

Both Hands In

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EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The din of the city surrounds the block, as if this rare calm stretch has inhaled its hustle, but refuses to exhale the bustle.

**LENNY** 60s, any race, AA prayer the only valuable thing in his wallet, limps down the avenue, distraught.

He glances back, grimacing, but doesn't change his pace or direction. He grips a bag slung over his chest.

**BARRETT** 50s, African American, his hips and multi-colored dreads as famous as his voice and temper, tails Lenny at a casually annoyed pace.

BARRETT

My patience ends at 13th.

Lenny slows at 13th Avenue to check both ways. He crosses. A car slows to avoid him. He hustles under the shade of an awning and turns, hoping he lost Barrett's pursuit.

BARRETT

You don't walk away from this, Lenny.

Lenny turns down an alley, out of sight. A busking musician pauses mid-song.

**BUSKER**

Apparently he does.

Barrett side-eyes the busker.

BUSKER

Say! Rock royalty and on my block.

Busker shakes his hips, scat-sings, and plays a few notes. Barrett sneers and quickens his pace.

BUSKER

Yo, big shot. Cut through the promenade. It's a ghost town 'til dusk.

Barrett changes course. Busker snaps a phone pic and follows a few paces with his horn held high.

BUSKER

How 'bout a duet?

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Lenny ducks between two racks of clothing on the sidewalk and pretends to shop. When enough time passes, Lenny takes a relieved breath.

BARRETT (O.S.)  
Look at these bargains.

Barrett saunters from behind. He yanks the clothes out of Lenny's hand, examines them, and shutters.

LENNY  
Geez, Barrett. What gives?

Barrett returns the clothes to the rack.

BARRETT  
You know what I'm after.

Barrett nods to a bag slung around Lenny's chest.

LENNY  
I haven't heard from you in 20 years--

BARRETT  
Twenty years? Damn. Gone in a flash.

LENNY  
A flash, yeah, you saw the flash of lights on the stage, the flash of cameras at your awards ceremonies. I scoop tuna straight out of a can to share with my cat.

Barrett wraps his arm around Lenny and leads them toward a food truck.

BARRETT  
Then sign the paper and start feeding him caviar.

Barrett guides Lenny onto a chair next to a table.

LENNY  
It's a she.

BARRETT  
You know I don't care.

Lenny absently scratches at his forearm and fidgets.

LENNY

What happened to you? We had a good thing.

Barrett drops a contract on the table.

BARRETT

I saw the bigger picture.

LENNY

What did that cost?

BARRETT

Traded my soul for Stillwater tickets as a kid, what else did I have to lose? Sign it.

Lenny removes a CD from his bag and holds it up.

LENNY

Vicky wanted this song--

BARRETT

Vicky quit on me. Quit on you.

Barrett holds out a pen. Lenny, stooped over in defeat, signs. **Food truck vender** approaches.

BARRETT

What're you having?

LENNY

A crappy time.

Barrett drops a twenty dollar bill on the truck windowsill, and slaps a small stack of twenties in front of Lenny.

BARRETT

Can I get a celebratory beer for my ex-bandmate?

Lenny pushes the money back.

LENNY

You of all people know I'm dry.

Barrett gathers the money before showering Lenny with it. He picks up the CD, labeled 'Vick New Song'.

BARRETT

Then go feed your cat.

Barrett cracks the CD in half. A rock drumbeat plays as Barrett backpedals, disappearing into the sunlight.

INT. BAND PRACTICE SPACE - DAY

The drum beat continues as the light subsides.

A computer screen refreshes, showing 'Next Loudcast featuring Lila Louds in: 1H 3M 46S'

The drum beat changes as a finger reaches out to click refresh on the keyboard. The countdown clock skips a few seconds.

**Vicki**, 17, mixed race, a chaotic blend of pink and punk, wears her ever present headphones and an anxious expression. She plays the drums.

VICKI

Breathe in.

She's at her band's practice space, a cluttered mess of equipment, cables, and food wrappers.

VICKI

Breathe out.

She clicks refresh, again playing with one hand. A video window pops up, revealing **LILA**, 30s, Rock Riot Grrl with multi-colored hair and blazing eyes.

LILA (O.S.)

Good morning, Loudaholics. This weekend we'll invade the Chicago Music Expo to celebrate my fifteenth year hosting the Loudcast. Join me and a special guest band--

Vicki presses refresh. The timer advances a few seconds.

LILA (O.S.)

Good morning, Loudaholics. This weekend we'll invade the Chicago Music Expo--

Refresh.

LILA (O.S.)

Good morning, Loudaholics. This weekend--

Vicki's beat falters. She tosses her drumsticks.

Vicki clicks on a link reading 'Drummers shortlisted to join new supergroup.' She scrolls through photos/bios of the drummers dying for good news, pausing on her own photo.

VICKI  
Breathe in.

Vicki refreshes the page. The clock advances a few seconds.

VICKI  
Breathe--Argh!

She kicks her drum throne backward.

Vicki grabs a snack and checks her band's to-do list on a whiteboard: update website, design flier for Barrowlands show, clean space, rework intro on 'Pasty', book June show.

Vicki breaks off a few crumbs, and tosses them onto a scratched coffee table. The room's resident mouse scurries from underneath a couch.

VICKI  
Want to help me clean, Angus?

The mouse chews her crumbs, but offers no reply.

INT. BAND PRACTICE SPACE - DAY

BEGIN MONTAGE

Vicki dials clubs to book a concert.

**BILL** (O.S.)  
DomainCleveland Rock Hall, the only  
rock hall in Cleveland with no fame.

VICKI  
Bill, hey, it's Vicki from Orphan  
Martians. Still need an opener--

Vicki turns on LED lights.

VICKI  
Jerry, need us to fill a slot? We can  
sell roughly--

Vicki turns on a guitar amp. She refreshes the timer: 47M.

VICKI

Let Orphan Martians play the Odeon on  
the 14th to prove--A girl? No. A  
female drummer, yes. What of it?

Vicki waters a potted flower. She 'pets' the flower.

VICKI

No, we're not all orphans. Only me.

She holds her nose, throwing out stinky garbage.

VICKI

Julie, we'll play a dumpster if--

Timer: 41M

VICKI

Do we drive ourselves to the gig?

She vacuums. 33M. She marks a green check next to clean room.

VICKI

Drink tickets AND exposure? Wow.

She writes a blog post. Marks a green 'x'.

VICKI

I'll name twenty amazing women in rock  
if--Oh, I'm copping an attitude?

Vicki designs flier for Barrowlands concert. Marks green 'x'.

BILL (O.S.)

Okay, kid, you wore me down. I need an  
opener in five weeks. Saturday night.

Drumsticks fly across the room.

BILL (O.S.)

Kid?

VICKI

I...might have a conflict--if I  
advance in a drummer competition.

BILL (O.S.)

Why do I even bother?

Frustrated, Vicki slashes a red 'x' next to the book a show  
task. She hits refresh on the counter. 19M left.

END MONTAGE

INT. BAND PRACTICE SPACE - DAY

Vicki plugs her headphones into the PA and hits 'play' on the computer. A metronome clicks. Vicki tucks a necklace, sporting a pendant she got from her mother, under her shirt.

VICKI

Breathe in, breathe out.

Vicki grabs her drumsticks. Distorted bass creeps through her headphones, matching the click. Vicki plays a slow, minimal groove focusing on toms. Keys swell.

A loud, abrasive, way over the top guitar slides in, swallowing the rest of the music.

VICKI

What the?!

Startled by the unexpected noise, Vicki opens her eyes, but keeps the beat. **Omar**, 20s, the band's guitarist, wears more tats than their gender neutral clothing, grins a few feet away as they let the guitar fade out.

OMAR

Staring at the clock won't change the outcome.

VICKI

Wow. Do you offer motivational speeches on Cameo?

Vicki clicks refresh on the computer, drumming with one hand.

VICKI

Did you ever stop to consider how me winning could help us open doors?

OMAR

In this band, one hand out is the same as no hands in.

Vicki replies, but Omar blasts her with another wave of distortion. Vicki rips her headphones off and throws them at Omar. They flinch, get caught in the chord, and end up stepping on the headphones in the process.

OMAR

You're a lunatic.

Vicki lunges forward, shoving Omar out of the way, to assess the damage to her headphones.

VICKI  
I need these to hear the contest  
results. Why are you even here?

Omar holds up their phone and shakes it. Vicki realizes she pocket dialed Omar thirty minutes ago.

OMAR  
My fault for believing you still  
cared.

With a frustrated growl, Vicki grabs the headphones, her book bag, and her skateboard.

VICKI  
And you're wrong, I only have one  
finger in.

She flips Omar off and storms out.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Vicki plugs in her headphones.

LILA (O.S.)  
Go-d ---ning, --udaholi--. Th-- week--  
we'll in--de the Ch-ca-go--

VICKI  
Someone sells headphones.

Vicki finds a few dollars in her wallet.

VICKI  
Like, really, really cheap headphones.

EXT. FLEA MARKET - DAY

Vicki rushes around a flea market, panic in her eyes. She hums and air-drums a song.

Preeya 50s, African American, her conservative suit a sore thumb at the punk rock flea market.

PREEYA  
Vicki?

Nina matches her stride, holding a pretend microphone up to her mouth and pressing her index finger of the other hand to her ear.

PREEYA  
Paging Space Captain Vicki. Earth to  
Vicki. This is your Aunt calling.

She waves her arms. Vicki blinks and focuses on Preeya.

PREEYA  
So, who you listening to, The Doors,  
The Cult, The Spin Doctors, The Mighty  
Morphin Bosstones, The...The?

Vicki shows her the broken earpiece, her lower lip curled outward.

PREEYA  
Sorry. That sucks. You were humming  
something cool.

VICKI  
I was?

PREEYA  
Loud enough to recognize your voice  
from the next aisle. New tune?

A few people gawk in her direction. Vicki flashes a grin.

VICKI  
(singing)  
'Blink of an Eye.'

PREEYA  
Mom's lullaby.

Vicki uses two fingers to trace a heart.

PREEYA  
Look, I'm glad I bumped into you. Your  
counselor told me you applied to a  
music conservatory. Nina and I  
supported you graduating early, but  
not to abandon real school to chase--

VICKI  
If you support me, then let me decide  
where to go.

Vicki picks through a box of wires and cables at a table covered in various electronics.

PREEYA

So, what, you're going to skip town  
and abandon another band?

Vicki drops a mangled mass of wires harshly, a clunky thud. Preeya offers the merchant an embarrassed expression. She mouths 'sorry' before chasing her niece.

PREEYA

Did you bounce?

Vicki shrugs.

PREEYA

Eh, you're too good for them anyway.

VICKI

I--I can't wait around for  
opportunities to come and expect to  
get famous.

PREEYA

Exactly! That's why Pete Murray State  
sounds like an ultra perfect fit,  
because I can open a lot of doors.  
Hey, you want to march with the band?

VICKI

What makes you think I want to wear a  
costume to prance at sportsball games?

PREEYA

You forget, I saw Omar at your last  
concert. You want to talk about  
costumes and prancing. Start there.

Vicki rolls her eyes.

PREEYA

Hey, Vicki, look, I know talking about  
these big decisions isn't fun, but I'm  
hip.

Preeya sniffs the air, stopping at a coffee stand. but Vicki keeps going.

PREEYA

I'm not a, a...square root or whatever  
you kids call us. I'm gen x for  
goodness sakes. I can party. I can get  
weird.

Vicki reaches the end of the aisle, smirks, but turns out of  
sight.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Vicki grabs her board from the rack.

PREEYA (O.S.)

Ow! Jeebus.

VICKI

What is it?

PREEYA

It's...it--this coffee wants me dead.

Preeya approaches and unlocks her car.

PREEYA

Wanna grab lunch before we start  
prepping for your party?

VICKI

Can't. Saule asked me to finish  
organizing for his work trip, and  
Orphan Martians have a big prac--

PREEYA

No. Nina's throwing this shindig for  
you, so free up a couple hours before  
you waste the Summer with the band.

VICKI

My band is a waste?

PREEYA

You're the one trying to win a contest  
right under their noses.

VICKI

You know how the business works.

PREEYA

I know bills don't get paid playing  
dead-end bars while hoping between  
dead-end bands.

Vicki drops her board to the pavement.

VICKI  
Did they teach you how to suck at PM  
State too?

She skates off, ignoring her Aunt's agitated calls.

INT. CAR - DAY

Barrett drives a luxury car. His phone, tied through his speaker system.

BARRETT  
And look, I understand you blame me.  
Maybe what you needed was guidance,  
reassurance. Instead, you felt  
abandoned. The pressure, the self-  
doubt, it wore on you. I can see that,  
and--

VOICEMAIL AUTOMATED MESSAGE  
To leave your message press one. To  
re-record press two.

Barrett drives on in silence a few beats before he presses two.

BARRETT  
(recomposed)  
Lenny signed. Syd's next. Time to pay  
the piper, Vicky.

EXT. STRIPMALL - DAY

Vicki rolls down the sidewalk. Four punk/goth/metal kids block the way.

VICKI  
Passing on your left.

The group doesn't move.

VICKI  
I'm not a patient girl.

They don't move.

VICKI  
Last chance. Can I pass?

**Tusk**, 17, the leader of **the wolfpac**, snarls.

TUSK

You can pass out of existence for all  
I care.

The others laugh. Vicki digs her heels in, pushing right at them and screaming. One flinches enough squirt passed.

VICKI

You should brew some coffee to fill  
those mean mugs you have.

Tusk flashes an annoyed grimace.

VICKI

Cute zits, kid.

She flips them off, still riding. Tusk feels along his cheek.

TUSK

Wolfpac, get her!

Vicki, startled, picks up the pace. She turns left, but a complaining Karen blocks her escape. Vicki changes course.

The Wolfpac reaches the Karen, jeering/yelling, one even bumps her, laughing. Karen falls, exasperated. Vicki turns to confront the wolfpac to prevent them from hurting the Karen.

VICKI

Leave her alo--

Tusk jumps out at her from around a pole.

TUSK

Got ya!

Tusk yanks Vicki off the board.

TUSK

Come chill with me and my zitty  
friends.

The rest of the gang catch up and grab hold of Vicki, who struggles. Everyone freezes when Tusk whips out a knife.

TUSK

Relax. No one gets hurt, *Dicki*.

He forces the knife under her necklace and raises up the pendant.

TUSK

I peeped this on you before, but  
couldn't believe my own eyes.

VICKI

I got that from my mother!

Tusk kisses the pendant before removing it and putting it  
around his own neck.

TUSK

Now, Dicki, you've got two choices--

**Saule**, 60, an elderly crust rocker, rounds the corner. He  
yells and waves his fists as he rushes at the Wolfpac.

SAULE

Get away! Get out of here. Scram!

None of the punks comply as Saule attempts scaring them off.

TUSK

I take it back. This guy I'm willing  
to hurt.

Tusk advances and the Wolfpac falls in, releasing Vicki.

SAULE

Run!

The Wolfpac spreads out.

TUSK

Brave...stupid...

SAULE

Does that make me an automatic member?

Tusk presses the knife under Saule's chin. Saule bares his  
teeth.

SAULE

You better run.

Vicki smashes her skateboard into Wolfpac Three, cracking his  
shoulder. Wolfpac Three howls. His headphones snag on Vicki's  
board and get yanked off. Tusk shoves Saule and the gang  
turns tail. Vicki grabs the headphones.

VICKI

Now to find an adaptor.

Vicki checks on Saule, groaning on the ground.

SAULE  
I told you to run.

VICKI  
Oh, I thought you meant they should  
run from me.

From a safe distance, Tusk stops and holds up the pendant.

TUSK  
I'd love to stick around, but I got--

Vicki growls, advancing with a shard of her broken board.  
Tusk stumbles backward, wide-eyed, before escaping.

VICKI  
What was all that, Saule?

SAULE  
When confronting a bear you're  
supposed to scream like the eye of  
every storm.

Saule rises with Vicki's help.

SAULE  
You're late.

INT. SAULE'S RECORD SHOP - DAY

Vicki flips through shelved records, a half-filled cardboard  
case next to her.

SAULE (O.S.)  
I'm pretty sure I have the right  
connector for those headphones here  
somewhere.

Vicki sticks a tag on a record and slides it into the case.  
She marks down the title and price on her notepad.

SAULE (O.S.)  
You don't have to pick a fight with  
everyone who looks at you sideways.

VICKI  
Me? They attacked.

Saule doesn't answer. Vicki replays the moment in her head.

VICKI

Okay. This time I might've started it,  
but come on. Doesn't anyone have a  
sense of humor anymore?

Vicki continues sorting records, listening for a response.

VICKI

I have a short fuse. I can admit that.

Saule doesn't reply. Vicki reaches for her missing pendant.

VICKI

Your silent judgement sounds  
deafening, but I don't care.

Saule doesn't answer. Vicki heads to the front.

VICKI

Fine, you want to know the absolute  
truth? I wanted those kids to come  
after me. I wanted to get a couple  
good licks in and who cares if--

Vicki peers over the counter. Saule kneels on the floor,  
tossing random stuff into a junk-filled box.

VICKI

You didn't...hear me? Hear that?

SAULE

Oh, I heard, but I was talking about  
you disregarding the way I want the  
records sorted.

VICKI

But if you cross-reference--

SAULE

Do it my way or don't do it. Isn't  
that how you lost your skateboard  
teaching job?

Saule holds the box packed with random items as he gets back  
on his feet with a grunt.

SAULE

I wish you could go with me this  
weekend to Chicago.

VICKI

I know, right? My aunts wants to parade me around these big-wig friends from their alma mater and pretend it's for my benefit. We could've seen a show, tried new food, gotten lost painting graffiti.

Saule gestures to the pile of full crates.

SAULE

Oh, I wanted your help lugging those around.

Vicki throws something at Saule.

VICKI

You suck! Do you know how many demos I could hand out to industry people in Chicago? That's how you start a career.

SAULE

Maybe record a demo first?

Saule hands her the box full of stuff.

SAULE

Happy Birthday.

Vicki grabs the box, confused.

VICKI

(singing)

It's... not... even my birth-day.

Vicki pulls out a shirt, lipstick, a notebook, a social studies book, a hair tie, candy wrappers.

VICKI

You gave me my stuff? Hey, wait...

She loses her train of thought as she pulls out a golden discman.

VICKI

This isn't even mine.

SAULE

Your mom must've left that here.

Vicki flinches, almost dropping the discman.

SAULE

Look. See. I told you I had a connector.

Saule points at a metal piece sticking out from the discman. Vicki presses the power button. Nothing happens.

VICKI

Please tell me you have batteries.

Saule scowls.

SAULE

I'll check in the back.

EXT. OUTSIDE SAULE'S RECORD STORE

Vicki, flustered, slinks out of the shop on shaky legs and uses the wall to hold herself up. She hugs the discman and stares off.

Vicki opens the discman and cries out in surprise when a paper falls out.

It's a concert setlist. 'Clev' and '8/10/0' are written in the top right corner. A tear obscures the last digit. A phone number, scribbled in ink, has an area code she doesn't recognize.

VICKI

At least you were making friends.

A cd-r in the discman has "Vick New Song" written in black sharpie. Vicki runs a finger along the handwriting. She grabs her phone and navigates to the message board on the Lila Louds website.

VICKI

(Typing a post)

*Looking to identify a band. Twenty years ago. Not sure where they hail from or genre, but they played Cleveland.*

Vicki attaches a photo of the setlist, covering the phone number. Her phone beeps.

OMAR

(Text)

*Hey, Jaylin's amp sounds like dog farts. He's taking it to the shop. No practice today.*

Vicki considers apologizing for her outburst, but chooses snark instead.

VICKI  
(Text)  
*Can't say I didn't warn him.*

INT. SAULE'S RECORD SHOP

Vicki reenters Saule's shop. Saule emerges from the back empty-handed.

SAULE  
No luck.

VICKI  
If there's no practice, Omar won't mind if I borrow a couple batteries from his effects pedals to hear my mom's mystery CD.

Vicki grabs Saule's bike.

SAULE  
Hey, I'm not made of money.

Vicki backs out the door.

VICKI  
My board saved you an ER visit.  
Imagine what this can do.

EXT. STRIPMALL - DAY

Vicki turns on the Lila Louds Podcast on her phone.

On her screen, two people sit in a studio talking via microphones. A banner across the bottom of the screen reads 'Guess the Band by the Song Titles'.

LILA (O.S.)  
'You're One' to talk, Mr. 'Teacher's Pet'.

Vicki pedals off.

INT. LILA LOUDS STUDIO - DAY

Lila and her musical guest, **Chip**, have a conversation inserting song titles from a mystery band in each sentence. Viewers try to identify the band.

LILA

'Yoo-Hoo'! Can we stop 'tippy tap'ping around the subject or do we need to restart back at 'The Beginning'?

CHIP

You said 'Captain' Lou Albano was a better wrestler than the 'Million Dollar Man'. How could--

LILA

'Parade' around your career stats to 'Sugar' coat your points, but the truth won't come 'Undone' with a bunch of 'Pig Latin'.

CHIP

That's 'The First' thing we agree on, 'Birthday Girl'.

LILA

'Baby', You might be 'Timeless', but this segment doesn't go on for 'Eternity'. It's time I show you 'How We Say Goodbye'.

CHIP

'Hooray'

LILA

'Ha', Well, 'I Think That's Everything'. Please leave your band-of-the-week guesses in the comments. And now the moment you've all been waiting for. We proudly identify the five finalists--

EXT. STREET - DAY

Vicki rides past vacant storefronts begging for a little tlc before stopping outside the practice spot. On her phone, Chip performs a vocal drumroll, raising the tension and anticipation. Chip mimics a crash cymbal at the crescendo.

LILA (O.S.)

Right after a word from today's sponsor.

Vicki groans, anxious yet exhausted. Live rock music billows from inside, but the song falls apart when the drums falter.

VICKI

Why do bassists pretend they can drum?

Vicki smirks, grabbing the door handle.

**DRUMMER** (O.S.)

Sorry. I tried to spice up the fill--

Vicki pauses when she hears the unfamiliar voice.

OMAR (O.S.)

Dude, no worries. Keep it in the pocket and learn as you go. Our last drummer refused to let the songs breathe.

Vicki recoils.

VICKI

Last?

Vicki raises her fist to pound on the door. A bass slides and riffs, proving the broken bass story untrue. She pauses.

VICKI

Broken bass my foot.

INT. BAND PRACTICE SPACE - DAY

Omar tunes his guitar. **Jaylin**, the bassist, and drummer wait for him to start the next song.

OMAR

Screw the songs, she doesn't even let US breathe without her say so. This song starts this way. That solo needs this feel.

Jaylin and the drummer giggle.

OMAR

Right? Tune to that, step to this. We have to use this artwork for the cover. The lyrics must emote--

Vicki, still outside, screams in frustration.

OMAR

Did a coyote die outside?

EXT. STREET - DAY

Vicki pumps the bike at top speeds, grunting and screaming.

VICKI'S HOUSE - DAY

Vicki opens her second story bedroom window and crawls in from the roof. She tip-toes silently, stopping to listen at her door. The familiar fussing of **Nina**, 40s, a hippy with an attitude, reverberate from the kitchen.

NINA (O.S.)

Preeya. Hon? Any chance you'll finish cleaning the bathroom before the party tomorrow night?

Vicki slinks along the hall and down the stairs to avoid an unwanted confrontation.

PREEYA (O.S.)

My concern over making this toilet sparkle trumps any fear I have of the biggest contract threat of my career looming over me.

NINA (O.S.)

Guests arrive in eighteen hours.

Vicki grins. She's heard this interplay before. She searches the battery basket in the utility room, but comes up empty.

PREEYA (O.S.)

I feel heard. I feel important.

NINA (O.S.)

Sorry, I can't hear you over these five chores I'm doing at once.

Vicki heads back upstairs.

PREEYA (O.S.)

You know Vicki has skin in the game too.

Vicki freezes. Nina's scrubbing stops.

NINA (O.S.)

But you protect her.

From inside the bathroom, Preeya sighs.

PREEYA (O.S.)  
If this group wrestles control of the  
songs, I have no play--

Vicki glares at the discman in her hands, furrowing her brow.  
Vicki grasps the railing. It creaks.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

NINA  
Sweetie?

Nina tilts her head, but hears nothing.

NINA  
Vicki, you home?

Nina glides to the bottom of the stairs, but finds no one.  
She heads back to finish the conversation.

NINA (O.S.)  
How much could she lose?

PREEYA (O.S.)  
Enough to ask if the secret warrants  
the sacrifice anymore.

NINA (O.S.)  
So, we cover her first year of PM  
State, and--

The bathroom door squeaks open (O.S.).

PREEYA (O.S.)  
She doesn't want to go there. She  
doesn't want to stay here.

NINA (O.S.)  
But we--but we--she...

Vicki, slinks out of the shadows atop the stairs, curious.

PREEYA (O.S.)  
Oh, Sug, she'll always be our girl,  
but it's time. Do you really see her  
living in the burbs forever, bowling,  
square dancing, meatloaf? She's my  
sister's kid.

NINA (O.S.)  
She's his kid.

Vicki flinches at Nina's suddenly vicious tone.

Created using Celtx

PREEYA (O.S.)  
Heeeyy. Easy.

NINA (O.S.)  
So, no issues defending the guy as  
long as Vicki still believes he's  
dead?

Vicki stifles a shocked gasp. The conversation continues, but  
Vicki backs away.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Vicki ruffles through Preeya's desk, looking for batteries.  
She pulls a manilla envelope from a brief case, noticing it's  
addressed to her and on her birth date.

VICKI  
Enough with the birthday surprises.

Something else catches her eye. She lifts a clipped together  
emancipation form with her name listed. Vicki furrows her  
brow then clenches her jaw. Vicki glances at a clock and  
grins.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vicki sneaks down the hall, rolling two AA batteries over  
each other in her hand. She puts the batteries in the  
discman, fingers trembling, and hits play. Ambient noise and  
someone fumbling with chords or equipment plays.

DAD (O.S.)  
Ready?

A cough. Shuffling noises. A few notes plucked on guitar.  
Stops. Guitar resonates again, but with urgency and purpose.  
Vicki listens. She hums along, but the song stops. More  
shuffling.

MOM (O.S.)  
Let's try 'Blink of an Eye'. I want to  
make sure she hears it from us.

Vicki sharply inhales the moment she hears her mom's voice.

DAD (O.S.)  
Remember after the second set of lines  
the pattern--heh, you don't need me to  
remind you. How about a good luck kiss  
instead?

A door slams downstairs. Vicki listens for approaching footsteps.

Vicki grabs the setlist. She dials the number written. On the third ring a groggy male voice answers.

DAD (O.S.)

Hello?

Vicki stutters, unable to speak. Dad hangs up. Vicki calls back, going directly to a generic VM. Vicki opens the Lila Louds website and navigates to her post.

She scrolls past several comments until seeing one from Lila herself.

LILA

*Vickitorious, you need to get busy recording a video for the next round of competition this weekend. Congrats! Hopefully someday you can tell me more details, face to face. I'm a sucker for musical mysteries.*

Vicki beams, having completely forgotten about the contest when faced with the news that her father lives.

VICKI

If only we could meet, Lila. If only--

She hits the home button again. The video ad for the Chicago event plays. Vicki glances at the time.

VICKI

One hand in equals both hands out.

She packs an outfit, a toothbrush, and the discman into her bag. She glances back at her room and then with a deep inhale, she opens her window.

INT. OFFICE MEETING ROOM - DAY

**Suit Four** gazes out a window, listening to the three other suits sitting at the mahogany table in the meeting room.

**SUIT THREE**

Round and round. We can repeat ourselves until we're blue in the face, but it gets us nowhere.

Suit Four turns away from the window. Papers, briefcases, water bottles litter the table.

**SUIT TWO**

Then budge on your percentage, break the stalemate.

**SUIT THREE**

You first.

Suit four paces, clearly annoyed.

**SUIT FOUR**

Gentleman. I brought us all in on this. How about--

**Payne** 60s, a hard-nosed, eagle-eyed, ruthless CEO, enters with Barrett in tow.

**PAYNE**

How about you all shut up.

The surprised suits come to attention.

**SUIT FOUR**

Sir, if I may.

**PAYNE**

You may not.

Suit Four retreats to his chair, cheeks reddening. The others snicker.

**PAYNE**

That goes for all of you.

He claims the head of the table. Barrett looms next to him.

**SUIT FOUR**

Why bring him in? He's exactly the type of person we aim to screw over with my operation.

Barrett sneers.

**PAYNE**

While you're in here bickering, he's doing the dirty work.

**SUIT THREE**

No, man, my hands are dirty.

Suit Three pats a small pile of papers.

SUIT THREE

Let's see Barrett make any headway in  
Seattle. I have hounded labels to  
secure--

Barrett sets his briefcase down with a thud, pausing for  
silence before unloading several large stacks of papers onto  
the table.

PAYNE

These contracts, signed, neat, ready,  
provide not only a leg to stand on in  
court, but our backbone.

SUIT FOUR

I looped you in on this. Don't make me  
regret--

Barrett grabs Suit Four's papers and throws them across the  
room.

BARRETT

Sit in here. Smug. Living high on the  
hog off a business model your  
grandparents created. You deserve a  
reward. You want a cookie?

SUIT FOUR

Why? We already own the jar.

The other suits chuckle.

SUIT THREE

We'll take what we want, thanks.

SUIT TWO

Shouldn't you be onstage in Budapest  
shaking your hips for quarters?

Payne stares, a coiled snake. The chuckling dies down.

PAYNE

My exclusivity contracts give me  
greater control, while listers have  
less, and the artists extend their  
servitude generations beyond their  
deaths. Decide now, gentlemen. Join us  
or get left behind.

Suit Five stays, but the others grumble out the exit. Payne  
stares down Barrett.

BARRETT  
I'll make them one final offer.

EXT. OUTSIDE SAULE'S RECORD STORE - NIGHT

Saule loads a box into the back of his cargo truck, grunting.

SAULE  
Time after time.

Vicki approaches, returning Saule's bike.

VICKI  
Awe, if I fall you'll catch me?

SAULE  
You're late, time after time.

Saule flips the keys to Vicki. She catches them and excitedly hops in. Saule pushes a cd into the stereo.

EXT. CURB - NIGHT

The van peels off the curb.

VICKI (O.S.)  
Roadtrip!

INT. VAN - NIGHT

A soft, folk song plays. Vicki, confused, glances down at the stereo and then over at Saule, eating chips.

VICKI  
Oh. K.

She reaches for chips. Saule snaps the bag away.

VICKI  
Six hours to Chicago.

Saule crunches chips.

VICKI  
Care to share some of those stories  
about my mom you tease to keep me  
coming into work?

Saule slurps his drink.

VICKI

I mean, you knew my mom better than I  
did, maybe greater than I ever could.

Car passes, honking. Vicki swerves.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Truck drives up highway ramp.

VICKI (O.S.)

Kids perceive their parents  
differently than friends, co-workers,  
or even lovers who met them at  
different stages of their lives.

Vicki chuckles to herself/snorts.

VICKI (O.S.)

You tell me my mom moshed, barked at  
the moon, and flew to Scotland once on  
a lark to see Mogwai. She dated a  
billionaire. She loved a homeless man.  
She snuck backstage to party with  
Elastica.

Vicki peers out at the highway lights whipping by as she  
gathers her thoughts.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

VICKI

You got way more of my mother than I  
did. I got whispers, shadows, a pale  
reflection. You got a wave file and I  
get a lo-res mp3.

Vicki holds up the golden discman, reflecting on what she  
wants to know about her mother.

VICKI

Did her and my father ever--

Saule, slumped to his side, snores.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

**Syd** 60's, scrawny, malnourished, long greying hair pulled in  
a ponytail, navigates around vegetables, bacon, onion rings,  
and an umbrella erupting from his drink's glass to find his  
straw.

SYD

Me signing doesn't change anything.  
You need Vicky and you won't nevah get  
that signature.

He guzzles an obscenely long sip, closing his eyes in  
ecstasy. He leans back, crunching on a stalk of yellowing  
celery.

SYD

Yeah, you hurt me. You used me. You  
betrayed me, fine. Maybe I even  
deserve it, after what I did out there  
on the road, but Vicky was a kid.

Barrett slides the drink out of the way and collects the  
signed contract and a CD, labeled 'Vick New Song'.

SYD

Looked up to you, like a God.

Syd grabs Barrett's hand. Barrett tries to pull away, but Syd  
squeezes.

SYD

And you broke Vicky's heart.

BARRETT

No, Syd, this will break Vicky's  
heart.

Barrett wrestles free and snaps the CD.

BARRET

And it's got your signature.

INT. EXPO HALL - DAY

Vicki follows Saule, both carry a case of records. Two guys  
set up equipment on a stage. Vicki watches the roadies as  
they work. One of them, **O'Keefe** 40s, an ogre without green  
skin, nods.

VICKI

Gotta feel weird working super close  
to the action without being good  
enough to perform.

SAULE

Not good enough? Pfft. Most roadies  
run circles around the actual guys in  
(MORE)

SAULE (CONT'D)  
the band, but playing a show requires  
more than talent.

As if to help his point, **Ray**, 40s, Caucasian, scruffy,  
sporting a chaotically handsome vibe, fingerpicks a  
beautiful, melodic yet melancholic riff.

SAULE  
See?

Saule and Vicki place their cases on a table and turn back.  
As they head past the stage, Ray does a double take at Vicki.  
He flubs his riff. Vicki raises her eyebrows at Saule.

SAULE  
I said most. Ray is...unique.

Ray strums a chord progression. Vicki hums a bass line,  
nodding. She air drums, hearing them thundering in her head.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - DAY

Vicki daydreams drumming until Saule interrupts by whistling.

SAULE  
Yo, Lars, when you finish your solo  
can you help?

He motions to the various boxes stacked in the truck.

LILA (O.S.)  
No, she had more of a Will Calhoun  
flow going.

Lila bounces toward them with an industrial-sized coffee.

SAULE  
Oh, simply because she looks African  
American you had to name drop an  
African American drummer, eh?

LILA  
No, the way she uses the toms to fill  
space without losing drive and energy  
is why I mentioned him, you old hermit  
crab.

Lila winks at Vicki, before pulling Saule in for a hug.

LILA  
How's thing's--Wait, hold the phone.

Lila pulls out of the hug and gives Vicki a once-over.

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SAULE

Vicki tagged along to look for her father.

**PASSERBY ONE**

You're at a rock convention. Everyone here wants validation from their dads, but we settle for face-melting solos and lyrics about the devil instead.

**PASSERBY TWO**

I prefer lyrics that make me cry or reflect.

PASSERBY ONE

Especially when the devil makes them cry.

Lila's eyes spark with recognition.

LILA

Vickitorious?

Saule tilts his head, confused.

VICKI

In the fle--

Vicki loses her breath as Lila pulls her into a hug.

LILA

Awe, sweet! I get to hang out with someone this weekend who actually appreciates music like I do!

Lila wraps an arm around Vicki.

LILA

You love Baroness, right? Come on. I want to introduce you to Gina--

SAULE

Hey, she has work to do.

LILA

Sorry. Your father mission.

SAULE

No, I'm talking about helping me.

LILA

Do you have that setlist on you?

Saule grumbles about doing everything himself, grabbing another case. Lila holds out her elbow.

LILA  
Walk this way.

VICKI  
Talk this way?

SAULE  
Just give me a kiss, and then steal my help, like this.

Lila pecks Saule on the cheek and leads Vicki away.

INT. EXPO HALL - DAY

Lila and Vicki head toward the main expo area.

LILA  
I recognize a lot of these song titles, but they don't fit together.

Vicki raises her eyebrow.

LILA  
First song, everyone knows that as a hit for The Firmary, right?

VICKI  
My aunts even have that record.

LILA  
Then we have a song known in folk circles by, uh, what's her name?

**JEFFREY** (O.S.)  
Lila?

Lila searches the people rushing around to identify the voice. Jackie, a rockstar in leather, approaches.

LILA  
Jeffrey!

JEFFREY  
Small world. Got a new project going. Any chance you'd spin our demo on your show?

LILA

Depends if you help us or not. Can you identify this band?

Lila trades the setlist for Jeffrey's demo.

JEFFREY

Alexandria... at Dawn, maybe? Hmm, I saw a band play that in Alexandria at sunset once.

VICKI

Why did you call it Alexandria at Dawn?

JEFFREY

Old habit. I often use abbreviations or code words for songs on our setlists.

VICKI

Why?

JEFFREY

Inside jokes, title changes, maybe it was a temporary working title before the song had lyrics.

LILA

Boredom.

JEFFREY

Boredom on the road cannot be overstated.

LILA

There's a video where Faith No More covered 'Sweet Dreams(The Nestle Song)' and Chuck started ad-libbing Stairway to Heaven over it.

JEFFREY

The road makes you loopy.

Vicki glances at the setlist with this new info. She reads a song called 'Show'.

VICKI

Three Dog Night had a hit with "The Show Must Go On", but none of these other songs match. Did this get way more complicated?

JEFFREY

No, you took a huge step.

LILA

How so? We can attribute half a dozen of these songs to different bands.

VICKI

Oh, no! Cover band maybe?

JEFFREY

Forget about the songs on here for a sec. Who had a hit with 'Nothing Compares To You'?

VICKI

Sinead.

JEFFREY

And 'True Colors'?

VICKI

Cindy Lauper.

JEFFREY

(singing)  
Just another--

LILA

(singing)  
'Manic Monday'.

VICKI

The Bangles. Aside from them all being females from the same era--

Lila snaps her fingers.

LILA

Prince! He wrote all three of those.

JEFFREY

And Three Dog Night didn't write 'The Show Must Go On', Leo Sayer did. Maybe you need to think about who wrote these songs, not which bands made them famous.

They all glance at the setlist.

JEFFREY

Now, 'Price to Pay' could be Blues  
Traveler, or Barrett, Bruce  
Springsteen, uh, Randy Travis--

LILA

Not the Boss.

She leads them to a record booth. She flips through a crate to find *The River* by Springsteen, pointing at the title, 'The Price You Pay' on the back.

JEFFREY

My bad.

Fans approach Jeffrey for autographs and photos.

LILA

Barrett had a few songs that match  
these titles, but not all.

Lila holds up Jeffrey's demo as she backs away.

LILA

You've earned a spin.

Jeffrey poses for a photo with a fan.

JEFFREY

And maybe we play live in studio?

Jeffrey tosses guitar picks. Lila leads Vicki away.

LILA

Those roadies on stage might know who  
wrote these songs. What's your  
tolerance for unpleasant smells?

INT. PREEYA'S OFFICE - DAY

Nina rubs Preeya's back as she digs through her briefcase.

NINA

Don't jump to any conclusions.

Preeya pats the emancipation paperwork on her desk.

NINA

But, but, Honey, I created those with  
good intentions, and you--

PREEYA  
Nothing. Me nothing.

NINA  
Honey--

Preeya shakes her head, waving Nina off.

PREEYA  
My sister left us this responsibility  
and all I did was count down the time  
before we could move on with our  
lives. I never committed to her.

Preeya grasps Nina's hand on her shoulder, squeezing.

NINA  
Don't blow this out of proportion and  
push her away.

Preeya parts the emancipation papers, revealing they're torn  
in half, and raises her eyebrows.

INT. EXPO HALL - DAY

Ray plays the guitar. O'Keefe carries equipment.

LILA (O.S.)  
O'Keefe!

O'Keefe sets down an amp, grinning.

LILA  
(whispering to Vicki)  
Pick a band.

Vicki raises her eyebrow.

LILA  
Any band, any genre, any era, quick!

VICKI  
Uh...Black Sabbath?

LILA  
No, no. O'Keefe didn't earn the  
nickname Encyclopedia Rocktanica  
without cause.

VICKI  
Uh, Helmet?

LILA  
O'Keefe, Helmet. Classic lineup.

O'KEEFE  
Stanier, Bogdan, Echeverria, and Page  
Hamilton.

He accepts the setlist from Lila.

VICKI  
We're trying to find who might've  
written these songs. Y'see, my aunts  
told me my father died, but I  
discovered--

O'KEEFE  
Whoa, the Phantasy Nite Club. That  
takes me back.

Vicki glances at the list and back up to O'Keefe.

VICKI  
How do you--

O'KEEFE  
A rainy, miserable day, but a high-  
energy crowd roared all night, even  
for the openers. The bathrooms smelled  
worse than CBGBs. Wait a sec!

VICKI  
What?

O'KEEFE  
I left my pillow behind at the house I  
crashed at that night. Haven't had a  
decent nights sleep since.

RAY (O.S.)  
Hey!

O'KEEFE  
Hold your horses, Boss. We're making  
pillow talk.

RAY (O.S.)  
Tick tock on our bonus.

O'Keefe rushes back onto the stage.

LILA  
Girl, I'm sniffing a story here. You  
mind if I grab my recording gear?

Vicki gives her a thumbs up before rushing after O'Keefe.

INT. STAGE AREA - DAY

Ray squats to plug in a cable into a cabinet full of  
compressors, effects racks, and other various gear.

RAY  
This one goes here, that one goes  
there, okay? You plug this into that  
input and you'll deafen the entire  
crowd with feedback.

O'KEEFE  
At least they won't have to hear your  
singing.

Ray flashes an intense glare, pretending to have his feelings  
hurt, but then smiles. Vicki rushes onstage. Ray blocks her  
advance.

VICKI  
Hey, O'Keefe, can we talk?

Ray grasps her shoulders, taking a long, confused look at  
Vicki.

RAY  
Kiddo. Louie O'Keefe needs to earn us  
a much needed bonus.

Vicki peers down at the disassembled drum kit at their feet.

VICKI  
Pearl seven piece. Someone beat the  
rack toms silly. Drummer a leftie?

RAY  
How did you--eh, whatever. Ramble on.

Vicki picks up a cymbal stand.

VICKI  
Let me help as I ask O'Keefe a few  
questions.

O'KEEFE

Actually, you'll want to bend his strings. Boss worked for the band in question.

Vicki drops the cymbal stand and reaches for Ray.

VICKI

You were this band's guitar tech?

Ray's expression darkens.

RAY

Hey! Treat that kit with respect. Do I need to spell that out for you?

Vicki bites her lower lip, cheeks reddening. Ray's expression softens from anger to discomfort.

RAY

Look, sorry I bit your head off.

He nods to the setlist.

RAY

Lucky for those guys, I handled the guitars.

As if to un-prove his point, the guitar in Ray's hand slips. He recovers it nanoseconds before knocking over the whole guitar rack.

VICKI

Please, tell me their name.

RAY

Kid, Cleveland doesn't hold the best memories for me and it's all ancient history anyway.

VICKI

Did you lose a pillow too?

Ray shoots her a questioning glance.

RAY

No bonus, no answers.

Vicki screws a cymbal in place. Ray heads away. Vicki growls, frustrated, but sets up the kit.

INT. EXPO HALL - DAY

Saule places signs with pricing and payment info on his table. He glares around looking for Vicki.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Ray paces, phone to ear.

RAY

No way. No way. You're not listening.

He rolls his eyes.

RAY

And, what, I planned for this?

He listens, tries to respond, but the person on the other line keeps talking. Ray hears something that stops him cold.

RAY

What do you mean there's more? I can't handle more, right now. I need--I needed time--and now you're forcing me to march straight into the Liger's den?

O'Keefe pokes his head in the bathroom. Ray waves him off.

RAY

Secrets never stay buried, even as deep as you dug. I'll get you your info, but then I want--

Ray listens, deflating.

RAY

I know, I know, I know. I didn't do anyone any favors. I screwed up. I failed. Thanks for the reminder.

INT. STAGE AREA - DAY

Vicki hums to herself, air drumming with her eyes closed and head bobbing. Ray golf claps. Vicki startles.

RAY

You know there's a real kit ready to go right here to entertain the crowd.

Vicki considers for a moment before grabbing the drumsticks. Ray intercepts her.

RAY

Whoa, whoa, whoa. You can't claim the throne without a plan. This kit has graced stages since the 40s.

VICKI

I'm a beautiful woman about to tear up the room with a fast drum beat. I don't need a plan. They'll come flocking, head's banging.

RAY

If you can impress these half-asleep, jaded zombies, I'll answer your questions.

VICKI

Watch and learn.

Ray holds up his hands, backing away.

Vicki plays, simple, slow. Then stops. Starts again. Stops. A few people saunter over, curious. She drums a little faster, a little heavier, a little more frantic--sloppier.

RAY:

Try loosening up. If you--

VICKI.

Don't fret, guitar boy.

The few people who came to see her play back away/lose interest. She notices and compensates by playing harder, faster, but makes mistakes. The miscues anger her. She loses concentration.

RAY.

You can't play at the--

VICKI.

I'll play whatever I want, how I want.

With one final scream in frustration, Vicki smashes her the snare and cymbal. She flips away the sticks defiantly. Ray favors her with a cold, I-told-you glance.

RAY

That enough to check levels?

O'Keefe offers a thumbs up.

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RAY  
Then we gotta roll.

Ray grabs his book bag and hops off the stage.

O'KEEFE  
Wait, what? We signed a three day  
contract.

RAY  
I don't have three days anymore.

Vicki follows, nipping at their heels.

VICKI  
You need to tell me what you know  
first.

RAY  
I know you have a lot of heart, but  
even more to learn.

VICKI  
Wait a sec. I didn't come all this way  
not to find--

RAY  
I'm not here to entertain little girls  
aching for adventure. I buried my  
heart in Cleveland when I left. Go  
home.

INT. EXPO HALL ENTRANCE - DAY

Barrett strolls in and people take notice.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Ray continues toward the exit.

LILA (O.S.)  
Why race off now?

Ray pauses, clenching his jaw and grinning in disbelief.

RAY  
Lila, it's amazing how every time I  
feel like things can't get worse, you  
slink out of the shadows holding a  
microphone.

Lila holds out her microphone.

LILA  
Glad to see you haven't lost your  
charm.

Lila tosses an apple to O'Keefe.

LILA  
Who knows, this could prove the  
perfect time to audition for your old  
boss. Maybe he'll rehire you?

RAY  
Say what?

LILA  
He's here and he's asking around for  
you.

Ray peers over Lila's shoulders.

RAY  
Like here, here? Like now, now?

LILA  
Here, here. Now, now.

O'KEEFE  
And how soon is now?

RAY  
We're actually on our way out.

Ray restarts his retreat to the van.

O'KEEFE  
Ray, we haven't gotten paid yet.

Vicki grunts and follows Ray.

INT. EXPO HALL - DAY

Barrett listens to a vendor manning his table. He scans the  
area.

BARRETT  
The stage over that way?

The vendor nods. Barrett offers a wave. He bee-lines for  
stage.

PASSERBY ONE  
Barrett? I didn't see you on the guest list.

BARRETT  
I actually came here for an autograph.

INT. EXPO HALL DOCK AREA - DAY

Vicki pursues Ray.

VICKI  
You're not leaving until I get a name.

RAY  
Kid, I'm telling you, whatever infatuation you have with that band will quickly turn into a nightmare.

Vicki blocks his path. When he tries to side step, she mirrors him.

RAY  
I'm not above watching an emo shoegazer unironically trip over her untied shoes.

Vicki glances down. Ray slips past her. Vicki grunts, embarrassed.

O'KEEFE (O.S.)  
We don't have a dime for gas.

Ray continues on.

VICKI (O.S.)  
I want answers.

RAY  
You're chasing a fantasy.

VICKI  
I'm chasing my father.

Ray stops in his tracks, sighs.

VICKI  
The only clue I have to his identity comes from this setlist. If you were there--

Vicki and O'Keefe maneuver around Ray to face him. His eyes clenched closed, pained and defeated. Lila catches up, still holding the microphone. Ray squints at Vicki.

RAY

When you find dad, you gonna kill him?

Vicki shakes her head.

RAY

You crave revenge though, right? Maybe you'll stab him? Like--a fleshy part, to make up for years of unresolved anger.

Vicki shakes her head.

RAY

You need him to pay bills, yeah? Guilt trip ol' dad to cover some gambling debts?

Vicki shakes her head.

RAY

Bad investments in weird inventions?

Vicki shakes her head.

RAY

Need money to cover up crappy tattoos? Penicillin to cure cat scratch fever?

VICKI

Gross, no. None of those things.

RAY

Then what do you need a dad for?

VICKI

I don't need a dad. I want to get famous, tour the world, record music. He can obviously help.

Ray lifts a doubtful eyebrow, but sighs, glancing around.

RAY

2000\$. I'll take you to the guy who sang those songs. Deal?

Vicki's eyebrows skyrocket.

VICKI  
You scumbag. I'm a broke musician. How  
do you expect--

Vicki pauses, gathering her thoughts.

VICKI  
I pay for gas and meals until you get  
me to him. Then he pays you the 2000\$.

Ray tries to rebuff, but she doesn't allow it.

VICKI  
You know my dad. You know he's rich  
and famous. He'll be ecstatic to find  
out I'm alive.

Ray considers and then nods. Vicki follows O'Keefe toward the  
loading dock. Ray glances at Lila, still holding her mic.

LILA  
Go on. Take the money and run.

Ray spots Barrett over Lila's shoulders. Ray grabs Lila's  
hand and pulls her along. Barrett approaches.

BARRETT  
The man of the hour.

RAY  
Louie, Louie, oh, no, no--we gotta go.

O'Keefe tosses the keys to Vicki and rushes toward Barrett.

O'KEEFE  
I'll buy you some time.

He blocks Barrett with a comical wrestler pose.

INT. VAN - DAY

Vicki jumps in the driver's seat. She cranks the keys and  
looses a joyous scream, but the key doesn't budge.

Vicki notices the others staring at her. She giggles  
uncomfortably.

RAY  
Jiggle it a bit.

INT. EXPO HALL - DAY

Barrett tries juking O'Keefe, with no luck. The van jolts to life with an awful squeal. Barrett shoves O'Keefe as the van peels off.

EXT. VAN ON ROAD - DAY

RAY (O.S.)  
Hang a left at the next light.

INT. VAN - DAY

Ray glances back through the rear window.

RAY  
Next stop Minneapolis.

VICKI  
Minneapolis?!

The van heads toward the highway on-ramps. The sign reads Minneapolis one way and Cleveland the other.

RAY  
It's now or never.

Vicki appears conflicted trying to decide which way to go.

VICKI  
Breathe in, breathe out. Here I come,  
dad.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Preeya tosses a bag into the back seat of her car, turning to grab another with haste.

NINA  
Should I call the cops?

Preeya shakes her head, loading her suitcase. Nina, in her pajamas, sips her coffee, unconvinced.

NINA  
Should I call her bandmates?

Preeya pops the trunk and loads a couple file boxes.

NINA  
Should I call *him*?

Preeya glances at the legal documents with Spirit Graves written in bold and sighs. She closes the trunk.

PREEYA

No, we need to--hon?

Preeya no longer sees her wife. She peers into the car. Nina, now in the driver's seat, sips coffee.

PREEYA

What about your party tonight?

NINA

You'll need to buy me fresh clothing along the way. M'K, thank you.

Nina peels off her face mask and adjusts the mirror.

INT. VAN - DAY

Vicki adjusts the rearview mirror. Lila sits in the co-pilot chair.

LILA

Uh, Ray, that proved a most interesting exit.

Ray, sketching on a frayed art pad, talks without looking up.

RAY

Some people spend their whole lives working on the perfect entrance, but I specialize in goodbyes.

LILA

When was the last time you and--

RAY

I'm not filler content for your show.

Lila huffs and readjusts in her seat.

LILA

Speaking of which, thanks to you, I have to explain to my producer why I disappeared on three days worth of promo commitments, including a secret gig tonight featuring **BAND**.

VICKI

Oh, no. That's your secret guest? I love them.

LILA

Was my secret guest.

RAY

You came for the scoop.

VICKI

No offense, but what scoop does a roadie ever have?

Lila laughs.

RAY

Kid, the people behind the scenes see and hear it all.

LILA

And the PR and press spread the word into the ether.

RAY

Without good music and musicians creating drama, you've got nothing to report. No lives or bands to ruin, no coat tails to ride, no--

LILA

We go back. I'd hope you'd give me the benefit of the doubt.

RAY

Oh, I doubt a lot.

LILA

Those accusations had a lot of smoke behind them, but I never smeared your name for headlines.

RAY

You also never called to clear the air.

LILA

You fell off the map after Cleveland. Made it pretty clear you wanted out.

RAY

No, Approachingstorm's PR team made it clear that they wanted everyone to bury me, but you knew me. We--

LILA

We what? We nothing, ever.

Lila grasps Vicki's hand to assure she has her attention.

LILA

Seriously, never, ever, okay?

Ray glares.

INT. EXPO HALL - DAY

Saule lifts a record case with a grunt. He glares around the crowd and shakes his head.

INT. VAN - DAY

Lila flips through a CD BOOKLET. The van silent. Lila finds a CD cracked into several pieces, stuffed into a sleeve. Vicki glances over and sees a photo of Barrett underneath/between the broken wedges of the CD.

LILA

Ray helped me get my first break, introducing me to Barrett and his band, and I'll owe him forever. After Barrett--after Cleveland...something changed.

RAY

Everything changed.

LILA

I didn't know that. Hell, turns out I didn't even know your real name, Ray. All these years I knew you as--

RAY

You told me you stood for truth, but sold it for the gossip.

Lila rips the pencil out of his hand.

LILA

I got where I got because of my hustle and talent.

Lila tosses the pencil in the backseat. Ray tries to stop her, losing his grip on his drawing paper.

Vicki gets a glimpse of a female face, but Ray pulls the drawing out of sight quickly. Ray and Vicki exchange a curious glance.

PREEYA (O.S.)  
Vicki? Vicki?

In the silence, Vicki hears muffled talking. She pulls her phone from her pocket to find she pocket dialed her aunt. She hangs up, panicked.

EXT. SAULE'S RECORD SHOP - DAY

Preeya lowers the phone and shakes her head to Nina, who pulls a new shirt on. Her make up applied and hair now brushed.

NINA  
Do we split up? I can go after her.

PREEYA  
No. If she won't talk to us, you and I need to deliver this.

Preeya pats the suitcase.

NINA  
And then after that, she's--

Nina gets choked up, falling into Preeya's arms. Preeya glances up at the store's sign.

PREEYA  
Feels like old times. Let's figure out where Saule went.

NINA  
You drive. I'll call.

INT. EXPO HALL - DAY

Saule hands a customer change. He glances around, not noticing his lit up phone buzzing.

INT. VAN - DAY

Vicki parks the van by a pump.

RAY  
What do you got?

Vicki grabs her wallet and removes 4\$.

RAY  
Four Dollars won't even cover a jumbo dog.

VICKI  
That's all I have.

Ray chuckles, but then realizes she's serious.

VICKI  
Hey, look, I didn't figure extortion into my budget for this trip.

Ray grimaces.

RAY  
Right, everyone, empty your pockets. Three adults in a van can fill up a tank.

Each person hands over dollars and gives them to Ray.

RAY  
7 dollars, 13 cents, and...

Ray tips over one of O'Keefe's boots and a small plastic triangle drops out of it into the pile. Everyone gags.

VICKI  
A guitar pick?

RAY  
No. A bass pick. Stage used by Duff McKagan at Slane Castle in '92. That's enough to cover us.

Lila shoots him a doubtful glance.

LILA  
7\$ Ain't gonna fill this tank.

RAY  
Listen, I have a theory that you can pull into any gas station, any time, anywhere in rural USA and find a die hard Guns N' Roses fan. Be right back.

Ray exits.

Created using Celtx

RAY (O.S.)  
Junior, hey. You like Guns N Roses?

Muffled 'who doesn't!?' heard from outside.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Lila and Vicki exit to stretch their legs.

LILA  
Guy lives and breathes music 24/7, but  
that's not enough.

VICKI  
I love that. I wish I could get a band  
to hear my drums and see past the fact  
I'm just a girl.

LILA  
Wait, a talented drummer like you  
can't find a group of guys?

Lila grabs the gas station door and opens it for Vicki.

VICKI  
See? Even you call it a group of guys.  
I'm way more than a token female rock  
musician--

Ray rushes up behind them, laughing and celebrating. He holds  
up a wad of cash.

RAY  
Hot Dogs are back on the menu!

INT. CAR - DAY

PREEYA  
Barrett, I hear you're making moves.

BARRETT (O.S.)  
One signature left, but something  
tells me you already know.

Preeya exchanges a nervous grin with her wife.

BARRETT (O.S.)  
For twenty years you've held this  
irrational protection over an old  
collection of songs that everyone else  
has forgotten.

PREEYA

That band still rakes in a few pennies each quarter. Helps keep Lenny afloat.

BARRETT (O.S.)

Please. I make you more money taking a breath each morning than the Spirit Graves' entire catalog.

PREEYA

I made a promise to--

BARRETT (O.S.)

A promise? You made a promise in a business built on backstabbing. You made a promise to a dead band, a dead thing.

Preeya motions for Nina to take the next exit off the highway.

PREEYA

(heated for the first time)

I made the promise. That's the difference. You've built an empire on a swamp of quicksand. I can't help it if your foundation's cracking.

BARRETT (O.S.)

Don't you dare spit my lyrics at me.

PREEYA

My, my, my.

The sound of an airplane revving up can be heard through the phone as Barrett groans.

BARRETT (O.S.)

We're not going to do this again. I sang the songs. I made the songs. Why can't you move on?

PREEYA

Because the song was her moment. And you stole it.

BARRETT (O.S.)

Who?

INT. VAN - DAY

Lila and Vicki play cards in the back seat. Ray drives.

LILA  
Girl, we didn't even get to talk.  
Congrats on making it to the final  
five drummers.

Vicki blushes, but her excitement turns to disappointment.

VICKI  
I guess it won't matter now. Out here,  
I've got no way to film an audition.  
And I pissed off my band by  
auditioning.

Lila seems bummed with the admission.

LILA  
I can't rewrite the rules or our  
sponsors would get skewered.

RAY  
And we left our kit back in Chicago.  
Too bad we weren't taping you play.

VICKI  
Thank god no one did. You hated it.

Ray shakes his head.

RAY  
You can play, no doubt. I heard it. I  
hated that you overplayed.

VICKI  
I did what now?

RAY  
Find that pocket and own it, but trust  
your bandmates and give them space to  
work.

LILA  
Twin Cities, ten miles.

INT. EXPO - DAY

Saule organizes records at his booth.

SAULE  
Who needs help? Me? You kidding? I got  
this.

O'Keefe approaches.

O'KEEFE  
Hey, Saule, long time. You got any gas  
in that truck?

Saule deflates and speaks without turning.

SAULE  
Does she know?

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Ray, Lila, and Vicki head to the elevators of an office building.

VICKI  
So, what's the story?

RAY  
ApproachingStorm has an office up top.

VICKI  
Wait, the record label,  
ApproachingStorm?

Ray nods. They get onto the elevator.

VICKI  
I wonder if I can audition for--

Vicki calls out in surprise, jabbing a finger at a photo on the back of the elevator door.

VICKI  
That's my necklace. My mom left it to  
me, and said it was all she had  
from... dad. Dad?

Lila squints at the necklace as she works out this news.

LILA  
Oh, how could I have missed that. The  
Spirit Graves!

VICKI  
The Who?

LILA  
No, The Spirit Graves. They had the  
briefest cup of coffee in the  
mainstream. But their singer, Barrett,  
jumped ship to go mainstream, taking  
(MORE)

LILA (CONT'D)  
all the buzz with him. That's why some  
of the songs didn't ring a bell.

Vicki absently reaches for the necklace she no longer  
possesses.

LILA  
Barrett made a big stink about losing  
that. Blamed everyone on the crew.

VICKI  
No, he gave it to my mother. Look, it  
has the same scratch right here and  
everything.

Ray interjects but Lila erupts.

LILA  
Barrett as a father? That's Ludacris!

Ray glances around, but doesn't see the rapper.

RAY  
Vicki, before you meet--

Vicki gazes at the photo.

VICKI  
I thought maybe my dad could help  
boost my career, but I never thought--  
gosh, I can even see the resemblance.

Ray glances from Vicki to the photo and back, doubt on his  
face. Vicki rubs her thumb over the photo.

VICKI  
My dad the singer, my dad the touring  
musician, my dad the star, it makes  
total sense now.

Ray slinks back to the elevator wall.

VICKI  
I...I'm going to meet my dad. I wonder  
if he needs a drummer?

Vicki turns, raising an eyebrow, a silent request to confirm  
the news.

RAY

You asked me to bring you to the  
singer of those songs on your list.  
Barrett's the guy, but before you go  
in, we need to talk.

The elevator pings.

VICKI

Oh, right. Dad needs to pony up.

The elevator door opens.

RAY

Hey, listen--

VICKI

Wait here. I'll square us up.

She enters the ApproachingStorm office without hesitation and runs toward the front desk as the secretary thrusts up her hands alarmed.

INT. GYM - DAY

Payne rubs a towel over his sweaty face, slowing his workout. He reads a text and quickly makes a call.

PAYNE

What do you mean she's rushing around  
the office?

Payne navigates around equipment at a brisk pace.

PAYNE

Where's she--who opened--

Animated voice of receptionist interrupts. Payne freezes.

PAYNE

Where's Barrett?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Vicki roams the halls. She enters a door bearing a Barrett nameplate. Someone rustles behind the desk, but the computer and a file cabinet blocks Vicki's view.

VICKI

You coward.

She inhales sharply, shocked by her guttural reaction. The rustling/typing freezes. Two hands raise in a surrender.

VICKI

I--sorry. Let me restart.

One of the raised hands gives her a thumbs up.

VICKI

I've imagined what I would say,  
practiced it, like I would for a  
concert. Stumbled over word choices,  
I, tried to predict my emotions, but  
here I am, angry, confused. I want to  
scream until my throat explodes.

She reaches for her pendant, remembers it's gone

VICKI

You hurt me. You abandoned me and I  
can't ever forgive you. Time to face  
the music you--

Fast footfalls echo down the hall.

LILA (O.S.)

Time's up.

Vicki tilts her head, confused, as Lila enters the office.  
Vicki turns, even more confused, as Ray, maneuvers from  
behind the desk.

Ray holds a scribbled note in his hand.

LILA

Oh good, you found each other. C'mon.

Vicki and Ray follow Lila down the hall. Ray notices Vicki  
rolled up her sleeves and she's holding the jagged/broken  
edge of something she broke in the office.

RAY

I thought you said you wouldn't kill  
your dad when you met him?

They take a right and keep jogging.

VICKI

I didn't think I would, but--

RAY

But?!

VICKI

I dunno, when I thought you were him,  
or he was here or--I saw red.

Lila, a few paces ahead, veers right of the elevator, as it dings, to take the stairs. Ray and Vicki race through the stairwell door as the elevator opens.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY - DAY

Barrett storms out of the elevator.

INT. OFFICE STAIRWELL - DAY

Vicki, Ray, and Lila bolt down the stairs.

VICKI

What--how--why did you go into his  
office?

RAY

We needed to know when and where  
Barrett had set up a meeting.

VICKI

We needed?

RAY

We heard Barrett intended to use an  
unpublished Spirit Graves song for  
something new, but I had no idea how  
big this actually is.

VICKI

So, you used me for gas money knowing  
he wasn't here?

Lila opens the door to the outside, flooding them with light.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Barrett's desktop monitor shines, an unexpected file opened,  
proving someone messed with his stuff. He slams his fist.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Ray, Vicki, and Lila rush toward the van.

RAY

Barrett organized this super secret  
meeting tomorrow in Nashville that I  
need to disrupt.

He holds up the paper with the note he wrote in Barrett's office.

RAY  
You still want to meet him?

LILA  
We both have questions for Barrett.

RAY  
Then you've got your story.

Ray opens the van door and jumps in the co-pilot seat.

RAY  
Punch it!

Lila cranks the engine. Loud music blares from the speakers. Ray and Lila scream out, but Vicki still has her head in the clouds, trying to make sense of all the new information.

VICKI  
Oh, come on.

Barrett exits the building as the van squeals out of the parking lot.

BEGIN MONTAGE INT/EXT DAY INTO NIGHT

**Ext./Int. Van drives on highway - day**

Lila interviews Ray, though he appears uncomfortable. Vicki listens to a Spirit Graves CD in the back seat, nodding off.

LILA  
You plan to disrupt one of the biggest publishing deals in decades. Why you?

RAY  
To right a wrong, I suppose.

LILA  
Maybe to cash in yourself?

RAY  
Heh, what do I need money for?

LILA  
Gas. Food. A fumigator for this van. No one would complain if we let you visit a dentist here in, uh, Dubuque.

**Int. KITCHEN - DAY**

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Barrett lords over Suit Two, who unhappily signs a contract.

SUIT TWO  
Got it all figured out, eh, Barrett?

BARRETT  
I'm playing with house money.

SUIT TWO  
Being a star wasn't enough for you?

BARRETT  
You were born with more money and power than I've ever dreamed of, but I'll take what I can and enjoy making you hurt. Should we get your hidden beau out of the bathroom?

**Ext. Getting darker as the van drives past a city.**

RAY (O.S.)  
Every time I pass The Arch I remember that one night in St. Louis, traveling and drinking and soaking in the city with a couple great friends. We didn't know it was the last hurrah, we didn't know anything...we didn't need to and that was sort of the beauty...enjoying the moment...

LILA (O.S.)  
I'd like to enjoy the silence.

**Ext. front door - night**

Barrett knocks at the door of a mansion. Suit Three answers, deflated.

BARRETT  
All you had to do was say, 'yes.'

**Int. car - night**

Nina drives, Preeya sleeps. Nina has a podcast playing.

**Int. van - night**

Vicki lays in the backseat, watching a youtube video of Barrett performing. She has the setlist out, debating whether to call it again.

VICKI  
Fiftieth times a charm?

Vicki calls the number. She shifts, making enough noise to get Ray's attention. He glances in the mirror. The call goes to voicemail. Vicki stares out the window, sighing.

**Int. club - night**

BAND finish a song onstage.

VOCALIST  
Hey, we'd like to thank Lila Louds for  
throwing this together, but uh, no one  
can find her.

**Drummer/Bassist/Guitarist** start a two-beat groove. The lights  
onstage pulse on each kick drum hit.

VOCALIST  
Li-la! Li-la! Li-la!

The crowd joins in.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. REST AREA PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ray pauses before entering the rest stop when he hears Vicki  
singing and playing hand drums around the corner.

RAY  
Practicing for the contest?

Vicki jolts, unaware of Ray's presence.

VICKI  
No, it's a new song I'm working on.

RAY  
And you have a band?

VICKI  
Yeah. Ugh. About that...

Vicki dusts her pantlegs off.

VICKI  
Why can't I find people as driven as  
me?

Ray watches her go, debating whether to talk more or give Vicki space. He calls out and catches up.

RAY

Some of the happiest people I know  
have spent their whole career in the  
music business flailing and failing  
and some of the most miserable people  
on the planet drown in hit records.

Vicki sizes Ray up.

VICKI

So, you're happy?

Ray mimics thrusting a knife into his chest and twisting.

RAY

No. I said I know happy people or, at  
least, I've heard people talking about  
knowing happy people.

VICKI

You've traveled the globe,  
experiencing things normal people only  
dream about.

RAY

No one dreams about extra rounds of  
antibiotics.

Vicki grimaces.

VICKI

You get to see and smell and touch and  
explore other cities and cultures, eat  
foods that I haven't even heard of.

RAY

Fair play. I am happy, in my own way,  
but I've sacrificed too much of my--

VICKI

Is this where you try talking me out  
of chasing fame in the music business?

RAY

Oh, not at all. Rock 'n roll favors  
the young and the restless and the  
brave and the bold. When you get out  
into the world, you'll find your  
people.

VICKI  
Like you found O'Keefe?

RAY  
Years back--

VICKI  
The Cleveland incident?

RAY  
Uh, no, well, the aftermath of it,  
sure. I got caught in a bad spot at a  
bad time.

VICKI  
Sounds like Cleveland all right.

RAY  
Heh, no. I have fond memories of the  
mistake by the lake actually, but I  
made a short-sighted decision to fix  
an unfixable situation.

VICKI  
Sounds heavy.

RAY  
The only thing that bailed me out was  
a guitar tech job on a lengthy tour.  
Two person crew, budget didn't allow  
for any frills. Band leader was a  
prick.

VICKI  
Geez, how could you say no to that?

RAY  
I needed the money, okay? You're  
young. Everything smells awesome and  
you wake up without pain, but  
eventually all gear breaks down.

VICKI  
Didn't you brag about your drum set  
from the 40s?

RAY  
The Pearl tank? It'll outlast me for  
sure. Maybe not you, though. You hit  
so hard, but you had a swagger--

Ray squints, taking a moment to reflect.

RAY

Or at least the start of swagger.

VICKI

Thanks. So the tour went great and you got addicted to the road?

RAY

Hell no. Europe couldn't have sucked more. I wanted to quit almost everyday.

VICKI

But O'Keefe got you the gig, and he, what, saved your life and you owed him to see it through?

RAY

Technically we saved each other, but no...when we got to Costa Rica, I--

Van horn honks.

LILA (O.S.)

You two ready?

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Suit Four holds a potted plant to cover his privates, but appears otherwise naked on the balcony.

SUIT FOUR

Enough. Let me in. I have a reputation.

Barrett holds up a pair of boxers.

BARRETT

(singing)

I'll bet you wish you had these, don't you? Don't you? Don't you?

SUIT FOUR

Barrett, we've had our differences, but now you've gone too far.

Barrett pulls out his cellphone.

BARRETT

Maybe Rockpile Magazine would like a few photos of you and your, plant, uh, Robert.

Suit Four slaps at the balcony door.

SUIT FOUR  
Hey, hey! Hey, wait a sec!

Barrett holds the phone up, aiming at Suit Four

SUIT FOUR  
I'll sign, I'll sign. Come on. I'm  
roasting out here.

Barrett holds the contract in one hand and clothes in the other. He cracks open the balcony door. Suit Four reaches for the clothes.

BARRETT  
Sign first.

Barrett passes the papers and a pen through.

SUIT FOUR  
When Payne hears you intend to double-  
cross him, he'll rip your soul apart.

Suit Four scribbles his signature and hands the papers back to Barrett. Barrett holds out a pair of boxers, but when Suit Four reaches, Barrett tosses them.

SUIT FOUR  
You scumdog!

The boxers sail over the balcony's edge. With Suit Four's back turned Barrett closes and re-locks the door.

BARRETT  
Payne will get what pain he deserves.

Suit Four panics as Barrett closes the blinds.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

A woman startles when a pair of boxers fall to the ground. She peers up, noticing a naked man leaning over the edge of a balcony.

SUIT FOUR  
Won't you please, please help me?

INT. VAN - DAY

Ray mumbles, asleep in the backseat, holding his drawing pad

loosely. Vicki carefully lifts the sketchpad free. It isn't finished, but certainly looks like he intends to draw her. She shows Lila.

LILA

The eyes don't capture your spark and  
you have incredible--

A clang in the engine, followed by a hiss, startles them. Lila pulls the van over.

INT. VAN - DAY

Lila scavenges for food. Vicki and Ray converse under the raised hood, heated and frustrated.

RAY (O.S.)

We patch this quick or we don't make  
it.

A wrench clangs on something, startling Lila. Ray tries calming the situation, but the clanging continues as frustrated grunts explode from Vicki. The hood slams.

VICKI

Fix this stupid hose and get me to my  
dad.

RAY

Hey look, kiddo, none of us wanted to  
get stranded here.

VICKI

Sorry, remind me, did you have some  
life-changing thing happening today?

Vicki storms off, still complaining.

Ray leans in the passenger side window, sporting some oil on his cheek.

RAY

We melted the coolant hose right off.

Lila pours cold water into a foam ramen cup and stirs.

LILA

Anything I can do to help?

Ray glances back toward Vicki, still complaining.

RAY  
Help me find the off switch.

LILA  
Reminds me of Cleveland. Rumor has it  
they still talk about the madman of  
Euclid Ave.

Ray studies Lila for a few moments before grinning.

RAY  
All things considered, I'd say I  
handled the night with grace.

LILA  
And the following eighteen years?

Ray glances around, lingering on the city park across the  
street.

RAY  
I got an idea.

Ray opens the side door, letting in the sunlight.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Nina, laying in bed, shies away from the light coming through  
the blinds that Preeya opened. The a/c unit howls.

PREEYA  
If all goes to plan, the papers get  
signed, and we finally install your  
greenhouse out back.

NINA  
And if things go South?

PREEYA  
My severance package might look  
California, but it'll feel Minnesota.

NINA  
Look, you'll do what's best and Vicki  
will understand.

PREEYA  
Hon, am I cool?

NINA

Nothing can be with that a/c unit on the fritz. I didn't sleep a wink.

PREEYA

No, like, would the Talking Heads think I'm cool?

NINA

Why would they talk about you on the news?

Preeya shoots her dead-eyed disappointment.

PREEYA

The band, hon. With all that's going on, it's hard not to second-guess the path we chose. I always wanted respect in the music industry, even if I didn't have my sister's talents.

NINA

You can keep talking, but I'm sleeping. Now scram and don't come back without coffee.

Nina rolls over.

NINA

And fix that fan!

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Ray carries his guitar. Vicki hauls a conga. Lila borrowed Vicki's phone to shoot footage and narrate something.

LILA

And so, after that rare apology for disappearing, I want to set the scene. I find myself a foreigner, stranded. Radio claims we could see tornados in a few hours. I'm tagging along on an unexpected journey, to witness old friends face off and I'm torn. On the one hand...

The audio becomes harder to hear as Lila saunters away.

VICKI

So, you've done this before?

RAY  
Busking rocks. It might not look  
glamorous, but no one can tell you  
what to play.

Vicki stops. Ray continues toward the park a few moments  
before noticing.

VICKI  
I caught my band playing with a new  
drummer behind my back, and...

RAY  
And?

With Ray's prodding, she follows him. She remains silent for  
chewing her lower lip as she ponders his question.

VICKI  
I overstepped my bounds. Always do. I  
push and push and push, but for every  
step forward I hit another road block.  
So I shove.

RAY  
Why did you get upset?

VICKI  
You know how things feel when--

RAY  
When the groove locks and the guitars  
roar, the keys swoosh and shimmer over  
top and the vocals cut into your soul  
like a rusty, jagged blade. When you  
want to cry and scream and laugh and  
burst all in a single moment?

VICKI  
Exactly.

RAY  
You didn't feel that?

VICKI  
Worse. Omar didn't understand what I  
meant.

RAY  
Screw him. What about you?

Ray pulls his guitar out of its case and tunes it.

VICKI

I dunno. I can't get out of my own head, out of my own way. Almost every practice ends with me yelling or crying.

RAY

Were the tears deserved?

VICKI

I heard missed opportunities... melodies and changes left unexplored, compromises, and... fear?

RAY

Sounds like a band still searching for its soul. Also, sounds like you approach things more as a songwriter would rather than a lughead drummer. That's good.

Ray strums guitar and paces. Ray prods her to play the conga. She hesitates. Ray encourages her. Vicki listens to his riffs to find her place. She opts for a simple beat.

RAY

We'll need a solid 200\$ to fix the van and reach the meeting in time tonight.

Vicki tightens up, hyperventilates, feeling pressured to earn that much quickly. A few women walk close. Vicki clubs the conga, loud and fast. They pass without slowing.

VICKI

Hi, please, I want to play you a...

A family saunters across the park. Vicki plays fast, off, and too loud. The family meanders off, polite but uninterested. Vicki gets flustered.

RAY

Don't worry about the people. Lose yourself.

VICKI

We don't have all day, though, we need to--

RAY

If you entertain them, they will respond. If you play at them, they  
(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)  
will scurry. The music isn't about  
them at all. Search for that feeling  
we talked about.

Vicki notices Lila watching from the other side of the square, nodding support while recording something for her show. Vicki timidly plays along to Ray's riffing.

RAY  
Don't play against or over me, play  
alongside. Weave through.

Vicki growls, knocks over the conga, and rushes off.

VICKI  
I don't have time to waste playing  
music school in the park. I have to  
go.

RAY  
Vicki. Vicki, hey.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Lila, concerned, pauses as Vicki storms off. She notices Ray following Vicki. She composes herself before continuing her monologue.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Vicki collapses on a bench, huffing. Ray catches up.

RAY  
Hey, what's up?

VICKI  
Forget it. It's stupid. I don't play  
conga anyways. I don't know what I'm  
doing.

RAY  
Not true. You need--

VICKI  
I play and people stare like I'm a  
freak. I play too loud for them, I  
play too fast for you, and my Aunts  
wish I didn't play at all. And here I  
am frantic to collect enough money to  
go meet my rich dad when he's had my  
entire life to come find me.

RAY

Oh, we're not talking about the drums.  
I get it.

VICKI

Oh, It's about the drums. I've worked  
for years to get a chance at stardom  
and now I'm about to blow my one shot.  
I should improve. I should have the  
chops to blow my dad's socks off.

RAY

Your dad would melt with pride. I know  
he would.

VICKI

Melt with embarrassment more like it.  
These people can't even be bothered to  
slow down.

Ray reaches out to console her, but she pulls away.

RAY

Come back to the conga.

VICKI

I don't want to.

Vicki crosses her arms, avoiding eye contact.

RAY

C'mon.

VICKI

I don't want to! I can find my way out  
of town without your help.

Ray tries to reach out again. Vicki avoids him, standing and  
then hustling away.

RAY

Fine, go. 'Run if you like, and hide  
what you feel, but the problem remains  
and you still have to deal.'

Vicki freezes. She turns.

VICKI

My mom wrote that sage advice in my  
baby book before she passed. I took it  
to heart for years until I heard some  
guy singing it on the radio.

RAY

Some consider Barrett the Leonard  
Cohen of his generation.

VICKI

Literally no one has ever said that.

RAY

True. I threw up in my mouth a bit,  
but the lyrics still apply.

Vicki throws her arms up in frustration.

VICKI

Barrett's way older. What was my mom  
doing?

RAY

In a few hours you can ask him, and if  
you don't like his answer, tell him he  
sucks right to his face.

Vicki grins. Ray leads her back to the instruments.

RAY

Getting a crowd to take notice isn't  
the same as blasting beats in your  
garage at home. Style and substance  
and groove win out over power and  
volume.

VICKI

Isn't the goal to feel each note and  
never compromise?

RAY

Depends. Do you want to spend the rest  
of your life living in a van with  
O'Keefe?

Vicki giggles. She picks up the conga.

RAY

Start humming that tune you wrote and  
play along to your humming.

VICKI

But, I don't sing--

RAY  
Stop. Use the humming as a way in, a  
way to shut out any distractions.  
Close your eyes.

She doesn't.

RAY  
Close your eyes.

She does.

RAY  
Breathe in. Breathe out.

Vicki opens one of her eyes and shoots him a quizzical  
glance. He motions for her to close them again.

RAY  
Start humming.

She does, softly at first.

RAY  
Run your fingertips across the conga,  
then up and down, and keep going until  
you hear the beat. Keep humming.

He noodles along as she gets more confident.

VICKI  
(singing)  
As the echoes fade away, and you feel  
you're lost inside. Focus on the  
dream, as everything shatters I...would  
die, to see life in your eyes...one more  
time.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Lila watches Ray and Vicki playing together. People pass her  
to get closer. Lila follows.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

VICKI  
(singing)  
Do I deserve this last embrace? Do I  
deserve this love?

She holds out the last note, eyes still closed as the music drifts off. Vicki opens up her eyes, surprised to find a small crowd applauding.

Vicki blushes. Ray favors her with a grin, but appears overwhelmed with emotion.

RAY

Kid, you sure about being a drummer?

Vicki, caught off guard, suddenly feels vulnerable.

VICKI

I--I'm that bad?

LILA

Gurrl, you've been hiding a front woman in there this whole time?

A couple people throw money into the guitar case.

RAY

Quick, what else do you know?

VICKI

Uh--

**CROWD MEMBER**

Yeah, Vickitorious, you sound awesome!

VICKI

How do you know who I am? Whoa. Where do these people keep coming from?

Ray nods to the side. Vicki realizes that Lila started livestreaming.

LILA

Come on down to the town park to meet me at an impromptu gig and help Vickitorious busk to fix the van.

When people hear why Vicki and Ray need to raise money, they throw in more.

VICKI

Ok, ok, ok... I have another one, uh, that my mom used to sing me at bedtime.

She thumps a beat as Ray places fingers on strings.

INT. EDITING ROOM - DAY

Barrett and Payne peer over the shoulder of an editor, seated before a control board and a couple monitors. A commercial plays, advertising a new streaming service. A rock version of 'Blink of an Eye' plays in the commercial.

PAYNE

You've kept this hit tucked under your belt for this moment, eh?

BARRETT

Never found the proper opportunity to get it out into the world.

PAYNE

Perfect. Now after the signing, you get back on the road to promote your latest flop by adding this song to the set.

BARRETT

Flop? The record sold--

PAYNE

The record didn't even recoup social media promotional costs and your backing band has revolted again. You owe me. Big.

Barrett locks his jaw and straightens, as if to challenge authority. Payne matches the intensity, advancing under Barrett's chin.

PAYNE

Do you know what I hate? Encores. Everyone assumes the band will return to play their big hit, but when the band decides to instead play some obscure cover or simply jam for twenty minutes it irks me to no end. No encores tonight. Get it?

Barrett nods in obedience and nerves before leaving. Payne returns his attention to the monitors.

PAYNE

All right, show me this live stream from Lila Louds that has you in a tizzy.

INT. VAN - DAY

Ray shuts the hood of the van, wiping grease from his hands.

RAY  
T-minus two hours to Nashville.

INT. CORPORATE MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

People filter in, pouring coffee, grabbing doughnuts/appetizers while socializing. Barrett and Payne work the room.

The lights dim a few times.

PAYNE  
Ready to get down to business?

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Vicki, Ray, and Lila race out of the van and toward the building.

LILA  
Meetings already started. Move it.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

A security guard blocks the elevators. The trio back up before getting spotted.

LILA  
I'll distract him. You two get on the elevator.

She saunters out and catches the guard's eye.

**GUARD**  
Can I help you?

LILA  
For sure. Can you take me to a broom closet nearby?

She gives him a flirty glance.

**GUARD**  
Sure. Follow this hallway. When you see the fire extinguisher hang a left. You'll see--

Lila puts a hand on his chest.

LILA  
I meant, like, can we go?

GUARD  
Who?

LILA  
(whispers)  
Us.

GUARD  
Sorry, I'm not sure what you need, but  
I'd say ask at the front desk.

LILA  
Say, sweet Zeppelin t-shirt. What if I  
told you I could get John Paul Jones  
on the phone right now?

GUARD  
Cool.

LILA  
Uh, want to call him in the cafeteria?

GUARD  
Can't. Stationed here by the ele--

RAY (O.S.)  
'Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You'.

The guard and Lila jolt, surprised. Lila realizes Ray is  
playing the song title game using Led Zeppelin.

LILA  
You try leaving and you'll get  
'Trampled Underfoot'.

RAY  
That would be--

GUARD  
'Nobody's Fault But Mine'. Ha! I love  
playing this game. Let's see who can  
insert the most Led Zeppelin song  
titles into the conversation.

Lila maneuvers causing the guard to face away from the  
elevator. Lila waves Vicki and Ray forward.

LILA

I did see a cafeteria. You want a 'Hot Dog?'

The guard turns out his empty pockets.

GUARD

'No Quarter.'

LILA

'How Many More Times' do I need to remind you I don't eat 'In The Light'?

GUARD

Oh, a double! 'Hats Off to You, Roy Harper'.

Vicki shrugs, unsure which floor to press.

LILA

Look, I need to 'Boogie With Stu' up to the meeting, but I'm feeling 'Dazed and Confused' on which floor.

GUARD

Count with me One stick, two sticks, three sticks...

LILA

'Four Sticks'. Fourth floor. Of course!

Vicki presses four. The guard hears the elevator closing and turns to examine. Lila grabs the guard's shoulder, forcing his attention on her shaking hips.

LILA

Hey, 'Dancing Days' are here again.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Ray shuffles from foot to foot, eyes darting.

RAY

Listen, about those guys back home, eh, about all the guys you're going to meet. You have a gift. A way to connect with people by letting them in further than most others, coupled with a voice brimming with personality. Don't hide behind the drums. You don't belong back there.

VICKI

I-I love the freedom of the drums,  
but--

The elevator dings as they reach the fourth floor.

VICKI

Today I did feel a connection that I  
never got behind the kit, you know?  
Like, I could look right at the  
audience and--

The door opens. The security guard blocks their way. He's  
huffing and puffing from running up the stairs.

GUARD

"Oh, look, it's 'Poor Tom' and 'The  
Rover.'"

RAY

Oh, sorry. we were lost and-- Where's  
that confounded bridge?

Ray charges and jukes around the guard, who gives chase.  
Vicki follows the arrows leading to the meeting.

INT. MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Commercial featuring 'Blink of an Eye' finishes and lights  
un-dim.

PAYNE

As you can see, and hear, we have  
amassed something special. This new  
service provides each of you a steady  
stream. Wait, no, your account will be  
flooding.

Laughter from the audience.

PAYNE

Please sign the documents to jump on  
board. Now, since the ad campaign  
flies at midnight, we'll need you to  
decide in the next ten minutes.

A few people start to sign right away. A couple hold off.

**SUIT SIX**

So, we throw in a quarter of a bill  
and we can't even have our attorneys  
(MORE)

SUIT SIX (CONT'D)  
read it first? Section 32 has a  
stipulation for Barrett--

BARRETT  
Gentleman, the back dozen pages  
highlight the vast list of publishers  
locked into multi-life terms. If--

The door opens. Vicki hustles in, surprising everyone. Vicki,  
a deer in headlights herself, spots Barrett.

BARRETT  
Can we help you?

Vicki forces herself forward, trying to mask severe nerves.

VICKI  
In fact, you can help me a lot, dad.

General murmur from the audience. Payne scowls. Vicki  
realizes all the years of picturing this moment, feel  
galaxies off the actual emotions. She doesn't feel  
overwhelmed, upset, or even overjoyed. Vicki inhales deeply.

BARRETT  
I don't have any of...you.

Vicki hands him the setlist. He glances at it before quickly  
handing it back.

BARRETT  
Ancient history, but as I recall, I  
crashed early after firing the band  
and crew. Slept like a baby.

Anger rises in Vicki, but not for the years of abandonment.  
She hates that Barrett calmly dismissed firing Ray. She wants  
to repay that feeling of helplessness if possible.

VICKI  
I don't know the story between you and  
my mom, but I wanted to meet you.

BARRETT  
There's no story.

Payne picks up the phone.

PAYNE  
We need security in here. Now. And get  
Craig Halford from RockPile Magazine  
on the line.

The suits who hadn't signed yet hold off.

BARRETT

Please, ignore her and sign. Time  
marches on--

VICKI

The song. The song you played as I  
came down the hall. That's your song,  
right?

BARRETT

Yes.

Vicki works the room, pointing at 'Blink' on the setlist.

VICKI

My Aunt says my mom sang it to soothe  
herself during chemo, but she recorded  
it for me as a lullaby. The lyrics  
taught me to live without regrets or  
fears. Now, I get it. You wrote it for  
her.

The security guard enters.

PAYNE

Escort our guest out.

The security guard closes in.

VICKI

Wait, wait, wait. I have proof.

She unzips her bag and brings out the discman.

VICKI

My mom left a collection of demos for  
songs Barrett ended up releasing.

The suits glance around and murmur, confused and  
uncomfortable.

BARRETT

Enough of this. Security, get her out.

Suit Two blocks security.

SUIT TWO

No, wait. I want to hear this.

Suit Four rises at the opposite end of the table.

PAYNE

All of you, please, sit down. This boils down to a personal matter between Barrett and this girl.

SUIT TWO

This constitutes a quarter of a billion dollars matter to me.

Suit Four holds his copy of the contract ready to tear it up.

SUIT FOUR

And a lot more that you won't get if we don't hear what she wants.

He nods to Vicki. She plugs her adaptor into the room's audio system. 'Blink of an Eye', plays.

People side-eye each other. Suit Four slithers back into his chair, defeated. Suit Two grabs his pen and sighs.

VICKI

Wait, what?

She tries to prevent Suit Two from signing, but he shrugs her off.

PAYNE

We've heard Barrett's voice on dozens of hits over the years and that's clearly not him singing. Security, get her out of here.

Barrett removes the CD from the discman.

Vicki rushes forward, grabbing the discman, but Barrett keeps the CD.

As Security pulls Vicki away, she hears a voice. She glances around, even up toward the ceiling before realizing the voice emanates from her pocket.

VICKI

Wait, wait. Please.

She wriggles free. Vicki pulls the phone from her pocket.

VICKI

Saule?

SAULE

Vicki, you must've pocket dialed me.  
I'm actually--

VICKI

Listen, I'm here with my father, but  
he doesn't want to admit it.

SAULE

Hmmm. Use the form--err--the...uhh,  
setlist.

Vicki's eyes light up.

VICKI

Saule, you're a genius. I owe you.

Saule tries complaining about how many different things she  
owes him for, but Vicki hangs up. She grabs the setlist from  
her pocket, unfolding it.

VICKI

This setlist was given to my mom by my  
dad when he played Cleveland with  
Spirit Graves.

She makes a big show of punching in the digits. The phone  
rings once, twice, three times. Barrett brings his phone out  
of his pocket. No incoming call.

VICKI

What the? I called and...

Vicki, stumbles backward, dizzy and overwhelmed. Her knees  
give out, but Suit Two holds her up.

BARRETT

You must know by now, but I'll make  
this crystal clear. No, I am not your  
father.

Vicki raises her gaze to meet Barrett's smug grin. Barrett,  
surprised, appears unsettled.

VICKI

Then you didn't write that song and  
don't have permission to use it.

Gathered suits murmur.

BARRETT  
Maybe, but I'll bet no one else on the  
planet has a copy.

Barrett snaps the CD. Vicki drops her gaze.

PREEYA (O.S.)  
Like this?

INT. CORPORATE MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Preeya holds up the envelope that Vicki found in her office.

PREEYA  
Gentleman, I mailed this demo CD to my  
niece on the day of Vicki's birth.

BARRETT  
(murmuring)  
Vicky?

PREEYA  
You plan to partner with a man who has  
spent a career stealing from people  
who trusted him, who has taken credit  
for things he didn't create.

Payne scowls, but doesn't speak.

SUIT TWO  
Barrett, if you're not her father it  
seems clear, you stole this song.

Other suits start chiming in, but Barrett isn't listening.

BARRETT  
Vicky? That's your name?

She nods. Barrett grins.

BARRETT  
This makes a lot more sense. You're  
the girl from that leaked video,  
right, playing the conga? The one Lila  
Louds says needs a band and wants to  
get famous?

Vicki nods.

BARRETT

Then consider this. You join my band  
for my next tour, and we straighten  
this out. You'll be on the cover of  
Rockpile magazine next month.

Vicki fights the urge to scream 'yes' and follow her dreams.  
She glances at the door, then at Preeya, who remains stone-  
faced.

BARRETT

Tick-tock. Tick--

Vicki has made up her mind.

VICKI

I came looking for family, but it  
turns out, I already found them.

Vicki rushes out of the room, which erupts into a heated,  
chaotic debate.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Vicki races down the hall. She bounds down the stairs. Vicki  
sprints through the lobby. O'Keefe races in through the  
doors.

O'KEEFE

Do we need to get out of here? I've  
got Saule's truck.

Vicki shakes her head, catching her breath. Lila approaches  
from the far hall.

LILA

We lost the guard, but not sure for  
how long.

She pulls on Vicki's arm.

LILA

Let's get to the van. Where's Ray?

Vicki holds her ground.

VICKI

O'Keefe, Spirit Graves?

O'KEEFE

Now there's an obscure one. Finally, a challenge. Of course everyone knows Barrett sang, Lenny Wittmann on bass, They had that weird drummer, with the crazy-eyes, Syd Thompkins. Rounding it out, you had Damien, the god-man, who could shred guitars and women's heart in a single solo.

Vicki falters with a side-step, unsure.

VICKI

Spirit Graves... original line up?

O'KEEFE

Only one change that I know of, uh, before Damien they had some young kid virtuoso-type guitarist named something, uh, Gandsakovick. As far as I know, he never did anything after.

Vicki calms and dials her phone. A muffled ring sounds behind them. They follow the noise to a closed door. They open it to reveal a darkened broom closet.

RAY (O.S.)

Ray Gandsakovick wrote most of the songs for Spirit Graves, music and lyrics, but he felt mortified every time he got onstage. He drank, he indulged in drugs, he chased women and men, but in the end, he quit rather than face his fears.

Ray slinks out from the shadows pushing a mop bucket and other cleaning products out of the way.

RAY

He did plenty after quitting too, or at least he made plenty of messes.

VICKI

But...you...you...wait--that drawing wasn't of me.

Ray grins, but with sadness in his eyes.

RAY

On my twenty-second birthday, your mom got the worst news and I had no idea  
(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)  
how to channel my frustrations and  
fears over losing her. I--didn't cope  
well, but she inspired me to write a  
song about her battle.

VICKI  
Breathe in, breathe out.

RAY  
Exactly. And Barrett forced me to  
decide between your mother or his  
band.

LILA  
Why?

VICKI  
Because one hand out is the same as no  
hands in.

LILA  
Gandsakovick. That is a mouthful.

BARRETT (O.S.)  
Which is why I started calling him  
Vicky.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Barrett, Preeya, and Rube approach from the elevators.  
Barrett gestures for the security guard to stay on the  
elevator and out of the conflict.

BARRETT  
Hey, Vicky.

Both Ray and Vicki respond and then sheepishly look at each  
other.

BARRETT  
That's nauseating.

Lila sneers, microphone in hand.

LILA  
How'd it go in there, Barrett?

Barrett talks, but Preeya interrupts.

PREEYA

Barrett will retain many of the songs  
he has recorded and performed--

RAY

Why am I not surprised, Barrett wins  
again.

Barrett grins.

PREEYA

Let me finish. We need to iron out  
some details, but Barrett agreed to  
recognize your contributions and  
sacrifices by renegotiating terms.

NINA

Which include Barrett showing his  
supreme remorse for his past deeds.

BARRETT

And while I'm out here, I imagine the  
suits will celebrate the launch of the  
service with my services no longer  
needed. Thanks to this one.

VICKI

I didn't want...I didn't know...I--

BARRETT

You acted on impulse, all emotion, no  
logic, and certainly no forethought.  
Reminds me of my old guitar player.

Ray and Barrett nod at each other.

NINA

Barrett has also agreed to fund  
Vicki's education moving forward.

Vicki shoots her eyebrows up and stumbles over a reply.

PREEYA

And he'll write a letter to The Mosley  
Conservatory of Music to help your  
admission process. Maybe the world  
needs more songs.

VICKI

What about your emancipation papers  
and giving up on me?

Everyone freezes. The attention shifts. Nina frowns.

NINA

Hon, emancipation guaranteed that the rights pass directly to you.

PREEYA

Barrett won't have any say on 'Blink of an Eye' moving forward.

NINA

After we cross a few t's. C'mon.

Nina and Preeya hug Vicki at the same time.

NINA

We love who you've become. But you're also in deep trouble for scaring us and running off.

PREEYA

If you change your mind, PM State makes an ultra-great plan b.

Vicki grimaces playfully. Nina pulls Barrett away from the gathering.

BARRETT

Call me, Vicky, err, Ray. I know I come off as a jerk, but--

LILA

You've changed?

BARRETT

Ha, no! I'm way worse, but I have better connections. Ray, I can make you more money. Heck, she can play drums. Talk soon, yeah?

Lila pulls O'Keefe toward the van. Ray realizes only he and Vicki remain. They exit the building together.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

RAY

Two days ago the only thing I was responsible for was my hangover. I--I didn't...She and I hadn't...your mom and I, we--

Vicki wraps her dad in a hug. He hugs her back, still overwhelmed and apprehensive.

RAY  
I don't know how this works.

VICKI  
What?

RAY  
Like honestly, aside from riffing, I  
don't know how anything works.

VICKI  
Sometimes you don't get to prepare.  
Try this instead. Breathe in, then  
attack.

RAY  
Sounds sort of familiar.

VICKI  
Old riff, new tuning.

Vicki pulls out of the hug.

VICKI  
Dad, you loved my mom?

Ray breaks eye contact, shifting his gaze to the ground.

RAY  
No.

VICKI  
Of course, I, it's silly, a stupid  
question, shouldn't have asked or put  
you on the spot, I get it. I--I--

Ray puts a hand on each of Vicki's shoulders, steadying her  
and gazing into her eyes.

RAY  
No, I still love her. And... I love  
you too.

Vicki crumbles in his arms for another hug. Horn honks.

O'KEEFE  
We got twelve hours in the van to cry  
and hug. Let's go.

Ray and Vicki hop in the van.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The door slams and O'Keefe turns on the van. All four people in the car scream as loud rock blasts from the speakers. They peel off and race out of the parking lot as music plays.

VICKI (O.S.)

Finally.

INT. SAULE'S VAN - NIGHT

Saule wakes up to find he's all alone. He shakes his head.

SAULE

Time after time...

EXT. VAN TRAVELING ON THE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

RAY (O.S.)

Preeya was up to her eyeballs in school debt, Vicki's grandmother lost her business and her grandfather had gone a little crazy. None of us could afford another round of chemo. I sold my publishing and jumped on the road with O'Keefe. We were in Costa Rica when I got news of her passing and I swore I'd never come home again.

VICKI (O.S.)

You didn't know about me?

RAY (O.S.)

No, worse, I did. I knew she was pregnant, but not if, uh, you survived.

LILA (O.S.)

That's one way to say he didn't want to change any diapers.

RAY (O.S.)

I was a heartbroken fool, too self-absorbed in my grief, too deep in the bottles and the needles. By the time I came out of my haze, Preeya and Nina had taken you in and didn't want me around. I couldn't blame 'em. The longer I stayed away, the harder I found it to set things right.

VICKI (O.S.)  
Because one hand out is the same as no  
hands in. How long 'til Cleveland?  
I've got an apology to write.

INT. BAND PRACTICE SPACE - DAY

Orphan Martians pause mid-song, clearly uneasy as Vicki enters unexpectedly.

OMAR  
Vicki, hey, uh, I know we didn't  
handle this professionally, but--

VICKI  
You found another drummer. Sounds like  
a solid one too. I don't want to drum  
for you anyways.

OMAR  
Pfft, you can't quit.

VICKI  
You need a singer.

Omar barks out a laugh.

OMAR  
I have that covered, thanks.

Omar looks around for support, but no one offers.

OMAR  
Seriously? Jaylin? Huh, thanks.  
Remember, she strong-armed us as the  
drummer, and now you're going to trust  
her on vocals?

The band remain uncommitted. Omar scoffs and backs away from the mic.

OMAR  
Fine. Let's hear what you can do.

Vicki grabs the mic, straps on a guitar, and turns to the drummer.

VICKI  
Start us off with a chick, chick,  
boom--you know what? You play what you  
feel. Guys, chords are C to G. Watch  
(MORE)

VICKI (CONT'D)  
me for the changes. This one's called,  
'Both Hands In.'

She flips Omar off with both middle fingers. The others laugh. Omar joins in. Vicki plays a fuzzy riff.

CREDITS MONTAGE - DAY

**Int. Lila Louds Studio**

LILA  
Though she dropped out of the  
competition, our guest band today has  
a winner for a vocalist. Give it up  
for the Orphan Martians!

OMAR  
Oh, we had to change our name,  
'cause...

LILA  
No more orphan. So, you're called  
Martians?

Vicki glances at Omar who grins and nods in encouragement.

VICKI  
We're Vickitorius! 1-2-3 Go!

Vicki and her band perform, 'Both Hands In' on the Lila Louds Show.

**Int. House - day**

Preeya and Nina listen to Vicki perform as they clean. Preeya scrubs the toilet.

PREEYA  
Listen, sis, I might not've handled  
things exactly as you wanted, but...  
when I whipped out that twenty-year  
old CD...The Talking Heads would  
totally say that was cool.

Preeya sighs.

PREEYA  
I miss you and I--

NINA (O.S.)  
 Hon, I hate to interrupt your toilet  
 talk or whatever you have going on in  
 there, but these chores won't finish  
 themselves.

Preeya grins and scrubs the toilet.

**Ext. Strip mall - Day**

Tusk and the Wolfpac chase a kid down the street. Tusk turns  
 a corner. Barrett blocks the way. Tusk, growls and leers, but  
 then recognizes the singer.

BARRETT  
 Hand over the pendant, Kid.

**Int. Saule's Store - Day**

Saule sweeps his store, scowling.

SAULE  
 Catchy tune.

**Int. Side stage - Night**

Vickitorious play onstage as Barrett, Syd, Lenny, and Ray  
 watch from the side.

BARRETT  
 I'm telling you, she's a star.

RAY  
 She's talented, no doubt, but she's  
 got her mom's temper.

Lenny, Syd, and Barrett stare at Ray doubtfully. Ray shrugs  
 sheepishly.

LENNY  
 Lil' Vicky's kid... who would've  
 guessed? The torch burns on.

He offers cheers with a non-alcoholic beverage.

BARRETT  
 Hey, speak for yourself. I think we  
 need to rekindle our own torches.  
 Lenny, can you get a cat-sitter?

Lila approaches, holding a guitar.

LILA  
Enough with the high school drama.  
C'mon, Ray, you're needed onstage.

RAY  
Breathe in, breathe out.

CUT TO BLACK.

RAY (O.S.)  
Breathe in, Breathe out. No, wait.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Ray, beaming, strides onstage. He squeezes Vicki's shoulder.  
She wears her mom's pendant.

RAY  
Breathe in.

VICKI  
Then attack.

THE END