

INT. MANSION DINING - DAY

Medium close-up on LUCIO sitting at the head of a table. He has a smirk on his face as he glances from QUEENIE, who is seated to his right at the far end of the table, to LUC, who sits opposite her, fixing his cravat with a morose expression. Minute of silence, shifting focus between the three before LUCIO begins talking. LUCIO has a slight silkiness to his speech, as if English is his second language.

LUCIO
Wine?

QUEENIE shakes her head, LUC harrumphs.

LUC
(Stuck up)
It's piss.

LUCIO
(He finds this amusing)
It's from your vineyard.

LUC's eyes widen and he shifts in his chair. He tries to salvage his pride.

LUC
Then I will.

LUCIO snaps his fingers, watching as LUC's brow furrows in irritation. A servant appears carrying wine on a tray; he pours it into LUC's glass, then hurries off, vanishing. LUC swirls it around in his glass before sipping it lightly.

LUCIO
Such young talent... one of the screen, the other of... the alcohol.
(To LUC) Your father must have died a proud man, Luc, (To QUEENIE) and yours must live as one, my dear Queenie.

LUC

(With rising passion)

My father died a drunk bastard. A pig. A poor vagabond in a millionaire's guise. It's my obligation to be what he never was – the man he wanted to be, yet to live as such, not to use that life as a facade.

LUCIO tilts his head, unimpressed.

LUCIO

Wonderful; perhaps our fathers knew each other.

QUEENIE

My father's rather opposed to my success. He asks me for my money, but doesn't want me to earn it; he thinks of me more as a lawyer.

LUC

Do you argue?

QUEENIE

(Resolutely)

I don't.

LUCIO looks from one to the other, then a noise sounds from above – a large bang. The guests look upward in shock, then to LUCIO, who seems unperturbed.

LUCIO

(After a moment)

Cat.

LUC's brow furrows again, then he fixes his cravat once more, sipping his wine. QUEENIE leans back in her chair, stretching out her arms behind her, then she pauses in this position, staring up at the ceiling. Camera shows her perspective, revealing the watermark seeping through the wood. A drop forms, then falls, landing on her face; she flinches, straightening in your chair. She looks to LUCIO.

QUEENIE

(Disgusted)

Got a leak?

LUCIO fixes her with a stare for a moment, then his chair creaks as he peers up at the roof. He looks back down to her.

LUCIO

(He doesn't seem to care)

I do hope not; perhaps I may go and see.

He rises from the table, sliding his chair back in, then he nods to both.

LUCIO

(Cont.)

I will return promptly. If the others arrive, be good guests and let them in.

He crosses the room, leaving through the door. QUEENIE turns to look at LUC, who she finds staring at her, his face cold. She shifts in her chair, then looks to his wine. The surface is rippling.

LUC

You are an actress?

QUEENIE

(Looking at him)

Yeah. And you make wine? Did your dad pass on his vineyard when he died or something, or did you take it from him?

LUC

Does it matter?

QUEENIE
(Unsettled)
No, just askin'.

LUC swirls his wine, watching in silence, then he puts it down. From his pocket, he takes a lighter, but he pauses before producing his cigarillo.

LUC
Do you mind?

QUEENIE shakes her head, but after a moment, she frowns. Just as LUC is about to light the cigarillo, she speaks.

QUEENIE
You old enough to be smoking?

LUC raises his eyebrow, taking the cigarillo away from his lips.

LUC
I am.

QUEENIE
How old are you?

LUC
(With sass)
Eighteen... Old enough to run a company, old enough to smoke.

He pauses, then, seeing that QUEENIE does not, in fact, approve, puts the cigarillo back in its case; this returns to his pocket. Now he holds the lighter, fingering the switch.

LUC
(To diffuse the tension)
You were in movies. Which ones?

QUEENIE leans back again in her chair, yet not far enough to be beneath the trickling water. She sighs.

QUEENIE

Ones about lawyers, ones about spies. Got invited to the Academy Awards for one of my latest – one about a billionaire. It didn't win anything.

LUC

Were you nominated?

QUEENIE

(Regretful)

No... not even considered. Movie was, but... not me.

There is a moment of awkward silence. Above, a faint noise can be heard – a dragging, as if something is being pulled across the floor.

LUC

You have a lover? (Beat) How old are you – since you asked me, I have to ask you.

QUEENIE raises her eyebrows.

QUEENIE

(Disbelief)

You want a date?

LUC realizes what he just implied.

LUC

(Flustered)

Oh, no, just asking. (Beat) No, I have a girl at home... and I love her.

QUEENIE

(To his previous question)

I'm seventeen... (Pause) What's her name?

LUC

(Dreamily)

Aimée. Her father knew my father; they went to school.

He flicks the lighter on and the flame dances.

LUC (Cont.)

If I could be back with her now... I would do anything to see her.

QUEENIE

Why are you here, then? If you want to be with your girl so bad,
why did you come?

LUC

(Bitter)

My father was a brash old fool, yet my mother could outdo him.

She wants to make a friend of Lucio – she's still alive – and
sent me here to do it for her; I have to have acquired a deal by
the time I return to her – a deal for three palettes of
Cabernet.

QUEENIE

(Confused)

So you didn't come for the dinner?

The lighter flicks off; LUC glances up at QUEENIE, fixing her
with his stare.

LUC

Why are you here, then? You have no deals to sign, I am sure, so
what brought you to this terrible house?

QUEENIE

(Suspicious)

I was invited for dinner... a dinner for actors... (Pause) You're
not an actor.

There is a loud bang that shakes the table, knocking the wine glass onto its side; the liquid spills all over the tabletop and QUEENIE jumps up from her chair, holding her expensive clothing away from the wine. LUC does the same, just as a trail of red trickles down into his chair.

QUEENIE

What in the hell?

LUC

What is he doing up there, knocking down a wall? Idiot!

He looks down to ensure his suit is clean, then kicks the chair in irritation, sending it sliding across the floor. Just as it comes to rest, there is a knock on the door that silences both guests. They look at each other, then QUEENIE points to the door, raising her eyebrows; LUC, vexed, goes to open it.

On the other side is RYOTA, dressed in a red blazer. There are sunglasses hiding his eyes, but he very clearly turns to look over LUC's shoulder at the girl standing behind. He smiles, then looks back at LUC, who wears a chilled expression.

RYOTA

You're not Lucio.

LUC

(With irritation)

I am Luc, one of his guests – one of his very angry guests who dislikes his vulgar behaviour.

RYOTA

(To QUEENIE, with a suggestive tone)

And you?

QUEENIE frowns, then steps forward, clearly unimpressed by his suave introduction. Her confusion is mounting now. She wonders if RYOTA is an actor.

QUEENIE

Queenie. You probably saw me in a movie... (Beat) Are you an actor?

RYOTA

I knew I recognized you... I never forget a face. I'm Ryota, and no, I'm not.

He smiles at her, but receives a confused frown in return. Put out, he steps inside, straightening LUC's cravat as he passes; LUC reaches up, glaring, and fingers it until he is satisfied that the damage has been mended. He shuts the door. RYOTA carries a bag, which he sets down beside the door. QUEENIE looks down at it, then up at him.

QUEENIE

What's in there?

RYOTA

Something I never travel without.

LUC

(Pestered)

And what would that be?

RYOTA

(Mocking)

Nothing you need concern yourself with, Jules.

LUC

My name is Luc.

RYOTA

I know.

RYOTA enters the room, finding a spot at the dining table to sit at, but frowning down at the spilt wine. He resolves to stand,

then begins to examine the artwork on the walls. *The Dead Toreador* by *Edouard Manet* catches his attention, and he stands before it, staring in silence. He is making himself at home.

RYOTA

Strange artworks... is Lucio a sadist?

LUC

He is rich, and the rich hang odd things on their walls. That is a piece by Edouard Manet.

RYOTA

One of your people, then?

LUC glares at him, yet his back is turned, so he can not see. RYOTA pivots on his heel, sauntering back over to the table with his hand buried in his pocket. He takes his sunglasses off now, folding them and hanging them from his collar.

LUC

Dark enough for you now?

RYOTA says nothing to that. He finds a seat clear of spilt wine and sits down, straightening his blazer. He gestures for QUEENIE to sit, but she stands, leaning on the back of the closest chair.

RYOTA

And where is our host?

LUC

Renovating upstairs, I imagine.

QUEENIE

He went to check on a leak; that one, there. (Point)

RYOTA looks up at the roof and sees the water mark. He frowns, then rises, moving to stand directly beneath it.

RYOTA

Maybe a burst pipe? That mark is rather... long, isn't it?

LUC

It is. Now who are you? You're not an actor, and you're definitely not a winemaker, so what's your story?

RYOTA moves out of the way of the trickling water and stands with his hands in his pockets. Now realizing that he has been asked a question, he moves over to LUC, reaching out to shake his hand. LUC takes it begrudgingly.

RYOTA

As I said, I'm Ryota – property developer; you could say I own half the city. I'd bet you live in one of my apartments.

He brushes off LUC's blazer. QUEENIE and LUC exchange a confused glance. If he's not here for dinner or to make a wine order, then he's here for another reason.

RYOTA

(Looking around)

Quaint abode he's got here. All it's missing is a black iron fence. And where is the bast— oh, right. Upstairs. I'm quite tired, frenchie, so excuse my not listening to you.

LUC

(Irritated)

And how did you receive an invitation? Do you know Lucio?

RYOTA

Never met him. I just got an invitation from my secretary, said some guy dropped it off – looked pretty richly dressed – and told her it was for me. Some housewarming party or something.

LUC
(Confused)
Housewarming?

He looks to QUEENIE again. Now they know something is wrong.

RYOTA
(Frowns)
Yeah. Isn't that what he told you?

The door to the parlor opens to admit LUCIO, who wears a smirk. LUC immediately adopts a glare, then he steps forward to confront his host as LUCIO crosses the room to his seat.

LUC
Like to rattle your guests? We almost ruined our clothes with spilt wine, you fop, and your seats are fit for the dump. What were you doing, dragging a body around?

At the mention of a body, LUCIO stops, halfway sat down, to fix LUC with a stare; the smile is gone from his face. LUC's brow furrows, then he backs away, returning to stand by his seat as LUCIO drops into his, now smiling again. LUCIO looks to RYOTA.

LUCIO
Ryota... how pleasant it is to see you.

RYOTA sits down, then starts fingering an olive on his plate, rolling it around. He looks to LUCIO, his face blank.

RYOTA
I've never met you.

LUCIO
And you have met your fellows, I presume.

RYOTA (Sarcastically)
Oh, just lovely people.

LUCIO

And we need only one more to complete the set.

QUEENIE

Set?

She and LUC are still standing; she still leans on her chair, he seems aloof, distant from the table.

LUCIO

She will be late, I have heard, so we must begin our dinner. There is no sense in wasting it, is there? Expect her later this evening.

LUC

Who is this?

There is another bang, quieter this time, but still audible. LUC turns to scowl at LUCIO, fixing his cravat. QUEENIE and RYOTA glance upwards, then RYOTA turns to LUCIO.

RYOTA

You got a cat?

LUCIO smiles, then gestures for QUEENIE and LUC to sit down. QUEENIE finds a dry chair warily, but LUC resolutely disobeys.

LUC

What's going on up there, Lucio? Are there others here? Do you have children? And tell me what all these tricks are about? What is this, huh? A dinner or a wine deal?

LUCIO

You will see, my friend; be patient, and you will see. For now, you must eat. It is rude to refuse your host's dinner; of all here, you must know this.

He stands there for a moment, then finally sits down. LUCIO addresses the table.

LUCIO

I do apologize for the confusion, but I will explain everything in time. For now, let us begin our dinner.

Hold on a close-up of a smiling LUCIO, then cut to shot of a close-up on *The Dead Toreador* until music from a car radio begins to play, then cut abruptly to the next shot.