

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

PENNY chews her lower lip. She sits in front of PAULINE'S desk. Pauline sits behind it, wearing an anxious expression.

PENNY
Gosh, lady. I really don't know.

PAULINE
I'm asking. This is me asking.

PENNY
No, I know. I hear you. But it's not even a favor I'd be asking. It's a favor I'd be asking someone else to ask. It makes me feel a little icky.

Pauline gets up and closes the door. When she walks back she leans on the desk and looks right down at Penny.

PAULINE
I'll level with you. Things aren't going especially well. The money people are beyond nervous. The crew is beyond cranky. It's all about to come crashing down square on Agnes.

PENNY
Does she know you're asking?

Pauline doesn't say anything.

PENNY
Now it's twice as icky.

PAULINE
I'll take you on as a client.

Penny arches an eyebrow.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - ALLEY SET - DAY

Agnes stands at the mouth of a narrow alley. Two GRIPS wheel a painted backdrop in place behind her.

She shoves Penny.

AGNES
No fucking way.

PENNY
Yah huh.

AGNES

Dex Moore. From "Bear Didn't Come
Here To Hunt Dot Com"?

ZEE, a long, tall, cool drink of ginger, stands at the monitor. With a real "DP" posture.

He studies the backdrop in frame and looks over at Agnes. With more than a little impatience.

Penny notices. Agnes doesn't.

PENNY

I don't think you ought to be saying
the "dot com" part out loud. But yes.

AGNES

They're basically the only film blog
I give a shit about. And he's
basically the only dude on the site I
read on a regular basis.

PENNY

Sasha knows him.

AGNES

Ho. Lee. Shit. I mean. Damn.

PENNY

Yeah. He'll be here tomorrow.

Zee throws more than a couple of glances at Agnes.

PENNY

You might want to...

She nods at the monitor. Agnes trots over to it.

INT. SOUND STAGE - MONITOR - DAY

Agnes watches a scene unfold on the monitor. Penny enters a cheap motel and does some high octane acting.

It's a bit much, but it works. Agnes wears a much hipper outfit than usual. Still has her binder and yellow hoodie.

Penny falls on the bed. Agnes's lips count to five.

AGNES

Cut.

DEX MOORE, an overly fashioned man with a catalog beard, leans his face into view.

DEX
That was fucking amazing.

Agnes doesn't recognize him. Her focus is on a strange circle of purple light in the corner of frame.

AGNES
Can we please have all non essentials step away from monitor so my DP can squeeze in? Great, thanks.

Pretty much the second she's done talking she realizes who she's talking to. Dex's smile doesn't fade.

DEX
Sure thing, chief.

He steps away. Agnes winces. Dex hop-steps on to the set. Agnes watches him fawn over Penny on the monitor.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - PICNIC TABLE - DAY

Agnes sits across from Dex at what's basically the crews smokers lounge. Penny sits next to him.

CASSAVETES straddle's a chair. He runs a comb through his hair and looks from Dex to Agnes as they speak.

DEX
That's why it's so important to have women behind the camera. I mean, I feel crazy having to explain feminism to women, but sometimes I actually have to. Isn't that nuts?

Dex has a natural enough bearing that his pompous charm seems more charming than pompous. But it isn't.

AGNES
What's really nuts is that not all women are feminists.

PENNY
I don't know if that's true. I'd say not all women consider themselves feminists, even though they have to be by default, right?

DEX

Yeah, totally. They're never not women, right? So. Feminists.

AGNES

Yeah. But. It's kind of a proactive term, isn't it? Or it should be.

DEX

Not in the film business. I don't think, anyway.

AGNES

What will be nice is when an article can be written about a "woman director" that just uses the word "director." Full stop.

PENNY

Oh, I don't know. I plan to remind people I'm a woman every fucking chance I get.

DEX

Amen, sister.

He pushes himself up on the table.

DEX

If you'll excuse me, I've got to see a man about a horse.

PENNY

Hey, could you swing by crafty and grab me a coffee on your way back?

AGNES

Make sure it has extra caffeine.

Cass laughs. Penny and Dex look at her like she's nuts.

PENNY

Um. Huh?

AGNES

Yeah. No. Just. Crafty's so out of the way. It's extra steps. Extra caffeine. Little joke.

PENNY

(Looks quickly at Dex)
You know what? I'll just go with you.

DEX

Cool.

They walk off, thick a thieves. Agnes gives Cass a "what the hell just happened?" look.

CASSAVETES

That guy? Massive prick.

Agnes wants to disagree but she's not sure she can.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - SIDE WALL - DAY

JOHN TRAIN leans against the wall. He's got a cigarette planted between his teeth and a cup of coffee in one hand.

He tries to pour cream into it with the other. It doesn't go swimmingly. He gets coffee all over his hand.

AGNES

Will you please come talk to him with me? He has this rapport with Penny and I can't crack into it.

JOHN TRAIN

No way. Every time I talk to a journalist I get into like the Hundred Twitter War. No time.

AGNES

Yeah. But. Saint Huck is your thing too. People read his stuff. A lot of people. It would be good to get a little bit of what we're trying to do out into the world.

JOHN TRAIN

Don't try too hard to get him to write what you want him to write. He can be kind of a bully if all the brilliant ideas aren't his.

AGNES

I just don't want him to think the inmates are running the asylum.

JOHN TRAIN

Penny's the inmate in this scenario?

AGNES

No. I'm the inmate. At least when Penny's around. They just click.

JOHN TRAIN

Is it possible you're just a little tweaked because he might like her more than he likes you?

AGNES

He definitely likes her more than he likes me. I want him to like the movie more than either of us.

JOHN TRAIN

Let's worry about finishing the movie before we start worrying about who likes it.

She chews her cuticles.

AGNES

He had to come on the day she has her biggest scene.

JOHN TRAIN

Don't be jelly. Everyone knows you blow her off the screen.

He kicks off the wall.

AGNES

I'm not jelly. I'm worried about the focus of his article.

John salutes her with his coffee as he walks off. He turns the corner pretty quick.

AGNES

The focus I tell you!

There's no one there to believe her. Or disbelieve her.

INT. SOUND STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Agnes clutches her binder to her chest. She marches through the entire room. She starts on the -

MOTEL SET

- and pushes through the fake door into a -

LOBBY SET

- and turns into the sound stage itself. Dex crosses in front of the wide warehouse doors.

She passes -

THE MONITOR

- and picks up the pace. Zee catches sight of her and gestures. She moves past him to -

HAIR AND MAKEUP

- and turns to the corner. Dex disappears out of view. She grits her teeth with determination.

Zee follows after her. He catches up with her at -

THE PROP TABLE

- and gets her to stop.

ZEE

Hey. Are we going to get a chance to go over the shot list?

She slows down but doesn't stop moving.

AGNES

What's to go over? Just set up the shots on the list. Hence. Shot list.

ZEE

(Patience of a saint)

There are still things we need to discuss before we get going.

Agnes slows even more. But she's still walking.

AGNES

I don't have time to go over the shots we already decided we were going to shoot right now. OK?

He stops following her. His patience is at an end. His voice gets slightly louder. But mostly more...distinct.

ZEE

Are you directing this movie or not?

She stops and looks down. Her lungs push out a long and unsteady burst of air. She turns.

They make eye contact. She SLAMS her binder on the ground. The pages get loose and scatter.

ZEE

Feel free to come find me when you're ready to behave like a professional.

He walks away. Hella calm. She lets out one frustrated "Argggg" and drops to her knees to gather her pages.

A hand reaches down to hand her a few. They are - of course - attached to Dex. Who heard everything.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

Agnes sits on one end the couch, her posture fully upright. Dex "chillaxes" on the other end.

Pauline leans on her desk.

PAULINE

What do you mean you didn't sign a non-disclosure agreement?

DEX

No one asked me to.

PAULINE

Fuck. Off.

Agnes stares down at her broken binder.

DEX

Look. I like you guys. The movie seems cool. I mean. The sets are great. But the story that interests me is Penny.

PAULINE

That is absolutely not why you're here. She's not even that good.

DEX

I mean, I think she's terrific. But either way - young black actress. Gets signed to a big agency off her first indie. I can write that.

Agnes's eyes flare when he says "big agency." She flares them over at Pauline, who won't look at her.

DEX
 Everything else seems pretty standard for a micro-budget flick. And by standard I mean dull. So. No worries. I have no reason to air your slightly soiled laundry.

He gets up and buttons his stupidly fashionable sports coat.

DEX
 Thanks for making me feel important, though. We all need an ego boost every now and then.

PAULINE
 My lawyers will -

AGNES
 No. It's fine.

DEX
 See? It's fine. Now, if you ladies will excuse me, there were some left over pastries with my name on them.

He struts out. Pauline looks immediately to Agnes. Now it's Agnes's turn not to look at her.

INT. SOUND STAGE - MONITOR - NIGHT

Agnes stands at Monitor. Alone. Pauline and Zee and Dex stand watching the scene live from a few feet away.

Penny's entire face fills the monitor. Tears stream down her cheeks. She chokes out a few sobs. It's raw.

Agnes's mouth counts to five.

AGNES
 Cut. OK, let's go again right away.

Penny nods. The usual "roll sound" "roll camera" refrain rings out. Agnes glues her eyes to the monitor.

Penny looks down to compose herself. Agnes takes a quick breath and blurts out a cursory -

AGNES
 Action.

- before gluing her eyes to the monitor again.

PENNY (ON THE MONITOR)
 You loved all the good out of me.
 Can't you see that? Can't you see
 every lousy thing I ever did to you
 was love? And I...I just miss her so
 much and that was the last lousy
 thing I'll ever do. It has to -

She takes a dramatic breath. Her face conveys pain and she plops out some real tears. Her hands lift into frame.

They're covered in blood. They lower. Slightly less tears stream down her cheeks than the previous take.

Before she even gets to the sobs Agnes yells -

AGNES
 Cut.

- and takes a step closer to the monitor.

AGNES
 We're going again.

An uncomfortable murmur passes through the crew. Polly nods and turns her face away for a second.

Roll sound. Roll camera. You know the drill.

AGNES
 Action.

Penny takes longer to get into it this time.

PENNY (ON THE MONITOR)
 You loved all the good out of me.
 Can't you see that?

AGNES
 Cut.

Penny shoots a frustrated look right down the lens. Agnes looks right back on the monitor.

A MAKEUP ARTIST heads for set.

AGNES
 She's fine. Let's go again.

Sound. Camera. Penny has a streak of blood on her cheek. She's about to ask about it when -

AGNES

Action.

PENNY (ON THE MONITOR)

Can't you see that. Fuck.

AGNES

Keep rolling. Go again. Action.

PENNY (ON THE MONITOR)

You. You loved all the - shit. Agnes.

AGNES

Still rolling.

Penny nods. She gets it. Agnes watches her get it on the monitor. Penny takes a deep breath.

Agnes's eyes threaten tears.

AGNES

Action on you.

CUT TO BLACK: