

FADE IN:

INT. SUBURBAN BATHROOM - DAY

A stoic face (KAI) stares deeply at her reflection in the mirror. Her long locs drape the sides like a veil.

She looks indifferent... or perhaps intrepid. It's hard to tell with her poker face showing no signs of life.

Until, she blinks and lets some life return to her face.

Not a beat longer, she takes the pair of SCISSORS in her hands and cuts off a loc.

And another one.

Until she releases her last dread without ceremonious pause.

It isn't until then that Kai finally lets herself smile.

INT. SUBURBAN BEDROOM - DAY

UPBEAT MUSIC plays as Kai dances and haphazardly packs in a room of suburban bland. Although her room is annoyingly tidy, she grabs and tosses clothes into two suitcases with little care for order.

Her face and body exudes an uncontrollable excitement as she moves authentically to the beat; held back by no fear; only her weak breath.

And it isn't too long before she runs out of it.

As the music comes to an end, so does Kai's packing.

She removes all signs of emotions from her face before exiting the room with suitcases on hand.

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

Sitting in a modest colonial-style kitchen, an early fifties professional-dressed woman (MRS. JACKSON) is nose deep in a stack of files. Her face has the same stoic calm as Kai's, except hers looks less forced and more refined.

Kai enters and heads towards the fridge.

KAI

I'm ready whenever you are.

MRS. JACKSON
 (without looking up)
 OK. Give me 10 minutes.

As Kai opens the fridge, Mrs. Jackson lifts her head to face the profile of Kai.

MRS. JACKSON (CONT'D)
 You should take some leftovers with
 you on your flight...

Her voice trails off as she notices her daughter's new do. Suffice to say, she isn't pleased.

MRS. JACKSON (CONT'D)
 (underbreath)
 Oh... my...

Kai pretends not to notice her mom's reaction but Mrs. Jackson is not one to ignore.

MRS. JACKSON (CONT'D)
 You are *not* leaving this house with
 your hair looking like that.

Kai rolls her eyes behind the fridge door. Then stuffs her mouth with corn bread and responds ever so disdainfully:

KAI
 Looking like what?

MRS. JACKSON
 What did you say to me?!

She asked more like a challenge that Kai shouldn't take. But Kai decides today is the day, she doesn't back down... or away from the fridge just yet.

She swallows the food instead of her pride and replies.

KAI
 I said looking--

MRS. JACKSON
 --Like you've lost your damn mind!!

Kai clenches her teeth to keep her curses to herself as she finally closes the fridge door.

Mrs. Jackson knows she's struck a cord so she tones herself down... a bit.

MRS. JACKSON (CONT'D)
 Go put something over your head.

But it's not enough to tone Kai's down. She looks her mom stone cold in the eye as her mom returns with a look of fire. An intense battle of angry eyes that lasts as quickly as it started.

MRS. JACKSON (CONT'D)
Go put something over your head!
NOW!

The shrill of her mother's voice rattles Kai but she hides it well.

She slowly pulls her hoodie over her head as a last provoke while Mrs. Jackson closes her eyes and summons every fiber of her being, plus God, to come save this child.

Et voila!

Upon opening them, Kai is magically gone.

INT. "BMW SUV OR SIMILAR" - DAY - TRAVELING

Kai and Mrs. Jackson ride in silence with third eye frowns. Eventually, the white noise gets too loud for Kai so she turns the radio on to a hip-hop song she likes.

As her head bounces to beat the awkward silence, her mother shakes to escape the song's offensive tone.

Mrs. Jackson turns the volume down.

Noticing her mom's displeasure, Kai reluctantly turns the channel to a more pleasant song.

They continue to ride in silence as their frowns disappear and their emotionless faces returns.

EXT. AIRPORT DEPARTURES - DAY

Airport departure terminal. A BMW SUV reaches the curb and parks.

Kai exits the vehicle to grab her suitcases from the back as her mother approaches her from the driver's side.

MRS. JACKSON
Why did you do that to your hair?

KAI
I wanted a change.

MRS. JACKSON
A day before you start a new job?
What were you thinking?

KAI
I thought you hated my locs.

MRS. JACKSON
I most certainly do but this is
much worse.

KAI
Relax. I'm getting it done when I
land.

MRS. JACKSON
And do what with it!? You barely
have any hair left!

KAI
That's the point.

MRS. JACKSON
It's unprofessional, Kai.

KAI
Why? Because I'm a woman with short
hair?

MRS. JACKSON
No. Because you look like a man.

Kai flinches at her mom's contemptuous tone but saves face.

MRS. JACKSON (CONT'D)
I just don't understand you.

KAI
I know.

They embrace out of ceremony then pull away.

MRS. JACKSON
I'm still here for you, Kaya.

KAI
I know. Take care, Mom.

Kai exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEDDING RECEPTION - DAY

An "old money" wedding reception where everyone looks the same, except for the help. But they're only a couple shades darker.

At one of the bartending stands, a young goddess (ZOE) stares into space with a placid smile. It's hard to tell if she's human or robot until she blinks herself back to earth as two model-type women (BLONDE and BRUNETTE BECCA) approach her.

ZOE

What can I get for you?

BLONDE

Is that your real hair?

A beat.

ZOE

What would you like to drink?

BLONDE

--Oh I'm not trying to be rude or anything. I'm asking because I'm trying to educate my friend here on the difference between natural hair and weave. You're mixed right?

ZOE

(more sternly)

What would you like to drink?

New wedding guests: a post-menopause husband and wife.

A MARRIED MAN

Uhhh... Let me get a bourbon.

A MARRIED WOMAN

(to her husband referring
to Zoe's hair)

Look how gorgeous she is Robert!

A MARRIED MAN

Indeed she is.

But he's not looking at Zoe's hair or anywhere above her neck for that matter. Lucky for him, his wife is too enthralled by Zoe's curly fro to notice her husband's lustful gaze.

A MARRIED WOMAN

I've been trying to get my hair to curl like yours but I just can't seem to get it to stick.

The woman's hair is as thin as her lips so she reaches for Zoe's to steal its' magic. Zoe quickly dodges the woman's intrusive touch while handing them their drinks.

ZOE
Anything else?

A tall, dark and handsome man.

HANDSOME MAN
(suggestive)
Well, what else are you offering?

Zoe shoots him a cold glare that chills his loins.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)
I'll just take the beer.

Smart choice. Zoe hands him his poison.

ZOE
Enjoy your drink.

Handsome Man exits as Zoe looks down at her tip jar. More change than cash.

EXT. SFO AIRPORT ARRIVALS - DAY

With her two suitcases on hand, Kai spots CHRIS, a late twenties butch with a fade, approaching her.

CHRIS
What's up, buddy!

KAI
Hey!!

They embrace and greet each other like brothers who haven't seen each other in a while. As they pull away, Kai's cover falls back, revealing her thick choppy fro.

CHRIS
Damn, you chopped the locs!?

KAI
Yup.

CHRIS
(roughing Kai's hair)
Trying to get more like me, eh?

KAI
 (playfully jabbing Chris'
 stomach)
 I've got a few more pounds to gain
 before that happens.

CHRIS
 Let's see what you look like after
 a month on the job, smart ass.

Chris playfully roughs Kai's hair up as they load Kai's bags
 in Chris's SUV parked along the curb.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 Your momma must had a fit about
 your hair, didn't she?

KAI
 Whatever.

CHRIS
 What did she say?

KAI
 She said I looked like a man.

CHRIS
 Well, you do. Women don't leave the
 house with their hair looking like
 that.

They laugh as they enter the vehicle and drive away.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) INT./EXT. VEHICLE - DAY - MOVING SHOT of an SUV as it
 drives along the 101 highway into San Francisco.

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (to Kai)
 You're going to love it out here.

B) EXT. ROWS OF HOUSES - DAY - Large hills of houses, similar
 to the infamous "Painted Houses."

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The weather is nice...

C) EXT. TWIN PEAKS - DAY - Fog rolls over Sutro tower in the
 distance.

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The food is fresh...

D) EXT. BARREN FARM LANDS - DAY - A sign that reads "NO WATER, NO JOBS" sits on a dusty, barren land with no greenery in site.

CHRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And the people open-minded and laid
back.

E) CIVIC CENTER MARKET STREET - DAY - The hungry and sick camp out amongst a gentrified block of downtown.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
And here is where you'll be
spending most of your waking hours.
Or as I call it, your new home.

Chris' vehicle slows to a halt in front of an art deco behemoth building. The eye of Horus sits hauntingly atop the glass front door with the words "HEIROGLYPH" illuminating between its gold eyelids.

Two or three homeless people cower underneath a sign that reads "HEIROGLYPH'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION."

Chris drives off.

G) INT./EXT. VEHICLE - DAY - Chris' SUV rides along the BAY BRIDGE until it passes a sign that reads "580 DOWNTOWN OAKLAND."

H) EXT. DOWNTOWN OAKLAND - DUSK - The sunset and street light fight for attention against windows of the high-rise and street-art graffiti.

END MONTAGE

INT. SMALL, UPSCALE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Chris and Kai enter a concrete walled apartment as Chris provides a tour.

CHRIS
Living room. Maid comes in once a week to clean and do laundry. But she will not clean your dirty drawers so keep them off my clean floors.

(pointing to the sofa)
Your bed. No fucking in my house, thank you.

KAI
When does your cook come in?

CHRIS

Don't worry about that because
she's not here to cook for you.

THE BEDROOM

Chris and Kai standing in a tidy bachelor room.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

My room. Keep your belongs to the
side and out of the way, please.

Chris and Kai exit to enter...

THE BATHROOM

That is more like a closet space.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Bathroom. Spray when you number 2.
I pay way too much for this shitty
ass apartment to have it literally
smelling like shit.

THE KITCHEN

A bite-sized kitchen connected with an even tinier dining
room space.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Kitchen. Get your own food. Don't
eat mine.

Kai opens the fridge and grins as the door bell RINGS.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I mean that.

Chris leaves to answer it while Kai ignores her friend's
warning and scavenges for treats.

Moments later, Kai slyly retreats from the fridge as Chris
and a young chocolate transman (RYLIE) enter with barber gear
on hand.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

(motioning from Rylie to
Kai)

Rylie, this is Kai: college buddy
and new Product Designer for
Heiroglyph.

(motioning from Kai to
Rylie)

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Kai, Rylie: intern and soon to be
Interim Program Manager.

Rylie and Kai slap hands and chests as Kai settles into a
chair in front of Rylie.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Rylie is being trained to cover the
current program manager when she
goes on maternity leave next month
but I'm trying to get him into a
full-time position.

Rylie wraps the barber cape around Kai then lays out her
gear.

RYLIE

You're going to be on Mitch's team
right?

KAI

Yea.

RYLIE

Good luck with that.

KAI

Why do you say that?

CHRIS

Mitch is the golden child of the
organization which means a lot of
people listen to him, including
Directors and VPs.

RYLIE

He also really loves the *urban*
community.

KAI

Oh... one of those.

CHRIS

Stay on his good side and you'll do
just fine.

A beat.

KAI

Speaking of community...

CHRIS

Avoid it. It's a field of drama.

RYLIE
 (proudly)
 And sexy ass women--

CHRIS
 --Who are bat shit crazy.

KAI
 (suggestive)
 The kind that bite?

CHRIS
 No, the kind that casts spells.

KAI
 When was the last time you got
 laid, buddy?

Rylie and Kai both laugh.

CHRIS
 The last time I wanted to waste the
 time and money. Just wait until you
 start working. Then let's see then
 if you have time to chase after
 females.

KAI
 I don't chase, my friend. I glide.

CHRIS
 Well prepare yourself for friction
 because juggling women and work
 ain't going to be easy. This ain't
 college.
 (noticing Kai dropping
 food on her floor)
 And this ain't your momma's house.

Rylie TURNS ON her clippers as Kai picks up her food like a
 scolded child.

INT. ZOE & NIYA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A modest two-bedroom apartment with an Afrocentric feel.

A Nubian princess (NIYA) removes rotten food from the kitchen
 fridge with gloved fingertips as a drained Zoe enters.

ZOE
 Hey beautiful.

NIYA

Hey gorgeous. Can we talk about rotting things growing in the fridge again?

ZOE

Oh yea... I've been meaning to clean that out.

Niya gives Zoe a look. Zoe drops the act and joins her friend in the cleaning.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. How was your day?

NIYA

The usual. I'm just ready to graduate.

(more to herself)

Just two more months.

(to Zoe)

How was your day?

ZOE

The usual. But taking your advice and focusing my energy on what I want.

(quietly)

And how I'll make rent this week.

Niya collects her disappointment.

NIYA

Again Zoe? You've been short the last two months. You know I can't afford to keep covering you.

ZOE

I know. I'm sorry. I'm just not making what I used to in tips even with the bump in hourly pay.

NIYA

Whatever happened to that internship that you were offered?

ZOE

It's unpaid.

NIYA

Oh that sucks. Well, they're hiring another part-time cashier at the boutique for \$13.50 with flexible hours. I could talk to the manager for you.

Zoe frowns.

ZOE

I don't know if I can take on another service job right now.

NIYA

I hear you, Zoe, I really do. But I'm also not trying to become an accountant with bad credit either.

INT. HEIROGLYPH CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A conference room with glass doors.

At the head of the table sits MITCH, an early thirties male with a wiry frame.

MITCH

Before we start our daily scrum meeting, I wanted each of us to give brief introductions since we have two new team members joining us today. I'll go ahead and start. I'm Mitch Connor. Product Design Manager.

Moving left... a programmer type (DAVE).

DAVE

Dave O'Brien, Product Design Summer Intern.

A quiet guy (RAJIV).

RAJIV

Rajiv Chatterjee, UX Lab Technician.

A nerdy red-head (KYLE).

KYLE

Kyle Huntley. UX Researcher.

Finally, the only woman of the group, dressed similar to her male counterparts and with glasses.

KAI
Kai Jackson. Product Designer.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Same conference room. This time with just Mitch and Kai talking across the table from each other.

MITCH
Let me start off by saying, it's an absolute pleasure to finally have you on board with us. The guys in Engineer were really gunning for you but with your stellar recommendations and academic record, I knew that the Product Design team would be a better fit for you.

KAI
I'm really happy to be a part of the team.

MITCH
Well, let me jump right in and ask you something, Kai. I know you answered this question in your 4th interview but now that you're hired I was hoping you would be a little more candid with me.

KAI
(slight discomfort)
OK.

MITCH
As a user, how do you feel about our product?

A beat.

KAI
I think it has a lot of potential for growth--

MITCH
--Keep it 100, Kai.

Another beat.

KAI
It'll be the next Myspace in two years.

MITCH

You see that's exactly how I feel.

Mitch straightens up.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I'm going to level with you.

KAI

OK.

MITCH

We need a new product. And we need it to be sticky. Our user retention rate has steadily declined the last 3 quarters. But the last two products we released didn't get the sort of traction that we needed it to. As a result our board is now considering purchasing a music streaming service in order to turn Heiroglyph into a viable paid social media service by the end of this year. Can you believe that?!

Mitch rises from his chair as if ordained by God.

MITCH (CONT'D)

But to me, that goes against everything this company stands for. How can we call ourselves revolutionary if our users are limited to only those who can afford it? And what sort of experience will that be for the users that can? No, no, no... There has to be another way. And so, that's where you come in.

KAI

You want me to design a new product that will re-engage and retain our users?

MITCH

Exactly!

KAI

OK. I already have an idea in mind so I could send you a proposal next week.

A beat.

MITCH

You really are everything your references said you would be.

Kai's not sure what that means.

With his groin a foot from Kai's face, Mitch sticks his fist towards Kai for a pump.

Kai warily responds in kind.

INT. HEIROGLYPH CAFETERIA - DAY

A buffet-style cafeteria with an urban loft feel. Kai packs her plate with as much grub as her eyes desire.

Footsteps away, Chris and Rylie talk business.

RYLIE

Indira plans to send me to China next month to talk to the supplier. She told me this would be their first time sending an intern.

CHRIS

I made the suggestion to Indira since she's knocked up and no one else on your team wanted to go.

RYLIE

Really? Why is that?

CHRIS

You can't breathe the air, the food and water will give you the shits, and you work more hours. Basically prepare to be awake for 22 hours a day.

RYLIE

So why would you suggest I go?

CHRIS

It's good experience and it's a good way for them to consider you for a permanent position.

(to Kai)

Damn, you got enough food?

KAI

What? It's all free right?

CHRIS

Yea, but must you look so greedy.

KAI

But you know how I feel about food.

CHRIS

Wait until you start packing on the pounds then let's see how you feel about food.

Rylie and Chris suddenly begin to part ways as they walk towards the seating area.

KAI

Where are you guys going?

RYLIE

We don't sit next to each other.

CHRIS

We want to appear "*social*." Don't worry, I'll introduce you to some folks first but then you're on your own after that.

Disappointed by the end of boi time, Kai follows Chris to a table of employees.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

CLOSE SHOT: A large poster banner reading "HEIROGLYPH'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION"

Underneath it, tech bros mill about on landscaped lawns as loud music roars over their dull chatter. White booths of gratuitous food and beer cage them in.

On one patch of earth, Kai fraternizes with her teammates.

MITCH

So what's your impression of the Bay so far, Kai?

KAI

It's cool.

MITCH

Where you looking to rent?

KAI

Oakland.

DAVE
 (under breath)
 Of course.

Kai notes Dave's micro aggression with her eyes while Mitch ignores it with his.

MITCH
 I'm really considering a move out there. My new landlord just hiked my rent to \$4,000 a month. Can you believe that? Four thousand for a one-bedroom? It's outrageous.

DAVE
 You couldn't pay me to move to Oakland. Last weekend, my frat brother got held up at gunpoint by some thugs.
 (to Kai)
 No offense.

KAI
 (without expression)
 Why would I take offense?

DAVE
 Oh you know...

Kai turns to stare at Dave.

KAI
 No, actually, I don't know.

As he fumbles to search for an appropriate response, a popular trap-rap beat drops (perhaps the same as the one Kai was enjoying in the car with her Mom).

MITCH
 Oh snap! This is my shit!

Mitch breaks out in a squibble of a dance as he raps along. Dave follows suit with drunk bro moves of his own. And Kai's face wonders why is this her life?

She attempts to discreetly slip away but Mitch stops her.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 Hey! Where are you going? The party's just getting started!

KAI
 I need a drink.

MITCH
That's what I'm talking about!

DAVE
Get me a beer while you're up
there?

He asks more like a statement as Kai walks away.

On her exit, Chris stops her.

CHRIS
Remember: Mitch is someone you want
on your side.

KAI
I know.

Kai drudges towards...

A SHADED AREA.

Once out of view, she takes a few hits of her vaporizer.

Kai relaxes with each inhale of smoke while her eyes search
the distant for something more.

And eventually, they find it at...

A DRINK BOOTH.

Zoe serving drinks at one of the stations along the park's
outline.

A programmer approaches her.

ZOE
What would you like to drink?

BROGRAMMER
You.

Zoe ignores him with an eye roll.

ZOE
On the rocks?

A nervous guy.

OCD GUY
No, thank you. I've seen the way
you guys handle ice.

ZOE
Anything else?

A man easy on the eyes.

NICE GUY
A smile would be nice.

A cold stare shot while handing him his beverage.

ZOE
Enjoy your drink.

Zoe takes an eyes closed moment to herself.

When she opens them, Kai is standing there with a warm smile.

KAI
Hi.

ZOE
Hi.

Although intrigued by the novelty of Kai, Zoe quickly returns to her stoic demeanor.

ZOE (CONT'D)
What would you like to drink?

KAI
Uhhh... Yea... Can I get a beer.

ZOE
Sure.

Zoe pours a cup from the beer tap as they both pretend to ignore their attraction.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Anything else?

KAI
No, that's it. Thank you.

ZOE
You're welcome.

Kai leaves an appropriate tip for Zoe then slowly saunters off. On her exit, she looks back at Zoe who is also staring back with a smile.

THE MAIN AREA.

Kai returns to Team Design who are dancing rather awkwardly with Mitch egging them on.

It's too much for Kai to bear so she attempts to exit the spectacle unnoticed again.

But Mitch doesn't take his eyes off Kai.

MITCH
C'mon, Kai!

Kai slowly begins to move her arms like a stiff puppet, with as limited movement as possible. It's enough to satisfy Mitch.

MITCH (CONT'D)
There you go!

And enough to make Dave jealous.

He tries to steal Mitch's attention away with poor imitations of hip-hop moves. But Mitch's eyes are too fixated on Kai to allow Dave's drunken missteps to break through.

MITCH (CONT'D)
(to Kai)
I know you can do better than that!

Kai's eyes roll and fall upon Zoe, who is watching the interaction with empathy at her booth nearby.

And then, Kai quickly shifts her energy to execute humble swag moves that defy gravity and gender.

Mitch's eyes widen with hungry excitement.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Uh-oh! Team Design in the house!

Kai's teammates cheer and hype her on as Dave tries to mask his envy.

Zoe grins as she realizes this show is for her.

Mitch doesn't get the memo so he moves in closer to Kai.

MITCH (CONT'D)
(to Kai)
How do you do that move?

KAI
(rather annoyed)
I'm just freestyling.

MITCH

Wow.

Mitch poorly attempts to mimic. Zoe laughs while a familiar customer returns.

NICE GUY

(to Zoe)

You see I knew you would look better if you smiled.

Without blinking, Zoe flashes.

ZOE

And you would look better if you were gone!

A stomach punch blow to his ego that he mistakes for his heart.

NICE GUY

I was just trying to be nice.
(under breath with his
back turned)
Bitch.

Zoe closes her eyes and chants to herself.

Back at the minstrel show, Kai loses steam so Dave attempts to capitalize. He jumps in front of Kai, challenging her to a dance off.

DAVE

Let's see what you got.

MITCH

Uh-oh! Dance battle!

Underwhelmed, Kai searches for her muse but this time, Zoe is gone. And it isn't long before Kai's interest in dancing leaves too.

FADE TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Kai explains her proposal to Mitch via Powerpoint presentation.

KAI

The new product that I propose integrates two forms of machine intelligence: a deep neural network and a reinforcement-learning algorithm. With these two forms of intelligence, we'll not only be able to more accurately analyze and extrapolate information on user behavior but drive users to new content that is more in line with their interests, thus, keeping users plugged in.

MITCH

This is brilliant. This is just... brilliant.

KAI

Thank you.

MITCH

How long do you think it would take to build and test out?

KAI

Around five to six weeks. I've already specified the static codes so it should be pretty straight forward from there.

A beat.

MITCH

(more to himself)

Nothing is ever straight forward around here.

Then a reflective pause.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I'm going to be frank with you. I need to present a new product to the directors by the end of this quarter. And there's no way we'll meet that deadline if we leave it up to one of our many programmers. I know it's outside of your job description but with your background in AI, I have full confidence in your ability to bring this product from concept to life.

KAI

With all due respect, I decided to join the Design team so I could focus on big picture items. I actually have a lot more ideas on how to create--

MITCH

--And we'll have plenty of time to explore them after the directors' meeting.

It dawns on Kai that this wasn't a question.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You can work directly with Indira, and whoever else you need to in order to save time. Just tell them, Mitch Connor sent you. I'll also give you Dave to support.

KAI

(without expression)

OK.

INT. WOMEN'S BOUTIQUE - DAY

An Ann Taylor-styled women's clothing boutique. Two or three customers shop quietly while Zoe reads a book.

The front door RINGS open as Blonde and Brunette enter the sweet calm with quiet chatter.

They shuffle through hanged clothes. Picking out items they like... carelessly dropping others. Zoe eventually looks up from her novel to see the trail of clothes they leave behind.

ZOE

(to Blonde and Brunette)

Do you need help finding anything?

They're too immersed in vapid conversations to respond but they look eager to buy so Zoe returns to her book.

A page turned later, the store doorbell RINGS CLOSED with the two women now gone.

Unimpressed and beyond annoyed, Zoe picks up after the mess as Niya enters upbeat.

NIYA

Hey gorgeous!

ZOE
Hey beautiful. Why are you so cheerful?

NIYA
I just passed my corporate tax exam!

ZOE
Oh, that's so wonderful! Congratulations!

NIYA
Thank you! Let's go out to celebrate tonight!

Zoe loses her excitement.

ZOE
Like where there's people?

NIYA
Yes. It'll be fun! It's Reggae night at the Parish.

ZOE
I'm kinda tired. Why don't we do a movie night instead? I'll buy the wine.

NIYA
Because we do that all the time.

ZOE
And we enjoy it each and every time. Why fix something that isn't broke?

NIYA
OK you are way too young to be sounding like someone's grandma. We're going out!

CUT TO:

INT. OAKLAND NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Reggae nightclub with a melanated crowd. Zoe and Niya enter, excited and already moving to the pulsating Caribbean beats.

NIYA
See, I told you this would be fun!

A few more steps in and an attractive brother grabs Zoe's hand and pulls her closer to him.

RUDE BROTHER
Hey sexy, where's your man at?

Zoe slides herself away from the man and back towards Niya.

ZOE
(referring to Niya)
She's my date.

Without skipping a beat.

NIYA
(politely)
Hi. We're here together.

RUDE BROTHER
Y'all some dyke bitches, huh? Such a damn shame. All that sexy gone to waste.

Without skipping a beat.

NIYA
And yet, we still choose waste over you.

RUDE BROTHER
Fuck you, you ugly ass bitch!
You're lucky I don't believe in hitting bitches.

NIYA
No, actually, *you're* lucky I don't believe in hitting bitches.

RUDE BROTHER
What the fuck did you just say to me, you dyke bitch?! Do you know who the fuck you're talking to?

Niya takes a deep inhale with eyes closed, preparing to unleash a holy wrath on the brother.

Before she opens them, Zoe grabs her hand and quickly escorts them both out as the brother continues to heckle obscenities at them.

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

A lively sports dive bar. Basketball fans cheer as the Warriors play on multiple wide-screen TVs.

Rylie and Kai talk while Chris is plugged into the dramatics of the game.

RYLIE

I heard you're managing Dave now?

KAI

Yea.

RYLIE

Let me know how that goes. Last week, he asked me if I had a real penis... while we were both taking a piss. Then he proceeded to see for himself even after I told him to buzz off.

KAI

Are you serious?

RYLIE

Yea.

KAI

Did you report him?

CHRIS

(rather annoyed)

Rylie is just an intern. He can't afford to stir trouble. Now can we please stop talking about work? The game is on.

Rylie nods in agreement.

Kai loses interest.

KAI

I'm going to get a food menu.

She heads for...

THE FRONT BAR.

Niya and Zoe enter and see the flocks of fans hypnotized by flat screens.

NIYA

Uhmmm no.

Kai stares at Zoe from the bar but goes unnoticed by the two.

ZOE
I second that.

A second or two later, Kai discreetly follows them out.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Niya looks around for another refuge while Zoe is ready to return to her shelter.

ZOE
Can we go home now?

NIYA
Let's try one more spot.

Niya spots a sign that reads "Sunday Soul" outside of a tavern bar blasting "Say it loud, I'm Black and I'm proud" by James Brown.

NIYA (CONT'D)
Ooo what about here? This looks promising...

They enter expecting fire...

INT. HIPSTER DIVE BAR - SIMULTANEOUS

But finding cold in it's place. And what a place it is. It's teaming with young hipsters attempting to feel the spirit but without any soul around.

Niya and Zoe are shell shocked.

NIYA
I'm sorry but I can't... I just can't.

A pair of green eyes beats a small Djembe drum as he walks by Niya and Zoe in awe of their afro-calm. Niya and Zoe become visibly uncomfortable as he pounds his drum harder.

ZOE
(to Niya)
Can we please go home now?

NIYA
Yeaaaa, let me use the rest room real quick first.

As Niya quickly heads to the toilet, Zoe retreats to a dark corner.

Soon after, Kai enters and scans the bar for Zoe, spotting her in the shadows. Kai pretends not to notice her as she casually moves her way onto the dance floor to put on another show.

An upbeat soul groove comes on as Kai moves unassuming as members of the crowd begin to watch.

And it's not long before she catches Zoe's eyes as well. And keeps them while she dances with confidence.

A few moves in, Kai finally lets her eyes lock onto Zoe for too many heartbeat flutters for either of them to survive. But thrive they do as they both get lost in their magic.

Kai's eyes eventually ask Zoe to join. Zoe smiles and slowly dances towards Kai, but with a couple feet of distance.

Kai moves to dance closer to Zoe.

As their chemistry peaks, Zoe leans into Kai and whispers something inaudible in her ear.

They exchange numbers.

Then Kai exits as Niya returns.

NIYA (CONT'D)

(to Zoe)

Why are you glowing? Did you get high without me?

Zoe slyly smiles.

INT. CHRIS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kai is on the couch, on the phone, under covers to muffle her voice as Chris SNORES in the adjacent room.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

You finally decided to call me back, huh?

KAI

Yea, I've just been busy.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

That's what I figured. How's work going?

KAI

It's OK.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

How are your coworkers?

Kai pauses to find her words.

KAI

They're alright.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

Remember to stay focused on the work and out of office politics.

KAI

I know.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

Have you found an apartment yet?

KAI

Not yet. I don't have enough money saved yet.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

I could loan you some, Kaya.

KAI

That's OK, Mom. I'll be fine.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

You don't want to outstay your welcome.

KAI

I know, Mom. How are you doing?

Anything to change the subject.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

The same. Tired and ready to retire.

KAI

It's really late for you. You should get your rest.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

OK. Take care of yourself, Kaya. I'm still here for you.

KAI

I know. Good night.

Kai hangs up and then dials another number.

Zoe answers after the first ring.

ZOE (O.S.)
Hello.

KAI
I was hoping you were still up.

ZOE (O.S.)
(hiding sleep in her
voice)
Yea... I was just reading. How are
you?

Their voices trail off as they continue their late night
flirt.

FADE TO:

INT. HEIROGLYPH BULLPEN - DAY

A cacophony of talking and typing in an open plan space with
an industrial feel.

Kai and a dozen or so Heiroglyph employees are plugged to
screens while others chat at their workstation.

Chris enters.

CHRIS
How come I didn't see you at lunch?
You never skip a meal.

KAI
(focused on screen)
I'm trying to get out of here by
six.

CHRIS
Where you off to?

Kai hesitates.

KAI
A date.

CHRIS
And you didn't think to tell me
about it in advance?
(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You really need to vet these women through me, buddy. I told you the community is small. What's her name?

KAI

Zoe.

CHRIS

Yea, no, I don't know her. She's probably new. How did you meet her?

KAI

Dancing.

CHRIS

You stay true to that hustle, don't you? Well, good luck.

Kai smiles to herself as Chris exits.

Seconds later, an eight month pregnant woman (INDIRA) appears.

INDIRA

Hey, Kai. Thanks for sending me an update this morning. I know Mitch has you coding so if you need any help pushing things along, let me know.

KAI

Thanks. I appreciate that. Dave's already working with Engineer to dogfood the app so we're making good time.

Indira checks to see if anyone is listening or watching. The coast is clear.

INDIRA

How's that going?

KAI

How's what going?

INDIRA

Working with Dave.

A beat.

KAI

It's going.

A beat.

INDIRA
I see. Well, enjoy your weekend.

KAI
Thanks. You too.

Kai finally checks the time. She's late and her phone's dead.

KAI (CONT'D)
(silently mouths)
Fuck!

EXT. FOOD TRUCK STREET - NIGHT

Friday Nights at Oakland Musuem. Food trucks line the block as a large eclectic crowd of patrons dance to afrobeats nearby.

In the middle of this festive fun, Zoe impatiently waits for something... or someone.

She checks her phone for one last irritating time then finally decides to leave.

As she's about to depart Kai arrives, still catching her breath.

KAI
I am so sorry I'm so late.

ZOE
I've been waiting here for half an hour.

KAI
I lost track of time.

ZOE
And you couldn't text to say you would be late?

KAI
My phone's dead. My charger's home.
I'm sorry.

Seeing the sincerity of Kai, Zoe lets it go with a deep sigh.

KAI (CONT'D)
Thank you for waiting.

ZOE
You're welcome.

A heat flirt moment passes before Zoe shifts back to normal... And back to walking with Kai following behind.

ZOE (CONT'D)
So what is it that you do?

KAI
I'm a Product Designer for Heiroglyph.

ZOE
Do you enjoy it?

KAI
I don't know yet. Too early to tell. I just started four weeks ago. What about you? Do you enjoy what you do?

ZOE
Bartending? No.

KAI
Why not?

Zoe stops to stand in a food truck line.

ZOE
Bartending was just supposed to be the job I did to pay for my degree. But then it became the job I did because my degree doesn't pay. And now, it's the job I do because I don't have a degree.

EXT. AMPITHEATRE SEATING AREA - NIGHT

Kai and Zoe sit on the elevated stairs as they enjoy the ambiance of people dancing.

KAI
I'm not really passionate about what I do either. I'm just good at it and it pays well so... you know.

ZOE
What are you passionate about?

KAI
I don't know. Probably dancing.

ZOE
I can see that. You ever think
about doing it professionally?

KAI
No, I just enjoy doing it for
myself.

ZOE
And for the women you woo.

Kai's taken off guard by Zoe's playful fact check.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Yea, I know you followed me into
that club.

KAI
You saw me?

ZOE
The minute you walked through the
door.

KAI
Wait, if you recognized me, why did
you pretend like you didn't see me?

ZOE
I didn't pretend like I didn't see
you. I actually saw you quite well
from the corner of my eye. And what
I saw was *you* pretending not to see
me.

Busted. But Kai is impressed, not alarmed.

KAI
You knew I would dance for you.

Zoe shoots a "of course" look to Kai.

ZOE
You know, you could've just come up
and talked to me.

KAI
But then I wouldn't have seen how
you moved.

Another flirty beat that Zoe doesn't let herself dance to for
too long.

ZOE
When's your birthday?

KAI
Why? So you can judge me based upon
my astrological sign?

ZOE
Precisely.

Her candor tickles Kai.

KAI
I'm a Capricorn.

ZOE
Ohhh, I love Earth signs.

KAI
What are you?

ZOE
A Gemini.

KAI
Ohhh boy.

ZOE
Don't hate. Don't even hate.

KAI
Yea it's probably best I keep my
mouth shut.

ZOE
(sarcastically)
Yea, let's see how long that lasts,
Capricorn.

This time, they're both unable to escape their eyes' amorous exchange.

EXT. AMPITHEATRE DANCE AREA - NIGHT

Zoe and Kai groove to each other's rhythms to mellow afrobeat song.

Kai moves in closer to dance more intimately with Zoe who allows the entry with tease.

EXT. ZOE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Zoe and Kai are at the footsteps of Zoe's apartment door. Eyes still locked on each other.

ZOE
Thanks for the wonderful evening. I had a really nice time with you.

KAI
Me too.

Kai leans in for the kiss, but Zoe casually dodges it.

ZOE
Have a goodnight.

KAI
You too.

Zoe enters her apartment.

Kai saunters home with the beat of the night still in her feet.

INT. NIYA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Niya stands in front of the mirror dressed in an elevated-shoulder dress suit and big-framed glasses. She practices lines under her breath until there's a KNOCK at the door.

ZOE (O.S.)
Hi beautiful, you still up?

NIYA
Yea, gorgeous, come in.

Zoe enters.

ZOE
Where are you off to?

NIYA
Nowhere. I'm just trying out a new look. What do you think?

ZOE
You look like an office stiff.

NIYA
That's exactly the look I'm going for! Guess who got offered a job today?

ZOE
Oh my goddess, congratulations!

NIYA
(princess bowing)
Thank you, thank you! I'm just
trying to imagine myself in the
role now.

ZOE
What's the job?

NIYA
An auditor for one of the Big Four.

ZOE
Ewww.

NIYA
I know right! That was my initial
reaction. But then they sent me my
salary and benefits and now I'm all
like whaatttt...
(handing Zoe a piece of
paper)
Perhaps making a living out of
making people's lives a living hell
isn't too bad after all.

Zoe's eyes widen at the amount on paper.

NIYA (CONT'D)
You think I'm a sell-out, don't
you?

ZOE
(handing paper back to
Niya)
Niya, I sell poison to people for a
living.

NIYA
Right. OK. I can do this. This is
just setting me up for the next
best thing. Like Olivia Pope before
"Scandal." Working for the man
until I become my own man...
Woman... Whatever.

ZOE
I'm thinking about taking the
internship.

NIYA
The one that doesn't pay?

ZOE
Yea. The internship is still posted
so I'm thinking I could negotiate
some sort of a stipend.

NIYA
You know I support you. Just make
sure you can make rent.

ZOE
I know.

NIYA
Anyways, how was your date?

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS' KITCHEN - SIMULTAENOUS

Kai peruses the fridge as Chris watches a basketball game in
the adjacent living room.

KAI
It was cool.

CHRIS (O.S.)
What did you guys do?

KAI
We talked and danced.

CHRIS (O.S.)
You still want to hit it?

KAI
I like her.

CHRIS (O.S.)
Don't get too caught up too soon.

KAI
I know.

She closes the fridge door as we...

CUT TO:

INT. NIYA'S BEDROOM - SIMULTAENOUS

Niya and Zoe in comfy blankets on the couch, drinking wine while the TV plays on silent.

NIYA

Damn her page is private. Ooo make a Heiroglyph profile and then add her as a friend.

ZOE

You know I don't like social media.

NIYA

Or people. Or going out. I know. I get it. But I want to investigate this situation.

ZOE

And why is that?

NIYA

To ensure she's not a lying, manipulative twat like Tye. What's her sign?

ZOE

Capricorn.

NIYA

Oh now you know I've got to do a full reading.

Zoe sighs.

INT. CHRIS' LIVING ROOM - SIMULTAENOUS

Kai receives a notification on her phone: a Heiroglyph friend request from Zoe. She grins as Chris looks over her shoulder.

CHRIS

Is that her?

KAI

Yea.

CHRIS

She looks familiar. Let me see.

Chris takes the phone before Kai can protest.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Yo buddy, you're dating stripper
girl!

KAI
What are you talking about?

CHRIS
Yup. Rylie's friend Tye used to
bang her. I told you the community
is small as fuck.

Chris shows Kai a photo on her phone.

CLOSE SHOT of the photo reveals: Zoe happily wrapped in the
arms of a stud who looks like a muscular version of Kai.

As commercials still roll, Chris returns to her couch and
takes out her laptop to work.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I heard they were still fucking too
but honestly, I'd be more concerned
about the stripping.

KAI
And why is that?

CHRIS
(without pausing from
typing)
Because most of those women do more
than just "lapdance" in the
champagne room. And even if your
girl managed to avoid all that, she
still has had hundreds of men
groping all over her body and with
her consent. And we both know that
anybody that's able to do that for
money is able to do that for free.
I don't know about you, buddy, but
I'm not about that life.

Kai doesn't look like she is either.

INT. ZOE & NIYA'S LIVING ROOM - SIMULTAENOUS

Niya reads from her phone.

NIYA
"While Gemini and Capricorn are an
unlikely pair, this match will
certainly spark quite the fire!
(MORE)

NIYA (CONT'D)

The flames between these old souls will sear so bright, you both will want to take cover. But fear not, Gemini, for this is one blaze that you will not want to put out. Keep your cool and stay in your power. And just remember, you were built to rise from ashes."

ZOE

Hmmm.

NIYA

Well, that sounds intense. Good luck with that.

INT. CHRIS' LIVING ROOM - SIMULTAENOUS

Kai turns to Chris for advice.

KAI

What do you suggest I do?

CHRIS

Take the L and be grateful you found out before you caught anything, including feelings. Plus, you need to be focused on apartment hunting anyways. I do want my living room back eventually.

A harsh reminder to Kai of her adult life.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) INT. MID-SIZE APARTMENT - Kai enters a one-bedroom apartment with about a few dozen people already in it. By the time she reaches for an application, they're all gone.

B) INT. A JUNIOR STUDIO - Another crowd of folks but this time for an even smaller space. Kai looks at the listing price. CLOSE SHOT of THE FLYER reveals A "STELLAR DEAL OF \$2500/MONTH!" Kai walks away.

C) INT. DOWNTOWN APARTMENT - A decent apartment. As Kai picks up an application, a scruffy looking man (SCRUFFY GUY) marches straight towards the LANDLORD and hands over a stack of cash. The landlord beams. Scruffy Guy smirks. Kai sulks.

END MONTAGE

INT. THE BULLPEN - DAY

New day. Same bullpen.

A couple stations down from Kai, Dave pretends to be busy when Kai approaches.

KAI

Hi Dave. I wanted to follow-up with you on the status of the feedback report.

DAVE

(without looking up from his laptop)

I don't think Engineer has finished testing yet. They seem pretty busy down there.

KAI

Why didn't you tell me?

DAVE

What could you do? Plus, I already talked to Mitch about it and he said he's handling it. I'll let you know what he says.

Kai clenches her teeth and exits.

INT. HEIROGLYPH GYM - NIGHT

Kai looks disgusted as she probes new layers of fat on her body in a wall length mirror.

A few pokes in and she grabs a pair of dumbbells with resolve and walks a few feet over to where Rylie's spotting Chris' bench presses.

RYLIE

Fortunately, I was finally able to get the suppliers to agree to a 3% price reduction so the directors were really happy with that.

CHRIS

(out of breath)

That's... good.

RYLIE

How have things been around here?

(to Kai)

How's working with Dave going?

Kai gets in position to do curls.

KAI

He's useless. I've lost 2 weeks on the project because of him.

Chris finishes a set as Kai starts her workout.

CHRIS

I told Kai she should just do the work herself and give him real intern shit like organizing files.

RYLIE

We *interns* make \$5,000 a month. Do you really think that's a good use of our time?

CHRIS

And I make \$10,000 a month. Do you think it's a good use of mine?

KAI

And I don't care who does it. I just want to finish the job and go home.

CHRIS

I've already told you, buddy.
(while sitting up)
Heiroglyph is your new home.

The fifteen pound dumbbells prove to be too much for Kai so she exits to switch them out.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

(to Rylie)

Speaking of Pyramids, guess who Kai almost fucked?

RYLIE

Who?

CHRIS

Tye's stripper ex.

RYLIE

Who? Zoe?

CHRIS

Yup.

Kai returns with ten pound dumbbells to restart her curls when...

RYLIE
Zoe's not a stripper.

Kai stops dead in her tracks.

CHRIS
Tye said she worked at Club
Pyramid.

RYLIE
Yea, as a bartender but she
apparently quit around the same
time her and Tye broke up for real
this time.

Kai takes a deep inhale through her eyes...

CHRIS
(to Kai)
Yo my bad.

And exhales with defeated calm.

RYLIE
What happened?

CHRIS
I thought she was a stripper.

KAI
I thought she fucked men.

RYLIE
Why does either matter?

CHRIS
Are you kidding me, man?!

INT. CIVIC CENTER BART STATION - NIGHT

Chris, Rylie, and Kai descend into the BART underground station. As they enter the station, a number of homeless people beg for change but the trio are too engaged in strategy talk to notice... or rather to care.

KAI
What am I going to tell her?

RYLIE
Well, how long has it been since
you two spoke?

KAI
Three weeks.

RYLIE
Damn. You did her like that.

CHRIS
Just tell her things have been hectic at work and that you wanted to wait until things settled down before reaching out to her.

RYLIE
Yea because she probably hasn't heard that line before.

CHRIS
It's true though!

RYLIE
Yea but it's not the real reason.

CHRIS
Well, of course it's not the real reason but what do you suggest she say? "Yeah, I thought you was a hoe but then I found out you really wasn't so now we cool." I don't think so.

(turning to Kai)
Tell her you were busy.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS' BATHROOM - NIGHT

Kai's sits on the closed toilet with an earpiece on.

The phone RINGS a few times before someone finally answers.

ZOE (O.S.)
Hello.

KAI
Hey. How are you?

ZOE (O.S.)
(emotionless)
Great. You?

KAI
I'm good.

ZOE (O.S.)
Is there a purpose to your call?

KAI
Yes. I wanted to apologize for how long it's taken me to get back to you. I actually had a really great time with you on our date.

ZOE (O.S.)
Then why haven't you called?

Kai swallows her dry spit...

KAI
Truth is... I don't really have a good excuse.

ZOE (O.S.)
So then why haven't you called?

Then looks up to the heavens to ask the gods why? Kai deep breathes then responds.

KAI
I'm still crashing at my friend's place and I'm starting to overstay my welcome. But finding an apartment on top of working 12-hours a day has been more than overwhelming. But like I said, none of it is a good excuse.

A torturous pause.

ZOE (O.S.)
Do you still want to see me?

A sigh of relief.

KAI
Yes. Do you?

ZOE (O.S.)
Yes. But after you find an apartment.

Not the response Kai expected but the one she takes.

KAI
OK.

ZOE (O.S.)
Have a good night.

KAI

You too.

They hang up.

INT. CHRIS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kai enters the living room. Chris plays a basketball video game on mute.

CHRIS

So what's the verdict?

KAI

She still wants to see me but after I find an apartment.

CHRIS

Well, at least *she* has your priorities straight.

KAI

It's not like I haven't been trying, Chris.

CHRIS

I thought you had good credit.

KAI

Good credit ain't worth shit when you got people dropping a year's worth of rent in cash.

Chris puts her game on pause to turn to face Kai.

CHRIS

Kai.

KAI

What?

CHRIS

You know all you have to do is pick up the phone and call your mom.

Not the response Kai wants to hear.

KAI

I came out here to do my own thing on my own. I'm not trying to do the whole child-parent dependent relationship thing as an adult.

CHRIS

And I'm not trying to do the whole parent-dependent-on-child relationship but I still pay my mother's bills.

Kai looks away to hide her shame... or her annoyance... it's unclear.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

We all have to do things we don't like. Consider yourself lucky that your situation isn't the other way around.

Chris returns back to her game.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Plus, we both know, you don't like going long periods of time without getting pussy. So I suggest you suck up that pride of yours and go back in there, and call your momma.

Another truth, Kai cannot deny.

INT. CHRIS' BATHROOM - NIGHT

Kai is back in her confessional but this time with her Mom on the line.

KAI

Hi Mom.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

(sounding worried)

Is everything OK?

KAI

Yea. Everything is fine. How are you?

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

Exhausted but trying to finish up this deposition before I go to bed. How's work?

KAI

It's OK. It's work.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

I know how that goes. Have you found an apartment yet?

KAI

No. I haven't... That's actually why I'm calling. I wanted to see if I could borrow some money from you. I'll be able to pay you back by--

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)

--Of course Kaya. How much do you need?

CUT TO:

INT. A HOMELY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kai attempts to cook in her new apartment but this is clearly not her strength. She struggles as a pot boils over and a pan fizzes to smoke.

And now her phone is RINGING. It's Mom so she quickly puts it on SILENT as she tries to get the food, and her nerves, under control.

After some moments of chaos, Kai breathes herself to peace. And then, with focus, settles the stove's storm.

In moments time, all is to a peaceful simmer, including Kai who stands proud of herself.

Soon after, the front doorbell ALARMS the calm again.

Kai wipes her hands on a cloth over her shoulders then carelessly tosses it as she exits to answer the door.

INT. KAI'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The door opens to Zoe standing with simplistic beauty and charm. (XXX)

ZOE

Hey, I'm so sorry I'm so late. The BART was delayed by half an hour.

But Kai could care less.

ZOE (CONT'D)

(hands Kai a small present)

I got you this house warming gift.

Kai takes the gift while keeping her eyes on Zoe.

KAI
(motioning for Zoe to
enter)
Thank you. You look amazing.

Zoe smiles as her high heeled boots make a seductive clack against the bare hardwood floors as she enters...

INT. KAI'S LIVING ROOM - SIMULTAENOUS

The large living room space without furniture.

Zoe does a quick run of her eyes over the space while Kai's eyes roam Zoe.

ZOE
This is a really nice space.

KAI
Thank you. Most of my furniture
won't arrive until next week...

Kai's voice trails off as her eyes drift into a trance-like over Zoe's body.

And then, Zoe senses something off.

ZOE
Is something burning?

But Kai is still focused on Zoe, out of touch with her environment.

KAI
Possibly.

Zoe turns around to see...

SMOKE coming from the kitchen as she lets out a loud SCREECH.

Kai finally snaps from her daze to notice the fumes.

KAI (CONT'D)
Oh shit...

Then rushes into the kitchen to see...

CUT TO:

INT. KAI'S KITCHEN - SIMULTAENOUS

A small fire BLAZING on the stove.

KAI

Fuuuck!

She frantically searches for something... anything to put the fire out. SWINGING open empty drawers and cupboards.

But quickly realizing the only containers around are the ones currently being engulfed by the blaze.

Kai rushes to the sink and turns the water on as...

Zoe enters.

KAI (CONT'D)

Don't come in here!

As Kai is about to bare hand scoop water from sink to stove, Zoe SPOTS the small fire extinguisher underneath the cupboard.

She quickly grabs it and sweeps the fire before Kai's hands can release the water onto it's flames.

The fire goes out instantly as white dust floats in its place.

Zoe and Kai cough... or laugh... or both.

EXT. KAI'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

An illuminate night in an urban jungle backyard.

Zoe and Kai eat a salad in silence on the back porch steps.

KAI

Sorry for nearly killing us earlier.

ZOE

That's alright. Just thank goddess, I was there to save us.

KAI

I would've eventually put the fire out.

Zoe's eyes widen with disbelief. Kai swallows her grin.

KAI (CONT'D)

(turning to face Zoe)

Thank you for saving us.

ZOE
 (turning to face Kai)
 You're very welcome.

Zoe returns her attention to the night's sparkle.

ZOE (CONT'D)
 (taking in a deep breathe)
 This is really nice.

Kai moves in closer... ever so slowly... with her eyes fixed on the moon.

As Kai inches into her, Zoe pretends not to notice as both their breathes get heavier.

Then an idea strikes Zoe.

ZOE (CONT'D)
 Would you like to draw with me?

Kai halts her slow crawl.

KAI
 Like with pen and paper?

ZOE
 Yes.

KAI
 Right now?

ZOE
 (getting herself up)
 Yes, right now. C'mon the smoke
 should be gone by now.

INT. KAI'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Zoe and Kai sit across from each other on the hardwood floor with a letter-sized paper in between them. Their chests pulsate to an AMBIENT SONG with heavy 808 beats.

Zoe hands Kai a pen. Kai nervously takes it.

KAI
 Are we drawing anything in
 particular?

Zoe starts drawing with ease.

ZOE
 Whatever you want.

KAI

OK.

Kai begins to sketch in waves with Zoe, loosening up with each stroke.

They look up at each other occasionally.

Letting their souls catch eyes every so often...

Before letting them drop back down to paper again.

But during one of these eye linger gazes,

Kai finally gives in.

And with the melody of the song as her guide, she prowls towards Zoe like a panther to prey.

But Zoe is no deer.

She slides her way out of Kai's sly crawl with cat-like ease and onto her feet.

Kai stumbles but quickly catches her ground to liquid dance tease with another wild thang.

With each passing bar, their energy rises, as they both try to shake off each other's seductive attempts.

Finally, just as they are about to give in and reach climax...

THE DREAM SEQUENCE ENDS.

And Zoe stares into a space where Kai's eyes used to be with her hand still doodling. Kai is now on her feet.

KAI (CONT'D)

Did you want anything?

ZOE

(breaking from her daze)

Huh? What? I'm sorry, did you say something to me?

KAI

I said I'm going to the kitchen to get something to drink. Did you want anything?

ZOE

Oh uhmm...

She's still trying to bring herself back to earth. Somewhere on the descent, she pauses.

KAI
Are you OK?

Zoe's eyes meet Kai's who quickly finds herself in the same love trance as Zoe.

Without hesitation, Kai moves in for the kiss and this time, Zoe doesn't dodge it.

Instead, she wraps Kai into her. They devour each other as they fall back...

INT. KAI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Onto Kai's bed where they continue to feed off each others breath and skin, as if they've never tasted life before.

As Kai is about to undress Zoe, she pulls away.

KAI
What's wrong?

ZOE
Nothing. I just need to catch my breath.

Turned on by the thought, Kai dives in for more but Zoe does really need a moment. She delicately pushes Kai away.

And then realizes something is off again.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Wait. What time is it?

KAI
I don't know. Midnight maybe.

But that doesn't sound right to Zoe. So she checks the time herself.

ZOE
Oh my goddess. It's 3 am, Kai. I have to be up in 3 hours for my internship. I'm sorry. I've got to go.

Zoe gets up to leave.

KAI
Well, you can spend the night here
if you want?

ZOE
(turning to look Kai in
the eye)
You know very well if I did that,
we wouldn't be doing much sleeping.

Not the answer Kai wants to hear, but it's the answer she
can't deny.

ZOE (CONT'D)
What about tomorrow night?

KAI
I'm probably going to be working
late for the next two weeks to meet
a hard deadline. What about Friday
night?

ZOE
I work Friday night and this
weekend. What about meeting up
after your deadline?

Kai doesn't like the sound of that.

KAI
I'll see if I can leave work early
tomorrow. We have some sort of team
outing thing in the afternoon so I
might be able to slip out
afterwards. I'll call you a car.

Zoe kisses Kai on the cheeks as Kai grabs her phone.

CLOSE SHOT: A missed call from Mom from three hours ago.

EXT. DUPLEX HOME - NIGHT

Zoe and Kai face each other at the stoops of the stairs with
a longing gaze that stretches time.

A beat later, a car pulls up.

ZOE
Thank you for the evening.

KAI
Thank you for your company.

ZOE

Bye.

Zoe enters the vehicle and drives off into the quiet night.

INT. KAI'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kai stares hopelessly at the blanket of snow that covers much of the kitchen, in particular, the charred pots on the stove.

She notices Zoe's package sitting on the counter. She quickly unwraps it.

CLOSE SHOT of a small flea market clock with its hands stuck at five o'clock and an envelope attached.

Kai opens the envelope and takes out a note inside. She quiet chuckles as she reads it then sets it aside to begin clean-up.

As Kai scrubs the stove, she calls her Mom who is slow to answer.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
(groggy voice)
Hello.

KAI
Hey Mom.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
Is everything OK?

KAI
Yes. Everything is fine. Why do you sound asleep?

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
Because I was.

KAI
Oh I'm sorry. I thought you would be awake. Just call me when you're up.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
No no, it's OK. How are you doing? Isn't it late where you are?

KAI
Yea. I'm just... tidying up.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
My daughter?! Tidying?! And at this
hour? I must be dreaming.

KAI
(laughing)
Yea, I nearly burned down the
kitchen.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
Are you serious, Kaya? Are you OK?

KAI
Yes, I'm fine. Took it out before
there could be any real damage.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
How did it happen?

KAI
I was cooking and I got distracted.

A beat.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
You had one of your *friends* over
didn't you?

Kai smiles.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Mhmmm. That's what I thought.

KAI
Why are you sleeping in? You never
sleep in.

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
I retired yesterday.

KAI
Really?? Just like that?

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
I put my notice in four weeks ago.
But I didn't want to say anything
until I did it.

KAI
Wow! Good for you Mom!
Congratulations!

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
Thank you.

KAI
So what's the plan for post-
retirement?

MRS. JACKSON (O.S.)
Sleep. Seriously. I don't think
there's anything else I can do
besides sleep.

KAI
I'm happy for you, Mom... I'll let
you get your rest.

MRS. JACKSON
OK. I'm still here for you.

KAI
I know.

INT. DELILAH'S STUDIO - DAY

Zoe follows an eccentric middle-aged woman (DELILAH) around a
high-rise studio, with a wooden divider.

DELILAH
I am so happy to finally have some
help around here. I'm so used to
having an assistant that I forgot
how chaotic the fashion business
can be.

ZOE
What happened to your last
assistant?

DELILAH
I lost her along with my job.

ZOE
Oh, I'm sorry.

Delilah walks towards the backroom with Zoe at her heel.

DELILAH
No need to apologize. It's for the
better, trust me. No more of that
corporate fast fashion bullshit
that's destroying the art.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO BACK ROOM - DAY

Delilah and Zoe pushing back the curtains to shine light on the office/seamstress/photography/wardroom room.

DELILAH

Fashion is not supposed to be fast!
At least not the kind that's good.
It's an art, for God's sake! But
the greedy big wigs just don't get
that. But my mother always told me
in order to break the mold, you
need to break the rules. And I'm
ready. I'm ready to do things my
way... the right way.

Delilah walks over to a covered clothing rack.

DELILAH (CONT'D)

So my question to you is, are you
ready for this magical journey too?

ZOE

(without emotion)

Yes.

Without hesitation, Delilah uncovers the rack of clothes to reveal...

A CLOSE SHOT of six outfits that look like the gothic angst of today meets 16th century privilege.

DELILAH

Here it is. My very first
collection. I'm calling it Eve
Reborn.

Zoe feels the textures of the gowns.

DELILAH (CONT'D)

What do you think?

ZOE

It's beautiful.

DELILAH

Wait until you see my piece de
resistance. It'll arrive tomorrow
and hopefully on time before the
models show up for their fitting.
Which reminds me, we need to follow-
up with the venue about the timing
and--

Delilah's phone RINGS. She immediately takes it.

DELILAH (CONT'D)

What do you mean she needs to cancel?!... Don't you do this to me John...

Delilah exits the backroom and the studio.

INT. KAI'S WORKSTATION - DAY

Kai's fingers move fluidly over keyboard as she faces screen. She doesn't notice Mitch standing behind her watching with awe until he finally speaks.

MITCH

So this is what you look like in action.

Kai hides her annoyance before turning to face Mitch.

KAI

Are we heading to the field now?

MITCH

We are but before we go, do you have a second?

KAI

Sure what's up?

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Mitch and Kai sit across from each other again.

MITCH

How are things going?

KAI

Good. We should be finished by the end of next week.

MITCH

Great. I'm glad things are moving along... And how are things working out with Dave?

A long pause.

KAI
It's going OK.

MITCH
Keep it 100, Kai.

Another beat.

KAI
I think I just work better alone.

MITCH
You see, that's what I figured.

KAI
What's what you figured?

MITCH
Well, it's just that I sense that Dave doesn't feel challenged in his current role. It sounds like the work that you're giving him is too... administrative.

KAI
Well, it's the work that needs to be done. And he's an intern so...

MITCH
I know but I see an internship as more of a mentorship.

KAI
But he doesn't listen to me.

MITCH
Well, what's your approach?

Kai sighs as Mitch administers a lecture on good management.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Outdoor city soccer field. Team Design waits around while Dave argues with two young adult players (MARTIN and MALCOLM).

DAVE
We have this field reserved at two.
It's 2:10. That means, you guys
need to leave.

MARTIN

We've been playing here for years
and we've never had to make
reservations before.

DAVE

Well, I guess the rules have
changed now, haven't they?

MALCOLM

Fuck your rules, man.

MARTIN

Where's your paperwork?

DAVE

I told you my manager is on the way
with the document.

MALCOLM

Then let's wait for your master to
arrive.

DAVE

Fine. Have it your way.

Dave marches off seething with anger as Mitch and Kai arrive.

MITCH

What's going on here?

DAVE

These guys won't leave the field
although I've told them several
times we have reservations... I say
we call the cops.

MITCH

No, no. I can handle this.

Mitch loosens up his body. Then struts over to Martin and
Malcolm with calculated swag.

Dave follows close behind while Kai moves as far away from
the spectacle as possible.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What's up guys? What's the problem
here?

MARTIN

You take turns joining a game and
we're currently in the middle of
one.

(MORE)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

If you guys want to play, then you'll have to wait your turn. That's how it works around here.

MITCH

I hear you bro but here's the thing: we didn't know this beforehand. So instead, we went through the proper channels and paid \$150 to reserve this space for two hours.

Mitch hands Martin a document who gives it a once over.

MALCOLM

I don't give a fuck what channels you used or came from.

MARTIN

(handing Mitch back the document)

Look, this is the only outlet these kids have. If you want us to leave, then you tell them.

Mitch looks around to finally notice the tribe of brown boys staring at him without expression.

DAVE

(under breath to Mitch)

I told you. Let's just call the cops.

But Mitch's eyes are caught on something else... or rather someone.

MITCH

(looking at Kai)

That won't be necessary.

THE BLEACHERS

Kai's plugged into her machine when Mitch and Dave breach her audio bubble.

MITCH

Hey Kai. How's it going?

Kai turns her music off and looks up at him dreading what's next.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Might I recruit your assistance? We can't seem to get these guys to leave the field and you have such a collective calm about you that resonates with more... high-strung personalities.

KAI

They're not going to listen to me.

MITCH

Why don't we give it a try? Otherwise, we'll have no other choice but to call the cops. I have to justify the expense to corporate.

Mitch looks helplessly at Kai.

KAI

OK.

Kai gets up and heads towards Martin and Malcolm who see her coming.

MIDFIELD

MALCOLM

(to Martin)

Look, here comes their bitch.

Kai reaches them.

MARTIN

They sent you to deal with us didn't they?

KAI

Yes.

MARTIN

(scornfully to Kai)

So deal with us.

But Kai has nothing to say.

KAI

I don't care about any of this. I just want to go home.

MALCOLM

You need to tell your *teammates* to go home.

KAI
Because you really think they'll
listen to me?

MALCOLM
But they think we'll listen to
you?!

Kai sighs out of annoyance.

MARTIN
They're going to call the police,
aren't they?

KAI
What do you think?

Malcolm shakes his head.

A frightened look crosses Martin's face.

Malcolm recognizes his friend's angst and charges up.

MALCOLM
No, no, NO! We can't keep backing
down, Martin!

MARTIN
They're just kids for God's sake,
Malcolm.

MALCOLM
Yes and what type of message do you
think that sends them?!

MARTIN
You rather they learn the message
we did from dealing with the cops?!

MALCOLM
This is bullshit and you know it!

THE BLEACHERS

Dave and Mitch watch Malcolm and Martin argue from an
inaudible distant.

MITCH
Wow, look at them. I wonder what
she said to them.

DAVE

She probably told them we're calling five "0". I would've done that but then they would've called me a racist.

Mitch's eyes light up as the players pack up and Kai returns.

MITCH

(to Kai)

How did you get them to leave?

Kai can no longer hide her annoyance.

KAI

What choice did they have?

Mitch stares at Kai like she's magic while Dave looks at her with disdain. And Kai hides her disgust as she turns to walk away.

But she doesn't get far because it's now...

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Game time.

"Golden Boys" by Res plays as the Design team members on either side of the field, take their positions.

As goalie for Kai's team is Mitch, who looks like a Dad excited to play with his kids.

MITCH

Is everybody ready?!

And although these aren't his children, they know who Daddy is.

TEAM DESIGN

(enthusiastically)

Yea!!!

Except Kai. She looks to see if anyone else is as underwhelmed as she is.

They're not. It's just her and the man children happy to play outside.

Mitch BLOWS the whistle.

And Dave immediately takes command of the ball. He passes to a teammate for the quick and easy goal.

Team Dave celebrates.

MITCH

Alright. We let you guys get that one. No more easy ones after that.

(to his team)

C'mon Team Mitch! We got this!

TEAM MITCH

(minus Kai)

Yea!!

Dave gets the kick off again but this time, skips an open pass, to take the shot himself.

He is met by the defense of Rajiv who swiftly steals the ball then passes to Kai.

Dave runs towards Kai who wants nothing to do with the ball. She looks up the field and sees Kyle open.

Kai gets the pass off but not in enough time to miss a foul kick from Dave.

She hits ground as Team Mitch scores.

As the guys celebrates, Kai gets herself up with calm. No one saw the foul... or maybe no one cares... except Kai.

Another kick off.

But this time, Kai takes command of the ball, dribbling past Dave as if he didn't exist.

Then a quick pass to an open Rajiv for the goal!

Kai stares down an embarrassed Dave as Team Mitch celebrates.

MITCH

Go Team Mitch! Go Team Mitch!

Dave charges up.

DAVE

(to Team Dave)

Let's do this!

Kai takes command of the ball again. Dave tries to tackle her but misses. She passes to Kyle who passes to Rajiv. Then back to Kai for another easy goal.

The team high fives Kai as Dave's temperature reaches boil.

Rajiv receives the kick off pass from Kai. He dribbles past an opponent, then kick punts it to Kyle.

Kai runs towards the goal, prepared to receive the pass via head.

As her head meets ball, Dave comes plowing towards her, hitting more head than ball.

And then...

The world and music goes silent as Kai falls cold to the ground.

With her face up, eyes blurry, Kai is like a lifeless creature floating on clouds. Time stretches in this space as a single tear drops down her frozen face as she stares blankly into the sun.

In this frozen time and space, a peaceful look appears on Kai's face as the light from the sun is all she sees and feels.

Some hazy seconds later, darkness falls on her as team members gather around her to assist her up. Kai frowns as she realizes she's not dead yet.

She brings herself back to earth and back on two feet before anyone can touch her.

MITCH

Are you OK?

KAI

I'm fine.

MITCH

Are you sure? You two took a pretty hard blow. Dave has a pretty nasty gash on his head. He's probably going to need stitches.

Kai sees Dave clutching a bloody towel to his head as two team members help him to his feet.

KAI

I'm good.

INT. THE BULLPEN - DAY

Kai returns to her desk with Team Design still feeding off the high of outside.

MITCH

Are you joining us for happy hour?

KAI

(clutching her head)
I should probably take it easy
tonight.

MITCH

Yea yea, of course. You should also
make sure someone watches over you
tonight as well.

Realizing how that sounds, he backtracks.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You know... In case you have a
concussion.

KAI

OK.

He awkwardly departs. She quickly packs her bags.

As Kai is about to leave her station, Chris stops her.

CHRIS

Hey, what are you up to tonight?
It's the finals game!

KAI

I've got plans with Zoe. But you
and Rylie have fun.

A beat.

CHRIS

Rylie may not be able to make it.
Her Mom is sick.

KAI

Is she OK?

CHRIS

She has Type 1 diabetes. How OK can
she ever really be? So are you
coming tonight or what?

KAI

I told you, I have plans.

CHRIS

This game is once and a lifetime.
Zoe will still be there tomorrow.

KAI
You know I don't care about the
game.

CHRIS
Fine. Forget it.

Chris is about to march off when Kai's guilt kicks in.

KAI
Wait.

INT. WOMEN'S BOUTIQUE - NIGHT

Niya is at the cash register with a woman customer.

NIYA
Is this all for you?

PASSIVE CUSTOMER
Yes.

NIYA
Your total comes to \$320.16. Will
that be cash or credit?

PASSIVE CUSTOMER
Did you ring up the discount?

NIYA
Yup.
(pointing to the receipt)
It's right there under discount.

PASSIVE CUSTOMER
The calculation doesn't seem right.

NIYA
It's correct.

The customer doesn't buy it but she's too uncomfortable to
say it.

PASSIVE CUSTOMER
(looking around)
Can someone else ring it up... just
to be sure? Maybe your manager?

Niya takes a plunging inhale and replies ever so passively...

NIYA
The original price is \$368. With
the 20% discount, it makes \$294.40.
(MORE)

NIYA (CONT'D)

Sales tax is 8.75% of your subtotal which gets you to your total of \$320.16. However, if you still need help with the math, I could go in the back and get a calculator for you.

An assault to the woman's ego. But her vanity runs deeper than pride. She hands Niya her card.

PASSIVE CUSTOMER

That will be all.

Niya rings her up and hands the lady her bag.

NIYA

Now you be sure to have a wonderful evening.

The customer exits. Niya's customer smile disappears.

Zoe enters.

ZOE

Hi beautiful.

NIYA

Hey gorgeous. How was your first day?

ZOE

Too early to tell. How about you?

Niya prepares to close down the shop.

NIYA

Another day, another math lesson. Ooo and how was your dinner date? Details please. Can she cook?

ZOE

I don't know, the flames devoured the food before I could. But she made the most delicious salad that we enjoyed under the moonlight.

NIYA

Aww that sounds so magical.

ZOE

And then we drew together.

NIYA

Really? What was that like?

Zoe pulls out a drawing that looks like a labyrinth of swirls.

NIYA (CONT'D)

Wow.

ZOE

Right.

NIYA

Awh I want to draw with someone too!

Zoe's phone CHIMES.

CLOSE SHOT to see it's a call from Kai.

INT. OAKLAND DOWNTOWN SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Niya and Zoe chat as they walk.

NIYA

You know how much I hate watching men play with balls, right?

ZOE

Yes. So do I. But it's the only way I could see her tonight.

NIYA

Why not just meet up after the game?

ZOE

And become some sort of late night booty call? I don't think so.

NIYA

Fine. What's this Chris character like?

Zoe

I don't know.

NIYA

What's the last name? Maybe I know them.

ZOE

Uhhh...

NIYA

Damn Zoe, you doing me like that?
Just straight up blind date. No
intel, no basic background, no
nothing. You know I don't get down
like this.

ZOE

Well, it's Kai's best friend so
they're bound to have a lot in
common. Plus, this isn't a date.
We're all just hanging out so no
pressure.

Zoe opens the door for Niya.

NIYA

(as she enters)

You and Kai are not just hanging
out.

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Chris and Kai are at a table with two pitchers of beer and
some bar food.

CHRIS

Does she even enjoy watching sports
or am I going to have to entertain
her?

KAI

You don't have to entertain anyone.

CHRIS

Good, because I'm not. She doesn't
think this is a date or anything?

KAI

I doubt it.

CHRIS

Good, because it's not.

Kai notices Zoe and Niya's arrival and motions them over with
her hand over a sea of fans. Niya peeks her head through the
crowd to get a look at Chris.

NIYA

Ugh. This is going to be awkward.
I've met them before.

Niya and Zoe walk towards Kai's table.

ZOE

Really?

NIYA

Yea. We went on a date awhile back.

ZOE

How did it go?

NIYA

It didn't. We had nothing in common. Yet, they kept texting and calling. So eventually I did what any sensible girl would do and ghosted myself out of that situation.

ZOE

Oh boy.

NIYA

Exactly.

They reach Chris and Kai. Kai perks up at the sight of Zoe.

KAI

Hi.

ZOE

Hi.

Their bodies hide their chemistry, but their eyes do not.

KAI

(motioning towards Chris)

This is Chris. Chris, this is Zoe and...

NIYA

Niya. We've met before.

CHRIS

Really, I don't recall.

Niya feels the shade, but summons her strength to ignore it.

KAI

We've got beer and some snacks if you guys are hungry.

ZOE

We already ate but thank you.

Zoe and Niya sit across from Kai and Chris, respectively.

It's now game time so Chris's attention is back to screen. Zoe and Kai love whisper across the table while Niya is on her own.

After some lonely beats, Niya gives into the silence.

NIYA
(turning to Kai)
So Kai, where are you from?

A sudden interruption startles Kai.

KAI
Uhhmm... Michigan.

NIYA
What part? I got family out that way.

KAI
Grosse Pointe.

NIYA
Ewww I'm sorry.

ZOE
What's wrong with Grosse Pointe?

NIYA
Oh just the usual colorblind racists with money.

Chris jumps in the conversation, rather annoyed.

CHRIS
Who isn't a racist?

NIYA
Uhhmm oppressed people.

Zoe and Kai pretend to pay attention while the tips of Zoe's shoes play with the lengths of Kai's leg.

CHRIS
Oh here we go. Look, we all judge people based on superficial qualities and stereotypes.

NIYA
Yea but only certain people have the power to turn their judgements into rules and laws.

CHRIS

But that's why you work hard to obtain status. Life is not a handout. If you want something, stop complaining and start excelling.

NIYA

That would work if excellence actually equated to power.

CHRIS

It can if you're smart enough to know how to leverage power in your favor versus playing victim all the time.

NIYA

Or you're smart enough to know that master only gives you the illusion of power and therefore, you need to stop playing Uncle Tom.

A long tense beat.

CHRIS

Because I'm a nice person, I'm not going to go there with you.

NIYA

Oh please. Don't patronize me with your fake kindness. You did that to me on our date and I had little patience then and I have zero patience now. If I've offended you in any way use your words to say it. But don't act like you're doing me some huge fucking favor, like little ole me can't handle big ole you, like I'm some fucking delicate rose or something.

Chris is turned on by Niya's confidence.

CHRIS

I didn't mean to offend you.

But Niya feels discomfort with Chris' lingering gaze.

NIYA

(to Zoe)

I need to use the rest room.

Zoe immediately breaks from her love spell.

ZOE
Yea, me too.

Niya and Zoe head for the rest room.

INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM - NIGHT

Zoe and Niya are vaping inside one of the bathroom stalls while Niya rants.

NIYA
(mocking Chris' voice)
"It can if you're smart enough"
like I'm some idiot or something.
When here you are pretending like
you don't even know me.

Zoe takes a hit then passes to Niya who takes one herself.

ZOE
I'm sorry I haven't been more
attentive.

NIYA
It's not your apology to make. I'm
just so fucking sick of this shit.

ZOE
You know I see you, Niya.

Niya and Zoe exit the stall to stand side-by-side in front of the mirror above the sink. Niya deep breathes herself to calm.

NIYA
I know you do. It's just... when
does it end? When does it ever
fucking end?

A beat.

ZOE
I don't know if it ever does. But I
think it gets better.

NIYA
(near tears)
Then is it just me, Zoe? Is there
something wrong with me? Be honest
with me, please.

Zoe slowly shakes her head.

Niya closes her eyes while Zoe kisses the tear that's falling from her sister's cheek.

A warm smiles surfaces on Niya's face.

Zoe rests her head on Niya's shoulder.

Then makes funny faces in the mirror as Niya giggles. And it's not long before Niya joins in on the fun. They continue being silly until...

Zoe and Niya quickly shift back to "normal"; quietly fixing their hair and make-up in the mirror while holding in their high smiles.

A second or two later, we see two other women walk behind them and towards the stalls.

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS BAR - SIMULTAENOUS

Kai sits alone at the table, checking e-mails on her phone, as Rylie enters.

RYLIE

Hey what's up. Where's Chris?

KAI

(without looking up from
her phone)

She went to get a drink. How's your
mom doing?

RYLIE

She's fine now that I dropped off
some food and medicine.

KAI

You weren't going to stay with her?

RYLIE

No, my mom doesn't like anyone
around when she's got a cold. I
told Chris I would be back by
second half.

Kai looks up from her phone as she realizes she's been fooled. But Zoe and Niya returns so she's distracted again.

KAI
(eyes glued on Zoe)
Rylie, this is Niya and Zoe.

Niya and Rylie's eyes immediately find each other in unexpected heat.

RYLIE
It's nice to meet you.

NIYA
It's nice to meet you too.

RYLIE
I was just about to go to the bar to get a drink. Did you want anything?

NIYA
(reaching in her purse for change)
A red wine, please.

RYLIE
No no, it's OK. I got it.

NIYA
Why, thank you. That's so very kind of you.

RYLIE
My pleasure.

Rylie heads to the bar.

Niya and Zoe squeeze each other's hands under the table while failing to hide the happiness in their eyes.

Chris returns with a red wine on hand.

CHRIS
(handing it to Niya)
I remembered you liked red wine.

NIYA
Oh my goodness, thank you! I really appreciate that but uhmm... Rylie is getting me a drink. But you go ahead and enjoy it.

CHRIS
(butt hurt)
I don't drink wine.

ZOE
(scooping up the drink)
But I do. Thank you.

Rylie returns with a drink for Niya as Kai and Zoe continue their love flirt.

NIYA
Thank you.

RYLIE
You're welcome.

The roar of the crowd drowns out their conversations while Chris watches the game alone. But at this point, Chris no longer cares for the game even as the excitement of the crowd let us know her team is winning.

INT. ZOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kai and Zoe enter a clutter cozy bedroom with self-affirmations and soul empowering art on the walls. An ancestor altar sits peacefully in a corner.

Zoe lights incense and candles while Kai takes in the high vibrations of the room.

KAI
Wow. This is really nice.

ZOE
Thank you.
(putting MUSIC on)
I'll be right back. Make yourself comfortable.

KAI
OK.

Zoe shuts the door behind her while Kai sits nervously on the bed.

She vapes and inhales herself to calm as the second half of "Pyramid" by Frank Ocean PLAYS. It doesn't take long for the high to sink into Kai and to push her back onto the bed.

Not a moment too long, a mystical mist creeps into the room and over a peaceful Kai. As it reaches her head, she closes her eyes while her torso slowly rises up, as if being summoned.

Once fully upright, Kai opens her eyes to see Zoe's legs peeping through a black lace gown. She stands inches from Kai's face while Kai sits mesmerized by her prize.

Zoe lifts Kai's chin with the suggestion of her hand. Kai obliges.

And now, they're caught in a sensual gaze with Kai enchanted.

Zoe takes a couple seductive steps back,

And with wolf-like charm,

Begins a slow, seductive dance tease.

Playing with Kai through dance as she remains stuck in a trance.

A few bars in and Kai shakes out of her spell to confidently dance her way towards Zoe, who anticipated her revival.

As the music gets heavier, so does their breathes as they dance closer to each other.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

Zoe enters the room dressed in shorts and a tank top. No mist in sight.

Just Kai, lying on her bed like Sleeping Beauty.

Zoe blows all but one candle then enters the bed. As her head touches pillow, a sleeping Kai grabs Zoe to bring her closer to heart.

The unexpected embrace overwhelms Zoe to a state of flutter that she doesn't fight off.

As the music comes to an end, Zoe just breathes...

And breathes...

And breaths...

Until...

A final deep exhale to blow the last candle out on her night stand.

CUT TO:

INT. ZOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The POUNDING of a Xylophone ringtone.

Kai struggles to open her eyes.

She winces as she clutches her head with one hand and searches the bed for Zoe with the other.

It's a second before Kai notices Zoe rushing about the room fully-clothed.

Kai turns off the alarm and smiles at Zoe.

ZOE
(smiling at Kai)
Hey.

KAI
Morning.

A beat.

ZOE
I don't mean to rush you but I need
to leave in 10 minutes.

KAI
(disappointed)
Oh... OK.

Zoe comes over and kisses Kai on the cheek. Kai smiles.

INT. STUDIO BACK ROOM - Day

Zoe and Delilah stare at a black corset dress with a dark hoodie as if it breathes a life of it's own.

DELILAH
What do you think?

ZOE
It's gorgeous.
(preparing to write a tag
on the dress)
Which model is going to wear it?

DELILAH
You.

ZOE
What?

DELILAH

Yes. You're the perfect size! Plus, I've seen the models the agency sent you to replace Erica and they just don't have the look that I'm going for with this outfit. But you do.

ZOE

But I've never modeled before.

DELILAH

It's not that hard. You'll be fine! I'll even pay you \$50 in cash versus the 50 in trade that I'm paying the other models.

Zoe admires the dress as if it's already a part of her.

ZOE

It's just this outfit?

DELILAH

Yes.

ZOE

OK.

DELILAH

Great! Now try it on! Let's see how she fits!

INT. WORKER PODS - DAY

A couple of egg-heads plowing on laptops in egg-shaped pods with Kai amongst the flock.

Indira gently waves her hand in front of Kai's fixated eyes.

INDIRA

Hey, so sorry to disturb you.

The broken silence breaks Kai's focus.

KAI

Hey Indira. I thought you had gone on leave already.

INDIRA

Yea, I was supposed to.

A beat.

INDIRA (CONT'D)

I know this is really last minute but I was wondering if you would be finished by this Friday instead of next Friday?

KAI

Well, Dave just gave me the feedback report this morning so I'm still working through the changes.

INDIRA

I know I'm asking for the impossible but can you do it?

Another beat.

KAI

(sternly)

Rylie is fully capable to take over in your absence.

INDIRA

It's not him I'm concerned about... But I understand if it's not possible.

Kai picks up on her desperation.

KAI

I'll get it to you Friday night.

INDIRA

Thank you. You're a life saver.

Indira departs.

A text message notification pops up on Kai's laptop screen. Kai clicks on it to unveil a text from Zoe.

ZOE (TEXT)

Are you free Friday night? [Insert Event link]

Kai opens the link.

A CLOSE SHOT of the laptop screen: Zoe stands with seductive poise in gothlike attire while holding a bitten-in apple.

Kai admires with hunger.

KAI (TEXT)

I'll be there.

ZOE (TEXT)

Great. Your name will be at the door.

INT. HEIROGLYPH CAFETERIA - DAY

"Insane" by Flume or a similar dub step tune PLAYS while Kai stocks up on sugary snacks and energy drinks.

The music continues as we cut to a...

DANCE SEQUENCE - VARIOUS

A) INT. KAI'S WORKSTATION - DAY - Kai plops her legal drugs underneath her workstation.

As she sits down, her spirit (SPIRIT KAI) exits her body, tumbling to the floor behind SITTING KAI.

Spirit Kai struggles to get to her feet.

As the beat drops, Spirit Kai moves with melodic lethargy while Sitting Kai works to her grave.

Meanwhile, her surroundings speed through time while both Kais remain stuck in the present.

A few bars in and Spirit Kai gives in.

She falls back slowly onto the table in front of Sitting Kai as her sleepy eyes flicker shut.

The music continues to play as we cut to...

B) INT. STUDIO FRONT ROOM - DAY - Papers fall off a desk. Delilah rushes from behind it to take a call.

Zoe tends to one of the half dozen models with their fittings.

DELILAH

(on her way out the front door)

Can you pick up the mess?

Zoe obliges.

As Zoe picks up the files, one in particular catches her eyes.

CLOSE SHOT of the document entitled "Payroll: Models" with a rate of \$150.00 listed along with each model's name.

Delilah returns.

Zoe calmly shuffles the papers back to its rightful place while staring at Delilah with cold rage.

Off to the side, Blonde and Brunette Becca stand waiting for someone to tie their corsets.

BRUNETTE

Uhmmm. Can we get some help over here?

With clenched teeth, Zoe walks towards them and stops inches behind.

It's unclear if she's going to help them or hurt them. Eventually, STANDING ZOE decides to tighten Blonde's ribs while Zoe's spirit (SPIRIT ZOE) marches backwards and away.

But in circles.

And round and round she goes.

Unable to escape her spinning surroundings while fighting off her insane. It's a poetic dance without an audience. Even Standing Zoe doesn't look her way while she tends to the misses.

Eventually, Spirit Zoe falls to her knees and screams up towards the heavens as...

C) INT. KAI'S WORKSTATION - NIGHT - Spirit Kai suddenly rises from her table grave. But what comes back isn't alive but rather the undead. Meanwhile, Sitting Kai chugs yet another energy drink, then returns her red eyes to screen. Spirit Kai dance twitches like a zombie puppet to the bass of the beat until she stumbles off the desk and onto the floor.

D) INT. STUDIO FRONT ROOM - Spirit Zoe's scream is coming to an end although this time, we can't hear her. She is now all alone in the dark with a single spotlight on her. She fights tears by clawing through her mane. But instead of reaching calm, it just draws out her crazy. She then dances like a tortured soul who can no longer feel her own pain.

As the music comes to an end, Spirit Zoe collects herself before exiting the spotlight and proudly walking into the dark as...

E) INT. KAI'S WORKSTATION - NIGHT - Spirit Kai sloth crawls back into Sitting Kai's body.

END DANCE SEQUENCE

INT. KAI'S WORKSTATION - NIGHT

Kai clicks "SEND" on an e-mail as she exhales with relief. Her eyes blood shot dead.

An incoming message from Zoe via laptop.

ZOE (TEXT)

We take the stage in an hour. What costume are you wearing?

From Kai's reaction it appears she forgot but she types back...

KAI (TEXT)

It's a surprise.

ZOE (TEXT)

OK text me when you get here.

EXT. WAREHOUSE NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A moonlit evening rolling in the fog. Nearby, a warehouse-style nightclub BLASTS dark trap music, such as "Breathe" by Ritual.

Kai strolls in with the mist dressed in all black with a cheap, nylon black mask in hand.

She enters a nightclub that is...

INT. WAREHOUSE NIGHTCLUB - SIMULTAENOUS

A Mardi-Gras playground for those with enough time to play and enough money to buy those who don't. And play they do but not with touch... with hungry eyes.

Its a carnival of creatures adorned in decadent masks and skimp attire with a gothic vampire at the turn tables.

Kai walks in eyes wide open but face calm.

She slides through a hall of folks seducing each other with baited thirst. She quickly darts her eyes away and onto...

A pale beauty offering a platter of fresh fruit and rich chocolates. Her body language invites Kai to try but Kai's replies no thank you.

As the servant walks away, Kai's eyes suddenly grow wild with an angry fire.

She grits her teeth, puts on her literal black mask, and steps back against the black wall behind her.

Not a second too soon, Mitch, Dave, and other members of Heiroglyph stumble by with drunken folly. Kai goes unrecognized as the bros dance within view.

She remains still as a few footsteps later, TYE enters dressed like the Egyptian Pharaoh Horus.

Tye stops in front of a mirror to admire herself before putting her hawk-headed mask on. Behind her, remains Kai camouflaged by the dark.

Tye struts off.

Kai exits the shadows to follow Tye.

THE GREEN ROOM

Backstage chaos.

Zoe doing it all for the models: hair... make-up... touch-ups... zip-ups... tighten ups... sew-ups...

And checking her phone.

Not a text.

CENTER STAGE

Ghostly-looking models take a small stage with vapid elegance. They don't go far before they just stand and pose like lifeless creatures.

DOWN STAGE

Tye slithers towards the front of the stage while Kai stalks behind. She stops a few rows in as Kai stands a few feet from her back.

And then...

Dave walks by Kai but this time he takes notice of the dark creature amongst a crowd of white.

DAVE

(to Mitch in reference to
masked Kai)

Look at this douche-bag.

A drunken Dave stands eye-to-mask to Kai in a taunting matter.

Kai doesn't move an inch.

Dave moves in closer.

Kai clinches her fist.

Mitch grabs Dave.

MITCH

(to Dave)

Yo! Check out the jester over here!

Something more novel to Dave. He exists as Kai's face stays glued to Tye.

THE GREEN ROOM

Zoe rushes to get herself dressed but she has no help.

Blonde and Brunette watch as she struggles. The other models tend to their phones.

And Zoe now fights tears as she closes her eyes.

Blonde and Brunette snicker as Zoe chants inaudibly to herself.

And then...

Zoe reopens her eyes. The look of prey no longer in sight. Instead, a goddess rising from her ashes stands tall without fear.

Delilah appears out of no where to rush to tighten her corset as Zoe stare at Blonde and Brunette. Their smiles drop as they become uncomfortable with Zoe's intense glare.

Eventually, Blonde and Brunette cower out of site.

DELILAH

There! Let's go!

Zoe exits with erotic grace to take...

CENTER STAGE.

And to meet the crowd's hungry gaze as they admire her like Eden's forbidden apple.

Zoe sees Niya front and center of the down stage audience, cheering her on while a Pharaoh Horus SNAPS photos close behind.

Zoe stands taller.

And stoically as the music comes to an end and the audience comes with applause.

INT. DANCE AREA - NIGHT

Zoe is now in her day-to-day attire. She's beyond exhausted as she searches the crowd for someone.

Horus Tye tickles Zoe from behind to her delight. She turns and lets herself fall into the pharaoh's embrace like it's home.

ANGLE ON Kai who watches the intimate embrace from a close distance, still behind her black mask. It's not long before she turns to leave.

On her exit, Dave cuts her off.

DAVE

(reaching out to remove
Kai's mask)

Let's see who this asshole is...

Before his fingers can touch her head, Kai grabs his arm and judo tosses him with ease to the floor.

He hard land slides into the Heiroglyph management team who collapse like bowling ball pins.

Dave grabs his stitched head in agony.

Before her colleagues can catch their bearings, Kai is already gone.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) EXT. WAREHOUSE NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT - Dark Music plays as Kai exits the nightclub and walks into the foggy mist of night.

B) INT. BART CAR - NIGHT - While man spacing two seats, Kai stares out of a window of dark mass with raw anger.

C) EXT. LAKE MERRITT AMPITHEATRE - NIGHT - Kai solemnly gazes out onto the lake as man and moon light dance along its surface.

D) INT. KAI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - Kai stares up at the ceiling, hands behind head, as a single tear falls from her eye. And then she closes them as the song comes to an end.

END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

INT. KAI'S BEDROOM - DAY

The painful THROB of the alarm.

Without opening her eyes, Kai puts it on snooze.

A beat later, it BLARES again.

This time Kai finally opens her eyes to check the time.

CLOSE SHOT of the phone reveals missed calls and messages from Zoe and Rylie from the past two days.

She slowly gets herself out of the bed.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The team water cooler chats as Kai enters still sleep hungover.

She notices Dave is absent so she relaxes.

Mitch then enters the room excited.

MITCH

(stopping at Kai)

Fantastic job, Kai! The directors loved it!

Kai halfheartedly smiles.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(to the team)

I have another meeting to run off to so I'll make this quick. I really just have two updates to share with you guys. First and foremost, I want to thank Kai and Dave for all their hard work on the design and development of our new product app that the directors approved to release next month. Let's go ahead and give them a huge round of applause.

Team Design obliges.

MITCH (CONT'D)

In other exciting news, I'm very sad but proud to announce that one of our very own has moved on to another team.

Kai perks up with interest.

MITCH (CONT'D)

After careful consideration, the Program team has selected Dave to fill the role of Interim Program Manager during Indira's maternity leave. This change goes into effect immediately so be sure to congratulate Dave if you ever see him again.

Team Design bursts into dry laughter as Kai's mouth stays shut.

MITCH (CONT'D)

That's all for now. We'll catch up more next week.

Kai cold stares Mitch as the rest of the team departs.

Mitch eventually notices Kai's stare but waits for everyone to leave before speaking.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I know what you're thinking. And don't worry, given the issues you raised about working with Dave, I've requested that Dave goes through me.

KAI

Dave is incompetent.

MITCH

Excuse me?

KAI

(the same beat)
Dave is incompetent.

Mitch shifts his tone and body language. Suddenly, the friendly Dad is gone.

MITCH

As a manager, it's my job to identify employee skills and how best to utilize talent.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

Dave has a lot to offer this company, just like you do. I wouldn't have hired him if I didn't think so. But I am also not one who's too proud to recognize when someone isn't a good fit on the team anymore... even if it was my idea to bring them on board in the first place.

Kai looks away.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Focus on your work, Kaya. And leave management to me.

An uncomfortable beat that Kai purposely stays in before she gets up and exits.

INT. KAI'S WORKSTATION - DAY

A CLOSE SHOT of Kai's laptop screen reveals a picture of Zoe in her black gown.

Kai stares at the photo with a studied gaze as Rylie approaches from behind.

RYLIE

Zoe's been asking about you.

Kai quickly puts her laptop to sleep.

RYLIE (CONT'D)

She hadn't heard from you so she asked Niya to ask me if you were alive. I told her you were but that you looked like shit. Are you OK?

She's not.

KAI

I'm fine. How are you doing?

RYLIE

I'm pissed off but trying not to let it get to me. Chris says the company has such a high turnover rate, there's bound to be another position available before my internship is up.

Suddenly, Dave appears.

DAVE
 (to Rylie)
 There you are. Did you finish
 organizing those files.

RYLIE
 (to Kai)
 I've got to go.

Kai watches as Rylie departs with Dave.

INT. STUDIO BACK ROOM - DAY

Zoe faces a large studio window with eyes closed as the
 sunlight beats against her skin.

Not far away, Delilah talks as she writes a check.

DELILAH
 I'm getting so many requests for
 that dress you wore! You really
 stole the show!

ZOE
 Thank you.

DELILAH
 (handing Zoe her check)
 Here you go.

Zoe pockets the \$50.

DELILAH (CONT'D)
 We're going to need to contact the
 suppliers to order more fabric--

And then interrupts Delilah ever so politely.

ZOE
 --Why do you pay the models \$150
 for an hour of work but only \$300
 to me for a month's worth?

Delilah is taken off guard by Zoe's question so she takes the
 defense.

DELILAH
 That's a model's standard rate.
 They're professionals.

ZOE
 And what am I?

A beat.

DELILAH

No one is going to pay you more than that as an intern, Zoe.

ZOE

And no one is going to perform better than me with the rate that you're paying.

Another beat.

DELILAH

Fine, I'll give you the \$800 a month you originally asked for but you're really going to have to work for it. We've got another show to do in a month and--

ZOE

--My rate has changed.

DELILAH

Excuse me?

ZOE

My rate has changed. It's \$800 a month plus 10% of profits.

DELILAH

That's outrageous and goes against every industry practice and standards that I know.

ZOE

Someone once told me that in order to break the mold, you have to break the rules.

Delilah melts at the sound of her mother's words. She puts away her armor.

DELILAH

Oh I just knew you were brilliant!

She reaches out to put her hands on Zoe's shoulder, like a mother to a child.

DELILAH (CONT'D)

You're just a younger version of me!

ZOE

Do we have a deal then?

A steady beat to allow Delilah to linger in this bonding moment a little longer.

DELILAH

Yes, you've got yourself a deal.

But Zoe isn't feeling the bond. With a dip and a sweet swing, Zoe releases herself from Delilah's clutches. She sticks her hand out which Delilah happily shakes.

ZOE

Great. I look forward to reviewing my new contract.

Delilah departs.

Zoe relaxes then checks her phone.

CLOSE SHOT of ZOE's phone. A text from Kai that reads:

KAI (TEXT)

Was burnt out and slept all weekend. Are you free tonight?

A reflective pause that leads to...

INT. ZOE'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Zoe sitting on her bed quietly, staring into some unknown distance.

A gentle KNOCK at the door.

She calmly gets up to open it. It's Kai.

KAI

Hi.

ZOE

Hello.

Kai dives forward for the kiss but Zoe stops her.

Kai pulls herself back, sensing Zoe's serious demeanor.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Where were you Friday night? I thought you said you could make it?

A beat.

KAI

There were some coding errors that I caught at the last minute so I worked late to change them.

ZOE

So you never showed up?

Another beat.

KAI

No, I'm sorry.

Zoe deep breathes with her entire body.

ZOE

You know, I keep getting this feeling that something isn't right when you disappear. And I've been trying to figure out if it's because you're hiding something or if I'm the one projecting my past.

KAI

Well, in all honesty, I don't think you're quite over your past.

ZOE

Excuse me?

KAI

Never mind.

ZOE

Speak your mind.

A heated pause too hard for Kai to swallow so she spits out.

KAI

I don't know if you're on some Bay Area free-love type of thing but inviting me and your ex to the same event is messy.

ZOE

How do you even know about me and my ex?

KAI

Who doesn't know about you and Tye?

ZOE

What is that supposed to mean?

KAI
Just forget about it.

Zoe closes her eyes again.

KAI (CONT'D)
Look, if you still got stuff going
on with your ex, it's cool, OK?
We're not serious or anything but a
heads up would've been nice.

ZOE
So would have giving me the benefit
of the doubt.

Another beat.

KAI
A friend of mine saw you two
together at the show.

ZOE
Who?

KAI
It doesn't matter.

ZOE
Why's that?

KAI
Are you trying to tell me that she
wasn't there?

ZOE
No, I'm trying to tell you that I
didn't invite her.

KAI
Well, either way, I'm sure you
weren't disappointed to see her.

ZOE
Yea sure if you count the first
five seconds when I thought she was
you. So once again: who is your
source?

A long beat.

KAI
Why does it even matter?

ZOE
Because I want to see how far
you'll go to deceive me.

A painful beat.

ZOE (CONT'D)
I know you showed up. Front door
told me you left right before I
did. At first I thought, this can't
be. Why would you come and leave
without saying anything?

Kai looks away... or down... or just anywhere away from Zoe's
gaze.

ZOE (CONT'D)
And then you went radio silent and
so then I thought, oh you must
really be stressed out like that
time you disappeared for three
weeks.

KAI
Things have really been stressful--

ZOE
--But somewhere in all this excuse
making for you, I got this itch of
a feeling that there were things
you weren't saying to me but
holding against me. But you know
the sad part is up until now, I
thought I was the crazy one.

KAI
I'm sorry.

ZOE
You know those were the first words
you said to me on our first date.

KAI
I don't know what to say.

ZOE
Neither do I.

Kai searches the air for answers but instead finds silence
and Zoe's cold demeanor.

Kai accepts her defeat and exits the room.

As she closes the door behind her, Zoe remains stoic.

Once we hear the apartment door SHUT, Zoe drops to the floor, crying uncontrollably.

Not a moment too soon, there's another gentle KNOCK at the door.

NIYA (O.S.)
Hey gorgeous.

ZOE
(still sobbing)
Hi beautiful.

NIYA (O.S.)
Can I come in?

ZOE
Yes.

Niya enters and takes Zoe into her arms, holding her dear friend to heart.

ZOE (CONT'D)
I really wanted to be wrong this
time. I really wanted to be wrong.

Zoe's sweet tears fall onto Niya's chest as Niya pulls her in tight.

FADE TO:

INT. THE BULLPEN - DAY

Winter holiday cheer has infected everything and everyone in the office. Very few people are glued to their screens as they chat amongst each other about upcoming holiday plans.

Except for Kai who plays mind sweeper on her machine at rapid speed.

She looks different from all the times we've seen her before. She's not dead but she's not really alive either. She's just gone.

Dave enters.

DAVE
Hey I'm still waiting on the static
codes.

KAI
(without looking away from
her game)
(MORE)

KAI (CONT'D)

I sent them last Monday in an e-mail entitled "Static Code" along with two follow-up e-mails sent on the 10th and 14th.

DAVE

You need to watch how you talk to me. I'm not an intern anymore.

KAI

(still not meeting his eyes)
I'm merely stating facts.

DAVE

Your tone is unprofessional.

KAI

(still not looking up)
I have work to do, Dave.

Dave mumbles frustrations under his breath as he departs.

INT. HEIROGLYPH CAFETERIA - DAY

Kai carries a modest plate of food to an empty table. She's the loner amongst the feasting flock.

Not too far away, Chris socializes with colleagues when she notices Kai sitting alone. She looks over to Kai with disapproval.

But Kai ignores her gaze and continues to eat in silence.

After some bites in, the sun shining in from a nearby window finally grabs Kai's attention.

EXT. HEIROGLYPH PICNIC TABLES - DAY

A roofless outdoor sitting area enclosed with brick walls and layered with fake grass.

Kai sits alone handwriting a letter at a table. She looks up to the roofless sky from time to time to find her words.

During one of these sky gazes, she sees Chris standing before her.

CHRIS

Can you at least make the effort to look presentable at work?

Kai looks back down to her paper.

KAI

Half the company looks like this.
I'm just blending in with my
unnatural environment.

CHRIS

Do you know what Dave is going
around saying about you?

KAI

I could give two fucks about what
Dave has to say about anything.

CHRIS

You need to think about how you
make the rest of us look.

KAI

I'm only responsible for me.

CHRIS

You are by far the most selfish
person I have ever met!

KAI

Why? Because I don't want to play
grateful house slave anymore?

CHRIS

Fuck you, man. Just fuck you! You
grow up with a silver spoon in your
mouth and you have the nerve to
call me a slave. Go fuck yourself,
man!

KAI

I wasn't calling *you* a slave,
Chris. I was calling myself one.

CHRIS

Well, we both know *you* don't have
to be here.

Chris exits with scorn. Kai looks away with hopelessness.

INT. AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM - DAY

Mrs. Jackson stands impatiently at Baggage Claim when Kai
finally arrives.

MRS. JACKSON
It's so good to see you,
sweetheart.

KAI
It's good to see you too, Mom.

They embrace but this time with earnest affection.

INT. SUBURBAN DINING ROOM - DAY

Kai and Mrs. Jackson sit on either side of a long dining room table with plates of soul food in front of them.

Kai quickly shovels food down her mouth.

Mrs. Jackson watches in slight horror.

MRS. JACKSON
I thought you said your job
provided you with free food?

KAI
They do but I can't get food like
this in the Bay.

Mrs. Jackson tries not to let the unintentional compliment go too much to her head.

MRS. JACKSON
I got a Heiroglyph page yesterday.
Don't worry, I'm not going to add
you as a friend. I just thought it
would be a good way to connect with
some of my old college friends of
mine.

Kai briefly pauses from her food binge to look up at her mom.

KAI
That's nice.

Then head back down again.

MRS. JACKSON
So how's life in the Bay? Are you
making any new friends out there?

KAI
No.

MRS. JACKSON

What about that friend you cooked for?

Kai flinches.

KAI

I work too much. I don't have time for friends.

Mrs. Jackson pauses.

MRS. JACKSON

You know, Kaya. I know our relationship isn't the best but when I say I'm here for you, I also mean I'm here to listen.

Kai slowly raises her head up from her plate to meet her mother's.

MRS. JACKSON (CONT'D)

I know how challenging it is to work in a... high-stress environment. It's hard to stay the course when there's more obstacles for you. But with perseverance, eventually doors do open. Things do get better eventually.

KAI

Do you really believe things are getting better or is that just something black moms are trained to tell their kids?

A beat.

MRS. JACKSON

You're young, Kaya. When me and your father were growing up in the south, we too thought things wouldn't get better. But--

KAI

--So instead, you guys escaped the Jim Crow south so you can slave away for the rich racists of the North and then call it progress when they finally promote you to a job they passed you over for years. I know the story, Mom. I just don't want to live it.

Mrs. Jackson flinches.

KAI (CONT'D)

When I get back to the Bay, I'm
quitting my job.

MRS. JACKSON

What?!

KAI

I'm quitting my job.

MRS. JACKSON

Are you out of your mind, Kaya?

KAI

I have enough savings to last me--

MRS. JACKSON

--You've worked there for less than
a year! How do you expect the next
employer to take you seriously?

KAI

Fuck another job!

MRS. JACKSON

You watch your language in my
house!

KAI

Forget another job.

MRS. JACKSON

And what will you do instead?!

KAI

I don't know! Something else! My
own thing!

MRS. JACKSON

Because you think it'll be any
different or easier for you?! Kaya,
you are a *black woman*! No one's
going to take you seriously if you
quit your first job so soon!

KAI

What is that even supposed to
mean, Mom!?

(mocking tone)

I'm a black woman!?

(MORE)

KAI (CONT'D)

Like what, I'm just supposed to shut-up and take getting fucked with and fucked over so long as someone pays me real good!

MRS. JACKSON

You think I didn't try finding another way out!? You think I enjoyed what I had to do to put a roof over your head and to provide you a decent education!?

KAI

And do you know what I had to go through to get that *decent* education, Mom?!

MRS. JACKSON

Better than the life I had missing school because I still had to pick cotton!

KAI

Oh so that's just it, Mom?! Let's all just settle for better than the cotton field?! And just be grateful master finally let us in his house!

MRS. JACKSON

That's enough!

Mrs. Jackson pounds her fist against the table. But only the dishes rattle.

Kai just stares back at her mother with tired, angry eyes.

MRS. JACKSON (CONT'D)

You have no idea how hard it is to raise a little black girl.

KAI

And you have no idea how hard it is to stay one.

Mrs. Jackson slowly closes her eyes to stop the flood of tears that follow.

Kai looks down at her plate in frustration.

KAI (CONT'D)

I can't do it anymore, Mom. I can't keep playing the game. I won't make it this way. I just won't make it.

(MORE)

KAI (CONT'D)

I'm not as strong as you, Mom. I'm
not you.

Kai trembles into tears. Mrs. Jackson looks across the table as they both stare at each other with the same hurt and pain in their eyes.

FADE OUT.

INT. SUBURBAN BATHROOM - DAY

Complete silence except for the sound of water DRIPPING into a large bathtub.

After a few drawn out drips, Kai pops her head up from under the water to breathe new life into her lungs.

INT. SUBURBAN MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

A modest bedroom with an elegant feel.

Mrs. Jackson lovingly tends to her daughter's hair while Kai lets herself fall into her mother's therapeutic touch.

They remain in a bonded silence for a few beats.

EXT. AIRPORT DEPARTURES - DAY

Mrs. Jackson stands curb side with Kai as they say their good byes.

MRS. JACKSON

You got everything?

KAI

Yea I think I do. Oh wait... I
almost forgot.

Kai pulls out a CHECK from her pocket and hands it to her mother.

KAI (CONT'D)

Thanks again for the loan.

MRS. JACKSON

You keep it.

KAI

It's a lot of money, Mom.

MRS. JACKSON
I know. And you'll need it.

A beat.

KAI
Thank you.

MRS. JACKSON
You're welcome. I'm still here for
you, Kai.

They embrace as if feeling each other for the first time.

EXT. LAKE MERRITT AMPITHEATRE - DAWN

The sunrise glistens the lake while Same Cooke's "A Change is
Gonna Come" SINGS promise.

A few elders slowly jog the lake.

As we watch the solace of dawn, we hear TYPING... then
PRINTING. Until finally we see...

CUT TO:

INT. KAI'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kai at her home office desk in a now furnished apartment.

The music continues as the printer SPITS out a one-page
document.

Kai grabs it, seals it in an envelope, then writes "MITCH" on
the outside of it.

As she finishes writing, she notices the antique clock from
Zoe resting on her desk, still stuck in time.

She stares longingly at it for a few beats.

CUT TO:

INT. KAI'S BATHROOM - DAY

Kai stands in front of a mirror for a few silent beats.

And then, she uses a PICK to turn her modest faded low-top
fro into a high-top crown.

INT. BART STATION PLATFORM - DAY

Morning rush hour.

Kai and piles of commuters stand in double single file lines along the black boxes of the platforms.

A train approaches and comes to a stop.

INT. BART CAR - SIMULTAENOUS

Kai slides her way into an already crowded car, towards an area where there's less people.

On her way there, she accidently steps on a woman's foot.

KAI
Oh, I'm sorry.

FEMALE PASSENGER
(while turning to see Kai)
It's OK.

The woman turns to reveal it's Zoe.

Kai and Zoe's eyes immediately light up with a fire that never went out.

KAI
Hi.

ZOE
Hi.

KAI
How have you been?

ZOE
I've been good. And you?

KAI
I'm good.

ZOE
I got your letter. Thank you for--

A passenger interrupts.

BART PASSENGER
--Do you think you guys can squeeze in a little closer?

Kai and Zoe slowly oblige.

As they do, the raucous of yelling passengers trying to push their way into the train drowns out their conversation.

And then, Kai whispers something in Zoe's ear.

Zoe's eyes crinkle as she nods yes.

We follow them as they manoeuvre themselves towards the door...

INT. BART STATION PLATFORM - SIMULTANEOUS

And onto the platforms, pinkies locked.

As they head for the escalators, they pass two tech bros arguing over car space.

ANGRY BRO

Dude, just take the next train.

ANGRY DUDE

There's room if you just moved, bro.

BART DRIVER (O.S.)

(intercom)

Please move away from the doors. We cannot leave the station until the doors are clear.

Kai and Zoe reach the bottom of the stairs.

They slowly ascend as the argument quickly escalates.

ANGRY BRO

Dude, you're going to make us all late!

ANGRY DUDE

Fuck your job, bro. I could buy you.

ANGRY BRO

If you can buy me then why the fuck are you taking public transportation, asshole!

ANGRY DUDE

(face-to-face with Bro)

So I can show you how I own you, bitch.

Within an instance, Bro punches unsuspecting Dude in the face.

Dude falls to his knees then lunges at Bro with a vengeful fury, causing other passengers to fall down.

BART DRIVER (O.S)
(intercom)
Requesting assistance from the Bart
Police. We've got a disturbance at
Lake Merritt Bart Station.
Immediate assistance required.

Kai and Zoe reach the top of the stairs as chaos ensues. They eventually go out of view as we PULL BACK and away from the fight and into the subway tunnel.

At this point, it's unclear if we're fading to black or going deeper into a hole.

It's all the same anyway.

The music eventually ends as we...

FADE OUT.

THE END