

# **EXCLUSIVE MEDIA**

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## **CAN A SONG SAVE YOUR LIFE?**

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# CAN A SONG SAVE YOUR LIFE?

(Pre-Production)

**Genre:** Romance/ Music/ Comedy

**Writer/Director:** **John Carney** (*Dogs of Babel, The Rafter, Once*)

**Cast:** **Scarlett Johansson** (*Iron Man 2, She's Just Not That Into You, Vicky Cristina Barcelona, The Other Boleyn Girl, The Prestige, The Black Dahlia, Match Point, The Girl With The Pearl Earring, Lost In Translation, The Man Who Wasn't There, The Horse Whisperer*)

**Mark Ruffalo** (*The Avengers, Shutter Island, The Kids Are All Right, Collateral, Zodiac, Just Like Heaven, 13 Going On 30, Eternal Sunshine, Windtalkers, The Last Castle, You Can Count On Me*)

**Hailee Steinfeld** (*Ender's Game, Rosaline, Romeo & Juliet, True Grit*)

**Production Company:** **Exclusive Media** (*Rush, The Ides of March, The Way Back*)

**Executive Producer:** **Judd Apatow** (*Bridesmaids, Get Him To The Greek, Pineapple Express, Step Brothers, You Don't Mess With The Zohan, Forgetting Sarah Marshall, Knocked Up, Superbad, The 40 Year Old Virgin*)

**Music:** **Gregg Alexander** (*New Radicals*)

**Synopsis:** Seduced by dreams of a making it in the big city, Gretta (Johansson) and her long-time boyfriend move to New York to pursue their passion for music. She's heartbroken when he dumps her for the fame and fortune of a big solo contract, leaving Gretta all on her own. Her world takes a turn when a down-on-his luck record producer (Ruffalo) stumbles upon her singing in a local bar and is immediately captivated by her raw talent and inspiring authenticity - they may be each other's last chance to turn their lives around.

Somewhere between friendship and their love of music, the two strangers strike a chord that captures the hearts of everyone around them, proving that every great story has its own soundtrack.

## CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

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**Scarlett Johansson**  
as GRETTA

A talented singer-songwriter whose passion for music leads to her “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity.



**Mark Ruffalo**  
as DAN

A down on his luck record producer whose professional and personal life becomes intertwined with Gretta’s.



**Hailee Steinfeld**  
as VIOLET

Dan’s vibrant, straight talking teenage daughter.

Pre-title.

The ALPHABET fades up. A ribbon across screen, A through Z.

The letters **A** and **R** glow brighter than the rest, drifting closer. As all the other letters fade away.

Dan's narration is fast-paced and energetic.

DAN  
(narrating)

**A.** and **R.**

Just two distant letters of the alphabet to you. But to any aspiring lead vocalist, sixteen year old guitarist, or testosterone-charged drummer, these are the two magic-sounding letters for which they dropped out of school, argued with parents, left home, and held out.

The letters come together : **A & R**

DAN (CONT'D)  
(narration)  
Artiste and Repertoire. That's me.

INT. A LIVE VENUE - EARLY NINETIES.

Card: 1991

The venue is thumping. An exciting new band play on stage. Think Smashing Pumpkins crossed with Sonic Youth.

The camera scans the too-cool, young, New York audience. Dan's narration continues.

DAN  
(narration, fast,  
educational)

Artiste and Repertoire is the division of the record label that is responsible for discovering new recording artists and bringing them to the attention of the record company.

We notice, dotted among the CROWD, a number of characters watching the band from different vantage points.

They stand out, as they are dressed in slick suits, some with sunglasses, some taking notes, some on their out-dated cell phones. ALL of them surreptitiously snort cocaine during the set.

DAN (CONT'D)

(narration)

See how these guys stand out? Apart from the burgeoning, or in many cases well established cocaine habit, they are not fans. They've all followed the *same* lead, to the *same* club, on the *same* night, to make the *same* pitch. Everyone else is here to enjoy themselves. Your A&R man? he's here to do a job.

INT. THE DRESSING ROOM - LATER

A number of GROUPIES have assembled outside. Among them, our A&R men, filtering in and out, making their pitches.

INT. THE DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The BAND, sit around, toweling off, smoking, drinking beer.

One A&R MAN in particular, is making a suave pitch. The lead singer (17), nods his head with wide-eyed enthusiasm. They are about to strike a verbal agreement.

DAN

(narration)

It's easy to wow these kids. After all, most of them are spotty virgins just out of high school. That's if they're any good. Just tell 'em about the time Led Zeppelin were in the label offices and how you ended up spending the evening with Robert Plant getting totally shitfaced...

The A&R MAN produces a little coke and offers lines to the kids.

A & R MAN:

...so anyway, Bobby said to me, and I shit you not....

DAN  
(narration)  
...they'll be eating out of your  
hand...

The lead singer snorts a line off the back of the A&R man's hand.

INT. THE DRESSING ROOM - LATER

The excited BAND peruse a neat pile of business cards: Virgin. EMI, Polygram, Island, Epic etc.

DAN  
(narration)  
If the band don't have a manager  
it's like taking candy from a  
baby... literally. That's the thing  
about youth- it says YES to  
everything. And always ends up  
getting screwed. That's why we try  
to get 'em young. In 1970, after  
ten years of work, and nine gold  
albums, Mick Jagger's bank Balance  
was ten Thousand Pounds.  
(beat)  
*I shit you not.*

One of our A&R MEN, (25, good looking, call him MARK), shakes hands with the LEAD SINGER. Result. He punches the air outside the dressing room, to the dismay of his other colleagues.

DAN (CONT'D)  
(narration)  
There's an in-joke among us record  
company boys that A & R actually  
stands for Assault and Robbery. I  
like that joke. I made it.

EXT. THE VALET PARKING - LATER

The A & R men, winner and losers, all shake hands and get into their cars, BMWs, Mercedes, and Lexus's. They speed off into the night.

We TRAVEL with the winner A&R man as he speeds uptown, psyched-up, laughing, music blaring, and top down.

DAN  
 (narration)  
 Tomorrow morning, this lucky A&R man will drive into work, where he'll introduce the new talent to the president of the label...

INT. A RECORD COMPANY OFFICE - EARLY NINETIES

The same band from the club last night, is shown around a record company office. They shake hands with various record company executives, including THE PRESIDENT, a formidable looking man in Ralph Lauren gear. The A&R man from last night leads the way. Confident, swaggering, well dressed.

DAN  
 (narration)  
 Two lawyers, masquerading as rivals but often working for the same company, will draw up a memo, a deal will be struck. The band will sign their lives and publishing away for the next six albums. The lawyers will get an upgrade on their company cars. If all goes according to plan, the band will go on to global success, the record company will get very, very rich, and the A & R man....

Track into the A&R man, sitting in his big office, snorting a line of coke followed by a glass of Jack Daniels... he looks directly into camera... he is already burning out... the music grinds to a halt.

DAN (CONT'D)  
 (narration)  
 ...our A&R man will inevitably crash and burn, in a business that is as jaded and cynical as it is lucrative.  
 Our only real home-grown industry...  
 Rock 'n roll.

"Wild Flower" by The Cult, starts up, LOUD on the track.

DAN (CONT'D)  
 (narration)  
 But that was twenty years ago.  
 Things are a little different now.

Titles.

INT. A SHITTY APARTMENT - MORNING - TITLES

DAN (early forties, but looking fifty), wakes up in a single bed in a tiny studio apartment. The sun is streaming in the window. Around the room are packing boxes. Some half open, others still taped closed.

On his bedside table, an over-flowing ashtray, empty bottles of beer, and a bottle of Jack D with three inches left in it. Dan has a likable, troubled, burnt-out face, a three-day beard, and bloodshot eyes. He stares at the wall.

EXT. THE BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER - TITLES

Dan opens the window and stands on his little balcony, lighting up a cigarette. Down below, it's a sunny, bright morning, and the city is alive and teeming with activity. We hold on Dan watching it all. Titles and music continue.

INT. THE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dan is shaving. He's done half his face. He catches his reflection in the mirror, and pauses. Then, for some reason, he throws the razor into the basin, and dries off his face. Half of his face is clean, the other is dark with stubble. He literally has a two-tone face.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dan shuts down his cell phone, closes the curtains, and gets back into bed for the afternoon.

Titles continue into:

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - MUSIC OVER

Dan drives in his big, vintage, beat-up Mark 10 Jaguar. It was probably a lot nicer when he bought it. Now, the car is a mess. *He's* a mess. He opens his glove box, and about sixty C.D.s slip out onto the floor and passenger seat. They are demos and promos from bands. He pats around the floor like a blind man, looking for something to play. He sticks C.D. after C.D. in.

We hear a cross section of derivative and unimaginative demo tapes. Dan sighs, screams, punches his wheel, at each of them.



DAN  
Come on guys. Give me something.  
Anything! Gimmie a chorus. Okay, a  
verse. ONE verse. Something. Gimmie  
a line. One line? No?

As he drives, he turns off his stereo, chucking the C.D.'s  
out of the car.

Hanging off the rear view mirror, is a cross, some beads, and  
a plastic HEADPHONE JACK, tied to a piece of string like a  
necklace.

We PULL FOCUS onto it as we motor along...

EXT. A SCHOOL - LATER

Dan pulls up outside the gates of a school. He double parks,  
and waits. He is Jittery. He takes his HIP FLASK out of his  
breast coat pocket. Checks his watch. Too early in the day.  
Transfers it into the glove box, locking it with his key.

He sits. Checks his watch. Dries his brow.

Close on the Glove box. Dan looks at it. There's whiskey in  
there.

He waits more, but then gives up, unlocking the glove box and  
taking two hits from the flask. He returns it, filling his  
mouth full of mints. He sits there; calmer now. The edge off.

In a moment, VIOLET (15), taps on his window. She wears  
heels, and is dressed in a provocative skirt, ripped  
fishnets, and covered in make up. Dan rolls down his window,  
looking at her.

VIOLET:  
Where's mom?

DAN  
Where's my daughter?

VIOLET:  
Whadda you mean?

He looks at her outfit, sighing.

DAN  
Your mother has a deadline. She  
asked me to look after you for the  
afternoon. Exciting, eh?

We hold on Violet, unimpressed.

INT. THE CAR - LATER

Dan drives his daughter through heavy afternoon traffic in awkward silence. He looks at her outfit with embarrassment.

DAN  
So you wanna go to the natural  
history museum? Or go to the park,  
and get ice creams?

VIOLET:  
Why would I want to do that? I'm  
not ten. (beat) What's that smell?

DAN  
What smell?

VIOLET:  
That sorta... alcohol smell?

He rolls down the window.

DAN  
Oh yeah, that's gas. I was filling  
her up, and I spilled some on my  
pants.

VIOLET:  
Imagine mom found out you were DUI.  
She'd kill you.

DAN  
I'm not DUI. (beat) Okay, I had one  
drink because I was nervous about  
meeting you.

VIOLET:  
Why would you be nervous about  
meeting me?

DAN  
Because I'm an estranged father.  
That's what we do. We get nervous.  
We're a mess. We drink. We fuck up  
and try make amends. Haven't you  
ever been to the movies?

She watches him. He opens the glove box, and takes another  
swig.

VIOLET:  
Gimmie a drink or I'll tell mom.

DAN  
You're too young to drink.

VIOLET:  
I'm a fifteen year old daughter of  
fuck ups. That's what we do. We  
drink. And act out. And get  
pregnant, and stuff. Haven't you  
ever been to the movies.

DAN  
Are you pregnant?

VIOLET:  
Of course not. (beat) I use  
protection.

DAN  
Okay okay okay.

Dan puts a finger in his ear and makes a warbling noise to  
avoid hearing this bit.

VIOLET:  
What in hell are you doing?

DAN  
I'm trying to pretend I didn't hear  
that.

VIOLET:  
I'm a teenager, what did you *think*  
we do?

DAN  
I don't know, go to the drive in,  
kiss in cars, talk over the phone  
in your rooms, meet at the diner.  
Cosy stuff. I dunno.

She sighs, grabbing his flask. She takes a swig. Grimaces.  
She's bluffing about drinking.

She turns up a song on the radio. A catchy pop song.

DAN (CONT'D)  
You like them?

VIOLET:  
They're okay.

DAN  
I saw their first gig a couple  
months ago. It was great.

VIOLET:  
Oh yeah? Did you sign them?

DAN  
You know I didn't sign them.

VIOLET:  
Just checking.

DAN  
Jesus, you're turning into your mother.

VIOLET:  
So long as I'm not turning into you...

Silence.

VIOLET: (CONT'D)  
Can we go to the movies?

DAN  
No way.

EXT. THE MEAT PACKING DISTRICT - MOMENTS LATER

Dan pulls up at an old factory in the Meat Packing District. It's been converted into offices. He pauses outside, looking up at the door. A simple, brushed-steel sign reads "R&M".

DAN  
I think I have a meeting this afternoon. Do you wanna wait, or come in?

VIOLET:  
You *think* you have a meeting? Do you or not?

DAN  
Let's find out...

She gets out, reluctantly following her father into the building.

INT. A RECORD COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

Dan walks through a funky, busy office space. Posters of bands line the walls. Phones ring, and execs chat on their hands-free phones behind glass.

A few of them wave at Dan as he crosses the floor. With his bed head, and half beard, he looks out of place here. Violet follows behind.

They approach a desk behind which sits a cute (new) secretary.

DAN  
Where's Saul at this afternoon?

SECRETARY  
How may I help you, sir?

DAN  
Tell him Dan's here.

SECRETARY  
What is it in connection with?

Dan starts laughing. Violet looks embarrassed. Another secretary, PHILLIS (35), exits an office from behind the desk, immediately recognizing Dan.

PHILLIS  
Hey Dan. How are ya?

DAN  
Hey Phillis. Where's Saul?

PHILLIS  
He's in the boardroom with marketing and the I-tunes guys. Head right in. I'll send in a pot of coffee. Hi Violet.

Violet nods her head.

SECRETARY  
Sorry.. I wasn't sure who he was?

PHILLIS  
This is Dan Mulligan, Jenny. He owns the company.

The new secretary blushes, flustered.

Dan smiles at her, winking at Violet, and heading for the boardroom. Violet follows.

DAN  
See? This is fun, right? This was a shell of an old factory when we found it. Back in 1989. Ripped the whole interior out.  
(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

And we were one of the first in this neighbourhood. When it still wasn't safe to walk these streets. Now it's become gentrified.

VIOLET:

I know Dad. I've had the tour.

Violet barely listens to his historical lesson. They head for the boardroom.

DAN

Now, I'll just be a couple of minutes in here. You just sit quietly.

INT. A LARGE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

SAUL ROSENTHAL, (EARLY FORTIES), sits at a large boardroom table. A few casually but expensively dressed men and women brainstorm, taking notes and perusing pictures of bands. There's some expensive looking art on the walls. Saul is incredibly polished, wearing a suit and tie. He is mid-flow as Dan enters noisily, interrupting.

SAUL:

Oh. Okay.

Dan waves. He ushers Violet into the room. She didn't expect so many people. She blushes, sitting at the coffee table, opening a magazine. Dan sits down at the meeting.

SAUL: (CONT'D)

We're actually just finishing up. Traffic's bad?

DAN

Tell you the truth, I was just passing.

Some of the folks laugh. Is this a Joke? But Dan is not joking.

SAUL:

We were just discussing the audio commentary feature, remember? We were talking about it last week?

DAN

Shit idea. It was a shit idea, it's still a shit idea.

SAUL:  
(laughing, but  
embarrassed)  
Well, we're not all necessarily  
agreed on that...

DAN  
(interrupting)  
It reeks of desperation.

BUSINESSWOMAN 1:  
Well, our industry *is* struggling a  
little bit. What with this pesky  
little Internet thing...

DAN  
Believe me, no one wants to hear  
some singer talk shit about how he  
came up with a tune. Would you?  
Young, Williamsburg hipster?

He directs this question to the youngest exec from iTunes, a  
hipster, in retro glasses and skinny tie.

YOUNG HIPSTER  
Honestly? No. Probably not? Am I  
allowed say that?

He looks nervously at his boss, the Businesswoman. She gives  
him a very sharp look back.

DAN  
No. You've just been fired.

More laughter. Chaotic as Dan is, you've got to admit he's  
lively.

DAN (CONT'D)  
Plus, musicians are invariably  
monosyllabic teenagers with very  
little to say. If they're any good.  
Don't worry about how to control  
revenue from the music industry.  
We'll do just fine. We always have.  
(beat) And besides... maybe music  
is free...

Ouch. This is the LAST thing these guys want to hear, but Dan  
clearly means what he says. Violet looks up. She gets that  
her father is making sense. Sort of.

SAUL  
He doesn't mean that.

DAN

Sure I do.

BUSINESSWOMAN 1:

Wow. That's an alarming thing to hear the head of a record company say.

Saul quickly avoids a confrontation.

SAUL:

Well look, it's an idea that's at a very early stage. Let's sleep on it over the weekend and regroup next week, yeah?

He indicates that the meeting is over. The iTunes people gather up their stuff.

Hard cut.

INT. THE RECORD COMPANY OFFICE - LATER

Outside in the corridor, Violet studies framed photographs on the walls. In a number of them, a younger looking Dan and Saul. One, on the cover of a music magazine, outside their new offices from the mid nineties. Others, of Dan with various hip hop artists and rock singers, shaking hands, working in the studio etc. Another, of Dan at a mixing desk in a large studio.

INT. SAUL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Saul sits across from Dan.

SAUL:

It's four O'clock in the afternoon Dan?

DAN

New girl on reception didn't know who I was. What's all that about?

SAUL

Maybe if you came in more than once a month people would get to know you.

They regard each other.

SAUL:

How's everything at home?



DAN  
Depressing.

SAUL  
Right. And what are you doing to  
make it less depressing?

DAN  
(thinks)  
I've upped my alcohol intake.

SAUL  
Great.

Silence.

DAN  
Do you *care*?

SAUL:  
No, actually. You're right. I'm  
tired of caring about you. You said  
you didn't want to work behind a  
desk. That was okay. I offered you  
carte blanche to travel, make some  
signings...see the world.../

DAN  
(interrupting)  
I don't want to be away from  
Violet.

SAUL:  
So you said you'd do some research,  
here, see what was happening on-  
line, in the city, but you never  
came back to me. I don't know what  
you want me to do?

DAN  
I just want to run a company.

SAUL  
You're not *up* to running a company!

DAN  
Bands doing audio commentaries of  
their music is so fucking lame,  
Saul, and you know it!

SAUL:  
It's an idea! It's something! We're  
losing money hand over foot here.

DAN

We need to sign some new bands.  
We need vision. Not gimmicks.

SAUL

Hey, don't cast me as some sort of  
Salieri of my own company. And in  
case you forget, you've signed  
nothing but turkeys for the last  
ten years. Mozart.

They are silent. Dan gives up. He stands up, heading towards  
the door.

SAUL (CONT'D)

So seeing as you're here, maybe now  
is as good a time as any to have  
this conversation.

Dan stops in his tracks.

DAN

What conversation...?

We hold on Saul. He clears his throat. Dan knows what's  
coming.

INT. THE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Saul exits his office. Hot on his tail, is Dan. They pass  
Violet, who stands up.

DAN

Hey, don't walk out on me! Hey...

INT. THE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Saul walks out onto the floor. Dan follows, shouting behind  
him.

DAN

You can't pull this shit!

SAUL

You really want to do this here?

People start looking up from behind their work stations. Saul  
stops. Dan looks around at everyone. He is centre stage.

DAN

Yeah! I want to do it RIGHT FUCKING  
here.

Silence. A few doors to bigger offices open, and heads look out. Violet is standing, watching.

DAN (CONT'D)  
Cause they all know! They know  
they're sitting behind those desks  
right now, because I started a  
little independent label. Remember  
that, Saul? Above that little bar?

Dan's eyes start to water up, as he remembers the past. He is an emotional wreck.

DAN (CONT'D)  
Remember? And we said we'd change  
the way the industry worked?  
Nurture. Foster. And we did.  
Remember that?

People are moved. Saul breathes out. This isn't the way he'd planned for this to go.

SAUL  
That was a hundred years ago, Dan.  
And we'd still be above that bar if  
things were left up to you. Things  
are changing, and you refuse to  
change with them.

DAN  
I can change.

SAUL  
Well then change. But not on my  
time.

DAN  
You know what- fuck it. I'm outta  
here. But I'm taking all my clients  
with me.

SAUL  
You haven't got any clients, and  
this isn't Jerry Mcguire. *They sign  
with US, not with you.* You know  
that.

Dan looks around at everyone. Blank faces greet him. There's nothing to say. He turns and beats a hasty retreat. Violet follows.

Close on a WORKER'S FACE, FEMALE, 30'S. She makes a "Who was that?" Face to her co-worker, who shrugs.

INT. THE JAG - LATER

Dan and Violet drive in silence. Dan is fuming.

VIOLET:  
So did you really mean what you  
said inside? About music being  
free?

DAN  
No.

VIOLET:  
(disappointed)  
Oh. Why did you say it then?

DAN  
For effect.

VIOLET:  
But don't you think it just might  
be? I mean, like poetry. That  
basically free. You can read any  
poetry you like on the internet.

DAN  
Yeah, and you know how much poets  
make?

VIOLET:  
So, it's about money then?

DAN  
No, it's about making a living.  
Besides, anything that's worth  
something comes with a price tag.

VIOLET:  
What about bird-song?

DAN  
(sighing)  
Right, with the exception of bird-  
song. Jesus.

He pulls into a parking space.

DAN (CONT'D)  
I need a drink.

INT. A BAR - LATER

Dan and Violet sit at the bar of the Western Tavern. It's the afternoon, and Dan is drinking a beer. Three empties in front of him. Violet has an orange juice.

VIOLET:  
So did Saul just fire you?

DAN  
He's just blowing off steam.  
Everyone's tense at the moment. The  
industry's under a lot of pressure.  
He'll call me up over the weekend  
to apologize.

VIOLET:  
*Looked* like he fired you.

DAN  
He can't fire me. I set the whole  
fucking thing up.

VIOLET:  
Did you?

DAN  
Don't you know *anything* about me?

VIOLET:  
I know what mom says.

DAN  
What does she say?

VIOLET:  
She says you're a pathetic loser.

DAN  
She's right about that. What do *you*  
think?

VIOLET:  
Dude, I don't know you. Two years  
is a long time in the life of a  
teenager.

DAN  
Where do you learn to talk like  
that?

VIOLET:  
My psychiatrist.

DAN  
You have a psychiatrist?

VIOLET:  
Yeah. Mom thought it would be a  
good idea.

DAN  
Why?

VIOLET:  
I was acting strange.

DAN  
You're fourteen. You don't need a  
psychiatrist. Believe me. I know. I  
know you better than anyone.

VIOLET:  
I'm fifteen.

He knocks back his beer.

DAN  
You have money to get these beers,  
right?

VIOLET:  
What? I'm a child.

DAN  
What about your pocket money?

VIOLET:  
I spent it on cigarettes.

Dan searches in his pockets, concerned. He has nothing. He  
looks at the barman, a heavy set older man with tatoos in a  
black tee shirt.

DAN  
You ready?

VIOLET:  
For what?

Hard cut

EXT. THE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Dan and Violet run fast down the street. The BARMAN follows.  
Dan looks over his shoulder.

Behind them, the barman appears to slow down and give up. Violet and Dan turn a corner and take a breather, laughing, against a wall.

Dan is gasping for air. In a second, the BARMAN turns the corner, smiling. Dan did not expect this. The BARMAN approaches.

BARMAN  
(to violet)  
This your daddy?

She nods.

BARMAN (CONT'D)  
Then look away.

She looks out to the street. The BARMAN hits Dan square in the face in the face. It is not cruel, more like punishment for ripping him off. Dan takes it fairly well, considering. He nods his head, his nose bleeding.

BARMAN (CONT'D)  
Okay?

DAN  
Yep. Sorry.

BARMAN  
Okay.

The BARMAN heads back around the corner. Violet turns back. We see that she is in shock. Dan wipes the blood away. We see that Violet's eyes are full of tears. Dan barely notices this.

INT. THE CAR - LATER

Dan drives Violet up a suburban street. Dan's nose has stopped bleeding.

DAN  
Oh, and you don't have to tell your mother I got fired if you don't want to.

VIOLET:  
Why not?

DAN  
Because I can't have her feel any worse towards me right now.

VIOLET:  
That's impossible.  
This is me.

DAN  
I know. Smart ass. I brought you  
home as a baby, in my arms.

He pulls in to a driveway and she gets out. Violet enters the house. Dan sits in the car for a moment, marvelling at the distance that can arise between family. He watches a WOMAN sitting in the kitchen at a computer. MIRIAM (40). She looks very pretty.

INT. THE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Dan pours a coffee at the counter as Miriam works at a laptop at the kitchen table. The house is chaotic and messy. Violet makes a sandwich from the fridge. Dan watches Miriam as she types from the doorway, dictating from an interview on a cassette Walkman.

MIRIAM:  
How's work?

DAN  
Fine.

He darts a look towards Violet. She says nothing. She makes a sandwich and plonks it in her dad's hand as she goes to exit.

VIOLET:  
You look hungry.

She heads up stairs. He watches Miriam typing.

DAN  
Wanna have sex?

MIRIAM:  
Why would I want that?

DAN  
Cause it's familiar?

MIRIAM:  
I'm good thanks.

She continues working. Dan watches her.

MIRIAM: (CONT'D)  
Sorry, was there something else,  
Dan? I'm snowed under here.



DAN

She's very distant. Hardly exchanged a word the whole afternoon.

MIRIAM:

Well, if it's in the cat, it's in the kitten.

DAN

What, you saying that she's got some *bug* from me? That's a shit thing to say.

MIRIAM:

Well she doesn't get it from me. Her teacher's worried about her. Girls in school don't like her. She's isolated. The only people who hang out with her are older boys trying to have sex with her.

DAN

I'm not surprised, the way you got her dressed. She looks like Jodie Foster in Taxi Driver.

MIRIAM:

She dresses how she likes. And besides- any daughter who dresses like that is looking for one thing.

DAN

Yeah, a pimp.

MIRIAM:

No Dan. Her father's attention.

Silence. He shrugs.

INT. VIOLET'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Violet sits in her room. It's a little cooler than the average teenagers room. There's a posters of The Doors, Janis Joplin, Hole, among others, on the wall. Violet sits on her bed plucking an acoustic guitar, and smoking. Downstairs her parents row. A half assembled drum kit is piled up in the corner.

INT. THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dan and Miriam's row has amped up a couple of notches.

DAVE

She's a fucking teenager for Christ's sake. She's doesn't have something in her DNA. She needs guidance.

MIRIAM:

(laughing)

So go guide her! I'd like to see you try. You waltz in and make all these grand observations about how I should run the show? The show you cut out on during intermission? And here you are telling me how to raise my daughter? The daughter you pick up once a month and develop a conscience about?

She gathers herself together.

MIRIAM: (CONT'D)

We are doing TOTALLY fine Dan. Don't worry about us. You coming over is just a distraction. But believe me, half an hour after you've gone, we'll both have forgotten you were ever here.

This is meant to hurt.

DAN

Evil.

Dan puts his sandwich in his pocket and exits, wounded.

INT. THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dan storms out. He stops by the hall table, and opens Miriam's handbag. He rummages around. There's some change, a couple of loose cigarettes, and some tissues. He opens her purse, and there's a ten dollar bill and a twenty. He takes the twenty.

EXT. THE DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dan sits into his car, slamming the door. He sits there, looking through the window. Inside, we see that Miriam is balling her eyes out. This kills him. We're close on his face as he watches her...

FLASH CUT

INT. A COLLEGE GIG - 1990'S

A death metal band play on a small stage. It's chaos. And a lot of fun. The audience is made up of drunk STUDENTS.

MIRIAM, (seventeen years ago), is speaking to a YOUNGER DAN (though we don't see him, just his shoulder). She has a beer in one hand, a book under her arm. The music is VERY LOUD.

DAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
What's the book!???

MIRIAM:  
(shouting)  
What?

DAN'S VOICE  
WHAT IS THE BOOK?

MIRIAM:  
SYLVIA PLATH!

DAN'S VOICE  
AND THE TATOO?

She looks at her TATOO on the other arm.

MIRIAM:  
SONIC YOUTH!!

DAN'S VOICE  
SO YOU'VE A COPY OF SYLVIA PLATH  
UNDER ONE ARM, AND A SONIC TATOO ON  
THE OTHER? HOW INTERESTING AND EDGY  
ARE YOU!!

She smiles.

MIRIAM:  
PRETTY INTERESTING I GUESS!

DAN'S VOICE  
YOU WANNA GET MARRIED?

She cracks up laughing.

INT. HIS CAR - THE PRESENT

Back in his car, Dan is still watching Miriam through the window. His eyes have welled up. Loud drumming can be heard from Violet's upstairs window.

Where did all this promise go?

INT. A BAR - AFTERNOON

Dan sits at a bar. He puts the twenty bill down and addresses the barman.

DAN  
Turn this into alcohol.

EXT. A PARK BENCH - AFTERNOON

Dan sits on a park bench in Washington Square. He has taken a bite out of Violet's sandwich, and is sitting there, staring into space. A CROW flies down and eats some of the crumbs at his feet. The CROW looks at him, warily. Dan throws down a corner of the sandwich on the bench beside him, and the CROW jumps up and starts eating it, hungrily. This image makes him start sobbing uncontrollably. Passers by notice him and give him a wide berth.

INT. A NUMBER OF BARS.

Dan gets soused in a number of bars. He is losing himself. Young, beautiful people are laughing and having a ball. He goes to pay, and sees a picture of Violet in his wallet. She is younger and sweeter, and is smiling.

INT. A SUBWAY - NIGHT

Dan sits drunkenly in a crowded subway car. A small "FAMILY" of CHRISTIANS have occupied a section of the carriage. They are singing a Christian song about how much God loves us. The women wear white kerchiefs in their hair, the men are skinny and wear short sleeved shirts and sensible shoes. The LEADER finally addresses an uninterested audience about how he found God, and how you can too, and hands out leaflets advertising a prayer meeting. Dan watches this, sadly. It is meaningless.

They start singing:

GROUP  
"I saw the light, I saw the light,  
no more darkness, no more night..."

Dan gets off, taking a deep breath as the train doors close.

LEADER  
Whenever you're alone sir, go have  
a talk Go.../

The doors close. The train pulls off.

Dan notices that the station is deserted. He looks up at the sign, which reads : Next Train, three minutes. He takes a swig from his hip flask, standing on the edge of the platform.

Silence.

DAN

Okay. Here we are. I want some  
fucking answers. I'll give you  
three minutes.

The sign changes to TWO minutes.

DAN (CONT'D)

Two minutes.

Silence. The the only sound is the slow rumbling of a train,  
very far off.

DAN (CONT'D)

Seriously. I'm running out of ideas  
now, fella. Gimmie a sign.  
Anything...

The sign changes to ONE minute. Dan reads God's silence as a  
sign.

DAN (CONT'D)

Okay, buddy.

He takes a final swig from the hip flask, preparing himself,  
and takes a step forward, now standing perilously close to  
the edge of the platform, next to the tunnel exit. He means  
business...

ANGLE ON the tracks. The rattling of the train approaching...

ANGLE ON his feet. He takes another step, now right on the  
edge. He closes his eyes, preparing to fall forward...

But his resolve is distracted by...

P.A. VOICE

Due to a technical fault, the next  
train will be twenty minutes.  
Twenty minutes next train.

DAN

You are fucking kidding me!?

Dan sighs. He sits down to wait.

He checks his hip flask. Empty. He thinks, checking his watch.

He sets off out of the station, hurrying.

EXT. THE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Dan appears out of the station, looking up and down the street for a bar. Any bar. He spots one in the distance and hurries off towards it.

EXT. THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Dan walks up to the door of the bar. A few people stand outside smoking. From inside, the sound of an acoustic guitar and voice.

He enters thirstily, passing a sign in the window: "Singer Songwriter Night"

INT. THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Dan approaches the bar and sits down, checking his watch. He mouths "scotch" to the barman over the noise.

BARMAN  
Which kind, sir?

DAN  
Any kind. And make it quick. I  
gotta kill myself in... seventeen  
minutes.

BARMAN  
Okay, good luck with that.

He sits there, waiting. A young, hip crowd drink and chat.

Behind them, a SINGER SONGWRITER (male, 25), is finishing up his set on stage. A few devoted nineteen year old girls cheer as he finishes. He gets off stage, handing his guitar to a reluctant young girl, GRETTA, (mid twenties).

She is wearing baggy jeans and an old V neck jumper and sneakers. She's very pretty, but plays it down, wearing no make up.

She plugs in a guitar and says hello over the microphone. She's an unwilling performer, and genuinely nervous on stage.

She begins...

GRETTA  
Two, three, four...

### **FIRST SONG**

The first verse is just her voice and guitar. No one really listens, and all we hear is a cacophony of chat, the cash register, and glasses. Around her, a number of instruments are strewn, belonging to the rest of the singers and bands: a cello on it's side; a piano; a bass; a drum kit.

We hold on Dan's close up. We TRACK slowly into him, as his eyes well up, the lyrics speaking to him, as Gretta sings-

"....."

He turns around on his seat, and watches Gretta's faltering performance on stage.

Slowly, the sound of the club fades imperceptibly away, until all Dan can hear is her voice and the song. For a moment of clarity, his drunkenness seems to fade.

As Dan looks around the stage, from instrument to instrument, each one makes a contribution. The cello is plucked in time to the song. The piano plays a subtle harmony to Gretta's vocal. We PAN over to the bass. It joins in. Dan smiles. He's arranging.

As the song reaches its climax, the drums come to life. The cymbals crash as the cello crescendos, and Gretta is lost in the song. Dan laughs, watching her as the whole stage comes to life.

Gretta's promising tune is subtly transformed into a full-blown, rich love song. *But it's all in Dan's head.*

Back in the real world, Gretta nears the end of her song. Tears have welled up in her eyes, and anyone in the audience who is paying attention is moved. There's a real sadness to the way Gretta sings which can't be faked. She finishes.

The audience give her a mixed response.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
Thank you.

She joins a few other songwriters on the side of stage, and hides behind a drink as another performer gets up.

She sits cross legged on an amp, rolling a cigarette, red in the face, and embarrassed. Dan approaches and stands over her. He hands her a business card from his wallet.

She takes it and looks at it, handing it back. It says "Dan Mulligan. A & R."

DAN

I'm in.

GRETTA

What?

DAN

I want to sign you. Make a record.

GRETTA

Are you out of your mind? Didn't you see what just happened?

DAN

You feeling sorry for yourself?

GRETTA

No. *I* like my music. So what if they don't?

DAN

They do. You need to work on your performance a little.

GRETTA

I'm not a performer. I just write songs now and then.

DAN

Are they all as good as that one?

GRETTA

Are you really an A and R man? You look more like a homeless man.

He laughs. Then lies:

DAN

We've been out celebrating all weekend. A new band I just signed. We got a bit carried away.

She goes back to watching the next guy on stage. Dan watches her, intrigued.

DAN (CONT'D)

Well, you've got a song there that could be turned into a huge hit. I promise you. *And* you're beautiful.



GRETТА

What's beauty got to do with anything?

DAN

It helps, selling records?

GRETТА

Tell Shane McGowen that. (beat)  
Anyway, I never intended selling records. And I'm not interested in doing anything that my looks determine the outcome of. They fade.

DAN

Jesus. You're tricky, aren't you?

GRETТА

No. Music is music for me. It's about ears. Not eyes. And I'm not Judy Garland, just off a greyhound bus, on broadway looking for stardom. But thank you.

She *is* too tricky. He checks his watch.

DAN

Okay. Bye.

He turns and heads off. But Dan isn't the type to give up this easily. He turns and strides back to her, shunting her up, and sitting next to her on the amp. This disarms her a little.

DAN (CONT'D)

So if you don't want to make a record, then why are you writing songs?

GRETТА

What, I can't write songs unless I want to make money from them?

DAN

No, I just don't get the point, unless people are going to hear them. What's the purpose in making any art unless it's going to change people's lives.

GRETТА

You think a *song* can change someone's life?

DAN  
Hey, I think a song can *save*  
someone's life.

GRETТА  
(beat)  
I wrote that tune to kill time.  
Okay? As a painkiller.

DAN  
What did you need a painkiller for?

GRETТА  
(not answering)  
I don't intend to capitalize on it.  
That's the death of art.

He watches her. He is taken aback by her honesty.

DAN  
Painkiller question...

GRETТА  
That's none of your business. So  
save your A&R spiel for some hungry  
young singer songwriter who wants  
to hear it, and who you think you  
can make shit loads of money from.  
I've heard it a thousand times.

Dan watches her closely. She's clearly been hurt by  
something, or someone, and feels very strongly about this.

INT. THE CLUB - LATER

The evening is wrapping up. Dan is standing against the  
doorway as people exit out into the street. Finally, Gretta  
approaches, carrying her guitar case.

DAN  
You want the truth? I couldn't sign  
you if I wanted to.

GRETТА  
What?

He thinks about getting into all this with her. What the  
hell...

DAN  
I haven't come from signing anyone.  
I haven't made a signing in over  
seven years.  
(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

No one in my label has any faith in me. They say I've lost my ear.

Now it's her turn to be taken aback by his honesty.

GRETTA

Oh. So why are you giving me your card then?

DAN

Force of habit? I look homeless because I basically am. I left home over a year ago, and I'm sleeping on a shitty mattress in a tiny apartment. I haven't been out celebrating, I've been drinking my head off and crying, and standing on the edge of train platforms thinking about killing myself. And then I heard your song. Do you want a beer?

She watches him.

INT. A BAR - LATER

Dan and Gretta sit at a quiet bar. They drink. She has his card in her hand, as she types something into her Iphone, and scans a Wikipedia page.

GRETTA

"Dan Muligan. Born 1966. Headed A&R department at Island records for two years. Left to co-found indie label R&M records with Harvard classmate, Saul Rosenthall...

She pauses, surprised.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

You own R&M records?

DAN

Used to. Sold my interest in it to my partner when I was having some... emotional difficulties.

GRETTA

What emotional difficulties?

DAN

I'm too emotional. Read on.

GRETTA

"Active on the hiphop scene in New York in the early nineties/ the pair were responsible for discovering numerous breakthrough artists/ nominated for two Grammys as producer/ Lives in New York with wife, music-journalist Miriam Hart, and their daughter."

She puts her phone away, staring at him, impressed.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

Where are the Grammys?

DAN

I pawned them.

GRETTA

What d'you get for them?

DAN

Hundred and twenty bucks. Enough to keep me drunk for a weekend couple of months ago.

GRETTA

Were you drunk when you heard my song?

DAN

Totally. That's when the magic happens.

GRETTA

What magic?

DAN

When I... hear things. Arrangements. You gotta be drunk for that sorta thing.

GRETTA

Well you must have been drunk tonight, because no one else heard anything.

DAN

Hey, it's not the song that's the problem. It's the way you stand on stage. The tomboy thing. No offence, but that's sorta out of date? You gotta get a look. Shoot a killer video.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

We could go for the singer songwriter thing. Nora Jones, maybe you at a piano. Or a more rock 'n roll vibe. A bit like the Cardigans used to be when they first arrived. Or Debbie Harry. With a male band behind you...

Gretta laughs as she drinks. This is total bullshit.

GRETTA

I'm sorry. Go on.

DAN

Did I say something amusing?

GRETTA

No no. Just something went down the wrong way. You were saying. Nora Jones, me at a piano, with a cardigan on. Carry on.

He knows she's ripping on him. She laughs again. He is not smiling. He stops her.

DAN

What makes *you* so above all that?

GRETTA

I'm not saying I'm above anything. Sorry I interrupted.

DAN

What, just because you have a beat-up acoustic guitar you think you're Carol fucking King? That you have some God-given gift of song writing that you don't have to work at it a little? Or think about it?

GRETTA

No. I just think that a record company guy concocting how an artist should dress, or come across, is total bullshit. People don't want that. They want authenticity.

DAN

(laughing)

Oh please. Okay, so who passes the authentication test to you. Go. Gimmie three names.

She smiles, thinking. She's stuck.

GRETTA

Dylan?

DAN

You think Bob Dylan didn't cultivate that look? The hair. The sunglasses? Or Leonard Cohen? You think he didn't look in the mirror one day and say "hey, I'm digging this whole beat-poet thing, French movie director vibe. This look is working for me!" Remember, if Dylan, or Cohen, or Bono, for that matter, were being truly authentic, they'd look like your father. (beat) You wanna buy rock and roll from your father? Me neither.

She smiles. But he's got a point.

GRETTA

Randy Newman!

DAN

I fucking love Randy Newman. You got me there.

He taps his beer off hers.

DAN (CONT'D)

Look, I'm not saying you can't be a bona fide motherfucker in this business, but you've got to be open to whatever helps shift your units. And gets people out to your shows. Where your songs can do their real work. People who don't release their music are either scared, or know it's shit. And people who do, have realized that music is about the audience, not about themselves.

GRETTA

So what are we talking about here? You can't sign me, and I don't want to be signed??

DAN

Right! What's not to like!

She smiles. He goes to pay for the drinks, but his wallet is empty.

DAN (CONT'D)  
You have to pay for the drinks. I'm  
sorry.

EXT. THE STREET - LATER

Dan and Gretta walk down the street together. They arrive at  
the subway entrance.

GRETTA  
Okay. It was nice to meet you.

DAN  
Where are you going?

GRETTA  
To sleep. I got a plane to catch in  
the morning.

DAN  
Where to?

GRETTA  
Home.

DAN  
Why?

GRETTA  
Because I'm sick of this city.  
I want to go back to school.

DAN  
Don't do that.

GRETTA  
Why not?

DAN  
Because what would the world do  
without your songs?

GRETTA  
It'll be fine.

DAN  
So why *else* are you going home? No  
one comes to New York and leaves,  
unless something went really wrong.

GRETTA  
It did.

DAN  
So tell me about it.

GRETТА  
No thanks.

They stand there.

DAN  
Come in to the label and meet my partner. We'll play him a song. If it doesn't work out I'll pay for you to change your ticket. You'll be home a day later.

GRETТА  
Let me sleep on it, okay? And I'll call you either way.

She puts out her hand. He takes it.

DAN  
I'll be waiting by the phone.

INT. A SUBWAY TRAIN - LATER

Gretta rides a near-empty subway train.

INT. ANOTHER SUBWAY TRAIN - MEANWHILE

Dan sits against the window of another train.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Dan enters his lonely, creepy apartment. He takes his coat off and stands in the middle of the room, thinking. He hums a bar of her tune, still lingering in his head.

He sits at the coffee-nook and opens up his laptop. He pours a double whiskey as the computer boots up. He clicks play on a REAL TIME clip and sits back, drinking.

On screen, hand held, grainy footage shot on a digital camera. A bunch of Mpegs from better days. Violet as a baby. Then as a toddler, then as a little girl. Dan looks younger. Happier. Miriam looks less stressed. They look like a typical young family starting off on the road to life together. We hold on Dan's face, watching, as if this is a nightly routine. Where did it all go wrong...?

And all the way over, on the other side of town:



## INT. A TINY APARTMENT - MEANWHILE

Gretta is lying under a duvet on a couch, which is made up as a bed. She is in a tiny studio apartment. There's a few posters of singers on the walls. It's obviously not her place if she's sleeping on a couch. She drinks a cup of tea. She too, is looking at pictures on her Iphone, lost in thought. She presses play on a file, and it comes to life in her hand.

## ANGLE ON PHONE

A shaky, hand-held shot of a HANDSOME YOUNG MAN, as he looks into camera, smiling and joking around outside an AIRPORT. The camera phone turns around on itself, and we see Gretta is operating it. She looks a little younger, a little happier.

We TRACK into the camera, and the MPeg becomes our film.

We're at the departure terminal of \*\* Airport. Gretta and DAVE, (28), grab heavy suitcases and three or four guitar cases from the trunk of a taxi. Gretta is filming on her phone. Her hair is a little different, and she wears a woolen jumper and hat.

Dave is handsome, dressed in black jeans, and floppy boots with untied laces. They are unkempt and look like they belong together.

DAVE

(laughing)

Hey stop filming! We'll miss our flight.

GRETТА

Are you kidding me? This is a momentous moment!

She continues filming as they pay the driver, and load up two baggage cars, racing inside, giddy. Dave pauses at the doors, and turns around to the grey, rainy \*\* sky, and gives it the finger, smiling into Gretta's camera. She grabs him and they run inside the airport.

## INT. THE AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Gretta and Dave skid up to the check-in desk and check in their bags. It is just closing.

## INT. THE PLANE - CONTINUOUS

They line-up to board the plane, out of breath. They both carry guitars on their backs.

The couple in front of them keep looking at Dave over their shoulder. Finally one of them musters up the courage to speak.

GIRL:  
Sorry to interrupt, but, are you  
Dave Cole?

DAVE  
I am.

GIRL 1:  
I knew it! I just saw the film the  
other day. I SO love your songs!

DAVE  
(sincerely, humbly)  
Ah thanks a million. Glad you  
enjoyed it. This is my girlfriend.  
Gretta. She writes songs too.

GUY:  
(to Gretta)  
Cool. Would you mind taking a  
photograph?

He hands Gretta his phone, and frames up Dave and the two  
strangers, taking a picture of them.

Dave blushes slightly, not used to being recognized in  
public. Gretta smiles at him, linking him, proud.

INT. THE PLANE, FIRST CLASS - LATER

Dave and Gretta look out the window as the plane circles.  
Down below, Manhattan, in all its glory. They hold hands as  
they look down.

INT. ARRIVALS - JFK - LATER

Dave and Gretta appear through the doors at arrivals. On the  
other side of the barrier stands a LATINO MAN (50s), in a  
chauffeur's uniform and a cardboard sign reading DAVE COLE.

Gretta and Dave look at each other. She smiles.

GRETTA  
You didn't say they'd send a car!

Dave affects nonchalance. But he clearly didn't know either.

DAVE  
Stick with me, baby.

She laughs, taking his arm. As they walk out into a swelteringly hot New York day.

INT. A CAR - LATER

Gretta and Dave are whisked through New York in a gleaming Lincoln Towncar.

"Dance Sister, Dance" by Santana is playing low on the car stereo as they cross the bridge.

GRETТА  
Excuse me, is that Carlos Santana  
on your stereo?

DRIVER  
Yes it is miss. Is it too loud?

GRETТА  
No. It's not loud enough.

The driver smiles over his sunglasses. He turns it up a little, watching her in the rearview. She indicates louder. He smiles, cranking it up.

Gretta and Dave smile. The music rocks.

We hold on Gretta, almost hyperventilating at the view across to Manhattan Island, as scored by Carlos Santana's guitar solo.

EXT. A CONVERTED WAREHOUSE BUILDING - LATER

The Lincoln pulls up outside a renovated warehouse, and the driver opens the door for Gretta and Dave. Waiting at the door of the building is a pretty thirty year old woman, dressed in a smart suit, carrying a set of keys and a briefcase. She approaches.

WOMAN  
Dave? I'm Jill. I work in  
hospitality with the label. How was  
your flight?

They shake. Jill helps the driver and Dave and Gretta pile up the bags at the door.

JILL

Here are your keys. I'll just show you around and tell you a few things. You'll like the apartment I think. It's pretty cool...

Hard cut.

INT. THE COOLEST, LOFT-STYLE APARTMENT YOU EVER SAW - DAY

Gretta and Dave stand at the door of the coolest loft-style apartment you ever saw. They are awe-struck. It is open-plan. Jill turns on some lights.

JILL

The fridge is stocked with food. There's two sets of keys on the table. Here's your driver's number. And my cell. You're due at the label in the afternoon to meet with everyone and say hi. Then we'll take a trip around to the studio. Maybe you'll want to catch up on your sleep before then. I'll leave you to it. Pleased to meet you Gretta.

GRETТА

You too.

She exits.

Dave and Gretta just stand there, looking around. They start laughing at the luxury of it all.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE APARTMENT - LATER

Dave tests out the huge double bed. Gretta crosses over with two cups of tea. She hands him one and sits on the bed, trying it out. They are like two kids. They kiss, and their kissing very quickly turns to something else. Gretta pauses.

GRETТА

Hey, are you sure I shouldn't have followed you over here in a few weeks. Let you settle in first? Get used to all this?

He holds her face in his hands.

DAVE

No. I'm glad you're here right now.  
It'd be scary doing all this on my  
own.

She smiles. Satisfied. They continue kissing, taking off each other's clothes.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - LATER

Music plays over as Gretta and Dave explore their neighbourhood. They are having a laugh, walking arm in arm. We see that Gretta idolizes Dave.

We see them get pizza, stop for a coffee, try out guitars in DAN'S GUITAR SHOP in Chelsea, and perusing record stores in the village.

INT. A SWANKY RECORD LABEL OFFICE - DAY

Dave and Gretta are sitting in the CEO's office of a swanky record label. Gold and Platinum records line the walls, and posters of singers and bands adorn the corridors. Behind his desk is the CEO of the company, his name doesn't matter to us. Eight or ten Execs, A&R people, from the label sit about the room, including Jill, from earlier. It's a meet and greet, and the mood is light and up beat.

Mim, (28), a stunning Korean girl stands out, being particularly beautiful.

CEO

You catch up on some sleep?  
How did you like the apartment.

DAVE

It's tiny! How can you expect us to  
live there?

Laughter.

CEO

Chris and Gwyneth were over in it a couple of months ago while he was recording, so you're in good company. So you ready to start on Monday? I got the demos and they're great. We're very excited about this.

DAVE

Yep. Ready to roll.

CEO

And so Gretta, you're going to play guitar on a track or two, I hope?

GRETTA

(beat)

Oh, yeah. Sure. Whatever works.

DAVE

You know me and Gretta have been writing for a couple of years together, right? When the film came along?

CEO

Right...

DAVE

Yeah, so I'd love us to try a couple of her songs too. I think you'd really like them....

The CEO looks at him, surprised.

CEO

What we're after is the sound of the film though, yes?

The other label folk nod their heads.

DAVE

(hesitant)

Oh sure, of course. But Gretta is very much part of the inspiration behind that....

GRETTA

(interrupting)

Just to be very clear. I am *totally* just tagging along on this. I'm happy to be here, and more than happy to accompany Dave on a couple of tracks if he wants. Whatever. So. I'm just here to see New York. Okay?

There's a moment of relief in the room. Crisis averted. Everyone back on the same page. The CEO gets up.

CEO

That's good to hear, Gretta! And you guys will have a great time. Are we having dinner tonight? Let's show you around.

Everyone goes to exit the room. Gretta smiles at Dave. He could say more here, but he doesn't. We hold on Gretta as they are showed around the rest of the office.

INT. THE BOARDROOM - LATER

Dave and Gretta are shown into the boardroom, where a number of people from creative are waiting. Jill introduces everyone.

Dave shakes hands as Gretta whispers in his ear.

GRETTA

Hey, I'm going to explore. You do your thing. Let's meet later.

DAVE

You sure?

GRETTA

Of course.

She kisses him.

A STREET - LATER - MUSIC OVER

It's a beautiful summer's day, and Gretta looks around the streets of New York, very happy to be alive.

We see her pass the Flat Iron Building, walking through Washington Square, wandering through the East Village etc. All to music.

EXT. DOWN TOWN - LATER

At the entrance to the subway, she finds STEVE, a small, bearded twenty five year old man busking on the street. Steve is wearing a porkpie hat and a goatee beard. And a lot of hemp. Basically he'd like to be Damian Rice.

Only Gretta stops, smiling, listening to his song, but wishing it was better. He smiles back, now addressing his song just to her.

EXT. A STREET - LATER

Steve and Gretta walk down a street. He is carrying his guitar. He is thrilled to see her.

STEVE

And how long are you here for?

GRETTA

Well he has the studio for three months. Then we're off on tour. We figure we'll stay for six.

STEVE

Unbelievable! You're total rock stars!

They climb up the steps of a dilapidated apartment block on Avenue C.

Steve unlocks numerous locks to an apartment and they step in. There's a bed in a mezzanine and a couch next to the kitchen. It is the smallest apartment in the world. (and it's where we've found Gretta sleeping on the couch).

STEVE (CONT'D)

Yep. It's like that old joke- you put the key in the door and you break the window.

Steve clears away used plates and cups as Gretta potters about. There are guitars and cables strewn about the place. A computer and set of studio monitors. Old amps, mixing desks and headphones etc. A bedroom/recording studio.

GRETTA

Look at all this gear!

STEVE

Yup. I've spent every penny picking up stuff. Studios are up-grading, so they're almost giving stuff away. I'll be ready to record my album here soon.

Posters of Nick Drake, John Lennon, Leonard Cohen etc., on the walls.

She picks up a CD from his collection and looks at the cover. It's the sound track to a movie, with a still on the cover of a couple kissing. We catch a glimpse of: "Music from the motion picture. Featuring songs by David Cole." On the back, a picture of Dave facing camera with his eyes closed, and holding a guitar.

STEVE (CONT'D)

They are going crazy for that here.



GRETTA

Really?

STEVE

Like, when I play a show and people find out I'm from \*\*, the first thing they ask is if I know your boyfriend. It's becoming quite a pain in the ass actually!

She laughs.

GRETTA

Me too. I'm becoming "Dave Cole's Girlfriend" back home.

STEVE

And we're both way more talented than him!

She laughs. She kisses the picture of Dave, putting it back.

GRETTA

Well you know what they say- get your songs in a movie...

Steve pours two glasses of whiskey.

STEVE

So look at you- the small town girl, so far from home!

GRETTA

I know! I'm kinda nervous!

STEVE

You'll do just fine in the city, Gretta. Believe me- couple of months, and you'll be quite the little New Yorker...

He lifts up his glass, smiling at her.

Hard cut.

To a carousel of still photographs over the next couple of months. Parties, nightclubs, openings. The focus is on Dave, looking more and more like a rock star. Out, are the check shirts, jeans and brogues of before, and in is "Instant Edge" from All Saints, or any high-street shop in London.

We see him on the cover of magazines, leaving clubs, stepping into cars, posing at launches and film premiers etc. In all of them, Gretta is at his side. Patient. Unnoticed.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE CITY - DAY

We see that summer has turned to fall. And we find Gretta making her way down the sidewalk. She wears flip flops and a pair of jeans. She's carrying the NY times and a cardboard tray of cappuccinos in take-out cups. Steve's prediction is correct; She is quite the little New Yorker. She buzzes an intercom on a heavy door, down a alleyway, and pushes it through.

INT. A RECORDING STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Gretta enters a recording studio, heading for the control room.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

This is a big, state-of-the-art studio. Big mixing desk, large couches, plush rugs on the floor. Dave is sitting at the desk listening to playback with his PRODUCER, a greying man with pony tail and beard. Mim is on her Ipad looking at album cover designs. Dave is bare foot, wearing tight black combats, and trendy scarf, and floppy hat. He is on his cell, doing an interview as Gretta enters.

DAVE

...yeah, we're just finishing up the album. It's due for release in October. Then I'm off on tour around the states with my band...

He mouths something to her, covering the mouthpiece.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(mouthing)

Rolling-stone!

Gretta widens her eyes as she hands out coffees to Dave and his Producer. A number of MUSICIANS hang around taking a break, reading, on their laptops, texting, reading books, etc. Dave finally hangs up. Gretta looks into his cup on the desk in front of him, which contains a green liquid. She tastes it.

GRETTA

What is this?

DAVE

Oh yeah, that's Matcha tea.  
One of the girls at the label gave  
it to me the other day. It's got  
the same amount of antioxidants as  
like twelve cups of regular green  
tea.

GRETTA

Cool. That's a lot of antioxidants!  
It tastes like piss.

DAVE

It totally settles my nerves.  
Apparently the Samurai used to  
drink it before going into battle.

GRETTA

Em, you're a songwriter, Dave? Not  
a Japanese warrior?

DAVE

(laughing)

So, they're sending a photographer  
around tomorrow, and I said I'd  
give them a sneak preview of a  
couple of songs. So we've done a  
rough mix of that last tune. Do you  
wanna listen?

GRETTA

Yes please!

They listen to playback. Gretta sits on Dave's knee. It is a  
catchy, romantic song. Something like a cross between Michael  
Buble, and James Blunt. It's very richly produced, and that's  
putting it mildly. Gretta and Dave chat as it plays.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

I like it.

(beat, quietly, in his  
ear)

Is it a bit over-cooked, do you  
think?

DAVE

How do you mean?

GRETTA

It's quite... "big."

DAVE

What's wrong with "big". I've done small!

GRETTA

Right. And they liked that.

DAVE

I'd like to reach some proper numbers with this.

GRETTA

Big production sounds like you're trying to hide something.

DAVE

I'm not trying to hide anything. What are you saying?

GRETTA

No, I mean, it sounds great. Seriously.

Dave is a little annoyed. But Gretta is probably right. It's a lot of fuss, and not a great song.

Dave gets a text on his phone. He reads it.

DAVE

Hey, let's go to this party later.

GRETTA

Where?

DAVE

That video director guy we met is throwing some mad party for fashion week. Come on, it'll be a laugh.

GRETTA

I said I might pop out to see Steve play. He has a set at a singer songwriter club. Would that be okay?

DAVE

Why do you hang out with that guy so much?

GRETTA

Cause I like him. Don't you?

DAVE

I don't know. He's funny I guess.  
He's always struck me as a bit of a  
loser.

GRETТА

Oh, I didn't know we just hung out  
with winners.

PRODUCER:

Okay people! Let's get back to  
work, shall we?

Dave gets up, and the other musicians come to life, trailing  
into the live room. Gretta opens the news paper, taking a  
seat on the couch.

DAVE

You wanna do an overdub on this  
later?

GRETТА

Sure.

Inside, they begin jamming another song. Gretta sits there,  
drinking a coffee and reading. But she's restless, and tired  
of being a runner for Dave and his band. She checks her watch  
and finally gets up.

She knocks through the glass, at Dave, who is sitting at the  
piano, and waves, gesturing a WALK, with her fingers. Dave  
waves at her, blowing her a kiss and getting back to work. He  
is totally caught up in his whole world. She smiles, a little  
sad.

EXT. CITY STREETS - LATER

Gretta has hit the streets. She explores Brooklyn, stopping  
at bookshops and record stores, taking photographs on an old  
camera, and stopping for coffee.

INT. A SMALL CLUB - NIGHT

Gretta makes her way through a crowded club. (it's the one  
where Dan first saw her). Steve is taking the stage as  
Gretta orders a drink at the bar, and watches him. Steve  
chats between songs, drinking whiskey and telling stories; a  
junior Tom Waits. A few devoted girls listen at the front of  
stage.

We hear a cross section of Steve's set. It is very bad. Worthy acoustic numbers with naive lyrics and cliched chord changes. Again, Gretta wishes it was better. We hold on her as she starts to realize she's in the wrong place. She checks her watch, getting up and exiting.

EXT. THE CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Gretta jumps into a cab.

INT. A LARGE ROOF GARDEN - THAT NIGHT

A swinging party. Full of beautiful New Yorkers. Lots of models and actor types. Gretta enters quickly, looking around for Dave.

ANGLE ON:

The terrace. Dave is sitting on a couch surrounded by pretty people, mainly girls. He is chatting animatedly to Mim from the label. Gretta smiles at him, and he waves back. But he doesn't bother to come over. He is too busy being wonderful. We hold on Gretta wishing he was just the teeniest bit happier to see her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE WAREHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

Gretta walks up the street, pushing an old bike. She lets herself into the apartment, and brings it up in the lift.

INT. THE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Dave is sitting, cross-legged on a mat. Gretta enters and pushes the bike through. Dave suddenly gets up.

Gretta parks the bike against the wall and heads to the kitchen counter.

DAVE

Where d'you get that?

GRETTA

In a store up the road. Sixty bucks. It needs a bit of work.

Dave starts clearing away his little meditation bowl and leaves.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
Hey, were you just meditating,  
Dave?

DAN  
Maybe.

GRETTA  
Oh. When did you get into that?

DAN  
I dunno. Just trying it.

She boils the kettle and makes a cup of tea, opening the window, going to light a cigarette.

DAVE  
Em, do you mind not smoking Gretta?

GRETTA  
Oh. Really?

She puts it away.

DAVE  
I've got to look after my voice.

She potters about, settling on the bed. She leafs through one of Dave's books from a pile of self-help titles. "Chicken Soup For The Soul". "Magical meditations to calm the mind". "Loving kindness- the revolutionary art of happiness."

GRETTA  
Is everything okay, with you, Dave?

DAVE  
What do you mean? Sure. Why?

GRETTA  
No reason. Just some of these book titles... you're happy, right?

DAVE  
Course I am. They're just some books some people have recommended. You should read them.

GRETTA  
Okay. I might. Though I've got a whole load of *actual* philosophers to get through before I start on the dabblers, you know?

She looks at them. They are not for her.

EXT. THE STREET - EARLY EVENING

Dave and Gretta walk down the street, searching for a restaurant. She links him. He seems preoccupied. Like he's a thousand miles away.

GRETTA

And *Mariah Carey* looks after her voice. You're supposed to be a rock star! And you should be scoring drugs off your record company friends, not green tea!

He laughs.

DAN

I'm sorry I'm not rock 'n roll enough for ya!

GRETTA

And when I catch you doing something when I walk in, it should be snorting coke, or sleeping with groupies, not meditating and doing yoga. You've skipped like twenty years in your rock star timeline. It's drugs and sex *then* rehab and clean living and reading self help books.

DAVE

They're not self help.

GRETTA

"Chicken Soup for the Soul"??  
"Magical Meditations to Calm Your Mind"?? "Hello?

DAVE

They're great books. You're so closed off, Gretta.

GRETTA

When was the last time you read a novel, Dave?

DAVE

Why are you attacking me now?

GRETTA

I'm not attacking you. I'm sorry.

She kisses him.



DAVE  
You're so self righteous, Gretta,  
do you know that?

GRETTA  
I know.

DAVE  
When did you become so cynical?

GRETTA  
When you became so gullible. We  
can't have two suckers in this  
relationship, right?

She elbows him affectionately. Though this conversation is  
clearly pissing Dave off.

70

EXT. JAPANESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

70

Gretta and Dave eat Sushi.

DAVE  
So, I'm going to L.A. For the  
weekend.

GRETTA  
You're kidding me. What for?

DAVE  
There's this woman, who does a sort  
of intensive three-day workshop  
where you work out the things in  
your life which scare you, and try  
to overcome them.

GRETTA  
What's scaring you, Dave?

DAVE  
I just thought it might help me get  
some perspective on everything  
that's been happening to me.  
Sometimes I don't know how to deal  
with all this.

GRETTA  
Really? You've wanted it for long  
enough. You'd think you'd know how  
to react to it when it came?

DAVE

I can't really talk to you about it. It sounds sorta ridiculous. But there's loads of testimonials from actors and musicians and creative people, about her online. And it sounds pretty amazing.

GRETTA

Why don't we go somewhere together instead? Like upstate? To Woodstock, I've heard its amazing. We could hire a car?

DAVE

No, I need to do this now. And I've paid the deposit. I'll be back Monday.

GRETTA

Oh. Okay.

They eat.

DISSOLVE TO:

72

INT. LOFT WAREHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT

72

Gretta is on her own at the apartment for the weekend. She is on her laptop in bed. She peruses "The Workshop", a web-site featuring pictures and testimonials from people from around the world. She clicks on a media file. A woman with a dreamy voice is heard:

WOMAN'S VOICE:

The "*Workshop*" is a simple yet powerful process of inquiry that teaches you to identify and question the thoughts that cause all the suffering in the world. It's a way to understand what's hurting you, and to address the cause of your problems with clarity.

Pictures of a mad looking blonde woman lecturing small groups of impressionable men and women.

Gretta clicks on the Payment menu. She is brought to a registration page.

The fee: \$20,000 (\$2,000 non-refundable deposit, with the balance due prior to your arrival) Reservations are dependent on space.

GRETTA

Jesus.

She closes the computer and looks around the apartment. It looks bigger without Dave.

She scrolls through the menu on her phone. She finds what she's looking for, and sits the phone on the bedside locker, listening with one headphone, and resting her chin on her hands.

Close up on the phone screen.

73

INT. CELL PHONE SCREEN - APARTMENT IN \*\* - DAY

73

It is an M Peg, shot on a cell phone as it is placed across the room from Dave, who sits with a guitar in a small apartment. Gretta steps into frame, carrying a guitar, and sits next to him. They both look younger by a year or two. Dave looks thinner, and broker, but more attractive. They are working on a song together, and putting it down on the camera phone to remember it.

INT. LOFT WAREHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT

We hold on Gretta's face now, getting lost in the past...

INT. CELL PHONE SCREEN - APARTMENT IN DUBLIN - DAY

We track INTO the phone screen, and so, into the past itself, to the little apartment back in \*\*.

## **SECOND SONG**

INT. THE APARTMENT - \*\* - DAY

The song plays, as we pan around their apartment. It is typical of a young couple beginning the journey of life and creativity together. Their small double bed remains unmade, a few guitars strewn about the place; a mini home recording studio on the kitchen table, amid a half-eaten meal. Through the window, the snow is gently falling on a wintry, \*\* afternoon. A perfect day for staying indoors and writing songs.

The song itself is a simple and beautiful collaboration. Just two voices and two guitars. As it ends, we pull back into the phone, and so back out to the screen in the New York apartment. Gretta smiles, a little sadly.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - DAY

Gretta walks around various streets. She is listening to her headphones, and enjoying exploring the city. We see her on her bike, on the subway, in the Botanical gardens in Queens etc.

It's fairly pleasant, if a little aimless.

INT. LOFT WAREHOUSE APARTMENT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gretta and Dave eat and share a bottle of wine at the counter. She lists off stuff she did over the weekend. He listens. But he is a thousand miles away. He guzzles back wine.

GRETТА

Hey, if you're thirsty have a beer.  
You'll knock yourself out with  
that.

They carry on eating.

80

INT. LOFT WAREHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT

80

Gretta washes the dishes. Dave potters about behind her, restless. He knocks back his glass of wine. We see that he is on edge. He stands next to her, drying her dishes.

Suddenly, she stops, sensing something is wrong.

GRETТА

If you've got to tell me something,  
then tell me. Don't get drunk to  
make it easier. Out with it.

He freezes. We hold on her face. She knows what's coming next.

DAVE

I've fallen in love.

Okay, so she didn't expect *that*.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
I didn't realize it was happening  
until it was too late. I've fought  
it, but I haven't been able to beat  
it.

GRETTA  
(finally)  
With who?

DAVE  
Mim.

GRETTA  
Mim from the label? Mim who we met  
one month ago, Mim?

He nods his head, ashamed. Gretta takes a moment. She drops a glass, which shatters on the floor. She turns around, sliding down the side of the counter until she's sitting on the floor.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
Was she in LA with you?

DAVE  
(finally)  
Yeah.

This kills her.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
I don't know what to say. Maybe it  
won't last. Maybe it will fade  
away. But I gotta see what's at the  
end of it.

She starts crying. Kneeling down with her back to the wall.  
Dave stands there watching her.

EXT. A STREET - NIGHT

Gretta wheels her rickety bike down the street. She is lost.  
Her whole world has just imploded.

EXT. A STREET - LATER

Gretta wheels her rickety bike down the street. She is lost.  
Her whole world has just imploded.

## EXT. STEVE'S SPOT - EVENING

Steve is standing on his spot playing to passers-by. Gretta walks up and stands there, watching him. Steve smiles to her through his song, but this time, she doesn't have a happy smile back. Steve instinctively knows something's up. He stops his song, takes off his guitar, and crosses over to her, hugging her.

She weeps on his shoulder.

## INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Steve makes up the couch in his tiny flat. Gretta stands across from him, not even helping. She is drained and in shock.

He makes a pot of tea, and gives Gretta a cup. She sits down at the counter. We hold on her, staring off into space, not believing what has happened to her.

## EXT. A NUMBER OF LOCATIONS. CRYING MONTAGE

A number of exterior locations around NY city. Gretta cries everywhere she is. She is going quietly mad. The way you do when your boyfriend's fucked Mim.

Ending in...

## INT. A SUBWAY STATION - EVENING

Rush hour. Gretta sits on a bench in a subway station crying. Busy New Yorkers fly by. She finally gets up and waits by the platform for the approaching train. We hear it rumble down the track. She looks at the track below. A MOUSE disappears under the tracks as the SOUND of the approaching train increases in volume. She looks at her feet, right on the edge of the track.

Hold on her close up. For a moment, she looks determined. She closes her eyes. Then as the train comes barreling into the station, she wakes up, and steps back.

Instead, she gets on the train.

## INT. AN INTERNET CAFE - DAY

Gretta is filling out an airline website. She is buying a ticket home. She crunches in her credit card details.

Her pointer hovers over the "Buy Ticket" button. She thinks about it for a moment.

She clicks, and prints it out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE SINGER/SONGWRITER CLUB - NIGHT

Steve is just starting his set on stage. Gretta sits beside stage, nursing a drink. She is lost in thought, and looks like she's been this way for a few days. Steve is finishing up his set. The crowd applauds. He talks into the mic.

STEVE

Thanks. So, hey, would you do me a favour? Would you listen to a song from a friend of mine? She's a girl from home, and she's an amazing little songwriter.

Gretta looks up. He can't seriously mean her? Now of all times??

STEVE (CONT'D)

Would that be okay?

The crowd cheers.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Gretta, would you get up here please.

Gretta shakes her head in disbelief.

GRETTA

You are kidding me Steve?

STEVE

No I'm not. I think it would be a really good idea just to get up and sing a song.

GRETTA

No thanks Steve. Not just now. Jesus.

He unplugs his guitar and holds it out for her. The crowd cheer. There's no getting away from this now. Gretta looks at Steve, annoyed.

ANGLE ON:

The door. Dan enters, as before, to get a drink before killing himself. In the background we see Gretta take the stage, reluctantly.

She begins.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
One, two, three, four...

Hard cut.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAWN

We're back to the present again.

Gretta has had a sleepless night reviewing the last few months of her life. Her phone is in her hand. Early morning sunlight falls across her. Upstairs in the mezzanine bedroom, Steve snores soundly.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Gretta and Steve have breakfast at the counter. Steve looks at Dan's A and R card in his hand as he drinks his coffee.

STEVE  
... I can't believe I'm here a whole year and nothing, and you breeze in and in two minutes some A and R guy wants to sign you!?

GRETTA  
Drunk, depressed, suicidal A and R man, please.

STEVE  
Gretta, Dan Mulligan was a big voice in this city. Defined a lot of that early hip hop sound. Produced some amazing records. You need to take this seriously.

GRETTA  
Yeah, but I don't know what he's going through. I mean, he's a total mess. Do I want to get involved with someone that fucked up?

STEVE  
What do you mean, you just have been.



GRETTA

Dave? He's not fucked up?

STEVE

Yes he is. He just hid it well. But it was always just below the surface.

GRETTA

Dave's just a baby. He's been thrown into this mad world, and he needs to go through it all and come out the other side.

STEVE

I can't believe you're standing up for him!

GRETTA

I love him.

STEVE

Do you? I think you love the guy who you shared a studio with for three years in back home. Smoking dope and listening to Sparklehorse and dropping out of school.

GRETTA

Hey, you're talking about a man who asked me to marry him! Okay? That *means* something to a woman. We take those four words kinda seriously??!

STEVE

The OLD Dave asked you to marry him! When he was a street performer in \*\*, without a record deal and groupies lining up to sleep with him. Those things change a person, Gretta.

GRETTA

Do they?

STEVE

I don't mean to be cruel. But he's a bloke. Blokes are dicks. We say all sorts of wonderful things when we're drunk, or broke, or lonely.

GRETTA

Do you?

STEVE

Of course. It doesn't mean we don't feel them at the time, but we're artists. We're different than other people. We don't have to honor things we say. If you want honorable go marry a teacher. Or a vet!

She manages a laugh at the absurdity of this. But Steve kind of believes it.

EXT. THE STREET - DAY

Gretta walks Steve to his bus stop. He carries his guitar on his back.

STEVE

Besides, what are you going to do at home?

GRETТА

I don't know, go back to college?

STEVE

Oh gimme a break! Horticulture will do fine without you- music needs you.

GRETТА

...meet a nice man, with a steady job, and a BMW with his feet on the ground, and have a couple kids with him.

STEVE

You'll have plenty of time for that, Gretta. Hang out. Write some music. Meet some people. You go home and I give up on you! Besides, I've gotten totally used to you being around.

He kisses her on the cheek as his bus pulls up. He jumps on. He opens the window as it drives past, and shouts out:

STEVE (CONT'D)

This is New York, Gretta. Say yes to everything!

She smiles, standing there after it's gone. She looks at Dan's card.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - MEANWHILE

Dan has fallen asleep where we left him, curled up on a seat with a bottle of whiskey in front of him, and his open laptop.

He wakes up with a start as his cell phone vibrates on the table. He looks at the number. He grabs it, like he's been thrown a lifeline.

DAN

Hello?

EXT. THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Gretta talks on her cell as she walks back to Steve's.

GRETTA

Hey. So were you serious last night? About signing me?

DAN

Who is this?

GRETTA

Really?

DAN

I'm joking. Of course I'm serious. Are you serious about letting your guard down and seeing what happens?

GRETTA

Maybe. But I got some conditions...

INT. MIRIAM'S HOUSE - LATER

Miriam follows Dan as he speeds excitedly around the house.

MIRIAM:

What do you want to shower *here* for?

DAN

Because I can't get the hot water to turn on in that shit hole of an apartment. And I have none of my suits there. Will you pick one for me? Make me look good.

MIRIAM:

Why? What's all this about?

He marches upstairs. He starts stripping off his clothes in the bathroom.

DAN  
I heard a song. It's exactly what that excuse of a record label needs right now.

MIRIAM:  
That's great Dan, but you've got to call if you're going to drop over.

DAN  
Why? You got someone here?

MIRIAM:  
That's not the point. We have an arrangement.

He starts calling:

DAN  
Hello? Stray men? Any stray men sleeping here, I'm the husband! Just picking up a suit. Don't worry about me! Continue fucking my wife.

She pushes him really hard. It annoys her how flippant he's being.

MIRIAM:  
You're a fucking idiot Dan.

DAN  
(surprised)  
Hey, I'm sorry.

MIRIAM:  
If I had a met someone don't you think you'd be the first I'd tell?

DAN  
So you haven't?

Silence.

MIRIAM:  
Let me get you a suit, and a shirt, and a razor. You idiot.

He jumps into the shower, singing and wetting his hair.

She goes to exit, but turns at the door, watching him.

We hold on her, a faint smile of relief that he's happy on her lips. He turns and sees her, through the glass. Her eyes have welled up.

DAN

What?

MIRIAM:

Nothing...

She turns and exits.

EXT. THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Dan exits with Miriam in her dressing gown.

MIRIAM:

Let me know how it works out for you.

DAN

Okay.

(beat)

So you still iron my shirts?

MIRIAM:

So? (beat) Force of habit.

DAN

(smiling)

I'll see you later. Thanks.

He jumps in the car and speeds off.

EXT. STEVE'S STOOP - DAY

Gretta sits on the stoop outside Steve's apartment. She has her guitar case next to her. In a moment, Dan's back-firing Jaguar pulls up the street and parks beside her. Dan rolls down the window, and smiles up at her. Dan scrubs up pretty damn well, in his suit and crisp white shirt. Gretta smiles. It's her first smile in a while, and it's nice to see.

INT. THE CAR - LATER

Dan and Gretta drive across town, music playing on the radio, and the windows open.

GRETTA

...why should I go back home? You know?

DAN  
Why indeed!

GRETTA  
With my tail between my legs? And  
be that girl? Who got her heart  
broken by the famous guy and never  
recovered?

DAN  
So not you!

GRETTA  
Music is my life. I'm not going to  
walk away from that. And go back to  
college? Am I?

DAN  
No you are not!

GRETTA  
He'll get over himself, and come  
back down to earth. He doesn't love  
this chick. He's just on some weird  
trip.

DAN  
(doubtful)  
...okay....

GRETTA  
What?

DAN  
Nothing. I'm sure he will.

They drive on. Gretta thinks about this.

GRETTA  
So where are we going, Mr A&R man?

DAN  
We're going over to my partner to  
play some songs. Did you bring your  
demo?

GRETTA  
I don't have a demo.

DAN  
Okay, well what about a Myspace? Or  
a Facebook profile?

GRETТА

Nope. I told you, I just write songs from time to time.

DAN

Yeah, but songs for what?

GRETТА

How do you mean, songs for what? Songs for my pleasure.

DAN

For *your* pleasure?

GRETТА

Yeah. And my cat.

DAN

Does she like them?

GRETТА

He. Yes. He seems to.

DAN

How can you tell?

GRETТА

He purrs.

DAN

Maybe he's booing.

GRETТА

(laughing)

No. I know him. He's got taste. He purrs at Leonard Cohen too.

DAN

Maybe he's just fooling you. Haven't you heard the theory that it's the cats that are actually playing with us?

GRETТА

Can we stop talking about cats now?

DAN

Okay, Fuck it. Why don't we just cut straight to the chase?

He hangs a sharp left.

EXT. THE RECORD LABEL OFFICES - LATER

The Jag pulls up outside the offices. Gretta gets out, carrying her guitar. Dan walks her up the steps. She is reluctant.

GRETTA

...are you sure about this? No band? No rehearsal? Just in an office?

DAN

Of course I'm sure. You have to learn to trust me if we're going to get into this.

He stops her.

DAN (CONT'D)

DO you trust me?

GRETTA

Sure, I trust you.

He pushes her inside, taking a couple of surreptitious slugs from his hip flask behind her.

INT. R&M RECORDS - SAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Saul is listening to Gretta, as she sits across from him with her guitar. Dan stands a little away, watching both of them, biting his nails, hoping Saul likes her as much as he does.

She is faltering and unsure, though the song is still beautiful. What has effected Dan so much is clearly lost on Saul. Though he does his best to seem interested, tapping his foot etc. But we see that he subtly checks messages on his Blackberry. When Dan sees this he knows the audition is over.

INT. THE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Gretta hangs around the corridor. She is angry with herself for letting this happen. And embarrassed. We can hear Dan and Saul chatting from behind the door. She looks at the pictures of him on the wall.

INT. SAUL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DAN

You don't see it?



SAUL

Nope. And this isn't an episode of Seinfeld- you can't just walk back in here like I didn't fire you on Friday. What are you doing here, Dan?

DAN

I'm bringing you an act. Like I said I would.

SAUL

That's not an act. That's a little girl with too much attitude and an average couple of tunes.

DAN

You really don't see it?

SAUL

I don't know what *you* saw, Dan. But maybe whatever it was, you *needed* to see it. I'd look again if I were you.

He goes back to work.

DAN

What are you looking for Saul? Some teenager groomed for stardom by her mom since she was a kid?

SAUL

Okay?

DAN

This is a serious artist here. Remember them?

SAUL

Tell her to make a tape and we can play it around to the girls in the office and see what they think.

DAN

I thought we made the calls around here, right?

SAUL

We do, but we're getting old Dan. What I like and what my kids like are two very different things.

DAN  
We never made records for kids.

SAUL  
That's cause we were kids. It's easy to make stuff for your peers. But the next generation...? total fucking mystery.

DAN  
Okay, so give me the money to make a tape. She doesn't have one. I want you to hear it the way I hear it. We'll get a killer producer. Hire some session guys. Really give it the treatment. Then you can tell me to fuck off.

Saul looks at him. He starts laughing.

SAUL  
Are you kidding me? I'm not going to start a precedent of paying for singers to make their tapes. That's sorta cart before horse, don't ya think?

DAN  
No, we're prospectors. It's called an investment.

SAUL  
The day I start taking portfolio advice from you I'm in big trouble. Make a tape. We'll call you.

EXT. THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dan exits into the hallway, but Greta's gone.

DAN  
Shit!

He hurries towards the stairs.

EXT. THE LABEL OFFICES - MOMENTS LATER

Dan exits the office, looking up and down the street. Then he sees her, sitting against the hood of his Jaguar with two take-out coffees. He is surprised how relieved he is to see her. He approaches.

DAN  
Okay, so that was a terrible idea.  
I'm sorry.

GRETTA  
It's not your fault. I told you-  
I'm an awful performer.

She hands him coffee and bun.

DAN  
You're not awful, you're different.  
And people don't know what to do  
with different. I think we have to  
go about this the old fashioned  
way. Get into a studio and record a  
few songs. So people can see what  
I'm talking about.

He unscrews his hip flask and makes his coffee Irish. He  
offers her a hit. She watches this, checking her watch.

GRETTA  
No thanks. I normally wait til the  
evening to start drinking...

He takes a swig from the flask instead of responding. They  
sit there on the hood, thinking.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
Okay. So how do we get a studio?

DAN  
Studios cost money.

GRETTA  
Okay.

DAN  
Do you *have* any money?

GRETTA  
I'm a college dropout. I have  
exactly \$189 in my checking  
account.

DAN  
Yeah, that won't do it.

She laughs. He gets up, knocking back his Irish coffee and  
binning the cup. He opens the car door.

GRETTA  
Hey, where are you going?

DAN  
I'm going to get us a studio. You  
wanna come with me?

He gets in. Gretta watches him start up, wondering what she's  
gotten herself into. She gets in.

INT. THE CAR - LATER

Gretta and Dan drive across town.

DAN  
So what were your conditions, on  
the phone?

GRETTA  
Okay, you take me as I am. No image  
consultants. No re mixes of my  
tunes, no big production. Let's let  
the songs do the talking.

DAN  
I can live with that.

GRETTA  
And I want you to produce it.

DAN  
I haven't produced for years.

GRETTA  
I want you to do the arrangements,  
pick the musicians. Choose the  
songs.

DAN  
Hey, I'm out of touch. We should  
get someone young.

GRETTA  
They're my conditions.

DAN  
Why is that so important to you?

GRETTA  
Because I want to keep things  
simple.

DAN  
Believe me; the way things are  
looking they'll be very simple.

He drives on.

INT./EXT. A NUMBER OF RECORDING STUDIOS.

Dan and Gretta wear out their shoes calling into a number of busy recording studios. Music plays over. Dan doesn't seem to be having much success. He seems to know everyone, but it's all head shaking, and checking of bookings, and shrugging.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A PARKING LOT - LATER

Dan and Gretta exit a studio. They lean against the car, running out of ideas.

DAN

Well, this is sort of embarrassing.

GRETTA

No, it's fine. It's my fault- I should have a tape. Thanks for trying.

DAN

The amount of work I put through these ass holes' books, you think they'd give me a couple of free days.

GRETTA

It's times like these you really find out who your friends are.

DAN

This is where I'd normally get drunk.

GRETTA

Oh, that's another one of my conditions, by the way.

DAN

What?

GRETTA

That you stop drinking. Get your life back in order. Get over whatever mid-life crisis you're going through.

DAN  
(laughing)  
That simple, is it?

GRETТА  
It has to be. I'm not working with  
a drunk. We either end this now, or  
promise me that the next drink you  
have is the bottle of champagne we  
have when we finish our demo.

He thinks about this.

GRETТА (CONT'D)  
Think you can do it?

DAN  
(doubtfully)  
Oh sure...

GRETТА  
Okay good. We have a deal then.

EXT. A CAFE/BAR - DAY

Gretta and Dan are having lunch outside a little cafe. In a moment, Dan returns from the bathroom and sits across from her. She lights up a cigarette.

DAN  
What, you're allowed smoke, but I'm  
not allowed drink?

She tosses it away.

GRETТА  
I just quit.

DAN  
So I've had an idea. Fuck them. Why  
do we need a studio at all?

GRETТА  
What?

DAN  
Why pay for all the stuff that  
comes with studio rental, most of  
which is just overhead.

GRETТА

Right, but you still need a desk,  
and a live room. With  
soundproofing.

DAN

It's 2011. We have a laptop. We get  
pro tools on it. A couple of  
dynamic mics. And the city is our  
live room.

He becomes more excited as she pitches this out there.

GRETТА

So you mean, record outside? Like  
where?

DAN

In fact, forget about doing a demo.  
Let's record a whole fucking album.  
Eight or nine songs. Each one in a  
different location around New York.  
Over the autumn. A tribute to the  
city...

We can see Gretta grow visibly excited as she thinks about  
this.

GRETТА

Each track with it's own ambiance.  
It's own neighborhood. And no  
overdubs.

DAN

Right. Just do it totally live. One  
take. Different musicians for each  
song.

GRETТА

St. Patrick's Cathedral...

DAN

Top of the Empire State building.

GRETТА

On rowing boats on the lake in  
Central Park...

He laughs.

DAN

Exactly. Take a Polaroid of each  
session.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

Eight of them would make up the cover of the album. Really low-fi and basic.

GRETTA

If it rains, so what. Keep rolling. We get arrested? It'll sound great. That's the track. That's the moment. Eight moments.

DAN

Call it "The Great Outdoors".

The both start laughing. And then think it through.

GRETTA

Are we serious about this?

DAN

I think we are!

They sit there, looking at each other. It's one of those moments of palpable excitement at realizing something totally ridiculous could actually be wonderful.

GRETTA

You see?

DAN

What?

GRETTA

And you said you got your best ideas when you were drunk? This is genius!

DAN

Thank you. (beat) But I am drunk.

GRETTA

What??

DAN

Yeah, I finished off a hip flask of scotch in the bathroom just now. It was lovely.

GRETTA

You're kidding me?

DAN

No, I'm totally serious. I had a half full flask, and I drank the whole thing.



GRETTA  
You're an ass hole.

DAN  
What, you thought it was that  
simple? A lifetime of drinking,  
just like that? 'Cause you say so?

GRETTA  
But we had a deal?

DAN  
Don't you know anything about human  
beings? I've been drinking for  
twenty years. I can't just stop.  
Besides, I have to want to do it.

GRETTA  
Don't you want to do it?

DAN  
Sure. But when I'm ready.

GRETTA  
When will you be ready?

DAN  
When I'm ready.

They look at each other. The waitress passes.

DAN (CONT'D)  
Excuse me, two beers please.

Gretta shrugs. She lights up a cigarette.

Music starts on the track...

EXT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

N.B. MUSIC PLAYS OVER THE FOLLOWING, UNTIL STATED OTHERWISE

Dan and Gretta, now in the company of Steve, haul gear out to Dan's big car. Two or three guitars in the trunk, with spare leads, effects units and speakers and headphones. Steve hooks up a small mixing desk and M box to his Macbook pro in the passenger seat and does tests.

Dan and Gretta sit on the stoop with her guitar and a notebook and pen. Dan is picking songs from her repertoire for the record. They discuss which instrumentation will suit which tracks.

Strings on this one, electric guitar on that, etc. It is ad-libbed. Dan fires suggestions about to approach different songs. There's a lightness to him that we haven't seen before.

Steve stands back and looks at the car.

STEVE

Right folks. We're done. The world's first mobile recording studio. Where ya wanna go...?

They all look at it. Cables trailing out the windows, and the back seats full of stuff. It looks like a vintage storm-chaser vehicle.

DAN

Okay. Now let's go and kidnap some musicians.

Gretta and Steve look at each other quizzically.

EXT. THE MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC - DAY

Gretta is leaning against Dan's Jaguar, which is double parked outside the Manhattan school of music. Steve sits in the passenger seat smoking.

INT. THE MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC - CONTINUOUS

A free lunchtime concert is taking place in a classroom. Thirty or so people sit watching a quartet of young students playing chamber music. Dan stands at the doorway. He is watching the string players carefully.

EXT. THE MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC - CONTINUOUS

Dan walks down the steps of the music school with two of the students from inside; a very neat, preppy BOY (16) with glasses and buck teeth and a blazer. He is carrying a violin case. And a gawky GIRL (19), with long, black hair, carrying her cello. They meet Gretta at the car.

DAN

Okay, so this is Gretta. It's her album you'll be playing on. Gretta, this is Malcolm, and his sister Rachel.

MALCOLM

Hey. How do you do.

DAN

So we can't afford to pay you up front, as we're doing the album for free. But I'd do a deal, that you'd get a back end. Like a profit share if the record makes any money. Sounds good?

MALCOLM

Hey, we're happy to play on anything other than fucking Vivaldi for a change. Where are you guys recording?

DAN

Here.

RACHEL

Where?

GRETTA

Everywhere.

DAN

It's an outdoor album.

Rachel and Malcolm look at the car. They smile.

EXT. A HUGE HOUSE - LATER

Dan and Gretta pulls up at the gates of a stately mansion in the Lower East Side. He buzzes the intercom, and it opens. He drives through the gates and parks. Next to the Range Rover, BMW, and vintage Eldorado, Dan's beat-up Jaguar looks pretty out of place.

INT. THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Dan and Gretta are shown into a big, white hallway by a typical BRITISH BUTLER (60), dressed in tails.

BUTLER

(in English accent)

Mr. Troublegum will see you presently.

He exits. They look around the hallway. The place is all marble and fake gold. It's like stepping into cribs crossed with Cludo.

In few moments, the butler returns with TROUBLEGUM (32), a rapper, dressed like a British Lord, wearing a tweed suit and waistcoat, and carrying a walking stick.

TROUBLEGUM

Yo Dan my Man. How the fuck you are?

They hug, like old friends. Dan looks at his getup, laughing. Phony Gangstas, and "crew members" potter about. They are mainly large men, wearing tracksuits and sneakers.

Dan looks around, at the pool table, the security system, the pool outside, etc. Benson waits at Troublelegum's side.

DAN

So this is it! Gangsta paradise.

They laugh.

TROUBLEGUM

No doubt. Nigger done well! How come we ain't see you, Dan? Two, three years?

DAN

(lying, badly)  
I've been... busy.

TROUBLEGUM

That's no excuse not to drop around.

DAN

I know, I know, I'm sorry. I've just been... laying low...

TROUBLEGUM

Germinating.

DAN

You could say that.

Troublelegum clicks his fingers, a stream of consciousness rap coming out.

TROUBLEGUM

Hibernating. Waiting. For the your next move. Anticipating the next groove. Gotta a lotta shit to prove. Been down in the underground, waiting for the next sound. He ain't fucking around.

(MORE)

TROUBLEGUM (CONT'D)  
Gotta be right, or it's wrong, and  
the road is long. You're only as  
strong... as your last move.

                  DAN  
Wow!

                  TROUBLEGUM  
You feeling me?

                  DAN  
That's basically it, man.

They shake hands. Gretta claps.

Troublegum turns to one of his crew members, who follows him  
around with a pad and pen.

                  TROUBLEGUM  
You get that down?

                  CREW MEMBER  
I got it T.

                  TROUBLEGUM  
Very good. So what's on your mind,  
guys?

INT. THE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Dan and Greta sit at the kitchen counter. Troublegum makes  
three healthy fruit drinks, bringing them over.

                  DAN  
I'm recording an album with Gretta  
here, and we need some musicians.

                  TROUBLEGUM  
I got musicians. How many you need?

                  DAN  
We need a rhythm section. Maybe  
some piano. Three.

                  GRETТА  
But we got a slight problem.

                  TROUBLEGUM  
Oh yeah? What's that?

                  GRETТА  
We can't pay them.

TROUBLEGUM  
So? I'll pay them.

                  GRETТА  
Why would you do that?

                  TROUBLEGUM  
For him? (meaning Dan) I'd do  
anything.

He smiles, handing them their fruit juices.

EXT. TROUBLEGUM'S HOUSE DRIVEWAY - DAY

Dan and Gretta stand by his Jaguar with Troublegum, saying  
goodbye. Dan gets in.

                  DAN  
Thanks for this, T.

                  TROUBLEGUM  
No doubt.

Troublegum puts an arm around Gretta, walking her to the  
passenger door, and taking a moment to whisper to her.

                  TROUBLEGUM (CONT'D)  
Good luck with the record Gretta.  
Everything which you see. This  
whole place. The rides. The crib.  
Is because of him. I don't ever  
forget that.

                  GRETТА  
I get it. I know.

                  TROUBLEGUM  
No you don't. Guy falls down on his  
luck a couple of years, people lose  
sight of who he is. Don't treat him  
with respect. I was singing to  
beats on the corners in the  
projects trying to beat a crack  
habit when he heard me. Got me into  
rehab. Paid for it. Signed me. I  
never lose sight of that sort of  
shit.

Dan rolls down his window.

DAN  
What are you talking about?  
Whatever he's saying, don't believe  
it.

Troublegum laughs as he opens the door for Gretta. It creaks.

TROUBLEGUM  
What is this crock on ancient shit?

DAN  
This is my Jaguar! Great car.

They laugh. He gets in and starts her up, leaning his arm on the ledge, and hugging Dan.

TROUBLEGUM  
You see that's the difference  
between you and me. The artist  
gotta flaunt his shit, with the  
SUVs and the Benz's. While you  
record company boy's is discreet.  
Driving this piece of shit like you  
is nobody. Respect!

He laughs. Dan smiles at the irony that HE thinks Troublegum is totally unaware of. But Troublegum winks discreetly at Gretta as they pull off. She smiles.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gretta, Steve, Malcolm and Rachel, and three LARGE BLACK MEN - musicians we recognize from Troublegum's house- rehearse Gretta's songs in Steve's flat. They are all cramped into the small room. Troublegum's guys are dressed in tracksuits and sunglasses. Malcolm in a blazer. Rachel in a long dress. They are a motley crew if ever there was one.

Dan fires out suggestions as they jam. This is ad-libbed and dependant on the song being rehearsed, but we see that Dan is a gifted producer, with an ear for detail, and natural communication skills.

Over a cross section of Gretta's songs, we see that her lyrics are intelligent and heartfelt; an account of her relationship and breakup with Dave.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL - DAY

Dan sits outside Violet's school waiting to pick her up. In a moment, she gets in. She looks around, at the wires, cables, and microphones as they drive off.

VIOLET:  
What's all this?

DAN  
Oh, I saw this girl sing, and I'm trying to get her signed.

VIOLET:  
Oh, cool. What's she like?

DAN  
Sort of where Nora Jones *could* have gone, if she'd been Carol King, with a touch of Alanis Morissette, by way of Janis Joplin. Really interesting.

Violet laughs.

VIOLET:  
Sounds cool.

DAN  
Yeah. She's sorta... different. Kinda tricky, and outspoken. *You'd* like her!

They drive on, the ice melted a fraction.

THE RECORDING OF THE ALBUM...

A cross section of locations around New York, as Gretta, Dan, and their motley crew of musicians record their outdoor album:

**The lake in Central park.** Three boats drift across the lake making music. Dan and Steve in one, Gretta, and the two weird string players in another, playing cello and violin. Trouble gum's gangstas in another, playing drums and bass. It's a beautiful atmosphere. The water laps against the boats, and birds fly overhead, and the city buzzes in the background. Dan monitors from his boat with headphones. Other BOATERS drift by, smiling, watching this bizarre scene with intrigue. Some take pictures.



**Times Square.** Gretta sings down an alleyway off Times Square. Steve has one microphone trained on her guitar, the other on her vocal. Dan sits in the car up the laneway, working the desk. The sound is live and exciting. Car horns, police sirens and foot steps. Malcolm and Rachel sit on seats a little way off. They join in, and the song fills out. Tom Waits meets Elvis Costello.

Dan moves microphones, tweaks faders on the portable desk, and throws instructions to the musicians. He is in his element when he is producing. Steve takes pictures with a Polaroid camera.

### **A Subway station.**

Dan, Gretta and Steve carry gear from the car into a subway station.

Gretta sits on the bench rehearsing a simple acoustic song. The acoustics of the empty station and its tunnels are fantastic. Dan sits on another bench listening on headphones.

On the other side of the station, next to the tunnel, sit Malcolm and Rachel. They join in on Dan's instruction, and the song really fills out.

### **St. Patrick's Cathedral**

Early morning in St. Patrick's Cathedral on 5th. The Jag pulls up around the corner, and Gretta, Steve, Dan, Malcolm and Rachel get out and surreptitiously enter the side door of the cathedral, carrying their gear. The cathedral has just opened its doors, and is fairly empty.

Our little group is making beautiful music at the back of the church. The acoustics are wonderful as Gretta's voice reverberates around the huge room. Steve plays a vintage keyboard. A small group of TOURISTS have gathered around, and are enjoying this unexpected treat.

Dan takes a picture on a Polaroid, and dries it off, adding it to the collection from the other locations.

DISSOLVE TO:

### **EXT. CHELSEA GUITARS 23RD STREET- DAY**

Another day. Dan and Gretta walk up the street together, entering Chelsea Guitars, a famous music shop in Chelsea. Dan looks a lot better than when we first met him. The spark is back in his eye.

INT. THE SHOP - LATER

This is a funky, vintage guitar shop. Kids play in corners, testing out various guitars. Dan is negotiating with MATT, the owner, a skinny rocker in his fifties. Gretta potters about, trying out guitars.

Dan and Matt strike a deal, shaking hands.

EXT. THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dan and Gretta exit, walking towards Dan's car around the corner.

DAN

Okay, 11 O'clock here tomorrow morning. I'll pick up the others.

GRETTA

Okay. You want to get lunch?

DAN

I can't. I gotta pick up my kid. Anyway, you need a break. We've been at it all week. Why don't you go see your man? Play him what we've done already.

GRETTA

He's still away on tour. Anyway, I don't want to go chasing him. I want him to come to me. When he gets over himself.

DAN

What if he doesn't get over himself?

GRETTA

Of course he will.

He squeezes her shoulder.

DAN

I'll see you in the morning.

GRETTA

Hey, can I hang out with you more?

DAN

Sure. Why don't you come and meet Violet with me. I'd like you to meet her?

INT. THE CAR - LATER

Dan and Gretta are waiting outside Violet's school. The bell goes and a bunch of kids file out. Violet walks with a small gang of kids, including a VERY HANDSOME GUY (15), who a couple of girls, including Violet appear very interested in. As she spots Dan, she says goodbye to the GUY, but he doesn't notice her. He is preppy looking, and out of her league.

She approaches the car.

DAN

Hey there.

VIOLET:

Hi.

DAN

This is Gretta, the girl I mentioned to you. This is Violet.

GRETTA

Hey Violet.

Gretta shakes hands with her and they all sit in.

INT. THE CAR - LATER

The three of them drive. Gretta sits in the back.

GRETTA

So who's the cute guy? The blonde haired guy in the blue shirt.

VIOLET:

Oh. Greg. You noticed him?

GRETTA

Who wouldn't? He's gorgeous.

VIOLET:

He's totally out of our league.

GRETTA

He didn't look out of your league. He looked like he was getting way too much attention from you guys so that he *thought* he was out of your league.

VIOLET:

So what do I do to get his attention?

GRETTA  
Honestly? Ignore him.

VIOLET:  
How can you get someone to notice  
you're ignoring them, if *they're*  
ignoring you?

EXT. A PARK - DAY

Violet, Greta and Dan sit in a park eating ice creams. Greta and Violet have hit it off.

GRETTA  
Believe me- he's not ignoring you.  
You're beautiful. He knows you're  
there. He's just hedging his bets.  
Also, you have to be sure you  
really like him. That it's not just  
because he's the guy in school to  
be seen with.

VIOLET:  
I do like him. He's actually really  
cool, and smart. He's into great  
music, and reads books. Which  
believe me, is unusual for that  
school.

GRETTA  
Well then, you gotta get him to ask  
you out.

VIOLET:  
Yeah, but how.

GRETTA  
Well, for a start, stop dressing  
like you're totally easy!

Violet looks at her clothes, becoming a little self  
conscious. Dan takes this opportunity to make himself scarce,  
wandering off, but making sure to stay in earshot, as he's  
interested in Greta's advice for her.

VIOLET:  
I thought this was sorta sexy. It's  
American Apparel.

GRETTA  
It is sorta sexy, but it doesn't  
leave much to the imagination. You  
know what I mean?

VIOLET:

I guess.

GRETTA

You wanna keep something back, right? Some mystery? I know that's sort of old fashioned, but it's true.

VIOLET:

I don't know if he's into that.

GRETTA

If he's not into that, he's not worth it! Are you free now? You wanna go looking around shops?

EXT. WILLIAMSBURG - LATER - MUSIC OVER

All three of them wander through thrift stores in Williamsburg. Violet is enjoying the attention she's getting from Gretta.

They have lunch in an outdoor cafe, and accumulate a few bags of clothes that Gretta helps Violet pick out. It's generally vintage stuff; a bit more subtle than what Violet is used to, but still pretty cool. We hold on Dan watching them together.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE CAR - MIRIAM'S HOUSE - LATER

The car pulls up outside Miriam's house. Violet gets out with a few bags of shopping.

VIOLET:

Good luck with the rest of your album. It sounds cool.

GRETTA

Hey why don't you come and sing on a track?

VIOLET:

I can't sing. I can play like a bit of drums...

DAN

(wary)

Well she's.../

GRETTA  
(interrupting)  
Okay, so bring in a snare, and a  
bass drum, and brushes. We're  
recording a track tomorrow. It's  
gonna be really simple. Why don't  
you come in?

VIOLET:  
Could I Dad?

DAN  
We'll see.

Violet nods and turns, heading in to her house. Dan watches  
her go.

DAN (CONT'D)  
That wasn't cool. She can't drum.  
She'll just embarrass herself.

GRETTA:  
She can bang a snare in time,  
believe me. We don't need John  
Bonham. Let her do it.

He thinks about this.

DAN  
Hang on a second.

He jumps out, running back to the house.

INT. MIRIAM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Miriam opens the door to Dan.

DAN  
Hey, what to do think about getting  
Violet to drum on one of these  
tracks I'm doing?

MIRIAM:  
Em, it's a nice idea. But can she  
drum?

DAN  
I think she'd probably be fine.  
Tomorrow? I'll text you the  
address. Maybe you could bring her  
in? Hang around for the day. I  
mean, if you're free.

MIRIAM:

I am free.

Miriam thinks about this. It's clear she'd like it.

MIRIAM: (CONT'D)

That sounds nice.

DAN

Okay, great. See ya. Round 11.

He smiles and hurries off back to the car. She watches him, shaking her head.

INT. A DINER - LATER

Dan and Gretta sit across from each other, eating hamburgers.

DAN

So you're sorta ready for a daughter of your own, aren't ya?

He smiles.

GRETTA

I think I am actually. In fact, some days, it's all I think of. Thing is, I don't see much space in the music business for kids.

DAN

That's true. (beat) I was a complete flop when it came to bringing up Violet.

GRETTA

Really?

DAN

When Miriam got pregnant we made a deal to kinda put our careers on hold. But I never followed it through. And I sort left her, literally, carrying the baby, for like, ten years.

GRETTA

Ouch. That's not good. I would hate that.

DAN

Do you think Dave would make a good father?

GRETTA  
I used to think so. I don't know  
anymore.

DAN  
What makes a good parent? I mean  
what's the defining feature.

Gretta thinks.

GRETTA  
Time.

He thinks about this. She's probably right.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
And breast milk.

He laughs.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
So it was nice seeing you with  
Violet today. It must be hard not  
seeing her more.

DAN  
Tell me about it.

GRETTA  
So why don't you? Seems like she  
really needs her father around.

DAN  
Hey, you working for social  
services now?

GRETTA  
No, I'm just saying. Things must've  
been fairly tense for you guys to  
split up. Specially seeing how much  
she obviously wants you around.

He finishes a bite of his hamburger, and throws a few notes  
down.

DAN  
Okay, I'm going to split. I'll see  
you in the morning.

GRETTA  
Hey, did I say something wrong? I  
didn't mean/



DAN  
No, you're just making judgements  
about things you know nothing  
about. I'll see ya tomorrow.

EXT. THE DINER - CONTINUOUS

Dan exits, annoyed. Gretta follows.

GRETTA  
Hey, don't pout. It's our first  
row, you going to just cut out?

DAN  
Yes, I am.

GRETTA  
Is that what you do? With  
confrontation? Just walk away?

He stops.

DAN  
What do you want from me?

GRETTA  
I'm sorry. I'm just saying. I was  
watching her today, and seeing how  
sweet she is, and just feeling  
sorry for you being away from that.

DAN  
Yeah, it is hard!

GRETTA  
That's all I'm saying.

DAN  
No. You're judging me. You're  
assuming I'm not there because you  
think I'm a selfish, depressed  
prick. Which I am. No denying it.

GRETTA  
I don't think you're a selfish  
depressed prick. I just think  
you've let your problems take over  
your whole life.

DAN  
Hey! You're really showing your age  
right now, okay?  
(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

You have NO idea what other people are going through. Or their reasons for doing what they do. So don't give me some naïve romantic crap about "couples staying together for the sake of the kids" alright? Just because you're willing to hang around for your boyfriend when HE'S the ass hole who betrayed YOU, that's your business, okay.

He walks on. She catches up and walks beside him.

GRETTA

I'm not hanging around for him! I've invested a lot of time in that relationship. I'm not just going to walk away when he needs me more than ever. Because of a bump in the road.

He stops her.

DAN

You think I left that relationship because of a fucking "bump"? You have no idea, alright?

GRETTA

I'm sorry, alright? I'm not judging you.

DAN

Yes you are. I left that relationship because I was having a nervous fucking breakdown, and when I needed HER most, she was in a different country, with a different man, making plans to settle down with him, while I was at home looking after our daughter. You know nothing. Okay? I'll see you.

He storms off, leaving Gretta standing there, wishing she could reverse this. Suddenly, and impulsively, she runs up behind him and hugs him, turning him around. We see that his eyes are full of tears. He hugs her back. They stand there, locked in an embrace that is somewhere between friendship and love. They both need this physical affection.

EXT. OVERLOOK - NIGHT

Dan and Gretta have driven somewhere nice, overlooking the city. They are sitting on the hood of his car sharing a cigarette. She watches him closely as he talks.

DAN

...she was away on a Junket in London. And she met this singer she was interviewing for her paper. And they fell for each other. Thunder. Lightning. The whole bit. And they both arranged to fly home and tell their partners, and meet up and start a life together. I picked her up in the airport, and she came straight out with it. Told me the whole story. I had a lot of respect for that. And packed her bags the next day. We told Violet what was going to happen.

GRETTA

Shit. That's terrible. (beat) So what *did* happen?!

DAN

Nothing.

GRETTA

How do you mean "nothing"?

DAN

Turned out the guy got cold feet on the plane ride home. Choked. Went back to his life like nothing had happened. Turned his phone off, and she never heard from him. I moved into my own bedroom. She waited for a call that would never come, like the girl on her prom night who's been stood up. And we just sorta stayed like that. With me beating her up on a nightly basis. Until it became unbearable.

Silence. Gretta is dumbstruck.

GRETTA

I feel like an idiot for judging you.

DAN

Thing of it is, you're sorta right. I was outta my mind back then. I can see why she made a run for the door.

GRETТА

Isn't that a cliché? The victim blaming himself for why he was betrayed?

DAN

Sure, she fucked up, but I hadn't exactly held up my part of the bargain. We weren't sharing a life, I was just making her fit her life around mine. That wasn't the deal.

GRETТА

Sounds like Dave.

DAN

Oh yeah?

GRETТА

Did you forgive her? I mean really *forgive* her?

DAN

I think I tried. It's more about her forgiving herself. They say guilt is hard to live with; try shame. You live with shame long enough it becomes part of the furniture.

They sit there in silence looking down at the city as the sun goes down.

INT. THE CAR - LATER

Dan drives Gretta home. She looks at the cross and beads hanging off the mirror. Then she notices the HEADPHONE JACK beside it, swaying.

GRETТА

What's this?

DAN

What?

He looks at it.

DAN (CONT'D)

Oh, that's a splitter. You know, a headphone jack, but for plugging two sets of headphones into the same input.

GRETTA

Ah. Why do you have it here?

DAN

I guess it's sentimental.

It's from our first date- me and Miriam.

GRETTA

What do you mean?

DAN

I met her at a college gig- first band I ever signed, she was covering them for the college paper, and I invited her out the next night. I bought one of those, and we walked around New York listening to the same songs on her cd player. It was New Years Eve. We hardly exchanged a word over the whole night.

GRETTA

That's nice.

DAN

I hate listening to headphones on my own. I feel cut off. But you do it with someone else, and it's a lot of fun. It's like you're plugged into the same, private vibe; but just the two of you, against the whole world. You ever done that?

She looks at the headphone jack.

Frank Sinatra singing "LUCK BE A LADY" blasts in on the track.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

Dan and Gretta walk through the crowds. Dan has his Iphone in his hand, with two sets of headphones coming from it.

They are smiling like idiots as the brass blasts in their ears, Frank singing "Stick with me baby, I'm the fella you came in with, Luck Be a Lady Tonight..."

We follow Dan and Gretta around New York city at night. Numerous locations, to numerous songs from Dan's music library. Sometimes Gretta picks a song, sometimes Dan. From jazz piano playing, to Chaka Khan, to Wu Tang Clan, to classical music, to The Clash, to Grand Master Flash. They travel over the whole city.

Ending in...

EXT. A BENCH - NIGHT

Gretta and Dan sit on a bench in the village. She rests her head on his shoulder. He has an arm around her, and she wears his coat.

They are listening to one of HER songs on their headphones.

Couples walk arm in arm, a bum screams at traffic, a cop berates him, two nuns run across the road, laughing. Dan takes one ear out, and nudges her.

DAN

Look at that. That's what I love  
about music.

She takes one ear out.

GRETTA

What?

DAN

The most banal scene suddenly  
becomes rich with life and meaning,  
depending on what you're listening  
to...

They continue watching the scenes around them, *now scored by Gretta's music*. A mother stops on the sidewalk and talks to her baby in a stroller. A couple of teenagers play-fight, pretending to be in slow-motion. A bunch of kids pull wheelies on BMX bikes.

DAN (CONT'D)

All these banalities become pearls.

Dan is right- a scene we pass by every day is enriched with potential and poignancy as the song swirls.

DAN (CONT'D)

But I gotta admit, those pearls have been becoming increasingly rare than in my teens and my twenties.

GRETTA

Now there's more string than pearls?

DAN

Right. Longer to travel. I guess for some people it's family, or nature. For me it's music that's always came to the rescue.

We hold on Gretta watching him, sensing that he is in a very precarious place in his life.

GRETTA

You know, you ought to be careful of that. You've got to try find some *inner* happiness that's long lasting, that doesn't depend on anything else.

He smiles.

DAN

This is a pearl, Gretta. This moment.

GRETTA

(smiling)

It sorta is, isn't it!

He looks at her in the eyes, really close.

DAN

(seriously)

Yeah. It is. Meeting you has been a pearl.

GRETTA

Likewise.

She smiles. He goes back to watching the action on the streets below. But Gretta is sort of transfixed by him now. She leans into him, and he moves into her. She rests her forehead against his, and they both close their eyes. They don't kiss, but in a way, this is more intimate. They stay like this for some time, until the song ends.

## INT. CHELSEA GUITARS - MORNING

The Jag is parked outside the little guitar shop. Miriam's car, a Volvo, pulls up outside, and Violet and Miriam get out, carrying parts of a drum kit. A couple of Violet's friends from school help out.

## INT. CHELSEA GUITARS - CONTINUOUS

The little shop is open to the public. Our whole gang is here. Gretta sits on an amp tuning her guitar. Steve is playing bass through an amp. Rachel and Malcolm are tuning their instruments, and two of Troublegum's musicians are on guitar and piano.

Dan sits at the mixing desk wearing headphones as Miriam and Violet enter.

DAN

Hey guys! Hey everyone, this is Violet, my kid, she's gonna play some percussion on this track.

He leads Miriam in as she waves to everyone, ushering her shy daughter into the shop. Gretta gets up and helps Violet with her drums, setting them up with Steve. Dan introduces them everyone, ending in.

DAN (CONT'D)

And this is Gretta, Gretta this is Miriam.

They shake. Gretta notices that Violet has changed her look a little. She's still got a touch of the angry young punk thing, but it's more Vivian Westwood meets Lauren Bacall.

DAN (CONT'D)

Okay everyone. Let's rehearse this.

## INT. CHELSEA GUITARS - LATER

The "band" finishes a rehearsal. It's getting fairly cramped in here. But the music sounds pretty good, if a little disorganized. Dan tweaks a few microphones while firing instructions.

Gretta's phone rings, and she fishes it out of her pocket, looking at the screen. Her heart skips a beat.

"DAVE".



She lets it go to message minder, putting the phone back in her pocket.

DAN

Okay, let's go for a take. Malcolm and Rachel, if you can build more gradually to that first chorus. And Gretta, check your tuning. Rappa DD, try playing the octave up on the first verse, and just the bass notes on the chorus. And Phat Jimmy, gimme a bit more attack from the last chorus to the end.

PHAT JIMMY:

You got it.

VIOLET:

What about me, Dad?

DAN

Oh. You were actually pretty good.

She smiles. They all prepare to go for another take. Miriam, and a few WORKERS from the shop watch from the wings.

The song begins. It is a little chaotic, but quickly finds it's feet.

Dan connects with the players almost like a conductor. Gesticulating, and bringing the song to life with his hands.

Miriam watches him closely, impressed. He is focused, clear-headed, and impressive.

The song is very beautiful. And Gretta's natural voice suits this low-fi, home-made production. As it reaches its climax, Dan watches Gretta singing. Her eyes are closed, her voice sails. He smiles watching her, lost in her music.

The song ends, and she wakes up, as if from a dream, and catches him watching her. She smiles.

A number of people who have wandered in from the street applaud. Dan keeps rolling- this will work well on the record; the sound of traffic in the background, the cash register etc.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHELSEA GUITARS

Gretta is standing on the sidewalk taking a break. She is listening to her messages. We hear Dave's voice.

DAVE

(O.S.)

Hey. It's me. I'm back in town.  
Thinking about you. Call me.

We hold on Gretta. Her face is filled with anticipation at hearing Dave's voice. She listens to it again.

Miriam exits the shop behind her. Gretta hangs up.

MIRIAM:

I'm doing the coffee run. You want one?

GRETTA

Oh, sure. I'd like a small Americano.

MIRIAM:

Of course. Nice to meet you properly, by the way. That song inside was so beautiful.

GRETTA

Oh thank you. It's nice to meet you too. Let me help you.

They set off together towards a coffee shop on the corner.

MIRIAM:

I'd like to write something about it if that's okay? The way you guys did this? Like a spec piece.

GRETTA

Sure. I mean, I don't know what's going to happen with it, but I'd love the help.

MIRIAM:

Hey, it would be helping *me*. I sorta fell outta the business for a few years, and now all these children have taken over, it's hard to get back on the horse, so It'd be good to have an exclusive on something like this. Help me get the foot back in the door.

GRETТА

Wow. I'd be happy for you to write about it.

MIRIAM:

And I meant to thank you properly.

GRETТА

For what?

MIRIAM:

For what you've done with Dan.

GRETТА

What?

MIRIAM:

He's like a new person in there. Or rather, the *old* person.

GRETТА

He just needed to get his teeth into something.

MIRIAM:

You're the one person who's taken a chance on him in the last five years.

GRETТА

Hey, he's the one who took a chance on me. It's not everyday that an unknown songwriter from \*\*\* gets to work with a someone like him.

MIRIAM:

That's a nice way to look at it. Not the way most people see it I'm afraid... He's alienated a lot of people...

GRETТА

It's a fickle business. He's just out of fashion. He's a total legend.

MIRIAM:

Sure. But legends can be hard to live with.

GRETТА

Tell me about it.

They laugh.

MIRIAM:

But anyway... thank you.

She stops, and makes a very big point of shaking Gretta's hand, holding onto it for a little longer than usual. Gretta is puzzled by this. Is she being sized-up? After a moment, Miriam lets go of her hand, smiling.

They enter the cafe.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A small after-album party is in mid flow in Steve's tiny apartment. Couches have been pushed back, and the fridge is full of beer. Twenty or thirty people drink and chat and listen to music.

All our "band" are present, and a few people from Steve's spot at the singer songwriter club. Violet, and a few girls from her class are there, and Miriam is supervising them. Greg, (the handsome guy from Violet's school), is sitting with them. Gretta has put on a nice dress. Steve wears a hip suit and hat. It's a weird mix of family gathering, and typical village party.

The doorbell rings and Steve opens it. Standing outside, is Troublegum, and about seven of his crew.

TROUBLEGUM

Yo. This where the party at?

STEVE

(in shock)

Are you Troublegum?

TROUBLEGUM

That's my name, don't wear it out.  
Where's Danny?

They all enter. Dan hugs Troublegum, thanking him for coming. It's a lively atmosphere, and people are thrilled by the arrival of the big hip hop star and his entourage.

INT. THE PARTY - LATER

People are drunker, and the party is becoming more lively. Dan is DJing. He puts in a CD, shouting.

DAN

Okay, so here's a preview of our record. It's not mixed yet, but you'll get the idea. Here it goes.

Gretta's album begins, and sounds pretty good over Steve's big vintage speakers.

ANGLE ON:

Violet is sitting on the couch with a girlfriend from school. Greg sidles up, and sits on the arm of the couch next to her. She blushes.

GREG  
Hey Violet.

VIOLET:  
Hey Greg.

They sit there. Awkward as hell. Suddenly we see just how attractive Violet really is.

GREG  
You look, sorta... different...

VIOLET:  
Oh.

GREG  
So your dad produced this music?

VIOLET:  
Yeah.

GREG  
Cool.

They both look over to Dan, who is chatting animatedly and laughing with Troublegum.

VIOLET:  
And I played drums on this track.

GREG  
I know.

VIOLET:  
Who told you?

GREG  
Her?

He points at Gretta, who is surreptitiously watching them from the other side of the room.

GREG (CONT'D)  
That's pretty awesome.

Violet's girlfriend excuses herself, leaving a seat free. Greg quickly sits down beside Violet, and they start talking and laughing.

Across the room, Gretta smiles to herself, her match-making a success.

Dan sidles up to her, glass in hand.

GRETTA  
Hey, we should have a toast.

DAN  
Okay. To your record.

GRETTA  
*Our* record.

She picks up a bottle of opened champagne and goes to pour two glasses.

DAN  
Not for me.

GRETTA  
What? You quit!??

DAN  
Don't get too excited. I'm just trying it out.

GRETTA  
That is a seriously good move for you Dan.

She studies him, impressed. She pours him a coke instead. They clink. We hold on her, smiling.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAWN

Music plays over as the party is breaking up on the block below Steve's Apartment. Steve is throwing people out. Troublegum gets into his Limo as Dan says goodbye. Violet and Greg chat, getting on warmly. Dan says goodbye to everyone. Violet hugs Gretta and gets into her dad's car with Miriam.

We HOLD on Gretta watching him give a lift home to his wife and daughter. Her look is inscrutable. But for the first time, there's a hint of jealousy on her face as she watches the car drive off.

In a moment, the corner is quiet again. She stands there on her own. She digs in her pocket for her phone. She pulls it out, and writes something...

Hi...

She presses send to DAVE. She re-enters the apartment.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE RECORD LABEL OFFICES - DAY

Dan climbs the steps of the label. He is carrying a plastic bag full of CD's.

INT. THE RECORD LABEL OFFICES - DAY

Dan marches across the floor of his busy record company offices. He is energized.

DAN

Here we go! Music! New music right here! Listen up! Here we go. Roll up!

He distributes them to workers behind desks and in offices. People seem grateful for an opportunity to take a few minutes off. Phillis walks with him.

DAN (CONT'D)

Where's Saul at?

PHILLIS

He's in L.A. Until the end of the week.

DAN

Okay. Here's one for you, Phillis. I'm going into the boardroom to make some calls. Let me know what you think?

INT. THE RECORD LABEL OFFICES - LATER

We track, hand-held around the office. Everyone is listening to Gretta's songs on CD. In a couple of offices, A and R men and women listen on their stereos and computers. Dan watches from behind the glass. It's obviously connecting with people. He smiles to himself.

INT. THE BOARDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dan is pacing about the boardroom listening to Gretta's songs loud on the stereo, and knocking back coffee. Three YOUNG WOMEN knock and enter.

FIRST WOMAN  
Who is she? It's amazing Dan.

DAN  
What did you think?

SECOND WOMAN:  
Phillis cried!

DAN  
(laughing)  
Did you?

PHILLIS  
Yep. Track two is so beautiful.

They all laugh. A COUPLE OF MARKETING GUYS in expensive suits poke their head in.

MARKETING GUY 1  
Dan. She's amazing. Where did you find her?

MARKETING GUY 2  
Seriously bro. Who is she? She's beautiful.

DAN  
I'm thinking of signing her. What do you think?

PHILLIS  
You mean she's *not* signed?

MARKETING GUY 1  
I just googled her. There's nothing on her!?

DAN  
I know. Clean slate.

EXT. A CAFE - LATER

Gretta is nervously sitting at a table. For the first time in the movie she appears to be wearing make up. She's put on a dress, and is looking her best. She checks her watch. Looks at the door. Looks around. Back at the door.



Finally, Dave steps in. He's changed his look a little. He's wearing a waistcoat, an old fashioned long sleeved vest, and a big beard. He's more Ray LaMontagne now.

He rushes up to her table, hugging her, apologizing about being late. She doesn't care, she just wants to see him.

INT. THE CAFE - LATER

They are half way through lunch. Gretta looks looks him over, wondering if this is an authentic change of lifestyle, or a fad.

GRETTA  
So, look at you!  
When did you get in?

DAVE  
Rolled in from Philly on Friday  
night.

GRETTA  
And how was it? Touring?

DAVE  
Grueling. Amazing. Punishing.  
Inspiring.

GRETTA  
Did ya find yourself?

He blushes.

GRETTA (CONT'D)  
Well you certainly found a beard  
anyway! Look at that thing!

He laughs, rubbing his beard self consciously.

DAVE  
It's good to see you Gretta.

GRETTA  
Did Mim come with you? On tour.

He is expecting this grilling.

DAVE  
For a little bit.

GRETTA  
(fake)  
How the hell is she?

DAVE  
So we're going straight into this?

GRETTA  
Are you guys like the happiest couple ever, or did you break up after like a month? And she returned to New York on a bus?

DAVE  
Train.

Gretta smiles.

GRETTA  
I'm sorry. I'm being a bitch.

DAVE  
No, you're entitled.

They sit there, not knowing what to say next. Through the window, we notice a guy with 16mm camera, and a couple of crew members across the street.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
So what have you been up to?

EXT. THE CAFE - LATER

Dave and Gretta exit the cafe, putting on their coats.

DAVE  
You recorded an album!?? Where?

GRETTA  
It's a long story. But you've been away a long time. I'd love you to hear it.

DAVE  
When did all this happen?

GRETTA  
Hey, I think those guys are filming you. Across the street.

DAVE  
Oh. Yeah. So tell me more.

He puts his sunglasses on.

GRETTA

Does that happen all the time now?

DAVE

Don't worry about them.

GRETTA

Why? Who are they?

DAVE

Oh, they're just some guys outta NYC. They're doing a sorta thing on me.

GRETTA

You mean... you *know* them?

DAVE

Yeah. They wanted to make a documentary about me, on the album and the tour, and stuff. A sorta fly on the wall.

GRETTA

Oh. I see.

Gretta isn't sure about this. Dave takes her arm, and walks down the street with her. The crew track along on the other side of the street. It's weird.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

Now they're following us.

DAVE

Don't worry. You get used to them.

GRETTA

And you took them along to your first meeting with me? After two months? Don't you think that's a bit... weird?

He thinks about this.

DAVE

You know, you are *so* right, Gretta.

He rips off a radio mic from inside his shirt, and turns his pack off. Gretta looks on, bemused.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Back in a second.

He crosses the street, gesturing for the guys to cut.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
That's enough for today. Cut.

Across the street, the little crew stop rolling and break up. Gretta watches all this, baffled. Dave walks on with her.

EXT. A STOOP - LATER

Gretta and Dave sit outside Dave's building. He is listening to her record on her iphone. His eyes closed. She is watching him, waiting for a response. He finally pulls out the headphones. He just looks at her.

GRETТА  
Well?

Silence.

DAVE  
It's amazing, Gretta.

GRETТА  
You think!?

DAVE  
Totally. The ambient sound, the city. And that's it, no overdubs? Nothing?

GRETТА  
Nope. Just the way you hear it.

DAVE  
That's so great. And are they really offering you a deal?

GRETТА  
We'll see- he has to play it to his partner first. I don't care really, I'm just glad we did it.

We hold on Dave, genuinely happy for her, if not a little jealous.

DAVE  
I can't believe what he's done with your songs!

GRETТА  
I know! He's amazing. You should get him to produce your record.

DAVE

Too late. We just mastered the album in Los Angeles. Been recording it in various studios on the road.

GRETTA

Wow. So what's it called?

DAVE

"On The Road".

GRETTA

Oh. Kinda like Kerouac.

Now that he hears it back, this sounds like a bad idea. He blushes.

DAVE

Well, I was reading a lot of Kerouac while we were touring, so it sorta made sense. At the time.

GRETTA

Well, at least you've moved on from the self help books.

He smiles.

DAVE

But I gotta tell you- I wish I had done it this way. An Outdoor album. That's so cool, Gretta.

GRETTA

It wasn't meant to be cool. We had no other options.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE APARTMENT - LATER

Gretta sits on the couch drinking tea, and reading the liner notes on his new album, which is pressed and printed. The cover is of Dave standing on the side of a dusty road, with his hands in the pockets of his hoodie. A NOT VERY GOOD song plays on the stereo. It's got a phoney, urgent vocal, and the production is like a Snow Patrol record. Catchy, but empty.

DAVE

Well... what do you think?

GRETTA

Let it sink in. I'll listen to it again tomorrow.

DAVE

No, I want your immediate reaction!

GRETTA

My immediate reaction is that it's a catchy pop record. But I'm sure there's something more to it, so I want to listen to it again.

DAVE

There isn't anything more to it. That's it. But they're going to do a huge push on it. I mean, global. And that's exciting.

GRETTA

So what? What does *global* mean anymore anyway? I mean, sneezing pandas are global.

DAVE

Look. I just want to get my foot in the door. Then once I'm in, you know, I can start to do the stuff I really want.

GRETTA

Dave, listen to yourself! You're prepared to release a bullshit album so that you can become a star, so you can do what you want and be taken seriously?? That makes so sense. You were already in a position to do what you wanted!

DAVE

Yeah, but no one was listening!

GRETTA

I was listening!

DAVE

This is a once in a lifetime chance, and I'm not going to take it because of what? That it'll damage my integrity? That it's a sell out?

GRETTA

(laughing, but frustrated)  
Yeah! All of those fucking things!

DAVE

But people don't care. They  
forgive.

GRETTA

And I can't believe you're okay  
with changing your look every time  
some record company guy tells you  
to. From Coldplay, to Kings Of Leon  
overnight!

He laughs. But she is on a roll.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

Really. Look at you! I mean, you  
come to New York, and within a  
couple of months you've totally  
changed who you are. You're flip-  
flopping around with your wardrobe,  
your ideology, your principals.  
You're in the limelight two minutes  
and you're commissioning a  
documentary of your life, like  
you're John fucking Lennon. How is  
anyone meant to take that  
seriously? How am I meant to take  
that seriously?

Dave is stunned by all this.

DAVE

God, you really resent me, don't  
you?

GRETTA

No, I don't resent you, Dave. I'm  
embarrassed by you, is all. Because  
you don't know who you are.

She stands there, looking out at the city. Dave watches her.  
There's something different about her. Like she's grown up.

DAVE

Did we fight like this?

We see that her eyes are welling up. She shakes her head.

GRETTA

We never had much to fight about.  
We should be fighting about babies,  
and mortgages now. Not our fucking  
solo albums. Remind me when we  
became this music-biz couple?

DAVE

Let's do all that, then. Have a baby.

GRETТА

Oh yeah, and who'll look after it?

DAVE

We will. You'll come on tour. We'll bring him with us.

GRETТА

You didn't want me on tour. Do you know how that felt?

DAVE

I'm sorry.

GRETТА

I wish we were back in that apartment, watching movies, and writing songs on rainy days.

DAVE

We were kids back then. This is what we always dreamed of.

GRETТА

No, it's what you must have been dreaming of. I wasn't dreaming at all.

He crosses over and holds her from behind. He rests his tired head on her shoulder.

DAVE

I want you back, Gretta. You're my anchor. You keep me grounded. I need to hear all that stuff, ya know? You always kept me tethered to reality. (beat) I need you.

GRETТА

I know you do. But I'd much prefer you just wanted me.

She breaks away, putting on her coat.

DAVE

Where are you going?

GRETТА

I need a little time. I'll call you soon.



DAVE  
I understand that. Take as long as  
you want.

They look at each other, a long time. Then she turns and  
exits.

EXT. VIOLET'S SCHOOL - DAY

Dan's Jaguar is parked outside the school. Violet exits and  
sits in.

INT. THE CAR - LATER

They drive across town. Dan looks sprightly; shaven, and  
fresh. Violet looks less self conscious with her new look.  
For the first time, we see her as a young lady. They are  
listening to an up-beat track off Gretta's Album as Violet  
peruses the album cover. She finds the picture from her  
session.

VIOLET:  
Ahhh! There's me!

Dan laughs. She pours over it.

DAN  
You look cool.

VIOLET:  
Can I keep a copy? Show my friends?

DAN  
That's what it's for. But keep it  
to yourself for now. There's a lot  
riding on that. I don't want anyone  
getting sneak previews.

VIOLET:  
Okay dad.

DAN  
Hey, you wanna go to the natural  
history museum? See the dead  
animals?

VIOLET:  
(without thinking)  
Sure.

They drive on, Violet moving in time to the music, and Dan, smiling ear to ear. They've come a long way from the first time we met them.

EXT. MIRIAM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dan pulls up outside Miriam's house. They sit there.

VIOLET:  
You coming in?

DAN  
Not just now. I gotta go into the office and play this to Saul. See if we can all work out a deal.

VIOLET:  
Okay cool. Good luck. Say hi to Gretta for me.

They sit there in silence.

DAN  
You'd like it, wouldn't you, to have both your parents around.

VIOLET:  
Not on my account.

DAN  
Really?

VIOLET:  
Maybe a couple of years ago, I would, but not anymore. But PLEASE, do not do anything because of me. Besides, I'm outta here in like a year, so what then, ya know? You guys are gonna kill each other if I'm not around.

He smiles. She leans in and kisses him on the cheek. She jumps out. He watches her enter the house. Miriam comes to the door and waves. He smiles, beeping and heading off.

INT. THE RECORD LABEL OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Phillis leads Dan and Gretta down the corridor towards the boardroom. Dan is wearing a suit and tie. Dressed for business.

INT. THE BOARDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Saul is sitting at the table with a bunch of Gretta's records in front of him. He is winding up a call as Gretta and Dan are showed in. He shakes hands. A number of EXECs sit around the table.

SAUL

Okay, so let's get the embarrassing bit out of the way. I'm an idiot. Okay? Total fool. Cloth ears. This is fantastic. I don't know how I missed it.

GRETТА

We're glad you like it.

SAUL

I do. I think it's fresh, and simple, and lovely. What are you planning to do with it, Dan?

DAN

We're looking at a number of offers at the moment.

Gretta looks at him, knowing this is bullshit. She avoids smiling. Dan's bluff is fairly convincing.

SAUL

I figure we can get the opening tune in a movie. Gretta, we're very well connected in LA. It's pilot season out there at the moment, and I think we'd have a good shot at getting a few tracks in a high profile show.

DAN

We know all this, Saul. We're not interested.

SAUL

Then what are you doing here?

DAN

I wouldn't miss this for the world. Are you kidding me?

Some EXECs laugh.

SAUL

(laughing)

I get it.

(MORE)

SAUL (CONT'D)

Thing of it is, you technically still work for the label. Anything you bring in legally belongs to us.

DAN

No it doesn't. You fired me.

SAUL

I put you on probation.

DAN

That's not what it sounded like.

SAUL

We didn't formally terminate your contract.

GRETTA

That's total bullshit. None of that would stand up in court.

SAUL

How do you know?

GRETTA

Because I studied Law for three years. You wouldn't have a leg to stand on. You must have someone here from your legal department?

A small man in a suit and glasses sheepishly puts his hand up. Saul looks over to him. Well?

LAWYER

She has a point. But if she signed something with Dan, then we could be seen to own that.

SAUL

Bingo.

DAN

She didn't.

BIG close up!

SAUL

Pardon me?

DAN

I didn't ask her to.

Everyone from the label is flabbergasted by this.

SAUL

This is like rule NUMERO UNO of the recording industry. You do *not* demo any songs until the artist has SIGNED with the label!??

DAN

Who cares. It all belongs to her. She can do what she wants with it.

Saul takes a breath. He doesn't want to lose this.

SAUL

So how do we work this out? We at R&M want to be in business with you Gretta. So what do we do to make that possible? Dan doesn't really come into this. We can pay him a producer fee if you like. Cut it up any way you like.

All eyes are on Gretta. She thinks. Silence.

GRETTA

These are my conditions. If I was to sign with you. Which I'm not saying I will. Me and Dan would have complete artistic control of my material. You say you like it, so you leave it alone. No re-mixes, no dance mixes, and I choose to accept any shows or films it gets used in. And no ads. I don't want my music used to sell jeans, or cell phones. Secondly, Dan gets his old job back. A new office. And a raise. And a signing bonus for finding a new artist.

Saul looks to Dan. Dan just shrugs his shoulders.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

Finally, we draw up a contract that includes anyone who helped record this album. That's Steve, the string players, Troublelegum's guys, and anyone else. If we make money from this, then everyone else should get a check.

SAUL

Dan can have his job and raise. Of course. We can pay off your musicians. But I'm not signing anyone who isn't open to creative discussion. What's the point in the record label then?

GRETTA

Pretty much.

Gretta looks at Dan, indicating that the negotiating is over. They get up. Saul crosses over.

SAUL

Let's talk soon. You've got a great record there, and if you allow someone to market it, and put on a dress, you might just have a hit. I'll leave it with you.

DAN

We'll call you.

She exits. Dan follows, looking over his shoulder at Saul, who is smiling and shaking his head. He's taking it fairly well.

EXT. THE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Gretta and Dan walk down the street. They are both pumped.

DAN

Did you really study law?

GRETTA

Of course I didn't. I'm a botanist!

Dan laughs. She turns around, facing him.

DAN

You played it perfectly!

GRETTA

Hey I just told the truth. It's amazing that when you're not *that* interested you always win the hand.

He watches her closely.

DAN

You're *really* not that interested are you?

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

Sometimes I think you're the one bluffing, trying to get a massive deal, and hiding behind the small-town gal...

GRETTA

(hick accent)

Maybe I am...

DAN

Seriously though, you're three months in the city, and you have a record deal, your debut album, all on your own terms.

She shrugs, smiling at him.

DAN (CONT'D)

Hey, you know we could do a whole series of these. Outdoor albums. Around Europe. The Berlin tapes. The Paris sessions.

GRETTA

I love that! Or, what about one album, a song for each country in Europe?! We could take a train from country to country!

She laughs.

DAN

Do you know how many countries there are in Europe?

GRETTA

So it'll be a long album! We could bring Steve, and use different musicians in different cities.

They both laugh. But then reflect on it.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

It's not a *bad* idea though.

DAN

Are you kidding me? It's a fucking great idea!

They walk on, thinking about this.

DAN (CONT'D)

You know he'll never agree to those conditions, don't you?  
He can't. He's too old fashioned.  
He doesn't want to be obsolete.

GRETTA

I know. I'll think about it. Maybe I need to compromise a bit.

DAN

No, you shouldn't. (beat) What you up to later? We should toast this.

GRETTA

I gotta go meet Dave.

He stops in his tracks.

DAN

Oh. So he's back?

GRETTA

Yup. Met up last night.

DAN

Big news. How was that?

GRETTA

I'm not sure yet?

She seems preoccupied. He picks up on it.

DAN

Do you wanna talk about it?

GRETTA

Yes I do.

He smiles. Takes her arm.

INT. A QUIET CAFE/BAR - DAY

Dan and Gretta sit at the corner table of a quiet cafe/bar, drinking coffee.

GRETTA

What is that about- when you get all you wanted, all you've prayed for, and it just feels empty?



DAN

You got perspective. It's the one thing that either saves or ruins a relationship. And it's why couples are so scared of being apart. And rightly so. 'Cause you see things how they really are.

GRETTA

I would have given my life up for him a month ago. What happened?

He doesn't have an answer for this.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

Maybe *you* happened!

DAN

What?

She is semi-serious. Though she is smiling.

DAN (CONT'D)

What?!

GRETTA

(blushing behind her  
coffee)

I'm serious.

DAN

What, you're now going to blame me for shipwrecking your entire relationship? What's so special about me?

GRETTA

You've got your good points.

She laughs. Though we can see she is only half-joking. It's the first time either one of them has identified something more than a working friendship. At least with words.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

How's Miriam?

Dan watches her closely.

DAN

She's okay?

GRETTA

What does that mean?

DAN  
Sometimes I think we have enough in  
the bank to get us through  
anything. And that this has just  
been a long break. Other times, I'm  
not so sure.

GRETТА  
I think she genuinely loves you.

DAN  
How can you tell.

GRETТА  
Women can tell these things.

They sit there in silence. We hold on Dan, thinking about  
saying something...

DAN  
Is it really selfish of me to feel  
a pang of relief that you haven't  
gone running straight back into  
Dave's arms?

She thinks about this.

GRETТА  
No, but I'm probably gonna. (beat)  
Is it really selfish of me to hate  
seeing you driving Miriam and  
Violet home the other night? To  
feel I was losing something...

He watches her. They both just sit there. He raises his  
coffee cup. She clinks it.

EXT. THE STREET - LATER

Dan and Gretta stroll up the street, approaching Dan's car.  
He opens the door, and they stand there.

GRETТА  
So, I'll see you over the next  
while, I guess?

Suddenly, he grabs her by the hips, and pulls her into him.

DAN  
You wanna get in with me? We'll  
fill the tank and take off.  
Upstate. Run out of petrol, and  
abandon the car.  
(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

I've got a friend who has a cabin in Vermont. We'll buy enough food for a week. Sleep outside under the stars. I'll catch fish. We'll make love, and have a baby. I'll take care of you.

GRETTA

When do we set off?

DAN

I'm serious.

GRETTA

I thought you got your best ideas when you were drunk.

He doesn't respond. We see that there is a side to him that would do this.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

I'll just go get my guitar.

DAN

We don't need anything. I'll be at my place.

She looks at him, seeing that he is serious. She doesn't know what to make of it. They smile at each other, then she pulls away.

Starts walking up the street, looking back at him, flushed.

He gets in, starting up the motor, but not closing the door, one foot on the ground. She walks away.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gretta climbs up the steps of Steve's apartment. She has a silly smile on her face.

She enters. Thankfully, Steve isn't around. She potters about, restless. Opens a window, clicks the kettle, looks in the fridge. Strums her guitar, chucks it away.

She finally settles in a chair.

Then looks at her suitcase next to the couch...

We hold on her for a long moment, lost in thought. Is she thinking of a life with Dan? Running away. Leaving the city. An adventure.

An SMS beep wakes her up. She looks at her phone. It's from DAVE. It reads:

Hey babes. What's up?

She sighs. Back in the real world.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Now Gretta is sitting at the kitchen counter with her guitar and note pad. She is scribbling lyrics furiously.

GRETTA  
(singing)  
I'm no longer in pain...

She throws a few chords together, making up lines in her head.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Gretta has set up a mic stand. She has her guitar strapped on and her sleeves rolled up. She tests the mic, which is hooked up to her laptop.

GRETTA  
One two, one two.

She presses record on Garageband, and begins to put down a song.

The song is called NO LONGER IN PAIN

And it will run over the rest of these shots, right up to the end of the picture.

INT. DAVE'S BUILDING - DAY (MUSIC OVER)

Dave is drying his hair in his apartment. From under his hall door, the corner of a transparent CD case. He notices it, bending down and picking it up. It's blank.

He listens; opens the door. The elevator is just closing. We don't see who's in it. It is going down.

DAVE  
Hello?

The elevator descends. He shrugs, re-entering the apartment, looking at the CD.

INT. DAVE'S BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER (MUSIC OVER)

Dave turns the volume up on his sound system. Gretta's half-formed song fills his speakers. Dave slumps back onto the couch, listening.

GRETТА

(singing)

Do what you want, the world is your  
oyster, Go where you want, and  
don't feel shame. Love who you  
want, and please forgive me; but  
I'm no longer in pain.

We hold on his face. He's crushed, but he gets it. They are done.

Back to STEVE'S APARTMENT

Gretta is still recording her song, building. She sings with abandon, meaning every word.

INT. DAN'S SHITTY APARTMENT -EVENING (MUSIC OVER)

Dan is sitting in his apartment watching the box. He checks his watch a couple of times. Looks at his cell phone. Nothing.

Gets up off the couch. Potters about. Restless. Goes to the window and looks down.

EXT. DAN'S SHITTY APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS (MUSIC OVER)

Dan steps out onto the street, looking up and down. There is no sign of Gretta. He smiles to himself. *Of course she's not coming.* He shrugs, heading back inside.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY. (MUSIC OVER)

Another day. Now Gretta is sitting cross legged on the couch. She opens her laptop, goes online, and puts a CD of her record in. She starts ripping it onto her hard drive. Steve is helping her.

She starts typing. We don't know what she's doing yet, but we see flashes of YOUTUBE, MYSPACE, FACEBOOK etc.

EXT. A STREET - DAY - SONG OVER

Gretta cycles down the street on another day. She is smiling, listening to her music on her headphones. She stops at a mailbox and takes out a large cardboard envelope with DAN MULLIGAN on it. She posts it.

INT. THE RECORD LABEL OFFICES - DAY - (MUSIC OVER)

Dan is sitting at his desk in his bright, large office, drinking a coffee. His job back.

In a moment, Saul enters, followed by a couple of COLLEAGUES. He is carrying his laptop.

SAUL

What the hell are you two up to?

DAN

What are you talking about?

SAUL

Your record? It's online. Facebook, Myspace. Youtube. The whole fucking thing.

DAN

What!!?

Saul puts his laptop in front of Dan. Dan peruses it.

DAN (CONT'D)

Shit.

SAUL

What is wrong with this chick?

DAN

I do not know. Is anyone listening to it?

SAUL

You're telling me you don't know about this?

DAN

Of course I don't.

SAUL

What's the point in signing this girl if she's pulling this sort of shit?

Dan smiles to himself, frowning.

SAUL (CONT'D)  
I mean, we can pull it, but what's  
the point. I think she's more  
trouble than she's worth?

Saul exits, shrugging. Dan sits there, baffled. Gretta's song increases in volume on the track.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - MORNING - (MUSIC OVER)

Dan's buzzer is ringing. He wakes up and gets out of bed. The apartment looks cleaner. No empty bottles. He opens the door, where a UPS man is waiting for him to sign. He hands him an envelope.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER - MUSIC OVER

Dan sits down at his coffee table. He opens the envelope, but there's nothing inside. He turns it upsidedown, and something small falls out onto the table with a "clink". He picks it up, quizzically. Then understands...

It is the little splitter headphone jack, for listening to the same music together.

We hold on him. He smiles.

The song crescendos on the track. We cross cut to a carrousel of stories around the world. Couples row, kiss, break up, make up, but somehow, they are all connected in *some small way* by Gretta's song on a computer screen or smartphone, etc, in their apartments, at work, on trains etc.

Gretta's free music has gathered a small following.

These couples include Violet and Jeff. Steve and a GIRL from his singer songwriter night, and finally...

DAN and MIRIAM, listening to the same iphone, and sitting in Washington square as the sun goes down. She is snuggled into him. They are together.

Gretta smiles as she cycles through the West Village; the wind in her hair, the songs in her ears...

End.

Closing titles run over a series of shots of Gretta and Dan recording their outdoor record in Paris, Berlin, Prague etc.

Steve is there, also Miriam, Violet, Malcolm and Rachel.  
Sometimes they are joined by local buskers and musicians.

It's a positively good vibe...