

Scene 1

Lights up on a bar somewhere in Thailand. Zach is at the bar, drinking. A bartender lurks nearby. Natalie enters. She sees Zach.

Natalie: You again.

Zach: Me again what?

Natalie: I keep seeing you around here.

Zach: I've seen you too, I guess.

Natalie: Three times in the last two days.

Zach: Was it? We checked in at the same time... then you were jogging on the beach this morning just before dawn—

Natalie: And you were sitting on the beach in the dark.

Zach: Couldn't sleep, decided to watch the sunrise.

Natalie: Whatever. And then you were getting back from a scuba trip when I was heading out snorkelling. And I know you noticed me then.

Zach: I may have glanced in your direction.

Natalie: Glanced. Right.

Zach: So that's three. And this is four, if keeping track makes you happy.

Natalie: I'm not looking to hook up on this trip.

Zach: ...Okay?

Natalie: So if you're following me around, trying to get my attention in order to—

Zach: I am hardly following you around.

Natalie: You keep showing up where I am.

Zach: *You* keep showing up where *I* am. And if anyone's looking for attention, I'll just point out that until now each time you showed up you were wearing fewer clothes.

Natalie: Sorry to break the trend.

Zach: After the bikini you didn't have much choice. Thailand does have laws.

Natalie: Should've stalked me in Europe. Could've given you a real show.

Zach: I still say you're stalking me.

Natalie: Just because I don't swim in a burka—

Zach: Also, *you* talked to *me*. I didn't even know you were in the room.

Natalie: Okay. So it's just coincidence we keep bumping into each other.

Zach: It's a small island. Bound to happen.

Natalie: Guess so.

Zach: I'm Zach, by the way.

Natalie: Natalie. How about I buy you a drink to make up for the accusations?

Zach: I wouldn't stop you.

Natalie: Just one drink, though.

Zach: Right.

Natalie: And that's it.

Zach: Because you're not looking to hook up.

Natalie: I'm not.

Zach: Neither am I. (*displays wedding ring*)

Natalie: Oh. Right. Okay. (*to bartender*) Two of whatever he's having?

Bartender nods, begins pouring.

Natalie: If it's terrible I'm blaming you.

Zach: If you like.

Bartender hands them two drinks.

Zach: What are we drinking to?

Natalie: Quiet mornings.

Zach: Cheers.

They clink glasses and drink.

Zach: So?

Natalie: It'll do. Been diving long?

Zach: About once a year for... seven years now.

Natalie: One dive a year?

Zach: Several dives during one trip. Only get to do it when I'm on a trip, so I try to squeeze in as much as I can.

Natalie: Can't do it at home?

Zach: Don't live near the coast. And even if I did, I'm not big on cold water and that's pretty much all we have.

Natalie: Canadian?

Zach: Yeah. How about you, where are you from?

Natalie: Lots of places.

Zach: You here for the diving?

Natalie: I would, but with all the gear you have to rent it's just a bit much for the budget, you know?

Zach: I guess. So if not diving, why Koh Tao?

Natalie: I was in a hostel in Bangkok. Nice city, kind of busy, though... and there was this German girl going on about Koh Tao, tiny but beautiful and all that. It sounded nice. And quiet. I was kind of in the mood for quiet.

Zach: Just picking where you go at random?

Natalie: Pretty much. You?

Zach: Had a loose outline. There's a lot of places I want to get to, but I don't necessarily want to rush through them, you know?

Natalie: Like those bus tours of Europe? See the whole continent in two weeks?

Zach: I hate those things. Never cared for being rushed on vacation. Isn't the point to relax?

Natalie: Or to get away.

Zach: Yeah. We could all use some quiet now and again.

Natalie: Cheers to that.

Zach: Guess that's why you were touchy about being followed, huh?

Natalie: I needed a reason?

Zach: Well, no, but... it's not like you found me lurking outside your hotel room, is it?

Natalie: This bar is right outside my hotel room.

Zach: That's not what I—it is? Huh. Does that make it hard to sleep, or—

Natalie: Not really, but I'm a pretty deep sleeper, so...

Zach: That'd help, yeah... I had a point a second ago.

Natalie: Me not wanting to be followed, even from someone harmless. I think that's where you were going.

Zach: That was it, yeah. It's right when you want to be left alone that everyone suddenly wants your attention, isn't it.

Natalie: Especially if you're a woman on her own. Every guy in the hostel looking to score sees an easy target, like a zebra separated from the herd. There was this clerk at a hostel in Spain, he was relentless. He'd hover over any girl using the computers, asking if they wanted to stay in his room that night, getting pissy when they said no...

Zach: Yikes.

Natalie: Yeah. I was tempted to pretend to be sleeping with the girl at the next terminal just to shut him up, but I thought it would only encourage him.

Zach: What did you do?

Natalie: Just kept blowing him off. He was all bark, no bite. Eventually he'd call you a stuck-up bitch and move on. You learn to deal with these things. The clerk who thinks working at a hostel is his free pass to loose women, the local at the bar who thinks offering to show you the "real Barcelona" will make you swoon and fall all over him, the guy saying "you speak English, you'll do..."

Zach: I guess, yeah. Don't really think about that often. That's not really a concern for guys. Well, except that one time...

Natalie: One time?

Zach: Forget it.

Natalie: Don't be shy. We both know you only mentioned it so you could tell the story.

Zach: I was on a snorkel trip in Malaysia, this island called Langkawi, and this one staff member offered to take me on a private tour of the island. I thought, what the hell, Malaysians are known to be friendly, there's not a big chance he's just going to stab me and steal my passport...

Natalie: Guess that's still a concern.

Zach: Big concern. So I leave my passport and credit card in the safe, mail a postcard to a friend with instructions on how to avenge my death, and off we go. We hit the cable cars, go for seafood, watch the sun set over the ocean, he starts talking about this dance club... and it occurs to me...

Natalie: He was showing you the "real Langkawi."

Zach: And he went from “date” to “clingy boyfriend” fast. Called me three times that night and insisted on taking me to the airport the next morning.

Natalie: Awww, you made a friend.

Zach: Ha ha.

Natalie: How long ago was this?

Zach: Last week. I take great comfort in being in another country where he can’t call me. Probably can’t call me.

Natalie: Wait. Last week? Where was your wife during all this? Hell, where is she now? Every time I’ve seen you you’ve been alone.

Zach: She’s not here.

Natalie: You left her at home? No wonder the tour guides are all over you...

Zach: She’s gone.

Natalie: Gone? (*realizes*) Oh. Sorry.

Zach: Not your fault.

Natalie: How long?

Zach: One year, four months, twelve days.

Natalie: Wow. To the day? Off the top of your head?

Zach: She died on the fourth. It’s the sixteenth. The math’s not hard.

Natalie: Alright. So you’re a newly single guy, traveling alone in a country with a slight reputation for sex tourism, but you’re not looking to hook up?

Zach: No. Especially not with ladyboy prostitutes, thanks.

Natalie: Didn’t say you were.

Zach: Everyone else tends to. Well, the ones not walking on eggshells ever since the accident.

Natalie: What acci—oh, right, yeah. THE accident. Gotcha. My point is... what brings you out here?

Zach: Most people would have thrown an “If you don’t mind me asking” in there.

Natalie: Do you?

Zach: ...I guess not.

Natalie: Okay then.

Zach: I'm... getting away. To clear my head. The first year was... a haze. Like the entire world was on the other side of a wall of cotton. All I did was stick to routine, try not to think about her, I was just trying to hold myself together until the end of the day and I didn't always make it. Everything had been "us" and "we" for so long that I didn't remember how to be just "I" anymore. That always seems to make more sense in my head.

Natalie: I get you. A piece of your life went missing and you didn't know how the rest fit together anymore.

Zach: Yeah. So I was just sleepwalking through life, either a wreck or just numb. A few months ago I started to work my way out of it. Decided I needed to get away for a while. So I took a leave of absence from work, withdrew some of the money we'd been saving to buy a bigger place, and took off.

Natalie: To here?

Zach: To all sorts of places. England, France, Italy, Greece, Australia, Malaysia, all the places we loved and all the places we said we'd go someday. As many as I can manage.

Natalie: Doesn't exactly sound like a "moving on with your life" trip.

Zach: That was never the point.

Natalie: Then what was?

Zach: To get some time and space to think.

Natalie: About what?

Zach: A lot of things. So what about you? What brings you out here?

Natalie: I'm just drifting.

Pause.

Zach: That's it? I tell you all of that and all I get is "I'm just drifting?"

Natalie: Maybe that's all there is?

Zach: Like hell. If you were a student backpacking for a summer in between classes maybe, but "I'm just drifting" sounds like it has a story.

Natalie: Is it too late to say the backpacking thing? Has that ship sailed?

Zach: Pretty much.

Natalie: Don't really know where to start.

- Zach:** How about where you're from?
- Natalie:** I'm not really from anywhere.
- Zach:** Everybody's from somewhere.
- Natalie:** Not me. Military brat. Constant moving.
- Zach:** Which military?
- Natalie:** Mom was with the Canadian forces, Dad was with the Australian army.
- Zach:** Really?
- Natalie:** Yeah. Wasn't easy for them to meet, let alone start a family together, but they're stubborn people when they want to be. Meant there was a lot of moving around. I lived in three different cities that I don't remember because I was too young. I'm not sure I ever knew exactly where I was born, but I stopped caring a long time ago. Moved around with Mom and Dad until university, then kept moving around for school. Was on my fifth university before I started this trip.
- Zach:** Fifth?
- Natalie:** University of Melbourne, University of Sydney, University of Nottingham, Queens and NYU.
- Zach:** Wow. Weren't kidding about moving around. What are you studying?
- Natalie:** I've got a degree and half a Masters in chemistry, a minor in history and about three quarters of a degree in English lit. I like to save that one for summer classes.
- Zach:** Wow. You keep busy.
- Natalie:** Five courses a semester, four semesters a year, you can get a lot done.
- Zach:** And yet you're "just drifting" instead of finishing off that Masters?
- Natalie:** Apparently.
- Zach:** Did the course load wear you down? Seems like it must have, what with not even taking breaks over the summer...
- Natalie:** No, I just... needed out of New York. In a rush.
- Zach:** Why? What happened?

Natalie: My parents were in town. For my birthday. They wanted to take me out to dinner, hit up Broadway, but instead... instead they were shot and killed by a mugger for the thirty dollars they were carrying.

Zach: Oh.

Natalie: Between them they had five medals and forty years of service and they were brought down by a meth-head with a twitchy trigger finger because they were visiting me. *(pause)* Gonna tell me it wasn't my fault?

Zach: Would I be the first?

Natalie: Nope.

Zach: Would it help?

Natalie: Nope.

Zach: Didn't think so. No wonder you needed a break.

Natalie: There's more.

Zach: Oh.

Natalie: I was at NYU to be with a guy. A few weeks after my parents died, the boy decided I was getting too clingy, and that he needed his space.

Zach: You're kidding.

Natalie: If only.

Zach: Who is this guy? Do you have his current address? I'd just like to send him a strongly worded letter.

Natalie: I gave him plenty of words.

Zach: Also a punch. For his face.

Natalie: Gave him a few of those as well.

Zach: Always room for one more.

Natalie: Anyway. Without him there was nothing keeping me in New York, and without Mom and Dad, I didn't really have anywhere else to go. So I took my savings and what was left of the inheritance after their funeral and started drifting. Now I'm here.

Zach: What are you doing for money?

Natalie: Like I said, savings and inheritance.

Zach: Other than that. An income. Shouldn't you be getting a pension of some sort?

Natalie: Two, one from the Australian military and one from the Canadians. And between the two of them they barely cover my student loan payments. Five universities in four countries. Adds up.

Zach: What happens when the money runs out?

Natalie: Haven't thought about it.

Zach: How much is left?

Natalie: Trying not to think about that.

Zach: Don't you think you should?

Natalie: Don't you think you should stop wearing your wedding ring?

Pause.

Zach: Fine then.

Natalie: Okay.

Zach: What a fun pair we make.

Natalie: Sorry to bring the mood down.

Zach: Bring the mood down? I was sitting here drinking and remembering how I proposed on the beach outside. Hearing about your dead parents is the most fun I've had all-- that came out wrong.

Natalie: Forget about it. *(pause)* Right outside? Right outside this bar?

Zach: By that tree leaning to the left. Right at sunset.

Natalie: You really need to think about something else.

Zach: You have any suggestions?

Pause.

Natalie: Maybe.

Lights down.

Scene 2

Lights up on the Constantinople, the pub owned by Vincent Constantine and frequented by the rest of the cast. Vincent is behind the bar. Tabitha, Lana and Wes are at a table nearby.

Wes: So you're not going to say you're sorry.

Lana: Wasn't planning on it.

Wes: And why not?

Lana: Because I'm not wrong.

Wes: You still don't think—

Lana: *(simultaneously)* Don't have to apologise when you're not wrong.

Wes: --that you're at least a little wrong?

Lana: I am not wrong!

Wes: So that's your big plan. Just have the government hand everyone money every month and expect society to function?

Lana: Because society is functioning so well right now.

Wes: Sure there's a recession, but the solution is jobs, not expensive government handouts.

Lana: What jobs, Wes? What are these jobs that are going to magically make small towns financial juggernauts? Manufacturing is gone. Nobody is going to pay 50 people to do a mindless, repetitive job that can be done by one machine. And the people who used to count on those jobs need a better choice than going broke, getting hooked on Vicodin, and making bad choices in elections. They need--

Wes: They need a better choice, but it isn't handouts, it's pulling yourself up by your bootstraps and—

Lana: You know that's not a thing, right? "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps" is something rich people say so they can pretend poor people just aren't trying?

Wes: Because they'll try so hard if they don't need to work for a living.

Lana: I'm not saying the government should make everyone millionaires, just that it's easier to chase your passion if you know you'll be able to eat this month.