

# ROCK BOTTOM

CHAPTER 1: "BEING A HAPPIER YOU"

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**ACT ONE**

OVER BLACK:

ELIZA (V.O.)  
People are always searching for the secret to a happy life. There was a time when I thought I knew the answer.

FADE IN:

INT. A STAGE SOMEWHERE

ELIZA LYLES (31), a poised, professional woman, delivers the end of a motivational speech to an unknown audience.

ELIZA  
True success starts by creating a respectable brand for yourself. By being the best 'you' that you can be, the world in return will reward you for it. **Because image is everything.** At the end of the day you are the only thing in this life that you can fully control but you do have the power to influence how other people see you. And that makes all the difference.

Eliza walks over to a lectern and picks up a book titled *Being a Happier You* by Eliza Lyles.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
If you follow my guidelines to giving your personal brand a makeover, you too can become a happier you.

INT. COLLEGE SEMINAR ROOM - DAY

A room of STUDENTS and their PROFESSORS politely clap.

HARLEY (37), Eliza's uptight agent, stands in the back. She gives Eliza a thumbs up.

A PROFESSOR stands up and speaks into a MICROPHONE.

PROFESSOR

Thank you, Ms. Lyles. We're going to go ahead and open it up to a Q&A session now.

A brash young woman raises her hand. This is SAMANTHA (21).

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Right over here, in the front.

Samantha stands. An IT GUY hands her a microphone.

SAMANTHA

My name's Samantha. I'm a senior psychology student and I have a comment, actually. I think your book encourages superficial behavior and perpetuates the ongoing negative stigma behind mental illness.

A small murmur erupts in the audience.

ELIZA

My philosophy promotes maintaining a positive attitude and a brand for a professional lifestyle. I don't see anything wrong with that. Next question?

SAMANTHA

You preach about appeasing society as if validation from other people is the only thing that matters. That's the kind of advice a pageant mom gives to her daughter.

ELIZA

I'm moving on. Does anyone else have a question? An actual question, this time?

A STUDENT raises their hand. Eliza nods in their direction.

The IT Guy tries to take the microphone from Samantha but she refuses to let go of it.

The student shouts, instead.

STUDENT

Yeah, I have a question. What do you have to say in response to all that?!

Titters from the crowd. A couple of students have taken out their CELLPHONES to record.

The DEAN motions to Samantha to sit down but she ignores him.

The IT Guy tries one more time to get the mic from Samantha's hand but she stands up on her chair, holding a copy of *Being a Happier You*.

She starts to read from the book.

SAMANTHA

"There will always be people in your life who have the power to make yours better. Learn how to please them early on and your life will be easier because of it".

Samantha holds it up and addresses the whole audience.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I've highlighted 172 passages in the book similar to this. It's all people-pleasing conformity she's put in this overpriced hunk of bullshit.

Laughter and more commotion comes from the audience.

Harley is waving her hands above her head as if to say "wrap it up".

PROFESSOR

Well that actually is all the time we have-

Eliza stays rooted where she stands.

ELIZA

I stand by the very realistic advice I wrote in my book and if you don't agree with my methods than I hardly think that makes me a criminal.

SAMANTHA

What if I told you my friend tried to kill herself after this advice made her feel worthless when she couldn't, and I quote, "*will the negativity away to make room for a positive future*"?

Eliza is speechless as these words sink in.

Harley gets on stage to try and get her to leave but Eliza is glued to her spot.

POP TO BLACK:

SAMANTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
You don't know the first thing  
about helping people with problems.  
Real problems.

SUPER: TWO MONTHS LATER

FADE IN:

INT. ELIZA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The living room is an untidy disarray of clothes and fast food packages.

Classical music is playing loudly in the background.

Eliza appears to have melted into her couch. She takes a sip of WINE straight from the bottle.

There's a LAPTOP opened on her lap.

ELIZA (V.O.)  
My life up until this point had  
been pretty predictable. I was  
shocked that a 21 year old student  
started my road to infamy. I can't  
say I saw it coming.

She's scrolling through an online article titled: "Self Help turns to Self Sabotage".

ELIZA (V.O.)  
In my defense, I really did think I  
was helping people.

Eliza slams her laptop shut.

She picks up her PHONE and checks her notifications.

INSERT: PHONE

Three unread voicemails. She takes a huge sip of wine and clicks on the first voicemail from Harley Owens.

ELIZA (V.O.)  
I'll give her this, though. My book  
is overpriced.

Eliza puts her phone on speaker.

HARLEY (V.O.)  
 How's the new book coming along?  
 Good? It better be. I want to see  
 some pages next week. Call me.

INT. ELIZA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eliza is tossing and turning in bed, unable to sleep.

Another voicemail. It's from STACY, a friend.

STACY (V.O.)  
 I was surprised to hear from you.  
 It's been a while. I'm so sorry to  
 hear your book tour got cancelled.  
 Listen, there's no way I can loan  
 you any money. I'm so sorry but  
 Harry and I just found out we're  
 expecting. Can you believe it? Me.  
 A mom. Anyways though, I hope you  
 figure all this out. We should  
 catch up sometime.

INT. ELIZA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eliza is doing crunches and she gives up halfway through the  
 workout, defeated.

Another voicemail. This one is from DANIEL, an ex.

DANIEL (V.O.)  
 Hey...um, look I hate talking to  
 the machine like this but you  
 haven't been returning any of my  
 messages. The last rent check I owe  
 you is in the mail. That's the last  
 bit I owe you before the lease is  
 up.

INT. ELIZA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Eliza stares out of her window.

DANIEL (V.O.)  
 And uh, listen, I'm gonna need the  
 ring back. It was my mom's.

INT. ELIZA'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza is eating alone. A notification pops up on her phone.

Reminder: Alex's Birthday is Tomorrow!

Her entire apartment is now empty minus a few boxes and suitcases she has packed by the front door

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAND HOUSE - MIDDAY

Eliza stands on the porch of a small, suburban home wearing sunglasses.

There's a small GIFT in her hand.

It takes a some of preparation before she's finally able to knock on the door.

ROBIN (Filipino, 35), a soft spoken but charming man, opens the door.

Eliza sizes him up, apprehensive.

ELIZA

Oh. Um...sorry, I think I might have the wrong house.

Eliza starts to walk away, double checking an ENVELOPE.

ROBIN

Whoa, whoa whoa. Are you looking for Alex?

ELIZA

Yeah, actually, I am. How'd you -

Robin gestures to the birthday gift.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Right.

(beat)

Are you, uh...Alex's--?

ROBIN

Oh, God no. No no no no. No. I'm Robin. I'm her landlord slash housemate.

Awkward pause.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
It's a whole thing.

Eliza takes off her glasses.

The reveal of her full face catches Robin's eyes. She has his full attention now if she didn't before.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Let me go grab her for you. She's just in her room. Please, come in.

ELIZA  
If you don't mind, can you just give this to her for me? She'll know who it's from when she opens it. I probably shouldn't be here.

Eliza holds out the package.

ROBIN  
Sure you don't wanna just give it to her yourself? Come on in. You look like you could use something to drink.

Robin starts to head into the house.

Eliza follows with caution.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Eliza steps into the house and takes in her surroundings.

It's a comfortable yet messy home with minimal furniture.

Eliza closes the door behind her and a PAINTING by the doorway catches her eyes.

It's a colorful piece featuring a mostly naked woman surrounded by a backdrop of exotic flowers.

ELIZA  
This is absolutely stunning. Never seen anything like it. Do you know the artist?

JULIAN (O.S.)  
That would be me.

Eliza looks to where the voice is coming from.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Sitting at the kitchen table is JULIAN (Black, 23). He's a strong, well built ex-athlete. He wouldn't strike you as an artist.

There's a crossword puzzle in front of him.

ELIZA  
You painted this?

Julian nods.

Robin hands Eliza a glass of water.

ROBIN  
I want to introduce you, but I just realized I didn't catch your name.

ELIZA  
Eliza.

Julian picks up a CANE that was leaning on his chair and eases himself up.

JULIAN  
I'm Julian.

He limps over to shake Eliza's hand.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
Always nice meeting someone with good taste.

Eliza chuckles and tries not to stare at his deformed leg.

ELIZA  
Right back at you.  
(beat)  
So Alex's room is...?

Robin points down the hallway.

ROBIN  
Last door on the left.

JULIAN  
She might still be sleeping.

ELIZA  
It's four in the afternoon.

JULIAN  
She's a bit of a night owl.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - FOYER - SAME

NATHANIEL (22) enters the hallway wearing a barista uniform. He's a worn down, not-so-typical hipster.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Nathaniel walks straight past Eliza into the kitchen.

He pops his head back in and then squints at her.

NATHANIEL

Oh my God, Robin. Is this the girl you were telling us about? Are you going out with the Eliza Lyles?

ROBIN

What? No. Do you two know each other?

NATHANIEL

(to Eliza)

They don't go online much.

ELIZA

Thankfully.

JULIAN

How do you know her?

Nathaniel is already pulling up an image from his phone.

NATHANIEL

She's viral, dude.

Nathaniel holds up a MEME which features Eliza, standing at the same podium we saw before, looking like she just saw a ghost.

Underneath the picture in bold white letters says:

*"Finds out she killed someone. Realizes she forgot to take her laundry out of the dryer" (Or something like this)*

Julian takes Nathaniel's phone and scrolls through several other memes featuring Eliza.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

To what do we owe this honor?

ALEX

She's here for me.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - HALLWAY - SAME

Everyone turns to see ALEX (23), a very bold, vibrant young woman who oozes charisma.

ALEX

What the hell are you doing here?

All three men sit down at the table, turning their full attention to the women.

ELIZA

It's your birthday.

ALEX

Right, I'm aware. And?

ELIZA

I thought I'd surprise you?

ALEX

Mission accomplished. How did you find me?

Eliza holds up her envelope.

ELIZA

You sent me a drunk letter once. At least I think you were drunk. It had puke all over it.

Julian and Nathaniel exchange a look.

Nathaniel mouths "*Sisters??*". Julian shrugs, just as confused.

Alex makes her way into the kitchen.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ALEX

What do you want, Eliza?

ELIZA

You don't believe I'd just want to come by on your birthday?

ALEX

After three years? No, I don't.

Eliza turns, embarrassed.

ELIZA

Can you guys give us a minute?

The three men immediately begin to get up.

ALEX

No, don't move.

They sit back down.

ELIZA

If you're going to just argue with me the least you can do is not do it in front of your housemates.

ALEX

You were already a joke to half the country for a month straight. Three more people aren't going to matter.

ELIZA

I knew this was a mistake.

Eliza sets the gift and her glass of water down on the table.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

It was nice meeting all of you.

Eliza leaves the house.

The guys all turn to look at Alex.

ALEX

What?

Blank stares.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You guys don't even know her! You have no idea what she's actually like.

Julian pushes the gift towards Alex.

JULIAN

See what the gift is. If it's a good gift, you should go talk to her. If it sucks...then you can keep acting like a bitch. Deal?

(beat)

Happy birthday, by the way.

Alex stares at the package before she picks it up and unwraps it.

ROBIN  
What is it?

ALEX  
It's a rock.

JULIAN  
Like a ring?

Alex takes a literal ROCK outside of the box.

Nathaniel whistles.

NATHANIEL  
That's about as shitty as a gift  
can get.

Alex turns the rock over in her hand. She groans.

ALEX  
Actually, it's a nice one.

She leaves, slamming the door behind her.

The guys are left at the table, perplexed.

EXT. GRAND HOUSE - CURB - CONTINUOUS

Eliza is leaning against her car, smoking.

ALEX  
Can I bum one?

Eliza hesitates.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Oh, come on.

ELIZA  
It's bad for you.

ALEX  
But it's medicine for you?

Eliza gives in and hands Alex a cigarette and a lighter.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Seems like Little Miss Perfect has  
changed a bit since I last saw you.

ELIZA  
I'm not too sure that nickname  
works for me anymore.

The two of them take nice, long drags.

ALEX  
Thanks for the rock.

ELIZA  
Cost me a lot, that rock.

ALEX  
Will you ever let the joke die?

ELIZA  
Only when you stop calling me  
'Little Miss Perfect'.

Alex looks inside of the car and notices that it's packed to the brim with MOVING BOXES and SUITCASES.

ALEX  
Geez. I knew things had been rough lately but you don't have to flee the country. No offense, but no one cares about self help books. This'll all go away soon enough.

ELIZA  
Running away sounds fun except I don't really have anywhere to run away to.

*It clicks*

ALEX  
Except to me.

Eliza nods.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
No. Nope. Not gonna happen.

ELIZA  
Alex...please. I need hel-  
-I just need a place to stay for a bit. It'll be temporary.

ALEX  
I understand the context. Doesn't change my answer.

ELIZA  
Do you honestly think I would be here if it wasn't my last resort?

ALEX

What happened to..what's his face?  
Derek? Drew? Weren't you like,  
engaged or some shit?

Eliza takes another drag from her cigarette.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Ohh I get it. You got dumped.  
What'd he leave you for? Being too  
uppity?

ELIZA

Can we not do this right now?

ALEX

Did you correct his grammar too  
much?

ELIZA

Seriously. Can you-

ALEX

Is it because you're not open  
minded enough in the bedroom?

ELIZA

Shut the fuck up!

Eliza throws her cigarette to the ground. She starts to grab  
her keys.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

You are the last person I wanted to  
have to explain myself to. Have a  
good birthday. Or don't. I don't  
care.

Eliza opens the car door and is about to get in.

In one swift movement, Alex kicks the door closed and Eliza  
retracts her hand.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

What the hell!?

ALEX

For the record, I'm only doing this  
because I know how much you hate  
asking for help.

ELIZA

Just...don't rub it in. This is  
embarrassing enough.

ALEX  
I know. That's the best part.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The boys are crowded over a phone watching Eliza's viral video.

As soon as Eliza and Alex walk in, Nathaniel panics and throws his phone.

ALEX  
Eliza's staying for a while.

ROBIN  
She can take my room.

ALEX  
Nope. Couch is fine.

Alex walks back into her bedroom.

Eliza picks up Nathaniel's phone and hands it back to him.

NATHANIEL  
Uh, thanks.

ELIZA  
If you listen closely about a minute and 30 seconds in, you can hear someone call me Mary Poppins with the umbrella stuck up my ass. Here. I'll show you.

Eliza takes the phone back and rewinds the video.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza lies on the couch, restless.

Snoring can be heard along with the loud bass of a rap song.

She sits up and looks at her phone.

INSERT ON PHONE: 2:26 AM.

Eliza turns on a lamp and looks around. The place is a mess.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Eliza scrubs the toilet.

Talking can be heard from the living room and she pauses.

She peeks outside of the door down the hallway.

Alex is in the foyer talking to someone outside.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Alex closes the door and turns around to find Eliza right behind her.

ELIZA (O.S.)  
Who was that?

ALEX  
Fuck, you scared me. It was no one.

ELIZA  
Really? Because it sounded like you were with a guy.

ALEX  
Okay so...I was with a guy.

ELIZA  
I thought you were a lesbian?

ALEX  
I'm *bi*.

ELIZA  
Oh, right. Well, it's still a little late, don't you think?

Alex ignores her. She stumbles on her heels as she turns to walk away.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
How much have you had to drink?

ALEX  
Can you stop interrogating me?  
This whole overbearing sister thing is exactly what I was trying to avoid when I left.

ELIZA

Really? So it didn't have to do  
with not wanting to take care of  
Mom?

ALEX

Let it the fuck go.

ELIZA

Let it go? You left when we needed--  
you the most.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - ROBIN'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Robin opens the door and stops when he hears the argument.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

ALEX

Please. You're not mad at me  
because I left. You're mad that I  
left before you could.

ELIZA

That's not true.

ALEX

Yes it is. You used mom as an  
excuse to not do anything for  
yourself and you learned to regret  
it later.

ELIZA

The only thing I regret right now  
is coming here.

ALEX

That makes two of us. Looks like we  
finally found something in common.

Eliza and Alex stare each other down.

POP TO BLACK:

ACT TWO

INT. GRAND HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Robin walks in, stretching. He stops in his tracks.

The house is so clean, it looks like the inside of IKEA.

He sniffs.

ROBIN  
Is that...bacon?

ELIZA (O.S.)  
And eggs.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Eliza is at the kitchen table with her laptop open.

ELIZA  
Help yourself. I made extra.

Robin starts to make coffee until he realizes it's already been brewed.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
This person sounds normal, right?  
"40 year old woman searching for a  
non-smoking, single female  
roommate. Must be okay with cats".

Robin joins Eliza at the table with some food and coffee.

ROBIN  
Definitely a bitter cat lady.

ELIZA  
Okay how about this: "Small family  
of three renting out guest room for  
\$600 a month. All utilities  
included. Female tenant over 25  
preferred. Being able to house-sit  
on the weekends is a plus." That's  
not bad. Oddly specific but....

ROBIN  
Unless you want to be a glorified  
nanny, no. It's not.

ELIZA

What, are you an expert in  
Craigslist ads?

ROBIN

I work in advertising so I know a  
thing or two about subtext. There's  
always something more than what  
people let on.

ELIZA

So what would your ad say? You  
know, without the subtext?

Robin takes a bite of bacon and thinks.

ROBIN

Divorced 30-something idiot thought  
buying a house was a smart  
investment. Seeking anyone to help  
pay the mortgage.

ELIZA

Anyone?

ROBIN

I'm living with a bunch of 20 year  
olds. What do you think?

Nathaniel comes into the kitchen, ready for a day at work.

NATHANIEL

Is that breakfast? Oh, sick.

ROBIN

Hey. How'd it go with the  
uh...shit, what's her name? The  
stand-up comedian girl. Did you  
talk to her last night?

Nathaniel joins the other two at the table with a dish of  
EGGS that he begins to scarf down.

He talks while chewing.

NATHANIEL

Emily. And Not so good. It was open  
mic night and I performed so we got  
to talking about my slam poetry.  
Now normally I LOVE that but I  
realized all my poems make me out  
to be this super anxious, socially  
awkward guy with no family.

(MORE)

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

Which I am. And I got a bit emotional...it uh. It got awkward.

ELIZA

Next time you get a chance, buy her a drink or two and keep the conversation focused on her. Try to get her to be vulnerable this time. Level things out a bit. Show some confidence.

Nathaniel gets up out of his seat and grabs his APRON.

NATHANIEL

Alright. I'll try that. You know, the internet doesn't know what they're talking about. You're super chill in person.

He takes one last bite before getting up.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

Gotta jet. White girl frapps don't make themselves.

Nathaniel leaves the table as quickly as he came.

Eliza reaches for his PLATE but Robin grabs it before she can.

He takes them to the sink and starts to wash them.

ROBIN

You know, we've been struggling to make ends meet here lately and... well, what I'm saying is you don't have to just be a guest.

Eliza closes her laptop.

ELIZA

I appreciate the offer but I shouldn't overstay my welcome. I'll be out of here by the end of the week once I weed out the cat lady ads.

ROBIN

Does this have anything to do with Alex?

No response. Robin looks behind him. Eliza is gone.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND HOUSE - JULIAN & NATHANIEL'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

The room is covered with powerful, intimate paintings similar in style to the one we saw earlier.

Julian is at the center of the room at an EASEL, painting.

He's at peace until he hears a gentle KNOCK on the door.

JULIAN

Yeah?

ELIZA

Hey, sorry to bother you, but do you know where the towels are?

Julian looks up to see Eliza leaning in the doorway.

She has a half-eaten BROWNIE in her hand.

JULIAN

...Eliza, where did you get that brownie?

Eliza takes another bite.

ELIZA

It was in a pack by the fridge. Hope it was okay I took one.

JULIAN

That's not... *just* a brownie.

Eliza's eyes widen. She gulps.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Eliza, Julian, and Nathaniel are lying down on the floor stoned out of their minds.

ELIZA

Julian...your art is like...better than art. It transcends art. It's my dead mother speaking to me through the hands of a 20 year old.

Nathaniel is fixated on how soft a BLANKET is. He laughs.

JULIAN

Naaaaah. It's...it's nothing. And it's definitely not whatever you just said it was.

ELIZA

No. You're wrong. You have a real talent. Seriously. I know a guy. I can't think of his name right now but he's a real guy who does art stuff. Gallery! There we go. He owns a gallery. Let me hook you up.

JULIAN

I don't know. I'm not classically trained or anything I just do this for fun.

ELIZA

But you have a real gift. And you know who else did art for fun? Everyone who's ever done art. Oh...woah. Did I just discover something?

NATHAN

That's profound, man.

Coy, Julian looks away. Contemplates.

JULIAN

Let me think about it.

A moment of peaceful silence follows as all they stare up at the ceiling.

ELIZA

Can I ask you something though? What's with the uh...the cane?

JULIAN

Car accident.

ELIZA

Oh. I'm so sorry.

JULIAN

Don't be. It was my fault.

ELIZA

Your fault?

JULIAN

My fault.

ELIZA  
What uh...what Happened?

JULIAN  
I don't wanna talk about it.

More silence.

NATHANIEL  
Okay. My turn for a question. For you, new girl.

ELIZA  
Shoot.

NATHANIEL  
What's with the rock?

ELIZA  
Uhh...That's a good story. When I was 18 and Alex was...10, I think? Our dad just kind of disappeared on us a few days before Christmas. Just poof. Gone.

Alex enters dressed in a tight dress.

She pauses and listens to Eliza.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
We both joked that the only way our Christmas could get any worse was if we got rocks as gifts. So naturally, we both got each other rocks. We've only given each other rocks since. Well...when we see each other.

Eliza starts to stare at her hands.

ALEX (O.S.)  
Did you guys get my sister high?

Nathaniel sits up, his blanket still pressed to his face.

NATHANIEL  
Hey now, she did this to herself. And what kind of horrible people would we be if just we let her trip alone?

Alex starts heading to the door.

ELIZA

Are you going out with that guy again?

ALEX

Nope. Different guy.

ELIZA

A different guy? That seems... exhausting.

NATHANIEL

I mean that's all part of the job description. Going out with guy-s. Plural.

ELIZA

...*Job* description? Holy Shit. Alex. Are you a-a...

ALEX

I'm an escort. It's not that big a deal, okay? I have to go.

ELIZA

Wait. Now, hold on!

Alex leaves, shutting the door behind her.

Eliza struggles to get up but Julian puts a hand on her shoulder to calm her down.

JULIAN

She's just arm candy for rich guys. That's all this is. She'll be fine.

ELIZA

Have you met rich guys?

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERTED PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Alex is walking next to RODNEY (Late-30s). They're both stumbling around, drunk, as they approach a parked CAR.

RODNEY

Thanks for joining me tonight. I can't stand going to office parties by myself.

ALEX

I had a good time. Your coworkers are boring as shit but the food was amazing.

Alex reaches for the doorknob but Rodney spins her around to kiss her instead.

As they make out, he starts to reach up her dress and Alex shoves his hand away.

He tries again, this time with more force. Alex pulls away.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Dinner and some kisses are fine but that's as far as I go. You know that.

RODNEY

Come on, how much will it cost for a little dessert this time, huh?

Rodney tries again to reach up her dress and she slaps his hand away with force.

ALEX

This isn't part of our arrangement.

RODNEY

Fuck the arrangement. Come on, baby.

Rodney opens the car door behind Alex and manages to shove her in the back.

INT. CAR - BACKSEAT - CONTINUOUS

Alex struggles underneath Rodney's weight.

Rodney continues to grope every inch of visible skin.

RODNEY

Come on, beautiful. I'll go easy on ya, I promise.

It isn't until Rodney sits up to unbuckle his belt that Alex is able to free herself and push her way out of the car.

ALEX

You can keep your fucking money!

INT. DESERTED PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Alex takes off her HEELS and is about to make a run for it before Rodney grabs her arm.

He starts to pull her back to him but a pair of HEADLIGHTS come into view and drives into the lot.

Rodney lets go.

Alex takes off and runs without looking back.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Nathaniel and Julian are still high except now they're on the couch, passing a joint.

INSERT ON: NATHANIEL'S PHONE

It's ringing. Alex Lyles is calling.

His phone's on silent.

NATHANIEL

Dude. I have a confession to make.

JULIAN

Hmm?

NATHANIEL

My name's not Nathaniel.

JULIAN

Oh shit. What?

NATHANIEL

Yeah. It's really Tom. I just think Nathaniel sounds cooler. More...sophisticated. Ya feel?

Julian bursts out laughing.

INSERT ON: JULIAN'S PHONE

It's ringing. Alex is calling him, too. It goes ignored.

EXT. GRAND HOUSE - PORCH - SAME TIME

Eliza is sitting on the porch, Robin besides her. She drinks a tall glass of water.

ELIZA

Do you have any siblings?

Robin shakes his head.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Good. Keep it that way. It's not easy.

ROBIN

You guys definitely don't make it look easy.

ELIZA

I thought it'd get better as we got older but if anything, it's gotten worse. We're just so different.

ROBIN

Actually I think the problem is you're too similar.

Eliza looks at Robin like he's crazy.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Just hear me out, okay? You guys have your obvious differences for sure. But from what I've gathered you're both just super independent, proud people. Maybe even to a fault.

ELIZA

You barely even know me.

ROBIN

Oh, I Googled your ass yesterday. I know everything now.

Eliza manages a smile.

Robin's PHONE starts to ring and he answers.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Hey. What's...Alex? Are you okay?...Yeah. Text me where you are. I'll be there soon.

Robin hangs up and his tone of voice has shifted.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

We gotta go.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Alex is sitting on a curb, her head in her hands. Footsteps can be heard and she looks up.

It's Eliza.

ELIZA  
What happened?

ALEX  
Just some asshole. He...he almost-  
well, anyway. It's fine. I've dealt  
with it before.

Alex gets up and brushes herself off.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Save the lecture.

ELIZA  
I wasn't gonna lecture you.

ALEX  
That's a first.

Eliza gives Alex a hug. One of those warm hugs that you can melt into.

Eliza continues to hold her sister as tight as she can.

ELIZA  
We don't have to talk about it.  
You're safe, that's all that  
matters. It's...gonna be okay.

Alex hugs her sister tighter and begins to tear up.

ALEX  
How is this okay? Look at me. Shit,  
I'm probably gonna lose my job.

ELIZA  
Look at that. Something else we  
have in common.

Alex laughs and tries to wipe away her remaining tears.

The two sisters continue to stand in an embrace.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
Looks like we both have some stuff  
we gotta figure out.

Alex sniffs and buries her head into Eliza's chest.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
 But maybe the two of us can figure  
 it out together for a while. We  
 don't have to be so alone.

The two of them stand there on the street, letting Eliza's words hang in the air.

Robin watches from the car, smiling.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND HOUSE - ELIZA'S NEW ROOM/GARAGE - DAY

Eliza is surrounded by a pile of boxes in a garage that will presumably be turned into a proper living space.

She's sits at a desk, typing away on her laptop.

Eliza's voice over picks up where we left off.

ELIZA (V.O.)  
 My book *is* overpriced....  
 And I was wrong.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - JULIAN & NATHANIEL'S ROOM - DAY

Julian is sorting through all of his paintings, smiling.

He looks at his laptop where he's been researching the FREDRICKSON ART GALLERY.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
 Self worth is not measured by the  
 approval of others. It has to come  
 from yourself, first.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Nathaniel is performing a really passionate slam poem.

EMILY, watches from her seat. Mesmerized.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
 And the truth is, we all have  
 baggage-

INT. GRAND HOUSE - ROBIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Robin is on his bed, drinking a BEER. His room is littered with several cardboard 12 pack beer carriers.

ELIZA (V.O.)  
 -and there's always going to be  
 more to people than what they  
 choose to show.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - ALEX'S ROOM - DAY

Alex wakes up. She looks over at her nightstand where there is a glass of water, some Advil, and a NOTE.

INSERT ON: NOTE

It's the dedication page ripped out of *Being a Happier You*.

In bold letters it says "To Alex"

ELIZA (V.O.)  
 Most importantly, it is, in fact,  
 okay to not be okay.

Alex picks up the page and smiles. It's clear she's never seen this before.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - ELIZA'S NEW ROOM/GARAGE - SAME TIME

Eliza is still at the computer where we left her, typing.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
 So to anyone who read my book...  
 who took my advice...who came to my  
 seminars and paid my bills for a  
 while as I coasted off of my mild  
 success...consider this new book an  
 apology.

Somewhere in the corner of the room, a copy of *Being a Happier You* has been tossed to the side with a pile of junk.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
 My first word of advice? Throw the  
 old book away. It was an overpriced  
 hunk of bullshit.

Eliza looks at her introduction paragraph and smiles.

**END**

