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Art Thomas

Ursinus College, asthomas@ursinus.edu

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Schizophrenia in Film: The Missing Narrative

Art Thomas

Ursinus College

Abstract

Film characters with schizophrenia are most often depicted as (1) violent and threatening or (2) extraordinary and talented. As a result of these cinematic representations, audiences have false assumptions about the reality of schizophrenia. Films give the impression that people with schizophrenia should be separated from society in some way by being placed in a mental institution or on a pedestal to show that even a sick brain can be marvelous. I studied films that portray schizophrenic characters in order to identify a story that is not being told by Hollywood. By looking at the romantic, platonic, and familial relationships in these movies, I was able to write a short film that tells a realistic story of the early stages of schizophrenia. In my screenplay, I supply the “missing” narrative of how society can live together with people who have mental illnesses without separating them.

Keywords: Schizophrenia, film, misconception, missing narrative

Schizophrenia in Film: The Missing Narrative

I have noticed that mental illnesses in film are often represented as horrifying. With the premiere and success of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* in 1960, a surge of films that base mental illness as motivation for crimes arose. This wave of films created a notion that people with mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia and multiple personality disorder, are dangerous and that society should be protected from them. In real life, however, people who have schizophrenia are not violent criminals. Mental illnesses in film are underrepresented and, often, misrepresented in cinema (Owens, 2007; Kondo, 2008; Wahl, 1997).

Personally, I have experienced some situations that, after consulting with a psychiatrist, seem like symptoms of schizophrenia. Since those experiences, I have grown to fear losing touch with reality and myself. I have heard on multiple occasions that schizophrenia just gets worse over time. Though I would like to believe that I am not schizophrenic, I am not quite sure. I see schizophrenia represented in media and that representation does not match my reality. I do not see myself as a violent person. In fact, killing any bug would make me sad (excluding mosquitoes). How could I have schizophrenia if I am not a violent person or hallucinating a different reality? I began to question the representation of schizophrenia in film. As a result, I have decided to create a short film that demonstrates the realities of the early stages of schizophrenia. I hope to write a film that provides a narrative that is missing in the representation of schizophrenia in film, a narrative closer to reality for those diagnosed with the mental illness. In addition, I hope to provide more hope and less horror for those that may identify, like me, with symptoms of schizophrenia.

Naomi Kondo also questioned her schizophrenia in respect to schizophrenia in film in her article, "Mental Illness in Film". In her experience with the illness, she explains that she would

see a demon little girl, and, with the help of her therapy, she was able to trap the little girl in her head. However, when she watches films about violent schizophrenic people, she questioned if the little demon girl was a portion of herself that is truly who she is and that, somehow, she was suppressing the true, violent version of herself. Alternatively, some more recent films about people with schizophrenia have grown to demonstrate positive perspectives, like *A Beautiful Mind* (Ron Howard 2001) and *The Soloist* (Joe Wright 2009). However, those films portray extraordinary schizophrenics; a mathematical genius and a talented cello/ violin player. These movies, though positive in messages, are still just as troubling to the community of those with schizophrenia. It generates a second category of a person with schizophrenia, adding talented genius to violent criminal. It is because of Hollywood that schizophrenia “remains a poorly understood disorder” (Brander, 2003). In her article, Kondo expressed the damaging results of viewing films about schizophrenia as someone with schizophrenia. I was able to empathize with her writing and her experiences watching the films. We were both angered by the representation of schizophrenia in film. The lack of accurate representation made me scared of being diagnosed. Even more frustratingly, it gave Kondo reason to fear herself. People, like Kondo and myself, are so scared of the truth because of the false reality represented in film. Kondo’s article made me understand that, for the missing narrative that I want to create, I should not just tell a story, I should tell a genuine story.

In starting my writing journey, I sought to find a narrative that is not being told by Hollywood and should somehow describe how we should live together as a community. As a result, I did some research to identify films that: (1) explicitly portray a character with schizophrenia; (2) are not entirely set in hospitals; and (3) do not revolve around the person with schizophrenia being a violent problem to society. I was able to find nine movies that fit my

criteria: *Through a Glass Darkly* (Ingmar Bergman 1961), *Images* (Robert Altman 1972), *Benny & Joon* (Jeremiah S. Chechik 1992), *Angel Baby* (Michael Rymer 1995), *A Beautiful Mind* (Ron Howard 2001), *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly 2001), *My Name is Alan and I Paint Pictures* (Johnny Boston 2007), *Stateside* (Reverge Anselmo 2005), and *The Soloist* (Joe Wright 2009).

When analyzing these films, I focused on the different relationships the characters with schizophrenia in specific categories: romantic, platonic, and familial. I was able to identify reoccurring themes in each of these relationships that helped me identify which relationships are not told in these films. Overall, the relationships in the films are portrayed as supportive or dismissive of the illness if they are aware of the illness but are never portrayed as harmful to those with schizophrenia.

Schizophrenia in film

After identifying which movies to watch, I began researching schizophrenia as an illness. According to National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), schizophrenia is a “mental illness that interferes with a person’s ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions and relate to others” (<https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Schizophrenia>). The American Psychological Association (APA) adds to definition by saying that the illness also affect’s a person’s “overall functioning” (<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recognizing-schizophrenia>). Symptoms of schizophrenia include hallucinations, delusions, trouble thinking logically, poor ability to absorb and interpret information, problems utilizing recently learned information, disorders of movement, lack of emotional expression while talking, infrequent speech, lack of pleasure in everyday life, inability to initiate or carry out planned activities, problems with memory, and difficulty paying attention (<https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Schizophrenia>; <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recognizing-schizophrenia>).

[schizophrenia](#)). Antipsychotic medication, psychotherapy, and self-management skills like, managing stress, getting sleep, avoiding drugs and alcohol, and maintaining social connections, help to manage and/ or mediate the symptoms of schizophrenia (<https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Schizophrenia>).

Because the medium is visual, film tends to place an emphasis on visual hallucinations when, in reality, hallucinations are more commonly audible (Owen, 2007; Wahl, 1997). Because almost all the symptoms of the illness occur in the mind, “it is probably impossible to convey the subjective experience of a schizophrenic in a coherent movie” (Brander, 2003). Rather than enter the mind of those with schizophrenia, films have created three perspectives that we can identify as someone with schizophrenia. They can be people with “wisdom or deep knowledge about eternal Human truths” who play a valuable role in society, like in *Through a Glass Darkly* (Ingmar Bergman 1961), “wayward, animal-like savages, [...] ferocious, given to violence, or possessed by evil spirits” from whom “society needs to be protected”, like in *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly 2004), or they display “mental talents [with] a heightened creativity or clairvoyance” (Rohr, 2014), like in *The Soloist* (Joe Wright 2009) and *A Beautiful Mind* (Ron Howard 2002). Therefore, people with schizophrenia are represented as people who are above society intellectually or a threat to society.

In film, there is a separation between those with mental illnesses and those without. Film has created the idea that people with illnesses and dysfunctions that “affect [a] person’s perception of, relation to and ensuing interaction with reality,” or “madness” (Rohr, 2014), look different from others. Those with mental illnesses can be judged by their “facial appearance, expression, body build and gestures as well as features like wild, unkempt hair and tattered or inappropriate clothing” in order to create “a visual continuum of ‘otherness’” (Rohr, 2014). This

physical representation of otherness “enables the viewer to make the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ regardless of how accurately the patterns of mental illness are represented” (Rohr, 2014). Though many people with schizophrenia live as homeless people (Brander, 2003) and unkempt hair and tattered clothing are common in that community, there are also people with schizophrenia who look like a *typical* member of society. The films I watched placed more emphasis on the actors, and schizophrenia was a mental illness physically portrayed through acting rather than through costume design. *The Soloist*, however, does show the person with schizophrenia conforming back into society by *normalizing* his clothes as the movie progresses. However, when knowing of the illness, people are either cautious around those with schizophrenia or they take advantage of them. People with schizophrenia are more commonly treated like people who need to be protected from themselves. Their otherness was not in their appearance, but in their interactions with others. To further understand these interactions, I have analyzed the relationships that occurred in the films.

Films with Romantic Relationships

All but one of the films analyzed place people with schizophrenia in romantic relationships. These relationships were frequently represented as loving. With the love comes varying degrees of how they treat their significant other. There are instances where the relationships are seen as positive for the people with schizophrenia due to the support given by their partner, there are also relationships that express how detrimental the partners are to those with schizophrenia, and there are cases where their partners are unaware of the schizophrenia and do not seem to notice any schizophrenic behaviors that were abnormal to their partner’s personality. *The Soloist* is the film excluded from this portrayal because Nathaniel Ayers, a

homeless musician with schizophrenia, is not in a romantic relationship with any other characters in the film.

Supportive. *Through a Glass Darkly* is complicated when it comes to identifying romantic relationships because Karin, the person with schizophrenia in the film, is not only married, she also has an incestuous affair with her brother. To simplify my analysis, when referring to her romantic relationship, I will only be referring to her husband, Martin. This film is centralized around Karin and how her existence complicates the lives of the men in the film. Her relationship with her husband is one sided. Knowing that her husband wants a family of his own, she refuses to have sex with him, and she even questions her own love for him. Martin admits that he wishes his wife was not ill while on a boat ride with David, her father, and goes on to explain that he feels as if he is watching her turn into a “creature”. He wants to help her and does the best he can, and though the illness intervenes with his plan of becoming a father, he admits that he will stick by his wife through her illness because he loves her and, therefore, has to put up with the illness.

Benny and Joon is told through the perspective of Benny and occasionally through Sam and Joon as a pair. After a poker game loss, Sam is taken into Benny and Joon’s home and ends up being Joon’s “housekeeper” and, ultimately, lover. In Joon’s relationship with Sam, we see her initial attraction to him as she draws him in his sleep and watch their attraction grow as the movie progresses. After deciding to run away with Sam, Joon starts to have a schizophrenic episode on the bus they were on. In this moment, Sam chooses to comfort her in the best way he can and ends up riding with her to the hospital. After Joon’s hospitalization, Sam and Benny trespass in order to visit her and stop at nothing to see Joon and give her an option to live on her own (with Sam) and make her happy. Ultimately, being with Sam gave Joon happiness and,

therefore, hope that her illness will get better. Though Sam questioned how sick Joon was because she did not show signs of schizophrenia until the bus scene, he still stuck around to make her happy and be with her in her new apartment.

A Beautiful Mind tells the story of Johnathan Nash, a mathematician who develops schizophrenia and learns to manage his illness. In the film, Nash meets his wife, Alicia, teaching her class, and, in getting to know each other, he reveals his work with the U.S. government which is then revealed to be one of his delusions. Not only does Alicia watch her husband battle his delusions, enter and get dismissed from hospitalization, and readapt himself into the social world, she also stays by his side and supports him through all the hardships. In Nash's acceptance speech, he reveals that love is what got him through his hardships and, though not cured from his illness, is what saves his mentality.

My Name is Alan and I Paint Pictures is a documentary that describes Alan Russell-Cowan's life as an artist with schizophrenia. In the film, we see both Alan's current Girlfriend and one of his ex-girlfriends. Alan's ex explained that Alan's paranoia and jealousy are the reasons she decided to leave their relationship. He was skeptical of her and believes she was cheating on him; there was not trust in their relationship which, I assume, is due to his schizophrenia. Though broken up, they remain cordial friends. Alan is in a new relationship and when asked if his schizophrenia impacts their relationship, she explains that she did not have a great understanding of the illness, but still loves him.

At the end of each of these films, the couples stay in their relationships whether it is satisfying for them or detrimental to either partner's wellbeing or happiness. These films show that love will cure or alleviate symptoms of schizophrenia.

Detrimental. In addition to the portrayal of romantic relationships as vital and healthy for those with schizophrenia, there are also relationships where other characters, specifically medical figures in the film, express that pursuing a relationship would be detrimental to the health of those with schizophrenia.

Angel Baby is a film that depicts two people with schizophrenia in a relationship with each other. Harry is attending group therapy when he meets Kate and instantly finds her attractive. As Kate opens up emotionally to Harry, their relationship begins to move rapidly, and after moving in together, we find out Kate is pregnant. They are warned that if they are to live together, they should proceed to attend therapy and take their medications. However, after researching the effects of taking medication for their schizophrenia during pregnancy, Harry decides that Kate should stop taking her medication for the health of the baby and he will stop in order to help support her in her withdrawal. This decision impedes on the mental health of both people in the relationship, and the rest of the film turns into a us-against-the-world type film where the couple only had each other to understand and cope with their illnesses. Harry's encouragement, however, endangered his sanity and the sanity of his wife.

In *Stateside*, Mark meets Dori while visiting a friend who was placed in a mental institution. In the times he would visit home from marines training, they fell further in love. Dori has a breakdown while Mark is at camp. When he returns, friends and medical professionals inform him that his presence in Dori's life gives her the impression that there is hope for her to be cured and he should no longer visit her though he wants to be in her life. He leaves for war, and when he returns, he is hospitalized for his injuries. Dori finds him, somehow, and gets him discharged from the hospital. The end of the film gives hope for the couple but forgets to understand the tax that their relationship places on Dori's mental health. If being in a relationship

with Mark gives Dori the impression that she is well when she is not, she is placing herself in a very unhealthy position.

These films have medical figures who explain how being in a relationship may be detrimental to those with schizophrenia. These medical figures also explain rules that the couples should follow that would benefit the health of each partner. When those rules were disobeyed, the sanity of those with schizophrenia were sacrificed for the sake of the relationship.

Unknowning. There were instances where it was unclear whether their significant other was aware of their partner's illness. The lack of awareness did not impact the relationships had, however, they served as either a form of stability or security in reality.

Images is told from the perspective of Cathryn Harrison, a writer struggling to finish her book, and we experience her hallucinations as she does. Her hallucinations send her into paranoia that makes her question her husband's faithfulness, has her confusing her husband with her former/ other lovers, and imagining conversations with people who are not truly there. Her husband is fond of his hobby as a photographer and is dismissive of his wife's outburst, safety concerns, and lustful desires. His inability, or lack of willingness, to check in with his wife ended up being his own demise.

Donnie Darko follows Donnie as he starts to challenge authority in his life as one of his hallucinations informs him that he has less than a month until the "end of the world". His girlfriend, Gretchen Ross, is the new girl in town and is instantly attracted to him. Over time she shares stories of her broken household, and he shares with her his attraction to her and his urge to speak to Lady Death, the author of a book that discusses time travel. Gretchen did not add much value to the plot but gave Donnie a reason to go back in time and save her. Because this film travels in time, it is difficult to say whether anything in the movie happened or if Frank, the giant

Bunny that encouraged Donnie to do bad things, was a hallucination. Also, film analyses of *Donnie Darko* express the film to be science fiction and express Frank as a form of “ex-Machina” (Jordan, 2009) rather than a hallucination. The film revolves around Donnie’s actions guided by Frank, and Frank’s ambiguity as a hallucination makes me question *Donnie Darko* as a film that represents schizophrenia. Assuming Frank is in fact a hallucination, the relationship Donnie and Gretchen have is rushed. When they speak, Donnie is expressing his desire for physical intimacy, and Gretchen talks about her home life. Gretchen does not seem to know much about Donnie because he does not share much about himself until he tells her about his investigation of time travel. Donnie manages to keep his diagnosis, and his life, from Gretchen.

Romantic relationships in films that represent people with schizophrenia show that romantic partners are supportive of their diagnosed partners through their illness even if their presence is detrimental to the diagnosed partner’s health. The exception to this rule is if the person with schizophrenia chooses not to share their illness symptoms with their partner.

Film with Platonic Relationships

Platonic relationships in these films can also be sorted into the same three categories: supportive, dismissive, and unknowing. *A Beautiful Mind* is a film where the person with schizophrenia has multiple types of friends that treat Nash differently and, therefore will be spoken about in two categories. Whereas the plot of *Through a Glass Darkly* is oriented around family, and friends are not represented or mentioned, so this film will be excluded from this analysis. I will also exclude *Benny and Joon* from this analysis because Joon does not have friends of her own though she does interact with Benny’s friends in one scene.

Supportive. This category describes friends who do what they can to help the person with schizophrenia through their illness and/ or personal hardships.

The friends of Harry in *Angel Baby* attend the group therapy that Harry and Kate attend, so it is implied that they also have schizophrenia. When Harry and Kate celebrate moving in together at therapy, most of Harry's friends are excited for the couple, but one of his friends expresses anger for the occasion because he is jealous of Harry moving on. However, when Harry confirms that he will still be attending therapy, his friend instantly calms down. One of Harry's other friends carries a television around with him, and Harry asks to borrow the television in order to watch *Wheel of Fortune* and get messages from Astro. It took the same angry friend from before to convince the television friend to lend Harry his television. Though usually hesitant of Harry's actions, his friends know that Harry's intentions are good, and they support Harry, and Kate, whenever they ask for their support or help.

In *A Beautiful Mind*, Nash's college friend, Hansen, is a challenger in the early years of their friendship, and a supporter in his adult life. Nash visits Hansen to ask for an opportunity to be his assistant to get out of the house more and Hansen agrees to Nash's request. Hansen also helps calm Nash when he has episodes during work and, later, helps him get a job as a professor when Nash felt mentally secure to do so. Hansen helps Nash adjust back into socialization and the work force.

In *Stateside*, Susan is the girl who Mark injured in car crash that was sent to a mental institution by her mother. Susan is roommates with Dori and is the reason Dori and Mark met. Susan helps Mark get and maintain his relationship with Dori. She also encourages Mark to stay away from Dori when she finds that his presence in Dori's life is detrimental to Dori's health. Susan wants what is best for Dori's sanity and health, whether that means maintaining a happy healthy relationship or keeping Dori away from the guy she loves.

The Soloist tells the story of a writer, Steve Lopez, who finds a homeless man playing a violin with two strings, Nathaniel Ayers, and writes about him for an article. Lopez suspects that Ayers has schizophrenia upon meeting him and as he continues to write about Ayers, Lopez also helps Ayers as much as he can. From the first time Lopez helps Ayers, Ayers refers to Lopez as a God. In the end, however, Lopez expresses that he does not want to be Ayers' God and confirms that he is in fact Ayers' friend.

Dismissive. The dismissive category encapsulates people who know of the illness, or are skeptical of the schizophrenic's sanity, and choose to ignore the symptoms they see.

The two other friends in *A Beautiful Mind* that stay in Nash's life are Sol and Bender. They work with Nash and notice his unusual behavior when he mentions that he is working for the government. They follow Nash to his letter drop off spot which turns to be an abandoned home, but do not let his wife know until she barges into Nash's work office and questions his friends about his behavior. Though skeptical of Nash's sanity, they keep their suspicions to themselves until Nash is hospitalized. By not expressing their suspicions to Nash's wife, they ignored the symptoms of his illness and created an abduction like hospitalization that Nash did not know he needed.

Unknowing. The unknowing category are when friends of those with schizophrenia are completely unknowing of the schizophrenia and do not recognize the symptoms at all.

In *Images*, an "old friend," Marcel, is invited over by Cathryn's husband and it seems to be someone she has had a sexual interaction with in the past and is still attracted to her. He attempts to kiss Cathryn on multiple occasions and even tries to have sex with her. Whether or not they have a sexual interaction during the movie is unclear as Altman blurs the lines between flashbacks, hallucinations, imagination, and reality during the sex scene in the film. Cathryn does

not want Marcel and makes it clear on multiple occasions, however, he ignores her rejection and forces her into multiple kisses, and maybe even sex. Marcel only wants to sexually take advantage of Cathryn and possibly had the chance to do so because Cathryn often hallucinates that Marcel is her husband. Marcel does not know about Cathryn's illness and grossly sexualizes her. If they did have sex during the film, she was hallucinating having sex with someone else and, therefore, he unknowingly took advantage of her mental illness.

Donnie's friends in *Donnie Darko* do not seem to know about his schizophrenia. They encourage him to smoke cigarettes, which does not influence his illness, but give the impression that they are likely encourage the use of alcohol or drugs which can trigger symptoms of his schizophrenia. In short, his friends just want to have fun lives as a teenagers and do not necessarily care about Donnie's personal life or sanity.

There were multiple people who were labelled as Alan's friends in *My Name is Alan*, and they all seem to discuss his work as an artist. It does not come across as if they know of Alan's schizophrenia, but they mention on multiple occasions that he has a different perspective on the world. Rather than labeling Alan as a schizophrenic, they label him as an artist.

Platonic relationships in films show friends who help the person with schizophrenia with or without their request. If they are not aware of the illness, they treat the person with schizophrenia as an accessory to their life due to their presence or the work they create.

Films on Familial Relationships

Families in all the films that show familial relationships are all the same, supportive. I will be excluding *Images* and *A Beautiful Mind* from this discussion because they do not show family members of the person with schizophrenia. I will also be excluding *Stateside* from this

section because, though it does show Dori's mom and uncle in one scene to discuss her health, they do not say anything or add to the plot as Dori runs out of that meeting.

Supportive, yet pushed away. Each family goes about demonstrating their support in distinct ways; however, they all want to see the person who has schizophrenia get better. Though each family is supportive of the member with schizophrenia, the character with schizophrenia ends up pushing (members of) their families away in some way as well.

In *Through a Glass Darkly*, Karin's father, David, has just returned from traveling another country. After being awoken by a nightmare, Karen finds herself in her father's room. In his room she finds his diary in which he writes that Karin's illness will not get better and he wishes to document her journey. His distance from home was off putting to Karin and his son, Minus, and created distance in their personal connections. Not only was the distance a problem but finding that he wants to document her health journey because she is not going to get better further separates their bond. David wants his daughter to get better because he watched his wife be "consumed" by the same illness and he does not want that for his daughter. However, because he was informed that she will not get better, he wants to use her illness as fuel for his career. Karin loves her father, but no longer trusts him. Her connection to her brother, however, is trusting and, as I mentioned earlier, sexual. Her brother listens to how his sister views to world, her schizophrenic reality, and comforts her when she has her episodes. However, after Karin's breakdown in the boat, she admits to the affair and how her illness played a role in how she treats Minus and it is because of that interaction that she tells her father that she wishes to be institutionalized, to keep herself from Minus. Karin pushes David away because he broke her trust by trying to use her illness as a muse for his writing and Minus because she feels that being around him would be detrimental to his life.

In *Benny and Joon*, Benny is overprotective of his sister, Joon. He takes Joon into consideration even when he dates. He cares for Joon and he knows he is the only family that she has, so he contemplates sending her to a boarding school, even though it is recommended by her doctor. Joon pushes Benny away only when he kicks out Sam, her love interest, and reveals that he wants to finalize her trip to the boarding school. After that moment, Joon decides to run away with Sam, has a bad episode that places her in an institution. Benny recovers their relationship by offering Joon her own apartment. Benny and Joon are close because they are all the family they have, but Joon feels smothered and when the little independence she had, Sam, is taken away from her she feels like she needs to run from Benny.

In *Angel Baby*, Harry lives with his brother, sister-in-law, and their son. They house Harry and encourage him to take his medication and go to therapy. After he moves out and stops taking his medication, he grows further away from his family and the more they try to help him, the more he pushes them away. It is not until he is in desperate need of assistance that he returns to his family and they help him through his hardships and Kate's labor. Harry's family wants to see Harry happy and healthy and when he moves out, they are concerned about whether he will be able to maintain his health. Once he stopped taking care of himself, he stopped seeing his family, but when he admits that he needs help, his family is there to help him.

In the first scenes of *Donnie Darko*, Donnie expresses that he does not like the fact that he must take medication for his schizophrenia and calls his mom a "bitch". We see from the start the Donnie has some sort of hatred towards his parents and we see in a later scene that his parents just want to see him get better and live happier life. His relationships with his sisters are still threatening, but he still cares about them and wants to celebrate their accomplishment. Donnie pushing his family away is his way of keeping the reality of his illness away. No one else

seems to know about his illness, so he chooses to distance himself emotionally from the people who are aware, his family.

Growing up Alan's parents were always working to support their family, so they were not around a lot. They expected him to work a regular job, but, from an early age, Alan knew he wanted to create art. After his diagnosis, doctors recommended that Alan recover at home, in England. In his time back in England he noticed that during family events, everyone would distance themselves from him. His parents explain that in that time, Alan's art was uncomfortable and Alan, himself, was "uncomfortable to be around" according to his father. According to Alan's mother, Alan is different and always has been different, but she will always support her son. According to Alan, his mother is unsupportive of his art and his choices in life, and he mentions that he prefers not to discuss his family in fear that the documentary makers will edit what he says to show that Alan hates his family. Alan's schizophrenia created paranoia and misunderstanding of how his family perceived and treated him. As a result, he moved back to New York City to distance himself from the negative effects he felt his family has on him.

In *Soloist*, Nathaniel runs away from home because he does not believe he has schizophrenia and is paranoid that his sister, Jennifer, is putting his medication in his food. Though she was not putting his drugs in his food, she did want to take care of Nathaniel and make sure he was alright. Jennifer wants to be there for her brother, but his paranoia pushes her away, and Lopez is the one who brings them back together.

Families tend to be pushed away when the people with schizophrenia feel as if the families are not helping in a way they need to be helped. The characters with schizophrenia use physical or emotional distance as attempts to break free from overbearing family members or distance themselves if they feel they are detrimental to the other family members.

Missing Narrative

When creating the missing narrative, I will, also, be identifying the who. The characters with schizophrenia in the films I have analyzed are prominently cast with white actors. *The Soloist* is the one instance the character with schizophrenia is not White, the character is Black. It is because of the lack of diversity that I want to tell the narrative from the perspective of a Latinx person. Being that the only person of color in the films I have chosen to watch is a male bodied person, I will tell the story from a female perspective. Therefore, the main character in my film will be a Latina.

I will tell the stories of the relationships that are not represented. Romantically, the relationships were always supportive no matter the effect it has on the mental health of either partner. In these films, schizophrenia is portrayed as a test of the relationship and the only outcome represented is to stay in the relationship. There are never instances when the relationship ended due to the threat of schizophrenia tugging at one's sanity. I will show a romantic relationship in which the partners do not stay together after schizophrenia tests their relationship. Platonically, friends help the person with schizophrenia in the best way they can. Whether that means they wait for the person with schizophrenia to ask for help or they assume that they know the best way to help. Those friends, however, never seem to interact with each other during the film. I will show friends having a disagreement on how they feel is the best way to treat someone with schizophrenia, whether it is right to enforce help without being asked or allowing the person to ask for help when they feel they need it. Familial relationships were always supportive. Though I do not want to strip away the support, I will add an element of disbelief. In the Latinx community, mental illnesses are not acknowledged and are often, nonmedically, diagnosed as something else by an elder family member. So, I will portray a

family that does not believe that the symptoms the main characters experience are schizophrenic symptoms, but rather implemented by some sort of controlling force or figment of imagination.

The Missing Narrative's Plot

Below is the plot of the film I will write, with an explanation of the scene's importance and contribution to the missing narrative I am creating.

Scene 1. The film will start with a phone call between the main character and her mother. This will establish that they have a great, open, communicative relationship; the mother values education; and she reminds her daughter to take care of herself because she is not around to make sure that her daughter does. During this conversation, the main character is getting ready to go study with her friends. This scene establishes a strong bond between the main character and her mother and show that their relationship is conversational outside of mental health and that the main character's mother cares for her as a person rather than a patient. This scene shows that the main character has family that cares for her.

Scene 2. The next scene introduces all the other characters in the film: the main character's roommate, her best friend, and her boyfriend. It is close to midterm week and they are all stressed while they study. The main character's best friend offers a night of smoking marijuana to relax and everyone, but the boyfriend, agrees to the plan. This scene will show that both the main character's roommate and her best friend care for the main character's wellbeing while simultaneously revealing the distance the main character's boyfriend has in their relationship.

Scene 3. In the next scene, the best friend and roommate explain how to smoke to the main character. As time passes, the main character is still unaffected by smoking and so one of her friends offers her an edible. After consuming the entire edible, she starts to feel the high she

expected. When she leaves to use the bathroom, she has her first audible hallucination. This scene establishes the main characters first schizophrenic experience.

Scene 4. The next day the main character is studying with her boyfriend. She is explaining to him a text her mother sent to her regarding evil energies in her home. Her boyfriend asks if she believes in the spirituality in which her mom refers to, and, in her answer, the main character starts to show examples of her jumbled thought, like how Nathaniel Ayers speaks in *The Soloist*. Her boyfriend, however, seems disengaged from the conversation while she is speaking, her best friend walks into and interrupts their conversation to ask about the main character's first high experience. As the main character explains, her boyfriend and best friend seem to think that her experience was abnormal, but her best friend is the one who shows concern. This scene establishes schizophrenic symptoms in the main character's speech and daily interaction. It will also drive the fact that her experience was unique, and drugs do not cause schizophrenia, but encourage the symptoms for those diagnosed.

Scene 5. In the next scene, the main character's roommate leaves the room to go home for the weekend. The main character, that same night, will wake up from a nightmare, turn on the lights and try and distract herself from the nightmare by doing chores. At some point, she will leave her room and as she walks back towards her room, she will hear her roommate screaming as if the main character's boyfriend were attacking her. When the main character barges into the room, she sees that there is no one there. After a few moments, she starts to hear giggling and chatter in the hall that gets too loud for the time of night it is. She opens the door to get the attention of those talking only to realize that there is no one in the hallway. At this point, the main character is shaken up from the nightmare, and the hallucinations she has been experiencing, that she decides to distract herself by playing music. This scene identifies that

drugs are not the cause of her hallucinations and they occur while she is sober as well and further establishes her schizophrenic symptoms.

Scene 6. The next day, the main character explains her night to her best friend and the best friend recommends that the main character see a doctor. As her best friend is saying this, the main character's boyfriend enters and the best friend leaves for work. At this moment, the main character explains to her boyfriend her hallucination and he is upset. The hallucination of him attacking her roommate angers him because he can not believe his girlfriend can think of him in a way that is violent. It is evident that he has lost feelings for the main character since the beginning of the film, and her hallucination is what triggers him to break up with her. This scene is where the schizophrenia tests her relationship and her boyfriend finally decides to leave, filling in the gap of the romantic relationships in films about schizophrenia.

Scene 7. After this, the main character is on the phone with her mom again explaining her hallucinations and her breakup. Her mother expresses that sadness of the breakup could have triggered negative energies to play tricks on the main character's mind. The main character reminds her mother of the order in which things occurred, and in response her mother explains that her daughter must cleanse her room of the negative energies. With growing frustration, the main character finds a way out of the conversation with her mother and ends the call. This scene shows the misunderstanding of mental illness that I discussed previously and shows how the main character's family does not understand mental illnesses enough to believe in them or properly care for them. This disbelief fills in the missing narrative in the familial relationships represented in films.

Scene 8. In the following scene, the roommate comes back from home and runs into the main character's best friend. The best friend updates the roommate on the main character's

experiences and encourages her to help the main character in whatever way she can. In response, the roommate respectfully disagrees and informs the best friend that she will wait until the main character asks for help before attempting to help. This disagreement turns into an argument that ends in them walking away from each other without reaching an agreement. This scene shows the friends disagreeing on how to treat the main character and her illness, which fills the gap of the conversation how to treat someone with schizophrenia in a platonic relationship.

Scene 9. The final scene shows the best friend entering the main character's room crying. The main character explains how her break up and lose of sense of reality are affecting her. Her roommate walks in and asks what is happening, and the main character's best friend gives the roommate a quick synopsis. After a few moments of the main character crying, the roommate asks if she is alright. The main character states that she already asked that. At this moment, her best friend reassures her the roommate has just entered the room. And that will be how the film ends. The film ends this way because no matter what happens with her relationships, she will continue to have these symptoms and will need to learn how to cope with them.

Next Steps

The preceding analysis and research have helped me to determine the arc of my film. Now that this phase of my project is complete, I will use the rest of the time in my Summer Fellows to write a full draft of my screenplay. In the Fall of 2019, I will enter Ursinus' Philadelphia Experience program; during my time in Philadelphia, I will produce and direct a finished short film based on my screenplay. Below the Reference List is the script I have written to produce. The film may differ from the original script.

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Grey Matter

By

Art Thomas

CECILIA- female, late teens, 2nd generation Guatemalan American, has schizophrenic symptoms

OPAL- female, late teens, Cecilia's best friend

CATHERINE- female, early 20s, Cecilia's roommate

DAMON- male, late teens, Cecilia's boyfriend; Lacks feelings for his girlfriend, but is trying to make the relationship work

MOM- female, 40s, 1st Generation Guatemalan American, Cecilia's mother; Lines are sometimes written with accent, and may not be grammatically correct; any lines written in Spanish are translated in parentheses

KEY

NEW SCENE

SCENE 1- INT. DORM- THURSDAY LATE AFTERNOON

Dial tone rings. CECILIA is on a phone call with MOM. She is packing her backpack with books, highlighters, and writing supplies.

MOM

Alo (Hello, with an accent)

CECILIA

Hey ma.

MOM

¿Hola m'ija como estas? (Hi sweetie, how are you?)

CECILIA

I'm doing alright. I'm 'bout to go study with my friends. How are you?

MOM

You know, aquí, cansada, extrañándote. (You know, I'm here, tired, missing you). Cecilia, you know what your abuela did the other day?

CECILIA

No, what?

MOM

So, you know your tía went back to Guatemala to visit grandma? And remember grandma has her oxygen tank? So, your tía quiera ir a la piscina (your aunt wanted to go to the pool), and she told your grandma *I'll hold your oxygen tank when you go in the water* and grandma was like *Okay*. Y Después, cuando llegaron, (and then, when they arrived) your aunt was talking to grandma and putting the bags down on a chair and then she heard a splash. She looked to where grandma was standing, and her tank was there instead. Your grandma left her oxygen and

jumped into the deepest part of the pool. Your aunt asked why she jumped in and your grandma said *well, you have to hold your breath underwater anyway.*

CECILIA

(laughing)

Why is grandma so crazy?

MOM

I ask that about you too. You must get it from her. ¿Y con quién va a estudiar? (Who are you studying with?)

CECILIA

Opal, Catherine, and Damon

MOM

Ahh, how is Damon doing?

CECILIA

He's doing alright. He has a lot of tests, so I don't see him as much.

MOM

¿Test? ¿No es temprano para test? (Isn't it early for tests?)

CECILIA

It's midterm week, ma. We all have tests and papers due.

MOM

Ah pues, ya no voy a sacar mucho de tu tiempo. (Alright well then, I won't take up too much of your time.) You need to study and get good grades. Damon is nice, but I send you to school to learn, okay? Yo te digo todo el tiempo, (I tell you all the time) your education is the only thing no one can take away from you, so make sure you do good.

CECILIA

Yes ma, I will.

MOM

How are you doing? Are you eating and drinking water?

CECILIA

Yeah mom, I'm just stressed. I wanted to talk to you, you know. See how you're doing. Tell you

I miss you.

MOM

I miss you too m'ija, but I know you. All you're doing is procrastinating. You got to work, m'ija.

CECILIA

Fine. I'll text you later ma.

MOM

Okay. I love you and tell Damon and the other ones I said hi.

CECILIA

Okay, bye ma.

MOM

Te quiero mucho, te extraño tanto (I love you a lot, I miss you so much)-

MOM & CECILIA

- y te amo con todo mi corazón (and I love you with all of my heart). Muah (sound of a kiss).

CECILIA

Alright, bye ma.

CECILIA hangs up the phone and leaves her room.

SCENE 2- INT. STUDY LOUNGE- THURSDAY EVENING

CECILIA, OPAL, CATHERINE, and DAMON are all sitting at a table. **CECILIA** and **OPAL** both have laptops and books to work on papers, while **DAMON** and **CATHERINE** are surrounded by their notes studying for exams. Everyone is working intensely.

CATHERINE

(to Damon)

Um, what's fMRI?

DAMON

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging.

CATHERINE

That's the one that, like, measures the electronic signals in neurons and brain activity and stuff?

DAMON

No, that's EEG.

CATHERINE

(with uncertainty)

Electro?

DAMON

Electroencephalography measures electronic signals in neurons to measure brain activity. fMRI measures blood flow to brain regions to analyze brain activity.

CATHERINE

(frustrated)

I thought that was MRI.

DAMON

MRI analyzes the physical brain structure.

OPAL

(to Cecilia)

Do you understand what they're saying?

CECILIA

I don't think they understand what their saying.

CATHERINE

I don't even know what's happening anymore.

OPAL

Quick break?

CATHERINE

Break my neck?

OPAL

(singing)

Break me off a piece of that Kit-Kat.

CATHERINE

(laughing)

That came to you way too easily. I hate you so much.

CECILIA

I hate this. They give us so much work knowing we have multiple classes, and each professor thinks their class is more important. I have a ten-page paper due Monday plus two exams, on the same day, and another ten-page paper due Tuesday. This is a lot.

DAMON

I have three exams back to back tomorrow, so you have it easy.

CECILIA

But you're going to be done tomorrow, I'm going to be stressing the whole weekend.

OPAL

Cee-Cee calm down.

DAMON

Yeah, Cecilia, you have to relax.

CATHERINE

But is she wrong? It's only midterm week, and we don't even have time to sleep.

CECILIA

Finals will be the death of me, if I make it past this week.

OPAL

(to Cecilia) You're stressed, (to Catherine) you're confused, (to Damon) and you're acting like more of a dick than usual. We might have to roll up tonight.

CATHERINE

I'm out of wraps.

DAMON

Can't have to study.

OPAL

Fine, Damon, you're excused. (to Catherine) I'd rather get oil than get wraps. Is that cool?

CATHERINE

Fine by me.

OPAL

Cee-Cee, you in?

CECILIA

Uh, yeah, sure.

SCENE 3- INT. OPAL'S DORM- THURSDAY NIGHT

OPAL and **CATHERINE** are preparing their smoke pens. Cartoons are playing in the background.

OPAL

Okay, so this oil has both CBD and THC. The CBD will make you feel relaxed and the THC is what gives you the high feeling.

CATHERINE

How is it that you've never smoked before?

OPAL

There are different kinds of pens, but you're going to use mine, so don't worry about the rest.

CATHERINE

(to Cecilia) You can use mine if you want to.

OPAL

So, you press the button, here, and you inhale. When you finish inhaling, let go of the button. You can hold your breath if you feel like you can, and exhale whenever. It's like taking a deep breath.

OPAL holds the smoke pen to **CECILIA**.

OPAL

You good?

CECILIA

Yeah.

CECILIA *takes the smoke pen.*

CATHERINE

You know you don't have to smoke with us. Your company is fine.

CECILIA

Yeah, I know. I just want to see it before I do it, so I know how to do it right.

CATHERINE *demonstrates as she explains. OPAL takes back her pen and demonstrates her.*

As if they were flight attendants.

CATHERINE

So, you press the button. Inhale. Hold and exhale.

CECILIA

Did you guys rehearse that?

OPAL *laughs.*

CATHERINE

Rehearse what?

CECILIA

You guys did that at the same time.

CATHERINE

Like it was cool or like it was freaky?

OPAL

Cee-cee, you ready to hit?

CATHERINE *hands her smoke pen to CECILIA. CECILIA mimics the instructions given to her and begins to cough for an extensive amount of time.*

OPAL

(to Catherine)

Oh shit, get her some water.

CATHERINE *grabs a water bottle from her desk.*

OPAL

(to Cecilia)

That's why I wanted you to use mine, it's smoother.

CATHERINE

We have the same cartridge. And, like, it's still her first time.

CATHERINE *gives the water to CECILIA. CECILIA drinks the water.*

OPAL

Don't worry, coughing gets you higher.

CATHERINE

She was going to cough no matter what.

OPAL

That was a big hit for a first time.

CECILIA

I was copying you guys.

OPAL

Are you okay?

CATHERINE

(overlapping with Opal)

Who told you to try and inhale as much as we did? We told you *for as long as you feel comfortable*.

CECILIA

(immediately after Opal) Yeah, I'm fine. (to Catherine) I was *comfortable* until my throat was burned and tickled at the same time, somehow. How do you guys deal with that?

OPAL

She got used to it. I bought a better pen.

CATHERINE

Are you sure you're good? Like, do you want to keep smoking?

CECILIA

Yes, I'm fine, but I'm smoking from her pen 'cause yours hurts.

CATHERINE

It's, really, not that bad.

In a time lapse we see the girls continue to smoke, laugh, and chat. CATHERINE is very relaxed, OPAL's speech is slowed, and CECILIA is unchanged.

OPAL

How do you feel, Cee-Cee?

CECILIA

Fine. I don't feel high.

CATHERINE

(Whispering)

I didn't get high my first time.

OPAL

What?

CATHERINE

(slightly louder)

I didn't get high my first time.

OPAL

What are you saying?

CATHERINE

She needs an edible.

OPAL

I don't have edibles.

CATHERINE

There's a couple in my bag.

OPAL *gets up and finds a small silver resealable bag. She tosses it to CECILIA. OPAL reaches back into the bag and pulls out a tampon.*

OPAL

I'm taking one of your tampons.

CATHERINE

Mhmm. (okay)

OPAL *exits.*

CECILIA

Cat, how many of these do I eat?

CATHERINE

You can have 'em.

CECILIA

Like, all of them?

Pause.

CATHERINE

Hm.

CECILIA

Are you sleeping?

CATHERINE

Mm-mm. (no)

CECILIA begins to eat the edibles. Another time lapse happens. CATHERINE is asleep.

OPAL is back in the room and is also asleep. CECILIA is finally starting to feel high. She gets up and goes to the bathroom. While using the bathroom, she closes her eyes.

VOICE

(Voiceover)

I'm so high right now.

CECILIA

(Excited)

Me too.

CECILIA opens her eyes and looks around the bathroom, she realizes she's alone. She walks over to the sink and washes her hands. She looks up into the mirror and laughs.

CECILIA

I look so high.

SCENE 4- INT. STUDY LOUNGE- FRIDAY AFTERNOON

CECILIA and **DAMON** are sitting together. **CECILIA** has her laptop and the same books from scene 2 but is looking at her phone. **DAMON** is reading a textbook and taking notes.

CECILIA

Look what my mom just sent me.

DAMON glances at her phone.

DAMON

Read it to me.

CECILIA

Basically, what she's saying is that she went to sleep, and something woke her up. Like, someone shook her awake. She said (*reading*) "the energy was like yours but when you were a kid and had a nightmare, but it didn't want help and it didn't want me". Isn't that freaky?

DAMON

If you believe in that energy stuff, then yeah.

CECILIA

I mean it makes sense because, like, you know when you catch vibes from people, like, you know, whether or not you'll like them by looking at them. I remember when I first met Opal she looked like a bitch. She wasn't standing too far from me, and she was just watching everyone at orientation. She kept looking around, and everyone who came up to her ended up walking away from her. It was like she was a chaperone at a school dance, but she wasn't. I never walked up to the chaperone at dances, and I walked up to her. (*pause*) So, like, I was drawn to her energy, you know?

DAMON has begun to study again. **OPAL** enters.

DAMON

Uh-huh. (yes)

OPAL

I woke up to Cat knocked out and you nowhere to be found.

CECILIA

I went back to my room after you went to sleep.

OPAL

Did you get high?

CECILIA

(smiling)

Yes.

OPAL

How was it?

CECILIA

It was weird, but not bad weird. Like, the world was slow, and my body felt tingly and relaxed.

OPAL

Doesn't it make your body just feel amazing?

CECILIA

Oh my God, yes. But it was weird because I went to the bathroom and while I was peeing someone said *I'm really high right now* and I was like *Me too*, but no one was in the bathroom with me. So, I was like, *really* high.

Pause.

DAMON

(Confused)

Huh?

OPAL

Let me get this straight: you ate the edibles, went to the bathroom, and had a conversation with someone who wasn't there.

DAMON

That's not a normal high.

OPAL

Nowhere near normal.

CECILIA

Is it bad?

OPAL

I'm going to ask Cat where she got those edibles from, they might've been laced.

CECILIA

Should I be scared?

OPAL

Do you still feel high?

CECILIA

No.

OPAL

Then you're fine, you have nothing to worry about.

DAMON

I've never heard voices when I was high.

OPAL

Everyone experiences different highs, Damon. Don't freak her out.

CECILIA

What if it was laced? Laced with what?

OPAL

You're not going to die. Calm down and finish your work. Try not to add anymore more stress.

CECILIA looks back at her work. OPAL glares at DAMON, who is studying and no longer paying attention.

SCENE 5- INT. CECILIA'S DORM- FRIDAY NIGHT

CATHERINE is zipping up a small suitcase as CECILIA is entering their room.

CECILIA

Are you going home?

CATHERINE

For the weekend, yeah.

CECILIA

Text me when you there.

CATHERINE

I will. See you Sunday.

They hug. CATHERINE exits. Cut to CECILIA sleeping the same night. She wakes up from a nightmare. She then checks her phone for the time and sees a notification.

CATHERINE

(in text)

I'm home, Good Night! Luv U :*

CECILIA starts doing chores to distract herself from her nightmare. She goes to the bathroom to splash water on her face. She is walking down the hall to her room.

CATHERINE

(Voiceover; yelling)

Damon, stop. Stop it. I said stop, get off me! Get off of me, Damon! Damon, Stop!

CECILIA races to her room and throws the door open. She looks around her room and no one is inside. She continues to do chores to distract her from the voice she heard. There is laughter heard in the hallway that increases in volume. **CECILIA** opens her door to confront the people laughing. She sticks her head out the door.

CECILIA

Hey, can-

She sees there is no one in the hall. **CECILIA** closes her door and is on the verge of tears. She decides to play music as a distraction from her night.

SCENE 6- INT. STUDY LOUNGE- SATURDAY LATE MORNING

CECILIA has told **OPAL** about her night (the last scene). **OPAL** is dressed for work.

CECILIA is still in her pajamas looking sleep deprived and as if she was crying the whole night.

OPAL

How are you feeling after all of this?

CECILIA looks as if she is about to cry.

OPAL

Okay, okay, okay, don't think about it.

CECILIA

I just- it was just- all at once- and I just- it was a lot.

DAMON *enters.*

OPAL

Cee-cee, if this keeps happening you might want to see a doctor.

DAMON

What's going on?

OPAL

I can't be late for work. (to Cecilia) I'll keep my phone on me. Text me if you need anything.

Okay?

CECILIA *nods.*

OPAL

(whisper to Damon) Listen to her.

OPAL *exits.*

DAMON

What's wrong?

CECILIA

Last night, I had a really bad nightmare and I didn't want to think about it, so I started cleaning.

And I left my room to splash water on my face, and when I walked back Catherine was screaming for help. She was yelling *Damon stop it, get off* and I ran into the room and she wasn't

there, but I heard her screaming.

DAMON

For me to get off of her?

CECILIA

Yes. And then-

DAMON

And you *ran* to the room? What were you expecting to see?

CECILIA

I heard Cat screaming. I wanted to help her.

DAMON

So, you really thought I would hurt one of your friends?

CECILIA

No, I- she was screaming and-

DAMON

Why would you even think I would do something like that? And why was she screaming in the first place?

CECILIA

She wasn't there, she went home for the weekend.

DAMON

So, you're making up this story, why?

CECILIA

Making up this story? No, this- [happened]

DAMON

Is this what you just told Opal? What the fuck. She wanted me to listen to this bullshit.

CECILIA

Damon, just let me finish.

DAMON

Cee-Cee you can't be serious. You really think that I would attack your roommate. Oh, I'm sorry, she wasn't there. So, you made up an attack, so that I look like a bad person? If you want to break up, just do it. Don't go around spreading rumors about me raping your roommate.

CECILIA

Damon, that's not what happened.

DAMON

What happened is that you think I would rape your roommate.

CECILIA

Damon, that's not what I'm trying to say.

DAMON

You're going crazy, hearing things that aren't there, and you chose to think that I would rape your roommate.

CECILIA

I didn't choose to-

DAMON

Whatever, the fuck, happened, I can't deal with you anymore. If you don't want to break up, then fuck it, I will.

DAMON *storms out.*

SCENE 7- INT. CECILIA'S DORM- SATURDAY AFTERNOON

CECILIA *is on the phone with MOM.*

MOM

Son energías malas. (It's the bad energies) Just like the one that woke me up. Tu lo tienes también. (You have them too). He broke up with you and now the bad energies están en tu cabeza (are in your head), that's why you're hearing things, Cecilia.

CECILIA

No, ma. I was hearing things *last night* and he broke up with me *today*.

MOM

Entonces, (then) the bad energy went from you to him. Necesitas limpiar tu cuarto y tu alma. (You need to clean your room and your soul) Those drugs were not yours, so now negativity is following you.

CECILIA

Catherine gave them to me. I didn't steal them.

MOM

Catherine was asleep and on drugs.

CECILIA

I talked to her after. She said she wanted me to have them.

MOM

Then, something's not right in your life, y no se que es (and I don't know what it is). For now, clean your room of bad spirits and the voices will stop.

CECILIA

Ma, I don't think it's spirits.

MOM

If it's not spirits and it's not drugs, después que es? (then what is it?)

CECILIA

No se, ma. I don't know.

MOM

If you don't know and I'm telling you what I know and you don't like what I say, Que hacemos?

(What do we do?)

CECILIA

I don't know ma. I'll call you back later.

MOM

Okay m'ija. Te quiero mucho, te extraño tanto y te amo con todo mi corazón. (I love you a lot, I miss you so much and I love you with all of my heart) Take care of yourself.

CECILIA

Okay ma, bye.

CECILIA hangs up.

SCENE 8- INT. HALLWAY- SUNDAY AFTERNOON

CATHERINE *is walking through the hall with her suitcase and runs into OPAL.*

CATHERINE

Hey.

OPAL

Welcome back.

CATHERINE

What was so important, that you couldn't text me what it was, but that it was happening?

OPAL

That's a weird sentence.

CATHERINE

I don't know what's happening, I can't phrase it any better.

OPAL

Cee-Cee has been (*pause*) hearing things since she's been high.

CATHERINE

Those edibles weren't laced I told you. I had some before she did, and I asked.

OPAL

Yes, I know. Thanks again for checking. But it continued after that night. She couldn't go to sleep on Friday. She said she heard you screaming and people laughing really loud in the hall,

but you were in Jersey and no one else was up at 4 am.

CATHERINE

So, are you expecting me to diagnose her with the neuro degree I might not get?

OPAL

I mean, I googled why someone could be hearing things and the first thing that popped up was schizophrenia. Sound hallucination is a symptom and it gets worse with stress and sleep deprivation. And, for someone with schizophrenia, THC could encourage hallucinations. The more I looked into it, the more I realized that she's been showing signs since before Thursday. Like, how she sometimes talks for a long time and it takes a while before it makes sense. And sometimes she just stops talking in the middle of a sentence, and she forgets everything, and how she doesn't really seem to finish anything. You know brain stuff; don't you think that she might

be a little schizophrenic?

CATHERINE

I study neurology not psychology. If you can, like, get her into an MRI or fMRI, I don't know which one, then maybe I'd be able to tell you. But, again, I'm not qualified to diagnose her.

OPAL

I just wanted to update you on what's happening. She's freaking out, and I'm kind of worried.

CATHERINE

Opal, I'm just getting back. I didn't even put my stuff in my room, and, like, I still have classes to try and pass. Does Cecilia even know you're telling me this?

OPAL

You know she was going to tell you.

CATHERINE

Then there's nothing I can do until she does.

OPAL

Cat, she needs us right now. When no one's around she starts to freak out. And you live with her-

CATHERINE

So, like, you want me to babysit her? Keep her company forever?

OPAL

Keep an eye on her. Talk to her. Make sure she stays in reality.

CATHERINE

Opal, if Cecilia and I are the only people in a room and I have to pee, am I supposed to, like, take

her with me? I can't stay with her forever.

OPAL

She just needs someone to ground her to what's real.

CATHERINE

Is that what she said she needs?

OPAL

I watched her relive a traumatic night and breakdown crying. She wants a distraction from whatever happened, so, yeah. She said she needs it.

CATHERINE

Well she needs *you* to help with distracting her. If she needed my help, she would ask me for it.

OPAL

When you talk to her, you'll see that she needs help.

CATHERINE

I'm not in a place to say what she needs, and neither are you, Opal. Let her ask for help when she feels like she needs it.

OPAL

She's not okay, and we have to help in whatever way we can.

CATHERINE

When she *wants* our help. You don't pop ibuprofen every morning because you *might* feel pain.

You take it when your body *is* in pain. So, don't force help onto her if she's not asking for it because you can make things much worse.

OPAL

You don't wait until you have stage four cancer to treat it because at that point its too late.

Whatever she's going through, she's in the early stages so we shouldn't let her get worse.

CATHERINE

Did you just compare hallucinations to cancer?

OPAL

You just compared it to a headache.

CATHERINE

She's not going to die because she hears things.

OPAL

Not everyone with cancer dies.

CATHERINE

Okay, I'm, like, done. I'm going to put my stuff away and we'll deal with Cee-Cee when we see her.

CATHERINE *walks toward her dorm.*

SCENE 9- INT. CECILIA'S ROOM- SUNDAY EVENING

CECILIA *is crying on her bed. There is a knock on the door. OPAL enters.*

OPAL

How you holding up, Cee-Cee?

CECILIA

Damon broke up with me. I don't know what's happening anymore. Like, I don't know if I'm talking to you or if I'm talking to myself or if I'm even awake. I just don't know anymore.

OPAL

Well, I'm here. You can see me. You can touch me. If you want to be weird about it, you can smell me.

CECILIA

(chuckle)

OPAL

I'm here for you Cee-Cee. Take all the time you need.

CATHERINE *enters.*

CATHERINE

What's wrong?

OPAL

She's not sure if what she hears is real, and they broke up.

Long pause. CATHERINE enters.

CATHERINE

Hey, Cee-Cee is everything okay?

CECILIA

You already asked that.

CATHERINE

What?

OPAL

Cee-Cee, Cat just walked in.

The End.