

Nocturne

Written by

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INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

We're close in on sunlit fabric; a pillowcase marked with bleach stains. We see a few of these; sheets, towels, shirts- all stained the same way. We cut wide to see a woman, knelt down by her washing machine, examining the stains, holding the fabric up to the light.

This is MARY- early thirties, shoulder-length brown hair, pale with round glasses. The phone rings in another room and she looks up from the washing pile, seems to come out of a daze. She tosses a sheet in the machine and gets up.

EXT. MARY'S GARDEN - DAY

She steps out onto the grass, phone to her ear. We're looking down from above. We hear only her side of the call, talking in short bursts between interruptions.

MARY

I'm... no, I'm good... You don't have
to do that...

She squints up at the July sun, shields her eyes.

MARY (cont'd)

Benjamin... No his name was Benjamin,
he wasn't just...the cat- No I've
been okay, I told you...

As she talks, she wanders out of the sunlight and into a cool, shaded corner of the garden.

MARY (cont'd)

Well if you're... Dad you don't have
to get a hotel- I told you, you can
stay here... No that's fine, I'll
make up the spare room... okay...
okay! I said it was okay.

She sits down, cross legged as if in meditation.

MARY (cont'd)

Thursday. Okay, see you then... Love
you too... Okay goodbye dad, I'm...
I'm hanging up the phone now... Okay
3,2,1-

She hangs up and drops the phone onto the ground.
She straightens up in a Zen-like pose, shuts her
eyes.

After a few seconds trying to concentrate, she falls back onto the grass and lies there, staring at the sky.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MORNING

A newspaper, thrown from the street, hits Mary's doorstep and unfurls on the mat. We see the front page; an image of scientists stood around an enormous telescope, a heading we can't quite make out.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mary wanders through the kitchen, reading the paper closely. She stops, seems transfixed for a moment, then she shakes her head and drops it onto the counter.

CUT TO:

She's pouring hot coffee into a mug. As she does, her eyes wander back over to the front page. A look of mild frustration crosses her face- then she realises all of a sudden that the mug is overflowing and spilling out onto the counter top.

She puts the pot down and scrambles to clean up. A knock comes on the door then, and she looks up- still holding the mug in one hand, a handful of dripping paper towels in the other.

She puts both down, and goes to the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A young boy of around twelve is sat at a piano in Mary's living room, playing a piece. Chopin's Nocturne No. 2.

Mary sits behind him, lost in thought. We push gradually into her face, as the piece plays out. Her mind wanders to images of fabric, covered in patches of faded colour.

Suddenly the kid hits a wrong note, loses his momentum and stops. The metronome ticks on. The discordant note seems to break Mary out of her trance; she turns her attention back to the boy and stops the metronome.

MARY

It's that tricky walk up again,
right?

The kid doesn't say anything. He's looking down at his shoes.

MARY (cont'd)
Have you... been practising your
major scales like we talked about?

KID
(suddenly defensive)
I do, I practice them I just...

He looks away again.

MARY
Well... keep practising- that's the
only way you'll get it in your head.

Mary sees the anguish in the kid's face, his furrowed brow.

MARY (cont'd)
One more time, okay? Then we can be
done.

She resumes the ticking and the kid reluctantly starts over.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

The boy is walking away from the house, to his dad who waits
by a car out front.

KID'S DAD
(waving)
Thanks again, Mary!

Mary waves back from the doorway, watches as they drive off
down the street.

As their car disappears, another one comes around the
corner, towards the house: A small coup packed to capacity
with suitcases, boxes, odds and ends and a bike strapped to
the roof. Mary watches with curiosity as it passes her house
and pulls in across the street a few doors down. A woman
gets out- tall and lanky, wearing an oversized flannel shirt
and a baseball cap.

She stares up at the house- a tiny bungalow with wood siding
and an overgrown garden, similar to Mary's. She squints up
at the sun, wipes her forehead with her sleeve and turns to
the street, sees Mary there in her doorway. She hesitates,
then holds up a hand to wave. Feeling caught, Mary waves
timidly back, then retreats inside.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

It's a few days later. Mary and her father sit at the dinner table, both picking at their food in silence.

Finally:

DAD
So you're okay?

Mary sighs.

MARY
Do I not look okay?

DAD (recovering)
Of course you do sweetheart, of course, It's just... it's just we worry about you-

MARY
Who is we?

DAD
Well... Gloria and I-

MARY
Gloria has... no stake here, why would Gloria give a shit what I-

DAD
She worries because I worry-

MARY
Jesus dad you barely know this woman, It's been- what- three months? And already you've got her worrying about me-

DAD
Mary I...

MARY
What a... fiery romance you two have, you sit around *worrying* from a great distance-

Her father fixates on his plate for a moment, seems to be trying to gather himself.

DAD (cont'd)
You see what you're... what you're doing where you deflect from the subject, with your jokes- I know all the tricks Mary-

MARY

Wow that's real therapy speak dad,
you said things were going well with
Gloria?

DAD

Please dear if you could just- I'm
just... alright, things are...
actually a little rocky right now,
but we're working on it.

Beat.

MARY

Why?

He looks up at her, searching.

DAD

*Why? Why- you work on it because...
because I don't know, because that's
what you do, because you love
someone, you work at it.*

A long silence here, Mary stumped. Finally:

MARY

Okay but... she looks like Al
Pacino-

DAD

MARY-

MARY

*Like current Al Pacino, I've never
seen the woman without... eight
scarves-*

DAD (cont'd)

(staring down again)

Would you... forget... about Gloria
please, this isn't about Gloria.

Another silence. He tries to catch Mary's eye now.

DAD (cont'd)

You don't... leave the house you...
don't talk to anyone, no boyfriend-

Mary flares up at this last part.

DAD (cont'd)

Oh- well... you know what I mean... A
partner.

MARY

I cannot believe I'm getting...
romantic tips from *you*- as if you and
mom were-

DAD

I'm not talking about *romance*...
sweetpea, just... I don't know...
(beat)

You know, your mother and I were
friends for a long time before we got
together- we might not have been very
good at being married to one another
but we didn't... ever stop being
friends, even after, we never-

The last word catches in his throat and he goes quiet,
looks away. Mary puts a hand on his arm. After a moment:

DAD (cont'd)

That's all I'm talking about- you
don't have friends... you don't have
people over.

Mary looks up at the ceiling, blinks away brimming tears.

MARY

Dad I... I'm not like a total shut
in, you know... I talk to people,
I... People come over all the time.

He stares at her in disbelief.

DAD

Children. Mary. Who are paying you to
teach them chopsticks- these people
are not your friends.

MARY

Okay!

(beat)

Whatever- What's your point?

DAD

Sweetheart I've been very lonely in
my life. I know what it looks like- I
don't want it for you.

MARY
I'm not... lonely- there's a
difference between being lonely and
being alone.

DAD
There is.

MARY
I enjoy my own company.

He looks at her, doubtfully.

MARY (cont'd)
WHY is that... so hard to believe- is
my company that unbearable?

DAD
No- dear you know that's not what I
meant, we...

He catches himself, Mary raising her eyebrows.

DAD (cont'd)
I just worry.

MARY
Okay, well I think I'm doing okay.

DAD
(smiling weakly)
That's good.

MARY
Or I do until someone tells me
they're worried about me.

DAD
Alright... Alright... message
received, shut up dad.

He gets back to his food, defeated. Mary eats too,
immediately filled with remorse watching him there.

After a painful silence:

MARY
I've... I keep finding these stains-
like bleach stains... all over the
place.

Her father looks up, baffled.

DAD

What?

MARY

Shirts, pants... all over my
pillows...

He watches her, waiting for her to arrive at the point.

MARY (cont'd

I don't know I... I thought you might
know what that was about.

DAD

Oh... no sorry honey, Mom always did
the laundry, you know that.

MARY

Right...

He watches her, sees her clearly disappointed. He chimes in
after a moment.

DAD

On your pillows?

MARY

Mm-hmm.

DAD

(chewing, shaking
his head)

Huh...

She smiles.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mary stands by the sink, brushing her teeth, staring into
space. A few cuts to before bed rituals: tying up her hair,
face cream, glasses off.

She spits and straightens up- stares at herself in the
mirror, a blank expression on her face.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

She lies awake in bed, staring at the ceiling, too much on
her mind to relax. We look down from above, close in on her
face. She reaches over to a draw in her night stand, pulls
out little white box.

She flicks a switch on it, turns it over and after some fiddling, the sound of a thunderstorm starts to play all around us.

She lies back and tries to get comfortable, shuts her eyes. We start to move steadily away from her, higher and higher. The sound of distant rumbling and steady rain seems to transport her and tension starts to drain out of her face.

She's just beginning to relax when a sudden noise breaks through; muffled but recognisably human. We're tight on her face again as her eyes snap open. She sits up, switches the box off. The noise comes again- a gargled yell from another room. She jumps out of bed and runs.

INT. SPARE ROOM - NIGHT

Mary's father lies in a ball on the carpet, clutching his stomach. She cries out in horror as she finds him there.

INT. MARY'S CAR - NIGHT

She stares dead ahead at the road, speeding through traffic in a frenzy. Her dad sits in the back seat, still clutching his abdomen, finding a moment to yell.

DAD
Not so fast sweetheart!

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary sits, restlessly tapping her foot. A kind looking doctor finally comes around the corner, holding a chart. She jumps to her feet, watches the doctor's expression in anticipation, looking closely for any signs.

DOCTOR
He's okay-

Mary visibly decompresses; lets out a shaky breath.

DOCTOR (cont'd)
The abdominal pains seem to have let up- we've...
(reading from the chart now)
done a scan around the pain centre; liver, kidneys, stomach... all appear to be in complete working order... no abnormalities, cysts, growths...

Mary seems confused.

MARY

So... what happened, what's wrong with him?

DOCTOR

Well the honest answer is... these things happen sometimes. Pain can flare up for all sorts of reasons, maybe something he ate- Why this particular flare up was so severe... we really can't say.

Mary studies the doctor- her look of relief giving way to one of slight irritation.

MARY

You... can't say?

The doctor senses her frustration but smiles warmly.

DOCTOR

I'd say bring him in for another scan in a few weeks but otherwise... nothing to worry about.

She gives Mary a squeeze on the arm and disappears back around the corner. Mary just stands there.

INT. HOSPITAL FRONT DESK - MOMENTS LATER

Mary's at the desk, talking in hushed tones to the nurse.

MARY

Hi, I'm with... Mr Allen- Henry Allen?

The nurse stares blankly back at her.

MARY (cont'd)

I'm the daughter- I was wondering if you could tell me who he has down as the... as emergency contact?

The nurse sighs and starts digging through a pile of forms.

NURSE

A Mr Allen?

MARY
(looking both ways)
mm-hmm

She finds the form finally, scans it.

NURSE
Here we are... Ms Gloria Walsh, that sound right?

Mary winces slightly.

MARY
Yep... yep that's the one- I was actually wondering if we could... change that, switch it to my number?

The nurse looks up from the form, considers Mary. After a moment:

NURSE
New wife?

Mary lets out a nervous laugh, clumsily tries to explain herself.

MARY
Well- yes it's... they're not even... it's just that I know all of his-

The nurse holds up a hand, already looking back down.

NURSE
I understand.

She pulls a pen from behind her ear.

NURSE (cont'd)
Number?

Mary freezes for a second- stunned she's gotten away with it- then starts rattling off the number, still in a low voice. As she does, we:

FADE TO:

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE - DAWN

The sun sits low in the sky and birdsong comes down from the trees surrounding the street.

A taxi pulls up in front of Mary's place and honks its horn.

INT. KITCHEN - DAWN

Mary looks up from her coffee at the sound of the horn. She gets up and goes to the window, confirming what she already suspected. She storms back through the house, on a warpath.

INT. HALLWAY - DAWN

MARY
I cannot believe you called it
anyway- who let you have a phone?

She finds her father dressed up in a cotton suit, sneaking towards the door holding a large suitcase.

MARY (cont'd)
You can tell them you have to cancel,
you're not going anywhere-

DAD
Mary dear you heard what the doctor
said- nothing to worry about. I told
you I have to meet Gloria at the
airport, it's all booked.

He goes past Mary, through the kitchen and out the front door. Mary follows behind him, grabbing hold of the suitcase.

MARY
Dad you've had a... a medical...
incident, you can't travel.

DAD
Sweetheart, they said they weren't
concerned- it could've been food
poisoning, I overreacted I was being
a drama queen.

He goes down the porch steps and along the path. Mary pulls her dressing gown around herself, follows him a way then stops.

MARY
Dad.

He stops and turns back to her.

MARY (cont'd)
What if... it happens again, what if
it's worse?

He smiles reassuringly.

DAD
Don't worry.

He turns and walks to the cab, puts his suitcase in the back and gets in. As the car pulls away, he cracks the window and shouts out, waving.

DAD (cont'd)
Bye sweetheart!

She waves back, smiling despite herself. As he disappears around the corner, her smile fades.

She walks back up the path and goes inside. We stay behind, looking at the empty street.

After a while, we see movement. It's the new neighbour- the lanky woman from earlier- coming out of her front door with a bike. She's on the phone, having an animated conversation we can't quite make out.

From across the street we get intermittent, shouted scraps- enough discern that we're hearing an argument.

NEIGHBOUR
-I'm not talking to you like this.

She hangs up the phone and puts it in her pocket. She stands in the doorway for a second, running a hand through her hair. Then steps out into the sun, looks up and lowers her sunglasses.

A little radio is strapped to the handlebars of the bike and she switches it on now. We hear the music only faintly. She shuts the door behind her, walks the bike to the road and gets on. The music fades as she rides off.

INT. MARY'S CAR - DAY

Mary is on the road, switching stations as she drives, agitated. She turns inadvertently to a station playing loud punk music. She winces and turns the dial again. This time, a more soothing voice- a news announcer.

ANNOUNCER
-tific community eagerly awaits the coming of a foreign comet which will be visible in the night sky the last Sunday of July- that's the evening of the 27th.

Mary stares at the radio, a look of growing concern on her face.

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)
As the first observable matter to arrive in our milky way from another, *unknown* system, it marks a major milestone for the astron-

Mary grabs the dial and turns it, cutting the voice off, and the car is filled again with fuzzy guitar and screaming. She seems now to be comforted by it.

INT. BOOK SHOP - DAY

We move by a book shelf, scanning the spines. Mary is looking closely at the titles, searching for something.

Now she's at the desk, trying to get an employee's attention. The young man sits languidly behind the desk, staring off in one direction, lost in a daydream.

MARY
Excuse me... Hello?

He looks over to her finally, vaguely annoyed.

MARY (cont'd)
Hi- sorry, I was wondering if you could tell me where the score books are?

He stares at her, eyes narrowed in a silent question.

MARY (cont'd)
Scores... like, musical scores...

DESK KID
(guessing)
Um... Second floor.

She nods and smiles as she moves off but he's already staring into space again, tuned out.

She arrives at the top of the stairs and stops, stumped. We cut wide to see the second floor; a labyrinth of shelves and sections, with no signs to point the way.

She stands there a second, at breaking point. She spins around and heads back down the steps.

She stops by the desk on her way out and the kid looks up dozily from a book ('Of Human Bondage'). Several words form on Mary's lips, before she finally bursts out with:

MARY
Have a shitty day.

And storms out. The kid watches her go, genuinely lost.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary sits by the piano, tapping the end of a pencil on a piece of blank score sheet; repetitive, habitual.

She reaches over to the keys and plays a short section, marks it down on the sheet. She plays it again, continues on, walking us up to the next chord, then she stops, waits for it to come to her.

The last section hangs in the air for a second, then fades. She strains, shuts her eyes, tries something. It's wrong.

At that moment, a knock comes on the front door, breaking her concentration. She hits another wrong note and sits up straight, turns to the door.

INT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

The front door opens on the tall, freckled woman from across the street. She wears sunglasses and an old t-shirt and smiles at Mary as she comes to the door. This is SARA.

SARA
Hi...

Mary pulls the door to a little; standoffish, tries to casually fix her hair.

MARY
Hello.

Sara takes off the sunglasses hastily.

SARA
Sorry, I'm... Sara, I just moved in across the street I think we... caught each other the other day? I just came to introduce myself.

She holds out a hand to Mary and waits.

Mary smiles a little, bemused. As she reaches out to shake Sara's hand, we see a large bleach stain marking the sleeve of her shirt.

Sara sees it too; in the middle of the slightly stilted handshake, she seizes upon it, desperate to fill the silence.

SARA (cont'd)
(pointing)
What happened there?

Mary looks down at the sleeve, mortified. When she sees what Sara means, she seems to loosen up a little, apparently ready to talk about this to whoever will listen.

MARY
Oh the... yeah don't know, I keep...
finding them everywhere, I think
they're... bleach stains... maybe.
They're on my pillows. I don't know
how they could...

She catches herself, looking up at Sara.

MARY (cont'd)
Sorry, you don't care about this-

SARA
Bleach stains?

Mary opens the door an inch wider.

MARY
Yeah, little... marks everywhere- I
can't figure it out, I tried the
internet but it just tells me 'baking
soda and water' like I know that's
the solution, I'm asking what the
problem is- you know?

Sara doesn't respond, seems lost in thought. Then:

SARA
You said they were on your pillows?

Mary looks at Sara with a sudden intensity, leans in.

MARY
Yeah do you... do you know what that
is?

Sara looks up, searching for something again, then she shakes her head.

SARA

Nope... sorry, wish I could help...
that's a head scratcher...

Mary deflates a little, visibly disappointed.

MARY

Oh... no, don't worry.

A lull, Sara dashes to fill it again.

SARA

You see about this comet?

Mary glances inside, plainly wishing for this 'introduction' to be over.

MARY

Oh the... yeah I... I think I read
something about it.

SARA

Supposed to be one of those... once
in a lifetime things, all that...

MARY

Right...

SARA

I... only mention it 'cause of
your... 'cause they don't know where
it comes from, folks are... studying
it...

Mary looks up at the sky, nervous.

MARY

Well is it safe?

SARA

Oh yeah I think so, very far off they
think... should be okay...

Mary looks back at her, frustrated.

MARY

Doesn't anyone know anything?

EXT. LEAFY STREET - EVENING

We're moving down a path, looking up at the evening sky, trees on both sides of us rustling in the wind. We cut to the reverse, see Mary walking along the path, staring uncertainly up.

She walks by a group of kids, all huddled around a telescope set up there in the street. Some of them are wearing makeshift cardboard space helmets, and all chatter excitedly. Mary eyes them.

Something occurs to her then and she reaches into her pocket, pulls out her phone. She calls someone, keeps walking. It rings a few times, then a voicemail message plays.

DAD

Hi you've reached Henry- you got the machine but call me back or leave a-

She hangs up the phone, worry etched in the lines of her face. She looks back up at the sky. Nocturne No. 2 starts to play again and we go into a SHORT MONTAGE, spanning over the next week or so.

We see Mary eating dinner, teaching, listening to rain- all the while distracted. We see her at the sink, scrubbing a pillowcase, trying to get out the stains.

We see her at the window, watching Sara hauling boxes out of her driveway. Sara turns and looks around to the street and Mary yanks her curtains closed. She stands for a second, then hastily leaves the room.

A TV screen- showing a man stood in front of a map of stars, gesticulating- is switched off. Mary stands in the reflection, staring at the dark screen.

She picks up the phone multiple times throughout all this, trying to get through to her dad, each time getting the voicemail, eventually texting him in all caps 'CALL ME BACK'.

The music bridges us into:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

We look down on the keys of Mary's piano. A kid's hands are playing- the same kid from earlier. We cut out wide, see Mary sat behind him again, watching wearily.

Her eyes wander to the open window as he plays- to the fabric hung up and moving in breeze. She shuts her eyes and listens.

She sees the image of her father, crumpled on the floor of the spare bedroom. He lies there writhing in pain. Then it gives way to another image, one of him walking away from the house, turning back around to say something.

The kid approaches the tricky walk up, hesitates, and fumbles it again. Mary's eyes open.

She turns to him, smiles. She has a sudden calm about her- maybe a by-product of tiredness, maybe something else. She sees the kid's visible frustration with himself, speaks carefully.

MARY

Okay so... I think we're... getting stuck so just... move past the walk up, focus on the next section, you know this part really well

(pointing to the next section on the sheet music)

So... this time, don't keep thinking about the one horrible part, think about this bit here and then... see if you can make it to the end without stopping.

The kid looks at her, uncertain.

MARY (cont'd)

Okay?

He nods. He starts to play. We see the strain in his face slowly let up. We watch as he sails through the difficult section without thinking about it.

Mary watches him too.

EXT. MARY'S GARDEN - EVENING

Mary lies in the grass again. Above her, sparrows flutter about, criss crossing.

After a moment she hears a sound; a faint knocking. She sits up, looks to the other end of the garden- to the rickety gate.

Sara stands there, on the threshold. Mary leans back on her elbows.

MARY
Oh... Hello again.

SARA
Do you get acne?

Mary blinks, taken aback.

MARY
You know... sometimes people say hi
back.

SARA
(smiling)
Hi. Do you get acne?

MARY
(getting up)
I... sometimes? Why?

On her feet now, Mary begins walking over to her.

SARA
And you have like... whatever- a
cream you put on, helps with the
acne?

Mary begins to seem a little annoyed now.

MARY
Yes, why do- what is this about?

Sara grins.

SARA
Benzoyl peroxide.

Mary blinks again.

MARY
I'm sorry?

SARA
Benzoyl peroxide!

Mary raises her eyebrows, a silent repetition.

SARA (cont'd)

It's a... chemical, they used to put it in acne cream I don't know if they still do. When you mix it with water it... bleaches fabric- it used to get on all my pillows when I was a kid it drove my mother insane- I knew it sounded familiar so I called her and-

MARY

Benzoyl peroxide?

SARA

Yeah...

Mary leans back on her heels, takes it in.

MARY

Fuck.

SARA

(laughing)

Right?

Mary stares off, putting all the pieces together in her head. Then she comes back to Sara.

MARY

God, that has been... driving me insane, thank you-

Sara sees her opportunity and seizes it.

SARA

Do you want to have a drink... with me?

Mary stares at her, thrown by the abrupt question.

They lock eyes- each suddenly trying to suss the other out.

SARA (cont'd)

I have a case of wine I just unpacked, I was gonna... get drunk and watch this comet thing... if you-

MARY

Yeah I could... I could come by.

SARA

(grinning)

Yeah?

MARY
(watching her,
probing)

Yeah...

SARA

Okay so... I actually don't have any
glasses at the moment, there was a...
a mishap- so if you've got any-

MARY
(smiling, eyes
narrowed)

I'll bring some.

SARA

Amazing...

MARY

I'll just
(pointing a thumb
towards her house)
grab them and... be right over.

SARA

(walking backwards
away from Mary and
through the gate)

Okay... see you in a minute then...

Mary watches her go, that slight smile still in the corners
of her mouth.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

We're close in on a tube of Mary's cream, looking at the
tiny scrawl of chemicals on the back. Sure enough, among
them is Benzoyl Peroxide.

Mary drops the tube to her side, with an expression of
relief, fascination, irritation with herself. She stands
there for a second, then she comes out of her reverie.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - EVENING

Before she leaves, she grabs her phone from her bedside
table, checks it. She refreshes her texts a few times, still
nothing from her dad.

She sighs, goes to put the phone back on the night stand but hesitates. After a moment, she puts it in her back pocket instead and heads out.

INT. SARA'S FRONT DOOR - DUSK

The door opens on Mary, holding two wine glasses between her fingers. She holds them up, smiling.

INT. SARA'S LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Mary wanders, looking at all the piles of books and trinkets as she moves through the room. She looks into a box filled with camera equipment, sheets of photo paper. She takes note. Under a stack of records, she finds a dusty old piano.

MARY
(to the next room)
Oh, do you play?

Sara comes in, holding two glasses of wine, sees what Mary means

SARA
Oh that- no, not at all, it was
here when I moved in...

She reaches Mary, hands her a glass.

SARA (cont'd)
Tin ear.

Mary smiles, takes the glass from her.

They stand there a second, across from each other. Then Sara raises her glass in a toast.

SARA (cont'd)
Benzoyl Peroxide-

Mary laughs, raises her own glass.

They drink. A beat, then Sara gestures back to the piano.

SARA (cont'd)
I know you play though- I've heard
you sometimes... you're very good.

MARY
Oh god... thank you, that's-

SARA
Play me something.

Mary shrinks.

SARA (cont'd)
Come on! Play me something, there's
nothing sadder than a piano no one
plays- play me anything.

She looks up, sees Sara looking expectantly at her.

CUT TO:

Mary sits down at the piano, starts to play- the piece she'd been trying to write earlier, slowly and carefully. As she plays, we move towards Sara, watching from one end.

INT. SARA'S BACK ROOM - DUSK

Sara places a needle on a record and lets it spin. She pulls away and we stay on the record. As the music begins to play, we move upwards- towards to the window, where we see Sara walking barefoot across the garden towards Mary.

CUT TO:

EXT. SARA'S GARDEN - NIGHT

A little later. They sit on deck chairs in Sara's garden. It's a clear night. Sara's topping up Mary's wine.

MARY
Keep going...

SARA
(laughing)
More?

MARY
Yep, Yep- just a little more-

She fills it to the top, then fills her own, still laughing.

They clink glasses, share a brief look, and drink.

A beat. They both find themselves strangely comfortable in the silence. Finally:

MARY (cont'd)
So- where are you coming from?

SARA
Well... I was living out near
Nashville for a while- that was the
last place but I've been all over
kinda...

MARY
Taking pictures?

SARA
Bartending
(laughing)
Mostly... but good work.

MARY
Thank you-

SARA
But... yeah sending pictures just
about everywhere, getting nothing
back... then one day, little paper in
Portland needs a photographer, and..
(smiling)
here I am.

Mary smiles back, quietly thrilled by the story.

SARA (cont'd)
And you?

MARY
Oh god, much more boring... out here
a few years, the house was my
mom's... you know, nothing exciting-
odd jobs, teaching piano...

Sara watches her as she talks.

MARY (cont'd)
Honestly I don't do much at all.

SARA
(shifting a little
closer to Mary,
facing her)
Come on that's not true-

MARY

Oh, really? You know what I did this week? I thought about what the... fucking stains on my pillows were-

Sara laughs.

MARY (cont'd)

That's like... mostly what I thought about- my days are not full.

Sara's now a little closer, leaning imperceptibly towards Mary.

SARA

I don't know, that sounds... full to me, you were... unravelling a conspiracy-

MARY

Oh wow I... I kind of was, wasn't I-

SARA

It was journalism.

MARY

(laughing)

It was... journalism- that's right, I'm a very serious journalist.

They both fall silent, faces inches away now. A beat.

Something appears suddenly in the corner of Sara's eye. She glances up at the sky and does a double take.

SARA

Shit- I... I think it's starting

Mary looks too, sees it. A streak of purple and red, making its way across the night sky.

They both turn and look up, eyes wide.

And then It's surrounded; more streaks, appearing all across the sky.

SARA (cont'd)

Oh god... there's more...

Mary says nothing- she just stares open mouthed as the sky fills with light.

We see their faces, unnaturally lit by the glow of the comets, both fixated on the sight, in awe.

We look up too, watch as the light slowly fades and the streaks vanish; watch until none are left, and only stars remain.

We stay a second longer, then a phone starts to ring.

FADE TO BLACK.