

FADE IN:

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - EVENING

The space is alive with conversation. Professionals in sleek attire sip cocktails and exchange polite laughter. Dim lighting and a soft jazz melody set the mood.

LEILA (33), confident and radiant, steps inside. Her eyes scan the room with precision—she's on a mission. She smooths her dress, sits at a bar alone.

Leila's gaze locks onto a MAN (mid 30s) at the bar, as she sips. Tall, well-dressed, enigmatic. He leans against the counter, nursing a drink, engaged in conversation with a colleague.

Leila locks eye contact with him. He hesitates for a beat, then strides over, positioning himself next to him.

LEILA
Networking alone?

The Man glances at her, a slight smile forming—cool, composed.

MAN
Seems that way.

LEILA
Rookie mistake. You know these events are all about alliances.

MAN
Is that so?

LEILA
Trust me.

The Man chuckles lightly, taking a sip of his drink.

MAN
Sounds like I should be taking notes.

Leila smirks, her confidence unwavering.

LEILA
Stick with me, you'll learn a thing or two.

He studies her for a moment, intrigued but unreadable. Leila takes another sip of her wine, her eyes never leaving his.

LEILA (CONT'D)
So, what brings you here? Business
or pleasure?

MAN
Work, mostly.

LEILA
Let me guess. Finance?

MAN
(smirks) Not quite.

LEILA
Hmm. Mysterious. I like that.

Before he can respond, his COLLEAGUE taps his shoulder,
motioning him away. He gives Leila a small nod.

MAN
Nice talking to you.

Leila watches him walk off, her expression unreadable,
curiosity piqued. She takes a slow sip of her wine, eyes
following him across the room.

LEILA
Definitely not finance.

She smiles to herself, swirling the wine in her glass, lost
in thought. We capture his eyes glide to her occasionally
during conversation.

TITLE CARD: BETWEEN US

FADE TO:

INT. LEILA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Leila enters her apartment, tossing her purse onto the couch.
She kicks off her heels and heads straight to the kitchen,
pouring herself another glass of wine.

She pulls out her phone, scrolling through social media. A
photo from the networking event catches her eye—her gaze
lingers on a blurred background figure. It's him.

LEILA
Umm hmm.

She zooms in, studying his silhouette, a satisfied smirk
forming on her lips. She jots down notes in a small journal,
the page filled with scattered thoughts and observations.

Her phone buzzes ERICA (32), her best friend, calling. Leila hesitates before answering.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Hey, E.

ERICA (V.O.)
Hey! How was the event?

LEILA
Same crowd, same talk. Nothing special.

ERICA (V.O.)
You sure? Thought you might've met someone.

Leila glances at the journal, tapping her pen nervously.

LEILA
Nah, just business. I'm not worried about meeting anyone. You know me. Focused. We got these trips to plan.

ERICA (V.O.)
No, but for real girl. Spain won't know what to do with us.

Leila stands and exits the room.

LEILA
So are you ready for your big day tomorrow?

INT. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE - MORNING

ERICA (32), dressed professionally yet approachable, enters the sleek, modern office with a mix of excitement and nerves. Employees bustle around, engaged in discussions and typing away at their desks.

ERICA approaches the receptionist's desk.

ERICA
Hi, Erica Davis. First day.

The receptionist smiles and gestures toward an open-plan workspace.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome! You'll be working with Jared Hollis on the community initiative. Your desk is just over there.

ERICA smiles, nodding.

INT. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE - WORK AREA - LATER

Erica settles at her desk, unpacking her things. Around her, coworkers greet her warmly. She meets TINA (40s), an experienced coordinator, and RYAN (35), a friendly analyst.

TINA

Heard great things about you, Erica. Jared's lucky to have you as his partner.

ERICA

I'm looking forward to it... What's he like?

RYAN

Jared? Oh, he's a favorite around here. Loves his community, down-to-earth, could run for mayor and win in a heartbeat.

TINA

You'll meet him tomorrow. Today's all about getting you settled in.

Erica smiles, absorbing it all.

TINA (CONT'D)

This is Ryan. He's one of our analyst. Come on and let me show you around the building.

Erica stands and they navigate down the hallway.

FADE TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - EVENING

Erica and Leila sit across from each other, catching up over drinks.

ERICA

First day was good. They've got me working on a big initiative with some guy named Jared Hollis.

LEILA

Jared Hollis? Yea...Uh, never heard of him.

ERICA

Apparently, he's kind of a big deal.

LEILA

Hopefully he'll be a big deal in between them legs.

ERICA

Now you know Lay, we don't do business and pleasure.

LEILA

Bitch, then just do the pleasure.

ERICA

Girl, I can't with you sometimes.

They both laugh.

ERICA (CONT'D)

What's been up with you though. I hope you've slow down a bit on work. We don't need anymore scary panic episodes.

LEILA

I am good girl. I met this guy the other night at the event.

ERICA

See I knew you were holding out.- Well...Tell me.

LEILA

Nope... I no longer kiss and tell until it's official.

ERICA

Oh okay. Well at least tell me when's the first date.

LEILA

I'll let you know for sure. Girl he was all on me too.

The girls excitedly chatter.

INT. ERICA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Erica sits at her kitchen table, flipping through project files. The dim lighting casts a soft glow over the neatly stacked papers and open laptop.

She sighs, rubbing her temples, and takes a sip of tea. Her phone buzzes.

LEILA (TEXT)
Girl, I'm still thinking about that
guy.

Erica smirks, typing back.

ERICA (TEXT)
Focus, Lay.

They chat for a moment before Erica returns to her work.

ERICA (CONT'D)
Okay girl. Talk to you later.

Scrolling through Jared's profile on the company's website. She lingers on his bio, her eyes narrowing thoughtfully.

ERICA (CONT'D)
Let's see what you're really about
Mr. Hollis.

She clicks on an article about his community efforts, engrossed. We watch her sip her wine, smiling here and there.

ERICA (CONT'D)
Strictly Business E...Strictly
Business.

INT. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE - MORNING

Erica walks into the bustling office, clutching a coffee cup and a leather-bound notebook. Employees move efficiently around her, exchanging greetings and discussing projects.

ERICA
(to herself, softly)
Let's do this.

She approaches her desk, setting down her things. A voice from behind catches her attention.

JARED (O.S.)
You must be Erica.

ERICA turns to see JARED HOLLIS (38), confident, charming, and effortlessly composed. He offers a warm, professional smile.

ERICA (CONT'D)
That's me. You must be Mr. Hollis.

JARED
Please Jared. Heard a lot of good things about you.

He reaches for a handshake as they greet.

ERICA
Hopefully, I can live up to the hype.

JARED
I have no doubt. Shall we?

He gestures toward a conference table, where project documents are spread out. They take their seats.

JARED (CONT'D)
So, The Northside Revitalization. It's ambitious, but it's got potential to make a real impact.

ERICA flips through the documents, nodding thoughtfully.

ERICA
I've reviewed the outline. It's a solid framework, but I think we could enhance community engagement.

Jared raises an eyebrow, impressed.

JARED
You've done your homework. I like that.

There's a brief moment of eye contact, unspoken chemistry, but Jared quickly shifts gears, keeping it professional.

JARED (CONT'D)
Let's focus on the funding side first. The city council needs numbers before they sign off.

ERICA

Agreed. I can start working on a detailed impact analysis this week.

JARED

Perfect. And don't hesitate to bounce ideas off me. We're in this together.

ERICA

Noted.

Watching her for a beat, then Jared stands, hands her his card, before nodding.

JARED

Here's my card. It's a direct line to me. Any ideas or whatever, don't hesitate to call me. Alright, let's make magic happen.

Erica smirks, flipping through her notes.

ERICA

Let's do it.

JARED

I'll talk you later. Anyway I can help you, right down the hall. Do not hesitate to contact me.

ERICA

Certainly. Have a good day.

She watches him exit walking with a confidence that's captivating to her. She smirks to herself, covering her intrigued.

INT. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE - LUNCHROOM - NOON

The lunchroom is buzzing with employees chatting and grabbing quick bites. Erica sits at a small table, scrolling through project notes on her tablet. She's focused until Jared enters, grabbing a coffee from the machine.

JARED

Mind if I join you?

Erica looks up, surprised but composed.

ERICA

Sure. It's your office, after all.

Jared sits across from her, his easygoing demeanor making the space feel smaller.

JARED
So, how's your first day going?
Surviving all the introductions?

ERICA
Barely. But everyone's been great.
Tina and Ryan are keeping me on my
toes.

Jared chuckles, stirring his coffee.

JARED
Yeah, they're good people. They'll
push you, but they have your back.

Erica nods, then gestures to the document on her screen.

ERICA
I've been digging into the
community outreach strategies. I
think we need to shift the focus a
bit to grassroots involvement—start
with the neighborhood influencers.

Jared leans forward, clearly interested.

JARED
I like that. The city loves
numbers, but the people love
stories. If we can get the right
voices behind this, it'll have more
impact.

Their eyes meet briefly, a flicker of unspoken connection
before Erica looks back down at her screen, shaking it off.

ERICA
Exactly.

JARED
(straightening up)
Okay, we'll brainstorm on it
tomorrow. But for now...

He pulls out a small wrapped sandwich from his bag.

JARED (CONT'D)
You gotta eat, Erica. No project's
worth passing out over.

Erica smirks, taking a sip of her water.

ERICA
You sound like my mother.

JARED
I get that a lot.

They share a laugh, the tension easing into something familiar. Jared checks his watch.

JARED (CONT'D)
Alright, I better let you get back
to work before Tina comes hunting
me down.

He stands, pausing before heading out.

JARED (CONT'D)
And Erica... good ideas today.

Erica watches him leave, a thoughtful smile on her face. She exhales, shaking her head before focusing back on her work.

ERICA
(to herself)
Strictly business.

INT. LEILA'S YOGA STUDIO - DAY

A tranquil space filled with natural light. Soft instrumental music plays as LEILA, dressed in comfortable yoga attire, leads a small group through a series of poses. Her voice is calm, confident.

LEILA
Breathe in... and out. Let go of

Today's stress. Focus on the now.

The class follows her lead, moving fluidly. Leila walks around, gently correcting postures and offering encouraging smiles.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Beautiful. Remember, it's about
progress, not perfection.

INT. LEILA'S YOGA STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Leila sits at a counter, sipping on her water bottle. A FRIEND, KIM (30s), joins her, playfully nudging her shoulder.