

Social Medea

When Cassandra's supernatural helper service stops impacting human lives for the better, she teams up with her last would-be client to find a new way to help people appreciate what "could be".

INT. COLLEGE BAR - NIGHT

CASSANDRA [brunette, late 20s, elegant] sits on a stool at the crowded bar, overdressed and out of place. She looks down at a black card in her hand upon which the name "KARMA PARVESH" is printed in gold foil, then tucks the card away.

KARMA [23, athletic, no-nonsense] tends bar with practiced ease, ignoring everything except the next order. She stops in front of Cassandra and points to her untouched cocktail. Cassandra flicks her wrist and produces a crisply folded twenty-dollar bill between two fingers as if by magic.

CASSANDRA
Another, please. Karma, right?

KARMA
Ask me if I'm a bitch and you're out.

Karma takes the money and begins making another cocktail.

INT. BAR - LATER

The crowd has thinned considerably, but the bar is still active. Cassandra hasn't moved, and Karma is still tending bar. A HANDSOME MAN approaches and motions to Karma.

HANDSOME MAN
Burning Rose Lager.

Karma pours the beer, but as she hands it to him, Cassandra gestures subtly and Karma slips, spilling it all over the man's shirt. They make eye contact, and Cassandra smiles a small, self-satisfied smile. Her smile evaporates as Karma pours a second beer, sets it down in front of him along with twenty dollars, then moves on to another customer.

INT. BAR - LATE NIGHT

Cassandra still has not moved, but she looks defeated. Karma stands behind the bar, texting on her phone.

KARMA
(not looking up)
You're cute, but that's not my thing.

CASSANDRA
Excuse me?

KARMA

You dropped nearly four hundred dollars
on drinks tonight but drank three of 'em.
You haven't gotten up once, even to pee.
I'm flattered, but not interested.

CASSANDRA

(with growing embarrassment)

Oh! That's not what this is. Was. It
doesn't matter anymore. Goodnight.

Cassandra stands and heads for the door, but stumbles and
breaks the heel of her shoe. She screams in frustration and
kicks off her broken shoe; it flies through the air like a
brick and shatters the front window of the bar. Everyone
left in the place stops and stares at Cassandra. Cassandra
looks mortified, then suddenly runs for the door.

KARMA

Hey!

Karma runs after her. She catches up to Cassandra and grabs
her just as they cross the threshold of the door.

INT. CASSANDRA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cassandra enters this stylish apartment, shrugs off her
jacket and drops onto the couch, then takes out the card
with Karma's name on it. As she stares angrily at the card,
a glass of wine materializes in her other hand. She gulps
down the wine and flicks the card away. It is caught
casually by MERRICK [early 30s, handsome, arrogant], who
materializes on the other side of the coffee table.

CASSANDRA

You are not welcome here.

MERRICK

Don't be that way, Cassandra. I take the
health and welfare of my employees very-

CASSANDRA

I am *not* your employee!

MERRICK

Not yet. But if you can't pay your bill,
your business becomes mine.

Merrick leans over the table and brushes Cassandra's cheek.

MERRICK

And so do you.

KARMA (O.S.)

Hey, douchebag!

They both turn in surprise to see Karma. She kicks the coffee table into Merrick's shins and he falls over it onto the ground. A moment later her knee is on his neck.

KARMA

I've been over there this whole time, so I know I heard her say you're not welcome.

CASSANDRA

Karma, don't say another word to him.

KARMA

I got this. Me and Mr. Handsy here are coming to an understanding, yeah?

MERRICK

Quite so. Karma, is it? Am I to understand that you are a colleague of our Cassandra?

CASSANDRA

Karma, don't-

KARMA

Yeah, so don't even think-

Merrick stands up and makes a show of brushing himself off, leaving Karma confusedly kneeling on nothing at his feet.

MERRICK

Excellent. As an employee of Glimpse, I look forward to having you *under* me as well. Remember, Cassandra, three days.

Karma stands up as Merrick disappears into the shadows. Cassandra starts pacing, gripping her arms tightly.

KARMA

Lady, I've got a ton of questions, but first I could really use a drink.

Karma sits on the couch. Cassandra continues pacing but flicks her hand; a scotch neat appears on the coffee table.

KARMA

So are you a witch or something?

CASSANDRA

How rude! Do I *look* like a witch?

KARMA

How would I know? I didn't know magic was real until like two minutes ago.

CASSANDRA

How did you get here?

KARMA

I grabbed your jacket as you ran out of the bar, but you were too preoccupied to notice. I freaked out a little, but I was over the worst of it by the time ass-face showed up. What's his deal?

CASSANDRA

Merrick is a villain of means who delights in taking advantage of those in need. And now you are tied up in his scheme as well!

KARMA

I never said I was an employee of-

CASSANDRA

But you did! He asked if you were my colleague, and you said yes, so you are subject to the bargain I made with him.

KARMA

That's some fantastic bullshit.

CASSANDRA

Perhaps, but men like Merrick sell the spirit of a deal while secretly poisoning you with details and the letter of it.

KARMA

Sounds like my student loan officer. What is Glimpse, anyway?

Cassandra hands Karma the black card that bears her name. The other side of the card just says "Glimpse".

KARMA

Thank you for clearing that up.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Karma looks up to find herself in a nondescript suburban living room, looking like a 1950s-sitcom housewife. The Handsome Man from the bar enters from the kitchen.

HANDSOME MAN

Clearing what up, honey?

He walks up and kisses her cheek. Karma leans in for the kiss, catching herself and recoiling only after he has continued past her to look out the window.

KARMA

Wait, what's happening?

HANDSOME MAN

They're home!

He opens the door and two faceless CHILDREN [6 and 9, blurry, unfinished] enter and run toward her.

CHILDREN

Mommy!

Karma screams and jumps away from them, tripping and falling backwards.

INT. CASSANDRA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Karma lands on the couch wearing her normal clothes. Cassandra sits beside her, holding the card.

CASSANDRA

Glimpse is just that, a view of what your life *could* be. They are usually much longer and more detailed than that, but you have to agree to it, even unknowingly, to get the full experience.

KARMA

Why would you do this to... to *anyone*?

CASSANDRA

To change how you're living your life. There are different services that target different demographics. Glimpse is about showing you the life you could have if you let down your defenses and accept love when it comes along.

KARMA

Let me guess, your target demographic is single women in their early twenties.

CASSANDRA

Exactly. It used to be late teens, but one must change with the times.

KARMA

Uh-huh. And business has dropped off. Lots of unsatisfied *customers*.

CASSANDRA

There's been a steady decline over the last twenty years or so. I've had to let my staff go, and lately I haven't even been able to pay my own bills.

They sit in silence for several seconds before Karma sighs.

KARMA

Hey, buy me breakfast and I'll help you.

INT. FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT - LATE NIGHT

Karma and Cassandra sit opposite each other in a booth. From Karma's expression, they obviously *just* arrived, even though they already have food in front of them.

CASSANDRA

How can you help?

KARMA

Look, I was obviously supposed to be a client, so can I just sign something saying, "I'm satisfied, pay the woman?"

CASSANDRA

Oh, it doesn't- the system is set up to prevent that kind of dishonesty.

KARMA

Fine, you want honest? Your business is tanking because Millennials grew up being told what we were supposed to want, but it was all lies, nothing but fairy spackle. Wait, you're not a fairy, are you?

CASSANDRA

We don't use that term anymore, but please continue.

KARMA

We're sick of being told what to think, and tired of being blamed for failing the system by not buying diamonds or getting married. So you come along and show me a glimpse of what you think my ideal should be? I'm demisexual, and piss on you for passing judgment on my choices without even knowing that much about me!

Cassandra is in tears. Karma sighs again and eats her hamburger in silence as Cassandra sobs for several moments.

CASSANDRA

I'm sorry. I didn't realize... And now you're stuck working for Merrick, too.

KARMA

That's not happening. I'm your colleague now, and we're doing things differently.

CASSANDRA

But we only have three days.

KARMA

Oh, we're not starting from scratch. There's still one choice that every cisgender woman I know wishes she could get a glimpse of before making.

FADE TO BLACK as Karma begins explaining.

INT. CASSANDRA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cassandra is sitting on the couch, drinking and laughing as she watches something on a laptop that sits on the coffee table. Merrick materializes, holding a glowing scroll.

MERRICK

Good evening, milady. I'm here to collect on your debt.

CASSANDRA

Certainly, Merrick. I cannot thank you enough for the loan, to say nothing of the inspiration you gave me and my colleague.

Cassandra snaps her fingers, and the scroll stops glowing. Merrick looks confused, then angry. He reads the scroll.

MERRICK

This...the debt is *paid!* But how? There is no way your silly, outdated little-

Cassandra flicks her wrist and Merrick is thrown back into the shadows and disappears. Karma enters from the kitchen with a drink in one hand and her phone in the other.

CASSANDRA

Thank you so much. This is perfect!

KARMA

Well, one must change with the times.

Karma sits next to Cassandra, who refreshes the screen.

LAPTOP SCREEN - 'SOCIAL MEDEA' WEBPAGE VIDEO AD

Karma is sitting at a bar. She sees an attractive man looking at her and cartoon hearts form in her eyes. She takes a picture of him with her phone, then taps a button under the image that says 'GLIMPSE'. A series of images scroll across the screen, showing a psychologically abusive relationship that ends with Karma alone and crying cartoon tears. The picture she took of him reappears, accompanied by the bullet points: ·ALPHA MALE, ·MRA, ·NICE GUY™, and underneath the picture flashes a button with the words 'AVOID AND WARN OTHERS'. Karma looks back at the man and the cartoon hearts in her eyes break. The video ends with an image of Merrick wearing a trilby. Above him are the words "SOCIAL MEDEA", and under him it says "WHO NEEDS THE HEARTACHE JASON WILL BRING?"

Karma and Cassandra laugh as the screen fades to black.

END