

THE ROCK ISLAND LINE

Written by

Liam Parry

liamparry55@gmail.com  
323-204-5698  
liamparrywriting.com

INT. BIKER BAR - NIGHT

SUPER: Prologue

A LOUD, 1970's PUNK SONG PLAYS. Ramones. Maybe Crass.

DIX (21), a powerful, magnificent red-head, takes a solid punch directly across the jaw. She grins.

A group of three SKIN-HEAD GIRLS - suspenders over tank tops, boot-stomping-boots, badly shaved haircuts - circle her.

She tackles one around the waist. A SECOND moves to pull her off. A knee comes up into the Seconds stomach. It belongs to -

MIRANDA (20), a trim, efficient looking blonde. She kicks the doubled over Skin Head down and pulls the first off Dix.

Dix and Miranda stand shoulder to shoulder as two more Skin Head Girls advance. They catch each others eyes.

And smile. And charge.

CUT TO CREDITS:

INT. GUSSY UP NIGHTCLUB - MAIN BAR - NIGHT

SUPER: Some Years Later

Loud FUNK MUSIC fills the round, intentionally gaudy club. FIVE CUT MEN strut on stage. The crowd goes bananas.

AVERY (29), a lean man in a tux that looks like it should fit better, fidgets a half empty whiskey in front of him.

The Strippers pose, fully clothed, as the Funk disappears. A raucous BLUEGRASS tune starts, along with pelvic gyrations.

Avery keeps his eyes firmly planted on his drink. He uses the beats in the song to mask the sound of a HEAVY COUGH.

INT. GUSSY UP NIGHTCLUB - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

A PAIR OF TIGHT, SHORT-SHORT JEAN SHORTS strides through a line of oiling up, preening, spray tanning MUSCLE BOYS.

The shorts belong to Miranda. She balances a case of booze on her hip. The strippers snap to attention as she passes.

MIRANDA

Ease up, boys, ease up. What do I  
always say the name of the game is?

## STRIPPERS

(In unison)

Hard work with a little bit of  
gravy.

She spins around and offers them a smile.

## MIRANDA

Damn straight. Keep it hard out  
there, OK?

She backs through a swinging door into the -

## MAIN BAR

- and PLOPS the case next to Avery. He jumps a little.  
Miranda doesn't notice.

## MIRANDA

You want some unsolicited advice?

## AVERY

Never.

## MIRANDA

Always be the boss. Anything else  
is for buttoholes.

Avery shoots her a playful hangdog look. She motions at his  
half empty glass.

## MIRANDA (CONT'D)

What, you need me to put a nipple  
on that thing?

His hangdog look turns real. Without warning he leans over  
the bar and throws his arms around her.

It takes her a second to return his affection. When she does  
it's a little stiff. He holds her in the hug until the SONG  
ENDS, and with it the pelvic gyrations.

Multicolored lights strobe off a disco ball as the strippers  
clear the stage and the curtain closes.

In the flickering it's hard to tell if Avery wipes a tear  
from his eye or not. Miranda turns on a low volume stereo.

## MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Seriously, since when are you such  
a light weight?

She moves to refill his glass. He covers it with his hand.

AVERY

My voice, you know? And anyway I have to split in a mo'. I'm meeting Dix uptown. She wants to go over the music before the show.

MIRANDA

Pfft. Like it's your fault she never learned how to sight read. You'll be back later though, right?

It takes Avery a second to respond as he swallows a cough.

AVERY

Not tonight. We're going out after.

Miranda waves her finger in the air.

MIRANDA

Hell you say.

She rushes to the other end of the bar. Avery lets out a string of coughs into his cuff.

Miranda rushes back with a HUGE LEDGER. Multicolored post-its poke off of almost every page.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

We'll just see about "going out after" tonight, mister.

AVERY

Miranda...

She plops the ledger on the bar and opens it to a calendar page. Every square of the month is filled with a tidy scrawl.

MIRANDA

See here - you already set aside one of my Sunday's, not to mention all the time she got to spend with you in rehearsals.

AVERY

None of that counts. It's business, not pleasure.

She keeps her eyes glued to the calendar.

MIRANDA

(Distracted)

She wouldn't know the first thing about business if it bit her damn fingers off.

AVERY  
Excuse me? What was that?

He coughs out a laugh. Miranda looks up.

MIRANDA  
What? What's funny?

AVERY  
Just call her already. You know you miss her.

MIRANDA  
Never.

Avery drains his glass and gets to his feet.

AVERY  
I'll let you know how it goes.

She faux-scowls at him. He kisses her on the cheek.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
Love you.

MIRANDA  
Go on then, git.

He squeezes her hand before walking away. Just as he reaches the far end of the bar she yells -

MIRANDA (CONT'D)  
I love you more than she does.

INT. THE RINKY DINK - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

A cramped room filled with folding chairs, setup three by six with space in the middle for an aisle - kind of - bustles.

The conditions the room is packed. People stand three deep behind the last row. The front rows knees touch the stage.

The lights GO OUT. A MURMUR runs through the crowd. A row of lightbulbs CRACKLE to life in a semi-circle around the stage.

Twelve performers stand in two rows of six, split right down the gender. Avery stands at one end of the front row.

Dix stands at the other end, in an evening gown. She leans forward to make eyes at Avery. He tries to avoid them.

MOOD LIGHTING plays on the stage, followed by the strains of CLASSICAL MUSIC. Their mouths open as one.

The crowd is enrapt as they sing a strange, spooky choral arrangement. Edges of seats. Baited breaths.

Except one. A single ELECTRIC GLOW appears in the front row as a LOUDLY DRESSED WOMAN checks a text.

Not only does she check it, but she RESPONDS TO IT. Before her screen has time to dim, the phone VIBRATES.

She LAUGHS and types back. The VIBRATION is instantaneous this time. She's INVOLVED.

Dix lowers her eyes in a fixed glare, without missing a note. The woman is right in front of her.

VIBRATE. GLOW. VIBRATE. GLOW. The crowd is too awkwardly polite to do anything.

Avery catches sight of Dix out of the corner of his eye. Her body inches forward a little. Her glare gets more severe.

VIBRATE. GLOW. LAUGH. TYPE. Dix trembles with rage. Avery catches her eye and shakes his head.

She ignores him. At the next audible VIBRATION Dix flies off the stage and tackles the woman.

EXT. THE RINKY DINK - ALLEY - NIGHT

Dix leans against a brick wall, a bag of frozen peas pressed to her right eye.

Avery talks to a WILD HAired MAN on the street. The Wild Haired Man shoots angry glances at Dix.

She watches Avery calm him down, reassure him, and send him on his way. She waits until he's next to her to speak.

DIX

He pissed?

AVERY

Pretty pissed, dude. You OK?

DIX

Yeah, yeah. You should see the other broad.

AVERY

I have. She's still in the bar, merrily texting away.

DIX  
I swear I knocked out a tooth or  
two. I swear it.

AVERY  
You didn't knock out anything,  
dummy. You've been retired too  
long. It was barely even a fight.

She pulls off the peas and points to her blackening eye.

DIX  
Then what do you call this?

AVERY  
Accidentally smacking your face on  
her knee when you tumbled off the  
stage.

DIX  
Leapt. Leapt off the stage.

Avery doesn't respond. He's lost in his phone

DIX (CONT'D)  
Oi, I just got a black eye fighting  
for our mutual honor. A little  
respect would be nice.

AVERY  
Sorry, sorry. It's Miranda. She's  
in a state.

DIX  
She still do the bit with the  
calendar?

AVERY  
Yup, yup.

DIX  
How's the club doing?

AVERY  
Call her and ask her yourself.

DIX  
She'd hang the hell up on me.  
Otherwise you know I would.

AVERY  
(Under his breath)  
... know you say you would, anyway.

DIX  
Excuse me? What was that? Hmm? What  
was that you just said?

She advances on him and digs her knuckles into his ribs. He turns away to hide a wince. It actually hurt.

Dix doesn't notice. She pulls him into a headlock/arm-around - his-shoulder hybrid.

DIX (CONT'D)  
Whose fault is it that I don't  
brawl? Hmm? Say her name. Say it.

AVERY  
Get off, you lady-ape.

He untangles himself from her grasp and smooths down his tux.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
As much as I'd like to stick around  
on the off chance that you get  
booked on assault charges, I better  
hit the road.

DIX  
I thought we were going out.

AVERY  
We were, but I'm give out. All them  
fisticuffs and such.

A hurt expression wanders across her face, but she doesn't let it linger. She forces a grin.

DIX  
Alright, but you better not bail on  
me again. I'll fisticuffs all over.

She dances around him, jabbing at his arm. He lets her, pretending it doesn't hurt. But it does.

AVERY  
Come on, Dempsey, bring it in.  
Bring it right on in here.

He pulls her into a hug as big as the one he gave Miranda. Dix returns it for all she's worth.

DIX  
Love you, dummmmy.

AVERY  
Love you too.

He looks her straight in the eyes for more than a breath.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Just... OK.

DIX

What?

AVERY

Get a steak on that eye.

She shoves him toward the street.

DIX

Don't be an idiot.

He shuffles off, his posture slightly bent. She watches until he's out of sight.

INT. GUSSY UP NIGHTCLUB - OFFICE - DAY

Miranda sits at an immaculate glass desk. Sunlight sneaks in behind her from a tiny window, open on a brick wall.

DUNBAR (20), a tried & true beefcake in a thong and pair of unlaced sneakers, sits on the edge of a white leather couch.

Miranda ignores him as she sorts through a stack of accounting papers and bills. PAST DUE is a general theme.

Here eyes drift to a silhouette in the doorway. They only linger for a second, until she hears a leathery SQUISH.

She finds Dunbar stretching out to his full length. When her eyes dart back to the doorway the silhouette is gone.

MIRANDA

Get your greasy man parts off my  
four thousand dollar sofa.

Dunbar springs up instantly. Miranda keeps checking her phone reflexively, every ten or eleven seconds or so.

DUNBAR

Sorry, boss. Force of habit.

MIRANDA

You know what? Out.

DUNBAR

But I'm soooo bored.

MIRANDA

Don't whine. And tie your damn laces while you're at it. The last thing I need is for you to fall down the stairs and break that ass.

DUNBAR

Yes ma'am.

He drops to a squat to tie his laces. She notices the silhouette again. It lets Dunbar slide through the door.

MIRANDA

Gwendolyn?

The silhouette stays where it is.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Would you get in here already? I already told you I'm not calling you "Johnny Sodapop."

GWENDOLYN (22) moves into the room. She's a short, very butch, very pretty tomboy.

GWENDOLYN

Two things. One - I want that to be my stage name. I told you. Two -

MIRANDA

You don't need a stage name, because you're never getting on my stage. You've got lady parts. As previously discussed.

GWENDOLYN

And two - two, I need my paycheck.

MIRANDA

I pay you?

GWENDOLYN

Come on. I got bills and shit.

Miranda looks down at the papers on her desk.

MIRANDA

Did you just come here to break my balls, or did you need something?

GWENDOLYN

I did. It's Gina.

Miranda's head shoots up.

MIRANDA  
What about her?

GWENDOLYN  
She's here.

Miranda's out of her seat and on her way to the door in record time. She leaves her phone behind. It -

-RINGS as soon as she's gone. The screen fills with a picture of her, Avery, and an older woman who looks a lot like Avery.

The screen reads "AVERY'S MOM."

INT. TINY NEW YORK ONE BEDROOM - DAY

Dix's wide open mouth emits a PROLONGED HIGH NOTE. It warbles at the end. A PIANO cuts out abruptly.

A MIDDLE AGED WOMAN made of eccentric clothing sits behind an ancient upright. Her apartment is filled with books.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN  
You want to sing, or you want to  
dick around on your phone?

Dix's eyes are, in fact, on her phone. She opens a text convo with Avery. The last few texts are all hers.

She nods at the Woman and opens her mouth -

INT. T-BURGE'S KARAOKE - DAY

An odd crowds peppers the second story, daytime Karaoke joint. Tacky daytime Karaoke joint. Beyond tacky.

Bored waiters watch the spectacle. Businessman. Layabouts. Fans of extremely questionable buffet.

An elderly woman clad ALL IN RED dances - or does something she thinks is dancing - on the otherwise empty dance floor.

Dix leans into the mic during a minute and a half long instrumental break in the middle of "MacArthur Park."

The Richard Harris version. Her eyes dart back and forth to check the screen. The seconds count down.

It's almost time. She cozies up to the mic and opens her mouth. The GLOW of a smartphone ringing lights up her pocket.

She slips the phone out immediately. There's no picture. The caller's name reads "AVERY'S MOM."

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Dix's mouth opens wide. A beautiful, unrestrained version of the AVE MARIA pours out of it.

She stands on one side of the grave, her dress a slash of BRIGHT RED amidst a crowd of mourning black.

She tries to keep her moist eyes focused on nothing in particular but they keep flickering to the -

OTHER SIDE OF THE GRAVE -

- at Miranda, who stands in high fashion black, flanked by the dancers from Gussy Up. Gwendolyn stands toward the back.

BARBARA (55), Avery's mom, stands at the head of the grave, the pages of a speech crumpled in her hand. She looks down.

The strains of the Ave fill the crisp Autumn air.

EXT. CEMETERY GATES - DAY

Dix wrings her hands. A few MOURNERS rub her back or offer her a "great job" or a "beautiful, just beautiful."

She barely responds. Dunbar appears, behind him Gwendolyn. Dix stops moving. She knows whose coming next.

Miranda appears between them, a veil obscuring her face. She charges Dix as soon as she see's her.

MIRANDA

What the hell do you think you're doing?

Miranda looks anywhere but at Dix's face.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

A red dress? Who the hell do you think you are? Honestly, Dix... what were you thinking?

DIX

That it's what he asked me to wear to his funeral, so I wore it.

MIRANDA

Asked you when, freshman year of college when you were stoned off your asses inhaling sno-balls and yoo-hoo like there was no tomorrow?

DIX

Pretty much, yeah.

MIRANDA

We all say we want stupid shit at our funeral when we're younger. No one actual goes through with it. It's mortifying.

DIX

It's what he wanted.

MIRANDA

(long stare)

You always have to make everything about you.

DIX

Miranda, he's...

SLAP. Yup. Miranda slaps her. At a funeral.

MIRANDA

You're a dick.

DIX

You're the one causing a scene in a cemetery, and I'm the dick?

Miranda opens her mouth to speak but stops when she catches a few people throwing her a glance or two. She inhales sharply.

Their eyes meet for the first time. A lone SOB escapes from Miranda's throat. Dix nods her head senselessly.

They take a half step toward each other but stop abruptly and look away at the same time. Miranda spins on her heel.

INT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dix stands alone in a corner of the tasteful, slightly overstuffed room. The heavy somber whisper is punctuated with an occasional snuffle or clattered cup.

She tries to cover as much of herself with her arms as she can. It's not much - she glows a vivid RED amidst the black.

The hush of grief overtakes the room. Dix rubs her hands together faster and faster until the nervous energy explodes.

She shuffles into the -

DINING ROOM -

- where a few faces recognize her. She nods at them but doesn't stop moving.

She passes through into the -

KITCHEN -

- where Barbara stands with PRESTON (25), an average, jovial young man with his arm around her. Dix stops and stares.

An "Oh yeah" look crosses her face. Preston doesn't notice.

PRESTON

Oh. Hey dude.

DIX

Preston. Hey.

Barbara turns Preston's face to hers and plants a real romantic-like kiss on him. He leans in to it full force.

Dix stares enrapt as the mathematically mismatched couple makes out. When Barbara's mouth leaves his her head crumples onto his shoulder. He holds her tight.

Dix freezes. The sight of this small, frail woman shaking into the arms of her young lover slams her in the gut.

Her eyes close. One hand covers her face, the other braces itself on the counter. She's about to lose it. Until-

LAUGHTER sounds from outside.

EXT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Miranda holds court at picnic table with uncomfortable chairs. Dunbar sits on one side, Gwendolyn on the other. A few RELATIVES and FRIENDS fill out the small crowd.

MIRANDA

- of course it was just like Avery to show rather than tell. So anyway I open the door and there he is, getting a mouthful of Chuck.

They LAUGH, mostly because she does. Or because they need to.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

And poof, all my childhood dreams  
of a hometown wedding went up in  
smoke. In a single gulp.

She doesn't laugh this time, so no one else does either. A  
moment of silence threatens to become more.

DIX (O.C)

Why don't you tell them why we were  
creeping into his room in the first  
place.

All eyes shoot up to the back door. Dix leans on a railing,  
trying her best to look composed.

SHEPARD (25), a red faced man in a NAVY BLUE SUIT, gets out  
of his seat.

SHEPARD

Dix. Come sit.

Dix looks at Miranda, not quite for permission, but sort of.  
Miranda (sort of) gives it with a shrug.

Shepard hugs Dix as he clears the way to the chair. SHELLY,  
an older relative, puts her elbows on the table.

SHELLY

What's this about creeping now?

MIRANDA

Oh, it's just some silly piece of  
business. Who even remembers?

DIX

If you don't tell them I will.

GWENDOLYN

Come on, boss. You tell this story  
all the time. I mean... a lot.

Miranda's jaw clenches. Her nails drum a frustrated refrain  
on the table. Dunbar touches her shoulder.

Her frustration deflates.

MIRANDA

Our reasons were twofold.

DIX

This one had crossed an ice cold Connecticut campus in nothing but a trench coat and negligee -

MIRANDA

- with this one in tow, because she swore she knew how to "pick a lock"-

DIX

I, for my part, was looking to swipe his ATM card, you understand.

MIRANDA

Tell them why.

DIX

To get tickets to Phantom, obviously.

MIRANDA

Obviously.

DIX

Now you tell them why.

Miranda pauses for effect. Her smile widens with Dix's - they've told this story before. They have a rhythm down pat.

MIRANDA

Why, to offer him my flower, of course.

Shepard does a spit take. Everyone else at the table laughs, sincerely, without a hint of grief.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

It was an ice cold winter, after all, and I was only in town for the long weekend. What better way to stay warm than in the arms of my childhood sweetheart? Poor Chuck. He never saw us coming.

DIX

Poor Chuck? What about poor Miranda. Your lips were blue for the rest of the night.

A savvy ELDERY RELATIVE grins from Miranda to Dix.

ELDERLY RELATIVE

Did you get to see Phantom at least?

DIX

We got the tickets, but there was - lets call it "an incident" - on the train down to the city.

SHEPARD

Holy shit. I was totally with you guys. I completely forgot about that. That was the night those two pricks were dropping the N-Bomb left and right and you threw them off the train - while it was moving.

MIRANDA

Ah, yes. My misspent youth. If regrets were nickels and dimes, right?

SHEPARD

What are you talking about? That was the best thing ever.

Miranda looks over at Dix, whose staring at her. She holds her eye for a moment then shakes it off.

MIRANDA

Who needs a drink?

EXT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - LATER

Preston refills Dunbar's glass from a flask. The two lean against the house, smoking.

PRESTON

So you don't go full dong, huh?

DUNBAR

I promised my mom I'd never do nudity. Might get a cold, you know?

Preston points his cigarette at the end of the driveway, where Miranda and Gwendolyn have a tense conversation.

PRESTON

How's she doing, man?

DUNBAR

She's doing her, only hardcore. K.I.T, "keep it together." Always. You haven't talked to her?

PRESTON

Nah. She took Avery's side in the whole "dating his mom" thing.

DUNBAR

Shit. Yeah. That's you huh? She does not speak highly of you. No way, no how.

PRESTON

I'm OK with that. We were only friends through Avery in high school anyway. Fuck, man. Six months. All I had left was six months.

DUNBAR

For what?

PRESTON

The last time we spoke he told me he'd get over his shit if me and Barb stuck it out for five years. We've been together four and a half. Six more months...

DUNBAR

Dang. Gonna be a rough Christmas I bet. Rough ass Christmas.

PRESTON

Whose that she's talking to?

DUNBAR

Gwendolyn. Johnny. Shit. Ask her what she wants to be called. She works at the club. You could say she's the muscle.

PRESTON

Get out.

DUNBAR

It's true. She reads medical text books - like, from med school - to learn where to hit so it hurts.

PRESTON

Huh.

They watch as Miranda and Gwendolyn's conversation becomes an argument. Miranda shuts it down when Barbara approaches.

Gwendolyn offers a few gestures of affection. Barbara accepts them but makes it clear she wants to talk to Miranda alone.

Gwendolyn weaves away through the glut of cars lined up on the street and in the driveway.

EXT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - TREEHOUSE - DAY

Dix sits with her dress hiked up to her waist, legs dangling off a wooden platform set in the branches of a tree. Shepard lights a bowl next to her.

They watch people milling quietly in the back yard. A FAT MAN spills a drink on a CHILD. HE gets annoyed at the CHILD.

Dix laughs and instinctively reaches for her phone. She stops herself at the last second.

DIX

Fuck. I just went to text him.

Shepard offers her some weed.

DIX (CONT'D)

I'm good. I suck at being high.

SHEPARD

How long was he sick? Do you know?

DIX

A few months. Which is a few months longer than they gave him when he was diagnosed, I guess.

SHEPARD

God. Imagine keeping that from everyone you know. All your friends, your family. Why didn't he tell anyone?

DIX

Shep... I can't.

SHEPARD

Right, sorry.

He takes her hand. They sit in a silence only broken by the wind through the crackling autumn leaves.

CRUNCH. CRUNCH. CRUNCH. Footsteps approach.

GWENDOLYN (O.C)

Ahoy there.

They look down. Gwendolyn waves a six pack at them.

GWENDOLYN (CONT'D)  
Cool if I come up?

DIX  
That's not IPA is it?

GWENDOLYN  
Fuck that shit.

DIX  
Come on, then.

In the time it takes Dix and Shepard to scoot over, Gwendolyn is ready to take her place. She opens three beers.

DIX (CONT'D)  
You guys know each other?

Gwendolyn reaches across Dix to shake Shepard's hand.

GWENDOLYN  
Johnny Soda Pop.

DIX  
Gwendolyn. It's Gwendolyn.

GWENDOLYN  
Whatever you say, "Daisy Rue."

DIX  
No one say -

SHEPARD  
You'll "rue" the day you called her by her full name.

DIX  
Fuck's sake.

They sip their beers.

GWENDOLYN  
You ready to vag up and bury the hatchet with Miranda? She misses you something fierce.

DIX  
Talk to her about it.

GWENDOLYN  
I do. All the time. So did Avery. All the time. Get on it.

As if on cue Miranda appears in the backyard. She looks around. It only takes her a second to catch sight of Dix's dress shining through the mute autumn browns.

They can tell she's annoyed, even from on high and across the yard. She turns back into the house in a huff.

Dix's phone VIBRATES. The screen reads "Avery's Mom." She stares at it until it stops ringing.

GWENDOLYN (CONT'D)

You going to call her back? I know she wants to talk to you.

Dix stares at the word Avery on her missed call notification until the screen goes black.

DIX.

Not today. Today I drink. Today I drink like he's still alive.

She downs the rest of her beer and grabs another.

DIX

Let's get the fuck out of here and have some fun.

CUT TO:

INT. DIX'S CAR - DAY

A mass of hair and red dress twists and turns on the back seat of a two-door sedan. A pair of shoes serve as a pillow.

Dix turns into the light. Her arm goes over her face immediately. Her phone BUZZES. She ignores it.

It BUZZES again. She groans to find it under the drivers seat. She squints at the number. A local New York exchange.

DECLINE.

She curls back into herself, slightly more awake then she wants to be. BUZZ. BUZZ. She covers her ears.

BUZZ. BUZZ. BUZZ. With a grunt, she forces herself up in defeat and answers her phone as angry as she can.

DIX

Whoever this is - what?!

EXT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - DAY

Miranda, dolled up in her best Casual Friday ensemble, paces on the concrete path between the grass.

The mourners cars are gone, the house is quiet. A bright sun shines, a bevy of birds blow bugle-blast-b-flats.

Yeah. It's the next morning.

MIRANDA

Where the hell are you? If you're not here in ten minutes you'll be late. Did you even make it home last night?

INT. DIX'S CAR - DAY

DIX

Miranda? Take it easy, breezy. I'm feeling deadly over here.

She squints around to get her bearings.

EXT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - DAY

Miranda looks over her shoulder at the house.

MIRANDA

I agreed to this on one condition. Just one. That you be respectful. Being late is the opposite of that.

INT. DIX'S CAR - DAY

Dix's car is parked under a tree on a suburban street. She looks out the drivers side windows.

She smiles when she realizes where she is. And hangs up.

EXT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - DAY

Miranda talks for a second or two before she realizes the call was disconnected. She fumes.

Her fingers slide through her contacts to Dix. She presses the call button, pacing all the while.

She doesn't notice the SLASH OF RED HAIR in the car window across the street, a little up the block.

Dix's voicemail kicks in. She fumes more. Enough that she misses the CREAK-SLAM of the car door opening and closing.

MIRANDA

No I will not leave a message or "send you a text" god dammit. What I will do is shove this phone down your throat until you choke on it.

DIX (O.C)

Hey asshole.

Miranda looks up from her muttering. Dix struts across the street in last night's dress, shoes in her hand.

DIX (CONT'D)

Did you just yell at me for almost being late? That's low, dude. Even for you.

Miranda is at a complete loss.

DIX (CONT'D)

What? I thought I'd beat the traffic.

They face each other on the path to Barbara's front door. Miranda seethes. Her arms flex. Her fists clench.

DIX (CONT'D)

So help me god if you slap me again I'll punch your ovaries out.

Miranda's breath goes from shallow to long, from angry to controlled. She shakes it off. Literally.

MIRANDA

(To herself)

This is for Barbara. This is for Barbara. This is for Barbara.

DIX

And Avery.

She heads for the front door. After a few seconds of forced even breathing, Miranda follows. Dix rings the doorbell.

MIRANDA

You look like shit, by the way.

Dix shoots her a sincere, sad look.

DIX

Yeah. My best friend just died.

Preston opens the door. He's only wearing boxer-briefs.

PRESTON

Oh, cool. You're here. She's in the library.

INT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY

DIX

You want us to what?

She leans as far forward in the plush leather chair she's in as she can. Miranda sits next to her, in an identical chair.

Barbara sits behind an ornate, antique desk. Preston stands at her side, a shirt unbuttoned over his boxer-briefs.

BARBARA

I don't want you to do anything. It's what Avery wants. Wanted.

She brings a well worn hankie to her lips. Preston puts a comforting hand on her shoulder.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Go get dressed, you troglodyte.

Preston steps back and leans against the window sill.

PRESTON

Nah, I'm good.

MIRANDA

I'm sorry, could you maybe repeat what you just said.

BARBARA

Your friend - my son - had a very extensive last will & testament saved to the desktop of every computer he ever owned. Some kids made Christmas lists. Avery made wills. I have one from when he was in Junior High on a floppy disk. One of the big ones.

DIX

Yeah, he would talk about it all the time. It was real important that his sixth grade lab partner got his copy of the second Calvin & Hobbe's collection.

MIRANDA

Dix. Shh.

BARBARA

No, she's right. His last one - his real...his will - was less comprehensive, but...

A SHUDDER runs through her whole body. Preston leans forward and slides a glass of water in to her hand.

Dix and Miranda stay stock-still until she composes herself.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Like I said, he wants you to drive his body across country. Together. To his final resting place, facing the Pacific Ocean. I have details somewhere...

Miranda twitches in her seat.

MIRANDA

I don't mean to be indiscrete but... body? What was in the - what did we bury yesterday if it wasn't -

She stops herself, instantly hot-faced. Barbara gulps down a potential SOB. Preston puts his hand on her shoulder.

PRESTON

Dude.

DIX

Miranda. Jesus.

BARBARA

Can you please just say yes? I don't have it in me to try and convince you and it's what he wanted and I already - I already made arrangements that I won't know how to handle if you don't say yes and I have so much other stuff to do and...please?

MIRANDA

(Quick)

We'll do it.

She scoots to the edge of her seat and takes Barbara's hands across the table. It's a stretch.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)  
Of course, Barbara. Anything you  
need. Anything.

All eyes turn to Dix.

DIX  
I...

She holds up her hands.

INT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

The garage door slowly opens with an ELECTRIC WHINE. Miranda, Dix, and Preston stand in the bright sun on the other side.

DIX  
... can not believe I'm agreeing to  
this.

The sun spills onto a HEARSE. A sleek, modern, jet-black hearse. With tinted windows.

Miranda steps in to the garage to check it out. Preston moves to a fridge and takes out a beer. Just one.

Dix freezes. Her eyes lock on the back of the hearse, where the body is. A panic attack starts in her lower body.

MIRANDA  
So he's what... in the back?

PRESTON  
Yeah, on ice. Not actual ice, but  
you know. Preserved.

Miranda presses her hand to the back window.

MIRANDA  
Can't see a thing.

She chews her thumbnail.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)  
And we'd have to be in L.A in what,  
like a week?

PRESTON  
North of L.A, yeah. Off the P.C.H.  
Five days, give or take. That a  
problem?

MIRANDA

It shouldn't be. The three of us made the trek in less time right after they graduated. Avery really wanted to try this Monte Cristo he heard about in Solvang. God. Only he could get me to drive across country for a sandwich. Right, Dix?

Dix is gone.

INT. DIX'S CAR - DAY

Dix sits in the passenger seat, hands pressed to the dashboard for dear life. Preston gets in on the drivers side.

He hands her a beer.

PRESTON

Why are you in the passenger seat?

DIX

I really don't know.

Her hand shakes with the can. He opens it for her.

PRESTON

He loved you the most, you know? He never said. Not a dude that liked taking sides or making people feel lousy, but I could tell.

DIX

You haven't talked to him in five years. Things change.

PRESTON

Four and a half. And we texted all the time. He just didn't want Barb to know he'd let us off the hook. Believe it or not, he thought the "conflict" was good for her. I have no clue why.

DIX

Did he think driving his fucking corpse across country would be good for me?

PRESTON

Yup.

DIX

How?

He holds up a DVD in a white envelope. "If they say yes" is written on it.

PRESTON

Why don't you let him answer that.

INT. HEARSE - BACK SEAT - DAY

Dix and Miranda huddle next to each other in the dark, cushy back seat. Velvet curtains obscure the windows.

Avery's face fills a screen imbedded in the backseat. He looks extremely pale and exhausted.

He holds the camera on himself and walks down FIFTH AVENUE and into CENTRAL PARK. A full spring blooms around him.

AVERY

Dudes!! I'm totally dead! I'm guessing it sucks but...you know.

Dix and Miranda wince and smile at the same time. Miranda folds her hand over Dix's. Dix squeezes.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DIX'S BUILDING - DAY

The hearse awkwardly double parks in front of a row of down town shops. Dix gets out.

AVERY (V.O)

Do I sound spooky like a ghost?  
Spoooooky?

Dix leans in to the window as it slowly glides down.

AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)

Sorry, couldn't resist. As you probably know, if you're watching this, I got some pretty bad news recently. It's April now, and I told both of you that I was going out of town for a week. I didn't.

Miranda says something to Dix.

AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)

I did a bunch of different things.  
Talked to a lot of doctors.  
(MORE)

AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 Freaked the fuck out, on both an  
 emotional level and on Grindr.

Dix straightens up impatiently. Miranda gestures for her to come back down to window level. She won't.

                  AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 I'll spare you the details but it's  
 bad. I mean...obviously you know  
 how bad. "Not going to make it"  
 bad. Didn't make it bad, I guess.

Miranda throws her hands up in frustration. The window slowly rolls up. Dix stays where she is.

                  AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 I've pretty much decided to keep it  
 to myself. At the moment I don't  
 know if I'll pull it off, but if  
 you're watching this, I did.  
 Otherwise I'd have deleted it.

The hearse pulls off. Dix watches it go.

INT. GUSSY UP NIGHTCLUB - OFFICE - NIGHT

Miranda leans on the window that looks down on her club. The room is a bustle, the crowd drunk and electric.

                  AVERY (V.O)  
 So look, this is all new, early  
 days shit, so who knows where it'll  
 end up, but I also pretty much  
 decided that you two get to be the  
 lucky ones. You get to be the ones  
 that share this final ride with me,  
 whatever the hell it ends up being.

Miranda watches as Gwendolyn, in very lazy drag, weaves her way through the crowd. She motions to Dunbar behind the bar.

                  AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 I'll write my mom a letter and say  
 my goodbyes where I can, in my own  
 way, as usual. But you two - you're  
 too huge in my life. If I won't  
 have you around to be part of the  
 end of it, I want you to - I don't  
 know, bear witness after the fact?

Dunbar slides her two purple drinks in martini glasses. Gwendolyn looks up at Miranda. Miranda nods.

AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 I kind of can't wait to see what I  
 come up with. I'm a real hoot that  
 way. Real big hoot, this guy.

Gwendolyn sidles up to GINA (45), a fiercely dressed,  
 entirely disinterested woman at the bar. She accepts the  
 drink and allows Gwendolyn to sit next to her.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dix haphazardly fills an overnight bag.

                  AVERY (V.O)  
 So welcome to my final days. I  
 think I'll skip to the end.

The room around her looks like she could pack everything in  
 an hour and leave no trace of herself behind.

The furniture is cheap but new, not even used enough to get  
 scuffed or smudged.

                  AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 My earthly remains. You guys  
 already know where I want to lay my  
 weary bones to rest. Or you should.

She looks around for something other than clothes to pack.  
 The only thing she finds is her phone charger.

                  AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 That stretch of the one, where the  
 ocean goes on forever. All you need  
 to do is retrace the steps of our  
 trip...our huge, life altering,  
 beautiful, wonderful...  
                   (His voice breaks a  
                   little)  
 I'm not getting worked up. I just  
 saw a guy with a huge dong roller  
 skating in a thong. I think he  
 works at the bank.

She zips her bag closed, sits on the bed, and checks her  
 phone. The screen reads "7:15."

EXT. GUSSY UP NIGHTCLUB - ALLEY - NIGHT

Dunbar and Gwendolyn load Miranda's bags into the hearse.  
 Miranda stands in the doorway to the club.

AVERY (V.O)  
 Anyway, back to the matter at hand.  
 You guys are dicks. Your weak-tea  
 falling out makes everyone cranky.

Dunbar adjusts his spangly leather vest. He waits to see if  
 Miranda will hug him when he approaches. She doesn't.

                  AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 It's been on my mind a lot this  
 past week. I never tried to do  
 anything about it because I never  
 thought I could. Even though it  
 affects me more than anyone else.

Gwendolyn leans on the hood of the hearse until Dunbar  
 disappears inside. She opens her mouth to speak.

                  AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 So of course now that I'm dead,  
 when I can reap not one single oat  
 of my valiant effort to mend your  
 stupid idiot fence, I take action.

Miranda shakes her head. Gwendolyn charges inside.

                  AVERY (V.O) (CONT'D)  
 You guys get to drive my body  
 across country. I'll work out all  
 the details and the paperwork and  
 the logistics. But the two of you  
 have to do it.

Miranda hops in the hearse.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DIX'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Dix looks at her phone. The time reads "10:45."

                  AVERY (V.O)  
 Let's face it. Without me around  
 the two of you are going to be one  
 huge, codependent mess.

The hearse glides to a stop in front of Dix.

EXT. WEST SIDE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The hearse makes its way north through sparse traffic.

EVERY (V.O)

You both love to brag about how proactive you are. Largely nonsense. Dix, you haven't had a paying job in like three years. I'm the only person you talk to. And don't think I'm unaware of the ghoulish amount of time you spend at that bizarre Karaoke place.

INT. HEARSE - NIGHT

Miranda steers the car onto a dark, mostly empty freeway. Dix stares out the window. The clock reads "12:23."

EVERY (V.O)

And Miranda, don't you go getting smug and haughty. You ain't got nothing to be smug and haughty about. You hide yourself away in the club like some sad, celibate Rapunzel, looking down at everyone from your office like your shit don't stink. I've used the bathroom after you. It smells terrible, just like everyone else's.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

The hearse takes an exit for NOWHERE U.S.A.

EVERY (V.O)

I need you to do this for me. It's important. I need you to become those two fierce assholes that were ready to fight the good fight. Lately you've both been more interested in talking about what fight is better than the other. The world needs you two to slap it around every now and then, you know?

INT. HEARSE - MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Miranda sits in the parked hearse, watching the video. Avery's face fills her phone screen.

EVERY

We should only ever fight for each other, right?

He gets off a bench and walks down a verdant path.

                  AVERY (CONT'D)

Anyway, my batteries going to die  
and I swear that guy with the huge  
dong is circling in an ever  
narrowing spiral in my direction. I  
love you both. Stay tuned for -  
messages from beyond the grave.  
Wooooo.

The video ends. Miranda stares at the frozen image of Avery's face on the screen, his smile only a little sad.

BANG BANG. Miranda jumps. Dix appears at the window.

                  DIX

                  (Muffled)

Are you coming or what?

Miranda plugs her phone into a car charger. When she gets out she slams the door. Her phone falls between the seats.

EXT. MOTEL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

                  DIX

Been on the road less than two  
hours and already you're getting on  
my last nerve. This is gonna be a  
treat. A real damn treat. Mutter  
mutter, gripe gripe.

She crosses the parking lot to the flickering neon light of THE BURROW OWL, a genuine, honest to god dive bar.

INT. THE BURROW OWL - BOOTH - NIGHT

The bar is crowded with mostly BLUE COLLAR LOCALS, sipping on cheap cans of beer, shooting pool, flirting.

The men have thick hands and leathery skin. The women a few extra pounds and slightly out of date clothes.

A group of four younger, finely cultivated DUDE-BRAH'S dominate the jukebox with limply aggressive tunes.

Dix & Miranda face each other in the back corner, a pint of beer in front of each of them. Not one word is spoken.

Dix lifts hers to her lips.

                                  TIME CUT TO:

SLAM. An empty pint SLAMS down next to four of its kind. Dix follows it with a shot.

Miranda sips on her second beer. No words come.

TIME CUT TO:

SLAM. A sixth empty pint slams down next to a whiskey on the rocks. Dix chucks the straw on the table and drinks.

Miranda has a half empty gin next to two empty pints.

DIX

Fine, see if I care.

She bolts out of the booth. Miranda exhales like she's been holding her breath.

INT. THE BURROW OWL - BAR - NIGHT

Dix slides onto a stool and motions for another whiskey. An OLD TIMER next to her offers a grin.

OLD TIMER

How're yeh?

DIX

Shitty.

OLD TIMER

Sorry to hear it. You get them drinks in, you hear?

He goes politely back to his drink with a nod. HUSKER, a trim but pudgy fella with an immaculate beard, sidles up.

HUSKER

This guy - what a major hick, right? It's like, dude, the mine closed a hundred years ago. Take a fucking bath already.

Dix stares straight ahead.

DIX

Nope.

HUSKER

Look, me and my band are up from Brooklyn, and it's fulla luddites and groupies in here. What say you and your pal -

She very deliberately turns her stool to face him.

DIX

Look, buddy, I've got this whiskey, the next whiskey, and maybe a whiskey after that, a real fucked about demeanor, and a hang over that started an hour after my second beer. So I'm going to hit you with a little bit of wisdom before I point this stool back at the bar. I don't care about your band. Nobody cares about your band. Your band probably sucks. Take that for what it's worth, but for the love of god take it away from me.

HUSKER

Jeez. You gotta learn how to mind your manners, huh? Fucking prick.

Without hesitation Dix throws her drink at him. He pivots out of the way. The drink hits the face of a WOMAN behind him.

SHEILA is tall, wears combat boots and a T-Shirt with the logo for a band called "Zero Minus You."

SHEILA

What. The. Fuck. You dick.

DIX

Shit, sorry. I was aiming for him.

SHEILA

How dare you throw a drink at the bass player of ZMY. Their first EP changed my life.

DIX

Bass player? Ick.

ELLIE and VICKY, two similarly garbed - and drunk - friends of Sheila's approach. They form a half circle around Dix.

ELLIE

We got a problem here, Sheila?

DIX

Look gals, I don't want a problem, OK? Long day. Lets call it a Mulligan and move on.

She swings her stool back to the bar. Vicky turns it back.

HUSKER

She said you didn't care about the band. She said we sucked.

VICKY

That true? You talking shit?

Vicky wraps a pink bandana around her right hand.

ELLIE

Shouldn't ought to do that.

SHEILA

Say you're sorry. To him.

The half circle tightens around Dix's stool. She holds up a hand to indicate "one second" and downs her drink.

And that's it. She goes right back to ignoring them. Sheila takes a step back and throws her hands up.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Ok, cool. I see how it is. That's fine, I feel fine -

CRACK. She punches Dix right across the jaw.

WHAM. Dix clocks her back without a seconds hesitation. Vicky lands one in Dix's side. Dix swivels with it.

Ellie throws an uppercut that catches Dix off guard. She staggers back. Ellie charges.

Dix kicks down on her shin as hard as possible. Ellie staggers. Sheila throws a left cross. Dix blocks it.

Vicky gets behind her and slams her face on the bar.

INT. THE BURROW OWL - BOOTH

Miranda looks up at the commotion. Zero Minus You and a few patrons gather in a small crowd, blocking the bar.

She hears a CRACK and a LAUGH and forces her eyes down at her drink. She shakes her head deliberately.

INT. THE BURROW OWL - BAR

Dix has the upper hand. Ellie is down, Vicky bent over, grabbing her stomach, and Sheila holds her face.

Two more FAN GIRLS come up behind Sheila, who laughs as best she can through a broken nose.

SHEILA

Looks like you bit off more than you can chew this time. ZMY fans are raw.

She breaks a bottle on the bar.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

You got two seconds to apologize to the best god damn bass player of all time before I -

KICK. She tumbles forward and staggers to her knees. Miranda stands between the two Fan Girls.

She cracks her knuckles. Her eyes lock with Dix's. A huge smile crosses Dix's face. SLAM. Vicky gets in a jab.

INT. THE BURROW OWL - BAR - LATER

A few GRUNTS and GROANS fill the air. A CRACK here, a THUMP there. The Old Timer looks to the far end of the bar.

A BRITISH ROCK SONG blares. Ellie crashes into the stool closet to the Old Timer. He secures his drink.

She pulls herself upright. Miranda charges, pulls Ellie's shirt above her head, and shoves her away from the Old Timer.

The music overtakes the sound of the fight. Little evidence of it presents itself near the Old Timer until -

- Husker's stupid hat flops through the air and lands on the bar. He moves toward it, doubled over.

Dix's hands pull him away from it. A BARTENDER saunters over to the Old Timer. He lifts the hat to wipe under it.

The Old Timer glances down the bar. He nods and motions at the bartender for two drinks.

The Bartender sets them down just as Miranda limps over to her stool. She flops forward, bruised and battered.

Dix joins her, even more bruised and battered. They sit next to each other facing forward. They drink at the same time.

Their breath comes heavily in time to the music as the adrenaline wears off.