

FADE IN:

1 NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE - MONTAGE - OVER RADIO 1

We see famous Nashville institutions: the Ryman Auditorium, the tiny Springwater Saloon, the tall glass temples of the music industry, the old stone Station Inn. Vista of the church steeples dot the horizon. The full-scale replica of the Parthenon, LP Field, the landmark neon sign of the Loveless Café. The Greek Revival State Capital buildings, quaint Music Row publishing houses, the slow, green Cumberland river rolling downtown, shabby mobile homes, stately Belle Meade mansions, Vanderbilt University, Prince's Hot Chicken Shack, the humble Bluebird Cafe. From the highest society to the lowliest hillbilly hangouts, Nashville has it all. *

2 EXT. RAYNA'S HOME - NIGHT 2

A warm glow from the windows of a beautiful home on a gated two acre lot in the Brentwood section of Nashville. From somewhere in the house, the SOUND OF THE TV turned up loud, the Vandy/Alabama game.

3 INT. RAYNA'S HOME - NIGHT 3

Pandemonium as DAPHNE (8) runs laughing and squealing down a hallway. Her mother, RAYNA JAYMES (40), in curlers and a dressing gown, marches purposefully behind her. She is halfway made-up but totally beautiful. She's in full mom hollering voice. *

RAYNA

Daphne! I mean it! Get in the bath right now! Mama's got to get to work! Teddy, I need a little help here. I can't be late. *

Rayna's handsome husband, TEDDY CONRAD (40's) intervenes. His daughter MADDIE (12) trails behind him. *

TEDDY

(to Rayna)
I got it, babe.

RAYNA

Thank you!

Rayna splits off to her room.

TEDDY

(to Daphne)
Because somebody's got to work in this family-- and I want you in that tub NOW! *

Maddie stops and turns to her dad.

(CONTINUED)

DAPHNE
Why does she have to work? I
thought we were rich.

TEDDY
We are, but now we're a different
kind of rich called cash poor, and
it's bad manners to talk about
money.

4 INT. RAYNA'S BEDROOM - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 4
Rayna is frantically pulling curlers out of her hair.

TEDDY (O.C.)
I'm counting! One, two...

5 INT. GRAND OLE OPRY STAGE - NIGHT 5
Rayna is on stage with her band, glittering like a diamond in
full Country Music Queen regalia, belting out a country song,
thrilling the full house with her big, gorgeous voice.

RAYNA
(singing)
IT'S A LONG LONG ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE,
BUT I'M LEAVING YOU FOR TENNESSEE,
I GOT DEMONS RIDING SHOTGUN TELLING
ME NOT TO GO, BUT WHAT THEY DON'T
KNOW IS I'M ALREADY GONE.

Rayna's got a thousand-watt stage presence. DEACON CLAYBOURNE
(43), her strikingly handsome lead guitar player, can't take
his smiling eyes off of her. He's the guy that all the women
want to be with and all the men want to be. As he plays and
sings harmony, he smiles at Rayna. Their flirty rapport
charms the crowd.

The song ends to a standing ovation, and as the crowd roars--

RAYNA (CONT'D)
THANKS EVERYBODY! AND GOD BLESS
WATTY WHITE!

They leave the stage waving to the crowd. Deacon puts his
hand on Rayna's shoulder, and she covers his hand with hers
in a familiar, affectionate and intimate gesture. The
ANNOUNCER steps to the stage right podium.

ANNOUNCER
The reigning Queen of Country,
Rayna Jaymes! Coming to you from
Music City, USA, and WSM it's the
GRAND OLE OPRY celebration of
legendary producer and songwriter,
Watty White! Stay tuned for
Juliette Barnes, the Del McCoury
Band, Brad Paisley and Lady
Antebellum!!

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6

INT. BACKSTAGE WINGS - GRAND OLE OPRY - NIGHT

6

The wing of the stage is crowded with friends, family and fellow country music stars. Deacon whispers to Rayna--

DEACON
Killed 'em again.

She walks into the arms of a smiling WATTY WHITE (70), flowing white hair neatly swept back. They are dearest friends.

RAYNA
Watty, I love you. Who knows where I'd be without you.

Watty sings in a beautiful tenor--

WATTY
JUST A BIRD IN A GILDED CAGE--

RAYNA
Thanks for setting me free.

WATTY
Ya done good, my little songbird.

Before Deacon knows what's happened, he's being hugged by a young woman, SCARLETT O'CONNOR (early 20's).

SCARLETT
Uncle Deacon! That was GREAT. Thank you so much for getting us in!

Now that he knows who he's hugging, he gives a big hug back.

DEACON
Hey, no problem. Rayna, c'mere!

Rayna turns as Deacon steers Scarlett to her. Rayna wears her meet-and-greet smile.

DEACON (CONT'D)
You remember my niece, Scarlett.

Rayna's eyes widen in surprise. She takes Scarlett's hands in hers and looks her over.

RAYNA
No way. Oh, my gosh, hello! This is not possible. Last time I saw you, you weren't even talking yet.

Scarlett is smiling, overwhelmed.

DEACON
She's livin' here now. Working at the Bluebird.

(CONTINUED)

RAYNA
Wow! The Mecca.

SCARLETT
I think someone pulled some strings.
Deacon looks away, feigning innocence.

RAYNA
Are you a songwriter?

SCARLETT
Oh! Me? No! I mean, I write poems,
but no. My boyfriend is, though.

She turns to AVERY BARKLEY (23) to introduce him. *

SCARLETT (CONT'D)
This is Avery Barkley. *

Avery, a dead sexy East Nashville hipster who patterns himself after Kings of Leon, tries to play it cool, but even he is a little nervous in the presence of the legend.

AVERY
Pleased to make your acquaintance,
Ma'am.

SCARLETT
Miss Jaymes, I promised myself I
wouldn't do this, but I have to
tell you that I have worshipped you
since I was a little girl, and not
just because of Uncle Deacon. I
know every one of your songs by
heart, and I love your voice and I
just-- You're so GREAT! *

Rayna gives her a hug, truly charmed.

RAYNA
Aren't you sweet? Now if you need
anything you let me know. Ya, hear?

Rayna is looking at Deacon as she says--

RAYNA (CONT'D)
We're all family here.

7 INT. JULIETTE'S DRESSING ROOM DOOR- GRAND OLE OPRY- NIGHT 7 *
We see the door to the "Honky Tonk Angels" room at the Opry. *

8 INT. JULIETTE'S DRESSING ROOM - GRAND OLE OPRY- NIGHT 8 *

A gorgeous, sequined, mini-skirted young country vixen, Juliette is being touched up by her hair and make-up people, while a wardrobe person kneels at her feet, strapping on some ridiculously high heels.

ASSISTANT
-- the New York itinerary is coming together. Good Morning America and the Vogue shoot are locked in. And they're waiting for approval on the perfume.

On a table, prototype perfume bottles are laid out. She inspects them and picks one up and sprays it. She wrinkles her nose.

JULIETTE
What? That doesn't smell like anything. What the hell is wrong with those people?

An ASSISTANT cautiously delivers the news--

ASSISTANT
They're just the prototypes.
They're all filled with water.

JULIETTE
I can't tell without smelling the perfume which one I'm gonna--

A RINGING CELL PHONE cuts her short. The assistant finds it on the table. She answers it and suddenly looks stricken. She covers the mouthpiece, mouths the words--

ASSISTANT
It's your mom.

Now Juliette is the one who looks stricken. She's frozen for a second. Then she reaches out for the phone--

JULIETTE
Hello?

We hear a woman's REEDY VOICE on the other end.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
(interrupting)
Hello? Hellohellohello?--
There's no one there.

The VOICE INTENSIFIES as she ends the call. Juliette holds the phone like a live rat or an unpinned grenade.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
How'd she get this number?

No one knows, but they're all frozen in fearful submission.

(CONTINUED)

8

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
Oh. So she just got it out of thin
air. Is that what I'm supposed to
believe? Isn't that part of your
job, to make sure she doesn't have
my number?

ASSISTANT
This is a new number. I just
changed it.

Juliette flings the phone into the trash can.

JULIETTE
Well, change it again.

A KNOCK at the door startles them. The door opens and
Juliette's manager, GLENN GOODMAN (late 40s) steps in.

GLENN
It's time.

He holds out his hand up to help her up. *

9 INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - GRAND OLE OPRY- NIGHT 9 *

Juliette steadies herself on Glenn's arm as she teeters down
the hall on four-inch heels. *

GLENN
This is important. Be nice.

JULIETTE
I'm always nice.

Glenn's eyebrow says otherwise.

GLENN
Well--be extra nice.

JULIETTE
And this benefits me how?

GLENN
It's not for you. It's for the
label. She's royalty. Just kiss the
ring and tell her you're a big fan.

10 INT. BACKSTAGE GREEN ROOM - GRAND OLE OPRY - NIGHT 10 *

We see CU shots of backstage details as Rayna makes her way
through, shaking hands and smiling for pictures.

The FLASH from an iPhone releases her, and she turns to greet
a tall distinguished African-American man, COLEMAN CARLISLE
(40s) and his wife ANITA. *

(CONTINUED)

RAYNA

Hey, Cole! Hello, Anita! I didn't know you were gonna be here! Can I hug the next Mayor of Nashville?

ANITA

You sure can-- I hope you're right about that!

COLEMAN

I'm announcing my run officially next Monday. You in town? If you could do a song it would mean the world to me.

RAYNA

I think so. I'll check with Bucky. I'm so proud of you!

COLEMAN

Is your father here tonight?

Rayna's eyes stop smiling, but not the rest of her.

RAYNA

Dad come hear Hillbilly music?

COLEMAN

Not even for Watty? The Pope of Nashville?

RAYNA

Daddy doesn't worship at this particular church. We'll be ice skating in hell before he ever sets foot in this place.

COLEMAN

He doesn't know what he's missing.

RAYNA

Yes he does.

And she moves down the hall. *

INT.- BACKSTAGE HALLWAY- GRAND OLE OPRY- NIGHT

A blazing Juliette makes her way down the crowded hallway, still on Glenn's arm. She owns the place and greets everyone with a super-friendly-- *

JULIETTE

Hi, hon, how you doin'?

-- as if she actually cared. Glenn plays it with cool aplomb. *

ANOTHER ANGLE: *

Deacon is talking to some of the members of the DEL McCOURY BAND when Juliette spots him. She lets go of Glenn.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
Deacon Claybourne?

Deacon's caught off guard for a second, and Juliette is suddenly the star-struck teenager.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
Oh my gosh! I'm sorry to interrupt!
I just love your songs, and your
playing. I have your very first
record on vinyl and I love it.

DEACON
Yes, you can still find them in
antique stores here and there. I'm
glad you liked it. That makes you
and my mom.

JULIETTE
That one song, "Been and Gone" was
the most beautiful-- Oh my gosh,
I'm so sorry-- I just think you're--
amazing! Nice to meet you! Sorry!

And she's gone. Deacon turns back to the grinning McCoury's.

DEACON
She probably says that to all the guys.

RONNIE MCCOURY
She never said it to me.

The merciless ribbing begins.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Juliette is back on Glenn's arm, continuing down the hall.

JULIETTE
I hope I didn't make a fool of
myself. I just love him so much.

GLENN
He's the best there is.

JULIETTE
(sharply)
Then why isn't he in my band?

GLENN
He's been with Rayna for twenty-
something years, but hey, if you
can get him--

11

CONTINUED: (2)

11

Scarlett and Avery come around the corner and Avery bumps smack into Juliette. Glenn catches her, but Avery has also grabbed her to break her fall.

AVERY

Oh my God! I'm so sorry!

Juliette is pissed, until she gets a good look at Avery.

JULIETTE

That's okay. We should try that again sometime, only slower.

And gives him a wink over her shoulder as Glenn pulls her away. Scarlett's jaw drops in disbelief. She whacks Avery on the arm, like it's his fault.

12

OMITTED

12

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13

INT. RAYNA'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

13

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Rayna's Producer RANDY ROBERTS (40s), her manager BUCKY DAWES (a boyish 50), and two guys from her record label, ZACH (35) and STEVE (40s), speak in hushed tones. Watty is there too. Rayna comes in and the guys freeze. Something's going on.

RAYNA

What? Somebody die?

No one wants to answer. It falls to her manager.

BUCKY

Nothing we need to talk about now. Let's wait 'til Monday. Hey, Watty. What a night, huh?

RAYNA

Why? Talk about what?

Before anyone can speak, the dressing room door opens again, and Glenn ushers Juliette into the room, all sequins and legs.

GLENN

Hi, folks, Rayna. I wanted to introduce you to Juliette Barnes. She's a big fan of yours.

Juliette all but rolls her eyes at this and goes straight for Watty, a major diss to Rayna. Watty clocks it.

JULIETTE

Mr. White, it's such an honor for me to get to sing for you tonight.

WATTY

It wouldn't be if you knew me better. You met Rayna yet?

(CONTINUED)

Rayna smiles as they size each other up, but Juliette shows none of the enthusiasm or reverence she showed Deacon.

RAYNA

Oh, I know who you are. You're burning it up out there, girl!

JULIETTE

Oh... thank you. My mom was one of your biggest fans. She said she'd listen to you when I was in her belly.

Darting eye contact between the guys. They're not off to a good start. Rayna doesn't blink, but there's now a faint razor sharp edge in her tone.

RAYNA

Well, bless your heart. What a charming story. You're going on in a minute. Don't you want to go find your pants?

The guys cut it short and Glenn hauls Juliette out before she can do more damage. Rayna looks at her team.

RAYNA (CONT'D)

What the hell was that?

Long-suffering Glenn leads Juliette towards the stage door.

GLENN

We've obviously got some work to do on that "be nice" deal.

A sly smile on Juliette's lips. She knows exactly what she's doing.

The mood remains grim as the bad news is laid out to Rayna.

BUCKY

Indianapolis. Three years ago we put 16,000 tickets on sale they were gone in an hour. Now same venue we've sold 2800. Austin, same thing. We're at barely a third of where we'd hoped to be by now.

Rayna is distressed.

RAYNA

So what does this mean? I mean, I did all that radio and press--

RANDY

We talked about this. There wasn't a strong single. I brought you three songs I was sure could chart and you nixed all three. We came on the charts at twenty and we're falling.

*
*
*

RAYNA

Well, I don't wanna just stand here and go down in flames. What's the plan, guys?

*

Nobody wants to say. It falls to Bucky. He begins carefully.

BUCKY

Well, one idea is that you combine tours. With Juliette Barnes. You can co-headline. You'd save several hundred thousand in production costs--

RAYNA

Co-headline? You're kidding, right?

They're not.

RAYNA (CONT'D)

That's why you brought her in here? Was there a turnip truck that drove through here you think I fell off of?

STEVE

Miss Jaymes, it would introduce you to a whole new generation of fans --

*

RAYNA

The one that doesn't buy records?

STEVE

They buy Juliette's records. She's the number one crossover artist in the--

RAYNA

(interrupting)
Who goes on first?

No one says anything. This is an unprecedented proposal.

RAYNA (CONT'D)

You're not seriously suggesting that I become Juliette Barnes' opening act? For that half-talent little snipe? No. No way.

The guys look at Bucky. It's his job to break the news.

BUCKY

I know you don't want to play in half empty venues and that's what we're looking at. If you don't cut down production costs, you're going to lose money. A lot of money. We'd be better off cancelling the tour.

Now Rayna is the one who's silent.

STEVE

Miss Jaymes, you are very, very important to Pinnacle Republic records. We believe putting our two most important artists together is a historic event and a way to solve a very big problem for you. You can hop onto a tour that's sold out every arena and most stadiums from New York to L.A., or you're gonna be facing a pretty tough decision. It's a no-brainer really--

*

RAYNA

Of course it is. Who's the genius that came up with this idea?

STEVE

Marshall Evans. The new head of the label.

This is not good news and she's obviously shaken.

RAYNA

(to label guys)

Um, okay guys, could I have a little privacy? Thank you.

STEVE

Miss Jaymes, Marshall would like to know your decision by Monday.

*

They go. Bucky, Randy and Watty stay. Rayna collects herself.

RAYNA

I have one record that doesn't perform and suddenly I'm an opening act?

WATTY

Peaks and Valleys are what make a career. Often we are tested.

BUCKY

I know this is tough, but you'll come off looking like the bigger person.

Rayna is stoic, but she's in pain.

(CONTINUED)

WATTY

Girl, the business has changed. The good part's gone, but the part that sucks is still thriving.

16 INT. GRAND OLE OPRY STAGE - NIGHT

16

Juliette prances charmingly across the stage in her spangled mini-dress. The young people in the audience are now at the foot of the stage singing, clapping and dancing with her.

JULIETTE

(singing)

I MIGHT STAY UP DRUNK ON WINE
HURTING LIKE HELL, UGLY CRYING
BLACK MASCARA TEARS

Deacon watches from the wings.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)

I MIGHT LOCK MY DOOR, SLEEP WITH MY
PHONE, MISS YOU BAD FOR A MONTH OR SO

17 INT. RAYNA'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

17

Rayna's alone now. Sad, angry, confused. She watches Juliette's performance on a monitor hanging from the ceiling.

JULIETTE (ON MONITOR)

BUT LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING I'M
GONNA BE JUST FINE, BUT YOU'RE NEVER
GONNA FIND ANOTHER LOVE LIKE MINE.

Rayna picks up the remote and points it like a gun at the monitor.

RAYNA

Oh shut up.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT 1

ACT II

18 EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

18

A CHAUFFEUR opens the door to a black SUV in front of where two black-suited SECURITY GUARDS and an EVENT GIRL wait. Rayna, late, runs quickly up the steps.

MAYOR (V.O.)

In my two terms as Mayor, Lamar Wyatt has been more than a friend and a captain of industry-- he has been a titan of philanthropy. The countless charitable causes, the cultural and intellectual enrichment brought to Nashville through his benefaction to our Symphony and to our many great Universities-- has been monumental.

19 INT. CITY HALL - DAY

19

A full gallery listens as the Mayor at the podium continues his remarks. The recipient, a beaming LAMAR WYATT (late 60s), sits in the front row, with his CRONIES. To his right sits his oldest daughter, the handsome and regal TANDY WYATT (42). To Lamar's left, an empty seat.

LAMAR

(whispering to Tandy)
Where the hell is she?

TANDY

She should be here any minute.

A murmur rises as Rayna hurries into the room, security in tow. The Mayor sees Rayna making her way through the room.

MAYOR

--and of course we can't forget Lamar's priceless contribution to country music by way of his daughter, the great Rayna Jaymes!

*

Rayna smiles and gives an embarrassed wave as she takes her seat. Her father rises, a brief kiss on the cheek and they sit. It's tense and icy.

As the mayor continues--

LAMAR

Unbelievable. On a day like today.

TANDY

She's here now, Daddy. Let it go.

RAYNA

I showed up. More than you can say.

(CONTINUED)

LAMAR

I ask for so little.

RAYNA

Oh, for God's sake.

MAYOR

By unanimous vote of the Nashville Metropolitan City Council it is my honor to proclaim this Lamar Wyatt Day!

The room rises to a standing ovation. As a smiling Lamar stands, he hisses to Rayna--

LAMAR

Try to look happy, dear.

Lamar glad-hands his way to the podium where he's presented with a framed certificate and the Key to the City.

Lamar and the Mayor stand together as they are photographed holding the award. Lamar smiles and whispers to the Mayor--

LAMAR

Two terms, five million dollars in campaign contributions, and all I got was this lousy certificate.

MAYOR

It's overdue. And I can't thank you enough for your invaluable support.

LAMAR

Oh, you didn't thank me enough. I asked for only one thing, one lousy permit. You got something against bringing major league baseball to Nashville?

The mayor waves the photographers off and aides clear the area, giving the two men their space.

MAYOR

You know that's not the case, Lamar. You know that particular piece of land--

LAMAR

What I know is that I have a billion dollar property that's been rendered worthless because you wouldn't push one permit through for me.

From the outside, this exchange looks like two old friends.

MAYOR

That permit falls under the purview
of the Director of Public Works--

LAMAR

A mayoral appointee whom you could
have replaced at any time. And yet
you chose not to, a decision I will
see to it you regret as you return
to life in the private sector.

The blood has drained from the Mayor's face.

MAYOR

Well. I wish you better luck with
my successor.

He nods in the direction of Coleman Carlisle who's being
photographed with Rayna and Tandy.

*
*

LAMAR

Hell, he's even more of a tree
hugger than you are.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

The event is over and Tandy walks Rayna to her waiting car.

TANDY

Thank you for coming. He won't say
it, but it means a lot to him.

RAYNA

You know I didn't come for him. I
came for you.

TANDY

Well, then, it means a lot to me.
But still I'm sorry I had to ask. I
tried to talk him out of it, but
you know how it is with him. You
win one, you lose ten.

RAYNA

Funny thing about Daddy. He's
always there when he needs me.
Don't ask me again for a while,
okay? I've got enough problems.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Through the glass into the studio we see Juliette singing.

JULIETTE (O.S.)

BOYS AND BUSES GOT A LOT IN COMMON,
THEY BOTH PICK UP SPEED WHEN YOU
TRY TO STOP 'EM.

Randy Roberts sits and watches. Juliette's manager, Glenn, sits on a sofa, reading Billboard. The ENGINEER lowers the tracks except for Juliette's voice. It's out of tune.

RANDY
Don't worry. We can fix that.

Without looking up from the magazine--

GLENN
Thank God for auto-tune.

Juliette sees Randy watching and gets flirty. Randy smiles.

RANDY
(re: Juliette)
Heartbreaker.

From the sofa--

GLENN
Money maker.

RANDY
Maybe I ought to marry her.

GLENN
Take the money and run.

Off Randy looking at Juliette--

RAYNA (O.S.)
I am sick to death of talking about
money.

*

Rayna and Bucky at a table deep in conversation, looking over budgets, oblivious to the turned heads of the other patrons.

BUCKY
You'd be more sick to death of not
having any. Look if you cancel this
tour you're burning bridges with
the promoters and radio, too. If
you think the record is stiffing
now, just wait till you piss those
guys off.

A woman holding the hand of a six-year old girl approaches the table, stopping Bucky.

WOMAN
Miss Jaymes, I'm so sorry to
interrupt but I am such a huge fan.
(MORE)

*

CONTINUED:

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Could I get a picture of you with my daughter?

Rayna acts like she's been waiting all day for this.

RAYNA

You sure can. What's your name, darlin'?

LITTLE RAYNA

Rayna.

RAYNA

It is? That's my name, too! What do you want to be when you grow up?

LITTLE RAYNA

A star.

A nano beat while Rayna processes that.

RAYNA

Well, you're sure pretty enough.

Rayna puts her arm around the little girl and smiles.

WOMAN

I love your new record. But I've loved all your records.

BUCKY

Here. I'll take the picture. You get in there.

The woman can't believe her luck. Bucky shoots, looks at it.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

Beautiful. Y'all have a good day.

He hands the camera to the woman, who is overwhelmed.

WOMAN

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Rayna and Bucky resume.

RAYNA

It wasn't all that long ago that I was the future of country music.

INT./EXT. - CAR- DAY

*

The former future of country music sits in traffic.

*

MADDIE

Mama, when do you leave?

*

RAYNA
Are you trying to get rid of me? *

DAPHNE
Maddie's gonna be in the talent
show. *

RAYNA
You are? Maybe I can fly back for
it. Do we know what day of the week
it is?

MADDIE
It's a Friday.

Maddie is already dealing with the disappointment. *

RAYNA
Maybe we could move something.

MADDIE
You can't. It costs too much money.
You missed it last year, too.

RAYNA
But Daddy sent me the video. I
watched it over and over on the
bus. I thought you were great.

Rayna checks the rear view mirror. Both girls are silent,
staring out their respective windows. She turns the radio on.
Juliette Barnes' MEAN GIRL is playing. The girls perk up.

MADDIE
Turn it up!

Rayna turns it up and endures as long as she can, four more
seconds, then snaps the radio off. The girls wail.

DAPHNE
Nooo! Why?

RAYNA
Mama's got a headache.

Rayna looks out the window and something catches her eye. *

RAYNA (CONT'D)
There's the first place I ever
played. *

From Rayna's POV, we see the Bluebird Cafe. *

Sound check is underway. GUNNAR SCOTT (27) handsome in a
clean cut way, mans the sound board as FOUR MUSICIANS
play. *

The fiddle player, JESSIE (25), is the band's sole female. Scarlett and Gunnar acknowledge with eye contact that it sounds great. The song wraps up.

GUNNAR
(to the band)
Once the room's full it won't sound
so bright.

JESSIE
(wryly)
How about if the room's half full?

SCARLETT
It's sold out. Y'all are great.
Gunnar, tell 'em.

GUNNAR
You guys should be playing bigger
venues.

JESSIE
(to Gunnar)
So should you. As long as we're
handing out compliments.

SCARLETT
I told him the same thing. He's
great.

GUNNAR
My time'll come.

The door opens flooding the room with sunlight. In sails Avery, happily waving a CD. Gunnar deflates a little.

AVERY
Looky what I got-- fourteen songs.
Hot off the pro-tools.

SCARLETT
It's done? Are you happy with it?
I'm so proud of you.

AVERY
Maybe if you like it, you'll give
it to your Uncle Deacon.

SCARLETT
Maybe? You know I'll love it.

JESSIE
Deacon Claybourne? Are you kidding?
That's your uncle?

Scarlett nods.

AVERY
I think I deserve a beer. It's five
o'clock somewhere.

GUNNAR

Here. It's five o'clock here.

AVERY

So it is.

Avery takes a seat at the bar and grabs a beer. Scarlett goes to the bar, and leans against him. Gunnar arranges mic stands.

SCARLETT

(to Gunnar)

Gunnar, can we play Avery's demo?

GUNNAR

(a little too fast)

Can we not-- right now? I need to give my ears a break for awhile.

Scarlett makes a frowny face at Avery.

AVERY

You don't know what you're missing.

As Avery kisses Scarlett, Gunnar's expression says, in fact he does know, on several counts.

Rayna sits at her dressing table. She inspects her face for wrinkles, seeing if a face lift might help. Teddy enters.

TEDDY

Don't do that. You're beautiful and if you ever get a face lift I'll leave you.

Rayna puts her head in her hands.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I was kidding.

Teddy realizes Rayna is crying.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Babe, are you crying? What's wrong?

RAYNA

Everything. The record's a stiff, the tour isn't selling. They want me to open for Juliette Barnes.

TEDDY

Who does?

RAYNA

The label. Marshall Evans.

TEDDY

Open for her? Are you sure?

RAYNA

"Co-headline" they called it.

TEDDY

Well, now. Let's think about this.
Is it really such a terrible idea?

RAYNA

Teddy! Yes, it's terrible idea. I'd
have to lie and pretend like I like
her music.

TEDDY

You've lied for a lot worse than
her. That's not the reason.

RAYNA

I might have to cancel the tour.
I have till Monday to make a
decision. I'm set to lose a bundle
if I don't. I've been over every
detail with Bucky.

Teddy proceeds with caution.

TEDDY

You know, you don't have to put
yourself through this. You could
quit and just walk away--

RAYNA

Not if you like living in this
house I can't.

TEDDY

Rayna, look, I know I've let you
down and I'm sorry as hell about
it. I'm not the first guy to go
bust and I'm working on some deals
that'll put us in better shape. But
in the meantime, there's a trust
fund just sitting there doing
nothing but racking up interest.
You could do whatever you wanted--

RAYNA

No. I promised myself I would never
put myself in a position to rely on
him or his money. And that isn't going
to change. I'll wait tables first.

TEDDY

But you won't share a bill with the
hottest act in Country music.
Interesting logic.

RAYNA

Just look at Tandy. She's practically
his handmaiden.

TEDDY

She's gonna take over the damned family business, Rayna. And when he dies, she'll be the most powerful woman in the state. She's hardly running errands for him.

RAYNA

That's not the point. The point is--

TEDDY

The point is she's never gonna have to worry for one second about paying a bill. Now look, I get it, he was a lousy father, a son of a bitch and still is. Mine was a drunk. But it doesn't change the color of his money.

RAYNA

Please, Teddy, you think you know him, but you don't.

TEDDY

Okay. Okay. I just hate to see you being put through this.

RAYNA

Me, too. But that's how it is. We're just gonna have to figure out something else.

A LOUD KNOCKING on the door. Randy pulls on a robe.

*

RANDY

(muttering)

Who the hell is beating the damn door down? I'm coming!

He peers through the peephole. He lets Rayna in.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Rayna? What the hell? Is everything okay?

RAYNA

Can I come in? Did I wake you?

RANDY

No. I-- was just--

RAYNA

You were right. I should've cut something dead commercial. I mean I love the record. But you were right and now I think we ought to cut one of those three.

RANDY
They've all been recorded.

RAYNA
Well, can you find another one? You found those three.

RANDY
After a year of sifting through hundreds. I can't just snap my fingers and find a song that'll chart.

RAYNA
I know. I'm sorry. I'm in a fix here and I'm asking for some help.

RANDY
And I want to help you but I have to finish Juliette before she goes out in two weeks.

RAYNA
You're doing her record?

This is news to Rayna and Randy looks caught. Randy acknowledges, and begins speaking very quietly.

RANDY
You know I'm in no position to say no to anything. Ex-wifestyle's a bitch.

RAYNA
Stop getting married. Try dating.
(re: Juliette)
God, I can't believe people like that phony adolescent crap. She sings like a feral cat.

RAYNA (O.C.)
Why does everyone keep pretending she's good?

Juliette lies in Randy's bed, hearing every word, eyes narrowed. Game on.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

30 INT. BLUEBIRD CAFE - NIGHT 30

The tiny club is having its famous "Writers in the Round" night. FOUR NASHVILLE SONGWRITING LEGENDS sit in a circle.

DEACON
(Singing)
FIREFLIES DANCING IN THE YARD UNDER
A BLANKET OF STARS...

Scarlett gingerly makes her way through the sold out room, delivering drinks, picking up empties. Gunnar mans the sound board. Scarlett catches his eye. He mouths the word "WOW" and she smiles. Avery sits at the bar, Jessie next to Avery, mesmerized. In a darkened corner sits a funky/chic, dressed-down Juliette. Her posse gives her good cover. She quickly wipes a tear.

DEACON (CONT'D)
(Singing)
ALL THAT I HAVE TO DO IS THINK ONE LITTLE
THOUGHT OF YOU AND I'M BACK HOME...

The song ends to huge APPLAUSE. Deacon smiles.

DEACON (CONT'D)
Thank you.

VINCE GILL next up in the circle, tunes his guitar, while he, PAM TILLIS, FRED SCHUYLER and GABE WITCHER, ad lib about Deacon. The audience laughs along with Deacon. Still tuning.

31 INT. BLUEBIRD CAFE - NIGHT - LATER 31

The room is mostly empty. Deacon and Scarlett catch up.

DEACON
She can stay at my place for
Thanksgiving.

SCARLETT
She just doesn't want to put you
out.

DEACON
She's my sister. She's still weird.

Avery appears.

AVERY
Hey, Deacon, did you get my demo?

DEACON
I did. What kind of music?

(CONTINUED)

AVERY

Kind of alt/country/punk, but more cerebral.

*
*

DEACON

You know, around here punk is code for not being able to play at all.

Avery ribs him right back.

AVERY

You need to hear what the kids are playing these days, old timer.

DEACON

Alright, alright, I promise not to use it as a coaster. In the meantime, you keep working on being good enough for my favorite niece.

Gunnar brings Deacon his guitar case. Avery follows Scarlett back to the bar.

GUNNAR

That was a great show. A couple of those songs I'd never heard.

DEACON

It won't be too long before you're sittin' in that circle. Heard a couple of your demos. You're sounding good, boy. Real good.

A compliment from Deacon is as good as it gets.

GUNNAR

That's-- thank you.

Deacon looks at Avery, getting cozy with Scarlett.

DEACON

What do you think of that guy?

GUNNAR

I guess I'm just naturally suspicious of anyone that confident.

DEACON

Keep an eye on her for me, will ya?

Gunnar, with a smile, as charming as can be --

GUNNAR

Kind of hard to take my eyes off her.

Deacon claps him on the shoulder.

DEACON

Well, son, she's got the family
curse. We always pick the one
who'll break your heart.

Deacon takes his guitar case and heads out the door.

Deacon opens the car door and puts his guitar on the back
seat. When he turns back around, Juliette is standing there.

DEACON

Well! Hello.

Juliette's posse waits outside her Escalade on the other side
of the parking lot.

JULIETTE

That last song you did. Has that
ever been recorded?

She stands close to Deacon, gazing up at him.

DEACON

Only by me, so that pretty much
damns it to obscurity.

JULIETTE

I want to record it.

DEACON

You do.

JULIETTE

I do. This week. Will you come play
on it?

Deacon is a little unnerved by this show of attention.

DEACON

Well, I could, depending. I'm
rehearsing with Rayna all week.

JULIETTE

I heard that tour might be off.

DEACON

What? No. Not to my knowledge. I
haven't heard anything like that.

JULIETTE

Maybe I'm wrong then.

Now she's just smiling at him. He's a little at a loss.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)

Why don't you come take over for
Buddy as my band leader?

(MORE)

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
His wife's baby is due two weeks
into the tour. I have to replace
him anyway.

DEACON
I can't.

JULIETTE
Why not?

DEACON
I can't do that to Rayna.

JULIETTE
I'll pay double whatever she pays.

DEACON
And why would you do that?

JULIETTE
I want the best. You're the best.

Deacon is trying to figure her out her angle.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
We could write together.

Now he's interested, but doesn't let it show.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
(suggestively)
I'll bet you and I could have a lot
of fun on the road.

Her white Escalade comes rolling up.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
I'll schedule the session around
you. Think about it.

The car stops.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)
Rayna's not the only woman in the
world, you know.

DEACON
You're a girl.

JULIETTE
That, too.

The back door opens and she climbs in and is gone.

DEACON
(to himself)
What the hell was that?

33

EXT. PROJECT SITE - DAY

33

The early morning sun rises over Nashville.

In a wide open, overgrown expanse of land, Lamar, Tandy, HENRY, ALBERT and DENNIS stand in the stiff breeze. *

HENRY

One civil servant making twenty grand a year can deny a permit and hold up a billion dollar ballpark.

TANDY

It's not gonna get any better when Coleman Carlisle's the mayor. *

LAMAR

Then I'll run my own candidate. I'm done throwing good money after bad.

Everyone looks at Lamar. Is he serious? He is.

TANDY

It's not an idea without merit. If we found someone business friendly, who fits nicely in your pocket--

DENNIS *

How 'bout Michael McDaniel? He's already on Metro Council and ready to move up.

LAMAR

Teddy Conrad.

Tandy shoots a look to Lamar. Bad idea.

HENRY

Son-in-law Teddy?

TANDY

Let's stay within the realm of possibility.

LAMAR

I just put it in the realm of possibility. Albert, what about it?

ALBERT

Well, maybe we say-- it skipped a generation. Ted, Sr. was a rake, but Teddy got it together. I mean, after he blew through his trust fund. But his grandfather was mayor, then congressman. Great grandfather was a judge and a four-term senator. He's smart, great people skills and photogenic as hell.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY
How the hell do you know so much
about Teddy Conrad?

ALBERT
I was his big brother when he
pledged Kappa Sig.

HENRY
You don't think it looks a little
sketchy if he pushes a deal through
for his father-in-law?

ALBERT
Lamar Wyatt is nobody's father-in-
law. No one's gonna question how he
gets things done.

TANDY
Except Rayna.

ALBERT
A beloved star of Country Music for
a wife sure as hell doesn't hurt.

They all check each other, then Lamar. Tandy's look to Lamar
is unequivocal. It's a bad idea.

LAMAR
Run it up the flagpole.

They head to the waiting cars, Lamar quietly asks Tandy--

LAMAR (CONT'D)
How bad do you expect Rayna's gonna
try to screw this up for us?

TANDY
She's gonna lose it. She's going to
absolutely lose it.

Rayna is rehearsing with her band. Bucky is also there.

RAYNA & DEACON
I'M FLAT ON THE FLOOR WITH MY HEAD
DOWN LOW WHERE THE SKY CAN'T RAIN ON
ME ANYMORE DON'T KNOCK ON MY DOOR
CAUSE I WON'T COME I'M HIDING FROM THE
STORM TIL THE DAMAGE GETS DONE

I'm hiding from the storm 'til the damage gets done

Rayna abruptly stops, yanks out her in-ear monitors and
throws them on the floor.

RAYNA
Why the hell is my voice distorted?

She looks over to the monitor guy, a deer in the headlights.

RAYNA (CONT'D)
Are these the new ones?

The monitor guy nods.

RAYNA (CONT'D)
Well they suck, too!

She crushes the ear pieces with her foot and walks off the stage. Bucky watches the whole scene.

BUCKY
(to himself)
There goes twelve hundred bucks.

DEACON
(stating the obvious)
And... that's a wrap.

The techs scurry onto the stage, gathering instruments, etc.

BUCKY
It's sounding great!

RAYNA
Not to me. Talk to him before he makes me deaf. And did you see the wardrobe they pulled? It's crap!

BUCKY
I know. They're in New York shopping now. Don't worry.

RAYNA
(to band and crew)
Sorry, guys! Diva dip. Haven't eaten. *

BUCKY
Can we talk about a couple of things?

RAYNA
Go.

BUCKY
I told Carlisle's campaign guy that you could do two songs at the announcement, so just let me know what songs and who you want. *

RAYNA
Okay. Let me think about it.

BUCKY
Now. There's a meeting Monday morning. Marshall Evans. He's going to want to know your decision.

Rayna nods, but obviously doesn't want to talk about it. She catches Deacon's eye and heads toward the door.

RAYNA

Deacon! Wait. You gotta second?

DEACON

For you I do.

BUCKY

And... meeting's over.

Rayna has told Deacon everything. Almost.

RAYNA

I mean, I feel like I'm in my prime. I don't think I've ever sounded better. But the way they say "forty" makes it sound like I should be in a wheelchair. If I'm such an old hag, then why would I open for Juliette Barnes? What is she, fifteen?

DEACON

Nineteen. And don't talk crazy.

RAYNA

Am I crazy? Do you understand why I can't do it?

DEACON

I do.

(beat)

We've been doin' this for twenty-one years. Can you believe that?

This makes her laugh.

RAYNA

No. That's absolutely impossible.

DEACON

You've been sayin' for a while you don't want to do as many dates now that the girls are in school--

RAYNA

Yeah, but I want it to be my choice.

DEACON

You can leave any way you want and come back anytime you want. You're not some overnight sensation. Although you are sensational overnight, to the best of my recollection.

She smiles, but isn't going there.

RAYNA

I'm just not ready to hang up the rhinestones. And all the guys and the crew, they've planned their whole year around the tour. I can't leave everybody hanging. Especially not you.

Deacon realizes that he has to tell her, now.

DEACON

In that vein, here's something kind of strange that happened. Juliette Barnes asked me if I wanted a job.

RAYNA

She asked you? As what?

DEACON

Lead guitar. Band leader. Her guy is leaving in a few weeks.

Rayna looks like she's been punched in the stomach.

RAYNA

Oh. What did you say?

DEACON

Nothing. I mean, I'm not available until otherwise notified.

RAYNA

Randy's doing her record, she wants you in her band, what, is she comin' for my house next?

DEACON

She wants to write with me.

RAYNA

Wow. She went straight for your soft spot.

He acknowledges that it's his weakness.

DEACON

I've always wondered why you never cut more of my songs.

RAYNA

I don't know. Felt weird, like they were all about me.

DEACON

They are. I guess.

Rayna nods. He knows this is pure pain for her. She is far away.

(CONTINUED)

RAYNA

Sometimes, I wish I could go back
and do the whole thing over again.

DEACON

What would you change?

RAYNA

Everything. I'd do it all
different.

DEACON

That makes two of us.

A moment. They want to kiss each other but don't.

RAYNA

I need a drink. Walk with me to Tootsies?

DEACON

Ha, can't. Got a meeting.

Really? Then she gets it.

RAYNA

Oh, that kind of a meeting. Ever
miss the wild old days?

DEACON

Everyday. Except the headaches. I
don't miss the headaches.

She smiles.

RAYNA

You were the headache. I'd never
stand in your way, you know. I want
you to be happy.

DEACON

Babe, you know good and well
there's only one thing that could
have made me happy and I lost that
a long time ago.

Not much to say after that.

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

36 EXT.- NASHVILLE- DAY 36

Over helicopter shots of Nashville, we hear the radio.

TAMMY WYNETTE (V.O.)
(singing)
KEEP GIVING ALL THE LOVE YOU CAN,
STAND BY YOUR MAN.

37 INT. WATTY WHITE'S SATELLITE RADIO STUDIO - DAY 37

Rayna and Watty both wearing headphones.

WATTY
(into mic)
And we're here on Sirius XM Outlaw
Country with mega-superstar Rayna
Jaymes and her Top Ten Desert
Island Death Row Last Country Song
You Hear Before You Die list. That
was the great Tammy Wynette with
the classic "Stand By Your Man." Is
that a philosophy you ascribe to?

RAYNA
Well, I guess so, as long as he
stands by you.

WATTY
What's next? Number 8.

RAYNA
This is the song that made me want
to sing country music. "Rose
Colored Glasses". When I was a
little girl, I'd sing it for my
Mama over and over. One of her
favorites, too.

WATTY
And you lost your Mama when you
where how old?

RAYNA
Twelve.

WATTY
So this song is a beautiful memory
for you, too.

RAYNA
Bittersweet.

WATTY
By the great John Conlee.

(CONTINUED)

He starts the record, turns the mic off and they take their headphones off. They pick up where they left off.

WATTY (CONT'D)

Look Rayna, labels are irrelevant now. You gotta figure your next move. Reinvent yourself. You used to love the smaller venues.

RAYNA

Watty, I can't go back to playing fairgrounds and casinos.

WATTY

You could do a club tour, something intimate. On your own terms.

RAYNA

What would you do if you were in the same position?

WATTY

I'm one of the original outlaws, girl. I'd do whatever I damn pleased, long as I could face myself in the mirror.

RAYNA

You think Juliette Barnes is a flash in the pan?

WATTY

Nope. I'd take the long view on that one. She's gonna be around awhile.

As Rayna thinks...

RANDY (O.S.)

Well, where the hell is she?

Randy is impatiently waiting for Juliette. Her nervous assistant comes in.

ASSISTANT

She's here. She just--she got a phone call.

Juliette is in a closet filled with cables and recording components. She is fighting tears. She's on her cell. A desperate voice on the other end--

39

CONTINUED:

39

JULIETTE

No, mom. I can't give you money--
I can't -- Because you're using--
I can hear it -- I can tell by your
voice--

40

EXT. ALABAMA TRAILER PARK OFFICE - DAY

40

A once beautiful face, ravaged by drugs and poverty, with
trembling hands, holds the payphone handset for dear life.
JULIETTE'S METH-TWEAKED MOM (34) begs, lies and cries.

MOM

I'm not, though. I've stopped. I
told you that.

A greasy, hollow eyed man watches her, full of hope and
chemical desperation.

41

INT. STORAGE CLOSET - DAY

41

A knock at the door.

JULIETTE

I have to go, Mom. I'm at work--
I'll call you later-- tomorrow.

She hangs up, pockets her phone and dries her eyes.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)

Who is it?

The door opens. Randy stands there, not knowing what to do.
She looks at him, tear-stained face, like a little girl. She
pulls him into the closet by his shirt, violently, kissing
him, tearing at his clothes. This is how she kills the pain.

42

OMITTED

42

*

43

INT. CAPITOL GRILL - DAY

43

A stately dining room, known for its power lunches. Lamar,
Tandy, Henry, Albert and Dennis dine in the corner with all
eyes on Teddy, who shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

*

TEDDY

You don't think my fiscal disasters
are gonna be an issue in a mayoral
campaign?

DENNIS

Everyone lost their shirts. We'll say
you lost yours through unscrupulous
mortgage lenders.

*

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT

Between your family's political legacy and the machine you'll have behind you, a failed business is the least of your worries. And the trust fund we write off as youthful indiscretion.

TEDDY

Cole's got that gorgeous wife, and those great looking kids.

HENRY

Your wife's pretty easy on the eyes, too.

LAMAR

Do you understand what you're being offered? This isn't an honorary position in some backwater hamlet. This is a thriving, prosperous city, an industrial and cultural juggernaut. We're asking you to take a seat in the most powerful office in the city. Do you understand the kind of power you'll have and where that can lead?

TEDDY

You think anyone will believe I'm qualified?

LAMAR

Hell, yes, son. You're a Conrad, born and bred.

Lamar takes a good long look at Teddy.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

I see something in you, Teddy. Something you may not be able to see in yourself right now. Or I wouldn't be wasting my valuable time. The afflictions your father suffered have blessedly not been visited on you. It's on you to rehabilitate the good name of your family. We are handing you your life on a silver platter. Is there some compelling reason that you can't run, some dark secret that will further damage the integrity of your family?

TEDDY

I'd like to not have my ass handed to me a third time. I can't take one more thing to live down.

It's frank and Lamar is impressed by his candor.

(CONTINUED)

LAMAR

I guarantee that will not be the result of our efforts. Fate is what befalls a man who fails to act. Destiny is for men who refuse to accept their failures as their fate. We've all had failures, Teddy. Don't let them define you. Let them refine you. I believe in your destiny. Do you?

Teddy nods. Barely.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

After you've served a couple terms as Mayor, you can write your own ticket. You won't have to depend on your wife anymore.

Checkmate.

TEDDY

You have to promise me you won't hurt Cole Carlisle . I've seen what happens to people who go against you. No dirty tricks, no "rumors", no "unnamed sources." If I run I have to do it without destroying his reputation or his family. He's a good man.

*

Everyone looks to Lamar to answer that one. Is Teddy really that naive? Lamar looks him in the eye.

LAMAR

Agreed.

Tandy's eyes flash a moment of incredulity.

HENRY

Carlisle announces Monday.

*

LAMAR

So will we.

TANDY

What about Rayna?

TEDDY

Who's gonna tell her?

LAMAR

You are. Your first order of business as a mayoral candidate is to grow a pair.

Floor to ceiling bookshelves, filled mostly with Grammys, CMAs, and photos of Rayna with celebrities.

RAYNA

Mayor?! Since when did you want to be Mayor?! You hate politics.

TEDDY

No, I don't hate politics. I hate talking about politics.

RAYNA

It would be one thing if it was your idea, but it wasn't!

TEDDY

That doesn't mean it wasn't a good one.

RAYNA

Teddy, you don't know what you're getting into. You do not want to be owned by him. You'll regret it, I promise you.

TEDDY

Did it ever occur to you that maybe he's trying to help me? And that I could use a little help right about now? If I serve a term or two as Mayor, I'll be able to write my own ticket. You can stop working--

RAYNA

That's not what I want. Is that what you want for me? Put everything on hold to stand on the side of the stage, smiling and shaking hands--

This strikes a chord and Teddy gets mad.

TEDDY

You think you're gonna tell me something about standing on the side of the stage that I don't already know?! I know I'm not your first choice. You settled for me. But I have been there for you. How 'bout helping me put my life back together? How 'bout just once letting me step into the limelight?

She has no reply. He's got her dead to rights.

RAYNA

(quietly)

I told Cole I'd perform at his announcement.

TEDDY

Well-- what are you gonna do?

She honestly can't answer.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
I'm gonna go check on the girls.

He leaves her standing alone.

It's after hours. Scarlett and Gunnar are alone in the club. He reads from the spiral notebook, clearly enjoying himself.

GUNNAR
These are songs. Are they about someone in particular?

SCARLETT
They're poems. Avery and I broke up for awhile. I guess nothing calls the muses more than a broken heart. Great for weight loss, too.

GUNNAR
Hmm. Truth be told, other than heartbreak and drunken sex, I'm not one hundred percent sure what you see in him.

SCARLETT
(laughing)
Isn't that enough?

GUNNAR
For awhile maybe, but a whole life?

SCARLETT
He's an artist. It's just one of those things. I've tried being without him. I can't. He's just -- the one. I'm hopeless.

GUNNAR
I don't believe in that. The one. There's always another one.

SCARLETT
Hmm. Sounds like you've had a little heartbreak of your own.

Their eyes meet. A moment between them. He changes the subject.

GUNNAR
These poems are good. Have you thought about putting them to music?

SCARLETT
I mean, sometimes I hear music when I'm writing, but they're just--

She reaches to take the notebook back. He playfully keeps it.

45

GUNNAR
Hang on a minute. Do you play?

SCARLETT
Not well. I know basic chords and
you know, I'd play when I was
learning songs for choir.

He folds it open to a page and hands it to her, and then
tries to hand her the guitar.

GUNNAR
Here. Play what you heard when you
wrote this.

SCARLETT
I can't.

GUNNAR
Okay. Then you sing and I'll play.

She is smiling, but reticent. He strums a chord.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)
Like this? Tell me when I'm close.

46 EXT. PINNACLE REPUBLIC RECORDS BLDG. - DAY 46

A gleaming high rise glass monument to the boom years of
country music.

47 INT. PINNACLE REPUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE - DAY 47

A giant one-sheet for Juliette Barnes' album covers an entire
wall.

48 INT. MARSHALL EVANS' OFFICE - DAY 48

MARSHALL EVANS' (40s) office is a shrine to adolescence.
Rayna's superstar persona is turned up to eleven. Bucky,
Steve and Zach are there as well.

RAYNA
I know you're new here, but
Pinnacle Republic Records has been
my home since my first album came
out and went triple platinum. I've
given this label nine Grammys and
eleven CMAs. When I signed, it was
in a little run down house on Music
Row, so you could say I built this
company.

MARSHALL
Miss Jaymes, no one's going to argue
that you've had an unparalleled career.
(MORE)

*

(CONTINUED)

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

I wish the new record was performing better. Unfortunately, the older business models are irrelevant. We believe that you and Juliette together will be a huge event.

RAYNA

I've been loyal while every other label tried to woo me away and now all I'm asking for is support for a record I'm very proud of.

MARSHALL

You're going to have to find your place in a new market. I know that's not what you want to hear.

RAYNA

So after twenty-one years at this label, if I don't open for your little ingenue who wouldn't make the cut as one of my back-up singers, you won't support me?

MARSHALL

Those are your words, but still, I need to know your decision.

She stares unflinchingly into his eyes for a moment.

RAYNA

You can kiss my decision as it walks out the door.

She turns and leaves. Bucky wordlessly follows her out.

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

49 EXT. LAMAR'S HOUSE - DAY 49

Rayna's car in the huge driveway.

50 INT. LAMAR'S DINING ROOM - DAY 50

Rayna fumes while Lamar sips his soup. Tandy referees.

LAMAR

I know you can't conceive of me actually helping a member of my own family, and you will continue to punish me for my dereliction of paternal duties 'til I'm six feet under, but I think you're being unduly harsh--

RAYNA

(interrupting)
Save the speeches, Daddy. All I want to know is, what exactly is it you want Teddy to do for you?

LAMAR

I want him to pick himself up, dust himself off, and get back in the game.

TANDY

This could be good for you and the girls or I wouldn't support it. It could restore Teddy's confidence and his standing in the community.

RAYNA

Stop! Tandy, please.
(she sits next to Lamar)
Did you offer him money? We won't accept that. I won't accept that.

LAMAR

Oh, I know. You're too proud to accept anything from me. You prefer to delude yourself into thinking your success was all your own doing, that I had no hand in it whatsoever. Every dime you ever earned is because of me.

RAYNA

What are you talking about?

LAMAR

Who do you think paid for your first album? That pissant little record label?.

(CONTINUED)

Rayna isn't sure if Lamar's telling the truth about the label, but it has knocked her back on her heels.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

I want you there by his side tonight. How would it look if you're not there for your own husband? I can't believe you would further humiliate him after all he's done for you. Especially as it relates to Maddie. Imagine how he would feel if he knew--

Rayna's eyes go wide. Tandy intervenes.

TANDY

Daddy-- that's enough!

He drops that point. Tandy grabs Rayna's hands and yanks her up out of the chair. Rayna's been worked over pretty good.

RAYNA

(punchdrunk)

I'm not for sale, Dad. Not for sale.

(to Tandy)

I'm not doing it. I won't be there.

TANDY

I know.

LAMAR

Your absence will not go unnoticed, I can assure you of that.

TANDY

Stop it! You don't need to threaten her.

As Tandy pulls her out of the room, Lamar continues--

LAMAR

It's alright if you see me as your enemy.

Rayna sits in her car, high on a hill overlooking Nashville. Storm clouds are piled over the city. Lamar's words continue--

LAMAR (V.O.)

But don't be foolish enough to make that a two way street. My enemies do not fare well--

A crack of lightning. Rain begins to pound the windshield.

52 INT. BLUEBIRD CAFE - NIGHT 52

Rain falls against the window of the Bluebird on Open Mic Night. Scarlett waits on a few brave souls. On stage, a very drunk Avery is beating the hell out of a vintage guitar.

AVERY
(singing)
I AM THE KEEPER OF THIS BOREDOM
I AM THE BATTLE-SCARRED PINATA
I AM THE SON OF YIP THE KNIGHT OF YEE
AND THE KING OF HA.

The small audience is underwhelmed, and the lukewarm reception pisses Avery off. He stumbles off the stage.

SCARLETT
Babe, that was so good!

He puts his guitar in the case. She goes to put her arms around him and he pushes her away.

AVERY
Thanks for the great advice. This place sucks.

He heads out into the rainy night. Gunnar watches. He looks over to Scarlett, who is hurt and embarrassed.

53 EXT. JULIETTE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 53

The rain continues. A security guard waves Randy Roberts through the gates to Juliette's starter mansion.

54 INT. BLUEBIRD CAFE - NIGHT 54

The audience is even thinner. The MC picks up the clipboard, flips it to the next page. Blank.

MC
Anybody else want to go?

Gunnar watches Scarlett, picking up empties.

GUNNAR
Scarlett O'Connor. Sing one.

Shocked, she freezes. The audience claps and whistles.

SCARLETT
Unh-unh. No way.

GUNNAR
She's good! Don't let her say no!

Her resistance spurs them on. They pound on the tables. As she acquiesces, she looks at a smiling Gunnar--

(CONTINUED)

SCARLETT
I'm gonna kill you!

GUNNAR
I won't throw you out there alone.
Let's do that one we worked on.

Gunnar sets up a mic stand. Scarlett nervously adjusts it.

SCARLETT
I've never sung into a mic. Forgive
me Lord, I know not what I do.

The door opens and a drenched Watty White comes in, shaking
off the rain. Scarlett realizes she can't wait on him.

SCARLETT (CONT'D)
Mr. White, I'm sorry. They're
making me sing. But if you tell me
your order I'll bring it quick.

The audience is charmed by her and so is Gunnar.

WATTY
I can make it for a few scarce minutes
without a drink. Contrary to popular
opinion.

SCARLETT
Okaaay. This is gonna be
interesting. This is a poem I wrote
and Gunnar helped me put it to
music. So if it sucks, blame him.

Gunnar begins to play and Scarlett sings. She really sings.

SCARLETT (CONT'D)
(singing)
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D HANG MY HAT
RIGHT THERE, IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D
FOLLOW YOU UP THE STAIRS

It only takes a moment for everyone to realize that the magic
for which the Bluebird has become legend is taking place. Watty
White knows instantly, too. Gunnar sings harmony, and the
feeling is electric. It's not just the singing, it's the song.

THIS SONG PLAYS OVER THE REMAINING SCENES--

SCARLETT & GUNNAR (V.O.)
WHY DO I KEEP DRINKING, WASTING MY
TIME ON YOU? IF I DIDN'T KNOW
BETTER, BUT DAMN IT, I DO.

The door opens. Juliette is surprised to see him.

RANDY
Hey, doll.

55

CONTINUED:

55

He reaches out to touch her face.

JULIETTE
What are you doin' here?

RANDY
What do you mean?

Randy doesn't know how to react. She's ice cold.

JULIETTE
Don't come here without calling.

She closes the door in his face.

56

INT. JULIETTE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

56

She walks into the living room where Deacon sits with his guitar and some papers. She stands in front of him, takes the neck of the guitar from Deacon's hands and puts it aside. She climbs onto his lap, straddling him, and begins kissing his face. His hands stay at his side, but he lets her go on.

57

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM STAGE WINGS - NIGHT

57

A huge COLEMAN CARLISLE FOR MAYOR banner hangs. Rayna's band's equipment is set-up on stage. The room is packed. Backstage Coleman reviews his speech with a few aides. Another aide whispers something in his ear. He nods.

*

58

INT. PARKED CAR - NIGHT

58

Avery sits in the driver's seat as rain falls on the windshield. The car door opens and a woman gets in-- Jessie, the fiddle player from the Bluebird.

JESSIE
I thought you'd never call.

He leans in, kisses her-- she resists not at all, not ever.

59

INT. BLUEBIRD CAFÉ - NIGHT

59

Scarlett and Gunnar are lost in the song. And each other.

SCARLETT
OH YOU MIGHT AS WELL BE THE DEVIL,
KEEPING ME OUT PAST THREE

Watty takes a blackberry out of his pocket...

60 INT. SYMPHONY HALL LOBBY - NIGHT 60

The room is packed and TEDDY CONRAD FOR MAYOR swag is everywhere. Teddy is at the podium, remarkably at ease. Off to the side we see Tandy, tense as a cat.

 TEDDY
I will work to protect people of this
great city from the problems that I
arrogantly thought would never be mine.

Teddy has an endearing charm and self-deprecating style.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
Unfortunately, too often my lessons
have been learned the hard way, but
to quote Booker T. Washington --

The camera pulls back to reveal Lamar watching from a balcony above the room with his advisors.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
-- success is to be measured not so
much by the position we have
reached in life, but by the
obstacles we have overcome while
trying to succeed.

He's impressed with Teddy's performance. He smiles, satisfied.

61 INT. SYMPHONY HALL KITCHEN - NIGHT 61

Rayna is led by a female campaign worker and escorted by security. A MAKE-UP ARTIST powders her as she walks. They stop at a closed door and wait. Her iPhone RINGS. It reads "WW".

 RAYNA
Hey, Watty. I'm just getting ready to--

62 INT. BLUEBIRD CAFE - NIGHT 62

Watty covers his mouth as he whispers into the phone.

 WATTY
Rayna. Listen--

He holds the phone out towards the stage.

 SCARLETT
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER,
BUT DAMN IT I DO.

63 INT. SYMPHONY HALL KITCHEN - NIGHT 63

Rayna covers her other ear, straining to hear. She hears it. She also knows she's hearing something remarkable.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: 63

RAYNA
Watty, who is that?

64 INT. BLUEBIRD CAFE - NIGHT 64

WATTY
(whispering)
Did you hear that?

*

65 INT. SYMPHONY HALL KITCHEN - NIGHT 65

Rayna waves off the make-up artist and turns away.

RAYNA
Yes! I heard. What's that song?

66 INT. BLUEBIRD CAFE - NIGHT 66

WATTY
Call me later. I've got an idea.

SCARLETT & GUNNAR (V.O.)
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER,
BUT DAMN IT I DO

67 INT. SYMPHONY HALL KITCHEN - NIGHT 67

The make-up artist does last minute touch-ups. Rayna slips her phone back into her pocket, transported.

68 INT. SYMPHONY HALL LOBBY - NIGHT 68

Rayna enters the crowded room to a cheer. A path clears for her to make her way to the stage.

TEDDY
And many of you already know my wife, my
better half, the love of my life, the
mother of my two beautiful daughters,
Maddie and Daphne, the great, the one,
the only-- Rayna Jaymes!!

*

As she steps onto the stage, the room explodes into thousands of flashes of light. Joining Teddy, Rayna turns on her megawatt smile. She waves to the cheering crowd. She kisses Teddy like a loving wife. Tandy stands on the side of the stage. Rayna sees her and Tandy nods to say you made the right choice. Rayna turns back to the audience, CAMERA FLASHES light the room. They are all smiles like a happy couple. The crowd cheers.

END OF SHOW