

NO BYLINE

Written by

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EXT. HOUSTON AIRPORT

RILEY VEGA (22) gets out of the passenger side of a **Ford Escape**. She's subtle, unassuming - wearing jeans and a white t-shirt. She looks around hesitantly.

Riley walks to the back of the car and pulls a massive suitcase out of the trunk.

Riley's MOM (mid-40s, very showy) runs around from the driver's side to Riley. She's everything Riley is not.

MOM

Oh my goodness, darlin'. I can't believe you're really leavin' me. Come here, give me a hug.

Riley leans towards her mom, who wraps her arms around her and squeezes.

MOM

Ohhh, I'm gonna cry all the way home, I just know it.

Mom's arms jingle from the **dozens of bracelets** she's wearing. Riley sees her mom's manicured hot-pink nails out of the corner of her eye. She takes a breath and pulls back.

RILEY

Okay, mom. I gotta go.

MOM

Ok, darlin'. I love you so so so so much. You know that? You know that, right?

RILEY

Yeah. Love you too, mom. I gotta go though.

Riley starts to walk away. She looks back at her mom standing at the door of the car, mascara running down.

MOM

Riley! You tell those New Yorkers you don't mess with Texas, baby!

Someone nearby whistles. Riley puts her head down, turns, and walks through the doors into the airport.

INT. HOUSTON AIRPORT - STORE - LATER

Riley places a few snacks on the counter and the CASHIER scans them.

CASHIER

Twenty seven thirty three.

Riley's eyes widen slightly. She hesitantly taps her card.

INT. PLANE - LATER

Riley sits in her seat and checks her phone. She opens up a bank app. Her account balance is **\$446.62**. She looks at her most recent transactions:

*Hudson's IAH - \$27.33*

*United Airlines - \$392.56*

*Manhattan Rental Agency - \$4,500.00*

STEWARDESS

Ma'am, please put your phone in airplane mode, we're about to take off.

Riley quickly swipes that app closed, looks up at the STEWARDESS, smiles politely, and nods.

She types a message to her mom:

- "Taking off, love you"

The reply dots appear and then after a moment disappear.

INT. SUBWAY CAR

Riley sits with her backpack on her lap and a large suitcase in front of her staring off, emotions boiling up.

MOMENTS LATER

Riley pulls the heavy suitcase across the train doorway. She bumps into a STRANGER who gives her a dirty look.

RILEY

(under her breath)

Sorry...

EXT. SOHO - MANHATTAN - EARLY EVENING

Riley walks down the street, pulling her luggage and looking up with awe at the buildings.

RILEY  
 Hey, mom. I'm here, so I just  
 wanted to let you know. Anyway, I  
 guess give me a call later or  
 something. Love you. Bye.

Riley taps her headphones to end the call and looks up at a tall apartment building.

RILEY  
 (under her breath)  
 Holy shit.

On one of the fire escapes a boy, NOAH (10), is drawing in a notebook. She smiles at him, but he looks away.

She struggles to pull her bag up the two small stairs onto the landing. And huffs audibly when she does.

She looks at the call buttons and presses the one next to "Apt. 3 - Sullivan/Greer"

SYD (O.S.)  
 Hello?

RILEY  
 Um, hi, it's me... Riley.

No response, but a second later the door buzzes. She looks at it, and pulls on the handle too late.

She presses the button again. Nothing.

She presses it again and the door buzzes again. She looks inside and sees mailboxes and a giant staircase.

She presses the button again.

SYD (O.S.)  
 You open the door when it buzzes.

RILEY  
 Um, yeah. I did that. Is there an  
 elevator?

She hears two people laugh.

SYD (O.S.)  
 Nope. Walk up.

The intercom clicks off before Riley can answer.

MRS. DEMPSEY  
 Do you mind?

Riley turns and sees MRS. DEMPSEY (40s, professional) carrying groceries. Riley slides over, letting her through.

Riley takes a deep breath and it catches. She steadies and pulls her suitcase into the lobby. She stands, looking up the stairs, frowning. She takes a deep breath and smiles.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Riley struggles to pull the bag up the final two stairs. When she finally does she leans down on it, panting.

RILEY  
(out of breath)  
Welcome to New York...

SYD  
Could've been worse.

Riley turns and sees SYD SULLIVAN (late 20s, gorgeous) without his shirt on and ARI GREER (25, tall and blonde) standing in the doorway looking at her.

RILEY  
Oh. Hey. Could've been worse?

Syd looks up the stairs.

SYD  
Could've been on the fifth floor.

Syd and Ari both snicker, as Riley looks up.

RILEY  
Right.

ARI  
Come on! Let's go inside, we have  
Champagne!

Ari hops inside.

RILEY  
Yeah, let me just...

SYD  
I'll get your bag. Go head.

Syd steps into the hallway.

RILEY  
Oh, thanks.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Riley follows Ari inside and takes the place in. The living room has a large bookcase and exposed brick walls. A hallway leads to the one end and the kitchen on the other side.

Ari pops a bottle of Champagne.

ARI

So this is it. Kitchen is obviously right there. Food in the fridge is mostly up for grabs. Bathroom is there. My room is the door beside it.

Syd stands next to Ari and holds out three glasses. She pours the Champagne. Syd hands a glass to Ari and Riley.

RILEY

Your room?

SYD

I'm back that way...

He points down the hall.

RILEY

Cool. And me?

Syd and Ari look at each other.

SYD

Umm... Here...

Syd points to the living room.

SYD

Cheers!

Syd and Ari clink glasses with each other and Riley and take a drink.

RILEY

Here as in... Here? Like the couch?

Syd looks at Ari who looks visibly uncomfortable.

SYD

Yeah, I... thought you knew. That's why it's so cheap.

ARI  
You should have seen my first  
place, ugh, it makes this look like  
a mansion.

Ari smiles at her warmly, but Riley's emotions bubble.

RILEY  
Fifteen hundred dollars a month...  
is cheap?

SYD  
We're in Soho. So, yeah. But!

Syd smiles and goes to the one corner of the room. He unties  
a curtain and pulls it around.

SYD  
Private. And...

He points to a stack of sheets and covers on the couch.

SYD  
I just got all of these for you  
today.

He can see Riley's less than enthused look.

Arguing sounds come from above and they all look up.

SYD  
Yeah. They do that a lot. Do you  
have headphones?

Anyway. We'll let you get settled  
and then we can all go out for  
dinner. Sound good?

RILEY  
Yeah... Sure.

Syd and Ari walk out, closing the curtain behind them. Riley  
looks around and sits on the couch.

RILEY  
Could be worse I guess...

SYD (O.C.)  
See, that's a great attitude!

Riley closes her eyes and throws her head back.

MOMENTS LATER

Riley pulls back the curtain to her "room" and sees Ari and Syd standing there waiting. They're both dressed impeccably.

RILEY

That's what you're wearing?

They look at each other and then back at Riley who's still in a t-shirt and jeans.

ARI

You look... great. Don't worry about it. Let's go!

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Syd and Ari stumble into the front door, Riley walks in behind them.

Ari goes to the bathroom, Syd to the kitchen. He takes a few beers and walks down the hall to his room.

Ari comes out of the bathroom and mumbles "goodnight" as she enters her room and closes the door swiftly.

Riley stands there by herself.

LATER

Riley is in her "room" lying on the couch turned bed. She pulls out her phone and opens the bank app again.

*Balance: \$294.55*

*Recent Transactions:*

*- The Matador SOHO - \$152.07*

RILEY

Shit.

THE NEXT MORNING

Riley opens her eyes and looks over to see Syd's face peering in the curtain.

SYD

(whispering)

Oh hey, you're up. Breakfast?

Riley pulls the covers up, and slides upright.

RILEY

Um, no, I think I'm just going to go get a coffee somewhere and apply for jobs. Is there a cafe nearby?

Syd laughs.

SYD

It's New York, there's like three hundred nearby.

RILEY

Right. Any maybe inexpensive ones?

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Riley walks out of the apartment and hears the yelling from upstairs more distinct than usual. She listens a moment.

MR. DEMPSEY (O.C.)

I didn't try to lose my job, they just canned me like a thousand other people!

Riley winces.

MRS. DEMPSEY

I know! Everyone knows! It not being your fault doesn't mean you can't do the dishes!

MR. DEMPSEY

I do the fucking dishes, just not on your made up fucking schedule!

Riley continues on.

INT. CAFE - MID-MORNING

Riley sits at a table facing the street and types on her computer: **writing gigs NYC**.

The page opens with lists of jobs.

- Copy for drink company, up to \$0.07/word
- Writer needed for blog, \$0.04/word
- \$0.10/word! Adult fantasy writer

RILEY

Ew.

She continues to scroll. Stops on one.

RILEY

Ooh.

- *Ghostwriter for influencer, pay negotiable.*

Riley clicks apply and starts typing.

"Dear Tara So Honest,

Thank you for your consideration. Since I was a little girl, I've always dreamt of moving to New York and being a writer.

Well here I am.

While the romance of writing in Manhattan is fun to think about, everyone needs to earn a living, and I believe that together, we can make both things possible at the same time..."

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Riley approaches the door; loud music coming from inside.

She unlocks it and walks in to a party, people everywhere.

SYD

Riley! Where have you been?

RILEY

Did you mention you were having a party?

SYD

Party? No... This is just some friends.

Riley starts to pull the curtain.

RILEY

(over the music)

I'm pretty tired, can you help...?

SYD

Of course! Come on everyone, my room!

They all file out and down the hall. Riley pulls the curtain the whole way closed.

She lays down on the couch and stares up at the ceiling. The music is still thumping.

Riley looks at the window, and huffs audibly.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS

Riley crawls out the window and stands against the railing. She looks out on the busy street.

She pulls her phone out and dials "Mom".

It rings continuously until she finally hangs up.

Riley takes a deep breath and sits down on the stairs.

A moment later a text comes in from her mom.

"Out with the girlies, everything okay, hun?"

Riley texts her back.

"Yup, just checkin in. Love you."

Riley hears a rustling behind her. She turns abruptly and sees Noah staring at her.

RILEY

Hi. Um, what are you doing out here?

Noah nods toward his flat. Riley leans to see the figures of two the Dempsey's arguing.

RILEY

I'm Riley.

Noah doesn't respond.

RILEY

And you are?

Noah ignores her, and Riley decides to move on.

RILEY

You draw?

Noah ignores this as well.

RILEY

(to herself)  
Jesus. Whatever.

Riley stares out, the music and the arguing competing with the street sounds below..

The couple stops and embraces. Noah looks over and stands.

Just before he crawls back into his apartment, he looks down at Riley, who continues to stare out into the city.

NOAH

Noah. My name... is Noah.

Riley turns and sees the boy half way inside.

EXT. TARA'S HOME

Riley stands at the entrance and hits the button labeled "Apt. 1 - Rosewood".

INT. TARA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Riley walks into an immaculate home, designed in a mid-century bohemian mash-up with greenery everywhere.

There are people everywhere. They all seem to be fixing, photoing, and coiffing the place.

Riley's mouth is agape.

MINA MILLS (late 20s, petite, but serious) approaches her.

MINA

Riley Vega?

RILEY

Um, yes.

MINA

This way, please.

Mina walks to the stairs. Riley awkwardly follows, bumping others as she makes her way through.

UPSTAIRS

They continue into the master bathroom. Riley slows.

MINA

Just back here.

They walk through the bathroom into a huge closet. As they enter, TARA ROSEWOOD (mid/late 30s with a perfect body) is bent over. She stands and turns, completely topless.

RILEY

Oh! Oh my god, I'm so sorry, I...

Riley turns away awkwardly.

Mina and Tara just stand there watching her.

Riley looks back to see Tara is still topless.

Tara points at a bra near Riley. Riley looks at it, picks it up, and tries to hand it to her without looking at her.

Tara rolls her eyes. Mina shows no emotion.

TARA

It's *safe* to look now. Didn't know my body was so shocking.

Riley turns, slightly more relaxed than before, but barely.

RILEY

No, it's just...

TARA

If you're gonna work for me, you should probably get used to seeing my tits. They're out... A lot.

RILEY

Umm... I...

Tara shakes her head at Mina.

Riley looks at Mina who huffs.

MINA

Let's go.

RILEY

What? No. Wait.

Mina and Tara stare at her and she gulps.

RILEY

You have really nice boobs. And body. I'm sorry I was, just not expecting to see it.

Riley takes a deep breath.

RILEY

Sorry. I can, I'm fine. Please.

TARA

I read your samples, they're good.

Riley smiles, no one else does. Her smile drops.

TARA

I need fifteen hundred words on fall flowers.

(MORE)

TARA (CONT'D)

It needs to be charming, but  
informative, in my voice, not  
yours. Can you do that?

Riley nods.

TARA

Do you know what that means?

RILEY

I think so.

TARA

My fans, my customers. They follow  
me and come to my site because I  
sound aspirational. Aspirational,  
but not smart.

You? You're too smart. Make me  
sound like me.

RILEY

You want me to sound dumb?

Tara's eyes narrow.

TARA

No I don't want you to sound  
fucking dumb. I want you to not  
sound so smart. Less... Erudite.

RILEY

Right, sorry. I didn't mean...

TARA

I need it tomorrow. Mina will give  
you the details.

Mina hands Riley a card. Tara turns back to her wardrobe and  
continues to get dressed.

Riley looks at Mina.

MINA

Do you not remember how to get out?

RILEY

That's it?

Mina doesn't respond.

RILEY  
Oh. Okay. Thank you, both. I'll  
have the article in a few hours.

TARA  
(without looking)  
Tomorrow's fine.

Riley turns to leave, and takes a few steps. She turns back  
and realizes that Tara and Mina have already moved on.

She breaks out into a big smile.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - LATER

Riley sits, typing away on her laptop.

NOAH  
What are you writing?

Riley doesn't look back.

RILEY  
Hi, Noah. I'm writing about  
flowers.

Noah snorts.

NOAH  
Why flowers?

RILEY  
I'm getting paid to write it.

NOAH  
How much?

Riley pauses. She looks at him.

RILEY  
Odd question for a eight year old.

NOAH  
I'm ten. What's it about? I mean  
what about flowers?

Riley turns back and types a few more words and then stops,  
and turns to Noah.

RILEY

It's about flowers that feel like summer flowers but bloom in the fall and can make your home seem like you're extending the warm weather.

NOAH

Is that real?

RILEY

Hmm... Not sure, but it sounds like it's real, right?

INT. BAR - THE NEXT EVENING

Riley stands in the corner, nursing a beer as Syd and Ari mingle with a dozen other people.

Riley's phone starts to buzz in her pocket and she pulls it out. The number is a New York area code.

RILEY

Hey! I need to take this...

Ari isn't paying attention, no one is. Riley walks out.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

MINA (O.S.)

Where are you?

RILEY

Hello?

Riley looks at her phone, and then puts it up to her ear.

MINA (O.S.)

Where are you?

RILEY

Um, at a bar, who is this?

MINA (O.S.)

A bar where? We're at an event at The Revolver rooftop bar. Tara wants you here.

RILEY

Is this Mina?

MINA (O.S.)

Can you get here?

RILEY  
Um, The Revolver? Yeah, I guess.

Mina hangs up before Riley say anything else.

EXT. THE REVOLVER - LATER

Riley gets out of a cab and sees a line down the block.

RILEY  
Holy shit.

She smiles broadly as she makes her way down to the end.

LATER

Riley is still in line, smile dropped. Her phone buzzes.

*From: 608-554-4343 - Where are you?*

*From: 608-554-4343 - Why aren't you here yet?*

*To: 608-554-4343 - I am - in line.*

Riley's phone buzzes, a call from Mina. She answers.

RILEY  
Hello?

MINA (O.S.)  
We don't wait in lines.

RILEY  
What do you mean?

MINA (O.S.)  
I mean go to the front of the line  
and tell the bouncer that Tara's  
waiting for you. If he doesn't let  
you in, call me.

Mina hangs up.

Riley looks up and down the line. She gets dirty looks from the taller, skinnier, well dressed GIRLS behind her.

She snarls at them, and they look at each other and giggle.

Riley gets out of line and walks up to the front. She speaks to the bouncer who steps aside to let her through. Just before, she waves to the girls.

INT. THE REVOLVER - MOMENTS LATER

Riley walks up to Tara and Mina. They both are dressed in sleek, tight dresses, and high heels. Tara almost laughs. Mina looks at Riley in a sweater and jeans with disdain.

TARA

We're gonna have to work on your wardrobe girl.

MINA

I'm getting another drink.

Mina walks away.

TARA

Don't mind her. She's a mean girl, but also a terrific assistant.

Riley smiles.

TARA

Do you want a drink?

RILEY

No. Thanks. Um, why... Am I here?

Tara shouts to Mina and holds up two fingers.

TARA

A job. Your article took off. More people read that than anything I've posted in two years.

Riley can't help but grin.

TARA

Yeah. Take it in.

Tara looks out at the view. Riley looks as well.

TARA

I want you to be my writer.

RILEY

Your writer?

TARA

Ghostwriter. Your words, my, um, persona.

Tara poses. Riley takes it in.

RILEY  
Are you offering me the job?

TARA  
Look around Dorothy... Yes. I'm  
offering you a job. Do you want it?

Riley is in shock.

TARA  
Good. It's settled, I'll put you  
on salary. I think fifty to start.  
And residuals, seven cents RPM.

She pauses for a reaction from Riley.

RILEY  
RPM?

TARA  
Look it up. Do we have a deal?

RILEY  
Um... Can I think about it?

Tara narrows her gaze.

TARA  
Got something else lined up?

Riley shakes her head.

TARA  
No, of course not.  
(eyes narrow)  
How long have you been in the city?

RILEY  
(meekly)  
A week?

Tara laughs shrilly.

TARA  
Oh my god. A baby... Oh god. You  
need so much help. Eighty grand, no  
residuals and I'll get your  
wardrobe... Updated.

Riley's eyes widen.

TARA

You're not in a position to say no,  
so don't bother. The offer only  
gets worse from here.

Riley stands straight.

RILEY

Seventy five, with residuals, and a  
five k sign on bonus paid  
immediately.

And the clothes.

Tara examines her. She can see how nervous Riley is which  
makes her smile.

TARA

Spent all your life savings on  
rent, didn't you?

Tara waves her off.

TARA

Don't bother answering that, we've  
all been there.

Mina comes back up to them, three flutes of Champagne in her  
hands. She hands one to Tara. Tara nods to Riley.

TARA

Seventy and all the other stuff. I  
have to mingle.

Tara starts to walk away and pauses.

TARA

Just a warning, though. Your  
writing is good, but it's mine. So  
I get to edit what I want. You know  
that?

Riley looks at her. Slowly she nods in agreement.

Tara walks off. Mina hands Riley the glass. Riley  
immediately drinks half of it.

RILEY

Is she always like that?

MINA

Put your drinks on my tab. Mills.  
I'm going to assume your not dumb  
enough to turn this down, so I'll  
see you Monday, eight a m, Rag and  
Bone.

Riley looks unsure.

MINA

It's a store. Don't be late.

Mina walks away, leaving Riley there alone.

Riley looks around. The people everywhere, the city lights  
in the background. She breaks into a giant smile, and  
finishes her Champagne.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Riley stumbles into the apartment, laughing. The lights are  
out and both of her roommates' doors are closed.

RILEY

(whispering)

Oh.. Shhhh.

She laughs again as she makes her way to her sofa/bed. She  
drops into it and pulls her laptop onto her lap.

She opens it and types "Tara So Honest flowers".

The page opens revealing an article "Fall Flowers, Summer  
Vibe by T". She scrolls down quickly and then scrolls back  
up and clicks on the Instagram link.

A picture of a summery bouquet appears. The Caption reads  
"Check out my latest post about fall flowers! Link in bio."

Above the caption reads "Liked by @gigihadid, @selenagomez  
and 1.2M others".

RILEY

Oh shit. That's a lot of others.

FADE TO:

MORNING

Riley is in the same position. Her phone buzzes and she  
pulls it out of her pocket. She squints to see that it's her  
mom and answers.

She hears squeals on the other end. She brings the phone closer to her ear, but not the whole way.

RILEY

Hi mom...

MOM

Oh my goodness, honey! I read your little blog thingy, well most of it. It's soooo cute! You're gonna be famous, I just know it.

RILEY

Thanks mom, it's just one article, and no one knows I even wrote it except you.

MOM

It doesn't matter, honey! I know talent when I see it.

Riley pulls the phone away and rubs her temples.

RILEY

Mmhmm.

MOM

Anyway, I gotta go get ready for church, but I wanted to catch you before you became too famous and didn't take my calls anymore.

She cackles.

MOM

Bye, love you, darling.

Riley's mom hangs up.

Riley drops her phone and closes her eyes.

RILEY

(under her breath)

Ow. Why...

Ari and Syd peer in.

ARI

Ready?

Riley opens one eye and looks at them.

RILEY

Ready for what?

SYD  
Sunday fun day!

ARI  
Mimosas and brunch. Without the  
brunch. A little hair of the dog,  
ya know... Champagne breakfast.

Riley's eyes open at the word Champagne. She gets up and runs past the two and immediately throws up in the bathroom.

The two wince and smile.

SYD  
We'll be downstairs. We'll, um,  
give you a minute to get ready...

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Riley is lying on the couch. She looks worse than earlier.

Yelling starts above her, she looks up and then out to the fire escape.

She pulls a blanket off of her and sticks her head out.

Noah climbs out of his window, looking sullen. Riley smiles at him and waves. He doesn't respond.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS

She climbs out and sits next to him.

RILEY  
You okay?

Noah looks at her and makes a face.

NOAH  
I think better than you.

Riley leans into him.

RILEY  
Rough day, but thanks.

NOAH  
What happened?

RILEY  
Just got a little carried away  
celebrating.

NOAH  
Celebrating what?

RILEY  
New job.

NOAH  
Oh.

Noah looks at his parents, Mrs. Dempsey and MR. DEMPSEY (40s disheveled, tired) fighting. He opens his book and starts to sketch the cafe across the street.

NOAH  
They weren't always like this. Now  
it's either fighting or pretending.

RILEY  
Can I see your other drawings?

Noah continues to sketch.

NOAH  
What's the job?

RILEY  
A writing job.

NOAH  
The flower thing?

RILEY  
Yep

NOAH  
You gonna write more about flowers?

RILEY  
No. Well, maybe. I don't know.

Noah is quiet. Riley sits there for a few more minutes looking out. Finally she stands.

RILEY  
Okay, I'll leave you alone.

Riley climbs back inside her apartment, leaving Noah alone.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Riley is sitting on the couch watching **Friday Night Lights** on her laptop. On the table in front of her are several different beverages. She's crying softly.

A knock at the window startles her. She pauses the show, wipes her eyes and turns to see Noah. She holds up a finger.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - MOMENTS LATER

Riley, bundled up in a blanket, climbs out the window.

RILEY  
Hey kid, what's up?

She looks up to see his parents arguing again.

RILEY  
Oh.

Noah hands Riley his sketchbook. She takes it hesitantly.

NOAH  
You said you wanted to see my  
drawings. So...

Riley nods and carefully opens the cover. She starts to flip through; the drawings are beautiful scenes of the street. People and buildings alike, all from this vantage point.

RILEY  
Wow, Noah, these are really  
wonderful.

Noah shrugs as Riley continues paging through them.

NOAH  
I read your flower article.

Riley smiles.

NOAH  
Says it's written by that Tara lady  
though.

RILEY  
(without looking up)  
Yeah, well, I'm writing for her.  
It's called ghostwriting.

NOAH  
But why not just say it's your  
article on her page?

Riley shrugs.

RILEY  
Not how it works I guess.

Riley holds up the sketchbook and shows Noah.

RILEY  
I love this one.

Noah smiles slightly.

NOAH  
Are you still a writer if someone  
else gets credit for it?

Riley pauses. She turns the next page and sees a sketch of her, writing on the fire escape.

She gently touches it.

Noah looks up and sees the lights have dimmed in his house.

NOAH  
Can I have my book back?

Riley breaks her trance and looks up at him. He's holding out his hand for the book. She smiles as she hands it to him, and he immediately goes back inside.

RILEY  
(to no one)  
I hope so, Noah.

EXT. RAG & BONE - MORNING

Mina is waiting out front when Riley arrives.

MINA  
You're late.

RILEY  
I thought you said eight.

MINA  
I did. It's eight oh four.

Riley looks at her, expecting a smile, but gets none.

RILEY  
Sorry.

MINA  
You might not care, but I do. On  
time means early. Let's go.

Riley points to the sign.

RILEY  
It's closed. Doesn't open 'til 10.

MINA  
It's open for us.

Mina walks in, Riley follows.

STORE MANAGER  
Hey Mina. Who's this?

MINA  
This is Riley. As you can see, she  
needs an update.

Mina looks at Riley, who's feeling very self-conscious.

MINA  
You're a four?

Riley gulps.

RILEY  
Sometimes a two.

The STORE MANAGER smiles at her.

STORE MANAGER  
This way. I'll pull some stuff if  
you want to get undressed in there.

She points to the dressing room.

DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Riley stands in front of the mirror in a bra and panties.  
The door opens widely.

Riley recoils trying to cover herself up.

MINA  
Modesty might be endearing in  
Texas, but its a waste of time in  
New York.

Mina has a stack of pants and the manager has a bunch of  
shirts on hangers. Mina's face is blank. The manager grins  
slightly at the two of them.

Mina sets the stack down on the bench and the manager hangs  
the shirts on a pole.

They both walk out, but leave the door open.

MINA  
We only have thirty minutes, so  
hurry up.

RILEY  
Thirty minutes until what?

Mina doesn't respond, so Riley picks up the first pair of pants. She holds them up and smiles. Then she takes a look at the pricetag, **\$278**.

RILEY  
Um, Mina.  
(whisper)  
Can you come here for a moment?

Mina appears instantly.

MINA  
What?

RILEY  
I can't afford any of this.

MINA  
No shit. That's why I'm here.

STORE - 30 MINUTES LATER

There's a stack of boxes and bags at the register. Mina is at the door.

MINA  
Let's go.

Riley goes to grab the bags.

MINA  
Leave them, they'll be delivered to your apartment. We have three more stops.

RILEY  
More? How much do I need?

Mina leaves and Riley runs after her.

FADE TO:

INT. LOFT APARTMENT - EVENING

The elevator opens. Tara is flanked by Mina and Riley, all of whom are impeccably dressed.

They step out to a room full of people. Tara and Mina walk straight through, eyes narrowed.

Riley follows, but immediately stumbles in the high heels she's wearing and falls. She stands, straightens herself out, and then confidently walks to Tara and Mina.

RILEY  
(to Mina)  
Oh my god, is that Bradley Cooper?

Mina glares at her.

MINA  
Act like you've been here before.

RILEY  
(whispers)  
But I haven't been here before.  
(excited)  
No. James Franco is talking to  
Scarlett Johansson. Are they  
working together on a movie?  
Seriously. Where are we?

MINA  
(through gritted teeth)  
It's a party for The Row. Now shut  
the hell up and stop embarrassing  
yourself.

RILEY  
Sorry.  
(pause)  
Am I supposed to know what the row  
means?

MINA  
(huffs)  
Yes. You're going to have to write  
about it.

Tara stops and sits on a chair at a high-top table along the windows looking out across the city.

Mina looks at Tara and waits.

TARA  
I think bottles.

Mina walks away.

Riley pulls out the chair opposite of Tara.

TARA  
No.

RILEY  
No?

TARA  
Stand behind me, against the windows so I can give you the context of what's happening here.

Riley pushes the chair back in and obeys. Tara waves and smiles at someone across the room.

TARA  
This is a release party for the latest line for The Row.

Riley leans toward Tara.

TARA  
Do not lean in. Speak clearly, but quietly. And listen intently. Do you want me to look like I'm gossiping?

RILEY  
(blushes)  
No of course not. I would never...

Mina comes back and sets a Champagne cooler with two bottles on the table. She places several glasses down, pours three of them, and slides one to Tara, takes one to Riley.

TARA  
(continues)  
At parties like this, it's always good to get a bottle and extra glasses, as you will become a stopping point for people, and it's easier to mingle without leaving a single spot.

RILEY  
Right. What's The Row?

Tara looks back at Riley who sheepishly takes a sip.

MINA  
This is a mistake.

TARA  
You have to get her ready.

MINA  
I can only do so much.

Tara doesn't respond. She sips her Champagne.

TARA  
The Row is a very high-end fashion  
line owned by the Olsen twins.

RILEY  
Woah. That's so cool!

Tara and Mina both look at her pointedly.

RILEY  
(whispers)  
Sorry...

TARA  
Everyone in here is A list. Look  
around, but act like you don't  
care. No one wants a groupie.

Riley looks around the room and sees known people and celebrities in groups mingling everywhere. She cares.

RILEY  
Holy shit.

TARA  
Welcome to the club. Close your  
mouth and don't fuck it up.

Riley closes her mouth, but can't keep it closed as a broad smile crosses her face.

LATER

THEO  
Who's your new puppet?

Tara smirks. She looks at THEO BROWN (ageless, tall, slender always tailored) who gives her a tight-lipped smile.

He's looking at Riley standing in the corner.

TARA  
Wouldn't you like to know?

THEO  
That's why I asked.

TARA

She's just a temp. Mina has a few family engagements coming up and needed a back-up.

THEO

Ah, good old Mina. I thought for sure she was going to kill you in your sleep.

Tara laughs.

TARA

There's still time.

Theo smiles.

THEO

One of these days, one of these young girls is going to figure out who you are and take you down.

TARA

And who's that darling?

THEO

Why Dorian Gray of course. I've seen the picture in your attic.

Tara looks at Theo and bursts into laughter. She swats at him and he laughs as well.

TARA

Who lets us into these places anyway?

Theo shrugs. They clink glasses and both sip Champagne and watch the crowd. Riley glances at them.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT

Riley is typing on her laptop, still wearing her dress from the party, but wrapped in a blanket.

NOAH

What are you writing about now? And why are you wearing that?

Riley smiles, finishes typing a few more characters and then looks back at Noah.

RILEY

Another blog. This one's about a new fashion line by the Row.

(MORE)

RILEY (CONT'D)  
I just got home and wanted to get  
some notes down.

NOAH  
Oh. For that lady?

Riley nods.

NOAH  
Why are you writing her life  
instead of yours?

Riley smiles.

RILEY  
Geesh kid, it's just a job,  
everyone needs one.

Noah's head drops. He climbs back into his apartment. Riley shrugs and continues typing.

INT. LOUNGE - A FEW DAYS LATER

Riley walks in, talking on the phone. The place is set up for a photo shoot.

RILEY  
I just got here, I'm at the front.

INT. LOUNGE - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mina sits on a chair against the wall. Tara lays on a table beside her, knees up.

MINA  
We're in the back room.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

RILEY  
What is this shoot for?

MINA  
The review. Of the new line from  
The Row. We post your article, and  
this social campaign of Tara  
actually wearing everything.

RILEY  
Ohhh... Cool.

Mina hangs up.

INT. LOUNGE - BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens and Riley looks down at Tara lying spread eagle on a procedure table. She squeals and hides her eyes.

RILEY

Oh my god, I'm so sorry!

Mina rolls her eyes. Tara doesn't move and the ESTHETICIAN takes another wax strip from the table and places it between her legs. She rips it off and Riley cringes.

TARA

The article. Did you finish the article?

RILEY

(softly)

Umm... yea. Yes. Sorry. Yes it's finished.

Riley winces again as another wax strip is pulled off.

RILEY

Shit.

ESTHETICIAN

Last one.

RILEY

Oh thank god.

TARA

Getting a good look?

Riley looks up.

RILEY

Sorry! It's just. Wow. It's... nice.

The esthetician rips another strip off and Riley winces again and keeps the look on her face. Tara doesn't flinch.

RILEY

Does that...

TARA

Is it good?

RILEY

Your vagina?

TARA  
I wasn't asking you. And I know  
that's good.

MINA  
Yes. It's fine.

TARA  
Fine isn't good enough.

MINA  
It's up to our standard. Your  
voice.

Tara pulls on a pair of underwear, and stands in front of Riley, who continues to stare at her vagina with a grimace.

TARA  
Watch the shoot. Take notes. Do a  
rewrite if you have to.

Riley looks up at her. She nods at the rack.

TARA  
You should get changed into  
something from the brand we're  
representing.

She looks at Mina.

TARA  
You too. Are they ready?

Mina nods and Tara walks out. Mina starts to undress and walks to the rack of clothing in her underwear and bra.

Riley stares at her petite, but tight figure.

MINA  
Jesus. What's your deal?

Riley shakes her off.

RILEY  
What? Oh my god, sorry. You have a  
really nice body. Perfect. Everyone  
seems to have a perfect body.

Mina takes a few items off the bar and turns toward Riley.

MINA  
I'm so happy you think I'm pretty.

She gets dressed quickly and walks to the door.

MINA

Let's go.

She walks out leaving Riley by herself.

RILEY

It's so nice to have a friend here.

MONTAGE OF PHOTO SHOOT

INT. LOUNGE - LATER

Tara puts on her shoes.

TARA

Tomorrow, High Line. Two thirty.

RILEY

What's the High Line?

Riley's phone buzzes and she looks down at it. It's a message from Mina with a Maps pin of the High Line location.

RILEY

Oh.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

Riley walks in and puts her things down. She sees Ari at the table eating a salad and scrolling on her phone.

RILEY

Hi.

Riley smiles.

ARI

Hey.

Ari looks up quickly and then does a double-take.

ARI

Wait, is that The Row?

Riley looks down, smiling wider.

RILEY

Yeah. Actually...

ARI

Apparently there was a big launch party for their new line the other night. God I wish I could have been there...

RILEY  
I was there!

Ari's eyes narrow.

ARI  
What?

RILEY  
The launch party? I was there. It was really really cool. Like so many famous people.

ARI  
How the hell did you get in?

RILEY  
That woman I'm working for... She was invited or something. I wrote an article about it!

Ari slumps. Goes back to her phone.

RILEY  
Maybe next time, I could like get you in or something? I can ask.

ARI  
Yeah... Sure.

LATER

Riley is laying on the couch. She pulls out her phone and opens the bank app. Her account balance is **\$5762.55**. She looks at her most recent transactions:

*TaraSo Deposit - \$3755.48*

*TaraSo Payroll Deposit - \$1998.32*

Riley has a wide smile on her face.

RILEY  
Thank god.

EXT. HIGH LINE POP-UP RESTAURANT - THE NEXT DAY

Riley walks past a line of people to the front. An annoyed-looking HOSTESS scowls at her.

HOSTESS  
The line is the line.

RILEY  
I'm here with Tara Rosewood.

The hostess huffs. She turns and looks at Mina who's standing nearby. Mina nods.

HOSTESS  
Go.

RILEY  
(thick Texas draw)  
Well thank ya, kindly.

Riley bows and walks past.

MINA  
She wants you to sit down with her.  
Near the back.

Riley smiles and walks through the restaurant. The area has been transformed into a rural farm-to-table pumpkin patch.

Riley sees Tara and waves, but Tara doesn't acknowledge her.

RILEY  
Hey Tara.

TARA  
Sit.

Riley obeys.

TARA  
I want a few extra articles.  
Something whimsical. Light. Fun to  
read. Maybe fiction.

RILEY  
Fiction?

TARA  
You can write fiction, can't you?

RILEY  
Yeah, of course.

TARA  
Do you have anything ready?

RILEY  
I think so. But, um, let me brush  
it off and... I'll send it to you.

TARA  
No, send it to Mina.

RILEY  
Oh, okay, sure. What's good here?  
I'm starving.

TARA  
I've already ordered.

LATER

A few empty plates sit in front of the two women.

RILEY  
Oh my god, that was amazing. I  
don't even know what half that  
stuff was.

TARA  
Squash.

RILEY  
Squash? What...

Riley is interrupted by a loud voice.

SAMANTHA  
Tara. Rosewood. In the flesh!

Riley looks at Tara who feigns a smile. SAMANTHA BROOKS  
(40s, over-styled) sits uninvited.

TARA  
Samantha, sit, please. To what do  
we owe this pleasure?

SAMANTHA  
Oh stop. How was it?

Samantha points at the empty plates.

TARA  
Have you not sat yet?

SAMANTHA  
No, of course, my reservation is  
after all the V, I, Ps. I remember  
when you were one of us. And look  
at you now.

TARA  
A mistake I'm sure.

Samantha smiles. Tara smiles in return. Riley watches.

Samantha looks at Riley, up and down.

SAMANTHA  
And who are you?

RILEY  
Me?

SAMANTHA  
(still staring)  
I saw Mina up front, so you're not  
an assistant. And Tara shared her  
reservation with you, so you must  
be important.

RILEY  
No. I'm just a write...

TARA  
She's a client. Potential client.

SAMANTHA  
Ooooh. And what's your name?

RILEY  
Riley?

SAMANTHA  
Riley...? Are you not sure? Riley  
what?

RILEY  
Vega.

SAMANTHA  
Hmm. Never heard of you Riley Vega.  
But you are very cute.

She looks at Tara.

SAMANTHA  
Very young.

She looks back at Riley.

SAMANTHA  
But very cute.

Well, I need to get to my table  
now. Tara, a pleasure as always.  
Riley Vega, I look forward to  
meeting again. Soon I hope.

Samantha stands and saunters away.

Riley leans in.

TARA  
 Page six. She's a  
 (air quotes)  
 Journalist. Mostly just a gossip  
 writer, and now you're going to be  
 in a gossip magazine.

RILEY  
 Me? Why? Is that bad?

Tara examines her long enough that Riley starts to squirm.

TARA  
 I don't know. We'll see.

INT. TARA'S HOME - OFFICE - MORNING

Riley walks in with a tray of coffees.

Tara and Mina are sitting. Tara points to the empty chair.

RILEY  
 Is everything okay?

Tara nods to Mina. She opens her laptop and it immediately projects to a large TV screen to the side. They all look up.

There's a picture of Riley and Tara at lunch in the Pumpkin Patch restaurant.

RILEY  
 Oh my god, is that...

TARA  
 Your moment in the spotlight. At  
 least the gossip spotlight.

Riley grins. Tara nods at Mina.

A graph appears, three lines trending up. One higher than the others.

TARA  
 The bottom line is our Instagram  
 growth. The middle line is our  
 TikTok growth. And the top line is  
 our web traffic growth.

RILEY  
 Okay?

TARA

We were pretty flatly at eight hundred thousand monthly visits. And then you started writing for us, and in the last few weeks, we're trending towards an expected one point two million this month.

RILEY

Wow. Sweet!

TARA

Yes. It is sweet. But now we need a new strategy.

RILEY

Strategy? Why?

Tara looks at Riley intently, cause her to squirm.

TARA

I've been doing this for years. You've been doing this for days. If. All of the sudden. People can pinpoint the *change* in my persona online based on your writing, then...

She pauses for Riley to answer, but she doesn't. Tara huffs.

TARA

My credibility, everything I've built. Puff. Gone. If I'm not authentic then I'm not interesting.

RILEY

Oh.

Right.

Tara nods to Mina. She switches the image on the TV.

Riley looks up, sees her picture in a web of blank faces.

TARA

We need more content, more sophistication, and more producers. So once we get to the next threshold, I need more of you.

RILEY

Okay? What does that mean? For me?

TARA

Nothing for now. I'm just giving you context because we're going to need more from you.

RILEY

Oh. Sure. Yeah. More work is fine by me.

TARA

Good.  
(nods to the door)  
That's all.

Riley doesn't move. She takes a deep breath.

TARA

Yes?

RILEY

More work... Means, more, um, money, right?

Mina whips her head to Riley and then at Tara. Tara looks shocked. And then smirks ever so slightly.

TARA

Oh?

RILEY

I just mean, it's...

Tara waves her off.

TARA

One point five. Three months in a row and we'll talk. That'll be all.

Riley nods and stands. She looks at Mina who's smiling. Riley starts to leave and pauses.

RILEY

Can I bring a friend to the party tonight?

MINA

You have a friend?

Riley ignores her and looks at Tara.

TARA

Give Mina your friend's name to add to the guest list.

Riley smiles and walks out. Tara looks at Mina.

TARA  
Mina. Please be nicer. To Riley.

Mina looks offended.

TARA  
But let's make sure she's in the...  
background. Not the foreground  
again.

Okay?

Mina's face goes blank.

MINA  
Of course.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Riley and Ari walk up to the front of the line.

ARI  
(whispers)  
Impressive.

RILEY  
We're on the list. Riley Vega. Ari  
Greer.

The DOORMAN looks at his clipboard. Shakes his head.

RILEY  
I'm here with Tara Rosewood.

The doorman shrugs. Riley looks at Ari frantic.

RILEY  
Will you look again?

The doorman ignores her. Riley looks inside to see if she recognizes anyone. Mina sees her and immediately turns away.

RILEY  
Mina!

Riley dials Mina. It immediately goes to voicemail. She texts her, but it stays unread.

RILEY  
What the hell?

DOORMAN

I need you to get in line, or get out of the way.

ARI

(to Riley)

What's going on?

RILEY

I don't know. But I think it has something to do with her.

Riley points at Mina, who's facing them but acting like she's not there.

INSIDE - BALCONY - LATER

RILEY

Tara! Hey, I'm here!

Tara looks up and then over at Mina.

Riley watches Mina come toward her.

MINA

(into Riley's ear)

There's no room for you and your friend at the main table tonight.

RILEY

(into Mina's ear)

Why wasn't I on the list?

MINA

Sorry, that was my fault. Tara needed a last minute add, and so I had to take you off. I should have warned you.

MINA

So you two can sit over there. It's mostly other assistants, but drinks are still free.

Riley looks over to a table filled with smartly dressed girls all staring at their phones.

RILEY

I'm not sitting with them.

ARI

Riley its fine. Let's just...

RILEY  
No... What the hell is this, Mina?

Mina looks at her, grins.

MINA  
I guess it's just a little  
reminder...

Mina turns and walks away, leaving Riley fuming, and Ari disappointed.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Riley and Ari walk in. Riley pauses and Ari walks past to the bathroom.

Riley sets her bag down in her "room". She kicks off her heels and meanders to the kitchen.

Ari comes out.

ARI  
Goodnight.

She immediately closes her bedroom door.

SYD  
You two have fun tonight?

Riley startles at Syd's voice.

RILEY  
Shit!

Yeah. No. I don't know.

Riley opens the fridge and leans in. She gets two beers, and holds one out to Syd.

He walks towards her and takes it.

RILEY  
Tonight was... Disappointing. What  
are you doing here?

SYD  
I live here. I could ask you the  
same thing.

RILEY  
I also live here.

SYD  
Doesn't feel like it lately.

Riley sits at the table.

RILEY  
God, yeah. It's been a lot the last few weeks.

Syd sits. He opens his beer and looks at Riley. He holds out his hand, and she hands him the beer to open.

SYD  
Where'd you go and why was it disappointing?

RILEY  
Some club in mid town.

SYD  
No fun?

Riley shrugs her shoulders and takes a long swig.

RILEY  
Not really. My boss's assistant was trying to make a point I think.

What did you do?

SYD  
Me? Nothing. Stayed in. I was working on a canvas. Couldn't get it right.

I like the new look by the way.

Syd points up and down.

RILEY  
Oh, god. Yeah.

SYD  
I'm serious. Didn't take you long to shed your Texas, um style...

Riley's eyes narrow.

RILEY  
My mama told me to tell you New Yorkers, don't mess with Texas.

Syd holds up his hands.

SYD  
If mama said so...

Riley takes another drink and coyly smiles back. She finishes the beer and stands.

She gets two more out of the fridge and looks at Syd.

RILEY  
Show me your canvas?

SYD'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Riley looks around his room.

RILEY  
I've never been in here.

The room has art and canvases all around. It's large, as big as the rest of the apartment, brick everywhere.

In the middle is a large velvet platform bed.

Syd sits on the edge of it as Riley inspects everything.

Finally, she looks at him.

SYD  
You wanna sit?

He nods next to him.

RILEY  
Umm.

Syd tries to hold back a smile. Riley slowly walks over and awkwardly sits next to him. She looks up at him and blushes.

RILEY  
I dunno, is this gonna be weird?  
After?

SYD  
Doesn't have to be.

She looks over at the open door.

Syd walks to it and shuts it.

SYD  
Is that okay?

Riley nods.

Syd stands there and takes off his shirt.

RILEY  
(under her breath)  
Shit.

She takes a swig.

SYD  
Your turn.

Riley finishes her beer and stands.

She sets the bottle down and then slides the straps of her dress off one shoulder at a time and lets it fall.

Riley stands there, facing Syd, in just her underwear.

RILEY  
Now what?

Syd turns off the lights and makes his way back to Riley.

Syd looks at her and she pauses.

RILEY  
What?

SYD  
Nothing.

Riley smiles.

RILEY  
What is it?

SYD  
You're just... Not who I expected  
when I met you...

Riley grins, whispers in his ear.

RILEY  
Good.

FADE TO:

THE NEXT MORNING

Riley opens her eyes to Syd looking down at her. He's sitting on the edge of the bed, dressed.

RILEY  
What time is it?

SYD  
Ten forty five.

Riley's eyes widen.

SYD  
You have work today?

Riley shakes her head.

SYD  
Brunch?

RILEY  
Do I have to leave this bed?

Syd smiles.

LATER

Riley and Syd are sitting in bed, food wrappers in front of them, an empty bottle of Champagne on the night stand.

RILEY  
Never really got the breakfast in bed thing until now.

Syd raises his eyebrows.

SYD  
Good. What now?

Riley leans into him seductively.

RILEY  
(whispers)  
Now? I need to use you again.  
(pauses)  
For your shower.

Riley pecks him on the cheek and gets up. She walks across the room into the bathroom and turns on the water.

INT. TARA'S HOME - MORNING

Riley passes out the coffees and sits down.

TARA  
Okay, we have three shoots, two parties, and another product launch this week. Riley, I also need a few holiday-related articles.

Mina stands and leaves.

Riley stands and clears her throat.

RILEY

Tara, did you read my short story?  
I was thinking it might be...

TARA

I read it. Some of it. I don't  
think we're the New Yorker quite  
yet. So shelve it.

INT. CAFE - AFTERNOON

Riley stands in line with Syd.

RILEY

And like I totally owe her a lot,  
obviously. But I know she didn't  
read it. Mina did, and just told  
her it was too... Something. It's  
so annoying.

SYD

What are you getting?

RILEY

Getting?

Syd points at the menu board.

RILEY

Oh, I don't know. Nothing. You?

SYD

I don't drink coffee, so I don't  
know what we're doing here if  
you're not getting a drink.

RILEY

Right. Well I'll get a tea then. So  
anyway, I just think I've made her  
site so much more interesting with  
my writing, and obviously other  
people think so too, because the  
monthly views have gone up like  
crazy. So why wouldn't she read  
something I sent her just because  
Mina said no?

SYD

Did you actually ask her about it?

RILEY

I did. She said, this isn't the New Yorker. Like no shit. But why not? Right? Like that's what I want to be. So just let me a little bit. Right?

Syd shrugs.

SYD

If that's what you want, send it to them.

RILEY

Send it to who?

SYD

To the New Yorker.

RILEY

No... Stop.

SYD

Why not?

Riley stares out. Syd clears his throat and nods for Riley to order. She looks around.

RILEY

Do you make blueberry matcha lattes?

The BARISTA looks at her, and slowly shakes his head "no".

Riley makes a face to Syd.

RILEY

Actually, I don't want anything.

Riley turns and walks away. Syd mouths "sorry" then follows.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Riley starts up the street, stops and turns to see Syd standing there. She waits for him to respond.

SYD

Yeah, um, gotta meet my dad, at the gallery.

RILEY

Oh. Um. Want me to go... With you?

Syd smirks, sadly.

SYD  
No. I'll save you from that.

RILEY  
I want to see it though!

SYD  
Yeah, you will. Next Tuesday with everyone else.

RILEY  
Ugh. Fine...

Riley gives him a poutty face.

SYD  
I'll see you at home, whenever that is...

Riley's phone buzzes. She looks down at it and slumps. She looks back up at Syd and shakes her phone at him.

RILEY  
Yeah, who knows when that will be. Good luck with your dad.

INT. SYD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Riley is in bed on her laptop. Syd walks in.

RILEY  
Oh my god, I did it!

SYD  
Did what?

RILEY  
I sent the story. To the New Yorker. Like you suggested.

SYD  
That was fast.

RILEY  
Yeah, well I just got home and decided to do it.

Riley closes her laptop and looks up at Syd, now noticing he's wearing a suit.

RILEY  
Oooh... Mr. Sullivan.

Syd looks down. Smiles.

RILEY

Fuck. The gallery opening. No. I'm awful. I...

Syd starts to undo his tie and take off his clothes.

RILEY

I'm so so sorry. I was working. It was a lot. And I just got back... How did it go?

Syd sits on the bed. Takes off his shoes and then lies back.

SYD

Not great. No one bought anything.

Riley crawls down to him.

RILEY

It takes time, doesn't it?

SYD

Know a lot about the art world?

RILEY

Nope. But I do know a little about artists. At least one artist in particular.

Riley kisses him. He's hesitant, but she drapes her arms around him and kisses his neck.

RILEY

I'm sorry I missed it. Let me make it up to you.

She bites his earlobe and he smiles.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAYS LATER

Riley walks in and sees Syd talking to an OLDER MAN.

He glances at her, looking sullen. She waves cheerfully, but he doesn't respond, just looks back at the man.

Riley walks around looking at his artwork.

She stops at a large canvas. In the middle is the figure of a woman in a dress looking out the window.

Syd stands beside her.

SYD

It's one of my favorites too.

RILEY

Is it...

SYD

You? No. Did that one way before I met you.

RILEY

Oh. She looks familiar. Ari?

SYD

Hah. No. She couldn't stand still long enough for a photograph.

RILEY

Hah, right. Who was that man, a buyer?

SYD

No.

RILEY

Oh, looked serious.

SYD

Yeah, it was I guess. My father.

She bats at him.

RILEY

You should've said something, I want to meet him!

SYD

Eh, he's not, it wasn't a social call. Told me to put the crayons down, so...

RILEY

Wow. Okay. I'm sorry.

(pauses)

If it makes you feel any better, The New Yorker rejected me already.

Syd considers her.

SYD

It's not really the same...

Riley plays it off.

RILEY

Duh, I know. Still sucks though, right? Ready to go?

INT. TARA'S HOME - LATER

Riley and Syd walk in to a party. Syd leans into Riley.

SYD  
This place is crazy.

RILEY  
Yeah. Her husband is a hedge fund  
guy or something like that.

SYD  
Of course.

ATTENDANT  
Can I take your coats?

LATER

Riley is drinking Champagne, Syd has a beer, and they're  
standing in the corner by themselves. Mina walks up to them.

MINA  
Who's this?

Riley smiles at her.

RILEY  
Syd, this is Mina. Tara's  
assistant. Mina, this is Syd...

MINA  
Syd. You look familiar, do I know  
you?

Syd doesn't respond.

RILEY  
He has an installation at the  
Standard Gallery.

MINA  
Hmmm... No, I don't think so.

Tara wants to talk to you. She's  
upstairs.

RILEY  
Now? Okay. Um, I'll be right back,  
you good?

MINA  
Syd's a big boy, he can be by  
himself for a few minutes.

Riley breathes in deeply and looks at Syd who nods.

TARA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Riley knocks on the door and walks in.

RILEY  
Hello? Tara?

TARA (O.C.)  
Back here.

RILEY  
Mina said you wanted to see me?

Riley walks back to the closet. Tara is sitting on a bench, she's wrapped in a towel.

RILEY  
What's going on, is everything okay?

TARA  
I don't know. I couldn't find anything to wear.

Riley looks puzzled.

RILEY  
I mean, you could wear anything and everyone will say how lovely you look.

TARA  
Hah. True. Maybe I'll go down in this fucking towel and see who still kisses my ass.

RILEY  
Is this... real?

TARA  
How the hell should I know. Maybe it is. Maybe I'm just bored.

Riley walks further in and looks at her clothes.

RILEY  
Well that's stupid. Nothing about your life is boring.

She pulls a dress down and holds it against herself. She sets it next to Tara.

RILEY  
How did you become Tara So Honest  
anyway?

Tara laughs.

TARA  
My husband thoughtfully said I  
needed a hobby that didn't involve  
spending his money.

RILEY  
Bras?

Tara points to a drawer.

RILEY  
So you started a blog?

Riley opens the draw and takes out a strapless bra, hands it  
to Tara.

TARA  
No. I started posting on Instagram  
to get free shit.

RILEY  
Underwear?

Tara shakes her head no.

RILEY  
So all this is just to get free  
stuff?

TARA  
Started that way. Feels good to  
earn more than everyone around me  
though. Especially the Mister.

Tara looks at her. She takes a deep breath. Her eyes narrow.

She stands and drops her towel. Riley immediately tries to  
hide her eyes.

TARA  
Grow up. You'd think by now a naked  
woman, and specifically my naked  
body wouldn't make you blush, but  
you're still a child.

Tara puts on the bra and picks up the dress that Riley  
picked out and looks at it. She shakes her head, hangs it  
back up, and picks out a different one.

As she straightens the new dress, she looks at Riley.

TARA

I need you to write that. Make me seem more vulnerable. More empathetic to regular people. We need a deeper audience without alienating the higher-end clientele. Understood?

Riley's eyes grow wide.

TARA

And fucking remember, you're writing me.

Tara slips on heels, looks Riley up and down. Grins.

TARA

You need a new hair style.

Riley touches her hair gently.

Tara applies lipstick in the mirror and walks out, leaving Riley standing there.

DOWNSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Riley walks up to Syd and Mina. Mina immediately leaves.

RILEY

Oh god, sorry if she...

SYD

No, she's... All bark.

RILEY

I dunno... Feels like she has a lot of bite too.

SYD

Should we get a drink?

RILEY

Honestly, can we just leave?

Syd looks at her and shrugs.

INT. APARTMENT - A FEW DAYS LATER

Riley walks in with a bunch of shopping bags. Ari squeals and Riley can't help but smile.

ARI

Can I?

Riley nods and Ari rushes over. She picks up the bags one by one inspecting the brand names on the outside.

RILEY

Where's Syd?

ARI

Out I think? He didn't tell you?

RILEY

What? No. I mean, maybe? I dunno, my brain is fried. I've been writing two or three articles a day for the website, and I can't think.

ARI

Right. Exciting, though, right? So I actually have a date tonight. Okay if I...?

She points at a bag.

RILEY

Yeah... Of course.

Ari takes a sweater out and puts it on.

ARI

Oh my god. Love. Love. Love. How do I look?

Ari poses.

RILEY

Perfect. When's the date?

Ari looks at her phone.

ARI

Shit, now!

She puts on a coat and waves as she rushes out the door, leaving Riley by herself.

RILEY

Bye...

Riley walks back to Syd's room, turns on the light and looks in at the empty space.

She turns off the light and walks back out to her "room", pulls the curtains shut.

THE NEXT NIGHT

Riley comes home to an empty apartment again.

RILEY

Hello?

No answer. She walks toward the kitchen and hears the fighting above her. She looks out to see Noah.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - MOMENTS LATER

Riley climbs out.

RILEY

Hey dude. How are ya?

Noah doesn't look up. She sits next to him.

RILEY

I've missed you the past few days...

NOAH

I've been staying with my aunt a bunch this week. She's not too far away.

RILEY

Oh. Is that good or bad?

Noah shrugs.

NOAH

You come out here to write? For that lady?

Riley winces.

RILEY

What's wrong, bud?

NOAH

Nothing.

The fighting behind them gets louder.

RILEY

Not getting better, huh?

NOAH  
No. Worse. I think...

He starts to tear up. Riley slides closer to him and rubs his shoulder.

RILEY  
It's okay, buddy. Something will change soon.

NOAH  
Yeah, they're gonna divorce and then I'm gonna have to move to New Jersey.

RILEY  
New Jersey?

NOAH  
That's where my friend Shane said all the divorced parents live because it's cheaper.

RILEY  
Oh. Well I don't know. It's hard to lose a job, but, something's gonna give, I know it.

The fighting stops and Noah looks up.

NOAH  
It doesn't feel like that. It just feels like...

RILEY  
Like what?

NOAH  
It feels like something bad is going to happen.

He stands and heads to the apartment.

NOAH  
Riley?

RILEY  
Yeah, Noah?

NOAH  
Thanks.

RILEY  
For what?

Before he answers, he's gone.

Riley opens her laptop, opens a blank document and starts typing: "Tara's thoughts" and pauses.

She opens another file. The title reads: "A Drop of Rain in Texas by Riley Vega"

She reads it for a moment and then stops. She looks back at Noah's apartment and huffs.

She goes to Tara's website, logs in, and uploads the article. She hovers her cursor over the word **POST**.

Finally she clicks it and can't help but smile.

EXT. STREET - THE NEXT MORNING

Riley walks confidently down the street when her phone starts to ring. She answers.

RILEY  
Hey Tara, I'm...

INT. TARA'S HOME - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tara is standing at her desk, Mina is seated, sipping a coffee, slight smirk on her face.

TARA  
Who the fuck do you think you are posting that fucking story on my site?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

Riley stops.

RILEY  
I...

TARA  
Mina said she showed you how to do it last week, and magically that stupid fucking story is on there.

RILEY  
I just thought...

Tara makes a guttural noise.

RILEY  
Tara, please. I'm a block away, we can figure this out...

INT. TARA'S HOME - OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Riley rushes in.

RILEY

Tara, I didn't mean any harm, I thought it would be good, for your brand.

MINA

Yeah right. My brand? Or yours?

Riley swallows hard. She slumps in a chair.

RILEY

Is it bad?

TARA

Not for you!

Riley looks up at her, shocked.

RILEY

Wha.. do you...

TARA

Most traction we've ever got on the site.

Riley looks between Tara and Mina.

RILEY

That's a good thing, though, right?

TARA

It was until I got a call from the New York Times asking for a comment.

RILEY

A comment?

TARA

Did you submit this to the New Yorker?

RILEY

Um, yeah, but that was rejected...

TARA

Well whoever read it, saw it on my site, and...

Tara nods at the screen. Mina has the article pulled up with the headline "Who is Riley Vega?" and the picture of her and Tara at the High Line.

RILEY  
I don't understand...

TARA  
They recognized your fucking article and did some snooping...

RILEY  
That Samantha lady?

TARA  
Yes, fucking Samantha. Well now everyone knows you're writing all my content. So what the fuck do you think I should do now?

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Riley is pacing as Syd and Ari stare at her, from the table.

RILEY  
This is nothing, right? Like she won't fire me. It'll just pass in like a day, right?

The door buzzes startles them and they all look over.

Syd gets up and walks to it.

SYD  
Hello?

REPORTER 1  
Hi, does Riley Vega live here?

SYD  
Who is this? How'd you get this address?

REPORTER 1  
Does she?

SYD  
No.

It buzzes again and Syd ignores it. He looks at the girls.

SYD  
I don't think this is going away.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - THE NEXT DAY

Riley walks out of the lobby and a FEW REPORTERS are milling about. They immediately run up to her.

REPORTER 1

Ms. Vega! How long have you been writing for Tara? Does she writing anything herself? Has she ever?

Riley rushes away and they follow her. Finally she turns.

RILEY

Leave me alone!!

They back up a set and Riley rushes off.

INT. HOTEL - LATER

Riley rushes in and sees Tara, Mina, and a dozen OTHERS setting up for a photo shoot.

RILEY

Sorry I'm late, there were a bunch of reporters at my apartment. How'd they know where I live?

TARA

Mind if we get started, or do you need more of the limelight?

Riley shrinks.

LATER

Tara is being photographed and the PHOTOGRAPHER stops.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Mind if we try something?

TARA

What's that?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Your assistants. Let's put them in the shot.

TARA

I only have one assistant, Mina.

Tara points to Mina.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Fine, Mina. And whoever she is.

She points to Riley who looks very uncomfortable.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Put you in a power role. Surrounded  
by other women.

TARA

Um, okay. Do we need to?

PHOTOGRAPHER

I've got the shots I need, this is  
just, playing. See if anything  
comes out of it.

The photographer waves the two over, and they reluctantly  
come over.

She arranges Tara in front of them and takes a few photos.

Then the photographer arranges Tara behind them and shoots.

Lastly, she staggers them, so Riley is in the front and Mina  
is in the back and takes a shot.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TARA'S HOME - OFFICE - A FEW DAYS LATER

Tara drops a magazine in front of Riley and Mina. The three  
of them posing together, except Riley is the one in focus.

TARA

Fucking New York Magazine.  
Congratu-fucking-lations.

RILEY

How was... I had nothing to do with  
this.

TARA

It was your god damn article.

Riley gulps.

RILEY

So what are we gonna do about it?

TARA

We? What the hell do you know about  
we? Mina and I now have to pivot.

Tara nods at Mina and the screen turns on with the website.

RILEY  
It looks the same.

TARA  
To you, maybe. But...

She nods again and Mina clicks on a tab that says "Contributors". When it opens, Riley's picture appears.

RILEY  
So I'm a contributor?

TARA  
Sometimes. We picked a few of the articles and attributed them to you.

RILEY  
Who's Angie White? And Rachel Stack?

TARA  
Other contributors.

RILEY  
But those are also my articles.

TARA  
Listen. This is the spin. We are making it look like we have many others writing for us, so it doesn't look like it's just you. Understood?

RILEY  
I guess?

Tara stares at Riley.

TARA  
I need you to be a little less, you, and a little more, not you.

RILEY  
What does that mean?

TARA  
It means I created you...

She points to Riley up and down.

TARA  
And I can get rid of you whenever I want.

(MORE)

TARA (CONT'D)

So you should be more grateful I haven't done that yet. Do you fucking understand??

Riley holds back tears.

TARA

Out, both of you.

Riley and Mina stand and walk out. Outside the office, Mina brushes past and then stops just ahead. She turns.

MINA

It would be a very good idea for you to keep this to yourself and play along. Tara doesn't deal well with people fucking up her sand castle.

RILEY

Maybe she shouldn't be building with fucking sand then!

Mina's eyes get wide, and Riley rushes past her.

EXT. TARA'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Riley rushes through the door onto the street and storms down the block. She turns the corner and then collapses along the wall, breathing heavy.

RILEY

Oh shit, shit, shit. What the fuck.

She finally takes a deep breath and pulls out her phone. She pulls up Syd's number and then decides against it.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - EVENING

Riley is sitting at the bar by herself, sipping on a beer. Theo comes up beside her.

THEO

Seat taken?

Riley looks at him and shrugs.

THEO

Riley Riley Riley... What are we gonna do with you?

Riley narrows her eyes and looks at him.

THEO  
Everyone here knows who you are and  
what's going on, dear.

The BARTENDER walks up to them.

THEO  
I'll have what she's having. And  
she'll have another.

RILEY  
Who are you?

THEO  
Who am I? Hmmm... I'm just a fan  
and a friend.

RILEY  
A fan of who?

THEO  
Anyone who's a threat to Tara So  
Honest.

Riley looks at him for a moment.

RILEY  
What do you want?

THEO  
Want? I don't want anything, dear.

RILEY  
I don't get it.

THEO  
This isn't the time or the place.  
But when you're ready...

Theo slides a business card towards her. The bartender sets  
down two beers. Theo picks one up and takes a sip. He  
grimaces and sets it back down.

THEO  
Never understood why anyone would  
want to drink that. Ta ta for now.

Riley picks of the card and looks at it. "**Theo Brown**" She  
turns it over and there's just a phone number. She puts it  
in her purse.

Mina walks up beside her.

MINA

Why were you talking to Theo?

Riley glances at her and then looks straight again.

RILEY

I wasn't.

MINA

I saw you.

RILEY

He stood next to me and ordered a drink, that's all.

Mina stares at her.

RILEY

Jesus, Mina, if you don't believe me, go ask him. I don't even know who he is.

MINA

Stay away from him. He's nothing but the SOHO gossip queen. Makes his money selling people out.

RILEY

Well I was sitting here and he came up to me. Ordered a drink, and walked away. Not much to gossip about unless someone cares what beer I drink.

MINA

We'll see...

SAMANTHA

Mina, darling. Aren't you just the cutest thing.

They both turn back and see Samantha staring at them.

SAMANTHA

Riley isn't it? We met at the pop-up. How are you?

MINA

I have to go.

Mina nods at Samantha and walks away.

SAMANTHA

I'm not afraid of a lot of people,  
but Mina...

Riley smirks. Samantha follows.

SAMANTHA

So Riley. How can I be of service  
to a burgeoning writer like  
yourself?

RILEY

Burgeoning?

SAMANTHA

Well yes. I'm sure Tara has her  
talons in you at the moment, but  
she'll let go eventually. She'll  
have to. Talent is talent.

(whispers)

Let me give you some free advice...  
People like Tara come and go, when  
their body and their image is their  
only asset, it fades. Ta ta for  
now.

Samantha leaves.

RILEY

Why is everyone saying ta ta?

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Riley walks in and kicks off her shoes. She walks to Syd's  
room and the door's closed, knocks but there's no answer.

Riley takes her phone out and calls him.

SYD (O.S.)

Hey, what's up?

RILEY

Where are you, I just got home.

SYD (O.S.)

Oh, I'm at a gallery opening. You  
should come.

RILEY

Nah... I'm gonna stay in. I'm  
tired.

SYD (O.S.)

Okay.

(MORE)

SYD (CONT'D)  
 (to someone else)  
 Hey, yeah, I remember. Give me a  
 second.  
 (to Riley)  
 Hey, sorry, you still there?

RILEY  
 Yeah.

SYD (O.S.)  
 Your, uh, coworker is here.

RILEY  
 My coworker? Mina?

SYD (O.S.)  
 Yeah, Mina.

RILEY  
 God, now I'm definitely staying  
 home. I'll let you go. See you  
 later?

SYD (O.S.)  
 Sorry, it's pretty loud in here.  
 I'm gonna go! Have a good night.

Syd hangs up.

RILEY  
 Of course.

INT. TARA'S HOME - THE NEXT DAY

Riley walks in to dozens of people re-staging her home. Mina  
 is in the kitchen with Tara and Riley approaches them.

RILEY  
 What's all this?

TARA  
 Holiday decor shoot.

RILEY  
 It's the beginning of October.

TARA  
 People need to see it before they  
 buy it. Don't be ignorant.

Mina's phone rings. She looks at Tara and walks away to take  
 it. Tara looks at Riley, who's less than enthusiastic.

TARA

Listen, Riley. I know this has all been... A lot. And, I really don't say this very often, but I'm sorry how I initially acted, and well. Let's just try to get back to where we were. It was working well for both of us, right?

Riley looks visibly relieved.

RILEY

Yes. God. Please. This has been a nightmare.

TARA

For both of us. Let's right the ship though. Get back to where we were headed.

RILEY

Yes, let's.

Mina walks back up to them, a snarl on her face when she looks at Riley.

TARA

What is it?

MINA

They all pulled out.

TARA

Who?

MINA

All of them. Hallmark, Pottery Barn, even fucking Bed Bath and Beyond.

TARA

What? Why?

MINA

Because of her.

TARA

Riley?

RILEY

Me?

MINA

Yes you. Everyone thinks our product is diluted, and now...

TARA

Mina, enough. Get Sebastian on the phone.

MINA

That's who I just talked to. He said he's putting fires out as fast as he can, but it just won't go away.

TARA

FUCCCCCKKKKK!

Everyone in the room stops.

LATER

The house is half-decorated, and only Tara and Mina remain. Mina sits at the kitchen island. Tara is pacing.

Riley walks in with a tray of coffees, and Tara goes to her quickly and takes one.

RILEY

That's mi...

Tara gives her a dirty look and Riley doesn't finish. She walks over to Mina and sets her cup down next to her.

RILEY

I was thinking on my way...

MINA

No one's paying you to think.

Riley looks to Tara for assurance and gets none.

RILEY

I don't know what I'm even doing here.

TARA

Why you're here? You're here to do whatever I say when I come up with the new plan. Because your little story got us into this mess, and you're gonna get us the fuck out of it.

EVENING

Tara is sitting in a chair. Riley is pacing, and Mina is in the same spot.

RILEY  
Can't we just get some different  
sponsors?

Tara and Mina look at her with disdain.

MINA  
What the fuck do you think I've  
been trying to do all day?

RILEY  
I literally have no idea what you  
do.

MINA  
No shit. You don't know anything.

TARA  
Out. Get the hell out, both of you.  
Now!

Mina rolls her eyes. Riley rubs her face and hangs her head.

THE NEXT MORNING

Riley walks into the house carrying a tray of coffees.

RILEY  
Hey... I had to go to Cartel, the  
line at Marseille was long.

She sees no one and gets no response.

RILEY  
Hello?  
  
What the f...

OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Tara and Mina are sitting when Riley walks in. Mina immediately closes her computer, stands, takes her coffee, and walks out of the room.

TARA  
Sit.

Riley watches Mina leave.

RILEY

I thought you said seven.

TARA

I did. Mina was here early  
because... Well because she's Mina.

Tara waives her off.

TARA

Don't worry about her. Sit. Please.

Riley sits and hands Tara a coffee.

TARA

Thank you.

She takes a sip.

TARA

Now. I thought about it last night  
and...

RILEY

Listen, if you have to fire me...

TARA

Stop. Please.

Tara takes a deep breath.

TARA

I'm not going to fire you. I'm not  
mad, I'm not anything. I just want  
to move forward. And the best way  
to do that is to keep moving  
forward.

So. Tomorrow, I'm finishing the  
shoot from yesterday out of pocket.  
And between now and then, I need  
you to get some articles, fiction,  
fashion, whatever, and send them  
over to Mina. We're going business  
as usual. Okay?

Riley nods.

TARA

Good. Now go. Write. Do what you're  
good at and I'm going to do what  
I'm good at.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - LATER

Riley is typing away when she hears Noah crawling out the window. He sits down next to her.

NOAH  
Hey Riley.

RILEY  
Hey kid.

NOAH  
What are you writing now?

RILEY  
A story about a kid on a fire  
escape?

NOAH  
Really?!

RILEY  
No. Hah. But maybe the next one.

NOAH  
Oh.

Noah sits in silence. Arguing gets louder in the background.

NOAH  
What would it be about?

RILEY  
Hmmm... Good question. Maybe he's a  
superhero?

NOAH  
Oh, cool, yeah! Like he can fly and  
fight and...

Riley's phone rings and she looks at it.

RILEY  
It's my mom. Okay if I answer?

NOAH  
Why you asking me?

Riley smiles and makes a face at him, then answers.

RILEY  
Hey mom.

MOM (O.S.)  
Oh Riley, honey, please tell me  
this isn't true, baby. Please!

RILEY  
What? Mom? What are you talking  
about?

MOM (O.S.)  
They said you copied someone else's  
writing. None of the stories are  
yours.

RILEY  
What? No. That's not true. Who said  
that?

MOM (O.S.)  
Oh honey. I'll send you the link.

RILEY  
Okay, mom. Let me look at it. I'll  
call you later.

MOM (O.S.)  
Love...

Riley hangs up and immediately clicks on the link her mom  
sent. She pulls up an article titled "Riley Vega's best  
writing isn't hers!".

RILEY  
What the hell!

Riley looks at Noah.

RILEY  
Sorry!

She stands up.

RILEY  
Sorry Noah, I gotta go.

Riley climbs into the apartment and throws her laptop on the  
couch. She calls Tara.

INT. TARA'S HOME - OFFICE - SAME TIME

TARA  
I saw it.

## INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

RILEY

It's not true!

TARA

I know. I know. It's just fluff.  
It's nothing. I'll take care of it.

RILEY

This is serious, like I didn't  
plagiarize!

TARA

Riley, calm down. Please.

RILEY

Fine. Okay. What should I do?

TARA

Nothing. It's nothing. I'll call  
some people and get it killed.  
Just. It's fine. Gotta go. Bye!

Tara hangs up.

Riley falls down into the couch and starts to tear up. She  
wipes her eyes and takes a deep breath, but can't hold it.

## INT. SPA - THE NEXT EVENING

Tara is getting dressed as Riley and Mina stand by.

TARA

Riley, make this post more salesy.  
They're giving a pretty good  
referral bonus, so I want to  
squeeze what we can out of it.

RILEY

Salesy?

TARA

Yeah, write something that makes  
people want to come here, spend the  
day.

RILEY

Okay...

Tara stands straight and adjusts her clothes in the mirror.

TARA

I have plans with the Mister for the rest of the day, but, I've booked a few treatments for you so you get the real experience.

RILEY

Me?

TARA

Both of you.

Riley and Mina look at each other. Riley raises her eyebrows. Mina almost looks excited.

TARA

Yes. Enjoy.

LATER

Riley and Mina are getting messages next to one another, laying face down.

RILEY

Can I ask you something?

MINA

Do I have a choice?

RILEY

I this what you wanted to do when you moved to New York?

MINA

Get a free message at a high end day spa?

RILEY

You know what I mean.

MINA

No.

RILEY

What did you want to do?

Mina lifts her head.

MINA

I'm good thanks. Can I do the facial now?

The MASSEUSE nods and points to the doorway. Mina gets up, covering herself with the towel and follows her out.

Just before she leaves she pauses.

MINA

I... Like you... Wanted to be a  
writer. But that didn't work out.

Mina leaves. Riley lifts her head and looks to the doorway.

Her face reveals a wide array of thoughts.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Riley sits on the couch, staring out the window. Ari and Syd  
walk into the apartment, and Riley bolts up.

RILEY

Hey! Where were you?

Ari and Syd look at each other and then back at Riley.

SYD

What are you doing home?

RILEY

Me? A girl can't just be at her  
apartment?

SYD

Sure but...

ARI

But you haven't been. At least not  
during the day.

RILEY

Well I am. Let's do something!

Ari and Syd hesitantly get excited.

ARI

Now?

RILEY

Yes!

Ari looks at Syd who smiles. She shrugs.

ARI

Okay!

INT. BAR - LATER

Riley, Ari, and Syd are all sitting at a table. Riley looks  
drunk. Ari and Syd look bored/annoyed.

RILEY  
Yeah, so basically her only  
redeeming quality is a rich husband  
and a wildly impressive body.

ARI  
You've seen her body?

Riley snorts.

RILEY  
Oh my god, like have I seen it.  
She's constantly naked. Like all  
the time. She would make fun of me  
for trying to give her some  
privacy. Like I've seen people  
naked before, I'm just tryin' to be  
polite, ya know?

Riley finishes her beer and raises the empty glass at the  
bartender who ignores her.

RILEY  
Sorry, I'm done talking about my  
shit show. What's going on with you  
two? I feel like I haven't talked  
to you for weeks.

Ari looks at Syd.

ARI  
Yeah. Well. Actually, I got cast in  
a pilot. And...

RILEY  
Wait. Wait wait wait. Did I know  
you were an actress?

ARI  
Every waiter in New York and LA is  
an actor.

RILEY  
Oh. Right. So wait, you're gonna be  
on a TV show?

ARI  
If it goes ahead. But yeah!

RILEY  
Wow! That's amazing.

Riley stares at Syd.

RILEY  
And what about you. Mister.

Syd smiles slightly.

SYD  
Honestly. Nothing really. Nothing  
as exciting as the two of you  
anyway.

RILEY  
Come on, dude. You got your show,  
the gallery, right? Anything  
happening there?

ARI  
I think I'm gonna get us another  
round.

RILEY  
Yes, good idea!

Ari leaves to the bar.

RILEY  
You didn't answer my question.  
Sydney.

SYD  
I basically did. Nothing is  
happening.

RILEY  
No one likes your paintings? I like  
you paintings. Especially the girl.

SYD  
Yeah. Well. That makes two of us.

RILEY  
So then what?

SYD  
What do you mean?

RILEY  
Like what's the next move, what are  
you gonna do? You can't not work  
forever, right?

Ari comes back and places three bottles on the table. Riley  
immediately picks on up and takes a long drink.

RILEY

Tell him, Ari. If it ain't working, as some point, he's gotta do something else right? Gotta pay the rent.

Ari looks at Syd who looks away from the table.

RILEY

What?

ARI

What?

RILEY

No. What was that... That look. And why'd you look away? Everyone's gotta pay rent, so eventually if your shit's not selling, you need to do something else, right?

SYD

I'm gonna get some air. I'll be outside.

Syd leaves. Ari looks embarrassed. Riley confused.

RILEY

What the hell was that?

ARI

You sound like his dad.

RILEY

Who's dad?

ARI

Syd's.

RILEY

How? Who's his dad?

ARI

His dad owns like half of our street. Owns the whole building we live in. He's constantly telling Syd to give up and do something that makes money. He's kind of a dick.

RILEY

Wait. What? The whole building? Why does Syd have roommates if he owns the place??

Ari shrugs.

ARI  
He just doesn't want to live alone.

RILEY  
But I sleep on the fucking couch.

ARI  
You decided to stay. You could  
leave anytime you want.

Riley sits back.

RILEY  
The gallery?

ARI  
Syd's.

RILEY  
Jesus.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Syd and Ari help Riley through the door. She's half  
conscious, laughing.

RILEY  
Could've been worse.

They lay her on the couch. She's still smiling, eyes closed.

RILEY  
Could've been the fifth floor. Good  
thing your dad let you have this  
one!

Syd looks at her and storms away.

ARI  
Syd, she's drunk!

Ari looks at Riley who's laughing and pulls the curtain  
across the room.

FADE TO:

MORNING

Riley opens her eyes and looks around.

RILEY  
Damn.

She slowly stands and walks out of her "room". On the other side of the curtain, she sees Ari sitting at the table.

RILEY

Hey.

Ari doesn't look up.

ARI

Hey. There's coffee.

RILEY

Cool. Thanks. Where's Syd?

ARI

Have some coffee.

LATER

Riley is sipping on her coffee, slightly more upright.

Ari puts her phone down and looks at Riley.

ARI

So I don't want to make this like a thing. But we think maybe you should look for a new place.

Riley's eyes get wide.

RILEY

Okay...

ARI

It's just. Obviously he doesn't need the extra money for rent. And like now we don't have a living room. So...

RILEY

So you're kicking me out?

ARI

No. Um. Not exactly. Just, you need to start looking. It's fine for a few more weeks. But...

RILEY

But then you're... He's kicking me out.

They're quiet for a moment.

ARI  
I don't know what you expected.

RILEY  
Me? What did I do?

Ari gets up and walks away.

ARI (O.C.)  
Ask him.

INT. TARA'S HOME - LATER

Riley walks in clearly hungover to a house being decorated.  
No one pays attention to her.

TARA  
You look awful.

RILEY  
Thanks.

TARA  
No no no. Go home. Get a shower,  
get changed. Get out of...

She motions up and down.

TARA  
This. We don't start for three more  
hours. Come back when you look like  
someone who should work for me.

MINA  
She should stay home, she looks  
disgusting.

Tara ignores her.

MINA  
I can write a draft of this and  
send it to her to finish.

Tara looks at Mina, confused.

TARA  
No. I need you to help with  
directions. She's the writer.

Tara looks at Riley.

TARA  
You. Go. Back in two.

INT. APARTMENT

Riley walks out of the bathroom in a towel, hair wet, but she looks much more alive than before.

The screaming above is loud. Riley frowns.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE

Riley sticks her head out and looks around, sees no one.

NOAH (O.C.)

Down here.

Riley steps out and looks down at the staircase below and sees Noah sketching.

RILEY

Why you down there?

NOAH

Perspective.

Riley climbs out and down the stairs to Noah.

RILEY

Big word for a ten year old.

NOAH

My art teacher said all my drawings are from the same perspective and I should move to a different point of view.

RILEY

Yeah.

There's a loud banging sound from above. Riley looks up, but Noah does not.

RILEY

Getting worse?

Noah doesn't answer.

RILEY

Sorry kid. I gotta get back to work, but maybe I can take you to the park or something. Draw from a whole new place.

Noah doesn't respond. Riley tousles his hair and gets up.

She half way up the stairs when Noah looks back.

NOAH

Riley?

Riley pauses and looks at him.

RILEY

Yeah, bud.

NOAH

If I left, would you go with me?

RILEY

Left?

NOAH

Ran away. Would you go with me?

RILEY

You wanna run away?

NOAH

Sometimes.

RILEY

Yeah, me too. Sure kid, I'll go with you.

INT. TARA'S HOME - LATER

Riley walks in looking upbeat and much more presentable.

The home is beautifully done in red and tan, with green accents to go with her plants all around.

RILEY

Oh my god, Tara, this place is...

TARA

Come with me, to my office. Now.

Riley winces, and immediately looks worried.

OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Tara, Riley, and Mina walk in and all take a seat.

TARA

Riley, you're fired.

Riley looks shocked. Mina smirks slightly.

RILEY

Fired? What? But why???

TARA  
You plagiarized.

RILEY  
No I didn't. I thought you were  
gonna take care of that.

TARA  
Yes. I tried. I trusted you, but...

Tara nods to Mina, who opens her computer and projects a  
website on the wall.

TARA  
Mina found this.

Riley looks up to see a blog from a girl named "Mindy  
McKee". Her picture is in a field with flowers and she's  
wearing a white sundress.

RILEY  
Who is that?

TARA  
I don't know, you tell us.

RILEY  
What's going on here?

MINA  
You stole half your stories from  
this girl and sent them to me as  
your own. That's what's going on.

RILEY  
No! I wrote those articles, all of  
them! I promise! This is not right.

Mina starts to say something and Tara holds up her hand.

TARA  
(softly)  
Please don't make this a thing. We  
are more than willing to keep this  
quiet so long as you take your  
things and go.

RILEY  
But I...

TARA  
Please, Riley. This is embarrassing  
enough for all of us. Let's just  
move on.

Riley starts to tear up. She stands, takes a breath and walks out of the room.

Mina opens her mouth to say something and Tara stops her.

Riley comes rushing back in.

RILEY

Tara. I don't know what the fuck this is, but I didn't copy ANYONE'S work. And I didn't post that fucking article. So maybe you should look at your fucking assistant who has her dirty hands all over this!

Before anyone can respond, she storms out again.

TARA

(calmly and quietly)  
Take the site down before she digs into it.

INT. FIRE ESCAPE - EVENING

Riley sits with her laptop in front of her, scrolling through the Mindy McKee website.

She types in her name and looks at a few news articles accusing her of plagiarism.

RILEY

How did they get this so fast? No no no... Oh god.

NOAH (O.C.)

What's wrong?

Riley starts. She looks up at Noah and slumps. He sits down next to her.

RILEY

I lost my job. My apartment. My life here. Everything. Like..

She snaps her fingers.

RILEY

All because of some spiteful b...

She looks at Noah and stops.

RILEY  
Sorry, just a really bad day. Week.  
I dunno.

Riley sighs.

NOAH  
Who's Mandy McKee?

RILEY  
Mindy. Mindy McKee. And I have no  
idea, but she stole all my articles  
and everyone's convinced I stole it  
from her. So...

NOAH  
Did you?

RILEY  
No! Geeeeez....

Noah looks down bashfully.

NOAH  
Sorry...

Riley stands.

RILEY  
Ugh, I can't do this right now.  
Sorry, it's not your fault. I  
just... Can't. Have a good night.

INT. APARTMENT - A DAY LATER

Syd walks in to see Riley sitting at the table with her  
computer in front of her.

SYD  
Hello...?

Riley looks up, relaxes a moment, and then stiffens again.

RILEY  
You come in here to pour more salt?  
Or is that just what you have Ari  
do for you?

Syd frowns.

SYD  
I...

RILEY

Just save it. I'm... Going home.

SYD

For the holidays?

RILEY

For good. This, New York... it's just. It's cold here. Everyone is.

I lost my apartment and then I lost my job, all for what? I didn't even do anything wrong.

SYD

You lost your job?

RILEY

Yeah, that asshole Mina did it.

Syd's brow furrows. He starts to say something but stops.

SYD

Mina? Are you sure?

RILEY

Yes I'm fucking sure. She's had a vendetta against me from the beginning.

SYD

Vendetta?

Do you hear yourself?

Like Riley, you're not the victim here. You moved to New York, immediately found a nice place.

RILEY

A fucking sofa.

SYD

Yeah. Fine, a sofa, but a sofa in SOHO, for half the price of any other place you could get. A sofa in a great building, in a great flat, with two perfectly normal roommates.

And then you find a job after what, thirty minutes of looking?!

(MORE)

SYD (CONT'D)

The guy upstairs has been looking for over a year, but you fall into this amazing opportunity.

RILEY

Fall??? I didn't fall. I earned that job. I've been writing for a long time.

SYD

Lots of people have been doing their passions for a long time and have gotten no where...

RILEY

Like you?

The words sting and they both sit in it for a moment.

SYD

I guess Mina isn't the only one with a bite...

RILEY

Syd, I'm sorry, I didn't mean...

SYD

Yeah. Riley doesn't mean anything she says. Like all great writers.

Syd shakes his head and walks back to his room.

Riley lets out a guttural scream.

FADE OUT.

INT. APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

Riley's phone chimes. She pulls it out and opens the bank app. Her account balance is **\$262.55**. She looks at her most recent transactions:

Manhattan Rental Agency - \$1,500.00

RILEY

Shit.

LATER

Riley scrolls on her phone and looks up, instead of arguing, she hears a loud thump.

She walks over to the window and looks around. Seeing nothing, she climbs out.

RILEY  
Noah? Everything okay?

She's alone. She hears a familiar voice, Noah's dad, yellowing down on the street and she leans over.

In front of the building, a large Uhaul. Noah's dad is scolding a mover. Noah is standing beside him mom.

RILEY  
Noah!

He looks up, but he's immediately ushered into a car.

RILEY  
Noah...

Riley crumples down and cries.

THE NEXT EVENING

Riley walks out of her "room", dressed up. Ari looks at her.

ARI  
Where are you going?

RILEY  
I don't know. Not here. Do you maybe want to go with me?

Ari looks at her and softens.

ARI  
Sure.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Riley and Ari walk along, quietly.

RILEY  
Shit, isn't this the street Syd's gallery is on? We should go in.

ARI  
I don't know... He's probably not even there.

RILEY  
He's always there. Come on...

INT. ART GALLERY - MOMENTS LATER

Riley and Ari walk in, and begin to take off some layers. A HOST approaches them.

HOST  
Hi there. Can I help you with something?

RILEY  
We're roommates with Syd. Is he around?

The host nods.

HOST  
Of course, I'll let him know you're here.

The host walks off.

RILEY  
Have you been here?

ARI  
Yeah, of course.

RILEY  
Which one's your favorite?

ARI  
I dunno...

RILEY  
I love this one over here.

Riley walks quickly to the picture of the woman, Ari hesitates, but slowly follows from a distance.

RILEY  
(looking at the painting)  
It's just, I don't know, she's so beautiful.

MINA (O.C.)  
Aww... Thank you!

Riley turns quickly.

RILEY  
What are you doing here?

MINA  
Just admiring... Myself.

Mina points to the canvas.

RILEY  
No fucking way.

MINA  
(quietly)  
Keep your fucking voice down, this  
is an art gallery not a fucking  
rodeo.

RILEY  
You have got to be fucking kidding  
me.

Syd walks up cautiously. He stands next to Mina. She looks at him, smiles, and takes his hand. She dramatically rests her head on his shoulder.

MINA  
You didn't think... Oh no. You did.

SYD  
Mina, stop. Please.

Ari stands in the corner watching. Riley looks at her.

RILEY  
You knew?

Ari shrugs apologetically.

RILEY  
Jesus. To hell with all of you. You  
can all have each other!

Riley storms out. Syd looks at Mina and runs after Riley.

MINA  
Don't be too long, we'll be late  
for our reservation.

EXT. ART GALLERY

SYD  
Riley! Wait! Please.

Riley turns, tears streaming down.

RILEY  
What the hell is this? I mean  
seriously, her?

SYD

Mina and I have been, I dunno...  
It's a long story. We started  
talking again after Tara's party.  
And...

RILEY

Oh my god, I'm so stupid. That's  
what that was. I'm such an idiot.  
And you. What kind of person are  
you???

SYD

Woah. Hey. That's not fair.

RILEY

What's not fair?

SYD

How is she so different than you?

RILEY

Mina? Are you serious? First of  
all, she doesn't care about anyone  
but herself.

SYD

And you do?

Riley is struck.

SYD

Yeah. You used me. You act all  
innocent but you're not. And then  
you got busy and what? You've been  
in New York how long now. Do you  
have any friends? Have you done  
anything for anyone except Riley?  
No. So judge Mina all you want, but  
at least everyone knows where she  
stands. You, you just cover up  
selfish with a Texas drawl.

Syd turns and walks back into the gallery, leaving Riley by  
herself, stunned.

After a moment, Riley's face contorts. She turns and starts  
to march away.

MONTAGE OF RILEY WALKING

EXT. STREET

Riley's phone starts to ring and she pulls it out of her pocket to see her Mom calling. She answers.

RILEY

Hey mom...

MOM (O.S.)

Baby, what's wrong?

RILEY

How'd you know?

MOM (O.S.)

Oh come on now, a mama always knows, baby. I can hear it in your voice, feel it in my heart. What's the matter?

Riley starts to tear up.

RILEY

I... I just... I think I need to come home.

MOM (O.S.)

Home? But you're in the big city living your big dreams.

RILEY

Huh. Some dream. I got fired today and my roommates want me to move out and I'm totally broke, and the guy I was kinda seeing is... It's all just a mess.

MOM (O.S.)

Ohhh. Well. That sounds like you're livin' to me. Everything ain't always gonna be rainbows, love.

RILEY

No mom, you don't understand. I didn't do anything wrong.

MOM (O.S.)

Hmmm...

I love you, darlin'. I do. But I ain't never heard someone have that many issues at one time and it be all because of someone else.

RILEY

But...

MOM (O.S.)

No buts, baby. You figure it out. What you did wrong, or what you need to fix, and fix it. I believe in you more than I believe in anything in the whole wide world. But darlin' I know you're a pain in the ass, just like your mama.

Riley giggles.

RILEY

I don't want to be.

MOM (O.S.)

That makes one of us.

Her mom cackles, and Riley smiles.

MOM (O.S.)

Now why don't you go get yourself one of those big floppy pieces of pizza you see in the movies, make yourself feel better. And then go on and figure out what do next. Okay, baby.

RILEY

Okay, mom. I love you.

MOM (O.S.)

Oh baby, I love you so much you don't even know! Now go on...

RILEY

Okay. I will. Bye.

MOM (O.S.)

Bye bye baby.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Riley walks up the stairs, taking bites of what's left of a piece of pizza. As she approaches the door to her apartment, she sees a book on the floor.

She picks it up and hugs it, tears in her eyes.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Riley walks in, places the book next to shopping bags full of new, unworn clothing. She looks around.

Ari's door is closed. Syd's is open, but dark. She starts to undress and goes into the bathroom.

BATHROOM - SHOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Riley stands under the shower and cries.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - LATER

Riley sits, staring. She's wrapped in a thick blanket, hair still slightly wet.

Her phone rings and she looks at it; Tara.

She hesitates and then answers.

RILEY

Yeah?

TARA (O.S.)

Rileyyyy... How are you doing?

RILEY

What do you want Tara?

TARA (O.S.)

We've both had a few days to...  
Decompress.

INT. TARA'S HOME - SAME TIME

Tara is sitting at her kitchen island in a mostly dark house, with a glass of white wine in front of her.

TARA

It was a lot, ya know? And now,  
it's time for us to get back to  
work.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

RILEY

Us? What do you mean?

TARA

I mean... We're good together.  
You're writing makes my brand  
better, and, well... I give you the  
opportunity.

RILEY

The opportunity for what? To take my voice?

TARA

Take your voice? I gave you a voice. I gave you a point of view. I gave you experience and exposure, and something to write about. No one cares about a little girl from Texas. But a woman in New York, making something of herself? I see me... Young me. In you. And now, I want to see your flourish.

RILEY

You need me.

TARA

I don't need anyway. Don't misread this situation. I'm offering you and opportunity to come back.

RILEY

Yeah.

TARA

So... What do you say? There aren't better offers for you out there. Not yet anyway.

Riley slumps.

TARA

I'm getting ready to go to a party tonight. Join me. As my guest.

RILEY

Guest?

TARA

Yeah, like... just the two of us. Not for work, for... Fun.

RILEY

I don't know.

TARA

I'm not going to beg you. But I would like you to join me. I'll send you the location and see you there.

Tara hangs up. She takes a sip of her wine.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - MOMENTS LATER

Riley stares at her phone as a pin comes from Tara: "Union Club. Dress appropriately. 1 hour"

Slowly she stands. She looks out a moment and then turns.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Riley climbs in and puts the blanket on the couch. She looks through the bags of new clothes and sees the sketchbook.

She picks it up and starts to flip through, sketch after sketch. People from the building, people on the street, and then she gets to a sketch of her, and her breath catches.

In the drawing, she is looking out, wearing the dress she first wore the night of The Row party. The other side of the window from Syd's painting.

In the picture, Riley's smiling, excited.

She touches it gently and mirrors the smile.

After a moment, she flips back through quickly, and pauses.

She rushes over for her computer, brings it to the table and starts typing furious. She smiles as she does, occasionally stopping to flip through the book at other pictures.

LATER

Riley is still typing furiously when her phone rings. She looks down to see Tara calling. She silences it.

A moment later, a text from Tara: "on your way?"

LATER

Riley is reading her work. She gets to the end and scrolls up, pages and pages of writing. She smiles.

Riley's phone lights up next to her, revealing another missed call from Tara.

INT. CAFE - A FEW DAYS LATER

Riley sips on a giant cappuccino in a ceramic mug, watching the people on the street.

SAMANTHA

Ahhh, Riley, so sorry I'm late.

Riley turns to see Samantha, breathless.

RILEY

It's okay, I've got no where to be.  
You want something to drink?

SAMANTHA

Me? No, I gave up coffee in the  
nineties, dear.

RILEY

They have tea too.

Samantha waves her off and sits across from her.

RILEY

So?

SAMANTHA

So. First of all, I loved the  
story, it was cute and funny and,  
well, adorable. The Boy on The Fire  
Escape - just, how did you come up  
with that?

Riley shrugs.

SAMANTHA

I passed it around in my circle,  
and I got mixed reactions. Some  
good. Some not so good.

Riley nods.

SAMANTHA

If I'm being honest, it's just not  
something that anyone is buying  
right now. There's no place to...  
Put it.

Riley slumps.

SAMANTHA

I've read all of your stuff on  
Tara's website, and I obviously  
read this, and while it was fun and  
whimsical. You're not a young adult  
writer.

RILEY

Yeah.

SAMANTHA

But you must must must keep writing, and I will continue to put your stuff out there until something good happens. Okay?

RILEY

Yeah. Okay.

Riley sips her coffee, pensively.

SAMANTHA

Hey hey, none of that. You're not a feel sorry for yourself kind of girl. You hear me?

Riley smiles.

SAMANTHA

I do have one bit of good news though... Well potentially.

Riley perks up.

SAMANTHA

The drawings. You said they were by your neighbor?

RILEY

Yeah, Noah.

SAMANTHA

Do you perhaps have his contact information? Or his parents?

INT. ART GALLERY - LATER

Riley walks in and Syd sees her immediately. He's talking to two people, looking at one of the paintings. He holds up a finger to her and she nods.

MOMENTS LATER

Riley is staring at the painting of Mina when Syd walks up to her.

RILEY

It's still my favorite, unfortunately.

SYD

Riley, I'm sorry, I...

RILEY  
No. Please. It's okay. You were  
kinda right about some things. I  
needed to hear it.

They are both silent for a moment.

SYD  
Did you want something?

Finally Riley turns from the painting and looks at him.

RILEY  
Yes. The neighbors, upstairs. The  
couple that fought all the time?

SYD  
The Dempsey's?

RILEY  
Sure. Do you have a phone number  
for them?

SYD  
Yeah, of course. Why?

EXT. SMALL HOME - DAY

Riley gets out of a car.

RILEY  
Thanks.

She shuts the door and the car takes off. She walks up to  
the front door and knocks.

She turns and looks around the neighborhood. Seems idyllic.

After a moment Noah's mom answers.

MRS. DEMPSEY  
Hello?

RILEY  
Hi, Mrs. Dempsey? I'm Riley Vega. I  
kinda know your son, Noah.

She looks at Riley questioningly. Noah approaches and rushes  
past her and gives Riley a big hug.

NOAH  
Riley!

RILEY

Hey kid.

Noah pulls back.

NOAH

What are you doing here?

MRS. DEMPSEY

Yeah, what are you doing here?

RILEY

Can I come in?

INT. SMALL HOME - LATER

Riley sits at a table with Mrs. Dempsey and Noah. His sketchbook that he left for Riley lying in front of them.

RILEY

So. I wrote the story, and included some of his drawings, and while no one was impressed with *my* work. They were impressed with Noah's.

Noah grins. Mrs. Dempsey looks hesitant.

MRS. DEMPSEY

So what does that mean?

RILEY

I don't know exactly.

Riley pulls a card from her purse and slides it over to Mrs. Dempsey. She looks down at it like it's diseased.

RILEY

This is the information for Samantha Brooks. She sent my story out to her contacts. She's an editor for page six.

MRS. DEMPSEY

The gossip magazine?

RILEY

Yep. Believe me, I was hesitant too, but through that she knows A LOT of people. I don't know what if anything that will come of this. But it doesn't hurt to reach out, right?

MRS. DEMPSEY

I guess not.

RILEY

Well I have to get going, but I'm glad I got to see Noah, and get this over to you.

MRS. DEMPSEY

Yeah. Thank you.

NOAH

Thanks Riley!

RILEY

Of course kid.

Riley stands, and Mrs. Dempsey does as well.

NOAH

Riley?

RILEY

Yeah?

NOAH

What about you, are you still writing for that lady?

RILEY

No. Just for myself now.

NOAH

Good.

Riley smiles.

RILEY

Yeah.

EXT. TARA'S HOME

Riley stands at the entrance and hits the button labeled "Apt. 1 - Rosewood".

MINA

Yes?

RILEY

Mina, it's Riley.

Theo leans in past Riley.

THEO  
And Theo. Let us in.

INT. TARA'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Mina escorts Riley and Theo inside, and Tara, who's arranging fake presents under a tree looks up.

THEO  
Tara, darling. We need to talk.

OFFICE - LATER

Theo and Riley are seated. Tara is across from them and Mina is standing in the corner. Theo points at a piece of paper on Tara's desk.

THEO  
So, as you can see here, there's no stipulation on the RPM being paid out. Now obviously we don't have the exact numbers, but Riley said something around four hundred thousand additionally monthly views since she came on. For what, six weeks?

Tara is silent.

THEO  
And here...

He points at a different page.

THEO  
We have the RPM rate of twelve cents. So I believe you own my client a decent sum of money.

MINA  
Your client?

RILEY  
Yes. Theo is an attorney, contract law. Specializes in artists and creative contracts. Who knew? Well, I guess I did.

MINA  
She's not paying you anything, there's no proof.

Theo smiles. Riley smiles.

TARA  
Twenty five.

MINA  
Seriously? She didn't even do anything.

TARA  
Mina. Stop.

THEO  
I don't think twenty five is gonna do, darling. See, that barely covers my cost. And of course, we could just take this to court and have this all sorted officially. Dig into those books and numbers. We'd be obligated to report anything we find.

TARA  
How much?

Theo looks at Riley in a dramatic way.

THEO  
Oh. Well should we add in the wrongful termination part?

RILEY  
And the fraud, you were mentioning fraud of some kind? Mindy McKee?

THEO  
Oh right right right. Yes.

TARA  
How much?

THEO  
Let's say seventy five. And you take down all of Riley's writing.

TARA  
Fine. One twenty five. But the writing stays.

THEO  
Oooh. No, no, no. I'm not sure that's going to work. Future residuals, and well, Riley's really suffered through all this. Isn't that right?

Riley makes a sad face at Theo. He frowns

THEO  
There there, darling.

They both look at Tara. Faces straighten.

THEO  
One fifty.

TARA  
Fine. That's all?

Riley leans over and whispers in Theo's ear. He smiles.

THEO  
One last thing...

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - DAY

Riley is sitting at a desk facing the window, typing on her computer. The door buzzes and she looks over at it.

She walks to the buzzer and presses the button.

THEO  
It's me dear.

Riley buzzes him in.

MOMENTS LATER

Riley opens the door and Theo walks in holding an envelop.

He makes a grand gesture of presenting it to her and then looks around.

THEO  
You've settled in nicely.

RILEY  
Thank you, there's just something to be said about a rent-controlled one bedroom apartment without any roommates.

THEO  
Ahh, yes there is. Nice of Mr. Sullivan.

RILEY  
Yeah, well makes up for selling me a living room for rent on the internet.

Theo grins.

RILEY  
So this is the check?

THEO  
That it is.

RILEY  
And it's all for me. I mean, I  
don't owe you anything else?

THEO  
All for you, darling.

Riley sets the envelop down on the desk.

RILEY  
Can I get you something, a drink  
or...?

THEO  
No, no, I'm off to a bougie party  
filled with celebrities. Would you  
like to come?

RILEY  
Me? No. I've had my fill.

THEO  
Ah, well when you're ready to come  
back, you just let me know.

Theo turns to the door.

RILEY  
Theo?

THEO  
Yes, darling?

RILEY  
Why? Did you help me?

He pauses.

THEO  
Well. I met Tara several years ago.  
My nephew worked for her as an  
assistant. Before Mina.

RILEY  
Oh? What happened?

THEO

Well. Not unlike you, he was pushed out for taking too much spotlight. But unfortunately for him, there wasn't enough to do anything about it. So I just waited and then you came along. And as you were getting noticed, I, um, paid more attention.

RILEY

Wow. That's... I'm sorry for your nephew.

THEO

Oh don't be. He's tall and handsome and everything works in his favor now. Wonderful boy, but not a care in the world.

RILEY

Must be nice.

THEO

It is, darling. It is, but I'm certain you will know soon enough what that's like.

RILEY

I don't know about that.

THEO

Oh pish posh. You have talent. It's there. Anyway, off I go. Enjoy your evening, and do something good with that money.

RILEY

Pay rent?

THEO

Well yes, but maybe something else too. Treat yourself.

RILEY

Okay, I'll think about it. Thanks for coming by.

Riley walks him to the door. Just after he walks out Riley shouts to him.

RILEY

Theo, is the article up?

THEO (O.C.)  
Should be!

Riley shuts the door and walks over to her computer. She opens up the Tara So Honest website, and there, front page is a "Letter to my Fans."

"First and foremost, I want to apologize to my previous employee and friend, the writer Riley Vega. The actions that Mina Mills took against her were inappropriate and wrong. And it happened on my watch..."

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END