

THE PERFECT MATCH

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OVER BLACK SCREEN:

KRISTIN (O.C.)
(Soft, rapid, and worried)
No, no, no, no.

PEYTON (O.C.)
Kristin! Kristin! Look at me!

REVEAL:

EXT. BEACHSIDE - DAY

KRISTIN (28, female, wearing a HARNESS over her color-coordinated workout outfit) stands in the middle of an extremely tall rope bridge. The bridge is part of a tall ropes course built on the picturesque beach.

Kristin looks so stressed she may actually be in physical pain. Her eyes are slammed shut.

KRISTIN
No! Peyton, I hate you! I hate you!
I hate you! I hate you!

REVEAL: THE PERFECT MATCH CONTESTANTS and FILM CREW are watching/filming from on the beach below. PEYTON (late 20's, boyishly charming) is with them. He calls to Kristin.

PEYTON
You're just scared.

KRISTIN
No! I really hate you!

A BREEZE shakes the rope bridge violently. Kristin SCREAMS and her eyes open wide and terrified.

PEYTON
Kristin, look at me.

Kristin WHIMPERS and nods an aggressive "no".

PEYTON (CONT'D)
(soft)
Kristin. Please.

At his plead, she manages to look down at him.

PEYTON (CONT'D)
You're safe. I'd never lie to you.

Kristin's face darkens for the briefest moment.

She opens her mouth as if to say something, but just then the breeze hits again and...

SHE SLIPS! A SCREAM rips from her mouth as she plummets to the ground below.

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK SCREEN: ONE MONTH AGO

EXT. CITY PARK, ATLANTA - DUSK

ESTABLISH: a bustling park in the middle of Atlanta.

A GROUP OF RUNNERS (20's, 30's) are stretching/chugging water/doing whatever it is runners do before runs.

Kristin half-heartedly stretches alone off to the side while trying not to look like an out of place loser.

She drops into a half-hearted lunge and TEXTS on her PHONE.

KRISTIN
(reading out loud)
Mallory, if you bail, I will murder
your family -

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
First time here?

Kristin looks up from her phone and sees...

A FLOPPING PENIS BOUNCING wildly in pair of tight running shorts. Kristin GASPS and RECOILS falling onto the grass.

KRISTIN
Geez!

She looks up and sees the shorts are being worn by an overly-fit MAN (30's) JOGGING in place in front of her.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
Oh shit, sorry. Didn't mean to
scare ya! Just didn't recognize
you, thought I'd say hi.

KRISTIN
(gruff)
Hi.

She stands brushing GRASS off her palms.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
First time here?

KRISTIN
Uh, yeah. I'm meeting someone.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
A date?

KRISTIN
A friend.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
Good 'cause I was gonna see if you
wanted to grab a drink later?

He stops jogging to pull his knee to his chest in a stretch.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE (CONT'D)
Enjoy that endorphin high together.

KRISTIN
I'm good.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
Ha, at least give me an excuse.

The Dude leans in conspiratorially.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE (CONT'D)
You got something going on down
there? 'Cause there meds for that.

KRISTIN
No! I'm just not dating right now.
I'm focused on work.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
You a consultant? Consultants are
always hot.

KRISTIN
I'm in PR.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
Dude, that sounds stressful.

KRISTIN
It is, dude.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
How about you let me destress you?
Then after, you can destress me.

He WINKS and Kristin's expression rips through understanding, to disgust, to a plan in mere moments. She shifts her body.

KRISTIN
 (coy, seductive)
 Actually, that'd be great. But I
 should warn you...

She steps closer to him.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)
 (seductive whisper)
 I'm on my period and it's a gusher.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
 Oh, god.

KRISTIN
 Yeah, it's like Niagara falls down
 there. Whoosh - gallons.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
 Gallons?

KRISTIN
 But you're right, I could use a
 little fun.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
 Actually, you know what? I've got
 something tonight.

KRISTIN
 No, really? Tomorrow?

He pretends to hear someone calling his name.

RUNNER DOUCHE DUDE
 (over his shoulder)
 Coming!
 (to Kristin)
 I gotta go.

He turns and sprints off towards a group of guys.

KRISTIN
 (sugary sweet)
 Byeee!

Just then, MALLORY (20's, lithe and willowy) jogs up to
 Kristin with a friendly grin.

MALLORY
 Krispy! You're here!

The two friends hug.

KRISTIN

Yes, and I got a nice warm welcome.

She nods her head towards the Dude standing at a distance.

MALLORY

Ew, sorry. Josh sucks.

KRISTIN

He really does. I would'a waited for you at work, but I thought you were leaving right behind me?

MALLORY

I was, but Ian asked me to set a meeting for him out of nowhere.

Panic grips Kristin.

KRISTIN

I thought he left!

MALLORY

Chill, please. You're gonna give yourself a heart attack.

Mallory starts stretching, but Kristin keeps staring at her.

KRISTIN

Did he notice I wasn't there?!

MALLORY

No, you freak. Plus it's like 6:30, you're allowed to leave.

Just then, the RUN CLUB LEADER (30's female) calls out.

RUN CLUB LEADER

Alright everyone listen up! Lotta walkers out today so be mindful of them because they will NOT be mindful of you. Let's go!

Suddenly, the rest of the run club takes off running.

MALLORY

Oh shit, c'mon.

The girls fall into a clump RUNNING with the others.

MALLORY (CONT'D)
(already panting)
Sometimes, I really hate running.

Mallory looks over and sees Kristin's lost in thought.

MALLORY (CONT'D)
What?

KRISTIN
Was Ian meeting with Minh?

MALLORY
Yeah, how'd you -

KRISTIN
Do you think Ian fired him?

MALLORY
Fat chance. I watched them make a
Tik Tok together.

KRISTIN
Damn.

MALLORY
I'd say y'all's little rivalry is
sad, but it's beyond that.

KRISTIN
Wrong, it's completely justified.

MALLORY
Is it though?

KRISTIN
Minh and I have competed for every
promotion since we were hired. And
with Rebecca gone -

MALLORY
Ah, I miss Rebecca.

KRISTIN
I don't! With her gone, I'm taking
her manager spot.

Mallory juts out an arm and GRABS Kristin as they run!

MALLORY
WHAT!? Kristin! Congratulations!

Kristin's face gets all scrunched with thought.

KRISTIN

No, I mean technically I don't have the job yet, but tomorrow's my yearly review and -

MALLORY

- Ooooh. Gotcha. We're manifesting.

KRISTIN

But it makes sense! I'm already covering most of the manager's responsibilities. I haven't taken a single vacation or a sick day in five years, and I'm pretty sure I have a vitamin D deficiency from lack of sun exposure.

MALLORY

I bet Josh would help you get some vitamin D.

KRISTIN

I'd rather lick a chainsaw.

MALLORY

Ha! Well, we should go out tonight. For a good luck toast! And maybe you can meet someone who's not Josh.

KRISTIN

Can't, tonight's *The Perfect Match Finale*.

MALLORY

Ah yes, your mommy and me night.

KRISTIN

Ew, please don't call it that.

MALLORY

What would be a better name for a weekly reality tv show binge-night with your mom, her best friend slash pseudo second mother, and that best friend's very straight, very insanely hot son? Who also happens to be your childhood best friend? Because I'm at a loss.

KRISTIN

Peyton's not insanely hot.

MALLORY

Yes he is. You're just too close to the situation to see. But okay, anyway, Saturday we are going out. I need fun Kristin back. Promotion or not.

Kristin swerves around some Pedestrians walking on the path.

KRISTIN

I'm getting promoted.

MALLORY

I know! And if -

KRISTIN

There's no if, Mal! There's one option!

The girls swerve around oblivious WALKERS in their path.

MALLORY

(annoyed)
People.

KRISTIN

I know I haven't been *fun* lately, but I needed to show Ian how much I cared about the work.

Kristin starts to pick up speed as she gets lost in thought and Mallory starts to lag behind her.

MALLORY

How are you this fast? Is it that stupid walking pad?

KRISTIN

- And so what if I haven't dated the Joshes of the world. I don't want all that lovey-dovey crap in my life anyway. I don't need some random guy taking my focus away from my goals and -

Just as Kristin is about to run around a MAN on the path, he KNEELS down to propose to his GIRLFRIEND.

Kristin TRIPS over his leg and goes SOARING into the air before landing on the path with a THUD. She GROANS.

The couple looks from Kristin then back to each other.

PROPOSING MAN
Melissa, will you marry me?

BEING PROPOSED TO WOMAN
Oh Frank, YES! Yes, I'll marry you!

They lock into a passionate embrace while ONLOOKERS CLAP.
Meanwhile, Kristin painfully rolls onto her back.

KRISTIN
(with pain)
Congratulations...

Suddenly the other runners run past Kristin without stopping.

RUNNERS
Runner down!/Watch out!/Look out!

Mallory jogs to a stop in front of Kristin.

MALLORY
Are you okay?!

Kristin just GROANS again.

MALLORY (CONT'D)
Also I definitely couldn't hear
anything you were saying.

KRISTIN
Just that love sucks.

[TITLE SLAMS OVER KRISTIN'S PAINED FACE: THE PERFECT MATCH]

EXT. KRISTIN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a mixed-used commercial space with
restaurants/shops at the bottom of an APARTMENT BUILDING.

INT. KRISTIN'S APARTMENT, FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Kristin's apartment is silent.

Suddenly, Kristin unlocks the door and LIMPS inside. GRASS
and GRAVEL cling to her scraped knees.

KRISTIN
Ow. Ow. Ow. Owwww.

She hobbles into her bathroom.

INT. KRISTIN'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kristin kicks the bathroom door closed, but a TOWEL hanging on the back of the door catches in the doorway and STOPS it from shutting. Kristin doesn't notice.

She sends a talk to text from her PHONE:

KRISTIN
Running late. I'm gonna shower.
Don't scare me when you get here.

Kristin picks up a CANDLE and LIGHTS it taking a DEEP BREATH.

Her phone DINGS and, as Kristin checks her texts, she absent-mindedly sets the candle down close to a HAND TOWEL hanging from a WOODEN SHELF on the wall.

Kristin sets the phone down then steps into the shower.

Meanwhile, the candle's FLAME grows taller getting closer and closer to the dangling hand-towel.

LATER:

INT. KRISTIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

There's a KNOCK on the door to Kristin's apartment, then the TURN OF A KEY, and PEYTON (late 20's, boyishly handsome) enters carrying BAGS OF TO-GO FOOD.

PEYTON
Krisp, I'm here! Don't be naked.

He hears the SHOWER SOUNDS and goes to the bathroom door.

PEYTON (CONT'D)
Kristin, I'm -

Through the open sliver in the door, he sees the HAND-TOWEL now fully engulfed in flames!

PEYTON (CONT'D)
Kristin!

Dropping the food bags, he bursts into the bathroom.

Kristin SCREAMS and whips her head out from behind the curtain.

KRISTIN
Peyton?! What the fu-

PEYTON

Fire!

He tosses water from the sink to the towel.

KRISTIN

Do something!

Peyton briefly stops to sass her.

PEYTON

What does it look like I'm doing!?

Peyton looks from the flaming towel to the shower.

PEYTON (CONT'D)

Move!

KRISTIN

Why?

He RIPS the entire WOODEN SHELF out of the wall leaving gaping holes of cracked dry wall in its wake.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

Peyton!

PEYTON

Move!

Kristin jumps out of the shower and hunches over covering her naked bits with her hands.

PEYTON (CONT'D)

Open the curtain!

Kristin fruitlessly tries to push it open with her foot.

PEYTON (CONT'D)

KRISTIN!

KRISTIN

Okay! Just, don't look!

Peyton rolls his eyes as Kristin lets go of her body to rip back the shower curtain.

Peyton marches over to the shower and shoves the towel under the water. The flame SPUTTERS out.

Both of them stare at the soaked towel in shock.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)
What the fuck!

CUT TO:

INT. KRISTIN'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - LATER

Kristin and Peyton sit at the table in tense silence, staring holes into the table. The food sits forgotten on the floor.

PEYTON
If it helps, I didn't
see...everything.

Kristin drops her head to the table with a GROAN.

KRISTIN
It's like my brother saw me naked.

PEYTON
One: you don't have a brother. And
two: I think we can agree that
would be worse?

The DOORBELL RINGS and Kristin nearly JUMPS up to answer it. She pauses in front of the door turning back to Peyton.

KRISTIN
We say nothing.

She composes her face then pulls open the door revealing:

JAQUELINE BANKS (50's, Kristin's mother), and MARY-GRACE SMITH (50's, Peyton's mother) at the door.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)
Hi! Oh, hi!
(to Peyton)
It's both of them.

JAQUELINE
Hi, honey.

Jacqueline bends to give her daughter a kiss on the cheek.

KRISTIN
Hey, mom.

JAQUELINE
Yes, we carpooled.

Mary-Grace enters and pulls Kristin into a hug.

KRISTIN

No, nobody new. I'm focusing on work.

(mutters)

For the hundredth time today.

Mary-Grace pivots to her son.

MARY-GRACE

Peyton? How about you honey, anybody new?

PEYTON

Oh no, leave me out of this.

He gets up to put his plate in the dishwasher.

JAQUELINE

What is with you kids? We've got the nun and the priest for children.

Kristin joins him bringing plates to the kitchen.

PEYTON

More like the priest and the pyro.

KRISTIN

Shut up.

PEYTON

At least I go on dates. She's a hermit.

KRISTIN

I'm working! Plus, you don't date, you hook -

Peyton wraps a hand around Kristin's mouth cutting her off.

PEYTON

The smoke's made her delusional.

Kristin LICKS Peyton's hand and he YANKS it away.

PEYTON (CONT'D)

UGH!

JAQUELINE

Serves you right. She's always been a licker.

PEYTON

And yet, no boyfriend.

He wipes his palm on Kristin's shirt, but she slaps him away.

MARY-GRACE

Peyton.

PEYTON

Jacqueline's said worse.

Jacqueline gives him a conciliatory shrug.

MARY-GRACE

I just think it's important you have a partner.

PEYTON

Just me, not Kristin?

MARY-GRACE

Well her too, but she's not my child. I can't guilt her as much.

PEYTON

I've got a partner, right here.

He hangs arm over her shoulder and Kristin shrugs it away.

PEYTON (CONT'D)

The little pryø.

MARY-GRACE

I mean a romantic partner! Not just a best friend.

PEYTON

I like being single.

KRISTIN

Because he's a slut.

MG reaches for Peyton's licked hand, then pauses, thinking better of it, and grabs the other hand instead.

MARY-GRACE

I just want you to have someone to go through life with. The good stuff and the hard stuff.

PEYTON

Well good thing my life's not hard.

The moms share a subtle GLANCE. Kristin catches it.

KRISTIN

What was that?

JAQUELINE

What?

KRISTIN

That look.

JAQUELINE

What look?

KRISTIN

The one you just gave her.

JAQUELINE

Honey, there wasn't a look.

Then the moms share another look.

KRISTIN

That! That look!

JAQUELINE

Paranoia will age you prematurely dear.

KRISTIN

(grumbles)

You age me prematurely.

Mary-Grace puts her fork down and folds her hands in her lap.

MARY-GRACE

So kids, we have something to tell you.

PEYTON

You're becoming cruise people?

JAQUELINE

Feel free to shoot me if that day comes.

MARY-GRACE

Jacqueline. No, it's...well it's just that...

Recognition clicks in Peyton's face.

PEYTON

No. Again?

Confused, Kristin looks between Peyton and his mother.

KRISTIN

Mary-Grace?

PEYTON

Mom?

Mary-Grace gets up and goes to sit beside her son.

MARY-GRACE

I have a tumor in my abdomen. I'll need more tests before we know exactly what it is, but it's in the same spot as last time.

PEYTON

But it's been eight years. Why would it just come back after eight years?

MARY-GRACE

Sometimes, cancer just comes back honey.

Peyton abruptly gets up from the table and walks out of the apartment. The door CRASHES shut loudly behind him.

Kristin looks between Mary-Grace and the door, then stands.

KRISTIN

I'll talk to him.

Kristin starts for the door, then turns gives Mary-Grace a squeeze and a kiss on the head before following Peyton out.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kristin heads into the hallway rushing after Peyton.

KRISTIN

Peyton!

He dips into an apartment just a few doors down and Kristin charges in after him.

CUT TO:

INT. PEYTON'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Peyton's apartment is laid out similarly to Kristin's, but has an extra bedroom and the decor has a more masculine feel.

Peyton charges inside and Kristin follows him in.

KRISTIN

Peyton!

Kristin follows Peyton into his bedroom.

INT. PEYTON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kristin watches as Peyton SWIPES at a ROW OF BOOKS stacked neatly on his desk and they CRASH onto the floor.

He RIPS the DUVET off his bed and SLAMS it to the floor then SNATCHES a LAMP from his bedside table.

KRISTIN

Wait!

Peyton pauses, lamp held aloft, without meeting her eyes.

Kristin steps over, unscrews the LIGHTBULB, then steps aside.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

Okay.

Peyton SLAMS the light onto the ground then stills.

Kristin steps over the mess and pulls him into a hug. His arms hang limp at his sides and his eyes stare ahead.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

(whispered)

It's okay, it's okay. She's beaten it before, she'll do it again.

A SOB claws itself from Peyton's throat.

He wraps his arms around Kristin and drops his forehead onto her shoulder surrendering to her hold. He's taller than her, but in that moment he looks so fragile.

CUT TO:

LATER.

Kristin and Peyton sit close together at the foot of Peyton's bed surrounded by the mess. They look like little kids hiding in a club house.

KRISTIN

(whispered)

She'll be okay.

Peyton's expression grows wary. He looks exhausted.

PEYTON

It's not just that she's sick -

A KNOCK sounds at the bedroom door and Mary-Grace leans in.

MARY-GRACE
Mind if I join ya?

KRISTIN
Of course.

They scoot apart and she sits between them on the floor.

MARY-GRACE
Whenever you're ready, I'm here for
all your questions -- both of you.

Kristin gives her a sad smile and a nod.

MARY-GRACE (CONT'D)
Buuuut, it's not like anything's
going to change tonight. And, it is
eight o'clock...

PEYTON
You can't be serious.

MARY-GRACE
Serious as cancer.

The kids both look back at her horrified.

MARY-GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh, if we don't joke about it, who
will?

She lifts herself off the floor with a GROAN.

MARY-GRACE (CONT'D)
We've got a finale to watch.

Mary-Grace settles into the middle of Peyton's bed making herself cozy as Kristin pulls Peyton up off the floor.

MARY-GRACE (CONT'D)
(to doorway)
Jaqueline, get that skinny butt in
here!

Peyton and Kristin sit on the bed on either side of Mary-Grace while Jaqueline comes into the room.

JAQUELINE
Sculpted not skinny.

MARY-GRACE
Yeah, yeah.

Jacqueline takes a seat in Peyton's desk chair and Mary-Grace CLICKS on the TV with the remote.

The Perfect Match intro MUSIC fills the room.

ON TV: Celebrity host, BLUE WILSON (50's, Ryan Seacrest-type), stands on a WEDDING ALTAR built on a beautiful beach.

BLUE (ON TV)

We started this season with fifteen couples - each one believing they were with their perfect match. But now after weeks of challenges designed to test that match, we are down to one final couple. Will they chose to leave together? Or will they chose their perfectly matched single instead? And who will take home the million dollar prize? It's all ahead in our jaw dropping finale of, *The Perfect Match*.

They all relax comfortably into their spots.

LATER:

INT. PEYTON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary-Grace, Jacqueline, Peyton and Kristin all watch the episode with rapt fascination.

On the TV screen, a COUPLE (SARAH and PETER, young 30's, dressed in formal wear) stand on the altar with Blue between them like a wedding officiant. An attractive WOMAN (20's) and a MAN (30's) stand to the side watching.

BLUE (ON TV)

After a season of challenges, Sarah your love for Peter has been tested in so many ways.

Sarah nods in agreement.

BLUE (ON TV) (CONT'D)

But you've also gotten a chance to develop a connection with Matt, you're Perfect Match. So now we are at the final test: Sarah, is Peter your perfect match?

JAQUELINE

Run Peter, run.

PETER (CONT'D)
Were you going to pick me?

She nods "no" and Peter throws up his hands and storms off.

PETER (ON TV) (CONT'D)
Great! I'm going home! <BLEEP> you,
<BLEEP> this stupid show. Sarah,
don't call me!

BLUE (ON TV)
Sarah, I know that must have been
hard, but I still have one more
question to ask you: Sarah, is your
perfect match here?

Sarah's expression goes from sullen to a budding smile.

SARAH (ON TV)
Yes, Blue, I think he is.

She turns to the MAN standing on the side of the altar.

SARAH (ON TV) (CONT'D)
Matt?

MATT (ON TV)
Oh thank God!

Matt rushes and grabs Sarah pulling her into a kiss. They share a PASSIONATE embrace.

In the background, Peter is looking on aghast.

PETER (ON TV)
For <BLEEP> sake!

SHOW SECURITY comes and pulls Peter off screen.

BLUE (ON TV)
Ah, sometimes something old has to
end for something even better to
begin. Sarah and Matt?

Sarah/Matt pull apart while staying close.

BLUE (ON TV) (CONT'D)
We've gotten to see you two grow
closer across this season. And now
it's time, let's make it official.

The couple nuzzles closer into each other.

BLUE (ON TV) (CONT'D)
 Matt, did you vote to leave with Sarah as your perfect match?

MATT (ON TV)
 Of course.

BLUE (ON TV)
 Since you both picked each other as your Perfect Match so together you're walking away with a new partner and the full million dollar prize.

Sarah and Matt both CHEER then resume their embrace as Blue looks on un-phased. He talks to the camera.

BLUE (ON TV) (CONT'D)
 There we have it folks, another season of *The Perfect Match* ends with heartbreak and with love. Do you think you've found your perfect match? Or do you think you could be someone else's? Well we are still searching for next season's couples and singles. To apply go to TPM.com!

With that Mary-Grace clicks off the TV.

MARY-GRACE
 I'm shocked.

KRISTIN
 They won't last.

PEYTON
 You never think they'll last.

KRISTIN
 They won't! She only likes him cause he's hot and he clearly just wants to get famous!

PEYTON
 He could'a left at any time after the first episode then.

KRISTIN
 Not ah, only the winners get the real press.

MARY-GRACE

I read he has already signed some kind of underwear modeling deal.

KRISTIN

Exactly.

(to the moms)

You two are a better match than Sarah and freakin' Matt.

JAQUELINE

Oh, I could do so much with the prize money. MG, what would you buy first?

Mary-Grace holds her son's hand.

MARY-GRACE

Oh, I'm sure I'd find something.

She kisses the back of his hand, then slides off the bed.

MARY-GRACE (CONT'D)

Alright, bedtime for me.

Peyton watches her with a soft, sad smile.

CUT TO:

INT. KRISTIN'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later that night, Kristin is asleep in her bed when her DOORBELL RINGS.

KRISTIN

(sleepy)

Mmmm, go away!

The bell keeps RINGING so Kristin drags herself out of bed.

She creeps towards the door, stopping to grab a KNIFE from the kitchen, then quietly peers through the peep hole. Relief washes over her and she WRENCHES open the front door.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

Are you insane?

PEYTON

What were you going to stab me?

Kristin rolls her eyes as Peyton charges in animated.

KRISTIN
I still might! It's 3:15 in the
morning!

PEYTON
Let's go on the show!

KRISTIN
What?

Peyton starts to pace around Kristin's apartment.

PEYTON
Let's go on the show! Let's go on
the show!

KRISTIN
Repeating that is not clearing
anything up.

Peyton WHIRLS on his heels and grabs Kristin's shoulders.

PEYTON
The Perfect Match.

Kristin searches his face for more of an explanation.

KRISTIN
What about it?

PEYTON
We could win the prize money.

KRISTIN
To do what with it?

Pain, fear, and desperation all streak across Peyton's face.

PEYTON
Pay for my mom's treatment.

KRISTIN
Oh...

Peyton drops his hands from her shoulders.

PEYTON
She's still in debt from last time
she was sick.

KRISTIN
Peyton, we don't even know what
kind of treatment she needs.

PEYTON
But she'll still need something.

KRISTIN
I'm sure my mom and I could help -

PEYTON
Kristin, she's got nothing left.
All her savings, her 401K, it's
gone. She's going to drown in debt
and instead of focusing on getting
better, she'll be worried about
money!

KRISTIN
Peyton, we can't go on the show.

PEYTON
Why not!?

KRISTIN
Because we're not a couple!

PEYTON
So we pretend! We've been friends
longer than most of those people
have dated. Nobody knows me better
than you and nobody knows you better
than me.

KRISTIN
We'll figure something else out.

PEYTON
Do you know a better way to get a
million dollars in eight weeks?

KRISTIN
No, but!

PEYTON
I'd do it for you!

KRISTIN
I'm not asking you to!

PEYTON
Your mom doesn't have cancer!

Just like that the conversation hits a wall.

KRISTIN
Peyton.

She reaches out to take his hand, but he whips it away from her. He holds her gaze for a moment, then storms back out through the door leaving Kristin in the silence of the night.

Kristin softly shuts the door.

CUT TO:

INT. FINE PRINT PR OFFICE - DAY

ON: Closed elevator doors when DING! They slide open and a sleep-deprived Kristin steps into the bustling office.

[NOTE: the Fine Print PR office is corporate, but still chic with minimalist decorations and a sleek open concept work space lined with rows of computers and fashionable workers.

MINH (O.C.)

There you are!

MINH (late 20's, Vietnamese, gay male) slides up beside Kristin as she makes her way towards her desk.

MINH (CONT'D)

You look awful.

KRISTIN

Thanks.

Kristin puts her bag down on her exceptionally neat desk.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

Do you need something?

MINH

Just wanted to say good luck in your review.

Kristin whirls to face him.

KRISTIN

Why are you being nice to me?

MINH

Oh, I decided our little rivalry wasn't worth my time.

Kristin assesses him.

KRISTIN

...why?

MINH
Just rising above it I guess.

As Minh turns to leave, he delivers one bit of snark:

MINH (CONT'D)
Also, you have shit in your teeth.

KRISTIN
I do not.

She watches him go, then frantically rubs her teeth.

She takes a FOLDER from her desk then heads towards her boss's office. It's a corner office and inside Ian (late 50's, silver fox) is hitting golf balls on a faux-green while talking on headphones.

MALLORY sits at a receptionist's desk in front of his office and nearly JUMPS out of her seat when she sees Kristin.

MALLORY
Kristin!
(assesses)
Cid you sleep at all?

KRISTIN
(whispered)
No. Do I have anything in my teeth?

Kristin leans into Mallory's desk and flashes her teeth.

MALLORY
No, but Kristin! You were right.
Look -

She hands Kristin a PAPER with the agenda for a meeting. The first bullet is "Staffing changes/Promotion announcement".

MALLORY (CONT'D)
It's the agenda for the 9:30. Ian sent it to me this morning.

Kristin GASPS.

KRISTIN
Oh my god.

Just then, Ian KNOCKS on the glass and waves Kristin in.

MALLORY
Eppp!

Kristin beams and heads into the office.

INT. IAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ian's office is nearly all windows and decorated in artistic-male style with two black leather club chairs facing an imposing glass desk.

KRISTIN
Good morning, Ian!

Ian gestures to one of the chairs as he takes the other.

IAN
Kristin, yes, have a seat.

As Kristin sits, the leather makes a horrible AIR SQUELCHING SOUND like a fart and Kristin turns BRIGHT RED.

KRISTIN
That wasn't -

IAN
Kristin when I started this company, I had a vision...

He gets up from the chair and stares out the window with his back to Kristin for an uncomfortably long time.

Kristin looks back towards Mallory and sees she is watching intently. Mallory gives her a confused shrug. Just then -

Ian whips around and strides back to the desk. Kristin snaps back to attention.

IAN (CONT'D)
The superstars behind the stars.
That's who we'd be.
(he sits)
Everyone thinks celebrity is this untouchable, magical thing, but I knew.

He leans in towards Kristin like he's unleashing a secret.

IAN (CONT'D)
Fame can be built. Cultivated.
Everyone wants it and if they can't have it, they'll settle for wanting the person who does have it.

He looks at Kristin with an intensity bordering on unstable.

IAN (CONT'D)
That's why I hire superstars: to attract stars.

KRISTIN

Yes, wow.

IAN

I like to think of my employees as a constellation of talent.

KRISTIN

I love that.

IAN

I like to fan my brightest stars and, of course, I keep an eye out for any fading stars.

KRISTIN

Of course.

IAN

So when I saw your yearly review on the calendar, I thought it would be a good time to really take a look at my constellation. I asked myself: how bright is Kristin's star burning this year?

Kristin waits with baited breath.

IAN (CONT'D)

I sensed a great deal of superstar potential when I hired you. You've worked here for several years now and I finally see...

Mr. C CLICKS his tongue and leans back assessing her.

IAN (CONT'D)

You don't have it.

Kristin is frozen.

KRISTIN

What?

IAN

You don't have that spark, that fire, that -
 (he balls his fist)
 - gravity pulling people to you. You're not a superstar, you're more like a black hole. A void.

He slides back into his desk.

KRISTIN
But my clients -

IAN
- Aren't my focus. You have to be the product that the clients want. You have to be the flame that all those sycophantic little moths fly to! We're in PR for god sake and you have no P.R..

He turns his computer screen to her and her social media accounts are all pulled up.

IAN (CONT'D)
You have NO online presence, your accounts are barely alive.

Ian comes to sit in the other club chair beside Kristin.

IAN (CONT'D)
Why should anyone trust you to tell their story when you can't even tell yours?

Kristin pulls a paper from the folder with details about her clients and their earning rates.

KRISTIN
(stammering)
But all of my metrics are positive. My clients have been solid.

IAN
The work can be great and you still don't have the star-power.

KRISTIN
I would have been on social if you'd said that was something we measured.

IAN
Did you know Minh has over five-hundred thousand followers across his platforms? Hit it last night. I didn't have to mention that to him, but he knew to do it. That's the gravity I'm looking for here. That force demanding to be seen.

KRISTIN
I can demand to be seen.

Ian gives her a closed-mouth smile as tears and panic flood Kristin's system.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)
So, I'm, I'm...

IAN
I'm reshaping my constellation without you in it. I'll expect you to stay a few weeks to help ease the transition. Professional courtesy and all. Minh will handle your clients until we find someone to replace him too.

KRISTIN
You're firing Minh too?

IAN
Oh, God no. His star is burning BRIGHTER than ever! I've decided to move him up to manager.

The BREATH gets knocked out of Kristin.

IAN (CONT'D)
Now, I, uh, need a few minutes to prepare before the 9:30. Okay?

He stands and goes to open the door to his office.

IAN (CONT'D)
Okay.

In a daze, Kristin shuffles out of his office.

Mallory stands to pull her into a big hug, but stops.

MALLORY
Congra- wait. What's wrong?

KRISTIN
He fired me.

MALLORY
WHAT?! But, the agenda?

Just then Minh slides past the girls.

MINH
Hey, Kristin?

MALLORY
Not now, Minh.

MINH

This'll be quick. I was just wondering where you think the manager should sit?

Shock registers on Mallory's face.

MINH (CONT'D)

Oh that's right, you wouldn't know. Guess I'll figure it out.

With a smirk, Minh turns and heads into a conference room.

MALLORY

(dumbfounded)

Their meeting last night. It must have been...aw Kristin. I'm sorry.

Kristin deflates as heads into the room after Minh. Mallory follows after her.

MALLORY (CONT'D)

(whispered)

Also, fuck both of them.

INT. FINE PRINT PR, CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Other WORKERS are already gathered around a big conference room table. Kristin takes a seat and Mallory slides into the chair next to her. Mallory takes her hand.

WORKERS

I sent the deck yesterday and she texted me she'd send thoughts tomorrow./No way! I've been wanting to try that place for so long./Yeah, she was like weirdly close to her dog./A fish-fry and two beers. Pretty casual.

Suddenly, Ian struts in commanding attention with two CLAPS.

IAN

(chirps)

Good morning, good morning.

Everyone but Kristin and Mallory respond back in unison:

WORKERS

Good morning, good morning.

IAN

Lots of juicy stuff on the agenda -

PING, Kristin's PHONE chimes and all eyes turn towards her.

IAN (CONT'D)

Kristin, please. Respect the space.

The rebuke snaps her out of her zombie-like state and she grabs her phone from her pocket.

She glances down at the text on her phone. It's from Peyton, "*Just think about it please. This is our chance.*"

IAN (CONT'D)

Let's start with our big news -

Suddenly, Kristin jumps up from her seat.

KRISTIN

Yes!

MALLORY

(horrified)
Shit.

MINH

This'll be good.

Kristin's eyes have an almost frenzied state to them.

KRISTIN

The big news!

MALLORY

Kristin.

Kristin CLEARS HER THROAT.

KRISTIN

I have an announcement.

IAN

Kristin, let's not -

Minh is on the edge of his seat giddy with anticipation.

KRISTIN

I am going on the next season of,
The Perfect Match!

Her coworkers look around confused.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

That's right. I'll be our very own
superstar on the show creating
superstars.

Kristin locks eyes with Ian. He's stunned, but intrigued.

IAN
 Yes, well.
 (clears throat)
 I speak for everyone when I say,
 we'll be watching! With intrigue.

He nods. Kristin nods. And with that, she sits back down.

IAN (CONT'D)
 Now, what's next?

MINH
 I believe there's some other big
 news on the agenda?

Minh points to the promotion bullet on the agenda doc.

IAN
 Actually, that's a misprint. I have
 to confirm a few things first
 before that particular item.

MINH
 What?

IAN
 Realities change, we adapt. Let's
 go to -
 (flutters agenda)
 - ah yes, terms of service updates.
 Very important people!

Minh and Kristin glare at each other. Smoothly, Kristin takes a PEN from the table and CROSSES out the agenda bullet with the big announcement.

LATER:

EXT. KRISTIN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the building exterior.

INT. KRISTIN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

DING. The ELEVATOR DOORS open and Kristin steps into her apartment hallway looking thoroughly exhausted.

She looks ahead and pauses when she sees Peyton sitting on the ground in front of her door. He looks at her expectantly.

KRISTIN
Run out of places to sit in your
apartment?

PEYTON
You know I'm a sucker for
carpeting.

He moves as she unlocks the apartment, then they head inside.

INT. KRISTIN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Kristin drops her purse on the kitchen counter.

KRISTIN
Any updates from your mom?

PEYTON
She's got a biopsy on Monday. We'll
know more after that.

Kristin nods and Peyton pauses to muster up his confidence.

PEYTON (CONT'D)
Look, Krisp, I'm sorry. I know it
wasn't fair of me charge in here. I
just got scared -

Kristin cuts him off.

KRISTIN
- I'll do it.

Peyton's attention SNAPS to her face.

PEYTON
You'll...

KRISTIN
At work today, well, I realized I
needed -

The truth is on her lips, but gets squashed when Peyton pulls her into a bearhug and spins her in the air.

PEYTON
Thank you!

He sets her down, but continues to hug her.

PEYTON (CONT'D)
I can't believe you'd do this for
my mom. For me. Thank you!

He pulls back and looks at her in earnest. She's stunned.

PEYTON (CONT'D)
Sorry, I cut you off.

Hesitation and guilt clouds Kristin's eyes.

KRISTIN
(hesitant)
Oh, I just realized...I needed to
help.

Peyton pulls her into a long hug.

PEYTON
I'm so lucky to have you as my best
friend. Thank you.

KRISTIN
I'd do anything for you two.

CUT TO:

EXT. FINE PRINT PR OFFICE - NIGHT

Establishing shot.

INT. FINE PRINT PR OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The office is entirely empty except for Minh. He sits alone at his desk. The computer casts an unnatural blue glow on his face and makes him look evil.

MINH
Think you can mess with my career?

Reveal: Minh is scrolling through Kristin's social media.

MINH (CONT'D)
I will end yours.

With anger-fueled emphasis, he CLICKS through photo after photo. FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.