

TEASER

FADE IN

MILAN, ITALY - SEPTEMBER 1984

INT. BELLA MODELING AGENCY - MAIN ROOM

The agency is spacious, brightly lit, modern in design. Two walls are lined from floor to ceiling with rows of model composites. THROUGH THE WINDOWS, century old buildings layered in a patina of black soot are visible.

A large circular desk in the center of the room is manned by MARCELLA, (36). Her make-up is meticulously applied on a face etched with deep lines of anger and disappointment. She smokes while adding casting information on work charts.

ANTONIA, 26, sits next to Marcella, sorts a stack of head-shots. Her dress is modest, her presence low key. She wears no make-up to enhance her plain features.

CLAUDIO CONTE', (37), ex-model handsome, impeccably dressed, enters, tosses three composites on the counter in front of Marcella. (Conversation in Italian, English subtitles.)

CLAUDIO

When are these three arriving?

C.U. on a head-shot of girl-next-door, CASEY TOWNSEND, a color fold-out of a dark-haired beauty, JOANNE BROOKS, and a grainy color xerox of a striking blonde named STAR.

MARCELLA

Day after tomorrow.

CLAUDIO

Make dinner arrangements at the Cigno de Nero Restaurant. Invite our biggest clients, and a few photographers. I want these girls working immediately.

MARCELLA

Of course.

CLAUDIO

And schedule a car to pick them up at the airport.

Claudio locks eyes with Marcella, waits for her to respond. The tension between them makes Antonia nervous.

CLAUDIO (cont'd)  
Marcella?

ANTONIA  
I will make the call.

MARCELLA  
No, Antonia.

Marcella picks up the phone, dials. Satisfied, Claudio exits the booking area. Marcella hangs up the phone.

ANTONIA  
Claudio warned you about interfering with his models.

MARCELLA  
I own forty percent of this agency. They also belong to me. If they want to land magazine covers and fashion campaigns, they must understand who has the real power at Bella.

Marcella pushes the three composites off to the side.

ANTONIA  
They owe the agency money for airfare and will soon owe for their pension room.

MARCELLA  
I am aware of their debt to us. Even the foolish ones who think they only need to show up to find success will be given work.

ANTONIA  
Low-end catalog jobs.

MARCELLA  
That can be taken away as soon as the next plane full of hopefuls arrive.

Marcella picks up a work chart, jots down casting information. Antonia sighs, continues sorting headshots.

GROWING UP BEAUTIFUL PILOT

ACT ONE

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY - MODEST NEIGHBORHOOD - LATE DAY

MIKE, (16), sun-bleached hair, easy manner, peddles his bike down the center of a tree-lined street. CASEY, (17), sweet, uncomplicated, shapely woman-child, sits on the handlebars.

MIKE

You want to catch a flick at the drive-in tonight? Last chance before you leave.

CASEY

International models don't peddle into Drive-in movies on bicycles.

MIKE

I'll borrow my brother's car.

CASEY

You only have a learners permit.

MIKE

He doesn't care. If I give him five bucks for gas, he's cool with it.

The bike slows, turns into the driveway of a tract home, stops. Casey hops off the handle bars.

CASEY

(adorable smile)

Bye, Mike. See you in a month.

INT. TRACT HOME - KITCHEN

Typical '80's color pallet and appliances. Mrs. Townsend (early 40's) plump, pleasant features, has her back to the kitchen, mindlessly stirs hamburger in a pan on the stove. Casey enters, retrieves a cookie box from the cupboard.

MRS. TOWNSEND

You're late.

CASEY

You said to be back by five-thirty.

MRS. TOWNSEND

(glances at wall  
clock)

It's quarter to six. I was getting worried.

CASEY

Why do you have to make such a big deal out of everything?

MRS. TOWNSEND

A lot can happen in fifteen minutes. I saw a girl who looked just like you on one of those missing person fliers I get in the mail.

CASEY

If I ever disappear, I want you to use the photo on my modeling composite. I love that one.

MRS. TOWNSEND

I'm being serious, Casey.

CASEY

I'm home now. Why are you freaking out?

Mrs. Townsend shuts off the gas burner, faces Casey.

MRS. TOWNSEND

Your ticket to Milan arrived today.

CASEY

Cool.

MRS. TOWNSEND

It's not cool. You're too young to be running around Italy on your own.

Casey opens the box, takes out a hand full of cookies. Mrs. Townsend takes cookie box from her, returns it to the cupboard.

MRS. TOWNSEND (cont'd)

I wish your father hadn't encouraged you to go. He's never been one to think things through. He's always left that up to me.

CASEY

He said he went to Europe after high school and had a great time.

MRS. TOWNSEND

He was lucky he didn't get mugged or worse.

CASEY

He told me he met a lot of interesting people.

MRS. TOWNSEND

He's never been a good judge of character.

CASEY

He thinks I can do this.

MRS. TOWNSEND

(stares at Casey a beat)

Your father doesn't understand how pretty girls like you can attract the wrong kind of attention. Trust me. I know.

Casey is curious, waits for an explanation.

MRS. TOWNSEND (cont'd)

Promise me you'll never go anywhere alone. Not even to the bathroom.

CASEY

I told you I'm traveling with two other models.

MRS. TOWNSEND

Make them your best friends. And then stick to them like glue.

CASEY

(typical teenage exasperation)

Mom, stop. You're taking all the fun out of this trip.

MRS. TOWNSEND

If something happens to you...if you get yourself into trouble, I'll be too far away to help you.

CASEY

Relax. My Italian agent will be there to look out for me.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST - UPSCALE NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

Three-story mansions line the shoreline. High tide crashes against stone barriers keeping the ocean at bay.

INT. MEDITERRANEAN STYLE HOME - JOANNE'S BEDROOM

The ocean is visible through French doors leading out to the terrace. The room is tastefully decorated. A leather suitcase and model portfolio have been placed by the door.

JOANNE, (19) wears a Chanel jacket/skirt, stares out the French doors. There is sadness about her; a suppressed spirit going through the motions. She holds a letter against her skirt a beat as if debating, then sets in on her pillow.

C.U. LETTER: Stanford Leave of Absence approval for Fall 1st quarter classes.

INT. MEDITERRANEAN STYLE HOME - STAIRCASE - FOYER

Joanne, quietly, carefully pulls her suitcase down the last step, hears...

MR. BROOKS (O.S)  
 ...Stop talking about it. We don't  
 need your hysteria making the  
 situation worse.

Joanne glances toward the open dining room door.

THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR, WE SEE AN EMPTY PLACE SETTING at the end of a table.

MRS. BROOKS (O.S)  
 You're right. Once we get Joanne  
 settled in at Stanford, her momentary  
 lapse of sanity will be forgotten.  
 Modeling. Can you imagine opening the  
 Sunday paper and seeing our  
 daughter's face on a coupon? I would  
 die of shame.

Joanne drags her suitcase toward the front door, passes under a life-size portrait of herself wearing a Valentino gown...and the same sad expression.

A MAID enters the foyer with a tray carrying three breakfast plates, sees Joanne opening the front door, is surprised.

MAID

Miss Brooks? Your parents are expecting you to join them.

JOANNE

Please, don't say you saw me.

MAID

Are you leaving early for the university? Your father told me he was looking forward to driving you.

MRS. BROOKS (O.S)

Where is she? I'm not going to be happy if I have to go up those stairs to remind her we're waiting on her.

A chair in the dining room scrapes against the floor. Joanne panics. The Maid is sympathetic.

MAID

Go, on. I won't say anything.

JOANNE

Thank you. I need...

Joanne isn't sure of the answer. She opens the front door, pulls her suitcase outside, quietly closes it behind her.

INT. EDDIES DINER - KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is dingy 1960's decor. A SKINNY TEEN flips burgers on the grill.

STAR, (18) stands in front a metal locker by the back door, stares at her reflection in a mirror Scotch-taped inside.

C.U. STAR'S REFLECTION IN MIRROR. Star pulls a blonde curl down over her forehead, tilts her head to the side, her confident blue eyes hold an inviting, captivating gaze.

STAR

(into mirror)

That's right, darling.

(flirty smile)

At least three carats, or you can fuck off.

JENNY, (22) harried waitress, enters, bangs a plate on the side of a plastic trash container, knocks off a half-eaten tuna melt and soggy fries.

JENNY

Get out of that mirror, Star. The place is packed, and I've got a real jerk in my section tonight. Keeps asking me for ketchup.

(snorts out a laugh)

Like I'm gonna go out of my way to get it, when he can reach over to the next table and grab the bottle like everyone else.

Star pulls a worn out duffel bag from the locker.

STAR

Can you cover the rest of my shift? I still haven't packed and my flight leaves in a few hours.

JENNY

Are you kidding? I've already got more customers than I can handle.

Jenny walks up to the food counter, hits the order bell, hooks two order slips on the rotating wheel.

STAR

C'mon, Jenny. You can have my tips.

Star removes a handful of crumpled dollars from the pocket of her uniform, holds them out.

JENNY

Don't you need that money for Italy? And what about your paycheck? Eddie's not gonna give you a dime if you take off before your shift is over.

STAR

It's only a half hour early. And I already took sixty bucks from the register, plus an extra forty for putting up with that asshole.

Jenny removes three plates from the serving station, balances them along the length of her arm.

JENNY

Fine. Go. But only if you promise to treat me to lunch at the Plaza when you get back. I want someone to wait on me for a change.

Star stuffs the bills into Jenny's apron pocket.

STAR

Deal. Next time you see me, I'll be dripping in diamonds from my rich boyfriend.

JENNY

(with a trace of envy)  
Beautiful women have it so easy.

Jenny uses her ass to push through the double doors, momentarily lets in the sounds of a full diner. Star glances at the Skinny Teen busy flipping burgers, grabs a bag of coffee off the counter, stuffs it under her leather jacket.

EXT. BROOKLYN - EDDIE'S CAFE - BACK EXIT - RAINY DAY

The back door slams shut behind Star. She looks up at the gray sky, closes her eyes, lets raindrops splash across her face a beat, then runs down the street through puddles.

INT. BROOKLYN APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY

Mismatched pieces of furniture and chotchkies fill the dimly lit room. The front door opens, Star enters.

STAR

Hey, Ma. I'm home.

Star tosses the bag of coffee on the couch. It bounces off the cushion, lands on the floor with a thud.

STAR (cont'd)

Mom?

STAR WALKS DOWN THE HALL. Grease on the bottom of her work shoes stick to the hardwood slats. She peeks inside a door left ajar, sees STEFANIE, (36) sitting in the dark, holding a bottle of vodka. The sight affects Star deeply; her eyes reflect both love and despair.

STAR (cont'd)

I brought the coffee you wanted.  
(enters bedroom)

BROOKLYN APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Star approaches her mother, notices a picture frame on the floor, face down. She picks it up, turns it over.

C.U. on photo shows Stefanie and a heavily intoxicated man sitting at a bar.

STAR

Darryl isn't worth a two-day bender,  
ma. None of those fuckers are.

Stefanie looks up. She is a worn down version of Star.

STEFANIE

Why do they always leave me?

STAR

They leave when you stop giving them  
what they want.

STEFANIE

He said he loved me.

STAR

He dumped you because you stopped  
paying for his drinks.

(tosses frame in  
trash)

You're better off without him.

STEFANIE

(grabs Star's hand)

I don't want you to go.

STAR

I know, but waitressing isn't going  
to get us out of here.

Stefanie nods, lowers her head. Star stands motionless,  
holds her mother's hand in the dark.

EXT. NEW YORK - JFK AIRPORT - EVENING

Heavy rain. A 747 plane waits at the terminal.

INT. 747 JET CABIN - ECONOMY

Impatient travelers jam the aisle. Flight attendants wrestle  
with excess carry-on baggage. Joanne sits in the window  
seat, pages through an English-Italian dictionary. Casey, in  
corduroys and a t-shirt, sits in the center seat, snaps her  
gum, irritates Joanne.

Star, Jet's baseball cap, leather jacket, duffel bag tossed  
over her shoulder, stops next to Casey, checks her ticket.

STAR

Cheap seats are not what I signed up  
for.