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TALENT + LITERARY MANAGEMENT

3615 EASTHAM DR | CULVER CITY
CULVER CITY, CA 90232 | 310.838.3333

BROOKLYN | 20 JAY ST
718.422.0200 | BROOKLYN, NY 11201

GHOSTED

Written by

Dan Schoffer

INT. BAR - NIGHT (LOS ANGELES)

One of those lame first date spots where single men and women meet under dim lighting for overpriced cocktails. We land on one such duo. AMANDA and CALEB, both mid-20s, attractive.

CALEB

What these whiny snowflakes fail to realize is that he *is* making America great again. But it's a process. It's like, if you wanna build your dream house, then you gotta tear down the piece of shit in its place first. And if a few people happen to get bulldozed along the way, then that's just the price of freedom. Ya feel me?

Amanda looks ill, not feeling him. Caleb downs his beer.

CALEB (CONT'D)

So, another round?

Amanda pretends to check her watch.

AMANDA

Y'know, I'd love to, but I have a deposition early in the morning.

CALEB

Oh, okay. No prob. But we should do this again some time. This was fun.

AMANDA

Yeah, sure, text me.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Amanda's at her cubicle. BLOOP. She gets a text message from *Caleb OkCupid: Hey girl. Fun times last night. Free Saturday?*

AMANDA (V.O.)

What is ghosting?

Amanda ignores Caleb's text, continues with her work.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Technically speaking, it's the act of ceasing all communication with someone you've gone out with, in the hopes that they'll just get the hint and leave you alone.

INT. LAW OFFICE - LADIES' ROOM - NIGHT

Amanda changes out of her work clothes into something sexier.

AMANDA (V.O.)

But really, ghosting is a reset button, allowing us to soldier on in this exhausting age of modern dating.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Amanda's out on another date. This time with BEN, 20s.

BEN

Actually, I live in Manhattan.

AMANDA

Oh, you're bi-coastal?

BEN

No, just the mono-coastal.

AMANDA

(confused)

Your profile said Silverlake.

BEN

That's where I'm staying. With a high school buddy. For the week. But figured I'd try and sample the goods while I'm out here.

Ben winks at her, gross.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

BLOOP. Amanda gets a text from *Ben Bumble: Hey you. I'm here for a few more days if you wanna meet up... lemme know :)*
Once again, Amanda doesn't bother responding.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Ghosting isn't even a choice. It's a necessity...

INT. ANOTHER BAR - ANOTHER NIGHT

Amanda has drinks with VINCE, 20s.

VINCE

Probably Pitbull.

AMANDA

The rapper?

VINCE

Oh yeah. He's the best. He gets me
amped up the gym, or to go out.
Plus he's got some lesser known
ballads that are real emotional.

AMANDA

We talking about the same guy here -
racially ambiguous dude in the
white suits who pumps his fists and
sings about loving life in Miami.

VINCE

Good. You're familiar with him.

Amanda stares at this guy, incredulous.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Without ghosting, I'd be fucked...

CUT TO A FLURRY OF MORE AWFUL DATES:

KEVIN

I used to drive for Uber, but then
they found out about all the DUI's,
so now I'm kinda between gigs.

NICK

If you're gonna live in our country
then learn the fucking language.

DEAN

I'd rather not tell you what I do
for work.

LOUIS

That was my 200th Phish show.

BRANDON

But all lives *do* matter.

More BAD DATES keep popping up, until the screen pixelates
into a VAST MOSAIC OF MEN, all talking over each other.
Eventually, Amanda's voice returns over the cacophony.

AMANDA (V.O.)

And I know what you're thinking -
"Bad date or not, ghosting is cruel
and childish."

(then)

But it isn't!

(MORE)

AMANDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Ghosting is actually the mature and kind option. If I text these guys back, I'm rejecting them, and hurting their feelings. This way, they sweep it under the rug and pretend it never happened. It's a win for both of us.

ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 But, Amanda, what is ghosting to you really?

The mosaic TUMBLES away like a house of cards, to reveal:

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Where a SHRINK, 40s, sits across from Amanda.

AMANDA
 I thought I just told you.

SHRINK
 Sounded like a lot of excuses. Might be a defense mechanism.

AMANDA
 Nah, I don't think that's it.

SHRINK
 But don't you see how you're avoiding any sort of real--

AMANDA
 Look, I'm not trying to be rude, but I'm only here for the Adderall. Your Yelp reviews insinuated that you were pretty chill about giving out prescriptions, and that's the reason I made the appointment. Honestly, I'm not even sure how we got on the whole ghosting tangent.

The shrink SIGHS, reaches for her script pad.

EXT. MEDICAL COMPLEX - ELEVATOR BAY - LATER

Amanda presses the down button, when... someone WHISTLES at her. She turns around, spots the culprit - SOME GUY, 30ish.

AMANDA
 Seriously? Whistling? Does that ever work? Grow the fuck up.

Suddenly, a GOLDEN RETRIEVER bounds over to the guy. It's an adorable dog, wearing a *Sgt. Pepper's* themed collar.

GUY

This is Paw McCartney. But everyone calls him Sir.

AMANDA

(realizes her mistake)
Shit, my bad.

Amanda looks the guy over... he's actually pretty damn hot. Like a Ralph Lauren model - with a perfect tan and a rugged charm that make it seem like he just stepped off a sailboat.

GUY

I think Sir Paw and I can find a way to forgive you.

DING. The elevator arrives.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Amanda rides down with the sexy guy and his adorable dog.

AMANDA

I feel like such a dumbass.

GUY

Don't. I theoretically deserved it.

AMANDA

So whistling at strange women isn't your go-to move then?

GUY

No, never. I usually just tell them to smile more.

AMANDA

Was that a joke?

GUY

An attempt, yes.

She stares at this hot guy, who apparently has some wit too.

GUY (CONT'D)

I'm Julian by the way.

AMANDA

Amanda.

Sir Paw SNIFFS her leg.

JULIAN
He's harmless, promise.

Amanda leans down to pet the dog, when she notices that Julian is holding one of those toothbrush / floss baggies they give you at the dentist. She looks up, confused.

AMANDA
You brought your dog to the dentist?

JULIAN
I know, it's weird. But they were doing construction next to my house and he was barking like crazy and I didn't wanna leave him home. Luckily, the dentist is an old college buddy, so he let it slide.

AMANDA
He's adorable.

JULIAN
Dr. Meyerson? He's alright. Could probably hit the gym a little more.

Amanda and Julian share a glance, something brewing here.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

They walk to their cars.

AMANDA
Any cavities?

JULIAN
Nope, just a routine cleaning.

Julian smiles. Even his teeth are fucking perfect.

AMANDA
Your dentist pal better watch out. Might report him to the ADA.

JULIAN
Over Sir Paw?

AMANDA
Can't be too hygienic.

JULIAN

That would suck... I'd need a new source for all my free nitrous.

Julian stops at a cool vintage pick-up truck.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Well, this is me.

AMANDA

Nice wheels.

JULIAN

Thanks. Repaired it myself.

They just stand there for a beat - the moment of truth.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

We should get drinks.

AMANDA

(beat)

I'm onto you.

JULIAN

How's that?

AMANDA

I get your thing now. You bring Sir Paw around and "accidentally" whistle at women and then bring them to your cool vintage car that you happened to fix yourself. It's really quite transparent, Julian.

JULIAN

Damn, you got me. Truth is, this car doesn't even work. Just a prop.

AMANDA

(smiles, takes out iPhone)

Drinks would be great. Let's exchange numbers.

JULIAN

I meant now. It's gotta be five o'clock somewhere, right?

AMANDA

(checks iPhone clock)

Yeah, here in L.A.

JULIAN

Even better.

EXT. ROOFTOP BAR - NIGHT

Sir Paw SLURPS water from a bowl, as Amanda and Julian enjoy their second round of whiskeys.

JULIAN

I build secondary cloud networks within existing clouds to analyze usage and detect security risks.

AMANDA

Wow.

JULIAN

Impressed?

AMANDA

No, I just wasn't expecting a nerd.

JULIAN

Not everyone in tech is a nerd.

She shoots him a dubious look.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Was Steve Jobs a nerd?

AMANDA

Of course.

JULIAN

Don't be ridiculous.

AMANDA

He wore mock turtlenecks.

JULIAN

Like a boss.

AMANDA

Still not cool.

JULIAN

Okay. How about Sean Parker?

AMANDA

The Napster guy?

JULIAN

Yeah, he was cool.

AMANDA

No, Justin Timberlake, who played him in the movie, was borderline cool. But the actual Sean Parker developed file-sharing software for fun, so I'm betting he wasn't.

Julian leans back, as if taking her in.

JULIAN

You're fun. This is easily the best first date I've been on in a while.

AMANDA

Huh, we're officially saying this is a first date then?

JULIAN

Is it not?

AMANDA

I dunno. You haven't asked me my favorite bands or TV shows yet.

JULIAN

How about we skip all that and get out of here instead.

Julian flashes that perfect smile again.

EXT/INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

Modern, stylish, perched in the hills.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amanda and Julian fuck like it's a sport.

INT. JULIAN'S KITCHEN - LATER

Julian pours tequila into a blender. Amanda sits atop the counter. They're both still in various stages of undress.

AMANDA

I don't usually do this.

JULIAN

Sex?

AMANDA

With strangers, no. Or anyone at all lately.

JULIAN

Then I feel honored.

Julian adds in some margarita mix.

AMANDA

You never even told me where you're from.

JULIAN

Originally, London.

AMANDA

Really? I don't hear an accent.

JULIAN

We moved here when I was four, I assimilated pretty quick. You?

AMANDA

Grew up in New Jersey.

JULIAN

North or south?

AMANDA

Central. Not far from Princeton.

JULIAN

Nice. I've done a few guest lectures there.

AMANDA

On secondary cloud networks?

JULIAN

Hey, someone was paying attention.

Julian smiles, turns ON the blender.

AMANDA

Sure you don't need me to leave? You don't have to get up early to work on your networks or whatever?

JULIAN

No work for me tomorrow. I actually sold my company last year. Still do some consulting on the side. But I'm more or less retired for now.

AMANDA

Interesting... and whatcha gonna do
with all that free time...?

Amanda shoots him a coy look. Off the RUMBLE of the blender.

INT. JULIAN'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Julian and Amanda fuck on the ceramic tile.

EXT. JULIAN'S BALCONY - NIGHT

They drink the margaritas, enjoy the impressive canyon view.

JULIAN

How we gonna top this for our
second date?

AMANDA

(cheeky)
Oh, we're still doing that?

JULIAN

We better be.

Amanda can't help but melt a little. She finishes her drink.

AMANDA

Can your neighbors see us out here?

JULIAN

Probably. Why?

She leans over, whispers something into his ear. He quickly flicks off a light switch, causing the balcony to go dark.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Better?

Amanda kisses his neck. The coyotes HOWL in the distance, as she and Julian embark on round #3.

INT. LAW FIRM - AMANDA'S CUBICLE - DAY

Amanda effortlessly types away on her keyboard. She's glowing this morning, even WHISTLING a tune. Her friend / co-worker TAJA, mid-20s, leans over from the next cubicle.

TAJA

Is that a fucking Katy Perry song?

AMANDA

Is it? Not sure. Must have heard it
on the radio. It's kinda catchy.

Taja stares at her, perplexed.

TAJA

What is up with you today?

AMANDA

Nothing. I'm being normal.

Amanda starts WHISTLING again.

TAJA

No, you're acting bubbly as fuck,
and it's freaking me out.

Amanda stops typing, looks up from her work.

AMANDA

Okay, it's new, so I wasn't gonna
say anything, but I met someone.

TAJA

Someone, as in a man?

AMANDA

Correct.

TAJA

A man you wanna see again?

AMANDA

Very much so.

TAJA

Which app?

AMANDA

Life.

TAJA

I don't know that one. Is it new?

AMANDA

No, life, as in real life.

TAJA

Damn. Old school. Love it.

AMANDA

And the thing is... he's kinda
perfect. Which is crazy because--

TAJA

You hate every guy you go out with.

AMANDA

Yes. But not this one. He's funny and he's smart and he has his shit together. Plus I think he really likes me. Like *really* likes me. I'm telling you, Taj, we had this genuine connection. And the sex... my god... the sex was like borderline porn quality.

TAJA

Whoa. You had sex on a first date?

AMANDA

(whispers)

Three times.

TAJA

I need a pic, stat.

Amanda pulls up a link to a *Wall Street Journal* article with a great photo of Julian. She spins her screen towards Taja.

TAJA (CONT'D)

Jesus.

AMANDA

I know.

TAJA

That jaw.

AMANDA

Gosling-esque.

TAJA

And that hairline.

AMANDA

Not plugs.

TAJA

And those fucking dimples!

Amanda swoons, just thinking about him.

TAJA (CONT'D)

When you seeing this guy again?

EXT. LAW FIRM - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Amanda walks back to her car, texts Julian: "Round four?"

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Amanda's back home on the couch, staring at her iPhone - it's open to the text that she sent Julian earlier: "Round four?" She can see that Julian's read it, yet he hasn't responded.

AMANDA

I'm sure he's just busy.

Amanda pours herself a glass of wine, SPARKS up a joint.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Amanda's passed out on the couch, stray Cheetos in her hair. BLOOP. She jolts awake at the sound, immediately checks her iPhone. But alas, it's only a text from her mom.

INT. LAW FIRM - AMANDA'S DESK - DAY

Amanda tries to work, but can't concentrate. She checks her cell phone - still no response. She returns to her work, only to check the cell again five seconds later. Still nothing.

INT. AMANDA'S CAR - NIGHT

Amanda drives home from work, when a CALL comes in over her Bluetooth - *unknown number*. She accepts.

AMANDA

Julian?

COURTESY CALLER (VIA BLUETOOTH)

Every year, over one million
children are affected by cancer.

CLICK. Amanda ends the call.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Amanda's back on the couch, a few Malbecs deep, staring at her text message to Julian - still no response.

She continues to stare hard at the phone, squinting her eyes, as if conjuring up some kind of mythical Jedi force to get Julian to text her back. But of course, there's no response.

INT. LAW FIRM - AMANDA'S DESK - DAY

Amanda stares at that text again. This time, she takes a deep breath, starts to type a follow-up: *Hey Julian. Never heard back. Everything ok?*

AMANDA

Lame.

She deletes the text. Starts over: *The round four offer is still on the table. Hit me up :)*

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Desperate.

She deletes that too. Tries again: *Sup?*

Amanda shrugs, doesn't hate it. She hits SEND.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - A FEW DAYS LATER

Her coffee table is littered with joint roaches and wine bottles. Amanda SNORES on the couch, splayed out, a mess.

Her iPhone sits in her lap, open to iMessages. There are now a slew of outgoing (mostly drunken) texts to Julian. But still zero responses.

INT. LAW FIRM - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Amanda nurses a hangover with Gatorade, as she vents to Taja.

AMANDA

I don't know what happened. Julian and I were perfect together. Where did I go wrong? It's not like I was pushy. I waited 24 hours to text, and when I did, it was only to have more sex. I made it so easy on him and he just tossed me aside like some meaningless one-night stand.

TAJA

Maybe there's an explanation.

AMANDA

Like what?

TAJA

I dunno. Maybe he lost his phone.

AMANDA
And didn't replace it?

TAJA
Or he went to Joshua Tree.

AMANDA
For an entire week?

TAJA
Or he has family in town and lost
track of the days.

AMANDA
Oh stop it. You know he ghosted me.

TAJA
I know, I was just being nice.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - MORNING

A black Mercedes pulls into a parking spot. Out steps the
shrink that Amanda went to earlier.

AMANDA (O.S.)
Dr. Forrester...

The shrink startles, reaches into her purse for mace.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
(covers her eyes)
Relax, it's just me.

DR. FORRESTER
Jesus Christ, Amanda. You can't
scare me like that.

AMANDA
I'm so sorry. But I needed to talk
to you. It's an emergency.

DR. FORRESTER
Was there a problem with the
Adderall?

AMANDA
No, I never even had a chance to
fill it. It's about something else.

DR. FORRESTER
(checks her watch)
You've got ten minutes.

INT. DR. FORRESTER'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Amanda sits on the couch, across from the shrink.

AMANDA

I don't know why Julian would do this to me. How hard is it to respond? It's like, be a person.

DR. FORRESTER

Sorry, but I'm a little confused...
(refers to her notes)

Last week, when we were discussing ghosting, you called it the kind and mature option. You even said, and I quote: *"If I text these guys back, then I'm rejecting them, and hurting their feelings. But this way, they can sweep it under the rug and pretend it never happened."*

AMANDA

This is different.

DR. FORRESTER

Why?

AMANDA

Because it's happening to me!

Dr. Forrester shoots her a look. Amanda realizes:

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I sound like a whiny millennial.

The doctor shrugs.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Fine, maybe you're right, maybe I'm being self-important about my situation. But that's because it fucking sucks! I've been obsessed with finding someone for years, and I finally do, only for him to treat me like garbage. I don't deserve this. It's humiliating.

DR. FORRESTER

So why not take your own advice?

AMANDA

...and sweep it under the rug?

Dr. Forrester nods.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I don't wanna sweep it under the rug. I don't wanna pretend like meeting Julian never happened. It did happen. And it was special. It had to be...

(then, dark)

Because if it wasn't, that means my entire chemistry radar is off. And honestly, that's all I have left at this point. If my gut's been this far off about this stuff, then I deserve to be alone forever.

Amanda lies down on the couch, reeling.

DR. FORRESTER

Have you tried Ativan?

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Amanda's back on the couch again. But no longer drunk texting Julian. Instead, tonight commences a fresh start for Amanda, as she opens up Tinder, and returns to the dating world.

However, as soon as Amanda opens the app, she's flooded with a backlog of "matches" & incoming messages. Hundreds of them.

It's all a little overwhelming. And Amanda wants nothing to do with it. She closes out of the app, grabs her car keys...

EXT. JULIAN'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Amanda launches into a speech to Julian:

AMANDA

I know this looks pathetic. If I saw another girl show up some dude's house after getting ghosted, I'd think she was bat shit crazy. And maybe I'm crazy too. But I don't care, because I think you're someone worth acting crazy for. We had something, Julian. I know we did. I know it in my gut. And if you give us another shot, I'm certain you'll know it too.

WIDEN ON AMANDA: to reveal that Julian's door is closed. Amanda exhales, finished the practice run of her speech. She shrugs like, *that should work*, and rings the doorbell.

OLD MAN (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Amanda turns, spots a neighborly OLD MAN walking a dog.

AMANDA
Oh, I'm just looking for Julian.

OLD MAN
Won't find him in there.

AMANDA
...I won't?

OLD MAN
You mean you don't know?

She doesn't. The old man approaches.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Julian's gone missing.

AMANDA
Missing? What do you mean missing?

OLD MAN
He's gone. Disappeared. No one has heard from him in over a week.

AMANDA
Hold on, you mean no one has been able to reach Julian this week?

OLD MAN
Correct. Not since last Friday.

AMANDA
(does the math, then)
OH MY GOD, THAT'S AMAZING!

Off the old man, staring at Amanda, suspicious.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - NIGHT

DET. GUTIÉRREZ, 40s, female, interviews Amanda.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
(CLICKS open pen)
Name.

AMANDA
Amanda Tinsely.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

Age.

AMANDA

Twenty-six.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

Relationship to the missing?

AMANDA

Sexual.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

Please be more specific.

AMANDA

We had sex.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, I deduced as much. What I meant is - how long had this sexual relationship been going on?

AMANDA

Oh, it was just the once. I mean, we did it more than once, but it was only the one night.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

So it was a one-night stand?

AMANDA

No. It was more than that. There was this connection. It was unique.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

Julian told you this?

AMANDA

Not with words, but you could tell.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

Did you ever speak with him again after your evening together?

AMANDA

Technically, no.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

How about non-technically?

AMANDA

Also no.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

And what were you doing outside Julian's home this evening?

AMANDA

That's the crazy part... since I hadn't heard from him, I was going over there to find out why he ghosted me. But now it turns out he might not have ghosted me at all. See, I saw him Wednesday, but didn't text him until Thursday night, and he was reported missing on Friday, so he could have already been caught up in this whole missing person situation the entire time that I was texting him.

Amanda can't help but smile about her stroke of luck.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

Wait, are you *happy* that Julian's gone missing?

Amanda doesn't deny this. The detective is taken aback.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ (CONT'D)

This is a first.

AMANDA

I know, it sounds awful. But it's better than being ghosted, right?

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

(wrong)

Right.

An awkward silence. The detective CLICKS her pen closed.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ (CONT'D)

Well, I'll be in touch.

INT. LAW FIRM - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Amanda is surrounded by all of the YOUNG ASSOCIATES (Taja, RAE, CHELSEA, SEBASTIAN, etc.) From their hanging jaws, it's clear that Amanda has just given them all the full update.

RAE

Then what happened?

AMANDA

Nothing. I left.

CHELSEA

Do they have any leads?

AMANDA

She didn't say.

SEBASTIAN

Do they think he's still alive?

TAJA

Why wouldn't he be alive?

SEBASTIAN

I dunno, on TV, missing dudes always end up floating in some river with their dicks chopped off and shoved back up their butts.

TAJA

What TV shows are you watching?

AMANDA

Sebastian's right... Julian could totally be dead already. I did some research, and apparently, the longer a case like this goes unsolved, the greater the odds they never find the person.

CHELSEA

Did you look him up online? See if you could find any clues?

AMANDA

That was like the first thing I did. But Julian's not into social media. No Insta, no Twitter, dude doesn't even have a Facebook page.

SEBASTIAN

So what do you do now?

LISA (O.S.)

You hire a private investigator.

Everyone turns to see LISA DESANTO, 50s, senior partner. At once, the associates all rustle to get back to work.

LISA (CONT'D)

Relax, as you were.

(then, to Amanda)

But you need to act fast. You can't rely on the police.

(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)

If you want to find this guy, then you need to hire someone to do it for you.

AMANDA

Aren't P.I.'s crazy expensive?

LISA

Do you want to find him or not?

AMANDA

Of course, more than anything.

Lisa writes down a phone number on a piece of paper.

LISA

This guy is the best. We've used him on a few cases. I promise you, he will not disappoint. If Julian's out there, he'll find him for you.

INT. LAW FIRM - AMANDA'S DESK - LATER

Amanda holds the piece of paper with the P.I.'s number on it. She enters the digits into her iPhone...

AMANDA

Oh fuck me.

TAJA

(peaks in)

What's wrong?

ANGLE ON Amanda's phone, where the phone number is already stored in her contacts as 'Dean Tinder.'

AMANDA

I went on a date with this guy.

TAJA

The P.I.?

Amanda nods.

TAJA (CONT'D)

And what happened?

Amanda gulps.

TAJA (CONT'D)

You ghosted him.

Amanda nods again.

TAJA (CONT'D)

Why?

As Amanda recalls the memory... the whole screen re-pixelates into that VAST MOSAIC of Amanda's bad dates, all talking over each other. Eventually, one of the date boxes ENLARGES TO:

INT. SOME BAR - NIGHT (~ FIVE WEEKS AGO)

Amanda has drinks with DEAN, 30, handsome.

DEAN

I'd rather not tell you what I do for work.

AMANDA

Good one.

DEAN

I'm not kidding.

Amanda tilts her head. Something is off about this guy. His vibe is slick, yet somehow also uptight. For an incredibly dated reference, think young Tom Cruise in *Rain Man*.

AMANDA

(tries again)

So, what do you do for work?

DEAN

I'm serious, I don't wanna get into it.

AMANDA

Because you're a professional serial killer?

DEAN

(changes topics)

You been watching *Westworld*?

AMANDA

I don't get what's happening.

DEAN

I know, it's a bit convoluted, but I think the robot uprising--

AMANDA

Not in *Westworld*. Here. Are you really not gonna tell me what you do? You realize that's super shady.

DEAN

I swear, it's all above board.

AMANDA

Sorry, but that's just too weird.

DEAN

Why? I'm sure there are plenty of topics you don't like getting into on first dates either.

AMANDA

Yeah, normal stuff, like ex-boyfriends or religion, not what I do for a goddamn living.

Dean shrugs, unwilling to budge. Amanda sits there in disbelief. They sip their drinks, not much more to say.

RETURN TO:

INT. AMANDA'S DESK - AS BEFORE

Where Amanda stares at her iPhone, which is open to Dean's last text message: *Hey. Sorry things got awkward last night. But I'd love to try again sometime if you're interested.*

AMANDA

I can't contact him, right?

TAJA

He might be professional about it.

AMANDA

How can I risk that? This is gonna cost me thousands of dollars. I can't just pay some guy who might already have it out for me.

TAJA

(considers, then)

Maybe you don't have to pay him at all... lemme see your phone.

Amanda hands it to her. Taja texts Dean back: *Drinks?*

AMANDA

Hey. What the fuck?

TAJA

I'm brilliant.

Amanda shoots her a look, not in agreement. Taja explains:

TAJA (CONT'D)
Dean doesn't know that you know
that he's a P.I.

AMANDA
So?

TAJA
So pretend Julian is just a friend
and get Dean to help you for free.

AMANDA
And why would he do that?

TAJA
(duh)
To get laid.

Amanda just shakes her head at Taja.

TAJA (CONT'D)
I'm telling you, it's brilliant.

AMANDA
Whatever. That date was like five
weeks ago. I doubt he'll even text
me back.

BLOOP. Dean responds immediately: *Drinks sound great! You
free tonight?*

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Amanda's at the counter with Taja.

AMANDA
I can't do this.

TAJA
Drink up.

Taja slides over a tequila shot.

AMANDA
I'm using him, it's wrong.

TAJA
Take the damn shot.

Amanda takes the shot, bites into a lime.

TAJA (CONT'D)
Feel better?

AMANDA

No, I'm still using him, and it's still wrong.

TAJA

Men and woman have been using each other for centuries, it's human nature. You're entitled to participate every once in a while.

AMANDA

(looks toward entrance)
Shit. He's early.

Taja looks over, spots Dean.

TAJA

You didn't tell me he was cute.

AMANDA

Gimme your shot too.

Taja slides over her tequila, Amanda throws it back.

INT. BAR - LATER

Amanda and Dean at a booth.

AMANDA

Sorry for taking so long to get back to you.

DEAN

Don't sweat it.

AMANDA

I meant to text earlier, but I've been going through some rough personal stuff lately.

DEAN

Oh, is everything alright?

AMANDA

Yeah, it's just...

Amanda looks over toward the counter, where Taja gives her an encouraging fist pump.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

...I lost a friend recently.

DEAN

I'm so sorry. That sucks.

AMANDA

Thanks, I appreciate that.

DEAN

Drugs?

AMANDA

That's the thing... no one knows. He just went missing. And he's officially still missing. Police don't really have any leads. Hopefully he's still alive, but it's all a big mystery right now.

Dean straightens up, intrigued.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Let's change subjects. I'm sure you don't want to hear about this.

DEAN

(leans across the table)
I need to tell you something.

AMANDA

Um...ok...

DEAN

Remember on our last date, when I was acting weird about my work?

AMANDA

Vaguely.

DEAN

Well, I don't normally like to tell people this when I first meet them, but I'm actually a P.I.

AMANDA

(plays dumb)
P.I.?

DEAN

Private Investigator.

AMANDA

Wow. Never met one of those before.

DEAN

If you need help finding your friend, I'd be happy to pitch in.

AMANDA

Seriously? You'd do that for me?

DEAN

Not in a million fucking years.

A beat. Dean shoots her a mischievous grin.

AMANDA

So... you won't help me?

DEAN

Do you think I'm an idiot? First you ghost me, and then you try to use me to help find some missing dude. Who does that?

AMANDA

I don't know what you're talking about.

DEAN

Lisa DeSanto emailed to give me the heads up that she gave my number to an employee of hers - a certain employee named Amanda - who needed help finding a missing person. And then, not ten minutes later, I get a text message from you, out of the blue, asking me out to drinks. Doesn't take a private investigator to put that one together.

AMANDA

(relents)

If you knew what I was doing, why did you even agree to meet me?

DEAN

Wanted to see if you'd go through with it. I guess you're a worse person than I even thought.

AMANDA

Hey, watch it. You know nothing about me.

DEAN

Amanda Tinsley. Born March 3rd, 1993. Raised in Edison, New Jersey.

(MORE)

DEAN (CONT'D)

Middle child. Rutgers undergrad.
UCLA law. First year associate at
Cutler-Stein. Making 120k a year,
which is respectable, but most of
that's just going right back into
paying off your student loans.

Dean sips his beer, proud of himself. Amanda looks over
toward the counter, searching for--

DEAN (CONT'D)

Taja's out front smoking a
cigarette. She should really quit.
Especially with her family's
history of heart disease.

AMANDA

Fine, I get it, it was wrong of me
try and trick you, but that doesn't
give you the right to run
background checks or whatever on me
and my friends. That's an invasion
of privacy. And it's fucked up.

Amanda grabs her purse, stands to leave.

DEAN

He's still alive, by the way.

AMANDA

(freezes)
Julian?

Dean nods. Amanda sits back down.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

How do you know?

DEAN

Julian's not just some ordinary
citizen. He's influential, he's
successful, he's a proven innovator
in his field... someone like him is
far more valuable alive than dead.

AMANDA

Where do you think he is?

DEAN

Fuck if I know.

AMANDA

Oh come on. This is what you do.
You've gotta have some ideas.

Dean checks his iPhone clock.

DEAN

I actually have a Bumble date in a few minutes. Probably best if you're not here when she shows up.

AMANDA

You scheduled back-to-back dates?

DEAN

Except this wasn't a date. So I only scheduled one date. And one whatever-the-hell-this-was.

AMANDA

(doesn't budge)

Are you really not gonna help me?

DEAN

That's correct.

AMANDA

Why not?

DEAN

Because this isn't charity.

AMANDA

That's messed up. We're talking about a missing person here.

DEAN

There's a lot of missing people here. Nearly four thousand a year in L.A. county alone. But I only have time to get involved in the cases I'm being paid to pursue.

BLOOP - Dean gets a text. From *Bumble Stacy* - "*Just parked. Be there in five.*"

DEAN (CONT'D)

Punctual. Good sign.

AMANDA

(beat)

What if I paid you?

DEAN

For the drinks?

AMANDA

For your P.I. services.

Dean shoots her a doubtful glare.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I'm serious. You're clearly good at what you do, and you came highly recommended. I wanna hire you as my private investigator.

DEAN

(sips beer)

The retainer is five thousand, then it's seventy an hour on top.

AMANDA

Fuck, that's a lot of money.

DEAN

That's the rate.

AMANDA

Do you do like a friends and family discount?

DEAN

Sure, for friends and family.

Amanda can't argue there.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Look, if you really wanna save some money, I can refer you to a cheaper colleague. Here...

BLOOP. Dean shares a contact with Amanda. Angle on Amanda's iPhone, where she reads the P.I.'s name.

AMANDA

Terry Seinfeld?

DEAN

No relation.

AMANDA

Is he any good?

DEAN

When he's sober.

AMANDA

(irked)

Is this all a game to you?

DEAN

What? I just gave you two solid options. You can hire Seinfeld at a discount. Or you can use me.

AMANDA

(rolls her eyes)
For a 5k retainer.

Dean nods, correct. Amanda considers her choices. After a beat, she finally whips out her check book.

DEAN

I prefer Venmo.

INT. LAW FIRM - DAY

Amanda arrives at her desk, texts Dean: *Any update?*

Dean replies: *It's 8am. You just hired me.*

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Packed with LAWYERS, amid a meeting. Under the table, Amanda texts Dean: *Anything?* Dean responds: *Please stop.*

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She returns home, tries Dean once more: *Still nothing?*

Dean replies: *Don't make me regret taking on this case. I'll text you when I have something concrete.*

INT. LAW FIRM - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

It's the office Christmas party, where the JOYOUS TUNES don't match Amanda's dour demeanor. She downs a glass (her 3rd) of the punch.

AMANDA

I'm such a fucking idiot.

She's surrounded by the full gang of supportive co-workers.

TAJA

Don't say that.

RAE

He's gonna text.

CHELSEA
Yeah, these cases take time.

SEBASTIAN
(always the contrarian)
Or he's messing with your head.

Taja punches him.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)
What? It's not out of the realm of
possibility. Amanda did ghost him
and then try to trick him into--

Taja punches Sebastian again. He capitulates.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)
You're right, he's gonna text back.
I'm sure he'll have something soon.

Amanda is not so sure, refills her glass of punch.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Amanda returns home, a bit wobbly. She FLICKS on the lights.

MAN'S VOICE
Hope you took an Uber.

Amanda SCREAMS, grabs an umbrella to defend herself.

MAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Chill. It's just me.

She looks - it's Dean.

AMANDA
What the fuck? How did you get into
my apartment?

DEAN
You should tell your landlord to
upgrade your locks. Michael J. Fox
could have picked that thing.

AMANDA
(disgusted)
Parkinson's humor? Really?

DEAN
(thinks, then)
Yeah, I kinda regret it.

She's still brandishing the umbrella.

DEAN (CONT'D)
Wanna put that thing down?

AMANDA
(no, waving it)
This is incredibly inappropriate.
What are you doing here?

Dean notices a bottle of red wine on the counter.

DEAN
Saint-Émilion, fancy.
(then)
That reminds me - my Bumble date
the other night was terrible. She
ordered like four glasses of wine
and got super drunk. I think she
was just using me for free drinks.

AMANDA
I don't care about your Bumble
date. What are you doing in my
apartment?

DEAN
(pause)
I know where Julian's being held.

Amanda finally lowers the umbrella, all ears.

DEAN (CONT'D)
Panama.

AMANDA
Panama?

DEAN
It's a small country linking North
and South America, famous for its
canal.

AMANDA
I know where fucking Panama is. But
why do you think Julian's there?

DEAN
Because of this woman...

Dean clicks a few things on his iPhone, streams a YouTube
video onto Amanda's Apple TV.

AMANDA

Are you connected to my internet?

DEAN

(yes)

This is Vivian Ruiz...

He points to the TV, where the YouTube video plays - an ad for a Panamanian energy company, touting their environmental accomplishments, via the company's CEO, 50s, female.

DEAN (CONT'D)

She's Panama's 4th richest person. A billionaire philanthropist with suspect business ties. She's also someone who Julian's been working with for the past six months.

AMANDA

But Julian's retired.

DEAN

Does anyone really retire in their thirties?

AMANDA

You think it was a cover?

DEAN

I think he's in some deep shit.

Amanda sits down on the couch, overwhelmed.

DEAN (CONT'D)

I'll deduct what you owe from the retainer, and then refund you the balance. That'll make us square.

AMANDA

(looks up)

That's it? You're done?

DEAN

Unless you want me to go to Panama.

AMANDA

Why wouldn't I?

Dean hadn't even considered that as an option.

DEAN

I mean... I do have contacts in Panama City...

(MORE)

DEAN (CONT'D)

I guess I could head down there and start digging around. But that would set you back substantially.

(list expenses)

There's flights, lodging, protection, bribe money...

Amanda shoots him a glare.

DEAN (CONT'D)

That's how this stuff works.

AMANDA

Could I use my miles?

DEAN

For the flights? Don't see why not.

AMANDA

Then fuck it, it's a go.

DEAN

(cautious)

Are you sure? It's still gonna cost you thousands of dollars. Maybe take a night, sleep on it.

AMANDA

No need. Honestly, this is gonna save me money in the long run. Do you know how expensive it is to go out on all these dates?

DEAN

Not like you're buying the drinks.

AMANDA

A) A lotta dudes wrongly assume it makes them feminists to not pay, so sometimes I do. And B) It's not just the drinks. It's the time. Lawyers work in billable hours. Every date I go on is lost income. There's the getting ready, the thirty minutes in traffic, the getting home. It's all a waste.

DEAN

Okay then, sounds like you're sure.

AMANDA

There's just one last thing.

He's listening.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
I'm coming with you.

DEAN
Where?

AMANDA
To Panama.

DEAN
What are you talking about?

AMANDA
(simply)
I'm coming with you to Panama.

DEAN
No way. Far too dangerous.

AMANDA
I've actually heard it's become quite tourist friendly.

DEAN
Not the parts we're going to.

AMANDA
It's Christmas week and I'm off anyway. I might as well come and help. I'm fluent in Spanish. I'm sure I can help somehow.

DEAN
Absolutely not. No chance.

AMANDA
I can't just send you off alone to Central America with my money and my miles. I need to protect my investment. I need to come too.

She motions to the TV, where the Vivian Ruiz video plays.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Otherwise, I'm sure Terry Seinfeld would love a high profile case like this on his résumé. Especially when half the leg-work has already been done.

Off Dean, irritated by this turn of events.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY (MID FLIGHT)

En route to Panama City. Dean types on his laptop. Amanda's in the next seat over.

AMANDA
First class was unnecessary.

DEAN
(typing)
You had the miles.

AMANDA
We didn't have to use all of them.

Dean ignores her, keeps typing.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Moving forward, we should discuss
where certain funds are allocated.

Dean looks up from his computer, sets something straight.

DEAN
We are not partners. You're here as
a courtesy, nothing more.

Amanda drops it, flips through the in-flight travel magazine.
After a beat, she leans over again.

AMANDA
What's the plan once we land?
(off his glare)
What? I'm not questioning your
authority or anything, I just wanna
know the general itinerary.

DEAN
Your itinerary is to stick with me,
and not get yourself killed.

AMANDA
Are you always this patronizing?

DEAN
I'm looking out for your safety.
This work is dangerous. Just cause
you read on some blog that Panama
was a trendy new destination spot,
doesn't mean it's actually safe.

AMANDA
So you are always this patronizing.

Dean ignores her, returns to his laptop. Amanda flips through that magazine - where there are some lovely photos of Panama.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I dunno... looks pretty safe to me.

DEAN

Trust me, underneath that modern exterior is a corrupt infrastructure, held together by crime, dirty money, and a constant stream of dead bodies.

AMANDA

(beat, concerned)

Exactly what kind of mess did Julian get himself into?

Dean contemplates whether or not to fill her in. Eventually:

DEAN

Panama is a safe haven for international money laundering - the IRS has no purview here, so the local banks are all in bed with the big law firms, who are all in bed with the legislators, who are all in bed with the cartels up north.

AMANDA

How does this involve Julian?

DEAN

The last bastion of legitimacy down there is the internet. Well, it *was* the internet, until legislators got rid of net neutrality last year. Now it's a shit-show, with every Panamanian billionaire making a play to own the damn thing.

AMANDA

...they wanna own the internet?

DEAN

And the quickest gateway to do so is through cloud security.

AMANDA

Julian's niche.

DEAN

More than a niche. Julian's a pioneer in the field.

Amanda takes a moment to process, puts the pieces together.

AMANDA

So it all comes back to money laundering... in order to run the banks, you need to run the servers that protect those banks' finances.

DEAN

Look at you, Nancy Drew.

AMANDA

(nagging thought)

But why would Julian help Vivian Ruiz do something illegal?

DEAN

I don't think he did. I think he was originally helping her with something legitimate. Until Ruiz started twisting his arm to get what she really wanted. Julian probably held strong as long as he could, until Ruiz decided enough is enough. At which point she dragged him down here, holed him up in one of her properties, and forced him to work for her against his will.

AMANDA

Hmm, kinda like Walter White.

Dean doesn't know what she's talking about.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

From *Breaking Bad*. Remember in the final season when he was a meth-making-slave for those neo-Nazis?

DEAN

(genuinely annoyed)

Come on, spoiler alert.

AMANDA

Seriously? Who hasn't watched *Breaking Bad*? That show ended like seven years ago.

DEAN

I've been busy.

AMANDA

Yet you have time to stay current with fucking *Westworld*?

DEAN

(beat, conversational)
 Don't you think it's weird how we always end up discussing favorite TV shows on first dates? How did that become such a default first-date talking point?

AMANDA

Because it's a no-lose question.
 (then, professorial)
 It's a relatively harmless topic that's likely to produce some sort of common ground amongst almost anyone. For instance, I could be on an awful date with a total weirdo and I'm sure we could still spend ten minutes talking *Breaking Bad*.

DEAN

Lots of people haven't seen it yet!

AMANDA

Everyone has seen it. Because it's the best show of all time.

DEAN

Wrong, that would be *Mad Men*.

AMANDA

(GASPS)
 Oh my god. No. You're one of those?

DEAN

People with taste? Yes.

Amanda audibly SCOFFS at him.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Mad Men is a masterpiece. It's the apex of peak TV. It's a deliberate and nuanced contemplation on--

AMANDA

It's a masturbatory exercise in the male gaze.

DEAN

Wow. Now who's the patronizing one?

INT. TOCUMEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (PANAMA CITY) - DAY

As Christmas TUNES play over the radio...

Dean and Amanda exit Customs, head toward transportation.
Amanda rolls a particularly large suitcase.

DEAN

Plan on moving down here?

AMANDA

(defensive)

I read that the weather in Panama
can be unpredictable this time of
year. I wanted to have options.

They pass a men's bathroom.

DEAN

I gotta leak. Think you can handle
getting in line for the rental car?

Amanda salutes him, *aye-aye captain*.

INT. AIRPORT - HERTZ RENTAL CAR STATION - LATER

Amanda waits in the line, when... a SPEEDY MAN grabs her
suitcase, rolls away with it.

AMANDA

Hey, that's my bag.

The man gains steam, rolling the bag into the distance.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Somebody stop him!

Nobody even bats an eye.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Seriously? What the fuck? Stop him!

Nothing. Amanda hops out of line, gives chase.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Come back! That's my bag!

Amanda tries to catch up with the man, but he's already
exited through the motion sensor doors.

EXT. CURBSIDE - SECONDS LATER

Amanda runs out of the airport, plows into a SIDEWALK SANTA.

AMANDA

Sorry, my bad.

She continues on, searching for the thief.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Did anybody see a man with a
suitcase?

She looks around, realizes she's surrounded by dozens of men with suitcases.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Right.

Suddenly, an unmarked van SCREECHES to a halt in front of her. The door slides open, she spots her suitcase inside.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
What the--

Before she can make sense of what's happening, she's shoved into the vehicle, where she's blindfolded and duct taped.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Amanda's tied to a chair, with two MASKED MAN standing over her, menacing. One of the men removes her blindfold, RIPS the duct tape off her mouth. Amanda SHRIEKS from the pain.

MASKED MAN
Who are you?

AMANDA
(gasping for air)
What?

MASKED MAN
Is simple question - who are you?

AMANDA
Me? I'm nobody. You've got the
wrong person.

MASKED MAN
I don't think I do...

He reads the information off her suitcase label:

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)
Amanda Tinsley, 1268 Fountain Ave.
Apt #4. West Hollywood, California.

Amanda gulps, scared shitless.

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)
So, Amanda Tinsley, tell me - what
brings you to Panama?

AMANDA
Nothing. Vacation.

MASKED MAN
Which one? Vacation or nothing?

AMANDA
Vacation.

MASKED MAN
And who are you on vacation with?

AMANDA
No one. I'm all alone.

MASKED MAN
(scoffs)
Nobody travels alone.

AMANDA
I do.
(improvising)
I'm on like an *Eat Pray Love* kinda
thing, trying to find myself.

MASKED MAN
Eat-pray-what?

AMANDA
It was this book from like ten
years ago. Super popular.

MASKED MAN
I don't believe you.

AMANDA
I swear. Maybe it didn't catch on
down here in Panama, but it was
huge in the US. They made a movie
of it and everything. Movie wasn't
nearly as good as the book, but--

MASKED MAN
I meant I don't believe you about
traveling alone.

He's right in Amanda's face. She's scared, but stays strong.

AMANDA
But I am. It's the truth.

He whips out his iPhone, shows Amanda a picture taken today at the airport of her and Dean together.

MASKED MAN

Then you don't know this man?

She shakes her head no.

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)

Really?

He scrolls through more pictures of Amanda and Dean together.

AMANDA

Really. He was just some stranger who was bothering me. I swear.

The 2nd masked man steps forward with an ominous briefcase.

2ND MASKED MAN

Are you positive about that?

He opens the briefcase - it's full of rusty torture devices.

AMANDA

His name is Dean DeMont. He's a private investigator based out of Los Angeles that I hired to help me find Julian Grant, who's been missing for two weeks and might be a hostage somewhere in Panama.

ANOTHER MAN (O.S.)

Two minutes and forty-nine seconds.

Out of the shadows steps a third man. It's none other than... Dean, who's been timing Amanda's interrogation on his iPhone.

DEAN

You couldn't even make it three whole minutes before giving me up. I'm disappointed.

AMANDA

Dean?? What the fuck is this?

The masked men take off their masks.

DEAN

Say hi to Carlos and Gio. Two of my best contacts down here.

CARLOS / GIO

Hola, Señorita. / Is a pleasure.

They wave to Amanda, suddenly super friendly towards her.

AMANDA
I don't understand.

DEAN
You being in Panama compromises my agenda. You're a liability. And I needed you to see that.

AMANDA
(slowly realizes)
This was all a test? You had me kidnapped to prove some point?

DEAN
And I proved it.

AMANDA
It's still fucked up!

DEAN
It was for your own good. It's better that you get taken by my men, than whoever is out there.
(to Carlos / Gio)
Am I right?

CARLOS / GIO
Si. / Absolutamente.

DEAN
Now, I'm gonna drive you back to the airport, and you're gonna get on the next flight home. Clear?

Off Amanda, wanting to strangle Dean.

INT. RENTAL CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Dean drives, following signs toward the airport. Amanda sits shotgun, still fuming.

AMANDA
You're such an asshole. I can't believe you fake kidnapped me.

DEAN
It needed to be done.

AMANDA
There were other ways you could have proved your point.

DEAN

What other ways? I tried telling you multiple times you shouldn't be down here, but you wouldn't listen.

AMANDA

I was just trying to be helpful.

DEAN

Except you had nothing to offer.

AMANDA

You don't know that. You didn't even give me a chance. You just assumed I'd be baggage.

(then)

You're too judgemental.

That makes Dean laugh. Hard.

DEAN

I don't think you're in a place to be calling other people judgmental.

AMANDA

And why's that?

DEAN

You're only the most judgemental person I've ever met.

AMANDA

Y'know, just because you did a background check on me, doesn't mean you know what I'm really like.

DEAN

(beat)

How many first dates did you go on last year?

The question takes Amanda off guard.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Just answer. How many?

AMANDA

I dunno. Thirty?

DEAN

Eighty-seven.

AMANDA

Did you hack into my iCal???

DEAN

You treat dating like some check-list to be conquered. And as soon as some guy doesn't live up to your lofty expectations - poof, ghosted, on to the next.

AMANDA

And that makes me judgemental?

DEAN

Exceedingly!

AMANDA

There's a difference between being judgemental and having standards.

Dean doesn't bother responding.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

There is.

He remains silent.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Having standards is commendable!

Dean continues the silent treatment. After a beat.

NAVIGATION (VIA DASHBOARD)

Take the next exit, and your destination is on the right.

INT. AIRPORT - GATE - DAY

In the boarding area, Amanda waits for her flight. The joyous Christmas TUNES haunt her over the radio. Until:

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)

Your plane has arrived at the gate. After a quick turnover, we hope to begin boarding in twenty minutes.

As the previous flight disembarks, several of the exiting TRAVELERS pass by Amanda, when--

She takes notes of one traveler in particular. It's a TATTOED MAN, 30s, who's walking a SERVICE DOG on leash. But this isn't any ordinary service dog. This is--

AMANDA

SIR PAW??

Upon hearing Amanda call his name, the dog turns around, makes eye contact with Amanda. It's definitely Sir Paw. He's even still wearing that distinctive *Sgt. Pepper's* collar.

After a beat, the tattooed man turns around too, but Amanda quickly averts her gaze. The tattooed man is none the wiser. He YANKS at Sir Paw's leash, drags him away.

INT. RENTAL CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Dean gets an incoming call from Amanda. He answers, annoyed.

DEAN

We are not doing the whole check-up-on-me-every-ten-minutes thing. I'll text you when I have something.

AMANDA (INTERCUT)

I've got eyes on Paw McCartney.

DEAN

What?

AMANDA

Paw McCartney is in Panama.

DEAN

(unimpressed)

Lots of celebrities vacation here.

AMANDA

Not Paul McCartney, Paw McCartney.

DEAN

(beat, realizes)

Julian's dog.

AMANDA

It's him. 100%.

DEAN

But that dog's been missing too.

AMANDA

Not anymore. He's two-hundred feet ahead of me. A man just got off a flight from Los Angeles with him.

DEAN

Describe the man.

AMANDA

6'4, Hispanic, all tatted up.

DEAN

Is there a scorpion on his neck?

AMANDA

As in the animal?

DEAN

As in a tatoo. Check his neck. Is there a tattoo of a scorpion on it?

Amanda walks faster, catches up to the large man...

AMANDA

Affirmative on the scorpion.

DEAN

Follow that dog!

EXT. AIRPORT - CURB - MOMENTS LATER

The tattooed man and Sir Paw get into a black Mercedes SUV. Meanwhile, a few cars back --

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Amanda hops in, points ahead.

AMANDA

(in Spanish, subtitled)

I'm with that black Mercedes up there. Just follow them.

EXT. WEALTHY SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Lush rolling hills and pristine manicured lawns. The black Mercedes SUV winds up a quiet street. Amanda's taxi follows.

INT. AMANDA'S TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Amanda rides in the back, on the phone with Dean.

AMANDA

Ooh, ooh, they're stopping.

Outside the taxi, the Mercedes arrives at the entrance to a fancy gated community. It's protected by SECURITY GUARDS.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(to driver)

Para aquí, por favor.

The driver comes to a stop. Amanda watches on as a security guard opens the gate, waves the Mercedes through.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
 (into iPhone)
 Okay, they just drove into some kind of gated community.

DEAN (INTERCUT)
 Is it *Altos Del Maria*?

AMANDA
 I dunno, it's not really labeled.

DEAN
 Drop me a pin.

BLOOP. Amanda sends Dean her location.

DEAN (CONT'D)
 Jackpot.

AMANDA
 Jackpot? Why jackpot? Is this good?

DEAN
 Very.

BLOOP. Dean sends Amanda a rendezvous point.

DEAN (CONT'D)
 There's a Starbucks a mile up the road. I'll meet you there in ten.
 (then)
 Oh, and if you could order me the gingerbread Christmas latte, that would be great.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Dean enters, heads to Amanda's table. He grabs his latte.

DEAN
 Thanks, I'll just deduct the drink from my expenses.

Amanda snatches the latte away.

AMANDA
 Tell me I did good job.

Dean freezes, doesn't understand.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

You've been a dick to me for two days. You mocked me, you kidnapped me, you told me I was liability. But it turns out I'm the *opposite* of a liability. I'm an asset. And I'd like you to acknowledge that.

She continues to withhold the latte until he does so.

DEAN

What are you seven? You also want a gold star for your Trapper Keeper?

AMANDA

Just say something nice to me. It's not that hard.

DEAN

(defiant)

Spotting Sir Paw was a lucky clue that fell directly into your lap.

Amanda tosses the latte, it SPLATTERS across the floor.

STARBUCKS EMPLOYEE

(subtitled)

What the hell?

AMANDA

(subtitled)

Sorry, my bad, I'll clean it up.

DEAN

(shaking his head)

Mature. And to think I was actually gonna use you for our next mission.

He exits the Starbucks.

AMANDA

Wait, you were?

Amanda leaps out of her seat, chases after Dean. The Starbucks employee just stares at the mess, dejected.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Dean walks toward his car, Amanda follows.

AMANDA

Hold on. I wanna help. Use me.

DEAN

How can I? Everything with you
turns into a fucking drama.

AMANDA

Me? I'm not the one who wasted two
hours staging a fake kidnapping.

Dean shoots her a look. She plays nice.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Which was a valuable lesson in the
dangers we could face down here.
I'm grateful you did that for me.

DEAN

(beat)

I see what you're doing.

AMANDA

I'd hope so, I'm being pretty
fucking transparent.

They reach the rental car. Dean HUFFS.

DEAN

Just get in.

INT. RENTAL CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Dean drives. Amanda shotgun. He gives her the low-down.

DEAN

The man with the tattoos is named
Hector Pujols. He's one of Vivian
Ruiz's top goons.

AMANDA

There are varying levels of goon?

DEAN

Sure. And Hector's basically an
Operating Thetan.

AMANDA

That a Scientology reference?

DEAN

Yeah, I just watched that HBO doc.
Fascinating stuff. You seen it?

Amanda shoots him look, as if to say, *can we stay on topic?*

DEAN (CONT'D)

Right. So Hector started out as muscle, but eventually gained her trust, now he's inner circle.

AMANDA

And he lives in *Altos Del Maria*?

DEAN

He has no official residence. But according to tax records, Vivian's corporation owns a property inside that community. I believe it's Hector's current home base.

(then)

It's also a potential location where they're keeping Julian.

Amanda perks up, hopeful.

AMANDA

You think Julian's behind those gates?

DEAN

I think it's possible. Particularly if they're bringing Sir Paw there.

Amanda considers the theory - something doesn't add up.

AMANDA

But why would they bring a prisoner his dog?

DEAN

(grim)

It's not a present.

Amanda still doesn't understand.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Julian was probably being resistant, and so they needed some leverage. It's a classic move - if someone won't do what you want, you threaten the ones they love.

AMANDA

(finally realizes)

They're gonna hurt his dog???

DEAN

Messed up, I know.

AMANDA

We have to stop them.

Dean pulls into a strip mall, finds a parking spot. Amanda looks up - they're outside a local real estate office.

DEAN

We're gonna try.

EXT. ALTOS DEL MARIA - FRONT GATE - DAY

A red convertible pulls up to the security checkpoint, and gets waved right through...

INSIDE THE CONVERTIBLE, Dean and Amanda sit in the back seat, holding hands. They're all gussied up - she in a floral sundress, he in a blazer. Up front, a local REALTOR, female, 40s, drives them through the exclusive community.

REALTOR

There are four properties for sale.
The first is a six bed, five bath--

DEAN

We're only interested in the
property on Calle Carrera.

The realtor makes a left turn, heads up a hill.

REALTOR

A fine choice. One of my personal
favorites. It was just renovated.

Heading up the street, they pass that black Mercedes SUV from before, and pull into the driveway of the house next door.

INT. CALLE CARRERA PROPERTY - DAY

It's a massive house, fit for a king(pin).

AMANDA

(overly bubbly)

Ohmigod, honey, I love it! It's
exactly what we're looking for!

DEAN

(reserved)

Darling, let's not show our cards.

AMANDA

Oooh, is that a veranda?

Amanda dashes into the backyard. Dean turns to the realtor.

DEAN

Better follow that one. She makes
all the decisions around here.

The realtor follows Amanda out back. As soon as she's gone,
Dean *bounds* up the stairs...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

It's straight out of Architectural Digest, with stunning 360°
views. But there is one view in particular that matters - the
bedroom looks directly into Vivian Ruiz's property next door.

Dean removes his coat, unbuttons his shirt. We see that
underneath, he's duct-taped surveillance equipment to his
torso. He begins removing the duct-tape. Meanwhile...

INT. KITCHEN / DEN / BATHROOM - QUICK CUTS

Amanda keeps the realtor occupied.

AMANDA

Tell me about this marble. / Is
this wood reclaimed? / Is there an
emergency septic system in place?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Dean installs multiple covert cameras, each with a different
view into the house next door. He's almost finished the set-
up, when... he hears VOICES O.S.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The realtor leads Amanda toward the master.

REALTOR

You have to see the master bedroom.
It's simply breathtaking.

Amanda STOPS at a hall closet.

AMANDA

Tell me about this room.

REALTOR

The broom closet? Forget that. Come
see the master.

She grabs Amanda's arm, tries to drag her away. But Amanda stands her ground, avoiding the master at all costs.

DEAN (O.S.)
She's right, it's breathtaking.

Dean appears in the master doorway, his clothes coat back on.

AMANDA
Oh, there you are honey.

He smiles at Amanda, as if to say *mission accomplished*. Amanda notices that he's missed a button on his shirt. She clasps it for him. They continue the tour, uncompromised.

INT. HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS - MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Dean's established a surveillance station at the room's desk. He spies on Hector's house via laptop. It's a stakeout.

DEAN
Good job this afternoon.

Amanda lays on one of the beds, flipping through TV stations.

AMANDA
(sits up)
Was that a compliment?

DEAN
When I see solid work, I have no problem acknowledging it.

AMANDA
My acting chops were on point, huh?

DEAN
Your minor in theatre arts was due to come in handy eventually.

Dean returns his attention to the surveillance feed. Amanda returns to the TV channel flipping. She eventually lands on a Spanish-dubbed version of *It's A Wonderful Life*.

AMANDA
Crazy how we ended up here. Five weeks ago we're on a terrible date in Echo Park, now we're spending Christmas eve together in Panama.

DEAN
It wasn't that terrible.

AMANDA

The date?

DEAN

Awkward, maybe, but not terrible.

AMANDA

(disagrees)

Okay.

A beat.

DEAN

You're right, it was terrible.

AMANDA

Can I give you some advice?

DEAN

(sarcastic)

Oh please. I'd love some.

AMANDA

Fine, forget it.

She returns to watching TV.

DEAN

I was kidding. What's your advice?

She looks at him - he's for real. She shuts off the TV.

AMANDA

Okay, I get that you like to be discreet and all about your professional life, but I really think you should tell your dates the truth about what you do. Hate to admit this, but being a private investigator is kinda cool. It's intriguing and mysterious and a helluva lot more interesting than the average L.A. dude who wants to be a screenwriter or app developer. I think a lot of women would be into in. Could work for you.

DEAN

That's your big advice?

AMANDA

I did go on eighty-seven first dates last year. I have experience in the field.

Dean just stares at her, a smirk on his face.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

What?

DEAN

I'm not exactly new to online dating either. I've been using these apps for a while now.

AMANDA

So?

DEAN

So getting laid is not a problem. You don't think I know that women find my line of work intriguing? It's basically an aphrodisiac. As soon as I bring it up, the panties come down.

AMANDA

Ew, don't be gross.

DEAN

Which is why I didn't tell you what I did. Because I'm done with all of that.

AMANDA

(confused)

All of what?

DEAN

Meaningless sex, one-night stands, a roster of smoking hot women to slam on a moment's notice.

AMANDA

Do you hear yourself?

DEAN

Sure, it was fun. Like, crazy, insanely, mind-bogglingly fun...

He takes a moment to recall some of his greatest hits, then:

DEAN (CONT'D)

But none of that sex led anywhere. I was merely a fantasy to these women - someone intriguing to fool around with and have a good time, never anything more. I'm done being the fantasy. I want something real.

AMANDA
You expect me to believe that?

DEAN
It's the truth.

AMANDA
So you were just what - swimming in
pussy for the last few years?

DEAN
Your words, not mine.

AMANDA
Well, for the record, I wouldn't
have slept with you just because
you had a cool job.

DEAN
Okay.

AMANDA
I wouldn't.

DEAN
I believe you.

AMANDA
I'm serious.

DEAN
I'm not arguing with you.

AMANDA
Good.

DEAN
Great.

An awkward silence. Which only lasts until--

AMANDA
(pointing)
Movement! Camera six.

Dean enlarges one of the camera feeds to full-screen mode.
ON THE LAPTOP, they see into the living room, where the 6'4"
tattoo guy cracks open a beer, plops onto the couch.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
What else do we know about this
Hector guy?

DEAN

Born in Albuquerque, New Mexico,
where his father played third base
for the AAA Isotopes, making him--

AMANDA

A dual citizen.

DEAN

Correct. A valuable commodity for
someone like Vivian Ruiz.

They continue watching the feed. Amanda notices--

AMANDA

Looks like he's texting someone.

ON THE VIDEO FEED, Hector fiddles with his iPhone. Dean tries
to zoom in, to see who Hector's texting, but it's too blurry.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(looking closer)

Hold on... he's not texting...

ON THE FEED, Hector is clearly "swiping."

AMANDA (CONT'D)

He's on fucking Tinder.

Though blurry, they can make out the distinctive red flame
Tinder logo.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(disgusted)

He's not even reading their
profiles. He's just swiping right
to literally every woman he sees.

ON THE FEED, Hector is indeed "right swiping" ad nauseam.
Amanda chastises him through the computer screen:

AMANDA (CONT'D)

That's not gonna get you laid,
Hector!

DEAN

(beat)

But what if it did?

Dean leaps out of his seat, paces the room, an idea brewing.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(thinking)

This is good... this is good...

He turns to Amanda, pitches his plan:

DEAN (CONT'D)

This motel is less than one mile from Hector's house. Which means we're guaranteed to be within Hector's dating radius on the app. So, all we have to do now is create a fake Tinder profile and--

AMANDA

You wanna catfish him!

DEAN

No. This is no catfish. This is a straight-up old school FBI style honey trap.

Amanda doesn't know the distinction.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Unlike a catfish, only the profile is gonna be fake here. The pictures are gonna real. Because the pictures are gonna be you.

Dean sits on the bed, pitches the second part of his plan:

DEAN (CONT'D)

After you match with Hector, you're gonna meet up with him for a date, where you seduce him and drug him.

AMANDA

Isn't that... dangerous?

DEAN

Yes, it's incredibly dangerous!
(annoyed)

Have I not been saying that from the very beginning? I've been trying to send you home from the moment you got here. But you've been begging me to be involved.

AMANDA

Okay, I'll do it.

He ignores her, returns to the surveillance station.

DEAN

Forget it, we'll just figure out another play.

AMANDA
No, no, I'm serious, I'll do it.

DEAN
(looks over)
Don't say it if you don't mean it.

AMANDA
I mean it. I'm in.
(whips out her iPhone)
Let's honey trap this motherfucker.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Amanda puts the final touches on her fake profile.

AMANDA
Okay, this should work.

She hands Dean her iPhone. ANGLE ON THE APP, where she's dubbed herself "Tiffani." Her profile picture is a risqué bikini shot. Her 'About Me' reads: *"American girl next door. On vacation here in Panama for the holidays. Looking for a local stud to show me a good time. XOXO"*

DEAN
Nope.

AMANDA
C'mon, that's good.

DEAN
That's a red flag. You come across like a prostitute.

AMANDA
Let's not stigmatize sex work.

DEAN
This is a fake profile that looks like a fake profile. If you message Hector with this garbage, he's gonna think you're playing him. What you need to do is come across as a normal person. Someone sweet and unassuming. That way he won't see it coming when you play him.

AMANDA
(considers)
That's actually pretty smart.

Amanda takes her iPhone back, starts the process over.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

On her iPhone, Amanda finishes up her 2nd profile attempt.

AMANDA

Okay, how about this?

ANGLE ON AMANDA'S IPHONE, where she's now dubbed herself "Gretchen." Her 'About Me' read: *"I'm a grad student studying abroad in Panama. I'm not looking for any one night stands. So all you fuckboys swipe left."* The accompanying photos are all very conservative, no skin at all.

DEAN

The fuck is wrong with you?

AMANDA

No good?

DEAN

You went 180° in the opposite direction. This might be the least sexy profile I've ever seen. We don't want Hector's dick to shrivel up either.

(then)

Just make a normal profile. Post some flattering photos, a lame Marilyn Monroe quote, a couple playful emojis, and call it a day.

He tosses Amanda her phone back. She starts the process over.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Amanda finally hits publish on the new normal profile.

AMANDA

Alright, we're live.

She sets her dating radius to < 1 mile, and starts swiping through single Panamanian men.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

How exactly are we gonna drug him?

DEAN

With this...

Dean reaches into his dob kit, pulls out a Ziploc bag. It contains two small squares of white blotter paper.

AMANDA

What am I looking at?

DEAN

I've laced these strips with my secret blend. Part scopolamine, part MDMA, part flunitrazepam. Plus some special salts mixed in.

AMANDA

What's it do?

DEAN

Morphs the subject into an impressionable zombie who'll tell us everything we need to know.

Amanda shoots him a look, grossed out.

DEAN (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

AMANDA

You make homemade roofies?

DEAN

It's not a roofie. This is different.

AMANDA

Okay, Dr. Huxtable.

DEAN

It's not a roofie. It's more like a liquid truth serum. Trust me, all you have to do is dissolve one of these strips into Hector's drink, and he won't be able to shut up.

AMANDA

Still creepy.

DEAN

So you don't wanna use it?

AMANDA

Oh, I'm definitely using it.

DEAN

(exasperated)

Then why are we arguing about this?

AMANDA

Cuz it's fun.

Amanda smiles, keeps on swiping through local singles.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Oooh, found him.

She lands on Hector's Tinder profile, swipes right...
It's an immediate match!

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A trendy spot. Amanda and Hector share a booth. The date is going particularly well. Subtitles aren't even necessary.

HECTOR

*Yo encanto Breaking Bad. Es el
mejor programa de televisión de
todos los tiempos!*

AMANDA

¿derecho? Es mi favorito también.

HECTOR

*Es inteligente y lleno de suspenso.
Mucho mejor que Mad Men.*

AMANDA

Estás predicando al coro.

HECTOR

(beat, English)
Your Spanish is fantastic.

AMANDA

As is your English.

HECTOR

I was actually born in America.
Alberquerque.

AMANDA

Really? I didn't know that.

HECTOR

(sharp)
Why would you?

Amanda freezes, caught off guard.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Relax, I was kidding.

AMANDA

Sorry, I'm a little nervous.

HECTOR
New to online dating?

AMANDA
(whew)
Yes. Exactly.

HECTOR
I remember being new. You'll get
used to it in no time.

AMANDA
So you've been on Tinder a while?

HECTOR
You could say that.

AMANDA
How long?

HECTOR
About two years. I'm on Bumble and
eHarmony too. I don't meet a lot of
single women in my line of work, so
the apps are really helpful.

AMANDA
And what line of work is that?

HECTOR
Construction.

AMANDA
I see.

A brief pause.

HECTOR
It's kind of addicting.

AMANDA
Online dating?

HECTOR
Yeah, all these apps... there's
just so many options... you can get
obsessed with finding the perfect
match, like it's all a video game.
(then)
You'll see, it makes you feel like
there's always someone better out
there, just a swipe away. Probably
not too healthy though. My friends
all make fun of me.

(MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)
 I must have gone on a hundred dates
 last year.
 (catches breath, beat)
 Sorry. Don't know why I told you
 all that. Hope I don't sound crazy.

For a goon, turns out Hector is a pretty sensitive dude.

AMANDA
 You don't sound crazy at all.

They share a nice smile. Lasts until Hector's phone BUZZES.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
 Not another date I hope.

HECTOR
 (checks)
 Shit, I've gotta take this. But
 I'll be right back. Promise.

Hector excuses himself from the table.

DEAN (O.S., VIA EAR PIECE)
 DO IT! NOW!

Amanda startles, clutches her ear.

AMANDA
 Jesus Christ, Dean, you don't have
 to scream in my fucking ear.

INT. RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dean's parked out front of the bar. He's been listening in on the conversation the whole time. We INTERCUT as needed:

DEAN
 Sorry, my bad. But now's the
 perfect time to spike his drink.

AMANDA
 I'm well aware. I got this. Chill.

Amanda calmly scopes out the bar - the coast is clear. She discreetly reaches into her bra for the goods.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
 Shit.

DEAN
 What is it? What's wrong?

She looks down into her bra.

AMANDA

They're gone. The strips are gone.

DEAN

What do you mean they're gone?
Where'd you put the Ziploc?

AMANDA

I took the strips out of the bag
and hid them in my bra.

DEAN

You took them out of the bag???

AMANDA

It was itchy.

DEAN

Oh fuck.

AMANDA

It's fine, I'm sure they're around
here somewhere.

Amanda looks underneath the table.

DEAN

No, they're not!

AMANDA

Calm down, I'll find them.

DEAN

You're not listening. They didn't
fall out, they got absorbed.

AMANDA

(beat, looks up)
Absorbed? Absorbed how?

DEAN

Blotter paper is highly permeable.
If you placed the strips inside
your bra, then it's almost certain
they dissolved into your skin.
Especially with how sweaty you get.

AMANDA

I do not get especially sweaty!

DEAN
Your high school nickname was
"Sweat Favre."

AMANDA
Because I liked the Packers.

DEAN
And had chronic pit stains.

AMANDA
How did you even--?

DEAN
(back on track)
We don't have time to argue about
this. You need to look in your bra.
If the strips dissolved, they would
have left a red ring on your skin.

Amanda looks down at her cleavage - sees two red spots.

AMANDA
The drug can't effect you through
skin, can it?

DEAN
It's the most direct route to the
bloodstream.

AMANDA
I roofied myself??!

DEAN
It's a truth serum, not a roofie.
But yes.

Amanda's freaking out, taking deep breaths.

AMANDA
Holy shit, holy shit, what do I do?

DEAN
Get outta there. Abort the mission.

Amanda hesitates.

DEAN (CONT'D)
The fuck are you waiting for?

AMANDA
I dunno, we've got Hector here...
we should try something, right?

DEAN

Amanda, any second now, that drug is gonna kick in and you'll be a sitting duck, unable to edit your simplest thoughts.

AMANDA

But this is like a tangible lead. We can't just let it go.

DEAN

Don't be stupid. You gotta--

HECTOR (O.S.)

Sorry about that.

Hector returns from his phone call, slides into the booth.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Hope you didn't miss me.

AMANDA

(beat, matter-of-fact)
I didn't.

Uh oh. Amanda realizes the truth serum has kicked in.

DEAN (O.S., VIA EAR PIECE)

Abort! I repeat, abort!

Hector assumes she's kidding, thinks nothing of it.

HECTOR

So, what were we talking about?

AMANDA

(can't help herself)
You were oversharing about the sad pathetic state of your love life.

HECTOR

(smiles)
That's a blunt way to put it.

AMANDA

Given the facts, I believe it to be a wholly accurate description.

Hector notices something is different with her, but he's not sure what to make of it. He continues on in first date mode:

HECTOR

And how about you... are you more of a relationship person?

AMANDA

God no. To the contrary, I haven't been in a long-term relationship since junior year of college. He turned out to be exceptionally gay. His cat named Jonathan Larson should have been a give-away. Or the fact he had a cat at all.

Hector nods politely. Amanda can't stop.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

But nothing serious since then. In fact, over the past six and half years, my longest relationship has been with my Je Joue Mimi.

HECTOR

Je Joue Mimi?

AMANDA

It's a top-of-the-line vibrator. Bought it off Amazon. It was on sale for Prime Day.

Amanda can't believe she's divulging all this information.

HECTOR

Well... I guess we're both oversharing tonight.

Across the table, Hector shoots her a big smile.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

It's so refreshing to go out with someone this honest. On most first dates, everyone is so guarded.

AMANDA

Not me. I'm an open book.

HECTOR

So how about love?

AMANDA

You'll need to be more specific.

HECTOR

Ever been?

AMANDA

Nope. Never.
(short pause)
(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Although I've recently met a man
with great potential, who I think I
might be able to love some day.

Hector blushes, wrongly assumes she's alluding to him.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

He's currently--

HECTOR

I don't work in construction!

Before Amanda incriminates herself with more information,
Hector interrupts, joining in on the honesty free-for-all.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I work for a terrible woman who
makes me do awful things and I hate
it. I just hate it. It's miserable.

He breathes a major sigh of relief.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Ahhh, the truth feels so good.

And that truth keeps flooding out of him.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I've wanted out for years, but I
don't know how. It's like I'm stuck
in this vicious cycle and I feel
like I have no voice to speak up.

Tears start to well in Hector's eyes.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

You're the first person I've ever
been able to tell this to.

He reaches across the table, takes Amanda's hands.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Your honesty... it inspired me.

Tears now flood down Hector's face. He's a bawling wreck.

DEAN (O.S., VIA EAR PIECE)

He's vulnerable. Use it.

Dean has Amanda's attention.

DEAN (O.S., VIA EAR PIECE) (CONT'D)

*Tell him he needs to tell this
woman how he feels.*

AMANDA

Hector, you need to be honest with this woman and tell her how you feel.

HECTOR

I'm not sure I can.

DEAN (O.S., VIA EAR PIECE)

Ask him when he's seeing her again.

AMANDA

When are you seeing her again?

HECTOR

Tomorrow morning. I'm supposed to deliver this package down to her at the yacht club in Balboa.

Amanda's face lights up. She needs no prompt.

AMANDA

Wait, you're saying this woman is gonna be at the yacht club in Balboa tomorrow morning?

HECTOR

The Flamenco, nine a.m.

AMANDA

That's fantastic!

HECTOR

(beat)
It is?

AMANDA

Well, for me. Not for you.

Hector shifts in his seat, confused.

DEAN (O.S., VIA EAR PIECE)

Stop talking!

AMANDA

(to Dean)
I can't.

HECTOR

Can't what?

AMANDA

(to Hector)
Stop answering your questions.

HECTOR
(at a loss)
What's happening here?

AMANDA
I'm speaking with two people at
once and it's confusing you.

HECTOR
Who else are you talking to?

AMANDA
Dean.

HECTOR
Who the fuck is Dean?

AMANDA
He's the private investigator who's
been helping me find Julian.

HECTOR
(beat, fumes)
Julian? You're looking for Julian?

AMANDA
I am. Can you tell me where he is?

HECTOR
What the fuck is this? Is this even
a real date?

AMANDA
No. You're not my type. We created
a fake profile and used your
compulsive Tindering against you.

The WAITER arrives at their booth.

WAITER
(in Spanish)
Would you like another round?

HECTOR
Go away. We're good.

Amanda looks up - the waiter is Dean.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
I said go away!

Dean discreetly holds a hypodermic needle in his hand. He
leans over, tries to stick Hector in the neck...

But Hector instinctively SWATS his hand away, twists Dean's arm behind his back, and SLAMS his head onto the table. The move is swift and effective.

Dean tries to fight back, but he's no match for the hulking Hector, who effortlessly picks Dean up and tosses him into a decorative Christmas tree. Off Dean, wincing in pain.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Dean and Amanda are blind-folded, hands tied behind their backs. Hector leads them through the darkness, at gunpoint.

AMANDA

You don't have to do this.

HECTOR

Shut up.

AMANDA

What about all that stuff you told me? You don't have to work for Vivian. She doesn't control you.

HECTOR

At least Vivian never tried to catfish me.

AMANDA

Technically speaking, it was more of a honey trap situation.

DEAN

(whispers)

I don't think you're helping.

AMANDA

I can't help it.

They approach a black sedan with tinted windows. Hector POPS the trunk.

INT. TRUNK (MOVING) - LATER

Dean and Amanda are crammed inside, bound and blind-folded.

AMANDA

(after some silence)

Sorry I blew the mission.

DEAN

It wasn't your fault.

AMANDA

Sure it was. I'm the one who took the papers out of the Ziploc.

DEAN

You didn't know. It was an honest mistake. Don't beat yourself up.

AMANDA

(suspicious)

Why are you being so nice?

DEAN

Because it genuinely wasn't your fault. If anything, it was my fault. I shouldn't have put you in that position in the first place.

AMANDA

But I begged you.

DEAN

Doesn't matter. I should have known better. It was unprofessional.

(then)

Honestly, I should have never taken on your case. I should have just let you hire Terry Seinfeld.

AMANDA

Why would you say that?

DEAN

Because it's true. With all our history, and everything going on between us... it was just a bad idea. Made me susceptible to poor decision making.

AMANDA

(beat)

What do you think is going on between us?

Dean hesitates.

DEAN

Nothing. Forget it.

AMANDA

(realizes)

Do you have feelings for me?

DEAN
Don't be ridiculous.

AMANDA
You do. You still like me.

DEAN
Still? When did I like you before?

AMANDA
When you asked me out on a second date.

DEAN
(pause)
What are you talking about?

AMANDA
After our first date, you texted me to go out again. You wouldn't have done that if you didn't like me.

DEAN
Sure I would. It was a second date, not a marriage proposal.

AMANDA
Just admit you liked me.

He won't.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
You did. And I know for a fact you did, because I'm still on your truth serum, which makes me incapable of telling a lie.

DEAN
That's not how the serum works. It doesn't magically make you a mind reader.

AMANDA
(persists anyway)
Okay, so you're honestly telling me that you've never had any feelings for me whatsoever?

The car hits a BUMP, sending Amanda rolling on top of Dean. They suddenly find themselves with their hips and torsos pressed against each other, their lips mere inches apart.

DEAN
Yes. That's what I'm telling you.

EXT. VARIOUS ROADS & HIGHWAYS - NIGHT

The sedan drives through the night, crosses into Colombia.

EXT. MARINA - DAYBREAK

A huge yacht is docked ashore. It's a grand ship, nearly half the length of a football field. Its name reads - *La Jefa*.

Hector's sedan pulls into the marina parking lot, slows to a stop. The trunk POPS open again. Two BODYGUARDS approach.

INT. YACHT - SECURE ROOM - LATER

On the floor, Dean and Amanda are tied up back-to-back, still blind-folded.

AMANDA

Are we moving?

The ground RUMBLES beneath them.

DEAN

I think we're on some kind of ship.

AMANDA

Hector mentioned a yacht club.
Maybe it's Vivian's boat.

DEAN

I fucking hope not.

AMANDA

(optimistic)

This might be a good thing... maybe we can talk to Vivian directly, maybe she's reasonable.

DEAN

(knows better)

Or maybe she's sailing us out to international waters to drop us into the middle of the ocean.

On a dime, Amanda's optimism turns to despair:

AMANDA

OH FUCK, OH FUCK, WE'RE GONNA DIE.

Amanda squirms, trying to wrangle out of the constraints, but it's of no use. Then, the door CREAKS open... a pair of boots STOMP over to them, lift them off the ground.

INT. YACHT - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

The bodyguards lead Dean and Amanda through the ship.

Since they're still blind-folded, they're unable to see the sheer opulence of this remarkable yacht. But it's truly luxurious. With the feel a Four Seasons resort, and filled with all sorts of expensive artwork and priceless relics.

AMANDA

Where are you taking us?

The bodyguard shoves a gun into her back.

BODYGUARD

Just keep walking.

She does as she's told.

EXT. YACHT - TOP DECK - LATER

Dean and Amanda are led to the far edge of the ship. Amanda's blind-fold has moved a bit, allowing her to peak out through the bottom edge.... she sees the long drop to the sea below.

AMANDA

Holy shit, this is it, we're done.
They're gonna kill us.

She's shaking, scared for life. Meanwhile, Dean stays silent.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Dean, what the fuck? What do we do?
We have to do something.

DEAN

I lied to you...
(deep breath)
Of course I liked you. I've never stopped liking you. From the moment we met... there was just something. And it hasn't gone away for me. If anything, it's gotten stronger.

AMANDA

Are you fucking kidding me? You're doing this now?

DEAN

(yes)
You're smart and you're funny and you're passionate and I'm absolutely crazy about you.

AMANDA
They're gonna kill us!

DEAN
Which is why you need to know how I
feel about you.

AMANDA
Please stop.

DEAN
You deserve better than Julian.

AMANDA
I said stop.

DEAN
He's got a shitty track record with
women. Even if we did find him, and
even if he wanted to be with you,
he'd only mess it up eventually. He
always does. Julian would never
appreciate what he has with you.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
That's a bit harsh, man.

Dean and Amanda startle - *who was that???* Then suddenly, the
blind-folds are lifted off of their heads. Standing before
them is none other than--

AMANDA
Julian???

It's him alright. Flanked by those bodyguards.

JULIAN
I'm so sorry about the blind-folds
and everything. Vivian insisted. We
had to keep my location secret.

Amanda looks Julian over... for some reason, he doesn't look
harmd at all. In fact, he looks great - tan, fit, and very
nautical chic in his pastel polo and matching Bermuda shorts.

AMANDA
What is this? What's going on?

Julian rushes over to her.

JULIAN
I'll tell you everything soon. I
promise. The important thing is
that you're here and you're safe.

He wraps his arms around Amanda, looks deep into her eyes.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Don't listen to this guy. He
doesn't know what he's talking
about. I know exactly what I have
with you...

He goes in to kiss her--

AMANDA
Whoa. No.

JULIAN
But you came all this way.

AMANDA
What the hell is going on? We
thought you were kidnapped.

Amanda looks around, takes in the luxurious surroundings.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Are you a hostage or not?

JULIAN
I know you have lots of questions,
but I really can't say right now.

DEAN
Of course you can't.

JULIAN
Hey man, you've said enough.

Julian and Dean share an tense look. Julian then turns to the
bodyguards.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Please untie her.

They untie Amanda's hands. Julian squeezes them, heartfelt.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
That night we spent together was
one of the best nights of my life.
I think about it all the time. I'm
just so happy you came down here to
find me. It's the greatest surprise
I could ever ask for.

AMANDA
But why did you go missing? Why are
you here? This doesn't make sense.

JULIAN
I'm sorry, I can't--

AMANDA
I need to know! What is this?

Amanda means business, won't accept anything but the truth. Julian looks O.S., as if asking someone for permission.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Julian is working with me.

From out of the shadows steps the one and only VIVIAN RUIZ. She's a striking woman in her mid 50s, dressed impeccably in a Chanel jacket and leopard Manolo pumps.

VIVIAN RUIZ
We've been collaborating on a project for a few months now.

JULIAN
It's super exciting. By the end of next year, we're gonna be bringing free internet to the whole country.

AMANDA
...free internet?

JULIAN
It'll be a game changer. We'll be providing service to poor, rural areas that have been ignored here for years. We think it could have ripple effects on a global scale. We want to change the way the world views telecommunications.

AMANDA
So you're like willingly working with Vivian?

Julian nods, correct.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
(turns to Vivian)
And you're not trying to own a monopoly on the internet for your own personal gain?

VIVIAN RUIZ
No. Who told you that?

Amanda turns to Dean, shoots him a harsh glare.

DEAN
 (defensive)
 It was just a theory.

VIVIAN RUIZ
 To be fair, that is the precise
 goal of those who are trying to
 stop us. Our initiative could cost
 a lot of people a lot of money.

JULIAN
 Which is why I had to go missing
 and hide out here on the boat. It's
 for my own safety.

Amanda puts the pieces together.

AMANDA
 Because your enemies want you dead?

Julian nods. Then takes Amanda's hands again.

JULIAN
 I'm so sorry I disappeared on you
 like I did. But I had to...
 (growing emotional)
 When Vivian and I put this plan in
 place, I was just a single guy,
 unencumbered. I wasn't planning on
 someone like you coming along.
 (sighs, lovelorn)
 But then you did. One minute I'm
 getting a routine teeth cleaning,
 and the next I'm falling for a
 complete stranger.

Amanda melts. This is exactly what she's been wanting to
 hear. Julian caresses her hair, moves in for that kiss--

DEAN
 (CLEARS THROAT)
 Can somebody please untie me too?
 Promise not to tell anyone about
 your free internet thingy.

Vivian nods to the guards. They remove Dean's restraints.

DEAN (CONT'D)
 (once he's free)
 Alright Amanda, I think it's time
 for us to get going.

AMANDA
 I'm not ready to leave.

DEAN

You heard Julian - he's saving the world and stuff. We don't wanna interfere with all that.

AMANDA

Julian, do you want me to leave?

JULIAN

Of course not. I want you to stay.

AMANDA

For how long?

JULIAN

As long as you want. We have a full staff here. All the amenities you could ever want. And we can take it one day at a time. No pressure.

She considers the offer, seems to be leaning towards yes.

DEAN

Are you insane? You can't do this. How could you actually consider staying down here with this guy?

AMANDA

(sarcastic)

You mean the handsome, successful, charming guy who's bringing free internet to poor people.

DEAN

Oh c'mon, don't be naive. There's obviously more going on here.

AMANDA

You don't know that.

DEAN

You don't not know that. Are you forgetting everything else we know about Vivian?

VIVIAN RUIZ

I can hear you, you know.

She glares at Dean. He turns to Amanda, changes tact:

DEAN

Fine, let's assume it's all above board and there's nothing illicit going on out here...

(MORE)

DEAN (CONT'D)

It's still an awful idea to stay!
What are you gonna do? Live on this
boat and sun-tan all day long while
getting sloshed on margaritas?

AMANDA

This is your argument *against*
staying?

DEAN

Yes! Because it's not you. You're
not some arm candy. You're a
lawyer. You have a career. You have
a life back in L.A.

AMANDA

A sad one. I'm not exactly living
the dream. I sit in a cubicle all
day, reviewing tedious contracts.
Then at night, I go out on first
dates with even more tedious dudes.
Maybe it's time for a change.

DEAN

So make a change. But not with *him*.

AMANDA

With who then? You?

DEAN

Yes, exactly.
(holds out his hand)
Let's get out of here. Me and you.
Let's go back to L.A. and start
something new. Something great.

He keeps his hand outstretched... Amanda stares at it for a
long beat. Then turns to Julian, then back to Dean again.
Off Amanda, debating her future.

EXT. MARINA - DAY

The yacht is now docked at shore. The gangway lowers from the
ship, and... Dean exits. Alone.

UP ON THE TOP DECK - CONTINUOUS

Amanda stands at the railing, looking down. She watches as
Dean walks away. There's a wistfulness in her eyes. It's
clear that this decision wasn't so simple for her.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - NIGHT

The yacht is now back at sea.

INT. YACHT - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Julian and Amanda share a romantic candlelit dinner. Sir Paw is now back aboard too. He lays at their feet.

AMANDA

(bites into a scallop)
My god, this food...

JULIAN

I know. The chef is ridic. He's like Michelin rated. He should be working in Paris.

AMANDA

Why isn't he?

JULIAN

(shrugs)
Vivian gets what she wants.

Amanda lowers her fork. Something is off.

AMANDA

What exactly is her deal?

JULIAN

Vivian?

AMANDA

She's kinda scary.
(looks around, cautious)
And when I was on my fake date with Hector, he had some unflattering things to say about her. He made it seem like she was awful.

JULIAN

(pause)
I get that.

AMANDA

You get that?

JULIAN

Vivian has her hand in a lot of stuff. I'm sure Hector is exposed to much worse shit than I am.

AMANDA

And that doesn't bother you?

JULIAN

Central American politics are highly complicated. It's not as black-and-white as things at home.

AMANDA

Are you defending her?

JULIAN

She's never been anything but kind and generous to me. And our initiative is truly ground-breaking. If its success means I have to turn a blind eye to some other stuff, I'm okay with that.

From Amanda's face, it's clear she's not quite as okay.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Forget about Vivian. Let's talk about something else.

AMANDA

(considers, then)

Okay, what TV shows do you watch?

JULIAN

TV shows?

AMANDA

Yeah, we never did the whole first date thing. Might as well now.

JULIAN

Oh, I haven't had cable for years.

AMANDA

I know, everyone's a cord-cutter these days. What are you streaming?

JULIAN

I don't really do that either. I'm not really into TV or movies.

Amanda stares at him, askew.

AMANDA

Like, at all?

JULIAN

They're all so fake and made-up.

AMANDA
That's kind of the point.

JULIAN
Sorry, not my thing.

AMANDA
Huh.

They eat in silence for a beat. After some time.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
How about music? I'm guessing The Beatles are your favorite band?

JULIAN
Um, they're okay I guess.

AMANDA
Okay? You named your dog after Paul McCartney.

JULIAN
He's adopted. Name came with him.
(then)
I didn't even realize Sir Paw was a Beatles reference until now.
(looks down)
That explains the collar.

Amanda is flabbergasted (and kinda mortified too). They eat in silence for another few beats. Starts to feel torturous.

AMANDA
So, do you have any other hobbies I should know about?

JULIAN
(suggestive)
I can think of one...

He flashes that famous smile of his. Only now, its charm seems to have faded.

INT. YACHT - JULIAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lights are dim, candles are lit, soft MUSIC plays. Julian waits in the bed, wearing only his boxers. After a few beats.

JULIAN
Everything okay in there?

IN THE ADJACENT BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Behind the locked door, Amanda stares into the mirror, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, knowing she cannot go through with this.

Overwhelmed, she sits on the window sill, where... she notices something outside the bathroom's window --

A long ledge by the boat's transom, storing a small dinghy, a few lifeboats, and one super powered Kawasaki STX-15 Jet Ski.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Julian KNOCKS on the bathroom door, concerned.

JULIAN
Amanda? Are you okay?

No answer.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Amanda, answer me if you're okay.

Still nothing. Worried for her safety, Julian takes a running start, and successfully BARRELS through the bathroom door...

INSIDE THE BATHROOM, he sees that the window is propped open. He then hears a loud motor ROAR. He looks out the window...

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Amanda?

She jet skis off into the vast ocean, as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY - REESTABLISHING

A plane touches down at LAX.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Amanda's back home on her couch. She's holding her iPhone, which is open to Dean's contact. She takes a deep breath, hits CALL.

It RINGS a few times, then goes to VOICEMAIL. She leaves a message:

AMANDA

Hey, it's me. Amanda. I'm back in L.A., was hoping we could talk.

(sighs)

You were right.

(another sigh)

About everything.

(pause)

Anyway, I'd really like to see you. You know how to find me.

She ENDS the call.

INT. LAW FIRM - A FEW DAYS LATER

Amanda's back at her cubicle, reviewing a contract, but unable to concentrate. She peaks down at her phone - there are a slew of outgoing messages to Dean. With zero responses.

TAJA (O.S.)

Enough!

Taja slides over, snatches the phone out of Amanda's hand.

TAJA (CONT'D)

Don't let him ghost you.

AMANDA

It's not really my decision.

TAJA

Uh, sure it is. You're making it super easy for him.

Amanda makes a face, dismissive.

TAJA (CONT'D)

Anyone can ignore calls and texts. It's a lot harder to ghost someone who shows up at your house.

AMANDA

I am not doing that.

TAJA

Why not? It's got a way better chance of working than just sitting here, hoping he zombies you.

AMANDA

(pause)

Zombies me?

TAJA

It's when you contact someone after having previously ghosted them, like you've come back from the dead. And since Dean is clearly ghosting your ass, if he decides to reach out, he'd be zombieing you.

AMANDA

Are you just making this shit up?

TAJA

No. It's a real thing. I swear.

Taja grabs Amanda by the shoulders.

TAJA (CONT'D)

But I promise you, it sure as shit ain't happening here. Dean is not calling anytime soon. If you wanna talk to him, you gotta initiate.

Off Amanda, hearing the sage advice.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Amanda's on her couch, laptop open to addressfinder.com
She chugs some wine, enters her credit card info.

EXT. DEAN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Amanda RINGS the doorbell. No answer.

EXT. DEAN'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Amanda hops over a fence, falls into the yard.

She looks toward the house, spots a sliding glass door...
with a pile of large decorative rocks beside it.

Amanda grabs one of those rocks. It's quite hefty. She
musters all her strength, tosses it through the door...

Off the sound of SHATTERED GLASS.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Amanda sits across from Det. Gutiérrez (the very same female
officer who interrogated Amanda after she showed up at
Julian's house).

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
(CLICKS open pen)
Name.

AMANDA
Amanda Tinsely.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
Age.

AMANDA
Twenty-six.

Gutiérrez looks up, realizes:

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
Wait, no, you're--

AMANDA
Hey.

Gutiérrez looks down at the case file, reads it through.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
Please don't tell me this is
another guy who ghosted you.

AMANDA
Okay, technically, yes. But--

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
Is there something wrong with you?

AMANDA
It's different this time, I swear.

Gutiérrez closes the file.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
I'm gonna refer you to a mental
health professional.

AMANDA
I swear, this is different. I was
wrong about the last guy. But this
one is the real thing.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
Then why is he ghosting you too?

AMANDA
Because I fucked up. But if I can
find him and speak to him, I can--

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
(stern)
Stop talking.

Amanda abides.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ (CONT'D)
I've been married three times. So I know a thing or two about bad relationships. And lemme tell you, if he's already ignoring you at this point, things are not gonna magically improve from here.

AMANDA
I think my situation is unique.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
Everyone thinks their situation is unique. And everyone is wrong.

AMANDA
Okay, I hear you, I do, but--

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
--but you're gonna ignore my advice and track him down anyway.

Amanda nods, correct. Gutierrez gives up.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ (CONT'D)
Fine, whatever. Do what you gotta do to find this guy. I don't care. Just promise me that you'll stop breaking the law to do it, okay?

AMANDA
I promise, Detective.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
(CLICKS pen closed)
Good.

Amanda stands up, heads back on her journey... only to get YANKED back down, since she's still handcuffed to the desk.

AMANDA
(re: handcuffs)
Can I get a hand with these?

DET. GUTIÉRREZ
(matter-of-fact)
No.

AMANDA

I thought we were on the same page.

DET. GUTIÉRREZ

You still committed a breaking and entering.

AMANDA

Is that like a fine?

Gutiérrez exits the room.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Detective? Hello...? Detective...?

Off Amanda, cuffed to the desk, calling out into the void.

CUT TO:

EXT. KIEV, UKRAINE - A FEW DAYS LATER

A busy afternoon in the Ukrainian capital.

EXT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Out on the sidewalk patio, we find Dean, sipping an espresso. His focus is fixed --

ACROSS THE STREET, where there is another cafe. A MYSTERIOUS MAN in a burgundy suit enters this 2nd cafe.

Dean waits, patient, sipping his espresso.

Then, after a minute, the man in the burgundy suit exits.

Dean leaves some rubles on his table, heads across the street.

INT. 2ND CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Dean enters, heads directly for the restroom...

INSIDE THE STALL, he reaches behind the toilet, and finds a USB drive taped to the back. Dean smiles, jackpot.

EXT. 2ND CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Dean exits. He looks left, then right, coast is clear. He continues down the busy street, when...

A MASKED MAN emerges from an alley, suffocates him with a chloroform towel. Dean struggles for a moment, before passing out into his arms.

The man drags Dean into the alley, and stuffs him into a trunk. Somehow, not one PEDESTRIAN bats an eye. Sadly, just another day in Kiev.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Dean's tied up to a chair, still passed out. A bucket of water SPLASHES across his face. He comes to, GASPING for air.

That masked man approaches, speaks in a Russian accent.

MASKED MAN
Why you in Ukraine?

Dean says nothing.

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)
Who hires you?

Still nothing.

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)
Fine, we play hardballs, as you
Americans like to say.

The man takes out a manila folder, slides out a photograph.

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)
You know this woman?

It's a photo of Amanda, getting into her car in Los Angeles. Dean shakes his head no.

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)
No? Because we tap your cell phone.
And she tries call you twelve times
last week.

Dean stays silent.

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)
Seem fishy, no?

Dean stays strong.

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)
So we pay her visit in L.A.

The man reaches into a bag...

Pulls out some clothing - it's the same outfit that Amanda's wearing in the photograph. Only now, they are blood stained.

DEAN

(beat)

What did you do to her?

MASKED MAN

Ah, he speaks.

DEAN

Did you fucking hurt her?

MASKED MAN

What matter? You no know her.

DEAN

What the fuck did you do to her?

The man SNIFFS Amanda's underwear.

MASKED MAN

Mmm. Wouldn't you like to know.

DEAN

You fucking asshole. You won't get away with this.

MASKED MAN

Huh, I think you like this woman.

DEAN

Tell me what you did to her.

The masked man gets right in Dean's face.

MASKED MAN

Do you like this woman?

DEAN

What???

MASKED MAN

Answer question - do you like her?

DEAN

What's it matter?

MASKED MAN

I wants to know. Do you likes her or do you not?

DEAN

Yeah, I mean, I guess.

MASKED MAN
You guess or you knows?

DEAN
What's the difference?

MASKED MAN
(angry)
Tell me how you feel about her.

DEAN
(utterly confused)
Why do you care how I feel?

MASKED MAN
I needs to know. Tell me. Now.

He retrieves pliers from his satchel...

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)
Or I rip your toe nail out.

DEAN
Fine, yes, I like her.

MASKED MAN
As friend? Or more?

DEAN
What?

MASKED MAN
(repeats)
As friend or more?

DEAN
More.

MASKED MAN
How much more?

DEAN
Why do you--

MASKED MAN
HOW MUCH MORE?

The man holds the pliers up to Dean's fingernails.

DEAN
A lot more. A lot more.

MASKED MAN
Good.

He tosses the pliers away. Then shifts to an AMERICAN ACCENT:

MASKED MAN (CONT'D)

That's exactly what we were hoping.

The man takes off his mask... he's not some imposing Russian, but rather a nebbishy looking guy in his mid 40s.

DEAN

Seinfeld?

TERRY SEINFELD

My accent work was solid, right?

DEAN

What the fuck are you doing here?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

I hired him.

Dean looks across the warehouse, spots a WOMAN heading toward him. It's...

DEAN

Amanda??

AMANDA

You can ghost me all you want. But you still like me. This proves it.

DEAN

Seriously? You hired Terry Seinfeld to fake kidnap me? Really?

AMANDA

What was I supposed to do? I tried everything else. You've been impossible to reach.

DEAN

Because I'm on a case.

AMANDA

(crosses arms)

Without cell phone reception?

DEAN

I'm sorry your phone calls weren't atop my priority list.

AMANDA

You could have texted me back. It wouldn't have been so hard. You didn't have to ghost me.

DEAN
I was not ghosting you.

AMANDA
Bullshit.

DEAN
I wasn't. I was always planning on calling you back when I got back home. I was just gonna let you sweat it out a little bit first.

AMANDA
(beat, realizes)
You were gonna zombie me.

DEAN
Zombie you?

AMANDA
It's when you contact someone after having ghosted them, like you've come back from the dead.

DEAN
That's not a thing.

AMANDA
It is, I swear.

DEAN
(shrugs)
Fine, then I guess I zombied you.

They share a smile, happy to be around each other once again.

TERRY SEINFELD
I'm gonna leave you two alone.

AMANDA
Nice work, Ter.

TERRY SEINFELD
The underwear sniffing thing wasn't too much?

AMANDA
Nah, totally played.

TERRY SEINFELD
Sweet.

Terry exits, proud of himself. Once he's gone.

AMANDA
I should probably untie you now.

DEAN
(smirks, coy)
You don't have to.

AMANDA
Oh no?

Amanda straddles him on the chair... and they kiss. Finally. It's pretty great. The kind of kiss that's worth waiting for. As they keep at it, Amanda's voice fades up:

AMANDA (V.O.)
What is ghosting?

The camera pulls back on them.

AMANDA (V.O.)
Technically speaking, it's the act of ceasing all communication with someone you've gone out with, in the hopes that they'll just get the hint and leave you alone.

The camera pulls back farther.

AMANDA (V.O.)
It's also something I was guilty of as a single person far more times than I'd like to admit...

EXT. BEACH (MALIBU, CA) - DAY - ONE YEAR LATER

Out in the sand, there's an altar erected. Under which we find Amanda, in her wedding dress, standing across from Dean. She continues her vows:

AMANDA
I was what you'd call a serial ghoster. A slave to first impressions. Addicted to finding major red flags or even minor transgressions...

Among the GUESTS, we find many of Amanda's old friends and co-workers (Taja, Sebastian, Lisa DeSanto, etc). They all nod along vociferously to Amanda's self-assessment.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
But ultimately, ghosting was just a defense mechanism...

In the crowd, Amanda's therapist (Dr. Forrester), nods along.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

It wasn't other people's flaws I was avoiding, but my own. I was staying in my comfort zone, afraid to imagine a life or a person who actually challenged me.

Under the altar, Dean and Amanda share a smile.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(continues)

Because yes, dating is hard...

Out in the crowd, *is that... Hector?? Did he stand up to Vivian after all?* He nods along, mouths to himself.

HECTOR

...so hard.

AMANDA

(continues)

But dating is not meant to be easy. And for good reason. It should be difficult to find someone who you want to spend the rest of your life with. Because anybody can make a good first impression. But it's the lasting impressions that matter. And Dean, you're the last impression I ever want to make.

In the crowd, Terry Seinfeld sheds a tear.

The wedding OFFICIANT declares them husband and wife. And as Dean and Amanda kiss once again, we...

FADE OUT.

THE END