

HOW TO DIE ALONE

Written by
Natasha Rothwell

NOTE: Natasha Rothwell will play the role of MELISSA and periodically appear as other characters where indicated ***CHARACTER (MELISSA)*** The key function of this device is illuminating Melissa's internal thoughts, fears and dreams. These instances are triggered when she can't use her voice to express what she is truly thinking and feeling. These Psychological Projections indulge her curiosity about the unknown with brief moments of fantasy.

Natasha Rothwell
Big Hattie Productions
4208 Overland Avenue
Culver City, CA 90230

WHITE PRODUCTION DRAFT - 11/01/22

© 2022, ABC Signature. All rights reserved. This material is the exclusive property of ABC Signature and is intended solely for the use of its personnel. Distribution to unauthorized persons or reproduction, in whole or in part, without the written consent of ABC Signature is strictly prohibited.

HOW TO DIE ALONE

EP. 101 / "TBD"
WHITE PRODUCTION DRAFT
11/01/22

CAST LIST

MELISSA "MEL"
RORY
ALEX
TERRANCE
BRIAN
MOM
ALLIE
BI-COASTAL BAE (BEN)

PATTI
KAYA
SHAWN
DESHAWN
JOSH

ELISE
KEKE
DR. TIBIDEAUX
RESIDENT #1
RESIDENT #2
RESIDENT #3
ZACK
WILA
JADA
ZOË
REPRESENTATIVE
GIRLFRIEND
CASHIER
DOCTOR

HOW TO DIE ALONE

EP. 101 / "TBD"
WHITE PRODUCTION DRAFT
11/01/22

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

- AIRTRAN
- AIRTRAN STATION
- APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY
- BRIAN'S CAR
- BROOKLYN INN BAR
- BUTTERMILK CHANNEL
- DUANE READE - CHECKOUT
- ELISE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM
- IKEA - DISPLAY AREA
- IKEA - REGISTER
- IKEA - WAREHOUSE
- JFK / GATE C19 - PAX VEHICLE
- JFK / PAX ASSIST OFFICE
- JFK / TERMINAL 4
- JFK / TERMINAL 4 - PAX VEHICLE
- JFK / TSA SECURITY
- JFK / VIP LOUNGE BATHROOM
- JFK AIRPORT
- MEL'S APARTMENT
- MEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY
- MEL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM
- MEL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM
- MT. SINAI HOSPITAL - ELISE'S BED
- MT. SINAI HOSPITAL - MEL'S BED
- MT. SINAI HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM
- NYC SUBWAY STATION
- SUBWAY
- SWANK HOTEL - BEDROOM

EXTERIORS:

- IKEA - BUS STOP
- JFK / TARMAC
- MT. SINAI HOSPITAL
- NYC STREET
- SUBWAY ENTRANCE

HOW TO DIE ALONE

EP. 101 / "TBD"
WHITE PRODUCTION DRAFT
11/01/22

DAY / NIGHT BREAKDOWN

<u>SCENE #</u>	<u>SCRIPT D/N</u>
1-13	D1
14-33	N1
34-39	D2

1 **EXT. NYC STREET - DAY - LETTERBOX [16:9] - VIBRANT COLOR (D1)**

Welcome to New York City. An ACTUAL PERSON (à la Humans of New York) gives a real to-camera documentary interview:

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Why do you think some people end up
dying alone?

NEW YORKER
Motherfuckers out here thinkin'
they got time. Holdin' out for a
hero and whatnot-- But tomorrow
ain't promised. We just gotta do
the best we can with what we got--
My man? He stutter. I don't
understand half the shit he say.
But he fuck good, bills be paid and
he don't lock his phone. That's
good enough. 'Cause at the end of
the day, we all dyin' alone. I'm
just out here tryin' not to die
lonely. There's a difference.

TITLES: "HOW TO DIE ALONE"

2 **INT. DUANE READE - CHECKOUT - MORNING - MUTED COLOR (D1)** 2

Harsh florescent lights illuminate a bored employee, ZOË,
20s, as she scans a few items at a register: SHAPE MAGAZINE,
RED BULL, BREAKFAST HOT POCKETS, A BAG OF CANDY and TUMS.

MELISSA (O.C.)
And a pack of American Spirits.

Zoë's judgmental eyes move from the Tums to MELISSA (MEL),
30s, Lizzo's unremarkable tether.

She wears an old black hoodie over a wrinkled t-shirt, and
shapeless, black, uniform pants. Her plus-size frame is held
up by black security work boots and caffeine.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
The orange ones. Thanks.

Zoë goes to get the cigarettes as Mel debates something
internally. After a beat, Mel makes a decision and smiles.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
What the hell...

Mel runs out of frame and comes back holding a pair CHEAP
HOOP EARRINGS and sets them down as Zoë returns.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (CONT'D)
Treat yourself, right?--

ZOË
I.D., please.

Mel hands over her LICENSE. **CLOSE ON:** The license as Zoë enters Mel's birthday on the register and hands it back.

ZOË (CONT'D)
(re: license)
Happy birthday.

Mel smiles and pays as she continues:

MELISSA
Tuh, I hope so.

Mel takes her bag, puts on her headphones and exits as "About Damn Time" by Lizzo kicks off a **MONTAGE:**

3 **EXT. SUBWAY ENTRANCE - A LITTLE LATER - MUTED COLOR (D1)** 3

- As a wave of COMMUTERS exit, Mel fights her way down the subway stairs, being pushed and shoved without regard.

4 **INT. NYC SUBWAY STATION - CONTINUOUS - MUTED COLOR (D1)** 4

- Mel barely makes the train as the DOORS CLOSE ON HER. No one helps her as she struggles to get free.

5 **INT. AIRTRAN STATION - A LITTLE LATER - MUTED COLOR (D1)** 5

- Mel exits the train and runs up the stairs to catch the waiting AirTran but her Duane Reade bag catches on the handrail, ripping it and sending its contents everywhere.

6 **INT. JFK / TSA SECURITY - A LITTLE LATER - MUTED COLOR (D1)** 6

- Mel walks to the front of a LONG LINE OF PEOPLE. A TSA OFFICER doesn't notice Mel flashing her badge as she continues to walk past him.

- Moments later, Mel is tackled to the ground by SECURITY GUARDS coming from both sides.

END OF MONTAGE

CUT TO BLACK:

PRE-LAP: Hospital-like BEEPING...

7

INT. JFK / TERMINAL 4 - PAX VEHICLE - LATER - MUTED COLOR (D1)

REVEAL: The hospital-like beeping is Mel backing up her PAX ACCESSIBILITY VEHICLE.

Welcome to Mel's JFK. It's a claustrophobic place where giant windows illuminate the irony that everyone there is going somewhere in life except for her.

Once parked, Mel preps her cart like it's an UBER BLACK, putting some of her salvaged Duane Reade candy in the cup holder and wiping down the cart with a microfiber cloth. She catches her reflection in a store window and musters a smile. Game face on. She flicks on her walkie and presses the gas.

Mel drives her Pax Cart through a locked frame, happily chatting with a DISABLED PASSENGER.

MELISSA

South Africa! You can't go wrong in a country with penguins and giraffes!

After a beat she drives the Pax Cart in the opposite direction chatting with an OLD MAN wearing a MAGA HAT.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Don't sleep on the surf lessons. Did you know you're more likely to be bit by a New Yorker than a shark? And that's a true fact.

Finally, she drives in the other direction back through the same frame now chatting with a WHITE MOTHER and DAUGHTER.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Pro-tip, gate 27 is always empty. I don't know why. Set up camp there.

They share a laugh and Mel helps them to their gate.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Okay. You're all set. Safe travels!

They laugh as Mel heads back, and when her walkie goes off, Mel drops her "customer mask" revealing exhaustion.

PATTI (V.O)

Patti for Melissa.

Mel rolls her eyes and responds via walkie to Patti, annoyed:

MELISSA

Go for Melissa.

(CONTINUED)

PATTI (V.O.)

Did you see the gate change for your ten o'clock? Mr. Ganesh will now arrive at A21. That's Apple-Two-One. Do you copy?

MELISSA

Copy. I saw it come through just like you did.

Mel gets in her cart, exhales and checks her phone. Suddenly, she sits up. **CLOSE ON:** Mel as her face falls.

8

INT. JFK / GATE C19 - PAX VEHICLE - LATER - MUTED COLOR (DB)

CLOSE ON: Mel's phone as a video plays of a nauseatingly symmetrical couple set to "Marry You" by Bruno Mars.

Images of the groom / the other half of Mel's most meaningful situation-ship, ALEX WILLIAMS, 30s, a nerdy, funnier version of Michael B. Jordan, and the bride, JULIE, are punctuated by details of their upcoming nuptials.

SUPER: MAUI, HAWAII: 12/16/2023 -- "WE'RE GETTING MAUI'D!"

RORY (O.S.)

One time for my birthday bitch!

REVEAL: Mel's work husband / best friend RORY, 30s, basically Bowen Yang, in a HUDSON NEWS UNIFORM, holds two Jamba Juice smoothies. He hands Mel one and sits down next to her.

MELISSA

I didn't even know he was engaged.

RORY

I know. I can't believe he's getting married to someone else after you rejected *him*--

MELISSA

Before he could reject me, and as I predicted, he found someone who makes sense. Look at her--

RORY

Look at you!
(off her eye roll)
Can we unpack this on the way to Hudson? I'm late, even for me.

MELISSA

You know I'm not your personal chauffeur, right?

9

INT. JFK / TERMINAL 4 - PAX VEHICLE - MUTED COLOR (D1)

9

Mel sips her Jamba Juice as she drives Rory to Hudson.

RORY

Come on! I've never broken up a straight wedding before!

MELISSA

Let's say I wasn't afraid to fly and could fit into my silk Eloquii jumpsuit--

RORY

Silk jumpsuit?

MELISSA

I don't know-- I wanted to feel warm *and* cold at the same time-- the point is I still wouldn't go because it'd make me pathetic.

RORY

You're only pathetic if you still have feelings for him otherwise you're Julia fuckin' Roberts. Picture it. It's winter in New York, and you're flying out of it, straight into a Mai Tai. We make it only to the reception where we dominate the dance floor, duck walking to Whitney as Alex files for divorce.

MELISSA

Let's say you drug me and get me on the plane, I'm broke and I can't open another credit card--

RORY

My treat.

MELISSA

Do you ever think about money or is it a Scrooge McDuck situation?

RORY

How many times do I have to tell you my parents are rich, I'm not.

In avoidance, Rory takes out his phone.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

You have horses, you work at Hudson
just to meet a trust fund
requirement, and your dad is
president of JFK--

RORY

Shut your fucking face! Stop the
cart!

Mel slams on her brakes.

RORY (CONT'D)

(re: his phone)

Lizzo's here! B17 in ten minutes!

MELISSA

Oh my god! Are you sure?!

RORY

Tina from Delta just posted on
Slack--

MELISSA

Tina?

RORY

The one with the big tiddies--

MELISSA

Shit! I have a medical transport!

RORY

If it was *really* that important,
they'd send an ambulance.

MELISSA

...Fuck it. It's my birthday!

Mel hits the gas as "Ruff Ryder's Anthem" by DMX blasts them
into a **MONTAGE**:

10

INT. JFK / TERMINAL 4 - VARIOUS - LATER - MUTED COLOR (D1) 10

- **SLOW MOTION:** Mel dramatically maneuvers her Pax Cart like
it's a Formula 1 race car.
- Mel quickly stops in front of BROOKSTONE and honks her
horn. KAYA, 20s, cute and down for anything, appears.

MELISSA

Lizzo's here!

(CONTINUED)

- Kaya throws her store keys to a coworker, DARREN, as she jumps into Mel's Pax Cart and calls off screen:

KAYA

Darren, cover me! I got the shits!

- The cart flies by a group of CONCERNED NUNS.
- The cart passes LABREA BAKERY when JOSH, 30s, a cute bread nerd and LaBrea employee, runs alongside them and hurls himself onto the cart.

JOSH

If I touch her, I'll absolutely nut.

- A concerned MOTHER pulls her LITTLE BOY close as the Pax Cart flies across the frame.
- They race through the airport, when Mel slows to a stop. A MEN'S COLLEGE SOCCER TEAM is crossing in front of them.

RORY

More thighs than Popeyes...

- When the SOCCER TEAM finally parts, standing there is a traveller, BI-COASTAL BAE (BEN), 30s, incredibly gorgeous.
- **SLOW MOTION:** Ben walks through the terminal like a dream as "Only Time" by Enya begins to play.
- Mel and Rory sigh, hypnotized by Ben.

MELISSA

Bi-Coastal Bae gets better looking every week. I'd let him do *anything* to me...

KAYA

Girl, he came in to Brookstone last week carrying Andy Cohen's book and a pack of raw almonds. He doesn't do *anything* to women.

- Rory looks at Ben wistfully.

RORY

What are the chances he's into vers bottom Gaysians who are lactose intolerant? Zero, right?

JOSH

Shut. Up. None of you are getting him! We're all invisible airport cretins to him, and everybody else!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOSH (CONT'D)

Now can y'all *please* stop eye-fucking and get a move on?

- Mel snaps out of it and DMX kicks back in. Mel puts the pedal to the metal just as an OLD LADY steps in their path.

RORY

OH SHIT!

KAYA

WATCH OUT!

- Mel slams on the brakes to avoid hitting her, sending all four of them FLYING OUT THE CART.

- Kaya, Josh and Mel dust themselves off while Rory, pissed and covered in Mel's smoothie, wipes his eyes clean.

END OF MONTAGE

11 **INT. JFK / PAX ASSIST OFFICE - LATER - MUTED COLOR (D1)** 11

Mel sits and quietly fills out an incident report.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Don't forget to sign and date. It's a whole thing if you don't.

REVEAL: It's Alex, her boss / "ex" sitting at a desk.

MELISSA

No one even got hurt--

ALEX

This place is a liability-fest. You have to be more careful.

MELISSA

I know! I was just trying to see Lizzo and now my perfect record is going to be besmirched-- And I can not go back to baggage claim! The smell alone--

ALEX

I don't think they want you back.

MELISSA

No shit. They sent me up here.

Alex looks at Mel wistfully and smiles.

ALEX

I gotta thank them for that...
(a long beat, then)
Uh, did you... get the email?

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

I did, and I don't even eat
cantaloupe.

(off his look)

Oh! *That* email! Did I get it?

(singing)

I THINK I WANNA MARRY YOU!

(self-correcting)

Not me-- Her-- She's marrying you
in two months and that's *awesome*.
Mazel Tov.

ALEX

Thanks. It all happened so fast
that's why I didn't get to--

MELISSA

Hey, I'm happy you're getting
Maui'd.

ALEX

Oh God-- Are people saying that?

(off Mel's laugh)

Big plans tonight? Or is it Thai-
day night with Rory per usual?

MELISSA

Actually, we're going *out* for Thai
food *and* karaoke. So, big tings.

ALEX

You hate singing in public.

MELISSA

Rory got us a private room, so...

Mel signs and dates her final page.

ALEX

Okay. Well, have fun tonight. Happy
birthday.

Feeling awkward, Mel nods "thank you" and opens the door as
PATTI, 30s, Mel's nemesis, approaches. As they cross:

MELISSA

Patti.

PATTI

Melissa.

Once the door closes, Mel gives her a violent double-bird.

12 **INT. JFK / VIP LOUNGE BATHROOM - LATER - MUTED COLOR (D1)** 12

Rory, post-shower, stands at the sink applying moisturizer wearing a terrycloth turban, when sexy Ben enters.

Rory tries to hide his excitement as Ben uses the urinal but when he goes to wash his hands, Rory can't contain himself.

RORY
Nice shoes-- I like your shoes.

BEN
Saks.
(off Rory's confused look)
Saks Fifth Avenue.

RORY
Oh! I thought you said 'sex' and I was like, "Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaat?"--

BEN
If I'd said sex, you'd know it. I'm Ben.

Off Rory, utterly gagged.

13 **EXT. JFK / TARMAC - LATER THAT DAY - MUTED COLOR (D1)** 13

Mel is perched on top of a BROKEN BAGGAGE TROLLY. She smokes a CIGARETTE as she USES A FINSTA TO TROLL LIZZO. She studies a photo of Lizzo at JFK from earlier in the day then types:

USER6233494: *"delete ur account jabba the slut"*

After a beat, her friend and runway manager, TERRANCE, 30s, basically Bashir Salahuddin, approaches. Mel hides her phone.

TERRANCE
It's highly flammable down here.

MELISSA
(putting it out)
Oh, wow! Really?

TERRANCE
You work at the sixth largest airport in the world-- for how long now? And you don't know that this place is covered in fuel?

Mel stares at him blankly.

TERRANCE (CONT'D) MELISSA
You're fucking with me. I'm fucking with you.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Anyway, as far as I'm concerned the only thing keeping those things in the air is black magic. I'm talkin' the dark arts.

(off his look)

I'm serious! We're not supposed to be up there. If we were supposed to fly, we'd have wings. I'm keepin' my ass on the ground.

TERRANCE

Flying is safer than driving. I mean, you crashed today.

MELISSA

How did you know?

TERRANCE

Oh, I have my ways...

(off her laugh, re: plane)

Come on. You're not even a little bit curious? Expand your mind.

Mel looks up at a ***SOLO TRAVELER (MEL)*** dressed in a flowing kaftan, walking down the glass gangway to board a flight. Mel stares at her with longing but shakes off the brief fantasy.

MELISSA

Maybe some people, not me.

TERRANCE

You can't let fear keep you from taking off.

MELISSA

Okay, Carmen Sandiego-- where have you been?

TERRANCE

Munich, Tokyo, Baghdad, Turkey--

MELISSA

Thank you for your service.

Mel notices two familiar faces, tarmac employees SHAWN and DESHAWN, 30s, two peas in a pod.

SHAWN

...It's my constitutional right to be litigious as fuck. I'm clockin' every OSHA safety violation.

(CONTINUED)

DESHAWN

Why you always tryna shut us down?
I ain't tryna be home with Dee Dee!
You know how mean she been since
she got that IED.

MELISSA

You mean, IUD?

SHAWN

I think it was a DUI.

DESHAWN

Nigga, GED, L, M, N, O, P-- The
woman ice cold! She even talkin'
'bout skippin' Disney this year!

TERRANCE

How many times I gotta tell you,
you cannot be a black man *and* a
Disney Adult. You gotta pick one.
Now, both of you get back to work.

They both laugh. Mel coughs.

TERRANCE (CONT'D)

You know, smoking can kill you.

MELISSA

We're black people living in
America, Terrance. Our odds aren't
great to begin with.

Mel collects her things and heads back upstairs.

14

INT. JFK / TERMINAL 4 - EARLY EVENING - MUTED COLOR (N1) 14

Back in her hoodie, Mel looks for Rory in front of the Hudson News entrance. After a beat, he emerges wearing a NEW OUTFIT and a pained look on his face.

RORY

Ehhh... so, about tonight...

MELISSA

Come on. Don't do this to me again.
If you bail for dick on my
birthday, you're dead to me.
Seriously. Dead.

Cornered, Rory decides to abandon the truth and lie.

(CONTINUED)

RORY

Uh-- I *wish* it was dick, but Dad was chairing this fundraiser and now he can't go, so I have to host the table or whatever. And you know how he is, I can't tell him no.

(off her look)

Look, we'll do everything you want to do next weekend. Take edibles, watch *The Office*--

Mel sighs and makes the familiar decision to give in.

MELISSA

The UK version *and* the US version.

RORY

Are you sure? Be honest.

MELISSA

Go! I mean it. Have fun. I'm gonna go to my happy place.

15

INT. IKEA - DISPLAY AREA - A LITTLE LATER - MUTED COLOR (NB)

A smile creeps across Mel's face. **REVEAL:** She's at Ikea wandering around a MODEL APARTMENT imagining her life there.

After a beat she's interrupted by a CALL FROM HER MOTHER. She ignores it and continues into the attached MODEL BATHROOM.

She bumps into a cute guy, ZACK, 30s.

MELISSA

I didn't know you were home!

Removing her headphones. They share a laugh.

ZACK

(catching on)

It's date night or did you forget?

Mel's eyes go wide. The game is afoot. Zack continues into the MODEL KITCHEN and Mel follows him.

MELISSA

Did I forget? I made your favorite. Swedish meatballs with lingonberry sauce.

ZACK

How did I get so lucky?

The faux flirt makes Mel nervous and she breaks character.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA
I'm Melissa, by the way.

ZACK
I'm Zack... You know, I think this might be my favorite room here.

MELISSA
There are *real* books inside of the ottoman! The attention to detail--

DING! Zack gets a text notification. He checks it, then:

ZACK
I should probably get what I came here for.
(off her look)
One of those PAX wardrobes.

MELISSA
Oh my God, me too!

16 **INT. IKEA - WAREHOUSE - A LITTLE LATER - MUTED COLOR (N1)** 16

Side by side, Mel and Zack each push a flatbed cart with identical boxes on them.

MELISSA
You've never bought anything on Amazon? Like on principle or are you just trying to be interesting?

ZACK
So, you think I'm interesting, huh?

Mel gets butterflies. Could he be the one?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Babe. Babe. Babe.

REVEAL: Zack's GIRLFRIEND, a model, approaches. She pushes a cart with HUGE PHOTO-CANVAS of the NYC skyline in it.

GIRLFRIEND
Zack, let's go! I hate this place.

Zack sheepishly waves goodbye and obediently follows his girlfriend. Mel looks at her cart, considering leaving it.

17 **INT. IKEA - REGISTER - LATER - MUTED COLOR (N1)** 17

Mel watches the CASHIER scanning her items and begins to sweat as the total gets higher and higher on the screen.

(CONTINUED)

CASHIER
Your total is \$376.43.

Mel clocks Zack and his girlfriend a few registers down.

MELISSA
You know what? Fuck it. Today, imma do me.
(offering a credit card)
That one should work.
(re: Family Card discount)
Can I get one of those or do you have to have an actual family?

18 **EXT. IKEA - BUS STOP - EVENING - MUTED COLOR (N1)** 18

As Mel comically struggles to carry her purchases to the bus stop, she gets a VOICEMAIL FROM HER MOM. **PRE-LAP:**

MOM (V.O.)
Hey baby, when you get a chance, I need you to show me how to record The John Legend Singing Show.

The bus arrives and the doors open. The BUS DRIVER watches Mel struggle for a long beat before helping her inside.

MOM (V.O.)
It comes on the same time as bible study and God don't want me to choose. Ow! Doggoneit-- I'm gonna get your brother to come over here and move this table--

The doors close and the bus pulls away with Mel awkwardly standing in the aisle, trying to avoid eye-contact.

19 **EXT. NYC STREET - LATER - MUTED COLOR (N1)** 19

The bus pulls into frame. After a beat it pulls away.
REVEAL: Mel making her way to her building.

MOM (V.O.)
I keep banging my foot-- Speaking of foot, keep the Johnson family in prayer. Instead of losing weight, Julissa lost a foot. Diabetes. Mm.

20 **INT. MEL'S APARTMENT - LATER - MUTED COLOR (N1)** 20

Mel sits on the floor in her sweats in front of open boxes listening to the voicemail as she looks at the instructions.

(CONTINUED)

MOM (V.O.)
Oh! I almost forgot--
(singing black HBD-style)
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU! HAPPY--

Mel deletes the voicemail and fixates on a SINGLE CARTOON PERSON WITH A RED 'X' DRAWN OVER THEM, indicating that it shouldn't be assembled alone. She scoffs and begins to defiantly assemble the wardrobe.

21 **INT. MEL'S APARTMENT - MUCH LATER - MUTED COLOR (N1)** 21

Mel stands in front of a fully assembled wardrobe on its side surrounded by IKEA DEBRIS, PBR CANS, THAI FOOD CONTAINERS.

She starts to lift up the wardrobe, but struggles to get it upright. Then... she does! Mel celebrates but the moment is ruined when a RAT makes a beeline for her food.

MELISSA
No! Fuck off you little shit!

The rat runs away as Mel sits and possessively eats the remaining CRAB RANGOON. Unbeknownst to her, the wardrobe BEHIND HER begins to lean forward. Then suddenly, it falls over KNOCKING HER OUT, COLD.

END OF ACT ONE

(CONTINUED)

ACT TWO

22

INT. MT. SINAI HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT(N1)

22

POV: BLINKING EYES bring a hospital room into focus and the world is suddenly in **VIBRANT COLOR**.

REVEAL: Mel in a hospital bed. She looks around the room, and then studies her injuries: bandages on her head, a cast on her left arm, bruises and cuts on her face.

She begins to cry loudly, feeling completely alone.

Like a Catholic confessional, Mel is separated by a curtain from her roommate, an OLD WOMAN, as they lay in their beds side by side.

A nurse, KEKE, 30s, over it, quickly enters the room and checks on Mel's neighbor.

KEKE (O.S.)

Ms. Robinson, did you mean to call?

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

Kill me please.

KEKE

What's wrong?

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

This bitch won't shut the fuck up--
Can you just pull the goddamn plug?

KEKE (O.S)

Ask Dr. Tibideaux, he'll be in
shortly doing his rounds with the
residents.

Keke, quickly comes to Mel's side of the curtain, at her wits end. Mel, still crying, tries to compose herself.

KEKE (CONT'D)

Ma'am-- I keep trying your
emergency contact number but I
can't get through. Is it (646) 123 -
4567?

MELISSA

That's-- That's my phone number.

KEKE

You're your own emergency contact?

Mel nods "yes" and begins to cry a little harder.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

It's my birthday and I just wanna go home. Can you just release me?

KEKE

Look. I love a Libra, but it's hospital policy. You need to find somebody to pick you up.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

In the name of Jesus!

MELISSA

I'll try again...

Keke leaves Mel, crossing DR. TIBIDEAUX and five of his RESIDENTS as they enter the adjacent hospital bay.

POP TO:

23

INT. SWANK HOTEL - BEDROOM - SAME TIME (N1)

23

REVEAL: Rory in bed with Bi-Coastal Bae (Ben) making light work of foreplay. Rory's phone rings. Rory looks over and sees it's Mel.

BEN

You're so fucking hot. You know that right?

RORY

I do now.

Rory smiles and it goes to voicemail as they get back to it.

BACK TO:

Mailbox full, Mel hangs up, frustrated. Unsure what to do. She scrolls through her contacts.

DR. TIBIDEAUX (O.C.)

(to the old woman)

...We'll be admitting you and you'll be kept overnight for observation. Get some rest.

Mel's finger hovers over the contact: 'ALEX WILLIAMS' when Dr. Tibideaux and the residents come around the curtain and gather at the foot of her bed.

DR. TIBIDEAUX (CONT'D)

(looking at his clipboard)

Okay, black woman, 35, single.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR. TIBIDEAUX (CONT'D)

She was found in her apartment unresponsive by her neighbor with lacerations to her face, a contusion to the back of her head.

RESIDENT #1

As well as a hairline rib fracture.

DR. TIBIDEAUX

A rib fracture from what?

RESIDENT #2

Chest compressions after she stopped breathing.

MELISSA

Wait, I stopped breathing? For how long?

DR. TIBIDEAUX

Almost three minutes.

This lands on Mel hard -- this could have been bad-bad.

MELISSA

Three minutes?! That's longer than "Despacito"...

DR. TIBIDEAUX

The blunt force trauma to the back of the head caused her to fall forward on her face, and she choked on the Crab Rangoon she had in her mouth.

CLOSE ON: Mel as she processes the magnitude of what could have happened as the residents continue in the background.

DR. TIBIDEAUX (CONT'D)

What are the next steps?

The residents scour their notes.

RESIDENT #3

Because of the severity of the concussion, she'll need to be kept awake for the next six hours or so.

MELISSA

Six hours?...

RESIDENT #3

A short script for oxycodone to treat the rib fracture as needed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RESIDENT #3 (CONT'D)

Otherwise 500 mg of ibuprofen for the contusions. No strenuous physical activity for the next six weeks.

DR. TIBIDEAUX

Alright, get some rest and Keke will get you discharged shortly...

Mel is SHOOK. Keke enters as the doctors exit.

KEKE

So, where are we on your pick up?

MELISSA

I told you, I'm working on it.

KEKE

Listen, if you don't have anyone, there are services I can--

MELISSA

(explodes)

What do you want from me? The one person who's supposed to be there for me isn't fucking picking up and I don't have anybody else! You don't want me here and I don't want to fucking be here either but I don't know what else to do. So give me some space so I can figure it out!

As Keke exits:

KEKE

Mercury is ON. ONE.

24

INTERCUT: MEL'S BED / ELISE'S BED - CONTINUOUS (N1)

24

REVEAL: Mel's older roommate, ELISE, 80s, black and plus-size, lies in her bed. After a beat, she decides to engage.

ELISE

I didn't think you had it in you.

MELISSA

Had what in me?

ELISE

Some goddamn *fight*. But I underestimated you.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

I guess I underestimated me, too.

ELISE

I used to be just like you.
Insufferable, holding my tongue,
scared of everything-- But then I
started living. Now, when my life
flashes before my eyes, at least
I'll see something.

Mel moves in a way that exacerbates her pain. She winces and buries her face in her hands, frustrated. A beat, then:

MELISSA

I'm Melissa. What's your name?

ELISE

Elise.

MELISSA

What brought you here, Elise?

ELISE

I fell down and at my age that shit
can kill you.

MELISSA

Oh, I'm sorry--

ELISE

Don't be, I died a long time ago.

MELISSA

Huh?

ELISE

Real death is when people stop
caring about you.

MELISSA

(a beat, then)

Well, my father's dead, my mother
is a narcissist-- Like if I had
died, she'd wear grief like a
fucking feather boa at church. And
my brother doesn't give a shit
about me. I don't blame him.

(sotto)

I don't even care about myself.

She sits in the silence of the truth.

(CONTINUED)

ELISE

Tell me something. Was that Crab
Rooty Tooty worth it?

MELISSA

(laughing)
You know what, yeah. It was.
(a beat, then)
Listen, if all we need is one
person to care about us, what if we
did that for each oth--

Mel is interrupted by a FLATLINE.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Elise...? Elise?!

25

INTERCUT: INT. MT. SINAI HOSPITAL - MEL'S BED/ELISE'S BED (N5)

MEDICAL STAFF rush in to resuscitate Elise. Mel's eyes widen, riding the emotional roller coaster until they call it.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Time of death, 10:27 PM.

Mel lies there in disbelief. Grief and fear take turns overwhelming her as tears fill her eyes.

At the same time, Keke and a nurse, WILA, clean the room.

WILA

Hey-- Do you think you can call the
coroner? I was going to try and get
out of here. Second date!

KEKE

Okay! Yeah, I'll call. DSS case. No
next of kin anyway.

This lands on Mel. After the nurses leave, she walks over to Elise's bed and reads her chart: "NAME: ELISE ROBINSON".

Mel TAKES A PAGE FROM THE CHART, folds it up and puts it in her dressing gown pocket.

Curiosity gets the best of Mel. She pulls the sheet down to see ***ELISE'S FACE (MEL)***, her own face staring back at her.

Scared by this glimpse into the future, Mel PUKES on Elise's face. Mel quickly pulls the sheet up and tiptoes back to her bed as ORDERLIES come for body. Off Mel, shook...

END OF ACT TWO

(CONTINUED)

ACT THREE

26 **INT. BUTTERMILK CHANNEL - A LITTLE LATER (N1)** 26

BRIAN, 30s, basically Brian Tyree Henry, sits across from a black woman, JADA, 30s, in the middle of a date.

BRIAN
That settles it, Jada. I'm taking you. Jazz at Lincoln Center will have you scattin' in real life!

They share a laugh when Brian's phone starts ringing. He quickly retrieves it, sees that it's Mel and declines it.

JADA
Your phone keeps blowing up. You sure you don't want to get that?

BRIAN
Yeah, I'm sure. The only thing I'm trying to get is a second date. Or should I say, skee-wap-a-dee-dee-doo-wah-doo-wah!

Jada laughs and they resume their flirt fest.

27 **EXT. MT. SINAI HOSPITAL - LATER THAT NIGHT (N1)** 27

Mel exits the hospital looking worse for wear. She's bandaged up and holding an OPAQUE HOSPITAL BAG of her belongings.

She looks out into the cold Autumn night, lost, then takes a step off the curb.

REVEAL: Mel is walking toward a waiting car and her brother Brian is in the driver's seat.

He quickly reaches into the cup holder for his WEDDING RING and puts it on. Mel gets in the car and they take off.

28 **INT. BRIAN'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER (N1)** 28

Mel stares out the window, fighting back tears as Brian fights the urge to give a fuck.

MELISSA
...I'm sorry for ruining your night.

BRIAN
Just once, I'd like to get a call from you and it not be that you need something from me.

(CONTINUED)

They drive in silence for a bit longer.

MELISSA

I didn't have anyone else to call.

Brian reaches in the backseat and hands Mel a warm Capri Sun.

Mel takes it, flips it upside down, and stabs it in the bottom and drinks from the straw. It helps.

BRIAN

What the fuck happened?

MELISSA

I was putting together Ikea furniture and it fell on me.

BRIAN

Jesus.

(realizing)

You got Ikea money? And you on my family plan?

MELISSA

Don't start.

They drive in silence for a beat.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Can I make it up to you? I can watch the kids--

BRIAN

Seriously? Look at you. I'm tired of pretending like I need you just to give you opportunities to show up when I know you won't. I got two kids, not three. Fix your shit.

MELISSA

You're acting like your shit don't stink-- You're an alcoholic who voted for Jill Stein!

BRIAN

I'm not an alcoholic-- And I voted my conscience!

MELISSA

Nigga, you split the vote.

BRIAN

BEN. GHA. ZI.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

Whatever. Okay. My life is a mess
but I'm going to do better.

BRIAN

Pfft. Do better or stop trying.

MELISSA

Look, whatever story you have about
me in your head can't be worse than
the one I'm living-- Something's
got to change-- I don't know how
I'm gonna do it or if it's even
possible-- But if I'm gonna die, I--
I-- want to die trying.

BRIAN

Tuh. Good luck with that.

MELISSA

You know what, stop the car.
(off his inaction)
Stop the fucking car!

Brian does as he's told and Mel opens the door.

BRIAN

Where are you going?

MELISSA

Don't worry about me. I'm good. Go
home to your white wife and your
imported beers.

As Mel gets out of the car:

BRIAN

I'll see you at the fucking
funerals!

Mel slams the car door as Brian drives away. Off Mel, alone.

29

INT. BROOKLYN INN BAR - A LITTLE LATER THAT NIGHT (N1)

29

A karaoke rendition of Radiohead's "Creep" plays deep
background as Mel sits at the bar in front of a flat Diet
Coke playing with her medical bracelet.

Mel's melancholic trance is broken when she clocks a birthday
party at a nearby table, celebrating a BIRTHDAY GIRL that
isn't her.

After a beat, Mel looks at the stage and watches the ***KARAOKE
PERFORMER (MEL)*** who's been singing Radiohead's "Creep."

(CONTINUED)

KARAOKE PERFORMER (MEL)

*I DON'T CARE IF IT HURTS
I WANNA HAVE CONTROL
I WANT A PERFECT BODY
I WANT A PERFECT SOUL
I WANT YOU TO NOTICE
WHEN I'M NOT AROUND
YOU'RE SO FUCKIN' SPECIAL
I WISH I WAS SPECIAL
BUT I'M A CREEP
I'M A WEIRDO
WHAT THE HELL AM I DOIN' HERE?
I DON'T BELONG HERE...*

The bartender, ALLIE, 30s, basically Natasia Demetriou, clocks Mel's injuries as she approaches her.

ALLIE

Last call.

Melissa sighs and reaches into her hospital bag:

MELISSA

Can I get a shot of Jack and a PBR?

Allie pours Mel a shot as Mel looks down at the wallet she's pulled out. It's Elise's.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Fuck.

ALLIE

What's wrong?

Allie pours Mel a beer and hands it to her.

MELISSA

The hospital gave me Elise's stuff.
I can't deal with this right now.

ALLIE

Oh, shit.

MELISSA

It's okay. She's dead.

ALLIE

I'm sorry. Are you okay?

MELISSA

Absolutely not!

Mel thinks about the enormity of her day and begins to laugh.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (CONT'D)

This is the highlight of my day.
How fucking sad is that?

(marveling)

I was *supposed* to die today.
Imagine choking to death on your
favorite food the same day you get
a wedding invitation from the only
man who ever really got you?

(a sip of beer, then)

All I want to do is go home and go
to bed but I can't. And even if I
could, I have nothing to go home
to! Less than nothing.

(resetting)

And I work hard-- I love my job. It
pays shit but I'm good at it--
Everyday I take people where they
want to go but I have no fucking
idea where I'm going-- And even if
I did, I couldn't afford to get
there! Like, I'm still paying off
the Lane Bryant bra they cut off my
body to drag my fat ass back to a
world where nobody sees me.

(getting emotional)

And I pretend to be okay with that
but the truth is I want to be seen--
I-- I want to be loved, I want someone
to love me even though I don't--
And I'm scared I'm broken in a way
that even if I found love, I don't
know if that shit would fix me.

(through tears)

So, now what?

With empathy, Allie pours Mel another shot.

ALLIE

I don't know. No one fucking knows.
We're all just putting one foot in
front of the other. All you can do
is just make the next best decision
you can and build from there.

Mel nods as she composes herself. After a beat Mel tries to
take off her medical bracelet. Allie takes out scissors and
Mel smiles as she lets Allie snip it off for her.

MELISSA

Thanks. How much do I owe you?

(CONTINUED)

ALLIE

I got you. It's on the house-- Do you have a safe place to go?

MELISSA

Yeah.

Allie slides over a piece of receipt paper that says "Allie" and her phone number. Allie smiles like, 'Hang in there.'

30 **INT. SUBWAY - EARLY MORNING (N1)** 30

Mel stands in an empty subway car trying to keep herself awake.

31 **INT. AIRTRAN - EARLY MORNING (N1)** 31

Mel is now above ground and sitting in a window seat, watching the planes take off and a small smile creeps across her face.

32 **INT. JFK AIRPORT - EARLY MORNING (N1)** 32

Mel sits at a gate watching planes land and take off, eating the leftover Duande Reade candy, looking unrecognizable.

For the first time, she sees through the windows of JFK to the world beyond and sees the beauty in the possibilities.

Mel looks up and sees ***SOLO TRAVELER (MEL)*** walking down a glass gangway again to board a flight. Mel stares at her and this time they lock eyes with hopeful knowing.

TIME LAPSE: Mel's bag of candy is nearly empty. Suddenly, Mel's hopeful reverie is broken when she spots Rory and Bi-Coastal Bae at a nearby gate, saying goodbye and kissing.

33 **INTERCUT: MEL / RORY - CONTINUOUS (N1)** 33

Rory picks up his phone and calls Mel. Confused and hurt, she declines his call. Rory leaves a voicemail.

RORY

Hey-- Sorry I missed all your calls. I'm just getting home from the fundraiser. I won't bore you with the details. Call me tomorrow and let me know you're alive. Hope you had a happy birthday, this is going to be your year.

Rory leaves. Mel considers playing the message when she's interrupted.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (O.C.)
Please tell me this did not happen
on the premises--

Mel looks up to see Alex approaching, concerned.

MELISSA
I don't want to talk about it.

ALEX
Oh, okay... What are you doing here
off the clock?

Alex cautiously sits next to Mel.

MELISSA
(yawning)
My spare keys were in my locker.

ALEX
Why don't you go home and get some
sleep? You look... tired.

MELISSA
No, I need this night to be over.
I'm just gonna wait here until the
sun comes up. Then I'll go home.

Alex settles in next to Mel as they both wait for sunrise.

ALEX
Solved today's Wordle in one guess.

MELISSA
Bullshit.

ALEX
No, really.

MELISSA
What was it?

ALEX
Fight.

Mel smiles, looks at Elise's bag. MOS: Off of Alex and Mel,
continuing to catch up.

CLOSE ON: Mel entering an apartment.

35 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING (D2) 35

The door opens and Mel enters. **REVEAL:** Mel is standing in Elise's apartment.

36 INT. ELISE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS (D2) 36

Mel carefully puts down the bag of Elise's effects. She starts to leave when a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH of Elise in her 30s traveling with a SEXY MAN catches her eye.

MELISSA

Okay! I see you, Elise.

Curious, Mel goes further into the apartment and explores, admiring the ARTWORK, touching HANGING TAPESTRIES -- marveling at the fullness of Elise's life.

After a beat, she hears RUSTLING BEHIND A DOOR.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

I swear to God, if that's a rat...

There's no response and the rustling continues. Mel makes the decision to open the door. She turns the handle and throws it open and backs way from it, expecting the worse.

CLOSE ON: Mel, shook.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Oh, shit...

REVEAL: It's Elise's dog, BUBBA. He runs out of the bedroom and attacks Mel with love: kisses, nuzzles, and hugs.

Mel is overcome with emotion. She has the bittersweet realization that a stranger's dog has given her the unconditional love and affection she's been craving.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Oh my-- Okay-- It's okay-- You're going to be okay-- I'm here--

37 INT. MEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - LATER THAT DAY (D2)

Mel is at her front door and briefs Bubba before entering:

MELISSA

You ready?
(pretending to hear him)
Yeah, me neither.

(CONTINUED)

Mel opens the door and unleashes Bubba, who runs into the apartment. **REVEAL:** Mel still has Elise's bag. She sets it down, now stuffed with treasures from her apartment.

Mel takes in the scene of the crime from the night before: blood, broken IKEA furniture and Thai food. After a beat, she calls for Bubba who is nowhere to be seen.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Hey Bubba! Come here boy!

Bubba finally emerges from the kitchen with a DEAD RAT IN HIS MOUTH and proudly drops it at Mel's feet. Mel gags.

38 **INT. MEL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING - LATER (D2)** 38

Mel, having showered, enters the living room wearing clean sweats. She takes in the scene of the crime. "Wise Up" by Amiee Mann begins to play over a **MONTAGE:**

- Mel starts cleaning up the Thai food and blood stains on the floor -- riding relentless waves of emotion as she goes.
- Mel cleans off the wardrobe and lays it on its side to use it as a sideboard. She's impressed by her creativity.
- Mel opens the windows, letting the new day in.
- Mel texts Allie. MEL: "I'm alive."
- Allie immediately hearts her text. Mel smiles.

39 **INT. MEL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - AFTERNOON (D2)** 39

Mel sits at her desk in front of an open computer. Next to it sits the clear container holding Elise's effects.

In addition to what was there before, now there's a JOURNAL, a PHOTO ALBUM, a COOKBOOK, a GLADYS KNIGHT LP and a weathered copy of bell hooks' BOOK "All About Love".

Mel's on the phone talking to a credit card REPRESENTATIVE.

MELISSA

--So, when you say I've maxed out the card, like, what does that mean exactly? Can I raise the limit--

REPRESENTATIVE (O.S.)

It means you can't use this card. Would you like to make a payment?

Frustrated, Mel hangs up the phone and looks off camera:

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

Don't judge me.

Bubba, at Mel's feet, ignores her as he chews on one of her black work boots. Mel turns back to her computer screen.

CLOSE ON: The screen displaying Mel's attempt to purchase a FIRST CLASS PLANE TICKET to Hawaii.

Mel looks over at the framed travel photo of Elise now on her desk. **PUSH IN:** On the photo as Mel studies it.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: Mel holding a different credit card, typing in the number. The card says "ELISE ROBINSON" on it.

Mel hits "COMPLETE TRANSACTION" and it goes through.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Let's go.

END OF EPISODE