

FINDING DISTANCE

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Screenplay
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FADE IN:

EXT. TRAVIS HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Bright sunlight reflects off the top windows.

TEENAGERS exit the buses and walk toward the building. Girls show off nail polish. Boys slap hands and fist bump.

INT. INSIDE SCHOOL LOCKER - MORNING

Three slits of light illuminate crumpled papers.

The locker opens. ALEX McKENNA (14) scoops out books with her right hand and keeps the left safely hidden in her pocket. Everything she wears is a different shade of dark.

INT. HALLWAY

Alex fumbles with the books and they fall to the floor. A GIRL gently comes to her aid.

GIRL
Need a hand?

MADISON SHAW (15) laughs at the remark. Everything Madison wears is a different shade of perfect.

ALEX
(to the girl)
Get lost.

Alex shoves her into the lockers. The female SECURITY MONITOR waddles over.

SECURITY MONITOR
Bingo! Thank you, Miss McKenna.
You get detention before first period
and I get my first coffee break.

INT. DETENTION HALL - MORNING

The Security Monitor sits and slurps from a mug. Alex sits and sulks. The bell rings and she bolts out the door.

SECURITY MONITOR
See you soon.

INT. MATH CLASSROOM - DAY

MR. MILLER (38) casual and cool, writes an equation on the smartboard. He turns towards his frightened STUDENTS.

MR. MILLER
Just follow the formula, guys.

Madison whispers to her worshipers SALINA HENRY and TAYLOR DUNST, both fourteen.

MADISON
I aced this unit in my last school.

SALINA
(showing her nails)
What do you think of this color?

MADISON
Too dark.

Meanwhile, Alex stares out the window.

MR. MILLER
Give it a shot. Anybody? Alex?

ALEX
(glancing at the board)
X equals negative three and six.

MR. MILLER
Correct. Good job.

MADISON
Let's all give her a hand.

Madison quietly applauds and the kids giggle. Then she gives a 'thumbs up' and they all laugh out loud.

MR. MILLER
Knock it off.

Alex angrily turns towards Madison. Madison immediately dumps her own text book to the floor and holds her arm.

MADISON
Ow! Hey!

SALINA
Oh my God! She hit Madison!

ALEX
I did not.

MADISON
You did too.

MR. MILLER
Enough. Get back to work.

SALINA
Why does she get special treatment?
Anybody else would get detention.

TAYLOR

Mr. Miller, you have to take her to the principal. That's the rule.

MR. MILLER

I'm aware of the rules, Taylor. Here are mine. For disrupting my class answer questions six through eight. Madison, Salina, you too.

MADISON

Three questions? No problem.

ALEX

Add that up in your head?

CARLY CEDERSTRUM (14) stifles a laugh.

MR. MILLER

Do the work, girls.
 (grabbing their
 calculators)
 Without these.
 (gently)
 Let's go, Alex.

*

He escorts her out.

CARLY

Why did you do that?

MADISON

I hate that creepy freak.

INT. DETENTION HALL - DAY

The Security Monitor eats a doughnut and solves a crossword.

SECURITY MONITOR

What's a three letter word for 'slovenly?'

ALEX

You.

EXT. TRAVIS SCHOOL ATHLETIC FIELDS - AFTERNOON

Various TEAMS practice various sports. The SOFTBALL COACH organizes her GIRLS.

SOFTBALL COACH

These positions will work best for all of you. Trust me. Thompson, catcher. Willis, short stop...

Alex walks alone past the enthusiastic athletes.

INT. MCKENNA HOUSE, ALEX'S ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Silence.

Alex lays on the messy bed in the messy room. She throws a rubber ball at a worn circle on the wall. It leaves another dead center mark.

INT. MCKENNA HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

More silence. NATE McKENNA (46 and perpetually annoyed) sits and eats. Alex plays with her food.

NATE

Eat. And finish the broccoli.

Nate's cell phone rings.

NATE

(into phone)

Hello? Yes, this is Mr. McKenna.

It's not a good time Dr. Pitcoff.

We're in the middle of dinner...

What now? Was she thirty seconds

late for lunch? No, I... all right.

Fine. Twelve-thirty tomorrow.

(shuts the phone)

Detention. Twice in one day. That's a record, even for you.

ALEX

It wasn't my fault.

NATE

Of course not. It never is.

ALEX

I'm not hungry. I'm going upstairs.

NATE

No you're not. It's family time.

She plays with the broccoli. He reads a magazine.

INT. ALEX'S ROOM - EVENING

Alex lies on the bed in pajamas and fuzzy slippers. She gives up on her homework and throws the text book to the floor. Nate bursts in...

NATE

Go to bed. And put that laundry in the basket.

... and leaves. She takes the pile of clothes and throws them in the closet.

They fall on top of an old shoe box crammed in the corner. 'Mom Stuff' is written on top in faded red crayon.

INT. TRAVIS HIGH SCHOOL, PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. PITCOFF (56) sits stiffly behind her desk. The reading glasses pinching the tip of her nose are in constant danger of falling. Alex fidgets in her seat.

ALEX

I told you he wasn't coming.

Nate bursts into the office and drops into a chair. He wipes the remnants of lunch off the VideoView logo on his shirt.

NATE

Sorry. I was with a client. Let's make this quick. I have to get back. Alex says she'll behave.

DR. PITCOFF

That won't solve the problem this time, Mr. McKenna. Madison's mother has filed a complaint.

ALEX

I didn't even touch Miss Perfect.

DR. PITCOFF

Alex, she's a new student. Take the opportunity to make a friend.

ALEX

I don't need any friends.

DR. PITCOFF

Clearly you need something. You're fighting with other students, you're failing three classes...

NATE

What? You told me your grades were getting better.

ALEX

They are. I'm failing by less.

DR. PITCOFF

I think Alex needs to find an outlet for her anger. A club, maybe a sport.

NATE

What she needs is for the other kids to stop bothering her because...

He stops. Alex pushes her hand deeper into the pocket.

NATE
...because of who she is.

DR. PITCOFF
Alex's unique circumstance doesn't give her permission to attack her peers. If this behavior continues she'll be placed in the alternative high school.

NATE
You're going to throw her in with the troublemakers? Are you out of your mind?

DR. PITCOFF
(the glasses fall,
she puts them back)
I'd be 'out of my mind' to let an unstable student stay in my school. Either she finds a way to channel her energy into something positive or she'll need to relocate. Until she does, Mr. McKenna, I suggest you keep a closer eye on her.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Nate and Alex walk and argue.

ALEX
I'm not joining a club.

NATE
Yes you are. I can't keep coming down here to bail you out. You're going to join something and stay out of trouble. Until then you'll be meeting me at work after school so I can 'keep a closer eye on you.'

ALEX
Sure. That'll be easy. You're in a different place everyday.

NATE
There's this new invention called the smartphone. I'll text you the addresses. And watch the mouth.

The bell rings and the hall fills with kids and teachers.

NATE
Find a club. No more fights. Get it? No fighting.

He pushes past the Security Monitor and through the front doors. Alex kicks a locker and melts into the crowd.

INT. TRAVIS HIGH SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - DAY

The room is packed but Alex sits alone. Madison and the COOL KIDS fill the center table.

Salina walks by with her food tray and purposely bumps into Alex. Juice spills down her back.

SALINA

Oops. So sorry.

She joins Madison and her laughing crew. Alex is about to make her move when her cell phone buzzes. She reads Nate's text, 'Today - 20 Broad St. DON'T BE LATE!'

CUT TO:

Alex fights to get her bicycle out of the rack. It clanks on the bars.

CUT TO:

Two fencing FOILS clank together.

CUT TO:

Alex angrily rides her bicycle, legs pumping furiously.

CUT TO:

A FENCER jumps and lunges forward.

CUT TO:

Alex rounds a corner. A car honks.

CUT TO:

A fencer lands a touch on her OPPONENT and screams in victory.

INT. APPELE FENCING CLUB - DAY

Alex rushes through the door and stops dead in her tracks. She's mesmerized by what she sees.

The large room is filled with the sounds of blades clashing and buzzers ringing. Pairs of young FENCERS dressed in white meet on long strips that look like bowling lanes.

A victory scream rings out.

EMMA

BOOO-YAA!!

Alex jumps at the sound. BROOKLYN ORENSKY (42 and slightly beautiful) recounts the action with the hand signals of the sport.

BROOKLYN

Attack misses. Counter attack lands.
Touch right. En Gardé.

ILSÉ HENRIQUEZ (14) and EMMA BRIGHTON (14) get into position and point their weapons towards each other.

BROOKLYN

Ready, fence.

Emma thrusts her blade and lunges in for the touch. A green light comes on in the scoring box at the end of the strip.

EMMA

YAA! SAH!

BROOKLYN

Touch right. Bout.

They take off their mesh steel masks, salute with their blades and shake hands.

ILSÉ

Curses! Foiled again! Thank you.
Good bout.

EMMA

Good bout, Ilsé. Thank you.

The girls hug and un-plug their body cords from the retractable reel wires on strip. Ilsé hands the reel clip to LOUIS SKULLMAN (15).

ILSÉ

Next victim. Take it easy on him
Emms, he's fragile.

LOUIS

I can take care of myself. But take
it easy on me, okay?

EMMA

Your actions are really good. You
just need to finish strong.

DANIEL VIRSIL (14) calls out from across the room.

DANIEL

After you beat Louis, I'm up.

LOUIS

Thanks for the vote of confidence.

Brooklyn approaches Alex. As she gets closer, Alex notices the tattoo of a cracked diamond on her right inner forearm and the multiple piercings in her left ear.

BROOKLYN

Hi Sweetheart. Can I help you?

ALEX

My dad is here.

BROOKLYN

I should have known. You look just like him. I'm Brooklyn Orensky.

ALEX

I'm Alex.

BROOKLYN

Come on, he's in the office. Emma, I'll direct your bout later. Lead a foot-work drill and get ready for your lesson.

EMMA

Sure thing. Everybody line up. En Gardé. Advance lunge.

INT. OFFICE

A desk and couch face the half wall that looks out to the strips. Nate mounts a large screen monitor on the side wall.

BROOKLYN

Nate, your clone is here.

NATE

Get started on your homework. I've got a lot left to do.

ALEX

I could be half way finished by now if you didn't make me come here.

The phone rings.

BROOKLYN

(into phone)

Hello, Fencing. Hi, Honey. How was track? Great! Be sure to drink a lot of water. Trinomial factoring? Sure I'll help you. As soon as you tell me what it is.

ALEX

It's the prime factorization of a statement with three terms.

BROOKLYN

(after a moment, into
phone)

Hear that, Ray? Order something for
dinner and tell Billy we'll work on
the Comic Con costume tonight. Love
you, sweetie. Bye.

(smiling to Alex)

Thanks. Brainiac.

ALEX

(smiling back)

No problem.

Nate grabs the remote off the desk and spots a receipt.

NATE

Is this what it costs to fence? How
do people afford it?

BROOKLYN

They sell the first child and use
the money to pay for the second.

NATE

I'd have to sell six children to
cover a bill like that.

(demonstrating the
monitor)

The camera is on twenty-four seven.
You can rewind, fast forward, slow
motion. You can also go frame by
frame and watch the swords...

BROOKLYN

Foils.

NATE

... do what they do. The kids can
use flashdrives to download their
fights.

BROOKLYN

Bouts.

NATE

Bouts, whatever. I have to adjust
the back camera. It looks like the
end of the strips are out of frame.
Soon as I install another camera up
front you're good to go.

INT. OFFICE - LATER

Alex sits on the couch peering over the top of her text book.
Her focus is on the strips.

INT. STUDIO

Brooklyn works with Emma. The only sounds are clanking blades and thud of hits on Brooklyn's thick black teaching jacket.

Kids relax in their fencing knickers and white shirts. Ilsé works on the practice mannequin. Louis attacks the flashing red lights on an electric target with the tip of his blade.

Alex takes it all in.

INT. OFFICE - EVENING

The club is empty. Alex solves math equations. Nate adjusts the monitor and answers his cell phone.

NATE

(into phone)

Hello. Hello? Hi Jon. What? The reception is really bad in here. I'm in a fencing club. Fencing. I don't know, teaches kids to fight with swords. No, are you kidding? Not for Alex. She gets in enough trouble already.

Alex bites her lip.

NATE

What? Hang on.

He steps out the front door. Alex slowly walks to the strips.

INT. STUDIO

She runs her palm over the rack of foils. She takes one. The electronic target catches her eye.

Alex turns it on and stands in En Gardé. She rapid-fire hits the lights with the tip of the blade.

NATE

(entering)

Hey! Put that down before you break it. Go get your stuff. I'm done.

She gently puts the foil back. The board is left on.

EXT. MCKENNA HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is quiet and dark. A single light shines from an upstairs bedroom. Alex faces the mirror and fences with her reflection.

EXT. TRAVIS HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Kids pile out of buses. Alex grudgingly gets off and stares at the building. She backs away and bumps into Mr. Miller.

MR. MILLER

Walk with me. I want to introduce you to the Mathletes.

ALEX

The Mathletes?

MR. MILLER

I hear you're looking for a club and you have a mind for math. For example, a line on a Cartesian graph can be expressed as $Mx+B$ equals...?

ALEX

Y.

MR. MILLER

Why? Because if you don't join the club you'll be expelled.

ALEX

Seriously? That was terrible.

MR. MILLER

There's a reason I'm a math teacher and not a comedian. We meet in the resource room during lunch.

ALEX

I'll think about it.

MR. MILLER

If you're going to think about it, think yes.

He opens the door for her.

INT. APPELE FENCING CLUB - DAY

Brooklyn enters the empty club. The score on the electronic target catches her eye.

INT. TRAVIS HIGH SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - DAY

Alex sits alone surrounded by tables filled with kids. She grabs her things.

INT. MATH RESOURCE ROOM - DAY

The TEN MEMBERS of mathletes lounge on lumpy couches. Mr. Miller works on a laptop. Carly addresses the club.

CARLY

Eight months till Math Bowl. Only four mathletes on the panel but all of us work to support the team. This year's theme is Conditional Probability. Thursday we'll discuss how Marilyn vos Savant proved that the entire mathematics community was wrong about the Monty Hall Problem.

MIGUEL COLON and WILL BATES, both fourteen, slap hands.

WILL

Oh yeah. We can meet behind door number three.

MIGUEL

Good one, Bro.

Madison reads a text and laughs out loud.

CARLY

We meet every other day. You could at least pretend like you care.

MADISON

I'm only here because my mother forced me to join a club for college apps and you know I'm the reason you'll win Math Bowl.

WILL

She's 'probably' right.

MIGUEL

Sweet.

CARLY

Shut up, Will. Okay?

MR. MILLER

Here it is! Einstein's Brainteaser.

WILL

Awesome!

MIGUEL

Sick!

Alex appears in the doorway. Carly looks up and smiles. Madison looks up and smirks.

MR. MILLER

Alex. Come on in.

Alex backs into the hallway. Mr. Miller follows.

INT. HALLWAY

MR. MILLER

Wait.

ALEX

Really? Madison's in the club?

MR. MILLER

You're both great at math. The club gives you something in common.

ALEX

So?

MR. MILLER

You'll get to know each other. Maybe even like each other.

ALEX

You never went to High School did you, Mr. M.? Thanks anyway. I'll find something else.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Alex carefully looks through the rows of books. She stops and a broad smile stretches across her face. She pulls 'The Art of Fencing' off the shelf.

INT. APPELE FENCING CLUB - DAY

The kids warm up. Brooklyn leans on the electronic target.

BROOKLYN

Okay guys. Who got the great score?

DANIEL

(coughing)

Emma.

EMMA

Not me.

BROOKLYN

No one wants credit?

LOUIS

Let's check out the new video.

They bolt towards the office.

INT. OFFICE

The kids pile in. Brooklyn is hopeless with the remote.

BROOKLYN

How do I...? Wait, I want it to...

ILSÉ

Go to menu. No, menu. Don't click that one! Curses! Foiled again!

LOUIS

Is that your one joke?

ILSÉ

Curses! It is!

BROOKLYN

No... why won't it...?

LOUIS

Top left.

DANIEL

Previous. At the top.

BROOKLYN

Hang on, Daniel. I got it!

The playback comes up. They watch in silence.

EMMA

Wow. Who is that?

BROOKLYN

(with a smile)

It's Alex.

INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

A pile of scarves hits the floor. Alex gets into En Gardé. With great concentration, she moves a thin tree branch in circles around the now vacant coat pegs.

Nate walks in with a basket of laundry. In a flash Alex drops the branch and stands in front of the fencing book.

ALEX

Could you at least knock? I said I would do my own laundry.

NATE

And then tell me you can't go to school because you don't have any clean clothes? I don't think so. Put this stuff away and finish your homework. Did you look for a club?

(silence)

Of course not. Get ready for dinner.

She locks the door after him and gets back in En Gardé.

EXT. APPELE FENCING CLUB - DAY

Alex peeks through the window into the empty club. She lets out a breath and walks towards her bicycle.

BROOKLYN
(calling from doorway)
Alex? Do you want something?

ALEX
Yeah... I think I left my iPod.

BROOKLYN
Come in and look around.

INT. APPELE FENCING CLUB - DAY

Alex checks the strips. Brooklyn looks through the rack.

ALEX
Maybe it's in my locker at school.

BROOKLYN
I'll check in back.

Brooklyn disappears through the side door. Alex slowly steps onto a strip and adjusts her En Gardé.

BROOKLYN (O.S.)
Bend your knees a little more.

Alex freezes. Brooklyn stands next to her.

BROOKLYN
Bend your knees. Feet apart. Very good. Let's try with foils.

ALEX
The thing is...

She exposes her deformed hand. It stops at the palm. There have never been any fingers attached and the thumb is short.

ALEX
I only have one hand.

BROOKLYN
(smiling)
One hand is all you need.

Brooklyn holds out a blade. Alex accepts it.

BROOKLYN

En Gardé. Tap my blade. You tap
and I tap back.

(they do)

It's like we're having a conversation.
Easy breezy. Just follow me.
Advance, retreat. Find your distance,
Alex. That's the first rule of
fencing. Good. That was very good.

ALEX

Thanks.

BROOKLYN

Now we salute. Hold your blade up
to your face, extend your arm up and
whoosh the blade to the side.

(they do)

Most of the kids like that sound.

ALEX

I like it too. I have to go, I have
to meet my dad.

BROOKLYN

If your iPod shows up I'll give you
guys a call.

ALEX

Okay. Thanks.

Alex returns the blade.

EXT. APPELE FENCING CLUB - DAY

Alex drags herself away from the club.

INT. MCKENNA HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alex and Nate have another silent dinner.

INT. MALL - DAY

Alex fences with her reflection in a store window. A group
of GIRLS pass by. She quickly stuffs her hand in her pocket
and jumps onto the escalator.

Alex finds Nate watching a FATHER and SON trying out baseball
gloves. She waits for him to notice she's there.

INT. TRAVIS HIGH SCHOOL, HALLWAY - DAY

The bell rings. Kids slam their lockers and bolt out the
front door. Alex spots Salina walking in the opposite
direction. She follows.

The security monitor stands in her way.

SECURITY MONITOR
Exit is that way, McKenna.

ALEX
School's over. Leave me alone.

The monitor doesn't move. Alex sidesteps and passes.

INT. GYMNASIUM HALLWAY - DAY

Salina has disappeared. Alex peeks in classrooms, looks up the stairwell. A FENCER comes out of the gym.

FENCER GIRL
Where's the bathroom?

ALEX
Don't you know your way around?

FENCER GIRL
Nope. We're an independent team so we train in different schools. We picked up a fencer from here so I have to learn my way around. Again.

ALEX
Bathroom's over there.

FENCER GIRL
Cool. Thanks.

She disappears around the corner. Alex looks through the small window in the gym door. Her eyes light up.

INT. GYMNASIUM

The space has transformed into a fencing studio. COACHES and FENCERS work on portable strips.

COACH
Fence hard everyone! The High School Invationals are in a month!

A scream echoes off the walls. Madison takes off her mask.

MADISON
YEAH! YEAH! Haa!

INT. HALLWAY

Alex jumps back and lands on the security monitor.

SECURITY MONITOR
Out! Now!

She bolts out the side door.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Brooklyn watches bouts on the monitor. Alex appears in the doorway.

BROOKLYN

Hi! Still looking for your iPod?

ALEX

No. I guess it's lost. I was thinking... I'm not busy after school. Maybe I could come here and...help out or something.

The video of Alex on the electric score board comes up.

ALEX

Sorry. I just wanted to try it out. If I broke it I'll...

BROOKLYN

Your technique is sloppy and your En Gardé is weak. But you have talent.

ALEX

Really? I got a book from the library. I've been practicing and...I didn't lose my iPod. It's on my desk. I really want to fence.

BROOKLYN

I knew that from the moment I met you. Tell your dad you're going to help out after school. In exchange, you'll learn to fence.

ALEX

(brightly)

Okay.

INT. MCKENNA HOUSE, GARAGE - AFTERNOON

The soft orange sun reflects off the bumper of Nate's classic Mustang convertible. He pours antifreeze into the engine and accidentally splatters some onto his shoes.

NATE

Great.

He wipes the mess and checks his watch. Alex rides up on her bicycle, helmet hooked on the back. She jumps off and quietly rehearses as she walks up the driveway.

ALEX

It's not fighting. There are rules,
there's respect...

Nate pops up and stops her in her tracks.

NATE

I told you not to ride without your
helmet. And did you conveniently
forget to meet me at work today?
Where were you?

The speech stays caught in her throat.

NATE

That's it. We're done discussing.
I signed you up for Yoga. Nice and
quiet and relaxing. Maybe you'll
finally get that temper of yours
under control.

ALEX

I do not have a temper, and there's
no way I'm going to Yoga.

NATE

This is not a discussion, Alex. You
didn't choose, so I chose for you.

ALEX

But...I did choose. I joined a club.

NATE

Really? Which one?

ALEX

It's after school...It teaches
discipline and respect and...

NATE

Which club, Alex? And it better be
something that's going to keep you
out of trouble.

ALEX

...I'm good at it and...

NATE

Where are you going after school?

She looks at her father and makes a decision.

ALEX

Mathletes. That's where I was today.
Mr. M. invited me. Everyday after
school I'll be at mathletes.

NATE
Is that the truth?

ALEX
Yes.

They both hold their ground.

NATE
(softening)
All right. Go do your homework.

Nate wipes his hands. Alex walks past him and exhales.

INT. TRAVIS HIGH SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - DAY

The noise level is unbearable.

Carly and the boys sit in back. Madison and her crew fill the center. Alex sits alone studying the fencing book.

INT. MATH CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr. Miller teaches at the smartboard. Alex marks footwork under her desk.

INT. APPELE FENCING CLUB - AFTERNOON

The strips are full. Fencers yell, buzzers go off. Alex quietly walks in the door.

BROOKLYN
Halt! Everybody halt. Ladies and Gentleman, we have a new member. Ms. Alex McKenna.

The kids applaud and shout greetings.

INT. CLUB - LATER

With her hand hidden, Alex cleans up the foil racks. Across the room Brooklyn, Emma and Ilsé repair blades.

BROOKLYN
You haven't seen Star Wars? How is that possible?

ILSÉ
Yeah, how is that possible?

EMMA
I just never got around to it.

BROOKLYN

I'm ashamed of myself for not taking care of this sooner.

(squeezes Emma's hand)

I'll lend you my DVD.

EMMA

Okay.

BROOKLYN

Ilsé, go tell Alex we're ready.

She jogs across the room.

ILSÉ

Alex, Brooklyn wants you to practice with Emma. There's extra knickers and stuff in the bin.

ALEX

Thanks.

ILSÉ

Cool shirt. I really like that band.

ALEX

Really? No one at school knows who they are.

ILSÉ

Not surprising. They stay under the radar but they're awesome. I'll show you my iPod later. I have, like, all their songs.

She goes back to Emma.

ALEX

(smiling to herself)

Cool.

A BIT LATER

Alex stands on strip with Emma. They are both ready to fence. She keeps her hand hidden in the sleeve of the white jacket.

BROOKLYN

En Gardé Girls. Beat back and forth.
(they do)

Good Alex. That's it. The beat or parry can take 'Right of Way.'

ALEX

Uhm...Okay.

BROOKLYN

You have to have 'Right of Way' to score a touch. Something has to happen before you hit. Stop their attack, attack first, use the parry. Emma, show parry four and parry six.

Emma rolls her wrist from right to left with the blade in line. Alex does the same.

BROOKLYN

Back and forth. Parry four, parry six. There are others but everything is built on these two. Practice them a billion times then a billion times more. Let's fence a little.

Brooklyn clips Alex into the reel at the end of the strip. Emma zips up her jacket and metallic lamé vest. She connects her body cord to the reel at the other end.

BROOKLYN

Test.

The girls poke each other's lamés with their foils. The red and green lights in the score box flash on and off. Ilsé and Daniel settle in to watch the bout.

BROOKLYN

En Gardé. Ready, fence. Play with distance, Alex. Advance and retreat.

Emma charges in with a strong lunge. Alex parrys the blade off target and is hit hard in the biceps.

ALEX

Oww. Oww, oww.

DANIEL

Welcome to fencing, Alex! You've earned your mark!

EMMA

Sorry.

BROOKLYN

Fencers ready, fence. Work girls. Use your legs, Alex. Eyes open. Stay sharp.

Emma attacks. Alex parrys and hits.

BROOKLYN

Good!

EMMA

Nice touch.

ILSÉ

Awesome Alex!

BROOKLYN

Nice work girls. Salute and shake hands.

They take off their masks and salute. Emma extends her hand. Alex attempts to shake off her glove.

BROOKLYN

Always shake with the un-gloved hand Alex. It's a sign of respect.
 (Alex hesitates)
 It's okay.

Everyone waits. Alex drops her deformed hand out of the sleeve and braces herself for the reaction. Emma curls her fingers into a fist.

EMMA

Good bout. Thank you.

ALEX

(bumping the fist)
 Thanks. Good bout.

The kids go about their business. Brooklyn un-clips Alex's body cord from the reel.

BROOKLYN

Good job.

ALEX

Thanks. Thanks a lot.

She stays on strip with her exposed hand. No one comments.