GRAND RIVER

*(screenplay)*

FADE IN:

EXT. GRAND RIVER - DAY - 2014

EMILY (7) stares down at her reflection in the Grand River. She's got frizzy, brown hair dangling all the way down to the water, half-cocooning her face.

She leans forward and dips her hair in the lake, watching the ripples make her face indecipherable.

*SPLASH!* Emily jumps, seeing heavy ripples. Looking twenty yards ahead of her, a TREE BRANCH plops up to the surface.

Emily looks up: MAYA (5) is BARELY HOLDING ONTO the pine tree hanging over the river. She squirms to get another hand on its trunk, but SLIPS and FALLS DOWN TO THE WATER.

Maya submerges. Emily is frozen.

EMILY

(whispered)

Maya...?!

Maya plops up to the surface, FLAILING.

EMILY

Maya!

Maya tries to yell, but keeps sinking under. She hugs onto the floating tree branch, but it SPINS, DUNKING HER.

EMILY

Oh, no... Oh, no... Maya!

Emily SPRINGS INTO THE WATER, running along the river floor. Maya is STILL UNDER THE BRANCH.

Emily stops, not able to touch the river floor anymore. She's JUST OUT OF REACH, smacking at the soaked branch bristles.

EMILY

(pushing lips over water)

Maya!

The branch spins up as Maya GASPS IN AIR. Maya frantically searches, spotting Emily and kicking towards her.

Emily GRABS THE BRANCH, pulling herself up, DUNKING THEM BOTH. She kicks backward, bringing the sinking branch towards the shore.

EXT. GRAND RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

Emily and Maya lie on the shore, breathing heavily. Emily musters all her energy to push herself onto her elbows and move to Maya, hanging over her.

EMILY

Do you need Mom...? Maya...!

Maya heaves and shakes Emily away, unable to look away from the broken tree.

EMILY

Maya, tell me if you can see my fingers.

Emily holds two fingers up to Maya's nose as Maya looks right through them.

EMILY

Maya? Hey... hey... Maya?

Maya wheezes. Emily collapses on her arm, hugging her tight.

EMILY

Please don't let this happen... *Please. Please,* don't let this happen. *Please.*

Maya huffs incoherently, trying to speak. Emily brings herself up again, looking down at Maya.

EMILY

Maya!

MAYA

(incoherent)

I saw Him.

EMILY

Can you breathe?

Maya shakes her head, she WHEEZES. A SMILE blossoms on Maya's face as she slowly HUGS HERSELF.

MAYA

(incoherent)

I saw Him. It's a miracle.

EMILY

Maya, do you need to...? What do I...? Oh, G-d. Please be okay. Please, please, don't be now.

Maya POINTS TO THE SKY. Emily looks up after her finger.

CUT TO BLACK.

TEXT: *GRAND RIVER*

FADE IN:

EXT. METRO-DETROIT JEWISH ACADEMY - DAY - 2019

TERRA (25) sits on the hood of her 2001 RED CHEVY MALIBU, checking her smartphone.

She sees a YOUNG GIRL (12) coming towards her, struggling with a ROLLING BACKPACK *and* REGULAR BACKPACK.

Terra makes a quick peek back in the car: the glove compartment is CLOSED. Terra turns back to the Young Girl and approaches with a smile.

YOUNG GIRL

Are you Terra?

TERRA

That's me. Lemme help you with those.

YOUNG GIRL

Took ya long enough.

Terra takes the backpacks from the Young Girl, giving them a speedy inspection as she drags them to the trunk.

The Young Girl gets to the passenger seat as Terra opens the trunk, plopping in the rolling backpack.

Fast as lightning, Terra UNZIPS the rolling backpack, peeks in, and RE-ZIPS it. Terra grabs the other backpack, puts it on top of the rolling backpack, UNZIPS, and peeks.

Without even seeing it first, Terra SWIPES A LAPTOP, throwing it in a POUCH in the side of the trunk. She grabs a $20 BILL and pockets it. She re-zips the backpack, closing the trunk.

EXT. METRO-DETROIT JEWISH ACADEMY - MOMENTS LATER

The red Malibu DRIVES OFF, having been WATCHED by an older Maya (10), who waits with an older Emily (12). The LYFT LOGO glows in the back window of the Malibu.

Maya gawks to Emily, who missed the pickpocket. Emily looks to the sidewalk, morose. Maya turns to face the disappearing Malibu, coming up with something.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - LATER

Terra slows down as they reach the Huntington Woods suburb, Terra's mounted smartphone saying they're TWO MINUTES AWAY. The Young Girl is ASLEEP.

Terra sees that the Young Girl's sweating in her sleep. Terra turns the A/C up a tiny bit.

EXT. HUNTINGTON WOODS SUBURB - LATER

Terra pulls both backpacks out of the trunk, placing them on the road, as the Young Girl collects them.

TERRA

Need me to carry these in your house?

YOUNG GIRL

I can do it.

TERRA

You're paying me to be helpful -- however I can be that.

The Young Girl frowns at Terra, weirded out. She rolls her backpack up the driveway as Terra watches.

The Young Girl reaches her front door, struggling to open it. Terra's about to advance when the Girl successfully unlocks it. Terra nods and heads back to her car.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Terra sits, opening her glove compartment, revealing a trove of JEWELRY, PILL BOTTLES, WEED BAGGIES, and CASH.

She deposits the $20 bill.

INT. LEVIN HOUSE - MAYA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Maya lies in bed, thinking. She looks to an OPENED ENVELOPE on her nightstand. It's got yellowing paper and "MAYA LEVIN" in browning cartography.

The room is covered wall-to-wall in BOOKS, all of their covers flashing a PULITZER, MAN BOOKER, NEWBERY, etc. There are MAPS of different countries from opposite corners of the world with THUMBTACKS in the old locations for the Ancient Wonders: Pyramids of Giza, Temple of Artemis, etc.

INT. LEVIN HOUSE - EMILY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Emily sits in bed, looking to her open doorway. Her room is tidy to the the point of uninhabitance.

The house is dead quiet as Emily stands. Just as she does so, Maya ARRIVES in her doorway. Emily quickly sits.

The two stare at one another for a moment, melancholic and exhausted. Maya goes to Emily's bed, lying down and throwing the covers over herself. Emily gets under the covers as well.

Maya looks to the wall, Emily worriedly looks to Maya, staring holes into her back.

EMILY

I'm here still.

Maya doesn't respond, just looks at the blank wall.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - NIGHT

Terra sits, bored, as a podcast plays on her car speakers.

Terra gets a *DING!* on her smartphone. She looks, and it's a ride request from the far away Farmington Hills. She taps "DECLINE", looking to the massive houses around her, waiting.

EXT. LEVIN HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Emily drops her backpack and inspects the wheels of the family 2019 CADILLAC CT6. All the tires are DEFLATED. Emily looks to Maya, who stands on the edge of the driveway, swiping through a SMARTPHONE.

Maya's on the LYFT APP. She gets a new driver for a route to the school, takes a look at him, and CANCELS. She orders another Lyft. She waits. New driver. Looks. CANCELS.

Emily grabs her backpack and goes to Maya, who squints at the smartphone, smiling: she FINALLY got TERRA WITH THE RED CHEVY MALIBU. Maya pockets the phone as Emily reaches her.

EMILY

Dad's too dense to get when you're up to something.

MAYA

He doesn't care.

EMILY

Stop fishing for indirect praise.

MAYA

He's got his own Lyft to work.

(re: smartphone)

Won't be missing *one* phone for the day.

EMILY

Just for the *day*, yeah?

Maya smirks. Her sister's the only one who can follow her.

EMILY

For someone who thinks they're the messiah, you're an asshole.

MAYA

For someone so intent on me sleeping in the same room as you, you're a heavy sleeper.

Emily tries to respond, but sighs.

EMILY

Maya... Just tell me this isn't anything... y'know... irreversible you're about to do.

MAYA

If you believe that any act can have permanent consequences, then all acts do -- And I don't think I'm the *messiah*.

Maya takes Emily's hand. Emily sighs and grips back.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - MORNING

Terra arrives at the address for a "JOSHUA," seeing Maya and Emily on the driveway. Terra pumps her fist under the wheel and parks the car.

EXT. LEVIN HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Emily and Maya watch as Terra gets out of the car.

TERRA

(charismatic)

Which one of you is Joshua?

Neither of the girls laugh. Maya walks to Terra.

MAYA

(extending hand)

Maya Levin. My sister and I need a ride to school.

Terra shakes as Emily walks past Maya and goes to the backseat door.

TERRA

(jumping to Emily)

I can help you with your backpack!

EMILY

I got it.

TERRA

No, really! You're paying me to!

EMILY

Thank you. I got it.

TERRA

Come on! It'll be fun! Like I'm your valet!

Emily pauses outside the backseat door, not smiling. Still staring at Terra, she pulls at the handle.

MAYA

(to Terra)

It's been a rough morning -- our dad's car was vandalized. Let me ask you: have you ever been convicted of a felony?

Terra frowns, looking back to Maya.

TERRA

No.

MAYA

Misdemeanor?

TERRA

No.

MAYA

It's important to tell me the truth: what's the worst thing you've ever done?

Terra stares, a little thrown off.

TERRA

All right, kid, let's just get in the car.

Maya stares Terra down. Terra frowns and shifts awkwardly.

Maya's face then LIGHTS UP, happy in her assessment.

MAYA

Perfect!

(to Emily)

Let's go to school!

Maya goes past Terra as Terra furrows her brow.

TERRA

I can hold your bag in the front seat so you have room.

Maya shakes her head, almost scoffing.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - LATER

Terra drives. She looks in the rearview, seeing Emily and Maya with their backpacks on their laps.

TERRA

You two gonna need a ride back after school, too?

MAYA

Stop right here.

Emily and Terra both frown.

TERRA

What?

MAYA

(holding mouth)

I have food poisoning -- I'm going to vomit in your car!

TERRA

What are you talking about?

Maya fakes a dry heave. Terra PULLS OVER.

TERRA

Woah, just -- !

Maya manually unlocks the door as the car HALTS.

EXT. HUNTINGTON WOODS STREET - CONTINUOUS

Maya jumps into a bush, pulling out TWO PACKED DUFFEL BAGS.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Maya opens the back door, throwing both bags on top of a STUNNED EMILY. The bags say "JORDYN'S JAMBOREE -- 3/14/15".

EMILY

Maya! You little --

(to Terra)

Ma'am, don't listen to her!

Maya then hops into the passenger seat.

TERRA

(surprised)

Hey, what's going on, friend?

MAYA

I'm feeling better -- keep driving but pull past the drop off line.

TERRA

I'm...

Terra sees cars behind her and pulls forward, but continues the route on her phone.

EMILY

Maya, you're not roping a stranger into your cries for help.

MAYA

They're not cries for help, they're part of G-d's plan.

EMILY

I'm older than you -- I am nearly a *woman* -- and I am telling you right now to --

MAYA

Not until I'm hoisting a chair, you're not.

TERRA

Is everything good?

Maya looks around the car.

MAYA

(to Terra)

*This* neighborhood at *this* time is ideal for a certain business practice, wouldn't you say?

(looking ahead)

That's the pick-up line. Don't get in it. We're changing course.

Maya opens the arm rest, which Terra quickly snaps down. Terra gets into the pick-up line.

TERRA

Excuse me?

Maya opens the arm rest again, causing Terra to shove it down again. Maya opens it again, Terra shoves it down, now holding her arm down on it, gawking at Maya.

Maya then smiles and opens the glove compartment, revealing TERRA'S STOLEN STASH.

Terra's EYES GO WIDE as Maya beams.

MAYA

Do you have a prescription for these stolen pills?

EMILY

(blown away)

Oh, no...

TERRA

How did you...?

Terra slams the glove compartment shut, looking to see if any of the kids on the sidewalk noticed.

TERRA

Woah, woah, woah! This ride's over! Get out!

MAYA

I caught you pickpocketing from children and your first response is to let me go free?

TERRA

What?!

MAYA

I cancelled five Lyfts till we got you; but you're consistent in your prowling.

Terra pulls out of the pick-up line, panicking.

MAYA

Don't do anything rash and be sure to complete the ride.

Maya undoes the top two buttons of her shirt, revealing that underneath she has TEN HAMSA NECKLACES, some PURE SILVER. Terra sees this and gawks at them.

MAYA

I'm not here to get you in trouble, I'm here to do the opposite. I want to pay you for a ride -- but it needs to be off the books.

Emily realizes what's going on.

EMILY

Oh, my -- You're not doing this.

MAYA

(to Terra)

We're going to Saugatuck.

EMILY

(facepalming)

Maya...

MAYA

And neither the police nor your employer will be notified about your entrepreneurship. Deal?

TERRA

What...?

EMILY

Maya, you're being an infant! I'm not going with you!

MAYA

(to Emily)

I'll get to you in a sec; the driver obviously needs her ultimatum before you do.

(to Terra)

A trip to Saugatuck averages to about two hundred dollars from Huntington Woods -- don't drive off from here before you complete the ride -- and these necklaces are worth ten times that. This is my dad's phone he gave us for the day so we could Lyft backlater. My dad would be able to access this ride history online, and therefore that we're going to Saugatuck, which means this ride cannot be on the books. I pay you with these necklaces, you take us to Saugatuck -- it's about three hours -- and neither of us ever speak about seeing each other in your red Chevy Malibu, Terra. License plate: TRB-046.

Terra slows the car and stares at Maya, unsure of what to do. She drives past the end of the drop-off line, PULLING OVER.

TERRA

Okay, what is going on right now?

EMILY

My sister is blackmailing you into a ride across the state because she's reckless and immature.

MAYA

The kinda blackmail where you stand to gain two thousand dollars. I am not here to tattle, that's simply option two. Option one is you drive us, you get silver necklaces, no one knows. Option two is you don't drive us, you don't get these necklaces, you receive a thorough investigation into whatever I choose to have lost on this ride; which opens all kinds of investigations based on contacting previous rides in your history.

Terra stares, then taps "RIDE COMPLETE" on her phone, still trying to process.

TERRA

What just...? What?

EMILY

Maya, I'm not doing this.

Maya looks back at Emily, then to Terra.

MAYA

Stop the car for a moment.

TERRA

Okay, kid, what is going --

MAYA

Stop the car. You already skipped the drop off line without dropping us off so I *can* claim you tried to kidnap us.

Terra throws her hands up and STOPS THE CAR, not having any other choice. Maya looks back to Emily.

EMILY

Just because you think G-d saved you from drowning one time doesn't mean you have a higher purpose that excuses your --

MAYA

This phone will be getting a call in an hour -- Dad is the primary contact in their phonebook. When it's called, Terra -- since she's got the deepest voice -- will either excuse one of her daughters or both of them... Emily... This is it. I'm going where G-d wants me to. Where They told me to. You're supposed to be there as well.

(turning forward)

But I'm your sister, not your guardian. Only G-d is that.

Emily just stares, then looks at the duffel bags, then looks at the school to their right. On the school's front lawn, a large, DEAD TREE BRANCH rests -- having fallen recently enough to not be disposed of.

MAYA

(turning back again)

I packed all of your valuables, favorite clothes, two books of poetry I've been asking you to read for a while now, your laptop and charger, and I don't want you to be gone from my life.

Emily looks to Maya, sighing and shaking her head.

EMILY

(deciding)

Put your seatbelt back on.

Maya nods, then looks to Terra, who glares back.

The two stare at one another.

TERRA

What just happened? What is going on?! Why do you talk that way?

MAYA

You're going to be driving three hours West. You're going to make two thousand dollars, depending on your skills as a fence. The less questions you ask, the less I will. That sounds great for our circumstances.

EMILY

(tired)

She talks that way because she skipped two grades out of her own volition. She was *supposed* to skip six. She thinks it's a personality. She's gauging necklace prices, *I'm* assuming, based on eBay --

MAYA

Lowered a touch if I understand underground resale values.

EMILY

And those necklaces belong to our mother.

MAYA

*Step-*mother.

EMILY

Our *mother*. I wouldn't agree to any deal with her. But if she made this plan based on you being --

TERRA

Two necklaces now.

Maya smiles and removes one necklace, opening the glove compartment and plopping it in.

MAYA

One more when we're out of Detroit.

EMILY

(to Terra)

Really? You're enabling this behavior? I don't want to go to Saug- this literally *is* kidnapping.

Terra taps her smartphone to go "OFF DUTY."

TERRA

You got necklaces too? No?

(nodding)

Then I've talked outta worse.

Emily sighs. Maya looks back at her.

EMILY

(to Maya)

I'm giving you a run for your money, I just need a second.

Maya grins and faces forward again.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - LATER

They're on the freeway, the sun higher in the sky. It seems clear that nobody has been doing any talking.

Maya and Emily's dad's smartphone rings, the number being a 248 area code. Maya stares, thinks, and looks to Terra.

MAYA

We're Maya and Emily. We have fevers. The receptionist is Pat.

Maya hands the ringing phone to Terra, who answers it.

TERRA

(lower register)

Hello?

A voice speaks for a moment on the other side.

TERRA

Well, here you are calling me and here I am forgetting. Yes, my girls both came down with such a fever -- the two of them, yes. Thanks, *Pat*.

(beat; listening)

Yes, I know! I feel awful! This weather's for playing, not sneezing.

Maya looks back at Emily, who refuses to look at her.

TERRA

Oh, you never know with these things. I'd certainly expect them to be a couple days...

The other voice speaks for a bit on this, agreeing.

EMILY

(hushed; not looking)

You're not gonna get away with this.

TERRA

Thank you so much -- goodbye.

Terra hangs up. Maya takes the phone.

MAYA

(to Emily)

Read your brochure. It's got plenty to think about.

EMILY

No.

A traffic jam's formed up ahead. Terra turns to exit.

The exit sign, interesting enough, has NO INFORMATION ON IT. Maya removes a second necklace, putting it in the glove compartment.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - LATER

They're on a two lane highway, surrounded on both sides by trees. There's still been a lot of silence. Terra looks around, confused by the lack of cars.

Terra looks to her smartphone on its dock, which shows a long blue line for where they need to go, but the navigation isn't moving due to NO SERVICE in the corner.

Terra shifts, sighing. She keeps driving.

TERRA

So... Maya and...?

Terra looks to Emily through the rearview then looks to Maya.

MAYA

Emily.

TERRA

Riiiight... You, uh... do a lot of this kinda stuff?

EMILY

No.

MAYA

Yes.

Terra nods.

TERRA

Wanna throw on Spotify?

EMILY

No, thank you.

MAYA

If you'd like.

TERRA

Good.

(to Emily)

I'm listening to the crazy one.

Terra fiddles with her phone, struggling to get any connection, while they talk:

EMILY

You're listening to the one with two grand on her. Who raised you? Wolves? Very greedy wolves?

MAYA

Don't impose.

EMILY

I am not a guest to my own kidnapping.

MAYA

That word's moot here. I asked if you wanted to get out of the car.

EMILY

Terra, ask if she's gonna need a return trip.

TERRA

Are there more necklaces?

EMILY

That's not the point.

TERRA

(to Maya)

Kinda is, man.

EMILY

If she doesn't need a return trip on a ride she doesn't want her parents to know about, you can assume you were the last, documented person with a couple of to-be-*missing* children. I'll add that she didn't leave a note.

MAYA

(to Terra)

Don't sell the necklaces *right* off the bat --

EMILY

You can't sell them at all! Bury them. Deny ever having them.

Terra comprehends, pulling her hand away from the phone.

TERRA

Wait -- So you're running away-away?

MAYA

Running *to*.

EMILY

And didn't leave a note. She's vanishing -- conveniently, in your car.

(to Maya)

Terra's going to have to tell the cops exactly where she dropped us off -- tell them everything. You didn't think this through because, in the end, you *are* a child, not --

MAYA

You're a child as well, and one that got into a recognized private school because I did.

(to Terra)

*If* you get in that position, you wouldn't have to admit to the other pickpocketing. This was simply your first time. You have no prior charges.

EMILY

You didn't get me into that school, a donation did. You're throwing a random woman under the bus just because you like bumpy rides.

MAYA

(to Terra)

You're fine.

(to Emily)

You're attempting to appeal to pathos, which doesn't --

TERRA

Oh, my -- Can you two stop talking for a second?! *What* is going on?!

EMILY

If she doesn't rat you out for being a pickpocket, then *I* will. *Unless* you drive us back.

MAYA

Same potential consequences as going forward, minus two grand --

EMILY

You won't sell them --

TERRA

Why do you -- ?! Who *raised* you two?

EMILY

Don't impose.

MAYA

Our stepmother is a rabbi and our father writes for the Free Press.

EMILY

Our *mother* is a retired neurologist and our father is a casual venture capitalist. Maya doesn't like her life so she exaggerates it.

MAYA

Emily doesn't like life, period, so she denies it's happening around her.

Emily is about to respond, then sighs and looks out the window. Terra's mentally KO'd.

TERRA

All right, how about --

(swerving)

HOLY SHIT!

Terra narrowly misses a PALE HORSE SITTING IN THE ROAD, the car going off the road and INTO A SLIGHT DITCH. Emily LAUNCHES herself forward to try to secure Maya, but her seatbelt PULLS HER BACK.

Once the car hits its stop, the inhabitants are fine. Just a moment of off-roading. All breathe heavily for a moment.

Emily looks to Maya, whose chin quivers, terrified for her life. Terra just looks right ahead, then double-takes and looks behind them. She unbuckles and hops out of the car.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Sure enough, as Terra gets onto the car-less road, there's a horse sitting like a dog, staring at her.

It NEIGHS and gets to its feet, BOLTING INTO THE TREES.

Terra grabs her hair, unsure of what just happened.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - SAME TIME

Emily puts her hand on Maya's shoulder. Maya FLINCHES, then sees it's Emily's hand and cools down. Maya clutches her Hamsa necklaces, trying to steady her breathing.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - SAME TIME

Terra gawks, the horse now disappearing amongst the trees.

TERRA

What...? What the hell, dude...?

Terra looks back at the car, checking the damage.

She goes to the front: NOT A SCRATCH.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Terra gets in and breathes, finally looking to the girls.

TERRA

Uh... S-uhhh... Uh, well, okay -- Uhh... Are you okay?

MAYA

(quick)

Yes.

TERRA

Uh -- We -- Okay, we -- Holy cow, dude, did you -- Did you *see* that?!

Emily shakes her head.

TERRA

No, I...! Oh, my G-d...

MAYA

(voice shaking)

Don't take His name in vain!

Terra's mind races as she finds her words.

TERRA

(to Maya)

Okay... first of all -- No, first of all, I *do* have a record, so nobody's gonna be snitching and we'll figure that out in a -- No, *first* of all, there was a straight up horse in the road -- Oh, shit, no, first of all, everyone okay?

The two girls are terrified. Terra puts the car in reverse.

TERRA

All right, cool.

Terra looks back, presses the gas, and the CAR DOESN'T MOVE. She frowns.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Emily and Terra are in front of the car, PUSHING, as Maya sits in the driver's seat, REVVING. The car's pulling up mud, STUCK IN THE DITCH.

Emily and Terra release, exhausted.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - LATER

The three of them lean on the car, Terra and Maya both on their phones. Terra holds her phone high -- NO SERVICE. Terra shoves her face into her hands.

MAYA

(to both of them)

Okay. You're gonna stay here. I'm gonna walk till I find service -- we passed an intersection a few miles back. I can see if there are signs for anything --

EMILY

No. We're children and children are prime targets for abduction. We're not going anywhere without Terra.

MAYA

(sighing)

Fine. Terra, you're --

TERRA

We're not leaving this car here without anybody watching it!

MAYA

We have to.

(removing backpack)

You can put all your contraband in my backpack.

Terra looks to Maya, then sighs and goes to the passenger side door.

EMILY

If we walk from here, we can be hit. We aren't leaving.

Maya holds her smartphone to the sky.

EMILY

We're not gonna be able to get another Lyft out here.

MAYA

I know that.

EMILY

We have to find a new way back.

MAYA

We're not going back.

Terra returns with a full backpack.

EMILY

If we make it back before Dad gets home, which is in... what time is it now?

MAYA

Eleven.

EMILY

Good, so let's shoot for four o'clock, which is in five hours, and we drove less than two...

MAYA

Terra was making good time.

EMILY

That's plenty of time to figure this out -- we should be gold. We were called out. We go back to school tomorrow with sniffles. We forget this ever happened. No one has to know we did this.

TERRA

All right, so let's just... You're running away, yeah? What's in Saugatuck?

MAYA

G-d.

Terra nods, frowning.

TERRA

Cool...

EMILY

She thinks she's not kidding.

MAYA

I'm not.

TERRA

Yeah?

Maya pulls out the YELLOWED ENVELOPE from her pocket, waving it around before putting it back in her pocket.

MAYA

G-d invited us.

Terra throws her hands up, leaving this alone. As she turns away, sees something in the distance.

MAYA

(to Emily)

*Your* brochure's in your duffel bag. Unopened.

EMILY

I'm not going to subject myself to seduction.

TERRA

Folks, there's a car.

Maya and Emily look:

Sure enough, way in the distance, there's a LARGE, BLACK CAR parked on the side of the road.

TERRA

Was that there a second ago?

Neither of the girls answer, also confused.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - LATER

The three approach the car with their bags, Terra carrying a backpack and a duffel bag. As they get closer, they see the car's a 1991 LINCOLN TOWN CAR HEARSE.

Terra reaches the driver door and peeks in, not seeing anybody. She pulls the handle: LOCKED.

MAYA

Can you break into it?

EMILY

We're not doing that.

Terra looks around: nobody in either direction. Emily goes to the back, reading the etched company information.

EMILY

Swanson Funeral Company. Lansing, Michigan.

MAYA

Is there a body in the back?

EMILY

Of course there isn't.

MAYA

We don't know that.

EMILY

We can't take this back to Detroit. Lansing isn't too far from here, but if a hearse is all the way --

TERRA

We're not taking it back to Detroit. If anything, we're taking it somewhere with a phone. We'll figure out what the plan is from there.

MAYA

So you can break into it?

TERRA

I mean... Thing's gotta be like thirty years old...? Do you have a wire coat hanger in your bag?

Maya sets down her duffel bag and opens it, pulling a DRESS ON A HANGER out from the top. She plucks out the hanger, giving it to Terra.

Terra takes the hanger and straightens it out, keeping the hook's shape. Maya quickly folds the dress and hops to Terra, observing. Emily looks away.

Terra pauses, feeling Maya staring.

MAYA

What?

TERRA

It's just...

Terra thinks about it.

TERRA

Come here.

Maya gets closer. Terra peels back the window's black, rubber strip, shoving the hook end between that and the window.

TERRA

That's weather stripping. You gotta get real low. You're looking for a pin. You want that pin to go --

(pointing towards rear)

*That* direction.

Terra steps back, still holding the hanger. When Maya realizes she's being invited to try, her eyes light up and she rushes to take the hanger.

Maya grunts to no avail. Emily shakes her head.

TERRA

It's gonna be lower.

Maya hits resistance and gasps.

TERRA

There you go. Don't lose it. It's gonna be pretty hard to get it.

Maya struggles, looking to the door lock knob for wiggles. She loses the pin and pouts.

TERRA

Try again.

Terra looks around for no cars coming as Maya tries again. She finds the pin, giving it a careful push. Just like that, the LOCK KNOB BUDGES.

TERRA

Good-good-good-good-good! You're on it. Reel it in. Nice and gentle.

Maya grunts and tugs the wire, UNLOCKING THE CAR. She gasps in delight and OPENS THE DOOR. She looks to Terra, who grins.

TERRA

Great. And now, *you* broke into a car, not me.

Maya frowns as Terra nudges her aside, peeking in.

INT. HEARSE - CONTINUOUS

Terra pulls the driver sun visor down, then the passenger's. Nothing. She opens the glove compartment. Nothing. She opens the arm rest. Nothing. She glowers.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Maya's trying to refold the hanger. Emily's trying to peek in through the back windows.

TERRA

No keys.

MAYA

Lemme look.

Maya throws down the hanger and hops in. Emily pulls back.

EMILY

There's a casket in there.

MAYA (O.S.)

Let's check the casket!

TERRA

There's a *what*?

EMILY

Don't open it!

MAYA (O.S.)

Oh, wow, there *is*!

Maya throws open the back doors from the inside; she crawled over the partition.

INT/EXT. HEARSE - CONTINUOUS

Sure enough, there's a WEATHERED, BABY BLUE CASKET with a NOTE taped on it. Maya feels around for the casket's opening.

TERRA

Hey! Hold on!

EMILY

Maya!

MAYA

The keys might be in here!

EMILY

We can't steal a car and we *definitely* can't open a casket!

Maya can't find the opening. She sees the NOTE and takes it, reading. Her eyes go wide.

MAYA

(looking to casket)

No kidding...

Maya continues reading, then looks to the front of the hearse. She leans through the partition, opening the sunglasses holder, revealing the HEARSE'S KEYS.

The three stare at the keys.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Door open, Terra STARTS THE HEARSE, the car sputtering to life. Emily and Maya stand outside the door, Maya still reading the note.

TERRA

What's the note say?

EMILY

I'm gonna have to deny that this happened later.

MAYA

Cover your ears.

Emily does so, and hums a prayer.

MAYA

(reading)

"My name is Feature Swanson. My uncle owned the funeral home. My father drove the hearses. I sat shotgun. I am in this coffin and ask that you don't bother me. It's odd spending your life at funerals; feels odd for me to have one. I'd rather not. Instead, I'd like to be kept in the hearse forever. You can use it if you'd like. I'm not gonna be selfish over a perfectly good car. The keys are in the sunglasses holder, just be sure to put the hearse back on the side of the road when you're done, and it'd be kind if you refill the tank if it's under half."

Maya taps Emily's shoulder twice and Emily uncovers her ears. Terra marinates in this, looking back at the coffin. She looks to the fuel level: NEARLY EMPTY. Maya goes to the passenger side.

MAYA

Are you getting in or should we scrape you up later?

EMILY

There are only two seats up front.

MAYA

I'll go in the back.

EMILY

There's no seatbelt back there.

MAYA

No -- okay, I'll sit on your lap.

EMILY

The airbag would break your face.

TERRA

Oh, my Gooo-oodness. I'll go slow.

Emily fidgets. She doesn't get in.

EMILY

(to Terra)

We're just gonna go find service, right? And then back to Detroit?

MAYA

We're not going back.

EMILY

Maya, we're done doing this! You're not the one who can drive, so you're not the one who can make decisions!

MAYA

I *probably* could drive. Terra, you're looking to find spiritual significance, aren't you? You pickpocket to find purpose? Have a tangible impact on the world?

TERRA

Uhh... I was just looking at the necklaces.

MAYA

No, you weren't, but let's keep that if it works. Em, you had your ultimatum outside the school. If I have to give you one every hour, I will, but you'll pick the same thing every time.

Emily stares, then looks away from Maya, seeing the forest.

MAYA

I need to do this. You know that. Moses couldn't do it without his Aaron.

EMILY

And Abel couldn't get killed without his Cain...

The forest floor is COVERED IN DEAD BRANCHES. Emily shakes her head, wincing.

MAYA

No. G-d invited you because G-d *loves* the two of us together.

Maya SMILES and subconsciously HUGS HERSELF.

MAYA

It's your call if we're staying that way.

Emily stares, then looks to Terra.

EMILY

You're the one who can stop this.

MAYA

(excited)

Oh! Is she Seth?

Emily ignores Maya, looking dead into Terra's eyes.

Terra stares back, confused and idle. She looks over to Maya's backpack, then Maya. She returns to look to Emily.

TERRA

Uh-huh... Yeah, I really shouldn't... be the one to decide your whole thing with... Yeah. No.

Emily sighs disappointedly at Terra.

INT. HEARSE - MOMENTS LATER

They pull away, Maya sitting on Emily's lap and Emily covering Maya's face with her hands.

Terra struggles to roll the window down using the rusted, manual window crank.

TERRA

How good are you at gauging distance? Either of you?

MAYA

I am. I was able to --

TERRA

When we hit a road, we gotta get the name of it, then gauge how far back my car was. I don't know the name of the road we're on now.

EMILY

Does that mean --

TERRA

We were miles from the last intersection, I honestly don't know if this tank has enough gas for that. We're gonna go ahead to the next intersection for gas or a phone and loop back to my car.

Terra looks in the rearview to see Emily's worried face looking out the window.

TERRA

Okay, so... Can we talk about where you're *going*? You're running away to find G-d?

MAYA

Yes.

EMILY

Maya got a letter from a cult.

MAYA

(to Terra)

It's not a cult and both of us got them. There's a synagogue in Saugatuck that has a direct line to G-d. They've communicated with G-d for centuries. They've invited us as pilgrims. Emily's letter came a day after mine. As a result, she's refused to open it.

EMILY

Because Maya's was very clear that it's a cult, and Maya roped me into her little exodus.

MAYA

It's not an exodus.

TERRA

Kid, that's a cult.

Maya frustratedly sighs and procures the YELLOWED ENVELOPE from her pocket. We can see now there's no return address.

MAYA

It's dated from a hundred years ago. The brochure inside explains some details, but not all of them. It's in Saugatuck, near the lake, says to follow the empty signs. The rest is mostly just info about the history of the place.

TERRA

I mean, you can pour tea on paper and make it look old like that.

MAYA

Faith is in knowing what's true, not investigating what's false.

EMILY

That's not what faith is.

MAYA

Terra, what religion *are* you?

EMILY

Now *you're* imposing.

MAYA

I told her where we were going. I trust her. She's in too deep.

(to Terra)

What religion are you?

TERRA

I don't have one.

MAYA

I would've predicted.

TERRA

I'm not looking.

EMILY

She's not selling.

TERRA

Yeah?

Maya shakes her head.

EMILY

Judaism isn't like... *other* ones. It's not survival by conversion. It's survival by survival.

MAYA

No. It's survival by G-d. G-d wants Jews to continue on. That's why He has us surviving everything.

Emily scoffs and Maya smiles, looking to Terra.

MAYA

Emily was going to be Bat Mitzvah'ed in two months.

EMILY

*Is*.

MAYA

Saugatuck might -- *Any*ways, for her Bat Mitzvah, she wanted to study the topic of why G-d used to intervene on human atrocities, but didn't on the Holocaust --

EMILY

Why are you telling strangers this?

MAYA

She asked!

EMILY

She didn't.

TERRA

I mean, I really didn't.

MAYA

Then I apologize. *I* just think it's a ridiculous topic.

EMILY

It isn't. Hard questions are good questions. Not everything is a miracle; some things have no G-d in them.

MAYA

That's impossible.

TERRA

I would love to just... not talk about religion.

MAYA

You asked where we were going, and I'm linking this back to how this synagogue isn't a cult.

EMILY

It's a cult and they're gonna pedophile you.

TERRA

Wow! You two are a lot of fun! Let's listen to the radio.

Terra turns on the radio. Dead static. She turns it off.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - LATER

The sun is peaking in the sky as they reach an intersection: a BIG, DIRT ROAD. Terra rolls down the window and looks out.

TERRA

Okay, there's no sign for a name of the road... and it's a dirt road.

They sit, Terra biting her lip. Terra looks in the rearview to see Emily expectantly waiting on Terra's call.

TERRA

I think we gotta keep going.

EMILY

No! You said we have to turn here! We're going too far!

MAYA

Look at where the *dirt* road's leading! Even further nowhere!

EMILY

There wouldn't be a road here if it were useless! It goes somewhere that warranted a whole road.

TERRA

Okay, we just can't stick around to pick. I don't know how much the longer the hearse can run on empty.

MAYA

If we turn at this one, the next one might be in a mile and might be *blossoming* with gas stations.

EMILY

We don't need gas stations! Even if this road just goes to someone's house, that's enough to find a phone! Wherever this road goes, it goes to people!

TERRA

Oh, my G-

Terra pulls forward and Emily groans.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - LATER

The car pauses at a MUCH SMALLER DIRT ROAD. This one, however, has a SIGN, reading "JEWEL RD."

INT. HEARSE - SAME TIME

Maya opens her mouth to say something.

TERRA

Let's not.

Terra drives forward before they can deliberate.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - LATER

The sun is still high as the hearse SPUTTERS. To their right, through the trees, one can now see a RIVER.

INT. HEARSE - SAME TIME

Terra fumbles to maintain control.

TERRA

(under her breath)

Shit.

Terra pulls the hearse over.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Terra's out of the car, Emily putting the keys back in the sunglasses holder and Maya sticking the note on the coffin.

Emily closes the front doors as Maya lugs the duffel bags and backpacks out the back, plopping a backpack on the road.

TERRA

Careful!

MAYA

I'm being careful.

Terra looks around, spotting the river. She squints, unsure.

TERRA

Okay, we're gonna walk now.

EMILY

We can't walk along a road.

TERRA

If the only car to go by in, like, an *hour* manages to hit one of us, I'll be ecstatic.

EMILY

No.

TERRA

Jesus. Fine! Let's just walk along the river!

EMILY

(guttural; instinctive)

*NO!*

The scream shocks Terra. Maya looks to her sister, suddenly very quiet.

MAYA

Hey, it's okay... I'm walking on the road. I'm right here.

Maya quickly gives Emily a hug, then scoops up her duffel bag. Emily, still a bit shaken, grabs her backpack. Terra, concerned, plucks up the remaining backpack and duffel bag.

Emily hurries down the road after Maya. Terra looks to the river, then follows the two of them.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - LATER

Terra checks her phone: NO SERVICE, and now 12:30PM.

Emily's singing a Bat Mitzvah prayer to herself, trying to remember the words. She avoids looking towards the river. Maya, a bit ahead of the others, stops. She squints.

Emily sees Maya's stopped and looks down the road as well. She stops. Terra, looking at her phone, bumps into Emily, then frowns and looks forward:

On the lefthand side of the road is a MAN sitting at a STALL made out of plywood, a large CORNFIELD behind him. The two girls look to Terra.

TERRA

Uh... Yeah. Definitely.

Terra leads the pack as the two girls follow her.

EXT. CORNFIELD - MOMENTS LATER

The three arrive at the stall, the CORNMAN (40s) is asleep, a fishing hat covering his face from the sun. The stall advertises "CORN: 25¢/EAR."

TERRA

Uh --

MAYA

Excuse me!

The Cornman wakes up, grabbing a corn ear to protect himself. He instantly CHUCKS it at the three, Terra DUCKING as it soars past her.

The Cornman looks at them, ready to throw another ear.

TERRA

Woah! Hey! We just wanted to...

The Cornman calms down a bit. Terra bewilderedly nods.

TERRA

Just wanted to know where the closest phone is. We hit a ditch pretty far back there. Do you have a working phone on you?

The Cornman slows his breathing, shaking his head.

TERRA

Do you know the closest way to anywhere with a phone? Is there a town nearby?

The Cornman thinks, then points West.

TERRA

How far?

MAYA

Can you talk?

The Cornman looks between the two of them, unsure which to answer first.

MAYA

Can you talk?

After a moment, the Cornman nods.

MAYA

What's your name?

The Cornman doesn't respond, still scared.

TERRA

Look, how far is the town? Can we walk to it?

The Cornman looks West, then shakes his head, unsure.

TERRA

Seriously? Come on, man... All right. Do you live nearby?

The Cornman stares, afraid to answer.

TERRA

We just need to use a phone.

The Cornman still stares.

MAYA

I'm going to call you "Cornman."

EMILY

Maya, don't be rude.

Cornman looks to Emily, inquisitive. He hands her a corn ear, which she accepts nervously. He nods, pantomiming eating it.

Emily pulls the husk back and takes a nibble. Crunchy. Cornman nods. He looks to the others.

TERRA

Uh...

Terra pulls her wallet out, plucking a dollar and giving it to Cornman. Cornman pulls two more ears from under the stall, handing them to Terra and Maya. He pulls one for himself.

He undoes a clip on the fishing hat, revealing a clean-shaven face, his yellowed, blotchy teeth biting into the cob. He chews, looking around.

CORNMAN

Town's about ten miles West. Saranac. Lotta uphill. If you're determined to, you can walk it in a little under four hours.

Terra sighs.

TERRA

You don't have a phone on you? Do you have a car?

Cornman shakes his head.

TERRA

You don't have a car?

CORNMAN

Don't need one. River.

TERRA

What about the river?

CORNMAN

Boat.

Terra looks back at the river.

TERRA

You have a boat?

Cornman is nervous for a second, then shakes his head.

MAYA

It's okay. We can't steal your boat. Emily's afraid of water.

Cornman looks to Emily, who nods. Cornman nods himself.

CORNMAN

Grand River.

TERRA

Can Grand River take us to Saranac?

CORNMAN

Take you all the way to Lake Michigan.

MAYA

Then the river could take us to Saugatuck!

Cornman frowns, then shrugs.

EMILY

(to Maya)

You're not going on a boat!

MAYA

One sec --

(to Cornman; re: river)

You live right there?

Cornman goes pale, unsure of how to respond.

MAYA

Is there a cabin? Where do you launch your boat from?

EMILY

(voice quivering)

Maya...!

TERRA

(to Emily)

What's wrong with the river?

(to Cornman)

Hey, we'll pay you to use your boat!

Emily's too scared to speak. Cornman looks to her, concerned. He looks back to Terra.

CORNMAN

If you have a phone, you don't need a boat?

TERRA

Yeah. Absolutely. We just gotta call somebody to yank us out of a ditch back there.

(to Maya)

How far?

Maya looks to Emily, thinking. Terra nudges her.

MAYA

Six miles East of Jewel Road. Give or take.

Cornman sees Emily's scared and stands. He pushes the whole stall on its back, "closing" it.

EXT. MICHIGAN FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Cornman and Maya hold Emily's shoulders as Emily COVERS HER EYES, Terra behind them. They walk past the road, heading into the forest.

Emily hums the Bat Mitzvah prayer to herself. She STOPS, breathing heavily. Maya SQUEEZES her shoulder.

MAYA

I'm here still.

Emily nods with closed eyes. They continue.

EXT. CORNMAN'S CABIN - LATER

They get to a cabin on the river, where a 1981 BOSTON WHALER SKIFF is wheeled up on a small dock. They stop Emily at the cabin so she can touch the mayfly-coated wall. She turns away from the river and opens her eyes, her knees shaking.

Cornman sits with Emily, PULLING UP GRASS and squeezing it. Emily does the same, easing herself.

EXT. CORNMAN'S DOCK - SAME TIME

Terra follows Maya to the skiff, being CAREFUL ON THE DOCK. Maya peeks to see that Emily isn't looking, then hops in the skiff, inspecting it.

MAYA

He doesn't pad it when he stores it; you can tell because the tarp licked up the finish.

TERRA

Yeah, I figured you guys knew boats. Come on. Let's go back.

Maya fiddles with the motor. She seems fluent in it.

MAYA

Motor's old. But kept. You seem on edge.

TERRA

I... I don't like swimming.

MAYA

Because you can't?

Terra looks to see Emily and Cornman pulling up grass. She looks back to Maya.

TERRA

Can she?

MAYA

I figure she remembers how. A miracle happened when we were little kids and it scared her.

Maya smiles at the memory of it, one arm instinctually HUGGING her body. She then looks to Emily and becomes morose.

MAYA

And she'll always find a way to pull me back.

Maya pulls out her ENVELOPE, opening the BROCHURE. It's ancient as well, riddled with handwritten notes and drawings.

MAYA

I think she might've been invited as some kind of last test. And it's pretentious of me to assume I can hold her hand through it.

TERRA

Kid, if I had to give one piece of advice and that's it -- it'd probably be, "Don't join a cult." I don't know if there are more effed up ways to spend your childhood.

MAYA

Do you view all religious institutions as cults?

TERRA

Uhh... I view *cults* as cults. If they're telling young girls to leave home so you can directly talk to G-d, I can tell you they've got some guy named Kyle running it and he's got crabs. Just drop it. Run to something else.

MAYA

Did you have a negative experience with a religious institution?

TERRA

What? No. Never been in a cult. I'm just saying I watch TV. You need to do that more. I don't think you're scared enough.

Maya looks to Emily, then to Terra. Maya walks back to shore.

EXT. CORNMAN'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Maya reaches Emily, kneeling down. She holds Emily's hand. She sighs, shaking her head.

MAYA

(to Cornman)

Can we use your phone now?

INT. CORNMAN'S CABIN - DAY

An oven clock turns to 1:00PM. It's a small cabin, but well kept. Deliberate sanding and staining give it a rustic touch.

Emily sits on a couch, eating a chicken salad sandwich, as Terra holds a landline and Cornman looks through a phonebook. Cornman stops on a page, tapping it. Terra squints to see a number, then dials.

Maya plays with a KEY hanging on a nail. She looks to Emily.

Maya goes to Emily, sitting on a coffee table across from her. The two lock eyes, Emily chewing.

EMILY

(mouth full)

No.

MAYA

I understand your inability for *me* to go in -- it's childish but it's understandable -- why can't *you* go in the river?

EMILY

(mouth full)

Terra's calling a tow truck. That's the end of it. You're not getting on the boat.

MAYA

I'm asking why *you* wouldn't.

Emily stares, swallowing.

EMILY

Please let's just go home.

MAYA

We can't...

Maya looks down. Emily stares.

EMILY

We're gonna be okay. We're gonna...

MAYA

No, it's... We can choose too.

EMILY

So let's choose to deal with it.

MAYA

G-d sent us these letters because He knew we wouldn't have a --

Emily grabs Maya's hand.

EMILY

Let's make this unflinchingly clear: G-d does not communicate with people. G-d does nothing. If G-d made everything, then so be it, but He doesn't maintain it.

MAYA

(shocked)

What do you mean "if"...? You said "if" G-d made everything.

EMILY

I'm...

Emily looks around, ensuring the coast if clear. Terra's talking on the phone by Cornman. Emily returns to Maya.

EMILY

You know that I pulled you out of the water that day. Not G-d. If I didn't do anything, you would've drowned.

Maya smiles at Emily's naivety, an arm subconsciously HUGGING herself.

MAYA

Em, G-d was in that water. I saw Him. G-d is there, and G-d put you there on that beach for a --

EMILY

G-d didn't put me here for the purpose of saving you. G-d did not make everything *for* you, so you could do something amazing and world-saving and save Judaism -- and just shut up. G-d didn't save you, so I had to. From the very first killing: Cain and Abel. G-d did nothing to stop it. He didn't save those going into Birkenau. He didn't save our first... He is either a myth that we hold onto 'cause we're afraid of the dark, or He is very, very, bad. If He is real, I don't trust Him.

Maya's taken aback. Emily shakes her head, unable to look at Maya. She bites her lip.

EMILY

Don't... Please don't try to keep running.

MAYA

You... You are *not* my guardian.

EMILY

*I'm* not. Mom and Dad a- Mom *or* Da- *Dad* -- We'll figure it out, just...

MAYA

She's not my mom and neither are you. And I'm tired of you making that my burden.

(standing)

I'm not going in the water -- I'm just going outside -- give me a moment, okay?

Maya shakes her head and storms off, Emily fuming.

TERRA

(on phone; frustrated)

It's a tiny road. It said "Jewel Road" on the sign. Six miles East of that, just... I don't have cell service out here, man! That's all I can give you! It was an official-looking sign on it, man! Ten miles -- *sixteen* miles East of Saranac!

Emily sets down her sandwich, unable to eat.

INT. CORNMAN'S CABIN - LATER

Terra sits on a chair with a huff, pulling her hair.

TERRA

(to Emily)

They don't know where we are based on our directions 'cause -- guess what -- these random-ass roads -- how'd we get so far off the right way, I mean...? What?

Emily nods.

TERRA

We need a new plan. Kid, let's just do the boat. That's --

CORNMAN

Don't make her.

TERRA

I'm not *making* anybody! We're not walking four hours if there's a boat! All those in favor of...

Terra looks around.

TERRA

Maya! Get out here!

No response. Emily frowns. Cornman leans against the wall with nails in it, each holding keys. ONE NAIL'S GOT NO KEY.

TERRA

Maya!

Emily looks to the window seat: there's only ONE DUFFEL BAG AND ONE BACKPACK on it.

Without missing a beat, Emily launches herself out the door.

EXT. CORNMAN'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Emily runs onto the shore as Maya finishes wheeling down the skiff, her DUFFEL BAG AND BACKPACK on it.

EMILY

MAYA, NO!

Maya sees Emily and JUMPS on, STARTING THE MOTOR.

Terra runs outside the cabin, seeing Maya.

TERRA

Oh, shit --

(calling out)

Hey! HEY!

EXT. CORNMAN'S DOCK - SAME TIME

Maya turns the bow West, then looks to Emily:

Emily's on the shore, but can't bring herself to the dock. Terra SPRINTS past Emily.

MAYA

(quiet)

Goodbye.

Terra reaches the dock.

TERRA

MAYA!

Maya LAUNCHES THE SKIFF FORWARD, blazing West across the river. Terra halts as she watches Maya disappear.

EXT. CORNMAN'S CABIN - SAME TIME

Emily stares in horror from the shore.

EMILY

Maya...! Maya...!

The skiff turns around a bend, vanishing. Emily crumbles to the shore.

INT. CORNMAN'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Terra carries the deadened Emily into the cabin, Cornman hurrying to grab a blanket. Terra plops Emily onto the couch. Cornman wraps Emily as Terra paces the cabin.

TERRA

(to Cornman)

How far can it go? How much fuel's in it?

EMILY

She'll do it...

CORNMAN

It's *got* fuel.

TERRA

Come on, man! Just... You're kidding me.

EMILY

We have to go... We have to go after her...

TERRA

No! She just took eight necklaces she owes me! She's a pain in the dick! We're getting my car, I'm cutting my losses, and we're going to Detroit. Call somebody from there.

EMILY

No!

TERRA

Then *I'm* going back to Detroit and if, hey, Cornman, if you wanna do what you can to help the... to...

Terra pauses, looking to the window seat. She bolts over to it, unzipping the remaining backpack.

Terra fumes, shaking her head.

TERRA

No...

Emily sees and realizes.

TERRA

No... *No*... Oh, my G-d... She took all my... She just...

Terra paces.

EMILY

We have to call the police...

TERRA

We can't call the police if what she stole is what --

EMILY

Not for your stupid stuff! For her!

TERRA

That "stupid stuff" is how I eat food! She just stole food!

EMILY

You taught her how to steal! That's why you shouldn't steal!

TERRA

Then feed me, Seymour!

Emil's eyes well up. Cornman rushes to comfort her.

EMILY

(through tears)

We need to call somebody...

CORNMAN

Oh, honey, the police aren't gonna come here anymore. I call them when I get scared too much.

Terra groans at this, shaking her head. She then freezes, comprehending what Cornman said.

TERRA

The police come here?

CORNMAN

Not anymore, I --

TERRA

How'd they come here? What'd you tell them?

CORNMAN

They... just came when I called.

TERRA

'Cause they can track the landline's location?

Terra thinks.

TERRA

Okay... Okay, can any other service track that too, like...?

EMILY

You have to call.

TERRA

No!

Emily gawks at this.

TERRA

Listen to me: if they find her, they find my stuff, and she'll give me up in a second. She knows that. She *probably* took my shit as a hostage.

EMILY

No!

TERRA

Okay, *your* sister blackmailed me, she broke into a car, she did whatever; she's got teardrop tattoos in her future from when she shanks everybody in psycho prison! If you mention her to them, she's going to some Juvi in Detroit. This isn't sibling rivalry when it's my shit!

EMILY

I don't care about your shit! I can't keep losing them! Not... *her*!

Terra goes from a scowl to a frown. Cornman looks between the two of them.

CORNMAN

I'll... go wave down a car if it comes by.

Cornman hurries out the cabin. Terra stares at Emily, then goes to her, sitting on a chair by the couch.

Emily struggles to speak.

EMILY

It...

TERRA

Hey, I reallydon't wanna know what's going on in your lives, but you gotta let it out so we figure out how to get my stuff and you get, y'know...? Yeah.

Emily looks to Terra, chin quivering.

EMILY

Our parents are getting... a...

Terra realizes. Emily nods.

EMILY

They told us two days ago. Dad's getting custody; we're not gonna see... That's another one gone.

Terra nods. She hops over to the couch. She doesn't know how to comfort Emily.

TERRA

Uh... Gotcha. Okay... Uh...

EMILY

Maya been crying a lot since. They told me to not let it affect my Bat Mitzvah since it's so soon and... then she got that stupid letter and I got one and... Maya just... She said we had to run away and I said no. That I'm gonna be an adult soon and adults don't run from things...

Terra stares. Emily grips the blanket tighter. Emily rests her head in her lap, exhausted.

EMILY

I'm gonna be an adult soon and I'm still her keeper, just even more scared, but *now* it's... I hate growing up... Why didn't anybody tell me it was gonna be just like they said it was?

Terra sighs, then looks to the landline.

TERRA

Kid... I'm sorry, all right? That... I mean, that sucks. Kids freak out when they're freaked out. This is... I guess, kinda a bigger version of that.

EMILY

She can't go to Juvi.

TERRA

Uh... Right. She'll go to Juvi. So, can't call the cops. Settled.

Emily looks around the room. She wipes her eyes and goes into planning mode. She stands up and bolts to her duffel bag, opening the pockets. She finds it: the ENVELOPE FOR "EMILY LEVIN." She immediately TEARS IT OPEN.

Emily pauses. Inside's only a card, not a trifold like Maya's. She ogles at it. It's only got one word on it:

"FOLLOW"

Terra gets up, frowning, and goes to inspect it as well. Emily looks in the envelope: there's nothing else. Terra holds the card to the light: nothing. They stare at it.

TERRA

Uh... Right.

EMILY

Maya's was way longer than this. No, no, no, hers had... Hers had information, and said it was near the lake, and said... uh...

TERRA

Something about signs...? Maya --

EMILY

Yeah, yeah, yeah -- following "empty signs" -- Maya said. Why does mine not have...?

The two look at it. Emily looks around the room.

EMILY

Okay. First, we gotta get internet connection, see if we can find an address for it -- No... if Maya didn't have an address with her, then she didn't find one. Uhh...

TERRA

First, we gotta get my car.

EMILY

We...

Emily looks around the room. She sees a TV. She thinks.

EMILY

TV.

(looking to landline)

Phone. Cable... Cable company. *They* also know your location. Ach -- they wouldn't send somebody so soon... Yeah, I'm not Maya.

TERRA

No, no, no! You're definitely her! You're an *older* her! *Adult* her! You can come up with some --

CORNMAN (O.S.)

(shouting)

Hey, folks!

TERRA

Never mind, don't stress it.

(shouting back)

Yeah?

CORNMAN (O.S.)

Hurry up! Somebody's stopping!

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Emily and Terra, clutching the backpack and duffel bag, rush through the forest and to the road, where they see Cornman hanging by the side of a halted 1971 DODGE D200 PICKUP TRUCK.

Emily and Terra reach the truck, seeing the DRIVER (40s/50s) is a woman with a cowboy hat and a scowl.

TERRA

Thank you so much! Do you have a chain? Like a chain for towing?

The Driver inspects Terra, nodding.

TERRA

You're kidding me -- you *do*?! Oh, my -- Can you take us just six miles the other way? Our car's a red Malibu --

DRIVER

I'm goin' West.

TERRA

I...

(frowning)

Yeah, we're just six miles back! I mean, we could even -- Do you have spare gas?

The Driver nods.

TERRA

The hearse is even -- There's a hearse back there and it's even closer! It just needs gas and we can even tow my car ourselves if you take us just --

DRIVER

Tell me somethin' about your eyes. Do they see me?

Terra pauses.

TERRA

Uh... yes? We don't have time to --

DRIVER

'Bout your nose? Smell the gas burnin'?

TERRA

I... I mean --

DRIVER

Now how 'bout the ears? Did they hear that I was goin' West?

Terra doesn't respond, offended.

DRIVER

You and your kid can get in the truck or wait for somebody else that's goin' East.

Terra looks to Emily, who nods. Terra frustratedly sighs and opens the passenger door: the front seats are a bench.

Cornman stops Emily, leaning down to her.

CORNMAN

Good luck and be safe.

EMILY

Thank you, Mr. Cornman.

Cornman hands her a GIFT WRAPPED IN A HANDKERCHIEF. Emily takes it, feeling its weight.

CORNMAN

This'll protect you when you need it. Be *very* careful. It's loaded.

Cornman steps back as Emily ogles the gift. She puts it in her backpack and hops into the front. Having not heard Cornman, Terra sandwiches Emily in and shuts the door.

Emily waves to Cornman as the truck pulls away.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Emily faces forward again. The old truck is weathered inside, the seats beige leather and cracked. Between the Driver's leg and door is a LEVER-ACTION HUNTING RIFLE.

TERRA

We just need to get somewhere with service.

DRIVER

Get service 'round Saranac.

TERRA

Good to hear.

EMILY

Thank you for driving us.

DRIVER

You got manners. Clearly didn't learn'm from your sister.

TERRA

I'm... I'm clearly not her sister.

DRIVER

No, 'cause she's got manners.

The Driver slows down, causing Terra to frown more. The Driver's looking at something out the window, squinting.

The truck slows to a STOP. Emily and Terra exchange glances.

EMILY

Is everything okay?

The Driver doesn't answer, squinting into the forest, before DRIVING FORWARD again, going SLOW. She looks ahead.

DRIVER

Lookin' for somethin'.

TERRA

We're in a hurry. It's an emergency.

DRIVER

And you're gettin' me impatient.

EMILY

What are you looking for? If we help you look, will we go faster?

DRIVER

Sure. Lookin' for a horse.

TERRA

A... a horse? Hold on. A white one?

DRIVER

Pale's the word. You seen it?

TERRA

Yeah! Yeah, we saw the horse! Yeah, it was by my car! It was six miles back! If you're trying to -- !

DRIVER

How long ago?

TERRA

Not long! Like...!

(checking phone)

Less than two hours ago!

The Driver grimaces.

DRIVER

Too late. It'll be forward by now. Thing's hard to track.

TERRA

It'll be... What? *Really*?

DRIVER

You're keen on complainin' 'bout a good samaritan. I got a rifle here that'll even out my charity.

Emily looks to Terra, concerned, then returns to the Driver.

EMILY

How about this? We'll keep a look out and you can focus on driving. We'll be a help to you.

DRIVER

You're in a rush and I don't trust you to put that aside for my...

(squinting)

My... Nah.

The Driver looks forward again.

TERRA

Ma'am... I'm sorry for being... *rude*. I'm sure losing your horse is very stressful.

DRIVER

Not my horse.

TERRA

Not your... Whatever horse you're trying to catch, I'm sure --

DRIVER

Not trying to catch it.

Terra struggles to not scream.

TERRA

I'll keep an eye out for service.

Terra pulls her phone out, trying to focus her entirety on its screen. Emily shifts in her seat, looking forward. She frowns, squinting. She looks to the Driver, who's focused on the forest. Emily looks forward again.

EMILY

Hey.

The Driver waves her away, trying to focus on the forest. Emily fidgets in her seat.

EMILY

*Hey*...

The Driver ignores her. Emily FRANTICALLY TUGS the Driver. The Driver GRIPS THE RIFLE, turning furiously to Emily.

EMILY

(pointing forward)

*HEY!*

The Driver looks forward and SWERVES.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The truck barely manages to STAY ON THE ROAD, having avoided the PALE HORSE sitting on the road.

INT. TRUCK - SAME TIME

The Driver gasps. She opens the door, BRINGING THE RIFLE.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The Driver steps out as the HORSE GALLOPS INTO THE TREES. The Driver FIRES AT THE HORSE.

The Driver MISSES as the HORSE ESCAPES. The Driver grunts and kicks the road. The Driver RUNS INTO THE FOREST.

INT. TRUCK - SAME TIME

Emily and Terra are flabbergasted, watching the Driver disappear into the trees. Another SHOT rings out.

DRIVER (O.S.)

(distant)

Don't you sneak up on me!

EMILY

What's going on?

TERRA

I don't know.

EMILY

What do we...?

Terra hops out.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Terra runs onto the road, looking for the Driver.

The Driver's in the forest, still close to the road, aiming down the sights. She crouches to steady herself.

Terra thinks, then BOLTS back to the truck, hopping into the DRIVER'S SEAT.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Terra SLAMS THE DOOR as she shifts the truck into drive. She pulls forward, then turns left, planning to execute a U-turn.

EXT. MICHIGAN FOREST - SAME TIME

The Driver hears the engine revving and looks, seeing Terra driving the truck.

She ROARS and AIMS AT THE TRUCK.

INT. TRUCK - SAME TIME

Terra STRUGGLES WITH THE GEAR SHIFT. It won't go in reverse. She kicks against the brake pedal but the lever WON'T BUDGE.

TERRA

Come on! Come on! Stop being old!

A SHOT rings out, NICKING the front of the truck. Terra realizes as Emily DUCKS into the passenger leg room. Terra SLAMS THE GAS -- keeping the truck on its path West -- as a SHOT SMACKS against the back of the truck bed.

TERRA

(looking back)

Shit! Oh, shit!

Emily peeks to Terra from her cramped spot in the passenger leg room, terrified.

EMILY

You're stealing her truck?!

TERRA

Can you cut it out with the puritan shit?!

EMILY

You can't -- ! You can't do that!

TERRA

I had to do *something*! She was gonna --

EMILY

No! We have to go back!

TERRA

She's got a gun!

(looking back)

Jesus Christ, man!

Terra floors it even more as Emily pokes her head up, getting into the seat and frantically buckling her seatbelt.

TERRA

Hey, man! This is for you, right? I'm doing this for -- Check my phone for when we get service!

Emily SMACKS Terra's arm again and again.

TERRA

OW! Stop! What are you -- You're gonna get us -- !

EMILY

Stop stealing things! You're the reason we're here right now! Just stop!

TERRA

All right, now listen to me. Listen. *LISTEN.* Okay? -- We turn this car around and either she'll shoot us -- she was shooting a horse -- either she'll shoot us, or drive off without us. Which of those helps us get your sister?

Emily doesn't answer, furious and scared.

TERRA

Right. You wanna get your little Keyser Söze home, 'cause I do too, and my way involves us actually beating her to Saugatuck.

EMILY

That woman was giving us a ride! And you stole her car! You cheated her after she -- !

TERRA

She was being an asshole about it! She didn't wanna be... charitable, she was just a... an asshole! Now, you need to listen to me: playing nice and waiting for her to finish her crazy hunting dealeo was gonna cost us time you don't have right now. You need to be back home before I get a warrant. That lady's not gonna call the cops on us -- she shot at us... If you just... If you can just not smack at me when I'm trying to help you, we'll get to your sister. All right? I promise you, once we get your sister, I'll drive you back to Detroit.

EMILY

You just want all the stuff you stole. You're not helping anybody.

TERRA

Oh my G- You're a kid. You don't understand intentions can be complicated.

EMILY

You're a terrible person.

TERRA

I...

Terra's taken aback.

TERRA

All right. Weird blow. That's fine.

EMILY

It isn't fine.

Emily glares out the window. Terra thinks.

TERRA

Shit... I should not have stolen this truck.

EMILY

Yeah! -- You told her where your car was! If she's *not* gonna call the cops, she's gonna be waiting for you to drive by while she's heading to your car!

TERRA

Okay! All right...! Then...

EMILY

As soon as we get service, you call a tow truck, have them pull it. How much gas is in this one?

Terra looks down at the fuel level.

TERRA

Just about full.

EMILY

Then we shouldn't stop. We're taking this to Saugatuck. We...

Emily buries her face in her hands, then yanks it out.

EMILY

You'll take the fall if we get caught -- I'm still *technically* a child -- but we have to think of...

Emily squirms at the thought.

TERRA

Calm down! All right? Okay, so your sister: she knows boats?

Emily winces and nods.

TERRA

It's all right! She's fine! We're gonna be in Saugatuck in like an hour. If the only place we can meet her is at this cult thing, then we just gotta find it before she does and intercept her. We've got a quarter of the state left, right? She's got directions, but that river's gonna take her ages to get across a *quarter* of the state.

EMILY

(eyes closed)

Right.

Emily squirms again. In a panic, she looks behind them as if to anticipate the Driver. She faces forward again, holding her hand up to the window to avoid seeing Grand River.

EMILY

No, she knows that.... There isn't enough gas in a skiff and the river isn't wide enough for her to go that fast. She'll get back to land, and she'll get a ride. She'll get to Saugatuck. We should watch out for small planes.

TERRA

*Planes*?

EMILY

Small ones. Local airports. She might even get there before us.

Terra looks forward, shaking her head. Emily checks the phone, JUMPING.

EMILY

Oh! Service!

TERRA

Yeah?!

EMILY

Yeah! Says you're roaming!

TERRA

Yeah, yeah, yeah, that happens! Okay, let's give it a sec to get off roaming and we'll get bars.

They pass a PAVED ROAD with a sign, Emily and Terra grinning.

TERRA

Look at that! People things!

EMILY

(holding phone out)

Can you unlock it?

Terra puts her thumb against the phone, unlocking it, and Emily goes to the Phone App. She dials.

TERRA

Wait, are you calling a tow truck?

EXT. GRAND RIVER - BEACH - SAME TIME

On the river, we can see better that the sun's still high, but'll start to descend. Maya disembarks the skiff, having parked it on a small beach.

She pulls out their dad's phone. She goes to the Maps App, which takes a second to show her that she's East of Grand Rapids, a forty mile drive from Saugatuck.

She types, "Gerald R" and an AIRPORT comes up, ten miles South of her. Maya frowns.

MAYA

Missed it... Stupid...

THE PHONE RINGS. Maya frowns, looking down: it's a 313 NUMBER. She winces, answering.

MAYA

You get that the police can track the missing phone's records, right? *You* just threw Terra under the bus.

INT. TRUCK / EXT. GRAND RIVER

EMILY

Are you on land?

MAYA

I'm not telling you anything. Go back home.

TERRA

Are you -- ? Holy shit! You can call Maya! Tell her to get her dumbass back here!

EMILY

How are you getting there?

TERRA

No! Tell her to just stay still! We can find her wherever she is! Maya, can you hear me?! You stay still with my shit, all right?! Where are you?!

MAYA

She really doesn't get it.

EMILY

She doesn't get *you*. People don't, and you pretend you like that. How are you getting there?

MAYA

I'm not telling.

EMILY

So you're still figuring it out?

Maya looks out at the river.

EMILY

Fine. Call me when you're *closer* to tell us how to find the place. We don't have to beat you, just don't go *into* the synagogue without --

Maya hangs up. She sees an OLD MAN stepping out of a cabin and she kicks the skiff so it looks like she was coming from the other direction. She walks to him, pointing to the skiff.

INT. TRUCK - SAME TIME

Emily brings the phone down. Terra looks to her.

TERRA

And...?!

Emily goes to the Google App, typing "towing grand rapids."

EMILY

She's safe.

TERRA

Is she meeting us anywhere?!

Emily hands the phone to Terra.

EMILY

Now it's the tow company.

INT. OLD MAN'S CAR - DAY

The Old Man (60s/70s) drives as Maya sits shotgun, duffel bag at her feet and backpack on her lap.

OLD MAN

When we get to Saugatuck, I'm having a talk with your mother. Just irresponsible. You're *ten*?!

MAYA

Still ten.

OLD MAN

You can't go -- You don't have a boater's license!

MAYA

I'm so sorry, sir. It's really all my fault.

The Old Man scoffs as Maya hides her grin.

INT. TRUCK - LATER

They're merging back onto the FREEWAY. Terra hangs up the phone, pulling up the Maps App on it, shaking her head.

TERRA

I mean, that was the best I could come up with. I mean... Shoot. They're not gonna find it. How far are we from Saugatuck?

EMILY

(checking phone)

Half-hour.

Emily looks to the clock: it's 2:20PM.

EMILY

Maya's gonna play it safe and turn off the phone by four, make sure Dad can't track it. I know she's gonna give us a heads up on where to find it when she's close. If she's not close by then...

Emily bites her lip. Terra looks over to her.

TERRA

Yeah... Who *is* this kid?

EMILY

Not as smart as she keeps convincing everyone she is.

TERRA

Is she, like...?

EMILY

(sighing)

She's got Mom's genes... Our biological mom was this... scholar.

TERRA

Biological?

EMILY

Our current mom's not our biological mom. Our biological mom died before we were born. Melanoma.

Terra frowns. Emily anticipated that reaction.

EMILY

We don't really talk about -- She froze her eggs, Dad artificially inseminated a surrogate so they could "have kids together," then he married a woman named Rachel when I was four. That woman raised us, so she's Mom.

TERRA

Uh-huh... All right. And real Mom?

EMILY

*Biological*. Smart. Reckless. Passed those on to the *second* test tube.

TERRA

Uh-huh...

Terra grimaces, feeling guilty.

TERRA

I mean... All right, I'm sorry. That sucks.

EMILY

No, it doesn't. I had a mom growing up. I wouldn't want to have met biological mom: I've met Maya. Rachel, hereafter "Mom," has been our mom. And... I'm gonna live with her... Dad likes Maya more.

TERRA

All right, you know parents don't really do that.

EMILY

They do and it makes sense. Maya's named after our biological mom. I don't know if she was born smart or got that way to make Dad happy.

Terra doesn't respond, sighing. She nods in recognition.

EMILY

You want to share something, just do it. I'm not going to massage your dumb childhood until it milks.

Terra grins, then nods.

TERRA

You're smart too, all right? And yeah. I had a dumb childhood.

A pause as Terra waits.

TERRA

Oh, you're actually not gonna ask anything.

EMILY

Yeah.

Terra nods. Emily sighs. Terra peeks over to Emily, who's too exhausted to talk.

TERRA

Answer's no. Nobody ever did anything bad in my family.

This *does* perk Emily's ears, who frowns.

EMILY

What?

Terra shrugs.

EMILY

Nobody taught you to steal?

TERRA

Had to figure it out myself.

EMILY

Why? Is anybody dead or divorced or abusive?

TERRA

No.

EMILY

Why do you keep doing this?

Terra has trouble answering. Emily looks out the window.

EMILY

Take the next exit.

EXT. SAUGATUCK - DAY

The truck comes into the town. Saugatuck's cute, with small storefronts and thin streets. The truck immediately pulls into an alley, heading into a parking lot.

Emily looks to the clock as Terra parks. It's 3:00PM.

TERRA

Near the lake and we're looking for "empty signs"?

EMILY

Yep.

TERRA

Let's find a cult.

Terra's about to pull into a spot when TERRA'S PHONE RINGS.

Emily takes it from her and answers it. She waits.

MAYA (V.O.)

(over phone)

At the northern edge of Oval Beach is the first sign. They lead into the woods.

EMILY

It's in the *woods*?!

MAYA (V.O.)

I'm... I'm right outside of it. I can see it. It's small. It's practically a cabin, but it's got the symbols from the brochure.

EMILY

Maya, please don't go in there!

(to Terra)

It's in the woods.

Terra turns white.

EMILY

Maya...? *Maya*...?!

Maya doesn't answer. Emily looks at the phone: she hung up.

TERRA

Oh, my G-d.

Emily furiously types into Maps. She looks.

EMILY

It's at the northern edge of Oval Beach. We can drive there.

Terra SPEEDS OUT OF THE LOT.

EXT. OVAL BEACH - DAY

Emily and Terra hurry from the truck, parked in a small lot by the beach. Emily's still got her backpack on. As she jogs, she feels Lake Michigan on her left, the waves pounding away. She whines under her breath.

EXT. OVAL BEACH - LATER

Emily sees something and stops jogging. Terra, a bit behind her, sees her halting and stops as well.

In front of Emily, buried in forest foliage, is a PEDESTRIAN X-ING SIGN with NO PEDESTRIAN on it. Emily looks to her right, seeing a TINY CREEK running up the forest.

Terra reaches Emily, looking into the forest as well. Terra can sense Emily's afraid.

EMILY

(squeaking)

Come on.

Emily leads the charge into the bush.

EXT. SAUGATUCK FOREST - LATER

Emily smacks at branches as Terra ducks behind her. They pass another "EMPTY SIGN" -- also PEDESTRIAN X-ING with NO PEDESTRIAN on it -- this one almost flattened along the creek. Emily subconsciously avoids stepping near the creek.

TERRA

(hushed)

Hey...! Emily, stop!

Emily doesn't. Terra has to rush forward and GRAB HER. Emily yelps as she turns back to Terra, who holds her steady.

EMILY

(hushed too)

What are you doing?!

TERRA

Stop for a second!

EMILY

We can't stop! She's --

TERRA

Kid! We're literally running into a cult! We don't know how many they've got!

Emily pulls away from Terra.

EMILY

We don't have time!

Emily hurries through the forest as Terra shakes her head.

EXT. SAUGATUCK FOREST - LATER

The sun is a bit lower as EMILY HALTS, Terra quite a few steps behind her. Emily's face is covered in TINY SCRATCHES. Emily sees something ahead, and slowly crouches.

Terra sees Emily and HALTS. She frowns, then crouches too. Emily stays still. Terra crawls to her to see what she sees:

There's a clearing in the forest where a CABIN sits. It's over a century old: small with faded paint and surrounded by dead leaves and the same EMPTY SIGNS. It's got the STAR OF DAVID on its side along with UNKNOWN SYMBOLS.

Emily scans the area: there's nobody around.

EMILY

(still hushed)

How long ago did Maya call?

Terra checks her phone, spooked.

TERRA

(still hushed)

Uhh... Like, forty minutes.

Emily breathes in heavily.

EMILY

I don't see anybody.

TERRA

Okay, I'm definitely not saying call the cops, but like, let's just weigh leaving an *anonymous* tip --

Emily MOVES FORWARD before Terra can grab her.

TERRA

Emily!

EXT. SAUGATUCK FOREST - SMALL CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Emily crunches through the leaves and weaves through the empty signs. She keeps low, getting close to the cabin.

Emily reaches the cabin, putting her back to it. She tries to peek in through one of the windows, but it's covered in GRIME AND PINE NEEDLES. All she can see is the cabin's dark inside.

Terra reaches the cabin as well, keeping low. Terra's practically hyperventilating.

TERRA

(still hushed)

I don't like this... I don't like this... Emily!

Emily turns the corner of the cabin.

Now at the front, there's an outline for a FALSE DOOR, meant to blend in with the rest of the cabin wall, but IT'S AJAR.

Emily stares at it, terrified. She sets her backpack down quietly, then reaches into the backpack.

She pulls out CORNMAN'S GIFT, still wrapped in its handkerchief. She leaves the backpack outside the cabin as she grabs the side of the door, PULLING IT OPEN. She doesn't let any part of her body appear in the entrance.

She waits. Nothing happens. Terra peeks around the corner, seeing Emily putting her LEG in the doorway, then PULLING IT BACK. Terra winces as nothing happens.

Emily puts a HAND in the doorway, holding it there. Nothing. She WALKS FORWARD as Terra silently yelps. Emily looks in. It's too dark to see. She breathes heavily.

Emily GOES IN THE CABIN.

INT. SMALL CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The place is a mess and seems *mostly* abandoned. BOTTLES OF LIQUOR lie everywhere. There are a few desks but no papers on them. Once upon a time, this might've been a school.

Emily looks at both inside corners, making sure they're uninhabited, then steps in further, checking the empty desks. She clutches Cornman's gift tight.

Terra finally pokes her head into the sight of the doorway. Emily looks around the inside of the small cabin. No people. She turns back to Terra.

EMILY

Keep watch.

Terra looks around the cabin, nodding, then hops in and pokes her head out to keep watch.

TERRA

(still keeping watch)

What's that in your hand?

Emily's keeping close attention to the floor, trying to find any trap doors. It seems like the more she searches, the more afraid she becomes of finding one.

Emily accidentally kicks past a bottle of Jack Daniels, its label from the eighties. She sees a few bottles lined up on a window ledge, oldest to newest, the oldest reading "GENUINE BEAM WHISKEY" in faded letters and the newest being "JIM BEAM: 215TH BIRTHDAY EDITION (1795-2010)".

EMILY

If this place was abandoned when she got here, Maya's probably not too far away. She's probably still looking for people.

Emily arrives at the far corner, where the biggest desk is: seemingly one for a teacher. Behind it, a series of FORTY-OR-SO PLAQUES adorn the wall, all of them grimy, having been cleaned or dusted nowhere near recently.

Carved into the wall above the plaques, in beautiful typography, are the words "HALL OF PILGRIMS." Emily looks down at the plaques, reading them.

There's one reading, "ORIN BUCHMEYER -- FEBRUARY, 1939." Another nearby it is, "JANET SCHUMER -- MAY, 1950." Despite, the dates, the plaques appear to be from the same time, and clearly took very long to make, with notable craftsmanship.

Emily looks to the plaques in the bottom row. Her face goes rigid. She blinks a bit, then falls back onto the desk.

Cornman's gift HITS THE FLOOR with a ringing *CLANK*!

Terra looks back at Emily for a moment, then quickly returns to her scouting.

TERRA

Hey! Everything good?

Emily just stares, unable to comprehend it. She touches it:

Emily's hand lingers, then slides down, revealing a grimy plaque reading, "MAYA LEVIN -- MAY, 2019." It's the same as all the others, clearly having been made, hung, and neglected for decades.

TERRA

(still scouting)

Emily...! Emily, what is it?!

Emily can't answer. Terra looks around the forest, then hurries to Emily.

TERRA

Are you okay?

Emily looks to Terra, breathing heavily, then points to the plaques. Terra looks, tries to take them in, then stops.

TERRA

What?

Terra leans forward, looking at the last plaque of them all. She looks at Emily, then back to the plaque. She looks at all the other plaques, confused.

TERRA

What is going on?

Emily looks at the last plaque, realizing it says, "TERRA HOWARD -- MAY, 2019."

Between that plaque and Maya's: "EMILY LEVIN -- MAY, 2019."

Emily, totally stunned, studies them all: the plaque to the left of Maya's is "DEANDRE LEWIS -- MAY, 2010." Every plaque with the same typography, wood, metal, and neglect.

Terra feels her plaque, scraping at it with her nail. Some hardened grime scratches off, revealing there once was a brilliant, GOLDEN shine to these.

VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, hello.

Emily and Terra spin around to see A MAN IN THE DOORWAY. The Man holds a plastic bag of groceries, mainly Slim-Jims.

Terra jumps in front of Emily.

TERRA

Don't come any closer.

MAN

What are you...?

("*of course*")

Oh! Your plaques.

The Man enters, placing the groceries on a desk. He's in his thirties with massive bags under his eyes, wearing regular street clothes.

MAN

What day is it? Busy day.

The Man opens the plastic bag as Emily and Terra stare. The Man snaps into a Slim-Jim.

MAN

It's, what, the twenty-fifth? Sixth? Thing only says May, so I really have no idea when -- but you guys are here! Great! Congratulations!

The Man eats his Slim-Jim, sitting on top of one of the smaller desks.

TERRA

What is this?

MAN

(through Slim-Jim)

You...? Didn't you guys get pamphlets? Pamphlets tell you everything you need to know!

The Man pats around his body. He finds nothing.

MAN

What time is it?

Neither respond to him.

MAYA

Uhh... Did I already say congrats?

EMILY

(scared)

Where is she?

MAN

It's in the -- ! Come on. Just gimme the pamphlet. Gimme, gimme.

The Man holds his hand out. Emily pauses, then cautiously crosses the room, causing Terra to flinch but not yet intervene. Emily gives the Man the CARD from her pocket.

MAN

Thank you.

(looking to card)

Now, what do we got here?

The Man takes a bite, then reads a bit, as if there was more than one word. Emily returns to Terra,.

The Man stops chewing.

MAN

Huh...

The Man looks up at the two of them, shaking his head.

MAN

Unreal...

(to Terra)

What about you? Where's your pamphlet?

Terra doesn't respond, keeping herself close to Emily.

MAN

Really? None? So, you with her?

Terra wraps her hand around Emily's arm, pulling her closer.

TERRA

What is this place?

The Man looks up from the pamphlet and at the two of them.

MAN

You guys got any booze?

The two take a moment to comprehend.

TERRA

What?

MAN

My go-to's got pissed at me. I'm forgetful about paying. Runs in the family so I don't think it's all my fault, really. That's a joke. Do you have alcohol? I'm dying right now -- That isn't a joke. I keep an emergency stash in here but that's what it needs to be for: emergencies. And I know you guys have booze; I'll tell you what this place is if you --

TERRA

You tell us what is going on right now. Where's the girl?

(re: plaques)

What are these?

EMILY

Do you really talk to G-d?

Terra looks down at Emily, stunned that she'd ask that.

MAN

We... It's complicated. And I'm not supposed to talk about it *exactly*, like we usually make something up, but... I can't exactly let you know why I don't give a shit about the consequences until you give me the booze and then I tell you... whatever. Everything. I know you've got booze. Please, can I have some?

TERRA

We don't.

The Man sighs.

The Man gets up and heads to the big desk, Terra pulling Emily behind herself as the Man strolls around them.

The Man pulls a FLASK out from the desk drawer and sits in the desk's chair. He opens the flask and takes a sip. He sets down the flask, folding his arms nicely across the desk.

The Man gestures to the chairs on the other side of the desk. Emily slowly moves to them as Terra follows her, Emily keeping focused on the Man, Terra with one eye on Emily.

The Man looks between the two of them.

MAN

So... This is not a, uh... synagogue, exactly. It's a place of G-d. None of the religions were right. Jews, though, Jews were close. I mean, so were Muslims, and... everybody. Uhh, about the pamphlet: pamphlets just say what they gotta. So, we, uh... Well, not *me*. I'm not that old, so... uh...

The Man thinks.

MAN

I'm not starting at a good spot. Lemme just... So, G-d kinda tells some people, "Hey, I exist!" Don't remember their names off the top of my head. These people live in this forest and G-d lets them in on all kinds of stuff. Y'know, all the new stuff, all the keeping up with the religious word -- always just making sure that some people were keeping a secret knowledge of the religious word. Are you keeping up with me so far?

Emily and Terra are deer in headlights.

MAN

All right, lemme try again. G-d is not fake. That's probably a big one for you guys, uhh...

(re: plaques)

There's proof. G-d told these folks a century ago you'd be coming here right now and they made plaques, there was room in the budget -- That's everybody who will ever be in this room -- after 1927, of course. Good proof, yeah? Want anymore?

Emily and Terra just stare.

MAN

Eh, we don't got a whole ton. We do got *some* though.

(re: plaques)

That always gets people though. I mean, at least the pilgrims since *I've* been here; almost a decade. So... Right. G-d is not fake. G-d doesn't, uh... So, G-d reveals... *It*self? I think that's the right pronoun... G-d reveals Itself, tells people It exists and these people need to keep in tabs with G-d. Good so far? Great. In order to keep these people not dead, G-d gives them heads-ups when a storm is coming, tornadoes, making sure these people would survive. Uh... told 'em who was gonna win the World Series every year so they'd bet and that's how they bought this thing. Was gonna be a school but the town didn't finish it -- if I remember right. This piece of shit... Wasn't gambling, technically, since they knew who was gonna win. And uh... pilgrims! Yeah. G-d predicted these pilgrims. People made these plaques and made sure they stayed, uh...

The Man looks back at the plaques, sipping the flask.

MAN

Shiny... My bad. We already talk about that? Oh! Also made your pamphlets! Basically said that those pamphlets would say the bare minimum to get you here.

(to Terra)

So, that means you came here because of her pamphlet, which is great, 'cause that probably cost them less. Uhh... So the pilgrims were just kinda people who would get to meet G-d. Say hello. Oh! Other proof that I like is --

(patting cabinet)

-- they got formulas and shit to cure polio, 'cause that was a problem-o way back when. And G-d gave them the cure! Said, of course, that they couldn't share it with anyone... Let Salk take that one. They got others here. Pretty sure there are cures here that still aren't in the medical world. Uh... Cool! Thanks for stopping by! That's what I'm allowed to tell you, technically.

Emily and Terra stare. Emily's too concerned to speak.

TERRA

Are you insane?

MAN

Yes. But that is unrelated.

TERRA

What are you talking about, man?

MAN

G-d. Real thing. Conversations. Knew you were gonna come here. Sent you pamphlets. Made you plaques. I'm assuming you're Emily and you're Terra. And... you're right on time! As predicted, like... a hundred years ago. Well, technically, predicted at the beginning of time. I think. No idea how being G-d works. Sounds like a time. I'd probably like it.

TERRA

You're tryna *sell* this bullshit?

MAN

Wish it was bullshit. That'd probably make me not an alcoholic. If you want, we can just kinda pretend I didn't tell you any of that. I don't give a shit. You guys are the last ones.

TERRA

You want money.

MAN

Nope. I don't want jack shit but this:

The Man lifts and sets down the flask.

MAN

I'm just kinda the one who has to sit here and know these things. Gets passed along. I was one of those pilgrims. Not gonna tell you which one though. My age is my own business. Always believed in that philosophy.

Emily and Terra stare.

TERRA

What is going on?

(re: plaques)

How did you...? How is that...?

MAN

Sorry, lady... Only one explanation. And it sucks: G-d. Those've been there for a century. Not allowed to tell you what happened next.

EMILY

What... happened next?

Terra frowns at Emily.

MAN

Can't. Sworn secret that only one person is supposed to know and carry it on to the next generation.

Man points to himself. Emily pauses, then takes the flask from the table. The Man nods, *there you go*.

MAN

(phoning it in)

Oh, no! I have to tell you now! Because I'm addicted to -- !

(legit)

No, but exactly... Now, please put it back.

Emily doesn't.

MAN

I'm gonna tell you, put it back.

EMILY

What happened next?

TERRA

(to Emily)

What are you doing? You don't... Do you believe any of this?

Emily looks at Terra, then to the plaques.

MAN

I know! You can't come up with another solution! I've been here for a while -- I mean, I'm not here for the months when there aren't gonna be pilgrims -- but I've been here with that knowledge and I cannot come up with a reason for these. Sure enough. May. 2010. I come here the first day. Nobody. Next day. Nobody. I think it was the third day of May -- I remember 'cause it was awesome -- it's usually like the twenty-sixth day -- DeAndre Lewis. Tell him about G-d. Congratulate him for being a pilgrim. He loses his shit.

EMILY

Did you tell him... the... thing you can't tell people?

MAN

I did not.

TERRA

(to Emily)

Stop listening to this...

EMILY

(to Terra)

I have to hear it before Maya does.

(to Man)

What's the thing you can't tell people?

MAN

I mean, on that -- First, can I get the flask back?

EMILY

No.

MAN

Will I get it back after -- ? Ah, of course I will. All right. Time for the thing! Weight off my chest! Big ol' secret!

The Man shifts in the chair, then addresses the two of them.

MAN

G-d... is... dead.

The Man looks at the two of them, waiting for a reaction. Terra has a more surfaced one, *not* expecting that.

TERRA

What?

MAN

G-d is dead.

The two of them don't respond for a moment, neither able to comprehend.

EMILY

Okay... You mean... Nietzsche? Time Magazine? You're saying religion no longer serves the --

MAN

Nope, but you're a *smart* cookie, but nope. Like... G-d got sick and died. 1927.

Terra is now roped in.

TERRA

What?

MAN

G-d existed. We talked to G-d. Sometime in the 1100s maybe, before we were talking to It, G-d got sick. Probably why It started talking to us, figuring the end was on its way and couldn't disappear without saving face. G-d got sicker. In 1927, G-d died. Don't look for significance in the year. There is literally none. All pilgrims since have been trying to understand the significance of the date, and there is absolutely none.

Emily and Terra stare, Terra frowning.

TERRA

What?

MAN

Old age, we think... So... obviously, we stopped being able to talk to G-d... It just happens. Everything dies. And you guys...

(re: plaques)

... are the last to make the pilgrimage... You wanna see the grave?

Emily and Terra are too thrown off to respond.

EXT. SAUGATUCK FOREST - SMALL CABIN - DAY

The three of them stand outside, looking down at the ground. The Man nods. Emily frowns. Terra is stunned.

A false patch of grass has been removed, revealing a flat TOMBSTONE, reading, "Here lies G-d. The beginning — 1927."

MAN

Obviously "Here lies" doesn't make any sense. This thing itself doesn't make any sense. I'm pretty sure some idiot had it made in the '60s. Blew the last of the budget. G-d only told 'em who won the World Series up to, like, the mid-'40s or something. Tigers winning.

The three of them keep staring down at the grave.

MAN

Oh. Obviously, uh... You can't tell anybody about what you learned here today. Uh... For probably some pretty obvious reasons. The, uh... G-d, I forget what the people were called! The people G-d talked to. They swore to never let anybody ever know outside themselves -- *our*selves -- but made sure the truth was passed on to only one person and that person had to be a pilgrim. That was me -- before today. I made sure the pilgrims visiting under my watch didn't see this dumbass thing. And now that there are no more pilgrims to tell, it's up to you three to figure out if the secret's carried on, who to tell since G-d didn't pick any more people after you, et cetera. Hey, can one of you -- ?

EMILY

(looking up)

Wait -- what?

MAN

Can one of of you stick around and take my place? Somebody is supposed to guard this thing so nobody after you "last predicted pilgrims" wanders in and learns about --

EMILY

You said "up to you *three*."

MAN

Uh... You two and your sister.

Terra looks up from the grave.

EMILY

So... Wait, you were here before? Did she already hear all of this?

MAN

Yeah. She, uh... She seemed super devout so I figured she'd take my place so I told *her* about G-d being dead and all, and she did not take it well. Actually had a breakdown and ran off in... some direction. I went to buy more drinks after that but my go-to's still mad at -- Hey, either of you gonna take my place?

The two stare at him. The Man sighs and nods, looking down at the grave and sipping the flask.

MAN

Well, shoot... I was a bit of a sucker when I said yes to it.

The Man chugs the rest of the flask and shakes like a dog. The Man stumbles back to the small cabin. Terra looks down at the grave as Emily looks after the Man.

Neither of them speak.

Terra takes a breath to speak, then doesn't. She joins Emily in looking down at the grave:

"Here lies G-d. The beginning — 1927."

Terra shakes her head and takes a breath to speak. She doesn't. She frowns and takes another. She doesn't speak.

The two keep staring down at the grave.

Emily takes a breath to speak.

EMILY

We have to find her.

Terra looks up at her, thinking.

TERRA

What's that smell?

Emily stares at her. Terra looks down at the grave. She sniffs. Terra's head perks up. She looks to the small cabin.

TERRA

Oh --

Terra BOLTS over to the small cabin as Emily looks as well:

SMOKE IS POURING OUT of the small cabin.

EMILY

Oh...

Terra PULLS THE MAN OUT THE CABIN, the Man clutching a half-full bottle of whiskey, pouring some ALL OVER HIMSELF.

MAN

(slurring)

It was an emergency!

Emily runs past them and into the cabin.

INT. SMALL CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The FIRE IS COVERING THE FRONT OF THE ROOM, lapping up a splashing of whiskey. It's at the desks now as Emily searches the room, trying to find something to put it out.

MAN (O.S.)

(from outside)

There's another bottle in one of the desks! The left-handed one!

Emily rushes to a left-handed desk, lifting it and pulling out a BOTTLE OF BOURBON. She opens the bottle, looks at the fire, realizes the counterintuitive nature, and sets it down.

She grabs CORNMAN'S GIFT off the floor and runs out.

EXT. SAUGATUCK FOREST - SMALL CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Emily reaches Terra, who's sitting and catching her breath, THE MAN GONE.

TERRA

(looking towards water)

I... I don't know. He was slurring but he said he was gonna...

Emily looks around the forest, standing next to Terra and pocketing Cornman's gift.

EMILY

We gotta find Maya.

The two pause for a moment, Terra still breathing.

TERRA

Shit, dude...

Emily nods. Terra looks down at the ground.

TERRA

*Shit*, dude... Is that...?

(re: cabin/plaques)

What do we...? Do we think...?

Emily doesn't answer, looking around.

EMILY

Where would Maya go...?

TERRA

Can we take a second to think about what just happened?!

EMILY

Maya... Maya *would* probably take a second to think. Then she'd...?

Emily looks around the forest, thinking.

EMILY

She hasn't called?

Terra throws Emily her phone, shell-shocked. Emily looks at it: it's 3:50PM, with no notifications. Emily holds the phone to Terra, who unfocusingly puts her thumb against it.

Emily goes to the Phone App and redials, holding it to her ear. She waits.

EMILY

It's dialing. She hasn't turned the phone off. Why... Why hasn't she turned the phone off?

Terra gets up, RUNNING TO THE CABIN.

EMILY

Terra?

(standing)

Terra!

Emily hurries after her.

INT. SMALL CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

The cabin's filled with SMOKE, but the fire hasn't moved much; taking its time to burn wood after centuries of rain.

Terra's at the entrance, coughing from the smoke and unable to go in. She lowers herself. Emily reaches her, but she's still trying to hear the phone.

TERRA

We need to... grab the stuff from the cabinets or...! Let's get the plaques! We can take them to somebody and they'll tell us if they were made, like, an... How would they know *me*...?!

(looking to Emily)

How'd they know *me*?!

Terra looks back into the cabin. She readies a charge, but Emily HOLDS HER BACK.

EMILY

Stop!

TERRA

What do you mean, *stop*?! There could be proof there that G-d exists -- I have to -- !

Terra MOVES IN and Emily tugs her back.

EMILY

NO!

TERRA

Let go!

Terra THROWS EMILY DOWN. Emily lands in the dead leaves, phone falling out her hands, as Terra readies to run in.

Terra can't do it. She holds the edges of the doorway, as if throw herself in. She stares at the fire through the smoke.

TERRA

(biting lip)

Shit, dude.

Emily gets back up, grabbing Terra again.

EMILY

NO!

Terra's READY TO THROW Emily again, then sees Emily's pleading eyes. Terra stops. She doesn't know what to do.

The roof to the cabin FINALLY COLLAPSES IN. Terra sees this and quickly PULLS EMILY away from the cabin.

EXT. SAUGATUCK FOREST - SMALL CABIN - CONTINUOUS

They run away from the cabin as it continues burning, smoke RUSHING OUT the massive hole in the top. Terra stares at it as Emily coughs.

Terra looks to Emily, guilt slowly blossoming.

TERRA

I just...

Emily looks to the cabin, then hurries over to it.

TERRA

Hey! HEY!

Emily scoops the PHONE from the leaves in front of the cabin. She listens. She quickly hangs up. She heads to Terra, keeping them on track as best as she can.

EMILY

Voicemail. She didn't pick up.

Terra gawks at Emily, half blown away by Emily's focus and half mortified that Terra actually threw Emily to the ground.

Emily hands Terra her phone and Terra hazily takes it.

EMILY

She'd take time to think... She'd take a *lot* of time to think. Then... Then she'd... What conclusion would she come to?

Terra just gawks, unable to do anything else.

EMILY

She'd... She'd...

A tree over the cabin GROANS. A branch BREAKS OFF IT, smacking into the cabin and shooting up embers.

Emily sees this and recognizes the one thing she hasn't looked at yet. Her face goes numb. She can't speak.

She finally turns to THE WATER.

EMILY

No...

She stares at it, then has to to turn her head away.

EMILY

No.

Terra sees this, not following.

TERRA

Emily...?

Emily's chin quivers, then she SPRINTS TOWARDS THE LAKE.

TERRA

Emily!

Terra gets up as Emily disappears into the trees.

EXT. SAUGATUCK FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Emily's CHARGING THROUGH, branches SLICING HER CHEEKS. She doesn't even notice she's whimpering, going as fast as she can without thinking twice anymore.

Terra hurries through, but doesn't have the animalistic drive that puts Emily so far ahead of her.

TERRA

EMILY!

EXT. OVAL BEACH - LATER

At the parking lot, the Man sits on a concrete wheel stop. He drops an EMPTY BOTTLE into the sand. He looks at the horizon.

Emily arrives at the beach, UNABLE TO BREATHE and her NOSE BLOODY. Her clothes are TORN UP. She looks around the shore. No Maya on the shore. She finally sees it:

At the edge of the water are Maya's BACKPACK and DUFFEL BAG.

Emily sees SPLASHING in the FAR, FAR DISTANCE.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

MAYA SWIMS BREASTSTROKE, only looking to the horizon. She pauses, floating on her back, looking to the sky.

MAYA

(huffing)

Please... Please...

EXT. OVAL BEACH - SAME TIME

Emily sees this and WAILS.

EMILY

NO!

Emily almost has a moment to think before she BURSTS DOWN THE BEACH, feet hitting the water.

Emily nearly SCREAMS as the water gets to her KNEES, but she's got no air left.

Terra REACHES THE BEACH, seeing Emily running in.

TERRA

(breathless)

Oh, no, no, no --

Terra LIMPS over to the water, but stops herself.

TERRA

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

Terra looks around the beach, trying to find anyone.

TERRA

(words not coming out)

He-... Help!

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

Emily's now up to her NECK.

EMILY

(no air to yell)

Maya!

Tears nearly blind her as she BEGINS SWIMMING.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

Maya swims, but has to STOP TO BREATHE AGAIN.

She floats, looking back up at the sky, HEAVING.

MAYA

(barely coming out)

Prove to me You're...? Show me Your... Show me...

A wave goes OVER MAYA'S FACE. Maya resurfaces and GAGS OUT WATER, COUGHING.

She's barely able to tread water.

EXT. OVAL BEACH - SAME TIME

Terra reaches the parking lot, seeing the Man.

TERRA

(still no breath)

He-... Help...!

The Man doesn't react, eyelids drooping.

Terra doesn't know what to do. Then she REALIZES. Terra pulls out her phone, unlocking it. She goes to the Phone App and DIALS 9-1-1. She stares at the screen, panting.

She looks to the water.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

Emily's BARELY ABLE TO SWIM, head under the water for longer and longer spans of time. She's beginning to LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS, her eyes closing for a moment before she JOLTS them open again. She looks forward.

She can no longer see splashing far ahead of her.

EXT. OVAL BEACH - SAME TIME

Terra stares at the phone, then PRESSES THE GREEN "DIAL." She puts the phone to her ear, worriedly shaking her head.

North of her, a FISHERMAN is loading a SKIFF into the lake.

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)

(over phone)

9-1-1, what's your emergency?

TERRA

(still catching breath)

I'm on... Oval Beach... and...

Terra SEES THE FISHERMAN.

TERRA

Oh!

Terra RUNS TO THE FISHERMAN, LIMPING, completely ignoring the phone in her hand.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

Maya floats with her eyes closed, another wave skimming OVER HER FACE. She breathes in after it. Her eyes barely open.

The sky above her is covered in clouds.

Maya SINKS UNDER THE WATER.

EXT. OVAL BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Terra reaches the Fisherman, spewing out an incoherent sputter of words. The Fisherman frowns.

Terra points to the water.

TERRA

(barely finding air)

There are... There are girls... They're in the water...

Terra shows the man the phone, where 9-1-1 IS DISPLAYED.

The Fisherman frowns then looks out to the water: there are no splashes, and the waves are covering wherever the girls' heads would be.

FISHERMAN

Is somebody out there?

Terra nods, buckling over. She uses her hand to display short height, then realizes and points down the beach, where the backpack and duffel bag are.

FISHERMAN

Is a *kid* out there?!

Terra nods, holding up two fingers. The Fisherman PULLS THE MOTOR and hops into the skiff.

FISHERMAN

Where are they?! I don't see them!

Terra still wheezes as she looks out.

She can't see them either.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

The trees, Terra, and the Fisherman, are completely indecipherable from how far out Emily is now. She looks around, her chin unable to lift itself over the water.

Maya's nowhere to be found.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - UNDERWATER - SAME TIME

Maya's face is less and less illuminated as she SINKS. Bubbles flow out of her nose in a burst, then another, shorter burst, then an even shorter burst.

Maya closes her eyes, curling her body together.

She's nearly in complete darkness when EMILY GRABS HER.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - MOMENTS LATER

The two reach the surface, BOTH GASPING FOR AIR. Emily treads water for the two of them, holding Maya over herself.

Maya's half conscious, eyes closed, as her weight forces Emily to SINK UNDER FOR A MOMENT, before Emily kicks herself back up. Emily tries to spit the water out of her mouth.

EMILY

(no air)

Maya, you... kick... Maya, you gotta kick...

Maya's curled, barely conscious, unable to open her eyes.

MAYA

He's gone...

EMILY

Maya... Maya, *kick*...

MAYA

He's gone... He's not there...

EMILY

I'm... I'm still here... *I'm* still here...

Emily whimpers, struggling to keep her face over the waves.

EXT. OVAL BEACH - SAME TIME

Terra and the Fisherman are still looking for the girls.

FISHERMAN

Okay, I'm... I'm gonna head out and *try* to look for them! You stay here and wait for the cops!

The Fisherman PULLS FORWARD, bringing the skiff out.

Terra collapses onto the beach as she grabs her leg, trying to catch her breath. She watches as the Fisherman gets smaller and smaller.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

Another wave passes over the two of them, this one covering Maya's face as well. Emily gets to the surface again.

EMILY STOPS KICKING.

The two float for a moment, both with eyes closed.

EMILY

M-... Ma-...

They float, a wave coming OVER THEIR FACES. Both emerge from it, Emily taking a numb breath after. MAYA DOESN'T.

Next to them, CORNMAN'S GIFT plops up the surface, the handkerchief wrapping now a bit undone.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

The Fisherman's moving fast, looking out for the girls:

Through the waves, he CAN'T SEE ANY HEADS.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

Emily's eye peeks open, seeing Cornman's gift. The last corner of the handkerchief falls off, revealing AN OPAQUE ZIPLOC BAG, the air keeping the gift on the surface.

Emily keeps one arm wrapped around Maya, using the other to reach for the bag. As she does, the arm FALTERS. Emily's eyelids droop. She GRABS THE BAG, pulling it in.

Emily puts the bag on Maya's head, unzipping it. The contents are dry. Emily pulls it out, resting it on the bag.

It's a FLARE GUN.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

The Fisherman slows the boat to a halt, looking around. He still can't see anyone.

EXT. OVAL BEACH - SAME TIME

Terra lies on the beach, breathing, she looks up at the sky.

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)

(barely audible)

Ma'am...? Ma'am, I have you at Parking Lot B on Oval Beach --

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

Emily tries to point the flare gun up, but SHE CAN'T, her arm too weak. She looks up at the sky, her finger SLIPPING around the flare gun.

*REV!* Emily hears the Fisherman's skiff, breathing new life into her. SHE KICKS, holding Maya up, her eyelids fluttering.

Emily holds her arm up, pointing the gun to the sky.

The sky above her is covered in clouds.

Emily stares at it.

SHE SHOOTS AT IT.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

The Fisherman hears the FLARE SHOOT UP, lighting a BRILLIANT RED against the clouded sky.

The Fisherman follows it down to the water and TURNS THE SKIFF towards it.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SAME TIME

Emily kicks the two of them over another wave as the sound of the ENGINE gets LOUDER AND LOUDER.

EMILY

Stay here... Stay here... You're still here...

Emily can't see as the SKIFF comes into view, the Fisherman SEEING THEM and slowing down.

Emily BLACKS OUT.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. OVAL BEACH - LATER

Emily VOMITS WATER, a PARAMEDIC backing off of her. Terra covers her mouth in relief. Emily GASPS IN AIR.

They're on the beach, an AMBULANCE by them, parked on the sand. The sky's orange through the now spreading clouds. The Fisherman talks to a POLICEMAN as Emily begins to recognize her surroundings and push herself up.

PARAMEDIC

Woah, woah, woah, take it easy.

Emily gasps as she looks around hazily.

EMILY

(no air)

Where...? Where...?

PARAMEDIC

Come on. Keep down. You're safe on a beach.

EMILY

Where...?

Emily looks around as Terra kneels by her.

EMILY

Where...?

TERRA

She's okay.

The Paramedic wraps Emily in a towel, who tries to refuse it, looking to Terra.

TERRA

She's okay! She's lying down in the ambulance. She's just lying down.

Emily looks back to the ambulance, letting the towel wrap around her. The Paramedic heads back to the ambulance as Emily breathes.

TERRA

Oh, my G-d -- you're okay.

Emily looks to Terra, then immediately tries to stand. As Terra tries to stop her, Emily COLLAPSES from weakness.

TERRA

Hey! Hey, you're all good!

Emily shakes her head, pushing herself up again. She winces as she gets to her feet, Terra unsure if she should stop her.

Sand falls off Emily's soaking clothes as she pulls the towel around herself and stumbles to the ambulance.

INT. AMBULANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Emily arrives, where Maya lies on the stretcher, looking up at the ceiling. Maya turns her head slightly to acknowledge Emily as Emily leans against the back of the ambulance.

EMILY

Are you breathing?

Maya doesn't answer. Emily sighs in relief.

EMILY

Okay.

Emily leans her torso over the edge, flailing a bit to tumble into the ambulance. She squirms to face up, lying on the ambulance floor, feet hanging over the edge.

EXT. OVAL BEACH - SAME TIME

Terra stands, watching the girls from a distance, not noticing the POLICEMAN APPROACHING.

POLICEMAN

Ma'am?

Terra turns as the Policeman reaches her.

POLICEMAN

Whose kids are these?

Terra thinks for a moment, then nods.

TERRA

They're my sisters. What's up?

The Policeman frowns, gauging their lack of resemblance.

TERRA

Well, *step*-sisters. But, y'know, same whoop.

The Policeman frowns even more, then confusedly nods.

POLICEMAN

All... right... So can we drop *you* off anywhere?

TERRA

I drove.

The Policeman nods.

TERRA

You guys got here fast.

POLICEMAN

Yeah, there was a fire not too far from here. In the forest.

TERRA

Yeah?

POLICEMAN

Yeah. Hard to get water there. Had to just contain it. Crazy fire. Everything's just ash.

The Policeman steps away as Terra nods.

INT. AMBULANCE - SAME TIME

Maya still lies on the stretcher as Emily lies on the floor, both looking up at the ceiling.

MAYA

I...

Emily looks in Maya's direction.

MAYA

I'm sorry.

Emily doesn't respond, smiling.

INT. TRUCK - LATER

Emily sits in the middle of the beige leather truck bench as the Paramedic helps Maya into the passenger, Maya wincing. Terra gets ready to get into the driver's seat when...

POLICEMAN (O.S.)

Hey!

Terra sees the Policeman hurrying after them holding the BACKPACK and DUFFEL BAG. Terra's face goes still.

TERRA

Oh, shit...

The Policeman arrives at the truck, frowning.

POLICEMAN

(to Terra)

Are these *yours*?

EMILY

They're mine!

Terra and the Policeman look to Emily as the Paramedic closes the passenger door, Maya wincing in pain.

EMILY

You can throw them in the bed!

The Policeman looks to Emily, shaking the backpack.

POLICEMAN

It's pretty heavy.

EMILY

Yeah. I do a lotta learning --

(a la Terra)

-- bud.

The Policeman frowns, then shrugs, tossing the bags in the bed. He waves goodbye to the three of them, then heads to his cruiser in the other end of the lot.

Terra gets in, closing the door.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

None of them say anything. They just sit for a moment. Terra fidgets with the rusted gear shift. Maya takes a breath.

MAYA

There's sand in my ass.

Emily agrees. Terra nods and starts the car.

EXT. TOW COMPANY LOT - EVENING

The sun's getting low as Emily and Maya lean against TERRA'S MALIBU. They've changed into dry clothes from the duffel bag.

Terra walks out of the office door, shaking her head.

TERRA

Towing *and* storage fee.

Terra unlocks the Malibu as Emily opens the backseat door. Maya pauses, then opens the other backseat door.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Terra closes her door and they sit in silence again, taking a breath. She runs her hands over the gear shift and a SMILE creeps out of her.

Terra looks out the window, seeing the TRUCK.

Terra thinks about it, then pulls out her phone. She dials, then holds it to her ear.

TERRA

Hi. Somebody stole my truck. I live somewhere around ten miles East of Saranac maybe. The truck's, uh... No, right, I don't know where the truck is. Best of luck. It's a Ram, but like, old and shitty. My name's whatever. I have a hat and I'm an asshole.

Terra hangs up and starts the Malibu. Emily smiles.

Terra goes to the Maps App.

INT. TERRA'S CAR - EVENING

They're on the freeway, Emily sleeping against the window. Maya looks out her window at the violet sky. There isn't a single cloud in it. The sky's just empty.

Morose, Maya looks away. She looks to Emily, sleeping. Maya stares at her.

Maya pulls her backpack from under her feet, opening it. Piece by piece, she reaches to put Terra's contraband on the front seat.

Terra looks to the passenger seat, seeing Maya has also placed ALL TEN HAMSA NECKLACES on the front seat.

TERRA

(quiet)

These were your mom's, yeah?

Terra looks in the rearview as Maya nods.

Terra fishes through the necklaces, plucking out...

TERRA

(to herself)

One, two, three, four, five...

She pulls the five up, then holds them back for Maya to take.

MAYA

(quiet as well)

I don't want them.

TERRA

Emily might.

Maya stares at them, then takes them, putting them back in her backpack and zipping it up.

Terra takes a breath to say something, but can't bring herself to. She keeps quiet. Maya looks out the window again.

EXT. LEVIN HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Terra pulls the duffel bags out of the trunk. Emily checks their dad's phone: it's 9:00PM.

TERRA

You sure you can carry these?

Emily nods, taking both of them. Her limp arms FALL DOWN as she grunts. Maya watches, then takes one of the bags. Both of them are exceedingly weak right now.

TERRA

All right... Uh... If you ever need a ride, I'm... There's an app. I'm on it.

The three of them stand there, nobody moving.

Terra nods, then makes the first move: she pats them both on their heads.

TERRA

See ya, buds.

Terra heads back to the driver's seat, starting the car. She drives off. Emily and Maya watch her go.

EXT. LEVIN HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Emily and Maya reach the top of the driveway when Maya stops. Emily goes to the side door to type a code into the door handle when she sees Maya and pauses.

Maya stares at the door, unable to move.

Emily doesn't say anything.

MAYA

I...

Maya's chin quivers, but she holds it back.

MAYA

You guys saw it too, right? The plaques?

Emily nods.

EMILY

There's an explanation for --

MAYA

No, there isn't... I spent an hour just... just thinking of every possible explanation for something so simple... And I thought proof of G-d was gonna be more... exciting. But that was it. There's no other explanation...

Emily pauses.

EMILY

There's probably an explanation.

MAYA

(voice cracking)

Emily!

Maya's eyes well up.

MAYA

I... I don't think I can go back in there... I don't think I can do this... I don't know how to do this without... If I don't have...

Emily sets down her duffel bag, then crosses over to Maya.

MAYA

Why is everything happening at once...? I...

(taking a breath)

I don't wanna go... I can't lose... I can't lose everything...

Emily stares, then hugs Maya.

EMILY

You're not losing everything. Dad's getting sole custody. I'm not going anywhere.

MAYA

Don't...

(breaking down)

Don't let them take her away...!

Emily squeezes Maya as Maya sobs into Emily's arm.

MAYA

I know I pretend that I don't like her but I do! I do so much...! It's because of me... This is because of *me*. *All* of this -- *All* of --

EMILY

No, it isn't... Not everything is because of you.

Emily thinks, holding onto Maya.

EMILY

You're ten. You're small. You really can't do a lot...

(cracking a smile)

I think you'll feel different when you're becoming a woman.

Maya stares up.

EMILY

It's gonna suck... but I'm still here.

Maya looks up, unsure. Emily knows she has to say more.

EMILY

Y'know... I'm sorry you lost G-d today. I know They meant a lot to you... But I was thinking of, y'know, if G-d died in 1927, then Hitler rose to power right after that, and maybe G-d would've done something if They were still alive. But then, I thought... about... probably not. But I don't know... I don't think it matters if G-d can change things. *If* G-d made us, if G-d was real once, then G-d made us loving.

Emily holds Maya tight.

EMILY

I don't... When I always saw you talking about G-d and being Jewish, you were just bursting with love... I don't know if G-d exists, but... I know G-d's good.

Maya looks at her, trying to take it in. Emily releases and steps back, going to punch the code into the door handle.

Maya pauses, then grabs her duffel bag off the driveway. She doesn't smile, but one arm subconsciously HUGS HERSELF.

INT. LEVIN HOUSE - EMILY'S ROOM - LATER

Emily sets her duffel bag and backpack on her bed.

DAD (O.S.)

Hey! What have you two been up to?

EMILY

Soccer. Maya's got your phone.

DAD (O.S.)

Gotcha.

Emily looks around the bare room. Now that we've got a look at it, we can see all that's in it is her bed and a desk. The desk has a printout of a TORAH PORTION on it.

Emily goes and sits at the desk, exhausted. She looks down at the Hebrew, then smiles and kisses it.

She reads it in her head, humming along.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - EARLY MORNING

The Man from the small cabin swims in a calm lake, clearly exhausted and soon to drown. The fog is so thick he can't see in front of himself.

Up ahead, a RED BLUR OF LIGHT FLASHES BY. The Man is surprised by it. He keeps swimming. Another red blur of light. The Man keeps swimming, then pauses. He stretches vertical and his feet touch the bottom.

EXT. FREEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Man walks to shore, exhausted.

He walks over a railing as another car zooms by. The Man looks up and sees a freeway sign showing an exit in the direction of SOUTH TOWARDS MILWAUKEE. The Man confusingly looks back at the water, then to the sign again.

The Man shakes his head, then walks back towards the water.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END