

You Could Be Here Now

By

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Setting:

An empty upscale condo unit far away from the city.

Synopsis:

A real estate salesman, desperate to close the sale of a condo, finds himself trapped between a warring couple: a wealthy attractive trader who's seeking a place he can stash his mistress and the attractive mistress who's seeking a place she can stash equity for putting up with the trader.

Characters:

Katarina, female, 30, Eastern European, confident.

Donnie, male, 30's, married, wealthy, tries to be confident

Ed, male, 40, harried, definitely not confident

YOU COULD BE HERE NOW

OPEN: An unfurnished condo. Upstage is a sleek, modern kitchen with a brochure stand on the counter. On one side, an undecorated space staged with a modest couch and two chairs. On the other side, an entryway with dead flowers in a vase resting on a table. It's as bare as it gets.

As lights come up, we hear VOICES outside, the key turning the lock, the door opening, and entering--

ED, 30, balding, more than a little around the middle, leads the way. A slender woman, KATARINA, 27, follows, eyeing the place, disinterested. DONNIE, 30's, closes the door behind them -- he's tall, well-dressed, trim.

ED

Can't beat the location. Twenty minutes to the airport. Outdoor mall's opening down the hill.

KATARINA

You told us. When we passed it.

ED

Town center has a farmer's market every Sunday.

DONNIE

Perfect for the weekends.

ED

At night, you get that cool breeze through the canyon. Like living in the country.

KATARINA

This is the country.

ED

It's ideally situated. Got your freeways East and West. No rush hour headaches. There's chain stores valley-side, mom and pops in the canyon.

DONNIE

So...nice, huh?

KATARINA

Yes. Like the last one. And the one before.

ED

It's a little further out, but definitely worth the drive. The development's only four years old. Real tight-knit community. Lot of couples, working professionals, families...

KATARINA

Families. With kids.

ED

No better place to start your own.

Katarina chuckles loudly, unamused.

KATARINA

Did you hear that, Donnie?

ED

Take your time, no need to rush. I've got three of my own and they're a handful.

DONNIE

The kids and couples are nice, but we like to keep to ourselves.

ED

I hear you, Don. Privacy's important, right? Come here to get away from the hustle and bustle. Want a little peace and quiet. Do your own thing.

Ed dumps the dead flowers in a trash can.

DONNIE

Something like that.

KATARINA

We're not hermits.

ED

No, no, no. Not hermits. Nobody's saying that. Hermits, no. You're busy folks with busy lives. You need a home, a sanctuary, a getaway. Somewhere you can kick back. Relax. What'd you say you did for a living, Don?

DONNIE

I'm a broker. I manage portfolios.

ED

And, uh...

KATARINA

Katarina.

ED

Right. Katarina. What do you--

KATARINA

I sleep with the broker.

DONNIE

More power to you. Can't go wrong in that industry. As a money-man, Don, you'll appreciate the rates right now. Best in years. My guy can get you a good deal, the best deal, but we'd have to move on it.

KATARINA

It's thirty minutes more from your office.

DONNIE

We're close to the freeway.

KATARINA

And nothing else. All so we can sit in more traffic. To come here. For this.

DONNIE

It's a good place.

KATARINA

That's what the signs say.

DONNIE

We have to make compromises.

KATARINA

We do?

ED

I wouldn't call it compromising. This is the first stage of the development. They're talking about putting in bike paths and a nature center--

KATARINA

That's enough, Ed.

ED

And a country club with an Olympic-sized pool--

KATARINA

I said enough. (*turns to Donnie*) Bike paths? Nature center?

DONNIE

I'm saying, just for the weekends.

KATARINA

We didn't discuss that.

DONNIE

We discussed what I'm paying for. (*Katarina ignores him*) You're not going to let it go? That place on the west side.

KATARINA

Don't talk to me like that.

DONNIE

Like what?

ED

I handle listings on the west side, too.

DONNIE

Enough, Ed, okay?

KATARINA

Like I'm some girl you found on the internet. Don't talk to me like I don't know any difference.

DONNIE

This place is nice.

KATARINA

For you.

DONNIE

We're taking it.

KATARINA

Be my guest. And when you schlepp here for your country weekends and bicycle with the families to the nature center, you can do it alone.

DONNIE

Katarina...

KATARINA

Don't forget the new mall. It's just down the way.

DONNIE

I'm cramping your style? That it? The new Jag, wardrobe from Saks, trips to Cabo, this place. Life's tough, huh. Especially when someone else does the heavy lifting.

KATARINA

Don't think you can buy me.

DONNIE

Wouldn't dream of it.

KATARINA

Wipe off that smirk or I'll do it for you.

Katarina and Donnie are locked in a stare-down. Ed steps toward a hallway.

ED

I haven't shown you the bedrooms. Fresh paint. Hardwood floors. Walk-in closet. (*Dead silence*). Maybe I should let you two talk this out.

KATARINA

There's nothing to talk about.

DONNIE

There's nothing to talk about.

Donnie dumps his jacket on the kitchen counter. Agitated, he fumbles for cigarettes and a lighter in his pocket.

ED

You, uh, can't smoke in here.

DONNIE

It's okay. I'm taking the place.

ED

This is a smoke-free community.

DONNIE

So?

ED

So you can't smoke here.

DONNIE

I can't smoke *in my own place*?

ED

Technically, it's not yours. Not yet. Even when it is, and I'm sure we can work a deal at the right price, but even still, the covenants forbid smoking inside and outside the units.

DONNIE

You're shitting me.

ED

Community's rules. Don't blame the messenger.

Donnie looks to Katarina, palms in the air.

KATARINA

You want I should shed tears?

Donnie lights up and inhales deeply, satisfied.

ED

I don't want any trouble. Let's put out the cigarette, okay? I'll show you the patio.

KATARINA

A patio. For the parties you'll be throwing for the families. With the kids. Run along, Donnie.

Donnie takes another long drag on the cigarette.

DONNIE

Think I won't go through with it?

KATARINA

You're not buying this place.

DONNIE

There's bike paths. And a farmer's market. I like fresh produce.

KATARINA

So go buy a fucking farm.

DONNIE

You have the papers, Ed?

ED

Sure thing. But that cigarette...

Ed rifles through his briefcase and produces some forms.

KATARINA

You won't.

DONNIE

Why's that?

KATARINA

Because.

DONNIE

Because? (*Silence*) Never had a problem working that mouth of yours before. Talk.

KATARINA

If you're here, I'm not. And if I'm not here, I'm somewhere else. With someone else. Not in the fucking country. Not at a farmer's market. Not picking fresh produce.

DONNIE

Someone else? *Who?* Is it Barry? From the golf club? It's Barry.

KATARINA

Think what you think.

DONNIE

It's him, right?

KATARINA

Tell you what -- you can have all the weekends. With your kids. And your beautiful wife.

DONNIE

Do you know how easy it would be to put your ass on a plane to Minsk?

KATARINA

I'm not scared of you.

DONNIE

It's winter back in the homeland, Princess.

KATARINA

Do you think you're the only swinging dick with a bank account?

Ed tries to throw water on the fire--

ED

Look, guys, there's plenty other listings. Guarantee smoking won't be a problem.

KATARINA

Does she do what I do, Donnie?

DONNIE

I'm warning you.

KATARINA

Does she?

DONNIE

Be quiet. Turn around.

KATARINA

You'd like that.

DONNIE

Turn around and lean over.

KATARINA

Exactly what to expect from a pig like you.

DONNIE

Do it.

Katarina turns, defiant, and faces a wall.

ED

Seriously, folks, we don't have to be like this.

DONNIE

We?

ED

I'm saying, it's a property. In the valley. It's not worth it. There's lots of condos.

DONNIE

I want this one.

KATARINA

You want, you get. Isn't that right, Donnie?

Donnie grips Katarina's shoulder and pushes her forward so she's leaning over, hands pressed against the wall.

ED

Buying a home's stressful, Donnie. It's easy to lose your temper--

DONNIE

I don't know what you're talking about, Ed. I haven't lost anything. (*Donnie puts his empty hand out*) Give me the offer.

Donnie gives him the papers. Donnie snaps his fingers and Ed hands him a pen. Donnie slaps the papers on Katarina's back and signs. He hands them back to Ed.

KATARINA

You must think this is impressive.

DONNIE

Trust me, *it is*.

KATARINA

So, you sign some papers and now you're the cock of the walk?

DONNIE

You're such an expert at sizing things up, want to tell me where this leaves you? What's the bottom line?

Katarina looks at Donnie, hands on her hips.

ED

Well, I'll go get cracking on this.

KATARINA

Sit down.

ED

You two talk things out, take as much time as you need. You don't like a room color or a window covering, that's an easy fix. I'll drop this off with the seller. Be right back.

KATARINA

I said, sit down.

Ed sits. Donnie circles Katarina.

DONNIE

What is it? Barry's made you a better offer?

KATARINA

Shut up.

Donnie chuckles, looks to Ed.

DONNIE

This one. You believe her?

ED

Yes.

KATARINA

Smart man.

DONNIE

You don't know her like I do.

ED

No offense, but I don't want to get to know either one of you. Can I go?

KATARINA

Sit still. (*Sticks her hand out*) Give me the offer.

Ed puts the offer sheet in Katarina's hand. She tears it to pieces.

DONNIE

Shred as many as you want. I'll just sign another one. I'm buying this place. Get to know the bike paths, Kitty-Kat, because when you change your mind, you'll be riding them.

KATARINA

You hear this man? Is this the way you treat your wife, Ed?

ED

I'm...divorced.

DONNIE

Smart man.

KATARINA

Time to go.

Ed looks to Donnie, confused.

ED

You mean *me*?

KATARINA

You drove. It's late, I'm tired, and I'm not sitting in traffic. Get up.

ED

The paperwork. I've got to re-do it. He's saying he wants to buy.

DONNIE

I am buying. (*to Katarina*) He's not going anywhere.

KATARINA

I said we're leaving. *Get up.*

Ed stands up, hesitant.

ED

I'll be right back, Donnie, we'll get this deal done. No distractions, okay?

DONNIE

You walk out that door, the deal goes with you.

KATARINA

Don't listen to him, Ed. He's showing off. For me. Tell him to kiss your ass.

DONNIE

You think this is the only property I'm ever buying? Have you seen what I'm worth?

KATARINA

Tell him.

ED

I'm trying to do my job.

KATARINA

Are you a *man*? Show some spine for once in your life.

ED

I've got kids. And alimony.

DONNIE

That's how they do us, am I right, Ed?

KATARINA

You don't need his money. It's crumbs compared to what you're capable of making.

ED

It's been rough lately, okay, I'm not going to lie. I *need* this.

DONNIE

Don't listen to her. She'll say anything. Just looking to drag us down.

KATARINA

Say it, Ed. Open your mouth. Say the words.

ED

I've got another listing. Closer to the water. Spectacular view.

DONNIE

Don't fade on me, buddy.

KATARINA

Say it, Ed.

DONNIE

I'm with you, pal.

KATARINA

Say it.

Ed looks to Katarina, torn, helpless, confused.

Listen to me.
KATARINA

I need the money.
ED

Listen to me. You don't need money. You need someone who *understands*.

And the money.
ED

What you need, Ed, is *me*.
KATARINA

Pause. Donnie shakes his head.

Can you believe this bitch?
DONNIE

No. Maybe. I don't know. Can I?
ED

It's a business proposition.
KATARINA

I know all about your business propositions.
DONNIE

Your clients - do they like you?
KATARINA

Sort of...maybe...they know I work hard for them.
DONNIE

But do they like you?
KATARINA

Ed shakes his head -- "no."

This is no worry. Not any more. You put together the deals, I make sure clients are happy. They will like me. They will like us.
KATARINA

Donnie chuckles to himself, turns to Ed.

Ask her.
DONNIE

ED

Ask her what?

DONNIE

The cost, Ed. The pound of flesh you'll be giving up. I'm curious myself.

ED

I've never had a partner before.

KATARINA

We start with this place. The next one through that door will beat his offer. For sure, no problem. With the money, we figure out who gets what. We'll make it fair.

DONNIE

I don't know.

KATARINA

The money will be a good deal. For both of us.

DONNIE

Ed's got something else in mind, right buddy?

ED

Well...

DONNIE

I mean, look at her. Money's not the point, right? C'mon, be honest.

ED

She's very attractive. *(to Katarina)* You're attractive.

KATARINA

That is the point.

DONNIE

For the clients? Or Ed? *(to Ed)* Seal the deal, Ed. Show me you're a closer.

ED

Seal what deal?

DONNIE

You want her, don't you? Close the deal.

ED

This, uh, partnership proposal...

DONNIE

It's what you want. *(to Katarina)* It's what he wants.

ED

I've never dated someone like...her.

DONNIE

So imagine sleeping with someone like...her.

KATARINA

You think I would sleep with him? *(to Ed)* You honestly believe I will sleep *with you*? For money? This is your deal?

ED

I thought it was your deal.

DONNIE

We both heard you. The offer's on the table. Close her, Ed.

KATARINA

I would not sleep with this simpleton for any amount of money. *(to Ed)* Are you crazy? Look at me. Look at yourself. Do I need to say more?

ED

You said you'd make the clients happy.

KATARINA

And we both make money, yes. But sleep with you? I shop at Saks. Do I look like a woman who'd screw you for your Sears card?

ED

Y'know, I'm not some push-over. I'm a good guy.

DONNIE

But not a closer.

KATARINA

You thought I would sleep with you to make this deal. I'm not a cheap whore.

DONNIE

No. You're the expensive kind.

ED

Y'know, things would be different if you'd get to know me a little.

KATARINA

Spare me the drivel. Do you want my help or not?

DONNIE

I know which way Ed's leaning. Let's finish the paperwork, okay? *(beat)* Are we going to do this? Ed?

ED

Yeah, we are. But we're doing it *my* way.

This stops Donnie cold. Katarina looks to Donnie, perplexed.

ED

He's done with you. You know that, right?

Katarina is momentarily speechless. She recovers with--

KATARINA

Maybe I'm done with him.

ED

You didn't come all the way out here because you're done with him. Maybe I'm wrong. I'm just a simpleton, so help me out.

KATARINA

You don't talk to me--

ED

You're bluffing, all the way. You know he's never leaving his wife. He's probably already got somebody else lined up. That's the way these assholes work.

DONNIE

Hey, watch it.

ED

It's all contingencies and back up plans and playing the odds. I've been played by dudes like him before. His Plan B has a Plan B. You're filler until he brings on the next girl.

DONNIE

I don't need this.

ED

Yeah, well, you're getting it. Because the second this one gets dumped, she'll be shaking you down to keep her mouth shut. Because that's her deal. Am I right, Snow Queen?

KATARINA

I have to look out for myself.

Ed raises his hands, palms up - "voila." He pulls out a contract, writes on it, and hands it to Donnie.

ED

This is what we're going with. I'll fill in the details later.

DONNIE

That's a hundred over asking. Why the hell would I sign that?

ED

Because of what my Sears-card-carrying ass is going to do for you.

Ed takes out his car keys. Dangles them in front of Katarina.

ED

Go sit in the car and wait.

KATARINA

I won't move a muscle.

ED

If you had a Plan B like Donnie here, no way we'd be talking right now. I've never said this before in my life and maybe I only get one chance because I'm not rich and don't have looks, but this is the surest bet I've ever made. *Get your ass in the car.* Now. Then we'll talk about how much you're going to get from our little deal. And, eventually, when you do come around to asking me to sleep with you, I'll have my own demands. Are we on the same page?

KATARINA

I don't have to listen to any of this.

ED

You walk out of here, you lose two offers. I'd say number one is iffy at best.

KATARINA

Don't think you can scare me.

ED

Get in the car.

Katarina chews it over, then huffs and grabs Ed's keys.

KATARINA

I don't come cheap.

ED

I'll be done here in a minute.

Katarina goes. Donnie gestures towards her.

DONNIE

It's like that, huh? You think you're going to ride off with my girlfriend *and* a commission?

ED

And twenty a month.

DONNIE

Are you nuts?

ED

Someone's gotta' keep her quiet. Ten for her and another ten for me for insurance.

DONNIE

I'm not feeling this.

ED

Sign the paper. Or I drive that hot mess to wifey for a little chit-chat.

DONNIE

Don't bullshit a bullshitter.

ED

I'll be blowing past every red light in my Honda.

Donnie signs the paper. Ed turns to leave.

DONNIE

Wait a minute. How am I getting home?

ED

Try the bike path. (beat) And lock the door on your way out, will you?

FADE TO BLACK.