

ABSTRACT

The Monday Girls

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Downtown Chicago, 1985: a young girl from a broken home loses her identity and falls in love with rock 'n' roll. This thesis uses the medium of scriptwriting to explore how coming-of-age stories grapple with identity, purpose and fear. In the places where our narratives, both written and unwritten, intertwine, we as humans must seek to comprehend, empathize, and understand. Anne Lamott, in her memoir *Bird by Bird*, says of writing, "...this business of becoming conscious...is ultimately about asking yourself, how alive am I willing to be?" Part music homage, part coming-of-age farewell, this thesis has evolved over multiple drafts into an exploration of how we honor the things we deeply love. As poet Tracy K. Smith says, in her poem "The Largeness We Can't See," *"All we live blind to grows into the ground. And all we live blind to leans its deathless heft to our ears and sings."* This intersection of the seen and the unseen form our roots, our backbone. The richest place, I believe, where stories grow.

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THE MONDAY GIRLS

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By
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	pp. iii - iv
Script	pp. 01 - 109
Bibliography	pp. 110 - 111

INTRODUCTION

Inspiration, Origin & Writing Process

Sometimes writers write about a world since passed; others, a world that is yet to be awakened. Those skilled enough manage to capture between the pages a slice of life that is both intimately present and aching receding. Both past and present ever slide backward, as memory does, but remain powerful enough to strike any given reader at any given time with their familiar grace.

This thesis is not a book, but it is a smaller entity – a story, encapsulated in the form of a script. While it has not yet sunk its roots deep enough into habitation to become a strong story, a lasting story, it is one that I hope achieves at least in part its goals: to serve as a love letter to music; to comfort others who feel alone or misunderstood; and to deal effectively with the difficult things that happen as we grow up, as our perspective of those things evolves.

Inspiration

Laurie Halse Anderson, Young Adult author of *Speak*, says of writing that it "...can make us feel vulnerable. It can dredge up all kinds of scary and negative emotions. That's why we so often waste our precious writing time - we are afraid." As this story evolved over two years – and I struggled to understand why I was so drawn to Sleater, my main character's, crisis of identity – I found myself drawn in again to young adult literature and the movies I fell in love with as a teen. I believed in it so firmly as a cornerstone for how we understand life.

To me, coming-of-age stories can be literature written exclusively for teenagers, or literature we encounter as teenagers – stories that shape our human experience as we grow. These are bridge-builders. These are educators. These are “lies that tells us true things,” in the words of Neil Gaiman. These are, in short, a small piece of magic.

Origin of the story

This script came about almost on accident, all though its stem existed long before it became a draft. As I grew up, my constant search for an identity, a place to “fit,” was an attempt to understand the world I found myself in where I felt I didn’t belong. Rock ‘n’ roll was a love letter to my soul: *you are welcome here*. There are other, bigger lifesavers – but I believe music is a small piece of the healing process. That love showed up in the character of Sleater, a young girl who finds herself at a crossroads after a summer of personal loss and brokenness. Music is the funnel through which she sees the world anew. It’s important to her, because it’s the first thing she attaches herself to where she “belongs.” The script also wrestles with how we assume the identities of the things we love. For Sleater, it’s being considered a “poser,” because true rock ‘n’ roll is much more than a cultural ideal or a slogan on a t-shirt. Instead of offering a concrete solution to this, I put forward the idea: what if we’re all just “posers?” Standing in for our ideal of The Thing? This allowed me to experiment with ambiguity in how the other characters are viewed, and in turn view one another.

Over the course of the next three drafts, the story became focused not only on Sleater’s story but also her relationship with her sister, her family and her

experience of being “unworthy” when worthiness has been handed to her. Hers is the long road to self-acceptance. This process is often painful. But complex, flawed, or conventionally “different” heroines have always interested me. Such characters grapple with both standing outside society’s definition of “acceptable,” and the freedom that accompanies it with the real rejection and isolation of not fulfilling an preconceived norm. Sleater’s process through understanding her own purpose and decisions is, as Anne Lamott, in her memoir *Bird by Bird*, says, “...ultimately about asking yourself, how alive am I willing to be?” Her choices continue to push her towards confronting her fear.

Writing Process.

When I decided to turn THE MONDAY GIRLS into a script, versus a traditional narrative, I also looked to my favorite coming-of-age movies, which were funny, campy, nostalgic, comforting and touching – all things I wanted to infuse in Sleater’s story. From *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, I tried to absorb the gravity and internal conflict the main character, Charlie, undergoes, as he tries to deal with both abuse and the suicide of his best friend. I knew I wanted a character who displayed similar resilience, yet a naivete about growing up. To better understand the culture of rock ‘n’ roll (as it translated to film) and skateboarding, I turned to *The Runaways*; *Ladies & Gentlemen*, *The Fabulous Stains*; *Almost Famous*; *Empire Records*; and *Lords of Dogtown*. From John Hughes’ iconic teen movies, I took a grain of humor and the often-simple perspective of one event in a teenager’s life – such as a school dance or a test –

and translated that to a moment of growth. I researched fanzines of the punk scene (UK and US) and read Lisa Robinson's *There Goes Gravity*, a memoir dealing with her time as a rock journalist on the road with some of the most influential bands of the seventies heyday. Also helpful were Blacklist interviews with Scott Neustadter and Michael H. Weber (of *The Fault in Our Stars*, *The Spectacular Now*) – on their adaption of *The Spectacular Now* and the “gravity” of the script, they said: “...we were trying for something a little different. We didn’t want to shy away from the emotional complexity of being a teenager.” This resonated with my goals for Sleater and her friends – I wanted something outside the traditional coming-of-age narrative, dealing with the love-distance-frustration relationship with her younger sister and the hard things in their lives (divorce, substance abuse, identity) written in a way that could both empathize and examine our blind spots.

Coming-of-age stories are a special, powerful kind of story, because they grapple with traditional questions of identity, purpose and fear through the heightened prism of adolescent newness. The intersection of all that is seen, as a young adult, and all that is unseen – just beyond our grasp – forms the backbone of these narratives, the unspoken current humming of what has been determined and, what is yet to come. I believe these are the richest places where stories grow. As Joan Didion says, “We tell ourselves stories in order to live.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO BAR - 1986 - NIGHT

A downtrodden hole-in-the-wall bathroom. Loud and overcrowded. Smoke and hairspray thick in the air. Stall doors banging open and closed; someone's throwing up, three down from the sink.

Leaning into the mirror is SLEATER, 18, barefaced, with a poorly done pixie haircut. This close, her lips are cracked open. Her uneven breathing is to her the roar of an airplane engine.

The woman beside her finishes applying red lipstick. Off Sleater's look - she holds out the tube.

The lipstick might as well be BLOOD-RED. Sleater is fascinated. But instead of accepting it, she shakes her head. No way. Not me.

INT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO BAR - NIGHT

Lights flash chaos against the walls of a cramped, dirty venue. Ragged punk music pounds through the air. Bodies thrash back and forth, shoulders bumping, ankles smacking.

Beer bottles, empty glasses, and stains shatter across the floor and bar. Screaming, laughter, whistling and cheering split the air.

Sleater, heading from the direction of the bathroom, joins a group of GIRLS at the back of the crowd. They're Bright Young Things getting jostled into the dancing mass of fans near the stage.

Looking worried - Sleater links arms with the youngest-looking girl, a BRUNETTE, around 14.

On a narrow stage above the crowd in front of them, an all-female rock band is in the middle of a song.

JEZEBEL JACKSON, a mid-30s rocker with spiky black hair, draws her thumb across her throat and waves her hands above her head.

The music screeches to a halt. Her bandmates pause, mid-motion.

Jezebel drops her guitar against her waist and cups the microphone in the palms of her hands.

Jezebel leans in to the mic. Locks eyes with Sleater standing in the crowd below.

She takes a deep breath...

And THE LIGHTS GO BLACK.

SUPER TITLE: Three months earlier...

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

We follow the wheels of one skateboard beneath a pair of torn-up Vans down a street. The sound of another skateboard coming up behind...

SLEATER'S POV

This neighborhood used to be middle-class suburbia - Victorian houses line the cracked sidewalks - but everything has fallen into disrepair.

SLEATER, 18, curvy, barely holding herself together, stops in front of a neat brown house. The paint is peeling but it looks tidy, well-kept. A station wagon sits in the driveway.

Her friend KAMERON, female, African-American, cool but not in an obvious way, wearing a Mets cap, skates past her and continues down the street.

KAMERON

Catch ya this weekend!

Sleater waves. She hops off the skateboard, pops it up with her heel, and jogs up the front steps.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

A rundown suburban 80s dream: flowered wallpaper and carved wood. Narrow ceilings. Black & white photos on the walls. A peek into the LIVING ROOM, where a boxy TV rests in front of a powder blue sofa.

MOTHER(O.S.)

Sleater! You just get in?

Her voice drifts down from upstairs. Sleater climbs the first steps and hollers up.

SLEATER

Yeah, mom! I'm back.

The door to the LIVING ROOM is cracked. "General Hospital" hums across the television screen. From behind the couch we see a velour-clad shoulder, hear the CRACK and HISS of a lighter. Cigarette smoke drifts up to the ceiling.

In the living room, her GRANDMOTHER sits adjacent to the television. She's wearing house slippers. Magazine open on her lap.

GRANDMOTHER
What in the world are you doing,
Tracy? Give the man his medicine -

SLEATER
Excuse me?

CHERISH (O.S.)
I'm *trying* to work in here!

KITCHEN

Sleater walks into the kitchen, past white Formica countertops and a small table. Dirty dishes fill the sink.

SLEATER
Working, or writing love songs?

Sleater grins and props her skateboard in the corner. Her younger sister, CHERISH, freshman in high school, glasses pushed up in her hair, is scribbling at the kitchen table. A guitar lies abandoned beside her.

CHERISH
Do you wanna try this?

SLEATER
Nah, looks dangerous.

CHERISH
I'm concentrating.

Sleater takes a seat on the counter.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
Where'd you put my record? I know
you took it.

SLEATER
I have no idea what you're talking
about.

CHERISH
MOM! Sleater's been stealing my
stuff again!

Their MOTHER, at the door. Mid-40s, Irish nose, the look of a woman who has had a lot taken from her in life.

She's still in her suit from work, but she's barefoot. She crosses her arms.

MOTHER
What's the problem?

SLEATER
Physics make her grumpy.

CHERISH
Sucks to be the cheerleader who
can't even read.

SLEATER
Sucks to be doing homework on your
last day of break. I read Plath...

CHERISH
Not again with the Plath...

SLEATER
(quoting)
I shut my eyes and all the world
drops dead; I lift my eyes and all
is born again.

MOTHER
Your grandmother's trying to watch
her favorite soap.

Sleater slides off the counter.

SLEATER
(yells)
Sorry, Gran!

She angles her index finger at Cherish's open book.

SLEATER (CONT'D)
Don't lose your place. Oh, and -
happy first day of school.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

A PRINCIPAL in a rumpled brown suit, mid-60s, stands in the middle of the stage behind a podium, opening the first day of school assembly to an auditorium filled with bored teenagers.

Cherish sits in the balcony with the other freshmen. Jittery with first-day nerves.

She glances down her row. No one else is paying attention to the stage - except one boy, REVANT, who leans forward, hands on his knees, an expression of polite disinterest on his face.

Cherish looks a second longer than she should. Revant turns his head in her direction and she snaps her attention back to the stage. Cheeks going red.

PRINCIPAL

Now, I'm pleased to introduce last
year's student body president,
Sleater Simms.

Sleater steps out on stage from the wings to weak applause.

She joins the principal at the podium.

She's barefaced, hair flat and loose to her elbows, wearing men's jeans. A sweet, naive smile on her face. Her eyes look weary.

There's a general hum of disbelief.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

Oh my god, what happened to her?

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is chaos. A minefield for freshmen.

Sleater makes her way down the hall past a sea of inquisitive faces and stifled whispers. She ducks around a corner into the...

WOMEN'S BATHROOM

...where her friends, SHARON, COURTNEY and OLIVIA, lean over a cramped counter and sinks. They're not flawless, but they're definitely "in" - high hair, bright makeup, wearing those frilly little socks with their Keds.

Girls cluster in all corners, banging stall doors open and shut, flushing toilets, spraying hair, tweezing eyebrows, fixing socks and jewelry.

Olivia is busy admiring her reflection.

COURTNEY

Shit, how are you so tan?

OLIVIA
Six weeks in Malibu -

Olivia catches sight of Sleater in the glass.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Sleater, babe! Get on over here!

Holding her books loose at her side, Sleater joins her friends in front of the mirror. She ignores her reflection.

Pressing down the memory of that morning.

SLEATER
What's up, friends? I missed you guys.

SHARON
(maybe it's genuine)
Yeah, we uh - missed you too. You look so different.

She stares, pointed, at Sleater's bare face.

Behind them a group of girls jostle for mirror space. When they see Sleater, they pause, then break away, chattering, whispering.

SLEATER
Wow, that acid...

OLIVIA
Oh my god, I knew it -

SLEATER
...wash overload, Court. Even the bravest Madonna fans salute that jacket.

Courtney gives her shoulders a shake in the mirror, admiring her jacket. It IS violently bleached and ripped.

COURTNEY
Kickin', right?

OLIVIA
Court, I think she's making fun of you.

Sleater dumps her books on the lip of the sink. Shaking her fingers through her loose, sun-darkened hair, she pulls it away from her face and ties it on top of her head.

A loudspeaker CRACKLES overhead.

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)
Attention students of Shore Area
High...

Turning to face her friend, Courtney takes hold of Sleater's wrist.

COURTNEY
It's the first day of school, babe.

SLEATER
Yes.

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)
*This is your principal speaking,
with a friendly reminder to remain
quiet during opening assembly...*

COURTNEY
And you're...just...no makeup,
shoulder pads, nothing. The remark
about the denim? Not cute. Not
Sleater.

Sharon turns from the mirror to interrupt them.

SHARON
Yeah, but wasn't this the summer -

She stops. All four girls are suddenly, abruptly, silent.

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)
*We're happy to have you all back
refreshed and ready for an
excellent...*

Fumbling, face ashen, Sleater jerks out of Courtney's grasp.

She hesitates a moment before picking up a tube of lipstick.

SLEATER
Are you going to help me, or what?

Her friends grab her ponytail, teasing it away from the crown of her head; tug her shirt off her shoulders; pinch her cheeks. Smile, victorious.

Sleater watches them in the mirror. Narrows in on her shoulder, the rounded curve of her upper arm. Blinks.

She stares down past her knees, at her battered Vans hugging the floor. Shuts her eyes.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sleater's updated look is well-received by classmates and friends. All seem to relax at the appearance of the girl they knew the summer before.

Even though she looks uncomfortable, Sleater smiles, flirts.

Loops her hands around the neck of the same jock from the assembly. He squeezes her hip, laughing.

She's that girl again: admired, accepted, wanted.

The bell RINGS. The people around her scatter, the hallway drains to empty, and Sleater's left, frozen, alone.

She glances down both sides of the hall before shouldering her way back inside the...

WOMEN'S BATHROOM

SLEATER'S POV

From inside the stall, elbows on her knees, she stares at the back of a door. An enterprising classmate has scribbled, SEX, DRUGS, & ROCK N' ROLL over the legs of the female icon.

The toilet paper dispenser has also been defaced, with a drawing of a girl hiking up her skirt.

Sleater chokes, caught between a laugh and a sob, and presses the heels of her hands to her temples.

FROM OUTSIDE THE STALL, we hear the toilet flush. Sleater emerges.

She's captured by her reflection in the mirror - new, chaotic, exposed. Alien to the girl we first met.

Grimacing at herself, she wipes a hand across her mouth, smearing the lipstick across her cheek. Red on her teeth, red on her fingers.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Band auditions. Cherish faces two exhausted teachers, snare drum in her lap. She taps out a four-count.

INT. SHORE AREA PARKING LOT - DAY

School's out. Sleater, holding her skateboard, crosses the parking lot with Olivia, Courtney, and Sharon. They stop at a beat-up purple minivan that looks like it used to belong to Sharon's mom.

SHARON

You sure you don't need a ride?

SLEATER

No, thanks, I'm trying to practice.

She holds up the skateboard.

Her friends wince / react and climb into the car. Sharon in the driver's seat. She backs out, rolls down her window.

SHARON

Cheer tryouts, tomorrow. Noon.

SLEATER

Oh. Yeah. I don't know if...

Inside the car, Olivia leans toward Sharon in the passenger seat and whispers something in her ear.

SHARON

(fishing)

You don't know if WHAT, Sleater?

The car behind Sharon's minivan honks loudly.

Sleater steps out of the way and waves to her friends.

SLEATER

Never mind. See you tomorrow.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

The sun rises through the window on an empty kitchen: bare, white, clean. The dishes have been cleaned out of the sink.

Around the back of the house, Grandmother weeds her herb garden, knee-deep in dirt and humming softly.

UPSTAIRS

A door at the end of the hall is half-cracked open. Cherish and Sleater's shared room. On the door under a hand-beaded name sign, a newspaper cutout of Kim Gordon, vocalist of Sonic Youth, is plastered beside a drawing of Darth Vader.

Drum beats echo down the hall from inside room - halting, start-stop, as if being played for the first time.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

The gymnasium is alive and bustling with noise. Blue and yellow banners hang from the ceiling. The bleachers are crumpled against the wall; the school logo across the gym floor has seen better days.

Off to one side, Sleater sits lacing up white sneakers. She's in a full pre-summer Sleater regalia: gym shorts, fitted tee, knee socks, loose hair.

She looks VERY uncomfortable - maybe her friends were on to something. Her clothes don't fit quite right. As she looks around she is beginning to realize this doesn't feel like "home" anymore.

Sharon approaches.

SHARON
You made it!

SLEATER
Yeah.

She finishes tying her shoes.

SHARON
Don't take this the wrong way,
but...Coach might be talking about
taking you off the pyramid.

SLEATER
Might be?

A coach's WHISTLE from the sidelines.

SHARON
I mean...summer. Did things. To all
of us. But you. You
look...so...it's just...

SLEATER
What? Why do people keep saying
that?

SHARON
You know what, it's nothing. Forget
it.

Sharon leaves to rejoin Courtney and Olivia on the court.

Before Sleater heads over to join the gathering circles of returners and newbies, she checks herself.

It hurts, but she's starting to feel it. Self-conscious.

Different.

Lifting her chin, she walks into the hornet's nest.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - LATER

COACH - 40s, sporting a perm and ill-fitting tracksuit - paces along the sidelines. On the court five girls assemble into a pyramid.

The once-full gym has been cut to a handful of about twenty to thirty. Sleater bounces on her toes as the bases line up.

She's usually top of the pyramid.

COACH
Sleater, get moving!

Taking a deep breath, Sleater steps into the first set of cupped hands. Body a perfect line. She climbs.

Music fires up in the background. It's the title track to last year's game...

EXT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAME - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

...being played full-throttle by the band on the side of the football field, where a Friday Night game is in full swing.

Sleater, slimmer, happier, sparkling in her new uniform, balances precariously at the top of the pyramid. She looks out into a crowd of screaming fans. The school fight song blazes in the background.

Her parents in the audience, distant, cold. Her mother is huddled into her jacket and her FATHER - mid-50s with the nervous, pinched look of an East Coast businessman - is watching the clock wind out halftime.

The base under Sleater shifts. She loses her balance.

She tumbles forward onto...

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY - PRESENT

...the hard gym floor.

Sleater crumples to a chorus of shocked gasps and laughter.

SLEATER'S POV.

Coach's sneakers squeak across the floor. She looms over Sleater, a storm of frizz and distaste.

COACH

You okay, Sleater? That was quite a fall.

Sleater doesn't have an answer. She covers the bump on her head with her hand. She might cry.

Coach extends a hand and helps Sleater to her feet.

COACH (CONT'D)

(sighs)

Alright, can I get another spotter over here? Let's try someone else for top. Olivia? Let's go, girls!

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - PARK - DAY

On a bench deep in the heart of the park. Maybe it's kind of a city park - lots of joggers. But this spot is nice and quiet.

Beneath The Caterpillar, a stone statue vaguely reminiscent of wonderland, Sleater lounges. Face red and swollen with tears.

She looks around to make sure she's alone. Clasps her hands, once, in petition.

The proud Caterpillar frowns down at her.

Sleater drops her hands. She hates this stuff. But that doesn't stop her from flinging her cheer ribbon in the water at its feet. It darkens and sinks.

Footsteps click up the path toward her.

MOTHER

This doesn't seem like congratulations.

Sleater sniffs, wipes her nose.

SLEATER

Hoo-rah.

MOTHER
You didn't make the team?

SLEATER
No...No, I mean, I did.

Her mother notices the cheer ribbon.

MOTHER
Those are expensive! Oh, Sleater.

SLEATER
I think I just wanna go home.

Her mother sits down next to her.

MOTHER
Tryouts didn't go well?

SLEATER
I mean, I made it. So they went fine.

MOTHER
Sleater, I'm so proud of you - it's senior year, you made the team again, you're...

SLEATER
Can we go home? Please.

Her mother strokes her hair. Sleater flinches. Tries not to start crying again. Above them, the silent Caterpillar.

Watching.

INT. SKATING RINK - AFTERNOON

Around a sticky table off to the side of the rink, Sleater sits with Olivia, Courtney and Sharon. Their cheer Letterman jackets are draped over the backs of their chairs.

Sleater is red-faced - CLEARLY upset - but her friends aren't trying hard enough to be sympathetic.

Cartons of French fries and ketchup, squashed hamburger wrappers and cups litter the table.

Sleater rests her forehead on the table and groans.

SHARON
It's not our fault.

SLEATER
Have you been making fun of me all
day?

OLIVIA
No?

COURTNEY
Look, if you ask me, that tumble
off the top of the pyramid was an
intervention.

Olivia picks up a fry and dunks it in ketchup. She and Sharon
share a look.

OLIVIA
We meant to talk to you about this
earlier.

COURTNEY
Then, you know, you - fixed
yourself a little.

SHARON
Please. Let's not, today.

OLIVIA
I'm not saying she's FAT!

COURTNEY
It just wasn't enough. The fixing.

At the mention of the F-word - Sleater's posture changes. She
shrinks. This is hallowed ground.

She rolls her cup between her hands. Refuses to make eye
contact. A flush creeps up her cheeks.

OLIVIA
You just need to get back to where
you were.

Sleater stiffens.

COURTNEY
Less...full-figured.

On Sleater: crushed. It's true, she knows it, but these are
her friends. They're supposed to have her back.

Sharon reaches across the table and takes her hand.

SHARON

We know it's been hard for you.
This summer and stuff.

SLEATER

But I'm still me. I'm still the
same person.

OLIVIA

You skateboard. You...rip your own
jeans.

SLEATER

Who cares?

The girls share an uncomfortable silence.

OLIVIA

You fell off the pyramid.

SLEATER

But I made the team!

SHARON

A little lipstick never killed
anyone...or, like, cardio...

Sleater stands. Her voice is high, tight.

SLEATER

Don't bullshit me, dammit. I wasn't
aware I had to come back perfect to
keep being the same person.

SHARON

Sleater...it's not like
that...you're making a scene.

Sleater knocks over her cup and steps out of the booth. Her
teammates shriek as soda drips onto their street clothes.

SLEATER

Oh - sorry, sorry.

She's flustered - apologetic - trying to help clean up the
mess, until she realizes what she's doing.

SLEATER (CONT'D)

No, I think I'm done.

OLIVIA

Excuse me?

Sleater looks around. Classmates are watching her from the middle of the rink. The music has wound to a slow, quiet, embarrassed tempo.

Pink disco lights splash across her face. Her features are sudden, sharp - wounded.

She grabs her jacket and walks away from her teammates, her friends. Her old life.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DUSK

Sleater's standing paralyzed on top her skateboard, heels hanging over the edge. Still in her cheer clothes and an oversized sweatshirt.

Her sister sits on the front step, guitar perched on her lap, bottle of soda in one hand. The other slung over the neck of her guitar, pick in hand.

SLEATER
I think I'm failing at life.

CHERISH
Hmmm.

She strums a chord. Pauses. Adjusts.

SLEATER
Also, my "friends?" Are so mean.

Her sister drops her hands and squints up at her.

CHERISH
You were one of them.

SLEATER
(uncertain)
I wasn't like that.

Cherish keeps playing. Then stops again. There's something she has to get off her chest.

CHERISH
Are you ever even present for
problems that aren't your own?

SLEATER
Like what?

CHERISH
That's the problem.

SLEATER
What? What problem?

She takes a drink of soda. A cat slinks out of the shrubs to rub against her ankles.

CHERISH
(lightly)
Well, for starters, my first day
was super, screw you very much.

SLEATER
Yeah, life at the bottom of the
food chain.

CHERISH
You wouldn't know, would you? Or
maybe...

She plucks out a chord.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
...now, you will. See what things
look like from the ground up. I
hear the air's cleaner and the
bullshit harder to cut through.

Cherish fumbles through the first few notes of Sonic Youth's
"Teenage Riot."

CHERISH (CONT'D)
Wanna take me to the record store?

SLEATER
I REFUSE to be a teenage loser.

Cherish bends over her guitar. She continues playing, eyes
focused on her hands.

CHERISH
I didn't realize you cared so much.

Sleater kicks off down the street, ponytail whipping out
behind her. Wobbling - still not that great at this skating
thing.

SLEATER
You're right - I should just not
care about anything! I simply
couldn't care less!

Cherish stands, still holding her guitar close to her chest.
She climbs the stairs and cracks open the front door.

CHERISH
(hurt)
Bitch.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - LATE
AFTERNOON

The weekend. Sleater and Cherish come out of the house, holding their overnight bags, as their dad pulls into the driveway in a silver sports car. He climbs out and tries to smile.

DAD
Ready?

From the porch, their mother and grandmother wave and shut the door.

Cherish and Sleater load their bags into the back seat.

CHERISH
I don't want to go.

SLEATER
(quoting)
*How the hell did it get here so
soon / I don't want to grow up...*

INT. SLEATER'S CHILDHOOD HOME - ENTRYWAY / LIVING ROOM -
NIGHT

Their old home looks just like it did six months ago, when they left with their mother. Sparser, no shoes at the door, but clean. The curtains still torn down from The Big Fight.

A siren whines down the street outside. Sleater and Cherish hesitate before putting their bags on the thin, dirty carpet.

DAD
Oh! I, uh, cleaned your rooms.

INT. THEIR CHILDHOOD HOME - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Sleater and Cherish follow their dad up the stairs. Sleater's room is on the left; Cherish's room is on the right. He stops in the hall.

DAD
You need anything? There's toilet
paper and toothpaste in the
bathroom, and some coffee on the
stove.

SLEATER
We're good.

CHERISH
Dinner?

DAD
What do we think - pizza? Chinese?

CHERISH
(confused)
You aren't -

SLEATER
(cuts her off)
Chinese is fine.

DAD
I'll call the delivery guy.

He disappears back down the stairs. Sleater pushes open the
door of her room. Cherish, frozen.

CHERISH
He always cooks.

Sleater shakes her head. What else has changed?

INT. SLEATER'S CHILDHOOD HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Boxes of takeout and napkins litter the coffee table. Dad and
Sleater eat takeout with plastic forks; Cherish is trying to
use chopsticks.

On the TV, Penn State plays. Their dad is preoccupied with it
and not his daughters. A touchdown.

DAD
Go Big Blue! That's the way.

Cherish snaps her chopstick in half on accident. Sleater
stares at her. Their dad gathers their dishes and throws them
out. He picks up his beer.

DAD (CONT'D)
Sleater, when's your first game?

She wasn't expecting this.

SLEATER
I - um - it's -

DAD
Next weekend, right? I bet you're
excited. Senior year.

Cherish laser-beams her from across the coffee table. An epic
stare down. TELL HIM YOU'RE QUITTING.

SLEATER
Thrilled.

He smiles.

DAD
Well, I have some work to do. You
guys okay watching TV?

CHERISH
Fine.

He kisses their foreheads in turn. Cherish not-so-subtly
tries to dodge it. He's hurt.

DAD
Holler if you need anything.

Cherish and Sleater mumble "night," and he exits to the
bedroom, taking his briefcase with him.

SLEATER
I - I think I need a smoke.

CHERISH
You smoke.

Sleater unlocks the door, sneaks out. Cherish stares at the
TV alone for a beat - the crowd celebrates! - but gives up
and follows her.

EXT. THEIR CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

The stars have just come out. Sleater takes a pack of
cigarettes out of her pocket. Lights up, closes her eyes.
Bliss.

CHERISH (O.S.)
When did *this* happen?

SLEATER

I don't know.

Cherish stands shivering, frowning at her sister.

CHERISH

Does this have something to do with
the people you never tell me about?

SLEATER

No.

CHERISH

Don't screw with me. You have a
whole separate life. And you
shouldn't be lying to Dad.

SLEATER

(ignores her)

Man, it's cold out here.

The house looks warm and aglow with light. Cherish considers
it.

CHERISH

Sleater. Let's go inside.

A beat. Sleater exhales.

SLEATER

I'm sorry.

CHERISH

I don't think I like high school.

SLEATER

Me either.

Sleater takes a seat on the stoop and Cherish sits beside
her, leaning her head on her sister's shoulder. Rubs her
nose.

CHERISH

I needed you. This summer. I mean,
science camp was awesome,
but...after a while...I felt like
one of the counselors. My tan line
was so deep it STILL hasn't faded.

Cherish pushes down her sock to prove her point: there's a
clear divide in her skin from olive tan to milk white.

CHERISH (CONT'D)

Also, the ice cream cones were always soggy. I couldn't brush my teeth without being swarmed by gnats. And they don't tell anyone this, but no one cleans the test tubes. I came home, excited to hang, and you were...

Cherish shrugs.

Sleater doesn't respond - but it's clear she's hurt. She should have been there. After blowing out a ring of smoke, she drops her cigarette and stomps it out.

Sleater tucks a strand of hair behind Cherish's ear.

EXT. SKATE PARK - DAY

A small skate park behind an abandoned warehouse. Kids carve up the BOWL - trade jokes and cigarettes in the PARKING LOT - aggressive hip-hop playing from the stereo of someone's CAR.

Kameron and Sleater are hanging out with a few other SKATERS.

Kameron practices her kick-flip while Sleater laughs with GEORGE - just "G." to his friends - roughly her age, Latino, the kind of ragged soulful that girls get a kick out of.

SLEATER

I got "Bad Moon Rising" yesterday. I've been waiting for months. It's pretty rad...even you would like it.

G.

Baby, I don't need to love rock and roll...I rock and roll with my body.

Sleater laughs, shakes her head.

Behind her: Kameron gets some air and WIPES OUT.

Sleater and her friends cheer in sympathy. She extends a hand and helps Kameron to her feet.

KAMERON

I almost had it!

SLEATER

You were close.

She sets down her board - practices with Kameron - G. shadowing her movements. There's some sort of romantic interest there - something unspoken.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

Sleater sits across from her coach.

SLEATER

I think this will be better for everyone. Plus, you can recycle my jacket, so you don't have to order another one.

COACH

Sleater.

SLEATER

...just steam off the last name and restitch a brand-new one. Peeling up sticky letters, especially on leather, is so satisfying, too - *whoosh* -

She pantomimes the motion, making a noise like paper ripping.

COACH

You can keep your jacket.

SLEATER

Oh. Thanks. But I don't think I'll wear it.

COACH

Let's be clear - are you leaving the team, or quitting?

SLEATER

Quitting. Obviously.

COACH

I'm disappointed in you, Sleater.

SLEATER

Well, I'm moving on.

Her coach stands and holds the door for her. She doesn't look thrilled, but she doesn't try to stop Sleater, either.

COACH

If you need anything...

SLEATER
Sure. Got it.

EXT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAME - NIGHT

Cherish is almost lost in the crowded bleachers. She's alone, watching the marching band run through their pre-game ritual with longing.

Cheerleaders flood the sidelines.

Blue and gold uniforms, huge curls. Laughing and cheering.

Sleater's friends -- Olivia, Courtney and Sharon -- in front as the band launches into a fight song.

OLIVIA
(clapping)
R-E-B-

Kickoff! The roar of the crowd drowns her out.

Cherish stands with the rest of the crowd to cheer on the team - the bleachers tremble and groan under the weight of so many feet.

EXT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAME - UNDER THE
BLEACHERS - NIGHT

Underneath the bleachers, Sleater hides with a cigarette and what's left of her pride.

She watches the game from her position under the end of the bleachers, half-in, half-out, stomping feet and metal seats breaking up her view.

SLEATER'S POV: the cheerleaders move in slow motion. Light glints off their gold bows.

Sleater takes a deep inhale, trying not to feel so...numb.

She watches for a beat more, then drops her cigarette and stomps it out.

MARTIN (O.S.)
Hey! Sleater?

Sleater looks up. It's the JOCK from the assembly - the one she embraced in the hallway just a week earlier.

SLEATER
(embarrassed)
Martin, hi. What's up?

MARTIN
Shouldn't you be out on the field?

SLEATER
Um, I...quit, yesterday.

MARTIN
Yo. That's cool. I quit the
football team like two weeks ago.
Broke my hand.

He holds up a heavily bandaged hand.

SLEATER
Oh my God! That sucks. I'm sorry.

MARTIN
Yeah. It's not that bad...fractured
in three places. Are you going to
Sharon's party tonight?

Sleater pretends to know what he's talking about. She nods vigorously and takes out another cigarette, sticks it in her mouth.

EXT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - POST-GAME

Sleater waits for Cherish on the school's front steps. She watches the parking lot and smokes. On the grass a short distance away, a couple is getting high.

Kameron, wearing a sweatshirt for the opposing school, approaches her.

KAMERON
I promised myself this would be the
first and only football game I
attend this year.

SLEATER
Not a fan?

KAMERON
Crowds freak me out.

From among the crowd trickling out of the field and into the parking lot - Cherish separates. She beelines for her sister.

CHERISH
Where WERE you? I sat alone. The
whole game.

She notices Kameron.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
Who is this? One of your secret
friends?

KAMERON
Kameron. Nice to meet you.

Cherish acknowledges her - but barely. She turns back to
Sleater. Arms crossed and awaiting an explanation.

SLEATER
(apologetic)
Let's get dinner. No secrets. Okay?

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NIGHT

Kameron and Sleater skateboard down a dark street, weaving
around light poles. Cherish bikes beside them.

EXT. CHICAGO CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Kameron, Cherish and Sleater pass underneath the Chinatown
GATES.

High overhead, ornate dragons sit motionless atop the gate in
the soft GLARE of changing traffic lights.

INT. THE JADE EMPRESS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Another cramped, bustling Chinese restaurant. Fish tanks line
the far wall. A low platform across the side of the room
boasts squat tables and pillows. Sleater, Cherish and Kameron
sit cross-legged, each on a pillow, a mug of green tea, three
bowls of noodles and a pile of fortune cookies on the table
between them.

Cherish raps her knuckles on her knees, making fun of the
fussy, upbeat K-pop music. Trying to annoy the still somewhat
dejected Sleater.

CHERISH
This one guy in my class is already
hooked on Ambien. He wants to be
student body president.

SLEATER

Wait until you're a senior. We've already had two attempted OD's. And counting. Half of the cheerleading squad is hooked on weight loss pills.

Kameron laughs and pours steaming tea into the cup at her elbow.

KAMERON

Those are shit-all for your body. You remember Jack? He started making his own and selling them with his girlfriend.

SLEATER

I think it's dangerous. Mentally. That you swallow a magic pill and your problems disappear. It'd be nice though...

The song ends, and another begins to play over the radio. The opening strains of a mournful ROCK SONG. It's wildly different from what was playing - but, man, for them it's life-changing.

Cherish pauses to listen.

CHERISH

This is my favorite song.

KAMERON

This one?

CHERISH

Oh my god, you know it?

KAMERON

KNOW IT?

Cherish is geeking out.

CHERISH

I've been trying to teach myself the chorus, on the snare after school, but it's a little...

KAMERON

Tetchy?

CHERISH

...yeah, yeah, and the middle bit...

Kameron starts to tap it out, humming.

On Sleater: annoyed at their exclusion.

SLEATER

This is *not* what you've been practicing at home.

The song continues.

SLEATER (CONT'D)

I mean, compared to this, you could've been banging a stick into the wall.

KAMERON

(to Cherish)

Should we try to convert her?

CHERISH

Nah, she's -

Off Sleater's expression - she reconsiders.

CHERISH (CONT'D)

- already kind of a fan.

Sleater rips open a fortune cookie and shoves it in her mouth.

Cherish is still rambling:

CHERISH (CONT'D)

...so, Sleater, this is the record you stole, Jezebel and The Jacks, 1981, STOP SEARCH OR SURRENDER, track three, so it's impossible that you even listened past the first song, which is just tragic.

SLEATER

I get it. How'd YOU find the record, huh?

Cherish doesn't want to admit it.

CHERISH

Doesn't matter...how do you guys know each other, anyway? I mean, no offense, but I don't remember seeing you around this summer...

KAMERON

The skate park mostly.

Sleater steals a piece of Cherish's cookie.

SLEATER
I've been corrupted.

CHERISH
(putting the pieces
together)
So, the smoking thing...

Kameron snorts. She rattles her spoon in the empty teapot until the waiter comes over. He takes it without speaking.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Their mother wipes out the sink, wearing yellow rubber gloves and humming. At the table, their grandmother clips coupons out of the daily paper.

GRANDMOTHER
Here's one for juice.

MOTHER
Waste of money.

GRANDMOTHER
Do the girls like juice?

Their mother opens the spice cabinet and frowns at the empty top shelf.

MOTHER
Girls, where are my pills?

SLEATER (O.S.)
I threw 'em out!

Sleater sticks her head into the kitchen. The left half of her hair is braided and curves into a conch shape around her ear.

SLEATER (CONT'D)
They're toxic.

MOM
You did *what*?

Sleater retreats into the living room.

SLEATER (O.S.)
You're encouraging unhealthy
behavior!

Their mother follows.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The TV is on. Cherish slouches across the couch, Walkman and a bag of pretzels cradled to her chest. Sleater occupies the floor.

MOTHER

I don't want a feminist manifesto,
Sleater, I want to lose five
pounds. What happened to your hair?

SLEATER

(without looking)
It's called experimentation.

Cherish snorts. Derisive.

On the TELEVISION in front of them, action! Masked soldiers break down a door. Gunfire.

MOTHER

You ate all the pretzels?

CHERISH

Oh, I thought -

MOTHER

Those were supposed to last until
next week.

Their mother grabs the pretzel bag from Cherish and throws a pillow at Sleater, making faces from the couch. Her gloves still dripping water.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'm kicking you out. Go spend some
time together. The least you can do
is get along, okay?

Cherish to Sleater - barely suppressed annoyance.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Their mother put the (almost) empty pretzel bag into the pantry, looking troubled. The shelves are sparse - there's not much food left in there.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Sleater and Cherish cross the street and start down the sidewalk.

CHERISH
Do NOT embarrass me. Consider
yourself lucky I'm even deigning to
bring you here.

They approach and enter...

INT. HASTY RECORDS & COMICS SHOP - DAY

Sleater follows her sister inside.

Rotating racks of comics stand beside high wooden bins stacked full of records. Guitars, headphones and armchairs occupy the far side of the room. A door half-propped open leads to what looks like a bar.

Over the radio - The New York Doll's "Jet Boy."

Cherish is already elbow-deep in a box of records, clearly comfortable. She's been here before.

Sleater is in AWE. Just frozen in place, soaking it all in. Why hasn't she been here before?

SLEATER
Dude, Kameron would love this
place.

Cherish stops digging through the records.

CHERISH
You cannot.

SLEATER
(sighs)
What, share friends? Love music
like you love music? Be anyone
other than the person everyone
keeps telling me I am? I'm like,
the last pair of dirty jeans. At
the bottom of the hamper. Also, I
thought you liked Kameron.

CHERISH
That doesn't make sense.

She pulls out a record. Discards it.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
I meant, you can't keep standing
there like a total freaking square.

SLEATER
Oh.

She joins Cherish.

CHERISH
(trying to make amends)
Also, she seems cool. Way cooler
than you...she's probably been here
before. I like her. She's gonna
teach me guitar.

SLEATER
Oh. I didn't know she played
guitar.

CHERISH
What were you doing when I was at
camp, sitting around, getting high
together? You can't have never
talked about it. Music is like, her
life.

SLEATER
No...yeah, I mean, we have...

Cherish resumes digging.

Leaving her little sister behind, Sleater wanders over to the
wall of guitars. She stands and stares up at the instruments.

Faint - tinny - cords.

She turns. Behind her a small BOY, around 10, sits beneath
the large display windows. Ovation awkwardly propped in his
lap.

SLEATER (CONT'D)
Hey, that sounds familiar.

The boy is concentrating very hard on hitting the right
cords.

BOY
I can't talk to strangers.

SLEATER
That's cool. I mean, I'm not a
creepy stranger or anything, but
good advice. In general.

He keeps struggling through. Sleater sits down.

SLEATER (CONT'D)
I wish I could...
(she hesitates)
I think it'd be cool to learn.

BOY
Yeah, I wanted to teach myself.

Sleater looks over - Cherish has disappeared between the shelves. Something compels her to be honest.

SLEATER
I don't think I'd be brave enough.

WOMAN (O.S.)
It's just an instrument.

Sleater whirls- but it's just a WOMAN, mid-30s, jet black hair almost hidden under a pageboy hat.

As the woman reaches out to help the boy, Sleater notices the tattoo of a phoenix on her forearm, wings wrapped around her wrist.

BOY
I got the first couple right.

WOMAN
Awesome, bud. Just fix your fingers here. Like that.

When Sleater looks up, the woman is smiling. Her face is soft but there's a harshness behind her eyes.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
(to Sleater)
Like I said, just an instrument.

SLEATER
It's music. Rock 'n' roll, right?

The woman takes down a Gibson from the wall. She sits beside her son.

WOMAN
What do you know about rock n' roll?

SLEATER
Um, nothing.

WOMAN

C'mon.

SLEATER

I mean, really, nothing, like, at all. The music seems nice. Very...loud. My little sister's a big rock fan. It's kind of an identity thing, right? Being rock n'roll? Yeah, I don't get that. I used to be a cheerleader. But I quit. For what? I'm not sure what that means. It feels scary.

The boy hits a wrong note.

WOMAN

Can I tell you a secret?

SLEATER

Uh...I guess...

WOMAN

I'm kind of just a poser, too. We all are.

She hands Sleater the Gibson. Stands and waits for her son to put his Ovation back.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Good luck out there.

SLEATER

Thanks. You too.

The woman takes her son's hand. She leaves.

Sleater sits in silence. Holding the Gibson with a kind of reverence. Exhales. Slowly, she runs her fingers across the strings.

EXT. BLUE MOON CAFE -HASTY RECORDS & COMICS SHOP - DAY

Cherish stands in the DOORWAY between the record shop and the café, waiting for Sleater to approach.

CHERISH

Would you get your butt in gear?
They have killer waffles here.

SLEATER

Do you want, money?

CHERISH
Yes, stupid, and I also want to eat
waffles. Let's go!

SLEATER
What's the ulterior motive?

CHERISH
No motive. See the waffle. Feed the
waffle. Become one with the waffle.
Now hurry up.

Sleater tracks behind Cherish as they enter...

INT. BLUE MOON CAFE

Carpet bleeds into checkered tile. The windows are dust-smeared.

The sisters take a seat at the counter.

Behind the coffee bar, the door to the kitchen swings open and a HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT in a white apron comes out. Male, around 15, gangly. Nametag: Revant. He begins wiping down the counter.

Cherish freaks. Like she's been hit with a livewire. She lets out a loud GASP-HICCUP - almost like someone just punched her in the stomach.

REVANT
(bored monotone)
Oh, sorry. You guys want to order?

SLEATER
We'll have some waffles. And a
black coffee.

REVANT
Just one?

Sleater glances over at Cherish. But she refuses to make eye contact. She's breathing very quickly, like she's about to have an asthma attack.

SLEATER
Uh, make that two. Thanks.

Revant nods and heads back into the kitchen. Sleater bends over to Cherish.

SLEATER (CONT'D)
Hi. What the hell?

CHERISH
I - I'm not hungry.

SLEATER
I thought you wanted a waffle!

CHERISH
No, no, I do.

Revant comes back out carrying two coffee mugs. He sets one down in front of Sleater and the other in front of Cherish.

As he bends closer to set down the cup, Cherish lets out another loud HICCUP-GASP and turns bright red. To recover, she reaches for the coffee mug and tries to drag it over the counter towards herself...

...but it TIPS OVER. Coffee spills out over the counter, steaming.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
Shit! Oh, shit! I - I -

REVANT
Man...here...

He hands her the rag he's holding - their fingers touch, BRIEFLY - and she drops the rag too.

Revant takes another rag out of his apron and helps her clean up the spill. Their hands keep bumping.

CHERISH
There should be spill-proof mugs.
With nice tight lids.

REVANT
Sippy cups?

Cherish is too embarrassed to respond. She hands him back the rag and he places it in the sink beside the coffee maker, on the other side of the counter.

SLEATER
So, are you two in class together?

CHERISH
(furious whisper)
Shut up, please.

A voice interrupts them -

ANDIE (O.S.)
Excuse me. Andie Sunset, Rock
Report. Are you all waiting?

Sleater, Cherish and REVANT swivel in unison to ANDIE, seated at the far end of the bar.

She's about 18. Hardcore 80s goth with wide, vacant features and uncontrollable hair. The barely-contained energy of a superfan or conspiracy theorist. Gripping a cup of coffee in both hands.

REVANT
Where'd you get that coffee?

ANDIE
You never watch the back counter.
Also! Rumor has it that a certain
hero of mine frequents this
location. And that she's hosting a
signing RIGHT HERE in. This. Very.
Room!

She speaks slowly - wide-eyed - with the awed but obsessively fixed posture of a music nerd. As off-beat and focused as Lydia Deetz from Beetlejuice but more enthusiastic.

CHERISH
You look familiar.

SLEATER
...looks like a weirdo to me...

A smoke alarm BLARES to life.

REVANT
Shit, the pancakes!

He runs back through the swinging doors.

Andie snaps a photograph of the empty doorway with her camera, a BRONICA ETRs in a leather case attached to a cord around her neck.

ANDIE
It should be any minute now.

SLEATER
You used to go to Shore Area High,
right? But you dropped out?

ANDIE
Kicked out, actually! It's on my
permanent record.
(MORE)

ANDIE (CONT'D)

I come from a long line of dropouts, so I'm proud to have broken tradition.

SLEATER

And Rock Report is your...

ANDIE

Fanzine! But not a SIMPLE fanzine?
Not a MERE fanzine? Nay...

She launches into a long tirade.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Founded in 1980 by yours truly, Rock Report is inspired by classics such as "Sniffin' Glue" and "Punk," both of which my badass English punk cousin brings when she visits my aunt, which is like twice a year, so I make her bring a whole box! The idea is simple: you make it yourself, you charge basically nothing, and you give it to anyone who wants a copy. Punk is about the absence of rules - or of climbing over them...

Revant comes back out again carrying plates loaded with a heavily browned pile of pancakes.

He sets the pancakes down and fans the air.

REVANT

(cutting in)

There's no signing here, or whatever you're waiting for.

ANDIE

How! Would you know?

He points to his name tag, and then the empty café.

Andie rolls her eyes and resumes -

ANDIE (CONT'D)

If I can catch every up-and-coming band in the Chicago punk scene, SOMEONE is going to blow up famous, or I'll just have a lot of kick-ass interviews...

SLEATER

That's a lot...in one sentence...you do everything yourself?

ANDIE

Yeah, yeah! I mean, I suck at drawing, but that's the thing, right? Doing it anyway. I wanted to create something real. None of the bitches -

(she looks at Sleater)

- okay, rude, but IT'S TRUE, none of the bitches at your high school seem to appreciate what punk is. Plus, my uncle owns a Staples, so I can sneak in and run off as many copies as I want during his lunch break. I just put on a name tag and pretend to work there.

Punctuating this with a smirk, she scoots down to occupied end of the counter, reaches over Sleater's plate and stabs the last pancake with her fork.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

I'm so hungry! My god, this one looks lonely.

SLEATER

Excuse me -

ANDIE

Rock n' roll is savage!

Cherish forks out a bite of her own pancakes, trying to be neat about it. Still distracted by Revant.

CHERISH

I don't think the "hero" you're waiting for is coming anyway.

EXT. EUGENE'S ALLEYWAY -DAY

Sleater and Andie leave the café, passing a graffiti mural stretching across the alley walls.

Sleater tries to keep her distance - still irked about the pancake thing.

ANDIE

You know, we're always scouting for more reporters at Rock Report.

Sleater edges further away. Full-on bitchy cheerleader mode, reminiscent of her former friends.

SLEATER
I'll think about it.

Andie and Sleater continue walking.

EXT. BACK OF CAFE / EUGENE'S ALLEYWAY - DAY

In the foreground behind them, Cherish and Revant stand in the door of the café. He's sweeping the back step. She's flustered and trying hard not to stare. He doesn't seem to notice.

Cherish gathers her courage.

CHERISH
You, um, sit on front of me, in biology.

REVANT
I hate that class.

CHERISH
It could be worse. We haven't even gotten to dissections.

She scuffs her shoe in the dirt.

REVANT
Wait, we have to cut things open?

CHERISH
(is he serious)
You didn't know that?

REVANT
Nah, man. You're good at that kind of thing, though, right.

CHERISH
Cutting things open?

REVANT
Um, science.

He frames the word with his hands, like it's this big, important, all-knowing thing.

Cherish doesn't think he's been paying attention. She drops her chin and shrugs. Suppressing her smile.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - STREET - DAY

Far ahead of Cherish and Revant, by now - Andie and Sleater cross the street that café / music stores is on, still talking.

Andie hugs her camera to her chest.

ANDIE

So would you want to help me cover a show? Jezebel and the Jacks are playing. Next. Weekend! I don't know if you know them, but they're like, local legends.

Sleater is less enthusiastic.

SLEATER

Do you get a free press ticket?

ANDIE

Sure! I mean, I think so.

Sleater looks over her shoulder, trying to find Cherish. She spots her sister walking away from the café, toward the crosswalk. Hands in her pockets.

SLEATER

That's my sister's favorite band.

Turning back to Andie, Sleater grimaces. She can't believe she's agreeing to this.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Cherish, Sleater and Andie loiter outside an APARTMENT downtown. Stray dogs wander across the lawn and boards nail broken windows shut.

SLEATER

How do you know Kameron again?

ANDIE

We see each other at shows a lot. Sometimes I make her hold my tape recorder. Oh! One time, she bought me a beer with her fake ID.

Kameron runs out the door, skateboard hitting her shins.

KAMERON

Yo! Sleater? Cherish?

SLEATER

She assaulted us over pancakes.

Andie holds out a CD -- THE EFFIGIES, one of Chicago's first real punk bands.

ANDIE

Didn't I promise I burned an extra copy?

INT. SKATE SHOP - DAY

Ragged punk music and the CHA-CHING of the cash drawer.

Cherish, Kameron, Sleater and Andie stand at the counter, rattling their knuckles on the glass case, pointing at boards hanging against the wall.

Kameron is picking up wheels from a case by the register. She points out a board to Andie that matches her vibe, a la Corpse Bride.

KAMERON

Have you learned to skate yet?

ANDIE

It's complicated.

Kameron gives her A Look.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

I've been meaning to learn. I just have a low center of gravity.

Cherish runs her hand over the partially assembled skateboard on the counter.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

The girls skate down the street, Chicago skyline rising behind them. Cherish and Andie both a little unsteady and trailing behind the others. Afternoon light just turning hazy.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - BAND PRACTICE - DAY

High school band practice - a cacophony of off-kilter sounds. Wailing tuba. Kicky French horn.

Cherish sits in the last row in the back with the other wannabe drum majors. Glowing. This is a dream in the making.

The director signals them from the front of the room.

BAND DIRECTOR
 Alright, so for starters, is
 everyone in their assigned seat?
 You can't change sections, people!

Cherish straightens in her chair. She leans over to the GIRL next to her.

CHERISH
 I'm in the right place.

GIRL
 Congratulations.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SHARED BEDROOM - NIGHT

Closed bathroom door and the sound of shower water. Cherish lies on one of the twin beds, looking at nothing. Pencil rapping a beat against her thigh.

The water turns off. Sleater emerges in pajamas, scrubbing a towel through her hair.

SLEATER
 You don't have homework?

CHERISH
 No, I do.

Sleater throws her towel in the laundry basket and takes a seat, cross-legged, on her own bed. Begins to shift through the pile of magazines and notes on her comforter.

Into the silence: thwack, thwack, thwack.

She looks over - Cherish is drumming her pencil on the bedpost, the windowsill, the sole of her shoe.

SLEATER
 C.

No response.

SLEATER (CONT'D)
 C!

CHERISH
 Yeah?

Sleater lunges across the divide for the pencil. Her sister jerks back, on the defensive.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
I'm practicing.

Their mom peeks around the door.

MOM
No weekend trip this Friday to dad's house, m'kay? Your dad has some business stuff to take care of. I'm going to meet with him Sunday afternoon. On the bright side, your grandmother offered to take you shopping.

CHERISH
Gee, mazel tov to us.

MOM
I left him on the line downstairs. He wants to apologize.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sleater and Cherish sit at the kitchen table; Cherish holds the phone, the cord stretching from the cradle mounted on the wall of the kitchen.

Their mother leans against the sink in her bathrobe, arms folded across her stomach.

DAD (O.S.)
Night, girls. I'm sorry about this weekend.

CHERISH
Dad! What's the pace? I thought we were going to make s'mores and rent a bunch of back copies of THE PRICE IS RIGHT.

DAD (O.S.)
I know. I, um - what did your mother tell you?

CHERISH
Some lame excuse about a work thing.

Their mother narrows her eyes and mouth, watch it. Cherish winks. But maybe she's genuinely hurt.

DAD (O.S.)

Yes - a - a work thing. But I'll
clear my schedule, I'm all yours
next week, okay? I promise.
Sleater? Are you there too?

Sleater rolls her eyes. She expected this setback.

SLEATER

Yeah, dad, whatever. Love you.

She stands and returns the phone to the cradle.

Their mother kisses Sleater and Cherish's cheeks goodnight as
they get up to leave the kitchen.

MOM

Night, peaches.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SHARED BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cherish switches on her bedside lamp and crawls under the
covers of her bed. She lies there for a beat staring at the
ceiling.

From her side of the room, Sleater sits back in bed and
stares up at the ceiling, too, confused, tired. Hearing
Cherish TOSS and TURN.

SLEATER

Go to sleep.

CHERISH

How do you know I'm not sleeping?

Sleater grunts and rolls over to face the wall. She closes
her eyes. Hurt - more hurt for her sister than for herself.

INT. JODIE'S PAWN MART - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Sleater and Cherish follow their grandmother through the
doors of a kitschy pawn shop. Begrudging and less impressed
by the minute. Stuffed animal heads hang amid old instruments
and household appliances along the walls. The ceiling is low,
and the general air is dingy, suppressed.

Their grandmother turns down an aisle of old porcelain
figures.

GRANDMOTHER

You girls pick out something you
want.

CHERISH
(under her breath)
We're not five.

SLEATER
Thanks, gran.

Cherish and Sleater move toward the display beneath the large windows. It's a table stacked with chair legs of every imaginable size and shape.

Cherish grabs one that's carved into a clawed foot at the base. She pokes it at Sleater.

CHERISH
Meow.

SLEATER
Cut it out.

Through the window, Sleater watches the bustling street.

Wishing she were outside. On her way to somewhere.

She's surprised by the sudden, unexpected SMACK of a hand against the glass...

...followed by Andie's face, smirking. She peels back from the glass and motions for Sleater to join her outside.

CHERISH
Did you hear that? I bet it was a
baby bird. They fly into windows
all the time and break their necks.

Sleater points.

Outside, Andie sticks out her tongue at the two of them.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
The weird pancake girl!

SLEATER
Did I mention she's getting us in
to see Jezebel and the Jacks this
weekend?

CHERISH
For a price.

Sleater checks over her shoulder - their grandmother is completely preoccupied with her shopping, moving further along down the aisle.

SLEATER

Gran! We're going to hang out with our friends!

GRANDMOTHER

(turns)

Don't get lost anywhere. Or drunk.
Your mother will kill me.

Sleater gives her a thumbs up.

EXT. JODIE'S PAWN MART - DAY

On the edge of the street, Andie sits with Kameron on the curb. Both have their skateboards and a soft drink in hand.

Sleater and Cherish cross the sidewalk toward them. Cherish, hesitant; Sleater, excited to see her friend.

KAMERON

What's up?

SLEATER

You know, just...shopping.

ANDIE

I'm trying to coerce Kameron into buying me THE perfect pair of red cowboy boots I found for this weekend. They're so badass.

SLEATER

Boots?

ANDIE

I'll show you.

The girls stand. Cherish seems reluctant to leave their grandmother, alone in the pawn shop, but she tags along behind them. Guilty.

INT. CHICKADEE THRIFT - DAY

An exhausted, tattooed store attendant watches Andie model the red cowboy boots in front of the dressing rooms. Her friends can't keep straight faces. The shoes are ridiculous.

Sleater, Cherish and Kameron discover a bucket of plastic figurines beside the cash register. They pull out handfuls of action figures and baby animals to buy.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE ROOFTOP - DAY

From this high up, we can see the Chicago skyline against the clear blue sky. Andie, Sleater, Cherish and Kameron hang around near the short concrete wall circling the edge of the roof.

Andie throws her plastic figurine over the ledge.

It lands neatly in a dumpster far below. She whoops in triumph - good aim!

ANDIE

Okay okay. Biggest fear.

KAMERON

I fear nothing but nirvana.

SLEATER

Sure, Kam. Um, I guess, disappearing?

CHERISH

What a beautiful thought.

Sleater elbows her.

SLEATER

I'm serious. Do you ever worry you'll wake up and just not exist, never have existed?

ANDIE

Only when I'm super drunk.

Cherish tosses down her figurine, mulling this over.

CHERISH

My fears are smaller. Spiders, shoulder pads. Phone calls from my dad.

This kills Sleater's mood completely. She turns to her sister, frowning.

SLEATER

He's not that bad.

CHERISH

No, but he left. He left us.

Kameron tosses down her figurine. It almost nails a pedestrian and the girls all shriek, duck down behind the ledge.

KAMERON

At least he calls you.

ANDIE

Yeah, my mom's a crackhead, and my dad gets f---d up like, every night.

This is an AWKWARD revelation. Sleater, Cherish and Kameron stop and stare at her.

Andie just shrugs.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

I'm cool with it.

Cherish, leaning against the concrete divider, joins in the flow of conversation as it resumes, but still seems thoughtful, troubled. She's not quite over the disappointment of this weekend.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO BAR - NIGHT

Cherish, Kameron, Andie and Sleater in line outside the bar. There's a good size crowd of punkers and trendsetters waiting; the line wraps around into the alley behind the bar.

They're all dressed up: Andie, in full-blown goth mode and the red cowboy boots; Kameron, usual laid back; Sleater, tense and buttoned up; Cherish, in combat boots that are falling apart, sporting her father's collegiate denim jacket.

Cherish turns to Sleater.

CHERISH

Check?

This is clearly a sister thing - the sacred Outfit Check.

Sleater fixes the collar of Cherish's jacket.

Sleater smiles, baring her teeth. A smudge of lipstick on her front tooth.

CHERISH (CONT'D)

Lipstick.

Sleater rubs it off with her thumb. The two bouncers open the door of the bar and the line begins to move forward.

INT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO BAR - NIGHT

The girls enter, tucking fake IDs back into their bags. Andie buttons her shirt back up to cover her black lace bra.

ANDIE
Wasn't sure that would work.

KAMERON
You're a real magician.

Andie, carefree, throws an arm around Cherish's neck and Cherish flinches.

ANDIE
Loosen up, babe.

SLEATER
Don't touch anything. Don't take drinks from strangers. Don't leave your purse alone.

CHERISH
Chill, okay? I'm not a little kid. I have to pee.

She pivots and makes for the neon RESTROOM sign, shoulders pushed back. Determined to be All Grown Up. She's swallowed up in the crowd.

Kameron, Andie and Sleater take stock of the room. Andie shimmies a cigarette out of her pocket and shakes out the fringe on her sleeves.

ANDIE
You think she's a lightweight?

SLEATER
My sister? She's fifteen. I don't think she's ever been drunk.

KAMERON
We should get a table.

ANDIE
Maybe you're the one who needs to relax.

SLEATER
You guys go. I'll check on her.

She leaves to follow in Cherish's wake.

Andie shrugs and motions to Kameron. They head toward a small round table at the edge of the room.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM- NIGHT

Sleater pushes through the door of the bathroom to see Cherish bent over the lip of the sink. The bathroom is half-empty but punk music fills the silence with white noise.

SLEATER
I though the puking part came after
the drinking part.

Cherish shakes her head, dips her forehead between her arms.
Her face is flushed red and splotchy.

Sleater joins her sister at the sink. It's a familiar hearkening to her own bathroom breakdown on the first day of school. She reaches out - hesitant - and rubs small circles on Cherish's back.

SLEATER (CONT'D)
Sorry. I suck at this.

CHERISH
You're doing okay right now.

She inhales - deep but shaky.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
Jezebel Jackson is my icon, and I
love her, and I don't think I can
see her in real life. What if it
ruins everything? What if I meet
her, and panic? What if -

SLEATER
I know.

CHERISH
I mean - she's more than a legend.
She's a rock goddess. I don't want
to disappoint myself.

She pulls her head out of her hands and meets Sleater's eyes in the mirror behind her.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
Why did you come? Really.

SLEATER
I'm helping Andie with Rock Report.

CHERISH
Andie doesn't need your help.

SLEATER
I'm not trying to ruin your life.
Or steal your music. I just wanted
to come to a concert.

Cherish turns to face her.

CHERISH
Why did you quit the cheer team?

SLEATER
I - it doesn't matter. I'm still
me. I'm still Sleater.

Cherish thinks about this. A beat. She sets her jaw.

CHERISH
No, you're not. I was happy with
the way things were.

Off Sleater's face: wounded and confused. A girl who has been doubly rejected. First by her friends, now by her sister.

SLEATER'S POV

The sight of Cherish becomes blurred and obscured by tears as she leaves the bathroom.

There - on the lip of the sink - someone has left a pair of nail scissors.

Sleater reaches out and grabs the scissors.

Around her head, the snowflake-like flurry of bright hair and furious hands as she saws off the ends of her hair.

After she finishes cutting, she realizes what she's done.
WHAT has she done?

She leans into the mirror. Cracked-open lips. Frustration.

Her uneven breathing is to her the roar of an airplane engine.

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO BAR - NIGHT

On a narrow stage above the crowd an all-female rock band is in the middle of a song.

Cherish, Kameron and Andie are pressed desperately against the wooden barricades in front of the stage, cheering and awestruck.

At the back of the room, heading from the bathroom, Sleater pushes her way through a chaotic crowd. She joins her friends at the front.

Onstage: JEZEBEL JACKSON, a mid-30s rocker with spiky black hair, draws her thumb across her throat and waves her hands above her head.

The music screeches to a halt. Her bandmates pause, mid-motion.

Jezebel drops her guitar against her waist and cups the microphone in the palms of her hands.

Jezebel leans in to the mic. Locks eyes with Sleater standing in the crowd below.

JEZEBEL

(mocking)

Sex, drugs, rock n' roll. Step right
up to sell your soul.

(beat)

You know what I see out here
tonight?

Off the crowd's raucous cheers, she raises a hand in the air, palm open.

JEZEBEL (CONT'D)

I see a lot of people who think
they know everything about music,
who don't know anything about
me. That's fine. This band wasn't
created to push an ideology. A
product. But somehow, somewhere...

She slides her leather jacket off her shoulders. It crumples on the stage.

JEZEBEL (CONT'D)

Rock n' roll has become just
another machine. Since I'm not big
on selling lies, I'm leaving.
Jezebel and the Jacks -
(MORE)

JEZEBEL (CONT'D)
(she sweeps out her arm -a
slicing motion)
- disbanded!

Stunned silence greets this announcement.

Cherish, Kameron, Andie and Sleater are in shock. THIS was their one night to meet their rock hero?

Both Cherish and Andie look near-tears.

JEZEBEL (CONT'D)
But since the best endings are
beginnings, I'm giving someone else
a chance to accept music for what
it is and cherish it for what it
does.

Swinging one leg down, she hops over the stage barrier. Fans are too stunned to rush her. Boos murmur faintly from the back.

She walks up to Sleater. The crowd parts around her.

JEZEBEL (CONT'D)
All yours, kid.

Jezebel unstraps her guitar and hands it over. It's priceless - a vintage 1960s Teisco, cherry red.

Sleater is wide-eyed, face red. She doesn't deserve this. She isn't even sure if she wants it.

As Jezebel reaches out, Sleater sees the phoenix tattoo around her wrist. Recognition strikes like a slap.

SLEATER
It was you.

Jezebel shakes her head.

JEZEBEL
Don't be so afraid to grow. It's
good; it means you're learning. And
remember, not even death can stop
true rock 'n' roll.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A huge, ugly blue van driving down Sleater's street. Andie is driving. In the front seat, Sleater cradles the guitar.

The van stops in front of SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE.

Cherish opens the door and steps out. Her eyes are red and swollen.

When Sleater climbs out of the passenger seat, the silhouette of Jezebel's guitar overwhelms her shadow. It doesn't even fit in her arms.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Inside the house is dark and quiet. A blue glare emanates from the television screen in the living room, casting eerie shadows on the floor of the entryway.

A peek inside the LIVING ROOM through the half-open door reveals their grandmother, asleep, on the sofa. Their mother is nowhere to be seen.

In the hall, Sleater and Cherish take off their shoes by the door.

Sleater carefully eases Jezebel's guitar off her shoulder and props it up against the wall.

She looks up. Cherish is watching her.

SLEATER
(whispering)
I didn't ask for this.

CHERISH
(whispering)
What the hell happened to your hair?

SLEATER
I cut it.

CHERISH
Mom is going to flip shit.

Sleater takes off her jacket, shrugs. Still hurt and keeping her distance.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
When did you meet Jezebel?

SLEATER
I didn't know it was her. I mean it, I would have told you.

CHERISH
When.

SLEATER
(hesitates)
That day at the music shop. You
were looking at the records and I
was messing around with a guitar.

Her face is cast in shadow. This admission hurts.

SLEATER (CONT'D)
I just felt lost.

CHERISH
That's BULLSHIT. Complete and total
bullshit.

Angry tears in Cherish's eyes.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
Do you even know how special of a
gift that is? She's played every
single show since she was seventeen
with that guitar. Her grandfather,
a World War II vet, gave it to her.
It's priceless.

SLEATER
I - I'm sorry.

Cherish brushes past her and storms up the STAIRS.

CHERISH
I'm going to bed.

Sleater pauses at the bottom of the stairs.

She's torn between comforting her sister and the guitar,
sitting there against the wall like the greatest Christmas
present ever.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SHARED BEDROOM - NIGHT

Inside Cherish and Sleater's shared bedroom. The white-washed
walls look soft blue in the moonlight. Seashells and colored
glass line the windowsill.

Cherish is lying on her bed, facing the wall. Her side of the
room is clearly HER OWN: beat-up acoustic guitar and a
ukulele propped against her dresser.

Sitting on the dresser, beside a lamp, is a framed picture of
their whole family together, happy and sunburned at the
beach.

Sleater knocks twice and enters.

SLEATER
I'll take it back. Okay? I'll take
it back.

No response.

Cherish clenches her pillow to her chest. A tear trickles down her face. This is a devastating betrayal - her sister taking what seems to be her rightful place.

Quietly, Sleater undresses and slides into her own bed.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SHARED BEDROOM - NIGHT

On the dresser, Sleater's alarm clock glows: 12:00 a.m.

JUMP CUT - SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SHARED BEDROOM - NIGHT

An unsteady, flickering light bounces off the window above the dresser. Soft and first but more and more insistent in its brightness, as if additional lights are congregating together.

Sleater rolls over and opens her eyes.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

An odd assortment of people on their front lawn. We see a few familiar faces - music fans from the concert earlier that night. Several punks, kicking their studded boots against the grass. A few high-strung groupies.

The light is coming from cigarette lighters and flashlights. There is an undercurrent of conversation, growing stronger.

FAN (O.S.)
I can't believe she's the one.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SHARED BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sleater stands at the window in her pajamas, hunched over, fingers prying open the blinds to peer out at the lawn. She sees the gathering crowd and sucks in her breath.

Behind her, Cherish moans and sits up in bed.

CHERISH
Shut off the light.

SLEATER
I can't.

Cherish climbs to the head of her bed. Sleep-befuddled. She kneels on her pillow, peering through the half-open blinds.

CHERISH
What is this?

SLEATER
No idea.

They watch through the window as fans produce lighters, flashlights, candles. A flame flickers up in the darkness.

Soon the whole front yard aglow. Lights bob and spill like fireflies, casting long shadows.

CHERISH
I think it's...some kind of vigil.

SLEATER
For Jezebel?

CHERISH
For you.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

The first door along the hall at the top of the stairs open.

Their mother, cinching her bathrobe around her waist, staggers down the hall. Confused and alarmed.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SHARED BEDROOM - NIGHT

Loud knocking at their door.

MOTHER
Girls!

SLEATER
Come in.

Their mother enters. She stops short at the sight of the vigil in the front lawn - of Sleater, aghast, and Cherish near-tears.

The quiet flames now seem almost blinding. There are more mourners spilling into the street.

MOTHER

Who ARE these people? I should call the police. That open flame is a hazard. They're ruining your grandmother's lawn.

SLEATER

Apparently, I've been chosen.

Their mother joins Sleater and Cherish at the window.

MOTHER

For what?

Sleater stares out at the fans, the mourners, the devotees.

These are people who used to dismiss her. Now the balance feels unsteady. She has no idea how to respond.

SLEATER

I'm not sure.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - MORNING

Cigarette butts and burned-out candles litter the ground. The aftermath of the vigil.

Birds chirping.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Sleater sits at the kitchen table, alone, with a cup of coffee. On the table in front of her - Jezebel's guitar.

She considers it. Reaches for it. Stops, draws back her hand.

Her fear is crippling. And she feels foolish.

Sleater stands up and unhooks the phone hanging beside the sink. She dials.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - PARK - MORNING

Back to the same bench, deep in the heart of the park. It's still early, and quiet. A chill in the air.

Sleater, Cherish, Andie and Kameron sit side-by-side. Each still shocked, upset, confused.

SLEATER
Thank you for coming.

KAMERON
How're you holding up?

Sleater shrugs and picks at the rip in her jeans.

SLEATER
I - I don't know what to do with
it.

CHERISH
I'll tell you what you can do with
it. Give it to someone who actually
cares.

SLEATER
What if I gave it back?

Andie reacts as if Sleater has just suggested she set the
guitar on fire and abandon it.

ANDIE
Are you insane? That's Jezebel
Jackson's prized guitar. You're
going to waltz into her house and
give it back?

SLEATER
I have to.

CHERISH
Yes, you do.

Sleater stands and faces her friends.

SLEATER
Look, I'm not going to pretend I
deserved this. Because I didn't.
This person, that Jezebel somehow
thought I can be - I'm not her. It
was a mistake.

CHERISH
Yes.

SLEATER
But what if it was THE mistake?
Like what if this is a sign? I
could be at the tip of the iceberg.
Find out where I belong.

KAMERON
You feel like you don't belong?

CHERISH
This is NOT your Titanic moment.

SLEATER
I know. I mean, yes.

A beat of silence. There seems to be only one option.

ANDIE
Uh, I can drive us. I'll borrow my
aunt's van. She's probably still
asleep and super drunk.

SLEATER
You know where we can return the
guitar?

ANDIE
I have a few ideas.

The girls follow a walking trail out of the park. Cherish
brings up the back of the line, keeping a noticeable distance
between herself and Sleater.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER HOUSE - DAY

Andie pulls into the driveway in her aunt's beat-up blue van
and leans on the horn. Kameron sits in the passenger seat
beside her.

The front door BANGS open. Sleater hurries out holding the
guitar. Cherish follows, pulling on her denim jacket.

Andie and Kameron stare at the wreckage of candles,
cigarettes and muddy footprints on the lawn.

KAMERON
Did we miss something?

ANDIE
Nah.

Sleater and Cherish climb into the backseat of the van. They
buckle their seat belts.

ANDIE (CONT'D)
Ready for this?

SLEATER
Just drive.

Putting the car in reverse, Andie turns up the radio.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD - STREET - DAY

The blue van pulls out onto the street. Rock music hums, restless and sad, from cracked windows.

EXT. ONE HOUR OUTSIDE CHICAGO - HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

The van stops at the end of a gravel driveway that snakes through surrounding forest and disappears. A mailbox sits at the end: J. & J.

The sky is heavy and grey. It looks like it might rain.

INT. VAN - DAY

Andie turns to the backseat.

ANDIE
Need help?

Sleater is quiet and tense.

SLEATER
No. I'll do it.

EXT. ONE HOUR OUTSIDE CHICAGO - HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

Sleater walks up the still, eerie drive. Guitar cradled her arms.

At a certain distance she becomes just a small, stooped figure in recycled bell bottoms, dirty-blond hair whipping past her back and shoulders.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS / JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - DAY

A squat cottage sits at the end of the drive. Corrugated metals hang over a squat porch overflowing with plants.

Trinkets, chiming in the wind, hang around the porch. A yellow child's bike sits in the yard.

Sleater steps up onto the porch and knocks on the door.

The wind sends leaves whirling and the wind chimes clattering. Sleater glances around. Disconcerted.

SLEATER

Hello?

She knocks again.

There is no reply. The wind kicks up again and the door swings open to reveal a deserted hall. No reply. When she pushes the door, it gives way, swinging back to reveal a dim, empty hall.

Sleater leans cautiously forward.

SLEATER (CONT'D)

It's the girl from the concert -
from the record shop. My name is
Sleater.

INT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - STUDIO - DAY

Just off the hall is a living room / studio space. Sleater steps inside, holding her breath.

SLEATER

I've come to return your guitar.

It's sparsely furnished but clean. More plants spill from windowsills, flowers lighting up the dark room.

Guitars are mounted on the furthest wall. Headphones, a box drum, a keyboard and a case of notebooks clutter a desk in the middle of the room.

Sleater raps on the wall. The sound echoes.

INT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is just as empty as the rest of the house. The sink is still running.

As Sleater moves to shut off the water, she notices that the lamp on the windowsill has been unplugged.

INT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - STUDIO - DAY

Sleater checks all the outlets around the room - beside the desk, under the guitars, by the door. Nothing is plugged in.

EXT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - BACK PORCH - DAY

Sleater exits the house, guitar heavy across her shoulders.

She's tired but alert, spooked.

INT. ANDIE'S VAN - DAY

Andie, asleep in the front seat, mouth open.

Kameron fiddles with the radio. She stops at a station playing smooth jazz.

In the backseat, Cherish practices holding her breath. In-out, in-out. If she had a paper bag she'd be hyperventilating.

Loud pounding on the window.

Andie jerks awake and unlocks the door.

ANDIE
How'd it go?

SLEATER
She's gone.

CHERISH
Gone?

SLEATER
Yes.

Cherish collapses in the back seat. Relieved, in a way, but also stricken.

ANDIE
We should call the police.

KAMERON
I don't think that's the greatest idea...

ANDIE
I'm calling the police.

She gets out of the van.

EXT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - DRIVEWAY/FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Red, white and blue police lights flash over Andie, Kameron, Cherish and Sleater's faces. They're all sharing a blanket.

Shivering and confused.

One cop car sits in the driveway. An officer stands on the porch inspecting his empty holster. It does not look promising.

Andie's aunt, LANE - the resemblance is striking - a washed-out former groupie with worn, sad eyes, cups her niece's shoulder with one hand and scowls at the officer.

LANE

You should have called me first.

ANDIE

I thought you were, you know...

She makes a "noose" motion: passed out.

LANE

You know I heard about the vigil.
Real beautiful thing to do for
Jezebel. I'm sure she'd be touched,
wherever she is.

The officer clambers down the porch steps. He smiles at the aunt, trying to get friendly.

OFFICER

Always a big deal when one of these
rock-rollers disappear. If you ask
me, she was probably a druggie.
Yup...strung up on somethin'.

SLEATER

She had a child.

OFFICER

Would you like to report him or her
missing as well?

Blank stares from all of the girls. Andie's aunt finally gives a tight nod.

The officer continues toward his squad car as he pulls a notebook out of his pants pocket.

Sleater buries her head in her hands.

SLEATER

I don't know what happens now.

LANE

I'll tell you what happens. You've
just inherited a movement, hon. You
have an opportunity to be someone.

The sirens WAIL. Tires SCREECH down the drive.

Sleater, arms wrapped around her ribcage, watches miserably as the taillights disappear.

FADE TO:

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Sleater and Cherish sitting around the kitchen table over breakfast. Their mother stands at the sink, washing her hands. Their grandmother dozes on a stool beside the door.

Their mother goes to the refrigerator and opens it.

MOTHER

I don't need to tell you that
abandoning your grandmother at the
pawn shop was irresponsible, not to
mention cruel.

CHERISH

Mom, I swear -

MOTHER

Do you know what she did for you
yesterday?

Their mother pulls out carton of orange juice from the refrigerator, sets it on the table between Sleater and Cherish.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

A swarm of life and noise. On one side of the room, Cherish sits with the other freshman band kids. Tentative and still trying to fit in. But she's grateful for the chance.

Sleater sits by herself at a table beneath the cafeteria windows. Picking at a plate of fries.

The distance between her and her former friends, laughing amongst themselves at another table, is a Great Divide. Suddenly uncrossable. In this new social order, she doesn't have a place to belong.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - LATE AFTERNOON

Cherish sits on the back steps with her guitar in her lap. Eyes closed and humming under her breath as she plays.

She gets to the chorus of the one Jezebel and the Jacks song, from the restaurant, and stops herself. Disappointed, fragile.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Their father's rusted station wagon pulls into the driveway. He parks and gets out.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Knocking at the door. Their mother opens it - surprised - to see their father standing on the porch. Hands in his pockets.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Sleater is halfway down the hall, carrying her magazines, when she hears low, angry voices. She crouches at the top of the stairs and peers down into the entryway.

Downstairs, her mother hasn't invited her father inside. He's a stranger on the porch.

DAD

I thought I'd take the girls out to dinner.

MOTHER

It's a school night.

DAD

Have you talked to them about college? Their career fair is this weekend. I want to make sure they're not missing valuable opportunities.

MOTHER

I'm not raising dropouts. The girls are doing well.

DAD

You didn't let me see them last week.

Sleater backs up into the hall - she's heard enough. She takes the other staircase, the narrow one, down into the...

MUDROOM

...and hurries toward the door leading out onto the back porch, where Cherish is still playing guitar.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - DAY

Sleater barges out on the back porch, slightly out of breath. Cherish isn't even fazed.

SLEATER
Dad's here.

CHERISH
So?

SLEATER
He wants to take us out for dinner.

CHERISH
It's a school night.

Sleater collapses on the step beside her.

SLEATER
I think it's real.

CHERISH
The divorce?

Sleater nods, glum.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
I think it was always real.

INT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DINER - DAY

Sleater and Cherish sit in a booth across from their father.

Plates of food on the table. The environment is bright, upbeat - a stark contrast to the tension between the three of them.

Their dad rests his elbows on the table and leans forward, trying to break the ice.

DAD
You know what I miss? Donuts. This place used to have a whole case full of 'em.

Cherish stabs her burger.

CHERISH
They have cheesecake.

DAD
Those two things shouldn't even be
in the same food group.

Sleater eats in silence, mechanical. When her father's
attention turns to her, she looks spooked.

DAD (CONT'D)
How's school going?

SLEATER
You know. Whatever.

DAD
I hear there's a college and career
fair this weekend. You girls should
go.

SLEATER
Both of us? She's just a freshman.

DAD
It's never too early.

CHERISH
I'll go.

Sleater's betrayed. It's supposed to be two against one, but
not like this. She crosses her arm and sinks down in her
seat. Sulking.

SLEATER
(to Cherish)
I didn't know you had a plan.

CHERISH
You haven't been paying attention.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Students mill between booths set up around the room. All the
cafeteria chairs and tables are folded and stacked against
the wall. The teachers gossip, supervise.

Sleater - less enthusiastic by the minute - wanders around
the room empty-handed. She doesn't know where she's going or
where to stop.

In front of a bare table with a clipboard and a sign-up sheet, a smiling WOMAN in a purple suit hands her a flier.

WOMAN
Interested in a career in
telecommunications?

SLEATER
Uh, no thanks.

She moves away quickly but is stopped again by a strapping MAN in a well-pressed flannel.

MAN
Ever considered trade school?

SLEATER
Me, with a power tool? Pass.

Sleater finds a quiet spot in the cafeteria and takes a seat against the wall. Watching.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Cherish, hugging a stack of paper folders and brochures, weaves her way through the crowd to the MIT booth. It's like seeing a small piece of heaven.

The two MIT recruiters are both talking to other students, so she waits patiently, reading from the top brochure.

The conversation in front of her grows louder, confrontational.

BOY
Are you saying I don't have a
chance? Because I'm half of a
percentile under your average?

RECRUITER
No, I'm saying you don't have a
good chance.

BOY
It's half a point!

RECRUITER
We strive for precision.

Cherish is more than a little intimidated. She looks around and sees Revant standing in line at one of the Federal booths.

She catches his eye. He waves.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD - SUNSET

It's Halloween! Glowing Jack-o-lanterns, fake cobwebs and kitschy decorations decorate front lawns down the street.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER HOUSE - SHARED BEDROOM - SUNSET

Sleater sits on the edge of her bed, lacing up her sneakers.

She's wearing her father's Penn State varsity jacket and a pair of jogging pants.

SLEATER
This feel irrelevant.

CHERISH (O.S.)
It's vintage. It's sporty.
Basically a nothing costume. Relax.

Sleater finds her reflection in the darkened window. She applies lipstick unsteadily.

SLEATER
And that means...

Cherish sticks her head out from the BATHROOM, wig pin in hand.

CHERISH
It's neutral ground. You didn't have to put in the effort to find an amusing, desirable, or socially "with it" costume, but you're also not choosing not to participate in a timely tradition wherein woman wear a tank top and some frilly underwear and call it creativity.

She stabs the air with the pin.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
Voila! You have become Nemo.

SLEATER
Thanks. Are you almost ready?

CHERISH
Sure...

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

...Cherish is perched on the toilet trying to fit her hair under a short wig. Her costume - a cheap replica of Bones' Star Trek uniform, with boots - is draped over the sink.

Cherish stabs her scalp instead of the wig cap and yelps in pain.

SLEATER (O.S.)
You sound like you're performing surgery.

CHERISH
If you're going to get nasty, I'm going to leave.

Sleater steps in the bathroom.

SLEATER
Are you going to quote that all night?
(she surveys the wig situation)
Oh, you've gotten it all tangled.

Cherish sits, obedient, on the toilet while Sleater twists her hair up under the wig cap and secures it neatly to her scalp. Glances in the mirror and gives it a tousle. Perfect.

Cherish giggles. Her face looks sharper, smaller. From budding femme to androgynous.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - SUNSET

Their mother watches Cherish and Sleater drive off in her station wagon.

MOTHER
Have fun, peaches! Remember to GET DINNER FIRST. Don't drink on an empty stomach! Be safe.

On the front porch swing, their grandmother rocks slowly back and forth.

GRANDMOTHER
When I was their age, I had a much better car.

Their mother sighs. Takes a seat beside her. The sunset soft against both their faces.

EXT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cherish and Sleater ring the doorbell. The house is pretty rundown - trash and cigarettes on the lawn. Blue lights strobe through the windows. The solid thud of the bass inside.

The door swings back. It's Andie, dressed as the Bride of Frankenstein. Towering wig, stitches on her neck.

ANDIE
Yo. Welcome!

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Furniture shoved back against the walls. A keg on the coffee table. Trash and bodies everywhere.

Andie leads Cherish and Sleater to the counter dividing the living room from the KITCHEN. Drinks are stacked high.

ANDIE
What's your poison?

CHERISH
Diet coke.

Sleater grabs a beer. She's older and cooler. Maybe disappointed in Cherish.

SLEATER
Where's Kam?

ANDIE
Busy.

SLEATER
And your aunt?

ANDIE
Upstairs, making herself beautiful.
She's meeting her boyfriend
tonight. A geologist.

Andie widens her eyes in her unsettling way, like a mystic. She licks her lips.

ANDIE (CONT'D)
It's DISGUSTING how boring he is.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cherish dances timidly in the middle of the room to David Bowie's Moonage Daydream. She's alone, awkward, but everyone around her is too drunk to notice.

On one of the couches near the wall, Sleater has been drawn into Andie's conversation with an ASPIRING DJ from school.

ANDIE
No. Hell no. If you have to hide
behind face paint -

ASPIRING DJ
-- that applies to Bowie --

ANDIE
-- I refuse to allow you to use
Bowie and KISS as parallel
metaphors --

The aspiring DJ sticks out his tongue in a horrible grimace. Imitating Gene Simmons.

ASPIRING DJ
Y-eee-aa-hhh!

Sleater hides behind her beer. These are not her people.

SLEATER
Uh, Robert Smith did that too. It's
surprisingly common...the makeup
thing...

ANDIE
You like The Cure?

SLEATER
(she sucks)
No. Cherish does.

Sleater chugs the rest of her beer.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sleater finds her rhythm, sloppy and feeling more comfortable. She dances with a VAMPIRE BOY. Getting into it. Smiling.

Until vampire boy starts to slide her varsity jacket off her shoulders, baring her arms.

Sleater stumbles back. Clutching it to herself.

SLEATER
Hey! That's mine.

VAMPIRE BOY
C'mon baby...you look hot...

SLEATER
(hysterical)
This is my father's jacket. Not
mine! I can't lose it.

Vampire boy tries to take her arm, but Sleater wrenches free and tries to find a way out -- the bodies seem to crush in on her -- she's panicking, sinking -- and throws up on the floor.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Sleater leans over the sink, running water over her head.

She's choking and gasping for air.

Andie storms in, holding a bunch of dirty rags. She dumps them in the other side of the sink.

ANDIE
Where's your sister?

Sleater turns off the sink. She flips her head over, spraying water, her neck and shoulders soaked. Still a little groggy.

SLEATER
Don't know.

ANDIE
There's coffee in the pot near the
stove. Don't puke on the carpet.

Andie leaves.

Sleater checks the pot - the coffee is stone-cold, a film over the top. She takes a solo cup from the counter and pours herself a little.

Sliding down to sit, Sleater leans against the lower cabinets. She opens one of the cabinet doors and adjusts, trying to fold back. If only she could disappear.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

Cherish, staggering, goes down the hall opening doors. She giggles at the curses and shouts.

CHERISH
Oops. Oops. Oops.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Cherish opens a door at the bottom of the stairs with a sign taped to it: Do Not Enter. There's no one in this room.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

It's a library! Quiet and cool. Cherish shuts the door behind herself. Shelves circle the room. Empty, for the most part.

In the middle, a dirty divan with a tattered pillow faces the wall.

She curls up on the divan, kicking the pillow to the ground. Like a small ragged animal. She's fast asleep in seconds.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The music has started to die down a bit. It's far past midnight.

Andie slow dances with her BOYFRIEND, SOREN, a platinum-haired teenage rocker sporting a double lip piercing.

SOREN
You talked to those chicks yet?

ANDIE
I will, man.

SOREN
That fuckin' guitar is legendary.
And they're throwing it out like
shit. Garbage.

ANDIE
I know! Shit. Don't tell me what to
do.

Soren cups her face. Super-intense.

SOREN
We're in this together, sweetheart.
You and me.

Andie bites his thumb, grins, doesn't both answering. She's in this for herself.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

Sleater searches for Cherish among the few remaining partiers. She sees the door to the library ajar.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Sleater, relieved to find her asleep and fully clothed, shakes Cherish awake.

SLEATER

Let's go.

INT. STATION WAGON - EARLY MORNING

Sleater drives, windows down. Cherish sleeps in the passenger's seat.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

The distant sound of shower water running. Footsteps and teeth being brushed.

At the kitchen table, their mother sits with her coffee and the newspaper. Reading under her breath.

Cherish is first down the stairs.

MOTHER

There's my beautiful daughter. Home and safe.

CHERISH

Morning.

She grabs a piece of toast from the toaster, butters it, and eats standing up.

MOTHER

Care to join me? There's a crossword puzzle in the back.

CHERISH

Mom. I'm like, too old for crosswords.

MOTHER

It's a Japanese style grid.

CHERISH

Oh! I love those!

She finishes eating. Now embarrassed.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
I've gotta study. PSAT's this weekend.

MOTHER
Does Sleater know the SAT is this weekend? I got a letter in the mail.

Cherish shrugs and grabs a second piece of toast. She heads for the stairs.

Their mother fills in the crossword.

MOTHER (V.O.)
We are pleased to inform you...

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - THE NEXT WEEKEND

Desks set up over the basketball court, seats filled with anxious, restless STUDENTS. A whiteboard dragged out to the front. PROCTORS pass out tests.

Sleater slouches in a row toward the back: unprepared and out of her depth.

MOTHER (V.O.)
...that your daughter has a high potential for success but a low performance track record.

CUT TO Sleater bubbling in her NAME, working through READING COMPREHENSION, mapping out grids in MATH, increasingly flustered, SLOWING DOWN as she goes.

MOTHER (V.O.)
Sleater has the particular gift of aptitude and ambition. Her work ethic, however, has left us with much to be desired...

Sleater TURNING IN her test to the PROCTOR...

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - HALL

...passing a classroom of students taking the PSAT. Cherish near the front. She makes a FACE at the Cherish's diligence and concentration.

CUT TO:

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Their mother holds the mail out to Sleater. Disappointed.

MOTHER

...and we would like to request a meeting to discuss her situation. Sleater. You're not doing well? What's happening? First you were cut from the cheer team...

SLEATER

I QUIT the cheer team.

MOTHER

...which is disappointing. But you have to find something else you love. There's a whole world beyond this neighborhood, beyond high school. That's what I've been trying to teach you from Day One. You're my warrior girl. Just because you didn't get what you wanted, you're going to give up?

Sleater refuses to take the mail.

SLEATER

I like: uncreased pages. Cilantro. Skateboarding. Putting things together. Risky Business. E.T. Music with lots of space in the middle.

MOTHER

You loved cheerleading.

Sleater is done with this conversation. She opens the screen door off the kitchen.

SLEATER

No, I loved seeing you and dad at my games. Together. When we all cheered one another on.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Sleater's grandmother kneels in the garden beneath the kitchen window, weeding around the pansies and mums hardy enough to survive into fall.

Sleater storms into the yard. She trips over the GARDEN HOSE and falls.

SLEATER

Ah, shit!

GRANDMOTHER

Sleater! Can you wind up that hose?
These pansies needed some love.

Grumbling, Sleater does so, dragging the hose to the bottom of the back porch STEPS when she's done.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

Hold this?

She offers a de-planted mum, its tuberous roots dangling.

Sleater takes it gingerly. She's disinterested until she notices a small patch of green BUDS beside the pansies.

SLEATER

Did the tulips come back?

GRANDMOTHER

For now. The second we get a frost,
they'll die.

SLEATER

You can't do anything?

Her grandmother takes the mum from her and covers it with dirt.

GRANDMOTHER

It'll be back in the spring. The
longer it lives, the deeper its
roots go.

Sleater regards the buds again. Fragile but with a surprising strength. She CROUCHES in the dirt and takes the shovel from her grandmother. Helps dig a new hole.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S DIRTY BASEMENT - DAY

A cramped, junk-filled room. Grey light filters through the sheen of grime on the window.

Andie stands beside a long wooden table piecing together her fanzine. Typewriter, pieces of magazines and newsprint, glue and book binding. She's holding scissors.

The PRINTER at the end of the table is whirring out copies of ROCK REPORT.

Sleater, Kameron and Cherish are there: Sleater, on a stool, preoccupied; Cherish with her guitar. Plucking out notes that land wrong.

Kameron is helping Andie glue a collage together to form the magazine's back cover.

CHERISH

Did you know that people say Da Vinci invented scissors, but it was really the Egyptians? He gets too much credit.

KAMERON

Yeah? People say Gaetano Vinaccia invented the first six-string guitar.

SLEATER

Riveting.

She grabs a copy from the printer. The cover is Jezebel Jackson, half-hidden under BREAKING: A LEGEND DISAPPEARS.

SLEATER (CONT'D)

Where'd you think she is right now?

ANDIE

Canada. If she's smart.

SLEATER

It's almost winter.

ANDIE

There's a lot of places to hide in Canada. Trees.

KAMERON

Once, my cousin's family went camping in Alberta and almost died. Their cabin was attacked by a bear.

The girls consider this.

ANDIE

See, this is why I founded Rock Report. For random shit and rock 'n' roll.

KAMERON

You founded Rock Report for Jezebel and the Jacks. What happens when...

Their raised voices fade into the background. Sleater, intensely focused. She creases her copy of Rock Report. On the cover, Photograph Jezebel BLINKS her eyes...

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO BAR - FLASHBACK

...the concert blur of lights and sound. Jezebel, clad in black leather, looming over Sleater.

She holds out her guitar in slow motion.

INT. ANDIE'S BASEMENT - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

The printer POPS, HISSES, and begins to SMOKE. Kameron unplugs it. Copies spill from the lid across the table.

ANDIE

So what's happening to the guitar?
Are we going to share it? Pass it
around?

Sleater realizes she's being addressed.

SLEATER

Um, I haven't thought...

CHERISH

Are you serious? She doesn't even
let me touch it, like, it's
becoming her own personal security
blanket.

SLEATER

I - um, should I get a glass case
or something? I feel like it's
worth something. But not, you know,
valuable. Kind of just -- sacred.

ANDIE

You should USE IT, man.

SLEATER

Oh - no.

ANDIE

C'mon. What would Jezebel want? Her
guitar, collecting dust, like those
lame condolence trophies you get
from Little League? Or a BRAND NEW
legacy?

Sleater isn't ready to have this conversation.

SLEATER

You keep bringing this up. This band thing.

ANDIE

Because it'd be epic.

SLEATER

That's YOUR dream, Andie. You can join a band anytime you want. But I'm not that person, okay?

CHERISH

What if - I mean, I'd like that. Starting a band. It'd be a good chance to practice.

SLEATER

No. I'm sorry, but no.

She grabs her jacket and leaves.

E/I. ROADS, DOWNTOWN / STATION WAGON - DAY

Sleater drives through a bad part of town. Bars in shop windows. Shitty gas stations.

"Peek-A-Boo" by Siouxsie and the Banshees is playing: off-kilter, unsettling. She mouths the words. Practices a rock star's growl.

SLEATER

(singing)

*Creeping up the backstairs /
slinking into dark stalls...*

I/E. GREEN VOLKSWAGEN / OLD MINE ROAD, NEW JERSEY - DAY

Feminine hands tapping a beat on the steering wheel. On the left wrist, a tattoo; the edge of a phoenix wing.

Beautiful New Jersey autumn unfolds along the road: vividly dressed trees and empty highway.

Childish laughter from the passenger's seat.

SLEATER (O.S.)

(singing)

*Shapeless and slumped in bath
chairs / furtive eyes peep out of
holes...*

Intercutting, between the two cars.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Sleater buys a pack of cigarettes. Tries to buy an energy drink but doesn't have exact change. She searches her pockets for a quarter.

SLEATER (O.S.)
(singing)
*She has many guises / she'll do
what you want her to...*

E/I. ROADS, DOWNTOWN / STATION WAGON - DAY

Sleater smokes with the windows down. Cagey and whisper-screaming the words.

SLEATER (O.S.)
*Playing dead and sweet submission /
cracks the whip deadpan on cue...*

I/E. GREEN VOLKSWAGEN / OLD MINE ROAD, NEW JERSEY - DAY

The Volkswagen zooms out of a thick knot of trees and onto wide road. Up ahead - Dutch-style cottages, a relic from a distant past.

The hands pause their beat. Lift off the wheel and point.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Look, Charlie.

E/I. ROADS, DOWNTOWN / STATION WAGON - DAY

The Ferris wheel along Navy Pier rises with the skyline.

Sleater is mesmerized. The carts glowing in the golden light.

Like small spaceships.

She loses control of the wheel and almost rear-ends a trolley.

SLEATER (O.S.)
(singing)
Peek-a-boo/ peek-a-boo...

I/E. GREEN VOLKSWAGEN / OLD MINE ROAD, NEW JERSEY - DAY

Emergency lights bathe the road in red and blue. Police cars and an ambulance pulled over beside a semi-truck.

The green Volkswagen, crumpled and shattered. Steam rising from the engine.

POLICE RADIO (O.S.)
We have two in the car. Illinois plates.

Black.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sleater, Cherish, and their mother and grandmother in the living room around the television, eating reheated frozen dinners in pajamas and watching "The Tonight Show."

CHERISH
I think I found a pea.

She holds up the offending substance: not a pea, but definitely an unidentified circular object.

SLEATER
Eat it. I dare you.

MOTHER
It's probably just seasoning. When I was a kid I used to find chunks of unmixed seasoning in my meals.

CHERISH
GROSS. Like a garlic-flavored malt ball.

Onscreen, Johnny Carson bows to raucous applause. Commercial break! Their mother changes the channel to local news.

NEWS ANCHOR
The death of a local rockstar and her son has just been confirmed tonight.

Cherish drops her dinner tray ALL OVER the carpet. She grabs the remote from her mother and cranks up the volume.

MOTHER
Cherish, what --

CHERISH

Shh!!!

NEWS ANCHOR

Authorities found Jezebel Jackson and her son, Charlie Willis, age eight. While the preliminary cause of death has yet to be confirmed, police were called to the scene by a truck driver who found Jackson's car, wrecked, on the side of the road in a possible hit-and-run.

Sleater reaches across the sofa and takes Cherish's hand. She can't look away from the overhead footage of the scene. The twisted vehicle. The wailing sirens.

Cherish hides her face in her mother's shoulder, like a child, and starts to cry.

EXT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S OVERGROWN BACKYARD - THE NEXT DAY

Sleater, Andie, Cherish and Kameron stand around a garbage burner at the edge of the backyard, feeding copies of Rock Report to the flames.

Their hero is dead. It's impossible. Unthinkable.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - MONTAGE

Sleater going through the motions. As if underwater.

--in ENGLISH CLASS watching her classmates act out a scene from MACBETH.

LADY MACBETH (SHARON)

"Yet do I fear thy nature, It is
too full o' th' milk of human
kindness to catch the nearest
way..."

--in GYM running laps around the track. The coach's WHISTLE.

--in the COMPUTER LAB surfing through pictures of topiaries: MOTHER EARTH rises out of the ground.

--in LATIN, suffering through lecture.

LATIN TEACHER

The boy loves the girl. Puellam
amat puer. The girl loves the boy.
Puella amat puerum.

--the voices BUILD. Sleater trudges through the crowded HALL. A JOCK shoves past her. She flips her middle finger at his retreating back.

END MONTAGE.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

Sleater sits across from her old coach.

SLEATER

Please. I'm not asking for much.

COACH

It's the late end of the season.

SLEATER

I'll help clean uniforms. And order the Christmas bows. I'm happy being on the bench. Just let me have this back.

Her coach purses her mouth. A tense beat. Then she nods.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - AFTERNOON

Sleater sneaks down the stairs in her cheer sneakers, her backpack stuffed with a change of clothes.

Rock music drifting from the KITCHEN. Soap opera dialogue from the LIVING ROOM.

She opens the door, careful and quiet.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Sleater drops her skateboard on the ground, steps on and kicks off down the street.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - AFTERNOON

The cheer team are working on a pyramid.

Sleater takes off her jacket and hides her skateboard under her backpack. She looks just as uncomfortable as she did during tryouts.

Her former friends - Sharon, Olivia and Courtney - are surprised and displeased to see her. Sharon leaves the formation to come over to the side of the court.

SHARON

You should have done this weeks ago.

SLEATER

I'm sorry I got mad at you.

SHARON

No, I'm sorry. You quit the team, Sleater. Blew. It. This is just a mercy move.

Sleater absorbs the verbal hit. She watches the coach run the girls through a dance for Homecoming. Loud, grating ELECTRONIC MUSIC.

She tries to join in from the back. Defeated.

CHERISH (O.S.)

You rejoined the CHEER SQUAD?!

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SHARED BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sleater is changing into sweatpants. Her uniform hanging from the closet door.

Cherish, irate, stands on her bed and wields a book.

CHERISH

I'm calling a meeting.

SLEATER

I thought you'd be happy about this. I'm staying in my lane. The "same old Sleater."

CHERISH

Because I love you. And you're a HUGE dumb-ass.

She bounces to a seat and stands.

CHERISH (CONT'D)

This isn't going to solve anything, Sleater.

SLEATER

I need this. Okay?

Cherish makes a DRAMATIC EXIT to the bathroom. Clearly, she is not on board.

INT. ANDIE'S AUNT'S DIRTY BASEMENT - DAY

Andie and Kameron are working on the next issue of Rock Report, which has been changed to TITLE PENDING.

Andie looks haggard. Her hair is half its usual height.

ANDIE
Just fold the pages together. I'll
have my uncle staple 'em.

CHERISH (O.S.)
I invoke safe passage!

ANDIE
Come in, yo.

Cherish enters with Sleater.

ANDIE (CONT'D)
(at Sleater)
Hey, look - it's the sellout.

CHERISH
We should keep this civil.

Cherish hops up to sit on the edge of the table.

CHERISH (CONT'D)
Attention, those assembled...

ANDIE
Shut up a second, Cherish. Look:
(to Sleater)
If you want to quit rock 'n' roll,
fine by me. I'm not gonna hold your
hand and pow-wow about it. But pass
on the guitar.

SLEATER
What...IS this?

She picks up a copy of TITLE PENDING. Skeleton animals march across the page.

KAMERON
I guess it's punk now.

SLEATER
That's just a sub-genre!

CHERISH

What I think we ALL are trying to communicate to my sister is that she's selling herself short. You could step in the vacuum of a rock goddess, Sleater! She chose you. Not us. You.

Sleater shoves the fanzine back into the printing tray.

SLEATER

Yeah? You didn't see it that way when it happened.

CHERISH

I changed my mind?

SLEATER

No. You need me. And I'm not doing this shit.

She storms out of the basement.

Cherish wilts. Andie takes the 'zine out of the tray and flattens the crumpled paper.

EXT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL GAME - FRIDAY NIGHT

BRIGHT stadium LIGHTS and MARCHING BAND playing. Two opposing teams run warm-up drills on the field. From the sidelines, the cheerleading team hypes up the crowd.

Sleater stands in the middle of the group, trying to recapture her spirit n' pep. She fluffs her pom-poms anxiously and forces a smile.

Kickoff! The game begins.

Sleater looks into the stands to see her parents sitting on opposite sides of the bleachers. Both cheering, but...

She sees it in SLOW MOTION. The distance between her mother and father seems to be a HUNDRED MILES WIDE. It's too weird.

Too painful.

Sleater drops her pom-poms mid-dance and breaks into a sprint.

COACH (O.S.)

Sleater? SLEATER!

She runs past the edge of the BLEACHERS --

Past the CONCESSION STAND --

Past the REFEREES and STUNNED FANS and OBLIVIOUS PLAYERS --

Across the TRACK --

Through the teeming PARKING LOT --

And up the BACK STEPS OF THE SCHOOL.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sleater tears down the hall. Not sure where she's going.
Upset.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - COMPUTER LAB - NIGHT

Andie, Cherish and Kameron are kneeling on the floor gluing letters onto poster board.

ANDIE
Do we smell pickles? I smell
pickles. Slow...death...

CHERISH
Quit it. This is the only room they
leave unlocked.

They finish working, roll up the poster and exit the lab.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sleater turns the corner - COLLIDES! - with her friends.

Kameron drops the poster.

Cherish slips and falls.

ANDIE
What the hell?!

SLEATER
I couldn't do it.

ANDIE
Oh.
(holds up the poster)
We were coming with our Carpe Diem.

SLEATER

Yeah, already got there. But thanks for the sign. Is that supposed to be me?

On the poster: it COULD be Sleater. It's bizarre and unsettling. Magazine cutouts block out pieces of the photo - a red guitar is glued over her hand, a flaming pirate ship over her hair. Dancing animal skeletons over her eyes.

ANDIE

Yes. I think it'll be the next cover of TITLE PENDING.

CHERISH

You weren't made for Dada - stick to rock 'n' roll. Also PICK A GODDAMN TITLE.

SLEATER

But...you guys were so upset.

She helps her sister up off the floor.

SLEATER (CONT'D)

C? What gives?

CHERISH

Me first. Did you run off the field? What the hell?

SLEATER

I, uh...broke a shoelace. I was -- making haste! -- to the locker room.

(Cherish doesn't believe her. A pointed look at her tear-streaked face.)

Uh. Mom and dad were there. Not, like, together.

(she resigns herself)

I guess I was afraid. And I'm tired. What about you?

CHERISH

I thought you'd like a grand gesture, just once. Doesn't look like anyone else is around to do it.

SLEATER

My grand gesture is a poster? *One* poster.

CHERISH

Yeah, and you're welcome. I burned a finger for you. Hot glue is basically lava.

(she sighs)

I couldn't let you give up. Okay? I'm sorry to giving you so much shit. Here is my permission to you to be a badass. Because, you know, you could be. Or a "poser," or a cheerleader, whatever. You'll figure it out.

Sleater takes another look at the poster. The collage really IS terrifying. Still, she's touched.

She hugs Cherish.

INT. JADE EMPRESS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The girls sit cross-legged around their platform table, passing around tea, noodles and egg rolls.

They're chatting -- gentle rock music playing in the background -- when Andie takes a poster out of her bag and unfolds it on the table.

It's a red-stamped NOTICE. The bar - JEZEBEL'S BAR - is closing.

She throws another poster on the table over the notice:

IT's a NEWSPAPER CUT-OUT -- Jezebel Jackson's funeral, open to the public -- GRACELAND CEMETERY - Saturday, 3 p.m.

EXT. GRACELAND CEMETERY - ENTRANCE - DAY

Sleater, Andie, Cherish and Kameron march single-file into the cemetery, wearing head-to-toe black, Andie in her red boots.

All of it is surreal - the lush green grass, the towering mausoleums and intricate headstones. A fervor of white flowers against the iron-grey sky.

EXT. GRACELAND CEMETERY - GRAVESIDE - DAY

The mood of the service is both solemn and celebratory. It's a huge crowd, widely varied -- from Jezebel's fellow rockers, bandmates and fans to families.

A MINISTER wraps up his speech.

MINISTER
Above all, we petition for eternal
peace.

EXT. GRACELAND CEMETERY - GRAVESIDE - LATER

The girls sit on the low stone lip of a Victorian-style mausoleum facing Jezebel's tomb. By now, the crowd is gone and the clouds overhead threaten rain.

Andie lights a cigarette and passes it on. The girls each take a pull as it's handed to them. Cherish, new to this, coughing.

The last person in the row, Sleater, exhales a cloud of smoke and drops the cigarette. She stubs it out in the grass.

SLEATER
We should do it.

KAMERON
IT, it? This isn't a virginity pact, is it? Because I hate to say it, but I've already...

SLEATER
No! No - I mean, play one show, as a - a ...band. In her memory.

CHERISH
You're sure.

SLEATER
I think...it's only right. She passed on her legacy. We need to honor that.

Andie lights up another cigarette and passes it down again.

Reserved but STOKED. The girls smoke in silence. In the distance, the rumble of thunder...

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S GARAGE - NIGHT

...which becomes the discordant CRASH of the drums as Cherish slams down the sticks. It's an old, dated drum kit - a Titan of its day, probably owned by her grandfather. Dust flies from the cymbals.

Andie stands in front of the group. She clears her throat into a toy microphone.

Sleater and Kameron occupy the middle, Kameron on bass, Sleater cradling Jezebel's guitar. Looking...mortified.

They sound like MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND PRACTICE or DICE IN A BLENDER. Discordant and grinding through The Ramones' "I Wanna Be Sedated." It's barely recognizable.

ANDIE

STOP! Cut! I need more to work with. An actual rhythm would be nice. Let's start there.

KAMERON

Dude, we don't need a whole set. One or two songs is plenty.

ANDIE

Sure, if this were an eighth grader's birthday party!

SLEATER

(too uncomfortable to be serious)

We could just not practice. At all. Get up there on the stage next week and do...our best.

ANDIE

Fine. Two songs.

INT. - THE JADE EMPRESS RESTAURANT - DAY

Sleater and Andie sit at their usual table across from Andie's aunt, Lane. They're pitching her their idea.

ANDIE

Can you help us?

Lane stirs her finger in a cup of tea. She ignores the plate of egg rolls in front of her.

LANE

Did you know I quit gluten? Five months ago. It's been life-changing.

ANDIE

Yes, we've heard.

LANE

You should be so grateful. I did it for you, you know that? When Jack --
(to Sleater)

-- my second and least favorite husband, the photojournalist -- died and left me a load of money, I thought, I should use to this help my poor, starving niece. After she washed up on my doorstep one night, half-drowned, out of her goddamn mind - That stupid little bitch wasn't even feeding herself. Her mother was shit-knows-where --

ANDIE

-- in rehab --

LANE

-- but you should have seen her, wouldn't recognize her. Andie was on cocaine constantly. All jumpy. After the pregnancy scare I found out she didn't even know how to use protection!

SLEATER

Pregnancy scare?!

Lane smiles at Andie, not trying to be cruel -- just oblivious and rough around the edges.

ANDIE

I was not a coke fiend.

SLEATER

Ms. Sunset...

LANE

Lane.

SLEATER

...Lane. We're asking for a small favor. That's it. We just think it's the right thing to do, you know? To honor a legacy.

LANE

Yeah, yeah.

Lane gazes out the window. Lost down the rabbit hole of memory.

LANE (CONT'D)

I remember bein' a little older than you, down at Stinson Beach when Janis died. My friends and I were sleeping in the sand and swapping clothes around so nothing wore out too bad. If you turn underwear twice, you don't have to wash it as often, so it doesn't fall apart as quick. We would have followed her anywhere...when they found her at the Landmark...we were so heartbroken.

(she drinks her tea, cold)

You realize you have less time kickin' around here than you think. I'll help you. But if those promoters give you a dime, I'm not half as young as I used to be.

SLEATER

We're not doing it for money.

LANE

No? That's good then.

INT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S STREET - NIGHT

Sleater and Cherish walk home, bundled against the November chill. Each lost in thought.

SLEATER

Hey - want to know something crazy?

CHERISH

Shoot.

SLEATER

Thanksgiving is tomorrow.

CHERISH

Huh...I guess I should've gotten my PSAT results back by now.

SLEATER

C'mon C. Test results? No HAPPY THANKSGIVING? No pumpkin-pie happy dance? This rocked my world today. I forgot all about it. I want twenty-four hours to inflate on pie and sweet potatoes and forget about this mess.

Cherish isn't tracking with her - she's still mulling over the PSAT results.

SLEATER (CONT'D)
(singing)
Cinnamon-spiiiiice, pumpkin
twiiice...

CHERISH
Stop - you sound terrible --

But as Sleater keeps singing off-key at the top of her lungs...

Cherish breaks and starts laughing. She moonwalks through her Thanksgiving dance, improvising, pretending to fork a bite of pie from the palm of her hand.

For just this moment -- she forgets.

SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

The kitchen is crowded with food. Sleater's mother stands over the sink peeling potatoes; her grandmother is reading the obituaries from the table.

GRANDMOTHER
Sarah, I think the grocer's nephew died. Listen to this: "The deceased requests his body to be set afloat in a longboat and burned like a Viking warrior." Too bad he grew zucchini in his backyard instead of poppies. That family couldn't even afford oxygen, and that's free.

MOTHER
Poppies?

Their grandmother mimes taking a pill. She cackles at the disapproving look on their mother's face.

Cherish, barefoot and holding her guitar, enters for the last part of this exchange - she takes the paper from her grandmother.

CHERISH
Oh, man. The zucchini guy!

GRANDMOTHER
He was ambitious, I'll give him that.

MOTHER

Cherish, will you help me with the potatoes? Where's your sister?

Cherish sets her guitar beside the table. She joins her mother at the sink and takes up the potato peeler.

CHERISH

I dunno. Sleeping maybe.

MOTHER

I know this is difficult, but I need both you to keep up the good spirits for today, okay? I think it'll be good for all of us to keep this holiday as normal as possible.

Cherish salutes. She keeps peeling a potato.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

When your father gets here, you two can watch the parade together.

CHERISH

WHAT?!

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - HALL / SHARED BEDROOM - DAY

Cherish takes the stairs two at a time and barges into the shared bedroom, out of breath.

The blinds are drawn; it looks like Sleater is asleep under the covers. Cherish pounces.

CHERISH

Sleater! Wake UP!

Sleater groans and swats her.

SLEATER

(mumbles)

Ged-of-me.

CHERISH

Dad's coming to dinner.

Sleater turns her face into her pillow.

SLEATER

Oh, shit.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The entire family sits around the kitchen table, the extra flap brought up to accommodate two extra guests: their father and his DATE.

A picture-perfect feast is spread out. The chairs are decorated with orange-and-red ribbon, and the napkin holders are shaped like cornucopias. Jazz music over the TENSE SILENCE.

There's been a lull in conversation. Everyone is eating instead of talking.

Sleater and Cherish keep stealing side glances at their father's DATE -- a plain, L.L. Bean type, wearing a nutmeg brown turtleneck, who clearly wasn't ready to "meet the family."

SLEATER

So, you're a scientist?

DATE

Yes - environmental activist. I go back and forth between here and Lake Michigan for work.

SLEATER

Is that where you met? On a mode of public transportation?

Their father and his date make brief - guilty - eye contact and no one answers.

GRANDMOTHER

I read an obituary about the lake today. An old woman fell off the dock and drowned. They fished her body out with a crane.

MOTHER

(a beat)

Pass the casserole. Please.

INT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - DAY

From the half-open living room door, Cherish and Sleater have a clear view of their father, his date and their grandmother watching the LIONS / JETS game.

Cherish and Sleater stand at the kitchen sink. One washing dishes and the other drying.

Through the kitchen window, their mother is standing in the back garden, her high heels severing the pansies underfoot.

Cardigan wrapped tightly around her body. Her face is turned away from them but her posture is rigid, erect.

Cherish examines the inside of a casserole dish.

CHERISH

It's weird - they'll have two sets of dishes soon. Like, mom's dishes and dad's dishes. And we'll have to keep them both straight.

SLEATER

They won't be sharing dishes.

CHERISH

No. They won't.

EXT. SLEATER'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Sleater and Cherish hug their father goodbye.

DAD

I thought next weekend we could have "The Price is Right" night, like you wanted. I'll make some popcorn.

CHERISH

Okay, dad. Sure.

Their father kisses their mother's cheek, cordial but distant. He and his date leave in her Corvette.

When Sleater and Cherish reach the top of the front porch steps, their mother hugs them tight. She kisses each of their foreheads in turn.

MOTHER

Love you, peaches.

INT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

Lane leads the girls through the bar. The crowd is sluggish, mid-afternoon sorrow-drowners. An ANDROGYNOUS PERSON with a cowboy hat and a tambourine warms up onstage.

Off to one side, observing, an older, creased-in MAN watches, drink in hand. He has the look of someone who belongs even where he isn't wanted. Tattoos on each finger.

LANE

Am I too late? I thought you'd be sober until at least four o'clock.

HUBERT

Son-of-a-bitch. You still look beautiful.

LANE

I've got nine lives.
 (he pats her shoulder; she
 takes a drink of his
 whiskey and hands it
 back)
 Hubert, meet the girls. Girls, meet Hubert.

Hubert surveys them. He seems unimpressed.

HUBERT

Huh. I guess Jez meant to pick just one of you.

LANE

Jezebel had a sixth sense. I think she'd know. One of my friends believed she was a psychic...

HUBERT

You know I don't believe in that shit. You girls ever played before?

SLEATER

The guitar isn't for sale, if you've got that idea. This is a one-time thing.

HUBERT

Fine. I'm putting on the memorial at her old summer cottage, so, my rules. Her bandmates are going to be there. The press. A few bands who opened for THE JACKS back in the day.

Kameron, Andie, Sleater and Cherish are NOT PREPARED for this. An audience? A memorial? The last thing they were expecting or hoping for...

HUBERT (CONT'D)

Yeah, Jezebel was a friend of mine. I don't care why you have the guitar, if you can play it, what you're planning to do with it...I care that she gave it to you. That means something. I think she'd be tickled. You kids could be good, too. Pretty, young, innocent...do you sing?

LANE

Trust me - it's too early for that. Right now they sound like a bunch of dead cats trapped in a bag.

She kisses his cheek.

LANE (CONT'D)

We'll see you Sunday.

The girls follow Lane to the exit -- turning over their shoulders to look at the bar -- the stage -- a hundred times bigger now that they'll be the ones standing on it.

Onstage, the tambourine player shakes out a beat. A customer boos and throws a drink at his feet.

INT. SHORE AREA HIGH SCHOOL - BIOLOGY LAB - DAY

Cherish carries her unopened PSAT scores into class. Like a good luck charm, but more insidious.

She glances around, but all the lab stations are full - except for one in the middle of the room, beside Revant.

Nervous, blushing, she takes a seat.

CHERISH

Um, hi.

REVANT

What's up?

CHERISH

You know...nothing much...

An opening - if she's brave enough to take it. Cherish takes a deep breath.

CHERISH (CONT'D)

...my sister and my friends and I are playing this show, downtown.

(MORE)

CHERISH (CONT'D)

For the Jezebel memorial? Do you know who she is? I'm, um, drumming.

REVANT

The one who just died, right? With the kid.

CHERISH

Yeah. That's her.

REVANT

There's this party...that I might be going to...

Cherish, a little crushed, turns back to her notebook. She bends over her work and ignores him. Still red-faced but now BLOTCHY with embarrassment.

REVANT (CONT'D)

I - crap. I don't know why I said that. I'm not doing anything this weekend. Unless watching Trek re-runs counts. The music thing sounds cool.

CHERISH

No, re-runs count. Except if you're on...

REVANT

...Voyager, season one...

CHERISH

...because that one sucks.

REVANT

I know!

They make BRIEF - but striking! - eye contact and look away. The awkward innocence of young love.

INT. CHICKADEE THRIFT - DAY

Andie, Kameron, Cherish and Sleater hunt for the right outfits. Filling their arms with leather - fur - animal print - fringe.

INT. ANDIE'S BASEMENT - DAY

Hunched over her sewing machine, Andie pins the eviscerated pieces of a jacket back together.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Andie's van screeches to a halt along the side of the road.

Cherish stumbles out.

A bin of abandoned instruments sits at the curb. She scoops it up with both arms.

EXT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - SUNSET

Bus after bus pulls into a field. It's the middle of nowhere, post-frost. Attendees are bundled up, drunk, rowdy, mourning, celebrating.

Andie's hideous blue van parks and the girls and Lane file out.

INT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - FRONT ROOM - DAY

The cottage is packed to max capacity. Posters on the walls.

A makeshift stage, just like the one at the bar, sits in the middle of the...

LIVING ROOM

...which has been taped off until the show stars.

Hubert greets the girls at the door.

HUBERT

There we are. There we are. Nice costumes, gals. Friendly word of advice? Shake out the hair a little bit. This isn't a Motley Crue reunion. How does it feel to stand in your predecessor's footsteps?

SLEATER

Surreal.

HUBERT

...you can park your stuff in one of the bedrooms upstairs; show doesn't start until nine.

He leads them toward a BATHROOM down the HALL.

Andie and Lane bring up the rear. Andie is wild with excitement and nervous enough to puke. Lane keeps trying to calm her down.

ANDIE

I just hope they don't expect me to be sober all night.

LANE

Practice your breathing - in through your nose - out through your mouth.

INT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - BATHROOM - LATER

The bathroom has been converted to the sparsest dressing room possible - a few stools have been dragged in for seating and the mirror is smudged with dirt.

Sleater leans into her reflection. Her hair is wet and slicked behind her ears; her jewelry bold and cheap. She is BRASS and FIRE. She is braver than the girl who refused red lipstick.

Andie crouches on the floor tuning her guitar. In full overblown-glam-rocker mode. Cherish sits beside her, tense to the point of stomach pain, hugging her knees to her chest.

Kameron knocks and enters, Lane at her heels.

KAMERON

We go on in five.

LANE

NO crazy introductions. Andie. Remember to breath. Push your air through the back of your vocal cords. Open your mouth wide.

ANDIE

We don't have a band name! I just realized we didn't have a name!

SLEATER

We - are not - a band.

KAMERON

Hell yeah we are. For the next ten minutes.

Cherish manages a weak smile.

CHERISH
For Jezebel.

The girls look at each other. This is something special, undefinable - this love of music that they all share and the community it's brought them into.

Close on each girl's face....

Before we JUMP CUT to the...

LIVING ROOM STAGE

...as a reverent hush falls over the crowd. The girls are lined up onstage. Sleater holds Jezebel's guitar like she owns it.

A loud, exuberant HOLLER from the back breaks the silence.

Andie grabs the mic and looks out at the fans, mourners, revelers gathered together.

ANDIE
We're the Monday Girls. Chicago,
are you ready?!

The girls launch into a jagged, messy intro to "Marquee Moon," by Television. Every note is an uncertain step as Andie wails out of tune.

It's a beautiful TRAGEDY, as all first rock gigs should be.

INT. JEZEBEL'S LIVING ROOM - POST-SHOW

The Monday Girls, sweating and hassled, pack up their stuff and exit the stage. The crowd wasn't as generous about the second song - they're receiving some DISBELIEVING LOOKS and DARK MUMBLING.

They pass Lane and Hubert sharing a drink at the door.

LANE
Killed it, sweets.

EXT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

Sleater helps Kameron pack the back of the van. She stashes her guitar beneath a pile of blankets.

Andie wrings beer out of her hair. She's half-drunk on the buzz of performing.

ANDIE

Did you see that asshole dump his drink on me?

KAMERON

You did karate-chop his face with the microphone.

ANDIE

Yeah, AFTER he asked me to flash him.

SLEATER

Oh, my god, did you even wear a bra? When you fell on the floor...and I was standing next to you...

Andie has to check. She smiles happily.

ANDIE

Nope! So I guess I could have. He was unworthy. There's a beautiful man in there who isn't, either, but whom I will grace with my presence...

KAMERON

The rocker thing went straight to your head.

She and Sleater close up the back of the van.

INT. JEZEBEL'S COTTAGE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Through the crush of the crowd warming up for the next band's set, Cherish spots Revant, soda in hand, leaning against the wall near the back of the room. Out-of-place but adorable in a pale blue polo and jeans.

She fights her way over. A couple people give her high-fives.

CHERISH

Hey...

REVANT

Hi. You look...pretty cool right now. Like you could kick my ass.

Cherish covers her face.

CHERISH
T-thanks. What happened to your plans?

REVANT
I was fibbing.

CHERISH
Oh. No re-runs?

REVANT
I'll definitely be watching re-runs. At some point. Or new stuff.

CHERISH
Yeah?

REVANT
If you're free - or, you know, not being a rockstar...

CHERISH
I'd like that.

She leans against the wall next to him to watch the crowd. They share a smile.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - EARLY MORNING / DAWN

In the distance ahead, growing smaller against the breaking horizon, Lane drives the ugly blue van home.

Behind her, Sleater, Cherish, Kameron and Andie skateboard through the streets of downtown. Faltering, stumbling, joyful, cold, there to be alive.

Sleater navigates a corner and TRIPS, ankle twisting, skateboard shooting out into the street. She FALLS. Concrete scrapes her knee open.

Blood drips from the wound. The same bright red as Jezebel's Teisco guitar.

Hands reach for her...

Unsteady, teeth gritted against the pain, she gets to her feet on her own.

SLEATER V.O.
It might be all bullshit. Who knows?

FADE TO BLACK

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