

# MY FAVOURITE STRANGER

Screenplay by

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FADE IN

INT. RAINY EVENING.ASHVIEW. THE WATCH APARTMENT BUILDING.

ARIA KEYS: 28, Masters student, smart, warm, defiant, song writer, book lover and works part-time at the local library.

Aria quietly makes her way across the lobby of the apartment building towards the elevator. She is holding her cellphone in her hand and is carrying a green backpack. There are few to no people in the area. She presses the elevator button and waits for it to open. She offers a brave smile to the desk manager at the reception. The elevator door opens, it is empty. She enters and presses the number 5 on the intercom. As the doors begins to close, Aria begins to tear up.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. RAINY EVENING.ASHVIEW.THE WATCH APARTMENT BUILDING.

NOAH RIVERS: 28, bartender, struggling artist; musician, charismatic, easy-going, guarded.

Noah quietly makes his way across the empty lobby towards the elevator. He presses the elevator button and waits for it to open up. The elevator door opens, the desk manager walks out. They exchange subtle hellos. Noah enters and presses the number 5 on the intercom. As the doors begins to close, Aiden's eyes start to well up.

The song 28 by Ruth B and Dean Lewis plays in the background.

FADE OUT

CUT TO:

INT. EVENING. ARIA'S APARTMENT (5A). THE WATCH APARTMENT BUILDING.

Aria is sitting on the sofa in her disney princess pajamas, with a bowl of popcorn in her hand. She stares at the cellphone on the coffee table. She appears distracted. The tv sitcom Girlfriends plays in the background. Aria resists the urge to pick up her cellphone. She puts her bowl of popcorn to the side, picks up her cellphone and proceeds to unlock it (1111). She scrolls down her contact list and stops at the name Noah.

ARIA

(mumbles)

Don't call him.Don't call him.

Don't call him...Call me, please...

Aria goes onto her WhatsApp chats. She scrolls past the series of unread chats and clicks on her last chat to Noah dated yesterday. She checks to see if her last voice note to him was played.It was not. Her last text was not read

either. She proceeds to send another text message. She types "I miss-", then deletes the text. Thereafter, she types "Hi", however, she cannot press send. In exasperation, she throws her phone away.

CROSSFADE:

INT. EVENING. NOAH'S APARTMENT (5F). THE WATCH APARTMENT BUILDING.

Noah steps out of the shower in his bedroom, towels dries his hair and falls onto his bed. He appears distracted. Following a huge sigh, Noah searches for his phone. It is on his bedside table. Noah unlocks the phone (1111) and scrolls through his chats on WhatsApp. He stops at his last unread chat from Aria (yesterday). He is almost afraid to open it. However, he does. It reads: I hope we can be friends. Before that, there is a nine minute voice note. Noah, exits the chat.

BACK TO:

INT. EVENING. ARIA'S APARTMENT (5A). THE WATCH APARTMENT BUILDING.

Aria, is lying on her bed. She is on her phone again, staring at her last chat with Noah. She notices he is online.

ARIA

(gasps)

He is online..

Aria sits up straight. She waits, wondering if he is playing her voice note, wondering who he is talking to if not her. Suddenly, Noah goes offline. She checks again to see her nine minute voice note to Noah was played. It stil has not been played. Disappointed, Aria sighs, resides to bed and plays the voice note to her self.

ARIA V.O

Hey, Noah. I wonder if you're already taking a cab to work. I have really wanted to talk to you the last couple of days. I have tried calling. Several times. Sometimes your cellphone doesn't ring. I wonder if it's off or maybe you have blocked my calls, or maybe something's wrong with your phone... or you don't want to pick up. But when you do pick up, somehow the reception is always bad and we can never finish a conversation. We're in the same building Noah. But I hardly ever see you. It's ridiculous. I am aware  
(MORE)

ARIA V.O (cont'd)

that you are under a lot of pressure from work, school, your family and maybe even more so yourself. And how is school going? Are you going back?..Anyway, I understand all that pressure. However, I noticed that you often disappear when it gets overwhelming. "To quieten your mind", you say. I understand. However, I feel you are pushing me away when you do that. Because I won't hear from you for days, sometimes even weeks. I don't like that. I don't like not beng able to reach you. I don't like not knowing if you're okay..I have never liked that...

(sigh)

And it happens a lot. You are overwhelmed a lot. You are overwhlelmed a lot Noah. You are not the only one. I am too. There is so much happening in my life too. And I don't know if...I feel like I am slow dancing room too...I am tired Noah. I am tired of all of this.I don't even understand what all of this is. Our dynamic feels unneccesarily complicated. We're in the same building. But John the desk manager sees you more than I do. I hardly ever see you. Our conversations are getting fewer. I know you have been taking up extra shifts at the bar. Terry told me that. She definitely sees you more than me.

(sigh)

I understand that you have many responsibiities. Responsiblilities you don't feel comfortable sharing what the are yet. Maybe we are from different worlds like you so often remind me. However, I don't think you and I are that different. You keep saying, "I don't understand, that you don't deserve me." Maybe you are right. I can't understand something that you won't explain. And, you don't deserve me. I don't deserve you. I deserve someone who respects me, I deserve someone who is willing to give me a chance. Not someone who runs because life starts to feel too hard. Life is always going to be hard, Noah, so I

(MORE)

ARIA V.O (cont'd)

guess you beetter pack several running shoes if that is how you're going to be. I do deserve better Noah because I am better. I guess I just hoped that you would realise that you are deserving of better too. I guess I was wrong for hoping that. I need to stop guessing. You and I both know I am terrible at that. I care about you Noah. I really do. There was a time you were the best thing that had happened to me. However, I can't do this anymore...whatever this is. I want better for us. I want better for me. I want better for you too. Remember that song I sent you. The one by Janine. "I know we said this won't be the way we stay forever. I want you in my life, that won't change if we're not together. Even if you're not the one I see down the aisle, you're the best thing, you are the best thng that has happened to me in awhile." This is goodbye Noah.

Following the end of that voice note, Aria presses 'delete chat'. She closes her eyes and resists the urge to cry.

INT. EVENING. NOAH'S APARTMENT (5F). THE WATCH APARTMENT BUIDING.

Noah has reached the end of that voice note too. He looks up at the ceiling of roof heartbroken. After a moment, he presses 'delete chat' and attempts to sleep.

1 YEAR  
LATER

EXT. AFTERNOON. PERRYVIEW PARK LIBRARY.

Noah is sitting on a bench in the garden area of the park. Opposite him is a library building. His eyes are focused on the door. Waiting. Then it happens. Aria, walking out of the doors of the library. Taken a back by her beauty, Noah is unable to move. Aria, preoccupied with the pile of books in her hands does not see him. She trips and her books topple over.

ARIA

Good grief!

Aria bends down to pick up her books.

NOAH

Woud you like some help with these?

Aria stops. She recognises that voice. She slowly lifts her head.

NOAH

Hi.

Aria takes a second to catch her breath. Noah offers the remaining books. Aria, feigns a smile and takes the books from him. It hurts to see Noah. It hurts to speak.

ARIA

(beat)

Hi.

Silence.

NOAH

How have you been?

Silence.

NOAH

(feeling awkward)

I have been waiting for you. Not in a stalkerish way or anything..just that Terry said I would find you here. So I came. I wanted to go in. But I saw you and then I couldn't. So I thought I'd wait until you come out. Give myself time to think this through, figure out what I am going to say.

Silence. Aria attempts to say something but words fail her.

NOAH

Uhhh...I saw Terry at Jades a month ago. I am not sure if she told you this. I asked about you. She mentoned you still helped out at the old library...I don't know what I thought would happen, but, I woke up today and thought I'd come find you here. I should have called...But, I wanted to see you.

Silence.

NOAH

Say something. Anything. Please.

ARIA

I don't know what to say.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN

EXT. AFTERNOON. PERRYVIEW PARK LIBRARY.

Aria stands in front of Noah, struggling to process an ambush of emotions. Suddenly, she dashes off to her car. Noah follows after her.

NOAH

Aria! Aria!

Opening the back door of her Ford, Aria, quickly shoves her books on the passenger seat.

NOAH

Aria, I am sorry.

Aria stops a moment. It takes everything out of her to look at Noah. Her eyes are filled with tears.

ARIA

You do not need to apologise for not being into me Noah. You left. Message received, loud and clear.

NOAH

That is not true.

ARIA

What part?

NOAH

All of it.

ARIA

You didn't disappear?

NOAH

Aria, you called it off with me.

ARIA

Called what off Noah? Our "complicated, confusing" novella of a romantic friendship relationship???

NOAH

Yes...

ARIA

Yes, I didn't want that anymore. We were terrible at that. But I still wanted us to be friends. I hoped that we would still be friends. To which you said nothing. You simply disappeared. I am about to take note.

Aria proceeds to step into her car but Noah quickly interjects.

NOAH

I am sorry Aria. I really don't know what else to say. I didn't know what to say then. But I would like another chance. I would like to say more now..

ARIA

Unfortunaley, I was more interested then, than I am now.

NOAH

(beat)

I never stopped thinking about you Aria-

ARIA

(scoffs)

Don't do that.

NOAH

I know you don't believe me, but I need you to hear me out.

ARIA

And I need you to leave me alone, Noah. I don't care to hear you out, not anymore.

(beat)

And I stopped thinking about you. I got tired. I got tired of trying to catch up with you. I got tired of trying to understand you. I got tired of watching you run when things got hard. I got tired of fighting for someone who did not care to fight for me back. I got tired of running after someone who was always ready to walk away. So, you can think about me all you want Noah Rivers, but I am done thinking about you and I don't want to start again. Your actions always proved how little you cared about me.

Aria steps back into her FORD and drives off, leaving behind a crestfallen Noah.

NOAH

That's not true Aria. I cared about you. I never stopped caring about you.

FADE OUT

CUT TO:



INT. EVENING. ARIA'S APARTMENT (5A). THE WATCH APARTMENT BUILDING.

Aria walks into her apartment feeling sombre. She lays all her books on the table and uses her landline to make a call.

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

Hello.

Terry Green: late 20s. Aria's best friend. She is a nurturing, kindered spirt and a hopeless romantic. She is interning as a paralegal at the top firm in the City.

ARIA

Why didn't you tell me he was back in the city?

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

Who is back in the city?

ARIA

He showed up at the library Terry.

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

Who?

ARIA

Noah, Terry! Noah.

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

Oh. That's bold of him.

ARIA

Terry!

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

What?

ARIA

Why didn't you tell me Noah was back in Perryview?

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

Because, he never left.

ARIA

(stunned)

What?

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

He moved out of your apartment building but he didn't leave Perryview, Aria. Noah has been here the whole time. I have bumped into him a few times at Jade's. It is a new coffehouse/bar downtown and his band has a gig there every month.

Aria is in shock.

ARIA

How long have you been keeping this from me Terry?

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

Maybe 6 months...

ARIA

(pause)

Why didn't you say anything?

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

Because...you were happy again. And you just started seeing Luke, and you stopped talking about Noah, and you were happy again.

(pause)

The first time we met at Jades', it was a little awkward. We didn't speak. He avoided me like the plague. I figured that was for the best because I was a little bit drunk and I would have given him a mouthfull. I was also on the worst date of my life. No, second worst date of my life, no one can out do Barney the Cable Guy. And yeah, I just forgot.

ARIA

But you remembered to inform me about that date. Every intricate detail.

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

Well...yeah.It had been 6 months since you last saw Noah and you were doing much better. You just started dating Luke. And Luke's great. I didn't want you to go back to obsessing over Noah. You were finally letting him go, you were dating again, you just seemed a lot happier.

Aria is feels conflicted.

ARIA

Noah said you told him I still worked at the library.

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)

Yeah, I told him that last month when he had the balls to talk to me. I also told him you moved on and you were seeing Luke.

Silence.

TERRY (ON THE PHONE)  
You still there?

ARIA  
Yeah...Luke and I broke up  
yesterday.

CUT TO

INT. EVENING. NOAH'S APARTMENT. AMBER CREST FLATS.FLAT  
NUMBER 11.

Noah walks into his dingy lit apartment, throws his car keys  
on the kitchen counter and collapses on the couch. He takes  
a moment to absorb the silence. Then, his phone rings. The  
caller ID states "PHANTOMSHADE".

NOAH  
Yes?

PHANTOMSHADE  
How'd your reunion go?

NOAH  
It didn't.

PHANTOMSHADE  
(mocking)  
Shocker.

NOAH  
Well, it wouldn't have had to be  
this way if someone didn't get  
dumped.

PHANTOMSHADE  
What can I say? I got tired of  
babysitting.

NOAH  
And here I thought she was also  
allergic to your personality.

PHANTOMSHADE  
Smart ass. We're meeting at HQ in  
20 minutes.

NOAH  
I'm off today.

PHANTOMSHADE  
Aren't we all.

Phantomshade hangs up. Noah sighs and then proceeds to leave  
his apartment.