

G'Day LA

by

Tony McFadden

Based on the Novel

G'Day LA

By

Tony McFadden

tony@tonymcfadden.net

INT. AN COMEDY CLUB IN LA

JOEL SAMPSON (20's, country-bred fresh faced, mop of dark hair) walks on stage and squints into the bright lights.

He grins and launches into his act.

JOEL

Good evening every-fucking-BODY. My name is Sampson.

Joel flexes his biceps.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Joel Sampson. I hope you're all having a fantastic evening. And if you're not, what the hell are you doing here? Anybody here from Boise?

Australian ELLIE BOURKE (tall, thin, blonde, 20's) sits at a table near the front with a glass of scotch and ice. She smiles and lets out a WHOOP.

JOEL (CONT'D)

All right then. So this pirate walks into a bar with a ship's wheel attached to his crotch. The bartender looks at him and says, 'Hey buddy, you've got a ship's wheel attached to your crotch.' The pirate says, "Yeah. And it's driving me crazy."

Crickets.

ELLIE

(yells)

Nuts!

Joel closes his eyes, leans into the mic.

JOEL

Nuts.

Joel shakes his head and slips back into the pirate's voice.

JOEL (CONT'D)

'Yeah, it's driving me nuts. The wheel. It's driving me nuts.' Well, hell, folks I've gone and fucked up my first bit. Can only get better, right?

Ellie chuckles and stirs what's left of her drink with her finger.

A few minutes later Joe's act winds up to loud applause. A female ventriloquist walks onto the small stage and starts her set.

Ellie flags down a wandering actress/waitress and orders another drink. She sits back and enjoys the ventriloquist's hand talking.

Joel slides in across from Ellie.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Thanks for the 'nuts'. I can't believe I fucked that up.

He carefully places his drink on a coaster.

ELLIE

Good recovery though, and the crowd seemed to forgive you.

Ellie points at his glass.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Not rum and coke I hope?

JOEL

You know better than that. Just pop. No booze. Saying clean. Virgin.

ELLIE

We all were, once. You're welcome for the 'nuts'. All that practicing for nothing.

Joel takes a small note-pad from his shirt pocket and scribbles something.

JOEL

I got better laughs off the recovery than I did from the original. I'm going to fuck it up intentionally next set.

ELLIE

Whatever works.

Ellie tongues a piece of ice out of her glass and crunches down on it.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

So, you're driving us back to the house, okay? This is my third. Double. I'm liable to fall off my feet.

Joel squeezes some lemon into his cola and looks up at the next act. A surfer-dude - BILLY - does his Bill and Ted stoner shtick.

JOEL

Sure. I probably won't kill us on the freeway. You drunk are still a better driver than me anytime.

ELLIE

The cops don't seem to appreciate that though.

EXT. CLUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ellie tosses the keys to Joel and gets in the driver's seat of a "vintage" Volkswagen Beetle.

JOEL

Yeah, it's a good thing I'm driving. You still think you're in Oz?

Joel waits for Ellie to get out and switch sides, then climbs behind the wheel. He sticks the key in the ignition, looks at Ellie and turns the key. The car winds over twice and catches with a shot of smoke out its tailpipe.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Excellent.

ELLIE

Sounds just like Mr. Burns. Ever think of getting into voice acting? There's a lot of money in voices, Joel, and you've got a great voice.

Gears grind as Joel backs out of the parking lot.

JOEL

Yeah, but I'm not quite there yet. I need to get a better time slot at the Improv, then get on a "Comedy Central Presents" show.

Ellie's phone rings, interrupting Joel's grand master plan. She looks at the display and smiles.

ELLIE

Hey, Melon-head, what's up?

MELON-HEAD

(filtered)

Just calling to remind you, pretty girl, that you're my primo guest Saturday night. Don't stand me up, okay? 8:30 sharp for a 9:00 pm start. I want you to expound on the trials and tribulations of an up and coming star.

ELLIE

Can I bring Joel?

Ellie looks at Joel who is vigorously shaking his head.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

No, never mind. He doesn't want to come.

MELON-HEAD

(filtered)

I'll book him next time. Tell him I love his stuff. Don't be late, girl. I'm crap on my own. I need a guest to elevate my show to the level of witty repartee that wins awards.

Ellie laughs and terminates the call.

JOEL

Melon-Head?

ELLIE

Ross Mellon. You know him. Does a radio show. Every Aussie in the US has been on his show, I think. I'll get you on. He's a kingmaker.

JOEL

I'm not Australian.

ELLIE

Nobody's perfect

Ellie closes her eyes and unsuccessfully stifles a yawn.

INT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY GUEST HOUSE

Ellie stumbles into the bedroom of the one-bedroom guesthouse, shedding clothes as she walks.

ELLIE

Crashing. Got an early start tomorrow. Wish me luck. I need sleep.

Joel moves his surfboard off the sofa and leans it against the wall by the TV stand. He pulls the sofa into a bed and sits up, turns on the TV and mutes it.

He retrieves his phone and opens the voice recorder app. He speaks as the opening credits for Fallon silently play across the TV screen.

JOEL

Day 87. Had a pretty cool experience tonight at the Improv. I totally stuffed up the opening bit. And spectacularly recovered. Turned out better than if it had gone well to start with. Crowd loved it.

Joel takes a deep breath and scratches the back of his head. Fallon is about to begin his monologue.

JOEL (CONT'D)

So that's 87 days without a drink, weed, meth, coke, smack, ice - wait, that's the same as meth, right? Anyway, clean and sober for almost three months now. Celibate, too, though god knows that's harder. But I've got to put all of my energy into this career. It's going to be nobody's fault but my own if I fail. And I'm not going to fail. Sampson out.

Joel closes the app, looks at his laptop on the other side of the room and tosses the phone on the bed.

Joel turns up the TV volume and a minute later falls asleep in the middle of Fallon's monologue.

INT. CASTING DIRECTORS OFFICE - NEXT DAY, NOON

STEVE BOND (fit, mid 30s) rests his face in his hands and groans.

STEVE

Where in the hell are my sandwiches, Trudy?

He tries to straighten his hair and looks at his assistant.

STEVE (CONT'D)
How many do we have out there?

TRUDY (officious looking office drone) flips through the pages.

TRUDY
Thirty-seven at last count.

STEVE
Anybody we know?

TRUDY
Half of them. It's going to be a long afternoon.

STEVE
Let me see the list. I can cut some of them right now. I've got to be out of here at 2:30.

Steve takes the clipboard, ticks seventeen names and hands it back to Trudy.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Tell these ones to go home. They aren't what we're looking for. Not enough boob on them.

TRUDY
I can't tell them that.

STEVE
Why not? They should know the truth.

Steve shakes his head and takes the list back from her.

STEVE (CONT'D)
I'll do it then. You might want to toughen up a bit.

Steve pushes the door open and looks at the sea of women facing him.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Ladies, time is tight so I'm sending seventeen of you home now. The role I'm trying to fill is going to be in a bikini for the vast majority of the shots, and she needs to have big tits.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

The following people can head to your next audition or the nearest frozen yogurt shop, or wherever.

Steve reads off a list of names, ending with,

STEVE (CONT'D)

- and Ellie Bourke. Thanks for coming by. Better luck next time. The remaining twenty, my assistant will call your names in alphabetical order.

Steve hands the list back to Trudy and re-enters the casting room. Trudy hands the first headshot to Steve.

Steve looks at it, flips it over to read the bio and rubs his eyes.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Desiray Abbot? Desiray? Really? I hate this city.

Trudy leans into the intercom mic.

TRUDY

Could Desiray Abbot come in please?

Steve looks at the door as a pneumatic, probably bleached blonde enters on impossibly high heels.

STEVE

You're Desiray?

Desiray pops a gum-bubble and nods.

DESIRAY

I changed it? People kept calling me Desire, without the 'ay' sound at the end? So I changed the spelling so they had to say it like I want them to?

Steve takes a deep breath.

STEVE

Show me what you look like in your bikini, then we'll go through the lines.

DESIRAY

How can I do that when I don't have a bikini with me?

STEVE

You read the casting call, didn't you? It explicitly said bikini.

Desiray starts unbuttoning the front of her pants.

DESIRAY

That's okay. We can pretend.

Desiray drops her pants to the ground and exposes her frilly purple g-string.

Her t-shirt is halfway over her head, bra-less breasts wobbling like the twin peaks of silicon jelly that they are, when the door slams open and Ellie barges in.

ELLIE

Listen, I object strenuously to being typecast as a tom-boy just because -

Ellie stops and watches Desiray's double-D dance.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I didn't realize the casting couch was a real thing.

Ellie can't take her eyes off Desiray, mesmerized by the sight.

Desiray, for her part, is still blinded by the t-shirt, turning in ever-decreasing circles in an attempt to extricate herself.

The t-shirt is currently stuck on her chin, left ear and the extensions on the back of her head.

DESIRAY

Who just came in? I can't see. Can somebody help me with this?

Steve looks at Ellie, shakes his head and sighs.

STEVE

Please leave, Desiray.

(to Ellie)

Career suicide? I can suggest better, more efficient ways, but barging into an audition nears the top of the list. What is your problem?

ELLIE

You. This whole business. Any one of the girls out there, including the seventeen tit-less that you sent away, could do the three minutes a week on this show and it wouldn't make any difference. Viewers will forget the character as soon as she leaves the screen. She's a piece of eye-candy. The audition process for this should be the first person who shows up, gets it.

Ellie is breathing heavy now, full head of steam and going for the kill.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

You just force this audition process so you can parade a bevy of mostly unclad bimbos around for your sick sexual gratification.

Ellie pauses. Steve opens his mouth to reply and she walks all over him.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Career suicide? I need a career first. I've been pushing boulders uphill since I got here. Sisyphus had nothing on me. I came back here to force you to audition me, but fuck it. I'm going to head back to Australia.

Steve has a half-smile on his face.

STEVE

Sisyphus. You're too smart.

Steve leans back in his chair and crosses his arms.

STEVE (CONT'D)

So you're saying this is a disposable business?

ELLIE

Damn straight it is. Like plastic wine glasses. Fancy-assed from a distance, but cheap, disposable crap once you're up close.

STEVE

You'll do well here if you remember that. You're as good as what you've just done. Sorry, but that's the way it is.

Steve pauses, then winks at her.

STEVE (CONT'D)

And you might want to reconsider your views on these small parts. Robin Williams played a small part on "Happy Days" that spun off to "Mork and Mindy" and launched his career. "Happy Days" also spun off "Laverne and Shirley" from a couple of small parts.

ELLIE

And "Joanie Loves Chachi", so don't tell me they all work.

STEVE

You're missing the point. Laverne and Mork were small, "three minute parts" as you call them. Joanie and Chachi were main characters that tried to have a life after their gravy train made its final stop.

ELLIE

Oh. Like "Joey".

Steve puts his left index finger on his nose and points at her with his right.

STEVE

I think you've got it. Now get out of my audition and stop bothering me. There's tits to judge.

Trudy watches out the office window as Ellie walks to her car, kicks the wheel and fumbles with the lock.

The car starts and idles for a couple of seconds before it slowly pulls out of the parking lot in a cloud of exhaust.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Trudy? You with me here? Who's up next?

TRUDY

Sorry. Just a second.

Trudy flips the headshot over and reads the name on the back. She smiles and presses the intercom button.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Miss Heaven Dee. Please come in.

STEVE

Heaven Dee? Are these porn stars?
Am I in the right office?

INT. GLENDALE OFFICE BUILDING, BART SWEENEY'S OFFICE

An overweight, balding with comb-over BART SWEENEY (50s) sits behind his desk, feet up, playing a game on his phone when the door opens.

Ellie enters. Bart swings his feet onto the floor.

BART

Ellie, what brings my favorite
actress into my humble domain?
Don't you have an audition sometime
around now?

ELLIE

I've had it. The assholes said my
tits were too small, and the one
before that said I was too
Australian. My two marketable
features.

BART

Too Australian? How can someone be
too Australian? What the fuck was
that for?

ELLIE

That reality show. They already had
this bogan asshole from Perth
signed and they told me one
Australian was enough.

Ellie drops into a chair across from Bart's desk and grabs one of her breasts.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I'm not getting a boob job.

Bart leans forward on his elbows, surveying Ellie's smaller than average chest.

BART

From a career point of view, larger
breasts do get you more work.

(MORE)

BART (CONT'D)

You can count the small-breasted woman with a solid career in this business on one hand. There's that girl from "Easy A".

ELLIE

Emma Stone.

BART

Right, her. And who else, Calista whats-her-name with Harrison. From that Ally show.

ELLIE

Flockhart. McBeal.

BART.

Exactly. That's it, right?

Ellie closes her eyes and leans her head back on the chair, exasperated. Not the conversation she wanted.

ELLIE

Kiera Knightly, Lara Flynn Boyle, Milla Jovovich, Paris Hilton...

BART

Still counting on one hand, though. You might want to consider it. I think you can claim it as a business expense.

ELLIE

And there's Debra Messing and Kate Moss. No, I'm not going to do that. I'd rather quit than go under the knife. It reeks of the ultimate in hypocrisy - baring your soul to the world through acting, with a fake body.

BART

I've heard it doesn't hurt much. You're completely under. There's a bit of tenderness for a few days after, but really, not that bad.

Ellie shakes her head and stands.

ELLIE

Not going to happen.

Bart stands with her and walks her to his office door.

BART
You heading home?

Ellie stops at the door, thinking.

ELLIE
No. I've got one more audition. I really want to blow it off and head out to Zuma and watch the sunset. I need to cleanse. I miss Bronte.

BART
Who's Bronte?

ELLIE
The beach? We spent three weeks shooting "Beast" there because you couldn't swing the permits for Bondi.

BART
Yeah, yeah. I remember. Hey, I'll catch you later, okay? Say hi to Joel for me. Word is he's killing them on stage.

EXT. BART SWEENEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Red and blue lights are flashing on two black and whites. Two cops are beside one of the cars.

CONSTABLE LARRY PERKINS (late-40s), bald, slightly overweight stands looking through a notepad, flipping pages.

Beside him, CONSTABLE DAVE STANFIELD (late 20s), tough-looking, short cropped black hair looks on with exasperation.

STANFIELD
Is everything in that pad? Has the inside of the guesthouse been checked thoroughly?

PERKINS
(flipping pages)
Double check it for me.

Stanfield looks at Perkins for a beat then walks into the guesthouse.

Ellie pulls up at the curb and stops, looking at the flashing lights, then jumps out of the car.

ELLIE
Is Bart okay?

Ellie walks toward the main house but is stopped by Perkins.

PERKINS

Hold on a second. Do you live here?

ELLIE

In the guesthouse. What happened?
Did Bart have a heart attack? Is he
going to be okay?

Perkins looks over his shoulder at the guesthouse.

PERKINS

Wait here. I've got a few
questions.

ELLIE

Yeah. Why? What?

PERKINS

Do you know a -

Perkins flips back a few pages in his little cop issued note
pad.

PERKINS (CONT'D)

- Joel Sampson?

ELLIE

This is for Joel? Shit. He's my
roommate. What happened?

PERKINS

Sorry. Can I get your name?

ELLIE

Ellie Bourke. B-o-u-r-k-e. Will you
tell me what the fuck is going on
here?

PERKINS

Were you close to Mr. Sampson?

ELLIE

Were? Past tense? Oh my God, what
happened to him?

Ellie heads toward the guest house and is stopped by Perkins'
hand on her chest. She looks down, he blushes and pulls it
away.

PERKINS

A few questions first. When were
you last in the house?

ELLIE

What, the main house? A couple of weeks ago. The owner invited us over for dinner.

PERKINS

I meant the guesthouse. When were you last in it?

ELLIE

This morning. I left at eight for an audition. Joel was asleep on his bed, headphones half on his head and the TV on.

(beat)

Oh God, no. He wasn't dead this morning, was he? Oh no. I walked right past him when I turned off the TV.

Perkins flips back a few pages in his note pad and checks something.

PERKINS

No. It appears that he died between three and five hours ago. Where were you during that time?

Ellie furrows her brow and looks at the time on her phone.

ELLIE

Five hours ago I was in Bart Sweeney's office in Glendale. Then I had another audition and after that I went to Zuma, watched the sun go down, then drove here. Tell me something. Anything. What happened to Joel? Did somebody kill him?

PERKINS

Sorry Miss Bourke, but it appears your boyfriend crawled into the tub and committed suicide. I know that must be difficult to hear.

ELLIE

No, that's not right.

PERKINS

Depression is the silent killer, they say.

ELLIE

It might very well be, but Joel wasn't depressed.

PERKINS

Hard to tell sometimes. Depression is a disease, not a weakness.

Ellis puts her hands on her hips and looks at the older cop with amazement on her face.

ELLIE

You just get off some suicide sensitivity training course or something? Joel was not depressed. And if it's a suicide, why are you interrogating me?

PERKINS

We need to treat it as a potential homicide until confirmed otherwise. Although, I have to say, based on my fourteen years experience on the force your boyfriend killed himself.

ELLIE

No. I can't believe he killed himself. Roommate. Not boyfriend.

PERKINS

Male roommate and you weren't in a relationship?

ELLIE

He's gay. Was gay. Still is gay. Whatever. I want to see him. How did he do it? You said in a tub. Did he cut his wrists? Oh, shit. Is there a mess to clean up?

PERKINS

Relax. It was a drug overdose. Was he a habitual user?

ELLIE

Hell, no. Clean for almost three months. We were going to celebrate the three-month anniversary next week. I can't believe this. Who found him?

Perkins flips through a few more pages. Ellie clenches her jaw and crosses her arms, impatient.

PERKINS

Sweeney something or other. Hang on a sec. Yeah, Bart Sweeney. Said he was going over to invite him in for a bite when he found him. Were they close?

ELLIE

As close as a landlord and tenant are.

Perkins snaps the notebook closed with a sense of finality.

PERKINS

Thanks for your help. If I need a statement I'll contact you. If you think of anything, give me a call.

Perkins hands a business card to Ellie and enters the guesthouse. Ellie watches him leave and slowly slides the card into her back pocket.

Ellie steps to one side as a gurney rolls out of the house up to the back of the ambulance. A body, in a body bag, is lifted into the back and the doors closed.

A tear rolls down Ellie's cheek. The ambulance driver turns off the bubble-gum lights and slowly drives away.

INT. GUEST HOUSE - NIGHT

Stanfield looks up as Perkins walks into the bathroom. The lights are now on, but candles are still burning. The bathtub is half-full of water.

A juice glass is on its side on the floor by the tub. A CSI tech is bagging a syringe.

STANFIELD

He really went all out for this.
Candles lit, show tunes playing
when I came in.

Stanfield pauses.

STANFIELD (CONT'D)

And drugs.

PERKINS

Sound like one of your dates.

STANFIELD

(Deadpan)

One of my better ones, except the owner said the Sampson kid was by himself, and nobody else was here this afternoon, as far as he knows. The roommate?

PERKINS

She's still standing on the front lawn, shocked. She was at auditions and the beach this afternoon.

Perkins flips through the pages of his notepad.

PERKINS (CONT'D)

Zuma. Any next of kin?

Stanfield lifts an evidence bag and extracts a wallet.

STANFIELD

There's a contact number in his wallet. You want I should call him?

Perkins writes down the name and number in his pad.

PERKINS

Jacob Sampson? In Boise. What time is it in Boise?

STANFIELD

Where is Boise? North Dakota?

Perkins looks at Stanfield and cocks an eyebrow

PERKINS

I despair for this country. Idaho, you cretin. I'll call him.

Perkins walks into the small living room and dials the number on his mobile. He sees the surfboard leaning against the wall and headphones on the sofa bed.

After three rings a male voice answers with a grunt.

PERKINS (CONT'D)

Is this Jacob Sampson?

JACOB SAMPSON

(filtered)

Who's calling?

PERKINS

This is Constable Larry Perkins,
LAPD, Valley Bureau, Devonshire
Division, Badge number 14987. Are
you related to one -

Perkins flips the pages in his note book to find the name

PERKINS (CONT'D)

- Joel Sampson?

JACOB SAMPSON

(filtered)

Yeah, what about him? Is he in
trouble?

EXT. SWEENEY'S FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Ellie watches the CSI tech van leave. One black and white
still sits in the drive, red and blue lights flashing.

Ellie steels herself and walks toward the guesthouse. She
stands in front of the door and stops, leaning her head
against the door frame.

ELLIE

Fuck. I can't do this.

Ellie takes her phone out and scrolls through the contacts
until she hits "Cathy". She dials.

CATHY

(filtered)

Ell? That you? Long time no talk,
girl.

ELLIE

God, I'm glad you answered. Can I
crash at your place tonight? Joel
went and killed himself. I can't
stay in there tonight.

Ellie wipes her nose on her sleeve and aimlessly walks back
toward the street and her car.

CATHY

(filtered)

Oh, no. Ellie, honey, that's
terrible.

ELLIE

So can I crash at your place?

CATHY

(filtered)

Bernie and I are in Tempe until the end of the week. I'd let you stay at our place, but Bernie took the spare key out of the rock last week and didn't replace it. Jeez, I'm sorry Ell.

Ellie nods and opens her car door.

ELLIE

That's okay, Cath. Give my love to Bernie. I'll find a motel. I'll catch up with you two when you get back.

Ellie hangs up and gets into the car. The time on her phone says 8:45 and she's exhausted. She slides the front seat back as far as it will go, puts the phone in the holder.

Ellie watches the two cops leaving the guesthouse and slams her fist repeatedly on the steering wheel.

Ellie draws a deep, shuddering breath and leans her head back and closes her eyes. Starts the car and pulls away.

EXT. BART'S BACK YARD - THE NEXT DAY. AFTERNOON

A "Quick Cleaners" van is parked in the drive next to the guesthouse, and cleaners are going in and out with cleaning supplies.

"Dave's Porta-BBQ" van is next. Dave (young red-head) is removing food from the back and setting up for an afternoon barbecue.

Bart is surrounded by Hollywood producer types.

Steve Bond is talking with GEORGE (50s, overweight and with a bald, shiny head) and BOBBY (50s, unruly hair and beige all over).

STEVE

Bart, isn't Ellie here? She lives in the guest house, right?

BART

She's heading back to Australia. Had enough of this town. So she says. Not enough spine. She wasn't that good, anyway. Too much weighing on her mind with the suicide.

Bart points at the guesthouse with his drink.

BART (CONT'D)
No great loss. Tons like her around here.

Bart catches sight of Ellie walking toward the guesthouse.

BART (CONT'D)
Um, I've got a story idea that will blow the socks off Hollywood. Even finished the screenplay. And I want you guys in on it. It's a life changer. Think "Twilight" meets "Avatar".

Steve sees Ellie also.

STEVE
Hold that thought, Bart.

Steve walks over to Ellie and touches her gently on the elbow.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You okay?

Ellie starts, knocked out of her reverie.

ELLIE
Oh, great. Going to critique my ass now? This time tomorrow I'll be somewhere over the Pacific heading home.

STEVE
That's a shame. You're one of the most honest people in this crappy town. Before you pack it all up, come and eat some of Bart's food. It's the least you can do.

ELLIE
Asshole's having a party the day after one of his tenants kills himself?

Ellie takes a deep breath and looks over at the group talking.

STEVE
He arranged this weeks ago. Eat some of his food, drink his booze and relax.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

Talk to me before you leave. I want another chance to change your mind.

ELLIE

I won't give him the pleasure.

INT. GUESTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The cleaning crew are just finishing up. The CLEANING GUY walks past with a bucket.

CLEANING GUY

All finished. We're out of here. Who do I talk to, to get the bbq van moved?

ELLIE

Bart. The slimy one of the group.

Ellie walks past the surfboard against the wall and Joel's clothes on the sofa bed. She swallows and walks into the bedroom.

In minutes she has pulled her clothes from the small closet and chest of drawers and put them in a couple of suitcases. She leaves them on her bed, grabs her phone and walks out.

On the way out she spots Joel's phone and grabs it too.

EXT. BART'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Steve sees Ellie leaving the house and peels off from the group and intercepts her.

STEVE

You sure you're going to be okay?

ELLIE

Eventually. Yeah. Thanks for asking.

STEVE

Bart's got a good thing here. Great premise. And there's a lead role in it for you.

ELLIE

Nope. Thanks. You're really nice and all, but I'm out of here.

STEVE

I understand. Go back to Oz, get your bearings, and when you're ready, call me. I've got a good feeling about you.

Ellie squints at him and heads to her car. She calls over her shoulder:

ELLIE

You're a sweet guy, Steve. I don't know how you manage to survive in this shit hole.

Ellie hops into her Beetle, rolls the window down and sticks her earbuds in, jamming old Beach Boys as she heads to the beach.

She's got to navigate Valley traffic. And the lights on Topanaga are programmed by a sadist. Red light after red light until she hits Woodland Hills and the Canyon.

A smile cracks on her face as she descends through Topanga Canyon to the PCH.

West on PCH and into the Zuma lot.

EXT. ZUMA BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Ellie locks her car and looks over the ocean. She takes a deep breath and visibly relaxes. She sits on a dune and lets the ocean breeze wash over her as the sun sets.

She's scrolling through pictures on Joel's phone - pictures of happier times - when the music is interrupted by her ringing phone. She swipes to answer.

ELLIE

Yeah.

ROSS MELLON

(filtered)

Melon-head here. How's my favorite actress doing?

ELLIE

Sitting on the dunes at Zuma. For the last time. Ever.

Ross's folksy tone disappears in a heart-beat.

ROSS

(filtered)

What the hell are you talking about? Come on. It's not that bad. Talk to me about it.

ELLIE

Oh, God no, Ross. I'm not going to kill myself. You really are a melon-head, aren't you? I'm heading back to Australia tomorrow.

ROSS

(filtered)

Why? I thought things were going well?

ELLIE

Ya thought wrong. Joel killed himself yesterday. It all seems kinda pointless now.

Ellie sniffs and rubs an eye with the heel of her hand.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I'm going to bag your show tonight, Ross. Not really in the mood for it.

ROSS

(filtered)

Not a great time for you to be alone, Ellie. Drop by, chat and memorialise your friend's life. Tell everyone about how great he was, and what led up to his death. Maybe we can help someone in the same situation.

Ellie puts her elbows on her knees and holds the earpieces in her ears. She exhales a long breath.

ROSS (CONT'D)

(filtered)

I know you're there. I can hear the heavy breathing. What do ya say?

Ellie sniffs and wipes her eyes again.

ELLIE

Asshole. Okay. I'll be there. I hope you're on a seven-second delay.

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I'm not feeling all that charitable
about this fucking place right now.

Ellie stands and starts walking back to her car.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I'll be there in an hour.

ROSS
(filtered)
Don't run any reds.

ELLIE
Why not? They going to chase me to
Sydney for them?

She hangs up, gets in the car and tosses Joel's phone on the passenger's seat. She's listening to music through her headphones when she hears another phone ringing.

She has a brain freeze for a second then realizes that it's Joel's phone.

She braces the steering wheel with her knees and swaps the headphones to his phone and swipes the screen to answer.

VOICE
(filtered)
Joel, where the fuck have you been?

ELLIE
This is not Joel. Just his phone.
This Kyle?

KYLE
(filtered)
Yes. Put him on, will you? I've
been trying to reach him all day.

ELLIE
What kind of agent are you that you
don't know your client is dead?

KYLE
(filtered)
What in the hell are you talking
about? I've got Pollak's guys all
over me. What do mean he's dead?

Ellie closes her eyes for a second. Takes a deep breath.

ELLIE

OD'd in the bathtub. What do mean
Pollak's guys are all over you?
Kevin Pollak?

KYLE

(filtered)
Yeah. "Usual Suspects", "A Few Good
Men", and all that. I was waiting
for Jacob's go ahead.

ELLIE

You never wait for his okay. You
just book his gigs and he goes
where you tell him.

KYLE

(filtered)
This was bigger than that. Would
have put him on the map.

ELLIE

And Joel knew about this?

KYLE

(filtered)
Yeah. Told him yesterday morning.
Around 10:30, I think.

Ellie pulls over to the side of the road, frowning.

ELLIE

And he knew it was a big deal?

KYLE

(filtered)
Biggest of his career. Fuck. He
killed himself?

ELLIE

Doesn't that strike you as odd?

KYLE

(filtered)
What?

ELLIE

Biggest thing of his career and he
shoots himself up with drugs? After
three months clean? This wasn't a
suicide.

EXT. BART'S BACK YARD

Bart, George, Bobby and Steve are standing in a circle nursing drinks. Bart is in full throat.

BART

So the two aliens need to use the scientist's technology, the technology that they already discredited, to stop the attack from their planet on Earth.

GEORGE

And the girl? The alien gets the girl?

Bart holds one finger to his nose and points at him with his other whiskey-laden hand

BART

Bingo. Alien Callum gets Jackie and Sam, the scientist gets Callum's formula for cold fusion.

Bobby nods and nudges George

BOBBY

Sounds like it might work.

STEVE

Got names yet? At least the four main characters?

BART

Colin Hanks for Callum. That would be perfect. Maybe Franco for the other alien. Don't have Sam or Jackie yet.

BOBBY

What about Ellie for Jackie? She'd be good.

STEVE

I thought the same, but she's packing up and heading back to Australia. I think Joel's suicide knocked the stuffing out of her. Too bad. She'd be perfect.

GEORGE

She'd be opposite Colin Hanks, for Christ's sake. Change her mind.

BART

Let it go, guys. She's not stable. And she's leaving. Don't want anyone attached to this having second thoughts. It's too big.

STEVE

Maybe. We'd be shooting in Australia, so who knows what might happen. So where do we go from here? How do we get Colin attached?

Bart smiles.

BART

So you're in? All of you?

Bobby and George and Steve all nod.

BART (CONT'D)

Fantastic. This is the big time, boys. No room for errors or mistakes.

INT. RADIO STUDIO - EVENING

ROSS MELLON (50s), overweight, balding with a goatee and friendly eyes is in his element. Headphones on and he's running the show.

Ellie sits across from him, headphones on and mouth inches from her mic.

The PRODUCER (20s), shaggy and keen sits on the other side of a glass window, outside the soundproof booth.

The producer points at Ross to go.

ROSS

It's Ross "Melon-head" Mellon coming to you live from Los Angeles, the city of Angels. And devils. And trolls, troglodytes and scuzzbags. But today it's just angels. With us, hopefully for the full two hours, is a fellow Aussie, aspiring actress and good friend Ellie Bourke. You told me earlier, Ellie, that you were quitting this place, turning your back on a very promising career and heading back to our sunburnt country.

Ross nods at Ellie, cueing her up.

ROSS (CONT'D)

What's going on, Ellie? Why are you quitting this cesspool of malcontents and ego-bruisers?

Ellie adjusts the mic slightly and leans forward.

ELLIE

I don't want to talk about me tonight, Ross. I'm not leaving because of me. I'm not even sure now if I am leaving. Something has come up in the last hour that has changed things for me.

ROSS

That's great news. We need more real people here.

ELLIE

That's nice of you, but I'm probably only delaying my departure. I know you know Joel Sampson. He's been my roommate for the last six months. We became very close, in a platonic way. I was like an older sister to him. I'd been here longer and helped him settle in.

ROSS

I do know Joel. A very talented stand-up comic. Tell us what this has to do with your decisions.

Ellie swallows and sets her jaw.

ELLIE

He died yesterday. It was an overdose. And it was tragic. But it wasn't suicide like the police think.

ROSS

I thought you told me on the phone it was. What changed your mind?

ELLIE

I just found out he was booked on a gig that would have been the opportunity of a life time.

Ellie sniffs and rubs her eyes.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

He didn't kill himself, and he
didn't accidentally OD on drugs.
Somebody killed him.

She stops talking and sits back in her chair in the studio.

Ross forgets for a moment that they are live and on the air.
He looks at her for a couple of silent seconds before
recovering.

ROSS

Wow. I thought I had hard-hitting
news before, but this is a first.
We're going to continue this in a
minute, but we've got to get a song
on the air first. Here's Katy Perry
and Eminem with their reinvention
of that Ray Charles favorite "I got
a Woman."

Ross pushes his mic away and stares at Ellie.

ROSS (CONT'D)

The cops know about this, yes?

Ellie shakes her head.

ELLIE

I just found out myself.

ROSS

You could have warned me before we
went on air. You've got to take
this information to the police,
immediately.

Ellie fishes a card out of her pocket.

ELLIE

I was interviewed at the scene by a
constable. I've got his number
here. I'll call him after the show.

Ross leans over the console and snags the card from her.

ROSS

Who is this? Constable Larry
Perkins. Constable? No Detective on
this murder?

ELLIE

It's a suicide as far as they're concerned. I'll call him tomorrow and see what he thinks.

Ross smiles. He waves at the producer to get the card and cue up the constable.

ROSS

Bullshit. We're going to call him on the air.

ELLIE

No. You're going to get embarrassing, aren't you?

ROSS

I had that surgically removed. You can't embarrass me.

ELLIE

I'm not worried about you.

The song winds down, Katy and Marshall harmonizing on the final chorus. Ross steps all over it with a definite look of purpose on his face.

ROSS

That was Katy and Mathers crooning away like the lovebirds that they want to be.

Ross wipes the corners of his mouth and leans a little closer to his mic.

Ross (CONT'D)

Listeners, we've got some hot, breaking news here.

Ross points at the producer and receives a nod.

ROSS (CONT'D)

We're going to give cop on this case a call right now and see if we can prod the LAPD into action.

Ross points at the producer. The dialling tones are heard.

ROSS (CONT'D)

Okay, the number is ringing now. I respect the work that the LAPD do, but they are seriously overworked. That's the second ring.

(MORE)

ROSS (CONT'D)

There's no way that I'm going to let a killer get off scot-free, though, just for expediency sake. Here's the third ring

PERKINS

(filtered)

Perkins.

ROSS

Constable Perkins? This is Ross Mellon on the air. You're on the air also.

PERKINS

(filtered)

Melon-Head? Love your show. What's this about? Did I win something?

Ross winks at Ellie and clears his throat.

ROSS

You attended the death of a Joel Sampson yesterday, right?

PERKINS

(filtered)

Oh, hey, I can't talk about any cases. I'm not the official spokesperson for the LAPD. You need to call Nancy Wilson at the main number for any official statements.

ROSS

That's a fair comment, constable. You can't officially talk to us and I respect the rules you need to live by. We all need to live by rules. New information has come to light in the death of Joel Sampson. Information that almost certainly precludes suicide as a cause of death. Not even accidental overdose. I'm going to ask Ellie to explain this to you.

Ross points at Ellie and mouths "hit it".

ELLIE

Okay constable, so Joel had no reason to kill himself.

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT'D)

He had found out that morning that he was lined up to be interviewed by one of his idols. He was about to reach his dreams.

Ross and Ellie listen to silence until Ross's professionalism takes over.

ROSS

Constable, are you still there?

PERKINS

(filtered)

If you think you have information that pertains to this case I strongly suggest that you come by the station and tell us in person. We can take a statement from you and direct our investigations appropriately.

ROSS

That sounds like a blow-off constable. You're going to whitewash this, aren't you?

PERKINS

(filtered)

Miss Bourke should come by the station tomorrow and make a statement and if she has more information we'll take it under consideration. Sorry, I can't really say any more than that. I still love your show, though. Bye.

Ross pushes some buttons on the console and confirms the call is dropped.

ROSS

Well it appears that we've lost him. Ellie, are you going to head back to Australia now?

ELLIE

I can't leave. Not knowing somebody out there killed him. I don't know how long I'll stay, but I'm not heading back tomorrow.

ROSS

That's a girl. Our very own Australian Nancy Drew.

(MORE)

ROSS (CONT'D)
And one helluva an actress I hope
to see more of.

Ross gives Ellie a wink, then turns his attention back to the show.

ROSS (CONT'D)
Lily Allen is back with a song so
crude we've had to mute more than
half of it. A quick update on the
coming crappy weather and we'll
take your calls right after that.

Ross drops his audio while the song starts.

ROSS (CONT'D)
You good?

ELLIE
I am. Thanks. I've got to go now,
Ross. Thanks for the invite.

ROSS
No problem. And I want you back to
tell us all what the outcome of
this Nancy Drew-ness is, okay?

ELLIE
You really think I'm as good as you
say I am?

Ross leans his considerable bulk forward and points at Ellie.

ROSS
Remember the Winter Olympics a few
years back where the Aussie girl
was competing in the snowboard
competition? Final run, she gets
two attempts. On the first one she
stacks and lands on her arse.
Lowest possible scores. She gets
back up to the top of the pipe for
the second, and final, run and she
aces it. Highest marks in the comp,
instant gold medal.

ELLIE
Yeah, so?

ROSS
Did she train between the first and
second run?

ELLIE

Of course not.

ROSS

Of course not. It was 100% in her head. One. Hundred. Percent.

Ross wipes spittle from the corners of his mouth

ROSS (CONT'D)

And you've got to get it 100% in your head. Do you want to be up on the screen or forever sitting in the audience? Eighty, ninety percent of the people in this town are getting beat in their heads. Every time self-doubt crawls into your skull, grab that mother by the throat and kick the ever loving shit out of it. You only succeed in this business when you know -

Ross punches himself in the chest.

ROSS (CONT'D)

- absolutely know in your heart that you will succeed. Now piss off and succeed. I've got a show to do.

EXT. BART SWEENEY'S BACK PATIO TABLE - EVENING

George and Bart sit at the table, beer bottles between them. Bart shakes his head. The Lily Allen song is playing on a radio on the bar. Bart reaches over and turns it off.

BART

What did I tell you? She's going off the rails. It was a suicide. The door was locked, for Christ's sake. You wannanuther beer?

George looks at Bart, thinks for a second and nods.

GEORGE

Yeah. A light. Why do you have a hard-on for her?

BART

I don't know what you mean.

GEORGE

She seems fine to me. Steve loves her, and he's a casting guy, so he should know, and he thinks she'd make a great Jackie for our movie.

George pauses for a second, weighing his words.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

But be that as it may. Too early for casting yet, anyway.

BART

So why are we here? You guys turning cold on the movie?

GEORGE

No. Hell, no. Steve and Bobby will be here in a few minutes. Easier to tell it once. But we're all in. Don't worry.

EXT. DEVONSHIRE POLICE STATION - MORNING

Ellie pulls up in her broken down Beetle, parks at a meter, doesn't feed it and walks determinedly across the street to the station.

INT. DEVONSHIRE STATION - MORNING

The station lobby looks like early DMV. A chest-high counter separates Ellie from the office drones, all in police uniforms, some with guns.

Ellie catches the attention of a person sitting at a desk near the front of the station proper.

ELLIE

I need to talk to someone about a case that Constable Perkins was working on yesterday. A suicide at Bart Sweeney's house.

The clerk checks a roster list and smiles up at Ellie.

CLERK

Would you like to talk to Constable Perkins himself? He's in today. Pulling extra shifts. Like all of us.

ELLIE

That would be great. Thanks. Where do I go?

CLERK

Oh, you just wait here, doll. I'll get him to come out. Have a seat.

Ellie barely has a chance to get comfortable when Constable Perkins appears from the bowels of the station.

PERKINS

Miss Bourke, I was expecting you.

Ellis stands and wipes her hands on her pants.

ELLIE

Sorry about that call last night. I hope we didn't get you in trouble.

Perkins laughs.

PERKINS

My boss heard it and congratulated me for keeping it close to the vest. Follow me.

Ellie and the constable snake through a maze of desks and cubicles until Perkins holds a door and motions Ellie to enter.

Ellie sits in a utilitarian chair and looks around at the sparse surroundings.

ELLIE

Isn't this an interrogation room?

PERKINS

It's one of the few quiet areas in here.

ELLIE

Okay. So, Constable, what more do you want to know?

Perkins flips open his notepad about half way through.

PERKINS

From the top, Miss Bourke.

Ellie takes a breath and collects her thoughts, and relates the story.

INT. DEVONSHIRE POLICE STATION - OUTSIDE THE INTERROGATION ROOM

Looking through the window, no audio, as Ellie, frustrated, tries to get Perkins to believe her.

EXT. DEVONSHIRE POLICE STATION - MORNING

Ellie runs down the station steps and crosses the street blindly, horns honking and drivers yelling at her.

She looks up and sees a TRAFFIC COP opening her book of tickets.

In front of Ellie's Beetle.

ELLIE

Wait, wait, wait. I'm here. I was just leaving.

The Traffic Cop holds her pen over the pad.

TRAFFIC COP

And I just got here. Your meter expired. I've got to write you a ticket.

Ellie takes Perkins' card from her back pocket and hands it to the traffic cop.

ELLIE

I was just in the station talking to him.

The traffic cop looks at the card, smiles and hands it back to Ellie. She also puts her ticket book back in her pocket, unused.

TRAFFIC COP

Life-time Larry, eh? What are you expecting him to do for you?

ELLIE

Life-time?

TRAFFIC COP

Yeah. He's been a constable for a life-time. Nice enough guy, but that fucking notebook drives me insane.

Ellie smiles a wan smile, opens the driver's door and slides in. She opens the window.

ELLIE

Thanks for the no ticket. I'm kinda messed up right now. I need to go home and think.

INT. GUESTHOUSE BEHIND SWEENEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Ellie slowly slides the guesthouse door closed behind her and looks at Joel's belongings piled on the sofa.

She runs her fingers along the edge of Joel's mid-sized Becker surfboard and smiles at the memories.

ELLIE

(to herself)

Damn you Joel, you used this once.
Looked like a duck on a bike.

Ellie slowly turns, the emotions strengthening her resolve. She sits on the sofa and tries to make a call on Joel's phone, but the battery is dead.

Ellie pulled Joel's laptop closer and plugs in his phone. The phone syncs to the laptop and she looks for KYLE's number.

She plugs her headphone's into Joel's phone and dials.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Kyle, It's me. Ellie.

KYLE

(filtered)

You've got to stop calling me from
Joel's phone. It's freaking me out.

ELLIE

Get a grip. I'm trying to recreate
his day before, you know, the
killing. What time did you talk to
him last?

KYLE

(filtered)

I called him in the morning around
10:00. I woke him, by the sound of
it.

ELLIE

Did he say what he was doing the
rest of the day?

KYLE

(filtered)

Nothing specific.

(beat)

If I had known what he was going to
do I would have told him to come
over.

ELLIE

He didn't do anything. Something was done to him.

(beat)

And that was the last time you talked to him?

KYLE

(filtered)

No, he called me back, lunchtime, definitely before 1:00. Still pumped. Wanted to confirm the time. Oh, fuck, I still can't believe he's dead.

ELLIE

Anybody you know who might have wanted to kill him, as strange as that may sound?

KYLE

(filtered)

Joel? Joel was everybody's kid brother. I can't think of anyone who would want to hurt a hair on his head.

ELLIE

Yet he's dead.

Ellie leans over, her arms on her knees.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Thanks for talking. I'll put your number in my phone. Don't want you having a heart attack.

Ellie terminates the call and sends the contact info from Joel's phone to her's.

She stands and looks around.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I can't stay in here any longer.

Ellie grabs her keys off the counter and leaves, headphones still in her ears, Joel's phone in one hand and hers in the other.

She gets in her car and starts driving aimlessly - anything to get out of the guesthouse.

Ellie presses the play button on her headphones, but they are still plugged into Joel's phone. Instead of John Farnham she get's Joel's voice.

JOEL (V.O.)

Day 83. Went shopping with Ellie today. That sounds like a lame day, and for most it probably would be. But we had a blast. Shopping, for both of us, is primarily walking down Rodeo or, in today's case hitting Fashion Island at Newport Beach and looking.

Ellie pulls over, tears starting to build.

ELLIE

Oh, shit.

JOEL (V.O.)

I couldn't afford to buy shoelaces there. Not yet, anyway. We window shopped at half a dozen places, getting kicked out of a few for loitering with intent, whatever the hell that means, then Ellie sprung for food at Cali Pizza. Excellent food and a very reasonable price. That would be free for me. Too bad Ellie isn't a guy. Or I wasn't gay. We make a great couple. Anyway, perfect day. Some gigs next week that I'll be telling you about, dear diary, and hopefully they'll be good news.

Ellie puts her car into gear and continues to drive aimlessly, heading generally north to the top end of the Valley on Topanga.

After a short break in the audio:

JOEL (V.O.)

Day 84. Twat. Not just the past tense of Tweet. Ass-hat himself came on to me again today. It doesn't matter how many times I explain to him that I'm not just saying I'm celibate - I actually am - he thinks I'm just rebuffing him. And he showed up with a beer. Hello! Celibate and sober, dickwad. Which of those don't you understand? Oh yeah. Both of them.

Ellie wipes her eyes, sniffs but can't help listening. The audio plays over her drive north through the Valley.

JOEL (V.O.)

*Okay. Vent vented. Note to self:
This is the genesis of what will no
doubt be one of my funniest bits,
recorded here for future
reference...*

The audio fades as Ellie laughs through her tears. She stops her car on a small dirt road north of the 118 and watches a couple of rabbits play.

ELLIE

Oh, fuck, Joel. What did you get yourself into?

Ellie's phone rings. Momentary confusion while she sorts out which phone is which, then she pulls the headphones from her ears and answers her phone.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

If it isn't my useless agent.
What's up, Davie?

DAVE

(filtered)

Sorry for calling you on a Sunday,
but I've got an audition for you
tomorrow morning. I just checked my
email and the notice came through
Friday night.

ELLIE

What's the part call for? A four
foot tall gypsy?

DAVE

(filtered)

What? Why would it be that?

ELLIE

That sit-com thing you sent me on
last week was for a bimbo. Big
tits. You remember what I look
like, right? Your tits are bigger
than mine. I'll pass on this one,
thanks.

Ellie terminates the call. Five seconds later it rings again.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

What?

DAVE
 (filtered)
 You really shouldn't pass on this one. The part's made for you.

ELLIE
 Jesus. Fine. What is it?

DAVE
 (filtered)
 "Modern Family". Foreign tutor for one of the families. The goofball father family. The Dunphy guy. It's tomorrow morning at -

ELLIE
 I'm driving home. Send it to my phone, okay?

DAVE (V.O.)
 Sure. Starts at 11. Might go to as late as 2.

ELLIE
 Yeah, just text me the details Dave. Thanks.

EXT. BART'S BACK YARD PATIO - DAY

Bart and Bobby and Steve and George sit around the patio table, each with a beer.

Bart belches and wipes his mouth. He holds up his phone.

BART
 I'm ordering pizza. Meat lovers. Want?

GEORGE
 Sure.

George drains his bottle and smacks it on the table a bit too hard.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 I've got to drain a man about a snake. Or something. Be right back.

George sways a bit as he tacks toward the back door.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 I'm bringing beers back with me. Who else wants another?

BART
 Bring us all one, George, thanks.
 (to the other two)
 Well, guys, I think we're getting
 all of our ducks in a very nice row
 here.

STEVE
 Not good enough yet. We need to
 secure Hanks. He's the keystone to
 this.

Bart makes like he's checking his pockets.

BART
 Damn. I don't have his number on
 me.

Steve takes out his phone and places it in the middle of the
 table.

STEVE
 Actually...

Bobby lifts his head off his arms.

BOBBY
 For real? You've got Hanks's
 number?

STEVE
 You're awake, are you Bobby? I
 thought we lost you a couple of
 beer ago.

Steve taps his phone.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 Not Colin Hanks directly, but I've
 got his agent's number. Obviously.
 That's what I do for a living.

BART
 So call him.

STEVE
 Not so fast. What do we want to
 achieve here? What do we expect to
 achieve here?

George returns with four frosty bottles.

GEORGE

Achieve with what? What are you talking about?

BART

Steve here is going to call Colin Hanks' agent.

Bart takes a bottle and twists off the top.

BART (CONT'D)

What do we expect? Well, I'd love to get commitment to the project from him.

STEVE

Come on, Bart. Be realistic. We don't have a finished script, we don't have a title -

BART

Yeah, but we've got a hell of a concept. And the screenplay is 90% there.

STEVE

You can't even wipe your ass with a concept.

Steve rubs his chin and thinks.

STEVE (CONT'D)

At this juncture the best we can hope for is a strong expression of interest and an agreement to meet with us and the first draft of the script.

BART

And I thought we agreed on a title.

BOBBY

Which one did we agree on? "Blood Stump"?

GEORGE

Hell no. Sounds like a spin off of the Saw franchise. "Blood Thunder", wasn't it?

Bart leans in and points at the phone.

BART
 "My Girlfriend is an Alien"? It really doesn't matter. It'll change. So. We make the call?

STEVE
 We make the call.

Steve dials the number, puts the phone on speaker and places it in the middle of the table.

At the other end of the phone is super-agent MARTY WILLIS.

MARTY
 (filtered)
 Is this the famous Bond, Steve Bond? What can I do you for?

STEVE
 Marty, long time. You're doing well, I hope?

MARTY
 (filtered)
 You know I am. You've got me on speaker. Who else is with you?

Bart leans in and steps on Marty.

BART
 Bert Sweeney here, Marty, with Bobby Bowens the cinematographer and George McPherson. And Steve, of course.

MARTY
 (filtered)
 Hey George, how's the beautiful Daphne?

GEORGE
 Still beautiful. Thanks for asking. And thanks for taking the time to talk.

Paper rustles on the other end of the line.

MARTY (V.O.)
 So, guys, what is it? I've got a pretty full plate right now.

STEVE
 It's Sunday. Quit trying to blow us off, buddy.

MARTY

(filtered, laughing)

Cut to the chase, Steve-o. What do you want?

STEVE

We - Bart, Bobby George and I - are putting together a project that has your boy Colin written all over it.

MARTY

(filtered)

No, no, no. You're looking for an anchor for a shit project. I wasn't born yesterday, boys. Good talking to you.

BART

Wait! That's not it.

Bart takes a deep breath and steadies himself.

BART (CONT'D)

Look, Marty, yes, we need an anchor. We need a high profile attached to this to make it fly, but it's gold. Seriously, gold. The first draft is written. We've got a team of the top writers coming in next week to tweak dialogue and smooth the edges. The concept is a winner.

Marty sighs, a hollow sound over the speakerphone.

MARTY

(filtered)

Fine. I'll bite. What's the concept?

Bart smiles at his colleagues. Step one.

BART

Vampires. They're -

MARTY

(filtered)

Oh, hell no. They're dead. That's a meme that's run its course. Not interested at all.

BART

You didn't let me finish, Marty.
The vampires are not the
traditional, Romanian Vlad the
Impaler types.

MARTY

(filtered)

I don't care. They're vampires.
They're old hat. Even the glittery
ones.

BART

Not these ones. They're aliens that
have been here since the Industrial
Revolution, keeping an eye on us.
They have on their planet, just at
the edge of where man can currently
travel in space, an energy source
that they know we would kill for.
After watching us for the four
hundred years since the Industrial
Revolution -

MARTY

(filtered)

Three hundred years.

BART

Yeah, whatever. They've been
watching us to make sure we aren't
going to invade them. Just keeping
an eye on us. They know that we
don't ask nicely or negotiate; we
tend to take what we want. There's
a love triangle, environmental
subtext and the usual high tech
stuff you get with aliens.

George steps on Bart's explanation.

GEORGE

And it's going to be a satirical
view of the green movement,
infiltrated by these aliens.

They listen to the tap-tap-tap at the other end of the line.
Then a deep breath and Marty speaks.

MARTY

(filtered)

Interesting. Not what I was
expecting.

(MORE)

MARTY (CONT'D)

I'll bounce it off the young Mr. Hanks. What role were you looking at him for?

Bart smiles at his friends and gives them the thumbs up. Step two.

BART

The hero / anti-hero alien vampire. He's perceived as the bad guy initially, but by the midpoint the audience starts pulling for him. The love triangle between him, the scientist whose advances allow Earthlings to reach the alien vampire planet and the scientist's girl, a martial arts instructor -

Bart looks at the other guys around the table and shrugs.

BART (CONT'D)

- tilts so the girl starts falling for the Hanks character. A bit of a message movie with mankind learning about planet care and the military complex getting slapped down.

They can almost hear Marty nodding.

MARTY

(filtered)

Yeah. I like it. I definitely like it. Is the script complete?

BART

Yes, yes. The first draft is. About one thirty pages. Needs to be trimmed a bit, but it's workable.

MARTY

(filtered)

That sounds good. Send me a treatment and I'll get it in front of Colin. Let me know when the script is in better shape. Or when it's story boarded. Remember, he's not attached yet, okay? You can say he's showing interest. You can say he's in discussions, but he's not attached until I tell you he's attached. Understand?

BART
Absolutely Marty. I'll get
something to you tomorrow morning,
okay?

MARTY
(filtered)
Sounds good, Bart. Talk to you
tomorrow. And then I'll talk to
Colin. Make this work, guys.

There is a few seconds of silence after Marty hangs up, then
George lets out a whoop.

GEORGE
Hot damn, Steve. You came through.
(to Bart)
So how's the treatment?

BART
How many pages in a treatment?

GEORGE
What? You kidding me?

BART
I'm a director, George. I'm not a
writer.

GEORGE
So get whoever wrote the script to
do the treatment.

Bart puts up his hand.

BART
I wrote it. It's probably shit,
which is why we need some real
writers to come in here and fix it
up.

BOBBY
Oh, fuck. You're flying this by the
seat of your pants. You're going to
crash and burn. If our names are
attached to something that draws in
one of the biggest film dynasties
in this city, and then fails them
miserably, we'll all be living in
cardboard boxes under the Santa
Monica Pier.

BART

That's never happened before, and I can guarantee you that it's not going to happen now. This is nothing. The story's already written. I can put my head down and get the treatment out in twelve hours. Fuck it. I've been in worse situations. So have you, for that matter. To the victor go the spoils, and all that.

Bart stands and collects beer bottles. He juggles six of them, trying not to drop them. He pauses and looks at his three new partners.

BART (CONT'D)

Well, what are you doing still setting there? Piss off and let me get to work.

Steve and Bobby and George push their chairs back.

BOBBY

You need any help, let me know, okay?

Bart mutters something vague in response and drops the bottles in his garbage bin. As he turns to go back in his house he catches Ellie pulling into the driveway after George pulls out.

He intercepts her as she gets to the door of the guesthouse.

BART

I thought you were splitting. Heading back to the land down under.

ELLIE

Nice to see you too, Bart.

Ellie fumbles with her keys, trying to insert the door key and get into the house as fast as possible.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Changed my mind.

BART

You're dropping the Joel thing.

Bart gets between Ellie and the partially open door to the guest house.

ELLIE

My business, Bart. Out of my way,
please.

Bart pokes an index finger in her chest. He gives her a slight push.

BART

No. You get out of MY way. On to a plane to Australia, tomorrow. Out of my life. Definitely out of my guesthouse.

Ellie pushes his hand away and stands her ground. Bart grabs her by the wrist and tries to pull her away from the guesthouse.

ELLIE

Get off me.

Bart grabs her other wrist and leans in close.

BART

I've had enough of you, bitch. You're stirring up shit that doesn't need stirring. I've got a big deal going down and I don't need you fucking it up.

Ellie shies away from his fetid breath.

BART (CONT'D)

So get on a fucking plane and get the fuck out of my life before I do to you what I did to your friend.

Ellie stops struggling against him as the words sink in.

ELLIE

What? What did you do to Joel?

BART

You don't get out of here you'll find out soon enough.

ELLIE

I'm going to the fucking cops.

BART

(smiles)

Like they're going to believe you over me.

Ellie tries pulling her hands free, but Bart is holding tight, pulling back.

Ellie stops resisting and takes a step closer to Bart and KNEES HIM IN THE NUTS. Bart lets go, grabs his groin and falls on the ground.

BART (CONT'D)
(wheezing)
You bitch!

Ellie runs to the car, gets in and backs out of the driveway in a cloud of smoke.

EXT. SERVICE STATION PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

Ellie leans against her car, her shaking hands over her mouth. She looks around, wildly, panicked, and seeing no Sweeney, pulls her phone out of one pocket and Perkins' card from another.

Ellie fumbles with the card and starts dialing.

Then stops.

ELLIE
Fuck, fuck, fuck. He's not going to believe me.

Ellie paces beside her car, almost dropping her phone as it rings.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
What?!

CATHY
(filtered)
Shit, you okay?

ELLIE
Oh, Cathy, you have no idea.

Ellie's eyes start leaking. She impatiently wipes away the tears.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Bart did it.

CATHY
(filtered)
We're home. Show got cancelled.
Just got back if you need somewhere to stay.

ELLIE
Bart killed Joel.

CATHY
(filtered)
What? I'm worried about you Ellie.
You need to get over here. Where
are you?

Ellie looks over her shoulder at the street signs.

ELLIE
Servo at Tampa and Parthenia. It's
great to hear your voice. I can't
do this alone.

Ellie gets in her car, stuffing Perkin's card above her
visor.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I'll be there in 10 minutes.

EXT. TIDY BUNGALOW IN SAN FERNANDO VALLEY - EVENING

CATHY (blonde, 20s, tall, bigger build than Ellie) stands on
the curb as Ellie drives up. BERNIE (late 20's, muscular,
over 6', dark hair) is at the BBQ in the side yard.

Ellie gets out of the car and Cathy envelopes her in a hug
and talks into Ellie's hair.

CATHY
What in the hell is going on, Ell?

Ellie disengages and wipes her eyes.

ELLIE
Sweeney killed Joel. I don't know
how or why, but he killed him.

Cathy takes stock, decides to believe her, and takes her by
the arm.

CATHY
Bernie is cooking up some chicken
breast, I've made a nice mango
salad and I've got a glass of
Aussie white on ice. You need food
and ears. And wine.

Cathy sits her at an outside table and pours a large glass.

CATHY (CONT'D)
You need to start from the top.

EXT. BERNIE AND CATHY'S HOUSE - LATER

An almost empty plate of salad and an empty wine glass sit in front of Ellie. Cathy tips the wine bottle and a few drops land in Ellie's glass.

BERNIE

I'll get another one.

Ellie puts her hand over the top.

ELLIE

Not a good idea. I'm exhausted and another will knock me out.

Ellie leans back in her chair and runs both hands through her hair. She closes her eyes and stretches, trying unsuccessfully to stifle a yawn.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I don't know what to do now.
Perkins sure as hell isn't going to believe me. My word against the slime ball's.

CATHY

Sleep.

Cathy sends a meaningful look to Bernie, who almost misses it.

BERNIE

Oh. Yeah, hey, if you want, I can stop by Sweeney's place and -

Bernie cracks his knuckles.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

- you know.

Ellie actually laughs. She remembers something and opens the messages on her phone.

ELLIE

Oh, shit. I've got an audition tomorrow. What time is it? I've got to call the casting director and beg off.

Cathy puts her re-filled glass on the table and takes Ellie's hands.

CATHY

Oh, no, hon. Do the job. You need to take your mind off this shit. We'll get together after and work out a plan to capture slimy Sweeney. You need to keep a regular schedule or you'll lose it.

BERNIE

Besides, you said this was supposed to be a good one. Cathy's right. Go to it. But sleep first.

Ellie pushes her chair back and receives Cathy's hug.

ELLIE

Thanks. Point me to a sofa.

INT. CASTING OFFICE SOMEWHERE IN GLENDALE - MORNING

Ellie sits among dozens of other hopefuls, including the waitress who served her the scotch at Joel's last gig.

Ellie closes her eyes, leans back and presses the play button on her headphones. Actresses are getting called periodically, background chatter fades as:

JOEL

What is this, day 84? Nope. 85. An emotionally seesaw day. Woke up tired and seriously missing bro. I honestly haven't missed him since I got here which is probably strange, being that we're twins and all. Anyway, almost called that ugly asshole three times today. But I resisted. I vowed that I'd do a full year here on my own, no family help and dammit, I'm going to wait the year.

Ellie sniffs. Not even six months. That fucking Bart.

JOEL (CONT'D)

So, anyway, enough about Jacob for now. That was the down side of the seesaw. I showed Ellie the flopping, Botoxed hands bit today and I think she liked it. I'm saying I think she liked it because I almost had to give her CPR she was laughing so hard. Let a bit of pee go, I think.

(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)

I'll need to practice it a bit for a couple of days, get the pacing and the rhythm tighter, but it's got legs.

Ellis smiles and leans her head back, reliving the day.

JOEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I have to say, though, that I'm getting a bit worried about my buddy Ellie. I don't think she's had a good gig in a month or so. That can't be making her feel good. I might see if Kyle can help her out. Her guy is a bit of a jackass. But enough downer shit. Ellie and I had a good laugh today, stayed away from booze and etcetera. And that's the way it is on Tuesday, day 85.

Ellie cracks a smile. She jumps when someone taps on her arm. Ellie looks up at a green-eyed red-headed girl.

GIRL

You're Ellie Bourke, right?

ELLIE

Yeah, why?

GIRL

They've called your name twice now. You're going to miss your spot.

INT. CASTING DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

Ellie puts the sides down and stretches.

ELLIE

Good?

STEVE

Fantastic, Ellie. Glad you didn't leave town. You're at the top of the list.

ELLIE

A list I'm not sure I want to be on. So, what's next?

STEVE

For you? Enjoy the rest of your day.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

For me, another twelve hopefuls to traipse through that door to get their dreams steamrollered by me, 'cause that's what I do.

The door cracks open and bumps Ellie. She is half-trapped behind the door. Bart pokes his head in.

BART

Steve, buddy, when are you doing lunch? I'm right next door.

STEVE

I was just checking with Ellie here what she was up to.

Bart looks around the edge of the door.

BART

(false smarminess)

Oh, Ell, didn't see you there. You're still here? Join us for lunch?

Ellie clenches her jaw muscles.

ELLIE

Not now. I've got to call Perkins.

Bart comes into the room and closes the door behind him.

BART

Don't keep pushing, kid. He killed himself. It's a sad, but undisputable fact.

ELLIE

Indisputable.

BART

So you agree.

ELLIE

No, Bart, I was correcting your English.

Bart squares off in front of Ellie, his finger raised.

BART

I strongly suggest you back off from this. It can only go bad for you.

Ellie stands an inch or two taller than Bart. She looks down on him, hands on hips.

ELLIE
You can go fuck yourself.

Ellie looks at Steve and shakes her head.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Steve, call me if you want to see me again for this, okay?
(to Bart)
Seriously. Go fuck yourself.

Ellie pushes past Bart.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I've got to go see a guy about a thing.

Bart closes the door behind Ellie, looks at it for a moment, and turns to Steve.

BART
Unbalanced bitch.

STEVE
She's been through a lot. You of all people should know that. I'm surprised she's staying. Where are we going?

BART
Damon's. The other two are meeting us. Things are coming together.

STEVE
What was she talking about, Perkins?

Bart shrugs and holds the door for Steve.

BART
Fucked if I know. Told you, she's instable.

STEVE
I think you mean 'unstable'.

INT. DAMON'S STEAK HOUSE - LUNCH

Bart and Steve join George and Bobby at a back table.

Half empty beer bottles and crumbs from bread rolls litter the table.

Bart picks up a menu and makes a point of leisurely looking through the lunch options. Steve takes the menu from him and places it on the table.

STEVE

Spit it out Bart. What happened with Marty? You e-mailed it to him, right?

Bart shakes his head while he arranges the flatware.

BART

I dropped the treatment off in person and waited while he read it. He was halfway through reading it and he was smiling and nodding and I knew he was hooked. He is showing it to Colin,
(he looks at his watch)
as we speak. He said he'll text me after the discussion.

BOBBY

So it was positive sounding then?

BART

He loved it. Thought Hanks would too. Called it one of the few original ideas he'd read in a long time.

Bart takes out his phone from his suit pocket.

BART (CONT'D)

So why don't I send you a copy of the treat-

Bart's phone rings. He looks at the caller ID and shushes the others. He puts the phone to his head.

BART (CONT'D)

Marty, what can I do for you?

MARTY

(filtered)
I've got Colin here. He's eager to get his hands on a script. The first draft is good enough.

BART

I couldn't. It's really rough. It may change in the rewrites.

MARTY

(filtered)

We expect it will. Can you send it today? There's a small window of opportunity in Colin's schedule.

BART

Absolutely. Just know it is first draft. I've got some writers lined up -

MARTY

(filtered)

Don't worry. We know some.

Bart looks at his colleagues watching him, gives them a smile and a thumbs up.

BART

Okay. I'll send it this afternoon. We'll be looking for financing shortly. A positive reaction by Mr. Hanks would be very helpful in that regard.

MARTY

(filtered)

I'm sure it would. If the script is as good as the treatment was - or at least has the potential to be that good - his father would like to come in as an Executive Producer. A good name to have on the page when you're wandering around with your hat out.

Bart blinks.

BART

Tom?

Bart swallows and looks at his partners who are staring at him.

MARTY

(filtered)

He only has one father. I need to run, Bart. I look forward to getting the draft this afternoon. Thanks. Later.

Bart sits with the phone stuck to the side of his head, stunned.

GEORGE

What about Tom? I heard you say Tom. Hanks?

BART

I need to get a draft script to Marty and Colin this afternoon.

BOBBY

What. About. Tom?

Bart blows out a breath of air.

BART

Yeah. The Tom of the Hanks clan has said he'd like to get onboard as a hands-off executive producer if his son likes it.

Bart sits back, grin splitting his face as the other three clamor for more information.

INT. DEVONSHIRE POLICE STATION

Ellie and Perkins are in the public space at the front of the station. Perkins is on the receiving end of an onslaught.

ELLIE

What don't you believe? He told me. He didn't hint. He fucking told me.

PERKINS

Exactly what did he say?

ELLIE

That if I didn't leave for Australia he would do to me what he did to Joel. You're going to investigate, right?

Perkins flips pages in his notepad and Ellie taps her foot. He flips to the front of the pad, then closes it.

PERKINS

I'm sorry. That's not even close to a good enough reason to investigate. There's no evidence pointing to anything other than suicide.

Ellie stares at him a beat, then shakes her head and walks out. Perkins calls after her:

PERKINS (CONT'D)
If you do find anything, please let me know.

EXT. DEVONSHIRE POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Ellie storms down the steps, phone to her ear.

ELLIE
Cath, Perkins blew me off.

CATHY
(filtered)
Didn't believe you?

ELLIE
No. I'm going to sneak into the guesthouse and get my stuff. Bart shouldn't be around for awhile.

CATHY
(filtered)
Be careful.

ELLIE
He's having a liquid lunch with some of his buddies. I'll be fine.

CATHY
(filtered)
I could send Bernie over to cover for you.

ELLIE
Thanks for everything, but not necessary. I'll see you later tonight.

Ellie slides into her car and leaves in a cloud of smoke.

INT. DAMON'S STEAK HOUSE - LATER

Plates, empty except for T-bone bones and dregs of salad are collected by a busboy. Fresh beers are delivered and opened.

Bart looks at the other three around the table.

BART
What's the biggest gamble you guys made? The farthest you've gone to achieve a goal?

Bart tips back his beer, puts the empty on the table and grabs a new one.

BART (CONT'D)

Bobby?

BOBBY

I'm a camera guy. I point the camera where you director types tell me. I'm pretty by-the-book, pal.

GEORGE

Well, there was this time we needed to get an actor, who we all know well, on set for the final day of shooting. The idiot had spent the night with his girlfriend and her twin brother going through more opiates and alcohol than I've seen an entire football and NBA team go through. And, apparently, plenty of sex and I don't want to know who was doing what to whom.

STEVE

You get any pictures?

GEORGE

(laughs)

Maybe I'll show you later. Remember, this was the last day of shooting. We didn't have the location beyond the day, the scene was critical.

George holds up his hand to forestall questions.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

No, I won't tell you the location. It comes time to shoot the scene and he's comatose.

STEVE

So how'd you get him to the set?

GEORGE

You see "Pulp Fiction"?

STEVE

No way. The adrenaline scene?

George points and smiles

GEORGE

He was flat on his back in his apartment, gone from this world. Didn't want to get a doctor involved - didn't have the time, anyway - so I acquired a syringe full of adrenaline and drove it through his chest bone, into his heart and gave the fucker a jump.

The other three are laughing at this point.

STEVE

"Acquired"?

GEORGE

Yeah, don't ask. I still don't think, to this day, he remembers what happened to him.

BART

Nice, but I've got you beat. What about you Steve? Anything in your past that spells risk?

STEVE

I find people for other people. The most daring my job gets is sending a brunette when the producer asks for a blonde.

Steve sits back in his chair, a smile on his face and a bottle in his hand.

STEVE (CONT'D)

So spill it. You've got George's adrenaline in the heart story beat, do you? You going to tell?

Bart looks at his bottle and gently places it on the table.

BART

I think I better switch to coffee. This is going to be a long night.

GEORGE

No, pal, you can't start this and not follow through. Spill the beans.

Bart looks at Bobby and holds his gaze for a few seconds. Then the same with George and Steve. A small smile forms on his face.

Bart licks his lips, a perverse pride in the story he is about to tell.

Bobby yawns and Steve drums his fingers on the table.

STEVE

Out with it.

BART

You know I made "Beast of Bondi" in Australia, right? That B-grade horror, surfer slash flick?

BOBBY

You're generous calling it B-grade. It barely made it to that level.

BART

Hey, I bought this house with DVD royalties. There will always be teenaged boys willing to fork over their paper route money to see tits and gore.

Bart takes a deep breath and rubs his hands together.

BART (CONT'D)

So, we're in rehearsals for this movie. Maybe a week all up, and the entire week I'm badgering the lead psycho about his limp.

Bart shakes his head, a wry smile on his face.

BART (CONT'D)

He couldn't limp for shit. We already signed the guy - couldn't get out of the deal without killing the movie, and the asshole couldn't limp.

GEORGE

Put pebbles in his shoes.

Bart waves that idea away.

BART

We tried everything. Whenever he tried to limp he walked like Richard Dreyfuss's Richard the Third in "Goodbye Girl".

There are blank stares around the table.

BART (CONT'D)

Really? No? Like a gay hunchback of Notre Dame. For a horror movie he was the funniest man on screen.

BARRY

I saw that movie, and his limp looked fine. It looked very convincing.

BART

Well, we worked on him right up to the end of the day on Sunday. We started shooting on the Monday. I was seriously screwed. So I figured if I couldn't teach him to limp, I'd force him to limp.

Bart looks at the three of them. In the eyes. Extracting a promise.

BART (CONT'D)

This stays between us, okay?

GEORGE

Spit it out, Bart.

BART

Okay. So I brought him to my place and loaded him with every mind altering substance I had. He was paralytic. Completely blotto. He couldn't stand at all. He was slumped in a chair in the kitchen. He had, by my recollection, a spoonful of smack, a couple lines of coke and almost half a bottle of Jack. He had no fucking idea where he was.

STEVE

The limp?

BART

I had a meat tenderising hammer in the kitchen. I broke a couple of bones in his foot. Four, I think the x-ray ultimately said. We shot scenes the next morning with him hopped up on painkillers, none the wiser. He had no idea how he hurt his foot, and still doesn't know to this day.

Stunned silence around the table until Steve breaks it.

STEVE

That is seriously fucked up, Bart. Seriously. Don't tell us any more stories like that.

BART

You need big balls in this business Stevie. You need to do what needs to be done. I thought you knew that.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF BART'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Ellie rolls by in her car, looking out for Bart's car. The drive is empty. She continues around the corner and parks on the street, out of sight of Bart's house.

Ellie gets out of her car and walks back to the house. She walks quickly up the drive and unlocks the guesthouse sliding door.

INT. GUEST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ellie quietly slides the door shut and closes the vertical blinds.

She takes Joel's phone and plugs in her head phones. Joel's audio is heard as Ellie moves around the guesthouse.

JOEL (O.S.)

I've got an ethics question for you, imaginary listeners. I overheard a fairly respected comic deliver a joke this afternoon that was, as a joke, not too bad, but I know I can deliver it better. Hell, Pauly Shore could deliver it better.

Ellie folds Joel's t-shirts and stacks them on the sofa.

JOEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Can these recordings be used as evidence in a court of law? Don't know. Don't care, really. So the bit goes like this: This pirate walks into a bar with a ship's wheel attached to his groin. The bartender says, "Hey, there's a ship's wheel attached to your groin." The pirate nods and says, "Yeah. It's driving me nuts."

Ellie chuckles and examines Joel's surfboard, a thought crossing her mind.

JOEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Funny, right? Well the delivery that I heard was as flat as the corn fields in Nebraska, had the pacing of a one-legged man and was so quiet that I could barely hear it. I don't know if he was ashamed of the gag, or just afraid he was going to screw it up. Doesn't matter, really. There was dead silence after the delivery.

Ellie catches movement out of the corner of her eye, out the kitchen window.

JOEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Decision made: I'm stealing it. Nobody can do it better than I can. I'm assuming. And if this recording is used as evidence against me, my defense will be that the original guy killed it within an inch of its life and I revived it. Plus, finder's keepers and the salvage laws of the high seas.

Ellie walks to the kitchen window.

JOEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

That's all. Humpday over. Gig tomorrow night at the Improv, a little later in the night, which is good. Ellie is providing transport, which is even better. I'm designated driver which owns several levels of suckery, but sober is as sober does, or some such shit. I think I'll open with the pirate bit, see how it goes.

Ellie leans over the sink, looking out of the window at a man walking up the driveway. She can't believe her eyes.

ELLIE

Shit, Ellie. You're being an idiot.

Ellie pulls the earbuds from her ears and slides open the patio door that serves as the guest house front door.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Jacob? Jacob Sampson?

JACOB SAMPSON, identical to Joel, but with shorter hair, changes course up the drive and heads to the guest house.

JACOB
I'm in the right place then? I'm
Joel Sampson's brother.

ELLIE
Yeah, yeah. Right place.

JACOB
I'm here to make the funeral
arrangements and to pick up his
stuff. Who are you?

Ellie touches his face, then blushes and pulls her hand back.

ELLIE
Shit, sorry. I'm acting like a
freaking basket case. You look
exactly like him. But his hair was
longer.

JACOB
Were you his girlfriend? We hadn't
heard much about him while he was
here.

ELLIE
Ah, girlfriend? No. We both lived
here. Come in and sit. I think we
need to talk about your brother.

Ellie sits sideways in the chair at right angles to the sofa so she can look at him in the eye.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
This is spooky. I'm Ellie Bourke.

JACOB
He didn't tell me that he was
living with a girl.

Jacob raises an eyebrow.

JACOB (CONT'D)
If I'm honest, I'm a little
surprised. I would have bet money
that he was a little bit, you know.

Jacob wiggles his hand back and forth in a seesaw motion.

JACOB (CONT'D)

So how long had you been seeing him?

ELLIE

Oh, Jacob, your brother was definitely gay. He and I are - were - just very good friends. I was living here and he moved in as a roommate about six months ago -

JACOB

- when he got here. Okay. So.

Jacob pauses and frowns.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Like I said, I suspected as much. And frankly it makes no difference to me. The suicide is a bit of a controversy at home though.

ELLIE

It wasn't a suicide though, Joel.

JACOB

I'm Jacob.

ELLIE

Oh, fuck.

JACOB

And I talked to a Constable Perkins who informed me that all of the markers for a suicide were there.

Ellie shakes her head and stands, pacing the floor.

ELLIE

No. His career was taking off. And no suicide note. And his landlord told me that he killed him.

JACOB

No suicide note doesn't mean - what? Killed him? He actually said that?

Jacob looks up at Ellie who is furiously pacing in the small room.

ELLIE

Not exactly. You sound like Perkins. I know what he said.

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT'D)

He did it. He said he'd do the same to me.

JACOB

Who is this? I want to talk to him.

ELLIE

Lives in the main house. Bart Sweeney. He's not home right now and he'll deny anything he said to me.

Jacob looks closely in Ellie's eyes.

JACOB

You believe this, don't you?

Jacob pauses for a sec, then shakes his head.

JACOB (CONT'D)

I can look into it, maybe talk to Perkins, but Occam's razor says suicide.

ELLIE

Who's razor?

JACOB

Occam's razor. The simplest solution is the most likely.

ELLIE

You're a cop. AND his brother. I would have thought you'd take my concerns a bit more seriously.

Ellie pokes him in the chest.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Your Occam's razor theory is a lazy man's approach to a problem. The fact is, Jacob, Joel did not kill himself. Bart killed him. Somehow.

Ellie points to the suitcase and boxes on the sofa bed.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Take Joel's stuff and get out of here, okay?

Jacob looks at the personal belongings Ellie has piled together, all that remains of Joel.

JACOB

(apologetically)

I want to leave things here until I head back to Boise. Is that okay? I can take it now, but I'm staying in a very small hotel room.

Ellie finger-combs her hair, then wipes away tears.

ELLIE

Leave it here. I'm sorry if I'm coming off like a bitch, but you're wrong. Perkins is wrong.

Ellie pauses, considering.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Are you going to talk to Perkins again?

JACOB

Do you have proof?

ELLIE

Just that Sweeney told me he did, and that he'd kill me if I didn't leave town.

JACOB

He actually said he'd kill you?

ELLIE

He said he'd do the same thing to me that he did to Joel. Clear enough, isn't it?

Joel shakes his head apologetically

JACOB

Sorry, even if you had that on tape it wouldn't be enough. Just a vague threat.

Ellie draws a shuddering breath.

ELLIE

Thanks for nothing, then. I need you to leave. I'm about to lose it and I can't do that in front of you.

Ellie watches Jacob walk down the drive. As she turns away from the window she sees Bart's car come in the drive. She quickly ducks below the window line.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Double-fuck.

A sharp rap in the window startles her.

BART (O.S.)
I saw you in there. I told you to
leave. Get the fuck out of there.

Ellie slides across the floor to her bedroom. She hears the front door slide open as she reaches the back door.

BART (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Where the fuck are you, bitch?

EXT. GUESTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ellie goes out the back door and the screen door slams shut. She runs across the gravel and around the corner and comes face to face with Bart.

Bart is flushed, and breathing heavily. Spittle builds up on the corners of his mouth.

BART
Got ya.

ELLIE
Shit.

Ellie starts to back up, pressing into a hedge, little thorns digging into her back.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Bart, just let me get the hell out
of here.

Bart grabs Ellie by the wrists.

BART
I think, Ellie, that you are going
to disappear.

ELLIE
I don't really feel like it Bart,
you creep.

Bart squeezes a bit tighter.

BART
There's be no point in you staying
here.

(MORE)

BART (CONT'D)

I am going to call every casting director, producer, director, agent, whoever in this fucking town and tell them I caught you -

Beat.

ELLIE

Caught me doing what, Bart? What could I have possibly done that you haven't already?

BART

It doesn't matter, really. It would take me at most an hour of phone calls to completely ruin you. And after you've lived in six months of obscurity I'll kill you, drop you off a cliff in Malibu maybe, and make it look like a suicide, too.

Ellie pulls against Bart's hands and as Bart pulls back, Ellie pushes. Bart drops to his ass.

Ellie looks at her options. She can't go back through the back door, Bart will head her off at the front door. If she tries to go over him, he'll grab her leg.

ELLIE

Sorry, pal.

Ellie steps hard on his groin and puts all her 115 pounds into it. She stomps twice, and as he curls in pain she jumps over him.

She runs into the guesthouse and grabs her and Jacob's phones.

She taunts him on the way out:

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Hurt much, mate?

Bart looks up at Ellie through watery eyes.

BART

You fucking bitch, I will ruin you.

ELLIE

Not as bad as I just ruined you.

BART

I know where you're staying. You are dead.

Bart rolls on to his knees and stands, shaky from the pain in his groin and the amount of booze in his system.

ELLIE

You've made too many shit movies,
Bart. You're repeating the bad
dialogue.

INT. ELLIE'S CAR, TOPANGA CANYON TO THE BEACH - EVENING

The sky has opened up, the promised storm finally hitting Los Angeles.

Ellie is travelling faster than she should be, given the state of the weather and the winding road she is on.

Her headphones are in and we hear Joel's voice as she wrestles her car around the bends, through the rain.

JOEL (V.O.)

What is this, Day 88? Yes. Eighty-fucking-eight. Friday. I'm fucking beat. It's been a week of ups and downs and on balance I'd say it was a positive. This diary is brought to you by the nude Joel. Please do not listen if you are under the age of eighteen or are easily offended by unfit, pasty-white bodies. I am in the tub. Hot as hell water, epsom salts and a bit of a bubble. Dad would shit himself, but it feels fan-fucking-tastic.

Ellie's breath catches. This recording is from Joel's last day alive.

The road goes through a hard hairpin and Ellie struggles to hold the line.

JOEL (V.O.)

Tonight off, big show tomorrow. My agent is a genius. His call this morning is going to put me on the map. Note to self: call him back and confirm the date. Things have been shifted and I'm going on the show. And that, my friends, is fucking awesome.

Knocking is heard in the background. Ellie starts, then realizes it's on the audio she's listening to.

JOEL (V.O.)

*Hang on a second, dear listeners,
there's been a disturbance in the
force.*

There's a CLUNK as the phone is put down. Splashing water and Joel's unintelligible voice in the distance. Ellie wrestles around another tight corner as the voices become clear again.

JOEL (V.O.)

*What are you doing here Bart? I'm
trying to chill. You're supposed to
give a day's notice before you come
over here.*

Water splashing as Joel gets back in the tub.

BART (V.O.)

*Joel, my friend, I'm not here as
your landlord. I'm here on a social
visit. I want to try and rekindle
that thing we had three or four
months ago. That was nice. I
enjoyed it. I think you enjoyed it.*

JOEL (V.O.)

*Not a chance, Bart. I like you,
sure, but I'm on a purification
kick right now and it's working for
me. No booze, no weed and no sex.
I'm on the top of my game. Don't
want to jinx it. But I'm flattered,
man. Really, I am.*

Ellie pulls a hard left onto the PCH. The audio silences and Ellie thumbs the volume up. After a few more seconds of silence:

BART (V.O.)

*So can I get you something to drink
while you're stewing in there? A
beer? Rum and Coke? A nice glass of
Pinot Noir?*

JOEL (V.O.)

*I told you man, I'm clean. There's
some grapefruit juice in the
fridge, if you're still offering.*

BART (V.O.)

That'll have to do, I guess.

Footsteps recede. Joel hums along to a show tune. Torrential rain is pounding on the Beetle's roof and Ellie has to turn the volume up louder.

BART (V.O.)

Here's your juice. Don't know how you drink this stuff. I have the smallest sip and my face turns inside out. You must take an hour to get through this glass.

JOEL (V.O.)

Nah. I'm used to it. I can take this glass in one swallow. Watch.

Ellie hears swallowing noises and a clink as the glass is put down.

JOEL (V.O.)

That tasted funny. Did you get the juice from the fridge?

BART (V.O.)

I did, my young friend. Added some of my own ingredients to it. You are mere minutes away from being voted "the one most willing to comply", although I'm be lying if I said I roofied juices on a regular basis. I prefer the fruity alcohol drinks. They mask the flavor better. You downed that pretty fast, big guy. You feeling the effect yet?

JOEL (V.O.)

Wha-? Whaddafuck you put in that?

BART (V.O.)

The almighty equalizer. Rohypnol. Don't worry young fella. We're going to have a fabulous time tonight and you're not going to remember a single thing.

JOEL (V.O.)

Bastard. Ahhh. Ah, fuck, what izzat?

Joel's words become more and more incomprehensible. He gasps for breath, then nothing.

Ellie pulls over to a small parking area on the side of the PCH and cries. She reaches to pull out the ear bud when she hears Sweeney talk.

BART (V.O.)

Joel. Joel?

(slap, slap.)

Joel, buddy, what the fuck? Oh my God. Holy shit the fucker's dead. Jesus, Jesus.

There is a scuffle of shoes then silence. Ellie pulls into the visitor's center at the Santa Monica Pier and gets out of the car. She still has the headphones plugged into her head. There is still silence

She walks over the pedestrian bridge to the pier. The wind and rain are pummeling the coast with a ferocity rarely seen.

Ellie puts her hands in her pockets and leans into the wind. Rain peppers her face and her long hair is whipped back.

Her reverie is interrupted by:

BART (V.O.)

Okay, so let's see. How much. Shit, I'm just going to pump the whole lot of it into him.

Ellie pushes the earbuds tight into her ears to combat the storm noise. She hears rustling, then:

BART (V.O.)

Okay that should do it. Easy come, easy go.

Ellie hears Bart chuckle and his footsteps recede. The recording goes silent. Ellie lifts the phone out of her pocket. The battery is dead.

ELLIE

Bart, you fucker, if it kills me you're going to pay for this.

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Bart gets out of his car and tucks a handgun in the waistband of his pants. He walks past Ellie's Beetle and heel-kicks the door.

BART

Where the fuck are you, bitch?

Bart squints in the rain and sees Ellie standing on the far end of the pier. He smiles and walks/limps into the rain.

As he approaches Ellie turns and holds out Jacob's phone.

ELLIE

You roofied him? What a douche move. And it fucking killed him.

Bart's smile slips a bit.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

He was recording his daily diary when you came in, idiot. I've got it all here. You're finished. Perkins gets this tomorrow and you're completely finished.

Bart looks around at the deserted pier and shakes his head.

BART.

I'm going to throw you into the ocean and be done with you. Not even an Australian could survive in that surf.

Ellie takes a step backwards and feels the cold metal railing press into her back.

ELLIE

Go for it. There are security cameras everywhere. Even with this poor visibility, your pasty white head would be recognizable. Bring it on, doucheberg, throw me over if you can. Maybe those cameras are off. Maybe today is your lucky day.

Bart looks up at the cameras, then back at the parking lot, peering through the rain.

Ellie takes advantage of his inattention and starts to slide along the rails away from him.

Bart skips ahead of her.

BART

Nuh-uh. Where do you think you're going? We're not finished.

Bart wrenches Joel's phone from Ellie's hand. It slips from his hand and clatters across the pier. They both dive for it, ending up on their knees, in the rain.

Bart gets a grip on the phone and tries to push her away.

Ellie grunts and digs her nails into the back of Bart's hand.

ELLIE

Fuck off and let go, asshole.

Bart swings a fist and catches Ellie on the jaw, dropping her hard. Bart grabs the phone and looks down on Ellie.

Rain pelts her face, a deluge almost as strong as a bucket of water.

BART

Not that tough now, are you?

Bart pokes her in the ribs with his toe. He holds up the phone.

BART (CONT'D)

Is this your precious evidence?

Ellie grabs the railing and pulls herself to her feet, holding her jaw and wiping the water off of her face.

ELLIE

What a big man, hitting a woman.

Ellie lunges for the phone and Bart slips, falling over. Ellie lands on top of him, kneeling him in the groin as she falls.

The phone drops to the deck as he curls up in pain. Ellie grabs the phone and struggles to her feet.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

This is going to Perkins first thing in the morning, then I'm finding an apartment near the beach and killing this town. So fuck you and your fucking fat ass.

Ellie takes a final kick at him, landing a toe in his ribs, hard.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Get lost, Sweeney. You fucked up one time too many.

Bart winces, looks up at Ellie and smiles.

BART

Surprise.

Bart sweeps both of Ellie's legs out from under her. The phone falls to the deck again and she lands on her ass, the wind knocked out of her.

Sweeney rolls to his knees, takes a few deep breaths, retrieves the phone and leans against the railing, half doubled over.

BART (CONT'D)

You've hit me in the nuts so many times in the past few days that I think I should get a free shot at your ovaries.

Bart coughs and spits a bunch of phlegm at her feet.

BART (CONT'D)

Oh how I'd dearly love to drown you right now. You've caused me more problems than I thought one girl could possibly cause. If those cameras weren't there -

Ellie pulls herself up with help from the railings again.

ELLIE

What? You think you could actually take me? I fought off surfers tougher than you on a regular basis. You're not getting off this pier with that phone, if I have to break every bone in your body. Now give me the phone.

Bart leans in close, smiles and opens his mouth to make some witty retort and Ellie slams him in the jaw with her elbow.

She follows up with a punch to the eye, her small bony fist connecting just under the eye socket.

Bart snarls and grabs Ellie by the throat and pushes her up against a light standard.

BART

Jesus, you're thick.

A ringing phone interrupts Bart. He continues to squeeze Ellie against the light pole and stuffs Joel's phone in his pocket and takes out his own.

BART (CONT'D)

Who is it?

MARTY

(filtered)

Can you get your boys to my place
in, say, about an hour? I want to
talk over this with Tom and Colin.

Bart smiles and squeezes Ellie's neck a little harder and
presses his phone hard to his head.

BART

Hell yes. I'll call them now. Text
me your address and I'll be there
in an hour or so. I'm out in this
mess so I have to clean up first,
but no problem.

Bart stows his phone and takes out Joel's. He releases Ellie
and watches her slide to the ground. He holds Joel's phone
between his thumb and middle finger.

BART (CONT'D)

This is all you got?

Bart flips the phone in his hand.

BART (CONT'D)

So, problem solved the easy way.

Bart leans back and throws the phone as far as he can into
the Pacific.

BART (CONT'D)

There goes your fucking evidence.
Now fuck off. I've got shit I've
got to do.

Ellie watches him walk away from her. She grits her teeth,
rolls to her feet and walks back to her car.

ELLIE

Not that easy, asshole.

INT. ELLIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Ellie pulls a towel from the back seat and attempts to dry
herself. The windows are fogged up. She starts the car and
cranks the heat.

She fishes a business card from her wallet, plugs her phone
into the charger and calls Jacob

JACOB SAMPSON

(filtered)

Is this Ellie?

ELLIE
Where are you staying?

JACOB
(filtered)
A little motor Inn on Sepulveda.

ELLIE
Text me the address, okay? I need
to see you.

Ellie hangs up, looks at the incoming message and pulls out of the parking lot, wheels skidding on the wet pavement.

INT. JACOB'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jacob holds the door open and lets a damp, dishevelled Ellie in.

JACOB
Jesus. What the hell happened to
you?

ELLIE
Bart Sweeney did.

JACOB
Come in, come in. You need dry
clothes.

ELLIE
I need to see your brother's stuff.
Do you have it?

JACOB
Still in the guesthouse.

Ellie bites the inside of her lip.

ELLIE
Shit.

JACOB
What in the heck is going on?

ELLIE
I need to get to Joel's stuff. And
if you can use your cop contacts, I
need to talk to Perkins tomorrow
morning. I don't think he wants to
talk to me any more.

Jacob grabs towels from the bathroom.

JACOB

Wrap these around you and I'll take your clothes to the motel laundry.

ELLIE

No, no. I need to sneak into the guesthouse. Again. This ends tomorrow. I've got to get to Joel's laptop before Sweeney does.

JACOB

I'm going with.

ELLIE

Not going to argue.

INT. BART'S CAR, DRIVING FAST - NIGHT

Bart sluices through the rain, wipers hammering against the rain double-time. He glances at his watch. Time is ticking.

BART

Fuck, fuck, fuckity fuck.

He pokes the phone button on his dash.

BART (CONT'D)

"Call Steve Bond".

The call goes through. Bart needs to turn the volume all the way up to counter the rain pounding on his soft-top roof.

STEVE

(filtered)

Bond here. What's up, Bart? I'm almost out the door.

BART

I'm going to be about thirty minutes late. Can't avoid it. Had a flat and got muddy and wet in this weather. Why is it we only get flats in crappy -

STEVE

(filtered)

Yeah, yeah. I'll cover for you. Don't fuck this up for us.

Steve terminates the call and Bart wrenches the wheel onto his street, almost hitting a fire hydrant.

Bart pulls into his driveway and jumps out makes a dash to the house.

Clothes drop on the floor and he grabs a tin on his dresser and pops out a couple of pills. Dry swallows and steps into the shower, steam enveloping the room.

EXT. BART'S STREET, IN FRONT OF HIS HOUSE - NIGHT

Jacob's rental coasts to a stop in front of the house. Ellie sees Bart's car in the drive and nudges Jacob.

ELLIE
The asshole is here.

Jacob slams open the car door.

JACOB
Going to have a word.

Ellie reaches across the seat and grabs at his shirt.

ELLIE
No, don't. It's a waste of time. My idea is better. He won't see us in this weather. We sneak in and out and he's none the wiser.

Jacob pauses, rain pelting his face.

JACOB
Fine. Let's do this.

INT. GUEST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ellie slides the door closed and stops, taking stock.

ELLIE
No lights.

Jacob takes a step forward and bangs his shin into a chair.

JACOB
Shit.

ELLIE
Stay still. I know what I'm getting.

Ellie steps carefully though the dimly lit room, grabs her laptop, Joel's laptop and runs her hand along the surfboard.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Jacob?

JACOB
Yeah?

ELLIE

This board. You won't really have any need for it in Boise, will you?

Ellie hears Jacob chuckle.

JACOB

No. Didn't even know it was his. Thought it was yours. He doesn't strike me as a surfer type. Didn't.

ELLIE

He tried it once. Ate a ton of sand. We came home after and laughed ourselves silly.

JACOB

You keep it. Something to remember him by. Anything else? We need to get going before we're caught.

ELLIE

In my room. Some clothes and stuff. I'm going to have to turn on a light back there, though.

INT. BART'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bart has a towel wrapped around his waist and a shirt on the ironing board. A joint is lit and in one hand. He's waiting for the iron to heat up when a light turns on in the guesthouse.

BART

What the fuck?

Bart grabs his cordless phone and is in the process of dialling 9-1-1 when the light goes out and he sees Ellie and - Joel?

BART (CONT'D)

Fuck, no. Can't be.

Bart looks at the joint and takes another drag and peers out the window. Ellie has just closed the door and she's with somebody.

Bart opens the kitchen door and steps onto his back deck, hidden in shadows. He can hear them talking.

ELLIE

Thanks for letting me have the board.

JACOB

No prob. Like you said. Can't use it in Boise. Shit, this rain is going to ruin everything.

Ellie and Jacob run down the drive and out of earshot. The last thing Bart hears is:

ELLIE

Thanks for the help. And thanks for tomorrow morning in advance.

Bart looks at the joint one more time.

BART

How old is this weed? I fucking killed him. I know I fucking killed him.

Bart looks at his watch.

BART (CONT'D)

Jesus I'm running out of time.

EXT. MARTY'S MALIBU CLIFF-SIDE HOUSE - FRONT STEP - NIGHT

The rain has stopped and the night sky is starting to clear. Bart, looking a little ragged, approaches the door and raises his hand to knock.

The door opens and TOM HANKS is standing there.

TOM

My God, man, what the hell happened to your face? Marty, there's some guy here, for this here meeting I'm assuming, who looks like he was on the receiving of a serious mugging. Come in, come in.

Bart, stunned, follows him into the house. He looks around, soaking in the opulence. Tom touches him on his sleeve to get his attention.

TOM (CONT'D)

Can I get you a drink? Marty's paying.

Marty joins and takes his guests out to the pool deck to watch the storm die out over the Pacific. George corners Bart away from the rest of the gathering.

GEORGE

What the hell, man? Looks like you went a couple of rounds with Mickey Rourke.

BART

What? Why is everybody looking at me like I've got a third eye?

George grabs him by the arm and drags him to a hallway mirror.

GEORGE

Look at yourself.

Bart looks in the mirror at the face of a man who has been elbowed to the jaw and punched in the eye.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And what the fuck is with your hand?

Bart looks at the deep scratch marks.

BART

Shit. Jesus. They must think I'm some sort of thug. Fuck.

GEORGE

So, pal, what happened? You kill anybody?

BART

Hell no. Like Tom said. I was, uh, mugged this afternoon. Change the subject.

Tom jumps at the opening, welcome for the change of subject.

TOM

Look, guys, Colin and I read the script. Could be tightened, I think, and the title is god-awful. I'm tempted to put my hand up for the scientist role myself, but I think I'm a generation too old. I'm in like Flynn if we get the right female lead. Any ideas on that? Steve? You're the casting director in the room. You must have some ideas for that part.

Tom looks at the assembled guests.

TOM (CONT'D)

Come on. You've talked about this already, right? This isn't a new train of thought for you?

Steve smiles, glances at Bart and speaks up.

STEVE

There's an Australian actress that I've been bumping into a lot lately. She's very capable, and she's tall so she can go head to head with your son. I've heard she's pretty physical, so some of her stunts can be done full face.

Steve glances at Bart, and winks.

STEVE (CONT'D)

A girl named Ellie Bourke. I don't know if you've seen her. She was in one of Bart's movies, 'Beast of Bondi', an Aussie horror flick. Did some commercials and some guest spots, but other than that a bit below the radar.

Bart croaks. He wipes sweat off his lip with a trembling hand. Tom looks at Bart.

TOM

So you've approached her to do this project?

BART

Not really. She's having a bit of a hard time. Her roommate just committed suicide. Heroin overdose. She's spinning out of control right now. If we were putting this together a month ago, or maybe six months from now, I'd be agreeing with Steve. Excellent choice.

Bart swallows.

BART (CONT'D)

Right now, though, I don't know. I think she would be too much risk for the picture.

TOM

Well I trust Steve. One of the best in this crazy business.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

If he likes her, I'd like to meet her. Make an assessment myself. Can you set that up in the next couple of days? I'll make time. Should only need fifteen minutes.

Steve smiles.

STEVE

No problem. I'll call her first thing in the morning. You okay Bart?

Bart smiles and swallows.

BART

Sure. Yeah. No problem.

INT. JACOB'S MOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Jacob bundles the blankets from the sofa and throws them back in a cupboard, unfolded.

Ellie walks out of the bathroom, showered, hair in a pony-tail, looking 100% better than the previous night.

ELLIE

You and Joel are so much alike. I think he had a folding allergy. Did you get thumb drives?

Jacob reaches into a small Walmart bag and pulls out two.

JACOB

4 gig should be big enough, right?

ELLIE

Plenty.

Ellie opens Joel's laptop and uses the finder program to transfer a group of audio files to one of the drives.

She unplugs it and hands it to Jacob.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

This is almost three months of daily audio diaries that Joel kept. Find a nice quiet place and listen to them. Your brother was a great kid.

Jacob holds it in the palm of his hand, looking at it.

JACOB

I don't think I'll be able to
listen to it.

Ellie closes his hand around the thumb drive.

ELLIE

Listen to it. I guarantee you that
you'll cry and you'll laugh, and
you'll laugh while you're crying
and it is the most important thing
you have to do to remember your
brother.

She looks intently into his eyes.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

And make sure your parents listen
to it to.

Ellie plugs the second drive into the laptop and drags a
single file to it.

Her phone rings as she pockets the drive.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Ellie here.

STEVE

(filtered)

I have, for you, the audition of a
lifetime. Need you to be in Malibu
by 11:00.

ELLIE

Good morning to you, Steve. You're
not my agent though. He's going to
have a problem with this.

STEVE

(filtered)

Call him, fire him, and your new
agent will be at the meeting. No
problems then, right?

Ellie looks at the time on the laptop. 10:05 a.m.

ELLIE

Except I can't get to Malibu by
11:00. There'll be other auditions
of a lifetime, though. Thanks for
thinking of me.

STEVE
 (filtered)
 Not like this, there won't

Ellie listens to silence on the line for a couple of seconds.

ELLIE
 Hello?

STEVE
 (filtered)
 I can move it to 1:00. Trust me,
 this you don't want to miss. Makes
 that "Modern Family" part look like
 peanuts.

ELLIE
 Text me the address. I'll do my
 best to be there, but only because
 you've been so helpful.

Ellie slides the phone in her pocket. And looks at Jacob.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
 To Perkins, if you're ready.

INT. DEVONSHIRE POLICE STATION FOYER

Jacob and Ellie are doing a full court press on Perkins.
 Ellie is holding the thumb drive like a weapon.

ELLIE
 I know you still believe this is a
 suicide, but there is solid,
 incontrovertible proof on this
 thing that it wasn't. He was
 killed. Murdered.

PERKINS
 I don't know where that came from.
 There's a chain of evidence problem
 here.

Jacob digs out his wallet and shows Perkins his Boise P.D.
 identification.

JACOB
 I'm a detective in the Boise PD.
 I'll sign an affidavit if
 necessary. The original source
 material was thrown by the killer
 into the ocean last night during
 the storm.

(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)

But the audio had been automatically synced to my brother's laptop. This is a true copy.

Ellie shoves the drive into Perkins' hand.

ELLIE

Do the right thing.

Stanfield walks into the foyer and takes the drive from Perkins' hand.

STANFIELD

We will. Let us work on it, okay? We aren't trying to cover anything up. We've got your contact info. I'll give you a call later today with an update.

Ellie is mollified, somewhat. She lets Jacob escort her out of the station.

JACOB

I'll keep pressing them, okay? Cop to cop.

ELLIE

Thanks.

EXT. SECURITY GATES AT MARTY'S MALUBU HOUSE - LATER

Ellie leans out her car window and presses the buzzer at the Gate.

ELLIE

Ellie Bourke here. I'm meeting Steve Bond.

The gate slowly swings open. Ellie pulls into the very large yard and parks beside cars, some of which were worth at least a hundred times her Beetle.

The front door opens as she walks up the steps. Steve Bond stands there with a smile on his tanned face, pearly whites blinding.

STEVE

Really great you could show, Ellie. Come on in.

INT. MARTY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ellie looks around the foyer and through the house to the patio doors and the view of the Pacific.

ELLIE

This is spectacular, Steve. It's out of this world.

STEVE

Come on out to the pool. There are some people I want you to meet. One of them you already know.

ELLIE

Who's that?

STEVE

Bart Sweeney. He's directing this project and while he initially had reservations about you being in the picture, he's come around.

Ellie stops.

ELLIE

No way. Count me out. I don't care if it's the next 'Citizen Kane', if he's in it, I'm not.

STEVE

What's going on between you two? He was pretty much the same way.

ELLIE

Some other time. I'll let you know privately, not around whoever else is out on that patio. Doesn't really matter who it is.

STEVE

Look, Ellie, huge favor, okay?

Steve points out to the pool deck.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Colin Hanks, Tom Hanks, an agent for the stars and some assorted lawyers are out there. Forget about Bart. I'm kind of in agreement with you. I can understand if you've got hesitations working with him. Not sure why you do, but you no doubt have good reason.

Steve takes a deep breath.

STEVE (CONT'D)

But be honest with yourself: A meeting with the Hanks and their agent doesn't come by every day. Take advantage of this opportunity. Plus, I'll look like a complete idiot if I went back there without you. If you can't do it for yourself, at least do it for me.

Ellie takes a couple of deep breaths through her nose and looks at Steve.

ELLIE

Fine. I'll go out there for you, but I'm not talking to Bart and I'm not going to pretend I like him. We're clear with that, right?

STEVE

Right-o. Let's go do this.

Ellie follows Steve to the pool deck, shaking out her arms to release tension. She shakes hands with the father and son, the super agent Marty and the two lawyers.

Bart stands and holds out his hand and Ellie ignores him.

MARTY

Thanks for stopping by, Ellie. Has Steve told you anything about this project?

ELLIE

Rough plot outline, but other than that he's been pretty mum about it all. Kind of mysterious.

Marty looks at Bart, at Ellie and then at Steve.

MARTY

Steve, isn't NPH supposed to be here too? We want to make sure the chemistry is right.

STEVE

He's tied up with his kids. Might be by later. He's in though. Loves the idea.

ELLIE

NPH? NP-Dr. Horrible-H? He's in this?

Ellie looks at Tom and Colin.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

So what parts do you two play?

TOM

Oh, I'm strictly behind the scenes on this one. I've got a dozen things in production, pre-production, development. You know how it is. Want to ride this wave as long as I can.

COLIN

I'm playing Callum, the alien vampire. You know, that sounds funny when I say it out loud. The scientist will be owned by NPH. Really looking forward to working across from him. Love what he does.

ELLIE

Cool. Sounds like it's going to be a fun movie. Not sure what I'm here for, though. Is there a part in it for me? Usually my sack of shit agent calls me almost too late for an audition and I go through the cattle call like everyone else. What's different here?

STEVE

Okay, first, did you fire him? Your agent?

ELLIE

Yeah, like you said. Look, I'm pretty slow some days. Oblivious is more like it. I'm still not getting what's going on here.

STEVE

Marty, what do you think?

MARTY

I think it's pretty clear. Colin?

COLIN

Definitely. Pops?

TOM

Up to you, son. If my opinion counted for anything, mind you, I'd say yes.

Ellie puts her hand up, like in grade school.

ELLIE

Excuse me, guys, can you clear something up for me? What in the hell are you talking about?

Tom laughs.

TOM

You really haven't told her anything, have you?

Tom leans forward and puts his arms on his knees.

TOM (CONT'D)

The third in the love triangle.

He points at Ellie.

TOM (CONT'D)

You. We wanted an unknown. Relatively unknown. You come with great recommendations. Steve here tells us that you're very physical.

ELLIE

I'm a klutz.

TOM

Be that as it may. You're young, strong, tall, beautiful. Everything we're looking for.

STEVE

Ellie, we're offering you a role in a movie opposite Colin Hanks and Neil Patrick Harris. The budget is a couple hundred million dollars. Tom is backing this. The part is yours if you want it. Actually, we really want you to take the part.

Ellie looks at Bart.

ELLIE

Is he directing?

Bart clears his throat.

BART

Director and writer. Let's bury the hatchet, Ellie. The past is the past. This is a phenomenal opportunity for you.

ELLIE

I don't care. I can't work with you. Steve, can you show me out? I really appreciate the offer guys, and I'm sure you're going to make a fantastic movie, but there's no way in hell that I'm going to work with this guy attached to it.

She jabs a finger in Bart's direction.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

And if you knew what this guy did, well, you wouldn't work with him either.

Ellie stands and waits for Steve to show her the way to the front door.

Marty and the father/son team confer about something, then Marty comes and joins Ellie and Steve on the walk out.

MARTY

What is it Ellie? You're taking a pretty strong stand. Did Bart try to cop a feel? Shit like that happens.

ELLIE

I would have busted his hand. I'd tell you, but he'd deny it, and we'd get into a he said/she said thing that would probably get me sued for slander or defamation. I can never keep the two straight.

MARTY

Between us. Out of earshot of him. In confidence. What did he do?

Ellie takes a deep breath.

ELLIE

Okay, Bart killed my roommate by giving him too much Rohypnol, then tried to cover it up by shooting him full of heroin. Then he tried to kill me last night.

MARTY

Are you freaking serious?

Marty stops the procession to his front door.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Can you come back and tell the rest of the people that? It has bearing, I think, on what we're trying to do. Just a bit, I think.

ELLIE

It won't end up good. I appreciate the offer you guys made, but I think I'll stay below that radar for a little while longer.

Ellie turns to head back to the front door when a SECURITY GUY jogs up.

SECURITY GUY

Marty, the cops are here with an arrest warrant.

MARTY

For me? What the hell?

SECURITY GUY

No, it's for one of your guests. Should I let them in?

MARTY

Hell yes. They're big, and they have guns. Send them back to the pool deck.

(to Ellie)

Hang around, okay?

Marty strides with purpose back to the cliff side of the house. Ellie almost jogging to keep up.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, I think we've found a solution to our problem.

(to Bart)

You've signed your contract, right?

BART

Yesterday. Very generous. Thank you.

Marty turns to one of the lawyers.

MARTY

Sven, can you read the morals clause of that contract?'

A short, extremely blond lawyer flips to a section in the contract and clears his throat.

SVEN

This contract will become null and void, and the intellectual property will remain with the licensee in the event that a) the licensor, Mr. Sweeney, is charged with an intentional violation of any law, including any serious violation which may result in the licensee being found partially or wholly liable for Mr. Sweeney's actions, b) the licensor acts in a way that is prejudicial to the interests of the licensee, c) the licensor -

MARTY

That's good enough, Sven. Point A covers it, and B fills any potential gaps.

(to Bart)

Right Bart?

BART

What did she tell you? It's all bullshit.

(to Steve)

I warned you she was instable. I fucking warned you.

Tom grins and stands.

TOM

It's "unstable", Bart. Marty, you always throw the best parties. Can you tell me, the executive producer of this here flick, what in the hell is going on?

Before Marty has a chance to answer the security guy walks on to the deck with four policemen, including Constable Perkins.

Perkins approaches Bart.

PERKINS

Mr. Sweeney? I'm arresting you for the murder of Joel Sampson. You have the right to remain silent.

(MORE)

PERKINS (CONT'D)
Anything you say may be used
against you in a court of law.

Sweeney sputters like an old car does on cold mornings. He finally gets words out after he is Mirandized.

BART
You've got no proof. It's her word
against mine. Who'd believe her
over me?

Both Tom and Colin's hands go up in unison.

BART (CONT'D)
It was a fucking accident. It
wasn't supposed to happen. Who ever
died from roofies?

PERKINS
Mr. Sweeney, I said you have the
right to remain silent. I suggest
you exercise that right.

BART
I'm serious. It was -

PERKINS
Rohypnol mixed with grapefruit
juice is particularly toxic. The
juice magnifies the effect. Found
it in the autopsy.

Bart licks his lips.

BART
You've got nothing. I threw the
recording in the ocean.

ELLIE
I had a copy, ass-hat. I hope you
rot in hell.

Bart lunges across the patio and tries to grab Ellie by the throat. Again. Ellie backpedals as Steve and Colin jump in and grab Bart before Perkins can react.

Perkins and two of his colleagues bundle the foaming, frantic Bart Sweeney out the front of the house.

Marty takes Ellie gently by the arm.

MARTY
Could you reconsider our offer,
Miss Bourke?

ELLIE
Did what happen just happen?

Steve nods.

STEVE
Sweeney is out of the picture. Did he really kill Joel? I liked that kid. He made me laugh.

Ellie takes a deep breath.

ELLIE
If I understood that morals clause, if he fucks up you get to fire him and keep the story, right?

SVEN
That about sums it up.

ELLIE
So who's going to direct?
(to Tom)
You? I liked "That Thing You Do". I know you can direct.

TOM
Remember? A dozen projects lined up? I'd love to, but I'm kind of busy.

COLIN
Two-dozen, dad. Quit hiding it under a bushel.
(to Marty)
What's Favreau doing? This is the kind of thing he likes. Or is he doing another Marvel project?

MARTY
I'll check with him. And if it's not him there are a dozen good directors around the track that we can use. So, Ellie, speak now or forever regret your decision.

Ellie nods. Smiles so hard she is in danger of cracking her face.

ELLIE
Hell yeah. Where do I sign?

FADE OUT.