

**The Company**

"Best Day Ever"

by  
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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - ESTABLISHING - AFTERNOON

VI (PRE-LAP)  
Look, I'm sorry, Shane.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - VI'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Another day at the Morgan house.

Sounds of Penny YELLING at someone from another room set the scene, as our plucky heroine VIOLET "VI" MORGAN talks into the Morgans' cordless phone, pacing the length of her room and wincing.

VI  
I'm locked into this. Literally  
locked, handcuffs and everything.  
There's no way they're letting me  
off this time.

She pauses, and through the phone the voice of SHANE EVANS is audible, though barely.

SHANE (O.S.)  
(filtered)  
Oh.  
(beat)  
No, I get it. Your family's  
important, don't worry.

VI  
Sorry, what was that? The  
volume's on eleven over here. Cam  
cut up Penny's Louis Vuitton  
purse.

SHANE  
(a little louder)  
Why?

VI  
He says it was in the name of  
science but I think it was more  
to do with the purse being fugly.

SHANE  
Wow. Anyways, I said it's good  
you're doing stuff with your  
family. They're important.

VI  
No, not important! They just  
control certain things, like  
whether I get fed.  
(MORE)

VI (CONT'D)

(beat)

I'd love to hang at Wicker today, check out the new bands playing and all that, but my mum's practically got me to sign a contract in blood.

Shane sighs, but lets it go.

SHANE

(forgiving)

It's alright, Vi. I'll see you later, alright?

VI

(smiles)

Yeah. See you. Make fun of some gender-confused singers for me, will ya?

SHANE

Will do.

A CLICK. Vi sighs, and begrudgingly glances at her mobile phone on her dresser. She grabs it and heads out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - FRONT HALL - AFTERNOON

Vi comes down the stairs to see - -

- - CAROLINE MORGAN staring at the wall. She reacts instinctively at Vi's presence, speaking without looking at her.

CAROLINE

Sandy beach?

VI

We're actually at home, mum.

Vi looks at her mother strangely as she finishes her descent, but as Caroline turns, we can see she is holding colour slips.

CAROLINE

No, I meant, I'm thinking of having the hall painted.

VI

You mean getting *me* to paint the hall.

Caroline ignores her.

CAROLINE  
 (holding out slip)  
 So what do you think?

VI  
 I think Penny will skip out to see her boy-toy of the week - Jake Whatever, and Cam will have some world-changing experiment going on in his room, leaving me to do the work.  
 (thinks)  
 Why don't I have a handy, work-avoiding excuse?

CAROLINE  
 Don't be ridiculous, Vi. You'd all share the work.

As Vi rolls her eyes, Caroline turns back to the wall, pressing the slip to it.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
 Now, Cam printed some colours off the internet for me. What do you think of Pale Violet?  
 (silence)  
 Lilac Thyme?  
 (silence)  
 Alright, how about Deep Rose? It would go with the carpet.

VI  
 Honestly Mum? I think you'd be better off planting a garden and painting the wall an actual colour. You know, like 'green' or 'blue'.

Before Caroline can respond, Vi jumps in.

VI (CONT'D)  
 (rushed)  
 I-have-to-go-out.

Caroline looks at her, puzzled.

VI (CONT'D)  
 Erm, I have a thing.

CAROLINE  
 (flat)  
 A thing.

VI  
 Yes. A school thing. With Shane.

CAROLINE

Hm.

(beat)

Well, do you need a lift?

VI

No!

(beat)

I mean, no, I can walk. Get the exercise and all. Don't worry, I'll be home by eight.

Caroline's eyes narrow.

CAROLINE

Six.

VI

Eight.

CAROLINE

Let's compromise. Six.

Vi rolls her eyes and sighs, leaning back to place one hand on the doorknob.

VI

I'll be home at eight. Shane's Mum said she'd make us dinner so don't worry about that. I'll call you at three to check in - -  
 (before Caroline can interject)  
 - - so you don't have to.

CAROLINE

I don't have Shane's number, Vi.

Vi smiles.

VI

I'll be home at eight.

CAROLINE

Vi!

And she slips out the door, leaving her mother to stew.

CUT TO:

EXT. JESSOP HILL PLAZA - AFTERNOON

The usually-quiet plaza is teeming with people, as it would be on a weekend. Amidst the crowd, we see Vi waiting. She taps her foot against the ground, obviously impatient.

Two hands snake around her face and cover her eyes.

VI

Whoever that it, this is assault  
and the police will be involved.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Damn, and I never even got to  
shout 'peekaboo'.

Vi turns around to see ANDREW FRIAR grinning, and she gives  
him an admonishing look.

VI

Where've you been? I had to  
escape the Mummy Monster - what's  
your excuse?

ANDREW

Broken washing machine. Spitting  
clothes and detergent everywhere.

VI

(obviously not buying  
it)  
Ahunh, right.

ANDREW

My story, I'm sticking to it.

Vi doesn't press the issue, instead turning to look at the  
building.

VI

So, we going in?

ANDREW

As mandated by the Ruler, King  
Benson of Compania.

Vi starts walking towards the mall, and Andrew follows. She  
looks back at him as she walks.

VI

(annoyed)  
Do we have to do this? Can't we  
just, I don't know, set Benson on  
fire? That's amusement enough for  
everyone. And he wouldn't die,  
would he?

ANDREW

Actually, he sorta would.

VI

Oh. Never really got how that  
worked.

ANDREW  
We could still try it...

Vi ignores him as they enter the plaza.

CUT TO:

INT. JESSOP HILL PLAZA - ELEVATOR - AFTERNOON

Vi and Andrew stand side-by-side, almost awkwardly, in the moving elevators.

VI  
You know what? I'm a teenage girl. I'm just a kid. I shouldn't have to be subjected to this!

ANDREW  
Preaching to the pope, here.

VI  
To the choir.  
(beat)  
The saying is "Preaching to the choir".

Andrew gives her a blank look and then:

ANDREW  
Mine makes more sense.

VI  
You know, if you're so starved for conversation that you have to mangle sayings, maybe this will be good for you.

ANDREW  
(sarcastic)  
Sure. Next, I'll show up at Benson's birthday party. Go team.

Vi and Andrew practically cringe as the inevitable DING on the elevator bell sounds.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Here goes.

On their faces as the door opens. We can hear muted MUSIC and YELLING.

REVERSE ANGLE

In the reception office, a PARTY is in progress.

Various employees (in casual dress) wander around with drinks - some with crazy hats or noise makers as well - chatting to one another.

MUSIC coming from nowhere in particular plays loudly.

VI  
(flat)  
I hate this place.

Off her sullen expression:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. THE COMPANY - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Vi and Andrew step out of the elevator, Vi looking a little dazed and Andrew (already) looking bored. They begin to weave through the crowd.

Now that we're in the thick of it - the party comes off as being much more of a house kegger than it does a respectable office get-together.

GLENDA

Hello, dears!

GLENDA MORRISON (wearing a wide sombrero) walks up to them, smiling.

VI

(a little dazed)

Hi, Glenda...

GLENDA

You'll just need these.

Glenda presses something into Vi's hands and walks off.

VI

(to her retreating back)

Uh, thanks. Nice hat...

Vi looks down to see two 'MY NAME IS...' stickers. She hands one off to Andrew, and pockets hers.

VI (CONT'D)

We *do* have the right place,  
right?

ANDREW

Yeah.

VI

Okay, because remember how these people are adults, and not college kids house-sitting while their parents are away for the weekend?

ANDREW

Oh, yeah. I forgot that actual office parties aren't like this.

(beat)

Trust me, by tonight you'll wish it was more boring.

Vi glances out the window, and notes it's PITCH BLACK outside. She shoots Andrew a glance.

VI

Yeah - by tonight, you mean what, exactly?

The two reach a corner and turn down into:

INT. THE COMPANY - CORRIDOR 1 - CONTINUOUS

Here, the party is still going. Andrew shrugs.

ANDREW

Benson keeps it dark. This way, people can pretend to stay up all night - -

VI

- - And head home by eight to wake up bright and early. Yup, Benson mentality right there.

The two continue to walk down the corridor. Vi eyes the party-goers awkwardly. Some appear to feel exactly the way she does, while others...

GUY

Hey, Fry-man!

ANDREW

Hey, Jeez.

This is JESUS CONNORS, as his name tag tells us. He wears a huge grin underneath a bit of a scruffy beard and carries a drink.

JESUS

Who's the girl? Andrew, you cradle-robber!

Jesus punches Andrew's shoulder lightly.

JESUS (CONT'D)

(to Vi)

You're not wearing a tag.

VI

Not my thing.

JESUS

I get that.

(to Andrew)

We'll hang later, natch.

And he blends into the crowd. Vi looks at Andrew, but he is un-fazed.

As they walk, Andrew fields high-fives, complicated 'buddy' handshakes, grins and nods. Vi just looks at him in a mix of amazement and confusion.

VI

I thought you hated it here.

ANDREW

When your bored out of your mind  
nine days out of ten, you tend to  
do things that attract attention.

(beat)

On Benson's day off, I set a  
chair on fire. Well, actually, I  
convinced crazy Larry to do it,  
but...

Vi looks at Andrew, confused.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Hey, no judging!

VI

I'm just trying to process  
"Benson's day off"...

The two turn through a wide doorway into...

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA

As they enter, Vi sweeps her eyes across the large room. The party is strongest here, with the tables moved moreso to the sides. A stage, presumably for company-wide meetings, is in-use as a karaoke stage. She winces as she takes in the current singer's voice.

Vi eyes a table, on which is a row of BEERS. As she passes, she swipes one.

VI

Gotcha!

As she reaches to open it, Andrew grabs it from her, opens in, and takes a swig.

VI (CONT'D)

Hey!

She glares at him. He gives her a look.

VI (CONT'D)

I don't want to get drunk! It's just, my mum sort of has a stranglehold on my life, so I've never even had a sip. Not fair - right?

ANDREW

Just keep moving, junior.

Vi frowns as Andrew takes another gulp. Then, Andrew spots someone.

JENNA COOKE sits alone at a table. She looks bored and works halfheartedly on a crossword.

The two sit down at the table, causing her to look up. She looks annoyed - but not at them, just in general.

JENNA

Hey, Vi.  
(beat, notices Andrew)  
And Andrew.

ANDREW

(teasing)  
Well, someone looks like she'd rather be working.

VI

(quick, defusing)  
How long've you been stuck here?

JENNA

Feels like forever.  
(beat, checks watch)  
Since noon, actually.

ANDREW

You've sat here looking like Benson ran over your puppy for two whole hours?

Both girls just glare at him, and he sits back.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

(grumbles)  
This sucks.

Vi turns to Jenna, but before she can say something a round of APPLAUSE and a series of HOOTS and WHISTLES fill the air. Andrew speaks again.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
 (gesturing to stage)  
 Ah, Vi, I don't believe you've  
 met Diana. Queen of the scantily  
 clad blondes.

As Vi turns around, we see DIANA CROSS (23) step up to the mic. She's gorgeous, in a 'women across Australia hate her and heir husbands want to sleep with her' kind of way. Her skirt/shirt ensemble isn't slutty, but it isn't so innocent either.

Vi quirks her head at Andrew.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
 You'll see why Di's Head Bitch  
 around here. Just wait.

Jenna snorts, and Vi turns to see Diana start to SING, with a voice like crystal - a rendition of Gloria Gaynor's 'I Will Survive". The three sit and listen to the song.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

BIANCA PARRY sits on a wooden bench, reading a book, looking annoyed - whether at the fact she's reading or some other reason is unknown. A shadow blocks her light--

--and ERIN FOWLER stands awkwardly, looking down at her.

ERIN  
 Uh, hi.

Bianca looks up, and smiles. But this isn't a happy smile, oh no. It's the dreaded 'pissed off girlfriend' smile. Erin has to work to keep himself from shivering.

BIANCA  
 Hi, Erin. How are you.  
 (before he can speak)  
 Sit down.

Erin sits, and smiles at her - but it doesn't work. It dies on his lips.

BIANCA (CONT'D)  
 (dark)  
 We need to talk.

Erin just nods.

BIANCA (CONT'D)  
 Okay. We were supposed to have  
 this dinner. This nice, special,  
 anniversary dinner.

Erin watches his feet, and she glances at him to make sure he's taking this in before continuing.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Except my perfect boyfriend decided to take us, completely out of the blue, to some crappy little dump in the middle of nowhere and forced me to wait two hours for a table.

(beat)

Now, I already know why. But you're going to tell me anyway. Because you are my boyfriend.

This seems to stop Erin in his tracks, and he doesn't seem capable of looking up at her. She just keeps staring at him, pissed.

ERIN

(quiet)

Bianca... I'm sorry.

BIANCA

Hell yeah, you are.

Erin slowly sits up, and smiles slowly.

ERIN

Hell yeah, I am.

He leans forward and kisses her on the lips. It's short, sweet - more genuine than anything we've seen from Erin all season.

ERIN (CONT'D)

I was a jerk last night. I don't know what came over me. Either way, I had no excuse. I shouldn't have ruined the evening for you.

Bianca frowns for a moment - this was what she expected he'd try, but she finds herself just slowly shrugging and smiling back at him.

BIANCA

Well... Okay... I guess. Now, what do you wanna do for lunch?

ERIN

Actually... I have plans.

And THUD - her good mood vanishes.

BIANCA

("of course")

Oh.

ERIN

Sorry, it's really important -  
but I still want us to talk.  
Again. Later. Ish.

Bianca's clearly taken aback.

BIANCA

Oh, well, okay. I mean, of  
course. I can't stop you from  
going or anything.

ERIN

Thanks. See you in a bit.

He leans down and gives her another peck on the cheek, and  
walks off, leaving Bianca alone on the bench. Her eyes  
follow him, completely unsure of how to respond.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA - LATER

Diana continues to sing on stage, capturing the attention  
of every male in the room - including Andrew, which Vi  
notices with amusement.

Jenna, fairly disgusted, grabs her crossword and stands.  
She slips through the crowd and out of the door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - RANDOM OFFICE - MOMENT LATER

Jenna enters the dark office, crossword held to her chest  
and breathing a sigh of relief. She reaches over to turn on  
the light switch --

-- and gives out a YELL!

With the light on, ALISTAIR BENSON sitting behind the desk  
is easily seen.

JENNA

You scared the crap out of me.  
(remembering)  
Sir.

BENSON

I thought you were attending the  
office party, Ms. Cooke?

JENNA

Not all it's cracked up to be.

BENSON

Ah, yes. The noise that can hardly be described as music, people I'm sure I knew the names of once and bowls of that irritating coloured popcorn that gets stuck in my teeth.

(thinks)

Its moments like these that I really feel old.

JENNA

(laughing, embarrassed)

And I wish I was old so I had an excuse.

(beat)

So, You're not much of a people person either?

BENSON

I'd say that's an accurate assumption. This job, luckily, keeps my interactions with others short and succinct.

JENNA

I think I'd like that kind of job.

She smiles. Benson looks at Jenna, pondering, then smiles back.

BENSON

Well, I'm sure you'll make an excellent Director someday, Ms. Cooke.

JENNA

Thank you, sir. Though I'm not sure whether I'd - -

(sees his look)

Could handle the pressure of such a huge job.

BENSON

I know it sounds lonely, but you get used to it, after being in here for so long. You know?

Jenna shrugs. It's clear she knows *exactly* what he means.

JENNA

I guess. Yeah, I do.

A nostalgic look possesses her expression. The sound of faint CHEERING can be heard in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA

Vi claps politely and watches Diana as the crowd around her CHEERS. Diana seems very sure of herself - completely unsurprised at the applause. Andrew claps as well. Diana steps off the stage.

ANDREW

She's the one who puts the bug in Grace's ear every year for karaoke. She loves the attention.

VI

Grace?

ANDREW

Lex Grace, Benson's PA. College-age guy with no college to go meet people at, so he uses the office parties as a release.

VI

(eying the room)  
Explains a lot.

As Diana passes, Andrew can't resist saying something.

ANDREW

(calls out)  
Hey, Diana! You look nice.

Diana takes a moment to look around, and her eyes finally fall on Andrew. She walks over to them.

DIANA

Ah, Andrew Friar. You do realise you won't fulfill your years-long quest to get into my pants by stating the obvious, right?

Andrew is struck speechless. Vi blinks - shocked at Diana's attitude.

VI

("Umm...")  
You're wearing a skirt.

Diana turns to Vi as if she had spontaneously appeared from thin air, and gives her a nasty smile.

DIANA  
 (to Andrew)  
 I assume you haven't mentioned my policy on stupid people to the new girl. You do remember my policy, don't you?

ANDREW  
 (sighs)  
 ... They're not allowed to talk to you. Ever.

DIANA  
 Exactly.  
 (smiles)  
 Have a great time, you two.

Diana walks off into the crowd. An awkward pause between Vi and Andrew.

ANDREW  
 I want to axe-murder her.

VI  
 (a little surprised at herself)  
 I think... Me too.

The two sit in silence for a moment, before Andrew perks up.

ANDREW  
 Hey! How about I introduce you to the other Runners?

Vi is wary.

VI  
 Alright. It's gotta be better than this.

CUT TO:

A SERIES of short scenes play out:

SCENE 1

Andrew and Vi talk to LYNNE CAMPBELL (40's, red hair, well put-together).

LYNNE  
 My first assignment was spent in a home for Seniors. It was so exciting! I had to sneak into one man's room privately to steal prized possession and stash it in another's room.  
 (MORE)

LYNNE (CONT'D)

They eventually fell in love.

(beat)

I gave them sweaters at their  
commitment ceremony. I've never  
seen two men more in love.

Vi makes a face. Andrew shoots her a look.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2

Vi and Andrew walk through the crowd, speaking in hushed tones.

VI

I am not a homophobe!

ANDREW

Then why the face, huh?

VI

Old people. Kissing. Gross.

ANDREW

Ah.

(beat)

Next one over here.

CUT TO:

SCENE 3

Vi stands talking to HANNAH MARSHALL (from last episode).

VI

So, you're a Runner, too. That's cool.

HANNAH

Yeah. Looks like we're the youngest ones here.

VI

Yeah.

(looking for topic)

And, you're British!

HANNAH

With the vocabulary all built in,  
too. You know - bloody, sod it,  
pram...

VI

What about 'eh'?

HANNAH  
 (chuckles)  
 The 'eh' thing is Canadians.

VI  
 Ah. Right.  
 (beat)  
 Oh! Shane's band! I forgot to ask  
 - how were they last night? I  
 only made the last song.

Hannah smiles, a little relieved at the change of subject.

HANNAH  
 Pretty damn good, for a teenage  
 band. BB isn't amazing, but he'll  
 get better the more gigs they  
 get.

VI  
 That's great.

HANNAH  
 Thought I expect, with both BB  
 and Vinkle around, I half expect  
 Shane to start ripping his hair  
 out.

VI  
 Well, if I see any bald patches,  
 I'll let you know.

The two girls smile at each other, obviously enjoying the other's company despite the awkwardness of their conversation.

#### SCENE 4

Vi smiles absently at LEX GRACE (early 20's). He's pointing absently to various things in the room.

LEX  
 Set up a bit of a loners table  
 over there, for people who really  
 don't want to be here.  
 (beat)  
 Those people suck. Moving on, we  
 changed the stage for a karaoke  
 thing, which is always a hit.  
 You're not an employee here 'til  
 you've heard Andrew Friar drunk-  
 butchering the theme from  
 Firefly. Good times, good times.

Vi chuckles at this, and Lex grins.

LEX (CONT'D)

By the way, didn't get your name,  
little lady. Oh, and your age -  
important if I were to ever hit  
on you.

He winks, trying to be cute, but smiles at her like she's a kid, however.

VI

Vi Morgan. I'm 16.

LEX

The big 1-6. Good for you. Well,  
we both know I'll be Benson's  
butt-monkey for years to come, so  
when you turn 18 - we are so  
going clubbing together.

He smiles, and offers her a sip of his beer, but she shakes her head.

SCENE 5

Vi stands in a corner, and Jesus approaches.

JESUS

So, you and Andrew, huh?

She looks at him with a mix of confusion and disgust.

VI

No. No-no-no-no-no. God no.  
(beat)  
He's my mentor.

Jesus grins widely.

JESUS

(implying something)  
Yeah, I get *that*. Teaches you a  
lot, I bet.

VI

About assignments. And being a  
runner.

JESUS

("yeah, right")  
Mhm.

Vi gives Jesus a bit of a look, and slowly moves away from him.

SCENE 6

Vi walks with Andrew, whispering furiously, as they make slow progress to the exit.

VI

Just when this party seemed like it wasn't sucking, your friend the messiah starts... Yeah, not going there.

Andrew just continues to ponder.

VI (CONT'D)

(shocked)

Are you imagining me naked?

ANDREW

(outraged)

Gross! You're like, ten.

(beat)

Just trying to figure out who 'the messiah' is.

Vi sighs. She is talking to an idiot.

SCENE 7

Vi is standing (even closer to the exit of the room), listening to JORDAN CADBURY speak at length. If his suit didn't mark him as an accountant, the calculator in his breast pocket would.

CADBURY

And so, our success rates readily improved last year - meaning there was more income to give out. Any more, we're afraid, and we may imbalance the country's dollar worth.

Vi looks bored out of her mind, but she just smiles, and her eyes search the background for (presumably) Andrew or Jenna.

SCENE 8

INT. THE COMPANY - RECEPTION

Vi is trapped by GREGOR JOHNSON, a (drunk) 40-something man who has a tendency to lean a little too close for Vi's comfort zone.

JOHNSON

I'm *always* open to... new friends... you know w'm sayin'?

VI  
(freaked out)  
Yeah... I do.

She shoots a glance towards Andrew - who is caught up with a very animated conversation with an ASIAN MAN. Her hand signals going ignored, she turns to Johnson with a pained look on her face.

JOHNSON  
Yer very pretty, y'know?

VI  
And you're very drunk. And hitting on a teenager.

JOHNSON  
We're just... talking.

VI  
Not anymore.

Vi turns, making a beeline for the elevator. She reaches out for the button --

And everything goes BLACK.

VI (CONT'D)  
Oh crap.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. THE COMPANY - RECEPTION

A weak blue EMERGENCY LIGHT has come on, barely giving off enough light to see. It's a little creepy. Everyone in the room has frozen, eyes on Vi.

Vi's eyes nervously scan the room. The tension is at high. One simple thing could make everyone snap.

VI

I didn't do it.

And ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE. Some employees rush to the elevator, pressing the button or trying to pry the doors open. Some run out of the room to see what's going on elsewhere.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Vi, what did you do?

Vi looks to see Andrew at the corridor entrance.

VI

Nothing! I swear!  
(off Andrew's look)  
Seriously!

Together they set off around the corner.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA

The same eerie (and rather impractical) lights aren't very bright, leading the employees to crowd near the walls. Some can be seen wandering out of the room as Vi and Andrew enter.

ANDREW

Well, this is... strange.

VI

Yeah, I'd say. Is this a regular occurrence?

ANDREW

If by 'regular' you mean 'has ever happened before', I'd have to say...

(beat)

Nope.

Jenna and Benson enter the room. Jenna comes towards Vi, while Benson disappears into the crowd - heading towards the stage.

JENNA  
(panicked)  
What happened?

ANDREW  
We don't know.

BENSON (O.S.)  
(into microphone)  
Ahem.

The group turns, along with everyone else in the room, to the stage, where Benson stands.

BENSON (CONT'D)  
Everyone, stay calm.

Yells of "You stay calm!" and "What's going on?" come from the crowd. Benson gestures for quiet.

BENSON (CONT'D)  
It appears that the power in the building has gone out. Now, this is a rather unusual occurrence, and we are working very hard to find the source of the problem.  
(beat)  
I know you all have lives at home, but we will proceed with the party as planned. We will just have to improvise. Luckily, the cafeteria is fully stocked, so we won't run out of food for a number of days.

RANDOM EMPLOYEE  
How many?!

Benson pauses, not wanting to say anything more on the situation.

RANDOM EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)  
I said - -

JENNA  
He knows what you said, you idiot! Can't you give the man some breathing space?

Suddenly, all eyes are on Jenna, who looks extremely uncomfortable with the attention put on her.

JENNA (CONT'D)  
Um, please?

She smiles awkwardly.

BENSON  
(taking control)  
Now, if you could just sit tight -

A BEEPER interrupts his speech - and Jenna, the owner, sprints out the door.

Andrew and Vi follow at a run.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CONTROL CENTRE

The two come upon Jenna, sitting at a MASSIVE COMPUTER. The screen takes up an entire wall, and a list of 'assignments' fills the screen.

Jenna reaches down and grabs a SLIP OF PAPER protruding from a slot in the machine. She hands it to Vi.

JENNA  
Looks like it froze working on  
your assignment, Vi.

The bottom row of the screen is RED, and it reads VIOLET MORGAN. Moving along to the opposite side of the screen is an address - "14 Acacia St, Jessop Hill". Andrew looks at Vi yet again.

ANDREW  
(to Vi)  
And you said you didn't do  
anything.

And as Vi looks down at the assignment in confusion,

CUT TO:

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - STUDY - AFTERNOON

PETER MORGAN sits at his computer, typing excitedly - a look of childish glee upon his face.

PAN over to the doorway, where Caroline leans against the doorway, watching him tenderly. She lightly knocks at the door frame, getting his attention, and walks over.

CAROLINE  
(smiles)  
Hi.

PETER

(at ease)

Hey.

Caroline lays her hand on Peter's.

CAROLINE

Honey... I'm worried about Vi.

(off his look)

She's been sneaking out, going on dates. And something just feels...

(trying to find the words)

I sometimes feel like she doesn't trust me anymore. And it's not just Vi - I'm worried about Cam and Penny, too.

Peter lays his other hand on Caroline's in an attempt to comfort her.

PETER

Caroline.

But Caroline can't stop - she's finally saying something she should've said a long time ago, and she needs to say it, if only to get it off her mind.

CAROLINE

(blurting it out)

It's like, every time Penny goes out or I drop them off at school, I see Vi, after what happened, that horrible accident that none of us are allowed to talk about, and I keep worrying that the next time the hospital calls, next time something happens, they won't miraculously wake up. And I couldn't handle it if something happened - -

Peter presses his hand against her mouth to quiet her. She stops, confused. This is Dad-Peter - who hasn't had too much of a chance to speak up until now.

PETER

(soothing)

Our kids... they're really great kids. And they're smart - they got that from you. Don't worry.

CAROLINE

But I can't not.

PETER

Look, they'll look after themselves. Have some faith in us. We're good parents.

Caroline is calming down, slowly. She takes a deep breath, then rubs her hand against Peter's.

CAROLINE

It's hard. Not to worry.

PETER

You can do it. You can do anything, Coco.

She smiles and chuckles a little at the nickname, and leans down to kiss him, a married peck on the lips. And then, she kisses him again --

-- and she doesn't break away. She lets it linger for a moment, both clearly enjoying it.

CAROLINE

Peter...

She glances towards the doorway, and back at him. He looks tempted - but his eyes catch sight of his screen, and once again, he's back to Author-Peter.

PETER

I... I have to...

Caroline gives him a fake smile, clearly dealing with the rejection internally.

She stands and walks to the door. When she reaches it, she looks back - but his attention is back on the computer monitor.

Her face falls, and she leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA - LATER

The panic has subsided. Most employees either sit to the sides in groups, playing cards, or stand together talking quietly.

Jenna and Andrew enter the cafeteria, also talking.

JENNA

As her mentor, it's your job to help her.

ANDREW

There's not so much we can do until the doors open. Just relax, Jen.

Instead of calming her down, this only annoys her.

JENNA

Relax!? The Company has shut down! That's not supposed to happen!

ANDREW

And that makes the assignment so important because?

JENNA

Because - -

ANDREW

Sorry, don't care.

Andrew walks off, but Jenna doesn't stop.

JENNA

Look, Vi's assignment apparently froze the computer, which seems to be the power source. So that assignment is our only clue to not dying in here.

ANDREW

You're being melodramatic.

JENNA

At least I'm not - -

ANDREW

(interrupts)

Look, Jenna.

He points at Vi, who sits at a table, looking miserable. In her hand is a beer, which she takes a sip from and coughs.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

You really want to tell her, right now, that she has to do an assignment in the middle of all of this?

(beat)

Just... give me five minutes.

Andrew turns and heads over to Vi's table, sitting down and grabbing her beer from her.

VI

Hey, I'm depressed!

ANDREW

But you're like a baby. And society frowns on drunk babies.

VI

You realise I hate you, right?

ANDREW

Yeah, too bad. You're stuck with me. Doing the whole mentor thing, even if it means doing the friend thing, too.

Vi perks up a little, even unconsciously smiling.

VI

Friends, huh?

The two smile a little.

KOU (O.S.)

(amused)

Stuck with 'babysitting duty' again, Friar? She doesn't seem so small to me.

Vi turns around to see the Asian man - KOU YIMOU (early 40's), with a wry, careless smile.

KOU (CONT'D)

Yo.

Kou holds out his hand, instantly friendly.

KOU (CONT'D)

Kou Yimou.

Vi takes it.

VI

Vi Morgan.

KOU

Ah, our youngest employee! You're almost famous, you know.

She's surprised, but doesn't make a big deal of it.

VI

Cool.

Two arms snake around Kou's waist - soon revealed to be Diana, who sneaks a quick 'hi' kiss onto Kou's cheek.

DIANA

Hey, Kou, wanna head out? This place isn't exactly doing wonders for my headache.

Vi's eyes narrow.

KOU

Oh, Vi, this is Diana Cross.  
Diana, Vi - -

DIANA

We've met.  
(to Kou)  
I'll be back in a sec.  
(pointedly at Andrew)  
Something's making me nauseous.

Diana exits, and Andrew makes a face at her back. Kou chuckles.

ANDREW

I don't see how you can stand living with her if you're not-  
(eyes Vi)  
Well, you know.

VI

I'm not a baby.

ANDREW

Sure, Pipsqueak.

Vi glares at him, but he just turns to Kou.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

So?

KOU

Hey, Domestic paired us up, and she knows how to clean up after herself, unlike other roommates I've had.

ANDREW

Hey, I was having a tough time. I just died!

VI

(to Kou)  
Wait - when did you two...?

KOU

Drewy here lived with me in Domestic for about a month when he first got hired.

(MORE)

KOU (CONT'D)

Then they figured out the dumbass wasn't exactly 'as he claimed to be'.

(beat)

Seriously, Andrew. A war vet? Nothing you could think of topped that?

(beat)

Anyway, after him they paired me with Diana.

VI

(grins)

Drewy?

ANDREW

Shut up.

VI

(chuckles)

Drewy. You know that's gonna come back to bite you in the butt.

(to Kou)

Thank you. My depression is officially lifted.

KOU

Always a pleasure.

Andrew just glares at them both.

ANDREW

Evil, evil people.

VI

Well, if you boys will excuse me, I have to go to the little girl's room.

(to Andrew)

Shut up.

ANDREW

(amused)

Wasn't gonna say anything.

And Vi heads off. In the background, we can see Diana break away from a group to follow her.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - WOMEN'S BATHROOM

Vi exits a stall to find Diana waiting for her.

DIANA

Vi. Give me your assignment.

VI

No.  
 (beat)  
 Why?

DIANA

People talk. They're saying its  
 your little broken connection  
 that got us stuck here and we'll  
 be stuck here until you do your  
 job. But since you haven't shown  
 even the slightest bit of  
 initiative, I think you'd better  
 leave it to the professionals. In  
 other words - moi.

Vi just stares flatly at her as she moves to the sink to  
 wash her hands.

VI

That the best you've got?

DIANA

Nothing hurts more than the  
 truth. Your time on the Duke  
 Jones assignment was ludicrous,  
 and you almost got someone killed  
 on *two* assignments. I've had a  
 near-perfect record. So, give it.

Vi ponders.

VI

And...  
 (relishing it)  
 No.

Diana rolls her eyes.

DIANA

And your grand plan is?

Vi pauses, thinks. Then grins widely.

ANGLE ON: DIANA'S SHIRT

Which reads 'Best Friends Forever' where it was once read  
 'Princess' in sparkly writing.

VI

I have a hunch. Excuse me.

Vi exits the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. WICKER RECORDS - AFTERNOON

Pan over the store with an ESTABLISHING SHOT as BAD LIVE MUSIC plays. Eventually land on:

SHANE EVANS, who sits on a table in the cafe - miserable. His cousin JIMMY EVANS sits down beside him.

JIMMY  
Looking glum, little man.

SHANE  
I think these guys have broken my ears.

JIMMY  
Maybe you should - -

Shane's call phone RINGS.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
(changes course)  
- - Have a mysterious phone call.

Jimmy turns back to the band, while Shane looks at the phone to check the name, smiles and answers.

SHANE  
Hey, Vi. Family stuff work out?

Vi's voice filters through the phone.

VI (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
Um, not so much.

Shane's face falls.

SHANE  
Ah, kay. What did you need?

VI  
(off music)  
Is that the music Jimmy has playing? And he hasn't kicked them out? Tell him he's lost his edge.

SHANE  
(to Jimmy)  
She says you've lost your edge.

JIMMY  
Not news to me.

SHANE  
Anyway...?

A pause.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Vi?

VI

Shane? Umm... I know this is  
inconvenient, but... Can you do  
me a favour?

Off Shane's expression...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - STREET - AFTERNOON

Shane walks down the quiet street with his mobile phone at his ear.

SHANE

(into phone)

Okay, I'm on Acacia Street. Is that it or do you want to be a little more specific with this favour that I'm supposed to be doing for you?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA - SAME TIME

Vi wanders slowly back and forth along the wall of the cafeteria - not far from table where Andrew and Kou are seated.

She glances down at the assignment sheet in her hand.

VI

It's number fourteen. I'm guessing that's a house or - -

SHANE

My house.

VI

Wait, what

SHANE

I live here.

(then)

But, of course, you wouldn't know that because you've never actually been to my house. You're always "busy". And - by the way - I just put sassy air quotes around the word "busy".

Vi, growing panicked, desperately attempts to a cover story.

VI

Um, okay, then yeah! I was playing a joke! I know you live there.

Shane is silent - coming to a halt on the footpath and pursing his lips in annoyance.

VI (CONT'D)

Can you trust me, just this once?

SHANE

You owe me. So much.

He continues to walk again.

VI

As soon as I retrieve my soul  
from the devil, it's all yours.

Shane approaches a modest one storey place on the corner. As he does so, an unfamiliar green car pulls out of the driveway and speeds quickly down the street.

Shane watches this with apprehension as he speaks to Vi again.

SHANE

So, what exactly do you want me  
to do at my own house? I could  
take some pictures of me doing  
fun hang-out things and then  
we'll photoshop your head in and -  
-

Vi hurries over to Andrew and taps (or rather thumps) him on the shoulder.

ANDREW

(hushed)  
What?

VI

(to Shane, into phone)  
Uh. Another call. Can I put you  
on hold?

Shane walks up the front steps of his house.

SHANE

Sure, Vi but - -

And she's gone.

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS RESIDENCE - FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Shane enters the tidy (almost too tidy) household. He knows the routine and deftly slips off his sneakers - pushing them onto a mat by the door. He holds the mobile phone a bit away from ear - listening for Vi's return.

A voice, that of LORI EVANS, calls from another room.

LORI (O.S.)  
Shane? You're home early.

She appears at the doorway, looking frazzled, but sympathetic.

LORI (CONT'D)  
Vi not show again?

SHANE  
No, but it's fine.  
(covering)  
Who was here? I saw a car - -

LORI  
Oh... Some religious man. He  
wanted to sell me something.  
Jesus. I think.  
(smiles)  
How are you doing? I barely get  
to see you these days!

Lori reaches out to brush her hand through his hair. He gently pushes her away, fighting back laughter.

SHANE  
I might haveta go out again, kay?

LORI  
Alright, but not too late. I'm  
actually home to cook dinner for  
once.

SHANE  
No work?

LORI  
Nope - shift got bumped.

SHANE  
Great. Hey, I gotta - -

He motions to a door down the hall.

LORI  
Go for it.

Shane moves down the hall and turns a corner. We hold on Lori's face - her expression falls, but she moves into another room.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA - SAME TIME

Vi is frantically talking to Andrew and Kou.

ANDREW  
Make something up!

VI  
You don't think I'm trying? What am I supposed to say? He wants to know why I asked him to go to his own house. What? You want to just tell him the truth? "Yeah. I get assignments from this big computer that monitors the worlds broken connections and - guess what? You're my Saturday afternoon shift!"

KOU  
(phone)  
You're keeping him waiting. He'll get suspicious.

VI  
What am I supposed to - -

KOU  
Homework. You need to borrow a book for homework.

Vi takes a deep breath and presses a button on her phone.

VI  
(into phone)  
Shane?

INT. EVANS HOUSEHOLD - SHANE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Shane sits on the end of his bed.

SHANE  
(into phone)  
Yeah?

VI (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
I, umm... wanted to borrow... Can I borrow your history textbook? I have homework on the Taj Mahal due Wednesday, and Penny managed to spill her hair conditioner on mine - -

SHANE  
Yeah, that's okay.

VI (V.O.)  
 (filtered)  
 Alright, awesome.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA

Vi sighs in relief. She slumps down into a seat at the table and begins fiddling with a napkin - pushing it aside, she sees Jenna's crossword puzzle hidden underneath. She pulls it towards her and studies the words.

The letters inside the boxes running down the side of the page read, "SUPERMARKET". Vi glances at the list of questions diagonal to it. The corresponding question asks for "A place where connections are fixed".

VI  
 (muttering)  
 Oh, great.

SHANE (V.O.)  
 (filtered)  
 What?

A pause.

VI  
 Hey, Shane, think you can do me another favour?

SHANE (V.O.)  
 (filtered)  
 Uh... I guess.

VI  
 Can you swing by the supermarket for me. I need you to pick up... some cake mix.

SHANE (V.O.)  
 (filtered)  
 Really?

VI  
 It's for the bake sale. At school.  
 (quickly)  
 And, yes, there is a bake sale at school. This is really important, okay?

Shane sighs.

SHANE (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
Sure. I'll go now.

VI  
Awesome. Call me back when you're  
done, kay?

Vi hangs up and turns to Andrew who's now switched his choice of beverage to a can of diet cola. Kou takes the crossword puzzle from Vi and studies it.

KOU  
You saw a Sign in here, didn't  
you?

VI  
It told me to send Shane to the  
supermarket. Said that's where  
his connection will be fixed.

ANDREW  
Then what was the point of  
sending him to his house?

Vi shrugs.

VI  
I dunno but if I have to send him  
anywhere else... Well, I'm gonna  
have to come up with some really  
good excuses.

Lynne appears and sits herself down at the table next to Kou. She gives Vi a supportive smile.

LYNNE  
We'll help you, hun.

Vi returns the smile.

ANDREW  
(shaking his head)  
That boy's got an awful lot of  
broken connections. Two in two  
days. I think that's a new  
record.

VI  
Is that bad? What... what do we  
do now?

KOU  
We wait.

A MONTAGE starts here, with THE 88's "HIDE ANOTHER MISTAKE" playing over the following scenes:

CUT TO:

INT. SUPERMARKET - AFTERNOON

Shane yawns as he moves through the check out counter. He has the text book tucked under one arm.

Looking around, his gaze rests on a MAN somewhere in the middle of the very long line running from the counter that Shane is at. He is in his 40's, handsome and has a light dusting of greyish hair. Also, his face is never properly in view.

There is a flash of recognition and Shane stares - attempting to work out where he's seen him before. Then, something jolts him away. The Cashier says something and Shane hands over some money - he takes his bag and moves outside.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA

Vi sits, talking (unheard over the music) on her mobile phone. She is momentarily distracted by a group of employee's at the next table over who are playing strip poker.

Snapping back to the task at hand, Andrew's cola can catches her eye. The image splayed across the front is now of - -

- - JIMMY in bathing shorts and grinning like a loon. The name across the can now says "WICKER COLA!". Vi says something to Shane.

CUT TO:

EXT. WICKER RECORDS - LATE AFTERNOON

Shane exits the store, looking visibly tired and lugging a brown paper bag with the Wicker Records logo on the side. He stops on the busy footpath and opens the bag, tucking the text book and plastic bag from the supermarket inside.

Behind him, the Man from the supermarket walks up the street. He notices the brightly decorated window of Wicker Records, considers something for a moment, pushes the door open and enters just as Shane turns around and walks back past the shop.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA

Andrew, Kou and Lynne watch Vi in amusement as Vi wanders around the table - looking in every direction for a Sign.

Diana joins their table and unfolds a paperback novel. Vi's eyes light up and she darts forward.

The cover states that the book is 'The Stitch Witch' by 'Finish Y. D. Assignment'. Vi rolls her eyes and says something to Shane over the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. FABRIC STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

Shane stands inside, looking through the various colours and styles of fabric and thread. He looks incredibly frazzled now.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA - SAME TIME

Vi talks to Lynne, who is talking quickly with hand motions. Vi relays this information to Shane.

CUT TO:

INT. FABRIC STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

Shane crouches down, searching for a particular spool of thread in the bottom shelf. As he does so, the Man appears behind him but on the other side of a table of rolls of fabric.

The Man checks a list in one hand and picks up a roll of material before turning and heading off screen. Shane stands up, holding some thread and completely unaware of what just happened.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOKSTORE - PARKING LOT - EVENING

The MONTAGE ENDS and Shane - now lugging more bags - stops outside of a bookstore.

SHANE

(into phone)

Okay, I'm here. Please promise me that this is the last place.

VI (V.O.)

(filtered)

I wish I could.

Shane sighs dramatically.

SHANE

Did you hear that? I sighed  
dramatically.

He starts walking across the parking lot when a now familiar green car zips out of the lot right by Shane. He leaps backwards - stumbling on the street corner and tumbling into the road.

His phone goes skittering into the gutter and Shane looks - shocked - as the green car drives away in the opposite direction.

A couple of pedestrians rush to help him and Shane clambers to his feet. A woman picks up his mobile, handing it to him.

SHANE (CONT'D)

(to pedestrians)

Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks. Thanks.

(into phone)

Now, what is it that I need to  
get from here?

CUT TO:

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Caroline stands at the counter with a cup of coffee, still looking put-out, staring at colour combinations. She flits listlessly through a few, then puts them aside.

PENNY (O.S.)

(yelled)

You little *dork!*

CAMERON "CAM" MORGAN scurries into the room and stands at the other side of the table.

CAM

She's gone crazy!

And PENNY MORGAN bursts into the room, rage burning in her eyes.

PENNY

You're going to die. Right now.

CAROLINE

Don't threaten your brother.

PENNY

He - -

CAROLINE

(short)

Don't. Threaten. Your brother.

Penny pouts and sits at the table, idly grabbing an apple from the fruit basket on it. After a moment of reflection, she whips it at Cam, who just barely avoids it as he darts out of the room.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Penny! Don't do that in the house!

PENNY

Like it could hurt anything.

CAROLINE

You could damage the walls, hurt your brother, distract your father now that he's finally writing.

(mutters, sarcastic)

And we wouldn't want that.

Penny picks up on this, and turns to her mother.

PENNY

Was that sarcasm that I just detected, Mum?

Caroline looks up, surprised.

CAROLINE

What?

PENNY

You're very "Anti-Dad" today. What'd he do? Cut up your Louis Vuitton purse?

CAROLINE

I don't have a Louis Vuitton purse.

Penny nods.

PENNY

Ah, that's right. Because I'm the only one in this family with any style.

(then)

Come on, lay it on me. I can do daughter duty. God knows Vi never does.

Penny pulls her chair up to the counter as Caroline allows her face to fall back to it's less-than-happy expression.

CAROLINE

Your father and I... We haven't connected for some time.

Penny's mouth drops open in shock.

PENNY

Ew! Oh God! I don't think I need to hear this!

CAROLINE

Oh, get your mind out of the gutter.

(beat)

He never seems like he's fully together, y'know? Like part of him is talking to me and the other part is back there with his work.

Penny is a bit weirded out by the fact her mother is confiding in her.

PENNY

His book.

CAROLINE

I wish he were a dentist, Penny. Or a construction worker. Or even a secret CIA agent. But a writer... It's hard, being married to a writer.

PENNY

Okay. But... If he wasn't "crazy writer dad", he wouldn't be Dad.

(beat)

Although, if he wasn't "crazy writer dad", I might actually be able to bring friends over to the house.

Caroline smiles.

PENNY (CONT'D)

See? Totally did the daughter thing.

Penny grins, pleased with herself, and heads towards the door.

CAROLINE

Penny?

She turns to look at her mother.

PENNY  
Yeah, mum?

CAROLINE  
(glib)  
Never get married.

PENNY  
Don't plan on it!

And she leaves. Caroline continues to stand, alone, but much cheered.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE - EVENING

Shane wanders slowly up and down aisles, scanning the book spines as he goes.

SHANE  
You hate Sarah McLachlan.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA

Vi now sits alone on the edge of the empty stage.

VI  
I know.

SHANE  
So why - exactly - did I just buy her CD for you?  
(beat, to himself)  
And more to the point, why did Jimmy even have it in stock?

VI  
Uh... Penny! It's for Penny. A present.

SHANE  
Oh, is it her birthday?

VI  
(without thinking)  
No.  
(slaps hand against forehead)  
Gah!

SHANE  
(tired)  
So... Let me get this straight.  
(MORE)

SHANE (CONT'D)

You need my history text book to do homework, cake mix for a school bake sale, thread for your needlepoint club and a CD as a gift for your sister. Who you don't even like.

(beat)

Are you trying to keep me occupied while you set up some massive surprise party for me?

Andrew wanders over and sits next to her.

VI

Wouldn't that be nice?

SHANE

But you haven't told me what this book is for.

He finds the book and pulls it from the shelf - studying the front cover.

SHANE (CONT'D)

I didn't know you were into Hemingway.

VI

Who?

SHANE

"The Old Man and the Sea", that's the book you told me to get.

Vi puts her hand over the phone and glares at Andrew.

VI

(to Andrew)

You couldn't have suggested I ask for Harry Potter?

Then, to Shane...

VI (CONT'D)

Umm... Can you trust me, Shane?

SHANE

(quiet)

Sure.

Vi doesn't smile.

VI

Thank you. Shane... I really am sorry.

SHANE

It's alright. No problem-o.

But it really is a problem-o as we see when Shane quickly hangs up the phone - without warning or a proper goodbye.

Vi falls back onto the stage.

VI

This sucks. This is the black hole of sucking.

(beat)

Stupid Company.

She shuts her eyes out of tiredness and frustration.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE - EVENING

Shane, glancing at the back of the book, turns the corner towards the front of the store but doesn't even notice - -

-- ERIN FOWLER, who he narrowly avoids bumping into.

ERIN

(clearly surprised)

Woah, hey Shane! This is...

SHANE

Weird.

ERIN

Well, I was going to say coincidental, but yeah, that too.

Shane notices Erin's book, a book of E. E. CUMMINGS poetry. He points at it out of interest.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Huh?

(gets it)

Oh, the book! It's for Bianca. I don't know why, but she likes this guy.

(quiet)

It's a... parting gift. Maybe.

Erin nods to the bags of various assignment-related things.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Been shopping?

SHANE

Just grabbing some stuff for a friend.

ERIN

Oh. This friend happen to be... Uh... Violet?

Shane narrows his eyes - a little bit offended.

SHANE  
 What makes you think I don't have  
 other friends?  
 (beat)  
 But yes. It's Vi.

Shane steps around him - ready to end the conversation when  
 Erin darts forward.

ERIN  
 Hey, Shane.

Shane turns around.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
 Can I... talk to you? I just need  
 to talk to somebody about this,  
 and you know, my friends..

SHANE  
 You're gay?

Erin stands, shocked.

SHANE (CONT'D)  
 You are?

ERIN  
 No, no!  
 (beat)  
 It's about Bianca.

It takes Shane a moment to process this.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE - CAFE - MINUTES LATER

The two sit across from one another on soft armchairs by  
 the window.

ERIN  
 (middle of speaking)  
 - - And she just gives me that  
look - -

SHANE  
 I know the one. She gives it to  
 me when I dare to exist.

ERIN  
 (moving on)  
 Yeah, that one. And, I like her.  
 She's my girlfriend, I have to  
 like her but... I don't know.  
 (MORE)

ERIN (CONT'D)

(beat)

She's Bianca Parry and I'm Erin Fowler. It's more like a diplomatic arrangement than a relationship. I don't know what would happen if we... But I should... Y'know... break up with her, right? If I don't feel...

SHANE

You can't keep secrets from her - especially if you still care about her, even a little. It's...

There's a bit of transference with his Vi issues in his voice, but there's some genuine feeling here.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Well, you'd be an asshole to do that. You wouldn't be protecting her, man. She'll be able to tell, either way. Just get it over with.

Erin mulls this over as Shane stands.

SHANE (CONT'D)

I've got to go.

ERIN

Yeah, I'll see on Monday.

Shane starts to walk away.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Shane!

He turns back.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Shane nods and leaves - passing Bianca as she enters. Shane stops and looks at her incredulously. Bianca raises an eyebrow - looking down at his shopping bags.

BIANCA

And how did you get enough money to buy all of that? Sell your friend Vi to the circus, did you?

Shane gives her a fake smile.

SHANE

Hi, Bianca. It's nice to see you too.

He turns to go and as he does so, he raises his fist to his mouth - coughing into it.

SHANE (CONT'D)  
(coughing)  
Dumped!

Bianca, half catching this, whirls around but Shane is already gone. She turns back to Erin who gives her an awkward smile. She walks over to him.

BIANCA  
(curt)  
Did you lunch plans work out?

ERIN  
Sit down, Bee.

BIANCA  
(trying to stay cold)  
Don't call me that, Erin.

She sits, crossing her legs in an act of annoyance. She's pissed.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOKSTORE - PARKING LOT - EVENING

Shane storms out of the bookstore, bag in tow, and opens his phone. Dial, ringing, click.

VI (V.O.)  
(filtered, blurts)  
Shane, good - -

SHANE  
Look, Vi, I got your book. And I know you don't want to tell me why you're dragging me around the city all day, or if this is some kind of practical joke - -

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE - CAFE

Bianca is similarly taking down Erin.

BIANCA  
- - And you don't think I notice, but you're never actually around, mentally, when I am. We're a couple, Erin. You're my boyfriend. I'm your girlfriend -

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOKSTORE - PARKING LOT - EVENING

Shane is still ranting, getting more and more heated up.

SHANE

We're friends, Vi. You say you need me to trust you? You need to trust me with why you're doing this.

INT. BOOKSTORE - CAFE

Bianca's coming to a verbal climax.

BIANCA

This needs to be a relationship, Erin. I like you, a lot more than I should, but I do. So, this is it.

INTERCUT between both scenes.

Silence.

SHANE

Say something, Vi.

BIANCA

Say something, Erin!

INT. BOOKSTORE - CAFE - EVENING

Erin fingers the bag sitting by his chair, and slowly pulls something out.

ERIN

(dazed)

I got you something.

Bianca stops, and looks at the book. Against her better judgement - she calms down and smiles, taking it from him.

BIANCA

Thanks, Erin. I'm glad we're on the same page.

She gets up and moves around the table - wrapping him in a hug. Over her shoulder, Erin's face screams, "What did I just do?".

INT. THE COMPANY - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Vi sits, shell-shocked.

SHANE

Say something, Vi.

She looks like crap. She looks, frankly, like her only friend is begging for something she can't give.

VI  
I'm sorry, Shane.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - PARKING LOT - EVENING

Shane's face falls. His final gambit didn't work.

SHANE  
(sad)  
Me too.  
(beat)  
Don't call me tonight, Vi.

And, depressed, he clicks off the phone and pockets it. Off his sullen expression:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE



Now she's intrigued, and shows she it by wiping under her eyes and sitting straighter.

VI

What's the speech?

ANDREW

No speech.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE - CAFE - NIGHT

Shane stands.

ANDREW (V.O.)

This is the Company. It's all about coincidences and things that make no sense adding up.

Turning around, he gets his bags together but stops - seeing something tucked between the sofa cushions.

VI (V.O.)

This is supposed to be encouraging?

ANDREW (V.O.)

Yeah. Because all we have to do is wait.

ANDREW (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It seems like a crock, and I know this is Jenna's schtick, but it'll work out. Because everything works out in the end.

Shane picks up the object - a wallet. He flips it open and pulls out a Drivers License. There is a picture of the Man. The card tells us his name is CALEB DANIELS and he lives at 45 PALEY COURT.

ANDREW (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The Company knows what it's doing. Us pawns? No say in it.

Shane heads for the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. DANIELS RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Shane walks hesitantly up the driveway. He noticed the CAR in the driveway - the same GREEN CAR from his house and the bookstore!

Moving on from this shocking coincidence, Shane steps up to the door - KNOCKING. The door opens to reveal - the Man from the supermarket. CALEB "CAL" DANIELS. His eyes go wide.

CAL

Sh-Shane?

Shane says nothing - trying to process this event.

CAL (CONT'D)

Wow, you've grown. Your mum said so, but...

(trails off)

Anyway, I expect you're here to talk about your dad.

A spark of familiarity crosses Shane's eyes, and he smiles a little.

SHANE

You're dad's friend. Cal, from the publishing house.

CAL

You didn't know?

Shane pauses. He holds out the wallet.

SHANE

I found this.

Cal smiles widely, taking the wallet.

CAL

Wow, what a coincidence, huh? Come in, come in.

Cal shepherds Shane inside.

CUT TO:

INT. DANIELS RESIDENCE - FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Shane enters and Cal closes the door behind him. Moving further into the house, Shane looks around. Through a wide open doorway, he sees the kitchen. On the bench is a large paper bag from Wicker Records, a thick roll of material and some half un-packed groceries from the supermarket.

Cal leans up the staircase - calling to someone unseen.

CAL

Wish! Guess who's here?

CUT TO:

INT. DANIELS RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cal and Shane sit on chairs facing each other, chatting amicably, as Cal's wife MARCIE "WISH" DANIELS (Latina, mid-30's) enters with a tray of mugs.

Shane takes one as she offers the tray. She moves to sit in a third chair, placing the tray on a coffee table.

CAL  
 (laughing)  
 - - And all we had between us  
 were two five-dollar bills! On a  
 35 dollar dinner! So your dad,  
 what he did was, he set off the  
 sprinklers by smoking in the  
 bathroom!

He continues to laugh, caught up in the memory. Shane smiles a little. Wish places a hand on Cal's leg.

WISH  
 Tell the redeeming part, hun.

CAL  
 Oh, yeah. Next day, of course, we  
 went back and paid back the  
 amount we skipped out on.

SHANE  
 Dad was always a good guy.

CAL  
 Yeah...  
 (beat)  
 Anyway, down to business. I  
 wanted to talk to you about your  
 mum and dad, Shane.

Shane pauses, unsure exactly what he's in for - a secret, a lecture, a plea.

SHANE  
 Alright, what about them?

CAL  
 Well... I paid your mother a  
 visit earlier today.

Shane nods.

CAL (CONT'D)  
 Your Dad, he wanted to give you  
 two his phone number, because he  
 just moved so the number for the  
 old place in Melbourne is useless  
 now.

(MORE)

CAL (CONT'D)

(stumbling)

He said he didn't want yours. I know he really did but he didn't want to bug you - he just wanted you to be able to contact him.

(beat)

You know, if you needed him.

Shane continues to nod, mulling the possibilities over in his mind.

SHANE

What'd my mum say?

Now it gets awkward. Cal seems to be rendered silent.

WISH

Lori... Your mum said no, sweetie.

CAL

(annoyed)

Damn right she said no. I'm surprised people in Africa didn't hear her screaming at me. You'd think he'd slept around or something, the way she - -

(sees Shane's face)

Aw, crap, I'm sorry, Shane. Didn't mean for that to come out like that.

Shane shakes his head, wanting to hear more.

SHANE

No, it's alright. They just... They never did tell me why they split up, is all.

CAL

Apparently, she didn't approve of your dad's lifestyle.

SHANE

'Lifestyle'?

CAL

He - We liked to pull stunts. The kind of stuff that kept your mom waiting by the phone, thinking she'd be hearing from the hospital.

(beat)

Real stupid stuff, too. Once, he rented stilts and tried to walk across Josephine River - the one with the rocky bottom?

(MORE)

CAL (CONT'D)  
Idiot almost broke his head.  
Would've if I wasn't there.

Shane takes this in, processing it. He looks at Cal, who looks hopeful, and sighs.

SHANE  
And he still wants to contact us?

CAL  
Yeah. He'd like a relationship  
with either of you, if you're  
open to it. He misses you.

It's now or never, and Shane knows that this moment is the one that counts. The importance rests on his mind.

WISH  
It's not an easy decision to  
make, so take all the time you  
need, Shane.

Cal digs through his pocket, and hands Shane a slip of paper with a phone number scrawled across it. Then, he and Wish stand up and leave. Shane sits, alone, trying to think.

WISH (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Shane?

Shane looks up to see her standing in the doorway.

SHANE  
Yeah?

She takes a moment - should she tell him this?

WISH  
(slow, finding her way)  
When I met Cal, well, things  
weren't so great. We dated for a  
bit, but we had a lot of trouble  
connecting. We didn't really have  
anything in common - and we broke  
up. Became friends.  
(beat)  
But, then, I started to see  
things about him I really liked.  
And then I saw things I loved.  
And even though sometimes we're  
on different pages, I feel like  
asking him to come back to me was  
the best choice I ever made.

She smiles a little at him.

WISH (CONT'D)

Thomas Evans is a good man,  
Shane. At least give him a  
chance.

And she disappears. Shane looks at the paper, good and hard, wishing someone could make this decision for him.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - RECEPTION

Vi sits in reception, playing cards with Andrew. She checks her watch.

VI

(tired)

7:55. Supposed to be home by  
eight.

(beat)

Go Fish.

Andrew reaches over to grasps a card, then holds up to his face - and looks closely to decipher what it says.

And suddenly, the LIGHTS TURN ON.

Silence and stillness reminiscent of the blackout govern the moment. Andrew blinks.

ANDREW

I thought we took the Jokers out?

He turns the card towards Vi, and she sees it is, indeed, a joker. She blinks, dazed --

-- then is UP AND RUNNING towards the elevator, using her momentum to slide across the floor and reach the elevator before everyone else

She presses the button. The doors open. She enters.

The doors close.

CUT TO:

INT. JESSOP HILL PLAZA - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: ELEVATOR

The doors OPEN, and Vi immediately starts running. Long shots follow her, tracking her like a helicopter camera might, giving the feeling of urgency.

CUT TO:

EXT. JESSOP HILL - STREET - NIGHT

Vi runs down the street.

Run, Vi, Run! Finally:

CUT TO:

EXT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Establishing shot, with Vi turning a corner and racing inside.

CUT TO:

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Vi races past Cam into the kitchen - and TRIPS, sprawling herself forwards:

CUT TO:

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Into the kitchen, where her Penny sits. She looks at her sister, and slowly grins

Vi shoots up - points at her watch.

VI

Eight on the nose!

Penny just smiles nastily, and slowly points towards the clock on the wall. Vi looks - and her face falls. Penny stands and leaves the room.

PENNY

Sucker.

ANGLE ON: CLOCK, reading 9pm.

Vi looks at her watch, then stares after Penny.

VI

You set me up! You - -

CAROLINE

Ahem.

Vi turns around to see her mother standing, arms crossed - and ready to blow.

VI

I can explain. Penny screwed with my watch.

CAROLINE

Where you went didn't have - ?

(beat)

It doesn't matter. I asked you to be home at six, Vi. I asked you, and you came home not only late by my time, but by yours as well. I'm extremely disappointed in you.

Vi looks down... and then looks up and has eye contact with her mother.

VI

I'm okay. Not only am I okay, I'm great. Never been better. I know you're worried, like, all the time, but you have to learn to trust me.

Caroline pauses - and remembers Peter's words earlier. The cogs visibly tick in her head. She takes a deep breath.

CAROLINE

Alright.

VI

Alright? That's it? No yelling?

CAROLINE

No yelling. You're a young adult now. It's time I allowed you to be responsible for yourself, at least a little.

(beat)

So... no punishment. This time.

Caroline turns to walk out. The phone RINGS, and Vi answers it.

VI

Hello? Vi Morgan.

SHANE (V.O.)

(filtered)

Vi, can you meet me at Dixon Park?

VI

(for Caroline)

Dixon park? Now?

Vi looks at Caroline, and mouths 'Shane'. Caroline sighs, and nods.

VI (CONT'D)

I'll be there. See you then.

Vi hangs up, and does the impossible - she runs up and hugs her mother.

VI (CONT'D)  
Mum... Thanks. This is big,  
and... thanks.

Caroline, surprised and a little dazed by the sudden and unusual affection, pats Vi's head.

CAROLINE  
You're welcome.

Vi grins at her mother, and runs out. The front door is heard opening and closing.

Penny leans on the kitchen bench, watching after Vi.

There's a beat.

PENNY  
Do you think she sometimes looks  
like a Hobbit?

Caroline raises her eyebrows and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - STUDY - NIGHT

Caroline appears at the door again, seeing Peter at the computer, and strides across the room to place her hand on his. He looks up at her.

PETER  
Hey.

Caroline smiles, slowly and happily. She rubs his hand with hers.

CAROLINE  
Hey, stranger. I tried your  
advice. It worked.

PETER  
(happy)  
Good.  
(beat)  
What advice?

Caroline sits at the edge of the desk, seeming younger than ever before in a way. She kisses his cheek, and he kisses her back. She doesn't pull back.

CAROLINE

When was the last time we were  
'Peter' and 'Coco', instead of  
'mum' and 'dad'?

She kisses him again, slow, tender, and he returns it. Both are breathing a little harder.

PETER

It's been a long time... Coco.

Caroline slides off the edge of his desk onto Peter's lap. Moving his arm around her, Peter turns off the computer screen. They continue to kiss, smiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Vi advances up a hill slowly. When she reaches the top, the whole playground becomes visible. Shane sits on a swing under a streetlight.

VI

Shane!

She speaks as she approaches, not letting him say anything until she's said her piece.

VI (CONT'D)

I know that this is huge, and dragging you all around town without telling you what the heck it was for was incredibly stupid and wrong. And I know you're my friend, probably my only friend, which makes this even worse.

She reaches the edge of the light, still approaching. Now that Shane's face is visible, his expression is more of shock than anger.

Vi doesn't notice, because the more she says, the worse she feels, and the release isn't helping at all.

VI (CONT'D)

Frankly, this sucks. And I know I'm supposed to finish this by telling you 'my big secret', but I can't. So, you should probably just, I dunno, give up.

SHANE

Vi.

Vi stops. Shane starts to smile.

SHANE (CONT'D)

You know my dad? The one who  
doesn't live with me and my mum?

(Vi nods)

I called him today, first time in  
two years. He was glad to hear  
from me. And it's all because you  
and your crazy errands.

He watches Vi's face light up.

SHANE (CONT'D)

I can wait. Not forever, but I  
can wait for a bit. Because I  
think our friendship is worth a  
few headaches. Right?

Vi grins.

VI

Right!

She takes a seat on the swing beside him. As they look at  
each other, it's obvious - the camaraderie is back.

SHANE

Oh, I almost forgot.

He reaches down and picks up the shopping bags which were  
hidden by the side of the swing. He hands them to Vi.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Here.

Vi smiles.

VI

Thanks. I'll pay you back.

They are silent. Then, Shane starts to swing back and  
forth. Vi mimics him and they laugh as they gain momentum -  
swinging higher and higher into the sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW