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Half a Heart

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Film and Animation

School of Film and Animation

College of Art and Design

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Half a Heart



by
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2021

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Abstract:

Half a Heart is a screenplay that follows a character's journey to find happiness in her life and learn to be strong enough to stand on her own. Cara has spent a significant portion of her life in a relationship with Sal, and while this relationship has made her happy and could be considered true love, it is something she must learn to walk away from as it is not moving forward. Cara must learn to find other forms of happiness while also learning to stick up for herself. One of the most difficult struggles she needs to overcome is her overbearing family beliefs, that lead her to fall back into old habits and stunt herself discovery. This screenplay follows Cara's journey as she finds the strength to say goodbye to her long-term relationship, stick up for herself when it comes to her family, looks for a career that drives her, and finally be happy in what she is doing in her life.

Introduction:

Writing has always been an escape for me and allows me to live out stories that I find in my imagination. It allows me to take my experiences and relationships and create a story for others to enjoy. My goal whenever I write is to relate to the audience. I try to find common ground that others might experience and find a way to connect with them. I have always been writing these stories since I was young; it is writing that initially led me into filmmaking. That is when I discovered how powerful filmmaking can truly be.

The idea for *Half a Heart* was a culmination of multiple real experiences I've had in my life. It was formed by real people I've met, relationships I've formed, and moments I've lived through. I've always written about things I've dealt with, so when it came to writing a full-length screenplay, I knew that wasn't something I wanted to stray from. I knew I wanted to write about what I know and what happened to me. However, it took more than just the truth, I needed to find that idea and create something new.

Before I left to start graduate school at RIT, I was in a completely different place than I find myself in now. I was working late nights and forming strong relationships with people I never expected to become friends with. While I was happy where I was, I knew there was more that I was looking for, and unfortunately, this was only temporary. As much as it hurt to say goodbye, it was something I had to do in order to find what was going to make me happy. The relationship this story is based on came from someone I knew during this time. Someone who loved me enough to let me go, even if it meant saying goodbye basically permanently. The truth is, it wasn't as methodic and simple as it is portrayed in

this story. That is because real life doesn't happen like in the movies. However, I was able to create a bridge between the two and create a story that tells a "somewhat" true story of love and life. In a way, this story shows what I wish could've happened. Sometimes that's a privilege we are giving in writing and creating, we can change the story and we can make it whatever we want it to be.

Sometimes it's the simplest moments that stick with us. For me, that simple moment was sitting in a car with a person I loved, telling me we had to say goodbye. That moment, while painful, created self-discovery and allowed me to find what I wanted to write about. So, while it was a low point of my life, it also allowed me to find something beautiful. However, I wouldn't say my inspiration for this story comes from a singular place. It comes from multiple mediums, books, music, movies, poetry, and television. All these taught me something different and allowed me to discover my own vision.

Research:

Many different means of inspiration helped me create this story. It ranges from hearing a lyric in a song to a book I have read years ago. All of these mediums had a specific influence on me and how I created this story. A lot of the time we don't realize how important something is until we look back on it. That can be true for these motivations. I wrote them down because it sparked something in me. It's not until I started looking back that I realized how important they were to my development.

Real Life

This story comes from many different aspects of my life. I took real events and people in my life and created a story with characters and a journey. The relationship portrayed by Cara and Sal in my script are not completely fictional, but they are also not completely real. I took from past relationships and created a story related to mine, without making it what actually happened. I wanted to be able to portray the struggles and emotions I felt through the character of Cara. I hoped others would be able to relate to what she felt and what she was going through, not only with Sal and their relationship but also with her family struggles and job aspirations. Sometimes things seem a little easier when we know someone else is dealing with the same mountains to overcome, which is why I take from these experiences I've faced. These memories I've lived through helped me to shape this storyline.

Movies

There are certain movies that really shaped how I came up with the story and helped me envision what I wanted to show with these characters. These films are what I aspire to create myself. There are certain scenes that sparks my imagination and inspires me to start writing. While we all know movies aren't "real life", sometimes it's comforting to see a scene that you connect with. These are the movies I'm drawn to and helped me to shape this story, all in different ways.

500 Days of Summer

A movie that I felt proved that sometimes relationships are not exactly how we make them out to be in our heads is *500 Days of Summer*. The movie shows the 500 days that the main character of Tom becomes entangled with Summer. There are good days, bad days, terrible days, and finally days of acceptance. Tom has a picture he creates in his head of what his relationship with Summer is, even though it's not exactly what is actually happening. He creates this belief that Summer is everything to him and everything that he was looking for in a person, when it turns out he wasn't seeing the whole picture.

One of my favorite lines of this movie occurs when Tom's sister, Rachel, tries to give him some advice on the situation.



"Look, I know you think she was the one, but I don't. Now I think you're just remembering the good stuff. Next time you look back, I really think you should look again."

She is trying to prove to Tom that he is overlooking some of the things he shouldn't be. Instead of seeing the good and bad, he is only looking at the good. This is where he is going wrong and that is where he is turning the blind eye. Sometimes it is not until another person points out these things that we are able to put them into focus. Cara doesn't realize that she was always changing everything in her life until Amy points it out for her. It is then that she realizes that when she met Sal she stopped changing. Everything else in her life remained stagnant except for her relationship. This is a turning point for the character, similar to how it is for Tom in this movie.

Love has a way of narrowing our view and creating a different world than our reality. This is what Cara finally admits at the end. She tells Sal she stopped finding other things that made her happy and just relied on her relationship. At the end she found a more well-rounded way to be happy, through her job, music, and family. This is something that was kind of falling apart when we are first introduced to the character. Her relationship with her mother was relatively troubled, she didn't care about her job at all, and she had no creative outlet. Which all these things combined made her feel unhappy. Her only source of joy was her relationship and it got to a point where that wasn't enough.

I found this to be another common similarity when I looked back at how the breakup with Summer affected Tom. Post break up Tom stopped doing everything. He was in a depressed state that he thought was solely created by Summer's abandonment. However, he was once again looking through a narrow view. Not only was he putting too much pressure on his unrealistic view of their relationship, but he was also not taking into account other aspects of his life. For example, his job. Similar to Cara, the character of Tom was doing a job that he did not actually enjoy. Underneath that he had a passion for

something he was too scared to actually go after. He wanted to be an architect but truthfully, he was holding himself back. Cara was similar to this because she was holding herself back from going anywhere with her career. Just like Tom, she was putting her relationship over herself and future. Which only can work for so long before it falls apart, and for both that is exactly what happens.

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

My reason for including this movie is because of the impact the story had on me, and how it inspired me to write about chasing after what inspires you. The movie I really resonated with was the 2013 version of the story that was based on the original 1939 short story. It follows a man who is living in an imaginary world rather than living his real life, however, when it comes to time for the character to take action to save his job he finally starts living.

A couple things in this story really stood out to me. First, the main character's struggle to live the life of his fantasy world. This character is living a mundane day to day life without any source of excitement or change. While his daydreams start out as very unrealistic, they start to become more normal when he is actually living a more fulfilling life. Cara finds herself wondering less about what she is missing once she starts filling the holes she has in her life with music and her career.

The reason I took this movie into consideration when writing my screenplay is because my character, similar to Walter Mitty, longs for something more than what she is doing. However, she is not exactly sure what that is until she starts making changes in her life. In comparison, Cara's make-believe world is her relationship with Sal. It is a place she

goes that creates an escape for her and allows her to not have to deal with problems that are still present in her life. However, this is a temporary fix. This fix of her relationship does not create a permanent fix to her problems. She has to come to terms with that, even though it is not easy for her.

Aside from the storyline, this film also inspired me from the visuals, music, and editing. All secondary things when it comes to creating a story but just as important when it comes to the final project. Along with writing, editing is one of my favorite parts of

filmmaking. There are certain parts of this story that really spoke to me. For example, there is a scene where Walter is debating whether to stay where he is or take a jump and go out of his comfort zone. He imagines a girl he likes singing *Space Oddity* to him, which finally gives him the courage to jump onto the moving helicopter. This scene helped me envision how my love of music could play a part in my story.



Sometimes music as well as the people we love are a driving force to get us going, this scene is proof of that. The lyrics are powerful, the delivery is powerful, and the result is powerful as well.

Brooklyn

The movie *Brooklyn* inspired me not only because of the relationship between the main characters of Eilis and Tony, but also because of the character's struggle with herself and her family. I knew I wanted family to be a part of my story because of its importance in my life and decisions. *Brooklyn* helped me a lot when it came to showing a strong and growing protagonist as well as a relationship facing challenges. In *Brooklyn* the main character of Eilis finds love with Tony, someone very different from her but who she feels very strongly about. Eilis is forced to put the relationship on hold when she must choose between the man she loves, her family, and her commitments to them. She is torn between two different lives; the life she has created with the man she loves and the life that seems to be set up for her. She chooses to be with the life that brings her more joy. While in my story Cara does not end up with Sal, she faces a similar struggle because she loves him and is torn by what is the right decision when it comes to every aspect of her life, not just the relationship. Similar to Eilis, Cara chooses to go towards the path that is best for her. Unfortunately, that does not include Sal as she had once thought.

The struggles with family approval are a reoccurring theme in this movie. She is struggling to find the place she needs to be. She wants to be with Tony in *Brooklyn* but knows her family wants her to be home in Ireland. In the end she chooses what is right for herself, not her family. This is a struggle I imagine we all share at some point. We love our

family but sometimes we do not see eye to eye. There is a struggle sometimes with finding common ground. Ultimately, we know they want the best for us, but sometimes a decision needs to be based on yourself and no one else.

The scene that resonated most with me is the final scene. Eilis describes what home is to her and when it is you find where you're supposed to be.

"And one day the sun will come out and you might not even notice it straight away, it would be that faint. And then you will catch yourself thinking about something or someone has no connection with the past, someone who is only yours. And you'll realize that is where your life is."

Sometimes where our life is going does not necessarily have anything to do with our past. It doesn't involve where we grow up or who we



once loved. It just has to do with where we see ourselves and what feels like home. For Cara, she found that once with Sal, but life changes. She needed to change what that view was once again.

Poetry & Books

Another source of inspiration for this story comes from poetry. There are a lot of simple and short poems that inspired me to write when I read them. Usually, I find these

poems unexpectedly. They usually pop up on my social media and when it's something that sparks my interest, I save it for later on. A lot of the time a few lines of a poem can relate to what I am feeling or going through. That is why I used them as inspiration for this story.

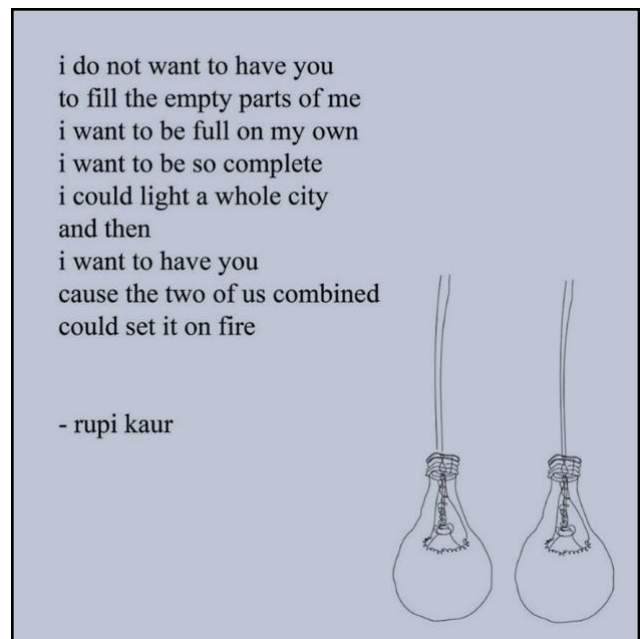
Rupi Kaur

I found poems written by Rupi Kaur when I was not even looking for them, but the words she wrote helped me to find the story I was trying to tell. I originally knew I wanted to create a story about a difficult relationship, but I wasn't sure how I wanted to show that. When I found this poem, I realized what it was I wanted to tell. A story about becoming two full people instead of one filling the other. It also inspired the title of this screenplay. Half a Heart came from the idea that while a relationship can be fulfilling, it is not what completes us, that it is only a part of what makes us complete. I felt this poem expressed that belief as well.

"I do not want to have you to fill the empty parts of me. I want to be full on my own. I want to be so complete I could light a whole city and then I want to have you. Cause the two of us combined could set it on fire" (Kaur 59).

This poem relates to what the character of Cara is facing in this story. She feels that Sal is completing her

instead of her being complete on her own. Before she moves out on her own Cara allows Sal



to be her “fixer” of certain parts of her life. She allows him to stick up for her when it comes to her mother. She allows him to, without realizing it, be the sole provider of joy in her life for a while. This poem is embracing the fact that a relationship is more powerful when both people are full rather than just fixing each other’s downfalls.

“You must enter a relationship with yourself before anyone else” (Kaur 150).

I found that Cara and Sal’s relationship fell into a hole that they couldn’t get out of and were not able to fix. Cara and Sal began depending on each other instead of allowing each other to grow on their own. When it came down to Cara needing to grow, Sal wasn’t able to live up to the hope Cara had for him. She thought marriage was what she was looking for, but when Sal denied that she realized it was just a turning point. Marriage wasn’t the real goal. Change and growth was her goal. Becoming whole again was her goal.

Wishing Stars

The poem *Wishing Stars* by Lang Leav spoke to me when it comes to the longing that Cara and Sal both feel for the relationship they once had. It’s about still loving a person that you don’t have in your life anymore. This is a common feeling when a relationship comes to an end. We see reminders of what we once shared, which could be felt at any moment. Maybe in a place, a song, or a joke. They bring back memories that are shared. While we know they are gone a small part of us hopes they’ll come back.

“I still search for you in crowds, in empty fields, and soaring clouds. In city lights and passing cars, on winding roads, and wishing stars. I wonder where you could be now, for years

I've not said your name out loud. And longer since I called you mine- time has passed for you and I. But I have learnt to live without, I do not mind- I still love you anyhow" (Leav).

I thought this poem really expressed how it feels to let go of someone who you still love. While Cara and Sal are finally able to move on at the end of the story, they still feel a certain longing there. The love is still felt between them even though a relationship is proven not to work. They have to force each other to say goodbye, which is quite possibly one of the hardest things we have to learn how to do.

To continue searching for someone who you have now lost is proof they are still a part of you. That even though you know they are gone you are still hoping they'll come back or that somewhere and somehow you will see them again. The characters of Sal and Cara are gifted this at the end of the story, even though it does not change them going forward. They are given another goodbye and the ability to say what it is they wish they could've before leaving each other behind, even though a lot of the time we don't get this in break ups.

Jane Eyre

WISHING STARS

I still search
for you in crowds,
in empty fields
and soaring clouds.

In city lights
and passing cars,
on winding roads
and wishing stars.

I wonder where
you could be now,
for years I've not said
your name out loud.

And longer since
I called you mine—
time has passed
for you and I.

But I have learnt
to live without,
I do not mind—
I still love you anyhow.

— *Lang Leav*

There is a certain book that has stayed with me since I read it many years ago. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte is a book that has always spoke to me when it comes to writing about relationships, which is why I chose to look to this story when writing my screenplay. The basic forefront of this book is the following the journey of the main character, Jane, as she crosses various stages in her life. The part of this book that really spoke to me is the strong connection between Jane and Mr. Rochester, as well as her strength as a protagonist.

Throughout the book Jane struggles to feel any form of love, she grows up in a loveless and tortured environment. There is a slight positive change of pace when she is sent away to be a governess at Thornfield Manor, where her employer is Mr. Rochester. A dark, secretive older man who Jane finds herself falling in love with. While Jane is expecting to marry Mr. Rochester, she finds out that he already has a wife. Realizing the one she loves cannot belong only to her, she leaves. She later receives another proposal from a man who she refuses to marry because she does not love him. She realizes she must return to the man who she still loves.

The reason this story resonated with me is because of the strong main character and her undying love for Mr. Rochester. While she forced to leave him behind for a time, it is because they aren't in a place to be together. As much as it hurts her to leave, she must do it. They both need to settle certain parts of themselves before they can actually be happy together. This is similar to the characters of Sal and Cara. While there is still love present between them, they cannot rightfully be together. It is holding them both back and keeping them in the same place that they feel safe, even though there is no moving forward. When Cara finally realizes this, it is even more painful because deep down she wants to stay with Sal.

I looked to *Jane Eyre* because this story proves that love follows us. Jane and Mr. Rochester are different people when they come back together. Sometimes that is what it takes for us to find what we are looking for. We could be with the right person, but it could be at the wrong time. While Cara and Sal don't end up together, there's clearly still a connection between them, but instead of chasing after that they choose themselves.

I also found the strength in the character of Jane was something I wanted to represent in my story as well. Cara needs to find herself and what she wants. So far, she has only discovered a small fraction of what the world has to offer. Similar to Jane she needs to go out and discover more.

"I remember that the real world was wide, and that a varied field of hopes and fears, of sensations and excitements, awaited those who had the courage to go forth into its expanse, to seek real knowledge of life amidst it's perils" (Brontë 72).

Music

A lot of the time when I hear a song, it inspires me to write. The lyrics of a song tell a story as a whole, but when you take just a piece of that you are able to create your own story. By taking lyrics from songs, it helps me to visualize a story around it. It is even displayed in the character of Cara as she realizes music is a way in which she can express herself and tell what she is feeling. This screenplay was created by the culmination of a dozen different songs I've heard and loved. Sometimes music and lyrics is the only thing that can make sense of the world. It can bring clarity to life, events, and feelings you've felt. What motivates me more than any book, writing, or movie is music. Just hearing a song and the lyrics can create a story for me. It might be completely different than what the musician

envisioned, but it still is a story created by the words. Listening to music is a huge part of how I created this story.

Hold You Now

One of the songs at the forefront of this story is *Hold You Now* by Vampire Weekend. This song came out in 2019 and features the vocals of Danielle Haim and Ezra Koenig. Upon research of the song meaning, I found it is a breakup song. A conversation between a man and a woman who once loved each other, but now that is lost.

"Why's your heart grown heavy, boy, when things were feeling light? Turning this June morning into some dark judgement night. This ain't the end of nothing much, it's just another round. I can't carry you forever, but I can hold you now."

I think what stayed with me the most is that last line, *"I can't carry you forever, but I can hold you now."* When I heard that I felt it spoke to the story I was trying to tell. Sal loves Cara, but because of what's happened to him in the past he can't give her everything she wants. Sometimes that's all we can offer someone, a temporary place of comfort. Even though the meaning of the song may be different from what my perspective was, I felt there was a similar basis. Some relationships are just not meant to last forever. Sal and Cara show each other how much they care, but when Cara's life hits a crossroads, she starts to realize she's not in the same place she once was. While Sal wants her to stay, he also realizes it is right for her to go. A relationship that was once beautiful now is not quite as bright.

"I know the reason why you think you gotta leave...I did my best and all the rest is hidden by the clouds. I can't carry you forever, but I can hold you now."

Sometimes all that's left is to love even if it means you aren't present. Hoping for the best for a person who you can't physically be with anymore. That is the challenge that Sal faces. This is similar to what I felt at a certain point in my life. I wanted to bring the people with me but couldn't. I needed to face the next chapter on my own.

All Your Favorite Bands

The song *All Your Favorite Bands* by Dawes helped me to realize how beautiful the feeling of nostalgia can be, which is another reoccurring theme of this story. Nostalgia is something that we all experience, it can make us long for moments of the past. While it can be something beautiful that we remember, we cannot go back. Moving forward is definitely something that the characters of Cara and Sal are struggling with.

"I hope the world see the same person that you've always were to me. And may all your favorite bands stay together."

It's really a basic note I draw from this song and lyric-I hope the world sees the same person you've always been to be. Sometimes you just cannot change someone. Sal doesn't want to move; he is happy where things are. While their love is the same, this changes them. This song is about wanting things to stay the same knowing full well that they cannot.

"When I think of you, you still got on that hat that says let's party. I hope that thing is never thrown away. I hope that life without a chaperone is what you thought it'd be. I hope that your brother's El Camino runs forever."

He is listing things that realistically won't stay forever, but somewhere they do, in their memories. When we move on, we have to say goodbye to all the little things, but what makes it easier is holding on to the memories that stay forever. When I listen to this song it

has a way of saying I love you and hope your life goes well, even if I won't be there, which is what Sal and Cara must say to each other.

High

The song High by Miley Cyrus really spoke to me when describing a relationship that you just can't let go of. The first time I listened to it I realized I could relate with almost every lyric of the song. This song directly related to the relationship I based this story on. I listened to this song and the lyrics over and over to help me focus in on what I was trying to tell in the same way this song did.

"And you, like a neon light. Shining through a door that I can't keep closed...Sometimes I stay up all night. 'Cause you don't ever talk to me in my dreams. And I think about eventually you're holding me. And dancing to a record like a movie scene."

These lyrics describe the constant pull that a relationship can create. It's easy to say that something is over, but it is not as easy to feel that is over. This story was inspired by a relationship I had that never quite felt over. Questioning what if would constantly come back. What if I stayed? What if I changed? All things that could've made a difference, but they didn't happen. The lyrics of this song made me realize sometimes we can't say goodbye to someone even if we want to. There's still that faint hope somewhere deep down that maybe one day it'll work out and things will be the way we imagine them, *"like a movie scene."*

A very large part of Cara and Sal's relationship is that he supports her and sticks up for her like no one else. That is part of the reason she doesn't want to let go. This is extremely evident when they are with her parents. Sal takes the punches her mother

throws because he knows how it hurts Cara. This is something she cannot easily let go of because she doesn't know how to stick up for herself when it comes to her mother. It is not until she finally sticks up for herself that she is able to close that chapter. While she says goodbye, the memories still fill her mind.

"Sometimes I get a little too low. And I can't see myself through the fire and smoke...And in my head I did my very best saying goodbye. Goodbye. And I don't miss you, but I think of you and I don't know why. I still feel high."

A Dustland Fairytale

A Dustland Fairytale by The Killers was a song that proved to me sometimes love stories aren't always what we expect them to be.

"He looks just like you want him to, some kind of slick chrome American prince. A blue jean serenade and Moon River what'd you do to me?"

Brandon Flowers wrote this song about his parent's relationship, meeting in a trailer park when they were both just teenagers. While a love story can take many forms, sometimes we look back and see it wasn't such a beautiful "Cinderella-like" tale. Sometimes you fall for the wrong person and you can't stop it. Following the lyrics, you fall for "a slick chrome American prince serenading you with *Moon River*." While it's romantic, it doesn't mean it's enough for the love to stay.

"Is there still magic in the midnight sun? Or did you leave it back in sixty-one? In the cadence of the young man's eyes, out where the dreams all hide"

This part is asking is there any fight left in you, is there any fire left in your soul, or did you lose it in that relationship? While this song holds different meaning for me than it

could to someone else, it struck me as another love story gone wrong. Sometimes we want each relationship we have to be a tale of romance, but sometimes they are *A Dustland Fairytale* instead. I took this into account when writing. I included beautiful moments between Cara and Sal to make you think that maybe this could be enough for them to make it, but sometimes that's just not reality. Beautiful moments don't necessarily make the relationship enough to withstand life's hurdles.

There's a Place

This song was one that I listened to a lot when I was going through the part of my life the story is based on. *There's a Place* by the American Rejects was written when the lead singer Tyson Ritter was working on a film entitled *Miss You Already*. He described it as a love note when saying goodbye to love ones. This song is one I listen to when I find difficulty in saying goodbye to someone.

"I miss you already, understand. That I know you aren't ready, but you don't get to pick the day, that the worst one in your life will land right on. I can hear you beg for more. I can hold you in this song. All I want, wanted, was to be want, wanted by you."

These lyrics are about saying goodbye but knowing it's not what you want. Cara wanted to be wanted by Sal. While he did that, he didn't give her enough for her to stay. Sometimes we hold onto to a person because of how they help us. Sal helps Cara through a lot of difficulties. This makes it harder for her to give up on him. In life we encounter a lot of goodbyes, some harder than others. This is one of those for Cara.

"Cause when goodbyes get easy, we'll all be alone. But why God, why? Can't this one just be even though that I'm gearing up for this battle. Even if I know I may never win."

Sometimes we don't get the easy route, we must take the harder path. That is what this song is saying to me. Gearing up for a battle we know won't be easy. Life is full of these, which is why the character of Cara needs to learn to be strong enough to face those battles on her own.

Process:

Parameters

The thesis I created needed to be a feature length script of 80-130 pages on a topic of my choosing. I went through an approval process where my idea was presented to a committee of RIT School of Film and Animation members. This proposal included a treatment, rationale, timeline, and budget. Once this proposal was approved by the committee it was time to fully create the story with a step outline. This was a scene-by-scene breakdown of what happens in the script. This would also act as a guide for when it was time to translate the outline to the script. Throughout writing this outline I would submit it for feedback to my thesis advisor and committee chair. After many changes and revisions, it was time to transition the story from outline to script. Writing this portion was also a similar process to the step outline where I needed to obtain feedback from my advisor. Once the final script was approved and finalized, it is then time to film a proof of concept. This entails shooting a 10-minute section, or roughly a few scenes, selected from my script. This selection would be presented for feedback at final screenings.

The amount of time this process takes is usually a year, however, this has not been a typical year. The pandemic that started in 2020 and continued into 2021 changed a lot for me. Meaning the process of my thesis took longer than I anticipated it would. Still, with

perseverance and acceptance of the "new normal", I have been able to create a story I am proud of. The final aspect of my thesis is the documentation of the process and research in this paper.

Proposal

I knew I wanted to tell the story of a relationship that isn't meant to be, but I just wasn't sure how to create that within the characters. Originally this story was a lot different than it is now. The original story I pitched to the thesis committee involved a broken and dysfunctional relationship that involved cheating and less than likable characters. I needed to bring back the reality of the story in order to create the narrative.

When it came to creating the characters, I found inspiration in the television series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* that I was watching at the time. This follows the character of Rebecca Bunch as she follows the person who she thinks is her soulmate, Josh Chan, across the country. She leaves a high-paying job and the east coast all together in order to be with him. In her head she creates this nonrealistic view of what is happening and believes everything is better when they are together.

This is where I found part of my storyline. Cara is replacing any other form of happiness in her life with a relationship and love. What goes along with this belief is the struggle of family values and growing up as a person. In a way, Cara stopped growing when she met Sal. She stayed where she was and didn't look further because she was happy. This is where the relationship starts to fall apart, when Cara comes to terms with this.

Proposal Feedback

When I first told my idea to the thesis committee, they weren't seeing the driving force of the story and what was really keeping Sal and Cara together. Along with that I was told to bring more growth to the characters, who originally did not have enough growth throughout the story. I decided I needed to make more of a love story to follow and prove why these characters were so important to each other.

I worked on what story I had behind each main character. I worked on Cara and needed to show what she was truly looking for. Originally, I thought what I wanted her to find was marriage from her long-term relationship. Then I realized, that's not exactly what she needs in order to be happy. Instead of marriage being her goal, I decided she needed to look for more. A relationship was not her only driving force anymore. There were problems with her family she needed to address as well as a career goal she never even thought about.

When I originally wrote the script, there was a faint theme of music, however I did not take it very far. After the proposal, I was told to look more into that, and I did. I realized that music was a driving force leading me to write, so the character could somehow show that in her actions. I decided to show that love comes in many forms, therefore her love of music could be a love she discovers when she gives up her relationship. It starts small when she is still in a relationship but grows as she discovers more about herself. In the end she realizes that music is something that helps her feel more confident and is a great form of self-expression.

I knew I wanted to make the character of Sal someone who was stuck. A character that has a troubled past that creates tension with his relationship with Cara. I knew firmly that I wanted the character of Sal to be against marriage, so I knew I didn't want that to

change in the story. However, I came to terms that it needed to be more than that. Sal needed more than his beliefs against marriage to be a wedge between him and Cara. That's when I realized something that really can drive people apart is distance. The relationship I based this story on was further pushed to an end because I moved. I realized that is what could really symbolize the end between Sal and Cara; if Cara is willing to move on without Sal.

The final piece that I wanted this story to include was family. I have struggled at times with the fact that sometimes we have different viewpoints than our parents might. While originally, I made Cara's mother, Jenna, cold and overbearing, I wanted it to all come from a place of love. After rereading the original script, I decided I wanted to make her more realistic. A mother someone might be struggling with in day-to-day life without making her a villain. I decided to make her jabs at Cara more subtle and make their relationship arc one that has peaks and valleys.

Finally, I needed to create a concrete timeline for when this story would be taking place. I decided to make it just over a year. I always hear the saying, "a lot can change in a year," and I find that to be true in my own life. So, I created a timeline of a very turbulent year in the life of this couple.

Writing the Step Outline

When the original story was approved, I was relieved but knew there was a lot more work to do. After I created the necessary changes in the characters and story, it was time to create a step outline of the story. Creating the outline helps you to go through every detail

you want to include in the story. This process is where you really start to see the story evolve, scene by scene.

One of the main struggles I faced was creating a long enough story to be considered a full-length script. I found myself adding in scenes that didn't really have a necessary point to be a part of the overall screenplay. This was something that took time to work on. I needed to make sure each scene had a significant purpose and that story kept moving throughout. My thesis advisor, Frank Deese, suggested I bring to light what is good in their relationship, something that seemed to get lost in what I was writing. Also, I needed to create characters that were more well-rounded, originally the characters seemed too selfish than what I hoped to show.

He also noted that, "Sal offers no future, but his *present* is amazing and it's difficult to give that up." This is exactly what struggle I wanted to represent in the story. How do you give up something that brings you joy and love? Even if there isn't hope for the future you imagined? This is something I really worked on representing when I worked on another draft of the story. I wanted to prove sometimes good things have to come to an end, no matter how difficult it will be. I also needed to work on why Sal was so averse to marriage in the first place, which helped me create a more well-rounded character in him.

A topic that I wanted to portray is sometimes changes occurs only to one person. Cara changes in this story, while Sal is not ready to change with her. I find this is how life can be sometimes. You might be ready to make a jump, but you have to realize there are people who won't be by your side when you land. Sometimes you have to let go of them to move forward. This is the dynamic we find between Cara and Sal.

My original outline needed to be more to the point and show more growth between the characters, so that is what I worked on moving forward. After many different drafts of the outline, I finally decided how I wanted my story to come together.

Writing the Script

When it was time to turn the step outline into a script it wasn't too bad of a transition. I was able to take the summaries in the step outlines and turn them into full length scenes. While this should be a smooth process, sometimes I struggle with keeping the dialogue succinct and the descriptions to only what can be seen and heard. So, after many revisions, I was able to create a script I was happy with. When I turned it in to Frank, I received some helpful feedback that then helped me to revise further.

Some of the feedback he gave was to step away from real life experience when writing the story. I was relying too much on the characters relating to my own experiences, and in that I was losing the story I wanted to tell. Cara needed to be starving for more out of life, and it seemed we didn't see that. I also had to make it clear that Sal not moving forward with Cara was a choice, not because of his career. Originally, I made Sal an owner of the bar he worked at. However, when Cara wanted to move for a new job this meant it wouldn't be an easy thing for him to give up. So, I made the change that he is now a bartender at the bar, meaning it is a job he could find somewhere else, but he chooses not to. I decided it to make it a clear choice that the character makes not to move to be with Cara.

Another change from the original script was stepping back from the family debate a little more. I wanted to focus more on Cara and Sal because the relationship was my story. I knew I wanted to keep the family a section of this story because it was important, but I

needed to make it more about Cara making her own choices, not being bullied by anyone to make them. I decided to cut down on the sections with her mother and give them a smaller arc in the story.

It took me a while to get to the script I was happy with, but the script I have submitted now is what I wanted my story to be. It shows struggle, love, family, and personal growth as the backbone to creating a life you are happy with. After many revisions I was ready to move to the next step of the process.

Adding the Song

A big part of this story is music. It is what gives Cara light in a dark time of her life. It sparks a passion for her. Playing her guitar is something she lost when she was in a relationship, she lost the passion because it was replaced with her love for Sal. Her new job and beginning to play again brings it back into her life. She realizes she can use it as an outlet for what she is going through. She can write about her emotions as a way to express them. Music is what inspired me to write this story, so I knew it had to be a part of Cara's story as well.

I knew I wanted the final scene to be Cara playing in front of an audience. Overcoming her fears and embracing a future that is unknown. All while doing it by herself. I didn't know until later in the process that I wanted it to be an original song. I thought it could be her just covering a song, however that isn't as special. I wanted the song she performed to express her story, her discovery, and her growth.

For many years my parents have been creating original music. This is why music is so important to me, it brings our family together. I've never been as musically talented as

they are, so I decided to ask them for help. I gave them a story outline and the title I wanted, and they went to work. They created a few options for me, but the one named after my story, *Half a Heart*, was exactly what I needed. When I heard it, I knew it was my story put into a song. My mother matched the lyrics to what Cara's feelings were and my dad created music to match. It was exactly what I needed to bring the story together and to a close.

Creating the Visual

As a screenwriting concentration we are asked to show roughly a 10-page section of the script. It is to be kept simple as this is not a fully produced short film we are shooting. I decided the best way for me to be able to show this was to do a simple film shoot. During my time at RIT, I have made a couple short films, I decided this was going to be the best option for me while still keeping it relatively simple. I picked a section of my script close to the end of the story. The final goodbye between Cara and Sal. This scene was the first part I wrote in the new version of the script, so I knew it was what made my story.

I am currently located in the Albany, New York area, so this made difficulty for shooting as I had always shot my films in the Rochester area. All my contacts for actors and crew were on the other side of the state. Also, while we are still facing a pandemic it becomes even more difficult to find a crew to help. However, I was determined to complete the project in this way. I decided to post in local Facebook groups in order to find cast and crew. I found an outdoor location that fit the description I wrote in the screenplay. Halfmoon Lighthouse Park in Waterford, NY is exactly how I imagined the location of this

scene, a small quiet park facing a waterfront. A small bench in front of the water, the perfect place for our character's final goodbye.

Finding actors is usually a little tricky but luckily, I only needed to find two. I was able to cast the role of Sal relatively quick. My actor was more familiar on stage, but I felt he fit the role as I imagined. Not long after I found an actress to play Cara. Things came together not long after they were cast. It only took one day to get everything we needed for the scene. There were a few hurdles but overall, it went smoothly. I was able to put together the emotional goodbye scene I saw in my head.



Evaluation:

Overall, I received many helpful critiques and comments at the screenings. My film was screened online through YouTube Live and Zoom for others to view. Unfortunately, it seemed it was a little difficult for viewers to grasp the full intentions of the scene without context from the rest of the screenplay. I was advised that the characters in the scene seemed unreasonably honest with each other for a couple post break up. Without any background from the rest of the story I understand how it was hard to follow how in this moment the main characters were so forthcoming with each other. This comment did help me to realize I could use more hesitancy coming from the main character of Sal. He could have felt a little more betrayed in the way that Cara continued on with her life and left him behind. I also received some comments regarding using subtext instead of relying so heavily on the dialogue. Looking back, I do think I could've worked on this a little more. I could've showed more of the relationship instead of relying solely on what was being said.

I saw comments regarding the music I chose for the end as well, not being sure it fit well with the scene. There is a reason for the placement of this song. This particular song is the one that Cara writes in the scene directly following when she faces Sal. This goodbye scene is her inspiration to write a song about what she is going through. The lyrics follow what she is feeling in this moment. Originally, I wanted the song to be included in the final scene where she performs in front of an audience. However, since this was the scene, I chose to film I wanted to include it in the last moments. I do see how there could be some better placed music in this section, but I did want to include the original song created for this screenplay.

To be completely honest, it felt a bit daunting to see my simple story played back-to-back with such impressive and well-made films. However, I am proud of what I created and thankful for the people who helped me put this together. Taking in all the comments I realize there is always going to be room for improvement. Every time I watch my film, I see areas that I want to change, but at a certain point you have to sit back and enjoy. All the hard work was worth it, and in the end something special was created.

Conclusion:

I hope through this story I'm able to connect to the audience in even the smallest way. It is through writing this screenplay that I was able to find strength myself. I was able to look back on these moments in my life and see them in a different light. I could take something that was once sad and turn it into something beautiful and meaningful. I set out to write a love story but found out I was able to tell a story about more than just love between two people. I was able to talk about finding love in life and living in the moment, living in your moment. Taking inspiration from all different forms I created a storyline based on truth and moments. Lyrics, movie scenes, and writings helped me to find my story. A story about finding a way to be complete and finding love within yourself.



Appendix:

Proposal

Half a Heart

A Screenplay by Maria Gesek

Thesis Proposal
MFA Screenwriting
School of Film and Animation
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, NY

Logline

This is the story of two people who are drawn to the one person who fully understands them, even though they continue to hurt them and prove it is a toxic relationship.

Rationale

The reason I chose to tell this story is because I write about things that are important to me, and events that have changed me. I like to take real life experiences and people I have met to help me create characters that reflect that. The characters of Cara and Brian are both facing difficult situations and struggles they need to overcome in order to become happy in their life. Both make mistakes, similar to what happens in real life. What I hope to reflect through this story is you need to be comfortable with yourself and at peace with your decisions before anything can make you happy, including love and relationships. Cara's struggle with influences from family and friends is something that I have struggled with for a long time. Being able to connect with others who may feel like they are struggling with a similar situation would be what I look to establish in my story. My story is one about overcoming the outside and inner struggles that may bring us down in life, and to truly find a way to be happy and at peace with the life you live- something I am still searching for.

Treatment

ACT I

Sal, 38, and Cara, 30, have been in a relationship for six years. They quickly went from friends to being in a relationship, but never questioned it knowing they were meant to be in each other's lives. In a crowded and stylish city restaurant, Sal and Cara at a friend's anniversary party. Sitting happily away from all the other company, in their own little world. There is a special connection between the couple as they enjoy the music playing and each other's company. It is not until their friends join them at the table that things seem to get a little uneasy between them. It is when Sal's friend Joe starts asking about marriage that the demeanor becomes cold between everyone. Sal states to the entire table that he will never marry Cara, that he no longer believes in marriage. He says that Cara knows, and they are in agreement on the topic. Cara is silent. Instead of any response she excuses herself from the table with Ben's wife Crystal. The group of friends (Sal, Joe, and Ben) continue to talk about the topic before Brian shuts it down.

On the way home that night it they aren't talking to each other. Cara avoids any eye contact with Sal, upset and angry, a flood of emotions all at once. Sal tries to ask why she is so quiet, but she doesn't say anything. When they arrive back at their apartment Sal finally forces the truth out of her. She reveals how she feels like a fool when he tells people he will never marry her, how it makes her feel like she's not anything special to him. He tries to calm her down, reiterating it is marriage he is against not their relationship. They continue on the topic, but it remains unsettled. When Sal realizes how upset Cara is, he chooses to comfort her instead of continuing to argue, his attempt to stop the fighting. Exhausted from

the night Cara decides to go to bed, pulling away slowly from Sal. As she goes into the bedroom, Sal pours himself a drink before sitting on the balcony deep in thought. Cara lays in bed, trying to stop her tears.

A few weeks later, Cara is at work opposite her best friend/coworker Amy, 32. Amy is pressing the topic of Sal, going down all the reasons he is wrong for her. Cara insists that she knows they are right for each other; it is just a rough patch. Amy decides to bring up all the breakup and make ups they've been through in the past six years, reinforcing how it's a less than healthy relationship. Cara disagrees, asking to change the subject. Amy starts to talk about work instead, to which Cara immediately is bored with the topic, asking to skip the meeting or leave work instead.

Sal finds Cara home after work. He is happy to see she is completely herself-talkative, laughing, and venting about her terrible day. He joins in with her and they are able to feel better as they have someone who hears them and understands them completely. Their nice moment is surprised by a knock at the door. Cara completely forgets about her parents visiting, which causes a panic. She immediately tries to impress them in some way, Sal tries to calm her as she does. Cara's parents continue to press her on the issues that make her uncomfortable, marriage, kids, and work. When Sal sees her get annoyed with their pestering, he tries his best to change the conversation. Cara is thankful for Sal, but still takes the things her parents point out to heart and feels the need to impress them. Once they leave there is a moment of silence between them. Sal embraces Cara, she feels broken from the constant upset lately. She builds up the courage to bring up the topic of marriage and kids again, which upsets Sal. She tries to get him to realize she is now 30 and they've already been together for such a long time, she can't understand why he won't do this for her. Done with the discussion, Sal leaves, still not budging on his decision.

Sal ends up at the bar where he has a conversation with Sal and Ben. We learn through this conversation about his past marriage and brutal divorce. It is clear his still has not healed from it which is why he is so against marrying Cara. Sal has multiple drinks and gets up to go home, but they convince him to sleep at the bar instead.

After not returning home, Cara decides to go to the bar the next day to find Sal. When she arrives, she sees Sal at the bar, serving drinks to a group of laughing girls. He laughs along. She immediately feels jealous, trying to ignore what is happening. Joe notices and comes over to talk to her. As Sal is distracted, Cara confides in Joe. He comforts her and she is happy to have a normal conversation for once. Without Cara noticing, Sal comes up from behind her and pulls her away to talk. He is incredibly sweet, enticing Cara out of her funk. She leaves with him, but glances back at Joe before, saying thank you.

Cara is walking with Amy sometime later, talking about work. Cara is visibly distracted, not even trying to be interested in the topic at hand. Amy tries to get her to talk about what is on her mind. Cara tells her about what's been going on with Sal and then brings up the conversation she had with Joe. Revealing she's starting to talk with him more. Amy is immediately worried about the situation, but Cara reassures her that there is nothing going on.

Sal and Cara are at dinner together. They are unusually quiet. Sal finally asks Cara why she is acting so weird. She doesn't respond honestly. Annoyed by her demeanor, he orders another drink. Cara asks him why he has to drink every time things are uncomfortable, Sal doesn't respond, drinks instead. Cara takes out her phone and starts texting Joe. As they are walking home, Cara finally breaks down and asks Sal why they are

keeping things up, even if they clearly aren't working. Sal tells her that they will work things out, like they always do. He puts his arms around her and gives her a hug, we see he clearly is unsure of the words he just said. They tell each other they love one another, before continuing their walk home hand in hand.

ACT II

Month's pass, seasons change. Cara is at the apartment when Amy shows up. She storms in asking why Cara did not show up to work. Cara, still in her pajamas replies that she didn't feel up to it. That she didn't have the time or patience to deal with it. Amy tries to get to the bottom of why Cara seems so hopeless, but Cara is too distant to make any headway. Through their fighting Cara finally reveals what has been going on with her, that she is thinking about leaving Sal. Amy is shocked and suppresses her anger for a moment to try and help her friend. Cara tells her everything. Amy insists she tells Sal, to avoid him find out the hard way. Cara agrees, but states she is still not sure if it is the right choice, convinced she still loves him. Amy tries to encourage her to do the right thing.

At the bar, Joe and Sal are working together. When Joe is serving someone his phone rings on the back counter. Sal notices it is Cara calling him. Joe goes to pick it up, hitting ignore. He looks up to realize that Sal has already noticed. Joe tries to make up some excuse, but Sal doesn't believe it. Sal goes into the back room, starting to feel enraged. He takes out a bottle of whiskey and begins to drink. Joe contemplates going into the backroom but decides to let him cool off before talking to him. When he finally goes into the back, he finds Sal is still drinking. He tells him he wants to know why Cara would be calling him. Joe is not sure how much he should tell him. He just keeps apologizing, which doesn't answer anything for Sal. As tensions continue to rise, Cara enters. She notices the state that Sal is in and realizes there isn't any way to get out of the truth. She breaks the news to him, revealing she has been seeing Joe and has feelings for him. Sal doesn't respond right away, both Cara and Joe are on edge awaiting his response. He asks how they could do this to him. Neither respond immediately, finally Joe starts apologizing again. Cara tries to stop him noticing it is making Sal angrier. He gets up, unsteady as he walks towards Cara. He looks at her for a second, before telling her that it is all her fault. That they were happy before she started to pick away at their relationship. Joe tries to get him to move back but Sal pushes him away. Cara upset and hurt by what he's said, tells him that they are done.

Sal gets into his car. It is late, dark outside, and he fumbles to get the keys in the ignition. He takes another drink out of the bottle of whiskey before putting it onto the seat next to him. He starts to pull away from the curb, taking off quickly. He turns the music on loud, trying to tune out the thoughts in his head. The look on his face turns from anger to disbelief. He reaches for the bottle again, as he takes another drink his attention moves away from the road. He starts to lose control as he is driving too fast. He veers off the side of the road and crashes.

Sal wakes up in the hospital, Cara is at his side. He is pretty badly injured, but alive. Cara explains everything that happened to him, he doesn't remember any of it. She tries to comfort him as he is in a lot of pain. He asks about their affair, hoping it didn't actually happen. Reluctantly she tells the truth. Sal tells her to leave, that he wants her out of his life. Cara tries to get him to understand that she didn't want any of it to happen, but she was pushed into Joe's arms. That there was too many problems and she couldn't fix him or the relationship anymore. Sal tells her he is done talking about it, reminding her that she was the only one he loved. Upset, Cara leaves.

Months have passed, Sal is now living with his Mother, Elyse, still healing from the accident. He has also started AA because of what happened, realizing he had a problem. He appears a little more put together than before, like he is in a slightly better headspace, but still not happy. She asks about work; he tells her that he is not ready to face that yet. Particularly not ready to face Joe. He still needs time to heal before figuring out things.

Cara is coming out of work with Amy. She is discussing wedding plans as she is now engaged to Joe. Cara is seemingly okay, but when Amy brings up her parents her demeanor changes. Cara realizes her parents still are overbearing and controlling even when she is with someone, they “approve of”. She is still unable to shake her internal feeling of discontent. When she gets home, she confides in Joe. He tries to help but does not know enough about her relationship with her parents to help. She fakes that things are all right, but when she is alone, we can see how unhappy she is.

At work, Cara is staring off and listening to music. Not actually doing anything productive. She gets reprimanded by her boss for not doing what was asked of her. Cara half-heartedly apologizes, not really seeming to care. Her boss tells her that there are other people that can do her job, people that actually want it. Cara has no change in emotion to this. She turns back around in her chair and turns her music back on, looking down at her engagement ring and continuing to space out.

Cara arrives home after work, another long and draining day. She finds her Mom in her apartment with her sister. They immediately start with her about all the things she needs to do for the wedding; it gets increasingly overwhelming. They never stop to ask Cara how she is; she holds it in, but it is finally too much. She loses her temper, yelling at her Mother. She reveals how out of place she feels in her family because of how she is treated. How she thought things would be better because she is marrying Joe, but things didn't change, she is treated the same way as she was with Sal. She feels like her decisions are never good enough and that is why she felt so much pressure about marriage. Cara tells the truth about everything, finally breaking down and crying. Her Mom stops talking back when she sees her start to cry, finally realizing how serious the situation is. Before anything is said, Cara runs out of the apartment.

Sal is at a meeting with his sponsor, Ben. They are talking about the progress he has made and that it might be a good idea for him to face some of the things from the past, like going back to work and talking to Joel. Sal agrees. Ben also suggests reaching out to Cara, since clearly it is something that he has not made peace with. Sal says he doesn't know if that's something he is ready for. Ben suggests writing everything down into a letter for her, then when the time is right to send it. Sal agrees to think about it.

A few days pass, Cara is hiding out at Amy's house. Avoiding everything that is too much to deal with, her family, work, and Joe. Amy tries to find out what it is that Cara wants to do going forward. Cara states that she doesn't know what will make her happy anymore, that what she thought would do it is clearly not the answer. She hesitates before deciding she is going to quit her job. She has always hated it and it's not even worth the money anymore. Then she reveals she wants to postpone the wedding, not sure if she rushed into things with Joe too quickly. That she was looking for happiness in marriage, even though it didn't make her any happier. Amy agrees to help her with everything, and Cara decides it is time to face Joe as she has avoided him since the fight with her Mother.

Joe comes to visit Cara. She apologizes, but he tells her there is nothing to apologize for. He says he is proud that she stuck up to her family. Hearing this should make her feel

better, but she doesn't feel the way she thought she would. Cara builds up the courage to tell Joe that she wants to postpone the wedding, but instead of saying in a moment of choice she tells him she wants to call off the engagement altogether. Joe is shocked, trying to figure out why, but Cara assures him that she needs time to figure out things by herself. He is hurt but understands, knowing it is what is best for her.

Seasons change, it is now wintertime. Joe and Ben are working at the bar when Sal comes in for the first time since his accident. While he has talked with Ben, this is his first-time seeing Joe. They decide what is best for him at work going forward. He apologizes for anything that happened before the accident, recognizing there were things he needed to change about the way he acted. He tells them that he is now sober and not sure if working at the bar is the best option for him. They agree giving him the option to work in the entertainment venue and handle the events at the bar instead, trying to give him a change that might be better suited for him. Sal happily accepts. Joe asks to speak with Sal alone. Joe apologizes quickly, trying to explain that there is no excuse for what he did except poor judgment. Sal tells him that it will take a while for there to be any trust between them. When Sal learns about their failed engagement he starts to worry about Cara. When he arrives home from work that night, he sits outside and starts to write the letter to Cara.

ACT III

It is Christmas time; Cara arrives home to be with her family for the holidays. There is still an unsettled tension between them. After awkward silence, Cara is able to talk with her Mother one on one. Her Mother apologizes for what happened before the wedding. She explains she may be overbearing, but she only wants what is best for Cara. Marriage or not. Cara forgives her Mother, finally feeling she can be honest with her.

As the new year begins, Cara has found a new job. She is working as an event planner, handling local concerts and performances in the city. She has found the joy in working again, being able to willingly go to work each day. She has bought her own apartment and is independent for the first time in a long time. This all makes her happier, but she still feels something is missing.

Sal is back working at the bar, enjoying his new position. Instead of serving drinks he is at the back of the house, setting up for performances and being able to listen to the music. He is sober and in a better place with his relationships. He is still living with Elyse, but she brings up the topic of moving out. He agrees it is probably time for him to go. She also asks about the letter to Cara, telling him it might be time for him to work things out with her. She feels they should at least come to an understanding since they were so important to each other and she hates to see them apart. Sal agrees to think about it, and later that night he decides it is time to give the letter to Cara.

Cara meets up with Amy for dinner. She talks about her new job, which she is very excited about. Amy can tell that she is better off. She asks about her love life, if she's talked to Joe at all. Cara tells her that she's okay being by herself, that she knows Joe is not the person for her. She looks like she is trying to convince herself of this, but she does not succeed. Amy hesitates before handing Cara the letter from Sal. She tells her that it is time for her to deal with Sal. Cara hesitates before placing the letter in her purse and changing the subject of their conversation. When she arrives home, she reads the letter, crying as she does. She quickly leaves her apartment as she finishes.

Cara arrives at the bar where she immediately sees Joe at the counter. She smiles and gives him a hug. They are casual with each other; Joe is happy to see things are going

well for her. He tells her that he'll always be there for her. She nervously works into to asking where Sal is. He motions her to the back of the bar where the band is playing.

Cara makes her way to the back. As the music plays her eyes wander across the room, she sees Sal sitting in the corner. He appears different than she remembers him, looking more put together, like time was well to him. She makes her way over to him. When he sees her, he is stunned, he gets up to hug her. She sits across from him, both trying to hide their smiles. They talk about the letter, their new jobs, what happened to them and the past. Cara tells Sal that she's missed him, and he says it is the same for him. He places his hand on her hand, and they watch as the band plays, reminiscent of their first date. They are both in a better place and just want to be happy together.

Character Analysis

Cara is a 30-year-old manager for a local hotel. She has been in a relationship with Sal for six years after meeting him at a concert at his bar. She struggles with the views of the outside world on her choices in life and she cannot tune out other people's opinions. This is especially true with her family, specifically her parents who have an expected way that Cara should live her life. She really wants marriage and children but continually pushes these feelings aside in order to be with Sal. She has a deep connection with Sal, both feeling like they have met their soulmate. He is the only person who she can be completely honest and herself with. Her career is also another area of unhappiness for her as she is doing a job that brings her no joy or excitement. All of these overlapping struggles cause Cara to deal with anxiety and a feeling of being incomplete, something she ignores, instead trying to find that happiness in her relationships instead of with herself. Until she is able to take charge of her own decisions in life and be comfortable with who she is as a person she will not be happy.

Sal is a 38-year-old retired fireman. After getting injured on the job he opened a bar/entertainment venue, *The Metropolitan Grill*, with his friends from college, Joe and Ben. Sal has difficulty being able to move on from things that have happened in the past. His wife left him, and the heartache of the divorce made him feel completely against marriage and kids. He met Cara not long after his divorce and felt like he might have another chance at love, but it was not able to sway his opinions on marriage. Sal's vice for whenever problems occur is alcohol. He chooses to drink to numb his problems rather than actually deal with them. It leads to his drunk driving accident that almost takes his life. Sal puts his trust in the wrong people, which ends up hurting him again and again. Until Sal can voice what he wants, work towards sobriety, and be honest with others, especially Cara, he will not be happy.

Joe is a 34-year-old bar owner who is best friends with Sal. He has known Sal and Ben since college, going into business together not long after leaving school. He has also known Cara for a while because of how close he is with Sal. He is the first person to voice his disagreement with their relationship, not only out of the truth he knows about his friend but also for selfish reasons as he has feelings towards Cara. Joe has been on the sidelines of the relationship, never acting on his feelings, but choosing to step in when he sees Cara is hurting because of the relationship with Sal. He tries to get through to Sal but when that doesn't work, he acts as a confidant for Cara, growing their relationship. This does cause a rift between Sal and his relationship; however, he appears as a better choice

for her.

Jenna and Jon are Cara's parents. They are strict and overbearing parental figures. They have a relatively narrow view towards the world and how their children should live their lives. This causes constant conflict between Cara and them, both fighting for what they think is right. Since Cara never really sticks up for herself, the relentless criticizing of her choices is something they continue. While they ultimately love her very much, they need to learn how to let Cara have her own life and decisions.

Elyse is Sal's Mother. Even though she wants what is best for Sal, she never pushes him (opposite of Cara's parents). She helps him in any way she can and gives him advice when he needs it.

Amy is Cara's best friend. She works with Cara and tries to help her whenever she needs it. While in the beginning she is too much of an influence over Cara, she realizes this later when she sees how broken Cara is. She later tries to help Cara in any way she can, by simply being a good friend to her.

Timeline

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Refine Treatment	Blue								
Outline	Purple	Purple							
First Draft			Blue	Blue					
Second Draft				Purple	Purple	Purple			
Shoot Scene/Edit						Blue	Blue		
Final Draft							Purple	Purple	Purple

Budget

Pre-Production Costs			
1	Final Draft Program	(One Time Payment)	\$90
2	Peer Reviews		In Kind
Production Costs (Shooting a Scene)			
1	Director of Photography		In Kind
2	Producer/Crew		In Kind
3	Cast	4 Character/ \$80 per	\$320
4	Equipment (Camera/Lighting/Sound)		In Kind
5	Location	4 Nights/\$100 per night	\$400
6	Props		\$150
7	Food	3 Days/\$60	\$120
Post Production Costs			
1	Adobe Suite	3 months/\$30 per month	\$90
2	Music	(Composer or Online Source)	\$150
3	Film Festivals	Screenwriting Festivals	\$200

Total	\$1520
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Artist Statement: Thesis Presentation

Maria Gesek – Half a Heart **Artist Statement**

A question you might have for me is why did I write this? Why did I write this particular story? The truth is I wanted to be able to connect with people. I consider myself an introvert, and as such it can be incredibly difficult to open up with others. Through these stories I write, it becomes a channel through which I can connect. During my time at RIT, I was able to create stories that connected my experiences with those of others.

I find inspiration in real life. In people I've met, in relationships I've formed, and through experiences I've lived through. That is where I find my story. When I tell my story, my ultimate goal is to connect with the person on the other end. I want the person reading or watching to feel that they are not alone in their experience. While writing and movies can be an escape, they can also create that connection for us, which is why I find them so powerful.

This particular story is one I hope people can relate to. Not necessarily by its entirety but maybe by a single part. It could be the connection Cara finds when she pursues a hobby and searches for a career instead of just a job. Or her struggle with seeing eye to eye with her mother's point of view. Or the difficulty she faces in saying goodbye to a loving relationship, which is beautiful but is not moving forward.

These are all parts of life. These are all parts of our growth as a person. This is what inspires me to write and create. There are certain people, places, and things in life that give us the gift of leaving our current being. They are so powerful to us that they let us escape. Seeing your grandparents at Christmas. Your parents waving to you as you get on the

school bus. Our first kiss. First Date. Or love. Getting our license and driving away for the first time on our own. These are powerful moments. We hold onto them because of the feeling they bring us. Pure joy or love. However, as difficult as it seems, the past is not somewhere we can stay. We can take these memories and hold them close. Share them for years to come. But we cannot stay in them forever.

Sometimes you have this idea in your head about who you want to be with. And while it might be what you think is best for you, that's not always true. Sometimes it's what we think we need, not what we actually need. Sometimes we get lost in the perfect picture, but we start to lose what goes along with it. We lose reality. Lose what love and life actually takes.

This is a story of when a relationship that needs more than love to survive. The characters of Sal and Cara are happy together, but Cara is not happy on her own. This starts a journey for Cara to find happiness on her own, in other places than just her relationship. Proving the belief that another person cannot always fill the empty parts of you, sometimes you need to be able to fill those on your own and find happiness for yourself.

I've always wondered if love and finding someone to be with is what completes us. I've found that is far from the truth. While a relationship can add to our lives it is not everything. When Cara looks past her relationship, she can finally see that her life is not complete. She is working a job she finds no joy in, she struggles to see common ground with her family, and there isn't a spark in her life that keeps her motivated. It is not until she is able to step away from her relationship that she sees the full picture.

A relationship can help us grow but they can also hold us back. We don't want to leave the perfect moment and say goodbye to something that makes us happy, and

sometimes the good blurs out all of the bad moments. We lose parts of ourselves to the relationship. But saying goodbye is far from easy. It can be more painful than staying. But unless we take that step into the unknown, we don't move anywhere.

A while ago I heard the saying that sometimes people are always focused on the future, the next thing, the next place, the next love. Basically, always saying, "I'll be happy once I do this...once I finish this...once I find this." That resonated with me. I always found myself saying I'll be happy at my next job, once I graduate, once I move, once I fall in love. While all these things bring more joy to life, it's not finding happiness in the moment you are in. If I'm constantly looking for what is next, I'm not finding the good in the moment. This parallel between myself and the character of Cara, is displayed throughout Half a Heart's screenplay. A relationship that is strong and makes you feel every bit yourself is special, but it doesn't mean it's supposed to last forever. If you stay in the wrong place or with the wrong person for too long, you'll miss your future. It'll pass you by as you look behind you.

I started out wanted to tell a love story. But what I found was that I was telling a story about a different kind of love. This story displayed the love between two people, but also a girl finding love for herself. Through developing this screenplay, I realized this was the story I needed to focus on. Sometimes we need to go after the love that is not necessarily easier to attain, but maybe a stronger love for ourselves. We fall into comfort traps. Places that make us feel whole or at ease but that causes us to not always see the whole picture. We are blinded by the feeling of love and happiness that we try to ignore or put off any red flags that come with it.

I decided to film the scene that I thought displayed this strength the character of Cara finds to move forward on her own. She doesn't go back to her area of comfort; she decides to move into the unknown. Love is strong. But it comes in many forms. We need to look for it in more places or people than we think is necessary.

Screenplay

HALF A HEART

by

Maria Gesek

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INT. HOTEL - EVENING

A lavish and beautifully decorated wedding crowded with people creates a picturesque evening. A bride and groom dancing in the center of the dance floor as couples, family and friends surround them with smiles on every face.

At a table near the rose covered patio entrance a girl named CARA, 29, sits alone at a table finishing a glass of wine. She is dressed in a beautiful red sequin gown with a low back and her dark brown almost black long curly hair flows down to her side. Her make-up and hair have all been meticulously put together, proving she spent hours getting ready for this event. She gazes at the bride and groom, first with no emotion evident on her face. Then as he pulls her closer and dips her down while dancing a soft smile emerges.

Her view is suddenly cut off by a group that walks towards her table. They all sit surrounding her. A talk, dark and handsome man, SAL, 38, kisses her on the cheek and places a freshly filled wine glass in front of her. He's wearing a black suit that fits him just right with a red tie that compliments Cara's dress perfectly. His long black hair is slicked back with gel, nearly hiding the few grey hairs that poke out normally.

CARA

Thanks, sweetheart.

JOE

Aww would you look at the happy couple?

TERESA

Beautiful, aren't they?

Sal's best friends JOE and BEN are with their wives TERESA and SUSAN. As the table looks over at the bride and groom Joe starts laughing.

JOE

No, no, no. Not them. I'm
talking about the happy
couple right in front of us.

Joe reaches his arm pointing out Cara and Sal. Cara
smiles and looks at Sal reaching for his hand.
However, Sal seems slightly off put by the attention.

SAL

Very cute, Joe.

JOE

Come on, you guys are
adorable.

TERESA

He's not wrong. I wish we
could look half as good as
you two. But look at us. Old.
Married. With two screaming
children who have managed to
turn our hair grey.

JOE

I don't have grey hair.

BEN

And that's denial speaking.

There's a collective laugh at the table. Sal sits back
and Cara leans against him. The band starts to play a
slow song as the lights in the room dim and the
couples start to pair off on the dance floor.

CARA

I love this song. Dance with
me, Sal.

SAL

No, no. Not for me.

CARA

What? Come on, dance with me!

Sal takes his arm that was wrapped around Cara and
reaches for his drink.

SUSAN

Dance with her, Sal.

SAL

I'm not much of a dancer.
Especially not at weddings.

CARA

Please?

The table gets a little awkward as Sal doesn't take
Cara to dance.

JOE

If you don't dance with her I
will.

SAL

Oh really? And what about
Teresa?

TERESA

She can take him for a spin.
My toes could use a rest.
He's managed to step on all
ten in the first song they
played.

JOE

I'm still your favorite dance
partner.

Teresa laughs squeezing Ben's cheeks together and
kissing him on the lips.

TERESA

Always and forever baby.

JOE

Come to think of it we danced
to this at our wedding,
remember?

TERESA

Of course. Right before
Stayin' Alive started up and
you went full on John
Travolta.

JOE

You know that's what this wedding is missing. Do you think I can ask the band to play it?

SUSAN

I'd say that's a long shot, Joe.

SAL

Plus, you're missing the white tux. Only way to do it.

JOE

True. It'll just have to wait until your wedding.

SAL

(Laughing)

Yeah. Luckily, I'm saving us all from seeing that again.

SUSAN

Oh, come on. You guys are going to get married someday. And that day Joe will show up looking like he walked off a disco dance floor from the 70s.

Everyone starts to laugh. Cara laughs but starts to seem a little uneasy.

JOE

Exactly and hopefully, you can make it happen in the next year or so because that tux isn't going to fit much longer at the rate I'm going.

BEN

At the rate you're going they'll have to get married this month.

JOE

Well, they've been together for what? 6-7 years? I mean

come on! Let's get it going,
Sal.

SAL
Alright that's enough.

TERESA
Has it been that long?

CARA
Uh, yeah. 7 years in July.
Right, sweetheart?

TERESA
That's longer than we've
known each other, babe.

JOE
Exactly, these two have been
hip and hip since they met.
That's why said what a beau-
ti-ful couple!

SAL
Alright, we get it. Why don't
you get another drink?

JOE
Look, don't get mad at me.
I'm your friend. Best friend.
I'm just saying you guys are
perfect together. Why not do
the damn thing?

CARA
Just waiting for the right
time. Right, Sal?

JOE
No time like the present.

SAL
Enough.

BEN
Joe, why not come to the
buffet table with me?

JOE

I'm just saying marry the
poor girl!

SAL

Stop! We are never getting
married. Okay? Are we clear?
Let's just stop talking about
this.

Cara looks at Sal shocked. His outburst silenced the
table. He calms enough to compose himself a little
more.

SAL

Oh, come on. You guys know
how I feel about marriage.
Let's just move on.

Silence, for a minute.

JOE

Well, I tried.

TERESA

Joe...
(whispering)
Just stop.

Ben gives an awkward look to his wife Susan, not sure
of how to help the current situation.

BEN

Well, I think it's time for
us to dance. No?

SUSAN

Time for us to dance, yes.

Joe stands up and takes Susan's hand leading her to
the dance floor. Cara watches as they hold each other
close. She tries to hide her frown. Sal avoids eye
contact with her.

CARA

I'm going to get another
drink.

TERESA

I'll come with you.

Sal sighs as Cara rushes from his side. A look of defeat evident on his face. As they get out of ear shot, he turns his attention to Joe.

SAL

What the hell, Joe?

JOE

Sal, you have to get your shit together. That was terrible.

SAL

Thanks to you. Why'd you have to push the marriage topic so hard? You know how I feel about it.

JOE

Look. You need to move on from the past. I'm just trying to help you see that. And everyone knows Cara can get any guy, you're lucky to have her.

SAL

Wonderful.

JOE

I'm just being honest with you. Wake up, man.

Sal sits back in frustration as Cara and Teresa return to the table. He notices her excitement that was there earlier in the evening has subsided. She sits back down next to Sal. Teresa hands a plate of shrimp to Joe.

JOE

Yes! My favorite. Thanks, babe.

TERESA

They just put a fresh batch out.

There is an awkward silence at the table. A new song starts playing. Sal missed his chance with the song Cara wanted.

SAL

Cara?

Cara finally looks at Sal again.

SAL

Let's dance.

She is surprised. So is Joe and Teresa who look up from the plate of shrimp.

CARA

Okay.

Cara is less than thrilled, seems the waiting made it less of a treat. But still, she takes his hand, and they make their way to the dance floor. Cara places her head on Sal's shoulder. The song is slow and they just sway. They don't say anything for the first verse.

SAL

Sorry.

CARA

Don't. It's fine.

SAL

I know it's not, Cara.

They sway for a moment.

SAL

He just knows how to get under my skin.

CARA

I know. Let's just...move on.

Sal pulls Cara in tighter, like he's apologizing through his embrace. He starts singing the song lightly into Cara's ear. She breaks a soft smile.

CARA

Trying to sweet talk me?

SAL

Is it working?

She pulls back to face Sal. His smile is gleaming under million little lights surrounding them. That suit makes him look like a million bucks, to Cara he is the most handsome guy in the whole room, and she falls in love all over again. She sighs and falls back into his arms placing her head on his chest. Her way of saying yes without using words.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Driving home from the wedding Cara and Sal are quiet. His hand on the center median holding Cara's. She is looking out the window, watching the rain hit the city streets surrounding them. A light and acoustic song is playing on the radio. Sal turns it down catching Cara's attention.

SAL

Are you okay?

CARA

I'm fine.

SAL

I feel like you're still thinking about what happened.

CARA

I mean, it was sort of embarrassing. You flat out said you'll never marry me in front of our closest friends.

Sal sighs in a way of showing he was right.

SAL

They already knew that Joe was just pushing my buttons.

CARA

It was still embarrassing!

SAL

Let's just forget it.

CARA

Right. Okay.

Cara says this in a snappy tone.

SAL

Is there something you want
to say?

CARA

I just-

Cara hesitates first gathering her thoughts.

CARA

I don't like when you say
that.

SAL

That we aren't getting
married?

CARA

Yes.

SAL

You know that.

CARA

But...you say it so definite.
Like the thought of it
disgusts you.

Sal expression turns from confusion to annoyance.

SAL

It's not that and you know
it.

Cara seems frozen, waiting for more from Sal.

SAL

We've been through this.
After my divorce, I'm not
going down that road. I'm
just not. I barely put myself
back together afterwards. I
can't do it again.

Cara looks away. Even though she's in pain from this topic she can see the pain on Sal's face as well.

CARA
But we're different. It
wouldn't be like the past.

Sal doesn't respond quickly.

SAL
I love you and I'm committed
to you. That has to be
enough. I can't promise you
more.

CARA
Even for me?

SAL
Please don't. You know how
hard this is for me.

CARA
It's not easier on me.

Silence for a moment, both looking straight ahead.

SAL
What I can promise you is
that I'll love you and do my
best to make you happy.
However, I can.

Cara doesn't respond, trying to find the positive in the fact Sal is trying.

SAL
Let's not completely ruin
this night.

They look at each other briefly. Sal reaches for Cara's hand again.

SAL
You look beautiful. I want to
take that in. Enjoy it.

Cara musters up a soft smile.

CARA

You don't look so bad
yourself, Stunner.

Sal takes Cara's hand up to his face and kisses the
back of it.

SAL

Vita Mia.

He places it back down only reaching away for a second
to turn the music back up. Then returns to holding her
hand on the center median.

CARA

Remember Joe and Teresa's
wedding? This song came on
and we went outside, away
from everyone else and danced
under the stars.

SAL

I remember. It's one of my
favorite memories.

CARA

Me too.

Cara takes a long look at him before turning back
towards the window, a look of being unsettled lingers
on her face.

INT. FITZ HOTEL OFFICE - DAY

Cara is at her desk going through paperwork. A stack
is sitting on the corner of her desk with a sticky
note that says to do on top. An alert starts to go off
on her computer notifying her about a meeting later in
the day. She tries to shut it off, but it keeps going
off. Finally, she just unplugs the speaker. A coworker
named AMY, 33, walks in a place another stack onto the
opposite corner of her desk.

AMY

Scott said he needs these by
the end of the day.

CARA

Fine. Just add it to the list.

AMY

You okay? You're looking a little strung out.

CARA

Fine. Just have a million things to do before the end of the day and I don't want to do any of them.

Cara does a sarcastic grin. Amy sits in the chair across from Cara's desk.

AMY

Alright, what's going on?

CARA

What do you mean?

AMY

Well, I know you hate your job but usually it gets worse when something happens with Sal. So, what is it?

CARA

Everything is fine.

Cara continues to go through papers creating a disorganized stack on her desk. She tries to use the computer and an error message pops up.

CARA

This is literally the worst computer I have ever used! All the money this place makes, and they can't get a functioning piece of equipment?

Cara slams the mouse down on the desk.

AMY

Alright! That's it. We're going out.

CARA

What? No. There's too much to do.

AMY

We're going for coffee before you burn this place to the ground.

CARA

I've already had coffee.

AMY

It's not an option. Let's go.

CARA

No.

Amy reaches across the desk and turns off her computer screen.

AMY

Not an option.

Cara rolls her eyes and grabs her jacket.

CARA

Okay, okay. Let's go.

INT. OLD MAN'S SPOT - DAY

Cara and Amy sit across from each other at a small table in a place that is somehow a coffee shop by day that turns into a bar at night. It has a hipster feel to it with bean bag chairs and college students on their laptops. The place is pretty crowded, but as Cara sips her coffee, she starts to look less tense. Her problems are drowned out by the smell of coffee brewing and Top 40 Radio playing softly in the background.

AMY

So now tell me. Take a sip of your latte and let it out.

Cara sips her drink and places it down. She takes a deep breath before responding.

CARA

At the wedding last night Sal basically told everyone that we're never getting married.

AMY

Well, that's not really a shock, is it?

CARA

No, I know that. It's just. I guess I hoped...in time...maybe his mind would change? Stupid, I know.

AMY

It's not stupid. Overly optimistic, yes. But not stupid.

CARA

Do I stay? I mean I love Sal. So, so much. But where do we go from here?

AMY

You guys never talked about it?

CARA

I never wanted to get married. Why am I thinking about it now?

AMY

It's not a bad thing. You're just always thinking about the future. You're always about what's next.

CARA

What's that supposed to mean?

AMY

It's not a bad thing, you're just always are ready for the next chapter. Your next move, your next job, and it used to

be your next boyfriend before
you met Sal.

CARA

I didn't change that much.

Amy laughs to herself a little bit.

AMY

Oh yes you did. Ever since
you left high school you were
always changing everything.
You didn't stay in one place
for more than a year until
you met Sal and you finally
settled.

CARA

Settled?

Cara appears annoyed by the comment.

AMY

Not settled like you settled
for Sal, settled like you
found your place. You found
your person.

CARA

Oh.

AMY

It surprised me. You were
always on the search and then
you were just ready to settle
down. Especially here when
you hated it so much growing
up.

CARA

I didn't hate it. I just felt
trapped.

AMY

Exactly which is why it was
weird that you came back and
started working at the hotel

with me, doing a job you have pretty much no drive for.

Cara sits back in her chair and sighs.

CARA

Wow. What the fuck am I doing?

Cara watches as Amy sips her coffee and relaxes back in her chair. She lightly throws a couple sugar packets at her.

AMY

Hey!

CARA

Thanks for pointing out why I suck.

AMY

That's not it.

CARA

Sounds like it.

AMY

Look maybe you just need something new in your life. That's probably what you're looking for. A change.

CARA

Well, it's not marriage. And work never changes so I'm out of luck.

Cara slumps down in her chair and stares at the ceiling.

AMY

(laughing)

Well, you are in rare form today.

Suddenly there is clapping coming from the back of the room. Cara turns around to see the stage set up with music equipment. A microphone is set up in the center

and a man, PETE, wearing glasses and a beanie walks up to it.

PETE

Excuse me everyone. My name is Pete and I run the open mic here at Old Man's Place. Today we are starting our fall series of performers. So, our first act will be Alex, excuse me, Alice Hall. Let's give her a warm welcome.

The room gives a round of applause as ALICE walks onto the stage holding a guitar decorated with sunflower stickers and sits center stage starting to play. Cara turns back to Amy.

CARA

She's really good.

AMY

Oh no. Scott is calling me. We should probably head back. I'm going to grab him a coffee. Maybe that'll put him in a good mood. Want anything else?

CARA

I'm good.

As Amy walks back to the counter Cara turns back to the performer. She gets lost in the music. Then she quickly takes her napkin and starts to jot down some notes. Amy returns with the coffee and starts putting on her jacket.

AMY

What are you doing?

CARA

Just writing down some ideas.

AMY

For what?

CARA
Song titles.

AMY
Okay...You ready?

Cara turns back as Alice finishes her song. She stands up, claps, and then reaches for her jacket to leave.

INT. SAL & CARA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Cara enters their apartment and places her bag on the counter. The room is decorated with paintings all around and Sal has a bar set up in the kitchen. The apartment is a perfect representation of both of their personalities and the pictures of them as a couple hanging all around show a long history of memories live here with Sal and Cara. Sal is on the couch watching TV. Cara rushes over to him and sits on his lap, giving him a big kiss. Pleasantly surprised he pulls her closer.

SAL
Hello there, beautiful.

CARA
Hello, handsome.

Cara pulls Sal's head close to her chest. They hold for a moment, comfortable like this.

SAL
I'm glad you're home.

CARA
Me too!

Cara jumps up and runs over to the closet. She starts digging and making a mess of things on the floor. Sal is surprised by her sudden shift of attention.

SAL
What are you doing?

CARA
Looking for something.

Sal gets up and follows her to the closet. Cara reaches the back of the closet and pulls out an old and dusty guitar.

CARA

There it is!

SAL

What are you going to do with that?

CARA

I had this idea! I should start playing again.

SAL

Again? You've never played that thing, Cara.

CARA

Yes, I did. I mean it's been a while, but I tried when I was younger.

SAL

Where is this coming from?

CARA

I went to this open mic with Amy, and I think this is what I need. Something new!

SAL

Okay then.

Sal reaches over the guitar and kisses Cara. Her eyes never leave the guitar.

SAL

Maybe after dinner though?
I'm starving. What should we have?

Cara doesn't answer, distracted by the guitar. A look of excitement illuminates her face.

SAL

Cara?

CARA

Sorry, sweetheart. I heard
you. One sec.

Cara starts strumming a few notes. It's quickly clear
she doesn't remember how to play at all.

CARA

Damnit. I'm a little rusty.

Sal laughs and returns to Cara.

SAL

You'll get it, beautiful. You
want pizza? I'll start
cooking.

CARA

Sure, fine.

Sal goes into the kitchen and starts cooking while
Cara makes her way to the couch. Consumed by her new
found interest she continues to try and spark her
memory of how to play, fumbling with every string.

INT. CARA'S OFFICE - DAY

Cara is sitting in her office on her computer. After
hitting send on an email she zones out. She takes out
her "song list" note from the coffee shop and starts
to write more on there. In walks her boss, SCOTT. He
is tall and young with a slender physique wearing
black from head to toe. Cara quickly puts away her
note and shifts her attention to Scott.

SCOTT

Good morning, Cara. Is this a
good time?

CARA

Of course, take a seat.

Scott sits across from Cara.

SCOTT

I wanted to talk to you about
and opportunity that has come
up. There is a new position

that has opened up in our Connecticut office. It is a trial position as we have never had this sort of venue open up in our hotels before.

Cara is enticed and sits forward.

CARA

What sort of venue?

SCOTT

It will be a concert venue. Open year round directly connected to the hotel. We're hoping this will bring in more guests. If it works, we will look into an expansion of this idea.

AMY

So, what is the opportunity?

SCOTT

We are looking for someone to run the entire plan for this project. Which will include setting up acts to perform, creating a schedule and accommodations for the band, as well as making sure this project runs smoothly. So basically, run this entire division of the hotel.

CARA

Wow. That sounds like a lot.

SCOTT

Yes, but it's a move up. I came to you because I know you're from the New England area and maybe you'd be interested.

CARA

What do you mean?

SCOTT

The position requires moving.

CARA

Oh.

SCOTT

I know I'm giving you a lot to think about, but I feel like this might be a good fit for you.

CARA

Can I have some time...you know...to think about it?

SCOTT

Of course. However, the company will be posting the job listing soon. They wanted us to see if there was interest with current employees first, give you priority apply.

CARA

When is the start date?

SCOTT

We are hoping to have this up and running with a first concert by the Summer.

Cara is intrigued.

SCOTT

I think this would be a good opportunity for you Cara, so just let me know. As soon as possible.

Scott stands up. Cara follows.

CARA

I'll think about it.

Scott shows a soft grin before turning and walking out the door.

INT. CARA'S OFFICE - EVENING

It is the end of the day of work, Cara is still working at her desk. Amy comes in surprised to see Cara so focused.

AMY

Hey, I'm surprised you're still here. You always leave before me.

CARA

Yeah, I know. I'm trying to finish up this application and lost track of time.

AMY

What application?

CARA

A job that Scott told me about.

Cara hands Amy a paper with information on the position she reads for a second before her eyes go wide.

AMY

You're applying for this?
It's in Connecticut!

CARA

Well, why not? I mean I might not get it.

AMY

But would you move? What about Sal?

CARA

It's just an application. You're getting a little ahead of yourself.

Amy rolls her eyes and places the paper back on Cara's desk.

AMY

Well, whatever you need to do. I'm heading out.

CARA

See you tomorrow.

Amy leaves Cara in an office that is starting to go dark with the sun setting outside.

INT. SAL & CARA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Cara returns home from work, visibly exhausted. She puts her bag on the counter and finds the dining room table set with roses, nice plates, and a wine bottle waiting to be opened. Cara walks towards the kitchen and finds Sal all dressed up. His hair slick back and he's even trimmed his beard. He is wearing a nice white button-down shirt that highlights his tan skin. Cara slowly walks towards him.

CARA

What's all this? Did I forget our anniversary?

SAL

Of course not. It's just because I love you.

Cara is touched and immediately a smile gleams from her face.

CARA

This is too much.

Cara runs up and wraps her arms around Sal. They share a long kiss before he turns his attention to the stove. He opens the pot and starts to stir.

CARA

What are you making?

SAL

Your favorite. Mac and cheese.

CARA
(laughing)
Oh, how fancy.

SAL
I didn't forget garlic bread
and a merlot to match.

CARA
It's perfect. Thank you.

Cara kisses Sal. They continue to kiss until the doorbell rings.

CARA
Who's that?

SAL
I don't know. Did you order
something?

CARA
I don't think so.

Cara walks over to the door and looks through the peep hole. On the other side are an older couple holding a bottle of wine. It is Cara's mother and father, JENNA and JOHN. Cara starts to panic.

CARA
Shit! Shit. Shit. Shit.

SAL
Who is it?

CARA
My parents! I completely
forgot about inviting them
over this week. I'm so sorry,
Sal.

SAL
Usually, a little warning is
better with your mother.

CARA
I know, I'm sorry! Do you
have enough food for four?

SAL

No, but I can make some more...you're going to have them stay for dinner?

CARA

Of course. I can't cancel now, or I'll never hear the end of it.

Sal looks slightly annoyed. Cara fixes her hair and make-up in the mirror. She takes a deep breath before opening the door. Jenna enters first. She is overdressed, wearing a nice purple dress and high heels. Her silver hair curled perfectly accentuating her diamond earrings.

JENNA

There's my girl.

She gives her a hug. Cara is tense.

CARA

Hi Mom. Come on in.

JENNA

Smells...uh...nice in here.

JOHN

Hi sweetie.

John walks in behind Jenna. Dressed casual in a sweater and jeans. He hugs Cara, more natural than her hug with Jenna.

CARA

Hi Dad, good to see you. Come in. Sal is fixing dinner.

Jenna walks in seemingly inspecting the room around her. She looks at the table, set with only two plates and glasses.

JENNA

Oh, Cara. Did you forget about us?

CARA

Of course not.

JENNA

Seems like we're interrupting something here.

Jenna points at the table set up for a romantic dinner.

CARA

Oh. I forgot to tell Sal that's all. It's fine. We just have to set two more spots.

JENNA

Well, we wouldn't want to intrude.

CARA

Mom. It's fine.

Sal comes out from the kitchen. Wiping his hands on a towel he then hugs Jenna.

JENNA

Sal, there you are.

SAL

Good to see you, Jenna.

JOHN

Sal, how have you been?

Sal hugs John.

SAL

No bad at all.

JENNA

We aren't intruding. Are we, Sal?

SAL

Of course not. I hope you're okay with mac and cheese. That's what I have cooking.

JENNA

Of course. A nice kid's meal does sound good.

JOHN

Jenna. Don't.

John nudges Jenna's arm. Sal and Cara look at each other with "help me" eyes.

CARA

Why don't you sit down, and we'll bring out the food, okay?

JOHN

Thanks, Cara.

John pulls out the seat for Jenna and they sit at the table. Cara pulls the roses off the table as Sal goes for more plates. Cara pours wine for her parents and then a couple cups for her and Sal.

JENNA

So, Cara, how is work?

CARA

Uh, fine. Same as always.

JENNA

Mhm. How about you Sal?

Sal brings out the food and they all sit down.

SAL

Good. It's been busy at the bar.

JENNA

Which one is it again?

CARA

The Metropolitan Grill. You know that. Sal's been there for years.

JENNA

Oh yeah. He bartends? Right?

CARA

Here, Mom. Eat.

Cara serves her Mom some mac and cheese.

JOHN

This is good, Sal. Cara's favorite, right?

SAL

Exactly, I have to know how to make it right.

The mood is light, relatively quiet.

JENNA

So, Cara. How was the wedding?

CARA

Beautiful. Steve and Beth were so happy. It was really lovely all around.

JENNA

What did you think, Sal?

SAL

It was wonderful. We had a lot of fun. Happy for Steve and Beth.

JENNA

Really?

Cara looks at Jenna quizzically.

SAL

Yeah, it was great.

JENNA

I thought you didn't believe in weddings or marriage.

CARA

Mom!

JENNA

What?

SAL

It's not that simple. And that doesn't mean I don't

believe in marriage for other people. They should be happy.

JENNA

So, you just don't believe in marriage with my daughter?

JOHN

Let's not get into this, Jenna.

JENNA

It's just so confusing to me. You've been together all this time and you still can't see being married to Cara.

Cara looks at Sal with desperate eyes, they are drowning.

CARA

Mom, it's not really your business.

JENNA

It is my business; you are my daughter.

SAL

Look, I just don't see marriage as our path. I don't think we should have to solidify our relationship in that way when we already are so certain in who we are.

JENNA

But you were married before?

SAL

I was.

Cara jumps in before he can say anything else.

CARA

And we aren't going to talk about that.

JOHN

They're happy together, let
them live. They're young.

JENNA

I wouldn't say young.

Cara turns with face of annoyance at Jenna. Before she
blurts anything out, Sal jumps in for her.

SAL

I love Cara and I'm not going
anywhere.

Sal reaches for Cara's hand trying to offer her some
comfort.

JENNA

I just miss tradition. I'd
just love to see my daughter
married with my grandchildren
one day, that's not too much
to ask is it?

Cara looks to Sal at a loss for words.

SAL

We're just doing things a
different way. Our way.

Cara turns to Jenna. Her stare is scathing. Cara is
obviously intimidated by her and struggles to make her
accept who she is.

CARA

We're just doing our best.

The mood drops, silence. John turns to Jenna and
nudges her.

JOHN

That's all we want,
sweetheart.

JENNA

Right. Of course.

Jenna appears to soften her demeanor. Cara shares a
soft smile at John.

SAL

And on that note, I'll get
dessert.

He turns and gives Cara a kiss on the cheek before
clearing plates.

JOHN

Cara, did I see my old guitar
out in the living room?

CARA

Yeah! I've started playing
again.

JOHN

That's great, Cara. Music is
a great release.

CARA

So far, I've been enjoying
getting back into it.

JENNA

What brought this sudden
interest back up?

CARA

I don't know, just seemed
like the right thing to do.

JENNA

Well, I hope you keep at it.
Sometimes your interest
fades, you know.

Cara's glow fades at Jenna's statement. Sal notices.

SAL

She's actually been playing
every night. She's getting
better.

Sal looks at Cara and smiles. Squeezing her hand.

CARA

Coffee, anyone?

INT. SAL & CARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As John and Jenna are leaving Jenna pulls Cara aside to talk.

JENNA

Cara, I don't mean to come off as harsh, but I worry about you.

CARA

You don't need to worry about me. I'm fine.

JENNA

I just want you to be settled.

CARA

I am though.

JENNA

It just seems like you guys are averse to making it official.

CARA

Mom, there's no need to push this further. Sal has his reasons for not getting married and I respect that. I know it's difficult, but I love him and want to be with him.

Jenna softens her stare. She places her hand on Cara's cheek.

JENNA

I know, sweetheart. I just want what's best for you.

Cara struggles to ignore her annoyance from the questioning.

CARA

You can worry less. I'll be fine.

JENNA

Okay, I've said my peace.

Jenna gives Cara a kiss on the cheek before making her way to the door. John enters from the kitchen with Sal.

JOHN

Keep playing, Cara. It helps.

John gives Cara a big hug appearing to make her feel a little better. They leave and Cara collapses on the door behind her. She sighs loudly. Sal rests on the doorframe watching.

SAL

You okay?

CARA

Exhausted. I apologize for my mother.

Sal waves her off.

SAL

I'm used to it. It doesn't bother me.

CARA

I don't know why she always does that.

SAL

She's old fashioned. She doesn't understand.

Sal pulls her into a close hug. Cara rests her head on Sal's shoulder. They start to sway a little bit.

CARA

Well, I'm sorry.

SAL

No. It's me. MY fault.

CARA

Things just seems so much harder recently.

SAL

Yeah. But you're tougher than most. You'll get through the storm.

They continue to sway to nonexistent music.

EXT. FITZ HOTEL - EVENING

Cara is walking out of work. There is now snow on the ground showing time has passed. Someone approaches Cara from behind.

SCOTT

Cara!

Cara stops and turns to see Scott behind her. He is putting on his gloves as makes his way in front of her.

CARA

Hey, Scott.

SCOTT

I wanted to talk to you about that position you applied for.

Cara is surprised, as she hadn't thought about it since she applied that day.

SCOTT

I've just talked with the general manager in Connecticut, and they want you to fill the position!

CARA

Really?!

Cara is excited and worried all at once.

SCOTT

Yes! They usually would have you go up to Connecticut for an interview, you know, more "official." But since you already work for the company

and because they want to get this section up and running quickly, they're eager to get started. To have you get started, I should say.

CARA

Oh my gosh. That's a shock!

SCOTT

I told them you would be a great fit.

CARA

Thank you. So much.

SCOTT

You do want to take it, right?

CARA

Yes...I mean...I think so? It's just...a lot to take in right now.

SCOTT

I know, we'll go through everything step by step. I promise it won't be more than you can handle.

CARA

Okay, thank you. Again.

SCOTT

We'll talk this all over first thing tomorrow morning. I've got to go.

Scott walks around Cara to the parking lot.

SCOTT

And congratulations! This is great!

Cara forces a smile as she waves goodbye. He gets in his car and drives off. Leaving Cara standing stunned.

CARA

Shit.

INT. METROPOLITIAN GRILL - EVENING

Cara walks into the Metropolitan Grill. It is crowded and loud. She finds her way to a seat in the corner of the bar. Sitting at the counter, Sal notices her and quickly brings her over a drink.

SAL
Evening, beautiful.

CARA
Busy night?

SAL
Typical Wednesday, I guess.

Cara takes a sip of her drink and sighs. Sal notices she appears down.

SAL
You okay?

CARA
Yes. I just have some news.
Something we should talk
about.

SAL
Okay.

JOE
Sal! Come on.

Joe comes up from behind the bar and places his hand on Sal's shoulder to catch his attention.

JOE
Let's keep moving! Sorry,
Cara but it's too busy for
Sal to take a break.

CARA
I understand.

Sal turns to follow Joe back to the other side of the bar.

SAL

Give me a few. I'll come
back.

CARA

Sure.

Cara takes another sip of her drink as Sal walks away. He goes up to a group of girls wearing sashes that say *Kayla's Bachelorette Party*. As Sal leans in to serve them they start getting flirtatious with him. Touching his arm and laughing. Cara has seen this before, but it rubs her the wrong way. She downs her drink and quickly makes her way out. Taking one last look at Sal in his element. He glows taking in all the attention. Looking like a twenty-one-year-old at a frat party. Cara rolls her eyes, it's one of his qualities she can't stand.

EXT. SAL & CARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cara is out on the porch of their apartment. Strumming her guitar. It is late and the city is rather quiet. She hears footsteps and Sal opens the screen door behind her.

SAL

You're getting good.

CARA

I can almost play two songs.
Badly, but still.

SAL

You'll get there.

Cara continues to play softly. Avoiding eye contact with Sal.

SAL

You left without saying
goodbye.

CARA

You were occupied. With
Kayla's Bachelorette Party.
I'd rather not interrupt.

SAL

Oh, come on. You know that's nothing. It's just work.

CARA

You were flirting.

SAL

It's just part of the job. To get more tips. You know that. It's not like I'd ever cheat on you.

Cara sighs.

CARA

I know but still. It's annoying.

SAL

Okay.

Sal sits in the chair across from Cara.

SAL

Well, I'm sorry but there's not much I can do about it.

Cara laughs in disbelief.

CARA

That's a terrible answer!

SAL

Well, it's true. Cara, I'm 38 years old. I'm not going anywhere. I'm not interested in any of those girls buying drinks off me.

Sal raises his voice a touch, out of frustration.

SAL

You just have to trust me.

Cara looks up from her guitar and back at Sal. They hold a look for a moment. Both too tired to keep fighting.

CARA
Sorry for bringing it up.
Let's just drop this.

She keeps playing.

SAL
So...what did you want to
talk to me about?

Cara freezes. All the sudden a look of worry hits her
face.

CARA
Um...we can talk about it
tomorrow.

SAL
What is it?

Cara hesitates, but then builds up courage.

CARA
I've been asked to fill a
position in Connecticut.

Sal is stunned. He looks at her with a stern look for
a second before reacting.

SAL
What?

CARA
Scott told me about this
position, and I applied for
it a couple months ago.

SAL
You applied and didn't tell
me about it?

CARA
No! I mean, yes, I did, but
it was because I thought it
was a long shot. I just
applied because I figured
there was no reason not to.

Sal looks frustrated and like he's running through a dozen thoughts.

CARA

I guess I misjudged it but honestly, it's a great step up and I think it sounds like something I want to do.

SAL

What's the job?

CARA

It's running their concert venue. A lot more responsibility but doesn't that sound exciting?

SAL

So, what does that mean? You want to move?

CARA

I don't know, Sal. It's a lot happening at once.

Sal sits back in his chair.

SAL

Huh.

Cara looks down, disappointed.

CARA

You're mad.

SAL

Yes. I wish you would've told me.

CARA

I know, I'm sorry. It just happened so quick.

SAL

I really don't know what to say.

CARA

Sal let's talk about this.

SAL

You sound like your mind is made up.

Cara looks hurt but so does Sal.

CARA

Aren't you happy for me at all?

SAL

Shit, Cara. Don't do that. You know I want what's best for you. But what does this mean for us?

Cara looks away.

CARA

You don't think you'd want to move with me? It could be a new chapter for us. Why not?

SAL

No.

CARA

No? Why not?

SAL

Cara, my whole life is here! It's not like I can get up and leave.

CARA

But you could just try it for a while, I mean I know you work for Joe, but you could find another bartending job in Connecti-

SAL

No!

Sal stands up raising his voice.

SAL

No. Just stop.

Cara is speechless. Sal starts to go back into the apartment.

CARA

Sal, we have to talk about this.

SAL

Not now, Cara. Please. It's been a long night. I don't want us to say anything we don't mean.

Cara doesn't respond. She sits back in her chair. Sal goes back into the house without saying another word. Cara picks up her guitar and tries to play but tears fall from her face. She pushes it away and lays her head on the side of the balcony breaking down.

INT. CARA'S OFFICE - DAY

Cara is in her office filling out paper work when Amy enters.

AMY

Hey! I haven't seen you all day. I brought you this.

Amy places a coffee from Old Man's Place on Cara's desk and Cara pulls herself away from the paperwork.

CARA

Thank you, I definitely need it.

AMY

No offense, but you look terrible! Have you been sleeping?

CARA

Not at all.

AMY

What's up? Trouble with Sal?

Cara sighs. She walks up and closes her office door before sitting back across from Amy.

CARA
I'm taking the job in
Connecticut.

Amy almost spits out her coffee.

AMY
You're what?

CARA
The one I applied for months
ago. I'm taking it. They
offered it to me and I'm
going to do it. The job
sounds like an opportunity
I'd have to be stupid to pass
up.

Amy has the look of confusion on her face.

AMY
Well, Cara, that's great! I'm
really happy for you...but
what does that mean for you
and Sal?

Cara sits staring at the desk in front of her. No answer immediately finds her.

CARA
I don't know.

There is a moment before she continues.

CARA
It really didn't go well when
I told him.

AMY
Yeah, I can see that.

CARA
I probably should've told him
before when I applied but-

AMY

You didn't?!

CARA

No.

Amy sits in disbelief.

AMY

Oh, Cara. Not good.

CARA

I know...Don't get me wrong, okay, I know Connecticut isn't exactly across the country. But this is a big deal for me. It feels like the start of something new. I just...I don't know how I feel about the fact that he might not be with me for it.

AMY

You think you'd break up over this?

Cara waves off her question.

CARA

I don't want to say anything right now.

AMY

When do you start?

CARA

After the holidays. The sixth of January. I'll be in Connecticut.

Amy sighs.

AMY

Well, even though I know this might be a train wreck in a sense...I'm happy for you?

Cara forces a smile.

CARA

Thanks...I think I might need
some help getting through
this next month though.

Amy reaches across the desk and squeezes Cara's hand.

AMY

Of course.

EXT. JOHN & JENNA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Cara and Sal are sitting in front of her parent's house. The house is covered in Christmas lights and there are wrapped presents filling the back seat of the car. Both are staring straight ahead, neither talking. They sit like this for a minute before Cara turns to look towards the house. The lights inside are on and you can see people walking around through the windows. Cara turns to face Sal.

CARA

You ready?

SAL

I guess.

Sal, without saying anything else or looking at Cara, gets out of the car and starts filling up his arms with presents. Cara quickly follows and does the same. Before they make it to the door Cara pulls Sal aside.

CARA

Sal?

He looks at her, with almost no emotion on his face.

CARA

I really don't want to fight
or ruin this Christmas. Can
we just hit pause for a
second and try to enjoy this?
Please?

Sal looks at the house and back at Cara. Still nothing.

CARA

I just- I need you.

He softens.

SAL

Okay. A pause.

Cara tries to a smile but it's not quite there. They continue into the house.

INT. JOHN & JENNA'S HOUSE - EVENING

The family is gathered together finishing up dinner. John and Jenna at separate heads of the table and Cara with Sal on one side and Cara's sister and husband, ANNA and BRAD, on the other. Jenna and Anna are overdressed, both wearing a fancy dress and jewelry. Cara wearing a casual sweater and jeans. The conversation subsides for a moment until John stands up, tapping the side of his wine glass with his fork.

JOHN

I just wanted to say thank
you to everyone for coming.
The holidays are the best
time of the year for me just
because we're all together
once more.

John looks around the table at everyone.

JOHN

I want to wish everyone
health and happiness going
into this new year.

SAL

Cheers.

Everyone starts toasting their glasses as John sits back down.

JENNA

So, Anna and Brad, what are
you looking forward to next
year?

Anna and Brad look at each other. They appear like the perfect couple. Anna's green velour dress matching perfectly with Brad's green tie. Her blond hair pulled

into a slick braid. Cara isn't jealous of them, but she does wish some things came as easy as things seem for them. Anna places her hand over Brad's, illuminating her diamond engagement ring.

ANNA

We're excited to be moving into a new place.

BRAD

A house!

ANNA

We found a place nearby in Saratoga. Not too far but right near the lake. Close the race track in the summer.

BRAD

We can't wait.

JOHN

That's great!

ANNA

It's something to look forward to.

Cara and Sal look rather uneasy at the talk of the future. Jenna turns her attention from Anna to Cara.

JENNA

And what about you two? Any plans?

They immediately turn to each other. Cara is at a loss. Sal notices and decides to handle it for her.

SAL

Well, Cara has some exciting news.

JOHN

Really? What's that?

Sal looks back at Cara, debating whether to share the news. Cara gives him a small nod.

SAL

She's starting a new job.

ANNA
That's great, Cara!

BRAD
Yeah, what's the job?

Cara clears her throat.

CARA
It's running a concert venue
for one of the Fitz's hotels.
A new part of the company
they are trying. They asked
me to be in charge of the
whole thing.

JOHN
That's wonderful, Cara.
Really wonderful.

ANNA
One of the hotels? Not the
Albany one?

Cara gets a little uneasy.

CARA
It's actually the one in
Connecticut.

JENNA
Connecticut?

Cara turns to Jenna.

CARA
Yes. I'll be moving there
after the holidays.

JENNA
You're moving?

CARA
I'm going where the job is.

ANNA
That's exciting, Cara!

BRAD

Yeah, Connecticut is nice.
I'm sure you guys will love
it there.

Cara and Sal freeze, knowing what is coming next.

JENNA

You're both moving there?

They look at each other. Neither wanting to answer.

SAL

I'm actually not.

Silence. Awkward silence.

JENNA

What do you mean? Cara's
moving on her own.

SAL

Yes.

CARA

Sal's whole life is here, you
know?

The table's silence lingers.

JENNA

So, what does that mean for
you two?

CARA

Well, it's a little
confusing.

JENNA

You really don't want to move
with her?

SAL

It's not that simple.

Jenna rolls her eyes.

JENNA

Couldn't you bartend down there?

CARA
Mom, please. Don't. Sal has his job up here.

ANNA
Are you doing long distance?

Cara searches for an answer suddenly Sal's hand finds her's. A calming feeling hits her for that split second. She looks to him as he gives her a soft smile.

CARA
There's a lot we still have to work out.

Their smiles fade.

SAL
Yeah.

They look around the table at everyone's stares. It's an uneasy feeling.

JOHN
Well, I'm sure you guys will figure it out. And whatever happens, it'll be for the best.

Cara and John share a look.

CARA
Thanks, Dad.

He gives her a reassuring smile.

JOHN
Okay! Coffee anyone?

John gets up and starts moving around trying to break that awkward tension that's lingering.

EXT. JOHN & JENNA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cara is sitting outside on the porch. She is in a blanket with a cup of wine in her hand. She's looking out at the stars and the view of houses covered in lights.

JENNA

Cara?

CARA

Hey, Mom.

JENNA

How are you?

CARA

Fine. Just taking in the view. It's beautiful.

JENNA

Mind if I sit?

CARA

Sure.

Jenna takes the chair next to Cara and pulls it close before sitting down. Pulling another blanket over her shoulders.

JENNA

What's on your mind?

Cara laughs.

CARA

A lot.

JENNA

You know, I think it's great that you're taking that job.

CARA

You do?

JENNA

Of course! You hated your job. It's good to see you moving forward.

CARA

Well...thanks?

Jenna looks at Cara.

JENNA

However, I think you need to take everything into perspective.

CARA

What?

JENNA

You know, with Sal.

Cara sighs in annoyance.

CARA

Mom. I really don't want to go over this. It's late.

JENNA

I know you don't but just hear me out. Sal isn't moving forward, and I think deep down you know that. You know you guys aren't moving anywhere, regardless of marriage.

Cara pauses. She knows the words are true but the way it hits hurts.

JENNA

I don't want it to hold you back from something that could be great for you.

CARA

Mom, I know it seems like it's an easy decision to make...but it's not easy to throw away all we have.

JENNA

Sweetheart, I know you want things to stay the same. But you know that can't be. Don't

hold onto something that's
holding you back.

Cara starts getting annoyed. Jenna is trying to be helpful but the subtle digs she's always taking at Sal makes Cara think her intentions aren't in the right place.

CARA

Mom, this is the man I love.

JENNA

Cara, love doesn't mean the relationship will work.

Cara waves off her Mom. This annoys her.

JENNA

To be fair, why isn't he even considering the move? If he really loves you than he should try more to save things, no?

That's it. Cara doesn't want to hear anymore.

CARA

Okay, Mom.

JENNA

Cara, please just listen. I just want what's best for you.

CARA

I know that, but can you just see it from my side? This isn't easy. I love Sal. I want to be with him. You always focus on what you want out of it.

JENNA

That's not true.

Cara throws the blanket down on the chair.

CARA

Right. So, you've always been
in support of me and Sal?

Jenna hesitates.

JENNA
It's not that. I just wonder-

CARA
Stop.

Cara goes to the door to go back inside.

CARA
It's my life. I need to do
what's best for me. Please
understand that.

Cara goes back inside leaving Jenna sitting alone
outside.

INT. SAL'S CAR - EVENING

Cara and Sal driving away from John and Jenna's house.
It is silent with clear tension between them. The
radio is playing softly.

CARA
Sal?

SAL
Yeah?

She turns in her seat.

CARA
We have to talk.

A look of worry crosses his face.

SAL
Okay.

CARA
I'm going to ask you this and
I want you to be completely
honest. Do you want to move
with me or is there any

chance you'd want to come to
Connecticut with me?

Sal hesitates before answering.

SAL

Honestly...I don't want to
move.

Cara looks crushed. It is confirmed, there is no new
chapter for them.

CARA

Not at all?

Sal can hear Cara's voice crack slightly as she says
this.

SAL

I'm sorry, Cara. I don't want
to. I like it here. I love my
job. I'm not at the point in
my life where I want to
change it.

Tears well up in Cara's eyes.

CARA

Okay.

She takes a deep breath in an attempt to hold back
those tears.

CARA

That means we have to make a
decision then.

Sal is quiet. He looks distressed but is trying to
hide it.

CARA

I know there's a chance we
could do long distance. But I
feel like that's not the
same. It's never worked for
me in the past and I don't
want to force anything.

SAL

Force it?

CARA

Sal...it just seems you're refusing to move forward with me.

SAL

That's not it.

CARA

Then what is it?

Sal stops himself and thinks before speaking.

SAL

I'm happy where I am. Where I live, where I work, with my relationship. I don't need change.

They drive a mile without any exchange.

SAL

I know you feel like this is the next step for you, but it's not for me.

Cara can feel the tears falling from her face.

CARA

So that's it?

SAL

I'm not breaking up with you.

CARA

It really feels like it.

SAL

Cara, I'm being honest with you. That's what you asked for.

Cara looks away from Sal and out her window searching for the words to say.

CARA

I can't do this, Sal.

SAL

What?

CARA

I can't pretend I'm okay with you. I'm hurt by this. Really fucking hurt.

A look of pain crosses Sal's face.

SAL

Cara, I'm sorry. That's never my intention.

CARA

I need to do this on my own.

Sal is speechless. Cara's tears fall from her face making a wet mark down her jacket.

SAL

We're done?

Sal's words come out shaky, he is fighting back tears.

CARA

I can't be with you. I need to do this on my own.

She looks over at Sal and can tell he is on the verge of breaking down, but he doesn't make a sound. She turns back to her window and cries more as she places her face against the frosted glass.

CARA

This hurts, Sal.

SAL

I know.

They continue in silence as a soft song plays underneath on the radio.

EXT. SAL & CARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

The day has come. Cara's car is packed up. She appears nervous but also stressed. She pushes in the last bag from the sidewalk.

AMY

Cara!

From down the street Amy appears. She runs up to Cara and gives her a hug.

CARA

Thanks for coming.

AMY

I had to said goodbye! I know you'll tell me everything but I'm going to miss you always being here.

CARA

Me too.

Cara looks at the packed car and then back at the apartment she had spent years of her life in.

CARA

A lot of memories.

AMY

You okay?

CARA

No but yes. I think I will be.

AMY

Is Sal here?

CARA

No, he left earlier. He didn't want to watch me packing up and leaving. I mean, he offered to help but I could tell this was the last place he wanted to be.

AMY

Things between you...they're?

CARA

Bad. We've barely spoken since Christmas. It's just painful.

AMY

I'm sorry.

CARA

I know it might be crazy, but
I've got to do this. Even if
it means leaving our life
behind.

Cara's voice cracks as she says this. Amy rushes her into a hug.

AMY

It's going to be okay.
Sometimes in order to grow we
have to let things go.

They hold the embrace. Cara takes a deep breath and pulls back.

CARA

I should get going. It's a
long drive.

AMY

Be safe. You got this.

After one more quick hug Cara gets into her car. She waves as back at Amy as she drives off into the unknown.

EXT. NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT.

The new setting of Cara's life has a charming small-town feel. Small businesses scattered along the coastline of a beautiful water view. The snow is gone, people wearing shorts in summer weather. Time has passed. We show the Fitz Hotel and located on the side is Fitz Concert Hall. An electric sign illuminates GRAND OPENING and then STUDDER LOVE PLAYING FRIDAY JULY 10th.

INT. FITZ CONCERT HALL - DAY

Cara is walking down the hall with a young woman, ABBEY, with bright red hair combed back into a bun. She is jotting down notes as they walk together. Cara

looks different. She is wearing a red dress with high heels. Her make up looks like she actually took the time to do it and her long brown hair is perfectly curled, she looks more professional than we have ever seen her look.

CARA

When is the band supposed to get here?

ABBEY

They'll be arriving within the hour for their sound check.

CARA

Is everything set up on stage?

ABBEY

Charles told me they were ready to go. Lighting and Sound are already at their stations.

CARA

What about Cody? Did he set up their rooms at the hotel?

ABBEY

Yes, they have three suites set up. Filled with amenities.

Cara and Abbey never stop walking as they talk. Walking down hallways filled with crew members pulling equipment and wires everywhere.

CARA

Good.

Finally, Cara stops as they are walking into the theater. Thousands of empty chairs and a stage filled with equipment. Cara looks around the room.

CARA

Tonight's the night.

ABBEY

We're ready!

Abbey's phone chimes and she reads a text.

ABBEY

The band just arrived. Shall we go to meet them?

CARA

Yes. Let's go.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

Cara and Abbey enter backstage. Three guys all dressed in black are placing their bags down in the green room area.

CARA

Good Afternoon, my name is
Cara Cefala. Manager of Fitz
Concert Hall.

The men look up. Two of the men give a soft smile before shaking Cara's hand. The third man takes a step-in front of Cara and her expression changes. He is tall, tan, and ridiculously handsome. His dark brown hair following the curves of his face perfectly. His white smile illuminates. Cara can't help but swoon, something she hadn't done this in so long it felt foreign to her. He reaches his hand out to her. Cara feels weak when she places her hand into his. A wave of excitement crashes through her.

JUSTIN

My names Justin Cruz. I'm the
lead singer and play bass.
This is Andy, our drummer and
Anthony, our guitarist.

Cara pulls it together and tries to stop from blushing.

CARA

It's nice to meet you all. I
hope you're settling in okay.
This is my assistant, Abbey,

she will be able to take care
of everything for you.

ABBEY

I'll run you guys through
soundcheck and show you to
your rooms for the evening as
well.

JUSTIN

Sounds good.

ANTHONY

Can you show us to the stage?

ABBEY

Of course, follow me.

Andy and Anthony follow Abbey to the stage carrying
their instruments. Leaving Cara and Justin alone.

JUSTIN

This is quite the place.

Cara tries to keep things as professional as possible
even though she can't keep her eyes off of him.

CARA

It is! And it's the grand
opening. We're expecting a
full house tonight.

JUSTIN

Do you stay and watch the
show?

Cara is confused by this statement; relatively sure
he's being flirtatious.

CARA

Of course.

JUSTIN

Good.

He flashes her a devilish smile. Cara doesn't know
what to make of it.

CARA

I'm really excited to have you guys be the first act. You have quite a following.

JUSTIN

Yeah, luckily, we have some great fans. Some weird ones, but all great.

Cara awkwardly laughs.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry I'm just distracted.

CARA

By what?

JUSTIN

You're goddamn beautiful.

Cara freezes. She tries to brush it off.

CARA

Thank you.

JUSTIN

Gorgeous actually.

Cara is speechless. Justin takes a step back surveying the space.

JUSTIN

So, you're running this whole thing?

Cara shakes her head. Her palms were sweaty she's so nervous.

JUSTIN

That's pretty impressive.

CARA

Thank you.

She hesitates but suddenly remembers how she used to flirt.

CARA

And you're one of the top
bands in the Northeast.
That's pretty impressive
also.

Justin smiles, a breathtaking view.

JUSTIN

How lucky are we that our
paths crossed?

Cara takes in this moment, something that hadn't
happened in years. The sudden sound of people all
around her pushed her back into the present.

CARA

Well, I should really get
back to work.

JUSTIN

I get it. Staying
professional. I understand.

Cara stares as Justin pushes his hair back and takes
off his jacket revealing his strong and tattooed arms.

JUSTIN

I know we have a long night
ahead of us here, but I hope
to see you at the end of it.

Justin picks up his bag and starts taking a few steps
back.

JUSTIN

We'll celebrate this
monumental night. Deal?

Justin leaves as Cara basically stands with her mouth
dropped. She doesn't respond, she's too confused by
what that just was. The she snaps back into reality
and gets back to work.

INT. FITZ CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

The band is playing. The music is loud, and the room
is full. Things are running smoothly. Cara is taking
it all in at the back of the house with Abbey.

CARA

Well, Abbey, what do you think?

ABBEY

We did it! So far, no major casualties except the parking issue which is being fixed as we speak.

CARA

Nice.

They both listen to the band as they finish a song.

CARA

They're so good!

The band starts to get into the song. Justin goes up to center stage and starts singing, I WILL BUY YOU A NEW LIFE. Cara gets lost in the music and Justin.

JUSTIN

(singing)

*You say you wake up crying
Yes, and you don't know why
You get up and you go lay
down inside my baby's room*

*Yeah, I guess I'm doing okay
I moved in with the strangest
guy
Can you believe that I am
really alive?*

As they hit the chorus the audience starts singing along with the band. The room is electric, and Cara is ecstatic, she did this.

JUSTIN

(singing)

*I will buy you a garden
Where your flowers can bloom
I will buy you a new car
Perfect shiny and new*

*I will buy you that big house
Way up in the West Hills*

*I will buy you a new life.
Yes, I will.*

Cara can't take her eyes off of Justin. He is everything. They catch eyes and he gives her a look. She can't help but keep watching.

INT. CARA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Cara is sitting in her office when there is a knock on her door. Abbey comes in laying some paperwork down for her.

ABBEY

We're all set. Security is locking up and clearing the place.

CARA

Good. Great work tonight, Abbey. I'm so glad I have you.

ABBEY

Of course, we made this happen!

As Abbey is leaving, she hesitates and turns back around.

ABBEY

Cara?

CARA

Yeah?

ABBEY

I know you don't usually come out because, you're the boss and everything. But we're all going out to celebrate...just for a few drinks. I really think you should come!

CARA

Oh, I don't-

ABBEY

Please. You deserve it.

Cara thinks for a second but then nods in agreement.

CARA

Let's go.

INT. MARK'S BAR - NIGHT

Cara and Abbey are sitting at the bar having a couple drinks. The place is crowded and loud, but the energy is positive all around.

ABBEY

So, Cara, I need to know.

CARA

Oh no, what?

Abbey points to Cara's phone. The screen lights up. The background is a picture of her and Sal.

ABBEY

Who is that? I've seen the picture on your phone and you've never talked about him.

Cara immediately picks up her phone and works on changing the background.

CARA

Oh, I just forgot to change it.

ABBEY

Who is it?

After changing it Cara places it back down on the table and takes a deep breath.

CARA

It's my ex. Sal.

ABBEY

Oh. I'm sorry. I was just curious.

CARA

No, no. It's okay. I just...I haven't talked about him in a little bit. I've kind of, shut that part of my life down when I moved here.

ABBEY

Was it serious?

CARA

Just about seven years.

ABBEY

Seven years? Oh my god!

CARA

I know. Long time.

Cara takes another swig of her drink.

CARA

We broke up just before I moved here.

ABBEY

I'm sorry.

CARA

It's okay. To be honest with you, I haven't really thought about him much since I've moved here. I've been so busy with work and settling in. I just went numb to it all this time.

Abbey calls over the bartender.

ABBEY

We'll have another round.

As he walks away Abbey stops Cara as she reaches into her wallet.

ABBEY

It's on me. I apologize for killing the mood.

Cara laughs.

CARA
You didn't. We're
celebrating!

As the girls get their drinks someone walks up in
between them.

JUSTIN
We're celebrating?

Cara nearly spits out her drink, spilling some on her
shirt.

JUSTIN
Oh, sorry. Did I startle you?

Cara's cheeks immediately start getting red. Abbey
notices and picks up her drink.

ABBEY
Of course! To a great show!

Abbey taps Justin's beer bottle with her glass.

JUSTIN
It was great. Thanks to this
woman right here.

CARA
Oh. No! It was everyone. So
many people made it happen.

Cara's voice sounds nervous. Abbey notices a certain
energy between the two.

ABBEY
I'm going to run to the
bathroom.

CARA
What, no!

Abbey gets up and mouths "you got this." Justin points
to the seat next to her.

JUSTIN
Mind if I sit?

CARA

Sure.

He sits close, just grazing Cara's legs as he gets settled. Cara takes everything about him in. He's like a walking cover of Rolling Stone Magazine.

JUSTIN

So. You're just the girl I've been looking for.

CARA

What?

JUSTIN

Yeah. I've been wanting to talk to you all night.

CARA

Why me?

JUSTIN

Because you're intoxicating. You have this killer job that you're amazing at. You're beautiful head to toe. I just have to know more. More about this lady in red.

Cara face lights up. All of the sudden this woman that Cara had hidden away found her way back out.

CARA

So, what do you want to know?

JUSTIN

Well first, am I getting anywhere?

Cara smiles.

CARA

You might be.

Cara sips her drink, Justin is enticed.

CARA

So, tell me, when did you start playing?

JUSTIN

Oh, I've been playing forever. I started as a kid and never stopped. I actually play bass, guitar, drums, and piano.

CARA

Really?

JUSTIN

I can do it all.

CARA

Mhm.. You know I play too.

JUSTIN

Really?

CARA

Yup. Guitar. Music keeps me going sometimes.

Justin gives Cara a surprised look.

CARA

What?

JUSTIN

It's the same for me.

CARA

I feel like it can numb the rest of the world while you listen. Make you forget about life for just a minute.

JUSTIN

Well, now I've got to see this.

CARA

What?

Justin looks back at the karaoke machine in the back of the bar. Points to it.

JUSTIN

You going to do this?

As Cara sees him start to get up, she pulls him back down.

CARA
No, no, no. Definitely not.

Justin starts laughing.

JUSTIN
Okay, okay. Second option. I hear you play.

CARA
What do you mean?

JUSTIN
Want to get out of here?

Cara hesitates.

JUSTIN
You can say no.

Suddenly she jumps back into the moment.

CARA
No... let's go.

INT. CARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Justin follows Cara into her apartment. Looking around. She has it decorated nice but simple. She has a few pictures here and there with friends and family but nothing too much.

JUSTIN
Nice place.

CARA
Thanks.

He spots her guitar in the corner of the room on a stand.

JUSTIN
There it is!

He walks over and picks it up. It looks different than before. Covered in stickers and writing. More worn in than it was before.

JUSTIN

May I?

CARA

Be my guest.

They sit down on the couch and Justin starts to play.

JUSTIN

It's nice.

CARA

Thanks. It was my Dad's.

JUSTIN

Does he play?

CARA

Yeah, a little bit.

Justin starts singing a song to Cara. He looks back and forth between the guitar and Cara. The room is dim. Just a couple lights in the window lighting the room. Cara is entranced by him.

JUSTIN

You can join in anytime.

Cara laughs nervously.

JUSTIN

Are you okay?

CARA

Yeah. Just a little nervous.

JUSTIN

I make you nervous.

CARA

It's just...it's been a while.

JUSTIN

You don't have to worry. I
just wanted to hear you play.

Cara starts to sing a little bit. Justin hands her the
guitar. She starts to play. She is better than before.
She is much more confident in her playing.

JUSTIN
You're pretty good.

CARA
Thanks.

JUSTIN
You're beautiful too.

Cara looks up at Justin and stops playing. He reaches
over the guitar and kisses her. They start to make out
and the guitar falls to the floor.

INT. CARA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The next morning Cara wakes up in her bed, looking a
mess. She hears someone walking in and screams.

JUSTIN
It's just me.

CARA
Oh my god! I'm sorry!

Cara falls back into her pillow.

CARA
My head is pounding!

JUSTIN
This should help with that.

He hands her a cup of coffee and a bag of food.

JUSTIN
Breakfast. Espresso. And
Tylenol for your head.

CARA
Thank you.

Justin sits on the end of the bed.

JUSTIN
I've got to get going.

CARA
Okay.

JUSTIN
I just wanted you to know
this isn't my usually thing
though.

CARA
What do you mean?

Cara sits up to face Justin.

JUSTIN
I don't just sleep with
anyone I see at a bar or from
our shows. I know it might
seem that way based on this.
But I'm not like that.

CARA
I didn't think that.

Justin leans in and gives Cara a kiss.

JUSTIN
I'd like to see you again, if
possible.

CARA
Next time you're in town I'll
make sure to sing you a song.

JUSTIN
I'm going to hold you to it.

They kiss again.

JUSTIN
Alright. I've got to go.

CARA
Bye.

Cara watches him leave. She waits until the door shuts and falls back into her bed.

INT. CARA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Cara is playing her guitar one night when her phone rings. She looks at it and sees it is Sal. Her expression immediately changes.

CARA
Hello?

SAL (O.S.)
Cara?

CARA
Hi, Sal.

SAL (O.S.)
Hi. I'm sorry to call...I just...How are you?

CARA
I'm good.

Cara is quiet. Still in shock and not sure of what to say.

CARA
Are you okay?

SAL (O.S.)
I'm okay. Same as always, I guess.

CARA
Good.

It is awkward.

SAL (O.S.)
I miss you, Cara.

Suddenly Cara is overcome by a rush of emotions.

CARA
I miss you, too. But I've got to go. Okay?

Her voice cracks on the last few words. She hangs up before even hearing his response. She takes a deep breath, holding back those emotions. She puts her phone face down back on the table and picks her guitar back up. She writes a few things down on the notepad next to her and then continues to play.

INT. CARA'S OFFICE - DAY

Cara is working in her office when Abbey comes in.

ABBEY

Cara? There's someone here to see you.

CARA

Okay, who is it?

Jenna walks in the room behind Abbey.

CARA

Mom?! What are you doing here?

ABBEY

I'll give you two a minute.

JENNA

Hello, Cara.

CARA

What's going on? Is something wrong?

JENNA

I don't know. I haven't heard from you as much and I've started to worry.

CARA

Why? I've been busy with work.

JENNA

You haven't been home in months, Cara! I'm worried.

CARA

You don't need to worry. I'm fine. This job is just a lot more time consuming and I've been preoccupied.

Jenna finds her way to the chair across from Cara and sits down.

JENNA

I know and I am proud of you, don't get me wrong!

CARA

I'm confused.

JENNA

I just want you to remember to have a balance.

CARA

Oh my god, Mom. I can't do this right now. I'm at work!

JENNA

Cara, I'm trying to help you.

CARA

No, Mom. It's not helping.

Cara gets frustrated and stands, pacing back and forth in the room.

CARA

You are being so controlling is not helping.

JENNA

I'm sorry?

CARA

You always having a say in what I'm doing, it drives me nuts! It's exhausting trying to keep you happy. And it almost never works for me.

JENNA

Cara, I'm just looking out for you.

CARA

I know that, Mom. I do. But it's hurting me.

Cara takes a breath.

CARA

I can't keep trying to make you happy. I need to make me happy. Coming here, this is the first time I've actually started to feel happy since I've left Sal. I'm finally feeling like I belong here.

Jenna is in shock.

CARA

You are coming here and telling me that I'm doing something wrong, it just brings me right back down. That hurts me.

JENNA

I'm sorry, Cara. I didn't know you felt that way. But I am your Mother.

CARA

Exactly. Which is why I've kept my mouth shut all this time. I've bit my tongue to keep the peace. I've had Sal be my backbone because he didn't mind taking the heat from you. But I'm not going to do that anymore... I'm more myself here, and I'm not going to apologize for that.

Jenna stands up. She looks a mix of hurt and annoyance.

JENNA

Well, it's clear I'm not wanted here.

CARA
Mom don't make this worse.

JENNA
No. I'm leaving.

Jenna walks around Cara and to the door. She takes one last look before leaving. Cara sits back at her desk and holds her head in her hands in frustration. A knock on the door.

ABBEY
Cara? You okay?

Cara takes a deep breath before walking towards the door.

CARA
Yes, I'm sorry for that. I'm going to get some air.

EXT. FITZ CONCERT HALL - DAY

Cara is outside of work. She's taking a breather after what happened with her Mother. She opens her phone, it's her sister, Anna, calling. Reluctantly, Cara answers.

CARA
Hello.

ANNA
Cara? What happened? Mom just called me talking a mile a minute.

CARA
We had an argument.

ANNA
Is she okay?

CARA
I don't know. She just left.

There is a brief pause.

ANNA

Are you okay?

CARA
I'll be fine.

ANNA
You sure?

Cara takes a deep breath in.

CARA
Yes.

ANNA
Okay...call me if you need
me.

CARA
Thanks, Anna.

Cara hangs up the phone. She pulls up Sal's name is about to call but hesitates. Instead of calling, she puts the phone away and takes a walk by the water.

INT. CARA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Cara's apartment is decorated with lights all around and a Christmas tree in the corner. She has a couple bags of gifts by the door and a suitcase next to them. Cara is wrapping another gift at her dining room table when there is a knock on the door. She goes to answer it and it is Abbey.

ABBEY
Merry Christmas!

CARA
Hey! What are you doing here?

ABBEY
I just completely forgot
about your gift at work today
and wanted to give it to you
before you left.

Abbey hands Cara a wrapped gift. Cara opens it up. It is a frame full of all the ticket stubs from every concert of their first year of work.

CARA

Abbey, this is amazing! Thank you!

ABBEY

You've been such a great boss to me, and this year has really been a whirlwind. I thought you'd like to have something to remember it by.

Cara gives Abbey a hug.

CARA

This is the nicest gift. Thank you so much.

ABBEY

Are you heading out soon?

CARA

Yeah, first thing in the morning.

ABBEY

How are you feeling about it?

CARA

Well...I'm excited to see my Dad and sister. We've been talking about me coming home for a while.

ABBEY

And your Mom?

CARA

I haven't talked to her since she came up that day in the summer.

ABBEY

I'm sorry.

CARA

As sad as it is, those things needed to be said at some point. Now I just have to

face her and find a way to
move on.

ABBEY

You'll be fine. I know it.

As Abbey gives Cara one more hug and starts to the
door, suddenly turns around again.

ABBEY

Oh...what about the ex?

CARA

Sal?

ABBEY

Yeah, you haven't really
dated anyone this year. Do
you think you'll talk to him
while you're back home?

Cara thinks for a second before responding.

CARA

Honestly, I still care a lot
about him...but I don't know
if I could face him again.

ABBEY

You're mad at him?

CARA

Not mad. Just disappointed.
In each other. And if moving
out here taught me anything,
it's that there is still
Cara. That I didn't get lost
completely in Sal and Cara
for so long.

ABBEY

Well, I secretly hope you'll
see him.

CARA

Why?

ABBEY

To me. It feels unfinished.
As much as you deny it.

CARA

Well, we'll see. Don't get me
wrong, I hope he's alright. I
just don't want to backtrack.

ABBEY

I don't think you will.

Abbey starts to turn towards the door.

ABBEY

Oh, one more thing, Studded
Love just signed on for
January. So, you'll get to
see Justin when you come
back!

Cara laughs.

CARA

Of course, you would give me
that news.

ABBEY

It's my job! Now I've got to
go. But safe travels!

CARA

Merry Christmas...and thank
you!

Abbey leaves and Cara looks at the gift she gave her.

EXT. JOHN & JENNA'S HOUSE - DAY

Cara arrives outside her parent's house. She looks out
at her decorated childhood home for a moment, taking
it in. She gets her bag and walks in alone.

INT. JOHN & JENNA'S HOUSE - DAY

Cara walks in. The house is decorated all around. She
walks into the living room where the rest of the
family is.

JOHN
You're home!

He walks up and gives her a hug.

JOHN
Merry Christmas.

ANNA
Merry Christmas, Cara. Way to
keep us waiting!

Cara and John break apart and she moves to give Anna a hug.

CARA
I was building anticipation.

They all laugh. Cara pulls back and looks at the room. There are decorations touching every inch of the room. While it's been a while, Cara feels comfort being there.

CARA
Where's Mom?

JOHN
She's in the kitchen.

Cara looks at her Dad. He gives her a reassuring nod and she makes her way to the kitchen.

INT. JOHN & JENNA'S HOUSE - DAY

Cara enters the kitchen to find her Mom at the sink, drinking her coffee while looking out the window.

CARA
Hi, Mom.

JENNA
Hi, Cara.

CARA
The house looks nice.

JENNA

I tried to make it feel like home.

CARA

It does.

There are awkward pauses between their answers. Jenna hands Cara a cup of coffee and she pours a new one for herself.

CARA

Mom, I wanted to say sorry. There was a better way I could've handled everything.

JENNA

Yeah. Probably.

Jenna takes a sip of her coffee.

JENNA

But you were right.

CARA

What?

JENNA

I haven't been fair to you. And I'm sorry for that. I just wanted things to work out for you. I lost sight of what I was pushing for.

CARA

We got stuck in that routine for way too long.

JENNA

Exactly. I am happy for you. Whether you're married, single, employed or not. I don't want to push you away. I'll support you, no matter what.

Cara rushes up and gives Jenna a hug.

CARA

I love you, Mom.

JENNA

Love you too, sweetheart.

Jenna pulls away holding Cara's face in her hands.

JENNA

Let's just be better. Okay? I
promise I'll do my best.

CARA

Okay, Mom.

Cara and Jenna share another long embrace.

JENNA

I've missed you.

CARA

Me too.

Cara and Jenna walk with their coffee back into the room with the rest of the family surrounding the Christmas tree.

INT. JOHN & JENNA'S HOUSE - EVENING

That night the family is in the living room. Wrapping paper all around, the Christmas lights illuminating the room. Cara leaves for a second and then comes back. She sits next to her Dad holding her guitar and his.

CARA

Shall we?

John's face lights up. He immediately takes the guitar from Cara and she sits next to him. The room shifts their focus to Cara and John.

JOHN

I'd love to, Cara.

They start playing SILENT NIGHT together.

INT. OLD MAN'S PLACE - NIGHT

Cara walks into a very crowded bar. She scans the room until she sees a familiar face. Amy stands up and waves at Cara. Cara walks through people until she makes it to Amy and gives her a hug.

AMY
I've missed you!

CARA
Me too!

AMY
Come, sit.

They sit at the table. Around the room people are wearing Happy New Year hats and have noise makers. There is a banner that says Happy New Year along the back of the bar. Cara takes off her jacket to reveal she is wearing a black dress full of sparkles.

AMY
You look amazing!

CARA
Awe, thanks! So do you!

AMY
How have you been?

CARA
Good! Great, actually. I love where I am right now.

AMY
You look happier.

CARA
I am. It took a while, but I really am.

AMY
You deserve it, Cara.

CARA
Thanks, Amy.

AMY

Now I'm going to get us
drinks and we are going to
catch up!

Amy quickly gets up and heads to the bar. Cara takes a second and looks around the room. Everyone is smiling and having a good time. The energy is positive all around. The room looks so different than it had a year ago. Cara smiles as she takes it all in and puts on a Happy New Year headband from off the table.

EXT. OLD MAN'S PLACE - NIGHT

Cara and Amy exit the bar and start up the sidewalk. Cara turns to the archway leading to the park lit by lights buried in the ground and surrounded by gold twinkling lights in the trees. She touches Amy's arm to stop her.

AMY

What is it?

CARA

I'm going to go.

AMY

You don't want me to drive
you back?

CARA

No, it's okay. I'll walk.

AMY

Are you sure?

CARA

Yes. I want to see something.
I promise it's fine.

AMY

Okay, if you're sure.

Amy takes a step forward as Cara stands still, still turned towards the park.

AMY

Are you okay?

CARA

I'm good. I'll see you in a bit.

Cara waves Amy off and then disappears under the archway and into the park. Amy continues in the opposite direction.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Cara is walking in the dimly light park as it is empty and quiet. The only sound is the light chirping of the crickets surrounding her and the cars whizzing by on the street close by. No one. The park is empty. Cara looks at each tree, each turn, as she reminisces on the nights she spent here with Sal. A smile crosses her face. She's remembering the good memories, nothing bad in this moment. As she comes to a turn in the path, she notices a man sitting on a bench. A figure in all black, sitting looking across as the lights reflect on the water rippling softly. As she takes a few more steps she can make out the face. It is Sal. Cara is frozen momentarily from shock before she starts towards him. He turns when she gets closer. His demeanor completely flips in that second when he realizes it is Cara. The frown that was dragging his face to the ground lights up. He stands up quickly to face her.

SAL

Cara? Is that really you?

Cara closes the gap between them. She reaches her arms out as she answers the lingering question.

CARA

It's me.

They hug. A long embrace. Making up for lost time. Sal chuckles in disbelief.

SAL

How? How are you here right now?

CARA

I'm just in town for a visit.
You know, the holidays.

SAL

Right.

Sal is still partially speechless. His eyes taking in the beauty of Cara. She looks different. Matured if possible.

CARA

I was just out with Amy and I wanted to stop by. You know. Our spot.

SAL

Yeah. I find myself here a lot lately.

CARA

You do?

Sal takes a step back and sits on the bench, motioning Cara to sit next to him.

SAL

Yeah.

Cara crosses in front of Sal and sits close to him. Their sides barely touching, but just enough to feel each other's warmth.

SAL

This place holds only good memories.

CARA

That's not true! Remember the time you fell on that crack near the water and almost lost two teeth?

Sal laughs.

SAL

That did suck. But also, we couldn't stop laughing the whole way to the hospital.

CARA

It was your lisp! I couldn't help it. Then you were just worried about getting blood on your hideous Hawaiian shirt.

SAL

You loved that shirt!

Cara giggles to herself and looks away.

CARA

I lied. I loved how you always sang Elvis when you had it on. It was hilarious and alluring at the same time.

SAL

I still have it.

CARA

It's stained!

SAL

I know, but I bought it when you and I went to the beach together for the first time.

Cara smiles softly.

SAL

It was important to me. I couldn't just throw it away.

CARA

I see.

There's a short pause.

SAL

There's a lot of memories here.

CARA

There's a lot of memories, period.

SAL

Yeah. Six years is a long time.

They look out at the water in front of them. Everything seems to drown out around them.

SAL

I wish it would've been different.

CARA

Me too.

SAL

Are you happier?

CARA

I don't know. I feel different. Like I'm more myself now. I think I lost part of that throughout the years.

SAL

Because of me?

CARA

No!

Cara reaches out and puts her hand on Sal's. He turns to her.

CARA

Not because of you. It was me.

Cara pauses and settles back on the bench. Her hand lingers on Sal's.

CARA

I just. I always associated happiness with a relationship and finding someone to love. And when I found that with you, I thought I was done. The search was over.

Cara sighs.

CARA

I just, was so happy, with you and being in our love bubble that I stopped doing anything pertaining to me without us as a couple. Does that make sense?

SAL

Kind of...

CARA

I stopped searching for the other loves of life. I went to work and had you. And for a while that was enough.

SAL

Right.

CARA

Not saying it wasn't beautiful, because it was. I never loved someone like I loved you.

SAL

Me too.

Another pause.

CARA

I think, we just, unfortunately, ran our course.

Sal sighs.

CARA

I felt awful pushing you for things you didn't want. That wasn't right of me.

SAL

I don't blame you at all. I was being stubborn and selfish in my own ways.

CARA

Just now, I see what I
couldn't before. That there's
more love out there for me.
Not just in a relationship.

Cara squeezes Sal's hand.

CARA

That doesn't change that
breaking up with you was
probably the hardest thing
I've ever had to do.

SAL

I hear you. I didn't realize
how much it hurt until you
were gone. Everything I knew
for so long just changed
overnight. It felt like rock
bottom.

They sit in silence for a moment.

SAL

I'm really happy for you,
Cara. That you found
happiness again. I know you
deserve it.

Cara smiles and gives Sal a kiss on the cheek. She
lingers close for a second before sitting back again.

CARA

What about you?

SAL

You know me. I'll carry on. I
can't say I'll be as happy as
I was with you, but I'll be
okay.

Cara looks at Sal. She looks at every curve of his
face, every hair out of place, his tan skin she once
knew so well. She fights back tears, but a couple
trickle out. She quickly wipes them away. Sal notices
and puts his arm around her.

SAL

I could say this with near
100% certainty, that you were
the love of my life.

Cara breaks into an awkward laugh cry as every emotion
she'd been putting off hits her.

CARA

I know. You were mine.

SAL

That I don't know about.
You'll find some ridiculously
handsome Rockstar and fall
madly in love. Get married.
Build a life together. And
I'll just be another chapter
in you amazing and
exhilarating life.

CARA

No, you were more than just a
chapter. You know that.

Cara and Sal turn to share a smile.

SAL

You know, it wasn't easy to
be happy for you?

Cara just looks at Sal, not knowing what to say.

SAL

But I'll always be here. Even
though I know you've already
grown out of needing
somebody.

CARA

It's still nice to know. I
might even stop in the
Metropolitan Grill once in a
while. You never know.

SAL

It'll always be a pleasure to
see your smile.

Cara smiles big, wiping any lingering tears on her face.

SAL

Can I get one more? Just for the memory.

Cara gives Sal a big grin before falling into his embrace once more.

CARA

I'm going to miss you.

SAL

Me too. But I know you'll be fine.

After a prolonged hug. They finally work up the courage to let go. Both not breaking eye contact with one another.

CARA

I should go.

SAL

I know.

Slowly they both stand to face each other.

CARA

Goodbye..Stunner.

Sal grins, the smile that made Cara fall in love with him. They take in each other. A final memory to add to their story.

SAL

Goodbye...Vita Mia.

In that moment, they were back at the beginning. Back to where and how they fell in love. They lingered here, seemingly remembering everything that brought them together, all the laughs and moments they shared. Nothing was left but this. They smiled, covering that internal pain they both shared knowing it was now over. Cara finally found the strength to turn around. She started walking and Sal sat back down. Before reaching the curve in the path she turned back. Sal was watching her disappear into the park. Cara gave

one last smile and wave, and he returned one back. She took one last good look before continuing out of the park.

INT. AMY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cara lay in bed. Wide awake, appearing to be running through a million thoughts. Finally, she hits her hands on the bed and gets up in annoyance. She grabs her guitar and a notebook and quietly makes her way onto Amy's balcony, trying not to wake up Amy. She closes the sliding glass door behinds her and sits on the chair out there. She starts strumming. Humming lightly to herself. She then takes out her notebook and jots down some notes. We pan out as she continues this.

INT. AMY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Cara groggily walks out of her bedroom into the kitchen where she finds Amy making coffee.

AMY

Morning, sunshine! How are ya feeling?

CARA

Like I need sleep.

Cara wipes her eyes and sits across from Amy at the kitchen island.

CARA

Actually coffee, I need coffee.

AMY

Did you sleep at all? I didn't even see when you came in last night.

CARA

I wasn't out too late. But I was up late last night- oh my god!

Suddenly Cara's emotion changes, a huge smile falls on her face. Amy takes a step back in confusion.

AMY

What? What?!

CARA

I did something!

AMY

Oh no, what?

CARA

No, no! Not bad. Good!
Exciting.

Cara jolts out of her seat and into the bedroom, she comes back into the kitchen with her guitar and notebook, placing her notebook on the island in front of Amy. Amy turns it to face her and starts reading.

AMY

What is this?

CARA

I wrote it! I wrote a song!

Amy is silent while she reads but a slight smile crosses her face.

CARA

After I saw Sal, I couldn't
stop my mind from racing...

AMY

Hold up, you saw Sal?

CARA

No. Yes! I mean, we'll talk
about that later. Read!

AMY

Okay, but we're going to come
back to that.

CARA

Right, whatever. Please read!

Amy looks back down at the notebook and reads. Cara can't contain her excitement.

AMY
This is good!

CARA
That's just the lyrics but I actually wrote music to go with it. I can't believe I did, but I did!

AMY
I want to hear it.

CARA
Well, it's not perfect but I think it's good. It's mine.

Amy sits down across from Cara. Still smiling ear to ear.

AMY
I know that look. What's on your mind.

CARA
Well, you know how I always wanted to play at that open mic? I think I finally can do it. And I want to play this.

AMY
You're sure?

CARA
Yes.

Amy smiles.

AMY
Perfect! I'm going to set that up before you change your mind.

Amy picks up her phone and walks towards her computer. Cara sits smiling down at her notebook. Again, starts strumming.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - EVENING

Cara and Amy are sitting in the back of the coffee shop as the open mic carries on. It is a light night, only a few people dispersed throughout, some paying attention, some not. Cara has her guitar case at her side. She looks nervous as she starts to bite her nails.

AMY

You sure you want to do this?

Cara sighs and turns to face Amy. She takes a deep breath and closes her eyes. When she opens them, she reaches down and takes out her guitar.

CARA

I'm ready. I can do this.

Peter walks to the center of the make shift stage. He grabs the mic and pulls a piece of paper out in front of him.

PETER

Next up...we have a new performer. Her name is Cara Cefala, and she is going to play an original song for us tonight. Let's give her a warm welcome.

A light applause fills the room. Cara takes a deep breath and stands up. She takes her guitar pick off the table and makes her way towards the stage. She walks up the stairs and places herself front and center behind the microphone. She positions it to her height and then clears her throat.

CARA

G-good evening. My name is Cara. This song...

The silence is loud surrounding her, that wall of fear hits her but as she looks only at the streams of light facing her, she breaks through,

CARA

It's my first song. I wrote
this song about someone I
love...It's not perfect. It's
also a work in progress. A
little like me...But I hope
you enjoy it. It's called
Half a Heart.

Cara looks down at her guitar and in a split second
she starts playing her song, HALF A HEART.

CARA

(singing)
*Half of me wants to stay
But the clouds are dark and
gray.
Half of me will walk away
And take my chances another
way*

Her first few words come out a little shaky and quiet.
But she tries to focus on her words. She closes her
eyes and continues.

CARA

(singing)

*We had some good times
But we couldn't find our way.
Out of what we both saw
As the future if we stayed*

*It would be a mistake
To try to recreate
The love we shared when new
Now we have a different view*

The more she plays the more comfortable she feels. She
starts to focus on the music and the rest of the room
around her fades. As she hits the chorus her voice
becomes stronger. She looks ahead and the light
shining takes away her sight of everyone in the room.

CARA

(singing)

Half of me wants to stay

*But the clouds are dark and
gray.
Half of me will walk away
And take my chances another
day*

She hits the bridge of the song; confidence fills her now. She feels strength through every note and every word.

CARA

(singing)

*Let's separate the truth from
lies
And let's finally realize
We will always love but need
to go
Our separate ways*

She comes to the next verse and brings her energy back down to match the song. Her confidence has hit its peak, she finds comfort in what she's doing.

CARA

(singing)

*Feeling clearer vision now
Brighter skies are breaking
free
Although I'm wondering how
making it alone will be.*

*Music flows from deep within
Helping me to find my way
A new way for me begins
A new me is here to stay.*

One the last few words she brings everything back down to the quiet place where that song started. She closes her eyes as she says the words one more time.

CARA

(singing)

*Half of me wants to stay
But clouds are dark and gray.
Half of me will walk away
And take my chances another
way.*

As she reaches the end of the song, she strums the last note and opens her eyes. The room comes back into focus and she starts to see the faces again. She feels that nervousness rise back up as the silence hits the room. It quickly subsides and a smile finds her face as the applause fills the room. Cara stands up and takes a bow.

CARA

Thank you.

Cara takes it all in. The room is small, but the people are smiling, her music made that reaction. Instead of rushing on to the next thing, she takes this moment in. We pan out from Cara's smile to the rest of the room surrounding her. Making our way out to the street and the sun setting over the city.

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