

CUPCAKES & COMMISERATIONS

A psychological Drama

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PREMISE

This psychological drama mines the timid memory of newly pregnant Nola Thompson, a housewife, and her relationship with her devoted husband, Frank Thompson. When Frank goes missing, an investigation opens a Pandora's box of dark revelations into their perfect marriage. Nola tries to piece together a chain of eye-opening revelations, all while baking her husband's favourite, cupcakes. Frank is the CEO to an award-winning marketing company and devoted father to his ex-wife's child, Lizzy. Their relationship goes under investigation when Frank goes missing the day after his 50th birthday party. Nola's perfect existence shatters when she starts to replay memories from their marriage leading up to his disappearance, combined with watching the investigation tapes laid out before her with all the "other" women in Frank's life.

The women in the tapes offer information in the hopes to help find him. Nola begins to piece together the truth and how seemingly "perfect" her husband is. She digs deeper into his disappearance and will do anything to uncover the truth, no matter the consequences. Cupcakes and commiserations focus on a timid yet complex woman who battles to trust herself. During the time it takes for Nola to bake the perfect cupcake, she unravels into despair.

CHARACTERS:

Nola Thompson: 35-38. Wife to Frank Thompson

Frank Thompson: 45-50. Devoted husband to Nola.

VOICE OVERS FROM THE INVESTIGATION TAPES

Investigator: 45-50. Male detective.

Dianne: 40. Nola's big sister.

Mandi: 40. Frank's ex-wife.

Julz: 25-30. Beautiful vibrant PA to Frank.

Lizzy: 10. Frank's daughter with ex-wife.

First Performance as "Cupcakes & Commiserations" at the Auto and General Theatre on the Square, Johannesburg, South Africa
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SETTING

A memory play. All action takes place in NOLA's kitchen. She bakes cupcakes throughout. We move from the present moment into the memories NOLA has of her husband FRANK. Nola's replays the investigations tapes In her mind.

THE STAGE

Nola's Kitchen.

NOTES

The actors playing Nola and Frank can play the voices of the other characters.

SCENE ONE

The present. Nola's Kitchen.

*Nola is in her kitchen. A whimpering 50th balloon drifting.
She calls her sister.*

NOLA: Hey. (beat) Still haven't heard from Frank. It's been two days and nothing. (Beat) I've called a hundred times. Driving myself crazy replaying the interviews in my head. I've watched almost all of them.(beat) Well not all, I still haven't seen yours, maybe you're hiding him. (she laughs)that would be funny. (beat) I know it's weird right? But, the detective gave me the tapes to watch. He thinks I might see something he'll miss, being Franks wife and all. (beat) Something doesn't make sense Di, I don't know what it is , but I can feel somethings wrong. (beat)I hope he is okay. I keep imagining him strolling in the front door. Anyway. I'm going to bake, keep myself busy. (beat) Oh and I have something to tell, but it has to be in person. Anyway, call me when you get this.(beat) I Love you.

NOLA hangs up.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Do you have any reason to suspect foul play?

NOLA (V.O): Foul play?

DETECTIVE (V.O): Did anyone want to hurt Frank?

NOLA (V.O): No. Of course not.

DETECTIVE (V.O): So, he's a good guy?

NOLA (V.O): Yes.

DETECTIVE (V.O): And your relationship?

NOLA (V.O): We're happy.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Happy. No trouble in paradise then?

NOLA (V.O): No. No.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Let's be honest, I don't think you'd be here if it was perfect.

NOLA (V.O): We've been seeing someone. *(beat)* A doctor.*(beat)* But, we're better now.

DETECTIVE (V.O) Tell me more?

NOLA: (V.O) Marriages have their ups and downs.

DETECTIVE: (V.O) Are you down?

NOLA: (V.O): We have more ups.

DETECTIVE:(V.O) Have there been any indiscretions?

NOLA: (V.O) Um. *(beat)* That's a nice way of putting it.
(beat) Yes, but nothing that would warrant

him disappearing. It's not like him. He always answers his calls.

DETECTIVE (V.O): I know this is difficult, but if we are going to fix this, I'm going to have to ask uncomfortable questions.

NOLA (V.O): An affair, a time ago with Mandy, his ex-wife.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Mandy.

NOLA (V.O): They have a child together.

DETECTIVE (V.O): I see.

Detective watches Nola.

NOLA (V.O): Lizzy.

DETECTIVE (V.O) Okay.

NOLA: (V.O) I don't know what this has to do with finding him?

DETECTIVE (V.O): There are hidden clues everywhere.

NOLA (V.O): This isn't a game.

DETECTIVE (V.O): No one is calling it that.

NOLA (V.O): Well it feels like you don't believe me.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Look. I am on your side Mrs Thompson. I believe you. I want this to turn out positive for both of you. *(beat)* I want to

ask you to do something for me. I don't usually do this, but I think it will help. I want you to watch the other tapes, of the other women's interviews. And If you see or hear anything you think may help find your husband...

NOLA (V.O): Then i'll be in touch.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Right. Thank you. *(beat)*One last thing. Has your husband ever said anything about leaving you?

NOLA (V.O): I'm pregnant.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Congratulations. Does he know?

NOLA (V.O): Of course.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Boy or girl?

NOLA (V.O): Too early. Found out two weeks ago.

DETECTIVE (V.O): When did you tell him?

NOLA (V.O): The day before his birthday.

DETECTIVE: (V.O): Early birthday present.

NOLA (V.O): Please don't tell anyone, he wanted to keep it between us for as long as possible.

DETECTIVE: (V.O): Do you keep a lot of secrets for him?

NOLA: (V.O) No.It's just...

Nola stops talking

DETECTIVE (V.O): It's just?

NOLA (V.O): We lost our first baby.

DETECTIVE (V.O): I'm sorry.

NOLA (V.O): A year ago.

The voices stop. NOLA calls Frank.

VOICEMAIL: Hello, You've reached Frank Thompson. I am unable to take your call. Please leave a message and I will be in touch shortly

Beep tone

NOLA: I've filed a missing person's case. The detective has been asking questions about you. Us. *(beat)* I've watched the investigation tapes. He thinks that maybe it will help me figure out where you are. *(beat)* Where are you Frank? Everyone is worried. I'm worried. It's been two days already. I need to know you're okay. *(hesitant)* I love you.

NOLA hangs up. She prepares to bake. A box of oats triggers the investigation dialogue followed by a memory.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Do you have daily routines? Breakfast, work, gym?

NOLA (V.O): Every morning at 6am I make him honey tea
with fresh mint and a bowl of oats.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Every morning?

NOLA (V.O): Yes. I'm up first. The morning shift.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Anything unusual the morning he
disappeared?

NOLA (V.O): No. Woke up, had a bit of a hangover from
his party the night before... then the
usual. Breakfast.. work...

DETECTIVE (V.O): So the party was a success.

NOLA: (V.O) I think so.

DETECTIVE (V.O): No phone calls, packages?

NOLA (V.O): Like I said. Same as any other day.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Does he work long hours?

NOLA (V.O): He always comes home, it doesn't matter
what time it is, Frank always comes home.

DETECTIVE (V.O): And you heard nothing from him since?

NOLA: (V.O): Nothing, I've been sitting at home like you
said worrying about him, trying to call
him, leaving him hundreds of messages. It's
like he just vanished.

DETECTIVE (V.O): He has another child?

NOLA (V.O): Lizzy. Why?

DETECTIVE (V.O): With Mandy his ex-wife?

NOLA (V.O): Yes. What do they have to do with him missing?

DETECTIVE (V.O): Anything else significant about that day? What was the date again?

NOLA (V.O): The twenty fifth of May.

The voices stop. Fade into a memory.

SCENE TWO

A Memory - the morning after his 50th.

NOLA: Frank... Frank?

FRANK (O.S): Yes Love?

NOLA: Breakfast.

FRANK enters.

FRANK: Good morning...

FRANK takes NOLA in his arms.

NOLA: Cigarettes?

FRANK: Helps with the hangover.

NOLA: There's a fresh shirt in the laundry.

FRANK: This is fresh.

NOLA: And there is gum in your laptop bag.

FRANK exits. Returns buttoning up a new shirt. FRANK scratches for gum.

FRANK: Last night was a whopper. *(beat)* How are you feeling?

NOLA: Fine. You seemed to enjoy yourself.

FRANK: So did you. *(beat)* Turning fifty is not for the faint of heart.

NOLA: Well, for a fifty year old, you definitely had some interesting moves.

FRANK: You didn't like them?

NOLA: I didn't realise how much I would like being tied up. *(beat)* We've never done anything like that before.

FRANK: We can do it more often if you like...

NOLA: Tonight?

She whispers something in his ear.

FRANK: You filthy little strumpet...

NOLA: You bring out something in me Mr Thompson.

FRANK's phone beeps. Reads message.

FRANK: Shit.

NOLA: What?

FRANK: It's Julie. The Coelho team have asked for a meeting first thing tomorrow. Which means I am going to have to work tonight.

NOLA: But tonight is...

FRANK: Shit. Your thing. I'll cancel.

NOLA: Our thing.

FRANK Our thing. *(beat)* Sorry. It's fine, I'll cancel. The team can work without me. *(Beat)* I'm sorry, I got caught up in my own world. I didn't even ask how you were?

NOLA: You did and I'm fine. It's okay, I promise. I know how important this deal is.

FRANK: You are important... you have been planning tonight for weeks.

NOLA: You've been planning this deal for months.

FRANK: Are you sure you are okay? We've been so busy being busy. You've had so much on your plate.

NOLA: Yes, I promise. I have these to keep me going.

Nola shows a bottle of pills.

FRANK: Good. That's what I like to hear. Right, I have to go. We can change tickets for another night? Right?

NOLA: I was thinking I'll take Dianne. She loves the theatre.

FRANK: Dianne?

NOLA: Yes, my sister? The one you hate.

FRANK: No. I'll cancel tonight. We are going together.

NOLA: Don't be silly. I want to go with her. Go to work. You can make it up to me another time.

FRANK: No, I'll fetch you after work.

NOLA: But Dianne...

FRANK: Don't book with Dianne. I'll be home.

NOLA: Okay.

FRANK: Promise me you won't call her.

NOLA: I promise. (*beat*) Will Julie be there?

FRANK: At work? Of course. She's my one trick pony!

NOLA: I enjoyed meeting her last night.

FRANK: What?

NOLA: Yes, last night? Mandy seems to be in good spirits with you too?

FRANK: Maybe I should stay at home today.

NOLA: No, go. I have things to do and you will just get in the way.

Frank hesitates. He receives another urgent message.

FRANK: Shit. (beat) I have to run!

NOLA: You haven't eaten?

FRANK: I'll grab something on the way. Sorry.
(beat) I love you. (beat) I'll call you just now. Let me just make Julie happy she is very needy this morning. I'll be home early.

FRANK exits. The sound of Pots and pans crashing.

NOLA: Are you okay?

FRANK: (O.S) I'm fine, I'm fine honey. I love you.

NOLA walks towards Frank's exit. Memory fades into present day. NOLA throws out the bowl of oats- she has no appetite.

SCENE THREE

Present moment.

NOLA calls FRANK.

NOLA: *(Voicemail)* Dammit!

VOICEMAIL: Hi, You have reached Frank Thompson. I am
unable to take your call. Please leave a
message and I will be in touch shortly.

Beep tone

NOLA: I'm panicking Frank. I need to know you are
okay? Please, let me know. I am imagining
the worst. I don't care where you are or
why, I just need to know you are okay. I
need you home. We need you home. Call me.
(beat) I love you.

*NOLA continues preparing the cupcake mixture. Ants crawl across
the counter. She calls Dianne.*

NOLA: Come on Di. Not you too. I need to speak to
you! *(sees ants)* Stupid ants. *(Reading recipe
book)* Fresh mint for garnishing.

Fade into memory and conversation with Detective.

SCENE FOUR

A memory - 3 days before his birthday.

*FRANK enters garden downstage L. NOLA watches Frank from the
kitchen window.*

NOLA (V.O): We always walk in the garden together at
sunset.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Everyday?

NOLA (V.O): When he comes home before dark. *(beat)* We chat about the new leaves and plants. *(beat)* We pick fresh peppermint leaves. He loves the smell of crushed mint. *(beat)* Then it changed.

DETECTIVE (V.O): What changed?

NOLA (V.O): He started going on his own. Always on the phone.

DETECTIVE (V.O): To who?

NOLA (V.O): I don't think he wanted me to know. I'd watch him, laughing and whispering... always whispering.

NOLA (V.O): I could see him, but I couldn't hear.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Julie or Mandy maybe?

NOLA (V.O): Maybe?

NOLA moves towards FRANK in the garden. The Voices speed up and becomes distorted as she gets closer to him. The voices stop. Frank hides the phone and stumps out his cigarette.

NOLA: The mint tastes better from our garden, don't you think?

FRANK: It's all the love you put into them. I see you in the morning whispering to them.
(beat) What do you tell them?

NOLA: Wouldn't you love to know

FRANK: Secrets?

NOLA: Secrets?

FRANK: Do you have any?

NOLA: I tell you everything. Do you?

FRANK: No.

NOLA: No?

FRANK: No, I don't have any secrets.

NOLA: Who were you speaking to?

FRANK: When?

NOLA: Earlier, on the phone?

FRANK: Work.

NOLA: Julie?

FRANK: Work.

FRANK plays with a picked peppermint leaf.

NOLA: I thought she was supposed to ease your workload.

FRANK: She does.

NOLA: It feels like all you do is work.

FRANK: Imagine what it would be like without her.
(Beat) And feelings aren't facts remember?

NOLA: Please don't let her book any meetings for your birthday. We are celebrating this year.

FRANK: Maybe we should invite her.

NOLA: What?

FRANK: Then she can't book up my diary space.

NOLA: It's A little late notice.

FRANK: It's three days away? Plenty of time.

NOLA: And Lizzy?

FRANK: I'll chat to Mandy, it's our weekend anyway.

NOLA: I'll plan two more seats.

FRANK: Good girl.

FRANK rolls fresh mint between his fingers.

NOLA: Why do you love peppermint so much?

FRANK shrugs.

NOLA: Dianne and I hated it.

FRANK: My father loved it. Peppermint anything.
(Pause) My favourite memory of him, one of my only memories. I would sit on his lap

while he played cards. Cigarette in one hand, the same hand gripping the edges of the cards and always sucking on peppermints. Every time he brought his cards up the smoke from the cigarette would flow up and hit my nostrils. He always had a packet of Wilsons mints on hand. The hard ones. On the day of his funeral, my mother took out his brown suit and lay it on the bed. I sat next to it. I could smell him. There was still a packet of peppermints in his inside pocket. I felt like I found jewels. I sat at the end of the bed sucking on the peppermints and smelling the cigarette on his jacket.

NOLA: Only memory I have of my step father is watching him froth at the mouth. Dianne was wearing her yellow and green dress. *(beat)* He smelt like peppermints and cigarettes.

Frank throws aside the crushed leaves.

NOLA: The doctors said he had a seizure. *(beat)* what else do you keep from me?

FRANK: I'm worried about you Nola.

NOLA: Julie?

FRANK: What about her?

NOLA: Nothing.

FRANK: Are you sure you are okay? *(beat)* We don't
 have to invite them. I'd prefer it to be
 just the two of us.

NOLA: I love it when the sunsets.

FRANK: Let's go inside, before it gets dark. I Don't
 like it.

FRANK's phone rings.

FRANK: Shit. I have to take this, sorry.

*He exits. The red hazy glow fades into darkness. NOLA enters
her kitchen with mint from the garden.*

SCENE FIVE

Present moment. Memory of the 50th birthday.

*NOLA sits on a couch front stage. Replaying investigation while
a memory of Frank plays in the kitchen.*

DETECTIVE (V.O): The night before his disappearance you
 celebrated his fiftieth, is that correct?

NOLA (V.O): Yes.

FRANK enters the kitchen doing up his shirt.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Who was there?

NOLA (V.O): Myself, Mandy and Julie - Frank's PA, Lizzy
and Di.

Car lights shine into the kitchen room.

DETECTIVE (V.O): You were all together?

NOLA (V.O): I was in the kitchen most of the night.
Hardly spoke to anyone really.

DETECTIVE (V.O): I thought Frank just wanted it to be the two
of you?

NOLA (V.O): Frank says things he doesn't mean sometimes.

DETECTIVE (V.O): What did you make?

NOLA (V.O): Beef wellington. His favourite. He always
said if he has a choice of a last meal it
would be beef wellington. *(beat)* You have to
find him.

FRANK prepares for the arrival of his guests.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Then what happened?

NOLA (V.O): Mandy and Lizzy arrived.

*Door bells rings. Frank exits to answer. We hear voices off
stage. NOLA moves towards the front door listening.*

LIZZY (O.S.) Happy birthday daddy! Happy birthday to you
Happy birthday. Sing mom!

NOLA (V.O): Dianne. She didn't say a word all night. She didn't even help me in the kitchen. She likes to drink, a lot, lately.

DETECTIVE (V.O): What about Franks PA?

NOLA (V.O): First time I met her.(beat). Not what I expected.

The detectives questions takes her back to the night of the party. NOLA enters her kitchen.

SCENE SIX - The arrival

A memory - Night of the party.

Frank enters

FRANK: It smells great in here! How are you feeling?

NOLA: Better, great actually. I don't know what got into me yesterday. But I'm fine... I'm back to me.

FRANK: They work wonders don't they?

NOLA: The sure do. I hear everyone's arrived. I'm putting an extra two place settings.

FRANK: Why?

NOLA: Dianne is here. And I heard that Mandy has decided to stay.

FRANK: Why is Di here Nola? You know she...

Nola interrupts

NOLA: Does Mandy like red or white?

FRANK: Oh fuck. *(beat)* I can't do this now.

Frank exits with a bottle of wine. The doorbell rings. Nola listens to what is happening off stage. Franks meets Julie at the front door.

FRANK (V.O): Julie. Wow! You look wonderful.

JULIE (V.O): Happy birthday boss...

FRANK (V.O): Here, let me take this...

JULIE (V.O): I'll just put this in the kitchen.

NOLA quickly sits down on the couch again in the present moment.

FRANK (V.O): No no, don't worry about that. I'll take it later, come with me.

Footsteps are heard walking away from the kitchen. There is whispering and giggling.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Did he hire her personally?

NOLA (V.O): Frank told me that it was through a recruitment agency. But I still speak to some of the girls in the office.

DETECTIVE (V.O): The girls in the office?

NOLA: That's how we met. I used to be Frank's PA.
I started working for him. Then when we fell
in love it got awkward so I stopped.

DETECTIVE (V.O): So he lied to you?

NOLA (V.O): No, why?

DETECTIVE (V.O): Well, he didn't recruit her from an agency.

NOLA (V.O): No, he didn't did he.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Do you think he is having an affair with
her?

NOLA (V.O): Why do you keep pushing affairs? No one is
having an affair. My husband is in trouble,
not away with his Personal assistant.

DETECTIVE (V.O): I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you.

NOLA (V.O): How are you going to find him? Because asking
me these stupid questions is getting us
nowhere!

DETECTIVE (V.O): We need to make sure we have all the facts.

NOLA (V.O): My husband is missing. You are meant to be
finding him. Not sitting in a room with a
bunch of women gossiping about their
relationships with my husband.

DETECTIVE (V.O): I am doing my job Nola.

NOLA (V.O): Mrs Thompson.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Mrs Thompson. I'm ruling out things as we
move forward.

NOLA (V.O): Well rule out faster. We are happy.

Voiceovers stop.

NOLA: We are happy dammit!

Nola calls Frank.

VOICEMAIL: Hi, You have reached Frank Thompson. I am
unable to take your call. Please leave a
message and I will be in touch shortly.

Beeping tone

NOLA: Come on!

She throws the phone on the kitchen counter.

NOLA: I can't do this without you. *(Beat)* God
Frank! *(beat)* we're happy, right?

Ants appear.

SCENE SEVEN

A Memory - one day before his 50th party. (Morning)

Nola is trying to get rid of the ants. FRANK enters.

FRANK: Hubby to the rescue!

NOLA: What on earth are you wearing?

FRANK: I believe you have an ant infestation. I'm here to remove them.

NOLA: And you had to practically remove all your clothes in order to do this?

FRANK: Don't question me damsel in distress. I'm a professional. Now, where are those little soldiers. Be prepared to meet your death! Seriously? Where are they? *(beat)* You said there were hundreds.

NOLA: There were! Everywhere... you must have frightened them.

FRANK: Jeepers Nola, it sounded like you were being eaten alive.

NOLA: There were millions!

FRANK: Ahuh... you just wanted me to come home, didn't you?

NOLA: If I knew this is how you'd turn up I would've cried wolf a lot sooner.

FRANK: I'll hang around in case they decide to show up again.

NOLA: You are ridiculous, handsome, but ridiculous...

FRANK: Ridiculously ravenous for one Mrs
 Thompson...

NOLA: I don't have time, I have to finish
 preparing. It's the big five O tomorrow!

FRANK: Fifty. Just say it, rip the plaster off.

NOLA: Nothing wrong with fifty. You are so
 handsome.

FRANK: Handsome?

NOLA: Accomplished.

FRANK: Accomplished leather.

NOLA: A tanned hide.

FRANK: Not helping.

NOLA: Maybe this will...

Nola pulls FRANK towards her.

FRANK: Hey...

NOLA: Frank...

FRANK: I thought you had preparing to do.

She pulls away

NOLA: I do! (*beat*) and you arrived at the perfect
 time. Beat the eggs.

This memory coincides with the baking Nola has been doing throughout the play.

FRANK: But...

NOLA: No buts... just beating

FRANK: Why is that so sexy?

NOLA: It's how you like it these days isn't it?

FRANK whisks the eggs while NOLA puts in the rest of ingredients.

NOLA: Not too hard Franky.. slowly..

FRANK: What?

NOLA: Like this...

NOLA whisks the eggs seductively.

NOLA: Not ... too... hard.

FRANK: You're making me...

Frank tries to distract again.

NOLA: No no... we have work to do.

FRANK: Please.

NOLA: Please check the oven for me. It should be hot already.

FRANK: I can tell from here it's hot.

FRANK exits

NOLA: You are so corny.

FRANK: You are a tease.

FRANK enters. *Tastes the mixture and offers his finger to NOLA who turns her head away.*

NOLA: Peppermint love.

FRANK: Sorry.

NOLA: I need you to concentrate.

FRANK takes a cigarette from the top drawer. NOLA ladles the cupcake mixture into the pan.

NOLA: Secret Stash?

FRANK: I need some release... unless you have time?

NOLA: You are going to ruin your birthday party.

FRANK: I don't need a party. I need you.

NOLA: I have been working way to hard at preparing the perfect party.

FRANK: Stop working so hard. It's just going to be you and me dancing here in our kitchen. Maybe you will wear that red dress I love you in...maybe you will wear nothing.... maybe we will...

NOLA: These need to go into the oven!

NOLA exits with cupcakes. FRANK takes cigarette box again.

NOLA Enters

NOLA: Those things will kill you.

FRANK: I don't have much longer anyway. Downhill
 from fifty.

NOLA: You are going to have to stick around a lot
 longer. We are going to need you.

FRANK: We?

NOLA: Yes.

FRANK: Is there someone else in the room you need
 to tell me about Nola? You've been acting
 a bit strange lately. Should I be worried.

NOLA: Play nice Mr. *(beat)* I'm pregnant.

FRANK: What?

NOLA: We're having a baby.

FRANK: What?

NOLA: It's a good thing. It's what we need.

FRANK: This is amazing! Oh my love I couldn't be
 happier. My darling. A baby. How are you ..
 are you okay? Is everything okay?

NOLA: I'm ecstatic. I couldn't be happier. We are good. I went to the Doctor a week ago, to check.

FRANK: A week ago?

NOLA: I wanted to make sure everything was okay before I told you. This is a gift for us. A chance to heal and be a family again.

FRANK: And what does he say? The Doctor?

NOLA: I told you, everything looks healthy. We have a healthy baby in the making. It's a miracle. Early birthday surprise.

FRANK: A dad. Again at fifty.

Throws the cigarettes onto the counter

FRANK: Done with these!

NOLA: And I am done with these! *(She pushes her box of pills aside)* For a week now!

FRANK: But, you said you've been taking them?

NOLA: Don't be angry. I haven't, but I don't need them. We're having a baby!

FRANK: Are you sure?

NOLA: Frank, I don't want to be a mother who needs to rely on stupid happy pills.

Everything is great. We're great. I haven't felt this happy since...

Frank is hesitant.

FRANK: Maybe I should give him a call. Just to chat? You know, make sure I do everything I need to do to make this easy for you and the baby.

NOLA: You just keep being you my love. My perfect husband and father. *(beat)* Oh, and do you think it is too soon to tell my sister?

FRANK: No. *(beat)* don't tell her, anyone, not yet.

NOLA: But...

FRANK: Let's just keep this between us. For now...our secret. Okay? I just want to share it with you. No one else needs to know anything.

NOLA: But it's my sister.

FRANK: I said no Nola, just listen. Okay.

FRANK'S phone beeps.

FRANK: Shit! I have to go. Um, we chat tonight? *(beat)* I'll get some sparking juice or something.

NOLA: Okay.

Frank gets a message on his phone.

FRANK: I love you.

NOLA: I love you too. Tell Julie I say hi.

FRANK makes a call and exits.

NOLA: Ants?

SCENE EIGHT

Present moment. *Nola calls Dianne.*

NOLA: Seriously Dianne.

NOLA cleans the kitchen. She replays investigation. All that's left on the table are the icing ingredients and the box of cigarettes FRANK left on the counter.

DETECTIVE (V.O): He's a good guy?

NOLA (V.O): Yes.

DETECTIVE (V.O): I just want to get your side Nola.

NOLA (V.O): He's a good man. I've told you this before.
Stop trying to dig up stuff that isn't there. I feel like we are going around in circles. This is driving me crazy! We are happy okay. I am having his baby. We love one another. My husband is in trouble.

Something has happened to him and I need you to find him.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Does Frank have any questionable habits?

NOLA (V.O): What?

V.O start repeating.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Owing people money, strange dealings?

NOLA (V.O): Smoking.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Smoking?

NOLA (V.O): Cigarettes.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Cigarettes?

NOLA (V.O): Yeah, that's as bad as it gets. He hides it from me. He used to hide it. Now he seems to do it whenever he wants.

DETECTIVE: How do you feel about that?

NOLA: He knows I hate it. He tries to hide the smell and taste by eating peppermints.
(beat) I hate that too. It's not a crime.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Have you asked him to stop?

NOLA (V.O): It makes him happy.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Why don't you ask him to stop?

NOLA(V.O): I want him to be happy.

DETECTIVE (V.O): What makes you happy Nola?

NOLA (V.O): My family.(beat) My sister, although she seems to be too busy for me these days.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Can we speak about what happened a year ago?

NOLA picks up the box of cigarettes.

SCENE NINE

A memory - A year before. The 25th May. Nola is twirling a box of cigarettes in her hands.

NOLA: (Startled) Shit!

FRANK: Woah, calm down.

NOLA: Why are you still smoking?

FRANK: It's been a stressful few weeks.

NOLA: You need to stop.

FRANK: I'm trying.

NOLA: You know I hate it.

FRANK: I'll stop.

NOLA: I've heard that so many times.

FRANK: Look. I'm battling. Stressed with work, what happened. Dianne. Our baby, you...

NOLA: Me? (*beat*) You are blaming me now?

FRANK: No, I'm just trying to cope, things are hard right now. Okay.

NOLA: It's hard for me too.

FRANK: I'll stop. Okay. I'll try. I'm sorry.

NOLA: It was bad enough that you were hiding it from me, but now you do it right in front of my face. You don't even bother to try anymore.

FRANK: I said I'll stop Nola.

NOLA: Stop saying my name like that.

FRANK: Sorry. (*Beat*) When is our appointment with the Doctor?

NOLA *ignores* FRANK

NOLA: Don't change the subject. I don't need a doctor.

FRANK: I think we both do Nola.

NOLA: I can't do this anymore.

FRANK: Don't say that, we can get through this. I just want us to go back, back to how we used to be. I just want you happy. I'll stop, I promise.

NOLA stares blankly at FRANK.

NOLA: Where were you last night?

FRANK: Working?

NOLA: With her?

FRANK: If you mean Julie, then yes, we've been working with the whole team. I'm sorry, everything is just so fucked up right now. I know I should've been home with you.

NOLA: Sleeping with Julie isn't going to help us.

FRANK: What?! What is going on with you? I am not sleeping with her. Where is this coming from?

NOLA: You want your wife back Frank? Here is a tip. Keep your dick to yourself then.

FRANK: Nola. Look, I know we are going through awful shit, but this isn't...

NOLA: I don't know how much more I can take.

FRANK: You need to listen to me. I'm calling Doctor, maybe he can do a house visit this afternoon, give you something to help you sleep.

NOLA: Dianne's coming over.

FRANK: What?

NOLA: She is coming over. We are going to paint the baby's room.

FRANK: Why the fuck would you do that?

NOLA: She is my sister Frank!

FRANK: Your sister... she is the reason we.. just, leave the fucking babies room alone! Okay! Dianne is not stepping foot in this house again. *(Beat)* I'm calling the doctor. *(Frank calls the doctor.)* You need to rest. You haven't slept in days.

NOLA: This is all your fault. Stop calling him. Stop making me feel like it's all my fault. Give it here!

FRANK: Stop it! Stop it!

FRANK pulls the phone back from her and leaves the room.

FRANK: (O.S): Hi... It's Frank...

NOLA watches him leave.

SCENE TEN

Nola in the Kitchen. The Present. She calls FRANK.

MESSAGE: Hi, You have reached Frank Thompson. I am unable to take your call. Please leave a message and I will respond shortly.

Beeping tone

NOLA: It's me, again. You probably going to think I've finally lost it. I'm in the kitchen. Baking (beat) cupcakes (beat) your favourite. Still fighting off ants. I found your secret stash, reminded me about all the times I would get so upset with you for smoking and hiding it from me. I'm sorry. I am sorry for the way I treated you with my sister. I need you to come home now. We need you Frank. I'm sorry for everything.

NOLA hangs up. An orchestra of the detective conversations is heard overlapping, whispering distorted while she frantically tries to get rid of the ants taking over her kitchen

DETECTIVE (V.O): Did anyone want to hurt Frank?

NOLA (V.O): No. of course not

DETECTIVE (V.O): He's a good guy?

NOLA (V.O): Yes. I've told you this.

DETECTIVE (V.O): And your relationship?

NOLA (V.O): We're happy.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Did someone want to hurt Frank?

NOLA (V.O): No.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Was he having an affair?

NOLA (V.O): Frank is a good man.

DETECTIVE (V.O): I know this is hard. I know my questions are difficult, but I need to ask them. Was Frank having an affair?

NOLA (V.O): Frank is a good man.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Was he having an affair?

NOLA (V.O): Frank is a good man.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Was Frank having an affair?

DETECTIVE (V.O): Was Frank having an affair?

DETECTIVE (V.O): Was Frank having an affair?

NOLA (V.O): Frank is a good man.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Was Frank having an affair?

DETECTIVE (V.O): How long has Julia been his PA?

DETECTIVE (V.O): Mandy his ex-wife?

DETECTIVE (V.O): So he lied to you?

DETECTIVE (V.O): So he lied to you?

Nola looks for her spray bottle to remove ants.

Flashback to the end of SCENE SEVEN

Leading into scene eleven - A memory.

NOLA: Frank, I don't want to be a mother who needs to rely on stupid happy pills. Everything is great. We're great. I haven't felt this happy since...

Frank is hesitant.

FRANK: Maybe I should give him a call. Just to chat? You know, make sure I do everything I need to do to make this easy for you and the baby.

NOLA: You just keep being you my love. My perfect husband and father. *(beat)* Oh, and do you think it is too soon to tell my sister?

FRANK: No. *(beat)* don't tell her, anyone, not yet.

NOLA: But...

FRANK: Let's just keep this between us. For now...our secret. Okay? I just want to share it with you. No one else needs to know anything.

NOLA: But it's my sister.

FRANK: I said no Nola, just listen. Okay.

FRANK'S phone beeps.

FRANK: Shit! I have to go. Um, we chat tonight?(beat) I'll get some sparking juice or something.

NOLA: Okay.

Frank gets a message on his phone.

FRANK: I love you.

NOLA: I love you too. Tell Julie I say hi.

FRANK makes a call and exits.

NOLA: Ants?

FRANK makes a call and exits. NOLA looking for spray bottle to remove the ants. She sends a text message.

SCENE ELEVEN - "The Affair"

A memory - The day before his 50th (after the baking scene)

The voiceovers stop. FRANK enters carrying flowers.

FRANK: Hey honey, I brought you flowers.

NOLA: We need to talk Frank.

FRANK: Right.

NOLA: I'm serious.

FRANK: Okay. I'm just gonna put these here then.
(puts flowers down) I'm listening.

NOLA: I can't do this anymore. (beat) We can't
do this anymore.

FRANK: Do what?

NOLA: Live in a house of lies. I don't want to,
I mean I won't bring my child up like this.

FRANK: Like what my love?

NOLA: I thought you would have stopped this.
We're having a baby.

FRANK: Stopped what?

NOLA: I hate it when you act like I am stupid.
(beat) Your affair, with Mandy.

FRANK: Not this again. When you start talking like
this it usually because you haven't taken
your pills.

NOLA: I knew you'd say that.

FRANK: Well, have you?

NOLA slaps something off her arm.

FRANK: Don't tell me the ants again?

NOLA: The affair Frank! I hate it when you do
this!

FRANK: Do what?

NOLA: Make me look like I am crazy, that I'm making up things. I don't have a word for it, but you are doing it! Again!

FRANK: Well if it's not the ants then it's the affair. This week it's Mandy huh, next week Julie right? Or Maybe the girl at the coffee shop? *(beat)* I'm tired of being accused for doing nothing wrong.

NOLA: I won't bring my child into a relationship like this.

FRANK: Maybe I should go out and have an affair, at least that way I am being accused for doing something wrong.

NOLA: So my husband is allowed to wonder off after other women, sleep with whoever he wants and it's my fault.

FRANK: You know what I mean.

NOLA: I've told my sister.

FRANK: I was waiting for you to mention her.

NOLA: Screw you.

FRANK: I'm surprised she isn't on my fucking list.
Or is she?

NOLA slaps another ant off.

NOLA: I don't want to fight with you. I just want the truth. Isn't that what you want too? Our child growing up in a loving family?

FRANK: This is a loving family!

NOLA: Could have fooled me. *(beat)* What do you want Frank?

FRANK: I want you to use your pretty little mouth for something else like taking your pills! Then I won't have to deal with this.

NOLA: You can't control me anymore Frank. I won't let you. Things are different now. I am different.

FRANK: When will this stop?

NOLA: When you stop lying to me! I know you are still seeing her.

FRANK: I only love you. What do you need me to do to prove it?

NOLA: Why are you lying to me?

FRANK: I've never lied to you. I promised to always tell you the truth, remember? Always. Nothing has changed. Mandy and I got divorced years ago. We were over long before

we started seeing one another. It's you and me. Look at me!

Nola looks away

FRANK: Fuck! I can't do this anymore. Look Nola. Nola? You are pregnant, you need to look after yourself and our baby.

NOLA: I can't do this anymore.

FRANK: I don't have all the answers, all I have is my love for you. You have to trust me. Shit man. Just this morning we were so happy? A baby Nola, our baby? Focus on us, our family.

NOLA: I hate you.

FRANK: No you don't.

NOLA: I hate you.

FRANK: Stop saying that. We'll navigate this together. You and me.

NOLA: And Dianne. Dianne is part of our family too!

Frank gives up

FRANK: Of course.. and Dianne.

NOLA: She hates you.

FRANK: I don't care...

NOLA: She hates you!

FRANK: I don't care! I don't care what anyone thinks- Mandy, Julie, Dianne! All that matters is that you trust me and that we are doing this together. What happened to you? What happened to us? We are meant to be happy. It's my birthday tomorrow for heaven's sake.

NOLA: My sister...

FRANK: Your sister is. *(Franks phone rings)* I don't know where all of this is coming from. Sort your shit out. I need to breath, I'm going to work. You do what you need to do.

NOLA: To be with her, to be with Julie.

FRANK: To work, to find ways to feed you and my child!

FRANK exits.

NOLA: And the ants Frank. You need to do something about the ants.

The egg timer rings startling NOLA back into the present moment.

NOLA runs into the kitchen to stop the egg timer and take out the cupcakes.

DIANNE (V.O): Simpson

DETECTIVE (V.O): Pardon?

DIANNE (V.O): Ms Simpson, Ms Simpson, I've been divorced for over 10 years.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Of course, sorry Ms Simpson. Different name to Nola?

DIANNE: (V.O): Different fathers. Luckily for her it was never incest. *(beat)* Frank wasn't a threat to anyone.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Oh.

DIANNE (V.O): He probably knocked himself off accidentally.

DETECTIVE (V.O): You are not a fan of Frank?

DIANNE (V.O): No.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Any reason?

DIANNE (V.O): His affairs... mostly.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Affairs?

DIANNE (V.O): He can't seem to keep his dick out of anything.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Is Nola aware of these affairs?

DIANNE (V.O): I have been telling Nola for years to leave him. Look, I wasn't happy with how they started their relationship either. He was

still married when they met. You lose them the way you win them. He has a kid you know. Lizzy. Who knows how many other kids he has roaming around.

DETECTIVE (V.O): So this is normal for him?

DIANNE (V.O): For him. Not her. She should never have gotten involved with a married man.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Do you know who his affairs are with?

DIANNE (V.O): Anyone that shows him the slightest bit of interest. He once tried it with me. I was happy, I finally had a reason to hate him.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Let's say he was dead.

DIANNE (V.O): Highly doubt it.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Hypothetically. Do you know anyone who might have wanted him dead?

DIANNE (V.O): Besides me? No.

DIANNE (V.O): I'd be pissed off if he was.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Was what?

DIANNE (V.O): Dead.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Why?

DIANNE (V.O): Because I didn't have the pleasure of watching him suffer.

DETETCIVE. (V.O): Nola doesn't know.

DIANNE (V.O): She denies it. I suspect. Prick! Sorry.
Let's blame the chemo.

Heart-breaking news for NOLA to hear.

DETECTIVE (V.O): You're sick?

DIANNE (V.O): You are good at this. Cancer.

DETETCIVE (V.O): I'm sorry.

DIANNE (V.O): Me too.

DETECTIVE: Does Nola know?

DIANNE (V.O): I'm dying. Why must the people I love suffer
with me?

DETECTIVE (V.O): Fair enough.

DIANNE (V.O): She is better off without him.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Probably a good thing if we don't find him.
Do you have any reason to believe your sister
has anything to do with his disappearance?

DIANNE (V.O): Have you even met her.

DETECTIVE (V.O): The cancer?

DIANNE (V.O): Terminal.

DETECTIVE (V.O): What would she do if she knew about Frank's
affairs?

DIANNE (V.O): It would kill her.

DETECTIVE: (V.O) And the cancer?

DIANNE (V.O): It would kill her.

NOLA *stops the tape. Calls Dianne. The calls don't go through. so she decides to send a voice message on WhatsApp.*

NOLA: Hi, it's me. *(beat)* I watched your tape. Cancer? When were you going to tell me? Why didn't you tell me earlier? Who else knows? You really need to call me, you need to come over, I need to see you. I can't live without you. I don't know how to. Please call me. I love you.

NOLA hangs up. *She watches another video. NOLA stuffs an icing bag and starts icing a cupcakes while watching the next tape.*

DETECTIVE (V.O): Good afternoon Julie, thank you for coming.

JULZ (V.O): I shouldn't be here. I tried to talk to Mrs Thompson, in the hallway. You know. Nola. Telling her how sorry I am for her loss. I started rambling stupid things like. How much I love her hairstyle and her black dress, and I said I'm sorry about Frank, and for everything, and just saying his name made me want to vomit. I said she is such a

nice lady and no wonder Frank loves her. She always had such wonderful kind things to say to me and I asked her to have coffee sometime, and that it would be nice to get together and do that. Then I said Jesus loves you.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Alright Julie, Let's start from the beginning. You are Frank's PA, right?

JULZ (V.O): Yes.

DETECTIVE (V.O): You are a lot older than I imagined.

Julz voice all of a sudden sounds older.

JULZ (V.O) I won't ask how old you thought I was.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Sorry. I am just going to get straight to the point. The two of you were having an affair, is that right?

JULZ (V.O): Excuse me?

DETECTIVE (V.O): Have you been having an affair with Frank Thompson?

JULZ (V.O): This can't be happening? This is all my fault.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Do you know where Frank is Julia?

JULZ (V.O): No.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Then why do you think this is your fault?

JULZ (V.O): I started this.

DETECTIVE (V.O): This?

NOLA: I knew it.

JULZ (V.O): The affair.

DETECTIVE (V.O): How?

JULZ (V.O): One day I wrote a little note on the 15th June in his diary - 8pm meeting with your secretary and a question mark.

DETECTIVE (V.O): And then?

VO JULZ (V.O): Before I could tipex it out, he walked past and grabbed his diary.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Then?

JULZ (V.O): We never work passed 6pm.

DETECTIVE (V.O): I see. Do you love him?

JULZ (V.O): I do, but dear Frank isn't capable of loving only one woman, not even two...

DETECTIVE (V.O): There is someone else?

JULZ (V.O): Mandy.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Mandy?

JULZ (V.O): I saw Frank and her kissing at his 50th. He
 had all his woman under one roof. I don't
 mind. Any love is welcomed by me.

NOLA: I knew it, I knew I wasn't going mad.

JULZ (V.O): Do you think Frank is okay?

DETECTIVE (V.O): We hope so.

NOLA stops the tape. Sound off stage of something breaking or falling in the scullery. It is the same sound at the end of Scene Three. She waits in silence for a long period of time. After a while she takes an iced cupcake and in silence she stuffs it down. She picks up her phone and dials Franks phone.

MESSAGE: This inbox is full. You are unable to leave a
 message. Please try again later.

Beep tone

NOLA exits. Loud banging and cankering heard off stage. Montage of voices can be heard, whispering shouting, nothing audible. The voices from the tapes the dial tone, the phone inbox all playing one after another.

SCENE THIRTEEN - "Nothing makes sense."

Present moment.

NOLA enters. Pushing FRANK into the room tied and gagged to a chair. FRANK is exhausted and dishevelled, he has been in the pantry since the morning after his birthday. NOLA wheels him on centre stage. She is wearing a red dress.

NOLA: I have read so many articles lately, you know the ones where they warn you about your partner. When all of a sudden he brings new objects or moves into the bedroom. Is it tight enough for you my love? I knew something was different, we always doing the same old position week after week. But then, Wooh! Things got steamy. Maybe I should thank Mandy for that. (beat) I can't believe I let you blame me for everything, I really thought I was going crazy. I stopped trusting myself, started believing your lies. But I'm done now though Frank. I can't bring this baby into this world with a lying cheating father. So many children without fathers, if they are anything like you. You understand right?

FRANK *struggling and moaning.*

NOLA:

I knew you would. *(beat)* I'm baking your favourite. *(beat)* I've called the police. *(beat)* I've opened a missing persons case. You've been missing for a few days now. *(beat)* The detective was kind enough to give me a copy of his tapes to watch. I think he fancies me. I mean, what officer gives you a copy of an investigation tape, right? Dianne was also confused. You'd like him. *(beat)* He suggested I watch them all in case anything stuck out. Well, plenty stuck out Frank. Plenty. And I watched all of them, several times. I haven't stopped actually. Trying to find clues. Trying to make sense of all of this.

FRANK *struggling*.

NOLA:

I've been thinking it was me all along. All your late nights, phone calls in the garden. Your innocent PA. Here I've been beating myself up thinking I am the reason my husband goes off galivanting. Maybe I've been too boring for him, driving him into the arms of two other women. Two. Other. Women! Seriously Frank?

FRANK *tries to talk*

I know love. I know, you didn't mean to. Because you love me. Right? Because I am everything to you. Sexy, beautiful. The mother of your child. *(beat)* Just the three of us, right? I thought you meant just the three of us. *(Referring to her baby too)*

FRANK *tries to talk*

Oh yes! I have something for you.

NOLA *gets the lap top and places it in front of Frank. The audience can't see the screen.*

People lie you know. There is one tape I have watched over and over again, but I can't figure out if I can believe her or not. I never trusted your ex-wife. Mandy. I keep telling the detective she is great. But we both know she's a bitch. Remember the night of your birthday, we did some pretty filthy stuff together. Makes me blush thinking about it. It was new to me... but not to you. Here I thought I was special. Not the first time I've been fooled. *(beat)* My step father told me I was special too. Turned out his own

daughter took first preference. Always second fiddle Nola. (beat) Watch this with me.

NOLA *presses play. NOLA forces him to watch the investigation tape. Using her hands to keep his head and eyes facing the screen, opening his eyes with her fingers. Making sure he watches everything.*

VO of Investigation between Detective and Mandy.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Hello Mandy. I appreciate you being here. We are treating your concern about Frank as an emergency.

MANDY (V.O): Thank you.

NOLA: Recognise her Frank?

FRANK *tries to speak*

DETECTIVE (V.O): Please state for our record who you are and your relationship with Frank Thompson?

NOLA *Mimics Mandy's responses. She has watched this tape a dozen times. She speaks over Mandy's voice.*

MANDI (V.O): Mandy McKay. Franks ex-wife.

DETECTIVE (V.O): You believe he is in danger?

MANDI (V.O): Yes.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Why?

MANDY (V.O): I haven't heard from him in days. We speak daily.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Daily? Tell me about your relationship?

Frank tries to speak.

MANDY (V.O): We are divorced.

DETECTIVE (V.O): How long?

MANDI (V.O): three years.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Are you having an affair with Frank?

MANDI (V.O): Yes

DETECTIVE (V.O): How long?

MANDI (V.O): A couple of years. 2 years.

NOLA: Two years? Two years!

DETECTIVE (V.O): Are you still in love?

MANDI (V.O): He is the father of my child. I will always love him.

NOLA: I suppose you are thoroughly enjoying this right now... making a fool out of me. Two years, what was I , what was this? Answer me!

FRANK moans

DETECTIVE (V.O): Why did you get divorced?

MANDI (V.O): It's complicated

DETECTIVE (V.O): Good guy?

MANDY: Charming ... great guy.

NOLA: Charming... are you charming Frank?

She taps his cheek

DETECTIVE (V.O): Love at first sight?

MANDI (V.O): Perhaps.

DETECTIVE (V.O): How did you meet?

MANDI (V.O): I invited him to come with us to art galleries and exhibitions. *(Beat)* What has this got to do with Frank missing now?

NOLA: Oh it is important Mandy. So important!
Watch Frank. This is the part I cant . I
don't believe.

DETECTIVE (V.O): It's important for us to know what circles
Frank moves in.

MANDI (V.O): I don't think it's questionable, but we
sometimes go to BDSM events.

NOLA: BDSM. B.D.S.M Frank? Is this what you like?
Is this how you like it? Is this the truth?

*NOLA starts getting physical with Frank. She can even use
items from the kitchen to "punish" him.*

DETECTIVE (V.O): BDSM? I've seen a few documentaries on
Netflix. Why did your marriage end?

MANDI (V.O): It ended.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Indiscretion?

MANDI (V.O): Does it matter?

NOLA: You lied to me Frank.

FRANK moaning.

NOLA: You lied.

DETECTIVE (V.O): Yes. If I am going to find him, you are going to have to work with me.

MANDI (V.O): Frank is an obsessive romantic

DETECTIVE (V.O): Jealous? Possessive?

MANDI (V.O): He can be...

DETECTIVE (V.O): Violent?

MANDI (V.O): Frank and I meet a certain need for one another. I'm sure you have needs officer. Needs your wife doesn't quite meet.

DETECTIVE (V.O): How did your affair start?

MANDI (V.O): We just never stopped having sex. We heal one another's pain.

NOLA *switches off the laptop turns to FRANK.*

NOLA (*venomous*): Pain? Pain? What pain? Do you want to see pain? Feel pain? Is this the pain you need to feel! Is this what you want Frank? To be controlled? Can you feel this? Does this heal your pain? Do you have pain that needs healing Frank? Do you need to be healed? Is this what you want Frank? I also dream

of being tied up, held up against the wall, strapped down and taken control of. But I'm not allowed to feel like this, am I? I'm not allowed my fantasies because I am the perfect woman, the perfect wife, the perfect lover. I am a good little girl. Do you even find me attractive?

NOLA *turns FRANK to face her.*

NOLA: Do you understand now, why I couldn't believe Mandy's story. Crazy. *(laughing)* You, lying there with a butt plug and nipple clamps. What's wrong Frank? I thought you liked being tied up? I thought this is what you enjoyed. Or is it only Mandy or Julie who can turn you on?

NOLA *pulls up a stool next to FRANK.*

NOLA: You know what I love the most in this world? Watching you eat my cupcakes. Your big hands around my small cupcakes, two bites and it's all gone.

NOLA *Unwrapping a cupcake*

NOLA: I want you to eat my cupcake. *(beat)* Please. Please Frank *(beat)* Eat it for me.

It will make me so happy to watch you. I already feel better with you here. I missed you so much. If you eat my cupcake, and you don't say a word, I will untie you. I promise. You won't say a word? I trust you Frank.

FRANK *nods*. NOLA *removes the gag straddles over FRANK and forces him to take a bite*. FRANK *speaks*.

FRANK: Nola! Nola!

NOLA: I told you not to speak!

FRANK: Nola, I need you to listen to me.

NOLA: No! You listen to me! I am done listening to you!

FRANK: You are wrong Nola, you are wrong about everything. Please listen to me my love.

NOLA: I'm tired of listening! I am tired of being abused by you, lied to. I am done! Done! Shut up!

FRANK: Nola! It's just you and me.

NOLA: Shut up Frank. Stop trying to control me! I won't let you anymore! I know the truth! I have proof.

FRANK: I haven't spoken to Mandy.

*Nola tries to re-gag him, he kicks the gag under the table.
She covers her ears so not to hear him.*

NOLA: Shut up.

FRANK: listen to yourself Nola, you know the truth.
None of this is real.

NOLA: So what, I am just imagining this now?

FRANK: Nola, I need you to untie me.

NOLA: I need you to listen to me! Even my sister knows
about your affairs. *(Beat)* Fuck, here you sit
still trying to deny me! Still trying to make
me feel crazy. You are a piece of work!

FRANK hiding his fear trying to calm her down.

FRANK: My darling, my love. Please sit down. You are
panicking. Something doesn't feel right, right?
Something doesn't feel right.

NOLA: I have the tapes.

FRANK: There are no tapes Nola.

NOLA: The investigation tapes. I have the rest, all
of them Dianne's confession, Julie's. You just
watched Mandy's.

FRANK: Nola...

NOLA: You can't lie to me anymore.

FRANK: Nola, There was nothing on the screen when you were showing me.

NOLA: Bullshit.

NOLA opens the laptop trying to turn it on and find the tapes. They are gone.

FRANK: Nola, You are seeing things again. There are no tapes. You need to untie...

NOLA: You deleted them.

FRANK: How could I? Nola *(beat)* Nola! I need you to look at me. Look at me!

NOLA gets distracted by the ants.

NOLA: Ants... ants everywhere. Get off me!

FRANK: There are no ants love. Nola, look at me. Please, please look at ...

NOLA: What are you talking about? Look. They are all around me on the floor.

FRANK: Nola, there are no ants! They don't exist.

NOLA: What?

NOLA screams brushing a few off her body.

FRANK: You are having an episode my love.

NOLA: What?

NOLA *still removing ants*

FRANK: Your pills. Where are your pills? You need to take them. Please.

NOLA: No. You don't get to do this to me anymore. I know what you are doing. You doing that thing where I am the crazy one. I'm not crazy! I'm not! I haven't touched my pills in days! I haven't been happier.

FRANK: When last did you have them?

NOLA: I know you are having affairs.

FRANK: When you don't take your pills you start hearing voices. Seeing ants. They aren't real. The tapes aren't real. There is no investigation. You need your pills Nola.

NOLA: I need to call my sister.

NOLA *calls Dianne.*

MESSAGE: The number you have dialled no longer exists.
The number you have dialled no longer exists.
The number you have dialled no longer exists.

(Beep)

FRANK: She won't answer. Your sister died a year ago. On the Twenty fifth May...The day after my birthday is the anniversary of her death. She

died from cancer. Please my love. My birthday triggered this...You have stopped taking your medication for two weeks now. Please, you need to untie me Nola, I need you to...

NOLA: Stop lying to me. She messaged me today. Look... look. It was here. I responded.

NOLA *looks for a message*

FRANK: Nola, my love. This time one year ago. We lost our first baby when you heard the news. Your heart was so broken...your body was ...you couldn't keep her inside you anymore. It was too much for you and our baby. We lost Dianne, our baby girl. You are reliving things, you. You need to speak to Doctor Morris, you need to call him.

NOLA: Detective Morris! I've been talking to detective Morris.

FRANK: You were getting better, we were getting better. None of this is real, you need to believe me, you need your pills Nola.

NOLA: Shut up Frank. Shut up! You don't know what you are talking about.

FRANK *starts struggling more, battling to breathe.*

FRANK: I love you, we love one another. We are happy.

NOLA: Detective Morris, he knows everything.

FRANK: Doctor Morris. *(beat)* Dr Morris has been helping you. Helping us. Your trauma goes back to when you were a child. Your step father abused you. Your mother left you, Dianne died... You are marinated in trauma and you are sick. Nola, look at me, listen to me. I'm telling you the truth. I promised you I would always tell the truth. Julie, Mandy they are part of your stories. They don't exist.

NOLA: Julie?

FRANK: Julie is a sixty five year old women! You confuse her with us, when we fell in love. You wrote a little note on the 18th June in my diary - 8pm meeting with your secretary and a question mark. We started seeing one another. I was married to Mandy then. But the marriage was over, we didn't have an affair. I left her for you. I love you. I love you.

NOLA starts to hear the Voice overs. A montage of all the conversations start to play. Overlapping and warped.

NOLA: But your 50th? I saw it all happen.

FRANK: Saw what happen?

NOLA: You kissing Julia and Mandy? They arrived, you stayed with them in the passage.

FRANK: We celebrated alone. We made love right here. Please Nola, you need to untie me. *(beat)* What did you feed me ?

FRANK *starts convulsing.*

NOLA: What?

NOLA *becomes catatonic*

FRANK: I don't feel well. What did you feed me? *(Beat)* what was in the cupcake?

FRANK *dying and frothing at the mouth.*

FRANK: You need to untie me Nola. What's in the cupcake. Please untie me, you are safe with me. It's just you and me.

FRANK *doubling over tied to the chair.*

FRANK: I'm not feeling... The cupcake Nola, what did you put in the cupcake. *(beat)* Call the Doctor. Please.

NOLA *stands catatonic watching FRANK die.*

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOURTEEN

FRANK is sitting on the couch in front of the stage. Dr Morris is the same voice as the detective.

FRANK: She hasn't taken her medication in ten days Doctor. Longer even. I wouldn't know. She says it was your orders.

DR Morris (V.O): I would never tell a patient with schizophrenia to go off their medication.

FRANK: Now what?

DR Morris (V.O): She needs to go back on immediately. She is already regressing. We know Nola suffers from delusions and hallucinations.

FRANK: Yes , she thinks my sixty five year old PA and I are having an affair, that I am still with my ex -wife Mandy. She even believe her sister is back from the dead.

DR Morris (V.O): Schizophrenia is a very serious mental disease. The fact that she has taken herself off her meds is what I warned you about it. It's dangerous.

FRANK: Dangerous?

DR MORRIS (V.O): Your wife has suffered marinated traumas. The loss of her sister, your baby...the

trauma from being abused as a child is the likely cause for her diagnosis. It's also genetic and we know nothing about her biological father. *(beat)* The anniversary of her sister's death is coming up soon, right?

FRANK: The day after my birthday. Tomorrows my birthday.

DR MORRIS (V.O): The 25th of May.

FRANK: Shit, this has all been too much for her. Works been ... and...I haven't been there for her.

DR MORRIS (V.O): Nola's mind has found its own way to make sense of it all. Even seasons, foods, smells can trigger traumatic memories and the onset of hallucinations. There isn't much you can do but be there and encourage her to take her medication.

FRANK: The ants.

DR MORRIS (V.O): Yes. Hallucinations. Patients suffering from hallucinations will hear things in her head, the same way we are hearing them now.

Even tactile hallucinations... feeling things.

FRANK: What do I do? She needs help.

DR MORRIS (V.O): You either bring her in, or you get her to take her pills now.

FRANK: Okay.

DR MORRIS (V.O): This doesn't have to be a life-sentence Frank. But, she needs to stay on her treatment. I strongly suggest you do what it takes to get her on her meds again.

FRANK: The baby? *(beat)* We can't lose this one too.

DR MORRIS: (V.O) It's still early days and there can be complications but you can't stress about that now.

FRANK: Complications?

DR MORRIS: (V.O) The only time you will need to worry about the baby is if she starts showing negative symptoms, withdrawing, bad hygiene, not taking care of herself. But, it sounds like we can get her back on her meds and back on the road to recovery before then.

Frank's phone beeps.

FRANK: It's Nola, she needs to talk.

DR MORRIS (V.O): Go home. Be gentle, take her flowers. Get her back on her meds. I'll check up on you later. Enjoy your birthday, your time together.

Lights Fade

Lights fade up. Frank and Nola dancing centre stage. The night of his birthday party. It is just the two of them. Nola wears the red dress.

FRANK: This is my favourite thing.

NOLA: What is?

FRANK: Just the two of us...dancing

NOLA: The three of us.

FRANK: I love you. (beat) You are all I want.

Nola rests her head on FRANKS shoulder looking out to the audience.

NOLA: The sun is setting.

A droning buzz of whispering voices from the investigation tapes flood the theatre.

BLACKOUT

THE END

