

Tide in Prime

ACT I

A bright, sunny summer morning in Los Angeles, California 2016. About 10:50 AM inside the foyer of 5-Star restaurant-hotel in Beverly Hills; marble floors, elegant decor, gold tastefully vomited in design to suit the floor-to-ceiling glass windows serving as the outside walls. An open residential lobby area outside the restaurants two floor-to-ceiling glass doors.

At a tall and very large wooden host desk, fit with two computers and two switch phones, sits Alexandra. 23. Caucasian-American. Valley girl living in Malibu. Genuine, kind, sweet and sassy. Playful and seriously good at her job. An all black romper and a black blazer with the cuffs rolled. LEXI sits in tall barstool behind the host making confirmation calls while scrolling through instagram on her smartphone; rehearsed yet genuine with enthusiastic apathy.

LEXI

(lost in her phone)

Good morning, this is Lexi with Tide-in-Prime Restaurant at the Chateau Beverly Hills phoning to confirm dinner reservations with us tomorrow evening for Mr. Ronald Gottlieb, party of seven at 8:30. If there's any questions or updates we can help you with before hand please feel free to call us back at 310-208-9210, otherwise we look forward to dining with Mr. Gottlieb and his party of seven at 8:30 tomorrow night. Thank you so much and have a wonderful day.

Exasperated, LEXI hangs up the phone. A beat. The phone rings . She dies inside a little with a sign then answers the phone pursed lips, eyes rolled, preparing to be annoyed.

LEXI

(enthusiastic, professional)

Thank you for phoning Tide-in-Prime Restaurant at the Chateau Beverly Hills, this is Lexi speaking, how may I assist you? ... A Reservation? Sure... Mhmm...

While LEXI enters the reservation, outside in the lobby area enters a STREET MAN off the street. 50's. African-American. Slacks and basket ball cap, a flannel button up with a coat, wearing worn sneakers. A modest backpack and drawstring bag overfilled with belongings. Friendly. Possibly drunk. A homeless man and basketball fan. At a bit of a distance, he lingers outside the tall glass doors, peering inside to see if the bar TV's are on. He looks a few moments and gets closer before realizing they're off and walking away unnoticed by LEXI.

Finishing the reservation

LEXI

Are we celebrating anything special? A birthday, anniversary perhaps?... Oh, you'll be staying at the hotel, even better! ... Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry... Three homes?! Thank god! Yes! About half the rooms at the hotel have families that lost their homes in the fire... Oh my gosh, I couldn't imagine... I'd just feel homeless as well! Just, you know... Oh, good. Gotta love that insurance, haha... Yes, we look forward to taking care of you Saturday evening while you make Chateau Beverly Hills your new home... Yes, 9:00 party of five Ms. Hall. Take care!

As LEXI hangs up the call, from around the corner, inside the offstage bar-lounge, enters the Assistant General Manager, AARON, mid 30's, African-American, bald and clean shaven, a blue polished suit. A affable token who takes pride in his position.

AARON

(Cool, nonchalant)

Lex, can we get these TV's on in the bar area?

He luxuriously checks his apple watch

Yeah, sure thing!

LEXI

Thanks...

AARON

LEXI starts looking for the remote. Aaron turns to leave, then,

AARON

(a smirk despite himself)

Your sister in later?

LEXI

(With cheeky sass)

I don't know, you tell me... mmhm...

She eyes him knowing a secret. His smirks bursts into a smile and a chuckle, giving himself away. He turns to exit, shaking his head, saying,

AARON

We open in five.

LEXI resumes looking for the remote control around the host desk. She searches all over for a few moments. While she looks, the STREET MAN re-enters the lobby to check again if the TV's are on. He waits off in the distance and looks inside. LEXI gives up on looking for the remotes and goes to unlock the front doors of the restaurant. She opens the left door, walking outside to lock it open. The STREET MAN interjects,

STREET MAN
 You puttin' the game on?!

LEXI
 There's a game?

STREET MAN
 Heat vs Magic!

LEXI
 (continuing opening the doors)
 Ummm... I think so? Sorry! I don't know...
 But you can always stop by and check!

STREET MAN
 Alright!

He starts to walk off then stops to say,

Thank you, young lady!

He removes his hat and gives a deep bow

For the Hospitality

He returns his hat

LEXI
 Aww! Any time! Have a good one!

The STREET MAN walks off as LEXI finishes opening the second front door. AARON re-enters with a stack of leather bound dinner menus and drops them on the host stand,

AARON
 Found these behind the bar.

LEXI
 Oh my god! Tell your staff to do their effing jobs!

AARON
 I am...

He pats the stack of menus

You know who closed...

Aaron saunters away back around the corner. Lexi goes behind the desk to retrieve a squirt bottle and towel to clean the menus.

LEXI

*(under her breath,
exasperated)*

Bitches...

LEXI starts cleaning the menus dutifully. A few moments in silence before lounge music ("Ocean Drive" - Duke Dumont) fades in becoming background lounge music. The music brightens the mood and LEXI grooves while cleaning the menus, getting lost in her own world as AARON re-enters the foyer to listen for the music levels, then walks outside into the lobby, looking around, chest proud. After a few moments AARON walks back inside and returns around the corner, unnoticed by LEXI. LEXI returns the cleaned menus beneath the stand, then returns to sitting and scrolling through her phone. After a few scrolls, another host, CJ, enters. Late 20's. African-American. An all black suit. Fun, a natural professional, with a playful and loving relationship with his co-host LEXI.

CJ enters, late for work, composed, yet somber and brooding. He settles himself at the host stand,

CJ

Hey, sorry I'm late...

LEXIE

(bright, nonchalant)

You're fine!... Aaron didn't even notice.
Everything good?

Silence. CJ chokes up.

Cam...?

Silence. CJ isn't ready...

Oh my god, you're bleeding!

CJ

(exposed, he looks at LEXI)

Oh my god, really?

*CJ quickly darts off away
around the corner. LEXI looks
concerned, then remembers,*

LEXI

Ugh, the remote!

*Lexi resumes looking for the
remote underneath the host
stand. She looks around for a
few moments. The phone rings.*

Thank you for phoning Tide-in-Prime
Restaurant at the Chateau Beverly Hills, this
is Lexi speaking, how may I assist you?
Yes. we're open... Have a great day...
Jesus...

*CJ re-enters, wiping his neck
with a wet paper towel*

Did they move the remote?

CJ

Behind the bar.

He goes to retrieve the remote

and turn on the bar TV's. He returns.

LEXI

Is everything ok?

CJ

... I ...

I got kicked out my friends place...

LEXI

Oh, nooo... What happened?

Silence. CJ struggles to fight a brewing breakdown.

Is that why you're bleeding?

CJ starts to breakdown in tears, then instantly resumes composure at the host stand as AARON re-enters,

AARON

Hey, Lexi, can you-
Oh, there is he is!

He gestures at CJ with finger guns.

CJ

What's up, Aaron.

AARON

Lookin' sharp, brother

CJ grins and gigs, brushing his shoulders off,

CJ

Hey, I'm just tryna get like you.

AARON

You're on a double today?

CJ

Yessir.

AARON

Alright, alright.
Can one of you make sure to clean out the
coat closet before end of shift?

CJ/LEXI

Most def/For Sure

AARON

You the MVP's!

More finger guns. He exits.

LEXI

Ugh, you're on a double?

*CJ nods his head lost in
silence. LEXI watches silently
as his tears start to surge
again. Then, the phone rings.*

LEXI

Thank you for phoning Tide-in-Prime
Restaurant at the Chateau Beverly Hills, this
is Lexi speaking, how may I assist you?
Ummm...

*Annoyed, she walks around the
host stand and looks inside
the bar*

Yes. We're showing the game. In the bar...
No, not from the main dining room. The bar...
You're welcome, have a great day...
Mhmm, bye.

*LEXI hangs up the phone to
find CJ crying to himself at
the host stand. A heavy weight
he still can't seem to
communicate. Concerned, LEXI
asks,*

(concerned)
What happened, Cam?

A beat. CJ shakes his head.

Another beat.

CJ

... I got into a fight...

LEXI

Oh my god, with who? You're friend?

CJ somberly nods

LEXI

Your bestie?! The one you've been staying with?

CJ nods, sadness swells.

Then,

STREET MAN

Hey brotha...

CJ and Lexi quickly turn their attention to the STREET MAN, now walking inside the foyer.

STREET MAN

What's the score on the game?

CJ

... There's a game?

STREET MAN

Heat vs Magic. Home game.

CJ

Cool. I don't know, but, I mean feel free to check it out for yourself,

He gestures to the bar lounge TV's. The man looks among the screens to find the game.

LEXI

We just turned it on!

STREET MAN

There it go. Top of the game. 6-4 Heat.

CJ/LEXI

Nice, right on/ Oh, see there ya go

STREET MAN

(to CJ)

What your team?

CJ

(caught off guard)

Ain't got one. Never played

STREET MAN

Alright then; I ain't disturbin' y'all or nothin'?

CJ/LEXI

Oh, no, be our guest/ of course not!

STREET MAN

Alright then; thank you.

CJ/LEXI

Of course/ no problem!

The man watches the game for a few moments longer before AARON then re-enters from around the corner. As he turns the corner he sees the man off the street inside the foyer and instantly puts his hands up as if to bar him entrance,

AARON

(to the STREET MAN)

I'm gonna need you to step outside.

A beat.

STREET MAN

What's the problem?

AARON

(again, with hands)

I'm gonna need you to step outside.

STREET MAN

Brotha, I was just checkin' the score-

AARON

(interrupting)

Restaurant service is for guests only.

I'm gonna need you to step outside.

STREET MAN

They ain't got no problem,

He gestures to Lexi and CJ

So what's the problem?

What I do?

AARON

Lexi, call the police

Awkward silence and shock from LEXI and CJ, unsure and hesitant to call the police on the man. LEXI picks up the phone as if to call but doesn't dial.

STREET MAN

Awww, man, come on.

I ain't evening' bothering' nobody.

They said it wasn't a problem.

AARON

Sir, I'm gonna need you to step outside

The street man brushes him off and looks directly at CJ, demanding

STREET MAN

You the manager? You need to get this fool together and teach him how to treat and talk to folks.

CJ's lost for words

How is it I walk in here, talk to y'all and get treated decent. Then Uncle Tom come around the corner tryin' to kick niggas out callin' the police? That ain't no kinda business. You need to have his ass fired! Fire his racist uncle tom ass on the spot!

CJ

(looking for words)

My sincerest apologies sir. This is my manager, he literally can fire me, so unfortunately my hands are tied.

STREET MAN

That's a damn shame. It's always another brotha. Always some coon as Uncle Tom they got up front making sure niggas stay in the back and can't get a table.

He points at AARON. A beat. Silence. Lexi and CJ look awkwardly between the two of them. CJ speaks up,

CJ

Sorry, Sir.

STREET MAN

Naw, brotha don't be sorry. You ain't done nothin'. It's this nigga, this uncle tom ass clown right here actin' a fool like he ain't got no damn sense. You done forgot where you came from, brotha.

AARON

(tough condescension)

I know where I came from just like you.

STREET MAN

What you tryin' to say, brotha? Just another nigga on a sunny street. What, you think you better than me? You don't me, brotha. White man take this little punk ass job you got you be standin' right where I'm at, with some weak ass uncle tom tryin' to keep from you knowin' the score on the game.

AARON

Lexi, get Security on the line?

Lexi pretends to call security, hesitant and unaware what to do. Her and CJ share a look.

STREET MAN

Aww, man gone with that weak shit.

The man dismisses AARON and turns to leave then points at CJ

Thank you, brotha! Thank you! For being real and treatin' niggas with hospitality! Like they deserve some damn respect! You too young lady! Thank you! Y'all need to get this fool together! Tell 'em about his self! Fake Kobe Bryant lookin' ass nigga, fuck you!

The man turns to leave and says to CJ and LEXI on the way out,

STREET MAN

Thank y'all. Y'all have a blessed day.

The man exits going off under his breath and walks back on to the street. An awkward silence between LEXI, CJ and AARON, who watches to make sure the man has left. A beat. AARON addresses LEXI and CJ before leaving as well out the front doors,

AARON

Cam? Lex? I'm walking to the bank? If anyone calls for me just direct 'em to my voicemail.

CJ/LEXI

Most def/ Yeah, you got it.

Alright, alright.

AARON

AARON gives CJ a clap, lock, handshake. They both happen to snap, then make finger guns at one another in recognition. Cool, playful and sly. AARON then points finger guns to LEXI before saying,

Teamwork makes the dream work.

With a grinning smirk he swaggers out the door to the bank in the opposite direction of the street man. CJ and LEXI rest in silence both simply looking off into the distance, a common position for them at the host stand. In their silence a new song transitions in the overhead lounge music ("Here For You" - Kygo)

LEXI

(deflated, over it)

I can't.

CJ

I literally can't.

LEXI

Dude, what was that?

CJ

I ain't got time. I got problems.

LEXI

Tell me about it.

CJ

(tired, brooding ready to break as he processes)

I haven't slept at all since yesterday. I get into a drunken argument after work last night with my best friend who then threatens to call the police and kicks me out of her

(MORE)

(cont'd)

apartment after strangling then provoking me to hit her in the middle of what turned into a really fucked up argument about love and dead parents so I smash her shit, grab all my stuff, shove it in my car, drive it up to the Valley at three in the morning to put it all in my storage space because that's the only place I can house my belongings right now but they don't open till seven and I have to be at work in Beverly Hills at 10:30 with no clean clothes, nowhere to shower, or even really anywhere to get dressed properly, I have no idea where to go, I literally can't go back to my friends place, our relationship is over, I'm not moving back to Missouri, I'd rather die, I can't ask my family for help, all I literally have right now is my car and this job and I don't really know what the fuck is reality right now or what I'm going to do with my life in the next 24 hours or where I'm going to sleep, or find a place to, I don't know where to, I just, don't, I don't know what to...

CJ breaks from processing his night and predicament. LEXI speaks up,

LEXI

(light, tough and sweet)

Hey, Hey,
 Just breath. It's all good. You're cool.
 We're cool. It's cool. You're good!
 You're not gonna move. You're not gonna quit.
 You'll figure it out. That's the CJ I know.
 My dad always says it's never a good time for something bad to happen. And hey, I get it, I've totally been a bad friend. And friends fight. That's OK. But, oh hell no! What she did to your neck! That's not ok! You are not going back there, mmhmm, no! I refuse!
 Listen, I'm gonna work your double for you It'll piss management off but I need the over time and you need rest. You can hang at my place, smoke some weed, walk down to the beach, chill by the ocean, and just...

(MORE)

(cont'd)

breathe. I'll talk to my sister and my roommate it'll be totally fine. We live in Malibu so if you leave early enough traffic shouldn't be too bad on the way there. It's a gated property so you'll need the code but there's a side door we keep open for the cat so you can just go in.

Lexi goes to write down the code and the address. CJ is lost for words.

CJ

Lexi... Thank You...

CJ is overwhelmed with gratitude.

Thank You.

LEXI

Yeah, Cam! You're welcome!
This is the real work the world needs right now. You heard about the fires in the Valley?

CJ

(a realization)

That's what I was seeing...
The sky was this creepy blood pink orange color at sunrise, and it was raining ash when I was moving stuff into my storage space...
Wow. What's the cause?

LEXI

Natural disaster. Mother nature.

CJ

God...

LEXI

Yeah... My parents just moved out the house they had since me and my sister were kids last week. That would've been us...

CJ

All those people, all their homes gone just like,

he snaps

It don't discriminate. Could be anybody...

LEXI

Anywhere, anytime... rich or poor

CJ

Black or white, friend or foe

LEXI

I'm just grateful, yo. The world might be going to shit but, look at us, at least we're here, we're alive, and we look good!

They burst in laughter together.

CJ

(brighter, optimistic)

Word!

LEXI

You know there's an event today? Some City Hall seminar but the food is bomb, and the the servers said there's hella leftovers. Box that shit up!

Lexi reveals a white take out box from beneath the host stand.

CJ

Oh, I'm boxing' all the shit!

CJ eagerly turns to leave into the bar-lounge to box up leftovers. LEXI takes out a fried appetizer from the box and pops it in her mouth at the host stand. The phone rings such as she starts to chew. While eating she answers,

LEXI

(mouth filled with food)

Tide-in-Prime, please hold.

She finishes savoring her food. She then reaches below to grab lemonade and takes a sip. Once satisfied, she picks up the phone and takes the caller off hold.

Thank you for phoning Tide-in-Prime
Restaurant at the Chateau Beverly Hills, this
is Lexi speaking, how may I assist you?...

Lights fade to black. End.