

Spring 5-2016

# Living With Loss: A TV Pilot

Jamie Savarese

Follow this and additional works at: [https://surface.syr.edu/honors\\_capstone](https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone)



Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Savarese, Jamie, "Living With Loss: A TV Pilot" (2016). *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*. 936.  
[https://surface.syr.edu/honors\\_capstone/936](https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/936)

This Honors Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects at SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact [surface@syr.edu](mailto:surface@syr.edu).

**Living With Loss**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at  
Syracuse University

Jamie Savarese

Candidate for Bachelor of Science Degree  
and Renée Crown University Honors  
May 2016

Honors Capstone Project in Television, Radio, and Film

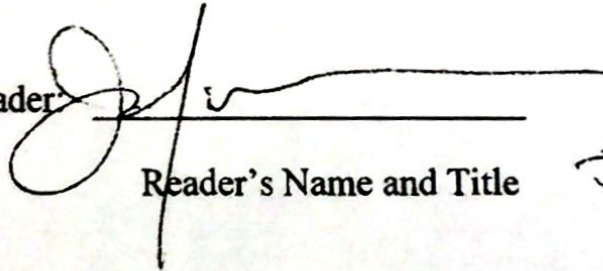
Capstone Project Advisor:



Advisor's Name and Title

RICHARD DUBIN  
PoP

Capstone Project Reader:



Reader's Name and Title

John Yonover  
Reader

Honors Director:



Stephen Kuusisto, Director

© (Jamie Savarese 24 April 2016)

## Abstract

A process – that is what writing a script is. The hard part is not the writing, but knowing what to write. The process is a period of months where there is no written dialogue, instead, endless research, brainstorming, and outlining. The hard part is not the words, those come naturally; the hard part is developing a world in which your characters can effectively tell their stories and portray a deeper truth.

*Living With Loss* is a full feature screenplay. The plot is structured around the main character, Elena Wellington, who has to cope with the death of her best friend, Emma Cooper. As she struggles with grief and a search for acceptance, she becomes overwhelmed by depression. The sadness suffocates her and changes her from the carefree girl she once knew. It is a coming-of-age script that teaches the reader that we can't always predict what life will throw at us, but that life itself is too precious to be wasted. It shows us that sometimes we overlook the people who truly matter, and it reminds us to cherish everything, because someday we might not have it anymore.

*Living With Loss*, like most of my works, is a dark drama. It showcases many serious issues, such as, death, suicide, drug addiction, depression, and internal psychological destruction. Through the use of flashbacks the audience is able to see the development of Elena and Emma's friendship throughout the four years of college.

My goal for this work was to create something that could affect people in a positive way. People deal with loss everyday, whether it's a loved one, a family member, a best friend or even a pet. Loss is relevant to everyone and so is sadness. I wanted to announce that it is okay to lose your way in life or to make bad choices. The only thing that truly matters is that one day you must accept the loss, know that it changed you, and figure out how to grow out of trauma.

## Executive Summary

I did not choose to write *Living With Loss* because I wanted to; I chose to write it because I needed to. Writers' are constantly overcome with a never-ending need to shed light on the darkness of life. I spend my days observing others, writing down quotes, and trying to analyze the complexities of life. *Living With Loss* is a full feature drama that showcases the friendship between the two main characters, Elena Wellington and Emma Cooper.

Throughout this work I will discuss my process as a writer. Firstly, I talk about inspirations and brainstorming. A writer doesn't just sit at a desk and begin writing. A new concept always appears during random moments in life. I did not begin with *Living With Loss*; I had developed two other scripts before I had thought of the idea. This is because not every idea is perfect. Ideas must be fleshed out and fully considered before a writer decides if it is worth pursuing. I spend days/weeks reviewing an idea in my head and trying to consider if it has enough substance.

I clung to the idea of *Living With Loss* because of problems I had been facing in my own life. I used writing as an artistic catharsis. I am usually a TV writer; however, I decided on a full-feature screenplay because I was inspired by a film that had been nominated at the Oscars. Every book, movie, TV show, quote, speech, and much more, can be an inspiration to a writer. Even if the information has absolutely nothing to do with the concept it can branch a new train of thought.

I was greatly inspired by an honors course I took this spring and the materials that were assigned. Through the course I understood the gratitude of being transparent and the dangers that are presented when one has a fear of death.

I was able to take my inspirations, life experiences, and beliefs to create a piece of work that displayed what it is like to live with loss. *Living With Loss* teaches an audience that only through acceptance will we find clarity.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>iv-v</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Advice to Future Honors Students .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Reflective Essay.....</b>	<b>1-15</b>
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>17</b>

## Acknowledgements

Throughout this process I have received an immense amount of help and counsel. I am the writer, developer, and creator of *Living With Loss*, but I wouldn't have been able to create this work if it wasn't for the help of some truly amazing professionals and friends. First and foremost is Richard Dubin, my capstone advisor. I sadly came across Professor Dubin too late in my college career. We first met my senior year when I took my Newhouse Capstone class with him. He showed me a new perspective on screenwriting and taught me the importance of the process. He also taught me to be interested, in everything, you might not know where your interest will lead you, but more often than not it will be what is meant to be. I would also like to thank my honors reader, John Yonover, who is a role model of mine and also someone I believe to be a good friend. His counsel in life and about the industry has greatly benefited my professional development. He has taken time out of his busy schedule to assist me; the world would be better off if more successful people were as generous as he is. I would like to thank my honors advisor, Kate Hanson, who has always been a tremendous help throughout the years in the honors program. She always answers my questions swiftly, provides me with guidance and is such a joy to visit in person. Yonah Nimmer, my friend and one day to be co-worker who has provided feedback on every script I have ever wrote and will always be someone I turn to for advice and support. Thanks to my best friend Alex who gave me inspiration for the character, Emma, and taught me a new form of love. Keith Giglio, the first screenwriting professor I had at Syracuse whose passion inspired me to become a writer. Professor Amardo Rodriguez, who taught me the importance of pure honesty and deeper truths. Also, Emily Luther, who was kind enough to edit and provide commentary on my paper. I wish I had used her counsel more throughout the years. I appreciate everyone's help and could not have completed this without them.



## **Advice to Future Honors Students**

For all future honors students, I encourage that you start this process early. I know you hear this over and over again from the honors faculty, but it really does make a difference. When it comes to senior year you don't want to be posted up in Whitman worrying about a Capstone when you have the pressure of getting a job shadowing over you. You also want to have time to enjoy the last moments you have left with your college friends. So just buckle down and start early. I promise it will pay off, I promise you won't regret it, and if you are a screenwriter such as myself I promise it will make you a better writer. Maybe this isn't the piece you will sell when you break in, but every screenplay you get under your belt the better your quality of storytelling will become. And lastly, good luck.





## Reflective Essay

For my Capstone Project, I created a full feature film screenplay titled *Living With Loss*. The project I had originally pitched was titled *Study Abroad*, but throughout the writing process the idea transformed into a new story with new characters and a different theme. I spent over 300 hours brainstorming, researching, creating characters, and developing the idea. The process was tiring and stressful, but it amounted to something that I am extremely proud of. Every new world created is an accomplishment for any writer. In this essay I will be examining my Capstone by justifying my stylistic choices, explaining how research influenced my ideas, going through its script development process, and clarifying the themes and my overall intention.

I have always had a love for storytelling and a passion for creative writing. In the second grade I discovered that the film industry was the perfect career path for me. My grandmother and I had always bonded over her fascination with cinema; I credit her for inspiring me and believing that one day I could create new worlds as well. I used to sit in front of the TV screen for hours as I watched *Star Wars* on repeat. I wanted to be a Jedi, I wanted to escape my boring reality and live in the galaxy. I've always lived inside my head; I've always liked fiction over reality.

This passion drove me to attend Syracuse University as a Television/Film undergraduate. I initially started out in Visual and Performing Arts school (VPA), which is where I began to acquire knowledge about the history of moving pictures. The first screenplay was thought to be George Mells' 1902 film *A Trip to the Moon*. Even though it was silent, the work had specific

descriptions and action lines that were thought to have similarities of a modern script. This shows us that cinema originally had its impact through visuals. It wasn't until the first non-silent movie was released in 1927 that the world began to appreciate the importance of the spoken word. The main difference between careers in television writing vs. feature film is the use of words. TV is suppose to constantly have dialogue because it is implied that the audience will not be as attentive to the visuals, whereas in film the visual descriptions are the most important part of any script – the “wow” moments where the audience is stunned by an extreme action. I want to be a TV writer; the words are what are important to me, and the interpersonal connection of human beings. I had originally pitched a TV series called *Study Abroad*, which was a drama-based script about students discovering themselves though their journeys abroad. I began reading televisions scripts such as *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal*. Shonda Rhimes, the creator of both, is my biggest inspiration as a writer. I wanted *Study Abroad* to be like her scripts, which are heavy, character-based dramas. Unfortunately, the idea fell apart because there was no hook, no connection that would move the story forward from week to week. My advisor, Professor Richard Dubin, asked why I didn't just write a feature film. I had my reservations because I knew I wanted to do TV, and I wanted this work to be something I could use in the future.

It wasn't until I watched the 2015 British-American romantic drama, *Carol* that I decided to write a feature film. I was obsessed with the story. Phyllis Nagy, the screenwriter, crafted such an eloquent script that told a very simple, but extremely complex story about the struggles of being homosexual in the 1950s. The screenplay was based on a novel titled *The Price of Salt* by Patricia Highsmith. The basic interpretation is about being homosexual, but the overarching theme is about love, and that gender should not define whom your heart falls in love with. No one can define the love you have for another being. No one can tell you that your love for

someone is insignificant or unsubstantial. One of my favorite parts of the novel was on page 60 when Terssa and Carol were driving to Carol's country home. Highsmith wrote, "They roared through the Lincoln Tunnel. A wild, inexplicable excitement mounted in Theresa as she stared through the windshield. She wished the tunnel might cave in and kill them both, that their bodies might be dragged out together" (60-61). I remember repeatedly reading that segment and thinking how powerful the words were. I remember wishing that one day my words would be able to convey such a strong emotion. The fact that Teressa daydreamed about dying just to end up with Carol showcased the true purity of love. The story was so beautiful and it made me realize there is a specific truth one can convey through a film. Whereas a TV show displays development overtime, with a film I could better explain one traumatic experience. I also wanted to focus on the love of a friend because I feel like it is another very powerful relationship that can sometimes be overlooked. True love is not just sexual connection; true love is an unfightable desire to be emotionally connected to another human being.

I wanted to create something that could impact people, which led to my next idea, *Animals*, a social critique on the animalistic nature of men and their misogynistic behavior. Rather than an extremely feministic concept, what I wanted to talk about was the suppressed part of the male psyche that feels forced to be overly masculine. I wanted to decipher whether this mental suppression was from nature or nurture. I began reading screenplays, such as *Crash* and *Requiem for a Dream*, both of these focused on the darker issues of the human perception that I was trying to portray. I annotated them for structure because I had the intention of telling a multi-character based story, which is what they both are. The problem with this concept was that I was working with a theme instead of focusing on a story. I excel best when I focus on characters and through character development I find themes. This was not the case with *Animals*. This project

fell through because I was trying too hard to make a change, when Professor Dubin, always tells me, “Your characters lead you to change; you can’t force them.”

For months, I had suffered with writers’ block. I had no idea what I wanted to convey or how to convey it. I switched back and forth between ideas and then I realized that I couldn’t create anything because as an artist I needed to do a “catharsis piece.” Catharsis was originally conceived by Aristotle as “the cleansing effect of emotional release that tragic drama has on its audience.” Catharsis stems from a Greek verb meaning, "to purify, purge" (*Catharsis*). I had first heard the term my freshman year when I was still in the Visual and Performing Arts school. My Professor, Robin Tomlin, discussed the effects of catharsis on the soul. I remember a friend of mine, Hannah Crowell, explaining how this purging of artistic expression allowed her to get over a break up. I never thought to do such a work because I didn’t realize there was something I needed to learn about myself. After much soul searching, emotional distress, and mental breakdowns, I realized that I had been struggling with clinical depression for the past two years and I had never come to terms with it, but instead masked it with addictions. I was not happy and could not portray an optimistic truth because my ideals had become so cynical. This first came to my attention through my experiences abroad and the documentation journal I kept for the honors program; however, it was solidified through an honors class (CRS 225) with Professor Amardo Rodriguez. Through his course, I began to realize the importance of inner truth and that the fear of death is what holds all people from greatness.

The whole script is not an exact catharsis on my life; I never went through losing a friend to death, but I did go through a process of change where I had to learn to let my friend go. For my honors capstone project, I wrote *Living With Loss*, an 85-paged full-feature film drama. The process of writing was aggravating, emotional, and straining, but it was also extremely

beneficial. Through writing I learned about parts of my subconscious that I had not understood prior to my experience. I learned the unbearable reality of writers' block, but I also realized the importance of artistic catharsis.

*Living With Loss*, specifically, is a story about two best friends, Emma Cooper and Elena Wellington. Pages 1-11 establish the happy, carefree world the two best friends share. When the initial incident (the event or decision that begins a story's problem) happens on page 12, Emma is shot in a movie theatre shooting. After Elena wakes up in a hospital bed surrounded by her other best friend, Noah, who she devalues, she learns about the death of her favored best friend and has to face this new world where she no longer has Emma. Events such as the funeral, stages of grief, and emotional breakdowns lead to the end of Act 1 where Elena is forced by Noah to go on a road trip. The story revolves around the simplistic idea of a music festival that Elena and Emma had always planned on attending. Noah tricks Elena into going on a road trip to the festival, which forces her to cope with the loss she has been avoiding.

The second act initiates the road trip to the festival, Mystic Woods, and the problems they encounter along the way. Also, the closing decision that grief has overwhelmed Elena so deeply that she feels her only escape is through suicide. Throughout this act we learn about the friendship between Noah and Elena, and how much Noah cares for the well-being of his friend. We see the love he has for her and how she abuses that love because she is so consumed with the love she had for Emma. It also focuses primarily on the psychological process the psyche goes through when dealing with grief. The five stages of grief include denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. At the end of the second act the story takes a turn when Elena attempts to commit suicide. This leads to the fallout of her and Noah's friendship, and brings the story into Act 3 (the final act).



Act three is known as the resolution stage because it's where everything either gets resolved or doesn't. It is in this stage that Elena must reach acceptance. When she loses Noah's support she understands that he is not disposable, but someone she truly does care about. This loss pushes her to be better and do better. She goes off on her own to find herself. She ties all her loose ends and deals with the things she had been avoiding throughout the script. It is in this phase that Elena finds herself, and proves that through trauma we can find clarity.

Throughout the piece there are eleven flashbacks that allow the audience to see Emma and Elena's relationship throughout the years. The reader sees how their friendship went from a carefree place of lighthearted fun to a controlling and jealousy-based relationship. It is evident that through the years they have changed, but have taken no measures to let their friendship adapt with the change because they were scared of moving on from one another, which led to an unhealthy relationship.

At the end it is clear that Elena has freed herself from the constraints of Emma and is ready to allow herself to live her life. She had constantly been holding back because she was afraid to lose love, but she realized through loss she was freed. Noah and Elena end up in California moving in together as friends, which is the plan Elena and Emma had. This goes to show that plans can change and despite change, they can still be beautiful.

*Living With Loss* was a personal catharsis piece that allowed me to move on with certain parts of my life. It reminded me that every person you've truly loved will teach you something about yourself or about the world. They will teach you how to laugh and how to cry; they will teach you that there are a million moments that make life worth living, but that you should never overlook those moments. The price of love is loss, but we pay because a world without love is no world worth living in. The thematic purpose of my piece was to teach people that it is okay to

hurt, to grieve, to be broken for a little while, but it is not okay to give up. Loss is hard and traumatic, but loss is something that will make you stronger.

Professor Rodriguez assigned *The Trauma of Everyday Life* by Mark Epstein. The book allowed me to understand the benefits traumatic events can have on a life and how through trauma the soul grows stronger. At the beginning of his book, one of his patients, Monica, said “I feel like a person alone in a sailboat in the middle of the ocean clinging for dear life to the mast” (16). He replied, “But you’re the ocean, as well.” We are our own worst enemy. We cause the storm inside ourselves. When we are faced with trauma we can be like Monica and cling to the mast, too scared to face the current of our emotions, or we can take action and push through the storm. Through this understanding I was able to construct a positive change in my main character, Elena. After the death of Emma, I was able to make Elena a more complex person because of her loss.

Another book was *Choice Theory* by William Glasser. This book influenced my way of thinking and changed how my characters perceived their world. Glasser’s work centers on the idea that we choose everything in life and we choose to depress or be happy. Glasser stated, “The common use of nouns and adjectives to describe ‘depression’ and other ‘mental illnesses’ prevents huge numbers of people from ever thinking that they can do something more than suffer” (77). This is vital to my work because I want my audience to understand that when we choose to depress it is a choice. When Elena cannot overcome her depression it is because she has chosen to only look at Emma’s death through a pessimistic lens.

Life is all about perspective. Through this knowledge I was able to understand the complexity of depression and how suicidal thoughts are really centered on the mind choosing that it doesn’t have an option even though there is always another option. Glasser discusses how

“the three logical reasons why so many people choose to depress...commonly called mental illness, such as depressing, anxieyting, or phobicking...Many doctors believe there is a psychological component in many diseases and call these diseases psychosomatic” (78). This means that we are in effective control of our lives and that our mental health can affect our bodies’ health. *Choice Theory* also makes a strong argument about the use of prescribed drugs to fix psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety. Glasser states, “Good psychotherapy precludes the need for drugs. If more people would learn and use choice theory, the use of these drugs could diminish” (88). I have never personally believed in drugs and Glasser backed my reservations. This is why I made the decision to incorporate anti-depression medication within the piece and show the health hazards they could cause. Glasser states “Drugs provide pleasure; they cannot provide happiness. For happiness, you need people” (88). This is showcased when Elena chooses to do MDMA. She is choosing an artificial form of happiness and separating herself from interpersonal connections. Without connections, Elena becomes even more alone.

In the script, Elena, mixes MDMA and anti-depressants in an attempt to commit suicide. My knowledge of Serotonin Syndrome and Ecstasy came from two texts: *Buzzed: The Straight Facts About the Most Used and Abused Drugs from Alcohol to Ecstasy* by Cynthia Kuhn, Scott Swartzwelder, and Wilkie Wilson; and *Ecstasy: The Complete Guide* by Julie Holland. I am pretty intelligent when it comes to drugs, originally, because of my strong passion for psychology and the effects chemicals have on the human brain; however, I used both of these books to broaden my knowledge and for fact checking. Holland states “Ecstasy had originally been used as an adjunct to psychotherapy for over a decade until the Drug Enforcement Administration classified it as a Schedule I drug in 1985” (*Ecstasy: The Complete Guide*). I incorporated Ecstasy’s connection to Elena’s suicidal attempt because of a TED Talk by Russ

Altman, “What Really Happens When You Mix Medications?” The talk discussed the health problems of mixing drugs. Altman states, “Studying two pills together...is not traditionally done.” Therefore, I inferred that teenagers on anti-depressants could be unaware of the dangerous side effects of mixing anti-depressants with Ecstasy. I found the talk to be very compelling and also a serious concern because doctors are so generous with medications these days. I wanted to display that there are unpredicted and undocumented dangers with the use of mixing pills that spike serotonin; with the increasing popularity of the street drug MDMA, I felt it was time that someone informs the public of these dangers.

My stylistic inspiration for *Living With Loss* developed from one of my favorite childhood films, *Raise Your Voice*, as well as *Charlie St. Cloud*. Both feature films are about the loss of a close sibling. I used the novel *The Screenwriters Workbook*, by Syd Field, to dissect the films and really get a sense of their structure. Syd Field’s is a renowned American screenwriting guru. He’s published multiple books about the craft of screenwriting, which all focus around a formulaic “three-act structure,” which he refers to as The Paradigm. In this structure, a film's plot is set up within the first twenty to thirty minutes. Then, the main character protagonist experiences a 'plot point' that provides a goal to achieve in the second act. Half of the movie then focuses on the main character’s struggles to achieve this goal. This second act is the 'Confrontation' period. Field also refers to the 'Midpoint', a more subtle turning point in the plot that happens at approximately page 60 if you are writing a traditional 120 paged screenplay (most scripts these days are much shorter with the attention span of the Millennial generation). This turning point is often an apparently devastating reversal of the main character's fortune. The final third (the third act) of the film depicts a climactic struggle by the protagonist to achieve the goal they had been working for throughout the entire journey of the screenplay

(Field). My main character, Elena, is striving to achieve the goal of accepting the loss of her best friend.

Because I had only written for television and had never constructed a feature film, *The Screenwriter's Workbook* was my guide and most valuable tool in the development process. It takes a writer step-by-step and explains why Field's formulaic method has appealed to audiences for years. Using this book allowed me to observe the specific inciting incidents (usually occurring on page 12 of a script), which started the action in *Raise Your Voice* and *Charlie St. Cloud*. I was able to imitate the two films' structure and apply it to my script. Professor Dubin, always says, "Amateurs create; professionals steal." I never quite understood what that meant until I observed the similar structure of all films. In the book *Thirty-Six Dramatic Structures*, Georges Dolti "makes a descriptive list to categorize every dramatic situation that might occur in a story or performance" (*The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*). He proves that all stories follow a formulaic structure of building drama. So there is a science to writing when one combines the dramatic situation structure with Syd Field's three-act structure. No artist likes to have limitations, whatever creative profession it might be, but the thing about limitations and structure is that they are a nice building block; once you know the rules you are then able to break them.

I first started out by observing the timecode for events in *Charlie St. Cloud*. The first eleven minutes establish the relationship between Charlie and his brother, Sam. At exactly eleven minutes and 37 seconds the boys are in an accident, which is the inciting incident. This begins the story and focuses on the recovery period for Charlie. *Living With Loss* and *Charlie St. Cloud* both share a similar structure and ideal for resolution – acceptance. However, these are very different screenplays. If you observe enough scripts, it is easy to make correlations to ones previously produced. Stories work for a reason.

Considering I had come to terms with the fact I was writing a catharsis piece, I really related to Hillary Duff's character, Terri Fletcher, in *Raise Your Voice* because the character used music as her catharsis to get over the loss of her brother. At the end of the movie she sings *Someone's Watching Over Me*, which is based on finding light through a place of darkness. The character's connection to music and my personal love of music lead me to have Elena use music as her outlet. Very similar to Terri Fletcher's character, Elena reaches a sense of solitude through her music. The music is something I struggled with throughout my process; I am the farthest thing from musically inclined. I had no idea how people created music or how one developed a story through lyrics. I reached out to my advisor to hear his input because I knew I wanted to incorporate a song toward the end of the piece. He directed me to a website with lyrics and told me not to think about rhyming or what I was trying to say, but to instead view it as a form of poetry. This really changed my perception of lyrics. I stopped focusing on melody and began to see them as just words. I turned to Halsey, one of my favorite songwriters, and began to dissect her music. In her song *Hold Me Down* she says, "My demons are begging me to open up my mouth, I need them mechanically make the words come out. They fight me, vigorous and angry, watch them pounce. Ignite me, licking at the flames they bring about." Her words are so fluid and powerful. They aren't just simple rhymes, but ingenuous depictions of the hardships in her life. In another song entitled *Hurricane* she said, "I'm a wanderess, I'm a one night stand. Don't belong to no city, don't belong to no man." This line resonates with my script and me because you are the creator of your own happiness. No person belongs to anyone; we belong to ourselves. I realized that I loved her songs because her words were so poetic. I use to be a competitive poetry speaker when I was in High School. I also use to write a lot of poetry to overcome hardships. I zoned in on this part of my past and pretended like I was Elena and focused on what

she was trying to convey about herself. Halsey's style influenced the final song that Elena sings at the end of my screenplay. I started off by focusing on the love Elena had for Emma, "Her eyes cast shadows on my soul. My emptiness consumed with all her hold" (*Living With Loss*, 79). Then, I transitioned into the sorrow she feels for overlooking Noah's love, "I'm sorry that it took this long to see. That you are another who sees me" (*Living With Loss*, 79). Finally, I concluded the song with Elena's realization that she doesn't have to be overcome by suffering, "But this isn't right, life is not, some emptiness that you have bought; you don't have to pay for all these sins" (*Living With Loss*, 79). The song summarized her coming-of-age and transition into a new part of her life.

Another artist that greatly influenced parts of my work was Lana Del Rey. I incorporated her song *Ride* throughout various parts of my script. First on page 8, Emma lightheartedly sings the song to Elena. Second, on page 63, you see that a quote from the song is on Emma's gravestone. The third is on page 68 when Elena sings it in the car during her resolution period. I implemented this three times because of the "power of three" which is a "writing principle that suggests that things that come in threes are funnier, more satisfying, or more effective than other numbers of things" (*Rule Of Three*). This rule is very popular in all forms of artistic expression, especially design. My High School yearbook teacher, Linda Altoonian, introduced me to the "Power of Three." Mrs. Altoonian used to explain that designing in three creates structure to a design; the same rule applies with writing. The reason I put so much value on the song *Ride* is because I felt like it embodied Emma's true soul: "An inner indecisiveness that was as wide and as wavering as the ocean" (*Ride*, 2012). This was also the quote on her tombstone. I wanted to connect Emma to a song because Elena perceived her world through music. Every experience was a song to her; every adventure was as complex as the lyrics she created.

Not only did I implement music into the piece, specific works also inspired me. On one of my trips home to Texas (my hometown), I listened to *Let it Be* by James Bay repeatedly. The song allowed me to come to the conclusion that in life you have to let the people you love go. The thing about love is that it can change you, sometimes for the better, and sometimes for the worse. Everyone wants love, but no one wants loss. It is a fact that you will love someone or something in your life, but it is also a fact that at some point they will leave, and you will have to let go. The song taught me that we shouldn't look at it as having to let them go, we should look at it as what they taught us along the way. Elena struggles the entire time with the fear of losing her friend, she is scared of losing love, but as James Bay says, "come on let it go, just let it be, why don't you be you and I'll be me" (*Let it Be*, 2014)? At the end of the day, you just have to know that whatever will, will be. You cannot fight the uncontrollable powers of living.

The idea to incorporate music also derived from my interest in Fox Network's show *Empire*. The TV series is centered on a music company and the use of musical expression. The TV show also incorporates a lot of flashbacks to explain the past relationship of two main characters, Lucious Lyon and Cookie. I implemented the use of flashbacks with Elena and Emma, so the audience could understand the construction of their relationship before the shooting. The girls had dreams together, but realized with time that sometimes you have to let go of the things you love in order to grow and become who you need to be. Their relationship revolves around a sense of control that Elena developed as their friendship progressed; she thought she knew what was best for Emma. The idea originally stemmed from a correlation between my best friend, Alex, and my sister, Jennifer, who hasn't had the easiest life. They both make irrational decisions and such decisions led my sister down a path she will never return from. I feared the same for my best friend Alex, but through William Glasser's *Choice Theory*, I



realized that I had been in search of control. Glasser states, “It is hard, if not impossible, to love someone who wants to control and change you or someone you want to control and change” (35). Elena mirrors these problems and the screenplay sheds light on the danger of controlling relationships and friendships. It is unhealthy to decide someone else’s life, even if it is out of a place of love. *Choice Theory* leads me to the revelation I experienced through my favorite quote by Oscar Wilde: “I hope you live a life you’re proud of. If you find that you’re not, I hope you have the strength to start all over again.” This is now a quote I live by because, like *Choice Theory* suggests, determining your happiness on someone else will always lead to internal turmoil. This quote teaches us that all we can do is have faith in the one’s we love and hope that they make the most of their lives.

The screenplay is not only about overcoming trauma, but it is also about appreciating the people in your life. Far too often, people become consumed with one person and fail to see the love that they have by all. Like I said above, determining your happiness based on the actions of another individual is extremely detrimental. This realization was another part of my personal catharsis. I realized that there were people in my life that I never appreciated the way I should have. Believe it or not, the relationship between Elena and Noah is somewhat rooted around the friendship of Lizzie McGuire and Gordo from the 2001 Disney Channel original TV show *Lizzie McGuire*. This show was my favorite entertainment when I was a child. As you can probably tell, I was a huge fan of Hillary Duff, the star of the show. Lizzie always overlooked the pure heartiness and generosity that Gordo brought to their friendship. She took advantage of his good soul and went for things/people that were more challenging. His friendship was easy; therefore, it was undervalued. I wanted to display this very common psychological phenomenon of going for what we can’t have, but not appreciating what we do have. I believe through Noah and Elena’s

friendship I was able to capture the idea that you should never undervalue someone who loves you because when you take love for granted, it will one day disappear.

And that's *Living With Loss*, it is not some high budget idea or economically changing discovery, but it is a story that meant something to me. It is a character-based description of what it is like to deal with the loss of a loved one. It is a psychological examination of the everyday struggle of the common person. *Living With Loss* is a script that allows the reader to understand that it is okay to struggle, to feel lost, and it is okay to want it all to stop. Just know, that there is no shortage of love in the world, if you are willing to accept love, it will find you again.

I write because I want to impact people – somehow. I wasn't born with the intelligence of a neurosurgeon or the ambition of an astronaut. I cannot change the world in ways that seem obvious for helping people; however, I can make a little bit of an impact through my words and observations of human interactions. I can show people the dark sides of life and remind them that even in darkness we can find light. I can speak to the masses through my scripts and even though they might be altered and maybe only seen by a few people, there will always be a hope that I can positively impact at least one person; impacting at least one person will always be enough for me. So if I could leave my audience with anything today, I would say, always remember to "Live a life you are proud of, and if you find that you are not, have the strength to start all over."

~Thank you



## Works Cited

- A Trip to the Moon*. Georges Méliès, 1902.
- Altman, Russ. "What Really Happens When You Mix Medications?" TEDMED. Lecture.
- Anderson, Tim. *Hurricane*. Halsey. Rec. 24 Sept. 2014. Tim Anderson, 2014. MP3.
- Requiem for a Dream*. Dir. Darren Aronofsky. Artisan Entertainment, 2000. Film.
- Daniels, Lee, and Danny Strong. *Empire*. 20th Century Fox Television. Television.
- Dubin, Richard. Newhouse, Syracuse. Lecture. "Amateurs create; professionals steal."
- Dubin, Richard. Newhouse, Syracuse. Lecture. "Your characters lead you to change; you can't force them."
- Epstein, Mark. *The Trauma of Everyday Life*. Penguin. Print.
- Field, Syd. *The Screenwriters Workbook*. NYC: Dell, 1984. Print.
- Dolti, Georges. *Thirty-Six Dramatic Structures*. September: Book Jungle, 2007. Print.
- Glasser, William, M.D. *Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom*. 1st ed. New York: HarperCollins, 1999. Print.
- Crash*. Dir. Paul Haggis. Lionsgate and Pathe, 2004. Film.
- Highsmith, Patricia. *The Price of Salt: Carol*. Print.
- Holland, Julie. *Ecstasy: The Complete Guide: A Comprehensive Look at the Risks and Benefits of MDMA*. Rochester, VT: Park Street, 2001. Print.
- James Bay. *Let It Be*. Jacquire King, 2014. MP3.
- Kuhn, Cynthia, Scott Swartzwelder, and Wilkie Wilson. *Buzzed: The Straight Facts About the Most Used and Abused Drugs from Alcohol to Ecstasy*. August: W. W. Norton & Third Edition Edition, 2008. Print.
- Raise Your Voice*. Dir. Sean McNamara. Perf. Hillary Duff. New Line Cinema, 2004. Film.
- Minsky, Terri. *Lizzie McGuire*. Disney Channel. Television.

*Carol*. Screenplay by Phyllis Nagy. Perf. Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara. StudioCanal UK The Weinstein Company, 2015. Film.

Parker, Justin. *Ride*. Lana Del Rey. Rick Rubin, 2012. MP3.

"Rule of Three." *Quora*. Web. 9 May 2016. <<https://www.quora.com/topic/Rule-Of-Three>>.

Rhimes, Shonda. *Scandal*. American Broadcasting Company. Television.

Rhimes, Shonda. *Grey's Anatomy*. American Broadcasting Company. 2005. Television.

*Living With Loss*. By Jamie Savarese. 2016. Screenplay.

Schwartz, Alex, Ryan Lott, and Joseph Khajadourian. *Hold Me Down*. Halsey. Futuristik, 2015. MP3.

Hillary Duff. *Someone's Watching Over Me*. Rec. 21 Feb. 2005. John Shanks, 2005. MP3.

*Star Wars*. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2001.

*Charlie St. Cloud*. Dir. Burr Steers. Universal Pictures, 2010. Film.

"Catharsis." *Vocabulary.com*. Web. 9 May 2016.

"The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations." *Wikipedia*. Web. 9 May 2016.

Wilde, Oscar. Speech. "I hope you live a life you're proud of. If you find that you're not, I hope you have the strength to start all over again."

LIVING WITH LOSS

Written by

Jamie Savarese

821 Comstock Ave Syracuse, NY 13210  
8179802677

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - SUNSET

Lush trees line the hillside. Toward the top lies a  
WATER TOWER.

Gives no fucks, EMMA COOPER(22), moseys up the ladder behind her intellectual counterpart ELENA WELLINGTON(22), who is gripping the steel pole with one hand and a BLUE MOON CASE with the other. They both have on Stratmon University game day apparel.

EMMA  
You're soooo slow.

ELENA  
Sorry I'm trying not to die while carrying *you're* beer.

EMMA  
It's yours too.

ELENA  
Do you want me to drop this on your head.

Elena reaches the top. Graffiti lines the dome structure. She begins to open a beer (unsuccessfully) as Emma steps onto the top.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
Emma.

EMMA  
What?

ELENA  
You didn't buy the twist off?

Emma laughs, the same carefree laugh that Elena has heard for the past four years.

EMMA  
Oops, well... whatever.

She walks to the edge, leaving the beer.

ELENA  
I'm opening this.

Elena finds a ridge in the concrete and pops the caps off.

Emma finds their names in the graffiti, dulled and covered.

EMMA  
Remember this?

El walks past her and sits on the ledge, looking at the small town beneath them.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
I almost fell off when we wrote that freshman year.

ELENA  
You almost fall off every time we're up here.

Pause.

EMMA  
Are you ready to leave?

ELENA  
School? I've been ready.

EMMA  
You don't think your gonna miss it?

ELENA  
...I mean, parts ya. But I don't know, this isn't the end for me.

EMMA  
I see.

ELENA  
I just mean this wasn't my peak. It was a great fours year, but I just wouldn't be able to do it anymore.

EMMA  
Yea.

ELENA  
Do you think you could?

EMMA  
I don't know.

ELENA  
Why are you being so odd, we're gonna kill it in Cali.

EMMA  
Yea.



ELENA  
What are the odds you chug this?

EMMA  
2.

ELENA  
You're such an ass...3.2.1

EMMA  
2.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
1.

Emma laughs blissfully.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
You suck.

Elena chugs her beer.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - MORNING - NEXT DAY

Elena is sitting in the recording booth chewing on her pen as she scribbles violently on a sheet of paper.

She stands up to the mic.

EL  
(Singing.)  
Her eyes cast shadows on my soul  
If I only knew this is what...

El paces back and forth, humming the words, trying to get the rhythm right.

EL (CONT'D)  
Ahh!

Southern by personality, but not by accent, NOAH RUIZ (22), opens the door to the studio.

NOAH  
Ah, look who it is.

El quickly grabs her notes.

EL  
Hey.

NOAH  
Glad to see you're alive... I called ya yesterday.

EL  
 Sorry, I went to the day drink with  
 Emma. Didn't see it.

NOAH  
 Probably should have figured that.

An awkward pause.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 What are you working on.

EL  
 I don't really even know.

NOAH  
 Let's hear.

Oddly embarrassed for no reason.

EL  
 I don't know, it's nothing,  
 honestly.

NOAH	ELENA
I feel like I haven't seen you in weeks.	I just can't figure out what I want to say.

The situation grows more uncomfortable.

NOAH  
 Play it.

Elena moves nervously to the microphone. Clears her throat.

EL  
 (Singing.)  
 Her eyes cast shadows on my soul  
 If I only knew this is was to be  
 told...

EL (CONT'D)  
 (More to herself.)  
 The memories that quickly smother.

She grabs her notes and scribbles down the new verse.

NOAH  
 What are you trying to say?

EL  
 I don't know!

NOAH  
Well who are you talking about?

EL  
I don't know Noah it's more of just  
a feeling.

NOAH  
Okay, okay.

He motions to the guitar.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Well you should try this.

He starts playing some chords and El hums to the new beat.  
It's slower.

EL  
Yea, that's good... Ah, I just  
can't get it out. It's all fucked  
up in my head.

NOAH  
Why you stressin' so much.

EL  
I just want to make this song,  
okay.

NOAH  
Okay, I'm just saying you already  
have a job lined up you shouldn't  
spend the last weeks before we  
graduate in the studio.

EL  
I know. I just needed to get my  
mind off stuff.

NOAH  
You alright?

EL  
Yes.

Pause.

NOAH  
What about we hang out tonight,  
just us two? We can brainstorm some  
lyrics?

Realizing she's being a bitch.

EL  
Yea, sounds good.

INT. ELENA'S & EMMA'S APARTMENT - LATER

This would be a nice modernized living space, but the girls have managed to turn it into a party haven.

Elena enters to find Emma dead like on the sofa, clearly feeling the past nights liquor.

EMMA  
Where the hell have you been all morning?

EL  
The studio.

EMMA  
Can you shut the blinds.

Elena slightly closes them.

EL  
You're ridiculous.

EMMA  
I wanted to get breakfast.

EL  
You coulda texted.

EMMA  
I don't know where my phone is. Do you have it?

EL  
Jesus.

EMMA  
Can we get breakfast?

EL  
What do you want your phone or breakfast?

EMMA  
Both.

EL  
Okay well I'm call--

EMMA  
Shh.

EL  
What?

EMMA  
Look!

She points to the TV screen where a movie ad plays.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
Yooo that's suppose to be so funny.

Pause.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
Let's go tonight.

EL  
I mean I'm always down.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - NIGHT

The night is cool, quiet.

Headlights reflect off the thick rain.

A BMW sits in the middle of the parking lot. The windows so flogged that no one can see who's inside.

INT. BWM - CONTINUOUS

Emma and El pass a blunt back and forth. Emma starts coughing.

ELENA  
Seriously? I remember the first time I smoked.

EMMA  
Shut up. My throats all messed up... this has been going forever.

ELENA  
It's cause I put honey on it.

EMMA  
What?

ELENA

Makes it last longer if you coat it  
in honey.

EMMA

I love this song.

She turns up "Ride" by Lana Del Rey. Making a microphone with  
her hand as she says it to Elena.

EMMA (CONT'D)

"I didn't really mind it because it  
takes getting everything you ever  
wanted and then loosing it to know  
what true freedom i--"

Elena's phone begins to ring. The name comes up on her GPS:

NOAH RUIZ

ELENA

Fuck!

EMMA (CONT'D)

Hey!

EMMA (CONT'D)

What?

ELENA

I forgot I made plans with him.

EMMA

Just tell him to meet us.

ELENA

Naw, it's okay.

EMMA

Okay weirdo.

Emma takes a massive pull.

EMMA (CONT'D)

(Coughing)

Ahh!

Elena breaks out in hysterics. Emma can't help but laugh.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Okay, so rape, marry, kill.

ELENA

You mean fuck, marry, kill.

The two laugh even harder now.

EMMA

Why do I always do that!

ELENA

I don't know it's so rapey.

EMMA

Okay whatever so *fuck*, marry, kill.  
Noah, Jason or Matt.

ELENA

Definitely kill Noah. And umm ahh,  
I guess fuck Jason and marry Matt.

EMMA

I think I'd marry Noah. He'd  
totally be a great husband.

ELENA

I think we'd kill each other.

EMMA

Wait, I forgot, I have something  
for you.

Emma reaches down into her purse and pulls out a small box.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Okay, I know graduation isn't for  
three weeks, buttt I'm giving you  
your present early.

ELENA

Em, you didn't need to get me  
anything.

EMMA

I owe you a lot and I don't know  
just open it.

Elena rips off the brown ghetto wrapping paper and pulls out  
two holographic tickets with the words

MYSTIC WOODS.

Elena looks in shock.

EL

You're kidding. Holly shit. Thank  
you!

EMMA

We've always said we'd go.

EL  
How did you get these?

EMMA  
I planned it awhile ago.

EL  
You planned something?

EMMA  
Shut up or I'll take them back.

Elena hugs her.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
Okay, okay.

EL  
Seriously, thank you.

Pulling away.

EL (CONT'D)  
When is it?

EMMA  
About two weeks from now. So I  
don't know, figured it was a good  
time.

Elena beams at Emma.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
Calm down, we're gonna be late for  
the movie.

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

The theatre is dark and pretty packed. Of course these two  
are late.

Elena carries a huge thing of popcorn while Emma keeps  
turning around to eat it.

ELENA  
(Whispering)  
Can you just wait till we sit  
down...

EMMA  
Where do you want to sit.



ELENA  
I don't care.

EMMA  
What about those toward the middle.

ELENA  
Go for it.

Upon sitting, Emma grabs the bowl and claims it as her own.

EMMA  
(Loudly whispering)  
You shoulda bought an icy too.

ELENA  
You're ridiculous.

Elena reaches down into her oversized purse and pulls out two red cups. She untwists the top of a submerged wine bottle and pours it into the glasses.

EMMA  
Are you serious?

ELENA  
Do you want some or not.

EMMA  
I don't discriminate.

Emma shoots some popcorn at Elena's face.

ELENA  
You're seriously twelve years old.

Elena grabs some popcorn and chunks it back at her. They both try to suppress their laughter.

A CAUCASIAN MAN(late 40s) stands up toward the front of the theatre. He raises his her arm and suddenly

BANG!

BANG!

A BLONDE WOMAN behind them collapses. Screams echo with a pulsating vibration.

BANG!

He keeps shooting. Elena turns to Emma and pulls her toward the floor.

The screams penetrate every fiber of their being.

The BANGS persists. Again and again.

EMMA

El.

ELENA

(Terrified but  
sympathetic)

Shhh.

EMMA

El.

Emma pulls her HAND off of her chest. It's coated in BLOOD.

Elena turns white, immediately immobile, speechless. Shots are still being fired.

Silent tears begin to roll down Emma's cheeks.

Elena reaches for her hand and grips it tightly.

Their stare is so captivating that it seems as though minutes have past.

A FOOT smashes down on Elena's head.

All the sounds blur into a deafening silence as we

FADE TO WHITE:

EXT. PINE VALLEY MEMORIAL - LATE NIGHT

Ambulances swarm the outside of Pine Valley Memorial. Stretchers carry in patients as paramedics try desperately to keep people alive.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ON TV

BREAKING NEWS: SEVERAL INJURED IN PENNSYLVANIA MOVIE THEATRE SHOOTING

A NEWS ANCHOR gives a live report.

NEWS ANCHOR

Liz we are being told that this was  
at the Eastchase Theatre near  
Stratmon University.

(MORE)

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

This was during the 9 o'clock showing of Animals. Witnesses are telling the daily advertiser that 15 minutes into the show an older white male stood up and started firing. We still are unsure of the number of people injured but witnesses said there was around 15 shots taken. The shooter who is still unnamed, was shot by a policeman after exiting the theatre.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elena is lying in the hospital bed. An oxygen line in her nose and various wires monitoring her heart rate.

Noah is pacing back and forth throughout the room. Waiting.

Elena slowly comes to consciousness.

NOAH

(Comfortingly)

Hey.

Her eyes flicker back and forth. She's terrified.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Can you hear me El. You're okay.

Elena struggles to speak. Her voice is weak. \*

ELENA

Where's...E..m. \*

NOAH

Shh. Just calm down. Everything is going to be okay.

Elena tries to get up. Her voice trembling.

ELENA

Where...is...she!?

He walks over to keep her down. \*

NOAH

You've had a concussion El. You need to stay down. The doctors aren't sure how much damage you've had to your head.

ELENA  
I need to see...

\*

NOAH  
Just lay back for a little.

Elena pushes against him, weakly.

\*

ELENA  
I need to see E..m.

\*

Noah knows he can't avoid it anymore.

NOAH  
El... Emma's dead.

It was if in that moment time stood still.

ELENA  
No.

Elena pushes into him again pulling off her wires. Tears surfacing in her eyes.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
I need to see her.

\*

A wire from her finger pulls her back and she falls to the floor.

NOAH  
El!

She's in hysterics.

ELENA  
I was just with her. We were in the movie... I.. She's okay. She has to be okay.

Noah wraps his arms around her.

NOAH  
It's gonna be okay, it's all gonna be okay.

Elena sobs uncontrollably as they rock on the cold tile floor.

EXT. CREEKWOOD CEMETERY - DAY

Herds of black line the green field.

Emma's mother, LORAINÉ (50s), is currently speaking on her daughters behalf.

A mahogany coffin lies in front of Elena who glares lifelessly at TWO SQUIRRELS chasing each other in the background.

FLASHBACK: FALL, 2013  
(EXT. DORM PATIO - AFTERNOON)

El and Emma sit on a patio watching TWO SQUIRRELS.

EL  
This is basically a metaphor for  
your love life.

EMMA  
That I'm always being viciously  
chased?

Laughing.

EL  
No, that you can't make up your  
mind so you just let them follow  
you.

EMMA  
Thanks... I feel like most  
sophomores have some idea of what  
they want.

EL  
I feel like most people don't know  
what they want.

EMMA  
You do.

EL  
I pretend I do.

Emma smiles.

~BACK TO REALITY~

LORAINÉ  
Now, Emma's best friend, Elena, is  
going to say some words.

The observers all look at Elena. Who has no idea her name has just been called.

Noah is standing beside her.

NOAH  
(Whispering)  
Elena.

Suddenly realizing what is going on, Elena moves to the podium. She looks as though she is the one in the coffin.

Lorraine speaks softly to Elena as she approaches.

LORRAINE  
Hey Elena. -She would have wanted  
you to have this.

She places something in her hand as she walks away.

Elena opens her hand to see Emma's GOLD GEMINI BRACELET.

She clutches HER HAND tight. Her eyes watery.

ELENA  
Um, hi...

Gathering her papers. Her voice shaky.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Emma and I met four years ago. We always joke about how, or sorry joked about how when we first met she um, Emma was my best friend. We might not have always seen eye to eye, but there's not a day that went by that, that girl didn't put a smile on my face. I would have done anything for her.

Elena starts to tear up.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
I saw so much in her. She had this part of her that was so pure and kind-hearted, but she barely let people see it. I think she might have been the first person besides my family that I ever truly loved.

Tears start to pour down her cheeks.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
I just wish I..

She's trembling.

EL

I wish I would have told...

She starts to panic, dropping her papers. She starts running. Not particularly to anything, but just to escape.

The people are silent.

She sees her car and buries herself in her leather seat.

She can't control it anymore.

The tears attack her.

...

Noah opens up the car door.

NOAH

Hey, El, it's okay.

Reaching for her. She can't handle him right now.

ELENA

Stop fucking saying everything is okay. It's not okay.

Burying herself deeper in the seats.

NOAH

El, just talk to me. I know it's hard but lets just talk it out.

Yelling.

ELENA

You don't know anything!

Realizing he needs to change the subject. He sees the Mystic Woods TICKETS in her cup holder.

NOAH

Where'd you get these?

She looks up, confused at the sudden change.

The tickets trigger the

MEMORY:

Elena is back in the car, hugging Emma. Their laughs flooding her eardrums.

She grabs her head. Jolting back into the very far off reality.

ELENA

Ahh!

She starts to cry. So unbearably hard. Between gasps.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Emma. Gave. Them. To. Me.

Noah realizing what he's done.

She rips them from his hand and throws them out the door.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Just leave me alone!

NOAH

(Comforting)

El.

El grips his arm so tightly her nails break the SKIN.

ELENA

Get out!!

Her eyes are beat red and foggy, but she presses on the gas and watches as they all fade away.

MONTAGE BEGINS -

INT. ELENA'S & EMMA'S APARTMENT - ELENA'S ROOM - MORNING

El's phone ALARM goes off, she throws it and goes back to bed.

EXT. ELENA'S & EMMA'S APARTMENT - NEXT DAY

Noah knocks at her apartment door.

NOAH

El.

INT. ELENA'S & EMMA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Take-out boxes build in the corner by the door.



INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Noah signs in to class. The PAPER reveals its been five days since El's been there.

EXT. ELENA'S & EMMA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Noah knocking more intently.

NOAH

Elena, come on. This isn't cool.

INT. ELENA'S & EMMA'S APARTMENT - DAY

El tries to play the piano. Her voice cracking.

EL

(Singing.)

Her eyes cast shadows on my soul.  
My emptiness consumed with all  
her...

The tears seem like second nature as they flood her vision.

She slams down on the keyboard.

EL (CONT'D)

Ahh!

INT. ELENA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Random objects scatter the floor around Elena.

Multiple bins that once lined her shelf are overturned on the floor.

She searches intently inside a large felt box.

Finally. She pulls out an old PILL BOTTLE.

EXT. EMMA'S ROOM - DAY

El walks by the door and pushes it open. She peers in to see a GALAXY TAPESTRY and a CANDLE that looks as if it was burnt yesterday.

She pulls the door shut again.

INT. ELENA'S ROOM - NIGHT

El lies in her bed, watching old go pro videos.

On the screen:

Emma stands on top of the water tower holding a bottle of Svedka.

EL (O.S.)

What are the odds you chug that for ten seconds?

EMMA

Hell no.

EL

What are the odds though?

EMMA

Fine. Ten.

EL

3. 2. 1.

EMMA

7.

EL (CONT'D)

7.

EMMA

I HATE YOU!

Emma starts chugging.

- MONTAGE ENDS -

EXT. ELENA'S & EMMA'S APARTMENT - DAY

The LOCK is being jabbed at by a tension wrench.

A METAL PICK slowly glides in and out.

NOAH

Fuck!

Clearly no idea what he is doing. Determined.

As he concentrates harder.

CLICK!

INT. ELENA'S & EMMA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

An odd odor immediately floods over him as he glances at the pile of TRASH.

The monotonous TV is background noise as he observes the table of empty alcohol bottles.

COKE residence is covered by forgotten takeout.

He sees the PILL BOTTLE.

NOAH

El?

She appears from inside her room, shocked.

EL

Noah. What the hell!?

Observing her oversized T-shirt and lack of pants.

NOAH

Elena you need to get dressed.

EL

You can't just break into my apartment.

Noah grabs a trash bag from under the sink. He starts cleaning.

NOAH

I'm gonna take you somewhere.

EL

No.

NOAH

It is just a guitar store... chill.

EL

Leave my apartment.

NOAH

Could you please just get dressed.

EL

I really just don't want to Noah.

NOAH

I know you don't, but its been over a week and a half El. Will you please just do it for me.

Every part of her wants to say no. She sees the NAIL MARKS on his arm from her funeral breakdown.

EL

Okay.

INT. NOAH'S CAR - LATER

El rests her head against the sleek leather as Noah proceeds on with pointless conversation.

NOAH

So Professor Stevenson basically lost her shit when Zack didn't have his song ready. Didn't we call it?

A sign reads HIGHWAY 476.

EL

Where are you taking me?

NOAH

The guitar store... chill. So I thought Zac-

EL

Noah. This is not the right way.

NOAH

I'm going to the one in Bethlehem.

El knows he is lying.

NOAH (CONT'D)

We are going to Mystic Woods.

He pulls out the TICKETS from his pants pocket.

Hate flushes over Elena.

EL

Turn. Around.

He proceeds driving.

EL (CONT'D)

NOAH!

NOAH

El, come on. Stop acting crazy.

EL  
Stop the car...stop the fucking  
car!

Noah pulls off on the side road. El gets out and starts  
pacing.

NOAH  
Is this necessary?

EL  
Why would you think this is okay?

NOAH  
Can you please just get back in the  
car.

El kicks his car, underestimating its strength.

EL  
Fuck.

Noah gets out.

NOAH  
Look, I get this was yours and  
Emma's thing, I do -

EL  
We were suppose to go together.

Noah grabs her.

NOAH  
I know.

FLASHBACK: Spring, 2014  
(INT. DORM ROOM - AFTERNOON)

A NOTEBOOK sits on El's lap, "Emma's Future."

EL  
So right now your only interests in  
life are festivals, alcohol, social  
media and music.

EMMA  
I don't know.

EL  
There's not one thing you thought  
would be cool to do.

EMMA  
Not really.

EL  
Okaayy. Um, what about like a  
social media internship.

EMMA  
Ya. I guess.

EL  
What if it was for a festival??

EMMA  
That could be cool.

El opens her laptop.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
I want to go to another festival.

Search engine: "TOP MUSIC FESTIVALS"

EL  
Look at this one.

An echoing of a tree breeze.

The sound of distant owls.

A mystic melody matches the allure of the forest noises.

EMMA  
We have to go. What is this?

EL  
Mystic Woods.

SIGN: WELCOME TO MICHIGAN

NOAH  
El, wake up.

Elena moves off the window she's been glued to for the past  
four hours.

Dazed.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
We just got to Michigan. Lets pull  
over for the night... You hungry?

EL  
Not reall-

NOAH

I think this is our hotel. Lets go to that bar. I haven't seen anything else.

INT. DOVER'S DIVE BAR - LATER

Noah searches the menu intently. El hasn't touched hers.

NOAH

I think I'm gonna go with the Black and Blue Burger... Or do I want the wings. What are you getting?

MIZ WAITRESS

Hi, what can I get for you.

NOAH

Oh, hey. Which is better the wings or Black and Blue?

MIZ WAITRESS

They're both good.

NOAH

Oh, okay. Elena you go.

EL

I don't want anything.

NOAH

You're eating.

To the waitress.

EL

I'm not, but I will have a gin tonic please.

NOAH

Elena.

MIZ WAITRESS

(Annoyed.)

And you?

NOAH

Um, Black and Blue please.

The waitress leaves.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Why can't you just get something.  
You're just making this harder on  
yourself. This isn't going to make  
you feel any better.

EL

I'm going to the bathroom.

INT. GRIMY BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

El splashes herself with water.

She grips the filthy sink and looks at herself.

INT. DOVER'S DIVE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Noah is standing by the waitress.

NOAH

Hey, could you just bring her out  
some chicken nuggets with my  
burger?

MIZ WAITRESS

Seriously, dude?

NOAH

Um, yes please.

MIZ WAITRESS

Okayy.

NOAH

Thanks, and just put everything she  
gets on this.

He hands the waitress his credit card.

INT. GRIMMY BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The toilet seat is down. El sits on top of it, phone to ear.

EMMA (VOICEMAIL)

Heyyy, you've reached Emma  
Hawthorne. I'm not available right  
now, but I'll get back to you as  
soon as I can.

The voice stings like a hundred needles through the heart.



She calls again.

And again.

BACK TO THE RESTAURANT:

El walks toward Noah who is beaming at her. Suddenly the room changes, she has entered another restaurant and Emma stares back at her.

FLASHBACK: Spring, 2014  
(INT. CAFE CUBES - NIGHT)

EMMA

I thought you didn't remember where we sat.

Laughing.

EMMA (CONT'D)

El, I'm like high.

EL

Did we order?

EMMA

I can't wait for my burger.

EL

Your eyes are like bloodshot.

EMMA

Can you imagine when we move out to Cali.

EL

Imma apply for a medical card like first thing. I'll just say I need it for my anxiety or something.

Emma rubs her eyes.

EL (CONT'D)

I might just grow a plant.

EMMA

Ahh, it's gonna be dope.

Elena points to a GOLD BRACELET on Emma's wrist that says Gemini.

EL

Yoo when'd you get that.

EMMA  
I mean your the one always saying  
I'm such a Gemini.

Staring at it, then thrusting it into El's face.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
It's so cool, right?

EL  
Jesus.

~BACK TO REALITY~

NOAH  
Elena? Are you listening to me?

EL  
What?

NOAH  
I was telling you about my new  
guitar.

El chugs the gin tonic in front of her.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Umm...

EL  
I'm getting shots.

NOAH  
Seriously?

AT THE BAR

EL  
Can I have two shots of vodka?

BEARDED BARTENDER  
Yep, open or closed?

EL  
Open.

The bartender places the shots in front of her.

She goes to take one but Noah grabs it before her.

EL (CONT'D)  
What the hell.

Noah cheers another one of the shots and throws it back.

NOAH  
I'm not gonna be the only sober  
one.

This is the first thing he's done right.

EL  
(To the bartender)  
We'll take another round.

They down the next couple.

INT. DOVER'S DIVE BAR - POOL TABLE - AN HOUR LATER

El is wasted.

She sits on the edge of a pool table as Noah shoots.

EL  
Thank you for hanging with me.

NOAH  
What do you say we go back to the  
room?

EL  
No, no its my turn.

NOAH  
We should probably get some sleep  
so we can leave early.

EL  
No, I gotta beat ya.

Getting off the table, she drunkenly swings her pool stick  
into a girl playing behind her.

BLONDE WHITE TRASH  
What the fuck!

EL  
Who the fuck are you yelling at.

The Blonde Trash pushes El.

BLONDE WHITE TRASH  
Drunk bitch.

El goes back at her.

Noah rushes to break it up.

SMACK!

She slaps El across the face.

NOAH  
Get the fuck away from her.

BEARDED BARTENDER  
Break it up.

Looking at Noah.

BEARDED BARTENDER (CONT'D)  
Get her out of my bar!

EXT. SUNSHINE HOTEL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Noah is basically carrying El.

EL  
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

El starts crying.

NOAH  
El, its okay. She was a bitch.

EL  
I should have gone with you that night.

NOAH  
What?

EL  
I should have went.

NOAH  
Elena what are you talking about?

EL  
Emma would still be here.

She is in hysterics now.

Noah realizes. He turns El to face him.

NOAH  
El... you know that's not your fault.

EL  
She would still be here, Noah.

NOAH  
You don't know that. Elena  
sometimes it's just time for  
people. You can't put that on you.

EL  
You didn't see her face right  
before... I just can't get it out  
of my head.

He hugs her.

EL (CONT'D)  
I should have hung out with you.

EXT. SUNSHINE HOTEL - NOON

Noah is supporting a coffee with his teeth, holding a pancake stack in his left hand and trying to pack the car with the other.

Elena is leaning against the passenger side of the car.

Her FINGER presses down on EMMA'S name.

She holds the phone up to her ear.

INT. NOAH'S CAR - AN HOUR LATER

There is an awkward air floating throughout the car.

Noah fidgets with his Aux cord as El becomes one with the window.

NOAH  
So, you wanna talk about last  
night?

El ignores him.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
I really feel like we should just  
talk about it. It's clearly  
bothering you.

Still glued to the glass.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Elena.

EL

Look, you're a great friend to me  
and I appreciate you doing all  
this, but I don't have anything to  
say to you.

NOAH

You did last night.

EL

I was drunk, Noah.

NOAH

It's not healthy to bottle up  
everything all the time.

EXT. THE OPEN ROAD - LATER

The long barren road is mostly deserted other than the ravers  
who are blasting EDM music and hanging outside their car  
windows as a sort of festival pregame.

INSIDE THE CAR.

NOAH

Is this normal?

EL

Yea, people get pretty amped. Damn,  
we don't even have any candy.

NOAH

What? Do you want to stop?

EL

No like bracelets. You know candy,  
PLUR, all that shit.

NOAH

This is my first festival.

The car jolts.

RATTLING matches the cars vibrations.

NOAH (CONT'D)

What the hell!

Smoke seeps from underneath the hood.

They're motionless.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
You've got to be kidding me.

EL  
Did your car seriously just die?

NOAH  
Just chill out.

Noah gets out of the car and inspects the engine.

El gets out.

EL  
You seriously brought me on this  
stupid road trip and didn't even  
think to check your oil before?

NOAH  
You don't know it's the oil.

EL  
I'm just taking a wild guess here.

Cars swiftly pass by.

NOAH  
Could you get back in the car  
please.

EL  
I'm done with this. I'm calling  
someone to get me.

NOAH  
Who are you gonna call. You don't  
have anyone to call!

FLASHBACK: FALL, 2014  
(INT - EMMA'S ROOM - AFTERNOON)

She's on the phone.

EMMA  
Dad I fucked up, I get it...I don't  
know why you always have to compare  
me to Nora...can you stop yelling  
at me...ya, well it's been a hard  
semester...

She starts to tear up. my

EMMA (CONT'D)  
I'm just not sure what I want to  
do...God just leave me alone!

She hangs up the phone, burrying her head in her hands.

CREEK!

She turns to see Elena standing in the doorway.

Elena moves out of sight.

~BACK TO REALITY~

NOAH  
I didn't mean it like that.

EL  
Can we just go home?

Noah goes to the side of the road and puts out his thumb.

EL (CONT'D)  
Seriously?

NOAH  
What, they're all going there.

EL  
I'm not down for that.

NOAH  
Well that sucks cause we're doing  
it.

A RAVER VAN pulls in front of Noah. A DREADLOCK RAVER, who really goes by Mitch, waves.

DREADLOCK RAVER  
What's good man.

NOAH  
Hey, you guys going to Mystic  
Woods?

DREADLOCK RAVER  
Yea dude, get in.

Whispering between her teeth.

EL  
Absolutely not.



Noah grabs the bags from the back of the car.

NOAH  
Live a little.

EL  
What the hell are we gonna do about  
the car.

NOAH  
We'll figure it out later.

EL  
What!?

NOAH  
You can't let me miss my first  
festival.

El basically says fuck it.

INT. RAVER VAN - CONTINUOUS

DREADLOCK RAVER  
Yoo friends, my names Mitch, and  
this is Moon.

MOON  
Nice to meet you both.

NOAH  
I'm Noah!

EL  
Is your name really moon?

Noah nudges her.

EL (CONT'D)  
I'm Elena though, it's just an  
interesting name.

MOON  
My parents were some peyote lovin'  
motherfuckers, they say it came to  
them on a trip.

NOAH  
Peyote?

DREADLOCK RAVER	EL
Comes from a cactus dude.	Huh, wouldn't have guessed
Last time I think I saw God.	that.

DREADLOCK RAVER  
Sucks about your car, man. Whatcha gonna do?

NOAH  
I don't know, figured I'd just figure it out.

DREADLOCK RAVER  
Respect.

MOON  
Do you guys want some?

Moon holds out some tablets - ecstasy.

Elena eyes it wildly.

NOAH  
No, no we're good.

It's apparent Noah's never done a drug in his life.

EL  
Those good tabs?

MOON  
The purest you've ever tried, hun. Half of one of these, and I'm right where my parents wanted me to be.

EL  
Huh.

NOAH  
So who you guys pumped to see?

Trying desperately to switch the conversation.

DREADLOCK RAVER  
Definitely down for Vertigo.

NOAH  
No, shit, El wrote a song for them. Isn't that the band?

DREADLOCK RAVER  
What!

EL  
Noah!

MOON  
Which one did you do?

NOAH  
It's sick, you should tell people.

EL  
I ah, I wrote Adolescence.

DREADLOCK RAVER  
No fucking way! I love that song.  
(To Moon)  
Put it on babe.

EL  
It's cool, it was my first...

The song starts to drone out El's voice.

A catchy techno beat starts to emerge.

The beat peaks and drops into a silent misty echo.

SERENE WOMEN'S VOICE  
Where do you run  
Is it somewhere we could discuss  
Where do you run  
When the only escape is above us,  
you won't run  
What if you run  
Then I'll be stuck here before we  
begun  
Please don't run  
I promise one day it'll be over  
We'll be undone  
Then you can run

FLASHBACK: FALL, 2014  
(INT - ELENA & EMMA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON)

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

NOAH (O.S.)  
Answer the door!

El goes to get it.

Noah sweeps her up into a hug.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
El, holly shit, why didn't you tell  
me! I was just driving and I heard  
it on the radio!

El's smiling and laughing, or at least trying to between  
Noah's intense squeezing.

EL  
Put me down loser your crushing me.

NOAH  
I'm so happy for you!

EL  
Thanks Noah, I didn't know they'd  
buy it, I just kind of went for it.

Emma appears from her room.

EMMA  
What's up, Noah.

NOAH  
(To Emma)  
Did you hear Elena's song? It's  
fucking incredible.

Emma doesn't appear amused. Clearly bothered by some deeper  
jealousy.

EMMA  
Yea, I saw.

El sort of looks at her, hurt/confused.

Noah too oblivious to see the interaction.

NOAH  
You've got to let me take you out  
for a celebratory dinner!

EL  
Yea, I'd love that. Thanks, Noah.

NOAH  
So freaking amazing.

~BACK TO REALITY~

EL  
Let's just turn it off.

MOON  
It's good vibes.

DREADLOCK RAVER  
This is so rad. Do you write a lot  
for festivals?

EL

I did.

NOAH

She *does*.

Noah throws her a confused look.

EXT. THE OPEN ROAD - LATER

WELCOME TO ROTHBURY

Hundreds of cars line the podunk freeway.

Dreadlock Raver talks to the PARKING SECURITY.

PARKING SECURITY

You're just going to pull up to lot  
A.

NOAH

Is this normal?

EL

It's one of the biggest music  
festivals in the world.

MOON

We've been for the past five years.

The car stops and they start to gather their stuff.

NOAH

I just wanted to thank both of you  
for putting up with us.

MOON

We're always willing for new  
friends.

DREADLOCK RAVER

Yea man, you guys be safe.

EXT. MYSTIC WOODS - ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Noah and El stand next in line.

NOAH

This is literally insane.

TICKET MAN

Next!

Noah goes up, giving both tickets.

NOAH  
(Turning to El)  
I wonder if we will run into them  
again.

TICKET MAN  
Nice try.

He hands the tickets back to Noah.

TICKET MAN (CONT'D)  
Next!

Noah being his oblivious self tries to go past him.

The TICKET MAN stops him.

TICKET MAN (CONT'D)  
Dude, you need to exit the line.

NOAH  
What?

TICKET MAN  
You gave me fake tickets.

The anger triggers something in El, she just stares.

NOAH  
Come on man, no they aren't.

TICKET MAN  
(Yelling)  
I'm gonna need security over here!

Noah whispers to the guard now. Fast.

NOAH  
Listen, she got these tickets from  
her dead best friend. This was like  
their thing. Please let us in, man.

A REFLECTIVE VEST GUARD grabs Noah's shoulders.

TICKET MAN  
His tickets are fake.

FLASHBACK: SPRING, 2015  
(INT. ELENA & EMMA'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT)

The girls aggressively enter the front door, clearly pissed.

EL

Are you gonna tell me why you've been such a bitch recently!?

EMMA

Seriously?

EL

Don't act like an idiot Emma.

EMMA

Sorry I've been annoyed.

EL

What cause my song was bought?

EMMA

Oh, ya sure.

EL

You can't keep getting pissed at me for things I can't control.

EMMA

What does that even mean?

EL

Sorry my dad gives me money and yours doesn't, sorry I know what I want to do with my life and have a plan. I didn't ask for any of this and all I do is help you out. So just stop being a bitch about things I can't help.- Just be a friend for once.

Emma knows she's right. She's speechless.

~BACK TO REALITY~

REFLECTIVE VEST GUARD

Come on.

He drags him out of the crowd to the back.

EL

This is just great... Now we have no way in, no way to get home, and it's almost dark.

NOAH

Come with me.

Noah grabs her wrist and drags her with him.

EXT. STEEL FENCE - MOMENTS LATER

They are engulfed in a canopy of trees.

The ticket booth stands about 50 yards to the right.

EL

You don't seriously think I'm going to jump that?

NOAH

Can you just stop! If Emma was here you would. You'd do literally anything... We are going over this fence and we are getting into this festival! I did not come all this way to turn back now.

El grabs the metal fence.

EL

Well... aren't you gonna help me up?

She steps on his hand and climbs to the top.

He hoists himself up and joins her.

NOAH

One. Two. Three...

They jump from the fence into an open grass area and sprint straight for the forest.

SECURITY from the entrance spots them and chases after.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Just keep going till you hit people.

EL

This is insane.

She looks behind her as the men close in.

They hit a large crowd and Noah pulls her behind a tree.

They're panting. El starts to laugh.

NOAH

I think we lost them.

As he scans the trees.



El's laughter gets louder.

Noah realizes this is the first time he has seen her laugh since Emma passed.

He smirks. Halfway laughing himself.

NOAH (CONT'D)

What weirdo?

EL

Emma would fucking buy fake tickets...what an idiot...holly shit, she would have just peed herself if she saw that.

EXT. CAMP GROUND - LATER

Hundreds of mystically painted tents line a field within the trees.

There are herds of people covered in bizarre apparel.

As different as they appear, they are all united.

OUTSIDE A TENT

NOAH

Can I please buy it off you. I don't have a lot of cash on me, but we don't have a place to stay.

A paranoid BAD TRIPPER glances past Noah.

BAD TRIPPER

Ah, man, I don't know.

NOAH

It would really mean a lot.

BAD TRIPPER

Have you seen my friends?

NOAH

You were alone when I met you.

BAD TRIPPER

No man, I definitely wasn't.

He tries to walk away. Noah grabs his arm.

NOAH

Wait, can we have it.

The bad tripper bugs out.

BAD TRIPPER

Yo, not cool dude. Fine, sure. Do you.

He walks away. Fast.

NOAH

(Yelling)

Wait, don't you want any money?

El's been beside him this whole time, but she's lost in a gaze.

A FLIRTY BLONDE and BADASS BRUNETTE best friend stand about a yard from her. It's as though she's in their conversation.

The Badass Brunette is wearing a Mario Bros. turtle shell backpack and is putting on the Flirty Blonde's face makeup.

FLIRTY BLONDE

Does it look alright? It feels like you are getting it all over me.

The Badass Brunette smiles.

FLIRTY BLONDE (CONT'D)

Are you?

The Flirty blonde holds up her phone to see.

FLIRTY BLONDE (CONT'D)

I hate you!

They both laugh. Completely at bliss.

FLASHBACK: FALL, 2015  
(INT - CLUB - LATE NIGHT)

Elena and Emma sit at a private table with a curtain tucked away from the debauchery of the club.

It's so far on the other side the club sounds are a mere hum.

EL

I don't know Em, people just get mad at me for caring so much about you when they think you don't deserve it.

Emma is in a drunk, sad stupor.

EMMA

Ohh- Well... why do you care?

EL

I don't know, it's something I can't really explain. I just think people treat you like you can't do anything and I've just always seen something great in you.- I know it's weird.

Emma starts to cry.

EMMA

You're the only one that's ever believed in me. My parents always treat me like oh, poor Emma.

Between breaths.

EMMA (CONT'D)

No. One. Thinks. I. Can. Do. Anything.

Elena scoots over to Emma and puts her arm around her. Emma collapses onto her.

Elena's tone is softer.

EL

You know what, fuck those people Emma. We are gonna get to Cali and have a sick time and they can all just fuck off because I've always known you could do it.

Emma grabs Elena tighter.

EMMA

I don't know what I would do without you.

~BACK TO REALITY~

NOAH

Are you coming? ...El!?

Breaking from her daze.

EL

What? Ya.

Noah reappears from the tent.

NOAH  
Holly shit. This is insane.

She runs to it.

The outside looks like a tent on flat ground, but underground stairs hide in the entryway.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

EL  
What the hell?

A fanciful room emerges before them.

Rope lights line the floor and neon paraphernalia scatters the dressers.

The small but spacious room is like their own personal LSD trip.

EL (CONT'D)  
How much did you pay that guy?

NOAH  
I didn't. He just kind of gave it to us.

EL  
This is unreal.

EXT. TENT - HOURS LATER

Dawn has overtaken the campground.

The night is still, waiting.

NOAH (O.S.)  
Are you sure I don't look like an idiot?

EL (O.S.)  
Noooo Noah, I would tell you.

NOAH (O.S.)  
Would you tho?

EL (O.S.)  
Everyone wears this stuff. You look conservative in comparison.

Noah and El walk out of their tent dressed in classic rave apparel, nothing like the crazies.

They start walking toward the woods.

EL (CONT'D)

Okay, I might have overdone you're face paint just a little.

NOAH

Elena.

She grabs his arm.

EL

Come on.

EXT. THE ELECTRIC FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Herds of RAVERS are scattered within the trees. Hammocks swing gracefully as lovers unite.

Flame throwers move routinely with their lustful fire.

The trees pulsate with a mystic glow that lights the grounds. The vibe is electric.

NOAH

Wow!

Elena just stares.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Did you know it was like this?

Still too captivated to turn to him.

EL

I had no idea.

They move slowly into the dispersed crowd. A SHIRTLESS MOLLYHEAD comes inches from Noah's face.

SHIRTLESS MOLLYHEAD

Yooo, man, I really like your face paint... A lot.

El dies at Noah's utter shock.

EL

Told you.

El spots the Badass Brunette and Flirty Blonde from earlier. They lean against a tree as a DIE HARD PLUR moves his light up gloves in front of their faces.

BADASS BRUNETTE  
Holly shit.

FLIRTY BLONDE  
I can't look away.

The Flirty Blonde starts laughing.

FLIRTY BLONDE (CONT'D)  
Your face is priceless. You look so stupid.

BADASS BRUNETTE  
Shut up asshole.

NOAH  
Yo El, should we keep go...

EL  
(Interrupting)  
How do you feel about rolling?

NOAH  
What?

EL  
I don't know I just feel like it'd be fun.

NOAH  
You know I never have.

El looks at the two girls again.

EL  
I think it'd be a good idea.

EXT. SMALL STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

MUSIC APPRECIATORS sit on logs circling a small rainbow lit camp fire.

A little, wooden platform stage sits a couple feet in front of the flames.

Random people get up to sing as others strum their guitars from the logs.

NOAH  
Yoo this is sick.

Noah goes up to the stage and starts talking to the vocalist.

El is in an odd mood since seeing the girls. She sits down beside an ANNOYING GUITARIST.

ANNOYING GUITARIST  
Heyy.

EL  
Hi.

Not interested.

ANNOYING GUITARIST  
My name is Ethan. You get here today?

EL  
Yep.

NOAH  
(Shouting)  
Hey El, come up here you should sing something.

She then realizes the guitarist could be to her advantage.

ANNOYING GUITARIST  
You sing..?

EL  
Do you have any Molly?

ANNOYING GUITARIST  
Wow, girl.

EL (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

EL (CONT'D)  
My bad, I didn't mean to cut you off. But it'd be great if you did. And ya I do sing.

ANNOYING GUITARIST  
How bout you get up there and sing something for me?

EL  
Do you have Molly or not?

ANNOYING GUITARIST  
Guess you'll have to find out.

EL  
Whatever.

El moves to Noah.

NOAH

Hey, you gotta meet RYAN, he's from Australia and plays out in Cali... Hey man, this is my friend Elena. She's the one who did the song for Vertigo.

EL

Noah, stop telling people.

RYAN

I mean, I think it's pretty badass.

He holds out his hand.

RYAN (CONT'D)

So what do you say you sing something with me?

EL

I ah, one sec. Noah can we talk real quick?

She pulls him to the side.

EL (CONT'D)

Hey, do you think your friend might have some E?

NOAH

Seriously El, we can find that later. I don't really even think it's a good idea any way.

RYAN

So, what do you say, Elena.

She see's Moon and Dreadlock Raver out of the corner of her eye.

EL

I'll be right back.

She runs toward them.

NOAH

Yo, sorry. She's going through a lot right now.

EL

Moon!



MOON

Hey! Elena, isn't it magical here?

EL

Yea, totally, um do you happen to have any more of that Molly?

MOON

Sorry darling, we took it all.

DREADLOCK RAVER

I feel incredible.

NOAH

(Yelling)

Elena!

EL

Do you guys know anywhere else to get it?

MOON

Yea, just follow the turtle backpacks.

EL

What?

FLASH MEMORY

The Badass Burnett with the Mario Bro. backpack putting on the Flirty Blonde's face paint.

NOAH

Hey, guys what's up!

(To El)

Now I see what you were running for. Had no idea ya saw them!

EL

Let's go Noah.

She grabs him by the arm.

EL (CONT'D)

Thanks guys!

EXT. SMALL AMPITHEATRE - AN HOUR LATER

Scattered lanterns light the branches above.

Bubbles drift wildly into view.

They approach a small outdoor venue.

NOAH

We've been to every stage. Who are we looking for?

EL

I told you. These two girls I saw earlier when we just got here.

NOAH

I wanna go to the main stage, it's about to start.

EL

They're the ones who have the drugs.

NOAH

Fuck the drugs Elena. Let's just have fun.

A lifesize fluorescent mushroom sits a couple feet away. The Badass Burnett and Flirty Blonde lean against it smoking... something.

EL

It's them.

She walks quicker through the never ending crowd. It seems as though it's expanding.

EXT. LARGE STAGE - LATER

Air cutting LASERS layer a smoke film across the night sky.

MONTAGE

BODIES move freely, overtaken by the music.

PILLS with smiley faces invade OPEN MOUTHS.

Elena dances wildly next to a carefree Noah.

Her HIPS sway.

SWEAT slivers down her forehead.

HER PUPILS dilate.

MINTUES LATER

Elena glances frantically around as the sounds around her begin to distort.

EL

Noah?

He's nowhere. The Flirty Blonde and Badass Brunette flash in front of her, their faces blurred. The Badass Brunette looks up...

It's Elena.

BADASS BURNETTE

Don't forget to take your pills  
Elena.

The girls laugh.

EMMA

Elena.

Emma appears as a misty reflection of lights.

EL

This isn't real.

She grabs her head.

EMMA

You can do this.

EL

I can't.

She runs away. Light getting smaller. She searches desperately.

She sees Noah, she reaches, right before she can grab him...

EVERYTHING DISAPPEARS.

INT. ROTHBURY HOSPITAL - ER - HALF AN HOUR LATER

El's vision keeps going in and out. A half conscious blur.

An oxygen mask covers her mouth, her breathing is frantic. Four doctors surround her gurney spouting out regulations.

A RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST inserts an IV.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST  
Cardio get her heart rate down  
before she seizes again.  
(She turns to a nurse)  
Rick go ask that kid she came in  
with what the hell she took!

El's body starts compulsing. Her EYES roll to the back of her head.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST (CONT'D)  
Fuck. We are gonna need to put her  
on diazepam. RUTH lets get 20 mg in  
her IV.

RUTH  
Are you sure about 20?

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST  
Yes. She definitely took something  
else. We have to stop these  
seizures.

Ruth adds the medication to the drip.

BLACKNESS.

INT. EL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - HOURS LATER

El is sitting up, still a little dazed, but mostly back to normal.

Noah sits in a pullout chair beside her bed.

NOAH  
You know, we really gotta stop this  
whole hospital routine.

El smiles, but something isn't quite right.

The Red Headed Neurologist enters.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST  
Glad to see you are doing better,  
Elena.

She looks at the charts and turns to Noah.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST (CONT'D)  
Do you mind giving us a second?

EL  
It's fine, he can stay.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST  
So it seems you had a severe case  
of serotonin syndrome.

NOAH  
Serotonin syndrome?

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST  
It's a condition where the body has  
an unhealthy amount of serotonin,  
which is the neurotransmitter  
associated with happiness. When the  
body has an overdose it shuts down  
and depending on the severity of  
the overdose you can experience  
symptoms such as you had.

NOAH  
It must have been from Moon's stuff  
El. I told the doctor's you took  
two of her pills.

EL  
Moon's stuff? Moon didn't have  
anything. I got it from that  
brunette with the turtle backpack?

NOAH  
No? You took them from Moon.

EL  
No, the brunette with the blonde  
friend.

NOAH  
El, we never talked to two girl  
friends.

El racks her brain.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST  
Well you experienced a severe  
case...it was almost fatal. We  
found traces of Zoloft in your  
bloodstream. Are these prescription  
or recreational?

Noah looks at El. Confused.

EL  
Um.. I used to be prescribed.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

The abuse of the antidepressants and the MDMA you took could have killed you. I think it's best you stay here for the night so we can monitor you. Let me know if I can get you anything.

She leaves the room. Noah stands up.

NOAH

You've been taking your antidepressants?

EL

Noah, can we not right now.

He paces for a second.

NOAH

You knew.

As if suddenly realizing some secret code.

NOAH (CONT'D)

You knew? Didn't you?

El looks away in shame. He gets closer.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Look me in the eyes and tell me you weren't trying to kill yourself.

Her gaze never meets his.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Elena, please tell me you weren't?

\*

FLASHBACK: FALL, 2015

(INT - ELENA & EMMA'S APARTMENT- LATE NIGHT)

EL

Didn't you have a phone interview?

EMMA

Yea, but I felt like it wasn't a good one.

EL

So you just went and had sex?

EMMA

Why are you pissed at me?

EL

Cause, weren't you not just crying about this a couple days ago?- You always just do the same shit Emma.

EMMA

Okay, sorry, I wanna do my own thing.

EL

Cool. Do your own thing, but stop giving me this shit about how you want people to see you differently and that you wanna make different choices.

EMMA

Why can't I just have fun?

EL

God. You are just never gonna get it.

EMMA

Chill.

EL

I'll chill when you grow the fuck up.

~BACK TO REALITY~

NOAH

Are you even hearing me? She wasn't all you had, do you not know that? Can you not just realize that sometimes life is really fucking hard...but, killing yourself? That's low Elena, even for you.

\*

\*

He walks out leaving Elena motionless in the background.

INT. EL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NEXT DAY

El sits in bed, aimlessly picking at her Jell-O.

Her doctor enters.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

We contacted your doctor. You were prescribed antidepressants five years ago?

\*

\*

EL

Yes.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

So I know you were well informed of the side effects of mixing.

EL

I understand.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

So are you saying you did this intentionally?

\*  
\*  
\*

EL

No.

\*  
\*

The doctor knows she is lying.

\*

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

Elena have you ever thought of seeing someone?

EL

What?

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

I'd love to offer you to someone at our hospital, but I know you're not close. I know a lot of good psychologists in your area.

EL

No.

The doctor shuts the door.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

My mom died when I was your age. I tried, but one day I smashed my car straight into a tree, it wrapped all the way around. Next thing I know, I woke up from a coma three months later.

Elena stares at her, uncertain what to say.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST (CONT'D)

It's normal to want to give up. It's easy. It takes strength to keep going.



EL

I don't know what you are talking about.

\*  
\*

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

Just be honest with me. I promise I won't send you away.

\*  
\*  
\*

Elena examines the doctor. Judging if she's trustworthy.

\*

EL

I can't tell my dad.

\*  
\*

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

You don't have to. You said you go to Oakland University, correct?

EL

Yes.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

Your school has free sessions for students and a friend of mine works there. I'm going to schedule you an appointment with her.

Pause.

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST (CONT'D)

Elena if you don't go I will have to report this. There is no harm in seeing someone.

\*  
\*  
\*

EL

Okay.

\*

RED HEADED NEUROLOGIST

Okay then.

EXT. OAKLAND UNIVERSITY - THE QUAD - A FEW DAYS LATER

It's sunny April day. The quad is a large grass field surrounded by University buildings.

STUDENTS roam around, some toss around frisbees, others sit on blankets enjoying the company of others.

ELENA walks aimlessly through the festive scene.

INT. COUNSLING CENTER - WAITING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Elena stands at the front desk speaking to a WOMAN behind the glass.

WOMAN

Alright sweetie, I just need you to sign this paper and then you're all set.

Elena signs, questioning her decision.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Just take a seat over there and the doctor will be out shortly.

Elena sits in a large armchair. The DOOR swings open with a chime. Elena ducks, scared of being observed.

PAMPHLETS sit on a table beside her: "How to Overcome Addictions," "Don't Be Shamed by Your Assault."

She looks around as she sinks deeper into the chair.

NURSE

Elena Emerson.

FUCK. Why'd she have to say it aloud.

Elena walks swiftly toward the door.

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - FEW MINUTES LATER

THERAPIST

So Elena, you wanna talk about what happened at the festival?

EL

Not really.

THERAPIST

You wanna tell me what caused it?

Elena is struggling.

EL

It was stupid. What I did was just dumb and I know that.

THERAPIST

I think you did it because you felt like that was the only way to solve your problems, am I right?

EL

Sure.

The Therapist smiles.

THERAPIST

This is going to be a lot easier for you if you just talk to me.

EL

I just don't know what you want me to say. My best friend got shot and I just didn't know what the fuck else to do. I know it's pathetic, I'm just fucking pathetic and I need to just accept it. I know that, but I just can't, and all I want is to see her again and that's the only way I can so.

Elena starts to tear up.

THERAPIST

Do you think she would want you to do that?

Tears move slowly down her face. She fights it.

EL

No.

(Pause)

She'd probably hit me on the head and say I'm an idiot.

A saddened grim slightly raises her cheeks for a split second.

THERAPIST

It's normal to be upset and to blame yourself, but it's also okay to let her go.

EL

I don't want to.

THERAPIST

No one ever does, but it's not fair to her if you loose yourself. How bout you tell me about a happy time you had with her?

FLASHBACK: FALL, 2015

(INT - ELENA'S ROOM - AFTERNOON)

Elena sits on her bed with her keyboard, attempting to write out a song.

Emma peers in around her door.

EL  
Hey, creep.- What?

EMMA  
I just finished an interview with URave.

EL  
Who?

EMMA  
That huge music company in Cali,  
they like promote Mystic Woods.

EL  
No fucking way! Why didn't you tell  
me?

EMMA  
I don't know I just wanted to see  
how it was gonna go..buuut he said  
I seem to be a perfect fit for the  
company and that they have a few  
positions opening for this summer.

EL  
No. Way! Holy shit Em, this is  
awesome.

She hugs her.

EL (CONT'D)  
Congratulations darling.

~Back to REALITY~

El sits helplessly.

EL (CONT'D)  
That's one of my favorite memories.

THERAPIST  
Why?

EL  
She was so happy.

THERAPIST

Have you tried to talk to her at all since she passed?

EL

How would I do that like through a psychic or something?

The therapist grins.

THERAPIST

No, no. I just mean sometimes people look for closure. I want you to reach out to her in some way. You could write her a letter goodbye or just speak like she was there with you. Sometimes people just need to say goodbye in order to move forward.

EXT. CREEKWOOD CEMETERY - DAYS LATER

SIGN: CREEKWOOD CEMETERY

Leaves rustle from the color coated trees.

The day is alive but the sky is pale.

EMMA'S GRAVE sits inches away from a frozen Elena.

EMMA RENEE HAWTHORNE

"An inner indecisiveness that was as wide and as wavering as the ocean."

July 5 1993 - April 1 2015

She sits down beside it, her eyes puffy.

EL

Hey Em. I uh...god this is weird. Um, I don't really know why I'm here -- I mean, I do, my therapist told me to come.

(Laughs)

I know, I have a therapist like wtf, right? I feel like it's funny cause you told me forever to get a therapist and now that you're gone I actually listen to you.

Elena starts to tear up. A lump forms in her throat.

EL (CONT'D)

I'm really trying here Em. I just don't know what to do anymore. I miss you so fucking much every single day -- but I just can't live like this anymore. It's killing me Emma. And all I want is to just keep holding on, but I think I just got to let you go. -- I know it's not my fault, but I shouldn't have taken you to that movie. I would do anything to change that. -- I'm always gonna love you Em. Probably more than anyone. -- I brought you something.

Elena pulls out a blunt from her jacket pocket and places it on the grave.

EL (CONT'D)

I even wrapped it in honey cause I knew you'd be pissed cause your gonna cough like a twelve year old.

She turns and looks at the grave as if Emma was staring up at her.

She picks up the blunt and puts a lighter to it.

EL (CONT'D)

I guess I'll smoke it for the both of us. One last time Em.

MONTAGE BEGINS-

INT. EMMA'S ROOM - COUPLE DAYS LATER

Elena holds a hand full of folded boxes standing in the middle of Emma's room. She looks around at all the stuff.

EL

Alright.

Hours pass.

Boxes scatter the room. She labels a taped box "clothes."

INT. BATHROOM - HOURS LATER

PILLS fall into the open TOILET. Elena flushes and watches as they all go down.

She places the bottle down, "ANTIDEPRESSANTS."

INT. EMMA'S ROOM - NEXT DAY

A couple boxes are stacked in the corner. Stuff still everywhere, but better.

Elena reaches underneath the bed, grabbing something.

It's a jar, she reaches in pulling out a handful of GLOW IN THE DARK CONDOMS.

She starts to hysterically laugh, shaking her head.

EL  
What the fuck Emma.

INT. ELENA'S BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

Elena lays on the opposite side of her bed.

She presses NOAH'S contact.

NOAH  
Hey, you've reached Noah.

She hangs up.

EL  
Ah.

EXT. WATER TOWER - AFTERNOON NEXT DAY

A SMALL KEYBOARD sits in front of El. HER FINGERS play random notes as she hums along.

EL  
(Humming)  
Her eyes cast shadows on my soul.  
My emptiness consumed with all her  
hold.  
Life goes on and you remember.  
Those summer days back in November.

She stops, writing the new words on a scribble pad beside her.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

About ten boxes line the wall. Her bed frame is tilted up against the ceiling.

Stuff still sits in one corner. Two open boxes await the remaining items.

EXT. GOODRICH PARK - DAWN NEXT DAY

The sun shines bright on the black asphalt.

KIDS glide down slides and play in sand as MOMS talk amongst themselves.

ELENA runs past in workout clothes, headphones blaring.

She stops, her breathing heavy, pauses music.

Takes out an earbud as she presses NOAH'S number.

VOICEMAIL...

EL

Noah, come on, please call me back.  
It's been two weeks. I wanna talk  
to you.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - A COUPLE DAYS LATER

EVAN sits in the studio with Elena.

She shows him her lyrics.

EL

Okay, you know Feels by Kiiara?

EVAN

Yea.

EL

That's the echo feel I'm kind of  
talking of. I want it to be  
sentimental, but also trippy like  
that, you feel?

EVAN

I gotchu. Let me play around with  
your beat a bit and I'll see what I  
come up with.



EL  
Alright, thanks. Just can't get  
exactly what I want.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

Emma's room is completely bare besides the MOUNTAIN OF BOXES  
that lines the wall.

Elena. Lays in the middle of the room with her knees in the  
air, sweating.

EL  
Finally.

EXT. NOAH'S APARTMENT - NEXT DAY

El knocks on the front door.

The place is pretty run down.

She turns to see NOAH'S CAR parked in his spot.

EL  
Come on Noah, I know you're home...  
I'm gonna wait here until you come  
out.

She sits there.

An hour passes.

She watches something on her phone.

An hour passes.

EL (CONT'D)  
Noah, I'm still here.

She throws rocks across the street.

An hour passes.

It's dusk.

EL (CONT'D)  
Noah, please I have to go, just  
open the door.

...

She begins to walk away. NOAH watches her leave through the BLINDS.

EXT. ELENA'S & EMMA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A UHAUL TRAILER is latched to the back of ELENA'S CAR.

A MAN carries boxes to the back of the trailer.

Elena talks to another WORKER.

EL

Yea, just the boxes in the room on the right. Should only be fifteen or so. - Oh, and the bed frame. Could you guys pack that as well?

WORKER

Yes ma'am. You know you could of had us take this stuff for you in one of our cars?

EL

I wanted to take it myself. Thanks though.

WORKER

Yep.

The workers carry out the bed frame.

Elena closes the truck.

EXT. THE OPEN ROAD - THREE HOURS LATER

ELENA'S CAR moves along the interstate, swerving in and out of cars for sport.

INSIDE THE CAR:

Elena sloppily eats Dorrito's as she jams out to "Ride" by Lana Del Ray.

WELCOME TO DELAWARE.

EXT. EMMA'S HOME - HALF AN HOUR LATER

A tunnel of trees lines the path to Emma's woodsy colonial home.

The house is homey.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Emma's parents open the front door.

LORAININE

Elena, good to see you dear.

She comes in for a hug.

EL

Hi, Mr. Hawthorne, I didn't expect to see you.

MR. HAWTHORNE

Lorraine called me, good to go through everything together.

EL

It's all in the truck, I'll start to bring it in.

She makes way for the trailer.

LORAININE

Wait, do you think you could come in for a second. We just wanted to talk to you about something real quick.

EL

Um... ya of course.

INT. LORAININE'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

LORAININE

Thanks so much for driving up, you really didn't have to do that.

EL

I'm really sorry about the funeral. I had a lot to say I just couldn't...

LORAININE

Elena, don't worry about that at all. We understand, what you said was beautiful and I know Emma would have appreciated it.

EL

I'm just really sorry.

LORAINÉ

We know, that's why we wanted to talk to you about the shooter.

This is not what Elena expected.

LORAINÉ (CONT'D)

Neither of us could sleep.

She looks at Mr. Hawthorne, grabbing his hand.

MR. HAWTHORNE

We hired a private investigator to look into the murder.

EL

Oh.

Elena doesn't really know what to think. Half of her is angry they brought this up, the other half interested.

LORAINÉ

The shooter was sick. He had schizophrenia.

Pause.

EL

Does that change anything?

LORAINÉ

He just didn't know what he was doing Elena.

(Pause)

His wife had just died, the guy we hired said he had been off of his medications.

EL

Okay.

LORAINÉ

You were her best friend Elena. She would want the best for you.

MR. HAWTHORNE

Thank you for everything you did for our little girl.

INT. ELENA'S CAR - LATER

Streetlights shine through the raindrops scattered on the front window.

-----

Elena is throwing popcorn at Emma.

EMMA'S laugh.

The GUN SHOT.

El reaches for Emma but everything dissolves.

-----

She pulls the car onto the side of the highway.

Her breathing heavy. You think she is going to cry but she calms down, pulling out her NOTE PAD.

She's humming as she writes.

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAYS LATER

THERAPIST

You look good.

EL

I have been.

THERAPIST

Anything new happen since we last spoke?

EL

I went to see Emma's parents.

THERAPIST

How'd that go?

EL

It seemed like they were trying to justify her killer.

THERAPIST

And does that bother you?

Pause.

EL

It did.- But then it didn't. They need that, to know the killer wasn't okay.

THERAPIST

Wasn't okay?

EL

He had schizophrenia. Off his meds.

THERAPIST

Oh. And this didn't help you?

EL

I don't care if it was deliberate or not, he killed my best friend.- But that part doesn't matter.- I've asked myself why, but no answer is ever going to change it. Why is not really what I want.

INT. OAKLAND UNIVERSITY - GRANT AUDITORIUM - A DAY LATER

Blue caps and gowns line the floor of the auditorium.

Parents banter wildly in the elevated seats, grins for days.

At the podium the valedictorian...

NOAH

Holy shit. We made it.

He grins as the room laughs.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I first wanna take a moment to bow our heads and remember the people who we lost during our time at Oakland. They will forever be missed, but never forgotten.

HEADS start to bow, one of them is ELENA'S, she softly smiles as she twirls EMMA'S GEMINI BRACELET around her wrist.

FLASHBACK: SPRING, 2016  
(INT - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON)

Elena has her computer plugged into the HDMI, she is projecting apartments onto the TV.

EL

Okay, what about this one.

EMMA

I don't know I feel like I'd rather be closer to the beach.

EL

Truu. Okay, Hmm, Ooo.

EMMA

What?

EL

This one is 5 miles from the beach,  
it has a pool, gym and bar in the  
lobby.

EMMA

You're joking.

EL

I'm not, look.

Pictures of the bar come onto the screen.

EMMA

I didn't even know that was a  
thing.

EL

Me neither!

EMMA

El, I think this is it.

EL

I think it is too.

EMMA

Holy shit. This is gonna be sick!

The two gleam at one another.

~BACK TO REALITY~

NOAH

I cannot believe this day has come  
and I am honored to stand here in  
front of you all.

Minutes pass. The speech is a distant echo as we see students  
faces, rustling of hands, smiles, parents softly whispering  
or pointing out their kids.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I can't tell you where you're going  
to end up or even if what you  
learned here will help you in the  
future, but I *can* leave you with  
this quote -- I hope you live a  
life you're proud of.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

If you find that your not, I hope  
you have the strength to start all  
over again.

-- Thank you.

CLAPS echo off the auditorium walls as everyone rises.

PARENTS WHISTLE.

STUDENTS chant.

Flashes of: students walking the stage, turning their  
tassels, posing with their diplomas.

THE HATS go flying into the air.

EXT. OAKLAND UNIVERSITY - OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM

GREEN GRASS moves wildly in the wind as students scatter out  
of the ceremony.

EL

Jeff!

She runs over to HER BROTHER who stands in front of a flower  
bed off to the side.

He's holding TWO BEERS, both cut open.

Elena immediately grabs the first beer and starts shotgunning  
without saying a word.

She finishes, cheers the other beer with the sky and gulps it  
down.

JEFF

What the hell?

Elena's panting, bending slightly over. She starts to laugh.

She hugs Jeff.

EL

Hey bro, good to see you.

JEFF

Wanna tell me why you forced me to  
bring those?

She's still laughing.



EL

Sorry, it's some stupid promise Em and I had. It's like the only thing they tell you not to do after the ceremony.

Jeff's grinning.

JEFF

Shoulda known.

She spots NOAH a couple feet from her.

JEFF (CONT'D)

So where you wanna...

EL

Sorry, one sec.- Noah!

She runs toward him. He's talking to a FAMILY MEMBER and as he turns they proceed without him.

EL (CONT'D)

Hey.

NOAH

Hey.

EL

That was an amazing speech.

NOAH

Thanks.

The crowd moves fluidly around them.

EL

I'm going down to Lucy's Bar tonight. Would you come, I need you to hear something.

NOAH

Ah, um, I don't know. I need to get dinner with the fam and stuff.

EL

Ya, okay. Well I'll see ya.

She starts to walk away.

Then she turns back.

EL (CONT'D)

Noah.

Pause as he looks back at her through the crowd.

EL (CONT'D)  
If you change your mind, I'll be  
there around 9.

He walks away.

INT. DIVE BAR - LATER

El and Jeff sit at a bar table. Two empty shots sit in front of the beers they are sipping on.

JEFF  
Wait who was that guy you ran after  
earlier?

EL  
This guy Noah.

JEFF  
He a friend of yours?

EL  
Don't think he'd say so.

Pause.

JEFF  
You know after mom died I thought  
about killing myself.

El doesn't really know what to say.

JEFF (CONT'D)  
It doesn't make someone an awful  
person to think about it.

EL  
Why are you telling me this?

JEFF  
That guy Noah called me everyday  
after you left the hospital making  
sure you were okay.

EL  
He shouldn't have told you.

JEFF  
It is not something to be ashamed  
of.

EL  
Not what he thought.

JEFF  
No one knows how to deal with that  
Elena. Not even the best of people.

EL  
Ya.

JEFF  
(To the bartender)  
Yo, could I get another round.

JEFF (CONT'D)  
I think that guys one hell of a  
friend.

The shots come over.

EL  
He's not gonna show is he?

Jeff lifts his shot in the air.

JEFF  
Cheers little sis.

INT. LUCY'S BAR - OPEN MIC NIGHT - LATER

Some DRUNK WHITE GIRL is screaming into the mic not caring to  
look at the Teleprompter.

DRUNK WHITE GIRL  
Since you been gone oh oh, can't I  
not breath for that very first time  
oh oh, ya baby sum of it all since  
you beeeeeen goooonnnnee

Jeff is plugging his ears.

JEFF  
What the fuck is this.

El's laughing, very much accustomed to the scene.

EL  
Yo, they aren't all music majors.

The DJ cuts the track, pulling the mic away from the girl.

DJ

Okayy, I think we've had enough of that. Thank you- (reading from a list) Little kitty mic muffin. Um, alright. Our next guest is Elena singing an original. - Real name's are promising. - Give it up.

EL

Fuck.

Jeff pushes her.

JEFF

Just go Elena.

EL

He's not here.

JEFF

I'm here.

El makes her way to the stage.

The spotlights switch to a deep red as she looks upon the crowd...hoping.

EL

Alright, well, I wrote this for my friend Noah, but don't think he could make it. Anyway...

EL (CONT'D)

(To the DJ)

You can play it.

JEFF

Elena!

Elena looks out to see Jeff...he's standing with his arm around Noah.

The music starts. Flashes to Noah's face.

EL

Her eyes cast shadows on my soul.  
My emptiness consumed with all her hold.  
Life goes on and you remember.  
Those fall days back in November.  
Wish I could hear your voice again.

(MORE)

EL (CONT'D)

But this isn't right, life is not  
Some emptiness that I have bought  
I don't have to pay for all these  
sins  
Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh  
I don't have to pay for all these  
sins

The sad thing is this is not me  
I am not this hollow being you see  
In time I have learned, to let go  
Have seen that others too cast  
shadows on my soul

Wish I would have known it sooner  
Wish you were there with us in  
November  
I'm sorry that it took this long to  
see  
That you are another who sees me

But this isn't right, life is not  
Some emptiness that you have bought  
You don't have to pay for all these  
sins  
Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh  
You don't have to pay for all these  
sins

You owe me nothing,  
nothing was always the something  
that I showed  
But I ask you now,  
ask you to see that I have grown

You were my rock  
My other hold  
Please just see that I have grown

Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh  
I don't have to pay for all these sins  
Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh,

You don't have to pay for all these sins  
Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh,  
I'm sorry that I made you pay

The red lights reflect the water glistening from her eyes.

The crowd cheers.

EL (CONT'D)

Thanks!

DJ

Holly shit girl. That's one hell of a single. Damn, you love to see that.

She makes her way through the crowd.

EL

Thanks for coming.

He hugs her.

NOAH

You never fail to impress.

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON - DAYS LATER

The sun is beaming through the summer foliage.

Elena is running a couple yards ahead of Noah who trails behind her with a SIX PACK OF BLUE MOONS.

She's laughing as she wildly makes her way up her personal charted trail.

Noah shouts to her.

NOAH

Where the hell are you taking me weirdo?

EL

Keep up, ya don't wanna get lost.

NOAH

I wouldn't if I knew where we were going.

She laughs and keeps running.

She is free.

EXT. WATER TOWER - MINTUES LATER

Elena stands in the middle of the ladder waiting for Noah.

He comes up to the tower panting.

EL

Jeez.

Between breaths.

NOAH

You run track now or something.

EL

Get up here loser.

She starts to climb up the metal ladder.

NOAH

I have a whole beer case.

She looks down at him smiling.

EL

I've done it a million times.

THE TOP OF THE TOWER

Noah hands the beers up to Elena.

NOAH

Can you take these.

She grabs them and stands by the ledge as Noah makes his way on top.

He looks down at the miniscule town engulfed by hillsides.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Wow.

EL

It's beautiful, isn't it.

NOAH

How the hell did you find this place?

Elena goes to open her beer on a crack in the ground.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Wait!

Noah pulls out a bottle opener and hands it to her.

She laughs as she pops off the top.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
What's so funny? I didn't get the  
twist off's.

She sits.

EL  
I use to come here with Emma. I  
don't even know how many times we  
sat up here just rambling about the  
stupidest shit.

He sits.

NOAH  
Wow, is this Elena opening up??

She shoves him jokingly.

EL  
Don't be an asshole.

EL (CONT'D)  
I'm really gonna miss this place.

NOAH  
Are you though?

She laughs.

EL  
No not really.

Pause.

EL (CONT'D)  
But this view I'll miss.

NOAH  
There's always more.

She holds up her beer.

EL  
Cheers to there always being more.

They cling glasses.

NOAH  
What are the odds you finish it?

EL  
2.



NOAH

3.2.1.

EL

NOAH (CONT'D)

1.

2.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Ahhh. Going down next time.

He chugs his beer.

EL

This time is good enough for me.

FLASHBACK: SPRING, 2016  
(INT - WATER TOWER - AFTERNOON)

~This is the same moment as the opening scene~

Elena is chugging her beer.

EMMA

I'm not going to Cali.

Elena spits half of it up, thinking she heard her wrong.

EL

Huh?

EMMA

I didn't get the job.

EL

But Emma we signed the lease. We  
leave in like a month and a half.

EMMA

I called and switched it to a  
single room.

Pause.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

EL

I just don't understand.

Emma starts to tear up.

EMMA

You've never been nothing but an amazing friend to me Elena, but you have these dreams and I have no doubt that your going to make them happen, but I can't match them.

EL

But you don't have to. I don't care where we live or what we do, I just want you there.

EMMA

I'm never going to do anything, but hold you back.

EL

That's not true. Why are you making this decision for me.

EMMA

Because you're too nice to do it.- I love you El, so much, but you gotta let me go.

### 3 MONTHS LATER

EXT. DOWNTOWN LA - AFTERNOON

A UHAUL sits open on the side of a populated street.

Elena stands on the curb directing the two men inside with the boxes.

EL

Alright, those two are kinda fragile I think, so let's bring them up first... Ya, this way, just follow me.

The three head into a modernized, up and coming, building.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

EL

Alright, it's just here to the right.

She opens the door to room 401.

Boxes line the apartment entrance.

NOAH stands in the middle of the living room unpacking his boxes.

NOAH  
Ah, look who it is.

Elena runs up to hug him.

EL  
Good to see ya, stranger.

NOAH  
So I went ahead and gave myself the biggest room.

EL  
No you didn't.

Elena goes to look.

NOAH  
Oh, is that gonna be a problem.  
Didn't realize.

She see's his stuff in the slightly smaller room.

EL  
I hate you.

NOAH  
Do you though?

She looks out the wall of windows onto the city below her.

EL  
This is one hell of a view.

THE END

(CONT'D)