

Cellular

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We start with a BLACK SCREEN as we hear the VOICEOVER of a NEWSCAST playing:

NEWS ANCHOR #1 (V.O.)
*And that's not all we're following.
This summer fifteen and sixteen
year olds around the country...*

SLOW FADE IN TO:

INT. MARIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

The voiceover continues throughout this opening sequence:

NEWS ANCHOR #1 (V.O.)
*...will be sitting their DSEs but
this year will be different. The
newly introduced government-funded
scheme: Merit Support Allowance, or
MSA, will be put into effect.*

In a VERY DARK room we hear a PHONE'S ALARM go off. As MARIE (16), awakes and emerges from her covers to turn her PHONE off that was lying on her pillow.

We see the LIGHT from the phone illuminate her face as she opens up her CHIRPER app (a knock-off of Twitter). PROJECTED ON SCREEN WE SEE WHAT MARIE SEES: a projected image of her Chirper timeline as she scrolls through it reading different Chirps.

JUMP CUT TO:

NEWS ANCHOR #1 (V.O.)
*Today we have Education Secretary
Olivia Pearson to talk to us about
the new initiative.*

Marie, still browsing on her phone with one hand, draws the CURTAINS. She squints and rubs her eyes with one hand as she yawns tiredly.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

NEWS ANCHOR #1 (V.O.)
*Thank you so much for joining us
this morning.*

(CONTINUED)

Marie is sitting on the TOILET whilst on her phone. On screen we see what she is looking at: she's reading an E-BOOK. An email notification suddenly appears on screen advertising ONLINE DATING SITES. Marie quickly dismisses it by swiping it to the side.

PEARSON (V.O.)

Not at all. I'm very happy to be here.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Marie, fully dressed in her UNIFORM, is gathering up her school stuff to take with her: BAG, COAT, PHONE etc.

NEWS ANCHOR #1 (V.O.)

So explain to us, and everyone watching at home what the scheme is all about.

As she picks up her bag which hangs from the side of her bed, SOMETHING FALLS out from one of bag's pockets. Marie, noticing this, picks up the fallen object which appears to be a CARD CASE. Marie opens it to see that there is a WORN OUT LIBRARY CARD in it. Marie closes it and chucks it on her DESK.

PEARSON (V.O.)

This scheme will allow pupils from lower-income families to be entitled to government financial support provided they reach their target minimum grade...

Marie's phone then beeps an ALERT.

We see a TEXT MESSAGE appear on screen from a friend KATY that says: **U ready for today?**

Marie texts back: **Think so. U?**

PEARSON (V.O.)

...on their English and Maths exams. Working families suffered heavily...

Katy texts back almost immediately: **Was up till 3 last night revising. So tired :(**

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Pearson's voiceover carries on from the previous scene:

Marie enters the KITCHEN. Her mother SOFIA (42), dressed in DARK BLUE OVERALLS, is sitting at the table sipping a CUP OF COFFEE and watching the TELEVISION with an intense focus.

It's now revealed that the television is the source of the voiceover. We see PEARSON and the NEWS ANCHOR's appearances for the very first time.

PEARSON
 (from television)
*...under the previous government so
 we feel that this new initiative
 will give young people a real
 incentive to achieve in the
 classroom...*

Marie walks over to the TABLE and takes a SEAT. Her breakfast - BEANS ON TOAST and a GLASS OF WATER, are there waiting for her.

PEARSON
 (from television)
*...and also it will give them a
 sense of responsibility to their
 family's well-being.*

Marie starts eating. One hand on her phone and the other putting toast in her mouth. Sofia turns her attention from the television and notices Marie for the first time.

SOFIA
 Oh, good morning sweetheart.

Marie gives a non-committal grunt as she continues eating, eyes fixed on her phone.

SOFIA
 Did you have a good night's sleep?

MARIE
 (not looking at her mother)
 Yeah.

SOFIA
 You all ready for today?

Marie doesn't answer. She's caught up on something on her phone.

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA
Can you please not do that while
I'm speaking to you?

Marie puts down her phone and looks up at her mother for the first time in this scene.

MARIE
Sorry.

SOFIA
So, how was your revision?

MARIE
It was fine.

Marie's phone beeps an alert.

SOFIA
Are you sure? You're always on that
phone of yours.

MARIE
(annoyed)
I revise on my phone Mum. Everyone
does.

Marie's phone beeps another alert. Marie automatically reaches for her phone to check it.

SOFIA
What's your first exam?

MARIE
(looking at her phone)
Maths, I think.

SOFIA
Do you want to go over some
practice questions?

MARIE
(still on phone)
What?

SOFIA
Practice questions. For your exam.

Marie puts her phone down and looks up at Sofia.

MARIE
Why?

SOFIA
Because I know you've always
struggled with it.

Marie's phone beeps another alert.

MARIE
(attention on Sofia, defiant)
I've never struggled with it. It -
it's just not my strongest subject.

SOFIA
Which is why I want to help.

MARIE
Why? It's not like you're any good
at Maths.

SOFIA
Marie, that's not -

MARIE
(raised voice)
Oh just drop it Mum! I don't need
your help!

There's a silence between them. Marie looks at her mother
and sees concern on her expression.

Marie picks up her bag, stands up and makes to leave the
kitchen.

SOFIA
Marie.

Marie stops and turns to face Sofia. Sofia opens her mouth
to say something but hesitates. She closes her mouth before
opening it again to say -

SOFIA
Do your best okay?

Marie leaves the kitchen. Sofia takes a deep breath, stands
up and walks over to the sink to begin WASHING THE DISHES.
On the table where she was sitting we see a LETTER which
says in big bold letters at the top:

RENT - 2 MONTHS OVERDUE.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDORS - MORNING - SOME TIME LATER

Marie is walking down the corridors of her school, her attention fixed on her phone. A girl around her age catches up to her to join her. This is KATY.

KATY

Hey Marie.

MARIE

Hi Katy.

There's a bit of a gap in between Marie and Katy as they walk together. Marie's attention turns to her phone.

KATY

I wish we wouldn't start with Maths. I fucking hate it.

MARIE

Same.

KATY

I know I'll do well in English though. That should balance things out I reckon.

MARIE

Right.

The two of them reach the AMPITHEATRE. Before they enter a female TUTOR (mid 30s) stops them. She is standing behind a TABLE that is filled with SMALL CONTAINERS with a NUMBER written on them. The Tutor points to a sign next to the door that reads:

NO PHONES, NO DIGITAL WATCHES, NO MP4 PLAYERS, NO TABLETS

TUTOR

You can recollect them once the exam is over.

Katy places her phone into one of the containers without hesitation and takes a NUMBER from the Tutor; she then enters the amphitheatre. With some hesitation, Marie does the same.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL AMPITHEATRE - MORNING

Marie takes her seat in the middle of the class. The rest of the ampitheatre is FILLED WITH OTHER STUDENTS.

In front of Marie is a TABLET that's turned off. The Tutor enters the room and addresses the ampitheatre.

TUTOR
Your exam will start in a few
minutes. To turn your tablets on...

The tutor's VOICE FADES AWAY as Marie stares anxiously at the blank black screen of her tablet. The whole ampitheatre is ENGULFED IN SILENCE. Absent-mindedly, she reaches for her POCKET, but there is no phone there. She takes a deep breath.

TUTOR
...you may start.

Marie is suddenly brought down to earth. She hurriedly turns on her tablet, logs in and sees the first question.

A multiple choice question on Pythagoras' Theorem:

Marie stares blankly at the screen.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: TWO MONTHS LATER

CUT TO:

INT. HOME - ENTRANCE HALLWAY - MORNING

A STACK OF ENVELOPES come through the MAILBOX. Marie walks over to it and picks them up. The envelope on top of the stack has been sent from Marie's school.

Marie shuffles through the remaining envelopes and sees one with RED STAMPINGS on the envelope that say:

URGENT - EVICTION NOTICE.

Marie looks at the eviction envelope with an alarmed expression. She then makes her way to enter the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Marie enters the kitchen and sees Sofia sitting at the table reading a BOOK ON INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES.

MARIE
Mum, are we being -

Sofia shuts her book and looks up at Marie eagerly.

SOFIA
Are your results here?

MARIE
(thrown off)
What? Err, yeah...

SOFIA
Have you opened them?

MARIE
Not yet.

SOFIA
(excited)
Don't leave me in suspense, open it!

Marie opens up the envelope. She sees her results but she only focuses on the top two subjects:

ENGLISH - D

MATHS - E

Marie stares at the PAPER blankly.

MARIE
Bullshit!

Sofia walks over and looks at the sheet in front of her.

Sofia stares at the paper, speechless, her expression a mixture of disappointment and concern.

MARIE
(to her mother)
This must be wrong!

SOFIA
What happened dear? Were the exams hard?

(CONTINUED)

MARIE

No! There must be some mistake!

Marie takes the papers back from Sofia and looks at her PRINTED EXAM PAPERS. Her text writing is written in the form of INTERNET SLANG. Sofia reads them over her shoulder.

SOFIA

Marie...

MARIE

No!

Marie chucks the papers onto the table and storms out of the kitchen.

Sofia crouches down to pick up the papers when she notices the envelope with the eviction notice.

Sofia stares at it, horrified.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON - LATER

Marie lays on her bed staring blankly at the ceiling until we hear her phone beep an alert.

Marie picks up her phone and sees a text from Katy: **How were ur results?**

Marie thinks for a while before texting back: **They were okay. U?**

Katy texts back almost instantly: **Happy with mine! :)**

Another text comes through: **Got 1 A and 9 B's.**

Another text: **No A*s though. Lol.**

No subsequent message. We hear a knock on Marie's bedroom door.

SOFIA (O.S.)

Marie? Can I come in?

Marie doesn't answer. Sofia opens the door and enters anyway.

SOFIA

Marie?

Marie ignores her mother.

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA

Marie, we need to talk.

Marie sits up and faces Sofia. Sofia walks over and sits next to Marie.

SOFIA

I've just got off the phone with your school. They told me you can retake some of your exams in the summer before college starts.

MARIE

I can?

SOFIA

Yes. But you'll need to study hard.

MARIE

What about MSA?

Sofia looks down at her feet and shakes her head.

SOFIA

You needed to pass your exams first time round in order to qualify.

Marie stares at her mother, horrified. Sofia forces a smile and puts a hand on Marie's shoulder.

SOFIA

It's okay Marie, it's okay. We'll get through it.

Sofia kisses Marie on the head before standing up and exiting her room.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Next morning, Marie walks into the kitchen in her PAJAMAS and walks toward the FRIDGE. She spots a HANDWRITTEN NOTE hung on the fridge door. Marie takes it off and reads it:

Working late tonight. Fix your own dinner. Mum

Marie crumples up the paper in frustration and chucks it across the room.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Marie, fully dressed, is sitting at her desk. She takes out her phone and opens up a REVISION APP for Maths. She starts to flick through some of the questions when her phone beeps an alert.

It's from Katy: **Me and Rachel are thinkin of going cinema later. Wanna come?**

Marie texts Katy back: **Little busy atm.**

Marie tries to return to her revision when her phone beeps again.

It's a text from Rachel: **Cinema later?**

Marie rolls her eyes as she texts back: **I'm busy today.**

Marie tries to return to her revision but her phone beeps again. Marie, now frustrated, opens up her notification. This time its an NOTIFICATION from Chirper that someone has followed her. Marie groans in frustration as she puts down her phone.

JUMP CUT TO:

Marie is looking around her room frantically. Opening DRAWERS, CUPBOARDS, looking under the bed. She finds one BOOK behind her BEDSIDE TABLE and opens it up, but realises its just an EMPTY NOTEBOOK. Marie chucks it on her bed in frustration.

Marie's gaze turns toward her desk. She walks over to it and finds a CARD CASE lying on the surface. She opens up the card case and takes out a WORN OUT LIBRARY CARD.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - EVENING

Marie enters the LIBRARY and sees that barely anyone is in here. She walks across the aisles looking for books on Maths and English. She picks a few off the shelves, all of them covered in dust.

JUMP CUT TO:

Marie takes a SEAT by herself on the TABLE with SEVERAL BOOKS stacked next to her. She opens up a large one. As she slowly opens it up and the pages fall one after another, Marie caresses the physical form of the book.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

12.

She starts to read, takes out her notebook and makes a few notes. Her handwriting is SHAKY and WOBBLY, like a child's.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - EVENING - SOME TIME LATER

Marie is still studying when her phone, which is on the table, vibrates loudly.

Subconsciously, Marie picks up the phone to unlock it but manages to stop herself. She looks at the phone uncertainly before putting it down. She resumes her studying.

The phone then vibrates again. Marie looks at it this time but does not pick it up. The notification light is BLINKING CONSTANTLY beckoning Marie's attention.

Marie continues to stare at her phone.

CUT TO BLACK

We hear Marie's phone vibrate again.

THE END