

A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ARRANGEMENT

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INT./EXT. OPENING SEQUENCE - VARIOUS: DAY (MONTAGE).

OAKES COHEN, 30s, confident, educated, intelligent, studies himself in his bathroom mirror as he combs his slicked-back hair to perfection in the manner of a self-assured upper management master of the universe.

Oakes stands in his walk-in closet as he puts on a crisply-pressed dress shirt and buttons it with practiced efficiency.

Still in the walk-in closet, Oakes adjusts his necktie, then inspects the flawless knot. He selects a suit jacket hanging beside several others, then puts it on with a snap of his shoulders. He studies himself in the mirror with the intensity of someone ready to conquer the business world.

Oakes is a pillar of manliness as he strides purposefully amongst THE CORPORATE MASSES scurrying to their office jobs on Park Avenue in the low 50s. He heads towards a gleaming skyscraper and climbs the stairs of the wide plaza in front.

Inside the skyscraper's gleaming lobby, Oakes is the epitome of vigor as he effortlessly swipes his building ID on a card reader atop a security turnstile. He steps through it and heads down the polished corridor leading to the banks of elevators at the end of the lobby.

Oakes rides in an elevator with SEVERAL OTHER BUSINESS PEOPLE. He spots a loose thread at the end of his suit jacket cuff and pulls on it. To his embarrassment, the thread grows longer and frays the end of the sleeve. He looks down and sees a patch of mud on his shoes, then frowns.

In the corporate offices of Cartland & Wallis, Oakes makes his way through a corridor and passes EXECUTIVES working in offices with inward-facing interior glass walls whose majestic Manhattan views are visible from the hallway. ASSISTANTS work silently at cubicles outside of the offices.

INT. CARTLAND & WALLIS - DATA ENTRY DEPARTMENT: DAY.

Oakes enters a windowless interior bullpen where DATA ENTRY PROCESSORS sit at cubicles as they type numbers into spreadsheets. Oakes crosses to his desk as his boss SARMEN, 40s, cruel, petty, soulless, emerges from an office at the front of the room as he clutches a piece of paper.

SARMEN

(To Oakes)

How gracious of you to join us this morning. I hope your job isn't interfering with your beauty rest.

Oakes' spirit sinks at the sight of Sarmen. The other data entry processors pretend not to notice the confrontation. The weight of their exaggerated focus is palpable.

SARMEN (CONT'D)

I got an email from the head of HR.
You've been late seven times in the
past three weeks.

OAKES

Did you tell him to get a life?
I'm three minutes late.

SARMEN

The Data Entry Department is the
backbone of this firm. When you're
late, it bends like it's riddled
with scoliosis.

From across the room, a data entry processor named DEAN, 30s,
extroverted, likable, loyal, stops typing and looks up.

DEAN

Lay off. His father just died.

SARMEN

(To Oakes)

You're on thin ice. That whole
bereavement excuse only goes so
far. Can I see you in my office?

OAKES

What about the numbers for the
Singapore division?

Oakes gestures towards a gigantic stack of printouts.

SARMEN

They're not due until noon.

Sarmen disappears back into his office. Oakes exchanges a
look with Dean, then follows Sarmen. The data entry
processors continue their work as the sound of fingers
tapping upon computer keyboards fills the room.

INT. CARTLAND & WALLIS - SARMEN'S OFFICE: DAY.

Sarmen gestures at the chair on the visitor's side of his
desk as Oakes takes a seat.

SARMEN

I remember when you started ten
years ago.

(MORE)

SARMEN (CONT'D)

You thought you'd only be here for a few months until you became a working writer. That went well.

(Picks up a faded literary journal from a nearby shelf)

One short story in the Paris Review five years ago. Promising. But nothing after that.

OAKES

I had no idea you were so literary. My story doesn't have any spreadsheets in it.

SARMEN

You need to embrace where you are now. The firm is relying on us to enter those numbers.

(Tosses the literary journal onto his desk)

You've used up all your vacation days and it's only August.

OAKES

I was with my father while he was dying and then at his funeral.

SARMEN

Do you think you'll inherit anything?

OAKES

The Singapore division is waiting for those numbers.

Oakes rises from his chair and crosses to the door as Dean passes by with a cup of coffee and pokes his head inside.

DEAN

(To Sarmen)

Still upset that everyone but you might escape this place someday?

SARMEN

Mister failed stand-up comedian. Keep it up and they'll be enjoying your jokes down at the unemployment office.

DEAN

Fire me. I'd love to tell HR what a horrible manager you are.

(MORE)

DEAN (CONT'D)

If you lost your job, your wife and kids might leave you for a human being.

SARMEN

Shut the door.

DEAN

No, thanks.

Dean and Oakes go back to their desks and leave the door wide open as Sarmen burns with anger.

EXT. MANHATTAN - MIDTOWN: NIGHT.

Oakes and Dean stroll amongst THE EVENING CROWD after work.

DEAN

Don't let Sarmen get to you. He's just a middle management stooge with a fixed-rate mortgage.

OAKES

His existence is so pointless. He just makes other people rich.

DEAN

Most jobs in the world, your main goal is making other people rich. How are you doing? With your father, I mean.

OAKES

I hadn't seen him in three years and then there he was. Dying.

DEAN

That's hard. When my father died, the amount of people who told me I was stupid on a daily basis decreased by a hundred percent.

Oakes looks sympathetically at Dean as they walk.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Want to get a drink?

OAKES

Not tonight. It's my first week back after being out for so long. I just want to go home and collapse.

Oakes and Dean arrive at the entrance to a nearby subway station and head down the stairs.

INT. OAKES' APARTMENT BUILDING - VESTIBULE: NIGHT.

Oakes enters and stops in front of the row of mailboxes set into the wall. He opens his and removes a thick envelope. Puzzled, he inspects it. The return address is from an attorney's office. Still clutching the envelope, Oakes unlocks the door leading into the hallway and goes inside.

INT. OAKES' APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM: NIGHT.

Oakes enters what is revealed to be a messy studio. He opens the envelope and removes several documents. He scans the first one, then takes out his phone and dials a number.

INT. JARVIS AND DIANA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM: NIGHT.

JEFFREY COHEN, 10, energetic, playful, sensitive, sits in front of a flatscreen TV while playing a video game as JARVIS COHEN, 40s, stoic, responsible, kind, sits on the couch and reads through copies of the same documents that Oakes received in the mail. His phone rings and he answers.

JARVIS

(On the phone)

I'm guessing you got Dad's will in the mail today.

During the following conversation, cut between Oakes and Jarvis:

OAKES

(On the phone)

I'm surprised he left us anything.

JARVIS

(On the phone)

He never told us he took out life insurance policies and named us the beneficiaries. A hundred thousand dollars each.

OAKES

(On the phone)

Talia only got the house, which is reverse mortgaged and has a lien on it from an unpaid credit card bill.

JARVIS

(On the phone)

I spoke to my accountant. We don't have to pay taxes on the money.

OAKES

(On the phone)

How long does it take to get it?

JARVIS

(On the phone)

The insurance company said we should each get a check sometime in the next two weeks.

OAKES

(On the phone)

Thanks. Talk to you later.

Oakes hangs up and breaks into a smile, then picks up the remote control from the coffee table. He points it towards an ancient-looking TV, then returns his attention to the will. On the TV, A NEWS REPORTER, 50s, addresses the camera.

NEWS REPORTER

(On TV)

And now, a special report about the website you don't want your daughter to join, A Mutually Beneficial Arrangement.

Oakes looks up at the TV, his attention piqued.

EXT./INT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - MONTAGE: DAY (NEWS REPORT).

THREE YOUNG WOMEN, 20s sunbathe in bikinis on a yacht as it cruises through crystal blue ocean water.

TWO YOUNG WOMEN, 20s, lean in towards each other to share a secret as they get their nails done by SPA WORKERS, 40s, at an upscale salon.

FOUR YOUNG WOMEN, 20s, are dressed in baseball caps and jerseys as they snap selfies in a stadium while ignoring the game on the field below them.

TWO YOUNG WOMEN, 20s, gossip over elaborate coffee drinks and tiny overpriced pastries in a cafe.

A LONE YOUNG WOMAN, 20s, sits cross-legged on the lawn of a college as she stares down at a textbook open on her lap while jotting down notes in the margins with a pen.

The log-in page for a website called A Mutually Beneficial Arrangement shows A MODEL, 20s, in a revealing dress with her index finger to her lips as A MAN IN A SUIT, 30s, embraces her while discreetly slipping her a large wad of cash.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

A Mutually Beneficial Arrangement is a dating site, but not the kind you probably use. On this website, struggling young women in need of financial assistance meet wealthy men eager to support them in exchange for their time. Both in and out of the bedroom.

INT. OAKES' APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM: NIGHT.

Oakes is mesmerized by the combined display of idealized female beauty and rampant consumerism.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - PLAZA: DAY (NEWS REPORT).

LACEY, 20s, a pretty university student with a knapsack over her shoulder, walks through campus on her way to class.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

Meet Lacey. The typical girl next door. She's a sophomore at a university in southern California, where she's studying to be a veterinarian.

EXT. MANSION - BACK PATIO: DAY (NEWS REPORT).

As a swimming pool glistens in the sun amidst landscaped gardens and burbling fountains, Lacey is interviewed by the news reporter.

NEWS REPORTER

What made you decide to join A Mutually Beneficial Arrangement?

LACEY

We sugarbabies call it "AMBA."

NEWS REPORTER

Sugarbabies?

LACEY

It means a young girl who's dating a rich older guy.

(MORE)

LACEY (CONT'D)

I joined because even as an in-state student, tuition plus room and board is over thirty-thousand dollars. My father manages a fast food restaurant.

EXT. AFFLUENT CALIFORNIA SUBURB - STREET: DAY (NEWS REPORT).

MORTON, 60s, wears sunglasses as his thinning hair billows in the breeze while he drives a convertible Mercedes.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

This is Morton. He retired last year as the CFO of a software company. He's widowed and has two grown children with families of their own. Morton is Lacey's boyfriend. They met on A Mutually Beneficial Arrangement five months ago.

INT. OAKES' APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM: NIGHT.

Oakes is captivated by what he's watching on the TV.

EXT. MANSION - BACK PATIO: DAY (NEWS REPORT).

Morton has his arm around Lacey as they sit on a couch in the same backyard where she was first interviewed.

NEWS REPORTER

The term "sugardaddy" describes an older man who supports a younger woman. Are you Lacey's sugardaddy?

MORTON

We're a normal couple. I saw her profile and thought she was so beautiful, I contacted her right away. We had dinner that week and it was love at first sight.

NEWS REPORTER

What does she get in exchange for dating you?

MORTON

There's a strong emotional bond between us. I asked her to move in with me last night.

NEWS REPORTER

(To Lacey)

What did you say?

LACEY

(Hesitantly)

I told him I'd think about it.

NEWS REPORTER

What do you get out of dating
Morton?

LACEY

Like he said, we have a connection.

NEWS REPORTER

But he supports you financially?

LACEY

He pays my tuition and living
expenses. He also bought me a car
last month.

NEWS REPORTER

And in exchange you have sex with
him?

Lacey averts her gaze, unable to meet the reporter's eyes.

NEWS REPORTER (CONT'D)

Is it embarrassing to be seen in
public acting romantically with a
man who's forty years older than
you?

Lacey squirms as Morton tries to retain his composure.

NEWS REPORTER (CONT'D)

Do you ever think about how his
children are almost twice your age?

Lacey shrugs, visibly upset by the question.

NEWS REPORTER (CONT'D)

If he lost all his money, would you
stay with him?

Lacey's eyes well up with tears as her bottom lip quivers.
Morton keeps his arm around her as she loses her battle to
remain calm and she hides her face in her hands while her
shoulder heave in time with her barely audible sobs.

INT. OAKES' APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM: NIGHT.

Oakes grabs his laptop and browses to the AMBA home page. Excited, he joins and creates a profile with a main photo showing him dining at an seaside restaurant. He searches for nearby FEMALE MEMBERS and clicks on the profile for TABITHA, 20s. He studies her profile with lustful eyes.

He tries to send her a message, but is taken to a page reading, "become a paying member and message thousands of beautiful sugarbabies for only \$75/month."

His shoulders sag, but he is undeterred. He checks his bank balance, but only has \$63. Refusing to give up, he browses over to the website for his credit card. He has a credit limit of \$5,000, but only \$29 is available. Frustrated, he sighs and closes the lid of his laptop.

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