

THE MORNING SHOW

EPISODE 207
"La Amara Vita"

Written by
Kerry Ehrin & Scott Troy

THE MORNING SHOW

"La Amara Vita" #207

CAST LIST

ALEX LEVY
BRADLEY JACKSON*
MITCH KESSLER

LAURA PETERSON*
PAOLA LAMBRUSCHINI

BRITISH ANCHOR
CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
DR. GWEN ZEEGERS-BOTTUM*
ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER

THE MORNING SHOW

"La Amara Vita"
#207

LOCATION/SET LIST

INTERIORS

ACSN INTERNATIONAL*
STUDIO*
ALEX'S CAR
CHARTER JET COMPANY
CHILE HOTEL ROOM
MITCH'S CAR
PAOLA'S APARTMENT
TMS*
STUDIO*
VILLA CROCO
DINING ROOM
DEN
FOYER
KITCHEN
LIVING ROOM
PAOLA'S BEDROOM
VERANDA

EXTERIORS

ALEX'S CAR
LAKE COMO
PAOLA'S APARTMENT
VILLA CROCO
GATE
PORCH
VERANDA

*Addendum Location

1 EXT. LAKE COMO - DAY (D50) 1

MUSIC STARTS: "I Want To Know Part I" by Adriano Celentano

It's a beautiful late winter day. The lake is still. Serene. Idyllic. It looks like nothing bad could ever touch it.

MITCH (PRE-LAP)

When you do a show five days a week, 52 weeks a year, none of them are going to be perfect.

2 INT. VILLA CROCO - PAOLA'S BEDROOM - DAY (D50) 2 *

MUSIC CONTINUES OVER AS PAOLA curls up on her bed, studying footage from her interview with Mitch, which we see on her laptop.

MITCH (ON VIDEO)

There are going to be warts. So you have to let the warts become a part of the show. You can't be precious.

3 EXT. VILLA CROCO - DAY (D50) 3

MUSIC CONTINUES OVER AS MITCH AND PAOLA run and play with Fido outside.

MITCH (V.O.)

-- You do it for 15 years, and you see people come, people go. You realize how replaceable everybody really is.

4 INT./EXT. VILLA CROCO - LIVING ROOM - DUSK (N50) 4

MUSIC CONTINUES OVER AS WE PAN PAST THE WINDOWS SEEING A PEACEFUL SCENE OF PAULA AND MITCH BOTH READING IN THE LIVING ROOM.

MITCH (V.O.)

I was there 15 years. I had to pretend to be amused by 4 different meteorologists.

Mitch stands up and heads out for a moment with the dog. Paula glances up from her book, her eyes following him, wondering where he is going.

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5 EXT. VILLA CROCO - DUSK (N50) 5 *

MUSIC CONTINUES OVER AS Mitch stands for a moment outside looking at the lake. A peacefulness overtaking for a moment.

MITCH (V.O.)
Then you realize you're the
replaceable one.

HOLD ON MITCH AND END MUSIC.

6 INT. VILLA CROCO - LIVING ROOM - DAY (D51) 6

FIND A TV playing an Italian morning show, Covid outbreak rapidly worsening. Roadblocks. Lockdowns. Shit's getting serious. **(NOTE: We'll use a clip from a real show.)** FIND MITCH watching, the craziness and weight of it landing on him. *This is some sort of alternate universe.* It feels wrong that he's not home to protect his kids. Lying on the couch, PAOLA orders grocery delivery on his phone, quite contented. FIDO sits on the floor, contented, too.

MITCH
This is unbelievable.

PAOLA
What is?

MITCH
The end of the world.
(gingerly)
You know, I should probably go
home. Be with my kids.

That Mitch is thinking of leaving gets Paola's attention.

PAOLA
That seems like a thing a father
should do.

MITCH
(overexplaining)
I didn't come here to get away from
them. I came because it seemed like
I was doing more harm than good.
But at a certain point it's just
negligence. And I miss them, too.
There's that.

PAOLA
When are you going to leave?

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

Well, I can't. Not now. Traveling doesn't seem smart. But I guess the two weeks are up in a couple of days. Is that okay?

PAOLA

Okay, not okay, doesn't make a difference. I can't stop time.

MITCH

I just meant -- I'm sorry.

PAOLA

(smiling)

Don't apologize. It makes you look weak.

Paola stands, grabs her cigarettes, and heads toward outside.

MITCH

Hey, Paola.

Paola turns around and sees a look on his face. There's a tenderness to it. Whatever he has to say is hard for him. She walks back toward him.

PAOLA

What? Whatever it is, just say it.

MITCH

(long beat; then)

Before I go -- I have to ask you. I've been thinking about it for the last few days. And I wanted to say something, but it just never seemed like the right time. But now that I have to go soon -- could you please delete the interview?

(off her incredulous look)

It's not that I don't trust you --

PAOLA

Are you sure? It sounds like that's exactly what you're saying.

MITCH

It's not you. I don't trust the world. This stuff gets out. It doesn't have to be your fault. People will leak it on purpose.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

You're still concerned what people think about you?

MITCH

My kids, yes. There's stuff in there I don't want my kids to see.

PAOLA

God forbid your kids think you're a three dimensional person.

MITCH

People don't want complicated. It wants things that are easy to digest.

PAOLA

("I want complicated. Fuck this.")

I'll delete your interview. Nobody will ever know your true thoughts and feelings. The way you like it. I'll get my computer so you can see me delete it --

Paola heads toward her room as the doorbell rings. He's not expecting visitors, god knows. He calls out to Paola.

MITCH

You don't need to show me. If you say you did it, I'll trust you --

No reply. The bell rings again. Guesses he has to go get it.

EXT. VILLA CROCO - MOMENTS LATER (D51)

Mitch exits the house to see who is at the gate. After a moment, he suddenly halts in his tracks. Like he has seen a ghost. Because he has seen a ghost.

FROM MITCH'S POV... WE SEE ALEX OUTSIDE HIS GATE.

He just stands there. She hasn't seen him yet. Every possible feeling competes for space in Mitch's brain and heart. Part of him is angry at Alex for not standing behind him. Part of him is regretful about his contribution to ending the good thing they had. Part of him is thrilled to see this person he loved -- and probably still loves. He is wandering around the globe, a man without a place, and she came and tracked him down. In some way, Alex coming to see him quiets all of the awful feelings he's felt over the course of the last year or so.

(CONTINUED)

But after a life of getting almost anything he wanted, he has spent the last year recalibrating his expectations; these days, most everything goes wrong for him. Frankly, it's hard to believe Alex came for some good reason. And it scares him a little to find out why she did.

ON ALEX, angry, desperate, anxious, feeling a frenzy that she's trying to keep at bay. Though deep down her feelings toward Mitch are complex, she has come here on a mission with no room for complexity. But then, far away, she sees him coming.

FROM ALEX'S POV, through the prison-like bars of the gate, we see Mitch walking toward her, looking so small in the distance. He doesn't look so different physically since the last time she saw him, but he looks to her like someone whose life force was drained. And it sparks some involuntary feelings inside: love, sadness, sorrow, pity. But those feelings are momentary.

MITCH

(as he walks)

What are you doing here?

ALEX

Let me in.

MITCH

I can't.

ALEX

You will.

MITCH

Alex, I was exposed to Coronavirus.
I'm quarantining.

ALEX

I don't care.

MITCH

It's not safe.

ALEX

I have been through *hell* getting here during all of this.

MITCH

Yeah, how *did* you get here? How did you find me?

ALEX

Let. Me. In.

(CONTINUED)

7

Mitch considers a moment. Considers Alex. Looks at her. Sees the emotion under the steely exterior. He opens the gate. Without a word, Alex starts walking toward the house with a slight limp. Mitch closes the gate, then follows. This is an uncomfortable situation for him, but he tries to cover with humor and charm.

MITCH

I missed you on the debate. Bradley was pretty good, though. I know what I would have done differently.
(trying to get a response)
Hey, you look good. Something's different. Did you get a new limp?

Alex keeps walking, too angry to respond. We follow the entirety of the walk in loaded silence. They enter the house.

8

INT. VILLA CROCO - FOYER - CONTINUOUS (D51)

8

Once Mitch closes the door behind them, Alex lets loose. Days of frustration, fear, and anger compounded by the secrecy and difficulty of traveling during a global crisis pouring out.
(NOTE: Their voices echo and carry in the cavernous room.)

ALEX

You talked to Maggie Brener, and you told her to fuck off?! Why the fuck did you tell Maggie to fuck off?!

MITCH

(confusion giving way to anger)
Isn't that what you wanted me to say? You and I didn't exactly part ways amicably, but I told her to fuck off anyway. Seriously, there's plenty you could be angry at me about, but this? I told her to fuck off!

ALEX

You didn't say no! You didn't say no!

MITCH

I wasn't going to dignify it with a response. It's none of Maggie's fucking business. It's nobody's fucking business.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Oh, you goddamn fucking idiot. You stupid goddamn fucking idiot. Of course it's nobody's fucking business! But you wouldn't go on the record and you didn't say no and now it's in a fucking book!

MITCH

Is that why you're here? What do you want?

ALEX

I want you to tell everyone that we didn't have sex.

MITCH

So you tracked me down and flew to Italy?

ALEX

Yeah. I'm not going to call you or text you or email you. I don't want this conversation hanging around in the ether. It's a nine hour flight. Big fucking deal. It's a small fucking price to pay to not be associated with your dick.

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MITCH

Are you serious? I think we're better off just leaving it alone. Let's not give it any air.

ALEX

That's pretty fucking easy for you to say. But I have a life.

MITCH

Alex, I can't --

ALEX

-- Do not say no. You don't get to say no! You of all people don't get to say no! You don't know what I've been through! I walked out on a debate --

MITCH

-- That was about me?

ALEX

No, it was about me! But it was your fucking fault!

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (2)

Pink

3/9/21

7A.
8

MITCH
Hey, are you okay?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

No! I'm not okay! Do you see me?
Are you hearing one word I'm
saying? I skipped town a week and a
half after I went back to the show!
No showed a debate! Chartered a
plane into the middle of a hot zone
4000 miles away! Didn't tell anyone
where I was going! That's not the
sort of thing someone who's "okay"
does!

Mitch hears everything Alex is saying. It's insane.

MITCH

No one is really okay. You're in
good company.

ALEX

Oh, will you put "Philosophical
Mitch" away? He's not as smart as
you think he is. I need you to
release a statement. You and me, it
never happened.

MITCH

Alex, I'm done lying.

Alex drinks in that whopper.

ALEX

You've got to fucking be kidding.
Now you're too good to lie? You
won't lie when it fucks up my life.
That's rich.

The implication that people knowing Alex slept with Mitch
will fuck up her life hurts him.

MITCH

Okay, why do you want me to lie?
Why will it fuck up your life?

ALEX

Because I lied about it on national
television! When Laura Peterson
blindsided me with the question
"what was the nature of your
relationship with Mitch Kessler?!"

MITCH

So is that really going to fuck up
your life? Being associated with
me?

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(CONTINUED)

There are a couple of ways Alex could go with this answer. She turns them over in her head, then ultimately goes with the most hurtful, nastiest version.

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ALEX

How did it work out for your life being associated with you? Did you lose your career? Did your family fall apart? Are you ostracized from polite society? Does your life have any meaning or purpose at all?

Mitch stands there, speechless. After a moment, Alex goes back for the coup de grâce.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Nobody will ever respect me again if they think I slept with you.

Ouch. Alex is yelling at the guy Mitch was when she last saw him, when he was trying to claw his way back. When things got nasty.

(CONTINUED)

When, scared animals that they both were, they were their ugliest selves. But that isn't really who Mitch is right now. He's trying to do good in his life. He is trying not to give in to the most base of human instincts. He is opening himself up to connection. Introspective. Alex is, to some degree, yelling at a ghost, but it hurts nonetheless.

MITCH

Okay. I'll do it.

Alex breathes an immediate sigh of relief, which Mitch observes.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You know, I've done a lot of things I regret. Made a lot of bad decisions. I'm not proud of any of that. And even though I feel remorse, I'm the person who did those things, so I'm clearly not an angel. But here I thought maybe it would be because you wouldn't want Lizzy to know or you wouldn't want to make Jason look foolish. Not because the mere act of having consensual sex with me is so vile it will end your life. But I'll do it. No big deal. Is that all?

Much as she hates that it is, this is making Alex feel bad. Mitch is being much more the person she wants him to be. The person she once thought he was. Introspective. Owning up to bad behavior. Smart. And she can see she hurt him.

PAOLA

(entering)

Did you see where I left my cigarettes?

Paola sees Alex standing in the center of the house. She'd heard all the shouting and had started eavesdropping, and decided maybe a distraction would help Mitch. Alex is both shocked and not shocked at all to see Mitch has a woman in the house. Paola feigns surprise.

PAOLA (CONT'D)

Oh. Hi.

Paola feels from Mitch that her help was not wanted here. It's an awkward moment of everyone just standing there.

ALEX

(not giving anything)

Hi.

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(CONTINUED)

8 THE MORNING SHOW #207
CONTINUED: (6)

Pink

3/9/21

9A.
8

PAOLA
(leaving)
It's fine. I'll find them.

(CONTINUED)

Alex can't believe she was actually feeling bad for this guy.

ALEX

Unbelievable. This is why you leave your kids? Wait, is she the crazy woman from the cafe?!

Ouch again. Mitch feels bad to have left his kids stateside, and Alex is talented at finding those soft spots. Even if Alex is wrong about Mitch fucking Paola.

MITCH

I did not leave my kids. I would never leave my kids. You know that, so spare me the intellectually dishonest outrage.

ALEX

Oh, are they here? Why didn't you tell me they were here?

MITCH

And you couldn't be more wrong about -- first of all, her name is Paola and she's not a crazy woman. She's impressive. A smart woman who I can be my real self around. I'm not going to screw it up with sex. She's a documentarian.

ALEX

A documentarian!

MITCH

Yes! And a good one, at that. Naturally gifted.

Alex is looking at Mitch like he is full of shit and "naturally gifted" is some sex thing.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Don't. She's her own worst enemy. Something I know a lot about. I'm helping her.

ALEX

With your help, she can be the next Leni Riefenstahl.

As Alex says this, she catches herself being unnecessarily cruel to Paola.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (CONT'D)

You know, I take back my snide remarks about -- Paola, was it? It's mean and unfair to her. But, you -- I mean, is this woman a crusade to you? You just decided to "help" her?

MITCH

Yeah. So what?

ALEX

You know, you're divorced. You can date now.

But it's because people see Mitch the way Alex sees him now that he feels he really can't date.

MITCH

I wouldn't want to sully her with the permanent stink of having fucked me like I know some people have. I'd hate for her to be the subject of a book.

ALEX

You'll issue a statement?

Mitch nods.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Nodding isn't going to do it for me. I need to see you call your publicist.

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MITCH

My publicist dropped me.

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ALEX

Figures. I need to see you write a letter, then. I'm not leaving without a paper in my hand.

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MITCH

You need to see me write a letter? Fine.

*
*

Mitch grabs a slip of paper from a table and as he writes --

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MITCH (CONT'D)

"I did not fuck Alex Levy. Best regards, Mitchell Kessler."
(presenting it to her)
Here.

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(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Cut the shit. I need a real
statement.

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*

MITCH

You know these things just get
submitted electronically.

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ALEX

I don't care. I need to feel
something in my hand.

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*

MITCH

Then you're going to have to wait.
I have to talk to my lawyer. I'm
going to have to send it to you.

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*

ALEX

How do I know you're telling me the
truth?

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*

MITCH

You'll just have to trust me.

*
*

ALEX

Well, I need your new phone number.
In case you're lying to me again.

*

Mitch takes the piece of paper with his "statement," writes
his number at the bottom, and hands it to Alex. She folds it
up and puts it in her purse.

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*

ALEX (CONT'D)

Great. Have a nice life.

With that, and having gotten what she came for, Alex goes to leave, as angry as when she arrived, leaving Mitch standing there, shell-shocked. Trying to figure out how to process it. As he walks slowly back away from the entry, Paola re-emerges.

MITCH

How much of that did you hear?

PAOLA

Some. You shouldn't leave it like that.

MITCH

It wouldn't have been my choice.
But it's not my choice.

PAOLA

It is your choice. Talk to her.
Tell her what she means to you.
Like you did in the interview I'm deleting.

MITCH

I don't know if I can catch up to her.

PAOLA

Try.

Mitch nods, then heads to the door, walking quickly.

Mitch goes out to chase after Alex, but after a couple steps, he sees he won't have to run too fast: Alex is still inside the gate.

MITCH

I thought you were going.

ALEX

I can't get out of your fucking gate!

MITCH

Take it as a sign. Stay for a minute.

ALEX

Do not hold me prisoner. It's not like the door in your dressing room.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

(furious)

It shut the door! It didn't lock it! People talk about it like it was fucking Alcatraz! *It was a plywood door!* But I was such a lazy baby I had a button put in so I didn't have to get up from the makeup table! It was your fucking suggestion! It wasn't so I could get my dick sucked in private!

Mitch is angry in a way we haven't seen him this season. Alex looks at him like, now *this* is the guy I left ten months ago. The angry, defensive guy. And Mitch realizes it. He tries to catch himself.

ALEX

Let me out.

MITCH

I'm sorry, Alex. I'm sorry I yelled.

ALEX

It's fine. Let me out.

MITCH

Can we talk for a second? You came to Italy to see me. You could have just called me.

ALEX

You changed your number, dipshit.

MITCH

You tracked me down on the other side of the globe, Alex. You could have gotten my new number.

(off Alex's look)

Look, I didn't have time to prepare for you showing up here. It's not like running into some guy I had algebra with. This is the sort of thing I'd need time for.

ALEX

You've taken all the time you're going to get from my mortal life. I am not going to stand around while you try to get your claws back in me in some desperate attempt to get your life back.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

I know the part of my life with The Morning Show, with journalism, with broadcasting, with you -- I know it's gone. I'm not getting any of it back. But I'd at least like to remember some of it fondly. I get that our relationship is too damaged. I know I might never see you again. But you were probably the most important relationship in my life. And I was shitty to you. And I just want us to talk so we can understand each other before we go on with our lives. I don't want us to go through our lives hating each other. It kills me to know that you'll be out there in the world somewhere hating me.

It's a genuine plea from Mitch and it stirs the love, and sadness, and pity for this person who really was also so important to her. But while in the past Mitch was the one person Alex didn't really have to be guarded with at all, she has been too hurt and she fights to maintain a barrier between the two of them.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Can we talk?

ALEX

We can talk.

MITCH

Do you want me to order us dinner? You've got to be starving. There's a place I order from with the best polenta you'll ever have.

ALEX

Mitch, we're not having dinner. I'm too tired to be hungry. I'm not really sleeping right now. You want to talk, talk.

MITCH

Okay. Can we at least go back inside where it's warm?

ALEX

We can walk.

MITCH

Okay. Walking's good.

(CONTINUED)

They start to walk slowly around the grounds. Alex has gotten what she needed from Mitch, at least the obvious thing she needed, and does not want to open herself up to him. But Mitch doesn't want to lose this opportunity.

MITCH (CONT'D)

So, how did you find me?

ALEX

I saw that video with you and your friend in there.

MITCH

Right. But how did you know where I was staying?

ALEX

Clay made the offer to all three of us. You, me, and Chip. At dinner in Monterey. "If you ever want to stay at Carlotta's place on Lake Como, just tell me and it's yours."

MITCH

Yeah. Huh. That's right. That was a fun night. Good polenta.

Alex forces a smile. They walk in silence. A loaded energy in the air. It's brisk, and Mitch doesn't have his coat, but he didn't want to go back in to get it and risk losing his audience with Alex. As they walk, Mitch wonders if Alex will say anything, or if it will just remain silent unless he talks. But after they walk for a bit more, it starts to feel more comfortable to Mitch for them to be together again. He thinks about what Alex said one of the last times they were together about how it's nice to be so comfortable with someone that you don't feel the need to talk. But then --

ALEX

Are you going to talk?

MITCH

Yeah. I just got lost in my mind.
(off Alex's expression)
Alex, I'm sorry. I'm really, really sorry. I'm a fucked up person. Mentally, emotionally fucked up. And I deserve all the comeuppance I've gotten. Which I know is a ridiculous thing to say as I walk around the grounds of an estate on Lake Como that I'm living in for almost nothing. But we're ridiculous people.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MITCH (CONT'D)

And I mean that part in a good way. I love that we're ridiculous. I wanted to be ridiculous with you until the day I died. But I fucked it up. I did things -- some pretty rotten things that fucked it up.

(off Alex's look)

I was two-faced. With the benefit of hindsight, that's the only way to describe it. At the time, I thought it was part of some sort of game we were playing or something. A competition. I don't know why I couldn't just be happy to win as a team with you. But I'm sorry.

(then)

I lost track of what was important. I literally remember having this conversation with you right after you were promoted. During a break. We'd just done a story on -- Jesus, who was it? Some celebrity had just lost their mind. I said, "When do these people stop being regular people? When do they lose touch? Is there just some moment --"

ALEX

Mel Gibson.

MITCH

(she remembers it too)

That's right. It was Mel Gibson.

(then)

And I said it would never happen to us. We'd always just be two regular people who have crazy jobs. But that guy wouldn't recognize me. He's still in there. Really. And he's really sorry.

Alex doesn't reply. They walk in silence as Mitch waits for a reply of some kind. Of any kind. And it did hit Alex profoundly. How could it not when this guy is pouring his heart out to her? But she just can't allow herself to give him what he needs. She can't take on genuine human feeling for him because she then would be a hypocrite for denying him in her public life.

ALEX

I can't just walk around silently all night. I have to leave. I have a flight.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

Right now?

ALEX

Tonight. I have to get back to my job.

MITCH

What if I hadn't been home?

ALEX

You were.

MITCH

And if I hadn't been?

ALEX

Where would you have to be?

MITCH

Okay, so you have to leave. You have no response at all to what I said?

ALEX

What kind of response do you want? What am I supposed to say?

MITCH

I don't know!

ALEX

That I forgive you? Because I don't.

MITCH

No, I don't expect you to forgive me.

ALEX

Then what do you want from me?

MITCH

I just want you to understand -- to understand me. To understand why I did the fucked up things I did.

ALEX

I think I understand you pretty well.

MITCH

I don't think you do!

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

It actually scares me how well I understand you. It freaks me the fuck out.

MITCH

I promise you that you don't. Not about this.

ALEX

What makes you so sure?

MITCH

Because if you understood me, you'd know -- look, none of it excuses my mistakes -- but I just want you to know that none of it came from a -- a malicious place.

ALEX

So you just bumbled your way into being a backstabber? Into fucking anyone who'd have you and some people who wouldn't?

MITCH

Alex, I just don't want you to think I'm evil.

ALEX

(flatly)
I'm late for my flight. It was a joy, as always.

As Alex turns to walk away, we can see on her face that it wasn't easy for her to respond so coldly. She just had to get out of there before the vault opened.

MITCH

What a bunch of -- fuck you, Alex.
Come on.
(then; lashing out)
Were you really going to say I raped you?

It comes from a place of hurt in him. He was trying to be an introspective adult, but sometimes even the introspective adult lashes out with the pain of a child. Alex receives it with the message that she's not such an angel herself. And though that might be true, that Mitch chose to say so in that moment is enough to confirm to Alex she is making the right decision to leave and never look back.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
(turning around)
Just to confirm -- you will put out
that statement, right?

MITCH
I'll put out the goddamned
statement. I don't even know if you
could call what you did sex anyway.
(then)
The gate button's on the left
column!

And Alex leaves without turning around. And Mitch is left
alone, knowing he's failed to reach an understanding with
her. Hating himself for being an asshole.

EXT. VILLA CROCO - GATE - DUSK (N51)

Alex, upset, walks to the gate. Pushes the button. It opens.
As she walks back to her car, she puts a hand into her purse
to look for something and gets increasingly agitated when she
can't immediately find it. Finally, she locates it. She pulls
out a business card for a charter flight company. She grabs
her phone, dials the number, hits call, puts it on speaker,
and sets the phone down.

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
Fazio Aeronautica. Questo è
Vincenzo.

ALEX
Hi. I need a flight to New York.

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
Okay, ma'am, when would you like to
leave?

ALEX
Now. I can be there in an hour.

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
Oh, I'm sorry, ma'am. We don't have
any ultra long-range jets available
today.

ALEX
It doesn't have to be nonstop. I
just need to leave.

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
We don't have any equipment
available.

ALEX
Thanks. I'll call someone else.

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
Nobody has equipment available.

ALEX
How is that possible?

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
Everyone from Fashion Week's trying
to leave, and there was an air
traffic controller strike today, so
we're all really backed up. Have
you checked Alitalia?

ALEX
No, I need a private flight. Okay,
let me ask you this way: do you
have some plane you expect to leave
Milan tonight?

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
Uh, yes, we do, but --

ALEX
Okay. What are they paying for it?

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
The planes are booked. I can't just
cancel reservations for you.

ALEX
But I didn't tell you what I was
willing to pay. What are they
paying?

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
Ma'am, I have other calls.

ALEX
Fine. I'll just come down there and
talk to someone.

CHARTER JET CUSTOMER SERVICE
That's not a good idea --

Alex hangs up. Gets in her car.

*

11 INT. ALEX'S CAR - DUSK (N51) 11 *

The door to Alex's nice, tiny rental car swings open and Alex falls into the driver's seat, trying to hold her shit together, overwhelmed by so many feelings at once, but leaning into the anger so she doesn't have to feel anything else. All she knows is one thing: now that this mission is accomplished, she needs to get the fuck out of Italy.

Alex feels a sharp pain in her back, and roots around in her purse for a painkiller. She finds it and takes it with a swig of water. *

She turns on the car and starts to drive.

12 EXT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT (N51) 12 *

Alex's car drives off into the night.

13 INT. VILLA CROCO - LIVING ROOM - LATER (N51) 13

Mitch, depressed at how his interaction with Alex turned out, lies on the couch. He'd been feeling relatively hopeful about things moving in the right direction until she showed up. And he'd been genuine about wanting to live a more honest life, but now he's committed himself to another lie.

Paola enters, carrying her packed bags. She walks up to Mitch with her laptop open and sets it in front of him.

MITCH

What are you doing?

PAOLA

I want you to watch me delete it.

MITCH

No, it's fine. I'm sorry I asked.

Paola clicks on a folder and drags it to the trash.

PAOLA

Now I'll go to "Empty Trash." Gone.
And now, off I go.

Paola closes up her computer and sticks it in a bag.

MITCH

Why? I'm not leaving right away.
It's not because of Alex? I'll be
better in a minute if you just
stay. I'll be okay.

(CONTINUED)

Paola knows this is a bigger deal for Mitch than he's letting on, and she doesn't want to comfort him about a person she thinks he likes better than her.

PAOLA

It's just time for me to go. We were quarantining.

MITCH

I know you don't really want to leave. So can we stop the game of pretend?

PAOLA

You're making too big a deal out of this. I haven't been home in two weeks.

MITCH

You know, if you want me to chase after you, I'm not going to do it.

PAOLA

I'm not trying to manipulate you.

MITCH

I don't think you're *trying* to --

PAOLA

Do you really think I'm that fucked up?

MITCH

I think everybody's that fucked up. I'm not judging.

PAOLA

Thank you for everything you've done for me. It was a successful crusade.

MITCH

Oh -- no, that was her term.

PAOLA

It's okay. Don't get weird about it.

(then; *trying* to keep from getting too emotional)

By the way, I did get a message from the professor's daughter. He died this morning.

(CONTINUED)

13

MITCH

He died?

PAOLA

I'm going to send flowers. I'll put
your name on them, too.

That's shocking news to Mitch. It distracts him momentarily.

MITCH

Thanks.

PAOLA

Bye.

MITCH

Bye.

Paola leaves.

14

INT. ALEX'S CAR - LATER (N51)

14

Alex is still driving, guided by her GPS. She's in disbelief at this entire situation. She makes a decision. Calls someone. It rings, then goes to voicemail.

ALEX

Hey, Lizzy. It's Mom. I don't know
if you've tried to reach me at all,
but I don't think I'm getting
voicemails the last few days. My
back's getting a lot better. I
don't want you to worry about me.
I'll probably be back at work in a
few days.

(pause)

There's going to be a book coming
out. Called *Wrong Side of the Bed*.
So stupid. But there may be some
stuff in it about me that sounds
terrible. But just because it's in
a book doesn't mean it's true.

(pause)

I just want you to know, Lizzy, how
much I love you. I always will.
You're so important to me. I love
you so much.

(MORE)

*

(CONTINUED)

14

ALEX (CONT'D)

I'll talk to you in a few days.

(pause)

I hope you're busy with school or
doing something fun.

(pause)

Okay, I'll talk to you soon.

Alex hangs up and continues driving. The stress, anxiety, fear, and anger have exhausted her. Then her face starts to slacken, her eyes get heavy... and she nods off.

Fuck! She wakes with a jolt, having strayed from her lane, scared shitless. Jet lag and everything else clearly having caught up with her.

She pulls over to the side of the road in the middle of nowhere, suddenly feeling just how tired she is. She so desperately wants to be on a plane right now, but she would settle for a bed. But now she feels like she barely escaped with her life. She feels scared and alone. She knows it's too dangerous to try to drive without sleeping. So she decides her best option is to try to sleep in the car.

She sits in the dark, so exhausted, a memory stirring inside of her.

15

INT. CHILE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT - MEMORY/FLASHBACK

15

TO BE WRITTEN

16

INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT (N51)

16

RESUME ALEX IN CAR

Drifting off, sad, remembering a person who used to mean so much to her.

17

INT./EXT. ALEX'S CAR - DAY (D52)

17

Alex shoots awake with a start to find an ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER wearing a protective mask knocking on the window. She winces in pain from having been contorted all night sleeping in her small rental car. She's groggy and trying to figure out where she is and what's happening.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER

(in Italian)

You can't sleep in your car. You
need to go home.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
Wha -- huh?

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
(in Italian)
You need to go home. There's a
lockdown.

Alex, still shaking out the cobwebs, points to her ears to indicate she can't hear and goes to lower the window.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
(in Italian)
Do not lower the window. Ma'am, you
can talk to me through the window.

Alex lowers the window.

ALEX
Sorry, I couldn't hear you.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
I said, "Do not lower your window."

ALEX
Oh. Sorry.

Alex goes to raise her window, but the cop waives her off.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
Just leave it down. Can I see your
ID? *
(she hands it to him) *
How long have you been here?

ALEX
I got here yesterday.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
(suspicious) *
Do you have a place to stay, or are
you just planning to sleep in a
car?

ALEX
I'm flying out today.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
(*"This makes no sense."*) *
You got here yesterday, slept in a
car, and are flying out today?

ALEX
(knows how bad it sounds) *
I was here to see a friend. I was *
driving to the airport last night,
but I was falling asleep. Safety
first.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
(*"I call bullshit."*) *
What time's your flight today?

ALEX
Well, I don't have one yet.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
(sternly) *
There's a lockdown.

ALEX
I'm going to the airport now. If
you'll let me. I'm all rested up. *
I'll just book a flight there. *
(then; cheerily) *
Grazie! *

Alex goes to turn the car on, but the Cop puts his hand on *
the windowsill. The other hand seems to move a bit toward his *
gun. *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
(*"I don't trust you."*) *
I want to see you make
arrangements.

ALEX
Okay, fine.

When Alex goes to look at her phone, the battery is dead.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(*"Oh, fuck me."*) *
Actually, my phone is dead. I
didn't charge it.

(CONTINUED)

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
(*"I want to see if you're
full of shit."*)
I can call someone for you. I need
you off the road. I have to know
you're leaving Italy or have a
place to stay.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Alex is in pain, hungry, somehow exhausted even after sleeping a long time, scared at the apparent seriousness of the virus situation. And anybody whose number she knows by heart she can't exactly tell where she is.

ALEX

I don't know any numbers.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER

I thought you were here to see a friend.

Feeling she has no choice, she reaches in her purse and pulls out the "statement" Mitch gave her earlier. She rips the number off the bottom and hands the Officer the slip of paper with Mitch's number on it.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

What's his name?

ALEX

(very reluctantly; so
annoyed; swallowing
pride)

Mitch Kessler. And, uh, we did have a little disagreement before I left, so he might say -- but he does know me.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER

(thinking he gets it now)
Oh, he your boyfriend?

ALEX

(he's something hugely
important to me, but --)
No.

ON ALEX as the Officer takes out his phone and dials the number while Alex sits there and watches, mortified and fearful of what Mitch might say, considering how she left his place. As the cop gets more chummy and she can sense they're joking about this crazy American woman who is lost and sleeping in her car during a pandemic, she gets increasingly humiliated and angry at herself for getting in this situation. **(SEE ADDENDUM A FOR BOTH SIDES OF PHONE CALL)**

17A INT. VILLA CROCO - SAME TIME (INTERCUT) (D52)

17A *

Mitch receives a call from a local Italian number.

*

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER

Hello, is this Mr. Kessler?

(CONTINUED)

MITCH *
Who's calling? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER *
This is Officer Bianchi, polizia *
municipale. *

MITCH *
This is Mitch Kessler. *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER *
Hi, yes. Are you friends with a *
Miss Alexandra Levy? *

To anyone but the police, Mitch would answer "no" right now. *

MITCH *
Yes, is she okay? Did something *
happen? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER *
No, no, she's fine. *

Mitch's relief gives way to allowing himself to resume *
feeling hurt by Alex. *

MITCH *
Okay. So what's going on? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER *
We found her disoriented, sleeping *
in her car on the side of the road *
in the middle of nowhere. *

MITCH *
Really? She was sleeping in her *
car? On the side of the road? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER *
She doesn't seem to have anywhere *
to go. That's not good. These roads *
are locked down.

Mitch is starting to feel a small delight in knowing how *
humiliating this must be for Alex. He also knows he can allay *
the cop's concerns with some chauvinistic bonding. *

MITCH *
Could you do me a favor and ask her *
if she missed a flight? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER *
Hey, did you miss a flight? *

ALEX
(caught; "Oh, fuck me.")
No.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
(into phone; "Your friend
is a kook.")
No, she didn't.

MITCH
Okay. I'm sorry you have to deal
with this. What can I do?

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
Can I send her back to you? If not,
I'll have to bring her in. I need
her off the road.

Mitch would love to say no, but --

MITCH
Of course. Can you make sure she
knows how to get here?

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)
(to Alex)
You know how to get there?

ALEX
(re: car GPS)
I don't know how to use this. I
live in New York.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
Her phone is dead, but I'll make
sure she can find it. My wife can't
find anything either.

MITCH
Grazie.

Mitch hangs up, a serious sadness overcoming him.

The Officer hangs up and bends down to talk to Alex.

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER
He says you can go back to his
place.

ALEX
("Fuck.")
Okay.

(CONTINUED)

17A THE MORNING SHOW #207 Yellow 3/14/21 28A.
CONTINUED: (3) 17A

OFF ON ALEX, begrudgingly grateful to this person who knows her so well.

18 EXT. VILLA CROCO - DAY (D52) 18

Alex drives back in. *Fuck. This is embarrassing. He's going to gloat and tease me. Asshole.* Steeling herself, she gets out of her car and heads to the door.

19 EXT. VILLA CROCO - PORCH - DAY (D52) 19

She arrives at the door. There's a note that says "Come on in." Weird. She walks in.

20 INT. VILLA CROCO - DAY (D52) 20

It's quiet. Feels empty.

ALEX

Hello?

No one answers. She leaves her stuff by the door. Walks through.

21 INT. VILLA CROCO - KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - DAY (D52) 21 *

Alex walks from the kitchen into the dining room. There is a covered plate of food. A note by it, laying on top of a sealed envelope with "Alex" on it. *

"Here's some breakfast if you are hungry. There's coffee. I'm going to stay upstairs and out of your way. I really don't want to talk to you anymore. It's too hard. I left the statement for you in the envelope." *

This kindness is not lost on Alex. No one has been kind to her for days, maybe weeks. Maybe she just hasn't allowed it. Whatever. It melts her a little. She takes the food and sits down. She sits there a long moment. A long, long moment. Then the tears come. She's melting. It's all pouring out of her. She lays her head on the table and sobs.

She reaches for her purse to get a tissue and inadvertently knocks a glass of water on the floor. The glass shatters. She gets on the floor to pick up all the pieces, still crying.

Suddenly Mitch is standing there. He gets it. He gets that she is used up and a little broken right now. He thinks she looks funny but he is gentle.

MITCH

Jesus, Alex, you didn't have to fly to Italy to break all my stuff.

He bends down to help her. They are picking up all the little shards. Close. She starts crying more. It's all taking her over. All the stuff she has shoved down for so long.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, hey. Alex.

Alex looks at him. So physically emotional. She doesn't know how to make it stop. And then she just blurts out.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

I'm trapped in Italy. I don't know
who I am or what I'm supposed to be
doing.

(then;

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (CONT'D)
explodes out of her)
And I miss you!

And that's all it takes. She is still heaving as they reach for each other and hug across the broken glass. HOLD ON THEM A LONG MOMENT. Then...

MITCH
Well I can help you with one part of that. *

22 EXT. VILLA CROCO - VERANDA - DAY (D52) 22 *

Alex eats and watches Mitch on a call pretending to be Alex's assistant booking a flight for her. She's kind of in awe at how he can make things happen. Getting increasingly amused at his tactics. *

MITCH
-- Great. I appreciate you moving things around. She'll be there at 6 am. Oh, and, just to reiterate, it's very important that nobody find out my boss is even in Italy.
(listens; then)
I wish I could tell you, but I just got this job --
(listens; then)
Thank you. It's my first job in TV or journalism. But one of the first things I learned is that it's super important to make sure there's no retaliation against a whistleblower before your investigation airs. Got to protect your sources!

ALEX
(whispers to Mitch)
And your bosses.

MITCH
(taking her suggestion)
And your bosses!
(listens; then)
For sure. Just send the confirmation to me.
clarence.whistle@gmail.com.
(listens; then)
Yeah, just like a whistleblower. That's funny. Okay. Thanks so much. My boss is going to be so relieved. She's a real special lady --

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (whispers; slaps at Mitch)
Hang up the phone, Clarence!

MITCH (CONT'D)
I'd hate for her to get sore at me and have to holler.
Okay, thanks so much!

Mitch hangs up the phone under comedic duress.

MITCH (CONT'D)
And they said it couldn't be done!

ALEX
Well, sure, anything's possible when you lie.

MITCH
(a painful reminder)
True.
(then; pulling past that)
But that was acting.

ALEX
You don't feel bad that some poor schmuck's getting a call right now to tell them they need to reschedule their flight?

MITCH
I don't feel bad for anyone who can afford to fly private --

ALEX
Except you --

MITCH (CONT'D)
-- Goes without saying.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Okay. I have until 3 am. What should we do?

Alex lies on the couch reading off questions from an old deck of Trivial Pursuit. Mitch stands, reading questions to Alex.

MITCH
Okay. "What ex-president missed the slab of pork while showing off his ax-wielding skills to a group of Moscow butchers?"

ALEX
Nixon. What color?

MITCH
Green.

ALEX

"What weekday do more colds begin on than any other?"

MITCH

I don't know. Friday?

ALEX

Monday, dipshit. How do you not know that?

MITCH

Ask me another one from the card.

ALEX

Okay. "What are Alvin, Simon, and Theodore?"

MITCH

Oh, please. That's too easy. Gay.

ALEX

Jesus, Mitch. You can't say that shit anymore.

MITCH

Why? I'm not judging them. That's an acceptable lifestyle for chipmunks these days -- oh, *that's* what you meant. They're Chipmunks.

(looking at a card)

Oh, wow. This is funny. You're going to love this question. "Who is the 'Your Day, America' anchor who replaced Blair Todman after her 12 year run?"

ALEX

(jokingly minimizing her enemy)

Laura... Peterson, was it? I guess these cards really are old.

MITCH

She's not that much older than you --

ALEX (CONT'D)

But she's older, and that's what counts.

Alex feels herself getting worked up thinking about this and doesn't want to go to that place after just connecting with this person she has been missing so much. Doesn't want to lose the contented feeling. Doesn't want to get bogged down in that "petty" place that she can so easily get trapped in when thinking about work.

*
*
*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (CONT'D)

I'm bored.

MITCH

You're bored?

ALEX

You heard me. Talking about Laura
Peterson bores me.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

We've been locked inside this place
for a couple weeks and I haven't
gotten bored.

Alex hears that. *"Oh, right, there was somebody here before I
got here."* Suddenly feeling guilty.

ALEX

Just the two of you? Oh, jeez.
(beat; then)
Did your friend leave because of
me?

MITCH

It wasn't because of you.

ALEX

Sure it was. A beautiful,
hunchbacked woman walks through
that door, having flown all the way
from America to see you.

MITCH

I doubt she thinks that. I've
talked to her about you.
(off Alex's horror)
Nothing bad. I told her how great
you are. And how I screwed things
up with you.

ALEX

Then it's definitely because of me.
She probably thinks you're in love
with me. That's what I would think
if I were her.

MITCH

No -- uh, I think I had something
to do with it, but she also may
have heard what you said about her.

ALEX

Oh, Jesus. I'm sorry. Should we
invite her back?

MITCH

Yeah, are you okay with that?

ALEX

Yeah, do what you want.

Mitch starts to text Paola, then stops to ask --

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

Could I ask you a favor, actually?
She really does have a lot of
talent. That wasn't bullshit.

ALEX

I believe you.

MITCH

If I give you her number, would you
give her a call? *

ALEX

Give her a call? *

MITCH

Well, I can guide her on work, but
I'm not connected in the same way
anymore. But you are.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MITCH (CONT'D)

So I thought maybe you could help her. Make some introductions. Not right away, though. She's still getting her footing. I don't want her to feel like there's pressure.

*

ALEX

Sure. I can do that.

(then)

Oh, jeez. All this wine. I have to use the facilities again.

As Alex gets up to use the restroom, Mitch texts Paola. After a moment, Mitch gets a notification on his phone. Weird news.

MITCH

(calling to Alex in the bathroom)

This is weird! It's like someone heard us talking!

ALEX (O.C.)

What? I can't hear you?

MITCH

I just got a notification about Laura Peterson filling in for you! Shocked you didn't mention it!

ALEX (O.C.)

Just wait a minute!

Mitch turns on his TV to the crappy old UBA streaming platform. Turns on *TMS* in progress, anchored by Bradley and Laura. **(WE WILL USE FOOTAGE FROM 206 OF BRADLEY AND LAURA DOING THE HEART HEALTH SEGMENT)** Alex re-enters.

MITCH

I was just saying I was shocked you didn't mention this. I got a notification about it.

ALEX

I didn't know it.

MITCH

How could you not know it?

ALEX

I'm sure Chip has been texting me nonstop. I haven't been looking at anything. This I couldn't have predicted.

*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (6) 23

Alex takes a beat to digest this.

*

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

How *is* Chip doing?

ALEX

It's not going well.

MITCH

I gathered. Now that guy's in love with you.

ALEX

Stop.

MITCH

It's true.

ALEX

What is it with all these men loving me?

MITCH

You're a good person. You're a good friend.

ALEX

Yeah, this is selective memory --

MITCH

I don't think so.

ALEX

It is. We've said awful things to each other, literally yesterday.

MITCH

Yeah. It's weird how we say the worst things to the people we care about the most.

ALEX

Well, I don't know if I'm a good person or a good friend. Don't idealize me. Because that's someone else anyway.

*
*

MITCH

I'm choosing to have good memories. I guess it would be easier to not have you in my life if I hated you, but --

ALEX

I get it.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

Well, I'm glad you brought Chip back. He's always going to have your back. Don't fuck it up.

ALEX

I'll try. But in the meantime, will you turn off that fucking show?

MITCH

Gladly. The real show's right here.

Alex sees a bunch of old Italian records. Starts thumbing through them.

ALEX

Jeez how long have these been here?

MITCH

They're pretty great. Some of them are hilarious. Here --

He pulls one out and puts in on the turntable. It starts playing. It's "PREGHERO" by Adriano Celentano. It's a really overwrought Italian version of "STAND BY ME." Mitch is laughing.

ALEX

Oh my God this is amazing.

Mitch holds out a hand, want to dance? Alex thinks about it a second but can't resist. This is fun Mitch. This is fifteen years ago Mitch. She lets herself embrace that. As they are dancing...

ALEX (CONT'D)

Please don't hit on me and ruin this.

MITCH

I don't want to hit on you. I don't even want you to like me. I just don't want you to hate me. That's all I want.

ALEX

I'm just scared. Scared of losing everything.

(her worst fear right now)

What's it like? Being cancelled?

MITCH

I hate that word. I haven't been cancelled.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MITCH (CONT'D)

The only one with the power to do that is the big programmer in the sky.

ALEX

Mitch, I'm serious. I've made mistakes. And I am scared.

MITCH

I understand. It's exactly what you would imagine. Your whole life changes in a day. We spent our whole adult lives making sure we'd be recognized, and then one morning, being recognized becomes a cruel nightmare. Did you know shunning is considered the most psychologically cruel form of punishment?

ALEX

Thanks for the pep talk.

MITCH

I guess the one good thing is you do get to know what's real in your life. Who's there. Who isn't. Who still believes you might be a human who could possibly change.

ALEX

Who is that for you?

MITCH

It's a list of one. And she doesn't know me very well.

ALEX

I believe you could change. I believe you are.

This is incredibly powerful to Mitch. He wants so badly to believe this is possible.

MITCH

I'm sorry so much bad shit happened between us.

ALEX

It doesn't matter. At our cores, we know we are close.

(then making a decision)
Remember, Chile?

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

Of course.

ALEX

I've never told anybody this. But after that I thought I was pregnant.

MITCH

(stops, looks at her)
Jesus, Alex. I'm so sorry.

ALEX

No, it wasn't a bad thing. I loved you so much then, not as a lover but just as my friend, my partner. Two lost souls that had found a home together on a stupid morning show. Until we blew it up.

(then)

I actually wanted to have it. I spent nights awake trying to figure out how I could keep it.

Mitch is unbelievably moved by this. Alex is remembering.

MITCH

Alex.

ALEX

But it wound up just being a very late period. But I grieved the idea, just the same.

Mitch pulls her in tighter. Hold on them, holding on to each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

24 INT. VILLA CROCO - DEN - NIGHT (N52)

24 *

Mitch sits on the floor, back against the couch where Alex lies. Both just enjoying being together. Fido, too.

MITCH

Are you sleeping?

ALEX

No. I probably should be with the jet-lag and the wine. But I just can't get comfortable.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

Is the couch no good?

ALEX

My back's no good. I'm not kidding about that. Spending the night in that car didn't help.

MITCH

Is there anything I can do?

ALEX

It might help me to lie flat on the hard floor. *

MITCH

I don't think it's clean, but be my guest. Keep me and Fido company.

Alex slides off the couch and lies on the floor, flat on her back.

ALEX

Is Paola coming back?

MITCH

She hasn't responded.

ALEX

I'm sorry.

MITCH

Yeah.

(then)

Do you mind if I join you in a prone position?

ALEX

It's a free country. Oh, wait, we're in Italy.

MITCH

(lying down)

Italy's a free country. I mean, outside of the government lockdowns.

OVERHEAD SHOT of Alex and Mitch lying on the floor, looking at the ceiling with Fido between them. Feeling the closeness they've missed.

ALEX

I think I might be proud of you.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

What made you say that?

ALEX

It would be easy to be bitter.

MITCH

I'm bitter sometimes. I can still go to some pretty dark places.

ALEX

But I can tell you're trying.

MITCH

I lost everything I thought gave my life meaning. My work life. My sex life.

ALEX

Your work sex life.

MITCH

I'm being serious.

ALEX

I'm sorry.

MITCH

It's okay, it's just -- it's okay. But it just makes you appreciate what's important. I could have worked with you at McDonald's and it would have been fun.

ALEX

And we would have sold a hell of a lot of burgers.

MITCH

The MOST burgers.

ALEX

I'm sorry I had to ask you to say we didn't have sex. I'm just afraid.

MITCH

It's okay. You're not an idiot. Only an idiot goes through life unafraid. Fear's what keeps you from doing things that'll kill you.

ALEX

Do you mind if I --?

(CONTINUED)

MITCH
I don't mind.

Alex rests her head on Mitch's shoulder. They just lie like that for a while.

ALEX
In an alternate universe, who knows...

MITCH
You mean a universe where Trump isn't President and the world isn't on the verge of a global pandemic?

ALEX
Yeah.

MITCH
I think you've got it reversed. I think we're living in the alternate universe.

ALEX
And this is the real world? That makes sense. Okay. Well, we have until 3 am to live in the real world.

Alex musters a sleepy smile, as she falls asleep gently resting her head on Mitch's shoulder. Mitch closes his eyes, too.

FADE TO BLACK.

25 INT. VILLA CROCO - DEN - NIGHT (N52) 25 *

Mitch begins to stir. His shoulder has fallen asleep under Alex's head. He wriggles his way out, making sure not to wake her. Tries to shake his arm awake on his way to the kitchen.

26 INT. VILLA CROCO - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER (N52) 26 *

Mitch goes from the kitchen to the living room with a bottle of water, then grabs the remote and turns on the TV softly. Turns the channel to ACSN International. A BRITISH ANCHOR reads the news (**ADDENDUM B**). After a moment, Alex enters groggily. *

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

(turning up the volume)
You're up. I guess this doesn't
have to be so quiet.

ALEX

Can I have some water?

MITCH

Of course.

Alex unthinkingly picks up Mitch's water and takes a long
drink from it. As she does --

BRITISH ANCHOR (O.S.)

And out of America, a bombshell
from journalist Maggie Brener's --

The mention of Maggie sends a chill up both of their spines.
Particularly Alex's. Their ears are at attention. They brace
themselves for the horror.

BRITISH ANCHOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

-- upcoming exposé on the behind-
the-scenes troubles at UBA's The
Morning Show to be published in
Vanity Fair. Those with knowledge
of the contents of this first
excerpt say it includes allegations
that disgraced former anchor Mitch
Kessler targeted an inordinate
amount of his inappropriate sexual
advances toward black women. Though
it had already been known that one
of Kessler's victims was a black
woman of mixed heritage, whose
family is involved in ongoing
litigation against Kessler and his
former employers for her wrongful
death, this pattern of behavior had
not been previously suggested. That
issue of Vanity Fair hits
newsstands on Friday.

MITCH

What?! No. How -- No.

(NEWS PROGRAM CONTINUES IN ADDENDUM B) Alex feels a momentary
sense of relief; feels ashamed by it. Bullet temporarily
dodged. Her mind then starts processing what it *did* say. She
doesn't think she believes it, but is horrified at what it
suggests.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH (CONT'D)

People are never fucking satisfied!
The shitty things I did aren't bad
enough without making this shit up?

Mitch looks at Alex, searching her face to understand what her silence means.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You don't believe I was "targeting"
black women, do you?

(off Alex's silence)

I'm attracted to them! I'm old
enough to remember when that was
considered progressive.

ALEX

No, I don't think so -- but -- I
mean, I know you were -- with --
more than one black woman. I know
Mia was something else.

MITCH

Alex.

ALEX

I should go.

MITCH

You don't have to go for another
few hours.

ALEX

But I should.

MITCH

You don't believe -- *that*, do you?

ALEX

It isn't my place to say. You don't
necessarily need to have meant to
do it.

MITCH

But isn't the fact that I didn't
mean to worth something?

ALEX

Yeah, it is.

MITCH

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

But it isn't worth much.

*

MITCH

Alex, I know I fucked up. I want to be better. Help me.

ALEX

I can't do that.

MITCH

I don't think I did this shit, but clearly I don't have the tools to understand. So teach me. I want to get better.

ALEX

I've got to go.

MITCH

So you come here to get me to tell the world you're someone you aren't so you're not "cancelled" like me, but you'll never tell everyone who you think I really am?

ALEX

Never's a long --

MITCH

Just be honest with me. Let's be grown ups about it.

ALEX

I'm just too afraid.

Mitch is completely deflated.

MITCH

Can I have a hug?

Alex walks over and hugs Mitch a long moment. She has an inappropriate question, but she needs to ask --

ALEX

I appreciate you making a paper copy, but -- will you still --

MITCH

I'll release the statement. You'll check in on Paola?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

I will. *

They let go of the hug. *

ALEX (CONT'D)

It was good to see you.

Alex and Mitch hold eye contact, but Mitch turns away, not wanting Alex to see him emotional in this way.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Bye?

Alex waits for Mitch's reply. Mitch walks in the other direction. So Alex grabs her bag and the envelope with the statement and heads out.

27 INT. ALEX'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER (N52) 27

Alex just sits there, having just driven outside Mitch's gate. Trying to collect herself.

28 INT. PAOLA'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME (N52) 28

Paola wakes up, having fallen asleep on top of her covers. She picks up her phone and looks at the text from Mitch, which she has clearly looked at before. She decides she's made him wait long enough. She texts him, "*Do you still want me to come?*" She stares at her phone as if willing Mitch to reply. But it doesn't come. She puts the phone down. Then she sees the bubble. He's typing. It goes away. Comes back. Goes away. Then the message: "*Actually, can I come to you? I want to be in your world for a while.*" Paola smiles.

PRE-LAP: "You Can Make Me Wait" by The Melvins

29 INT. MITCH'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER (N52) 29

MUSIC CONTINUES OVER as Mitch drives, a smile on his face.

30 INT. PAOLA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (N52) 30

MUSIC CONTINUES OVER as Paola stands close to the door. There's a KNOCK. She answers. It's Mitch.

MITCH

I just want to make sure -- did you see the news? The excerpt?

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

I did.

MITCH

And you -- do you -- I don't think
I did that. But I'm trying to be --

PAOLA

I know you.

Mitch digests that a moment. Paola grabs his face and kisses him emphatically. Passionately. Lovingly. But he pulls away.

MITCH

No. I don't think this is a good
idea.

PAOLA

That's how I know it is.

She pulls him in. Kisses him again. But he returns it tepidly. She takes a step back. Looks him in the eyes. Sees she has to wake him from this state of sexual dormancy.

PAOLA (CONT'D)

(re: his growing erection)

I can feel that you like it.

Paola SLAPS Mitch hard across the face. Mitch laughs in shock.

PAOLA (CONT'D)

Damn it! Show me your big fucking
balls!

This fucking woman is something else. And she doesn't care what anyone else thinks. He feels seen. Sex is in many ways about approval for Mitch. He wants to be wanted. And it's even better to be wanted by someone who you want. And he does want Paola. With the weirdest affirmative consent maybe we've ever seen, Mitch lifts Paola off the ground and she starts kissing him as he carries her to her bed. The shackles that have bound him since he was outed to the world as a "sexual predator" lifted, at least for one freeing moment. And he is reminded what it's like to have someone want him just as much as he wanted her. Giving him permission to own his sexuality.

He plants her on the bed and they start disrobing each other. It's sexual, and cathartic, but it's also a very loving act between two people who need and like each other right now.

MUSIC ENDS.

31 INT. PAOLA'S APARTMENT - LATER (N52)

31

Mitch and Paola lie in the afterglow of sex.

PAOLA

I'm out of cigarettes.

MITCH

They'll still kill you.

PAOLA

Yeah, but when you have the little death, it just stimulates your appetite for the big death.

Mitch laughs.

MITCH

You're an addict. Do you want me to get them?

PAOLA

Yes. I do.

MITCH

(getting out of bed)
Then get them I shall.

PAOLA

Is any place open?

MITCH

(slipping on clothes)
Because of Covid-19? I guess we'll find out.

He leans over to Paola and kisses her long and proper. She smiles. He grabs his keys and heads toward the door.

PAOLA

Hey. I have to tell you something.

MITCH

What's up?

PAOLA

I didn't delete the interview. I thought if I wasn't going to see you again, I might want to watch it.

MITCH

If that's your reason, you can safely delete it.

(CONTINUED)

31 THE MORNING SHOW #207 Pink 3/9/21 48.
CONTINUED: 31

They smile at each other. Mitch exits.

32 EXT. PAOLA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER (N52) 32

"I DON'T KNOW" BY THE BEASTIE BOYS PLAYS OVER.

Mitch exits Paola's building and walks to his car.

33 INT. MITCH'S CAR - CONTINUOUS (N52) 33

MUSIC CONTINUES OVER. Mitch gets in, turns on the car, and pulls out. He drives in silence. As he drives, something starts dawning on him. He's no different than he was before he'd had that exhilarating, connective experience with Paola. The change he was hoping he'd experience on the molecular level... just didn't happen.

34 INT. ALEX'S CAR - SAME TIME (N52) 34

Alex drives through the same middle of nowhere she drove last night. But her feelings have changed considerably since then. Her anger replaced with sadness. Intense sadness. She closes her eyes tightly for a brief moment to try to will it away, but it's still there when she opens them.

35 INT. MITCH'S CAR - NIGHT (N52) 35

Mitch drives. *

36 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT (N52) 36

Alex keeps driving. Her feelings brought her to the point of giving herself a desperate pep talk. Trying to convince herself as much as anything.

ALEX
I'm a good person. I know I'm a
good person. I am.

37 INT. MITCH'S CAR - NIGHT (N52) 37

Mitch has now hit the open road, kind of in search of a store, and kind of just driving.

38 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT (N52) 38

Alex leans back in her seat. She can't figure out how someone with every possible success can find herself so miserable. So alone. She closes her eyes and then immediately shoots awake, not knowing how much time she lost. She rolls down the window all the way, hoping the wind whipping through her hair will keep her awake. She is going to make her flight, or die trying.

39 INT. MITCH'S CAR - NIGHT (N52) 39

Mitch opens his car window. Hoping the wind will lift his sinking spirits. But the melancholy just won't leave. He's finding himself back in that dark place. In the end, nothing can ever really fill him up. He's feeling the hopelessness of the journey of life.

40 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT (N52) 40

Alex's car tears through the night...

41 INT. MITCH'S CAR - NIGHT (N52) 41

...and so does Mitch's.

Mitch understands intellectually that what he's feeling is temporary. If he can only push through it. After a moment, he makes a decision. He picks up his phone and starts texting as he drives.

42 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT (N52) 42

Alex drives, feeling the Milan metropolitan area growing closer. She closes her eyes for a moment. Her phone gets a notification of a text.

43 INT. MITCH'S CAR - NIGHT (N52) 43

Mitch looks for a reply. Nothing. Looks at his phone to check again. He looks up and sees something -- END MUSIC.

44

INT. CHILE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

44

*

WE SEE A BRIEF OVERHEAD SHOT of Mitch cradling Alex under the covers of a hotel bed. Where is it? When is it? What is it? We don't have time to register as we abruptly --

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE

ADDENDUM A: SC 17 - MITCH ON THE PHONE WITH ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER

INT. VILLA CROCO - DAY

Mitch receives a call from a local Italian number. *

MITCH *

Hello? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *

Hello, is this Mr. Mitch Kessler? *

MITCH *

Who's calling? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *

This is Officer Bianchi, polizia
municipale. *

MITCH *

This is Mitch Kessler. *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *

Hi, yes. Are you friends with a
Miss Alexandra Levy? *

To anyone but the police, Mitch would answer "no" right now. *

MITCH *

Yes, is she okay? Did something
happen? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *

No, no, she's fine. *

Mitch's relief gives way to allowing himself to resume
feeling hurt by Alex. *

MITCH *

Okay. So what's going on? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *

We found her disoriented, sleeping
in her car on the side of the road
in the middle of nowhere. *

MITCH *

Really? She was sleeping in her
car? On the side of the road? *

(CONTINUED)

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *
She doesn't seem to have anywhere *
to go. That's not good. These roads *
are locked down. *

Mitch is starting to feel a small delight in knowing how *
humiliating this must be for Alex. He also knows he can allay *
the cop's concerns with some chauvinistic bonding. *

MITCH *
Could you do me a favor and ask her *
if she missed a flight? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *
(to Alex) *
Hey, did you miss a flight? *
(off of Alex's "no"; "*Your* *
friend is a kook.") *
No, she didn't. *

MITCH *
Okay. I'm sorry you have to deal *
with this. What can I do? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *
Can I send her back to you? If not, *
I'll have to bring her in. I need *
her off the road. *

Mitch would love to say no, but -- *

MITCH *
Of course. Can you make sure she *
knows how to get here? *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *
(to Alex) *
You know how to get there? *

Alex says she doesn't know how to use the car GPS. *

ITALIAN POLICE OFFICER (V.O.) *
Her phone is dead, but I'll make *
sure she can find it. My wife can't *
find anything either. *

MITCH *
Grazie. *

Mitch hangs up, a serious sadness overcoming him. *

ADDENDUM B: SC 26 - A BRITISH ANCHOR REPORTS THE NEWS

INT. ACSN INTERNATIONAL - STUDIO - DAY

A BRITISH ANCHOR reads the news.

BRITISH ANCHOR

Covid-19 cases continue to spike in Italy. Six people have died from the respiratory virus and 27 people are currently hospitalized in intensive care units. As the numbers continue to rise, officials in Lombardy have banned large public gatherings, and schools, universities and other public spaces have been closed for a week in an effort to contain the virus.

Pivoting to AS SCRIPTED NEWS STORY RE: MAGGIE'S BOOK; from Sc26:

BRITISH ANCHOR (CONT'D)

And out of America, a bombshell from journalist Maggie Brener's upcoming exposé on the behind-the-scenes troubles at UBA's The Morning Show to be published in Vanity Fair. Those with knowledge of the contents of this first excerpt say it includes allegations that disgraced former anchor Mitch Kessler targeted an inordinate amount of his inappropriate sexual advances toward black women. Though it had already been known that one of Kessler's victims was a black woman of mixed heritage, whose family is involved in ongoing litigation against Kessler and his former employers for her wrongful death, this pattern of behavior had not been previously suggested. That issue of Vanity Fair hits newsstands on Friday.

After it's over, the British Anchor continues in the background on the TV (*as Mitch and Alex react to the Maggie Brener story*).

Resume Addendum:

(CONTINUED)

BRITISH ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Also out of America: The U.S. is requesting the extradition of WikiLeaks creator Julian Assange over his alleged participation in publishing classified documents. The lawyer from the U.S. Extradition hearing said in a London courtroom earlier this morning that the publication of those documents "put lives at risk." Assange faces espionage and hacking charges that carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison. Assange has served a prison sentence in Britain for skipping bail and remains in custody pending the extradition request.

(then; onto another story)

Today Prime Minister Theresa May is on her way to the EU-League of Arab States summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. This summit is the first of its kind to be held between the two regions in an effort to strengthen their alliance. Sources confirm that Prime Minister May plans to call on Saudi Arabia's King Salman to influence Yemeni parties in the direction of peace. The Prime Minister believes quote, now is the time for governments to increase efforts to settle the crisis in Yemen, end quote. The war in Yemen has been at an impasse for years. A Saudi-led coalition of Arab States and Yemeni allies have been unsuccessful in removing the Iran-allied Houthi movement that currently has command of the capital and most population centers. A ceasefire was agreed upon near Stockholm in January, but sources close to the Prime Minister say she fears a lack of progress could agitate the United Arab Emirates.

(then)

And finally: The Australian bushfires continue to rage in what climate scientists are calling one of most catastrophic natural disasters in modern history.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BRITISH ANCHOR (CONT'D)

The fires have left 33 dead in south-east Australia and burned through more than 20% of Australia's forest -- equivalent to the size of South Korea. An estimated 1.25 billion wildlife have also perished. Unusually dry weather and strong winds made it easier for fires to start and spread quickly. This comes after Australia reported Spring 2019 as the continent's hottest on record. Climate scientist Dr. William Hertel described the devastation as quote, worse than anything we projected, end quote. In some exclusive footage, ACSN is on the ground in Australia to witness the fearless efforts of first responders as they continue to combat the flames.

Cut to footage of Australian fires.