

BUTTERFLY

written by

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ACT I

FADE IN:

EXT. CAPE TOWN - SUBURBAN TRAIN TRACKS - LATE AFTERNOON

Golden light spills over a worn set of train tracks that cut through a quiet Cape Town suburb. The wind rustles dry grass. In the distance, Table Mountain looms like a quiet god.

A pair of sneakers slowly cross the tracks.

NOAH REID (17) walks alone, backpack slung lazily over one shoulder, earbuds in. He's thin, quiet-looking, with tired eyes like he hasn't slept in days.

He steps over litter, glances toward a rusty old sign:

"SALT RIVER"

A TRAIN horn howls in the distance — far, but echoing.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - EARLIER THAT DAY

A dim room. Posters peeling on the wall. Soccer jersey hung on the back of a door.

Noah lies on his bed, staring at the ceiling, headphones on. His phone buzzes.

INSERT - PHONE SCREEN

LILA 🐦: u coming or not?

He stares at it for a moment, thumb hovering. Then replies:

NOAH: on my way.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - LATE AFTERNOON

Noah leans against the window, watching Cape Town blur past — rusted rooftops, distant cranes, a group of boys kicking a ball in a dusty lot.

In the reflection, he sees himself... and **LILA (17)** — laughing, playful, blurry. A memory.

But it fades. It's just him.

EXT. LILA'S HOUSE - GOLDEN HOUR

Noah stands at the gate. It's a small, older house with chipped paint and garden overgrowth. Music plays faintly from inside.

He takes a breath and knocks.

INT. LILA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door swings open.

LILA GREY, radiant and messy, stands in cutoff jeans and a band shirt. A cigarette dangles from her fingers. A butterfly tattoo curls just above her collarbone.

She smiles — and it's the kind of smile that wrecks people.

LILA
(tipping her head)
Took you long enough.

NOAH
(train-lagged)
Missed the first one.

She lets him in without a word. He follows.

The door closes.

SLAM CUT TO BLACK.

CUE TITLE CARD:

BUTTERFLY

INT. LILA'S ROOM - EVENING

The walls are littered with Polaroids, lyrics written in pen, and postcards from places she's never been. A cracked lava lamp glows faintly on the dresser.

Noah stands awkwardly near the bed, as Lila flops onto it, scrolling her phone.

She's effortless — like she belongs to a world where things don't hurt the same.

LILA
You look like you haven't slept in
a week.

NOAH
Maybe two.

She glances up at him, studying. Her voice softens slightly.

LILA
You okay?

NOAH
(straightforward)
No.

Beat.

She nods like she understands more than she should.

LILA
Me neither.

She pats the spot next to her. He hesitates. Then sits.

There's a long, comfortable silence. The kind only people who
are both a little broken can share.

LILA (CONT'D)
Remember that party in Obs? The one
with the rooftop?

NOAH
You danced in the rain. Said you
were cleansing your "trauma."

LILA
(smirks)
It was aesthetic.

He almost smiles.

NOAH
You fell on your ass.

She bursts into laughter — that bright, reckless laugh that's
both joyful and sad.

LILA
Still one of the best nights of my
life.

She turns serious again. Quieter now.

LILA (CONT'D)
I got in. Joburg. Film school.

Noah's breath catches. This is the first he's hearing.

NOAH
When?

LILA
August.

Silence. Then:

NOAH
So you're leaving.

She doesn't answer. Instead, she reaches under her bed and pulls out a shoebox.

From it, she retrieves a small **MiniDV camera** – old, scratched, but working.

LILA
Let's make something. One last summer film. Before I go.

She offers him the camera. His fingers brush hers.

NOAH
What kind of film?

LILA
Us. Real. Honest. Even if it ends badly.

NOAH
Spoiler: it will.

She grins.

LILA
Good. Then it'll be interesting.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SALT RIVER STREET – DAY (MONTAGE BEGINS)

- Lila filming Noah walking past graffiti walls.
- Lila spinning in the street, camera in hand, pretending to direct.
- A quiet moment: Noah catches Lila crying on camera. She doesn't stop recording.
- The two of them lying on a blanket at Signal Hill, city lights twinkling below.

- A slow shot of Lila tracing the outline of her butterfly tattoo in the mirror.

MUSIC builds...

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dimly lit. Posters of bands and old film stills cover the walls. A guitar leans against a desk cluttered with notebooks, film canisters, and a beat-up laptop.

Noah watches the footage they filmed earlier on his screen.

Lila's voice echoes through the room.

LILA (V.O.)

Do you ever think about how we
might just be a memory to someone
else? Like—what if this is the last
time they ever remember us?

Noah pauses the footage. The image freezes on Lila mid-laugh, wind whipping through her hair. He stares at her.

His phone BUZZES.

A text from

MOM: "We need to talk about rent this month. I'm serious."

He sighs. Locks the phone.

Then opens a notebook. On the page, scribbled in black pen:

"SUMMER FILM: TITLE IDEAS:

- Paper Wings

- One Last Light

- Butterfly"

He circles Butterfly.

He stares at the word, then slowly reaches for his camera.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Noah speaks directly to the camera now. Raw. Unfiltered. Like it's a confession booth.

NOAH

This is about someone I met in a
time I didn't believe in anything.
Not in love. Not in people. Not
even in myself. She... ruined that.
In the best way.

He stops. Looks off, thinking.

NOAH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

This isn't about getting her back.
It's about remembering her the way
I want to. Even if she forgets me.

He presses stop.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAKOVEN BEACH - SUNSET

The golden sun dips low. Lila runs ahead, filming Noah from behind.

She turns the camera to herself. Her voice soft.

LILA (TO CAMERA)

If you're watching this years from
now... I hope you know that I meant
it. All of it. Even when I ran.

The sound of waves crashing gently in the background.

She looks off into the horizon, camera still recording.

INT. LILA'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Cape Town dusk casts an orange glow through the sheer
curtains. The living room is cozy, cluttered — books on the
floor, a half-finished painting on an easel in the corner.
Sounds of distant traffic drift through the windows.

Lila sits cross-legged on the couch, scrolling through photos
on her old camcorder. Her butterfly tattoo peeks out from
under her sleeve.

INSERT - CAMCORDER SCREEN:

A shaky shot of Noah, laughing. Then static.

KNOCK-KNOCK.

Lila looks up.

INT. LILA'S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

She opens the door. Her **DAD (40s)** stands there, disheveled. He looks like he hasn't slept.

DAD
Didn't answer your phone.

LILA
Yeah. I know.

DAD
You coming this weekend? Your gran wants to see you before you go.

She hesitates.

LILA
I'm not going, Dad.

DAD
What do you mean? This might be the last time—

LILA
I said I'm not going.

She starts to close the door. He gently stops it with his hand.

DAD
Why are you doing this? Every time things get better, you find a reason to disappear.

Lila stares at him. Her eyes fill with water, but she doesn't let the tears fall.

LILA
I'm not disappearing. I'm leaving. That's different.

She closes the door.

INT. LILA'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lila sinks onto the couch. The camcorder still plays on her lap.

She presses rewind.

The tape hums.

CAMCORDER AUDIO (O.S.)

NOAH (V.O.)
 You ever feel like if you stay too
 long in one place, you'll start to
 rot?

She presses pause.

She stares blankly at the screen.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Noah's on a call with Lila. His laptop open in front of him.
 On-screen: a blank Google Form titled "University of Cape
 Town - Film School Application."

LILA (O.S., PHONE)
 You should apply.

NOAH
 Yeah, but I don't have a story yet.

LILA (AFTER A BEAT)
 What if you told ours?

Noah looks out the window, thinking.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - ART CLASSROOM - DAY

A soft murmur of students. Lila sits at a long table,
 painting in silence. Her usual spark feels dim. Her
 paintbrush moves absentmindedly - blue over blue, making it
 muddy.

MR. KLEIN (40s, gentle, observant) stops beside her, glancing
 at her canvas.

MR. KLEIN
 That's a lot of blue, Lila.

LILA
 (shrugs)
 Felt like it.

MR. KLEIN
 You okay?

She doesn't answer. He studies her.

MR. KLEIN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
You don't have to use art to escape
all the time. Sometimes you can use
it to stay.

She keeps painting. Her face says she's listening.

Across the room, Noah walks in — late, breathless. He scans
the room, spots her, and quietly sits a few seats away.

They make brief eye contact.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

The bell rings. Students flood out. Noah catches up to Lila.

NOAH
Hey.

She turns, unsure.

NOAH (CONT'D)
You okay?

LILA
You're asking a lot of that lately.

NOAH
Because I care. Because I want to
know what's going on.

She leans against the locker.

LILA
I'm scared. I'm scared of leaving
and... losing everything.

NOAH
You're not going to lose me.

She looks at him, quiet.

LILA
Promise?

He hesitates. A second too long.

NOAH
I promise.

She nods but doesn't look convinced.

NOAH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
I submitted my film school
application.

She turns to him, surprised.

NOAH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
It's about you. Us. I called it
Butterfly.

That hits her. She swallows, her eyes glossy.

LILA
You shouldn't have done that.

She turns and walks away.

Noah is left standing there — hurt, but not surprised.

CUT TO:

INT. LILA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lila lies on her bed, staring up at glow-in-the-dark stars
stuck to her ceiling.

On her desk, a boarding pass to Johannesburg.

She closes her eyes.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The walls are plastered with old film posters, and a DSLR
sits beside his laptop. Noah's desk is cluttered — notebooks,
sketches, printed application forms.

He sits at the desk, replaying voice notes on his phone —
ones Lila sent weeks ago. Her laugh. A soft "goodnight." One
where she hums a tune.

He stops the playback.

Silence.

He opens his laptop and begins typing. The screen reads:

BUTTERFLY
Written & Directed by Noah Reid

He pauses. The cursor blinks under the title. Then types:

FADE IN:

EXT. CAPE TOWN - EARLY MORNING

*A GIRL STANDS ALONE ON A HILL, HER HAIR WHIPPED
BY THE WIND. A BUTTERFLY TATTOO ON HER WRIST.*

Noah stares at it.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - LATER

Camera on tripod. He's recording himself.

NOAH
(to camera)
This is for whoever finds this
someday. Maybe Lila. Maybe just me.

He hesitates, emotion sitting heavy.

NOAH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
I met her at the worst time - and
she became the best thing that ever
happened to me. But the thing is,
you can't always hold onto people.
Even when you love them. Especially
when you love them.

Beat.

NOAH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
This... this is our story. Not
because it ended perfectly, but
because it mattered.

He reaches forward and stops the recording.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

The camera is off. Noah's asleep at the desk, head resting on open pages of a script-in-progress.

Outside the window, a gentle Cape Town breeze rustles the trees. In the distance, Table Mountain looms in silhouette.

CUT TO:

INT. LILA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Lila packs the last of her things into a duffel. Her mom hovers nearby.

MOM

You sure you want to go through
with this?

Lila nods, trying to be brave.

She glances at a polaroid stuck to the fridge: her and Noah
in a photo booth, laughing.

She takes it down, folds it gently, and slips it into her
pocket.

EXT. CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - SUNRISE

A taxi pulls up in the soft blue light of morning. Lila steps
out, hoodie over her head, duffel bag slung over her
shoulder. The airport is waking up – the kind of quiet buzz
only airports have at this hour.

She lingers by the car. She's early. Too early.

Her mom gets out too.

MOM

I'll wait with you until check-in.

Lila doesn't respond. She's staring across the parking lot.

CUT TO:

EXT. NOAH'S STREET - SAME TIME

Noah, disheveled and out of breath, pedals hard on a bike.
He's wearing yesterday's hoodie and pyjama pants. Slung
across his back is a backpack.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - MINUTES LATER

Lila checks her phone. No messages.

She exhales shakily. Her mom watches her, concerned.

MOM

Still nothing?

Lila shakes her head, biting her lip.

Then—

NOAH (O.S.)

Lila!

She turns.

Noah weaves through the crowd, breathless, hair a mess, eyes locked on her.

She can't believe it.

He drops the bike, runs the last few steps.

They stop just in front of each other.

NOAH (CONT'D)

You didn't let me say goodbye.

LILA

I didn't think you'd want to.

NOAH

Of course I did. I just... I didn't know how to do it without falling apart.

She nods, her eyes wet.

LILA

I'm scared.

NOAH

Me too. But you have to go. And I have to let you.

Beat. He reaches into his pocket and hands her a folded page.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Scene one.

Lila opens it. It's the page he was writing. The one about the girl on the hill.

LILA

You wrote this?

NOAH

I'm going to finish it. One day.

LILA

You better. Or I'll fly back here just to yell at you.

They both laugh, tears rising.

A voice on the PA announces her flight is boarding.

They hug. A long, lingering embrace.

She whispers in his ear.

LILA (CONT'D)
Don't forget me, okay?

NOAH
Never.

She kisses his cheek and walks inside. He watches her go, refusing to blink.

She turns back once.

They lock eyes.

Then she disappears into the terminal.

Noah stands there alone.

The wind picks up slightly. A butterfly flutters past him.

He watches it rise into the sunrise.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - WEEKS LATER

Noah sits at his desk, a mess of script pages, sketches, and photos of Cape Town scattered around him. The room is dimly lit, a single desk lamp illuminating the space.

Music hums faintly from an old speaker – something lo-fi, melancholic, like a private soundtrack to a broken heart.

He types:

EXT. EMPTY FIELD - DUSK A GIRL runs through tall grass. She isn't running from something. She's running towards something.

He stops.

The blinking cursor waits for him. But Noah doesn't continue.

He leans back in the chair, eyes red, not from crying – from exhaustion.

His phone buzzes.

TEXT FROM LILA: "I watched the sunset today. Reminded me of that hill near your school."

He stares at it, then types back.

NOAH (TEXTING): "I'm writing again. It's about us, but I'm pretending it's not."

He doesn't send it. Just saves it in Notes. Like always.

A knock on the door.

MRS. RIED (O.S.)
Noah, dinner's ready.

NOAH
Okay, Mom. Coming.

He looks at the pile of scenes.

On top of it all is a printed-out photo: him and Lila on the fountain wall, smiling. It's slightly bent.

He picks up the pen and scribbles something in the margin:

Butterfly never stayed in one place.

Then he stands and walks out the room, leaving the music playing behind.

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT II

INT. STUDENT RESIDENCE - JOHANNESBURG - EVENING

Lila sits on a twin bed in a modest dorm room. The walls are bare, aside from a small corkboard where a photo of her and her mother is pinned. A folded acceptance letter lies open beside a half-unpacked suitcase.

Outside, muffled *laughter and voices* echo through the hallway – her suitemates are getting ready to go out.

Lila watches her phone screen. A new message lights up:

"Come out with us! First week in Jozi vibes 🍷 - Leila ❤️"

She types a reply, pauses... then deletes it. Sets the phone down.

She glances at her butterfly tattoo in the mirror. It's faded slightly, like her confidence. She touches it absentmindedly.

INT. CAMPUS CAFETERIA - DAY

Lila sits alone at a long table, earbuds in, pretending to scroll. Across the room, groups of students are huddled together – laughing, taking selfies.

A GUY (20s), dreadlocks, graphic tee – JORDAN – walks by and nods politely.

JORDAN

You're the Cape Town girl, right?

Lila nods, surprised someone noticed.

LILA

Yeah. Lila.

JORDAN

Welcome to the real world.

He smiles and walks off. She watches him go, the moment oddly grounding.

INT. LILA'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

She lies in bed, headphones in, face lit by her laptop screen.

Noah's short film plays. She watches a scene of a boy staring out at the ocean.

A single tear rolls down her cheek. She pulls her blanket over her head.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. CAPE TOWN - SKATE PARK - AFTERNOON

Noah sits on a bench at the edge of the skate park, board resting beside him. He watches younger kids attempt tricks he used to master. His expression is numb, distant.

A voice calls out behind him:

JAMIE (O.S.)
Well, well. I thought you died or
moved to the moon.

NOAH
(looks up, smirks faintly)
Jamie.

JAMIE (17), dyed-green buzzcut, oversized flannel, and full of chaotic energy, hops down next to him. They bump fists.

JAMIE
You disappeared, man. No parties,
no sessions, not even a drunk DM.

NOAH
Just needed time.

JAMIE
You always need time. Time for what
— mourning someone who didn't die?

Noah stiffens.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
Look, I know you liked her. Hell, I
liked her. But bro — she's gone.
You're still here.

Jamie kicks his board up and stands.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
You gonna keep sitting on this
bench or actually ride?

NOAH
(nods slowly)
Yeah. Okay.

Jamie grins and pushes off, weaving through the park. Noah watches, then stands, picks up his board, and follows.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Montage begins: Noah pulling down an old photo of Lila from his mirror. Reorganizing his desk. Uploading new photos to his film portfolio. Quiet resolve in his movements.

EXT. CAPE TOWN PROMENADE - SUNSET

Noah skates alone, headphones in, hair in his eyes. He stops at the edge, looking out at the ocean — same spot as his film.

A tiny smile forms. It's not over. It's just a new beginning.

FADE OUT.

INT. LILA'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

A soft orange glow spills from a small desk lamp. LILA sits cross-legged on her twin bed, laptop open in front of her. Her roommate's side is empty — it's a quiet night.

She scrolls through Instagram aimlessly.

She pauses. A familiar name in her DMs.

@noahreidfilm

"Posted something. Thought you'd like it. No pressure."

She clicks.

A Vimeo link.

Title: *"Butterfly"*

By Noah Reid.

She hesitates. Cursor hovers.

CLICK.

INT. LILA'S DORM - CONTINUOUS

Noah's voice begins to narrate over flickering visuals: Cape Town streets, an old park bench, skateboard wheels spinning in slow motion.

NOAH (V.O.)

They say when someone leaves,
something always stays behind. A
word, a scent, a moment.

Lila's face softens. Her eyes don't blink.

NOAH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But maybe... they were never ours
to keep.

On screen: blurry footage of a girl – unmistakably *her* – laughing under fairy lights. That same butterfly tattoo visible on her shoulder.

Tears brim. She wipes them away fast.

INT. LILA'S DORM - LATER

The film ends. Black screen.

Lila sits, still staring.

She replays the opening. This time, she smiles – just barely.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Noah ties his shoes, glancing at his phone: no new messages. He exhales deeply and heads out.

INT. LILA'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Lila doodles in her notebook: a small butterfly. Her professor talks, but she's distracted. The world outside the window moves faster than her thoughts.

EXT. CAPE TOWN - VARIOUS

Noah walks the streets alone – familiar places: the **beachfront, skatepark, corner café**. Each spot feels emptier now.

He films clips on his phone. His eyes observe, but he's somewhere else entirely.

INT. LILA'S NEW CITY - VARIOUS

Lila walks past neon cafés, university flyers, groups of laughing students.

She grabs coffee. Waits in line. Nobody notices her, and that makes it worse.

INT. NOAH'S EDITING SETUP - NIGHT

Quick cuts of Noah editing late into the night. Close-up: his screen filled with scenes of Cape Town, overlaid with her voice from an old voicemail.

INT. LILA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lila FaceTimes home, but hangs up before the call connects.

She stares at a photo of her and Noah taped to her mirror. She takes it down. Hesitates. Doesn't throw it away.

EXT. BOTH CITIES - NIGHT

Side-by-side shots:

Noah skateboarding under streetlights.

Lila walking through rain in a hoodie, no umbrella.

Both **looking up at the sky**. Same moon. Same longing.

FADE OUT.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATE AFTERNOON

Noah sits across from **SARAH (17)** – bright smile, friendly eyes. The café buzzes with quiet conversation and indie music.

They sip their drinks. Laughter. But there's a gap in Noah's expression – polite, but distant.

SARAH

You're funny, you know that?

(laughs softly)

And weirdly deep for someone our age.

NOAH

Yeah... I get that a lot.

She leans in slightly, curious.

SARAH

So... this film you're working on – it's about someone?

NOAH

(swallows)

Yeah. Someone I knew really well. Thought I did, at least.

Beat.

SARAH
Can I see it?

NOAH
Not yet.
(then)
It's not done. Neither am I, I
guess.

SARAH
(soft smile)
You're still in love with her,
aren't you?

Noah looks away, then back – finally honest.

NOAH
Yeah.
(beat)
I thought I wasn't. But I am.

Sarah nods – not hurt, just understanding.

SARAH
Thanks for not pretending.

She stands, grabs her bag.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Let me know when the film's done.
I'll still want to watch it.

She leaves. Noah sits in the quiet, hands around his cup,
alone – but something lifts. **Clarity.**

INT. LILA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Soft lamplight glows. **Lila** lies on her bed, phone in hand,
knees pulled to her chest. Her room is neater than it used to
be – like she's trying to have control where she can.

On the screen: **Noah's name**. The empty message bubble blinks.

She types slowly.

"Hey. I watched your film."

"It was really beautiful."

She stares at the words. Finger hovers over **SEND**.

FLASHBACK - MONTAGE:

Noah filming her laughing.

Lila showing him her butterfly tattoo.

The two of them running through Cape Town's streets at sunset.

A quiet kiss under city lights.

BACK TO PRESENT:

She erases the message. Types again.

"I miss you."

Deletes it. She breathes in – closes the app. Sets the phone face-down.

Lila curls up, eyes glassy but not crying. Just still.

A long pause.

The weight of unspoken words.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

ACT III

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The bell rings. Students chatter and rush past, but **Noah** walks calmly through the corridor, clutching a sealed envelope. He heads toward a quiet corner by the lockers and opens it.

INSERT - LETTERHEAD: "Cape Town Youth Film Festival 2027"
Bolded text reads: "We are excited to inform you that your short film, 'A Quiet Thing,' has been officially selected..."

Noah blinks, reading it again. His breath catches in his throat — then, a slow, stunned smile.

CUT TO:

INT. NOAH'S BEDROOM - LATER

Posters of indie films line the walls. His laptop sits open — the film's Vimeo stats are climbing. He types out a message in a group chat:

"Got in. CTYFF. August."

His old friend, **JABARI**, replies instantly:

"Told you. You're not done yet."

Noah leans back in his chair. Looks out the window at the faint silhouette of Table Mountain. A plane passes overhead. The sky is golden.

He picks up his phone. Opens Lila's chat.

A pause.

He doesn't type anything. Just stares at the chat history. Faint smile fades.

Then —

He locks his phone.

Goes back to work on a new scene.

FADE OUT.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Muted colors. A heavy atmosphere. The low murmur of voices dies down as **LILA** enters the courtroom, now 17, older and more grounded – but visibly anxious.

Her eyes scan the room. She sees **her father**, cuffed, seated at the front. He doesn't look back.

Lila walks quietly to the back row, sits beside her **mom**. The tension between them is palpable – but neither speaks.

The **JUDGE** enters.

JUDGE (O.S.)
Case number 732 – The State versus
Marcus Gray.

Lila stiffens at the sound of her father's full name.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Testimonies echo in the chamber. Legal jargon floats above Lila's head. She doesn't hear most of it. Her focus is locked on her dad – cold, withdrawn, barely responsive.

FLASHBACK –

INT. LILA'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - YEARS AGO

Her father sits on her bed, painting a butterfly on her wrist with a marker.

FATHER
(softly)
"You're free, kid. Always will be."

BACK TO PRESENT:

Her hand instinctively brushes her tattoo.

A tear escapes – but she quickly wipes it away.

JUDGE (O.S.)
...sentencing will be delivered in
thirty days.

Everyone rises. Lila doesn't.

Her father glances back. For a second – just a second – their eyes meet.

Then he's gone.

Lila exhales.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

She steps into the sunlight. The noise of the city floods back in. A camera clicks. A reporter murmurs something about "trial delays."

Lila ignores it all. She looks out at Cape Town — familiar, yet foreign.

FADE OUT.

INT. FILM FESTIVAL VENUE - NIGHT

Warm lights. The buzz of Cape Town's **Youth Film Festival** fills the air. Posters and student films line the hallway.

NOAH stands near the front, nervously adjusting his shirt as an **emcee** announces the next film.

EMCEE (O.S.)

Next up — "butterfly" by Noah Reid,
a story about first love, loss, and
growing up.

Applause.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - NIGHT

People trickle in, murmuring, finding seats.

LILA steps in slowly through the back door — unseen. She wears a simple black hoodie, hair tucked in a beanie. Eyes scanning.

She sees him.

NOAH, standing near the screen with the event organizer. He's smiling awkwardly.

She slips into the back row — heart racing — and pulls her hoodie down.

ON SCREEN:

The film starts. A flicker of light dances across the audience. Music swells.

We catch glimpses of the film:

- A **boy and girl building a pillow fort.**
- Sunset.
- **The girl leaving**, the boy staring out of a train window.
- Quiet, delicate scenes. Too familiar.

Lila's face softens.

A small, almost invisible smile. A tear welling.

No one notices her.

Not even Noah.

She watches in stillness – as the film tells *their* story.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. FILM FESTIVAL FOYER – NIGHT

The screening has ended.

Applause echoes. Audience members begin filing out of the room, talking softly, moved.

NOAH stands near the door, thanking people, trying to stay composed. He's overwhelmed – a swirl of nerves and pride.

He turns to grab his jacket.

And then – **he sees her.**

Across the room, framed by the light of the EXIT sign –
LILA.

Still.

Watching him.

Their eyes meet.

The noise around them dulls to a low hum.
Time stretches.

Neither of them smiles.
Neither of them looks away.

Lila takes a half-step forward... then stops.

Noah shifts his weight – torn between shock and relief.

A full, painful pause.

And then –

a voice from the crowd breaks it.

FESTIVAL ORGANIZER (O.S.)
Noah! Can I steal you for a quick
photo?

He blinks, nods without looking away from Lila.

But when he turns back –
she's gone.

No trace of her in the crowd.

His eyes scan the foyer, heart pounding.

CUT TO:

EXT. FILM FESTIVAL VENUE - NIGHT

Lila walking alone down the quiet Cape Town street, hands in
her hoodie pocket, disappearing into the night.

EXT. QUIET PARK - NIGHT

A stillness. Late-night crickets. Distant city sounds.

NOAH sits alone on a bench under a flickering lamppost,
hoodie up, legs tapping nervously.

He hears footsteps.

LILA walks toward him slowly from the path.
She stops a few feet away.

They look at each other again – this time, no one turns away.

LILA
(quiet)
You really made a movie about me?

NOAH
(half-smile)
Not just about you.

She sits beside him. Space between them.
The night wraps around them.

LILA
I didn't expect to cry in there.

NOAH
I didn't expect you to show up.

A beat.

LILA
I wasn't ready. Back then.

NOAH
Neither was I.

Pause.

LILA
You were good to me. And I—I left
without really saying goodbye.

NOAH
You didn't have to explain. I got
it.

LILA
Yeah, but I still should have.

The silence feels safe this time.

NOAH
Did you ever read my messages?

LILA
Every single one.

Beat.

NOAH
And I wrote them like an idiot.

She chuckles softly, emotional.

LILA
You were just honest.

She turns to face him.

LILA (CONT'D)
So be honest now.

NOAH
Okay.
(beat)
I still think about you. I don't
know if it's love, or memory, or
some habit I can't break. But I do.

She doesn't reply right away.

LILA
I think about you, too.

They sit in silence, hearts racing – and for the first time, it feels like a beginning instead of an ending.

EXT. CAPE TOWN - EARLY MORNING

The city is just waking up.

We see quick flashes – all wordless.

- **LILA** standing by the ocean, the wind in her hair.

- **NOAH** walking home, film festival badge still around his neck.

- Their paths: separate, but parallel.

INT. LILA'S ROOM - DAY

She unpacks a small box. Inside: an old **photo of her and Noah**, a dried-out pressed flower, and a folded note.

She doesn't open the note. She just holds it.

Peaceful. Bittersweet.

INT. NOAH'S ROOM - DAY

He edits something on his laptop. A new project. New characters.

He pauses, glances at a photo taped to the wall: **a still from his film – a girl with light in her eyes.**

He smiles. Just a little.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The city bustles now.

LILA and NOAH walk on **opposite sidewalks**, unaware of each other – until, maybe... a moment.

They pause. They **look across the street.**

Do they see each other?

Maybe. Maybe not.

The camera **pulls back** – wide shot of the city moving, breathing.

A butterfly lands on a railing. Then lifts off.

FADE TO BLACK.

CUE TEXT ON SCREEN:

"butterfly"

THE END