

10 reasons why I'm a bad idea

Written by

Sarantos (Stage Name)
Sam Speron (Real Name)

October 25, 2025

Version 3

This script is the confidential property of
Sarantos Melogia, LLC. Pictures and no portion of
it may be performed, distributed, reproduced, used, quoted or
published without prior written permission.

Sarantos Melogia, LLC
7157 W. Howard St.
Niles, IL 60714
© 2025
All Rights Reserved

Cell: 847-757-5399
Email: samsperon@gmail.com

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 getting tired of the list.

Emma narrows her eyes.

EMMA

Since when?

NATE

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

And yet, you're still doing it?

NATE

Because it's easier than asking someone to stay.

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
Two: I'm emotionally unavailable.

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

And, 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 actually means something. This shit? It'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

...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 one. 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.

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 like a hotel room waiting for a guest who never really unpacks.

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

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

I thought we were just having fun.

LEXI

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

NATE

You're not wrong.

LEXI

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

NATE

Let me guess - she'll ruin me? 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)

I'm not good at this 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. 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, airpods 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.

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
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
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

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

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
Maybe not. But it doesn't make it a
bad idea 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 stares. 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

Well, 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

Has Mr. Beringer arrived?

RECEPTIONIST

Not yet, but—

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

NATE

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 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 again, 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 that smile like you.

NATE

So you've got a type?

OLIVIA

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. 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.

OLIVIA
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, then walks off.

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.

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 - Senior Creative.

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

OLIVIA
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 (CONT'D)
Ooooh. He got to you.

OLIVIA
No, he didn't. He's just a
liability for the company.

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

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

OLIVIA
No, just 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.

Olivia gives her a look.

OLIVIA
Do you like having a job?

GRACE
Love it, some 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
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

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 job.

She ignores him, disappears into the restroom.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - EVENING

Sophisticated, candlelit, intimate – the kind of place where big deals or proposals happen.

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

NATE
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. Fancy seeing you here.

Olivia's jaw tightens as she looks up.

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. And 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 the one.

OLIVIA

I'm not looking for a husband.

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

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...

(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)
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 voice memos.

OLIVIA
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. She looks at 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
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

Nate doesn't fit.

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

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 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
date 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. 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. 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. Well,
seems like fate, man.

NATE
She was on a date.

JASON
Ohhhhhhh 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
She smarter than you?

NATE
Thinks she is. And she's completely, 1000% uninterested.

JASON
Oh, so you love her already.

NATE
(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

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 now?

NATE
You wish. You just have excellent taste in...ambiance.

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

NATE
You drop something?

OLIVIA
(glancing down)
My guard?

NATE
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)
That's not subtle. I feel like this is a cry for help.

She snatches it from him, eyes flashing.

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 grabs another book without looking.

NATE
Oh, this one's a classic.

OLIVIA
You don't even know what it is.

He flips it, smirks.

NATE
"Healing After Divorce."
(beat)
And that's karma in hardback.

A laugh escapes her, quick, unguarded. She kills it
instantly.

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? We
could make bad decisions together
over coffee.

OLIVIA
Nope. Going home. Erasing this
moment.

NATE
You know, denial's not just a
river.

She ignores him, but there's the faintest curve at the corner
of her mouth.

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)
A child called him Daddy.

Grace raises an eyebrow, her hair towel now lopsided.

GRACE
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."

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

OLIVIA
I want to move to another country.

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. 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. 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 sets the phone aside.

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

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" 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. 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-laughs)
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.

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! 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

We're spinning off part of Monroe's campaign to test our team alignment. You want back on the main pitch? Prove it. James Street is your shot.

NATE

So it's a play-in game?

BERINGER

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 gather their things.

Her smile is the kind that says she's already three moves ahead. As Olivia steps into the hall, Kat drifts into her path – voice low, syrup-smooth.

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

Olivia studies her, unsure if the threat is about business or the man walking toward them. Kat's expression never wavers – all charm, no warmth.

KAT (CONT'D)
Just friendly advice.

She glides past, heels clicking like punctuation. Nate steps out a moment later, catching the tail end, the air still humming with tension he can't quite place. He looks after Kat, then at Olivia – but she's already walking away.

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

OLIVIA

I—

(beat)

Of course, sir.

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 all just a hallucination. 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. Starts laughing hard.

GRACE

So can I just book the wedding? Save the date at least? 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)

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. Olivia sits at a corner table, laptop open, headphones in. 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
This account... could change
everything.
(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

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

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

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

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
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. 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.
(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

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

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 changes.

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, 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.

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...

Nate starts to say more, but stops himself. His jaw locks. He swings – too hard, too close – and the bag slams back, nearly taking him off balance. He catches it. Stares at it, breathing heavy. Jason watches – doesn't need to say a word.

JASON

What's that, another reason on the list? Stop adding to the list! You want her to believe you're not a bad idea?

(beat)

Then stop acting like one.

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

INT. NATE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Nate drops his gym bag by the door. Pulls out a battered notebook, its edges bent.

On a page: "10 Reasons Why I'm a Bad Idea." Eight are already scrawled. He stares at the blank space beneath them.

He writes one word: "Scared." Then shuts the notebook hard, like he regrets it instantly.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - OLIVIA'S OFFICE - MORNING

Morning light slices through blinds in perfect, even lines – the room is immaculate. Not a paper out of place. The precision feels suffocating.

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

We are not doing this now.

GRACE

Oh babe. We are.

Olivia fumbles with her laptop, fails to open it.

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 reaches for a pen – lines it perfectly beside her laptop. Then the stapler. Then the coffee cup. She straightens everything into exact alignment before finally taking a sip. Her hand still trembles.

OLIVIA

Five minutes.

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. It's 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
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.

OLIVIA
Congras. You've cracked the code.

Nate tilts his head.

NATE
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?

NATE
Fine. But let's make one thing clear — we don't just sell campaigns. We build stories that make people believe again.

She turns. Nate is close. Too close. Right in front of her.

NATE (CONT'D)
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
You like pushing my buttons.

NATE
(beat, quiet grin)
Seems like it works.

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? 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
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
years of disappearing when things
got hard.

(a beat)

He was the first person who showed
me love could vanish.

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.

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 though.

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
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.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Cold. Echoey. Nate leans against his car. 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. 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 please.

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)
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. 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 once.

NATE
What happened?

OLIVIA
He couldn't handle me. Anyway —
doesn't matter.

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.

The mirrored walls fracture their reflections - Nate and
Olivia multiplied in jagged pieces of steel.

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

...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 panicked. I lost control. It
happens sometimes.

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 both professionals.

NATE
Yes, we are.

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.

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

Olivia storms in, flushed.

GRACE
Whoa. You look like you just lost a
fight you secretly wanted to win.

Olivia freezes. That's all Grace needs.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh my God. You kissed him.

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 with you.

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
...I might be wrecked.

Grace throws her arms up in celebration.

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

OLIVIA
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 - LATER

Olivia sits at her desk, phone in hand. She hovers over the record button. Then hits Record.

OLIVIA
Note to self: You kissed him. You
liked it. Too much. And now you
can't stop replaying it.

She deletes the voice memo before it can save. Sits there, staring at the blank screen.

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 a bit more. Then hits send. A small breath escapes her.

Grace enters with her bag slung over her shoulder.

GRACE
Still here?

OLIVIA
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.

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

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. 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. The apartment, usually immaculate, looks wrong tonight. A chair turned slightly off angle. A ring of condensation on the marble counter. A half-empty glass she doesn't remember leaving.

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

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

You're quiet. That's new.

Nate doesn't answer.

JASON (CONT'D)

Guess I don't need to ask who's responsible.

Nate takes a casual sip of beer.

NATE

She kissed me. Not my fault. She lost control. She did.

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?

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

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)

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.

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)

She said she can't do "in-between" anymore. It's me or nothing.

NATE
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
I'm still building.

GRACE
Ok, don't forget what it feels like
to want your own name on the door.

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."

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. I heard you've... relocated your affections. 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.

(MORE)

KAT (CONT'D)

And 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.

(MORE)

KAT (CONT'D)

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 dare—

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

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 they don't expect — 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 -
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 nicely.

NATE
You always knew how to stage an
entrance.

KAT
And you still think this is all
about you.

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

KAT
You're still a drama queen.

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.

His 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 I am.

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.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Kat's here to take everything I've worked for. 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. 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 love.

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 hasn't changed.

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. The presentation title flickers across a big screen: BERINGER & CO. PRESENTS – LIVE FROM THE "INTEGRITY ROOM."

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.

Behind him, a screen saver loops "Luxury for the Planet." No one notices the irony.

Nate tests proximity like leverage — a salesman's smile disguised as sincerity.

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
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 you being happy
about this... 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. The
game's officially on.

Kat sets her glass down, eyes narrowing with delight.

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

This feels more like a show than a gala.

NATE

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

Ready for your own tightrope?

OLIVIA

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 on fire.

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, screw it up, and it's layoffs, budget cuts, and maybe your next job search.

She smiles.

KAT (CONT'D)

You think I like being the villain? I learned early – nice women get notes, ruthless ones get names on the door.

She leans closer.

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

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
Guess so.

Nate smirks.

NATE
I'll save you a glass of something
cheap.

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
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 a glass of wine, movements smooth. The sound of the pour fills the silence between them.

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.

She meets his gaze – steady, unreadable.

OLIVIA

Funny. You're the one who keeps bringing it up.

Her voice is even, but there's a flicker behind it – a dare he can't quite ignore.

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

Kat.

Olivia sips her wine, poker-faced. But her grip on the glass tightens.

KAT
Miss me yet?

NATE
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 advances like he's negotiating a contract — measured, deliberate, aware of every inch she concedes.

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.

OLIVIA

You think this is what I want?

NATE

No. I think it's what you're scared to want.

That lands. She freezes for half a second, breath shaking – then grabs his shirt and kisses him, hard. Furious. He groans, hands on her waist, pulling her in like gravity wins. The kiss deepens, messy, desperate.

OLIVIA

This isn't supposed to feel like this.

He stops. Looks at her – closer now, quieter.

NATE

Then stop pretending it doesn't.

Silence. Then she kisses him again – slower this time, no performance left. Her back hits the wall. He lifts her. The laugh that escapes her isn't wild – it's broken, real.

Nate's jacket hits the floor. Olivia's heels scatter. They move through the space blindly – kissing, yes, but something's changed. It's not about winning anymore.

She shoves him onto the couch. Climbs onto his lap. He looks up at her, breathless.

NATE (CONT'D)

Tell me it's nothing.

OLIVIA

I can't.

That's enough. He pulls her in again. They crash into the bedroom, lit only by city light. Clothes fall, but so do walls.

For once – no games, no armor. Just truth, finally allowed out loud.

And when they fall into the bed, it's quiet. Too quiet. The kind that feels like confession.

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 delivers a smirk like PR line—

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. She pauses in the doorway. Reaches into her bag, pulls out a keycard — and places it on the nightstand beside him.

A silent transaction: her rules, her boundary, no words needed. Then she disappears into the bathroom.

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

You've never called me that before.

OLIVIA

What?

NATE

Nate.

A flicker of something. Olivia doesn't flinch, doesn't cover.

OLIVIA

Let's just go.

Olivia grabs her phone off the nightstand. Next to it – the hotel keycard. She hesitates, then pockets it instead of leaving it behind.

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. Whatever you two did - you didn't just land a client. You changed how they see themselves.

He shakes Olivia's hand vigorously, then Nate's. He leans into them both. Behind Beringer, a massive new wall poster glows with the company's latest slogan: "HUMILITY™ - A Beringer Brand."

BERINGER (CONT'D)

Now let's turn our attention to Kat Monroe, yes?

OLIVIA

Absolutely!

Beringer walks off, practically gleeful. Nate turns to Olivia, smirking. She doesn't look his way. He glances at her coffee - black, no cream, steady hand. His, half-spilled, trembling just enough to betray him. He smirks, breaking the silence first.

NATE

Late night?

Olivia doesn't answer. Just raises her sunglasses a notch and starts walking. He chuckles under his breath and follows.

NATE (CONT'D)

Guess I'm the only one still recovering.

They stop outside her office. A long beat – too long. Neither moves first. Finally–

OLIVIA
We're at work.

He nods, almost a bow.

NATE
Of course.

OLIVIA
That's all this is to you, isn't it? A dream.
(beat)
Some schoolboy's fantasy.
(cold, sharp)
Grow up.

She turns to walk into her office.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
You know... sometimes I wonder if we're not the bad idea here?

NATE
The real bad idea is this whole system. Cuts corners, rewards the snake, punishes the real ones.

OLIVIA
Yeah. The suits 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.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE – OLIVIA'S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Grace sips from a white ceramic mug that reads in bold letters: "EMPATHY IS KPI." She pops up from her chair like she's been waiting for the curtain to rise.

GRACE
Alright–spill. Did we land the deal?

OLIVIA
Yeah. 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. You didn't?

Olivia says nothing. Her cheeks flush.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You did. You slept with him!
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

No!

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 - 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, a little fun.

OLIVIA

I need stability. Real love. Not Nate.

As she says it, Olivia opens a folder on her desk - a client pitch deck. A small business card slips out and lands face up: Nathaniel Williams - Senior Creative.

She freezes. Stares at it a beat too long before sliding it back into the folder like it burned her.

GRACE

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—

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 freezes. A flicker across his face — guilt, surprise,
something he can't mask fast enough. He doesn't answer.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
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 in. But
I didn't want her. I want you.

OLIVIA
You think this impresses me? That
you can just throw money at people?

NATE
Reason number nine.
(beat, pained)
I'm scared I'll hurt you.

She freezes. Says nothing. Nate shakes his head, frustrated.

NATE (CONT'D)

You don't get it — Kat wasn't just gunning for the pitch. She was gunning for me. For us.

OLIVIA

So you paid her to stop?

NATE

I paid her to control the story before she could spin it.

OLIVIA

That's not noble. That's damage control.

NATE

Maybe. But it worked.

He takes a breath — the next line quieter, more honest.

NATE (CONT'D)

And yeah... maybe a part of me wanted to make sure I didn't lose everything again. So call it selfish. Call it what you want.

OLIVIA

You were never trying to save me. You were trying to save yourself.

Nate doesn't answer. Just meets her eyes — silent, caught between guilt and pride.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

It's you, Nate. You.

He takes a step back like she hit him.

NATE

Me?

OLIVIA

Yeah. You're the problem.

NATE

Wow.

Olivia shakes her head, frustrated.

OLIVIA

Nate, you're—

Nate waits. Then, softly, almost pleading—

NATE
I'm what, Liv?

She reaches into her jacket pocket – pulls out the hotel keycard. Looks at it for a beat. Then sets it on the desk.

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. Don't act like I'm the only one who felt something. Don't 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.

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 her. 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. You're pissed, hurt. That's fine. But don't sit here and act like you don't know why she feels that way.

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. 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 answer her?

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

You do.

NATE

I've screwed up too many times.

JASON

She 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 - POWDER ROOM - NIGHT

Grace stands before a mirror, dabbing at her lipstick – steady hands, but her reflection betrays a hint of nerves. The muffled hum of the gala filters in through the door. Jason steps in behind her, tux slightly crooked, holding two flutes of champagne.

JASON
You hiding too?

GRACE
No. Just thinking about doing
something stupid.

JASON
That's my specialty.

She meets his eyes in the mirror – soft, direct.

GRACE
You ever get tired of waiting for
people to feel the same way you do?

JASON
Yeah. Every damn time.

A quiet moment. Grace takes a glass, smiles faintly.

GRACE
Then maybe we stop waiting.

Jason tilts his head, amused – but his smile is real.

JASON

Guess we both just made the list.

They clink glasses – not a grand romantic gesture, just two people finally honest enough to see each other. Grace laughs, light and easy, the tension gone. She heads for the door.

GRACE

Come on. Let's go watch your friend
make a scene.

She exits. Jason follows, shaking his head with a grin.

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.

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 walk away from us.

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 for a long time, I agreed. I
kept a list — every flaw I thought
proved her right.

(beat)

But here's the truth — every one of
those reasons makes me the man who
fell in love with her.

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—

OLIVIA

(calling out)

You forgot talks too much.

The crowd ripples with surprised laughter. Nate looks out, finds her standing steady, not running this time.

NATE

(laughing)

See? Case in point.

OLIVIA

And yet... you keep leaping anyway.

NATE

Yeah. Because maybe the fall's
worth it.

They hold each other's gaze across the room. The crowd is gone now — just them.

OLIVIA

You're right. You are a bad idea.

NATE

I know.

OLIVIA

But you're my bad idea.

Beat - the room erupts in cheers. Nate steps down from the stage, crossing the floor to her. 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.

Nate steps closer, the noise of the gala fading under the weight of what he's about to say.

OLIVIA

Nate-

NATE

No, wait. Just-let me get this out.

(beat)

You ran, Liv. But you didn't run from me. You ran from what this is. From how real it's gotten.

(beat)

And I get it - real is terrifying. But I'm still here. In a room full of people who don't matter to me half as much as you do, saying what I should've said a long time ago.

(beat, softer)

You and me... we're real.

OLIVIA

Nate...

NATE

I love you, Olivia Harper. So if you're gonna run - do it now.

(beat, a faint smile)

(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)

Because if you don't, I'm kissing
you again.

She stares at him – breath caught somewhere between fear and disbelief. Her hand slips from his. She steps back. And for the first time, Nate's confidence wavers. She looks up–

OLIVIA

(whisper)

I'm tired of running.

She grabs his collar. Kisses him like it's the only thing keeping her alive.

The room erupts – laughter, applause, a swell of music that drowns everything but them. Nate pulls Olivia in, holding her like it's the first breath after surfacing. Grace lets out a full-throated scream, launching herself into their embrace.

GRACE

I knew it! I told you!

Jason steps in, grinning as he gently pries Grace off. Their eyes meet – a flicker of something new, unspoken, lingering just a beat too long. Nate turns back to Olivia, that irrepressible grin breaking through as the noise around them fades into something that almost feels like forever.

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. She grips the balcony rail with both hands, the diamond bracelet on her wrist catching the moonlight.

A few beats pass. Then—she unclasps the bracelet, sets it on the stone ledge beside her. It's subtle, but deliberate – like shedding armor.

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. She doesn't answer. Just exhales — slow, uneven. Her eyes drift to the skyline instead of him.

NATE (CONT'D)
Liv.

She keeps staring out at the city. Fingers tighten around the railing until her knuckles pale.

OLIVIA
I don't do well with... happy endings. They make me nervous.

NATE
Because last time didn't end happy?

OLIVIA
(beat)
I thought if I could be perfect, he'd stay.
(then, quieter)
Turns out, I just made it easy for him to leave.

NATE
You don't have to be perfect with me.

She studies him — long enough for that truth to land. Then she exhales, letting some of that old armor go.

NATE (CONT'D)
So you still nervous now?

OLIVIA
(beat)
Yeah. Terrified, actually.

Nate turns toward her, waiting.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I keep thinking if I move, if I say
it out loud, it will disappear.

He reaches out – not to pull her in, but to loosen her grip
from the rail. She lets him.

NATE
Then don't say it. Just... stay.

She looks at their joined hands, then at him.

OLIVIA
That's the problem. I want to.

He doesn't smile this time. Just nods – quiet, steady. His
lips twitch. 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
I love you too.

She rolls her eyes. He laughs.

NATE (CONT'D)
Say it back. Say you love me.

OLIVIA

No.

NATE

Yeah. You do. You really 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
version in my Notes app...

She interrupts and pulls him 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.

Across the street, a boutique café sign gleams in gold letters: "Café Authentique™." Beneath it, smaller text in English reads, "A Truly Genuine Experience."

Olivia glances at it, smirks faintly, then turns back to Nate. They sit at a small table. Half-drunk coffees. Sunglasses. The content chaos of people in love.

A worn hotel keycard sits on the table beside their cups – the same one she once left on his desk. It's scratched now, faded from being carried too long. Olivia absently spins it with one finger as she scrolls her phone. Her jaw tightens.

NATE

That's your "this email just ruined brunch" face.

(beat)

Who's it from?

OLIVIA

It's an invitation.

NATE

To what?

OLIVIA

Kat's wedding.

Nate nearly spits out his coffee.

NATE

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. Every day, a new dumb decision.

(beat, grinning)

Now? I'm evolved. Sophisticated. I own scarves.

She snorts, leans in, steals a quick kiss.

OLIVIA

You weren't all bad.

NATE

Maybe not. Maybe some bad ideas
just end up being the right kind of
trouble.

She studies him - the smirk, the sincerity just beneath it -
and for once, doesn't try to hide the smile tugging at her
mouth.

OLIVIA

You really think we're not still a
bad idea?

NATE

Maybe we are. But we're our bad
idea.

A beat - a quiet smile passes between them, easy and real.

OLIVIA

You're impossible.

NATE

And you're late for your meeting.

OLIVIA

I rescheduled. Paris first.

He laughs. She leans in, kisses him - warm, quick, alive.
When they pull apart-

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

You know, this could've gone wrong
in about ten different ways.

NATE

Yeah. But for once... it didn't.

They share a look that says they both know it still could
someday - but they'll take the risk anyway. Their coffee cups
clink softly.

NATE (CONT'D)

So... we going?

OLIVIA

Oh, we're absolutely going. And I'm
wearing red.

Nate flips open the battered notebook on the table. The page
is blank - until he writes a single line: "Reason #11 - She
stayed." He closes it. Smiles.

His phone BUZZES. He glances down. A text. From "Dad." "Saw your campaign. Proud of you, son." He stares for a long beat. The same phone that once carried nothing but silence.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

NATE
Yeah. For once... it actually is.

He sets the phone face down beside the worn hotel keycard. Looks up at her. Grins.

NATE (CONT'D)
Chaos it is.

The city hums around them, alive and infinite – two bad ideas that finally made sense.