

1

INT. RENTAL CAR - PARKED - SUNSET

PHONE SCREEN: A thumb flips through INSTAGRAM REELS.

FINANCE BRO

"AI made me over \$30k on the stock market with just a few prompts--"

Swipe.

FITNESS BRO

"I've been taking supplements for years, and the number one product--"

Swipe.

DATING COACH

"Hypergammy means she's choosing you. Be strong, be assured, control how you're perceived, control your life. In my course, I teach you- "

Swipe.

A BEAUTIFUL BIKINI MODEL getting out of a pool in slow-mo. The thumb hovers above the screen... too long. Phone off.

TILT UP to the REARVIEW MIRROR. BENJAMIN (30, guarded) looks up from his phone and fixes his hair. He's dressed in a sharp suit, poised on the leather driver seat.

He looks out of the window to a TOWNHOUSE. Warm light inside.

His hands DRUM on the steering wheel. He stops them.

2

EXT. QUIET TORONTO STREET - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON: He presses the LOCK button on the LEXUS KEY. An *Enterprise Rent-a-Car* tag hangs on the key-chain.

BENJAMIN crosses the street with a paper grocery bag. His hand, sporting a ROLEX, rises to the door.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK.

Beat. A deep, slow exhale..... CLICK. The door opens.

HEATHER (O.S.)

Hey.

HEATHER (late-20s, casual elegance) stands in heels and a captivating GREEN DRESS, SILHOUETTED by the house lights.

Her face will remain hidden or obscured for now

BENJAMIN

(big smile; mask on)

Heather. It's a pleasure to meet you. You look amazing.

BENJAMIN approaches and gives her a one-armed hug.

HEATHER

Thank you. Come on in.

He steps into -

3

INT. TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An open-plan, MODERN TOWNHOUSE. Clean and sparsely decorated.

BENJAMIN

Nice place. I like the layout. Subtle. You rent or own?

HEATHER

Rent. I might move soon. I love the area, but my landlord's a pain.

BENJAMIN

I live in the finance district. It's close to work, but the rent's a killer. I'll take my first step onto the property ladder soon.

He pulls a BOUQUET out of the bag and sets it on the table.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

These are for you. And you said you like wine, so I brought this.

BENJAMIN retrieves an expensive bottle of RED WINE, glasses and a corkscrew.

He looks up - and notices something.

In the corner connecting the wall to the ceiling above him, a small HOME SECURITY CAMERA. His smile drops.

HEATHER

Before that, do you have something else for me?

He retrieves an ENVELOPE from his suit pocket and hands it over, turning his back to the CAMERA as much as possible.

HEATHER peaks inside the envelope - CASH. Lots of it.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Is there anything specific you're looking for tonight? I'm assuming you read through my screening info and boundaries?

BENJAMIN

Of course. I'm not looking for anything specific, just good company after a long week.

HEATHER

Then wine sounds lovely, thanks. -- And you're sure you want to spend the whole night here?

BENJAMIN

Yeah. Keeps it simple. I'll start on dinner - hope you like steak.

HEATHER

I'm vegan.

BENJAMIN

(stops)
Are you actually?

HEATHER

(smirks)
No. Not actually. Need any help?

BENJAMIN

(chuckles)
You almost derailed the whole date. I got it, cooking's a big hobby of mine. Just sit back and relax.

4

INT. TOWNHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

WOOSH! He ignites the wine in a pan with a LIGHTER.

ANGLE ON: HEATHER is holding Benjamin's PHONE, we see the moment unfold through his camera.

HEATHER

Jesus!

BENJAMIN stands in front of the stove, in the zone.

BENJAMIN

It's perfectly safe, I've done it a million times. It's all about practice and steady refinement. Like with everything. -- Did you get the photo?

She hands back his phone. He looks, no photo. He frowns.

HEATHER

I like cooking, but I don't try and set my house on fire.

She grabs paper towel and cleans up the mess beside the pan.

BENJAMIN

Sorry. -- Here, let me.

He grabs the paper towel from her, brushing her hand.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

It's just one of my hobbies. I have a home gym setup, I do some investing, I read a ton of non-fiction, even some philosophy. I love learning new things.

HEATHER

You ever tried dance classes? I go twice a week. It's a lot of fun, but takes practice, like you said.

BENJAMIN

I don't really have the bandwidth for anything purely recreational.

HEATHER

I perform at events. Pays pretty well. -- Is something burning?

He smells it too, opens the oven -

BENJAMIN

Shit.

Pulls out a tray of half-burned roast potatoes.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

(forced chuckle)

The simplest part. Of course...

5

INT. TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - NIGHT

They sit at the candle-lit TABLE, BENJAMIN with his back to the CAMERA lurking in the background. MUSIC plays. The food on their plates looks good. Except the potatoes.

HEATHER

What do you do in the finance district?

BENJAMIN

I'm at a big wealth management firm. We work with a lot of VIPs. Handling major investments and transactions.

HEATHER

(teasing)

So, shuffling a whole bunch of digits from one offshore account to another, that sort of thing? Sounds like my idea of hell.

BENJAMIN

If I keep grinding, I'll make account manager this year.

HEATHER

What do you do now?

BENJAMIN

Accounting. Not for much longer.

HEATHER

You ever feel like they gave us the word "grinding" to make burnout feel like progress?

BENJAMIN

I love the work. It looks great on my resume. It's stable. There's always going to be rich people to take care of.

HEATHER

You're telling me. What did you want to do when you were young? Before business school?

A slight pause.

BENJAMIN

I wanted to be in a band. I played drums all through high school. --- But that was a long time ago.

HEATHER

Why can't that be a hobby?

He leans in, puts his hand on hers.

BENJAMIN

I grew up. -- Right now all that matters is building myself up. Every decision I make, every hour I spend, is about laying the foundations for the man I know I can be.

EXTREME CLOSE UP: HEATHER's eye, piercing him.

HEATHER

I guess we'll just have to find out who that man is.

She slides her hand away to take the plates. BENJAMIN is disappointed that the moment didn't have the desired effect.

A knife slides off and CLATTERS on the floor. HEATHER bends over to pick it up.

POV: We're watching her figure beneath the dress, bending -

5a FLASH INTERCUT: Match cut to a POV CLOSE UP of a PROSTITUTE's naked back during sex on a BED. A FLASHBACK.

BENJAMIN is stricken. The colour drains from his face. HEATHER leaves the room and BENJAMIN takes a breath.

6 INT. TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

HEATHER is making them Negronis at a liquor cabinet.

HEATHER

I learned how to make these when I stayed in Genoa. I'd love to get back that part of the world someday. You don't have to live like you're on someone's agenda.

BENJAMIN

I've seen so many videos. That whole coastline is something else.

She hands him a glass and sits on the SOFA.

HEATHER

I have this vision of me and... of me in a small village on the coast, writing about the people I've met. Maybe publishing stories.

He sits close to her, leaning in.

BENJAMIN

You look like the kind of woman an Italian villa was made for.

HEATHER

Thanks. -- What's your vision?

A lingering moment. His eyes drop -

POV: CLOSE ON the strap of her dress hanging loose.

6a FLASH INTERCUT: CLOSE UP of a PROSTITUTE's naked chest.

Back to BENJAMIN. He re-focuses himself.

BENJAMIN

To be undeniable. A man who never has to wait to be chosen.

Beat.

HEATHER

Can I ask you, is this your first time with an escort?

His finger starts TAPPING his glass rhythmically.

BENJAMIN

No. But it is my first "girlfriend experience". I don't have time for real dates. -- Why do you ask?

HEATHER

It's one thing paying for an hour with someone. But when a guy hires me for the whole night, it's usually to complete an image. Just curious what you want from this?

TAP-TAP-TAPTAPTAPTAP... THE LIGHT CHANGES.

BEHIND BENJAMIN, a SOFT-LIT, OUT OF FOCUS SCENE appears.

He turns. It comes into focus.