

*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 cliché, 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-scrawled 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.  
(then)  
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  
Uhhh... *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 Phoebe 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**