

THIEVERY OF FAITH

Written by

Phoebe Dijour

phoebe.dijour@duke.edu
732-320-5855

FADE IN:

Montage, split screen, left color USA 1959, right b/w USSR 1959. {Time/Year is the same for both screens; if there is sound, it comes only from left or only from right split-screen, until the screens merge below}

L-1959: 3 scientists at UC Berkeley mix chemicals together. A vial of Cytarabine sits on the lab bench. Scientists administer the drug to patients.

R-1959: 18 yr. old Anna walking with a boy in the park, in Soviet city of Riga, Latvia. Getting soda from a common soda dispenser and common glass, washing it with water, and then the next customer uses the glass. The boy props Anna on a bench and holds her hands, she gasps and covers her mouth jumping up and down and clapping her hands. He takes her off the bench and they kiss. Cut to a Russian wedding.

L-1960: May 1 (subtitle) - Soviets shoot down American U-2 spy plane over the Soviet Union accelerating the Cold War and escalating the arms race. Nov 8 (subtitle)- JFK gives a speech at the White House after winning US Presidency. Dec (subtitle) - Foreign-trained doctors in white coats take a test in a room to prove their loyalty to America. One question on the test asks if the test-taker has ever subscribed to communist ideology.

R-1960: Russian hospital birthing wing, 19 yr. old Anna gives birth to her first daughter.

L-1962: Oct (subtitle)- flipping through different news channels where newscasters mention "Cuban Missile Crisis," then "panic in America," then a clip of JFK speaking, then "imminent nuclear war." December (subtitle) - a newspaper lands on a Brooklyn sidewalk with the headline "Radiation, Chemotherapy, and Steroids Combined to Fight Leukemia."

R-1962: Oct (subtitle) - Russians walk around Moscow streets casually with no worries of the Missile Crisis. Russian radio channel voiceover says "There is no panic in the Moscow streets. Life goes on as usual. Nothing since the Mongolian invasion has ever scared us." December (subtitle)- Anna works in the Riga Diesel Engine Factory, operating the steel smelter. Anna's husband teaches math to students at a school in Riga.

L-1963: Radio voiceover saying "Valium is the new hot topic. An antianxiety/anticonvulsant that actually works." Multiple cuts of doctors prescribing valium and people popping it with hard liquor at work in NYC skyscrapers.

R-1963: Anna's husband, Victor, plays chess and spends nights researching mathematical foundations of winning chess strategies. He flies to Moscow to watch the 1963 Tigran Petrosian (USSR) vs. Mikhail Botvinnik (USSR) World Chess Championship. Botvinnik is defeated. Victor plays computer chess. He becomes the Patriarch of the Soviet Chess School, and he shakes students' hands for a newspaper photoshoot.

L-1969: Radio voiceover saying, "The FDA has approved Cytarabine for AML leukemia." Vials of Cytarabine move on a factory conveyer belt.

R-1969: 28 yr. old Anna gives birth to a boy.

L-1973: An interview with Paul Berg, who describes his Recombinant DNA technology invention and with Stanley Cohen and Herbert Boyer, who describe their invention of engineered plasmids.

R-1973: Anna is pulled out of a steel plant smelter by her woman comrade, and saves her life.

L-1974: A businessman shakes hands with a scientist in a conference room. A man in a white coat reads a scientific white paper called "Sugar in the Diet of Man." A radio voiceover states "fat and high cholesterol appear to be the real reasons for rising heart disease. I guess we've been wrong about sugar all along."

R-1974: A man in a suit shakes his head at Victor and points to "Jewish," written on Victor's passport. He leads Victor out of the room. Victor teaches as a math professor at the less prestigious University of Latvia. He is stressed and takes Valium. At his job, students carve Swastikas into the desks and leave anti-Semitic comments.

L-1978: A ceremony is held for Werner Arber, Hamilton Smith, and Daniel Nathans, who invent genetic mapping via enzyme restriction and win the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

R-1978: Anna's husband has a heart attack.

L-1981: Television shows videos of pharmaceutical factories and newscaster says "The pharmaceutical industry crossed over the threshold of being a good business to a stupendous one."

R-1981: 40 yr. old Anna gives birth to her youngest daughter Vera. It is a difficult birth and both Anna and Vera are in the hospital for a long time. Baby Vera recovers fully, but Anna continue to suffer, many trips to doctors who shake their heads and shrug, not knowing what is wrong. They prescribe unpasteurized goat milk mixed with wild flower honey. She does vacuum cupping therapies and drinks herbal teas.

L-1987: Newspaper article headline states "US FDA approves the Statin and Lovastatin for regular use to lower cholesterol."

R-1987: 6 yr. old Vera plays chess in the park with her father in the morning, in between moves, he reads from a math book and writes down problem sets into a ledger; they finish the game and go together to the University, where he teaches Multivariate Analysis class. Vera sitting in the front row desk studying the white board while he teaches. Her eyes flutter in a subconscious state as her father rapidly fills the whiteboards with his right hand and erases with his left hand. She memorizes everything.

L-1988: The 1988 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine is awarded to three scientists. One is a woman and gives a speech about nucleic acid interrupters aimed at leukemia cancer chemotherapy.

R-1988: Russian wedding, Vera's 28 yr. old sister is getting married. Little Vera and her 19 yr. old brother are very happy, the brother and the father are drinking a lot at the wedding. Drunk brother gets in the car with his other friends and they go exploring an old abandoned soviet era building that is half built. They drink more, and Vera's brother has a fatal accident (he falls from 5th floor).

L-1988: Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, Electrical Engineering department door has a "Hiring" sign for math professors. The Chair reads the 1978 paper on new approaches to multivariate analysis, and signs 10 letters written to all authors of the paper, with an offer of a visiting scholar position. One of the letters is addressed to Professor Novikov.

R-1988: Vera's brother's funeral, everyone is crying, Anna screams out that this land is cursed and forces Vera's dad to agree to accept the visiting scholar, associate professor of mathematics position from Polytechnic University in Brooklyn.

L-1989: Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, Chair of Electrical Engineering, receives 9 "no thank you" letters from the "fake authors" and 1 "yes, I am interested" letter from Professor Novikov.

R-1989: Anna and little Vera try to convince her oldest daughter and her husband to leave USSR and come with them. Oldest daughter is just starting a new life and there is promise that Latvia will win its independence from Russia. Anna's oldest daughter decides not to go to America.

L-1990: September 14 (subtitle) - Newscast explaining how Dr. William French Anderson (Harvard) treats a 4-year-old girl suffering from the severe immunodeficiency ("bubble boy disease"), saving her life.

R-1990: 9 yr. old Vera, Anna and her dad are at the train station, 6 suitcases, waving good-bye to Anna's oldest daughter, very tearful.

Montage, split screens merge into 1 main screen, color.

M-1990: December - arrival at JFK Airport, settling into a 1 bedroom, finding work for Anna and her husband.

M-1991: Spring - Vera and her dad are discovering the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens - clock spins for 4 years while every day Vera and her dad play chess in the gardens while her dad teaches her advanced math at NY Polytech.

M-1994: Vera's father dies of a heart attack. Funeral - Anna and Vera and a few friends.

M-1995: Medical bills, stress, Anna works 2 jobs cleaning commercial offices and babysitting young children, Vera goes to school and works in the afternoons.

M-1999: 18yr old Vera is filling out college applications when Anna falls down in the kitchen. Many doctor offices visits and many lab tests.

M-2000: March - Anna is diagnosed with leukemia. Vera sees medical bills piling up and tears apart an acceptance letter from NYU Stonybrook, Anna and Vera can't afford it. June - Vera comes into a Russian owned flower shop and explains in detail all of the species of flowers in the shop with market prices for each one - she's hired for a morning shift part time because the owner can't afford to pay benefits or health insurance.

M-2006: Radio voiceover explaining how Dr. William French Anderson, the "Father of Gene Therapy" is convicted of sexual abuse of a minor and sentenced to 14 years in prison.

M-2006: Brooklyn, NY - cut to 1st scene.

CUT TO:

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Small barren drab 1 room apartment with 2 beds.

VERA NOVIKOVA, 25, pajamas, abruptly opens her eyes in bed and glances at the digital clock. It flips from 5:59 AM to 6:00. The alarm clock goes off. She sits up, puts on slippers, and walks on the creaky wood floors. She picks up pills from the kitchen table and walks to her mother, ANNA'S bedroom.

ANNA NOVIKOVA, 65, nightgown, lays in a hospital-style bed.

VERA
(In Russian)
Good morning, Mama. Here, take
this.

Vera places the pills in Anna's mouth and hands her a glass of water. She brushes her mother's teeth in bed, takes her blood pressure, pulse/ox, and blood sugar, applies cream to her leg, brushes her hair, and puts on her mother's leg brace.

Anna coughs aggressively. Vera holds a tissue to her mouth. Blood on the tissue. Vera is visibly concerned. Anna grabs her hand.

ANNA
(In Russian)
Darling, don't fuss over me, I'm an
old woman, I cough. You don't want
to be late for your job.

Vera goes to the bathroom and brushes her own teeth, puts on a white button-down and black pants, and looks in the mirror. She fixes her hair and looks at her watch. 6:48 AM.

VERA
(In Russian)
Time to go.

She kneels on Anna's bed.

VERA (CONT'D)
(In Russian)
Call me if you need anything. I'm
close by.

Vera taps the cell phone laying on the bedside table. Anna nods. Vera kisses her on the forehead.

EXT. VERA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Vera walks out of the apartment complex front door wearing a winter coat.

She walks with her eyes pointing at the ground, but drops a few coins in HOMELESS MAN's cup on the sidewalk. He gratefully nods to her.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

Small flowershop, with a few buckets of cheap flowers by the door and a clear refrigerator on the back wall with a large variety of flowers. One counter by the far side, where Vera sits alone on a high chair.

She looks at her watch. 7:30 AM. She sits on a high chair behind the counter and pulls out Sudoku and math puzzle books. She works on them with great speed.

VERA

Aha!

She finishes a puzzle.

EXT. VERA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Vera checks her watch. 3:58 PM. She is bundled up in her coat. She gives the homeless man coins. She opens up the mailbox on the side of the building. She picks up her mail, and is upset when she reads one of the return addresses.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Vera places the letters in a pile on the kitchen table. The return address is a health insurance company. The other letters are all medical bills.

She walks to Anna's bed. Anna sweats and coughs. Vera wipes the sweat off Anna's forehead and blood off her chin. She helps Anna swallow medication, takes her blood pressure and temperature.

VERA

(In Russian)

I need to get you a doctor.

ANNA

(In Russian)

No, my darling. I'm fine. Don't worry about me, please.

Vera kisses and holds ANNA'S hand for a few minute, then adjusts Anna's bedding and tidies up the room.

VERA

(In Russian)

Mama, I need to do some paperwork,
and then I'll make dinner. Pasta
tonight.

Vera goes behind a screen in the corner and changes into leggings and black t-shirt, then sits at the kitchen table.

She reads the pile of bills and writes down expenses in a household expense ledger notebook and places her head in her hands. She whispers to herself.

VERA (CONT'D)

There's just no way. Maybe if I
sell the TV...

She looks at her watch. 4:58 PM. She gets up and after a few attempts at igniting the gas stove, it turns on.

Later, Vera and Anna eat, laugh, and reminisce together.

ANNA

(In Russian)

You always had such a talent for
math. Remember when Papa took you
to those competitions in Moscow?
You were the only girl to ever win
the national math competition.

Vera laughs.

VERA

(In Russian)

Eh, boys are stupid. How could you
not know basic calculus going into
a national competition?

ANNA

(In Russian)

Not all boys, sweetie. Papa was one
of the smartest boys I ever met. He
had a crush on me for four years,
Verachka! Can you imagine?

VERA

(In Russian)

Everyone had a crush on you mama.
You were the prettiest girl in
town.

ANNA

(In Russian)

Well my only competition was the pigs and cows on the farms!

They laugh.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(In Russian)

Verachka, I want you to find a new job that you'd be excited about. I don't want you to center your life around me. You're too young to give up your dreams and talents...

Vera grabs Anna's hand.

VERA

(In Russian)

Mama, you're the most important thing in my life. I would be nothing without you. I can't work far away. I need to be here for you.

ANNA

(In Russian)

My angel, I wish things were different. I wish Papa were still here. I'm sorry...

Anna coughs blood. Vera is very concerned.

VERA

(In Russian)

This is getting bad, Mama. I will call a doctor for you.

Anna recovers from her coughing episode.

Later, Vera washes the dishes in the kitchen, brushes her teeth, and goes to bed at exactly 10:00 PM.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Vera wakes up at the usual time and does her usual morning routine. There is a soft knock at the front door. Vera opens the door.

DR. MOROWINSKI

Good morning Vera, how is she?

Vera silently ushers DR. MOROWINSKI inside. The doctor uses a stethoscope to check Anna's lungs. Anna has trouble breathing deeply. He puts his stethoscope around his neck and sadly shakes his head.

DR. MOROWINSKI (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. It's not good. Stage four.

VERA

How long does she have?

DR. MOROWINSKI

It's hard to say. Ten years with chemo. One without.

By the apartment door, Dr. Morowinski hands Vera a prescription paper and looks down sadly. She closes the door behind him as he leaves. She looks at her watch. 6:48 AM.

EXT. VERA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The sky is gray. Vera passes the homeless man and gives him a few coins. He gratefully nods.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

Vera is at the flowershop counter doing a complicated math puzzle. She circles her answer on the page when the shop door opens with a bell sound. She looks up, surprised.

DR. NOAH JACKSON, 34, jeans and button-down shirt, tall and attractive, is looking around at the flowers in the shop closer to the door. Vera looks intrigued.

VERA

Hi.

NOAH

Oh, hi!

VERA

How can I help you?

NOAH

I'd like to order some roses.

VERA

Sure. What kind of roses?

NOAH

Can I have these pink ones?

He points to roses in the cooler.

VERA

Ah, yes! They were delivered just this morning. Would you like to add wrapping paper or a note?

NOAH

Hmm yes, a note. Can you write, "Get well soon, sis."

VERA

Of course.

As she writes the note, Noah first admires her face and then peers over the counter at her math puzzle book.

NOAH

Goldbach's Conjecture. A multitaled florist!

VERA

Haha. Just something to keep my mind active. I've been accused of cheating in school 'cause once I see something, I remember it forever. Can't help it, it's just there, see it once and can never unsee it.. You dabble in math theory?

NOAH

Just a little. When I'm not at the hospital 14 hours a day. Hah.

VERA

Busy guy, huh.

Vera eyes his gold watch and raises her eyebrows.

NOAH

You could say that.

VERA

Time for pickup?

NOAH

Hmm?

VERA

Pickup. For your flowers. What time would you like to pick them up?

NOAH
Oh! 8:00 AM tomorrow.

VERA
Early bird!

NOAH
Sort of, gotta get to work on time.
It's a trek.

VERA
Langone?

Vera holds out a flower pickup reminder card with a smile.

NOAH
Good guess.

Noah smiles and grabs the card. He stops before exiting.

NOAH (CONT'D)
What's a smart girl like you doing
here?

VERA
Tied to my home. Sick mother. And
flowers aren't bad company are
they?

NOAH
No they're not. I'm sorry to hear
about your mom. See you tomorrow.

Vera smiles. Noah exits.

EXT. VERA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Vera gives the homeless man a coin. She picks up another
envelope from her mailbox.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Vera wears jeans and a plain t-shirt. She sits at the kitchen
table and looks at her ledger. She sighs and rubs her
temples.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Vera gives her mother medicine. She kisses her mother on the
forehead. She leaves the apartment.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

Vera is working on a math puzzle when she receives a call from her mother's health insurance company. She speaks through the phone and faces the back wall with the refrigerator of flowers.

VERA

What do you mean?...Not covered?

The door opens with a bell sound.

VERA (CONT'D)

But she needs this medicine. She'll die...No I don't have that much. Is there anything else she can use?... Yes, leukemia....Well yes, she has heart disease...Nothing at all? But she'll die, do you understand?...Please...please can you please cover her med...

The call drops. VERA stares at her phone and sheds a tear. The door opens with a bell sound again. She turns around. Noah is leaving the shop.

NOAH

I'm sorry, I can just come back later.

VERA

No, no. Sorry about that. I have your flowers ready.

She pulls the flowers out from under the counter and hands them to Noah.

NOAH

Thank you. How much do I owe you?

VERA

Oh uh, just \$25.

NOAH

No, no. Look at this floral masterpiece! You're selling yourself so short.

Vera wipes away her tears.

VERA

Thank you, but I believe in giving people good flowers at a good price, so they will come back again. Just \$25.

He slides his business card toward her across the counter. As she's ringing up his order, he looks at her with compassion.

NOAH

I didn't mean to eavesdrop, but there's a clinical trial at my hospital...

Vera looks at Noah's business card. (Noah Jackson MD, Cardiology, NYU Langone, 212-263-7995). Vera slides his business card back to him across the counter.

VERA

You're very kind. It's complicated...

NOAH

I'm a good listener, what's...

VERA

She's dying of cancer. Her heart is bad too, but that can wait. She's been on her leukemia medicine for years and now the insurance won't cover it, and now she's really sick. How can these people sleep at night knowing they've signed her death sentence?!

Tears stream from Vera's eyes, as she places the bouquet of flowers on the counter in front of Noah. He picks up a pen from the counter and writes on the back of his card. He slides the card back toward Vera and she reads it.

*(DR. JOYNER, Trial
Coordinator 646-929-7551,
ask for LILLY)*

NOAH

Your beautiful flowers are for my sister Margaret. She's in the hospital fighting cancer. She'll smile when I give these to her.

Noah carefully picks up the flowers.

NOAH (CONT'D)

The number on the back of my card is Doctor Joyner's coordinator Lilly. Tell her that I asked you to bring your mom to meet Dr. Joyner as a candidate for his leukemia clinical trial.

VERA

Trial, what do you?

NOAH

There are no certainties in medicine - only trials and errors. But you must try.

Vera still holds his card as Noah smiles and takes a step back.

VERA

Wow, thank you Dr. Jackson. I'm sorry I got so emotional. I hope Margaret gets better soon.

NOAH

She will, she must, I have faith, which is a strange thing for a doctor to say, isn't it?

VERA

Oh no, not strange at all, you are human, and you love your sister. I'll pray for her just as I pray for my mom every day.

NOAH

Thank you. I'm not a religious man, but for some reason I feel better after you said that. I'm sorry for not asking earlier, what's your name?

Vera hurriedly dries her eyes with her hands, wipes her hands on her work apron, and extends her right hand across the counter.

VERA

Oh, my apologies, I should've introduced myself. My name's Vera, Vera Novikova. It's nice to meet you Doctor.

NOAH

Vera, what a lovely name. It has been my pleasure to meet you Vera. I hope you give your mom a fighting chance to beat her illness. Take care.

VERA

Goodbye, thank you.

Noah leaves the flowershop and the door bell sounds.

INT. LANGONE CANCER CENTER - DAY

Vera expertly pushes her mother's wheelchair down a corridor with one hand. A large messenger bag swings across her back with Anna's charts and oversized x-rays. Vera keeps them from falling out with her free hand.

VERA

Mama, we're here.

Vera glides the wheelchair into a large bright oval-shaped reception hall. Anna raises her head and eyes to the very tall wrap around windows and admires the stained glass crowns that extend to the ceiling.

ANNA

(In Russian)

Verachka, look at this glass! This is amazing, it reminds me of the mosaics in Novoslobodskaya subway station in Moscow. Do you remember it? The glass came from churches in our own Riga! The communists just took the Catholic mosaics, bastards, but I will never forget those stained-glass images of fairy tales in the subway!

VERA

(In Russian)

Yes they were beautiful, of course I remember Mama. I'm like an elephant, I never forget, even if I wanted to.

Vera laughs as she scans across the reception's sea of largely empty blue chairs.

ANNA

(In Russian)

Why do they need such a huge
luxurious waiting room for a
clinical trial?

VERA

(In Russian)

The bigger the room, the greater
the hope.

Vera and Anna exchange sardonic chuckles.

ANNA

(In Russian)

Well, if you're gonna die, might as
well die in luxury.

VERA

(In Russian)

Mama, no more of that talk. Let's
just wait for our appointment and
be optimistic. Look, everything
here is made to raise your spirits,
so cheer up.

Vera rolls the wheelchair to the center of the reception and circles around a rose-colored marble pedestal with a gigantic steel and sand-filled hourglass. Vera makes a few circles, examining the last few grains of the falling sand.

VERA (CONT'D)

It's time.

The hourglass automatically rotates to advance the hour. Vera pushes the wheelchair toward the reception desk where every person is dressed entirely in white.

VERA (CONT'D)

Good morning. We have an
appointment with Dr. Joyner at 9:15
AM today. Lilly called us yesterday
to confirm.

LILLY

Oh, yes, I'm Lilly. Thank you for
coming in a little earlier. We need
some time to parse through all of
your mom's medical records and
charts we asked you to bring.

(MORE)

LILLY (CONT'D)

Dr. Joyner needs all of the data entered into our clinical trial systems so he's fully prepared for your visit. Did you bring everything we discussed with you?

VERA

Yes, of course. Everything is here. I ran around to more than 10 doctors to collect all of this.

Vera empties out her messenger bag onto Lilly's desk. Lilly shifts her attention to Vera's mom.

LILLY

Would you like some tea or water, Mrs. Novikova? Sorry we don't have coffee that anyone likes, so I don't even offer it. But we have excellent green tea. I can even put some ice cubes in it to make ice tea if you like...

Vera interrupts, glancing at the enormous hourglass.

VERA

Lilly, thank you, but my mom is very weak. She has her Chamomile tea in her bag, and that's all she drinks. We're just anxious to see Dr. Joyner. How long do you think it'll take?

Lilly's smile fades.

LILLY

No problem at all. We'll get you in as soon as we can. You're next in line. Here, you can take this.

She hands Vera a pager.

LILLY (CONT'D)

We'll page you 10 minutes before Dr. Joyner is ready for you. You can stroll around anywhere in the center until then. Does that sound good?

Vera replies sarcastically but Lilly doesn't detect it.

VERA

Yes, super. Thank you so very much.

LILLY

Great! See you soon.

Vera clips the pager to her leggings, and holds her stomach as her gut rolls with anxiety. She pushes the wheelchair away from Lilly's desk, with the empty messenger bag flopping on her back. Anna looks back at her from the chair.

ANNA

Darling are you ok?

VERA

Yes, I'll be ok. I'm sorry I didn't know it takes this much hoopla to meet the doctor.

Vera circles the large reception hall, weaving through the white columns, trying to avoid the hourglass but ultimately gravitating toward it. The sand runs, an hour has passed. The clock automatically rotates to restart the sand. The pager vibrates.

INT. DOCTOR JOYNER'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. JOYNER

Good morning Mrs. Novikova, and I presume this is your daughter?
Please come inside.

DR JOYNER, 56, lab coat over suit and tie, navigates around his chaotic desk and stacks of paper on the floor to extend his hand to Anna. Anna is visibly frail, in a wheelchair, with Vera sitting in the only available guest chair.

VERA

Good morning Doctor. Yes, I'm Vera.
My mom and I are very anxious to know if you can admit her to your late stage leukemia clinical trial.
We are literally desperate.

Dr. Joyner stands leaning on the edge of his desk.

DR. JOYNER

Well, I've read everything you brought to me today and everything your mom's doctors transferred to our clinical trial system directly.

He sighs and looks down.

DR. JOYNER (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I will disappoint you today. Unfortunately, Mrs. Novikova, I cannot offer you a spot in our clinical trial because of your health condition, which is complicated. Everything is connected, challenges from the liver and diabetes, lung capacity, but most troubling is the heart and multiple cardiac events...

Vera's eyes flutter on the brink of consciousness, Dr. Joyner speaks, but Vera only hears murmurs. She scans the room for a trash can in case she becomes ill, but then she scans and memorizes everything in Dr. Joyner's office: words, numbers, graphs, pictures, names - everything.

DR. JOYNER (CONT'D)

Vera, Vera! Are you alright?

Dr. Joyner reaches for VERA's wrist and checks for pulse. She doesn't speak. She snaps out of it, having completed the visual map of Dr. Joyner's office.

DR. JOYNER (CONT'D)

Vera, your pulse, it slowed down to almost nothing for several minutes. Looks like you're better now, yes?

Vera doesn't respond.

DR. JOYNER (CONT'D)

I'm truly sorry Mrs. Novikova. Vera, it's absolutely out of my control. The clinical trial entry parameters are established to give the trial a good chance of efficacy and safety. I'm deeply saddened that we had to turn away so many applicants with borderline conditions. I am very, very sorry Vera...

VERA

Doctor, it's okay, we understand. Thank you for giving us a chance. We wish good luck to all people in the trial. We will be okay, everything will be okay Mama, I promise.

ANNA
 (In Russian)
 Verachka, what does all this mean?
 I don't understand.

VERA
 (In Russian)
 Mama, it will be okay. Do not
 worry. Let's get you home.

VERA (CONT'D)
 Goodbye Doctor, you have been
 helpful more than you know. Thank
 you.

Vera and Anna leave Dr. Joyner's office past the hourglass clock where the sand is falling rapidly.

CUT TO:

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

She looks at her watch. 7:30 AM. Her laptop is open on the desk and she types into the Google search bar and presses enter.

(NYU Langone Jobs Online,
 Night Shift, 5 positions)

Vera presses "submit" on one of the applications. She closes her laptop satisfied and turns to her flowers.

VERA
 Hello my pretties, can you keep a
 secret? We're going on an adventure
 soon.

Vera works on her flower orders. Her laptop alerts her to a new email. She runs over to the counter and reads the email.

VERA (CONT'D)
 Yes! Let's see what kind of a
 nightshift stockroom girl this
 daytime flower girl can be!

CUT TO:

Two Weeks Later...

INT. LANGONE CLINICAL TRIAL STOCKROOM - NIGHT

Vera is alone inside the glass-enclosed stockroom. She looks past the glass walls into the reception. People are streaming past the flowing sands of time as they exit.

VERA

Have a good night. See you
tomorrow!

Vera waves back to one of nurses leaving, and logs into her work computer. She checks her time entry module, starts her shift clock, and checks her accumulated hours.

She dials her mom's caregiver.

VERA (CONT'D)

(In Russian)

Hi. How is she? Ok good, thank you.
If she asks for more of her pain
meds, could you try distracting her
first by reading from her book?
Yes, in the night stand. No, she
really can't have any more tonight.
Thank you. I will be home as soon
as I finish my shift.

Vera ends the call and walks to the cabinet containing [H0.P3
Trial] medication. She looks around, making sure no one is
nearby. She tries the door handle, but it is locked. She is
not disappointed.

VERA (CONT'D)

(In Russian)

Just another puzzle, let's figure
this out.

Vera removes her badge from the lanyard around her neck,,
drops it on the floor, blocks the door to the stockroom with
the lanyard so it doesn't lock, and takes a picture of her
badge through the glass door using her phone.

VERA (CONT'D)

(In Russian)

This should work!

She opens the door, stuffs the lanyard into her left front
pocket, picks up her badge and hides it in her back left
pocket.

VERA (CONT'D)

(In Russian)

God speed.

She pops a piece of gum into her mouth and walks to the
elevator.

INT. LANGONE BASEMENT SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Vera rings the doorbell and the nightshift GUARD emerges. He's Vera's age, aloof and music streaming from his headphones. He opens the door slightly.

GUARD

Can I help you Miss?

VERA

Hi! You're a life saver. I left my badge inside the stockroom and now I need to get back in. You can actually see it on the floor through the glass door. I took a picture of it through the door - see?

GUARD

Ok, so how do I know it's your badge?

Vera chewing gum, blowing bubbles, and speaking.

VERA

Well, here I can zoom in. I also have a picture of my badge on my phone from 4 days ago when I started working here. I'm such a klutz, I drop and lose everything, my car in the garage, my keys, driver's license, credit cards. I would be a big mess if I didn't take a selfie or picture of all the important stuff.

Vera comes closer and closer to the guard as she shows the pictures on her phone to him, zooming in and out. The guard is distracted. She quickly takes his badge dangling from his belt and hides it in her right rear pocket. He doesn't notice.

GUARD

Ok, Miss, I'll help you. Where did you say your office is?

VERA

Oh it's inside the clinical trial pavilion on the 14th floor. Do you have a key to get in?

He feels for his badge that was there just a minute ago. Badge is missing. He is embarrassed.

GUARD

What the heck? This is kinda funny.
My own badge is gone. I must have
dropped it on my last round. You
wait here please Miss, I'll be
right back.

VERA

Okay!

He disappears into the elevator as Vera holds on to the open door of the Security Office. She walks in and props the door open with her lanyard.

She walks to the badge printing desk. She picks up a blank badge from the badge printing machine and hides it in her front right pocket.

She walks to the guard's desk, takes his badge from her pocket and drops it under his chair. She then steps outside the Security Office door, hides her lanyard, holding the door open and waits for the guard.

The guard emerges from the elevator, sweaty with his shirt partially out of his pants, visibly distraught.

GUARD

Hey, please don't tell anyone but I
think I really lost my badge. Crap,
this is gonna get me fired! I have
to call my boss and tell him. I'm
toast!

He's near tears. She blows a gum bubble, perfectly calm.

VERA

Oh my god! That's not gonna happen.
It's probably inside this room
somewhere. Just take a look before
you panic.

She opens the door she's been propping open with her foot and he rushes in searching the floors.

VERA (CONT'D)

Maybe it's under your desk?

He rushes to his desk and stares in disbelief at his badge on lying under his chair.

GUARD

This is crazy, wow. Man am I
relieved. That was embarrassing.

He laughs.

VERA

No worries! I'm such a klutz too, I forgot that I had my badge in my back pocket the entire time. Here it is!

She shows her badge to the guard.

GUARD

What?! Oh wow, I need a drink. Don't tell anyone I said that.

VERA

Ok. Relax, relax, nothing happened. Everything is good. I'm sorry I bothered you. Take it easy. I'm going back to work. Bye!

She leaves.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

Vera calls MILA stored in her phone contacts.

VERA

(In Russian)

Hi Mila, it's Vera, your friend Anna's daughter. How are you?

MILA BABKINA, 65, Funeral Home Sales Manager, dressed to the nines, a beneficiary of many high quality plastic surgeries, answers the phone.

MILA

(In Russian)

Verachka, why so formal? You think I'm deaf in my old age or can't recognize my best friend daughter's voice? Believe me Vera, working in a funeral home trained me to recognize people's voices, when they cry, when they're sad, when they're angry. But such is life after death!

VERA

(In Russian)

Sorry about the formality, I know mama talks about you and her during the Soviet days all the time.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

Every Easter, I hear stories how she pulled you out of the steel smelter. But I'm sorry I didn't call you back last week, it's been hectic with her appointments and my work. Is everything ok with you?

MILA

(In Russian)

God willing, no complaints, another day, another big-roller service, and so we keep doing business... I called last week just to see how my Anna is feeling.

Vera looks at the clock.

VERA (IN RUSSIAN)

Mila, Mama and I need a big return favor from you. I know I'm asking a lot, but we really need the help.

MILA

(In Russian)

Dearest, you're scaring me. Do you need money? Are you and Anna in trouble?

VERA

(In Russian)

No, I just need to talk to one of your connected friends, you know the ones? As soon as possible, maybe even by phone?

MILA

(In Russian)

Verachka, these people are friends of my boss, I don't know them that well, but I can certainly suggest to one of the captains that it would be a good idea to pick up some flowers this afternoon...

VERA

(In Russian)

That's all I need. Please if one of them could stop by the flowershop, I'll be waiting until 3 o'clock.

MILA

(In Russian)

Ok, you got it.

(MORE)

MILA (CONT'D)

I'll ask for Dima to stop by. Bye sweetie. Call me later with an update.

VERA

(In Russian)

I will, thank you, this means a lot.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Vera is sitting at the counter doing her puzzles. The door bell sounds. DIMA ZOLANSKI, 32, Russian Mob Fixer, tall and skinny, black shirt, black tie, black Italian suit, bald under a black Kangol newsboy cap, stands by the door.

Vera scrambles to close her books, stand up, and fix her apron.

VERA

Good afternoon, I've been expecting you. Thank you for being so prompt. What is your name?

DIMA

(In Russian)

Dima. Why am I here? This is a very unusual request. I am assuming the funeral home can get its own flowers. What do you need?

Vera moves around the counter to face Dima and extends her hand to him.

VERA

(In Russian)

Dima yes, hello, you're right, it is a very unusual request. I need your help with an ID problem, and need your resources to get a new one.

DIMA extends his right hand to her, revealing the tip of dagger tattoo on the inside of his forearm.

DIMA

(In Russian)

VERA NOVIKOVA, you're a brave one, aren't you? Do you have money, or are we trading for flowers?

DIMA chuckles, then realizes they may not be alone in the shop, and motions her to follow him outside. They both exit to the street.

DIMA (CONT'D)

(In Russian)

Listen, carefully, you pulled me out of important business. What's the deal?

VERA

(In Russian)

I don't have enough money to pay you, I am sure of that. Whatever money I have I need to save for my sick mother's treatments.

Dima shuffles his feet and comes closer to VERA.

DIMA

(In Russian)

Then why the hell did you bring me here? You have 30 seconds to explain!

VERA

(In Russian)

Dima, do you play cards, do you bet on horses and sports, do you gamble? Well I am offering you a wager. If you win, I'll do anything you want for 24 hours. And if I win, you will help me get a new identity, one time, no questions and no strings.

DIMA

(In Russian)

Are you a horse? Why am I betting on you?

VERA

(In Russian)

Ok, here's the deal. I am no good at cards, but I'm pretty good at chess. Whoever wins 2 of 3 chess games is the winner. What do you have to lose? Are you scared to play a girl, huh?

Dima is now very angry, turns away from Vera, quickly crosses the street and dives into the back of a black SUV.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - SATURDAY EVENING

Vera's face is somber. She sits with her mom.

VERA

(In Russian)

Good evening mama. I've had a crazy day. Are you alright?

ANNA

(In Russian)

Yes dear, I'm ok. What else do I have to do except worry about my youngest daughter.

VERA

(In Russian)

There's nothing to worry about Mama. It's just life.

ANNA

(In Russian)

Well, life is what prematurely stole your papa and brother forever from us, and life is what separated us from your sister and your nieces in Riga. That's life.

VERA

(In Russian)

I miss them all every day. When you get better, we will go visit them, or maybe the girls can come stay with us in the summer for a few weeks. That would be nice.

ANNA

(In Russian)

Maybe yes, maybe no, who knows what destiny has in store for us. I am more interested to know that life doesn't hurt you here and now. You need to get away from it all, get away from this apartment, take a few days off work, we'll be okay, my social assistance will cover me. You should fly to Florida and get some sun. I hear its just like New York there in Miami, just hot, pretty and nice.

VERA

(In Russian)

Ok Mama, we'll see.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

Maybe I do need to decompress and live a little. I'll think about it

INT. DIMA'S SUV - SATURDAY NIGHT

Dima and his crew pile into his large black SUV, all sweaty. The sounds of night club music boom in the background.

CREW 1

Yo man, this was wack. Same old shit, same old channels. Girls are all the same, used, and abused.

CREW 2

Yea, no dice on nothing! Started talkin' to the Rasta crew, same BS, market saturated, status quo, they don't want our product and we have plenty of theirs, nothing new to deal.

CREW 3

Stagnation! No blood.

CREW 1

We need to get out of town. Let's hit up Quebec or Chicago.

DIMA (IN RUSSIAN)

Quiet! My head hurts. Pass the bottle.

Dima takes a swig of vodka, lays back in his seat, and closes his eyes. The crew continue to banter at a lower volume. Dima plays back his conversation with Vera in his mind. He whispers to himself.

DIMA (CONT'D)

You want excitement?

He turns to the driver.

DIMA (CONT'D)

I'll give you excitement. Lets go have some fun. Drive!

CREW DRIVER

What? Where?

Dima yells out the address.

DIMA
(In Russian)
In the age of stagnation, the most
bizarre deal wins! Drive!

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - SATURDAY NIGHT

Vera sits in the living room, reading a book, wearing a robe and wet hair after a shower. She hears a knock at the door and opens it.

DIMA
(In Russian)
Good evening VERA. May I come in?

VERA
(In Russian)
Hi Dima, I am surprised to see you
here, after you left so abruptly
this afternoon. How did you find
me?

DIMA
(In Russian)
Vera, I think you know the answer
to your question, otherwise you
wouldn't be interested in my
services, right? Now may I come in?

Anna hears the voices at the front door and yells out.

ANNA
(In Russian)
Verachka, who is there? Do we have
company?

VERA
(In Russian)
No mama, it's one of my friends
from school.

Vera turns her attention back to Dima.

DIMA
(In Russian)
Ok, I thought about it. If you go
out with me tonight, no strings
attached, then I'll take your
wager. Couple of drinks, maybe eat
something, walk around, fresh air.

Vera is surprised.

VERA

(In Russian)

Well this is sudden! I thought I offended you earlier. I'm not sure about that, I need to stay with my mother. Plus, my hair's wet and I'm not dressed.

DIMA

(In Russian)

Come on! What do you have to lose? Move quickly, nothing fancy, I'll wait.

Anna hears the conversation, but does not see that it's Dima.

ANNA

(In Russian)

That's a good idea Vera, listen to the young man, go have a good time.

Vera smiles and starts to run toward the bathroom, then turns around to Dima.

VERA

(In Russian)

Can I get you something to drink while you wait?

DIMA

(In Russian)

I trust you'll be quick. I am fine, thanks for the offer.

Vera, dressed for going out, and Dima, dressed in standard black-on-black, exit Vera's apartment.

INT. NYC NIGHTCLUB - SUNDAY EARLY MORNING

Vera, Dima and his crew move through the bass pounding dance floor of a very loud club to the quieter basement lounge. They push their way into sofa chairs, Dima snaps his fingers and more bottles and food appear.

DIMA

Let's drink! To you Vera, for your bravery!

Dima and crew down tall shots, Vera sips on her cocktail.

VERA

Bravery? Why do you think I'm brave?

Dima laughs.

DIMA

You're not afraid of losing.

The crew clinks glasses again.

VERA

Oh, I am afraid, I am very afraid.
I have never done this before.

DIMA

Done what? Did something bad to
some bad people and needed to
disappear? Or do you mean offered
yourself as a servant to the mafia
for a day?

VERA

C'mon, stop, I have never bet
anyone anything is what I meant.
But now that you put it that way, I
am even more afraid.

Dima and crew clinks glasses.

CREW 1

To Vera for being afraid and brave
at the same time.

CREW 2

In America this is called being
stupid.

DIMA

So which is it, Vera, are you brave
or stupid?

Vera laughs and acts a bit more drunk.

VERA

Guys, stop it. I am also afraid
because now that I think about it,
maybe 20 years of playing chess
lessons with my dad is not good
enough to play against Dima.

The crew goes wild with cheer.

CREW 3

Dima, you are the state chess
champion. You will beat her easily
and we will have a servant!

The crew clinks glasses.

CREW 1

Here's to consensual servitude.
Heard about it but never thought it
was real. But here it is.

CREW 2

Chief, you gotta play her right
now, man. Strike steel while's its
hot.

CREW 3

Let's go, there's a chess board in
Bryant Park.

Dima smiles.

DIMA

Hold your horses, let's finish our
drinks and see what our servant-to-
be has to say.

VERA

Ok, let's play in Bryant Park
tonight, 2 out of 3 wins. But, you
gotta give your word of honor in
front of your crew - I win, you
will help me unconditionally until
my problem is solved! You will not
ask questions, and I don't owe you
anything - no strings, we're done
forever.

Dima and the crew howl, excited. Dima grabs her hand and she
lets him, and he looks directly into her eyes.

DIMA

(In Russian)

Ok, let's shake on it. But, if I
win, you're gonna be our servant
for an entire day, no breaks, no
limits, you'll do willingly
everything we tell you. You can't
say no, no safe spaces or safe
words. We are in charge! Deal?

VERA

Deal!

EXT. BRYANT PARK - SUNDAY MORNING

The drunk Dima and the crew pile into Bryant Park, shushing each other as they scramble to find the perfect one of many free chess boards in the park.

VERA

Guys, this one's good, let's play!

Vera and Dima set up their pieces and start the 1st game.

DIMA

How are your gag reflexes?

VERA (IN RUSSIAN)

Don't be rude!

Vera advances her offensive.

DIMA

Why do you have to twist everything. I meant after I win I will want to tie you up a little.

VERA

Is your plan to win by distracting me?

Dima gives up 2 key pieces because he wasn't paying attention. Meanwhile, Vera flashes through hundreds of visual snapshots of chess positions to calculate the optimal path.

DIMA

Listen, you're not a bad player, I have to admit.

VERA

Listen, when I win, I don't have a lot of time. Promise that you will act quickly.

DIMA

Win first, then make demands.

VERA

As you wish.

Vera beats Dima in 7 more moves. The crew is dumbstruck.

CREW 1

C'mon, that was a flake. Play again right now. You'll beat her.

CREW 2

Vera, no talking this time. Dima,
let's go. This slave's yours.

Vera masterfully resets her board, as Dima catches up.

DIMA

Ok, let's play!

CUT TO:

Vera puts Dima in check.

VERA

Check.

Dima moves once.

VERA (CONT'D)

Mate.

The crew howls.

CREW 3

Damn man, 15 moves and you're done.
This girl's off the charts.

VERA

Dima, it was a fair game. I won.
Will you honor your word?

DIMA

My word is all I have. Go get some
sleep. I'll come by your shop in
late morning and we'll fix your
little problem.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - SUNDAY LATE MORNING

Vera attaches a ribbon to the flower bouquets on the counter.
The flower shop door opens. Dima walks in with 2 guys.

DIMA

Morning champion! Meet my best
hackers. I'll introduce you. They
prefer to be called #1 and #2.

VERA

Morning Dima, hello guys. Can I get
you anything, water, coffee?

DIMA
Coffee for them, water for me
please.

Vera returns with drinks, shows them the blank badge, and explains what she needs.

HACKER #1
Ok, we will return in 2 hours.

DIMA
Let's go get breakfast while
they're solving world hunger.

EXT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - SUNDAY LATE MORNING

Dima and Vera step out of the flowershop, Vera locks the door, and they walk around the corner to a Russian Pelemeni Restaurant.

DIMA
You realize you can't say nothin'
to nobody about me, you can't ever
call me and you don't owe me except
silence.

VERA
Listen, if this goes badly I'll
disappear forever. If this goes
well I'll send you an anonymous
bottle of the finest champagne. In
either case my lips are sealed.

Dima texts the hackers.

DIMA
Looks like they got into the
Langone system.

VERA
It's been 5 minutes. HOW?!

DIMA
I told you, they're my best guys.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - SUNDAY LATE MORNING

HACKER #1
So we broke into Langone, boy they
really need to step up their
cybersecurity posture!
(MORE)

HACKER #1 (CONT'D)

So we created a complete set of fake employee records for a non-existent female doctor, who happens to look exactly like Vera, go figure, and baked these credentials into this badge. We then broke into a few more systems and now this magical badge opens every electronically controlled door anywhere in NYU, go figure!

Dima takes the badge from the hacker, motions the hackers out, and turns to Vera.

DIMA

Well, that's it. We have business. You go experiment with your magic badge. I'll be back in 2 days with some help for the second half of your problem.

INT. LANGONE CLINICAL TRIAL STOCKROOM

Vera starts her night shift as usual, she logs into the computer, and waits for the day shift to exit. She takes out her magic badge and opens the cabinet. She takes one ampoule of [H0.P3] and hides it in her purse.

VERA

Finally!

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

Vera sits at the counter. Dima walks in with UNCLE SAM, an old man with a long white beard, long white hair in a pony tail, a cut off t-shirt, and many tattoos, rolling a very large black case on wheels.

DIMA

Vera please meet my Uncle Sam.

VERA

Good morning Sam. I really hope you can free me from my chains.

UNCLE SAM

Well missy, that's what I do, I make freedom ring. Now lemme take a few pictures of you and your relevant documents, and I'll cook up something real pretty for you.

Dima helps Uncle Sam open his case to reveal a stash of passport paper, covers, inks, printers, computers, scanners, light tracers, cameras, and lights.

Uncle Sam sets up his photo shoot and Vera poses for her picture. She hands him her current passport, license, other cards, and he scans all of them.

DIMA

Well, that's that. You'll have your passport soon, and then we'll never see each other again.

VERA

I know. I never doubted that you were a man of your word. Thank you.

DIMA

Ok, I have business, back in an hour to get him packed up.

Dima exits. Uncle Sam calls the hackers.

UNCLE SAM

Morning boys. I'm ready. Got the creds for me?

Uncle Sam listens for information and enters into his computer.

(Jennifer Wilson, 25,
disappeared 3 years ago)

Uncle Sam prints a perfectly fake US Passport. It is still hot from the printer, so he holds it carefully and hands it to Vera.

UNCLE SAM (CONT'D)

Here you are Miss. Now take good care of this little passport, 'cause there's only about 5 people on this planet that can figure out it's not real - so don't lose it.

Uncle Sam smiles big as Vera examines the passport.

VERA

You're a pro. I'm grateful for the craftsmanship!

Dima returns, helps to pack up Uncle Sam's case and turns toward the door.

VERA (CONT'D)

(In Russian)

Dima, thank you. If you get a bottle from a stranger, then you know it worked.

DIMA

Right, that's what I need, a bottle! Be good Vera.

Dima and Uncle Sam walk toward the door.

CUT TO:

INT. LANGONE CLINICAL TRIAL STOCKROOM - NIGHT

Montage of Vera using her fake badge to open the cabinet and takes one carton of [H0.P3] medication every couple of nights.

INT. LANGONE CLINICAL TRIAL STOCKROOM - NIGHT

Vera removes another carton of the medication from the cabinet, and puts it into her bag. She leaves the stockroom and heads to refill her water bottle. Noah is rushing past the water station and she bumps into him by accident.

VERA

I'm so sorry.

Vera is embarrassed. Noah is surprised, he is wearing his scrubs and looks like he just came out of surgery.

VERA (CONT'D)

Dr. Jackson, I am so sorry, I didn't see you behind me.

NOAH

Vera! What are you doing here?

VERA

Well, my hours at the flowershop weren't enough to cover my mom's meds so I looked for a second job at night, and..

NOAH

Second job? What do..

VERA

Yea, so my mom got rejected from Dr. Joyner's trial, but when we were waiting in reception, I saw a night shift job posting, so I applied. I work in the stockroom.

Noah is perplexed.

NOAH

I'm sorry to hear about the rejection, but that's quite a coincidence that you've got a job at Langone.

VERA

Yea, sorry I should've called to tell you, yea, about my mom and the job. Can I get you a cup of...

Noah's phone rings and he picks up.

NOAH

Vera, have to run, patient needs me. Let's catchup later...

Noah runs, mumbling to himself.

Vera runs back to the stockroom and concentrates on her inventory work. She opens the box of medicine and tries to figure out how to use it. She anxiously checks her watch and looks through papers and binders in the room.

VERA

Protocol...protocol...How do I use this...

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

Vera enters all of her mental map notes from Dr. Joyner's office into her laptop. She draws images on white wrapping paper to restore everything she saw. This continues for several days.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

The shop is closed, but Vera is at the counter printing all her laptop notes. She arranges the pages across the walls, windows and the floor of the shop. She reconstructs the detailed protocol of the clinical trial.

VERA
Aha! Solved it!

Vera picks up all the papers, except one drawing in the front window with the molecular composition of [H0.P3] medication.

VERA (CONT'D)
I think we are ready.

Vera packs up her laptop, notes, and cartons with ampoules into her bag. She helps customers and finishes her shift.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Vera wakes up at the usual time, goes to the kitchen, prepares a syringe with the trial medication, and returns to her mom's bed.

VERA
(In Russian)
Morning Mama. Good news! I found another clinical trial, brought them all your charts - they accepted you! I picked up the medication last night before work. Look.

Vera shows Anna the ready syringe and a carton of [H0.P3] ampoules.

ANNA
(In Russian)
Verachka, this is a miracle! But don't I need to be in a hospital or the clinic to be part of the trial?

VERA
(In Russian)
Not at all. The miracle of modern medicine. The doctors gave me all the steps and a log book to record all the data that I fax to them every day. I just need to monitor you after each shot for 30 minutes to ensure all is ok.

Vera shows Anna the logbook she created for tracking vitals and trial data.

ANNA
(In Russian)
You know better darling. How long does the treatment last?

VERA

(In Russian)

Mama, the trial has multiple parts. The first part is 45 days, and then the doctors will evaluate and adjust the protocol.

ANNA

(In Russian)

I am ready!

Anna gives a thumbs up sign and watches attentively as Vera goes through all the steps to deliver the shot.

VERA

(In Russian)

Do you feel any discomfort?

ANNA

(In Russian)

No, I feel fine.

Vera looks at the clock, and holds Anna's hand.

VERA

(In Russian)

Let's read a little. Close your eyes.

Vera begins reading from her mom's book as Anna enjoys the attention. 30 minutes pass.

VERA (CONT'D)

(In Russian)

Ok, time's up. How do you feel?

ANNA

(In Russian)

A little sore still from injection, but I feel fine. You need to get ready for work. I will call you if anything.

VERA

(In Russian)

You better. Also, I will be calling you more frequently today, and I asked the city healthcare agency to send your field nurse today and rest of this week. But listen, do not say anything to the nurse, OK? They will stop coming if they know you're taking experimental drug. They don't want the liability.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

But I need them to monitor your
vitals so I can collect them. OK?

ANNA

(In Russian)

Ok ok, so complicated. I won't say
a word.

Vera smiles at her mom and rushes off to get ready for work.

Montage of Vera giving Anna shots for one week. She collects
data, goes to work, brings a stethoscope from the pharmacy,
and listens to her mother's lungs.

VERA

(In Russian)

Mama, please no talking, I am
trying to listen to your breathing.

Anna complies and Vera records the data.

VERA (CONT'D)

(In Russian)

You're doing great mom. Your lungs
sound better, and there's less
blood when you cough, right?

ANNA

(In Russian)

Yes, I can breathe easier. Do you
think it's a coincidence?

VERA

(In Russian)

No mama, this is medication
working. Need to keep it up.
Another month before we know how to
change the treatment.

Vera completes her morning routine and heads to work.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

Vera arrives and opens the flower shop because it is Admin
Professional Day. She has customers throughout the morning.
Noah walks in.

NOAH

Good morning Vera. I see you're
very busy. I hope all is ok with
you and your mom?

VERA

Hi Dr. Jackson. Yes, busy day.
You're probably here to get some
flowers for your team?

NOAH

Ah yes, indeed I need a lot of
flowers today to thank at least 2
people maybe 3 in my cath lab. I
can wait while you make them if
that's ok.

VERA

Yes, absolutely, it will not take
too long.

NOAH

Great! How's your mom?

Vera arranges the first bouquet.

VERA

Luckily she is still hanging in
there. I was also lucky to get the
night job at Langone, to help pay
for treatment that insurance
refused to pay for.

Noah walks around the flower shop and finds the wrapping
paper with the molecular drawing of the trial drug. He raises
his eyebrow but doesn't say anything about it.

NOAH

Well, I am glad you and your mom
are ok.

Noah notices an amateur titration rig and an ampule in the
flower chiller. Vera sees him looking at it. She is concerned
but does not say anything about it.

VERA

Here you go. I made you 3 slightly
different bouquets.

Vera smiles and slides the flowers toward Noah and he hands
her his credit card.

NOAH

These are wonderful as usual, thank
you.

Vera runs the credit card, Noah signs.

VERA

Dr. Jackson, thank you for coming back to our shop. We count on repeat business.

NOAH

Take care Vera!

Noah exits the shop. Vera holds her head in her hands in pain.

VERA

He knows! He knows!

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - AFTERNOON

Vera brings a large order of flowers for her regular pickup and delivery driver and helps him load the flowers into his flower delivery van at the curb.

VERA

Please say hello to everyone at the Clinical Fillings Agency. They're one of our best customers.

DRIVER

Will do miss Vera. Thank you. Listen, I don't mean to pry, why you look so gloomy on such a gorgeous spring day - all ok?

Vera tries to relax her face and gives a gentle smile.

VERA

Oh, you're not prying, and yes I'm sorry for being a bit down. I've been having a migraine since the morning rush started, and can't shake it off. Not to worry, I think I know what I need - chocolate!

Driver reaches toward her to give her a hug of support.

DRIVER

Vera you make this place run like clockwork and you deserve a hug. Feel better now! See you later.

VERA

Thank you! I needed that. See you later!

The driver closes the van's sliding door, gets into the driver's seat and pulls away from the curb.

VERA (CONT'D)

Oh my god girl, poker face, get a grip and poker face!

Vera returns to the shop counter, takes a chocolate bar from the display case, finds the exact change in her wallet and adds it to the cash register.

VERA (CONT'D)

Ok, let's figure out what the good doctor knows.

She unwraps the chocolate, breaks off a small bit and waits for it melt on her tongue as she closes her eyes to recall Noah's office number.

VERA (CONT'D)

Number is easy, now what do I say to him? There's no way he's going to pickup his own phone! Take it easy.

Vera picks up her mobile and dial's Noah's number from memory.

VERA (CONT'D)

Hello, hi, yes sure I'll hold,..., no problem, could you please pass a message to Dr. Jackson to call Vera at 917-555-1212?... , it is not urgent or an emergency, he will know what this is about, ok, thank you very much. Bye

Vera ends the call and slowly eats more chocolate with her eyes closed. An hour passes, there are no customers, Vera gets ready to end her shift and leave for the day.

VERA (CONT'D)

Well, he's a busy man, what did you expect!

Her mobile rings, she is startled, hands tremble, she takes a drink from her water bottle to clear her mouth, then answers the call.

NOAH

Vera, hello. You left a message for me. All ok?

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

I know you said it was not an emergency, but I had a few minutes so figured to give you a quick call.

VERA

Hi Dr. Jackson, thanks for calling me back. Yes, everything is fine and absolutely not an emergency. I really didn't expect you to call me back so soon, so thank you.

NOAH

Ok good, no problem, after all I did give you my card. All my staff loved the flowers by the way. What can I do for you?

VERA

Dr. Jackson, I wanted to talk to you in person for more than a few minutes, face to face if possible. I know you're really busy, but I really could use your advice.

NOAH

Ok, advice, I'm not sure I'm best source for advice, but ok.

VERA

I promise not to take more than 20 minutes of your time, I'll come right to the point, and I can meet you right after your shift near your building, or whatever is easiest for you.

NOAH

Well, ok, I'm actually covering the night shift for another doc tonight, but I do have a short break in between. If you don't mind that I bring my food with me, already ordered it.

VERA

That's perfect. The weather is nice, I will also bring some food. How about we meet at the East River Esplanade and find a bench or table?

NOAH

Ok, see you there at 6:30, give or take, don't leave if I'm not exactly on time, and don't get mad if my phone rings 5 times while we're eating and talking.

VERA

Deal. Thank you Dr. Jackson. Bye

Vera hangs up the phone, ensures all is in order with the flower shop, collects all of her personal items including the titration rig in the cooler, stuffs them into her messenger bag, locks the shop and rushes home.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Vera rushes.

VERA

Hi Mama. How are you?

ANNA

(In Russian)

Hi, hi. I feel better, maybe its just in my head, but I close my eyes and somehow I feel like the cancer is gone. I know it's not true, but it feels good to think that way. Right?

VERA

(In Russian)

Yes, of course. That's exactly right. Keep positive. Mama, I'm sorry I'm rushing, but I have an important meeting before my shift starts. Can I warm up some leftovers for you?

ANNA

(In Russian)

Don't worry about me. Leftovers are fine. So you go ahead and get yourself ready.

Vera packs a small travel bag, an apple and a handful of protein bars, and her fake passport. She adds more cash to the coffee can in the kitchen cupboard for he mom's caregiver.

VERA

Mom, I'm actually a few minutes early, can I read to you a little?

ANNA

Okay dokay!

Vera marvels at her mom's pronunciation, sits next to her and reads out loud while holding Anna's hand. Tears begin to cloud her eyes, but she hides it behind the book.

VERA

(In Russian)

Mamachka, I have to run. Love you very much. Have a good evening.

ANNA

(In Russian)

Bye my love. Be safe out there.

Vera runs out, unable to stop the tears, grabs her backpack and heads out the door.

EXT. EAST RIVER ESPLANADE PARK - EVENING

Vera is sitting on the bench, polishing a green apple with a napkin, as bikers and joggers are passing by in each direction, a few small boats are drifting near the pier. Vera hears the sound of the city behind her.

Noah approaches, scrubs, surgical clogs, brown paper bag in hand. He dips in and out of light and shadows. Vera recognizes him by the confident gait and waives.

NOAH

(Joyful and sarcastic)

I see you've brought a giant "meal" for yourself. I hope you don't mind my chewing with my mouth open - its a habit, can't help it. You know in some cultures it's a sign of impoliteness to hide your mouth behind an open hand, like Westerners do.

Noah slides into the bench seat and begins to remove his carefully stacked food containers, all labeled with NYU emblems. Vera glances at her watch.

VERA

Hi Dr. Jackson. Are you always this prompt? It's now exactly 6:30 as we agreed!

Vera laughs. Noah notices her stress.

NOAH

Ok, look, how about you drop the Doctor bit. Seems like we're beyond that no? Just call me Noah,..., if you prefer.

Noah begins opening each compartment of his NYU made food rations.

VERA

(Smiling with sarcasm)

Ok Noah, dropping the Doctor bit, as you wish. Is everything in your life like clockwork? It's almost military like. But don't get me wrong, I envy people who are masters over time, space, people, even food it seems ...

Vera laughs more deeply, then takes a loud bite of her apple. Noah looks at his paper bag and points at his food containers.

NOAH

Oh, you mean these..., ok so ever since my residency days when my medical director told me - "you have to eat your own dog food, son" - I've been tasting and regularly eating everything that I tell my cardiac patients on a specific diet to eat.

Noah chuckles, sinks his spoon into one of the compartments, extracts some couscous looking grain, and pops it into his mouth.

NOAH (CONT'D)

So yeah, when I took over Langone's Interventional Cardiology Protocol, we built our own recipes, special kitchens, and on and on, don't want to bore you. I've been eating my own dog food. You know there's something anti-stressing to NOT have to make daily decisions or worry about logistics of basic functions like eating good food. Create the protocol once, revise it periodically, but let it run and do its thing day to day. Know what I mean?

Vera takes another loud bite of her apple, mouth open, chewing, gaining confidence.

VERA

Noah, I know exactly what you mean.
Protocol is key!

Noah raises an eyebrow.

NOAH

Speaking of which, I think both of us know why you asked for this meeting, right?

Vera becomes alarmed.

VERA

Yes Noah, we both probably do. But I just need you to tell me what you know so I can figure out if my next steps are fight or flight.

Vera points to her backpack.

NOAH

Vera, since you asked for this meeting, I think it's only fair you go first - so spill it - what's going on!?

Noah's voice is monotone, he avoids looking into her eyes. Vera's eyes are locked on his face, she is studying him.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Your mom gets rejected from Joyner's trial, you're suddenly working in Langone's stockroom at night, [H0.P3] is hand drawn on your wrapping paper, and does your flower shop boss know you're running thermometric titrations next to the orchids?

He looks directly into her eyes, awaiting an answer.

VERA

Yea, all of that is true. Noah, please - who else knows any of this? Did you tell anyone? Noah, who else knows?

Vera grabs the loose end of his short sleeve scrub.

NOAH

Vera, unless you told someone, the only person that knows the entire truth right now is just you. I told no one and I know only what I just said. Vera - what's going on?

Vera releases his sleeve and grasps her chest, she's laughing and crying.

VERA

Oh my god Noah, please I beg you, promise me you'll not say anything to anyone no matter what!

Noah, enjoying the control over the conversation, continues eating.

NOAH

This is silly. Just relax, and explain. I don't need every detail, don't overthink this - just high level - what happened?

Vera takes a deep breath, pauses, digs out her notebook full of protocol notes, drawings, her mom's data. She begins to explain.

VERA

We met Joyner in his office. While he was rejecting my mom, I memorized everything I saw in his office. I have a photographic memory. I reconstructed everything, and filled in the gaps with my own research.

NOAH

Research! You work in a..

VERA

Yes, research. I needed access to more information and the [H0.P3] medicine, so I applied to NYU night shift stockroom job and was accepted. I've been there over a month now. I got ..

NOAH

Woa, hang on, what?

VERA

I cannot tell you how, but I have everything I need now, including the drug to treat my mom. I have been injecting and monitoring her daily for 3 weeks. She's making good progress. She feels better!

NOAH

This is insane!

Vera shows him the notes. Noah scans them across many pages, and his facial expressions change from extreme disbelief to full enthrallment. Vera sits silently clutching her chest.

Noah breaks the silence with an even keel.

NOAH (CONT'D)

You broke into Langone and stole clinical trial medicine.

Vera crying.

VERA

Yes! Yes I did, I had no choice! Don't you understand what it's like to know exactly what to do, how to do it, and NOT be able to do it?

NOAH

Yea, that sounds familiar, but..

VERA

Noah, I'm done, I will not do it anymore. My mother knows nothing. She's innocent. I'll disappear. Just please don't tell anyone.

Noah grabs both her wrists and steadies them.

NOAH

Please calm down. I completely understand why you did it. Believe me, I understand. But what I can't fathom is HOW did you do it? HOW did you do by yourself what a team of 20 people spent 5 years preparing to do? This is nuts, Vera - you are not a doctor! You put your mom at risk!

Vera's eyes flutter.

VERA

My mom is innocent Noah, and I am going to disappear.

Noah examines her eyes.

NOAH

Vera, I give you my word of honor. Tell me everything in detail and I will keep your secret. I will not turn you in. I will not say anything to anyone. Do you understand?

Vera smiles and cries.

VERA

Yes, yes, I'll tell you every...

Noah's phone rings and he picks up.

NOAH

(whispering to Vera)
Sorry, I have to take this.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Dr. Brownell, hey thanks for calling back..., yes just out for a bite and a walk, I will be back in 10 min..., yes let's meet the patient together, ok be right there.

Noah hangs up and looks at Vera.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Vera look, I gotta go but, if you promise to keep secret all of our conversations, just as I gave you my word that I'll keep your secret, we can continue our evening park bench discussions, at least until I sort through the details. Do we have a deal?

Vera wiping the tears away and smiling.

VERA

Yes Dr. Jackson - we have a deal!

Vera extends her right hand to him and he takes it in his right hand, and covers it with his left hand.

NOAH

Now, my immediate concern is that you're potentially risking your mother's life. Can I see her most recent 3 days of vitals please?

Vera digs out another log book and shows him the data.

VERA

Yes, I am not a doctor, but I am a quick study.

Noah studies the data.

NOAH

Ok Madame Curie, I am beginning to believe you. But save the details for next time. Your mom seems at least on paper to be in no immediate danger. But please, same time, same place, tomorrow. Ok?

Noah closes up all of his containers and restacks them back into the paper bag.

VERA

Yes, see you here tomorrow.

NOAH

Ok, bye Vera.

Noah hurries back to the clinic. Vera recomposes herself.

VERA

YES! Dodged a bullet.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Vera does her morning routine, administers her mom's medicine, records data, and smiles

VERA

(in Russian)

Looking good mamma. Improving every day.

ANNA

(in Russian)

Verachka, what would I do without you. The fact that you found the 1st trial and then the 2nd clinical trial is a miracle.

(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

They say lightning doesn't strike the same place twice - but with you in charge, we are in charge of the lightning! Right?

Vera laughing.

VERA

(in Russian)

Yes, of course, who else is going to be in charge. In a few days we'll be at 4 weeks, and time for doctors to tell me which way to adjust the protocol.

Anna nodding.

ANNA

(in Russian)

Ok, let's cross that bridge when we get there. How was your work meeting last night?

VERA

(in Russian)

It was good, I actually have an opportunity to learn something. They're offering free lab training for next few weeks before my shift starts.

ANNA

(in Russian)

That's my girl, why not, learn something new!

Vera kisses her mom, and heads out.

VERA

(in Russian)

How about I bring you something good to eat for dinner from an organic store that opened a block away?

Anna raises her thumbs up and then blows a kiss toward Vera.

ANNA

(in Russian)

Have a good day darling.

EXT. EAST RIVER ESPLANADE PARK - EVENING

Vera sits on the bench, take out food from Brooklyn Organics is next to her. Noah approaches, standard surgical look, and a brown paper bag.

VERA
Good evening Noah.

Noah smiles and eases into the bench next to her.

NOAH
Good evening Vera.

Vera smiles back.

VERA
Shall we pickup were we left off?

Noah opens his brown bag and instead of food containers, removes a stack of paper, and hands them to Vera.

NOAH
Let's take a little detour, to seal our deal. Take a look at these papers, you've got 3 minutes, while I eat my apple, and you eat your whatever Brooklyn Organics is famous for.

Noah, winks at Vera, digs out a red apple from the brown paper bag, and takes a loud crisp bite of the apple.

VERA
Hm, 3 minutes, ok!

Vera opens her food container, eats, and speed reads the papers Noah handed her.

NOAH
Time's up. May I have the papers please. Now for the quiz!

Vera opens her eyes widely, mouth full of food, returns the papers to Noah, and mumbles something unintelligible.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Please tell me the patient's name, patient ID #, emergency contact name and number, chronic diagnosis, and most recent treatment plan outline. Take all the time that you need.

Noah's eyes open wide as he examines Vera's every move and gesture. Vera finishes chewing and clears her mouth, and begins to cry.

VERA

Margaret Jackson, your sister, patient ID 8745031, and you Noah are her emergency contact. Margaret has the same diagnosis as my mom and was referred by her oncologist to Dr. Joyner's clinical trial, and was also rejected. I am so sorry Noah. Treatment plan is long, but all of it points to palliative care.

Vera is crying.

VERA (CONT'D)

I cannot believe the cruelty of..

Noah interrupts

NOAH

Fate had nothing to do with it. It was all me. I did nothing. I failed to use my leverage to change the outcome of fate, and for my cowardice my sister will suffer and die.

VERA

Noah, wait, it is not your fault.

Several large tears fall from Noah's eyes.

NOAH

Vera, I know what death is like, I know how it feels when people die in front of you, when someone realizes that their loved one they saw 2 hours ago is dead. I know..

VERA

Is there nothing that can be..

NOAH

I've seen people realize that their loved one will be dead soon and how they struggle to hide this burden from the patient. I am almost immune to death. But my own sister - this is the biggest kick in the gut I've ever experienced.

Vera reaches both hands for Noah's wrist.

VERA

I am so sorry Noah for your pain.
This is terrible. Do you want to
try to treat Margaret using my
improvised protocol?

Noah looks her in the eyes and smiles

NOAH

Well, Doctor, will you accept
Margaret into your trial?

Vera nods enthusiastically.

VERA

Yes! Immediately, of course.

Noah puts his right hand over her hands and smiles.

NOAH

I have never been in a position
like this. Let's make a pact. Do
you swear to keep each other's
secrets and take them to our
graves?

VERA

I do.

NOAH

Do you swear to allow me to be an
equal partner in all decision
making, including clinical,
administrative, and all decisions
related to our two patients, Anna
Novikova and Margaret Jackson?

VERA

I do.

Vera reaches out her right hand. Noah turns to her and hugs
her.

NOAH

We are partners! We are allowed to
hug.

VERA

Yes! Partners!

NOAH

Ok, let's keep meeting here every day until you explain everything to me like I'm a six year old - I've got a decent memory, but nowhere near your horsepower.

VERA

I'd love that. For weeks I was doubting myself, and nobody to talk to. I'm so relieved that I can talk to someone about my protocol.

NOAH

Ok, but we do have to talk about some unsavory matters - are you ok to continue your activities at the stockroom to ensure enough supply for 2 trial patients?

VERA

Yes! If you help getting all other trial equipment and supplies then I'll continue to bring the trial drug for both patients.

NOAH

Done deal. Next meeting, please give me the list of materials and I'll do my own research on where to source these.

VERA

Are you ok that I continue treating my mom as-is for next few days? It will be 30 days soon, and I have to recalculate the protocol. Was hoping to do that together with you?

Vera raises her forehead in anticipation.

NOAH

As long as the vitals I looked at yesterday continue to stay within ranges, then yes.

VERA

So once we're totally on the same page, are you going to sneak the shots into Margaret's hospital room?

Noah gets up, energized.

NOAH

Oh no. I'm getting her out of there as soon as I find a house. She's got nobody else, and my place is 5 blocks from your flower shop, and it's a tiny studio.

VERA

I'm happy to administer her specific formulation, once we agree on it, wherever she will be, and monitor everything.

NOAH

Funny you mention that. I was thinking of renting a large house for Margaret and me somewhere in Dumbo or Brooklyn Heights. How do you feel about helping me setup this house for 2 patients?

Noah and Vera smile in sync.

VERA

This would be ideal, I am very much in favor.

NOAH

Ok, I gotta run, but please same time, same place - see you tomorrow.

Noah rushes off, crunching on his red apple. Vera continues to pick at her food, then closes the container, and slam dunks it into the near by trash bin.

VERA

She shoots! She scores! Yes!

4. WALKING THE WALK

INT. NOAH'S RENTAL HOUSE - MORNING

Vera walks up to the front door of a freshly remodeled Brooklyn Heights Brownstone, scans the mailbox label reading Noah Jackson, MD and enters the security code into the door lock. The time is 7:30 AM. The deadbolt retracts and Vera enters Noah's rental house.

VERA
Morning everyone.

NANCY, the nurse in training, hired as a caregiver by Noah is sitting in the dining room, reading the morning paper and drinking coffee. Nancy, age 32, is wearing dark purple scrubs, a 2-way radio, and has a very organized demeanor.

NANCY
Good morning Vera. Coffee?

VERA
Yes, usual small black would be perfect. Thank you Nancy. How did our patients do since last evening?

Nancy, stands in the kitchen, waiting for the noise of the Breville grinding and tamping the espresso beans to subside. Vera smells fresh ground coffee aroma filling the 1st floor.

NANCY
Oh, well it was uneventful, vitals for both ladies were within specs, and I took a peek about an hour ago when I woke up, and both were sleeping soundly.

Vera sits down at the very large dining room table and hears the sound of running shower water from the 2nd floor.

VERA
Did the Doctor leave any instructions for me this morning?

Nancy brings a cup of coffee to Vera, and returns to the kitchen to reload the Breville for the next shot.

NANCY

No instructions for patients. Dr. Jackson did say that he's having a refrigerator sized machine delivered for the upstairs clinic today, and asked that I sign for the delivery and point them to the 3rd floor exam room for installation.

Vera sips on the coffee, closes her eyes for a few moments.

VERA

Thank you Nancy, I look forward to these morning coffee moments with you. It gets me up in the morning to make the train trek from Brighton to Brooklyn Heights.

NANCY

You're very welcome Vera. I think we're all grateful to you for shuttling back and forth so many times during the day.

Vera closes her eyes again, she hears footsteps upstairs.

VERA

(Laughing)

Yes, me and my 3 jobs, morning clinic here, flower shop day job, and Langone night shift. The gods must be crazy. But to be honest, I enjoy the run around and staying busy. Much better now that Dr. Jackson setup the satellite clinic here. Better for patients to be in a home clinic environment.

Noah descends down from the second floor, freshly showered, dressed in dark blue scrubs, sling bag on his back. His gaze is on Vera. He approaches rather closely and reaches out his right hand.

NOAH

Hi Vera. I smelled your fresh coffee in my study even while showering. Good stuff, right? This Breville would have never fit into my old studio kitchen.

Vera, still sitting, places her hand in his, and Noah covers it with his left hand. The coffee grinder starts again.

VERA

(Heartbeat speeds up, she speaks softly)
Morning Noah, yes, this coffee is amazing. I'm glad you've got the space for it in your clinic.

NOAH

Our clinic. Our clinic Vera.

Noah sits down at the head of the dining table, near her.

VERA

(Laughing)
Ok, yes, I forgot, despite the name on the mailbox, this is OUR clinic.

Vera and Noah hear Nancy frothing the soy milk for Noah's morning java. Noah glances at his watch.

NOAH

Listen, do you want to change it up a bit tonight before your NYU shift? Let's go to a new Sushi place. I need a break from NYU rations.

Noah winks at her. Vera clasps her hands together near her throat in a coy gesture, but then realizes that Nancy is approaching, and returns to "nothing happened posture."

VERA

Aaw, are you asking me out Doctor.

Noah shows a white toothy grin, sensing the same approach of his nurse in training.

NOAH

Yes. Doctor's orders are Sushi.

Nancy brings Noah his soy latte, and presses the listen-in button on the 2-way radio. Vera hears a low sound of movement over the barely noticeable hiss of the radio.

VERA

Ok, morning rounds. Doctor, we'll be back in 15 minutes with new data for you to review. Nancy, you ready?

Vera heads for the bathroom to wash her hands. Nancy does the same in the kitchen.

Noah spins his sling bag to his chest, extracts his large iPad and begins to read his Epic hospital messages while sipping on coffee. Both Vera and Nancy return wearing examination gloves.

NANCY

I'm ready Vera, I'll take the stairs, I need the walk.

VERA

(Smiling)

Ok, I've had my morning exercise already with the B train, so I'll test our elevator, if no objections.

Nancy presses the up-button for Vera, and begins the climb to the 3rd floor. The elevator doors open silently, Vera starts to get up, Noah is mentally at work already, Vera puts her right hand on his shoulder.

VERA (CONT'D)

Ok, Noah, you win. Sushi tonight.

Noah doesn't hear her, but nods and smiles. Vera enters the elevator, presses the 3rd floor and re-emerges in the patients quarters.

NANCY

I followed your instructions earlier this morning, so everything's setup in the exam room. Please take a look and let me know if anything needs to be changed.

Vera glances around the space, notices the open door to the exam room, and 2 closed door rooms on each side of the exam room. She enters the exam room.

VERA

Nancy, this is very good. Just one thing, if you could record the exact date/time for each calibration of the spectrum analyzer.

NANCY

Yes, got it.

Nancy pushes a wheeled cart silently out of the exam room to the first closed door. Vera knocks gently and enters.

VERA

Good morning Margaret. How are you feeling?

Vera enters a large room equipped with a hospital bed, portable oxygen, ventilator, and many attributes of a hospital room, encased or disguised as normal bedroom artifacts.

MARGARET, age 58, is awake in bed, with the night light turned on, and shades drawn.

MARGARET

Good morning my angels. I am doing well, I think. I fell asleep reading, and the next thing I know I woke up this morning at 7:45 AM, no dreams, no turning and turning. That's a good night for these old bones.

Nancy rolls the cart closer to the bed and draws open the two curtains over the two very large windows. Pleasant morning light fills the room. Vera comes closer to Margaret.

VERA

That's good news. Let's take a look.

Vera examines Margaret, takes her pulse, blood pressure, listens to her chest, examines her extremities, glands, writes notes in the log, and hands it to Nancy.

VERA (CONT'D)

Nancy, could you please take a look to make sure I didn't miss anything.

Nancy reads the notes, nods, and sterilizes Margaret's skin, while Vera takes the syringe and ampoule from the cart and injects Margaret.

NANCY

Ok Margaret, you're all set. Would you like me to read to you while you close your eyes for a few minutes. I want to monitor you this morning if you don't mind.

MARGARET

That would be good actually, I'm dying to learn what happens next in my book.

VERA

Ok ladies, I will be back shortly,
let me go check in with Anna.

MARGARET

Yes, yes. I can't wait to see your
mamma for breakfast.

Vera returns to the exam room, and extracts an identical
wheeled cart. She pushes it to the closed door, knocks gently
and enters.

VERA

Good morning.

Anna is still sleeping with curtains drawn in a nearly
identical room to Margaret's.

VERA (CONT'D)

(in Russian)

Mamachka, wake up.

Anna begins to stir, and wakes up

ANNA

(in Russian)

Oh my goodness, I overslept. I have
not slept this good in, well, long
time.

VERA

(in Russian)

Hey, good you're awake. Yes, we've
started to give you and Margaret
some natural supplements that help
regulate your serotonin. You both
have been taking it for 9 days now.
Looks like it's starting to do its
magic.

Anna sits up, Vera draws open the curtains, and begins her
examination. Vera records vitals in Anna's chart.

ANNA

(in Russian)

How does it look?

VERA

Better every day. Ok, Nancy will
come in and watch over you for a
few minutes, ok? I have to talk to
Dr. Jackson and run to work.

ANNA

Busy bee you are. Okay dokay

Nancy comes in, Vera hands her Anna's chart.

VERA

All's well. Gotta run. Nancy,
please call if anything, you know
the drill.

Vera leans to Anna and gives her a kiss.

ANNA

Have a good day.

Vera heads for the staircase, and runs down the 3 flights to the dining room, where Noah continues to flip through his ipad.

VERA

Ok, both our ladies are doing well.
Nancy will bring the charts down
shortly.

Noah breaks from his ipad, but his words are jumpy.

NOAH

Vera, I've been meaning to tell you something. Well first, I can't explain how all of these coincidences happened. But one thing - I am very thankful, for Margaret's sake, well for both of us actually, that we....

VERA

Slow down, what..

NOAH

Ok, I'm trying to say that I am grateful to you for helping my sister. I'm optimistic and nervous at the same time.

Vera sits next to him.

VERA

Noah, you've done everything that is required, even more so. This setup is really good. And I am also very thankful that my mom's here with you and Margaret.

NOAH

Yeah, one regret I have is losing out on that double wide house for sale - would've saved you 90 minutes of commuting each morning - you could've had a place there too.

Vera adjusts her hair.

VERA

Well, I think it's fine. Everything is fine, no regrets.

NOAH

Well, all I'm saying is it would have been more fair, since we agreed to be 50/50 partners in this trial, to have your name next to mine on the mailbox...

Vera blushes.

VERA

I was joking earlier, I don't need my name on any mailbox. This is vanity. You know I'm not about that, right. Take it easy - all's good. I need to run back to the flowershop. I'll see you for Sushi tonight, yes?

NOAH

Ok, I'll make it up to you, Partner! I have to run soon too. Where's Nancy? Bye. See you later.

Vera gives him the hand salute, smiles and exits the front door.

INT. VERA'S FLOWERSHOP - MORNING

Vera is cleaning out the flower cooler. Mobile phone rings, and she picks up immediately.

VERA

Hi Nancy. All ok? ... Good, no you're not disturbing me. Just doing some spring rotation, sure I have a few minutes,..., Botanic Gardens? Sounds like our ladies have become activists. Who came up with this idea? ..., Oh, ok, and you're up for it too?

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

Well, I could probably call you a car and meet you at the entrance, maybe for an hour, hour and a half at most,..., they like this idea, yes I hear! Look, I need a few more hours to finish my orders, but first let me ask the Doctor. Ok? I'll let you know. Bye.

Vera hangs up and comes out of the cooler. She checks her weather app.

VERA (CONT'D)

Clear skies and 70. I guess these two schemers figured out a way to get me hooked on the idea. Flower girl's trip to the botanic gardens. Brilliant!

Vera dials Noah's mobile, goes to voicemail, she leaves a message.

VERA (CONT'D)

Hi Noah. Not an emergency. Our ladies are requesting that Nancy and I accompany them on a field trip to the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. Weather is perfect, and I can do it in a few hours. Nancy checked their vitals and they're good. Call me back please. Thanks. Bye.

Vera ends the call and returns to her work. Noah calls in 5 minutes.

VERA (CONT'D)

Hey, thanks for the quick call back. Did you listen to the message?... , yeah so looks like Margaret and Anna want a buddy trip to the gardens, and they insist I come along, as the resident expert tour guide.

Vera listens to Noah

VERA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Well, yes and if you must know, I did memorize all 14 thousand species. They found the perfect raison d'être to pull me into this little venture.

Vera hears Noah's laughter

VERA (CONT'D)

I can call them a car,..., Ok you can call them a car, fine so I will just meet them there,..., no I don't think I have energy to be their guide for more than 90 minutes,..., of course Nancy and I will be checking them, and if one of them doesn't look right, I'll send them home right away.

Vera listens to Noah

VERA (CONT'D)

(sarcastically)

I don't know, maybe with all this walking and talking Sushi may not be enough! I'm kidding, see you tonight. Bye

Vera ends the call.

EXT. BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDENS - AFTERNOON

Vera approaches the Flatbush Avenue entrance, tickets she purchased online are in her hand. Ray Bans, jeans and white shirt with a black and white M.C. Escher staircase print, a blue clutch hangs from her shoulder.

VERA

(waiving)

My goodness, the Doctor's definition of sending a car was certainly better than mine.

A Mercedes Benz Sprinter medical transport van opens its doors at the curb and lowers its ramp. Nancy and the van's driver push out the two wheelchairs with Margaret and Anna down the ramp and into the sunlit sidewalk.

NANCY

(excited)

We're finally here!

Vera walks rapidly across the plaza toward the van. Margaret in a dark green leisure suit and dark wrap around sunglasses. Anna in a black sarafan dress, Dior sunglasses.

VERA
 (laughing)
 Well, good day ladies! You're
 looking ready to smell the roses!

ANNA
 (in Russian)
 Verochka, stop making fun of your
 elders.

Anna lifts up her Dior's take a closer look at the
 approaching Vera.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 Hello darling, you're looking
 lovely yourself. Is that t-shirt
 from Home Depot with all those
 staircases?

MARGARET
 Hello Vera. Your mamma's taught me
 enough Russian to survive for a day
 on Brighton Beach, but I don't know
 what "stariki" means.

VERA
 (smiling)
 Well, that's good actually, because
 what it means - "old folk" - is
 opposite of what you two are, based
 on your outfits. Who's ready to do
 a little walking?

NANCY
 Hang on there, I got a call from
 the Doctor while we were on the way
 here, and he told me to limit the
 walking to 20 minutes, the rest in
 wheelchairs.

Vera, approaches and hugs Margaret and kisses Anna.

VERA
 Ok so first, MOM, this is the first
 shirt that I grabbed from the
 closet, and unlike someone here,
 I'm going to the hospital for a
 night shift after this, and not to
 the senior prom.

MARGARET
 Oh, c'mon Vera, I can read your mom
 like a book now. She meant to say
 you look gorgeous, young and free.

VERA

Well you two, as they say in Russian, are two boots of a pair. Fine, thank you both then for the compliment!

ANNA

(winking at Nancy)
Well, hospital, shmospital, little birdy says hospital can wait until Sushi.

Vera, raises both hands up in the air and slaps the sides of her legs, the wind blows her hair around.

VERA

(pretending to be affected)

Is nothing private at this clinic! Nancy, guess what you'll be doing tonight, your favorite - reading the Jackson-Novikov Clinical Trial HIPAA and PII Compliance Manual. That sounds like a lot of fun!

Nancy, looks down and embarrassed, begins rolling Margaret's wheelchair toward the entrance, as Vera pushes Anna's wheelchair.

NANCY

Vera, I'm sorry, I didn't know it was not public information.

VERA

Look, everyone needs to take a chill pill with this Sushi thing. And Nancy, I was also joking.

MARGARET

Joking or not, we didn't know until Nancy cracked!

Anna laughing, digs out 4 lollipops from her blinged-out black purse, hands 3 out to the others, and pops 1 in her mouth.

NANCY

I'm so sorry, I feel really stupid.

VERA

Ok, stop please everyone. Look Nancy, you've got a grape lollipop - enjoy it like its not 100% sugar.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

Mom, are you even allowed to have this? Ah, forget it. C'mon, let's go inside.

Vera presents the tickets to the guard at the gate and they roll inside.

MARGARET

So Vera, I hear you know every single one of the species across all 50 acres of this garden?

VERA

Margaret, it's been a while, but I used to. For several years when I was a teen, I practically lived here every afternoon from March to October, did my puzzles, played chess with my dad, and by osmosis managed to learn a lot about these flowers.

Anna turns to Margaret and winks.

ANNA

What did I tell you. Gorgeous and sharp as a knife. Will be a lucky catch...

VERA

(in Russian)

Anna Vasielevna Novikova - the topic is closed, do we have an understanding?

MARGARET

Oooh, I think I understood that. You want her to stop talking about knives in public?

VERA

(laughing loudly)

Yes, precisely, the first part for sure!

Anna gives Margaret the finger across lips shush sign and winks. They stroll quietly for a few minutes until they reach a clearing with benches and tables.

VERA (CONT'D)

Let's park our chairs here and do a small circle through the South Side of Plant Family Collection.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

It should take a little more than 20 minutes, but if you get tired, there are benches before we complete the loop. Sounds good everyone?

ANNA

I am so excited to walk, I feel like a little kid about to ride a bike.

MARGARET

Not in that dress you're riding a bike!

VERA

Ok perfect. Now everything everyone says is sarcastic. How will Nancy ever tell when one of you gals tells us you don't feel good and not think you're joking?

Vera and Nancy park the wheelchairs and help Margaret and Anna up, holding their hands, they begin their slow walk.

ANNA

Girls, I feel great, for real. You will know I don't feel good if I fall down or scream 911.

They all laugh and keep walking.

MARGARET

Ok Vera, I can't hold it anymore. I will spill the beans.

VERA

What?

MARGARET

Look, we understand that Langone agreed to let Noah and you work together on a small scale clinical trial, and we are so very lucky that you two rented that house and setup a perfect facility, pulled me out of that wretched hospital, and I am so glad I met your momma, and we became friends, and we think our cancer is decreasing, and on and on and on - I am very, very lucky...

ANNA

But...But...

MARGARET

Hang on Anna. So Vera - please don't take this the wrong way. I love my youngest brother as much as your mom loves you. But...we don't understand what/how/when/why a beautiful and smart young lady like you and the handsome and accomplished young man like Noah...

ANNA

How did you meet?

MARGARET

Did you meet him before you started working together?

Vera tries to open her mouth to respond, but closes it as barrage of questions continues. They all continue to walk past magnificently landscaped hills of the plant family clusters.

ANNA

Why did you not want to go to Medical School 5 years ago?

MARGARET

Anna, please, let's stay on topic. Vera - what's your relationship with Noah?

ANNA

And you better not say you "work together"

MARGARET

Well, ok, we already understand you work together, although he works in the Hospital and you have 3 jobs - and that's crazy already, but really that's not the point. Vera, do you love Noah?

ANNA

Yeah, Vera - do you love Noah?

NANCY

I know nothing, don't look at me, my mouth is shut, studying HIPAA and PII.

Vera coughs.

VERA

And here I was worried that I forgot to bring my water bottle and would be talking for a long time.

NANCY

Oh, I brought some water.

VERA

Nancy, I'm ok, I was trying to steer the conversation away from weird, but looks like these two have their hooks in me.

They walk in silence for a few minutes.

VERA (CONT'D)

Ok, I've thought about it. I can't answer your questions because I don't know. I also don't know if Noah knows or even thinks about such things. I just don't know.

They continue to walk in silence. They look at each other to see who will be the first to break the silence.

NANCY

Ladies, does anyone want some water? I have a bottle and some cups.

ANNA

Sure, since nobody knows any answers, might as well have some water.

MARGARET

Ok, water break.

They walk to the next set of benches and sit down. Nancy passes out the water. Margaret reaches out to Vera and rubs her back.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

It will be ok Vera. He's a very decent person. He'll do the right thing one way or another. I know him. He has a good moral compass.

Vera glances at her watch.

ANNA

I am a good judge of character and I know that Dr. Jackson is a very good person.

VERA

Good people sometimes do not know how they feel or what they want and need time to help them navigate.

NANCY

Vera, I am confident that you're a wonderful person.

VERA

(sarcasm)

Thank you everyone. We have now established that we're all very nice. So how about we do what we came here to do?

They all nod, get up, and continue walking. Vera begins explaining the origins and variations of the plants they are observing, she points out interesting and obscure facts, and is very excited.

INT. NOAH'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Noah sends Vera a text message.

NOAH

(iPhone text)

How's the garden tour?

Noah spreads Margaret's charts across his table and starts to trace vitals from week to week, but is interrupted by text.

VERA

(iPhone text)

All's well. We had a good time. Tour almost done :) How are you?

NOAH

(iPhone text)

Glad it worked out! Reading trial notes. Thinking...

VERA

(iPhone text)

About?

NOAH
 (iPhone text)
 You, me, your mom, my sis. Life,
 living, and being alive.

VERA
 (iPhone text)
 Socrates!

NOAH
 (iPhone text)
 Sure! Philosophers say a man with a
 purpose is unstoppable.

VERA
 (iPhone text)
 Man, that "man" thing again :) How
 about a woman with a purpose?

NOAH
 (iPhone text)
 C'mon I meant you/me/we. I thought
 being youngest head of cardio was
 my purpose. It's not.

VERA
 (iPhone text)
 What's your purpose?

NOAH
 (iPhone text)
 I don't know

NOAH (CONT'D)
 (iPhone text)
 My sis would be dead if not for
 you.

Noah looks at his iPhone, Vera is typing something, he
 interrupts.

NOAH (CONT'D)
 (iPhone text)
 If not for you I'd quit medicine
 move to the desert and become a
 hermit or a drug addict or both

VERA
 (iPhone text)
 This is too heavy for text. I'm
 still with ladies. Pickup at sushi?

NOAH

(iPhone text)

Sorry. Many thoughts. I'm Catholic.
What would the Pope say?

VERA

(iPhone text)

Now this is weird. At least you
didn't wonder what Dostoevsky would
say. LOL.

VERA (CONT'D)

The Pope would hear your
confession, bless you and Margaret
and tell you that miracles happen!
:) Gotta run. Bye

NOAH

(iPhone text)

Haha. My purpose is you/me/we. How
you like 'em apples? Don't answer.
See you soon.

VERA

(iPhone text)

I love apples!

INT. SUSHI RESTAURANT - EVENING

Montage of a very fancy sushi restaurant, cozy, dimly lit, corner facing a Japanese garden with a wall of vertical botanica and water fall. The table for two is set in white linen table cloth with green Japanese patterns, fancy tea and utensil accoutrements, and a row of dozen small candles in a ceramic base. Wait staff are circling between tables, pouring tea for Noah and Vera, bringing out multiple small plates, with miniscule amounts of food. Noah in a suit, no tie, Vera in Jeans and black/white t-shirt, face each other, they are smiling. Vera is wide eyed, impressed by the fancy décor and attentive service, Noah is pleased by Vera's smile. The wait staff continue to serve them, removing finished first small plates and pouring sake from a fancy carafe into their porcelain chokos.

Vera raises her sake choko and Noah does the same

VERA

What shall we drink to? First date?

Vera laughing.

NOAH

I feel I've known you all my life.
I don't know why. It does not feel
like a first date to me. If I was a
Buddhist, it would be acceptable.
What if we knew each other in a
past life?

Vera playful.

VERA

Ok, I see your philosophy trip is
still happening. I've got it!
Here's to reincarnation!

Noah laughs.

NOAH

Here's to rebirth and new
beginnings!

They clink chokos and drink sake.

Montage of Noah's expensive gold watch, and Vera's cheap
drugstore earrings, they continue to eat, waiters continue to
bring more small plates and refilling their sake.

The montage continues to the next table set for 3, where a
young good looking man and a young very attractive woman,
both sharply dressed pharmaceutical sales execs, with
briefcases at their legs, get up to shake hands with an
incoming older man wearing scrubs under a sports jacket. All
of them wearing very expensive watches, place their hands on
the white linen, as the woman exec smiles, the man exec hands
to the older man a business card, and the woman exec opens
her briefcase and slides a box of not-for-sale trial
medications.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Vera, I've never asked you this
before, and I think I already know
the answer because we're seeing,
speaking, or texting each other
nearly 12 hours a day - but here
goes - do you by chance already
have a husband or a boyfriend?

Vera, chewing laughing, tries not to choke

VERA

Are you kidding me? You trying to
refresh your Heimlich maneuver
skills? NO!

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

I do not have a husband! You think I would've kept that a secret from you?

NOAH

Take it easy, well, you're a good at keeping secrets..

Vera agitated.

VERA

Now hold on there a second mister! The only secret I keep is OUR secret!

Noah looks at his plate, quietly

NOAH

Well, I still don't know how you..

Vera interrupts

VERA

Oh seriously! I did what I had to do Noah! You don't need or want to know the gory details - yes that's a secret, and it will stay that way. But what does that have to do with my so called husband or boyfriend?

Noah laughing.

NOAH

Ok, sorry, disconnect these two things. Do you have a boyfriend?

Vera laughing.

VERA

Noah!? What are you actually asking me? NO! I don't have either a husband or a boyfriend. I did have a guy I was seeing for a few months, several years ago, but my life's been crazy and full of other concerns - no time for boyfriends - ever since my dad ...

Noah interrupts.

NOAH

Ok, ok I didn't ask anything crazy. Just wanted to know, thank you.

Vera smiling.

VERA
You're welcome. So now what?

Noah fidgets with his chopsticks.

NOAH
Nothing. Everything. Jesus. Let's
be together Vera!

Vera pretending to be shocked.

VERA
We are already together Noah - we
are partners!

Noah annoyed

NOAH
Why are you torturing me!? I meant
let's be a couple, let's be more
than partners, you know - let's be
together!

Vera grabs his wrist and smiles coyly.

VERA
I'm sorry, I am not a sadist, but
you're very cute when you squirm.

Noah relaxes and puts his hand over hers.

NOAH
Vera Novikova - will you be my
girlfriend, for Christ's sake, yes
or no?

Vera reaches her other hand and covers his, closes her eyes
and smiles

VERA
Yes!

Noah gets up, and pulls Vera up with him.

VERA (CONT'D)
I have been waiting for this
moment, but never thought it
required an extravagant restaurant
full of fancy pharma execs to ask
me out?

Noah brings her closer to him and they kiss.

VERA (CONT'D)

It's not like you're asking me to
marry you or anything...

Noah interrupts

NOAH

Can I enjoy kissing my lifelong
friend without having her talking
for a minute?

They continue to kiss and embrace.

Montage pans to the other table as wait staff service the doctor and his fawning pharmaceutical sales execs with a very expensive bottle of champagne, and the woman exec slides a contract for the doctor to sign, flashing his gold watch and gold pen he signs the paper, Tramadol mass volume distribution agreement, and the young man sales exec opens his briefcase and extracts a book to hand to the doctor, who opens the book and finds 4 tickets to the box seats at the 2007 Superbowl in Miami.

CUT TO:

EXT. NYC HIGH LINE PARK - EVENING

Montage Vera and Noah are walking the High Line, it is crowded, they are holding hands, sunset is approaching. They approach and stop to watch a pantomime practicing on the High Line bridge, he is playing music on his bluetooth speaker and is trying to act out the scenes in "New York State of Mind" song, while below, under the bridge at street level, a homeless woman is laying down on a cardboard box, and listens to his music while cars and delivery trucks are in stand-still traffic. The homeless woman digs through a clear-blue garbage bag with NYC Department of Sanitation logo, extracts many prescription bottles and indiscriminately pops a few pills from each bottle into her mouth. Nobody notices her on the street, and no-one can see her from the High Line, where the bustle of pedestrian traffic engulfs Vera and Noah, they have no choice but to keep moving with the traffic as they continue to hold hands as the sun sets under the East River.

CUT TO:

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Vera wakes up next to Noah in the bedroom, that now has a single king-sized bed, she looks at the clock. Vera embraces sleeping Noah, wakes him, and they make love.

VERA
Good morning!

Noah laughing.

NOAH
It is absolutely a great morning!

Noah kisses her and gets out of bed to shower.

VERA
Hey, how much longer are we going
keep playing hide and seek with our
ladies?

NOAH
What are you saying?

VERA
I'm saying that you're not fooling
anyone at the clinic with your
night time disappearances 4 nights
a week for the last 3 weeks.

Noah turns on the water in the shower, and starts brushing
his teeth with his toothbrush.

NOAH
Yea, I know. Not ideal, let's just
tell them!

VERA
Ok, so the first question you will
be asked is - when is Vera moving
into the 2nd floor of the clinic?

Noah spitting out toothpaste and rinsing.

NOAH
Hm, well what should I tell them?
How about none of your business,
whenever Vera wants to move in or
not move in, it's up to her.

Vera gets out of bed and opens the shades.

VERA
How about we increase the trial
patient pool, convert the 2nd floor
to more patient rooms and 1 exam
room?

Noah gets into the shower. Vera straightens the bed.

NOAH

That's perfect! How about you and I
pitch tents on the roof!

Vera flushes the toilet, Noah jumps from sudden hot water.

VERA

Don't forget I'm Russian - we
crazy!

Vera joins Noah in shower.

NOAH

Yea, that's what I love about you -
risk aversion is not a thing for
you!

Vera laughing

VERA

Oh, is that the only thing you love
about me?

NOAH

I would love for you to give up
this crazy old apartment and let me
get a nice normal apartment for two
of us somewhere close to the
clinic.

VERA

Now you crazy. Just 3 weeks ago you
convinced me to donate my mom's old
furniture and you brought in this
monstrosity of a bed that barely
fits.

Water running, soap everywhere, Noah and Vera are embraced.

NOAH

Listen, you've got a good plan, we
need to expand the trial and you
and I need our own space that's
close by the clinic. Yes?

Vera smiles

VERA

Moving a bit fast, no? We just had
our first date a month ago!

Vera laughs and kisses Noah.

VERA (CONT'D)

But that's what I love about you.

NOAH

First shmirst! In my head, I've known you all my life! This is what is best for you/me/we.

VERA

Ok Mr. you/me/we - let's do it!

Noah kisses her back.

NOAH

I have to run. Love you!

VERA

Love you back!

Noah gets out of the shower, looks at the clock, and dries off quickly. Vera gets out dries off. They dress and leave the apartment.

INT. NOAH'S RENTAL HOUSE - MORNING

Vera administers trial medicine to Anna and reads to her. She hears Nancy yelling

NANCY

Vera help! Margaret fainted!

Vera runs into Margaret's room, Margaret is convulsing, her eyes closed, Nancy is measuring her blood pressure.

VERA

Nancy, you gave her the shot already?

Nancy is in panic.

NANCY

Yes, like 10 minutes ago, she was fine, I was reading to her, then suddenly she starting convulsing.

Vera raises Margaret's head and clears her mouth, turns her on the side, Margaret remains unconscious, but the convulsions have stopped.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Oh my god, what do we do!?

Vera dials Noah's mobile, he picks up, sounds of hospital and Noah walking rapidly through the hallway.

VERA

Noah, emergency Margaret!

NOAH

Vera, call the 911 dispatcher number we programmed into your phone. It's called Ambulance in you contacts. They're around the corner. Make sure you go with my sis and tell them Langone!

Noah turns around and rushes into elevator.

VERA

Ok, yes, calling now!

Noah gets into elevator and signal lost.

INT. NOAH'S OFFICE - MORNING

Noah speed reads the last week of Margaret's vitals, compares to data Vera sent him yesterday.

NOAH

Oh crap! How the hell did I miss this change? God dammit! Thyroid storm.

CUT TO:

INT. LANGONE EMERGENCY ROOM - MORNING

Paramedics are rushing unconscious Margaret on a gurney toward triage, saline line, and cardio monitor attached, Vera is running behind them.

ER nurses and doctors direct the running paramedics into the triage room, they transfer Margaret to the hospital bed, paramedics report symptoms and codes, the EKG drops, they begin resuscitation.

VERA

Oh my god!

Noah runs into the ER.

NOAH

Hey that's my sister, Margaret Jackson.

ER DOCTOR
Dr. Jackson, is she your patient?

NOAH
Yes, she is. She's coding!

ER DOCTOR
Hang on there Margaret. Push
another 2 milligrams atropine!

The ER staff continue their work, as Vera and Noah stand helpless.

ER DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Dr. Jackson, what is she on?

NOAH
Acute myeloid leukemia, next gen
cytarabine, Hope Trial
Flavopiridol.

ER DOCTOR
She's part of Joyner's trial?

Vera grasps at her throat.

NOAH
Yes, she's in the trial.

ER DOCTOR
How did she get out of the clinic?
She came by ambulance.

Noah desperate. ER nurses continue to try to revive Margaret.

NOAH
I took her out and was treating her
at home.

EKG signal improves

ER DOCTOR
You took her home! Are you nuts?

Vera grabs the back of Noah's scrubs

VERA
Noah! Wait!

NOAH
Yes, I've treating her on the
protocol at home for the last 6
weeks.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

She had a small thyroid storm yesterday, I didn't notice, got worse today. My fault.

Noah puts both of his hands on top of his head.

VERA

Noah, noah, no.

Vera tries to pull him back from triage room, but he pulls forward.

ER DOCTOR

Did Dr. Joyner approve this?

NOAH

No

ER DOCTOR

So you've been injecting her with Hope Trial IV at home?

NOAH

Yes

Margaret begins to regain normal cardiac rhythms.

ER DOCTOR

Where did you get it? This stuff is specifically formulated for this trial by Langone's compounding lab.

ER DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(to the nurse)

Well, this is a first. Ok, get her stable and to oncology wing. I'm calling Dr. Joyner now.

Vera pulls on Noah's scrubs and he falls into her arms crying.

CUT TO:

INT. NOAH'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Dr. Joyner walks in. Noah and Vera stand leaning on Noah's desk.

DR. JOYNER

Dr. Jackson your sister is under our care, and is currently stable.

(MORE)

DR. JOYNER (CONT'D)

ER told me you've been injecting her with Flavopiridol, is that right?

NOAH

Yes, that's what I told them. I could not stand by and watch her die with no hope.

DR. JOYNER

That was a very foolish thing to do. I rejected her from my trial because of her heart, and now it is clear that my decision was the correct one. Her heart cannot tolerate this drug, and of all people, you should have recognized that!

Vera looks turns away and cries.

NOAH

Yes, it was a calculated risk I took. Either she died within a few months without treatment or risked dying from the treatment in a few months. It was a risk. I took it. I own the consequences.

DR. JOYNER

If it was that simple. I am now implicated because the medical record shows Margaret was using my [H0.P3] formulation and nearly died. I am implicated, do you understand?

Dr. Joyner hands him the ER admission paperwork. Noah reads it. Dr. Joyner turns to Vera

DR. JOYNER (CONT'D)

Now, this young lady looks familiar to me. How do we know each other?

Vera clutches at her throat.

VERA

I am so sorry, you rejected my mother from your clinical trial. Her name is Anna Novikova, my name is Vera, we met in your office.

Dr. Joyner takes the paperwork back from Noah, and becomes very upset.

DR. JOYNER

Dr. Jackson, what does Anna Novikova and her daughter have to do with you? What in bloody hell is going on here! How did you get your hands on my trial formulation - it is not available anywhere except from my lab? Did you make your own?

Vera crying.

VERA

No, Dr. Joyner. It is all my fault. He is innocent.

DR. JOYNER

What are you talking about Vera? He gave his sister an unapproved trial drug and now she's had a major cardiac event as a result. He is precisely the reason she wound up in the ER this morning. What am I missing here? How are you involved in all of this? I need a rapid explanation Dr. Jackson.

Vera interrupts Noah from responding.

VERA

It's all my fault. I stole the trial medicine from Langone for my mother. I've been injecting her with it. She's doing much better, I think she's in remission.

DR. JOYNER

Well, that's another crime. Langone security will be here any minute. Police aren't far behind. The only question is what I will tell them - arrest one or both of you.

Noah rings his hands.

NOAH

Dr. Joyner, hang on, we need to explain...

Vera interrupts him again

VERA

Dr. Joyner, I got a job in the stockroom and have been stealing the medication for my mother.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

Noah had nothing to do with that.
Do you think my mother will also
have a heart problem?

DR. JOYNER

Listen, I cannot predict the
future, but from what I remember,
Margaret was a very high risk of
cardiac complications and your
mother is a different case, with
many complications. I rejected her
from the trial because her overall
health was below threshold, but I
never told you she'll have a heart
problem, did I?

VERA

I was giving the medication to my
mother for weeks, and needed to
talk to a doctor about what to do
next. I didn't tell Dr. Jackson the
medication was stolen, I just asked
him for advice. He never asked me
where I got the medicine, and I
never told him. He just told me how
to adjust the protocol, that's it.
I had more medicine than I needed
for my mother, so I gave him the
rest because he said his sister had
the same leukemia...

Dr. Joyner yells at Noah.

DR. JOYNER

You injected your sister trial
medication that you knew was only
available from my lab, and never
asked where it came from? This is
highly unethical and negligent.
You'll never practice medicine, at
least not in this state.

Langone security officers enter Noah's office, talking on
walkie-talkie communicators. Dr. Joyner speaks to them

DR. JOYNER (CONT'D)

Folks, this is Dr. Jackson, please
accompany me and him to the
President's office, they are
expecting us.

NYC Police officers arrive.

VERA

Dr. Joyner, he is innocent. He just tried to help his sister and my mother. What are you doing?

DR. JOYNER

Dr. Jackson's fate is in the hands of hospital administrators. But you're going with the police and I will be pressing charges.

Noah turns to Vera

NOAH

Vera, please take care of your mother.

Dr. Joyner speaks to the police

DR. JOYNER

Officers, please arrest this woman, Ms. Novikova. She confessed to burglarizing my clinic and stealing controlled medications. I'll file a report shortly.

Vera reaches out for Noah's hand and he embraces her.

NOAH

I am sorry, I should've told you to send the ambulance to a different hospital.

VERA

I am sorry too. What will happen to Margaret?

Noah doesn't respond, as Langone security put their hands on him, while Police handcuff Vera and lead her away.

INT. NOAH'S RENTAL HOUSE - MORNING

Anna and Vera sit at the large dining room table.

VERA

(in Russian)
How are you feeling mama?

ANNA

(in Russian)
How do you expect me to feel? My own daughter is a criminal! I'm very disappointed you lied to me.

VERA
(in Russian)
I meant how is your health?

ANNA
(in Russian)
Well, it was 2 months since
Margaret went to the hospital and
never came back. I feel much
better, but is there a ticking time
bomb inside me? Am I going to the
hospital next?

Vera looks at her feet

VERA
(in Russian)
Margaret is stable, I thought you
told me you spoke to her yesterday.

ANNA
(in Russian)
Yes I spoke to her, and either
she's playing dumb or everyone is
keeping her in the dark for months.
She has no clue you got arrested
and Noah kicked out of the
hospital. The first time I called
her a few days after she came to
the hospital, I asked her to tell
me what's new, expecting her to
know all of this - and she has no
clue, and I didn't want to tell her
because it could cause her another
heart attack.

VERA
(in Russian)
Yes, I know mama. Noah and I agreed
we wouldn't tell her exactly for
that reason. Thank you also for
understanding.

Anna reaches out and hugs Vera, begins to cry.

ANNA
(in Russian)
Oh my little girl, it seems tragedy
keeps following us. Your brother,
your father, and now you. I am
cursed.

VERA

(in Russian)

I am not dead mom. I'm just going to prison for a year, and if I behave will be out in 6 months.

ANNA

(in Russian)

And what am I supposed to do?

VERA

(in Russian)

Mamochka, we did it, Noah, you and me - we did it! Don't you get it? Your cancer is in remission! I would gladly spend 2 years in prison knowing that you will live!

Vera kisses Anna.

VERA (CONT'D)

(in Russian)

You're going to be ok mama. You can continue living here, Nancy will continue to help you, you can maybe visit Margaret soon, and come visit me...

ANNA

(in Russian)

When are they coming for you? I see your backpack's ready to go.

Police van pulls up to the house. Two officers ring the door bell. Anna hugs and kisses Vera. Vera takes her backpack and opens the door. Officers cuff Vera and lead her out, before they close the door Vera turns to Anna and says.

VERA

(in Russian)

I will call and write every chance I get. All will be ok.

ANNA

(in Russian)

I will visit you every week, Verachka...

The door closes.

CUT TO:

INT. TACONIC CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

Vera sitting on the concrete floor of her prison cell, the door is open. The steel bed and mattress are covered by a grey blanket which is almost entirely covered with handwritten papers. Vera wears an orange jumper and writes continually with a ball point pen. Woman guard walks in front of the open door.

PRISON GUARD

Novikova, didn't you hear the call?
Go outside girl, get some fresh
air!

Vera does not react. Her eyes are fluttering and she mumbles to herself as she finishes writing on one page and picks up another blank page from the stack of printer paper.

PRISON GUARD (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? I'm talkin' to
you! Novikova! Get up off the
floor! You're either going to the
yard voluntarily or we'll escort
you to the infirmary if you're
sick, yet again.

Vera's pen runs out of ink, she tries to get more ink to flow onto the paper, but no ink comes out. She sets the pen down and gets up.

VERA

Infirmary. I need to speak to a
doctor.

PRISON GUARD

I can't promise you anything except
that you're going to spend the next
2 hours in the infirmary and
they'll tell you there's nothing
wrong with you again, while rest of
us enjoy the sunshine and fresh
air. Up to you.

VERA

Infirmary please.

Vera walks past the guard and stops, expecting to be accompanied.

PRISON GUARD

Ok, have it your way. At the rate you're going with your writing madness and every day trips to the infirmary, I think you need to ask for a shrink doctor or just stop writing all that nonsense and go exercise.

The guard escorts Vera down the corridor, badges through another secure door, another corridor, she opens another secure door to the infirmary.

PRISON GUARD (CONT'D)

Daily delivery! Novikova, have you met the doctor and staff? Oh, I forgot, you know the inside of this place better than the doctor does, right?

Guard laughs as the PRISON DOCTOR enters the exam room. The doctor is a woman in her early 30's, long black hair split between two long pony tails, olive complexion, wearing prison medical staff all whites. She laughs back at the guard.

PRISON DOCTOR

Hi Vera, I see your friend is in a good mood. Well, don't you worry, I'm glad to see you. We'll fix you right up.

Prison Doctor motions to the guard that she's dismissed, and as the guard is leaving, Vera turns around to check if guard is gone before speaking.

VERA

Hi Doctor Lightfoot. I need you to sign one of the forms for the NIH Grant Applications we discussed yesterday. The research grant is written, this is just the few signature pages.

Vera extracts 2 vertically folded papers from inside her orange jumper and hands them to the Doctor who reads them.

PRISON DOCTOR

Vera, I agreed to help you get the books and papers you wanted - that's one thing. But you're asking me to sign as the Principal Investigator for a clinical trial at a women's correctional facility.

(MORE)

PRISON DOCTOR (CONT'D)

What if your hundreds of pages of scribbles actually results in an NIH grant. I've never done this before.

Vera scans the exam room, and reaches for a pen tied to a clipboard.

VERA

Look, we're all working outside of our comfort zone. I've never been in prison and can't think of anything worse - so this is a stretch for me. But for you, you chose to be a prison doctor because your dad died in prison of cancer!

PRISON GUARD

So!? My dad had no money or a lawyer or a doctor and spoke Mohican - he died of neglect! Maybe he had the cancer even before he robbed the liquor store and got himself locked up.

Vera hands the pen to the doctor

VERA

Exactly. Neglect. You are here Dr. Lightfoot 'cause you care. No human should die in prison because nobody cared about her. How many prisoners do you have in Taconic with cancer?

PRISON DOCTOR

We went over this already? Why're you asking me stuff you already know and wrote across pages of your application? Don't you have a genius mind and remember everything?

Doctor takes the pen but does not sign. Vera recites.

VERA

Currently 54, average 43, all time max 70 women prisoners with cancer across all NY State correctional facilities.

Doctor smirks.

PRISON DOCTOR

Vera, this is going nowhere. You've been here 4 months. Unless you plan to murder someone in prison, you'll be a free woman in another 4 to 8 months. What's a Prison Doctor supposed to do with an NIH approved grant in her hands once you're gone?

VERA

Redemption or revenge - I'm not sure, but pick either one - that's what I want!

Doctor sits down in the doctor's swivel chair and motions Vera to hop up on the exam table.

PRISON DOCTOR

You cured your mother. You're a super woman, a non-violent criminal, a scientist wanna-be, I get that. But I'm just a doctor, and not a great one - I work in Prison. I can't be you! I can't cure prison cancer, and I'm not gonna get involved in your quest to punish insurance companies or the "medical system" as a whole", as you say. I'm just not...

Vera interrupts

VERA

I will stay. Being good is tedious, time to be bad. Who shall I take out?

Doctor jumps out of her chair

PRISON DOCTOR

What? That's insane. Don't you even say that - I'll report you if you take this threat any further.

VERA

Ok, I am joking. But I'll give you my word that if you apply and get the grant, you will need to hire people for your research, and I'll come here every day and work for you.

Doctor sits back in the chair and shuffles the 2 pages.

PRISON DOCTOR

Who'll take care of your mother?
Don't you have a life to live? Why
would you promise to do this and
why would I believe you?

VERA

I see my mother every week. If I'm
to believe her, the doctors at
Langone say she's beaten cancer and
her heart was not damaged.
Something specific in my protocol
protected her. I need to confirm
exactly what - this is the trial. I
will not abandon it.

PRISON DOCTOR

You're evading the question. Who
will take care of your mother in
Brooklyn while you're here, working
in a prison clinic 2 hours away?

Vera finally hops onto the exam table, and sticks out her
tongue.

VERA

I don't have a life to live. My
mother has been and will always be
my life. If you give me a modest
paying job, I can afford to rent a
small place in town and my mom and
I will escape from Brooklyn.

Doctor rolls her chair closer to Vera and looks up at her.

PRISON DOCTOR

Look, I don't want to be killjoy. I
wanted to help, I really did.
Everything you asked me for last
several months - I did for you.
There's nothing wrong with reading
books and writing crazy papers. But
you want me to take tax payer
dollars and setup a women's cancer
treatment trial in prison of all
places, because you have a theory
on how to kill cancer cells without
damaging any other cell or organ.
You're not a doctor Vera.

(MORE)

PRISON DOCTOR (CONT'D)

But I am - and this is crazy!

Vera takes the clipboard and pen from the Doctor, turns over the medical form and begins to write.

VERA

This is not a theory. Two patients received a synthetic drug, made to emulate a naturally occurring lipid molecule found in tree bark. Do you know who benefited from all that? That's right, insurance companies profited by sending countless people to die of neglect, because they denied access to drugs that can be made from tree bark! And do you know who will benefit from Langone's so called HOPE trial when they make the safety and efficacy numbers look good enough for FDA? You guessed it, the same drug companies that have been killing people with poisons invented in the 1960's. But now the almighty NIH wants to protect the hearts of cancer patients by denying them any HOPE for a trial medicine made essentially from tree bark!

Vera finishes writing the formulas comparing [H0.p3] and various distillates of the Pacific Yew tree bark.

PRISON DOCTOR

My ancestors have been chewing tree bark gum for thousands of years. They still die of cancer in even greater numbers.

VERA

I found a way by accident. Look, this is the difference between the standard protocol [H0.p3] which was given to one patient and caused her heart damage, and here's another variant which is my protocol. You see this structure? This is toxic, but if you add another nucleic acid interrupter, you lower the toxicity except for abnormal cancer mitosis. I was running titrations inside a flower cooler, where I stored mulch made from Yew. My mother's doses always came from this cooler.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

The 2nd patient's doses were
titrated in a sterile lab.

Doctor takes the clipboard with the formulas from Vera's
hands and studies them.

PRISON DOCTOR

You're telling me the synthetic
drug made to look like the real
bark is toxic to weak hearts but if
you accidentally sprinkle some Yew
tree mulch, it's safe for cardiac
patients? NIH will never fund this!

VERA

They will if you're the doctor
behind it. I wrote the grant
application to NIH's Native
American Research Centers for
Health. Guess what the acronym
sounds like - NARCH! Doctor
Lightfoot, you will prove to the
world that a freely available
formula made from a freely
available Native American tree
cures cancer.

Doctor picks up one of her two long pony tails from her back
and places it on her chest. The pony tail is tied by a band
of small turquoise stones.

VERA (CONT'D)

And you'll do this without an ounce
of big pharma - no narcs!

Vera reaches out her right hand

PRISON DOCTOR

I should be committed. A Native
American prison doctor is applying
for a Tribal medical research grant
that relies on flower power and
tree bark to cure cancer. I'm not
right in the head.

Doctor reciprocates with her right hand and they shake, as
both laugh.

VERA

Speaking of committed, any chance
you can teleport me back to my cell
with a few more pens, mine is out
of ink.

Doctor uses the pen attached to the clipboard to sign the 2 folded pages still in her hand.

PRISON DOCTOR

Oh sure, teleport and go back in time, that's easy! But first, I need to take your vitals for posterity.

Vera rolls up her sleeve

VERA

Who else has a say in launching the trial if we get funding?

Doctor takes her vitals and records the data in the chart.

PRISON DOCTOR

Well, the warden will probably be interested to know how we plan to take delivery of all of the required trial equipment behind bars in prison.

VERA

Very easy, leave it to me, I know people who can deliver that knowledge to his home...

Doctor waives her hands

PRISON DOCTOR

Vera, no, we're not doing that. If you're going to work with me for real - we're gonna be straight and narrow, on the path of righteousness always. Agreed?

VERA

Agreed, sorry, I didn't mean anything by it.

Doctor picks up several pens from the drawer under the computer keyboard and hands them to Vera.

PRISON DOCTOR

It's all right. You have a deal. Now, let's get you back so I can help other patients who come here with real reasons.

VERA

Thank you Doctor!

CUT TO:

INT. TACONIC CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - MORNING

Vera slowly moves the handle tip of a plastic white spoon across the surface of a cup of apple sauce, making and remaking flower and tree patterns.

Sounds of women talking and laughing are heard across a dozen rows of prison cafeteria metal tables and benches bolted to the ground.

Vera sits surrounded by other women in orange jumpsuits. Sunlight from tall windows reflects from the sea of orange and sets the room ablaze.

PRISONER 1

Girl, you be trippin'! Who would pay for your mangy hair?

PRISONER 2

Ladies wig makers that's who! You don't know shit.

The table laughs

PRISONER 1

Oh, I know my shit, and if God made me bald, I'd rather be smooth as shiny 8-ball than wear that mop.

Table erupts in laughter. Vera talks loudly over the laughter into her apple sauce, continues to draw patterns.

VERA

Cut the crap. You ever had cancer that made you bald - not God? How about you puke every 20 minutes for 3 hours - so whatever hair GOD decided to leave on your head is covered in vomit and you shave it off with your Gillette!

Table noise shuts down, everyone listening to Vera.

VERA (CONT'D)

Look around this room. How many bandana heads you see?

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

Some will live, some will not - but if they had freedom and money - most would live. Nobody cares about prison cancer.

Table turns rowdy supporting Vera

VERA (CONT'D)

So you go on, keep making those jokes, keep making those wigs, and leave everything in God's hands.

PRISONER 1

Whachusayin sister, are you against God?

Table quiets down to listen. Vera turns toward the orange glow ceiling.

VERA

I'm not for or against. I have faith.

PRISONER 2

You talkin' in tongues. Must be that Russian blood in you. Is that why you go to the infirmary every day? You sick or something?

VERA

I'm not sick. I'm on a mission.

PRISONER 1

Mission! Christ Almighty! You hearing this? What kind of a fool would give a missionary like you their money.

VERA

You'd be surprised!

Table erupts in laughter

PRISONER 1

So wait, are you fo' real? People just give you money to go on missions?

VERA

Pretty much. People with money and power give money to people without money or power to help spread their own power. It's a simple formula.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

You just have to know who to ask
and how to ask it so they feel like
giving you money increases their
power.

Table shushes.

PRISONER 2

Yo that's whack! I wanna go on a
mission with you!

VERA

Sure thing! Another simple formula
turns into opium for the people.

Table clamors to hear more. Prison guard approaches behind
Vera's back and disrupts the table

PRISON GUARD 2

Novikova, you have a visitor.

Vera turns around to look at the guard, then back at her
fellow inmates.

VERA

My mom's here early!

Vera's face lights up. She starts to pickup the food tray.
Prisoner to her left puts her hands on the tray.

PRISONER 3

Vera, I got this. You go to your
momma now. You give us a mission
and we got your back!

Table laughs, Vera laughs, she gets up fixes her hair and
jumper and follows the guard out of the cafeteria.

INT. TACONIC CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - MORNING

Vera enters a guard station and is searched. Her guard then
escorts her into the visiting room. The room is empty. Vera
asks the guard.

VERA

How did she get here so early?

PRISON GUARD 2

I have no idea. Please sit down and
wait.

VERA

Ok yes, thank you.

The guard exits. Vera is alone in the visiting room. Guards are visible behind glass walls. The circular wall clock strikes 9 am. The door labeled "Visitors" opens and a guard escorts Noah into the room.

VERA (CONT'D)

Noah! You're not in jail!?

Vera jumps off her bench to kiss and embrace him. One of the guards behind the window knocks on the glass and motions with her hands to stop, the speaker crackles.

PRISON GUARD 2

No physical contact. First warning.

NOAH

Hey, sorry I came without warning you.

VERA

No, no it's fine. I can't believe you're here. How did you get out?

Noah looks at his hands

NOAH

I never went it

Vera tries to look into his eyes

VERA

What do you mean. The day before I was sentenced you told me you can't meet because you're probably getting arrested. I was very upset, I didn't get a chance to say bye in person. What happened Noah?

Noah looks her in the eyes

NOAH

The hospital fired me. The state revoked my license. The board recommended I be suspended for life, with opportunity for appeal in 6 years.

VERA

But I thought you were going to prison like me.

NOAH

I have a good lawyer, he convinced the ethics panel that because I did not directly commit any crime, that the prosecutor would lose the criminal case if they pressed charges and would expose Langone to public scrutiny and ridicule.

VERA

Wow, that must have been nerve racking.

NOAH

Yea, it was a tough few weeks for me, but not the worst.

Vera smiles and demonstrates her orange jumper

VERA

Well, I am glad you never got a chance to experience these orange beauties.

Noah has a hard time smiling. His hands are folded on the table.

VERA (CONT'D)

Noah, what's the matter - something is wrong, I feel it.

NOAH

Margaret is dead.

Noah cries. Vera puts her hands over Noah's folded hands, he turns over his hands to hold hers.

VERA

Oh my god! Oh no, Noah, I am so sorry. Joyner said 4 months ago that she was in the clear, they took her into their clinic. What happened?

Noah wipes the tears from his eyes. Vera's eyes fill with tears as Noah speaks.

NOAH

She was in the trial, they had to adjust her treatment, the trial finished, I took her back to the rental house.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

Nancy was there, Margaret was very weak, I was dealing with all my legal issues, Margaret didn't know everything but she knew enough that it was painful for her as well.

Vera cries

VERA

My mom spoke to Margaret every day by phone before they took me away. My mom was always worried not to say anything about you that may upset her.

Noah rubs her hands

NOAH

Your mom was a trooper, she didn't tell Margaret anything, she found out from me, I wasn't at work for days, I had to tell her something.

VERA

I'm so sorry, it must have been tough to tell her.

NOAH

Yea, and then all the legal and ethics stuff started, I wasn't home much during the day. Margaret passed away in her sleep 2 months ago. Her heart gave up.

Vera wipes her eyes with the sleeve of her orange jumper.

VERA

I guess in hind sight I am glad you didn't tell me all this during last few months. I honestly thought that you could not contact me from prison or for some other legal reason it was not a good idea. So I felt relatively at peace for 4 months.

NOAH

Yea, I thought about visiting you, but it was easier for me to think of myself as already being in prison, losing Margaret, and not being able to talk to you - was easier in my head, do you understand?

Vera pats his hands

VERA

No hard feelings. You're probably right, if I knew everything, I'd have a hard time focusing.

Noah looks up with surprise

NOAH

Focusing on what?

VERA

My mom mostly. She has been visiting me twice a week since the beginning. By the way, my mom and I share everything with each other, and she never told me about Margaret's passing either. And she and I always assumed you were doing time too.

Noah sad.

NOAH

Wow, I feel bad. I guess your mom felt strange to be in rental house with Nancy while Margaret was in the hospital. Is that why she moved back to her Brighton apartment?

Vera interrupts.

VERA

That's what she told me. She said you were against it, insisted you stay under Nancy's care, but she made up her mind that she's no longer a patient, fully recovered, and has to go home and live a normal life as a healthy person not a sick patient.

NOAH

That makes sense, except she really didn't ask me or give me a chance to insist she stay. She just packed up her stuff one day, and told Nancy to call me and let me know. I was in a deposition, and couldn't really talk, so I just asked Nancy to call her a car and take care of everything.

VERA

It's ok. She's totally fine. I guess when people are in prison, or think they're going away, they start to compartmentalize what they think or say to people.

NOAH

I guess. Your mom was at my sister's funeral 2 months ago, we spoke, and she never said anything to you?

VERA

No she didn't. She did miss one visit about two months ago, but she didn't tell me about the funeral or seeing you. My head was also in a different space, was trying to find my purpose. Probably this is why she didn't want to cause me stress.

Noah looks concerned

NOAH

Are you not well also, what do you mean?

Vera leans back

VERA

I am physically fine, nothing wrong with me. But, well that's a tricky story.

Noah looks at the clock on the wall

NOAH

Well, can you give me the highlights before I am kicked out of here.

VERA

Ok, I will tell you. But first, tell me what's next for you.

Noah smiles.

NOAH

That's what I love about you. Every thing with a dose of suspense. Really, we're gonna play this game? Ok fine.

Vera smiles coyly back at him

NOAH (CONT'D)

I sold everything in the rental house, put all of Margaret's things into storage, and am in the process of moving to Arizona. I have an eye on an old run-down ranch in the middle of nowhere, which has its own aquifer water supply. I've been researching and thinking a lot about herbal medicine and food. I'm going to try to write a recipe and lifestyle book. I've got just enough saved for 3 years - so if I don't succeed, you can find me in a homeless shelter...

Vera interrupts

VERA

First, I want you to hear it from me - you did not cause your sister's disease, you didn't cause her rejection from the trial, you didn't cause her heart to give up, you were not negligent in any way. You did what you believed was the only thing and the best thing for your sister to try to save her. Her passing is not your fault. You did not fail.

Vera raises both of her open palms around her face.

VERA (CONT'D)

Now, prior to your adventures with your criminal girl Friday here ... have you ever failed at anything before?

NOAH

Vera, I've never failed before and because of this, I know that my hubris is inflated.

Vera smiles.

VERA

That's what I love about you - more right than wrong!

NOAH

I appreciate the vote of confidence, but it's your turn. What's been happening with you?

Vera begins to speak, sound of wind overtakes her words, she is emotional, gesturing, Noah is listening intently. Vera explains everything about the NIH research grant application, the science, the money, and the plan.

VERA

So, what do you say Dr. Jackson?

Noah thinking

NOAH

First, don't call me that please. Second, it sounds like the only MD on this case will be Dr. Lightfoot, and she's never done a clinical trial before. High risk for sure!

Vera raises her eyebrows.

VERA

That's why it will work - high risk, high reward.

NOAH

What reward exactly? You're gonna be living just above the poverty line for years trying to prove your hunch.

VERA

Redemption and revenge are the reward. Don't you get it?

NOAH

Yeah I get it, your mom is your life and now you've taken it to the next level. You want to stick it to everyone who was involved...

VERA

Not everyone, you were involved, and I still love you...

Noah slaps his palm into his forehead.

NOAH

Vera, I completely forgot the real reason I came here. I love you with all my heart.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

I can't stop thinking about you. I want you to come to Arizona when you're out. We should be together. There, I said the words that I've been practicing for 2 days!

Vera shows a big smile.

VERA

There's that hubris!

Vera and Noah laugh.

NOAH

Can't help myself, comes naturally

VERA

And what happens to your savings rationed out for 3 years with an additional mouth to feed? I get hungry you know...

Vera smiles

NOAH

Already accounted for.

VERA

So you assumed I would say yes?

NOAH

Well, yeah, what else should I assume?

VERA

Nevermind! Look, change of plans ok?

NOAH

There's no changing us being together, that I know for a fact, everything else is fluid - you know, freedom!

VERA

Freedom and revenge go together, don't you think?

NOAH

So what's the plan?

VERA

Soon Noah, you're gonna do some
time in prison...

CUT TO:

Montage, split screen, left color Arizona Desert November 2007, right b/w Taconic Prison November 2007. {Time/Year-Month is the same for both screens; if there is sound, it comes only from left or only from right split-screen, until the screens merge below}

L-2007-Nov: Noah is baking a cauliflower crust pizza in his backyard wood burning clay oven. The heat of the oven compounded by the heat of the desert are punishing. Noah's iPhone timer goes off, Noah takes out the pizza, and begins to write notes.

R-2007-Nov: Vera and Dr. Lightfoot insert a 300-page grant proposal into a manila envelope addressed to NIH

L-2007-Dec: Noah is outside, under an umbrella, watching a portable TV with bunny ears antenna - the stock market is diving, Noah takes the bottle of beer he's drinking, and chucks it across the desert. Scene reminiscent of Great Depression, tumbleweed. Noah sits back down, and begins to write a letter to Vera.

R-2007-Dec: Vera waiting in prison clinic, Dr. Lightfoot walks in and opens an envelope, she reads the NIH approval to move to next stage of proposal review. They jump up and down. Vera returns to her cell and begins to write a letter to Noah.

L-2008-Jan: Noah opens a letter from his broker. Insufficient funds, margin call, must pay or start selling assets.

R-2008-Jan: Vera is writing very rapidly by hand, filling page after page.

L-2008-Feb: Noah returns home from a long hike in the desert. He's carrying many samples of weeds, flowers, tree barks, and grasses. He gets the mail and opens his bank statement. Noah is a month away from being broke.

R-2008-Feb: Vera and Dr. Lightfoot open another envelope from NIH and discover a check for \$276,000.00 in seed money.

L-2008-Mar: Noah is packing up his rental ranch in the Arizona desert. A taxi awaits at the front gate. Noah walks across the dusty front yard and gets into the taxi and asks driver to take him to the airport. Noah's plane takes off.

R-2008-Mar: Anna is greeting Vera at the exit gate of the Taconic Prison. They get on the bus that takes them into center of town. They walk around looking through windows of real estate brokers for apartments to rent.

L-2008-Apr: Sunny fresh warm day. Noah gets off the bus in Mt. Kisco, NY.

R-2008-Apr: Vera runs out of the Mt. Kisco bus depot to greet Noah

Montage, split screens merge into 1 main screen, color.

M-2008-May: Noah and Vera get out of bed, do their morning routine, Vera comes out of her apartment's front door, it says Vera Novikova on the mailbox, she walks down the stairs with a bag of groceries and opens another apartment's door, which says Anna Novikova. After a few minutes she comes out, starts the engine of an old red car, and turns on the car radio, AM station playing old Neil Diamond song, "Coming to America". Noah comes downstairs and gets into the car. Vera smiles and drives off. The car drives along serpentine road, music playing, and comes to a stop in front of Taconic Correctional Facility, Employee Entrance.

M-2008-June: Vera and Noah are working in the expanded laboratory built adjacent to the Taconic Prison Clinic. Vera is running equipment and Noah taking notes. Then they switch, Noah runs equipment, Vera memorizes all of Noah's notes, and adds her own.

M-2008-July: US passes the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. Mohican Nation leader receives a package from Taconic Prison, labeled Fragile, Glass, Medicine.

M-2008-Aug: Vera is writing formulas on large papers taped to walls of the clinic. Noah is on the phone explaining to someone on the other side what to do.

M-2008-Sep: Lehman Brother's declares bankruptcy.

M-2008-Oct: Two Taconic Prison buses return with inmate cancer patients from NY Langone trip. 14 of 18 patients with variety of cancers are in remission.

M-2008-Nov: Mohican Nation leader calls Noah and says that 3 of 7 patients with 3 different cancers all reported complete remission

M-2008-Dec: Noah, Vera, Dr. Lightfoot, 3 clinic nurses, 2 guards, and 12 women inmate patients are exchanging Secret Santa gifts in a very crowded clinic.

M-2009-Jan: Vera completes the research report. Dr. Lightfoot signs the paper, and Noah takes the envelope to the prison mail office.

M-2009-Feb: Vera receives a letter from FDA authorizing emergency use of the YVAN (Yew Vera Anna Noah) protocol on Tribal Territories.

Montage, 1 main screen, turns black and white.

The screen is foggy, the years turn rapidly in succession from 2009 to 2022, Vera and Noah's wedding; the new couple welcome their first son and name him after Vera's father; then a girl is born and she's named Margaret; the boy plays chess with Vera and Noah teaches the girl ship building in a bottle. Both of them continue to work at the Prison and the Tribal clinics.

M-2022-Dec: In a grand ballroom, the stage is full of fog. The 2022 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine is awarded to Dr. Vera Novikova (honorary Ph.D Botany, NY Polytech) and 2 others, Dr. Lauren Lightfoot and Noah Jackson. Dr. Novikova is recognized specifically for her breakthroughs in botanical cancer treatments. Novikova is on a growing list of women scientists who changed the world.

Fade out to credits.