

FADE IN:

EXT. COURTYARD OF COLLEGE BUILDING - LATE AFTERNOON - OVERCAST

A dreary day. Gray clouds loom overhead. LISA (19), clutches her instrument case to her chest like a shield as she slumps down on a bench. Her posture is hunched, defeated.

Lisa sits in her defeat, grabs a bag full of papers and prepares to walk away. Before she can, Lisa hears a voice in the distance...

MIA (O.S.)

Lisa, hey!

Lisa turns around to find MIA (19), radiating warmth despite the gloomy weather, walking towards her. In her hands Mia holds papers and an instrument as well.

MIA (CONT'D)

(out of breath)

Sorry, I went a little over time!
Honestly, I didn't do my best in
there. Definitely middle of the
road. The panel seemed bored. Don't
blame 'em. It could go either way.

Lisa stands up to be eye-level with Mia, but her eyes seem distant. She could be listening to Mia, or she could be zoning out entirely.

MIA (CONT'D)

Hey, well, that's enough about me.
How'd your audition go?

Like a sleeper agent, Lisa suddenly stops, posture straight, head up. Lisa's expression crumbles. Lisa makes eye contact with Mia for the first time.

LISA

(voice quavering)

Oh, Mia. It was a disaster.

Mia produces a small chuckle.

MIA

A disaster? Really?

Lisa grabs Mia by the shoulders and pulls her closer. Her frown is giant, but her eyes are wide. WE SEE Lisa straight on, and a black curtain is now behind her, much like one in an audition.

LISA
A complete. Raging. Disaster. And
this is how it started.

A disembodied hand passes Lisa her instrument and she starts walking towards a place off-screen.

FLASH TO:

INT. AUDITION ROOM - EARLIER

FROM LISA'S POV: A panel of FIVE BOARD MEMBERS (early 20s) sits behind a long table. The room feels massive, oppressive. Lisa's hands shake as she positions her instrument.

LISA (V.O.)
It started normal enough...

The MIDDLE BOARD MEMBER rises. Her voice booms.

MIDDLE BOARD MEMBER
If needed, a 30 second warm-up period can be granted during which you may play any scale that you would like. Is this allotted time necessary for you?

LISA
Yes, it'll be necessary. Thanks!

Sitting in front of the board of 5, Lisa locks her lips with her head joint. She blows into her instrument and starts a chromatic scale on a A natural.

We see Lisa start to struggle using her keys that won't open or close properly. She looks up at an increasingly impatient panel.

MIA (V.O.)
Dang, sticky keys?!

LISA (V.O.)
Yep, embarrassing!

On the fly, Lisa decides to use her fingers to keep up and push down the uncooperative keys for each note, and completes her chromatic scale.

MIA (V.O.)
Glad you got that figured out. That doesn't make a disaster-

LISA (V.O.)
Oh, just you wait.

As Lisa smiles to herself, we see the middle board member pull out a timer.

MIDDLE BOARD MEMBER
You noticeably went over time, but let us move on. You will have 3 minutes to play the assigned piece, or the piece of your choice.

The CAMERA closes in on the face of the Middle Board Member.

MIDDLE BOARD MEMBER (CONT'D)
Your time starts now.

Lisa is visibly fumbling with her papers, flustered.

LISA
So sorry, could I restart my time?
I can't get these papers to stay up-

MIDDLE BOARD MEMBER
No. You have 2 minutes and 50 seconds remaining.

LISA (V.O.)
And just like that, my papers just-

Lisa's sheet music EXPLODES into the air, blowing into the faces of Lisa and the Board Members.

MIA (V.O.)
They just-

LISA (V.O.)
Yeah! And then-

In the disorientation of the papers flying everywhere, the Middle Board Member stands tall and the CAMERA PANS to her.

MIDDLE BOARD MEMBER
You now have 2 minutes and 20 seconds. Make them count.

At the end of her request, the lights of the audition room shut off. It is pitch black. Then...

The lights of the room revive into a cacophony of neon lights. All the board members, save for the middle one, look around confused. She stands tall, timer in hand.

MIA (V.O.)

Was there like a power outage?
How'd the lights chan...

LISA (V.O.)

Beats me! I was trying to gather my papers.

The 1ST BOARD MEMBER to the left grabs the rest of Lisa's sheet music and calmly hands it to Lisa among the neon lights.

LISA

Thanks!

The 1st Board Member nods and walks back to the long table, getting back in his place. All 5 board members are in clear view. They all stand together. And then the 1st Board Member becomes a cupcake.

BACK TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

MIA

(unimpressed)

No way.

Lisa inhales.

LISA

Yes way.

BACK TO:

INT. AUDITION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The scene resumes immediately and the other 3 board members who are not the middle one jump up and scream. Chaos encircles the room.

The 2ND BOARD MEMBER is seen running across the frame, and mid-run turns into a cupcake.

The 5TH BOARD MEMBER crouches under the long table, alas, to become a cupcake.

The 4TH BOARD MEMBER attempts to escape the room, and right before reaching the boundary, becomes a baked confectionary treat with frosting on the top.

Yep, a cupcake

The CAMERA CLOSES IN on all the cupcakes scattered across the room. Then on the timer, still fervently held by the Middle Board Member. Her eyes narrow, and she leans down and places her elbows on the long table.

MIDDLE BOARD MEMBER

Your time now reads "1 minute, 30 seconds." You have not impressed me at all so far-

LISA

Your friends are *literal* cupcakes!
What the heck?!

MIDDLE BOARD MEMBER

Do you want a spot on this orchestra, or are you here to waste my time?

Lisa gulps. The shifting neon lights fasten in their intensity. This is irrational, but she doesn't want to throw away her shot.

LISA

(focused)

Yes, let me just find my instrument.

Lisa starts looking for her instrument case and gets on the ground to look. She can't find it anywhere. It is like the case has disappeared. She starts to stand back up.

LISA (CONT'D)

So sorry, but my instrum-

Lisa can't believe it. The Middle Board Member is gone. In her place lies...an olive oil cake. The timer remains on the top. Lisa just stares.

BACK TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Mia listens, eyebrows raised, now fighting back a laugh.

MIA

I'm sure it wasn't that-

LISA

My sheet music literally exploded,
Mia. EXPLODED!

Mia stares for a bit. The sheet music exploding was the tamest thing in this story, and that's what she emphasizes?

MIA

(gentle)

Lisa... I don't think that's physically possible.

LISA

(dead serious)

I saw it with my own eyes.

MIA

(insistant)

You *didn't*. I would know, I'm a musician too.

LISA

(indignant)

You are a *clown* to keep questioning my experience. Now, can I finish?

INT. WARPED AUDITION ROOM

We cut back to Mia, and she is now a literal clown. Mia is quite befuddled. Lisa awaits her response. They are both now in the neon pink, warped audition room (almost like it's an entirely different room entirely) holding space for this moment. Mia, whose shocked face slides back into a slight smugness, replies:

CLOWN MIA

...fine. Go on.

LISA

Thank you! Now if you'll notice...

The CAMERA PANS to the timer sinking in the cake, with 10 seconds left. Lisa motions to the timer and shouts:

LISA (CONT'D)

There's still time! I can save this audition. Let me just get my...

The instrument case reappears! In preparation of grabbing her instrument, Lisa reaches into her instrument case to feel nothing. Instead, WE SEE a bevy of balloons rise towards the ceiling, her instrument no where to be found. As Lisa looks up at the rising balloons in a final look of disbelief, the timer rings.

Her time is up.

Standing in the middle of the frame, Lisa stands alone. In a wide shot, we see Clown Mia approach Lisa and raise her arm...

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Mia, no longer a clown, lowers a sympathetic but humbling hand on Lisa's shoulder. They are back in the courtyard.

MIA

Hey. Honestly I don't wanna gaslight you or your experience. The whole thing sounded really stressful and it's abundantly clear this was super important to you. You put your best foot forward and that is enough. If it happens it happens, and if it doesn't maybe this just wasn't the right opportunity. Something better will come along, okay?.

Lisa, looking down, looks up at Mia and nods affirmatively. Mia's phone beeps.

MIA (CONT'D)

(checking phone) I've got class but call me later, okay?

Lisa nods glumly. Mia smiles, pulls Lisa a long hug and hurries off.

Lisa decrescendos back into a glum sadness. Her posture is poor, her shoulders are low, her head hangs.

Lisa starts a dejected walk back to her dorm when the 5TH BOARD MEMBER of the orchestra walks outside from the audition building in plain view.

He comes outside with another board member, who is casually eating a cupcake, and they walk in different directions.

Before he can give a quick glance at Lisa, she shields herself with her case.

The Board Member looks back down.

Thinking she's in the clear, Lisa tries to flee the scene at a brisk pace, but not before he glances up again. He waves and walks over.

5TH BOARD MEMBER

Oh, hey, Lisa!

They approach, a tablet in hand, smiling warmly. Lisa still slightly crouches behind her case.

5TH BOARD MEMBER (CONT'D)
I just wanted to say what a
fantastic performance today.

Lisa's eyes start pacing back and forth, looking for further exits. She finds none. In her defeat, she stands upright in place.

5TH BOARD MEMBER (CONT'D)
You were our last audition, but
certainly not least. I gotta say
your approach was inter...

Lisa boldly interrupts, in the sulkiest of tones.

LISA
You don't have to pretend to be
nice. And you don't have to pretend
I got in or even did okay.

The 5th Board Member's disposition goes from enthusiastic to puzzled. It shows all over his face.

5TH BOARD MEMBER
Pretend?

With just one sustained look, the 5th Board Member knows what Lisa is feeling. Empathy and a deep understanding show in his eyes.

5TH BOARD MEMBER (CONT'D)
Here, look...

The 5th Board Member holds up their tablet plainly in Lisa's field of vision, showing a video of Lisa's audition. Lisa leans in, hesitantly.

ANGLE ON TABLET: We see Lisa enter the audition room through a hallway full of balloons, waving at the board members. Lisa starts a chromatic scale with jammed pads, but she powers through it. Lisa performs with passion and skill. Her jazz-influenced style is clear, confident, and concise.

5TH BOARD MEMBER (CONT'D)
Your technique is incredible! You
are clearly a learned, brilliant
musician. Though...

Lisa interrupts with an elated but fervent tone.

LISA
So, I got in?

5TH BOARD MEMBER
Not exactly. We're a traditional
Baroque ensemble.

Lisa's whole body shrinks in total realization.

LISA
Oh. Oh no.

ANGLE ON TABLET: Lisa crescendoes to a sweeping, impressive finish. As the video comes to an end, WE SEE Lisa trip on a chair on her way out, dropping her papers.

Lisa silently chuckles, seeing the event that probably sent her into a frenzy in the first place.

LISA (CONT'D)
Yeah I...I definitely just
auditioned for the wrong orchestra.
Must have gone to the wrong room.

Lisa did mess up, but not in the way she had originally thought.

The 5th Board Member starts putting the tablet back in his bag, shuffling things around while maintaining a conversation.

5TH BOARD MEMBER
I can send your tape to the jazz
orchestra if you'd like.

Lisa ponders the question for a moment.

LISA
Really? Shouldn't I audition again?

5TH BOARD MEMBER
I got your audition right here!
Trust me, they'll want to see it.

Lisa feels grateful. She feels calm. She feels content. In her calmest voice yet, Lisa says:

LISA
Thank you so much.

The 5th Board Member is done organizing all his things in his bag. He stands up tall, ready to go.

5TH BOARD MEMBER

No problem. I hope to catch your
next performance!

The 5th Board Member waves at Lisa and briskly walks away. Lisa stands alone in the courtyard. A slow smile spreads across her face as she processes the absurdity of it all. She starts to laugh.

Lisa adjusts her grip on her instrument case, holding it naturally now instead of like a shield.

She walks on with lighter steps, head held high. As she starts to exit the courtyard, the CAMERA PANS UP to the sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END