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Tracey in the 16th Minute

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TRACEY IN THE 16TH MINUTE

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

by D. Timothy Poisson
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Guarini School of Graduate and Advanced Studies
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October 2022

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2022

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has engaged millions of individuals in an existential crisis of values and purpose, echoing throughout “the Great Resignation,” in which 45% or more of Americans have been actively seeking new employment and change in lifestyle (Backman).

Walter Kaufmann’s question and answer,

...could it be that at least some part of what the existentialists attempt to do is best done in art and not philosophy? ...at some given time and place one of the arts ...says more adequately what the others say less well (Kaufmann 49),

inspires this thesis project—in the form of a screenplay—to answer how existential philosophy explains or applies to the angst in both an evergreen context and this moment of upheaval.

My story loosely tracks to the *Book of Job* as an existential touchstone. I outlined *Job* against the scene-by-scene breakdown of my screenplay to determine where I would be in line with—and break from—*Job*.

Job experiences over-the-top adversity, as does Tracey. To help determine the tone of my screenplay, I read existentially-themed stage plays, listened to radio plays online, and watched films and streamed shows.

The bulk of my research entailed reading and absorbing essays and books to understand the arguments of existential thinkers. I have applied core philosophies of Bultmann, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Sartre to the attitudes expressed by characters.

Tracey was first featured in my graphic novel *Strugglers*, as a singer/songwriter just starting her career. Here, at the seeming end of it, peer-reviewed articles about the music of Liz Phair, as well as contemporary articles about Phair’s life, and her most recent album (with its themes of indecision and compromise), inform Tracey’s character today.

Lastly, I have read extensively on “the Great Resignation,” from early observations about the phenomenon, to data available a year after the wave began.

The resulting slightly offbeat three-act screenplay hurls obstacles after obstacle at Tracey, whose interpersonal dialogues help set her on a path to existential liberation.

The protagonist concludes existence may be what you make of it, though ultimately meaningless; one can only strive to *be* and make others happy as much as circumstances allow.

Preface

Many of the characters in *Tracey in the 16th Minute* represent characters in the *Book of Job* as well as well-known existential philosophers.

Dramatis Personae

	In <i>Job</i>	Philosopher
Tracey McIrish, protagonist ...	Job	
Ellie, Tracey's friend ...	Eliphaz	Jean-Paul Sartre
Billy, Tracey's agent ...	Bildad	Friedrich Nietzsche
Christopher, Tracey's boyfriend ...	Zophar	Martin Heidegger
Aidan, label CEO ...	The Deity	
Lucky, record producer ...	Satan	
Henry, a man from Tracey's past ...		Guido De Ruggiero
Seminar Moderator ...		José Ortega
Joe Something, Rudy's father ...		Karl Jaspers
Rainer, a bartender ...		Rainer Rilke
Rudy, Tracey's son ...	Job's children	Rudolf Bultmann
Simone, an Uber driver		Simone De Beauvoir

In addition to the Seminar Moderator, the Seminar Attendees represent the top five reasons people have left their jobs during “the Great Resignation” according to MIT research reported by Stillman:

Attendee One ...	Toxic culture
Attendee Two ...	Job insecurity and reorganization
Attendee Three ...	High levels of innovation
Attendee Four ...	Failure to recognize performance
Attendee Five ...	Poor response to COVID-19

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TRACEY IN THE 16TH MINUTE

Written by

Tim Fish

TRACEY IN THE 16TH MINUTE

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

TRACEY, 48, carries a laptop, messenger bag and guitar slung over her shoulder, exits a mixing booth into a hall.

She "looks good for her age" though her dyed blonde hair shows signs of the graying brown underneath. She wears clothes that don't show off her maintained figure.

Her attire blends pricey, vintage, and inexpensive items to create a casual but eclectic look. Her hipster glasses help hide the lines on her face, and she wears minimal make-up.

Tracey shuts the door behind her and four BAND MEMBERS, each 25, enter the hall. As three enter a recording booth, the fourth pauses, tries to place Tracey for a moment.

BAND MEMBER

Holy shit! Tracey McIrish?!

TRACEY

(cheerfully but worn)

That's me!

The other band members turn toward Tracey, excitedly.

BAND MEMBER

Are you here to listen to us record?

TRACEY

Kind of just passing through--

BAND MEMBER

Just last week we watched the recording of your Toledo show. Killer way to end that tour!

Tracey looks at the band members, thoughtfully.

TRACEY

Sure, I can hang for a bit.

The band members filter into the room.

BAND MEMBER

Awesome! First track will be dedicated to you!

Tracey shakes her head wistfully.

She pauses and enters the control room where BRAD, 40, a sound engineer, and LUCKY, 37, a record producer, observe.

LUCKY
(imposed upon)
Hi, Tracey. Can we... help you with something?

BRAD
(concerned)
Is anything wrong?

TRACEY
(nods to band)
I told them I'd listen in a bit.

LUCKY
That's nice of you.
(smugly)
Plus you get some face time with me.

BAND MANAGER enters the control room.

TRACEY
(restrained)
Really just trying to be supportive,
(under her breath)
smart-ass.

BAND MANAGER
(nervously)
All set.

BRAD
Great. Let's run through a final sound check and get going.

The band members warm up as Band Manager paces.

Tracey stands next to Lucky in f.g., sound check in the b.g.

TRACEY
(quietly)
Any chance you've listened to that demo I sent you last week?

BRAD
OK, mic one...

LUCKY
Let's talk about that later-- you've got to hear this group.

BAND MEMBER
Check one, two, check...

TRACEY
 (shouting after Lucky)
 Don't forget about my party--you
 promised you'd come!

From the control room, the band chatters to themselves, heard talking through the PA. Their manager remains in the control room, feverishly texting.

BRAD
 Lucky is such a tool.

Tracey hits Brad sharply on the shoulder as she looks to the Band Manager absorbed in his texting.

TRACEY
 (mockingly resigned)
 But, a producer among men.

BAND MEMBER
 (into mic)
 TRACEY, I LOVE YOU!

Tracey waves as the guitarist starts playing a riff.

BRAD
 (sarcastically)
 That's sweet. They know "Sunny Day
 in L.A."

TRACEY
 (smiles)
 They always do.

BAND MANAGER
 Tracey McIrish! I'm so sorry! I
 didn't even--I was so-- What did
 you think?

TRACEY
 (cheerfully)
 What's the band's name?

BAND MANAGER
 Unfiltered Water!

Tracey pauses, leans in next to Brad.

TRACEY
 (into the mic)
 Unfiltered Water!
 (sweetly)
 Thanks for letting me listen in.
 That was a real treat.

(earnestly)
Good luck with the album!

Brad lets out a slight guffaw. She throws darts with her eyes.

The Band Manager moves from the control room to the recording room. Tracey and Brad remain in the control room and watch the band and manager talk animatedly in the b.g. through the control room window.

BRAD
Did you finish cleaning up Joe
Boy's tracks yet?

TRACEY
Just.

Brad notices Tracey's guitar.

BRAD
(nods)
Why do you put up with all this?

TRACEY
Unlike you, I still love this
business.
(whispering loudly)
And I need the money.
(pats her guitar case)
Plus I have more to say.

BRAD
(with concern)
Even if no one wants to hear it?

TRACEY
(scowls)
Especially, then.
(lightly)
You never replied to my evite.

BRAD
I hate replying.

TRACEY
You're coming to my birthday party,
you big grump. And do me a favor--

BRAD
What now?

TRACEY
Make sure Lucky comes.

Brad rolls his eyes.

BRAD

It's your party, you'll cry if you
want to.

Tracey kisses him on the head and leaves the control room.

INT./EXT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tracey sits on her patio, in a small back yard behind a cozy Craftsman Cottage. The patio and yard are well-designed with palms and lush plantings, but is untidy.

She strums her guitar, not necessarily writing a song, but thinking through a problem. She stops to type in notes on a tablet.

ELLIE, 45, rummages through kitchen cabinets. She is dressed in business attire, but with an edge. The kitchen cabinets are vintage and the appliances modern; it is a slight mess-- the kitchen of someone who doesn't cook or clean often.

ELLIE

There's no way I could ever live
with you again. Were you always
this messy?

Ellie starts the dishwasher and continues to rummage through the cabinets.

TRACEY

You were too busy with school to
notice.

ELLIE

You haven't done a goddamn thing to
prepare for this party, have you?

TRACEY

Nope.

Tracey plucks quietly but intently.

TRACEY

(suddenly remembering)
Ellie--are you bringing that guy
you're seeing?

ELLIE

You mean Gary?

TRACEY

Um, sure.

ELLIE

That crashed and burned six weeks ago.

Tracey looks up casually, still plucking.

TRACEY

Before or after you presented that paper of yours? At that conference.

Ellie joins Tracey on the patio, cell phone in hand.

ELLIE

Before. Nice of you to remember a little something about my life though.

TRACEY

You'll meet someone at my party.

ELLIE

(sarcastically)
Another studio musician, yay.

Ellie sits as Tracey continues strumming.

ELLIE

I thought you had writer's block?

TRACEY

(sings)
"The little voice that says no/ Get the fuck out of here/ Leave me alone, just go/ Words and chords save me now/ I meet with Aidan tomorrow."

ELLIE

Ah. The big boss, finally.

TRACEY

"Back in the saddle/ It's my turn again/ Stepping up to the plate/ Singing my song/ Life left in me still/ I'm only 48."

Ellie's phone pings and she looks at the incoming text.

TRACEY

You stopped by to talk about something? I really want to get back to this...

Tracey continues to work through a line with focus.

ON ELLIE'S PHONE SCREEN

The text message from Rudy reads: "Did you tell her yet?"

BACK TO SCENE

ELLIE

It can keep.

EXT. ARCH RECORDS - DAY

Indie label studios in a converted factory, located in a light industrial neighborhood. Edgy and hip, not glassy and clean.

INT. ARCH RECORDS - DAY

Tracey waits outside an office, nicely cleaned up, with laptop and guitar again.

She stares at AIDAN, 38, label president, through the glass walls of his office. Aidan talks to Lucky, paces his office, gesticulates excitedly.

She paces the lobby, looks at the posters, gold records, and album covers on the wall. She stops at her gold record, then looks to its album cover, titled "Tracey, I Love You."

Lucky exits Aidan's office.

LUCKY

I softened him up for you.
(snidely)
Good luck.

AIDAN (O.S.)

Traceeey!

She moves to the office as Lucky exits. Aidan hangs out the door, holding himself by the doorframe.

TRACEY

Good to see you, Aidan!

AIDAN

Of course, please, sit for a minute! I'd love to catch up--

TRACEY

Awesome, I--

AIDAN

But I only have a minute before my next call.

TRACEY

All right, I'll get right to it. I have an idea for a new album, and a few tracks sketched I know you'll want to hear.

AIDAN

No can do, Tracey. Everything is tied up right now.

Tracey musters strength to not lose it.

AIDAN

But hey, good news! CW needs a single for the new teen drama they're filming for the fall. And I thought of--you--first.

TRACEY

I appreciate the support.

Aidan gets up to show Tracey out.

AIDAN

Really great to see you! Lucky will be in touch about that CW single.

TRACEY

(deflated)
OK, great...

INT./EXT. TRACEY'S CAR - DAY

Tracey drives a 15 year old BMW, immediately after the meeting at Arch Records.

Her phone sits in a stand on the dashboard, indicates a live call with "CHRISTOPHER" as the time stamp ticks higher.

TRACEY (O.S.)

Hey, Christopher--Tracey.

Tracey looks to the left, makes a turn.

TRACEY

Just leaving Arch. That did **not** go well. I'll give you the details when you're back in town.

Tracey taps on her phone to hang up as she stops at a light. She scrolls through a list various Podcasts, stops at "The Indie Review" and launches it.

An intro jingle plays and Tracey taps the jump forward icon.

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)

--we'll listen to some Dirtface and talk about Tracie McIrish. But first, let's--

Tracey taps the jump forward icon as the light turns green. She keeps tapping until she hears herself singing.

Podcast recording plays "Do Me, I'm Yours" for a beat. The song features Tracey at the height of her guitar-playing skills and unique style.

PODCAST HOST interrupts, to discuss with PODCAST GUEST.

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)

And that was a bit of Tracey McIrish's sell-out hit "Do Me, I'm Yours," which was lauded **and** criticized at its release for its message of sexual empowerment.

Tracey rolls her eyes.

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)

Arch Records, who just announced its latest deal with the CW for 13 singles for the upcoming season of teen dramas--

Tracey looks incredulous.

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)

Including a new one from Tracey, of course!

Tracey shakes her head.

TRACEY

(under her breath)
Here we go...

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)
 You're listening to the Indie
 Review, a Podcast about Indie
 music, past, present and future!

Tracey makes another turn.

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)
 Any thoughts on Tracey today?

Tracey is alert.

PODCAST GUEST (O.S.)
 It's tough to compare the
 soundtrack one-offs to her early
 work...

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)
 (laughs)
 So true, so true!

Tracey pulls over, parks.

PODCAST GUEST (O.S.)
 Not a big surprise of course. Her
 early work was solid, but still,
 leaned on "Do Me Feminism" way too
 hard.

Tracey fumes.

PODCAST GUEST (O.S.)
 After she sold out, it was just a
 matter of time--

Tracey fumbles and taps her phone, in an attempt to stop the
 Podcast.

PODCAST GUEST (O.S.)
 --before she fell into the CW pit.

Tracey removes the phone from its stand.

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)
 You know, I think she's been
 editing tracks at Arch, and--

Tracey finally shuts the Podcast off.

TRACEY
 (mutters)
 Don't listen to these things, don't
 read the comments section.

Tracey looks at the guitar in its case.

INT./EXT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - SUNSET

A few days later, at Tracey's birthday party. CHRISTOPHER, 37, in a disheveled but fashionable suit, pulls up to Tracey's house, gets out of his car, retrieves items and walks to the house. The lawn is lush and green and ample flowers grow in hanging planters on the porch.

CAMERA FOLLOWS him into the house.

The house is cleaned and ready to host a party.

CHRISTOPHER
(mockingly sweet)
Hi, honey, I'm home!

Tracey rustles items in the kitchen.

TRACEY
(distracted)
Christopher, is that you?

Christopher sets his things down in the living room.

CHRISTOPHER
No, it's your other lover.

TRACEY (O.S.)
So long as you're here to help!

Christopher enters the kitchen, kisses Tracey on the cheek.

CHRISTOPHER
Nice to see you, too.

TRACEY
Fine, how was Detroit?

CHRISTOPHER
Chicago. And happy birthday.

Tracey looks at a clock on the wall which reads "8:15."

TRACEY
Nope. I have two hours, thirteen minutes before I turn 49. Let me savor it.

CHRISTOPHER
Precise.

Tracey removes a tray from the oven, puts more items in.

TRACEY

Then the real countdown begins...
march to the big five-o.

Christopher looks about the spread in the kitchen.

CHRISTOPHER

You're drawing a lot of attention
to your age for someone who doesn't
want to draw attention to her age.

TRACEY

I can't decide if I love it or hate
it, to be honest. Embrace it or
hide from it.

CHRISTOPHER

Showing it off seems to be winning.

TRACEY

At the moment.

Tracey darts out of the kitchen.

TRACEY (O.S.)

Arrange those on the tray, will
you? I need to get dressed!

LATER

Tracey enters the room in a new outfit. As she passes through
the living room, the doorbell rings. She sees Ellie through
the sidelight, lets her in, and rushes out.

TRACEY

Watch Christopher please--he's in
the kitchen.

CAMERA FOLLOWS Ellie into the kitchen.

ELLIE

Welcome home. How was Chicago?

CHRISTOPHER

I got my lawyering done. All good,
except I need to be in the office
early tomorrow for call back East.

ELLIE

And you're still here to be the
good boyfriend.

Ellie hands Christopher a tray.

CHRISTOPHER

The best.

CAMERA FOLLOWS Christopher as he brings the tray from the kitchen and the doorbell rings.

CHRISTOPHER

I'll get it. She probably only invited people from the label.

He opens the door to Brad and Lucky.

BRAD

Hey, man. Long time no see.
I brought Tracey a birthday present.

(thumbs to Lucky)

This is a producer at Arch. Lucky, this is Tracey's hunk of burning love, Christopher.

Christopher motions to the bar. Other guests filter in as conversation advances. The party populates quickly.

CHRISTOPHER

Come on in--drinks are at the bar, and there's a fire going out back.

Ellie greets Brad as Lucky works the room. She approaches Christopher as he opens the door again.

ELLIE

You sure Tracey knows all these people?

CHRISTOPHER

Damned if I know. In the two years we've been together, Tracey's only introduced me to you, Brad, and--

BILLY, 40, enters. She is very nicely and tastefully dressed but flamboyant in manner.

BILLY

Christopher! Thank goodness you're back! We need to connect ASAP about Trace-**E**.

Billy kisses Christopher on both cheeks. Ellie extends her hand to Billy, knowingly and coyly at the same time.

ELLIE

You must be the agent.

CHRISTOPHER

This is Billy. Billy, this is
Ellie, Tracey's oldest and dearest
friend.

Billy accepts Ellie's hand but in more of a touch than a
handshake.

BILLY

Lovely! I've heard all about you!
What is it you do?

ELLIE

I'm a recovery therapist at Cedars-
Sinai--

As soon as Billy realizes Ellie is not in "the biz" she
abruptly flits away.

BILLY

Marco! Is that you?

Ellie shakes her head at Christopher. In yet another outfit,
Tracey enters the now-full party (with an assortment of
hipsters: musicians, artists, people who run galleries,
etc.). Tracey manages to command the center of attention.

TRACEY

Happy birthday to me!

The guests applaud Tracey as she scans the room. She lights
up when she sees Lucky and greets people as she passes them
until she has a clear eyeline to Brad from across the room.

TRACEY

(mouths the words)

THANK YOU.

Brad salutes her with a beer bottle.

TIME LAPSE

Snippets of conversations are heard and party b.g. music
changes from song to song.

PARTY GOER 1

Did you see her hair?

--Drinks are emptied.

PARTY GOER 2
--latest album was killer.

--A record reaches its end.

PARTY GOER 3
Of course he's sleeping with her!

--Guests look increasingly disheveled.

PARTY GOER 4
(incoherent)
You should really do something
about that
(points to friend's hair)
mess.

--Tracey scans the room, satisfied with the turn-out. She sees Ellie from across the room. Ellie is giving her number to a male guest and catches Tracey looking at her. Tracey gives her the thumbs up.

--Guests leave while others pour more drinks.

EXT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - LATER

Tracey, Christopher, Ellie, Billy and Brad have moved to the patio while the last of the guests leave. Tracey strums on an acoustic guitar. She is tipsy but not drunk.

TRACEY
Thank you for attending this lovely
party, everyone...

BILLY
How does it feel to be **49**?

TRACEY
Oh, but I'm not!--I have--

Tracey looks for a clock.

TRACEY
What time is it?

CHRISTOPHER
You have three minutes left.

TRACEY
Three minutes. To say good-bye to
Tracey as you knew her.

Lucky stands in the doorway from the house to the patio,
holds up his phone.

LUCKY

Oh, I don't know... I'm just saying
hello! Aidan and I were discussing
some Tracey **buzz**--

TRACEY

Awesome.

LUCKY

And I found a fun little artifact
in the files. I could **not** stop
listening!

Lucky shakes his phone as the others turn to him.

LUCKY

Do you remember recording an EP
that was never released?

TRACEY

"Things I Barely Regret."

BRAD

Oof. Not that.

LUCKY

Seven charming tracks SPIN
described as
(reading from his phone)
"inappropriately upbeat for the
subject matter."

TRACEY

(indignantlly)
The juxtaposition was the whole
point! No one "got it."

BRAD

Arch paid a lot for that article to
go away...

CHRISTOPHER

What was on that EP?!

LUCKY

Let's see... "Badge 341." What was
that song about, Tracey?

BRAD

You **listened** to the tracks, didn't
you?

TRACEY

The time I threw up on a cop.

LUCKY

"Stranglehold"?

TRACEY

Choking a cab driver from the back seat as he was driving down Wilshire.

BRAD

That ended with a restraining order, I think.

LUCKY

"I'll send you the flowers"?

TRACEY

Some private time with an intern from the label.

LUCKY

"Moody Rudy"?

ELLIE

Tracey, no...

TRACEY

Giving my son to his father to raise.

LUCKY

(reading)

"McIrish wields her guitar like a machete and callously warbles as if blowing soap bubbles at a funeral."

TRACEY

(glibly)

It was a masterwork in sarcasm! A biting commentary of my own behavior, obviously!

BILLY

Someone did you a real favor burying all that, hon!

BRAD

She almost posted it to YouTube.

LUCKY

Want to post it right now? I can...!

BILLY

Put that phone away, Lucky. Do **not** post that!

LUCKY

Why not? An unseen chapter of Tracey's past as she approaches 50! What do you say, Tracey?

CHRISTOPHER

Seriously, dude, stop!

Christopher advances toward Lucky, who reels and holds his phone up.

TRACEY

Let him post it. And I'm **now** 49.

BILLY

Tracey--I must insist that be deleted this instant. Post haste!

LUCKY

I think this is going to YouTube right now!

Christopher grabs Lucky's arm.

CHRISTOPHER

Tracey, really--

TRACEY

Oh, who cares? People will either A) like the music and downloads go up, or B) they won't, but people will talk about me.

CHRISTOPHER

Or C) you could fall hard.

TRACEY

Everything bad about me has already been said, right?

BILLY

But not recently, hon. Different times...

TRACEY

Everyone is over-reacting. If Lucky thinks it's fine, it's fine.

Christopher lets go and walks off.

CHRISTOPHER

Fine.

Lucky taps at his phone.

LUCKY

(devilishly)

Last chance, rock star...

ELLIE

You don't want that out there,
Trace...

TRACEY

No one is going to care about these
silly little songs.

Tracey strums definitively, puts the guitar down, walks past Lucky.

TRACEY

Go ahead, Lucky.

Lucky is slyly pleased. He's already named the video and tagged #TraceyMcIrish #ArchRecords etc. He taps on his phone to "upload" and the upload bar scrolls to "Success! Video upload complete."

MONTAGE - VIDEO GOES VIRAL

A gleeful pop song from the EP PLAYS--with only a hint of the alternative/indie sound Tracey is known for, a deliberate affront to her fans. "Fuck You, Fans" was written when a significant portion of her fan base criticized her for selling out. Lucky's vid goes viral.

-- YouTube video of still images and music plays on a computer screen.

-- Characters appear while being typed into the comments section (LOL, So wrong, OMG, Tracey has lost it, etc.).

-- Hands click on mouse, enter keys, tablet, phones, to share video.

-- Person listens in horror.

-- Train rider with earbuds listens via phone.

-- Quick shots via other social media platforms.

-- ANIMATED TYPE dominates the screen #TraceyLostIt etc.

-- Closing of the video.

END MONTAGE

INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sun is up.

Tracey is asleep in her bedroom. The video of the EP is playing, apparently set to a continuous loop on a laptop. Tracey wakes up, gets out of bed, groggily figures out how to shut it off, snaps the lid down.

Tracey passes through the living room to her kitchen, finds her phone buzzing on vibrate. She stops the phone from buzzing, sets it down without looking at it.

The phone immediately starts to buzz again. She picks it up, silences it again. She sees an alert of four missed calls and 13 text messages, as a text pops up.

CHYRON of Christopher's text: "CHECK ROLLING STONE ASAP 🤖"

Tracey quickly wakes up, somewhere between confused and worried. She taps on her phone. Her eyes widen.

TRACEY

Oh, shit, no. No, no, no...

Tracey drops her phone, paces in a panic.

TRACEY

OK, calm down. Deep breaths. Any publicity is good publicity, right?

Phone buzzes.

TRACEY

(forced nonchalance)

It's no big deal. I just need to get ahead of this. Apologize to Aidan, have Billy spin it. It'll be fine.

EXT. ARCH RECORDS - DAY

Tracey's car is parked outside the office.

INT. ARCH RECORDS - DAY

Tracey waits outside Aidan's office. Aidan and Lucky are in the office, behind the glass wall, talking animatedly. Tracey looks at them, worried for a moment, but gathers herself and pushes in to the office.

TRACEY

Aiden, I'm sorry to interrupt, but this is important.

AIDAN

Tracey. Come on in.

TRACEY

I'm not sure if you know what's going on, but--

LUCKY

I told him we posted the EP to YouTube.

AIDAN

I'm not happy.

LUCKY

People calling you a horrible person.

TRACEY

You know no one pays attention to the comments section.

LUCKY

Mmm... they do. And, the overall numbers don't lie.

TRACEY

I recorded that so long ago!

AIDAN

But you did write the songs.

TRACEY

No one will take them seriously.

LUCKY

I'm not sure people will overlook these transgressions... wildly inappropriate.

TRACEY

Why did you post it, then?!

LUCKY
You told me to!

AIDAN
Clearly, neither of you used your
best judgment. But Tracey,
protecting your image is **your** top
priority.

Lucky wears his devilish grin again.

AIDAN
And your antics are once again
pulling down Arch's image.

TRACEY
No one will remember this tomorrow!

Lucky looks at his phone.

LUCKY
Mmmm...

TRACEY
No one will remember this next
week!

AIDAN
Maybe not. But the damage is done.
The CW won't want you on their
season soundtrack line-up now.

TRACEY
Can you stall them?

LUCKY
We stalled them all morning.

AIDAN
It won't do. They'll drop us if we
don't drop you.

TRACEY
From the line-up?

LUCKY
From the label.

TRACEY
From the label!?

AIDAN
Yes, Tracey. Arch has stuck by you
through some tough times.

LUCKY

Your lightning-fast marriage to--
and divorce from-- Joe Something.
You nearly **broke** the Something or
Others **up** as a result!

AIDAN

Sagging record sales.

LUCKY

That episode at the Grammys.

AIDAN

A lot of your... antics... have
helped your album sales... and
those that didn't... in some way
improved Arch's image and rep.

Tracey fully feels the gravity of the moment and shows it.

LUCKY

But not this time. I kind of wish I
hadn't found those files. But maybe
people will start streaming your
albums again.

AIDAN

Until then, let's call it a day.

TRACEY

Wait, did you do all this to get
rid of me? Or to boost sales?

LUCKY

Either way.

Tracey reads her phone.

TRACEY

"Pure evil." "Time for rehab,
much?" "World's worst mother." This
is not the attention I want!

Aidan considers carefully.

AIDAN

Tracey, it's over with Arch.

EXT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tracey pulls up to her house, parks. Christopher's car is
parked on the street with the trunk open.

INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tracey enters her house, in a daze. There are a few suitcases by the door. Christopher carries a box from the bedroom.

CHRISTOPHER

Hey.

TRACEY

You will not believe it. I still am having a hard time myself!

CHRISTOPHER

(quietly dumbfounded)
Yeah... we need to talk.

TRACEY

Yeah, we do. Aidan--just casting me aside like that.

CHRISTOPHER

Tracey...

TRACEY

I have two gold records! OK, one-- but I have a track on that CW soundtrack that--

CHRISTOPHER

(sharply but not loudly)
Tracey.

Christopher sets the box down.

TRACEY

Don't even get me started about Lucky. It feels like he did all this on purpose.

(paces)

At least he was blaming me all the way.

CHRISTOPHER

Tracey!

TRACEY

And I know I wasn't the **best** producer on the team, but I'd like to think I could get the job done.

Christopher sits on the arm of the sofa.

TRACEY

All right, it's happened. I guess that's that. It's not the end of the world.

Tracey faces Christopher.

TRACEY

Club tour? Hit smaller venues? I could try to write another book to follow up "Rocker Chick"?

Christopher sighs, and Tracey misdirects her anger at him.

TRACEY

Oh, what do you know?

CHRISTOPHER

(exhausted)

You can figure it out. But Tracey, please listen. We're through.

Tracey notices the suitcases.

TRACEY

What?! You can't walk out! I need people I can trust right now!

CHRISTOPHER

(incredulously)

... I'm not sure why you didn't trust me last night then. Or Billy. Or Ellie. We all had your best interest in mind.

Christopher stands up.

TRACEY

I just thought it'd make people smile--to see me as I **was**.

CHRISTOPHER

It doesn't matter. Not any more.

Christopher picks up the box.

TRACEY

Wow... this stings, buddy. Just when I was about to ask you to start paying half the bills!

CHRISTOPHER

Stings!? What really **hurts** is--
(looks around)

You never really allowed me in.
 This is all you let me bring after
 two years. Says a lot. Buddy.

Tracey turns away.

CHRISTOPHER

(teary-eyed)

I'm not stupid--I listened to all
 your albums, all the songs about
 failed relationships. I hoped I'd
 be different.

Christopher pauses for an uncomfortable amount of time, then carries the box as he wheels his luggage out.

Tracey turns, paces, sits, and rests her chin on her palm. She's upset, but not devastated.

EXT. FANCY BAR OUTDOOR SEATING - DAY

Late afternoon, Billy sits with a glass of wine in the outdoor seating area full of business people, all on their phones.

Billy talks on her phone.

BILLY

Lambchop, it's the best I can do!

Waiter tries to pour more water into her water glass, Billy stops him.

BILLY

Don't be crazy! Of course you
 should take the deal!

Billy taps on her wine glass indicating one more.

BILLY

You, Chaira, it's the perfect
 combination!

Billy cocks her head back, exasperated.

BILLY

Of course, lamby!

Tracey approaches the bar from the street.

BILLY

So do we have a deal?

Tracey is now in the seating area.

BILLY
Perfect! I just got your signed
contract. We are--**all--set**.

Tracey stands next to Billy. The waiter delivers Billy's wine. She motions to him to bring one for Tracey and motions to Tracey to sit down.

BILLY
All right. Bye-bye, love. Uh-huh.
Bye-bye.

Tracey sits down. Billy hangs up. She air kisses Tracey's cheeks from across the table.

BILLY
Thank goodness for Loopdocs! That
could have gone on for just **days!**

Billy grabs Tracey's hand with an exaggerated frown.

BILLY
But how are you holding up with
that awful EP making the rounds?

TRACEY
Arch cut me loose.

BILLY
Of course they did.

TRACEY
No, I'm serious.

BILLY
(leaning in)
I--know.

TRACEY
What do you mean?

BILLY
Everybody knows!

Tracey absorbs this while a thought strikes Billy.

BILLY
How did **you** know I was here?

TRACEY
Facespace check-in. You always
check in.

BILLY

Ah.

Billy taps on her phone.

BILLY

I defriended you on Tweetworld,
LinkMe, and RightNow! but I guess I
missed Facespace.

Billy keeps tapping.

BILLY

There! All gone!

TRACEY

Wait, why would you disconnect? I
need you! I need work!

BILLY

Oh, lambchop! No one will touch you
right now. And if I insist on
representing you... well... Billy's
image goes down the drain, too.

Tracey grabs Billy's wine, drinks it.

BILLY

And that doesn't do anyone any
good, now does it?

TRACEY

So that it? After all this time,
we're through. I'm supposed to find
another agent.

BILLY

(laughs, matter-of-factly)
If you're lucky!

TRACEY

(angry)
Thanks.

BILLY

(with gravity)
Tracey, I'll always be your friend,
hon, But I really have other things
I need to do right now.

Tracey stares at Billy, incredulously. Billy's phone rings.

BILLY

Take care of yourself, lambchop.

Billy answers the phone as the waiter brings a glass of wine for Tracey.

BILLY
 Billy here... Sounds like you're
 ready to talk numbers!

Billy quickly grabs the glass from him and mouths "bye-bye" to Tracey.

INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ellie sits on the sofa. Tracey paces.

TRACEY
 Label, agent--gone. Overnight!

ELLIE
 Boyfriend, too.

TRACEY
 Gee, thanks, Elle. Boyfriend is the
 least of my worries, except--

She pauses.

ELLIE
 ... Except?

TRACEY
 Without Christopher to chip in, I'm
 a bit strapped.

ELLIE
 (rolls her eyes)
 Oh, Trace.

Tracey plops onto the sofa.

TRACEY
 First three albums paid for the
 house, but I pissed most everything
 else away when things started to
 tank. Been living paycheck to
 paycheck for years now.

ELLIE
 (looks around the house)
 Thank goodness for one good
 investment... everyone loves a
 Craftsman Cottage...

TRACEY

You know, I've had my share of ups and downs.

ELLIE

You sure have. But you'll make it. You always do.

TRACEY

I'm not ready to hear that yet.

ELLIE

You're not perfect--we **all** know that-- but you-- your passion... devotion... you're really an inspiration.

TRACEY

Thanks.

ELLIE

You always try to make me smile, see through the black clouds.

Ellie puts her arm around Tracey's shoulder for a one-armed squeeze hug.

ELLIE

And I'll stick with you through **this**.

TRACEY

We have shared some lousy times.
(smiles weakly)
Is this the worst?

ELLIE

Nah... not like your black-out days. But...

Tracey puts her head on Ellie's lap.

ELLIE

I'm afraid that's not all, Trace...

Tracey looks up at Ellie.

ELLIE

I heard from Rudy.

Tracey sits up.

TRACEY

He heard the EP.

ELLIE

(calmly)

Yes. But before that. He's getting married.

Tracey is flabbergasted.

ELLIE

He asked me to tell you a few weeks ago, but every time I tried, you had some new drama.

TRACEY

Oh, Tracey always has some drama!

ELLIE

And, now, he wants to talk to you about the EP, too...

Tracey gets up, paces.

TRACEY

Lousy timing, Elle. Everything on my plate, now this.

Tracey grabs her jacket.

TRACEY

Just lock the door on your way out.

Tracey slams the door as she leaves.

INT./EXT. TRACEY'S CAR - NIGHT

It is the moment between late night and early morning--3 to 4 AM.

Tracey drives down a lonely stretch of boulevard. She feels alone in the world, upset but **not crying**.

She passes closed shops, liquor stores, gas stations in a slightly rundown part of town. No people or life on the streets.

Passing through a light she notices a guitar shop. In its window is a unique pearl pink guitar with white pearl accent. A guitar strum underscores the moment as she double-takes driving past it.

She pulls over, gets out of her car, approaches the shop window.

The shop is closed, and the guitar stand that held the pink guitar is empty.

A guitar slowly plays a riff and Tracey hears an echo of lyrics from "Moody Roody" and trails off. Tracey shakes it off as she stares at where she thinks the guitar was.

EXT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - DAY

A few weeks later and the yard is brown from lack of watering, and the flowers hanging on the porch are dead.

Ellie gets out of her car, shakes her head at the state of the yard.

She steps onto the porch and struggles to remove all the mail from the box mounted to the house.

INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - DAY

The house is a mess, unwashed plates and glasses throughout, clothes scattered in abandonment. Ellie drops the mail on a table, looks about, rolls her eyes.

Tracey is on the floor, staring at the ceiling.

Ellie steps over her, sets her phone and bag down, sits down, legs crossed next to Tracey.

ELLIE

Hey.

TRACEY

(despondent)

Hello.

ELLIE

I've been worried about you.

TRACEY

(flatly)

That's kind.

ELLIE

Have you eaten anything today?

TRACEY

What day is it?

Ellie gets up, gathers some trash, heads to the kitchen and rummages for food O.S.

Tracey hears the activity in the kitchen, hauls herself up and stumbles to the kitchen.

TRACEY

Why do you put up with me?

Ellie makes a salad.

ELLIE

Who cheered me on when I thought I couldn't finish the dissertation?

TRACEY

Me.

ELLIE

Those girls on the Santa Monica Pier--with the acoustic guitars? Who introduced them to Billie?

TRACEY

Me.

ELLIE

You want people to **succeed**, and you help when you can, in your own way. So, that's why.

Ellie chops vegetables and Tracey sits on a counter stool.

ELLIE

(kindly teasing)

You have plenty of flaws, but I still love you for the good parts. Part, maybe.

TRACEY

I WISH I WERE NEVER BORN.

Ellie turns with food.

ELLIE

Eat this and you'll feel differently.

Tracey takes a bite of food.

ELLIE

If you weren't ever born, you wouldn't have a gold record.

TRACEY

True. But if I were **dead...** at least I wouldn't have to worry about paying the mortgage.

ELLIE

(half-joking half-serious)
If you died now, your legacy would be that EP.

TRACEY

How could they set me up and just cast me aside?

ELLIE

You've seen it all before. To your credit you've lasted this long.

TRACEY

Who makes it, who doesn't--it's all so arbitrary. Aidan's in a bad mood and he'll hate a song.

(becoming heated)

If a chord grabs him, the weight of the label is behind the latest band.

(angrily)

Sales dip, or you dye your hair the wrong color, you're just over.

Tracey gets up and walks away.

Ellie follows and points to a guitar in the living room.

ELLIE

You've said a lot through that thing. Your songs--

(with emphasis)

your words--

(with admiration)

have reached out like a beacon, inspired a generation of women and songwriters.

TRACEY

Go on...

ELLIE

You said what was on your mind and rocked the boys' club! Your message transcended, took on its own life.

Ellie looks at decor which consists of album covers, framed magazine covers featuring Tracey, etc.

ELLIE

You're not just a plaything for those label jerks. You're not just fodder for internet trolls.

TRACEY

If only Lucky didn't find that EP. People think I'm a monster now.

ELLIE

What about you? Do **you** think you're a monster? What you said on those songs... does any of it haunt you?

TRACEY

Of course it does! Every time it pops into my head I just have to bury it...

ELLIE

(skeptically)

Tracey, you are responsible for it.

(with pure kindness)

Not the label, not Lucky. And you may have to face the fact that your rock star days are over.

TRACEY

(annoyed)

I guess that'll end your social life.

ELLIE

What?

TRACEY

It's not lost on me that every guy you've met, you've met through **me**.

ELLIE

This is coming out of nowhere.

TRACEY

Is it? The guy at my party? And Gary? What about Henry? You couldn't keep your hands off him!

ELLIE

Your bartender friend? That was one time! What, ten years ago?!

TRACEY

And what about Joe Something? You slept with him, too, didn't you?

ELLIE
Now you're being crazy.

Ellie finds her phone and bag.

ELLIE
(a bit heated)
Your life is a wreck right now, and
you're lashing out at me. Fine.

Ellie heads to the door.

ELLIE
When we first met, you told me your
life had no purpose before you won
that song contest. Well, you've
given it plenty of meaning since
then. Good and bad.

Ellie opens the door, pauses, turns toward Tracey.

ELLIE
(harshly)
You'll bounce back. You always do.

Tracey stares as the door thuds closed O.S.

A guitar strums or picks melancholically.

INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Some days later. It's raining.

Tracey walks through the living room, which is mostly tidy.
She sorts through what's now an even larger pile of mail than
Ellie had brought in during the previous scene.

Tracey's phone pings, as a text message arrives. She picks up
her phone, reacts warily.

CHYRON of Rudy's text: I'll be in town in a few weeks.

CHYRON of Rudy's text: I'd like to see you.

CHYRON of Ellie's text: I gave Rudy your number ♡

Tracey shakes her head with a slight smile, half upset, half
glad.

CHYRON of Rudy's text: OK?

Tracey sets the phone down without answering.

She picks up a jacket, probably the last item of "mess" and heads down a hallway to put it away. She stops at memorabilia on the wall: framed magazine covers, album jackets, press clippings.

CLOSE ON a framed review of her book "Rocker Chick" and then to another framed magazine cover featuring Tracey, Joe Something, and Rudy as a baby with copy "Tracey McIrish and Joe Something: The Rock 'n' Roll Parents You Wish You Had."

Tracey breaks her stare then opens a closet door.

A guitar tunes and sound checks O.S.

Her eyes transfix on another framed press clipping she'd not noticed in years.

TRACEY (O.S.)
Ready, girls? Ready to rock?!

Press clipping from the **RFT (Riverfront Times** local newspaper) reads "Tracey & Co. Garage Grit Pop Wows"

Song starts to play; it's strictly garage band but not awful. Tracey stares at clipping as the SCENE FADES AND TRANSITIONS to the past.

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. RANDOM BASEMENT - NIGHT

Twenty five years earlier, Tracey looks younger but largely the same.

SUPER: "1995"

Tracey sings and plays the pearl pink guitar. FEMALE BASS PLAYER and FEMALE DRUMMER also play, but the focus largely remains on Tracey.

SUPER: "Saint Louis, MO"

The alternative/indie song is raw and low-fi. Tracey is the best of the three, but her playing is simpler than in her other songs featured in the film. Her singing is also less refined, only a few steps above screeching.

Song abruptly ENDS after a chorus.

INT. RANDOM BAR - NIGHT

Still the past, Tracey, Female Bass Player, Female Drummer sit and stand at a bar with beers. Tracey is flipping through a copy of the **RFT**. There is no music, just noise from the crowd and the bar (pint glasses from a barback, orders given by patrons, etc.).

TRACEY

Oh my God! The article about us finally ran!

The trio is excited.

TRACEY

(reading from paper)

"What Tracey & Co. lack in sophistication they make up for in heart... a fun band to listen to and watch..."

Tracey drinks her beer.

TRACEY

(reading again)

"Tracey on that pink guitar is something else..."

Tracey pauses, Female Bass Player takes the newspaper so she and Female Drummer can read.

Tracey sees the full page ad on the back of the newspaper, reads in small but visible print "Tennessee Petites Presents" and in much larger type, "SONG CONTEST."

Tracey grabs the paper excitedly, orients it to read the ad.

TRACEY

(wide-eyed)

We are totally doing this!

INT. PERFORMANCE HALL - NIGHT

Song resumes to PLAY, perhaps with a reiteration of the chorus. Still the same song, but it is less rough, more rehearsed.

Tracey & Co. perform on the stage. Tracey's pink guitar is still prominent.

The song continues to play in the background, but the performance is over; Tracey & Co. and several other bands (all women) are gathered on stage with an ANNOUNCER.

ANNOUNCER

And the winner of the Tennessee
Petites song contest...

The women on stage are anxious.

ANNOUNCER

Who will be flown to Chicago to
record an EP for Arch Records...

Different women on stage are anxious.

ANNOUNCER

Is...

Tracey looks anxious but intent. Female Bass Player looks
anxious but terrified and Female Drummer looks simply
anxious.

ANNOUNCER

Tracey and Company!

INT. ARCH RECORDS - DAY

PRODUCER meets with Tracey.

PRODUCER

Everyone loves the EP! "Saint Louis
Sound" has a real edge.

TRACEY

That's great.

PRODUCER

We want to sign you on--three album
contract.

TRACEY

Even better--

PRODUCER

Just you though. No "and Co."

TRACEY

(uncomfortably)
No problem.

PRODUCER

Your songs, your sound, your look.
Just Tracey.

TRACEY

And to think I skipped that
debutante ball to practice guitar.

PRODUCER

But lose the pink guitar. Makes you
look silly.

TRACEY

Sure thing.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - DAY

RETURN TO PRESENT with Tracey at the closet door, still
raining. She shuts the door and walks away from the clipping.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Tracey walks up to an ATM. A guitar plunks with each step.
She inserts card, types PIN, withdrawal amount, etc., with
one hand, phone in the other. She alternates punching keys of
the ATM and her phone.

CHYRONS of information while she taps:

--Venmo

--Balance: \$1268.94

--PayPal

--Balance: \$398.53

She retrieves her cash and receipt. She looks at the receipt,
crumples it and tosses it into the bin in frustration.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy is on a call via headset, types on her laptop. A
massage therapist works her neck and shoulders.

BILLY

Of course, sweetie!

She continues to type.

BILLY
 Uh-huh... right... OK!
 (pause)
 Great... bye-bye now.

BILLY'S ASSISTANT leans into her office, knocking.

ASSISTANT
 Your eleven o'clock is here.

BILLY
 (mildly aloof)
 Remind me?

ASSISTANT
 Tracey McIrish.

BILLY
 (sighs)
 You gotta do what you gotta do...

Billy shoos the massage therapist away.

The assistant gestures Tracey to enter, as Tracey enters and the therapist exits.

Tracey is well put together in something between an edgy and professional attire.

Billy crosses the room to greet her, extending her arms to clasp Tracey's hands in a way to prevent a hug or her own traditional cheek-kisses.

BILLY
 Tracey! My little lamb! You look amazing! How **are** you?!

TRACEY
 Not great, Billy. These past few weeks--

BILLY
 (glibly but seriously)
 What doesn't kill us makes us stronger, **right**?

Billy gestures to Tracey to sit on a couch while Billy takes to a lounge chair, deliberately away from the desk, laptop, where any "business" may occur.

TRACEY
 (impatiently)
 Right. Billy, I really need work.

BILLY
I know, sweetie!

TRACEY
Is there any way you could help?

BILLY
No can do! My plate is just full!

TRACEY
We can up your commission, or--

BILLY
Lamb-pie, listen to me. Most
people... have so much baggage...
anxiety... conventionality...
(gestures with disgust)
all the trappings of mediocrity.

Billy leans in.

BILLY
But not you. You've led a powerful
life. You've spoken your mind
through your music. You've had a
good go of it in a tough business.

Billy leans back, finally showing through her veneer.

BILLY
(with a quirky gesture)
But listen closely. The jam you're
in... it's your own fault. And now
you're on your own.

TRACEY
I didn't--

BILLY
A song about shoving an old lady at
the grocery store? Add it to sexual
misconduct and people aren't ready
to forgive you yet. You might still
have your core fans...

TRACEY
A lot of--

BILLY
But no new ones.

TRACEY
But, I--

BILLY

And not hireable in the industry.

Billy stands up, smooths her skirt. When Tracey doesn't stand up, Billy reaches to guide her up by the elbow.

BILLY

Be true to yourself, sweetie, and you'll make it. You'll find your happiness.

Billy guides Tracey to the door. Tracey is still processing, gathering her thoughts.

BILLY

Until then, if you need money, it's really pretty simple. **Get a job.**

Billy gently pushes Tracey out the door.

BILLY

(lightly but seriously)
And you really need to practice the difficult art of leaving at the right time.

Billy closes the door.

INT. RANDOM HIPSTER BAR - DAY

Tracey sits at the bar at a hipster dive. It's late afternoon, not crowded. She's down, not sober, but not wasted. She is casually but hipsterly attired, with faded ripped jeans.

A bartender moves toward her, which prompts Tracey to stand up and put money on the counter. Tracey heads to the back of the bar to use the rest room.

A lonely, sad guitar strums and Tracey stops at a board full of flyers: upcoming shows, roommates wanted, etc.

Tracey slowly scans the board, stops at a flyer--a band's ad seeking a guitar player. She takes her phone out of her back pocket and snaps a pic of the flyer.

INT. RANDOM BASEMENT - NIGHT

A drummer and a bass player, both 25, hipsters, set up to practice. Tracey enters with CHUCK, 30, a hipster singer and leader of the band.

Tracey is in a mild disguise. Hair in a ponytail with a streak of pink, dressed a little younger than usual, different glasses. Hipster dork.

CHUCK

Hey! We have our temp guitar!

The drummer and bass player perk up.

CHUCK

This--
(gestures grandly)
is Babs.

TRACEY

Babs Woof... Just a stage name.

The drummer and bass player look skeptical.

CHUCK

She picked up the songs **fast**.

Tracey unpacks her guitar.

TRACEY

They weren't tough.

Chuck adjusts his mic, amps.

CHUCK

Let's run through the set once, and
we'll be ready for the show
tomorrow night at the Basement Bar.

The drummer and bass player situate themselves, each randomly warming up, until:

CHUCK

Let's go--

Drummer taps sticks four times, and the band plays a catchy but simple alternative/indie song that doesn't challenge the audience. The lyrics describe the hazard of holding on to youth too long. Chuck is the primary singer on this song, but Tracey's role of singer is also prominent--more than a back-up singer, but it's not a duet.

Tracey is the best player. She is nearly enjoying herself. Chuck looks at her; the drummer and bass player exchange looks warily.

Tracey is inspired to improvise a little; Chuck is delighted; the drummer and bass player are a bit annoyed.

The song ends abruptly, but Tracey adds a flourish--recognizable as the riff to "Moody Rudy." Realizing what she's done, she colors.

INT. CHUCK'S BEDROOM - DAY

The next morning. Tracey wakes up, groggy for a beat, then alert; she looks around, not knowing where she is. She sees Chuck in bed next to her; she rolls her eyes as she remembers she spent the night with him.

Tracey gets out of bed, dresses. Chuck wakes up, pleased.

CHUCK
(groggily)
Hey!

TRACEY
Good morning.

CHUCK
You have to run so soon?

TRACEY
'fraid so.

CHUCK
OK. Thanks for last night--we've never sounded better.

TRACEY
... I'm glad we all clicked.

CHUCK
Yeah. They thought you're too old, but come on!--the show is going to rock tonight!

Tracey is taken aback, but not.

CHUCK
Of course once Merle is back, we'll have to see who stays in the band.

Tracey, with her back to Chuck, zips up her hoodie.

TRACEY
It's... probably best that Merle gets the spot. I'll play tonight--have some fun on stage... get a little cash. It's a grand, right?

Chuck gets out of bed, hugs Tracey from behind.

CHUCK
Yup. Split four ways.

Tracey looks embarrassed at the misunderstanding.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Tracey sits in a placement agency's glass-walled office. In the common area, people bustle about. A scattered PLACEMENT AGENT carrying an armful of papers and files, enters, takes a seat, lets the pile of files spill onto the next, pulls up information on the computer and looks up at Tracey.

PLACEMENT AGENT
(excitedly)
Tracey--!

Tracey jumps in her seat.

PLACEMENT AGENT
(whispers)
Tracey McIrish!
(in a normal tone)
It is so amazing to meet you! My roommate in college had "Sunny Day in L.A." on repeat for **months**.

TRACEY
Thank you... that's very nice to hear.

PLACEMENT AGENT
I was a bit more top 40, myself...

Agent looks through Tracey's C/V on screen.

PLACEMENT AGENT
A few albums, very nice... a Grammy nomination--I had no idea!

Tracey grimaces anxiously.

PLACEMENT AGENT
Assistant producer... associate producer... can you explain this gap on your resume...?

TRACEY
(unsure)
Which...?

PLACEMENT AGENT
Looks like 14... 15 years back?

TRACEY

Ah. I had to take some...

Tracey struggles to find the right word.

TRACEY

... **wellness** time for myself.

PLACEMENT AGENT

No matter, no matter. Was quite a while ago, and you have such a non-traditional resume.

Agent taps into the computer and scrolls during an uncomfortable silence.

PLACEMENT AGENT

Well, Tracey, I need to be honest with you. Your skill set...

Agent gestures about the office.

PLACEMENT AGENT

Doesn't fit the needs of a modern office.

Agent leans forward almost in a pleading manner.

PLACEMENT AGENT

Of course we would love to place you! For the right employer, you would be an amazing find!

Agent leans back and looks at the screen.

PLACEMENT AGENT

But opportunities aren't going to come along often.

Tracey is nonplussed.

PLACEMENT AGENT

You're a bit... **too** famous for most employers.

TRACEY

Too famous?

PLACEMENT AGENT

If you had some everyday office experience, it might be easier to place you under a different name.

Agent crosses arms and leans on the desk.

PLACEMENT AGENT

We'll keep you on file and stay on the lookout for a good fit. In the meantime...

Agent hands Tracey a flyer.

PLACEMENT AGENT

You could look into picking up some general office skills.

Tracey looks blankly. A guitar plucks slowly, sadly.

EXT. OPEN-AIR FLEA MARKET - DAY

Tracey walks the grounds, with dozens of booths and stalls of antiques, treasures, and junk. The attendees are a wide variety of types, with plenty of hipsters.

She examines the area intently, but not at any of the booths or wares. She continues to scan until she sees Christopher.

Christopher flips through a box of vintage LPs, oblivious to Tracey standing next to him. Tracey nudges him playfully.

TRACEY

If it isn't my favorite ex-boyfriend lawyer.

CHRISTOPHER

Oh. Hey.

He resumes flipping through the LPs.

CHRISTOPHER

What are you doing here?

He pulls an LP out the box to examine.

CHRISTOPHER

A bit early for you, isn't it?

TRACEY

Knew you'd be here. I... didn't think you'd answer if I called.

CHRISTOPHER

I probably wouldn't.

He pulls out another LP.

TRACEY

That's a great one. Kenny Burrell
plays on two tracks.

He sets it in the stack he plans to buy.

CHRISTOPHER

Thanks. What do you want?

TRACEY

I miss you.

He hands money to the proprietor.

CHRISTOPHER

Maybe. But try again.

TRACEY

No, really, I do. Moments like
this.

He walks away and she follows.

CHRISTOPHER

Ha. What do you really want?

TRACEY

OK, OK... I need help.

CHRISTOPHER

Now you're Tracey.

Christopher stops at a booth, starts to browse. Tracey stops,
but is fixated on him.

TRACEY

You know everyone and everyone
likes you and respects you. You are
grounded and grounding.

He crouches, examines a vintage cabinet.

TRACEY

I'm not sure what to do... I need
your advice.

CHRISTOPHER

You need a reality check.

Tracey's eyes roll as he continues to examine the cabinet.

TRACEY

(restrained)
I'm exploring options.

I've been looking at jobs. And looking at my old contract with Arch.

He stops his examination and looks up.

CHRISTOPHER

Ah. You mean free legal advice.

He stands up, and Tracey adjusts her gaze.

TRACEY

Maybe?

(expectantly)

Maybe you can take a look at it.

CHRISTOPHER

I'm sure Arch has everything buttoned up. Aidan's no idiot.

TRACEY

Please--I'm running out of options!

CHRISTOPHER

Here's my advice:

(intently)

You're a good guitarist. You **might** be able to get studio session work... if you did some serious groveling.

TRACEY

(uncomfortably)

I don't think I can do that.

CHRISTOPHER

Look, you're passionate about your work. But if you can't compromise your pride and principles...

He takes two steps backward.

CHRISTOPHER

You'll need to move on. Figure it out on your own, Tracey. Time for a change, yeah?

He turns and walks away.

EXT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tracey sits on her patio with candles and Tiki torches burning. She plays an acoustic guitar and sings "the Pretty and Haunting Song" in which she begins to question herself.

Ellie approaches from a side gate to the yard. The music stops her in her tracks. She leans against the house, listens to Tracey.

TRACEY

"I've had my share of fun/ Am I
sorry?/ All the things I've said
and done/ Am I sorry?/ Remorse, why
can't I succumb/ Am I sorry?/
Questions, no answers/ Jeers,
cheers, and jeers/ I don't know/ I
just need to go/ Go/ Go/"

Tracey stops singing, writes down a note to herself and strums notes, stops, relays the passage as she is still writing the song's finish.

Ellie removes her hand from the gate latch and leaves.

INT. DIVE BAR - DAY

Tracey enters a dive bar, sits at the counter, looks about the bar and its few day-drinker clientele. There are no hipsters and Tracey looks satisfied.

She looks at the TV screens, momentarily transfixed. At least one airs a disaster program, with animated "what if" graphics of a meteor hitting the Earth.

RAINER, 40, a bartender, enters carrying a large plastic case of pint glasses. He is scruffy and rough but affable.

RAINER

'Afternoon. What can I get you?

Tracey looks a little disappointed.

TRACEY

Bourbon and water.

RAINER

Coming right up.

Rainer looks to a patron at the end of the bar and points.

RAINER

You doin' all right, pal?

The patron holds up his glass and Rainer sets about making two drinks.

TRACEY

Have you worked here long?

RAINER

Five or six years I guess.

TRACEY

I haven't been here in a long time.
Hasn't changed much.

RAINER

It's not that type of bar!

TRACEY

I was friends with the bartender...
Henry? Older than you...

Tracey motions down her left arm.

TRACEY

Sleeve tats of skulls and stuff.
Any chance he's still around?

RAINER

Nope. I'm his replacement. I met
him once. Showed me around.

Rainer places Tracey's drink in front of her and moves down to the end of the bar to place the other patron's drink. Rainer collects a few empty glasses and wipes the bar down.

Tracey watches him during an uncomfortable silence. She looks up at the TV screen.

TRACEY

Kind of depressing.

RAINER

What is?

He quickly follows Tracey's line of vision to the TV.

RAINER

Oh! We're all doomed. An asteroid
came within 400 miles of Earth two
weeks ago. A little closer, and,
boom!

Tracey looks skeptical.

RAINER

But that's the least of our
worries. There's this cliff on an
island off the coast of Portugal--

Rainer cleans glasses in the rinser behind the bar.

RAINER

It'll take almost nothing for it to
fall off. Once it does, it'll
create a tsunami that'll wipe out
the Eastern seaboard, Maine to the
Carolinas.

Rainer loads the glasses into a dishwasher.

RAINER

Want me to change the channel?

TRACEY

No, that's OK.

RAINER

Of course, global warming is going
to get us first, probably.

TRACEY

Cheerful.

RAINER

Everything we've built... just dust
in the end.

TRACEY

(mockingly)

What's the point of living?

RAINER

Right? People run around, try to
get ahead, and why? We're here
today, gone tomorrow.

TRACEY

I guess...

RAINER

We're born into a life without any
real possibilities. I mean, we
think there are. We're **told** there
are. But there aren't.

Tracey focuses on Rainer and his speech.

RAINER

We're given a lot, go through a grind--no matter who you are--we want to die or are forced to die.

TRACEY

Forced?

RAINER

By nature, at least. We think we have input, control. But we don't.

Tracey finishes her drink.

RAINER

All we really do is stand still and wait for someone else--something else--to make their input on us.

Rainer notices Tracey's empty glass.

RAINER

Another drink?

The TV program's voice over continues quietly.

ANNOUNCER

The meteor's force, exploding in the atmosphere, was the equivalent to ten atomic bombs...

Tracey stares at him blankly, then down at her drink.

TRACEY

I don't know.

EXT. DINER - DAY

Vintage mid-century diner, well past its heyday but not sad. Fun but worn. The song "Moody Rudy" plays as Tracey gets out of her car and walks to the door.

INT. DINER - DAY

Tracey enters the diner, which has only a few patrons. The song STOPS as the door shuts behind her. Noise from the diner is minimal, creating an uncomfortable silence.

RUDY, Tracey's son, 25, sits in a booth facing her. He is dressed conservatively.

Tracey approaches his booth.

TRACEY

Hi, Rudy.

She waits a beat to see if he stands up to hug her. But she abruptly sits down before he can get up.

RUDY

Hello, Mom--

Tracey nearly winces.

RUDY

Hello, **Tracey**.

There's an awkward pause as a waitress slowly approaches. When she finally arrives, Tracey is thankful for the opportunity to break the silence.

TRACEY

Could I get a glass of water... and
a vanilla malted milkshake?

The waitress grunts an acknowledgment and walks away. Tracey fidgets as she looks around.

TRACEY

I'd forgotten about this place. I'm
surprised you remember it.

RUDY

(uneasily)
I'm surprised you--
(catches himself)
I... couldn't resist looking it up.

There is another awkward pause.

TRACEY

(embarrassed)
The EP... you probably listened to
it...

RUDY

Kind of made it a point to never
listen to your music. But I know
what was on it.

Tracey shifts in her seat uneasily.

TRACEY

Was how I felt in the moment, so--

RUDY

It had to be said in a song, then.

TRACEY

You... weren't supposed to hear it.

RUDY

Funny you'd record it, then.

TRACEY

I mean... it was real, I can't deny that. But I wanted to move on from it. Still do.

RUDY

Still not sorry though?

Rudy stares her down until she looks away in awkward silence.

RUDY

I'm sorry you--your contract with the label.

TRACEY

(recovering)

Thanks. You're up for a job? Ellie mentioned it a while back, but I--

RUDY

That was a while ago. But yeah, it's going great.

TRACEY

(proudly)

Making your own way...

Tracey looks at the clock on the wall. Rudy follows her eyeline to the clock then shakes his head in sad acceptance.

RUDY

So-- I'm engaged. She's-- a very good person. I love her very much.

TRACEY

(awkwardly)

Ellie told me. Congratulations.

The waitress drops Tracey's water and milkshake at the table.

Tracey is unsure how or if she can continue the conversation and mixes her milkshake with the straw. She looks like she's about to say something, repeatedly.

RUDY

You don't have to ask questions-- I mean, I know this makes you uncomfortable.

TRACEY

No... I'm very happy you've met someone. A good someone. You deserve something stable in your life.

RUDY

I'm not-- I don't resent you. Dad was always there for me, and you did your best.

TRACEY

I don't know how to react to that. I'm grateful Joe was able to be the parent I wasn't, and at times just couldn't be.

Rudy stares blankly.

TRACEY

I've always had a difficult time balancing everything.
(casually)
One of my many flaws?

RUDY

(hastily)
You're too--
(catches himself)
You've had a life of... I don't know... wanting **more**?

TRACEY

Sure.

RUDY

It's just... that's as an artist, musician... just not as a mother, friend, or person.

TRACEY

That's horrible.

RUDY

But true-- you'll never stop trying to justify it.

TRACEY

Music is my passion... I can't escape it. There's so much more I want to achieve. Preserve my legacy?

Rudy is sadly resigned.

RUDY

Very little endures. Most
everything crumbles in the end.

TRACEY

Until then...

RUDY

Then you have nothing. By your own
making. Life is short, and you may
have squandered yours for record
sales.

TRACEY

I do have bills to pay.

RUDY

Of course. I didn't believe your
musician's soul was so pure.

TRACEY

It's not easy--trying to find
security in this career.

RUDY

I imagine not. But there is no
security in anything, really.
(hesitates)
And you-- seems like you lost the
ability to connect with... anyone
along the way. Just a slave to your
passion.

Tracey is appalled at the take on her life.

RUDY

You lack the faith needed to face
what a nothing your life is.

The two stare at each other, emotionally.

RUDY

This is not the conversation I
wanted to have. I-- apologize.

TRACEY

I might deserve it.

Rudy is nonplussed.

TRACEY

(sincerely)
I do deserve it.

RUDY

Everyone's convinced me to invite you to the wedding.

TRACEY

(quietly, sarcastically)
Very nice.

RUDY

Part of me would like you to attend. Very much.

TRACEY

(warmly)
Thank you.

RUDY

But not if you turn it into something all about you. Can you promise not to make a spectacle?

TRACEY

(incredulously)
Of course.

RUDY

Mariah-- my fiancée is Mariah-- Mariah and her family are... normal people.

TRACEY

Normal.

RUDY

Jobs. Kids. Pets. Church on Sunday.

TRACEY

OK.

RUDY

They won't get "rock Tracey"--
(uneasily)
I know you hate to compromise. **But** if you can tone it down, I would like you to be there.

TRACEY

(earnestly but lightly)
I'll do my best.

INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Tracey turns on a Bluetooth radio, taps on her phone, launches a Podcast and turns up the volume as "the Indie Review" Podcast intro jingle plays.

She opens up her laptop and starts to multi-task.

PODCAST HOST (O.S)
 Hey there, you're listening to "the
 Indie Review" and we're going to
 kick it off with Unfiltered Water--

Tracey double-takes from her laptop to the Podcast.

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)
 Arch Records' on-the-fly
 replacement for the CW season
 soundtrack, after they dropped--

Tracey quickly turns off her radio in disgust.

TRACEY
 (mutters)
 Unfiltered Water...!

MONTAGE - TRACEY TRIES HARDER

Tracey's breakthrough "Sunny Day in L.A." plays while she pulls it together to look for a path forward. The song holds on to a grunge rock core, but veers sharply to pop, which is what earned the song its radio play when it was released by Arch Records. The lyrics are sarcastic.

-- Phone alarm sounds at dawn, Tracey bounds out of bed.

-- Tracey pours a cup of coffee wearing sweats, T-shirt and towel wrapped around her wet hair.

-- A "LinkMe" web page scrolls into a "You Might Know" section and Tracey clicks on profiles to connect.

-- Tracey is now dressed nicely. She holds her hand to her forehead while perusing websites. With her free hand, she clicks furiously, her eyes glazed over.

-- In her car, she sings a line or two of the song, while driving.

-- At an employment office, Tracey peruses a bulletin board, scans a QR code from a poster.

-- She drinks an ice-coffee in her car, reading her phone; she reads the information page about a "Start Your Own Business!" seminar.

-- At home on her laptop she fills out the seminar registration; she hovers over the question "Why do you want to start your own business?" And clicks "Be my own boss."

-- She taps her phone; CHYRON of text: "You're Registered!"

END MONTAGE

INT. SEMINAR ROOM - DAY

Tracey and 20 people are in a bland function room to wait for the "Start Your Own Business!" seminar to begin. Some people are seated, others help themselves to the free coffee.

Tracey is a fish out of water and looks around, unsure what to do. She looks at the attendees as they pass her trying to suss out the situation.

The SEMINAR MODERATOR, 40, a nicely dressed woman, looks up from her laptop as she has been queuing up her PowerPoint presentation. She is annoyingly cheerful and professional.

SEMINAR MODERATOR

Don't forget to sign in, everyone!

Tracey looks down at a table near the door. She remains distant, scans down the list of 20 attendees' names and email addresses. Next to the list are Sharpies and "Hello my name is" nametag stickers.

SEMINAR MODERATOR (O.S.)

OK, let's get started! Take a seat if you'd like, or stand--whichever makes you comfortable!

Tracey looks up and to the moderator. She places a nametag sticker to her chest with the name "Babs" written on it.

SEMINAR MODERATOR (O.S.)

Welcome, everyone! I am so thrilled to be here with you today.

Tracey takes a seat as the lights dim.

SEMINAR MODERATOR

More than 16 million people quit their jobs last year! **Wow.**
(pauses dramatically)

And surveys suggest 45% of people are either looking for a new job, or plan to within the next year.

The attendees listen wide-eyed.

SEMINAR MODERATOR

And we offer a fantastic seminar on changing careers and upward success.

The Moderator advances a PowerPoint slide and paces naturally to engage with the audience.

SEMINAR MODERATOR

But that's not why you're here--
 (hushed seriousness)
 you're here to learn about starting your own business.
 (with verve)
 That--is--**exciting**.

Tracey and ATTENDEES ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, and FIVE warm to the talk.

SEMINAR MODERATOR (O.S.)

You are what you make of yourself. You've got to figure out **what** to make of yourself. That choice is always before you, and you have so many possibilities!

SEMINAR MODERATOR

But you must find your possibilities!
 (with grave seriousness)
 What will you choose?

The Moderator scans the audience, smiles and advances her PowerPoint.

SEMINAR MODERATOR

(enthusiastically)
 Let's get to work!

TIME LAPSE

Pieces of the Moderator's presentation FADE IN and OUT.

--The Moderator engages with the projected presentation.

SEMINAR MODERATOR
 ... Keep track of **every** expense!
 You can write everything off using
 Schedule C...

--The audience is engrossed.

SEMINAR MODERATOR (O.S.)
 ... small businesses grant in L.A.
 County--up to \$30,000...

--The Moderator engages with the audience.

SEMINAR MODERATOR
 ... That's an important dream.
 Catch it!

--The audience laughs.

SEMINAR MODERATOR (O.S.)
 ... Am I right?

--The Moderator stands akimbo as the lights come back up.

SEMINAR MODERATOR
 How about we take a break?

Tracey refills her coffee, turns to find herself in a
 conversation.

ATTENDEE ONE
 I couldn't stand that place. So
 toxic. Couldn't get past their
 (uses air quotes)
 "All-American" straight white male
 culture.

ATTENDEE TWO
 The place I work at is
 floundering... we've re-org'd like
 three times in the last five years!

ATTENDEE THREE
 That sucks.

ATTENDEE TWO
 Yeah... s'why I'm here! "Find my
 possibilities!"

ATTENDEE THREE
 I'm so burnt out. GIGGLE is a
 pressure cooker to innovate.

ATTENDEE ONE

I thought it was supposed to be fun to work there?

ATTENDEE THREE

It can be... **if** you produce!

ATTENDEE FOUR

I'm producing... Work harder than anybody, but no one notices. Can't wait to resign and tell them to **shove it.**

ATTENDEE FIVE

I just quit. They won't allow us to work remotely. Can you believe that? In this day and age?!

ATTENDEE FOUR

(addresses Tracey)

How about you... Babs? What's your business idea?

Tracey stands on the periphery of the group.

TRACEY

Oh! Me?

(shrugs)

I'm really looking forward to the "Ideation Workshop."

The lights drop, and a spotlight shines on Tracey. A guitar strums. Attendees One, Two, Three, Four and Five face her in a semi-circle.

TRACEY

I... already had my **dream job.**

The guitar picks slowly.

TRACEY

Right out of college--I was working at the science center. I was going to take laser light shows to the next level!

ATTENDEE FIVE

(from behind)

That does sound interesting...

TRACEY

But that wasn't it!

The guitar picks up pace and Tracey looks off to the distance, enraptured in her own story.

TRACEY

I learned to play **guitar**.

The five attendees mutter "guitar" as if hearing the word for the first time.

ALL FIVE ATTENDEES

Guitar...

TRACEY

That's right--and sing, too. I wrote some songs. Won a contest! And that's when I started to live...

The guitar plays steadily and energetically.

TRACEY

You can't imagine it. Long hours, hard work... It was my life. My existence!

Tracey holds up her hands.

TRACEY

The calluses!

She looks down, sullen.

TRACEY

But I became calloused, too.
(melancholically)
Right?

She looks back up.

TRACEY

And then it began to fade... and suddenly it ended.

ALL FIVE ATTENDEES

What happened?

The guitar slows.

TRACEY

It was like a sunset... Beautiful, bright. I never imagined it could stop, it moved so gradually.

The guitar stops abruptly.

TRACEY

But it did. The sun slipped below
the horizon and it was over. My
existence... gone. Yet I still
exist...

The SPOTLIGHT FADES and the attendees are in a more natural grouping. They disperse.

EXT. RUN DOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Tracey steps out of an Uber. She looks around, smiles wistfully, despite the neighborhood's condition.

She looks to "Henry's," a bar with lively music from within.

INT. "HENRY'S" BAR - NIGHT

The clientele is mixed, and of various ages. The music comes from a low-grade system with a Karaoke machine. The posters and decor are from another era, but rather neglectfully unchanged than deliberately retro.

Tracey takes a seat at the bar as HENRY, 50, with sleeve tattoos, fills pint glasses from a tap. He looks through her as he watches the whole bar.

HENRY

What can I get you?

TRACEY

Bourbon and water.

Henry delivers the pint glasses to two patrons and double-takes toward Tracey.

HENRY

Christ, how did you find this place?

TRACEY

You didn't make it too difficult, genius. Your own place at last, Henry? Good for you.

Henry sets the glass down firmly, holds the bottle in the other hand. He loves to hate her, and hates to love her.

HENRY

Keys.

TRACEY
(flirtatiously)
Rude.

Henry extends his free hand.

HENRY
You never could have just one.
Keys.

TRACEY
I took an Uber here.

Henry shakes his head, rolls his eyes and pours.

HENRY
(with concern)
What are you doing here?

TRACEY
Getting a drink.

HENRY
Liar.

TRACEY
I came to see you.

HENRY
Obviously.

TRACEY
Things haven't been going so well.

HENRY
I read that.

TRACEY
So I wanted to look up Henry, my
bartending friend.

Henry turns to get another patron's drink.

TRACEY
You always said I was lucky to know
you.

HENRY
And you were lucky to be alive.
Don't expect free booze now that
I'm paying the bills, though.

TRACEY
You don't seem pleased to see me.

HENRY

You were always bad news. How many nights can you **remember**? I'm lucky I wasn't fired for over-serving.

TRACEY

(wistfully)

And now you have your **own** place. Like you always wanted.

(teasingly)

Could have chosen a better neighborhood though.

HENRY

(defensively)

It's mine, and I'm my own boss.

TRACEY

I'm envious.

Tracey finishes her drink.

TRACEY

I'll have another.

HENRY

So soon.

TRACEY

I'm not leaving, apparently.

Henry pours another drink for her.

TRACEY

I've missed you.

HENRY

(touched)

That's sad.

TRACEY

Why?

HENRY

All I did was serve you drinks. And that was a long time ago.

TRACEY

You always listened.

HENRY

You wouldn't stop talking.

Henry sets Tracey's drink down.

HENRY
Desperate to be accepted. Or
rejected. Like most people, you saw
no in between.

TRACEY
How do you do it?

HENRY
What?

TRACEY
Keep going. Keep **being**.

HENRY
We all face the challenge. You do
too.
(with nostalgia)
You just like to whine.

TRACEY
I'm not whining.

Henry collects money off the counter, backs up, holds his
hands up and puts it in the till.

HENRY
OK.

Several customers enter the bar. They're a little loud. Henry
waves to them.

PATRON 1
Pint, please!

PATRON 2
Make it two!

HENRY
Sure thing--

Henry turns to Tracey.

HENRY
Factory down the block--second
shift just let out. I need to get
to work.

Henry starts filling pint glasses from the tap.

PATRON 3
Could I get a shot of whiskey?

TRACEY

I want to talk some more...

HENRY

Look, I can't right now.

(softens)

Maybe come around some morning. For old times' sake.

Henry turns to serve his other customers as the bar continues to fill.

Tracey slinks away from the bar as she finishes her drink, annoyed to have the conversation shut down. She moves through the crowd aimlessly and finds herself corralled near the karaoke machine.

She taps on the touchscreen. Karaoke muzak plays as the title and song information appear on screen.

Text on screen reads: "More Today Than Yesterday" by Spiral Staircase.

Tracey sets her drink down, picks up a mic, turns it on, steps onto the small stage as the song plays.

TRACEY

This on?

The lyrics appear on the screen and Tracey begins to SING and comment between the lines of lyrics.

TRACEY

"I don't remember what day it was"

(talks)

Couldn't remember anything--

(sings)

"I didn't notice what time it was"

(talks)

Probably drunk--

(sings)

"All I know is that I fell in love
with you/ And if all my dreams come
true"

(to the audience)

"I'll be spending time with you!"

With a devilish glint in her eye, she begins to improvise new lyrics. Scorned by the rebuff, she is picking a fight.

TRACEY

Yesterday is long gone, in fights
with you/ I was a train wreck
enabled by you/ Every time I took a
drink my mind stopped to wander/
And Henry's dreams came true/ We
passed out in his bed too!

Henry is attending to the crowded bar and doesn't notice Tracey singing. He delivers drinks, takes cash and puts it into the till. When he hears his name in the song, he stops suddenly, listens to the lyrics for a beat, then looks over his shoulder with disappointed anger.

TRACEY

"Oh, I love you more today than
yesterday/ But not as much as
tomorrow/ I love you more today
than yesterday/ But, darling, not
as much as tomorrow!"

Henry rushes out from the bar and through the crowd and onto the stage. He wrestles the mic from Tracey.

HENRY

Give me that!

He throws the mic to the side and escorts her off the stage and through the bar.

HENRY

You almost had me--but you still
couldn't meet me half way!

He escorts her outside forcefully but not violently. He remains in the doorway.

HENRY

This is my place, so right now,
it's about me.

Tracey collects herself. Henry turns, and the door shuts behind him.

INT. SIMONE'S CAR - NIGHT

30 minutes later, Tracey is en route home, looking sad and disheveled. She sits in the back seat of an Uber, looks at her phone to monitor progress toward home.

SIMONE, 40, dressed in L.A. Dodgers fan apparel, drives.

SIMONE

Some drivers wouldn't have accepted
a fare from that neighborhood.

Tracey looks up, catches Simone's eyes in the rear-view
mirror.

SIMONE

But I saw your profile, and
thought, "gotta help a sister out."

TRACEY

I appreciate it.

SIMONE

Not a lot of fares this way... so
most drivers hover around Melrose,
Santa Monica, downtown...

TRACEY

Yeah.

SIMONE

I like longer drives, sometimes.
(skeptically)
How was that bar?

TRACEY

A friend of mine owns it.
(abruptly)
How long have you been driving
Uber?

SIMONE

Three years now...? I love setting
my own hours. I used to be stuck in
that office same hours, day after
day.

TRACEY

Monotonous.

SIMONE

Dependent on some insane system
created by some old men hundreds of
years ago.

TRACEY

Never thought about it that way...

SIMONE

Oh sure. They created it, but kept
us out of it for a long time.

And when we got in, they kept us in meaningless roles.

TRACEY
Glass ceiling...

SIMONE
Exactly. Even today, so few break through. And when we do, we're still judged on how we look and dress.

TRACEY
Not fair.

SIMONE
Hell, no. We still buy into it though. Society groomed us to be subservient... kept us home... only concerned with material things.

Tracey looks out the window.

SIMONE
And that evolved into some sick, sordid materialism.

Tracey glances at her phone; the Uber map shows they are halfway home.

SIMONE
We're accused of being frivolous... and many women are, like, living in a home make-over reality show.

Tracey glances up, Simone is looking at her in the rear-view mirror again.

SIMONE
But given the chance, we're as serious as men. Hell, when we **take** the chance.

TRACEY
You got that right.

Tracey looks out the window. They pass through a business district, with bars and cafes open and people on the street.

SIMONE
Look at me--set my own hours... I drive when I want, as long as I want. Love it.

TRACEY

Really?

SIMONE

Pays the rent. And--

A trio of hipster women catch Tracey's attention. They load band equipment into an SUV. Two resemble the bass player and drummer from Tracey & Co. (or **are** the bass player and drummer from Tracey & Co.) and the third resembles herself. The third places the pink guitar into a guitar case.

A guitar strums and Tracey double-takes. She lurches forward violently.

TRACEY

Pull over!

SIMONE

What?

TRACEY

Please, pull over!

Simone pulls over.

SIMONE

Are you all right, girl?

Tracey bolts from the car but stops abruptly. The SUV, women, and pink guitar are gone.

The guitar strums gently.

INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Tracey's phone is on the kitchen counter charging. She carries groceries into the kitchen. She sets one bag down, but still holds another bag. With her free hand, she turns on a speaker, then scrolls through her phone to start music playing.

She sets the other bag down as she continues to check her phone, notices she has voicemail and taps on her phone to play them on speaker phone while she unpacks the groceries and sings along to the music she's listening to.

RUDY (V.O.)

Tracey, it's Rudy. I think you should talk to dad before the wedding.

Tracey springs to attention from a lower cabinet.

RUDY (V.O.)
 Break the ice so it's less awkward.
 Just letting you know I gave him
 your number.

TRACEY
 Great.

She reaches into another bag.

BILLY (V.O.)
 Hi, Hon, it's Billy. Listen,
Rolling Stone is looking to feature
 some rock and roll... hmm... used
 to be famous? And I thought of you!

Tracey raises her eyebrows skeptically.

BILLY (V.O.)
 They'll try to make you look
 pathetic--I don't mean regular
 pathetic, I mean **pathetic** pathetic.

Tracey continues to unpack.

BILLY (V.O.)
 It's twenty-five hundred for the
 interview and ten thou if they use
 it.

Tracey's eyes widen.

BILLY (V.O.)
 Text me letter "Y" if you're in,
 and I'll pass along your info and a
 reporter will be in touch. 'K, bye!

Tracey drops the food and frantically texts "Y Y Y Y Y!"

INT. "HENRY'S" BAR - DAY

Tracey is deliberately unkempt for her interview. She guides
 the ROLLING STONE REPORTER, 30, in jeans, untucked dress
 shirt, tie, and sport coat, to a table in the corner.

Henry enters, carries a keg to change the tap.

HENRY
 (loudly)
 Oh, Christ. I thought I told you
 you weren't welcome here.

Tracey skips to the bar, her back to the reporter, giving Henry two thumbs up. She leans across the bar as Henry squats and sets the keg down.

TRACEY
 (quietly)
 He's a reporter from **Rolling Stone**.
 I promise--no drinks, no trouble. I
 just need a place
 (even quieter)
 to look pathetic.

Henry, still squatted, doesn't look up as Tracey looks down at him pleadingly. He shakes his head.

TRACEY
 Look... you were being pretty cool
 about me waltzing in here the other
 night... and I just **couldn't** back
 off.

Henry stops and looks up.

TRACEY
 Olive branch time. I'm truly sorry,
 like a thousand per cent sorry a
 million times over.

Henry sighs heavily.

TRACEY
 (nods toward reporter)
 They get to make me look bad, but I
 insisted they say something nice
 about the bar.

Henry resumes changing the tap.

HENRY
 Work on your math after the
 interview.

TRACEY
 (hopefully)
 Thank you.

Tracey turns and hurriedly returns to the reporter.

REPORTER
 So... looks like you're a regular
 here?

TRACEY

Not really--but Henry and I go way back. I F'd things up with him so this is my apology and amends.

Tracey pauses thoughtfully but not deeply.

TRACEY

(earnestly but casually)
I F a lot of things up, actually.

REPORTER

Don't we all? I'm going to start recording, OK?

TRACEY

Sure.

REPORTER

Let's get to it! I want to hear about the, what, nine months--since the EP video.

TRACEY

Ten months, but who's counting?

REPORTER

How have your streaming royalties been impacted by the video?

TRACEY

What's streaming?

The reporter looks dumbfounded; he can't tell if she's joking or not.

REPORTER

Sexual misconduct, casual assaults, pretty wild behavior... people aren't ready to forgive your transgressions.

TRACEY

Not yet...

REPORTER

How does that feel?

TRACEY

I feel... tossed aside? I guess... unfairly? I obviously did what I did and said what I said. But that was a long time ago.

REPORTER

It was a different era. But how is it unfair?

TRACEY

You read your archives?

REPORTER

Yes.

TRACEY

What's your favorite article about me? Or fact that surprised you.

REPORTER

One just after you bailed on the **SNL** gig. At least a half dozen female guitar players, singer-songwriters interviewed--credited you for paving the way for them.

TRACEY

Unfair to negate my impact, my music, my accomplishments from a lapse of judgment.

REPORTER

Not yet ready to offer an apology?

TRACEY

I... Off the record--I can't decide.

LATER

Henry washes glasses, looks to Tracey and the reporter as they stand up. They walk past the bar and Tracey stops at the door.

TRACEY

So nice to meet you. I'm just going to hang here for the night.

REPORTER

It's a bit early...?

TRACEY

Just here to catch up with an old friend...

Tracey opens the door and the reporter fumbles out. Tracey walks toward the bar.

TRACEY

Thank you. How can I possibly repay
you for the imposition?

She starts to sit on a barstool. Henry motions with his
finger that Tracey turn around.

HENRY

(casually)
Get out.

TRACEY

Oh, come on! After that
performance?
(catching herself)
OK.

Tracey walks to the door and turns back with a smile.

TRACEY

See you around, Henry...

INT. SEMINAR ROOM - DAY

Tracey enters the bland function room. Attendees are present;
some seated, some get coffee. The Moderator enters behind
Tracey, carries a box of handouts.

SEMINAR MODERATOR

Oh, hi! Babs, right? I think you
forgot to sign in last time.

The Moderator moves past Tracey.

SEMINAR MODERATOR

(loudly)
Everyone please sign in!

The last attendees arrive, queue for nametags or coffee.

SEMINAR MODERATOR

OK, to start off today's workshop,
let's gather in groups of four and
catch up! Talk about your progress,
yeah? OK!

Tracey finds herself near Attendees One and Four.

ATTENDEE ONE

Oh, hey--good to see you guys
again.

Attendee Five rushes over with coffee as they position their seats in a small circle.

ATTENDEE FIVE
Mind if I join in?

ATTENDEE FOUR
Not at all.

TRACEY
So... what did everyone think about the last seminar once it sunk in?

ATTENDEE FIVE
Really inspiring.

ATTENDEE ONE
Definitely.

ATTENDEE FIVE
Yeah. I submitted a grant application the next day.

TRACEY
(quietly surprised)
That was quick.

ATTENDEE FOUR
I lined up my funding, so I've been scouting locations.

TRACEY
Wow. Since last time?

ATTENDEE ONE
Two of my old co-workers decided they wanted in, so we're forming a partnership.

TRACEY
Where are the other people I was talking to last time?

ATTENDEE ONE
What about you... Babs?

ATTENDEE FIVE
What have you accomplished?

TRACEY
Um... I think I'm having a tough time... letting go of the old dream for a new one...

ATTENDEE FOUR

Oh, no...

ATTENDEE FIVE

Do you have an idea for a business,
yet, Babs?

TRACEY

I--You guys are really motivated!
I'm not sure **what** to do. I'm having
a tough time deciding a lot of
things lately.

ATTENDEE ONE

You can have more than one dream!

ATTENDEE FOUR

Stay devoted. But multi-task!

ATTENDEE FOUR

Yeah.

ATTENDEE FIVE

Sure can.

Tracey's phone PINGS. She looks at it.

CHYRON of Joe Something's text: Still trying to connect...
when are you free?

SEMINAR MODERATOR (O.S.)

OK, everyone! Time to buckle down
and get to work.

Tracey puts her phone away.

INT./EXT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Tracey buckles into a window seat. An OLD LADY arrives to sit
down in the aisle seat. Tracey looks up at her, then out the
window as the Old Lady sits and buckles in.

OLD LADY

(triumphantly)

I made it!

TRACEY

It's such a pain to fly.

OLD LADY

Oh my, yes.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)
 Ladies and gentlemen, this is
 Flight 1182 LAX to St. Louis. We'll
 be taxi-ing as soon as...

The announcement continues in the b.g.

OLD LADY
 I'm excited to be going home! Are
 you headed to St. Louis for
 business or pleasure?

TRACEY
 (cheerfully)
 I'm not sure--my son's wedding.

OLD LADY
 (laughs)
 I know what you mean, dear.

Tracey looks out the window as the Old Lady prattles.

OLD LADY (O.S.)
 When my son was married, I couldn't
 stand for it. His wife was nice
 enough...

Tracey looks at the tarmac worker, waving glowing sticks.

OLD LADY (O.S.)
 But over time, I grew to tolerate
 her. And I love my grandchildren,
 so...

Tracey smiles weakly as the tarmac worker air guitars the
 glowing sticks. She looks to the Old Lady.

TRACEY
 How old are they now?

Tracey looks back out the window as the Old Lady prattles.

OLD LADY (O.S.)
 Goodness--Sarah is in college now!

Tracey is sternly surprised as the worker plays the pink
 guitar. She cranes to keep him in view, but the plane has
 moved such that she can no longer see him.

OLD LADY (O.S.)
 Ryan is still in high school...
 They wanted him to play football,
 but he's just not big enough.

Tracey leans back, mildly upset. She shuts her eyes and the Old Lady trails off quietly.

OLD LADY (O.S.)

And Izzy--she's my daughter's
daughter--she just turned ten. Such
a sweet girl... wants to learn to
play guitar...

Tracey's eyes pop open. The plane is in the air. Christopher sits next to her.

CHRISTOPHER

When did **you** learn to play guitar?

TRACEY

Right after college... you know
that.

CHRISTOPHER

So long ago... how have you marked
the time? Your existence?

Tracey looks at him, quizzically.

CHRISTOPHER

In quarter notes? In albums? In
articles about you?

Tracey looks away, sharply.

Tracey's eyes pop open to a jolt as the plane touches down.

OLD LADY

Landings are the worst part, aren't
they, dear?

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Tracey wheels her carry-on through the terminal. Behind her, people look at digital "arrivals/departures" screens. As she passes them, the screens change to footage of Tracey on stage, with a CNN-like news feed at the bottom of the screen: "Tracey & Co. kill their 'St. Louis Sound'" and "Tracey's Incident Delays Third Album" and "Detox for Tracey?"

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Your attention please for a gate
change. Flight 85 to Phoenix will
now depart from gate 24. When did
you learn to play guitar, Tracey?
(beat)

Flight 85 will now depart from gate
24.

Tracey stands at a baggage carousel, watches bags.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Luggage from Flight 1182 from LAX
now arriving on carousel 4.
How do you measure yourself,
Tracey?
(beat)
That's Flight 1182 from LAX on
baggage carousel 4.

Tracey picks up her luggage, turns to set it down. She stops abruptly. She sees a little girl resembling herself, in a T-shirt with a pink twill guitar stitched on the front.

A guitar picks as Tracey is transfixed.

JOE SOMETHING (O.S.)
Tracey!

Tracey turns quickly. JOE SOMETHING, 50, awkwardly stands, opens his arms.

TRACEY
Joe... I wasn't expecting you to
pick me up...

He awkwardly hugs Tracey.

JOE SOMETHING
Rudy thought it was a good idea,
since we weren't able to connect by
phone.

TRACEY
Yeah... sorry about that. I've just
been so busy... and the time zone
difference and all...

The guitar strum FADES.

INT./EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

Rudy and Mariah's wedding reception is underway; the hall has easy access to outdoor space, such as a country club with golf course. Average wedding guests mill about, queue at the beer and wine bar.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Ladies and gentlemen, put your
 hands together for the newlyweds,
 Rudy and Mariaaaaaah!

Attendees turn, clap, and hoot for the couple.

Tracey stands next to Ellie. Ellie claps, though Tracey
 stares blankly, wine in hand.

Rudy and MARIAH, 25, enter the function hall.

ANNOUNCER
 And let's get the couple on the
 floor for their first dance!

The wedding band begins to play, and Tracey tries to sidle
 away but Ellie takes her by the arm. Rudy and Mariah take to
 the dance floor.

LATER

All the guests are seated and eating. Rudy and Mariah are at
 the wedding party table, along with Rudy's BEST MAN, 25,
 Mariah's maid of honor, Joe Something and Mariah's parents.

Tracey and Ellie sit together.

The guests clink their glasses until Rudy and Mariah kiss.
 The Best Man stands up.

BEST MAN
 Rudy asked me to be his best man,
 but in my opinion, his father Joe
 should be the one making this
 toast...

Joe holds up his hands in protest.

Tracey side-eyes Ellie.

LATER

Tracey stands in line at the bar behind TWO SUBURBAN DADS,
 40, as they queue for their beers.

SUBURBAN DAD ONE
 Have you played the course here?

SUBURBAN DAD TWO
 No... any good?

SUBURBAN DAD ONE
Quality hole designs.

SUBURBAN DAD TWO
Ha ha.

Tracey rolls her eyes as they walk away. She looks at a display of the beer selections (all Budweiser products) and wine.

She squints at the BARTENDER seriously.

TRACEY
Do you have any bourbon, by any chance?

The bartender opens his hands at the selection on display and playfully frowns, shaking his head.

TRACEY
Any imported beer?

BARTENDER
We might have **Miller**.

TRACEY
I'll take a glass of the red, then.

Joe approaches Tracey from behind with her full glass.

JOE SOMETHING
Hey--Tracey--Doing all right?

He looks at the glass.

JOE SOMETHING
Don't break the kids' bank here!

Tracey makes a pouty smile and takes a drink.

TRACEY
Very nice shout out you got from...
(waves her hand)
the best man.

JOE SOMETHING
He shouldn't have said that.

TRACEY
No, seriously, thank you. You did a great job. Really.

Tracey tries to escape the conversation; she walks to the deck overlooking the course, as casually as she can. Joe follows her.

JOE SOMETHING

Well, you too, I mean, the first few years must have been really tough, all alone.

The sun dips below the tree line behind them.

TRACEY

Sorry I didn't say much when you picked me up.

JOE SOMETHING

You didn't have anything to say.

TRACEY

For once.

Tracey drinks her wine.

TRACEY

You're sober now twenty odd years?

JOE SOMETHING

Yeah. Clean living.

TRACEY

(earnestly, softly)
Good for you.

JOE SOMETHING

I'd shipwrecked myself. Too many possibilities... the music, the day job, the kid...

(looks to Tracey)

Not that I was there for him then. But then, yeah, shipwrecked. Alone on that island... Realized there was something greater there.

TRACEY

Bigger than you and me, you and whoever.

JOE SOMETHING

Yeah. But taking in Rudy when I did... when I had to... learning to love one person... I think that's the moment I became lovable.

Tracey notices Ellie watching Joe. Ellie abruptly turns away and Tracey drinks the last of her wine, as twilight fades.

INT./EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - NIGHT

Rudy and Mariah are there making the rounds. Tracey looks for her clutch intending to leave, finds it. As she stands up, she is face-to-face with them.

TRACEY
 (startled)
 Oh! Hello...
 (fumbling)
 Congratulations.

RUDY
 (pleased)
 Tracey, this is Mariah. Mariah,
 this is my mother, Tracey.

MARIAH
 I'm so happy to meet you! I've
 heard so much about you from Rudy,
 and Joe, and Ellie.

TRACEY
 Ellie?

MARIAH
 I'm sorry about the rehearsal
 dinner... you just RSVP'd so
 late...

TRACEY
 It's really... OK.
 (beat)
 You look lovely. And the service
 was lovely.

RUDY
 Mariah's family has gone to Ladue
 Chapel for--

MARIAH
Generations. Rudy said you're from
 St. Louis, too?
 (jovially)
 Where did you go to high school?

TRACEY
 I forgot everyone here asks that...
 I'm from **Texas**. I went to **college**
 here.

Two teenage girls shyly approach and stand close to Mariah.

RUDY

Tracey narrowly escaped debutant
life...

Mariah catches a glimpse of the girls.

MARIAH

Oh shoot, I nearly forgot!
(annoyingly saccharine)
Tracey, there's been a special
request for you from my **cousins**...

RUDY

Oh, right!
(to Tracey)
You don't have to--

MARIAH

They love all the CW shows and
soundtracks! And they know all
about **you**! Could you--?!

Tracey looks down at her clutch.

TRACEY

Well, I...

She then looks at Ellie talking to Joe. Tracey's face flushes
with a mild mix of suspicion, anger and jealousy.

TRACEY

Sure. If they know all about me...
(shrugs)
Why not?

She heads to the stage, hits Rudy in the chest with her
clutch, he catches it.

RUDY

(nervously)
Something from the CW--!

Tracey borrows a guitar from the band, motions to them. She
turns around and faces the dance floor.

TRACEY

Believe it or not--mother of the
groom, here.

Tracey looks out to the gathering crowd as she warms up for a
beat, contemplatively.

"WHAT IF" DAYDREAM - TRACEY CAUSES A STIR

She plays and sings a tame song as requested.

The teenagers are delighted; the adults are surprised and pleased. The girls migrate to the stage and begin to sway. Couples of a different generations pair off and dance slowly.

The first verse ends and with a devilish glint in her eye, Tracey abruptly transitions to a much racier song.

The lights steadily dim and the hall is noticeably darker. The teenagers stop swaying and look confused; the adults look shocked. Everyone stops dancing.

A reddish light slowly illuminates the hall with a Hellish glow. Mariah is horrified. She gathers her dress and spins wildly about.

MARIAH

Rudy, do something!

Rudy cranes his head around, wild-eyed. He catches Ellie's attention. Ellie's eyes widen as she grabs Joe and they rush to the stage.

ELLIE

Tracey!

Tracey laughs sharply.

BACK TO SCENE

The lighting and crowd are back to position before the "what if" sequence.

TRACEY

Mother of the groom here.

Tracey looks out to the crowd again as she softly strums.

TRACEY

I was asked... to play something
for the kids. But...

Tracey looks to Joe and Ellie, then Mariah, then stops on Rudy.

TRACEY

I'd like to play something new I've
been working on.

Tracey begins to PLAY and SING solo, a refined rendition of "the Pretty and Haunting Song." The continuation of the song describes her indecision, confusion, and ultimately her regret. It is an apology to everyone, Rudy in particular.

A few members of the band improvise along as the crowd gathers. Most everyone is touched. Joe, Ellie, and Rudy are particularly touched.

Tracey finishes the song and abruptly hands the guitar to someone in the band, and bolts off stage.

She stops at the exit, realizes she needs her clutch. She turns; Rudy holds her clutch out to her. She takes it, pauses and leaves.

EXT. DESOLATE LOCATION - DAY

Tracey drives to a desolate desert location. Road signs indicate she's back in California.

Parked, she searches her bag, pulls out a well-worn old trail book, flips through it, tosses it to the floor of her car.

TRACEY

Doesn't matter.

She sits on the hood of her car admiring the sunset.

TRACEY

Every day. Millions of years. Over
and over and over.

She opens the trunk, retrieves firewood and a blanket.

She sits by the burgeoning fire as the colors fade to twilight.

EXT. DESOLATE LOCATION - NIGHT

She stares at the star-filled sky, a stark contrast to the hazy vista from the city.

TRACEY

We're meaningless.

She is finally close to crying.

TRACEY

And yet... we're here. I've been so
stupid. Took everything too far.

After a long pause, she looks down toward the fire. In the distance, light from the fire dances off the metallic sheen of the pink guitar, propped upright on the ground.

She squints her eyes to focus on the guitar, and walks toward it.

She looks down, and a solitary strum echoes.

TRACEY

Where have you been?

She picks it up.

TRACEY

Did I leave you behind? My
devotion, my dream?! Has dread been
my destiny?

She looks up to the sky, lets a single sob escape.

TRACEY

(resigned)

It doesn't matter. Nothing matters.
We're only here for a minute and
then we're gone. Our legacy is
nothing. Ashes.

She looks down at the guitar.

TRACEY

I've doubted myself!--lost myself!
And caused misery in my wake. Why
did I believe in you?
(angrily)
Why?

She smashes the guitar to the ground repeatedly. It is significantly damaged but not destroyed. She raises it to deliver a fatal blow, but stops. She collapses to her knees.

TRACEY

No... I'm sorry. I can't... destroy
you... I'm still yours.

She embraces the guitar.

TRACEY

Ever faithful. To you.

She strums the guitar gently.

TRACEY

No matter what I've done.

She looks up, relieved, tears and dust on her face.

TRACEY
Existence might feel meaningless...
Hell, it might **be** meaningless...

Tracey shakes her head and shrugs.

TRACEY
But I **am**...
(beat)
And all any of us can do is strive
to **be**... Be devoted to what we
believe in...

She sets the guitar down.

TRACEY
And maybe make others happy when we
can...

EXT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tracey sits on her patio, candles and Tiki torches burning.
She strums her guitar. Her phone pings.

She picks it up, and there are several texts from people.

ON TRACEY'S PHONE SCREEN

--Ellie "Happy birthday--want some company?"

--Christopher "Happy 50th"

--Brad "HBD. Ditto from Paul"

BACK TO SCENE

Tracey strums, casually sings.

TRACEY
"Life is a stern teacher/ And we're
forever in school."

Her phone PINGS, she doesn't look.

TRACEY
"Is monotony my friend/ Day after
day until the inevitable end..."
(pauses, strums again)
"Pointless, useless, meaningless"

She strums, looks up to the sky, squints as she strains to see stars.

TRACEY

"Restless... what a mess... can I be less?"

Tracey's phone pings. She picks it up and reads.

ON TRACEY'S PHONE SCREEN

--Rudy "Happy birthday"

--Rudy "Mariah's cousin recorded you at the wedding. Thought you might like access to it"

--Rudy [link to download]

She taps "download" and a progress bar creeps across the screen.

BACK TO SCENE

She strums with a smile on her face, fades to nothing.

TRACEY

Through meaninglessness...
opportunity?

INT./EXT. RANDOM BASEMENT - NIGHT

Tracey pulls up to house and parks. She gets out, and heads toward the sound of Chuck's band practicing. She climbs through the open bulkhead of the basement and the band stops playing.

CHUCK

Hey! Babs!

TRACEY

Hey, Chuck. Hey, guys.

The drummer and base player grunt a hello. MERLE, 25, hipster chick on guitar, is wide-eyed.

CHUCK

Hey, Merle, this is Babs! She filled in for you while you were in Mexico.

MERLE

Oh my God! Chuck, you idiot! This is Tracey McIrish!

CHUCK
What, really?

MERLE
Tracey, I am such a huge fan of yours. The chords on "Dream Time..." made me pick up a guitar in the first place.

TRACEY
Oh, thank you!

MERLE
And the way you owned sexuality with pride? I wrote a **paper** about that in school.

TRACEY
Nice. That really means a lot.

CHUCK
WOW. I am **stunned.**
(gathers himself)
Why are you here?

TRACEY
I need a back up band. We can record in my home studio.

CHUCK
Really?

TRACEY
It's not the best, but works for what I have in mind. I could throw you a couple hundred bucks... but mostly you'll be playing for "exposure."
(apologetically)
I know that sucks.

MERLE
Why us? Why now?

TRACEY
You're still together, which is rare enough. And I had a good time on stage with your 'mates.

Tracey looks at them.

TRACEY
I really have to get some tracks down. Get some things off my chest.

Thought we could help each other
out again?

The band looks back to her in agreement.

SERIES OF SHOTS - TRACEY APOLOGIZES

- A) Tracey and Chuck's band record in a cramped home studio.
- B) Tracey and Brad listen to tracks and edit.
- C) Ellie operates a small camera with a tear in her eye while Tracey talks.
- D) Tracey talks directly to her audience through the camera viewer.

TRACEY

So to all of you, I apologize. I'm
truly sorry for my past behavior. I
won't ask for your forgiveness.
You'll give it when you're ready.

- E) Tracey uploads the video to YouTube.

INT. FUNCTION SPACE - DAY

Tracey gets coffee as the other attendees and the Moderator
filter in.

SEMINAR MODERATOR

Last class, everyone! Get your
coffee, take a seat!

Attendee Four hands out postcards to everyone and turns to
Tracey.

ATTENDEE FOUR

Grand opening in ten days! You're
invited, Babs. I want to share the
moment--

(mockingly)

and the dream--

(normally)

with everyone.

TRACEY

(touched)

... Actually, it's Tracey. I was
being... silly... about being
myself.

Attendees One and Five arrive to get coffee.

ATTENDEE FOUR

Oh! I think I get it... Well, I hope to see you there!

ATTENDEE ONE

I'll be there.

ATTENDEE FIVE

Me too!

TRACEY

(sullen)

I'll try to make it.

Tracey moves away. Attendee Four follows.

ATTENDEE FOUR

Have you thought more about--I think it was "balancing" I think you described it?

Tracey stops, pauses.

TRACEY

Actually--yes. I am devoted to--my dream. I... I think need to stay devoted to it.

ATTENDEE FOUR

Go, you!

The Moderator works the room, ushers people to sit.

TRACEY

But it's going to take a different space in my life...

(taps her temple)

up here.

(sets down her coffee)

I'll be making a few changes as I figure it all out.

INT./EXT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Realtor sign in the yard reads "FOR SALE OPEN HOUSE SUNDAY 12-4." The yard and porch are trim, ready for showings.

The interior is partially staged for showings. Tracey sits among boxes and Ellie stands near a cabinet with the doors open.

ELLIE

Let's see... coffee table books
that have never touched the coffee
table...

TRACEY

Are they signed?

Ellie checks.

ELLIE

Yeah... well, a lot of them.

TRACEY

Unsigned to the donation pile.
Signed to the eBay pile.

ELLIE

Got it.

Tracey continues to sort through a box of papers.

TRACEY

Recycle... recycle... shred...

ELLIE

You've got some crystal stuff...

TRACEY

That was my grandmother's... could
you offer all that to Mariah?

ELLIE

Sure.

(surprised)

Old board games?

Ellie realizes they are children's games, too late.

ELLIE

Oh...

TRACEY

I used to play with Rudy.

Tracey stares at Ellie for a beat.

TRACEY

Hey...

Ellie looks up.

TRACEY

Thanks for your help... packing...
getting my message out. You've
always been there for me.

ELLIE
Of course, Trace--

TRACEY
And--I don't know if there was ever
anything going on between you and
Joe--

ELLIE
(surprised)
What?

TRACEY
Seemed like there was something
"there" at the wedding...

ELLIE
Tracey--

TRACEY
Or maybe you're just friends being
a supportive "aunt" to Rudy.
(with conviction)
But it doesn't matter. None of my
business.
(with regret)
And thank you for being there for
Rudy when I couldn't or wouldn't.

Knock at the door. Tracey points to the board games Ellie
holds as she gets up.

TRACEY
Maybe just make a Rudy and Mariah
pile.

Tracey answers the door. Brad is on the porch, holds a box.

TRACEY
Hey.

Tracey moves back to resume work and Brad enters.

BRAD
I have the stuff you asked about.
Well, some of it. Archives wanted
to hold on to some.
(sets the box down)
Why do you want it?

Tracey points to a pile marked for eBay.

TRACEY
Cash... eBay.

Brad moves the box.

BRAD

Got it. Is it really all that bad?

TRACEY

It's not. But it is.

BRAD

Where are you going?

TRACEY

Haven't decided. Not Texas. Maybe back to St. Louis... Be closer to Rudy. Back to my musical roots?

Ellie looks at Tracey compassionately as she knows Tracey is not ready to admit her plans to an industry insider such as Brad.

BRAD

Makes sense.

(beat)

Made you what you are. Helps you see where you're going.

TRACEY

But for now, a job, hopefully.

Brad sits and watches Tracey and Ellie sort.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Tracey sits for a job interview across from INTERVIEWER ONE.

INTERVIEWER ONE

You have a very interesting resume, Ms. McIrish. Have I heard any of your music?

TRACEY

Do you listen to Indie rock?

INTERVIEWER ONE

Not really...

TRACEY

Then probably not.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Another officer, another outfit, with INTERVIEWER TWO.

INTERVIEWER TWO

Why do you want to work here? In a job like this? After a career like yours?

TRACEY

I need a change. Music will always be part of my life, of course. It's my heart, soul, my very being.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Another office, another outfit, and another interview.

TRACEY

But I'm ready to add something a little different to my life.

INT. TRACEY'S CAR - LATER

Tracey calls Ellie.

ELLIE (V.O.)

How'd it go?

TRACEY

(cheerfully)

I think I sold it. And I think they bought it.

ELLIE (V.O.)

Fingers crossed!

TRACEY

Yeah... thanks.

INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - DAY

The sun is up and it's closer to noon than dawn. Tracey is asleep in her bedroom.

Tracey's phone pings. After a pause, it pings twice more in quick succession.

She opens her eyes as it pings again.

She sits up, looks at her phone.

ON TRACEY'S PHONE SCREEN

--Ellie "Where are you??? CALL ME"

--Christopher "Congratulations! Let me know if you need someone to review contracts."

--Brad "👍" with still of TikTok video and caption "Tracey still rocks"

Tracey launches the video of a TIKTOK REVIEWER, girl, 15.

TIKTOK REVIEWER

I haven't been able to stop listening to Tracey! Ever since she posted her apology EP, I found her albums and put them on continuous loop!

BACK TO SCENE

Tracey looks confused but still groggy.

TIKTOK REVIEWER (O.S.)

It's amazing that she's not trying to hide her "no regrets" EP, but offers the new tracks with reflection and sincerity. But let's break it down--

Her phone rings and her eyes pop open.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS

TRACEY

(hesitantly)
Hello?

LUCKY

Tracey! It's Lucky from Arch Records.

TRACEY

I know... what do you want?

LUCKY

We--

AIDAN

Give me that phone!

AIDAN

Tracey! It's Aidan! We need to get you back into the studio A-S-A-P!

TRACEY

What...?

AIDAN

And the past year--rough as it may
have been--I bet you have a lot of
new songs to write!

Another call comes in; she holds the phone away from her head
to see "BILLY."

AIDAN

What do you say? How soon can you
start?

Tracey is fumbling for the hold and transfer button.

TRACEY

Hold on, Aidan--please.

She taps over to the second call.

TRACEY

Billy--

BILLY

Hi, Hon! **Don't sign anything!** I can
get you a better deal, trust me!

TRACEY

What is going on?

BILLY

A TikTokker found you last night--

Tracey looks skeptical.

BILLY

Declared you a **classic**--that modern
feminism owes you a great debt--
etcetera, etcetera, **etcetera!**

A smile creeps over Tracey's face.

BILLY

10 million views! Downloads of your
albums spiking! Your royalties will
be through the roof!

Tracey stands up, alert and alive.

BILLY

It's time to renegotiate rates and
put together a tour! Everyone wants
Tracey!!!

Tracey looks up, triumphantly. In the corner rests the pink guitar, undamaged.

FADE OUT

THE END

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