BEFORE I GET OLD

"The Pilot"

Written by

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The pilot

EXT. STEVE’S MUSIC - TORONTO - DAY

We hear random DRUMMING, GUITARS, Etc. - The usual MUSICAL RACKET emanating from an instrument store.

INT. STEVE’S MUSIC - DRUM SECTION - THAT MOMENT

DAVE, mid-forties, starting to grey a bit, casually stylish in skinny black jeans and ‘The National’ tour T-shirt, makes his way through the section.

The other customers - an equal number of guys and girls - are in their teens, early twenties.

Dave goes to the sticks section, grabs a pair of Vic Firth 7As and quickly assesses them to make sure they match.

As he moves on to the practice pads a cocky TEEN sitting at an electric kit gives him a bit of a sneer and does the cliche, flashy glam-rock twirl with his right stick. Dave gives him a little nod, then, with both sticks in one hand, lets one stick roll up and down the other and then with a subtle twist uses the stick he’s holding to make the loose stick twirl like a propeller (a kind of juggler’s devil stick move) finally tossing it up in the air and catching it neatly next to the stick in his hand. Dave gives the Teen a little ‘how about that’ shrug and heads off, leaving the kid gobsmacked.

AT THE COUNTER

Dave plunks down a practice pad, drum pattern work-book and the pair of sticks. Off the book, the 30-something SALES GUY smiles.

SALES GUY
Never too late to try something new, huh.

DAVE
Actually, I’m taking it up again.

SALES GUY
Getting the old high-school band back together?
DAVE
(smiling)
Something like that.

SALES GUY
Take it slow. Don’t want to hurt yourself. Gotta build up your wrist strength again.

DAVE
Hey, man, thanks for the advice.

NEAR THE MAIN DOOR

Dave stops and checks out the various postings on the bulletin board – bands looking for guitarists, keyboardists, horn players, singers, even a didgeridoo player. To himself, shaking his head,

DAVE (CONT’D)
...Nobody needs a drummer?

His gaze rests on a hand-scr rawled sheet – ‘Working band desperate for a cheap tour van! Immediately! Must work okay!’

He thinks for a moment, then takes a picture with his phone.

EXT. A BUNGALOW IN EAST YORK – LATER

There’s a rather garish-looking 1998 Econoline Van parked in the driveway. Dave strolls up to the front door of the home, rings the bell.

After a moment we see the vague outline of someone cautiously peering through the front window curtains, then a moment later the door opens and WES, fifties, who looks a bit like Al Pacino after a very rough night – pops out.

WES
Dave!? ...What’s up?

DAVE
Remember how when I lent you my van ten years ago I said some day I might need to take it back for a while?

WES
...Yeah...?

DAVE
I need to take it back for a while.
WES
Fair enough. Just let me get some
crap out if it.

Dave watches as Wes slides open the large side door and
starts to pull out clown props (unicycle, stilts, make-up
kit, over-sized shoes) ... take-out wrappers ... pizza boxes...
empty beer cans ... old parking tickets ... a pie-plate being
used as an ashtray ... and a pair of ratty men’s underwear -
carelessly tossing it all on his lawn.

WES (CONT’D)
Not like anyone’s booked me lately.
How long you gonna need it?

DAVE
No idea. ... Some band needs one.
Figured I’d offer to be their
roadie.

WES
... Their roadie?

DAVE
And other stuff.

Handing over the keys,

WES
The tank’s almost empty. Rear
shocks are in rough shape. Couple
of the tires are nearly bald. The
check engine light was on for a
month or so until it burned out ...
but other than that ... 

He shrugs helplessly. Then, off Dave’s look,

WES (CONT’D)
It’s not like it was mine.

EXT. OLD INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - AFTERNOON

The van’s out front. We hear a BAND JAMMING. They’re good.

INT. LOFT/REHEARSAL SPACE - THAT MOMENT

Dave approaches the door, nudges it open and we see the usual
clutter of a rehearsal space; amps, cables, guitar pedals,
monitors, instrument cases, an electric piano, mic stands,
empty beer bottles, etc.
We see the band--

EMMA, 22, asian, intently focuses on her bass playing. PHOEBE, 24, shreds away on lead guitar - almost like she’s wrestling some kind of living beast. MIA, 23, of middle-eastern descent, improvises a melody and lyrics, in the classic Bono alpha-dog leader style... while MARK, 22, hipster-in-training, pounds away on his drums, hamming it up just a bit too much for the emo-esque SARAH, 21, who sits off to one side, shooting video on a high-end DSLR.

MIA
Alright... let’s wrap it up!

Emma and Phoebe do a quick, raucous musical breakdown while Mark throws in some elaborate not really apt drum-fills he’s clearly been itching to try out...

The song ends. Phoebe and Emma nod at each other - nice.

MARK
Sarah! Sarah! Keep rolling!

Mark stands up--

MARK (CONT’D)
Make sure you catch the dismount!

The other guys look back at him - huh? Mark (probably inspired by Tre Cool, the drummer for Green Day who never goes around his kit when he can go through it) tries to do a slick gymnastic hand-vault from behind his snare - as he does, he catches the little finger on his right hand between the hi-hat cymbals - throwing him off stride. Almost cartwheeling as his body weight makes the cymbals slam shut, he hits the floor hard - noisily taking down half the kit with him.

EMMA
Geezus, Mark!

MARK
...Dammit...

SARAH
You okay?

Mark slowly gets to his feet.

MARK
I guess...

Then he looks at his hand in confusion, then down at the floor.
MARK (CONT’D)
Where’s my finger?
The others look confused.

PHOEBE
...Your finger?

MARK
My finger!
Still searching,

MARK (CONT’D)
My fucking finger!! It’s gone!!

MIA
What do you mean, gone?

MARK
GONE!!
He waves around his injured hand---

EMMA
...Seriously?
Sarah hurries over.

SARAH
Oh my God. Where is your finger!?
Mark HOWLS as the pain finally hits him, and grabs his injured hand. Frantically looking around,

MARK
I need my finger!!
Dave suddenly rushes up to him--

DAVE
Let me see.
He grabs Mark’s wrist. He yanks Mark’s other hand away from the injured hand to check out the injury.

MARK
What are you doing!?

DAVE
I can help---
As Dave quickly checks out Mark’s hand--
PHOEBE
I’m surprised there isn’t more blood.

DAVE
Give it a second---

A beat, then blood starts to absolutely POUR out of the wound. Dave quickly angles Mark’s injured hand upwards and sticks Mark’s good hand back on top of it.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Keep it above your heart.

EMMA
Holy shit---

Dave then firmly pinches the underside of Mark’s bicep just below the armpit.

DAVE
Give me your belt.

MARK
...what?

DAVE
I need your belt---

Sarah reaches down and quickly undoes Mark’s belt, slides it out and hands it to Dave. Dave grabs it, and tightens it around Mark’s upper arm.

SARAH
What are you doing!?

DAVE
Slowing the bleeding a bit.
(them)
Uhm... This is usually the moment where somebody realizes they should call an ambulance?

SARAH
There’s a hospital just down the road. I’ll take him.

DAVE
Really?

SARAH
I’m a fast driver.
DAVE
Okay - but - he’s going to go all shocky and heavy on you... want some help?

SARAH
We’re fine! Fuck off!

She starts to lead Mark away.

MARK
(explaining, through the pain)
My girlfriend has control issues.

Dave points towards the drum kit. Helpfully,

DAVE
Don’t forget the finger.

Sarah and Mark stop. Phoebe grimaces--

PHOEBE
On it.

--She hurries over to the hi-hat and, looking nauseated, pulls out the finger from between the two cymbals and hands it to Sarah.

SARAH
Ew.

DAVE
You guys got any ice?
(off their confusion)
For the finger. Delays decomposition.

Mia nods, runs over to a bucket filled with ice and beer, grabs some ice. She dumps it in a plastic cup, Phoebe drops in the finger.

EMMA
Okay - go!

Sarah (holding the cup) and a whimpering Mark hurry off - or as much as Mark can hurry with his now belt-less boy-capris continually sliding down his skinny ass.

Emma, Phoebe and Mia watch him go - still trying to process it all.

PHOEBE
This isn’t good.
Then, trying to be hopeful,

MIA
He can probably still play without a little finger, right?

Dave shakes his head,

DAVE
Doesn’t matter. I’m pretty sure I heard ligaments pop, as well.

The three stare at him for a moment, then,

EMMA
Uhmm... Who are you?

DAVE
Dave. With the van?

MIA
The van. Right...

The three stand there, looking at Dave, who looks just as uncomfortable as they do...

MIA (CONT’D)
Yeah, well... Looks like we won’t be needing it anymore, doesn’t it.

As it starts to sink in,

PHOEBE
No. NO. This can’t be happening. Not now. Why are drummers such idiots.

EMMA
...This is so bogus. What are we gonna do?

They stand there, shocked, afraid, pissed off, then--

DAVE
This might sound a bit weird... but I can fill in for him.

MIA
...what?

DAVE
I’m a drummer.

The three exchange looks. Smirks.
EMMA
Yeah. Thanks, but...

DAVE
Look - you have the biggest tour of your career booked.

PHOEBE
How’d you know that---

DAVE
Your social media footprint and all that? You might want to keep up with it.

(then)
This could be the make-it or break-it moment of a lifetime. You need a drummer.

PHOEBE
Right. But, there are other, real drummers out there.

DAVE
You also need a van. I’ve got a van. It’s been on tours before--

PHOEBE
You know what, thanks but no thanks. I don’t need this shit.

DAVE
--Tell you what. Let me fill in for...?

PHOEBE
Mark--

DAVE
--Mark. You can use the van for free. I’ll even pay for the gas.

EMMA
Really? ...Why?

DAVE
I need to get back on the road.

MIA
I dunno dude...

DAVE
See what your manager says.
PHOEBE
I’m our manager.

DAVE
I know. I checked. A terrible idea.

PHOEBE
I’ve done just fine.

DAVE
Which is why you don’t have a van
the day before you head out.
(then)
I’ll do some basic managing too.
Pro bono.

Phoebe and Mia exchange looks.

EMMA
It means for free.

PHOEBE
We know that – but who the fuck
speaks Latin anymore? What, is this
guy like a thousand years old?

DAVE
Some days I feel like it.

There’s a long beat as Phobe stews, then

EMMA
Who are you?

DAVE
Dave Marshall. Used to play in a
band called Blue Murphy. You must
have heard of us.

The three women slowly shake their heads.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Really?

Phoebe mutters into her phone.

PHOEBE
Siri... find evidence of a little
shit band called ‘Blue Murphy.’

DAVE
Had some minor, almost major hits.
Played all across Canada. I handled
the bookings.
He waits for a moment as the women huddle around Phoebe’s phone, peering at the results. We hear a snippet of a SONG.

MIA
Yeah. Okay... I remember that.

The three women bob their heads, liking the groove.

Emma looks up from the screen, at Dave.

EMMA
Wow. You got old in a hurry.

Dave nods. Waits. Then,

DAVE
...So? Wanna do this or not?

The three look at each other.

EMMA
First... real world... Shouldn’t we be going to the hospital to see how Mark’s doing?

DAVE
Sure - you can sit in triage for a few hours, and probably wind up with some horrible, exotic, hospital-borne pathogen for no good reason. And still learn nothing about your friend. Because you’re not related.

MIA
Yeah, but--

DAVE
--And if they can reattach Mark’s finger, he’s going to be unconscious for a long while. It’s pretty complicated surgery--

PHOEBE
--How do you know---

DAVE
I told you. I was in a band.
(then, pointedly)
A drummer.
(then)
Look. I’m not trying to steal Mark’s job.

(MORE)
DAVE (CONT’D)
But he’s on the long-term injured reserve -- and you guys leave on tour tomorrow--

MIA
Fine. Whatever. Let’s hear you.

Dave heads over to the drums. Mildly disgusted, he grabs the cloth Mark was using to deaden his floor tom and wipes the hi-hat clean. He then starts to fussily rearrange the kit.

PHOEBE
Any time you’re ready.

DAVE
Just gotta fix a few things. He’s got a pretty muddy snare...

EMMA
We like that snare sound.

DAVE
Okay.

Dave does some quick limbering up, grabs a pair of sticks--

DAVE (CONT’D)
Heavier than I like... hate nylon tips...

--Then gives each drum and cymbal a little test.

MIA
When was the last time you played?

DAVE
Two hours ago.

MIA
I mean... professionally?

DAVE
About ten years ago.

The three roll their eyes.

PHOEBE
Fuck this, guys... we need to find a real drummer. Fast.

DAVE
Just give me a listen.

The three exchange looks,
EMMA
Could be good for a laugh.

MIA
What the hell.

DAVE
Alright. What are we waiting for?

Phoebe and Emma strap their guitars back on, Phoebe shaking her head.

PHOEBE
This is fucking ridiculous.

EMMA
You know any of our tunes?

Nodding, as he tweaks a cymbal’s angle,

DAVE
I did some quick research. You’re clearly heavily influenced by The Beaches, Haim, and – bless your already crusty little hearts – The Runaways.

Phoebe gives him the finger. He smiles.

MIA
Falling Backwards.

Dave counts them in with his sticks, then they launch into the song. It’s a bit loose and sloppy at first – everyone (including Dave) still shell-shocked by Mark’s injury... but Dave’s solid authoritative playing pulls them together. They wrap it up after a quick verse and a chorus.

The women share quick looks... intrigued. Emma nods – surprised, like, he wasn’t bad.

DAVE
Well?

PHOEBE
I’ll give you this - you sucked a lot less than I thought you would.

DAVE
Thanks. You too. ...And?

MIA
We gotta talk about it.
Dave hops out from behind the kit.

DAVE
That’s fair.

Then, as he’s leaving,

DAVE (CONT’D)
Uh, a few quick comments.
(to Phoebe)
Your solo was kind of obvious...
and you might want to ease up on
the distortion pedal.

Phoebe looks annoyed, but Mia nods in agreement. To Emma,

DAVE (CONT’D)
In the middle eight it felt like
you were chasing the melody a bit--

EMMA
Yeah, I suddenly started thinking
about how much I’d like to keep all
my fingers... got lost for a couple
of bars.

DAVE
Understandable.
(then)
I still think the snare’s too
muddy...
(finally)
Oh, and you could make a little
more eye contact. Feed off each
other more.

He exits the room. The three look at each other.

PHOEBE
Okay - he was really solid - and a
bit of an arrogant dick.

MIA
Maybe... But he’s right.
(then)
You really do use that pedal too
much.

Phoebe gives her an icy stare.

PHOEBE
The pedal stays. ...And we can
always find another chick singer.
You all sound the same.
END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. QUEEN STREET BAR - LATER

Dave, Emma, Phoebe and Mia sit at a table - sharing a pitcher (or maybe their second) of beer. Mia shows Dave a sheet of paper the three have scribbled their thoughts on.

MIA
These are the rules.
(reading them aloud)
We’re basically known as a chick band, with a token male drummer.

PHOEBE
You’ve gotta be more or less invisible.

DAVE
...Okay.

MIA
The second you try to tell any one of us how to dress on stage---

EMMA
Or use the phrase ‘sex it up’--

MIA
You’re gone.

DAVE
Fair enough.

EMMA
And - the other end of the spectrum - you’re not our dad, or any kind of father figure.

PHOEBE
My own father wasn’t even a father figure.

DAVE
...Right.

PHOEBE
You can’t comment on our lifestyles...

(MORE)
PHOEBE (CONT'D)
You’re old, you’ve done this – we haven’t – if one of us wants to O.D. on heroin that’s her prerogative.

DAVE
I’ll stock up on naloxone.

EMMA
You can’t use anything stinky for your old guy aches and pains...

MIA
You’re never allowed to say, “Here’s how we did it back in the day...”
  (then)
No more critiques about our playing unless we ask...
  (then)
And you can use Mark’s kit, to maintain our sound, but he’s charging you rent for it. Oh – except you have to provide your own throne.

EMMA
He doesn’t want your ‘saggy butt prints’ on his. Quote, unquote.

MIA
He’s pretty pissed off at us.

EMMA
Thinks we should have rescheduled.

DAVE
I guess you could have. When will he be able to play again?

MIA
A year, minimum.

EMMA
He’s gotta get Tommy John surgery on his elbow. You were right about the snapping sound.

DAVE
So... he has to hope the finger reattachment takes... the elbow surgery heals properly... and if not---
PHOEBE
He figures he can do the Def
Leppard one-armed thing.
Eventually.

DAVE
Good for him. In the meantime, your
future can’t wait.

The three nod.

EMMA
And I’ve got my huge fucking
student loan to pay off.
(then, anticipating the
question)
Paleontology, U of A. Honors.

PHOEBE
She’s fascinated by dinosaurs.
Maybe she could write a paper about
you.

Dave smiles indulgently, then,

DAVE
Okay – here are my rules. Off the
top of my head,

The three exchange a quick look of uh-oh.

DAVE (CONT’D)
No farting in the van or the
dressing room. Sorry, it’s just not
that funny.
(then)
No snarky comments about my
Instagram account.
(then)
Yes, I tend to swear every time I
stand up. It hurts.
(then)
I have one glass of really good
wine before every show – please
don’t pee in it. Again, just not
funny.

MIA
Yeah... that’s pretty much all
immature guy behaviour...

EMMA
We’d be more likely to hide a
tampon in your hi-hat.
DAVE
Been there. And finally. The band-shot in front of a brick wall. Come on. That was hack even ‘back in the day.’

He smiles. Mia nods.

MIA
Sarah’s idea.

EMMA
She’s kinda headstrong.

PHOEBE
How can you do this, anyway? Don’t you have a job? A family?

DAVE
I’m divorced. Amicably.
   (then)
Well, my wife was awfully happy about it.
   (then)
I have a daughter your age---
   (then)
--which, now that I think of it, I shouldn’t have mentioned--
   (then)
She’s going to OCAD. Works as a pot sommelier at OCs. Lives on her own.
   (then)
And I recently sold my business.

EMMA
What, like an I-T thing? An App?

DAVE
Screw supply. I sold screws.
   (off their looks)
People always need screws. You’re gonna need screws.

PHOEBE
I can’t think of a more boring job.

DAVE
So you can see why I want to do this again. And yes, I made a decent buck off the sale and no, you can’t borrow any money. Yet.

The three women exchange looks, then,
MIA
So I guess we’ve got a drummer.

PHOEBE
For now. I’ve put the word out.

A long beat as he looks at them, wondering if he’s made a
HUGE mistake...

DAVE
Great. See you in the morning.

EXT. OLD INDUSTRIAL BUILDING – THE NEXT MORNING

A yawning Dave strolls up with 4 coffees and a bag of bagels
to find the van crammed, and several pieces of gear – all
Mark’s drums and hardware – still on the sidewalk.

MIA
I thought you said this could hold
all our stuff.

EMMA
We’re gonna need a roof rack... or
a trailer...

PHOEBE
Or we just ditch the drums, like I
said. We don’t need ‘em.

Dave looks a bit startled by this--

MIA
For fuck’s sake, Phoebe – what’s he
supposed to play, then?
(to Dave)
So what do we do?

After a long look at Phoebe, who gives him a screw-you look
back -- Dave hands over the coffees and the bag. Suddenly
less enthusiastic,

DAVE
There’s a trick to it. First, all
this has to come back out.

The three women GROAN.

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS

The four pile the gear back on the sidewalk... Dave quickly
arranges things by shape... we see him artfully loading the
van as the women watch...
THEN,

He stands back. All the equipment is very neatly and compactly packed, with room to spare.

EMMA
Yeah, okay... you’ve done this before.

DAVE
There’s even room to sleep – well, in shifts.

Dave then hands Mia the keys.

MIA
...what.

DAVE
The singer drives to the gig.

MIA
Since when? Why?

DAVE
The rest of us need our arms to be fresh. Because we do the hard physical stuff the singer gets to sing along to.

MIA
The drummer sits during the whole show! I hate driving!

Emma and Phoebe smile.

MIA (CONT’D)
What if I want to work on some new lyrics?

DAVE
Tell ‘em to your phone.

Grumbling just a bit, Mia climbs in behind the wheel.

PHOEBE
Dibs on the sleeping section.

Phoebe climbs in the back. Emma and Dave hop in... and the van drives off.

DAVE (O.S.)
Just curious... What if the van and I hadn’t materialized...?
EMMA (O.S.)
My Grand-mom would’ve driven us in her SUV.

DAVE (O.S.)
Across the fucking country.

EMMA (O.S.)
...She likes driving. Chooses really shitty music, though...

MIA (O.S.)
And she thinks farts are funny.

EXT. CLUB – A TOWN LIKE KINGSTON OR BELLEVILLE – AFTERNOON

It’s a smallish but busy venue, like Lee’s Palace.

INT. CLUB – BACK ENTRANCE – THAT MOMENT

The BAR MANAGER watches as Dave pushes in a cart loaded with drum gear.

DAVE
Load in?

BAR MANAGER
...That way.

Then, to the others as they lazily saunter in behind him.

BAR MANAGER (CONT’D)
...What, did one of you hire your dad to be a roadie?

DAVE
(huffing)
I’m the drummer.

The Manager looks over at the band’s promo shots – stapled to the walls. The three women are prominent, with Mark in the background.

BAR MANAGER
Man, you’re really not aging well.

The others LAUGH.

DAVE
Yeah, we need to update our shots.
BAR MANAGER
Maybe without the brick wall.

Dave looks over at the band. See? Then, off her phone,

PHOEBE
Awesome. Uh, Dave – you don’t need to set up.

EMMA
--What?

PHOEBE
I had our drums programmed.

MIA
--The fuck?

DAVE
...You want to replace me with a machine.

PHOEBE
I don’t want to – I am replacing you with a machine. Ping!

EMMA
Phoebe!

MIA
What about our vote!?

Phoebe rolls her eyes, then, to Dave,

PHOEBE
You can still drive.

Dave gives her a long look, then,

DAVE
Fuck you. Keep the van. I’ll hitch a ride home.

Dave turns and walks out. Emma and Mia glare at Phoebe.

PHOEBE
Don’t. I write the music.
(then)
Soundcheck in five.
**EXT. THE CLUB - TEN MINUTES LATER**

Dave sits on the loading dock next to several beer kegs, listening to the women ‘play’. The drum machine sounds hackish, sometimes too loud and over-powering, sometimes too tinny and skipping, and Emma and Phoebe struggle to do their usual things...

The band abruptly stops. We hear PROFANE ANGRY SHOUTING. Dave nods, not surprised.

A moment or two later a very angry Mia exits and finds Dave--

Looking a little surprised,

MIA
No ride yet?

DAVE
Just wanted to hear the soundcheck.

MIA
...and? We sucked, right?

DAVE
Worse than sucked. An amateurish disaster.

The Bar Manager exits, looking pissed.

BAR MANAGER
What the fuck was that!? This is not a practice hall!
(glaring at Dave)
What. The. Fuck.

Emma emerges, looking ruffled and contrite.

EMMA
Oh thank God, you’re still here--

DAVE
Not for much longer--

EMMA
No. Please. You’ve gotta play. You must’ve heard that.

DAVE
Yeah – I booked an appointment with an otolaryngologist. By some miracle they might be able to repair the damage to my ears...
MIA
Please stay--

DAVE
Your dysfunctional group dynamic reminds me why I got out of the biz. All this ego bullshit. It’s music, for Christ’s sake, the greatest thing in life, you’ve got to give it some love--

EMMA
We’re trying to fix her.

DAVE
If you don’t sort out your roles, and why you’re even doing this, I don’t even see you making it to the end of the tour.

Emma starts to tear up,

EMMA
I have to pay off my loan--

MIA
I don’t want to be a barista for the rest of my life--

DAVE
Ah. Hobbyists. Now I get it.

EMMA
No - we love it, too!

Phoebe emerges. She just stands there, unable to admit she screwed up big-time, then, finally

PHOEBE
My friend fucked up. I thought he knew what he was doing...

She turns and heads back in. Mia looks pissed.

MIA
Obviously it was her attempt at programming. She has no friends.

The Bar Manager sighs, shaking his head.

BAR MANAGER
I’ve worked with trained dog acts more together than you guys.
INT. CLUB – ON THE SMALL STAGE – A BIT LATER

As Dave sets up the drum kit Emma and Phoebe – ignoring each other – tweak their amps and pedals, LOUD ANNOYING SOUNDS, while Mia scribbles out set-lists for them all.

PHOEBE
(struggling with it)
Thanks for... uhm... not leaving.

Dave nods – not sure why he didn’t.

Off Dave’s somewhat dated arm tattoos (they are 25 years old), thinking she’s reaching out,

PHOEBE (CONT’D)
So tell me about your ink. ...They didn’t have a lot of design options back then?

EMMA
C’mon, Phoebe...

DAVE
Yeah, it was either this, or an anchor and a hula-hooping Betty Boop.

(then)
Wow, you’ve got this pathological need to be the Alpha dog and piss on everyone. Good luck with that.

PHOEBE
Speaking of which...

Phoebe turns to Emma and Mia--

PHOEBE (CONT’D)
And Dave, don’t take this personally---

MIA
Oh now what, Phoebe!?

PHOEBE
It’s purely business--

DAVE
Look out guys, she’s gonna start humping one of us soon.

Emma starts BARKING like a dog. Dave and Mia join in.
PHOEBE
(pissed)
Let me talk!

(then)
Dave’s a pretty good drummer, sure, but he’s messing up our look. What if we get him to play behind a curtain, or plywood... or something?

EMMA
Couldn’t we be grateful he’s still here?

PHOEBE
I’m just saying. Can we at least cover up his face?

DAVE
Great idea – I’ll wear a Popeye’s chicken bucket on my head. Full. I can chew to the beat.

PHOEBE
Again. Just saying. St. Vincent’s last tour, her drummer wore a full face stocking thing.

MIA
Yeah, and he looked like a burn victim.

Phoebe rolls her eyes, and heads off to the bar to hit on a cute bus-girl.

EMMA
Sorry. As you’ve seen – a lot – Phoebe can be – is – a total prick.

MIA
It’s like she’s always looking for conflict.

(then)
But she plays like an effin’ female Prince.

DAVE
I guess. Sure. And yeah, well, maybe she’s got a point about me. I kinda stand out.

(then)

(MORE)
DAVE (CONT'D)
Until she fires me again - which will be the last time, I promise - I’ll try to get some bigger ride cymbals I can hide behind.

(then)
Seriously.

After a beat,

DAVE (CONT'D)
Why did you guys have a male drummer?

MIA
He’s Phoebe’s little brother.

DAVE
Really!?

(then)
You’d think she would have been more upset.

EMMA
She’s been trying to figure out a way to fire him for months.

MIA
The rock gods work in mysterious ways.

INT. THE BAR - LATER - EVENING

The place is now gearing up for business. Dave strolls up to the bar. RONA, bartender, about 45, sexy as all get out, looks at him in surprise. The vibe is... they once had something.

RONA
...Dave? Long time.

DAVE
Hey Rona. Still here, huh.

RONA
Don’t remind me. What can I get you?

DAVE
The rider stuff.

Rona stares at him.
DAVE (CONT’D)
For the band.

She still stares at him.

DAVE (CONT’D)
I’m kinda their manager for now.

RONA
Oh!

She rummages under the bar.

DAVE
...And their drummer. ...For now.

She pops back up with a case of beer, a stack of towels, and a nice-looking bottle of wine.

RONA
Kind of a weird mix of demographics... but okay...

(then)
I kinda knew the screw-mogul thing wouldn’t work out.
(then, off the wine)
Should’ve known something was up when I saw forty cans of crap beer
and a bottle of our most expensive wine on the booze list. Still got your own---

Dave holds up a waiter’s corkscrew and a nitrogen wine-saver gizmo. She nods in recognition.

RONA (CONT’D)
I’ll have someone carry all this to the room.
(smiling)
You have to save what’s left of your dwindling strength for the show.
(then)
So what’s up? Really?

DAVE
Wasn’t my plan to do it this way... but I guess I’m starting over.

RONA
You know, a lot of us would love to do that...
DAVE
And then... realize too late what
you’d had all along?

RONA
Just shut up and pound your bongos,
Drummer Dave.

INT. THE CLUB - LATER - THE BAND’S ENCORE

The band’s doing their last song - totally killing it. The
crowd of forty or fifty is enthralled, sweaty, drunk, horny.

Emma - lost in the moment - jumps up on an amp... uses it as
a step to get up onto a taller amp... uses that to jump onto
the bar--- dancing along it as she plays--- and just as the
song ends--- she takes one more step and---

WHAM! - She’s SLAMMED in the forehead by a whirling CEILING
FAN.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

As Dave patches Emma up.

DAVE
Won’t need stitches. You’ll just
have a mysteriously oozing head-
wound for a couple of days. Crowds
love that.

EMMA
Why do you know so much about first
aid and stuff?

DAVE
I told you, I was in a band.

EMMA
No, seriously.

DAVE
When things weren’t going so well
for the group, I trained to be an
EMT.

PHOEBE
Why didn’t you do that instead of
selling screws?
DAVE
The hours suck and I took it really personally when people died.  
(then)
Speaking of which - you three need to learn to do a zone-check before every show. Look for ceiling fans, sprinklers, dangling wires, rogue balloons, loose floorboards, whether the stage is permanent or a bunch of risers jammed together, greasy spots, fresh rat shit on the outlets... all things that can trip you up when you’re in the moment.

They nod.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Oh, and learn how to spot a fight that’s about to happen down front.  
(then)
And which guitar to use if you need to defend yourself. Phoebe, I recommend your solid body Epiphone. Packs a wallop.

The women smile... although Emma looks a little concerned – since she’s only got the one instrument, her bass.

Chugging a beer,

MIA
So. One down. Forty shows to go.

PHOEBE
Now we just have to hope we get paid.

DAVE
I took care of that. Made ‘em settle up before we went on.

EMMA
...You can do that?

Handing Phoebe a slip,

DAVE
Here’s the receipt for the direct deposit in your band account.

EMMA
Nice.
DAVE
Aretha Franklin--
(then)
Please tell me you know who that is...
(off their nods)
She used to demand cash payment, up front, before every show. She’d put it in a big purse that she’d take on stage with her - plunk it right on the piano and never take her eyes off it. Been screwed over too many times.

Dave stands up, wincing.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Shit.
(then)
Okay, I’ll go check how the merch table did.

MIA
Wait... We have a merch table?

DAVE
Right. No. You don’t. And think of all the lovely money you let walk out of here tonight.
(then, nicely)
Get a clever friend to work up some T-shirt designs... a poster or two... buttons, stickers, whatever. Let your new fans show their allegiance and pay for your advertising.

MIA
Uhm... I did a year at Sheridan studying animation--

DAVE
Great. You’re hired.
(then)
I can cover the cost for the first batch of stuff. Okay, I’ll start loading out.

He heads off. The three women look at each other.

MIA
I think Mark’s getting frigged up might turn out to be a really good thing.
PHOEBE
It solved one problem. But as far as I’m concerned, Dave’s on a very short leash. I’ve got young, real drummers meeting us over the next couple days. We’ll try ‘em out.

EMMA
Whoa. What? Who put you in charge?

PHOEBE
I guess I just did.

ON DAVE
Who’s overheard. He shakes his head.

This is how most bands die. He SIGHS, then starts to roll a cart of drum gear out a door...

He passes Rona, who also heard--

RONA
I give ‘em a year.

DAVE
At most.

She looks at him, a little wistfully,

RONA
...I hope you find what you’re looking for.

He nods - not so sure anymore, and heads out.

FADE OUT

END OF EPISODE ONE