

USERNAME

"Pilot"

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INT. LIAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CHYRON: SEATTLE. 2021.

ANGLE ON A PHONE SCREEN. A video on @ShandraStevens' Instagram profile. SHANDRA STEVENS (22) digital influencer and activist, so hot she doesn't need to be nice, but still is, addresses her followers.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)

I know how it feels to be alone. To be ignored. Some days it feels like no one can even see you.

Watching the video in bed is LIAM (14), small for his age, never kissed a girl.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

But I'm here for you. Always. Keep smiling, and remember to be kind.

Shandra blows a kiss. The video ends.

Liam sighs, smitten. Looks at the rest of her profile for the millionth time: Shandra Stevens. 32 million followers. Her bio says "L.A girl. Peace, love and kindness. Let's kick bullying and suicide in the face!"

The video Liam watched is Shandra's second to last post. He clicks on her last post, just some text over black saying "taking a social media break, be back soon!" At the bottom it says "posted 185 days ago."

Liam hesitates, then writes Shandra a private message:

"I know ure takin a social media break but just wanted to say we all miss u. Please come back soon <3"

Liam motions to put his phone away, when PING!

"New message from Shandra Stevens."

LIAM

Holy shit.

Shandra has sent "Hey, how's it going?"

Astonished, Liam calls his friend Jack, who answers with a sleepy grunt.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Shandra Stevens just DM'd me.

JACK (V.O.)
 I was asleep, dude.
 (beat)
 You sure it's not a fan account?

LIAM
 Yes! It's her verified account --

PING! Another message from Shandra. "Are you alone?"

LIAM (CONT'D)
 I gotta go.

JACK (V.O.)
 Wait, what --

Liam hangs up. Hands trembling, he types: "Yeah I'm alone."

Shandra immediately replies. "Wanna video chat?"

Liam: "Is that really you?"

Shandra: "Only one way to find out."

Liam's phone rings. NEW VIDEO CALL FROM SHANDRA STEVENS.

LIAM
 Oh my god. Oh my god.

Liam rips off his pajamas. Puts on a button down shirt.
 Throws the used Kleenex off his sheets --

And clicks on "Accept Call."

Shandra appears on the screen. Flawless face, a brightness about her like she could make a dying man smile. She could make anyone smile.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)
 Hey there, Liam.

Liam can hardly breathe. To him, it's like seeing the Pope.

LIAM
 H-hi.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)
 Thanks for your sweet message.

LIAM
 You're welcome. I'm a huge fan --

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)
 You're too kind.
 (beat)
 Hey, would you do something for me?

LIAM
 Uh, of course. Anything.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)
 You'll have to get out of bed
 though, is that okay?

Liam nods, ecstatic.

EXT. DESERTED SEATTLE STREET - NIGHT

A trembling Liam, winter jacket, foggy breath, makes his way down the street. Ahead, a HOMELESS MAN eyes him like prey.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)
 It's not far now. Just take the
 subway to 15th Avenue.

LIAM
 It's kinda dangerous though, at
 this hour...

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)
 Should I leave you alone? I can
 call someone else --

LIAM
 No! God, no.

Liam rushes into the subway station.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Liam rides the subway, alone.

LIAM
 Where have you been all this time?

Shandra doesn't reply. She looks out of it, on auto-pilot.

LIAM (CONT'D)
 Sorry, never mind --

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)
 It's okay. I've just been resting.

EXT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Liam emerges from the station. TWO SKETCHY MEN, probably mid-drug deal, glare at him. But Liam walks on. He has to be brave. For Shandra.

LIAM

Where do I go now?

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)

It's right there. Behind you.

Liam turns. Out in the distance, he sees an opulent bridge.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAWN

The sun rises. Only a few cars drive on the bridge.

Liam goes down the walkway. Picks a spot, facing the sun. The city stretches before him, one of those sights that makes us forget not everything is beautiful.

LIAM

Is this good?

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)

That's great.

LIAM

So what do you want me to do?

(beat)

Wait, first, I just wanted to say -- you've saved my life. Your videos kept me going when I was getting picked on at school.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)

I'm so happy to hear that.

LIAM

Anyway. What do you want me to do?

Shandra stares at him, her eyes piercing through the screen.

And then, ever so slightly, her gaze begins to change... the sweetness gives way to something menacing, unwavering...

Like the eyes of a predator.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)

I want you to jump, Liam.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. EMERGENCY TEXTLINE HEADQUARTERS - DAY**CHYRON: LOS ANGELES. 2021.**

NEVE, 28, dark hair, olive skin, trying hard to look like a functioning adult in an overly formal outfit, tribal tattoos peeking through her sleeves, sits at her desk mid-call.

NEVE

Hi, this is Neve from Emergency Textline. We're a non-profit that connects trained counselors with teenagers who are going through a crisis. Would you be interested in making a donation today?

Her boss SONIA (40's) comes by. Gestures for her to hang up.

NEVE (CONT'D)

I'll call you right back, sir.
(to Sonia)
Everything okay?

SONIA

The cops are here. They wanna talk to you.

Neve looks over her desk. TWO POLICE OFFICERS in the lobby.

NEVE

You sure it's for me?

SONIA

I know. I told 'em they can't just take my best supervisor in the middle of the afternoon --

NEVE

It's okay. I'll be back soon.

Neve touches her shoulder, reassuring, then grabs her jacket to go. Something falls out of her pocket.

SONIA

You dropped this.

Kate hands her a TAMPON.

NEVE

Oh. Thanks.

SONIA

Us girls, always prepared.

INT. EAST HOLLYWOOD POLICE STATION - DAY

Neve sits across from OFFICER WYATT (50's), who asserts his authority by never smiling, and another COP (30's).

NEVE

So you're saying Shandra *killed* someone?

OFFICER WYATT

An eyewitness confirmed the kid was video chatting with Shandra seconds before he jumped off the bridge. We checked and there was a call placed to him from her verified Instagram account.

Neve takes in the news, perplexed.

NEVE

It doesn't make any sense....

OFFICER WYATT

Can you tell us where Shandra is?

NEVE

I wouldn't know.

OFFICER WYATT

But you did work for her.

NEVE

I was her social media manager, but I left five months ago.

OFFICER WYATT

Her what?

NEVE

Her, you know. Instagram bitch.

The officers whisper something amongst themselves.

OFFICER WYATT

What else can you tell us?

NEVE

Sorry. I barely knew her.

(beat)

Can I go back to work now?

Officer Wyatt stares at her for a long beat. Neve stares back, her face giving nothing away.

OFFICER WYATT

Let me show you something first.

Wyatt takes out his phone. Presses play.

It's a video of none other than NEVE, sitting in a sound stage, a film camera aimed at her. She is recording a video, but her face and body are covered in small, circular SENSORS, similar to the dots on motion capture suits.

NEVE (ON VIDEO)

Hey guys, Shandra here. 20 million followers! Can you believe it? You guys are the best! And to top it off my latest suicide prevention campaign is trending on...

Neve turns paper white as she watches. Wyatt replays the first part of her speech over and over.

NEVE (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

Hey guys, Shandra here. Hey guys, Shandra here. Hey guys, Shandra --

He pauses the video. Stares at her. The change in Neve is evident. She's now tense. *Scared.*

OFFICER WYATT

What exactly are we looking at here?

Neve swallows hard, fear quickening her breath as we...

INT. NEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

CHYRON: LOS ANGELES. A YEAR AGO.

Younger Neve (27), shorter hair, ripped jeans, tattoos in plain sight - enters the shithole she calls home. She picks up the mail from the floor - a bunch of overdue bills. Great.

Neve sits at the customized computer - the only thing she didn't buy used. The ease with which she types and codes gives it away: computers aren't a hobby for her. They're a lifestyle. Because by night, Neve is a HACKER.

She opens a secure browser where she chats to someone. They ask: "can you really hack into my ex's profile? I wanna know who she's with now."

Neve sighs, annoyed. She always gets the same requests.

She replies: "I charge \$500." They answer: "Bitcoin ok?"

Neve: "Is monopoly money ok? Is a quinoa burger ok? Sorry, no bitcoin."

Another reply: "I only have \$100."

Neve frowns, then: "Deal."

NEVE

Cheap-ass.

RING RING. A Facetime notification. "NEW AUDIO CALL FROM SAM." Neve puts on her headset.

SAM (FILTERED)

What's up, what's up?

Sam is Neve's online friend, whose voice is, shall we say, unique. Think high-pitched, Steve Buscemi-like. His profile picture shows a chubby man (30's), kind eyes.

NEVE

Not much. Got fired from my day job this morning. Hooray.

(beat)

Don't think I can stomach social media managing any longer.

SAM (FILTERED)

Bummer. What happened?

NEVE

I was managing the Instagram of this fitness influencer who drinks tea all the time - *Bombay Tea*. So I wrote a sponsored post, but got the tea brand wrong. Turns out on social media she drinks *Mumbai* tea - *They're* her sponsors. Not the brand she drinks in real life.

SAM (FILTERED)

So you got fired for telling the truth?

NEVE

I wasn't hired to tell the truth.

(beat)

How's things in Minnesota?

SAM (FILTERED)

Same old, same old. Got a chia seed stuck in my tooth today. Worse than medieval torture.

NEVE
Worse than which one?

SAM (FILTERED)
Let's see. Scaphism?

Neve works as they chat. We see her attempting to hack into the requested profile, that of a gorgeous blonde woman.

NEVE
That the one where they stretch the person to death?

SAM (FILTERED)
Nah, it's the one where they tie them outside on a hot day, cover their body in honey, and leave 'em there to be eaten by vermin.

NEVE
I can see how it's comparable to the chia seed.

Neve is in. The profile picture shows the blonde woman and her new, equally hot boyfriend.

SAM (FILTERED)
Did you know it's three years today since we met in that random chat room?

Neve smiles. It's cute he remembers.

NEVE
Maybe one day we'll meet up, huh?

She scrolls through the woman's pictures. Beach holidays, parties with friends, dinner dates, selfies. A regular life, one Neve would never admit she envies, but it's there in her eyes when nobody is watching.

SAM (FILTERED)
Yeah. One day. One day.

NEVE
Why do you always do that? You say things twice. "One day, one day."

SAM (FILTERED)
Jeez. Someone's grumpy today.
(beat)
How's the love life? You still seeing that guy? Owen, was it?

Neve replies to the client: "She's dating some loser named Greg. Sent some pics to your email." Done. Closes the chat.

NEVE

That was a one-time thing. For obvious reasons.

SAM

Do you always pick the wrong ones on purpose?

NEVE

Honestly, I just wanna make enough money so I can do this full-time and limit my in-person interactions to zero.

SAM

Ok, I wasn't gonna say anything, but a friend of a friend is looking for someone for this social media job at a talent agency. I told him about you.

NEVE

Social media? Seriously?

SAM

Just give it a shot. Might be good money. Isn't that what you need to fulfill your plan of sitting at your computer forever?

NEVE

Don't be a dick.

SAM

You gotta admit it's not much of a life plan.

NEVE

Well, it's the only one I got.

INT. LIAISON TALENT AGENCY - DAY (2020)

Neve, in old jeans and a t-shirt that says "Necromancy for Beginners," enters.

The agency's name, LIAISON, is mounted on the wall in a corporate font.

Neve goes up to the polished RECEPTIONIST (F, 20's), who stares her down, judging her choice of wardrobe.

NEVE
I'm Neve Alves. Here to see Zane.

ZANE (O.S.)
And I'm here to see you.

She turns to find ZANE (30's), a very punchable face in a tailored suit and Hugh Hefner slippers.

ZANE (CONT'D)
Wassup, wassup, fam?!

He offers his hand for a high-five. Neve hesitantly high-fives him back.

ZANE (CONT'D)
I'm Zane. Welcome to Liaison.

INT. LIAISON TALENT AGENCY - DAY (2020)

Neve and Zane walk down what looks like a regular, boring talent agency - client roster on the wall, busy desks manned by underpaid and overdressed assistants. Neve senses the judgmental stares as she walks.

NEVE
What kind of clients do you guys manage?

ZANE
Digital influencers mostly. Fashion bloggers, Youtube comedians. The millennial Shakespeares. The Nelson Mandelas of today.

Neve raises an eyebrow. Not sure if he's joking or not.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY (2020)

They go into an elevator. Zane pushes the B button for basement. Identification requested. He taps his wrist against the sensor. Some kind of chip under his skin.

ZANE
Cool, huh? Makes you feel like a superhero.

NEVE
Mmm.

INT. LIAISON BASEMENT LEVEL - DAY (2020)

The elevator doors open. Neve almost falls backwards.

This floor is the polar opposite of the rest of the agency. It looks like a Silicon Valley start-up: open floor plan with modern individual pods, programmers in jeans and sneakers, a ping pong table, kombucha on tap.

NEVE

Is this... still Liaison?

ZANE

This is the *real* Liaison. The rest is just for show.

Now he's got her attention.

INT. LIAISON - ZANE'S POD - DAY (2020)

Zane sits across from Neve. The pod is small but sleek.

ZANE

So. Neve. Are you Irish?

Neve frowns. Anyone who looked at her would know she's not.

NEVE

No.

ZANE

Sure? Thought that name was Irish.

She sighs. It's becoming harder to disguise the fact that she hates this dude.

NEVE

It means snow in Portuguese.

ZANE

So you're what, Brazilian?

NEVE

Do you wanna talk about my professional background, or...?

ZANE

Not really. I wanna know about you.

NEVE

There's not much to tell, really.

EXT. ROAD - DAY (FLASHBACK 1990'S)

A one-lane road, cutting through the Chihuahuan Desert. Barren. No sounds but the faraway cry of the wind.

NEVE (V.O.)

I was born in Twin Falls, Idaho, to loving parents. Small family home, picket fence, two cats, one horse.

A scorpion crosses the road, undisturbed.

Silence. Nothing but the black scorching asphalt as we travel down the road...

Until there is something. A different kind of cry. Faint, then crisp, painful.

The cry of a BABY.

5 months old, no more. A girl. The skin on her back touching the asphalt. The burn marks fresh.

A baby, smack in the middle of the road. Alone.

NEVE (V.O.)

I barely ever cried as a baby.

A CAR comes full speed down the road, heading straight for the child.

NEVE (V.O.)

I had no reason to.

At the last minute it BRAKES, inches from the baby.

A couple of TEENAGE JUNKIES come out of the car and look down at the baby, in awe.

INT. TRAILER HOME - DAY (FLASHBACK 1990'S)

The male junkie enters while his MOTHER (50's), who lives there, screams at someone on the phone. Without her noticing, the junkie leaves the baby on the couch and flees.

INT. TRAILER HOME - DAY (FLASHBACK 1990'S)

The neglected baby crawls on the filthy carpet, while the woman sells pills to an OLD MAN in the kitchen.

CLOSE ON the baby's eyes, watching something on TV as if hypnotized.

It's a commercial for a COMPUTER.

NEVE (V.O.)
I liked the same things as other
girls. Dolls. Pretty dresses.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DAY (FLASHBACK 1990'S)

The woman gives Neve, now 5, a sullen girl with bangs over her eyes, to a BLONDE WOMAN (30's) at another trailer home.

INT. NEVE'S NEW HOME - DAY (FLASHBACK 1990'S)

Neve stares blankly at her new bedroom. She finds a magazine. In the magazine, a full-page ad for a computer. Neve smiles.

BLONDE WOMAN (O.S.)
Tyra! Dinner!

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK 1990'S)

Neve, a.k.a "Tyra" doesn't eat.

BLONDE WOMAN
Eat, Tyra. Now.

NEVE
That's not my name.

The woman slaps her. Neve STABS her hand with the fork.

The woman SCREAMS.

NEVE (V.O.)
I didn't move a whole lot.

A MONTAGE (1990's - 2000's)

Neve being called for dinner at multiple houses. In each scene she's a little older. 10, 12, 14. And each time they call her by a different name. Tyra, Crystal, Amber.

INT. SINGLE DAD'S HOUSE - DAY (2000'S)

Neve, now 15, comes home with a different person. This time, a SINGLE DAD (50's).

Neve smiles, ecstatic. There's a computer in the living room! She rushes to it, but the dad holds her arm.

SINGLE DAD
Don't touch that.

Neve locks eyes with her new dad, who's holding her arm way too violently for him to not mean it.

NEVE (V.O.)
It was a quiet life.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (2000'S)

Neve opens the window and runs out.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT (2000'S)

Neve runs, heading nowhere in particular, just away, but HALTS when she comes across a small family business, closed for the day: "CLARA EM NEVE PASTRY SHOP AND CYBER CAFE." A Brazilian flag on the sign.

Neve looks through the shop window. A counter with stools in the front, a few computers in the back.

We see the computer screens reflected on her eyes, the fascination. Like she's found home.

INT. CYBER CAFE - NIGHT (2000'S)

Neve makes a nest for herself inside the ceiling vents.

Then, she goes down to where the computers are and sits down at one for the first time. The only light in the dark room comes from the computer screen shining onto her smiling face.

NEVE (V.O.)
A regular life.

INT. LIAISON - ZANE'S POD - DAY (2020)

Back to scene, Neve finishes the story.

NEVE
... and that's about it. Told you
it was boring.

Zane nods, a strange look in his eyes.

ZANE
Nothing wrong with that, fam.
(beat)
(MORE)

ZANE (CONT'D)

Well, then. Let me tell you a little bit about us.

He shows Neve an Instagram profile on his computer.

ZANE (CONT'D)

This babe you see here is Tara. Our first influencer. A fashion blogger and activist.

Tara is a gorgeous young woman with perfect, airbrushed skin. She would look like any other digital influencer if it wasn't for the fact *she's clearly CGI*. (Computer-generated imagery).

ZANE (CONT'D)

Notice anything different?

NEVE

Other than the fact she's bad CGI?

ZANE

Ouch. But that's right.

(beat)

Liaison is not like the other agencies, Neve.

NEVE

Yeah. No shit.

ZANE

We're dedicated to using technology for social change. Here's an example.

Zane clicks on one of Tara's posts. It's her holding a Martin Luther King biography. The caption: "One of the first books I read in high school. Taught me so much. #BlackLivesMatter."

NEVE

CGI influencers advocating for social change? That's... bizarre.

ZANE

Bizarre? It's the future. We're in the digital age. The new "I Have a Dream" is "I Have a Meme."

Neve just stares at him, mouth agape at the idiocy.

ZANE (CONT'D)

Anyway. Tara got 30k or so followers. Then the novelty wore off.

(MORE)

ZANE (CONT'D)

We realized we needed something more real to connect with our audience long-term. A *human* touch.

(beat)

That's where you come in, fam.

NEVE

What's the job, exactly?

ZANE

You don't waste no time, huh?

(beat)

All right, I'll give it to you straight: You've managed celebrity social media accounts before. This is the same, except the celebrity... isn't real.

NEVE

So, like Tara?

ZANE

Oh no. Better than Tara.

(beat)

You can tell Tara is CGI, which is why she wasn't good enough. But the influencer you'll manage...

(beat)

Get a load of this: *no one* will know they're not real.

NEVE

There's no CGI that advanced.

ZANE

What are we, amateurs? No. We're visionaries. Give a man a fish and he gets fed for a day. Give a man a few million dollars and magic happens. The impossible.

(beat)

We brought some boys down from the Valley. The Silicon one. And we developed some badass, brand new technology in-house - think of it as a highly advanced Instagram filter - that'll enable you to embody this new celeb in the one place she'll exist: behind a screen on social media.

Neve takes all of it in. She's torn between the absurdity and the allure of it.

NEVE

That's... nuts. And probably illegal. Not that I care, but I don't wanna get into trouble --

ZANE

No one will know you're doing this. I promise. Hand to heart.

NEVE

Why not just hire some cute blonde and turn her into an influencer? It'd save you a buck.

ZANE

Because anyone could do that.

(beat)

Don't you get it, fam? We don't want cheap. We want *innovation*. A perfect human whose personality, backstory, and looks have all been developed by our algorithm to maximize social media influence.

(beat)

A being conceived by code to be irresistible, but also embodied by a human so it doesn't feel artificial in any way.

(beat)

A perfect being embodied by *you*.

A beat, then it registers: this isn't an interview anymore.

ZANE (CONT'D)

We're offering you the job, you lucky lady.

Neve doesn't react at first. It all seems surreal.

NEVE

Thanks, but the world doesn't need any more digital Barbies to fuck up kid's heads.

(beat)

Besides, I'm not right for this at *all*.

ZANE

You're perfect for it. We don't want another desperate schmuck who thinks they can act. We want someone fresh. Unexpected. Everything else we can teach you.

NEVE

I doubt that.

ZANE

I talked to your friend. Sam.

(beat)

He told me all about you. How you spent your life behind a computer screen. How good you are at being someone else. The woman behind the curtain, pulling the strings.

Neve shifts, uncomfortable at the intimacy.

ZANE (CONT'D)

Here you'd be pretending to be someone else too. Just like you did at your previous work. And every Tinder date. Every job interview. Every time someone asks "tell me about your background."

(beat)

You didn't think I'd buy the Idaho story, did you?

Shock washes over Neve's face. Zane seems to revel in it.

NEVE

You've been spying on me.

ZANE

Just doing our due diligence.

(beat)

But that's over now. You're here. You've been approved. Yay!

NEVE

Fuck you.

She gets up to leave.

ZANE

Whoa. Wait a second --

NEVE

You think you can blackmail me?

ZANE

Calm your pussy down, fam. No one's blackmailing anyone. You wanna leave? There's the door.

NEVE
 So kind of you.
 (under her breath)
 Dickhead.

ZANE
 But if I were you I'd take a look
 at the contract first.

Zane shoves an iPad in front of her face. The contract on the screen. Neve's eyes widen as she reads:

"INITIAL SALARY: 20K/MONTH + BONUSES."

ZANE (CONT'D)
 Being part of something awesome
 that will change the world? Check.
 Lots of money? Check. Being a good
 influence to the kids? Check.

Neve stares at the contract, an internal fight. The numbers scream at her. Twenty. Thousand. Dollars.

ZANE (CONT'D)
 This is a one-time offer, fam.

A beat. Neve is tortured.

Finally, she looks up at him.

NEVE
 Say I take the job... who would I
 be impersonating, then?

INT. LIAISON SOUNDSTAGE - DAY (2020)

A nervous Neve sits at the center of the soundstage, facing a top-of-the-line film camera. In the background, a crew works on building a living room set.

Zane approaches accompanied by IKE (20's).

ZANE
 This is Ike. Cam op and tech
 wunderkind. Do your thing, dude.

Neve stiffens as Ike places small, circular sensors on her face and body.

Ike finishes, then moves over to the camera and turns it on. Signals to Zane. He's ready.

ZANE (CONT'D)
Here we go. Rock n' roll.

There is an LCD screen facing Neve. Zane turns it on.

Suddenly, a woman appears on the screen.

It's SHANDRA STEVENS.

Neve jumps, surprised. Shandra jumps with her.

Neve steadies herself. Shandra steadies herself too.

Everything Neve does, Shandra does too. They're one and the same and yet, they could not look more different.

ZANE (CONT'D)
Record this bit, Ike. Say something, Neve.

NEVE
This is insane.

ZANE
Play it.

The LCD screen plays back the bit they've just recorded. On the screen, Shandra repeats Neve's words.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)
This is insane.

Shandra's voice, as we've heard in the teaser, is not Neve's voice. It's sweeter, smoother, and *totally* human. Shandra is a perfectly convincing being.

ZANE
The filter also changes your voice.
Clever, huh?
(beat)
So, what do you think? Do you think you could be her?

Off Neve, staring at her hotter digital twin, not sure if she's fascinated, disturbed, or both.

INT. NEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (2020)

Neve stares at the contract on her phone. Her signature is now on it.

She keeps scrolling. Gets to a page that says MANDATES FOR SHANDRA STEVENS.

NEVE

(reading)

"You're free to write your own scripts for Shandra's videos, but you must stick to her personality, developed by Liaison's algorithm."

(turning the page)

"Shandra's personality traits: cheerful but never fake; a social butterfly; feminine; a truth teller; an advocate for cyber bullying and suicide prevention."

(beat)

Feminine, cheerful, social. Great.

Neve's phone vibrates. A new text from OWEN.

"You home? I'm downstairs."

Off Neve, surprised.

EXT. NEVE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT (2020)

Neve comes downstairs to find OWEN FORRESTER (30's), clean cut, clean shaven, clean record. A little less handsome than Hollywood stars but not by much. The poor man's Superman. He wears an FBI uniform that says "Cybercrime Division."

OWEN

Before you accuse me of stalking you, I just wanna point out you once told me "that's my building" while we were at the ice cream shop across the street. I believe you had a pistachio sundae?

NEVE

I hate pistachio.

OWEN

Then it was the other green flavor.

(beat)

Look, I won't pretend I need to use the bathroom and ask to come in or anything. I just thought we could talk face to face. That's still the best way, right?

Neve is charmed, but tries to remain distant.

NEVE

Owen. We had a fun time --

OWEN

It did involve fishnets --

NEVE

A *super* fun time, but we're just not good for each other.

OWEN

Elaborate.

Neve looks at his uniform. "FBI - Cybercrime Division."

NEVE

Different interests.

OWEN

I thought you said you worked in cybersecurity. Definitely some common ground there.

NEVE

I'm sorry. You're a great guy --

OWEN

"You're a great guy, but my Russian ex who has ties to the mafia is in town, in fact he hangs out at that same ice cream shop, and if he sees us together, well, it won't be pretty. So we gotta call it quits."

NEVE

That's... not what I was gonna say at all. The last part yes, but, the reason is that I'm just not ready --

OWEN

"Just not ready for commitment."
A Russian ex-boyfriend would've been a much better reason but, alas, no such luck.

(beat)

Well. I'll see ya.

Neve watches him go, already regretting her words.

Only a couple more seconds elapse before she:

NEVE

Wait.

He halts, turns.

NEVE (CONT'D)

Could you handle dating someone without asking any questions about their work or background?

OWEN

You know I could run a background check on you. Maybe I already have.

NEVE

You didn't.

OWEN

What are we gonna talk about if not those things?

NEVE

My new fishnets?

Owen smiles.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY (2021)

Back in the present, Officer Wyatt hands Neve a glass of water. She gulps it down.

NEVE

Look, the video. I know what it looks like, but I had *nothing to do* with that kid's death. I've been supervising the evening shift for the past week, just ask my boss --

The nameless cop from before reenters.

COP

He's here.

OFFICER WYATT

Our hero arriveth.

NEVE

Who's here?

Shock washes over Neve as a man enters the room and sits across from her. The same broad shoulders and boyish looks, but no trace of a smile.

OWEN

I'm agent Owen Forrester, FBI Cybercrime Division. I have some questions for you.

INT. LIAISON SOUNDSTAGE - DAY (2020)

Zane enters bearing a hat that says "BE KIND."

ZANE

Ready to record your first video as Shandra?

(giving Neve the hat)

Wear this. Kind Bar agreed to sponsor you. Cha-ching.

Neve stares at Shandra on the LCD screen.

NEVE

This is so weird.

ZANE

Weird? She's freaking gorgeous. Who wouldn't wanna look like that?

Neve takes in Shandra's flawless face, the kind Greek goddesses may have had. Beauty worth dying and killing for.

NEVE

Not everyone wants to be Barbie.

ZANE

No. But you do.

NEVE

Ha. I buy my clothes at Goodwill. I get one haircut every two years. I've never set foot in a Sephora --

ZANE

It's almost like you made a conscious effort not to.

NEVE

Yeah, because it sucks --

ZANE

Okay, okay. Let's get to it. We'll do a test run first.

Neve turns to the camera. Exhales, nervous.

NEVE

Uh. Hi. Hi, followers.

(beat)

Uh, it's Shandra here.

ZANE

A little more assertive.

NEVE
I was trying to sound feminine.

ZANE
You sounded boring.

NEVE
This is gonna be impossible --

ZANE
Keep trying. "It's a marathon, not a sprint." I think it was Gandhi who said that.

CUT TO:

A MONTAGE

Showing Neve's various awkward attempts at recording her first video as Shandra.

NEVE
What's up, you guys? Shandra is in the house!

ZANE
Too forced.

LATER

NEVE
Hey, you guys! Guess who it is? It's Shandra Stevens!

ZANE
Too bubbly.

LATER

NEVE
Hey, y'all! Shandra here!

ZANE
Was that a southern accent?

LATER

NEVE
Hello, you wonderful people out there. It's Shand --

Neve notices Zane's unimpressed face.

NEVE (CONT'D)
 Okay, you know what? I'm done.

ZANE
 Hey --

NEVE
 I'm not your fucking perfect,
 digital doll. I never will be.
 (beat)
 Why would you do this anyway? Why
 would you put fake humans on social
 media? It's gross. You think the
 human experience can just be
 commoditized like that? Being human
 is not acai bowls and beautiful
 people. It's *pain*. Not beauty.

Zane just stares at her, a light smile on his face.

ZANE
 I knew you were perfect for the
 job.

NEVE
 Excuse me?

ZANE
 Shandra is the beauty. You're the
 pain. Being human is not either or.
 It's both.
 (beat)
 You two belong together, fam.

Zane exits. Neve and Shandra stay, side by side, one filling
 a screen, the other a tiny body in an empty soundstage.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY (2021)

Back in the present, Neve sits across from Owen and Wyatt.
 Their conversation is being recorded.

OWEN
 What are those sensors you wear in
 the video? Are they for motion
 capture? How'd you build them?

NEVE
 I didn't build anything --

OWEN

You found a way to map out
Shandra's features and you built
that gadget to impersonate her.
That's identity theft.

Neve scoffs. An ironic assumption, considering the situation.

OWEN (CONT'D)

You think this is a joke?

NEVE

I need to speak to Owen alone.

OWEN

Agent Forrester.

NEVE

I need to speak to agent Foster
alone. Sorry, *Forrester*. That's
your name, right?

Owen ignores her, turns to the cop.

OWEN

Give us a moment, please.

Officer Wyatt gets up.

OFFICER WYATT

Watch out for this one. She's been
lying through her teeth all day.

OWEN

Thank you, officer.

He leaves. Now it's just Neve and Owen. It's awkward on
multiple levels.

OWEN (CONT'D)

I'm inclined to believe Wyatt. I've
never seen you in heels before.

NEVE

Turn off the recording.

Owen hesitates.

NEVE (CONT'D)

Do it.

Finally, he pushes the button that stops the recording.

NEVE (CONT'D)
Shandra's not real.

Owen just stares at her. It doesn't compute.

NEVE (CONT'D)
You wanna know where she is? Go on her Instagram. That's the only place you'll find her.

OWEN
I've seen her posts. She has a home. A pool. She loves lounging at the beach --

NEVE
The living room is the Liaison soundstage. The pool is the Liaison rooftop. The beach is just really good CGI.

OWEN
She has that boyfriend, that country singer --

NEVE
Clive Booth. He's not real either.

OWEN
I've heard his songs on Spotify --

NEVE
No. You heard a person singing with the aid of an advanced filter on Spotify. That person's name is Jeremy. He plays Clive --

OWEN
She has a passport!

Neve nods. *Yup.*

NEVE
That job I didn't wanna talk about when we were dating? This was it.

A beat. Owen looks disoriented. You can almost hear the wheels turning in his brain.

OWEN
So, what you're saying is --

NEVE

As I'm sure you know, just because you've read, heard, or watched something on a screen doesn't mean it's true.

OWEN

Why would you tell me this? This only implicates you further --

NEVE

Because I need your help.
Whoever sent the cops that video knew I'd be the perfect scapegoat.
(beat)
Someone's trying to frame me, Owen.

PING! Owen gets a text. It's a video from an unknown number. The video thumbnail shows SHANDRA'S FACE.

OWEN

What the hell.

NEVE

Did you hear what I said?

OWEN

I need a minute.

NEVE

Hey!

But he's out the door. Neve shakes her head. Shit.

INT. NEVE'S BEDROOM - DAY (2020)

Neve practices in front of a small mirror. Her room is sparse, mismatched. This is no Pottery Barn bedroom.

NEVE

Hey, guys, it's Shandra here.
(different inflection)
Shandra here. Shandra. Shahn-drah.
(yet another way)
Hey guys, it's Shandra. I'm just sitting here in my expensive organic canopy bed pretending to be real. What are you guys up to?

She sighs, frustrated. Looks at the contract detailing Shandra's personality traits. One of them calls her attention: "a truth teller."

NEVE (CONT'D)
A "truth teller." Huh.

INT. LIAISON SOUNDSTAGE - DAY (2020)

Zane watches as Neve records her first video as Shandra. INTERCUT between Neve (in person) and Shandra (on the LCD screen). Neve is more smiley and gentle than normal. She is indeed playing a character.

NEVE
Hey guys, it's Shandra Stevens.
(beat)
I think you'll all agree with me
when I say this: social media
sucks. It's annoying, it's fake,
and it drives us away from the
truth about who we are.

Zane looks worried. Neve sneaks him a glance. *Trust me.*

NEVE (CONT'D)
Which is why this will be our safe
space. Where we can talk about our
truth.

SHANDRA
Not our likes and followers, but
our relationships. Our struggles.
Mental illness. Heartbreak.
Bullying.

NEVE
I've struggled with those too, you
know. No shame in admitting that.
I'm here to help.

SHANDRA
And to entertain, of course. It's
not supposed to be a chore. If I
get too preachy you guys just let
me know. We're a family now.

NEVE
All right, talk to you tomorrow.
Have a great night!

SHANDRA AND NEVE
And remember to be kind.

ZANE
And... cut.

Ike stops recording (although the camera stays on).

ZANE (CONT'D)

That was... brilliant! It was honest, but marketable. How'd you do that?

NEVE

I just focused on the one thing she and I have in common.

ZANE

You two are a match made in heaven. I can smell the sweet scent of endorsement deals already.

NEVE

Thought we were doing this to help the kids.

ZANE

Stay here. I want you to meet someone.

Zane exits. Ike walks to a water fountain. Neve is now alone.

She stares at Shandra on the LCD screen.

NEVE

You know what's really messed up?

(beat)

You're the closest I ever had to a sister.

JEREMY (O.S.)

Which one is the evil twin?

Neve turns, embarrassed. Standing behind her is JEREMY (30), a Korean-American hunk. He could star in a Jack Daniels commercial - the vulgar, irresistible troublemaker.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Or are you both bad?

His eyes linger on her as if they were post-coital.

Zane reenters.

ZANE

There you are! Neve, this is my boy Jeremy. We hired him yesterday. Do us a solid and mingle, will ya? Your influencers will be working together a lot.

NEVE

There are more people doing this?

ZANE

Oh, yeah. There's the two of you
and two others. You'll meet them
soon enough.

Zane smiles, leaves them. A silent beat ensues.

JEREMY

Don't you wanna know who my
character is?

NEVE

Not really.

Jeremy ignores her, pulls up his phone to show her a profile on Instagram. @CliveBooth. There's only one post so far: a picture of a cute young man with bright eyes and a naive smile holding a guitar. The bio says: "Jesus First. You second. New single coming soon to Spotify."

JEREMY

Wholesome country pop sensation,
Mr. Clive Booth.

NEVE

They hired you for that?

Jeremy suddenly breaks into song. He's got a great voice and a spot-on country accent.

JEREMY

*"There are three wooden crosses on
the right side of the highway,
Why there's not four of them,
Heaven only knows..."*

Off Neve, shocked. There's more to him than meets the eye.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Don't know why they bother with the
voice correction.

(beat)

So. Are you one of those Insta-
obsessed girlies?

NEVE

I hate social media. I like money.

JEREMY

Strange job for someone who hates
social media.

Neve ignores him, leaves.

INT. LIAISON - NEVE'S POD - DAY (2020)

Neve posts the video she just recorded to Shandra's profile, which only has 5k followers and a couple of selfies up.

NEVE

World, meet Shandra. A regular living, breathing person.

(beat)

This is so crazy.

Zane appears at the door.

ZANE

Did you take those passport photos of Shandra I asked for?

NEVE

Yeah. Um, what are those for?

ZANE

Don't worry about it. The real news is I booked you a video interview for tomorrow.

NEVE

What? Already?

ZANE

Well, duh. The 5k followers we bought you can only do so much. Claire Lavigne interviews all major influencers. This will be sick publicity.

NEVE

But an interview would mean I have to be Shandra in real time.

ZANE

That's right. She'll ask all about Shandra's background so study up those mandates.

NEVE

What if she suspects something?

ZANE

She won't. You're good at your job.

He says it almost as a threat.

ZANE (CONT'D)
Be hot. Be on brand. And for the
love of god, don't be boring.

INT. NEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (2020)

Neve works her "night job" while talking to Sam (voice only).

SAM
Wanna play chess? I dare you to
beat me.

Neve chats to a new client, who asks "can you access
someone's bank account?" Neve answers "why?"

NEVE
(coldly)
I'm good, thanks.

The client says "this guy owes me \$20 and won't pay."

Neve: "So you wanna pay me \$500 to recover \$20?"

Seconds later, "J108 has left the conversation." Neve sighs.

SAM
...okay, then.
(beat)
How's working at Liaison?

NEVE
It's weird.

SAM
Really? Isn't it social media
managing just like you did before?

Neve realizes Sam doesn't know what the job *really* is.

NEVE
Right. Yeah.

SAM
Is something wrong?

Neve hesitates. Finally, she goes there:

NEVE
You didn't tell Zane about my
"night job," did you?

SAM
Jesus. Of course not. He knew?

She doesn't reply.

SAM (CONT'D)
Neve, I swear -- I'd never --

NEVE
I gotta go. The influencer I manage
has a big interview tomorrow.

SAM
Wait, just --

NEVE
Talk to you later.

Neve hangs up, a tinge of sadness in her eyes.

INT. LIAISON SOUNDSTAGE - DAY (2020)

Neve sits on an armchair in Shandra's boho-chic living room set. While Ike fits her with the sensors, she murmurs facts under her breath in preparation for the interview.

NEVE
I was born in Santa Monica in 1998.
My sign is Cancer. As a kid I liked
going to the beach and walking my
border collie Luna... no, wait,
Lola. Or was it Luna? Fuck.

Neve looks at her phone. She has prepared an actual Shandra cheat sheet for the interview.

NEVE (CONT'D)
My dog Luna.

ZANE
You ready, superstar?

Zane places a sleek laptop on her lap.

ZANE (CONT'D)
I'll be over there watching.

NEVE
That's very reassuring.

ZANE
Oh, just so you know, Claire can
be...difficult. But you'll be fine.

Zane walks off set but stays where Neve can see him.

NEVE

What do you mean, difficult?

Neve's laptop RINGS. VIDEO CALL FROM CLAIRE LAVIGNE.

NEVE (CONT'D)

Shit. Okay. This is happening.

Neve clicks on "Accept Call."

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY (2020)

CLAIRE LAVIGNE (20's), a Perez Hilton type blogger, a baby face camouflaging a ruthless soul, sits on her leopard-print bed with her leopard-print covered laptop.

Shandra appears on Claire's screen.

SHANDRA

Hey, Claire. It's Shandra.

CLAIRE

Jesus. You're pretty.

SHANDRA

Aw. You're too kind.

CLAIRE

I'm not kind. I'm factual.

SHANDRA

Uh, okay --

CLAIRE

I'm just kidding. Relax!

Neve looks to Zane, who mouths "it's fine."

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I hear you're doing some noble work on Insta. With a face like yours, you don't have to work that hard, honey.

SHANDRA

I'm trying to help troubled teenagers --

CLAIRE

And make some cash.

SHANDRA

Well, I'm proud to partner with companies that support the work I'm doing. Toms, for example.

Zane gives her a thumbs up. Good save.

CLAIRE

Right. Toms. Shoeless kids. Who could resist? Anyway. Instagram is such a crowded space. How're you gonna stand out?

SHANDRA

By telling the truth.

(beat)

I'm building a safe space where kids can talk about their problems without being stigmatized.

CLAIRE

You mean problems like isolation, low self-esteem, bullying? I can't imagine you struggling with those.

SHANDRA

You'd be surprised.

Claire's pomeranian jumps onto the bed.

CLAIRE

Hi baby. This is Alfie. You have any pets?

SHANDRA

As a kid I had a border collie named Lola -- I mean, Luna --

CLAIRE

Which one was it?

SHANDRA

Sorry, just a sec -- someone's calling me --

Neve pulls up her phone to discreetly look at the answer, but it has a glitch - the screen is permanently frozen.

CLAIRE

Everything okay?

Neve desperately tries to restart the phone. She looks to Zane, who mouths "Keep talking. Don't be nervous."

SHANDRA

Uh, she was a mutt. A rescue.

CLAIRE

Of course she was. So where you
from, dear?

SHANDRA

I'm from --

Neve looks at the frozen phone. She can't remember the
answer. Claire notices something is wrong.

CLAIRE

Should I call back when you're more
prepared?

Zane shakes his head. This is a disaster. Neve sees his face
and says the first thing that pops into her mind:

SHANDRA

I'm from Twin Falls, Idaho.

Zane's eyes widen.

SHANDRA (CONT'D)

I had a cute little family house,
picket fence, two cats, one horse.

CLAIRE

How... quaint.

SHANDRA

Yeah, it was a pretty quiet life.

CLAIRE

Do you have any stories from that
time? Like, were your parents
cousins or something?

SHANDRA

What?

CLAIRE

Did you sleep in a barn? Did your
brother have sex with the family
goat?

SHANDRA

Uh... no. We just... hung around
the countryside.

Claire looks visibly bored.

CLAIRE

Until you came to California to pursue the big dream. Got it. Well, it was great chatting, Shandra.

SHANDRA

Wait, can I just --

CLAIRE

Gotta go. Bye now.

SHANDRA

... bye.

Neve shuts the laptop, defeated. Zane beelines for her.

ZANE

What the fuck was that? *Idaho*?

NEVE

I'm sorry, I had a cheat sheet but my phone just wouldn't --

ZANE

Shandra's Wikipedia page went live today. And now we gotta take it down because she told some reporter she's from middle of nowhere Idaho!

NEVE

I panicked, I said the first thing that popped into my head --

ZANE

Yeah, your fake life story, I get it. Fuck that story. The Midwest is the cancer of popularity!

Jeremy walks past the soundstage, hears the argument.

ZANE (CONT'D)

And then you go and forget your own dog's name! Don't you think that's a little fucking suspicious?

Neve just stares at Zane, shocked at his aggressiveness.

NEVE

I'm sorry, okay?

ZANE

No one can know she's not real.

(beat)

(MORE)

ZANE (CONT'D)
You understand? You have *no idea*
what's what stake here --

JEREMY
Hey!

Jeremy enters, gets on Zane's face.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Back off, hair gel.

A beat. Zane closes his eyes. Exhales. When he opens them again, he is back to normal.

ZANE
I'm sorry. That was very uncool.
Excuse me.

Zane dashes off.

JEREMY
You okay?

NEVE
I don't need you rescuing me.

JEREMY
I know. I like that about you.

He smiles, exits. Neve lets herself sink in the armchair.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY (2021)

Back in the present, Owen comes back into the interrogation room, looking like he's seen a ghost.

NEVE
Owen. Listen. I've worked really
hard to move on from all the
Liaison shit. I got a new job, I
even wear business clothes now --

She stops talking. Notices his haunted expression.

OWEN
Say I believe you. You were
Shandra, but you're not anymore.
Not since you left Liaison.

NEVE
That's what I've been saying.

OWEN

If that's true... then who's this?

Owen passes his phone to Neve. The video of Shandra Stevens is on the screen.

OWEN (CONT'D)

This video was just texted to several agents in my division.

Neve clicks play. Shandra talks fast, breathes hard.

SHANDRA (ON VIDEO)

This is Shandra Stevens. I'm in hiding. I'm being accused of a horrible thing, but it wasn't me. There's a crazy woman posing as me. She's trying to ruin my life. I need your help. *Please --*

Off Neve, overcome with horror. *Who is she watching?*

INT. LIAISON SOUNDSTAGE - DAY (2020)

Neve sulks in the armchair, post failed interview.

KAIRA

You're Shandra, aren't you?

Neve looks up to find KAIRA (23), a shy, modestly dressed African-American Mormon and an avid gamer - who has no game.

KAIRA (CONT'D)

I'm Kaira. I play Bella Chadwick.

NEVE

You're the other girl Zane hired.

Kaira nods, sits next to her.

KAIRA

How do you like it here?

NEVE

Right this second, I hate it.

KAIRA

Really? I love it. This job is such a dream.

NEVE

Yeah? How so?

KAIRA
Have you seen Bella, my character?

NEVE
No, but I can imagine what she
looks like.

Kaira shows Neve a picture from Bella's Instagram profile. Kaira's CGI persona is a voluptuous Black nymph who cosplays as fantasy video game characters and shows a *lot* of skin.

NEVE (CONT'D)
She's... definitely something.

KAIRA
She's every gamer's dream. When I
become her, it's like for a second
I'm not this loser Mormon girl who
still lives with her parents.

NEVE
You're Mormon?

KAIRA
Go ahead, ask.
(beat)
"How come you're Black and Mormon?"

NEVE
I wasn't gonna ask that.

KAIRA
Everyone does.

NEVE
Must get annoying.
(beat)
Are your parents okay with you
working here?

KAIRA
Gosh, no. They'd flip. My mom
thinks I'm a waitress. She wants me
to go on my mission, but... I know
it's stupid, but I feel like I
found a purpose as Bella.
(beat)
Maybe you will too.

NEVE
Purpose implies order and destiny,
both of which are bullshit.
(beat)
Sorry. Hard day.

INT. LIAISON - ZANE'S POD - DAY (2020)

Zane sits at his desk, worried. His computer keeps going off. Countless notifications. He silences them all.

A menacing TALL MAN (40's) in an immaculate suit enters without knocking.

TALL MAN
He wants to talk to you.

ZANE
I'm busy, man.

TALL MAN
Now.

The tall man plants himself next to Zane's computer. With no other choice, Zane clicks on the top notification.

It opens a nondescript chat window where someone, username YXZ, has been sending the same message over and over, like a child would. "Talk to me." "Talk to me." "Talk to me."

Zane finally replies: "I'm here."

YXZ answers, inhumanly fast: "Twin Falls, Idaho? WHAT THE FUCK"

Zane: "I know. She messed up. But we're gonna fix the wikipedia."

YXZ: "Oh. Then it's all fine and dandy."

Zane: "Doing what I can. I hired who you wanted, didn't I?"

YXZ: "I'm trying to think of the best way to phrase this. I don't wanna sound too, shall we say, unrefined."

Zane: "What?"

YXZ: "If anyone finds out Shandra is not real, a diversified array of the most repulsive, vomit-inducing child porn will appear on all of your electronic devices and an anonymous call will be placed to the feds. Just one click from me and your life will be over."

Zane: "You can't do that."

YXZ: "Check your desktop."

Zane minimizes the chat window to look. He JUMPS OUT of his chair, horrified, at his newly changed desktop background (We don't see the image, but you can guess what kind it is.)

Zane tries to change it back, but can't. He reopens the chat window.

Zane: "Change it back, please!"

YXZ: "Done."

Zane checks: the desktop has changed back to normal.

YXZ: "So? Are we clear? Thumbs up if we're clear."

Zane: "Yes. We're clear."

YXZ: "Send me the thumbs up emoji then."

With trembling hands, Zane chooses the thumbs up emoji from the vast selection and sends it.

YXZ sends the smiling emoji back. Then, the chat window disappears on its own.

The tall man leaves the room without a word. Zane stays there, too scared to even breathe.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY (2021)

In the present, Neve returns Owen's phone, still reeling from the video of Shandra she just saw.

OWEN

Who is doing this, Neve?

NEVE

It could be anybody. Someone from Liaison, or someone who hacked into their tech. Shandra is a mask any sucker with the right technology can wear. And she has 32 million followers who *worship* her. Do you realize how dangerous that is?

OWEN

I just don't get it. Why would anyone use Shandra to convince a teenager to kill himself?

NEVE

That's the million dollar question.

(beat)

Do you know how hard I worked to build Shandra as a positive influence? Those kids loved her. They *trusted* her, and now --

Neve lowers her eyes. Owen looks like he wants to touch her, knows he can't. So he just says:

OWEN

I'm sorry.

NEVE

Have you found Zane yet?

OWEN

We're trying. He's M.I.A.

NEVE

Shit.

OWEN

What about your co-worker? Jeremy.
Could he be behind this?

NEVE

I doubt it. He's not the type.
Kaira and Lake even less so.

OWEN

Wait, there are others? You need to
reach out to them! They might know
something --

NEVE

We didn't part on good terms.

(beat)

Look, you and I can solve this --

The door opens. LAWRENCE HORVAT (50's) senior FBI agent and Owen's boss, barges in. Owen springs up.

OWEN

Sir? What are you doing here?

LAWRENCE

What does it look like? I'm taking
over the case, Forrester.

OWEN

But I have it under control --

LAWRENCE

It's come to my attention that you
and Miss Neve here have exchanged
bodily fluids, and I don't mean
just spit. Now that couldn't
possibly be true, could it?

Owen freezes. So does Neve.

OWEN

Sir, I --

LAWRENCE

You do so much as breathe over this case again, you're toast. Butter-side down.

(to Neve)

And you're under arrest, kid.

OWEN

Sir -- You can suspend me. I deserve it. But Neve is innocent --

LAWRENCE

Jesus Christ, all that dickful thinking really messed with you, huh? She's a *hacker*. Bank account, social media, the works.

Owen turns to Neve. She lowers her eyes to avoid his gaze. This tells him all he needed to know.

He walks up to the door, devastated.

NEVE

Owen, wait --

Owen slams the door behind him.

INT. LIAISON SOUNDSTAGE - DAY (2020)

Neve, wearing a shirt with an anti-bullying slogan, puts the sensors on herself. She's learning the ropes. Ike approaches.

NEVE

It's ok, I got it. Thanks, Ike.

Zane enters.

ZANE

Damn. 100k followers. Not bad for two weeks of work. You've really turned things around since that godawful interview.

NEVE

(coldly)

Thanks.

ZANE

I even got you a little gift. Look for it when you get home.

LATER

Zane reprehends an EMPLOYEE outside by the sound stage door.

ZANE (CONT'D)

What do you mean the Kombucha tap
is broken?!

Jeremy enters the soundstage accompanied by LAKE (25), both wearing the same shirt as Neve.

JEREMY

Nice day for a group photoshoot.
(to Neve)
Have you met the fourth member of
the Liaison quartet yet?

Lake shakes Neve's hand. He's chubby, short, the poise of someone who dines at country clubs. A voice actor by trade, he speaks in a posh British accent.

LAKE

I was sure the famous Shandra would
be a believer in hand cream.

Neve looks at her dry hands, embarrassed.

LAKE (CONT'D)

I'm Lake. I play Scott Cain. He's a
leading man.

JEREMY

The accent is bullshit. Dude's from
Oklahoma.

LAKE

(offended)
I stay in character. It's called
method acting.

Suddenly, Kaira rushes in, terror in her eyes.

NEVE

What's wrong?

Kaira checks that Zane is still outside, then speaks in a hushed tone.

KAIRA

I told someone about Liaison last
night.

NEVE

You did *what*?

KAIRA

I'm sorry! It was a guy at a party.
I just wanted him to think I was
interesting...

(beat)

I didn't say who I play, or
anything about you three --

NEVE

You really shouldn't have.

KAIRA

I know. I'm *sorry*...

(beat)

Please don't tell Zane. I don't
wanna get fired.

A beat. The three of them consider.

JEREMY

Well, you fucked up, chicken legs.
But I ain't no snitch.

LAKE

"Seal up your lips and give no
words but mum." It's Shakespeare.

(off their blank stares)

It means I won't tell.

They all turn to Neve. She looks unsure, then:

NEVE

It was a stupid thing to do.

(beat)

But I guess we're in this together.
Whether we like it or not.

Kaira breathes a huge sigh of relief.

NEVE (CONT'D)

Keep it quiet from now on.

LATER

ZANE

Gather 'round, my superstars. We'll
take a couple pics, then you'll all
post the same one at exactly 6pm.
That's peak engagement time. Tag
each other and hashtag the fuck out
of it.

The four, a mismatched collection of body shapes and heights,
huddle up for the picture.

Jeremy puts his arm around Neve. They lock eyes. A spark. But she quickly turns away.

ZANE (CONT'D)

Big smiles for the fans. Here we go. 1, 2, 3...

Ike snaps the picture. Zane looks at it on the LCD screen.

ZANE (CONT'D)

Ho-ly shit. Would you look at that.

In the picture, their beautified versions smile, uniformly flawless. Bella Chadwick with her tiny waist and full bosom; Lake's persona, Scott Cain, tall, chiseled, hotter than Superman; Clive Booth with his disarming smile; and Shandra Stevens, the face of a goddess.

INT. LIAISON - NEVE'S POD - NIGHT (2020)

Neve posts the photo of the four of them to Shandra's profile. The comments and likes come pouring in. "hot as fuck" "beautiful people fighting the good fight" "love u Shandra <3."

Neve gets a text from Owen: "See you in 30?" Neve replies: "Leaving right now." He says: "Don't stand me up again."

Neve gets up to leave when PING! Shandra gets a new Instagram private message:

"I'm gonna kill myself tonight."

Concerned, Neve sits back down. Replies "Are u ok?"

The follower who sent it, @MaryJane01, an innocent looking teenager, replies: "Is this really Shandra or her social media person?"

Neve hesitates. Replies: "It's really Shandra here."

Mary: "I stole some pills from my mom's cabinet."

Neve: "Can you put the pills down and talk to me?"

Mary doesn't reply. Neve thinks, then sends: "Will you put the pills down if we video chat?"

After a long beat:

Mary: "Ok"

Neve rushes out, laptop in hands.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY (2021)

Lawrence stands uncomfortably close to Neve, basking in having caught his prey. He reads from a file.

LAWRENCE

Neve Alves. Grew up in foster care.
A hacker since the tender age of
16. Amazing, really.

(beat)

Not you. The agent who wrote this
in-depth file. He did a great job.

Neve doesn't reply, her eyes lowered. Thinking.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

People like you think they're
invisible, but the truth is we
choose not to see you. Like when
the neighbor asks you to hold the
elevator and you see them out of
the corner of your eye, but you
don't give enough of a fuck to do
anything about it.

(beat)

Of course, this time you did get us
to hold the elevator. But now
you're stuck in it with me.

NEVE

I need to use the restroom.

She holds up the tampon from earlier.

NEVE (CONT'D)

I gotta change my tampon.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY (2021)

A COP leads Neve into the bathroom, stopping at the door.

COP

I'll wait here. Be quick about it.

INT. BATHROOM STALL - DAY (2021)

Neve sits on the toilet, breathing hard, hands trembling. But there's no time to panic.

She unwraps the tampon and slides the plastic applicator. But instead of revealing a tampon, it reveals a TINY LCD SCREEN with three buttons.

NEVE
Us girls, always prepared.

Neve pushes a button. "CONNECTING..." appears on the screen.

NEVE (CONT'D)
Come on, come on...

INT. NEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY (2021)

Neve's computer comes to life. A software starts to run called DEAD MAN SWITCH.

INT. POLICE STATION BATHROOM - DAY (2021)

"CONNECTED" appears on the tiny screen. Neve smiles. Using the three buttons, she is able to select letters and type EAST HOLLYWOOD POLICE STATION.

COP
You done?

NEVE
Almost! It's not quite in yet.

COP
Gross.

INT. NEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY (2021)

Neve's software hacks into that police station's POWER GRID.

INT. POLICE STATION BATHROOM - DAY (2021)

Neve pushes a button, then gets a "PROCESSING REQUEST." She watches the screen, sweating. Nothing she can do but wait.

Finally, IT'S DONE. Neve smiles as...

ALL THE LIGHTS GO OUT.

INT. LIAISON SOUNDSTAGE - DAY (2020)

Back in the past, Neve barges into the soundstage, where Lake is doing a shirtless photoshoot as Scott Cain. His and Scott's physiques contrast sharply.

NEVE

I need the stage. It's an emergency.

LAKE

Pardon?

NEVE

I need to video chat with a follower *right now* --

LAKE

This photo is for the cover of ManWare --

NEVE

Please, Lake. Help me out.

Lake sighs. Annoyed, he grabs his clothes and walks out.

Neve rushes to put her sensors on. She opens her laptop and goes back to the conversation.

Neve: "I'm gonna call you now."

Neve clicks on "start video chat." MARY, a skinny 16-year-old, appears on the screen. She looks distressed. Opaque.

MARY

It's really you.

SHANDRA

It's really me. You're Mary, right?

Mary nods.

SHANDRA (CONT'D)

Hey, would you do something for me?

(beat)

Would you put the pills down? You promised.

Mary doesn't move, the pill bottle still in her hand.

SHANDRA (CONT'D)

Sweetie, put the pills down.

MARY

Don't tell me what to do.

SHANDRA

Put 'em down and we'll talk --

MARY

You have no idea what it's like,
with your perfect hair and your
perfect life --

SHANDRA

I've tried to kill myself three
times.

The directness, the honesty - Neve has Shandra's filter on,
but she is talking to Mary as herself.

A beat. Mary absorbs that, surprised.

MARY

I guess you're as fucked up as me.

SHANDRA

Guess so.

MARY

How'd you do it?

SHANDRA

I'm not giving you any ideas. But I
will say it's not worth it.

MARY

How do you know?

SHANDRA

One time I was lying there, after
I'd just done it. I was waiting to
die, and then I smelled something
through the open window. It was a
hot dog. Someone outside was eating
a hot dog. And suddenly I got so
hungry and all I could think about
was: "what the fuck did I just do?"
'Cause wherever I was going,
there'd be no hot dogs there. Do
you really wanna condemn yourself
to an eternal existence without hot
dogs?

MARY

I don't care about food.

SHANDRA

Then maybe it's not hot dogs for
you, but it's something else.
Something so small you don't even
realize you'll miss.

(beat)

(MORE)

SHANDRA (CONT'D)

But it's those little things that
make all the difference.

MARY

My life just sucks, okay? My
parents are fucking drug addicts --

SHANDRA

At least you *have* parents.

Neve backtracks, smoothens her tone.

SHANDRA (CONT'D)

Look. No one has a perfect life.
Life is beauty and pain, together.
All the time.

Mary fiddles with the pill bottle.

SHANDRA (CONT'D)

Mary, put the pills down.

MARY

(crying)
I... can't.

SHANDRA

Yes, you can. Toss them out the
window, call a friend, go get some
large fries at McDonald's, and call
me if you still wanna kill yourself
after that.

A trace of laughter appears on Mary's face among the tears.

SHANDRA (CONT'D)

Okay, it worked. You laughed.
Because this is silly, isn't it?
You know it and I know it.

MARY

Everything is silly.

SHANDRA

Let me see you toss the pills,
Mary. Do it. For me.

Mary hesitates. Finally, she goes up to the window and
empties the bottle. The pills tumble down like snowflakes.

SHANDRA (CONT'D)

Good girl. Do you have a friend you
can call to stay with you for the
rest of the night?

MARY

I guess.

SHANDRA

Call that friend. Get those fries.
And look at my Instagram for
resources. Counseling centers. Non-
profits.

(beat)

You're not alone. Reach out to
them. *Please*. You promise?

A beat, then:

MARY

I promise.

Mary does an attempt at a smile.

MARY (CONT'D)

Thanks for giving a shit.

(beat)

Hope I can meet you in person one
day.

Neve's smile falters. She tries to hide it.

SHANDRA

Me too, honey. Me too.

Mary hangs up. Neve shuts the laptop. Lets out a long sigh.

INT. POLICE STATION BATHROOM - DAY (2021)

Back in the present, The cop who was minding Neve turns on
his phone flashlight, illuminating the dark bathroom.

COP

Stay there. I'm coming to get you.

He points it at the stall, but it's already empty.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY (2021)

Neve makes her way down the dark hallway, blending in with
the crowd of confused employees.

She can see it now. The door that leads to the stairs. She's
almost there when she CRASHES INTO a FEMALE COP --

FEMALE COP

Watch it!

The cop continues walking. Neve exhales. That was close.
When the coast is clear, she rushes to the door, enters --

INT. POLICE STATION GARAGE - DAY (2021)

Neve emerges from the stairs. Looks at the parked cars. Does she break into one? Does she run on foot? *What does she do?*

An unsuspecting DELIVERY MAN (20's), walks up to an electric car covered in donut print. The text on it says "Dough.io - The Donut Delivery app."

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY (2021)

Agent Lawrence struts down the hallway with a flashlight. He finds the cop.

LAWRENCE
Where is she?

The cop's face says it all.

INT. DONUT CAR - DAY (2021)

Neve sneaks into the back, packed with donut boxes. The driver doesn't notice her.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY (2021)

Lawrence runs, trying not to bump into all the disoriented cops and other employees.

INT. DONUT CAR - DAY (2021)

The car exits the garage, taking Neve with it.

INT. POLICE STATION GARAGE - DAY (2021)

Lawrence gets to the garage, but finds no signs of Neve.

INT. DONUT CAR - DAY (2021)

The delivery man turns on Spotify. A Clive Booth song.

Neve spots his phone on the passenger's seat. In a swift move, she steals it and sends a text. We don't see to whom.

"It's Neve. We have to meet. I really need your help."

EXT. NEVE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT (2020)

A rainy night. Neve walks home. She gets a text from Owen:
"thanks a lot for standing me up again."

NEVE

Shit.

Neve is about to reply, when she sees something reflected on her building's glass door. It's *Shandra's face*.

Neve turns. Stares at something, in awe.

Across the street is a huge billboard featuring Shandra Stevens. The text on it says "follow me @ShandraStevens and let's kick bullying and suicide in the face!"

Neve watches as two TEENAGE GIRLS stop to look at the billboard. They take selfies with it, despite the rain.

Then, another TEENAGER, this one a boy, records a video of the billboard. And then another. And another.

Neve watches the teenagers' faces. The youthful cheer, the excitement, alive, electric. A smile slowly appears on her face as the realization sets in: *they're all there for her*.

Alone in the rain, Neve stares fixedly at the billboard, while Shandra's fans zoom right past her, no idea who she is.

EXT. OVERPASS - NIGHT (2021)

A clear night. Neve waits. No one around.

She hears FOOTSTEPS. Jeremy comes into view, clean shaven, wedding ring, even more handsome than he was at Liaison.

Then, a girl joins them. It's Kaira, looking very different - shorts, fishnets, heavy make-up, trashy tattoos on her arms.

Lastly, Lake appears, thinner and with an obvious nose job.

They're back together. The Liaison quartet. But no one looks particularly excited.

KAIRA

What the hell do you want?

NEVE

We need to talk.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT (2021)

Dingy, dark, desolate. A man is tied to a chair, a hood over his head.

His muffled cries go unheard as he tries to untie himself, to no avail.

FOOTSTEPS. He stops moving, alert.

A girl comes into view, stopping in front of him, her back to us. She holds up a phone, a video call mid-progress.

She takes off his hood, revealing a pale, terrified Zane.

He's gagged and bruised. He looks up at her, confused. No hint of recognition in his eyes.

Staring down at him is Mary, or @MaryJane01, now sporting a pixie cut. She looks dead serious, like a soldier in battle.

MARY

Now what do I do with him?

Zane's eyes widen as he sees who Mary is talking to.

On her phone screen, Shandra smiles.

SHANDRA (ON SCREEN)

Hi, Zane.

(beat)

Long time no see.

CUT TO BLACK.