

MARCH
a short screenplay

by Heath

FADE IN:

EXT. NIGHT MARKET – EVENING

Steam rolls off a grill. One halogen tube, flickering. A generator coughs two stalls down.

MAYA, 19, works the skewers. Her father ROMAN, 60s, fans the coals beside her.

A CUSTOMER holds up two fingers.

ROMAN
Two.

He counts two skewers onto paper and hands them over. The customer goes.

MAYA
The letter came.

He turns the skewers. Doesn't look up.

ROMAN
Which letter.

MAYA
You know which.

The generator stutters, catches.

ROMAN
Hand me the tongs.

She doesn't.

MAYA
March. I start in March.

He sets the fan down. Reaches past her, takes the letter out of her apron, and slides it under the till.

MAYA
It's not a bill.

ROMAN
Then it keeps.

CUSTOMER (O.S.)
Boss. Three.

ROMAN (loud)
Three!

He counts three onto paper. Behind them, karaoke starts another song.

EXT. NIGHT MARKET — LATER

The crowd thins. Maya wipes the counter. Roman carries a crate of bottles to the back. She watches him go, then pulls the till drawer out an inch, feels underneath. Nothing. She slides it back before he returns.

INT. STALL — BACK ROOM — NIGHT

A cot, a crate, a bulb on a cord. Maya on her knees, the till drawer in her lap. Receipts. A rubber band. Coins.

She puts the drawer down and looks at the shelf. A biscuit tin, rust along the seam. She takes it down and opens it.

Buttons. A key. Under them, an envelope. Yellow, soft at the corners. Addressed to Roman, in a hand that isn't his. A stamp. She turns it over. The postmark is older than she is. It was never opened.

She sits with it a long time. Then she puts everything back — buttons, key, coins — everything but the envelope.

INT. STALL — BACK ROOM — CONTINUOUS

She tucks the envelope into her waistband, under her shirt, and goes back out.

EXT. NIGHT MARKET — NEXT EVENING

Rain earlier. The ground is dark. Half the stalls are shuttered. Vilma, 70s, leans on the counter while Roman counts change.

VILMA

Maya. Your father says you're not going.

Maya looks at Roman. He fans the coals.

MAYA

He said that.

VILMA

He said the school isn't real. Some of these places, they take your money—

ROMAN

Vilma.

A beat. Vilma lifts her hands and moves off.

MAYA

You told her that.

ROMAN

I told her nothing.

He wipes the counter where Vilma was leaning. Maya watches his hand.

MAYA

You tell everyone nothing.

He scrapes the grill. The rain starts again, thin, under the awning.

INT. STALL — BACK ROOM — NIGHT

Maya sits on the cot. The envelope in her lap under the bulb. Footsteps in the corridor.

Roman fills the doorway. He sees what's in her hands.

Neither of them moves.

He crosses, takes the tin off the shelf, and sits down on

the crate across from her. He holds out his hand. She gives him the envelope.

He doesn't open it. He turns it over, once, and sets it on his knee.

MAYA
It's this address.

ROMAN
It's the same address either way. He knew where I was.

He looks at the postmark.

MAYA
You never opened it.

ROMAN
What's the point.

MAYA
How old were you.

ROMAN
Your age. A little more.

She waits. He doesn't say more. She doesn't fill it.

ROMAN
Three times I wrote back. Every time I said I'd come. Then your mother.

MAYA
And?

ROMAN
And the stall.

He stands. He lays the envelope flat in the tin, on top of the buttons, and closes the lid. He sets the tin back on the high shelf.

MAYA
I'm still going.

ROMAN

I know.

He goes.

EXT. NIGHT MARKET – LAST NIGHT

Stalls shuttered. Chairs up on tables. Maya stands by the grill with a duffel at her feet. Roman wipes the cold grill with a rag, slow, in circles.

She waits.

MAYA

I'm going in the morning. Vilma's cousin drives.

He keeps wiping.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You want to say something.

ROMAN

No.

The rag stops. He looks at the grill.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Yours turn cleaner than mine. Always did.

He starts wiping again.

MAYA

Come with me.

ROMAN

For what.

MAYA

A week. Just to see it.

He doesn't answer. Maya picks up the duffel. At the mouth of the market she stops and turns.

MAYA (CONT'D)

There's a tin on the shelf. I didn't put it back right.

Roman's hand stops on the grill.

ROMAN
I know.

A long look across the empty stalls. Then Maya comes back, sets the duffel down, and reaches past him for the tongs. She holds them out.

He takes them.

ROMAN
Go on.

She goes. He stands with the tongs. After a while he switches the grill on – one ring, then the next – and stands there while the coals catch.

Behind him, the generator coughs, and holds.

FADE OUT.