

# SUMMER DAZE

by

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**EXT. - HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - EVENING**

**PRESENT**

MARIA, a fairly tall dark skinned Ghanaian girl, around 17 years of age, runs through the hospital doors, worry in her eyes. She sprints down the street, through the darkness, with all the energy she can muster.

**EXT. - HILLTOP - EVENING**

Atop the hill stands NOAH, a lanky black boy, also from Ghana, dressed in a hospital gown, not moving at all. The desolate nature of the hill matches his body language, as he stands silent and still.

**EXT. - PARK - EVENING**

Maria continues running, now through the park, clearly losing steam. She stops for a second, placing her arms on her legs as she mutters to herself.

MARIA  
(breathless)  
Noah... Come on man... Ugh...

She continues running.

**EXT. - HILLTOP - EVENING**

Noah walks closer to the edge of the hill, his lethargic manner motivating him.

**EXT. - FOREST - EVENING**

Maria's run continues, as sweat drips down her forehead. She keeps going, pacing herself as she makes it to the top of the hill, where she finds Noah standing alone.

MARIA  
Noah.. Noah... NOAH!

**EXT. - HILLTOP - DAY**

**PAST**

MARIA  
NOAH! Open your eyes!

Noah, 9 years younger, open his eyes to find a likewise younger Maria standing before him, both of them atop the hill. She gestures with her head to her hands, in which she holds two candy bracelets.

NOAH  
What's this for?

MARIA  
They're friendship bracelets! To show that we'll be friends forever.

She hands Noah his bracelet, which he immediately starts eating.

MARIA  
No! Don't eat it!

NOAH  
But if I don't eat it, it'll go bad...

MARIA  
But... It's meant to show our friendship...

NOAH  
I don't think we need bracelets to show we're friends, everybody already knows! You're my best friend, and I'm yours!

Maria ponders over this sentiment for a second before sighing.

MARIA  
I guess you're right. But, we WILL be friends forever, right?

NOAH  
Of course.

MARIA  
Alright, then cheers!

NOAH  
Cheers!

She holds her bracelet up and Noah does the same. They touch, like wine glasses, to which Noah makes a little 'clink' sound. Maria laughs and they both start to devour their bracelets.

A little while later, both full from eating way too many sweets, the duo lie on the grass and talk to each other, in such a way that ages them far beyond their years.

NOAH  
What do you want to be when you grow up?

MARIA  
A doctor. What do you want to be?

NOAH  
I don't know. Something cool. I want to help people.

MARIA  
Policeman?

NOAH

No... I said I want to help people,  
they always show up after people  
need help. (BEAT). I watch a lot of  
TV.

MARIA

Fireman?

NOAH

I'm scared of fire. And blood. And  
most things red.

MARIA

(getting fed up)

Well I don't know then, maybe  
you'll just work in an office?

NOAH

Maybe...

Maria sits up, prompting Noah to do the same. She looks at him with a fierce intensity. Noah senses this and moves back a little bit. Maria continues to stare and Noah prepares himself for whatever it is that awaits him. Instead, he's greeted with the tiniest and cutest hiccup ever heard, causing him to laugh at a now embarrassed Maria.

MARIA

Shut u- hic! I was going to- hic!  
Burp SO LOUD in your- hic!

Noah, not taking her words seriously at all, continues to laugh as Maria turns around, upset. Noah however, doesn't care and continues to laugh, which eventually infects Maria, causing her to laugh with him as she hiccups. They collapse in laughter atop the hill as the slowly setting sun illuminates their youth.

**EXT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Noah arrives home that evening, greeted by the sounds of sirens and bright flashes of light as police cars barricade his path. He approaches with caution and confusion as he spots an OFFICER talking to his mother SAM, a short middle aged lady, slightly darker than her son, dressed in her work clothes, slightly displaced, with a blanket over her shoulders. She spots her son and pushes the officer aside as she runs up to him.

SAM

Noah...

She grabs him and pulls him into a tight embrace. She holds his head, gently strokes his hair, and starts to cry.

SAM

Oh Noah...

NOAH  
What... What happened mummy?

Noah stops for a second.

NOAH  
(cont'd)  
Where's daddy?

Sam holds her son tighter and begins to cry louder. It doesn't take a genius to figure out what's happened. It doesn't take a 9 year old either.

Noah starts breathing heavily and reciprocates his mother's embrace. His world becomes muddled. He doesn't know what to say or do. He buries his head into his mother's arms and screams. Sam does her best to comfort her son.

SAM  
It's ok baby... It's ok... I'm here  
for you, now and forever. I'm not  
gonna leave you, I promise. It's  
ok...

Noah continues to cry. Sam continues to hold him.

**INT. - PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY**

**ONE MONTH LATER**

Noah, back in school, sits alone at the back of the classroom, his hair scruffy and his eyes tired. The classroom is colourful and covered with educational posters, misplaced pencils, worksheets and confiscated toys. It's a warzone basically. He stares at the table as his peers play around him, loud and careless. His TEACHER walks in, a woman in her 30s, perpetually tired yet with caring eyes. She looks over at Noah, before clapping to silence the class.

TEACHER  
Good morning everyone.

CLASS  
Good morning Miss!

TEACHER  
I hope you're all doing well. I'm  
sure you've all noticed that Noah  
is back today! He's been going  
through a very tough time, so  
everyone treat him extra nicely but  
also give him some space, ok?

Half of the class nods, while the other mutter 'yes' quietly. She glares at them, but understands that they don't understand.

TEACHER

Ok, so who's done their homework on photosynthesis?

The class groan as a collective, as two or three students put their hands up. Teacher looks on in disappointment.

TEACHER

Ok... Who has their homework with them?

The same few students keep their hands up.

TEACHER

(exhausted)

Alright... I'll go print some more worksheets off, and we'll do them now, ok? Sally, watch them for a second.

SALLY, the young TA, sitting near the window nods, but pulls her Blackberry out to text the second the Teacher leaves the room.

Noah, still facing his desk, is approached by Maria, who tries to talk to him.

MARIA

Hey bestie... Are you ok? I haven't seen you in ages...

Noah remains silent.

MARIA

(cont'd)

You know, it's been really lonely at our spot by myself. I was even thinking of bringing someone else along, but it didn't feel right without you.

Noah continues to stare at the crudely engraved markings on his desk.

MARIA

(cont'd)

I baked you some cakes... I tried to bring them, but my mummy wouldn't let me... We finished them... Sorry...

Silence.

MARIA

(cont'd)

And you know, they were really yummy-

NOAH  
 (under his breath)  
 Go away...

MARIA  
 What? What did you say?

Noah stands up in a flash of unprecedented anger and shouts at Maria.

NOAH  
 GO AWAY!

Maria, taken aback, stares blankly at her best friend and steps back slightly. She doesn't understand what's going on, but knows her best friend is hurt.

SALLY  
 (standing up)  
 Kids, let's settle down...

MARIA  
 I know you're going through a tough time... But you don't need to shout at me...

She tries to approach him, but as she does, Noah paces towards her and pushes her over, causing a loud thud as Maria interacts with the table behind her.

Noah stands there, shocked at what he's done as Maria stands up slowly and turns around, clutching her head.

MARIA  
 Noah...

A drop of blood falls from her forehead, from the spot covered by her hand. And then another. And another. And one more, until a stream of blood trickles from her fingers onto the floor.

Maria screams.

Noah catches sight of the blood and loses his balance. Their teacher walks in and catches sight of the commotion, lost as to what's going on.

TEACHER  
 What the-

Noah passes out and hits the floor as Maria is ushered away by the teacher, crying in pain as her hand turns red.

**INT. - OUTSIDE THE HEADTEACHER'S OFFICE - DAY**

Noah sits outside the headteacher's office, anxiously listening to his mother and the HEADTEACHER talk about him through the thin, underfunded walls.

HEADTEACHER

... I do think that would be the best option.

SAM

Yeah... He's not a bad kid, you know this... He's just having trouble adjusting, I am too but, he's young. You know this isn't something he'd do.

HEADTEACHER

I know... Yeah, this is certainly best for everyone.

SAM

Thank you, I'll let him know. And don't worry, he's good friends with Maria, we'll go to their house to apologise.

HEADTEACHER

Thank you for that, I'm sure they know he meant no harm. Remember, Noah is always welcome back here when he's ready.

SAM

Thank you.

Sam walks out and closes the door behind her. She looks at her son with both sympathy and disappointment.

SAM

You know what you did was very very wrong? You don't lay your hands on ANYONE, let alone someone as sweet as Maria, who was only trying to help. I'm very disappointed in you Noah.

Noah stares at the ground.

SAM

(sighing)

I know you didn't mean to hurt her, but what's happened has happened hm? When we get home, you're going to write an apology letter, do you understand? And after that, we're going to go to her house, and you'll apologise in person.

Noah nods, but continues to look down.

SAM

(cont'd)

Alright, let's go...



Sam puts her arm around her son and walks out of the school with him. Noah's head stays lowered whilst they walk.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Sitting at the dining table, on his 5th apology letter draft, is Noah, writing away as his mother cooks microwave meals in the kitchen.

The house isn't big but big enough. It usually feels warm, like freshly baked cookies, but right now it feels like cold, stale cookies, store brought.

SAM

Oh how I wish your father was here... I can't cook to save my life...

As she talks, the doorbell rings and she jumps up with excitement.

SAM

(cont'd)

Speaking of which...

She runs to the door and opens it with a joyful force -

SAM

PEGGY!!

PEGGY

SAMANTHA!!

Sam pulls PEGGY, her younger sister by about 10 years, into a warm hug and rocks her back and forth. Sam helps her bring her luggage inside, as Noah watches, confused.

SAM

Noah, come and say hello to auntie Peggy! Oh thank the Lord you got here safely baby sis!

Noah walks up sheepishly to greet his aunt.

PEGGY

Oh little Noah! Do you remmeber me? I held you as a baby! Oh, look how you've grown! You look just like your father you know that?

Noah stares at her blankly, as he's pulled into a warm, almost suffocating hug.

PEGGY

(cont'd)

Oh my baby nephew, how blessed are you to have grown so big. I'm a proud auntie.

Noah tries to escape her grip but fails as she continues to rock him back and forth, drowning him in her perfume.

SAM

So Noah, I was waiting until auntie got here to tell you, but there's going to be some changes around here. Auntie Peggy is going to take care of you while I'm working, and also teach you.

NOAH

Teach me?

SAM

Yes. We're going to be homeschooling you for a bit, ok? We know it's been very hard for you lately and we all just think this is the best option.

NOAH

What about my friends?

SAM

Don't worry, you'll still get to see them. It's almost summer, and I'll be damned if you spend all of it inside.

NOAH

What?

SAM

As I was saying, auntie Peggy will be living with us for a bit, ok? I know you haven't seen her for a while, but she's my baby sister and a far better cook than myself.

Noah returns to silence.

PEGGY

Aw, dont' be like that. I'm lots of fun, ok?

Noah remains silent and walks up to his room. Peggy watches him with worry.

SAM

Don't mind him, he's still processing. He'll be ok.

**INT. - NOAH'S BEDROOM - EVENING**

Noah's room is stereotypically boyish. His walls are painted blue and there are toys spread all over the floor. He has stickers on his wall that are starting to peel off, and a height chart crudely constructed with pencil markings. There

are books all over his desk, with drawings proudly displayed above them.

Sitting on his bed, Noah clutches a picture of his family-himself, his mother and his father. He stares at it and begins to cry, before getting up and putting a jacket on.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Downstairs, Sam continues cooking her culinary delights, but runs into trouble as the fire alarm is set off. She runs over to the microwave in a hurry -

SAM  
Oh shit- I left the mac and cheese  
in for too long-

PEGGY  
(sarcastically)  
No wonder I was the first person  
you called.

Peggy gets up to go assist her sister, as Noah creeps down the stairs behind them. He silently unlocks the door and closes it from behind as he walks out.

PEGGY  
Did you hear that?

SAM  
What?

PEGGY  
It sounded like the door closed.

SAM  
I'll go and check...

**EXT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Slowly, Noah walks down the street, just a tiny bit, before turning and facing his house, the same distance he was at on the night of the incident. He stares at the now empty spot blankly, and begins to cry.

Sam walks out of the house and runs towards him, once again pulling him into her arms and cradles him, understanding exactly what's going through his head.

SAM  
I've got you baby, didn't I tell  
you? I'm here for you. Whatever it  
is, you just talk to me, ok?

Noah remains silent, but nods, as he buries his head into his mother's arms. Peggy creeps out through the door and joins them, placing her hand on her sister's shoulder.

PEGGY

You two are hopeless... How about I cook you some dinner? What does he like to eat?

NOAH

(interjecting before Sam can reply)

Okra!

PEGGY

(laughing)

Some Banku with Okra hmm? I think I can manage that.

Noah laughs quietly in his mothers arms, as Sam extends her reach to her baby sister. She pulls Peggy in and they stand there together, enjoying each other's company and letting the world fade away for a moment.

**INT. - NOAH'S BEDROOM - DAY**

**PRESENT**

A 17 year old Noah stands confidently in front of his mirror, ushering words of encouragement to himself. His room is still blue, but with less stickers covering the walls and less toys on the floor. It's a lot neater, but the height chart is still there, having been updated over the last 8 years. He now has a PC at his desk, and textbooks which have taken the place of his storybooks.

NOAH

You've got this man, you can do it. What are they gonna do? Say no? I mean yeah, they could say no, you've got a convincing arugment, a REALLY convincing argument, they can't really say no, right?(Beat). I've got this, I can do this, right? I'll be fine, I can do th-

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - DAY**

Downstairs, the house feels warm again. It's got a fresh lick of paint, and the decor feels more homely than before. The sofa has moved positions and the dining table has changed.

Noah stands awkwardly in front of his mother, Sam, and his aunt, Peggy.

NOAH

So...

SAM

So...?

PEGGY

Yes! Yes?

NOAH

I wanted to ask you guys something,  
and before you say no, just hear me  
out.

SAM

No, you can not get married, yes  
you can go back to school.

Noah stares at his mother dumbfounded and in silence as a  
grin stretches across her face.

SAM

(cont'd)

We can hear you talk to yourself in  
your room you know? (Beat). Please  
stop talking about your facial  
hair.

PEGGY

(quietly)

Please.

NOAH

So, you don't even want to hear me  
out? I had a whole argument planned  
and everything!

SAM

Noah honey, we've already heard it  
all. You're about to start year 13  
and you want to get used to  
learning with people again before  
uni. You want to start next week,  
right before summer to get to know  
the people in your classes. And  
maybe, just MAYBE, make some  
friends.

NOAH

(quietly)

That's the goal...

PEGGY

(mockingly)

And you want to fall in love with a  
really hot-

NOAH

OK, WE CAN STOP THERE!

Noah stands awkwardly, his face as red as could be, which is  
not much, because it can't get red at all.

SAM

Then it's settled. Sixth form, here we come! Increasingly annoying teenage son, bye bye!

**EXT. - SIXTH FORM ENTRANCE - MORNING**

The sixth form, whilst scary to Noah, feels inviting, as though it's an actual place of learning, and not some kind of prison. Teachers loiter outside, ushering students in as they sip on their coffees.

Noah, standing outside Peggy's car, stares at the school's entrance, his demeanour become increasingly more anxious as students flock to the doors.

NOAH

Actually...

PEGGY

Nope, not happening. I am tired of listening to you talk about your 'beard'.

NOAH

(bitterly)

It's growing...

PEGGY

Uh-huh. You're not backing out now, you've come so far. Look at you, dressed up all smart. You can do this you know. I don't know any kid as strong as you. I'm a proud auntie.

She pulls him into a hug, and where any other teenager would be embarrassed, he hugs her back.

NOAH

Thank you auntie...

PEGGY

Go get them. When you get back, I'll prepare you some fine waakye, ok?

NOAH

(smiling)

Ok...

**INT. - SIXTH FORM CLASSROOM - MORNING**

Sitting alone at the back of the class, is Noah, unaccustomed to the intense aura given off only by a sixth form classroom. The class is a little bare, as they clearly lack the funding they deserve. His head down, he keeps his eyes glued to his phone as he taps away on his phone. There's no teacher there yet, so it's free reign for all the

students until then.

As he taps away, a familiar face walks in and approaches him. She taps him on the shoulder, shocking him into a tiny jump, causing him to look up.

MARIA

Noah?

Noah glances at the scar on Maria's forehead and instantly looks down, a wave of guilt washing over him.

MARIA

(cont'd)

Noah, that's you right? Noah?

NOAH

(quietly)

N-no...

MARIA

Uh huh...

Before she can finish talking, she's called over by a FRIEND, an Indian boy with hair down to his shoulders and a mischievous smile. She walks over to him, with a look of sadness on her face, certain that she's just seen an old face for the first time in 8 years.

**EXT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - DAY**

Noah paces fast to his front door and rushes in, Peggy behind him, looking confused as she locks her car.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - DAY**

Once in, he takes off his shoes and sprints towards the stairs.

**INT. - NOAH'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Diving headfirst into his bed, Noah grabs a pillow with both hands and SCREAMS into it, letting out a good 6 hours worth of frustration out as he relives his failed first day back at school. He stops screaming and turns his head slightly, staring at his desk as he lies there, a sad and sober look on his face.

**EXT. - SIXTH FORM ENTRANCE - MORNING**

The next morning, Noah readies himself as he walks towards the entrance, giving himself words of encouragement.

NOAH

Alright, day 2, you've got this  
Noah, it'll be ok. Day 1 was a  
failed attempt but it was only an  
attempt, this is the real thing,  
it's alright, you can do thi-

As he's talking, he loses sight on what's ahead of him and bumps into a girl talking by the steps of the entrance.

NOAH

Oh, I'm so sorr-

Maria looks him in the eye, and his head instantly moves in a downward motion, but she doesn't flinch a bit.

MARIA

I could never forget your face  
Noah.

Silence, as usual.

MARIA

(cont'd)

Come on man. I just want to talk,  
ok? I mean it. I'm not mad or  
anything, but we haven't spoken  
since we were 9. Look- I've gotta  
go, but come to my table at lunch.  
You'll find us easily, we're the  
'not quite weirdos but not quite  
cool either' table. I'll see you  
then?

Noah nods sheepishly, in an attempt to be free of this, his own personal hell. Maria takes this as a satisfactory answer and runs off, leaving Noah standing there, like a scarecrow in the mud, unmoving and cold, as students swarm in to get to class.

**INT. - LUNCH HALL - DAY**

Scanning the lunch hall with half willing eyes, Noah looks for Maria and her friends in the neverending stream of students in smart casual wear. Maria spots him and waves to him, gesturing him to come over.

He approaches the table with caution as he gets a good look at Maria's friends. Sitting with their hands intertwined are KAYLIE, a sweet faced Vietnamese girl and JASMINE, a studious looking White girl. Next to them is AHMED, the mischievous looking Indian boy from the day before. Maria sits on the end, and pulls a chair out for Noah.

MARIA

Hey, you came! Everyone, this is  
Noah - an old friend of mine.  
Remember, I told you about him?

AHMED

Oh yeah! Scar boy!

KAYLIE

Don't call him that!



JASMINE

I want a scar. I think I'd look really cool...

KAYLIE

Aw sweetie, you look cool enough already.

Noah sinks deeper into his seat, full of embarrassment as they talk about him. Maria notices and quickly tries to change the subject.

MARIA

Anyway, let's do introductions!

She gestures to them each.

MARIA

(cont'd)

So the lovebirds over here are Kaylie and Jasmine.

KAYLIE

Hello!

JASMINE

Hi!

MARIA

And next to me is Ahmed, who both keeps us together yet threatens to destroy us at any given moment.

AHMED

(smirking)

What's up dude?

MARIA

Noah and I go way back, basically since birth. I haven't seen him in ages though... (turning to Noah) Guess we've got a lot of catching up to do huh?

NOAH

I... Guess...

MARIA

Perfect! Let's try and catch up properly on Friday? I've got so much work to do, handing in these personal statements along with extra classes, it's all a daze.

NOAH

Y-yeah, sure...

MARIA  
Perfect! Ahmed? Did you finish the  
work for Mrs M?

JASMINE  
I did!

MARIA  
Can we quickly compare answers for  
question 4? I'm not too sure if I  
was right...

AHMED  
Hey, I thought you asked me?

MARIA  
Did you finish it?

Beat.

AHMED  
You didn't specify which piece of  
work...

MARIA  
So that's a no?

AHMED  
It depends.

MARIA  
You're hopeless...

They continue talking and Noah watches them in silence. He  
doesn't show it, but inside he's full of joy. He likes it  
here with them. He likes it here with Maria.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - DAY**

Back home with Peggy, helping her prepare dinner for later,  
Noah buzzes around the kitchen, chopping onions and throwing  
spices at Peggy.

PEGGY  
So today was better?

NOAH  
Yeah, I guess you could say that.

PEGGY  
Made any friends? Pass me a maggi  
cube.

Noah chucks the cube at her which hits the back of her head.  
She turns around in annoyance and gives him a gentle whack  
with the table cloth hung on her shoulder.

NOAH

Yeah... I'm talking to my old friend Maria again... (under his breath) somewhat...

PEGGY

(in thought)

Maria... Maria, Maria, Maria... Oh yes, that sweet little girl! Oh I remember! I only saw her a few times. Oh, how I remember her parents argued with your mother.

Noah looks at his aunt in confusion as she continues to reminisce.

PEGGY

(cont'd)

Her parents told your mother - 'keep your son away from our daughter!' and forbid her from seeing you. They were angry, and for what now, I do not know. You were only a child, and you made a mistake. Acting like their child is perfect, ha! Your mother was furious!

Almost frozen, Noah stares at his aunt, thinking over what he's just heard.

NOAH

I... I didn't know this...

Peggy, sensing the anxiety in Noah's voice, tries to calm him.

PEGGY

Hey, I'm sure it's fine now. It's been ages and you're all grown now! Who are they to tell you guys what to do hmm?

NOAH

I guess...

PEGGY

Don't worry about it. Come and help me peel this garlic.

Noah walks over with a sad look on his face, wondering if Maria knew this too. He peels the garlic as Peggy continues to talk, but he's not paying attention to her, instead, he's deep in thought.

PEGGY

Is that how to peel garlic? Ah!  
Your grandmother would have given  
(MORE)

PEGGY (cont'd)  
 me a dirty knock! It's laziness.  
 All these gadgets. Go see children  
 in Ghana, they play like normal  
 children! You have been spoilt by  
 growing up here! You need to grow  
 up the way we did...

**EXT. - SIXTH FORM ENTRANCE - DAY**

School's out and instead of rushing into school, everyone's rushing out and Noah drowns in the sea of lynx drenched youth while looking for Maria, who appears out of seemingly nowhere, surprising Noah.

MARIA  
 Hey, I've gotta go catch some  
 teachers real quick before they  
 leave then run some errands, but I  
 can talk in about 3 hours or so,  
 alright? Meet me at the spot then  
 ok? I really need to go, so I'll  
 catch you then!

And before Noah can so much as think about opening his mouth, Maria disappears almost as fast as she appeared, leaving Noah standing alone, confused and lost.

**EXT. - MARIA'S HOUSE - DAY**

With extreme caution, Noah approaches Maria's front door, praying to himself that she'll be the one to answer. He rings the doorbell with shaky hands and waits for what feels like a lifetime.

The door opens slowly and gently, but to Noah's dismay, it's not Maria, but rather EMILY, her mother - a stern faced woman with skin only slightly lighter than her daughter. She has a very demanding demanour.

EMILY  
 Yes?  
 NOAH  
 (nervously)  
 Is... Is Maria here?

EMILY  
 No she's not. What do you want? Do  
 I know you?

NOAH  
 I-I'm a friend...

EMILY  
 Maria has like, three friends, and  
 I know them all. I'm not sure I'm  
 familiar with you.

Emily looks at Noah a little more, with the same kind of fierce intensity Maria had a child, until coming to a realisation.

EMILY

You...

NOAH

(confused)

Me?

EMILY

(growing impatient)

You! You're the little devil who gave my beautiful little girl that hideous scar... Nick? Norman? No... Noah! I thought I told you to stay away from my girl?

NOAH

I... Yeah, but that was a l-long time ago...

EMILY

And so? Children like you don't change. I don't know why you're here but I want you to stay away from my daughter, ok?

Noah doesn't respond.

EMILY

(cont'd)

Great. Now that's all sorted, leave immediately, you have no business here. I don't want you coming back, got it?

Noah remains silent as Emily shuts the door on him. Frustrated, he walks down the street, clutching his hair until he comes to a brick wall which he sits down on.

NOAH

(to himself)

Ugh... Where could she be... What spot? I haven't seen her in years... Years...

A lightbulb goes off in his brain, a very dim one, that should've gone off ages ago. He gets up and makes his way to the spot.

NOAH

(cont'd)

Of course...

EXT. - HILLTOP - DAY

Years later and the hilltop remains looking as alive as it did 8 years ago, mostly because it's an unknown spot, with no wayward youth to ruin it.

Upon reaching the top of the hill, a worn out Noah is greeted to the sight of the back of Maria's head. Upon hearing his fast breathing and heavy footsteps, she turns around and waves to him as he tries to see clearly again.

NOAH  
(to himself)  
God, I'm so out of shape...

MARIA  
Hey Noah - thanks for coming out here. I was worried you'd forgotten where it was, but here you are!

NOAH  
Um... I actually went to uh, your house...

MARIA  
Oh God, was it my mum or dad?

NOAH  
Your mother...

MARIA  
Christ... Ah well, that doesn't matter. Come and sit, let's chat.

Noah sits down near Maria, but not too close. She looks at him and laughs. He stares in confusion.

MARIA  
Do you remember the last time we were here together? We were 9, damn...

NOAH  
Yeah...

MARIA  
We promised we'd be friends forever huh... Look how that turned out...

Noah awkwardly plays with his fingers.

MARIA  
(cont'd)  
You can talk to me you know... I'm not gonna bite.

She looks at Noah, who is staring at the grass.

MARIA

If this is about, the scar, please know that I don't blame you for it. We were 9 Noah. You had just lost your father. I'm not saying that it's right, but I'm not mad about it. You were going through a lot. You didn't know how to deal with it all. So don't beat yourself up over it, alright? Plus, it makes a GREAT conversation starter.

Noah continues to look at the greenery below him. Maria looks at him concerned. Maria leans in towards him, and he moves back instinctively. She brings her hand to the back of his neck and tickles him.

NOAH

AH!

Although clearly shocked, Noah starts laughing, and so does Maria. They fall on the grass, their faces pointed towards the sky. Noah's a little more relaxed now.

MARIA

So... How have you been? 8 years is a long time to not see your best friend for. Apart from that one time when the circus came. I saw you, but I didn't say anything. I don't know why... I guess I was scared.

NOAH

Of me?

MARIA

Of my parents... They were always so strict. They still are. I feel like I can't breathe around them. It sucks man.

NOAH

Oh...

MARIA

Eh, don't worry about it. One more year then I'm off to uni. They can't touch me there.

NOAH

Yeah...

MARIA

What have you been up to then? Did you move schools?

NOAH

No... I was homeschooled. My aunt taught me.

MARIA

Oh, that's cool! How did you make friends then? Is there like, some homeschooled kids group chat or something?

NOAH

Uh... (Beat). I don't really have friends... A few online...

MARIA

What? No way... What do you do during the holidays then?

NOAH

Uh, usually I go see my cousins. Play a lot of games. Sleep.

MARIA

Damn... We're an odd bunch but, come hang out with us this summer. It'll be fun.

NOAH

That'd... That'd be nice... W-what about you?

MARIA

Me?

NOAH

The uh, 8 years.

MARIA

Oh! A lot of studying. That's about it. I sing at church, although, against my will that is.

NOAH

I haven't been to church in... I haven't been to church since my father died.

MARIA

Do you believe in God?

NOAH

I don't know. Maybe I do? My mum and aunt go to church. I stay at home.

MARIA

That's fair. Maybe you will at some point. Maybe you won't. I believe

(MORE)



MARIA (cont'd)  
in God myself. But not so much the  
Bible. At least not most of it.

NOAH  
I see...

Noah sits up, prompting Maria to do the same. She looks at him with concern.

NOAH  
I feel really bad... About  
everything...

MARIA  
Look... I said it's ok.

NOAH  
No, I just... I really didn't mean  
to hurt you back then... I can't  
apologise enough...

MARIA  
Then don't. It's cool man. We're  
not 9 anymore. We've grown.

NOAH  
Yeah...

Noah grabs his bag and searches around a bit before pulling out a small white box. He shows it to Maria.

NOAH  
This... This is how those 8 years  
have been. After my dad died... I  
fell pretty hard.

MARIA  
Oh man... I'm sorry. I-

She sighs in frustration, not knowing what to say. Noah senses her uneasiness and puts the box away.

NOAH  
It's alright. It's not your fault  
or anything. I don't know why I  
showed it to you.

Maria stands up and extends her hand for Noah. He grabs it and she pulls him up, before walking closer to the edge of the hill.

MARIA  
It's not much, but whenever I'm  
feeling stressed, or anxious, or  
anything that's too much to handle  
really, I like to come up here and  
just... Scream.

NOAH

Scream?

MARIA

Yeah. Nobody can hear you out here.  
Scream to your hearts content. Come  
on, scream with me.

Noah approaches this with caution but decides to play along.  
As he moves closer, Maria lets out a powerful scream that  
pierces his ears and digs straight to his heart.

MARIA

(screaming)

AHHHHHHHHH!!! AHHHHH!!! I WANNA BE  
FREE!! UGH!!

Maria stops screaming and takes a moment to catch her  
breath, staring at Noah, to indicate his turn. He walks up  
to the edge slowly and lets out a less powerful scream, but  
a scream nonetheless.

NOAH

AHHH!! I WANNA- I WANNA FEEL GOOD  
AGAIN!!! AHHHHH!!!

He takes a second to breathe and joins Maria back on the  
ground.

NOAH

That... That was good... Thank you.

MARIA

It's alright. I hope it helps.

She lets out a tiny snicker.

MARIA

(cont'd)

It feels good to talk to you again  
Noah. After all's said and done,  
you're still the same kid I knew 8  
years ago.

NOAH

You've... Changed...

MARIA

Yeah... I guess I have... Anyway,  
lemme get your phone number, don't  
want you getting lost again haha.  
I'll add you to our group chat too,  
if we're ever gonna do anything,  
we'll talk about it there.

NOAH

Thanks... Why... Why are you being  
so nice to me?

MARIA

I dunno man... We said we'd be friends forever right? Is it so wrong to catch up with a friend?

NOAH

I... Guess not?

MARIA

Yeah. I guess not too...

They sit atop the hill for a moment, enjoying each other's company and silence alike. They're growing back into the friends they used to be, their summer just beginning. It's calm on the hilltop. Above all, all of this is just nice. It's just really really nice.

**INT. - MARIA'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Maria's house feels like Noah's house 8 years ago, cold and uninviting, but all the time. It's dimly lit and gives off an air of superiority.

Eating dinner together is Maria and her family. Emily sits on the opposite side of the table, next to DESMOND, her husband, dressed smartly, with a similar no-nonsense face to Emily.

DESMOND

So, how was your day Maria?

MARIA

(quietly)

Alright...

DESMOND

Just alright? It was the last day of school. Aren't you excited for summer?

MARIA

I guess?

DESMOND

What's with this attitude?

MARIA

(irritated)

What attitude?

EMILY

I hope it's not because of that Noah boy, hm? We don't want you with you bad company.

MARIA

I'm not in bad company...

DESMOND

(confused)

Noah? The boy who gave you your scar? Him?

EMILY

Yes. He came around this afternoon looking for Maria. What for, I have no idea.

DESMOND

Well, whatever it was, we don't want you around that boy, do you understand? He's bad news.

MARIA

Bad news? This happened 8 years ago. He was 9!

EMILY

Yes, and your uncle Kweku used to shoplift when he was 9. Where is he now?

MARIA

In Ghana?

EMILY

In JAIL, in Ghana. Once trouble, always trouble.

MARIA

You could just, bail him out.

DESMOND

Stop talking to your mother like that.

MARIA

What?? I didn't say anything-

DESMOND

Stop talking back.

Maria looks at them in frustration and makes gestures with her hands to show her annoyance.

EMILY

What is your problem today? Aren't you happy school is over?

DESMOND

Are you menstruating?

MARIA

(annoyed)

Are you kidding me?

Maria gets up and starts making her way to the stairs-

DESMOND  
SIT. DOWN. NOW.

She reluctantly sits down and diverts her eyes from her parents who continue eating.

EMILY  
Eat up.

MARIA  
I'm not hungry.

EMILY  
I don't care. Eat your food. You're really getting on my nerves tonight.

Maria begrudgingly eats her food, playing with it a little and taking her time to eat. Her parents finish eating, and Desmond gets up, taking his wife's plate with him.

EMILY  
Girl to girl, just talk to me. What's up?

MARIA  
(bitterly)  
Nothing.

EMILY  
Are you-?

MARIA  
No! And if I was, it wouldn't be any of your business.

EMILY  
Don't talk to me like that.

MARIA  
Like what? I can't reply. Aren't we having a conversation?

EMILY  
We are, but that's no way to talk to your mother, or father. I'm expecting an apology later tonight, do you hear me?

MARIA  
(reluctantly)  
Yes...

EMILY  
Excuse me?

MARIA  
(louder)  
Yes! God...

Emily looks at her daughter with tired and cold eyes, trying to dissect whatever's in her mind. Maria tries to avoid her mother's eyes, not wanting to look at her.

EMILY

(standing up)

I'm too tired to deal with you tonight. I'm going to the study. I'm warning you now, stay away from that boy. Do you hear me?

Maria doesn't respond, her head pointed at the table. Emily walks away, leaving her daughter all alone at the table, with a half eaten meal gone cold she still needs to finish.

**EXT. - SHOPPING CENTRE - DAY**

A few days have passed and summer is officially underway. The crew sits outside their local shopping centre on a bench, as Maria hands out ice cream, the store brought kind, out of a box. The shopping centre towers proudly, knowing how well it serves the capitalist society it functions in.

Kaylie and Jasmine are sitting on a bench, next to Ahmed, who is more slouching than sitting. Maria is standing next to them, with Noah on the opposite side.

AHMED

Oh my God, why is it so hot. I can't skate in this weather.

KAYLIE

Then why'd you bring your board, dumbass?

AHMED

(sourly)

I thought I could outspeed the heat.

MARIA

Children, let's not fight. Eat your ice cream and shut up.

KAYLIE

Thank you for these delicious cold lifesavers Mar Mar.

JASMINE

Thank you Mariaaaa.

AHMED

Thanks dude.

NOAH

Thank you...

Maria gives Noah a comforting smile, and he smiles back.

AHMED

(his mouth full)

You know, I wouldn't mind this heat, if it meant ice cream always tasted this good.

JASMINE

We all know that's a lie.

AHMED

Perhaps... Maria, when you're like, a genius scientist, can you make ice cream that always tastes amazing?

MARIA

Well, I'm aiming to be a doctor but sure, I'll try my best.

NOAH

You... You still want to be a doctor?

MARIA

Haha yeah. I guess I've got really insane tunnel vision. Did you ever figure out what you wanted to do?

NOAH

Uh, not really.

AHMED

You going to uni bro?

NOAH

Yeah... I'm gonna study computer science...

AHMED

Why?

NOAH

I'm... Not sure. It's what I'm good at I guess. I like it a lot.

JASMINE

You don't know what you want to do with it?

NOAH

Not really.

KAYLIE

That's cool, you've got time to figure it all out. We all do to be honest.

AHMED

Yeah, I've changed courses like 5 times already, although I think an art degree is it for me. It's the only thing I truly vibe with y'know? My parents aren't too happy though.

JASMINE

Exactly, I decided on politics two years ago but I know that's not truly final. I could just like, be a baker after I graduate and never want to do anything else.

MARIA

Exactly, and Kaylie's not even going to uni.

KAYLIE

But, I am going to live with Jasmine. I'll get a job somewhere and just figure it out as I go. Life is what you make it.

Noah looks at them, with a warm sort of confusion and lets a smile break through.

NOAH

Thanks guys, it means a lot.

AHMED

Anytime man, don't worry about it. Oh God, that ice cream was the best. Is there anymore?

MARIA

One left. Anyone else who isn't annoying want it?

KAYLIE

I'm good.

JASMINE

Hmmm, nah, I've had enough lactose for one day.

MARIA

Noah?

Noah shakes his head and Maria reluctantly gives it to Ahmed, who grins happily and unwraps it like a child opening a present on Christmas day.

AHMED

Ahhhh, sooo good.

Half of his face buried into his cone, Ahmed lets his board slip and it rolls off, past the pavement and heading into



the road. Noah runs and grabs it, which earns him an ice cream coated smile of gratitude from Ahmed.

AHMED

Thanks man, you ride?

Noah shakes his head.

AHMED

(cont'd)

You wanna try? It's super easy. It's like riding a scooter, just without the handlebars. Whatever leg you'd push a scooter with, is the leg you'd push a board with, go on, try it.

Noah takes the board and places it on the ground with trepidation. He places his right leg on the top of the board and starts to push with his left.

MARIA

You've got this Noah!

KAYLIE

Yeahh, go Noah!

They all cheer him on as he rides the board, slowly but surely. The look of worry on his face slowly fades away - he's enjoying himself.

Noah continues to cruise for a little bit, before losing his balance. The board glides out from underneath him, and he falls flat on his back, his eyes shut in pain as he screams out.

NOAH

Ah!

AHMED

Ah shit!

The crew run towards him and crowd around him, as though he was some marvel never before seen.

JASMINE

Are you ok?

MARIA

Noah, you good?

Noah slowly regains consciousness and opens his eyes. He nods his head slowly as his squinting eyes try to avoid the glare of the sun.

AHMED

That was pretty dope dude, I've never seen anyone cruise so well on their first try.

MARIA  
I certainly didn't.

KAYLIE  
Yeah, I ate shit almost instantly.  
Haven't skated since.

JASMINE  
(concerned)  
What about the penny board I got  
you?

KAYLIE  
Oh baby... That's just for  
decoration, you know I'm not  
getting on one of those things  
again.

JASMINE  
Wow...

AHMED  
That was cool Noah. You're cool  
Noah.

NOAH  
(laughing)  
Thank you. I'm glad I'm cool to  
someone.

MARIA  
You're cool to us all. You're our  
friend dude.

Noah smiles as Maria helps him up. Ahmed grabs his board and they begin to walk down the street.

**EXT. - SHOPPING CENTRE STREET - DAY**

As they walk down the street, the crew comes across a telephone pole, plastered in posters and stickers. Kaylie walks up to it and grabs a poster hanging loosely off the pole. She looks over it and squeals with glee.

KAYLIE  
Guys look! The culture festival has  
a date!

MARIA  
Oh my God, yesss, when is it?

KAYLIE  
Two and half weeks! Right before I  
go to Vietnam.

JASMINE  
Yeah, that's right before I go  
visit my family up north too, ugh.  
I hate it there.

AHMED

At least you guys don't have to deal with them coming HERE. The second my grandfather sees my room he asks if I worship the devil. I need to take everything down and hide it all until they go.

NOAH

Uh, what's the culture festival?

MARIA

You're kidding right? You've never been?

NOAH

No... I've never even heard of it.

JASMINE

Oh my God, it's literally the best thing ever. It's a massive festival held at City Park.

KAYLIE

It's to celebrate the different cultures of the people who live here. It's got all sorts of foods and traditional events for people to partake in.

AHMED

And the fireworks show is pretty lit too.

Beat.

AHMED

(cont'd)

Get it. Lit... Because-

MARIA

We got it dude. It wasn't funny.

Ahmed dejectedly looks at the ground in a childlike manner and Noah lets out a little snicker.

AHMED

(melodramatically)

My pain is funny to you??

MARIA

(ignoring them)

So yeah, the culture festival is one of the highlights of the summer. You've gotta come man. You're gonna come right?

NOAH

I guess?

MARIA

The amount of Ghanainan food there is insane. My uncle helps run most of the food stalls, I can get you some free food if you come along?

AHMED

I can vouch, that Chofi is GOOD man.

NOAH

Yeah, no yeah I can come. I'm sure it'll be fine with my mum.

KAYLIE

Hell yeah, it's gonna be so good.

MARIA

Oh for sure, the crew's penultimate summer in this town before uni is gonna be one for the books!

Maria stretches her arms out, as if to hug the world. She laughs and puts them back down again. They continue talking and laughing together as they walk.

**EXT. - LAKE - DAY**

The crew arrive by a secluded lake at the edge of town, separate from seemingly everything else. The lake is small and hidden, and is surrounded by dried mud and rocks, somewhat messy looking yet inviting all the same. Ahmed chucks his phone and wallet at Jasmine, before running in the body of water without a care in the world.

AHMED

Ahhhh, that's the stuff

KAYLIE

(stuttering but mad)

Hey! Jas isn't your, uh, personal things holder?

JASMINE

(to Kaylie)

It's ok. I've got this

(to Ahmed)

Hey! I'm not your personal things holder! Deal with your own shit!

AHMED

I'm sorry Jazzy Q, I just couldn't wait. Just leave it next to my board!

NOAH

You went in with your shirt on...

Ahmed realises as he grabs his now soaking shirt. He shrugs and runs his hands over his body in a suggestive manner.

AHMED  
(laughing)  
Eh, it's fine. It accentuates my figure.

NOAH  
Yeah...

MARIA  
Ignore him, he's an airhead, even if he is stupidly smart.

JASMINE  
(proudly)  
But not as smart as me!

MARIA  
(sighing)  
Yes, but not as smart as you. See Noah, they're all assholes, apart from Kaylie.

Kaylie beams with joy.

MARIA  
(cont'd)  
Mostly.

Kaylie beams with slightly less joy.

NOAH  
I don't think they're assholes.

JASMINE  
(smiling)  
You know what, I like you Noah, you're just swell.

Noah smiles awkwardly as Maria rolls her eyes and walks over to a pit of stones nearby.

MARIA  
Hey, who wants to play 'skipping stones at the fool in the pool'?

AHMED  
(shrieking)  
It's not a pool! Don't do that!

Ahmed ducks out of the way to avoid the first stone being thrown by Maria as Kaylie and Jasmine join in.

JASMINE  
Wow, this IS fun.

KAYLIE

Methinks we've found our new favourite game.

MARIA

It's surprisingly innovative, right?

Ahmed continues to thrash around in the water, before emerging from the lake, dripping wet with a devilish glint in his eyes. Noah watches on, laughing as he sits on the ground next to Ahmed's belongings.

AHMED

Time for MY game, which I call 'Ahmed gives everyone an extremely wet hug'!

Ahmed runs around slowly, the weight of the water slowing him down, chasing the girls who squeal as he approaches them. Noah continues to watch, content as he is, with both the game and everything really, until he falls in Ahmed's line of sight. Ahmed starts advancing towards him and a look of worry washes of Noah as he realises he's not exempt from this game.

AHMED

Oh, you thought you were safe Noah boy? Nope! Your silence on the 'throwing rocks at me' matter strikes me as complicity! C'mere!

Noah scrambles up but is unsuccessful as Ahmed grabs him from behind and pulls him in, dampening Noah's clothes as they collapse to the ground. Ahmed starts coughing which worries Noah, until he realises it's a laugh. They both lie on the floor, laughing together as the girls approach, bearing gifts.

They throw bundled up handfuls of leaves on Ahmed and Noah, laughing as the boys try and fan them away.

AHMED

Get them!

Noah grabs Jasmine, pulling her to the ground too, and Kaylie by proxy, who is almost attached at the hip to her girlfriend. Ahmed grabs Maria and she collapses on the ground in laughter, tears in her eyes as she tries to regain her breath. They all lie on the ground laughing, wet and dirty, but they don't care. They're together and having fun and that's what matters. Everything else, they'll deal with later.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Sitting in her living room, is Sam, with her sister Peggy. She's tinkering with her phone, trying to figure something out.

PEGGY

Let me try...

Sam hands her phone to Peggy, who also can't seem to figure it out. Sam sighs and calls on her last resort.

SAM

NOAH!!!

Noah stumbles down the stairs, his manner confused and alarmed.

NOAH

What is it?? Are you ok?

SAM

Yeah, I just don't know how to cast this movie to the TV. The icon isn't showing up.

NOAH

Are you on the Wi-Fi?

SAM

Yes. How else would I have internet?

NOAH

(irratated)

Mum, you're probably using your phone data again.

Noah walks over to his mother and she passes him her phone. He takes one look at it, taps it a few times and hands it back, crossing his arms and giving nothing but sass once it's back in his mother's hands.

NOAH

The Wi-Fi wasn't on. It should work now.

SAM

Ah ah ah, no need to get so big headed, Mr. Know It All. I'm still your mother you know? I'm wiser than you know.

PEGGY

(shaking her head)

Yes, you need to respect your mother! Kids these days.

NOAH

Yes, but I know how to use phones.

Sam grabs her son's arm and pulls him onto the sofa next to her.

SAM

Ah... When did you grow up so much  
hm? My little man. Your father  
would be so proud of you.

She strokes her sons hair and looks at him, with nothing but  
love in her eyes. Noah stops trying to fight it and lies  
there next to his mother, enjoying the moment.

SAM

Do you want to watch this film with  
us?

NOAH

Is it another Nollywood film?

SAM

And what if it is?

NOAH

I'm ok... I was actually talking to  
my friends...

Sam looks over at her sister and raises both her eyebrows in  
a wink wink nudge nudge kinda way.

SAM

I understand, you go talk to your  
'friends'.

NOAH

Why are you saying it like that?

SAM

No reason. You go back to your  
'friends'.

NOAH

No seriously, stop it, I really am  
talking to my friends.

SAM

Sure. We'll get out of your hair  
now. But I don't want grandkids  
until I'm 60! And I'm only 20!

PEGGY

(laughing)

It's ok, we'll find you a wife! Or  
husband! It's up to you!

Noah retracts himself from the situation and bolts to the  
stairs, realising where his mother and aunt are taking the  
conversation, feeling embarassed.

NOAH

I really am just talking to my  
friends! Oh my goodness.



Once Noah's door closes, the two women burst out in laughter.

SAM

Oh, that boy is growing up too fast.

PEGGY

That's just how it is. Next thing you know you'll be cooking for Noah Jr. Well, I'LL be cooking, you'd end poisoning them.

The sisters continue laughing, finding both joy and sadness in the fact their little boy is growing up, their time together growing shorter and shorter.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - MORNING**

Noah hops down the stairs in a joyous mood, gliding around the floor with joy as he greets his family.

NOAH

Good morning mum! Good morning auntie!

SAM

You're happy this morning. Going out?

NOAH

Yeah, I'm gonna ride my bike for a bit.

PEGGY

Your bike? That you haven't used for 3 years?

NOAH

Yes, that bike! I thought I might as well. Perfect weather for it.

SAM

Alright baby, don't forget to wear your helmet! Be safe.

NOAH

Alright mum, I will. Love you.

Noah dashes to the front door, grabbing his helmet off the coat rack, almost slamming the door behind him as he leaves.

SAM

That boy... He always surprises me.

**EXT. - STREET - MORNING**

Noah glides down the street on his bike, the wind rushing through the holes in his helmet. He passes streams of

houses, all of them merging into one colourful mess as he clearly breaks speed limits. He takes his hands off the handles and lets them swim freely in the air, feeling the freedom of the empty street and the heat of the summer sun as he flies by, without a care in the world.

He slows down a tiny bit and notices a familiar figure in the distance. As he gets closer, he recognises Maria, leaning against a wall next to a convenience store. She doesn't notice him approaching as he dismounts and walks his bike towards her.

NOAH  
(waving)  
Hey Maria!

With a look of concern on her face, she stands up with alert and starts shaking her hands to stop him coming closer. She mouths 'leave now' and 'go away' but Noah doesn't understand.

NOAH  
What is it?

And like clockwork, her parents walk out of the convenience store. Emily passes her a drink as Desmond turns his attention to the strange bike boy walking near his daughter.

DESMOND  
Can we help you?

Emily's face transforms from smile to scowl as she gets a better look at Noah.

EMILY  
Why are you here? Are you stalking my daughter?

DESMOND  
This that Noah kid?

EMILY  
Yes. I thought we told you to stay away?

NOAH  
(with newly gained confidence)  
I was just on a bike ride. Is it illegal to say hello to a friend?

EMILY  
A friend? I wouldn't go so far as to call you that.

MARIA  
(worriedly)  
You... You should just go man.

NOAH

(growing angry)

Why? You need to stand up to them.  
They can't keep treating you like  
this.

DESMOND

Treating her like what? (to Maria)  
What have you been saying about us?  
You telling your friends we're  
abusing you or something?

MARIA

N-no...

NOAH

No, it doesn't matter what she's  
said, but you guys can't control  
her like this. She's 17. Let her do  
what she wants.

EMILY

She'll do what we want, thank you  
very much. We're her parents not  
you.

MARIA

Noah, I think that's enough. You  
should go.

NOAH

(feeling defeated)

W-what? Are you just gonna let them  
keep winning?

MARIA

Noah...

NOAH

Fine, but you guys are pretty  
terrible parents.

MARIA

(snapping)

NOAH!

Silence from all parties.

MARIA

Dude, just... Just go already.

Noah looks at Maria, her eyes full of hurt and defeat. She  
turns around.

DESMOND

I think you should keep on riding  
your bike little fella. And keep  
away, do you hear me?

NOAH

I-

EMILY

Let's go.

They walk away from Noah, who decides he's cocky enough to let out one more remark.

NOAH

Maria. Don't let them do this. Come on, Maria. Just stand up to them.

But Maria doesn't look back. She just keeps on walking. They turn the corner, and they're gone.

Noah takes off his helmet and throws it at the ground in frustration. He starts breathing heavily and tears well up in his eyes.

NOAH

(to himself)

Shit.

**EXT. - CINEMA ENTRANCE - DAY**

Waiting outside the doors of the cinema, is Noah, anxiously tapping away at his phone. The cinema has several cardboard cut outs of various characters and is crawling with tired, underpaid staff. On his screen, are several messages to Maria, that start passive aggressive and slowly transition to apologies. His eyes are glued to his phone, and he doesn't notice Jasmine creeping up next to him.

JASMINE

Hey Noah!

Startled, Noah jumps up in surprise, then looks around in confusion.

NOAH

Where's Kaylie?

JASMINE

(laughing)

At work- we're two separate people y'know?

NOAH

I didn't know she had a job...

JASMINE

Yeah, she does. She works to help her parents pay rent, what a sweetheart. But don't tell her I told you, she only really talks to me about this stuff.

NOAH  
(confused)  
Then why did you tell me?

JASMINE  
(shrugging)  
I dunno, a little gossip between friends. We all know each other's secrets really. It's what makes us friends.

NOAH  
Ah...

As he tries to formulate a response, Ahmed pulls up, as confident as ever.

AHMED  
What's up nerds?

JASMINE  
Nerd. One nerd, and that's you bucko.

AHMED  
(playfully)  
You hurt me Jazz, you really do. Whatcha talking about?

JASMINE  
Oh y'know, secrets. Like how you pissed yourself in year 11 and your social standing never recovered.

AHMED  
(bitterly)  
I was a little bit... Intoxicated... Like father like son huh?

NOAH  
Oh...

AHMED  
(looking sad)  
He always used to like, give me sips of beer every now and then when I was small. Which turned into full bottles the older I got. My mum always kept me on the right path when it came to school and stuff, but on the weekends I'd like, get blackout drunk. It was fine, until the summer before year 11. It was becoming a problem... And one thing you never want to happen is to have to fight your drunk dad... Whilst also drunk.

Ahmed notices the discomfort in the air and tries to lighten the mood up, realising he's unknowingly slipped into a darker place.

AHMED

(cont'd)

I don't drink anymore though.  
Seeing your dad in jail changes  
you. And alcohol is EXPENSIVE, like  
damn I'll just get some apple juice  
instead.

Jasmine laughs before a look of love washes across her face as she spots Kaylie walking towards them, dressed in her work uniform, her face half dead.

JASMINE

My sweet summer worker, how was  
your shift?

KAYLIE

Eh...

JASMINE

Just eh?

KAYLIE

My boss is such a dick, made me  
work an extra half an hour because  
apparently I was late last week? I  
hate him.

JASMINE

Aw, bosses suck. If I were your  
boss, I'd let everyone go home  
early.

KAYLIE

Yeah... I don't think you would...

As they continue chatting, Noah checks his phone to see a new message from Maria. It says

'stop texting me or I'll have to block you'

His heart sinks and his mood drops instantly. He locks his phone and slides it back in his pocket, his heart beating fast.

KAYLIE

Is Mar Mar coming?

NOAH

(bitterly)

No... She just texted me...

Kaylie senses the bitterness in Noah's voice and realises something must have happened. She tries to change the subject.

KAYLIE

Ah, I see. Well, we can't watch this movie without her soooo, what do you guys wanna do?

AHMED

Destroy capitalism!

KAYLIE

Anything else?

JASMINE

We can go to my place? The twins are at summer camp, Mark is with James all day at some museum and little Angelica is probably gonna be asleep, so the place is mostly empty. We could play some pool?

AHMED

Sounds like a plan?

KAYLIE

I'm down for some pool!

NOAH

Yeah, that'd be cool.

**EXT. - JASMINE'S HOUSE - DAY**

Jasmine knocks on the front door of her fairly sizeable house. Noah looks around in amazement.

NOAH

You don't have a key?

JASMINE

I always lose it, there's usually someone home anyway.

Right on cue, the door is opened by a kind looking tall black MAN.

MAN

Jasmine, home already? How was your film?

JASMINE

We didn't see it, Maria didn't come so we decided to wait. Is mum home?

MAN

Nope, she had to go on an emergency work trip, she'll be back tomorrow.

JASMINE

Oh ok, thanks dad.

JASMINE'S DAD

No worries sweetie. Come in all of you, you guys want anything to eat or drink?

They all politely shake their head and say 'no' as they walk in apart from Ahmed.

AHMED

I'll get myself a cola, papa Jazzy, I know where it's at.

JASMINE'S DAD

Alright Ahmed, feel free.

AHMED

(cheekily)

You know I will.

**INT. - JASMINE'S HOUSE - DAY**

As Jasmine leads them to the pool room, Noah looks around with wonder in his eyes as he takes in Jasmine's house, its skyscraper like walls towering over the crew as they walk across its marble floor. As they pass the fireplace and spiral staircase, Noah notices the large family picture hanging at center of it all. In the middle are Jasmine's MOTHER and Father, both of them a similar skin shade to his own, with a White baby in her Mothers arms. Two Brown skinned TWINS below them. Next to them, is Jasmine, standing proudly by her father's side. Next to their mother are two boys, one taller than everyone else, of eastern Asian heritage. The shorter boy next to him is dark skinned and a little chubby.

Jasmine notices Noah staring at their family portrait and nudges him with her shoulder.

JASMINE

Yep, that's my family. Guess that's my secret, I'm an orphan.

AHMED

A RICH orphan.

JASMINE

Well, I'm not rich, my parents are. They took me in when I was born, because my birth 'parents' didn't want me apparently.

NOAH

I had no idea...

KAYLIE

I guess you could say... you had 'NOAH' idea? Eh? Eh?

Silence.



KAYLIE  
(cont'd)  
Screw you guys.

JASMINE  
You tried baby.

KAYLIE  
Not hard enough it seems.

Kaylie sulks playfully and Jasmine comforts her as they walk towards the pool room.

**INT. - JASMINE'S POOL ROOM - DAY**

Jasmine and Ahmed play a game of pool as Kaylie and Noah sit on a mini sofa and talk. The room is smaller than you'd expect, but just the right size for a game of pool with friends.

KAYLIE  
So, tell us about yourself Noah.  
It's dawned upon me that you don't  
talk about yourself much.

NOAH  
Uh... There's not much to know  
about me. I was homeschooled for  
the last 8 years... I watch a lot  
of anime... I uh, faint when I see  
blood.

KAYLIE  
Even your own?

NOAH  
...Yeah...

AHMED  
That's pretty metal man. Damn it  
Jazzy Q, that was a good shot.

JASMINE  
(laughing at Ahmed)  
So what, you faint when you get  
small cuts?

NOAH  
No, usually when I see a lot of  
blood.

KAYLIE  
What about when you watch movies?

NOAH  
I can usually handle it, or I close  
my eyes.

KAYLIE

(laughing)

That's so sweet, but you'd absolutely hate us during halloween.

NOAH

Oh, I just stay at home, fake blood has the same effect.

AHMED

You gotta stay away from the twins then, they love that shit.

JASMINE

Oooh yeah, if you come around enough maybe we can ban it? I'm sick of that stuff.

KAYLIE

Well, that's cool, I guess? What kind of music do you like?

Noah shuffles a little bit in his seat, clearly embarassed.

JASMINE

Aw, come on, tell us! If it's like, movie scores, don't feel weird because that's pretty much all I listen to.

KAYLIE

Sadly.

JASMINE

You got a problem?

KAYLIE

I do. Listen to some REAL music, Jay Som is right there.

JASMINE

Movie scores ARE real music doofus. And you know I can't listen to them, I don't know whether to dance or cry.

KAYLIE

You do both, that's the best part.

Jasmine rolls her eyes and Ahmed laughs as Noah tries to spit out his answer.

NOAH

Well, I listen to video game soundtracks a lot...

AHMED

That's pretty cool. I listen to a few myself.

NOAH

(excitedely)

You do?

AHMED

Yeah, some pretty good songs come from those things honestly.

Noah smiles with comfort. He's feeling more and more at home with the crew.

JASMINE

No type of music could wake me up in the morning though.

KAYLIE

Just get a new alarm.

JASMINE

You know nothing works, I've tried everything.

KAYLIE

Ugh, I'm sure I could find something.

Upon hearing this, Noah puts his hand up meekly, like a schoolkid trying to answer a question.

KAYLIE

Why... Why are you raising your hand? This isn't school?

Noah shoots his arm back down.

NOAH

Oh sorry... I- yeah I don't know why I did that. Um, I was going to say I might be able to help? With the alarm thing?

Jasmine and Kaylie look at each other with 'why not' faces and shrug - they might as well.

**INT. - JASMINE'S ROOM - DAY**

The crew are spread around Jasmine's room, which, like the rest of the house, is pretty big. It has white walls, lined with evenly spaced posters, a hammock and a massive desk. Ahmed is lying across Jasmine's bed, Jasmine swinging in her hammock, as Kaylie watches over Noah sitting at her desk, tinkering with her laptop and phone.

KAYLIE

So what is it you're doing?

NOAH

I'm just... Signing into my github account. I made an application last year for my mum and uploaded it here...

KAYLIE

(confused)

Uh-huh... What does it do?

NOAH

Basically, it links your phone to your computer - syncs all your alarm data and all, and if you snooze your alarm on your phone too much, the alarm plays on your computer.

JASMINE

I've tried that...

NOAH

There's more. The alarm on the computer plays at full volume, and you can't turn it down. To turn it off, you have to unlock your computer and type in a series of sentences that are randomly generated each morning. Until you get them all right, the alarm keeps going.

Jasmine gets off her hammock and walks over to Noah.

JASMINE

That's... That's pretty smart. And it worked for your mum?

NOAH

Yeah, I've made her a ton of little apps like this, just to help her out. My favourite is the toast timer.

KAYLIE

Sounds like you like making apps to help your mum?

NOAH

Yeah I love it. It's nice being able to do something for her... She does so much for me.

AHMED

(getting up)

There you have it man! You said you didn't know what you wanted to do - make apps that help people! You're

(MORE)

AHMED (cont'd)  
doing comp sci right? It all falls  
into place!

JASMINE  
I usually don't agree with him, but  
he's right. Have you ever  
considered this before?

NOAH  
No... I hadn't...

They all look at Noah with supportive faces. He looks back  
at them with a warm smile. Feeling like he's getting  
somewhere, with just everything, he lets out a little laugh.

NOAH  
I guess you're right. Maybe I'll  
clean these up a little bit, and  
put them on app stores. Who knows  
who they could help?

KAYLIE  
Exactly! That's two people down, a  
billion more to go!

JASMINE  
What she said. Now we've sorted  
that out, anyone wanna play tennis  
or something? Perfect weather to go  
on the court.

NOAH  
You have a tennis court too?

Kaylie starts laughing at this outburst, causing Ahmed to  
erupt in laughter, then Jasmine, and eventually Noah. They  
all spend a moment laughing, enjoying each other's company.  
Noah, caught up in the fun of it all, has forgotten about  
Maria and her last message to him.

**EXT. - STREET - EVENING**

As he skips down the street, on his way home from Jasmine's  
house, Noah passes by a familiar house, causing him to stop  
and do a double take. He walks back slightly, and stares at  
the door of Maria's house. All the lights are off and there  
are no cars nearby, so he figures they must be out. He looks  
at it for a little longer before walking off again.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Noah takes his shoes off and walks into the living room,  
deep in thought, where his aunt and mother are eating pizza.  
He notices them eating and snaps back to reality for a  
second.

NOAH  
 (fake hurt)  
 Without me?

PEGGY  
 You were with your friends! Can we  
 not eat pizza without you? Or is it  
 by force?

NOAH  
 Did you save some for me?

SAM  
 Of course we did, it's on the  
 table. You alright hun? You look  
 like you're thinking about  
 something. Everything ok with your  
 friends?

NOAH  
 Yeah no, I'm good...

Beat.

NOAH  
 (cont'd)  
 Actually, I think I forgot  
 something, I'm gonna head out  
 quickly, I'll be right back?

SAM  
 Yeha no worries, you want me to  
 drive you?

NOAH  
 No it's fine, I'll take my bike.  
 Thanks though.

SAM  
 Be safe, take your helmet!

But Noah's already out the door, his helmet still hanging on  
 the coat rack.

**EXT. - STREET - EVENING**

Noah races down the street on his bike, determination on his  
 face, gliding effortlessly as the world passes him by.

**EXT. - HILLTOP - EVENING**

Pushing his bike to the side, Noah hops off and makes his  
 way to the center of the hill, where Maria is sitting alone.

MARIA  
 Piss off.

NOAH

Hey, look I'm sorry about the other day. I don't know what came over me.

MARIA

(sourly)

I told you to stop and you kept going. What the hell is your deal?

NOAH

I said I was sorry...

He walks closer to Maria and sits down next to her. She shuffles away.

MARIA

(quietly)

You had no right...

NOAH

What?

MARIA

I said, you had no right!

NOAH

I didn't? Don't friends help each other out?

MARIA

Friends? We've been hanging out again for not even a month! I bring you back into my life and here you are, ready to mess it up again.

NOAH

(irritated)

Again?

MARIA

YES! Again! Do you know what life was like for me after the scar?

Noah looks down in guilt. He starts playing with his hands.

MARIA

(cont'd)

None of the other kids wanted to play with me. Called me a monster. And it hurt... But not as much as what my parents did. Took me to church, and made the pastors pray so I'd be healed. They didn't let me have friends over for years. I was all alone.

She starts to sob.

MARIA

(cont'd)

And you never showed up once. My best friend, gone.

Maria stands up and turns around, her back to Noah.

MARIA

(cont'd)

My parents are like, they're like having a two ton bulldozer on your back at all times. They're so suffocating. I CAN'T DO ANYTHING BECAUSE OF THEM. They never listen to me.

She groans and kicks the grass.

MARIA

(cont'd)

I'm no longer allowed to go to the culture festival by the way. They also took my phone. Had to delete your number and all your messages because they don't let me lock it. I know they're doing this because they love me, but sometimes I wonder. Is this love? Does love make you mean?

Noah sits uncomfortably, not knowing what to say. Maria senses his discomfort, but doesn't care.

MARIA

(cont'd)

I'm the only person who can deal with them. I didn't need you to help. You're not a knight in shining armour Noah. You've only just come back into my life and they don't even want you here. If anyone was going to be able to help, it wouldn't be you. This is something I need to deal with myself.

She walks to the edge of the hill and stops. She breathes in and lets out a powerful scream.

MARIA

(screaming)

ARGH!!!! SCREW YOU WORLD!!! I HATE YOU!!!

She takes a moment to catch her breath, before turning around and pacing down the hill. She doesn't look at Noah as she walks by.



MARIA

Just, leave me alone man.

She disappears into the dark of the night, leaving Noah on the hill, speechless and alone.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Noah throws his shoes at the rack and runs upstairs, much to the concern of his mother and aunt.

SAM

Are you ok Noah? Aren't you going to eat?

He doesn't respond. His door slams shut.

**INT. - NOAH'S BEDROOM - EVENING**

Noah jumps onto his bed and screams into his pillow. He turns around and faces his ceiling. He lies there with a mixture of both guilt and anger on his face. He doesn't know what to do. He feels helpless.

**INT. - MARIA'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Maria unlocks her front door and walks in, anger written all over her body. She walks down the hallway, before freezing in fear.

EMILY

And where exactly were you just now?

MARIA

(bitterly)

I thought you were out...

EMILY

We were out. Now we're in. And you're supposed to be grounded. So tell us, where were you just now?

MARIA

I was on a walk...

EMILY

Really? Long walk, don't you think? We've been back for an hour.

MARIA

I-

EMILY

Enough of your lies. Look at you, sneaking out, lying and talking back. This isn't the daughter I raised.

Maria stares blankly at her mother.

EMILY

See, that's how a good girl  
behaves. When adults are talking,  
you be quiet.

And just like that, Maria snaps.

MARIA

(restrained)

Replying isn't talking back.

EMILY

What you are doing. Is talking.  
Back.

MARIA

I'm not talking back oh my God! I'm  
so sick of this.

EMILY

Sick of what?

MARIA

Sick of you treating me like this!  
Maybe Noah was right, I shouldn't  
deal with this anymore!

Emily looks at her daughter in shock and crosses her arms.

EMILY

Treating you like what? Have you  
forgetten that we are your parents?

MARIA

No! I know you're my parents! You  
don't let me forget that! I might  
be your daughter, but I am NOT  
yours! I am my own person, and one  
who is only a couple of months away  
from being an adult at that. Stop  
treating me like a child! I can't  
do or say anything because it  
offends you! Everything I do, is  
because of you. I feel like I don't  
have control over my own life and  
I'm sick of it. Is this how your  
parents treated you?

EMILY

Yes. They treated me the way I  
needed to be treated, so that I  
would grow into a proper lady.

MARIA

Oh my God! Enough with this proper  
lady nonsense! It's always 'proper'  
(MORE)

MARIA (cont'd)  
lady' or 'good girl' as if I'm some  
subservient being, manufactured for  
some guy who I'm sure you'll be  
picking out for me too, just like  
everything else in my life!

EMILY  
DESMOND! GET DOWN HERE! I CAN'T  
DEAL WITH THIS GIRL ANYMORE.

Desmond bolts down the stairs and stands next to his wife,  
confused as to what the commotion is about.

DESMOND  
What's the problem?

EMILY  
Your daughter thinks she knows it  
all.

MARIA  
I don't think I know it all, I just  
think you guys are treating me  
unfairly!

DESMOND  
Unfairly? Do you not have a roof  
over your head? Food on your plate?  
Clothes on your back? Do you know  
how ungrateful you sound?

MARIA  
I'm not ungrateful at all! But  
you're my parents! You have to do  
these things! You brought me into  
this world, it's your duty to  
provide for me! Stop making it seem  
like some kind of gift, you made a  
choice and now you have to deal  
with it. But I'm my own person and  
I want to be treated as such! I'm  
so tired of the way you treat me, I  
just - ugh! Why won't you just  
listen?

DESMOND  
I think we've heard enough. You  
have two options. Either go to your  
room, or go sleep on the streets.

MARIA  
I'm still a minor, you can't kick  
me out, it's illegal.

DESMOND  
GO. TO YOUR ROOM. NOW.

Maria storms past them, frustrated and defeated. As she walks past, Emily grabs her arm and looks into her daughter's tired eyes with fierce, angry eyes.

EMILY

NEVER. Talk to us like that again,  
do you hear me?

Maria remains silent and pulls her arm from her mother's grip. She walks up the stairs and heads towards her room, shutting the door with as much as force as she can without upsetting her parents.

INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - DAY

A few days later, Noah walks down the stairs and into his living room, dressed smartly in a Ghanaian agbada, ready for the culture festival. Sam stands ready, phone in hand, to assault her son with the sounds of her camera shutter.

SAM

Oh my boy, you look so handsome!  
Wow!

She goes up to him to take photos, the flash going off with every shot.

NOAH

Ow, mum! Turn the flash off, the  
lights are on.

She ignores him and continues to take photos with flash, before putting her phone down and giving her son a kiss on his forehead, grabbing his face with both hands, which he wipes off as soon as he's free.

SAM

I can't believe you're so grown  
now. Just yesterday you were  
crying because you didn't know how  
to change the channel.

NOAH

How the tables turn...

SAM

(ignoring him)  
Have fun today alright? And don't  
come back too late.

NOAH

You're not coming?

SAM

Ah, I'm getting too old for these  
things. Your auntie and I are going  
to Auntie Linda's tonight.

NOAH  
So you admit you're old?

SAM  
Watch it.

She gives her son a playful slap on the head as he heads towards the door.

SAM  
If you need anything, just call me!

NOAH  
Will do, love you mum!

SAM  
Love you too!

**EXT. - STREET - DAY**

While strolling down the street to the culture festival, Noah is surprised by Kaylie, dressed in a blue Ao Dai, who sneaks up behind him.

KAYLIE  
Hello there!

NOAH  
(startled)  
Hey Kaylie... You scared me...

KAYLIE  
Whoops, sorry about that. You good?

NOAH  
Yeah...

KAYLIE  
You look good though damn, who knew?

NOAH  
Thanks... You too.

KAYLIE  
(concerned)  
You good? This about Maria?

Noah doesn't respond.

KAYLIE  
Look, don't worry about it. She caught me up with everything that's been going on.

NOAH  
Is she alright?

KAYLIE

She's fine. Still grounded, but I get special access to go see her.

NOAH

Why?

As soon as the word leaves his mouth, Noah is filled with regret. Kaylie look at him amused.

KAYLIE

It's alright. Her parents let me stay over sometimes... (quietly) when mine are fighting...

NOAH

Oh... Sorry...

KAYLIE

It's cool. That's life I guess. They're only still together because of me. I don't know why though, parents are weird.

NOAH

Yeah... They are.

They walk in silence, Noah once more deep in thought as Kaylie enjoys the sights of their neighbourhood, as they walk towards the festival, the silence of the empty street somehow the loudest thing imaginable.

**EXT. - FESTIVAL FIELD - DAY**

Upon arriving at the festival, Noah and Kaylie are greeted to the sight of dozens of people walking around in traditional clothing representing their cultures. The field is paved with food stalls and pop up shops, filled with chefs and vendors working hard. There's excitement in the air and children run and dance to the overlapping sounds of music as performers play their music all over.

Ahmed walks towards them, dressed in a black Sherwani, looking far smarter than anyone could have ever imagined. Noah looks at him in amazement and Kaylie laughs.

KAYLIE

He's worn this every year since like, year 9. He hasn't grown since.

AHMED

(embarassed)

Hey, shut up, he didn't need to know. YOU wore that dress last year!

KAYLIE

And isn't it pretty? This Ao Dai is my faveee.

AHMED

You don't look too bad yourself Noah.

NOAH

Thanks man...

AHMED

You still hung up over Maria? She'll come around dude, don't worry about it. Her parents are just, y'know- Forget about it! Let's enjoy ourselves today, it's what she would've wanted.

JASMINE (O.S)

She's not dead you know...

Walking towards them is Jasmine, dressed in a long floral print dress and heels. She walks up to Kaylie and gives her a kiss, before giving Ahmed a disapproving look.

AHMED

You know what I meant.

KAYLIE

Whatever- let's get this show on the road!

**EXT. - FESTIVAL FIELD - MONTAGE - DAY TO EVENING**

Time passes the crew by as they enjoy the festival, the sun setting after they stuff their faces with food, play an assortment of games, take photos and just have a really good time.

**EXT. - FESTIVAL FIELD - EVENING**

The crew sit on the grass, tired and bloated as the sky turns orange. They've had a good time, but they're clearly missing something.

AHMED

(yawning)

I am FAMISHED. When's the fireworks?

JASMINE

They should be starting soon, I think they're still setting up.

AHMED

Nice.

Ahmed stretches his arms out and lies down on the grass as he yawns again. To his surprise, a familiar face appears above him.

MARIA

Space for one more?

Dressed in a blazer and trousers made of kente cloth, stands Maria, who grins smugly, reacting to the look of surprise on Ahmed's face.

KAYLIE

Yay, you made it! They let you out?

MARIA

Not really, but I'm in my rebellious phase. I'll deal with the fallout later.

JASMINE

We got a rebel over here!

MARIA

Wouldn't miss the fest for the world. Or my parents.

JASMINE

Well, we're glad you're here.

Noah looks over to Maria, who glances at him. He raises his hand and gives her a little wave, and she turns around again. He pulls his hand down and turns around too.

The crew continues sitting on the grass, but with noticeable tension now. They remain silent and it's sort of unbearable.

AHMED

(weakly)

God... When's the show, right?  
Ha... Ha...

Not even this difuses the situation, so Kaylie stands up to make an announcement.

KAYLIE

I'm going to go get a drink. Does anyone wanna come?

MARIA

Yeah su-

NOAH

(cutting her off)

Yeah, I'll go. I could do with another supermalt.

KAYLIE

Great! Let's go Noah. Now.



Noah pops up at the speed of light and removes himself from the increasingly dire situation. He goes off with Kaylie to go get a drink.

AHMED

So... Not talking to Noah?

MARIA

(sourly)

No.

AHMED

You look nice though...

MARIA

Thanks.

JASMINE

Are you ok Maria?

MARIA

Not really. I risked a lot to come here and I'm not even enjoying it because he's here. I've never been so annoyed with anyone before, minus my parents.

AHMED

They've really been getting on your nerves lately hm?

MARIA

More than that. They refuse to listen to me. I'm so tired of them ugh-

DESMOND

Tired of who?

Standing behind her, are Emily and Desmond, furious looks on their impatient faces.

MARIA

(under her breath)

Shit...

DESMOND

Do you keep forgetting you're grounded? Or do we need to lock you in your room and throw away the key?

MARIA

It's the culture festival, you knew I was going one way or another.

EMILY

We did, which is why we caught you redhanded.

MARIA  
(mockingly)  
Oh noooooo...

EMILY  
I am so sick of your attitude.

MARIA  
Good.

And on cue, Kaylie walks back, with Noah right behind her, talking as he looks at his shoes while he walks.

NOAH  
(to Kaylie)  
And that's why supermalt is easily the best drink ever invented, next to apple juice. Water doesn't count, obviously, because it's like standard. Like air, I guess? But there aren't really variations of air? Unless you count like, vape smoke? I don't know...

He continues rambling mindlessly until he's stopped by Kaylie's now extended arm, signalling him to stop. He looks up to find everyone staring at him. Maria cups her hands, and plants her face in her palms. Emily looks at her with a look of disappointment and walks towards Noah.

EMILY  
What are you doing here? Why won't you leave my daughter alone.

NOAH  
(bitterly)  
For your information, I was here first. We're not exactly on talking terms right now.

EMILY  
Yeah right. Stay away from my child, creep.

NOAH  
Oh, so now I'm a creep? Great.

EMILY  
You're a bad influence is what you are.

Emily grabs her daughter's arm and starts to pull her away, despite her resistance.

MARIA  
(struggling)  
Get... Off...

DESMOND

Stop making a scene.

MARIA

I'll make a scene all I want- let go!

The crew awkwardly stand there, not knowing what to do. To further add to the chaos, the first few fireworks go off, their deafening noise throwing everyone off.

EMILY

You want a scene, I'll show you a scene!

Emily raises her hand, ready to strike. In the same beat, Maria breaks free and moves away from her mother. Noah runs towards them, right as Emily brings her hand down. Noah reaches them but is in the wrong place at the wrong time. Maria, now free from her mother, shouts at her as Noah takes a powerful slap from her.

MARIA

STOP!

But it's too late. Emily brings her hand back, realising what she's done.

EMILY

Shit.

Maria looks at her mother, who looks back at her with worry in her eyes. Emily looks at her hand, and notices blood dripping from the long nail of her index finger.

At the receiving end of the slap, is Noah, who clutches his cheek with his hand. The fireworks continue to scream in everyone's ears as Noah looks at his hand, which is covered in blood. Gushing from his cheek, is a stream of blood coming from a freshly opened gash, courtesy of Emily.

JASMINE

Shit, someone call an ambulance!

AHMED

On it!

MARIA

There's no time, he's gonna faint!  
Dad, we need to drive him!

EMILY

I'm not getting blood on my seats!

MARIA

(angrily)

MUM!

They continue to panic and argue, the sound of the fireworks drowning them out as Noah falls to the floor, his world turning black.

**INT. - HOSPITAL - EVENING**

Functioning as any hospital would, the cold yet caring interior of the hospital comes to life as nurses and doctors run around importantly, as they should.

On a hospital bed, still unconscious, with the side of his face bandaged up, lies Noah. He's wearing a hospital gown atop his agbada. In the chair next to him is Maria, who's fallen asleep and is drooling on herself.

Slowly, Noah opens his eyes and takes in his surroundings. He notices Maria waiting next to him and smiles weakly with a hint of sadness. He sits up and puts his shoes on, before walking away.

NURSE

Hey Noah, how are you feeling? Glad you're up again, but you really need to lie down.

NOAH

Oh, it's ok... I'm just going to the toilet.

NURSE

Alright, see you in a bit!

NOAH

Yeah...

**INT. - HOSPITAL HALLWAY - EVENING**

Completely passing the toilets, Noah walks out of the ward and down the hallway. He ventures into the waiting room, where he finds the crew asleep, next to his mother and aunt. He looks at them and tears start to well up in his eyes.

He turns around and walks the other way, acting lost as nurses walk by him. He gets to the end of the hallway and spots an exit, which he cautiously walks towards. Once he's certain nobody's watching, he sneaks out and disappears into the dark.

**INT. - HOSPITAL - EVENING**

Waking up from her nap, Maria looks at Noah's bed and gets up in alarm after noticing he's not there. She wipes the drool off her face in disgust and looks around for him. She wanders over to the nurse's desk in search of answers.

MARIA

Hey um, do you know where Noah went?

NURSE

Oh yes, he went to the toilet, but that was a while ago... Maybe he's with his mother?

MARIA

Where would she be...?

NURSE

Oh, they're in the waiting room. Just down the hall.

MARIA

Oh ok, thank you. Oh sorry, could you tell me what time it is? Don't have my phone...

NURSE

No worries! It's just turned 7!

MARIA

Oh, thanks!

**INT. - HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - EVENING**

Maria travels down the hallway to the waiting room and looks with discontent as she discovers Noah's not there, greeted only with sleeping faces.

She walks over to Sam and shakes her awake.

MARIA

Do you know where Noah went?

SAM

(groggily)

He went somewhere? (yawning) I haven't seen him since I got here... They only allow one guest at a time...

Maria looks away guiltily as Sam crosses her arms.

MARIA

Sorry... But yeah, I woke up and he wasn't there. I thought he'd be with you.

SAM

Nope, haven't seen him. But there is this... I went to his room to get some of his things, just in case he had to stay the night or anything... And I found this.

She produces the same white box Noah had shown her weeks earlier from his bag.

SAM  
(cont'd)

He hasn't been taking them... I had no idea... He's been so happy recently, I thought he was but...

Sam looks at Maria with worry only a mother could have. Maria looks at her with understanding and takes the box from her. She grabs Noah's bag and puts it back inside, before slinging it over her back.

MARIA  
I... I have an idea of where he might be. I'll find him.

SAM  
Thank you... Could you call me when you find him?

MARIA  
I um, don't have my phone with me... But don't worry, I'll bring him home. You go back, I've got this.

SAM  
Thank you Maria, you're a good friend.

MARIA  
Not good enough apparently. I'll see you later.

And before Sam can respond, Maria's already out of sight.

**EXT. - HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - EVENING**

Maria runs through the hospital doors, worry in her eyes. She's sprinting with all the energy she can muster.

**EXT. - PARK - EVENING**

Still running, Maria passes through the park, losing steam yet still determined. She stops for a second, places her arms on her legs and talks to herself, breathlessly.

MARIA  
(breathless)  
Noah... Come on man... Ugh

She takes a beat to catch her breath and takes off again.

**EXT. - FOREST - EVENING**

Sweat dripping down her forehead, Maria continues to pace herself as she gradually makes it to the top of the hill, where she finds Noah, standing alone.

EXT. - HILLTOP - EVENING

MARIA

Noah... Noah... NOAH!

Noah turns around to see Maria, breathlessly making her way towards him. He turns back around.

MARIA

Noah... What are you doing?

NOAH

(gingerly)

Nothing.

MARIA

You... You weren't going to do anything bad... Right?

Noah doesn't respond.

Maria continues making her way towards him, slowly. He doesn't move.

MARIA

Noah... Talk to me. Please.

Beat.

MARIA

(cont'd)

Why are you here?

Noah continues giving her the silent treatment, which starts to worry her.

MARIA

(shouting)

NOAH!

NOAH

(startled)

AGH! I don't want to talk.

Maria's caught up to him now. She stands beside him, staring out at the field.

NOAH

(quietly)

I thought about it... I have thought about it, not just now. But what's the point. I really just wanted to enjoy the view. Clear my head a bit.

Maria stares at him with concern. She doesn't know what to say.

MARIA

Man...

She sighs.

MARIA

Fuck.

She looks outwards again. Noah looks over at her.

NOAH

You were right. I haven't seen you  
in 8 years. Barely a month later  
and I'm out here acting like  
superman...

Silence. Maria pulls the white box out of his bag. He  
glances at it and quickly looks away.

MARIA

You haven't been taking these.

NOAH

I thought I could do it without  
them. Not yet I guess.

MARIA

You really aren't superman you  
know. You have these for a reason.  
Your mum was really worried.

A guilty look washes over Noah's face upon hearing this. He  
takes his bag from Maria and pulls out his water bottle. He  
takes out a tablet and downs it then and there.

NOAH

I-

He sighs.

NOAH

(cont'd)

I'm stubborn. My mum says I got it  
from my dad. I wouldn't know  
though... I'm sorry. And I mean it.  
I shouldn't have treated you like  
that... It was a shitty thing to  
do. I should've listened to you.

Maria lets out a little laugh.

MARIA

Yeah... It was.

Noah looks down, guilt all over his face.



MARIA

(cont'd)

If you're looking for an apology from me, you're not getting one. Yeah, I might have been a little harsh on my words the other day, but the truth remains. My parents are my problem man. You only made things worse.

Noah starts shuffling uncomfortably. Maria notices and tries to change the topic.

MARIA

(cont'd)

But you know what, that doesn't matter now. I'm so deep in it, I have no idea how I'm getting out of it. But I can worry about that later. How's your face?

NOAH

It's fine. I can't believe I passed out in front of everyone.

MARIA

(giggling)

Wouldn't be the first time, definitely won't be the last... It's nice out here. The air is cool, no loud noises... But who let us up here, unsupervised, AS KIDS? It's dangerous here!

Noah starts to laugh and Maria smiles. He opens his bag and pulls out a notebook. He flips through the pages and stops suddenly when he finds what he's looking for. He pulls out a thin white string and shows it to Maria.

MARIA

Is that...?

NOAH

Yep. The string from the candy bracelet you gave me 8 years ago. To say we'd be friends forever .

With kind eyes, Maria looks at her friend and starts to tear up.

MARIA

I can't believe you kept that.

Maria slides her phone out of her pocket and takes it out of the case. Squashed onto her case is a similar thin white piece of string.

MARIA  
 (cont'd)  
 But I can't believe I kept it too.

NOAH  
 Wow...

MARIA  
 Yeah... Who knew 9 year olds would  
 be able to keep something so small  
 for so long?

Noah chuckles as a strong wind starts to blow.

MARIA  
 (cont'd)  
 You think this wind is telling us  
 something?

Noah looks at her and nods. Together, they both walk up to the edge of the hill, each of them holding their piece of string. They raise their arms up in unison, and in the same beat, they both let go of their strings, which freely soar through the air, freed after 8 long years.

They both breathe in, and let out one last scream.

NOAH  
 (screaming)  
 BYE!!!

MARIA  
 (screaming)  
 GOODBYE!! BE FREE!!

NOAH  
 (screaming)  
 FLY!! FLY AWAY!!

MARIA  
 (screaming)  
 SEE THE WORLD!!

They take a moment to catch their breath and break out in laughter.

NOAH  
 So that's that, I guess.

MARIA  
 For the string, yes. For us, no.  
 I've missed you Noah.

NOAH  
 I've missed you too Maria.

They share a smile, before heading back to the middle of the hill and sitting down again.

MARIA

So, how have you been finding the crew? It's not been too awkward without me there?

NOAH

No, not at all. They're all really nice.

MARIA

Yeah, they're the greatest. I'm so lucky to have such wonderful friends. So lucky that you're one of them again. At one point I genuinely thought I'd never see you again. I'm glad that didn't happen.

NOAH

Yeah... Me too.

MARIA

Have you been to Jas' house yet? That place is MASSIVE!

NOAH

Oh yeah, it was great. And oh- I figured out what I want to do. Kind of.

MARIA

Really?

NOAH

Yeah, I'm aiming to be a software developer. I want to make apps that can help people, mainly with daily tasks they might find hard to keep up with.

MARIA

That's so cool. I'm glad you figured it out. Only took 8 years.

She laughs at him, which he responds to by laying back in the grass.

NOAH

Who knows. I might not. But for now, that's what I want to do.

Maria reciprocates this and joins him on the grass. They're both looking up now, staring at the stars.

MARIA

It's been so long since I've stared at the stars.

NOAH  
I've never looked at them before.  
Not properly anyway.

MARIA  
Aren't they beautiful?

NOAH  
Yeah...

Beat.

NOAH  
(cont'd)  
They really are.

They lay on the grass staring at the stars for a moment more, enjoying each other's company as the night continues to dance on. Their worries disappear and all that's left is them, just two friends, looking at the stars on a beautiful summer's evening.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Noah walks in and before he's finished taking his shoes off, his face is buried deep in his mother's arms. Unable to breathe, he tries to push her off but she refuses to let go.

NOAH  
(muffled)  
Mhum... Let mhe... Ghoo...

SAM  
What was that? Hold you tighter?  
Alright!

She continues to hold her son close as he struggles to escape. Maria laughs as she takes her shoes off and walks in.

SAM  
Thank you so much for finding  
him... He wasn't too much trouble  
was he?

MARIA  
(laughing)  
Only a bit.

Noah, now free from his mother's grasp, takes a breath and looks at his mum.

NOAH  
Is it ok... If Maria stays over  
tonight? She doesn't want to go  
home.

SAM

Of course! I need to call your parents first though, you know that right?

Maria looks at the ground and nods.

MARIA

I'll give you the house line. Whoever picks up, well that's up to God.

PEGGY

(coming down the stairs)

Is that Noah? Oh Lord thank you for bringing my baby back safely!

And like that, Noah is subject to another round of hugs he can't escape from.

PEGGY

(cont'd)

Oh, I bet you kids are hungry, I made dinner. Do you like Banku and Okra Maria? It's Noah's favourite.

MARIA

Yes auntie, that's fine. Thank you.

PEGGY

Aw, how polite. (slapping Noah's arm) Why can't you be like her?

NOAH

(passive aggressively)

Nice to see you too!

Maria laughs at their friendly family banter, a little jealous that she doesn't have the same.

PEGGY

Alright, let me dish the food for you guys. Noah, come and help.

SAM

I'll go get the guest room ready, Maria, make yourself at home.

MARIA

Thank you auntie.

Peggy drags Noah to the kitchen while Sam goes upstairs leaving Maria standing awkwardly in the hallway.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Sitting down together and enjoying their dinner, are Noah, Maria, Sam and Peggy. For the first time in a long time, Maria is able to enjoy dinner, without feeling bad.

However, the peace is short lived as they hear multiple thuds at the door.

SAM

Ah, who is it now? I'll go get that.

Sam gets up, washes her hands and goes to answer the door. Maria's heart sinks as she knows what her parents are like. Her heart sinks further when she hears her mother's voice.

EMILY

(bitterly)

Sam. We're here to get Maria.

Sam looks at her with tired eyes. She switches her demeanour, ready for an argument.

SAM

Oh really? I thought I made it clear that she wanted to spend the night... Or, are you deaf now?

EMILY

Don't take that tone with me.  
(shouting) Maria let's go.

But Maria refuses to move. Emily starts to get impatient and turns around, signalling for Desmond to come.

EMILY

(louder)

I said, MARIA, LET'S GO.

Maria stays right where she is, next to Noah. Emily, growing increasingly impateient, tries to walk towards her.

SAM

Ah ah ah, did I say you could come in? Or is that what we're doing now.

EMILY

Let me go get my daughter. Don't make me call the police.

A look of amusement washes over Sam's face and she stares at Emily open mouthed as Desmond joins his wife.

SAM

OH! The police? Well feel free. I'll tell them what you, a grown woman, did to my son's face. How about that?

DESMOND

(grabbing his wife)

Just leave it. MARIA. Let's go. I'm sick of this.

SAM

And she's sick of this too. She's old enough to make her own decisions... Look, my son, he talks to me. And I'm not too fond of how you've been treating him. He is, the SWEETEST boy I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. And YES, I might be a little biased, but that's because I. LOVE. MY. SON. And listening to him speak, I wonder if you feel the same way about your daughter-

DESMOND

(offended and loud)

Of course we d-

SAM

Nuh uh uh, not a word from you! What kind of man do you think you are? Raising your voice at your daughter? For what? You are not a man, you are a disgrace. Ah! You come to England, and you think you this behaviour is ok? In Ghana, nobody, and I mean NOBODY, would allow this. You better back your ass up and shut up, because you are not a man, not even a boy. You are a coward.

Desmond doesn't reply. He doesn't know what to say.

SAM

(cont'd)

And you Emily. What happened? We used to catch up every week after church. You would come to mine and I would come to yours. I don't know what happened, but your heart has turned cold. Mother to mother, do you think this is any way to treat your child? Hm? It's disgraceful. She is SO unhappy, but you can't even see it, because you are too focused on what you want. You can do better. You need to do better. That day, when you told me Noah couldn't see Maria anymore, I went home and you know what I did? I cried. Because my little boy made a mistake, yes, but to be punished like that? He had just lost his father, and now his best friend? And I prayed to God, and asked him why? What did we do to deserve this? What did HE do? And now I

(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)

see, he did nothing. He just got unlucky. Because that happens sometimes. BUT, as his mother, I need to be there for him when these things happen. I know I'm not perfect, I know. I can't cook, I don't understand technology, I feel useless sometimes. I'm not as strong as I wish I was, but no matter what, I will do anything for my son. And because of that, he has grown into such a fine young man, that sometimes I cry, just thinking about who he is. And your daughter deserves the same, so why isn't she getting that. Look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself - 'am I doing this for me, or my daughter'? And then when you've done that, apologise to her, because there's no way in HELL, that you'll be saying 'I'm doing this for her'.

Emily, tears welling up in her eyes, looks at Sam, her eyes full of fury. Desmond's head is bowed, his eyes on the floor.

SAM

Maria... Come over here darling.

Maria slowly gets up and walks towards her mother. Noah starts to get up, but is held back by Peggy. He realises what he's doing and sits there silently, leaving Maria to deal with her parents.

Maria stands in front of Emily, sadness in both of their eyes.

EMILY

Is this true?

Maria, her head down, nods. This sets Emily off and she starts crying.

EMILY

I... I didn't know this was how you felt...

She tries to hug her daughter, but Maria moves back.

MARIA

(sourly)

You would... If you listened to me...

Emily stutters with embarrassment as she comes to truly realise how she's treated her daughter. Guilt washes across Desmond's face.



DESMOND

Baby, we-

MARIA

No. Don't 'baby' me. You don't have the right to 'baby' me. Everytime I try to speak, all you do is shut me up. You shout and scream because you're always right. And because you didn't listen, Noah got hurt, and now I'm here. Do you finally understand, or are your egos too huge to listen? No matter how hard you try to fix this, you can't, and the road to things getting better isn't going to be easy either. No matter how much you change, I'm not just going to forgive you right away. Either you change, or I'm walking out the second I turn 18 and I'm not looking back, even if it means I'm homeless. Do you get it now? Or are we going to repeat this over and over again, because I'm tired of having to explain myself only for you to ignore me. We're out of fuel and I either push this car with you, or I walk alone.

EMILY

(defeated)

I... I don't know what to say.

DESMOND

I'm sorry Maria... We thought we were doing what was best...

Maria stares at them angrily.

DESMOND

(cont'd)

We'll try for you. We promise.

Maria continues to stare.

EMILY

We were just doing what our parents did...

MARIA

You're not your parents. And I'm not you.

EMILY

Look, stay here tonight. We'll talk properly tomorrow, ok? I think you need your space.

MARIA  
 (bitterly)  
 Yeah...

EMILY  
 Desmond, let's go for now. We love  
 you Maria.

Maria doesn't respond. Emily looks away, her manner guilty and defeated.

SAM  
 She loves you too. But she needs  
 some time. I'll bring her tomorrow.  
 And don't be fooled, any nonsense  
 and she's straight back here, and I  
 will get authorities involved if I  
 must. Make a real change, for her  
 and for yourself. You can't keep  
 living like this.

Looking back at her daughter, then to Sam, Emily nods, regret in her eyes. She leaves the house with Desmond, and for a moment, there's nothing but silence.

SAM  
 Are you ok darling?

And without saying a word, Maria runs into Sam's arms and starts sobbing uncontrollably. Sam wraps her arms around her and lets her cry. It's what she needs.

**INT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

A little while later, Noah and Maria are lying on the sofa, talking to each other. The tension of earlier has cleared and Maria's letting herself relax a bit, after an incredibly full day. Noah's slumped on the sofa, exhausted and ready to do absolutely nothing.

But then, the doorbell rings.

PEGGY  
 You kids, relax. I'll get it. (to  
 herself) Who the hell could that be  
 at this time of day? It's 11 for  
 crying out loud!(To herself) This  
 better not be Maria's parents again  
 or I'll adopt her myself...

And almost as soon as she opens the door, a party of mostly unemployed troublemakers flood through the hallway.

PEGGY  
 What the-?

AHMED  
 Party time? I've got board games!

KAYLIE

I brought some drinks, used my employee discount and all!

JASMINE

And I've got some snacks! Also with Kaylie's employee discount!

Noah and Maria turn around in shock as their unexpected guests make themselves at home next to them.

MARIA

What... What's this about? It's so late?

AHMED

(confused)

I thought... I thought you said we were having a sleepover?

Maria looks at Ahmed confused, then buries her face in her palm.

MARIA

I said, I'M sleeping over at Noah's.

JASMINE

Ohhhh, see I was a little confused when he said we were having a sleep over here, especially because it's been one HELL of a day. I'm tired! Does that mean we have to go back? I was kinda looking forward to it!

SAM

(walking down the stairs)

What in the good lord's name?

NOAH

(nervously)

Haha... My friends thought we were having a sleepover... But now they're here... I mean... Can they?

He gives his mother an innocent look and clasps his hands together, begging her as cute as 17 year old can.

SAM

(sighing)

You know what, go for it. I don't care anymore. But you make a mess, ya clean it.

Noah jumps up and hugs his mother, who goes from a scowl to a smile, unable to resist the charm of her son.

SAM

Alright, get off me now, jeez. I can't believe you meant it when you said you had friends. I thought they were strangers back at the hospital.

AHMED

Hey! That hurt.

SAM

Get over it. I'm going to bed. Don't be too loud.

Sam exits and her sister follows after her. Ahmed pulls out a board game and starts setting it up.

AHMED

This one's my favourite, you ever played it before?

NOAH

No, I don't think I have.

MARIA

It's only his favourite because he rigs it, he always wins.

AHMED

No I'm just better than you!

JASMINE

No, you definitely rig it.

KAYLIE

Ditto.

Ahmed throws his hands up in defeat and continues trying to convince everyone that he hasn't rigged it. But Noah's tuned out, a massive smile stretching across his face as he realises he's more than achieved his goal. He looks around at the faces of his friends, messing around without a care in the world. He feels at home with them, like he belongs with them. It's everything he wanted.

Maria notices and places her hand on his shoulder and smiles warmly at him, which he returns.

AHMED

Alright, everyone ready? Let's begin!

**EXT. - NOAH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Outside all of this, right by Noah's door, are two white pieces of string, laying together on the floor, before being swept away by the wind, returning to the sky together. They float off into the distance, and disappear into the night sky, illuminated by the glow of the stars.

And with that, our story is over, as their summer begins.

END.