

Artista-Rol

by

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In Stanislavski's approach, by the time the actor reaches the stage, he or she no longer experiences a distinction between his or her self and the character; the actor has created a 'third being', or a combination of the actor's personality and the role (in Russian, Stanislavski calls this creation *artisto-rol*). Benedetti, Jean. 1998

INT. EMPTY MEETING ROOM - DAY

MAX (20s), stares out of a window. Her face shows no emotion, but her eyes suggest her mind is working overtime.

She somberly watches over Hyde Park from her elevated vantage point over London. Couples walk arm in arm while kids play, and dog owners stroll as book readers relax.

She toys with an old surfer's bracelet on her wrist, her black painted fingernails chewed right back.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Max, are you ready to go?

Max spins around, wrapped in high fashion clothing, her make-up and hair spectacular. She smiles brightly as if her personality has just been activated,

In the center of the office, an empty seat awaits, facing a camera and lights set up to record an interview.

INT. DRAB CORRIDOR

LUCY (50s), brimming with confidence, walks with Max.

MAX

I'm starting to believe my own bullshit.

LUCY

You're doing great.

MAX

I feel like such a fake, you know?

LUCY

You're just doing your job.

MAX

I should say what I really think, for once.

Lucy pauses, concerned, causing Max to stop and face her.

LUCY

It's a long way down, Max. Don't do anything risky. The tightrope's thin enough as it is.

MAX

Don't worry, this,
(sweeps hand down face)
I can play.

Lucy laughs and shakes her head.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY

The lift doors sweep open. Lucy and Max exit and cross the lobby.

Max keeps her head down, hiding behind her hair. Lucy strolls boldly. Shutters click, and bulbs flash.

MALE FAN (O.S.)

Max! Max! Hey! Max! Max!

Max glances out the corner of her eye. A MALE FAN slips through a small crowd by a door and runs across the lobby.

Max's eyes bulge. He sprints toward her and--

BANG! He goes down hard on the marble floor, a BODYGUARD'S bulky arm raised in front of Max's terrified face.

The Fan gazes up, his flowers strewn across tiles.

The Guard's arm drops. Max glares as shutters capture the fleeting moment of anger in her eyes.

INT. PRIVATE CAR - MOVING - DAY

Max and Lucy slouch on the leather seat as bustling London streets sweep by.

MAX

It's just such fucking bullshit, you know? The first question they open with, 'what was it like to change your hair color?' My fucking hair color? Seriously? I worked my ass off for that performance.

LUCY

That's what people want to know. The superficial crap. The stuff they can relate to. Just calm down. None of it matters.

Max stares at the floor, stewing.

EXT. CHELSEA APARTMENTS - DAY

A gate to underground parking slowly squeaks open, a GUARD beside it. Max watches through the car window and sighs.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

A stunning apartment, minimalist contemporary luxury, pastel walls, hardwood floors and lots of glass. A cat nudges a gap in a balcony door left ajar.

Max shuts the door, picks the cat up, and strokes it adoringly. She stares at the spectacular view of London.

ADAM (20s), confident and well-dressed, moves in behind her, cradling her waist as they share the view.

MAX

You should be more careful. The cat could get out. You should shut the door properly.

ADAM

I thought I did. Don't worry, she'll be fine. She's got nine lives, remember?

MAX

She's got one life. She'll jump just to see what it's like.

INT. PENTHOUSE - LATER

The cat slaloms between Max's legs as she cooks. She neatly chops, working fast and well-practiced.

Adam crosses to the counter and sniffs the air.

ADAM

Mexican again?

She looks back pensively. He shrugs. She turns back and--

SMASH! A jar hits the floor. The cat bolts out of the room.

ADAM (CONT'D)

You okay?

She stares at the smeared tomato puree and broken glass and sighs deeply. She crosses to a cupboard, opens it, pauses for a moment, and slams the door hard.

MAX

FUCK! FUCK! FUCK! FUCK! FUCK!

ADAM

(going to hug her)
Hey! Calm down!

MAX

(ducking hug)
I don't have time for this!

She yanks out a dustpan and starts cleaning frantically.

ADAM

You want me to go get you another?

MAX

You sure you'll get the right one?

He winces. She thinks for a moment, hands him the dustpan, crosses to the front door, and grabs a coat.

INT. UNDERGROUND CAR PARK - DAY

Max hurries across the clean, white-walled car park, her head down as she chews her nails.

She sweeps by luxury cars and fumbles out keys. An alarm chirps.

INT. MINI - MOVING - DAY

Reflected strip lights sweep across the windshield. The engine races. Max stares ahead blankly. Daylight fills the interior, and she narrows her eyes, afraid.

INT. UNDERGROUND CAR PARK - DAY

The Mini squeaks to a halt at the bottom of the exit ramp and sits idling.

The Guard in a little booth glances up from a paper and opens the gate.

INT. MINI - DAY

Max stares. The bustling street at the top of the ramp. People and cars silhouetted against the glaring sunlight.

She takes a deep breath and clutches the wheel. Her face strains.

She exhales and runs her hands through her hair, frustrated. She throws the Mini into reverse, pissed off.

INT. UNDERGROUND CAR PARK - DAY

The Mini screeches backward and whines quickly back down the car park.

The Guard shakes his head and closes the gate like this is routine.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

Adam carefully brushes up shards of glass into the dustpan. The front door slams.

Max crosses back over, throws open the refrigerator door, and fumbles out tomatoes.

ADAM

I could-

She holds up her hand and clatters out pans.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - DAY

Max sorts through clothes, folding and hanging them, but has to pause and sit on the bed.

She jolts into stifled tears, masking any noise. The cat leaps up and paws at her.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Max reads by the window, the dark blue sky and lights of London behind her.

The intercom buzzes. She hops up and crosses quickly to it.

MAX

(into intercom)

Hello?

JORDAN

(through intercom)

Dude!

Max smiles, delighted, and claps her hands.

INT. PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens to present JORDAN (20s), wearing the same surfer's bracelet as Max but her image more rock and roll. She beams a huge smile, embraces Max tightly, and offers her a bottle of wine.

MAX

Wow! You become an adult.

JORDAN

No, I became an alcoholic.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Perfectly chosen music plays. Max, Adam, Jordan, and Lucy at the dining table eating an impressive spread.

Adam tries to top up everybody's wine. Max covers her glass.

JORDAN

This is too good. I swear you have
a chef locked up in a cupboard.

LUCY

Wouldn't surprise me if she did.

Max smiles modestly.

MAX

It's just so hard to get good
Mexican food in London, you know?

JORDAN

Aw, dude, are you getting homesick?

ADAM

Ha, don't start her off. You know
she hates the apartment, right? She
wants to sell.

MAX

I know the perfect advert too. Five
million dollar penthouse suite;
pastel walls, hardwood floors, and
a stunning view of a world you
can't be part of.

ADAM

That's bullshit.

Adam shakes his head angrily as he eats.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Max lies on the bed rigid, panting unconvincingly in the
throws of passionless sex. Adam thrusts away, comes, and
rolls off her, exhausted.

She grabs a book and reads.

ADAM

Seriously?

MAX

What? We fucked, didn't we?

ADAM

One of us did.

He throws himself over and covers himself with sheets.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adam creeps awake to find Max gone. He looks at the clock and
finds it's only 6 AM.

INT. PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Max at a desk typing, illuminated by a laptop, glancing at a notebook with her cat by her.

Adam walks in, wiping his eyes.

ADAM
What are you doing?

MAX
I need to work.

He crosses over. She closes the application. He rests his hands on her shoulder and gazes at the scrawled notes, morbid photos, and disturbing illustrations in the notebook.

She snaps it closed. He looks at the screen to see a photo of Max on a website, glaring at the guy who ran toward her in the lobby earlier, the headline reading *MAD MAX*.

ADAM
I thought we agreed you wouldn't look at this stuff.

She sighs and stares at the photo of her venomous glare.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

Adam lounges on the sofa, strumming a guitar.

MAX (O.S.)
YES! YES! YES!

Max walks in delighted, picks up the cat, and spins around.

MAX (CONT'D)
(singing)
The stars! They have finally aligned!

ADAM
What's happened?

MAX
IT'S happened! Oh-my-god-oh-my-god!
I can't believe it!

ADAM
What?

MAX
Oh, come on.

She pushes her face up to the cat and wiggles its legs.

MAX (CONT'D)
 (pretending to be cat)
 She named me after her.

ADAM
 The Gwyndolen thing? Wow! No way!

He gets up off the sofa and hugs her. She clutches him tightly and smiles. He frowns, concerned.

INT. PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Max glares at Adam, teeth snarling. He scowls back.

MAX
 It's my dream role, Adam!

ADAM
 I just thought there would be a discussion first! That's all!

MAX
 Why? Why would we need to discuss it? I'm doing it!

He holds her by the shoulders and looks in the eye.

ADAM
 Hey, calm down! You literally just came off a project! Why don't you take a break? Why the hurry?

She wriggles from his hands and scowls back.

MAX
 You know how much I need this.

ADAM
 She's a messed-up character, Max. She's a monster, and you know how intense you get.

She looks at him for a moment and drops to her knees.

ADAM (CONT'D)
 What are you doing?

MAX
 (unzipping his flies)
 Just shut up.

She unzips his flies, the panoramic view of London behind their silhouettes.

ADAM
 Woah! What the hell, Max?

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Max moans, riding Adam frantically, staring confidently and biting her lip as she thrusts. He gasps, coming hard as her quivering thighs clutch him tightly.

He lies panting and amazed. She smiles down at him, gets off, and walks out of the room wearing only a t-shirt.

ADAM

Do I not even get a cuddle after?

She gives him the finger, throws herself on the couch, and reads a script. He lies grinning as he watches her.

INT. MEXICAN CELLAR RESTAURANT - DAY

Spanish guitar music plays, the restaurant near empty. Max and Lucy eat in a secluded booth.

MAX

You're screwing with me, right?
I'll be redefined by this.

LUCY

Oh, sure, you'll be redefined. I know this Gwyndolen character. She's pure evil.

MAX

Exactly, cool, right? Just what I need to upset the status quo.

LUCY

Oh sure.
(counting on fingers)
Okay then, let's see; she's depraved, she screws over every single person she meets, she uses sex to manipulate men, she-

MAX

Seriously, you read the book?
You're checking up on me?

LUCY

I've started reading it, yes. I just don't get what you're trying to prove.

Max chews with a stubborn look on her face.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Ambition is good, Max, but not always for the person who has it. Don't become another casualty.

MAX

I don't mind being a victim, as long as it's for my art.

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - DAY

Dozens of Dogs bark in an animal shelter as Max stands in an old caged kennel.

She winces as she inspects the rusted metal, barely holding the thing together.

JAMES (O.S.)

Oh dear, we'll never re-home this little runt.

She playfully rolls her eyes as JAMES (40s), a friendly-faced man, peers into the kennel with a big grin.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Not with that scraggy coat and aggressive temperament. Nope, not fit to be around people this one.

Max jabs at him playfully.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(re: rust)

Checking out the damage, or do you work for me now?

MAX

It's rusted right through.

JAMES

The whole place has rusted right through. You any good with a welder?

Max raises her eyebrows as if that's a challenge. They stare at each other for a moment too long.

The SHELTER ASSISTANT enters with a cute little Mongrel in her arms. Max immediately swoons over it.

MAX

Oh my god! Just look at you!

She pets the Mongrel.

SHELTER ASSISTANT

This is Jack. He just came in.

MAX

What is he? Three?

SHELTER ASSISTANT
Three and a half?

Max pours over the dog, stroking his head.

JAMES
You interested?

MAX
Seriously, I had to negotiate hard enough to get the cat in. I need to move out and buy a farm.

JAMES
No, WE should buy a farm.

He looks at her frankly, the stare lingering before he looks to the floor and sighs worried.

JAMES (CONT'D)
That reminds me. I need to talk to you one-on-one sometime soon.

He leaves in a hurry. She peers out of the kennel, confused.

MAX
Yeah? Good news or bad news?

JAMES
(sarcastic)
Oh, come on, Max! Is it ever bad news?

INT. BUDGET HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

Max walks down the corridor hunched. GUESTS stare as they pass, recognizing her. She avoids eye contact.

INT. BUDGET HOTEL LIFT - DAY

Max walks down the corridor, her tiny body hunched over and hands deep in her pockets, the hood pulled up on her top.

GUESTS stare as they recognize her.

She avoids eye contact, ducks into a lift, and stands nervously as she selects a floor.

A BUSINESSMAN jogs to the lift and doesn't quite make it, the doors closing on him.

He sighs, but they open again, revealing Max smiling with her finger on the button.

BUSINESSMAN
(panting)
Thanks.

Max shuffles to the back of the lift and busies herself with her phone as he looks her up and down, working out who she is.

She glances up nervously. He smiles. She shoots him a polite smile back.

The lift stops, and he exits, but then a COUPLE runs to the lift, just making it in.

Max and the couple stand in silence, exchanging glances and smiles as it continues upward.

The woman whispers into the man's ear while staring at her.

The lift stops, and a FAMILY bumbles in, filling it to capacity.

Max's eyes go wide as she stares at her phone from the back of the group.

She looks up to find the family staring back at her like visitors at a zoo.

The lift finally stops, and everybody else exits, allowing Max to let out a long sigh and brace herself against the corner of the lift.

INT. BUDGET HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

Max knocks on a room door and waits impatiently, tapping her nails against the frame.

Jordan opens it while yawning, still in her pajamas, and holding a *DO NOT DISTURB* sign.

MAX
Seriously, could you not book a room on a higher floor?

JORDAN
Oh, hi, Max. Nice to see you too.

MAX
Did you not get my message?

JORDAN
I just got up. I have jet lag.

MAX
You said you slept the whole flight?

JORDAN
Yeah, but you still, like, get the
jet lag, right?

Max sighs and walks in shaking her head.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
Right?

INT. BUDGET HOTEL ROOM

The room dark, the curtains blocking out the sun. A luggage case lies open in the middle, surrounded by a mess of clothes, a snowboard propped against it.

Jordan lies back on the bed.

Max tweaks the gap in the curtains closed, crashes down beside her, and sighs.

Jordan idly checks her phone messages and raises her eyebrows, impressed.

JORDAN
Oh, no way! Congratulations, dude.

MAX
You think?

JORDAN
Duh yeah? This is what you always
wanted. This is awesome, right?

MAX
At least you think so.

JORDAN
What's the matter?

Max shakes her head resentfully as she chews her nails.

MAX
It doesn't matter.

Jordan lights up a cigarette.

MAX (CONT'D)
There's a party this weekend. You
want to come? The director wants to
meet me.

JORDAN
Umm, yeah! What about Adam?

Jordan picks through clothes, already choosing an ensemble.

MAX
He's away.

JORDAN
(singing)
Awesome.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Max types quickly at her computer while Adam dashes back and forth behind her, running in and out of the bedroom.

ADAM (O.S.)
You could have gotten me up.

She carries on consumed. He stumbles out, stamps on a shoe, and tugs at a case.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Max?

She idly glances around. He stares back, put out.

ADAM (CONT'D)
I'm going.

She crosses over and wraps her arms around him, sulking. He rubs her back and kisses her head.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Enjoy your party, okay?

MAX
It's not a party, it's work.

ADAM
Just try not to hate it. You going
to be alright?

She nods solemnly, and they kiss.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

Funky music blasts as sunlight glints through gaps in the blinds. The cat sits on the coffee table, looking up, confused as Max smiles back, swinging her hips and swaying her head from side to side.

She struts across the floor, miming to the lyrics, while pointing at the cat, and pulling goofy faces.

Max wiggles her waist and claps her hands, the beat infectious.

She poses, looks back over her shoulder, and shakes her booty.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Max stares at her computer screen and types like crazy with the night rapidly drawing in.

The intercom buzzes. She snaps into reality and crosses to it, confused.

MAX
(into intercom)
Hello?

JORDAN
(through intercom)
Party on, dude!

Max glances at the clock, alarmed.

INT. PENTHOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Jordan stands in the doorway perched on tall heels, wearing a black dress, and looking Max up and down unimpressed.

Max looks sheepishly back in her hoodie and pajamas.

JORDAN
Well, one of us is going to have to change.

MAX
Oh-my-god-oh-my-god, seriously, I'm so sorry.

Max sprints to the bathroom as Jordan strolls through the penthouse, shaking her head.

The shower comes on in the background as Jordan changes the music to a rock track and opens the curtains.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Four nearly identical black cocktail dresses lie laid out on the bed. Max scans back and forth between them, unable to decide which to wear.

She scrunches her hair, pained, as Jordan searches through the closet and pulls out a tiny red dress.

JORDAN
Woah, hello! Do you still have the Barbie doll that goes with this?

MAX
That was a gift, okay?

JORDAN
Yeah? You should ask them to send
the rest of it.

Max closes her eyes and takes a soothing breath.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Minutes later, Max's feet twist and tilt in heels, a black dress hanging to just above her knees, hugging perfectly around her body, a diamond necklace draped around her neck, and her glossy hair cascading over her shapely shoulders.

She stares nervously into the mirror while chewing her nails.

MAX
They'll say I look hideous.

JORDAN
Don't be stupid.

Max collapses onto a chair with her head in her hands.

MAX
I think I'm going to throw up.

JORDAN
Just chill out.

Max takes a deep breath and stares at her reflection, disgusted.

EXT. ST PANCRAS RENAISSANCE LONDON HOTEL - LATER

The stone gothic frontage stares out over the street, lit by up by a row of lights, the windows black, the gaping entrance glowing brightly.

A black cab rolls up to a halt.

INT. HOTEL STAIRCASE - NIGHT

An ornate staircase sweeps under pointed arches, the carpet and walls a deep red.

Max and Jordan descend, Max stumbling a little, absent of any confidence and her stride unnatural.

They reach the bottom, and she freezes.

MAX
I can't! I can't do this!

JORDAN
Calm down.

MAX

I'm going to fuck it up. I fucking look stupid. I fucking talk stupid. They're all going to think I am fucking stupid.

Jordan spots GUESTS walking down. She marches Max to one side, holds her by the shoulders, and looks her in the eye.

JORDAN

Dude, you're hazing me with issues right now. One problem at a time.

MAX

Let's just go. We can leave before we're spotted.

JORDAN

Nope. No way. You're not walking out of your dream on my watch. Look, you're an actress, right? So how about this? You start playing the role of someone who isn't a total neurotic fuck up?

Max takes a deep breath and tries to compose herself.

INT. HOTEL HALL

Orchestral music plays softly in the huge open hall as groups of GUESTS mill about under a glass ceiling.

Jordan and Max walk through the grand entrance smiling, causing everyone to glance around for a moment and continue chatting.

The girls grab wine, cross to a corner, and scan the room.

MAX

Oh god, there he is!

EDMUND WARD, an old, thin, thespian type, peeks his head out of his group and stares back. Max shoots back an awkward smile, and he raises his glass to her.

JORDAN

See, he seems nice.

He raises up a finger and Max nods back as Jordan downs her wine and grabs another from a passing Server.

Max gazes around and suddenly stops, fixed, her jaw dropping.

MAX

Oh, my god.

JORDAN

What?

MAX

Charlie Cane.

JORDAN

No fucking way?

Max nods across the room to CHARLIE CANE (30s), standing confidently in a well-cut black suit, entertaining a crowd with his charisma.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

I didn't know you were a fan?

MAX

Seriously, I am borderline stalking the guy.

JORDAN

Yeah?

MAX

Oh yeah. Professionally speaking, of course. You know, for research purposes.

JORDAN

Dude, whatever.

MAX

He can do anything. I hate him for that. You know he writes poetry, right? Just as a little side project, and it's like, good, really good.

JORDAN

I wouldn't mind being his little side project.

MAX

Seriously, he's got so much screen presence he could win an Oscar for a leaked sex tape.

Jordan spots Edmund making his way toward them, his smile beaming and his stride confident.

JORDAN

Heads up, dude, incoming.

Max takes a deep breath and forces a smile.

EDMUND WARD

Max! A real pleasure!

He shakes her hand and kisses her cheek, then looks Jordan up and down while swirling a tomato juice in his hand.

MAX

This is Jordan.

Edmund shakes Jordan's hand and kisses her cheek.

EDMUND WARD

The pleasure is all mine, I assure you, near orgasmic in fact.

JORDAN

Yeah? I usually need a few more tomato juices to get to that stage.

EDMUND WARD

Pretty and witty, a rare treat!
But, alas, tomato juice it has to be. For when it comes to alcohol,
(turning to Max)
I simply can't be one to trust around such a cruel seductress.

JORDAN

I'm the same with Ben and Jerry's.

He laughs, impressed, and she motions to leave.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

I'm going to go see where I can get some of that tomato juice, okay? It's clearly a lot stronger than this wine.

Jordan tails a drinks server as Max composes herself.

EDMUND WARD

So, Max, my contacts speak highly of you. They praise your dedication and professionalism.

MAX

Well, you should always try your hardest, right?

EDMUND WARD

Indeed, but tell me, do you yearn to play Gwyndolen?

MAX

Oh my god, I'm obsessed with her. I've wanted to play her most of my life.

EDMUND WARD

Wanted to? Or were born to?

MAX

I, I don't...? What do you mean?

EDMUND WARD

I fear your pondering may have said it all.

MAX

What? No! Seriously, I know so much about her. I've studied the hell out of the book.

EDMUND WARD

But you are far from her, you must admit. Gwyndolen is a confident, assertive, sexually manipulative woman, and I see you here, the very definition of a wallflower.

MAX

Look, I can do this, okay? I promise you. I can totally do this.

EDMUND WARD

I do hope so, Max. It would be a crying shame if your only real contribution to this is your Californian accent. That would hardly be 'bodacious'.

Max looks back hopelessly.

EDMUND WARD (CONT'D)

Don't let me down, okay? I've got a lot riding on you. Fifty million dollars, to be exact.

He looks her up and down and glances across the room.

EDMUND WARD (CONT'D)

(calling)

Tony! You elusive fat bastard! Wait there!

He hurries away, leaving Max shocked. Jordan walks up eating hors d'oeuvres.

JORDAN

Uh oh, dude. Ladies' room, now.

INT. HOTEL RESTROOM STALL - SECONDS LATER

Max sits perched on a toilet, sniffing and wiping her eyes as Jordan crouches by her, comforting her with one hand and swigging a glass of wine with the other.

JORDAN
Well, what did he say?

MAX
He's a twat, Jordan! A total twat!

JORDAN
Twat?

MAX
He's right though. That's the thing. I'm the complete opposite of what they want.

Max cries as Jordan grabs a glass from the floor, pulls a wine bottle from her handbag, and pours her a drink.

JORDAN
Look, you are awesome, okay? Like, totally awesome.

Max looks back, desperate, as Jordan hands her the wine.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
So if he wants Gwyndolen, give him Gwyndolen.

Max necks the wine and nods, determined.

INT. HOTEL HALL - MINUTES LATER

Minutes later, the guests all pause their conversations and stare, this time with their gazes locked.

Max in the entrance, her pose confident.

She strides cat-like down the center of the room, gliding around the groups of people before strutting past Edmund as he watches, captivated.

She pauses, looks back, and smiles coyly. He gazes back, entranced.

Carrying on across the room, she crosses toward Charlie Cane as he chats in a group.

He spots her and falls silent as she sweeps by while staring into his eyes and stops to take a drink from a server.

CHARLIE CANE
(to group)
Excuse me one second.

Charlie crosses to Max as she pivots around, expecting him to be there.

He beams a wide smile and shakes her hand.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

Hi, I don't think we've met.

MAX

I'm a big fan. I love your poetry.
It's excellent.

CHARLIE CANE

Well, it's hard to make each line
rhyme, you know?

He sniggers at his own joke as she smirks politely.

MAX

I write. Just stories though. Not
poetry.

CHARLIE CANE

(uninterested)

Yeah?

They drink in silence for a few moments before he gazes
around the room slowly and looks her in the eye.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

I'm not buying the whole sexual
seductress act, by the way, sorry.

She stares back, surprised.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

You just see it all the time.
Spoilt actress trying to be a
badass, taking on a tough role,
attempting to be taken seriously.
It never works out, and if you
can't even convince me tonight, how
the hell are you going to convince
all your critics in the press.

She winces hurt.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

Look, don't get angry. I'm just
telling you how it is. It's a big
jump from where you are to where I
am. Fame's frivolous. It's a by-
product of exposure. Respect.
That's different. You have to work
real hard to earn respect. Real
hard.

Jordan spots Max clenching her jaw angrily and hurries over.

JORDAN

Hey, you guys, mind if I jump in?
Only so long you can walk around
drinking alone, right?

Charlie shoots Jordan a huge grin and shakes her hand while Max fumes.

CHARLIE CANE
(shaking hand)
Much better to do it in a group,
yeah? Charlie Cane, a pleasure.

JORDAN
Dude, you so don't have to
introduce yourself to me! I'm like,
your biggest fan!

Max rolls her eyes.

CHARLIE CANE
Yeah? Cool!

JORDAN
Yeah, I think you're amazing. And
your poetry, seriously, oh my god!

Max presses her tongue in her cheek and glares.

CHARLIE CANE
Yeah? What's your favorite?

JORDAN
Umm, like all of them, right? How
could I even begin to pick just
one?

Charlie grins smugly as he looks Jordan up and down. She smiles back flirtatiously.

CHARLIE CANE
You living here now too?

JORDAN
Oh no, I'm just here for a week to
see my BFF.

She squeezes Max, who remains rigid and pissed off.

CHARLIE CANE
Cool, man, a week of partying in
London, yeah?

JORDAN
Well, not exactly.

Jordan frowns, disappointed. Charlie ponders for a moment.

CHARLIE CANE
Hey, I should totally take you out.
I know all the cool places.

JORDAN
 Seriously?

CHARLIE CANE
 Yeah, man.

JORDAN
 Oh my god, partying with Charlie
 Cane! Just how cool am I?

CHARLIE CANE
 You up for it, Max?

MAX
 I've got loads to do at the moment,
 you guys knock yourself out,
 whatever.

INT. HOTEL STAIRCASE - MINUTES LATER

Max and Jordan ascend the stairs, Jordan fanning herself with her phone delighted.

JORDAN
 (singing)
 Charlie Cane's number. It's like so
 hot I might just have to store this
 in the mini-bar.

MAX
 At least then there'd be something
 left in your mini-bar.

JORDAN
 Seriously, what's the matter with
 you? And what was with that look
 you were giving him? I thought you
 were, like, going to suck the blood
 from his neck or something.

MAX
 At least I wasn't trying to suck
 his dick, Jordan. He's a twat,
 okay? A narcissistic twat. He's
 just like everybody else. Thinks he
 knows me but doesn't have a clue.

JORDAN
 Dude, I still don't know what that
 word means.

MAX
 What? 'Narcissistic'?

JORDAN
 No 'twat'.

Edmund walks out of the hall behind them.

EDMUND WARD

Max!

Max and Jordan glance around, and he claps his hands as he walks up to them.

EDMUND WARD (CONT'D)

Impressive! Come by my place this week, okay? Let's talk detail as soon as possible."

Max smiles confidently as he hands her a business card. She watches him leave and sighs relieved.

JORDAN

Looks like we both snagged our men tonight, right?

INT. OFFICE MEETING ROOM - DAY

Max and Lucy sit at an office table alone, waiting for a meeting to start, Max engrossed in scribbling notes on a script.

LUCY

Is there ever a time you're not working?

MAX

There's sleeping.

LUCY

I thought you had insomnia.

MAX

I do.

LUCY

What's up? You okay? You seem quiet today. Have I pissed you off or something?

Max shakes her head as she continues making notes.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I'm still reading the book, you know. I've just read the part where Gwyn decides to become a whore. Real sweet.

Max sighs and rests her head in her hand.

MAX

You know when someone gets in your head?

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

And you can't get them out, but you don't know why you give a shit?

LUCY

I thought getting into people's heads was your thing.

MAX

Getting into other people's, yeah, but not anyone getting into mine. Even I don't want to be in mine.

Lucy struggles a concerned smile as Max shrugs the thought off.

MAX (CONT'D)

It's no big deal.

Lucy watches Max writing fast and determined, churning out thoughts, the skin around her nails chewed red, her face consumed, and her eyes defiant.

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER OFFICE - DAY

James angrily tosses a folder into a box labeled deceased. He sits back at his desk in the small, cluttered office.

JAMES

We're running a fucking slaughterhouse, Max.

MAX

Nice, James. Way to put a layer of sugar on it.

JAMES

I'm sorry, but there's no other way of putting it. With the way the economy is, people are saving their pennies, not their pets.

MAX

Seriously, if it's more money you need, just ask.

JAMES

It's a big ask this time.

MAX

(challengingly)
How big?

JAMES

The current setup doesn't work. You know that. The shelter needs a shelter.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

No-kill, cage-free that gives us the capacity and lifetime care. So, I'm putting a proposal together, and I'm looking for a backer to lead the way. A big backer.

He stares at her, hopeful she likes his brief pitch.

MAX

Well, it's good I just got a big job then.

JAMES

You serious?

She nods proudly. He leaps up so they can embrace tightly.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You know my plan B was to kidnap you and hold you to ransom, right?

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER SURGERY - MINUTES LATER

Max closes the office door as she leaves and pulls a sympathetic face at Jack the Mongrel lying on the surgery table as the assistant inspects x-rays.

MAX

Oh no, what's wrong with you?

Max crosses over and comforts him lovingly.

SHELTER ASSISTANT

His heart rate never came down after coming in.

She shows Max the x-rays of his chest.

SHELTER ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

There's something showing on the chest area.

MAX

Surgery?

The Assistant nods.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Max sits reading in the penthouse with the cat by her side.

The front door clunks, and Adam enters, wheeling his luggage case.

She tosses her book down and crosses over so they can kiss and hug.

ADAM
I am shattered.

He crosses to the bedroom.

MAX
Well maybe you shouldn't stay out
so late partying then.

He pauses and looks back guilty. She wiggles her phone in her hand as she shoots him a disapproving frown.

ADAM
Checking up on me? Since when did
you care about one night out?

He skulks into the bedroom.

MAX
I mean, hanging out with a stripper
all night, real classy, Adam.

ADAM (O.S.)
Burlesque performer. She's actually
really nice.

MAX
I know who she is. She's an
attention-seeking skank.

He pops his head out of the bedroom, amused.

ADAM
Are you jealous?

She glares back disgusted as he crosses into the kitchen.

ADAM (CONT'D)
What are we doing for tea?

MAX
Take-a-way menus are right there on
the fridge, dude.

He snatches up the menus, fighting his frustration as he reads them.

MAX (CONT'D)
Order some fried chicken. You know,
since you're so into artificially
enlarged breasts.

ADAM
Sod this. I'll go somewhere with
the boys.

He storms across the room, avoiding eye contact, and goes to open the front door.

MAX
No, wait, okay, stop!

He looks back, seething.

She glares for a moment, but her expression slowly softens into something more forlorn.

MAX (CONT'D)
You've not... You didn't ask me how my party went.

ADAM
How did it go?

MAX
It was horrible. The director was really mean to me, and there was this actor, this really famous one, who kept pestering me to go out with him.

ADAM
Really?

She nods back, upset.

MAX
I'll fix you something to eat, okay? I'm just really upset.

He rushes across and hugs her tightly.

ADAM
Hey, it's okay. I'm sorry.

She stares into the middle distance, emotionless.

INT. BELGRAVIA TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Max steps into Edmund's opulent home that's decorated with sexual paintings and erotic trinkets.

She stands confidently as he looks her up and down, impressed.

EDMUND WARD
Please, this way.

He sweeps open a door, and she struts past, but her face sinks when she finds Charlie already there, rustling a laptop into a bag.

CHARLIE CANE
I'll just get out of your hair.

EDMUND WARD
 Yes, Charlie, fuck off. We have
 some real work to do now.

Charlie goes to leave and pauses by Max.

CHARLIE CANE
 Hey, you missed a great night last
 night. Jordan is a load of fun. You
 should come out with us this
 weekend. It's gonna be wild.

Max stares back, uninterested.

EDMUND WARD
 Stop wasting our precious time,
 Charlie. Blinding us with your
 bleached smile. Talking out of your
 bleached asshole.

Charlie laughs and lets himself out. Edmund sighs.

EDMUND WARD (CONT'D)
 How can that over-groomed fetus in
 a suit hold power over me?

MAX
 Power over you?

EDMUND WARD
 You don't know? This is all his
 project! The monkeys are genuinely
 running the circus! The cunts are
 running the brothel!

Max closes her eyes and bites her lip.

INT. BELGRAVIA TOWNHOUSE LIVING ROOM - LATER

Max and Edmund go through sheets of notes.

MAX
 It's just this one scene I have a
 real concern about, right?

EDMUND WARD
 Yes?

MAX
 The striptease in the whorehouse. I
 want it to be amazing, okay? I want
 the best stripper in the world to
 see it and be like, oh my god, she
 can do this, like envy it, you
 know?

EDMUND WARD

Ah, I see. What you need is Faith!

MAX

Faith?

EDMUND WARD

Faith.

He crosses to the mantelpiece and reaches to a statue of the Virgin Mary, from behind which he takes an escort's calling card and hands it to her.

EDMUND WARD (CONT'D)

She's certainly taught me a thing or two over the years.

INT. LA FAMIGLIA ITALIAN RESTAURANT - DAY

An airy Italian restaurant, simple but classy. Max and Jordan sit at a small table by a bright window, giggling as Max keenly refills their wine glasses.

MAX

I mean, just grow some balls and tell me, right? Don't go sneaking around, dancing with attention-seeking skanks, and think I'm not going to find out about it.

Max shakes her head and gulps back her wine. She thinks for a few moments, her expression turning mischievous.

MAX (CONT'D)

You know what, fuck it. Seriously, if he likes to have his secret little parties, then I'm coming out. I'm coming out with you this weekend. Fuck him.

JORDAN

Yeah! Fuck him.

A WAITER crosses over to the table.

WAITER

Was everything to your satisfaction, ladies?

JORDAN

That was delicious, thank you.

He goes to clear plates, but Max rests her hand on his arm.

MAX

That was very satisfying.

WAITER

Excellent, I am glad to hear it.

Max clutches his arm tightly.

MAX

Seriously, I've not been so satisfied in a long time. You're very good

WAITER

(nervous)

Thank you, thank you. We aim to please.

Jordan smiles, amused.

MAX

I mean, I'm good at satisfying myself at home. I've got the equipment for it – all the special gadgets, many of which were, you know, mail-order.

Jordan snorts into her wine glass.

MAX (CONT'D)

But that was really satisfying. And usually, I wouldn't put so much meat inside me, so much I'm, like, stretched out real bad.

Jordan chokes and thumps her chest, her eyes streaming. The waiter looks at her, alarmed, his face bright red

WAITER

Are you okay, madam?

JORDAN

Dude, I'm fine, I'm fine. It just went down the wrong hole.

MAX

Oh, she's fine.

Max looks innocently at the Waiter

MAX (CONT'D)

Oh, she's fine. It's just the wrong hole, but that's okay with girls like us.

Jordan sniggers and wipes her eyes, trying to regain composure.

WAITER

(hurrying away)

I'll get you a glass of water.

JORDAN

Oh my god, this is awesome! I am so loving this new Max!

Max raises her eyebrows confidently.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB - DAY

A throbbing bassline pulses, riding up and down frequencies as rappers slur filthy lyrics over the slow beat. Sunlight peeks through masked-out windows, the carpet filthy, on which empty chairs are scattered randomly.

A lone figure writhes on stage in a t-shirt, jeans, and heels.

Max looks over her shoulder with a sultry look on her face as she circles her hips seductively, sweat beading on her arms.

FAITH, a pretty middle-aged woman wearing far too much makeup, looks at the DJ booth and draws her hand across her neck.

The music cuts and Max clutches her knees, exhausted.

FAITH

I think you've had enough for one day, love.

MAX

I can... I can keep going.

FAITH

Look, you're alright at this actually. To be honest, I thought you'd be well shit. I thought, fucking American, she'll be up there cheerleading like a right muppet.

Max grins to herself and rubs her calves.

MAX

So, how do you know Edmund Ward?

FAITH

Oh, Eddie? You having a laugh? He's always in here, dirty old git. Every Saturday night. Must be going on ten years now.

MAX

Seriously? No way.

FAITH

Soft bugger, he should save his pennies and hire prossies.

(MORE)

FAITH (CONT'D)

But then they're weird them acting types, ain't they?

MAX

Are we?

FAITH

Well, not you, love. You're alright. I thought you'd be right up your own arse, but you're a proper filthy cow, ain't ya?

MAX

(laughing shocked)

Yeah? you think?

FAITH

Takes one to know one.

INT. LUCY'S APARTMENT - DAY

A humble, cramped apartment, cluttered and messy. Books spill from shelves while others lie stacked in piles. Max sits perched on the only clear spot on the sofa.

She scans around and pauses on Lucy's collection of old photos on a table, a few of Max.

Lucy walks in, hands Max a drink, and slumps down in an armchair.

Max nods over to a book on the coffee table.

MAX

You're still reading it then?

LUCY

(shaking head disgusted)

I've given up with it.

Lucy rustles a blister pack out a box, pops a tablet out, and gulps it back. Max bites her nails consumed.

LUCY (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

MAX

You ever felt like everyone's just out to get you?

LUCY

Sometimes, yeah, but it's like Gandhi says; first they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, then you win.

Max nods back, unconvinced, and sips on her drink while stewing.

Lucy pulls her legs up to her chest and drinks in silence.

Max suddenly scrunches her face up and gasps as tears squeeze through her clenched eyes.

Lucy jolts up to comfort Max as she clinks the cup down, her hand shaking.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Hey, it's okay, it's okay. Don't let it get to you.

MAX

(gasping)

Why does everybody hate me, Luce?

LUCY

They don't. Don't be silly.

Max's chin quivers, her breaths short.

MAX

They do. They hate me so much. Don't tell me they don't. I know what they say. I'm not stupid, okay? What did I do? What did I do to hurt anybody? I must be a horrible person. That's the only explanation.

Lucy looks Max in the eye seriously.

LUCY

They don't know you, okay?

Max sniffs back tears and shakes her head.

MAX

I've got to prove I can do this.

INT. THE PIPELINE BAR - NIGHT

Punk blasts in the dark bustling bar as ROCKERS, BUMS, BOHEMIANS, and GREASERS mill about drinking.

Max, Charlie, and Jordan sit around a table, Max hidden in the corner, clutching her bottle pensively.

CHARLIE CANE

What's the matter? This not your scene?

JORDAN

She doesn't like big crowds. They scare her.

CHARLIE CANE

Yeah? Like a social anxiety disorder?

MAX

No, like a being famous when you don't want to be disorder.

CHARLIE CANE

You don't need to worry in a place like this. The people here might know you, they might even love you, but they consider it lowering themselves to show they give a shit about you. Perfect, right?

JORDAN

You don't get it, Charlie. She can't go anywhere, without everybody being, like, fascinated with her.

CHARLIE CANE

An actress who loathes attention.

Charlie shakes his head and smirks, amused. Max rolls her eyes and chugs on her bottle fast.

INT. THE PIPELINE BAR - LATER

Music pumps loud, the table now littered with empties. Max sways drunk, laughing with Jordan and Charlie.

CHARLIE CANE

Okay, here's a question, do you make love, or do you fuck?

JORDAN

Why do you have to be so gross and bring sex into everything?

CHARLIE CANE

I'm making commentary on social behavior. I'm not being gross.

MAX

You're so full of shit. Guys are always just so obsessed with sex. Seriously, that's such a cliché question.

CHARLIE CANE
Just like I thought. Typical Valley
girls. All front and no substance.

Jordan cups her breasts and jiggles them.

JORDAN
Hey, these are the real thing.

He raises his drink to her, and Jordan raises her eyebrows suggestively.

MAX
It's one of those bullshit
questions people ask. It's like
when journalists want to know if
you like cats or dogs.

CHARLIE CANE
What's your point?

MAX
Well, I love both, but for some
reason, that's not a satisfactory
answer.

Charlie purses his lips, interested.

MAX (CONT'D)
They should ask me if I like
animals or humans. Then I'd give
them something to write about.

CHARLIE CANE
We're digressing from my original
question.

MAX
Dude, I totally answered your
question. People make love, they
fuck, they like both, okay?

CHARLIE CANE
No, this isn't something you can
answer with words. The only way to
tell is with a kiss.

He puckers his lips, and Max and Jordan roll their eyes.

JORDAN
You know what, seriously, let's
just get it over and done with,
okay?

She leans in, kisses him passionately, and sits back confident.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Well?

CHARLIE CANE

Well, you tell me.

JORDAN

You like to fuck. As if that wasn't obvious enough anyway.

CHARLIE CANE

Yeah? I get that vibe from you too.

Max leans forward on the table, ready to kiss him.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

Woah, no way! Are you kidding?
You've got a boyfriend!

MAX

It's like she said; we're all we're actors, right?

CHARLIE CANE

I don't get you, man. One minute you're scared people are going to recognize you, and the next you're willing to kiss a guy in public?

MAX

You fucker, Charlie. Seriously, you're so full of shit! Fuck this!

Max grabs Jordan and kisses her while looking dead into Charlie's eyes, her hand clasping Jordan's neck, and her lips slurping eagerly. He's shocked but captivated.

Max releases and goes back to drinking as Jordan sits stunned.

MAX (CONT'D)

Well?

Jordan flicks her pupils back and forth between them.

JORDAN

I'm sorry Charlie, but I feel like she just genuinely fucked me
(beat)
with her mouth.

Charlie dismissively shakes his head.

EXT. THE PIPELINE BAR - LATER

Outside the bar, Charlie lights a cigarette in Jordan's lips. Max rubs her arm while watching, sighs, and gestures for one.

MAX
Okay, come on.

JORDAN
Hey, you quit.

MAX
Yeah, well, it didn't work out.

JORDAN
Does Adam know?

MAX
Do I fucking care if fucking Adam
fucking knows?

JORDAN
Woah, get this girl a cigarette,
Charlie.

Charlie hands Max a cigarette and she pops it in her mouth.

He goes to light it, but she snatches the lighter and lights it herself before inhaling eagerly.

INT. THE PIPELINE BAR - LATER

Music pumps at an oppressive level, the chatter of drinkers a riotous din, their crowding bodies heaving.

Max, Jordan, and Charlie jostle drunkenly to the music.

MAX
This is pretty fucking tame,
Charlie. I thought you said we'd go
wild tonight?

CHARLIE CANE
Oh, this is just the tickle of my
foreplay. The night is still young.

MAX
Whatever. I hope you have something
special, like pretty fucking
hardcore planned

CHARLIE CANE
Oh, I got some hardcore planned.

Charlie looks at Jordan, who smiles flirtatiously back.

MAX
Seriously, because us Valley girls,
we like to party hard.

Jordan bursts into laughter.

JORDAN

You are so full of shit tonight
Max. Since when have we ever
partied hard? Like seriously?

Max shoots Jordan a glare and spots someone taking a photo on their phone.

She firmly gives them the finger and smiles sarcastically before looking at Charlie challengingly.

MAX

Okay, well, maybe Charlie needs to
take our party virginity then. Give
it to us as hard as he can.

JORDAN

Yeah, Charlie, why don't you give
it to us real hard. So we're, like,
sore in the morning?

CHARLIE CANE

Girls, this is London, okay, not
L.A. This place will ruin you.

MAX

You're so full of shit. My
boyfriend grew up here, and he's a
fucking pussy.

CHARLIE CANE

Okay, you asked for it.

Charlie rummages in his jacket and raises clenched fists, elastic dangling from them.

The girls look at each other, then at him.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

Well, come on, choose.

Jordan taps a hand. He opens it to reveal a black masquerade mask.

JORDAN

No way! That's totally cool!

Charlie opens his other hand and looks at Max.

CHARLIE CANE

Now we can get away with anything,
right?

Max stares at a red devil masquerade mask as guitars thrash and bright lights sweep.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - LATER

Dance music pumps from buildings, laughing GROUPS stagger down the street. Bare thighs sweep in the moonlight under short, sparkling skirts. Heels click on wet concrete.

Hidden behind her mask, Max stares at passing people.

Drunken faces leer from steamy windows while disco lights flicker from inside.

Men shout, girls scream, and a sudden violent fistfight breaks out.

Max struts ahead, her hips taking on a seductive sweep. Glass bottles smash as they shatter into shards.

Charlie slides his hand around Jordan's waist. A group of girls shriek and leap from barking police dogs.

Max crouches down to the dogs and strokes the side of their snarling mouths as they jolt on the extent of their leads.

Passing people pause and look mesmerized at the sight of the anonymous masked trio. Max stares right back at them, pointing and waving.

Sirens echo down stone frontages, and blue lights flicker by.

Max, Jordan, and Charlie stroll toward a small door under a railway arch, where red lights strobe inside.

Two BULKY SECURITY GUARDS open the door for them.

INT. ARCADIA CLUB ENTRANCE

Red illuminates the small room. Max, Jordan, and Charlie shuffle along in the queue of CLUBBERS.

Max hands over money and ID and lifts her mask to the SECURITY GIRL.

SECURITY GIRL
(smirking)
Knock yourself out, Disney Club.

She points challengingly to a pair of doors, a bright red light glowing in the crack.

Max, Charlie and Jordan proceed through into darkness.

INT. ARCADIA CLUB

The harrowing shrill of an operatic choir hacked over a throbbing high rpm beat licked with drum and bass breaks. The crowd heaves and writhes.

Heads swing silhouetted against red sweeping lights while a DJ works a laptop, his dreadlocks flicking over his face. Bodies crash together.

Suggestive glances and dominant stares are exchanged. Sweat-stained work shirts jostle beside slashed-up nylon catsuits and sweeping glow sticks. Strong male faces in makeup wink from under spectacular flowing wigs.

Max, Charlie, and Jordan ease to the bar. Shots are handed out. Max necks hers and disappears into the masses. She snakes through the crowd, looking into the eyes of admiring men and stroking her finger across their chests.

Charlie and Jordan stay close, glancing around for Max.

Max dances to the hard beat, lost in the crowd, her movement tribal-like in the strobe lights.

Charlie and Jordan dance while gazing into each other's eyes.

Max gets onto the stage, and her body pumps hard to the beat.

Charlie and Jordan spot Max and point to her while cheering with surprise.

Max works the crowd, coaxing them into a fever, directing them like a conductor commanding an orchestra.

She spots Charlie and Jordan, beckons them over, and hands over a gold credit card.

Max then strips her top off and dances in her bra, her sweating arms glistening as she writhes to the pounding drums.

The credit card glints as Jordan hands it across the bar.

Max grabs a bottle of booze and pours it over the feverish crowd. They bask in it and cry for more.

Bar girls sweep through, a huge bottle of champagne sparkling above their heads which they hand to Max.

Max shakes the champagne bottle, holds it against her crotch, pops the cork, and showers the crowd below her before whipping off her mask and grinning menacingly down at her subjects.

Charlie and Jordan embrace in a kiss as Max watches down on them, her eyes seething and teeth gritted demonically in the black light.

She goes back to frantically dancing, the music pumping relentlessly.

INT. LONDON BLACK CAB - NIGHT

The engine purrs as a taxi slips through the streets in the night, the protective partition shuddering over bumps.

Charlie and Jordan kiss on the back seat. She throws herself into his groping hands and climbs across his lap. She gasps, grabbing at him, as he glances over her shoulder.

Max sits slumped on the fold-down chair opposite them, her head resting against the side window, jostling with the cab's movement as she stares vacantly through the glass.

She catches him looking, turns, and looks right back at him.

He carries on kissing Jordan, their lips slurping, but continues to watch Max out of the corner of his eye.

She stares back, draws her hand to her naval, and teases up her top. His eyes dart between her hand and stare.

Max plunges her hand down the front of her jeans and stares back.

Charlie leers while running his hands inside Jordan's top, watching Max's fingers stroke circles under the denim. Jordan moans and rocks her hips against him as he clutches at her, continuing to watch Max.

Max closes her eyes, lets her jaw drop, and pants silently.

He gazes, his body fixed as Jordan caresses him.

Max's lips gape, her chest heaves, and she opens her eyes slowly, staring back intensely.

The cab suddenly squeaks to a stop.

Max slides out her hand, opens the door, and ducks into darkness.

Charlie stares into the middle distance as the cab pulls away, Jordan still desperately kissing his face.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - DAY

The intercom buzzes in the penthouse bedroom, and Max's eyes creep open in the bright light.

It buzzes again, and she fumbles for the phone.

MAX

Hello?

INTERCOM

(Jordan serious)

Max, you've got to let me in now.

She glances around, worried.

INT. PENTHOUSE

Max crosses pensively to the door and opens it to find Jordan wincing in despair.

JORDAN
Dude, please tell me you have
painkillers.

MAX
Umm, yeah, sure.

Max jogs to the kitchen and pulls at drawers.

Jordan staggers across to a stool, clutching her stomach, as Max pours a glass of water and hands it across with pills.

JORDAN
Dude, you are a saint, seriously, a
bone-fide saint.

Jordan swigs them back, cringes, and collapses, disappointed.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
Well, you'll be pleased to hear
Charlie doesn't fuck as good as you
kiss.

Jordan looks up at Max, and they exchange awkward smiles.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
Can I ask you a serious question?

MAX
What?

JORDAN
What's going on with you two?

Max turns to the sink and pours herself a glass of water.

MAX
You saw?

JORDAN
Dude, it was pretty obvious, okay?

Max swivels around and braces herself against the counter.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
I mean, why are you like, so
aggressive around him?

MAX
I am?

JORDAN

Look, you don't have to like him,
okay? But could you at least
pretend to.

Max stares back at Jordan and nods sincerely.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

Max carefully slices an apple while miming and jiggling along to a song in a flowing dress.

She eagerly tops up her wine and takes a long swig.

A clunk from the front door grabs her attention. She smiles across as it sweeps open, and Adam peers in, grinning.

ADAM

Hey.

MAX

(sucking finger)

Hey.

He discards his luggage and crosses to her.

ADAM

Now, something smells wonderful.

She smiles as she cuts. He swoops in and cradles her.

ADAM (CONT'D)

You know what smells wonderful? My
wonderful, sexy girlfriend.

MAX

Yeah?

Max spins around in his hands, and they kiss.

MAX (CONT'D)

You shouldn't distract me. I'll
ruin your dessert.

ADAM

Maybe I want my dessert now?

She wiggles and pushes his hands down to her butt.

MAX

How about your starter instead?

INT. PENTHOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Adam and Max crash to the floor, embraced. He rolls her onto her back. She smiles, eyes wild.

Adam lifts her legs up and wrestles frantically with his belt, gazing at her. Max stares back, moaning as he thrusts,

MAX

Yes! Fuck me! Come on!

He strains his face in ecstasy.

MAX (CONT'D)

Fuck me harder! Oh yeah! Harder!

Adam clutches her shoulders, grinding as hard as he can. Max pants as if in the throws of an orgasm, staring impressed.

He freezes as he comes hard. She raises her face to his and stares meanly into his eyes, teeth gritted. His arms shake and give way and he flops onto his back, panting, eyes wide.

Max smiles proudly, stroking his chest for a few moments. Adam looks back and smirks, delighted.

MAX (CONT'D)

I genuinely have to cook, okay?

She kisses him on the lips lovingly and gets up, leaving him lying on the floor with a huge grin across his face.

INT. PENTHOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Max picks up Adam's coat and crosses to the hanger.

She pauses and sniffs the neck.

She slips a hand into a pocket, suspicious, and pulls out condoms. She spins around, glaring.

MAX

You fuck! I knew it! I fucking knew it!

ADAM

What? They've probably been in there for years, Max, seriously!

MAX

You sneaky little cunt! Are you telling me you'd sooner bag up and fuck some aids infected, crystal-heeled pole tramp when you have
(drawing over herself)
this at home?

ADAM

Exactly Max! Why would I? Stop being so paranoid! And don't use that word! You know I hate it!

She storms to the kitchen as he gets up and points defensively.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Check the expiry date, okay? I bet they're well past it.

She pins them to the chopping board with the knife.

MAX

Well, they are now!

ADAM

Good, okay, great. Just calm down. Don't get so upset.

MAX

Upset? I'll show you upset.

She tugs the knife out of the board and flashes her wrists, shaking the glistening knife over them.

Adam runs over with his palms up.

ADAM

Don't do anything stupid, Max! Seriously, okay? Give me the knife!

MAX

Come near me, and I'll expire your fucking cock, okay?

He edges closer, his eyes focused and fingers twitching.

ADAM

Give me the knife, Max, seriously.

Max snakes her body, retreating slowly while goading him.

MAX

Why don't you come get it, big boy?

Adam pauses and stares angrily. She raises the knife.

He lunges, grabs her arms, and throws her back, pinning her against the wall. She glares back, impressed.

MAX (CONT'D)

Come on, you fucking pussy! Be a fucking man!

Adam smashes her hand against the wall, and she drops the knife. He holds her, his face like thunder, his hands trembling.

MAX (CONT'D)

Yeah, you wanna punish me?

She wriggles her hair out of her face and glares back.

MAX (CONT'D)
Do it, fucking do it.

He sighs and stares as she looks him right in the eye.

MAX (CONT'D)
You're so fucking weak, you know
that?

Max throws her head forward and bites him on the shoulder. He screams and backs away, clutching himself.

She flops against the wall, cackling as he checks his hand to find blood.

Adam stares back at her in shock while she licks her teeth.

ADAM
Okay, I've got to get out of here.

He grabs his coat and rushes to his luggage.

MAX
Whatever, run away, run away to
Skankarella, you weak little CUNT!

He looks back furious and exits, slamming the door behind him.

Max shakes her head, amused, and wipes blood from her mouth.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

A thick chrome cylinder slides into another, then turns and screws. Max sits on the floor, studying parts of a stripper pole and the associated instruction sheet.

She swigs back wine. The intercom buzzes, and she crosses over, the lights of London in the windows.

MAX
Hello?

INTERCOM
(Lucy's voice)
Hey, free food? C'mon, open the
door already!

INT. PENTHOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Lucy crosses the room and looks at the stripper pole.

LUCY
 (sarcastically)
 Pretty classy, Max.

Max rolls her eyes, grabs the tray of the deserts she was making for Adam, and lazily offers them over. Lucy takes one.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 This why you called me over? To
 lure me into helping you?

Max sits back down, sips her wine, and continues assembling. Lucy eases down against the wall and eats as she watches.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 Do I not get a drink?

MAX
 You can't, right?

LUCY
 Is this how bad things have become?
 Where you start lecturing me on my
 life?

Lucy grabs the wine bottle and swigs on it. Max bursts into shocked laughter. They smile at one another.

MAX
 Luce, do you think that I know who
 I am, like, as a person?

LUCY
 Jeeze, you need to stop trying to
 disassemble everything. You'll
 never do that with yourself, you
 know?

Max stares and waits for an answer. Lucy sighs and thinks.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 There's this saying, right, from
 Shakespeare. All the world's a
 stage, and all the men and women
 merely players.

Max concentrates on assembling the pole.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 Well, it's true, okay? We're all
 acting, all of us. We're all
 playing a role to satisfy somebody;
 our bosses, our lovers, our
 friends, everyone. That's why we
 struggle so hard to know ourselves.
 We rarely are ourselves. We hardly
 get a chance to be.

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

And when we do, we spend it buried in some fantasy world; books, watching movies, playing video games. Because it's a lot easier to step into someone else's shoes for a few steps than walk the entire journey in ours.

Max looks up, a frank look on her face.

LUCY (CONT'D)

What? Well, you asked the question.

MAX

This is why you shouldn't mix alcohol and medication.

Lucy shakes her head, laughing.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

Max walks out of the bedroom and squints in the sunlight.

She crosses to the assembled stripper pole, gathers up the baking tray, wine bottle, and glasses, and carries them to the kitchen.

Max pours a glass from the bottle and leans on the counter sipping, looking out over London.

She takes out her phone, stares at it, and dials.

MAX

Hey.

(beat)

Yeah, I'm fine. Look, I think we need to talk, okay?

INT. PENTHOUSE - LATER

A tinkling synthesized tone cycles down high frequencies as the curtains blow in the breeze from open windows. A throbbing deep bass beat thumps through the penthouse. The cat sits confused as a rapper gruffly goads.

Max clutches the stripper pole in a red chemise and heels. She sweeps her hair back and grinds against it.

Max looks lost in the moment as she snakes rhythmically, running a hand tenderly down her writhing chest.

The intercom buzzes, and she snaps into reality.

INT. PENTHOUSE - SECONDS LATER

The door sweeps open, and Max stands there, gyrating slowly. Charlie looks back, confused.

She raises a remote in the air and the volume cuts.

CHARLIE CANE

This a bad time? You said two,
yeah?

MAX

I'm just working. You want me to
take this seriously, right?

She leads him to the leather sofas, where a wine bottle and two glasses sit waiting on the coffee table. He looks her up and down and sits uneasily.

Max goes to pour him a drink, but he covers his glass.

CHARLIE CANE

You got, like, a coke or something?

She pauses, unimpressed, and sweeps away to the kitchen.

The cat walks up to him, purring, and he strokes it keenly.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

Cute cat, man.

She crosses back over with a coke.

MAX

She likes you. You should be
pleased. She's very fussy about who
gives her attention.

CHARLIE CANE

She can just smell mine on me.

(to Cat)

Can't you, yeah? You picking up his
scent?

Max places the coke down, and he can't help but spy her spilling cleavage.

MAX

Don't trust her. She's got a split
personality. She can lash out at
any second

(to Cat)

Hey, come here.

She teases the cat to her and bends over to pick it up. Charlie leers as her chemise rises, exposing her butt, thong, and crotch. She hurriedly carries the cat away.

CHARLIE CANE

Hey, it's cool, man. I don't mind her hanging out with us.

MAX

I do.

She shuts the cat in the bedroom and pauses in the kitchen to light up.

Max returns with an ashtray and throws herself down, legs open, while she sips wine, smokes, and stares at him.

MAX (CONT'D)

(deadpan)

Fancy a fuck, Charlie?

INT. PENTHOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Max's hair flicks forward, and she smiles ahead out of the window as Charlie screws her from behind. His hands grip her waist while hers clench the sofa.

He pants as he stares down at her toned body. She gasps, trembling with pleasure, and looks back at him, smiling and biting her lip.

He freezes and cums while she moans in ecstasy, her eyes shut and mouth gaping.

Charlie slumps down, exhausted. Max gets up, crosses over to her wine, takes a long drink, and goes back to smoking.

MAX

So we're like, cool now, yeah?

He stares up at her, confused, while she looks back indifferently.

CHARLIE CANE

What is this? Are you kidding me?
Did you think? What the?

Charlie shakes his head and slowly works it out.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

This is business to you, isn't it?

Max raises her eyebrows suggestively and knocks back some more wine.

He gets up and paces back and forth, confused.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

Well, you did it, Max. Well done.
You played me at my own game.

She blows smoke and stares, shaking her head, not understanding.

Charlie grabs his bag, storms to the door, and points back.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

And to think, there I was,
questioning if you had it in you to
play this role, and as it turns
out, you're perfect, too perfect.
The fucking irony, man.

The door slams. She chews her lip, frustrated.

INT. CELLAR RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Spanish guitar music plays loudly while Max, Jordan, and Lucy eat in a booth.

Jordan slouches in her seat forlorn, glass of wine in hand.

JORDAN

I just don't know what I did wrong,
you know? Men right, like, so
emotional all the time.

LUCY

Sounds to me like you got away
lightly. The guy sounds like a
complete asshole.

JORDAN

He kinda is, but I like that.
Confidence, right? He was mean to
Max though, wasn't he, Max?

Max nods awkwardly as she eats. Jordan strokes her arm.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

He's like one of those things.
What's the word? You know the word,
Max. What is it?

MAX

A 'twat'?

JORDAN

A twat! He's totally one of those!
But seriously, who cares? Because I
was only ever going to be here for
a week anyway. It could never have
worked.

LUCY

Don't even think about it.

JORDAN

You are so right, you know? Oh, Max, I'm sorry! I hope I haven't screwed things up for you!

Max takes a long drink of wine and looks back, confused.

MAX

Why? You know the guy hates me anyway, right?

JORDAN

It's just what he said when he broke up with me.

Max and Lucy exchange concerned glances.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

He said he'll maybe see us around in the future, like, as if he was talking about you too. But that can't be right, can it? Can it?

LUCY

Arsehole. Typical arsehole. Strings you along just so he can shag your best friend. I just, argh, it makes me so mad, you know? What's the point? What's the point with people like that around?

JORDAN

Oh my god, Max! I'm sorry! Your dream role! I'm so sorry!

MAX

Don't be. He hated me from day one. This was inevitable.

Max shrugs nonchalantly and carries on eating. Lucy watches Max hacking away at her bloody steak and frowns, concerned.

INT. LONDON BLACK CAB - LATER

Max, Lucy and Jordan ride in the back of a cab as it rattles along. Max stares out of the window while Jordan glumly dwells, and Lucy looks worried.

The taxi squeaks to a halt.

JORDAN

Thanks guys.

Jordan leans in and hugs Lucy. Lucy grips her tightly.

LUCY
Enjoy the Alps, okay? Life's too
short to dwell on the negatives.

JORDAN
I will. I promise.

Jordan leans to Max and hugs her. Max struggles a smile

JORDAN (CONT'D)
I'll come round tomorrow before I
fly out, dude. Don't worry, okay?

Max nods, preoccupied.

Jordan backs out of the cab, looks at Max worried for a
moment, and shuts the door.

The cab pulls away and Lucy gives a friendly wave.

Max stares ahead, consumed. Lucy watches her as they travel
in silence, jostling over bumps, the engine droning.

EXT. CHELSEA APARTMENTS - MINUTES LATER

The black cab purrs up to the kerb outside the Chelsea
Apartments, and a door opens.

Max steps out and staggers toward the entrance.

LUCY
Max wait!

Lucy clambers out, crosses over, and hugs her.

She holds Max by the shoulders, looking at her sincerely, but
Max avoids eye contact, her eyes glistening.

LUCY (CONT'D)
This isn't your fault.

Max chews her lip, pained, and looks back, embarrassed.

MAX
It is, I messed up.

Max wells up and looks away, ashamed. Lucy looks back shocked
and upset, shaking her head with tears in her eyes.

LUCY
No, don't ever think that. You can
never fail in my eyes, never.

Lucy hugs Max tightly. Max clenches her eyes shut.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Look, I know you're not that kid anymore, okay? But you are still just as stubborn.

Max laughs and smiles. Lucy smiles back.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You're so strong, Max, so independent, so ambitious. I'm so proud of you. Don't ever think otherwise, okay?

Max nods.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Promise me you'll never think otherwise.

MAX

I promise.

Lucy smiles warmly. She hugs Max and strokes her hair.

Max smiles content as Lucy kisses her on the cheek and steps back, holding her hands.

LUCY

Promise?

MAX

Promise.

Lucy backs into the cab and shuts the door.

As Max watches it pull away, Lucy smiles as she waves through the rear window. Max smiles and waves proudly back.

INT. PENTHOUSE - MINUTES LATER

The front door of the penthouse clunks open, and Max staggers through.

She stumbles across the apartment, consumed with worry.

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY

She slides the door shut behind her, lights up a cigarette, and paces back and forth with traffic buzzing below.

She pauses and looks out over London, biting her nails.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM

Max stares meanly into the bedroom mirror, running bright red lipstick over her lips.

She presses red fake nails onto her fingers, pauses, and stares at the scarred, chewed skin.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM

Now wearing the really tiny red dress from her closet, eyes black with eye shadow, and hair ruffled, Max studies herself in the mirror.

INT. PENTHOUSE

She clumps to the kitchen in tall heels, gulps back a glass of wine, and crosses to the front door.

EXT. SOHO STREET - MINUTES LATER

Music whispers from seedy clip-joints. Groups of LADS laugh and shout as they pass by TOUTS and PROSTITUTES.

A black cab pulls up. Max steps out, lights up, and glances around.

EXT. SOHO ALLEYWAY

Max's heels click on the littered tarmac and splash through puddles as she heads toward the back of Selena's Strip Club.

EXT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB

Bass pumps from inside the club in front of which a BOUNCER stands under a dim bulb, barely illuminated.

Max struts up to him, brimming with confidence.

He stares at her for a moment and opens the door.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB CHANGING ROOM

A bassline ripples through the changing room, rattling the mirrors and scattered cosmetics. A young girl sleeps on the floor as a line of bulbs glare into the faces of pruning strippers.

They all briefly glance across at Max.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB

The music throbs under thuggish rapping, as a dancer writhes on stage, her breasts and glittery thong sparkling under the pink and blue lights.

Max peers through a curtain of silver beads into the dark crowd of PUNTERS.

She scans around, searching until she spots Edmund Ward sitting at the foot of the stage, flirting with LAP DANCERS and gawking at the performance.

Max narrows her eyes.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB BAR

The BARMAN walks past a glinting wall of bottles and cups his ear. Max mouths something into it. He nods.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB

Max passes behind the stage curtains, pauses, and peers through.

A WAITRESS places a drink by Edmund, but he shakes his head and waves his hands.

Max stares as the waitress mouths something. He nods, and she leaves him, staring at the drink.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB CHANGING ROOM

Max disappears, walks to a changing room locker, and tosses her bag in it. She crosses her hands over her back and wriggles out her dress before also shoving that into the locker and taking her phone.

Max composes herself, standing in red lace underwear, and stares coldly at the doorway to the club.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB DJ BOOTH

The dancer walks off to a murmur of applause.

The DJ leans forward behind the grubby perspex window as Max points to her phone and passes it through.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB STAGE

A sweeping synthesized cord pulses as Edmund stares longingly at the drink in front of him.

Max's red heels strut across the filthy floor.

The tone builds, and a deep, slow bassline drops under a tickling hi-hat.

His drink ripples as a female singer groans. He glances up, and Max stares right at him. She sweeps her hair back under the red lights. He gazes, surprised. The punters and strippers glance across.

The female singer spits filthy lyrics as Max gyrates her hips to the beat. She brings her hands behind her head and thrusts her waist back and forth before turning, looking over her shoulder, and stirring her body.

The female voice breaks into a chorus of singing.

Max grabs her ankles and whips her hair from side to side as Edmund's head moves in synchronization.

She crawls across the floor, just out of reach of the leering audience, and rolls her butt around. Max smiles across and snakes onto her back, staring at Edmund.

The bassline throbs, and she thrusts her body to the beat. He reaches for the drink as she closes her eyes and runs her tongue across her lips. He knocks back a mouthful.

Sexual lyrics lick over the track. Max gets to her feet, hair ruffled over her face and bites her lip, then sweeps her body back and forth while running her hands over her smooth skin.

The music pauses. She pauses.

Everyone waits on edge, and... she glides toward the pole, grabs it as the beat drops, and swoops around it.

Edmund stares fixed. Max clutches the pole with her legs, circling it fast, her body bent back, her arms out-stretched, and she coasts to a halt, raising her body to the pole.

He clutches the glass tightly. She kicks her legs up, grips the pole with her thighs and spins.

Edmund raises his glass and swallows deeply.

Max comes to a halt, hangs back, and stops perfectly aligned with him, gazing into his eyes.

He holds the glass fixed as the chorus of female singing flows back.

She slides to the floor, legs on either side of the pole, tilts her head back, and the beat pumps hard as she rubs her crotch against it, staring at him, rolling her pelvis and licking her lips as she grinds.

Edmund knocks back the whole drink and judders as Max casually struts off the stage to riotous applause.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB

Max walks through the audience and sweeps around the tables as punters gawk.

She heads straight to Edmund, ushers him up, and leads him away.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB PRIVATE BOOTH

Max eases Edmund down onto the seat, grabs a bottle off the table, and pours it into his mouth. He loves it.

A rap track booms, and Max dances under the red lights. He gazes up at her, fixed and leering.

She turns her back to him and wiggles her hips. Edmund grabs her butt. Max knocks his hand away and wags her finger.

She spins back around and writhes. He grabs her waist. Max pulls his hands away and looks at him like a naughty boy.

Edmund leers back petulantly. He grabs her tightly and gropes her. Max fights back and falls into his lap.

He grabs at her body while she desperately wiggles free and gets up. Edmund gets up and grabs her by the shoulders.

SMACK! Max slaps him.

EDMUND WARD

So the cat wants the play?

He throws her down onto the seat. Max glares back as Edmund wrestles with his belt buckle. She tries to get up.

EDMUND WARD (CONT'D)

Fucking stay down!

SMACK! Edmund slaps her hard with the back of his hand. Max screams, falls back, and slips off the seat onto the floor, peril in her eyes.

Quickly getting back up, she lunges onto him, clawing at his face. Two BOUNCERS burst in, quickly pull her off Edmund, and restrain her.

BOUNCER

Who the fuck are you?

MAX

I'm Gwyn! I work here!

The bouncers look at each other, perplexed.

INT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB CHANGING ROOM - NIGHT

Max screams and writhes as she's carried through the club and dragged to the back door.

Faith rushes in, panicked.

FAITH

Wait there, dick head! She's alright, I know her! I don't know what the silly slag's messing about at, but don't kick her head in! There'll be loads of trouble. Just let her go, alright?

EXT. SELENA'S STRIP CLUB

Max gets shoved out the back door in her underwear, dress in hand. The door slams behind her.

She indignantly wrestles the dress back on.

EXT. SOHO ALLEYWAY

Max clumps up the alleyway and pauses. She shivers as she glances down the street nervously. No traffic. No cabs.

DRUNKEN GIRLS cackle. A STAG PARTY shouts obscenities, their aggressive faces reflected in windows.

EXT. SOHO STREET

Max walks nervously up the street as DRUNK GUYS spill out a clip-joint.

BIG GUY

Oi, oi! 'Ello darling!

LEERING GUY

How much, my lovely? Just a suck and fuck. Maybe some A-levels.

She pauses. Another pack of men ahead. They shout and goad.

Max glances around, worried, and trots down an alley.

EXT. SOHO ALLEYWAY

Escorts wait in walk-ups, some already with punters. Max gazes up, flinches, and rubs her jaw.

She reaches the end of the alley, ducks into the shadows, and opens her handbag.

Max rummages through the contents and realizes her phone is still in the club.

She looks up and down a back street. It's empty, silent, and lit by the occasional street light.

EXT. BACKSTREET

She trudges along with an urgency to her step.

A car slows down and creeps behind her, the headlights glaring as a window whirrs down.

KERB CRAWLER
You doin' business or what,
sweetheart?

She carries on, ignoring him.

KERB CRAWLER (CONT'D)
Oi, I'm talking to you! How much?

MAX
I'm not a hooker, okay?

KERB CRAWLER
Yes you fucking are? You got a
problem with older men, you cheeky
fucking tart?

MAX
Just fuck off!

The car races ahead and screeches to a halt.

Max pauses. The huge, burly KERB CRAWLER gets out angry.

KERB CRAWLER
What you fucking say to me, you
mouthy cunt?

She turns on the spot and hurries away.

KERB CRAWLER (CONT'D)
Oi, don't you walk away from me!
I'll break your fucking neck!

Max kicks off her heels and sprints away barefoot.

EXT. PARK ALLEYWAY

She runs toward the next street. An engine races toward the end of the alley, and she freezes in the headlights. The car sits, engine idling. She stares back hopelessly.

The Kerb Crawler gets out and glares at her.

She looks back, terrified, shadows motioning in the darkness behind her.

KERB CRAWLER

Fucking slag. You were lucky this time!

Kerb Crawler gets back in his car, reverses, and races away.

Max stands staring, confused. Footsteps behind her.

She glances around, and two YOUTHS run toward her.

Max runs for it, but they quickly chase her down, grab her, and smack her against the wall.

One covers her mouth and pulls a knife.

LANKY YOUTH

No way! She is fit, bro!

The other snatches away her handbag and rummages through it, taking what he wants.

LANKY YOUTH (CONT'D)

You Russian, Polish? I seen you somewhere before, innit?

She stands trembling, eyes wide, as he goes through her wallet, and his eyes light up.

MUSCLY YOUTH

She's well rich! I bet she's one of them high-class escorts.

The one holding her looks around at the wallet, and she kicks him in the crotch, slips free, and sprints away, determined.

EXT. BACKSTREET - MINUTES LATER

Max runs to exhaustion, a good couple of minutes of pure adrenalin coursing through her veins until she has to stop, her knees shaking.

A car races up behind her and screeches to a halt.

She buckles to the floor, ready to throw up, and tries to crawl away, looking back hopelessly into the glaring headlights, but then flickering blue strobes come on, and a door opens to reveal the sound of police radio chatter.

EXT. CHELSEA APARTMENTS - LATER

The police car drives away as Max taps a keycode into the door lock and lets herself into the lobby.

INT. PENTHOUSE CORRIDOR

The lift doors sweep open at the end of the penthouse corridor.

Max trudges across to her front door, pauses, stares at the lock, and closes her eyes, frustrated, no keys to get in.

She slumps against the door and crumples into a heap.

INT. PENTHOUSE CORRIDOR - DAY

Hours later, Max snores on the floor by the door, her dress barely covering her decency.

The lift doors sweep open, and Adam stares, shocked.

He races over, pours over her, and quickly unlocks the door.

Max stirs awake, confused, as he cradles her, picks her up, and backs through the door with her in his arms.

INT. PENTHOUSE

The cat bounds over to them as Adam lays her down on the sofa and studies the bruise on her jaw.

ADAM

What the hell happened, Max?

MAX

You wouldn't understand.

Adam sighs angrily, ducks away, and crosses toward the bedroom, where he spots the stripper pole.

He shakes his head and continues into the bedroom.

Max adjusts herself on the sofa and winces, rubbing her jaw tenderly, some of her press-on nails ripped off.

He crosses back with a few items, pauses, and stares at her messed up slutty make-up, filthy bare feet, and cut knees.

ADAM
I can't deal with this right now.

Max looks back forlorn, eyes glistening.

MAX
Are you running away with the
skank?

He shakes his head, frustrated, and motions to leave.

MAX (CONT'D)
Do I not even get a hug? Am I that
dead to you already?

Adam pauses, turns, and leans to cuddle her. She nuzzles at his face, trying to kiss him, but he pulls out of her grasp.

Max watches angrily as Adam leaves, slamming the door behind him.

INT. PENTHOUSE - LATER

The phone rings. Max crosses across the room, wearing pajamas and nursing her jaw.

She picks up the receiver, sits down, puts her head in her palm, and closes her eyes.

INT. MEETING ROOM - LATER

Max slouches behind a table in a meeting room with an AGENT beside her.

Across the room sit Charlie and Edmund, their faces a mixture of guilt and anger. Between them sits an EXECUTIVE.

MAX
Seriously, is that just a fancy way
of saying you're firing me?

AGENT
They're giving you the opportunity
to leave, and as your
representative, I advise you to do
it gracefully.

EXECUTIVE
You could say it's something like a
scheduling conflict.

MAX
Oh, there's conflict, alright! Why
don't you ask your precious
director about conflict?

Edmund rubs the scratches on his face, his fingers quivering.

AGENT

Max, don't turn this into a mud-slinging competition, okay? It'll get very messy for everybody, especially you.

Max sits fuming and glares at the floor.

EXECUTIVE

Is there a statement you want to make at all?

Max stands up and goes to leave, her face like thunder.

MAX

You know what, yeah. Fuck you guys.
How about that?
(to Agent)
Graceful enough for you?

INT. PENTHOUSE - LATER

The front door opens to reveal Jordan, raising her eyebrows in surprise.

Max looks back dourly, a cigarette hanging in her mouth and a glass of wine in her hand.

JORDAN

Hey, trailer trash.
(circling finger)
Not a good look on you, okay?

Max rolls her eyes as Jordan wrestles her luggage into the room. They slump onto the sofas.

MAX

So, they fired me.

JORDAN

Seriously? That is so messed up. I mean, what the fuck, right?

Jordan lights up, shaking her head in disbelief.

MAX

The fucks all totally hate me.

JORDAN

But how come? I mean, you're awesome. It doesn't make sense.

MAX

Well, I've not exactly been acting like myself lately, have I?

Max takes a draw, exhales, and looks back frankly.

JORDAN

Seriously? You're blaming me? For inviting you out for a few drinks? I'm sorry to say this, Max, but you're being a bitch, okay?

MAX

I don't give a fuck.
(smiling challengingly)
I'm a bitch. Deal with it.

Jordan stares back, stunned.

JORDAN

Okay, you just got upgraded to total bitch, Max.

MAX

You sound like such a valley girl when you're angry. It's pathetic.

JORDAN

Oh my god, whatever! I, like, totally do not, okay?

Jordan stands up, waving her hands and flicking back her hair.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

You know what? I'm totally done feeling sorry for you. I'm so sorry I gave a shit about your boring little life here, okay? Take a long, hard look at yourself, Max. You've become the spoilt miserable little bitch everyone likes to think you are.

Jordan stares furiously as Max shakes her head, sneering.

MAX

Fuck you.

JORDAN

No, fuck you. You know what? I have a flight to catch. Because I have, like, an actual life to live.

Jordan storms to her luggage and fights the pop-up handle.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Enjoy your life, Max, with no boyfriend and no job. Just you. Just you, a fancy apartment, a shitload of money, and your cat, alone together.

(MORE)

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Oh, and since I'm not getting you anything from the gift shop, you can have these instead.

Jordan firmly gives Max both fingers. Max glares back.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

You can use them to play with yourself. Now you're back on the scrapheap!

Jordan storms out as Max shakes her head, fuming.

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER OFFICE - NIGHT

James sweeps grandiose-looking plans out over his cluttered desk in the animal shelter office and studies them proudly as Max nods nervously, chewing her fingers.

JAMES

Well, we're now officially past the point of no return. The architects have come back with this. I think you'll approve. The builders are still busy with their quote. It takes longer than you think to pluck a number out of the sky, it seems.

Max adjusts herself uncomfortably, her chest heaving. She swallows deeply and tries to concentrate.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's now really just a case of winning over the council. We're being ambitious with size, so I may have to sleep with a few of them.

He glances at her, expecting her to laugh, and pauses. She stares back pensively.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You okay?

MAX

Yeah, I just. I need to get some air.

She shirks away and crosses to the door.

JAMES

Max, I don't want to push, but that payment you said you wired, it hasn't come through.

MAX

Well, it can take a few days.

Her pupils dart around, panicked.

JAMES

Is there a problem I should know about?

MAX

Look, it's none of your business where the money comes from, is it?

She stares at him angrily.

MAX (CONT'D)

So keep your nose out.

He stares back, shocked, as she sighs, shakes her head, and ducks out the door.

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER SURGERY

Max hurries through the surgery toward the exit, but then she pauses and looks around, shocked.

Jack the mongrel on the surgery table, panting and wrapped in a blanket, the assistant tending to him.

Max crosses to him and stares down, etched.

MAX

What's wrong with him?

SHELTER ASSISTANT

We're not sure. The vet's running a blood test now. It could be a bad reaction to the surgery.

Max stares down solemnly at Jack as James walks in and pauses awkwardly. She goes to leave.

JAMES

Max, can we-

MAX

I've got to go. Seriously, I'll find out about the holdup.

She exits as James and the assistant look at each other.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Max sits on the sofa smoking, an open box on the table and a new phone in her hand.

She fumbles drunkenly, head swaying.

Max gulps back wine and dismisses a bunch of missed calls from Adam and Jordan.

She eventually finds Lucy's name and hits call.

MAX
(confused)
Oh hey. Is Lucy there?

Her face slowly turns surprised, then horrified.

Max gasps, and the phone tumbles to the floor. With tears flowing fast, she grits her teeth angrily and howls, pained.

INT. PENTHOUSE

Max paces across the kitchen, clasping her skull, gasping, sniffing, and shaking her head desperately.

She slams a wine bottle onto the counter, pours a glass, gags on tears, and gulps back the whole serving.

INT. PENTHOUSE - LATER

Max sobs on the floor, the glass toppled over, and the cat beside her.

She manages to get to her feet, staggers to the kitchen, and retrieves a box of cat food.

Max tops up the food bowl, picks up the cat, hugs it adoringly, and stares at the view over London at night.

She goes to open the balcony door but hears a buzzing.

Max glances at the floor to see her phone ringing.

She picks it up, reads it's Adam calling, and sends it straight to voicemail.

EXT. BALCONY

She slides the door shut and throws herself to the fence.

She clutches the rail and stares down, the wind whistling around the highrise.

Her phone buzzes. A message.

Max prods it onto speaker, tosses it on a table, and gazes over the twinkling lights of the city.

PHONE

(Adam)

Erm, call me back as soon as you can, okay? I just heard. I'm so sorry, Max. Just hold tight. I'm here for you. Go round to Jordan's or something. I'll be back in a couple of days, we-

She gazes back at the phone. The sound of a party.

PHONE (CONT'D)

-can you shut that, please? I'm making a call.

(Female voice)

Come on, get it over with already!

Max's face sinks, and she shakes her head as tears flow.

PHONE (CONT'D)

(Adam cont...)

I'll be back in a couple of days, okay? We'll talk then. Don't do anything stupid. I... I really care about you, Max.

Her chin quivers, and she hyperventilates.

She slips her feet out of her grubby sneakers and stares up into the sky.

PHONE (CONT'D)

(Jordan)

Oh my god, Max! I'm flying straight back, okay? Just forget everything we said today. It doesn't matter. I'll call you when I get into London. I love you, Max, okay? I love you so much.

Max raises a foot onto the bottom rail and looks back. The cat paws at the window, and she sighs hopelessly.

She looks down at the street, looks at the cat, then back down to the street again.

Max places her other shaking foot onto the rail and stands, clutching on, her long hair blowing in the cold wind.

PHONE (CONT'D)

(Lucy)

Hey, erm... it's Lucy.

Max glances around, shocked.

PHONE (CONT'D)

(Lucy)

I've called you like a dozen times already. Stop being so busy all the time. I need to tell you something. I guess it will be better as a message. At least now I can lecture you for eternity, right?

Max's eyes light up. She quivers laughter through her tears.

PHONE (CONT'D)

We were talking the other night about knowing ourselves. Don't forget what I said, okay, Max.

Max listens intently.

PHONE (CONT'D)

Just put on your own shoes and walk your own journey. I know that sounds overly simple, but that's all you need to do right now, and you'll understand when you do it.

Max drops back down, crosses to the phone, and clutches it while she gazes into the screen.

PHONE (CONT'D)

And do it as soon as possible. I'll be waiting at the end, okay, Max? Waiting to hear how it went.

The message ends, and Max jolts. She looks at her shoes and looks at the cat pawing the window.

INT. PENTHOUSE

Max dashes in, picks up the cat, and spins around, hugging it, smelling it, nuzzling it, and tickling it.

She stares at the wine.

INT. PENTHOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Music blasts. The cat sits on the kitchen floor, confused as Max pours wine bottles down the sink.

The bin lid pops open, and a packet of cigarettes are tossed in. Max stares at the script, tears it to shreds, and shoves that in the bin too.

She glances around. Her eyes narrow.

The stripper pole.

INT. PENTHOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Max walks out of the bedroom, her face deadly serious, Adam's classic black electric guitar hanging from her hand, dragging along the wooden floor.

She sizes up to the stripper pole with the guitar held like a baseball bat and swings hard, her eyes clenched and teeth gritted.

The guitar smashes, the pole buckles, and she swings again. Metal dents, fiberglass shatters, wood splinters, and strings coil.

She glares triumphantly as the pole falls and crashes to the floor.

EXT. BALCONY - MINUTES LATER

Max walks out to the balcony edge, coils back, and throws the tiny red dress over the side, watching it ripple through the air all the way down to the wet, glistening sidewalk.

EXT. HEATHROW AIRPORT - DAY

Jet engines whistle as a plane descends behind dull concrete and glass buildings.

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT TERMINAL 3

Announcements echo through Terminal 3 as travelers mill around. Shoes and luggage clatter. MILITARY POLICE stroll along, their machine guns cradled and radios squawking.

Max stalks them furtively, her head down and hair hiding her face.

They cut left. She glances up at the direction signs.

She watches them stroll away, looks the other way at the busy check-in lobby, and cringes.

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT RESTROOM

Max bursts through the door of a restroom and cuts past other girls, her face straining.

She dashes into a stall and locks the door.

Guttural choking echoes from inside as the girls wince.

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT TERMINAL 3

Polished black shoes stroll across the tiles toward a flight information screen as rumbling luggage wheels roll behind. Max's tattered sneakers pace along with them.

A BULKY BUSINESSMAN'S broad shoulders and long black coat shield Max as she follows closely.

She glances up at the arrivals and spots a girl nudging a guy with her elbow while nodding nod toward her.

Max ducks her head down, heads for a gate, and clutches the steel barrier tightly.

She takes a deep breath, her hands shaking.

An announcement echoes, and she looks up hopefully. Jordan walks out the gate, dragging her case, and beams a huge surprised smile.

Max crosses to her fast, eyes glistening, and hugs her tight, her fingers clasping onto her back.

JORDAN

Oh my god! I don't believe it!

EXT. HEATHROW AIRPORT SMOKING AREA

Max and Jordan sit in a quiet corner as jets roar overhead.

MAX

Look, just listen to me, okay? I have... I have to tell you something, but seriously, just don't get angry.

JORDAN

I don't even have the energy to be angry. I've been dragging this thing around for the past twenty-four hours. And I have, like, major jet lag.

Jordan kicks her luggage case hard. Max goes wide-eyed and looks at Jordan nervously.

MAX

Okay, I had sex with Charlie the day after we all went out. I'm so sorry.

JORDAN

(reeling tired)
Okay, wow, dude, wow!

Jordan sits stunned as she smokes. Max waits for an answer.

MAX

Well?

Jordan ponders for a few moments, reaches into her luggage, and pulls out a small plush dog.

JORDAN

I thought about what I said the other day, about how you, like, only had a cat for a friend. And I thought about how you actually like cats AND dogs, so I got you a dog... to go with your cat.

Jordan hands it across. Max smiles, touched, and sniffs back tears.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

And I'm still your friend, too.

INT. LONDON MARRIOTT HOTEL MAIDA VALE - LATER

CUSTOMERS eat and chat as Max sits perched on a leather chair, tapping a pack of cigarettes.

Adam crosses through the bar, searching, beer in hand. He spots her, and they exchange awkward smiles as he crosses over.

ADAM

You're smoking again?

Max shakes her head and hides the pack away.

MAX

Seriously, this is my last pack.

Adam glances around, eyes searching for a moment.

ADAM

You want to get away from these people?

She thinks for a moment and shakes her head.

He smiles, eases down into a seat, and toys with the condensation on his pint.

ADAM (CONT'D)

So you wanted to talk, right?

She nods surely, her pupils darting around as she thinks.

MAX

I'm sorry, okay. Sorry for going all weird.

ADAM

Look, Max, don't beat yourself up,
okay?

Adam puts his pint down and meshes his hands together nervously.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I kinda need to apologize too.
Well, I need to come clean. You
were right. I have been seeing
somebody else.

MAX

The Skank? Skankarella?

He looks back frankly.

MAX (CONT'D)

That bitch.

ADAM

Honestly, I'm genuinely sorry. I
guess we've both been acting out of
character lately.

MAX

So, what? Are you saying you want
to get back together now?

ADAM

(cringing)

I'm not so sure what I want.

MAX

Oh, I get it. She dumped you,
right? So you're keeping me on the
line until you see what happens. Is
that it?

ADAM

You know what, sod this. You
invited me here, Max.

He necks his beer and gets up to leave. Max grabs his arm and looks up, pleading.

MAX

Wait, just wait. Look, I have to
come clean, too. This is going to
make me sound like such a
hypocrite. I cheated on you too,
okay? Like, just once.

ADAM

Yeah? You regret it?

She nods surely. Adam sits back down and stares at her for a few moments, fighting anger and acceptance.

ADAM (CONT'D)

So you know exactly how I feel? And yeah, you don't just sound like a hypocrite, you are one.

He stares at her judgmentally as she shakes her head and runs her hands through her hair, frustrated.

MAX

Look, let's just cut the bullshit, right? Where are we? Where are you and me right now? Is it over between us? Are we rebuilding? What do you want, Adam?

She looks back hopefully as he mulls it all over.

ADAM

The thing is, I'm struggling to really narrow down who you are.

Adam looks at her, studying her, confused. Max adjusts herself in her chair awkwardly.

ADAM (CONT'D)

It's like, you've been so caught up pretending to be other people for so long, I don't know if I've ever seen the real you. And, I just... I just can't help but wonder about this Gwyndolen. If this character has stuck with you for so long. Maybe that's who you really want to be. No, that's not what worries me the most. What worries me the most is maybe, deep down, that's who you actually are.

Max reels, stunned, and stares back.

EXT. BROMPTON CEMETERY - DAY

Ancient weathered tombstones lie part-buried in tall grass. Max and Jordan, dressed in black, trudge along a path in Brompton Cemetery.

Max wipes her eyes as Jordan rubs her back.

MAX

I should have seen it coming, you know? I should have done something.

JORDAN

Nobody saw it coming, okay?

MAX

But I should have. I was the
closest to her. I knew she was
depressed. I knew she had problems.
Why didn't I realize it had gotten
that bad?

They walk in silence. Max pauses and stares at Jordan.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm a selfish bitch, aren't I?

Jordan stares back frankly. Max flinches, reaches into her
pocket, and pulls out her humming phone.

MAX (CONT'D)

What the?

She stares at the number calling.

INT. MEETING ROOM - LATER

Max sits at the meeting table with her agent, her face
incredulous.

MAX

Seriously? You're kidding me,
right?

Across the room sit the executive and Charlie.

EXECUTIVE

Given Edmund Ward's complication
(motions drinking)
And his subsequent departure from
the project, we feel it would be
mutually beneficial to both parties
if you came back on board.

AGENT

With substantial compensation?

EXECUTIVE

It's something we're maybe willing
to discuss.

AGENT

Are you willing to discuss figures?
Now?

The executive purses his lips, giving his best poker face.

BANG! Max slams her fist down on the desk.

MAX

For crying out loud!

They all stare at Max, shocked. She stares down at the desk, fuming, jaw clenched.

AGENT

Max, do not-

MAX

Shut up! Just shut up! Please!

They all sit in awkward silence, Max seething.

MAX (CONT'D)

(slowly)

Fuck the money.

(staring at agent)

You want to compensate me? Get my life back. Seriously, because I haven't got anything resembling one anymore.

Max rests her head in her hands.

EXECUTIVE

We're sorry, Max. We can't do anything about the attention. You know that.

Max runs her hands through her hair to her neck and looks at the executive.

MAX

Yeah, well, you don't get to read the small print when you sign your life away to fame, do you? Not when you're a wide-eyed teenager and you think the adults in the room have got your back. You've made your money outta me, and you've taken your pound of flesh too. I'll never get that all back, no matter what you offer now.

Max stares at the executive. He frowns back, concerned, while Charlie shakes his head, disappointed.

Max sighs deeply, gets up and gathers her things.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Look, this isn't your fault. I gotta get out of here.

INT. DRAB CORRIDOR

Max exits the office and paces down the corridor.

CHARLIE CANE (O.S.)

Max!

She stops and glances back to see Charlie approaching with a glare.

He throws open an office door, checks it's empty, and nods inside.

INT. EMPTY MEETING ROOM

Max crosses through the door, fuming. Charlie shuts it and stands glowering at her.

CHARLIE CANE
Just what is your fucking problem?

She stands silent, avoiding eye contact.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)
(pointing)
You think I want you around after
what you did?

He looks at her with contempt.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)
They've sent me running after you
because they think I can bring you
around because they know you look
up to me, but I am done with you
and your crazy attitude.

Max cradles herself defensively.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)
And you know what's funny? You
actually had just what you wanted
in the palm of your hand.

Charlie smirks as she runs her hands through her hair, chest heaving.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)
But you had to throw it all away,
didn't you? Because you're nothing
but a spoilt little brat.

She clutches at her hair tightly as he smiles, amused.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)
You're just a hack who got a leg up
the slippery pole of fame, and
you'll do anything to stay clinging
on.

Max coils, glaring venomously, teeth gritted, pointing back at him. Charlie reels back, shocked.

MAX

(screaming)

You think I want this? I hate my life, okay? I hate it! All I want to do is challenge myself, get some respect, and be entitled to a scrap of privacy! But you don't see that! Nobody sees that! I live in a fucking prison, and I hate it! I fucking hate it!

She stands seething as he shakes his head, disappointed.

CHARLIE CANE

Well, it looks like you're getting what you want. You're over, Max. You're done. They might want you back, but I sure as hell don't, and I'll get my way - you can be sure of that.

Max clenches her eyes shut as tears eek through, crosses to the window, and stares down at Hyde Park, the heavy wind rustling the trees.

CHARLIE CANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Enjoy being a nobody, Max.

The office door slams shut, and she jolts into gasping tears.

EXT. LONDON OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Max exits the office building and hurries down the street lined with parked cars, while wiping her eyes.

MALE FAN (O.S.)

(shouting)

Max! Max!

She pauses and looks back, confused. The crazed fan who got taken down in the hotel lobby, marches toward her, pointing.

MALE FAN (CONT'D)

I saw the photos of you out! You fucking slag!

He starts jogging toward her, his red face glaring.

She gasps and bolts away from him, her hair blowing back as she clutches her bag, her heels clicking fast.

MALE FAN (CONT'D)

Wait there!

She rustles her keys out of her bag. The Mini alarm chirps.

She throws open the door and gets in. He's right on top of her and reaches for the door.

Max slams it and he pulls it part open. She screams as she clutches at the door desperately.

MAX

Just leave me alone!

MALE FAN

I want a fucking word with you!

She smacks the wheel, and the horn echoes down the street, causing him to back away.

Max slams the door, locks it, and searches around for the keys as he glares through the window.

MALE FAN (CONT'D)

I need to talk to you!

She finds the keys down the side of her seat, fumbles them into the ignition, and cranks. The Mini lurches and stalls. Max glances around, confused.

The Mini lurches forward again and cuts out.

He pounds on the window hard. She looks back, terrified.

MALE FAN (CONT'D)

(amused)

Where'd you think you're going,
aye? Where'd you think you're
going?

He braces himself against the Mini and rocks it. Max jostles from side to side, her eyes welling with tears.

She looks around the dashboard hopelessly and realizes the car is in gear.

Max puts it in neutral, fires it up, and the Mini screeches away, the little engine whining. He watches her dart down a side street.

INT. MINI

Max sits staring ahead, eyes bulging as white stone buildings rush by.

She wipes her eyes and clams down.

MALE FAN (O.S.)

Oi!

She glances around to see the fan burst out between cars and sprint down the street behind her, closing in.

Max floors it, sits up, and peers ahead, worried. A lumbering truck ahead.

She shakes her head and the Mini peeks down the sides of the truck, lights flashing, not enough room to squeeze by.

Max glances in her mirror to see him closing in fast, sprinting head down, and right on her.

She cringes, hits the brakes hard, and... THUD!

He squeaks down the rear window.

Max sits shaking, staring, the engine idling for a few long moments.

He suddenly lunges to his feet, his face in his hands.

She slams the Mini into gear and it screeches away, roaring down the street fast.

INT. PENTHOUSE

Max and Jordan sit side by side on a sofa in the Penthouse, Jordan smoking and Max sitting anxiously.

MAX

So there's nothing to worry about?

A COMMUNITY OFFICER sits smartly opposite, placing an empty mug carefully on a side table as the cat sniffs his boots.

COMMUNITY OFFICER

The guy's a proper nuisance. He's getting banged up all the time for carrying on like this. Don't you worry, and remember, technically, he crashed into you, alright? He just wasn't in a car when he did it.

He smiles and eases up before Max walks him to the front door so he can leave.

Max shuts the front door and sighs, relieved, before picking the cat up and crossing back to Jordan while stroking it.

Jordan sits puffing smoke, shaking her head.

JORDAN

Dude, this is getting serious.

Max frowns and sits, thinking. Jordan watches her, worried.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
I can't fly back, not with you like this.

MAX
Don't be ridiculous. I'm fine.

JORDAN
Then come back with me.

Max smirks and stares out the window at the cloudy sky.

MAX
It's ten times worse back home. You know that.

JORDAN
But who'll look out for you?

Max ponders for a few moments and looks back unsure.

MAX
Adam?

Jordan winces, unconvinced. Max frowns, grabs the cat's front paws, and wiggles them.

MAX (CONT'D)
Then it will have to be Gwyn. I'll just have to stop trimming your claws, won't I?

INT. PENTHOUSE - LATER

Max and Jordan cook in the penthouse kitchen. Pans sizzle as the radio plays.

Max's phone rings and she grabs it to see Adam's calling.

She shows it to Jordan, who cringes.

MAX
(into phone)
Hey. I'm fine, you?
(beat)
I can be.
(beat)
Yeah, Okay, see you then.

JORDAN
Urgh, what does he want?

MAX
He wants to meet up later, go for a meal, whatever,

Max paces consumed, chewing her nails.

JORDAN
Is he taking you somewhere fancy?

Max nods.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
It better not be the old ditch her
in a fancy restaurant so she feels
she can't make a fuss trick.
(waving spatula)
Because, let me tell you, if you
never want to go back there again,
you can totally cause a scene. Oh,
hell yeah.

Max sighs, worried.

INT. THE WOLSELEY - LATER

DINERS murmur. Stone walls arch to the ceiling, decorated
with black gloss and gold decor, while classical music
serenades.

Max sits at a table, dressed smartly, but her nerves showing.

She spots Adam entering, dressed like a gent, and he crosses
to her.

MAX
Hey.

She stands and smiles. He kisses her on the cheek.

ADAM
You look amazing.

INT. THE WOLSELEY - LATER

A WAITER takes away finished desserts as Max and Adam laugh
and joke.

Adam sips coffee while Max eats his chocolate mint and
smiles.

MAX
This has been nice. We didn't used
to go out enough.

He smiles back awkwardly.

ADAM
We didn't do a lot of things
really, did we?

She stares back, concerned, toying with the wrapper.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I've been thinking about how things were, you know, before. I mean, before-before.

He glances around, thumbs his napkin, and shakes his head.

ADAM (CONT'D)

It isn't going to work, Max, you and me.

He looks her in the eye. Her face sinks.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I mean, I love you. I really love you to bits.

MAX

I love.
(choking)
I love you too.

Adam smiles, pleased, and wipes a tear from his eye. She struggles a smile back and clutches her neck.

ADAM

And that's why I have to give you the freedom to work this all out.

MAX

So, you're just going to throw everything we have away?

ADAM

(shaking head)
No, I'm turning a page, okay?
Starting a new chapter.

MAX

With her?

Adam shrugs and looks back guilty.

Max's face screws up. She puts her head in her hands, trying to stifle her sobbing.

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT TERMINAL 5 - DAY

Announcements echo down the huge check-in floor of Heathrow Terminal 5. Travelers mill around with luggage.

Max and Jordan walk to the security gate, smile at each other, and hug.

JORDAN

I'll come back as soon as I can, I promise. Don't run anybody over while I'm gone, okay?

Max smirks, they release and hold outstretched hands.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Are you sure you're going to be okay?

Max nods surely and looks at the security gate. TRAVELERS queuing up, loading security trays for the SECURITY GUARD, some of whom glance up at her.

Jordan hugs her tightly, and they both start to cry.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

You sure you're going to be okay getting back to the car on your own?

Max nods defiantly. Jordan makes her way into security.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Remember Lucy's watching over you, smiling, okay? And I'll be back as often as I can. See you soon! Thanks for having me!

Max smiles warmly as Jordan strolls backward.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

(calling)

And thanks for teaching me what a twat is.

Max slowly shakes her head, smiling, as Jordan looks back, amused, an unimpressed security guard leading her away.

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT PARKING GARAGE

Max hurries through the airport parking garage, wiping her eyes.

She tugs out her keys, blips the alarm, and gets in her Mini.

INT. MINI

Max slams the door shut and sits, clenching her eyes tightly as tears squeeze through. She jolts, teeth gritted, and shakes.

She breaks down into her hands and sobs, tears flowing fast.

Max howls, pained, and looks around hopelessly. Saliva clings to her lips, and snot runs from her nose. She gasps and sits back, panting hard, her eyes wild, and then suddenly, she stops and sits shivering, staring into the middle distance while thinking.

The bright, wide band of sunlight framed by the solid concrete walls of the parking garage ahead.

She shoves the keys into the ignition, fires up the engine, and slams the car into gear.

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT PARKING GARAGE

The little Mini squeals away, scurrying across the car park, engine buzzing.

INT. MINI

Max stares meanly ahead, cars whipping by. She cuts the wheel.

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT PARKING GARAGE

Mini ducks down the exit ramp, crashes down to the lower floor, corners screeching, and dives down the next ramp.

INT. MINI

Max focuses intensely, leaning into the turns and jolting as the Mini bumps down onto each level.

EXT. M4 MOTORWAY

Traffic bustles down the M4 motorway. The Mini blasts down the outside lane.

INT. MINI

Max revs the engine hard, staring ahead determined, clipping the rev limiter as she snatches the next gear.

EXT. LONDON OFFICE BLOCK

The Mini screams down the street and screeches to a halt outside the office block.

Max gets out and marches to the entrance.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY

Soft music plays in the peaceful, elegant lobby decorated with movie advertising and awards. A RECEPTIONIST sits idly behind the desk at a computer.

BANG! The receptionist jolts up.

Max crosses through, feet clumping on the marble floor. She goes to pass the desk.

RECEPTIONIST
Hey, excuse me! Do you have an appointment?

MAX
(giving her the finger)
Yeah, right here.

RECEPTIONIST
Hey, you can't go in there!

Max goes to open a door, but it's locked. She glares back.

MAX
Open the door, please!

RECEPTIONIST
Miss, you're going to have to calm down, okay? Or I'll have to call security.

Max crosses to the desk and stares down, shaking with rage.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Okay, I'm going to need your name and see some I.D.

Max stares back, dumbfounded.

MAX
Do you know who I am?

The receptionist shakes her head, worried.

Max pats her pockets to find them empty and looks up and around.

She crosses to the reception sofa and climbs up onto it.

RECEPTIONIST
(grabbing phone)
Miss, I'm calling security now.

Max heaves a framed movie poster from the wall, ripping it from its fixings.

The receptionist stares back, stunned, phone receiver by her ear.

Max struggles the huge poster over and crashes it down onto the desk. She flicks her hair back, points at the enormous picture of herself over her name, and sarcastically imitates the pose.

The receptionist stares, stunned, and hits the door buzzer.

INT. MEETING ROOM

Charlie and a group of EXECUTIVES talk in the middle of a meeting.

A knock at the door causes them to stop and look around to find Max standing in the doorway, nervous.

EXECUTIVE

Max? Are you okay?

MAX

I have to ask you guys something.

They narrow their eyes, intrigued, and she points at Charlie.

MAX (CONT'D)

If you had to choose between him and me, who would it be? Seriously, if you had to choose.

The executives wince awkwardly and exchange furtive glances. Charlie sits back and shakes his head in disbelief.

CHARLIE CANE

You're unbelievable, un-fucking-believable.

MAX

(narrowing eyes)
I wasn't asking you.
(looking around room)
Well?

EXECUTIVE

(laughing nervously)
We can't really answer a question like that, Max. Are you okay? Do you want to sit down?

CHARLIE CANE

I can answer that question, and you know what? I will.

EXECUTIVE

Charlie don't-

CHARLIE CANE

No! I'll say it! Max, not one person at this table would choose you over me. Like I told you before, it's a long way from where you are to where I am. That's a hard pill to swallow, but it's the truth. Some of us are here because of sheer talent, and some of us are here because of sheer momentum. You have to accept what kinda wave you're riding. That's just how the industry is. You've had some good luck, now appreciate that, and don't think, for one second, someone like you could replace someone like me. Ain't that right, guys?

Charlie glances around for support. The executives look around the room, refusing to respond, mainly because he wouldn't like the answer.

Charlie tosses his pen down angrily.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

Oh, you're fucking kidding me! Her? Really? The girl from some teen horror franchise? The kid who never wanted to be famous?

He throws his head around, wincing with humiliation.

CHARLIE CANE (CONT'D)

Fine, fuck it then. You win, Max. I'll go if that's what you want.

MAX

No wait. I don't want that. I don't want that at all.

They all look back, intrigued. She takes a deep breath.

MAX (CONT'D)

Another role's come up. One that's more important to me right now.

CHARLIE CANE

Who? Who could possibly be bigger than this for you?

MAX

Who do you think?

INT. DRAB CORRIDOR

Max walks solemnly down the corridor alone, her head down.

She glances around and fights tears, smiling, conflicted over what she's done.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY

Max exits the door, passing SECURITY GUARDS who are trying to rehang the torn-down movie poster.

The receptionist watches over them and spots Max skulking out.

RECEPTIONIST
Miss, excuse me.

Max looks back over her shoulder.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Sorry I didn't know who you were. I only started yesterday.

Max thinks for a moment.

MAX
Don't be.

She crosses to the bright, sunlit entrance, a genuinely content smile growing across her face.

EXT. ANIMAL SHELTER - DAY

A tatty old tennis ball bounces across concrete and rolls to a halt by a wall in the animal shelter. Jack the Mongrel dashes to it, scampers around, and sprints over to Max as she crouches down with a beaming grin.

She takes the ball and rubs his head lovingly before spotting James walking to the entrance.

MAX
James!

He pauses and crosses through a gate.

JAMES
You okay?

She nods.

MAX
I wanted to apologize in person.
You know, about the money. I messed
up

He shakes his head, disappointed and a little angry.

JAMES

You don't get it, do you? You think that's what bothers me?

JAMES (CONT'D)

You bother me.

(nodding at Dog)

Him I can help. You, I don't know where to start.

He stares at her sympathetically. She reaches into her pocket, slides out an envelope, and offers it to him.

MAX

I want you to have this.

He takes it from her and studies it concerned.

JAMES

Is this your resignation? You know you can't quit this job, right?

Max smirks, and looks at him sincerely.

MAX

I'm focusing on writing for the foreseeable future, and I wanted to write you something first.

He stares back, confused. She rubs his arm and leaves.

MAX (CONT'D)

Look, I gotta go.

She crosses through gate, carefully closes it behind her, and smiles back through the bars.

They stare for a few moments. She waves to Jack the mongrel and strolls backward.

MAX (CONT'D)

Just keep a space free, okay? I may need to move in.

He smiles, confused, as she crosses to her Mini.

James tears open the envelope, peers in, and frowns, shocked.

He snaps around, looking for Max, and fumbles through the gate after her.

JAMES

Max! Max!

The Mini races away.

James stares up the road and shakes his head, then looks back at the envelope and the cheque within it, smirking to himself, delighted.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

Max sits on the sofa, alone in the huge penthouse, gazing around and rubbing her arms.

She grabs her tattered old sneakers and pulls them on.

The cat nuzzles the balcony door.

She picks up the small plush dog and lets the cat sniff it.

Max ushers the cat into a carrier, pops in the dog, and closes the door. The cat settles and looks out.

She grabs up her laptop and notebook and stuffs them into a rucksack.

Max then picks up a picture of Lucy, slides it out of the frame, and looks at it. She smiles and slips it into her pocket.

Max slides the rucksack onto her shoulder, picks up the carrier, and crosses to the front door.

She looks back at the apartment, empty of all belongings, boxes stacked up.

EXT. CHELSEA APARTMENTS

Max exits the building as a gust ruffles her coat and blows back her hair.

She winces as she hails a cab.

INT. LONDON BLACK CAB

Max sits on the back seat and gazes out the window nervously, rubbing her neck as busy London streets blur by.

She wiggles her finger at the cat, playing with it.

The cab squeaks to a halt.

EXT. PARK LANE

Max takes a deep breath and steps out. The cab pulls away.

She stares ahead, scared, the wind rushing around her. The grand white monumental arches and pillars of Queen Elizabeth Gate tower overhead on Hyde Park Corner.

EXT. HYDE PARK

TOURISTS snap photos. Huge trees rustle in the breeze. Grass shimmers in the wind.

Max walks into the park tentatively, drawing up her scarf around her neck.

She passes a COUPLE walking arm in arm.

They smile warmly at her. She draws a shy smile back.

Children's voices call. Max glances across at KIDS playing with their parents.

One stops, points at her, and smiles. She smiles back and gives a brief wave. The kid waves back, grinning.

Max passes a DOG OWNER. He smiles at her. She smiles back. He spots her cat and chuckles.

Max places the carrier on an empty bench, slips off her rucksack, and sits down beside it.

She gazes up, tweaks her hair out of her face, and stares up at a dark window in an office block in the distance.

Max gazes around, takes a deep breath, and smiles nervously, scared but excited at the same time, a tiny body lost within a crowd and exactly where she knows she needs to be.

THE END