PERFECT STRANGERS

by

Adam Scott

FADE IN:

INSERT SHOTS - OPENING MONTAGE

Rock and roll.

Various shots ... jerky ... disjointed...

Bands perform on stages in bars.

The pounding beat of the drums...

Face-melting guitar solos...

Singers leaping around stages, holding the audience's attention with their every move...

The crowd rocking along, loving every minute.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK

the pounding beat of the drums becomes something else, something more precise, smaller, quieter ... the sound of a ticking clock.

FADE IN:

INT. SUPERMARKET, DELI COUNTER -- DAY

The clock is on the wall and being watched intently by TERRY REID, aged twenty five. He is tall, permanently unshaven and dressed in the supermarket uniform and stood behind the deli, but his attention is on the clock.

Five to eleven.

He looks nervous.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

EXTREME CLOSE on an expensive Rolex watch on a female wrist. Five to eleven, assume it to be the morning.

We PAN AROUND to see the owner of the watch - ALICE MASON. She is around twenty-two, very beautiful but also nervous as hell.

MAXWELL (O.S.)

Nervous?

She glances across at the man sat in the dock - MAXWELL CLAYTON, also early twenties, handsome enough to be pretty. He has an edge about him that some girls will find attractive, but he's basically trouble. He wears a suit as though it's an alien device, completely foreign to him.

The BAILIFF guarding him gives Maxwell a sharp look that shuts him up, but he's still wearing a cocky grin.

Alice gives him a disgusted look and doesn't answer ... but yes she is very nervous.

INT. SUPERMARKET, DELI COUNTER -- DAY

The hands of the clock have reached eleven. Terry watches, NERVOUS, unable to concentrate on his job.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Alice too is still looking at her watch. At that moment the voice of the CLERK OF THE COURT makes her jump.

CLERK

All rise!

They all do. Alice turns to look at the man sat beside her - her father, DAVID MASON (40s, the look of a successful businessman but kindly-faced), who is also looking nervous.

As the JUDGE (50s) enters, she gives David an optimistic smile that she clearly doesn't believe.

JUDGE

Good morning. Bring in the jury.

As the jury are brought in, Alice bites her lip. She doesn't think this is going to go well.

EXT. BACK OF SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Terry is stood out the back, smoking a cigarette for his nerves. He's on edge, looking as though he might snap at any second.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

The Judge addresses the FOREMAN of the jury.

JUDGE

Has the jury reached it's verdict?

FOREMAN

We have, your honour.

EXT. BACK OF SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Terry crushes out a barely-smoked cigarette and goes to light up another one almost immediately. Before he can even light his lighter his mobile phone rings.

He grabs for it immediately and answers with a trembling hand.

TERRY

Hello?

ALICE (O.S.)

Guess what?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. OUTSIDE COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Alice is descending the steps of the courthouse talking on her phone, a big grin plastered all over her face. **TERRY**

Not quilty?

ALICE

As if. Judge gave the bastard seven years for possession with intent to supply.

TERRY

Great ... oh, Alice, I'm ...

He's just as choked as she is.

TERRY (CONT'D)

And what about the--

ALICE

(cutting him off)

One trial at a time, okay?

TERRY

Fair enough. Are you headed home? I'm coming over there right now.

ALICE

What about work?

TERRY

I suddenly don't care anymore. I should have been there for you today, so I'm coming over now.

From the big grin on Alice's face, this is the capper on a great result.

ALICE

I love you, you know.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Yeah well, see how you feel when I'm out of a job.

ALICE

Even then.

She looks up, sees her father stood on the kerb across the scene.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I gotta go.

TERRY

I'll see you later. Love you.

ALICE

And you. Bye.

They hang up. We STAY WITH ALICE as she makes her way over to the kerb, where David is stood.

ALICE (CONT'D)

How about that?

DAVID

Alice, thank God...

He enfolds his daughter into a big hug.

ALICE

And Maxwell's going inside. It can only get better.

DAVID

The streets are a safer place without him. Now come on, we need to get you home ...

But at that moment, with a squealing of tyres, a motorcycle screeches to a halt in front of them. Alice's eyes go wide in horror.

All the sound DROPS OFF with the exception of a pounding, a heartbeat ... ALICE'S HEARTBEAT...

The rider is dressed in black leathers with a black helmet that completely covers his face. He reaches into his jacket and pulls out-

A GUN.

Time seems to slow down. Alice is frozen to the spot. The rider fires--

And HITS HER! ... three bullets in the chest--

And abruptly all the SOUND COMES BACK as Alice's body hits the ground. Everyone screams. Complete carnage. The rider roars off on his bike.

And Alice is lying on the ground in a pool of blood. David drops down beside her, HORRIFIED.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Alice! Alice! Somebody call an ambulance! Alice...!

But his words drop off, so all we can hear is the beating of her heart again ... Alice is fighting for her life... And losing.

All the other sounds around Alice DROP OFF. The sound of the heart beat swells to encompass the entire soundtrack as we...

FADE TO:

OVER BLACK

The pounding heartbeat turns into something else ... a pounding, rock'n'roll drumbeat.

FADE IN:

EXT. ALICE'S CAR ON CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

A black sports car drives through the streets of the small town at speed.

Inside the car we see Alice driving alone, a feral grin of pleasure on her face.

After a moment her mobile goes and she answers, driving the car with one hand.

ALICE

(into phone)

Hey! ... yeah, I know, the old man being an arsehole again ... I'll be with you in five ... promise - ohshit!

She drops the phone and SWERVES badly to avoid a car coming in the opposite direction - she had strayed over to the wrong side of the road without realising it.

The driver of the second car BLASTS his horn ANGRILY - she throws him a one-fingered gesture in return.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Prick.

She picks up the phone, where the person on the other end can be heard yelling.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What? Can't hear you, see you in five.

She hangs up, throws the phone onto the passenger seat and drives off down the streets.

EXT. THE ROX -- NIGHT

Alice's car drives past the front of a dingy nightclub - the half-cracked neon sign outside the door reads 'The Rox'.

The car drives down a side street and round the back to where several cars and battered-looking transit vans are parked.

She screeches the car to a halt, opens the door and gets out - only now do we see that she is dressed in a figure-hugging black leather skirt, high boots and an Iron Maiden 'Number of the Beast' T-shirt, the image of the sexy rock chick.

She makes her way over to the back door, where Maxwell - dressed all in black and looking far more comfortable for it - is waiting and smoking a cigarette.

MAXWELL

You're late.

ALICE

I know.

She jumps him and smothers him with a passionate kiss that he responds to with equal vigour.

ALICE

Forgive me?

MAXWELL

Oh yeah, now come on.

They head inside.

INT. ROX - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Backstage the rest of the band - VINCE (drums) CAMPBELL (bass) and EDDIE (guitar) are waiting for them, looking impatient. All of them are moshers to fit the worst stereotype - baggy jeans, purple hair etc. Face it, if this band didn't have Alice in it then no-one would give them the time of day.

EDDIE

Finally!

MAXWELL

Don't fucking start, alright?

ALTCE

What's the crowd like?

CAMPBELL

Baying for blood.

ALICE

Just the way I like it.

MAXWELL

And just the way I like you.

They kiss again. At that moment the FLOOR MANAGER (30s) appears from the doorway.

FLOOR MANAGER

Are you lot ready?

Maxwell and Alice break apart very reluctantly.

MAXWELL

We are now.

FLOOR MANAGER

About fuckin' time. Get out there, right now.

INT. THE ROX - STAGE -- NIGHT

The main area of the Rox is an underground bar/dance floor with a stage at one end. The band are on stage, Alice is on lead vocals, Maxwell on lead guitar.

The band are crap. But the one thing that really stands out is Alice. She can sing and she works the stage like a pro.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BACK OF MAXWELL'S VAN -- NIGHT

Alice and Maxwell, looking drained as hell from the gig, are sat in the back of the band's van. Drums, guitars and amps are scattered around them.

Maxwell unzips a leather bag - inside contains a personal heroin kit, complete with syringe. He pours some resin into a spoon and begins to heat it up with a cigarette lighter. He looks up to see Alice smiling at the focused look on his face.

MAXWELL

What?

ALICE

That's the only thing I think I've ever really seen you concentrate on - other than your guitar.

MAXWELL

Man's gotta do what a man's gotta do - this stuff don't come cheap, so there's no point in wasting any of it.

Alice smiles at him, feral, sexy.

MAXWELL

Ladies first?

ALICE

No, think I'll just smoke some.

MAXWELL

Smoke it? Your loss - not as much of the hit AND it's more addictive.

ALICE

That'd be really informative if it didn't come from someone who can't go three hours without shooting up.

MAXWELL

And now you're busting my balls?

He takes his syringe, inserts the needle into the boiling resin and pulls, sucking up the heroin.

MAXWELL

Okay, I got one - weirdest thing you've ever seen in your life. I mean seen as in REALLY seen - trips don't count?

ALICE

Weirdest thing?

She pauses to think about it as he pulls the boot and sock off his right foot.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I dunno. Oh wait ... there was this thing on TV about twins that didn't get born right - one of them was actually inside the stomach of the other.

MAXWELL

No shit.

ALICE

Seriously. The boy who gave birth to his own twin. That was some frightening stuff.

MAXWELL

Jesus ... wish I never asked.

He injects the syringe in his foot. The effects are almost instantaneous.

ALICE

You like that?

MAXWELL

You are so, SO sexy you know that? Come here.

He reaches over. There's a moment ... and then they begin kissing again, desperate, hungry, passionate.

They fall backwards, lying on some old sacking that adorns the back of the car. He claws at her t-shirt as she goes for his belt buckle. He rips her T-shirt off, goes for her bra--

The back door of the van bursts open. The moment ruined, they try to cover themselves.

ALICE

Do you mind?

MAXWELL

Campbell, how many times do I have to tell you...?

But he breaks off. It isn't the rest of the band facing them - it's a squad of POLICE OFFICERS armed with flashlights, and they don't look happy.

POLICEMAN

Get dressed. Now.

Alice and Maxwell exchange looks - despite his state of euphoria, Maxwell looks worried.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY -- NIGHT

David Mason is sat in the waiting area, looking nervous as hell. He looks around at all the local lowlife sat around and he looks even more worried.

He looks up as a door opens and an Inspector, FLINT (40s, intense, a natural detective) leads Alice, looking distinctly worse for wear, into the lobby.

DAVID

Alice?

She looks up at him, ashamed - she can only meet his eyes for a second before she has to look away.

FLINT

Sign here.

Alice looks grateful for the reason to look the other way. She signs the piece of paper and her personal objects - purse, mobile phone, jewellery and watch - are returned to her.

FLINT

Right, I think that's everything.

He leaves, the door closing behind him. Alice turns to face David. The look that passes between them says it all.

INT. DAVID'S CAR -- NIGHT

David drives the car - an expensive BMW - while Alice sits in the passenger seat. The silence is tense and almost palpable.

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The car purrs up the drive to Alice's house - an expensive, detached, Mock-Tudor Barrett-style house behind gates that clearly cost a fortune.

The car stops and they both get out. Alice cannot meet David's eyes.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

They enter the hallway. The house looks just as expensive on the inside.

ALICE

I'm going to bed.

DAVID

Alice--!

ALICE

Dad, I'm going to bed. We can do this in the morning.

There's a moment when it looks like David wants to have the inevitable row right there and then - but just for a moment.

DAVID

Alright.

Alice makes her way upstairs, a retreat to sanctuary.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(calling after her)

But don't think this is done.

And from the look on her face we know she knows it's just beginning.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Alice is sat on her bed - a massive four-poster - looking at herself in the mirror. Her face is covered in

disintegrated makeup. Her tights are laddered to death. Her outfit, which before seemed sexy, now looks cheap and tarty. Basically she looks like a two-dollar hooker, and she knows it.

She grabs a facecloth from her dresser and wipes all the makeup off her face, her movements almost, punishing herself.

Around her we see that her room is a shrine to rock and roll music - two guitars and a keyboard are propped against a wall, racks of CDs and LPs, posters depicting rock legends - no boy bands allowed.

She looks back at herself in the mirror, a look that says it all.

ALICE

Why are you doing this?

She switches off the light.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN -- MORNING

David is sat at the counter, drinking a cup of tea and reading the local rag - the headline reads "Local businessman's daughter in drug bust."

David looks disgusted.

He looks up as Alice enters, wearing a dressing gown. Her eyes are red, she clearly hasn't slept a wink, and she still looks ashamed.

ALICE

Morning.

He doesn't reply. There's an awful tense moment as they just stare at each other - eventually she wilts, moves across to make a cup of tea. David holds up the paper.

DAVID

You made the local rag, page four. You want me to cut it out and put it in the scrapbook?

ALICE

Dad...

DAVID

What do you expect me to say? It's not every night I get a phone call telling me that my daughter has been arrested for possession of class-A drugs!

ALICE

I was released without charge...

DAVID

That's not the point!

Another tense silence - Alice knows that wasn't the point.

CTVAC

Dammit, Alice, why are you doing this to yourself?

ALICE

Dad...

DAVID

Why? You've got everything you could ever want here.

(looks frustrated)

What's the matter with you, Alice? You're not doing any work for college, you're making no effort to get a job...

(beat)

After your mum died I did my best to bring you up the way she would have. I know I wasn't always there, but...

ALICE

Dad, please don't blame yourself ...

DAVID

Then explain it to me. I know this isn't the first time. Explain to me why you feel obliged to do silly stunts like that and get yourself into trouble-

ALICE

I don't know!

She's finally snapped. Her face is raw, close to tears.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I don't know.

David knows he's hit a raw nerve.

ALICE (CONT'D)

That's the worst part - I can't explain it. I can't explain it to anyone, not even me. All I know is that this is the only way I can feel ... anything.

DAVID

By using drugs?

ALICE

I've never touched drugs in my life.

The brutal honesty in her voice is clear to hear. We believe her.

DAVID

But that boyfriend of yours, he does? No wonder you never brought him home to meet me.

He gives her a disgusted look.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Sort your life out, Alice - before you end up arrested again.

He gets up, moves towards the door, pausing to add:

DAVID (CONT'D)

Or worse.

He leaves. Alice looks down at the mug in her hands, contemplating this.

EXT. TOWN STREETS -- DAY

Alice makes her way down the town streets - we are in a small town by the seafront. The town is a grim and slightly depressing place, with plenty of boarded up shop fronts. The place looks as though it's rotting.

As Alice walks, something attracts her attention - MUSIC.

She looks across the street and sees a YOUNG MAN sat on a suitcase, playing an acoustic guitar and singing.

It's TERRY REID, though Alice hasn't met him yet. This is the first time she's seen him ever.

His good looks are not lost on her, but it's not his face that's caught her attention - it's his music. He's playing the guitar beautifully and singing with a BOLD, CONFIDENT VOICE.

The song is upbeat and optimistic. In spite of herself Alice cannot help smiling.

Terry looks up and sees her watching him from across the street. He smiles and sings a line of the song towards her.

Whatever the lyrics are, it makes her smile. She crosses over the street, drops a handful of change into his cap.

He smiles and she walks off, looking considerably happier than before.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET -- DAY

Alice is stood with her back to a wall, working her mobile phone. She dials a number, stands and waits as it rings.

VOICE

(on phone)

Hi, this is Katie Dodson...

ALICE

Katie, hi...

But the voice carries on - Alice realises too late she's got the answer phone.

VOICE

VOICE (CONT'D)

to as High Wycombe, and if you're hearing this message it means I can't afford to get any more credit. I'll be back home by next week, or you can leave me a message after the tone. Thanks, bye.

The BEEP sounds. After a moment of indecision Alice speaks.

ALICE

Katie, hi, it's Alice. Can you ring me back when you get this? I could really use someone to talk to right now. There's some ... well, there's some bad stuff going on right now and I guess I just need a friend. So, uh, ring me back or else I'll be there to pick you up at the train station.

At that moment a train rattles past in the background. Alice looks around before she returns to the phone.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Things have gone bad, Katie. I need someone, I need some help. Badly.

She hangs up. For a moment she looks as though she is steeling herself before she walks off again.

EXT. POLICE STATION LOBBY -- DAY

Maxwell emerges from the front door along with his solicitor. They shake hands and go their separate ways.

Maxwell looks around and spots Alice, stood across the road, arms crossed, watching him. He blows her a kiss and swaggers across to her.

ALICE

They let you out then?

MAXWELL

Fuckers got nothin' to hold me on. Did you miss me?

He tries to kiss her but she pulls back. He didn't expect this.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

What? You still mad at me?

ALICE

We need to talk.

INT. PUB -- DAY

Lunchtime. Maxwell and Alice are sat towards the back of the bar. Maxwell swigs a beer; Alice is sticking to orange juice. MAXWELL

...and then they didn't have anything to hold me on, and they knew it, so they let me go.

(beat)

Well? There's no need to sound so happy, Alice.

ALICE

Happy? Why would you think I would be happy after you got us both arrested--!

She breaks off and quietens down, noticing that a few people in the bar turned to look. She turns back to Maxwell and speaks in a lower voice.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You tried to shift the blame, didn't you? You tried to make the police think those drugs were mine.

MAXWELL

So? They'd have never pressed charges.

ALICE

That's not the point! You tried to palm that off onto me!
 (angry pause)
It's just as well that detective recognised you for the lying bastard that you are.

Maxwell leans back in his chair, regards her evenly, then shakes his head in confusion.

MAXWELL

What is this?

ALICE

You didn't even try to deny it, did you?

Maxwell says nothing. Another tense moment.

ALICE (CONT'D)

This is me giving you the elbow, Maxwell. I don't like who I am when I'm around you, so I'm walking away before I become her permanently.

(beat)

I'm walking away before I become you.

MAXWELL

You little--!

He raises his fist in frustration. Alice locks glares with him. There is a tense moment before he gives in and punches the wall in frustration.

Fuck!

His knuckles are bleeding. All conversation has stopped in the bar as the BARMAN shouts over at them.

BARMAN

Hey! Take it outside!

ALICE

Easy, friend. Nothing happening.

The barman doesn't look convinced. Alice gives Maxwell an empty look.

ALICE

Goodbye Maxwell.

She walks away, leaving Maxwell behind, looking from his bleeding knuckles back to her, angry, resentful.

In the background the rain has begun to pour down.

EXT. GOLF COURSE -- DAY

David and his golfing partner, FRANK (50s, balding but energetic, the silliest moustache you have ever seen) charge for the shelter of the club-house to get away from the rain storm.

INT. GOLF CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

David and Frank enter the club house, soaked through.

FRANK

Jesus ... where did that lot come from?

DAVID

Knew it was too good to last.

FRANK

I need to dry off - get me something hearty, would you?

DAVID

Sure.

As Frank vanishes towards the changing rooms David heads over to the bar where the barman, BRIAN, is wiping down.

DAVID

Two Scotches please, Brian - on second thought make them doubles.

BRIAN

Coming up Mr Mason.

DAVID

Thanks.

As Brian goes to pour the drinks David lets his gaze sweep around the clubhouse. A round of laughter goes up from a group near the window - David cranes his neck to have a listen.

CLOSE on a newspaper headline - the story about Alice seen earlier.

Five golfers are GUFFAWING over the story as their leader, ARTHUR, reads the article aloud.

ARTHUR

"The pair were apprehended early this morning with a large quantity of what the police believe to be heroin in their possession. Both were later released without charge, although a senior police figure reported that an ongoing enquiry was still underway".

GOLFER #1

Disgusting habit.

GOLFER #2

Never happened in our day.

ARTHUR

(still reading)

"Miss Mason - the daughter of David Mason, self-made millionaire head of the Mason car dealership chain - has faced trouble with the police before, after she narrowly avoided being arrested in a raid on a student nightclub earlier last year..."

(lowers paper)

This girl really has gone off the rails, hasn't she?

In the background David looks furious.

GOLFER #1

Well, what do you expect? The father never paid her any attention, he was too busy making his money shifting dodgy motors...

GOLFER #2

The girl obviously needs some kind of professional help - it all seems to be a cry for attention...

David is fuming. He looks up as a slightly drier Frank reappears.

FRANK

Ah. Right...

(raises glass)

Cheers.

Another round of laughter goes up from the golfers.

DAVID

Sorry Frank - I seem to have lost my appetite.

He downs his drink and storms out as yet another laugh goes up.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Alice is sat on her bed, going through her photo album. We see scenes of happier times - a younger version of her and her mother, various boyfriends - some clearly better than others.

She reaches into her pocket, pulls out a tattered photo - her and Maxwell, in passionate embrace, him pulling some stupid rock-gonk face.

She crumples the photograph angrily and drops it onto the floor. For a moment she just sits there looking at it. Then she walks across the room and picks up an acoustic guitar. She sits down on the floor and begins to strum.

She starts to sing. As before we hear that she can really sing, but her voice suits the acoustic guitar more than the metal of Maxwell's group.

The door opens. She stops playing and looks up as David enters.

DAVID

How you doing?

ALICE

Better. Getting there.

DAVID

I've made some lunch if you want.

ALICE

I'll be down in a minute.

She gets back to playing. David moves to leave, pauses only for a second to listen.

DAVID

Sounding good.

He leaves. In spite of herself Alice smiles. She keeps strumming. Then she grabs a pen and notebook from her bedside table and begins to write some lyrics down.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COFFEE SHOP -- EVENING

A small, upmarket and friendly coffee-shop. Acoustic guitar music comes from inside - someone is playing.

A sign outside the door reads: "Open mike night"

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- EVENING

Alice enters, carrying her guitar, and makes her way over to the counter. The attendant, MILES MATHESON (20s, blond, a nice guy) recognises her immediately and smiles.

MILES

Hey, Alice, what's the word?

ALICE

Pretty crap all things considered. Cappuccino with skimmed milk?

MILES

Coming up.

He moves to make the coffee.

ALICE

Can I get an extra shot in there?

MILES

No problem.

(beat)

So what's this, the caffeineequivalent of Dutch courage?

ALICE

(grins)

Something like that.

INT. SAME -- LATER

Alice is sat on a stool on the stage, strumming her guitar and singing.

As we noticed before, her voice suits the acoustic sound far more than the death metal sound of Maxwell's band, but what really comes across here is her showmanship. She keeps the attention of the whole crowd riveted on her.

She finishes a song and the crowd goes wild. She smiles, a big grin showing true emotion.

ALICE

Thank you.

She gets off her stool and moves back across to the bar ... but at that moment she catches eyes with someone watching her from a table near the window.

Terry Reid.

There is an instant connection passed between the two of them, unspoken but definitely there.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP -- NIGHT

Through the window we can see Terry and Alice talking.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- NIGHT

The place is closing, Miles is closing down the bar and the punters are heading off to pubs and clubs. Terry and Alice are having an animated conversation that has gone on for a good few hours.

TERRY

...Carly Simon, Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Stevie Nicks era Fleetwood Mac ... and a hint of David Gray in there as well. How did I do? ALICE

Add James Taylor and Ryan Adams in there-

TERRY

Damn, shoulda seen that one-

ALICE

But your not far off.

Terry grins, takes a swig of coffee.

TERRY

Wide musical taste.

ALICE

From Frank Sinatra to Iron Maiden and everything in between. I can go from Led Zeppelin to Carole King in five moves or less.

TERRY

Impressive.

ALICE

So what about you?

TERRY

I guessed yours, you have a try with mine?

Alice considers for a moment.

ALICE

Early Stones ... Bruce Springsteen...

TERRY

How did you guess?

ALICE

I thought I caught a hint of Thunder Road about that one I heard this morning. Let's see ... Eric Clapton ... Dire Straits...

TERRY

Embarrassing but true.

ALICE

Not embarrassing. Brothers in Arms is one of my all time favourites.

TERRY

So we're both musical mutts.

ALICE

Maybe, but it works.

(pause)

I've not seen you around here before.

Terry looks amused.

TERRY

Let me guess - I've just met the expert on the local music scene?

ALICE

Something like that.

Terry smiles, sits back in his chair and sips his coffee.

TERRY

No, you wouldn't have seen me around. I just got back into town last week.

ALICE

Back?

TERRY

Yeah, I used to live here up until a few years ago. I moved away when I was nineteen. Now I'm back.

ALICE

Where did you go?

TERRY

London.

ALICE

Really?

TERRY

Yeah - actually it ain't that much fun living there.

ALICE

So what, you got homesick?

TERRY

No - well, kind of. I just got the sad realisation that I didn't really have a home.

(pause)

I guess I'm looking for something.

ALICE

Something like what?

Terry takes another sip of his coffee and shakes his head.

TERRY

I don't know. But I'll know it when I see it.

There is a look that passes between the two of them, a look not lost on either of them.

TERRY

So what about you?

ALICE

How do you mean?

TERRY

Well, you've been sitting there firing all these questions at me... (smiles)

Only fair that I get to fire one at you.

Alice grins and nods.

TERRY (CONT'D)

So what about you? What does the mysterious girl who knows everything about music have to say about herself?

Alice grins - he's charming and she knows it.

ALICE

I don't know. Don't look at me like that, that's the honest answer.

TERRY

You can't be a complete vacuum - there must be something?

ALICE

Oh there's plenty - jut not sure how much I want to talk about. Not sure how much I CAN talk about.

TERRY

I'm a good listener.

She considers for a moment, and finds that she believes him.

ALICE

I'm still trying to find out who I really am. These last few months - I don't know, I've said and done things that just aren't me. I'm just glad ... I'm just glad my mum won't find out some of this.

Terry gives her a sympathetic smile.

TERRY

So you're looking for something too?

Alice considers for a moment, then smiles.

ALICE

Yeah. Yeah, I guess you could say that.

They both smile.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP -- NIGHT

Terry and Alice, guitars in hand, are the last people to leave.

Miles flashes Alice a smile.

MILES

G'night Alice.

ALICE

Goodnight.

Miles closes the door and locks it, leaving Terry and Alice stood on the pavement. There is a brief uncomfortable moment.

ALICE

So, I, uh ... I guess I'll see you around.

TERRY

Yeah. Yeah, I'd like that.

She smiles. He smiles back and they walk off in separate directions. And for the first time all day, Alice seems truly happy.

INT. MAXWELL'S FLAT -- NIGHT

Maxwell is sat watching the TV, half a bottle of whiskey and a glass positioned on the table in front of him. His flat is covered with pictures and posters of various deathmetal bands and is basically a tip.

Maxwell looks up at a sound - a knock on the door.

MAXWELL

Who is it?

No answer - just another knock. He sighs in disgust, gets up and crosses to the door.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Alright, alright man...

He opens the door.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Where's the fire--?

But he stops short at the sight of the men outside - police officers, Inspector Flint in the lead, two CID GUYS and two UNIFORMS.

FLINT

Maxwell Clayton? Can we have a word?

MAXWELL

Where's your warrant?

FLINT

Right here.

He thrusts a search warrant into Maxwell's face. Maxwell's cocky demeanour vanishes.

FLINT (CONT'D)

Mind if we come in?

Without waiting for an answer he shoulders his way into the flat.

EXT. CAR PARK -- NIGHT

Alice places her guitar into the boot of her car, closes the lid just as a voice comes from behind.

MAN (O.S.)

Alice?

She turns to see JUSTIN (20s) approaching, a dangerous-looking young man dressed in black with a leather jacket. He's Maxwell's dealer, he looks like trouble and she gives him a contempt-filled look.

ALICE

What do you want Justin?

JUSTIN

A word with your boyfriend.

ALICE

In case you hadn't noticed, I'm on my own. And he's not my boyfriend, not any more.

JUSTIN

Really? What happened?

ALICE

None of your damn business. (beat - she sighs) Okay, I'll bite. What's Maxwell

done this time?

JUSTIN

When you see him, just tell him his interest's mounting up.

ALICE

Which part of he's not my boyfriend didn't you get?

JUSTIN

Oh I got the whole thing - just not sure I believe it, particularly since this isn't the first time you've done this. Just pass on the message. See you around.

He turns and walks away.

ALICE

How much?

He turns to regard her with an interested expression.

JUSTIN

How much what?

ALICE

How much to settle Maxwell's account?

JUSTIN

Thought you'd had done with him?

ALICE

I told you that was my business. Give me a figure.

JUSTIN

Five hundred.

Alice digs into her pocket, pulls out a wedge of cash.

ALICE

That should cover it. Now you leave me alone.

JUSTIN

So if you're not banging Maxwell anymore, what was that?

ALICE

Call it unfinished business. Now if there's nothing else?

Justin shrugs, pockets the cash and walks off. Alice watches him go with a thoughtful expression before getting into her car and driving off.

INT. MAXWELL'S FLAT -- NIGHT

The police team is busy tearing the place to bits. Maxwell, sat on the window ledge and pouring himself another drink, watches with contempt as Flint rummages around the back of the sofa.

MAXWELL

You find any coppers down there, you can keep them.

FLINT

Was that a joke, Mr Clayton?

MAXWELL

Take it any way you like.

FLINT

I could take it as an attempt to bribe an officer of the law. You might want to keep your mouth shut.

The serious tone in his voice shuts Maxwell up. It doesn't last very long as a wooden sound comes from the bedroom.

MAXWELL

What the hell was that?

FLINT

Probably the floorboards being ripped up.

MAXWELL

That does it, I'm gonna sue, I'm gonna have you for every penny-

FLINT

Yeah, you want what bank account?

Maxwell opens his mouth to retort but a shout from the next room shuts him up.

UNIFORM #1 (O.S.)

Inspector?

One of the Uniforms walks in carrying an acoustic guitar. Inside we can hear something rattling.

UNIFORM #1

There's something in here.

FLINT

Open it.

Maxwell watches in horror as the Uniform smashes it open with his asp ... revealing inside a quantity of heroin resin and several small packages of cocaine.

Flint grins and pokes through the small pile with a pencil.

FLINT (CONT'D)

Bit much for personal use, right Maxwell?

(to the uniform)

Do him.

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- MORNING

A police car makes it's way up the drive towards the house. Two uniformed cops and Flint emerge and head for the door.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Alice heads for the door as the doorbell rings. She opens it to see the police entourage stood outside.

FLINT

Miss Alice Mason?

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN -- MORNING

David bursts in to find Alice handing Flint a cup of coffee.

DAVID

Alice, what's going on?

FLINT

Sorry for the early arrival Mr Mason, but we need to ask your daughter a few questions about Maxwell Clayton.

DAVID

Maxwell Clayton, isn't that --?

ALICE

Yes. And he's not my boyfriend, not any more.

(to Flint)

Why? What's happened now?

Flint takes a sip from his coffee before answering.

FLINT

Mr Clayton was arrested last night after a quantity of class-A drugs were found in his possession.

David fumes; Flint holds up a reassuring hand.

FLINT (CONT'D)

Don't worry Mr Mason, we don't suspect your daughter had anything to do with this. Mr Clayton's already done his best to drop himself in it--

(beat)

But we would like you to come down to the station and make a statement.

ALICE

Sure. Right now?

Flint looks surprised. Alice clues in right away.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What? You thought I'd be trying to cover for Maxwell?

FLINT

The thought had crossed my mind.

ALICE

Well that's one thing you don't have to worry about. The other night was a wakeup call for me, about everything that was wrong with my life and about what a bastard Maxwell was. So if he thinks I'm going to cover for him then he's very much mistaken.

EXT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Just to establish.

INT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Alice makes her way through the supermarket, heading with purpose towards the deli counter. As she approaches she spots a familiar face working behind it - Terry.

She smiles. He looks up, sees her and smiles too.

TERRY

Hey.

ALICE

Hey.

TERRY

What you doing here?

ALICE

Is this a bad--?

TERRY

No, no, honestly, it's fine. What's on your mind?

A moment while Alice decides what to tell him.

ALICE

I don't know. to be honest, I could really just use someone to talk to.

TERRY

I get off for lunch at quarter past - meet me here then?

ALICE

(smiles)

Sure.

TERRY

Okay ... see you later then.

ALICE

Later.

She walks off, smiling.

Terry watches her retreating figure with a smile. A hand slaps him on the shoulder, he looks up to see his mate JOE (20s) stood beside him.

JOE

Smooth. Very smooth.

TERRY

Have I missed something?

JOE

You're well in there, mate.

TERRY

Stop whinging, just spill.

JOE

Do you know who that is? That's Alice Mason.

TERRY

So?

JOE

So? So? So her father's only a self-made millionaire, isn't he? King of the car dealerships. She's rolling in it. If I was you, son, I'd get in there and stay in there.

He walks off with a grin. Terry looks back into the shop but Alice is gone.

Terry and Alice walking along beside the railings, eating chips from plastic trays and talking. Terry is carrying his guitar on his back.

ALICE

You're not serious.

TERRY

Why wouldn't I be serious? And from everything you've told me, you do this kind of thing all the time? Playing in bands, moving around...

ALICE

I've played in bands before, and one thing I've found out is that it always destroys friendships.

TERRY

Don't tell me - 'creative disagreements'.

ALICE

That and the fact that at some point someone ends up shagging at least one groupie, getting a drug habit, or both - cue a gigantic argument, beer bottles thrown, song lyrics torn up, friendships ruined and bang, instant karma.

Terry laughs out loud.

TERRY

You don't sound too optimistic.

ALICE

Yeah, well I've just experienced it from the messy end far too many times.

TERRY

So you've had a few bad experiences - doesn't mean you give up on it.

They sit down on a bench facing the sea.

TERRY (CONT'D)

That'd be like going to a cinema, seeing a crap film and then never going to the movies again because you've become disillusioned. That don't make sense.

Alice shrugs, but doesn't challenge the point. Terry presses on.

TERRY

TERRY (CONT'D)

driving around in the car with my mum.

ALICE

Now there's an image for you.

TERRY

I got my first record when I was two. Sade.

Alice tries not to laugh.

ALICE

Sade?

TERRY

Diamond Life - y'know, the one with Smooth Operator.

ALICE

Know it.

She's still trying not to laugh.

TERRY

What's so funny?

ALICE

You didn't strike me as a Sade person.

TERRY

What can I say, I was a bit too young for Nick Drake at the time.

Alice takes a drink to stifle another laugh. Terry's on a charm offensive.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I've been into music all my life. I've been watching musicians, amateur and professional since I was fourteen, and I've never seen anyone that has jumped out at me and said 'I'm going places; I've got the talent to make it big and I'm gonna use it.'

(pause)

Never until now.

Alice gives him an ironic look.

ALICE

This routine ever get you laid? Do the girls in London fall for that one?

TERRY

I'm serious.

ALICE

Yeah, that was a seriously bad line.

TERRY

No, this is serious. I'm asking you to help me form a band - you sing, I'll strum.

(beat)

Well? What do you say?

Alice considers for a long moment. Then she grins.

ALICE

I'll think about it?

TERRY

Think about it? That's girl-speak for something isn't it?

ALICE

(grins)

Something.

Terry mirrors the grin.

TERRY

Got to learn how to translate that someday.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION -- NIGHT

CLOSE on a clock dangling from the ceiling of the station - it reads ten past two in the morning.

We PAN DOWN to reveal a train pulling to a stop on the deserted platform.

STATION PA (V.O.)

Platform 6A for the two-ten AM service from London Kings Cross. Platform 6A for the...

The doors open and the few late-night passengers get off. Among the last to disembark is KATIE DODSON (early twenties, brown hair, petite and pretty) carrying several bags and looking bone tired.

She dumps her bags on the platform, looks up and sees someone approaching - Alice. Katie smiles broadly, some of the tiredness evaporating.

ALICE

So what's with the ungodly hour?

KATIE

Well, it was either this or wait another two days in that shit-hole they call High Wycombe.

(grin)

Personally, I'd take the late night.

ALICE

Why did you end up going to a uni in a town that you hate?

KATTE

The miracle of finding a place through Clearing on the web doesn't exactly give you the whole picture.

ALICE

Well I'm glad you're back.

They embrace in a hug. These two are best friends and have an easy rapport, almost like sisters. Katie represents Alice's more sensible side.

KATIE

You didn't have to do this ...

ALICE

So what, I should have left you to the mercy of the late night cab drivers? No, seriously, I needed to see a friendly face.

Katie gives her a suspicious look.

KATTE

What have I missed these past few months?

INT. STATION CAFE -- NIGHT

Alice and Katie are the only customers in the station's all-night coffee shop - the attendant is sat reading *Kerrang* behind the counter.

KATTE

Well I can't say I'm sorry to see the back of Maxwell; he's been hanging around for far too long.

ALICE

Well I wish you'd told me at the time.

KATIE

I DID tell you at the time, remember? But you wouldn't listen...

ALICE

I know, I know...

KATIE

You were all over him, didn't I tell you he'd land you in trouble someday?

ALICE

Yeah well ... least you get to say I told you so.

Katie doesn't look the least bit satisfied.

KATIE

Ali, do you really think I'd gloat over something like this? I've been so worried about you...

ALICE

Yeah, turns out you were right to be worried, too. Still, I suppose now you're back to keep an eye on me.

There's a moment ... Katie's face cracks a small smile.

KATIE

I suppose. So, what's this other guy like.

ALICE

Terry? He's ... nice, y'know?

KATIE

Uh-huh. Nice as in just a friend, or nice as in...?

ALICE

There might be some potential there.

KATIE

Well this is better news - just as long as he doesn't turn out to be another Maxwell.

ALICE

Well I can't see Terry getting us busted for drug abuse...

KATIE

But you weren't...

Alice suddenly looks away, embarrassed. The penny drops and Katie clues in immediately.

KATIE (CONT'D)

You were, weren't you?

ALICE

Katie...

KATIE

He had you on that stuff, didn't he? Deny it.

A very uncomfortable silence - but Alice doesn't deny it. Katie looks as if she's been punched in the gut.

KATIE (CONT'D)

You lied to me.

ALICE

It wasn't like that-

KATIE

Then what was it like? (MORE)

KATIE (CONT'D)

You told me you never touched the stuff, and you had. You lied to me.

Alice looks down at her hands, bites her lip in shame. Katie shakes her head.

KATIE (CONT'D)

You make me feel sick.

She stands up and picks up her bags.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I think I'll take a cab if it's all the same to you.

ALICE

Katie--!

But she's already gone. For a moment Alice looks like she's going to follow her, then she turns away, buries her face in her hands and cries.

INT. TERRY'S FLAT -- NIGHT

Terry - still fully dressed despite the hour - opens the door of his flat to find a red-eyed, miserable Alice stood outside.

TERRY

Alice? What's wrong?

INT. SAME -- MOMENTS LATER

Terry pours liberal amounts of whiskey into two cups of tea and hands one to Alice, who is sat on the sofa.

TERRY

Here.

She takes the tea with a grateful smile.

TERRY (CONT'D)

And that was it?

ALICE

Doubt she'll ever speak to me again. Funny thing is, I'm not sure she's wrong. I'm not sure I don't deserve it.

TERRY

Alice...

ALICE

I lied to her. She's the closest thing I've had to a proper friend in ... and I lied to her. I don't know what's the matter with me any more - the more I think about the things I've done over the last few months, the more I can't even stand to be ... me.

She takes a sip of the tea, REACTS.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What did you put in there?

TERRY

Enough whiskey to take down my Aunt Judy, and that woman had some girth.

Alice actually laughs at this.

ALICE

Sorry about the late night visit, but I really needed someone to talk to.

TERRY

No problem. Besides, I usually don't sleep until a lot later.

Alice looks across the room to where Terry's guitar is sat next to a stack of paper and a pen.

ALICE

Song writing till dawn?

TERRY

Something like that. I generally find this is when I get all of my best ideas.

ALICE

Anything I'd like?

TERRY

Not sure about showing a work in progress.

ALICE

Oh go on...

TERRY

I dunno...

ALICE

You're a song writer - if you don't want people to hear what you write then you might as well keep a diary.

Terry laughs, rolls his eyes.

TERRY

I can see where this is going.

ALICE

Best not to try and fight the inevitable.

TERRY

Maybe, but I always found this easier when I had a band.

Alice looks up in surprise.

ALTOR

You were in a band?

TERRY

For the best part of two years. We did the clubs, got quite good reviews. Then things went wrong...

ALICE

Yeah, where have I heard that before?

TERRY

Maybe ... but things were different with this one. At least I thought they were.

ALICE

That's what I thought about Maxwell.

There's an uncomfortable moment. Alice does her best to course-correct.

ALICE

So, are you going to play me something or am I just going to sit here all night?

TERRY

Hold that thought.

He gets up and vanishes off in the direction of the bathroom. Alice looks around at the flat - quite neat and tidy, tastefully decorated with framed black and white pictures of music legends - we spot JOHN LENNON, BOB MARLEY, JIM MORRISON, MILES DAVIS, JOHN COLTRANE and BOB DYLAN among the images. Alice smiles in approval.

Then another photograph draws her attention. She gets up and moves across to the wall. The photo shows a younger Terry, arm-in-arm with a red-haired girl, all smiles, and what is clearly an engagement ring on the girls' finger.

Alice stares at the image for a long time. Then we hear the sound of a toilet flushing in the background and Terry reappears.

TERRY

Now then...

He spots Alice holding the photograph.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Ah.

ALICE

Pretty. Who is she?

Terry takes a few long moments before answering.

TERRY

Her name was - is - Laura Bryan. She was my wife.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TERRY'S FLAT -- MORNING

Sunlight creeps in as Terry emerges from the bathroom dressed in his supermarket uniform. He looks down at the sofa, sees Alice curled up under a blanket, fast asleep.

Terry smiles at the sight.

EXT. TOWN STREETS -- MORNING

Alice's car makes it's way through the streets.

TERRY (V.O.)

Me and Laura, we met in high school...

INT. ALICE'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Alice is driving Terry to work.

TERRY

We knew each other since we were fifteen. She was my first girlfriend - first girl I ever kissed. I was her first boyfriend. We were kinda the golden couple at our school…

ALICE

The ones that look like they're gonna stay together forever and have babies and live in a house in the country with a white picket fence.

TERRY

(grins)

Exactly.

ALICE

People like that used to make me sick.

TERRY

Ever considered you might be jealous?

She shoots him a sideways look, a wry grin. He continues.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Anyhow, that was me and Laura. We got together, fell crazy in love, got married at nineteen - at Gretna Green of all places, would you believe...

Alice makes 'I'm gonna be sick' gestures and Terry laughs again.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Before it all went wrong...

ALICE

Ah, the plot thickens...

TERRY

...and we fell crazy out of love. Divorce settlement should be through in a few weeks.

At the mention of the D-Word Alice pulls a face.

ALICE

Ouch.

TERRY

Yeah. Suddenly the whole thing seems very real - courts, judges, marriage counselling, the whole nine...

ALICE

Just as well there weren't kids involved.

(beat)

There weren't any kids involved, were there?

Terry's jovial mood suddenly vanishes.

TERRY

Not exactly.

Alice has the feeling she's just stepped in it.

ALICE

I've done it again, haven't I?

TERRY

Through no fault of your own.

A pause - Terry seems to be steeling himself to tell her something.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Laura was pregnant. She had an abortion. I didn't find out until afterwards, at which point I launched into the obligatory bout of noisy self-righteousness and the whole thing kinda started unravelling from there.

He looks out of the window.

ALICE

No wonder your songs are so deep.

TERRY

Yeah, well ... there's days I wonder what Bruce Springsteen would have written if he'd ever met Laura.

EXT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Alice parks her car near the door.

INT. ALICE'S CAR -- DAY

Terry unfastens his seatbelt.

TERRY

Thanks for the lift.

ALICE

No problem. And thanks for letting me crash at your place last night.

TERRY

Anytime.

He gets out of the car. Alice watches him as he enters the supermarket for a few long moments before putting the car into gear and driving off.

EXT. KATIE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Alice is stood ringing the doorbell. After a moment the door opens and JASON DODSON (27, easygoing with a pencil beard, Katie's brother) answers.

ALICE

(quarded)

Hi. Is Katie in?

JASON

Yeah

(uncomfortable pause)

But I really wouldn't advise coming in.

ALICE

That bad?

JASON

I don't know what happened between you two last night, but she's really upset.

ALICE

I just want to explain - put things right.

JASON

I know.

His expression softens into one of brotherly concern.

JASON (CONT'D)

Look, give her a couple of days, alright? She might have calmed down by then.

ALICE

Thanks Jason.

JASON

No problem. See you.

He closes the door. Alice looks just as upset as before.

Katie is sat eating cereal and watching early morning TV. In the background her other brother MARK (25) is fighting with the toaster. She looks up as Jason enters.

KATIE

Was that her?

JASON

Full marks.

He moves to put the kettle on. Mark shakes his head.

MARK

I don't know how she dares show her face.

KATTE

She's had a rough time of it...

MARK

You're not defending her? After she lied to you like that?

JASON

Mark, give it a rest, alright?

At that moment the toaster pops up, revealing a bagel burnt to a crisp.

MARK

Ah, Jeez...

JASON

Don't let it--

But at that moment the smoke alarm goes off.

JASON (CONT'D)

Nice work, bruv - really nice work.

KATIE

As if we don't have enough to worry about already.

JASON

You talking about Alice?

Mark reaches up and turns off the smoke alarm.

Katie considers for a moment, then nods.

KATIE

Maybe I was a bit hard on her--

MARK

Are you kidding? Look, she's a fucked up little junkie now - whatever she used to be, that's what she is now. Lets have no more said on the subject.

Katie gives him a look and storms out. Jason claps his brother on his shoulder.

JASON

You're all heart.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Alice rummages in her drawer, eventually pulling out a tattered notebook. She grabs her phone and sits down on her bed, flipping through the notebook.

Inside we see that the notebook contains lists - various names and numbers under a list headed 'guitar', then another reading 'bass', and others reading 'drums', 'keyboards', 'percussion', 'sax' etc. This is Alice's equivalent of a little black book, her guide to who's who on the music scene.

She begins routing through the lists, picking names and dialling numbers.

INT. SUPERMARKET - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Terry is getting changed at the end of his shift. His mobile phone beeps. He holds it up and reads the message:

"Rat and Parrot back room, today, five-thirty. Bring your quitar"

It's from Alice. Terry looks intrigued.

EXT. RAT AND PARROT -- DAY

Terry makes his way across the street towards the pub. He makes his way around the back.

INT. PUB BACK ROOM -- DAY

Terry enters to find Alice sat there with Miles from the coffee bar, who is setting up a drum kit. She looks up as he enters.

ALICE

Terry, hi. You got the message.

TERRY

Uh, yeah.

ALICE

Good. You already know Miles, right?

MILES

Hey man.

TERRY

Hey.

He looks at Alice in confusion.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Alice, what's...?

The door opens to admit someone else - PETE FOSTER (eighteen, black, wearing Harry Potter glasses) carrying an amp and a bass guitar.

PETE

Alice!

ALICE

Hey Pete.

(they hug)

Terry, Pete - Pete, Terry.

PETE

Hi.

They shake hands. Terry still looks confused.

PETE (CONT'D)

Thanks for the invite, Alice.

ALICE

No problem. You still play, right?

Pete rolls his eyes as if offended and moves to set up his gear.

PETE

"Do I still play" ... does the Pope shit in the woods?

ALICE

Yeah, and wild bears are Catholic, right?

PETE

Right ... can't trust those bastards, they're everywhere.

They laugh at some shared joke that goes over Terry's head. Terry looks from one to the other, bewildered.

ALICE

Great - all we need now is Charlie and we're set.

TERRY

Set for what?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Somebody say my name?

Terry looks up as CHARLIE PHILLIPS (late twenties, BIG) enters carrying a guitar.

ALICE

Couldn't start without you. Charlie Phillips, Terry Reid.

Charlie extends a hand. Terry shakes it and winces; he's got a hell of a grip. Alice coughs into her hand to hide a laugh.

CHARLIE

How's it going man?

TERRY

(they shake hands) Confusing.

CHARLIE

(grins)

It usually is with this one. (to Alice)

I dunno Ali, I never hear from you for six months and then next thing I know three messages on the machine... Alice gives him a playful clip around the ear.

ALICE

Stop trying to get attention, it doesn't suit you.

Charlie grins, kisses her on the cheek and moves to set up his gear with the other three - they all seem to know each other.

TERRY

Alice, will you please tell me what the hell's going on?

ALICE

You said you wanted a band. Well ... surprise.

Terry looks from Alice to the three musicians warming up and back again.

TERRY

You arranged all of this?

ALICE

Well, like the man said, very often it's who you know and not what you know. Once you've been on the music scene here for a while you get to know a few people. These guys were at loose ends, and I thought...

TERRY

You thought right.

He reaches across and gives her a hug.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

A trendy, reasonably upmarket bar in the expensive end of town. Katie is sat at a table with a group of friends including Jason and Mark - talking, drinking and laughing. After a moment she gets up.

KATIE

Won't be a minute.

She heads over to the bar, waves a banknote in the direction of the barman to attract his attention.

KATIE

Same again.

The barman nods and begins making drinks. Laughter comes from a nearby corner. Katie turns her head to see--

Maxwell is sat with a gang of mates (including the three members of his band) several sheets to the wind and talking loudly, raucously. They stick out like a sore thumb. Katie looks away in disgust, then something Maxwell says gets her attention.

MAXWELL

...like she's any great loss to us anyway - she was always just the pair of tits who was there to get us the attention.

VINCE

What a little bitch.

EDDIE

Never liked her really - she always thought she was better than us.

MAXWELL

Girls like that always do - because they got money and think that makes them 'it'. I mean okay, she was easy on the eyes...

MATT

Not wrong, my friend...

MAXWELL

And sure, she could sing, but she was just the same as the rest of us.

(general murmurs of agreement)

And I tell you ... she might have thought I was beneath her, but ... well, way I remember it, she was beneath ME most of the time.

Another laugh goes up.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Nah, we're well shot of her, lads. Whatever she's got planned, she's welcome to it.

In the background Katie looks furious.

INT. PUB BACK ROOM -- DAY

The makeshift band is in the middle of a rehearsal.

MONTAGE:

Drumsticks smash home against their skins...

Terry and Charlie confer about guitar parts...

Bass and drums come together ...

Alice watches, whispers a suggestion into Terry's ear...

They try again...

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Katie looks up as Jason joins her at the bar.

JASON

What's keeping those drinks?

Katie doesn't answer. Jason follows her gaze and spots Maxwell and his cronies.

MATT

We're gonna need a new singer...

MAXWELL

Someone who's got the right attitude this time, not some posh slag who thinks she's the next big thing...

CAMPBELL

That's a bit strong innit?

MAXWELL

How'd you mean?

CAMPBELL

Calling her a slag. I mean sure, she wasn't the nicest person in the world, but...

MAXWELL

Listen, the amount of powder that went up her nose, you'd think I was paying for her.

Another laugh. This time Katie can't take anymore - she grabs a drink off the bar and storms over to the table.

JASON

Katie, he's not worth it--

KATIE

Maxwell!

Maxwell looks up just as Katie hurls the contents of the drink into his face. Everyone is taken completely by surprise; Maxwell is the first to recover.

MAXWELL

You little bitch!

He leaps up at Katie; Campbell and Eddie grab his arms and hold him back. Jason squares up to him.

MAXWELL

You're just like her, you're just another fucking whore, just like her...

Mark has rushed up to join Katie and Jason.

MARK

You want to hit a woman, how much of a man does that make you?

JASON

You wanna come here and say that?!

KATTE

You're gonna hit me, tough guy? Bring it on!

Maxwell goes for her again just as TWO BOUNCERS turn up and physically pull Maxwell back.

BOUNCER #1

Is there a problem?

MAXWELL

You little cunt--!

BOUNCER #2

Get him out of here. Go on, sling your hook!

The other bouncer hauls Maxwell out.

BOUNCER #2 (CONT'D)

You alright love?

A moment before Katie replies. Jason looks concerned.

JASON

Katie?

KATIE

Yeah. Yeah, I think I am.

EXT. BAR -- NIGHT

Maxwell hits the dirt at speed. He looks up to see the bouncer glaring.

BOUNCER #1

I don't wanna see you in here ever again, got it!

MAXWELL

Go fuck yourself!

The bouncer gives him a one-fingered gesture before heading back into the club. As Maxwell picks himself up a voice makes him jump.

JUSTIN (O.S.)

Not your night, is it Maxwell?

Justin appears out of the shadow of the next doorway. Maxwell sighs.

MAXWELL

Not really, no.

He gets up.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

You got any gear?

Justin punches him hard in the gut and Maxwell goes down again.

JUSTIN

Until you finally decide to pay me for the last lot, no I fucking well haven't.

MAXWELL

Look, Justin, I'll get you the money...

JUSTIN

I know you will. Because if you don't then the next time I come see you you're going to leave with a bit missing. Right now you're lucky you're still breathing. Think about it.

He kicks Maxwell in the ribs as he walks off. After a few steps he stops and calls back over his shoulder.

JUSTIN

By the way ... how's that pretty girlfriend of yours?

MAXWELL

She's not my girlfriend, not any more.

JUSTIN

I'm not surprised - who'd want to date a junkie waste-of-space fuck like you? See you around.

He vanishes. Maxwell spits blood onto the pavement.

INT. JASON'S CAR -- NIGHT

Jason drives Katie and Mark home. There's a silence for a few long moments.

JASON

You alright, sis?

KATIE

Yeah, I think so.

JASON

Offhand, it looks as though Alice had a lucky escape.

MARK

From that twit back there? What a bloody monkey...

KATIE

Jason, can you turn off here.

Jason does as he's told.

JASON

Why?

KATIE

Something needs to be done.

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

David opens the door to find Katie stood outside.

DAVID

Katie, hi...

KATIE

Hi Mr Mason.

She looks decidedly sheepish, something David clues in on right away.

DAVID

What's going on?

KATIE

Sorry about the late night visit ... can I come in? I need to talk.

DAVID

Alice isn't here--

KATIE

I know. actually, it's you I wanted to talk to.

(beat)

I'm worried about Alice.

DAVID

That makes two of us. Come in.

David steps back to let her in.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

David enters the living room, carrying two coffees. He sits down on the chair, hands one to Katie.

DAVID

The honest answer is that I don't know what Alice is doing with herself. I was hoping you could tell me.

KATIE

Alice came and met me off the train when I got back ... she needed to talk. It was almost like she needed someone to confess to.

DAVID

I wish she'd talk to me. I want to help her, and it's killing me that I can't and that I don't even know what the problem is.

Just for a second David allows his own frustration to seep through.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Alice seemed to fall off the rails about a year ago, for no apparent (MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

reason. Before that she was fine, getting her head down at college, getting the work done, a nice circle of friends, playing in bands on the evening ... and then ... I don't know ... she just seemed to lose it.

KATIE

A year ago. That tallies with when she met Maxwell.

DAVID

You know him?

KATIE

Oh I knew him alright. He was dangerous. I told her that at the time but she wouldn't listen. I can't say I wasn't worried, but when nothing happened I didn't seem to have any reason. Then Alice just stopped calling and ... and then I came back and all of this had happened.

DAVID

It would make me sleep a lot easier at night if I knew she had someone like you looking out for her.

An awkward moment ... then Katie nods.

KATIE

I'll try. I'm guessing that right now she needs her friends until she works out whatever it is that's going on with her.

DAVID

Do you have any idea what it's all about?

A pause while Katie decides what to say.

KATIE

At a guess, I'd say she was directionless. Last time I really talked to her, she told me she was looking for something.

DAVID

Something like what?

KATIE

She said she didn't know ... but that she'd know it when she saw it.

EXT. RAT AND PARROT -- NIGHT

Alice and Terry are the last to leave as the landlord shuts and locks the door behind them. Both of them are enthused, full of energy. ALTOR

I know, it's rough...

TERRY

No, it's perfect! How did you find these guys?

ALICE

I've been part of this music scene for a good few years now, credit me with knowing a few people.

They start walking towards where her car is parked.

ALICE (CONT'D)

They seemed to really like your songs.

TERRY

We don't just have to play them, y'know, if anyone's got any suggestions...

ALICE

I don't think anyone else wants to try and follow that one, really. Give yourself some credit, Terry - you're a fantastic writer, I know it and they know it too. Most of the guys playing in bands around here would kill to be able to write songs like that. You've got something there ... something special.

TERRY

I thought you didn't go in for over-the-top flattery?

ALICE

I don't ... well, not unless it's deserved.

They've reached the car. There's a slightly awkward silence.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Well ... rehearsal tomorrow night?

TERRY

I'll be there.

ALICE

Great.

Another awkward silence. Alice breaks it by getting out her car keys and opening the door. As she does, Terry suddenly makes his mind up.

TERRY

Alice?

She looks back at him, curious.

TERRY

You, uh ... want to come back to my place? Help me write some songs?

There's a moment ... then Alice's face breaks into a big grin.

ALICE

Love to.

Terry grins and gets into the car.

INT. TERRY'S FLAT -- NIGHT

CLOSE on Terry's CD player, the sounds of Ryan Adams singing 'La Ciennega Just Smiled' coming from within.

The clock reads 0207am.

ALICE (O.S.)

I met Maxwell last year...

We PULL BACK to see Alice and Terry sat on the floor, their backs to the wall, guitars, papers and scribbled lyrics laid out in front of them. A half-empty bottle of wine is sat in front of them.

TERRY

This is your ex?

ALICE

Worst mistake I ever made in my life.

(pause)

Maxwell was ... well, he was fun. Dangerous, you know - not in a menacing way, at least, not at first but ... he had an edge about him, a darkness.

TERRY

Sounds charming.

ALICE

Oh he was, in the beginning, anyway. My band had just broken up, I slightly knew Maxwell, he asked me to come and sing in his band. Everyone thought it was a mistake - in fact Katie out-and-out warned me, told me not to go anywhere near Maxwell.

TERRY

Why did you?

A moment before Alice answers.

ALICE

I don't know. I told myself at the time that I recognised a part of myself in him. Besides, he was fun, dangerous, and ... and he made (MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

me feel alive. At that time, that was all I wanted. To feel alive. But then ... other things started happening. I found out what he was really like.

TERRY

How do you mean?

There's another long moment before Alice answers. Finally she doesn't say anything, just turns away and pulls up her shirt, revealing a nasty-looking purple mark on her lower back.

TERRY

Ah, Jesus ... how did ...?

ALICE

Kitchen chair. He told me I deserved it.

TERRY

I can't believe you never reported him.

ALICE

Oh I wanted too, most of the time, but ... then there was a part of me that ... well, that kind of got off on it.

A very uncomfortable silence.

TERRY

You're sure that's not just what he wanted you to think?

ALICE

No, this was all me. If I'd had any sense I would have left him, but I didn't.

She takes a sip of her wine and closes her eyes, trying to blot out memories.

ALICE (CONT'D)

In a way, he was right - Maxwell did represent something that I recognised from within me. But it's a part of myself that I absolutely despise, the part of myself that I'm most ashamed of.

TERRY

I've never met this Maxwell, but I can tell you now - you're not that person.

ALICE

You've known me all of a few weeks and you know that?

Terry reaches out, takes the wine off her ... puts his hand over hers.

TERRY

I know.

There's another awkward moment ... and then the two of them are kissing, hungrily, passionately.

FADE TO:

INT. PUB BACK ROOM -- DAY

The band is in the middle of a rehearsal. Alice sings as the band plays an old rock classic, finding the groove.

However, after a few seconds Terry suddenly stops playing.

TERRY

Whoa, stop, hold it right there.

The band crashes to a halt. Everyone looks at Terry unexpectedly.

ALICE

What's wrong?

TERRY

There's a problem with the bass.

All eyes turn to Pete, who holds his hands up in surrender.

PETE

Hey, don't look at me
 (points at Miles)

He's the one doubling his beats.

MILES

Get the fuck outta here...

KATIE (O.S.)

He's right.

Everyone turns in surprise to find Katie walking in. Alice looks stunned.

ALICE

Katie?

KATIE

(to Pete)

Right before that last chorus you dropped the ball.

PETE

I did not--!

KATIE

But it's only a teething trouble this is what happens when you've got a rhythm section that hasn't played together before. It'll go with practise.

She looks up at the rest of them.

KATTE

Sounding good though.

INT. SAME -- LATER

The band is taking a break - all except Pete and Miles who are rehearsing the rhythm section, slowly getting it right.

Katie and Alice watch from across the room

MILES

Okay, and lower there...

Pete adjusts, Miles adjusts to compensate. They both smile as it comes together.

MILES (CONT'D)

Where the hell did you learn to play bass like that? No, wait, let me guess - Iron Maiden fan, right?

PETE

How can you tell?

MILES

Anyone trying to play bass like Steve Harris...

Katie smiles, sips a can of coke. Alice makes a tentative stab at conversation.

ALICE

Nice going. Thought we were going to have a war there.

KATIE

It's always the bass player and the drummer...

A beat - Katie grins.

KATIE (CONT'D)

What's the difference between a drummer and a drum machine?

ALICE

You only have to punch the information into a drum machine once.

They both laugh at the old joke.

ALICE

Still, thanks. You managed to diffuse it nicely.

KATIE

No problem.

An awkward pause. Alice gives her an expectant look. Katie says nothing for a few seconds, sips her coke.

KATTE

Look, about what I said the other night--

ALICE

Katie--

KATIE

No, let me finish. I was out of line. I shouldn't have said what I did.

ALICE

Yes you should have.

Katie looks up in surprise.

ALICE (CONT'D)

It was precisely what I needed - a kick up the arse, to show me what I was doing with myself.

(pause)

My life has been so crazy this last few months. I've done things ... things I never would have done before. Things I'm not proud of. Things I wish I could just make go away.

KATIE

We've all had times like that.

ALICE

Maybe, but you never got yourself arrested for possession of controlled substances.

KATIE

Well ... okay, no. But do you know something else?

She puts her coke down, looks Katie in the eye.

KATIE

That wasn't you - that was Maxwell.

ALICE

He never exactly forced me into it...

KATIE

I've known guys like that - the boyfriend who's bad for you, who you don't actually like, but you can't get away from and he drags you down. I've been there. The trick is not to let him keep a hold of you - to know when to say enough's enough and have the guts to walk away.

ALICE

I never thought you'd speak to me again after--

KATIE

Yes, well ... I had a run-in with Maxwell last night, and lets just say any doubts I might have had were completely expelled. You've made the tough choice already and walked away from the bastard. Now you've got to get your life back on track and not let him drag you down again.

ALICE

I'll feel a lot better knowing there's someone to watch my back.

KATIE

Well ... what're friends for?

Alice grins and Katie smiles back - the damage to the friendship has been repaired.

The door opens and Terry enters carrying a bag of sandwiches.

TERRY

Okay, who ordered the chicken and peppers?

CHARLIE

That would be me.

MILES

Chicken and peppers ... damn, I should have ordered that.

CHARLIE

What'd you get?

MILES

Salami.

CHARLIE

No way I'm doing a trade.

The friendly banter continues as Terry dishes out the sandwiches. We cut back to across the room with Alice and Katie, who looks intrigued.

KATIE

So that's Terry?

ALICE

That's him. You approve?

KATIE

He'll pass.

Alice smiles, genuine relief - Katie's approval clearly means a lot to her.

MILES (O.S.)

Hey, are you two going to gossip all day or are we going to play some music? The rest of the band is getting ready to get back to work. Katie and Alice stand up.

KATTE

Well, I'd better leave you to it. See you later.

She moves to go when:

ALICE

Katie?

She turns. Alice looks nervous.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I, uh ... don't suppose you'd like to join us? We've got an opening for a pianist?

Katie looks momentarily taken aback. Across the room Terry nudges Charlie.

TERRY

What's she like?

CHARLIE

Fuckin' brilliant.

Katie's face breaks into a grin.

KATIE

Sure, I'd love to.

Alice's grin matches Katie's. They embrace in a hug.

ALICE

Glad to have you back.

KATIE

Don't worry...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE COURTHOUSE -- DAY

And suddenly we are right back to the courthouse the moment we left it, with Alice lying on the ground in a pool of her own blood, fighting for her life.

KATIE (V.O.)

...I'm not going anywhere.

Alice looks up as someone bursts through the crowd - Katie. She drops down beside Alice and David.

KATIE

Oh my God, Alice?

DAVID

Where's that bloody ambulance?

KATIE

Alice, can you hear me?

Her voice ECHOES in Alice's hearing.

KATTE

Alice? Alice... All the sound drops off again and we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE DOCKLANDS -- DAY

An establishing shot of a rock club down in dockland country.

BILLY (V.O.)

I dunno...

INT. THE DOCKLANDS -- DAY

The staff are cleaning up, getting ready for the night. Alice is talking to the owner, BILLY JOE DIXON (40s, fat and shabby, wearing a faded Motorhead T-shirt that barely covers more than half of his belly).

ALTCE

What do you mean you dunno?

BILLY

What I said - I remember the last time your band played here...

ALICE

Different band.

BILLY

Of course it is - it's always a different band with you, isn't it Alice? What're you averaging now, one every six months? When are you going to stick with something?

ALICE

It's not been as many as that.

(beat)

Well, okay, it has, but this is the one - this one is the one that's going places.

BILLY

You said that last time.

ALICE

This time I mean it.

BILLY

You said that last time too.

ALICE

(snorts)

Do me a favour - what band with Maxwell Clayton is ever in danger of going places?

This pulls Billy up short.

BILLY

Good point.

He still doesn't look convinced and begins swabbing down the bar with a cloth.

BILLY

Assume I give you the gig--

ALICE

You'd be doing us a huge favour--

BILLY

I know that. There better not be any trouble...

ALICE

Don't worry, we're not a mosher outfit.

BILLY

What kind of music?

ALICE

Good stuff.

Billy looks curious. Eventually he nods.

BILLY

One gig, trial period, ten percent of the door takings - that's standard, as you well know, take it or leave it.

ALICE

Take it.

They shake hands.

EXT. THE DOCKLANDS -- DAY

Terry is waiting outside as Alice emerges.

TERRY

Well?

ALICE

We're on.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Alice is getting ready to go out. She zips up her guitar inside it's bag before turning and checking her hair and makeup in the mirror.

DAVID (O.S.)

It's fine.

Alice turns to see David stood in the doorway. She smiles at him and he smiles back.

DAVID

Now there's something I've missed.

ALICE

What?

DAVTD

That smile. Been far too long since I've seen it.

An awkward moment. David makes an effort to break the silence.

DAVID

Going out tonight?

ALICE

Got a gig.

DAVID

Nice one.

Another awkward moment.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Well ... good luck. Break a leg.

He turns to leave--

ALICE

Dad?

He turns to face her and she smiles again.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Thank you.

DAVID

Well ... have a good one.

He leaves, and Alice already seems happier and more upbeat.

EXT. THE DOCKLANDS -- NIGHT

A huge queue of people are lined up waiting to go in.

INT. BACK ROOM, THE DOCKLANDS -- NIGHT

The band are sat around in silence, waiting to go on stage. Everyone is nervous as hell. Alice looks positively sick, as though she might throw up at any second.

Miles absent-mindedly clicks his drumsticks together, something that gets on everyone's nerves.

KATIE

Could you cut that out?

Miles looks up, realises his error and stops. Charlie tries to lighten the mood.

CHARLIE

Okay people, place your bets - how long before someone throws the first bottle?

At that moment Alice suddenly bolts out of the room, heading for the toilet. Terry jumps to his feet but Katie beats him to it.

KATTE

Think I'd better handle this one.

INT. TOILETS, THE DOCKLANDS -- NIGHT

The toilet is dark, dank and clearly smells disgusting. Alice is bent over a lavatory, retching, looking white in the face.

Katie waits outside the door without saying a word. After a moment we hear the flush, the door opens and a very shakylooking Alice emerges.

Silently, Katie hands Alice a bottle of water that she accepts gratefully.

ALICE

Thanks. God, I can't believe this.

KATIE

It's just nerves. You're the singer, you're bound to get it worse than anyone else.

Alice gives her a look.

ALICE

(sarcastic)

Thanks for cheering me up, really helped.

KATIE

(matches tone)

Any time.

And for no apparent reason they both burst out laughing.

The door opens and Miles sticks his head around.

MILES

Knock-knock, sorry to barge in--

ALICE

But?

MILES

We're on in five.

INT. THE DOCKLANDS -- NIGHT

The bar is packed with a decidedly mixed crowd - plenty of goths and moshers in evidence but also various trendies and music appreciators.

David - looking and feeling out of place - makes his way to the bar. He grabs a stool as the barman approaches.

DAVID

Budweiser.

As the barman moves to get his drink, David turns to see Jason and Mark stood further down the bar. Jason looks up, recognises David, grins and heads over.

DAVID

Evening boys.

JASON

Alright?

MARK

Hey.

JASON

Didn't think I'd see you here, Mr Mason.

DAVID

She's my daughter - about time I gave her some support.

MARK

That's what we're here for too.

JASON

If it's any consolation, I think she's about as nervous as you are right now.

DAVID

You think?

A whine of feedback comes through the speaker system - Billy is on stage, tapping the microphone.

BILLY

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Docklands. And we've got a show for you tonight...

BACKSTAGE Billy's voice can be heard muted. The band are lined up waiting to go on. Terry nudges Alice.

TERRY

Good luck.

ALICE

You too.

She reaches up and kisses him on the cheek.

OUT FRONT Billy is still addressing the crowd.

BILLY

...so please welcome on stage, our main act for the evening - Perfect Strangers!

The crowd applaud as the band takes to the stage. As Alice appears David applauds and several wolf-whistles go out.

Alice takes the mike - she's now in stage persona, all traces of fear gone, the adrenalin giving her an extra boost of confidence. She smiles into the crowd.

ALICE

Good evening.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

(counting in)

A one, two, three, four...

The opening number starts slow ... a slow, atmospheric fade in from Katie's keyboards, the excitement slowly building ... Alice hardly moves as the lights come up...

Then Terry's guitar kicks in, breaking the silence. Alice takes to the mike, singing the opening lines over a backdrop of guitars and keyboards...

Then Miles clicks his sticks and we're off.

The band roar into action, and right away we know we're onto something special. As an ensemble they're just right.

Miles pounds his drum skins...

Terry and Charlie duel guitars...

The crowd going wild...

Alice works the stage like a pro, pulling her mike from it's stand, making her way up and down the stage, engaging the audience, flirting with Terry on stage who responds with exaggerated guitar strokes...

Katie's piano keeping the whole thing on course, driving the song...

David at the bar, looking suitably impressed. He yells to make himself heard.

DAVID

They're good!

Jason sticks two thumbs up at David - he's loving it too.

The opening number comes to an end, the crowd goes nuts.

ALICE

Thank you!

When the crowd quietens down...

ALICE (CONT'D)

Thank you very much. Alright, let's get going and, uh, here's a nice, slow ballad...

Miles clicks his sticks and the band launch into another big rocker.

The crowd goes nuts as we DISSOLVE FROM ONE SHOT TO ANOTHER...

The band goes from big rockers to slow ballads...

The guitars ring out against the keyboards...

Pete hammering out a steady bass...

INT. SAME -- LATER

With a final clash of cymbals the band finish their last song. The crowd goes nuts as Alice replaces her mike on the stand.

ALICE

Thank you - goodnight.

The band bows and leaves the stage, leaving the crowd hungry and wanting more.

Amongst the crowd we see David, still stood with Jason and Mark. The brothers are going wild, but David is too overcome with pride to say anything.

INT. BACK ROOM, THE DOCKLANDS -- NIGHT

The band are in a state of euphoria - laughter, tears, hugs, handshakes, hi-fives - high on adrenalin after the gig.

Alice and Terry hug in triumph.

ALICE

We did it!

TERRY

YOU did it - you brought all of this together, you worked that stage--

KATIE

I think we can all agree it was a joint effort.

She catches a beer out of the air, lobbed by Charlie, who is divvying up a six-pack.

PETE

And a job well done all around.

CHARLIE

I'll say. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to make a toast.

He stands, strikes a pose that makes Katie giggle.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

To Perfect Strangers - rockin' in the free world!

They clink bottles in mid-air and drink.

EXT. THE DOCKLANDS BACK ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

The band is loading the last of their gear into Pete's van. As Alice and Terry emerge:

DAVID (O.S.)

Alice?

Alice turns - David is stood by a nearby lamp-post.

ALICE

(to Terry)

I'll be right back.

He kisses her on the cheek and she makes her way over to where David is stood.

ALICE

Hey - what're you doing here?

DAVID

I came to see you. I came to see the band.

ALICE

Dad--

DAVID

I thought you were brilliant.

This pulls her up short - joy in her expression.

ALICE

You think so?

DAVID

I know so - I never knew you could sing like that.

Alice blushes, slightly embarrassed.

ALICE

There's lots of things about me that you don't know.

DAVID

So I'm starting to realise. But I'd like to find out.

He glances across to where Terry is helping the others load the van. Alice follows his gaze.

DAVID

Is that Terry?

ALICE

How did you know?

DAVID

Katie mentioned his name. he looks like a good lad. Honest.

ALICE

He is.

An awkward moment. Alice fidgets.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I have to--

DAVID

Go. I understand. I'll see you later.

He turns to walk away.

Dad?

He turns, looks back at his daughter and she smiles.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming. I really appreciate it,

DAVID

Forget about it. You're my daughter - I'll always be here for you, Alice.

And he turns and walks away. Alice watches him go - looks up as Terry approaches.

TERRY

Hey. You okay?

ALICE

Yeah - I'm fine.

She reaches up and kisses him.

TERRY

Coming home?

ALICE

If you'll have me.

TERRY

Always.

INT. TERRY'S FLAT -- MORNING

Terry and Alice are sat at the table eating breakfast, having a heated debate.

TERRY

I don't think there's any contest--

ALICE

You don't? That's like saying Oasis have been able to make a decent album after Morning Glory.

TERRY

Yeah, well, I always thought that was overrated. They should say that they haven't made a decent album since Definitely Maybe.

ALICE

Ah, so you're one of them are you? Think they've sold out?

TERRY

No, not that either.

He pours a cup of coffee, offers Alice another. She declines with a wave of the hand.

TERRY

But it's still there, that indie mentality that big is bad - or the punk version that says that if too many people like you then you must be doing something wrong.

ALICE

I know what you mean.

(pause)

So what about us?

TERRY

Eh?

ALICE

Our band. If we get successful will that be a bad thing?

TERRY

We've only had one gig.

ALICE

So - no fair dodging the question.

TERRY

If we get famous and successful, then it'll be because of bloody hard work and lots of it. If people think working hard is selling out, then that's their problem.

ALTCE

Couldn't have said it better myself.

Terry grins ... and at that moment a loud banging comes from the door.

TERRY

Be right back.

He gets up and makes his way to the door. The hammering continues.

TERRY (CONT'D)

All right, all right, I'm coming.

He opens the front door.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Where's the f--?

But at that moment he stops dead. stood outside is an irate-faced young woman whom we recognise from the photo we saw earlier - LAURA BRYAN (25), Terry's ex.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Laura?

LAURA

(pissed off)

YOU FUCKING ARSEHOLE!

She shoulders his way past him and into the flat. Terry sighs and shakes his head.

TERRY

Good morning to you too, Laura.

He shuts the door.

Laura storms into the kitchen and finds Alice sat there. Terry comes in behind her.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Laura--

LAURA

I don't want to hear it!
 (to Alice)

You - out!

ALICE

Excuse me?

LAURA

You heard me - get out!

Alice doesn't like it - she gets to her feet, angry.

ALICE

Why you little--!

Terry physically puts himself between the two of them.

TERRY

Alright that's enough!

(to Laura)

You DO NOT tell my house guests what they can and cannot do in my own home, got it?

LAURA

Fine - forgive me for not wanting her to see what a conniving little bastard you actually are!

TERRY

Don't pretend you're doing any favours for anyone other than yourself. Now what's this all about?

LAURA

This.

She thrusts a piece of paper into his hand. Terry glances at it.

TERRY

So?

LAURA

You're selling the house?

TERRY

In case you hadn't noticed, neither of us is living there at the moment, it's stood empty and costing both of us money. So yes, it's going.

LAURA

And I don't get a say in this?

TERRY

Oh, you want it? you want to move back in?

LAURA

I can't afford to live there by myself, you know that!

TERRY

So what's the problem?

In the background Alice gets up.

ALICE

Terry, maybe I should--

TERRY

No, you stay right there. This isn't going to take very long.

He turns back to Laura, hackles raised, poised for a fight.

TERRY (CONT'D)

To answer the question, no you don't get a say in this because the mortgage is in my name. If you want me to sign the balance of payments over to you, fair enough, you'll hear from my solicitor.

He steps forward, getting right into her face.

TERRY (CONT'D)

In the meantime, I don't appreciate you barging back into my life when you well and truly moved yourself out of it not long ago. We're finished, Laura - it'll be official when the papers come through next week, and then thank god it'll all be sorted.

He pauses, his expression softening.

TERRY

I'm truly sorry it's come to this, but you didn't leave me much of a choice.

Laura doesn't say anything for a moment, just locks gazes with him. Then she looks away, turning to Alice.

T.ATTRA

You're welcome to him, love. I just hope you appreciate this little preview of what's going to happen to you later on.

And with that she turns and storms out, the door banging shut behind her. Terry winces at the slam.

TERRY

Alice, meet my ex wife.

ALICE

I'd never have guessed.

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK -- DAY

Laura gets into her car. For a moment she just sits there, looking frustrated. Then she reaches under her seat, pulls out a box and opens it.

Inside it is a GUN.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BACK OF AMBULANCE -- DAY

Alice's prone form is thrust on a stretcher into the back of the ambulance. She's still awake but barely conscious, her clothes soaked in blood.

Two PARAMEDICS leap on behind her, followed by David, who turns to face a sobbing Katie.

KATIE

I want to go with you!

DAVID

I need you to stay here, explain to Terry and get him to the hospital as fast as possible.

(beat)

Can you do that? Katie, can you do that?

KATIE

Yeah, sure ... oh my god ...

PARAMEDIC #1

We have to go now, Mr Mason.

David gets in and the door bangs shut behind him. Katie, looking helpless, watches as the ambulance screams off, sirens wailing as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTREME CLOSE UP: The blinded eyes of Lady Justice ... and we are...

The first thing we can tell is that this is NOT the same court seen at the beginning, but Maxwell is still in the dock.

In the public gallery we can see Alice sat with Terry on one side of her and Katie on the other, watching the proceedings coldly. Maxwell looks up at her and winks. She gives him a disgusted look and looks the other way.

JUDGE

Is your name Maxwell Douglas Clayton?

MAXWELL

Yes your honour.

JUDGE

And you live in flat 7A, 22 Archibald Street?

MAXWELL

Yes.

JUDGE

Good.

He turns to face the two solicitors.

JUDGE

In that case, we will reconvene in four weeks. Bail is set at twenty thousand pounds. Next case.

He bangs his gavel down with a very final tone.

INT. COURT CORRIDORS -- DAY

Alice places 50p into the coin slot of a coke machine and a can drops out. As she reaches down to pick it up:

MAXWELL (O.S.)

Come to wish me luck?

Alice jumps - Maxwell has appeared beside her.

ALICE

Come to see them put you away for good.

MAXWELL

They'll be lucky. Especially since you're gonna testify on my behalf.

ALICE

I'm testifying for the prosecution, Maxwell - which bit of that can't you understand?

MAXWELL

Oh I understand alright - I just think you'd do well to reconsider.

The threat is clear in his words. Alice smirks, contemptuous.

ALICE

Or what?

MAXWELL

Or your dad might find out what you've really been doing in the back of my van this last year.

Alice looks dumbstruck.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

He doesn't know that though, does he. What's he going to think when he finds out his daughter's a cokehead?

And Alice finally loses it. She leaps at him, SLAPPING, CLAWING, SCRATCHING - MESSY.

ALICE

You bastard! You fucking bastard-!

She is physically wrenched off him by Terry, Katie and her brothers.

Maxwell, wearing a cocky grin, gets back to his feet, dabs his cut lip.

MAXWELL

I'll see you later.

He turns and walks off, radiating smug confidence.

INT. PUB BACK ROOM -- NIGHT

The band are putting their gear together ready for rehearsal - Pete helps Miles set up his drum kit. Alice and Katie are stood by Terry as he puts together his amplifier.

KATIE

Maxwell's all mouth and no do, Ali - I wouldn't worry about him.

ALICE

What if he does it, though - tells dad that I--

KATIE

But you didn't - did you?

ALICE

Only a couple of times - and those couple of times were enough to put me off the stuff forever.

TERRY

Well there you are then - who's your dad going to believe, you or some frightened junkie who'll say anything to keep his arse out of prison?

Alice concedes the point, cheering up slightly.

ALICE

I suppose so...

TERRY

Well there you are then.

A shout distracts them - Charlie.

CHARLIE

Oy! Are you ladies gonna gossip all day or are we gonna get some practise in?

ALICE

Keep your hair on... They all get into position. Miles clicks his sticks and counts them in and the band begins.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- DAY

David is sat on a sofa, leafing through the yellow pages. After a moment he stops under an entry:

Recording studios.

He looks through a few entries, then pulls out his phone.

DAVID

Hello? Yes, I'd like to book some time in a studio ... no it's for a band ... my daughter's band.

EXT. RAT AND PARROT -- NIGHT

Miles, Pete and Charlie load the band's gear into the back of Pete's van.

INT. PUB BACK ROOM -- NIGHT

Terry and Alice are stood talking.

TERRY

You're sure?

ALICE

Yeah, I think I need some space ... besides, I've got a couple of song ideas.

TERRY

Well if you're sure...

ALICE

I am.

(beat)

Don't worry, I'll see you tomorrow.

TERRY

Okay.

He kisses her on the cheek, picks up his guitar and moves to the door.

TERRY (CONT'D)

And don't worry about Maxwell or your dad, alright? Everything's gonna be fine.

ALICE

T know.

He smiles, leaves, and closes the door behind him. Alice sits down on the floor in the now empty room, picks up her guitar and begins strumming.

EXT. RAT AND PARROT -- NIGHT

Terry lugs his guitar into the back of the van.

TERRY

You think she'll be alright?

KATIE

She'll be fine.

MILES

Man, I'm still buzzing - Resurrection are playing down at The Gates, anyone wanna join me?

KATIE

Sounds good. Terry?

Terry considers for a moment, then nods.

TERRY

Sure, why not.

MILES

Great.

PETE

Alright people, lets roll.

They all get into the van and drive off. As they leave, the light from the headlights briefly illuminates someone stood in a doorway--

Maxwell.

Watching the Rat and Parrot with intent.

INT. PUB BACK ROOM -- NIGHT

Alice is sat on the floor, working on her song. She takes a break from strumming to add some words to a growing sheet of lyrics.

The door opens - Alice looks to see a male figure step into the room.

ALICE

Terry?

The door is shut and locked. Alice looks nervous ... and then Maxwell steps into the light, face set, bloody furious.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Maxwell?

She scrambles to her feet, looking very worried. Maxwell just stares at her for a long moment, cold and set.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Maxwell, what do you want?

A moment. Then:

MAXWELL

Bitch!

And he punches her hard in the face. Alice goes down hard.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Bitch!

He hits her again ... again ... laying into her with all his fury. This is not a pretty sight as Maxwell proceeds to beat Alice to within inches of her life right in front of us.

On the floor beside them, Alice's song lyrics become splattered with blood.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Just to establish.

INT. HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

The door bangs open and Terry, Katie and the rest of the band charge in, running towards the end of the room.

They round a corner to see a horrific sight - Alice, covered in blood and bruises, having her pulped face sewn back together by a nurse. The police inspector, Flint, is also present.

ALICE

Maxwell Douglas Clayton.

FLINT

Right...

TERRY

Alice!

They rush to her side, concerned as hell. Katie is close to tears.

KATIE

Ali, my god, who...?

TERRY

Are you alright? Was it Maxwell?

ALICE

I'm alright.

The pain in her voice is easy to hear, but it is accompanied by a tight resolve.

ALICE

Trust me, he's not gonna get away with this.

INT. SAME -- LATER

Katie watches from across the room as the police continue to interview Alice. She turns to see Jason and Mark stood there, holding a hushed conversation.

JASON

We should never have let this stand. We should have done him proper the moment he laid a hand on--

MARK

Katie?

They both look up to see Katie stood there. She has a closed look on her face.

KATIE

You got a plan?

MARK

Something like that.

JASON

Ball's in your court, sis, what do you reckon? Should be do him proper?

There's a moment of indecision ... and then Katie nods once, her face set.

KATIE

Do him proper.

The translation of this is obvious - give Maxwell a taste of his own medicine, and the brothers couldn't be happier about this,

JASON

Right.

Terry, Miles, Charlie and Pete all hear this. Terry stands.

TERRY

I'm coming too.

MILES

We're all coming.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAXWELL'S FLAT -- NIGHT

Pete's van screeches to a halt in front of Maxwell's apartment block only to find two cop cars and a police van are parked outside.

As they get out of the van they see the door open and Maxwell, yelling obscenities, being hauled out in handcuffs by uniformed cops. Flint is with them.

FLINT

If I were you, I'd shut up.

As Maxwell is thrown into the back of the van, he looks up to see the assembled group - Terry, Miles, Charlie, Pete, Jason and Mark - watching in grim silence.

INT. HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

As the nurse continues to bandage Alice up, Katie sits beside her bed, holding her hand.

KATIE

It's alright ... it's gonna be alright...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BACK OF AMBULANCE -- DAY

Alice is fading in and out of consciousness. David grips her hand tightly.

DAVID

Alice? Alice, can you hear me?

Alice finally manages to speak, very weakly, racked with pain.

ALICE

Dad? What ... what ...?

DAVID

It's alright, sweetheart, it's alright ... we're getting you to hospital, you're gonna be fine--

But at that moment Alice recoils, in a lot of pain. The monitor goes flat.

PARAMEDIC

We're losing her!

They immediately go into action.

PARAMEDIC (CONT'D)

Adrenalin!

As the medics get to work, David's hand is pulled from Alice's ... he loses sight of his daughter behind the bodies of the medics.

DAVID

What's happening?

His voice echoes as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PUB BACK ROOM -- NIGHT

The band - Terry, Katie, Miles, Charlie and Pete - are sat around in silence. The instruments lie abandoned, no-one can bring themselves to play anything. The awful silence is broken by...

ALICE (O.S.)

What's all this? Somebody died?

They all look up --

Alice enters, leaning on a crutch, with David beside her as support. She is still bruised, but the determination is visible in her face.

TERRY

Неу...

KATIE

You took your time.

The grim atmosphere has been broken. Everyone is smiling now.

ALICE

You didn't think I'd let that bastard keep me away, did you?

Terry rushes over to her, hugs her...

ALICE (CONT'D)

Hey, easy on the ribs...

TERRY

Sorry.

ALICE

Don't mention it. Dad's got a surprise for all of us.

Everyone looks at David, who smiles.

EXT. RECORDING STUDIO -- DAY

Just to establish.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO -- DAY

The band are all set up in the studio - Alice is off to one side behind a piece of plate glass so the vocals can be isolated. David is sat in the control booth with the RECORDING TECHNICIAN.

TECHNICIAN

Okay ... ready whenever you are.

Terry throws Alice a look and she smiles back in agreement. Miles clicks the sticks and counts down and the band launches into one of their songs.

INT. SAME -- VARIOUS

Montage sequence.

We see various shots of the band going through the recording process.

[NOTE - the music over this sequence should be the band performing the song in the previous scene]

We SEE the band playing songs...

Listening to them played back...

Terry and Alice writing lyrics...

Charlie helps sort a guitar part with the help of the technician...

David sat watching it all, a look of fatherly pride...

Alice in the vocals booth, struggling to hit a high note...

The band horsing around, blowing off steam ...

Katie laughs at some joke... Miles hammers a steady beat...

Pete assumes a swashbuckling pose with his bass...

Terry doing his Elvis impersonation ... everyone kills themselves laughing...

Charlie assumes rock-gonk poses whilst belting out a guitar solo ... someone throws a crisp packet at his head...

INTERCUT:

INT. POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM -- DAY

Maxwell being interviewed by Flint [we cannot hear their words, only the music]

He is shown pictures of Alice's injuries...

Maxwell sits smug, not saying anything...

Flint loses his temper...

Maxwell yells silently at him...

END MONTAGE ON:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO -- DAY

Alice delivers the last note of the song and, with a clash of cymbals and a final flourish on the guitar, it's all over.

Terry grins, effecting genteel applause.

TERRY

(sotto)

That was very nice, thank you very much.

A moment - then everyone bursts out laughing.

EXT. RECORDING STUDIO -- NIGHT

P.O.V. - FURTHER DOWN THE STREET

Terry and Alice leave the building, make their way towards their car. Alice is now walking without the crutch and all the visible signs of her injuries have gone.

ANGLE ON

Laura - sat in her car further down the road, watching everything with an intense, dangerous expression.

Terry makes some joke we can't hear - Alice laughs, reaches across to kiss him on the cheek. They get into the car and Alice drives off.

Laura watches them go. The box containing the gun is still sat on the seat of the car beside her.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE TERRY'S FLAT -- NIGHT

Terry and Alice are stood on the threshold of his flat.

TERRY

Sure you can't come in?

ALICE

Dad's cooking dinner tonight - Mediterranean pasta something-or-other.

TERRY

Sounds good.

He kisses her on the cheek.

TERRY

See you tomorrow?

ALICE

Oh yeah.

She reaches up and kisses him on the lips, a kiss that lasts.

INT. TERRY'S FLAT -- NIGHT

Terry enters, puts down his guitar and slings his coat over a chair. He heads over to the kitchen to make a coffee when a voice attracts his attention.

LAURA (O.S.)

Don't ... move ...

Terry whirls - Laura is sat in the chair in the corner, looking straight at him.

TERRY

Laura! What the hell are you --?

But then he stops - he's seen it... Laura is pointing a gun right at him.

TERRY

Laura ... now don't do anything stupid...

LAURA

You and me, we've got to have ourselves a talk.

The shaky tone in his voice is enough to make Terry realise she means business.

EXT. TERRY'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

As Alice makes her way back to the car she finds an unwelcome guest leaning against the bonnet - Justin.

JUSTIN

Things going well with the new man?

ALICE

What do you want?

JUSTIN

What do I always want - you to settle your boyfriend's account.

Alice gives him a disbelieving look, indicates the bruises on her face.

ALICE

You still think he's my boyfriend after all this?

JUSTIN

Dunno and don't care - just want the balance of payments redressed.

ALICE (CONT'D)

No, not this time.

This catches Justin off guard - he wasn't expecting this.

INT. TERRY'S FLAT -- NIGHT

The confrontation continues - Laura is still pointing the gun right at Terry.

LAURA

It'd be so easy to do it, you know? Pull the trigger. Then you'd be dead ... just as dead as our son...

TERRY

No-one needs to get hurt here...

LAURA

I didn't want to do it. You understand, Terry - I need you to understand, I didn't want to do it...

TERRY

I know, I know ... you did what you had to at the time...

LAURA

I KILLED HIM!

She shriek makes Terry jump - her hands tighten around the gun.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Our son ... I killed him ... just as if I'd held this gun to his head and pulled the trigger. Do you have any idea what it's like, trying to live with that? No, you don't - how could you? You don't care - you've moved on, got yourself a new life, and...

She breaks off - tears are running down her face. Terry doesn't know what to do.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You never cared in the least. Maybe it's time I made you care.

She brings the gun up and points it right at his face.

EXT. TERRY'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

Alice is still facing down Justin. She shoulders her way past him and opens the door of her car.

ALICE

Understand this - after what I've been through these past few weeks there is no way I'm going to be intimidated by anyone, Maxwell or you. I paid you to get you off my back - that means that you don't keep turning up every time Maxwell decides he's going to forget to miss a payment.

JUSTIN

Shame - I coulda done you a really good deal.

ALICE

Not interested. If you feel obliged to break Maxwell's legs-- (shrugs)

Then be my guest. I'm past caring anymore.

She gets into her car and drives off, leaving Justin watching her retreating headlights.

INT. TERRY'S FLAT -- NIGHT

Terry takes a cautious step forward, hiding the fear well; his voice is soothing.

TERRY

Laura ... you won't do this. I know you won't - because you're a good person really...

LAURA

I killed our baby, Terry - how good a person can I be?

TERRY

That's no reason to do this. You pull that trigger and you'll be a murderer, and I might be dead but your life will be over. It doesn't have to be like that. We can both walk away from this one. So please, Laura ... give me the gun.

He takes another step forward ... another ... Laura brings the gun back up.

LAURA

(shrieking)

Get away from me!

TERRY

I can't do that. You've brought this on yourself, Laura. You want to kill me? Fine. Either pull that trigger or get out of my flat.

And with no warning whatsoever he rushes forward and grabs her wrist - Laura pulls the trigger--!

CLICK! Nothing happens...

Terry wrestles the gun out of her hand - he turns it over. The word 'replica' is clearly visible written down the side.

TERRY

God's holy trousers...

He looks down at Laura - she has collapsed in tears on the floor.

LAURA

What have I got left to live for?

Terry sits down beside her and puts his arm around her. She buries her face in his shoulder and cries.

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Just to establish.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

David brings a dish off the stove into the dining room where Alice is sat waiting.

ALICE

This smells great.

DAVID

I'm not a bad cook.

From the spread on the table we realise this is an understatement. David begins dishing out the pasta.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I dropped by the studio today.

ALICE

I didn't see you.

DAVID

You looked busy - I didn't want to bother you.

ALICE

You never bother me, dad.

David smiles, obviously glad he heard this little affirmation.

DAVID

I spoke to the technician - he said you'd got nearly forty songs tracked.

ALICE

I know, I can't believe it either - that's almost enough for four whole albums.

DAVID

That's what I thought ... which is why I got the technician to make a demo CD up for me.

Alice recognises the mischievous look on her father's face.

ALICE

What did you need a demo disc for ...

DAVID

Well ... I managed to get a meeting with Michael Samuels for Friday...

ALICE

Who?

David gives her a look.

DAVID

Who? I thought you were clued in on music? He's only the head of acquisitions for Top Five records. Only the man who suggests new acts to his boss. Only happens to think your stuff is the best thing since sliced bread, but, hey, if you're not interested... Alice's face has broken into a broad grin.

ALICE

Oh my god ... Dad, I ... God, I don't know what to say...

DAVID

Thank you would be nice.

ALICE

Thank you, but ... you've already done so much for us ... paying for all this studio time, we've been at it for about four weeks now ... all that money, it's...

DAVID

It's only money.

He takes a few bites of his meal.

DAVID (CONT'D)

In the past I've always provided you with money to do what you wanted, but that wasn't perhaps the best way of going about things. Maybe what I should have done is provided the money to do the things you needed to do.

(beat)

Music seems to be your passion - what you need to do. It's about time I recognised that and started working with it.

He puts down his fork, looks his daughter in the eyes.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I want you to do whatever makes you happy. If college makes you unhappy, I don't want you to do it. If music makes you happy ... then that's definitely what you should be doing.

(beat - then he
 speaks with total
 honesty)

If I can help you with that in any way ... then that's what I should be doing.

Alice's look of gratitude says more than any words ever could. She's fighting back tears, really moved by her father's confidence in her.

They don't let go. In the silence, it is a very powerful moment between father and daughter.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Alice is sat strumming her guitar, singing a few choice words. Then she picks up a pen and franticly starts scribbling lyrics.

Eventually she's written a song. She writes the title of the song at the top of the page:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO -- DAY

The band are in the process of finishing up another song. Terry takes his earphones off, looking tired.

TERRY

And we're done.

A moan goes up from the rest of the band.

PETE

What?

MILES

We can't stop now, I wanna keep going.

TERRY

Sorry guys, that's all my songs - I don't have anything else.

KATIE

So write some more.

ALICE

Uh, quys?

Everyone looks to her.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I've got a song.

INT. SAME -- LATER

The technician sets the wheels spinning.

TECHNICIAN

Okay, this is Never Saw You, take one.

Miles counts in and the song begins. We stay on the band for the entire duration of the song, mostly on Alice as we hear the raw emotion in her words.

One major thing that comes through about this song - it's a hit.

When the band finishes, it's clear everyone knows it's going to be a hit, one of the best things they've done ... but obviously no-one's gonna say that.

KATIE

Not bad ... we're onto something here.

A moment ... and then everyone bursts out laughing.

EXT. ARCTIC RECORDS -- DAY

Just to establish.

INT. ARCTIC RECORDS -- DAY

The band plus David are sat waiting. The silence is heavy - the only sound comes from the receptionist typing on her computer.

Everyone looks tense as hell, not unlike when they were waiting to go in for their first gig. Katie nudges Alice.

KATIE

This time I think I'm the one to be sick.

They all laugh, some of the tension broken. At that moment the door opens and Samuels' PA sticks her head in.

PA

Mr Samuels is ready for you now.

Everyone stands up, suddenly looking even more nervous than before.

TERRY

Well, here we go - into the valley of death. You want a blindfold?

Alice laughs. Terry puts a supportive arm around Alice's shoulders and they all head into the office.

INT. SAMUEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

The band sit facing MICHAEL SAMUELS (sixties, shirt and tie, impossible to read his face) who is sat behind his desk. A CD of one of their songs - Never Saw You - is playing.

Alice looks like she's going to be sick, and even the usually unflappable David looks worried.

The song comes to an end and David ejects the CD.

DAVID

Well? What do you think?

Samuels takes several long moments ... the tension is palpable as we...

CUT TO:

The CORK POPS from a bottle of champagne and we are...

INT. THE DOCKLANDS -- NIGHT

David pours glasses from a gigantic magnum of champagne. A HUGE CELEBRATORY PARTY is in full swing - all the band plus assorted MATES, GIRLFRIENDS, Katie's brothers and the technicians from the studio.

Terry raises his glass.

TERRY

I'd like to make a toast. To us - see you on Top of the Pops!

Glasses are clinked, everyone cheers and drinks ... Alice's big grin is infectious.

INT. SAME -- LATER

The party is in full swing ... Miles is dancing with his girlfriend, Jason and Mark have Katie squashed in between them, general raucousness and fun in abundance. The band have finally made it and are letting off steam.

Terry and Alice are stood off to one side, talking quietly.

TERRY

Still can't believe I've got to go back to that bloody deli counter.

ALICE

It's only for a few months ... and then we are off.

TERRY

You think we'll last? You think we'll go the distance?

ALICE

(grins)

I know we will. Cheers

TERRY

Cheers.

They raise their glasses and drink ... and then the two of them are locked in a passionate kiss of triumph.

For the band, it's the capper on everything and it's a perfect moment.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Just to establish.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

We are in the middle of Maxwell's trial. He is sat in the dock with the same irritating expression of smugness, but closer to we can see that he is sweating.

Alice is in the witness box being cross-examined by the PROSECUTION lawyer.

ALICE

Yes, I knew he was using. He used to ask me for money to pay for his drugs.

PROSECUTION

But you knew nothing of the large quantities of drugs that were found in Mr Clayton's flat on the night of the 23rd?

ALICE

I did not.

In the dock Maxwell winces as the prosecution continues.

PROSECUTION

So why did you not go to the police?

ALICE

You do some funny things when you think you're in love with someone, sir.

She looks Maxwell in the eye.

ALICE (CONT'D)

That's not a mistake I ever intend to make again.

PROSECUTION

And I would like to remind the court that Mr Clayton has recently been charged with actual bodily harm against Miss Mason.

The DEFENCE LAWYER gets to his feet.

DEFENCE LAWYER

Objection! Relevancy.

PROSECUTION

Your honour, this is relevant to my case.

The judge considers for a moment, then nods.

JUDGE

I'll allow it.

PROSECUTION

Thank you, your honour. Miss Mason?

ALICE

Maxwell wanted me to testify on his behalf today. He told me that if I didn't testify then he'd tell my dad that I was using cocaine.

Up in the public gallery, David smiles at the bravery in Alice's voice.

PROSECUTION

And what was your response?

ALICE

I told him where he could shove it. That night he came and...

She breaks off and grabs a handkerchief, fighting off tears.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Sorry.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

(beat)

He thought he could scare me into doing what he wanted me to. But I won't be intimidated by him. Not any more.

PROSECUTION

Thank you, Miss Mason. No further questions, your honour.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Just to establish.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

And we're back where we started - the day of the verdict.

The jury has just filed in. David gives Alice a reassuring pat on the hand.

JUDGE

Has the jury reached a verdict?

FOREMAN

We have your honour.

JUDGE

Mr Clayton, please stand.

Maxwell gets to his feet, and for the first time in the entire film he looks nervous.

JUDGE

To the charge of possession of controlled substances with intent to supply ... do you find the defendant Maxwell Clayton guilty or not guilty?

INSERT: A leather biker jacket is zipped up.

FOREMAN

Guilty, your honour.

Alice smiles in triumph ... Maxwell's face falls... INSERT: A helmet is pulled on, obscuring the face of the biker...

JUDGE

Mr Clayton, you have been found guilty of the charges against you.

INSERT: Leather gloves are pulled on...

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Throughout this proceeding you have acted with contempt, as though this whole procedure was beneath you.

INSERT: A clip of bullets is loaded into a gun...

JUDGE (CONT'D)

You have shown no remorse for your actions, and nothing about you convinces me that you will not reoffend at the first possible opportunity.

INSERT: The gun is cocked and locked ...

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Therefore I sentence you to seven years in prison, of which a minimum of five years must be served.

INSERT: A motorbike engine revs to life... The gavel BANGS down.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Take him down.

And the look on Maxwell's face shows us a man who's whole world has just collapsed around him.

SMASH CUT TO:

INSERT: Scenes from the beginning of the film ... the biker rides up ... two shots are fired ... Alice hits the ground in a pool of blood...

INT. TERRY'S CAR -- DAY

Terry drives up to the courthouse ... Never Saw You is playing on the stereo ... he smiles and taps his hands on the steering wheel like drums... He reaches outside the courthouse ... sees the devastation left by the gunman...

TERRY

What the hell...?

EXT. STREETS -- DAY

The biker rounds a corner, stops, pulls his helmet off ... and we see that the killer was Justin.

Up above him, unawares, a security camera is watching.

INT. BACK OF AMBULANCE -- DAY

The paramedics stop working ... they look at each other in sorrow, knowing they've done all they can and it wasn't enough...

David's face contorts in horror ... he SCREAMS silently, his words inaudible, and though it's never said we know it right away...

Alice has died.

FADE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

CLOSE on a gravestone ... "In loving memory of Alice Julia Mason ... 1981-2004 ... beloved daughter..."

And below the legend:

"I still haven't found what I'm looking for."

Terry, dressed in black, is stood beside the headstone. He gently lays flowers onto the grave ... one of many bunches from Alice's friends.

TERRY (V.O.)

The medics did everything they could, but they were too late - Alice was already dead by the time she reached the hospital.

EXT. POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

A police van pulls to a stop. The van is opened and Justin, handcuffed, is pulled out. He is dragged into the station.

Outside the gates we can see an irate mob yelling, screaming, throwing things at him.

TERRY (V.O.)

Justin Gaines was eventually arrested for the murder - his image was taken from CCTV cameras and the police tracked him back to his flat. The murder weapon was found there.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- DAY

David sits on the sofa staring blankly at a photo of Alice, unable to comprehend, unable even to cry.

TERRY (V.O.)

It was senseless - Alice wouldn't have reported him and he had no need to want to silence her.

INT. RECORD STORE -- DAY

Terry picks up a CD single - Perfect Strangers: Never Saw You.

Alice's smiling face on the cover.

TERRY (V.O.)

Not four months later, Never Saw You was released by Top Five Records. With all the publicity from her death, the song went straight to number one and stayed there for seven weeks.

INT. BAR -- DAY

Terry, Katie, Charlie, Pete, Miles and David are all sat around a table in silence.

TERRY (V.O.)

TERRY (V.O.) (CONT'D) people all around the world ... people who Alice touched with her words

and her music.

Terry raises his glass.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Here's to Alice - may she rest in peace.

Everyone raises their glasses. Katie begins to smile - Charlie puts his arm around her shoulders.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TERRY'S FLAT -- DAY

A scene from earlier in the film - Alice and Terry sat talking over breakfast.

TERRY

If we get famous and successful, then it'll be because of bloody hard work and lots of it. If people think working hard is selling out, then that's their problem.

ALICE

Couldn't have said it better myself.

We close in on Alice's face.

FREEZE FRAME.

TERRY (V.O.)

She might be gone, but ... in a way she'll never be gone. She's part of legend now ... and legends never die.

And on the shot of Alice's smiling face we...

FADE OUT.

THE END