

All Are Welcome

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FADE IN

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - STEPHANIA'S OFFICE - DAY

STEPHANIA, in her thirties, clearly deprived of sleep, sits behind a large mahogany table and browses her smartphone.

A knock on the door. Stephania sighs.

STEPHANIA

All are welcome.

A tall MAN, in his forties, enters, eyes exude confidence and self-respect. He flashes a police badge at her.

STEPHANIA

I know who you are.

She invites him to sit. The Man takes his phone out and places it on the table. He punches a few keys.

STEPHANIA

Sorry, but you can't record the session.

MAN

Don't you tape your clients whenever you feel like it?

STEPHANIA

You're not my client.

He pockets his phone. Stephania types something in her phone, then puts it away as well.

MAN

Tell me what you do, and why.

STEPHANIA

Well, you must know that I help people get over their loved ones.

MAN

You help them cope with rejection?

STEPHANIA

No, I only help to cope with loss.

MAN

But you're not a psychologist, correct?

STEPHANIA

I'm a better service. I become the person they lost.

MAN

You know people aren't happy with your services, right? You should tell me more, as some of them are ready to press charges.

Stephania sighs.

STEPHANIA

Alright. I basically gather information on the deceased and sort of pretend to be him. Or her.

MAN

Excuse me?

STEPHANIA

I converse with the relatives of the deceased on his behalf. I mean via online chats.

MAN

So, in a way you play a ghost.

Stephania nods.

MAN

Do you charge money for it?

STEPHANIA

I tax every penny of what I make.

MAN

An honest citizen, aren't you?

STEPHANIA

You may not like it, but my clients obtain closure this way. See, most of them don't get a chance for a final talk with their beloved. And that's when I come in.

The Man fumes at that, but takes a hold of himself.

MAN

Let's talk Irene Ketchum. After Pedro been shot, you told her on his behalf that he cheated on her.

Stephania reaches for her phone, opens it, checks her communication with Irene.

STEPHANIA

Yep, I absolutely did. ...Sorry, there were reasons to do it to Pedro.

MAN

What reasons could you possibly have?!

STEPHANIA

I did a bit of investigation.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - SHOE SECTION - DAY - FLASHBACK

Stephania makes her selection, walks toward the counter. She's greeted by a cute female CASHIER. Stephania takes a note of the woman's earrings - bright daisies with pearls. The Cashier checks out the shoes Stephania's buying.

CASHIER

I have the same in blue.

STEPHANIA

They must look great on you. Match your beautiful earrings, too, huh.

The Cashier touches her earrings, pleased.

CASHIER

I got them for the Valentine's day.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - STEPHANIA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Stephania reaches for a drawer, grabs a small jewelry box. Inside, the same pair of earrings. She flashes them at the Man.

STEPHANIA

These are Irene's, he bought two pairs on February 14. Irene knew he was cheating but haven't had the heart to admit that to herself. ...Don't you think knowing it will make it easy for her to let Pedro go?

MAN

Pedro is dead. He was shot at a job duty. Have some respect for the deceased police officer.

Stephania looks away.

MAN

I'll have to issue an arrest, sorry.
You can't go on doing what you do.

STEPHANIA

Sure, be my guest.

They hear a car enter the driveway and park. Pedro has a deer in headlights look on his face.

MAN

Who is it?

Stephania leans toward the window and knocks at the glass panel. She waves to the person outside.

STEPHANIA

It's Irene. I wrote to her you're here to see her for the last time. Don't you think I'd recognize you, Pedro?

Pedro stiffens. They hear the steps closing the house.

STEPHANIA

I'm sorry, you got shot. Now, don't make it hard for her, she's had enough.

Pedro rises, steps toward to the window, peeks through the shutters, watches Irene knock the front door.

PEDRO

God, I miss her so bad...

He closes his eyes for a moment, inhales deeply.

PEDRO

I've been stupid, having been killed serves me well. You're right. She's better move on. Just tell her I love her. I love her with all my heart. Please.

Stephania steps out to greet Irene.

She and IRENE (40s), walk in shortly. Irene's expression tells she suffered a loss.

Pedro's eyes fixate on her, but she doesn't show any reaction to him. He sees she can't see him and slumps.

IRENE

Is he still here?

Pedro's chin trembles, he tries to fight a sob.

STEPHANIA

He's crying.

IRENE

Shouldn't I be the one crying? He lied to me.

Pedro squirms, shakes his head. He seems like aged ten years after hearing Irene's words.

Stephania's studies him.

STEPHANIA

He says the cashier lady saw the earrings in his hands and asked him where he got them. He knew her from somewhere and couldn't refuse telling her. There was some WhatsApp to and fro because of that, nothing more.

IRENE

I don't believe it. Do you?

STEPHANIA

Spirits never lie. They can't.

Irene's eyes light up. Stephanica sits her down close to Pedro.

Pedro reaches for Stephanica's hand and gives it a squeeze. Stephanica nods to him. She turns away from the two to give them a moment.

Pedro studies Irene, reaches for her, soaks her in, drinks her every feature.

IRENE

I feel like he's touching me.

STEPHANIA

He's right next to you.

Irene looks at Pedro. She doesn't see him, but she can feel his presence. Her chin trembles. He leans close, lingers at her skin. Smells her hair.

IRENE

I love you, dear.

Her lips begin to quiver, eyes wet.

STEPHANIA

He loves you very much, too. He
asks you to move on though, okay?

They stay like that for a while, until Stephania touches
Irene's shoulder.

STEPHANIA

You can't stay for long. It's not
good for you or his spirit.

Irene nods. She rises. Stephania walks Irene out, shuts the
door behind. She returns to the seat behind her desk.

PEDRO

Thank you so much. ...May I ask why
you did it?

STEPHANIA

Because I believed you love her.
Remember, spirits don't lie.

Pedro nods.

STEPHANIA

You must go now.

She sits down, closes her eyes, takes a moment for herself.
When she opens her eyes - Pedro appears gone.

There's a knock on the door. Stephania sighs.

STEPHANIA

All are welcome.

FADE OUT.