

THE MEET

Written by
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INT. AUDITORIUM. DAY

CLOSE on EMMA TORY, 17, baking under stage lights, a sheen of sweat covering her face, eyebrows knit in concentration.

She wears a spider-like metal HEADPIECE, bulky and clasped painfully to her skull. Wires are attached to her temples with small suction cups.

EMMA

...Hippopotami...breakfasting...
...with...Martian...Landlords...
...Can...you...tell...which...is
...which?
...Because...I...can.....not.

ZAP!! We ORBIT around Emma to reveal a CABLE coming out of the back of the headpiece. We follow it as it feeds into a:

MASSIVE, CHURNING, HISSING MACHINE. Pipes extrude out of it like spilled guts. Bellows mounted to the sides inflate and deflate.

DING! A translucent pink JELLY SPHERE on a ceramic platter pops out of a small door of the machine.

A STAGEHAND picks up the platter, walks down to a table by the front row of the audience and places it before:

THREE JUDGES - who stare at the Jelly Sphere, eyes gleaming.

Judge 1, a bespectacled thin man, takes out a knife and a strange two-pronged fork. Cuts thin slices of the Jelly Sphere. Passes them to the other judges.

They place the slices in their mouths. Do not chew. Then swallow.

Judge 2 gasps. Judge 3 leans back in his chair, clearly impressed. Judge 1 writes down some notes.

They hold up score cards. 9.5, 9.3, 9.8.

SUPER: IOWA STATE THOUGHT PAGEANT - YEAR 2066

JUDGE 1

A melancholy structure gives way to
ambling notes of lavender and
weighted blankets, which themselves
collapse - coalesce - into a
singular melodic phrase: I felt my
mother's warm hand against my back
while I vomited into a bowl.

The other judges nod in assent.

A *noise* - a mix between a cough and a groan - catches the judges' attention.

On stage, next to Emma, sits a SWEATY BOY, her opponent, also hooked up to a machine. He grunts and jolts in his seat.

ZAP!! His machine rumbles. A platter with a slushy pile of grey jelly pops out.

The Judges scoff and hold up zeros.

JUDGE 1 (CONT'D)
Improper formulation.

Emma smiles.

INT. AUDITORIUM. WINGS. MOMENTS LATER

Emma walking off stage. VANCE, 40s, her godfather, hands Emma a towel and an insulated water bottle.

VANCE
Great work.

Emma mops her face with the towel.

Sweaty Boy limps into the wings and collapses into his mother's arms. Emma watches him, amused.

INT. BACKSTAGE. DAY

Cavernous, fluorescent lighting, loud and echo-y. Teens recoup while parents mill around, chatting, strategizing.

Emma walks silently through the crowd. Her eyes are focused ahead.

Other contestants watch her, whisper to each other, envious, resentful, adulatory.

INT. EMMA'S DRESSING ROOM. DAY

RACHMANINOFF PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 playing.

A small room. A mirror, a rack of towels, a backpack on the floor.

Emma is seated by another MACHINE, a miniature version of the one in the auditorium. She wears another headpiece.

Emma grunts and hums to herself, mumbling something we can't quite hear -

Zap!! The machine whirs. Then a small Jelly Sphere emerges. It's a milky bluish color.

She takes a bite out of it.

Chuckles.

She spits into a bucket, as if it's a wine tasting spittoon. Then takes off the headpiece.

She leans back in the chair, inhales slowly, holds, then exhales.

VANCE enters, holding a tray with a lid over it.

He puts it down. Then flicks his fingers outward, producing, as if out of nowhere, a small piece of folded paper.

VANCE
Your rank and schedule.

Emma unfolds the paper, skims through it, and grins.

VANCE (CONT'D)
What's this?

Vance picks up the half eaten milky bluish Jelly Sphere. Pops it into his mouth. He GIGGLES uncontrollably.

VANCE (CONT'D)
A joke? Hehehehehe

Emma eyes the tray with interest. She lifts the lid.

REVEAL another Jelly Sphere.

It's translucent orange, and half of it is missing, cut off.

VANCE (CONT'D)
Ah. Thought you'd be interested.
Haha. Swiped it before it was
tossed. Hehe.

Emma tries the orange Jelly Sphere. She pauses, then:

EMMA
A ball of fur purring on my chest.
Mature foundation, effortless
clarity. Whose idea is this?

VANCE

Her name is - heh. Sorry. Her name -
haha - She's - hhehehehehehe

INT. AUDITORIUM. WINGS. DAY

OLGA LEBEDEV, 16, pimply, wearing a large sweater and bulky headphones, dances silently. She holds a sports bottle.

She is watched by Emma - in the wings on the other side of the stage.

EMMA

Her?

Vance nods. Emma's eyes narrow.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Rapid simultaneous ideation - round
one of three.

The audience is, and always is, silent.

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

Olga Lebedev.

Olga takes off her headphones, walks out onto stage, waves.

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

Emma Tory.

Emma walks out, waves, shakes hands Olga.

They both sit down next to their respective machines and put on their headpieces.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Contestants. Your prompts.

A Worker enters and hands them each a SEALED ENVELOPE.

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

And...

Emma and Olga straighten their backs.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

...begin!

Emma and Olga rip open their envelopes.

Their eyes scan the contents within.

Then Emma CLOSES HER EYES.

She starts muttering quietly - piecing something together in her head - blood pumping - then, loudly for all to hear:

EMMA
Messianic...Gerald...Ford...
Jackaroos...in...the outback...
Legacy...not...for...sale.

Zap! Her machine whirs. She collapses. A Jelly Sphere, clear with a wispy tornado pattern inside, emerges.

Emma glances at Olga - who is hunched over in her seat - shaking - then in a crazy burst:

OLGA
SCANDINAVIA UNITES, CONQUERS NEW
HAVEN FOR DOBERMANNS, FINDS ONLY
POODLES.

Olga's machine JOLTS into action. A yellow oozy Jelly Sphere pops out.

Stagehands pick up the two platters and walk them down to the Judges.

Judge 1 cuts up Emma's Sphere and passes it to the others.

The judges taste it.

They write down some notes.

They raise their score cards:

9.2, 9.1, 8.9

The judges pause, then slice up Olga's Sphere and taste it.

They raise scorecards:

9.4, 9.7, 9.9

Emma freezes - in shock. Judge 2 clears her throat.

JUDGE 2
These are both remarkable pieces of
ideation. Messianic-Gerald-Ford-
Jackaroos-In-The-Outback-Legacy-Not-
For-Sale constructs a fragmentary
narrative that probes the chasm
between past and present.
(MORE)

JUDGE 2 (CONT'D)

Scandinavia-Unites-Conquers-New-Haven-For-Dobermanns-Finds-Only-Poodles ventures into a distinct vision of myth and the early millennium. Ultimately, the latter prevailed as the more potent experience and hewed closer to the prompt - despite lacking in aesthetic cohesiveness.

Olga hobbles to her feet. Celebratory. Shakes Emma's hand.

Emma, dumbstruck, silently walks off stage.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Round two will commence after the break. There is potato salad and orange juice in the lobby. Parking validation is in the booth by the back entrance...

Vance, waiting for Emma, hands her a towel.

VANCE

It's okay.

Emma shrugs him off and keeps walking.

EXT. AUDITORIUM. ROSE GARDEN. DAY

The auditorium is a brutalist concrete cube surrounded by a grid of rose bushes. Parents and contestants eat and chat.

Emma and Vance sit on a brick stoop. He eats potato salad. Emma picks her fingernails, peeled down to her skin, dry.

VANCE

Dial up the resonance at the tail end of the formulation, and she doesn't stand a chance.

Emma looks across the garden where Olga, Olga's parents, and younger siblings picnic on the grass.

EMMA

You think she's classically trained?

VANCE

You should eat.

ON EMMA - cogs turning in her head.

INT. EMMA'S DRESSING ROOM. DAY

Emma stares at the orange idea ball that she tried earlier.

She throws it in the spittoon, adjusts her practice machine, and puts on the headpiece.

Emma hunches over and closes her eyes. Her face begins to twitch in concentration. She winces. Trembles.

INSERT CUT: A BLACK ORB IN A WHITE HAZE. IT GROWS AND GROWS...UNTIL THE DARKNESS ENGULFS US.

Zap! The machine spits out a new Jelly Sphere.

It's transparent with a ribbon of red spiraling through the middle like a marble.

Emma appraises it.

Then digs into her backpack and takes out a pocket-sized leather KIT - like a small binder that zips up.

Inside is an array of forks, knives, and zesters.

Emma zests a tiny portion of the idea ball, making a small pile on the table.

Emma digs into her backpack again. Finds a pen. Uncaps it.

CLOSE on the pile of zest as Emma guides it off the edge of the table and into the pen cap.

EXT. AUDITORIUM. DAY

Emma pushes herself against a crowd of people who are trying to get back into the auditorium. She scans the side of the building, looking for Olga.

VANCE (O.S.)
Where've you been?

Emma turns. Spots Vance.

EMMA
Resting.

VANCE
We're on soon.

EMMA
In a sec.

VANCE
Everything alright?

EMMA
Yes.

Vance shrugs.

VANCE
You know where I'll be.

He follows the rest of the crowd back into the auditorium.

Emma heads around the corner of the building. Peers into the rose garden.

No one there.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAYS. DAY

FOLLOW Emma fast walking through the hallways.

She stops.

Lost.

She looks at the doors of the dressing rooms.

They're numbered.

INT. BATHROOM. DAY

She locks herself into a stall. Opens the folded SCHEDULE that Vance gave her earlier.

Rows and rows of printed names and times - various match ups. Then below that: a list of the contestants, their ranks...

...and room numbers.

INT. OLGA'S DRESSING ROOM. DAY

CLOSE on Olga seemingly at peace, her hair weirdly standing on end.

REVEAL - Olga doing a perfect handstand on a yoga mat in the middle of her room. The door opens.

EMMA
Oh shit wrong room.

Olga continues doing the handstand.

OLGA
No. No worries.

EMMA
I'll leave you to your prep.

Olga recognizes Emma.

OLGA
No please. Come in.

Emma steps inside. Awkward beat.

EMMA
I thought it was clever, the way
you goosed the structure.

OLGA
Your stuff's not bad either.

"Not bad" rubs Emma the wrong way.

EMMA
(re: handstand)
Is this your prep?

OLGA
It's just relaxing.

EMMA
I listen to music to cool down.

OLGA
What kind?

EMMA
Rachmaninoff.

OLGA
I don't know who that is.

EMMA
Just an old guy.

OLGA
Do you want to try this?

Emma hesitates, then steps forward, places her hands on the ground, and launches her feet into the air. Emma is weirdly good at the handstand.

She locks eyes with Olga. An upside down staring contest.
Emma's muscles twitching. Olga's face set like stone. Then -

An ELECTRONIC BELL rings over the PA System: *VROING - VROING - VROING*.

Olga disengages, does a swift roll, and pops up standing.
Emma heaves herself up to meet Olga at eye level.

OLGA (CONT'D)
I gotta take a piss.

Olga exits into a side restroom. Emma's eyes search the room.
On the ground is a bag.

And Olga's SPORTS BOTTLE.

Emma's eyes narrow.

WITH OLGA -

Washing her hands and coming back out into the main room.
It's empty.

She grabs her stuff and her bottle.

INT. AUDITORIUM. VARIOUS. DAY

Workers inspect the machines and wipe them down.

INTERCUT

-Olga lightly jogging through the halls.

-The Announcer doing vocal exercises in the back of the house.

-Emma, in the off-left wings, stretching her arms.

-The judges clearing their notepads.

-Olga reaches the off-right wings. Takes a swig from the bottle. Puts it on a table.

Olga immediately slows down. Looks at the bottle.

Tears stream down Olga's face.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Rapid Simultaneous Ideation round
two of three. Please welcome back
our contestants: Olga Lebedev and
Emma Tory.

Emma walks out on stage.

Olga tries to wipe away her tears - and fails. *Fuck it.* Olga trudges onto stage.

Emma and Olga shake hands. Olga is weeping and trying to hide it. Emma studies her.

The crowd is quiet as ever, but some members of the audience exchange uncomfortable glances.

Emma and Olga take their seats, lock themselves into their headpieces.

Olga's hands shake, fumbling with the clasp.

Finally, Olga is ready.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Your prompts.

A Worker hands them each a sealed envelope.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Your time begins...

Olga's lower lip trembles.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
...now.

Olga weakly opens the envelope, barely looks at it -

When a massive, ugly sob RACKS her body. Olga drops the prompt. Tears FLOOD down Olga's cheeks. Olga WAILS, body spasming.

The judges watch her, curious, concerned.

Emma opens her envelope. Looks at the prompt: a weird collection of numbers, finely printed Latin sentences, and logical symbols.

EMMA
Um....heli...helicopter...disco...

Olga's wailing SHOOTs up in volume - now a bloody SCREAM - cutting Emma off.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Helicopter...disco...moonlight...
...gazing...um....agh....

In the crowd, Olga's FAMILY watches in horror.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 Helicopter discography moonlight
 gazing....downward....while...
 Pomeranians...float...?

Zap! Emma's machine spits out a blood red Jelly Sphere.

The judges don't even notice it. Their eyes are on Olga.

Olga's neck bulges. She spasms out of her chair and cries in the fetal position, inconsolable.

OLGA
ARGGHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

ZAP! Olga's machine comes alive with noise. Immediately, commotion breaks out in the auditorium:

Workers dash in from the wings to provide assistance, prepping shots of sedatives. Olga's family rushes onto stage.

Emma watches in horror, then her gaze drifts towards Olga's machine:

It spits out a CRAZY, MULTICOLORED Jelly Sphere that looks like a Tie-Dye.

The judges lean forward, trying to get a better look at it.

Vance walks out onto stage and grabs Emma.

VANCE
 You okay?

No response from Emma.

VANCE (CONT'D)
 Emma?

The judges nod to a STAGEHAND, who picks up Olga's idea and walks it down to them. The judges slice the Jelly Sphere.

Emma watches. Olga groans as she gets cradled by her family.

The judges swallow their slices. There is utter disbelief in their eyes. Judge 3 begins to speak.

JUDGE 3
 Ms. Lebedev, your earnest and raw
 account under such unimaginable
 duress is one of the most vividly
 realized pieces of ideation that we
 have ever encountered.
 (MORE)

JUDGE 3 (CONT'D)
And it is our honor to have
witnessed your mind at work. Ms.
Lebedev, congratulations, you are
the Iowa State Rapid Ideation
Champion.

Emma stares at Olga's Crazy Sphere. Dumbfounded. Livid.

Then, Emma pushes past Vance, steps into the wings, and gets
obscured by shadow.

VANCE
Emma?

INT. BACKSTAGE. DAY

Emma walks past the other contestants, who stare and whisper.
Vance follows Emma from a distance. Emma quickens her step.

INT. EMMA'S DRESSING ROOM. DAY

Emma locks the door behind her. Vance pounds on the door.

VANCE (O.S.)
Emma. Open the door. EMMA!

Emma looks at the rest of the Jelly Sphere that she poisoned
Olga with. Most of it is still intact, only a bit of the side
was shaved off.

She sits down by her machine. Straps herself in. Eats the
rest of the Sphere.

Tears stream down Emma's face. She clutches the table. Sobs
rack her body. She squeezes her eyes.

ZAP! The machine CHURNS. Then the machine's door opens. A
platter with a pile of grey, formless Jelly comes out.

Emma SCREAMS.

INT. EMMA'S DRESSING ROOM. LATER

We're looking at the door.

BAM!

The door jolts, the lock rattles, and the frame splinters.

BAM!!!

More wood caving in, hinges breaking, as Vance stumbles in, having shouldered his way through the door.

He stops short, in utter horror, as he sees:

The mirror has been smashed.

And Emma, face bloody, shards of the mirror in her skin, cries in the corner.

CUT TO:

TITLE OVER BLACK

THEN TO:

INT. STATION WAGON. DAY

VANCE at the wheel of the car, sitting idle. A packed lunch on the passenger seat.

He produces a little GLASS BOTTLE.

Opens the cap.

And SNIFFS.

He shakes his head as it takes its effect.

He looks out the windshield at:

A looming network of buildings, each one a cross between an airplane hangar and a fortress. Tall wire fences surround them all. At the entrance, there are a few consecutive GATES.

This is THE POLK COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER.

The gates clank and screech as they slide open. Emma walks out. Faint scarring across her brow.

She spots Vance's car and begins to walk over.

Vance heaves a sigh.

INT. STATION WAGON. MOVING. LATER

Emma sits shotgun. Eats the packed lunch: a quinoa bowl with kale and tofu.

Vance drives silently.

EMMA
How've you been?

VANCE
I've been alright.

Emma studies Vance's expression for a moment, then moves on.

EMMA
I listened to Nationals - they let
us use the radio.

VANCE
She did well.

EMMA
It's so depressing.

VANCE
Yeah.

INT. APARTMENT. DAY

A modest two bed, one and half bath. A hodgepodge of stuff in the living room: a treadmill, overflowing bookshelves, and jigsaw puzzles on a coffee table.

SOUND: a key scraping the lock. A click.

The front door swings open. Vance enters, followed by Emma.

She takes in the apartment. Sniffs the air.

EMMA
Is that cabbage?

VANCE
Downstairs. New neighbors.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM. LATER

The walls are bare. There's a simple desk in the corner.

On the desk: a stack of envelopes.

Emma picks one up. The crest of WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY on the front. She opens it.

...We regret to inform you...

Emma throws all the letters in the trash.

EXT. IFCI HEADQUARTERS. DAY

The IFCI - The International Federation of Competitive Ideation.

An asymmetrical, concrete building that spirals in on itself on one side like a snail shell.

INT. IFCI HEADQUARTERS. DAY

Industrial and austere. Minimal staff. Dark grey floors and archways.

Series of angles:

THE LOBBY - IFCI insignia behind the front desk: an abstract silhouette of a magpie.

CORRIDORS - decorated with NUMEROUS POSTERS of contestants celebrating victories.

OFFICES - Middle managers reading, writing, and filing reports.

INT. IFCI CONFERENCE ROOM.

Several EXECUTIVES listen to Emma speak. Also present, off to the side, is Vance.

Emma stands before them all.

EMMA

First, I'd like to thank all of you for taking the time to consider my appeal. I believe a lifetime ban from competition is unprecedented and an overreaction to what I actually did. After all, she won.

Emma pauses. Clears her throat.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'd like to direct the attention of the board to Aaron Schuyler, a coach who knew his small team from Indiana had no hope at the national level.

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

In an effort to give them an extra layer of knowledge and insight, he slipped his own athletes an information bomb equivalent to seven volumes of first hand accounts from world war two veterans - which subsequently put all his athletes into a six week coma. However, Coach Schuyler was working again within two years, bringing Max Von Horst to fourth place at the Green-Steel Winter Invitational.

Emma takes a deep breath. Then:

EMMA (CONT'D)

I understand the board's reasons: that I may be a danger to myself and other athletes. Therefore, I am willing to accept a chaperone provided by the IFCI to oversee my movements during pageants.

(beat)

I just want to be on stage again.

The EXECUTIVES consider her speech...

INT. OUTSIDE THE CONFERENCE ROOM. LATER

Emma sits in a chair, picking her nails, waiting. She turns her head and peers in:

Through the glass, she can see Vance and the other Executives shaking hands and chatting together - but she can't hear them.

INT. INSIDE THE CONFERENCE ROOM.

The Executives are doing the whole bro-flattery thing.

EXECUTIVE 1

(to Vance)

2053, Toronto, you were down two rounds then came back with three stacked 9.8s.

EXECUTIVE 2

I was sitting right up there in the front. You were insane.

Vance smiles politely. Then switches the subject:

VANCE
Thank you for hearing her out.

EXECUTIVE 1
Of course.

VANCE
What are you guys thinking? A trial period? See how she does? She's eager to be let back in.

The Executives exchange looks.

EXECUTIVE 3
I think we'll have to discuss it among ourselves for a while.

EXECUTIVE 2
A lot of, uh, sensitive ligaments. You know how it is.

The sound of death. Vance just nods.

VANCE
Yeah, no, I get it.

EXECUTIVE 1
I know this is really lame, but do you think you could sign something for me?

WITH EMMA -

She watches as:

Executive 1 digs through his brief case and gives Vance a book and a pen. Vance signs.

Emma rips off a thin strip of her thumbnail.

EXT. MACRAE PARK. DAY

Overcast.

Dead leaves on the ground.

Emma in jogging gear. Running hard. Overtaking other runners.

She comes to a stop. Out of breath. Her eyes are red.

Determined.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN. DAY

Emma opens a cabinet. Takes out a plastic CONTAINER. Pours the contents - a white powder - into a measuring cup. Adds water. Stirs.

It condenses into a gelatinous clear substance...

VANCE (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Vance watches her from the entrance of the kitchen.

EMMA
I'm just gonna sketch a bit.

VANCE
Why?

EMMA
Because it's what I do.

VANCE
...200 milliliters. That's it.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM. LATER

Emma digs through her CLOSET - and hoists up a PRACTICE MACHINE.

She plunks it down onto her desk. Wipes off some dust. Flips up a hood and pours in some of that gelatinous substance.

Emma puts on the headpiece.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL TRAINING ROOM. DAY

Three MACHINES. A COACH watches the student athletes, who are all connected to the machines and mumbling quietly to themselves.

Among them is:

The SWEATY BOY from the opener.

He's 16. He has a name which we'll hear people say later, but Sweaty Boy is more memorable. His forehead gleams with perspiration.

SWEATY BOY

(sotto)

Decorated and distinguished, the
proboscis monkey sailed into the
interview....

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL QUAD. LATER

A complex of multiple two-story buildings. It's 4pm, and a few students walk to late buses.

Emma sits on top of a lunch table. Keeps her eye on the GYM DOORS.

They open; Sweaty Boy and the rest of the team emerge.

Sweaty Boy spots Emma.

Emma waves.

Sweaty Boy considers, then walks over.

SWEATY BOY

I didn't know you were back
already.

EMMA

How's your season been?

SWEATY BOY

Guess.

Emma grins.

EMMA

Is someone picking you up?

SWEATY BOY

No.

EMMA

Wanna get food or something?

SWEATY BOY

Why?

EMMA

It's something to do.

SWEATY BOY

You have ulterior motives.

EMMA
That's a given.

SWEATY BOY
Tell me more.

Emma collects her thoughts, then:

EMMA
In the past six months, has Olga performed as well as she did at States?

SWEATY BOY
Those were unique circumstances.

EMMA
What made them unique?

SWEATY BOY
You.

EMMA
Do you think she won despite of me, or because of me?

SWEATY BOY
Despite of you.

EMMA
Same difference. I gave her despair. She could've crumbled, but instead she channeled that into her performance. It made her stronger. I think there's a way to decrease the potency of that despair, so for normal athletes like you, it's a little extra gas in the tank, not a nuke.

SWEATY BOY
...You're nuts.

EMMA
I'm just talking to you because it seemed like you'd be interested. I'm sure there are lots of people who'd want this if you pass.

SWEATY BOY
I'm not interested in buying from you.

EMMA

I'm not selling anything. This is free.

SWEATY BOY

What's in this for you?

EMMA

I still want to be involved - even from afar.

SWEATY BOY

You want me to beat Olga for you.

EMMA

(beat)

If you're interested, you can swing by my place on Wednesday after school. I can show you what I've got.

SWEATY BOY

I've got cello on Wednesday.

It takes everything for Emma to hold back rolling her eyes.

EMMA

Thursday then. Yeah?

SWEATY BOY

I'll think about it.

PRELAP: *A knock at the door.*

INT. APARTMENT. DAY

Emma opens it. Sweaty Boy enters, backpack slung over his shoulder.

EMMA

My godfather won't be here for a few hours.

SWEATY BOY

That's chill.

Awkward silence.

EMMA

So...want to check out my shit?

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM. DAY

Sweaty Boy sits on the bed. Emma rummages through her desk drawer.

She takes out several ZIPLOC BAGS with an idea in each of them. The bags are all labeled with spike tape and sharpie.

Emma tosses one of the bags to Sweaty Boy.

EMMA

Start with five milligrams two minutes before you go onstage. If something goes wrong, or they want to scan you - you take ten milligrams of this:

She tosses another bag to Sweaty Boy.

SWEATY BOY

And what does this one do?

EMMA

It confuses you. Scrambles your thoughts enough to deactivate the depressing shit from the first one.

Sweaty Boy processes all of that.

SWEATY BOY

I don't see how this is going to work.

EMMA

What's the issue?

SWEATY BOY

They're going to catch me.

EMMA

They won't. They only know how to look for doping methods that already exist. That's how people in traditional sports consistently get away with designer drugs.

SWEATY BOY

Still, if I suddenly start winning everything, they're going to get suspicious.

EMMA

You start at low doses and work your way up.

Sweaty Boy's not buying it.

EMMA (CONT'D)
All of this means nothing if you
can't handle it, so are you going
to try it or not?

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN. DAY

A KNIFE - slicing into an idea. The Sweaty Boy picks up the slice. Puts it in his mouth.

Emma watches him.

Sweaty Boy mulls it over. Then shudders.

SWEATY BOY
Shiiit.

EMMA
These aren't like anabolic
steroids. Honestly, it's just extra
motivation. You're still going to
need to learn how to fight your way
through it. That means training the
way I did. That means taking this
as seriously as I did. That means
competing like I did. Are you in?

Sweaty Boy clutches the edge of the counter. Doesn't respond.
Then, he finds his resolve.

SWEATY BOY
You bitch.

INT. SWEATY BOY'S HOME. NIGHT

Silverware clinking on plates.

Sweaty Boy, his mom, and his dad sit around a dining table.

Sweaty Boy picks at his food - asparagus and corn.

SWEATY DAD
How was your day?

SWEATY BOY
Good.

Return to silence.

SWEATY MOM
I heard Olga got a sponsorship.

SWEATY BOY
With who?

SWEATY MOM
I don't know - one of those health bars.

SWEATY DAD
Free Oak Granola.

SWEATY BOY
That's cool.

SWEATY MOM
You're slouching again.

Sweaty Boy adjusts his posture.

INT. APARTMENT. DAY

Emma running on the treadmill. Vance lifting weights on the other side of the room.

VANCE
So what's your plan?

EMMA
Do I need one?

VANCE
You've been given a clean slate.
What interests you?

EMMA
Nothing interests me.

Vance looks at her sadly.

VANCE
Just think about it.

EXT. THE BLUFFS. DAY

Late in the day, after school.

Emma and Sweaty Boy squeeze through a fence and out onto a secluded SERVICE ROAD that leads off to a lookout point over the city.

The road is flanked by abandoned construction projects and weedy overgrowth.

As they walk:

EMMA

You know how they call you Semi-Final Simon?

SWEATY BOY

Yeah?

EMMA

I started that.

Sweaty Boy looks at Emma, disgusted.

SWEATY BOY

Seriously?

EMMA

No, I didn't. But it suits you. In ways it's a compliment. You get really close. You're just held back by some bad habits.

SWEATY BOY

No I'm not.

EMMA

More like misconceptions.

(beat)

You're on stage, you get your prompt. What are you thinking?

Sweaty Boy thinks about his answer, then:

SWEATY BOY

Well, I try to deduce if the prompt is asking for something emotional or academic, and I parse out the givens, and weave them into an answer that, um, seems insightful.

EMMA

What are we giving the judges? An idea? A memory? A thought?

SWEATY BOY

(quoting from a book)

An abstract brain object, produced by the process of thought.

EMMA

Okay, what makes an abstract brain object good?

SWEATY BOY

Its clarity, creativity, simplicity, and resonance.

EMMA

Those are four metrics that are constantly swallowing each other up. No one knows what makes a good idea. You just know when it makes you go: *holy shit*. Your thoughts always have to yield an emotional response - even if the prompt seems academic. That's why memory works so well in competition. They ask you about number theory? Find a way to segue that into something personal.

SWEATY BOY

How the hell do I do that?

EMMA

Good question.

EXT. LOOKOUT POINT. LATER

Emma and Sweaty Boy sit on a picnic blanket. Emma slices a sadness idea sphere on the lid of a Tupperware container.

EMMA

The second thing you're doing wrong: you're thinking too much. You need to trust yourself and move fast. Hence, our first drill.

Between them, a game of BANANAGRAMS has been set up. They each have 21 tiles in front of them.

Emma offers the slices to the Sweaty Boy.

Sweaty Boy takes one. Puts it in his mouth.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Peel!

They flip over the tiles and start arranging them into words.

Tears well up in Sweaty Boy's eyes. He tries to assemble a word. Hard to focus. He builds out another word as -

EMMA (CONT'D)
Bananagrams.

Sweaty Boy looks up. Emma has finished.

She pushes another idea sphere towards him: the confusion ball.

He picks it up. Takes a bite. His face flushes. He shakes his head.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Trust yourself.

She starts to reset.

SWEATY BOY
How many rounds are we playing?

EMMA
Until you beat me.

Emma puts the Bananagrams bag down between them. Unzips it. They take their tiles.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Ready?

Sweaty Boy takes a slice of the sadness ball. His face contorts. He nods.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Peel!

EXT. BUS STOP. NIGHT

Cars ROARING By.

Sweaty Boy and Emma wait for a bus. Sweaty Boy looks absolutely exhausted.

EMMA
What's your training regiment?

SWEATY BOY
90 minute session in the morning,
90 minutes in the afternoon.

EMMA
Do an extra hour when you're home.
30 minutes of basic drills, and 30
minutes of despair training. Here.

Emma tosses Sweaty Boy the Bananagrams bag.

Sweaty Boy looks at it forlornly.

SWEATY BOY
What about cello practice?

EMMA
Does Olga practice the cello?

SWEATY BOY
I don't know.

EMMA
She doesn't.

Emma sees that she isn't getting through to him.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I wouldn't be doing this with you
if I thought you couldn't do it.

She touches his arm.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM. BACKSTAGE. DAY

Sweaty Boy sitting with his parents. Contestants mill around.

SWEATY BOY
I should head to stage now.

Sweaty Boy stands, picks up his sports bag.

SWEATY MOM
You got this.

We follow the Sweaty Boy as he weaves through the other contestants. He reaches the WINGS of the stage.

Dark. Secluded. He digs through his sports bag. Takes out a Tupperware container with slices of the sadness ball.

An ANNOUNCER on stage speaks into a mic.

ANNOUNCER
Please welcome to the stage: Linus
Soderholm.

On the opposite end of the stage, a contestant walks out.

Sweaty Boy opens the Tupperware. Pops a slice into his mouth.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
And Simon Ecker!

Sweaty Boy puts away the Tupperware and steels himself against the effects of the despair.

Then, he walks out onto the bright stage...

INT. SUV. MOVING. DAY

The Sweaty Family car drives down a highway.

Sweaty Boy sit in the back seat. His dad is at the wheel. His mom sits shotgun. It's silent in the car.

Sweaty Mom heaves a sigh, disappointed.

Sweaty Boy shrinks in his seat.

SWEATY BOY (PRELAP)
What happened?

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM. DAY

Emma sits at her desk, which is littered with Ziploc bags and ideas. Sweaty Boy stands by the window, arms crossed.

EMMA
You're not ready, that's all.

SWEATY BOY
I don't think this works.

Emma puts on a headpiece. Eats a small part of an idea. Closes her eyes.

Ding!

An idea pops out of the machine. It's MULTICOLORED and INCREDIBLE looking - just like Olga's.

Sweaty Boy stares at it.

EMMA
It works. It just takes time.

SWEATY BOY
How did you do that?

EMMA

This is only achievable if you
commit every single molecule in
your body to it. So don't do this
for me; don't do this for your mom;
do this for you. It's not worth it
any other way. Do you want this?

Sweaty Boy looks at her.

SWEATY BOY

I don't know.

EMMA

That's lame as fuck.

SWEATY BOY

Why do you want this?

EMMA

This is the only thing I know how
to do.

SWEATY BOY

I doubt that.

Emma ignores him.

EMMA

Figure your shit out.

INT. SWEATY BOY'S HOME. BEDROOM. NIGHT

A DESK LAMP - clicking on.

THE BANANAGRAMS BAG - getting unzipped.

Sweaty Boy practicing alone.

INT. EQUINOX GYM. DAY

People lifting weights and running on treadmills.

Vance sits with a CLIENT (30s) who is hooked up to a MACHINE
and wearing a headpiece.

CLIENT

Landscaping...niceties....
technicolor....

VANCE

Hold on.

The client looks at Vance.

VANCE (CONT'D)
Don't worry about saying anything.
(re: Client's skull)
Just keep it all in here for now.
Stay focused, and if you trip up,
make it seem intentional. You good?

CLIENT
Yeah I'm good.

VANCE
Let's reset.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX. DAY

Vance takes out a stack of LETTERS from his mailbox. Looks through them as he walks up a flight of stairs.

Mostly junk mail, coupons, a postcard from a relative -

And a small ENVELOPE, clearly personal stationery. Vance pauses.

He opens it. Reads the card inside.

Reads it again.

Flips it over, as if to see if there's more to it.

There isn't. *Huh.*

I/E. STATION WAGON. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD. DAY

Vance steers. He has the envelope clasped between the wheel and his fingers.

He looks at the return ADDRESS on the envelope, then at the HOUSES sliding by his window.

He spots the house he's looking for - but he's overshot it - he hits the brakes. They squeal.

He backs up. Veers into a parking space between a large truck and a van. It's tight.

VANCE
Dammit.

Vance moves forward a bit. Tries again.

The FRONT DOOR of the house opens. A man emerges - Olga's DAD. He waves. Walks over.

Vance does his best to control his embarrassment. Rolls down the window.

VANCE (CONT'D)
Hi.

OLGA'S DAD
You still have some space.

VANCE
Thanks.

Vance continues backing up.

OLGA'S DAD
You're good! Okay stop!

Vance starts pulling forward.

INT. OLGA'S FAMILY HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY

Olga's Dad getting some cups out.

OLGA'S DAD
Tea? Coffee?

VANCE
Just water.

OLGA'S MOM (O.S.)
Don't worry, we won't poison it.

Olga's Mom stands in the entranceway of the kitchen. Vance looks grave.

VANCE
I'm so sorry.

OLGA'S MOM
We're lucky it was just sadness,
not something worse.

VANCE
Still - what she did was...

OLGA'S MOM
She did her time.

Let's move on. Vance nods.

OLGA'S DAD
(in Polish)
Where is she?

Olga's Mom tilts her head and calls out:

OLGA'S MOM
Olga!

LOUD FOOTSTEPS from upstairs, thundering down the staircase,
then Olga slides up to the entranceway.

OLGA
Hello.

VANCE
Hello.

INT. LIVING ROOM. OLGA'S FAMILY HOUSE. DAY

Vance sits on a couch in front of Olga and her parents.

OLGA'S MOM
We've looked at your coaching
history. Bottom line: your
goddaughter's implosion was clearly
not your fault. Olga has not had a
formal coach - well, not one that
we've liked - and we think you'd be
a good fit.

Vance looks at Olga's Mom, then Olga's Dad, then Olga.

VANCE
Why?

OLGA'S MOM
We'll spare you a summary of your
own resume. But you're the obvious
candidate to take Olga to the
international level.

VANCE
It seems like she's been doing well
on her own.

OLGA
I haven't been on my own. I
frequently revisit *7 Steps to Make
an Idea Worth Sharing*.

VANCE
That's not my best book.

OLGA
No, it's your most honest one
though.

Off Vance, considering the opportunity.

INT. APARTMENT. DAY

Vance sautés broccolini and has a rice cooker going. He calls out:

VANCE
I should tell you, I met with Olga
and her family.

In the living room, Emma reads a book. Vance's voice carries in.

VANCE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm going to start coaching her on
Wednesday.

She looks up from her book.

EMMA
That's cool.

VANCE
They're all actually really nice.

Emma digests that.

EXT. LOOKOUT POINT. DAY

Emma, Sweaty Boy, and Bananagrams.

SWEATY BOY
Boom!

Emma looks at Sweaty Boy's tiles, which have all been arranged into words.

EMMA
You're getting better.

SWEATY BOY
Thanks.

EMMA
It's not a compliment. It's a fact.

SWEATY BOY

Oh. Okay.

Emma puts away the tiles.

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)

Um.

Emma looks at him.

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)

Never mind.

EMMA

What?

SWEATY BOY

My friends are doing a thing later:
getting Fast Dan's near the park.
If you want, you can join. I don't
know if you'd be into that.

Emma doesn't respond.

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)

No, yeah, I guessed as much. It's
not that interesting anyways.

Emma continues to pack up.

EMMA

I'm surprised you have time to hang
out with your friends.

SWEATY BOY

They cornered me. I didn't really
want to.

EMMA

Then why are you going?

SWEATY BOY

I don't know.

Emma gives him a look: *how lame*.

EXT. FAST DAN'S. NIGHT

The outdoor seating area of a bustling fast food joint.
Sweaty Boy and his friends (AL, JACK, and MARIE) sip on
smoothies and intermittently pick at fries.

We're landing in the middle of their conversation:

JACK
...we hit up the gas station, and
guess who we saw.

MARIAH
Who?

JACK
Sarah.

Groans from Al and Mariah.

AL
That's hilarious.

On Sweaty Boy - tuning it all out. He stands up. The friends
break off their conversation.

SWEATY BOY
I have to go, guys. Sorry, I
forgot, I have to meet my parents.

MARIAH
Oh, um, okay.

A round of goodbyes from the friends.

LEAD Sweaty Boy as he walks away from his friends - and we

CUT TO:

TWO YEARS LATER

PRELAP: *DING!*

INT. AUDITORIUM. DAY

Another stage. Another Pageant.

An idea POPS out of a machine.

A worker picks it up, walks it off stage to a panel of JUDGES; as the worker does so, he passes the:

SWEATY BOY - watching intently as the idea gets sliced up by the judges. He's 18 now and a little less sweaty.

The judges try the idea, look to each other, impressed, and hold up scores:

9.1, 9.3, 8.9.

Sweaty Boy grins.

A judge clears his throat, and as he begins to give his evaluation...

JUDGE

A -

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE. DAY

CACOPHONY. Follow Sweaty Boy through the usual buzz of these events, but we notice something new:

Press. Cameras. People with badges.

SUPER: **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS - YEAR 2068**

INT. SWEATY BOY'S DRESSING ROOM. DAY

Sweaty Boy wipes a TEAR from his eye. Produces a Free Oak Granola Bar, and takes a bite into it.

A SHIVER runs through his body. He rolls his shoulders back, shaking it off.

EXT. BACK ENTRANCE. DAY

Sweaty Boy emerges from an emergency exit. Hops into a car. It speeds off and we tilt up - to REVEAL:

THE WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL.

INT. RADIO STUDIO. DAY

Sweaty Boy sits with a Radio Host.

RADIO HOST

I am here with Simon Ecker. Thank you for being with us, Simon.

SWEATY BOY

Great to be here. Love the show.

RADIO HOST

Congratulations on clinching a spot in the semi-finals.

SWEATY BOY

Thank you.

INT. EMMA'S STUDIO. DAY

Cramped. White walls. Popcorn ceiling. Dishes piled in the sink. Bizarre EQUIPMENT and metal COMPONENTS everywhere. Emma's lived here for a while.

Sweaty Boy's voice crackles through on a little radio.

SWEATY BOY (O.S.)

Look - I've always maintained: a meet is a meet is a meet. I just have to get in there and do the work, and it'll turn out okay

As Emma listens, she:

-Zests an idea.

-Stirs the zest into a GRANOLA MIXTURE.

RADIO HOST (O.S.)

If the bracket keeps narrowing down the way it has been, it looks like you're going to be facing off with -

SWEATY BOY (O.S.)

- She who shall not be named hahaha

RADIO HOST (O.S.)

- Olga Lebedev. How do you feel about that?

-Portions out the mixture onto a baking pan. She is making six little granola bars.

-Takes the baking pan out of an oven. The granola bars are now a golden brown.

-Rummages through a box of STORE-BOUGHT, FREE OAK GRANOLA BARS. She takes one of them out.

-Slowly pries open the wrapper.

-Removes the bar and putting in her OWN granola bar.

SWEATY BOY (O.S.)

Look, Olga's a legend. It'd be an honor to share the stage with her, win or lose.

(beat)

But obviously it'd be better if I won.

-Dips a cue tip in clear adhesive. Then traces it along the opening of the wrapper.

-And finally, she seals the wrapper back shut.

INT. CHICKPEA TAVERN. NIGHT

A lively, high end restaurant, but everyone is eating slices of JELLY.

INT. THE KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

SIX MACHINES. DEAFENINGLY LOUD. A conveyor belt takes all the ideas from the machines up to the HEAD CHEF, who slices and plates them.

We push past the head chef to find Emma - a LINE COOK - with a headpiece on.

Out of her machine the ideas emerge one after the other. They are shaped like blocks of tofu.

INT. KITCHEN LOCKER ROOM. LATER

Distant hum of machines.

Emma wipes her face with a towel.

INT. SEVEN ELEVEN. AROUND MIDNIGHT

The place seems empty except for Emma, who's taking a pack of Sapporo out of the fridge. She turns a corner, and finds:

The SWEATY BOY - dawdling by the Skittles and Gummy Worms, a tote bag around his shoulder.

She walks past him. Slides a couple of those phony FREE OAK GRANOLA BARS in his tote bag.

SWEATY BOY
Pretty crazy, huh.

Emma pauses.

EMMA
What?

SWEATY BOY
You didn't hear?

EMMA
I was at work.

INSERT CUT: Olga ON STAGE, watching the JUDGES try an idea...they drop their utensils in disbelief...Olga looks to her right...at her OPPONENT, LEON, who looks smug as hell...

SWEATY BOY
Leon beat Olga.

Emma doesn't say anything; she stares out into space, thinking.

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)
Emma?

EMMA
Leon's been shitting out low 8's for the past two years. That shouldn't be possible.

SWEATY BOY
I can still beat him.

EMMA
You don't get it. He's doping too.

Sweaty Boy processes that, then repeats:

SWEATY BOY
I can still beat him.

Emma ignores him.

EMMA

The question is how strong is their method, and if their method is similar to ours.

SWEATY BOY

I didn't tell anyone about this.

EMMA

No, but people might have wondered about what happened to Olga during States - independently of us.

SWEATY BOY

So what's the move?

INT. HOTEL. NIGHT

Orange light from the street bleeds under the curtains.

The phone rings, a piercing jangling. A figure shifts in bed, coughs, and clicks on the bedside lamp.

It's Vance.

He picks up the phone. His voice is hoarse.

VANCE

What?

FRONT DESK (O.S.)

There's someone on the line for you.

VANCE

Yeah, patch them through.

A jostling sound, then a click, and we hear:

EMMA (O.S)

Yo.

VANCE

Emma?

INTERCUT WITH

INT. EMMA'S STUDIO.

Emma, telephone to her ear, paces around her room.

EMMA
I heard about today.

VANCE
Yeah.

EMMA
My condolences.

VANCE
I can hear you smiling.

EMMA
No, I'm shocked, genuinely. Leon's a hack.

VANCE
The way Olga's family and I see it, even hacks get lucky.

EMMA
What if he wasn't so lucky?

VANCE
I don't like thinking that way.

EMMA
Doping's more common than you think.

VANCE
I know the rumors. But that's not constructive for Olga's performance. And if they were true, cheating's ultimately an admission of defeat.

Beat.

EMMA
You didn't notice anything suspicious about the French team?

VANCE
...They all had matching chap stick.

EMMA
What brand?

VANCE
In-house CVS stuff. When are you going to come home?

EMMA

I don't know. I'm making my own way out here.

VANCE

I leave on Monday. Why don't we hang out.

EMMA

My schedule is pretty full.

VANCE

Well my schedule just cleared up. I can work around yours.

EMMA

Get some sleep.

Emma drops the phone onto the receiver.

INT. EMMA'S STUDIO. DAY

Emma rummages through her closet, digs into a packing box, and produces a pair of OPERA BINOCULARS.

She stuffs it into her backpack.

EXT. WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL. DAY

Glistening like a beacon. Spectators flood the steps leading up to the main entrance.

At the STREET CORNER -

SCALPERS hawk tickets to the crush of pedestrians. Emma negotiates with one of them.

SCALPER

65.

EMMA

40.

SCALPER

55.

EMMA

It's balcony seating, bro.

The Scalper glares at her, speechless.

INT. WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL. DAY

It's epic, it's sleek, it's timeless, it's totally packed.

The LIGHTS dim.

IN THE BALCONY -

Darkness washes over Emma's face, and a BOOMING VOICE greets the audience:

CHAMPIONSHIP ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Now for our first semi-final match
up.

Emma unzips her backpack. Takes out the binoculars...

CHAMPIONSHIP ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
STEFANOS DE ALMEIDA.

...Puts the binoculars to her eyes.

CHAMPIONSHIP ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
LEON MALLE.

What Emma sees:

Leon, the contestant who beat Olga earlier, stepping out onto stage.

Emma turns a dial on the binoculars with her thumb, and we -

ZOOM IN on Leon. It seems like he's exhibiting the usual symptoms of nervous energy before a competition.

Emma turns the dial again.

We ZOOM IN EVEN CLOSER to Leon now as he shakes his opponent's hand. We're examining details of his face:

His clenched jaw.

The pulsing vein in his temple.

The sheen of sweat on the bridge of his nose.

Then, he purses his lips.

Emma tilts the binoculars down to Leon's hands.

He flexes his hands.

CUT TO:

INT. WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL LOBBY. LATER

Emma walking out of the auditorium along with the other spectators.

Conversations bounce all around her: fans gushing...

FAN

...and I was like, "There's no way he's gonna go there," but then Leon *did* go there, and I was like, "Oooh."

Contrarians bemoaning a dying art form...

CONTRARIAN 1

We need judges like Hirsch again.

CONTRARIAN 2

Or Kazan or Thomas.

CONTRARIAN 1

Thomas definitely.

Armchair-pundits discussing the tournament...

ARMCHAIR-PUNDIT 1

If she hadn't fumbled yesterday, she'd be a lock for gold by now.

ARMCHAIR-PUNDIT 2

Nah, that wasn't just a fumble. Olga's declining.

Emma lets the human current push her towards the center of the lobby, where we see an odd, elevated gazebo with a circular counter looping around it.

We'll call this the SUSHI BAR.

There is a DARK PURPLE CARPET which leads from the Sushi Bar to a service door. This walkway is cordoned off, and there are SECURITY GUARDS stationed around it.

An ATTENDANT emerges from the service door. He holds a silver platter with an idea. It has already been partially eaten.

The spectators, brimming with anticipation, surge towards the walkway.

The Attendant steps into the Sushi Bar and places the idea on a small, ornate DISPLAY shaped like a podium.

The Attendant hits a button, and the entire COUNTERTOP begins to rotate, showing off the idea to the spectators.

A voice booms over the PA:

CHAMPIONSHIP ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
With an average rating of 9.6 and a
peak rating of 9.7, we'll be
starting at 200,000. Leon Malle's
winning notion of the first round
of our semi-finals is starting at
200,000.

A spectator raises her hand.

CHAMPIONSHIP ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
200. Do we have 250?

Another hand, somewhere else in the crowd.

CHAMPIONSHIP ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
250. Do we have 300? 300?

As the bidding continues, we find Emma, hanging back, then heading for the exit.

OLGA (O.S.)
I'm surprised they let you in here.

Emma turns. Olga stands a few feet away. They eye each other. Tense.

EMMA
No one gives a shit about me
anymore.

OLGA
I would disagree, but I see what
would make you say that.
(re: the bustle at the
Sushi Bar)
I always hated this part.

EMMA
I never paid much attention to it.

Olga snorts.

OLGA
Don't lie.

EMMA
I'm not.

OLGA
You thought all of this was
flattering as fuck.

EMMA
...no.

OLGA
Then why did you start competing?

EMMA
Why did you?

OLGA
Because I found that I was really,
really, really good at this sport.

Emma can't help but love that answer.

EMMA
I never thought I was inherently
good at it.

OLGA
Really? You're the one person who
ever actually impressed me.

Emma pauses and tries to figure out what Olga's angle is.
Does Olga have one?

EMMA
What's going on here?

OLGA
We could've been friends.

Emma doesn't say anything.

Olga shakes her head and walks away.

INT. SEVEN ELEVEN. NIGHT

ICEE DISPENSERS - churning and churning and churning.

Emma watches them. Lost in thought.

INSERT CUT: Leon pursing his lips on stage.

Back to Emma, still watching the dispensers.

INSERT CUT: Leon in his DRESSING ROOM, applying LIP BALM.

Emma furrows her brow, realizing...

INSERT CUT: Leon, in a tracksuit with French insignia, sits with three other teammates in a hotel room...His COACH hands them all matching chap stick.

EXT. SEVEN ELEVEN PARKING LOT. LATER

Emma at a payphone.

EMMA

Look for markers 3, "a" and 6.

Emma takes a sip of her Icee.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'd like to stay anonymous.

A car pulls up in the distance. Sweaty Boy gets out. The car speeds away.

EXT. STREET. LATER

Emma and Sweaty Boy walking together. The streets are very quiet.

EMMA

How are you feeling about tomorrow?

SWEATY BOY

On a scale from 1 to 10? Like, a 6.25.

EMMA

Don't take the Granola bars tomorrow. You need to do the finals clean.

SWEATY BOY

What?

EMMA

It's a different game now. You need to get at least an 8.5 in order to not draw suspicion from the IFCI. Can you do that for me?

SWEATY BOY

You can't just switch things up on me like this. I'm a part of this team too.

EMMA

Then don't let me down.

INT. WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL. BACKSTAGE. DAY

A dark corridor, illuminated by a single red light.

Sweaty Boy stands, hunched over.

He has his eyes closed.

SWEATY BOY

(sotto)

Trust yourself. Trust yourself.

Trust yourself. Trust yourself...

Above, we hear the muffled, distant walla of a crowd.

INT. EMMA'S STUDIO. DAY

A WIDE of Emma sitting on her bed.

We slowly PUSH towards her as she listens to the RADIO. Her face is a mask of tight apprehension.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

The contestants are strapping on their headpieces now - *oh* - a little fumble there from Ecker. He's picking it back up from the floor, a nod of apology to the judges, and they continue:

Another voice crackles through over the radio.

CHAMPIONSHIP ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Contestants, take your prompts.

Beat.

Still pushing towards Emma.

CHAMPIONSHIP ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And...BEGIN!

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

And they're off! They are tearing into their envelopes now. We are receiving word that these prompts pertain to the optimization of rubber tire production. What will our contestants do with *that*?

Even closer to Emma...

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Malle's eyes are zipping across the prompt. It looks like Ecker is having a little more trouble. He is rereading the first few lines. Leon is done already and throws his prompt halfway across the stage. Ecker finally finishes reading. Malle has closed his eyes, while Ecker has brought his thumb and forefinger to the bridge of his nose.

A little closer...

LEON (O.S.)
Chacun pour soi dans le gateau!
L'immobilier explose. J'ai marche
sur un raisin.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.)
 Interesting declarative statement from Malle there.

SWEATY BOY (O.S.)
 Pelting hamburgers... at unsuspecting tourists... like a patriot.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.)
 We have seen incantations like this pay dividends for Ecker before.

Emma's forgotten to breathe.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The ideas have reached the judges' table. They are trying Malle's idea first...

A crackle, and -

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 ...A 9.3, 9.2, and a 9.7! For an average of 9.4.

CHAMPIONSHIP JUDGE (O.S.)
 A far-reaching and interactive forecast of rubber tire production - less an idea, but a model, from which we create our own thoughts, and draw our own conclusions. A fascinating, impressive journey.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.)
The judges are moving on to Ecker's
idea.

Beat.

We're inches from Emma's face now...

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Those are not the expressions you
want to see. It looks like it's
going for Malle. And....6.7, 8.9,
and a WHOA - a 9.9! For an average
of 8.5!! But still, it goes to
Malle.

Emma punches a pillow.

INT. WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL. THAT MOMENT

Sweaty Boy takes off his headpiece. Politely shakes Leon's
hand. Walks towards the wings where -

A STAGE MANAGER, wearing an earpiece and holding a clipboard,
guides him to the exit.

INT. TESTING ROOM. DAY

Sterile and hospital-like, white tile, fluorescent lights,
strange brass equipment.

The Sweaty Boy sits in a HOSPITAL BED, and an EXAMINER has a
brass handheld tool JAMMED in the Sweaty Boy's EAR - like a
clunky OTOSCOPE.

A cable runs out of the base of the handle of the otoscope
and feeds into an analogue MONITOR, which displays a:

WAVEFORM - it comprises a constellation of bright points,
constantly jittering.

The examiner turns a DIAL, and the waveform MUTATES through
several different shapes.

The Examiner turns to an ASSISTANT.

EXAMINER
Okay, all clear.

INT. HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER

Sweaty Boy exits the testing chamber.

LEON and the stage manager wait in the hallway.

Sweaty Boy and Leon exchange icy glances.

Leon enters.

INT. TESTING CHAMBER. DAY

LEON is in the hospital chair now, otoscope in his ear.

EXAMINER

Looking at markers 3, "a" and 6.

The waveform on the monitor shifts into a SPIKY formation.

The examiner, deeply disappointed, looks from the monitor to Leon.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

We are now receiving word that Leon Malle has been disqualified.

INT. EMMA'S STUDIO. DAY

SHOELACES - being tied.

Emma is in running gear.

The radio host chatters on:

RADIO COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

He is facing a 9 to 12 month suspension after failing a Clean Slate test.

INT. IFCI HEADQUARTERS. HEARING ROOM. DAY. FLASH FORWARD

Leon sits before a PANEL:

The examiner, pageant judges, and those three Executives whom we met during Emma's appeal a few years ago.

One of the executives studies a tube of chap stick. He extends it out and scrapes off a portion of the lip balm onto a plate.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

The performance enhancing substance, a piece of ideation, was mixed into his lip balm, which he ingested moments before receiving his prompts.

The Executive takes a tiny fork and samples a bit of the lip balm. Winces. Passes the plate to the next Executive.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

The contents of the idea are currently under review.

EXT. STREETS OF LA. DAY

Emma jogs through a residential neighborhood, block after block, a smug grin somehow always finding itself back on her face.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Meanwhile, the world title has now fallen to -

INT. WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL LOBBY. DAY

SWEATY BOY pushes his way into the lobby, finding himself on that PURPLE CARPET leading to the Sushi Bar.

The crowd is silent, scrutinizing the Sweaty Boy.

Sweaty Boy's footsteps sound soft against the carpet.

We hear someone cough.

He arrives at the Sushi Bar. An attendant produces a GOLD MEDAL and puts it around Sweaty Boy's neck.

A SOUND ripples through the lobby like a soft rustling of leaves. The audience isn't applauding - but SNAPPING.

EXT. SEVEN ELEVEN PARKING LOT. NIGHT

Sweaty Boy's GOLD MEDAL - in Emma's hands.

She examines every detail: the olive branches adorning the sides, the blue fabric of the lanyard, the embossed wings on the front.

EMMA

Good job.

SWEATY BOY

Thanks.

She hands him the medal.

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)

Can I be honest here for a second?

Emma looks at him. *Sure.*

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)

I don't really see where we go from here. I can't deliver 8.5s forever.

EMMA

Give me three weeks of R&D, and I'll make something new that they can't detect.

Sweaty Boy shifts uncomfortably.

SWEATY BOY

We have nowhere to go but down.

EMMA

You've got five more world titles in you. At least.

SWEATY BOY

And then what?

EMMA

And then we're undeniable.

Sweaty Boy shakes his head.

SWEATY BOY

I'm sorry.

EMMA

What's the issue?

SWEATY BOY

This is farther than I thought I'd ever get. I've impressed everyone I've wanted to impress.

EMMA

You haven't impressed *me* yet.

SWEATY BOY

And I'm tired of being taken for granted. I could have beaten Leon on my own, but you didn't trust me.

(MORE)

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)
(re: his gold medal)
What does this even mean now?

EMMA
It means people see you
differently. It means you're
respected, feared, and valuable.
You're welcome.

SWEATY BOY
But how do you see me?

Emma pauses. Blinks. Searches for the words. Then scrapes
together:

EMMA
I think you're a decent guy.

SWEATY BOY
You think I'm a bag of skin that
you can fill with all of your
schemes.

EMMA
I've built your whole life.

SWEATY BOY
And I hate that I let you.
(beat)
I thought if I proved myself to
you, you'd think of me as someone
that you'd actually enjoy hanging
out with or something. I thought we
could be, like, a pretty cool duo.

Emma chortles.

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)
Don't laugh at me.

EMMA
Then don't quit on me.

SWEATY BOY
Goodbye, Emma.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE. DAY

Olga and Vance at the head of a press conference. Microphones
and cameras and reporters.

Olga is in the middle of an answer.

OLGA

...Even when I lose, I never think about what my opponent did, I only think about what I did that was insufficient. Obviously, I'm disappointed. I attempted to layer my reasoning into the hook - as we've been practicing recently - but it's a tricky maneuver, and as I incantated, I felt a slight contradiction bubble up, but at that point it was too late.

REPORTER 3

Leon Malle was caught after the finals, but his doping affected the outcome of the entire bracket, including your match up with him. Do you wish the IFCI reset the entire pageant?

OLGA

That's what next year is for.

REPORTER 2

This question is for Vance: as a coach, but also a highly decorated former athlete, how are you processing being back at Worlds?

VANCE

I try to think of myself as a Saturn V rocket: I've ejected those stages of my life. I'm lighter, and wiser, than I was when I was here as an athlete. It's pointless to look backwards at my own achievements when the greatest of all time is sitting to my left. Yes, this was an off-meet, but that's the thing, even if you beat Olga, she's still the best.

A wave of POPPING FLASHBULBS takes us to:

INT. VANCE'S APARTMENT. DAY

We recognize the gym equipment and books - the same modest two bed, one and half bath from two years ago.

SOUND: a key scraping the lock. A door swinging open.

Vance enters. Suitcase in tow.

INT. VANCE'S ROOM. DAY

CLOSE on Vance tightening a SCREW...ATTACHING a nozzle...GREASING a gear...

LATER

Vance has a headpiece on. He's sitting crisscross-applesauce on the ground. Before him, there's:

An odd CONTRAPTION. It looks like a practice machine with a DISTILLATION APPARATUS attached to it.

Distilled liquid drips into a BEAKER.

Vance takes a CUE TIP - soaks it in the liquid.

Brings it up to right below his nose.

And SNIFFS.

His eyes DILATE.

The SKIN on his arms gets goose-like.

He opens a NOTEBOOK. Writes down the results.

The NOTEBOOK PAGE:

A DETAILED SKETCH of Vance's contraption and numerous notes in CURSIVE.

INT. OLGA'S TRAINING CENTER. DAY

An open space with several machines, some work out equipment, some bookshelves full of textbooks, and:

A ROCK CLIMBING WALL.

Olga clips herself onto one of the ropes. Vance has a stopwatch.

VANCE

Go.

Vance clicks the stopwatch, and Olga SPRINGS onto the wall, her fingers latching onto a hold. As she continues to clamber up:

OLGA

So I was at a dinner with my parents. They implied I should start doping.

(MORE)

OLGA (CONT'D)
Or, they made it clear that they
wouldn't judge me if I did.

VANCE
I can talk to them.

OLGA
No, I took care of it. Back in your
day, did you ever suspect people
were cheating?

VANCE
It was really bad back then, yeah.

OLGA
But you still beat them.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX. DAY

Vance crests a flight of steps and heads down a hallway.

He pauses.

By the door of his apartment stands EMMA, backpack slung over
her shoulder.

EMMA
You changed the locks?

INT. VANCE'S APARTMENT. DAY

Vance fixes some tea in the kitchen.

Emma browses the bookshelf in the living room.

EMMA
The Chris Kraus is gone.

VANCE
I lent it to someone.

EMMA
Who?

Vance emerges from the kitchen with two cups of tea.

VANCE
Sasha - Olga's Mom.

Emma smirks.

VANCE (CONT'D)

Shut up.

She takes a cup.

EMMA

I saw your press conference. She's the best, huh?

Vance sips some tea.

VANCE

Between you and her, it would've been a close call.

EMMA

You think so?

VANCE

Yeah, it would've been a cool rivalry. Like Haas and Flynn.

This genuinely takes Emma off guard. Vance looks down in his tea.

VANCE (CONT'D)

I'm guessing you didn't come here to talk about this.

EMMA

My old books - I wanted to finally pick them up.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER

The door swings open, revealing a clean, practically untouched room since we saw it two years ago.

EMMA

You didn't have to keep my room like this.

VANCE

I know.

Emma looks at her bookshelves.

EMMA

Perfect.

She takes out a couple books. Puts them in her backpack.

VANCE

I could've brought these to you in LA, if you told me.

EMMA

I didn't want them then, but I want them now.

Vance steps away.

INT. VANCE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT

TWO FROZEN DINNERS - spinning in a microwave. It beeps. Vance pulls them out.

Vance and Emma take their seats on various pieces of exercise equipment and dig into their food.

Emma PEERS across the living room into VANCE'S BEDROOM; she sees a sliver of his CONTRAPTION.

VANCE (O.S.)

Why are you really here?

Emma turns to him.

EMMA

It's not enough that I just want to say hi?

VANCE

For most people? Yeah, it's enough. For you? No, you're up to something.

EMMA

I felt bad not connecting in LA.

VANCE

Sure.

EMMA

(beat)

I wanted to know if you were still working on your project. We're looking for something to add to our fall menu at the Chickpea Tavern, and this could help me stand out.

VANCE

I don't think it'd be a good fit for the Chickpea.

EMMA
You don't know that.

INT. VANCE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Vance and Emma inspecting his contraption.

EMMA
How's the yield?

VANCE
2 teaspoons.

EMMA
Would you be comfortable with
sharing the specs and construction
procedure?

VANCE
...not entirely.

EMMA
Why?

VANCE
Because it's mine.

EMMA
You had no intent to let me take
this back to the Chickpea.

VANCE
No.

EMMA
So you're just showing it off right
now.

VANCE
Who else am I going to show it off
to?

EMMA
That's extremely frustrating.

VANCE
Sorry to disappoint.

INT. EMMA'S ROOM. LATER

Emma, alone, digs through her backpack. Takes out a
DISPOSABLE FILM camera.

She pokes her head out of her room. She hears the SHOWER running.

She sneaks into...

INT. VANCE'S ROOM. CONTINUOUS

Click! She takes a photo of the contraption.

Click! Another angle.

She looks over Vance's desk - finds his NOTEBOOK. She opens it. *Click!* Another page. *Click!*

EXT. BUS STATION. DAY

Vance walks Emma to her bus.

VANCE
It was good seeing you again.

EMMA
You too.

VANCE
Keep in touch, yeah?

EMMA
Yeah.

INT. EMMA'S STUDIO. DAY

Pictures of Vance's contraption are splayed out all over Emma's countertop.

She tinkers with a practice machine and consults the photos.

EXT. STREETS OF RENNES. DAY

A series of postcard views introduces us to Rennes, a modest French city. It's like a cross between Paris and San Francisco, but significantly smaller than either of them.

Emma drags her suitcase over a cobblestone sidewalk. She spots:

A TAXI driving down the street, coming her way.

She flags it down.

INT. FRENCH NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER. DAY

CLOSE on LEON - eyes closed - deep in meditation.

WIDER NOW, revealing the whole training center:

Mats, weights, practice machines, a bookshelf along the entirety of one wall, a grand piano tucked in the corner.

Leon's TEAMMATES, wearing tracksuits, train at their own stations.

A COACH paces around the athletes, keeping an eye on them; he's got a stopwatch around his neck and a Moleskine in his hands. This is GASPARD.

An ASSISTANT enters, jogs up to Gaspard, and whispers something in his ear.

Gaspard's face changes; surprise, worry, and befuddlement all mixing into one weird expression.

EMMA (PRELAP)

The IFCI is suspicious of all of you. And everyone else is trying to figure out what you did, and do it themselves, but better.

INT. OFFICE. DAY

Gaspard sits behind his desk. Various trophies and awards behind him.

Sitting across from him is:

EMMA

Luckily for you, you could have my help. I am the world's leading expert in performance enhancing ideation. I will put your team out in front of the rest of the field. And it is my guarantee that you will stay three to six months ahead of the doping controls.

GASPARD

You ruined us.

EMMA

If it wasn't me, it would have been someone else...or yourselves. You had tells. Big ones.

Gaspard stares at Emma, clearly insulted.

GASPARD

When we first discussed all this, we actually thought about contacting you. We thought you could help design our program. So we put it to a vote. And we voted against you...because no one likes you. Your aloofness, which you think is mysterious, is just embarrassing. We'll make our own way. Thank you.

EMMA

So you're prepared to get your throats slit on stage for the next decade and a half?

GASPARD

We are.

Emma looks at Gaspard for a moment. Then digs into her backpack. Takes out a glass bottle. Slides it across the desk to him.

GASPARD (CONT'D)

What is this?

Gaspard takes off the cap.

EMMA

You smell it.

He sniffs the bottle.

GASPARD

Merde.

EMMA

It's more potent and clears out of your mind faster than jelly. It's easier to hide. And I'm working on a way to delay the effect for eight hours, so athletes can take it before the event, and not bring any materials into the pageant venue. This is what you'll be missing out on. How do you balance that against my myriad character flaws?

Gaspard takes a deep breath.

GASPARD
What's your price?

EMMA
Ten percent of all the team's
winnings at auction.

Gaspard leans back in his seat. Sizes Emma up.

GASPARD
That's funny.

EMMA
Do I look like I workshop jokes in
my spare time?

INT. TRAINING FLOOR. LATER

Leon and his teammates (Jacques, Domitille, and Anne-Marie) are still practicing at their stations.

Gaspard and Emma stride out onto the floor.

Gaspard blows a whistle.

All French is italicized.

GASPARD
Team meeting.

Leon catches sight of Emma, and so do the others. The teammates glance at each other, apprehensive.

Leon, Domitille, Jacques, and Anne-Marie disengage from their machines and gather around Gaspard.

LEON
What's going on?

GASPARD
We're, uh, re-strategizing.

The group scoffs.

DOMITILLE
(to Leon)
You owe me 10 euro.

ANNE-MARIE
Why was she even allowed in the building?

GASPARD

I know, I know, just listen to what she has to say.

Then Emma starts speaking - *in French!!*

EMMA

(points to Domitille)

Do you want to be a three time Euro all-star?

(points to Jacques)

Do you want to bring your average above a 9.7?

(points to Anne Marie)

Do you want to sweep the Calcutta Double Round-Robin?

(points to Leon)

Once you're allowed back in competition, do you want to clinch gold at Worlds - and not get disqualified?

The French team looks at Emma, shocked.

INT. FRENCH TRAINING CENTER. DAY

A bit of clear liquid is dripped onto a piece of CARDSTOCK. Leon brings it to his nose and INHALES.

An idea pops out of a practice machine.

Emma slices the idea in thirds. One for Leon, one for his Gaspard, and one for herself.

They eat their slices.

EMMA

You're afraid of getting caught again.

Leon looks at Gaspard.

GASPARD

Focus less on the timbre.

EMMA

No, stop ideating like a pussy.

Leon switches to English.

LEON

(re: his idea)

This is good stuff.

EMMA

But it's not great. You could've thought that up without my help.

LEON

Then maybe I don't need your help.

Leon huffs and walks away.

Gaspard gives Emma a look - *seriously?*

LATER

Emma watches from a distance as Gaspard and Leon speak together in French.

LEON (CONT'D)

She calls me a pussy one more time and I will - I will kick her so hard in the shins...

GASPARD

I'm going to be honest. I agree with her. You are afraid. You can do better.

LEON

...One more time.

GASPARD

Everything she's doing is helping us.

LEON

No, everything she's doing is humiliating us.

BACK WITH EMMA - seeing Leon's flustered expression. She walks over to them.

EMMA

Hey.

They turn to her. Emma holds out her hand for a handshake.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Can we start over?

Leon looks at her hand but doesn't take it.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I want this to work out. I'm sorry I can be brusque sometimes.

Leon looks at Gaspard. Gaspard nods.

LEON
You call me a pussy one more
time...

EMMA
...And you'll kick me in the shins.

Leon takes her hand and shakes.

CUT TO:

TWO YEARS LATER

INT. PAGEANT VENUE. DAY

CLOSE on OLGA, on stage, baking under stage lights, listening to:

JUDGE 1 (O.S.)
A strong and potent thesis betrayed
by vagueness and a cloudy opening
statement.

Olga grimaces, removes her headpiece, shakes hands with her opponent, and as she walks off stage, we get the...

SUPER: PAN PACIFIC INVATIONALS - YEAR 2070

INT. VANCE'S OFFICE. DAY

Various books on athletics are stacked up next to a typewriter.

Vance sits on top of his desk, legs dangling. Olga and Olga's parents stand around him in sober silence.

They all look at each other, then at their shoes, then at their nails.

OLGA
I'll lock up tonight.

Olga's Mom leaves the office.

INT. OLGA'S TRAINING CENTER. DAY

Empty of life - except for Olga, who stands by the entrance.

She takes in the room:

The machines. The rock climbing wall. The bookshelves.

She hits the lights.

Everything goes dark.

INT. VILLA. NEAR RENNES. DAY

Old stone. Tall ceilings. Steep staircases.

Emma at her breakfast table. There's a spread of jams, toast, and butter before her.

The balcony doors have been opened, and Emma looks out at her view: a garden, a pool, and beyond, an expansive valley.

INT. FRENCH TRAINING CENTER. DAY

A DISPLAY CASE - full of TROPHIES, MEDALS, GOLDEN PLAQUES.

A dozen machines, a dozen ATHLETES, ROARING away. The original four - Leon, Domitille, Jacques, Anne-Marie - and several new additions to the team.

GASPARD and Emma do the rounds, keeping an eye on the athletes.

EMMA

Updates from the Pan Pacifics?

GASPARD

The Koreans are on our tail.

EMMA

They're six months behind.

GASPARD

Still worth keeping an eye on them.

EMMA

Brazil and Canada. Any clarity on that? Are they copy-cats of each other or are they colluding together?

GASPARD

Looks like they're sharing the same method.

EMMA

They should've been caught by now.

GASPARD

They might be bribing testing centers.

EMMA

How do we know that?

GASPARD

Because they've tried to bribe testing centers that we've already bribed.

EMMA

Anything else?

GASPARD
Olga's retiring.

Emma turns to him.

GASPARD (CONT'D)
She announced it this morning after
crashing out of the prelims.

Emma cracks a smile, then suppresses it.

INT. EMMA'S OFFICE. LATER

Emma tinkers with a CONTRAPTION.

A telephone rings.

Emma picks up.

EMMA
Ouias?

A voice on the other end:

VOICE (O.S.)
This is Daniel Roe, strategic
advisor for the Korean National
Team. Is this Emma Tory?

Emma doesn't say anything.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We would like to invite you to a
consulting position for our
upcoming season. Would you be
interested in meeting in Seoul to
discuss the details?

EMMA
How did you get this number?

DANIEL (O.S.)
Let us know.

The line goes dead.

Emma looks at the phone.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE. DAY

Sweaty Boy stands in front of a fake forest. His gold medal
hangs from his neck.

He holds a GRANOLA BAR.

Around him, a large film crew watches:

SWEATY BOY
With Free Oak Granola's locally
sourced ingredients, you'll feel on
the very top of your game. Free Oak
- snack like a champion.

EXT. SOUNDSTAGE. LATER

Sweaty Boy leans against the wall of the soundstage and
massages around his eyes.

He winces.

He squints.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. DAY

CLOSE on a HAIR CLIPPER, buzzing over Sweaty Boy's scalp.

Sweaty Boy sits in a hospital bed and wears a hospital gown.

A NURSE is shaving his head.

Massive locks of his hair fall to the ground.

CUT TO:

LATER

VERY CLOSE on Sweaty Boy's shaved head.

A COTTON BALL dabs the skin with a small amount of brown
liquid.

A METAL ROD with a rubber suction cup descends onto the
scalp.

A DEVICE - like the head of an otoscope, gets inserted into
Sweaty Boy's ear.

A SECOND DEVICE - gets inserted into Sweaty Boy's other ear.

REVEAL - Sweaty Boy is wearing a monstrous, titanium CROWN,
like a pageant headpiece but several times bigger.

There are about five of those metal rods planted around the
top of his head. WIRES sprout out of the Crown and feed up
into a towering, brass monolith.

A Nurse is TIGHTENING the Crown around Sweaty Boy's forehead with a dial. Sweaty Boy winces.

NURSE
Okay, are you doing alright?

SWEATY BOY
I'm fine.

The Nurse steps away to a table and picks up a bulky ACCESSORY, which is shaped like a sleeping mask, with rubber cones for where the eyes go.

She clasps the Accessory onto the Crown and folds it down over Sweaty Boy's face. The rubber cones fit right over his eyes.

The Nurse unclips another part of the Accessory, which folds out again over Sweaty Boy's entire nose.

There is about half an inch of clearance from his nostrils.

NURSE
I'm extending the monitors now.

The Nurse turns a dial on the accessory over the bridge of Sweaty Boy's nose, and two small, telescoping probes slowly EXTEND into Sweaty Boy's nostrils.

Sweaty Boy grunts.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

SWEATY BOY
Yep.

NURSE
We're all set. Hold still.

The Nurse walks out of the room.

Beat.

Sweaty Boy is just sitting there, blind, with about 15 pounds of machinery sitting on his head.

Then the brass monolith emits a LOUD ELECTRONIC HUM.

INT. CONSULTATION OFFICE. DAY

NUMEROUS PRINTOUTS of complicated, fractal WAVEFORMS - all splayed out on a desk.

A DOCTOR, 50s, with a pen, points out an area where the waveform has been compressed into a thin line.

DOCTOR
We're seeing some loss in activity
in your H-Sector...

The Doctor points to another printout with the same kind of compressed waveform.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
J-Sector...

Another printout, this one is completely flat.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
And K-Sector.
(re: another scan)
And over here, there's a drop in
the B-Sector, indicating it may go
offline as well in the next four to
six months...

Sweaty Boy cuts off the Doctor.

SWEATY BOY
Sorry. What does all of this mean?

The Doctor hesitates.

EXT. FAST DAN'S. NIGHT

Bustling outdoor seating. Sweaty Boy, wearing a beanie, has found a table. He scans the crowd.

He spots -

JACK, one of his high school buddies from before.

They shake hands.

JACK
Hey, nice to see you again, man.

SWEATY BOY
Yeah.

LATER

They are seated and digging into burgers.

JACK
Mariah's in New Zealand - studying
abroad. Al's up in Boston doing an
internship. So yeah, everyone's
done pretty well for themselves.

Sweaty Boy looks down.

SWEATY BOY
I'm glad.

JACK
How've you been?

SWEATY BOY
I'm good. I'm doing good. Just
trying to stay busy and all.

JACK
That's good.

Sweaty Boy puts down his burger.

SWEATY BOY
(re: his brain)
It's a complete mess up here, man.

JACK
Everyone's a complete mess up
there.

SWEATY BOY
No I mean, like, it's shutting
down.

Jack puts down his burger.

JACK
What's wrong?

Sweaty Boy shrugs.

JACK (CONT'D)
What does that mean?

SWEATY BOY
I don't know.

JACK
Can you get help?

SWEATY BOY
I don't know.

JACK

Why not?

SWEATY BOY

They don't know what it is.

JACK

What do you mean they don't know what it is?

SWEATY BOY

They don't know. I don't know. No one knows. I can't answer like a million questions.

Jack blinks.

JACK

Sorry.

SWEATY BOY

No, I'm sorry. That wasn't on you.

INT. VILLA. DAY

Empty hallways. Lush tapestries on the walls.

CLACK! The sound of SNOOKER BALLS echoing through the house.

INT. VILLA. GAME ROOM. DAY

Emma playing snooker alone.

A DOORBELL chimes.

Emma looks up. Puts down her cue.

I/E. VILLA. ENTRANCE. DAY

Emma opens the door.

At her doorstep: a PARCEL, wrapped in brown paper.

She looks down her driveway.

A DELIVERY TRUCK starts and drives off.

INT. VILLA. DINING ROOM. DAY

Emma opens the parcel...

As she peels away the paper, she sees a corner of something yellow.

Ripping off the rest of the packaging, she only confirms what she already knows:

It's a bag of BANANAGRAMS.

INT. FRENCH TRAINING CENTER LOBBY. DAY

Emma leans over the front desk and speaks with a RECEPTIONIST.

EMMA

Have we received the latest issues
of the trades yet?

The receptionist looks at Emma.

RECEPTIONIST

Maybe? We'll have to check.

INT. WAREHOUSE. DAY

Emma tears off a strip of tape and opens a cardboard box - within there is a stack of MAGAZINES.

Emma grabs a copy. Flips through it. Nothing.

Emma moves on to ANOTHER BOX - undoes the tape - picks up a magazine.

She quickly peeks at the pages, and in the middle, there's an:

IMAGE OF SWEATY BOY

She opens the magazine fully to look at it.

It's an ad for Free Oak Granola.

Emma sighs in exasperation.

Flips through a couple more pages.

There's ANOTHER IMAGE OF SWEATY BOY.

This one is black and white. There's a headline next to it.

"SIMON ECKER'S CHEATING LIFE"

Emma stares at it.

She flips the page. There's a picture of Sweaty Boy's SCANS.

SWEATY BOY (PRELAP)
I've returned my medals and I'm in
the middle of rectifying those past
rankings.

CUT TO:

EXT. SWEATY BOY'S HOME. PATIO. DAY

Sweaty Boy speaks with a REPORTER. There's a tape recorder on the table between them. *This is the content of the article that Emma is reading.*

SWEATY BOY
So you can probably guess that
entails lots of awkward phone calls
and meetings with the IFCI to help
them crack down on doping more.
(beat)
I can already hear people say that
this is all karma, that I chose
this path. And I'd tell those
people that they are 100% correct.
I was a guinea pig and now I'm
patient zero. I hope I serve as a
warning for other athletes who are
contemplating, uh, what I
contemplated.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM. DAY

The members of the French team all read copies of the magazine in silence.

INT. LOBBY. FRENCH TRAINING CENTER. LATER

The team is gathered in the lobby. Gaspard and Emma have joined them.

EMMA
This is a setback, certainly. We'll
do a round of tests and we'll
modify. If needed.

Leon and the other teammates shift uncomfortably.

LEON
That's not good enough.

Emma switches to French.

EMMA
What do you want then?

GASPARD
*I think we all need some time off
to reposition. See how everything
looks in a few days.*

DOMITILLE
(to Gaspard)
Kick her out.

A wave of assent from the team.

They all look expectantly at Gaspard.

GASPARD
(to Emma)
Did you know this would happen?

EMMA
How would I?

GASPARD
I don't know. You know things.

EMMA
Why would I start if I knew this
would happen.

GASPARD
Did you suspect that there was a
risk?

EMMA
Repeated exposure to concentrated
sadness - over time, sure, it could
impact you. No one could know it'd
do this though. We're not even sure
if it did. This is a sample size of
one, and he's been retired for two
years.

GASPARD
I think the team is right.

Emma snorts.

EMMA

A few waveforms and you're all
scared?

The team reacts, an offended silence falling over the room.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP. DAY

VANCE sits at one of the outdoor tables, reading Sweaty Boy's article.

He stops reading. Rubs his nose.

Exhausted.

INT. SWEATY BOY'S HOME. NIGHT

Sweaty Boy and his family eating dinner.

SWEATY MOM

Lots of calls today - asking about
you.

SWEATY BOY

Oh? What did they say?

SWEATY MOM

Just wanted to see how you were.

SWEATY BOY

That's nice of them.

Sweaty Boy looks at his food.

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)

Did you do something different with
the peas?

SWEATY DAD

Cooked them in butter instead of
oil.

SWEATY BOY

It's good.

They eat in silence.

A knock at the door.

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)

I'll get it.

He stands, walks to the door, opens it.

Outside, stands OLGA.

OLGA

There's sand underneath your
fingernails. There's grass growing
from your eyes. Worms slide their
way into your belly button, and
maggots nibble at your spinal cord.
Your brain is filled with eggs that
will never hatch. Your heart is
filled with songs no one will ever
hear -

SWEATY BOY

- And your stomach is filled with
lead while you hunger for a meal
that never comes.

Pause.

OLGA

How many times did you have to live
that.

SWEATY BOY

I don't know. Lots of times.

A tear slips down Olga's cheek.

SWEATY BOY (CONT'D)

After a while, Emma changed it so
that the worms crawled up my
urethra. It increased my rating by
a tenth of a point.

Olga hugs Sweaty Boy.

His parents stand to see who's at the door.

INT. HOSPITAL. WAITING ROOM. DAY

A woman's knee - trembling involuntarily.

The seat of a vacant chair - padded and covered with cracking
imitation leather.

A mosaic - depicting numerous fish swimming around a kelp
forest.

Leon sits and looks at the painting. He's in a nearly empty
waiting room.

NURSE (O.S.)
Monsieur Malle?

LEON
Ouais.

Leon gets up, follows the Nurse through a doorway.

Beat.

Then:

A sneeze from the woman with the trembling knee.

INT. PENTHOUSE IN RENNES. NIGHT

Empty and morose.

Leon takes a beer out of the fridge. His head has been completely shaved.

He hears the door open. Looks up:

Domitille enters the penthouse. Her head is also shaved. She takes off a scarf and hangs it up.

LEON
Do you want anything?

DOMITILLE
I'm alright.

Leon opens his bottle of beer. Walks out to meet Domitille.

DOMITILLE (CONT'D)
How did it go?

LEON
They couldn't really tell. Some diminished activity in my Q-Sector.

Domitille nods solemnly.

DOMITILLE
Early stages of shut down?

Leon looks away from her.

LEON
I don't understand how it could get so bad for Simon. He had stopped taking sadness for so long.

DOMITILLE
*I never agreed with it being called
 sadness. It felt more like
 incompleteness, no?*

Leon shrugs.

DOMITILLE (CONT'D)
*Sadness can be cathartic, but maybe
 incompleteness sticks to you. It
 will undermine you even after you
 think you've placated it or pushed
 it aside.*

LEON
We were such idiots.

DOMITILLE
Maybe we'll be okay.

Domitille takes Leon's beer and takes a sip.

INT. FRENCH TRAINING CENTER. DAY

The place is empty...

Except for Emma, sitting in the middle of the room.

Fluorescents buzzing overhead.

Emma stands up, straightens her shirt.

She walks across the training floor and out the door.

INT. PASSENGER AIRPLANE. DAY

The cabin creaks. Passengers snooze.

Emma sits in a window seat, and looks out at:

The two PROPELLER ENGINES on the wing. Below, there's an arid mountain range.

I/E. TAXI. STREETS OF SEOUL. DAY

Towering skyscrapers and tiny, bistro-esque Seven-Elevens.
 Several STRAY CATS idle on the sidewalk.

Emma watches the city slide by as she sits in the back seat of a taxi.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY

Emma sits alone, waiting at a long table.

Emma checks her watch.

Finally -

A man with a briefcase enters. This is DANIEL.

Emma stands to shake his hand.

DANIEL
Apologies for keeping you waiting.

EMMA
No worries.

Daniel takes his seat across from Emma.

DANIEL
What can I do for you?

EMMA
I can find a better, more
clandestine, and safer way to give
your athletes the bump they need.

DANIEL
What's your new idea?

Emma takes out a glass bottle. Slides it to Daniel.

EMMA
Sadness is out. Everyone knows the
trick with that.
(re: bottle)
This is pain.

Daniel stares at the bottle. Doesn't touch it.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Again, it's safe.

DANIEL
We're reassessing our doping
program at the moment and we are no
longer interested in your services.

Emma pauses - then, she tries one more thing:

EMMA

You're all going to go clean, but scores are going to deflate, and viewership is going to go down. I can help you get ahead of that dip.

(off Daniel's look)

We turn your athletes into characters. We design pre-determined outcomes for your pageants. Craft loose narratives around entire seasons. Double down on spectacle and entertainment.

Pause, then:

EMMA (CONT'D)

We start with local broadcast, poach our audience from traditional competitive ideation, and grow until it's got a global footprint.

Daniel is poker faced.

DANIEL

We hope you enjoy the rest of your stay in Seoul.

INT. VANCE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT

Dark. Vance stirs in bed as the telephone RINGS. He clicks on the bedside lamp. Picks up the phone.

VANCE

Emma?

INTERCUT WITH

INT. HOTEL ROOM. SEOUL. DAY

The hotel overlooks Seoul. Emma is on the telephone.

EMMA

Good to hear your voice. It's been a while.

VANCE

Yeah. What's up? Where have you been?

Emma runs her free hand through her hair and clenches her fingers. Her knuckles turn white.

EMMA

I don't really know what I'm doing.

Vance doesn't say anything.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I don't know what's wrong with me.
I see other people, and I just want
to be better than them. The more
people I'm better than, the better
I feel. Is that normal?

VANCE

I think so.

EMMA

I don't feel like I'm better than
most people right now.

VANCE

What do you mean by "better."

EMMA

Like, I don't think I've done good
things. And I think most people
have more friends than me.

VANCE

Do you want to come home?

Emma closes her eyes.

EMMA

...Yes please.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX. DAY

Vance crests the staircase, heading towards his apartment. He stops.

At his door stands Emma with her bags.

INT. VANCE'S APARTMENT. LATER

Emma and Vance eat dinner. Bowls of noodle soup and some bread.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE. DAY

The entire French team sits before flashing light bulbs and microphones.

REPORTER 1
(to Leon)
How are you feeling about the
upcoming Dresden Pageant?

Leon looks at Domitille and the rest of the team. Then:

LEON
I won't be competing in Dresden.

The press stirs.

LEON (CONT'D)
We'd like to echo and expand on
Simon Ecker's recent statements in
The Brainstorm Weekly. But if the
IFCI wants to have any hope in
cracking down on doping, they need
to 10x their sensitivity and target
a wide array of compound-markers.

INT. STATION WAGON. DAY

THE AUDIO OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE continues over the RADIO.

Vance drives through downtown Des Moines and listens to the
press conference. Aghast.

DOMITILLE (O.S.)
That's because the most efficient
way to deliver illicit thoughts is
no longer through taste, but sense
of smell.

LEON (O.S.)
Over the past few years,
competitive ideation has become a
competition of doping programs,
secrecy, and bribery. The desire to
be recognized for one's skill has
been outpaced by the desire for
status.

CUT TO:

INT. VANCE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT

Emma reading an old hard cover book. The front door opens.

EMMA
Hey. Where did you go?

Vance hangs up his jacket. He doesn't respond.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

VANCE
I think it's best if you leave.

Emma blinks.

EMMA
What are you talking about?

She sees that Vance is serious.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Okay.

Emma puts the book aside and walks to her bedroom.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX. NIGHT

Emma, dragging her suitcase, walks away from the apartment building.

INT. TRAIN STATION. NIGHT

A train pulls into the station. Steam billows out onto the platform. Emma is by a vending machine, punching a number.

A FREE OAK GRANOLA BAR gets pushed out and falls into the compartment.

Emma crouches and grabs it. On the back of the wrapper, there's a picture of Sweaty Boy.

CUT TO:

FOUR YEARS LATER

We hear the chatter and din of an office, or more precisely,
a:

INT. CALL CENTER. DAY

CLOSE on EMMA, swiveling into view. She puts on a pair of
HEADPHONES, and the mic extends down to her mouth.

She hits a button.

EMMA

Thank you for calling Tinkerbox
Industries, my name is Emma, what
can I do for you today?

A woman's voice on the other end of the line.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Hi, um, I'd like to cancel my
Tinkerbox Now subscription. I
thought I canceled already, but my
account is still getting charged.

EMMA

I'm sorry to hear about that mix-
up. Can I get your name and account
number please?

She's in a small cubicle. One of hundreds on the 20th floor
of a skyscraper.

SUPER: HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT - YEAR 2074

WOMAN (O.S.)

Yeah, Bella Towne, and my account
number is 668510.

Emma types rapidly.

EMMA

Yes, this account is inactive, but
your subscription to Tinkerbox
Periodicals is still live.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Oh, okay, I thought that was a part
of Tinkerbox Now?

EMMA

Yes, it's an ancillary service to
Tinkerbox Now, but it's a separate
subscription.

EXT. CITY STREETS. DAY

Emma at a news stand. She picks up as many different papers as possible.

INT. EMMA'S HARTFORD APARTMENT. DAY

Emma has the papers all splayed out on her dining room table.

She cuts out a section: "Leon Malle, Thought Athlete, Dead at 28"

Emma opens a drawer, there are several other obituaries. She adds Leon Malle to the mix, and shuts it.

EXT. MACRAE PARK. DES MOINES. DAY

Vance jogging.

He's followed by a PACK of other runners.

LATER

After the run. Vance and the other runners drink water, stretch, rest. Vance gives them a pep talk.

VANCE

...That was really great guys. Way to dig deep. How are you feeling?

THE GROUP

Good!

VANCE

I said how are you feeling??

THE GROUP

Good!!

VANCE

Alright, don't forget to walk off that lactic acid.

Vance turns from the group. Looks out over the park. Sips from a bottle of Gatorade.

CUT TO:

GRAINY TV BROADCAST

A DARK ARENA. Specks of light in the crowd indicate an audience of thousands.

JETS OF FLAME BURST OUT of the stage.

AT THE CENTER, an announcer emerges - he's decked out in sunglasses and a velvet suit.

ANNOUNCER
LAAAADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WELCOME TO
THE SHOWDOWN YOU'VE ALL BEEN
WAITING FOR...

The crowd ROARS.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
...BETWEEN THE POISON PILL...

Huge BOOS from the audience as a MAN in a suit sparkling with gemstones struts out onto stage.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
...AND HENRY CASABLANCAAAAAA.

The audience CHEERS as Casablanca steps out.

Workers don the contestants with HEADPIECES and mics.
Machines rise out of the stage around them.

POISON PILL
Finally, we meet again, Casablanca -
I was beginning to wonder if you
were afraid of another prescription
of the Poison Pill.

CASABLANCA
I'll give it to you, Poison Pill,
you're definitely the champion...of
terrible suits and dumb names.

CLOSE on The Poison Pill looking STUNNED.

INT. BAR. HARTFORD. DAY

The broadcast is playing on a few televisions.

Emma ignores them - she's focused on a game of POOL. She is alone at the table.

She lines up the shot, strikes, and the cue ball beautifully rolls forward. It ricochets off of several pool balls, sinking two of them.

INT. GROCERY STORE. DAY

Emma has a basket dangling from her crooked elbow, and picks up a bottle of oat milk.

As she places it in her basket, she looks up.

OLGA - standing at the other end of the aisle with a carton of eggs, a packet of linguini, and a bottle of wine. She's looking right back at Emma.

Emma timidly waves.

Olga walks towards her.

Emma hesitates, perhaps even contemplates running, but moves forward to meet Olga in the middle.

They're face to face.

Beat.

OLGA
Your afternoon's cleared up. Tea at
my place sounds lovely.

Emma nods.

EXT. CITY STREETS. DAY

Emma and Olga walking, carrying their grocery bags.

EMMA
So, how have you been?

OLGA
Adequate at best.

EMMA
Same.

OLGA
I'm doing consulting now.

EMMA
How do you like that?

OLGA
It sucks.

EMMA
You could commentate for the IBNA,
if that's what you wanted. Might be
more, uh, interesting than
consulting.

Olga gives her a sidelong glance.

OLGA
Why would I want to do that?

EMMA
I don't know, you could still be
involved with the Pageants.

OLGA
That's possibly the very last thing
I want to be.

EMMA
Have you heard from Vance?

OLGA
We talk every couple months.

EMMA
How is he?

OLGA
That's for him to share when he
wants.

EMMA
He's okay though?

Olga shrugs.

INT. OLGA'S HOUSE. DAY

Olga and Emma enter.

OLGA
I like Earl Grey.

Olga walks towards the kitchen. Puts the eggs in the fridge,
starts filling up a kettle.

Emma stands, waits, looks around. A modest town house.

On a shelf, there are NUMEROUS CARDS from memorial services. Among them is Simon's.

Olga returns with two cups of tea.

She gives one to Emma.

Emma looks at the cup suspiciously.

Olga takes the cup back, takes a sip, and gives it back to Emma again.

OLGA (CONT'D)
Come with me to the study?

Emma follows Olga.

INT. THE STUDY. CONTINUOUS

A burl wood desk with a PRACTICE MACHINE on it.

Olga sits. She gestures to a chair.

OLGA
Take a seat.

EMMA
What's going on here?

OLGA
Best of three. No prompts. We'll
have to be our own judges, but I
think we're old enough to stay out
of the shadow of bias.

Emma stares at Olga. Immense pain behind Olga's eyes. Emma nods. Takes her seat.

EMMA
Who goes first?

OLGA
Me.

Olga puts on a headpiece and switches on the machine.

Emma watches her, holding her breath.

Olga's body trembles. Her nose twitches. Then:

An idea pops out. It's a dark purple color.

Olga pulls out a drawer and produces an ornate KNIFE. She cuts the idea. Takes one of the pieces. Emma takes the other.

Emma shudders.

EMMA
That's good.

OLGA
Describe it back to me.

EMMA
Simon's service. I wasn't able to be there. I was, well, I didn't think I'd be wanted.

Olga unclasps the headpiece and hands it to Emma.

OLGA
Your turn.

Emma puts it on. Closes her eyes. Her pupils dart around beneath her eyelids.

Ding!

A neon green idea. Olga slices it. They eat.

Olga barely reacts.

OLGA (CONT'D)
That is not what you were thinking while we were doing handstands.

EMMA
It was.

OLGA
Round one goes to me.

EMMA
Agreed.

Olga takes the headpiece back.

Closes her eyes.

Another idea.

Slice.

Eat.

Emma nods her head and wipes a tear from her eye.

OLGA

Tell me.

EMMA

Watching a partner go through
airport security, for a trip that
will last too long.

Emma dons the headpiece. Thinks. An idea pops out. Milky
bluish color.

Olga eats it.

And starts to giggle.

OLGA

What did you--hehehe--this is--
hahaahahhaaha--stop--
hahaahahahaaha

Full belly laughs now.

Emma watches her, and we CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Emma picks up her bags of groceries. Opens the door.

EMMA

Thanks for tea.

Emma steps out.

OLGA

Goodbye, Emma.

Olga shuts the door.

EXT. CITY STREETS. NIGHT

Emma walks...

Past laundromats...

Grocery stores...

And even a restaurant, within which finely dressed people
dine on slices of jelly.

LATER

Emma walks through a promenade full of retail stores - all of
them are now closed for the night.

EVEN LATER

She's on a large BOULEVARD now. In the small hours of the morning, it's fairly empty.

She spots a:

PAYPHONE

She puts in some change. Dials.

INT. VANCE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT

Dark.

The telephone rings.

A figure stirs. Clicks on the bedside lamp.

Vance listens to the ringing but doesn't get out of bed.

WITH EMMA -

Phone to her ear, waiting.

WITH VANCE -

Lying in bed, not moving.

WITH EMMA -

More ringing....and then the line goes dead.

Emma's crushed.

She puts the phone back onto the receiver, picks up her groceries, and steps away.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END