

RETURNING

FADE IN:

EXT. INSIDE LIMOUSINE – DAY

A savvy uptown corporate lawyer from New York, HARTLEY MULDOON, sits in a posh limousine speaking on the cell phone.

HARTLEY

They have no right. The deal is done.

MUMBLING is heard from the cell phone.

HARTLEY

Then, they shouldn't have sold it. I expect everything to be completed in two weeks.

MUMBLING is heard from the cell phone.

HARTLEY

Yes, it's only a minor delay. Expect my return as soon as possible.

Hartley hangs up with a sharp SNAP of his cell phone. He directs his attention to the LIMOUSINE DRIVER.

LIMOUSINE DRIVER

(seeing Hartley in the rear-view mirror)

We will be arriving shortly, sir.

EXT. SMALL OFFICE – DAY

The limousine pulls up to a very small, plain office.

The Limousine Driver quickly exits the vehicle and opens the car door for Hartley. Hartley gets out without a word. He looks around with a disgusted look on his face.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

He enters the office and walks straight to the secretary passing OTHER CLIENTS who are waiting.

HARTLEY

(authoritative)

Mr. Muldoon to see MR. WALTERS. We have an appointment.

The SECRETARY, a young attractive pre-law student with a lot of make-up, looks up from her paperwork.

She looks at Hartley from head to toe taking in the fancy Armani suit, slick hair, shiny shoes, and leather briefcase.

SECRETARY

You're not from around here, are you?

HARTLEY

(irritated)

Not anymore. (Hartley scowls at the Secretary) I have an appointment with Mr. Walters.

Hartley looks down at his watch, then at the Secretary.

The Secretary slowly gets up from her desk and saunters over to an office door taking her time. She knocks lightly and then lets herself in.

She returns.

SECRETARY

Mr. Walters will see you.

Hartley walks briskly past the Secretary into the office without knocking.

INT. MR. WALTERS' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

HARTLEY

Mr. Walters, where are the papers that require my signature?

MR. WALTERS, a middle-aged town lawyer, stands and extends his right hand. Hartley shakes the man's hand abruptly.

MR. WALTERS

Mr. Muldoon, it's a pleasure. I've known your father--

HARTLEY

The papers, Mr. Walters.

MR. WALTERS

(startled)

Yes.

Mr. Walters shuffles some papers on his desk rearranging them so that they face Hartley. Hartley takes out an expensive pen from his inside coat pocket. He signs the documents.

MR. WALTERS

You're obviously in a rush. But, you should know that Margaret, the housekeeper, is still living at the house. I think she expects that she'll be able to stay on.

Hartley only stares at the town lawyer waiting.

Mr. Walters, realizing, hands Hartley a copy of the documents.

MR. WALTERS

I am sorry for your loss. I hope everything works out.

Hartley grabs the paperwork, turns on his heel and exits the office.

EXT. MULDOON FAMILY HOUSE – LATER THAT EVENING

Hartley approaches a police car at the house's curb. OFFICER REESE, a clean cut by the book officer, gets out of his vehicle.

Hartley extends his hand to Officer Reese.

HARTLEY

It's just a precaution in case she doesn't leave.

OFFICER REESE

I've known Margaret for some time. There should be no problem.

The two men walk up to the house's front porch. Officer Reese stops and makes eye contact with Hartley.

OFFICER REESE

Are you sure you don't need a housekeeper. It would be nice if she could stay —

HARTLEY

I'm selling this place as soon as I possibly can, Office Reese.

Officer Reese nods then turns and knocks on the front door. After a few seconds, MARGARET, the aged housekeeper, answers.

MARGARET

Officer Reese. How are you?

Margaret notices Hartley standing behind Officer Reese. Her expression and attitude immediately change. Her shoulders and neck stiffen. She bites her lower lip.

MARGARET

Hartley.

Officer Reese is thrown off guard. He looks from Margaret to Hartley then back. He lightly touches Margaret's arm.

Ignoring Officer Reese, Margaret stares at Hartley.

OFFICER REESE

I'm sorry Margaret. I'm here to make sure that you leave the house.

Margaret, still staring at Hartley, nods her head at Officer Reese's request. But, she doesn't move from her place at the front door.

MARGARET

(to Hartley)

I know. I understand.

The words seem to have a double meaning from the prophetic tone of her voice.

A disturbing moment passes before Officer Reese breaks the silence and moves towards Margaret entering the house.

OFFICER REESE

Margaret. Let's go and get your things.

Officer Reese leads Margaret away from the door. The aged woman lets herself lead into the house by Officer Reese but, keeps her eyes on Hartley.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Hartley examines the house as he enters. He scowls as he notices that his family house has not changed much.

Inside, Margaret stops and turns then moves to Hartley until they are uncomfortably close.

MARGARET

(whispers)

He will forgive you.

Hartley pushes Margaret back.

HARTLEY
Get away from me old woman.

Officer Reese walks over and grabs his arm

OFFICER REESE
Why don't you come back in a couple
of hours?

Hartley doesn't move.

OFFICER REESE
(forcefully)
I'll make sure that we're gone by
then.

Hartley yanks his arm away from Officer Reese. Hartley glares at Officer Reese then Margaret.

HARTLEY
Two hours.

Hartley leaves the house.

Margaret's demeanor turns to fear and tears streak her weathered face.

Officer Reese graciously takes hold of her arm and rubs her back. He waits for Margaret to calm down then helps her up the stairs to her room.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – THAT NIGHT

The room is dark. The distant sound of a car's screeching tires is heard. A loud, shrill scream echoes through the night. It turns from an old woman's tone to Hartley's hollering.

He jumps up from his sleep dripping with sweat and shaking. He runs his hands through his hair.

INT. FOYER - NEXT MORNING

There's a KNOCK at the door. Hartley answers it.

OFFICER REESE
Do you have a moment?

Officer Reese steps into the house giving Hartley no choice in the matter.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Officer Reese follows Hartley into the kitchen. Hartley pours himself a cup of coffee into a travel mug.

HARTLEY
What can I do for you?

OFFICER REESE
Margaret died in an accident last night.

Hartley avoids eye contact with Officer Reese and drinks from his coffee mug.

HARTLEY
I'm sorry to hear that.

Officer Reese closely studies Hartley.

OFFICER REESE
Where were you last night? (BEAT)
You didn't see Margaret after she left the house, did you?

Hartley makes eye contact with Officer Reese.

HARTLEY
(surprised)
No. I went to bed early.

OFFICER REESE
I need to account for everyone, procedure. Is there anyone who can confirm your claim?

HARTLEY
(raises brow)
The Limousine driver. He dropped me off at eight.

Officer Reese and Hartley stare each other down for a moment. Hartley breaks the silence first.

HARTLEY
If there's nothing else, I have an appointment to keep.

Hartley, with his free hand, grabs his briefcase from the kitchen counter.

Hartley ushers Officer Reese out of the house.

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