

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

A golf ball on a tee. WHACK.

Dr. Heideberg watches his shot sail down the middle of the fairway. Darren and STEFAN (27), another LAB MEMBER, clap.

STEFAN

Nice shot, sir.

Heideberg nods, content with his shot.

Harold fills out the quartet. He stands off to the side as Stefan places his ball on a tee.

HEIDEBERG

All right. Remember to keep your arm straight this time and swing through the ball.

Harold walks over to Darren as Heideberg shows Stefan what he is doing wrong.

HAROLD

Hey, Darren?

DARREN

(distracted)
What's up?

HAROLD

I wanted to talk to you about me being taken off the Sorenson collaboration.

DARREN

What do you want me to say, man?

HAROLD

I'd like another chance to figure it out. I think I might know what I was doing wrong.

DARREN

It's a done deal, Harold. Just let it go.

HAROLD

I don't know if I can.

WHACK. Stefan hits a decent shot, not amazing.

HEIDEBERG

Hm. Not bad.

DARREN

Look, it was Heideberg's decision.
There's nothing I can do.

HAROLD

If I could just talk to you--

HEIDEBERG

Harold, we're waiting on you.

HAROLD

Sorry.

Flustered, it takes him a minute to get the ball on the tee.
He hurries his shot and shanks it bad into the woods.
Heideberg shakes his head as Darren and Stefan cringe.

INT. SORENSON LAB - DAY

Jayna sits at her desk. DING. A new email. She checks it.

Darren has replied to an email from Jayna.

TEXT FROM JAYNA: Darren, what do you think are our next steps going forward and when can I expect delivery of the next lot of compound? Thanks, Jayna.

TEXT FROM DARREN: Dr. Heideberg wants us to retest the first and second deliveries. Can you return any remaining material you have? As far as the next lot, we hope to have something for you in two weeks. Darren.

Jayna goes to the freezer and retrieves what she has left of the deliveries from the Heideberg lab.

She finds Ana Sofia poring over a lab notebook at her bench.

JAYNA

Hey.

ANA SOFIA

Oh, hi. What's up?

JAYNA

I need help with something.

ANA SOFIA

Yeah, sure. What's up?

JAYNA

The Heideberg people want me to return anything left over from the first two batches so they can retest it. Do you mind running this package over there for me?

ANA SOFIA

Oh.

(not what she was hoping)

Yeah, sure. I can do that. It'll be good to get some face time with them since I'll be working with them at some point.

JAYNA

Thanks. I just can't take Darren talking down to me today.

Jayna leaves the package and walks away.

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Ana Sofia enters. Not a lot of people around.

ANA SOFIA

Hello?

Meena pokes her head around a corner.

MEENA

Can I help you?

ANA SOFIA

Hi. I'm from the Sorenson lab. I was told to drop this off.

MEENA

Oh, right. Thanks.

Meena takes the package and puts it in a freezer.

ANA SOFIA

It's quiet around here.

MEENA

Yeah. Dr. Heideberg sometimes takes all the male lab members golfing.

ANA SOFIA

Just the guys?

MEENA

Yes, he assumes women don't like golf. Which is ironic because I was on the golf team as an undergrad.

Ana Sofia chuckles at this, shaking her head.

MEENA (CONT'D)

It's okay. I actually prefer the quiet. I'm Meena, by the way.

ANA SOFIA

Ana Sofia. It's nice to meet you.

MEENA

I saw you with Jayna the other day. I'm actually going to be working on the collaboration going forward.

ANA SOFIA

Cool. I wish I was.

(Meena is puzzled)

Sorry. I just started in my lab and I was supposed to pick up a strain of research based on Jayna's work but that's all been thrown off by the delays. So, I'm working on something else in the meantime.

MEENA

I see. Well, I hope you get to work on it soon.

ANA SOFIA

Thanks. Sorry, I didn't mean to be a jerk. That's great you're working on the collaboration. Congratulations.

MEENA

Thanks. You weren't being a jerk.

They laugh.

ANA SOFIA

Jayna will be happy to hear that I'm guessing.

MEENA

Yeah, saying she and Darren have had a rocky go of it is an understatement.

ANA SOFIA

Seems like it. Look, do you want to grab coffee or lunch some time? It's always good to connect with other women in labs.

MEENA

Oh. Um, I would like to. I'm just really busy right now. I'm presenting a poster next week of my thesis work at the regional American Chemical Society and I still have so much to do.

ANA SOFIA

That's great.

MEENA

And then I'm trying to get up to speed on the compound for Jayna. I'm just really kind of swamped right now.

ANA SOFIA

No, I understand. It's cool. I'm kind of crazed myself trying to get situated.

MEENA

But, we can exchange numbers and maybe we can do something when we are less busy?

ANA SOFIA

Sure.

Ana Sofia hands Meena her phone. Meena punches in her number. Ana Sofia takes it back and sends a text.

Ding. Meena gets it.

ANA SOFIA (CONT'D)

Cool. Nice to meet you.

MEENA

Yeah. You too.

Ana Sofia leaves as Meena gets back to work.

INT. SORENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Sorenson works on her computer at her desk. An email pops into her inbox from Heideberg.

EMAIL TEXT: Dr. Sorenson, I wanted to make you aware of a new development in our collaboration. Darren Novak, who has been leading the research, will soon be leaving us. Meena Anand, a grad student in my lab, will now be making the compounds for your experiments. The research will carry on as planned, with Meena as point person. She has my full support. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. (Best wishes, Heideberg).

Sorenson groans, worried at how Jayna will take this news.

SORENSEN

Great.

Loretta leans in the doorway.

LORETTA

Meeting in five.

Sorenson checks the time.

SORENSEN

Oh crap.

Loretta almost leaves - and then stops.

LORETTA

Have you checked in with Alex recently?

SORENSEN

No. He hasn't said anything to me so I'm assuming he's fine. Why?

LORETTA

I spoke with him a few days ago and I'm worried about him. He told me he would speak to you. He seems frustrated with his work and I don't think he's on a clear path.

SORENSEN

Okay, I'll check in with him.

LORETTA

Thanks.

Loretta heads out as Sorenson wraps up.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - SORENSON'S LAB - LATER

Sorenson, Loretta, Jayna and Ana Sofia sit around a table. Jayna is getting everyone caught up on the status of her research.

JAYNA

Darren and I were last in touch a couple of days ago. He requested that we bring him any extra material from their first two deliveries of the compound. Ana Sofia took what we had back to their lab and they're testing the compounds for any inconsistencies. Darren also told me they'll have the next batch of compounds ready in two weeks. I wish I didn't have to wait that long, but at least their working on it.

SORENSEN

That's great. (Pause). I don't want to upset you, but...

Jayna gives her a "what now" look.

SORENSEN (CONT'D)

Heideberg just sent me an email. He's taking Darren off of the collaboration since he'll be leaving the lab soon. He's put a new graduate student on the project, Meena Anand, and she'll be leading up the research. He wants you to work with her from now on.

JAYNA

Are you serious? Some random grad student is taking over my project?

SORENSEN

Heideberg seems confident in her abilities.

JAYNA

I'll have to wait for her to get up to speed, which will push back their work even more. Perfect. This project will never get done.

SORENSEN

I know this is not what you wanted to hear. I'd like us to give it a chance before we assume the worst. Let's try to look at it as a fresh start.

ANA SOFIA

Meena is really nice. I met her when I dropped the compounds off. She seems like she'll be easier to work with than Darren.

SORENSEN

(to Jayna)

Why don't you reach out to Meena to introduce yourself? You can ask her if she needs anything before you get the next delivery.

Jayna is not happy.

JAYNA

All right. I'm willing to see how it goes.

Sorenson turns to Ana Sofia.

SORENSEN

How are you doing Ana Sofia? Are you making any progress reproducing Justin's work? Do you see any potential avenues you can build on?

ANA SOFIA

Well...I'm having a slow start. I have some ideas...Hopefully, I'll finalize a plan soon.

SORENSEN

It's all right to take it slow. No one expects you to instantly get it all.

ANA SOFIA

Thanks. I'll keep working and I'll keep you updated on my progress.

SORENSEN

Remember to check in with Jayna if you need anything. I'm sure she can help.

JAYNA

I'll help if I can. I'm just crazy busy with my own project right now...

ANA SOFIA

Thanks, Jayna. I understand.
(to Sorenson)

(MORE)

ANA SOFIA (CONT'D)

It would be great if we could meet too, when you have the time.

SORENSEN

Yes, of course. I haven't forgotten about our orientation meeting. There's just a lot going on. As soon as I get caught up, we'll grab that coffee. Okay?

Sorenson checks the time again.

SORENSEN (CONT'D)

That reminds me. I have another meeting to get to. Keep up the great work everyone and let me know if you need anything.

Sorenson quickly heads to her next appointment. Loretta, Jayna and Ana Sofia offer quick goodbyes as she rushes off.

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY - IN PROGRESS WAITING ON SCIENCE

Dr. Heideberg wraps up a meeting with lab members. Meena, Darren, and a few others are present, while Harold is noticeably absent.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Finally, I'd like to resolve the _____ issue before we end for today. I'll open the floor to suggestions.

Harold stumbles into the back of the room, as quietly as possible.

DR. HEIDEBERG (CONT'D)

Ah. Thank you for joining us Harold.

HAROLD

I'm sorry Dr. Heideberg. It won't happen again.

DR. HEIDEBERG

I know.

The lab members look at each other. Meena speaks up.

MEENA

If we did _____ that could help to eliminate _____.

DR. HEIDEBERG

All right, yes.

OTHER LAB MEMBER

We could also try cutting back on
_____.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Perhaps, yes. How about you Darren?

Darren looks up, distracted. He has been taking notes. He offers up the same idea as Meena, just articulated with other words.

DARREN

If we cut back on X and take care of Y, that would probably solve the issue.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Yes. I like it. Let's do that. Harold, type up the procedure, distribute it and post it near the lab entrance. We'll try that from now on. Thank you, Darren.

DARREN

Of course.

Meena quietly shakes her head. Everyone gathers their things to leave but--almost an afterthought--

DR. HEIDEBERG

Oh, Meena, how did the Poster Session go?

Everyone stops, is this still part of the meeting?

MEENA

(all eyes on her)
It was interesting.

DR. HEIDEBERG

(to all)
Meena just presented at the Fall Meeting. Give us the highlights if you will.

MEENA

Uh, sure. For the most part, it went well. A lot of people stopped to ask questions and seemed generally enthused about the project.

(MORE)

MEENA (CONT'D)

They were impressed with the route we took in the synthesis. That definitely got some attention.

Dr. Heideberg smiles and nods.

MEENA (CONT'D)

Some even wondered whether I actually contributed to the scheme or whether I just mostly followed your lead.

DR. HEIDEBERG

(shrugs)

Sometimes that's inevitable. The important thing is I know the contributions you made. And you know them as well. You can be proud of the work you're doing.

MEENA

Thank you.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Anything else of interest?

MEENA

Uhm, there were some other really good presentations. People are definitely doing interesting work. I found it very educational.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Well, great.

Everyone starts to leave.

DR. HEIDEBERG (CONT'D)

Oh, did Dr. Brennan stop by? He mentioned he might.

MEENA

He did. Yes. He didn't, uhm, have much to say about the project actually. But...

(seems about to say something difficult)

But he wanted me to tell you he said hello.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Okay. It was good you got to meet him.

(MORE)

DR. HEIDEBERG (CONT'D)
(to the group)
Everyone can go.

The group files out.

INT. VENDING MACHINE ROOM - DAY

A package of Cheetos falls from the spiral. Meena and Harold are grabbing snacks.

HAROLD
That's cool you got to meet, Dr.
Brennan. Dr. Heideberg talks about
that guy all the time.

MEENA
Yeah, it wasn't that great
actually.

Darren comes in.

DARREN
(dropping coins in the
machine)
What wasn't that great?

MEENA
Nothing.

Darren looks at them both. Now he's intrigued.

DARREN
What were you guys talking about?

Meena stays mum.

HAROLD
(feeling pressure from
Darren's gaze)
Nothing. Just the poster session
and Dr. Brennan.

Darren can see Meena doesn't want to say anything.

DARREN
Did he do something?

MEENA
No, he didn't do anything. He was
just...a little creepy.

DARREN
Creepy how?

MEENA

Nothing...he was hitting on me.

DARREN

Really?

MEENA

Yeah. I was trying to explain my thesis work to him, but he just kept saying things like: you're probably too young for me but you are one of the cutest chemists I've seen in a while. Stuff like that. It just...

Meena shudders a little.

DARREN

Are you serious?

MEENA

Yeah.

DARREN

That is ridiculous. Heideberg has introduced me to Brennan like three times and he never even remembers my name. But he's going to remember you because you had a skirt on at a poster session. Tell me how that's fair.

Harold can see Meena is uncomfortable.

HAROLD

That sucks, but I think it's good you didn't say anything to Heideberg. Brennan is like his all time star pupil.

DARREN

Yeah, well, he's a freakin' genius. What are you gonna say anyways? You said he didn't do anything. So, he hit on you. He probably hit on all the girl students at the conference. Just hope he remembers your name.

Darren takes his snacks and leaves. Meena looks to Harold.

HAROLD
(shrugging)
It sucks but what are you gonna do?
The guy's kind of a rockstar.

He leaves as well. Meena is distraught. She takes a moment to compose herself before following them.

INT. SORENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Sorenson and Alex talk at a small table.

SORENSON
So, how are things going?

ALEX
Pretty good, I guess. I've been reading a lot of articles (papers?). There's some work on monoclonal antibodies that seems interesting.

SORENSON
Okay. Yeah, I agree there's interesting work to be done there.

ALEX
So, you think that should be my focus for my first project?

SORENSON
Well, I'm not sure. I guess I would have thought you'd moved past the reading stage and been setting things up by now.

ALEX
No, I have. I've been messing around--not messing around--I've been trying some things, experimenting.

SORENSON
Okay. And?

ALEX
I see a lot of potential options, I guess. I just don't know which one is the most promising.

SORENSEN

That's fine. Is there any that seem more interesting than the others for you?

ALEX

Um, I want to focus on the one that will have the biggest impact on the field. The one that's kind of most forward-looking.

SORENSEN

Of course, that's a good aspiration. Any of these areas you're talking about can really make an impact and that's important to think about.

ALEX

Yes. That's where I was hoping I could get your opinion on things.

SORENSEN

Okay. We can definitely talk through the things your looking at. I'm happy to give you my opinion--

ALEX

That would be great.

SORENSEN

I meant I can give you my opinion but you are the one reading the papers and diving into these specific research areas. So, my opinion can inform your choice but your opinion about what's most interesting should ultimately drive your decision.

Alex looks confused.

SORENSEN (CONT'D)

It's great that you want to maximize the impact your research has but you don't want to exclusively prioritize that. You want to focus on projects that interest you and you kind of feel an affinity for.

ALEX

I agree.

SORENSEN

So, which of the topics fits that bill? For you?

ALEX

I don't know, exactly. They're all interesting.

SORENSEN

Okay. Do any of your project ideas seem to have a longer horizon where one might lead to a series of experiments?

ALEX

Maybe one or two are like that.

SORENSEN

Would you prefer that so you have sort of a path laid out or would you prefer to start with something more contained and then re-evaluate after that?

ALEX

I'm not sure. I'm okay with a longer time horizon as long as the focus is something that makes sense.

SORENSEN

Of course.

ALEX

It's, I guess, the focus I'm still working on.

SORENSEN

That's fine. It's a process. I would say try narrowing it down to the projects that have a time horizon you think works best for you and then just choose the one that fits most what you want to be working on. Does that seem like a reasonable plan going forward?

ALEX

(giving up)

Yeah, sure. I'll go back and think about it more.

SORENSEN

Great. And I'm here. Let me know if I can help.

ALEX

Okay.

Alex leaves.

INT. SORENSON'S LAB - DAY

Alex walks back to his bench. He sighs. Ana Sofia looks over at him.

ANA SOFIA

How did your meeting go?

ALEX

I don't know. How do you think my meeting went?

ANA SOFIA

What?

(Alex laughs to himself)

I don't get it.

ALEX

Nothing. It's just--I don't feel like Sorenson ever gives me a straight answer. Every time I ask her a question, she just replies with a question of her own. I'm just asking her to tell me what area she thinks I should pursue. I'm not asking her to do the research for me or anything.

ANA SOFIA

I could see how that would be frustrating.

ALEX

Does she not do that with you?

ANA SOFIA

I don't know. I haven't really had a one on one with her yet. Just group meetings.

ALEX

Really? I know she's busy but come on. You've been here a while now.

ANA SOFIA
I guess...I'm sure she'll let me
know when she has time.

Both feeling a bit dejected, they go back to work.

INT. MEENA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

A comfy, modest apartment. Meena fixes herself dinner in the kitchen. Pours it into a bowl and sits on the couch. Clicks on the TV.

Blows on her food. Too hot to eat.

She is distracted. Looks at her phone. Clicks off the TV and picks up the phone. Scrolls through her contacts to Ana Sofia. Hesitates for a minute, but then texts:

MEENA VIA TEXT

Hey.

A minute passes. Meena blows on her food.

ANA SOFIA VIA TEXT

Hey.

MEENA VIA TEXT

It's Meena. We met at Heideberg's lab.

ANA SOFIA VIA TEXT

Yeah. How r u?

MEENA VIA TEXT

Fine. How are you?

ANA SOFIA VIA TEXT

THUMBS UP EMOJI WITH A HEAD-
EXPLODING EMOJI.

MEENA VIA TEXT

Sorry if your busy. Don't mean to bother you.

INT. ANA SOFIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Ana Sofia sits on the couch, watching TV.

ANA SOFIA VIA TEXT

No bother. Everything OK?

MEENA VIA TEXT

Yeah.
(beat)
Kind of.

INT. MEENA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Meena's phone rings. It is Ana Sofia.

MEENA

Hi. Sorry. I really don't want to bother you.

ANA SOFIA

Meena, it's cool. Just tell me what's going on.

MEENA

It's not a big deal. I had a bad experience and I'm probably overreacting...

ANA SOFIA

Maybe you are and maybe you're not. If you want to talk about it, I'll listen.

MEENA

Remember the Poster Session I told you about...?

ANA SOFIA

Sure. Didn't go well?

MEENA

It was fine. I mean the usual. People wondering how much I contributed to my own thesis project cause I'm a woman. Stuff like that.

ANA SOFIA

Yeah, love to hear that after you put all that work in.

MEENA

I know. But what happened after is what really bothered me. Dr. Heideberg has a former student he always talks about. Dr. Brennan. He told Heideberg he'd be at the conference and would stop by. And he did.

ANA SOFIA

Creeper?

MEENA

Yeah. He didn't even look at my poster. He just kept hitting on me.

ANA SOFIA

I'm sorry, Meena.

MEENA

It was gross. What's worse, he had a female student with him, really pretty and tall. I don't want to assume what their relationship is, but she had to watch the whole thing. She looked as uncomfortable as I felt.

ANA SOFIA

Classy. Did you tell anyone in your lab about it?

MEENA

Sort of. Dr. Heideberg asked about him, but I felt weird telling him his golden boy hit on me. I told a few other guys in the lab about it, but they didn't get it.

ANA SOFIA

What did they say?

MEENA

One thought I should be flattered.

ANA SOFIA

Are you serious?

MEENA

The other felt bad for me, but said I shouldn't make a big thing of it.

ANA SOFIA

What do YOU think you should do?

MEENA

I don't know. What can I do?

ANA SOFIA

You can report Dr. Creeper through the proper channels and you could tell Dr. Heideberg that this guy made you feel uncomfortable.

(MORE)

ANA SOFIA (CONT'D)

It might not do any good, but he should know it's happening at least.

Silence from Meena. Clearly she is hesitant to do those things.

ANA SOFIA (CONT'D)

Look, I know that's easy for me to say and you don't have to do anything. Okay?

MEENA

Yeah.

ANA SOFIA

The question is, what do you want to do about it? It bothered you enough to call me. If all you need is someone to talk to, that's cool. I have no problem with that. But if it's going to keep bothering you, then you'll have to figure something out. Whatever you do, it should make you feel better about it, not worse. Okay?

MEENA

Yeah. Thanks.

ANA SOFIA

Sure.

MEENA

Is it weird I called you since we don't really know each other?

ANA SOFIA

No. I didn't see many other women in your lab. So, I get it. And I'm here if you ever need someone to talk to about this kind of stuff. I understand, believe me.

MEENA

Thanks. That really helps. Same goes for me.

ANA SOFIA

You know, the local girls STEM program I volunteer with is meeting this Saturday. If you want to stop by I can send you the details.

(MORE)

ANA SOFIA (CONT'D)

Working with the group has really helped me. If you came, we could get food after and talk some more, if you want? No pressure. Just let me know.

MEENA

Okay. That sounds good. I'll get back to you about it. And thanks again.

ANA SOFIA

No problem.

They hang up.

EXT. BIOLOGY BUILDING - DAY

Jayna crosses the quad and enters the building.

INT. MAILROOM - DAY

Jayna stops in the mailroom on the first floor. Two SENIOR FACULTY MEMBERS (ONE FEMALE, ONE MALE) stand by the boxes chatting. Jayna grabs her mail and then pulls the mail from Loretta and Sorenson's boxes as well.

One of the Senior Faculty notices.

SENIOR FACULTY #1

Is all of that your mail?

JAYNA

I'm sorry?

SENIOR FACULTY #2

Are you faculty in this department?

They move closer, standing between Jayna and the mailboxes.

JAYNA

Yes, I'm a postdoc in the Sorenson lab. I'm picking up mail for others in my lab. They asked me to.

SENIOR FACULTY #1

Who's your PI? I don't think I've seen you before?

SENIOR FACULTY #2

Neither have I. Are you new?

Jayna starts to say something but stops herself. She takes a deep breath.

JAYNA

I'm not new. I've been in Dr.
Sorenson's lab for about two years.
My name is Jayna Bell.

She points to the mailbox with her name on it.

SENIOR FACULTY #1

And who is Dr. Sorenson's Lab
Manager?

Jayna looks incredulously at her.

JAYNA

Loretta. Wenstrup.

SENIOR FACULTY #2

Okay. We weren't trying to be rude.
We just hadn't seen you before.
Wanted to make sure you were in the
right place.

SENIOR FACULTY #1

You're very youthful. I would not
have guessed you were a postdoc.
Good for you.

Jayna smiles sarcastically, heads out with her mail.

INT. SORENSON LAB - DAY

Loretta at her bench. Jayna drops her mail off.

LORETTA

Thanks.

JAYNA

Yep.

LORETTA

Everything good?

JAYNA

Good as it's gonna get, I guess.

Jayna goes to her desk. An email from Darren.

TEXT OF EMAIL: Jayna, we checked the compounds you returned
and both are the same molecule. Data proves the problem has
to be on the bio side. Hope you figure it out. Darren

Jayna shakes her head. Begins typing.

TEXT OF EMAIL: Darren, I just finished another experiment with additional controls in place and got the same results. There is something off in the second compound. I'm sure of it. I would like nothing more than to prove you wrong and shove it in your face. Unfortunately, I can't because you seem unable to get me more compound to test with. It's obvious this collaboration is not a priority and you and Dr. Heideberg can

She pauses. Deletes everything she wrote. Begins again.

TEXT OF EMAIL: Darren, Thanks for the update. When can I expect more compound so I can continue with my experiments and figure out where the problem is? Jayna.

She sighs deeply and hits send.

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Meena hard at work. She checks the spectroscopy results. Her shoulders collapse and she sighs in frustration. Something is off; it is not the molecule she was trying to make.

Meena looks at Harold's bench. Empty. She sends him a TEXT: Where are you? Are you okay? A string of texts to Harold, with no response.

Frustrated, Meena finds Darren at his desk. Busy, he doesn't look up.

MEENA

Darren, do you have a minute?

DARREN

Not really, but go ahead.

MEENA

I'm having trouble making the compound.

DARREN

This is getting ridiculous. Everything you need is in the protocol and in my notebook, which I still want back someday.

MEENA

It would help if you could watch me go through the process to make sure I'm doing everything correctly.

DARREN

That would be a huge waste of my time.

MEENA

Then can you at least review your notes again to make sure that nothing's wrong?

DARREN

If you really belong in a lab like this, you should be able to make the compound.

MEENA

I've tried. I've consulted with Harold on this too and both of us have been unable to reproduce.

Darren rolls his eyes and finally looks at her.

DARREN

Harold's inexperience in a lab at this level is clearly catching up with him. I thought at least you would be able to handle this. Look, you have to take care of this yourself. You're in charge of the project now, so it's your problem.

Meena stares at Darren in disbelief. Darren turns back to his desk.

Meena returns to her bench, disappointed. Heideberg walks through the lab. Sees Harold's empty bench.

HEIDEBERG

Has Mr. Wendling made an appearance today?

MEENA

I haven't seen him. He should be in soon. He told me he was just taking care of something and that he'd be right in.

Heideberg is unconvinced.

HEIDEBERG

Um-hm.

Meena goes back to work, more flustered than usual. Heideberg sees she is preoccupied.

HEIDEBERG (CONT'D)
How are things going for you?

Before Meena can answer, Harold arrives. He is haggard. The sight of Heideberg catches Harold off guard. He hastily begins to work, but it is too late.

HEIDEBERG (CONT'D)
Care to explain yourself?

HAROLD
I'm sorry, Dr. Heideberg. I haven't been feeling well lately. I'll get started right away...

HEIDEBERG
It would be nice. If we could do some chemistry today.

HAROLD
Yes, sir.

Meena wants to say something, but holds her tongue. Heideberg looks Harold over.

HEIDEBERG
Are you wearing sneakers?

HAROLD
I was running late. I must have grabbed the wrong shoes--

HEIDEBERG
This is a laboratory. Not your dorm room.

HAROLD
Yes, sir.

HEIDEBERG
I trust we won't have this conversation again. Is that understood?

HAROLD
Yes, sir.

HEIDEBERG
Good. Get to work.

Heideberg returns to his office and closes the door.

Meena watches Harold. His breathing is short and he is obviously upset. He stops to catch his breath.

Meena places a hand on Harold's back.

MEENA

Harold, let's get some fresh air.
Come on.

Meena leads Harold out of the lab.

EXT. CHEMISTRY BUILDING - DAY

Meena guides Harold to the side of the building.

MEENA

Where have you been? I've been
worried about you.

HAROLD

I woke up and came right over.

MEENA

It's 3 in the afternoon. I've been
texting you all day. Are you okay?

HAROLD

Not really.

MEENA

Are you sick?

HAROLD

No...I'm not eating well. I haven't
been sleeping. I guess I've been...
depressed.

MEENA

Harold, you can't let this whole
thing get to you like this.

HAROLD

What? Being a failure?

MEENA

Stop it. You're not a failure.

HAROLD

I'm not cutting it and everyone
knows it. Undergrad was so easy. I
did great in my old lab and then I
came here. Everything started fine
and then this damn collaboration. I
keep messing it up. You know
Heideberg.

(MORE)

HAROLD (CONT'D)

There's no margin for error here,
no room for mistakes. I know he
wants me out of his lab.

MEENA

Harold, calm down. You're a great
scientist and you're working on a
very difficult project. Sure, we're
having problems, but the issues
will get resolved. I can't figure
it out either. I really don't think
it's you. This stuff is hard.
Sometimes you're gonna fail. It
doesn't make you a failure.

Harold still looks unconvinced.

MEENA (CONT'D)

I think we should both go talk to
Heideberg together.

HAROLD

I can't talk to him right now...

MEENA

Not now. Tomorrow. Together. We'll
tell him something isn't right with
the Sorenson project and tell him
Darren needs to work with us to
make the compound from scratch.
It's the only way to finally
determine what's wrong.

HAROLD

It won't do any good. He already
thinks I'm useless.

MEENA

Not if we show him there's
something off in the synthesis.
Then he'll know it's not your
fault. We'll talk to him tomorrow.
Together, all right?

Harold is still nervous, but relents.

HAROLD

Okay.

FADE OUT.

INT. SORENSON'S LAB - DAY

Ana Sofia works at her bench. She pores over an electronic notebook on her computer. The notes are difficult to follow. Ana Sofia shakes her head.

She gets a text from Meena.

MEENA VIA TEXT

Have you talked to her yet?

ANA SOFIA VIA TEXT

No.

(pause)

Do I have to?

Ana Sofia's phone vibrates as she exits the lab.

INT. HALLWAY BIOLOGY BUILDING - DAY

Ana Sofia enters the hall and answers her phone.

ANA SOFIA

Hi. Yes. I know I need to talk with her, but I don't want her to think I'm totally incompetent.

MEENA

You've tried your best and you haven't done anything wrong. Talking to Dr. Sorenson is the right thing to do. You can practice on me. I'll be Sorenson. What would you like to say? Did you write out any personal scripts you can use?

ANA SOFIA

Yeah. Okay...I'm having trouble understanding Justin's e-notebook and I'd feel more comfortable if we could go over it together.

MEENA

That's great.

ANA SOFIA

It's not too desperate?

MEENA

No. You're just being honest.

ANA SOFIA

Or I could say...I'm unfamiliar with the data management system in the lab. Could you please go over it with me so that I can better interpret Justin's notebook?

MEENA

I like that one too. Maybe go with the second one because it addresses the data management plan in the lab. You'll be fine. Trust me.

ANA SOFIA

Thanks, that helps. I'll go talk to her after this. How are you doing? Were you able to make the compound?

MEENA

No. I haven't had any luck. It's so frustrating.

ANA SOFIA

Sorry. I know the feeling.

MEENA

I hope I can figure it out today. If not, both Harold and I are going to speak to Dr. Heideberg tomorrow. I'm really dreading that conversation, but we don't know what else to do.

ANA SOFIA

It'll suck but you can do it. If you want, we can talk it through?

MEENA

I guess I made you do it so...We feel we've done everything we can to reproduce the compound. We'd like Darren to guide us through the process. We believe it's the only way we're going to be able to do it successfully.

ANA SOFIA

That sounds reasonable to me.

MEENA

He's going to be disappointed.

ANA SOFIA

Probably but I'm sure he also wants the project to move forward. If you think that's the best way to do that, he's gotta understand. Feel any better?

MEENA

I guess. Thanks.

ANA SOFIA

No problem. I'm going to talk to Sorenson. Good luck with yours. Let me know how it goes.

MEENA

I will. Good luck.

Ana Sofia takes a deep breath and goes back in.

INT. SORENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Sorenson talks with Loretta at her desk. Ana Sofia knocks and comes right in.

ANA SOFIA

Dr. Sorenson, can I talk to you about something--?

(see their in a meeting)

I'm sorry. You're busy. I'll come back later.

Sorenson and Loretta see she is nervous.

SORENSON

It's all right. We're just finishing up. Is everything okay?

ANA SOFIA

I've been having trouble reproducing Justin's work. It's hard to interpret his lab notes on the server. There are multiple files with no clear dates or order. The processes he used are just confusing. At first, I thought I was doing something wrong. I've really tried and I can't make sense of the experiments as they were performed. Maybe I just can't figure out the lab's data management system.

(MORE)

ANA SOFIA (CONT'D)

Could you please go over them with me so that I can better interpret Justin's notebook?

LORETTA

It's all right, Ana Sofia. We're here to help you as best as we can.

SORENSEN

That's right. Let's look at Justin's notebook.

Sorenson brings up the files on her computer. Sorenson and Loretta are dismayed.

SORENSEN (CONT'D)

I certainly understand why you're having problems. I don't want you to spend any more time trying to reproduce Justin's work right now. Has Jayna been able to help you with this?

ANA SOFIA

I didn't ask her about it. She seems really busy right now, so I didn't want to bother her.

SORENSEN

All right. I'll talk to Jayna about it. We'll set up a meeting with the three of us to figure out next steps.

ANA SOFIA

Thank you. That would be great.

LORETTA

Thanks for coming to us.

Ana Sofia exits. Sorenson and Loretta share a look.

SORENSEN

What do you think?

LORETTA

I think those notes are a mess. I wish she had come to us sooner.

SORENSEN

I don't blame her really. She didn't want to seem incapable starting in a new lab.

LORETTA

Obviously, our electronic notekeeping needs work. With Ana Sofia not being able to reproduce, are you worried the data may be off? Justin published that paper months ago.

SORENSEN

I'm not worried about that. His research was replicated by a very reliable collaborator. Luckily. We do need to come up with a more concrete data management plan for the lab. A revised set of expectations and guidelines, so we don't have problems like this going forward.

LORETTA

Absolutely. I was actually just reading(a PNAS paper)(an article on iReds) concerning data management in labs. I think we should probably set up a discussion group with them.

SORENSEN

Great. That sounds like a good place to start.

LORETTA

I'll send you the article and we can figure out a good time to set up the discussion in the lab.

SORENSEN

All right.

Loretta leaves.

INT. SORENSON'S LAB - DAY

Alex sits daydreaming at his bench. Loretta walks by with her laptop. He perks up and moves some things around to look busy.

LORETTA

Hi, Alex. Placing another order. Do you need anything?

Alex looks around. Checks in a cabinet.

ALEX

No, thanks. I'm good.

Loretta starts to walk away and thinks better of it.

LORETTA

What are you working on?

ALEX

I'm setting up some initial tests
for my first project.

Loretta looks around, confused. His bench is mostly empty.

LORETTA

That's great. Did you book any
equipment today?

ALEX

Well, no. I won't need much.

LORETTA

Do you need help? I can see if any
of the undergrads are free?

ALEX

No - it's all right. I don't need
anything.

Loretta can tell that something is off.

LORETTA

Is everything okay, Alex?

ALEX

I'm fine. I'm still figuring some
things out.

LORETTA

Did your meeting with Dr. Sorenson
help? She told me it went well.

Alex scoffs but then stifles it.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

Alex, your Fellowship review is
coming up pretty quickly. They're
going to want to see a clear
direction for your first research
project.

ALEX

You think I don't know that? I'm
working on it.

Loretta is taken back by his tone. Takes a second to compose herself.

LORETTA

Okay. I'm saying it doesn't all have to be on you. We're here to help you if you're having trouble.

Alex does not reply.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

I'm not sure why you don't trust that I'm trying to help you.

(pause)

Alex?

ALEX

I know you're just going to go tell Dr. Sorenson any bad things I say.

LORETTA

Okay, first, that's not true. Second, the same as Dr. Sorenson, all I want is to help you be successful. That's my job. If you can't come to me for help, than what I am here for? The lab only succeeds if you succeed. So, I would like you to trust me when I tell you that I am here to help you as best I can.

Alex considers this.

ALEX

Really?

LORETTA

Of course.

ALEX

Okay. Well, I didn't get anything out of my meeting with Dr. Sorenson. I just wanted her to tell me what direction she wants me to take my research in but she just kept avoiding my questions. At my lab in Korea, the PI was a lot more direct. It was clear what type of research he wanted and it was easy to figure things out. I don't understand why it has to be this hard here. She's just evasive.

LORETTA

Okay. I hear you. You're not saying anything bad about Dr. Sorenson. What you're describing is miscommunication. I've known Dr. Sorenson a long time. She's trying to lead you to a place where you can make your own decisions about what research you pursue.

ALEX

But I just need her--

LORETTA

Hang on. That's not what you need from her. I understand that. But I would say that you haven't conveyed to Dr. Sorenson what it is you do need from her.

ALEX

I try but--

LORETTA

I hear you. The problem is we can't get past this unless we solve the communication problem. And that means talking it out. I want to set up another meeting.

ALEX

I don't think it'll do any good.

LORETTA

I'd like you to give it a chance and I will be happy to be a part of the meeting to help resolve any miscommunication. Are you willing to try that? Cause the option is not making any progress.

ALEX

Okay. Fine.

LORETTA

Thank you. I'll talk to Dr. Sorenson and set it up.

Alex turns back to his bench as Loretta leaves.

INT. SORENSON'S OFFICE - LATER

Loretta stops by. Sorenson works at her desk.

LORETTA
Do you have a minute?

SORENSON
Sure.

LORETTA
I just spoke to Alex.

SORENSON
Yes?

LORETTA
He told me he's still having
problems with his research.

SORENSON
Really? I thought our last meeting
went well.

LORETTA
I know. I don't think he left with
the same impression. My sense is he
needs clearer guidance on what his
projects should be.

SORENSON
You know I prefer to guide the
students along rather than force
things on them. I've worked in labs
where the PI was a dictator and
that's not the way I want to run
things.

LORETTA
Absolutely and most of our students
appreciate that and thrive under
it. I think Alex may be an
exception. It sounds like he was
used to the other method in his lab
in Korea and you may need to adjust
a bit to where he's at.

SORENSON
Okay. So what does that mean?

LORETTA
I'd like to set up another meeting
between you two.

(MORE)

LORETTA (CONT'D)

If it's okay, I can be there to help with any cross communication issues.

SORENSEN

That's fine. If it will help him figure out what he needs to move his research forward, it's good with me.

LORETTA

Okay. I'll set it up the meeting.

SORENSEN

Great. Thanks.

Loretta leaves and Sorenson sits at her desk, lost in thought.

EXT. CHEMISTRY BUILDING - EARLY MORNING

Sunrise barely peaks over the buildings as Heideberg enters the Chem building.

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - EARLY MORNING

On his way to his office, he sees Meena at her bench, working away. She looks tired. It is clear she has been there all night.

He enters his office.

EXT. CHEMISTRY BUILDING - LATER

Meena waits anxiously outside the building. She checks her phone. She texts Harold.

MEENA VIA TEXT

Where are you?

There are a strong of unanswered texts in the thread.

Finally, Harold arrives. Meena sighs with relief. Harold does not look good.

MEENA

Where have you been? Are you okay?

HAROLD

Not really.

MEENA
Are you ready?

HAROLD
I can't do it.

MEENA
Why not?

HAROLD
I can't face him. I'm sorry.

MEENA
Harold...?

HAROLD
Sorry.

He rushes off. Meena almost goes after him but stops. She sighs and goes into the building.

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Meena knocks on the door to Heideberg's office.

HEIDEBERG
Come in.

MEENA
Good morning, Dr. Heideberg.

HEIDEBERG
Good morning.

MEENA
I can't reproduce the compound for
the Sorenson lab.

Heideberg sighs in disappointment.

MEENA (CONT'D)
I have Darren's notebook and I'm
following all of the steps but I
cannot figure out why the synthesis
is not working. I'm getting the
same results that Harold did. I
need Darren to walk through it so
we can figure out where the
disconnect is.

HEIDEBERG

If Darren was able to make the compound twice, you and Harold should be more than capable of replicating it. I can't believe the amount of time and resources we've already put into this. All right, I see no other choice. I'll tell Darren to walk you through it to figure out what you and Harold are doing wrong.

MEENA

Thank you, Dr. Heideberg.

HEIDEBERG

My Indian students have always been exceptional. I really thought you were the one to get this done.

MEENA

I'm sorry you're disappointed but I really feel I did everything I could.

Heideberg is unconvinced.

HEIDEBERG

Well, you're in charge of the collaboration. Let the Sorenson people know they won't be getting the molecule again this week.

MEENA

I will.

Heideberg goes back to what he was doing. Meena leaves.

INT. SORENSON LAB - DAY

Jayna sets up an experiment at her bench. Ana Sofia stops by.

ANA SOFIA

Have you gotten the compounds yet?

JAYNA

No but I want to be ready when they do. Darren said two weeks so should be getting them any time.

ANA SOFIA

Good luck.

JAYNA

I hope that doesn't have anything to do with it, but thanks.

Ana Sofia heads off to her desk as Jayna checks her phone. An email from Meena.

TEXT IN EMAIL: Jayna, I am sorry but we are still experiencing delays in making the compound. We are working as hard as we can to deliver what you need but we need additional time. I can't say at this time how long it will be but I will get back to you with a clearer idea as soon as I can. Again, I am really sorry. Meena.

Jayna is pissed. She heads directly to Sorenson's office.

Sorenson and Loretta are in a meeting. Jayna barges in.

JAYNA (CONT'D)

I just got an email from Meena. No compounds. They're still having problems. They have no idea when they are going to get me something.

Jayna paces as she waits for Sorenson and Loretta to process.

Sorenson and Loretta exchange a look.

SORENSEN

Okay. You have every right to be upset. Do you think we can talk about it constructively or shall we give you time to collect yourself?

JAYNA

(stunned)

I don't understand why you're not more upset about this. Dr. Heideberg should be held accountable for the incompetence of the people in his lab. It seems like they're a bunch of screw ups.

LORETTA

Jayna, I don't think it is helping you to take it personally.

JAYNA

How can I not? Justin didn't have any of these problems when he dealt with Darren and Heideberg. So, it's gotta be me they have a problem with.

SORENSEN

This is a collaboration. We can't tell Heideberg how to run his lab anymore than we would want him to tell us how to run ours. We can only control the things within our power.

JAYNA

That's not good enough. If you step in, they'll listen and have to take this and me more seriously. They are not providing any explanation for the delays and no timeline on when I can expect the next delivery. How is that okay?

SORENSEN

I'm not saying it's okay. We never established deadlines or timetables. The best thing you can do is have a conversation with Meena and try to get a clearer timeframe from her and ask for clarity around the delays.

JAYNA

So, just putting it back on me again?

SORENSEN

It's your project.

JAYNA

I don't feel like I'm getting the support I need to do my project.

Jayna leaves. Sorenson and Loretta look at each other. There's not much to say. They go back to their meeting that was in progress.

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Dr. Heideberg is in his office. ELLIOT BARR (45), the Director of Graduate Studies for the Chemistry Dept. knocks on his door.

HEIDEBERG

Elliot, this is a nice surprise.
How are you?

ELLIOT
 (his tone is grave)
 Fine, Malcolm. Thanks.

HEIDEBERG
 Is everything okay?

ELLIOT
 I'm here to talk to you about one
 of your grad students.

HEIDEBERG
 All right.

ELLIOT
 Harold Wendling attempted suicide
 in his apartment last night.

Heideberg is dumbfounded.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 He survived and is expected to make
 a full recovery.

Heideberg nods but still can say nothing.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 Harold's family has asked that no
 one discuss it as a suicide
 attempt. Hey instead want it to be
 described as a family emergency and
 Harold needs to move closer to his
 family to help with it. I'm helping
 Harold transfer to a program closer
 to home and his family will see
 that he gets the help he needs.

HEIDEBERG
 I understand.

ELLIOT
 I thought it was important that you
 knew the truth.

HEIDEBERG
 Yes, no. Of course.
 (a beat)
 He really hd not been cutting in
 the lab lately but I never thought--

ELLIOT
 I'm not asking for an explanation.
 It'll be up to the department if
 there is an inquiry or not.

Heideberg nods.

HEIDEBERG

Okay. I trust the department will be taking care of all of the details.

ELLIOT

The department is taking this very seriously. We've had mental health issues around grad students prior. We do not want to see anything like this in the future if we can avoid it.

HEIDEBERG

Of course.

ELLIOT

Nothing is decided at this point. It seems likely though that in the near future we'll bring in a consultant to work with all faculty on promoting healthy labs. Identifying potential mental health issues in lab members. Something like that.

HEIDEBERG

I see.

ELLIOT

We'd appreciate if you could be the first faculty member from the department to volunteer to participate.

HEIDEBERG

Is that necessary?

ELLIOT

The department feels strongly about it.

HEIDEBERG

Well, if all faculty are meant to participate...that would be fine.

ELLIOT

I'll be in touch as things develop. But wanted to let you know.

Elliot leaves. Heideberg sits at his desk, processing for a moment. Gets up. He wanders over to Harold's bench. Meena is there.

It is clear from her face she has already heard the news. They exchange a look, not accusational, just sadness. Heideberg goes back to his office.