

LIVE LONG

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FADE IN

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A deserted road, but for a jackknifed truck that has shed its load of building materials, and a crushed blue hatchback.

A desperate woman's CRIES emit from the smouldering car.

INT. NOAH'S CAR - SAME

Clean-shaven NOAH (32) is impaled to the driver's seat, his dapper outfit doused with blood. His eyes droop, barely conscious.

DES (33) struggles against metal pinning her to the passenger seat. Her pink ombre hair and panicked face are splattered with blood - not hers. She appears unharmed except for a GASH on her upper left arm.

DES
Noah? Noah, talk to me, babe.

Noah's eyelids flicker.

DES (cont'd)
Come on, I gotta hear your voice.

Des shakes with the effort of forced calm.

DES (cont'd)
Tell me what you're gonna cook for me
when we get out of here.

NOAH
Can't.

Blood seeps from Noah's mouth. Des yelps.

DES
HELP! Where are they! HELP!!

Noah shuffles his head towards her.

NOAH
Mollie...

Sound of emergency SIRENS. Blue flashes illuminate the wreckage.

Noah SLUMPS.

DES
No! Noah, No! They're here!

Tears mingle with dirt and blood, streaming down her face.
FIREFIGHTER appears at Des's side with bolt cutters.

DES (cont'd)
Get him first. *Please*.

Firefighter doubtfully assesses Noah's limp, impaled body.
Checks his vitals, retreats with sombre bow of her head.
Returns to Des. Cuts a piece of metal. Des struggles.

FIREFIGHTER
Try to stay calm.

DES
Nooo!!! Noah-

SUDDEN SILENCE as Des vanishes, wreckage shifting as her
body winks out of existence. Firefighter staggers backwards
in shock.

EXT. PARK - MORNING

A sun-drenched park buzzes with families, dog walkers,
joggers.

Des drifts along a path. Pale, drawn, hair no longer pink,
carrying a handbag with a flower corsage. Her eyes dart to a
nearby bench.

Dapper Noah - ALIVE and UNSCATHED - reads on the bench.

DES (V.O.)
So far, so good.

Des sways, STUMBLES, grabbing for the arm of the bench. Noah
jumps up, guides her to the ground, allowing her to slump
against him as he sits next to her.

NOAH
Put your head between your knees and
wait for it to pass.

She puts her head between her knees. Deep breaths. Emerges
with an embarrassed grimace.

DES
Thanks. Seems to have worked.

NOAH

Trust me, if you're feeling woozy,
the ground is way better than the
bench. I've got the scar to prove it.

DES

Yeah, I know.

Noah looks at her quizzically.

DES (cont'd)

I mean, I assume that's where the one
above your eye came from.

Noah touches a miniscule scar at the edge of his eyebrow.

NOAH

Well, you'll be pleased to know your
eyesight is fully intact. Do you
think you're OK to stand?

DES

Um. Still a bit shaky.

NOAH

Probably low blood sugar, or maybe
dehydration.

He grabs his man-bag from the bench. Retrieves a water
bottle, hands it to Des, who swigs some. He rummages again,
finds a packet of mints, proffers them to Des.

DES

Very kind of you, but we can probably
do better than that. I'm pretty sure
that, with your help, I can make it
to that tea shop over there.

She indicates a little cafe, across the park.

DES (cont'd)

And I can get you tea and cake to say
thanks.

NOAH

Please don't feel obliged to-

DES

I was at a loose end anyway. Then
again, reading in peace might
actually be preferable to having tea
with an unstable woman.

Des titters. Noah dithers. Retrieves the book, transfers it to the bag. Deliberate movements - stalling. His eyes return to Des.

NOAH

Well, if we're going for tea, I should at least know your name.

He pulls frowning Des to a stand. She watches an ice-cream wrapper skitter past. Brand: Desire.

DES

Um. Desirée. But people call me Des.

Noah nods, they link arms, stroll towards the cafe.

NOAH

Des, huh?

DES

Er. Yeah. Sounds less like a prostitute. Although, admittedly, more like a middle-aged darts player.

He laughs, appraising her.

NOAH

Well, we might have something in common there. Not the darts or anything. Just, I know what it's like to have a burdensome name. I must have heard every ark joke under the sun.

DES

Ah, then I'm pleased to meet you - Noah?

NOAH

Say, maybe I should get a dart board installed on that ark?

DES

Did you just call me an animal?

NOAH

See? This is why I read. Stops me from talking.

Des giggles. Noah stops to admire a flower in full bloom, entranced by it.

She slides a semi-professional camera from her bag, positions a beautiful shot of the flower, takes a picture. Extends the view to also include Noah. Takes a picture.

She shows him the first shot, he nods with admiration, they relink arms.

INT. QUAINTE TEA SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Noah and Des amble to the counter of a cluttered but cute tearoom, which is adorned with antique tea-pots, frilly table cloths, elaborate plates.

Des recoils from the home-made cakes. Noah doesn't notice, his eyes drawn to a sponge cake filled with jam and cream.

NOAH

Mmmm. Check out that Victoria sponge.

DES

No!

Noah's attention jerks to Des, who retreats to a table, cowering. Noah joins her.

DES (cont'd)

Sorry. I have some pretty left field phobias. Jam being one of them.

NOAH

That is pretty left field. OK, then. No jam. Anything else I should avoid?

DES

Knives.

NOAH

That's not such a strange fear.

Des inhales, exhales, steadying herself.

DES

Trains. Domestic appliances. Passenger seat of a car.

She buries her face in her hands.

NOAH

Wow. I think I've actually managed to find someone more neurotic than me. And let me tell you, that does not happen every day.

DES
Glad I could return a favour.

Noah glances at the counter.

NOAH
OK, I'll go to the counter, so you
don't have to risk the jam.

DES
No, I'll go. That way you can make a
discreet exit while I'm gone. Just
please, *anything* but the Victoria
sponge.

NOAH
You choose.

Des sidles to the counter. TEA LADY (50s) bustles over.

DES
(quickly)
Two lemon drizzles and two teas,
please.

Tea Lady blinks, taken aback by Des's speed.

TEA LADY
I'll bring them over.

Des darts back to the table.

DES
Missed your chance.

NOAH
I'm hardly one to judge. I can be
somewhat precise. Not to mention, a-

He does air quotes.

NOAH (cont'd)
-Highly Sensitive Person. Which is
enough to send an averagely sensitive
person running, I generally find.

He organises a sugar pourer, salt and pepper pots into a
neat line.

DES
Well, there's nothing average about
me. What's a Highly Sensitive Person,
anyway?

NOAH

It's an actual thing. Means I experience things more acutely than most people. Good and bad. We're a right pair, aren't we?

Tea Lady trundles over with tea and cakes. Noah sips tea, Des nibbles her cake.

NOAH (cont'd)

So, what do you do?

DES

Flower arranger. You know, weddings and stuff.

NOAH

Wow. I'm a little jealous.

DES

That's not the normal reaction I get.

NOAH

I couldn't do it, though. I mean, how do you get any work done with all that beauty surrounding you? I'd just be in a daze the whole time.

DES

You like flowers, then?

Noah leans forward but avoids looking Des in the eyes, self-conscious. She leans towards him.

NOAH

I like... beauty. A pretty flower, the smell of a lily, a beautiful scene in a movie, the bar of a song that sings to your soul.

Noah meets Des's gaze, their noses only inches apart.

NOAH (cont'd)

Food that tastes so good you have to close your eyes when you eat it.

DES

Sounds messy. Not gonna have to apologise for you when you eat that cake, am I?

Des glances at cake, at Noah. Noah laughs as he sits back.

NOAH
I'll try to control myself.

DES
You know, most people have to take
drugs to experience life like you do.

NOAH
Well, it's not all good. I can't even
leave the house on bin day.

Des snorts, Noah gives a wry smile.

EXT. QUAIN T TEA SHOP - LATER

Noah eases the door closed as he exits the tea shop, strolls
to a nearby road with Des.

NOAH
Probably best we grab you a cab, just
in case. Actually, are you OK with
that? Sorry. The car thing.

DES
I'll be OK in the back.

Noah gives her a bemused look. She shrugs.

NOAH
Where are you headed?

He hails a cab. Des closes her eyes.

DES (V.O.)
You can do it this time. Be strong.

She gulps. Her eyes ping open.

DES
Wherever you're headed.

Noah does a double-take, oblivious to the cab pulling up.
Des interlocks the fingers of one hand with Noah's.

DES (cont'd)
If you're not... busy?

Petrified Noah slides a finger under his collar.

NOAH
Erm. Not sure if my place is guest-
ready.

In B/G, CABBIE (40s) pokes his head out of the cab window.

DES
Somehow, I think it'll be just fine.

She gives Noah a knowing smile.

DES (cont'd)
Just thinking it'd be nice to, maybe,
watch a beautiful movie?

Des bites her lip. Cabbie beeps. Noah looks at the impatient Cabbie. At Des. At the floor. Under pressure. Breathing quickens.

NOAH
Erm. Think I'm... overloading.

Des straightens his furrowed brow with her fingertips. He closes his eyes, relaxing, his breathing deepens.

DES
Then you'd better take the cab.

She guides Noah to the cab. He climbs in, looks back at her. He hesitates, gripping the handle of the open door. Cabbie tuts.

DES (cont'd)
Room for a little one?

Noah scooches over. Des slides in with a coy smile.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - AFTERNOON

Noah holds front door open. Des glides in, immediately removes shoes, places them in neat pair on the doormat.

Noah appraises her approvingly. Panics as he looks around - an unwashed coffee cup on the kitchen counter, clothes hang on an airer in the living space.

His flat is otherwise pristine. Spotless white sofas. Organised shelves full of books and DVDs.

Noah washes the cup, deposits the airer in his bedroom. As he fusses, he relaxes, regaining control. Des pads to the sofa, smiling to herself.

NOAH
Tea? Coffee?

DES
I could murder a G&T.

Noah hesitates. Digs out a bottle of gin.

Des breezes to the shelves. Locates a DVD - "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind". Inserts it into a DVD player. Noah does a double-take at her forwardness.

DES (cont'd)
I'm amazed anyone's even got any of these, any more.

She returns to the sofa. Noah drops his gaze, shrugs.

NOAH
Can't even give them away. Besides, they make me look cultured. How do people look cultured, otherwise?

DES
Social media?

Noah places two G&Ts on coasters.

NOAH
Not nearly as satisfying, don't you think? Like with e-books, you wouldn't get the pleasure of turning the last page, you know?
(beat)
Or the first one.

Noah catches Des's eye, shy smile exchanged. He sits upright on the sofa. She snuggles against him, making him loosen his position. Noah wonders at her then flicks the TV on with a bemused grimace.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - AFTERNOON

Des and Noah watch a movie, still snuggled on the sofa. Tears roll from Des's eyes, her makeup smudged.

She jumps up, grabs a tissue from a box on a shelf, dabs her eyes. Throws the tissue in a waste basket.

DES
Maybe this film wasn't such a great idea. With your white sofa, and my mascara, this could end in tears.

Noah chuckles as he flicks the film off.

NOAH
How about a comedy?

She selects "Zoolander". Noah grins.

NOAH (cont'd)
That film is so hot right now.

Noah does terrible impression of Zoolander's "Blue Steel" modelling pose. Des doubles up with laughter.

NOAH (cont'd)
What? That was a thing of beauty.

DES
That was a thing of hilarity. And still a disaster for the mascara.

She dabs her eyes with back of her hand. Noah passes her a tissue. Their hands collide, Des grasps his, pulls him close. Breathing intensifies. Their bodies melt together, lips brushing.

NOAH
Think I should be thanking Zoolander for that one.

DES
Nah. It's all you. You had me at the dart board comment.

Noah cringes. Des giggles. He pulls her into a gleeful embrace.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - EVENING

MONTAGE

--Des snuggles against Noah on the couch, both giggle at TV.

--Noah gathers Thai curry ingredients in the kitchen. Grabs lemongrass, reaches for a knife. Des signals to stop. *She* chops the lemongrass.

--Noah and Des at table, plates half empty. He indicates for her to close her eyes. Feeds her a mouthful. Pure pleasure.

EXT. NOAH'S BIJOUX GARDEN - NIGHT

Noah and Des lay on picnic blanket. Star gazing.

DES
Gotta hand it to you, that did make a difference.

NOAH
Oh, the irony. Gotta close your eyes to see the whole truth.

DES
Yeah. Only really works with taste, though.

NOAH
You'd be surprised.

DES
Well, if I close my eyes right now, I won't see these beautiful stars.

NOAH
True, but your other senses would be heightened.

Des closes her eyes. Noah brushes her lips with his. She moans. Emerges laughing.

DES
Totally fell for that one.

NOAH
Guess I can get it right, occasionally.

Des smiles. Shivers. Noah tucks the picnic blanket over her bare arm.

DES
You know, I wouldn't call it a phobia as such, but the other thing I would rather avoid is dying of hypothermia, just inches from warmth.

She reaches towards Noah's building with mock desperation. Stands. Pulls Noah up, helps him pack up the picnic blanket with precise folds. They mooch to the door, hand-in-hand.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - NIGHT

LIVING AREA

Des shudders into the flat, rubbing her chilly arms. Noah checks his watch.

NOAH
It's pretty late, shall I call you a
cab?

DES
Trying to get rid of me?

NOAH
No, I... Um...

Des removes her shoes, leaves in a neat pair, as before.

DES
Good, coz I've had quite enough of
cabs for one day.

She closes in on Noah, murmuring in his ear.

DES (cont'd)
Haven't had enough of you yet,
though.

He gulps, stiff with nerves.

NOAH
Erm. I normally have plenty of time
to build up to... this kind of thing.
I'm generally an acquired taste.

Noah slides his finger under the neck of his shirt.

DES
You look a little hot.

Des eases her hands under his shirt, manoeuvring it over his
head. Hangs it carefully on a coat hook. Noah glances at it.

DES (cont'd)
What, you think I don't know what I'm
getting myself in for? I'll even let
you fold your trousers if you ask
nicely.

Noah titters. Des embraces him, he relaxes into the kiss as
they migrate towards the bedroom.

BEDROOM

Noah gets distracted by a clothes airer. Des follows his
gaze.

DES (cont'd)
Go on, then. If you must.

He moves the clothes airer out of the bedroom. Reappears. Deep breath. Nudges the door closed.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - BEDROOM - LATER

Des snuggles against Noah in bed. Hands wander over each other's naked bodies.

Noah's fingers brush past a scar on Des's upper arm - same place where she had a gash in opening scene. She flinches.

She runs her fingertips up Noah's arm, settles on the nape of his neck. Plays with his hair tuft. He moans with contentment.

REALITY DISTORTS - everything pulsates, like Noah is drugged. He freaks out, pushes Des's hand away.

DES

You OK?

NOAH

How did you know?

DES

Know what?

NOAH

That I would like - that.

DES

What, you think you're the only guy who likes to have his tufty bits stroked?

NOAH

No, it's more than that. It happened when we were... together, as well. You knew me. Knew what I liked.

DES

Again, inside of the elbows is not that crazy.

NOAH

Then why did I get that weird feeling? Like déjà vu, only I just met you. So like a premonition, but it was already happening.

Noah considers for a moment.

NOAH (cont'd)
 Maybe that was it... I'd had a
 premonition before, then had déjà vu
 about it.

Des raises one eyebrow.

DES
 Maybe the endorphins are making you
 say crazy shit. Either that or I was
 so good that you had an out of body
 experience.

NOAH
 Yeah. It was like an out of body
 experience. But I was also *in* my
 body. Thankfully. I mean, I would not
 have wanted to miss that.

Des giggles. Noah still looks uneasy, shrugs it off.

NOAH (cont'd)
 And just so you know, I will be
 coming back to ravish you again. Just
 need to reset first.

DES
 Does anyone actually use the word
 "ravish" these days?

NOAH
 If they don't, then they should.

He chuckles, Des resumes playing with the hair tuft. He
 closes his eyes, sinks into the pillow, drowsy. She watches
 him doze, TEARS welling.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - BEDROOM - LATER

Des tosses and turns in Noah's bed, tortured by visions.

SERIES OF IMAGES

QUICK CUTS:

--Noah impaled in car wreckage (opening scene).

--Noah collapsed in his hallway, next to scorched plug
 socket.

--Noah in a pool of blood in his kitchen.

--News report of commuter train crash.

--Noah sprawled on his kitchen floor, lifeless, a small, crumpled paper bag under his hand.

END SERIES OF IMAGES

Des's eyes snap open. She jerks with silent, dry sobs as she watches Noah sleep. She eases back the covers to slip out of bed.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Noah blinks awake, reaches for Des. Empty space.

He sits up, looks around. A NOTE lies on the pillow.

Noah squints at it. His face contorts with confusion as he mouths the words ("Live Long, Des").

NOAH

What the...?

He puts the note down, picks up his phone, opens a messaging app.

NOAH (TEXT)

Free for golf?

MARCUS (TEXT)

Sure. Determined to thrash you one of these days.

Noah chuckles, mooches out of bed, opens a drawer. It contains 13 folded pairs of socks - 4 black, 5 grey, 4 patterned, with space for another pair. He selects an Argyle pair.

INT. MARCUS'S HOUSE - LIVING AREA - MORNING

Trendy, open-plan living space. Everything placed. No heart.

Henpecked Jew MARCUS (33) munches cornbread toast as he rattles around the place, getting ready to leave. Golf shoes, golf bag, sunglasses - all high quality.

He slumps through the front door, just in time to glimpse-

-Acerbic SADIE (32) running past in garish sports clothes, zebra-print headband.

Marcus pauses to admire Sadie, toast clamped between his teeth.

Sadie slows as she approaches a pedestrian crossing. Glances over her shoulder, intent on crossing. A car speeds up, causing Sadie to halt, pin-wheeling her arms.

The car whizzes through the crossing. Sadie gives an angelic smile whilst sticking up two fingers. Marcus sniggers, just catching his toast before it falls.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - MORNING

Noah lines up a shot. Marcus shakes his head, chuckling.

MARCUS

So her name's Desirée, no surname, no number, she practically marches you to bed, and was gone by morning. You sure you don't owe this girl money?

Noah gives him a withering glare.

MARCUS (cont'd)

Seriously, you might wanna keep one of these-

He nods to the golf clubs.

MARCUS (cont'd)

-by the door.

He watches with glee as Noah's shot misses.

MARCUS (cont'd)

You should get lucky more often. Might even beat you at this rate.

NOAH

I told you, it wasn't just *that*. It was weird. She treated me like we'd been together for ages. Then vanished. I mean, what did I do? Did she finally come to her senses when she slept with me? Did I put her off with my weird ramblings?

Noah putts, the ball goes in the hole.

MARCUS

Who says it's you that screwed up?

NOAH

Bitter experience?

MARCUS
OK, 3 theories.

Marcus counts on his fingers.

MARCUS (cont'd)
Rebound. Married. Fucking nuts.
Whichever way, you've had a lucky
escape.

NOAH
No, there was definitely something
deeper going on there.

MARCUS
Just bank it and move on, my friend.

Marcus chips the ball into the hole. Celebratory arm pump.

NOAH
She knew me. She put her shoes in a
neat pair by the door, for God's
sake.

MARCUS
Now you're sounding fucking nuts.

NOAH
What about this, then?

Noah thrusts the note at Marcus. Marcus scans it:

"Live Long, Des". The "O" is a heart. Lipstick print.

Marcus shakes his head, shoves the note back in Noah's hand.

MARCUS
Wanna know what I really think? I
think freaks attract freaks, and
that's what drew her to you. But for
some reason - probably the same
reason - she vamoosed. Get over it.

Noah pouts.

MARCUS (cont'd)
What? If you came looking for chicken
soup and sympathy, you came to the
wrong Jew.

NOAH
It's a moot point, anyway. No idea
how to find her.

MARCUS

Good. And if I suddenly see you on Facebook, I will have to stage an intervention.

Marcus ambles to next hole, Noah scrambling to follow.

MARCUS (cont'd)

You should think yourself lucky. At least you don't have to check out a woman's religion before you check out her tuches.

NOAH

I can honestly say I've never seen you check out a woman's religion.

MARCUS

Jewdar, my friend. Never fails. Running out of options, though.

NOAH

You're 33. Even *your* mother must have accepted the futility of that exercise by now.

MARCUS

You know her.

NOAH

She's tenacious, I'll give her that.

Marcus shudders.

INT. DES'S APARTMENT BLOCK - COMMUNAL ENTRANCE - MORNING

Des traipses in through a communal front door into a spacious hallway. Almost bumps into Sadie, who has a yoga mat tucked under her arm.

Des is hunched, pale, bags under her eyes. Lost in thought. Sadie appraises her.

SADIE

Jeez, Moll, you look like shite. And what's with the hair?

Des touches her hair.

DES

Good morning to you too, Sadie.

Des shrugs.

DES (cont'd)
Just fancied a change.

SADIE
Yeah, well I think it's washing you out. Either that or you had a really good night.

Des squirms.

SADIE (cont'd)
Oh, so there is a story to tell. Hope he was worth it. Pop round mine later, I want all the gory details. That is, unless he'll be keeping you up all night again.

DES
Nah, won't be seeing him again.

SADIE
Hmph. So he wasn't worth it.

DES
Do you ever get that feeling that you'd be really great with someone, but also they'd be really bad for you?

SADIE
Looking at the state of you today, I can't say I disagree on that latter part.

DES
Should've taken a vow of celibacy. How's that working out for you?

SADIE
Perfect. Haven't had to dance to anyone else's tune for a refreshingly long time. See ya.

Sadie skips to the front door. Des slogs up a staircase.

INT. ROSENTHAL HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

DAVID (60s, Jewish) washes up in a modest-sized traditional kitchen, passing plates to Marcus to dry.

MIRIAM (60s, Jewish) fusses around ABIGAIL (30s, Jewish), helping her put her coat on. Miriam nods towards Marcus.

MIRIAM

See! Well trained.

David sidles out of the kitchen. Marcus gesticulates after him but stays put, his back to Abigail and Miriam. Abigail cringes and paints on a polite smile.

ABIGAIL

He'll make someone a great husband
one day, Miriam.

Miriam beams. Nudges Marcus in the ribs. He drags himself round to face them. Miriam makes herself scarce.

MARCUS

(sullen)

Shalom, Abbie.

ABIGAIL

Shalom.

Abigail slumps out of the door. Marcus returns to the sink. Miriam marches up to him.

MIRIAM

Oy vey!

MARCUS

What was I supposed to say? You can't
keep ambushing me like this.

MIRIAM

And you can't keep acting like a
petulant child when all I'm trying to
do is help.

MARCUS

If you really wanna help, stop
chucking me a bunch of lefts.

MIRIAM

Since when was political leaning
relevant?

MARCUS

Left swipe, Ma. Left swipe. In the
nicest possible terms - "no thanks".

MIRIAM

Don't be so callous! You've known
Abigail since you were kids.

MARCUS

The problem with knowing someone is that you know their baggage.

MIRIAM

Now, now, Marcus. She's had a... difficult time, yes, but-

MARCUS

-What if her husband reappears as suddenly as he disappeared? What then, huh, Ma?

MIRIAM

So I'm supposed to just leave you to it, even if it means marrying out?

MARCUS

You need to stop obsessing over this.

Marcus chucks the tea towel down, marches to the door, throws himself outside. Miriam bustles to the door.

MIRIAM

Shalom aleichem!

MARCUS

(through gritted teeth)

Aleichem shalom.

Miriam eases the door closed. Marcus stomps down the path, slams the gate.

MARCUS (cont'd)

Well done, Marcus. Regressing to a teenager. As fucking always.

EXT. CAFE OPPOSITE NOAH'S FLAT - AFTERNOON

Des drinks coffee at an outdoor table. She is disguised - hat, large sunglasses, plain clothes. Corsage handbag is the giveaway. The pages of a well-worn journal flicker in the breeze.

She watches a barber shop over the road. Noah emerges from barbers', clean-shaven. Des breathes sigh of relief, opens the journal. Drops her pen, scans the ground for it.

Noah glances over, notices the corsage bag. Scrutinises Des. She looks up - straight into Noah's sight-lines. SHIT! Shoves the journal in her bag. BOLTS.

Noah navigates cars, pedestrians, cyclists. Just stays on Des's tail.

INT. SUPERMARKET - MOMENTS LATER

Des ducks into a supermarket. Bumps into a trolley. Stumbles. Journal FALLS, unnoticed. Noah, a few paces behind, scoops it up. Des ducks into the Ladies toilets. Noah loiters.

SECURITY GUARD (40s) eyes Noah. Strolls over.

SECURITY GUARD
Sir, please can you move away from
the washrooms.

NOAH
My, er, girlfriend's in there.

Security Guard knocks on the door of the Ladies.

SECURITY GUARD
Madam, are you OK in there? Is this
man bothering you?

DES (O/S)
He's just leaving.

Security Guard purses her lips. Noah's shoulders droop.

NOAH
(calling)
You know where to come if you want
your book back.

Noah drags himself away, scowling.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - LATER

Noah flicks through the journal. Some pages have calendars glued in, each day ticked up to a point - then ticks cease.

Ticks on the next calendar start on the same date, end on a different date.

Scrawled notes. Photos of him - some with a beard. Noah strokes his clean-shaven face, confused. Drops the book, white with fear.

He glances at the window, just before Des's head vanishes. He jumps up.

EXT. NOAH'S FLAT - SAME

Des stands on a ledge, peering in Noah's window. Jerks back - BUSTED! Swoons and COLLAPSES, her head hits a stone ornament.

Noah emerges from his front door, sees Des crumpled on the floor. He creeps towards her, scared. Prods her arm. Out cold. He heaves her onto his shoulder.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

LIVING AREA

Noah staggers through his front door, weighed down by Des, carrying her bag. He appraises the sofa, bedroom door. Hesitates. Braces himself, hauls her into the bathroom.

BATHROOM

Des sprawls in the bathtub, unconscious. Noah rummages through her bag, retrieves a phone. Unlocks it with Des's face. Activates LOCATION TRACKING app.

Slips the phone back into the bag. Removes Des's shoes, ducks out of bathroom.

Des stirs. Confusion turns to fury. Noah reappears.

DES

The bathtub? Seriously?!

NOAH

Well, what was I supposed to do? The bed would have been too presumptuous.

Des drags herself out of the bathtub. Glares at Noah when he proffers help. She touches a lump on her head, winces.

DES

The sofa might have been a good start.

NOAH

Too much of a flight risk.

DES

Oh, so if I try to run, you're gonna stop me?

NOAH

You owe me some answers.

DES
I don't owe you anything.

NOAH
Oh, come on. First you're all over me, then you ditch me with some stupid note, then you stalk me - I mean, make your bloody mind up!

DES
I am not having this conversation in the bathroom.

Des stalks to the door. Noah stands aside, irritated.

LIVING AREA

Des looks around by the front door - no shoes.

NOAH
See? I knew you'd do this!

DES
Can you blame me? You kidnapped me and shut me in your bathroom.

NOAH
Kidnapped? I retrieved you when you passed out - whilst *stalking* me, by the way. Did I mention that already? And what the hell is this?

Noah reaches on top of the bookcase. Grabs the JOURNAL. Des gasps, makes a desperate lunge for it. Noah holds it high.

Des CRUMPLES to the floor, defeated. Sinks against Noah's legs, clinging to his calves, sobbing. He places the journal back on top of the bookcase. Crouches. Rubs Des's shoulder gingerly.

NOAH (cont'd)
Shall we try this again?

He guides Des to the sofa. Perches next to her.

DES
I can't do this again.

NOAH
What?

Des looks at him with anguished eyes.

DES

Us.

NOAH

It was one day. I'd hardly call it an "Us".

DES

It wasn't a day.

Long pause.

DES (cont'd)

It's been a year and a half.

NOAH

I think I'd know if I'd been with you for a year and a half.

DES

Well, technically you haven't. Not this version of you, anyway.

Noah looks at her sympathetically.

NOAH

Maybe that bump on your head was worse than it looked.

DES

Yeah, it's the bump. So just gimme the journal, and I'll be going.

Des holds out her hand expectantly. Noah's eyes flicker to the bookcase. THE JOURNAL. He pauses. Shakes his head slowly. Des nods.

DES (cont'd)

I know it doesn't make any sense, but I've been here before. Multiple times.

NOAH

How do I know the journal is real?

DES

I know you, remember?

Des creases her brow.

DES (cont'd)

Your favourite food is Thai.

NOAH
I cooked you Thai food that night!

DES
You cry at The Truman Show.

NOAH
Who doesn't cry at The Truman Show?

DES
The socks.

Noah twitches.

DES (cont'd)
You have to have exactly 14 pairs of socks. 5 grey, 5 black, 4 snazzy. If a pair needs replacing, you put it aside until you get a new one, as you can't bear to have just 13 pairs of socks.

TENSE SILENCE, Noah's mouth hanging open. He floats to the bookcase in a trance, grabs the journal. Flips through, settles on some earmarked pages.

Calendars. The odd dramatic page:-

15th September 2023 - replace vacuum cleaner!
31st July 2023 - go out for dinner
22nd June 2023 - make sure we're away
13th April 2023 - Jam?!? Jam! After 11 days! I can't do this. What next, 30 minutes!!!

He frowns at Des.

NOAH
Jam?

Des chokes up.

DES
I'd barely got to know you, that time. You invited me for brunch. Collapsed later that weekend. Couldn't breathe.

Noah shudders.

DES (cont'd)
That was the worst one. Botulism is pretty horrific.

Noah backs away from her.

NOAH

Wait, every time you loop round... I...

DES

Why do you think it's driving me nuts? I keep trying to stop it, but it's always something different.

Noah looks shell-shocked, shaking his head.

DES (cont'd)

I kept the journal so that I could try to play things differently and see if...

She gives Noah a desperate look. He breathes arrhythmically.

NOAH

13th April. That's in two days.

DES

Or 9 days ago, depending which way you look at it.

Noah hyperventilates, falls to his knees. Panic-stricken, Des sprints to the kitchen, throws open a drawer, grabs a paper bag, shoves it against Noah's mouth.

He grabs it, steadies his breathing with it. Flops to the floor. Des sprawls next to him, both spent.

DES (V.O.)

Just a false alarm, just a false alarm, just a false alarm.

Both stare at the ceiling.

DES

Now do you understand? Why I crammed so much into just one day this time and then bolted?

NOAH

I don't think I understand anything any more.

DES

I'm tired, Noah. Worse than tired. I've done this too many times.

Noah squeezes his eyes shut, blinks them open.

NOAH

OK, that was a lot to take in.

He scratches his head absent-mindedly.

NOAH (cont'd)

I feel like one of those coffee dripper thingies, you know? You put some coffee in, but you have to wait for it to drain through the filter paper. If you keep pouring, there'll just be a huge mess everywhere. Gotta leave it to go down.

Des bursts out laughing.

DES

You always were crap at similes.

NOAH

I thought that was rather good.

DES

Only if your intention was for me to laugh my arse off.

NOAH

See? Genius!

Des rises, wanders to the front door, eyes searching.

DES

I guess that's my cue to leave, Mr Coffee Dripper.

Noah scrambles to his feet.

NOAH

No! No. Please. I can't be on my own either. You could probably use a rest. Why don't you get your head down here for a bit whilst I... drip.

He cringes.

NOAH (cont'd)

Eugh, that sounded a lot less seedy in my head.

Des shakes her head with a bemused smile.

DES

I rest my case. OK, I'll stay for a bit. On one condition.

Noah is all ears.

DES (cont'd)
I get the bed. No bathtubs. And no
actual dripping.

Noah squirms.

NOAH
Metaphorically only, promise.

Des plods to the bedroom.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - LATER

Noah curls in an anguished ball on the sofa. Drifts to the
bedroom door. Eases it open, watches Des sleep for a moment.
Closes the door.

Throws a fearful glance at the journal. Stands paralysed,
torn. Strides to the kitchen, grabs cleaning supplies.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Street lamps adorn the dusky view from Noah's gleaming
apartment. He reads on the sofa.

Des emerges from the bedroom, clothes rumpled, makeup
blurred. Pads over to Noah, flops next to him.

NOAH
I've been thinking.

DES
So I can tell. I think I'm getting
high from the bleach fumes.

Noah steels himself.

NOAH
What if we do this one last time?

DES
You remember the part where I said I
suck at this, right?

NOAH
Did you ever tell me before?

Des shakes her head.

NOAH (cont'd)
There you go, then.

DES
Your best bet is for me to get out of
here.

She shuffles to the door - no shoes in sight. Opens a shoe
cupboard - VOILÀ!

NOAH
You don't know that.

Des retrieves her shoes.

DES
You know, you are reassuringly crap
at kidnapping, too.

She gives wry smile. Dons a shoe.

NOAH
Can we drop this talk of kidnapping,
please? You're free to go. If you
want to. But I don't want you to.

Des pauses, about to pick up the other shoe. Sighs.

NOAH (cont'd)
Think about it, it's not just you
this time. I'm part of it. You
couldn't have a better person
helping, right? Um, sorry, that
sounded big-headed. I just mean - who
better to look out for me than me?

DES
What if it doesn't work?

NOAH
Then when you come back, just stay
away. Get as far away as you can.
I'll go it alone.

He paces, getting more animated.

NOAH (cont'd)
It keeps getting earlier, right? If
we can clear 13th April, then who
knows?

DES
And if we don't succeed, then you
die, Noah.

NOAH

And then I come back. OK, so *this* me won't enjoy dying but the next me won't even know.

DES

What if there isn't a next you?

Noah pauses, looks into Des's eyes.

NOAH

We're connected. Something keeps pushing us together, we have to try. Otherwise all those other times would've been for nothing. It's not like I've got much going on here, anyway. I'm willing to take that chance.

DES

I'm not sure I am. I can't wake up next to you every day, wondering if it'll be the last time. Again.

NOAH

Then you gotta pack that away, put it in a box.

DES

Oh, not the box theory. It's not healthy, Noah.

NOAH

Nor is all this fear. Anyone could die tomorrow. If you sit there biting your nails, waiting for it to happen, you won't live your life.

He gesticulates towards the bathroom.

NOAH (cont'd)

You might even end up stalking some guy and waking up in his bathtub.

Des sighs, conceding.

DES

One day at a time, then. I guess.

NOAH

I think that's as close to a "yes" as I'm gonna get.

He sweeps Des into a lingering kiss.

NOAH (cont'd)
You hungry?

DES
Always up for what you're cooking.

NOAH
Cool. Just one last request.

Des braces herself.

NOAH (cont'd)
Could you take that shoe off, please?
I just spent all afternoon cleaning.

Noah chuckles. Des looks down at her one shoe-adorned foot. She laughs, removes it, taps him on the bottom with it as he saunters to the kitchen.

MONTAGE

INT. NOAH'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Shot of calendar page in the journal, ticked to 13th April 2023.

Des observes Noah opening a fresh jar of coffee, he inhales deeply. Shows her the date on his phone - 14th April 2023. He beams, revelling in every sensory input. Des kisses him.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY

Calendar ticked to 29th April 2023.

Noah is entranced by a sculpture. Des takes an artful photo of it. CLICK! [Display photo]

EXT. TOWER BRIDGE - LONDON - DAY

Calendar ticked to 8th May 2023.

Des and Noah cross Tower Bridge. Noah stops to admire his surroundings. Des glances back at him, smiles to herself.

Takes photo of him, London's snaking Thames view in the background. CLICK! [Display photo]

EXT. KEW GARDENS - LONDON - DAY

Calendar ticked to 14th May 2023.

Noah and Des amble through a flower display in a London horticultural attraction. She takes a close-up of a flower, shows Noah a well-composed shot. He admires it.

NOAH

Wow, you're multi-talented.

DES

I wouldn't call flower arranging a talent.

NOAH

Who says I was talking about the flower arranging?

He gives Des a playful nudge. She looks around, embarrassed. They are alone. Noah drags her behind a tree. They canoodle.

DES

See, now I know why you like me. I'm the only one who'll buy your terrible lines.

NOAH

Well, there is a bit more to it than that. You like my cooking too.

Noah chuckles, disentwines himself. Looks around in wonder, drinking in the beauty - including Des.

NOAH (cont'd)

My favourite place.

(beat)

But then I guess you knew that.

He grimaces. Des squirms. They stroll in awkward silence.

NOAH (cont'd)

Kinda weird that you know all this stuff about me, and I know pretty much nothing about you. What's your favourite colour?

DES

Pink.

NOAH

Favourite flower?

DES

Bleeding Hearts.

NOAH

Hmm, I don't know those. Favourite food?

DES

Whatever you're cooking.

Noah beams.

NOAH

Favourite number?

DES

Favourite number? You know, you don't have to ask me all these questions. Just take things at a normal pace. If you focus too much on the destination, you won't enjoy the journey.

Noah does a terrible imitation of Yoda from Star Wars.

NOAH

Wise, you are.

Des winces.

DES

God, I hate Star Wars.

NOAH

Hate Star Wars? How can anyone hate Star Wars?

DES

Too cheesy, even for me!

NOAH

Guess we can't agree on everything, then.

DES

See, this is better. Just stumble across stuff, you know? There's no rush.

NOAH

OK, no rush. Apart from one thing.

Noah attempts to tickle Des in multiple places. No reaction.

NOAH (cont'd)

Dammit.

He appraises Des, looking for possibilities. Tries tickling her behind the knees. She swerves. Noah grins.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - MORNING

Marcus tees off, Noah eases a golf club out of his bag.

MARCUS

Can't believe you're seeing that meshuggeneh again.

NOAH

She's not crazy. Just had a lot going on, that's all. So yeah, she's my... I dunno... erm... girlfriend? I guess.

Noah lines up a shot.

MARCUS

And what does her husband think about that?

NOAH

It was none of your remarkably unhelpful suggestions, thanks. She just had a few complications, but we're working through it together.

Noah whacks the ball off the tee.

MARCUS

"Working through it together?" If it starts like that, it can only end in trouble.

NOAH

Why don't you meet her before you dismiss her.

MARCUS

Bring it on, my friend.

They shoulder their golf bags, wander towards the balls.

EXT. NOAH'S FLAT - MORNING

Calendar ticked to 28th May 2023.

Des ambles away from Noah's apartment, towards some shops. Glimpses Noah exit the same barbers', clean-shaven. She strides over.

DES
You have got to be kidding me.

NOAH
It's fine. I've been going to this
guy for years. He's got a steady
hand.

DES
What if he has a bad day?

Noah's face twitches as he fishes for an answer.

DES (cont'd)
I need to know you get it. It'll be
something else next time. What if
it's this?

Noah sighs. Des gives a sheepish smile.

DES (cont'd)
You know, you look pretty cute with a
beard.

NOAH
But 13th of April was ages ago.

DES
I won't be able to rest until we've
cleared all of them.

Long pause.

NOAH
OK. 15th of September's not too far
away, and I'm not exactly an
adrenaline junkie. But there may be
things I don't think of.

His posture tightens.

NOAH (cont'd)
Guess you'd better write me a list.

Des wraps her arms around him. Noah has a fleeting frown.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DES'S FLAT - NIGHT

Calendar ticked to 21st June 2023.

Sadie glides out of door 10, wine bottle in hand. Patters up
the corridor in socks and comfies. Knocks on door 7. Des
answers, dressed to impress.

SADIE
Ah shit, looks like I'll be drinking
alone tonight. Who's the lucky fella?

DES
Noah. I bumped into him again.

Sadie's face falls.

SADIE
Oh, not the guy from a few months
ago? Thought he was bad news?

DES
He's very sweet, actually. If kinda
complicated.

SADIE
That's just another word for "bad
news". Sure I can't tempt you?

Sadie brandishes the wine bottle.

DES
I have to see him tonight.

SADIE
Have to?

DES
Erm, yeah. Got a surprise planned.

Des shrinks back from Sadie's scrutiny. Grabs her handbag,
slinks out of the flat.

SADIE
Your funeral.

Sadie watches Des hurry away, then slouches back to flat 10.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

WOAH! Sadie's kooky flat has more zebra print than a safari
park.

Sadie dumps the wine bottle on her kitchen counter,
disappears through a bedroom door.

Re-emerges with a glass cage, placing it next to the wine.
She addresses the TARANTULA inside it.

SADIE

Ah, Tink. Can't say I didn't try. We gotta look out for that one. And no, not just because he's a guy. Something about them that doesn't add up. At least I know he won't leave her for her best mate though, huh?

Sadie slumps. Pours a glass of wine.

INT. DES'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - LATER

Front door glides open, Des floats in. Noah freezes, marvelling at bloom upon bloom of flowers - Lilies, Roses, Bleeding Hearts, Orchids. Des shrugs.

DES

Perk of the job.

Noah drifts to the Lilies, inhales. Glides to the Bleeding Hearts, caresses one of the flowers, in awe. Des drifts to his side, caresses another of the flowers.

DES (cont'd)

Now you know.

Noah wells up, retreating to the sofa to regain his composure. Des sits next to him, holds his hand.

NOAH

Not very manly, is it?

DES

Actually, I think it is very manly. That you can just let your emotions flow.

NOAH

Well, it's not so much a case of letting them flow. More like can't stop 'em pouring out. Like a champagne bottle that's been fizzed up.

Des sniggers.

DES

Oh my God. That simile wasn't totally crap! You must be getting better at that.

Noah pouts, feigning offence. He dabs away his remaining tears. Des is transfixed by him.

DES (cont'd)
 See, I love that about you. You don't
 experience beauty as a casual
 observer, you immerse yourself in it.

Noah steels himself.

NOAH
 And I love-

He hesitates, swallows hard. Bottles it.

NOAH (cont'd)
 -that you don't just roll your eyes -
 "typical Noah", you know? You're
 right there with me.

He strokes Des's cheek.

NOAH (cont'd)
 Somehow, impossibly, making things
 even more gorgeous with your photos.
 And, you know, you.

A tender kiss. Noah relaxes. Des straddles him, their
 passion rising.

DES
 Sorry, might this be a little...
 overwhelming?

NOAH
 I'm willing to test my limits.

He nuzzles Des's neck. Des's head DROPS onto his shoulder.
 She goes LIMP. Noah looks alarmed. Gently shakes her.

NOAH (cont'd)
 Des? Des?

He manoeuvres unconscious Des to the floor.

INT. DES'S FLAT - PREVIOUS TIMELINE - MORNING

Noah languidly checks a clock as he awakens: Time 06:53.
 Date 22nd June 2023. He notices Des - now with pink hair
 again - dozing next to him. His eyes ping open.

NOAH
 Shit! What're you doing still in bed?

Des jerks awake, glancing at the clock. Darts out of bed.

DES
Oh bugger! Could probably still make
it in on time, just.

She glances at a dress hanging on the bedroom door.

DES (cont'd)
Oh no! I was gonna wear that tonight
but I needed to take it to the dry
cleaners before work.

She sighs as she checks the clock.

DES (cont'd)
I'll never make the early train now.

Noah glides over. Drapes his arms around her.

NOAH
Now, that is a shame. I was looking
forward to sliding that off you
later.

Des slaps him away.

DES
Not helpful!

NOAH
Don't worry. I'll be ready before
you, I'll take it in.

DES
Sure you don't mind?

NOAH
I wouldn't offer if I minded.

DES
We both know that's a load of crap,
but I don't have time to argue.

She smiles, thrusts the dress at Noah, piles out of the
bedroom.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PREVIOUS TIMELINE - MORNING

PANDEMONIUM. A crowd of commuters is turned away by stressed
staff. Des approaches HASSLED COMMUTER with trepidation.

DES
Any idea what's going on?

HASSLED COMMUTER

Crash apparently, just up ahead. No chance of getting a bloody train from here this morning.

Des freezes with panic. The departing crowd flows around her. As the crowd thins, she edges towards the train station. RAILWAY EMPLOYEE blocks her.

RAILWAY EMPLOYEE

No trains, my love.

DES

(numb)

I'm not looking for the train.

Railway Employee's expression softens.

RAILWAY EMPLOYEE

I'm sorry, love, but you're better off making your way home. We don't know anything yet.

Des floats away in a grim trance. Emergency vehicles whizz by.

INT. DES'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - CURRENT TIMELINE - NIGHT

Noah huddles on the floor next to unconscious Des. Her eyes flicker open. She sobs, sits up, clings to Noah. He hugs her, strokes her hair.

NOAH

You know, you've really gotta stop doing that. I might not always be here to catch you.

Des sobs harder. Noah winces.

NOAH (cont'd)

Shit, sorry, bad choice of words. I just meant you should see a doctor.

DES

It's OK, I'm OK. All just kinda got on top of me, that's all.

NOAH

Sorry, this is my fault. I shouldn't've dragged you into this. If you're having second thoughts, then...

He looks away. Des turns his face back to her.

DES

Not second thoughts. But some days
may be harder than others.

She glimpses the Journal. Noah shudders.

NOAH

If it's a hard day, you just gotta
let me know, alright? No more styling
it out.

She nods.

NOAH (cont'd)

You did kinda steal my thunder,
though. That's assuming I could've
worked up the courage, of course,
which was by no means guaranteed.

Des looks questioningly at him. Noah fidgets.

NOAH (cont'd)

I was gonna tell you something
tonight. But this is probably now a
pretty rubbish time to tell you I
love you.

DES

Or maybe it was the perfect time.

She sniffs back her remaining tears, smiles. Noah exhales.

DES (cont'd)

I love you too. But then, I think you
knew that already.

Noah's face falls.

NOAH

Do you love me though?

DES

Love isn't that simple, Noah. It's
not just two people - it's a whole
bunch of little things that build
into a great big thing. And those
little things started-

She gulps.

DES (cont'd)
 -a long time ago. So yes, I love you.
 But I can't wipe out the others. If
 that's not enough, then-

Noah kisses away her words.

NOAH
 It's more than enough.

He rests his head on her lap. She plays with his hair.

INT. BUSTLING BISTRO - EVENING

Calendar ticked to 30th June 2023.

Noah, Des, Sadie and Marcus peruse menus.

Noah, sporting the beginnings of a beard, signals POLITE WAITRESS over.

POLITE WAITRESS
 Ready to order, sir? Any dietary
 requirements?

Noah cringes at Marcus.

MARCUS
 Just the usuals.

POLITE WAITRESS
 I'm sorry, sir?

MARCUS
 Gluten. Eggs. Dairy. Shellfish.

POLITE WAITRESS
 Well, you'll be pleased to know our
 chef can be quite creative, so you
 won't just be eating olives tonight.

MARCUS
 Oh yeah. Hold the olives too.

Sadie leans towards Des.

SADIE
 Do I seriously have to sit through an
 evening with this guy?

Des gives her a stern glare. Marcus strains to keep his
 mouth shut. Polite Waitress turns her attention to Noah.

NOAH
I'll have the salt cod, please.

Des micro-shakes her head, spied by Sadie's shrewd eye. Noah consults the menu again, tight-lipped with reluctance.

NOAH (cont'd)
Actually, could I swap that for the soup, please?

POLITE WAITRESS
Certainly, sir.

Polite Waitress turns her attention to Des.

DES
Same for me, please.

Sadie clocks Des's mirroring. Polite Waitress looks at Sadie.

SADIE
Scallops, please. And can you bring plenty of bread and butter for the table? I'm starving.

Sadie puts on an angelic smile.

POLITE WAITRESS
Of course, Madam.

Sadie shoots a smug look at Marcus. He glowers.

INT. BUSTLING BISTRO - LATER

Marcus emerges from the Gents, scooches towards their table. Sees Noah feeding Des cake, Des with her eyes closed.

Marcus grimaces, swerves to the rear exit, pulling a vape pen from his pocket.

EXT. BUSTLING BISTRO - MOMENTS LATER

Sadie lounges on a bench, vape in hand. Marcus leans away from her, opposite end of the bench.

SADIE
And here was me hoping you'd be allergic to vaping too.

Marcus vapes theatrically.

MARCUS

I would say that I hate to disappoint you, but I really couldn't give a shit. Why are you wasting your energy hating me, anyway?

SADIE

Don't sweat it. You're just a by-product.

She nods towards the restaurant.

SADIE (cont'd)

Seriously, what is that all about?

MARCUS

Yeah, right? She's no good for him. She messed him around and now she seems to be controlling his every move.

SADIE

Her controlling him? What the fuck! He doesn't even call her by her real name. Does that not seem weird to you?

MARCUS

She's the one who said her name's Des. Maybe it even is. Why would he question that? Other than she's a nutjob.

Sadie jabs her vape at him.

SADIE

Call her a nutjob one more time and you'll need a surgeon to get this out.

They seethe at each other. Marcus breaks the stand-off with a snigger. Sadie fails to keep a straight face.

MARCUS

Do you always say stupid shit when you're angry?

SADIE

Don't test me. You got off lightly that time.

Both vape, refocusing.

SADIE (cont'd)
So, we're agreed on one thing. Sooner they get bored of each other, the better.

MARCUS
What if they don't get bored? They seem kind of intense. Borderline obsessed.

SADIE
Then we've gotta try to make them see sense.

MARCUS
Don't you think I've tried?

SADIE
Me too. We've gotta try harder. They might throw it back in our faces, but you seem like you've probably weathered a few punches in your time.

MARCUS
Fewer than you've thrown, I dare say.

Sadie pockets her vape with a wink, swaggers to the door. Holds door open. Marcus leaves her hanging.

SADIE
Don't make the mistake of thinking that's the last laugh.

Marcus smiles to himself. Sadie casually lets the door drop, sashays into the bistro.

INT. DES'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - MORNING

Des sits at a dining table, poised to write in the journal. Stares into space, lost in thought.

Oblivious to a soft KNOCK at the door. Pause. KNOCK. Pause.

Sound of KEY in door. Des jolts up just as Sadie enters. Sadie jumps as she sees Des.

SADIE
Jesus, don't do that to me.

Both ladies look guilty.

DES
You're the one who broke into my
flat.

Des smiles. Sadie takes some steadying breaths. Sadie's eyes settle on the journal. Des shoves it in a drawer.

SADIE
I messaged you. And knocked. Twice.

Des checks her phone - message notification from Sadie.

SADIE (cont'd)
Figured I'd come water the flowers in
case you weren't here. But since you
are here-

Sadie turns the kettle on.

SADIE (cont'd)
If you can spare me 10 minutes?

Des's eyes flicker to the drawer.

DES
I was just, erm, figuring some stuff
out for work. Last minute request
from a demanding bride.

SADIE
You sure that's all that's
distracting you?

DES
You haven't met this bride.

Des reaches up for mugs. The sleeve of her dress slips to her shoulder, revealing the scar on her upper arm. Sadie spots it. Des whips her sleeve back into place.

SADIE
This isn't new, Moll. You've been
like this for months. Ever since you
met him.

DES
What do you mean, "like this"?

SADIE
You're anxious and tired all the
time. You changed your hair.

DES
I didn't change my hair for him, that
was my decision.

SADIE
And what's all this "Des" nonsense?

Des busies herself making tea, avoiding looking up.

DES
His ex was called Molly. She hurt him
pretty bad. He's not ready to say the
name yet.

SADIE
You do realise how fucked-up that
sounds, don't you? You've just given
away your *identity*.

DES
Calm down, it's just a pet-name.

SADIE
To me, it looks like he's moulding
you into the shape he wants. Feeding
you this bullshit so that you'll play
along. This reeks of "hidden agenda".

DES
Noah's not a "hidden agenda" kinda
guy.

SADIE
Clue's in the name, Moll. It's not
gonna be on show, is it.

Des gives her a steady look.

DES
You've got him all wrong.

Sadie meets Des's steady look. Des blinks first. Slides a
mug of tea to Sadie.

SADIE
When my dad died, my mum was lost.
Literally. I don't think either of
them appreciated quite how much he
controlled her.

DES
Sades, you know what drew me to you
in the first place.

SADIE
Strong, independent women, blah blah.

DES
Shrug it off as much as you want, you know it's true. Don't start doubting me now.

SADIE
Even independent women need a friend sometimes, and you know I've got your back, right?

Des throws an arm around Sadie.

DES
Likewise.

Des sizes Sadie up, acknowledging her strength.

DES (cont'd)
For what it's worth.

Sadie laughs. Des blows her tea, corners of her mouth upturned.

INT. DES'S VAN - AFTERNOON

Calendar ticked to 15th July 2023.

Des sits in the driver's seat, Noah in the passenger seat of a parked floristry van, both dressed for summer, Noah retaining his trademark neat attire despite the heat. He shields his eyes from the blinding sun.

NOAH
Thanks for the lift.

He unclips his seatbelt. Pecks Des on the cheek. Lingers.

NOAH (cont'd)
You know, you're here now, why don't you pop in?

DES
Gotta pick up those extra flowers, remember?

NOAH
OK, but you'll run out of excuses one day. Kate's gonna think I made you up.

Des squirms.

NOAH (cont'd)

Oh no. You already know her? Should I be worried? Is this gonna be awkward? Do you guys not get on?

DES

Relax. She thinks the sun shines out of my arse. All the more reason for me to keep my distance. Just until mid-September. Promise.

Noah drags himself out of the van. Turns, with a sulky pout. Des wrinkles her nose in apology.

Noah gives her a cheeky smile as he leans into the van, arms extended for a hug. Des shoves a baby gift bag into his waiting arms.

He laughs, ducks out of the van, bounds up the pathway to a modest suburban house. Fans his face with one hand as he rings a doorbell with the other.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DES'S FLAT - AFTERNOON

Sadie and Marcus creep from door 10 to door 7.

MARCUS

(whispering)

Why are we creeping? She's not even here.

SADIE

Good point. We do look like a pair of twats, don't we?

Sadie smiles, Marcus shakes his head. They mooch the rest of the way. Sadie inserts a key into Des's lock.

SADIE (cont'd)

Are we terrible friends?

MARCUS

Almost certainly. But also good ones.

Sadie turns the key with heavy sigh, opens the door. The flat brims with flowers. Marcus recoils.

MARCUS (cont'd)

Fuck. I can't go in there.

SADIE
Not a vampire are you?

MARCUS
Ha ha. Just highly allergic to lily pollen.

SADIE
Oh, so you're a cat?

She mimics scratching like a cat.

MARCUS
Well, then I would be allergic to myself.

Sadie huffs.

SADIE
Could've predicted that you would be a waste of space.

MARCUS
Fuck you! It's not my fault, is it?

SADIE
Right, I'll go in there, I can take pictures if I find anything. You go wait at my place. No lilies there. Or cats.

She chucks her keys, Marcus plucks them out of the air. Sadie flickers an appreciative nod.

SADIE (cont'd)
Help yourself to a drink. That's assuming you can find something you're not *allergic* to. And don't touch *anything* else of my stuff.

She disappears into Des's flat. Marcus slopes off to Sadie's flat.

INT. DES'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Sadie snoops. The drawer that Des had stuffed the journal into: No journal. Rummages through drawers, cupboards. Nothing of interest.

Until she uncovers: A PASSPORT. Mollie Penhaligon. Sadie photographs the passport, puts it back.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Marcus hunches at a breakfast bar, sips wine, scrolls through his phone. Sadie strides in.

SADIE
No sign of the book, but there was this.

She slides her phone into Marcus's eye-line.

MARCUS
Fuck. I hate being wrong.

SADIE
Normally I'd be doing a little victory dance right now, but I don't feel like dancing. I feel like drinking.

Marcus pours wine for Sadie. She stands on a stool, stretches to the back of a high cupboard. Plonks a dusty Cognac bottle in front of Marcus.

MARCUS
Couldda told me you had some decent booze.

SADIE
Couldn't let you have all the fun without me, now, could I?

She smirks. Grabs brandy glasses.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Noah hovers over EVIE - a sleeping newborn dressed in a nappy. A changing mat, nappies and various baby toys are dotted around a chaotic room.

KATE (late 20s) schleps in. Dishevelled hair, sweaty face, baggy clothes. She drops into a chair, eyeing Noah with bemusement.

KATE
It's OK, she doesn't bite. She doesn't even have teeth yet.

Noah snorts, perches on edge of couch. Kate drags herself up, slides her hands under Evie. Noah cringes.

NOAH
It's OK, no need to disturb her.

KATE

Don't be daft, this is the best time. She's soundo. Just make sure you always support her head. Cradle your arms.

She guides Evie into Noah's cradled arms.

KATE (cont'd)

Evie, meet Uncle Noah. You'll get used to him. Or should that be the other way around.

Kate sniggers, slumps down, fanning her face. Noah appraises Evie's attire.

NOAH

If you've run out of baby-grows, there's some in there.

He nods to the gift bag across the room.

NOAH (cont'd)

I could go get them.

He shifts Evie towards Kate, as if to hand her back.

KATE

You're joking, right? It's, like, 50 degrees. Stay put, brother dearest. Worst she could do is puke, poo or cry. And if that happens, I'll take over.

NOAH

Thanks, Kate. Really helpful.

Kate laughs, forcing Noah to crack a smile.

KATE

Aren't you hot in that thing?

She strokes her face, mimicking Noah's beard. He gives a sarcastic smile.

NOAH

I see parenthood hasn't dented your cutting wit. Is it as exhausting as people say?

KATE

More than you can possibly imagine.

Kate's eyes close for a moment.

KATE (cont'd)

But the rush that you get when you look at that squidgy little face, knowing that you *did* that - totally worth it. Even I've shed the odd tear. God knows what you'd be like.

They exchange wry smile.

KATE (cont'd)

Anyway, seems I'm not the only one who's been busy. Shame Des couldn't make it. I wanted to meet the woman who's putting a smile on your face. Des is a woman, right?

Noah gapes.

NOAH

What, so because I haven't settled down yet, suddenly I must be gay?

KATE

Well, maybe not gay, exactly, but maybe not entirely, you know, straight. And, you know, that's cool with me, whatever - whoever - makes you happy...

NOAH

Des is a woman. Full stop.

KATE

Can you blame me for speculating? You play your cards pretty close to your chest. And you didn't bring Des to meet me today, so-

NOAH

-She's a flower arranger. This is her busiest time, all the weddings and stuff. September should be quieter.

KATE

And then you'll definitely bring her over? Assuming you guys are still together, I mean, if you didn't want me to meet her, maybe you're hedging your bets, or-

Noah edges round to look Kate in the eye, his movement hindered by Evie.

NOAH

-Kate, this isn't fair. You trap me here with your baby and then proceed to dissect my private life. I'm just plain old straight Noah who just happens to be in love with a busy florist. OK?

KATE

You lurve her!

NOAH

Sister *dearest*, we are not kids any more.

KATE

OK, alright, so I'm getting a little over-excited. That is the most you've told me about any relationship since you split up with Adele four years ago.

NOAH

She split up with *me*. Everyone gets sick of my... foibles, eventually, it seems.

KATE

You really believe that? We both know she was preggers within a year of you guys splitting up.

NOAH

Is there any other aspect of my life you'd like to wade in on?

He purses his lips. Kate looks at shuffling Evie.

KATE

Better go grab her a bottle. You OK here for a sec?

Noah tenses.

KATE (cont'd)

Chill out, bro. Panicking is literally the worst thing you could do right now. Apart from drop her.

Noah gives Kate a pleading look. She sniggers, departing.

He looks at dozing Evie. Relaxes his shoulders. Loosens his grip, maintaining a secure hold.

NOAH
 Sorry, by the way. All that trapped
 stuff? I didn't mean it. Just don't
 tell-

Kate appears in the doorway, stops, almost retreats, barely
 visible. Spying.

NOAH (cont'd)
 -your mummy.

Evie's eyes flicker open. Noah looks into them intently. He
 smiles, chokes back a tear. Kisses her tiny fingers. Kate
 bustles in, hand on heart. Noah startles.

KATE
 Oh my god. There it is.

NOAH
 What?

KATE
 The pang.

NOAH
 What pang? There was no pang!

KATE
 Clear as day, brother dearest. I
 could practically hear it.

NOAH
 Along with the wedding bells you
 practically heard five minutes ago?

KATE
 Exactly, you're practically deafening
 me right now.

Noah shakes his head. Passes Evie to Kate. Kate smirks. Noah
 busies himself tidying the room.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - LATER

LIVING ROOM

Sadie and Marcus lounge on her sofa, cognac bottle nearly
 empty. They giggle and slur.

SADIE
 Well, being intentionally single does
 have it's benefits. I've got wanking
 down to a fine art.

Marcus chokes on his drink.

SADIE (cont'd)
 What? You think it's only the guys
 who do that?

Marcus cries with laughter, Sadie brims with playfulness.

MARCUS
 And here was me thinking you didn't
 beat around the bush.

His hysterics intensify.

SADIE
 I said I'm intentionally single, not
 dried up like an old prune.

She laughs, fixes Marcus with a piercing look, waits for him
 to control his giggles.

SADIE (cont'd)
 I reckon you're intentionally single,
 too. Tell yourself as much as you
 like that you're waiting for the
 "perfect Jewish girl" but we both
 know the truth. Scared.

MARCUS
 Bullshit am I scared!

SADIE
 God forbid anyone should try and tie
 you down, eh?

MARCUS
 Do not project your crap onto me.

SADIE
 Luckily I'm not the tying down kind.

MARCUS
 What do you mean, "luckily"?

SADIE
 That our paths have crossed. I mean,
 self-love is no substitute for the
 real deal.

Marcus goggles at her, incredulous.

MARCUS
 Are you suggesting-

He clears his throat.

MARCUS (cont'd)
- that I use you for sex?

SADIE
Typical man, hearing what he wants to hear.

MARCUS
Well then you're gonna have to spell it out for this "typical man".

SADIE
I'm proposing we use each other for sex. I mean, this ain't a one-way street.
(mocking)
"My friend".

MARCUS
Hey, I'm supposed to be the straight-talking one around here.

Sadie gives him a stern look.

SADIE
Don't make me get the whip out.

She giggles, drags bemused Marcus towards the bedroom. He slides ahead of her. Drags *her* into the-

BEDROOM

Marcus peruses the room. No whip. He freezes as he glimpses Tink in her cage.

MARCUS
Can we get rid of that thing first?

He inclines his head at Tink. Sadie scowls.

MARCUS (cont'd)
What I meant to say was, would you mind if I put a tea towel over it, or something?

SADIE
Would you mind if I put a tea towel over you?

Marcus sighs. Positions his back to Tink. Pulls Sadie into an embrace. Sadie pecks at him. He retreats, holding his hand up.

MARCUS

I draw the line at aggressive kissing.

Sadie bats her eyelids.

SADIE

Got it. No kissing.

She unzips Marcus's trousers. He stares at her in disbelief, relents, kisses her. She becomes less aggressive. She leans into his ear, murmuring

SADIE (cont'd)

Bonus points if you can find my other tarantula.

Marcus flinches. His eyes widen.

MARCUS

I'm guessing that would be a bonus for you, too.

They rip each other's clothes off.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Noah holds Des's hand as they wander along a well-trodden pathway. Fading light filters through the trees.

DES

Should I be worried that my former kidnapper is leading me into the woods at night?

NOAH

Says my former stalker.

Des sniggers.

NOAH (cont'd)

Just figured it'd be nice to be outdoors after such a hot day. You must be done in after all that extra running around, and I needed a chilled one - literally - after being under Kate's microscope all afternoon.

DES

How'd that go?

NOAH

Predictably, she grilled me about you not being there. Including you're actually a guy and I'm secretly hiding my true sexuality.

Des splutters with laughter.

DES

Not heard that theory before. Mind you, I've always been with you before. Did you hold Evie?

NOAH

Well apparently you know Kate, so you know she wouldn't take no for an answer.

DES

Actually, you've always managed to hide behind me before. Did you freak out?

She digs him in the ribs.

NOAH

Me, freak out? Perish the thought. She was quite harmless in the end. Charming, at points.

He fails to hide his wistful expression. Slows to a halt as he and Des reach a clearing. Des gasps as she sees an ice bucket, champagne, picnic hamper, blanket.

NOAH (cont'd)

And now for the pièce de résistance.

With a flourish, he flicks a switch. Fairy lights placed in a heart shape surround the blanket. Des grins, hugs him.

DES

What're we celebrating?

NOAH

Being alive. Together.

Noah hops inside the heart, Des joins him, embracing him.

DES

You've never done this for me before.

Noah crouches, pours champagne. Des lounges next to him.

NOAH

What if all these things being
different means that we'll beat it
this time?

Des hangs her head.

DES

It's always different.

Noah pulls her chin up to face him, his lips linger on hers.
Their heads droop, the tops of their foreheads touching.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sadie dismounts Marcus, both satiated. She drapes a zebra-
print cover over Tink's cage. Collapses back into bed.

MARCUS

Oh, now you decide to cover the thing
up!

SADIE

I could feel her eyes on me. Judging
me.

MARCUS

Gee, thanks!

Sadie giggles.

SADIE

I just had to know you could.

MARCUS

The offer of no-strings sex with an
attractive woman comes with a certain
amount of staying power. Even if
she's also a very demanding woman
with a deadly spider.

Sadie laughs.

SADIE

Attractive, huh?

MARCUS

Yeah, give me some credit. I'm not
just a dick for hire. I'm guessing
you have some standards too?

SADIE

Yeah. He has to be able to catch.

Marcus gives a sarcastic smile. Sadie shrugs.

SADIE (cont'd)
What? Ego stroking is not part of the deal.

MARCUS
Ironic, really. Here we are, trying to save my mate from an overbearing woman, and here I am with her even more overbearing mate.

Sadie strops away from him, reaching for her top.

SADIE
Overbearing?

She throws her top on.

SADIE (cont'd)
Over
(beat)
Fucking
(beat)
Bearing??

She exhales hard, whips around. Marcus is right there, in her face, smirking.

MARCUS
Feel free to overbear me any time.

SADIE
'Til you find yourself a nice Jewish girl, huh.

They laugh. Flop back onto the bed.

MARCUS
I'll get out of here, anyway. Leave you to stroke your tarantula.

Sadie is oblivious, distracted by Tink's covered cage. Marcus dons his underwear beneath the covers.

SADIE
Her name is Tink.

MARCUS
Tink?

Sadie slips the cover off the cage, eyeing Tink with pride.

SADIE
Tinkerbelle. Small but fearsome.

Marcus looks from Tink, to Sadie, to Tink.

SADIE (cont'd)
And you don't *stroke* tarantulas, you fool. You just... co-exist. Perfect pet, really.

Marcus climbs out of bed. Sadie looks pointedly at him.

SADIE (cont'd)
Did I give you permission to leave?

He pauses, frowning, caught between desire and irritation. Crawls back into bed, facing outwards, smiling. Sadie faces outwards at the other edge of the bed.

Tink crawls back into her burrow, revealing a Star of David on her cage floor.

INT. DES'S FLAT - BATHROOM - MORNING

Des reads in the bath, lathered-up hair piled on top of her head. Puts the book down, grabs shower head, rinses hair.

Notices some loose hair. Runs hands through her hair more thoroughly. Gapes in alarm at the amount of loose hair.

Checks her scalp in a mirror. No bald spots. Shaky exhale.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Sadie snuggles on her sofa, watching telly in pyjamas and a floor-length cosy robe. Reaches for her phone.

SADIE (TEXT)
Netflix and chill?

MARCUS (TEXT)
Answer the door in your underwear.
[devil emoji]

Sadie sniggers. Slinks to the bedroom.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - LATER

Sadie reclines on her sofa, wearing the cosy robe, slippers. Subtle KNOCK at door.

Sadie jumps to her feet, grabs a popcorn bag from the table, shuffles to the door. Nervously adjusts her hair in a mirror, catches a glimpse of Tink in the reflection - the tarantula appears to be watching her.

SADIE
(muttering)
Don't look at me like that.

She takes a steadying breath and answers the door - Marcus.

He appraises her. Sweeps into the room, kicks the door closed, flings popcorn aside. Slides Sadie's robe off - revealing subtly zebra-printed lingerie. Stockings. His eyes light up.

Sadie kicks her slippers off. Marcus whips his t-shirt off, kicks his shoes off. She slaps his hand as he reaches for his belt buckle.

SADIE (cont'd)
Socks!

He yanks his socks off, almost toppling over. Drags Sadie into a frenzied kiss as he unbuckles his belt.

INT. DES'S FLAT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Des and Noah sprawl in her bed, in the afterglow.

DES
We're definitely getting better at that.

NOAH
You mean I'm getting better at it.
You were already... impressive.

Des sniggers.

DES
Impressive? You'll be rating me next.

NOAH
No less than a 5. Out of 5, that is.
Not 10. Hehe.

Des laughs harder.

DES
Must've been the head start.

NOAH

Yeah that was a lot to try and live up to. But I'm glad my efforts haven't gone unnoticed.

DES

Efforts? I've gone from impressive to an effort in one fell swoop.

Noah blushes and clams up.

DES (cont'd)

Sorry, sorry.

She finger-zips her lips shut. Noah takes a deep breath.

NOAH

OK, so you know there are some bits of, erm-

He squirms. Des nods, coy smile.

NOAH (cont'd)

-that I like, I mean *really* like, and some I was less, er, you know, keen on?

Des giggles, lips still sealed.

NOAH (cont'd)

So I, um, retrained my brain to interpret every part of it as a, er, pleasurable sensory input.

Noah buries his face in pillow. Des blurts out laughter. Calms herself.

DES

That explains a lot. And the more you enjoy it, the more confident I am, the more I enjoy it, and so on.

Noah peeks at her.

NOAH

(into the pillow)
Into the stratosphere.

DES

And still master of the cheesy line.

Noah looks at Des properly.

NOAH
Yeah, you could do with working on
yours. 3 out of 5 at best.

She throws the other pillow at him.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - BEDROOM - SAME

Sadie and Marcus lay in bed, catching their breath.

MARCUS
We really are racking up the miles,
aren't we?

SADIE
Yep, you've really scratched that
itch.

Sadie sniggers. Marcus rolls away from her, in a huff.

MARCUS
Past tense.

SADIE
Oh, don't get all pouty. I might
still booty call you from time to
time.

MARCUS
But I suppose if I invite you for a
drink, that would be out of the
question.

SADIE
Marcus, it's quite simple. I don't
want a boyfriend. But sometimes, I do
want company. And yours is the
company I choose.

MARCUS
You make me sound like some kind of
commodity. Like a... like a... loaf of
fucking bread.

SADIE
Only if it's gluten free, huh?

MARCUS
Good job I came here for the sex, and
not a reasonable conversation.

He closes his eyes. Sadie reaches to turn the lamp off,
illuminating her glum face.

INT. DES'S FLAT - MORNING

Calendar ticked to 31st July 2023.

KITCHEN

Noah makes coffee as Des slides a tray of croissants out of the oven. He waits for her to deposit the pastries safely, scoops her into an embrace, grinning as the kiss ends.

DES
What's got into you today?

They mooch to the dining table, carrying breakfast.

NOAH
I woke up next to the woman I love,
so that was a pretty good start.

DES
Only pretty good?

NOAH
Vying for the top slot with these
pastries.

Des gives him a withering look. He fidgets, aligning the handles of their coffee cups.

NOAH (cont'd)
I love... feeling things... when I'm
with you.

DES
I bet you do.

NOAH
Hey, if I wanted someone to take the
piss, I'd go see my dear sister.

DES
I do believe you started it.

Des gives him a mock stern look as she reaches for a croissant.

NOAH
Years of training, I guess!
(self-conscious
titter)
Weird, isn't it? Most people, when a
day passes, would be one step closer
to death. I feel like I'm one step
closer to life.

DES
Thanks for that rather grim
observation.

NOAH
You know what I mean.

DES
Don't get too carried away. But yes,
it is good to have cleared another...
incident.

NOAH
Just a shame I don't get to spend
today with you too.

DES
Well, if you would make plans without
me.

NOAH
Feel like I should see him. He's
probably missing my stellar company.

He snorts.

DES
I can always pop round yours later.
Maybe I'll see what Sadie's up to in
the meantime.

Noah gathers his thoughts as he puts chocolate spread on his
croissant.

NOAH
You know, something's bugging me
about her.

Des looks wary.

NOAH (cont'd)
Why does she call you "Moll"?

DES
Oh. That. That's just a nickname... You
know, like-

Des gulps.

DES (cont'd)
-like a gangster's moll. Pretty lame,
really. Back in a sec.

She scuttles to the bathroom, avoiding Noah's sight-lines.

BATHROOM

Rattled Des eases the door closed, leans against it, her eye drawn to a packet of pills. Reaches for it, pops one out.

Before she gets pill to her mouth, she swoons, DROPS it. It skitters down plughole. She just gets herself to the floor as she goes LIMP.

EXT. CAR PARK - PREVIOUS TIMELINE - NIGHT

Pink-haired Des and Noah amble towards a blue hatchback car. Des rummages in her handbag, TRIPS on a pavement crack, lands upright but hard, foot twisted.

DES
Aaargh!

NOAH
Ouch.

Noah winces, supports Des as she hobbles to the car.

NOAH (cont'd)
I'll take it from here.

DES
On the plus side, I found my car key.

She hands him the car key with a pained smile. He pecks her forehead as she eases into the passenger seat.

INT. DES'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - DAY

Noah KNOCKS on the bathroom door.

NOAH
Babe? Everything OK?

Door inches open, revealing ashen-faced Des. Noah holds her tight.

NOAH (cont'd)
Another tough day?

She nods against his chest.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - LATER

Noah bustles around getting ready to go out. He has a well-groomed beard. There are golf clubs by the door.

Marcus waits by the door, wearing golfing clothes. He looks around, notices some dirt on the carpet.

MARCUS
Seems you are human after all.

Noah frowns.

MARCUS (cont'd)
I don't think I've ever seen a speck of dirt in your apartment before.

NOAH
Oh it's nothing. Just waiting for the cleaner to come.

MARCUS
Cleaner? What is with you?

NOAH
Des has a few phobias, just had to change a few things around here. It won't be for long, she's working on them.

MARCUS
But you *live* to clean.

NOAH
I do not "live to clean". Although admittedly, it is good thinking-time.

MARCUS
Then that would explain why you seem to have lost your mind.

NOAH
I beg your pardon?

Marcus gesticulates.

MARCUS
No driving. The cleaner. The face fuzz. Letting her decide every little thing you do.

Noah sighs.

NOAH
Love comes with compromises.

MARCUS
Love? Shit, have we reached that stage already?

NOAH

You know I always thought that when I found someone who makes me happy, that you'd be happy for me, no matter what was going on with you.

MARCUS

If I believed you were genuinely happy with her then I'd be over the fucking moon. But she's toxic.

Noah balks. Shoves his golf clubs in a cupboard.

NOAH

I guess jealousy cuts deeper than you think.

MARCUS

When you're ready to see sense, give me a call, yeah?

Marcus stomps out of the front door.

Noah staggers to the sofa, shaking. Presses hands to his temples, in quiet turmoil.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Front door swings open, Des edges inside. The room is dark, the TV giving the only light. Noah sits on the sofa, staring at the TV with blank eyes. Des switches on a light, making him blink.

DES

Bad time?

NOAH

I'm rubbish at arguments.

Des freezes, looking wary.

DES

I didn't realise we were arguing.

NOAH

Not you. Marcus.

Des breathes a sigh of relief, eases an arm around his waist, pecks him on the cheek.

NOAH (cont'd)

I don't even know where it came from. You've never done anything to him.

DES
 Typical only child. He's just gonna
 have to learn how to share. Again.

Noah's face twists with confusion.

DES (cont'd)
 What, you thought this was gonna be
 easy? He'll make you work for it, but
 it'll be fine.

She glides behind Noah, massages his shoulders, easing his
 tension. A look of concern flits across her face.

DES (cont'd)
 And in the meantime, I get you all to
 myself.

Des massages Noah's scalp. Noah closes his eyes, moans.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fluffy handcuffs pin naked Marcus to Sadie's bed. Sadie
 rummages in her bedside table, bounds out of bed, slinks out
 of the room.

MARCUS
 Hey! Where the hell are you going? I
 don't wanna have to deglove myself to
 get out of these things!

Sadie saunters back in, vaping, key in hand.

SADIE
 Oh pipe down, this isn't Gerald's
 Game. I'm still very much-

She dangles the key in his face.

SADIE (cont'd)
 -alive.

She pretends to unlock the handcuffs. Marcus scowls at her.
 She unlocks them, settles into bed next to him. He rubs his
 wrists.

MARCUS
 I reckon you were just trying to
 distract me. "Ride me like a pony?"
 You don't get out of it that easily.

SADIE
I will not be held responsible for
anything I say mid-shag.

MARCUS
I was just trying to work out if a
pony was a good thing.

SADIE
Oh, there was nothing Freudian about
it. The only thing I really wanted
when I was a kid was a tarantula. My
parents finally gave in when I was a
teenager.

She glances at Tink.

MARCUS
You've had that one-

Sadie glares at him.

MARCUS (cont'd)
-Tink - since you were a teenager?
How long do they live?

SADIE
Females... 20-30 years, generally.

Marcus contemplates, cheeky smile.

SADIE (cont'd)
It's OK, you can say it. "That's like
a prison sentence, living with me".

MARCUS
Yeah, she must be pretty resilient.

Sadie shudders, takes a steadying puff on her vape.

SADIE
You know, when I turned up here with
nobody after divorcing the bastard
who slept with my supposed best
friend-

Marcus winces.

SADIE (cont'd)
-Wanna know who was there for me?

Marcus throws questioning glance at Tink.

SADIE (cont'd)

Mollie. Bumped into her in the hallway and she could see I needed a friend. She's a good person. This isn't her.

MARCUS

So you've known her, what, a few months? Few years? I've known Noah most of my life. He was the only kid at school more awkward than I was. But mind games? No way.

Sadie sighs, her shoulders heavy.

SADIE

I just want my friend back.

MARCUS

At least she's talking to you.

SADIE

For now. Look, you questioned his choices, of course he's pissed off. He'll come round. Probably just needs to blow off some steam.

MARCUS

Noah doesn't do "blowing off steam". He's more of a "stew in his own juices" kinda guy.

SADIE

Well then, wait til the pan boils dry.

Marcus tries to hug Sadie. She stiffens, shifts away from him. He throws off the covers, sulking.

As he is halfway out of bed, Sadie clutches his shoulder, guides him back down. She snuggles beside him, strokes his chest hair.

MARCUS

I never know where I am with you.

SADIE

You're here. Isn't that enough?

Marcus sighs, suppressing his response with tight lips.

EXT. RUGGED CLIFFTOP - AFTERNOON

Calendar ticked to 13th August 2023.

Noah reclines on a bench, set back from a rugged cliff edge. Draws sea air into his lungs. Sound of WAVES crashing on rocks. Des meanders, taking the odd scenic photo.

NOAH

You were right, this is the perfect place. And I'm here with the perfect person.

Des wanders over, nestles into the crook of his arm.

DES

I knew there was only one person in the world who would love it more than I do.

NOAH

You know, I was like bread without butter when I met you. Not very interesting, kinda hard to swallow..

Des giggles as she digs him in the ribs.

DES

OK, maybe you're not getting better at those.

He blushes.

NOAH

I'm just glad I found the perfect accompaniment.

DES

For as long as it lasts.

NOAH

It could last forever.

DES

And if it doesn't?

NOAH

Then the next me will trundle along in his own little life, boring old bread without butter, never knowing what he got close to having.

They sit in heavy silence for a few moments.

NOAH (cont'd)
I'm the lucky one. Aren't I?

Noah guides Des's face to his, looks her in eyes.

NOAH (cont'd)
Promise me you won't come back.

DES
That was the deal.

NOAH
I need you to promise. I can't bear
the thought of you going through that
again.

DES
I promise.

Noah pecks the palm of Des's hand, holds it to her cheek.
She puts her other hand on top of his, interlocking their
fingers.

EXT. PARK - MORNING

Calendar ticked to 23rd August 2023.

Sadie runs up a slight hill, halts, looks back to see Des
lumbering round a corner, wheezing.

SADIE
Keep up Moll, no slacking!

Des slogs over to her, hand on chest.

DES
You go without me, I'm gonna head
back.

SADIE
Oh come on, we haven't done this for
ages.

DES
Think that must be the problem. What
with work and Noah, my fitness must
have taken a right bashing.

SADIE
There's a simple solution to that.

She gives Des a piercing look.

DES

You should give him a chance. He's romantic, charming in a goofy kinda way, and yeah so he's crap at impressions but he makes a mean Thai curry. And he loves me. Genuinely loves me. Need I go on?

SADIE

Depends who you're trying to convince.

DES

I haven't got the energy for this.

Des troops away from Sadie. Sadie turns the other way, starts running, doubles back. Catches up with Des, claps her on the shoulder.

SADIE

It's not often you'll hear me say this, so make the most of it. Sorry.

Des rounds on Sadie.

DES

You know, this really isn't helping. You not liking him, and Marcus-

Sadie twitches.

DES (cont'd)

-not liking me makes it all the more *exhausting*.

SADIE

I didn't mean to... I was just looking out for you.

DES

Well, I'd rather you didn't.

She tromps away, leaving Sadie red-faced.

INT. DES'S FLAT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Calendar ticked to 2nd September 2023.

Noah slumbers next to restless Des.

EXT. URBAN STREET - FUTURE TIMELINE - NIGHT

Des - hair not pink - edges along a curb next to a busy road. Focused on her phone map app, she cradles a burgeoning BABY bump. Noah scooches behind.

She stumbles into the road, not noticing an unlit cyclist. The cyclist nearly crashes into her, she swerves, staggers into the path of an oncoming van.

Noah pushes her out of way just in time. The van HITS HIM instead, sending him flying. He crashes to the ground, BROKEN, bleeding. Des SCREAMS.

INT. DES'S FLAT - NIGHT

BEDROOM

Des awakens with a SCREAM, jolting Noah upright. She quakes.

NOAH
Jesus! Are you OK?

DES
(vacant)
I can barely remember what OK feels like, any more.

She retches, lurches out of bed, to the doorway.

Noah freezes with panic, then trails after her, seeing the bathroom door SLAM shut.

BATHROOM

Des flushes the toilet, staggers to the sink, rinses her face.

SERIES OF IMAGES

QUICK CUTS:

--Des hands car keys to Noah (from car park scene).

--Des attempts to repair a vacuum cleaner, Noah takes over.

--Des chops vegetables in Noah's kitchen, her phone rings, she puts the knife down, Noah picks it up.

--Des thrusts a dress into Noah's arms (from train scene).

--Des and Noah eat brunch at his dining table. Both reach for jam at the same time. Des offers it to Noah.

END SERIES OF IMAGES

Des looks at her pale, petrified face in the mirror, tears streaming.

INT. DES'S FLAT - EVENING

KITCHEN

Calendar ticked to 8th Sept 2023.

Noah rummages in a cupboard. Des chops an onion.

NOAH
Got any tomato puree?

DES
The chances are not great. I'll pop to the shop.

She traipses out of the front door. Noah watches her leave, waits a few moments, creeps into the-

CORRIDOR

-checking. Tiptoes to door 10. KNOCKS softly. Sadie inches the door open, holding a tea towel and mug. Scowls.

SADIE
I'm busy.

Noah fidgets, nervous, looking over his shoulder.

NOAH
I won't keep you. I need your help.

Sadie scoffs.

NOAH (cont'd)
Perhaps someday we can discuss whatever I've done to offend you. But now is not the time. She needs our help. Please.

Sadie holds the door open for him to enter.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sadie leaves a tiny space, backing Noah against the wall.

NOAH

She's not well. I've tried telling her to see a doctor, but she won't listen. Says it's just nothing.

SADIE

Not well, in what way?

NOAH

It started with fainting, now she's vomiting too. It might not sound like much but...

SADIE

You'd better not have knocked her up.

NOAH

We're grown adults, Sadie, we do know how to take precautions, *thanks*. Not that it's any of your business.

SADIE

It is now.

Noah sighs.

NOAH

Please just... see if you can appeal to her. And call me if... Oh, I don't know. This was a stupid idea.

He turns to leave, Sadie blocks him.

SADIE

I'm only doing this because I'm worried about her too. So you'd better fucking call me if anything happens.

Noah nods. They exchange numbers. Sadie opens the door, checks corridor - clear. Ushers Noah out.

SADIE (cont'd)

You know-

Noah turns his face to her, wary.

SADIE (cont'd)

-she was fine before she met you.

Noah bites back his words, scurries down the corridor.

INT. DES'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Noah blunders in, shaking with tension, stumbles to the kitchen. Steadies himself against the kitchen counter. Tears of guilt well.

Des bustles into the flat, tomato puree in hand. He whirls around, puts on a smile, eyes still wet. He stands closer to the onions, throws them an accusing look.

DES
No styling it out, remember?

NOAH
I guess maybe I can have bad days,
too.

Des folds him into her arms. He leans on her.

DES
Good job I'm here to catch you, this
time.

Noah clutches Des to him.

INT. SADIE'S FLAT - SAME

HALLWAY

Sadie launches the tea-towel at the front door with guttural growl. Stomps to the bedroom, dumping the mug along the way.

BEDROOM

Flings herself onto the bed. Tink's cage is on the bedside table.

SADIE
I know, I know. Good job the tea-
towel was in my right hand, huh?

Sadie lets out a long exhale.

SADIE (cont'd)
What the hell am I supposed to make
of that? He's not the bad guy, all of
a sudden? Or he's the worst of the
lot, trying to draw me into his
insidious little mind games?

Sadie thumps her pillow.

SADIE (cont'd)
I should talk to her. But not while
he's there.

She reaches for her pyjamas with heavy arms.

INT. DES'S FLAT - BATHROOM - MORNING

Calendar ticked to 9th September 2023.

Des sits on the edge of the bath, fumbling to open a pregnancy test. Picks at the cellophane with the fingernail on her right index finger. Halts as the fingernail SHIFTS.

Test kit CLATTERS to the floor as her right hand spasms.

She brings her left hand across, places a finger on top of the loose fingernail, gently wobbles it. It MOVES. She jerks her left hand away, horrified.

INT. MARCUS'S HOUSE - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Marcus sits at a table, typing on a laptop. Sharp RAP at the door. He frowns, closes the laptop, trundles to the door.

Sadie barges past him, eyes darting everywhere but at him.

SADIE
Fuck me, what is this place? You
squatting in a showhome?

MARCUS
Not like you to skip the
pleasantries.

SADIE
Why have I never been here before?

MARCUS
Because it always has to be on your
terms. As I suspect it still is.

SADIE
Oh don't. I've got enough to deal
with right now.

She stalks to the kitchen, flings cupboards open. Finds cooking sherry, takes a swig. Dumps bottle on the counter.

SADIE (cont'd)
Wanna know how much sleep I had last
night?

Marcus opens another cupboard, retrieves rum. Switches it for the sherry. Sadie swigs rum, slides the bottle to him. He catches it, swigs.

SADIE (cont'd)

Less than two hours. Then I had to drag myself through an entire day at work, the commute was a fucking joke and by the time I got back, she wasn't even home. So I went to mine but then I had to go out otherwise I might've smashed the place up.

Marcus's eyes flicker to his golf clubs. He tugs his jumper off, tosses it onto them.

MARCUS

So glad you decided to come here instead.

Sadie hops up on kitchen counter, drags Marcus to her with her legs. Clamps him with her legs and arms. Locks her lips on his.

He throws his head aside, wriggles free of Sadie's grip.

MARCUS (cont'd)

Look, I'll happily help you work out your frustration, or whatever, but at some point you're gonna have to explain what the fuck this is all about.

Sadie swigs rum. Marcus drapes his arms around her.

SADIE

Mañana.

She moves back in for the kill.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - NIGHT

BATHROOM

Des hunches over the sink, takes a mouthful of water from the faucet. Spits it into the sink.

BLOOD tinges the vomit that washes down the sink.

LIVING AREA

Des lumbers out of the bathroom. Noah paces.

NOAH

I'm not taking "no" for an answer,
this time. First thing tomorrow, we
call the doctor.

Des nods slowly. Trudges to the couch. Noah hovers next to
her.

DES

It's OK. I know it's taking every
ounce of strength you've got just to
be in the same room as me at the
moment.

Noah fusses around, grabbing a bucket and glass of water.

NOAH

Sorry. I'd make a terrible nurse.

DES

Don't worry, I don't need you to hold
my hair back. I'll go.

NOAH

You're not going anywhere like that.
You have the bed, I'll take the
couch.

DES

I think I'll be better off on the
couch. Nearer the bathroom.

Noah sizes up the relative distances. Nods.

Des lays on the sofa, her hand draped over the edge.
Fingernails have been cut to the quick and there is a
plaster on her right index fingertip. Noah lets out a long
breath as he slopes towards the bedroom.

DES (cont'd)

Noah?

Noah cringes as he turns.

DES (cont'd)

I love you.

NOAH

I love you too. Not long now.

He smiles, vanishes into the bedroom.

DES (V.O.)

I'll get it right this time.

Des's chin wobbles.

BEDROOM

Noah grabs his phone from the bedside table. He scrolls through his Contacts, slowing as he passes "Marcus", keeps scrolling. Opens contact: "RED BUTTON".

Time shows 23:52. He clears the screen, replaces the phone, lies down. Stares at the ceiling.

INT. MARCUS'S HOUSE - SAME

BEDROOM

Marcus lies in bed. Rum bottle on the bedside table. Sound of SHOWER running. Steam seeps into the room from a doorway. Marcus's troubled eyes dart towards it.

MARCUS
(to himself)
Tomorrow. Or never.

EN-SUITE BATHROOM

Sadie showers, head tilted upwards, watching water cascade. Water mingles with teardrops, coursing down her cheeks.

She swipes the tears away, sniffs. Turns off the shower.

BEDROOM

Sadie slinks through the steamy doorway, wrapped in a towel. Collapses into bed, snuggles into the crook of Marcus' arm.

He squeezes her closer to him, pecks the top of her head. She drifts to sleep.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - MORNING

Calendar ticked to 10th September 2023.

BEDROOM

Noah stirs awake, looks at the clock. 07:16. Drags himself out of bed, grabs phone, dons dressing gown and slippers as he shuffles to the door.

LIVING AREA

Noah glances around the flat - no Des. Creaks bathroom door open. Empty. Spies something on the sofa, heads for it. A NOTE. He reads it.

"Live long. See you in the next life. All my love, Mollie xx"

He crumples onto the sofa as the words wash through him, mouth agape, breathing hard. Shakes himself out of the trance. Stumbles to the front door.

Yanks open a drawer, rummages, extracts car keys. Eyes them. Takes a deep breath, piles out of the door.

INT. MARCUS'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Marcus spoons Sadie, watching her sleep. Runs his fingertips up and down her arm. She snuggles closer.

MARCUS

I love waking up next to you in the morning.

Sadie's eyes flash open.

SADIE

Not about to get all soppy on me, are you?

Marcus winces, presses up against her, changing tactics.

MARCUS

No. Just wanted you to know how horny you get me.

Sadie spins to face him, her hand sliding downwards. He groans, kisses her hungrily, their hands exploring.

SADIE

You know, for a guy with so many allergies, you're a pretty good shag.

MARCUS

Why would you even say those two things in the same sentence? It's not like I'm allergic to you, is it?

SADIE

Good, coz I want you to lick me like a lollipop.

MARCUS

Well, if we're doing requests, I want-

Marcus's phone BUZZES - a call. He ignores it.

MARCUS (cont'd)

I want you to-

Distracted by the buzzing, Marcus sighs, snatches his phone off the bedside table. Declines NOAH'S call.

MARCUS (cont'd)

Now, where were we...

His phone BUZZES.

MARCUS (cont'd)

Fucks' sake, Noah. You pick your moments.

Sadie chews her cheek, nervous. Marcus turns his phone off, tosses it down. Grabs Sadie.

Another BUZZ. Sadie rummages through her clothes, finds her phone. "TROUBLE" is calling. She blanches as she accepts the call. Desperate BABBLE from other end of the line.

SADIE

Woah, slow down, say that again.

Pause as she listens, grim expression.

SADIE (cont'd)

OK. But you have got some fucking explaining to do.

She hangs up.

SADIE (cont'd)

You sober enough to drive?

MARCUS

Yeah, why? What...?

Sadie shoves her clothes on.

SADIE

Worse than even we could have imagined.

She charges out of the bedroom. Marcus scrambles into his clothes.

EXT. RUGGED CLIFFTOP - MORNING

Des hugs her knees, a few metres back from the edge of the cliff top that she had visited with Noah. Stares into space, facing the drop, breeze ruffling her thinning hair.

Noah rushes towards her, still in nightwear, out of breath.

NOAH

Oh, thank god. Thank god.

Des looks at him, her expression vacant, her voice calm.

DES

How did you...?

Noah shows her the tracking app on his phone. She retrieves her own phone, launches it over the cliff edge. Phone disintegrates on the rocks below - a LONG, HARD fall.

DES (cont'd)

You didn't trust me.

NOAH

Sorry, I... I did it when I thought you were stalking me. I was scared.

DES

But you never took it off?

Noah hangs his head.

NOAH

Guess I never stopped being scared.

He edges closer to Des. Grabbing distance - just. Perches on the floor. He looks at her, she looks straight ahead.

NOAH (cont'd)

Come home, we'll work it out. We're in it together, remember?

Des shakes her head.

NOAH (cont'd)

Please, Des. Or is it Mollie, now?

She flinches.

DES

Sorry. I didn't want my last word to you to be a lie.

Noah gasps. Des chokes back tears.

DES (cont'd)
It was your last word. The first
time. I just couldn't bear to have
you call me that any more.

Noah draws deep breaths, trying to stay calm.

NOAH
OK, so neither of us is perfect. We
can start afresh.

Pause. Noah focuses on the ground.

NOAH (cont'd)
Or you could go, if you have to. But
not this. You don't want this either.

Waves CRASHING on the rocks below entrance Des. Noah faces
her again, pleading expression.

NOAH (cont'd)
You can't quit now, we're nearly
there!

DES
This isn't quitting. This is
recognising that it's already over.

Noah growls with frustration.

DES (cont'd)
I'm falling apart-

NOAH
-Look, I know you've not been well,
it's probably just the stress, or...

DES
And things have gone into overdrive
since-

Her eyes flicker to her belly, she dissolves into sobs. Noah
reels, as if she had punched him.

NOAH
No, no, no, no, no, no.

DES
I can't do it, Noah. I can barely get
through the days.

Noah weeps.

NOAH

I would never pressure you. You don't have to-

DES

-The damage is already done.

She holds her hair up, revealing small balding patches. She wobbles a fingernail, which almost slides off. Noah's hand flies to his mouth, his breathing quickens.

He stares at the cliff edge.

NOAH

What if I jump?

Des finally whips her gaze to him, eyes wide with alarm.

NOAH (cont'd)

It's not as crazy as it sounds. I jump, it all resets. We go on with our lives.

DES

You reset, Noah. You reset.

She uncovers a scar on her arm, sobbing.

DES (cont'd)

It should've been me. I should've been driving that day. But you got in the way. You keep getting in the way.

She clutches both of Noah's hands in hers.

DES (cont'd)

I shouldn't be here, and every day I limp through puts your life in danger.

NOAH

But I'll come back.

Des strokes his cheek.

DES

Not *this* you.

Noah quakes with emotion, shaking his head. Des puts her arm around his shoulder. He latches onto her.

DES (cont'd)

Either way, it's over. It was over the second I handed you the car keys.

(MORE)

DES (cont'd)
 The only choice I have left is
 whether it's on my terms.

They cling to each other, grieving, for a few moments. Des peels herself away from Noah, glides to the cliff edge. Noah begs on his knees, wracked with desperate sobs.

Des spreads her arms wide, so as she steps off the edge, it seems as if she may soar like a bird.

She DROPS.

Noah gives an anguished HOWL.

NOAH
 DES!

Noah crumbles to the floor, weakened with grief.

NOAH (cont'd)
 Mollie.

He strangles handfuls of grass as he drags himself towards the cliff edge, tears and snot streaming down his face.

MARCUS (O/S)
 Don't you fucking dare.

Noah freezes. Turns to see grim-faced Marcus.

MARCUS
 This isn't gonna solve anything.

Noah collapses onto the grass. Marcus inches towards him, holds his hand.

In B/G, Sadie approaches, staring at Noah with horror.

NOAH
 I couldn't... I couldn't... she wouldn't
 listen.

Noah wails.

EXT. RUGGED CLIFFTOP - MOMENTS LATER

Noah and Marcus sit further back from the cliff edge. Sadie hugs her knees, staring at nothing. No tears.

NOAH
 What are you even doing here? You
 wouldn't answer my calls.

Marcus squirms. Noah looks over at Sadie.

NOAH (cont'd)

Oh. Right.

MARCUS

Just casual.

Marcus steals a concerned glance at catatonic Sadie.

NOAH

It's OK, you can go over there. The moment's passed.

Marcus holds his hand out.

MARCUS

Car keys.

Noah sighs but concedes. Marcus approaches Sadie. Puts his arm around her, she bucks him off.

He waits a moment. Tries again. She remains stiff. Allows Marcus's arm to stay around her. Floods of tears finally engulf her as she sinks against him.

Noah picks wild flowers, placing them where Des had sat. Shaking with grief. He stays back from the cliff edge.

Marcus keeps an eye on Noah.

INT. NOAH'S FLAT - DAY

SUPER: Two fucked-up years later

BEDROOM

Clean-shaven Noah perches on his bed, wearing black trousers, white shirt.

He caresses the pages of a photo book - pictures of Des, some with him, and Des's beautifully composed shots.

NOAH

I hope you're enjoying your freedom in a beautiful place.

Tears threaten to spill over. He steels himself, flips the book closed, places it in a drawer.

Opens a sock drawer. Socks are slightly askew. He straightens them, gathering strength. Retrieves a black pair.

Grabs a hand-written note from the dresser. Plods out of the bedroom.

LIVING AREA

Marcus hovers by the window, twitching the blinds. He wears black shirt, white trousers. He turns, revealing a zebra-print bow tie. Noah laughs.

MARCUS

The things you do for a decent shag,
my friend.

NOAH

You're not fooling anyone here. Still
can't get over the fact that your
"Jewdar" totally failed. Bet your
mum's delighted.

MARCUS

Oh she kept that very well hidden.
Didn't want me to wonder whether she
might turn out to be "nice", one day.
No danger there.

They exchange a knowing smile.

MARCUS (cont'd)

Not sure I would describe my mother
as "delighted" though, they barely
tolerate each other.

NOAH

Funny, that.

Marcus gives him a piercing look. David emerges from the bathroom. Black trousers, white shirt.

DAVID

You do know, when your Ma said to
marry a "nice Jewish girl", this is
exactly what she meant, right?

MARCUS

How the hell could I have known that?

DAVID

Coz that's what I did.

Marcus recoils, horrified. Looks out of the window. Cringes. A Rolls Royce approaches, adorned with zebra-print ribbons.

MARCUS

Oh, what is that woman doing to me. Looks more like a hen do. You shouldda seen the horns locking over this wedding - no heels, no hats, no flowers. My mother only won one of those fights.

NOAH

I'm sure she'll even up the balance at some point.

Marcus takes a deep, steadying breath.

MARCUS

Let's get this over with, shall we?

He chucks a zebra-print tie at Noah. Noah makes no effort to catch it. Marcus gives him a pointed look. Noah groans, scoops up the tie.

Marcus chucks a tie at David, swaggers out of the flat.

INT. MARCUS'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Sadie dons monochrome accessories at her dressing table. A knee-length Rockabilly-style wedding dress with a zebra-print sash hangs on the wardrobe door.

Tink's cage is next to her, flourished with zebra-print.

SADIE

Ah, Tink. Big Day, girl - you ready? We've been through some shit, huh. And now you've gotta live with that arsehole, eh? Sorry about that. I do love him though, so you just gotta bear with me on that one.

Sadie smiles at Tink.

SADIE (cont'd)

Next chapter, babe. We got this.

Sadie admires the wedding dress, her smile broadening. There is a MICRO-KNOCK at the bedroom door.

SADIE (cont'd)

Mum, you don't have to knock.

Diminutive ESTHER (60s) scuttles in, places a mug down. Bittersweet tears well as she beholds her daughter.

Esther perches on the edge of the bed, pats beside her.
Sadie flops down, with a slightly patronising smile.

ESTHER

You know, I was lost a long time
before I found your father. You've
never been lost. I respect you for
that.

SADIE

Everyone gets lost, sometimes.

Sadie chokes up. Embraces Esther.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - CEREMONY ROOM - AFTERNOON

Noah paces at the front of a packed wedding ceremony room,
near a monochrome chuppah (canopy). Monochrome decorations
abound. Some zebra-print. No flowers.

Guests mutter with hushed excitement.

Marcus cruises into the room, David and Miriam close behind.
Sadie glides in, Esther scampering at her heels.

Sadie carries Tink in her ribboned cage, accentuating the
unusual bride - knee-length dress, zebra-print sneakers.

Some of the male attendees wear a kippah. Only one lady -
Miriam - wears a hat - with zebra-print touches.

Marcus beams at Sadie as she swans down the aisle.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - FUNCTION ROOM - AFTERNOON

Noah and Marcus drink at a bar. In B/G, Abigail waits to be
served.

MARCUS

You OK, my friend? I know today's
gotta be...

NOAH

Yeah, it's...

He stares into space for a moment.

NOAH (cont'd)

But things are looking up.

MARCUS

Oh?

NOAH
I'm seeing a new therapist.

Marcus's shoulders sag.

NOAH (cont'd)
No, it's OK. This guy - he gets me.
Really gets me. Like "been through
the same kinda thing" gets me.

He leans in towards Marcus.

NOAH (cont'd)
There's more of us.

MARCUS
Glad you've found someone who
understands.

Noah becomes more animated, Marcus's words ignored.

NOAH
I guess there had to be, right? I
mean, why would I be the only one
impacted by some screwed-up encounter
with
(drops voice)
Time travel.

Abigail's ears prick up.

NOAH (cont'd)
And he knows other people. I've
decided I'm gonna start a group.

MARCUS
Please don't tell me you're gonna
call it "Noah's Ark".

Noah pouts.

NOAH
Figured I'd get to it before someone
else does. Gonna host it at mine.

MARCUS
You? You're gonna invite a bunch of
strangers into your home?

Marcus feels Noah's forehead. Noah bats him off.

NOAH
I feel better than I have in a long
time.

(MORE)

NOAH (cont'd)

You know, when I used to be alone, it felt like a place of calm. Now it just feels... Empty. I can't wait to talk to other people who genuinely get it. How's Sadie?

MARCUS

Good days and bad days. But more of the good, lately. When she decided to believe in the journal, in what you were saying, it really helped her move forward. Sorry she didn't believe you at first.

NOAH

If I hadn't been in it, I wouldn't have believed me! The so-called professionals certainly didn't. "Group Delusion"? What a cop out. I try not to think about who does and doesn't believe me any more. Or at least I did, until learning about the others.

They exchange a tight smile. Sadie skips over, drapes herself on Marcus.

SADIE

Gotta steal 'im.

She gives Noah a coy smile as she entices Marcus away.

ABIGAIL (O/S)

Saw the floods coming, huh?

Noah startles, whips around, sees Abigail, gives her a wary smile.

ABIGAIL

Me too.

Noah freezes. Abigail half-smiles, leans towards him, drops her voice.

ABIGAIL (cont'd)

You're right, there are more.

Noah gapes.

ABIGAIL (cont'd)

We're looking for a way to make it all go away. How big's your ark?

Noah looks around shiftily.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - TOILETS - MOMENTS LATER

Sadie drags Marcus into a large toilet cubicle. They snog like teenagers. Marcus slides his hand up her thigh.

MARCUS

See that's what I love about this dress. Easy access.

Sadie gasps, touches him through his bulging trousers. He nibbles her neck as he unzips his trousers. Sadie backs away.

SADIE

Oh no no. I don't wanna get jizz on my dress.

MARCUS

Well, I can think of a very good way to avoid that.

SADIE

But I don't have to do that now that we're married, right?

Marcus looks horrified. Sadie cracks up.

SADIE (cont'd)

Just kidding. But you're gonna have to wait.

MARCUS

Then why would you even drag me in here?

Sadie slips out of the cubicle, chuckling.

SADIE

Coz I've had to put up with your mother all day, and shit rolls downhill, baby.

Marcus thumps the cubicle wall.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - FUNCTION ROOM - AFTERNOON

Noah, Sadie, and Sadie and Marcus's families sit at the top table. No Marcus. Noah checks his watch, fretful.

Marcus slopes into the room, trousers no longer bulging. Tries to look inconspicuous as he sidles to the table.

SADIE
Where the fuck have you been?

MARCUS
Had a not so little problem to take care of. *Didn't I?*

SADIE
Oh, you dirtbag. Hope you've saved some for me later.

She squeezes his knee. Marcus gives her a wry smile.

MARCUS
I make no apologies.

Noah hovers, taps his glass with a spoon. The hubbub denies his lame efforts to gain everyone's attention. Sadie stands.

SADIE
Oi!

Everyone stops talking, focus on Sadie.

SADIE (cont'd)
Listen up, speech time!

Sadie inclines her head at Noah. All eyes on cringing Noah.

NOAH
(wavering voice)
Thanks everyone-

He clears his throat. Consults his handwritten notes.

NOAH (cont'd)
Thanks everyone for coming. I know how much it means to these two, erm, lovely people beside me.

He titters.

NOAH (cont'd)
This is the part where I would generally thank the bridesmaid too, but she's being a little cagey.

He looks pointedly at Tink's cage. Pause for laughter - the occasional person half-laughs politely. Kate pauses chasing Evie, gives Noah an encouraging smile.

MARCUS
Hey Noah, isn't it traditional for the best man and bridesmaid to er...

Marcus winks. Some guests laugh.

NOAH
(hissing)
This is hard enough without you
heckling me!

He fiddles with his collar, flustered. His notes drift to the table. He reaches for a glass of water - knocks it over, onto his SPEECH, the ink runs.

He reaches for a napkin to clear it up. Forces himself to leave it. A waiter bustles over, mops up the water.

NOAH (cont'd)
Oh who am I kidding, it was crap
anyway.

His eyes moisten, he paces, champagne flute in hand.

NOAH (cont'd)
We all know there's someone who
should've been here today. I
should've been kissing the
bridesmaid.

Crestfallen Marcus mouths "Sorry". Sadie mops away a tear. Noah takes a deep breath.

NOAH (cont'd)
The toast to absent friends is always
the hardest one.

Noah raises his glass, sips with difficulty. Guests follow suit, all looking sombre.

NOAH (cont'd)
But without what happened to her, I
truly believe that we wouldn't be
sitting here now. Because these two
would still be in denial that they
were made for each other. Sometimes
good does come out of bad. And I'm
really happy for you guys.

He inclines his head towards Marcus.

NOAH (cont'd)
Not least because you've married a
concentrated version of your mother.

Noah side-eyes Miriam, who glares at him.

NOAH (cont'd)
And who can blame him?

Awkward smile, awkward pause. Noah lifts his flute.

NOAH (cont'd)
To the two most aggressively in love
people I've ever met... Mazel Tov!

WEDDING GUESTS
Mazel Tov!

Marcus and Sadie laugh and kiss. Noah swigs champagne, the
guests follow suit.

NOAH
And if you'll indulge me once more,
I'd like to propose another toast.
Today seems like a good day to drink
to - NEW BEGINNINGS!

Noah's eyes flicker to Abigail as he holds his glass aloft.

WEDDING GUESTS
New beginnings!

Guests cheer and quaff champagne.

Noah smiles at Abigail. She smiles back.

FADE TO BLACK