

SCENE 2.1 TEAMWORK

INT. BILLIARDS LOUNGE - DAY

A rack of balls. SMACK. They scatter.

The World Cup is on the TV.

Heideberg makes a tricky shot, sinking a striped ball. Darren and STEFAN (27), another LAB MEMBER, nod their heads in approval.

STEFAN

Nice shot, Dr. H.

Heideberg nods, content with his shot. He shoots again but just misses.

HEIDEBERG

Damn.

Harold fills out the quartet. He stands off to the side as Stefan chalks up his cue.

HEIDEBERG

Remember to take your time and line up your shot this time.

Harold walks over to Darren as Heideberg corrects Stefan.

HEIDEBERG

No. The three is a much better shot.

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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

SMACK. Stefan tries for the three ball but misses.

DARREN

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

HAROLD

If I could just talk to you--

HEIDEBERG

Harold, it's your shot.

HAROLD

Sorry.

Flustered, Harold takes a cue and hurriedly lines up a shot. He rushes his shot and sinks the cue ball. Heideberg shakes his head as Darren and Stefan cringe.

HEIDEBERG

All right. Let's switch up teams.

INT. SORENSON LAB - DAY

Jayna sits at her desk. She checks her email. One from Darren.

Darren has replied to an email from Jayna.

TEXT FROM JAYNA: Darren, what do you think our next steps are 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 asked to drop this off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEENA

Oh, right. Thanks.

Meena takes the package and puts it in a freezer.

ANA SOFIA

It's quiet around here.

MEENA

Yeah. Dr. H took some of lab to watch the World Cup.

ANA SOFIA

You don't like soccer?

MEENA

No. I do. I love it. He just assumes women don't follow sports. Which is ironic cause I played soccer at my undergrad.

Ana Sofia laughs.

MEENA

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

ANA SOFIA

Ana Sofia. Nice to meet you.

MEENA

You were with Jayna the other day. I'm going to be working on the collaboration going forward.

ANA SOFIA

Cool. I wish I was.

(Meena is puzzled)

Sorry. I was hoping to build on the work Jayna's doing with you all but that's all been thrown off by the delays. So, I'm working on something else in the meantime.

MEENA

Oh. 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MEENA

You weren't being a jerk.

They laugh.

ANA SOFIA

Jayna will be happy to hear you're on the project I'm guessing.

MEENA

Yeah, she and Darren have had a rocky go of it.

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 super busy. I'm presenting my thesis work at the regional American Chemical Society next week and I still have so much to do.

ANA SOFIA

That's great.

MEENA

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

ANA SOFIA

It's cool. I'm kind of crazed myself getting situated.

MEENA

But, we can exchange numbers and maybe do something when we're 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ANA SOFIA

Cool. Nice to meet you.

MEENA

Yeah. You too.

Ana Sofia leaves as Meena gets back to work.

SCENE 2.2 SORENSON SUBGROUP MEETING

INT. SORENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Sorenson works at her desk. An email from Heideberg.

EMAIL TEXT: Jules, 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, Malcolm).

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

SORENSON

Great.

Loretta leans in the doorway.

LORETTA

Meeting in five.

Sorenson checks the time.

SORENSON

Oh crap.

Loretta almost leaves - and then stops.

LORETTA

Have you checked in with Alex lately?

SORENSON

No. He hasn't said anything so I assume he's fine. Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORETTA

I spoke with him a few days ago and he seems frustrated. He told me he would speak to you. I'm not sure 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 ready in two weeks. I wish I didn't have to wait that long, but at least they're working on it.

SORENSEN

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

Jayna gives her a "what now" look.

SORENSEN

I got an email from Malcolm Heideberg. He's taking Darren off the collaboration since he's leaving the lab soon. He's put a new graduate student on the project, Meena Anand. You'll work with her from now on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAYNA

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

SORENSEN

Dr. Heideberg seems confident in her abilities.

JAYNA

I'll have to wait for her to get up to speed, which will push them back even more. Perfect. This project's never getting 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? 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.

SORENSEN

Thank you.

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 avenues to build on there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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 right now...

ANA SOFIA

Thanks, Jayna. I understand.
(to Sorenson)

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

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.

SCENE 2.3 POSTER SESSION DEBRIEF

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

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

DR. HEIDEBERG

All right, everyone. Let's get to work.

Everyone gathers their things to leave but--almost as an afterthought--

DR. HEIDEBERG

Oh! Meena, how did the poster session go?

Everyone stops. Is this still part of the meeting?

MEENA

It was interesting.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Meena just presented at the ACS 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. They were impressed with the route we took in the synthesis, that definitely got some attention. Some even wondered whether I actually contributed to the scheme or whether I mostly just followed your lead.

DR. HEIDEBERG

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

MEENA

Thank you.

DR. HEIDEBERG

Did Jim Brennan stop by? He mentioned he might.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEENA

He did, yes, um, he didn't have much to say about the project actually, but, um, he wanted me to tell you he said hello.

DR. HEIDEBERG

OK. It was good you got to meet him. Ok, that's it for today.

Everyone 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 Jim 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 meeting Brennan.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARREN

Did he do something?

MEENA

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

DARREN

Creepy how?

MEENA

Nothing...um, It was almost like he was coming on to me, and his comments made me really uncomfortable

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 favorite student.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARREN

Yeah, well, he's a freakin' genius. What are you gonna say anyway? 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? Brennan's kind of a rockstar.

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

SCENE 2.4 QUESTIONS AND MORE QUESTIONS

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. There's some work on mRNA therapeutics 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEX

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

SORENSEN

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. Uh, 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--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'd 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.

(MORE)

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CONTINUED: (2)

SORENSEN (CONT'D)

So, my opinion can inform your choice but your opinion about what's most interesting should ultimately drive your decision.

Alex looks confused.

SORENSEN

It's great that you want to maximize the impact your research has and you don't want to exclusively prioritize that. You want to focus on projects that interest you and you 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

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 Jules ever gives me a straight answer. Every time I ask her a question, she just replies with a question of her own.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEX (CONT'D)

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.

SCENE 2.5 A SYMPATHETIC EAR

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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, maybe not. If you want to talk about it, I'll listen.

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CONTINUED:

MEENA

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

ANA SOFIA

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. H has a former student he always talks about. Jim Brennan. He told Heideberg he'd be at the conference and would stop by. And he did.

ANA SOFIA

Creeper?

MEENA

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. He had his hand on her shoulder the whole time he was creeping on me. I don't want to assume what their relationship is, but she looked as uncomfortable as I felt.

ANA SOFIA

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MEENA

Sort of. Dr. H 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

(scoffing)
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

What can I do?

ANA SOFIA

You can report Dr. Creeper through
the proper channels and you could
tell Dr. H that this guy made you
feel uncomfortable. It might not
do any good, but he should at
least know it's happening.

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

ANA SOFIA

Look, I know that it'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.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ANA SOFIA (CONT'D)

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. Look, say to me what you want to say to them

MEENA

What do you mean?

ANA SOFIA

You know this is gonna happen again someday, just thinking this through will help you be more prepared next time so you can choose whether to stay in the situation or not. Say it to me. What did you want to say to the creeper at the poster session?

MEENA

I wanted to tell him to... you know!

ANA SOFIA

Right... what would have been constructive to say?

MEENA

I would have told him he was making inappropriate comments and to please only comment on the work, as that is why I was there...to present my work.

ANA SOFIA

Ok, and what do you wish you had said to Dr. H and the other jerks in your lab?

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CONTINUED: (4)

MEENA

I wish I had said, Dr. Brennan hit on me, and made me really uncomfortable and you need to be aware of how he's treating female students if you're going to recommend they interact with him and I would tell my lab colleagues I was disappointed when it clearly made me uncomfortable that they were not more understanding or supportive and that they don't understand what that's like for a woman to have to deal with that every time we present our work! It's bad enough that we have to constantly prove ourselves in ways you don't have to but to be disrespected like that on top of it--it's too much.

ANA SOFIA

(chuckles)

Feel better?

MEENA

Yeah, actually, a little. 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. How do you deal with this?

ANA SOFIA

You just deal with it. You don't let it stop you. I find it does help me to volunteer with the local girls in a STEM program. We have a meeting this Saturday if you wanna stop by.

MEENA

That could be cool.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ANA SOFIA

And if you want to look into your options more the chapter of WISE here is really good.

MEENA

What is WISE?

ANA SOFIA

Women in science and engineering. They put on workshops and have advice for dealing with harassing behavior. Stuff like that. I think it could help depending on what you want to do.

MEENA

Thanks, um, I'll check them out.

ANA SOFIA

I'm here if you want to talk more, ok?

MEENA

Oh. Sure, thanks. Bye.

ANA SOFIA

See ya.

They hang up.

SCENE 2.6 ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER INDIGNITY

EXT. BIOLOGY BUILDING - DAY

Jayna crosses the quad enters the building.

INT. LOUNGE AREA - DAY

A few students sit around a TV as Jayna passes.

CNN is on. The Chyron reads: UNARMED BLACK MAN SHOT AND KILLED BY POLICE.

TV Anchor: Initially the Mayor fired the officer but the police union challenged this, saying the Mayor overstepped her authority and the officer cannot be fired without due process.

Jayna shakes her head and continues on.

INT. MAILROOM/FACULTY LOUNGE - 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 Jules' 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

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 the Sorenson 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENIOR FACULTY #1

Oh. That makes sense.

SENIOR FACULTY #2

Okay. We were just trying to be safe. 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 walks away. Loretta looks after her concerned. 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--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORETTA

Hey, uh, you gave me your mail too.

JAYNA

Oh, thanks.

LORETTA

Are you sure you're ok?

JAYNA

Never better.

(beat)

It's not worth getting into.

LORETTA

Jayna, come on. What's going on?

JAYNA

It's-- well it's kind of everything, you know?

LORETTA

Tell me about it.

JAYNA

It's the news, its seeing another Black person being shot and my white friends telling me they're sorry and wishing they could do more.

LORETTA

I get it.

JAYNA

It's feeling like I have no control over my work. It's people looking at me like I don't belong. It's people thinking I only belong because I'm a diversity hire. It's people asking me who helped me with the math, or, who did the hard parts of my project. It's being asked to be on DEI committees when all I want is to do my research. It's the pressure I get from my family and how much they want me to succeed and how I really don't want to let them down but they have no idea all the stuff I'm dealing with. It's everything, you know?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAYNA (CONT'D)

(beat)

But most of all, I'm tired.

LORETTA

You have a right to feel tired. It's exhausting! It's not easy being in a system that needs to be fixed. I was dealing with the same types of things 25 years ago when I was in grad school. Men greatly outnumbered women then, believe me. Being Black and a woman in science was not easy. There were so many obstacles.

JAYNA

I can't imagine. How did you even--

LORETTA

It was challenging. But, it was worth it. I had a network of other women and we kept each other going. I also talked, complained and planned with other Black professionals in science, and other disciplines. Both were critical. It makes a big difference to know you're not the only one--and you're not. Remember, there are other groups on campus that you can go to. Like the Women in STEM group. And there are lots of online communities that can help too.

Jayna nods, feeling better.

Sorenson comes around the corner.

SORENSEN

Loretta there you are. Can we go over some things when you're free?

LORETTA

Yes, I just need a minute.

SORENSEN

Sure. Is everything ok?

LORETTA

It's fine. I got it.

Sorenson leaves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JAYNA

Sorry. I didn't mean to go off.

LORETTA

Nothing to apologize for. You have to let stuff like that out or it'll just eat at ya. But don't ever think for a second that you don't belong here or that you haven't earned everything you get. I've been in labs a long time and you are as smart and capable as any student I've seen and this community needs you.

JAYNA

Thanks.

LORETTA

Feel free to come and talk to me or Jules anytime you need to ok? Jules may not understand first hand everything you're experiencing, but take it from me, she values the scientific contributions you make to the lab and cares about you as a person.

JAYNA

Alright, I will.

Loretta heads towards Sorenson's office.

Jayna looks over the email she was writing. 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 hits send.

SCENE 2.7 TYING IT DOWN/HAROLD PUSHED TO THE LIMIT

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 procedure 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 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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

He should be in soon. He told me he was just taking care of something and 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. 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAROLD

Of course.

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

HEIDEBERG

You are aware of the appropriate
laboratory footwear?

HAROLD

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

HEIDEBERG

This is a lab. Not your dorm room.

HAROLD

I know.

HEIDEBERG

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

HAROLD

Yes.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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? Have you eaten today?

HAROLD

I'm just not hungry. I'm not sleeping well. I'm just tired of being tired.

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. 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 hard worker and this is 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MEENA

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.

SCENE 2.8 TALKING IT 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 her. What would you like to say? Did you write any personal scripts you can use?

ANA SOFIA

Yeah. Okay...I'm having trouble understanding Justin's 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 systems for tracking data 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 issue of data management in the lab. You'll be fine. Trust me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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, Harold and I are going to speak to Dr. H 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 through it?

MEENA

I guess I made you do it so...We feel like we've done everything we can to reproduce the compound. We'd like Darren to guide us through the procedure. 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 so 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 Jules. Good luck with yours. Let me know how it goes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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

Jules, 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 alright?

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. And I can't figure out the procedure. At first, I thought I was doing something wrong. I've tried and I can't make sense of the experiments as they were performed. Maybe I can figure out the system if you help me get started and I can take it from there.

LORETTA

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

SORENSON

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

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SORENSEN

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?

SORENSEN

No. His research was replicated by a very reliable collaborator. Luckily.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SORENSEN (CONT'D)

We do need to come up with a more concrete plan for how we organize our data so we don't have problems like this going forward.

LORETTA

Absolutely. I actually just read a paper about improving communication in labs.

SORENSEN

Great. That sounds like a good place to start.

LORETTA

I'll send it to you.

SORENSEN

All right.

They go back to the prior meeting.

SCENE 2.9 LORETTA WEIGHS IN

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 Jules help? She told me it went well.

Alex scoffs but then stifles it.

LORETTA

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LORETTA

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 Jules any bad things I say.

LORETTA

Okay, first, that's not true. Second, the same as Jules, 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 Jules. I just wanted her to tell me what direction she wants me to take my research 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 Jules. What you're describing is miscommunication. I've known her a long time. She's trying to lead you to a place where you can make your own decisions about what research you pursue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

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 Jules what it is you do need from her.

ALEX

I try--

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 other option is not making any progress.

ALEX

Okay. Fine.

LORETTA

Thank you. I'll talk to Jules 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORETTA

I just spoke to Alex.

SORENSEN

Yes?

LORETTA

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

SORENSEN

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.

SORENSEN

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 and you may need to adjust a bit to where he's at.

SORENSEN

Okay. So what does that mean?

LORETTA

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LORETTA

Okay. I'll set up the meeting.

SORENSEN

Great. Thanks.

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

SCENE 2.10 MEENA VISITS HEIDEBERG

EXT. CHEMISTRY BUILDING - EARLY MORNING

Sunshine 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 string 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

HEIDEBERG

Good morning...Yes??

MEENA

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

Heideberg sighs in disappointment.

MEENA

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. Is it possible for 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.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HEIDEBERG (CONT'D)

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.

HEIDEBERG

My students from India 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.

SCENE 2.11 MORE BAD NEWS

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

Thanks. Fingers crossed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They both cross their fingers.

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

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 do you need time to collect yourself?

JAYNA

(stunned)

I don't understand why you're not more upset about this. Heideberg should be held accountable for the incompetence of the people in his lab.

LORETTA

Jayna, it's not going to help to take this personally. Let's try and problem solve.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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 specific deadlines or timetables. The best thing you can do is have a conversation with Meena and try for clarity around the delays. See if you can get a clearer timeline.

JAYNA

So, just putting it back on me again?

Jules and Loretta look to each other.

LORETTA

We're not trying to put it back on you, Jayna.

SORENSEN

No, we're here to support you. At the end of the day though, it is 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.

SCENE 2.12 THE WORST NEWS

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.

HEIDEBERG

What? What did he do?

ELLIOT

He survived and he's 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. They want it to be
described as a family emergency
and Harold had to move closer to
his family to help out. I'm
helping Harold get into a program
closer to home and his family is
going to see that he gets the help
he needs.

HEIDEBERG

I understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLIOT

I thought it was important that you knew the truth.

HEIDEBERG

Yes, no. Of course.

(a beat)

He really had not been cutting in the lab lately but I never thought that--

ELLIOT

I'm not asking for an explanation. It's not 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

We are taking this very seriously. The rate of suicides on campus has increased and I'm sure you're aware the department has not been immune.

(Heideberg nods)

This is something we're all concerned about.

HEIDEBERG

Of course.

ELLIOT

Nothing is decided at this point. It seems likely that in the near future we're going to 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

And we would appreciate if you could be the first faculty member from the department to volunteer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HEIDEBERG

Is that necessary?

ELLIOT

The college, grad college, and department are making this a priority.

HEIDEBERG

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

ELLIOT

Ok. 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. Heidgeberg goes back to his office.

END ACT 2.