

HOUSE OF CAESAR

The Muse



A supermodel gets unceremoniously retired by her lover, the CEO of a fashion empire. Embroiled in a bloody coup d'état, she must prove where her loyalties lie.

Loren Watson

INT. 1997 - NEW YORK - ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL - DAY - FLASH FORWARD

In the opulent hall, every pew is filled with richly dressed MOURNERS, their heads bowed. The church doors open, the Mourners turn to spy KATHERINE (27). She marches through the centre aisles, dressed in a fashionable black pant-suit, she fiddles with blood red gloves.

She kneels before a BISHOP, he anoints Katherine's forehead with oil.

BISHOP

*Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.*

CUT TO:

INT. 1997 - NEW YORK - HOUSE OF CAESAR - GROUND FLOOR - MORNING - PRESENT

Katherine enters through glass doors, the street outside bleak with winter winds. She holds a paper latte cup, she wears a trench coat. She enters a grand ornate building, decorated with large ads and posters of models, a giant poster of Katherine stares back at her. The room bustles with FASHIONABLE PEOPLE and SECURITY. Fashionable People stop and stare in awe as she passes. CLEO (early 20s), a beautiful young model with a short bob, pushes past the Fashionable People, she tries to wave down Katherine.

CLEO

Miss Brutica!

A BELL HOP opens the security gate for Katherine, ushers her into a private elevator.

BELL HOP

Have a good day, ma'am.

KATHERINE

Thank you, Jeremy.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Cleo shoots past the Bell Hop, he tries to stop her.

BELL HOP

You can't go in there!

CLEO

I'm sorry.

She squeezes past the closing elevator doors, she bends over winded. The elevator doors shut. Katherine slides her sunglasses down her nose at Cleo, amused.

KATHERINE

Can I help you?

Cleo straightens, faces Katherine.

CLEO

(nervously)

I... I am such a big fan. I'm Cleo!

Cleo shoots her hand out to shake Katherine's. Katherine gently shakes Cleo's.

CLEO (CONT'D)

I just wanted to ask if I could pick your brain a bit. I don't know if you remember me.

Katherine thinks for a moment, she snaps and points her finger at Cleo in recognition.

KATHERINE

Ah, right. You were the girl we picked up from Alexandria. Charming place.

CLEO

Yes! I just wanted to ask you, Miss Brutica. How can I set myself apart, like you? I want to be a star. I'm tired of being a background model.

KATHERINE

(teasingly)

Oh, you want my job.

Cleo's face drains of colour.

CLEO

No...No! That's not what I meant. I swear.

Katherine laughs. She places a hand on Cleo's shoulder.

KATHERINE

Don't worry, little Cleo. You will be fine.

The elevator doors open, Katherine steps out.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Good luck.

INT. JULIUS' PRIVATE RECEPTION - MOMENTS LATER

WALLACE (early 20s), a nervous man and Julius' assistant, sits behind a desk.

Katherine waltzes past, she flings her coat at him. She marches towards dark, oak double doors.

WALLACE

Good morning, Miss Brutica.

KATHERINE

Morning Wallace, sorry. In a rush.

INT. HOUSE OF CAESAR - JULIUS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Katherine peeks her head into the room. JULIUS (early 60s), an thin, fashionable, Italian man, with a phone to his ear, pinches the bridge of his nose. He waves her in. Katherine scurries over to him, leans and pecks his cheek. She perches on the corner of his desk, clasps her hands over her knee and studies him.

JULIUS

(in an Italian accent)

Si... Yes, that will be all.

Katherine opens a desk draw, she pulls out a box of cigarettes, lights one and hands it to Julius. He takes it, she lights one for herself. She leans back, swings her leg as she waits for him to finish.

Katherine glances out of the window. She spots on the street corner bellow a figure facing her. The HOMELESS MAN, holds a cardboard sign, she steps closer to the glass.

EXT. NEW YORK - STREET CORNER - SAME TIME

The Homeless Man's milky eyes linger on Katherine. He holds the sign aloft. It reads, "*The end is nigh*".

INT. HOUSE OF CAESAR - JULIUS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Julius ends the call, he swivels in his chair to face Katherine.

JULIUS

What are you looking at, my dear?

Katherine points at the Homeless Man. Julius turns in his chair, peers down.

JULIUS (CONT'D)

Bothersome creature. He is always there you know, watching me. Don't worry about him. Are you ready for today, my love?

Katherine grins at him, does a little twirl.

JULIUS (CONT'D)

How could I ever doubt you? My muse, you will be the star of my new Spring collection. What do you think of a Persephone inspired gown?

Katherine pauses, her expression drops.

KATHERINE

Didn't Gucci do something similar last year?

Julius sours. He shakes off the irritation. He stands to face her.

JULIUS

You do not understand my work. My art. Darling, you are undeniably the most gorgeous creature on the face of this planet.

He cups her chin in his hand.

JULIUS (CONT'D)

Why don't you leave the fashion business to me? Go get prepared for your ten o'clock shoot.

Katherine's gaze drops to the desk, she notices the schedule on a desk calendar, "*photo shoot at 12*". Julius picks up the phone again, he punches in numbers. Katherine shuffles out of the office.

INT. HOUSE OF CAESAR - JULIUS' PRIVATE RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Katherine closes the office door, she leans on the frame. She exhales in frustration. Wallace cautiously watches her. Katherine shakes off her defeat.

KATHERINE

Wallace, I have a photo shoot at 12. I need you to call wardrobe and make up.

WALLACE

I... I thought it was for 10?

KATHERINE

Julius meant 12, he is a very busy man. The Shareholders are arriving at the airport at 10. Check the schedule.

Wallace scans his clipboard.

WALLACE

You're right.

KATHERINE

Speaking of the Shareholders, I need Natalie on the line. She is preparing the hotel rooms.

Wallace scuttles behind a desk, he picks up the phone. He pauses, flips through his phone-book.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

555-401-251. Natalie Jackson, she is the new assistant to Cassius Aiello.

WALLACE

What happened to Chelsea--

KATHERINE

He fired Chelsea.

Wallace gazes at her, bewildered. He scribbles something on his clipboard.

WALLACE

How do you know everything?

KATHERINE

If I didn't then this whole House would fall apart. Who is the model for the *Sephora* collaboration, Sophia or Cleo?

Wallace quickly types on his keyboard, searches for a moment.

WALLACE

Cleo. Sophia is sick with mono.

KATHERINE

Get Cleo to make up in 10. She needs to be ready for when that *Runway* photographer gets here. She will be shooting after me.

Wallace grins. Katherine narrows her eyes at him.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

What, Wallace?

Wallace shrugs, he turns to busy himself at his desk. He pages through the calendar, today's date highlighted in yellow.

WALLACE

Are you doing anything special today?

Katherine scoffs. She turns, struts away.

KATHERINE

Call Marcus, tell him I'm on my way
to make up.

EXT. HOUSE OF CAESAR - STREET - LATER

Huddled on the wintry side-walk, Katherine adjusts Julius' tie. His eyes dart around the busy street, he anxiously shifts his weight from side to side. Katherine watches Julius, concerned.

KATHERINE

Don't worry. You will do great.

Julius huffs, he turns, agitated. Katherine gently cups his face in her hands, turns him back to her.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

(sincerely)

You will do great.

Julius' attention snaps to the street, a line of black cars parks by the side walk. Julius approaches the cars, opening his arms welcomingly. Out of the vehicles steps five SHAREHOLDERS, elderly mob-looking Italian men. They form a line, each pecking Julius on the cheeks.

MONTAGE - GREETING LINE

- CASSIUS steps before Julius, he softly kisses Julius' cheeks. They pull apart, Cassius grips Julius' shoulders tightly. He has a pleasant smile. Katherine stands off to the side.

CASSIUS

It is good to see you, Julius. We
have much to discuss.

Cassius steps aside. He holds Katherine's hands, softly he greets her.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)

And you, my dear, I have heard a
lot about you.

Katherine's eyebrows quirk up in confusion, but she smiles.

KATHERINE

I hope only good things.

Cassius turns away from her.

CASSIUS

We will see.

- NICOLAS approaches Julius. His grin crinkles the corners of his eyes. He holds a rosary clenched in his fist. He pecks Julius' face.

NICOLAS

New York is too cold. Bad for my bones.

KATHERINE

It is warm inside. Let us all go in now. Before your bones become popcicles.

Nicolas chuckles, Julius clasps him on the back.

- GIOVANNI waddles up next, Julius doubles over to embrace the frail man.

GIOVANNI

How is your woman? Still as beautiful as ever?

Julius smiles half heartedly at him.

JULIUS

Katherine is over there, Giovanni.

He shuffles over to her. He flings open his arms and ambles to Katherine, she brightens.

KATHERINE

Giovanni! I am so glad you made it. Tell me of your family, are they all well?

Katherine embraces Giovanni, kisses cheeks. They pull apart.

GIOVANNI

Katerina, you looking as beautiful as ever! Maybe even more so.

He cackles, she escorts him inside. They meander behind the other Shareholders dawdling after Julius.

INT. HOUSE OF CAESAR - GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Julius gestures passionately at the posters to the other Shareholders as they all march across the entrance. Giovanni pats Katherine's hand affectionately. His eyes rake hungrily over her physic.

GIOVANNI

(whispering)

If Julius ever mistreats you, you call me. I will fly you out to Sicily and I will take care of you.

Katherine giggles. Giovanni's hands wander from her back towards her ass, he gives it a little squeeze.

KATHERINE
Giovanni, if that day ever happens,
you will be my first call.

Giovanni nods. Together they shuffle after the rest of the Shareholders.

INT. PHOTO SHOOT - LATER

Katherine poses, a sheet drapes over her naked figure, a laurel wreath on her head. She holds a bottle of perfume. Flashes of light from the Italian PHOTOGRAPHER blinds her. Julius watches her hungrily, he draws in a puff of his cigar.

PHOTOGRAPHER
(in a thick Italian
accent)
There! Gorgeous, *amorina*. Don't
move.

A door on the other side of the room opens. Julius, the Photographer and Katherine turn to watch the door.

STAFF (O.C.)
Happy birthday to you! Happy
birthday, dear Katherine...

Wallace, Cleo and some STAFF enter the studio carrying a cake, they pause under the glaring eyes of Julius. They shuffle uncomfortably, Julius stalks over to them, he peers at the cake.

INSERT - CAKE

Happy 27th Birthday Katherine

BACK TO SCENE

Julius turns to Katherine disappointed, his discerning eye rakes across Katherine's body. A gritted smiles unfold, he motions to the cake.

JULIUS
Come, Katherine. Enjoy your
celebrations. You are free for the
day.

Julius snaps his fingers, Cleo approaches his side from the group. Katherine shuffles away from the set, Cleo takes her place. Julius removes the laurel wreath from Katherine's head. She scowls.

JULIUS (CONT'D)
 (to Katherine)
 Don't look at me like that, *Mi amore*. You are so much prettier when you smile.

The Staff and Wallace circle around Katherine, cheering, they present her the lit cake. Katherine's eyes never relinquish from Julius as he lovingly drapes the sheet over Cleo's bare body. Katherine's glare hardens, the light of the candles illuminate her face.

INT. HOUSE OF CAESAR - JULIUS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Katherine enters a darkened office she hold a slice of cake on a napkin. Julius sits in his leather chair. Katherine drapes herself over his desk, he leans back to admire her long legs. Katherine sheds her coat, revealing lacy lingerie underneath.

KATHERINE
Mi amore, come to me.

JULIUS
 Katherine, my darling. *My Muse*.
 What would I have done without you?

Katherine slides onto his lap. She brushes a lock of his hair behind his ear. She kisses his face and neck. Julius hold her chin, he stands, Katherine slides off his lap.

He pulls out a drawer of his desk, he reaches over. He plops a small gift box tied with ribbon on the desk. Katherine recoils, stares at the box.

JULIUS (CONT'D)
 For you, my love.

Katherine plasters a smile on her face, she unties the ribbon. Inside the box reads a card.

INSERT - CARD

To Katherine, my love, my muse.

Congratulations on your retirement.

Love, Julius.

BACK TO SCENE

Katherine stares frozen at a delicate gold watch in the box. Julius gets up, leaves the office. He closes the door behind him. Darkness.

EXT. JULIUS' HOME - LATER

Katherine, drunk, holds a bottle of wine and the gift box. She trudges through an elaborate and precise garden outside of a large mansion. She wobbles around a bush trimmed into a shape of a rabbit. Katherine approaches the door, she pound on it.

Beat.

Julius, wearing a silk house robe and holding a glass of brandy, opens the door. A gold chain around his neck tangle with his greying chest hair.

JULIUS

What are you doing--

KATHERINE

Retirement!

She falters on the steps, catching herself she swings the bottle in his direction.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I don't understand! I've been by your side since I was a kid.

Julius swallows the brandy in one gulp. Cringes.

JULIUS

You see, my darling, we have decided to go in a new direction.

Katherine peers past Julius, she spots a pair of giant, gold, hoop earrings on a table in the hallway. Katherine throws the box at his head, she hits his mouth. He turns away from her.

KATHERINE

What are you talking about? Do you have some SLUT in there? I was your muse! What changed?

Julius spins violently towards Katherine, his hair dishevelled. A trickle of blood running down his chin from his crackled lip.

JULIUS

(angrily)

What changed? How could you do this to me? All I've ever done was take care of you! You didn't tell me?

Julius marches over to Katherine, looms over her. His hands flexes. He grabs her wrist and forces her on her tippy toes.

JULIUS (CONT'D)

Are you determined to ruin my career?