

# INDUSTRY

(SPEC SCRIPT)

Episode "301"

"Realer Than Real"

Written by

Tristan Thom

Based on the series created by

Mickey Down & Konrad Kay

**INT. PIERPOINT. BOARDROOM - MORNING**

CLOSE ON:

A NEW GRAD. Young. Black. Poised. Inscrutable. She sits at the boardroom table staring intently at her INTERVIEWER who is offscreen. Her gaze narrows and her jaw clenches. Her neutral, inscrutable expression slowly contorts into something more definite: disgust.

NEW GRAD  
Excuse me?

ERIC (O.C.)  
Your IQ?

The New Grad's gaze widens.

NEW GRAD  
Are you sure you want to ask me  
that question?

On the other side of the table, sitting across from the New Grad is ERIC. He's interviewing the incoming crop of new grads at Pierpoint.

ERIC  
(demurring)  
Doesn't matter.  
(beat)  
So this is all very impressive...

Eric taps his finger on her CV.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
On paper.

Eric idly scans her CV.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
Princeton...two summers at JP  
Morgan...one at Google—  
(beat)  
Do you code?

The New Grad nods in the affirmative. Eric continues to skim through her CV

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(impassively)  
Wow.

Eric sets down the CV and leans back in his chair in that inimitably asshole-ish, alpha way.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
So...why are you here?

NEW GRAD

Well, to put it bluntly, I believe this industry is in crisis. The system is broken, and it's failing absolutely everyone, including the people who it was expressly designed to help. It's certainly failing people like you and me.

Eric looks around their environment pointedly.

ERIC

Is it?

NEW GRAD

It is. But I see an opportunity to build something better. Out of the wreckage I believe we can forge a radically more equitable and accountable future for this industry and for the world.

ERIC

So you're a revolutionary?

NEW GRAD

We're living in revolutionary times.

Eric gestures at the handsomely appointed boardroom and the Kingly views of the City beyond.

ERIC

Not from where I'm sitting.

NEW GRAD

The centre will not hold.

Eric smirks at this reference. He takes a deep breath.

ERIC

(faux-sagely)

Every revolutionary ends up becoming either an oppressor or a heretic...

NEW GRAD

Cynicism masquerades as wisdom.

Eric smiles. She's passed his test after all.

ERIC

You're very—

Just then, the New Grad stands up. She retrieves her bag and jacket from the back of her chair, and extends her hand across the table.

NEW GRAD

Thank you for your time. But I  
don't feel like this is going to be  
a fit for me. Culturally.

Eric shakes her hand then opens the door and gestures for her  
to exit.

ERIC

Things fall apart.

The New Grad shoots him one last withering look.

Eric shuts the door behind her then returns to his seat. He  
picks up her CV and scans it again. Exceptionally well-  
qualified.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Fuck.

**INT. PIERPOINT. TRADING FLOOR. CPS DESK - MORNING**

ROBERT sits at his desk, staring intently at his monitors. He  
has his earbuds in; MUSIC drowns out the din of the trading  
floor. His hands rest on his keyboard, lightly tapping in  
time with the beat without actually striking any keys. Every  
few seconds his gaze darts down to his phone, but the screen  
is black. He's waiting for something. Someone.

VENETIA (O.C.)

Rob?

Robert swivels around in his chair. VENETIA stands behind him.  
He takes his earbuds out. A slightly stricken expression  
passes across his face; like a little boy about to get in  
trouble.

ROBERT

Hey. Hi!

VENETIA

You have a minute?

Rob's eyes dart down to his phone then back to Venetia.

ROBERT

Yeah, sure. 'Course. What's up?

VENETIA

The culture at Pierpoint needs to  
change.

ROBERT

Uh, sure...a little broad, Ven...

VENETIA

I want to assemble a group of internal stakeholders, whose job it will be to bring to light specific instances of discrimination...abuse of power...and you know, just outright abuse.

Venetia looks pointedly at Rob who skirts her gaze.

ROBERT

Okay, great, yeah.

(beat)

But wasn't there that, uh, report?

VENETIA

After a fourteen-month audit they concluded that our diversity, equality and inclusivity initiatives were "under-resourced and lacking widespread institutional purchase" and proposed commissioning a follow-up study on how to foster diversity, equality, and inclusivity initiatives.

ROBERT

Sounds about right.

(confused)

So...

VENETIA

We need buy-in from everyone.

ROBERT

Ahh...a token white guy...

VENETIA

Yes. So they can't just reflexively roll their eyes at the aggrieved minorities.

ROBERT

Fair enough.

VENETIA

If we want any of this to move beyond the realm of unread white papers and tormented press releases, we need to demonstrate that this culture is failing everyone.

ROBERT

(defensive)

And you think I've been failed by Pierpoint?

Venetia ignores the question.

VENETIA

I have a meeting with Adler tomorrow. It'd be great if you could come along and...co-sign.

ROBERT

Uh, sure, yeah. Why not?

Just then Robert's phone starts RINGING. Incoming call: "Nicole."

Venetia looks at the phone then looks at Robert.

VENETIA

Do you need to get that?

Venetia again looks at the phone, then again at Robert.

VENETIA (CONT'D)

You should probably get that.

**EXT. PIERPOINT. OUTDOOR SMOKING AREA - MORNING**

Eric puffs on a cigarette while scrolling through his phone. He stops, taps on a name in his contact list, then raises his phone to his ear.

**INT. DVD'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN**

The room is dark and silent but for the faint glow of a computer monitor and the dull hum of a server set up in the corner. In the middle of the space is a long, low-slung couch and a coffee table, empty but for a phone and a glass of water. On one end of the couch, a WOMAN is curled up beneath a blanket. We see only the back of her head.

Just then, the phone on the coffee table lights up and starts to RING. The woman stirs and rolls over: it's HARPER. She grabs the phone. On the screen: "Eric Tao." She silences the ringer and sets the phone face down on the coffee table. After a second, she throws off the blanket and sits up. She stands up, stretches, then slowly walks over to the window and throws open the heavy curtains. Pale, early morning light pours into the room. Outside: New York City.

**TITLE CARD - "INDUSTRY"**

**INT. PIERPOINT. LOBBY - LUNCH**

An elevator opens. YASMIN and KENNY step out into the lobby. As they make their way through the crowd, someone in the distance catches Kenny's eye.

He grabs Yas' arm and tries to steer her in a different direction. She reflexively pulls her arm away.

YASMIN

What?

Kenny nods his head in the direction they had been heading. Yasmin sees it – or rather, them: CHARLES and CELESTE, walking directly toward them.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

(cooly)

It's fine.

Yasmin smooths her shirt and pivots to walk confidently over to Charles and Celeste. They both extend their arms as if to initiate a hug. Yasmin rebuffs the gesture and maintains a polite distance.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

Celeste. Dad. Good to see you both.

CELESTE

You as well.

(beat)

Your father and I just had an early lunch...

Yasmin eyes them incredulously.

YASMIN

I'm sure.

CHARLES

And tell me darling: are you enjoying your hard-won independence?

YASMIN

Immensely.

CHARLES

It must be overwhelming at times though. So many logistics that I always took care of.

YASMIN

You habitually overestimate yourself and underestimate everyone else.

CHARLES

Still, I'm impressed. It's difficult on your own.

YASMIN

Not so difficult. All I've really had to do is open a new bank account and sign a lease. Cumulatively, it's taken 45 minutes and £10,000 to extricate myself from you.

CHARLES

A bargain.

Silence.

CELESTE

Your father and I were just saying how much we miss having you on his account.

YASMIN

I'm sure you're doing a more than capable job. I always felt I was somewhat in the middle of something.

Celeste looks solicitously at Charles.

CELESTE

Not at all.

(beat)

And you two? Where are you sneaking off to?

KENNY

Client lunch.

CELESTE

With who?

KENNY

Bill. Wilson.

CELESTE

Hmm. Don't know him.

KENNY

He keeps a low profile.

Silence.

YASMIN

Well, we should be going.

Charles leans in uncomfortably close to Yasmin and clasps her arm.

CHARLES

(whispering)

(MORE)



CHARLES (CONT'D)

Darling, this little...show of force has gone on long enough. You've made your point. I concede! Have lunch with me next week?

YASMIN

Lunch is difficult. Meetings, meetings, meetings.

CHARLES

Oh, take pity on your poor old father.

Yasmin smiles tersely.

YASMIN

So nice running into you both.

**INT. DVD'S APARTMENT. NYC - MID-MORNING**

Harper sits on the couch idly scrolling through her phone. Her bedding is neatly folded and stacked to one side. DVD sits at his workstation and stares intently at his computer. Harper looks over at DVD expectantly but he doesn't notice her.

HARPER

Hey.

DVD

Hmm?

HARPER

What're you doing?

DVD

(distracted)

I am waiting on a possible short...

HARPER

So you're doing nothing?

DVD

Trading is mostly doing nothing.

HARPER

Is that what you tell your clients?

DVD

In not so many words.

HARPER

Waiting for your short; waiting for your turn; waiting for permission; waiting to be told that you're a good boy...

DVD

And what is it that you've been doing on my couch for the past six months?

DVD looks at Harper pointedly, to underscore that she has, in fact, been doing absolutely fucking nothing.

HARPER

That's different.

Silence

DVD

Harper?

HARPER

Mmm?

DVD

You need to do something.

HARPER

I'm going to the gym...

DVD

You need to work.

HARPER

I have money.

DVD

Not enough. You're languishing.

HARPER

Everyone in New York is languishing. And I will work. When I get back to London.

DVD

*If you get back to London...*

Harper ignores this remark and returns her attention to her phone.

DVD (CONT'D)

Harper...

After a moment, she stands up.

HARPER

I'm going to the gym.

**INT. CHURCH. MEETING SPACE - LUNCHTIME**

Yas and Kenny are seated in a drab, beige, nondescript room. Folding chairs are arranged in a circular formation at the middle of the space. Blindingly-bright overhead lights make it even more dire. An AA meeting. The group's attention is trained on an elegant, HANDSOME MAN in his fifties. Yas is transfixed; Kenny less so.

HANDSOME MAN

...I wish I could tell you how terrible it was to be like that; how empty and corrosive it was and how unbearable it became.

(beat)

But what tends to get lost in all the hand-wringing and genuflection is, well, just how much fucking fun it was to act with complete impunity; to be insulated from consequence; to be free of real responsibility.

(beat)

And I wish I could tell you that I would have changed of my own accord because it was the right thing to do. But I only changed because I was forced to; because the world changed, and I got caught, and finally - *finally* - there were consequences. And finally, I had to take responsibility for my actions. Not because I wanted to and not because it was the right thing to do, but because I was forced to.

(beat)

But fuck I'm glad I was forced to. Because everything is so much better now; impossibly better.

(beat)

But way less fucking fun.

Yasmin laughs. She's the only one. They make pointed eye contact.

**INT. CHURCH. MEETING SPACE - MOMENTS LATER**

The meeting has ended. People are stacking chairs, tidying up, and slowly trickling out of the room. Kenny and Yas put their chairs away and walk toward the exit. Yasmin stops and eyes the Handsome Man. He's chatting with another AA MEMBER on the other side of the room. Kenny impatiently taps her arm.

KENNY

Yas. We gotta go.

YASMIN  
 (distracted)  
 Mmm. One sec.  
 (beat)  
 Actually, you go ahead.

KENNY  
 You sure?

YASMIN  
 Yeah. I'll just be a minute. I'll  
 catch up

KENNY  
 Alright...

Kenny leaves. Yasmin makes a beeline over to Handsome Man.  
 She sidles up to him and places her hand on his arm.

YASMIN  
 Hi.  
 (to the other AA Member)  
 Hi. Sorry to interrupt...

AA MEMBER  
 Quite alright. I've got to be off  
 anyways.  
 (to Handsome Man)  
 Charles. Always a pleasure.

Handsome Man, aka AA CHARLES smiles and waves. He turns his  
 attention back to Yasmin.

AA CHARLES  
 Hi?

YASMIN  
 Hi! Sorry to interrupt, I just, uh-  
 (flustered)  
 So Charles...

Yasmin looks at him appraisingly.

AA CHARLES  
 Yes?

YASMIN  
 Oh...now...it's just, that's my  
 father's name and-  
 (beat)  
 Nevermind. I'm sure you don't want  
 to be compared to someone's  
 father...

AA CHARLES  
 It wouldn't be the first time. And  
 it usually goes one of two ways...

YASMIN

Which are?

AA CHARLES

I try and save them or they try and save me.

AA Charles eyes Yasmin with suspicion but also intrigue. A pregnant pause lingers between them.

YASMIN

I just wanted to tell you that I enjoyed what you shared. It was refreshingly free of sentimentality and self-flagellation.

AA CHARLES

The twin pillars of sobriety.

(beat)

Thank you.

YASMIN

I've been coming here for a few months now, and it's been lovely, but there's a certain kind of self-awareness that seems to be in short supply...

AA CHARLES

Self-awareness is just avoiding change and shirking responsibility, but charmingly...

YASMIN

Spoken with supreme self-awareness...

AA Charles flushes slightly.

AA CHARLES

And what about you?

YASMIN

And what about me?

AA CHARLES

Well, who are you?

YASMIN

Oh. Sorry. Yasmin.

(beat)

Hanani.

A glimmer of recognition passes across AA Charles' face. He extends his hand.

AA CHARLES

Pleasure.

YASMIN

Likewise.

Yasmin notices Kenny is still waiting for her by the door.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

So, I have to get back to work.

AA CHARLES

How dire.

YASMIN

Immensely.

(beat)

But I'll see you here again?

AA CHARLES

I'm sure.

**EXT. GYM - MORNING**

Harper stands outside her gym. She's idly thumbing through her phone but also half-eavesdropping on all the finance bros around her. She scrolls through the text message exchange between her and Jesse Bloom. A months'-long backlog of Harper's unanswered messages clog the bottom of their text thread. She re-reads everything...fuck it: she calls him. The phone rings. Voicemail. Fuck. She hangs up and goes inside.

**INT. GYM - MOMENTS LATER**

Harper's in the middle of a training session. Her arms are raised by her sides holding tiny dumbbells. Her TRAINER, a compact, terrifyingly lean woman, stands behind her monitoring her form intently. Harper's gaze eventually drifts from herself to a man, GYM BRO, working out next to her. They make eye contact: intense, sustained, unflinching. Harper's phone rings. She immediately swirls around to check her phone on the bench behind her.

HARPER

Sorry. I have to—

Harper drops the weights and picks up her phone. Her face falls. "Eric Tao." She silences the ringer and places the phone back on the bench and returns her attention to her trainer.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Sorry.

**INT. PIERPOINT. CORRIDOR - MIDDAY**

Eric stands in an empty corridor with his phone held to his ear. It rings and rings. He finally hangs up.

Eric continues down the hall. He arrives outside a large boardroom. BILL ADLER is seated at the table. Adler looks up and sees Eric and waves him inside.

**INT. PIERPOINT. BOARDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Eric enters the boardroom and stands tentatively at the threshold. Bill Adler gestures for him to take a seat.

ERIC

Bill...

ADLER

Eric. Thanks for making the time.

ERIC

(archly)

For you? For this?

Eric gestures at the table, empty but for a few bottles of room temperature water. He grabs one, opens it, and takes a sip.

ERIC (CONT'D)

You really shouldn't have gone to the trouble.

Adler grimaces then leans back in his chair in that inimitably asshole-ish, alpha way.

ADLER

Eric, I've always admired your candour, your directness. It's refreshing, in this industry – and in this country. So I'm going to follow your lead and keep this conversation extremely clear and extremely direct.

ERIC

But I so enjoy your poeticism, Bill...

ADLER

It's nothing bad...

ERIC

But...

ADLER

I've asked Catriona Bowens to join us for this conversation.

Adler reaches for the console in the centre of the table.

ADLER (CONT'D)

Catriona? Are you ready to join us?

CATRIONA (O.S.)

Hi Bill. Yes. Just give me a second to turn my video on.

ADLER

Great. We'll do the same.

Eric shifts nervously. After a few seconds, the large monitor mounted at the far end of the room switches on. On the screen is a video feed of CATRIONA BOWENS, the Group Chief Financial Officer at Pierpoint. She's based in New York. One of the big bosses.

CATRIONA

Bill. Eric. Good to see you both. How's everything over in London?

ERIC

Grey. Rainy. Echos of imperial glory continue to reverberate in the collective psyche.

CATRIONA

How wonderful for you both.

(beat)

Eric, I don't know how much Bill has told you yet...

ERIC

Not a thing. So far we've just had a delightful conversation about having a conversation, which is one of Bill's core competencies, as I'm sure you know.

CATRIONA

Well, I'll get straight to it then: I doubt this will come as a big surprise to you Eric, but we've revisited the issue and have made the decision to close the London office. In six months. We're folding our UK team into Europe and the Americas.

ERIC

Wow. Uh...

CATRIONA

I want to assure you first of all that your position with Pierpoint is secure. We want you, and a lot of your team back in New York. You've been doing good work, and you'll continue to do good work I'm sure.

(MORE)



CATRIONA (CONT'D)

We'll have plenty of time to unpack all of that in the days and weeks to come, but we just thought that it was important to get you on board and up to speed with this as soon as possible.

ERIC

Catriona can I just ask: why now?

CATRIONA

It's complicated of course, but it's our feeling that our presence in the UK has become...ancillary.

ERIC

London has become ancillary?

CATRIONA

Bluntly? Yes. Post-Brexit it's no longer a deregulated backdoor into the EU. The cynic in me would say that the country is well on the road to becoming an ungovernable rump state. And the pragmatist in me would say anything London can do, Dublin can do for half the price and without the terrible sense of entitlement.

ADLER

And there's also the looming prospect of recession...

ERIC

This country's been in one continuous recession since 1945. It's never stopped anyone from making money.

ADLER

Eric, you knew this was inevitable. We're bringing you in on it now because we need your help. This is a good conversation for you.

ERIC

My team is doing good fucking work and making real fucking money. Here.

CATRIONA

No one said you weren't. And you, along with much of your team will continue to do that good work. Just in New York.

ERIC

You know that's a non-starter for me. My kids...

CATRIONA

I'll make the call and there will be two spots waiting for them at Dalton. We're committed to making this a frictionless move for you and your family.

ERIC

I'll need to talk to my family...

CATRIONA

Of course. But the decision's been made. There's a great role for you in New York. Come home.

ERIC

This is short-sighted.

CATRIONA

Six months. We're telling you now as a courtesy, and as a vote of confidence in your future at the firm.

ADLER

Eric: there's a world in which this is an unalloyed good. Try and see it that way. Alright?

CATRIONA

Eric, Bill: I've got to run; I'm glad we started this conversation and we'll continue it soon. Thanks guys.

ADLER

Thanks Catriona.

Catriona hangs up and the screen turns black.

ERIC

Bill, what the fuck? I thought we had a very clear understanding about my future here. In London.

ADLER

Respectfully, Eric, given your past, uh...oversights, I would think it's in your best interest to stay close to us on this one. You're protected in here, but very exposed out there.

ERIC

Well Bill, also respectfully, my "exposure" amounts to some unfortunate but understandable managerial oversights that I swiftly moved to correct as soon as it came to my attention.

(beat)

Your "exposure" involves the SEC combing your colon with a wire brush for the next five years while Gloria Allred shoves a red hot endoscopic camera up your dick hole looking for every woman who's been sexually assaulted at Pierpoint on your watch

ADLER

You're not going to win this one Eric.

**INT. DVD'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - LATER**

Harper and DVD are in the kitchen making dinner. In the background, CNN plays on the TV at a low volume. Harper's half watching as she chops vegetables. The news segment rolls over and a picture of Jesse Bloom pops up on screen. This piques Harper's interest.

HARPER

Hey! Turn this up.

DVD looks at the TV and sees Jesse. He nods and turns the volume up.

DVD

Your boy...

CNN ANCHOR 1 (V.O.)

...Billionaire investor Jesse Bloom is set to make an appearance tomorrow at Valence Summit, the cryptocurrency festival set to take place in Miami over the weekend. A gathering that many on social media are affectionately – or not so affectionately – referring to as "DeFi Davos."

CNN ANCHOR 2 (V.O.)

That's right. And Bloom will apparently be taking the stage for a far-ranging conversation with Valence's CEO and founder Adam Baum-Cohen.

(MORE)

CNN ANCHOR 2 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Representatives for Baum-Cohen confirmed the planned meeting of the billionaires in statement, saying: "Adam is thrilled to welcome such a visionary thinker and disruptive innovator to the stage at Valence Summit. He looks forward to a productive and challenging discussion about the future of crypto and the mainstreaming of DeFi protocols."

CNN ANCHOR 1 (V.O.)

Wow. Sounds like some fascinating stuff.

CNN ANCHOR 2 (V.O.)

Absolutely. And I'm sure the question on everyone's mind in Miami is going to be: could Mr. COVID become Mr. Crypto?

The segment ends and DVD turns the volume back down.

HARPER

So what are your thoughts on this Valence guy?

DVD

(affected bro-speak)

A-Baummmmm!!!

(beat)

Complicated. But basically, he's a fucking legend. 28 years old. He started Valence and built it into the second-largest crypto exchange in the world in three years? It's like Coinbase, but not shit. Four years ago he was a junior analyst. Now he's worth \$22 billion.

HARPER

So he's legit?

DVD

Beyond legit; he's building a whole new world.

HARPER

And why aren't you going to Miami? Grab a hammer and get to work...

DVD

(shrugging)

Invite only.

HARPER

I thought you were one of the Young  
Turks of crypto?

DVD

I'll be there next year.

HARPER

But would you go this year if you  
could?

DVD

I mean...yeah. Fuck yea.

HARPER

Huh.

**INT. DVD'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM - LATER**

Harper paces back and forth with her phone held to her ear.  
It's ringing.

**INT. PRIVATE JET. MAIN CABIN - SAME TIME**

GUS and JESSE BLOOM sit opposite one another on Jesse's  
private jet. Jesse's phone is ringing. He picks it up and  
stares at the screen but doesn't answer. He holds up the  
phone to Gus. On the screen: "Harper Stern"

JESSE

Your friend's persistent.

GUS

At one juncture, that was what you  
liked best about her.

JESSE

It still is. But this—

Jesse shakes his phone pointedly.

JESSE (CONT'D)

—cannot be happening.

GUS

Do you want me to have a  
conversation with her?

Jesse's phone stops ringing.

JESSE

Sure. But just as a friend. And as a friend, you could remind her that it's for the best that she move forward rather than backward in her life; in her career; in all ways. As a friend.

Just then Gus' phone starts to ring. He reaches for it and looks at the screen. A slightly pained but bemused expression passes across his face. He holds up the phone to Jesse. On the screen: "Harper Stern"

GUS

My friend...

Jesse gestures to the back of the plane.

JESSE

Go. Talk to your friend.

Gus gets up and walks to the rear cabin. He shuts the door behind him.

**INT. PRIVATE JET. REAR CABIN - CONTINUOUS**

Gus answers the call.

GUS

Harper...

**INT. DVD'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM - SAME TIME**

HARPER

Gus. Hi. How's it going?

**INTERCUT: PHONE CONVERSATION**

GUS

Good...how's New York?

HARPER

Fucking provincial.

(beat)

Are you with Jesse right now?

A pregnant pause hangs between them.

GUS

Harper...

HARPER

I've been trying to get a hold of him for weeks...

GUS

Yeah...

HARPER

So he told you I've been calling?

GUS

(sighs)

Harper, I'm saying this as a friend: it's in your best interest to move on from...all that.

HARPER

Did Jesse tell you to say that?

GUS

I think you think something bad happened to you when really, you were spared the very worst outcome.

HARPER

We have unfinished business.

GUS

If you get away with murder, you don't go back to the scene of the crime, and you definitely don't keep calling the guy who gave you the gun.

HARPER

Are you in Miami?

GUS

Heading there. As we speak.

HARPER

If I came to Miami, could you get me in front of Jesse? Five minutes.

GUS

Harper, this is not...

HARPER

Five minutes. Gus, please. All I need is five minutes. I'm asking for your help. As a friend.

Gus mulls this over for a second.

GUS

If you can get to Miami by tomorrow afternoon, I could get you passes. He's doing that talk with A-Baum. I can't promise anything, but he'll be around afterwards. That's the best I can do.

HARPER

Fucking amazing. Thank you.

GUS

Not a word of this to Jesse. This is purely a coincidence.

HARPER

Of course.

**INT. MIAMI HOTEL. LOBBY - LATE MORNING**

Harper and DVD make their way through the thronged lobby of a chic, sexy, scene-y hotel lobby. There's a frisson in the air that screams "let's rage, fuck, and commit white collar crimes - ideally simultaneously." As Harper and DVD push their way through to the front desk to check in, Harper looks around in awe/disgust/bewilderment.

HARPER

I always thought I hated America in the general, totalising sense, but it turns out there's a lot of extremely specific things to hate by at the regional level too.

DVD

*Bienvenidos a Miami...*

HARPER

Everyone looks like they're a real estate broker. Or a Republican.

DVD

Or a Republican real estate broker.

(beat)

I fucking love it here. New York's stuck in the past. London's stuck even further in the past. This feels like the future.

Harper looks around disapprovingly and with much concern.

HARPER

God help us.

DVD

God abandoned Florida a long time ago. That's part of the appeal.

Harper and DVD come to a stop join what appears to be a long, meandering, informal queue at the front desk.

HARPER

Is this the queue? Are we in a queue?



DVD

People don't queue here...they just...position themselves and let things happen.

HARPER

That doesn't inspire confidence.

DVD

Have you messaged them yet to say you're here?

HARPER

No...

DVD

Are you going to?

HARPER

Of course.

Harper's phone buzzes. It's a message from Gus: "backstage now. text when you arrive?" Harper replies: "yes. here. en route."

HARPER (CONT'D)

Jesse's talk is in 45 minutes.

DVD

No stress. It's like a ten minute walk along the beach.

HARPER

Great.

**INT. PIERPOINT. CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON**

Rob walks down the hall to the meeting with Venetia. His phone BUZZES. It's Nicole. He hesitates for a minute, but decides to pick up

ROBERT

Hi?

NICOLE (O.S.)

Go somewhere private.

ROBERT

What?

NICOLE (O.S.)

Just go.

ROBERT

I've got a meeting...

NICOLE  
Is it important?

Rob stops and considers it.

ROBERT  
Give me a minute.

**INT. PIERPOINT. TOILET - MOMENTS LATER**

Rob steps into a private toilet and closes the door behind him. He opens FaceTime and calls NICOLE. Seconds later, her face appears on screen.

ROBERT  
Hi...

Nicole stares at him strangely; coolly.

NICOLE  
Put your phone somewhere so I can see you.

ROBERT  
Uhh...okay. One sec...

Rob props up the camera against the mirror then steps back. Nicole appraises him.

NICOLE  
All of you.

Rob takes a step back so his full body is now in frame on the FaceTime call.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
Take your clothes off.

Rob hesitates for a moment. Then he begins to loosen his tie and pulls it over his head. He unbuttons his shirt and shrugs it off. He unzips his trousers and allows them to fall to the ground.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
Nicely....

Rob collects his clothes from the floor and neatly folds them, then sets them carefully on the counter. He stands in front of the camera expectantly.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
And your pants...

Rob begins to pull down his underwear, but stops himself. He reaches over to the door and clicks the lock.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
Unlocked.

ROBERT  
I-

NICOLE  
Unlocked.

Rob unlocks the door and steps back in front of the camera. He removes his underwear. He stands expectantly.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
Good.

ROBERT  
Should I...?

Robert nervously adjusts his cock.

NICOLE  
No.

Nicole begins to touch herself.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
Stay there.

Rob stays frozen in place for a moment. Nicole has a strange vacant expression on her face; she's not so much looking at him as through him. Rob shifts uncomfortably, unsure of what to do.

ROBERT  
(sheepish)  
Nicole, I-  
(beat)  
I have to-  
(beat)  
I should-

NICOLE  
You're free to do what you want.

Rob remains frozen. Nicole looks directly at him.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
So what do you want?

Rob hesitates for a moment. He looks over at his clothes, then at the door, then at Nicole. He slowly moves his hand across his torso, down to his groin.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
Good. Good. Good.

**INT. AUDITORIUM. STAGE - AFTERNOON**

ADAM BAUM-COHEN a.k.a. "A-BAUM" sits on an a cavernous stage in a sleek, futuristic auditorium. Behind him, a towering screen pulses with hypnotic graphics and announces "BAUM ON BLOOM: Horizon 2030." The MODERATOR, a Kara Swisher-type journalist/media personality sits next to A-Baum. Beside her is an empty chair that she keeps gesturing to. She's mid-introduction.

MODERATOR

...Jesse Bloom is a towering figure in the collective consciousness. For some, he is the defining hero of our era: a once in a generation genius who has single-handedly revolutionised finance in and for the twenty-first century. For others, he is a villain – perhaps the consummate villain of our time. The very personification of greed; an avatar for the runaway freight train of unchecked and unfettered capitalism; a real son of a bitch. But love him or hate him, one thing is for certain: we all know his name. Please welcome Jesse Bloom!

The audience erupts into polite but tepid APPLAUSE. This isn't his audience. Jesse walks out. He smiles and waves, unfazed by the lukewarm reception.

**INT. AUDITORIUM. AUDIENCE - CONTINUOUS**

Harper and DVD enter the auditorium. They're late. They make their way to their seats. Harper leans over to whisper in DVD's ear.

HARPER

I told you we'd be fucking late...

DVD

Perfect timing.

Someone in the audience SHUSHES them. Harper settles into her seat and turns her attention to the stage.

## STAGE - CONTINUOUS

MODERATOR

...I'm a huge believer not necessarily in focusing on arriving at the right answers, but in asking the right questions, and continuously engaging in that process of asking the questions that we should be asking ourselves to reflect on. So if I could ask both of you in one question, one sentence: what is the most important question one must ask oneself, right now, heading into this space? Jesse: would you like to start us off?

JESSE

Yeah absolutely. Firstly, thank you for that introduction. It's always a thrill to hear the words of my detractors summarised so vividly and with such poetic license.

(beat)

And thank you to the illustrious Mr. Baum-Cohen - "A-Baum" - for inviting me to share the stage with him this afternoon.

Jesse turns around to look at the screen behind him.

JESSE (CONT'D)

(reading out)

"Baum on Bloom"...

(beat)

I might need to take a shower afterwards.

The audience LAUGHS. A-Baum winces.

JESSE (CONT'D)

So to answer your question...sorry, what was the question?

MODERATOR

(unamused)

What question you would ask yourself before entering the crypto space for the first time?

JESSE

Of course. Uhh...pffff...*what would I ask myself?* Well, I guess honestly, I'd ask myself a pretty simple, stupid question, which is: *what don't I know?*

MODERATOR

So what doesn't Jesse Bloom know about crypto?

JESSE

(sighs)

So much. Like...everything really.

(beat)

But I will say, for all its concessions to openness and transparency, I've found there's a lot of opaqueness around what this thing is, and how it works, and what it can really do. There's a lot of jingoisms, and buzzwords, and self-answering propositions in the crypto space. So when I think about all the things that I don't know – which again, is a lot – I guess the logical and necessary followup question for me is: do I not know about this because I have a knowledge deficit that I need to correct? Or do I not know about this because it's – forgive me – complete bullshit?

A scandalised TITTER ripples through the auditorium.

A-BAUM

Spoken like a true Trad-Fi apologist...

The audience LAUGHS approvingly.

JESSE

Look: what I admire most about Adam and his merry band of crypto evangelists is that they're out here earnestly trying to remake the world. The only problem is, I don't always feel that they fully understand the nature of the world they're trying to remake.

A-BAUM

We understand it all too well. That's why we're blowing it up and starting over...

The audience LAUGHS. A few sporadic CHEERS break out.

JESSE

Look, to take it back to first principles, money, currency, the markets, whatever you want to call it: it's a mass delusion.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

And like all mass delusions – cults and political movements and religions – it requires really intricate power structures and guard rails to keep what is essentially large-scale, unwieldy human subjectivity feeling like something knowable and predictable. And in so-called TradFi the guard rails manifest as over-regulation and inefficiency.

(jokey)

*Which we all hate!*

(beat)

But what I worry about with crypto and DeFi more broadly is that in spite of its lofty ambitions, it will ultimately just replicate our current financial hierarchy except with a different set of players–

Jesse gestures toward A-Baum.

JESSE (CONT'D)

–at the top, peddling a different, and even more inscrutable, inaccessible, undemocratic set of financial instruments to an even more elite audience. Which is a fair ambition! But then I hear all this talk about changing the world, and the betterment of humanity, and deliverance from corrupt and cruel systems of power. And that to me evinces a naïveté that borders on, well...

(sighs)

Stupidity.

Stunned and offended CHATTER reverberates throughout the auditorium.

MODERATOR

Strong words, Jesse...

JESSE

Just some thoughts I've been having...

(beat)

But again: so much I don't know.

**INT. PIERPOINT. BOARDROOM - LATER**

Venetia stands at the front of the room, mid-presentation to Bill Adler and a few other of nameless, faceless suits, none of whom want to be there.

On the monitor is a beautifully-designed presentation. The slide that's up proclaims "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is a Business Imperative."

VENETIA

...this isn't idealism. This is a deeply pragmatic set of business recommendations that are focused on unlocking innovation and increasing productivity.

Venetia looks over to Adler and sees that he's scrolling through his phone disinterestedly. She pivots.

VENETIA (CONT'D)

And If I can speak frankly, from personal experience, the culture that has existed at Pierpoint and in the banking sector at large has been one that actively stifles innovation and disincentivises hard work. The great sin of the boys-club model of business was not that it was discriminatory, it's that it was incredibly inefficient. It rewarded mediocrity. It excused failure. It made a virtue of incompetence. It was anti-meritocratic. And it was, quite simply, bad business.

ADLER

If I can just interject, I do question whether that tenor of language is productive in this context? You're opining about our culture in a way that's at once incredibly vague and sweeping, and-

VENETIA

I'm not opining. These are statements of fact informed by documented instances of favouritism and a lack of accountability for certain types of people. Which is to say nothing of the endemic abuse and harassment that has, in certain cases, risen to the level of criminality. And even after these events have been reported, repeatedly, to the highest levels of management, in all but a few cases, they've been dismissed outright.



ADLER

That's simply not true. We've spent the last eighteen months conducting an exhaustive audit of our shortcomings and have used those findings as the foundation for a whole new set of policy recommendations—

VENETIA

Talking about talking...meetings about meetings...

ADLER

And what is this? You've said nothing of any real substance; you've made no binding recommendations; you've presented no findings beyond a few anecdotal assertions. And how many hours and days have you both diverted from your core responsibilities in FX to focus on this "effort?"

VENETIA

We've worked on this exclusively outside of working hours. My work hasn't suffered.

ADLER

You're not a consultant.

Just then, a THROAT CLEARING from an indiscriminate source sounds out. The room falls silent. It's Catriona Bowens. She's been patched in over the phone and has been listening in on the meeting, unbeknownst to anyone in the room but Venetia.

CATRIONA (O.S.)

Bill? Hi, it's Catriona.

Adler is visibly startled by this.

ADLER

Oh, uh Catriona. Hi. I didn't realise you were joining us?

CATRIONA

Venetia reached out and I was able to move some things around at the last minute.

ADLER

Oh, uh, great. Do you have any...issues you'd like to flag?

CATRIONA

I'll keep this really focused:  
Bill. I agree with you that it's  
not productive to get mired in  
these vague accusations of where  
the culture has fallen short.

ADLER

Thank you. Yes. I-

CATRIONA

But I also take issue with your  
reflexive dismissal of the issues  
that Venetia is flagging.

ADLER

I wasn't being dismissive.

CATRIONA

You were. And the reason you were  
is that you don't truly care. And  
the reason you don't truly care is  
that you've never had to.

ADLER

That's-

CATRIONA

Consider this your reason to care.

Adler shifts uncomfortably.

ADLER

Of course. Venetia has the floor.

CATRIONA

Fantastic.

(beat)

As Venetia was saying, this is  
ultimately great for business. And  
I think we can all agree we care  
about that.

**INT. CONFERENCE CENTRE. LOBBY - LATER**

Harper and DVD mill about the lobby after Jesse and A-Baum's  
talk. Harper scans the room intently.

HARPER

We're never going to find him in  
this orgy of incels. He's probably  
not even here anymore.

DVD

A guy like Jesse would never give up an opportunity to work a room full of people who hate him. He'll show up.

HARPER

I'm texting Gus...

Harper pulls out her phone and starts tapping out a message. DVD grabs her arm and starts pulling her through the crowd.

DVD

(shouting)

Gus! Hey!

Gus is mid-conversation with a painfully handsome and solicitous-looking YOUNG MAN. He looks up and sees Harper and DVD.

GUS

(to the Young Man)

Excuse me.

Gus walks over to meet them.

DVD

Gus...how are you my man?

GUS

I'm good...*my man*. And you?

DVD

Good good. I-

HARPER

Is Jesse still here?

GUS

(sighs)

He is. I don't know where exactly.

(beat)

Harper...are you sure you want to...

HARPER

I told you. We just have...unfinished business.

GUS

Leave it unfinished.

An awkward silence descends.

DVD

So...that was intense, right? Jesse fucking *hates* that guy.

GUS

He actually likes him. Or at least he's intrigued by him. By the opportunities around him.

HARPER

Is that why you're here? Is Jesse considering a move into crypto?

Gus smirks knowingly.

GUS

Who can say? But speaking generally, there are some liquidity issues in the crypto space that someone like Jesse would be well-positioned to...assist with.

HARPER

So A-Baum needs cash?

GUS

The brave new world is taking a little longer than anticipated to arrive, and all this waiting around is getting expensive.

Suddenly, out of the corner of her eye, Harper spots Jesse on the far side of the room. Jesse sees Harper and they make eye contact for a split second, but he quickly turns away, excuses himself from his conversation, and slips off through the crowd to an exit that's manned by a security detail.

HARPER

Fuck! Gus can you get us backstage?

GUS

All I ever promised you was to get you in the same place as him. It's...

HARPER

Where's he going to be tonight?

GUS

Harper...

HARPER

Just tell me where he'll be. You don't need to do anything else.

Gus sighs.

GUS

Valence is co-hosting a party with some gallery. Lincoln Road. Starts at five.

(beat)

(MORE)

GUS (CONT'D)

It's being billed as "the intersection of art and crypto and space."

HARPER

Sounds like bullshit.

GUS

Harper, this is all bullshit.

**EXT. MIAMI STREET - EARLY EVENING**

Harper and DVD wait in line outside the Valence Party. They're near the front of the queue, but behind him, the line stretches down the block and around the corner. The crowd is an unholy melting pot of tech bros, finance bros, crypto evangelists, art world assholes, drug dealers, sex workers, and hot bitches. Harper looks around in wonderment but also disgust. She notices the entrance of the party leads into what appears to be a parking structure.

HARPER

Is this party in a parking garage?

DVD

An architecturally significant parking garage.

Harper considers this.

HARPER

I think I might be starting to get the appeal of this place. Irony came here to die but decided to stay and get some new tits instead.

**EXT. PARKING GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER**

Harper and DVD arrive at the front of the queue. An iPad-wielding HOST gestures for them to come forward.

HOST

Name?

HARPER

Melody Hobbes. And guest.

The Host scans the list on her iPad. She finds the name.

HOST

Okay...great. Enjoy.

Harper and DVD glide past the Host.

DVD

Who's "Melody Hobbes?"

HARPER  
 LinkedIn. The first black chick I  
 found at Valence.

DVD  
 Devious.

HARPER  
 Sorry Melody. Sorry to that woman.

**INT. PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS**

Another Host points Harper and DVD to the elevators. They push their way into an already full elevator car.

**INT. PARKING GARAGE. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

Everyone in the elevator is silent except for two CRYPTO BROS who are holding forth about everything and nothing.

CRYPTO BRO 1  
 ...it's all gonna go on the  
 blockchain. And like, I think long  
 term there's gonna be an evolution  
 from the current underlying chains  
 we use to moving into more  
 sustainable off chain type stuff  
 that are already out there, you  
 know?

CRYPTO BRO 2  
 Yeah, no, totally; totally.

Silence prevails.

CRYPTO BRO 1  
 I think I'm gonna drop some acid  
 tonight.

DING. The elevator doors open.

**INT. VALENCE PARTY - CONTINUOUS**

Harper and DVD spill out of the elevator into the party. A dramatic open-air triple-height space. Outside, the skyline of Miami shimmers against the sunset. Massive contemporary art pieces are scattered throughout: sculpture, and video art, and performance art, and sound baths, and neon lights arrayed enigmatically, and the requisite piles of random shit dumped haphazardly on the floor that no one likes or understands but feels duty bound to nod appreciatively at. It's thronged. It's a vibe.

DVD  
 Impressive.

Harper looks around appraisingly. She begrudgingly agrees.

HARPER

Yeah.

(beat)

I guess laundering your reputation through art is still a thing?

DVD

Always will be. The physical beauty masks the moral rot.

HARPER

I think I saw that on a Jenny Holzer t-shirt in the gift shop...

The reference is lost on DVD.

DVD

So what now?

HARPER

I need a drink.

**INT. VALENCE PARTY. BAR - MOMENTS LATER**

Harper waits to be served. All of the bartenders seem to studiously avoid making eye contact with anyone who needs a drink. She peers up and down the bar, scrutinising every face looking for...

JESSE (O.C.)

Harper Stern.

Harper spins around at the sound of her name. It's Jesse. Fucking finally. Harper's visibly flustered, but she quickly manages to right herself.

HARPER

(cooly)

Jesse Bloom.

Jesse makes a cryptic gesture to the nearest BARTENDER who immediately nods in return.

JESSE

So I hear you've been looking for me?

HARPER

I called a couple of times...

JESSE

More than a couple.

(beat)

And you're here...

HARPER  
Danny invited me.

JESSE  
Gus told me about your chat.

Harper looks stricken.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
He's a bad friend, a terrible  
assistant, and an even worse liar.  
But I keep him around. He has a way  
of setting people at ease...

HARPER  
Because he went to Eton or because  
he's Black?

Jesse ignores this.

The Bartender returns with two martinis. He slides them over  
to Jesse.

JESSE  
Thank you...

Jesse hands one of the martinis to Harper.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
So...you found me...

HARPER  
Actually, you found me...

JESSE  
What do you want, Harper?

HARPER  
Nothing. I just want to talk...

JESSE  
So let's talk...what do you want to  
talk about? The art? The weather?  
The election?

(beat)  
C'mon Harper. What do you want?

HARPER  
I want to come back to London.

JESSE  
Wonderful. Great city. I'm sure  
you'll land on your feet.

HARPER  
I need your help.



JESSE

I can't do that.

HARPER

Yes you can.

JESSE

So you want a job? A visa? Money?

HARPER

Any. All. A visa would probably be a good start.

JESSE

(laughs)

*A good start?* Is this a shakedown?

HARPER

I made you a fuck ton of money, and you repaid the favour by leaving me on read for eight months.

JESSE

No; I made me a fuck ton of money. You facilitated the transaction. And I repaid you with your commission.

HARPER

I brought that deal on a silver fucking platter.

JESSE

I think you should be very careful who you broadcast that claim to.

HARPER

Is that a threat?

JESSE

Harper, I like you. I respect you. You're good; excellent at times. But you have to understand that at any given time, I have ten Harpers waiting by the phone for my call, and they're all good; they're all excellent. For you, our entanglement was the defining event of your life, but for me, it was just a thing that happened alongside probably twenty other equally important things that week. Then it ended, because it had to, and now I don't think about it. You should do the same. Don't think about it. Don't let it be the defining event of your life. It was just a thing that happened.

Harper takes all of this in for a moment.

HARPER

We made a good fucking team, Jesse and you know it. Bring me back to London. Fuck your other ten Harpers; they can't do what I do; they *won't* do what I do.

JESSE

I can't.

HARPER

Why not?

JESSE

(sighs)

I don't know much about you, Harper. I don't know your deal. I don't know where you came from. I don't know what happened to you or didn't happen to you at the age when people tend to get fucked up for good. But it seems to me that you're not really here to ask for my help. You're here to demand my attention.

(beat)

And I can't give it to you anymore.

Just then Harper's phone RINGS. She doesn't answer it. Jesse places a hand on Harper's shoulder, gives her a paternal squeeze.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You should take that.

Jesse leaves.

Harper's phone is still ringing. She pulls it out. On the screen: "Eric Tao"

**INT. ERIC'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Eric stands at the far corner of his living room, pacing as he calls Harper. Behind him, in the background, his wife and children mill about the kitchen. The din of family life fills the space. The phone rings and rings and rings. Eventually he hangs up, puts his phone away and walks over to rejoin his family.

**INT. VALENCE PARTY - MOMENTS LATER**

Harper pushes her way through the crowd: she's numb and hurt...but also fucking activated.

She spots DVD in the distance and makes a B-line to him. He's chatting up some HOT CRYPTO BITCH who's wearing a slinky wisp of a dress.

DVD  
Where'd you go, Harp?

HARPER  
I found Jesse.

DVD  
Oh shit...what happened?

HARPER  
Nothing. We had a drink. He patted me on the head. Tried to give me some bullshit paternal wisdom. Fuck that guy.

DVD  
So you're done?

HARPER  
Fucking done.

Harper notices the Hot Crypto Bitch. She's the sort of woman Harper would usually despise, but tonight, in her fucked up mood, she's ready to lean into her weirdest and most chaotic impulses.

HARPER (CONT'D)  
I fucking love your dress.

HOT CRYPTO BITCH  
Ohmigod thanks babe. You too...  
You're like, literally the hottest  
bitch here....

Harper raises her glass.

HARPER  
(affectedly)  
To hot fucking bitches in Miami.

The Hot Crypto Bitch snaps her approval.

HOT CRYPTO BITCH  
*Yes bitch...*

HARPER  
Look at all these fucking assholes.  
These fucking gatekeeping,  
gaslighting, fucking...abusive  
*assholes* jerking each other the  
fuck off. Like, what are they even  
doing? It's all just like,  
performative bullshit. They're  
bluffing. They don't know shit.  
(MORE)

HARPER (CONT'D)

Behind every one of these dudes are like, ten fucking brilliant women doing all the work and getting none of the credit, and we all just accept it because *this* is who we've been conditioned to see as a genius: some fucking Stanford dropout who skimmed the fucking "The Fountainhead" once and tries to pass off the ideas – of a woman, I might add – as some completely novel revelation that he came up with? Fuck that.

HOT CRYPTO BITCH

Preach.

The Hot Crypto Bitch retrieves her coke necklace from her cleavage. She unscrews the main canister and retrieves a tiny spoonful of coke then snorts it. She looks over at Harper.

HOT CRYPTO BITCH (CONT'D)

Wanna bump?

**INT. PIERPOINT. TRADING FLOOR - EVENING**

It's late. The trading floor is empty except for Rob, who sits at his desk idly scrolling through some meaningless chart. He has nothing to do, but it's safer to do nothing here. Suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, he sees something reflected in the window next to him. He spins around in his chair: it's Yasmin.

ROBERT

Fuck Yas. You scared the shit outta me...

YASMIN

Sorry. I was heading out and I saw your light on. I thought I'd come over and say goodnight.

ROBERT

What are you doing here so late?

YASMIN

Catching up. And avoiding going home. You?

ROBERT

Same. And same.

(beat)

What are you avoiding at home?

YASMIN

Boredom. Loneliness. Myself. And you?

Rob gestures with his hands as if to say "Same. Same. Same."

YASMIN (CONT'D)

I stopped drinking recently.  
Stopped everything, actually.

ROBERT

The everything is sometimes just as  
bad as the drinking.

YASMIN

Or worse.

They share a knowing look.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

And I've been going to meetings.

ROBERT

Really?

YASMIN

Yeah. Kenny's proselytising finally  
worked.

ROBERT

Aren't you supposed to protect each  
other's anonymity?

YASMIN

It's the first thing he tells  
anyone about himself. Being sober  
has become his entire personality.

ROBERT

Being a drunk asshole used to be  
his entire personality, so I  
suppose something had to fill the  
vacuum.

YASMIN

Have you ever gone?

ROBERT

To a meeting? Nah. Not for me I  
don't think.

Yasmin shrugs and smiles.

YASMIN

I saw my dad yesterday; for the  
first time in months.

ROBERT

Fuck. How was that?

YASMIN

It was fine. In the moment.

ROBERT

And now?

YASMIN

I think it's going to take more than a few months to unravel all that.

ROBERT

Yeah. Parent shit will fuck you up.

YASMIN

Yeah.

(sighs)

Alright. I'm gonna get going. You wanna head out together?

ROBERT

Nah. I'm going to try and outrun my demons in this spreadsheet for a few more minutes.

YASMIN

K. Night Rob.

ROBERT

Night Yas.

**INT. VALENCE PARTY - LATER**

Harper and DVD and the Hot Crypto Bitch have been pounding drinks and doing bumps for hours. They're in the throes of an intense, circular, coke-y conversation.

HOT CRYPTO BITCH

...I don't think there *is* a bottom to the market if you just hold. Like, there's finance, but there's also mindset: like a breakdown is also a breakthrough, so if you look at it that way, you hold on. And like crypto and art and physical limitations...it's all combined; it's all mindset.

HARPER

Bro, it's *all* mindset. Like, if *this* is real, it's because we *think* it's real, you know?

DVD

Exactly.

HARPER

But if we *actually* look around,  
we'll see that the truth of reality  
is like, not there, and so we're  
free to, like, bend reality to our  
will. You can literally change the  
fabric of like, your physical  
reality if you just see the  
possibility of something different.

DVD

Dude, this is like, the essence of  
crypto. It's a test. We're being  
tested on, like, a civilisational  
level and only a tiny percentage is  
going to make it through, and like,  
that's just how it has to be, you  
know? It's fucking brutal but like-

HARPER

Shut the fuck up.

Harper's looks past DVD, to something behind him. Harper  
grabs him by the shoulders and spins him around. She points:  
there, 10 metres in front of them is the man himself: A-Baum.

DVD

Fuck...

HARPER

I'm going go to talk to him..

DVD

Harper you can't...

Harper takes off through the crowd, elbowing people out of  
her way.

HARPER

(shouting)

Yo! Adam! Adam! Hey! A-Baum! Bro!

A-Baum looks up from his conversation. His SECURITY DETAIL  
steps forward to intercept Harper before she can even get  
close. But something about Harper intrigues him. He signals  
to his Security Detail to stand down, which they do. Harper  
pushes through the circle of sycophants and hangers-on who  
surround A-Baum. She stands in front of him, expectantly. She  
is, just to reiterate, coked up out of her fucking mind.

A-BAUM

Uh, hello?

HARPER

Hey.

Harper extends her hand. They shake.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Harper. Stern.

A-BAUM

I'm—

(beat)

Nevermind. Redundant.

(beat)

Do I know you?

HARPER

Nope. Not even a little bit. I'm an absolute fucking nobody. I'm not even supposed to be here. But lucky for me, it was super fucking easy to impersonate one of the, like, *four?* black women who work at your company...

A-BAUM

Am I supposed to be impressed by your bravado? Or intimidated by your insinuations?

HARPER

I dunno. Am I supposed to be impressed by your party?

Harper gestures around dismissively.

A-BAUM

(smug)

Well...yeah. It's objectively quite impressive.

HARPER

It's a party.

A-BAUM

Well you're here, and went to the trouble of finding a way in...

HARPER

I did, yes. And do you want to know why I went to all that trouble?

A-BAUM

I think you want to tell me?

HARPER

Oh Adam: it's all a little complicated...

Adam rolls his eyes at his entourage as if to say "let's goad on this coked-out bitch on for entertainment."

A-BAUM

Go on...



HARPER

Well. You know Jesse? Jesse Bloom?

A-BAUM

Of course...

HARPER

Right! This afternoon...yikes!  
Well, he and I actually used to  
work together. Or, I guess people  
don't really work *with* Jesse, they  
work *for* him...so I worked *for* him  
up until about, oh, eight months  
ago?

A-Baum's interest is piqued.

A-BAUM

But you don't anymore?

HARPER

No...sad face.

A-BAUM

And why not?

HARPER

Well, it's not something I should  
really be talking about - or at  
least that's what everyone keeps  
telling me...

(beat)

but hypothetically, if someone were  
to stumble across some very  
confidential information about the  
deliberations of a governmental  
body...and then if that someone  
were to intimate the nature of  
those very confidential  
deliberations to an individual who  
may or may not have had a very  
vested interest in the sector that  
is heavily regulated by said  
governmental body...and then if  
that individual with the very  
vested interests took those  
intimations to be more than just  
intimations...well, that might be -  
again, purely hypothetically - a  
bit of a bad thing...

A-BAUM

Yes. It would be quite bad.  
Hypothetically.

(beat)

(MORE)

A-BAUM (CONT'D)

But also hypothetically, I imagine that that someone might be privy to quite a bit of...information with respect to the individual with the very vested interests?

HARPER

Hypothetically, they absolutely would be...

A-BAUM

And I would also imagine, again, purely hypothetically, that that someone, whether for revenge or simply for sport, could probably be quite easily induced to share that information with a concerned third party who could deploy said information to...advantageous ends.

HARPER

Hypothetically, they'd be fucking dying to talk.

A-Baum looks at Harper intently. A wry smile spreads across his face. He's impressed; intrigued; and a little scared.

A-BAUM

So let's talk.

**INT. VALENCE PARTY. GALLERY - MOMENTS LATER**

Harper and A-Baum stroll around the gallery space in silence. The room is austere and blindingly bright: the prototypical white cube space. The works on display are typical Blue Chip gallery fare: aesthetically pleasing, faintly subversive, and with just enough conceptual rigour to justify their eight-figure price tags, but not so much as to intimidate the types of people who can afford eight-figure paintings. A-Baum stops in front of one painting: a large-scale portrait of a Black man.

A-BAUM

I just bought this one. What do you think?

Harper appraises it seriously.

HARPER

It's striking. Who is he?

A-BAUM

No one.

HARPER

What do you mean?

A-BAUM

The artist doesn't paint from life;  
she paints from memory;  
imagination. He's a composite of  
people she's known; people she'd  
like to know.

HARPER

His eyes though...he's...

A-BAUM

There. Here. He's real; realer than  
real. It's like magic.

A-Baum continues to stroll around the space. Harper follows  
behind him.

HARPER

So...

A-BAUM

So...

HARPER

You need money.

A-BAUM

(laughs)

Excuse me?

HARPER

Cash. Liquidity. Fiat currency.  
Whatever you want to call it.  
That's why you're talking to Jesse.

A-BAUM

(by rote)

We're actively talking to a range  
of potential partners about how  
best to build a bridge from  
traditional finance to a future  
where crypto is ubiquitous,  
reliable, and accessible to all.

HARPER

And Jesse's money would be that  
bridge?

A-BAUM

Or someone like him.

HARPER

But it must hurt to have to go hat  
in hand to a guy like Jesse?

(MORE)

HARPER (CONT'D)

To have to cede that level of control to someone who either can't understand or actively chooses to remain wilfully ignorant of your vision?

A-BAUM

He won't have a controlling interest in Valence.

HARPER

He'll make his presence felt.

A-BAUM

(sighs)

Everyone thinks I'm a utopian, but really, I'm just an extremely forward-looking pragmatist.

(beat)

I can manage Jesse.

Harper wanders over to a sculptural piece in the centre of the room. She slowly circles the piece, appraising it carefully. Something is slowly cohering in her mind...A-Baum follows a few paces behind.

HARPER

Don't take Jesse's money.

A-BAUM

(beat)

And if not Jesse then who? Someone else exactly like him? A faceless consortium? A bank?

HARPER

You don't need their money.

A-BAUM

If you're going to try and weaponise my pride against me in the service of some elaborate revenge fantasy, you're going to have to reach deeper into the primal depths of my psyche.

HARPER

You don't need their money.

Harper stops pacing and looks A-Baum directly in the eye.

HARPER (CONT'D)

You already have the money you need.

A-BAUM

You're being obtuse and expecting me to find it profound.

HARPER

Valence has its own coin, right?

A-BAUM

VLC, yes...

HARPER

And right now its value is negligible within the Valence ecosystem, and close to zero outside of it, right?

A-BAUM

Correct.

HARPER

A glorified Bed Bath and Beyond coupon.

A-Baum smarts at this characterisation, but is also intrigued by it...

A-BAUM

Effectively.

HARPER

The value of those coupons was real...to the people using them. But their circulation was severely constrained. Their value was only real in one particular physical place, and in relation to one particular physical object...a pillow, a toaster, and towel - whatever the fuck. But if Bed Bath and Beyond was everywhere, and encompassed everything, and was untethered from the physical realm...

A-BAUM

(unimpressed)

Those coupons would suddenly be worth a great deal more. Sure.

HARPER

What you have is a circulation problem.

A-BAUM

I understand the analogy. So what?

HARPER

The value of VLC is entirely determined by its uptake. The more people use it, the more ubiquitous it becomes; the more ubiquitous it becomes, the more useful it is;

(MORE)

HARPER (CONT'D)

the more useful it is – or even  
*appears to be* – the more it's  
worth.

A-BAUM

And then?

HARPER

And then...you're the fucking  
Federal Reserve. You've just  
created billions, trillions, more,  
out of thin air. Endless leverage.  
Realer than real...

A-Baum smirks.

A-BAUM

Magic.

A-Baum wanders off, lost in thought. He stops in front of the  
same portrait from before. Harper follows behind and joins  
him after a moment.

A-BAUM (CONT'D)

Come and see me tomorrow. We'll  
have breakfast. Talk to my whoever  
to get my whatever.

A-Baum nods to Harper and heads for the exit. Just as he's  
about to leave, he turns back and points to himself, then to  
Harper.

A-BAUM (CONT'D)

Magicians.

**INT. ROBERT'S FLAT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Rob lies in his bed, wide awake. He closes his eyes for a few  
seconds at a time, but sleep is nowhere near.

Just then, his phone lights up with a notification. He picks  
it up; it's message from Yasmin: "Good talk tonight. I miss  
talking to you." Rob reads over the message a few times, and  
almost starts to compose a response. But he thinks better of  
it and sets his phone down. He rolls over and closes his  
eyes.

A moment later, his phone lights up again. This time he  
switches on a light, pulls himself up, and sits on the edge  
of the bed. It's another message, but we can't see from who.  
He contemplates it for a moment then gets out of bed and  
pulls on a pair of trousers.

**EXT. TERRACED HOUSE - LATER.**

An Uber pulls up in front of gleaming, impeccable terraced house. Rob gets out. He walks up the front steps and rings the buzzer. Inside, a light flicks on. Footsteps. The door opens. It's Nicole. Rob stands at the threshold for a moment, then collapses into her arms, like a desperate, defeated little boy. She guides him inside and closes the door behind them.

**EXT. MIAMI. BEACH - DAWN**

Harper walks along the beach at the water's edge. It's only her. Her footsteps press into the wet, white sand, as the incoming tide laps at her feet. Whatever stupor she had been stuck in has lifted. She's herself again. More than herself. She pulls out her phone, scrolls for a moment, then places the phone to her ear.

**EXT. PIERPOINT. SMOKING AREA - MORNING**

Eric stands outside smoking. His phone RINGS. He pulls it out of his pocket and looks at the screen: "Harper Stern." He hesitates for a moment, but answers the call.

ERIC

You've been avoiding me.

**INTERCUT: PHONE CONVERSATION**

HARPER

I've been busy.

ERIC

With what?

HARPER

I'm in Miami.

ERIC

What for?

HARPER

I needed to speak to someone.

ERIC

And?

HARPER

I did.

ERIC

And?

HARPER  
It was clarifying.

ERIC  
Are you okay, Harper?

HARPER  
I am. I wasn't. But now I am. I see everything clearly now; I see myself clearly...my role in all of this.

ERIC  
That's...good?

HARPER  
Yeah. It is.  
(beat)  
So why have you been calling?

ERIC  
Because I worry about you.

HARPER  
You don't need to. Really.

ERIC  
And because I don't like the way we left things.

HARPER  
You did what you needed to do. And you did what I needed you to do, even if it wasn't what I wanted.

ERIC  
I'm glad to hear that.

HARPER  
I thought I had found something really special in London. But it turns out the only thing special about it was that it wasn't here; it wasn't home.

ERIC  
And now that you're home?

HARPER  
I think I've suddenly figured out the thing I was trying to figure out.

ERIC  
You're being little cryptic Harpsichord...



HARPER

It's hard to explain. But it all makes sense to me.

ERIC

Then that's all that matters.

Eric finishes his cigarette and tosses it on the ground.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I should get back to work.

(beat)

Thanks for getting back to me.

HARPER

Of course. I was always going to get back to you.

ERIC

There are people out here who care about you.

HARPER

I know.

ERIC

Even if you don't always like the way they care about you.

HARPER

I know.

ERIC

We'll talk soon okay?

HARPER

We will.

They both hang up. Eric slips his phone back into his pocket then heads back upstairs. Harper continues to walk along the beach. Eventually, she stops and looks out to see the sun cresting over the horizon: a new day.

**INT. MIAMI HOTEL. HARPER'S ROOM - MORNING**

Harper lies on her bed, freshly showered. She's deep in thought. Her phone buzzes. She picks it up; a message from an unknown number: "Any time now. 8955 Collins Ave. PH4." Harper texts back: "K. On my way."

**INT. LUXURY CONDOMINIUM. LOBBY - LATER**

Harper arrives at the lobby of a luxury condominium. The space is exquisitely spare, and could even be called austere if every surface and every material weren't so conspicuously expensive. Millionaire minimalism. She approaches the front desk. The CONCIERGE looks up from his computer.

CONCIERGE

May I help you?

HARPER

Harper Stern. They're expecting me in PH4.

The Concierge consults his computer.

CONCIERGE

Please: this way.

The Concierge stands up and guides Harper to a private elevator bank. He swipes a fob, and the elevator doors slide open. He gestures for Harper to step inside. He presses the button, and the doors close.

**INT. LUXURY CONDOMINIUM. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

Everything is silent and still. There's a calmness and a peace about Harper that's never been there before. She's practically beatific. DING. The doors open.

**INT. PENTHOUSE. ENTRY - CONTINUOUS**

Harper steps out of the elevator directly into a entryway of a sprawling penthouse apartment. FOOTSTEPS sound out from somewhere within. An elegantly dressed middle-aged WOMAN appears at the end of the corridor. She stops and appraises Harper intently. Harper takes a few steps toward her tentatively.

HARPER

Hi mom.

**END OF EPISODE.**