

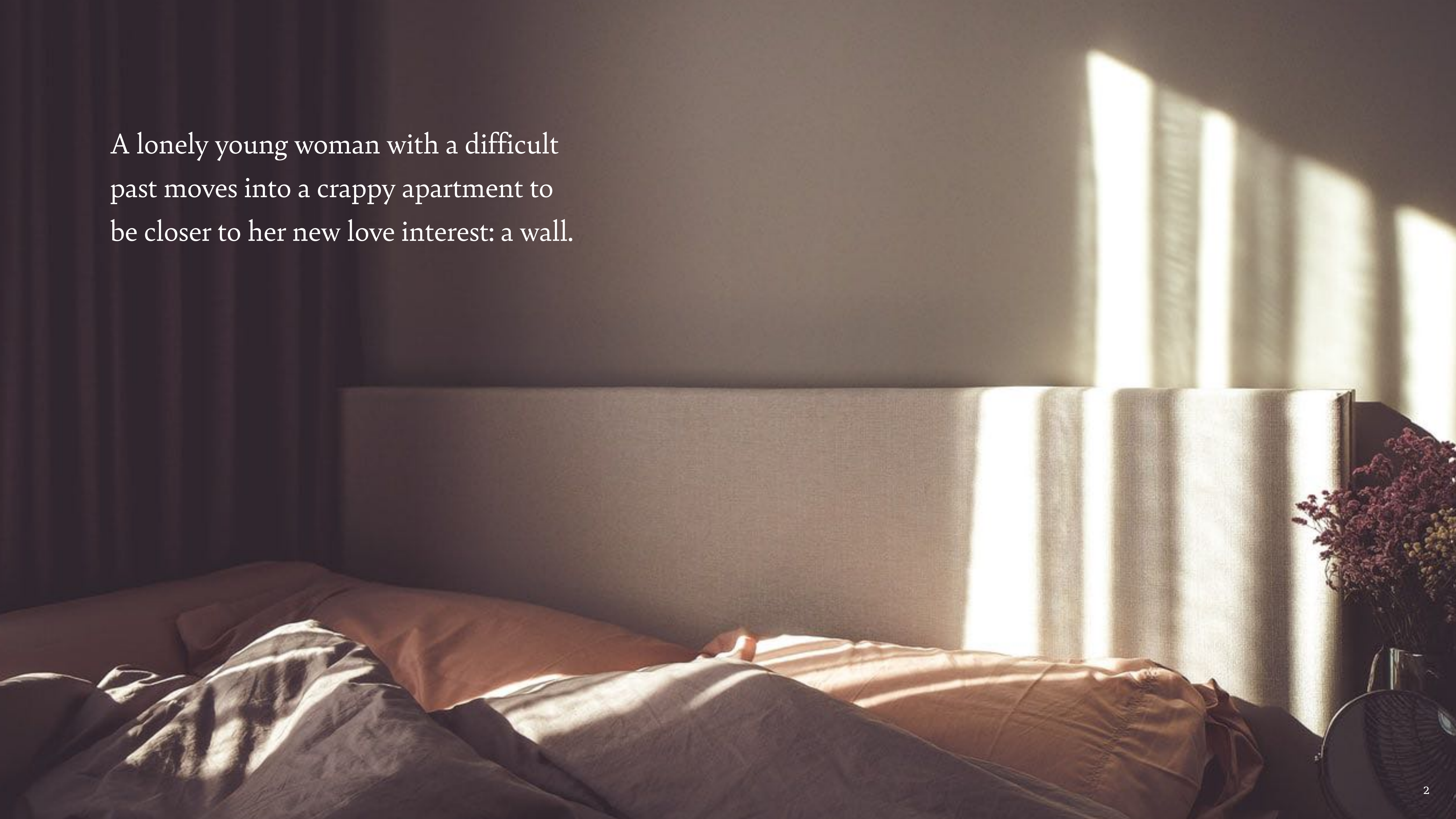


# *WALL*

By Erin Cantelo



A lonely young woman with a difficult past moves into a crappy apartment to be closer to her new love interest: a wall.





LANDLORD  
(Matter of fact)  
Boyfriend? Husband?

DAPHNE  
No.

LANDLORD  
You are alone.

DAPHNE  
Yes.



WINNER

*2021 Screenplay Competition*







WALL was born from a deeply personal place of learning to navigate past trauma, overcome my own fear of intimacy, and instilled with my belief that our most profound moments of strength and connection are when we have the courage to be our most vulnerable with others.



## Ideas for a script often resonate with me before I can comprehend why.

Back in 2018 when I was well... eavesdropping, on a group of people talking about fetishes, a woman exclaimed, “What about that girl who fell in love with a wall?!” The image I was immediately struck by was a young woman in in a crappy apartment, standing in front of a wall, gripped with love and longing. The image resonated with me in a profound way I did not fully understand yet. There was something compelling about the seemingly safe, reliable connection with an inanimate object, but I discovered the depths of my parallels with the main character, Daphne, were far deeper than that.

People who have romantic feelings for inanimate objects, or “object sexuality”, have been sensationalized in some media portrayals but these folks share fairly consistent traits. They often don’t have romantic feelings for other humans, are on the spectrum to some degree, and typically have a history of childhood sexual abuse or trauma.







Since puberty I had a nagging feeling that there was something in my past that prevented me from allowing people to get close to me in a meaningful way. I loved the metaphor of this wall representing both the emotional walls Daphne would have to keep others out, while still illustrating her inherent desire for connection because I felt the same way. In trying to unearth the most truthful version of Daphne's story, I decided to take a hard look at what was beneath my own walls and why this idea resonated with me so much.

It took a lot of therapy and a willingness to face memories that I had suppressed but what I gained was a fuller understanding of myself and a version of *Wall* that felt authentic and sincere. I tell stories about people healing their own trauma because it is my own story and also one I don't see reflected back enough.

**One of my favorite aspects of filmmaking is the dialogue a film can create about our deeply human experiences, even the most difficult ones, because to speak of these experiences, with empathy and without shame, is liberating.**





DAPHNE (31), shoulders perpetually hunched as if she felt guilty for the space she occupies. She looks around in the state of being that seems to define her - trepidatious.

In order to achieve the dry, dramatic tone of WALL, Daphne needs to come off as fragile, sweet, but very closed off. She is at sometimes even rude or curt because her walls are meant to keep others out at all costs. Additionally, the humor in Daphne's dialogue and actions will not be played to. The audiences' connection to Daphne hinges on empathizing with how earnest she is about falling for this wall: because whether over a teenage crush or our first real love, at some point in our lives, we have all been Daphne and that's why we connect to her.





## CHARACTERS

OMAR (31) a bit of a doof. But sweet. Clean cut. The kind of guy that always manages to come off a little too desperate. In a perpetual state of regretting what he just said.

Omar has his own walls but he is meant to be the softer side of this dilemma of connection. In terms of psychological attachment styles, Daphne is avoidant, whereas Omar's attachment style is anxious or anxious-avoidant, and therefore the perfect foil to drive Daphne away. Omar also has to have a balance of being kind but not a complete push over. I see him as someone who has an edge because of his own emotional scars, but it is exactly these scars that have also made him empathetic enough to see and understand Daphne. It is also vital that Omar's character does not simply serve Daphne, but that the two characters truly serve each other.

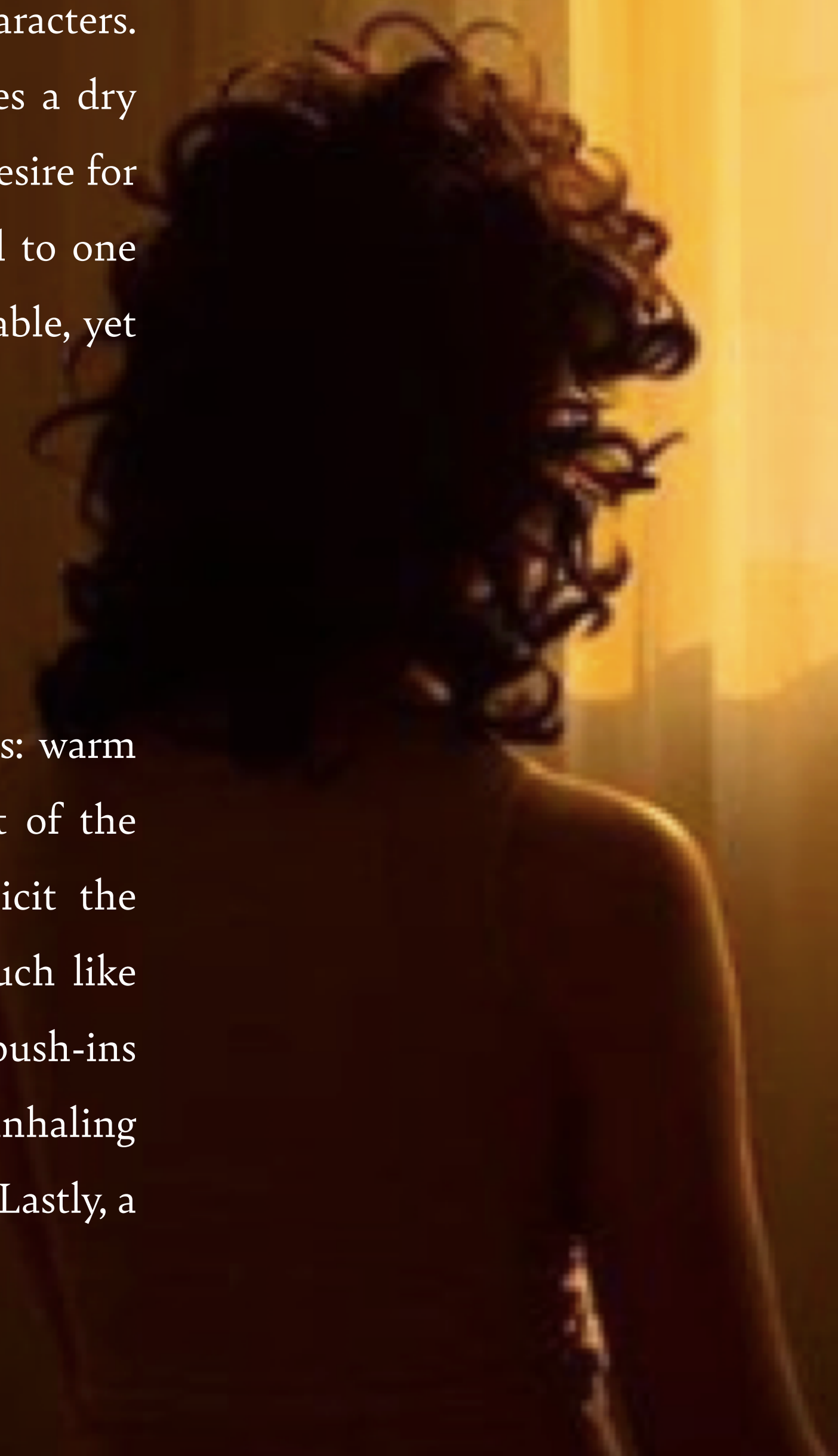




The tone of WALL is meant to be so earnest that the humor is found in the utter sincerity of the characters. It is meant to be played as a drama, with sincere emotional honesty that is so grounded it creates a dry humor that is both funny and surprisingly heartbreaking. Because the film is ultimately about the desire for connection, I wanted to set it in a simpler time before we were so easily accessible and connected to one another via technology. The aesthetic is a nod to mid-90's meets late 1970's in a slightly unidentifiable, yet familiar era to instill a unique sense of nostalgia.

**Warm color palettes in the production design of browns, peaches, blushes, sepia, and gold, reminiscent of the human body.**

Furthermore, I want to evoke the humanity that Daphne sees in Wall through the film's aesthetics: warm color palettes in the production design of browns, peaches, blushes, sepia, and gold, reminiscent of the human body. Golden, warm lighting to conjure a feel of afternoon sun or candlelight, to illicit the subconscious sense of warmth and comfort. Atmospheric haze to add texture to every image, much like breath on the air or the supple texture of skin. Portrait-like framing, close shots, and selective slow push-ins to imbue a sense of stability, intimacy, and a closeness known only to lovers. Nearly imperceptible inhaling and exhaling in the sound design each time Daphne is with Wall to further anthropomorphize Wall. Lastly, a cello-heavy, purely instrumental score to deepen the overall organic feel.





## Writer/Director Erin Cantelo

Erin Cantelo was most recently tapped by Mayans MC showrunner and co-creator Elgin James to co-write the character driven action THE HEIGHTS ABOVE that James will direct. She created and directed the short documentary series SUBCULTURES and directed and produced documentaries for the Oprah Winfrey Network/Harpo Studios, SoulPancake, Sandwich Video, as well as narrative content for Funny or Die, and more.

With a drive to tell truly meaningful stories and a belief that as a storyteller you have to live stories worth telling, some of her most compelling accomplishments have been off camera. Including a 4 month solo trip to Southeast Asia where she took a 5 day motorbike trip in rural Laos alone, a 10 day silent meditation retreat in Southern Thailand, and a 16 day cargo ship ride home from Hong Kong to California in which she was the only passenger as well as the only woman on board.

Her absolute favorite places to be are on set directing, traveling anywhere without an itinerary, or pouring over her writing and a breakfast burrito from Tacos Villa Corona in Los Angeles. She credits Joseph Campbell, Jim Henson, and her late father for inspiring her onto her path in life as a filmmaker. She tells character driven stories about people healing their own trauma or grief, with the aim to break your heart wide open.

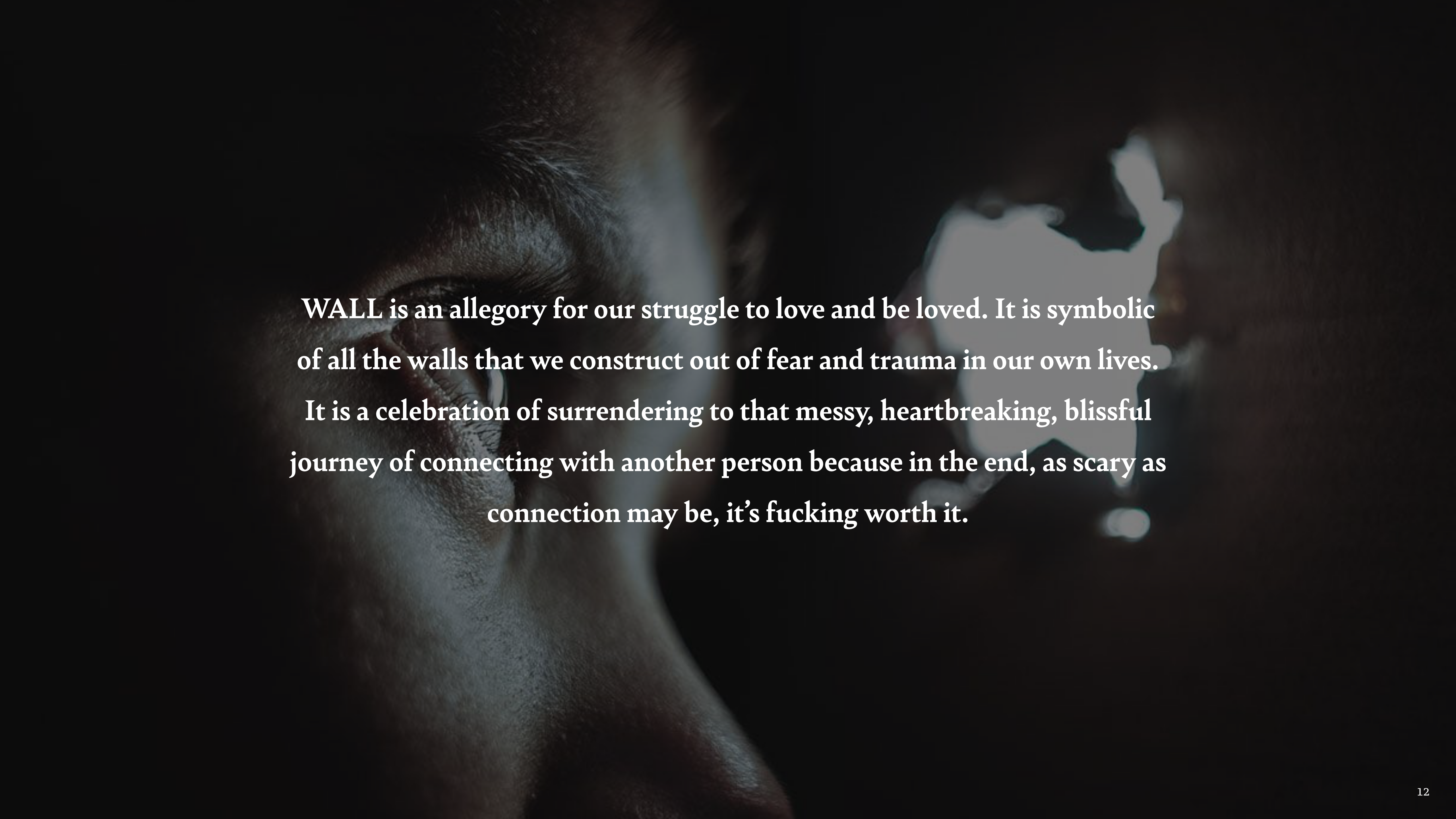


### **Production Designer Jason Kisvarday**

Jason Kisvarday is known for his Production Design on eclectic and surreal movies like “Swiss Army Man”, “Sorry to Bother You”, “Palm Springs” and “Everything Everywhere All at Once”. Also known for his strong work in music videos, he has been nominated twice for Best Art Direction at the MTV Music Video Awards for Childish Gambino's “This is America” and DJ Snake's “Turn Down For What”.

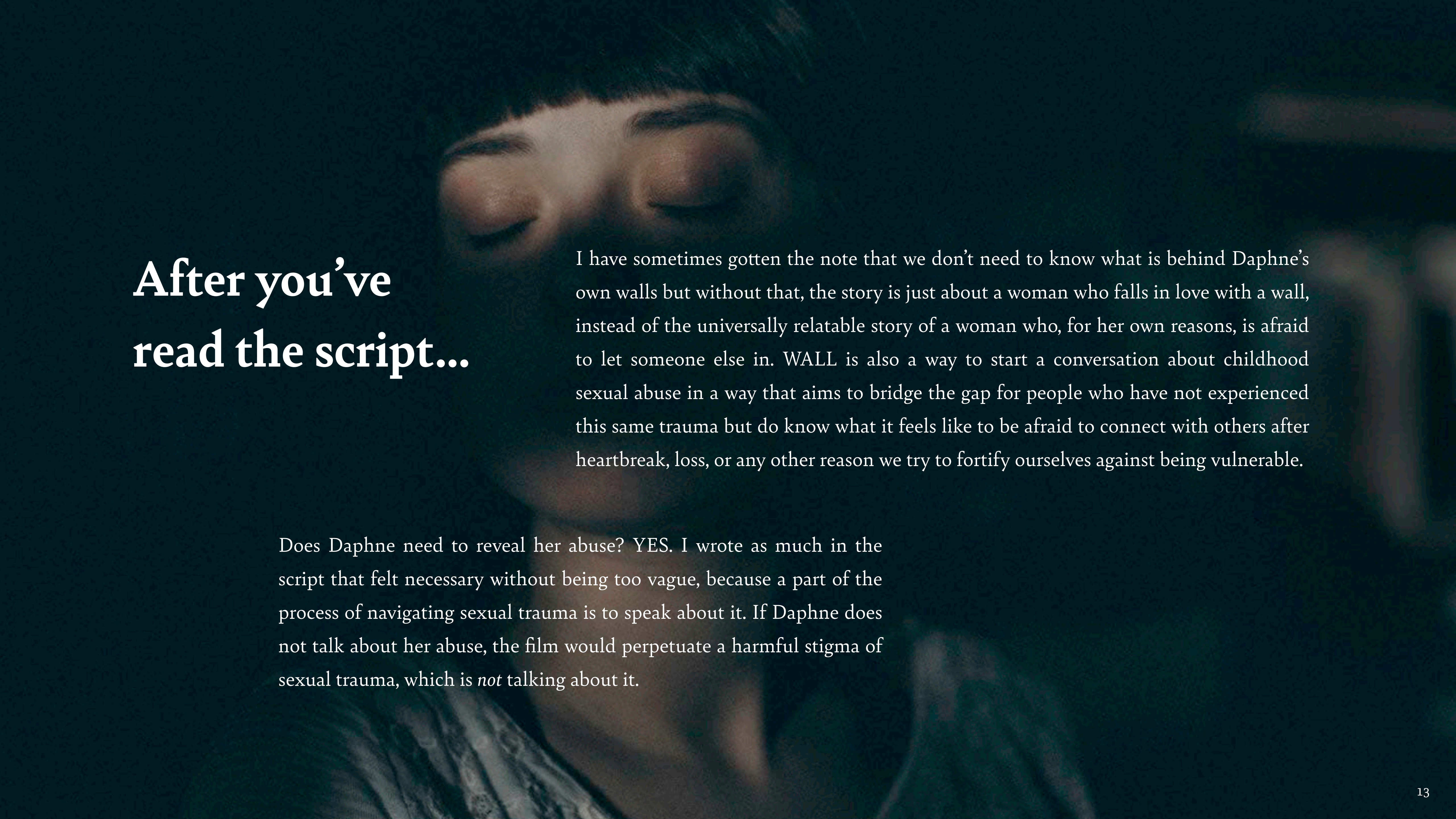






**WALL is an allegory for our struggle to love and be loved. It is symbolic of all the walls that we construct out of fear and trauma in our own lives. It is a celebration of surrendering to that messy, heartbreaking, blissful journey of connecting with another person because in the end, as scary as connection may be, it's fucking worth it.**





## After you've read the script...

I have sometimes gotten the note that we don't need to know what is behind Daphne's own walls but without that, the story is just about a woman who falls in love with a wall, instead of the universally relatable story of a woman who, for her own reasons, is afraid to let someone else in. WALL is also a way to start a conversation about childhood sexual abuse in a way that aims to bridge the gap for people who have not experienced this same trauma but do know what it feels like to be afraid to connect with others after heartbreak, loss, or any other reason we try to fortify ourselves against being vulnerable.

Does Daphne need to reveal her abuse? YES. I wrote as much in the script that felt necessary without being too vague, because a part of the process of navigating sexual trauma is to speak about it. If Daphne does not talk about her abuse, the film would perpetuate a harmful stigma of sexual trauma, which is *not* talking about it.



*THANK YOU*



WALL

Written by

Erin Cantelo



INT. VACANT STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

DAPHNE (31), shoulders perpetually hunched as if she felt guilty for the space she occupies. She looks around in the state of being that seems to define her - trepidatious.

Yellowed walls. Busted vertical blinds. Gnarled brown and gold wall-to-wall carpet that hasn't been replaced since 1976. Stains to prove it. A total shit hole.

The LANDLORD (74), short on words, stern grandfatherly vibe, fusses with a large set of keys ahead of her.

LANDLORD  
(Matter of fact)  
Boyfriend? Husband?

DAPHNE  
No.

LANDLORD  
You are alone.

DAPHNE  
Yes.

He scrutinizes her.

LANDLORD  
Hmm.  
(Beat)  
Kitchen is here.

He ambles into the kitchen which draws Daphne's eyes to...

WALL, eight feet wide, open on each side with entrances to the small kitchen. Aglow in afternoon light. Magnificent.

Daphne steps closer. A spark deep within her LIGHTS.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A shiny, new key poised in Daphne's hand.

She exhales, anxious. Primps her hair and...

INT. VACANT APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Daphne ambles in, dressed in a modest sundress too nice for moving. A cardboard box under one arm.

She admires Wall. Smooths her hands over her dress. Bashful.



DAPHNE

Hi.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Daphne glances at the front door. Perplexed.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

DAPHNE

(To Wall)

Are you expecting anyone?

INT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Daphne slides the security chain in place. Cracks the door, chain taught. On the other side of the door...

OMAR (31) a bit of a doof. But sweet. Clean cut. The kind of guy that always manages to come off a little too desperate. In a perpetual state of regretting what he just said. He freezes up the second he sees Daphne.

She stares at him, waiting for him to speak first.

OMAR

...We don't have rats any more.

DAPHNE

...

OMAR

I mean... we used to. But we don't any more. I live here. Not here, here.

(Pointing in the direction of her kitchen/Wall)

One door down.

(Beat)

Didn't you go to John Marshall?

DAPHNE

Yeah.

OMAR

Omar. We had Physics and Mythology-

DAPHNE

I remember. Daphne.

OMAR

I remember.



He most certainly does - and quite fondly. Daphne shifts - uncomfortable.

OMAR (CONT'D)  
Are you okay?

DAPHNE  
What do you mean?

OMAR  
Do you need help?

DAPHNE  
...

OMAR  
Moving boxes or... furniture.

DAPHNE  
No. Thank you.

OMAR  
I- I heard about your brother. I'm so sorry.

She forces a smile.

OMAR (CONT'D)  
If you ever need anything just... knock.

DAPHNE  
I'm good.

He moves for a hug. Daphne CLOSES the door. LOCKS the deadbolt. AND the doorknob.

INT. VACANT APARTMENT - LATER

Daphne grunts as she SHOVES an ENORMOUS BOX into the room. The box stops. STUCK. She pants. Struggles to pick it up. The bottom BURSTS. Contents spill onto the floor.

DAPHNE  
Goddamnit.

LATER

Daphne, exhausted and out of breath, lies on the floor next to Wall. She looks around. Scattered boxes and sparse furniture - suggestive of a new beginning.



INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Daphne double checks all the locks. Slides the security chain into place. Drags a READING CHAIR in front of the door. Satisfied.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

WHIRRR. Daphne stands in front of Wall, inflating a pathetic excuse for a twin size air mattress.

A LITTLE LATER

Daphne lies on the air mattress, facing Wall.

                  DAPHNE

                  I have a really hard time sleeping.

                  WALL

                  ...

                  DAPHNE

                  (Delighted)

                  Yeah.

She smiles at Wall, coy.

                  DAPHNE

                  Little spoon.

She rolls onto her side. Her back to Wall. Snuggles in.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

Daphne stirs. Groggy. The air mattress half-deflated. KNOCK-KNOCK. She winces in pain as she battles to get up. GRUMBLES.

INT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Daphne checks the peephole. Hesitates. KNOCK-KNOCK. Muscles the reading chair out of the way. Opens the door.

Omar. Bags under his eyes. Immediately remorseful.

                  OMAR

                  I woke you up. I'm so sorry.



She squints at him, bleary-eyed. Noticing a large cluster of DEEP SCARS that peek out from his shirt collar.

OMAR

I was just gonna see if you wanted to go- Or... if you wanted anything from the corner store. They have really solid coffee. And danishes. Like. Incredible danishes. Mind blowing.

DAPHNE

You still have a sweet tooth.

OMAR

(Surprised)  
Yeah.

DAPHNE

What time is it?

He checks his watch.

OMAR

Zero-seven-hundred. I'm so sorry. It's earlier than I thought.

DAPHNE

When did you get up?

OMAR

Three. Sleep and I have a tenuous relationship.

He watches her reaction - hoping his vocabulary will win him some points. Nada.

OMAR

-Do you want anything? My treat.

DAPHNE

No.

She moves to close the door.

DAPHNE

(Remembering civility)  
...Thanks.

OMAR

Oh- I found some old yearbook photos if you want them-



DAPHNE  
That's okay.

                  OMAR  
If you need anything-

Daphne SHUTS the door and walks away.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Daphne sits on the floor in front of Wall, unpacking a box. She unwraps a crystal prism. Touched by the sight of it.

                  DAPHNE  
This was my mom's.

She holds it by it's string in the afternoon light. Spins it. Rainbows swirl around the room. She reaches into the box. Pulls out a small stack of OLD PHOTOS of YOUNG DAPHNE (3-5).

                  DAPHNE  
I look so happy.

She holds a photo up for Wall. Flips through a few more, stops on...

A photo of herself at four and a BOY a few years older than her. His arm around her.

                  DAPHNE  
My brother.

She tears the photo in half and TOSSES it in a nearby trashcan.

LATER

Daphne stands, studying Wall.

Wall, golden in the afternoon light.

She steps forward. Notices...

Every blemish, patchwork, and scar on Wall is prominent.

She grazes her thumb over a patched divot. Runs her hand across Wall. Exploring. She traces her fingers along a large scrape.

Her hand wanders until she finds a huge patched hole, almost head height. She makes a fist, as if she were about to punch Wall. She studies it - the size and positioning look right.



DAPHNE

Is it?

She looks at Wall with empathy. Clearly affected by the mark of violence.

DAPHNE

(To Wall)

...Would you like to have dinner tonight?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lit candles. Romantic. Daphne sits cross-legged on the floor in front of Wall. A half-eaten bowl of boxed mac and cheese on the floor next to her.

She gazes at Wall a moment.

DAPHNE

I like that you kind of stand on your own. It makes you seem... strong.

WALL

...

DAPHNE

(Demure)

I don't know about that.

(Beat)

Do you know the Greek myth about Daphne?

WALL

...

DAPHNE

Daphne was a water nymph who was known for her beauty. She was so beautiful that Apollo, the god of light, fell in love with her the instant he saw her. But Daphne didn't want him. But Apollo pursued her anyway and he was... relentless. So Daphne begged her father, a river god, to save her from Apollo's advances. And her father- just like that- turned her into a tree. Because it was the only thing that could save her from Apollo. My mom named me after her.

(MORE)



DAPHNE (CONT'D)

I think she hoped it would protect  
me too.

          (Beat)

Best laid plans.

She falls silent - lost in the past.

                  DAPHNE

I haven't even cried yet. About my  
brother. He killed himself about a  
month ago. A part of me thought I'd  
be... relieved. But it's been hard  
to feel anything.

          (Beat)

Thank you.

                  WALL

...

                  DAPHNE

For listening.

LATER

Daphne runs her hand over Wall. Leans in. Presses her ear to  
Wall. Closes her eyes and listens - as though listening for a  
heartbeat.

The faint sound of a love song rises, muffled through the  
walls. Something like a slow cover of "*Fools Rush In*", coming  
from Omar's apartment.

Daphne listens. Gently pushes off Wall. Her movements evolve  
into a strange, beautiful dance with Wall.

As the song finishes, she rests her head on Wall. Looks at  
Wall. Yearning.

LATER

Daphne stands in front of Wall. The candlelight flickering on  
her face. She peels each shoulder of her dress down. Stands,  
insinuated, naked before Wall. Approaches.

Kisses Wall. Hesitates.

                  DAPHNE

I'm sorry.

Covers herself. All too vulnerable.



INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Daphne lies awake in a pile of blankets on the floor next to Wall.

                  DAPHNE  
                  (Forced)  
                  Morning.

INT. HALLWAY/MAILBOXES - MORNING

Daphne carries a fresh bouquet of flowers as she files down the hall.

                  OMAR (O.S.)  
                  (Flirtatious)  
                  Morning, Jane.

Daphne turns to see...

Omar, manilla envelope and small paper bag in hand, as he swoops down to pick up dropped mail at the feet of a silver-haired neighbor, JANE (92).

                  OMAR (CONT'D)  
                  Here.

He offers his arm to Jane. She wraps her arm in his. Swats him. But he spots-

                  OMAR (CONT'D)  
                  (Calling out)  
                  DAPHNE.

Pretending not to hear, Daphne hurries down the hall away from Omar.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

The flowers, now in a vase, sit on a small table near Wall.

Daphne examines the bouquet. Repositions it - seeking some sense of control.

                  DAPHNE  
                  I'm sorry about last night. It  
                  was... too fast for me.  
                  (Timid)  
                  ...Are we okay?

                  WALL

...



Daphne simpers. At ease - their apparent conflict resolved.  
KNOCK. KNOCK.

DAPHNE  
For Pete's sake.

INT. FRONT DOOR/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She peers through the peep-hole.

No one.

Confused. She opens the door.

TAP. An envelope propped against the door falls at her feet.  
A paper bag next to it. "MIND BLOWING" written on the bag.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Daphne approaches Wall as she pulls a danish from the paper bag. Takes a bite. Surprised, she breaks into a subtle *happy food dance* - Omar was right, it's delicious. She glances up at Wall and simpers - like Wall caught her dance. She smirks, embarrassed.

She opens the envelope. Leafs through...

A couple copies of old YEARBOOK PHOTOS of Daphne's brother at SEVENTEEN. Behind them, a MEMORIAL CARD with a more recent photo of him. Smiling.

Daphne blanches. FUMES with anger.

She CRUSHES the memorial card in her fist and HURLS it across the room. PACES. Overwhelmed. She beelines to Wall.

Drowning in a flash flood of emotions. She clenches her fists. Full of RAGE that melts away to AGONY. Tears stream down her face. She grasps at Wall - desperate to be held.

But Wall cannot help her. Which further ignites her FURY. She looks at Wall, as if looking into a mirror. She SCREAMS. Channels every emotion into one swift, HARD...

KICK.

Her foot PIERCES Wall, leaving a GAPING HOLE in its wake.

DAPHNE  
NO!

She clasps her hands over her mouth. Sees...

A strata of RAT SHIT inside Wall.

She dry heaves. And then...

SOBS. Collapses onto the floor. Crushed.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK. She turns to the door. Pissed.

INT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Daphne THROWS the door open.

Omar. Instantly regrets his intrusion.

DAPHNE

WHAT?

OMAR

(Sincere)

I- I'm so sorry. I heard you...

Crying. But he can't bring himself to say it. And he doesn't have a chance because- she SLAMS the door in his face.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Omar nods - how could he be so stupid.

INT. FRONT DOOR - SAME

Daphne remains in the doorway. Reeling.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Daphne talks on a corded landline phone mid-conversation. She braces for a scolding. Her eyes widen in shock.

DAPHNE

(On the phone)

Can't they just patch it? ...Just clean it out and-

She stifles, the wind knocked out of her.

DAPHNE

I need more time...

She cries silently - masking her true feelings.



DAPHNE  
Tomorrow. Thank you.

Defeated. She hangs the phone back on the cradle. Fighting to keep it together.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Daphne stares at Wall. The hole temporarily patched with masking tape. She walks up, places her palms on Wall.

Rests her head on him like a fallen lover. She breaks down.

DAPHNE  
Please don't leave me.

She hears... Faint, muted crying. She looks at Wall. Stunned.

Listens closely. A distinct vocalization and it dawns on her... It's not Wall. It's Omar.

INT. HALLWAY - A LITTLE LATER

Daphne peers her head out the front door. Paces one door down. Stops. Builds up the courage... KNOCK. KNOCK.

The door opens. Omar, composed - not used to being on this end of the equation.

OMAR  
...Hi.

DAPHNE  
I'm in love with a wall but it's full of shit.

OMAR  
What?

DAPHNE  
It's full of rat shit. So they have to tear it down.

Omar stares at her - speechless.

INT. APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Daphne and Omar stand staring at Wall in silence. Daphne on the verge of a meltdown - always the outsider. Omar notices.

OMAR

I... I fall in love all the time.  
But at a distance. Soak in every  
little thing I can. Fall in love.  
But, I never say anything... That  
way no one gets hurt.

Something in Omar's words resonates with Daphne. She looks at him - seeing him in a new light. Someone who understands.

He looks at her. She looks at him. Their eyes lock...

OMAR

I should go.

He turns to bolt for the door. Daphne, letting him go-

DAPHNE

-Omar.

He turns back to her.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

It's never really safe. Is it?

OMAR

No.

She soaks this in. Decides...

DAPHNE

I need to tell you something.

He nods, *go ahead*.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

The first time I wanted to have sex  
I was twenty-two. My first  
boyfriend. But the truth is... my  
first time- I was younger. Really  
young. You said you were sorry  
about my brother but... He wasn't a  
good man.

(Beat)

I thought I would feel better,  
after he died. But I don't.

OMAR

I'm so sorry.

DAPHNE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. You've  
always been so kind.



OMAR

Sometimes people hand us something we never asked to carry. But it becomes a part of us. And we never get to put it down. Not really. But what we do get is this special x-ray vision... To see everyone else who carries heavy too.

This hits Daphne. Hard. Omar wants to comfort her but is still cautious, respectful - holding space for her.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

You said if I ever needed anything...

Omar braces, unsure what her ask will be - unclear if he'll oblige.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

...I need a hug.

Omar opens his arms to her and she notices...

Scars similar to the ones on his neck litter the inside of his arm - shrapnel scars if you had to guess, and you'd be right.

She reaches for his scars but stops herself. Omar nods in consent.

She runs her fingers over his scars.

She meets his gaze. Omar, just as vulnerable. Their eyes lock. He gently takes her hand. Rests it on his chest.

She looks at him. Surprised. Leans in and...

Puts her ear to his chest - an echo of what she's done to Wall before but... You hear Omar's heartbeat.

She surrenders her head onto his chest. They slowly, cautiously embrace. Melting into each other. Filled with something they both longed for.

Their embrace framed by Wall, which in this moment, feels more like a doorway.