

SCENE 1.1 A TALE OF TWO LABS

EXT. BIOLOGY BUILDING - UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

ANA SOFIA (25) steps off a transit bus, slings her bag over her shoulder. Her phone dings.

Text from Mom: Buena suerte en tu primer día (Heart emoji).

She smiles. Texts back: Gracias Mami (Heart emoji).

INT. SORENSON LAB - DAY

Ana Sofia enters the lab directly into a conversation between JAYNA (27) and LORETTA (55).

JAYNA

I messaged her. I was really hoping she would weigh in on this.

LORETTA

I understand. I haven't talked to her.

JAYNA

You can't get a hold of her?

LORETTA

She's been at a conference and traveling. I know you're frustrated. My sense is she wants you to learn to handle situations like this on your own.

Jayna sighs, clearly not satisfied. She notices Ana Sofia standing in the doorway.

ANA SOFIA

Sorry. Didn't mean to interrupt.

LORETTA

No, it's fine. Welcome. I'm sorry Jules isn't here for your official first day.

ANA SOFIA

That's ok. I know she's busy.

LORETTA

We'll get you settled.

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ANA SOFIA

(to Jayna)

Hi, Jayna, right? I'm Ana Sofia.
We met during my rotation.

JAYNA

Yeah, I remember. Welcome. Wasn't
trying to ignore you.

ANA SOFIA

No, that's fine. I didn't expect
to see you honestly.

JAYNA

Yeah, I'm supposed to be gone by
now. There have been...issues.
It's been a headache.

ANA SOFIA

Sorry to hear that. I'm excited I
get to work with you though.

ALEX (28) comes in, startled to find them all standing
there. Looks like he might just slip by but...

LORETTA

Alex, this is Ana Sofia. She
starts today. Alex hasn't been
here long so you probably haven't
met.

ANA SOFIA

I don't think so. Hi.

ALEX

Hi.

Ana Sofia notices that Jayna and Alex barely acknowledge
each other. Loretta pulls Jayna aside as Alex and Ana
Sofia talk.

ALEX

So, what is your area of research?

ANA SOFIA

I'm interested in anti-cancer
treatments. Jules told me that's
what Jayna is working on. So, I
hope I'll be working closely with
her.

(CONTINUED)

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ALEX

Good luck with that.

(Ana Sofia confused)

She just acts like she runs the place. She always gets what she wants because she complains the most.

Ana Sofia is not sure how to respond. Before she can decide, Jayna comes back. Alex heads off to his desk.

LORETTA

Ana Sofia, Jayna's going to take you with her. I think it will be good to get your feet wet with the Heideberg people. Okay?

ANA SOFIA

Um, sure. Is that ok?

Jayna shrugs, indifferent. Ana Sofia drops her bag and follows her out, unsure where they are going.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Ana Sofia hurries after Jayna as she crosses campus.

ANA SOFIA

So, what is Alex working on?

JAYNA

He's on a some huge grant from the Korean government. He mostly just keeps to himself.

ANA SOFIA

I sensed some tension.

JAYNA

He's had a problem with me since he started. I don't know why and I don't have the bandwidth to worry about it right now.

ANA SOFIA

Yeah, sorry. Where are we going?

JAYNA

The Heideberg lab.

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ANA SOFIA

That's the chem lab you're collaborating with?

JAYNA

It's been rough working with them.

ANA SOFIA

Really?

JAYNA

It takes them forever to get me compound. I need to apply for jobs this fall and I really wanted this paper as part of my application. It would really bolster my research statement. I don't think that's possible with how slow they are. On top of that, there was a discrepancy in the results from the last delivery but I need more compound to tell if it was something they did or something on our side. It's been really frustrating.

ANA SOFIA

Wow. Yeah...that's a lot.

JAYNA

Yeah. Welcome to my life. And now I have to go over there and deal with Darren. He's a piece of work.

ANA SOFIA

Darren?

JAYNA

Yeah. Just full of himself. Guys like him make me hate Chem students. He finished the synthesis. The fun part's over for him so he doesn't care how quickly he gets me stuff. But what's the point of making the molecule if we can't prove the efficacy of it on the bio side? We're the ones that have to figure out if the molecule can actually be used to help people.

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ANA SOFIA

Jeez. What does Jules think about all this?

JAYNA

I'd love to know. Don't get me wrong. She's cool and she gives you space to work. I really wanted her input before this meeting.

They enter the Chemistry building.

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Ana Sofia follows Jayna past rows of benches. MEENA (24) and HAROLD (25) look up as they pass. Ana Sofia waves awkwardly. Meena waves back.

Jayna finds DARREN (32) at his desk, headphones on. She waits a moment before tapping his shoulder.

DARREN

Jayna, good to see you.

He takes off the headphones and spins in his chair. Surprised to see someone is with her.

JAYNA

Darren.

DARREN

Who's this?

ANA SOFIA

Ana Sofia Flores.

JAYNA

She's starting in our lab today.

ANA SOFIA

Hi.

DARREN

Hi.

JAYNA

She just came along. No big deal.

DARREN

Okay. You said we needed to talk.

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JAYNA

Yeah. Did you read my email?

DARREN

Yeah, I...looked at it.

JAYNA

Did you look at the data and the figures I included?

DARREN

(clearly he didn't)
You're getting inconsistent results.

JAYNA

Yes. The data I'm getting from the last batch of compound is totally incompatible with what I got from the first.

DARREN

Okay?

JAYNA

Well, is there a chance anything was different between them?

DARREN

No.

JAYNA

No? That's it. Just no.

DARREN

What do you want me to say? Not being able to reproduce is usually a bio issue. I can show you the spectroscopy on both. The plots match. Same molecule.

JAYNA

The second compound looked different. It was darker and grainier. Maybe something was off.

DARREN

It doesn't matter what it looks like. It's the same compound. My advice is to keep doing the experiment until you figure out what you're doing wrong.

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JAYNA

(getting louder)

I'm not asking for advice. And it would be a lot easier for me to figure it out if you could actually deliver the compounds I need. I've been waiting on you the whole collaboration.

DARREN

(also getting louder)

You think this is easy? The route I came up with in the synthesis is complex. It takes time, precision, and skill. I'm not whipping up a batch of brownies here.

Ana Sofia is visibly uncomfortable.

JAYNA

If you've figured out the synthesis, why is it taking so long to make more?

DARREN

You really don't understand what we're doing here do you?

JAYNA

Excuse me?

DARREN

Why are you getting hysterical?

JAYNA

I'm not hysterical. I just want--

DR. HEIDEBERG (67) comes around the corner.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Why do I hear shouting?

(notices Jayna)

Oh, Jayna. Of course, that's why. What is the problem this time?

Jayna bites her tongue.

JAYNA

Dr. H. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to raise my voice.

(MORE)

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JAYNA (CONT'D)

I'm just trying to explain to Darren that I am finding inconsistencies in my results and I think something may be off in the compound we received.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Is there any reason to think we've got a problem with the compound?

DARREN

Nope.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Are you sure everything is correct in your procedure?

JAYNA

I've been as consistent as I can and I sent Darren my data to show the results.

DR. HEIDEBERG

I would say when you are sure the problem is with the compound, we can take a look.

JAYNA

I understand. My concern is if there is an issue in the chemistry, all of my data is potentially unreliable and I'm already well behind schedule. So, if there is a problem, we all need to know.

Dr. Heideberg looks to Darren, who gives a look-what-I'm-dealing-with shrug.

DR. HEIDEBERG

My dear, creating these compounds is complex and--

JAYNA

I understand that it's complex.

Dr. Heideberg's lips tighten, not happy at being interrupted.

JAYNA

(backpedaling)
I respect that this is difficult work and it takes skill.

(MORE)

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JAYNA (CONT'D)

I cannot figure out where the problem is if I cannot get more of the compound in a timely manner.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Everyone in this lab is working at the top of their abilities and producing the materials for the collaboration as efficiently and at the highest quality possible.

The air drips with tension. Frustrated, Jayna leaves in a huff, Ana Sofia in tow.

EXT. CHEMISTRY BUILDING - DAY

Jayna and Ana Sofia hurry away from the building. Ana Sofia can see she is in no mood to talk.

SCENE 1.2 IN TRANSIT

INT. AIRPORT LOUNGE - DAY

DR. JULES SORENSON, WHITE 40's, sits in an airport lounge typing on a laptop. An email arrives. Jules opens it.

TEXT: We are pleased to inform you that you have been awarded the grant...

Jules smiles, obviously happy news.

TEXT: Please reach out to Lynn Samuels, your program officer, for specifics.

Jules picks up the phone and dials the number.

LYNNE (O.S.)

Hello? This is Lynne Samuelson.

SORENSON

Hi. This Jules Sorenson.

LYNNE (O.S.)

Oh, yes, Jules. How are you?

SORENSON

I'm good. Thanks. Really good actually after getting this email.

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LYNNE

Yes, well, congratulations.
Everyone was very impressed.

SORENSEN

Thanks. Definitely made my day.

LYNNE (O.S.)

I'm glad. We're excited to be a
part of the research you're doing.
We're going to need some
additional info to move things
forward.

SORENSEN

Yes, whatever you need, we'll get
on it right away.

LYNNE (O.S.)

Great. I'll send an email with
specifics and we can set up a time
to talk.

SORENSEN

Great. Thanks, Lynne. We're very
excited.

LYNNE (O.S.)

Me too. We'll talk soon.

SORENSEN

Okay. Bye.

She hangs up. Savors the moment. Then texts Loretta.

SORENSEN VIA TEXT

It's me. Just got off the phone
with the program officer. We got
it.

A brief pause.

LORETTA VIA TEXT

Yay. Great news.

SORENSEN VIA TEXT

We need to start prepping right
away. Will be in the lab in AM. We
can talk then.

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LORETTA VIA TEXT

Sounds good. Lot of stuff here
needs attention too. It'll be good
to have you back.

EVELYN TOWNE (50's) sits across from Sorenson, watching
her. Jules does not notice.

SORENSEN VIA TEXT

OK.

(new text)

Yay.

LORETTA VIA TEXT

Yay. Safe travels.

Sorenson puts down the phone, sees Evelyn.

SORENSEN

Evelyn, how are you?

EVELYN

Hello, Jules.

SORENSEN

(waving her phone)

Sorry, I was--texting.

Evelyn waves it off.

EVELYN

Did you enjoy the conference?

SORENSEN

I thought it went really well.
There were some interesting
presentations.

EVELYN

I caught yours. It was quite good.

SORENSEN

Oh, thanks. Will you be at
Pathways in New York?

EVELYN

No. I try not to do two in a month
these days unless I have to.

SORENSEN

Yeah. I feel like I'm traveling a
all the time and that's how we
make things happen.

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EVELYN

And how is everything else? Life and all that.

SORENSEN

Good. Actually really good. Yeah, it looks like a grant came through that I was really hoping for. It's gonna grow my lab quite a bit.

Sorenson gets lost for a moment, realizing the scope of what the grant means.

SORENSEN (CONT'D)

(to herself as much as Evelyn)

Yeah, we're going to need more equipment, definitely more lab members. It's gonna be interesting.

EVELYN

It sounds like it. Congratulations.

SORENSEN

Thanks. We're really growing.

EVELYN

Enjoy it. I've been through those times. It's hectic but also very exciting.

SORENSEN

How did you handle it?

EVELYN

Well, there were some growing pains for sure. The hardest was that tipping point of being involved in everything going on in the lab to more steering the ship. I missed being in the lab with students every day.

SORENSEN

Yeah. I have a lab manager. She's wonderful. Helps with all that.

EVELYN

That always helps. I will say things got rough until we revamped our lab manuals.

(MORE)

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EVELYN (CONT'D)

With me traveling so much, it became essential for the protocols to be crystal clear and written down. Things got a lot better after that. Also, we developed mentoring compacts for each student so everyone's roles and responsibilities were laid out. That way they knew my expectations even if I wasn't there.

SORENSEN

Interesting. I'll have to keep that in mind.

EVELYN

It's a natural evolution though. I'm sure you'll find the balance that works for you.

SORENSEN

Thanks.

BOARDING AGENT (O.S.)

(over PA system)

We're going to start pre-boarding for flight 1122 to O'Hare.

SORENSEN

That's me.

EVELYN

Great to see you and congratulations.

SORENSEN

Thanks. Take care.

Sorenson gathers her things to board.

SCENE 1.3 THE HEIDEBERG LAB

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Harold checks NMR results on a laptop at his bench.

HAROLD

(loudly)

Come on.

Startles Meena at the bench behind him.

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MEENA

What's wrong?

HAROLD

I got the same thing. It's a different molecule again. I don't understand what's going on. I've gone through this whole thing twice now on my own and I cannot get it.

MEENA

Have both of your results been consistent?

HAROLD

Yeah, but it's completely different from what Darren and I got when we walked through it together.

MEENA

Maybe something's off in his notes or he forgot to show you something?

HAROLD

I don't think so. I mean he rushed through parts of it but I don't think I missed anything. It's gotta be something I'm not thinking of.

Darren comes up to Harold

DARREN

How's it coming?

Harold's look says it all.

DARREN

Are you serious?

HAROLD

I don't know what's off in what I'm doing. I got the same results as my last try.

DARREN

This should not be that hard, dude. I already figured it out and I walked you through it step by step.

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HAROLD

I know. I don't get it. Believe me, I'm wracking my brain trying to figure this out. But...

DARREN

Now I get to tell Jayna we're not going to have the compound again this week.

HAROLD

I'm sorry. I really--

DARREN

I'm too pissed to deal with you right now.

Darren stalks off. Harold is visibly shaken.

MEENA

Harold, breathe. It's okay.

HAROLD

It's not. I've gone over this front to back and I can't figure out what I'm missing. Nothing like this has ever happened to me. I can always figure it out.

MEENA

Maybe it's not something you're doing wrong. It could be something off in the notes or the route.

HAROLD

No. I just haven't been working hard enough.

MEENA

You've been in the lab non-stop.

Dr. Heideberg enters.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Morning, people.

(senses something)

Is everything all right?

HAROLD

Yes. Fine.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Meena, how are things going?

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MEENA

Busy but everything is going well.
Thank you. My thesis project is
coming along.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Excellent. My Indian students have
always been hard workers. We'll be
ready for next week?

MEENA

Yes.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Good. Keep it up. Harold, how is
the molecule coming for the
Sorenson lab?

HAROLD

Uhm, I just completed the
synthesis again and I failed to
make proper molecule. I don't know
why.

DR. HEIDEBERG

I see. Does Darren know?

Harold nods.

HAROLD

Maybe if Darren could go through
it again with me--

DR. HEIDEBERG

Once should be enough.

HAROLD

I understand. I'll keep trying.

Dr. Heideberg looks disappointed as he leaves. Meena can
see Harold is shaken up.

MEENA

Harold, you're a good chemist.
You'll get it.

HAROLD

Clearly not good enough.

He starts the back into the process.

Dr. Heideberg finds Darren working at his desk.

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DR. HEIDEBERG

Darren, talk to me about the delays with the Sorenson people.

DARREN

Well, part of it's just how long the synthesis took. I think I moved pretty quick considering the complexity. The rest is Harold. I don't know why he's having so much trouble. I already did the hard part.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Yes. It's strange. He's been nothing but capable before this. Maybe he doesn't have the hands I thought he did. What about the inconsistent results Jayna was on about? Any reason to think there was something wrong with what we gave them?

DARREN

Nope. The problem has to be on the Bio side. You know how sloppy biologists are.

Dr. Heideberg frowns, not fond of Darren's trash talk.

DARREN

But, no. The spectroscopy matched on both lots. No reason to think it's something with the compound.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Okay. I think we need to make a change. I want Meena to take over with the Sorenson people.

DARREN

From Harold, you mean?

DR. HEIDEBERG

No. From you. You have enough to do wrapping things up before you leave us. I think she can handle it. Your time is better spent elsewhere.

DARREN

Okay. If you think so.

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DR. HEIDEBERG

Any reason we shouldn't trust her with it?

DARREN

No. She's a capable chemist. With the route I laid out, she should be able to make the compound no problem.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Good. Let her know then get her up to speed.

DARREN

I will.

Dr. Heideberg walks off.

SCENE 1.4 THE SORENSON LAB

INT. SORENSON LAB - DAY

The lab is buzzing. Jayna is at her desk, an eye on the door. Dr. Sorenson enters. Jayna is up in a flash.

JAYNA

Hi, Jules.

SORENSON

Jayna, how have you been?

JAYNA

Not great. I had a meeting with Darren in the Heideberg lab. They are still not delivering.

SORENSON

I know we need to talk. I need some time to get settled. Okay?

JAYNA

Sure.

SORENSON

We'll talk in a bit. I promise.

JAYNA

Okay.

Sorenson sees Ana Sofia at her new desk.

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SORENSEN

Ana Sofia, welcome.

ANA SOFIA

Hello.

SORENSEN

How are you settling in?

ANA SOFIA

Fine, I guess. Only my second day.

SORENSEN

Sorry I wasn't here yesterday.

ANA SOFIA

That's okay.

SORENSEN

Well, we are excited to have you here. I know you'll do great work.

ANA SOFIA

Thanks. I hope to.

SORENSEN

I usually like to grab coffee and have a semi-formal welcome with new lab members. I'm crazed right now but we'll get it on the calendar soon. Okay?

ANA SOFIA

Sounds great.

SORENSEN

Great. Very exciting.

Sorenson heads toward her office. She sees Alex, headphones on, not looking.

SORENSEN

Hi, Alex.

He does not hear her. Sorenson finds Loretta at the door to her office.

LORETTA

Welcome back.

SORENSEN

Thanks. I want to get moving on this grant as soon as possible.

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SORENSEN (CONT'D)

Can you set something up with the department to talk about equipment purchasing? And the grad office. We're going to be adding at least two, not to mention techs.

Loretta jots down notes.

LORETTA

I'll get the info together and reach out to the sponsored projects office. There are some fires here that need your attention, Jayna being the most pressing.

SORENSEN

Yeah, she was waiting for me.

LORETTA

I saw. We also need to set a time for Alex's fellowship review, and update the slide deck for your workshop next week. Ana Sofia is getting settled but could probably use some face time when you can spare it.

Sorenson sighs.

SORENSEN

All right. Let me check my email. Regroup in thirty?

LORETTA

Sure.

Sorenson enters her office and sits heavily into the chair. She takes a breath before opening her laptop.

INT. SORENSON LAB - SORENSON'S OFFICE - LATER

Jayna knocks on the office door. Sorenson looks up.

JAYNA

Is now a good time?

SORENSEN

Yes. Come in.

Jayna sits.

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SORENSEN

All right. Catch me up.

JAYNA

Well, you know I'm getting inconsistent results from their first delivery to the second. I went to talk to Darren about it. I don't think he even looked at the data I sent over. He and Heideberg didn't even consider the issue could be on their end. It just doesn't seem to me they are prioritizing getting me more compound. And I can't move my research forward or figure out where the issue is without it. I don't feel like I have control of my own work or and it's having a serious impact on my future.

Jayna pauses to see if Sorenson has anything to say but she just nods, listening.

JAYNA

It's a boys club over there. Justin didn't have these issues with Darren when he collaborated with them. Maybe he resents me as a woman. Maybe he resents me as a Black woman. I don't know.

SORENSEN

Did he say anything specific to make you think that?

JAYNA

He called me hysterical.

SORENSEN

Look. I've been there. I understand your frustration. How can I help you problem solve?

JAYNA

Well, you're the PI. If you get involved they'll have to make it a priority.

SORENSEN

But we don't know for sure they are de-prioritizing us.

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SORENSEN (CONT'D)

It might just be the complexity of making the molecule. Could be the science is just taking longer. There's no guarantee that me getting involved with help at all.

Jayna is clearly disappointed by this answer.

SORENSEN

You're going to be running your own lab soon and you're going to have to deal with situations like this. There won't be anyone for you to call in. I think you should take this as an opportunity to assert yourself and learn how to navigate the kind of issues that can come up in a lab.

JAYNA

Well, I'm not going to have my own lab soon if they never give us anymore compound.

SORENSEN

That's just being negative. What can we be doing to make sure the collaboration is a success? Where did you leave things with them?

JAYNA

What do you mean?

SORENSEN

Did you establish a timeline for the next delivery?

JAYNA

No. They were being unreasonable so I just left.

SORENSEN

You'll have more to push back on it you get them to commit to specific goals. What can you get them to agree to?

JAYNA

A timeline for the next delivery.

SORENSEN

Okay. And what else?

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JAYNA

I can ask them to agree to a plan for testing the materials again if my results remain inconsistent.

SORENSEN

Jayna, I wouldn't push you if I didn't think you could handle this on your own. In fact, I think it's good you and Ana Sofia are here at the same time. I'd like you to mentor her, get her up to speed on the collaboration.

JAYNA

I don't know that I have time with all this going on.

SORENSEN

Don't see it as a burden. She can help out with your work and it will give you practice for mentoring your own students.

Jayna can see she has made up her mind.

JAYNA

Okay.

SORENSEN

Great.

JAYNA

I'll reach out to the Heideberg people and get a timeline. I'll keep you posted.

SORENSEN

Sounds good.

Sorenson smiles as Jayna leaves.

SCENE 1.5 PASSING THE TORCH

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Meena arrives at the lab to find Harold working diligently at his bench.

MEENA

Hey.

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HAROLD

Hey. Sorry for being a bummer the other day. You were right. I can figure this out. I just have to not stress about it. The answer has to be here.

MEENA

Yeah, of course. You can definitely handle this.

HAROLD

Thanks.

MEENA

Let me know if I can help.

Meena has barely put her stuff down when Darren interrupts them.

DARREN

Meena, can I talk to you for a sec?

MEENA

Sure.

DARREN

At my desk.

Meena gives Harold a confused look as she follows Darren. Harold watches them go, curious and concerned.

At Darren's desk:

DARREN

With the synthesis done, I need to focus on publishing so you're going to be taking over making the compound for the Sorenson people.

MEENA

(genuinely surprised)
Oh. Really?

DARREN

Yeah. Is that a problem?

MEENA

No. Just, that's what Harold is working on.

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DARREN

I know but, let's be honest, he hasn't been able to make it happen and we need progress quick.

MEENA

No, I understand.

DARREN

Can you handle it? If not, you better say now.

MEENA

No. Yes, I can do it. I mean, I'm busy with my thesis work but if you think it's best.

DARREN

It's not me, honestly. It was Heideberg's decision. He just wanted me to let you know. But it shouldn't be too much extra work. I've already done the heavy lifting working out the synthesis. It's a complicated route but I'll get you a copy of my notes. As long as you follow those, it shouldn't be anything you can't handle.

MEENA

(a little hesitant)

Okay. I guess.

DARREN

Look, this is a big deal. This means Heideberg trusts you and considers you a valuable member of the lab. You should be psyched about this.

MEENA

No. I am. I'm very proud he trusts me with it. But I just...I guess I just know if it's fair to Harold. He really wants to make this work.

DARREN

It's Dr. H's decision. You can talk to him if you like but I wouldn't recommend it. I'm sure he had his reasons.

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CONTINUED: (3)

MEENA

Okay.

DARREN

Okay. I will get you copies of my notes so you can get started. Saying the Sorenson people are anxious for the next lot is an understatement.

MEENA

I understand. Thanks.

DARREN

(turning to his laptop)

Yep.

Meena goes back to her bench. She avoids eye contact with Harold.

HAROLD

Everything OK?

MEENA

Um, Heideberg wants me to take over the Sorenson collaboration from Darren.

HAROLD

Are you serious?

MEENA

I guess so. Yeah.

Harold goes pale.

HAROLD

He thinks I'm a failure. Doesn't he?

MEENA

I only talked to Darren but I'm sure Dr. H doesn't think you're a failure.

HAROLD

He's totally lost confidence in me.

Harold's hands shake a little.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MEENA

I'm sure that's not true. You know the project better than I do. I'm still going to need your help to make the compound. I'll make sure Dr. H knows your contributions.

HAROLD

It won't matter. Maybe he's right. Maybe I am a failure.

Harold turns back to his work.

MEENA

Harold, come on...

HAROLD

It's fine. Congratulations, by the way.

MEENA

Harold, I didn't feel like I could really say no. You know that.

HAROLD

I know. I'm happy for you. Really. It's a big deal. You should proud. I'm happy for you.

Awkward silence as they got back to their work.

SCENE 1.6 EVERYTHING IS FINE

INT. ESPRESSO ROYALE CAFE - MORNING

Alex waits in line for coffee. He notices Loretta is a few places ahead in line. He does not try to get her attention.

Loretta pays, notices Alex as she waits for her order. Alex nods hello but avoids eye contact.

Loretta gets her coffee. Waits for Alex to get his.

ALEX

(ordering)

Hi, large coffee, no room.

(to Loretta)

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORETTA

Alex. How are you?

ALEX

Fine.

LORETTA

Everything going well so far in the lab?

Nods his head noncommittally.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

And your research?

ALEX

Fine.

Alex gets his coffee and they walk out together.

EXT. QUAD - MORNING

Loretta and Alex cross the Quad to the lab.

LORETTA

Your Fellowship reviewing is coming up in a few weeks.

ALEX

I know.

LORETTA

How are you feeling about it?

ALEX

Okay.

LORETTA

Have you scheduled a time with Jules to talk about your research focus?

ALEX

No. I haven't talked to her since she got back.

LORETTA

Oh. I can set up that meeting if you like?

ALEX

Uhm, I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORETTA

What's wrong?

ALEX

I just don't see the point.

LORETTA

How do you mean?

ALEX

Nothing, it's just...I don't get much out of our meetings. She just asks me questions. I wish she would just tell me what she wants me to work on.

LORETTA

Well, I think she wants you to make that determination for yourself. That's why she asks those questions.

ALEX

Yeah but it's like she doesn't hear my answers. She just asks more questions. I need her to give me something to start with.

LORETTA

Okay. I understand and it's not going to get resolved if you don't talk about it. It's not something that is going to go away.

ALEX

Yeah, I know.

LORETTA

So, do you want me to set up a meeting for you?

ALEX

Yes, fine. Just set up the meeting.

Alex rushes ahead into their building. Loretta stands stunned. Then follows.

INT. SORENSON'S LAB - DAY

Loretta enters the lab. She sees Alex at his bench. He looks regretful but does not say anything. She leaves him be and goes to her bench.

FADE OUT.

SCENE 1.7 WHERE TO BEGIN?

INT. SORENSON LAB - MORNING

Ana Sofia arrives early to the lab. The lights are already on. She finds Jayna working away at her bench.

JAYNA

Hey. You're here early.

ANA SOFIA

Yeah. Early riser. Also kind of anxious to get going on stuff. Did the Heideberg people get you more compound?

JAYNA

No. I'm retesting the conjugate from the second lot with some more controls in place. I want to be airtight that it's not something I'm missing. I'm running low though so they better get me more soon.

ANA SOFIA

Did they give you an estimate?

JAYNA

No. I emailed Darren and haven't heard back yet.

ANA SOFIA

I hope it's soon.

JAYNA

Me too.

Jayna keeps on with her work. Ana Sofia lingers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANA SOFIA

Look, I know you're busy but I was hoping I could pick your brain about the work you're doing?

JAYNA

(hesitant)

How do you mean?

ANA SOFIA

Well, I've been reading a lot of papers this past week and I want my thesis work to build off of what you've been doing with the Heideberg lab. I'd like to kind of get a feel for where you're at, if that's okay?

JAYNA

It's really not a great time. I'm crazy busy and this whole project is way behind the schedule I was hoping for.

ANA SOFIA

Of course, I totally get it. Could I maybe see data or your notebooks if you are okay with that? Just to kind of get a sense of the project?

JAYNA

I've been getting these messed up results and I don't know why so I'm not sure if my data is even sound or not. I don't know if the problem is on the chem side or something I'm missing. I don't know if the problem is with the first lot or the second. All the work I've done might be suspect so I really am not comfortable sharing it the way it is now.

ANA SOFIA

OK. Is there any way I can help since you have such a crazy workload? Maybe I can help set up the assays or run control tests for you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAYNA

That's cool that you want to help. I would still need to get you up to speed on what I'm doing. And with the issues I'm having, I have to be super careful that everything is done right. No offense. You coming in would be one more variable that I can't take a risk on right now.

ANA SOFIA

(disappointed)

Okay. No I get it. Let me know if you change your mind.

Jayna feels bad.

JAYNA

I'm sorry. I'm really not trying to be a jerk. I just have way too much going on right now.

ANA SOFIA

It's cool.

JAYNA

There is one thing maybe you could look into.

ANA SOFIA

What's that?

JAYNA

The collaboration with the Heideberg people started under a different post-doc. He's not here anymore. From what I know, things went a lot smoother between him and Darren. They created a similar compound to what I'm working with. It might help you to recreate his work. We still have some of that compound.

Jayna goes to her desk and rifles through some papers. Finds it and hands it to Ana Sofia.

JAYNA

This is the published paper and his notes should be on the server.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ANA SOFIA
(happy to have a
direction)
Okay. Yeah, I'll work on this.
Thanks.

JAYNA
No problem.

She dives back into her work as Ana Sofia opens the paper at her desk.

INT. SORENSON LAB - LATER

Ana Sofia searches through the lab server. The folder structure seems haphazard--some folders named with just a first name, some last names, another that just says RESEARCH.

Ana Sofia finds a folder called WATKINS (the post-doc who left). Inside the folder is a mess of documents, most named Scan followed by the date. Ana Sofia opens a few of the documents. Some are typed up. Some are scans of handwritten notes.

Ana Sofia is perplexed, trying to make heads or tails of it. After a few minutes, she shakes her head in frustration just as Alex passes by.

ALEX
Everything okay?

ANA SOFIA
Uhm, I need to reproduce an experiment that a post-doc named Watkins conducted. Did you know him?

ALEX
No. We didn't overlap.

ANA SOFIA
Well, I'm looking at his notes on the server and I can't really tell what's what. Is there a procedure for keeping e-notebooks?

Alex scoffs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEX

No, there's no procedure. They set up the server and wanted everyone to convert to digital notebooks but they let everyone develop their own structure.

Alex leans in to the screen for a closer look.

ALEX

There's no page numbers or anything?

ANA SOFIA

Doesn't look like it.

ALEX

Yikes.

ANA SOFIA

I'm not sure where to start with this. Is there a lab protocol I can review to make sure I'm doing things right?

Alex goes to a bookshelf in the corner and grabs a binder. It is a mess of hand-annotated, photocopied pages from an older protocol with amendments crammed in. He laughs as he hands it to her.

ANA SOFIA

Great.

ALEX

No one ever uses that. It's more of a joke really. I've never been given procedures to do my work. If I had a question, I usually asked Jules but she's around a lot less these days.

Ana Sofia sighs.

ALEX

Jayna would be the best person to talk to. Her research picked up from Watkins's research.

ANA SOFIA

No, I know. She's really busy. I don't want to bother her more than I already have.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALEX

Yeah, if it doesn't help her out,
she doesn't really want to be
bothered, right?

ANA SOFIA

I don't really think that's it.

ALEX

You'll see the longer you're here.
The minute she doesn't get her
way, she gets all loud and self-
righteous. It's like we get it,
you're black.

Ana Sofia is stunned.

ANA SOFIA

I don't think that's fair. She
seems to me like she's busting her
ass. If anything, she's stuck
waiting on other people. And I am
not comfortable with you making
comments like that.

ALEX

(embarrassed)

I didn't mean anything. I was just
kidding. It was a joke.

Ana Sofia watches him walk to his own bench. He does not
look back at her.

Sighing, she turns back to the protocol, pushes it aside,
and goes back to the documents on the server.

Loretta stands at her office door watching them all:
Alex, Ana Sofia, and Jayna, heads down, engrossed in
their work.

END ACT 1.