

# 10 reasons why I'm a bad idea

Written by

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EXT. ROOFTOP BAR - NIGHT

The city skyline shimmers beneath a deep purple sky. City lights pulse. Music hums beneath laughter and clinking glasses.

Stylish PATRONS mingle beneath string lights. At the edge of it all:

NATE WILLIAMS (30s) – confident, dangerous charm – sips whiskey at the bar, grinning at a WOMAN mid-conversation.

He checks his watch. Offers her a polite smile. Finishes his drink. Scans the crowd – hunting.

INT. ROOFTOP BAR - LATER

Nate and EMMA (late 20s, red dress) are mid-conversation. They're laughing – undeniable chemistry – but there's tension too. Nate's trying to play it cool, but something in Emma throws him.

EMMA

You sure you don't have a girlfriend stashed away here somewhere? Or is this just your way of telling me you're "a bad idea"?

NATE

No girlfriend. But I am definitely a bad idea.

(Pause, smirks)

Got a list. Ten reasons. None of them have anything to do with you, yet.

Emma's smile thins. Intrigued, but less charmed than analytical now.

EMMA

Ten? That's a lot of pre-planned chaos. Let's hear them.

Nate shrugs, then – instead of launching in – he softens.

NATE

Can I ask you something first?

EMMA

(surprised)

Sure.

NATE

What's the worst first date you've ever been on?

EMMA

Hmm. That's either disarming or manipulative. But okay.

(thinks)

Guy who told me I "reminded him of his sister," mid-appetizer.

NATE

Wow. You win.

EMMA

You dodging your own question?

NATE

Maybe. Or maybe I'm tired of the list.

Emma narrows her eyes.

EMMA

Since when?

NATE

(sincere, low)

Since I realized I say the same shit every time and it still doesn't stop people from walking away.

That lands. A flicker of real self-awareness. Emma tilts her head, curious now.

EMMA

You rehearse being broken like it's a talent show.

NATE

I'm just... trying to not lie.

EMMA

But you never ask anything. You make yourself the whole show.

Beat. That's not what he expected – but it's not wrong.

NATE

You're not wrong.

EMMA

And yet, you're still doing it.

NATE

Because it's easier than asking  
someone to stay.

(beat)

That's not on the list. But it  
should be.

Emma studies him. Still skeptical – but maybe not entirely  
unmoved. Nate glances around the bar then exhales  
dramatically, like he's been waiting for this exact moment.  
He raises his eyebrows.

NATE (CONT'D)

Alright. Number one: I don't do  
exclusivity. At all.

Emma smirks.

EMMA

You're starting strong.

NATE

Oh, I'm just getting started. Two:  
I'm emotionally unavailable.  
Chronically.

EMMA

Sounds like a guy who wants to be  
understood, but hopes no one tries.

A flicker behind Nate's eyes. Vulnerability. Gone in a blink.

NATE

You're not listening. I'm the guy  
your friends warn you about.

(beat)

And when you inevitably ignore them  
– and fall for me – you'll get  
hurt. That's number three.

EMMA

So you're... a self-fulfilling  
prophecy with good bone structure?  
That's your charm??

NATE

Call it what you want. But I'm not  
the guy you build a future with.

She studies him.

EMMA

And that's it? You're predictable.  
Boring, even.

NATE

That's what I like about you. Most women would've run by now.

EMMA

Don't confuse curiosity for weakness.

(leans in)

I'm not your momma and I'm not here to fix you.

Nate's eyes widen.

NATE

Well, then there's number four: I'm complicated.

EMMA

Jesus.

NATE

You'll regret this.

EMMA

Wow. And you say that with such pride.

NATE

It's better to be honest upfront, right?

EMMA

No. It's easier. Honesty is when you say something hard that means something. This shit? That's a defense mechanism with good lighting.

NATE

Okay, ouch.

EMMA

Look, you're charming. But you're hiding in it. And I don't date guys who use irony like armor.

(beat)

You're not deep. You're practiced.

NATE

(finding no comeback)  
...Fair.

EMMA

Thanks for the drink.

She gets up. Nate watches her go, quiet for once. A flicker of something unsettled in him.

EXT. ROOFTOP BALCONY - NIGHT

Nate steps out alone. Below, the city hums.

He breathes deep. Shakes off the conversation like it got under his skin.

NATE

I've got ten reasons why I'm a bad idea.

(beat)

But for the first time... I'm not so sure I want to be. I'm so tired of being a bad idea.

He checks his phone.

ON SCREEN: "You're still coming to the party, right?"

NATE (CONT'D)

Right. Back to being the guy who's bad for everyone.

He pockets the phone, heads back inside.

INT. NATE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sparse. Sleek. A little too clean. Darkness hides more than it shows.

The click of a lock. Nate enters, loosens his tie, tosses his keys into a bowl. Kicks off his shoes.

He checks his phone. One voicemail notification. His thumb hovers.

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)

(woman's voice, strained)

Hey. It's Sarah. I know you're screening again, but Dad's in town next week. He's trying... I guess. Mom would've wanted you to try too. Anyway. Marlow's. Friday. 6PM. You won't come, but... I said I'd tell you.

Beat.

Nate doesn't move. Then - DELETE.

He opens a drawer. Inside: several unopened birthday cards. One reads: "To my son – even when you don't call."

He closes the drawer. Heads to the kitchen. Pours himself a whiskey. Ice clinks. He sips. Stares out the window – the city glittering far below.

His face is unreadable. Then, quietly – a whisper to no one:

NATE  
I'm fine alone.

INT. NATE'S APARTMENT – MORNING

Sunlight cuts through sheer blinds, casting sterile lines across pristine floors. The space is sleek and modern—expensive, impersonal. Like a hotel room waiting for a guest who never really unpacks. The silence feels intentional.

A half-empty whiskey bottle sits on the kitchen counter, a leather jacket slung over a chair.

SHOWER running. Steam curls from the cracked bathroom door. A WOMAN'S LAUGH drifts out.

Nate stands at the kitchen island, already dressed. Coffee in one hand, phone in the other.

LEXI (late 20s, clearly more into him than he is into her) steps out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel, hair damp. She starts putting her clothes on.

LEXI  
You always leave this early? Or is this the "don't stick around long enough for feelings" routine?

NATE  
(eyes on his phone)  
That depends. You catching feelings?

LEXI  
Not even close.

NATE  
(smiling, finally looking at her)  
Then I guess we're good here.

LEXI  
Right. Because if I were, you'd be gone already.

NATE  
(sipping coffee)  
Isn't that the deal?

LEXI  
It's not a deal. It's an exit strategy.

That lands. He lowers the mug, studies her.

LEXI (CONT'D)  
You're not unreachable, Nate. Just a coward.

NATE  
(quiet)  
I thought we were just having fun.

LEXI  
You say that like fun's a free pass and cancels out respect.

NATE  
(beat)  
You're not wrong.

LEXI  
One day, someone's gonna call you out for real. And you won't get to smirk your way out of it.

NATE  
Let me guess - she'll ruin me?

LEXI  
-Bad idea?

NATE  
And then I'll crash and burn?

LEXI  
No. You'll ruin yourself. She'll just be the first one who matters.

She buttons the last button, snatches her purse and heels, and walks out without looking back.

LEXI (CONT'D)  
See you around, Williams.



Nate opens the door. No salute. Just watches her go.

LEXI (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Try listening next time. You might  
like what you hear.

The door shuts. Nate stands in silence. He rubs the back of his neck. A flicker of something real.

NATE  
I always think I'm protecting them.  
But maybe I'm just hiding from  
myself.

He downs his coffee, tosses the cup in the sink. Jacket on.  
He heads for the door, slower now.

NATE (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
I'm not good at it. The  
relationship thing. I get too  
intense. Then I get bored. Then I  
mess it up. Always.

INT. NATE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nate drops keys into a bowl, shrugs off his jacket. Quiet. He passes a bookshelf—pauses at a framed photo: a younger Nate with a woman in a hospital bed, laughing. It's faded, well-worn.

He sinks onto the couch. Pulls out his phone. Opens his Notes app. Scrolls past entries titled "Don't Get Attached," "Exit Scripts," "Keep It Light."

One note is just: \*\*\*"What if it's not too late to get it right?"\*\*\*

He stares at it. Then closes the app. Silence.

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

The city is alive. Coffee carts, honking horns, the blur of morning rush.

Nate moves through it — hands in pockets, headphones in. Alone in the noise. He stops. A bus stop ad shows a couple mid-proposal, beaming. He stares. Scoffs under his breath. Keeps walking.

Unlocks the door to his building.

Pauses. Looks up at the sky, almost like he's hoping for something.

NATE  
(sotto)  
Alone again.

He disappears inside.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - LOBBY - MORNING

Sunlight glints off glass walls. The lobby buzzes with polished professionals.

OLIVIA MARTIN (30s) cuts through the space like a bullet – sleek suit, heels clicking, phone in one hand, coffee in the other. Every movement precise. Controlled.

As she approaches the elevator, she checks the time. Winces.

OLIVIA  
(muttering)  
Dammit.

The elevator doors begin to close – she speeds up.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Hold the elevator!

A hand shoots out – the doors stop. Olivia steps in, breath catching.

NATE  
You're welcome.

Leaning casually inside: Nate. Cool without trying. The definition of trouble-in-a-tailored-jacket.

OLIVIA  
(dry)  
I didn't say thank you.

Nate raises an eyebrow, intrigued. The doors close.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

They stand in silence. Olivia types rapidly on her phone. Nate watches, entertained-like she's a puzzle he suddenly wants to solve.

NATE

Let me guess. Corporate exec,  
always on the move, too busy for  
small talk, allergic to fun?

OLIVIA

Also allergic to clichés.

The elevator jerks – lights flicker. Olivia's grip tightens  
on her coffee cup.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

No, you've got to be kidding me.

A silent beat. Nate looks at the emergency panel.

NATE

Looks like we're stuck.

OLIVIA

Brilliant observation, Captain  
Obvious.

NATE

That's Mister Obvious to you.

A pause.

OLIVIA

I prefer you leave me alone. I'm a  
private person, okay?

NATE

(sincerely)

You don't have to be. With me, I  
mean.

Olivia's eyes flicker with something—surprise? Intrigue? She  
quickly masks it with sarcasm.

OLIVIA

Oh? You come with a confidentiality  
agreement?

NATE

(grinning)

Only the verbal kind. But it's  
legally binding if sealed with  
coffee.

He smiles.

NATE (CONT'D)  
You really don't like compliments,  
do you?

OLIVIA  
Just because you're persistently  
cute doesn't make this a good idea.

NATE  
(challenging, gently)  
Maybe not. But it doesn't make it a  
bad one either.

Olivia exhales, folds her arms.

NATE (CONT'D)  
This your first time stuck in an  
elevator with a charming stranger?

OLIVIA  
This your first time overestimating  
your own charm?

Nate lets out a short laugh. Olivia shifts uncomfortably.

NATE  
Alright. We've got time to kill.  
Want to play a game?

OLIVIA  
Pass.

NATE  
C'mon, humor me. It's simple. Ten  
questions.

OLIVIA  
Nope.

NATE  
Alright, five.

OLIVIA  
Still no.

NATE  
One.

Olivia exhales, pinching the bridge of her nose.

OLIVIA  
Fine. One.

Nate leans in, like it's a dare.

NATE

What's the number one reason I'm a  
bad idea?

Olivia watches him. Eyes narrowing. Reading. Measuring. A  
flicker of curiosity behind her guarded expression. Then—

OLIVIA

I don't do bad ideas.

DING. The elevator jerks back to life. The doors open.

She steps out without a glance back.

NATE

(to himself, amused)  
That's a first.

He steps out after her.

INT. OFFICE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Olivia walks like she owns the place. Nate lags a few steps  
behind, still grinning.

She approaches the RECEPTIONIST'S desk, adjusting her blazer.

OLIVIA

(to receptionist)  
Has Mr. Beringer arrived?

RECEPTIONIST

Not yet, but—

Nate steps beside Olivia, resting his arm on the counter like  
he belongs there.

NATE

(to receptionist)  
Hi. Quick question — does she  
always look this serious, or am I  
just lucky?

Olivia doesn't look up from her phone.

OLIVIA

Oh good, you followed me. I thought  
I'd lost my shadow.

NATE

Couldn't walk away from unresolved  
tension.

OLIVIA  
We had an elevator delay. Not a moment.

Nate tilts his head slightly.

NATE  
See, that's the thing – people who say "we didn't have a moment" are always the ones thinking about it the most.

Olivia lets out a dry laugh as she puts away her phone.

OLIVIA  
You're relentless.

NATE  
I prefer... committed.

OLIVIA  
What do you want?

NATE  
You always this suspicious?

OLIVIA  
Only when I'm right.

NATE  
To talk to you again.

Olivia ignores him, whips out her phone, scrolls through an email. She types. He studies her.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Maybe fate stuck us in that elevator for a reason.

OLIVIA  
Fate's a cliché.

NATE  
Or maybe fate's just lazy and out of ideas. Recycling plotlines.

She finally looks up.

OLIVIA  
Listen, Nate—

NATE  
Wow, you remembered my name!

OLIVIA  
I don't date guys who smile like that.

NATE  
(playful)  
So you've got a type?

OLIVIA  
(arch)  
I have a radar for trouble. It saves time.

NATE  
And yet you noticed me.

OLIVIA  
I can use the Force to sense the dark side - things like you, a huge red flag.

NATE  
Oof. That sounded personal.

OLIVIA  
I've met your type before.

NATE  
Enlighten me.

OLIVIA  
Smirk. Line. Ego. Think women are puzzles and you're the guy with all the pieces.  
(beat)  
Pretend to be self-aware to avoid growth. It's a solid act.

NATE  
Damn. I was just gonna go with "charming," but sure, roast away.

Before Olivia can respond-

MR. BERINGER (O.S.)  
Olivia!

Enter: A distinguished older man, MR. BERINGER (60s, CEO energy, expensive suit, commanding, impatient), strides toward them.

Olivia straightens, immediately shifting into work mode.

OLIVIA  
Mr. Beringer, good morning—

MR. BERINGER  
No time for pleasantries. We need  
to talk about the Harris proposal.  
Where's your assistant?

OLIVIA  
I sent her ahead to prep the  
conference room.

He nods, then sees Nate. His mood sours.

MR. BERINGER  
You're on thin ice, Nathaniel. One  
or two more screw-ups, your  
consulting gig is done.

NATE  
Noted. Always a pleasure, Mr. B.

Beringer turns back to Olivia.

MR. BERINGER  
Let's move. Kat Monroe's team is  
bidding too. Be sharper than them.

OLIVIA  
(deadpan)  
Delightful.

NATE  
(to Olivia, low)  
Hey, for the record? That was  
reason number five.

Olivia pauses mid-step. Turns slightly.

OLIVIA  
What is?

NATE  
I'm disposable.

OLIVIA  
You will be if you don't stop  
chasing receptionists.

NATE  
That's a lie. Fake news.

Their eyes lock — her expression shifts. She knows he's  
telling the truth.



She almost smiles – almost – then walks off.

NATE (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Yeah. I'm screwed.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Olivia turns a corner-nearly collides with KAT MONROE (30s) – the polished, PR-perfect rival.

KAT  
Olivia. Fancy seeing you.

OLIVIA  
Kat. Here to eavesdrop?

KAT  
Just scoping out the competition.  
(smiles)  
You and Beringer'll put up a good fight.

OLIVIA  
I don't fight. I win.

Kat raises an eyebrow.

KAT  
Mmm. Cute. Try not to take it personally when you don't.

Kat clocks Nate down the hall. She winks. He smirks, then walks on.

INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Sharp lines. Bare surfaces. Nothing extra. Nothing out of place. A space built on precision. Designed to function, not feel.

Olivia sits at her desk, a force of focus. Laptop open, phone buzzing, documents spread out – yet nothing slows her.

A KNOCK. The door opens.

Her assistant, GRACE (20s) – bright, on the ball, a little too excited to be helpful – steps in, holding a folder.

GRACE

Here's the revised contract for the Beringer deal. And – oh! – I almost forgot. You got a message earlier.

Olivia barely looks up, still typing.

OLIVIA

If it's from legal, tell them I already-

GRACE

It's not from legal.

Olivia looks up. Grace places a business card on the desk.

ON CARD: Nathaniel Williams.

A pause. Olivia doesn't blink, but her fingers pause mid-keystroke.

OLIVIA

(casual)

Who gave you this?

GRACE

Some guy dropped it off. Said he met you this morning.

(smirk)

Something about an elevator?

The smallest shift in Olivia's posture. Grace sees right through her.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Ooooh. He got to you.

OLIVIA

No, he didn't. He's just a liability for the company. One more screw-up and he's gone.

GRACE

And you're gonna be the one to fix him?

Olivia picks up the card. Flips it between her fingers.

OLIVIA

Contain him.

GRACE

He was cute, by the way.

OLIVIA  
You mean obnoxious.

GRACE  
Yes, obnoxious and cute. That's a  
lethal combo.

Olivia drops the card like it's irrelevant.

OLIVIA  
He's irrelevant.

GRACE  
Uh-huh. And yet...you're still  
talking about him more than two  
seconds later.

Olivia gives her a look.

OLIVIA  
Do you like having a job?

GRACE  
Love it. Most of the time. But I  
also love seeing you flustered.  
(grinning)  
Last time I saw this look, Kat  
Monroe showed up uninvited.

OLIVIA  
She's circling Beringer. Again.

GRACE  
Maybe. But right now? You're more  
rattled by elevator boy.

She picks up her pen and strolls out.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
So... are you gonna call him?

OLIVIA  
No.

GRACE  
Why not?

OLIVIA  
Because I don't entertain bad  
ideas.

GRACE

Maybe he's not a bad idea. Maybe  
he's just...not what you saw  
coming.

Olivia gives her a pointed look.

OLIVIA

I'll pass.

Grace holds up her hands in surrender, backing toward the door.

GRACE

Fine, fine. But this whole "he's  
irrelevant" act?  
(super casual)  
Super unconvincing.

OLIVIA

That's rich, coming from someone  
who hasn't texted the bartender  
back from last week.

GRACE

I did. Once. Then he sent a voice  
memo. I'm not ready for that level  
of intimacy.

Grace leaves.

Olivia exhales. Her gaze drifts back to the card. She opens a drawer. Tosses it inside. Her eyes flick back to the screen. She tries to focus. But she can't. She glances at the drawer. Just for a second.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Fluorescent lights buzz. Olivia exits the break room, moving quickly down the hall.

She slows near the restroom—and sees Nate casually leaning against the opposite wall.

OLIVIA

You always interrupt women on their  
way to the bathroom?

NATE

Just the ones who seem like they're  
running away from something.

OLIVIA

Maybe I am. Ever think I have better things to do than banter in fluorescent lighting?

NATE

(half-smiling)

Whatever it is you're running from, it doesn't scare me.

OLIVIA

So back to my original question - do you always wait outside bathrooms with weak pickup lines?

NATE

Only when they work.

She raises an eyebrow-dry, amused.

OLIVIA

You have a pretty generous definition of "work."

NATE

I wasn't waiting. I work here now.

Olivia eyes him, unsure whether to laugh or walk away.

NATE (CONT'D)

I asked around. I figured I'd owe you a proper introduction if I was going to crash your hallway moment.

She ignores him, disappears into the restroom. Nate watches the door with something like admiration-though it's hard to say if it's for her or for the challenge.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - EVENING

Sophisticated, candlelit, intimate - the kind of place where big deals or proposals happen. Not drama.

At a corner table, Olivia sits across from DANIEL MASON (mid-30s, polished, successful, the human embodiment of a textbook perfect LinkedIn profile).

DANIEL

So, Olivia, tell me - where do you see yourself in five years?

OLIVIA  
Running my own firm. Expanding  
internationally. Definitely not  
slowing down.

DANIEL  
Love that. Clear goals. Drive.

OLIVIA  
Exactly.

She takes a sip of wine. Unbothered by Daniel. Then—  
A familiar laugh from across the restaurant. She stiffens.

ANGLE: THE BAR.

Nate leans in close with a BRUNETTE — effortless, charming,  
infuriating.

Olivia subtly glances over. Confirms. Yep. It's him. She  
whips back around, immediately drinking like the wine might  
erase him from memory.

DANIEL  
Something wrong?

OLIVIA  
Nope. Not at all.

AT THE BAR

Nate's mid-convo with the brunette, but his attention strays.  
He sees Olivia. With another man. His smile tightens. Then —  
cool as ever — he raises his glass toward her.

BACK AT OLIVIA'S TABLE

Olivia doesn't look. But she knows. She catches him in her  
periphery—lifting his glass. Her stomach tightens. She  
refuses to look, but she knows Nate is watching.

DANIEL  
So, tell me Olivia, now that we're  
on our second official date, what  
do you do to unwind? Spill.

Olivia forces her attention back to Daniel.

OLIVIA  
I don't believe in relaxing.

DANIEL  
Good answer.

She forces a smile. It doesn't reach her eyes.

AT THE BAR

The brunette is talking. Nate isn't listening, too busy watching Olivia pretend she's not affected by him. He casually takes a sip of whiskey.

NATE  
(excusing himself)  
Hold that thought babe. I gotta say  
hi to someone.

The brunette pouts as Nate slides off the barstool.

BACK AT THE TABLE

A shadow falls. Olivia doesn't need to look.

NATE  
Well, well, well. Fancy seeing you  
here.

Olivia's jaw tightens as she looks up. She plasters on her most polite, get the hell away from me expression.

OLIVIA  
Nathaniel.

NATE  
Didn't take you for the white-wine-  
and-Wall-Street date type.

OLIVIA  
And yet, here I am.

DANIEL  
A friend of yours, Olivia?

NATE  
Oh, we go way back.

He pulls out a chair. Sits. Uninvited.

OLIVIA  
You're not serious.

NATE  
Deadly.

Daniel, completely unaware of the tension, extends a hand.

DANIEL  
Daniel Mason. Pleasure.

They shake hands. Nate never breaks eye contact with Olivia.

NATE  
Nathaniel. But Olivia just calls me  
trouble.

Daniel chuckles, confused. Olivia kicks Nate under the table.  
Nate barely reacts – just grins harder.

DANIEL  
So, how do you two know each other?

Olivia opens her mouth but Nate beats her to it.

NATE  
Oh, it's a great story. She got  
trapped in an elevator with me.  
Sparks. Electricity. Magic.

OLIVIA  
You annoyed me. I tolerated it.

NATE  
She's lying. She loved every second  
of it.

OLIVIA  
You mean I regretted every second.

Nate laughs.

DANIEL  
Well, sounds like a memorable first  
impression.

NATE  
Oh, yep, she'll never forget me.

Olivia calmly puts down her glass.

OLIVIA  
Nathaniel. Leave. Now.

NATE  
You wound me.

He rises. Olivia exhales. But Nate leans in. Low.



NATE (CONT'D)  
Number six.

OLIVIA  
What?

NATE  
Reason #6 of why I'm a bad idea.  
(beat)  
I love messing with you.

OLIVIA  
What were the first five?

NATE  
I'll tell you tomorrow, sweetheart.

He winks. Walks off. Olivia stares at her plate, visibly restraining murder. Daniel returns to his wine, blissfully unaware.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NEAR HOSTESS STAND - NIGHT

Emma (from the rooftop bar date) stands with a takeout bag in hand. She spots Olivia and walks over, calm but direct.

EMMA  
Hey. I don't want to scare you, but  
Nate's not an easy man.

OLIVIA  
(skeptical)  
I'm not looking for easy.

EMMA  
He probably gave you his greatest  
hits - the "why I'm a bad idea"  
routine.  
(beat)  
He's still working on real  
connection. Just... be careful.

Emma offers a small, knowing smile. Then she turns and walks away.

INT. NATE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nate enters alone. Tosses his keys. Everything is too quiet. He flips on a lamp. Stands there in his coat.

He crosses to a cluttered shelf, pulls down a small, cheap keepsake box. Inside: old photographs, hospital wristbands, a cartoon drawing labeled "Worst Patient Ever - Love, Maddie."

He sits on the floor with it.

NATE

(low)

You'd love her. She's sharp.

Beat. He presses the heel of his hand to his eyes. Breathes through it.

NATE (CONT'D)

And she doesn't back down, won't flinch.

He looks at the box.

NATE (CONT'D)

Yeah... these reasons. This list. I thought it made me a monster.

(pause, eyes soften)

But maybe these reasons are not all scars. Maybe some are just... armor. I don't do exclusivity - not because I'm cold, but because I'm scared to lose. I'm emotionally unavailable - but that's just me protecting what little I have left. People think I'm complicated - but maybe they just don't get the parts I'm willing to show. Maybe being a "bad idea" isn't the whole story. Maybe... it's just who I am, messy and real. And maybe... that's worth something to someone.

(beat)

I'm tired of being afraid to believe that.

Then he quietly closes the box.

NATE (CONT'D)

Maybe I'm not a bad idea. Just... misunderstood.

INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Olivia enters, unbuttons her blazer. She kicks off her heels, stares at her reflection in the dark TV screen. Alone now.

GRACE (O.S., EARLIER)  
It's nice to see you laughing  
again.

She sits. Picks up her phone. Hesitates. Opens her voice  
memos.

OLIVIA  
(quiet, into phone)  
Note to self: Don't confuse a  
flicker of joy for actual warmth.  
Or charm for safety.  
(beat)  
But it felt good to be around Nate.  
That's the part that scares me.

She ends the recording. Deletes it. Then deletes it from the  
deleted folder. The mask goes back on. She looks at her  
phone, deletes Daniel's contact.

INT. OLIVIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Olivia pours a splash of wine into a nearly empty glass.  
Thinks. Opens her call log. Daniel's name still lingers  
there, grayed out.

She reactivates it, taps "Voice Message."

OLIVIA  
(firmly, into the phone)  
Hey. I didn't want to do this in a  
text.  
(beat)  
Tonight was... fine. You were kind.  
But the way you looked at me - I  
think we both know.

She crosses to the window, looking out into the dark.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
You've done nothing wrong. You just  
remind me too much of the version  
of myself I don't believe in  
anymore. The one who confuses  
compatibility with connection.  
(beat)  
I don't want perfect. I want  
honest. And that's not you. Or  
maybe it is, but not with me.

She sends the message. Deletes the thread. Blocks Daniel.

INT. OLIVIA'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

She sits still on the bed, echo of that breakup thick in the air. She pulls out a notepad, flips to a list titled:

"What I Want (Non-Negotiable)"

She stares at it — organized, bullet-pointed, airtight. Then quietly tears the page out.

OLIVIA  
(soft, to herself)  
Nate doesn't fit.  
(beat)  
But I don't care. I think?

She crumples the list, drops it in the trash, and walks to the window.

INT. UPSCALE CAFÉ - DAY

A trendy spot. Earth tones. Overpriced greens and golden lattes. Chill indie beats in the background.

Olivia sits at a corner table, tablet in hand, her perfectly manicured nails clicking across the glass as she swipes through pitch decks.

Grace sips her iced coffee across from her, not even pretending to hide her curiosity.

GRACE  
You've barely touched your quinoa thing.

OLIVIA  
I'm working.

GRACE  
Okay, holy hand grenade... you're radiating stress like a car alarm in a yoga studio.

Olivia finally glances up.

OLIVIA  
That a new skill?

GRACE  
Yes, knowing when my best friend is pretending not to be distracted.

Olivia rolls her eyes, going back to her tablet.

OLIVIA  
I'm not distracted.

GRACE  
You have the "I just met a man  
who's trouble and cracked my  
emotional firewall" look. And I'm  
pretending I'm not into him but I  
am.

A flicker. Olivia's pause is microscopic. Grace catches it.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Oh my God. I'm right!

OLIVIA  
Congratulations. Would you like an  
award?

GRACE  
Not until you spill. Immediately.

Olivia knows Grace won't let it go. Olivia sighs, sets her  
tablet down, relenting.

OLIVIA  
It's nothing. He crashed my dinner  
last night. Persistent little  
menace.

Grace's eyes widen like it's Christmas morning.

GRACE  
Persistent as in cute persistent,  
or filing a restraining order  
persistent?

OLIVIA  
He's obnoxious. One of those smug,  
thinks-he's-too-clever types.

GRACE  
So... a charming, well-dressed red  
flag. Please continue.

OLIVIA  
There's nothing else to say. He  
flirted. I ignored him. End of  
story.

GRACE  
You're so lying. You're using your  
bored voice.  
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

The one that means you're hiding  
how much he got under your skin.

OLIVIA

I am not—

GRACE

And you're dating dreary Daniel.  
The human spreadsheet.

Olivia clenches her jaw, sipping her iced tea to avoid  
answering. Grace grins, triumphant.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Oh c'mon Liv. Daniel's the safe  
option. This other guy—

OLIVIA

Nathaniel.

GRACE

He seems dangerous... and you like  
it.

OLIVIA

I don't.

GRACE

Holy hand grenade, girl — act one:  
denial, act two: tension, act  
three: full meltdown, starring you.

OLIVIA

It's not happening. I don't do bad  
ideas.

GRACE

No, but bad ideas do you. And I'll  
be here. With snacks. Watching.

OLIVIA

Great. Can't wait.

Olivia picks up her tablet again. But her eyes... flick to  
the side. Thinking.

EXT. ROOFTOP BOXING RING - SUNSET

The city skyline glows with golden hues, skyscrapers bathed  
in warm light. The sun slowly dips behind the horizon,  
painting the sky in shades of orange, pink, and purple.

A makeshift boxing ring occupies the rooftop, ropes stretched taut against the breeze. The air is crisp, tinged with the distant hum of the city below.

Nate slams a sharp one-two combo into the heavy bag. Shirtless, focused – but not on boxing. This is therapy by fists. Like he's trying to punch something out of his system. His breath visible in the cooling air. This is therapy by fists under an open sky, far from the confined corporate world.

JASON COLE (30s, linebacker build, always looks like he's got a punchline loaded) leans on the ropes, eyeing Nate work the heavy bag.

JASON

You hitting that bag like it owes you child support. Who broke your heart this time – a barista or your own ego again?

NATE

Neither. Just needed to hit something that doesn't talk back.

JASON

Alright, who is she?

Nate doesn't look at him. Keeps punching.

NATE

Who?

JASON

Don't play. That's your emotionally compromised jab. I've seen it.

Nate ignores him.

JASON (CONT'D)

You've got that look. The "I met a woman who's ruining my life" look.

Nate grunts. Lands a brutal hook.

JASON (CONT'D)

Wait – this woman. You're spiraling. Like with Kat.

NATE

That wasn't a real thing.

JASON

You ghosted her after three months.  
That counts. To her, anyway.

NATE

She wanted things I never promised.

JASON

Yeah, like brunch and honesty.  
You're not good at closure, man.

Nate grunts loudly. Lands another brutal hook.

JASON (CONT'D)

Jesus. Did this new girl break your  
brain already?

Nate grabs his water bottle, shrugging like he's not  
unraveling.

NATE

Some woman I met. In the morning.  
And again last night.

(beat)

Boss wants me gone, so add that to  
the pile.

JASON

Ah-ha. And yet here you are,  
sweating out your feelings like a  
man fighting for his life.

NATE

I don't have feelings.

JASON

Buddy, denial isn't cardio.

Nate wipes his face with a towel.

JASON (CONT'D)

Alright, hit me with the deets.  
How'd you meet?

NATE

Elevator. She was rude. Then I saw  
her again. She was... still rude.

JASON

Two appearances. Same day. That's  
fate, man.

NATE

She was on a date.



JASON  
Ohhhhhhhh shit. You crashed her date?!

NATE  
I didn't crash. I sat.

JASON  
And let me guess – acted cool, said something clever, drove her nuts?

NATE  
Pretty much.

JASON  
So... you like her?

NATE  
I do not.

JASON  
Smarter than you?

NATE  
Thinks she is.

JASON  
She sounds smarter than you.

NATE  
And she's completely, 1000% uninterested.

JASON  
Oh, so you love her already.

NATE  
(pause, choking on water)  
What?! No!

JASON  
Dude. You never care this much when someone doesn't care.

NATE  
I just don't want her to be right about me.

JASON  
So... prove her wrong. And that bothers the shit out of you. Why don't you just move onto the next one, like you always do? Last week it was Lexi, the week before–

NATE

It's different this time. If I walk away, I'm exactly who she thinks I am.

JASON

So she is right about you.

Nate throws the towel at him.

JASON (CONT'D)

You realize this is basically a rom-com confession, right?

NATE

And what about you and Maya?

Jason shrugs.

JASON

She says I need to commit. I'm not sure it's the right time.

NATE

C'mon man, she's the one making the mistake, not you.

JASON

Uh-huh. And maybe you're projecting.

Nate smirks.

INT. BOOKSTORE - AFTERNOON

A warm, inviting space – soft jazz hums beneath the chatter. Exposed brick, vintage bulbs, and the faint smell of cedar and espresso.

Olivia moves through the shelves like a general surveying her territory—calm, precise, alone by choice. This is her safe place. A sanctuary. Until she hears...

NATE (O.S.)

Didn't peg you for the paperback type.

She closes her eyes. Inhales. Regrets existing.

OLIVIA

(sotto)

You have got to be kidding me.

She slowly turns. He's there. Of course.

Nate, effortlessly smug in a leather jacket, holding a coffee, leaning casually against a nearby shelf, grinning, looking obnoxiously good for no reason.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
You're following me?

NATE  
You wish. You just have excellent  
taste in...ambiance.  
(sotto)  
...and company.

OLIVIA  
This is exactly how I wanted to  
spend my Saturday. Stalked by  
sarcasm.

NATE  
You drop something?

OLIVIA  
(glancing down)  
My guard?

NATE  
(smiling)  
Maybe. Or maybe you left it behind  
on purpose.  
(beat)  
I know this is forward, but... you  
looked like you were having a worse  
day than me. Thought maybe you'd  
appreciate a distraction.

He steps closer, casually scanning the titles near her. He plucks one off the shelf.

NATE (CONT'D)  
"The Psychology of Emotional  
Avoidance."  
(beat)  
I feel like this is a cry for help.

She snatches the book from his hand.

OLIVIA  
This is me minding my own business.  
You're crowding it. Also—how did  
you even find me?

NATE

Relax. Not fate or the stars aligning. It's just... aggressively convenient coincidence.

OLIVIA

Statistically inevitable in a city of eight million. Keep walking.

NATE

Uh-huh. And yet, every time we cross paths, you look a little more rattled.

OLIVIA

I am not rattled.

NATE

You literally just said "statistically." That's a red-alert word.

OLIVIA

Okay, well, now that statistics have run their course, feel free to leave.

Nate casually plucks a book off the shelf.

NATE

Oh, this one's a classic.

OLIVIA

You don't even know what it is.

Nate flips the book over, reads the title.

NATE

"Healing After Divorce."

(beat)

Okay, I walked right into that one.

A laugh slips from Olivia – unexpected. Real. She shuts it down quick.

OLIVIA

Right. Well. This epic twist of fate has officially wasted both our afternoons.

She turns, heads for the register. Nate follows.

NATE

So what now? Grocery shopping?  
Power walk through Central Park?  
How about we get a cup of coffee  
together?

OLIVIA

Nope. Going home. Erasing this  
moment.

NATE

You know, denial's not just a  
river.

She ignores him.

NATE (CONT'D)

Okay. Fine. You win. I'll go.

She eyes him, skeptical.

OLIVIA

That easily?

NATE

I'm a man of my word. I'll even let  
you walk out first. You walk out, I  
wait exactly two minutes. No  
stalking, no statistically  
inevitable run-ins.

A long beat. Olivia studies him.

OLIVIA

...Fine.

NATE

Look—I'm not trying to bulldoze  
your boundaries. I just... think  
you're smart. Cool. And maybe a  
little lonely. Like me.

She pays at the register, heads for the exit.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - CONTINUOUS

Olivia steps into the sunlight—victorious. Free.

BAM — she walks straight into a delivery guy pushing a tower  
of stacked pastry boxes and coffees.

They crash like Jenga. Coffee explodes. A croissant hits her  
in the eye.

DELIVERY GUY

My muffins!

OLIVIA

Oh my God. Are you—? I'm—oh my God.

Inside, Nate watching through the glass. He doubles over, laughing.

She spins to glare — furious, soaked.

Then: Nate walks out. Doesn't see the flower stand.

CRASH. Full-on tumble into tulips and sunflowers.

FLOWER SELLER

Hey! Watch it!

Nate stumbles upright, red-faced.

NATE

I'm so, so sorry. Let me—

He tries to pick up the flowers. Then, out of nowhere, a TODDLER waddles over, grabs his leg like it's home.

TODDLER

You're my daddy now.

Olivia freezes, mouth open.

NATE

What?! I— No. No—I'm not!

Olivia hides her face, mortified.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT — DAY

Grace, towel on her head, opens the door.

Sees the coffee-drenched war zone that is Olivia.

GRACE

Okay. That's a new look. I know you wanted to try the whole Starbucks menu, but—

Olivia pushes past, dead-eyed. Flops onto the couch.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You want coffee or just a bottle of shame?

No answer.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Okay. Wine it is. It's 5pm  
somewhere.

She disappears into the kitchen.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
So what happened? You look like you  
lost a bet with the universe.

OLIVIA  
He saw everything.

Grace reappears, bottle in hand. She sits next to Olivia.

GRACE  
Define "everything."

OLIVIA  
He laughed. At me. I'm a  
professional. I do mergers. I  
don't... fall for men like him.

GRACE  
Nathaniel?

Olivia groans.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Girl, what kind of man lets you  
walk around looking like a mocha  
tragedy?

She gestures at the stain. Tries not to laugh.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
But... I'm getting a sense that you  
don't care about your what's going  
to be a hefty dry cleaning bill.  
What's the real trauma?

OLIVIA  
Every time I turn around, there he  
is, being—  
(vague wave)  
—annoying.

GRACE  
Mmmhmm. Annoying. That what we're  
calling sexy now?

OLIVIA  
That's not the worst of it.

She covers her face with her hands again.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
(muffled)  
A child called him Daddy.

Grace raises an eyebrow, her hair towel now lopsided.

GRACE  
(slowly)  
I'm sorry. What?!

OLIVIA  
He fell into a flower stand. And  
this child just... latched onto  
him.

GRACE  
And declared, with all the  
conviction of a Hallmark card—  
(dramatic toddler voice)  
"You're my daddy now."

Grace bursts into laughter. Olivia drops her face into her hands.

OLIVIA  
I want to move countries.

GRACE  
Girl, you've got feelings. Real  
ones. I haven't seen that look on  
you since Kat stole your client.

She grabs her phone, giggling.

OLIVIA  
What are you doing?

GRACE  
I need the group chat to know this.  
It's urgent.

OLIVIA  
Grace, I swear—

GRACE  
Too late. I've let all our friends  
know there's a new man on your  
radar. That you're secretly in love  
but in deep denial.  
(MORE)



GRACE (CONT'D)  
That fate keeps tossing him at you,  
and you keep pretending it's  
random.

She darts across the room, Olivia lunging after her.

GRACE (TEXTING) (CONT'D)  
"Another Update: toddler crowned  
Nathaniel 'Daddy.' Liv is  
spiraling. We drink at eight."

Olivia groans, defeated.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Bad idea's got you good.

Olivia, flat on the couch, stares at the ceiling.

OLIVIA  
I hate the world.

Grace toasts with her wine.

GRACE  
To bad ideas.

OLIVIA  
And dry cleaning bills.

INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Olivia sits alone on her couch, soft light from a lamp  
casting warm shadows around her. She holds her phone in one  
hand, headphones in, voice memos app open.

She takes a deep breath and taps "Record."

OLIVIA  
Ten reasons why I might be a bad  
idea for Nate...

She speaks slowly, her voice calm but layered with a hint of  
vulnerability.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
I protect myself too fiercely. I'm  
terrified of losing control. I  
expect perfection - from him, from  
me. I'm not great at saying what I  
want... until I'm too far gone. I'm  
stubborn. Hard to break through. I  
carry the weight of my past like  
armor. I'm too quick to judge.  
(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I can't help but plan every step...  
even when I should just let go. I  
push people away when I need them  
most. And maybe... maybe I'm scared  
to let anyone see the parts I'm  
still figuring out.

She stops. A long beat. She exhales softly, then taps "Stop."

Olivia looks down at the phone, a small, conflicted smile  
crossing her lips. Then she locks the screen and sets the  
phone aside.

The room falls quiet, but Olivia's expression holds a quiet  
strength – a subtle acceptance that she's as complicated a  
"bad idea" as Nate claims to be.

INT. JASON'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jason drops a plate of leftovers in front of Nate, who looks  
distracted.

JASON

How'd that consulting thing go?

NATE

I'm just... trying to figure out  
why I can't stop thinking about  
her.

JASON

So you asked Mr. B to bring you in  
– for what? Proximity espionage?

NATE

(small shrug)

Maybe I needed an excuse to stay in  
her orbit. Somewhere between  
pathetic and persistent.

JASON

Persistent isn't bad. Unless you  
forget why you left the orbit in  
the first place.

Nate doesn't respond.

NT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

Midway through a lively salsa class. Olivia spins with  
mechanical grace. She smiles, laughs on cue – all surface.

Instructor claps. Everyone cheers.

CLASSMATE (O.S.)  
You always look like you're having  
the best time.

OLIVIA  
(rehearsed)  
Fake it 'til it sticks.

She smiles – but as the music swells again, she steps away.  
Into the bathroom. Alone, she stares at herself in the  
mirror. No music. No smile.

INT. NATE'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

Late. Dimly lit. Nate sits on the couch, hair damp, laptop  
open, a folder of résumés next to him.

He's Googling: \*\*"How to not mess up a second chance."\*\*

Pause. He exhales, closes the laptop. Stares at the ceiling.  
Then opens his Notes app and sees old note:

\*\*"10 Reasons I'm a Bad Idea"\*\* (beat) \*\*1. I don't know how  
to be still.\*\* \*\*2. I can't tell the difference between  
attention and connection.\*\* \*\*3. I use charm like  
camouflage.\*\* (he hesitates) \*\*4. ...I want to be better. I  
just don't know if I know how.\*\*

He stares at the last line. Deletes note. Starts a new list:

1. Doesn't do exclusivity. At all.
2. Emotionally unavailable. Chronically.
3. Will hurt people who fall in love with him - Guaranteed.
4. Very complicated
5. Disposable
6. Loves messing with the people he likes.
7. Still loyal to ghosts.
8. Turns into an asshole around women who intimidate him.
9. Women think that Nate is going to hurt them.
10. Will make you believe you're safe...then disappear.

He then tosses the phone aside and flops back on the couch. After a beat, he grabs a throw pillow and hugs it to his chest like he's bracing for something. Or someone. He stares into the dark. Silent. Still.

INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Olivia sits at her desk, hyper-focused, fully in work mode. Flawless. Efficient. Controlled. She types at warp speed, deep in the zone. A machine.

SLIDE. A file appears in her peripheral vision. Grace.

GRACE (O.S.)

Read it.

OLIVIA

What's this?

GRACE

An unsolicited but deeply necessary investigative report. On Elevator Boy.

OLIVIA

Please tell me you didn't-

GRACE

Relax. I didn't run a full background check. I just Googled him... hard.

(beat)

LinkedIn, Facebook, one weird Reddit thread, and his high school tennis stats. You're welcome.

OLIVIA

Jesus, Grace.

GRACE

You can't trust a man that smooth. He probably has a secret podcast or a second family.

OLIVIA

(half-laugh)

Or a life. One that doesn't include us stalking him like teenage girls.

GRACE

Correction - light recon. It's what best friends do for each other.

She leans in, playful but sincere.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Besides. You're clearly spiraling.  
I just want to make sure your heart  
doesn't crash into something  
expensive.

OLIVIA  
Wonderful.

GRACE  
It's so adorable how fate keeps  
throwing you two together.

OLIVIA  
Fate doesn't exist. Probabilities  
do.

GRACE  
And what are the odds of a random  
child calling him "Daddy"?

A flash of horror crosses Olivia's face.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Exactly.

Olivia pivots back to her screen, desperate to change the  
subject.

OLIVIA  
I have a meeting with Beringer in  
ten minutes. Did the final proposal  
come in?

GRACE  
Yep, just emailed it. Also – heads  
up – James Street is technically a  
trial run. If it tanks, Beringer  
might freeze Monroe. And he's  
bringing in some outside consultant  
to the meeting.

OLIVIA  
That's fine. Who is it?

Grace checks her notes.

GRACE  
Uh... Nathaniel Williams.

Olivia sips her coffee – and promptly chokes.

OLIVIA  
You have got to be kidding me!

INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Olivia paces in front of the mirror, unraveling. Grace trails her, trying to steady the storm.

GRACE  
So now he's your work coworker?!

OLIVIA  
He's an outside consultant.

GRACE  
Same plot. Different title.

OLIVIA  
This is a professional nightmare.

GRACE  
No. This is a gift from the drama gods.

Olivia grips the sink, breathing hard.

OLIVIA  
Okay. No big deal. Just need to survive one meeting without—

GRACE  
—letting him burrow into your brain like a sexy parasite?

OLIVIA  
I hate you.

GRACE  
That's why you need my help.

Olivia pinches the bridge of her nose.

OLIVIA  
I just need one thing from you.

GRACE  
A pep talk? Bail money? A hug?

OLIVIA  
A murder alibi.

Grace howls with laughter. Olivia groans.

GRACE

You've got this. You're steel in heels.

(beat)

And Nate? Just a distraction with perfect bone structure.

Annoyance flickers across Olivia's face—sudden, sharp.

OLIVIA

That wasn't helpful.

GRACE

Oh, I wasn't trying to help.

OLIVIA

Goodbye, Grace.

She walks out.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I've got this.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

Glass walls. Power vibes. A sleek room where important people make important decisions.

Olivia stands just outside the glass doors, taking one last deep breath.

OLIVIA

Just a meeting. Just a man. Just... breathe.

She straightens her blazer, squares her shoulders.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

You are calm. You are composed. You are—

She pushes open the door. Steps inside. And then—

She sees Nate sitting at the table, sprawled in a chair, smirk ready. Living his best chaos.

NATE

Morning sweetie.

OLIVIA

Oh. Shit.

Outside, Grace peers into the room, watching through the glass. Slowly lifts her phone. Casually texts.

ON PHONE: "CODE RED. SHE IS SHORT-CIRCUITING. I REPEAT, SHE IS SHORT-CIRCUITING."

Back inside, Olivia tries to form words.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Hhh—

NATE

Everything alright? You look...  
thrilled to see me.

OLIVIA

(high-pitched)

Nope! Totally fine! Normal! Love  
work!

(beat)

Let's business!

Beringer enters behind her.

BERINGER

Olivia. I assume officially you've  
met Nathaniel?

She slowly turns. Face locked in "I am fine" mode.

OLIVIA

We've... crossed paths.

NATE

That's one way to put it.

Olivia forces a professional smile. Nate leans in, casual,  
charming.

NATE (CONT'D)

By the way. How's our kid doing?

CLATTER. Olivia drops her pen. Face: horror. Nate's: smug  
delight.

Beringer's eyes flick between them. Just a flicker — enough  
to register something off.

BERINGER

(beat, then measured)

We're spinning off part of Monroe's  
campaign to test our team  
alignment.

(MORE)



BERINGER (CONT'D)

You want back on the main pitch?  
Prove it. James Street is your  
shot.

NATE

So it's a play-in game?

BERINGER

It's your last one. And let's be  
clear--this isn't just about numbers  
or market share. If we don't win  
this pitch, we're looking at cuts.  
Serious ones.

He lands the look on Olivia and Nate again, heavier this  
time.

BERINGER (CONT'D)

This deal will decide the future of  
Monroe and this entire team. That  
includes you two.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Through the glass walls, Kat lingers watching Olivia and Nate  
pack up. Her smile is subtle -- too subtle. As Olivia exits,  
Kat intercepts with a low-voiced aside, warm on the surface,  
pointed underneath:

KAT

Careful, Olivia. Partnerships can  
be... volatile.

Olivia clocks her, uncertain if Kat means business or  
personal. Kat just smiles, breezes past. Nate steps out a  
beat later, catching only the tail end.

NATE

What was that?

OLIVIA

(snarling, covering)  
Nothing.

She stalks off. Nate watches her go, then glances back at  
Kat. She's already chatting up an exec down the hall, like  
nothing happened.

INT. HIGH-TECH VIRTUAL REALITY SPACE - MOMENTS LATER

The scene unfolds in a sleek, digital expanse – a luminous, boundless conference room with floating translucent screens and holographic charts spinning slowly around the participants.

EXECUTIVES sit as avatars: some humanoid, others stylized with subtle glitches or flickers hinting at their carefully curated online personas. Beringer's avatar looms sharp and commanding, eyes like data streams scanning the room.

Olivia's avatar sits upright, perfect posture with an almost ethereal glow – calm, focused, every movement precise and deliberate.

Across from her, Nate leans back with casual ease, arms folded. His avatar wears a slight smirk, pixelated just enough to suggest a hidden edge beneath the charm.

BERINGER  
(voice echoing slightly,  
synthetic)  
Olivia, why don't you walk us  
through the latest projections?

Olivia's avatar stands smoothly, triggering a cascade of virtual slides that float mid-air. Her gestures command the data as charts and numbers bloom and shift dynamically.

OLIVIA  
Of course.

A digital click sounds as she advances the slide.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
As projected, we're tracking a 15%  
increase in quarterly growth...

Nate's avatar tilts its head with a slow, deliberate motion, eyes locked on Olivia's glowing figure. She senses it, doesn't acknowledge, and continues seamlessly.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
...and integrating the next phase  
of this strategy could elevate ROI  
by end of quarter.

She clicks again – a new slide sparkles into view, polished and sharp.

Around the room, avatars nod with digital affirmations, their faces masks of approval, but subtle glitches flicker—tiny betrayals of underlying tension.

Nate exhales through his avatar – a breath that causes a ripple effect across his digital form. He knows this isn't about him, yet something inside stirs.

A soft TAP TAP TAP echoes in the virtual space. Nate pulls out a digital notepad – its translucent pages shimmering as he scribbles fast, then tears one free and slides it across the virtual table.

Olivia's avatar hesitates but can't resist looking.

ON THE NOTE (floating, glowing):

"Still thinking about our kid?"

Olivia makes a small, breathy sound – caught off-guard. Beringer's avatar flickers, glances up with an unblinking gaze.

BERINGER  
Something wrong?

OLIVIA  
Nope! Totally fine!

She steadies her avatar's stance and clicks to the next slide.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Now, regarding next steps–

Nate quickly scribbles another note and sends it sliding over.

Olivia resists longer this time, but then gives in.

ON THE NOTE:

"I'm open to joint custody."

Her avatar's cheeks glow faintly red – jaw clenched in pixel-perfect frustration. She snatches the note and crushes it in her virtual hand.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
(syrupy sweet)  
Nathaniel.

NATE  
Yes?

Silence. Executives remain unaware, avatars frozen in polite attention. Another note flies over with a quiet whirr.

ON THE NOTE:

"Or do you want full custody?"

Olivia slams her virtual hand on the digital table.

The room freezes – silence thick enough to glitch the system.

BERINGER  
...Something you'd like to add,  
Olivia?

Olivia forces a smile, small and tight.

OLIVIA  
Sorry. Just... very passionate  
about these Q2 numbers.

Nate bites his lip, avatar's smirk threatening to break.  
Olivia exhales, slumps back in her seat.

BERINGER  
Nathaniel, anything to add?

NATE  
Olivia's projections are rock  
solid. But I can't help but feel  
that we'd move faster by working  
together. Join forces... if you  
know what I mean?

His eyes lock on Olivia's avatar, lingering. A long, digital  
pause.

Olivia shoots him daggers, avatar's glare sharp enough to  
cause a flicker.

BERINGER  
Good idea. Olivia, send Nathaniel  
your data. Kat Monroe's team is  
already circling like vultures – we  
need to get ahead of them.

OLIVIA  
I—  
(beat)  
Of course.

She glares at Nate, who winks with a slow, pixelated grin.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Olivia storms in, pacing aggressively. One hand clutching a coffee, the other dramatically gesturing at nothing. Fury in her bones.

Grace leans against the counter, sipping a latte. She casually lifts her phone. Hits record.

OLIVIA

No. Nope. This is a hallucination.  
This is a stress-induced fever  
dream. This is not happening.

GRACE

Uh-huh.

OLIVIA

He passed me notes. At a corporate  
meeting.

GRACE

Scandalous.

OLIVIA

Do you know what the note said?  
(beat)  
"I'm open to joint custody."

Grace freezes. Blinks.

GRACE

I'm sorry... what?

OLIVIA

Joint. Custody. Of the imaginary  
child from the flower stand  
disaster.

Grace starts laughing - hard.

GRACE

So I can just book the wedding?  
Save the date? You're apparently  
already co-parenting.

OLIVIA

This isn't funny.

GRACE

It's the funniest thing that's ever  
happened in this office. And this  
place has printer jam meltdowns.

OLIVIA

He is a menace. And now... we're project partners.

GRACE

Professional soulmates. Love that.

OLIVIA

There's a reception tonight. We're supposed to show a "unified front."

GRACE

You sure it's not a rehearsal dinner?

A pencil flies. Grace ducks, cackling as she flees.

GRACE (CONT'D)

(gleeful)

Texting the group chat! You're officially the lead story!

OLIVIA

Stop distracting me. He humiliated me. Right in front of Beringer. In front of everyone.

GRACE

You covered it. Nailed the meeting.

OLIVIA

That's not the point.

She paces. Breath tight. Words sharp.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

He's charming until it costs me something. And then what?

(beat)

What if I land this pitch – and they think he's the one who made it work?

GRACE

Then we remind them who really did.

OLIVIA

I don't want to remind anyone. I want a win that's all mine.

(beat)

I want to stop being the girl who lets chaos walk in the door... because it's wearing cologne and good intentions.

She doesn't cry. She hardens.

GRACE  
You still want the pitch?

OLIVIA  
More than anything.

GRACE  
Then don't let him be the reason  
you lose it.

SLAM. The door closes. Olivia exhales.

OLIVIA  
This is my villain origin story.

INT. BOTANICAL GREENHOUSE CAFÉ - LATE AFTERNOON

Sunlight filters through glass panes, casting dappled light on hanging ferns and flowering vines. The air hums softly with the quiet drip of water and the rustle of leaves. Olivia sits at a corner table, laptop open, headphones in. The glow from her screen reflects off her face – focused, stressed, tired.

Grace slides into the seat across from her, carrying two steaming cups of herbal tea.

GRACE  
Don't forget – Beringer wants you  
at the client gala Thursday night.  
Big optics play. Full Monroe team,  
high-end donor types, legacy press.  
Wear something you can actually  
breathe in.

OLIVIA  
Great. Nothing says fun like  
corporate mingling in heels.

GRACE  
Daniel's going. Which means Nate  
will probably find a way to  
"accidentally" show up too.

OLIVIA  
Then I'll accidentally fall into a  
champagne fountain and disappear  
forever.

GRACE  
That's your "I've-hit-a-wall" face.

OLIVIA  
(nods, sighs)  
This account... could change everything. If I land it, I'm done with this crap. No more babysitting other people's clients.

GRACE  
Your own agency?

OLIVIA  
That's the plan. Just me, a name on the door, and zero coworkers trying to "joint custody" me in the middle of a damn meeting.

Grace laughs, then softens.

GRACE  
Nate on your mind again?

OLIVIA  
He's noise. But... effective noise.

Grace leans in.

GRACE  
Listen. I've known you since the "slogan queen" days. If you want this pitch to land, don't let him take up space in your head. You built this shot. Take it.

OLIVIA  
(beat, then smiles faintly)  
You always know when to coach and when to shove.

GRACE  
Shove's coming next. Finish the deck, close Petra & Co, build the damn agency. And then – maybe – circle back for the pretty idiot.

Olivia nods slowly. She straightens her shoulders. The screen glows brighter as she dives back in.

INSERT – COMPUTER SCREEN

A new slide loads: "Your Story, Elevated."

She starts typing again. Faster this time.



INT. CLIENT CONFERENCE ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Nate stands at the head of a glossy table. ANDERSON EXECS sit waiting. One checks his watch.

Nate clicks to the first slide - a placeholder title:  
"STRATEGY OPTIONS." Generic. Cold.

Silence.

NATE  
(half-trying)  
We're, uh... excited about helping  
your brand realign with its core  
story. The... human element.

He glances at the screen. Then - unconsciously - toward the door.

FLASH MEMORY - OLIVIA

In the elevator, smirking. That stained blouse. The toddler calling him Daddy.

Back to Nate - flustered.

NATE  
Sorry. What I mean is, you've got  
reach. And loyalty. It's about  
deepening that connection. Like...  
long-term dating, but for  
customers.

The room blinks at him. One exec frowns.

ANDERSON EXEC  
We're an enterprise cloud firm.

Beat.

NATE  
Exactly. Intimacy, but... digital.

Dead silence. Nate swallows. He's not charming. Not confident. Just drifting.

His phone buzzes. A name flashes: \*\*Angel.\*\*

He doesn't pick up. He exhales, rubs his jaw, and fumbles to the next slide.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Let's just skip ahead. Slide  
seven's got some numbers.

INT. BERINGER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Nate stands stiffly across from Mr. Beringer.

BERINGER  
You blew the Anderson pitch.

NATE  
Because it was boring.

BERINGER  
Because you didn't prep.

Beat.

NATE  
(softly)  
Sorry, I was distracted. I'll fix  
it.

BERINGER  
Start by not chasing Olivia during  
work hours. Consultants are good,  
until they're not.

INT. HIGH-END HOTEL LOUNGE - NIGHT

A jazz trio croons softly in the corner. The lighting is low,  
golden. Everything here whispers wealth and secrets.

At the bar, Olivia sits in a fitted black dress - sharp  
lines, sharp eyes - swirling a Cosmopolitan like she owns the  
night.

NATE (O.S.)  
Gotta say, I prefer this look to  
your boardroom armor.

Olivia closes her eyes and turns slowly. Nate, suit sharp,  
grin sharper, leans on the bar like he's in no rush to leave.

OLIVIA  
Why are you here?

NATE  
You tell me.

OLIVIA  
I'm working.

NATE  
Same.

OLIVIA  
No. I'm working. You're loitering  
with intention.

NATE  
Can't it be both?

OLIVIA  
I swear to God, if this is another  
"fate" moment—

NATE  
Relax. I'm not here for you. Just  
meeting a contact.

The BARTENDER slides him a drink. Olivia sips her drink,  
unfazed — until:

NATE (CONT'D)  
So... how's our custody battle  
going?

She chokes. Coughs. Slams her glass down.

The bartender stares, deeply concerned. Nate grins.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Calm down, Mom. I'm just checking  
in.

He leans closer. Just enough to rattle her.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Tell me to leave.

Olivia's breathing slows, fingers tightening around her  
glass.

OLIVIA  
You always do this.

NATE  
Do what?

OLIVIA  
This thing — where you show up,  
spin some clever line, then pretend  
it means nothing.  
(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
You're not here for a contact.  
You're here to rattle me.

NATE  
Is it working?

OLIVIA  
God, you're exhausting. Same shit  
over and over.

Beat. She turns to face him fully now. Voice lower. Sharper.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
You think flirting is the same  
thing as feeling. It's not. It's  
noise. It's safe. And you're  
addicted to it because any real  
connection or vulnerability scares  
the hell out of you!

Nate goes still.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
You say you're a bad idea like it's  
a warning. But it's a lame excuse.  
And I'm not interested in being  
someone's excuse.

NATE  
...Wow.

OLIVIA  
Tell me to leave? No. You tell me  
why you keep showing up if you're  
not willing to actually be here.

NATE  
(quietly, almost to  
himself)  
I want to—

A VOICE (O.S.)  
Nate Williams, you beautiful  
bastard!

Olivia startles. Nate tenses — moment broken.

JAMES STREET (40s) swaggers in like he owns the floor — loud, smug, and absolutely swimming in self-importance. Custom-tailored suit clings like it's trying to quit. Confidence turned up to eleven. Jeff Bezos meets cocktail hour charisma.

He throws open his arms like he's greeting a long-lost brother.

JAMES STREET  
You old fox.

They hug then shake hands.

NATE  
James. Still overselling  
everything?

JAMES  
Business is booming. That tip you  
gave me? Gold.

NATE  
Told you it was worth it.

JAMES  
You're with Beringer now, yeah?

NATE  
Temporarily. Olivia too.

He nods toward her. Olivia offers a tight, polite smile.

JAMES  
Ah yes – pulling the rug out from  
under Kat Monroe.  
(nods approvingly)  
Impressive stuff.

NATE  
Still finalizing the approach.

OLIVIA  
I'm finalizing it. I'm the one  
keeping it alive.

JAMES  
Well if it's anything like you and  
your partner here pulled off last  
quarter, I'd say it's a done deal.

Olivia stiffens.

OLIVIA  
Partner?

JAMES  
Hmm, yes. You two are quite the  
team. I keep telling my people that  
business thrives when there's  
trust. You can see it between you  
two – the rhythm. The bond.

She opens her mouth to correct him—

NATE  
Absolutely. Olivia and I.  
Unshakeable. Partners.

He holds her gaze, daring her to contradict him.

JAMES  
Well, if that's the case, I'd love  
to bring you both in on something  
big. An exclusive project. But only  
if you two come as a package deal.

A beat. Olivia's expression falters — one second of  
disbelief.

OLIVIA  
Of course.  
(through gritted teeth)  
We're... a strong team.

JAMES  
That's what I like to hear.

He pulls out two business cards and passes one each to Olivia  
and Nate.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Let's connect soon.

He vanishes into the crowd. Olivia doesn't move for a full  
second. Then grabs Nate by the lapel and yanks him off his  
stool.

INT. HIGH-END HOTEL - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Olivia rounds on Nate, checking that no one's listening. Fire  
in her eyes.

OLIVIA  
What the hell was that?

NATE  
It's called a win.

OLIVIA  
You're one screw-up away from being  
escorted out of my company and you  
know it.

NATE  
And yet, I just handed your company  
a multi-million-dollar deal on a  
silver platter.

Olivia fumes. But she can't argue with that.

NATE (CONT'D)  
It's just business.

OLIVIA  
You're impossible.

NATE  
It's part of the brand.

OLIVIA  
Then just stay the hell out of my  
way.

She turns to leave.

NATE  
Can't.

She stops.

NATE (CONT'D)  
We're a package deal, remember?

She glares. He smiles.

She walks. And behind her, the grin fades. For once, Nate  
looks... tired. Human. Alone.

INT. WINE BAR - NIGHT

Grace and Olivia sit across from each other, mostly quiet.  
Two half-drunk glasses.

GRACE  
You ever get tired of always being  
the friend who listens?

OLIVIA  
Is that a trick question?

GRACE  
I think I'm in love with someone  
who doesn't love me back.

OLIVIA  
(surprised)  
What? Who?

GRACE  
Doesn't matter. Just... can we not  
talk about me like I'm a sidekick  
for once?

A beat. Olivia's mask slips – the way she sees Grace shifts.

OLIVIA  
Deal. But you don't get to  
disappear after dropping that bomb.

GRACE  
Fair. I'll stay until the check.

INT. GYM – BOXING RING – NIGHT

The gym hums with fluorescent lights and the rhythmic thud of  
gloves hitting flesh.

In the ring, Nate is in a mid-sparring session, gloved up,  
focused. Landing sharp, controlled punches against his  
OPPONENT.

Outside the ropes, Jason leans lazily against the corner  
post, phone in hand, scrolling.

JASON  
So...joint custody means shared  
meeting schedules now?

THWACK. Nate's next punch goes wide. He exhales. Drops his  
guard.

NATE  
Okay. So?

JASON  
So why take the job with her? To  
mess with her? Or prove something?

Nate rips off his gloves. Steps through the ropes.

NATE  
I don't know. Something about  
her...  
(beat)  
I open my mouth and turn into a  
complete asshole.



Jason raises a brow.

JASON

That's reason number eight, right?  
"Turns into an asshole around women  
who intimidate him."

NATE

Look at you. Keeping count.

JASON

Then stop adding to the list. You  
want her to believe you're not a  
bad idea?  
(beat)  
Stop acting like one.

Nate stares at the mat. Breathing heavy. No witty comeback.  
No smirk. Just silence.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - OLIVIA'S OFFICE - MORNING

Olivia sits slumped at her desk, yesterday's dress wrinkled,  
makeup smudged just enough to betray the hangover.

Her laptop hums beside her, unopened. Her eyes? Closed.

Grace walks in with the world's largest coffee. Gently sets  
it in front of her like an offering.

GRACE

I see the Bacardi gods smote you  
down where you stood.

Olivia raises her head to see Grace's expectant expression.

OLIVIA

(gravelly)  
We are not doing this now.

GRACE

Oh babe. We are.

Olivia fumbles with her laptop, fails to open it with any  
grace.

OLIVIA

I am here. For. Work.

GRACE

And yet... you're early, wearing  
last night's sins, and radiating  
regret.

She leans in. Sniffs.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Bacardi and coke, huh? A classic.

OLIVIA  
(sips coffee like it's  
medicine)  
Five minutes.

GRACE  
Until?

OLIVIA  
You give up?

GRACE  
Until you really tell me what's  
going on with Nate.

Olivia groans. Opens a drawer. Pulls out a hairbrush.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Oooh. The pre-meeting brush. Who's  
the lucky client?

OLIVIA  
James Street.

GRACE  
And Nate?

Olivia sighs. Nods.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Boom. Dream team strikes again.  
(beat)  
James's secretary called me at 2am.  
Wants to fast-track the deal.

OLIVIA  
Of course he does. Because Nate's  
chaos works.

She sips again. It's not rum. Disappointment.

GRACE  
I'll go set up the conference room.

She backs out, grinning. Olivia doesn't even throw a pencil.  
That's how tired she is.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Olivia, hair now brushed and minty-fresh breath, sits alone. Tapping her fingers. Eyes glued to the door. Waiting.

Nate walks in, unfazed. Heads for the coffee machine.

NATE

Another?

OLIVIA

God, yes.

NATE

Been waiting long?

OLIVIA

I was hoping to avoid you.

NATE

And yet, here we are. Destiny strikes again.

The coffee now pouring from the machine, Nate turns. He watches her - curious, not smug.

NATE (CONT'D)

You know... you do this thing when you're nervous.

OLIVIA

I don't get nervous.

NATE

You do.

OLIVIA

Enlighten me.

He steps closer.

NATE

You tap your fingers.

Olivia glances down. Sure enough, her fingers are tapping. She stops, glares at him.

NATE (CONT'D)

See?

OLIVIA

Congratulations. You've unlocked one fun fact about me.

NATE

Oh, I've got at least ten.

Nate tilts his head. Studies her. Closer this time. Less teasing. More real.

NATE (CONT'D)

What are you so afraid of?

Olivia abruptly turns, connects her laptop. Her projection hits the screen like armor.

OLIVIA

Shall we talk numbers? Now that you're officially too valuable to fire?

When she turns again, Nate is close. Too close. Right in front of her.

NATE

Forget the numbers.

OLIVIA

Excuse me? Don't you think it's about time you tell me something real??

NATE

Sure, for once I will. No games. No power plays. Just... being real with you.

Olivia studies him, guarded. She turns back to the laptop.

OLIVIA

Fine. I'll start to get you going. Here's something real: I think you like pushing my buttons because it makes you feel like you're the one in control, not me.

NATE

Or... maybe I like what happens when I do push them.

A breath catches. Olivia looks down – realizes just how little space is between them. Just how loud her pulse is.

NATE (CONT'D)

My turn?

(soft)

I don't think you hate me.

OLIVIA  
Oh, I absolutely do.

NATE  
Nah. You wish you did.

Their eyes lock – and then–

Nate's gaze flickers down just enough for Olivia to notice. She realizes how close they are now. How her hip is almost brushing his. How her pulse is a little too fast.

A slow inhale. A pause. And then–

The door swings open. James swaggers in.

JAMES  
Perfect, you're both here already.

The spell shatters. Olivia steps back like she's been burned.

NATE  
(quietly, to Olivia)  
That's what I thought.

He returns to the coffee machine like nothing happened as James sits down.

Olivia stares at the screen. But she's not reading it.

NATE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Coffee, James?

JAMES (O.S.)  
Absolutely.

INT. NATE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Nate stands at the kitchen counter, nursing a whiskey.

Jason sprawled on the couch, scrolling on his phone. Nate's phone buzzes.

JASON  
You're really not gonna pick up?  
It's been... what? Four years?

NATE  
Five. And he still only calls once  
a year. One time. Always today.

JASON  
It's his way of trying.

NATE

It's not trying. It's guilt. A voicemail every year doesn't erase twenty years of disappearing when things got hard.

(a beat)

He was the first person who showed me love could vanish overnight. You think I don't know what that did to me?

Jason doesn't respond. Nate takes a long sip of his drink.

NATE (CONT'D)

So no, I don't need to hear him say "Happy Birthday." Not when he's the reason I learned to stop believing people mean it when they say they'll stay.

Jason stares off at the window.

NATE (CONT'D)

So I take it Maya's on another girl's night?

JASON

None of my business.

NATE

You're insane.

JASON

And you're beginning to sound like a stuck record.

NATE

Woah, dude.

JASON

We broke it off.

NATE

She, broke it off, because you let her.

Jason glares. Nate shrugs, drinks.

JASON

It wasn't going anywhere.

NATE  
Because you weren't trying.  
(beat)  
She saw right through you.

JASON  
Like Olivia sees through you?

That lands. Nate sets the glass down.

NATE  
I'm trying.

JASON  
Try harder. You want her? Then show  
her. Not with wit. Not with jokes.  
With something real.

NATE  
Bit rich coming from the guy who  
just got dumped.

JASON  
Exactly why I'm saying it.  
(beat)  
We were never going to work. You  
two might.

Nate runs a hand over his face. His jaw. His life.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Ok. So... when's your next move?

NATE  
Next week. We're flying out to  
finalize the deal.

A glint of amusement in Jason's eye.

JASON  
Oh... that deal. With Kat?

NATE  
I don't want to talk about it.

JASON  
All I can say is... good luck  
surviving that flight.

Jason laughs.

JASON (CONT'D)  
You know what's funny?

NATE

What.

JASON

Out there – at work, galas,  
interviews – you're this polished  
power suit version of yourself.  
Cool, unshakable, kinda scary.

NATE

It's called professionalism.

JASON

Nah. It's armor.

(a beat)

But in here? With me? You're a  
marshmallow. You just don't want to  
get hurt again, so you act like  
you're untouchable.

NATE

(softly)

Maybe I was easier to like when I  
had less to lose.

Nate drains his glass. Doesn't say anything else.

INT. BERINGER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Low light. Empty halls. Beringer flips through files. Nate  
stands across from him – no jokes, no swagger.

BERINGER

We're removing you from the Monroe  
pitch.

NATE

But, I landed James.

BERINGER

Olivia landed it. She's focused.  
You're... not.

Nate stares. For once, says nothing.

BERINGER (CONT'D)

You've got charm. But charm doesn't  
close. It distracts.

(beat)

You're a wildcard. And this isn't  
Vegas.



NATE  
Understood.

BERINGER  
If this goes sideways, it's on you.  
Next step is out the door.

Nate nods. Quietly. Turns to go. Then:

NATE  
You were right.

BERINGER  
About?

NATE  
I've been acting like I don't care  
— because I do care. Too much. And  
I don't know what to do with that.

A beat. Then he leaves. Alone.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Cold. Echoey. Nate leans against his car. Just breathing. He pulls out his phone. Starts to text. Stops. Deletes.

Paces. Replays Beringer's words in his head.

BERINGER (V.O.)  
You've got charm. But charm doesn't  
close. It distracts. And Olivia  
landed it.

Nate exhales — a rough, self-aware sound. He gets in the car. Turns the engine. Doesn't drive. Just stares at the wheel. Hands gripping tight.

A quiet beat.

Then — a flicker of resolve. He shuts the engine off.

INT. CORPORATE LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Nate walks through the dark, empty space. Past security. Past the elevator.

Determined.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - NIGHT

Dim lights. Everyone's gone home. The city glows faintly through floor-to-ceiling windows.

Nate walks the quiet halls with a coffee. He pauses outside Olivia's office. Sees the glow of her computer still on. He steps inside, careful not to touch anything personal.

On her desk: a folder labeled "Final Monroe Pitch - Draft 8". Sticky notes everywhere. Handwritten edits. It's her brain on paper.

He reads. Pauses. Nods, impressed. Then... he sees something. A flaw. A hole in the competitor analysis.

He pulls out his phone. Opens the competitor deck. Cross-checks.

Beat. Then, he opens the master pitch file on her computer. Edits it. Types. Refines. Just enough. Efficient. Quiet.

He leaves no signature, no mark. He closes the folder. Logs out. Straightens the keyboard. Looks around one last time - then walks out. The screen glows behind him.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - NIGHT

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

Olivia at the elevator - scrolling her phone. She looks different: a little less polished, a little sharper. New dress. Fresh highlights. A transformation that's hard to ignore.

The elevator DINGS. Doors slide open. She steps in, presses the button.

As the doors start to close-

NATE (O.S.)  
Hold the door.

Her spine stiffens. Without looking up, she sticks her arm out.

The doors slide back to reveal Nate. Tailored suit. Tie loosened. The space feels like his already.

The doors close. Silence. Charged.

NATE (CONT'D)  
(smirking)  
What are the odds?

Olivia's gaze remains fixed on the doors. He walks over to the control panel, hits the number three.

OLIVIA  
Statistically insignificant.

NATE  
So who's the lucky guy?

She doesn't flinch. But she does blink, smoothing the fabric of her dress.

OLIVIA  
Not your business.

NATE  
It's not Daniel, is it?

Olivia doesn't answer immediately. The air between them thickens.

OLIVIA  
What if it is?

Nate doesn't answer right away. His eyes flicker, a moment of vulnerability—or something else—before he finally speaks.

NATE  
I wouldn't like it.

Olivia exhales, softer now.

OLIVIA  
You want to know why I don't do this? Why I don't... let people in?

Nate waits. For once, no grin.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
I was engaged. Years ago. He said yes to me, then took it back.  
(beat)  
Said I was too much. Too driven.  
Too... everything.

Nate's gaze sharpens.

NATE  
He was an idiot.

OLIVIA  
No. He was honest. I just didn't  
want to hear it.

Nate studies her. For once, no smirk.

NATE  
You think being "too much" scares  
people off.  
(beat)  
Try being the guy whose dad walked  
out, and whose mom pretends he  
never existed. Family's a ghost  
story I stopped telling.

Olivia turns, caught off guard by the crack in his voice.

NATE (CONT'D)  
So yeah. Maybe I run. Maybe I push  
people away. At least I get to do  
the leaving.

A silence. They're both more exposed than they planned. The  
air between them is different now. Charged, but heavier. And  
then-

The elevator JERKS. Lights flicker.

ELEVATOR VOICE  
We apologize for the inconvenience.  
Please remain calm.

NATE  
This is... very much not my fault.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Nate sits calmly on the floor. Olivia paces, brittle.

OLIVIA  
Please do not talk to me.

NATE  
We're in a box together. Kinda hard  
not to.

She glares.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Seriously though, you okay?

She hesitates. Nods, barely.

NATE (CONT'D)  
You want me to shut up?

OLIVIA  
No. I just want the lights back.

A beat. Then she sits, too. She twitches, fingers tightening, one step from absolutely losing it.

NATE  
You're freaking out.

OLIVIA  
I am not.

NATE  
You are absolutely freaking out.

OLIVIA  
I just hate small spaces. And I  
hate being stuck.  
(beat)  
Funny, I didn't panic last time we  
got stuck. Guess I was distracted.

NATE  
Well. That explains a lot.

OLIVIA  
What's that supposed to mean?

NATE  
I mean, you like control. And when  
you don't have it? You spiral.

OLIVIA  
I do not spiral.

She exhales sharply, rubbing her temples. He's too calm. Too comfortable.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Why aren't you freaking out too?

NATE  
Because I like watching you freak  
out.

OLIVIA  
You are infuriating.

NATE  
And you're fun when you're  
flustered.

Their eyes lock for a long second. There's something there. Something charged.

NATE (CONT'D)

But there is a way we can take our minds off all this.

OLIVIA

Oh yeah? What's that?

NATE

We never finished our conversation the other day.

OLIVIA

Oh really? Because I thought we said everything we needed to say.

NATE

You can say whatever you want, Olivia. But the truth?

(beat)

We are real.

Her pulse quickens. She turns, finally meeting his gaze. A sharp inhale.

And then—SNAP—she grabs his tie. Pulls him in. Kisses him, hard.

A beat. Then—

They break apart, gasping for air. Eyes wide.

Olivia's still gripping his tie. Nate's hands are on her waist. Neither moves, neither speaks. It's heavy. Too heavy.

Olivia still grips his tie. Nate's hands on her waist. Processing.

OLIVIA

(whisper)

...Shit.

Nate blinks. Then slowly, his lips curl into a grin.

NATE

I liked that. Can we do it again?.

Olivia shoves him back and takes two very dramatic steps away, but the tension lingers, thick in the air.

OLIVIA

No. Nope. That did not just happen.

NATE  
Oh, it definitely happened.

OLIVIA  
No. It was — situational. A stress response.

NATE  
Right. Because when people are stressed, they usually shove their tongue down my throat.

Olivia spins, slamming both hands against the wall, trying to breathe.

OLIVIA  
Oh my God.

NATE  
Admit it. You liked it.

Olivia turns around so fast it's almost dangerous.

OLIVIA  
I did not like it!

NATE  
So you're just out here panic-kissing people now?

OLIVIA  
Yes. I panic. I lose control. It happens.

Nate smirks, stepping forward with dangerous ease.

NATE  
Wanna panic again?

OLIVIA  
You are unbelievable. We're never talking about this. Ever.

NATE  
Oh, we're absolutely talking about it. Plus, we've got a business deal to close.

OLIVIA  
No. Nope. This gets buried. Deep. So deep it never sees daylight.

NATE  
Yeah. Good luck with that.

The elevator jerks back to life, lights flickering back on.

Olivia straightens her dress, brushes a strand of hair behind her ear. Trying. Trying to look composed.

OLIVIA  
We are professionals.

NATE  
Sure.

OLIVIA  
We can move past this. It meant nothing. And, I'm never getting in an elevator with you again.

NATE  
Right.

DING. The elevator doors slide open.

Olivia marches out like she's just won the world.

Nate watches her, a slow, amused grin creeping across his face. Then, under his breath:

NATE (CONT'D)  
You'll think about our kiss. And you'll wish you didn't.

The doors close behind him.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - OLIVIA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The door bursts open. Olivia storms in like she's trying to outrun the memory of her own lips.

Grace is holding a notepad. She looks up, instantly suspicious.

GRACE  
Um... everything okay?

OLIVIA  
Fine.

GRACE  
Okay... Well, I've got Mr. Street on line one-wants to discuss-

OLIVIA  
I kissed him.



GRACE  
...I'm sorry?

OLIVIA  
In an elevator. Like some  
possessed... hormonal... rom-com  
extra.

She drops into her chair like she's just been shot.

Grace's eyes widen. She sprints to the chair opposite her.

GRACE  
We are unpacking this. All of it.  
In excruciating detail.

Olivia groans, dragging her hands down her face.

OLIVIA  
This is a disaster.

GRACE  
Let's focus on what matters. How  
was it?

OLIVIA  
What?!

GRACE  
Like — heat-of-the-moment hot, or  
my-life-just-changed hot?

OLIVIA  
I am not discussing this.

GRACE  
Yeah, definitely the second one.  
You're completely wrecked.

Olivia groans, dragging her hands down her face like she's  
trying to peel off reality.

OLIVIA  
(weakly)  
...I might be wrecked.

Grace throws her arms up in celebration.

GRACE  
Victory! I knew this day would  
come. Can I plan the wedding?

OLIVIA  
(shrieking)  
This is a crisis!

GRACE  
No. Listen to me. This is fate.

OLIVIA  
It was a moment of weakness.

GRACE  
No. It was a moment of destiny.  
Weakness would've been not kissing  
him.

Olivia lets her head fall back against the chair, staring at the ceiling like it might offer an escape hatch.

INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is dark, the glow of the city framing Olivia at her desk. Everyone's gone.

A nearly-finished version of the Petra & Co deck glows on her screen. The header: "Your Story, Elevated."

Olivia clicks through slides. Her fingers tremble slightly. She closes her eyes, then opens them.

The cursor hovers over "Submit."

Then—her phone buzzes. A new message from Nate: "Still thinking about our kiss?"

She stares at it. Smiles... and then turns the phone face down.

Her gaze hardens. She types. Then hits send. A small breath escapes her.

Grace enters with her bag slung over her shoulder.

GRACE  
Still here?

OLIVIA  
(subdued)  
I sent the deck.

GRACE  
Just in time for him to distract  
you again tomorrow.

OLIVIA  
Not this time.

Grace raises an eyebrow. Olivia just nods to the screen.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
I built this. I'm not about to let  
some charming idiot walk off with  
it.

GRACE  
So... no more distractions?

OLIVIA  
Just one goal.

Grace studies her. Nods.

GRACE  
Damn right.

INT. NATE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nate stands by the window, whiskey in hand, staring out over the city. Lights flicker below. Distant. Cold.

His phone buzzes on the counter.

ON SCREEN:

Text from Olivia: "I submitted the Petra deck. It's strong. Please don't screw this up for me."

He stares at the screen for a long beat. Then turns it over. Behind him, the Petra pitch deck sits open on his laptop.

He scrolls through it slowly - really studying it this time. The language. The rhythm. The care.

He exhales. A quiet beat of regret. Then he opens a new document. Titles it: "Petra Addendum - Notes from NW"

He types. Deletes. Types again. After a moment, he stops. Stares at the screen.

NATE  
(quietly, to himself)  
You want to be better... then act  
like it.

He saves the file. Closes the laptop. Pours out the whiskey. Washes the glass. Sits. Just breathes.

## EXT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Olivia exits a rideshare, cutting through the block on her way home. She slows when she sees Nate across the street. He's outside the children's hospital. Alone. No audience, no swagger. Nate hands a worn envelope to a volunteer nurse – not flashy, just quiet. The nurse thanks him warmly. He shrugs it off, deflecting.

NATE

Just make sure the kids get what  
they need.

The nurse disappears inside. Nate lingers by the entrance, looking through the glass at a cluster of kids laughing around a therapy dog. His face softens.

Then he pulls out his wallet. A creased old photo slips halfway out – a much younger Nate with his mom, hospital bracelet visible on her wrist. He stares at it a beat, thumb brushing the corner.

Olivia watches from across the street, hidden in the shadows. Her expression shifts – surprise, then something deeper. Nate tucks the photo back, exhales. For a fleeting moment, the smirk is gone. He's just a man standing outside a hospital, carrying ghosts, still trying to do some good. Olivia takes a step closer – then stops. She doesn't let him see her.

She turns and walks away, unsettled, carrying the image with her.

Nate never knows she was there.

## INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Nate sits at the bar, blazer off, tie loose, scrolling through his phone. A second whiskey in front of him – untouched. Olivia enters. She spots him instantly. She could leave. She doesn't. She sits. Right beside him, sets her bag down, trying to appear composed.

OLIVIA

One drink. Work talk only.

Nate hides a smile. Signals the bartender.

NATE

Two of whatever she's having.

The bartender nods, pours. Olivia picks up her glass, takes a sip – steady, controlled. For a second, it almost feels normal. Easy.

OLIVIA

Petra's not going to fall for smoke  
and mirrors. We need substance.

NATE

Agreed.

(beat, almost sincere)

That's what I like about you.

She shoots him a look. He shrugs. And then—Kat slides onto  
the stool at Nate's other side. Smiling. All teeth.

KAT

Well. Isn't this cozy.

Olivia freezes. She was the one who chose this moment — and  
now she's trapped in it. Nate straightens, caught between  
them. Olivia sets her drink down with precision, every move  
calculated to mask the sting.

OLIVIA

Enjoy your evening. Both of you.

She stands. Walks out, shoulders square.

Nate watches her go — the victory in Kat's eyes, the loss in  
Olivia's back. Olivia swallows hard, realizing her attempt at  
control just made things worse.

INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

A rare moment alone. Olivia walks in, heels in hand,  
exhaustion sinking in. She tosses her bag, unbuttons her  
blazer — then pauses at a cluttered console table. Framed  
photos.

Her mom. A much younger Olivia in braces holding a debate  
trophy. Another photo — her and her ex, blurry and half-  
cropped. She flips that one down.

She pours herself a drink. Sits. Opens her laptop.

A blinking cursor on a new doc: "Petra Pitch - Personal  
Letter." ON SCREEN: "Why this matters to me..." She stares.  
Thinks. Closes it. Reopens Nate's last message. Scrolls back  
through their thread — banter, barbs, gifs.

OLIVIA (QUIETLY)

You're not supposed to matter.

She deletes the message draft. Then picks up her phone.  
Almost calls. Doesn't. Tosses it across the couch.

A long beat. She pours the rest of her drink. And starts typing again – deletes it again.

INT. OLD-SCHOOL ARCADE LOUNGE – NIGHT

Neon lights flicker and retro arcade machines hum with electronic beeps. The smell of popcorn and vinyl fills the air.

Jason leans against a vintage pinball machine, beer in hand, relaxed but alert. Nate lounges nearby on a worn leather booth seat, eyes drifting around the lively scene – colorful chaos contrasting with his inner tension.

Jason sits beside him, arms crossed, suspicious.

JASON  
You kissed her?

Nate takes a casual sip of beer.

NATE  
She kissed me. Technically.

JASON  
You kissed her dude!

NATE  
Not my fault she lost control. I,  
on the other hand, was entirely  
composed.

Jason squints at him.

JASON  
She's got you twisted buddy. You're  
walking around like you're still  
the player – but she's the one  
playing chess. You're playing  
checkers.

NATE  
I am not–

Jason raises an eyebrow.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Okay. Maybe. A little.

JASON  
You've lost control, man.

NATE  
Yeah, well...  
(beat)  
That makes two of us. Heard from  
Maya?

JASON  
Who?

Nate snorts softly. His phone buzzes. He looks down. His smirk fades. His whole face tightens.

Jason watches him.

NATE  
(into phone)  
What do you want?

Silence on the other end. His posture straightens. His eyes go cold. Something's changed.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Grace sits on her couch, a little wine glass in hand, staring at her phone. The screen shows a text thread with a guy's name - unread messages. She exhales deeply, conflicted.

GRACE  
(soft, to herself)  
Maybe I'm the bad idea this time?

She scrolls through old texts, smiling sadly at a silly joke he sent, then quickly deletes the message. Her phone buzzes again. She ignores it, looks out the window - a mix of hope and fear in her eyes.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
How do you choose when every option  
feels like a risk?

She takes a deep breath, sets the phone down, and picks up a notebook titled: "What if I'm not ready?"

INT. JASON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jason's smile fades. He sits heavily on the couch, looking at his phone.

JASON  
(low, conflicted)  
Yeah... I did. But not with Maya.

Nate pauses, sensing the shift.

NATE  
What happened?

JASON  
I kept covering for you. Missing  
Maya's calls, dodging her texts  
because you needed space. But it's  
not just about you anymore. It's me  
too.

Nate looks uncomfortable but listens.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Last night, she said she can't do  
"in-between" anymore. It's me or  
nothing.

NATE  
(softly)  
That's... a lot.

JASON  
Yeah. And I don't know if loyalty  
means losing what's mine, or  
holding on to what's ours.

Nate reaches out, a rare gesture of support.

NATE  
We'll figure it out bud. Together.

Jason nods but the worry lingers.

INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Olivia sits on her couch, barefoot, wine glass in hand. Her  
laptop glows in front of her — the Petra & Co pitch deck  
minimized in the corner. Instead, a Spotify playlist is up.

She stares at the screen. A beat. Then: Grace appears on  
FaceTime.

GRACE  
So... are we still building an  
empire or did Nate turn you into  
one of those girls who leaves the  
stove on because she's in love?



OLIVIA  
(flashes a look)  
I'm still building. I just...  
paused construction.

GRACE  
(eyebrow raised)  
Girl, you don't "pause" your shot.  
You take it, or someone else does.

OLIVIA  
I know. I'm just — it's been a  
while since I liked someone, like  
this much. I forgot what it feels  
like to want something that doesn't  
check every box.

GRACE  
Then don't forget what it feels  
like to want your own name on the  
door. Remember Petra & Co? You  
pitched that like a woman who  
finally knew what she was worth.

Olivia nods slowly. She looks at the deck again. Her hand  
hovers over the trackpad.

OLIVIA  
You're right.

GRACE  
Always am.  
(beat)  
Now go be the bitch with a building  
named after her.

They hang up. Olivia closes Spotify. Opens the deck again.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - NATE'S OFFICE - LATER

Nate leans against his desk — arms crossed, expression locked  
down tight. Controlled.

Across from him, Kat lounges in a chair like she owns the air  
in the room. One leg elegantly crossed, coffee in hand,  
danger in her eyes.

KAT  
So. You didn't warn her about me.

NATE  
What was I supposed to say?

KAT

Oh, I don't know. Maybe something like, "Hey, Olivia, just a heads-up — my ex is about to waltz into your deal and your life like a wrecking ball in heels."

NATE

You're assuming you still have that power.

Kat smiles, slow and venom-sweet. She leans in, voice low, soft, and sharp like a knife behind silk.

KAT

Oh, Nate. You forget—I don't assume because I know too much.

NATE

Why are you here, Kat?

KAT

Business, obviously.

He stares. Waits. Knows better.

She lets the silence linger, then lets the smile stretch a little wider.

KAT (CONT'D)

Okay. Maybe a touch of pleasure, too. But I heard you've... relocated your affections. New zip code, new muse.

Nate doesn't flinch, but something tightens behind his eyes.

KAT (CONT'D)

Don't bother denying it. I know Beringer's trying to pull the contract out from under me. And now you and your partner are leading the charge?

NATE

Funny. You always did love a good rumor.

KAT

Oh, I don't follow rumors. I start them.

She sips her coffee. Shrugs.

KAT (CONT'D)  
I'll give her this much — she's  
different. Confident. Steel  
underneath the polish.  
(beat)  
You always did like a little  
resistance.

NATE  
Who?

Kat laughs.

KAT  
Oh, come on. Don't play dumb now.  
It doesn't suit you.

He stays silent. Kat leans back, swirling her cup like she's  
bored already.

KAT (CONT'D)  
So... what's the plan, Nathaniel?

NATE  
There is no plan.

KAT  
With her. With me. With this little  
three-act tragedy we're brewing.

NATE  
I'm done with games, Kat.

She stands. Smooths her blouse. Closes the space between them  
in three slow steps.

KAT  
That's adorable.  
(beat)  
But we both know — I invented the  
game. And I'm not just playing,  
Nathaniel. Remember who taught you  
all your best moves.

She taps his chest lightly with her fingers.

KAT (CONT'D)  
Let's be honest... I'm going to get  
this deal.  
(smile)  
And after that? I'm getting you  
back.

NATE  
Hard pass. On both.

She leans in, her voice a breath against his cheek.

KAT  
As soon as she finds out we were a  
thing... she'll run.

NATE  
Don't you—

But she's already at the door, smirking like the match she  
dropped is about to catch fire.

KAT  
Come on. We're late.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Clean lines. Tension so thick you could serve it chilled.

Olivia sits poised, notes aligned in front of her like armor.  
Not a single blink wasted.

Kat lounges across from her, feigning boredom — but her eyes  
are sharp. Calculating.

Nate paces by the coffee machine.

KAT  
So, Olivia. We never had a chance  
to chat before. I think it's time  
we cleared the air — we both want  
the same thing: a fair deal for our  
clients.

Olivia glances up. Perfectly neutral.

OLIVIA  
Which they'll get.  
(beat)  
Through Beringer. And me.

KAT  
Well. You've done your homework.

OLIVIA  
You could say that.  
(sotto)  
In more ways than one.

Kat cocks her head. Studying her.

KAT  
Be honest. What's Nate told you  
about me?

Olivia smooths an invisible crease from her sleeve.

OLIVIA  
Not much.

Kat watches her. Then leans forward, resting her chin on her hand.

KAT  
Huh. That's interesting.

OLIVIA  
Why?

KAT  
Because I know a lot about you.

OLIVIA  
Is that so?

KAT  
Oh, yeah.

THUD. Nate slams his coffee down, glare locked on Kat.

NATE  
Kat.

KAT  
Oh, don't look at me like that. I'm  
just getting to know the  
competition.

A long, cold pause.

KAT (CONT'D)  
God, this is gonna be so much fun!

Then —

Olivia does something that neither Nate nor Kat expects — she smiles a cool, sharp, lethal smile.

OLIVIA  
And here I thought consultants  
stuck to business.  
(beat)  
This feels... recreational.

Kat blinks. Just once. She wasn't ready for that.

Nate chokes slightly on his breath.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Well. If there's nothing else—  
(smoothly rising)  
-I have another meeting.

She gathers her things. Walks toward the door with the ease of someone who knows exactly where she stands. She's gone before either of them can answer.

Kat stares at the closed door. Nate stares at nothing. And the war has officially begun.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nate drops into a chair — casual on the surface, tight underneath. Across from him, Kat swirls her coffee, lips curled like she already won.

NATE  
I figured they'd send a shark.  
Didn't think they'd send you.

KAT  
What can I say? I clean up nice.

NATE  
You always knew how to stage an entrance.

KAT  
And you still think this is about you.

NATE  
I think you don't show up unless there's blood in the water.

KAT  
(chuckles)  
Still dramatic.

She leans in, just enough to feel like a dare.

KAT (CONT'D)  
This isn't personal, Nate.

NATE  
You've never done anything that wasn't.

A flicker of something sharp passes between them. Nate holds her gaze, jaw tight.

KAT  
You're angry. That's new.

NATE  
I'm not angry. I'm awake.

KAT  
Then let's really wake you up.

She smiles – sly, precise. Like she already knows how this ends.

NATE  
This isn't a game, Kat.

KAT  
Oh, baby. Everything's a game.

NATE  
You really think you can just walk back into my life and – what? Pick up where we left off?

KAT  
I think you haven't decided yet if you want to try and stop me.

Nate's jaw tightens – a flicker of something he can't quite bury.

KAT (CONT'D)  
If there's nothing between us anymore...  
(leans in)  
Why do you look like you're barely breathing baby?

Nate doesn't move. Kat smiles. Deliberate. Louder this time, knowing the glass door is cracked.

KAT (CONT'D)  
So it's settled then. You and me.  
Just like old times.

From the hallway – Olivia, approaching with a folder in hand, stops. Freezes. The words land.

Through the glass, she sees Kat touch Nate's arm, sealing the picture.

Olivia blinks once, hard, then walks away before Nate can see her.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - OLIVIA'S OFFICE - LATER

The sound of hallway laughter cuts through the room. Olivia looks up from her screen. Pauses. She rises, crosses to the door. Down the hall: Kat touches Nate's arm. Light. Familiar. Then she looks up—locks eyes with Olivia. Smiles. Slow. Calculated. Olivia blinks once, then steps back and slams the door. Grace walks in just as the tension settles.

GRACE

Okay. That looked... loaded. What'd I miss?

OLIVIA

Kat's not just here to consult. She's here to burn the place down. And she's starting with me. Grace raises an eyebrow, sets the files down.

GRACE

You still think Nate's not part of it?

OLIVIA

I don't know what Nate's part is. But I do know mine.

Grace crosses her arms, testing the waters.

GRACE

So... the kiss wasn't just a glitch in the matrix?

OLIVIA

It wasn't nothing.

GRACE

(Grinning but fidgeting with her bracelet)  
Holy hand grenade, this just got serious. Need me to run the background check for real?

OLIVIA

No. It doesn't matter. Not now... This isn't just some drama between us. Kat's here to take everything I've worked for.

(MORE)



OLIVIA (CONT'D)

If she wins this pitch, it's not  
just pride on the line – it's my  
future.

GRACE

And if you keep pretending you  
don't care about Nate, you're gonna  
lose both – the guy and the pitch.

Olivia freezes, stung. Grace shrugs, unapologetic.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Call me wrong. I dare you.

Grace studies her. Olivia walks back to her desk. Smooth.  
Controlled.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You're actually serious. You're  
going to war?

OLIVIA

Yep. And I'm going to win.

Grace lets out a low whistle.

GRACE

Now that's the Olivia I like.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE – HALLWAY – DAY

Olivia strides down the corridor, focused. Kat falls into  
step beside her, casual, too casual.

KAT

You know, I used to think Nate was  
unshakable. Turns out he's  
predictable.

Olivia doesn't look at her.

OLIVIA

Congratulations on the insight.

Kat leans closer, voice low but deliberate.

KAT

That insight comes from experience.  
Years of it.

Olivia finally looks at her. Sharp.

OLIVIA

Meaning?

Kat smiles. Perfectly timed.

KAT

We weren't just colleagues, Olivia.  
We were everything. And trust me –  
he doesn't change.

Olivia freezes for half a second. Just enough to register the hit. Then she masks it, strides ahead.

Kat lingers, watching her go. Smiling like she just dropped a grenade.

INT. CLIENT BOARDROOM – DAY

Nate strolls in, coffee in hand. Stops. Olivia sits already poised at the table, immaculate. Calm. Too calm.

She looks up. Meets his gaze. Smiles.

OLIVIA

Morning, Nathaniel.

NATE

...Morning.

He waits for the usual sting. Nothing. Just that unnerving smile.

NATE (CONT'D)

You're in a good mood.

OLIVIA

I am.

NATE

Why?

OLIVIA

No reason.

She leans in slightly, voice edged with amusement.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Something wrong, Nathaniel?

Nate studies her. Suspicious. She's up to something – and she knows he knows.

The CLIENT EXECUTIVE (50s, commanding) enters, loading slides.

CLIENT EXECUTIVE  
Our brand has a storied history of  
exclusivity and luxury. We have  
zero interest in "green"  
initiatives that might alienate our  
core customers.

Olivia's eyes flick briefly toward Nate – a deliberate move.  
She sits taller, voice calm but sharp.

CLIENT EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)  
Our customers want prestige and  
status – not politics or activism  
disguised as marketing.

Nate leans forward, confident.

NATE  
We can craft messaging that  
amplifies your heritage while  
respecting the market's values.

Olivia clears her throat, voice measured but firm.

OLIVIA  
With all due respect, future  
consumers care deeply about  
responsibility – environmental and  
social. Ignoring that risks long-  
term relevance.

The client shifts, unconvinced.

CLIENT EXECUTIVE  
We're not interested in risks  
disguised as values.

Olivia leans back – unruffled, but her smile lingers.

OLIVIA  
What if aligning with  
responsibility isn't risk at all?  
(beat, glancing at Nate)  
What if it's the only game worth  
playing?

Nate blinks, realizing she's not just challenging the client  
– she's challenging him.

NATE  
Sometimes business means  
compromise.

OLIVIA  
And sometimes compromise costs us  
everything.

The client clears their throat, signaling impatience.

CLIENT EXECUTIVE  
We want results. Not philosophy  
lessons.

Olivia turns her gaze fully on Nate now, her smile just for him.

OLIVIA  
(softly)  
This isn't just about winning the  
account. It's about standing for  
something - together.

Nate exhales. She's daring him. Pushing him into her frame.

NATE  
Then we make sure what we stand for  
is worth fighting for. On every  
front.

INT. JASON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A cluttered but cozy bachelor pad - sports memorabilia, a lava lamp, and at least three takeout containers. Jason lounges like a man with zero worries. Nate, not so much.

Nate sits on the couch, eyes fixed on nothing. Jason watches him with glee.

JASON  
Okay. I'll bite. What's wrong?

NATE  
Something's off.

JASON  
Define "off."

NATE  
Olivia. She's... different. Calm.

JASON  
And that's bad?

NATE  
Very bad. She's never calm.

JASON  
Let me get this straight. She's not avoiding you?

NATE  
Nope.

JASON  
She's not flustered?

NATE  
Nope.

JASON  
She's smiling at you?

NATE  
Yes. Like she knows something I don't.

JASON  
And instead of being happy about this, you... Well then congrats. You're screwed.

Nate blinks. Realization hits.

NATE  
I'm losing my mind!

JASON  
No. She just flipped the script. And you didn't even see it coming!

INT. UPSCALE HOTEL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Kat sits at the bar, wine glass in hand. Casual. Confident. Coiled.

The bartender resets glasses. Then—

OLIVIA (O.S.)  
I'll take care of her tab.

Kat's brow lifts. She turns — sees Olivia, effortless in a tailored blazer and zero fear.

Olivia takes the barstool beside her.

KAT

Well. This is unexpected.

Olivia smiles and takes a sip of her drink.

OLIVIA

I thought it was time we had a little chat.

KAT

About what?

OLIVIA

Nate.

Kat chuckles, slow and deliberate.

KAT

Ah. So you're ready to admit it.

OLIVIA

I don't need to admit anything.

KAT

Then what is this?

Olivia lifts her drink. Taps it lightly against Kat's glass.

OLIVIA

This is me telling you... I see you. I know you want him.

Kat sets her glass down, eyes narrowing with delight. The game's officially on.

KAT

Oh, sweetheart. You have no idea what you've just started.

OLIVIA

Then I guess we're about to find out.

INT. GRAND CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT

A kaleidoscope of colored lights pulses over a sea of elegantly dressed GUESTS seated around tables draped in crimson and gold. The air is thick with excitement – and the faint scent of sawdust and cotton candy.

Backstage, performers in sequined costumes rush past with juggling pins and hoops. Acrobats stretch and warm up, their muscles taut beneath glittering leotards.

Olivia, radiant in a sleek evening gown, moves through the crowd with practiced grace – a queen reigning over chaos. Nate, sharp in a tuxedo, leans casually near the concession stand, swirling a glass of champagne.

A high-wire artist rehearses above them, footsteps light on the thin wire stretched far above the crowd. The tension is palpable.

OLIVIA

(quiet, to Nate)

This feels more like a show than a gala.

NATE

(grinning)

Isn't that the point? Everyone's watching. Every move matters.

They exchange a look – charged, electric. Suddenly, a performer stumbles backstage, nearly colliding with Nate, juggling pins flying like missiles.

NATE (CONT'D)

Careful! This place isn't just about fancy dresses and champagne. It's survival – and spectacle.

Olivia nods, eyes sharp.

OLIVIA

Just like this pitch. One misstep, and it's all over.

Above, the spotlight follows the high-wire act. The artist pauses, balances – and takes a breath.

NATE

(sincerely)

Ready for your own tightrope?

OLIVIA

(deadpan)

Always.

They clink glasses, the circus roaring to life around them – a perfect backdrop for their dangerous dance.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - NATE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Nate scrolls through emails, half-engaged, nursing his coffee – the picture of morning indifference.

Then-click.

His door swings open without warning. Kat strides in like she owns the place.

NATE  
You know, people usually knock.

KAT  
I don't need to knock.

She leans casually against his desk, arms crossed, confidence weaponized.

NATE  
To what do I owe the pleasure?

KAT  
Had a drink last night. A very interesting one.

NATE  
...With who?

KAT  
Your girl.

NATE  
Olivia?

KAT  
Mhm. She bought me a drink.

Nate lowers his coffee. Eyes narrow.

NATE  
She what?

KAT  
Oh, honey. She sat right next to me, ordered a drink, and let me know – very politely – that she's not going anywhere.

Nate sets the mug down. His brain's already five steps ahead.

KAT (CONT'D)  
You should've seen her, Nate.  
Honestly? It was kind of hot.



NATE  
What exactly did she say?

Kat pushes off his desk, approaching the door, pausing with one hand on the handle. She glances over her shoulder.

KAT  
Ask her yourself. And by the way, you think this is just about us? It's not. I'm here to take that pitch – and your careers – apart. Beringer's made it clear: whoever wins this deal runs the whole account. Lose it, and you both lose your spots. No room for amateurs.

NATE  
So this isn't just personal. It's a power play.

KAT  
Exactly. I'm not here to play games. This deal? It's my lifeline – and your deadline. Screw it up, and it's layoffs, budget cuts, and maybe your next job search.

She smiles.

KAT (CONT'D)  
You want to keep your careers? Then you'll have to do more than survive me. You'll have to beat me.

She slips out.

DING. Nate's phone buzzes.

ON SCREEN: Change of plans. Meet at the Marriott. –JS

Nate stares. A grin creeps across his face.

ON SCREEN: He types: "Marriott NYC contact number."

He dials.

NATE  
(into phone)  
Hi, I'd like to book a room please.  
(beat)  
Yup, tomorrow night.  
(beat)  
Name? James Street.

## JASON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

JASON

You still going to that gala thing?

NATE

Unfortunately, yes. Why?

JASON

I got invited. Some producer dropped out, and my boss threw me the ticket.

NATE

(laughs)

Guess you'll have to put on a tie.

JASON

Yeah. Maya used to say galas were just places people practiced being lonely in a group.

NATE

Sounds like divine wisdom.

JASON

Thought maybe I'd test the theory. See if it still holds.

He smiles.

NATE

I'll save you a glass of something cheap.

They hang up.

## INT. LUXURY HOTEL - NIGHT

The elevator doors open. Nate steps out, suitcase in hand, steps crisp, casual - until he sees her.

Olivia, mid check-in. Calm. Unbothered. Radiating power in black. She turns. No surprise.

OLIVIA

Nathaniel.

NATE

Olivia.

OLIVIA

You got James' message then, about the change of venue. Apparently the last place didn't meet his... standards.

NATE

(laughs lightly)

Sure sounds like James.

The HOTEL CLERK grimaces at Olivia.

HOTEL CLERK

Apologies Miss Martins, there's been a slight mix-up with the rooms. It appears we only have one suite left.

Nate looks at Olivia. She raises an eyebrow. No flinch. No fight.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

A stunning penthouse suite. Floor-to-ceiling windows. City lights glowing. One impossibly large bed.

Nate drops his bag. Watches as Olivia glides to the minibar, opens a bottle of wine like it's strategy.

A slow grin creeps across his face.

NATE

So this is how we're doing this?

Olivia pours herself wine, unbothered.

OLIVIA

Doing what?

NATE

You, pretending you're cool.

OLIVIA

I am cool. Just want this deal with James done. One less thing to worry about.

NATE

You're faking it.

Olivia finally meets his eyes. Calm. Unflinching.

OLIVIA  
Funny. You're the one who keeps  
bringing it up.

Nate studies her. Then—his phone RINGS.

ON SCREEN: KAT CALLING

Olivia lifts her glass without missing a beat.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
You should take that.

NATE  
I don't have to.

OLIVIA  
Not my business.

He watches her. Waiting for the crack. She gives him none. He answers.

NATE  
(smoothly)  
Kat.

Olivia sips her wine, poker-faced. But her grip on the glass tightens.

KAT  
Miss me yet?

NATE  
(to Kat)  
Something like that.

Olivia downs the rest of her glass.

NATE (CONT'D)  
We'll talk later.

He hangs up. Looks at Olivia.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Something wrong?

OLIVIA  
Nope.

She heads for the bedroom.

NATE  
You sure?

She stops. Turns slightly, voice cool.

OLIVIA  
Oh, Nathaniel. You're not that important.

NATE  
You're awfully quiet for someone who doesn't care.

OLIVIA  
I'm tired.

NATE  
Nah. You're thinking about it.

OLIVIA  
Thinking about what?

NATE  
Me. Kat. That call.

OLIVIA  
I couldn't care less.

Nate steps forward, slow and steady.

NATE  
You do care.

OLIVIA  
I really don't.

NATE  
Funny thing is...

Closer now. Close enough she could shove him.

NATE (CONT'D)  
You're a terrible liar.

She turns away – fast. Opens a water bottle like it's a distraction. It isn't.

Nate follows. Calm. Dangerous.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Go on, then. Say it.

Olivia opens the bottle. Takes a sip.

OLIVIA  
Say what?

Nate leans in.

NATE  
Say you don't care.

OLIVIA  
I don't care.

NATE  
Try again.

One more step. No more space.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Come on, Liv. You really expect me  
to believe you're not losing your  
mind?

Olivia scoffs. Turns to walk. Nate grabs her wrist – gentle,  
but unyielding.

She spins, shoves him. Hard. He barely moves.

NATE (CONT'D)  
That all you got?

She shoves again.

OLIVIA  
You're such an asshole.

NATE  
And you're pissed... because you  
want me.

Another shove. Then – She grabs his shirt. And kisses him.  
Hard. Furious.

He groans – hands on her waist – pulling her in like gravity  
wins.

The kiss turns messy. Desperate. Her back hits the wall. He  
lifts her. And for once – they stop pretending.

Somewhere between a moan and a laugh as they stumble, still  
tangled in each other.

Nate's jacket hits the floor. Olivia's heels scatter.

They move through the space blindly – kissing, clawing,  
unpeeling layers. A trail of undone buttons and sharp  
exhales.

She shoves him onto the couch. Climbs onto his lap like she owns him.

He's breathless now. Eyes locked on hers. Daring her to keep going.

She does.

They kiss like it's a fight. Like everything they haven't said is being dragged to the surface – in gasps, in teeth, in fingers gripping too tight.

He lifts her again. They crash into the bedroom, lit only by city light.

Clothes come off fast – but the way he looks at her slows everything. Not a joke. Not a game. Real.

And when they fall into the bed, it's not just lust. It's surrender. Two people finally letting go – of the act, the armor, the fear. For a moment, it's not chaos. It's quiet.

And for the first time – they both want to stay.

INT. HOTEL SUITE – BEDROOM – MORNING

Soft sunlight spills through the windows, casting golden lines across tangled sheets.

Olivia stirs. Shifts. And freezes. A warm, bare arm is draped over her waist. She already knows. She turns her head–

Nate. Shirtless. Asleep. Smirking even in unconsciousness. Annoyingly perfect.

OLIVIA

Of course.

Nate stirs. Eyes open. That slow, lazy grin hits full force.

NATE

Mornin'.

She slides out of bed, wrapping the sheet around her like armor – not frantic, just deliberate.

OLIVIA

Here's the deal. We're not doing the whole "look at us, wasn't that wild" routine.

Nate props himself up on one elbow, shameless.

NATE  
So you admit it happened?

OLIVIA  
A singular lapse in judgment.

NATE  
Bold of you to call three lapses  
singular.

She smirks.

OLIVIA  
I admit nothing. Except that I'm  
showering before you start  
narrating this like a TED Talk.

She grabs her clothes, heads for the bathroom. Pauses in the doorway. Looks back at him, level.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Don't get comfortable.

She disappears inside.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - BEDROOM - LATER

They're dressed now. Buttoned-up. Guarded. But Olivia doesn't pace or babble this time. She's calm. Calculated.

Nate's phone buzzes. He glances at it.

NATE  
James wants to meet us for  
breakfast. Said he'll be in the  
restaurant.

OLIVIA  
Fine.

NATE  
We probably need to chew on  
something a little heavier than  
eggs.

OLIVIA  
Another time.

NATE  
When's that gonna be?



OLIVIA  
I don't know, Nate. But I'll tell  
you when I do.

That lands differently – controlled, not evasive. Nate  
studies her.

NATE  
You've never called me that before.

OLIVIA  
What?

NATE  
Nate.

A flicker of something passes. Olivia doesn't flinch, doesn't  
cover.

OLIVIA  
Let's just go.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE – DAY

Olivia enters like nothing's changed – coffee in one hand,  
sunglasses on. Her heels CLICK against the floor.

Employees nod and greet her. She nods back. Smiles. Totally  
normal.

Nate trails behind her, file folder in hand, trying to match  
her composure.

Mr. Beringer emerges from his office, beaming. He stops  
Olivia and Nate in their tracks.

BERINGER  
So?

NATE  
We sealed the deal.

Nate winks at Olivia.

BERINGER  
Excellent, excellent.

He shakes Olivia's hand vigorously, then Nate's. He leans  
into them both.

BERINGER (CONT'D)  
Now let's turn our attention to Kat  
Monroe, yes?

OLIVIA  
(enthused)  
Absolutely!

Beringer walks off, practically gleeful.

Nate turns to Olivia, smirking.

NATE  
(to Olivia)  
"Absolutely!" You're great at  
pretending you slept last night.

OLIVIA  
I slept just fine.

NATE  
Really? 'Cause you were... a little  
restless.

OLIVIA  
Nathaniel.

NATE  
Yes?

OLIVIA  
We are at work.

NATE  
Oh, I know.

OLIVIA  
We are professionals.

NATE  
Of course.

OLIVIA  
Which means this—

NATE  
The best night of your life?

Olivia stops. Turns slowly. Steps in close, eyes like ice.

OLIVIA  
(low, dangerous)  
Keep pushing me, Nathaniel.

NATE  
(smiling)  
Wouldn't dream of it.

A long, loaded beat.

OLIVIA  
That's all this is to you, isn't  
it? A dream.  
(beat)  
Some schoolboy's fantasy.

She steps back. Cold. Sharp.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Grow up.

She turns and walks into her office but Nate follows her. She looks up at him.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
You know... sometimes I wonder if  
we're not the bad ideas here.

NATE  
(smiling wryly)  
The real bad idea is this whole  
system. Cuts corners, rewards the  
snake, punishes the real ones.

OLIVIA  
Yeah. It's like they want us to  
betray everything we stand for...  
even each other.

NATE  
Maybe that's the real reason we're  
"bad ideas." Because we don't play  
by those rules.

They share a look – equal parts challenge and understanding.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE – OLIVIA'S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Grace pops up from her chair like she's been waiting for the curtain to rise.

GRACE  
Alright–spill. Did we land the  
deal?

OLIVIA  
It's done. Just need to get Kat out  
of the way now for Monroe deal.

GRACE

Right. But, uh... what's with the bedhead?

Olivia's hands shoot to her hair.

OLIVIA

Shit.

GRACE

Wait.

(beat)

You didn't.

Olivia says nothing. Her cheeks flush.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You did. You slept with him!

OLIVIA

It's not—

GRACE

Which means— You. Like. Him.

OLIVIA

I don't.

GRACE

Cool. Great. We're gonna play a game. Close your eyes.

OLIVIA

Absolutely not.

GRACE

Close your eyes.

OLIVIA

Absolutely not.

GRACE

Close. Them.

Olivia sighs. Closes her eyes.

GRACE (CONT'D)

It's a year from now. Nate's with someone else.

(beat)

She's laughing. They're holding hands. He's happy.

Olivia's jaw tightens.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Now... he kisses her.

Olivia's eyes snap open.

OLIVIA  
Nope. Nope. Absolutely not.

GRACE  
We have confirmation. You're in love.

OLIVIA  
This is a disaster.

GRACE  
This is a perfect rom-com movie. So what now?

OLIVIA  
Nothing. He's immature. Still all a game to him. Now that we slept together, I'm probably already a blur.

GRACE  
Maybe. But maybe... you need a little chaos. Some fun.  
(beat)  
Hey, charity ball this weekend. Just saying.

OLIVIA  
I need stability. Real love. Not Nate.

GRACE  
Oh my God. Don't say Daniel.

Olivia hesitates. Grace recoils.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Absolutely not. Get up. Go get what you want and stop pretending it's not him.

Olivia blinks. Then bolts.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - DAY

Olivia marches through the office like a storm system in heels. Laser-focused.

She reaches Nate's door. Raises a hand to knock. Then -- a voice from inside.

KAT (O.S.)  
Nate, come on. You and I both know  
this isn't over.

Olivia freezes, her fingers hovering just over the door.

NATE (O.S.)  
Kat.

KAT (O.S.)  
No, listen to me. You and I? We  
were never finished.

Silence.

Olivia's hand drops. Her fist clenches. She turns away--

The door opens.

Nate steps out. Sees her, the color draining from his face.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - OLIVIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Olivia types like the keyboard insulted her. The door swings open. Nate walks in with purpose. She doesn't look up.

OLIVIA  
If this isn't about work, I'm busy.

Nate closes the door.

NATE  
We need to talk.

OLIVIA  
We really don't.

NATE  
Yeah, Liv. We really do.

OLIVIA  
You made your choice.

NATE  
What choice?

OLIVIA  
Kat.

Nate stares. Disbelief.

NATE  
You've got to be kidding me.

OLIVIA  
It's fine, Nate. You don't have to explain.

NATE  
Oh, but I do. Because you're spinning this whole tragedy in your head and calling it fact.

OLIVIA  
I heard enough.

NATE  
No-you heard what you wanted to hear.

He steps in closer.

OLIVIA  
I have work.

NATE  
Bullshit. You're pissed. And instead of talking to me, you've decided to believe-

OLIVIA  
I have work to do.

She tries to move past. Nate gently catches her wrist.

NATE  
I don't want Kat.

He hands her a folder. She takes it. Pulls free.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Kat's gone.

OLIVIA  
What do you mean?

NATE  
I bought her out. Gave her the money she would have personally earned from the deal.

OLIVIA  
You what?

NATE

She made a move. A serious one. We used to date, only for three months. She wanted me back. But when it came to you... I couldn't let her do this.

OLIVIA

You think this impresses me? That you can just throw money at people?

NATE

It's not about the money.

OLIVIA

It's always a game with you.

She turns away. He watches her.

NATE

You think I'm gonna hurt you.  
(beat)  
Reason number nine.

She freezes. But says nothing.

Nate shakes his head, frustrated.

NATE (CONT'D)

Don't you understand? Kat is completely out of the picture. I made sure of it.

OLIVIA

I understand perfectly.

NATE

Then tell me what I'm missing. What else do I have to do?

OLIVIA

It's not about Kat.

NATE

Then what the hell is it about?

OLIVIA

It's you, Nate. You.

He takes a step back like she hit him.

NATE

Me?



OLIVIA  
Yeah. It was always you.  
(beat)  
And that's the problem.

NATE  
Wow.

Olivia shakes her head, frustrated.

OLIVIA  
Nate, you're—

Nate waits. Then, softly, almost pleading—

NATE  
I'm what, Liv?

OLIVIA  
You're a bad idea.

Nate goes still.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Always have been. Always will be.

Nate clenches his jaw. Steps back, nodding.

A long pause. The air thick with everything neither of them will say.

NATE  
Okay.  
(beat)  
Then let's make something real  
clear—You don't get to act like I'm  
the only one who felt something.  
You don't get to rewrite history  
just because you're scared.

He turns to the door.

NATE (CONT'D)  
You wanna run? Fine. Run.

He stops. One last look over his shoulder.

NATE (CONT'D)  
I hope you figure out what you're  
so afraid of, Olivia. I don't think  
it's me.

Then — he's gone.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY LOUNGE - NIGHT

The glow of neon lights flickers over lanes and vintage bowling posters. The faint sound of pins crashing echoes through the air. Nate lounges on a retro couch, beer in hand, feet up, smug as hell.

Jason sits beside him, arms crossed, suspicious.

JASON

So that's it?

No response. Just the soft clink of ice against glass.

JASON (CONT'D)

Didn't peg you for the "watch her walk away" type.

NATE

I didn't watch. She left!

JASON

Damn. I thought you'd at least go down swinging.

NATE

I did. She still walked away.

JASON

And you just let her?

NATE

What the hell was I supposed to do?

JASON

Fight for her.

NATE

She said I was a bad idea.

JASON

Bro, I'm sure she cares about you.

NATE

It doesn't matter.

JASON

Bullshit. You're pissed. You're hurt. That's fine. But don't just sit here and act like you don't know exactly how she feels.

NATE

She said I was a bad idea!!

JASON

Well... she's not wrong.

That gets a dry laugh out of Nate. Empty.

NATE

Thanks, man. Really uplifting.

Nate looks down.

NATE (CONT'D)

Appreciate the support.

JASON

No, listen. You are a bad idea. You're reckless, emotionally allergic, sarcastic to a fault, and honestly? Kind of a pain in the ass.

(beat)

And there's more. You're a cocky son of a bitch. You push people, you flirt with every damn thing that moves, and you drive her insane. But none of that matters.

NATE

Why not?

JASON

Because she loves you anyway. In spite of all that shit, she still chose you.

NATE

Not anymore.

JASON

That's not truth. That's fear talking.

NATE

She left.

JASON

She ran. Big difference.

NATE

No, she's done with me. You didn't see her face.

JASON

No, you idiot. She got scared. And instead of proving her wrong, you proved her right. You stood there and let her believe whatever her fear whispered loudest.

Nate runs a hand through his hair. Silence.

JASON (CONT'D)

Answer me this. If she looked you in the eye right now and asked why she should stay with you, what would you say?

Nate's jaw works, but no sound comes.

JASON (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's the problem.

NATE

I don't know how to be what she needs.

JASON

Then be what she deserves.

NATE

You think it's that simple?

JASON

It is that simple.

NATE

I've screwed up too many times.

JASON

She already knows that.

NATE

I don't deserve her.

JASON

She knows that too.

NATE

I don't know if I can be the man she needs.

Jason leans forward, looking Nate dead in the eye.

JASON

Then be the man she deserves you idiot!

A long beat. Then Nate stands.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Where are you going?

Nate grabs his keys. Determined.

NATE  
To fix it. To say what I should've  
said before she ever walked away.

INT. CHARITY GALA - NIGHT

Opulent. Glittering. The room is full of crystal chandeliers, camera flashes, and people who like to toast themselves.

James and Mr. Beringer are in the crowd, mingling. Grace sips champagne, eyes scanning.

Olivia stands at the bar, flawless in an elegant gown. Every laugh is forced. Statuesque. Untouchable. But her eyes flick to the door... once. Twice.

Hopeful. Stupid. Because he's not coming. Suddenly-

NATE (O.S.)  
So this is where you're hiding.

She turns.

Finally, he's there standing at the entrance. In black. Slightly wrinkled. Wild-eyed and absolutely, completely her person.

Jason standing next to him.

JASON  
(in Nate's ear)  
Ah I see what you mean.

OLIVIA  
Nathaniel.

NATE  
Olivia.

OLIVIA  
I'm surprised you bothered. What  
are you even doing here?

NATE  
Fixing a mistake.

OLIVIA

Oh? Which mistake was that? You've made quite a few.

NATE

The biggest one. The one where I let you go.

Without waiting, Nate moves—right past her. Straight to the stage.

He grabs the mic. Taps it. The room silences.

Grace turns from the bar, choking on her drink. She walks over to Olivia.

NATE (CONT'D)

Hi. I'm not on the program. But I've got something to say.

Every eye turns. Olivia freezes.

NATE (CONT'D)

Olivia Martin says I'm a bad idea.  
(beat)  
And she's right.

People laugh nervously. Olivia's breath catches.

NATE (CONT'D)

I'm stubborn. Arrogant. I flirt too much, drink too much, and I don't always think before I leap.  
(beat)  
But I leap for the right things.  
(beat)  
And I would leap again and again—every single time—for her.

He smiles at her. She's trying to pretend his words didn't land.

NATE (CONT'D)

I can't see the future. But I know this—I'd bet it all on you. Every time.

A long, loaded beat. The crowd is holding its collective breath.

Nate hands off the mic and strides toward the center of the dance floor.

Olivia shakes her head as the crowd grows louder.

GRACE

Holy shit-go. Run to him. I'll wait here and pretend I'm not crying into my mimosa.

OLIVIA

You sure?

GRACE

If he screws it up, I'll help you bury the body. But maybe don't hold back this time.

(beat)

For both of us.

OLIVIA

Nate—

NATE

No wait, I need to say this.

(beat)

You ran, Liv. But you didn't run from me. You ran from how real this has become.

(beat)

But here I am anyway. In a room full of people who don't matter half as much as you do telling you the truth. We are real.

OLIVIA

Nate...

NATE

I love you, Olivia Harper. So if you're gonna run... you better do it now. And fast. Before I kiss you again.

Olivia stares at him. Swallows. She drops his hand and steps back.

Nate falters.

OLIVIA

(whisper)

I'm tired of running.

She grabs his collar. Kisses him like it's the only thing keeping her alive.

The room explodes into cheers.

Grace screams. Jason grins.

Nate wraps his arms around Olivia like he's never letting go again.

Grace barrels in, wrapping them both in a hug.

GRACE  
I knew it! I told you!

Jason gently pulls Grace off, smirking. Grace and Jason lock eyes for a second too long.

Nate turns to Olivia, grinning.

NATE  
Wanna get out of here?

OLIVIA  
That could be a bad idea.

NATE  
All of the best ones are.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - NIGHT

The hum of the gala drifts in the background – laughter, music, the clinking of glasses.

Olivia stands by the stone railing, her silhouette framed by moonlight. The city glows beyond her, but she's still. Quiet.

Nate steps beside her. Not touching, but near enough that she feels it.

OLIVIA  
That was... dramatic.

NATE  
You inspire chaos. And you inspire me.

OLIVIA  
I didn't mean to hurt you.

NATE  
I know.

He turns, resting his elbows on the railing, facing her.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Are you still scared?

She nods. Barely. But it's enough.



NATE (CONT'D)  
You wanna run?

She turns toward him, eyes meeting his. She shakes her head.

OLIVIA  
No. I wanna stay.

His lips twitch—just a hint of something real. He reaches for her hand. Their fingers slide together, seamless – a perfect fit.

NATE  
Sooooo...

Olivia groans.

OLIVIA  
No.

NATE  
What? I haven't said anything yet.

OLIVIA  
I know that tone. I hate that tone.

NATE  
Come on. Just once.

OLIVIA  
Nope.

NATE  
Just three little words.

OLIVIA  
I tolerate you!

NATE  
Same thing.

She rolls her eyes. He laughs.

NATE (CONT'D)  
Say it back. Say you love me.

OLIVIA  
No.

NATE  
Yeah. You do. You love me.

OLIVIA  
You're insufferable.

NATE

And yet... here you are.

She leans in. Presses a kiss to his lips – warm, sure, deep.

OLIVIA

Yeah. Here I am. I love you too.

She pulls back, playful now.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Wait. What were the ten reasons,  
again?

Nate grins, tugging her closer.

NATE

Well, let me show you my newest  
note...

He pulls her in for another kiss.

EXT. SMALL CAFE – PARIS – DAY

SUPER: One year later.

A sun-dappled café in Montmartre. The Eiffel Tower stands distant but undeniable. Laughter from nearby TOURISTS weaves through the breeze.

Nate and Olivia sit at a small table. Half-drunk coffees. Sunglasses. The content chaos of people in love.

Olivia scrolls her phone. Her jaw tightens.

NATE

That's your "this email just ruined  
brunch" face.

OLIVIA

Shut up.

NATE

Who's it from?

OLIVIA

It's an invitation.

NATE

To what?

OLIVIA

Kat's wedding.

Nate nearly spits out his coffee.

NATE  
I'm sorry – what? She's getting  
married?!

OLIVIA  
Apparently.

NATE  
To who??

Olivia slides her phone across the table.

He reads. His eyebrows rise like a slow curtain.

NATE (CONT'D)  
This guy? No way. Oh, this is gonna  
be a disaster. He probably pulled  
the emergency elevator trick too.

Olivia glares.

OLIVIA  
You didn't! Did you?

NATE  
Guilty as charged. Look, I was a  
whole different disaster back then.  
Bad idea machine. Leather jacket.  
Zero commitment. I was a bad idea  
who had worse ideas daily. Now? I'm  
evolved. I'm classy. I wear  
scarves.

She snorts, leans in, kisses him.

OLIVIA  
You weren't all bad.

NATE  
Thanks. That means a lot.

They clink their coffee cups.

NATE (CONT'D)  
So... we going?

OLIVIA  
Oh, we're absolutely going. And I'm  
wearing red.

He grins.

NATE  
Chaos it is.

As the city swells behind them-