

The Company

"Inaction Reaction"

by
Sarah-Jane Sheppard

TEASER

FADE TO:

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - VI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The full moon is seen through a closed bedroom window. The CAMERA slowly PANS DOWN and ACROSS to reveal VI MORGAN'S sleeping form.

The bedroom door CREAKS OPEN, a shaft of unnatural light beams onto Vi's face. She stirs and opens her eyes blearily.

VI

What... What is it? Is it morning?

CAM MORGAN stands in the doorway. He wears his pajamas but looks wide awake.

CAM

Get up. You're not gonna believe this...

He scampers away. Vi, confused, sits up slowly.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Vi stumbles out into the hallway, dressed in a pair of plain pajamas. Her feet are bare.

Cam stands a little way down the hall, his hand on the doorknob to his room. He motions her forward with the other hand.

CAM

Come on.

He pushes open the door, steps inside, and is swallowed by the darkness. Vi follows.

ANGLE ON HER FEET

She steps onto the blue carpet of Cam's room. As she walks, the carpet gradually becomes a hard, sticky plastic floor.

CRUNCH.

Vi stops. Her hand reaches down into frame and picks something up.

We FOLLOW HER MOVEMENT as she lifts the object up for closer inspection. It shimmers in the moonlight. It is a large piece of broken glass.

VI

Cam, be careful. There's glass in here. Did you break a beaker or something?

She turns and fumbles for the light switch. Her fingers find it and flick it on. She is in...

INT. LIQUOR SHOP - NIGHT

Vi is completely alone. She drops the glass - stunned.

VI

Cam?

(beat)

Where'd your room go?

There is the SOUND of a GUN BEING READIED. Vi, fearful, turns around slowly to see - -

- - ALISTAIR BENSON

Standing in front of the counter. He aims a gun directly at her face. With a cold smile, he says:

BENSON

Welcome to the team.

The bullet EXPLODES from the barrel of the gun and we:

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - VI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Where Vi, lying in bed, suddenly jolts awake. She's sweating and breathing heavily - obviously disturbed by the dream.

It takes her a moment to register a soft BUZZING sound is coming from somewhere in her room.

She reaches across to her night stand and plucks up her mobile phone. She quints at the screen... And groans.

After a moments hesitation, she accepts the call and puts it to her ear.

ANDREW (O.S.)

(filtered)

Whatcha doing?

EXT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - STREET - SAME

Andrew sits cross legged on the hood of his car. In the chill, he has tucked his hands as far as they will go into the sleeves of his jacket, clutching his mobile phone awkwardly in one hand.

INTERCUT:

Vi rolls her eyes and props herself up on one elbow. She speaks in a hushed whisper.

VI

Interviewing the Dali Lama. Go away.

ANDREW

We've got a meeting.

VI

I don't care. I'm sleeping.

ANDREW

Through your interview? Kinda rude, don't you think?

VI

Seriously, I'm not doing this now.

ANDREW

Stop screwing around. This is your job whether you like it or not. Now, either we go to collect our assignment or...

Vi sits up fully.

VI

Or what?

ANDREW

Or I start singing.

VI

But you can't sing.

Beat.

ANDREW

Exactly.

And off Vi's somewhat concerned expression, we CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - RECEPTION - LATER

With a sharp CHIME, the elevator doors open to reveal Andrew and Vi (who wears her pajamas and slippers). Neither of them look too happy to be there.

As they step out, they are ambushed by JENNA COOKE. The only other person in the room. Jenna looks tired - her business attire is rumpled and her hair is less than perfect.

JENNA

Finally!

Vi and Andrew move further into the room.

JENNA (CONT'D)

I've been waiting for over an hour.

ANDREW

Then maybe you should consider calling at a reasonable time. One that doesn't end with the letters A and M.

Jenna turns to Vi.

JENNA

Is there anything you'd like to say?

Vi yawns.

VI

I would but... sleepy.

Jenna turns and moves toward the conference room. She notices the other two aren't following. She turns back.

JENNA

Well?

ANDREW

Where is everybody? Where's Benson?

JENNA

At home. It's the night shift.

(beat)

You didn't think he lived here did you?

Vi and Andrew share a look. Obviously, they did.

JENNA (CONT'D)

Well, are we going to do this or not?

VI

Why are you here?

JENNA

I had work to do.

ANDREW

You always have work to do. You should just move into Domestic. Seriously, you wouldn't even have to commute.

VI

What's Domestic?

ANDREW

Living quarters in the building. I applied by apparently I didn't "qualify".

JENNA

You lied on your application.

ANDREW

And who the hell says I'm not a war veteran?

JENNA

Just come on!

She turns and stalks into the conference room. Andrew leans down to Vi.

ANDREW

(sing-song)

Looks like someone didn't have her Vegemite this morning.

Vi smirks.

INT. THE COMPANY - CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jenna sifts through a manila folder. She hands a piece of paper to Vi.

ANDREW

And that was so hard to do out there because... ?

JENNA

The conference room has a purpose. To give assignments - -

ANDREW

(to Vi)

Surprisingly, we've never had an actual conference in here.

JENNA

And when we don't use it for that purpose it becomes obsolete.

A beat.

ANDREW

Get some sleep!

VI

(reading paper)

Duke Jones.

(to Jenna)

Let me guess... cowboy?

JENNA

That's your job to find out.

(beat; sincere)

Look, I'm really sorry for waking you guys up. We only de-coded your assignment a couple of hours ago and it came with specific instructions to give it to you straight away.

VI

It's okay.

ANDREW

What part of "A" and "M" is okay? Man, you really are one of the team now.

Vi's face pales a little.

JENNA

So, you think you can start this assignment as soon as possible?

There's a pause and then -

VI

(insincere)

Yeah, totally. I'll get right on it.

Vi gives Jenna a weak smile.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. GARRETON ACADEMY - MORNING

Establishing shot. A BELL RINGS.

INT. GARRETON ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - MORNING

KIDS file in - chattering and laughing happily. Or at least as happily as high school kids going to class can be.

Among the group is Vi, SHANE EVANS, ERIN FOWLER and BIANCA PARRY. Bianca pushes past Vi as she heads to her desk at the back of the room. Vi ignores this as she collapses into her own - placing her head down on the top. Shane sits in the desk next to her.

The teacher, MR. DUFFY enters. He is the "angry teacher" from Episode 1x01.

MR. DUFFY

Alright, alright. I know you're all excited about catching up with friends and such. I'm sure that stretch between first period and now was unbearable but from this point all that matters is you sitting up - -

He throws a pen lid at Vi and the class chuckles as she sits up - startled.

MR. DUFFY (CONT'D)

- - Paying attention and listening to what I am about to say or I will fail you.

He lifts a cardboard box from the floor and SLAPS it onto his desk.

MR. DUFFY (CONT'D)

I had a dream. I had a dream that every person in this class had thought about, decided on, planned and submitted their proposal for this terms assignment.

The class starts to shuffle and murmur uncomfortably. Oh, yeah, there was something they forgot to do last weekend.

A confident (or is it stupid?) BOY leans back in his chair and smirks.

BOY

I had a dream that I dropped out of school to open an ice-cream factory but hey - I'm still here.

Mr. Duffy chuckles and then - -

MR. DUFFY

(deadpan)

Get out.

He points to the door and the Boy sighs, stands and leaves.

MR. DUFFY (CONT'D)

If your proposal is not in this box in the next five minutes I will design your assignment for you. I will include the elements of...

(counts on his fingers)

... Hard work, hours of research and the Garreton rest homes annual Shuffleboard tournament. Get to work.

The class does so and begin to talk amongst themselves. Shane leans over to Vi.

SHANE

What are you doing?

VI

About what?

SHANE

Society and Culture assignment.

No response.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Design an experiment around an aspect of the local community in which you can monitor the reactions of a catalyst from an outside environment.

Still nothing.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Stick a thing in a place and see what happens.

VI

Oh... Then... No.

SHANE

Vi, it's fifty percent of our final mark.

VI

And who's fault is that?

SHANE

What?

VI

Ugh! Sorry. I've just been... Sleep has been pretty much non-existent lately. And when I do get sleep I get woken up by nightmares or phone calls and...

She trails off. Knowing she's already said too much. Shane, however, seems to pick up on the "nightmares" part and takes out his own proposal sheet - scribbling her name at the top alongside his own.

SHANE

Here. We'll be partners.

Vi brightens - a little surprised at this gesture.

VI

Thank you so much, Shane. You're the best.

(re: Mr. Duffy)

When did he tell us about this assignment? I can't remember ever getting it.

(laughs)

I must have been dead.

Shane's face drops and Vi reacts to this.

VI (CONT'D)

(awkward)

I mean I... forgot.

Vi conspicuously pushes her pen off of the desk.

VI (CONT'D)

Oops.

As she bends down to pick it up, Bianca smoothly steps in her way as she makes her way to the front of the room. She slips her piece of paper into the box. Vi sits up.

VI (CONT'D)

Is it just me or are there some major hate vibes being sent my way?

As Bianca passes again, she deliberately glares at Vi.

SHANE

I think some just bounced off you
and poked me in the eye.

VI

I've tried talking to her and she
calls me a stalker. I saved her
life and she - -

SHANE

Wait. When did you save her life?

VI

When I... The other day, I was in
front of her at the coke machine
and I bought the last can and so
technically, I saved her from
rotting her teeth which would
then mean that she couldn't eat
or at least she'd be too
embarrassed to go out in public
to buy, like, mushy food and
stuff. Therefore, you could say
that I saved her from death by
starvation.

A beat.

SHANE

I'm gonna hand this in.

He stands and Vi sighs. She's way too tired to handle this
right now. She leans forward again, her forehead hitting the
desk top.

EXT. GARRETON ACADEMY - LUNCH COURT - LATER

Vi exits the building and steps into the sunlight. As she
makes her way over to her usual lunch table, we notice that
she holds no lunch. This is remedied moments later when Cam
appears at her side. He shoves a 'Disney Princess' lunch box
at her rather sourly.

CAM

Here.

Vi looks down at the girly design.

VI

I'm trying to come up with
something witty but... no.

CAM
You left before mum could give
you money for lunch so she made
you some.

VI
Do I even own a Disney Princess
lunch box?

Off Cam's nervous fidgeting...

VI (CONT'D)
(incredulous)
Is this yours?

CAM
(defensive)
It's the perfect size for my
magnifying glasses! Shut up!

Vi smiles.

VI
Not a word.

CAM
I already scarred my reputation
enough by carrying it across the
yard for you.

Vi grins wider - obviously not being able to help herself.

VI
You mean your reputation of itty-
bitty science geek? Aww.

CAM
And I thought you were the nice
sister.

Vi throws her arms around him and hugs him tightly. Cam
squirms and tries to wriggle away.

VI
I'm sorry, Cam.

CAM
Stop! Get off!

Struggling free, he straightens his tie and glares at her.

CAM (CONT'D)
This is the last time I offer to
help you!

He leaves.

VI
 (calling)
 Apology accepted, then?

Vi sits down and opens the lunch box to find a neatly folded note on top of a sandwich, apple and small bottle of juice. Vi takes the note and opens it.

It reads, "Hope you're feeling OK. Call if you need anything. Love, Mum. XOXO".

Vi looks touched for a moment but overcomes this and scrunches up the note - tossing it back inside the lunch box.

Then, Andrew slides smoothly into the seat across from her.

ANDREW
 The Happy Vampire lunch special ends at one. If we hurry, we can make it.

Vi looks shocked.

VI
 I don't get it. Do you not have a life? Family, pets, cactus - anything? There has to be something besides me that you can annoy.

ANDREW
 I have a cat. His name's Stuart. He's a biter, though. Gets sick of me pretty easily.

VI
 I wonder why.

Andrew raps his knuckles impatiently on the table top.

ANDREW
 So, come on. Let's go.

VI
 Uh... School. Hello!

ANDREW
 Uh... Assignment. Hello!

VI
 I can't.

ANDREW
 Meaning?

VI

I have classes and friends -
Well, not in the plural - but
there are people who are
expecting me to be in school and
not go running all over town on
some insane scavenger hunt from
the beyond. I can't just drop
everything when a girl with a God
complex hands me a piece of
paper.

ANDREW

You'd be surprised at what you
can do when Signs are involved.

Vi looks around.

VI

Well, I don't see any Signs. If
you want to start the assignment
so badly, you do it.

She pulls the assignment sheet from her pocket and hands it
to him. Andrew reacts, taking it, before he thinks.

ANDREW

But it's yours.

VI

I don't care.

Frustrated, Andrew stands.

ANDREW

Benson's gonna be pissed.

VI

And who's he gonna blame? I'm the
newbie, remember?

ANDREW

And I'm not your scape goat. Two
assignments in the bag and you're
freaking out now? God, Violet -
What's the matter?

A beat. Vi takes a deep, shaky breath.

VI

The matter is you being here. In
my school. Outside my house.
There's my life and there's the
Company - they don't mix and I
don't want them to.

Mr. Duffy approaches.

MR. DUFFY

(to Andrew)

Hello, My name is Mr. Duffy -
Garreton Academy's Deputy
Principal. And you are?

Andrew - taken by surprise - is lost for words. He throws
Vi a desperate glance, asking for help.

VI

He just wandered in here.
(pointedly; looking at
Andrew)
I think he's drunk.

Mr. Duffy goes into serious mode, taking Andrew by the arm.

ANDREW

Hey, I'm not - -

MR. DUFFY

I'm going to have to ask you to
leave the premises, Sir. This is
private property.

Andrew glares at Vi and reluctantly allows himself to be
led away. Vi looks down and un-scrunches the note from her
mother - possibly hoping to find some comfort in it.

Instead, she sees a Sign, "Find Duke Jones".

ANGLE ON VI

We look up at her from inside the lunch box as she tears up
the paper and throws in over us. Then, she SLAMS the lid
closed - leaving us in darkness.

EXT. GARRETON CITY CENTRE - AFTERNOON

A BUS rolls down the street lined by busy shops - some
quaint and charming, others obviously part of corporate
chains.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Vi and Shane sit on a two seater on the partially full bus
with Vi next to the window. They both wear casual clothes
and Shane has a box on his lap. Vi stares out of the
window.

SHANE

Vi?

VI

Hmmm?

She turns to him.

SHANE

About today... I didn't mean to act so weird when... What I mean to say is... Ah...

VI

Shane, before you go any further - Can this conversation have sub-headings and footnotes because I'm not entirely sure what page we're on.

SHANE

(awkward)

The "I must have been dead" thing.

VI

(realising)

Ah.

SHANE

(quickly)

I kind of froze up and I don't want you to think that I'm freaked or that I think you're weird or anything.

VI

I'm not weird? News to me.

SHANE

C'mon, be serious.

VI

I totally am. Or... Not really but you've gotta understand that not being serious is how I be serious now.

(beat)

I get that we aren't exactly onto death-joke territory yet. So, my bad.

SHANE

You scare me sometimes.

VI

"You're not weird but you scare the hell outta me". Oh, that's better.

SHANE

It scares me that I don't know what you're thinking.

(MORE)

SHANE (CONT'D)

That I don't know when you're upset or freaked out about what happened because you act like every thing's normal. Like it never happened.

A beat.

VI

Maybe that's for the best because that was then and this is now. And now is about me being me. Perfectly normal.

She gives him a weak smile. The PASSENGER in front of them stands up to move towards the bus doors. Their back of their denim jacket has the words "Find Duke Jones" stitched in silver thread. Vi's eyes widen and she quickly averts her gaze - turning to stare out of the window.

Outside, standing on the footpath is a HOMELESS MAN in grubby, stained clothing. He stands on a wooden box - YELLING at the passers by. His words, however, are blocked by the windows of the bus.

He holds a cardboard sign which reads, "Find Duke Jones And The World Is Saved - Jr 50:22-23".

Vi turns back to Shane.

VI (CONT'D)

Our stop is how soon?

The bus jerks to a shaky stop and the doors HISS as they slide open.

SHANE

Right here.

He stands.

EXT. CITY STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The bus rumbles away as Vi and Shane move further onto the footpath. Shane leads them right past the raving Homeless Man.

Walking further down the street, Shane stops outside of a narrow shop - slotted in between a fashion boutique and an electronics store. It looks kind of plain with only one glass window which is taken up almost entirely by flyers and music posters.

VI

Shane, I'm all for spontaneous shopping but I actually think Mr. Duffy is capable of vaporising students with only a sideways glance. Assignment? Kinda more important than buying... Whatever it is that they sell here. By the way, where is here?

Shane smiles and puts one hand on the door knob.

SHANE

Violet Morgan, welcome to my sanctuary.

He pushes open the door and stands aside for Vi to enter. He follows after her. As the door swings closed, we PAN UP to reveal the sign above the shop - "Wicker Records".

INT. WICKER RECORDS - MAIN ROOM

"Aside" by The Weakerthans is heard over the sound system and we realise that this is possibly the coolest music shop we will ever see. Vi's mouth gapes open in shock as she turns around in a circle - taking everything in.

It has two levels, the second is almost a loft and is reached by a curved wrought iron staircase. Spread around the main floor are large bins and tables overflowing with cases of CDs and vinyl records. There are some guitars hanging on one wall with another covered in scrawled graffiti and messages.

Towards the back and down a few steps, is a tiny Cafe and lounge and off to one side of the entrance is the front counter.

VI

Wow...

SHANE

I know.

VI

How did I not know about this place? Back in Sydney, I had like a radar or something but... Man...

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

I sense a newbie to the Wicker.

JAMISON "JIMMY" EVANS nears the register carrying a stack of CDs. He looks a lot like Shane although at twenty-six, still doesn't seem to have lost all of his puppy fat. He places the CDs onto the register and turns to study Vi.

JIMMY
 You think she's good enough for
 us, Mini-Evans?

SHANE
 Totally.

JIMMY
 (to Vi)
 Hmm... Okay, new girl. Death Cab
 for Cutie?

VI
 (unsure)
 Love?

JIMMY
 Ah but where did you first hear
 them? From that loveable O.C
 scamp, Seth Cohen, or an
 underground Uni radio station?

VI
 Mixed Tape that some guy made for
 my sister before she used it for
 her Justin Timberlake road trip
 mix.

A beat.

JIMMY
 (to Shane)
 She's in.
 (to Vi; shaking her
 hand)
 I'm Jimmy Evans - music
 enthusiast and owner of this fine
 establishment.

VI
 Evans? So you guys are... ?

JIMMY
 Cousins. Yep, hard to believe one
 family could strike gold on two
 separate occasions but we,
 m'lady, are living proof.

SHANE
 Yeah, yeah. Stop harassing my
 friend and let us do our work.

JIMMY

You know where the heartbeat is.
I'll be helping customers,
generally lurking, you know, the
usual. Yell "fire" if you need
anything.

He starts to move away but turns back.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Also yell, "fire" if there's
actually a fire 'cause... Well...
Pretty.

Shane nods and Jimmy heads to the back of the shop. Shane
leads the way up the staircase.

VI

The heartbeat?

SHANE

Sound system. He can come off as
a bit of a freak but music is his
life. It's his pulse. And for the
next two weeks - it's gonna be
our catalyst.

He throws Vi a knowing smile as they reach the upper level.

INT. WICKER RECORDS - UPSTAIRS - LATER

Vi sits cross legged on the floor sorting through the box
of burned CDs Shane brought along. Shane stands over the
sound console by the wall, fiddling with buttons and so
forth.

From their vantage point, they can view almost the entire
store.

Vi studies the CDs closer, reading the hand written labels.

VI

I try not to judge things by
their cover or well... Argyle
vests... But the customers of
Wicker Records don't exactly
strike me as lovers of...

(re: CDs)

... Kylie Minogue or JayZ.

SHANE

Exactly. This music is our
catalyst.

(MORE)

SHANE (CONT'D)

We expose this to a bunch of elitist indie-rockers who only care about "true" independent music and scorn everything even a tiny bit mainstream from dance-punk to hip-hop and then, observe and record the results.

VI

You want to time how long it takes your cousin to go out of business?

(beat)

And he agreed to this?

Shane shrugs.

SHANE

What can I say? He's insane.

He takes a CD from Vi's hands and places it into the CD player. The previous indie-rock tune immediately cuts out and is replaced by "I'm Not OK (I Promise)" by My Chemical Romance.

A few cries of protests come up and Shane smiles, writing this down on a clipboard. Vi looks back to the CDs but finds that in their spread out pattern, the writing on each has been replaced by a letter which together spells out "Duke Jones".

We PAN OVER Vi, past Shane and down over the railing as the song follows us into the next scene.

FADE TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - SAME TIME

ANGLE ON TELEPHONE BOOTH

With the door open. Andrew stands inside, his mobile phone pressed to his ear - and flips through the worn telephone book which is chained to the booth.

ANDREW

(into phone)

Are you sure there's no Duke Jones living there?

(listens)

Yes, you told me all the names of your cats already. But I want to know about Duke.

(listens)

No, not "Ducky". Look, is there a human being that lives in your house named Duke Jones?

(listens)

Yeah, well, same to you lady.

He hangs up and takes a pen from behind his ear which he uses to cross off another name.

A BUSINESS MAN walks up to the phone booth. When he spots Andrew inside, he stands aside to wait patiently but then notices that Andrew isn't even using the actual phone.

Andrew starts to dial another number from the book.

BUSINESS MAN
 (to Andrew; re:pay-
 phone)
 Hey, are you using that?

Andrew glances from the pay-phone to the man.

ANDREW
 Yeah, yeah.

BUSINESS MAN
 But you're on your mobile.

ANDREW
 Good observation. If you used
 your amazing abilities a little
 more, you'd also see that I'm
 using this - -
 (shakes phone book)
 Which is attached to that.
 (taps the top of the pay
 phone)
 Now, if you don't mind - -

The person on the other end of Andrew's call picks up.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Uh, hello? Hi. Is there a D.
 Jones living there by any chance?
 (listens; optimistic)
 Oh, there is? Duke?
 (listens; disappointed)
 Oh. Daisy. Thanks anyway.

He hangs up.

BUSINESS MAN
 (impatient)
 Are you done?

Andrew scans the page.

ANDREW
 Eight more "Jones" in Garreton.
 So.. Nope.
 (beat)
 Unless...

BUSINESS MAN
Unless what?

ANDREW
Your name wouldn't happen to be
Duke Jones, would it?

BUSINESS MAN
If it were, would you let me use
the phone?

ANDREW
(thinks)
Yes.

BUSINESS MAN
Yep, I'm Duke. Nice to meet you.

A beat. Andrew slides the door closed. The Business Man
throws his arms up in frustration and walks away.

Inside the phone booth, Andrew looks down at the page again
and seems overwhelmed with this hard work he's doing for
Vi's sake. Fed up, he closes the book.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Vi enters. She's tired as hell and definitely showing it.
She's about to head up the stairs when CAROLINE MORGAN
calls out.

CAROLINE (O.S.)
Vi? Is that you?

VI
No!

CAROLINE (O.S.)
Can you come here a minute?

Vi sighs.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

PETER MORGAN stands over the stove, stirring a bubbling pot
of sauce while occasionally checking the recipe in a cook
book, propped up on a stand next to him. Caroline sits at
the kitchen table, sorting out some bills.

PETER
Hey, Vi-Pie.

CAROLINE
You're back late.

VI

I was doing an assign...

(beat)

A project with Shane.

CAROLINE

Alright but I don't want you to wear yourself out.

VI

I'm fine.

Caroline stands and walks over to the stove. As she talks she tips some herbs into the pot and takes the spoon from Peter, stirring.

CAROLINE

I know, I know. But you haven't been sleeping recently.

(quickly)

I haven't been spying.

(then)

I can hear you moving around and your light's always on. You know you can always talk to me about anything, right?

She passes the spoon back to Peter but he misses it and it falls into the pot. The sauce splashes up and burns Peter's hand. He cried out in pain and knocks the cooking book off of the table.

PETER

Bloody hell!

Kicking the cooking book accidentally, it skitters across the floor to Vi's feet. She picks it up and closes it to the front cover which reads, "How to cook Duke Jones".

Peter and Caroline are tending to his burn.

CAROLINE

Vi, run upstairs and get the - -

She turns but Vi is gone - the cook book lying face down on the floor.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. THE COMPANY - BENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

ALISTAIR BENSON stands at the window looking out onto a sunny city sky. Reaching down, he presses a button on the window sill which changes the view to grey and overcast - just beginning to sprinkle with rain.

Behind him, Jenna enters the room. She knocks lightly on the open door.

JENNA

It was supposed to be sunny today.

Benson turns and moves to his desk. He sits down.

BENSON

Never trust the weather reports, my dear. They'll lie to you.

Jenna hands him some files from a folder.

JENNA

Hopefully these reports won't. Control Centre status, assignment productivity. The usual.

BENSON

Thank you, Jenna.

She turns to go but stops - her back still to Benson.

BENSON (CONT'D)

Is there something else?

Jenna turns to him, shakes her head and smiles. She walks toward the door but stops. Turning around, she speaks...

JENNA

Actually...

BENSON

Yes?

JENNA

I was just thinking about Violet... Morgan.

BENSON

Yes, what about her?

JENNA

Well, I'm worried about her. It's nothing big, it's just...

(MORE)

JENNA (CONT'D)

I know it's been a month since she died but I'm not so sure she's taking the adjustment to working here very well.

BENSON

You think Andrew might be saying - -

JENNA

No. Andrew's fine. He's... Andrew but he's fine. I just think that maybe... It was a mistake to hire her. She's only sixteen.

BENSON

I acknowledge that you have concerns, Jenna, but there's really nothing I can do. Are you suggesting I place another employee as Violet's mentor?

JENNA

I don't know what I'm suggesting. I was just... It's nothing. I'm sorry... She'll come around and I'm sure Andrew's doing a great job. I'm... I'll just...

Giving Benson a weak smile, Jenna quickly bows out of the room and closes the door behind her.

Benson waits for a moment - almost sure she will reappear again. When she doesn't, he looks down to the files and gets to work.

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Andrew sits on the floor in front of the TV holding a video game controller. His concentration from the game is broken by the RING of his mobile phone. Fumbling with one hand, he picks up the phone and presses it to his ear with his shoulder - continuing to play.

ANDREW

Yeeeah?

INT. THE COMPANY - CONTROL CENTRE - SAME TIME

Jenna walks around the lower level, keeping one eye on the busy workers as she speaks.

JENNA

Andrew?

ANDREW

(filtered)

That's me. Who's this?

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

JENNA
(filtered)
It's Jenna.

Andrew freezes.

ANDREW
I didn't do it.

JENNA
(filtered)
Didn't do what?

ANDREW
Whatever Benson's accusing me of.
I've been home all day. I swear.

INT. THE COMPANY - CONTROL CENTRE - CONTINUOUS

JENNA
Home? But what about your
assignment? What about Violet?

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Andrew winces. Smooth.

ANDREW
Oh, well... Yeah. I meant "home" as
in... outside. Because... nature is
my home. Because I'm... outside...
doing the assignment.

JENNA
(filtered; not buying
it)
Andrew, where is she?

Andrew shrugs. He continues to play the video game.

ANDREW
I dunno. Smashing letter boxes,
sticking coins to the footpath -
doing teenager stuff.

INT. THE COMPANY - CONTROL CENTRE - CONTINUOUS

JENNA
And the assignment?

ANDREW
(filtered)
That's kind of... on hold.

JENNA

On... hold...

ANDREW

(filtered)

Y'see... Vi kinda ditched me and I don't take rejection too well. I tried. I really did.

JENNA

That assignment was urgent - a top priority. And right now, I bet you're at home playing some stupid video game.

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Andrew puts down the controller and grabs the remote, flicking the TV onto a commercial station.

ANDREW

For your information I'm actually watching... Sex and the City!? Gah!

Alarmed - he switches the TV off and tosses the remote across the room. Then, he backs away from the television set.

INT. THE COMPANY - CONTROL CENTRE - CONTINUOUS

Jenna closes her eyes and rubs her forehead.

JENNA

(almost to herself)

I can't believe I defended you to him.

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

ANDREW

Huh?

JENNA

(filtered)

Look, just find Vi and do the assignment or I'll... I'll report you.

ANDREW

You wouldn't.

INT. THE COMPANY - CONTROL CENTRE - CONTINUOUS

JENNA

Try me.

She angrily hangs up.

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

ANDREW
 (muttering)
 Goddamn goody-two-shoes. Thinks
 she's gonna report me. I'll report
 her!

The phone RINGS.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 What?

INT. THE COMPANY - CONTROL CENTRE - CONTINUOUS

Jenna is still in the Control Centre.

JENNA
 And stop muttering about me under
 your breath.

She hangs up again.

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

He stares at the phone in mild shock and surprise.

INT. WICKER RECORDS - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The front door is pushed open and Vi enters, weighed down with a plastic crate filled with CDs. She's tired - we can tell by her disheveled appearance and dark circles underneath her eyes. She stops, leaning against the open door to catch her breath.

The "OPEN" sign next to her head reads, "DUKE". Vi's sees it and grits her teeth.

Moving further into the store, she stifles a yawn as she heads up the stairs. Stumbling on the first step, Jimmy appears at her side - catching her arm.

JIMMY
 Careful there, Girl-Shane.

VI
 (not amused)
 My name is Vi.

JIMMY
 (shrugs)
 Whatevs.

Vi heads up the stairs and THREE GIRLS approach Jimmy. On appearance, they are hybrids of Sophie George and Bianca Parry. You know the type.

GIRL #1
Do you have the new Pussycat
Dolls single?

JIMMY
(points)
It's over there.

The Girl follows his finger...

GIRL #2
But that's the exit.

JIMMY
Exactly.

He walks away, leaving them to gape in shock at his rudeness.

INT. WICKER RECORDS - UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Vi reaches Shane at the music console and DROPS the crate on the ground - having little care for its contents.

SHANE
Whoa, hey. Are you okay?

VI
No. I mean... Yes.
(annoyed)
I'm here, aren't I?

SHANE
Not quite sure about that one.

Crossing her arms, Vi turns away and looks around the store - eager for a change of subject.

VI
How's the experiment going?

Shane picks up the clipboard and looks over his notes.

SHANE
Still in the early stages.
Complaints increased twenty percent when I spun Madonna's new single, eight people have walked out - one without paying for their CD. And someone threw a muffin at me.

VI
I'm surprised Jimmy hasn't done anything yet.

SHANE

Guess who's muffin it was?

VI

Oh.

(beat)

I'm still trying to figure out what you hope to achieve from all of this. You found out that some people don't like certain types of music - big whoop. Mr Duffy doesn't hand out A's for having a brain.

Shane smiles and turns back to the sound equipment, shifting through a pile of CDs in front of him. Something catches Vi's attention.

SHANE

Have patience, young one. The truth will reveal itself.

OVER VI'S SHOULDER we see what she's looking at. POSTERS stuck up along the opposite wall all plainly read, "FIND DUKE JONES" where the band name or record title should be.

VI

(muttered)

That's what I'm afraid of.

Shane presses "PLAY" and "Are You Feeling My Disco?" by Ley Royal Scam resonates throughout the store.

Vi and Shane watch as, down below, a COUPLE groan in annoyance and make a hasty move for the exit. Jimmy, standing at the register, looks up at Shane and pulls an EAR PLUG from one ear.

He cocks his head, listening to the music. Then, he shakes his head in frustration and replaces the ear plug.

VI (CONT'D)

(to Shane)

I don't think they're feeling your disco.

SHANE

Can you record that for me?

Vi grabs the clipboard which rests next the pile of CDs on the music console. She stops - the entire page now filled up with a continuous flow of "Find Duke Jones, Find Duke Jones, Find Duke Jones", scrawled in Shane's messy handwriting.

She shakes her head, taking a few steps backwards. That's it. She can't take it anymore. Turning, she hurries down the stairs.

SHANE (CONT'D)
(concerned)
Where are you going?

INT. WICKER RECORDS - MAIN ROOM

Reaching the lower level, she bumps into Jimmy with an arm full of record release posters for one underground indie-band or another.

The image is of a DOG barking - the speech bubble protruding from its mouth advertises the release date.

JIMMY
Sorry, Girl-Shane. I wasn't - -

The Dog is telling Vi to, "Find Duke Jones: RIGHT NOW!".

VI
No!

She RIPS the posters from his arms and THROWS them to the ground. Turning, she yanks open the door and sprints outside. Jimmy looks up at Shane as he stands halfway down the stairs, frozen in shock.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

The rapid beats and harsh vocals of "Are You Feeling My Disco?" continue to play as Vi runs, pushing her way through groups of SHOPPERS.

Everywhere she looks there are more SIGNS. Every shop sign - every street sign all say the same thing. She's so distracted that - -

WHAMM! She goes sprawling to the ground after a head on collision.

Erin, the person she ran into, leans down to help her while Bianca watches on in disgust.

ERIN
Vi! Are you alright?

VI
(distracted)
Get away from me.

She shrugs him off and clambers to her feet - taking off again. Bianca turns to Erin.

BIANCA

Did I tell you she was a freak or
what?

Erin's expression suggests he doesn't exactly hold the same opinion.

EXT. CITY STREET / RESIDENTIAL AREA - CONTINUOUS

Vi's still sprinting but the shops and cafe's have made way for houses, wider streets and far less people. Vi slows and leans down - taking in deep gulping breaths of air. Looking up, she sees street sign reading, "Jones Street".

VI

(almost defeated)

God, just leave me alone!

She starts to jog, veering off the main road and ducking through various backyards until she can't go any further and collapses against a backyard fence.

The music ends. Everything is quiet except for her shallow breathing.

She opens her eyes and...

VI'S P.O.V

... Sees the barrel of a SHOT GUN AIMED RIGHT IN HER FACE.

BACK TO SCENE

An ELDERLY MAN stands over her - the weapon held tight in his hands. He rests on a cane - clutched in his other hand. He's a good shot but from this close that doesn't really matter, anyway.

MAN

Don't move a muscle. It's loaded
and I will shoot you.

VI

I...I'm... Please... Don't.

MAN

Stay right where you are. I'm
calling the police.

The shot gun lowers as he tucks his cane under one arm and fumbles for a cordless phone jammed into his belt. Vi doesn't waste any time and springs up - dashing around the side of the house.

MAN (CONT'D)

Hey!

INT. MAN'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - SECONDS LATER

She's almost at the footpath when a "FOR SALE" sign across the street tells her to "Look Up" and, without thinking, she does so.

Tripping over a broken garden gnome, Vi hits the ground. There is a beat and she groggily lifts her head to see the Man's letter box.

"Jones" is printed on the side. Clear as day. Something clicks in her mind and, as she stands, she knows that this isn't a Sign.

Glancing around, the Man is nowhere to be seen. Vi pulls open the letter box and digs around inside - taking out a stack of letters. Sifting through them, she sees that they are all addressed to "Mr. Duke Jones".

The Man - or rather DUKE JONES - comes around the side of the house.

DUKE

Bloody kid! Get outta there!

Vi looks up, startled, and takes off down the street - with the letters still clenched in her hand.

EXT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - FRONT PORCH - LATER

Vi nears the front door but stops when she hears MUFFLED VOICES coming from inside. Creeping around to the window, she peers inside where she sees Shane talking to Caroline and Peter in the dining room.

Turning, Vi heads around the back.

EXT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

As she moves across the lawn towards the back porch - -

CAM (O.S.)

I think I've figured it out.

Vi jerks to a stop.

VI

Cam? Where are you?

Cam stands from behind a bush next to the house. His clothes are dirty and he holds a large glass jar in one hand. It's half filled with dirt.

CAM

Here.

He sits down on the steps leading up to the back porch and wipes his muddy hands on his pants - not getting them any cleaner.

VI
What have you figured out?

CAM
Your problem.

VI
I don't have a problem.

CAM
Vi, I'm eleven. I'm not an idiot.

Vi sits down next to him.

VI
(re: jar)
What is that?

CAM
Stop trying to change the subject.

VI
You haven't given me a subject to change.

CAM
You're afraid.

VI
And the subject has arrived.

Cam holds the jar up - studying it - and we see that there are EARTH WORMS wriggling through the dirt, pressed up against the glass.

CAM
You should be afraid. It's natural. Every living creature feels fear on some level. It's how they survive - avoid predators. If they didn't - they'd be dead. Eaten alive or squished under the shoe of some oblivious giant.

VI
I'm not afraid.

CAM
(not listening to her)
However, a rejection of fear...
An outright denial...
(MORE)

CAM (CONT'D)

Doesn't make up for the fact that fear exists. It simply covers it up. You bury it in the dirt but it keeps moving, keeps digging. Eventually, it'll break the surface again whether you want it to or not.

VI

Stop looking at the jar, Cam.

She stands and Cam turns to her.

VI (CONT'D)

Thanks for your concern but you really have no idea what you're talking about.

Moving up the steps, she pauses and turns. Looking down at her brother...

VI (CONT'D)

I thought you weren't going to help me anymore.

CAM

I'm not. I'm just... observing.

He turns back to the jar and Vi reaches the back door.

CAM (CONT'D)

Your friend's inside. He's worried.

And as she enters the house...

VI

Yeah, everyone's just so worried.

Cam stares intently at the jar but his mind is elsewhere.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Vi walks alone. She is dressed in her school uniform and carries her school bag lazily over one shoulder.

Andrew's car comes SCREECHING to a halt next to her. Vi stops, startled.

We FOLLOW Andrew as he climbs out of the car.

ANDREW

(ranting)

I don't care about your life. I don't care about your education. I pretty much don't care about you at all - except when you're making life hard for me. So, this is how it's gonna work. We are going to do your lame assignment whether you like it or - -

He reaches the footpath...

... only to hear a CAR DOOR CLOSING and looks around to see Vi seated calmly in the passengers seat.

She looks over at him and raises her eyebrows.

Off Andrew's stunned expression - -

CUT TO:

INT. ANDREW'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

They both sit in silence. As he drives, Andrew fidgets in his seat - obviously unnerved by Vi's calm demeanor. Finally...

ANDREW

Vi - -

VI

(interrupting)

Mr. Duke T. Jones. Twenty-four Rose Court, Henley. It's the next suburb over.

ANDREW

(irritated)

I know where Henley is.

(then)

How do you know - - ?

Vi holds up the letters she stole from Duke's mailbox.

Andrew glances at her nervously and then looks back to the road.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - CONTINUOUS

Shane pauses at a street corner, preparing to cross, when Andrew's car rounds the corner and drives right by him.

Shane does a double take as he spots Vi - or at least someone who looks a lot like her - sitting in the passengers seat.

EXT. DUKE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - LATER

Vi walks up the front path and steps onto the porch. Andrew hurries after her.

As they reach the steps, he jogs faster and darts in front of her - forcing her to stop moving.

ANDREW

Vi, can you just... stop. Please.

Vi gives him a bored look.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

(re: her expression)

And can you not do that?

VI

What?

ANDREW

I wanted to apologize.

VI

You mean for telling me that I'm an insignificant aspect of your life and there's no way in hell you'd ever care about my opinions or my feelings or - - ?

ANDREW

Okay, okay. I feel like crap. Mission accomplished.

VI

Good.

She steps around him and stands at the front door. A beat.

ANDREW

Or knocking is always an option.

VI

That depends.

ANDREW

On?

VI

On whether his shot gun's still loaded.

And just before Andrew can explode into a string of expletives, the front door swings open and Duke stands in front of them - glaring viciously.

DUKE

What the hell are you doing? You two yammering away with no consideration for a man's bloody privacy. I don't care about spiritual enlightenment, I don't care about starving pandas in wherever-the-bloody-hell panda's live. I don't care about anything either of you are trying to sell!

VI

(to Andrew; under her breath)
Sounds familiar.

DUKE

You can just - -
(realising)
Hang on... It's you! You little thief! Give me back my bloody mail! You come to steal the entire letter box now? How about that rock over there? Take your fancy?

Vi promptly hands over the letters.

VI

I didn't read them.

Duke glances over the letters before stepping back and SLAMMING the door in her face.

Vi looks to Andrew. Then, KNOCKS on the door. After a beat, it opens a crack and Duke peers out.

DUKE

Go away!

VI

I just wanted to... Uh...

She looks over her shoulder at Andrew. He steps forward.

ANDREW

Your telephone! We needed to make a call.

VI

Uh, yeah. His car broke down.

DUKE

Ask the neighbors.

He moves to close the door but Andrew jumps forward and blocks the entrance.

ANDREW

We did. They're not home.

VI

Darn.

DUKE

I don't let thieves use my phone. Now, get off my porch or I'm calling the police!

Vi and Andrew are stumped. Then...

VI

Fine. I want you to call the police. Then we can all have a nice little chat about your habit of pointing guns at the heads of sixteen year old girls.

A beat. Duke sighs and stands aside to let them in.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL

He grabs the phone off the hall stand and hands it to Andrew. Duke points at his watch.

DUKE

One call. Three dollars a minute. An extra dollar fifty for every thirty seconds after that.

Turning, he walks through a doorway into the living room.

VI

(to Andrew)

What now?

ANDREW

You talk to him. I'll... call a tow truck.

VI

I don't wanna talk to him! You talk to him!

ANDREW

This is your assignment.

VI

And I don't even want to do it! Listen, the guy's obviously a psycho. I'm not good with psychos. Psycho's plus guns equals bloody wounds and elevators. Not exactly a happy place for me.

DUKE (O.S.)

Twenty five seconds!

ANDREW

Five minutes. I'm right here.

VI

And they say gallantry is dead.

ANDREW

I think its chivalry.

VI

It was a joint funeral.

She follows Duke.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Duke is in his armchair in front of the TV. He's looking through his mail.

DUKE

You'd better not have opened anything.

VI

I said I didn't.

DUKE

Like I'm gonna believe a thief.

Vi holds out her hand.

VI

I'm Violet, by the way. Violet Morgan.

DUKE

(yelling to Andrew)
Two minutes!

Vi turns, pretending to have reached out her hand to touch the top of another armchair. Only to realise that the "armchair" is a STUFFED KANGAROO.

VI
(cheerful)
Oh!

And as she realises that it's actually DEAD and not a toy as she first thought...

VI (CONT'D)
(horrified)
Oh!

Duke looks over. Vi plasters on a cheesy grin. She tentatively pats the kangaroo's head - visibly flinching as she does so.

VI (CONT'D)
I like your kangaroo. It's very... realistic. Er... Not that I'm saying that it's not real. I mean, it's not like I think you somehow faked a whole kangaroo or anything. It's not like you could anyway.
(quickly)
I don't mean that you're not smart enough! It's just that you'd need some kind of laboratory or something...
(beat)
It's very nice.

DUKE
It's dead.

VI
So?

DUKE
You like touching dead things?

Vi realises that she's been stroking the dead animal all this time and yanks her hand away.

VI
Like them? No.
(then; to herself)
Forced into a work environment with them? That's a whole other wall of mounted wildlife.

She moves away from the kangaroo and starts wandering around the room. It looks like a normal living room. A bit untidy but very "homey".

There is a couch, Duke's armchair and a mantle filled with nick-nacks over an old disused fireplace.

DUKE
(yelling to Andrew)
Four minutes!

VI
So, Duke. Tell me about yourself.

Duke glares and picks up a TV guide off the coffee table in front of him. Vi moves towards the couch and sits down. She picks up another TV guide - this one about three months old - and sighs as she begins to flip through it.

VI (CONT'D)
(awkward; reading)
Heh. That Stewie Griffin. What a crack up.

She turns the page.

ANGLE ON TV GUIDE PAGE

Every time slot has been replaced with the saying, "A picture says a thousand words".

BACK TO VI

VI (CONT'D)
(muttered)
I'm so glad I have cable.

She looks up and scans the room - her eyes landing on the only picture she can see. An old photograph on the mantle piece. Duke watches her, suspicious, as she stands and moves towards it.

As Vi picks up the frame, we see:

Duke and THREE ELDERLY MEN standing in a garden area outside of a white building. Duke is in a wheelchair but smiling.

VI (CONT'D)
Is this you? Who are they?

Duke leaps up from the armchair and snatches the photo away from her.

DUKE
Don't touch that.

He slams it face down onto the mantle piece.

VI
It was just a question.

DUKE

And it's one you don't get to ask.

VI

I'm sorry. I was just trying to - -

DUKE

(growing anger)

To what? Invade my privacy? Rifle through my things for some amusement? I ain't no side-show entertainment, Missy, and I don't appreciate you and everybody else in the bloody neighborhood treatin' me like one!

Duke turns around and heads back to his chair. Before he can sit down - -

VI

Well, maybe if you didn't go around murdering helpless animals.

Duke points towards the front hall.

DUKE

Get out of my house!

VI

Oh, I'm sorry. Did I hurt your feelings? I'm sure Skippy over there would have preferred to be insulted rather than that other thing.

DUKE

Out!

He grabs her arm and pulls her towards the doorway.

VI

But we were just starting to get to know each other!

EXT. DUKE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH/FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Duke opens the door and Vi exits.

VI

I'm supposed to help you!

Duke SLAMS the door. A beat. The door opens again and Duke shoves Andrew out onto the porch. He shuts the door and he can be heard BOLTING it from the inside.

Andrew and Vi share a look.

ANDREW

I'm not an expert or anything but generally yelling at people doesn't make them like you.

Andrew pulls out his keys and heads for the car.

VI

But is a good distraction.

ANDREW

From what?

He turns around to see Vi waving the framed photograph in front of her. Andrew grins and moves towards her - taking the photo and looking over it.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

The Artful Dodger ain't got nothin' on you!

VI

I feel kinda bad though. I think I made him mad.

ANDREW

I think that's just him Monday through Sunday.

VI

But he's old. I might give him a heart attack or something.

They move towards the car.

ANDREW

You planning on finishing the assignment by jumping out at him from behind a bush wearing a Scream mask?

And as they both climb into the car...

VI

I just know what it feels like to have people try to make you talk about things you don't want to talk about, okay? It's... It's hard.

Andrew sits for a beat - taking this in.

ANDREW

You hungry?

Vi considers for a moment.

INT. THE HAPPY VAMPIRE - DAY

PAN OVER the less-than-crowded establishment to Andrew and Vi seated at a booth in the corner. They eat their meals silently while Andrew, in between taking bites of his breakfast burger, scribbles away on a children's activity menu.

ANDREW

Ah, crap.

CLOSE UP ON MENU

He has come to a dead-end in a maze.

VI

Raises an eyebrow. Then, rolls her eyes and pulls the picture frame from her backpack which is on the seat next to her. She takes the activity sheet away from him and slides the photo into its place.

VI

I think this is a little bit more important.

ANDREW

(re: maze)

Uh, there's a pile of gold at the end.

VI

(looking at maze)

I think they're chips.

ANDREW

Gold and crunchy. Bonus.

(off Vi's look)

Okay, okay. So...

He looks down at the photograph.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

He has friends. I'm shocked. But really, what kind of person wouldn't love a guy with a gun and a years worth of old TV Guides? I mean, I'd want to be his bestie.

VI

(re: photo)

What are we supposed to do with this, then?

Andrew turns the photo frame over and starts pulling back the metal clips keeping the back of it on.

VI (CONT'D)

I didn't mean for you to break it!

Andrew slides the photo out of the frame and stares at the back for a moment. Then, he turns it around to show Vi.

Written on the back is; "Don't Forget us. Carl, Bernie, Duke and Joe. Garretton General."

Vi takes the photo.

VI (CONT'D)

So, I guess we track down Carl and Bernie and Joe, huh? See if they can help us get through to Duke?

ANDREW

That's gonna be difficult.

VI

Why?

ANDREW

No last names. They might not even live in Garretton and... well... they're kinda old and... we don't know how long ago this picture was taken.

VI

Is that some under handed way of suggesting that they might be dead?

ANDREW

Well... yes.

VI

Then what are we supposed to do?

ANDREW

See this?

He points to the building in the photo behind them men.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

This is the long-stay wing at Garretton General Hospital.

VI

Meaning?

ANDREW

Meaning - if we find out what kept Duke out of the world for so long, we could find out why he hates it so much.

Vi looks a little impressed - Andrew, despite his childish antics, obviously knows what he's doing.

EXT. GARRETON GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Establishing shot.

NURSE (PRE-LAP)

I'm sorry, Sir. There's nothing I can do.

INT. GARRETON GENERAL HOSPITAL - RECEPTION

Andrew and Vi stand at the front desk. A middle aged, female NURSE is overseeing their inquiry - and doesn't look too happy about it.

ANDREW

But isn't this stuff like... public record or something?

NURSE

I can't give out a patients medical records to just anyone who asks for it.

ANDREW

But what if I told you that I were his... son?

NURSE

(not amused)
Are you his son?

ANDREW

(beat)
Yes.

The Nurse rolls her eyes and moves out from behind the desk and walks down the hall.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Do you think she's coming back?

VI

With a sudden change of heart?
Unlikely.

She looks around nervously.

VI (CONT'D)

We should go. They probably have
a no loitering rule or something.

ANDREW

Vi, what's up? You're like...

He widens his eyes and moves his hands slowly from side to side.

VI

The Ghost of Christmas past?

ANDREW

Freaked.

VI

Hospitals.

ANDREW

Got it.

They turn and head towards the front doors, passing a male JANITOR (mid 40s) on their way.

JANITOR

Duke Jones, right?

The pair turn.

ANDREW

Yeah...

JANITOR

You his kid?

ANDREW

Uh... Would it help if I say yes?

JANITOR

Not really. Why'd you wanna know
about Duke?

VI

He's... We have to help him.
Y'see, it's kind of our job.

JANITOR

Yeah, whatever. I was just
wondering if you were coming to
move all of his crap.

Vi and Andrew share a confused look.

INT. GARRETON GENERAL HOSPITAL - BASEMENT - LATER

The Janitor leads Andrew and Vi down a dingy hallway. Vi leans in to Andrew.

VI

Are you sure it was a good idea to follow him down here. I mean, serial killer vibe aside, it smells like old feet.

Andrew throws her a wary look and the Janitor stops outside a door. He takes a chain of keys from his belt and fiddles with the padlock - trying to find the right one.

JANITOR

Duke was in here for over a year. All sorts of problems. Heart problems, spinal problems. Couldn't walk for nearly three months.

VI

Why? What happened to him?

JANITOR

Fishing accident. I know a few of his friends died because of it. Don't know how. He never said.

ANDREW

So that's why he's so angry?

JANITOR

No, I don't think so. He wasn't that torrent of fury I saw walking out that door two months ago when he first came in. He was a decent bloke. Knew how to have a laugh.

VI

What changed?

JANITOR

Damn keys...

He rattles the padlock and starts through the set of keys again - annoyed.

JANITOR (CONT'D)

His friends - the not dead ones, obviously. They stopped visiting. They used to stop by everyday but eventually, they decided that fishing was more important.

(MORE)

JANITOR (CONT'D)

The weekends they used to spend with Duke, they spent on the lake.

(beat; sadly)

A place I heard him swear he'd never go back to.

VI

How do you know so much about him?

JANITOR

The thing about Duke is, towards the end, the only way he'd open up - the only way he'd really listen to what you had to say - is if you threw as much fire at him as he did at you.

(nostalgic)

Yep, our shouting matches made ward three famous.

ANDREW

So... Er... What is it exactly that we're supposed to be collecting?

The padlock clicks and pops open. The Janitor turns the doorknob...

JANITOR

The life of Duke Jones.

He pushes open the door but we don't get to see what's inside because we:

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - WICKER RECORDS - AFTERNOON

Establishing shot.

INT. WICKER RECORDS - MAIN ROOM/CAFE

Vi follows Shane down the winding staircase as one pop diva or another plays over the stereo system. Surprisingly, there are still customers in the store - and one or two of them bob their heads slightly to the music.

Reaching the floor, Shane and Vi head over to the cafe at the back of the room. Vi looks around.

VI

Something's different.

SHANE

(proudly)

You just noticed?

VI

Jimmy isn't wearing his ear plugs and people aren't... They aren't leaving.

SHANE

(under his breath)

Not today at least.

Vi catches that but doesn't reply as they reach the cozy enclave set up as a cafe. There are a couple of groups already there - sitting in the low sofas and benches along the wall. Shane steps up to the counter.

SHANE (CONT'D)

You want something?

VI

Oh, I don't have any money.

SHANE

That's cool. Tabby!

TABITHA McMILLAN (25) steps up to the counter and tosses a cloth at Shane's head. Tabitha is cute, likeable and strong-willed. Much like Jimmy, an argument with her is one you'd be quick to lose.

TABITHA

Hey, what have I told you?

SHANE

That Ronald McDonald is a spokesman
for the devil?

TABITHA

Yes. And?

SHANE

Don't call you 'Tabby'?

TABITHA

Damn straight. Now, what'll it be,
cowboy?

SHANE

Milkshake. Chocolate.

(to Vi)

You?

She nods.

SHANE (CONT'D)

(to Tabitha)

Two.

TABITHA

A man of many words.

And as she starts making the milkshakes, she looks to Vi.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Lucky you snagged this one. More
kissin', less listenin'.

VI

Oh, we're not - -

SHANE

That is to say - -

TABITHA

I got it. Sorry. Thinking back,
I'm surprised I even jumped to
that conclusion.

SHANE

Hey, are you saying I couldn't get
a girlfriend?

TABITHA

Maybe.

(to Vi)

Hi. I'm Tabitha.

VI

I'm Vi.

TABITHA

(to Shane; re: music)
So, how much longer do you think
you're gonna keep this up?

SHANE

Almost done. Just have to record
some final observations and then
you'll be back to your Bright
Eyes and Arcade Fire, don't
worry.

TABITHA

No, it's not that. I was just...

She lowers her voice and leans over the counter towards them.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Okay, don't tell Jimmy I told you
this because I think it's, like,
a work requirement to despise
mainstream music but... I'm kinda
digging the Lindsay Lohan.

SHANE

Really? Please, tell me more.

TABITHA

A lot of people here do. I caught
that dude singing along to Nelly
before.

She nods to a GOTH in the corner.

VI

But... How can you just start
liking something... doing
something different... out of
nowhere? I mean, he's only been
playing this crap for a week.

TABITHA

Well, I... I guess you could say
that I wasn't exactly not a fan
before I was just - -

SHANE

Afraid.

TABITHA

(indignant)
I wasn't afraid.

SHANE

Yes, you were.
(to Vi)
See? It's all falling into place.
(MORE)

SHANE (CONT'D)

Just like I said it would.

(to both)

Everyone here who actually stuck around to endure the barrage of pop and hip-hop and techno? They liked it before, no matter how much they'll try to deny it. They were simply afraid to display their true selves in an environment where conforming to an "individualist" lifestyle is deemed appropriate.

A beat.

TABITHA

Deemed?

SHANE

Shut up. You know I'm right.

Tabitha puts two chocolate milkshakes up on the counter.

TABITHA

Maybe.

SHANE

That's gonna be your response to everything I say now, isn't it?

Tabitha quirks an eyebrow - pondering if she should say it again. Shane takes one of the milkshakes to hand to Vi.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Here...

VI

Uh, thanks but I've - -

SHANE

Gotta go?

VI

Sorry.

SHANE

Yeah, me...

Vi has already turned and is now halfway to the front door.

SHANE (CONT'D)

... Too.

TABITHA

Does she do that a lot?

Shane turns back to Tabitha.

SHANE
Like Bruce Wayne.

Tabitha shrugs.

TABITHA
And if you ever do become a couple,
you've got a nick-name right there.

Shane doesn't find this funny. Tabitha smiles and moves off.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

The first thing we hear is an angry BANGING on the front door. Duke hurries in from the kitchen grumbling.

DUKE
I'm coming! Bloody, impatient...

He yanks open the door and Vi STORMS inside. Duke stumbles back - shocked.

VI
That's it. I can't take it
anymore.

DUKE
What do you think - - !?

VI
No. Me talking. You quiet.

She charges into the living room and Duke follows.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vi moves over to the TV which is playing quietly and she turns it off.

DUKE
Hey, I was watching that!

VI
Well, I don't care. You need to
stop talking because I have
something to say to you.

DUKE
Well, say it!

VI
I will!
(takes a deep breath)
You, Duke Jones, are afraid.

DUKE
I am not - -

VI

("shut up")

Ah!

(then)

You hide away with your re-runs and old photographs because you're afraid to move on. You're afraid of how the world has changed and now it's big and scary and there are too many teenagers and non-biodegradable plastics and pop-stars with fake boobs and you just can't handle that. Well, guess what? Not handling it has made you angry and mean and just... not a very nice person.

DUKE

You don't seem to be understanding something, kid. I've never been a nice person.

Vi digs around in her shoulder bag and swiftly produces the picture from the hospital. She holds it up.

VI

I seriously doubt that.

Duke marches shakily forward and snatches back the photo.

DUKE

Give me that! What makes you think that you have the right to come into my house and tell me what I am!?

VI

Someone has to!

DUKE

Why!?

VI

Because I know the kind of person you used to be and I... Look... The world's always changing. Just because you went away for awhile doesn't mean you can't still live in it. This isn't right.

DUKE

No, it's not. You what else isn't right? Some little girl with enough problems of her own trying to butt into mine!

VI

What? I don't have any problems!

DUKE

Really? You say I'm afraid? What about you? There must be something mighty terrifying chasing you if you're willing to invest all your time into yelling at someone you don't even know.

Vi's anger falters.

VI

You... You don't even know me!

DUKE

Same here, sister!

VI

I'm just trying to help! You don't need to throw it back - -

DUKE

Oh, I don't need to? Just like you didn't need to steal my mail and my photos and continually barge into my house to judge me and the way I choose to live? I like being mean, I like being angry and I like being LEFT ALONE!!!

VI

Fine!

DUKE

Fine!

DUKE (CONT'D)

Get out of my house!

VI

No!

(beat)

Fine!

DUKE

And this time, don't come back!

Vi turns and exits. We hear the front door SLAM. There is a silent pause.

Then, the front door BURSTS OPEN again and Vi steps inside - holding a heavy cardboard box.

VI
 (still yelling)
 And I think these are yours!

She turns the box upside down and a torrent of PHOTOGRAPHS pour out. We get close ups of a few - snippets here and there - of happier times. Times when Duke was a different person.

Vi THROWS the box to the floor and exits - slamming the door behind her.

Duke closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. Then, he looks down at the photograph and - with shaking hands - puts it back on the mantle piece.

Suddenly overcome with anger, he sweeps everything off the over-crowded mantle piece and watches it CRASH to the floor.

EXT. DUKE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Vi, still standing on the porch, hears the CRASH from inside. She whirls around and stares at the door.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MEANWHILE

Duke crumples to the floor and puts his face in his hands.

EXT. DUKE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH/FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

As Vi listens, her face softens momentarily.

VI
 (annoyed)
 Stupid Cam and his worms.
 (beat)
 Stupid Janitor and his insight.
 (beat)
 Stupid... Ugh!

She walks down the steps where another cardboard box - stuffed with photographs - sits inside a shopping trolley. She hauls it out and places it by the front door where we see several other boxes already sit.

Then, she takes the trolley and heads towards the footpath. Stops and glares back at the house before leaving the trolley in Duke's front yard.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Vi stalks down the footpath.

A PIZZA DELIVERY BOY emerges from a driveway in front of her and she jerks to a stop, startled.

He gives her a polite smile as he heads to his car parked on the road-side. Vi is about to walk on when she stops...

ANGLE ON BOY'S CAR

The sign on the door - along with a picture of a steaming pizza - reads, "Job Well Done!" .

VI

Looks after the car as it pulls out and drives away. She takes a moment. Smiles.

Then, in the background, two teenagers race by - one inside of and one of the back of Vi's abandoned shopping trolley. They holler with joy. Vi doesn't seem to notice them and we stay where we are as she begins to walk. "Your Misfortune" by Mike Doughty plays over the following scenes...

FADE TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - WICKER RECORDS - LATER

As she walks, Vi glances inside through the glass door. Jimmy nears the door and flips over the sign from "Open" to "Closed". He spots her and raises his eyebrows - nodding his head towards the interior of the shop.

Vi shakes her head and gives him an apologetic smile as she walks off. Jimmy shrugs, not bothered, and turns away.

INT. WICKER RECORDS - MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We follow this movement as Jimmy walks further into the shop just as Shane heads down the stairs - his box of CDs in his arms. Jimmy takes it from him and puts it on the front desk.

Sneakily, he takes one out and glances at the track listings. Glancing up, he catches Shane's amused look. Jimmy rolls his eyes, puts the CD back and grabs Shane around the shoulders - leading him down towards the cafe where Tabitha wipes down a table.

EXT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - LATER

Vi walks up the front path and, taking out a key from her pocket, lets herself inside.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Caroline sits on the couch reading a book. Vi enters behind her, pauses for a moment and then comes around the couch, sitting down next to her mother.

Caroline looks up in surprise and closes her book.

CAROLINE
Hello, stranger.

VI
Hey, Mum.

CAROLINE
Your project all done?

VI
(nods)
Yeah. All done.

CAROLINE
That's good. Your Dad's cooking
dinner. How does lasagna sound?

VI
From a box?

CAROLINE
Violet, your father is cooking
dinner.

VI
So, box?

CAROLINE
Oh yeah.

Vi suddenly leans over and hugs Caroline. Caroline smiles.

VI
You know I love you, right?

CAROLINE
Of course. I love you too.

Vi pulls back.

VI
Okay. Just making sure. You don't
have to be afraid.

CAROLINE
What do you mean?

VI
I just... I know you're worried.
You don't have to be scared that
your worrying is going to make
things worse. I know it sounds
weird but just... Just remember
that, okay? I don't want to end
up alone because no one ever
worries.

CAROLINE

Alone? Vi - -

VI

Y'know, I forgot something. The project. There's just one more thing I've got to do.

CAROLINE

Oh, okay. Don't be long.

Vi stands and pulls on her jacket again.

VI

I'll be back in time for dinner.

She smiles and exits. Caroline opens her book but pauses - a little stunned.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - LATER

Duke is now dressed in a neat suit. He shrugs on a jacket and takes a hat from the stand by the front door. He takes up his cane. Lifting the photograph from the hall stand, he folds it up and places it in his jacket pocket.

He moves towards the front door. Pauses.

CLOSE UP ON DOOR KNOB

His trembling hand reaches towards it. Stops. Moves closer and finally takes the door knob in his grasp.

BACK TO SCENE

Duke pushes the door open and confidently walks out into the front porch. He closes the door behind him.

EXT. JESSOP HILL SHOPPING PLAZA - ELEVATOR - LATER

Vi stands outside the closed elevator. She's nervous.

ANGLE ON ELEVATOR BUTTON

Her trembling fingers reach out towards it. She stops. Then, moves closer until she's mere millimetres from the button.

DING!

The elevator doors open (without Vi having touched anything) and she takes a deep breath, stepping inside.

INT. THE COMPANY - RECEPTION - MOMENTS LATER

The elevator doors open and Vi steps out. GLENDA sits behind the reception desk chatting on the telephone. She looks up and sees Vi. Vi waves and moves down a corridor...

INT. THE COMPANY - CORRIDOR #1

... And almost bumps into Jenna as she moves towards the Reception area.

JENNA

Violet! Hi!

VI

Hey, Jenna.

JENNA

I wasn't expecting you.

(concerned)

Is something wrong? How's your assignment going?

VI

It's done.

JENNA

Oh, alright. So... I guess you'll be wanting a report to fill out. Y'know, if you give your e-mail address to Glenda, we have a system that sends them out.

VI

Um... Sure.

Jenna smiles and starts to move around her.

VI (CONT'D)

But - -

Jenna stops.

VI (CONT'D)

That's not the reason I'm here.

(beat)

I was just wondering if we could... Hang?

(quickly)

That is, if you're not too busy.

JENNA

Do you mean "hang" as in "out" or as in "nineteenth century pick-pockets"?

VI

I was thinking you could show me around. I haven't exactly spent a lot of time here since I started and I figured that... Well, I figured I'd better... I'd like to. I'd like to get to know... the team.

JENNA

(surprised)

Wow. Well, uh. Sure! That'll be fun.

She turns and she and Vi head off down the corridor. We REMAIN, watching them as they walk.

JENNA (CONT'D)

You haven't seen the garden yet, have you?

VI

There's a garden?

JENNA

Yeah, it's amazing. There's like this big dome and there are trees and a rose maze. Oh, and a pond! In Winter, it ices over and you can go skating.

VI

Oh my God, that's so cool.

JENNA

And the Dining Hall. Are you hungry? Dinner starts around now and they have these great little potato things...

They round the corner and their voices fade out as the tour begins.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE