

**ZAY**

Written by

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A hybrid of a shooting draft and spec script, written a day and a half before filming. Designed to guide direction and shot composition on set.

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FADE IN:

MUSIC CUE: "Forever" by Julianna Barwick - 0:00 - 0:10  
before fading into 1:23 - 2:33

SLOW MOTION

1. INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

In a warm, dreamy frame, TIA (21), a chef with a gentle presence and South Asian roots turns toward the camera, smiling and laughing.

Our focus shifts to an oven as it ignites. Its mechanical hum cuts into the dreamy atmosphere. The orange glow of the oven mirrors the warmth of the room.

We focus on her bright smile as she prepares homemade pasta. Her smile widens into a laugh which fills the air. Her joy is suspended in time, slowed down, as the world around her feels distant, as if in a dream.

Beside her, we cut to ZAY (Isaiah) (21), a baker with braided hair and African roots, swiftly kneading dough in frustration. Tia gently covers his hand, offering comfort.

Our focus shifts back to Tia as she slowly moves her head to face the camera as she smiles, with a warm, loving gaze of devotion. The frame is slightly out of focus.

This shot of Tia will remain continuous with quick cuts between it, we see Zay struggling to quickly prepare dough, as he relentlessly tries again and again. He is a perfectionist.

We vividly focus on her smile once more.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

We now see Zay in his kitchen, a noticeably dimly lit setting. The cold blue of moonlight from the window to his right illuminates him.

He is stood alone, as he is kneading dough, struggling to perfect it.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK/DREAM)

Tia quickly appears beside him for a short second.

The room is now filled with a dreamy quality and a warmth, no longer dimly lit. The curtains are now pulled down, diffusing the blue moonlight which enters the room.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

After only a second, she vanishes, as we return back to the dimly lit, desolate version of the kitchen. Zay remains stood alone, struggling at his craft.

INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The couple laughs together as we cut to the inside of the oven, as the bread is now burnt. (oven light on, oven turned off)

INT. ZAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

We quickly cut to a closeup of old cereal episode of Looney Tunes emitting from a television screen.

INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Our focus shifts to Zay's eyes as we see the orange light of the oven reflecting in them.

Tia once again smiles directly into the lens. The image sharpens into focus like a painful memory clawing its way back.

ZAY (V.O.)  
(softly)  
I'm so happy right now.

Tia's smile widens before her laugh echoes. We're pulled adrift, down the drain of a memory, as if a dream is coming to an end.

END MUSIC CUE

2. INT. ZAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

We cut into a living room left in a complete mess. Delivery boxes, cigarette butts, unwashed glasses, and plates are scattered around - many clearly used as ashtrays.

Asleep on the couch, we see Zay.

The TV is still on from the night before, or seemingly earlier in the day as cold blue moonlight enters the room from the window. The LED lighting inside the room casts a cold, isolating glow.

On the TV, we see a manic, classic episode of Looney Tunes as phrases like "What's up doc?" and "Wile E Coyote" are heard emitting from the screen.

The shots grow less stable, handheld now, as we follow Zay through the night. (Good Time style)

Alongside the TV's swirl of SOUNDS, Zay's phone can be heard ringing, waking him up.

Zay searches for his phone before finding it, seeing it's a call from a friend and colleague, BORIS (21). He quickly answers before the call goes to voicemail.

BORIS (O.O.V)

Yo Zay? Yo?

ZAY

(into phone, croaky)  
What's up?

BORIS (O.O.V)

Where the fuck have you been bro?

ZAY

(croaky)  
What do you mean?

BORIS (O.O.V)

(annoyed)

What do I mean? Bro, we had those rich fucking socialites come in for lunch and you weren't there.

ZAY

(realisation)  
Oh fuck yeah.

BORIS

We had them booked for two weeks.. this was important shit bro, you knew how big of an event this was. Marcus was fucking furious. He had Billy fill in for you bro, do you really wanna get replaced by fucking Billy?

As Boris says this, Zay becomes enthralled in what's on the TV for a second as he starts lighting a cigarette, smoking it.

INT. TIA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK/DREAM)

In less than a second, we see Tia's smile, as her warm gaze is locked into the lens. It strikes Zay like a vicious punch to the heart.

The SOUND within this memory remains consistent with Zay's living room as the noise from the television continues in the background.

INT. ZAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Zay's eyes remain fixated on the screen, lost in a state of reverie.

BORIS (O.O.V) (CONT'D)

Zay?

Zay's breaks from his trance.

ZAY

(snaps out of it)

Yeah. Yeah look my bad bro, I fucked up.

Zay extends his hand, emphasising inner frustration.

BORIS (O.O.V)

(exhales)

Look, bro. I know that it's none of my fucking business alright...but you've gotta sort that shit between you and Tia. You're letting it ruin everything.

ZAY

(exhales)

Yeah I know man.

Zay rubs his hand on his forehead.

BORIS (O.O.V)

And look I get it, seeing your ex in a kitchen ten hours a day must fucking suck. But you can't let this shit make you lose the thing you've got going for you bro.

BORIS (O.O.V) (cont'd)

And how am I gonna keep selling you this weed if you lose your fucking job?

Zay laughs to himself, almost choking on smoke.

BORIS (O.O.V) (cont'd)  
And fuck man, more importantly you're  
leaving me to deal with Marcus, you  
know how much of an asshole he is.

ZAY  
Yeah look...I'm sorry man...I fucked  
up. I'll talk to Marcus tomorrow when  
I'm back and I'll try to make it up.

BORIS (O.O.V)  
Good luck with that shit because he  
was fucking angry.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Zay stands up, continuing the call as he makes his way into  
his kitchen, smoking and slump walking. He feels frustrated  
for sleeping the day away.

Similar to before, we see his kitchen is a desolate, dimly  
lit setting. The cold blue of moonlight from the window to  
his right once again illuminates him.

The kitchen will have music within the hip-hop/rnb genre  
playing on a speaker that he left on.

MUSIC CUE (BG) - "Young Lady" by Kid Cudi, Father John Misty

BORIS (O.O.V)  
Look, I love you bro, and I'm only  
saying this shit because I care. I  
want you to take care of yourself but  
you've gotta get your shit together.  
You can't just stop working.

As Zay begins talking, he starts preheating the oven. He  
glances inside and notices the burnt remnants of bread from  
his last attempt. Opening the oven, he pulls out the tray  
and sets it on the counter.

ZAY  
I know, I know but I'm still doing  
work. I've been testing that vitamin  
C thing to get a better rise in the  
same amount of time. I've also  
switched back to the convection oven.

Zay pauses as he inhales his cigarette, taking a moment  
before exhaling.

(MORE)

ZAY (cont'd)

Marcus wanted it to be slightly more aesthetically pleasing, so that's what I'm tryna to do for him.

Zay pours water into the kettle, the cigarette dangling from his mouth as his phone is pressed to his ear. Once the kettle is filled, he flips the switch to turn it on.

BORIS (O.O.V)

Yeah but a glass half full isn't enough bro. You've gotta be showing up to work as well, even when Tia is there.

ZAY

(sighs)

Yeah I know, I'll be there tomorrow, I promise.

BORIS (O.O.V)

Good, and you can bring your own vitamin C pills, I'm not running out for that shit again.

Zay glances to the side at a stack of vitamin C tablets, most of them already empty. He begins preparing the dough, then lifts his phone to his ear, holding it between his shoulder and cheek.

ZAY

Noted.

Zay takes a slow drag from his cigarette, exhaling the smoke in a steady stream.

ZAY (cont'd)

What you doing tonight?

BORIS (O.O.V)

I'm just watching TV bro. Gaby's gone out with her friends. So fuck all to be honest with you. (laughs slightly)

ZAY

Yeah that's fair.

As Zay speaks, he begins rolling out the dough, continuing his preparation.

BORIS (O.O.V)

(breathes) So...you still got that date tonight?

BORIS (O.O.V)

(laughs)

You're some crazy motherfucker you know that? (laughs again) You should get your shit together before you even think about getting back out there. One of Tia's old friends too? That's some crazy shit man...(hysteric)

Zay freezes in a moment of immediate shock. He's just realised he not only missed work and slept the day away - he also completely forgot about a date he planned for the evening.

As Boris continues talking, his voice begins to fade beneath the rising whistle of the kettle and the background music. Zay looks down to the presence of the dough and scattered flour on the counter. Zay's focus drifts, overwhelmed.

Zay turns, his eyes settling on a photo resting on the windowsill. In it, Tia stands beside him, both dressed in chef's uniforms, her head rests gently on his shoulder as they embrace.

He stares at it, slipping into a quiet trance, as if seeking approval, or offering a silent prayer - a flicker of pain passing through his expression.

Boris will still be talking in the background, with his words draining out as Zay is in a trance.

BORIS

(laughs)

Yo. Yo bro, you still there? Yo Zay?

Overwhelmed by everything around him, Zay finally tears his gaze from the photo. He places the cigarette between his lips, takes a drag, then sets his phone down.

Grabbing the baking tray, he opens the oven, slaps the dough onto it, and shoves it inside. The urgency sets in - he begins scrambling to get ready for his date.

END MUSIC CUE (BG)

MUSIC CUE: "The Acid Hits" by Oneohtrix Point Never -  
1:48 - 3:03



## 3. INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A series of quick shots will show Zay working on his craft, preparing some bread in the oven. The pacing will now change, being far quicker and more rapid. He is in a rush.

This sequence will focus on the process of him preparing the food and him reading a text from his date, MARIA (21), a kind presence of Eastern European descent.

TEXT MESSAGE (FROM MARIA)

"Hey, would you be able to send your address?  
I'm gonna head over in 5 mins :)"

Zay continues to smoke, each drag helping him calm his nerves as he rushes through the motions.

Zay pulls out a packet of pasta, setting it aside for later.

He opens the cupboard, searching for the necessary tomato pasta sauce.

A shot from inside the cupboard reveals him rifling through the shelves, only to realise - he's out of tomato sauce.

ZAY

(frustrated, rushing)

Fuck.

Realising he needs tomato sauce, Zay quickly puts on his jacket and heads for the door. He glances at the oven, hesitating. A split-second decision: he knows the risk of leaving it on, but also knows the food won't be ready for Maria if he turns it off. He chooses to leave the bread in the oven and rushes out.

A quick couple of shots will show him slamming his door and turning the lock as he leaves.

## EXT. MAIN ROAD - NIGHT

Zay will now be seen running along a main road in a singular, handheld tracking shot from behind.  
(very Good Time style)

The street takes on a cold blue hue, the street lamps casting a blue glow, their chill mirroring the autumnal atmosphere.

INT. SHOP - BUDGENS - NIGHT

From inside the shop, the camera quickly (post?) zooms in on Zay outside the shop window. He's scanning the shelves in a hurry, his urgency palpable.

The shop's interior is bathed in warmer lighting, a comforting haven from the cold outdoors.

INT. SHOP SHELF - BUDGENS - NIGHT

Zay quickly scans the shelves, grabs the tomato sauce, and heads for the till.

EXT. ZAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As before, a shot shows Zay turning the key, unlocking the door, and stepping back into his house.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN

Zay runs in, places the sauce aside, and looks at the oven...his face drops as he realises the bread has burned.

ZAY  
(exhales in realisation)  
Oh fuck!

Zay hurriedly opens the oven, smoke billowing out and triggering the fire alarm. He pulls the tray with the burnt bread to the side just as he hears a voice behind him.

TIA  
No not that temperature. (laughs)

As the MUSIC CUE reaches a blissful euphoria at 3:03, in spite of the piercing fire alarm, the music fades out.

END MUSIC CUE

Zay spins around quickly, the motion cutting to a flashback that offers a brief glimpse into his past.

The fire alarm's blare distorts, warping seamlessly into a similar SOUND from a different moment in time.

4. INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Zay and Tia cook side by side, preparing a meal for a friend's birthday party as we hear others in the next room.

Zay, with his baking expertise, and Tia, skilled in cooking with a touch of baking, have teamed up to prepare the celebratory meal.

MUSIC CUE (BG) - (distant, faint) "Hotel California" by The Eagles

The kitchen is dressed with birthday decorations: balloons, banners, and a soft, celebratory glow. There's a warmth in the air, a stark contrast to the coldness of Zay's home.

In spite of the warm setting, the SOUND of a fire alarm continues.

TIA  
(still laughing)  
Zay, what is this technique?

Tia grabs a kitchen stool, to switch off the fire alarm as Zay struggles to scrape out burnt dough from the oven, smoke curling up around him.

TIA (cont'd)  
You're supposed to preheat at 230 and  
bake at 200. (laughs)

Zay sets the tray down. The bread is blackened - burnt to ash.

ZAY  
Fuck. (laughs)

The two look at each other, laughing together.

TIA  
I know you're hungry, but you've  
gotta be a little patient.

Tia, leaning on the counter-top, turns and shifts her focus back to the pasta.

ZAY  
Being patient wouldn't get me what I  
want straight away.  
(smiling  
flirtatiously)

Tia smirks, holding in laughter as she grabs the burnt bread with a towel.

TIA  
(laughing) This, (laughs) this is  
what you wanted?

The couple laughs together, before a brief pause. They stare into one another's eyes.

ZAY  
(calmly)  
I've already got what I wanted.

We cut to Tia's face as she stares directly into the camera, her gaze locked onto Zay. We are immersed in his memory - her look is filled with romance, her smile near hypnotic, a perfect moment of bliss.

TIA  
(smiles)  
Yeah, and what's that?

We hold on Tia's smile for several seconds, her expression radiating warmth, before the wailing fire alarm disrupts the moment, jolting both us, and Zay, out of this blissful escape from the cold present.

END MUSIC CUE (BG)

#### 5. INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE (BG) - "Scale It Back" by DJ Shadow, Little Dragon  
- 2:25 onward (louder on speaker)

Zay, snapping back into reality, looks behind him, down at the ground. For a brief moment, he's lost in thought, the smoke swirling around him and the fire alarm ringing. His eyes flick to the same picture of Tia on the windowsill.

In a swift motion, he pushes it down, face-first. He then hurries into the hallway to turn off the alarm on the smoke detector.

In a quick succession of shots, we see Zay preheat the oven from scratch, setting it to 230°C. Next, he prepares the dough, working quickly with focused precision. Once the dough is ready, he places it in the oven, adjusting the temperature down from 230°C to 200°C.

After doing this he lights another cigarette as he grabs his phone to check where Maria is. Zay checks an unopened message from Maria, sent 5 minutes earlier.

TEXT MESSAGE (FROM MARIA)  
"Hey, I just got off the train and am walking over now,  
I'll be 5 mins"

Panicking, Zay realises she'll be there any moment. He quickly scans his surroundings, checking to make sure the room isn't a complete mess.

In a flurry of movement, Zay grabs a black sack and runs into his living room.

INT. ZAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

He quickly throws delivery boxes and scraps of pages from cook books - used to wipe off ash from his cigarettes into the bin. A series of rapid shots show him picking up litter from around the house, tossing it into the bag.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Whilst holding the black sack, now full of litter, he leans down, glaring nervously at the bread in the oven. We see this from within the oven (oven light turned on, oven off, bread half-baked).

Zay places the bin bag down before quickly making his way into the bathroom, just off the kitchen.

INT. ZAY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

In the mirror, he washes his face, his reflection momentarily paused as he takes a deep breath.

The bathroom lighting mirrors the dim, oppressive atmosphere of the rest of Zay's home. A grimy, faintly greenish hue hits his face, casting uneven shadows that leave parts of him obscured in darkness.

(The Bear (101) - Mirror Reference Shot/Lighting)

As Zay walks back into the kitchen, his gaze lingers on a picture of Tia pinned to the fridge. She is seen in Paris, smiling opposite the Eiffel Tower. For a brief moment, it feels like they're sharing eye contact. He quickly covers it with a piece of paper, then moves a magnet in front of it.

A knock at the door startles him. He looks down at the bin bag, realising he can't take it out with Maria waiting outside.

He lets out a quick, frustrated sigh, as he hurries.

## INT. ZAY'S STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Zay rushes upstairs, quickly stashing the bin bag out of sight. The camera stays low at the bottom of the staircase, focusing on Zay's hurried ascent as he rounds the corner, out of view.

We cut to the upstairs, where the lighting is dim. The only light comes faintly from Zay's bedroom and from downstairs, casting long shadows across the hallway. Zay is silhouetted by this lighting.

As he hurries back downstairs, another knock SOUNDS from the door, making him flinch.

## INT. ZAY'S PORCH - NIGHT

As Zay runs downstairs, he's acutely aware of the sweat on his brow, his disheveled appearance, and the clothes he's been wearing since yesterday. He's a mess, physically and mentally unprepared. His nerves are evident, and he's unsure if he's in the right headspace for this, but a small part of him convinces himself that this might be a step forward in moving on.

He takes a deep breath, composing himself as much as he can in the short time he has, aware that she's already knocked twice. Zay opens the door, coming face to face with Maria, who greets him with a warm smile.

MARIA

(smiling)

Hi, how are you?

ZAY

Hey, I'm good, thanks.

(pauses awkwardly)

ZAY (cont'd)

How are you?

As Maria steps inside, the two share an awkward hug, the discomfort mainly coming from Zay's nervousness.

MARIA

(smiles)

I'm good, thank you.

She pulls back slightly and reveals a bottle of wine she brought along for their date.

END MUSIC CUE (BG)

## 6. INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

We cut to the two sitting in the kitchen together. The mood shifts instantly. The kitchen, once cold and unwelcoming, now feels warmer and more inviting. However, beneath this change, there remains an undercurrent of coldness and bitterness, as if Zay is trying, but failing, to create a comforting atmosphere.

The background music fades into a quieter, more subdued tone, aligning more with Maria's taste. Its calming nature contrasts with the tension in the room, heightening the awkwardness of the moment.

MUSIC CUE (BG) - (very faintly) "gold" by EDEN

The softer music creates an almost uncomfortable silence, drawing attention to the subtle unease between Zay and Maria as they sit together, the atmosphere charged with unspoken words.

Zay stands from his seat, using the excuse of checking the bread in the oven to break the silence and ease the tension. He glances at the oven, his hands fidgeting as he opens it, trying to give himself something to focus on.

Meanwhile, Maria, sitting at the table, pours two glasses of wine, her actions mirroring Zay's - both of them subconsciously attempting to fill the awkward void. She smiles lightly as she pours, the act of preparing the wine just another effort to distract from the discomfort.

Zay, distracted, abruptly changes the song on his phone to something more in line with his own taste. He turns the volume up slightly, hoping to ease the tension in the air.

END MUSIC CUE (BG)

MUSIC CUE (BG) - "Kody Blu 31" by JID

MARIA  
(smiling)  
So, how was your day.

Maria takes a sip from her wine glass.

MARIA (cont'd)  
Did you have any fancy customers come in?

Zay, distracted, checks the bread in the oven before glancing at the pasta and tomato sauce, still sitting uncooked on the side. As he glances at it, quick flashes cut back to the same evening he drifted into earlier.

INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We return to Zay in the past, laughing as he focuses on preparing the bread. Beside him, Tia stands at the stove, her attention fixed on the pasta.

A shot lingers on Zay handing her the tomato sauce. She looks up at him, smiling, warm and reassuring as soft lens flares and glimmers of light drift through the edge of the frame.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

MARIA

Zay?

We cut back to a low angle shot of Zay, the tomato sauce in hand. He snaps out of it - realising Maria had asked him a question, and that this time, he's cooking the pasta alone. He flickers with hesitation, before quickly turning around.

ZAY

(lying) Sorry. Uh yeah, we actually had this rich crowd come in today.  
(breathes as he nods) It was pretty hectic.

MARIA

Ooooh, were any of them famous?

Zay hesitates for barely a moment before following through with his own lie. As he speaks, he grabs a chair from beside the table, pulling it out just enough to sit near Maria - but not directly next to her. His placement is deliberate: a mix of quiet discomfort and a clear view of the bread still baking in the oven.

ZAY

Um, just a politician I think.  
(pauses) I think the rest were just family and friends.

MARIA

I'd ask his name but I'm not very political. (laughs)

Zay doesn't laugh, but a small slightly delayed smile forms, catching the moment just before it slips away.

ZAY

Yeah me neither. (forces laugh)



Awkwardness remains hanging between them, thick and unspoken.

Zay reaches a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket as he instinctively goes to smoke but he stops himself, realising he has company and it would be impolite.

He glances down at the cigarette packet before quickly deciding to put it back in his pocket.

Zay looks up at Maria, a smile forming on his lips as he meets her gaze. She smiles back, their eyes briefly locking. But as no more than a second stretches on, Zay finds himself struggling to maintain eye contact, it feels wrong. His gaze continues to flicker away and then back again.

Maria is more keen than he is in this moment. Not too keen, but she is far more engaged and in the moment. She is completely present and isn't detached, unlike Zay.

ZAY (cont'd)

What about you, how was your day?  
How was work?

Zay finds a spark of interest from within.

MARIA

(smiles)

My day was good, thank you. (nods and pauses) I mean I can't say work was fun, but I guess, it never really is. (laughs slightly)

ZAY

(nodding along) But you're passionate about it, right? It's what what you wanna do? You wanna teach people?

Maria is somewhat surprised by Zay's question and his sudden spark in interest.

MARIA

I suppose, I have a lot of respect for teachers. A teacher has the power to shape someone's way of thinking. They help young people navigate the foundation of their calling which determines the rest of their lives. For that alone, I have a deep respect them.

Zay is nodding as she says this, more engaged than he has been in regard to anything she's said so far.

Zay is passionate about his craft and hearing someone else talk about their passion fascinates him.

MARIA (cont'd)  
But...(pauses), I don't know, I don't think it's something I could do forever, I'm just not sure if I enjoy it all that much.

Maria smiles, hoping deep down Zay understands her point of view on this topic.

Zay's spark of interest fades as soon as he hears her words. He nods slowly, his posture softening. His gaze drifts away from her, his earlier enthusiasm now quelled.

The music changes as Zay's spark of interest diminishes.

END MUSIC CUE (BG)

MUSIC CUE (BG) - "REVOFEV" by Kid Cudi

ZAY  
(quietly, nodding)  
Yeah...I get that.

Zay looks over at the oven to check on the bread, his focus shifting away from Maria. As he turns back, his attention seems noticeably less engaged, and Maria picks up on it, sensing a subtle shift. She feels a slight discomfort, as though her words or presence have caused something in him to pull back.

ZAY (cont'd)  
But uhh. (distracted) That's good though. It's good you're willing to step away if it's not for you. A lot of people wouldn't take that risk.

Maria smiles, now feeling better about herself and the direction of the conversation.

MARIA  
Exactly. I'm not entirely sure what I want to go into...but not knowing what my future holds is almost quite exciting.  
(smiles and faintly laughs)

As she says this, Zay nods, zoning out slightly whilst smiling, trying to make himself appear as less detached from the conversation.

As Zay makes eye contact with Maria, who is smiling softly, the scene transitions into a close-up shot of her face, her smile directed at the camera.

INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The moment lingers for a beat before it cuts into the same shot we saw earlier of Tia, smiling warmly while looking directly at Zay, her gaze now taking on a more critical edge. The warmth of her smile now feels laced with an unspoken judgment, adding an uncomfortable weight to Zay's present actions.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Zay's smile fades into shock as he processes his inner turmoil. Maria's words blur and fade as flashes of Tia appear. Her smile, her disapproving gaze overlapping with the present moment. Zay is lost in the past, struggling to stay grounded.

MARIA

(forward) But don't get me wrong, I really respect and admire people who know exactly what they want to do. I think what you do and how dedicated you are is amazing. (smiles)

INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

As Maria speaks, we see flashes of Zay and Tia cooking together in the party setting. Laughter fills the air as their friends pass by in the background, but the focus is on Tia.

Her passion for cooking is evident as she stirs the tomato sauce, her movements fluid and full of intent. The warmth of the scene contrasts sharply with the tension in Zay's present.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN

We cut back to Zay's face in the present. His gaze shifts away from Maria, and he looks over his shoulder. His eyes linger on the tomato sauce on the side, the camera focusing, (post) zooming in on it

We cut back to Zay's face as the realisation hits him - he has to prepare the pasta and sauce alone.

He stands up abruptly, causing Maria to look at him, somewhat confused by his sudden detachment. Her words of affection trail off as she notices his shift in attention. Zay glances at her before speaking.

ZAY  
(catching a breath)  
Sorry, I've gotta start preparing the  
pasta and sauce.  
(emulating a smile)

MARIA  
Oh yeah, of course, go for it.  
(smiles)

Zay smiles and nods his head, before turning around and walking over to prepare the sauce. He leans over the wooden board, pausing for a second to breathe, feeling overwhelmed by everything happening around him.

Maria watches him, sensing something is off. She notices his detachment, but she hesitates, unsure if asking what's wrong would be overstepping. Instead, she searches for a fresh, less personal topic to ease the tension.

Meanwhile, Zay uses this moment to recalibrate, but the weight of it all hangs heavy on him. He quickly glances over at the picture of Tia on the windowsill that he had faced down earlier, half-expecting her face to be looking back at him.

As Zay leans over the counter, the SOUND of the oven intensifies, growing louder and almost deafening. His breathing becomes heavier, as if the noise is suffocating him. He looks down at the tomato sauce, his hand shaking slightly as he grabs the bottle. With a deep, shaky breath, he opens it.

At that moment, Maria starts talking, her words beginning to drift into the background, becoming barely audible, alongside the music. All SOUNDS muffled, as Zay's attention is pulled away, unable to focus on anything but the mounting pressure.

MARIA (cont'd)  
(remembers) Oh my god, I've been  
meaning to ask you, have you seen The  
Bear? It's so good! You'd honestly  
love it.

MARIA (cont'd)  
And you've seen Shameless, right?  
Lip's actor plays the main guy in The  
Bear, and he's actually incredible.

As the SOUND of the oven rattling intensifies, growing louder and building into a rhythm (Oppenheimer Teaser Trailer Reference), we see Zay frantically moving around the kitchen, his hands darting between different tasks. (low shutter-speed?)

He panics as he tries to juggle preparing the pasta and sauce, while keeping an eye on the bread. His movements become erratic, and the noise of the oven drowns out everything else, creating a sense of escalating pressure and chaos.

#### 7. INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The scene jumps forward in quick, disorienting cuts, showing Zay desperately working to perfect each dish, all while attempting - and failing to engage in conversation with Maria.

Zay places the food on the table, drenched in sweat, his hands trembling from the stress.

END MUSIC CUE (BG)

MUSIC CUE (BG) - "Liar, Liar" by The Castaways

The background music on the speakers and all other present SOUND begins to have a warped presence amid the rhythmic crashes of the oven.

We cut to her talking, still polite and trying to keep the conversation going. But her smile now feels more forced, the effort of carrying the exchange beginning to show.

Zay places their plates on the table and takes a seat opposite Maria. As she speaks, her words are drowned out by the rattling of the oven. We linger on Zay's face, his eyes fixed on her, but distant. In the reflection of his eyes, we glimpse Tia's smiling face staring back at him. (shoot this scene after acquiring shots of Tia)

Quick cuts flicker between Tia and Maria sitting opposite Zay. Tia, in her flashback outfit, silently smiles as she eats her pasta with graceful ease, her presence hauntingly calm. Her dining etiquette is noticeably slightly more refined than Maria's.

Zay's leg shakes anxiously beneath the table. His hand slides into his pocket, fingers trembling as they reach for his cigarettes.

The oven's rattling grows louder, warping his senses. Zay glances over - his face tense, searching.

But the oven is empty. No bread. No reason for the SOUND. Just the hum of something imagined, loud and inescapable, echoing inside his head.

INT. ZAY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

ZAY smokes out the window, his face tense, eyes distant.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maria sits alone at the table. Confused, bored and disappointed.

She glances toward the bathroom door, waiting.

INT. ZAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Zay and Maria sit side by side on the couch, watching TV with a noticeable distance between them.

Maria is starting to feel ready to leave. She really wanted to try to make a full effort but she feels he has not reciprocated in this.

Though still uneasy, Zay feels slightly calmer beside her, relieved not to be sitting across the kitchen table, no longer burdened by the pressure of constant conversation.

The oven's rattling builds. Maria glances at Zay, searching for a final trace of effort. But his eyes stay fixed on the screen - a Ratatouille cooking montage playing.

The banging from the oven intensifies, matching the SOUND of the door slamming shut.

INT. ZAY'S PORCH - NIGHT

We cut to Zay seeing Maria out, her departure final.

8. INT. ZAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Zay sits in front of the TV, still watching Ratatouille, a lit cigarette in his hand. As we cut to this, the song 'Surf' by Mac Miller starts playing softly on the kitchen speaker.

MUSIC CUE (BG) - "Surf" by Mac Miller

Zay stares blankly at the TV, lost in thought, reflecting on the night and his emotional state. The screen cuts to Alfredo and Colette kissing, falling in love. This triggers Zay to stand up and walk into the kitchen.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Zay grabs some bread and jam, quickly making himself a sandwich, which he starts to eat. He then picks up the two plates from earlier to wash them.

As Zay starts washing the dishes, we cut to a flashback of him and Tia cleaning dishes together.

The music begins to fade, as we enter a blissful memory.

END MUSIC CUE

MUSIC CUE - "Forever" by Julianna Barwick - 4:39 - 5:29

INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The couple laugh as they playfully splash water at each other, enjoying the moment.

INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Zay and Tia are now sat at a dinner table, surrounded by friends. As they engage in conversation with the group, their eyes meet across the table. They share a long, meaningful gaze, smiling at each other lovingly.

This room is a warm, candle-lit space with a subtle '70s aesthetic. Vinyl records hang on the walls, and the table area tucks inward near a window, creating an intimate corner in the room where everyone is seated.

("Last Christmas" by Wham! - Music Video Reference Shots - 2:20 - 2:30)

The music begins to slowly fade, enhancing the stillness of the moment.

END MUSIC CUE

## INT. TIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Tia is curled up in bed, eyes heavy. Zay sits on the floor beside her, back against the wall, fighting the urge to climb in beside her. He looks up at her with a soft, gentle expression as the quiet moment lingers.

A warm, cosy space. The only light comes from a small bedside lamp on the cabinet, casting a soft amber glow over her cream-coloured, French-style bed.

## INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE (BG) - "Surf" by Mac Miller - continuing from 0:57 - 1:16

We cut back to the present. Zay holds the sandwich in one hand, his other hand reaching up to remove the piece of paper that had been covering the picture of Tia on his fridge.

He gazes at the photo of Tia in Paris, a connection forming in his mind to his viewing of Ratatouille. As he stares, his eyes are heavy, filled with weakness and pain, the weight of his newfound reality - one he doesn't want to accept, sinking in.

The music gradually fades out, and we're swept into a comforting memory within Zay's mind, a moment that shields him from the pain of his present reality.

## INT. ZAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We continue to hear the warped, fading SOUNDS of Zay's present in the midst of this moment.

We quickly cut to Zay and Tia watching TV together in his living room, her head resting on his shoulder, a quiet moment of comfort and closeness.

Zay's living room is noticeably warmer now, still containing LED lighting, however warmer as a sunset lamp lights up the room, softening the atmosphere.

The music and background noise of Zay's present completely fades as we enter a poignant memory.

## 9. INT. TIA'S BEDROOM (FLASHBACK)

Sitting on the floor as Tia falls asleep, Zay breaks the silence.



ZAY  
I'm so happy right now.

Tia opens her eyes, as she begins to smile.

ZAY (cont'd)  
I don't think I've been this happy in  
a long time.

The couple's eyes meet, as they smile at each other.

INT. TIA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We cut to the two watching TV together once again, as Tia looks up at him and smiles.

We hear nothing but absolute silence, not even the TV.

INT. TIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

In the background, we very faintly hear a speaker playing music.

MUSIC CUE (BG) - (very faintly) "D 4 N" by Laura Groves,  
Sampha - 0:00 - 0:36 before fading into 4:23 - 5:25

We cut to Zay gently tucking Tia in, her eyelids fluttering as she drifts closer to sleep. He leans down, pressing a soft kiss to her forehead.

Standing at the doorway, he lingers for a moment, watching her as she drifts asleep before beginning to quietly slip out.

TIA  
(half asleep)  
Zay?

Zay turns around, not realising she was still awake.

TIA (cont'd)  
Aren't you coming to bed?

ZAY  
I'm sorry babe, I've got work to do.  
I have to prep for tomorrow.

Tia exhales out of tiredness. After a moment she says something sweet.

TIA  
Just don't be up too late, I know how  
you get with your work.

Zay smiles before having a thought. He isn't completely sure if it's the best time to say this but he loves her, and decides to say it anyway.

ZAY  
I'm just worried that all this work  
is gonna eat me up. I don't want it  
to mess with things between us.

Tia, almost effortlessly as she is dozing off, says one final line.

TIA  
We'll figure that out. I'm not  
worried about us.

10. INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE (BG) - "Surf" by Mac Miller - continues from 1:36 onwards.

Zay stands still, his eyes fixated on the photo of Tia on the fridge. His body is tense, but his face portrays a deep emotional unraveling.

He stares, his expression distant and broken. His breath comes in shallow gasps. Every second feels heavier as he remains rooted to the spot, consumed by the weight of his memories.

END MUSIC CUE (BG)

INT. ZAY AND TIA'S FRIEND'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

All SOUND fades to nothing.

Tia gazes at Zay, her eyes soft and full of emotion. They lean in, their lips meeting in a kiss.

The world around them disappears, leaving only the silence and the intensity of the moment.

TIA (V.O.)  
I love you.

INT. ZAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE (BG) - "Surf" by Mac Miller - continues from 1:43 onward.

Zay stands frozen, holding the sandwich in his hand. The weight of the memories, especially the kiss with Tia, hits him all at once.

Tears begin to fall. He gasps for breath, hyperventilating, as the release of all his pent-up pain overwhelms him. His body shakes as he lowers himself to the floor, curling up into a ball as he drops the sandwich beside him. He uncontrollably cries out.

The camera pulls back slowly, revealing Zay in his most vulnerable state, broken by the loss of what he believed to be the perfect woman. He is alone. Empty.

"Surf" by Mac Miller starts to play softly, gradually rising in volume as it transitions from background music to underscore our final moments with Zay as he is heartbroken.

MUSIC CUE - "Surf" by Mac Miller - 1:55 onward

As the heavy synth kicks in at the 2:01 mark, the screen cuts to black, as the music continues through the credits.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END