

Post-Credits Scene
“Last Train to Purgatory”

Nine Years Before Present
Saturday, January 5, 2029
7:05 A.M.

Ally Talamantez felt herself wake up. There was light streaming in from somewhere, and something didn't feel right.

Her eyes snapped open and she looked around, last night slowly re-assembling itself in her head. This was not her apartment.

It was nicer. A lot nicer.

She was on the fifth floor of the Watergate - in Dan Dragovich's bed.

Wow, she thought, *I actually went through with it.*

She rolled over to see Dan still sleeping, albeit not terribly peacefully, beside her.

What was that old phrase? 'Be careful what you wish for.'

How was she going to get out of this one?

Did she really even want out?

The one-night stand hadn't exactly sucked – she could get quite used to this if she wanted.

She snuggled against Dan's back and felt him start to wake up, but he just muttered something incomprehensible and dozed right back off.

Ally laid there for a few minutes, holding him and trying to decide whether she wanted to be there when he woke up.

Yeah, actually, she kind of did.

Not that she knew what would be next. She had no job, no prospects, and a signed agreement requiring her to get out of journalism entirely. Still, she'd always kept her head above water

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before. Why should this time be any different?

She put her head against Dan's shoulder and squeezed him a little tighter. That's when he shifted a little, not fully awake, and mumbled, "That feels good, Maddy," before dozing a second time.

Ally let go and rolled over. In what universe had this been a good idea?

What the hell had she thought was going to happen? Dan was wildly in love with Madison. For all she knew, they'd be back together in a week.

Nothing about the current state of things was real or permanent, and there was nothing Ally could do to change that.

She slinked quietly out of bed, retrieving her clothes and handbag from the floor, then tiptoed to the bathroom.

Thankfully, Dan failed to wake up as she showered. She ran one of his combs through her hair a few times, then threw back on the tight jeans and tank top she'd shown up wearing.

The image in the mirror was a sight to behold. When had she become such a...

Whatever.

Her career was in tatters, her best friend had abandoned her, and the crazy lady she worked for had found the one thing that could break her spirit. Prissy had already gotten her uncle deported and found enough dirt to ensure her little cousins would be next. It wasn't like Ally hadn't known they were at risk, but she hadn't expected Prissy Davis of all people to go after them just to keep a stupid hypercompression story off-air. Nobody stooped that low, and Ally still had no clue why Prissy hated the idea of fast internet so much.

How did that benefit anyone?

Either way, right now there was nothing left to work for – so who cared if she wanted to be the type of girl who wakes up in her best friend's ex's apartment?

She'd left her St. Rafka pendant hanging from the medicine cabinet doorknob, and she gave it a guilty look as she put it back on. What would her namesake think of her now?

Not that she'd ever been a particularly good Maronite girl, or a good little Mexican girl, or any of

it. She was too busy trying to be “All-American Ally” – and where exactly had that gotten her?

“Ally” had nothing. Nowhere to go, no identity, and nothing to do except what felt good in the moment.

She peeked back into the bedroom and saw Dan still dead to the world. Good.

He wasn’t a bad guy, but he would never be *her* guy, and it was time to get out while she still could. There was a tube of red lipstick in her purse, and she uncapped it and scrawled across the bathroom mirror.

Thanks for being there.

She stared at it for a solid minute, then added a signature.

XOXO
-Ally

Capped the lipstick, Ally looked at her work. The Xs and Os had always been her calling card – cute, retro, hopeful. But did they still fit?

She found her rattlesnake stilettos and bolo necklace near the door and slipped them on, wondering again what had come over her to come here looking like that. “Seductress in snakeskin” wasn’t who she was – or was it?

That was a question for later. For now, Ally slipped out the door as quietly as she could and let out a long breath. Then she found the business card that had been burning a hole in her back pocket – the one that had been slipped through her mail slot two days after she got fired.

She checked the hand-scribbled address and plugged it into her phone. If she didn’t leave now, she’d be late. That hadn’t been a problem fifteen minutes ago, when she’d been planning on staying here. Being with Dan wouldn’t have required shadowy people who left cryptic business cards.

Now, though? Why not see who wanted her attention?

She found her car in the Watergate garage, then sped down the beltway, exiting into an industrial suburb area somewhere south of Springfield, Virginia. The GPS directed her to the back of a row of warehouses, stopping her at one marked “Mirage Fiberoptics.”

Ally threw the car into park and checked herself in the mirror out of habit.

Who was that girl?

It definitely wasn't All-American Ally. The last bits of that girl were smeared in red streaks on Dan's mirror. There would be no more X's and O's from here on out.

Alejandra? No, that wasn't going to work either. That name had too much screen time and too many memories. Alejandra had been the one rich, legal kid growing up in that stupid little border town. That name was what her parents called her, what her cousins and her uncles called her and...no. She didn't want to go back to that life either.

That was the life where her best childhood friend had once held a gun to her head and told her that her whole life was a lie - that there was no point in getting a career outside of gangs. That America would never really accept her, and that this evil place would take everything from her no matter how hard she tried.

She'd been thinking a lot about that night lately – the night she'd changed from a semi-interested journalism student to a woman hellbent on becoming a real TV reporter at all costs. It had crossed her mind more than once that he might have been right. After all, look at her now.

Still, thinking about the crazed fire she'd seen in his eyes that night – the despair, the anger, the evil – there was no way she would ever let him win.

She felt the cool metal of her St. Rafka icon against her chest and fingered the icon around her neck. Her namesake. The thing that tied her to her mother and separated her from all her cousins.

Alejandra Rafka Talamantez Abad had always been a Lebanese-Mexican kid, and then she'd been a Mexican-American woman. She'd never really explored herself as a Maronite, an Arab Christian. Heiress to a family who were immigrants long before they left Mexico.

Maybe that was where her old friend with his gun had gotten it wrong. Mexico had never really accepted people like her either, and Lebanon had spit them out like bad coffee.

Maybe *that* was what she saw in the mirror.

A perpetual stranger leaving yet another strange land in her dust.

Ally Talamantez closed her eyes and centered herself one last time, and then Rafka Abad got out of the car.

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The front door of the warehouse had no bell, but it was surprisingly unlocked. Inside, the darkened front room was lined floor to ceiling with cellophane-wrapped computer servers and giant spools of fiberoptic cable. The only real light was coming from an open office door in the back.

“It’s okay,” came a voice, stern but distinctly feminine, “I don’t bite. This place was just the best my friends in the tech industry could do on short notice.”

Rafka took a deep breath and steeled herself, walking toward the back office, where she now saw an all-too-familiar silhouette – even if she’d only ever seen it through a TV screen.

She reached into her back pocket and pulled out the business card – the one with a silver lipstick stain – and held it up so the figure behind the desk could see.

“Ms. Carsten, I am *sick* of cryptic WWN theatrics, and if you give me any more cloak and dagger *chingaderas*, I will walk right back out of here. So, start talking.”