

Kings *of* Catalina

EXT. STRAND BEACH PATH - AFTERNOON

Finn strolls the path with Jiminy, who's enjoying a treat. Trudy meanders behind them, licking a lollipop.

JIMINY

Now, listen up. Finding Miss Ayres is a cinch--she's a public figure. The problem here is you, sport.

FINN

What do you mean?

JIMINY

(stopping)

I mean you look like a forest creature. She's had more attractive nightmares.

Jiminy swats Finn's shoulders. Dust plumes. Finn coughs.

JIMINY (CONT'D)

Now then, have a look over there. At those fancy hotels.

Jiminy points inland. Finn and Trudy look over to a string of hotels. Roped off staircases rise up from the beach, leading to elevated pool patios brimming with well-heeled patrons.

JIMINY (CONT'D)

You see that one there? That's the Georgian, where Hollywood's elite wheel and deal with their millions.

On the second-floor patio of the Georgian, the wealthy and famous negotiate over Punch Romaines. Below them on the beach, FANS have gathered, hollering and waving. Paparazzi angle for pictures. Finn and Trudy gawk at the whole ordeal.

JIMINY (CONT'D)

You're peerin' up into some awfully high cotton. You wanna get anywhere close to Ada Ayres? Well, first you're gonna have to fit in.

Finn gropes at his beard. Trudy presses down his wild hair.

JIMINY (CONT'D)

And hell, kid. Would you really want her to see you like this?

FINN

--Damn, you're right. That would be a disaster.

TRUDY

--Um. Finn?

Finn follows Trudy's gaze back up to the hotel patio. Behind the antics of a red-headed ACTRESS, a concentrating BRUNETTE WOMAN, 20's, sits at a table under a patio umbrella. Her face is concealed behind harlequin sunglasses and a wide hat. She's every bit a movie star--stately and magnetic. While massaging her temple, she makes notes in a screenplay.

FINN

Oh no.

The brunette woman senses something. She looks up from her script and peers down to the beach. Clumsily, she removes her sunglasses. Her face is revealed--a familiar one. Years of emotion well up within Ada.

ADA

Finn?

Jiminy's dumbstruck gaze passes from Ada to Finn.

Impulsively, Ada drops the script and stands, pen still in hand. An intimidating businessman sitting beside her takes notice--MAX POWER, 40's, Italian American. He's strong-jawed in a bespoke suit, the embodiment of power and success. His every move is precise, crafted, and a little unsettling.

MAX POWER

Ada--is everything alright?

ADA

Yep. I'll be just a minute, okay?

As Ada exits, Max fluidly removes his sunglasses. He watches her hurry for the staircase, then he gazes down to the beach.

Finn frantically looks around, as if for somewhere to hide.

FINN

No. Crap! Shoot me.

Jiminy watches Ada descend the Georgian staircase.

JIMINY

Well, butter my butt and call me a biscuit. Alright, keep your britches on.

(sloughing off his blazer)

Here, put this on. And stand up straight.

Jiminy jabs Finn in the back to straighten his posture. As Finn wriggles into the blazer, Jiminy yanks Trudy away.

Finn holds up his forearms--the sleeves are way too short.

TRUDY

You look great. Like you're growing.

Once Ada descends the staircase, she steps over the crowd control rope, then passes throngs of fans.

FANS (VARIOUS)

Hey, it's Ada Ayres! We love you, Ada! America's next star!

ADA

(reservedly)

Thank you.

Finn rubs the sweat off his mucky brow. While the fans gawk from behind, Ada slips out of her heels to step faster through the sand, abandoning them.

Once she reaches the Strand beach path, she stops a few feet from Finn. Catching her breath, she still seems uncertain it's him. The beard and dirt are enough to disguise him.

ADA (CONT'D)

Finn?

Finn crosses his arms, trying to hide the too-short sleeves.

FINN

(shamefully)

Hey there, Ada.

Thirty feet behind them, two-toned dress shoes glide through the sand. A hand reaches down to gather up Ada's heels.

EXT. LIFEGUARD TOWER - AFTERNOON

Jiminy and Trudy are peeking out from behind the supports of a lifeguard tower. Jiminy pans his binoculars to Max Power, approaching Finn and Ada. Spitefully, as if there's history:

JIMINY

Max.

EXT. STRAND BEACH PATH - AFTERNOON

Max places his hand on Ada's back. Visually, they're the perfect couple. Yet, there's something threatening about this guy. Behind his good looks and crafted manner, there's a noticeable ruthlessness. He offers Ada her heels.

MAX POWER

Your shoes, dear. Am I intruding?

ADA

Thanks, Max. No, of course not.

(with breathy excitement)

This is Finn Henry. We were best friends, years back. He's a writer.

Perplexed, Max scrutinizes Finn with a stiff smile.

MAX POWER

Oh. Well, it's a pleasure meeting you, Finn. I'm Max Power, Ada's producer at the studio.

They shake hands. Taking a not-so-subtle jab:

MAX POWER (CONT'D)

LA treating you well?

FINN

Yep, I'm thriving.

Ada can't take her eyes off Finn. Finn glances behind Max, at two thuggish BODYGUARDS arriving. Their suits give off a gangster-y vibe. One is a cigarette-suckling lug: SKINNY. The second is an oafish bruiser: TINY.

Max motions to a third dolt lumbering forward: SAL FERRARI. A piggish sleaze, Sal is rotund with a threadbare comb-over. He loosens his tie and gasps in the heat.

MAX POWER

This is Ada's agent, Sal Ferrari. Sal, I'd like you to meet a talented young storyteller: Finn Henry.

Blotting handkerchief to forehead, Sal snorts at Finn.

SAL FERRARI

A writer?

FINN

Playwright.

SAL FERRARI
 (hunching over, gassed)
 Well, it looks like you need better
 management. Ha!

The bodyguards snicker. Finn glances at Ada. She's staring
 down in embarrassment.

MAX POWER
 Oh, never mind them.
 (offering his card,
 patronizingly)
 Finn, if you need anything, I'd
 like you to ring my secretary. For
 friends of Ada, I'll do all I can.

FINN
 You're a saint.

MAX POWER
 Ada, I have to be off. But I think
 you've had enough sun for one day.

From his half-collapsed position, Sal eagerly chimes in:

SAL FERRARI
 I can drive her home, Max.

Finn and Ada both know they're being stymied.

ADA
 Well--it was nice seeing you, Finn.

As Ada reluctantly exits with the suits:

FINN
 Hey, do any of you know a taxi
 number? I try to avoid the bus--
 full of drifters.

MAX POWER
 Tell you what. I'll call for a--

ADA
 I do.

Ada returns to Finn. She takes his hand and, with her pen,
 writes aback Max's business card. Privately:

ADA (CONT'D)
 Big Apple Cab. Friendly drivers.

Max examines Finn with a wolfish intensity neither Finn nor
 Ada sees. Skinny and Tiny take Finn's mark as well.

Then Ada disappears behind the curtain of unsettling suits. Finn exhales as if he hasn't breathed in a minute.

EXT. GEORGIAN VALET - DAY

Ada and Sal wait as a valet delivers Sal's Triumph Roadster. He's clearly, torturously infatuated with her.

SAL FERRARI
Free for some Indian food? I'm
giving Buddhism a twirl--it's the
sophisticate in me.

Ada replaces her sunglasses, lost in thought.

ADA
Some other time, Sal.

He takes her arm. Leading her to the car, he caresses his thumb against her arm.

SAL FERRARI
Right. What would Max think, eh?
Bad karma.

She gently pulls away from him.

EXT. PUBLIC PARKING LOT - DAY

Jiminy thumbs through his keys with Finn and Trudy in tow.

TRUDY
Holy smokes, she's pretty! Dang, a
real life princess.

Jiminy reaches his sedan.

JIMINY
Take it easy. After watching that
little boondoggle, fellas, I
recommend you call it quits.
You said Ada was one of Max's
girls. Not the girl. Big
difference.

TRUDY
They're dating?

JIMINY

These Hollywood producers. They're ruthless in a way you can't imagine, Finn. And Max is the worst of the lot, by a country mile.

FINN

--You seem to know a lot about him.

JIMINY

More than I care to.

FINN

Well--I've got nothing to lose. I have to see her again. Just, talk to her.

JIMINY

(sighing)

Fine. I tell you what. Meet me outside Ciro's nightclub on Sunset, tonight at nine o'clock sharp. There's one last thing I'd like to show you.

(slipping into his seat)

This one's free of charge. And don't do anything in the meantime. *Comprende?*

FINN

Sounds good. Thank you, Jiminy.

Finn shuts Jiminy's door for him. Then he and Trudy continue down the boardwalk. Trudy nudges Finn.

TRUDY

She gave you her phone number, didn't she?

(off Finn's smile)

Oh, I'm burstin'!

EXT. BEACH CLUB POOL DECK - NIGHT

Finn has snuck into the closed pool bar of a ritzy beach club. He inspects Max Power's business card--Max's title boasts "Executive Producer, Hart Bros. Studios." Finn flips the card, revealing Ada's handwritten number.

Finn dials the bar phone--the handset rings. And rings. No answer. So he motions to hang up. Then:

FEMALE VOICE

Hello?

Finn jerks the handset back to his ear.

FEMALE VOICE (CONT'D)

Hello?

(beat, husky-voiced)

Big Apple Cab. This is Honking Harriett.

FINN

Hey.

FEMALE VOICE

Hey. Where are you?

Finn darts a look to his grubby reflection in the bar mirror.

EXT. BEACH CLUB LOCKER ROOM SHOWER - NIGHT

In a tizzy, Finn scrubs his body with bar soap. He shivers at the chilly water.

INT. BEACH CLUB LOCKER ROOM SINK - NIGHT

Finn rakes a razor over his beard. Rehearsing:

FINN

Hello. Howdy there--

(nicking his cheek)

Damnit.

He scoops water onto his face, then touches at the nick. A bit of blood seeps onto his finger. The sight triggers him. A SHRIEK of violins. Finn's startled into a memory:

Nighttime in the portico of a New York bookshop. A six-year-old Finn wears what looks like a Vaudeville costume--a plaid vest, blazer, and bow tie. He waits with books cradled under his arm. A jaunty BOOKSELLER appears at the door.

BOOKSELLER

Well, you read that bunch fast, eh?

Modestly, Little Finn shrugs as he hands over the borrowed books. The bookseller refreshes him with a new stack.

BOOKSELLER (CONT'D)

You're gonna like these. They're called "fairy tales."

LITTLE FINN

(gaping at the books)

Thank you, Mr. Gertle.

BOOKSELLER

*Sure thing. And send my regards to
your mother!*

A *splash!* of sink water ends the memory. Finn eyes the locker room mirror between his fingertips.

EXT. BEACH CLUB - NIGHT

Between the club's stacked loungers on the beach, slender legs step out of heels. Finn gathers up Ada's heels. He's jittery. Her, too.

ADA

Thank you.

Finn's handsomeness is beginning to show. His hair and face are clean, and the beard is off. He's in a thrift store blazer. She's in a cocktail dress, suggesting she's just left some Hollywood *soirée*. Noting his improved appearance:

ADA (CONT'D)

You clean up well.

Blushing, Finn straightens his blazer.

FINN

Oh, thanks--jogged through a car wash.

She laughs.

EXT. SANTA MONICA SHORELINE - NIGHT

They stroll the moonlit coast, like awkward adolescents on a first date. The tide foams at their feet.

FINN

So, you came out west.

ADA

(playfully)

Actors move west. Playwrights stay in the east.

He chuckles. She fiddles with her hands.

FINN

I just saw *Captured*. You were terrific, Ada.

ADA
Yeah? Thanks. The story's pretty whimsical. Right up your alley.

FINN
The studio made it?

ADA
No. It's a little film that's just sort of taken off this year. Sal introduced me to Max a few months ago, and honestly, it's all happening so fast.

They stop. Finn glances out over the water.

FINN
Ada--

She steps in, rising to her tiptoes and clasping her arms around his neck.

ADA
I've missed you, Finn.

Enthralled, he gently wraps his arms around her.

EXT. BEACH CLUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

They're next to her gleaming Porsche. She holds a clutch.

FINN
Well, I can imagine how crazy things must be, but--

ADA
I'd love to see you again.

He brightens. She unclasps her clutch.

FINN
Yeah? Well, if--

She reveals an invitation envelope.

FINN (CONT'D)
What's that?

ADA
(hesitantly)
Max is throwing an engagement party Saturday night.

FINN
 (heart kerplunking)
 --You're marrying him?

Her silence confirms it. He accepts the envelope.

ADA
 I leave Monday for six months.
 We're shooting this huge epic. And
 the male lead just dropped out
 yesterday, so everyone's panicking.
 But I'd love it if you came. Max,
 too--he really seems to like you.

FINN
 Thanks. Well . . . I should go.
 (half-jestingly)
 Reservations on Sunset.

An uneasy silence.

ADA
 You know--you broke my heart. When
 you disappeared. I never got the
 chance to tell you that.

FINN
 (sincerely)
 I'm sorry, Ada. And
 congratulations, on all your
 success.

He starts off.

ADA
 Finn.
 (once he stops)
 Promise you'll write me another
 story some day.

He pretends he didn't just wither up inside.

FINN
 Some day.

Ada manages a smile as Finn ambles off.

EXT. CIRO'S NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Limousines pull up to the valet underneath the giant, lit
 "Ciro's" sign. A gaggle of INDUSTRY ELITE come and go. *Flash!*
Flash! of paparazzi cameras.