

GRAND RIVER
(sample)

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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 THUMBTRACKS 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 uninhabitation.

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.