SONGBYRD

by

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ACT ONE

INT. GRAND BALLROOM -- NIGHT

On a stage in a crowded and opulent ballroom, A GIANT POP STAR we will call ELLORY is covering “Lessons Learned,” backed by the CHILDREN’S CHOIR OF HARLEM. A display on the stage reads: THE SONGBYRD FOUNDATION.

We PAN backstage and find CHRIS SPENCER, 32, more attractive than he gives himself credit for, in a tux, CLARA FRYE, 32, brilliant, confident, and MICKEY BYRD, 26, quirky, simultaneously nervous and highly competent. Clara and Chris are both pacing. Mickey is holding her ground.

CHRIS
Song’s almost over.

MICKEY
She’ll be here.

A beat.

CLARA
We should get her.

MICKEY
She’ll be here.

A beat.

CHRIS
I’m knocking.

MICKEY
She’ll kill you.

Chris heaves a sigh as we PAN PAST THEM and push into the backstage bathroom...

INT. BACKSTAGE BATHROOM -- NIGHT

LAUREN BYRD, 32, beautiful, playful, warm, direct, and neurotic as hell, is sitting on the closed toilet, writing, with a pen, on a roll of toilet paper. She’s humming as she writes, totally absorbed.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM -- BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

CHRIS
People paid ten grand a table to support her charity. So she should probably SHOW UP, right?

CLARA
Breathe.

CHRIS
YOU breathe.

MICKEY
Everybody breathe!

Ellory's song ends and the CROWD APPLAUDS WILDLY. *

INT. BACKSTAGE BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Lauren doesn't hear the applause. She can only hear the music in her head. A hot guy, LEROY, 35, in a tux, walks in to the bathroom, jarring her out of her reverie. She looks up at him, startled.

LAUREN
Hi. I'm in here. And I'm pretty sure this is the ladies' room.

LEROY
Um. Pretty sure it's the men's room. Cause of the urinal. And the sign on the door that says "Men." Also pretty sure you're wanted on stage right about now.

A beat as Lauren realizes where she is. Hears the applause. She jumps up.

LAUREN
Shit. How do I look?

LEROY
You look fantastic. I'm a big fan, by the way.

Lauren manages a smile as she pushes past him, dragging the long roll of toilet paper behind her.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM -- ON STAGE/BACK STAGE -- NIGHT

Ellory is at the microphone now. *

ELLORY *
Her songs have received six Academy Award nominations, five Golden Globe nominations, and seven Grammy nominations -- and she's only 32 years old.

LAUREN
I'm here!

CHRIS
I hate you.

LAUREN
You love me. Take this.

She thrusts the toilet paper at them, then notices...

ELLORY *
Beyond her accomplishments as a songwriter, we're here tonight to celebrate Lauren's generosity. The Songbyrd Foundation keeps essential music programs funded in inner-city schools throughout our country.

The crowd applauds.

LAUREN
I have pit stains.

CHRIS/CLARA/MICKEY
Keep your arms down.

Lauren pins her arms to her sides.

ELLORY *
Billboard Magazine once called her "the most important songwriter in the world." And I am very proud to call her my friend. Ladies and Gentleman, please help me in thanking Lauren Byrd.

The crowd rises and cheers. Lauren forces a huge smile on to her face and walks out on to the stage. Once on stage, she hugs Ellory awkwardly, keeping her arms down, and then moves * to the podium and looks out at the crowd.

LAUREN
Thank you. I...have a song to finish so I'll make this quick.

The crowd laughs. Charmed. Because while she often says the wrong thing, she manages to be wholly charming all the time.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Music matters. For some of us, it's the only thing that matters. For some of us...for me...it's been everything.
(MORE)

LAUREN (CONT'D)
...I write these love songs so people ask me all the time if I'm a hopeless romantic. I'm not. I'm just a hopeless musician.

Lauren smiles, and with that her eyes fall on Leroy, who is backstage, hanging on her every word.

SMASH TO:

INT. LAUREN'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Lauren and Leroy smash through the doors, knocking over furniture in their rush to get their clothes off. Hot, sexy, naked, furniture smashing sex ensues as we...

FADE TO:

INT. LAUREN'S APARTMENT -- BEDROOM -- DAWN

Shirtless, and sexy, his naughty bits barely covered with a sheet, Leroy wakes up alone in Lauren's bed. He takes a minute to get his bearings. Looks around.

LEROY
Hello?

He waits. Nothing.

INT. LAUREN'S LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

Wrapped in the sheet, Leroy wanders out of the bedroom to find Mickey, trying to repair a lamp that they broke the night before.

LEROY
Umm...

MICKEY
Oh. Hey. Hi. I'm Mickey. Lauren's sister. Nice to meet you. Your clothes are on the sofa. I folded them. Lauren had to go to work.

LEROY
It's five a.m.

MICKEY
Yes. She asked me to give you this.

She hands him a to-go cup of coffee and a bakery bag.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
And she said to thank you for last night. She had fun.
(off his confusion)
You're really hot, so this doesn't happen to you often. I'm sure it's very confusing.
(a beat)
It's an almond croissant, by the way. Delicious.

LEROY
Can I...Uh...I mean, can I get Lauren's number, or...?

MICKEY
No. Sorry. She doesn't give that out.

Off Leroy, a little bewildered by it all...

INSERT TITLE SEQUENCE

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK -- DAWN

As the sun rises, Lauren sits on a park bench, with her own coffee and croissant, looking around. She smiles at an early morning DOG WALKER. Takes a deep breath. Feels the first rays of sun on her face. Listens. Listens. Listens.

Off in the distance, she hears a BEAT. She looks over and sees a CHILD SKIPPING ROPE, rhythmically. As the SOUND of the jumprope pulls into focus, she breaks up her croissant, scattering the pieces for the birds. As PIGEONS swarm the crumbs, the SOUND of their wings flapping comes into focus, creating a counter rhythm to the drums. Nearby, a DOG starts BARKING and a CHILD starts LAUGHING and BIRDS start CHIRPING, and a GARBAGE TRUCK beeps as it backs up and all those SOUNDS rise up and combine and become MUSIC INSIDE LAUREN'S HEAD.

And then she sings, quietly, under her breath, she's singing along to the music in her head (which we can also hear.)

LAUREN
(singing)
I was lost when you found me/ *
Out of my mind *

And we go INSIDE HER MIND, to FLASHBACKS of her life - the pain she draws on when she writes.

INT. LAUREN'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM -- 15 **YEARS AGO** -- DAY

A YOUNG Lauren, 18, sitting on a bed with the love of her life A YOUNG JAKE, 18, both are awkward, both are strumming guitars, both are full of joy in the other's company. They are playing guitar and singing their hearts out.

LAUREN (V.O.)
Down on my knees/ Uninspired, *
incomplete *

EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY -- 14 YEARS AGO -- DAY

Young Lauren and Young Jake are both now 19 and they are playing guitars together in Central Park. Lauren looks up from her guitar to see Jake on one knee, holding up a tiny but beautiful ring. As her eyes fill with tears and she nods a yes...

EXT. MANHATTAN -- DAY

Lauren is walking down the street now, the music still playing in her head, still singing under her breath, still remembering...

LAUREN
You changed it all up/ Nowhere is *
where I was before you *

INT. CHURCH DRESSING AREA -- 13 YEARS AGO -- DAY

We see young Lauren, 20, in a flowing wedding dress waiting in the back of the church. Waiting, waiting, waiting for a groom who never arrives.

INT. SONGBYRD STUDIO -- ELEVATOR -- DAY

Lauren is still hearing the music, still singing....

LAUREN
Out of touch/ Nothing to feel/ *
Nowhere to go/ Nowhere to be *

INT. LAUREN'S STUDIO/OFFICE -- 13 YEARS AGO -- DAY

Young Lauren returns home to her tiny studio apartment, to find a note. INSERT NOTE: "Lauren, Please forgive me. I'm so sorry. I love you. Always, Jake." She glances up at his guitar, which is still hanging on the wall.

INT. LAUREN'S STUDIO/OFFICE -- PRESENT -- DAY

Tears are streaming down Lauren's face, only now, she's at her keyboard, playing, with headphones on, writing the song she's been hearing all morning. It's the same studio from the flashbacks only now it looks a little crazy, with an enormous pile of thousands of cassette tapes cascading along one whole side of the wall. Jake's guitar is still mounted on the wall.

LAUREN
You woke me up from a bad dream/ *
You brought my life back/ *
Nothing is what I had before you *
(she stops playing)
Crap.

The music in her head has stopped. It's silent. For a long beat, she listens, trying to hear it again. Frustrated, she takes it back, starts playing and singing again...

LAUREN (V.O.)
You brought my life back/ *
Nothing is what I had before you... *
(she stops playing)
CRAP!

As she takes a beat, then takes it back again...

INT. SONGBYRD -- WAITING AREA OUTSIDE LAUREN'S OFFICE -- DAY

In a strange little waiting area outside Lauren's studio, that looks like it was once a kitchen, Mickey waits for Lauren, a bottle of water in her hand. A new intern, NATE JONES, 26, hipster, painfully cute, approaches Mickey.

NATE
Is this the kitchen?

MICKEY
No. It's three doors down on the right.

A beat. Nate looks around.

NATE
It really looks like a kitchen.

MICKEY
Used to be one. Now it's like a supply closet.

Nate looks confused, so Mickey explains...

MICKEY (CONT'D)
Lauren's a creature of habit. This used to be her apartment. Not the whole floor, just this kitchen, that tiny room, and that bathroom. And when she got successful, converted what used to be her neighbor's apartments into recording studios.

NATE
Because she didn't want to move?

MICKEY
Exactly.

NATE
That's kinda bad-ass.

MICKEY
Right?

NATE
I've heard about her office. Is it true that she like, hoards her songs? That she records them on *cassette tapes* and puts them in a pile that no one's ever allowed to touch?

MICKEY
You say cassette tapes like they're a disease.

NATE
I just...I don't even know where she'd buy them anymore.

Mickey opens one of the "kitchen" cabinets to reveal neatly organized stacks of thousands of blank cassette tapes.

MICKEY
She doesn't like change.

NATE
Gotta admire the commitment. I'm Nate, by the way. Nathaniel. New intern.

MICKEY
I'm Mickey. Michaela. Lauren's assistant. And her sister.

NATE
Crap. Hope I didn't offend. Still trying to get the lay of the land.

Mickey points down the hall to Chris and Clara in their offices -- we can see them through the windows or open doors.

MICKEY
It's pretty simple. Clara manages legal and business affairs. Chris manages creative affairs. We all manage Lauren. And we all like our coffee strong and our interns quiet.

NATE
Right. Sorry. Got it.

MICKEY
Nate. I was kidding about the quiet part. You can ask me anything and I don't offend. My sister's a genius. *
A little crazy comes with that. *
(off the wall clock) *
Here she comes. *

NATE *
What? *

MICKEY *
It's 10 a.m. in 5, 4, 3, 2... *

Lauren emerges from her office, a little wild-eyed. Mickey and Lauren's dialogue is rapid-fire. *

LAUREN
I can't hear the chorus.

Mickey hands her the bottle of water.

MICKEY
You will.

Nate, awed, stares into the crazy looking office with the four thousand cassette tapes. He covertly snaps a picture on his iPhone as Mickey pulls the door closed and locks it.

LAUREN
Don't patronize me.

MICKEY
I'm not.

LAUREN
Who's he?

MICKEY
New intern.

NATE
Nathaniel Jones. Nice to--

But Lauren's walking for the elevators. Mickey smiles at Nate, and follows Lauren. Nate watches them go.

LAUREN
Stupid chorus. Stupid deadline.
Stupid hangover.

Having anticipated this, Mickey hands Lauren a couple of aspirin, and a business card. Lauren swallows the pills and looks at the business card.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
What's this?

MICKEY
Guy from last night.

Lauren tucks the card in her pocket without a second glance. As they pass his office, Chris emerges, falls in step with * them.

CHRIS
How's the new song?

LAUREN
Not finished.

CHRIS
Not good.

MICKEY/LAUREN
She knows that./ You think I don't
know that?

CHRIS
Ellory's coming to record it *today.* *

LAUREN
Salt in a wound, Chris.

MICKEY
She's almost there.

As they pass her office, Clara emerges, falls in step.

CLARA
How's the new--

MICKEY/CHRIS
No. / Don't.

As they all step onto the elevator...

CLARA
You just need coffee. Coffee will help.

LAUREN
Don't patronize me.

CLARA
I'm not.

As they wait silently for Lauren's mood to pass...

INT. INDIE COFFEE HOUSE -- MORNING

The coffee house is warm, crowded, hip, inviting. A SMALL STAGE with a few MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS sits abandoned in the corner. Lauren, Clara, Chris, and Mickey are sitting with their coffee when JUSTIN SIMMONS, 30's, sweet, sexy, soulful, approaches.

JUSTIN
Morning.

Our group smiles and says hello.

LAUREN
Morning.

JUSTIN
You get everything okay?

LAUREN
Everything's perfect. Same as every day.

JUSTIN
Great.

A beat. He really likes her. Which vaguely annoys Chris.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
If you ever want a behind the scenes tour or anything...

LAUREN
A tour of the coffee beans?

CLARA
He’s asking you out, Lauren, in front of all your friends. It’s brave. Be kind.

JUSTIN
It really is brave, right?

CLARA
I applaud you. Although touring the coffee beans was maybe not your best effort. *

JUSTIN
I’m gonna work on that and try again tomorrow.

CHRIS
Good call.

Justin smiles at Lauren, who is awkwardly sipping her coffee, and walks away. Chris continues to look vaguely annoyed but no one seems to notice.

CLARA
Hot. Sweet. Business owner. What’s not to like?

CHRIS
Really? You see Lauren Byrd dating Coffee Shop Guy?

CLARA
Lauren Byrd dating ANYONE would be a good start.

LAUREN
He’s a feelings guy. I can smell it on him. I only go out with sex guys.

CLARA
You only stay in with sex guys.

MICKEY
It has been over a decade since Jake--

LAUREN
Nope.

MICKEY
Going on an actual date might be a good--

LAUREN
Nope. We're not fixing me today because I have to fix my song today.

CHRIS
A love life might help with the love song writing.

LAUREN
Right. Got it. We'll do that later.

CLARA
He's just saying--

LAUREN
(warp speed, without a breath)
I know what he's saying, Clara, it's just that Ellory is coming in *today* to record a song for a movie that comes out very, very, very soon. I fought hard to get the movie/Ellory job because they wanted to go with Taylor Swift whose last song was ever-so-slightly bigger than mine because she likes to kiss and tell and you, my very favorite people in the world, all happen to also be on my payroll, so if I go down, you come with me and that is not a threat, that's just me making sure we're all clear on the stakes when I say *today is not the day that we are going to fix me,* and when I add that the song Ellory is coming to record today *does not yet exist.* *

And Lauren is up and out the door. Her friends grab their coffees and follow. Justin watches her go. Chris watches Justin watch her go.

EXT. MANHATTAN -- DAY

Mickey, Clara, and Chris follow Lauren down the street. As they lay out her day, Mickey takes notes in her iPhone.

LAUREN
Five minutes of business. Go.

CHRIS
The A and R rep for Atlantic sent a link on their new baby artist--

LAUREN
Links are auto-tuned and misleading.

CHRIS
Which is why I told him he has to bring her to play for you in the studio. But I need you to be nice.

LAUREN
I'm always nice.

CHRIS
And Jada Sutter's shooting her new video uptown. I said we'd stop by the set. *

LAUREN
(total contempt)
For *schmoozing?*

CHRIS
Schmoozing is how we stay relevant.

LAUREN
Writing is how we stay relevant.

CHRIS
Writing is how you stay relevant. I stay relevant by making you schmooze.

LAUREN
What would I do without you?

CHRIS
Die in the street under an enormous pile of unsold songs?

LAUREN
Fine. I'll schmooze. What else?

CLARA
New lawsuit on my desk. Some cowboy bar musician is claiming he wrote "Lessons Learned." *

LAUREN
Ha! Wow! That's a bold cowboy!

CLARA
And I plan to make him sorrier than my husband is that he married me.

A STREET MUSICIAN PLAYING A DRUM pulls Lauren's focus. Her friends continue to banter but we don't hear any of their words because we are inside Lauren's mind wherein the DRUM has combined with a HONKING CAR and the WHOOSH of steam pouring out of a grate to create a musical soundscape in her mind.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK -- 15 YEARS AGO -- DAY

Young Lauren and Young Jake sit with their guitars, busking for change and for the fun of it in the exact spot where the drummer is playing in present day.

RESUME:

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK -- PRESENT DAY

Suddenly, Lauren's running. Not even noticing that Chris was mid-sentence. Her friends hurry to catch up with her.

CLARA
This is good!

MICKEY
You think she got the chorus?

CHRIS
I pray she got the chorus.

As they hurry behind her...

INT. SONGBYRD STUDIO -- FOYER -- DAY

As Lauren steps off the elevator, bee-lining for her office, the music is blaring in her ears, when a man calls after her.

JAKE
Lauren?

She turns. And the music comes to a screeching halt. It's replaced by the sound of her heart beating in her ears and we REPLAY THE JAKE FLASHBACKS ON FAST FORWARD, A JUMBLE OF FILM.

LAUREN
Jake?

Mickey gasps.

MICKEY
Jake?!

CLARA/CHRIS
Wait, Jake? / *Jake* Jake??

JAKE
Hey Lauren. Long time, huh?

And, yes it’s Jake. The one from the flashbacks -- the love of her life -- standing in her lobby.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SONGBYRD STUDIO -- FOYER -- DAY

Lauren stands, staring at Jake, who stares at her back and smiles appealingly, a sweetness and apology behind his eyes.

JAKE
I didn't mean to ambush you at work, I just...

The elevator doors open and Ellory and her ENTOURAGE step off the elevator. *

ELLORY *
Lauren Byrd!

And Lauren turns and smiles like her world is not in the process of shattering.

LAUREN
Ellory, you killed it last night. *
Thank you.

Lauren and Ellory hug. *

JAKE
Holy crap. That's Ellory. You're *
Ellory! *

ELLORY *
I am! Who are you?

CHRIS
He's no one. Come with me. Good to *
see you. You look great. How's the baby?
(to Mickey)
You got this?

MICKEY
Yep. Lauren?

But with the smile glued to her face, Lauren turns back to Jake, incredibly calm.

LAUREN
Jake, it's lovely to see you but I have a very busy work day today so...what can I do for you?

JAKE
I...God. There's so much to say, y'know?
(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)
I'll get it if you say no, but is there any chance I can buy you dinner tonight? For old times' sake?

MICKEY
No! Hell no!

JAKE
Oh wow. Is that you, Mickey? You're all grown up.

MICKEY
That's what happens when you disappear for ten years, Jake. People age.

LAUREN
Dinner sounds great.

MICKEY/CLARA
No, it doesn't./It really doesn't.

LAUREN
Ayza. West Village. Eight P.M. Mickey will make a reservation.

MICKEY
No I won't.

LAUREN
It's good to see you, Jake. You look...well.

And Lauren takes off down the hall, looking 100 percent together. Mickey follows. Jake turns to see Clara staring at him, like he's a painting. Or a fungus.

CLARA
I pictured you taller.

And then Clara abruptly walks away.

INT. SONGBYRD -- RECORDING STUDIO -- DAY

As Ellory practices in the studio with back up singers, * Lauren talks to her from the engineering board.

ELLORY *
What do you mean, no chorus?

LAUREN
Not no chorus, just no chorus *yet*.

ELLORY *
You understand that I'm leaving on a world tour in a week.

LAUREN
I do.

ELLORY *
So your plan is what?

Lauren blinks. Chris jumps in.

CHRIS
The plan is that we will work out the harmony on the verses with the back up singers. And then, shortly, very soon, she will have the chorus. Very, very...very soon. Definitely before you leave for your world tour in a week.

A beat.

LAUREN
Remember all those Grammies we won on our last song together? That was fun, wasn't it?

A tense beat.

ELLORY *
Girl, you're lucky you're a genius.

CHRIS
We are all lucky she's a genius. Let's go from the top.

An ENGINEER hits a button and music starts to play and Ellory * begins to sing. Chris turns to Lauren.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Okay. Talk. Spill. Cry. Do whatever women do. Quick. While she's not looking.

LAUREN
I'm fine.

CHRIS
You're *fine?*

Lauren presses the TALK button.

LAUREN
Ell, it goes down at the end of the second line.
(singing)
Out of my mind, down on my knees...

Ellory nods and makes the adjustment. As Lauren hums along, looking totally focused...

CUT TO:

INT. SONGBYRD -- REHEARSAL ROOM -- DAY

A YOUNG ARTIST is at the piano, singing an UPBEAT SONG for Lauren, Mickey, Chris, and RAY, the artist's manager.

YOUNG ARTIST
No matter how you look at me/ No matter what I say/ No matter who we used to be/ Or how we feel today / When we promise to stay friends...

As she sings, Ray approaches Chris and Lauren.

RAY
What do you think?

LAUREN
She's prettier than she is talented.

Chris smiles at Ray, trying to smooth it over.

CHRIS
...And that describes most of the biggest artists in the world. We'd be thrilled to have her record the song.

RAY
Lauren doesn't look thrilled.

CHRIS
That's cause she's gone dead inside. But believe me, she's thrilled.

As the Young Artist sings her heart out...

EXT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART -- DAY

Lauren, Mickey, and Chris visit the set of young, sexy pop star JADA SUTTER's new video. A dozen dancers dance their faces off on the steps outside the museum.

Lauren is working, shaking hands with suits and hobnobbing with Jada. From a distance, Mickey and Chris watch. *

CHRIS
This can't go on for much longer, can it?

MICKEY
Nope.

CHRIS
It's gonna hit her soon, right?

MICKEY
Yep.

As Jada steps on set and starts singing, we go close on Lauren, feeling the lyrics, believing that it's possible that her decade of romantic fantasizing could be made a reality tonight. And as that reality hits her, she vomits. Right there on the steps. It splatters on the SUITS with whom she was schmoozing. *

CHRIS
There it is.

Off Chris, strangely relieved...

INT. LAUREN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Clara, Chris, and Mickey watch as Lauren, in a bathrobe, frantically digs through three separate make up drawers.

LAUREN
He likes red lipstick.

MICKEY
Lauren.

LAUREN
I need red lipstick. Dark red. Not candy apple. Mickey, can you run to the drugstore?

CLARA
Lauren.

LAUREN
Why don't I have one damn red lipstick??

CHRIS
LAUREN!

His tone is sharp and his voice is loud. It startles her into paying attention. And when she looks up from the make up drawer, she looks painfully vulnerable.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Dude. What the hell are you doing?

CLARA
What could this guy possibly say that would make him leaving you at the altar and disappearing somehow okay?

Lauren stares at them a long beat.

LAUREN
I have dreamed of this day for ten years. I have loved this man beyond anything that any song can ever describe. I have fantasized a million different ways about him coming back to me. And now he's here. And he's Jake. He's still Jake. So..I don't know what he could say. I just know I'm gonna listen.

Lauren stares at her friends, begging them with her eyes to help her and not to judge her. But they remain stern so she tries another approach.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
(to Clara)
Dead marriage.
(to Chris)
Commitment-phobic.
(to Mickey)
Keeping the internet in business. *
You three are really gonna judge me?

After a beat, Clara pulls a red lipstick out of her own purse and hands it to Lauren. A simple concession that means the world.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Chris shakes his head. He's not in support of this, but he knows better than to fight her on it. As Lauren puts on the lipstick...

EXT. MANHATTAN -- NIGHT

Jake waits nervously outside a Manhattan restaurant. Lauren approaches: red lips, red dress, stunning, breathless.

JAKE
Hey.

LAUREN
Hi.

JAKE
You look...wow.

And Lauren can't help but smile. As he opens the restaurant door for her...

INT. THE BITTER END -- NIGHT

An INDIE BAND like THE SPRING STANDARDS is on stage playing. Mickey's in the audience, loving them, when she looks over and is surprised to see Nate beside her.

MICKEY
Nate?

NATE
Hey. Hey!

MICKEY
You like The Spring Standards?

NATE
Yes, yeah, love them, what's not to love?

MICKEY
Lauren sent me to watch them. I'm like her unofficial scout.

NATE
So cool.

And that's all the words he can manage. Mickey smiles at his awkwardness. He cringes a little at it. She waits for further conversation but he is bad at this. So they both awkwardly turn back and watch the band. The song the band is playing, something along the lines of "Unravel, Unwind" underscores the following scenes...

INT. NEW YORK PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Clara sits in bed beside her husband WILL, attractive and perpetually distracted, both working on laptops.

She looks at the clock. It's only 9pm. She looks down at her pajamas. Pathetic. Will's so absorbed in his writing, that he doesn't notice as she puts her computer aside, draws the shades and then gets naked. When she dims the lights, he finally looks up from his computer. She kisses him and he smiles apologetically.

WILL
I'm sorry, Babe, I'm on a roll. Can we take a raincheck?

Clara nods, trying to be okay with that, as Will goes back to his writing. Painfully, we watch her put on a bathrobe, open the shades.

INT. MANHATTAN BAR -- NIGHT

Chris sits drinking and brooding, thinking about Lauren. A flirtatious woman, KATE, sits down beside him.

KATE
Girl troubles?

Chris glances over, smiles.

CHRIS
You could say that.

KATE
I'm good at girl troubles. Being as I'm a girl. Go ahead. You talk. I'll drink.

Chris considers. Okay, why not?

CHRIS
I've been in love with her since the day I met her. Which was about three thousand days ago, give or take. And she just...doesn't notice.

KATE
Ever think about telling her?

CHRIS
Only about three thousand times.

Kate laughs. Chris stares at her a beat. Makes a decision.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I have better whiskey at home. You want to join me?

And Kate definitely does.

INT. CANDLE LIT RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Jake is incredibly charming and it's easy to see how he still takes Lauren's breath away.

JAKE
It's incredible, what you've accomplished. I mean, you don't just write songs, you record and produce. You're a hit maker, and a star-maker and...damn. I always knew you had it in you but it's impressive even to me.

As he talks, Lauren stops hearing his words because...

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT -- LAUREN'S IMAGINATION

Jake and Lauren make love, passionately, sweepingly. Flesh, hands, lust. But also true romance, the opposite of the furniture breaking sex from the teaser.

JAKE
God, Lauren, leaving you was the biggest mistake of my life.

He thrusts and she gasps and he looks deeply into her eyes...

JAKE (CONT'D)
You want another glass of wine?

LAUREN
What?

SMASH TO:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT -- **REALITY**

Lauren emerges from her fantasy.

JAKE
Wine?

He's holding the bottle -- poised over her glass.

LAUREN
No. I'm. Yes. No. Yes, please.
(as he pours)
Tell me about the place you work.

Jake smiles.

JAKE
It's just a little local bar in Roanoke, Virginia. Been playing there six nights a week for the better part of the last ten years. I never made it big like you, but at least I found a place to call home where I'm surrounded by folks who love me and where some nights I even manage to forget about what I did to you and how wrong it was.

He looks at her with his beautiful, apologetic eyes. He is painfully sincere and it is melting her.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Lauren, I am just so sorry about that. I was...

LAUREN
We were young.

JAKE
We were so young and I was so scared. I loved you like crazy and I thought I was ready for marriage and then I just... I just knew I wasn't and I didn't know how to face you so I ran. I couldn't imagine you could ever forgive me and I felt so bad about what I did that I never wanted to bug you about the song before this.

Lauren looks at him, confused.

LAUREN
I'm sorry, what? What song?

JAKE
"Lessons Learned?" *

She stares at him. Trying to put the pieces together. This conversation just took a radical turn and she can't quite keep up. He's confused by her confusion.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I co-wrote that song with you, Lauren. It's my song too. And the truth is, I'm engaged again, to a woman who's...well...

We hear Lauren's heartbeat pounding in her ears, and she stares at him, so shocked that she can't yet move or talk...

JAKE (CONT'D)
What you and I had...it was puppy love, y'know? Well, I'm sure you do know with all those songs you've written since. Anyway, I just, I love her and I want to be able to provide for her. And playin' guitar in a cowboy bar barely pays the bills. Anyway, I'm real sorry about any stress all this has caused you. Last thing I ever wanted to do was cause you any more pain.

And Lauren finally finds her voice.

LAUREN
You're suing me? ...You're the cowboy who's suing me?

Jake looks confused.

JAKE
I...I thought you knew. My lawyer's been dealing with your lawyer all week.

Lauren stares at him, beyond stunned. She's too hurt, too broken to form any words. She just gets up and walks out into the night. Jake watches her go.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CHRIS' DOWNTOWN APARTMENT -- EARLY MORNING

Chris blurrily opens his eyes to see Kate, naked, her make up smeared under her eyes, her hair a mess, smiling at him.

KATE
Morning, sunshine.

Off Chris, feeling like anything but sunshine...

INT. SONGBYRD STUDIOS -- REHEARSAL ROOM -- EARLY MORNING

Mickey's playing piano and singing a beautiful song (in the vein of Ingrid Michaelson.) Her voice is soft and pretty and raw.

MICKEY
(singing)
You say you can't love me, the way I could love you/ You say you see a lonely sky where I see only blue/ You say you think love is for poets, thieves, and fools/ I think that I could make a poet out of you...

Nate watches her from the doorway until she notices him and abruptly stops playing.

NATE
Don't stop. It's awesome.

MICKEY
I'm-- no. That's...I just--

NATE
Did you write that?

MICKEY
No. Yes. But I'm not a songwriter. I just...sing when I'm worried. And I'm worried. Lauren didn't come home last night. Which is fine. But she also didn't come in to write this morning which is...unheard of. Y'know. OCD. So, same time. Same schedule. Every day. Anyway, that's why I'm... Aaaagh. Mortified. Why are you here so early?

NATE
Want to make a good impression.

MICKEY
Oh. Good. So...

NATE
So.

A tortured beat, and then he starts to walk away. And she calls after him.

MICKEY
Nate?

NATE
Yeah.

MICKEY
I have this online dating app on my phone. And on this app, I currently have messages from four fifty-somethings, three teenagers, and a morbidly obese man who asks if I'd be interested in grocery shopping for him. I also have a message from a handsome young man who asks if I'd be into having him as a slave, but wants me to know I'd be required to stand on his scrotum while giving him orders. And he misspelled "scrotum." ...My point is, that if you were to ask me out sometime, I would be inclined to say yes.

A beat of awkward shock. And then Nate smiles.

NATE
How 'bout tonight?

And Mickey's smile is her answer.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK -- DAY

Still in her dress from last night, Lauren is sitting on a park bench, listening, listening, listening. The birds chirping are just birds chirping. The dog barking is just noise. The people laughing seem cruel rather than musical. The magic is gone. The music is gone. Justin approaches, holding two cups of coffee.

JUSTIN
Lauren?

She looks up at him, squinting in the sun.

JUSTIN(CONT'D)
Triple machiatto, right? And an almond croissant?

She nods. He hands her coffee and a bakery bag.

JUSTIN(CONT'D)
On the house. ...May I?

She nods. He sits down next to her.

JUSTIN(CONT'D)
It's 10:30. Usually you get to the coffee shop at 10:15. And by usually, I mean every single day since the day I bought the place. When you guys didn't come in, I actually got a little worried. And then I saw you sitting here. Across the street. In the park. In what looks like is probably last night's dress. Which makes me think...bad date?

A beat. And now Lauren laughs. And laughs and laughs and laughs.

JUSTIN(CONT'D)
What's funny?

LAUREN
The understatement. The understatement is funny.

She recovers and sips her coffee.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
What's the worst thing that ever happened to you?

He stares at her a beat. Deciding if he should be honest.

JUSTIN
My folks died in a car wreck. 'Bout five years ago.

LAUREN
Your folks?

JUSTIN
My parents.

A beat.

LAUREN
That's the worst thing I've ever heard. That's so much worse than my worst thing.

JUSTIN
I didn't know it was a contest. ...Was last night your worst thing?

LAUREN
It was part of it.

Her eyes brim with tears but she fights and wins.

JUSTIN
One minute at a time.

LAUREN
What?

JUSTIN
You just go one minute at a time. And there are really bad minutes. But when you feel like you can't breathe, you just breathe anyway. And then eventually there are some minutes that are less bad.

A beat.

LAUREN
I feel like an asshole. Cause your parents died. And I just got my heart broken.

JUSTIN
It's all heartbreak, Lauren. It's all the same thing.

A beat.

LAUREN
A minute at a time.

JUSTIN
A minute at a time.

A beat. She meets his eyes. It's a moment of real connection.

LAUREN
("You're wonderful")
Thanks again for the coffee.

JUSTIN
("So are you")
Any time.

And she walks away. And he watches her go.

INT. SONGBYRD -- CLARA'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jake sits quietly while Clara and Matheson negotiate.

MATHESON
That number is to settle out of court.

CLARA
You have what we call moxie, Mr. Matheson. No case. No morals. But a hell of a lot of moxie.

MATHESON
That money is just a drop in the Lauren Byrd bucket.

CLARA
The "Lauren Byrd bucket" happens to fund the largest children's music charity in the country--

MATHESON
Be that as it may, if you lose this case--

CLARA
"*Be that as it may?*" I'm sorry, I need a puke break. Scumbags turn my stomach.

MATHESON
If you lose this case and it goes public, every artist Lauren Byrd has ever met, every indie artist she's seen live, everyone who has ever played a guitar lick similar to one Ms. Byrd has used in her songs will come out of the woodwork and sue you. And once you've got a loss like this on the books, judges are predisposed to think of you as a thief. Your client could lose *everything*. This is a good deal.

CLARA
That might be true if you had anything resembling a case. But
(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)
she is one of the most respected songwriters in the history of music and he is a one man boy band in a Roanoke, Virginia cowboy bar. What judge is going to think he had anything to do with Lessons Learned? *

MATHESON
The judge who opens this.

Matheson, looking smug, pushes an envelope across the table to her.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
It's a good deal.

As Clara picks up the envelope, suddenly looking concerned...

OMITTED *

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN -- DAY

Lauren rides through the city, studying the faces of the lonely people on the bus. Relating. When her phone rings, she answers it.

LAUREN
I'm okay. In this minute, anyway. You can stop calling.

INTERCUT:

INT. CLARA'S OFFICE -- DAY

Clara is alone in her office with the door closed and she's talking fast.

CLARA
I can't stop calling because do you know what a poor man's copyright is? When you have an idea and you mail it to yourself and keep the envelope sealed so you can prove when you had the idea--

LAUREN
Yeah, Jake and I used to do it all the time when we would write songs.

CLARA
Right.

A beat.

LAUREN
Oh my God.

CLARA
Lauren, is there any chance at all that when a Judge opens the envelope that Jake's attorney is holding, it's going to contain the lyrics to Lessons Learned? *

A painfully long beat. Clara's face falls.

LAUREN
I am not a thief.

CLARA
I know.

LAUREN
He ruined my life.

CLARA
I know.

A beat.

LAUREN
There was a song we were working on. We didn't have the chorus. It was different. It wasn't... I don't know. There was a song we were working on and then he left me on our wedding day. And then...

CLARA
And then it became Lessons Learned. *

A beat.

LAUREN
It changed. A lot. But...Some of the lyrics might be the same. I don't remember.

CLARA
We have to settle.

LAUREN
I really don't think--

CLARA
You have to be sure. If you're not sure, we have to settle.

A beat.

LAUREN
How much are they asking for?

CLARA
A whole lot more than we have.

A beat.

LAUREN
I’m not a thief.

CLARA
I know.

Lauren hangs up the phone. Sick.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. SONGBYRD STUDIOS -- CORRIDOR -- DAY

Mickey's on the move, on the phone.

MICKEY
Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom! There is no reason to worry. Just... if you hear from her tell her to call me okay? Yes, Mom. Yes, Mom. Yes, Mom. Goodbye, Mom.

Mickey heaves a sigh. Hangs up.

INT. SONGBYRD STUDIOS -- RECORDING STUDIO -- DAY

A young band along the lines of THE SATURDAYS or ONE DIRECTION is RECORDING A SONG in perfect harmony, as Chris watches, a recording engineer records, and Mickey enters.

CHRIS
Please give me good news.

MICKEY
I haven't found her yet.

CHRIS
That's not good news.

MICKEY
(re: the band)
What did you tell them?

CHRIS
That Lauren has something contagious and involving open sores but she's listening and giving me notes through the speaker phone.

MICKEY
Seriously?

Chris presses the button to talk to the band.

CHRIS
Guys? Lauren says to dial back the harmonies and let the melody do more of the work. Take it back to the chorus.

The band takes it back to the chorus.

MICKEY
You’re an excellent liar.

CHRIS
I’m an excellent producer. *

A beat as the band sings. And Chris and Mickey listen...

BAND
I know you so well, known you so long/ I always can tell when you're tryin' to be strong/ I know where you hide and I know what you seek/ just wish you could tell me the secrets you keep...

And suddenly...

CHRIS
I know where she is. Stay here. Take over.

MICKEY
What?!

But Chris is gone. Mickey looks terrified. Then she presses the button.

MICKEY (CONT’D)
Lauren says your looks won’t last so you better learn to sing better than that. Take it back to the top.

As the band takes it back to the top...

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM -- DAY

Lauren is sitting on a bench, listening to a subway musician -- a VIOLINIST who plays beautifully. She’s lost in the music, and in so much pain. And suddenly Chris sits down beside her. She looks up, not all that surprised to see him.

LAUREN
Go away.

CHRIS
No.

LAUREN
Chris--

CHRIS
No. Because if you didn't want me to find you, you wouldn't have come to our place.

LAUREN
This isn't our place.

CHRIS
Since college, this is where you've been coming to cry and I've been coming to mop you up. This is our place.

A beat.

LAUREN
I've spent ten years fantasizing about him. Imagining the life we should have had together. Imagining the day he would come back and tell me he made a mistake and that he's sorry and that he still loves me. I write from that place. I remember the heartbreak and I imagine the reunion. *That's how I write.*

A beat.

CHRIS
Do you have any idea how pathetic you sound?

LAUREN
I am the boss of you.

CHRIS
Not in the subway.

LAUREN
Fine. I'm pathetic. But calling me names doesn't solve the fact that I CAN'T WRITE. I'm washed up at 32.

CHRIS
Pathetic!

LAUREN
Mean!

CHRIS
You are not washed up at 32, you asshole. You haven't even gotten started.

LAUREN
He's suing me for Lessons Learned-- *

CHRIS
So what? Let him have it. Write another one. God, Lauren, you have more talent in your little finger than most people could wish to have in their whole...like, hand. Or y'know, body.

A beat.

LAUREN
Wow. That's poetic.

And he laughs. And she laughs. And this minute is just slightly better than the last.

CHRIS
I hate Jake. I swear I would choke him out for you if I wasn't so afraid of jail and anal rape.

And she laughs again.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
But also? I kinda want to thank him. Cause he was always a liar and he was always a coward and finally he came back and proved it. And all this time, there hasn't been any room for anyone else because he was taking up all the space. But now there's space. You want to write? You want inspiration? Fill up the space. Cause there are guys, Lauren, there are *really good guys* who would give just about anything for you to even notice them.

She looks at him a long beat. He's confessing something here and it looks for a minute like she's getting it.

LAUREN
Is that a hickey on your neck?

CHRIS
...Probably.

LAUREN
You gonna see her again?

CHRIS
Probably not.

LAUREN
And you call me pathetic.

And she stands up and starts to go.

CHRIS
Where are you going?

LAUREN
To take your advice. Despite the fact that I hate it when you're right.

And Lauren takes off. And Chris watches her go.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIE COFFEE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Lauren looks through the window to see Justin playing on the stage. She's scared to go in. She likes him and that makes her almost more vulnerable than she can bear. She takes a deep breath and forces herself to go inside.

INT. INDIE COFFEE HOUSE -- NIGHT

A scattered crowd is watching Justin on stage, playing guitar and singing...

JUSTIN
Now I'm drowning on dry ground/I call your name but there's no sound/And I can't make you come around...

Lauren stands in the doorway watching him. His eyes fall on her and he can't help but smile.

JUSTIN(CONT'D)
But I'll try... I'll try.

Off their shared smile, and his continued song...

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- NIGHT

The coffee shop is empty but for Justin and Lauren who are both behind the counter laughing as he shows her how to steam milk. As it sprays all over both of them and they howl with laughter.

JUSTIN
Oh my God. You are *terrible* at this.

LAUREN
Mean!

JUSTIN
That's not mean. It's kind. I'm kind to tell you that no matter how bad things get in the non-profit business, you should never ever try to get a job as a barrista.

She laughs. He reaches out and wipes some milk off her face.

JUSTIN(CONT'D)
Sorry. You have a...

The chemistry is crazy. And right when maybe he might go in for a kiss...

LAUREN
Why are you single?

JUSTIN
Why is anyone single?

LAUREN
You're hot. A hot musician is rarely single.

JUSTIN
You're very direct.

LAUREN
Yes. Why are you single?

JUSTIN
Earth scorching break up took me off the market for awhile. It was like...everything went dark. Had to wait for the color to come back. How are the minutes?

LAUREN
The minutes?

JUSTIN
Have there been some better ones?

LAUREN
This is a better one.

JUSTIN
Sorry... you still have a...

He reaches out to clean more milk off her face. Right by her lip.

LAUREN *
There are a lot of things you don't *
know about me. More things than I *
don't know about you. *

JUSTIN *
I didn't know it was a contest. *

And he kisses her. And it's insanely awesome. And as they kiss, MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY IN LAUREN'S HEAD. And she starts to sing (inside her head).

LAUREN (V.O.)
Before you, all my life all was *
black and white/ You put my life in *
color/ Baby you, you shut out all *
the night *

She pulls away from the kiss, staring at him, or through him, as the song continues to write itself in her head...

LAUREN (V.O.)
Let in all the light/ You pulled it *
all together/ Baby you, you put my *
life in color *

Justin looks at her and smiles. Asks if he maybe did that too soon. Or...was it okay? We can see his lips moving but we can't hear him because she can't hear him and she's frantically reaching for a pen and a napkin and writing the lyrics down...

EXT. EAST VILLAGE DINER -- NIGHT

Mickey and Nate, over dinner and drinks.

NATE
An A & R rep. Or...A producer.
Maybe a sound engineer.
(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)
Or, at one point I really wanted to be a music journalist, but...I don't know. I guess I just know what I *don't* want to be.

MICKEY
What's that?

NATE
My Dad. He sits in an office with a tiny window and a closed door and he pushes papers across his desk and he makes three or four suicide jokes every time I talk to him. I don't have any talent that I know of. But I know good music when I hear it. And I want being around music to be my job. That's what I know. And...I overshared.

MICKEY
No.

NATE
Yeah, my Dad's suicide jokes were a definite first date overshare.

MICKEY
I dropped out of law school because I had a nervous breakdown.

Nate stares at her.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
Crap. I was gonna overshare back, to make you more comfortable. But I think I may have of over-over shared.

NATE
No. No way. I love a good nervous breakdown story. Do they even call it that anymore?

MICKEY
My parents call it my "Episode." But it was a breakdown. I just...I walked out of a class and I didn't stop walking. I walked from NYU to central New Jersey.

NATE
Bad ass. What made you stop?

MICKEY
Holes in my shoes. And the fact that I was finally willing to tell my parents that I don't want to be a lawyer. And now I'm 26 and I don't have any idea what I want. And the only one in my family who's okay with that is Lauren. That's why I'm okay with her crazy. Cause she's okay with mine.

A beat.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
Should we drink more now?

NATE
We totally should.

As they wave to the waiter...

INT. INDIE COFFEE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Justin is watching, fascinated as Lauren frantically writes on the napkin. Finally, she turns back to him.

JUSTIN
Well hello.

LAUREN
Hey. Sorry. I...

JUSTIN
What is it? Poem? *

LAUREN
Lyrics.

JUSTIN
Really?

Lauren shrugs.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
You run a charity by day and write songs by night?

LAUREN
Something like that.

JUSTIN
You just keep getting better.

LAUREN
Right. Okay. Well, this is awkward, but, could you sign a release? Or, just sign this napkin?

JUSTIN
What? Why?

LAUREN
Just...because a couple of words that you said may have inspired these lyrics but you didn't actually write the lyrics, I did, so I don't want you to come back and sue me later.

He smiles. Reads as he writes.

JUSTIN
I...did not...write...this song. Signed, Justin Simmons. Okay?

LAUREN
Thanks. Okay. I gotta go.

JUSTIN
What? Wait, no. Don't go. Let's put it to music.

He grabs his guitar, perches on the edge of the stage.

JUSTIN(CONT'D)
You got a tune?

Lauren nods. Justin nods at her to sing. But she shakes her head no.

JUSTIN(CONT'D)
You're shy?

She shakes her head no. So he gets up, moves close, kisses her again. Then whispers...

JUSTIN(CONT'D)
Sing.

After a beat, she sings...

LAUREN
Before you, all my life all was black and white/ You put my life in color/ Baby you, you shut out all the night *

Justin starts to follow her on the guitar, and echo her with his voice, creating a gorgeous duet.

LAUREN (V.O.)
Let in all the light/ You pulled it all together/ Baby you, you put my life in color *

And it's incredibly sweet but Lauren's eyes fill with tears as she remembers...

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- 14 YEARS AGO -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

Young Lauren and Young Jake are both now 19 and they are playing guitars together in a coffee shop, similar to this one. An open mic. Singing together, madly in love.

INT. INDIE COFFEE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Justin is going to town on the guitar now -- he's really good. He's sexy and sweet and playful and musically gifted and it's all too much for Lauren, who starts to quietly hyper ventilate. Justin puts his guitar down.

JUSTIN
Bad minute?

LAUREN
I can't do this.

JUSTIN
Take deep breaths and listen to me--

LAUREN
Can't-- can't breathe.

JUSTIN
You can. You can do anything. You can survive anything. Anything is possible and nothing is what we plan and nothing is promised in this life and you just breathe. Whatever it is, whatever you're afraid of, you breathe through it, and you write about it and you sing about it and you do life. You do life anyway.

LAUREN
I can't. I can't do this again. It'll swallow me whole.

She can't get her breathing under control.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Sorry. I'm so sorry.

And poor Justin watches helplessly as she runs out of his coffee shop.

EXT. MANHATTAN -- NIGHT

Justin chases Lauren for a block...

JUSTIN
Lauren, wait! Come back!

But he finally stops, knowing that he has to let her go. Off Justin, bewildered...

EXT. MANHATTAN -- NIGHT

As Lauren runs through the city, the song "Bruised but not Broken" builds and underscores the blurring lights and the tears in her eyes...

INT. SONGBYRD STUDIO -- NIGHT

Lauren moves through the empty, dark studios, heading straight for her office. Her safe place. Her home.

INT. LAUREN'S STUDIO/OFFICE -- NIGHT

Lauren closes the door to her office and with that door slam, the song ends. She stands with only the sound of her breath in the dark to keep her company. She looks to her keyboard. She would like to sit and write. She would like to lose herself. But that's not why she's here. She walks over to her pile of four thousand cassette tapes and pulls one from the stack. As the huge pile comes cascading down around her...

END ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. CLARA'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jake and Matheson sit across from Clara, looking smug.

CLARA
The settlement will not be in a lump sum, but in quarterly payments-

MATHESON
Payments? You're not serious.

CLARA
It's that or we make you chase us through the courts for the next three years, on your own dime.

JAKE
I can live with payments.

CLARA
Good. Furthermore, you will sign a non disclosure agreement which will bar you from discussing this settlement with anyone at all. When asked where you came into the money, you'll answer that it was a family inheritance. Any other answer, any mention of Lauren Byrd or of the song "Lessons Learned" will result in a nullification of this settlement and a lawsuit for defamation of character.

MATHESON
You good with that?

JAKE
For this much cash? I'll tell folks I sold my soul to the devil if it'll make y'all happy.

CLARA
It would make me happy. Let's stipulate that.

LAUREN (O.S.)
You left your guitar.

They turn to see Lauren standing in the doorway, Mickey and Chris eavesdropping behind her. She's still dressed as she was last night, red-eyed, been up all night.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
You left so fast, you took the case but the guitar was still hanging on the wall. And I thought you'd come back for it. I was so sure you'd come back for it that I didn't leave the apartment for a year. Literally. A year of my life I spent waiting... You asked me to spend my life with you. You promised to love me forever. And then you disappeared. And I took that soul crushing heart break and I turned it into music, which was the only thing I had left. And you don't even have the decency to stay away forever. You had to come back to take that too.

JAKE
Lauren--

LAUREN
Don't say my name. You don't have that right. You don't have any rights. And you don't have any talent. You never did.

And Lauren pops the casette tape she's holding into a small boombox she's carrying and presses play. And as a wobbly old guitar track starts to play...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LAUREN'S STUDIO APARTMENT -- **PAST** -- DAY

22 year old Jake and Lauren sit on the edge of the bed. Jake plays guitar and they both sing. The song they're singing bears very little resemblance to "Lessons Learned." We recognize a chord here and there, maybe a structure, and then they get to the chorus, singing loudly and proudly... *

YOUNG JAKE AND YOUNG LAUREN
Some days were long/ Some night are gone/ But that's life and we learned *

The tune isn't even the same. The song is banal and nowhere close to a hit.

RESUME:

INT. SONGBYRD -- CLARA'S OFFICE -- DAY

As the song plays through the boom box, Clara smiles big.

LAUREN
That sound like a hit song to you?

CLARA
No. No, it doesn't.

MATHESON
It may not be a hit, but it's the seeds of a hit.

CLARA
I disrespectfully disagree.

Clara pulls the "deal memo" away from Matheson and tears it up.

MATHESON
Guess we'll leave it to a judge to decide.

And Matheson gets up to go.

LAUREN
See you in court, Jake. Oh -- and you can have your piece of shit guitar back now. I don't want it anymore.

She puts the guitar down in front of him and walks out the door.

FADE TO:

INT. SONGBYRD -- RECORDING STUDIO -- DAY

Ellory's in the booth, recording the new song. Lauren and Chris watch. *

ELLORY *
I was lost when you found me/ Out *
of my mind/ Down on my knees/ *
Uninspired, incomplete/ You changed *
it all up/ Nowhere is where I was *
before you *

INT. MICKEY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Nate and Mickey make out, falling into bed, crazy about each other...

ELLORY (V.O.) *
Before you, all my life was black *
and white/ You put my life in *
color/ Baby you, you shut out all *
the night/ Let in all the light/ *
You pulled it all together/ *
Baby you, you put my life in color *

As clothes come off...

EXT. BAR PATIO -- NIGHT

Chris sits all alone, in a sea of people. A pretty girl smiles at him. But he can't bring himself to smile back.

ELLORY (V.O.) *
Out of touch/ Nothing to feel/ *
Nowhere to go/ Nowhere to be/ *
You woke me up from a bad dream/ *
You brought my life back/ *
Nothing is what I had before you *

INT. PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Clara packs a small suit case. Her husband Will, in his habitual spot in the bed, with his laptop in his lap, doesn't notice.

ELLORY (V.O.) *
Before you all my life all was *
black and white/ You put my life in *
color/ Baby you, you shut out all *
the night/ Let in all the light/ *
You pulled it all together/ *
Baby you, you put my life in color *

Resolutely, she closes her suitcase, and leaves him. When the door clicks closed, he finally glances up from his computer.

INT. MICKEY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Mickey sleeps soundly. Nate is shirtless beside her, his laptop in his lap. In the dim light, he glances at Mickey. And guilt washes across his face, but that doesn't stop him from typing.

ELLORY (V.O.) *
Before you everything was faded/ *
You made it new/ Nowhere is where I *
was before you *
*

ON HIS SCREEN, we can read the title of the article he's writing: "Inside SongByrd Studio: A Heaping Pile of Crazy" by Nathan Jones. The photo he took of Lauren's studio is at the center of the article.

ELLORY (O.S.)
Bridge isn't working.

The song comes to a screeching halt.

INT. SONGBYRD -- RECORDING STUDIO -- NIGHT

Ellory and Lauren are talking through the glass.

LAUREN
What?

ELLORY
The bridge.

LAUREN
What about it?

ELLORY
It needs work.

Lauren stares at her.

ELLORY (CONT'D)
Don't look at me like that when you know I'm right.

A long beat.

LAUREN
Crap.

EXT./INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Justin looks up to see Lauren watching him through the window. He smiles. She smiles back. And they just stand there and look at each other a minute. And smile.

And just when he might go outside to talk to her, she takes off. And he shakes his head, smitten. It's a kind of crazy he could learn to love.

EXT. MANHATTAN -- NIGHT

Lauren walks down the street, and the leaves and the dogs and birds and the traffic all shimmer with that musical magic as the song builds in her head and a genuinely happy, slightly love struck smile washes across her face and we hear...

ELLORY (O.S.) *
Before you all my life all was *
black and white/ You put my life in *
color/ Baby you, you shut out all *
the night / Let in all the light/ *
You pulled it all together/ *
Baby you, you made everything *
better/ Baby you, you put my life *
*in color** *

As the song ends, and Lauren's smile grows...

END OF SHOW

* *"Life in Color" "Lessons Learned" Lyrics by Diane Warren.* *