

FELLOWSHIP
11.21.2024

Written by
Cassie Keet

Kasey Muraszko, Industry Entertainment
kaseym@industryentertainment.com

Independent Artist Group

INT. NEW ORLEANS ART GALLERY - NIGHT

An art gallery soiree. The lighting is dim, naked bulbs hanging from the ceiling. The atmosphere is charged as cater waiters and hungry artists mingle with guests, critics, and potential buyers. This isn't your typical New York gallery opening. There's something more raw about it, more visceral. Blame it on the hot New Orleans air.

A well-dressed man with a pocket square (VICTOR) stands in front of a self portrait of an artist. Oil on canvas. He takes a breath slowly, as if to inhale the painting.

VICTOR

No.

He begins to walk away. We FOLLOW him. He is being recorded -- we are recording him.

VOICE (O.S.)

Can I ask why?

The voice behind the camera is feminine. Young. Curious.

Victor turns around and looks DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA. Smirks.

VICTOR

If you have to ask, then you're not in the right business.

VOICE (O.S.)

Art criticism feels like such a nebulous thing. That's why I'm making this documentary. And, specifically, why I wanted to talk to you, Victor.

Victor quirks a smile. He feeds on praise.

VICTOR

Well. I'm always happy to speak with a fan.

A cater waiter walks up with a PLATTER OF CHAMPAGNE. Victor takes a flute, dismissing her with a glance.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Come along.

He continues his way through the gallery.

VICTOR(CONT'D)

The art world is a brutal place.
People try to dress it up or
sugarcoat it, make it seem
mysterious, but really, it's
simple. Things are either art, or
they're bullshit.

He points at three different pieces of art.

VICTOR(CONT'D)

(a sculpture)

Bullshit.

(a collage of photography)

Bullshit.

(a painting)

Art.

Victor goes to the NAME PLATE, pointing.

VICTOR(CONT'D)

See?

*Brayden Austin
A Meditation On Grass
Oil on canvas
2024*

Underneath, it's marked **SOLD**.

VICTOR(CONT'D)

Art is what sells. And an artist
knows that.

VOICE (O.S.)

What about Van Gogh?

VICTOR

Ahead of his time.

(pointing at another
painting)

Bullshit.

VOICE (O.S.)

What if that person's ahead of
their time?

Victor snorts, giving the camera an look. *Are you kidding me?*

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

So it's a matter of taste.

VICTOR

Exactly.

VOICE (O.S.)
But isn't that subjective?

VICTOR
People say that it is, but. They're lying to themselves. You're either born with taste, or not. The people who bitch and complain about the politics of it all, blah blah blah - - **they** were born without it.

VOICE (O.S.)
So, it's a coincidence that most art critics are affluent white men?

Victor turns to us again, particularly chilly.

VICTOR
God, that's so... boring.

VOICE (O.S.)
You really don't think racism or classism has anything to do with who succeeds in this industry?

VICTOR
I think people's feelings get hurt when their dreams don't come true. It's easy to blame your failure on a buzzword boogeyman.

He finishes his glass of champagne. As if on cue, another caterer approaches with a platter. Victor swaps out his glasses seamlessly. He's a pro.

VOICE (O.S.)
So. Are there any other pieces here that you think are valuable?

VICTOR
There are things here that I don't even think qualify as **art**.

VOICE (O.S.)
Like what?

Victor nods his head towards a corner of the room. *Follow me.*

We follow him to a MIXED MEDIA exhibit: there are SPOONS, FORKS, a PRINTER, a HAIRDRYER, and other somewhat inexpensive items, all placed into the shape of a PAIR OF HANDCUFFS.

The camera zooms in to the NAME PLATE:

Abraham Cecil
A Conversation About Art, Part One
Mixed Media
2024

Victor looks at the camera, his nose crinkling with distaste.

VICTOR

All of these things you see here?
 They were stolen. The "artist" has
 been robbing people for years.

VOICE (O.S.)

How do you know that?

VICTOR

He posted it on his website.
Abraham Cecil. *Disgusting.*

The way he says his name almost sounds like a slur.

VICTOR(CONT'D)

He only gets away with it because
 he hasn't publicly appeared before.
 No one knows who he is. He should
 be in jail, not a gallery.

VOICE (O.S.)

That's little harsh. The things
 he's stealing are just... stuff.

VICTOR

It's about principle.
 (lamenting)
 Everybody wants to be Banksy.

VOICE (O.S.)

So... what makes what Banksy does
 "art?"

VICTOR

(self-explanatory)

He's Banksy.

They keep walking, towards a CURTAINED ROOM. There's a NEON SIGN over the entrance:

A Conversation About Art, Part Two

VICTOR(CONT'D)

He'll vanish into obscurity soon
 enough. Probably once he's
 incarcerated.

(MORE)

VICTOR(CONT'D)
They have excellent programs in
prison-- maybe he'll actually take
an art class and learn to make
something of value.

He steps through the curtain...

INT. ART EXHIBIT - CONTINUOUS

Where he's immediately greeted by a LARGE SCREEN. Fifty or so people watch it, transfixed. On it is a live feed ... of Victor. ***His entire conversation with the unseen camerawoman has just been broadcast.***

Slowly, the people watching the screen realize that this is live. They turn towards him. People instinctively whip out their phones.

Victor turns, horrified, to look into camera.

VICTOR
What the fuck is this?

The camera flips around to reveal CECILIA, a 20-something young woman with a smile more satisfied than the cat who ate the canary.

CECILIA
This is a conversation about art.
Part two.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW ORLEANS SHOTGUN HOUSE PORCH - DAY

A warm Louisiana afternoon. JOSIE (20s-30s, female, big smile) lounges, feet up on an outside table, laughing hysterically as she scrolls on her phone.

JOSIE
Listen to this Cece-- listen,
listen.

Cecilia is perched on a stool next to Josie, a lit JOINT in her left hand and a PAINT BRUSH in her right. She paints less of a portrait, and more of an impression of Josie. OIL ON FELT. Long lines to shape her best friend's body, bright colors to express her bubbling personality.

CECILIA
I'm listening.

JOSIE

(affluent male voice)

"I was horrified that the 'so-called artist' Abraham Cecil -- now revealed to be Cecilia Collins -- had targeted me."

CECILIA

I was criticizing his art criticism through art. It's hardly *targeting*.

JOSIE

(male Karen voice)

"My life has been irrevocably damaged in the past month by Collins' misrepresentation of my strong moral character."

Cecilia and Josie both guffaw.

CECILIA/JOSIE

"Strong Moral Character."

CECILIA

So strong. So moral.

JOSIE

"They should expect a letter from my lawyer very soon."

CECILIA

(passing Josie the joint)

Progressive of him to not assume my pronouns.

JOSIE

Are you worried?

CECILIA

He has no case, Josie. He signed a waiver before the interview saying that his image could be used. He just doesn't like how I used it.

Josie leans over, looking at the painting.

JOSIE

Damn. I look good.

A truck pulls up. ANDRE (20s-30s, male) hops out. He's got his hands full of letters and packages.

JOSIE (CONT'D)

Mail time!

CECILIA
Need help, Andre?

Andre walks up the porch steps, a letter or two falling out.

ANDRE
I got it, I got it...

Josie moves her feet. Andre drops the mail on the table.

CECILIA
Anyone mail me dog shit this week?

ANDRE
Not today. I did throw out one
package though. It was suspiciously
damp.

CECILIA
This is why P.O. Boxes are
necessary.

The three of them start to skim through the mail.

ANDRE
Love letter ... death threat ...

JOSIE
Ooh, a postcard from Savannah.

She flips it over and reads it.

JOSIE (CONT'D)
"Get fucked you talentless bitch."

CECILIA
Charming.

Josie uncovers a BLACK ENVELOPE the middle of the pile. It looks expensive. Can envelopes be sexy? This one might be.

JOSIE
Five bucks says there's some fetish
shit in here.

Cecilia takes the envelope. She opens it with care-- it looks too nice to rip open. From inside, she slides out what appears to be an invitation on thick, white paper. It's embossed with gold font: THE BRIDGER FOUNDATION.

CECILIA
Holy shit. HOLY SHIT!

She jumps up, pacing as she reads.

ANDRE
What is it?

Cecilia is in shock. Josie snatches the letter, reading it quickly.

JOSIE
"The Bridger Foundation prides itself on discovering bold new talent around the world. With the recent installation *A Conversation About Art Part One and Two* we are thrilled to have witnessed the arrival of a fresh new voice. Isabel and Davis Bridger believe that new artists should be elevated and celebrated, which is why the Bridger Foundation wishes to award a four week Artist Fellowship to Cecilia Collins."

Cecilia and Josie SCREAM, jumping up and down!

ANDRE
Wait wait, what does that mean?!

CECILIA
The Bridger Fellowship is fucking pinnacle, dude! It's not even an annual thing, it's so rare for them to offer it!

JOSIE
She's had this shit on her vision board for years!

CECILIA
This is ... oh my god. Is there such a thing as a positive panic attack?

She sits down on the couch, overwhelmed. Andre takes the letter from her, reading as Josie types on her phone.

ANDRE
"Ms. Collins will be provided room and board in New York City, as well as a daily stipend and **expense account**"-- Cece! This is huge.

JOSIE
This is Isabel and Davis Bridger.

She turns the phone around to show Andre, revealing Google images of a shockingly attractive couple (40s-50s).

ANDRE
How does it feel to be God's
favorite?

The three of them look at each other. They all break out into screams, with Andre and Josie jumping on top of Cecilia.

Across the street, an ELDERLY NEIGHBOR steps outside.

ELDERLY NEIGHBOR
What's all that racket?!

JOSIE
(calling)
Our girl's going to NEW YORK!

ELDERLY NEIGHBOR
Dirty city. People shit on the
street.

CECILIA
(calling)
Thanks, Mrs. Carmichael!

The elderly neighbor grumbles her way back into her home.

INT. CECILIA'S ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Cecilia sits on her bed, looking over the invitation again. It's real. It's really real. She glances to her right, where the VISION BOARD Josie mentioned lives. In the center are Isabel and Davis Bridger, a glamorous PHOTO from Page Six. She glances to her left, looking at a beautiful MINIATURE OIL PAINTING of a woman and a child. She touches her lips, then the painting. A kiss for good luck. She takes a fortifying breath, opens her phone, and then dials a number.

RING. RING. RING. CLICK.

CECILIA
Hello?

On the other end of the phone line, we hear a rich voice that might as well belong to a sphinx. ISABEL BRIDGER.

ISABEL (O.S.)
Am I speaking with Cecilia Collins?

CECILIA
(surprised)
You are.

ISABEL (O.S.)
Davis was impressed by your
installation. He wants to meet the
woman behind the man Abraham Cecil.

CECILIA
Oh, well-- thank you. I'd love to--

ISABEL (O.S.)
However, your invitation was sent
more than a week ago. Have you been
ignoring us? Or are you too
inundated with other offers.

CECILIA
I'm sorry, who am I speaking with?

ISABEL (O.S.)
Isabel Bridger.

Oh shit. Cecilia is pacing now. Nervous.

CECILIA
Oh. Wow. Mrs. Bridger, it's an
honor, I'm such a fan of your work--

ISABEL (O.S.)
I have another call shortly, so
you'll need to be quick.

CECILIA
Am I -- does the offer still stand?
Or, did I completely fuck this up?

A long silence. Cecilia is sweating now.

ISABEL (O.S.)
Of course the offer still stands.
Do you accept?

Sweet relief.

CECILIA
Yes! Yes, I accept. Thank you!
Thank you so much--

ISABEL (O.S.)
You'll receive an email shortly
regarding the incidentals.

Cecilia opens up her laptop, just as an email arrives. DING.

CECILIA
Yup, I just got it--

She clicks on a PDF, her eyes bugging out when she sees the "other incidentals." Her daily stipend is \$500. Her personal expense account will contain ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. She mouths "holy shit," staring in awe.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
(breathless)
Looks good to me, yeah.

DING. Another email. A DocuSign of her contract.

ISABEL (O.S.)
That'll be the Fellowship contract.
Please sign and return that.

CECILIA
Absolutely. When do you need it?

ISABEL (O.S.)
Before we get off of this call.

CECILIA
Oh. I-- well, I haven't had time to
read it over--

Frantically, Cecilia begins to scroll. Speed reading.

ISABEL (O.S.)
It's a fairly basic contract,
Cecilia.

Her eyes slide over a particular paragraph, catching key phrases: *"Should a recipient of the Bridger Fellowship **refuse to participate** after their artist residency has begun, or otherwise **fail to meet the the standards** of the Bridger Fellowship and specifications of their contract, including but not limited to **attendance at all three mandatory dates** listed in their itinerary, as well as a passing assessment at their **performance review**, then they will be **held liable for all funds** diverted towards their fellowship opportunity."*

ISABEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We were expecting a response within forty-eight hours of mailing your invitation. Things are already moving forward, with or without you. The choice is yours.

Cecilia gulps, but takes a fortifying breath.

CECILIA
With me, please.

She hastily adds her e-signature, sending it back.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Done.

ISABEL (O.S.)
Gorgeous. Oh, and no posting about
this on social media until you
complete the Fellowship.

CECILIA
Understood.

ISABEL (O.S.)
Benjamin will pick you up from the
airport.

DING. A final email. She opens it up -- wait, what?

CECILIA
Uh, these plane tickets are for ...
tomorrow.

ISABEL (O.S.)
Is that going to be a problem?

Cecilia is silently freaking out, jumping up and down but
playing it cool.

CECILIA
Not at all.

ISABEL (O.S.)
Good. Safe travels.

CLICK. Cecilia picks up the OIL PAINTING, holding it closely
to her chest as she starts to jump up and down again.

CECILIA
JOSIE! I NEED A RIDE TO THE AIRPORT
IN THE MORNING!

JOSIE (O.S.)
(laughing)
Call an Uber, bitch!

EXT. AIRPORT - THE NEXT MORNING

Cecilia stands on the curb at Louis Armstrong Airport with
her bags. Andre and Josie are both hugging her goodbye.

ANDRE
You ready?

CECILIA
As I'll ever be.

JOSIE
(tearing up)
Your mom would be so proud.

Josie hugs Cecilia tightly.

CECILIA
Are you crying?!

JOSIE
So what if I am?!

Andre hugs Josie next.

ANDRE
You're gonna kill it. Don't be
nervous.

CECILIA
(lying)
I'm not.

ANDRE
Sure, honey.

CECILIA
I'm only nervous about you burning
the house down while I'm gone.

JOSIE
I swear we'll only throw one rager.
Maybe two.

ANDRE
No more than five.

JOSIE
Thank you. I feel much better.

The three of them hug, a blob of arms and legs and love. An AIRPORT SECURITY OFFICER yells from the terminal doors:

AIRPORT SECURITY OFFICER
NO PARKING ON THE CURB.

JOSIE
THIS IS A PRIVATE MOMENT. GODDAM.

INT. AIRPLANE - LATER THAT DAY

Cecilia sits in her own row in First Class, sipping a glass of champagne while she stares out the window, headphones on. Even the windows seem cleaner. Rich people, man.

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - LATER THAT DAY

Cecilia walks outside with her bags. She starts to walk past a line of cars with drivers outside, holding up NAME PLATES. Cecilia spots her name on a sign being held by an attractive but somewhat pensive looking man with longer hair in his late 20s/early 30s. This is BEN.

CECILIA
Benjamin?

He gives her a quick look up and down, face inscrutable.

BEN
Cecilia Collins?

CECILIA
That's me.

He gives a slight shake of his head before he opens up the trunk of a black Bentley. Cecilia is a bit taken off guard.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

BEN
(quietly)
Yeah. Definitely. You're just ...
young.

CECILIA
Young for a Bridger Fellow, or just
young?

BEN
Both.

An awkward beat. They both simultaneously go to pick up her bags, nearly colliding.

CECILIA
Oh, I got it...

Cecilia drops her duffle and suitcase into the trunk.

BEN
I'll just...

He goes to open her door, but she's already done it for herself.

BEN (CONT'D)
Uhp-- okay, never mind.

She climbs into the back. He shuts the door for her.

INT. BENTLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia and Ben drive in silence. Cecilia stares out the window, soaking up the sight of the city as they drive across the bridge. She's got that dreamy New York City skyline smile, eyes bright with hope.

BEN
First time in New York?

CECILIA
(teasing)
Does it look like my first time?

BEN
(unsure)
No, I'm just making conversation.

CECILIA
Yes, I've been to New York before.

BEN
Cool.

A beat.

BEN (CONT'D)
Do you want to listen to music?

CECILIA
Sure.

BEN
What do you want to hear?

CECILIA
Just play whatever you were
listening to earlier.

BEN
(embarrassed)
Oh... uhm... okay.

He turns on the radio. Heavy metal (think Gojira) plays.

CECILIA
Interesting.

Ben half-grimaces, half-smiles.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - AFTERNOON

The Bentley pulls up to the front of a stunning brownstone in Chelsea. Four stories. Huge windows. Cecilia climbs out of the car, eyes huge.

CECILIA
Wow.

Ben pops the trunk, grabbing her bags before she can.

BEN
Allow me.

The two of them approach the front door. Ben types in a CODE on a SECURITY BOX. The door digitally unlocks.

BEN (CONT'D)
The code's in your itinerary.

CECILIA
Cool, thanks.

Ben grabs her bags, walking inside. Cecilia follows him.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE FOYER - CONTINUOUS

It's like walking through a portal into another world. The art is expensive, yet tasteful. Natural lighting, original hardwood floors, crown moulding.

CECILIA
(whispering)
Jesus.

Ben stops at a beautiful BRASS GATED ELEVATOR, dropping her bags inside. He hits a button for the 3rd floor, closing the door. The elevator rises with a WHIR.

BEN
First floor. Dining room's to the right. Your itinerary and signed contract are in the kitchen. My number's on the fridge. Call me whenever you need a ride.

CECILIA
You live here?

BEN
I manage the building for the
Bridgers. I live in the basement
level.

CECILIA
Pretty sweet set up.

He gives only a tight-lipped smile, before shifting gears.

BEN
C'mon. I'll give you the tour.

Time to explore!

INT. BROWNSTONE SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia and Ben walk up the stairs to the SECOND FLOOR. It's been gutted and transformed into one large STUDIO.

BEN
Second floor. This is your work
studio. I'm sure you brought some
art supplies, but. Everything here
is brand new, and included in the
Fellowship.

There's a work bench with an assortment of brand new artist tools (brushes, paints, aisles, etc). Cecilia touches everything with delicate fingers, as if she's worried this life will crumble and disappear into dust.

INT. BROWNSTONE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

They step up into the bedroom level: the entire third floor.

BEN
Third floor. Living quarters.

While Ben retrieves her bags from the ELEVATOR, Cecilia explores. There's a massive dresser, gorgeous four poster bed, thick high thread count sheets, and a great view overlooking the courtyard.

Cecilia spots what appears to be ROOF ACCESS.

CECILIA
Can I...?

He motions. *Go for it.* Cecilia opens the door, stepping out.

EXT. BROWNSTONE ROOF – CONTINUOUS

Outside on the roof, Cecilia admires the street below. She pulls out a VAPE PEN, taking a hit. Behind her, Ben lingers.

CECILIA
(re: the vape)
You want?

BEN
I'm good, thanks.

CECILIA
Yeah ... I switched to the pen to quit smoking cigarettes, but I miss those fuckers every day.

Ben laughs, a surprised sound. But then, his mood shifts into something more melancholy.

BEN
I'm gonna go.

CECILIA
No more tour?

BEN
The rest is pretty self-explanatory. But don't forget to read the itinerary in the kitchen.
And the contract.

CECILIA
Will do.

BEN
(hesitant)
Good luck, Cecilia.

He closes the roof door behind him. Cecilia shakes her head.

CECILIA
(to herself)
That man needs a vibe check.

Cecilia takes a deep breath, looking out at the city. *Her* city. She exhales. Smiles. She can do this.

INT. BROWNSTONE MASTER BATHROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia switches a light on and steps into the MASTER BATHROOM, admiring the CLAWFOOT TUB and GLASSDOOR SHOWER.

CECILIA
Oh fuck yeah.

INT. BROWNSTONE MASTER BATHROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia lounges in a bubble bath, hair piled on top of her head to keep from getting wet. Her *Pretty Woman* moment.

INT. BROWNSTONE BEDROOM – LATER

Cecilia, wearing a fuzzy bathrobe, unzips the bag on her bed. She pulls her tidily-folded clothing out, setting them aside. Next, she pulls out HER MOTHER'S PAINTING, smiling. She looks around the room, as if showing her mom.

CECILIA
Not too shabby, huh?

She opens the MASSIVE DRESSER in the bedroom. There are already beautiful CLOTHES hanging inside: dresses, skirts, tops. And a BLACK ENVELOPE.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
No way ...

She opens it, pulling out a NOTE:

**See anything you like? It's yours to keep.
- The Bridgers**

Cecilia flops on the large bed laughing, staring up at the ceiling, her mom's portrait pressed to her chest. This is a life she could get used to. She digs her phone out of her bathrobe, taking a SELFIE. She sends it to Josie, captioned:

#eattherich but please also #letmeberich

Josie sends a HAHA reaction back.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE KITCHEN – EVENING

Cecilia makes her way through the kitchen, opening up the fridge to find it fully stocked. Food, produce, and wine. And a familiar BLACK ENVELOPE. She opens it up to find a NOTE:

What's ours is yours.

- The Bridgers

CECILIA
(drunk on the perks)
Don't mind if I do.

She pulls out a bottle of white wine. It looks expensive. When she closes the fridge door, a NOTE catches her eye: **If you need anything, call Ben.** And a phone number.

She grabs a WINE GLASS and a CORK SCREW. As she's twisting the corkscrew, she notices another BLACK ENVELOPE on the island counter. The cork comes loose with a POP.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Let's take a look here.

She opens the envelope, pulling out another handsomely embossed piece of paper. She reads out loud as she skims.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
"Dear Ms. Collins, we'd like to offer you a warm welcome to New York City ... please look over the itinerary ... all scheduled events are mandatory. However, your time is your own outside of these occasions. Use it wisely."

She sets the letter aside to pull out a PRINTED ITINERARY. There are only THREE EVENTS:

- 1) **Welcome soiree (1st Friday)**
- 2) **Performance review (3rd Friday)**
- 3) **Final showing (4th Friday)**

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Three events? Seems manageable ...

She takes another sip of wine as she turns the page, finding A BANK CARD. She kisses it.

Lastly, she pulls her signed CONTRACT out of the envelope. Just as she's about to start skimming it, there's a KNOCK at the front door.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia approaches the FRONT DOOR, making sure her robe is closed. She secures the chain out of habit.

She opens the door. A DELIVERY MAN stands on the front steps with a LARGE BLACK BOX with a RED RIBBON tied around it.

DELIVERY MAN
Cecilia Collins?

CECILIA
Yes?

DELIVERY MAN
Package for you.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia studies the large box. She pours another glass of wine as she pulls the RIBBON. When she takes off the BOX TOP, ALL FOUR WALLS of the box collapse, revealing a VASE OF MADONNA LILLIES. There's a NOTE:

Have fun tonight.
- D

She flips the note to reveal AN ADDRESS. Huh.

She looks at the NOTE on the fridge. She pulls her PHONE out of her robe pocket, dialing.

CECILIA
Hey, it's Cecilia. Can I get a ride later?

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

A GIANT WAREHOUSE. It looks abandoned. There's a BOUNCER standing outside of a door. This will either be a great place to party, or get murdered. Ben's Bentley pulls up outside.

INT. BENTLEY - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia, in one of the GIFT DRESSES from the magical wardrobe, stares out the window dubiously.

CECILIA
Are you fucking with me?

BEN
I am not. But I am gonna wait here for you. Just in case.

CECILIA
Very reassuring. Thanks, Ben.

Cecilia steps out of the car.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

As Cecilia approaches the entrance, she pulls out the CARD that accompanied her flowers. She shows it to the bouncer, a guy who could bench press a cow. He looks at the card, then looks at her. One short nod.

BANG BANG BANG. He knocks on the door. From the inside, someone OPENS IT. Cecilia walks in.

INT. WAREHOUSE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The hallway is almost completely dark, save for some moody red lighting in the ceiling. Whoever opened the door for her is nowhere to be seen. There is a DULL, PERSISTENT THRUMMING.

Cecilia walks down the hall. As she does, the thrumming grows louder. It's music with a ton of BASS. She reaches the end of the hallway. There's nothing there but a WALL. When she touches the wall, IT VIBRATES WITH SOUND.

She pushes it. It opens up into

INT. CLUB - CONTINUOUS

A swanky dance club. Flashing lights and an illuminated dance floor. Cecilia can't help but smile. This is damn cool.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- 1) Cecilia dancing, drink in hand, having a blast
- 2) Cecilia doing a shot at the bar with some HIPSTERS
- 3) Cecilia dances opposite a COKE OUT GUY

CECILIA
(yelling over the music)
I GOT THE BRIDGER FELLOWSHIP!

COKE OUT GUY
(yelling over the music)
IS THAT A POKER TOURNAMENT?

CECILIA
(yelling over the music)
NO!

4) Cecilia using her PER DIEM CHARGE CARD to pay for a round of drinks for the people around her.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB DANCE FLOOR - LATER

Cecilia is dancing with random people, but also by herself. The beat in Chris Lake's "In The Yuma" vibrates the walls. She is feeling herself, yes ma'am.

A TALL FIGURE slides in behind her, matching her rhythm. She immediately leans back, happy to have a dance partner. The dance is sensual, but playful. Keeping it light and flirty.

After a few beats, Cecilia turns around to face her dance partner. When she looks up, her face falls immediately.

This isn't just some guy. She's been dancing with DAVIS BRIDGER. Absurdly handsome, even more so in-person. Older than her. Aging exceptionally well. Also her patron! *And she's been grinding on him.* They yell over the music:

CECILIA
Mr. Bridger! HI.

DAVIS
Call me Davis, please.

CECILIA
I had no idea-- I didn't know you'd be here!

DAVIS
Follow me!

He heads off of the dance floor. Cecilia follows him into

INT. CLUB VIP SECTION - CONTINUOUS

The fancy part of this club. The music is much less blaring now, and they have a private bar.

DAVIS
(to the bartender)
My usual bottle.

BARTENDER

Coming right up, Mr. Bridger.

DAVIS

(to Cecilia)

Apologies for stealing you. I
couldn't hear myself think over the
music out there.

CECILIA

More of a Macy Gray fan?

DAVIS

(laughing)

That's a deep cut.

They're given their drinks.

CECILIA

Yeah, I wouldn't guess that this is
your scene.

DAVIS

(pointedly)

Why is that?

Oh. Did she misspeak? Probably. She's definitely a bit drunk.

CECILIA

I mean, you're ... Davis Bridger!
Tech billionaire. Time's Person of
the Year. Patron of the Arts.
Beloved by all.

DAVIS

Ah! I see. You're calling me old.

CECILIA

No! No, not at all. Just, I don't
even go to clubs like this and--

DAVIS

And you're young?

CECILIA

I'll shut up now.

Davis laughs. Any chilliness is gone.

DAVIS

My company helped finance this
place. So, every now and then, I
come to check on my investment.

They're half-way through their glasses now.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
How are you liking the
accommodations?

CECILIA
You're joking, right? It's the most
gorgeous place I've ever been in.

DAVIS
I have a soft spot for it. It was
the first property I bought after
my company went public.

CECILIA
A four story Brownstone is your
starter home? What a life.

DAVIS
Your star is rising. You'll get
used to it.

CECILIA
From your lips to God's ears.

They clink glasses. He finishes his drink, so she feels
compelled to do the same.

DAVIS
Another?

Cecilia grins.

INT. CLUB VIP SECTION - LATER

Cecilia and Davis are both laughing. They're clearly a couple
of drinks in, but their conversation is easy and animated.

DAVIS
God, the moment he turned around...

CECILIA
I know! His face was just ...
chef's kiss.

DAVIS
You couldn't have planned it
better. Priceless.

CECILIA

That's the thing! I *did* plan it.
Once you figure out who someone is,
you can nudge them in the right
direction.

DAVIS

I don't know how artist types do
it. You pull ideas out of the air.
My brain doesn't work that way.

CECILIA

How does your brain work?

DAVIS

Tangibly. When I see something I
want, I reach out and grab it.

There's tension between them. A flicker, a spark. Cecilia
takes another sip of her drink. Davis shifts the mood:

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Where did you study?

CECILIA

At home, mostly.

DAVIS

(impressed)

Self-taught?

CECILIA

My mom was an artist. The best oil
painter in New Orleans, hand to
God. She put herself into credit
card debt buying me supplies when I
caught the art bug.

DAVIS

She sounds like an amazing woman.

(Gently.)

May I ask what happened?

Cecilia shifts. A little uncomfortable, being so vulnerable.

CECILIA

She got sick my first year of art
school, so. I dropped out to take
care of her. She passed away about
six months ago.

DAVIS

That's a terrible thing to go
through on your own.

CECILIA

(smiling)

I wasn't on my own. My mom was a Patron Saint to everyone on our block. Everyone's mother. So I had friends around to help me out.

DAVIS

Well, I'm sorry for your loss.

CECILIA

She taught me everything I know. So it's not a loss, as long as I keep going.

DAVIS

So keep going, Cecilia Collins.

He reaches out, his hand firmly over hers. Again, that spark between them. Slowly, Cecilia slides her hand away.

CECILIA

It's a little late for a school night. I've got a lot of work to do ... I should get some sleep.

DAVIS

I'll take you home.

CECILIA

That's okay. Ben's waiting outside.

Davis gives her a long, inscrutable look. She can't help but feel suddenly a little nervous.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

But, thank you, so much. For the offer. And for the drinks. And for, you know ... potentially changing the course of my life.

DAVIS

You're very welcome, Cecilia.
Goodnight.

CECILIA

Night.

He KISSES HER ON THE CHEEK. She blushes. He smiles.

DAVIS

See you Friday night for your welcome party.

And with that, he strides away into the masses of the club, leaving Cecilia to catch her breath.

INT. BENTLEY - NIGHT - LATER

Ben is asleep in the front seat of the car. A somewhat drunk Cecilia stumbles into the backseat. Ben wakes up with a shout, then tries to play it cool.

BEN
(awkward)
Seatbelt.

CECILIA
(drunkenly singing)
I think I'm gonna like it here...

That's right. We're doing a montage set to a remix of "I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here" from the musical *Annie*.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- 1) Cecilia, hungover yet happy, sipping her morning coffee on the roof of the brownstone. She snaps a photo of her reflection in the window with a POLAROID CAMERA.
- 2) Cecilia buying art supplies at an upscale art supplier. The cost is **\$1,329.17**. She gulps but hands over the Bridgers' charge card.
- 3) Cecilia walks through the halls of the MoMA, taking snapshots of paintings for inspiration.
- 4) Cecilia sits in the back seat while Ben drives. She's got several bags of art supplies from different stores.
- 5) Cecilia working in the art studio on the second floor. She's painting on canvas, while also using wires to begin forming a BUST. Her MOM'S OIL PAINTING sits on the desk, watching over her.
- 6) Cecilia walks through the Guggenheim, admiring the contemporary art while also enjoying the Picasso installation.
- 7) Cecilia sits in Central Park, headphones on, reading a copy of The New York Times. There's a PHOTO of Davis and Isabel. She runs her fingers over the image, reverent.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE SECOND FLOOR - AFTERNOON

Cecilia, comfortable in overalls and a sports bra, is working in the studio space, twisting wires into new shapes. Her phone DINGS. She checks it -- it's a calendar reminder:

Welcome party. 8pm. 1st Friday.

She dismisses the reminder.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Cecilia goes to investigate.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - FIRST FLOOR

Cecilia approaches the front door. The CHAIN is in place. She opens the door a crack, seeing Ben holding a LARGE BLACK BOX. He looks more tense than usual.

BEN
Special delivery.

CECILIA
Ooooh ...! Thank you.

Cecilia unchains the door, opening it fully. She takes the box from him, smiling happily. She knows who it's from. Ben opens his mouth as if to speak, then changes his mind.

BEN
We need to leave by 7:45pm tonight.
Don't be late.

He turns and leaves without a word. Cecilia blinks.

CECILIA
(calling)
Thanks for another normal human
interaction, Ben!

BEN
(calling back)
7:45pm!

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - THIRD FLOOR

Cecilia stares at a gorgeous RED DESIGNER DRESS, laid out on her bed. She studies the card it came with:

Something to help the rising star shine her brightest.
- D

Cecilia's eyes sparkle. This is too good to be true.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Ben waits outside, checking the time. He hears the DOOR open.

BEN
(eyes on his phone)
It's almost eight...

He looks up to see Cecilia. The red dress fits like a glove.

CECILIA
Whaddya think?

She looks like a star. Ben looks like he's going to vomit.

BEN
You're late.

Cecilia experiences a wide range of emotions in record time, moving quickly from embarrassment and confusion to anger.

Ben walks stiffly to the Bentley, opening up the driver's side back door. Cecilia walks around, opening up the passenger side back door and letting herself in. She shuts it with a SLAM that makes Ben flinch.

INT. BENTLEY - NIGHT

Ben and Cecilia drive in awkward, stony silence.

BEN
Do you want to listen to music, or--

CECILIA
(exploding)
What the hell is your problem?!

BEN
What?

CECILIA
Seriously, I can't get a read on you! One minute you're like, super nice, and the next it's like you're possessed by the ghost of a sad Victorian boy.

BEN
Wow...

CECILIA

Everything you've said to me since I got here makes you sound like an NPC in a video game. "Here's your tour. Read the itinerary. Answer me these riddles three."

BEN

(darkly)

Well, we can't all be Bridger Fellows.

CECILIA

Oh, so this is a jealousy thing?

BEN

No! It's just-- I'm just trying to do my job. Okay? And I'm sorry if I come off as awkward or rude but THIS IS MY JOB, I don't have a CHOICE, so just-- cut me some fucking slack! Okay?!

A long, uncomfortable beat. Cecilia recognizes that exhaustion and vulnerability. She proceeds gently.

CECILIA

Okay. I'm sorry.

Beat.

BEN

Sorry. I'm a little... stressed.

CECILIA

It's cool. We're cool. Sounds like you need to ... decompress a bit.

Beat.

BEN

Are you going to tell the Bridgers?

CECILIA

Do I look like a narc?

BEN

No. You look like you're the star of another Gossip Girl reboot.

This makes Cecilia laugh, which makes Ben grin. The tension between them is leaking away, but Ben looks heartbroken.

EXT. BRIDGER GALLERY - MINUTES LATER

The Bentley pulls up outside of the Bridger Gallery, a modern building with three stories and large glass windows.

Cecilia allows Ben to open the back door for her. She climbs out, taking in the sight of the monolithic building.

BEN

Have fun.

CECILIA

You're not coming?

BEN

No. I'm not.

CECILIA

Okay. Then ... bye.

She starts to walk away.

BEN

(calling)

Cecilia.

CECILIA

(turning around)

Yeah?

He seems almost lost for words. Struggling to make them form.

BEN

Make good choices.

CECILIA

Another weird thing to say, but
thanks, Ben!

He snorts a laugh despite himself. Cecilia faces the building, takes a fortifying breath, and then walks with purpose towards the front doors.

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia walks into the Bridger Gallery. A SECURITY GUARD waves her through the front door. He must have known she was coming. Oddly enough, from the inside it looks like there are only two floors.

She looks around, mildly confused. There's no one in sight, but she can hear the sound of VOICES from above. Slowly, she ascends a staircase.

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Another empty floor. The gallery space is full of paintings, sculptures, film playing over mixed media pieces. Under each work of art is a small sign: **Inquire with management about purchase.** Still there are no people, but the VOICE of people grow louder. She sees one more staircase, and ascends it to the third floor.

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - THIRD FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia opens a door onto the THIRD FLOOR. It is a rooftop space, half enclosed by glass, half open to the elements. DOZENS of well-dressed denizens of art sip their cocktails, chatting and laughing and comparing trips to the Hamptons. As if they can sense the presence of an "other," their eyes find Cecilia in the doorway.

TITLE CARD: 1st FRIDAY

ISABEL (O.S.)

Cecilia.

It's the same rich voice from the phone call that changed her life. ISABEL BRIDGER. The crowd seems to part for her as she approaches, a truly stunning creature of the night.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Welcome to your party.

The crowd claps politely, although they seem more curious than sincere. Some strain to get a better look. Cecilia suddenly feels very exposed in her red dress.

Isabel approaches Cecilia with a megawatt smile, pulling her close to kiss her on both cheeks. Cecilia beams at her.

CECILIA

Thank you, so much.

Isabel leans in, her mouth centimeters from Cecilia's ear.

ISABEL

(whispering)

You're late.

Cecilia's smile disappears immediately. Before she can say anything, Isabel has turned back to the crowd.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
I'm sure you're all dying to meet
our newest Bridger Fellowship
recipient, Cecilia Collins. Play
nice, everyone.

Isabel whisks away into the crowd, leaving Cecilia rocking on
her heels. A CATERER approaches with a tray of champagne.
Cecilia takes one immediately. *Cheers.*

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1) Two SOCIALITES talk with Cecilia.

SOCIALITE #1
You must be excited to be in New
York for the first time!

SOCIALITE #2
Are you going to go to the M&M
museum?

SOCIALITE #1
You should see *Harry Potter and the
Cursed Child.*

Cecilia finishes her drink.

2) A SNOOTY OLDER COUPLE talks to Cecilia.

SNOOTY MAN
I'd say your work is more
reminiscent of Haversham than
McMillen.

SNOOTY WOMAN
Wouldn't you say?

Cecilia grabs another drink.

3) An ART CRITIC sips his glass of wine.

ART CRITIC
I thought your piece in New Orleans
was interesting. *The Conversation.*

CECILIA
Oh, yeah?

ART CRITIC
It was a helpful reminder that most
people have no idea what art
criticism really is.
(MORE)

ART CRITIC (CONT'D)
Whether it be a supposed critic, or
a supposed artist.

A beat.

CECILIA
You're a critic, aren't you.

ART CRITIC
I am. But what do I know? I'm just
an affluent white man.

He walks away with a chilly air. Cecilia mouths to herself,
"what the fuck?"

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - THIRD FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia studies a PAINTING. Dark and brooding, a feminine
figure surrounded by an ouroboros. The card underneath reads:

Hadley Owens
Chimera
Acrylic on canvas
2022

Isabel slides up next to Cecilia, taking a sip of her wine as
she observes the painting.

ISABEL
I see you found our special
collection.

Isabel begins to walk, looking at the pieces. Cecilia follows
her, a student eager to learn.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
(pointing at each piece)
Hadley Owens. Grant Glover. Maya
Sato. Sandrine Oliviera.

CECILIA
They're all Bridger Fellows.

ISABEL
You've done your research.

CECILIA
Less research, more religious
reverence.

Isabel laughs. How can something sound warm and empty?

CECILIA (CONT'D)
I noticed none of their pieces are
for sale.

ISABEL
Of course not. They belong to Davis
and I.

There's a final piece: a contemporary sculpture. Blown glass,
mirror shards. A blizzard, frozen in time and space, shaped
to look like snakes bursting from a broken skull. The artist
is listed as Unknown. The name of the piece: "**Medusa.**"
Cecilia steps closer to study it, transfixed.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Imagining your name on the wall?

CECILIA
For my entire life.

ISABEL
Well. Maybe you'll surprise me.

Cecilia blinks, looking to Isabel. *What?*

ISABEL (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Enjoy the party.

Isabel clinks her glass against Cecilia's as she walks away,
leaving Cecilia along with that small but obvious slight.

EXT. BRIDGER GALLERY - ROOF

Cecilia steps outside, greedily inhaling the cool night air.

HADLEY (O.S.)
They're eating you up.

Cecilia startles, looking for the owner of the voice. HADLEY
(late-20s) steps out of the shadows in a long dress,
cigarette between her fingers.

CECILIA
I can't tell if you're being rude.

HADLEY
It's a skill. You'll learn.

CECILIA
(re: Hadley's cigarette)
Can I have one of those?

Hadley reaches into a small purse she's carrying, producing a LIGHTER and a cigarette. The lighter is a silver ZIPPO, engraved with a name: HADLEY OWENS. She snaps it open. Hadley hands Cecilia the cigarette. She leans into the flame.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Thank you.

HADLEY
Anything for a fellow Fellow.

Cecilia sees the engraving on the lighter, then studies Hadley for a moment.

CECILIA
Holy shit -- you're Hadley Owens!
You got the Bridger Fellowship,
what, two years ago?

HADLEY
Three.

CECILIA
I read in Art Life that you're
doing a show in Brooklyn in a
couple of weeks.

HADLEY
You read correctly.

CECILIA
Guess the Fellowship is worth it.

She laughs. Hadley doesn't.

HADLEY
Good luck, Cecilia.

Hadley walks away, leaving Cecilia alone. *Why do people keep saying "good luck?"* She takes another drag of the cigarette before dropping it in her glass of champagne.

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - THIRD FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia slides back inside, keeping to the fringes of the room. Leaning against the wall, she pulls out her phone. She clicks on her Contacts, finding Ben's number. She types:

gonna irish exit. can you pick me up?

She's about to press 'send' when--

DAVIS (O.S.)
Are you hiding?

Cecilia looks up to see Davis. Swiftly, she puts her phone away, extending a hand to him.

CECILIA
Mr. Bridger. Hello, again.

DAVIS
Davis, please.

She shakes her shoulders, trying to clear her mind.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Are you all right?

CECILIA
I'm fine. Just not used to ... all
of this.

DAVIS
Thank god.

Cecilia is surprised by his candor. She laughs, and relaxes.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
The people in this room are so
fucking dull. I took a Xanax before
one of Isabel's soirees and ended
up talking to a Bernini sculpture
for ten minutes. Couldn't tell the
difference.

CECILIA
People keep asking me if this is my
first trip to New York. It's
driving me nuts.

DAVIS
Really?

CECILIA
I had an exhibit in Dorsey like,
two years ago! I mean, Abraham
Cecil did-- But still! Just because
I'm from the South doesn't mean I'm
not cultured.

DAVIS
Don't take it personally. Then they
win.

CECILIA

"They"?

DAVIS

(feigning offense)

Excuse me?

CECILIA

Come on! Your name is on this building. You have more money than everyone in this room.

DAVIS

So?

CECILIA

So, that makes you one of them.

DAVIS

Money doesn't make people assholes. Thinking money makes you interesting, that makes you an asshole.

CECILIA

I wasn't calling you an asshole.

DAVIS

No, no. It's fine. Being insulted by the artist I'm sponsoring is a new and fun experience.

He smiles, but there's a sharpness to it. Cecilia grimaces.

CECILIA

I'm sorry. This is one of the most important nights of my life and I feel like I'm drowning. I would kill for a Xanax and a Bernini sculpture.

DAVIS

We'd have to go to my place, then.

Cecilia's cheeks go red. She can't help but balk.

CECILIA

What?

DAVIS

The Bernini. It's in my living room.

CECILIA
You have an actual Bernini
sculpture?

DAVIS
I do.

CECILIA
Just ... hanging out in your home.

DAVIS
What can I say? I respect the
classics.
(Beat.)
Are you in?

CECILIA
I ... I can't just leave--

DAVIS
Sure you can.

CECILIA
But it's my party.

DAVIS
It's *my* party, for you. We can do
whatever we want.

Cecilia scans the crowd, looking for Isabel.

CECILIA
What about Mrs. Bridger?

DAVIS
Isabel can take care of herself.

Cecilia smiles.

EXT. BRIDGER GALLERY - ALLEY - MINUTES LATER

Cecilia and Davis leave the gallery through a backdoor on the street. Waiting in the dark alley is another Bentley. This one is watched over by FRANK, an ex-military guy built like a brick shithouse and allergic to smiling. He opens the backdoor for them. Davis climbs in.

DAVIS
(nodding)
Frank.

She climbs in after Davis.

CECILIA
(nodding, as a mimic)
Frank.

INT. DAVIS' BENTLEY - NIGHT

Cecilia and Davis sit in the backseat as low-fi beats play gently through the speakers. Davis rests his head on the back of the seat, like a panther getting comfortable.

DAVIS
Be honest. Was tonight awful?

CECILIA
No. It was intimidating.
(Beat.)
I dunno. I feel like I'm running away from the first truly good thing that's happened to me.

DAVIS
You're not running **away** from a party. You're running **towards** a Bernini sculpture.

Cecilia laughs. Davis grows more serious. Earnest.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
You're just not used to being yourself at these things. You're used to being Abraham Cecil.

Cecilia settles in, relieved to feel so seen.

CECILIA
Exactly.

DAVIS
Why did you go by a pseudonym for so long?

CECILIA
Well, historically, people are more likely to respect a male artist out of the gate.

DAVIS
But was that the only reason why?

She studies him for a moment. He sees her.

CECILIA

It felt safer, being someone else.
Like, if things didn't go the way I
wanted, Abraham Cecil was the
failure. Not me.

DAVIS

So what changed?

CECILIA

I did, after my mom passed. I
realized I wasn't going anywhere,
pretending to be someone that I'm
not. That's not who my mom raised
me to be.

DAVIS

Your mother would be very proud.

Cecilia touches his hand, giving it a gentle squeeze.

CECILIA

Thank you.

INT. ELEVATOR - MINUTES LATER

Cecilia and Davis stand in the elevator. They're not touching. Not making eye contact. Looking ahead. But they're both thinking about the same thing.

INT. BRIDGER APARTMENT - NIGHT

Davis opens the front door, allowing Cecilia to walk into the stunning apartment. Calling it an apartment feels wrong, though. It is a mansion, in a residential building. Modern, chic, constantly being updated. Tony Stark could live there. And the view, *goddam*, the view is just absurd.

Cecilia is truly gobsmacked. It's gorgeous, but cold. Clinical. Like a museum, or an operating room. She rubs her arms instinctively.

DAVIS

Are you cold?

CECILIA

I'm fine.

DAVIS

No, no. None of that Southern,
"who, me? I couldn't possibly"
nonsense.

He goes to the wall, tapping a button. The FIRE turns on.

CECILIA
Ah. Thank you.

He moves to a gorgeous BAR area as Cecilia walks through the living room, taking it in. There's art on his walls that should be behind glass at the MoMA. And there, near the glass wall overlooking the city, is the Bernini sculpture. *Medusa*.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Holy shit.

DAVIS
It's on loan from the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome.

CECILIA
How...?!

DAVIS
I've done well for myself. That affords me certain privileges.

CECILIA
This isn't privilege. This is *Medusa*.

Davis approaches with two glasses of tequila.

DAVIS
To your future success.

He hands her a glass. They CLINK, and DRINK.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Can I be honest with you?

CECILIA
Of course.

DAVIS
I wasn't a fan of your work, when you were Abraham Cecil.

Cecilia blinks, almost startled. She wasn't expecting this turn of conversation. She wasn't expecting the sting.

CECILIA
Oh... okay, why?

DAVIS

Something about it felt false. And I was right. Well, half-right. The art was real. The artist was a lie.

He steps closer. Cecilia can hear her own heart beating.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

When I saw you -- the real you-- I could see your work clearly. But that's not all I could see.

Davis closes the space between them. So close yet not touching. Cecilia looks up at him, lost in his spell.

CECILIA

What else did you see?

DAVIS

Raw potential. And someone who could live up to it.

CECILIA

Is that what I'm doing now? Living up to my potential?

DAVIS

I dunno, Cecilia. Was Abraham Cecil ever awarded the Bridger Fellowship?

He leans in, his mouth inches from hers.

CECILIA

Davis ...

DAVIS

What?

CECILIA

You're *married*. You're my *sponsor*.

DAVIS

Exactly. I picked you, Cecilia. I picked you.

He kisses her. Against her better judgement, she gives in, and kisses back. Both of their glasses are abandoned on the mantle. He picks her up easily; she wraps her legs around his waist. He carries her to the gorgeous bespoke couch.

She's on her back, hands fumbling with his shirt buttons until she rips it open, breathing heavily as his mouth finds her neck.

He pushes her dress up, grinding his hips against her as her hands run over his skin, moving from his chest, down his abdomen, running lower--

The DOOR opens. Cecilia freezes.

CECILIA
(breathless)
Oh, fuck.

Isabel walks in, sliding out of her designer jacket. She looks at Davis and Cecilia, still on the couch.

DAVIS
Good evening, Isabel.

ISABEL
Hello, Davis.

Cecilia slowly begins to squirm her way out from under Davis. He sits up, allowing her some room.

Isabel goes to the bar, pouring herself a drink.

DAVIS
Did you enjoy the party?

ISABEL
It was fine.
(eying Cecilia)
Nothing special.

Cecilia drops with very little grace onto the floor, trying to pull her dress up at the top and down at the bottom. Davis reclines on the couch as if nothing is wrong. Isabel sips her drink, unbothered.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
You left early.

DAVIS
You came home early.

A beat. They both laugh, but there's little mirth in it. There's something else. Adrenaline. Anticipation. An invisible gun being cocked.

Cecilia, not in on the joke, struggles to stand. Mortified. She takes a breath and manages to work up the bravery to meet Isabel's piercing gaze.

CECILIA
There's no excuse, for... any of
this. I am so sorry, Isabel.

ISABEL
(correcting)
Mrs. Bridger.

CECILIA
Mrs. Bridger. I'll show myself out.

ISABEL
Why would you do that?

Cecilia has no idea what to do.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Grab those glasses from the mantle,
Cecilia. Won't you?

Wordlessly, Cecilia takes the glasses.

Isabel looks at Davis expectantly. He seems to read her mind, standing with a lazy grace. He holds out a hand towards her. She places the BOTTLE in his palm.

Davis refills his and Cecilia's glasses.

Isabel turns on her heel, walking out of the living room towards the master bedroom. She steps out of her shoes as she goes, abandoning them haphazardly on the ground. Her free hand reaches up her back, unzipping her dress as she walks.

Cecilia looks at Davis, her eyes as wide as tennis balls. He offers a hungry smile back. He slinks towards her, placing a firm but gentle hand on her lower back.

DAVIS
After you.

INT. BRIDGER MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia stops in the doorway. Davis lingers behind her, a solid mass shadow.

Isabel sits on the bed, staring at Cecilia. It's not just the designer lingerie or how she holds her beautiful body. It's the fire in her eyes. The utter assurance.

ISABEL
Well?

Cecilia hands Davis her drink. Davis stays in the doorway, sipping his drink, as Cecilia approaches his wife. Cecilia stops in front of Isabel. Standing over her, looking down, a wild smile tugging at her lips.

CECILIA
(breathless)
I'll be perfectly honest with you?
I have no fucking clue what is
happening right now.

ISABEL
This is a good lesson to learn
early in your Fellowship, Cecilia.

Isabel pulls Cecilia onto the bed, pinning her on her back.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Davis and I share everything.

She kisses Cecilia. Cecilia kisses back. How could she not?

Davis takes his cue, finishing his drink and sauntering to the bed. He sits on the opposite side of Isabel, positioning Cecilia between them.

Isabel breaks the kiss with Cecilia. Davis turns her chin towards him, kissing her. He moves backwards towards the bed, bringing Cecilia with him.

As he does that, Isabel reaches under Cecilia's dress, pulling her panties down. She tosses them away before she slides her hand between Cecilia's legs. Cecilia groans into Davis' mouth.

Isabel lifts her glistening fingers to her mouth, licking them slowly.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Davis. You really must taste her.

Davis breaks the kiss, eyeing his wife with a wolf's grin.

As he moves his lips down her body, Isabel positions herself behind Cecilia. Davis moves her legs to be on either side of his shoulders, her dress pushed up and draping over the bed. He looks up the long line of Cecilia's body, his breath warm against her skin as he makes eye contact with her.

DAVIS
That's our good girl.

As his mouth begins to explore her, Isabel wrenches her neck back into a passionate, visceral kiss. Cecilia's back arches with a gasp--!

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGER MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Cecilia wakes up with a jolt. The high-rise blinds are open, letting in cruel, blinding sunlight. She groans, rolling over. Her hair is a mess. Mascara has dried in streaks under her eyes. She looks and feels like she's been hit by a bus.

ISABEL (O.S.)
You're still here?

Cecilia sits up with a gasp, covering herself with a sheet. She stares with glassy eyes at Isabel, who is fully dressed in exquisitely expensive clothes. She looks completely unfazed, putting on earrings and she readies herself to go. As if nothing happened the night before.

CECILIA
(croaking)
Where's Davis?

ISABEL
He's working. Which is what you should be doing. Or have you forgotten why you're actually here?

Cecilia clears her throat.

CECILIA
I'll be on my way, then--

ISABEL
Benjamin is waiting for you downstairs.

This is terrible news. Cecilia looks around, searching...

CECILIA
Do you know where my clothes are?

ISABEL
I've sent them out for dry cleaning. I've left you something in the guest room.

With that, Isabel walks away. Cecilia listens to her high heels click-clack on the floor, then winces as the front door shuts with a SLAM.

INT. BRIDGER APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Bare feet move across the cold wooden floor, carrying Cecilia, wrapped in a sheet, towards the guest bedroom.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia opens the door. She deflates even more when she sees what Isabel has left for her.

CECILIA
Oh, goddammit ...

INT. BENTLEY - MORNING - MINUTES LATER

Ben sits in the driver's seat. He's already in a dark mood. After a moment, the BACK DOOR opens. Cecilia climbs in in a RED SILK ROBE, her crossbody purse keeping the front closed.

The door shuts after her. Ben puts the car into DRIVE and starts forward.

There's a long, unbearably awkward silence.

BEN
I waited up. You didn't text.

CECILIA
Sorry. It was a late night.

BEN
(under his breath)
I bet.

CECILIA
Excuse me?

BEN
Nothing.

Ben clams up. They continue in deafening silence.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - MORNING

Cecilia marches through the front door. Ben is right behind her. He catches the door, but doesn't come in.

BEN
Cecilia--

CECILIA
What.

She spins around.

BEN

Look, I don't know what happened
last night, but--

CECILIA

That didn't stop you from making an
educated guess!

BEN

I shouldn't have said--

CECILIA

It's fine. Whatever.

She starts to shut the door, then thinks better of it. She's mad, but she's not sure why.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

You know what? Don't expect any
more calls from me, okay? I don't
care if your "services" come with
the package. At least with Uber, I
can request a Quiet Ride.

Cecilia SLAMS the door.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE BATHROOM

Cecilia plugs her phone in to charge, then takes a long moment to look at herself in the mirror. She looks exhausted.

Slowly, she unties the RED ROBE, letting it pool on the floor. Her skin is a mess of intimate bruises. Teeth marks, scratches, one or two hand prints. Evidence of either a very good night or a very bad night.

She takes a POLAROID of her reflection.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE SHOWER

As Cecilia showers, her mind cant help but wander back to last night as her hands trail over her body...

CUT TO:

FLASHES FROM LAST NIGHT:

- 1) Three mouths, three tongues, six lips together
- 2) Legs interlocked, hips moving, hands roaming

3) Davis kissing her neck, Isabel biting into her shoulder

CUT BACK:

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE SHOWER

Cecilia catches her breath, overcome by the memory.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - SECOND FLOOR/EXT. NEW ORLEANS SHOTGUN HOUSE PORCH - INTERCUT

Cecilia, dressed in an over-sized t-shirt and sweatpants, walks through her workspace. She's on the phone.

CECILIA

I'm just, like, what now? Is this what my Fellowship is? Fucking my sponsors between dinner parties?

ANDRE (V.O.)

That's how patrons and artists used to work. You're throwing it back old school.

IN NEW ORLEANS: Josie sits on the patio, a book and an iced tea on the table. Andre sits next to her, painting his nails.

JOSIE

But isn't this kind of "best case scenario" though? You've been obsessed with these deep pockets for a minute.

CECILIA

I know, but ... this isn't what I'm here for. You know? I'm an artist. Not a concubine.

JOSIE

I have to ask...

CECILIA

The sex was insane.

JOSIE

I KNEW IT. Rich people are filthy.

CECILIA

You have no idea.

ANDRE

Are you gonna make this a regular
thing?

CECILIA

No. No, no, no. One and done. I'm
here to do my work, collect my
flowers, and launch my career into
the stratosphere.

JOSIE

I see you're managing your
expectations.

We hear a KNOCK at the door downstairs.

CECILIA

Someone's at the door, I gotta call
you back.

ANDRE

Have fun.

JOSIE

Bang a Rockefeller for me.

Cecilia hangs up as she heads downstairs.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - FIRST FLOOR

Cecilia approaches the front door. She makes sure the CHAIN
is on it before she opens it up.

On the other side is Ben. He looks uncomfortable. Guilty.
Holding a familiar BLACK BOX.

BEN

I have a delivery for you.

She shuts the door. She considered keeping it shut, but
unchains the lock with a sigh, her better angels prevailing.
She reopens the door, taking the box from him.

BEN (CONT'D)

Cecilia, I--

She shuts the door without a word. Her better angels failed.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - THIRD FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia looks at a glossy CARD:

Sommerville's, 8pm

-D

A dark GREEN SILK DRESS is laid out on the bed. Clearly meant to be worn this evening. *So much for one and done.*

CECILIA

Shit.

INT. SOMMERVILLE'S - NIGHT

Cecilia looks nervous as she FOLLOWS a HOSTESS through a chic NYC restaurant. She's changed out of her pajamas but opted for casual clothes (jeans and a hoodie). Still, she's obviously out of place. Dim lighting, tiny plates, \$500+ per person. The hostess guides to a corner table where Davis sits, studying his phone.

He looks up as if he can feel Cecilia's presence, ready to greet her with a smile, but his face goes blank when he sees her. Cecilia gives a nervous, closed-mouth smile as she sits.

CECILIA

Sorry I'm late, I got really caught up working in the studio...

He looks her up and down, making sure she feels the weight of his eyes.

DAVIS

Interesting wardrobe choice.

Cecilia can feel a flush creeping up her neck. A WAITER approaches, a bottle of RED WINE in hand.

WAITER

Good evening, Mr. Bridger. The usual?

DAVIS

Please.

The waiter uncorks the bottle of wine, pouring him a glass.

CECILIA

(joking)

Wish I'd known how nice this place was.

DAVIS

The dress I sent should have been your first clue.

Cecilia clears her throat, nervous. The waiter moves to pour wine for Cecilia, but she puts a hand over the glass.

CECILIA
Actually, I'm all good for right
now. But thank you.

The waiter nods, leaving the bottle on the table before walking away. Davis rolls his shoulders back as if working a kink out of his neck.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
(trying to redirect)
I, ah, actually got a lot done
today. My exhibit is starting to
come along...

Davis snatches the bottle. He begins to pour Cecilia a glass.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Oh...

He pours half of the bottle. It's too much.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Ookay. Ah. Thanks.

He pours the remaining bit wine in his own glass, looking at Cecilia with cool eyes. Something has shifted. She picks up her glass, taking a sip.

DAVIS
Tell me about your exhibit, then.

Cecilia feels a small sense of relief, but not enough. Something still feels ... off.

CECILIA
Well, it's still early in the process, but. I'm exploring the idea of self-portraiture. Not just through painting, but sculpture and found art objects, too. This is my first show as Cecilia Collins instead of Abraham Cecil, so it feels important to really reveal myself.

DAVIS
Interesting choice of words.

He gives her a wolfish smile. Her cheeks redden. How does she say what she needs to say? Get them back on track?

CECILIA

Davis ... last night was crazy. And fun! A lot of fun. But... I didn't come here to sleep with you and your wife. You know? Like, thank you, but ... I'm here for the Fellowship.

Davis' demeanor goes completely cold.

DAVIS

Understood.

CECILIA

I don't want to sound ungrateful, or anything, I just--

DAVIS

No, no. You said what you needed to say.

A beat.

CECILIA

Are we good?

DAVIS

Why wouldn't we be?

Cecilia takes a sip of her wine, suddenly glad to have it.

CECILIA

So ... with my piece, I'm using recycled metals to build out a bust, almost like a mannequin, but I've hand-painted flower petals--

DAVIS

Are you a kleptomaniac?

CECILIA

... excuse me?

DAVIS

Conversation About Art, Part One.
All of those "found art" objects were stolen, correct?

CECILIA

Yeah, they were.

DAVIS

Is it compulsive? Or premeditated.

Cecilia sucks her teeth for a moment. She doesn't like his tone. Her defenses are raising.

CECILIA

I've worked a lot of odd jobs in my life. Gig economy, all that. Student loan debt from the art school I dropped out of, credit card debt paying for medical bills, property taxes I pay for the house my mother died in. You get it. But my favorite job was cleaning houses. It clears my head. I had a pretty good circuit going, all different neighborhoods, but mostly rich people. One family recommended me to another, and before you know it I was cleaning for half of the wealthy families in New Orleans. Until one day, a client can't find her ruby earrings. And she blamed me. All of my clients fired me, just like that.

She snaps her fingers. Davis listens closely.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

Police got involved. They searched my home, didn't find anything. Then, my former client gets a call from the 5-star resort she had been staying in, saying they found a pair of ruby earrings left behind in the safe. Of course, she apologized. They all did. Everyone scrambled to give me my job back, saying how sorry they are, how it was just a misunderstanding, blah blah blah.

DAVIS

But you told them to piss off?

CECILIA

No. I took every single client back. And then over the next year, I stole from every one of them. Nothing big. Nothing expensive, or sentimental. Just enough to make them wonder if they should accuse me, and risk being wrong again.

DAVIS

Why?

CECILIA
Because, fuck them. That's why.

They sit in silence for a moment, letting that story breathe. Until Davis shrugs and takes another sip of his wine.

DAVIS
It goes without saying, but. I
don't want to see my candlesticks
in your exhibit.

Cecilia blinks. That's it? He's gone completely cold.

CECILIA
Of course not.

DAVIS
Good. Glad we're on the same page.
(Beat.)
About one thing, anyway.

CECILIA
What do you mean?

Davis leans forward, considering her.

DAVIS
I can't tell if you think you're
being cute.

Cecilia can feel her muscles tightening. Anticipating a strike of lightning. She takes another sip of wine.

CECILIA
I don't think I'm being cute--

His hand suddenly wraps around hers, fastening her to the WINE GLASS. She's holding it by the glass, not the stem. His fingers tighten around hers as he speaks.

DAVIS
I bankroll your art. I stock your
wardrobe. You're sitting at **my**
table. Drinking **my** wine. But you're
just "here for the Fellowship."
(Mocking.)
And, of course, you don't want to
sound ungrateful.

The glass is straining against the pressure around it, Cecilia's hand trapped against it.

CECILIA
Davis--

CRACK. THE GLASS SHATTERS. Cecilia yelps, yanking her hand back. Davis instinctively smiles at the nearby tables.

DAVIS
It's okay, just a little spill.
(spotting a familiar face)
Good to see you, Gavin.

Cecilia looks at another table. She makes eye contact with a WEALTHY WOMAN. Davis leans in, his voice a low whisper.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
You don't get it yet. Do you.

The woman looks away, ignoring Cecilia's distress. You can almost read her mind: *this is none of my business.*

DAVIS (CONT'D)
These aren't your people, Cecilia.
They're my people. I could buy this
entire restaurant, in cash, if I
wanted to. *I can do whatever the
fuck I want.*

Cecilia looks back to Davis, truly alarmed. She looks down at her HAND -- there's a SMALL CUT from the glass. Drops of BLOOD have mingled with the spilt wine.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
So, tell me. Do you think you're
being cute?

Cecilia looks at Davis, her jaw clenching. *Fuck this.* She stands abruptly, walking away without a word.

INT. NYC CAB - NIGHT - LATER

Cecilia sits in the back of the cab, staring at the CUT on her hand. She pulls her hoodie sleeve down to hide the wound. She pulls out her phone, calling Josie.

JOSIE (O.S.)
It's Josie, leave a message,
pussycats.

Cecilia hangs up. Waits a moment. Calls again.

JOSIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's Josie, leave a message,
pussycats.

Cecilia clears her throat, trying to sound calmer, but she can feel the emotion bubbling up in her chest.

CECILIA

Hey, Jos-- you're probably at work,
but uhm ... I'm kinda freaking out.
I just ... I don't think I'm gonna
be here for much longer. Call me
back. Love you.

Cecilia hangs up.

INT. BROWNSTONE BEDROOM - LATER

Cecilia's suitcase is open on the bed as she begins to drop her clothing into it. Well-worn, stained, comfortable. Hers. She looks at the beautiful silks hanging in the WARDROBE. A life that could have been hers. She shakes her head. Not worth it.

BANG. Cecilia's yelps! What was that? It almost sounded like... a door slamming shut.

Cecilia goes to the stairs, looking down them.

CECILIA

... Hello?

Thick silence. Something is wrong. She can feel it.

INT. BROWNSTONE FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

As Cecilia descends the stairs, she sees that the FRONT DOOR CHAIN HAS BEEN CUT.

Suddenly, MUSIC begins to play from the DINING ROOM on the first floor. "The Court of the Crimson King." Cecilia swallows her terror, walking towards the sound of the music.

INT. BROWNSTONE - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia slowly rounds the corner of the dining room entrance, her face falling into a mask of shock as she freezes.

Davis sits casually on the dining room table, next to Cecilia's METAL BUST WIRE SCULPTURE. The piece she's been working on for more than a week. Some of the hand-painted flowers have fallen onto the table.

CECILIA

Davis ... what are you doing?

Davis produces his signature SILVER ZIPPO.

DAVIS
Whatever I want.

He snaps the ZIPPO open, the flame coming to life.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Do you get it now?

Without hesitation, he LIGHTS THE FLOWERS ON FIRE. Cecilia's piece immediately goes up in flames.

CECILIA
NO!

Instinctively, Cecilia moves towards her art piece, but Davis jumps up from the table, intercepting her. He drives her backwards until her back hits the wall, pinning her with his body. She tries to push against him in a panic, but his hand WRAPS AROUND HER NECK.

Cecilia is unable to move, staring up at him. She can hear her heart beating in a terrible rhythm.

DAVIS
(calm control)
I want to be very clear about where we stand, Cecilia. I think it's starting to sink in, but I need to be sure. **I am in control.** Nod your head if you understand.

He TENSES his already tight hold on Cecilia's neck. She tries to swallow a cry of pain, but it lodges in her throat. She can only answer with a stilted nod.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Good girl.

BEN (O.S.)
Oh my god--

Cecilia and Davis both look towards the doorway, where a horrified Ben stands. He disappears into the brownstone, leaving Davis and Cecilia alone once again.

After a moment, Davis releases Cecilia's neck, bruises already forming on her skin. She gasps for air, coughing to clear her airway.

Ben runs back into the room with a FIRE EXTINGUISHER. He sprays it at the burning art piece, smoke filling the room. It's as thick as the silence they all share.

DAVIS
Perfect timing, Benjamin.

Ben swallows roughly. That didn't sound like a compliment.

BEN
I'm sorry, I-- I heard a crash, I
wanted to make sure Cecilia was
okay...

Davis looks to a rattled Cecilia, still clutching her neck.

DAVIS
She's fine. Aren't you, Cecilia?

Davis turns to the table, looking at the smoldering mess that was her art piece. He looks back to Cecilia.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
You like to clean rich people's
houses, right? So clean that up.

Without another word, Davis walks out of the room, shoulder-checking Ben. Cecilia stays against the wall, trying to catch her breath, listening to his footsteps disappear down the hall. SLAM. He's gone.

Cecilia nearly collapses, releasing a choking gasp that had been trapped in her chest. Ben moves to her quickly. He's careful not to touch her.

BEN
Are you okay? Did he hurt you?

CECILIA
I don't know-- I ... I can't--

She's hyperventilating.

BEN
Breathe, Cecilia. Breathe...

She takes a breath, her body shaking.

CECILIA
I can't be here, I need to go--

BEN
Look at me.

She does. He looks as grave as the Crypt Keeper.

BEN (CONT'D)
You can't leave.

She blinks slowly. Trying to understand.

CECILIA
What do you mean, I can't...

BEN
The **contract**, Cecilia.

CECILIA
What? What about the contract ...

Her mind is running a million miles per minute. And then, she remembers. She drops her bags and half-runs to the kitchen. Ben follows, giving her more space this time.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia opens up one of the KITCHEN ISLAND DRAWERS, pulling the BLACK ENVELOPE out of it. She pulls out the CONTRACT, frantically looking for the paragraph that she skimmed over when first speaking to Isabel.

CECILIA
(pacing)
"Should a recipient of the Bridger Fellowship refuse to participate after their artist residency has begun, or otherwise fail to meet the the standards of the Bridger Fellowship and specifications of their contract, including but not limited to attendance at all three mandatory dates listed in their itinerary, as well as a passing assessment at their performance review, then they will be held liable for all funds..."

She trails off. Ben watches her, helpless. Guilty.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
"Then they will be held liable for all funds diverted towards their fellowship opportunity. This includes the cost of food, art supplies, room and board, and any other purchases and preparations made for the Fellow."

BEN
(quietly)
Everybody signs it.
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
They think they'll make it through--
and why wouldn't they? They were
invited... but most don't finish.
They make sure of that.

CECILIA
What do you... what does that mean?

BEN
It means, no matter happens, win or
lose, you are now the property of
the Bridger Foundation.

The room is spinning. There's no oxygen.

CECILIA
No ... no... fuck this...!

Cecilia shakes her head, unwilling to accept the reality
she's in. Instead, she snatches up her contract and nearly
stumbles past him.

BEN
Where are you going?

CECILIA
To get out of this contract!

She runs out of the Brownstone, slamming the door behind her.

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - SECOND FLOOR - LATER

Isabel Bridger is standing in front of a NEW INSTALLATION by
Bilbao. A team of people stand around her, waiting to hear
what she has to say next.

ISABEL
This light needs to be moved so
that it emphasizes the shadows...

CECILIA (O.S.)
Mrs. Bridger...

Isabel, along with her assistants, all turn to see the
disheveled, desperate Cecilia holding her CONTRACT. Something
flickers behind Isabel's eyes.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
I need to talk to you. Please.

ISABEL
(to her assistants)
That'll be all for tonight.

Everyone disperses immediately. Good worker ants.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Come with me.

INT. ISABEL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia trails after Isabel as they walk into her office, a well-appointed and meticulously arranged modern set up. Isabel points at a chaise lounge in the corner.

ISABEL
Sit.

Cecilia does. Isabel walks around her desk to a mirror BAR CART, filling TWO GLASSES up with WHISKEY.

CECILIA
I'm so sorry to interrupt you while
you're working, I just didn't know
where else to go...

ISABEL
I can only assume this is about my
husband.

Cecilia nods. Isabel goes to her, sitting close beside her. She all but pushes the whiskey into her shaking hands.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Drink.

Cecilia does as she's told. Isabel studies her for a moment, seeing the CUT on her hand.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Did he hurt you?

Cecilia nods. She lowers her hoodie, revealing the darkening bruise on her neck.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Christ, Davis...

CECILIA
(tearing up)
Everything's just so fucked up...
he attacked me, he threatened me,
he destroyed the piece I've been
working on--

ISABEL
Shh, shh. It's okay. I'm here.

Cecilia folds into Isabel, letting herself fully break down.

CECILIA
I don't know what would have
happened, if Ben hadn't come in--

Isabel moves Cecilia back so that she can look at her.

ISABEL
Benjamin? Our driver?

Cecilia nods, wiping her face. She slumps over, her elbows on her knees, holding her head up with one hand. Isabel gently runs her hand through her hair to calm her.

CECILIA
It's like... Davis turned into a
completely different person. Like a
switch got flipped. I mean, I was
just trying to set a boundary--

ISABEL
Strange time to set a boundary,
isn't it? After you've already
slept with someone?

Ouch. She grabs Isabel's well-manicured hands, pleading as if on death row.

CECILIA
Mrs. Bridger, I came here to work.
I never thought that anything would
happen with Mr. Bridger, or with
you... Things have just gotten
completely out of control. I just
want to be an artist. Getting your
invitation was the best moment of
my life, and I really mean that.
I've looked up to you since I was a
kid. This Fellowship means so much
to me, but I didn't sign up for
this. Please. **Please** let me out of
my contract. I just want to go
home.

Isabel touches Cecilia's face gently. Cecilia almost smiles with relief.

ISABEL
He's not usually so forceful, at
the beginning. He must like you.

CECILIA
... what?

Any warmth that Isabel had shown a moment earlier vanishes. She's a statue. Cold and unyielding.

ISABEL
Davis always wanted to be an artist, but his mind is just too surgical. It's all 1s and 0s. He can't help himself. It's in his nature to break his favorite toys open to see how they work.

Cecilia is speechless. Isabel sips her whiskey, head tilting.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Did you really think this was going to work? You come crying to mommy about mean, mean daddy and she makes it all better? Grow up, Cecilia.

Cecilia abruptly stands, trying to put distance between herself and Isabel. She grips her CONTRACT, trying to make a stand, trying to find another way, trying to get out.

CECILIA
You can't keep me here. This contract is bullshit!

She throws the contract at Isabel, who doesn't even flinch.

ISABEL
It's a bit hypocritical to be throwing this tantrum, don't you think? Considering your last art piece was contingent on someone signing up to be humiliated without realizing.

CECILIA
... Is that why you're doing this? Because I let some elitist asshole dig his own grave with opinions that he regularly posts on LinkedIn?!

ISABEL
No. But I do think the irony is delicious.

Cecilia is pacing now.

CECILIA

You can't do this to me. This ...
indentured servitude!

ISABEL

You made a bad business decision,
Cecilia. That's no one's fault but
your own.

CECILIA

The contract was made in bad faith.
It doesn't hold water.

ISABEL

Gee, you're right. That must be why
we've been successfully sued by ...
how many Fellows?

Cecilia backs up slowly, as if Isabel were a tigress.

CECILIA

You're a goddam sociopath.

ISABEL

Diagnosed, actually.

Cecilia heads for the door.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Running off so soon?

CECILIA

Fuck you!

ISABEL

(deadpan)

Maybe another night.

Cecilia runs away, as if she's afraid Isabel will give chase.

EXT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - LATER THAT NIGHT

An emotional but determined Cecilia marches up the path
towards the Brownstone. Ben, clearly waiting for her, sits up
on the front stoop.

BEN

Cecilia...

CECILIA

No.

She walks straight past him and into the Brownstone, as if he doesn't exist. Ben reluctantly follows her inside.

INT. BROWNSTONE FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia makes a beeline to the stairs, taking them two at a time. Ben lingers by the front door, which he has closed.

BEN
Please, listen to me...

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia grabs her mom's OIL PAINTING, and runs upstairs.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - THIRD FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

She grabs her bags and starts heading down the stairs.

BEN (O.S.)
(calling from downstairs)
I know you're freaking out-- I get
that. But you need to listen to me.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia is half-running down the stairs. Ben stands in front of the door, worry etched onto his face.

BEN
Cecilia--

SLAP. A sharp blow across his face. He stumbles into the door, shocked, but doesn't move. Cecilia is incandescent with rage, tears streaking her face.

CECILIA
YOU KNEW. This whole this, you knew
what I was getting myself into. You
knew what kind of monsters they
were, and you said NOTHING.

BEN
I couldn't tell you! Okay?! I
couldn't say a goddam word!

CECILIA
WHY!

BEN
Because I signed the contract, too!

This stops her in her tracks.

CECILIA
You were a Bridger Fellow?

Ben gestures helplessly, to her and to their gilded cage.

BEN
This? All of this? None of it's
real. It's a game. *Their* game. And
we're just the pieces on the board.

CECILIA
How many people have they done this
to?

BEN
I don't know, exactly. But in the
two years I've been here ... you're
the seventh.

This knocks the wind out of Cecilia. *Seven?!*

BEN (CONT'D)
(quietly)
You'll see some around. The ones
who are still around.

Cecilia balks at him. Horrified.

BEN (CONT'D)
Not everyone can handle it. Then
they realize there **is** one way out
of the contract. But there's no
coming back from that.

CECILIA
How is this possible...?! The
people at my welcome party--

BEN
They all know, Cecilia. It's an
open secret in their circle.
They're untouchable. What's one
more dead artist in New York City?

He gathers himself, trying to remain calm to make sure his
point gets across.

BEN (CONT'D)

I know you're angry at me. And I know you don't trust me-- I get that. I deserve that. But you need to **listen** to me. The contract is binding. It's a gag order. It's an NDA. You can't tell anyone what's happening. You fuck up? They charge you. You try to leave? They find you, and charge you. And if you really piss them off, they'll go after your loved ones. Do you understand me? *You belong to them now.*

Cecilia swallows roughly. Steals herself. She gathers her bags again, stepping up to him. A challenge.

CECILIA

Move. Or I will move you.

Ben looks crestfallen. He's failed another one. With a defeated nod, he moves out of her way. Cecilia marches past him, down the stairs, and into the dark. Ben watches her go, knowing she won't get far.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Cecilia sits on the subway, guarding her bags. She's pulled up her hoodie to try and obscure her face more, feeling paranoid. She's texting Josie.

this place is fucked. i'm coming back.

The text sends.

She opens up an AIRLINE APP. Flights out of JFK for New Orleans. There's one for 1am. The cost? \$1700.

CECILIA

Damn it...

Cecilia opens her bank app. Her checking account has \$2400.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

Goddam fuck shit fucking ...

She goes back to the flight page, and presses "PURCHASE."

INT. JFK AIRPORT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cecilia steps up to the counter to check in. An AIRLINE EMPLOYEE helps her.

AIRPORT EMPLOYEE
Name?

CECILIA
Cecilia Collins.

The employee types into the computer. Purses her lips.

AIRPORT EMPLOYEE
Could you spell that for me?

CECILIA
C-E-C-I-L-I-A. C-O-L-L-I-N-S.

She types again.

AIRPORT EMPLOYEE
I'm sorry Ms. Collins, but I'm
seeing that you're on the No Fly
List.

CECILIA
... what?!

The airport employee reaches for the phone.

AIRPORT EMPLOYEE
I'm going to have to ask you to
step aside so that a member of our
security can--

CECILIA
No. No, no. Fuck this.

Cecilia half-runs out of the airport as she sees a TEAM OF SECURITY GUARDS approaching.

EXT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cecilia runs outside, looking over her shoulder.

OOF. She runs smack-dab into a solid mass of man.

CECILIA
Sorry--

She looks up to see Frank, Davis' driver. She backs away.

FRANK
Ms. Collins.

CECILIA
No ...

FRANK
You can come with me, or you can
spend a night in airport prison and
then come with me. Your choice.

Cecilia looks back over her shoulder, seeing the SECURITY GUARDS come outside.

CECILIA
Shit.

Frank motions to Davis' Bentley. Cecilia climbs in the back.

INT. DAVIS' BENTLEY - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Frank shuts the door with a SLAM. Cecilia sits in the back of the car next to Davis.

They sit in silence. She stares straight ahead. His eyes are only for her.

We hear Frank get into the front seat. Hear the car turn on. Watch as the scenery behind Davis and Cecilia begins to change. And still, they do not speak.

DAVIS
Frank.

Cecilia jumps at the sound of his voice. She can't help it.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Turn on some music.

FRANK (O.S.)
Of course, sir.

"Nothing's Gonna Hurt You Baby" by Cigarettes After Sex BEGINS TO PLAY.

DAVIS
I'm very disappointed in you, Cecilia. But not surprised. You said it yourself-- good things finally start happening, and all you want to do is run and hide--

CECILIA

Davis--

DAVIS

I'm speaking. Didn't your mother teach you not to interrupt a man when he's speaking?

She's stunned into silence once more.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

You had so much potential. Seems I might have been mistaken.

Cecilia is shaking. Anger, fear, helplessness.

CECILIA

You're right. I don't belong here. So please, **let me go.**

He REACHES ACROSS HER suddenly. Cecilia flinches back with a gasp as if preparing for a blow. Instead, he coolly takes her SEAT BELT, pulling it across her body and buckling her in.

DAVIS

You're not going anywhere, Cecilia.

IN THE FRONT SEAT: Frank TURNS UP the volume. They drive in deathly uncomfortable silence.

EXT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The Bentley pulls up to the curb outside of the Brownstone.

Frank lets Davis out.

DAVIS

(to Frank)

The bags.

Frank goes to the trunk, opening it to collect Cecilia's bags. Davis opens up her door, waiting expectantly for her to climb out. Defeated, she does so.

They walk silently to the front door, trailing behind Frank with her things. He opens the front door, drops the luggage off in the foyer, turns around, and leaves without another word. A well trained dog.

Cecilia moves to go up the stairs but Davis abruptly blocks her path with his arm.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Night's not over yet.

He places a hand on the back of her neck, guiding her to the left. Not towards the front door, but towards the BASEMENT LEVEL ENTRANCE. Ben's apartment.

EXT. BROWNSTONE BASEMENT LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

Davis and Cecilia walk the six steps down to the basement level door. It's already cracked open. Davis pushes the door open, leading Cecilia inside.

INT. BROWNSTONE BASEMENT LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

Inside is the opposite of Cecilia's living situation. Bare walls. A mattress on the floor. A small table. A prison. And in the center of the space stand Isabel, leaning over a seated Benjamin. He looks straight ahead, eyes blank.

ISABEL
(nonchalant)
That took ages.
(stroking Ben's hair)
Benjamin was getting antsy.

DAVIS
There was traffic coming back from
the JFK.

Isabel produces a pair of METAL SCISSORS. Recently sharpened. Cecilia is dumbstruck. Horrified. She steps forward.

CECILIA
Ben--!

Davis tightens his grip on her neck, stopping her.

ISABEL
No interruptions, please.

With very little ceremony, Isabel begins to cut Ben's hair. Tufts of hair fall by the fistful as Cecilia and Davis watch. Ben remains completely still.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Benjamin knows not to interfere
with our business.

Snip. Shorter.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Don't you, Benjamin?

Snip. Ben says nothing.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
He knows that if he does, there
will be consequences.

Snip. Shorter.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Of course, he did put out a literal
fire in our home. So. He's getting
off with a warning.

Snip. Ben gasps. The scissors have snipped the TOP OF THE CARTILAGE OF HIS LEFT EAR. Cecilia covers her mouth.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Oh dear... took a bit much off of
the top.
(leaning to whisper in his
bloody ear)
Do you think anyone will notice?

Ben shakes his head. Isabel smiles at Davis and Cecilia as blood drips down Ben's neck.

EXT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - MINUTES LATER

Cecilia, in shock, stands at the entrance to the brownstone next to Davis. Davis looks at her, assessing the damage.

DAVIS
Give me your phone.

CECILIA
(distantly)
What?

DAVIS
I am not in the habit of repeating
myself. Your phone, Cecilia.

She digs into her hoodie, pulling out the phone. She hands it to him with a shaking hand.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
You'll get this back when you've
earned it.

CECILIA
Are you ... *grounding* me?

DAVIS
Act like a child, get treated like
a child.

He opens the front door for her.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Go to bed. You've had a long night.

She stays on the porch, afraid to walk inside. He puts a hand on her chin, moving her face towards his. She winces. He gives her a patronizing smile. Aww.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
This will only be as difficult as
you make it, Cecilia.

He kisses her gently, then walks away. Without a word, Cecilia goes inside, shutting the door.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - SECOND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia stands at her WORK BENCH, staring at the work she's done. At her hopes and dreams. At her MOTHER'S PHOTO.

She pushes everything she's been working on onto the ground with a wild SHOVE, screaming until her lungs hurt.

She collapses on the floor, tears of rage and fear and utter helplessness pouring down her cheeks. She stays on the ground, surrounded by her broken dreams.

EXT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - EVENING - FOUR DAYS LATER

Ben, his hair short and his ear healing, stands outside on the front porch, looking at a handful of BLACK BOXES. He knocks gently on the door.

BEN
Cecilia?

No answer.

BEN (CONT'D)
Cecilia ... it's been days. I'm
worried about you.

He knocks again, but resigns himself to speaking through the door.

BEN (CONT'D)

I know I'm probably the last person you want to be speaking to right now, but ... waiting the Fellowship out isn't going to change what's happening. It'll only get worse--

The door OPENS. Ben jumps back. Cecilia stares at him with dark circles under her eyes.

CECILIA

I need to go to Brooklyn.

INT. BENTLEY - EVENING - MINUTES LATER

Ben drives a silent Cecilia.

BEN

Cecilia ... I'm sorry. I know it's not enough, but--

CECILIA

Just drive, Ben.

BEN

Where are we going, anyway?

EXT. BROOKLYN GALLERY - NIGHT - LATER

A chic gallery. The poster in the front window displays: **HADLEY OWENS, EVOLUTION.**

INT. BENTLEY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Ben shakes his head, clearly worried.

BEN

This is a bad idea.

CECILIA

I'm out of good ideas.

Cecilia steps out of the car.

INT. BROOKLYN GALLERY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Cecilia walks through the gallery towards Hadley's show. It's full of vibrant young people, aspiring artists, and general Brooklyn folks.

Hadley's paintings are starkly contrasted with each other. Her earlier work is bright and colorful and energetic. Hopeful. Her recent work is dark, moody, violent. Painful.

Cecilia steps in front of a massive canvas painting, titled "Gorgon." At first it seems to be unrelated shapes, splashes of inky black and crimson, but the more Cecilia studies the image, the clearer it becomes. Three bodies. One bleeding.

HADLEY (O.S.)
You shouldn't be here.

CECILIA
Is that a stipulation in the
contract? We can't interact with
fellow Fellows?

Hadley steps next to Cecilia.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Did you come to my welcome party to
warn me?

HADLEY
I went because they asked me to.
And they're never really asking.

They look at the painting. It looks back at them.

HADLEY (CONT'D)
When the Fellowship ended, I
couldn't get them out of my mind. I
thought putting it on canvas would
help exorcise the demons, but...

The rest goes unsaid.

HADLEY (CONT'D)
Three years later, I have my own
apartment. My own money. My own
show. But I do not own myself.

INT. BENTLEY - NIGHT - LATER

Ben drives. Cecilia studies the skyline from the backseat.

CECILIA
What was your medium?

BEN
My what?

CECILIA
Artistically. What was your medium.

This gives him pause. No one's asked him that in a long time.

BEN
Watercolor.

CECILIA
Were you any good?

BEN
(wryly)
Good enough to get the Bridger
Fellowship.

CECILIA
Maybe they just wanted to avoid the
hassle of hiring a driver.

Ben chuckles, which in turn makes Cecilia giggle.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Do you think Frank was a Fellow?

BEN
God, I hope so.

CECILIA
Blindfolded glass blowing?

BEN
Competitive flower arranging.

Before they know it, they're both laughing, the breathless
sound of the trauma-bonded.

CECILIA
This is so fucked up.

BEN
It really is.

A beat to compose themselves.

CECILIA
Why didn't you finish the
Fellowship?

He clears his throat. He's not used to talking about this.

BEN
Because they didn't let me.

CECILIA
How do you mean?

BEN
I was so close to being done. I had set up my exhibit at the gallery, put the final touches on the whole thing, and then ... they offered to pay for my mom's cancer treatment if I quit. So, I quit. The night before the 4th Friday showing. And that was it. I belonged to them.

CECILIA
That is ice fucking cold.

BEN
She's my mom. You know? It wasn't really a choice.

CECILIA
Is she ...?

BEN
The treatment worked. The fucked up thing -- well, one of the fucked up things-- is, they've kept me on such a tight leash I haven't been able to go back to Chicago and see her. For two years.

CECILIA
So there is no winning.

Cecilia processes this information.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Well, then. I guess I'm just gonna be a sore loser.

Ben looks at her through the rear view mirror, nervous.

INT. TIFFANY'S JEWELRY STORE - THE NEXT DAY

A SALES CLERK stands behind a glass cases of jewelry. Cecilia walks up with a charming but slightly manic smile.

CECILIA
Hi there!

SALES CLERK
Hello ...

CECILIA
I'd like to buy some expensive
shit.

SALES CLERK
I see, well--

She points at a HEART NECKLACE WITH A DIAMOND ATTACHED.

CECILIA
How much is that?

SALES CLERK
That would be ... \$2,950.

CECILIA
Do you charge extra for engravings?

SALES CLERK
We do.

CECILIA
Perfect.

She whips out her CARD.

SALES CLERK
I'll need to see some ID, ma'am.

She fishes out her beaten leather wallet from her purse,
slapping it down on the table.

CECILIA
Cecilia Collins. See? That's me. My
card. My money.

The sales clerk looks at the ID and the card, then nods.

SALES CLERK
Very well, Ms. Collins. Is there
anything else I can help you with?

CECILIA
(laughing)
Yeah!

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS (AKA CECILIA BE SHOPPING):

- 1) Cecilia at Hermes, **\$2,572.29**
- 2) Cecilia at Saks 5th Ave, **\$5,229.52**

- 3) Cecilia at Jimmy Choo's, **\$3,661.12**
- 4) Cecilia walking with bags of expensive items, mad with power
- 5) Cecilia at her computer, ordering a BOUQUET OF ROSES to be sent with a card. She presses "purchase."

CUT TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Davis' Bentley pulls up in front of his warehouse club. Frank opens up his car door. Davis walks to the front door. The BOUNCER opens it up for him immediately.

INT. WAREHOUSE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Davis saunters through the hallway, hearing a familiar voice singing as he approaches. He pushes through the door at the end of the hallway into

INT. WAREHOUSE CLUB - CONTINUOUS

An absolute rager happening in his club. On the stage? MACY GRAY. That's right. Macy Gray. Davis is struck by the scene. Out of sorts, for once in his life.

A very blinged out Cecilia dances towards him. She's dressed to the nines in a low-cut dress, glittering lights reflecting off of her Tiffany's necklace.

CECILIA
(shouting over the music)
Davis! You made it!

She leaps onto him, planting a kiss on his surprised mouth.

DAVIS
I got your flowers. And the card.

CECILIA
I would have texted, but. You stole my phone.

She puts a drink in one hand, and grabs the other. With a bounce and a laugh, she pulls him further into the club.

DAVIS
Is that ...?

CECILIA

Macy Gray! She's so sweet. I know her music is more for *your* generation, but. What was it you said? Oh yeah! "I respect the classics."

Davis stops, catching her wrist. There's no malice-- only bewilderment, and a trace of suspicion.

DAVIS

What the hell are you doing,
Cecilia?

CECILIA

I'm having FUN. Remember fun?

He doesn't know what to say or do. His code is glitching.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

Dance with me!

She leads him out to the dance floor. After a short period of adjustment to whatever the hell this is, Davis relents. They dance. Bodies finding a rhythm, familiar hands moving over familiar geography. They're two kids, enjoying themselves.

INT. VIP SECTION - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cecilia, carrying two drinks, joins Davis on a couch.

CECILIA

Clase Azul. Don't worry-- my treat.

He takes a drink, tilting his head to look at her.

DAVIS

Isabel thinks you're running up your bill as a "fuck you."

CECILIA

She's half right.

DAVIS

What's the other half?

CECILIA

I was drowning in debt before I met you. Owing you \$10,000 is practically the same as owing you \$100,000, in that it's gonna take me the rest of my life to pay it back.

(MORE)

CECILIA (CONT'D)
So I might as well live the next
two weeks of my life as if they're
my last.

DAVIS
You're acting like you've already
failed.

CECILIA
Haven't I? This whole thing is
rigged.

DAVIS
We've had successful Fellows in the
past. You could surprise me.

CECILIA
Isabel hates me. I don't see my
"performance review" going well.

DAVIS
Isabel doesn't get the final say.

CECILIA
You sure about that?

DAVIS
Careful.

CECILIA
I'm just saying. Is she your wife,
or your parole officer?

He leans in close to her, a warning. Or is it a challenge?

DAVIS
You're playing a dangerous game,
Cecilia.

She leans closer to him, her lips next to his ear.

CECILIA
Winner takes all.

INT. VIP BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia is against a wall, Davis pressed behind her, kissing her neck. He's rough with her, pinning her wrists to the wall with one hand as he unzips his pants with the other.

CECILIA
(breathless)
Wait, wait...

DAVIS BRIDGER
(rough)
What.

Cecilia turns her head towards him, her mouth centimeters from his.

CECILIA
I want you to take your time with
me. *Let me show you.*

She slides her wrists from under his hold, guiding his hand instead under her dress and up, up, up until his fingers are between her legs.

He takes the cue from her, working her with his fingers. She kisses him. They both gasp when he delivers his first thrust--

CUT TO:

INT. VIP BATHROOM - POST-SEX GLOW

Davis is leaning against the bathroom wall, watching as Cecilia fixes her hair in the mirror.

CECILIA
Benefit to having a VIP bathroom.

Davis laughs, which surprises him. He zips himself back up, going to wash his hands as Cecilia smoothes her dress.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Also, just a heads up -- Macy Gray cost \$10K to book. So. Let me know when Isabel sees that charge.

She walks out of the bathroom. Davis stands in the doorway, watching her go.

IN THE VIP LOUNGE: Cecilia gives Macy Gray a big hug. They both wave at Davis. "That's the guy who's paying for this!" Davis waves back. This is ... new.

INT. SOTHEBY'S AUCTION HOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

A live auction is taking place. A mixture of classic and contemporary. Isabel stands at the back of the room, two ASSISTANTS behind her. One holds a paddle, the other a stenopad of notes. As the auctioneer rattles off another lot (an original Picasso sketch) Isabel leans over to ASSISTANT #2, checking the number.

AUCTIONEER

Four thousand, four thousand, do I
hear four thousand five, four
thousand five-- thank you sir, four
thousand five! Do I have five
thousand, five, five thousand--

Isabel shakes her head.

Cecilia, in designer clothes, sidles up next to Isabel.

CECILIA

Lovely day for an auction, isn't
it?

Isabel does a double-take. Where the hell did she come from?

ISABEL

I see you've taken a break from
burning our money to appreciate
some actual art.

CECILIA

(lifting her paddle)

Five thousand!
(to Isabel)
I can do two things at once.

AUCTIONEER

Five thousand! Do I hear six--
thank you, sir, six from the
gentleman in teal--

ISABEL

And what will you do with a Picasso
sketch, when you're living in the
basement with Benjamin?

CECILIA

I'm not sure yet. I guess we'll
find out. SEVEN THOUSAND!

AUCTIONEER

Seven thousand! I hear seven
thousand, do I hear--

ISABEL

(seething)

EIGHT THOUSAND.

AUCTIONEER

Eight thousand-- who do I have
eight thousand from?

ASSISTANT #1 lifts the paddle, extremely flustered.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
Eight thousand from the lovely Mrs.
Bridger, thank you, do I hear nine--

ISABEL
What do you want, other than to
annoy me?

CECILIA
Well. I was thinking about the
night of my welcome party.

ISABEL
The night I made you cum so hard
you cried?

CECILIA
(lifting her paddle)
NINE THOUSAND.

AUCTIONEER
Nine thousand to the spirited young
lady next to Mrs. Bridger! Nine
thousand, do I hear ten--

CECILIA
(to Isabel)
Where was I?

ISABEL
TEN THOUSAND.
(whispering to Cecilia)
If you lift that paddle again, I
swear to god--

CECILIA
What. You'll make me cum again?

The assistants don't know where to look or what to do. Poor things.

ISABEL
(snarling)
What do you want?!

CECILIA
I was thinking about the Bridger
Fellow collection. And the one
sculpture whose artist was listed
as Unknown. Medusa.

Isabel says nothing. Her face is blank. Cecilia sizes her up.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
It's yours, isn't it. You were a
Fellowship participant.

ISABEL
What does it matter?

CECILIA
I'm just trying to figure out why--
Christ, **how** someone could enforce a
contract that they were also a
victim of.
(lifting her paddle)
FIFTEEN THOUSAND.

AUCTIONEER
Fifteen thousand, thank you, I hear
fifteen, do I hear--

ISABEL
A victim, Cecilia? Please. I
created the Fellowship.

Isabel grabs Cecilia's paddle, holding it down.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Before me, Davis was careless. He
can't control who he is, so he was
paying people hand over fist to
keep them quiet about his
"proclivities." The Fellowship
contract is so much cleaner,
wouldn't you say? I am not, nor
have I ever been, a victim.
(shouting)
TWENTY THOUSAND.

CECILIA
And they say love is dead.

ISABEL
What Davis and I have is deeper
than love. Our souls recognize one
another. It's ineffable.

CECILIA
Oh. It's definitely eff-able.

ISABEL
I forgot I was speaking to a child.

Isabel turns Cecilia towards her, hands on her shoulders.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Mothering is not in my nature,
dear, so please do fuck off at your
earliest convenience.

CECILIA
Thank god that jealousy isn't in
your nature, either.

ISABEL
Why do you say that?

CECILIA
Because I fucked Davis in a
bathroom at his club last night.

AUCTIONEER
Going once...

Isabel's eyes bore into her as she tries to suss out if she's telling the truth.

CECILIA
What, he didn't mention it?

AUCTIONEER
Going twice...!

CECILIA
Guess you guys don't share
everything.

AUCTIONEER
SOLD! To Mrs. Bridger.

The room claps. Cecilia smiles.

CECILIA
Enjoy your Picasso sketch. It was
valued at \$7K.

She turns on her heel, heading towards the exit.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
(calling)
See you at the performance review!

Isabel is left seething.

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: Performance Review

INT. BRIDGER APARTMENT - DINING AREA - NIGHT

Isabel and Cecilia are seated at a long table: Isabel at the head, with Cecilia seated in the middle. The third seat, at the opposite end, is empty. There are only plates and cutlery in front of the end of the table -- Cecilia's space is blank.

We HEAR a door open. Moments later, Davis appears. Quickly, he shrugs out of his suit jacket and moves to kiss Isabel.

DAVIS

Sorry I'm late. Stuck on a call.

He leans to Cecilia, giving her a kiss as well, before taking his seat at the head of the table.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

(calling)

Allison?

As if on cue, a PERSONAL CHEF reappears.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

What are we having tonight?

PERSONAL CHEF

A filet for Mrs. Bridger and a New York Strip for you, both cooked medium rare, with cream whipped potatoes, ham hock collard greens, and lemon beurre blanc to top.

DAVIS

And for Ms. Collins?

Chef Allison looks between Davis and Isabel, unsure.

ISABEL

Cecilia won't be dining with us.

DAVIS

(to the chef)

Go ahead and prepare another plate.

PERSONAL CHEF

(nervous)

I only have the two cuts of meat, sir. I could go to the market--

DAVIS

No need. Isabel can share.

Isabel barks out a laugh.

CECILIA
(to the chef)
Could you make mine medium? Thanks.

The chef makes a small bow, excusing herself in a hurry.

Just then, a familiar face joins them. HADLEY, holding a BOTTLE OF WINE. Cecilia does a double-take when she sees her. Isabel clocks this immediately.

ISABEL
You know one another?

CECILIA
No. Just a fan.

HADLEY
(quietly)
Likewise.

ISABEL
Well isn't that precious.

Davis lazily pulls Hadley towards him, wrapping an arm around her waist. Wordlessly, she pours him a glass of wine.

DAVIS
We're very proud of how far
Hadley's come. Aren't we, Isabel.

ISABEL
Over the moon.

Hadley moves from Davis to Isabel, pouring her a glass. She snatches it away, nearly spilling in the process.

DAVIS
Hadley, be the dear and fetch a
glass for Cecilia--

ISABEL
No.

Everyone freezes. Isabel shakes her head.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
(through her teeth)
This is a four thousand dollar
bottle of wine, Davis. Not the gas
station swill that I'm sure she's
familiar with.

DAVIS

Cecilia is our guest, Isabel. Treat
her as such.

Davis nods to Hadley. She walks out, but immediately returns
with a GLASS. Hadley pours a normal amount of wine.

CECILIA

Little more.

Hiding a forbidden smile, Hadley pours more.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

There we go.

DAVIS

Thank you, Hadley.

Hadley nods, leaving the bottle of wine at the table in front
of Davis. She steps to the back of the room, a servant to be
seen and not heard.

CECILIA

Do we usually do the performance
review before, or after dinner...?

Isabel SLAMS copy of the most recent transactions on the
Bridger charge card.

ISABEL

She's laughing at us. More than
\$75,000 in one week!

DAVIS

She's acting out.

ISABEL

She's not a fucking teenager,
Davis. She just spent \$700 at
AutoZone.

(to Cecilia)

What the FUCK could you be buying
at AUTOZONE.

CECILIA

Air fresheners.

ISABEL

Un-fucking-believable.

DAVIS

The contract doesn't stipulate how
the money can be spent.

ISABEL

Don't lecture me about the
contract. I know the contract.

(pointing to the page)
\$1,500 donation to Global Impact,
in my name.

Cecilia stifles a laugh.

DAVIS

What is that?

ISABEL

It's an organization to stop Human
Trafficking.

(pointing at Cecilia)
The little bitch is **enjoying** this.

DAVIS

Well then. Maybe we revise the
contract for our next Fellow.

A beat.

ISABEL

That's all you have to say?

DAVIS

What else do you want me to say?

ISABEL

I want you to say you're going to
drown her in the fucking Hudson!

Thick silence.

CECILIA

So I guess that's a "no" on the
gallery show, huh.

ISABEL

(acidic)
Of course it's a no--

DAVIS

Isabel.

His silence says it all. Isabel laughs, a joyless sound.

ISABEL

You can't be serious.

DAVIS

I think Cecilia shows promise. I'd like to see this through.

Isabel leans back in her chair, eyes full of fire.

ISABEL

It's your decision.

DAVIS

I know. And I've made it.

A long, brutal silence. Finally:

ISABEL

Fine. Finish the Fellowship, if you can. A lot can go wrong in a week.

DAVIS

But it won't. Will it, Cecilia?

CECILIA

No. It won't.

DAVIS

Our first successful fellow since Hadley.

ISABEL

Just think, Cecilia. One day, you too may be performing bottle service for your patrons.

Hadley, still in the corner, says nothing. The chef walks in, placing plates in front of the three of them. She exits.

DAVIS

Oh-- one more thing.

Davis stands, leaving the room. Isabel swirls her wine. She and Cecilia stare at one another. Who will blink first?

Davis returns, holding Cecilia's CELL PHONE. He stands directly behind her chair, his hand on the back of her neck.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Your friends won't stop calling. I need you to tell them to fuck off.

He's already dialing. The phone is on speaker, RINGING.

The phone CLICKS.

JOSIE (O.S.)
Cece?! What the fuck is going on?!
I've been calling you for--
(calling)
Andre! ANDRE! It's CECE!

CECILIA
Josie...

ANDRE (O.S.)
Cece, are you okay?! You turned off
location services after your last
text to Josie--

JOSIE (O.S.)
Who sends a scary-ass text like
that and then doesn't respond for
TWO WEEKS?

ANDRE (O.S.)
Where are you. Are you okay?

CECILIA
I'm okay. I'm great, actually.

A long beat.

JOSIE (O.S.)
That's it? That's all you're gonna
say?

ANDRE (O.S.)
We were calling hospitals, Cecilia.
We were calling morgues.

CECILIA
I broke my phone and then got
really caught up in work.

JOSIE (O.S.)
(quietly)
Cece, you sound weird. Is it safe
for you to talk? Are you in any
danger?

Isabel picks up her STEAK KNIFE from the table, sawing into
her steak as she pretends it's Cecilia.

ANDRE (O.S.)
Give us a signal. Say "red."

Davis' hand tightens on the back of her neck. She gets the
hint, and responds with ice in her voice.

CECILIA

I don't need a code word. I'm where
I'm meant to be, with the people
I'm meant to be with. So don't
expect me to come back after the
Fellowship is over.

JOSIE (O.S.)

... what? Cecilia--

CECILIA

I want you out of my mother's house
by the end of the month. No more
freeloading on my talent. Do you
understand me?

ANDRE (O.S.)

What the hell is--

CECILIA

You're dead weight. Both of you.
Don't call again.

JOSIE (O.S.)

Cece--!

Cecilia hangs up. She passed the test. Davis bends down to give Cecilia a kiss on the cheek, releasing her neck.

DAVIS

Good girl.

He gives her back her phone. Isabel stands up so quickly she knocks over her chair, leaving the room without a word.

CECILIA

(standing)

I should go.

DAVIS

I want you to stay.

She kisses him. He kisses back.

CECILIA

You and your wife need some time
alone.

Cecilia glances between Davis and Hadley. He purses his lips, taking the hint.

DAVIS

Go. Both of you.

Wordless, they both head towards the door. Davis stands, brooding alone in his living room, before he stalks in the direction of his wife.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia and Hadley stand in the elevator, both a bit shaken.

HADLEY

Whatever you're doing ... do it
carefully.

They look at one another. An understanding.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Cecilia stands over her workspace. Thinking of how far she's come, and how far she has to go.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- 1) Cecilia and Ben at a Fabric store, buying SPOOLS and SPOOLS of expensive, flowing fabric.
- 2) Handing over the charge card. The cost is **\$14,276.82**
- 3) Cecilia working in the Brownstone, painting on a massive canvas. We don't see what she's working on. *Her mother's painting watches over her.*

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - DAY

Cecilia walks into the gallery, holding a giant ladder. Ben trails behind her, holding the many spools of fabric.

A CONCERNED ASSISTANT (MONICA) approaches them. She and Cecilia could be sisters.

MONICA

Can I help you?

CECILIA

I'm here to prep for my show.

MONICA

Is Mrs. Bridger expecting you?

BEN
You can go tell her, Monica.

Monica looks between Ben and Cecilia. She nods, and leaves.

CECILIA
One of us?

BEN
Mhm. From nine months ago.

CECILIA
He really does have a type.

She gives him the side-eye.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
How'd you make the cut?

BEN
You really are a bitch sometimes.

CECILIA
You have no idea.

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - THIRD FLOOR - LATER

Cecilia stands on the top of the tall ladder, hammering a NAIL into the wall to hold one of the SPOOLS OF FABRIC. Beautiful red cloth spills down to the ground.

Isabel marches into the room. Monica isn't far behind her.

ISABEL
What the fuck are you doing to my walls?!

CECILIA
Good morning, Mrs. Bridger.

She hammers another NAIL into the wall.

ISABEL
(to Monica and Ben)
Leave.

They do, although Ben does so more reluctantly.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Come down. Now.

Cecilia climbs down the ladder. Once they're eye-to-eye, Cecilia makes sure to keep a neutral face.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Is this some pathetic attempt at a
power play?

CECILIA
Not at all. I'm just here to work.

Isabel looks at the spools of fabric with disdain.

ISABEL
Your artistic vision involves
turning my gallery into a brothel?

CECILIA
The white walls are too clinical. I
need to add some pops of color. The
contract doesn't say that I can't
hang my pieces early--

Isabel slaps her.

ISABEL
Shut your cunt mouth. You're
nothing, do you understand me? I
built this place. I curated every
single piece. You think you can
waltz into my gallery, my fucking
temple, and act as if you own it?

Cecilia responds with a hard KISS. After a moment, Isabel
breaks away. The two of them are inches from one another.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Why did you do that?

CECILIA
Seemed like something Davis would
do to shut you up.

ISABEL
Oh, really.

CECILIA
To you, there's no difference
between a kiss and a slap.

ISABEL
So you think you've figured us out.

CECILIA
I think I've figured you out.

ISABEL
Do tell.

CECILIA

I'm sure it can't feel good, watching your husband shop for your replacement. You tell yourself that you're in control, but it's *his* influence. *His* name. Without him, you're just another woman with expensive taste and no money of your own to spend.

The words have a sting to them. Isabel smiles slowly.

ISABEL

I'm going to love watching the light leave your eyes. It could take weeks, years even, but eventually, I will grind you down into nothing.

Isabel turns and walks away. Cecilia gets back to work.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Cecilia opens the door in the GREEN SILK DRESS Davis sent. The one she refused to wear to dinner before.

Davis looms in the doorway. His face is unreadable.

CECILIA

Come in.

He does. Cecilia shuts the door after him.

DAVIS

You don't seem surprised to see me.

CECILIA

I'm not.

She walks down the hall. He trails behind her into the

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - DINING ROOM

Candle-lit dining room. A bottle of wine, two glasses. She begins to pour their wine.

DAVIS

What happened with Isabel?

CECILIA

She was upset about the holes I put
in her gallery wall, but. Better to
beg forgiveness than ask
permission.

DAVIS

A bold choice, considering you've
met my wife.

CECILIA

Did she say something?

DAVIS

She didn't need to. Most of her
recent moods can be traced back to
you.

CECILIA

I can't help it. I'm a trouble-
maker.

DAVIS

You really are.

She taps her wine glass against his. He starts to lean in to
kiss her, but she's up out of her chair and heading to the
kitchen.

CECILIA

Dinner's ready.

Davis sips his wine. Is he ... pining for her?

Cecilia walks back into the dining room, carrying two plates.

DAVIS

What are we having?

CECILIA

Sommerville's. Your favorite.

She sets their plates down, rejoining him. He gives her one
of those long looks. Inscrutable.

DAVIS

What are you doing?

CECILIA

What do you mean?

DAVIS

You know what I mean.

He catches her wrist, bringing her hand to his mouth. He kisses it gently.

CECILIA

Do you remember what you said to me, the first night we met?

DAVIS

Remind me.

CECILIA

You said that your mind works in a tangible way. You see something, so you reach out and grab it. I figured I could learn from that. Because you're right. I do run away when I'm scared. But I realized... I was trying to run away from everything I've ever wanted. Look at where I am, now. This house. These clothes... you.

DAVIS

What about me?

CECILIA

You see me. You always did. Even when I was pretending to be someone else.

She lets this confession hang in the air for a moment.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

I got you something.

She walks out of the dining room, returning shortly with a blue TIFFANY'S BAG. She places the bag in front of him and leans against the table, her body close to his.

DAVIS

You bought me a gift with my own money?

CECILIA

It's still my money until Friday.

He opens the box, looking at a simple but beautiful pair of DIAMOND CUFFLINKS.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

See? Now we match.

She leans down towards him, pulling the Tiffany's heart NECKLACE out from inside of her blouse. She flips the heart to reveal an engraving:

Property of Davis Bridger

They lock eyes. It's that moment right before a lit match meets gunpowder. And then ... *boom*.

He stands with such a force that his chair tips over behind him. Sure hands pick Cecilia up, planting her on the dining room table. Davis pushes her knees apart, leaning his weight against her as he kisses her. Hands in her hair, tightening, twisting, as she unbuttons and unzips his pants. He thrusts into her, drawing gasps from them both.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Tell me you want me to stay.

DAVIS
I want you to stay.

CECILIA
Tell me you choose me.

DAVIS
I choose you. I choose you.

CECILIA
Tell me I'm yours.

DAVIS
You're mine.

They climax together.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE BATHROOM - LATER

Cecilia and Davis recline together in the massive bathtub. Her head on his chest, his fingers gently playing with her hair. If this was in another movie, it would be romantic.

CECILIA
We should go away together.

DAVIS
Where would we go?

CECILIA
I've never been to Europe.

DAVIS
We'll start with Italy.

CECILIA

Mmm. Pasta.

(Beat.)

You'll probably need to get me off
of the No Fly List, though.

DAVIS

(laughing)

That was cruel of me.

CECILIA

Just a little.

DAVIS

We'll fly private. I'll take you to
galleries all over the world.
You'll have shows on every
continent.

CECILIA

Sounds too good to be true.

DAVIS

You're a Bridger Fellow. Every door
is about to open for you.

Cecilia continues carefully.

CECILIA

And Isabel?

DAVIS

What about her?

CECILIA

I don't think she'll be too keen
about our little travel adventure.

DAVIS

She can stay in New York, with the
gallery. It's the only thing she's
ever truly loved.

CECILIA

Apart from you.

DAVIS

Apart from me.

She kisses his chest.

INT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - LATER

Cecilia and Davis stand in the front doorway. She's in the red robe she "borrowed" from Isabel. He's back in his clothes, although he's missing a few buttons. They kiss.

CECILIA
Goodnight, Davis.

DAVIS
Goodnight, Cecilia.

He walks away, casting a glance over his shoulder to get one last look at her before he goes.

Cecilia takes out a pack of cigarettes and a SILVER ZIPPO with her NAME ENGRAVED ON IT. She lights one, smoking in the doorway.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. BENTLEY - THE NEXT NIGHT

Cecilia sits in the back seat next to a BLACK GIFT BOX, wearing a coat over her outfit. Ben drives, watching her in the rear view mirror.

BEN
You made it through.
Congratulations.

CECILIA
The night's not over yet.

EXT. BRIDGER GALLERY - THE NEXT NIGHT

Cecilia steps out of the car with the box, a LATCH PURSE around her wrist. Ben rolls down his window.

BEN
Good luck.

CECILIA
I don't need luck. But I do need an escort.

BEN
I can't come, Cece. The Bridgers wouldn't allow it.

CECILIA

Well, too bad for them. Because I
already bought you a ticket.

She pulls the ticket out of her coat pocket.

BEN

I'm not dressed--

She shoves the BLACK BOX through the car window. He opens it up to reveal a gorgeous bespoke evening jacket.

CECILIA

Now get out of the goddam car.

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT

Ben and Cecilia walk into the gallery, arm in arm. The third floor space is draped in decadent curtains and rich light, all of which is designed to wrap the attendees in a dark, sensual glow. People mill through the room, drinks in hand, chatting with each other as they take in the CENTERPIECE.

At the center of the room is Cecilia's final piece. It's an amalgamation of mediums, all swirling together to make a dark but beautiful tableau.

Three figures made of wire sit at a glass table. The figure in the middle has a crown of antlers, with flowers in the horns. At the center of the table are Davis' TWO CANDLESTICKS from the dining room. Moody paintings and other "found art" objects are suspended from the ceiling, trapped by a MASSIVE BIRD CAGE that hangs above the entire scene. Isabel's RED ROBE. The POLAROIDS of Cecilia's bruises. The destroyed METAL BUST, enshrined in memoriam by the torn PAPER PETALS. And in the center, the OIL PAINTING of CECILIA'S MOM.

TITLE CARD: Final Show

BEN

Holy shit.

CECILIA

Don't sound so surprised.

Through the crowd, she spots Isabel at one side of the room, with Davis on the other. They both see her at the same time.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Hang this up for me, will you?
(whispering to Ben)
And find Hadley.

She shrugs out of her coat to reveal a stunning evening gown.
She hands her coat to a googly-eyed Ben.

Davis and Isabel both make their way towards her. Two raptors on the hunt. Cecilia stands her ground, smiling winningly. Davis reaches her first.

DAVIS
You look perfect.

CECILIA
It's all for you.

In a bold display of PDA, Cecilia kisses him. Isabel stops in her tracks. Davis steps back, surprised.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
What. Are you worried about what
they'll think?

She looks at the crowd. Some of them saw, others didn't. Ben looks at her with horror and disgust, but turns away to hide his face. Isabel has disappeared.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
They aren't the ones who matter.

DAVIS
(grinning)
Very, very bad girl.

He turns around to look at her centerpiece.

CECILIA
What do you think?

DAVIS
I think ... this is only the
beginning.

He kisses her cheek, then walks back into the crowd. Cecilia practically counts down in her head. "Three... two... one..."

ISABEL (O.S.)
So much fuss and fury, and for
what?

Cecilia grins as Isabel slides next to her.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
A cheap display that mixes
pornography with a yard sale. Davis
has lost his fucking mind.

CECILIA
You have no idea.

Cecilia picks up a glass of champagne as a CATERER passes by.
She's gotten pretty good at it.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
(sweetly)
Cigarette?

EXT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - THIRD FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Isabel and Cecilia both pull cigarettes from their respective purses. Isabel lights hers with a SILVER ZIPPO with her NAME ENGRAVED ON IT. She extends it to Cecilia. Cecilia produces her own SILVER ZIPPO. Isabel's jaw clenches.

ISABEL
You're planning something.

CECILIA
I am.

ISABEL
Is this going to be the moment when
you turn on your little camera and
air my dirty laundry to all of our
guests?

CECILIA
I'm not a one-trick pony. I've got
at least three, maybe four tricks.

ISABEL
So what do you want.

CECILIA
I have a proposal. A contract,
actually.

ISABEL
A contract. Really.

CECILIA
I spent the last of your money,
having a lawyer draw it up. It's
air tight.

Cecilia produces a BLACK ENVELOPE from her purse.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
It states that I'm being released
from the Bridger Fellowship.

ISABEL
What are you talking about. We're
at your gallery show. You've
already completed the Fellowship.

CECILIA
But I haven't really, have I?
You're still going to be in my
life, breathing down my neck,
wielding your power over me. I'll
never truly be free of you.

ISABEL
And why would I release you?

CECILIA
Because you don't want me around
Davis anymore.

Isabel takes a drag from her cigarette, considering. She takes the envelope, opening it.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Sign the contract, and you'll never
see me again.

ISABEL
Aw. There's a pen inside.

CECILIA
I was a Girl Scout.

Isabel hands her the contract back.

ISABEL
You'd be foolish to think I would
sign this without having my lawyer
look over it.

CECILIA
That's a shame. This was a time
sensitive offer.

Cecilia snaps opens her ZIPPER. Flame springs to life. She brings the flame to the paper, but right before it can catch--

ISABEL
Wait.

INT. BRIDGER GALLERY - THIRD FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cecilia and Isabel walk back inside, going their separate ways. Cecilia finds Ben in the crowd, taking advantage of the trays of free booze. He looks at her as if she betrayed him.

CECILIA

Ben, I need your help--

BEN

Why? You seem very comfortable where you are.

CECILIA

What?

BEN

I actually thought you could be the one to get out of this fucking snake pit, but no. You're one of the snakes.

This stings worse than a slap. He starts to walk away.

CECILIA

Ben ...

AT THE CENTERPIECE:

Isabel and Davis join one another in the center of Cecilia's piece.

ISABEL

(calling attention)

Ladies and gentlemen...

The room quiets. All reverent eyes on their gorgeous hosts.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Thank you all so much for joining us this evening. We're so thrilled to be presenting the newest installation by Cecilia Collins.

Everyone claps as Cecilia joins Davis and Isabel. She looks confident. Strong. In control.

DAVIS

We couldn't be more proud of the growth that Cecilia has demonstrated in the past month, and we know that she'll continue to blossom into the raw, formidable talent she is.

ISABEL
Please enjoy your night--

Cecilia steps forward, interrupting.

CECILIA
I would like to take this opportunity to thank my incredible sponsors, Davis and Isabel Bridger. Without their kindness, generosity, and encouragement, I could never have accomplished what I did.

Polite clapping. Isabel and Davis exchange a look.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
I'm so honored to be the final Bridger Fellow.

The clapping is slightly confused now. Is the Fellowship ending? Ben stops in his tracks, gobsmacked. He and Hadley, brutally calm, exchange looks across the gallery floor.

Cecilia smiles, eyes twinkling.

EXT. BRIDGER GALLERY - THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT

Cecilia and the Bridgers walk outside onto the balcony. The view inside is obstructed by the pieces of fabric that Cecilia has hung. They have their privacy. Which is good, because Davis is immediately on her, his grip tight around her elbow as he yanks her towards him, unsettlingly calm.

DAVIS
What game are you playing, Cecilia?

CECILIA
This isn't a game, Davis.

DAVIS
Tell me what you've done.

CECILIA
Ask your wife.

Davis turns to Isabel, who stares at him calmly.

DAVIS
What the fuck did you do?

ISABEL
I released her from the Fellowship and all ties to it.

DAVIS
Why would you do that?!

CECILIA
It was the only way.

DAVIS
Cecilia, I want you to pick your words very, very carefully.

CECILIA
If the Fellowship exists, Isabel will always have control over me. I did it for us.

This takes Isabel by surprise.

ISABEL
... what did you just say?

CECILIA
We're free now, Davis. We can be together. No strings. No ties.

ISABEL
You fucking bitch...

DAVIS
Isabel.

ISABEL
She said she would never see you again!

CECILIA
No. I said **you'd** never see **me** again.

Isabel rushes towards Cecilia, ready to attack her. Davis moves in front of Cecilia, protecting her.

ISABEL
You're dead! You're fucking DEAD!

DAVIS
STOP.

CECILIA
She'll never stop! She'll keep coming for me until I'm in the ground!

ISABEL
I'll bury you myself!

CECILIA
You have to choose, Davis!

DAVIS
(roaring)
I don't have to choose anything. I have everything.

Isabel steps back, as does Cecilia. Davis stands between them, caught in the middle.

ISABEL
I want her gone, Davis.

DAVIS
You don't get to make that decision.

CECILIA
This was the only way.

ISABEL
Hadley, I put up with. She was too naive, too sweet to keep your attention. The others were flashes in the pan, petty little dalliances over before they began. But her?

Isabel sneers at Cecilia.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
I will not share you with that trailer trash, ten-penny fucking whore.

Davis violently BACKHANDS Isabel. She stumbles to the ground, clutching her face. BLOOD drips from her nose.

CECILIA
Davis.

He turns towards her. She kisses him, hard.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Choose.

DAVIS
I just did.

A beat. Cecilia laughs, catching her breath.

CECILIA
I can't believe that worked.

Davis blinks. Confused. Suspicious.

DAVIS
... what are you talking about.

CECILIA
You really picked me over your
wife? After one month?! Incredible.

DAVIS
(warning)
Cecilia ...

CECILIA
(to Isabel)
That contract you signed, by the
way? It didn't just dissolve my
Fellowship. It dissolved all of
them. Including the NDAs everybody
signed.

He hits her in the stomach. She falls to the ground.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
(breathless)
I knew you needed couple's
counseling but, yikes.

He kicks her, one sharp movement that catches his designer
shoe across her jaw. She falls to the ground, spitting blood.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
(coughing)
Do you want to know why you could
never be an artist, Davis? Because
you have no fucking soul.

Davis grabs her by the neck, forcing her to her feet. Cecilia
laughs, blood pouring from her mouth. Defiant to the end.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
I can't wait to tell the world what
it's really like being a Bridger
Fellow.

He shoves her backwards until her back slams against the
balcony wall. Below her is the cold New York concrete.

DAVIS
You lied to me.

He squeezes her neck, tighter and tighter.

ISABEL
DO IT, DAVIS!

He bends her backwards, readying to throw her.

DAVIS
You want to be released from the
Fellowship? *Fine.* I'll release you.

Cecilia struggles against him, the city spinning in her view as her feet leave the ground.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Send my regards to your mother.

Just then, the RED CURTAINS covering the windows suddenly part. Light from inside spills over them. Ben and Hadley hold the ends of the curtains.

The party-goers turn to see the scene, looks of horror blooming on their faces. It's only a matter of time before the phones come out.

In shock, Davis pulls Cecilia back, stepping away from her. She collapses on the ground, coughing and choking on air.

He looks between Isabel and Cecilia and then back to the party, feeling powerless for the first time in his life.

Hadley and Ben rush outside.

BEN
Cece... are you okay?

She gives a pained thumbs up.

Davis, defeated, walks inside through the crowd, head down. He's running away.

Hadley and Ben help Cecilia up.

Cecilia removes her necklace, throwing it at Isabel's feet as she walks past. Isabel picks it up, running her thumb over the inscription: **Property of Davis Bridger.**

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER

Cecilia walks out of the brownstone, bags in hand. She's still pretty banged up, her neck bruised, but she's alive.

Ben walks up from his basement apartment.

BEN
Heading out?

CECILIA
Sure am.

BEN
I didn't get a chance to tell you,
but. Your piece was gorgeous.

CECILIA
Thanks, Ben.

BEN
The live show was pretty
spectacular, too.

CECILIA
Yeah, well. I always knew I'd bleed
for my art one day.

The share a smile.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
You gonna stick around much longer?

BEN
No... but. It's weird-- I've been
trapped here for so long, I don't
really know what to do with my life
now.

CECILIA
I have an idea.

She pulls out a PIECE OF PAPER, handing it to him.

BEN
What's this?

CECILIA
A present I bought with the
Bridger's charge card before they
froze it.

He opens it up. It's a PLANE TICKET TO CHICAGO.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
It's time to go see your mom.

Ben hugs her. A deep, aching hug. She hugs back, but after a
few moments pats his back.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Uhp, still sore.

He lets go immediately.

BEN
Sorry! So sorry.

CECILIA
It's okay.

BEN
I guess this is goodbye, then.

CECILIA
I guess so.

BEN
... do you need a ride to the
airport, or anything?

They both laugh.

CECILIA
Aren't you sick of driving?

BEN
God, yes.

CECILIA
Thanks for the offer, but. I've got
a ride.

He walks her outside to the

EXT. BRIDGER BROWNSTONE - STREET

Shady street. Josie and Andre jump out of their waiting CAR,
hugging Cecilia.

JOSIE
Rich people, man. Never trust 'em.

ANDRE
We were on the road eight seconds
after that little phone call.

CECILIA
I knew you would be.

JOSIE
Also, I already called shotgun.

CECILIA
(laughing)
Bitch.

They load Cecilia's bags while she finishes saying goodbye to Ben.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Take care of yourself, Ben.

BEN
You, too, Cecilia.

She climbs in the backseat. Ben starts to walk away.

Cecilia sticks her head out of the back window.

CECILIA
(calling)
Hey, Ben!

He turns around.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Make good choices!

Ben laughs, and walks away.

Cecilia settles back into her seat.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Let's go home.

She smiles as the car pulls away. She's free.

CUT TO BLACK.