

MIDNIGHT, PACIFIC TIME

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. MAYA'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A narrow kitchen at the top of an old London building. Mugs piled in the sink. A laptop on the table, its fan working harder than anyone else in the room.

MAYA ELLIS (31), sweater with a hole at the elbow, reads the screen with her chin on her fists. Two clocks on the fridge: a real one that says 1:40, and a paper one, drawn in marker, labelled LOS ANGELES.

LEO (O.S.)
Is it done?

MAYA
It's written. It isn't formatted.

LEO (27), her brother, shuffles in wrapped in a duvet and reads over her shoulder.

LEO
Why is half the dialogue in the middle and half of it isn't?

MAYA
(not looking up)
Word happened.

He pours tea from a pot that went cold an hour ago. Drinks it anyway.

LEO
When's the deadline?

MAYA
Midnight in Los Angeles.

She looks at the paper clock. Counts on her fingers.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Eight in the morning. Here.

LEO
Then go to bed.

MAYA
Then go to bed yourself.

He takes the teapot with him, which is how she knows he means it.

Alone, Maya scrolls back to page one.

MR. BRENNAN (V.O.)
A reader decides on page one
whether you know what you are
doing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FILM SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Rain on tall windows. MR. BRENNAN (60s), corduroy jacket, holds a single printed page between two fingers, the way you hold something the cat brought in.

MR. BRENNAN
(not unkindly)
Before your story has even said
hello.

Twenty-year-old Maya, in the second row, writes that down.

INT. MAYA'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Present day. Maya cracks her knuckles.

MONTAGE - MAYA FIXES THE SCRIPT

- A speech sits at the left margin. She puts the cursor in it and makes it dialogue. It slides into its column.
- One character, three spellings: ROSA, Rosa, ROSE. She picks one.
- Nine CUT TOs in a row. She deletes every one and enjoys it.
- The page count in the corner drops from 131 to 117.

END MONTAGE.

INT. MAYA'S FLAT - KITCHEN - LATER

SUPER: 6:40 A.M.

Grey light. Maya asleep on her arms beside the laptop. Her phone buzzes against a mug. The screen says ABUELA.

She answers without lifting her head.

INT. ROSA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

ROSA (78), Maya's grandmother, waters geraniums on a windowsill in Madrid with the phone wedged under her chin. She has been up since five.

INTERCUT - MAYA / ROSA

ROSA
(in Spanish, subtitled)
Did you sleep?

MAYA
(in Spanish, subtitled)
A little.

ROSA
Your voice has no sleep in it. Did you send it?

MAYA
Not yet. An hour left.

ROSA
Your grandfather wrote letters to the newspaper for forty years. Never sent one on time.

MAYA
Did they print them?

ROSA
Never. Send yours.

She hangs up without saying goodbye, as always.

INT. MAYA'S FLAT - KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: 7:52 A.M.

Maya, dressed now, hair still a disaster, scrolls the last page.

Her phone buzzes. A text from Leo: "did u send it". She turns the phone face down.

INSERT - LAPTOP SCREEN

The contest's upload page. A countdown: SUBMISSIONS CLOSE IN 00:07:48.

BACK TO SCENE

She drags the PDF onto the page. Clicks SUBMIT. A small wheel spins.

And spins.

ON THE SCREEN: "Thank you. Your script has been received."

Maya lies down on the kitchen floor.

MAYA
(to the ceiling)
Formatted.

FADE OUT.