

VESPUCCI – SEASON 3, EPISODE 2 - SERIES 1

Scene Title: “The Shoreline Pause” **Location:** Private Pacific Coast Beach, Near Los Angeles
Time: Night

EXT. PRIVATE BEACH – NIGHT

Crashing surf. Pale firelight flickers across the sand. The scene is still. Very still.

The only motion is the waves, the fire, and SANDRA WARREN (40s), seated on a low, curved log.

Her shoes are off, feet half-buried in the sand. Her oversized VSI hoodie falls past her knees, its collar turned up against the breeze. Her hair is damp from the mist.

She isn’t doing anything. Just listening to the waves. Smoking a joint.

No tablet, no phone.

She sits—fully alone—watching the Pacific churn against the dark horizon. She lifts the joint to her lips. It crackles as she draws. The glow lights her face in amber: sharp, still, weary.

The silence isn’t peaceful. It’s haunted.

A worn leather notebook rests beside her on the log, its pages fluttering. Blank, save for a few scribbled acronyms. A cheap, broken pen lies next to it.

The joint burns down. She breathes in again. Longer. Slower. Exhales smoke toward the sky.

A sound.

DISTANT TIRES ON GRAVEL, muffled by dune grass. A soft electronic CHIRP as a car is locked.

Sandra doesn’t move. But her eyes flick. Barely.

The fire pops.

Footsteps approach—not boots, but clean leather dress shoes.

BENJI (30s) appears in the firelight, perfectly dressed as always. Navy-blue tailored suit, understated gold cufflinks. He looks exhausted. His tie is already loosened, the top button of his shirt undone.

He takes in the scene: the fire, the joint, the boots discarded in the sand. He exhales.

BENJI You know I'd follow you into hell, right? (beat) But it really could've waited until after dinner.

Sandra says nothing. She taps the ash from her joint onto the log. Benji's eyes fall on a small, silver canister beside her notebook.

BENJI (a single brow raised) Is that... an encrypted Q-Drive?

SANDRA (not looking at him) Retired. Reassigned.

Benji sets down a soft gray tote and sits beside her, uninvited. The fine fabric of his suit pants protests, folding awkwardly as he settles onto the sand.

He looks absurd. A fact he's clearly aware of, and couldn't care less about. He grunts softly, unbuttons his blazer, and rolls the sleeves.

From an inside pocket, he produces a metal case. Flips it open to reveal a neat row of high-end pre-rolls. He selects one.

BENJI Can I? Or is this a "clarity-through-solitude" kind of night?

Without a word, Sandra holds out her black, Aegis-branded jet lighter.

BENJI Gracias.

He lights up. Inhales. Coughs—lightly, then clears his throat with mock dignity.

BENJI Okay. That's... not recreational. That's weapons-grade. Jesus.

SANDRA You're welcome.

BENJI (smiling despite himself) Are we celebrating or grieving?

SANDRA Neither. Breathing.

BENJI Then what are we doing?

She doesn't answer. She picks up a small shell from the sand, turning it over in her fingers, examining its smooth surface. Benji watches her, his expression softening.

BENJI You missed five calls. One from the Client. Two from me. And a third-tier deputy secretary of Treasury who's now under the impression you're in active theatre. (beat) I may have implied you were aboard an unlisted flight. I'm not proud of that.

SANDRA (a hint of amusement) They'll believe anything if you say it calmly.

BENJI That's the job, right? That, and negotiating my cell phone bill down to nothing.

He digs into the tote. Pulls out a wax-wrapped sandwich, a metal water flask, and a box of French sea-salt chips. He offers them to her like sacred relics.

The corner of Sandra's mouth twitches.

BENJI You didn't eat today. Again. No, don't argue. I called the commissary and bribed your private cook. She confirmed you asked for black coffee and an orange. You didn't touch the orange.

Sandra raises a brow but takes the sandwich. Slowly unwraps it. It's still warm.

SANDRA This isn't from the commissary.

BENJI (smug) You're right. Corner place in Echo Park. The one with the guy who hates us because of the drone footage leak.

SANDRA You brought me hate-toast?

BENJI Yeah. But it's hate-toast with rosemary duck fat. You'll forgive him. Besides, he still blames the CIA.

Benji smiles. He takes a long drag from his joint, then passes it to Sandra. She accepts it, takes a quick hit, and passes it back.

BENJI Eventually.

She takes a bite of the sandwich. Chews quietly. It's excellent. She doesn't say so.

Benji lays back on the sand, blazer half-off, dress shirt open at the collar. He sighs, staring at the sky.

BENJI I'm too damn good at my job.

SANDRA Yes. You are. (beat) That's why I let you see this.

Benji looks over. She gestures at the fire, the empty beach, the silence.

SANDRA This part. The pause. There's no data here. No optics. No utility. (beat) Just sand. Smoke. Silence.

BENJI ...And me?

SANDRA I didn't say you weren't useful.

Benji snorts. The silence settles between them again—this time warmer, more comfortable. After a moment:

BENJI The West Wing doesn't know what to do with you. They're talking cost-overflow, not Phase Four readiness. They're scared. You predicted a six-week incubation, not twelve days.

SANDRA Alberta moved early. I didn't force that.

BENJI You didn't stop it, either. (beat) So now what? You're hiding?

SANDRA I'm watching.

BENJI Watching what?

SANDRA How the world feels before the pulse hits.

Benji turns back to the sky. The joint burns low between his fingers.

BENJI Do you remember... two years ago? In Geneva. Right after the North Corridor contract. You said, "War is the shape of ambition." (beat) I didn't get it then. I thought you meant the generals, the ones who posture. Now I know. You were talking about you.

Sandra says nothing. The surf crashes. The fire flickers.

BENJI They don't see it yet, do they?

SANDRA They will.

BENJI When?

SANDRA When it's too late to matter.

They sit in the shared silence. Two people by a fire as the world holds its breath.

PULL WIDE to reveal the lonely flicker of the fire against the vast, black ocean stretching into infinity.

FADE OUT.