

ANGEL LANDING

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Twitter: @surlaroute

EXT. A PARK - DAY

Faint bird sounds, distant traffic.

We dive down from the sky and float through pockets of people, couples, alone, groups, living as:

SAM

(voiceover)

If you look close enough at anyone you'll end up crying. I think that's why some people don't get too close. You never really know what lies in another person's past. What brought them to these moments, where they fell in love, where you fell apart. You never know exactly what they've been through, what they want, what they'll give or take to get it - even when they tell you. We barely know these things about ourselves. Sometimes it's hard to believe in yourself. Sometimes you're waiting for them to believe in you.

Out of the blur of people eventually we settle on and follow a little girl running, playing, approaching SAM CARTER, 30-ish, mousy hair, sitting on a bench, writing in a notepad.

SAM

(voiceover)

Sometimes all you're waiting for is for something to happen. Sometimes, it happens. Sometimes it feels like all we leave behind is shadows. Sometimes all that keeps us going is the shadow that remains. It's hard to believe you're real 'til someone else does... It's hard to count on angel landing when all you've seen is angel leav-.

SAM

(spoken)

FUCK.

She breaks off writing, realising her mistake, and tears the page out - we linger on the title a beat before she screws the ruined sheet up into a ball and sets it beside her on the bench.

The little girl appears out of nowhere and picks up the ball, giggling.

For a second Sam wants it back but on seeing the girl's face she smiles and lets it go.

She gets back to writing and on the blank paper we FADE TO:

EXT. SEAVALE BEACH - "MEMORY LANE" - DAY - A DREAM

A perfect hazy summer day.

A minor attraction on a touristy beach in a small seaside town.

Seavale.

Faces move by in blurry, pastel clumps.

ELLIE DeFRANCO - 10, blonde, in a yellow dress - has one hand sealed around an ice cream cone with sprinkles, the other held tight by her guardian, LEILA THOMAS - 17, also blonde, blue jean shorts and red t-shirt, trying to look in control.

They look at the attraction askance, from afar.

There are three booths, all occupied, the centre one by a man in his 30s.

Illuminated signs reaffirm the booths are occupied.

Another man waits outside the centre booth looking nervous and expectant.

The sign clicks off and the man inside turns around to step out, tears rolling down his face.

The couple embrace, exchange a few words, and walk past Ellie and Leila looking blissful.

ELLIE

Can we have a go?

LEILA

I don't know what it is!

They walk up to the vacated booth, and Leila reads the instructions on the inside.

LEILA

(cont'd)

So it looks like you put your money in and it records you. Oh I've used these before.

Ellie is reading too.

ELLIE
It's a time machine!

LEILA
Huh?

ELLIE
Here - they keep it for you when
you come back!

LEILA
Smartie. Well I don't know what to
say!

ELLIE
I do.

LEILA
You always do. Okay -

Ellie goes in the booth and Leila starts to follow. Ellie
pushes her out.

ELLIE
Nuh-UH, this is for future you!

LEILA
Okay, okay.

ELLIE
And you think of what to say in
yours!

Leila looks at this intelligent little girl, half smiling
but with a twist of regret.

TINA
(off-screen whisper)
Leila?

A hand lands on Leila's shoulder, she turns away from
Ellie speaking into the machine, startled to see TINA
DeFRANCO, late 40s, deep red hair.

LEILA
Teeny? What are you -

She turns back to the booth to check on Ellie but it's
empty.

The blurry faces swarm in on Leila.

INT. LEILA'S ROOM - DAY

Leila, now in her 30s, wakes up with a sharp intake of breath.

She looks to her bedside table, with two pictures - one of Sam, the same age as she was in the dream, the other of Ellie and a younger Tina.

LEILA

I dreamed of you again, Teeny.

She gets out of bed wearing a cream over-sized mens' shirt and goes to her dresser, looking at herself in the mirror, pinching her cheeks.

Around the mirror are photo booth strips of her and Sam aged between 15 and 20 making faces, then a few of her alone.

INT. THOMAS' KITCHEN - DAY

Leila walks past ANGELA, her mother, a very old mid-60s, warped by bad food and worse TV, absorbed in a colourful game on her tablet - she places a gentle hand on her shoulder.

Angela looks at her daughter as she opens the fridge, observes carefully as she takes out the orange juice, pours it, puts it back, and browses for further inspiration.

She takes a few slices of ham and a cheese slice and makes a kind of wrap of it.

Leila catches Angela's watching eye, and Angela quickly looks back down at her tablet.

LEILA

I'm okay, mum. I promise.

She walks behind Angela, almost thinking twice, but she places two gentle hands on her mother's shoulders and slowly turns them into the tiniest hug from behind.

LEILA

(cont'd)

I'm okay, I swear.

She walks out of the kitchen, leaving Angela alone with her tablet.

She comes back.

LEILA

(cont'd)

I think I might stay somewhere
tonight, 'kay? Maybe the weekend.
Just in case I don't come back.
Don't worry. I'll call.

Angela acknowledges it with a look.

They've been doing variations on this for nigh on a
decade.

INT. BOOK STORE - DAY

Rainy windows.

Sam walks in front of a half-finished display for Tina
DeFranco's latest, ROUGE VAMP ENDS.

She's visibly distressed, laying out books in front of a
large photograph of the author in her prime.

KAREN, one of Sam's colleagues, black hair, comes through
the front door.

KAREN

Oh, Sam. It's beautiful.

SAM

Ya think?

KAREN

I know how much she means to you.

SAM

She was the greatest.

KAREN

Was?

Sam looks down at one of the books and begins to speak.

HENRY

(off-screen)

What the fuck is that?

KAREN

Henr-

HENRY, shaved head, comes out of nowhere, from his dress
a clearly more senior figure.

HENRY

What the fuck is this? What the
fuck is that?

KAREN
Henry. It's a big one...

HENRY
I know that. So what?

Sam moves as if wanting to speak but, she has no words.

KAREN
So, Sam is in charge of our front
of store displays and... well, she's
very fond of Miss DeFranco...

Henry closes his eyes as if physically pained.

HENRY
Whatever. This can only be up til
Wednesday, it's the Foxtrot Alpha
launch.

He exits, but under his breath...

HENRY
(cont'd)
Fuckin' waste.

This finally breaks Sam, she raises a hand to her face
and leaves in the opposite direction.

SAM
'xcuse me...

Karen, left alone, busies herself with the DeFranco
display.

EXT. BOOK STORE. REAR - DAY

Sam comes out of a nondescript door in a side street and
gasps at the sight of Leila, looking even more like a
deer in headlights.

SAM
Leila?

LEILA
I was coming to see you.

SAM
This is so weird. I was just
thinking about you. Well about
Tina.

Leila glances behind Sam at a giant promo poster of Tina
and nods.

LEILA

It is strange. I had a dream.
Dreams.

She uneasily moves forward to Sam, taking her hands out of her pockets.

LEILA

(cont'd)

I know it's been a while..

Sam's face collapses in bittersweetness as she awkwardly moves closer too and they eventually hold each other, a graceless human tangle.

SAM

Doesn't matter..

They kiss for a long time.

LEILA

Are you okay? Do you wanna come with me to Seavale? Like right now?

Sam frowns at Leila, then looks at the Tina poster and the door she came out of.

SAM

Sure.

Over the Tina poster as Leila leads the way:

ELLIE

(voiceover)

It had to be murder.

INT. DOLPHINS CLUB. SEAVALE BEACH - DAY

Tiny stage. Tiny crowd. Dramatic lighting.

It's Club des Dauphins but we call it Dolphins Club.

Ellie, alone on the stage, now 25, flapper haircut, black feathers, intense eye make-up, is a performance artist.

ELLIE

My mother the provocateur. Trash novelist. The question was never if she'd be murdered - but when?

She takes a deliberate sip from a very large, very emptied glass of red wine and enjoys it.

Somebody in the dark shouts, "sing!"

ELLIE

(cont'd)

You want a song, huh? 'Kay.

She fumbles a moment with a very old looking little girl's tape recorder.

Awkward silence in the club, just the sounds of glasses being gathered and cleaned behind the bar.

Finally a thin instrumental kicks in - The Man That Got Away... Ellie sings along with it semi-enthusiastically..

INT. DOLPHINS CLUB - LATER

Ellie sits at the bar with the prettiest cocktail on the menu, just way too much shit sticking out of it.

HORATIO - just Horatio, or "H" - a 90s hippie/surfer/beat blend long let slide into the rawest of cool, slightly greying, flavour saver - gingerly takes the seat next to her.

ELLIE

Is it selling?

HORATIO

Too soon to tell.

Ellie takes a dramatically long sip from her drink, never losing eye contact with Horatio.

ELLIE

Was I good? Be honest.

Horatio repositions himself, this is clearly an awkward moment for him.

HORATIO

You might lay off the Tina stuff,
you don't know who might be here.

ELLIE

Nobody's listening. 'n you know
it's not true. 'n I need to put it
somewhere.

HORATIO

I know.

INT. CAR. SEAVALE COAST - DAY

On the back seat, ragged but beautiful old bag covered in fabric paint, sequins and buttons between her legs, Leila chews on her nails.

Sam absent-mindedly reads the back of the DeFranco book.

SAM

We'll be back by Monday right? I mean I just kinda walked out and they'll be fine with that but, I have to show up on Monday.

LEILA

Sure, I think.

Leila's distracted, intent on the back of the driver's head.

SAM

I did wanna ask her about this I guess.

Leila snaps a little out of her fugue and looks at the book in Sam's hands, brighter.

LEILA

You can get it signed. In person this time.

They smile at each other and Sam takes Leila's hand.

SAM

Thanks for asking this time.

LEILA

Sorry I didn't before.

She looks again at the back of the driver's head.

LEILA

(cont'd)
Sorry 'bout a lot of things.

SAM

Ellie'll be like... 20 something now?

LEILA

(realising)
Yeh. God what are we doing. She won't even remember.

SAM

Not remember you? Impossible.

LEILA

I mean remember stuff. Stuff I
can't say right now.

She darts her eyes toward the driver's seat and Sam nods.

DRIVER

Don't mind me!

His eyes flash at them through the rear view mirror and they both roll their eyes.

SAM

Is that her?

Leila follows Sam's gaze out the front as the car nears:

EXT. THE DeFRANCO HOUSE - DAY

A large isolated beach house surrounded by clumps of trees almost on an island with a piece of waterside to itself.

A way out from the house itself, Ellie kneels before a flowerbed atop a sharp descent to the beach and water.

Off-stage, out of the lights, she's earthier, more raw, real and sad, - still a little scary, but in a different way... we might not even recognise her at first.

She turns as she hears the car arrive, brushing something from her eyes, makeup a little smudged, trying to clean herself up as she walks to see who it is.

Her curious look turns to confusion and almost crazy-eyed surprise as first Leila then Sam step out from the back.

LEILA

Ellie?

Ellie makes a hand gesture like, "moi?" that sort of collapses as she edges toward Leila, falling into her arms like a kitten.

Sam hangs back a little, observing the strange reunion.

Ellie looks up at her and takes her in but continues to hold Leila tight.

LEILA

(cont'd)

Is that where we buried Flipper?

She looks over at the flowerbed, finally released by Ellie.

ELLIE

Uh-huh. I was just...

She catches herself, eyes widening, frowning, gathering again...

ELLIE

(cont'd)

...can't believe you remember. What are you doing here? I mean, let's go in, it's getting chilly.

Ellie casts a look back at the flowerbed as they walk together trailed by Sam toward the house, sun going down behind them.

INT. MAISIE'S DINER. SEAVALE - EVENING

Empty.

The Trolley Song can be faintly heard from a radio in the back.

ARTHUR RAIMES, mid-60s, balding grey, heavy tweed coat and hat, pulls up in his car outside and strolls in.

Behind the counter, MAISIE, black hair, late 30s, takes a sneaky bite of something before noticing him with her mouth full.

She quickly swallows, covering her mouth.

MAISIE

Excuse me!

Raimes waves it off, mouthing 'it's nothing'.

MAISIE

(cont'd)

What can I get you?

RAIMES

I appear to have lost myself. Just coffee please. It's been a while and the scenery changed.

He takes a paperback from his large pocket and removes a piece of paper that was holding his place.

Maisie glances at it and double takes a bit, uneasy, pretending.

MAISIE

Oh, the DeFranco house. You a fan?

RAIMES

As it happens, but that's not my business today. Is it far from here? I thought it would be clearer.

MAISIE

Not far. You just keep going toward the beach -

(she gestures down the road, still half-covering her mouth)

It's kind of hidden away now but also can't miss it, there's only one turn.

She glances at the book in Raimes' hand.

MAISIE

(cont'd)

I didn't like that one.

She pours him coffee.

MAISIE

(cont'd)

But I won't tell you why.

RAIMES

Oh, it's not mine, just a habit, always carry one. My wife, rest her soul, was a fan. Had all of them signed.

Maisie looks at his weary face with sudden pity.

MAISIE

How sweet.

RAIMES

All but this one. She died before the release.

MAISIE

I'm sorry?

RAIMES

Hoped I might run into her.

MAISIE

You've been in Seavale long?

RAIMES

Oh years, years.

MAISIE

And you never ran into Tina DeFranco? She came in here a lot.

RAIMES

I've been kind of hidden away myself. The chance never really came up. My wife came here a lot though, it was where she got the books signed.

Maisie's face falters again.

MAISIE

Wait... was her name Linda?

Raimes' face brightens at the name and his voice cracks.

RAIMES

It was.

MAISIE

I remember her. Damn. I'm really sorry to hear about... damn.

There's an awkward silence and Maisie busies herself arranging things on the counter.

RAIMES

You never spoke with Miss DeFranco?

MAISIE

Not really. Like I'm sure she'd love to hear the details of my little life. I did wanna tell her how much I liked her books, just never dared.

RAIMES

What a pair we are. Waiting, always waiting for permission. Waiting for something to happen.

MAISIE

Well something sure happened.

She half-groans at herself.

MAISIE

(cont'd)
That was - sorry.

Raimes again waves away her indiscretion.

MAISIE

(cont'd)

You're sweet. I mean, I don't know why she never comes in here anymore. Miss... DeFranco I mean. I don't know, something must've happened is what I mean. I mean even I won't be coming here much longer. I'm moving back to the city.

She holds up a hand with an engagement ring on it.

RAIMES

Well good things happen after all.

He takes a large mouth full from the coffee cup.

RAIMES

(cont'd)

S'good coffee.

He picks up the paperback.

MAISIE

Have another cup?

RAIMES

No, I should be moving. Thank you very much for the change. Keep the-

He slides a note across the counter, stands, and leaves Maisie alone again with the radio.

MAISIE

G'bye. And I'm sorry.

She catches her own foolish looking reflection in the window as she watches Raimes leave, and sighs at herself and the emptiness.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. KITCHEN - EVENING

JOE ELSBETH, 52, greying, frowns absently at his reflection in the window over a half cup of cold coffee with a skin forming on top.

He blinks at the sound of multiple people entering in the hallway.

LEILA

(off-screen)

It hasn't changed...

He double blinks at the sound of the voice and casts quickly around the room, startled out of his fugue, standing just as Leila, Ellie and Sam enter.

ELLIE
Got a surprise for you Joe.

JOE
It certainly is.

He acknowledges Sam and Leila avoiding eye contact.

LEILA
Hi Joe.

JOE
Hi... and Sam, I guess?

Ellie steps out of the way, looking over her shoulder at Sam as if she forgot she was there.

SAM
Hi.

Awkwardness fills the room.

LEILA
We should've called but, after so long..

She moves to hug Joe but he flinches, and she backs off, a sudden look of concern crossing her face.

ELLIE
We never answer the phone anyway.
Drinks.

Joe goes to the fridge trying to remember how to deal with guests.

JOE
Yeh... can I get you anything?

Ellie breezes past him to a cupboard.

ELLIE
Nuh-uh, real ones.

She pops open a compartment in the back of the cupboard and brings out a half bottle of liquor.

Leila smiles.

LEILA
Teeny.

ELLIE
Secret stash. Thanks mum.

Ellie pours four doubles and hands them out.

As Ellie offers one to Sam, she holds up her hands.

SAM
I don't really...

ELLIE
Just hold it. But I think you
might need it.

Ellie smirks awkwardly and gently shakes the drink at Sam, who takes it, trying to read her.

SAM
...where is Tina?

A soft but sure knock at the door.

JOE
What now?

He puts his drink down and goes into the hallway.

LEILA
Ellie what's going on?

Ellie's eyes widen like, "I don't know," but she clearly does, and she's enjoying it in spite of herself, a little too unhinged around the eyes.

EXT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. DOORWAY - EVENING

On the porch stands Raimes, hands deep in his coat.

Joe, rattled, opens the door.

Raimes removes his hat, a naturally grim expression.

JOE
What'd she do?

RAIMES
I assure you this isn't about your
daughter. Good evening, Mr.
DeFranco.

JOE
We were never married. Elsbeth.
Joe Elsbeth.

RAIMES
Excuse me.

JOE

So what's this about? We're kind of in the middle of something. Visitors.

RAIMES

Of course, of course. It's my wife, you see. She was a fan of Miss DeFranco for many years. Recently she passed away.

Joe tries not to react.

RAIMES

(cont'd)

I only hoped..

He takes the paperback out from his pocket.

Joe sighs.

JOE

Oh. Look I'm sorry - if you want stuff signed there's an address in the back.

RAIMES

Oh but she - no, of course. I'm sorry to intrude.

JOE

If you could just. Sorry. Not a good time.

Raimes glances past Joe into the kitchen and sees the women, especially noticing Leila.

RAIMES

Perhaps another day.

Joe shakes his head and begins to object further but Raimes is already on his way back to his car.

Joe closes the door.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joe re-enters, picks up his drink and downs it.

Ellie on standby immediately refills.

ELLIE

Who was it?

JOE
Your old friend. Raimes. For a sec
I thought -

ELLIE
What'd he want?

JOE
(flustered)
His wife died, he wanted - shit,
I'm tired.

LEILA
Joe what's going on? Where's
Teeny?

Sam is staring at the book in her hands.

SAM
She's dead isn't she?

Leila, Joe, and especially Ellie, all look stunned at her.

ELLIE
(impressed)
You got it.

LEILA
What??

SAM
I knew there was something up with
this.

She tosses the paperback on the table.

LEILA
This isn't funny. Joe?

JOE
It's true.

Leila puts her drink down untouched and sits at the kitchen table.

Ellie, realising she's upset, softens a little and crouches down beside her, kittenish again, putting her head in Leila's lap, pouting overly dramatic.

LEILA
Teeny... but how?

ELLIE
(musically)
She just had enough. I know the
feeling.

JOE
She wasn't happy. But you know
her, wouldn't let anyone help.

LEILA
Why didn't you let me know?

ELLIE
Why didn't you come back?

Leila barely hears and doesn't react.

Sam pulls up a chair next to Leila and puts a hand on her
shoulder, picking the book off the table.

SAM
So... who wrote this? I knew it
wasn't her.

LEILA
Sam...!

Sam whispers sorry but etc...

JOE
Yeh... that's why we couldn't tell
anyone.

ELLIE
Mmmoney.

She spits the word out like it's metallic.

She looks up at Leila.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
One of H's friends.

SAM
Who the hell is H?

JOE
Tina's drug-dealer.

ELLIE
My friend.

SAM
Well it's awful.

Ellie's starting to take an interest in this Sam
creature.

ELLIE
You might be the only one who
cares.

SAM
Well she deserves better.

ELLIE
(bitter)
Don't we all.

She snuggles a little more in Leila's lap before rising to refill.

JOE
I am really beat. We can talk more tomorrow. Will you guys be okay in Tina's room?

Leila and Sam exchange looks.

JOE
(cont'd)
You are together, right?

LEILA/SAM
(together)
Sort of...

Ellie simmers a little over her drink.

LEILA
What about you?

ELLIE
Joe doesn't sleep.

JOE
I've been using the guest room for years.

Ellie picks up the bottle and offers it around.

ELLIE
Nightcaps?

Sam and Leila shake their heads - Joe doesn't need to say or do anything, she tops him up.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
'kay seeya tomorrow.

She takes the bottle and steals out of the room.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. TINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Leila throws her sequined bag at the bottom of the bed and sits on the edge.

Sam stands near the door taking the room in.

SAM
This is bizarre. I don't know how
to feel. Are you ok?

LEILA
Yeh. I don't know either. This
place was always... bizarre.

Sam joins her on the bed and they kiss.

SAM
Alone at last.

LEILA
I'm sorry it's been too long.

SAM
We said it doesn't matter.

LEILA
No, I'm sorry. I'm scared. I don't
know how it become this long. With
you. With Ellie.

She tears up more than she is already.

LEILA
(cont'd)
With... Teeny. I don't know what
I've been doing all that time.
What's wrong with me?

She cries into Sam's shoulder, Sam's arms around her.

LEILA
(cont'd)
Everyone changed but me.

Suddenly from elsewhere in the house, muffled by the
walls, the sound of Judy Garland can be heard.

JOE
(off-screen)
Ellie!

The volume goes down but only a touch.

Sam and Leila can't help but smirk through the tears.

SAM
Maybe not changed so much.

Leila wipes her face.

LEILA
I should go and see her, okay? I
won't be long. You can get ready
for bed.

Sam looks at the big bed.

SAM
I didn't bring any PJs.

LEILA
I'm sure there's some stuff in the
wardrobe?

SAM
That... would be too weird.

LEILA
Well, nothing is fine too.

SAM
Are you sure this isn't too much?

LEILA
I wanna do it right this time.

She kisses Sam and touches her cheek before leaving the
room.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. HALLWAY - NIGHT

As Leila walks to Ellie's room, Joe comes out of the
bathroom and they pass awkwardly.

Joe hesitates.

JOE
You okay?

FLASH ON:

INT. UNKNOWN - NIGHT

Two figures grapple in the dark.

BACK TO:

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. HALLWAY - NOW

Leila keeps moving.

LEILA
 (bluntly)
 Yep.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. ELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ellie might be 25 but this is a little girl's room.

Judy spins on a pink vinyl record player in the corner as Ellie lays on the single bed.

A light knock at the door.

ELLIE
 What.

LEILA
 It's me.

ELLIE
 It's open.

Leila comes in and is almost overpowered by the room.

LEILA
 Wow.

Ellie slowly gets up off the bed and goes to Leila, falling into her like a rag doll.

She's different in here too.

ELLIE
 I'm sorry.

LEILA
 It's okay. Wait, for what?

They hold for a while, and Ellie finally lets go.

Leila gazes at the room again.

LEILA
 (cont'd)
 You didn't change a thing here.

ELLIE
 I guess not. It's my place.

LEILA
 But the music's different. No Marilyn?

ELLIE
 Sometimes. But I feel more Judy now. Sad Judy.

LEILA
Y'know Marilyn got sad too.

Ellie cocks her head a little.

ELLIE
Yeh but you couldn't hear it.

LEILA
Are you okay? I missed you.

ELLIE
I'm fine.

LEILA
I don't know why I didn't come
back till now. I feel like I
missed so much.

ELLIE
You didn't miss shit.

LEILA
I missed you learning 'shit'!

ELLIE
You can blame Joe for that. Wait,
did you leave your girlfriend
alone with Joe?

LEILA
Sam's not-

Ellie makes a hugely doubtful face.

LEILA
(cont'd)
Okay she was. Gonna be. But I
haven't seen her in almost as long
as you before today.

ELLIE
Is she staying with you?

LEILA
...yes?

Ellie makes a satisfied face.

ELLIE
Then you should get back to her.

LEILA
I wanted to see you. Alone.

Ellie looks annoyed.

ELLIE

Why?

LEILA

'Cos I'm worried about you. This is such a crazy thing. Nobody knows how to feel. You're supposed to be sad or... something, just something. I'm no good at this.

ELLIE

I've done sad.

LEILA

Huh?

ELLIE

After you left.

LEILA

Okay.

ELLIE

That was the best year of my life.

Leila brightens.

LEILA

Really?

ELLIE

I never felt like anyone loved me like you did. Not before. And certainly not since.

(almost singing)

You were my angel. But you got back with Sam so... I couldn't get mad at you.

LEILA

We... didn't exactly get back together. I mean, we didn't stay together.

Ellie flops down on the bed defeated.

LEILA

(cont'd)

Failed you again.

ELLIE

(half into the pillow)

Nah I'm used to it.

She sits up.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

So how come she's here?

LEILA

We kinda both had the same idea, just different. She got it from that book I guess. But I had this dream. I've been having it forever. Bout Teeny.

ELLIE

What about?

LEILA

'member that place we went to with the memory thing?

Ellie smiles.

ELLIE

That was the best day.

LEILA

Really? Well it's that. Just this time Teeny appeared at the end. But old, now...

She rolls her eyes, tearing up a little.

LEILA

(cont'd)

...then, Teeny. Scared me. Something clicked. So I went to see Sam. I guess I always wanted to come back. I'm sorry.

ELLIE

Stop saying sorry, silly. I love you.

Ellie hugs Leila, who absorbs the love painfully.

LEILA

Do you -

She stops herself.

ELLIE

What? You can say anything, you know you can.

Leila looks down, she really doesn't wanna say but:

LEILA

That time... in the bathroom.

Ellie giggles.

ELLIE
That was fun.

LEILA
 It's not funny. I'm sorry. I
 shouldn't've-

ELLIE
 Meddled with a minor?

She sees Leila's face.

ELLIE
 (cont'd)
 Oh my god, Leila, I'm kidding. You
 took a bath with me! I was a kid.
 And you were too by the way.

Leila's starting to cry.

ELLIE
 (cont'd)
 Lei-

She haphazardly nuzzles Leila.

LEILA
 I was always afraid I did
 something. I mean, what if you
 don't remember. And I think I
 wanted to. Do more. I was a mess.

ELLIE
 Leila, if I'm a mess it's not 'cos
 of you.

She stands up from the bed and looks around.

ELLIE
 (cont'd)
 If it's anything it's this fucking
 house. Leila, I remember
 everything.

She comes back to Leila's side.

ELLIE
 (cont'd)
 And you're the best fucking memory
 I have. For what it's worth I
 forgive ya.

She kisses Leila.

LEILA

I'm so sorry.

Ellie kisses her again, harder, emphatically.

The pain comes up from Leila's stomach, finally released, she pulls away, collapsing in heaving sobs in Ellie's lap.

LEILA

(cont'd)

I'm so sorry!

Ellie strokes her hair, calming her but scared herself, slowly, eventually lifting her, nesting Leila's face in her hands.

They lock eyes.

ELLIE

Hey. Hey. I think we're both old enough now.

They put their foreheads together, staring into each other's teary eyes intensely for a beat too long.

LEILA

I love you. And, I have to get back to Sam.

ELLIE

Attagirl.

Leila wipes her face and slowly gets off the bed.

As she walks to the door, Ellie swats her butt.

Leila turns.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

'Member what you said to me about Flipper?

LEILA

You do remember everything. I'm the slow thinker.

Leila smiles and leaves.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. TINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sam is sitting up on the bed writing in her notepad, just a dim bedside light beside her.

She puts the book down as Leila gently opens the door and enters.

LEILA
(whispers)
Sorry.

SAM
It's OK you had a whole life to catch up on. I guessed you'd be a while.

Leila looks at Sam's notepad.

LEILA
(nervously)
Can I read something you wrote some time?

SAM
I guess. A lot of it's just pieces. Except for one thing.

Leila gets into bed and spoons with Sam.

SAM
(cont'd)
See I wrote this thing about us. After we stopped talking. It's like a dream. The way I wished... well, y'know...

LEILA
I'd like to read that. I wish I could write stuff.

SAM
You could. I mean you don't have to. I'd just like to hear. I mean, when you're ready. Your story. What happened. You don't have to write it. Sometimes you just have to get it out.

LEILA
I want to tell you.

Sam turns over and sees Leila's puffy eyes.

SAM
Y'okay?

LEILA
Just... time, y'know?

She's almost overcome by emotion again but waves it away.

She snuggles back into Sam.

LEILA
(cont'd)
Ellie kissed me by the way.

SAM
S'okay, I owe you.

Sam turns out the light.

EXT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. BACK GARDEN - MORNING

Horatio reclining in a deck chair, half-dreaming.

Sam struggles with the sliding door and finally sheepishly emerges, squinting at the early sun coming through the trees in shafts.

She looks startled at the stranger.

HORATIO
So you get the worm. I couldn't
get comfy in there. Sorry -

He gets up and offers a hand.

HORATIO
(cont'd, play-acting,
bit too loud)
Horatio, I mean you no harm!

She points at him with both hands, liking him already.

SAM
-H.

HORATIO
You must be Leila's friend.

She smiles and closes the door behind her and settles next to him.

SAM
So, hey... Joe said yesterday... you
got Tina drugs?

Horatio sits up.

HORATIO
Bugger me, here I thought I had a
few more hours till interrogation.
It was just a little weed now and
then.

He winks.

HORATIO

(cont'd)

Why, you want something?

SAM

I mean, if it's okay. Just like something to -

HORATIO

Matter of fact, I just rolled this.

He looks toward the house producing a joint seemingly out of nowhere.

SAM

Oh I don't think Leila'll be up for a bit...

HORATIO

I don't think this house ever saw action before noon.

He lights up and passes it to Sam.

SAM

When Leila was last here...

HORATIO

Uh-oh...

SAM

She and you?

He puts on an exaggerated guilty look.

HORATIO

She and everyone. It was a pretty crazy summer. But we were all pretty, young and crazy.

He suddenly hollers.

HORATIO

(singing)

OH YES I REMEMBER IT WELL!

Sam smiles, exhaling.

HORATIO

(cont'd)

She was having trouble with herself. I just tried to be there for her.

SAM

Yeh. Me too. Thanks. For being there for her. You seem like a nice guy.

HORATIO

It's a weird place, this place. And you and Leila, you haven't seen each other in a while either?

Off her reaction he looks up at the top of the house.

HORATIO

(cont'd)
Ellie said.

SAM

We see each other but we don't always talk. Less over the years. There's so much shit in the way. But when we saw each other yesterday it were different.

HORATIO

This Tina thing's woken a little something in all of us I think. Maybe a little gift.

SAM

You really think she could've done it to herself?

The door suddenly slides open.

Leila.

LEILA

Fee-fi-fo-fum... wow, Sam. I didn't know.

She holds her hand out and Sam passes the joint to her.

LEILA

(exhaling)
Cha talking' 'bout?

HORATIO

Time, man.

LEILA

Were you talking about me?

HORATIO

Not exactly - that girl who came here 15 years ago.

Leila feigns a laugh.

LEILA

That girl.

She sits with them.

LEILA

(cont'd)

Regrets, I have a lot.

Sam pinches her.

SAM

We worked out good considering.

LEILA

Y'think?

HORATIO

We're all still here.

LEILA

Surprised you are.

SAM

So... one of your friends wrote the new Tina book?

HORATIO

Sort of. Fancies herself a writer. She had something from years ago, just changed a few names here and there, then the editor cleaned it up.

LEILA

Sam's a writer too.

Sam looks away embarrassed.

SAM

Not really. The editor knows?

HORATIO

More's the question if he cares.

SAM

Anyway it was terrible.

LEILA

(proud)

That's how Sam knew.

HORATIO

Well it was best we could do. Maybe you try next time.

LEILA

You know, that's a great idea!

SAM

I can't write like Tina. I can barely write like me. I wanted to. Write, I mean. No I'm just a fan.

She looks down at the water almost hypnotised.

SAM

(cont'd)

You ever just wake up and wonder, seriously, what have I been doing all this time?

ELLIE/LEILA

(together, Ellie off-screen)

Only every damn day.

All three jump and look up at:

Ellie looking down from a window, cigarette in her hand.

A Marilyn Monroe song floats faintly out from behind her and continues to play the rest of the scene...

LEILA

How long have you been there?

ELLIE

26 fucking years. Oh that smells good, be right down.

She closes the window.

SAM

Did we say anything about her?

HORATIO

Honestly don't remember.

The door slides open. Joe, with coffee, looks half dead as always.

JOE

Looks like I missed the party.

Ellie pushes past him.

ELLIE

Me first.

HORATIO

Joe, what the hell was tweedy doing here last night? Saw him

from down club. Scared bloody life
out of me, I nearly came up.

JOE

Nothing to worry about. Might be
back though.

Joe goes back inside.

SAM

Who?

ELLIE

I used to get in trouble. Usually
he's the one who brought me home.
I don't like him sniffing around
right now.

LEILA

You guys don't really think she-?
I just - Teeny wouldn't have.

HORATIO

Your Tina wouldn't have. You
missed a lot round here. This
house was just going through the
motions for a whole decade.

LEILA/SAM

(together)
Sounds familiar.

They look at each other and laugh.

Ellie shakes her head.

ELLIE

I know it's too cliché. But she
did like attention. Sorry Leila
but H is right. It just wasn't a
surprise in the end. Ooh!

The Marilyn song clearly reaches Ellie's favourite part
and she runs into the middle of the garden.

She turns to Leila in sync to the music, putting her
hands on her chest.

ELLIE

(cont'd)
Moi?

Leila forgets everything for a sec and laughs almost into
a sob.

LEILA

God.

SAM

What'd I miss?

Ellie picks up a frisbee off the lawn and throws it directly at Horatio's head.

He joins her playing in the background.

LEILA

This song was... the first time I met Ellie this was on. It just kinda hit me how long ago that was.

SAM

I wish I'd been here then.

LEILA

I do too. I'm sorry. I had to leave so fast, those assholes.

Sam wraps her hand around Leila's.

SAM

We were kids and they were too. It turned out okay. And there's still so much time.

Leila suddenly looks so bitter.

LEILA

But so much time. So many years wasted.

SAM

Not wasted. It just made us want it more. Don't set yourself off again.

She wipes a little tear from under Leila's eye.

Ellie runs over, a little breathless, and flops down in an empty chair.

ELLIE

Who's wasted?

In the background there's a knock at the door.

LEILA

Where's Horatio gone?

ELLIE

Lost the frisbee.

JOE
(off-screen)
He's here again.

SAM
Well that was convenient.

LEILA
Sam!

EXT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. DOORWAY - DAY

Raimes, again with the book.

Joe opens the door.

RAIMES
Forgive me, Mr. Elsbeth.

He clearly has a whole speech prepared but Joe waves him off.

JOE
Don't worry about it, we were just
a little busy last night. Wanna
come in and have coffee?

Taken aback, but running with it, Raimes follows Joe inside.

RAIMES
Certainly, coffee sounds good.

EXT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. BACK GARDEN - DAY

Once more the back door slides open and Raimes nervously walks out with Joe.

JOE
Guys, this is - I'm sorry, I
forgot your first name.

RAIMES
Raimes, Arthur Raimes, pleased to
meet you all.

He offers his hand all around.

When he gets to Leila he lingers, holding her hand tightly, looking sadly into her eyes, she the same back.

FLASH ON:

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A misty highway.

A single car by the roadside, two figures in the front.

A GUNSHOT suddenly rings out and a burst of red SHATTERS the window facing us.

BACK TO:

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. BACK GARDEN - NOW

Raimes releases Leila's hand and moves on, leaving her haunted by herself.

Sam notices and looks at her with concern.

On reaching Ellie he hesitates before offering his hand.

RAIMES
And wonderful to see you again,
Eleanor.

Unimpressed, Ellie takes his hand lightly.

ELLIE
Ellie. I thought you were a
detective.

Everybody looks stunned at her candour.

Raimes laughs roundly and nods his head.

RAIMES
It is true, I must confess. I used
to work in that area. Retired now
but for many years. Can't shake
the habits.

He gestures broadly to them all.

RAIMES
(cont'd)
I must assure you that's not why
I'm here.

He looks to Joe, paperback hopefully in hand.

JOE
Tina's actually writing all day
today, Mr. Raimes, but if you
leave your book with us I'm sure
we can get it signed.

RAIMES

Oh. Oh. How unfortunate. Thank you very much.

He takes a steaming cup of coffee off Joe and settles down comfortably in a chair, sipping the coffee.

RAIMES

(cont'd)
S'good coffee.

He takes another sip.

RAIMES

(cont'd)
You see, it's not really for me.

He laughs at himself.

RAIMES

(cont'd)
I know, they always say that but in, in, in this case it's true. My wife, god rest her soul, she had all of Ms. DeFranco's books and she had of them signed in person. All but this latest. She passed away a few years ago.

SAM

I'm so sorry.

He smiles at Sam.

JOE

Well Tina doesn't really like to see... outsiders... so much these days, but I guess I can ask... when she's free. I can't promise anything.

Joe casts his eyes at the others looking for assistance.

SAM

Do you read Tina's books, Mr. Raimes?

RAIMES

I didn't. Not my kind of thing. But carrying this round since Linda - I have on occasion made attempts.

SAM

And?

RAIMES
Not my kind of thing.

SAM
I mean, it's not like you can
judge a whole author on a few
chapters.

LEILA
Sam's a fan.

RAIMES
Oh, I'm sure the other books are
wonderful.

SAM
They are.

She looks at Leila.

SAM
(cont'd)
You're a fan too.

Leila is silent.

SAM
(cont'd)
You told me you loved Rouge Vamp!

LEILA
I... may have seen the TV movie..

SAM
Oh my god.

Everybody laughs but Sam looks kind of bitten.

ELLIE
I tried the book on tape once.
Fell asleep.

JOE
The money comes to the same place.

He gestures at the house.

LEILA
I downloaded it.

Raimes finishes his coffee.

RAIMES
It is a lovely house. Lovely area.
Quiet.

JOE

More coffee?

RAIMES

No. No, thank you. Had too much already today. No, I'll be moving on.

He digs in his pocket and offers Joe a card.

RAIMES

(cont'd)

Do let me know if Miss DeFranco - I'll be around.

JOE

Like, I said, I can't promise anything, but sure.

Ellie opens the sliding door for him.

RAIMES

It was wonderful to meet you all.

He looks around at them, again stopping sadly at Leila, and disappears into the house, Joe following.

SAM

Oh -

She's looking at his chair where a wallet remains.

Leila quickly gets up and grabs it, running through the house.

LEILA

I'll take it!

Joe comes back through the door looking behind him.

JOE

Where's she going?

SAM

Forgot his wallet.

ELLIE

Joe - what the fuck, why'd you invite him in?

JOE

When you put it like that, I... yeh. Sorry, I'm rattled. It seems like something she'd get a kick out of.

ELLIE
Even in death she pulls the
strings.

He not so much nods as has the strings pulled.

EXT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. FRONT - DAY

Raimes approaches his car, rummaging in his pockets,
turning just as Leila catches up to him.

She hands him the wallet.

RAIMES
I always hoped we'd meet again,
Miss Thomas.

He looks sadly into her eyes again.

RAIMES
(cont'd)
How ya b-?

LEILA
(breathless)
-never got a chance to thank you.

RAIMES
No thanks required. You did the
right thing, I took care of it.
What I couldn't take care of was a
young girl's conscience. How ya
been?

Leila's almost hurt by finally being asked this.

LEILA
I've just been me.

Raimes looks up at the clouded sky.

RAIMES
I suppose we're all still here.

Leila looks too.

LEILA
(absently)
Is that all there is?

RAIMES
Perhaps it is. You should get back
inside before -

He hesitates.

RAIMES

(cont'd)

Why are you here again, Miss Thomas?

LEILA

It's a long story.

Raimes nods and sighs.

RAIMES

Well, if you ever need to talk - anything - Mr. Elsbeth has my number. And if you could pull any strings regarding -

LEILA

Sure, I'll try.

She watches him get in his car and looks through the window.

LEILA

(cont'd)

Seriously, thank you.

RAIMES

You're welcome, Miss Thomas.

He drives away.

Leila looks up at the DeFranco House, haunted by its darkening silhouette in the night, and the shadows in the windows, but walks back.

EXT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. SUN ROOM - MORNING

Sam sits in the morning light, feet tucked under her with a notepad in her hands, steaming cup of tea on the table before her.

She occasionally writes, mostly scribbles.

Ellie enters just as Sam tears a whole page out, crumpling it with one hand and tossing it on the table next to the tea.

ELLIE

Morning.

Sam looks up and smiles.

Instinctively, Ellie grabs the ball of paper off the table as she glides into position on the floor by Sam.

She sets herself down, rubbing her neck against Sam's thigh the way she does - Sam reacting - and starts to uncrumple it.

SAM
Oh, please don't.

Ellie looks absently at the ball and laughs to herself.

ELLIE
Sorry, just a habit. I used to read all of mum's. Best part. To me. The bits no one ever else got to read.

She looks at the screwed up paper.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
Why not?

SAM
S'just embarrassing.

Ellie's eyes widen excitedly.

SAM
(cont'd)
Nothing that bad. Just - not finished.

ELLIE
'cha writin' anyway?

Sam lowers the note book and scans Ellie's face, deciding.

SAM
That book's been bugging me for weeks. Even before we came. What Horatio said yesterday - I've been trying...

ELLIE
Your own book, huh?

She fiddles with the ball of paper.

SAM
Not exactly -

She's embarrassed.

SAM
(cont'd)
...a Rouge Vamp book.

Ellie fakes a shocked expression.

She passes the ball from hand to hand, she clearly wants to read it.

Sam laughs.

ELLIE
Please? Promise I won't laugh or anything. Just for me.

Sam shrugs and gestures for her to go ahead.

Ellie quickly uncrumples the paper and reads aloud.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
"The Shadow That Remains..."

She looks up at Sam, her big eyes sparkling like the little girl she was.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
Sam! I love it.

She happily sinks her head into the words on the page, her thumb automatically going halfway into her mouth.

Sam takes a sip of tea and picks up the notebook again, rereading the last thing she wrote.

She's about to put pen to paper again when Ellie speaks quietly, seriously, a stillness, a tone we've never heard from her before.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
You have to finish this.

Sam looks down to see Ellie, her huge eyes sparkling up at her, holding the creased paper like a holy artefact.

SAM
That's just... trash.

Ellie shakes her head before resting it against Sam's thigh.

ELLIE
I don't mean this. But the stuff people throw away, that's where they live. That's where she lived. The only place I found her. That was my mum, the part she didn't give to anyone else.

She stares at the paper.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

This matters, 'cos you get it.
'Cos if you get her someone might
get me. If this is your trash then
you gotta write the real thing,
'cos you found her. You found my
mum.

She snuggles her head into Sam's lap further, half
kissing the air.

The door slides open and Leila walks in with a cup of
coffee, beholding the cosy scene.

LEILA

Hey, hands off.

Not moving, Ellie looks serenely up at Leila's joking
face.

LEILA

(cont'd)

What'd I miss?

ELLIE

Sam's gonna write the new Rouge
Vamp.

SAM

Woah, I didn't - I'm - just...
trying.

ELLIE

Nobody else can do it like her.

She folds the piece of paper and puts it in her pocket.

Leila sits down across from them and takes in the image
of Ellie curled up like a child by Sam.

LEILA

I used to sit like that with
Teeny.

ELLIE

Me too.

LEILA

I made paper planes out of the
stuff she threw in the bin.

Ellie and Sam glare at her.

LEILA

(cont'd)

What?

The back door slides open again and Joe comes through with two dresses on hangers which he hangs in the corner.

ELLIE

Thanks Joe. Is H still there?

Joe shakes his head and leaves.

SAM

What are they for?

ELLIE

My show! H takes them to be cleaned. Hey, you should come tonight.

(formally)

I invite you.

LEILA

Since when did you have a show?

ELLIE

Since forever! Well a couple of years. It's nothing much, I just tell some stories, sing some songs. Nobody pays any attention but it "keeps me out of trouble".

She lilts her head from side to side as she says this.

SAM

Sounds like fun. Where?

ELLIE

Dolphins club!

She looks at Leila.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

'member that place you said about the memory thing? They were gonna tear it down so mum bought it. Was a big year for Rouge that year I guess. They put a bar in and stuff. H runs it. If you can call it running. What's the matter?

Leila looks a little crestfallen.

LEILA

Memory Lane isn't there anymore?

ELLIE

Not really. But you should come,
I'll show you.

Sam looks at Leila.

SAM

Let's. We haven't had a real date
yet.

LEILA

What about Joe?

ELLIE

Now you care about him? Joe never
comes. He's not interested in that
stuff.

SAM

But he's your dad, he never once?

Ellie doesn't understand this kind of concern at all.

ELLIE

Why would he?

Leila eyes Ellie down on the floor.

She looks through to the kitchen.

LEILA

Joe!

The door slides open, Joe with coffee.

LEILA

(cont'd)

Joe, we're going to Ellie's show
tonight, wanna come?

JOE

That's great, no. I have stuff to
do here.

LEILA

I think you should come. Please.
You need to get out of here.

JOE

It's not my -

LEILA

Come on, Joe. Come on.

Joe just wants to get out of there.

JOE
I'll... we'll see okay.

LEILA
Attaboy.

The door slides shut.

ELLIE
Why?

Leila looks at Sam and smiles.

LEILA
'cos Sam's right.

INT. MAISIE'S DINER - AFTERNOON

Still empty.

Something like Bali Hai floats in from the tinny radio in the back.

Raimes sets himself down at the counter looking at the paperback in his hands, puzzled and disappointed.

Maisie pours him coffee.

RAIMES
Thank you.

MAISIE
Get what you wanted?

RAIMES
No. No, not yet.

MAISIE
She's kind of a recluse these days
huh. Can't say I blame her.

She casts around the empty diner.

MAISIE
(cont'd)
That's why I like it here.

She studies his face pityingly.

MAISIE

(cont'd)

Y'know, her daughter sings down there on the beach. She used to come in here. She was a tearaway. That business in the oughts. Not her kinda place so she got her own I guess. Down there.

RAIMES

Yes, she seemed more settled when last -

Maisie looks from his face down to the book.

MAISIE

I'm sorry. I gotta tell you something. And it's gonna get me in a whole lot of trouble, but I'm leaving soon and - you're too nice. That book? You're not gonna get it signed. It's not written by her. She killed herself months ago. And she wasn't well for a while before that. I wrote it.

Raimes barely reacts as it all falls into place.

He puts his coffee down and smiles at Maisie.

RAIMES

Then you should be the one to sign it.

INT. DOLPHINS CLUB - NIGHT

Sam and Leila sit adrift at a front of stage table.

SAM

I wish we'd known about this. I'd've brought better clothes.

LEILA

You look great.

She frowns around at the club rolling her eyes.

LEILA

(cont'd)

I mean... I don't know if you wanna know but I remember Teeny wearing both of what we're wearing.

Sam laughs.

Horatio comes out to them from behind the bar.

HORATIO
What can I get you, ladies?

Sam looks to Leila.

SAM
I don't really...

HORATIO
It's all on the house.

Leila widens her eyes at Sam.

LEILA
Just this once? Like you said,
it's our first date.

SAM
Just get whatever, I'll watch you
enjoy it.

Leila looks up at Horatio hopefully.

LEILA
Champagne?

HORATIO
Oh, uh...

He casts around awkwardly a little bit:

ELLIE
(off-screen, she's
been watching)
Whatever they want, H!

Horatio shakes his head at Leila.

HORATIO
See that girl's still there.

He runs backstage and a moment later comes back with Ellie.

As they pass, Ellie smirks at Leila, shaking her head.

They disappear into a back room and Horatio comes to the table with a bottle of champagne in a bucket of ice.

As Ellie walks back to the stage, Leila turns.

ELLIE
Secret stash!

LEILA
Thanks Teeny.

Ellie disappears backstage.

ELLIE
(off-screen)
Not mum's! Mine!

Horatio starts opening the champagne.

HORATIO
Usually it's just the wine and
beer...

SAM
Free for everyone?

Horatio checks the stage.

HORATIO
Why else would they come?

The champagne pops and he pours a glass.

SAM
None for me. Not yet.

LEILA
Not yet...

SAM
Could I have some fizzy water?

HORATIO
Whatever you want.

He disappears.

Sam smiles at Leila.

People, mostly single men, have started entering the club
and gathering around the bar.

SAM
Don't you think this is sad?

LEILA
I don't know how to feel about
anything here. Ellie seems to
think it's okay. Bizarre. Word of
the week. Just... bizarre.

Horatio returns with a bottle of San Pellegrino, a
champagne glass and a regular glass, and sets them before
Sam.

HORATIO
I brought another of these just in
case.

SAM

Thanks... H.

He disappears again.

Sam pours water into the champagne glass and raises it to Leila.

SAM

(cont'd)

To all things bizarre.

LEILA

Including us.

They touch glasses and laugh.

The lights dim.

The silhouette of Ellie assumes the dark stage.

SAM

Hey, it's Mr. Raimes.

LEILA

Shh!

She follows Sam's gaze to the bar where Raimes has just entered and is talking to Horatio.

They both look back to the stage, where Ellie, still in darkness, starts singing a cappella.

As the song goes on, the lights slowly come up.

The rest of the club hangs back in the dark and she may as well just be performing for Sam and Leila.

She stops singing.

ELLIE

We have friends here today.
Leila's been here before. She knew
my mum. Leila was sent to look
after me while mum wrote. God
knows father didn't know how.

Ellie blinks as a newcomer through the door sends a shaft of light across the room.

Joe.

She steels herself.

Leila and Sam, especially Sam, shift awkwardly in the too bright light.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

Love is the most special thing in the world. I thought I loved you but I was only little. I'm still only little. I'm happy you found yours again. I'm happy one of us found happy.

She lets the awkwardness hang in the air a moment.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

As for mum..

She fumbles with the tape recorder.

Sam finishes her water and pours herself a glass of champagne.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

One day, when you used to take us to the beach. When people used to come here. There were these other kids playing football. They needed one more for 2 a side. I didn't wanna play football. She kept telling me to go play. I don't wanna play football I kept telling her. Come on, Ellie. Come on, she said. I wouldn't move. Finally she quit trying. Later she goes look Ellie, they're not playing football, they're playing piggy in the middle. You like that game.

Sam gently places her glass on the table, more interested.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

I mean you just can't win.

She presses play on the tape recorder and seeks out Joe at the bar.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

Daddy was delivering manuscripts. That's what he did.

Another old song starts.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

Piggy in the fucking middle.

She sings.

INT. DOLPHINS CLUB - LATER

Another old song comes to a close and Ellie finishes what's left in her wine glass.

ELLIE
...and now Miss Ellie needs to
tinkle.

MAN
(off-screen)
On the stage!

ELLIE
Phil, that is disgusting, and I
told you, it wasn't part of the
show.

Sam mouths "oh my god" at Leila.

Ellie sees and smiles mischievously.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
I'll be right back.

She wiggles her fingers slowly at the invisible audience.

The lights go down as Ellie disappears and come back up full to an empty stage with standard background music.

SAM
Holy shit.

She pours herself another glass from the almost empty champagne bottle, laughing.

LEILA
Sam, slow. Save some for me.

She giggles.

SAM
That was...

LEILA
I know.

Ellie plops down at their table as breathless as she was in the garden.

She smiles mischievously at them, she doesn't care.

ELLIE

So?

Sam and Leila look at each other.

LEILA

It was... something...

ELLIE

I'm sorry. Not used to people paying attention.

She's really only engaging with Leila again and Sam starts to notice.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

You just bring out the worst in me. The best. Wanna see something?

LEILA

What about the rest of the show?

ELLIE

I come and I go. They never notice. Come on.

She takes Leila's hand and stands.

LEILA

Sam?

ELLIE

She can come.

Sam smiles weakly.

SAM

Go ahead, I'm ok.

ELLIE

Come on.

Leila smiles apologetically back at Sam as Ellie drags her away.

From the bar, Raimes slowly approaches Sam's table.

He awkwardly gestures to the empty seat.

SAM

Sure.

RAIMES

Never know how to - old man, lonely young girl. These days.

SAM

You're not like them. 'n I'm not lonely.

RAIMES

You looked sad. You okay?

SAM

Yeh. Really. I know that look and I know what you mean but really.

She smiles reassuring herself and him.

SAM

(cont'd)

I knew this time would come, I mean, not exactly - but somehow - and I knew it'd be hard, and weird... but I'm glad she let me be here for it. In a way I've been waiting. All I've got is time for her.

RAIMES

She's been through things. We should all be so lucky to have -

He nods at her running out of words.

He removes the paperback from his pocket and puts it on the table.

RAIMES

(cont'd)

I know about Miss DeFranco. I'm assuming -

SAM

Took you a bit. Are we in trouble?

RAIMES

No, no, I don't think so, not in Seavale.

SAM

I suppose you don't need it signed anymore anyway -

She stops herself.

SAM

(cont'd)

You did know that bit too?

RAIMES

From the same person.

SAM

So she got the whole set in the end. Your wife.

Raimes smiles and nods sadly.

RAIMES

Promise me something. You'll continue with the writing. That's what she wanted to do. She also wanted a daughter. I could see her in you the moment we met.

Sam smiles not knowing what to say.

INT. DOLPHINS CLUB. BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Mainly shelves loaded with boxes, stacks of drinks, etc, and walls that have lived.

Ellie stops, Leila too.

LEILA

What are we looking at?

ELLIE

You were worried about that night.

LEILA

Are you okay?

ELLIE

I had a few. I needed to.

She sits down on the floor and pats it gesturing for Leila to follow.

She breathes.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

What you thought... you did. But I know it wasn't your fault. And I enjoyed it, but I wasn't to know it was wrong. Other things hurt me a lot more.

LEILA

I'm sorry.

ELLIE

I know.

They stare at each other and Ellie nods like, "go ahead," she knows.

LEILA

It was the same with Teeny. The night dad left. They came home from a party fighting and Teeny just stayed with me in my room. I was so scared. She was kissing me all over trying to make it better and - I don't know. I was tiny. She was Teeny, I mean, she was too. At least she had her books. That's why I never read them. She must've had somewhere to put it.

ELLIE

She was a lot older than you. And that's not where she put it.

Ellie stands and walks to one of the shelves, taking down a security box.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

I told you, I remember everything.

She sits down in front of Leila again and opens the box.

It's full of scraps of paper, some typed, some hand written.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

I didn't understand it sometimes but... it's the reason nothing much surprises me.

She sighs, beholding the contents of the box, almost as enchanted as Leila.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

All this misplaced affection.

LEILA

Can I show these to Sam?

ELLIE

That's the idea. They're yours.

Ellie stands and goes to the shelf again as Leila sifts through the papers.

She comes back with another box and sets it between them, taking a deep breath.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

There's something else.

She takes the lid off the second box.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

When they were gutting this place
they let me keep these.

She rolls her eyes.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

God knows why.

It's a box of cassette tapes.

She pulls one, marked up with a pink highlighter,
"07/15/2002" written on it darker ink.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

Y'know - I don't think they ever
expected anyone to come back.
Smart thinking if you ask me. No
disappointments. But no
organisation whatsoever. Some of
the other tapes were fun to listen
to. I listened till I found ours.
I knew I went before you. I didn't
listen to yours yet.

Leila looks at the tape, hurt and happy.

LEILA

You found our memory.

Ellie takes the cassette out of the case.

ELLIE

I'll go and get my tape deck.

Leila puts her hand out and stops her.

LEILA

(cont'd, looking
around the barren
room)

Not here.

Ellie smiles.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. ELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ellie puts the cassette in the tape player.

ELLIE

I'll leave you to it. Be right back.

Leila watches her leave the room and stares at the cassette player, finally pressing play.

There's a crackle, hiss, a tone, then faint background crowd noise.

EXT. MEMORY LANE - THAT DAY

Little Ellie pads from foot to foot in front of the mic, looking out at Leila and smiling with her eyes.

ELLIE

Umm... this is funny cos I'm looking at you and I don't know what to say!

She giggles, but then becomes very quiet and serious - the scary, deep kind of serious only little girls can be - the same tone she had telling Sam to finish the book.

ELLIE

(cont'd, too close to the mic)

I hope I'm as beautiful as you one day. I can't wait. And I hope you never leave Seavale and take care of me forever. Umm... that's it, bye!

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. ELLIE'S ROOM - NOW

Another tone. Leila pushes stop.

She wipes tears from her eyes with a bittersweet, wretched expression, looking around Ellie's room.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ellie comes out of the bathroom and waits outside her room.

Sam emerges from Tina's room on her way to the bathroom.

She stops by Ellie, their eyes meet, looking towards Ellie's room, an understanding, and they quietly sink into each other's arms.

They just hold each other.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. ELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Leila quietly moves around Ellie's room, looking at the posters on the wall, old movies, lots of Judy and Marilyn clippings, the stuff you'd expect.

She stops in front of the vanity table and looks at herself in the mirror which is decorated all around mostly with pictures of Ellie between the ages of 12 and 20-something taken with an old-school Polaroid instant - but just selfies, just Ellie.

There's also a Valentine's day card - Leila smiles at this and cautiously opens it - but inside it says, "from Mum."

She looks at the table.

There's a journal.

On the front cover it originally said 2000 but the last 0 is crossed out, then the 1, 2, 3, and so on, all crossed out, ending at 2008. Leila opens it and it's empty.

She opens the top drawer of the dresser and, immediately on seeing the contents, slams it shut, biting her lip then smiling, shocked, not knowing where else to look.

At that exact moment, Ellie re-enters.

ELLIE

So?

Leila breezes silently across the room to her, places her hands under her chin and stares into her big eyes.

LEILA

You are... way more. And you will be even more.

She kisses her on the forehead.

ELLIE

Guess you like it, huh.

LEILA

I missed you. I'm sorry.

ELLIE

(angry)
STOP.

Leila stops herself from saying sorry one more time.

LEILA

I don't even remember what I said
for you. I don't remember stuff
the way you do.

ELLIE

Well let's see.

LEILA

You want me to-?

ELLIE

pfft.

She softens again seeing Leila's eyes.

ELLIE

(cont'd)
Whatever you want.

LEILA

I don't know.

Ellie meets her again eye to eye, they come to a silent
agreement, and Ellie presses play.

EXT. MEMORY LANE - THAT DAY

Leila presses record and hesitates, watching the counter.

She stares at the little girl outside the booth, smiling
at everyone who passes.

LEILA

I don't know when you'll listen to
this but. Hi Ellie. It's been the
best day. I don't know how it
could be better. Actually it's
been the best day of my life. I
don't want it to end.

Little Ellie is staring intensely back now.

LEILA

(cont'd)

I know nothing lasts. I hope you never have to find that out. It's all just now, and, I guess this little thing's silly. Maybe we'll never hear each others'... but I guess we'll always be on this tape together. 'n if we remember it won't be past anymore somehow. So we'll always be here, and now. I'm sorry about everything else. I love you Ellie. You're the most beautiful thing I've ever known.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE - NIGHT

Leila and Ellie just hugging each other tight.

LEILA

What other stuff?

ELLIE

Huh?

LEILA

The other stuff that hurt you. If it's okay to ask.

ELLIE

Nothing.

LEILA

Sorry.

ELLIE

No. I mean - nothing. Nothing can hurt worse than something. The right people not being there can be bad as the wrong ones showing up. Better not expect either. You know I don't mean you. And eventually that's what happens. You stop expecting and it gets comfy inside. You don't realise how sad it looks till someone takes you to the big outside and makes you look through the window.

She laughs to stop herself.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

So stop it.

LEILA

Okay. I went all this time without Sam but I knew I needed someone. I think she did too. You never feel like that?

ELLIE

I was very bored for 10 years. I had to learn everything by myself. Mum would just leave me with her videos and records. That's why I'm so weird. Yeh I do know I'm weird. But who cares? Who honestly cares? Least I'm not hurting anyone. We keep the lights on. We get up in the morning. Go to bed at night. I've got them.

She points at her Judy and Marilyn records.

Her eyes glow and her cheeks flush.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

And a little self love... and every now and then...

She hugs Leila again.

LEILA

Something good happens.

EXT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE - DAY

A misty late morning.

At the flowerbed a new stone has been added for Tina next to Flipper.

A picture of Tina sits on a stand to one side.

Joe, Ellie, Sam, Leila and Horatio head up a small gathering of others in front of FATHER RANDALL finishing up an introduction.

The shadow of Raimis hangs back in the mist.

RANDALL

I believe Tina's daughter Eleanor has a few words to say.

Ellie is looking to see what Leila's smiling about.

JOE

Ellie -

He nudges her, slipping her a piece of folded paper, and she finally steps forward.

As she passes Leila:

LEILA
(Whispers)
Eleanor...

Ellie smirks and pinches Leila on the arm.

Facing the smattering of people Ellie finally unfolds Joe's piece of paper.

ELLIE
Hi everyone. Um - this has all happened so fast I know not everyone could get here.

She gives the paper a snarky once over, looking at a few strange faces in the audience.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
Tina -

She frowns at Joe, the word isn't comfortable to her.

She looks down at the piece of paper again and screws it up, putting it in her pocket.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
Mum would've hated this. She was only happy writing and it was the only thing she was any good at. People love her books and the people in her books but they wouldn't like her. She wasn't a bad person, she just wasn't a very nice one.

She looks at the photo of Tina on the side.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
That's what I liked about her. I know I'm meant to say nice things right now but, it's ridiculous. I think she'd prefer I said exactly what I feel. I'm sorry you couldn't connect with the world better mum. Wish you had more time. Wish we all did.

She stares at the photo a little longer.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

I would've sung something if we had more time. This is what I'd've sung.

She looks awkwardly at Randall, who realises that's all she has to say and goes back to the front.

RANDALL

Thank you, Eleanor, wonderful words. And thank you all for coming. God bless you.

He goes off to the side and presses play on a CD player. Judy Garland sings "A Foggy Day" as everyone awkwardly disperses.

We linger on the flowerbed as a light rain starts to fall.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. KITCHEN - DAY

Rain patters on the window as Joe actually cooks breakfast.

He looks healthier than when we first met him.

Leila is sitting at the table and stands as Sam and Ellie enter, handing Ellie a cup of coffee.

Ellie passes the cup to Sam.

ELLIE

Not yet. Thanks.

SAM

Why thank you...

She tries to measure the room.

SAM

(cont'd)

...Eleanor...

Ellie smirks.

ELLIE

Whatever, Samantha.

Leila nearly chokes on her coffee.

ELLIE

(cont'd)

What?

Leila looks to Sam like, "sorry, all yours!"

SAM
I was never a Samantha.

Ellie puts her coffee down, mortified.

ELLIE
Oh. Oh shit. Fuck. I'm sorry.

She laughs awkwardly at herself.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
Not many movies about that in the DeFranco collection.

There's a knock at the door.

Ellie's eyes widen.

ELLIE
(cont'd)
I'll go!

Sam sits at the table with Leila, as Joe plates up breakfast.

He smiles uncharacteristically at Sam a little too long.

SAM
What?

JOE
Nothing. Sorry.

Ellie comes back in with a large box which she sets proudly in between Sam and Leila.

SAM
Oh shit, it's the proofs?

LEILA
Your first book!

Sam looks sharply at Leila.

SAM
Tina's last.

LEILA
Same thing.

Ellie and Joe exchange a look.

ELLIE

Sam, you wanna do the honours. I think you should.

She grabs a pair of scissors off the counter and hands them over.

Sam hesitates but slowly strips the packaging away.

Her breath falls out of her as the top copy inside is revealed to her.

LEILA

What's up?

SAM

What is this?

Ellie fake casual looks inside... she already knows, but a once over satisfies her more.

ELLIE

Looks like the latest Rouge Vamp to me.

Inside the box, we see the book cover, with ROUGE VAMP in smaller branding over the subtitle, THE SHADOW THAT REMAINS, and SAM CARTER on the bottom.

Not a DeFranco in sight.

SAM

But that's my name.

Leila looks inside smiling at Ellie.

ELLIE

Don't look at me.

They all look at Joe who looks awkward but a little smug.

JOE

I... took care of it.

SAM

What about... "mmmoney"?

ELLIE

People'll buy it anyway. At least this one. I should know. But I told you. No one else can do it but you.

Leila looks at Sam looking at her book, then to Joe.

She gets up and goes to him, to hug him.

He flinches like before but then allows it.

LEILA
It's ok. Thanks Joe.

JOE
Seemed like the kind of thing
she'd get a kick out of.

She kisses him on the cheek.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. TINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sam is on the bed absently flicking through one of the proofs.

Leila stuffs a few things into her bag at the end of the bed.

She gets onto the bed and sits cross-legged facing Sam, taking a deep breath.

LEILA
I owe you a story.

Sam sits up and puts the book to one side, taking Leila's hands.

SAM
You don't owe me a thing. But I'm listening.

LEILA
I think you know almost everything about that summer. Pretty sure they all told you. 'bout that girl. And I know you're okay with all that.

She closes her eyes ashamed.

LEILA
(cont'd)
All that. I'm still sorry.

SAM
It's ok, I messed around when you were gone too. Not just the first time. I mean when you were gone gone.

LEILA

I know. That wasn't why I was messed up when I came back though. Ellie said something about me and her. Cos I was worried I hurt her. I told you about that.

Sam holds her tighter and smiles reassuringly.

LEILA

(cont'd)

But she said other things hurt more. Well other things hurt me too. Something happened. Mr. Raimes is the only one who knows.

SAM

Mr. Raimes?

Leila takes a huge breath.

LEILA

When I came here first time, the taxi driver was weird. Like really weird. Tina fan. But we just thought he was weird, y'know? But he drove me back too. Well part of the way.

She goes quiet, bitterness twisting her bottom lip out of shape.

SAM

Take your time.

LEILA

He wanted what everyone else wanted. The only thing I ever have to give. But this time I didn't wanna give it. 'Cos I finally knew who deserved it. He had a gun. Fuck knows why he had a gun.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ellie at the door, quietly listening.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. TINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Leila wipes a tear from her cheek.

LEILA

Mr. Raimes took care of it. But it's like he said, nothing'll ever take care of me.

SAM

I will.

LEILA

I know it's never gonna go away.
This cold and dead inside. Feeling
like I don't deserve it. To be
loved. Can't be changed.

She holds Sam's hands tighter.

LEILA

(cont'd)

But I don't want to waste another
second waiting. Life's always
gonna be... bizarre. I wanna be one
of the who make it work anyway.
Like Ellie, and Joe. Like fucking
Horatio. Like you! But with you.
Like forever.

Sam grabs her and pulls her into an embrace.

SAM

That was pretty good.

LEILA

Really?

Leila laughs through the tears and back again.

INT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ellie wipes her eyes and goes back toward her room.

ELLIE

And, scene.

EXT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE - DAY

Ellie and Joe stand at the front as Leila puts her bag
and Sam the box of books in the back of an Uber.

Raimes pulls up and gets out of his car, strolling
towards them.

RAIMES

I was hoping I'd catch you!

SAM

We were hoping you'd come!

She ducks inside the car and comes out holding one of the
proofs.

She hands the book to Raimes.

SAM

(cont'd)

You came here to get a book signed. I know it's not the same, but -

Raimes opens it to see Sam's signature inside and weeps internally.

RAIMES

It's better. Truly. Linda would've loved it. She would've loved you. Both of you. I look forward to reading it for her.

He looks over Sam's shoulder at Leila, but also to Joe and Ellie.

RAIMES

(cont'd)

Take care of her, won't you?

Sam hugs him like a grandfather.

He holds her like a lost daughter.

SAM

I'm gonna take care of both of us.

Closer to the house Joe and Ellie watch them get in the car.

JOE

I know I've never been great - especially since -

ELLIE

I like you being there in the morning. And knowing you're there at night.

She holds his hand, waving to Sam and Leila with the other.

INT. CAR. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE - DAY

As Sam gets in the back seat, Leila's deep into the book.

SAM

Would you stop? It's embarrassing!

LEILA

I just love the ending.

She looks up at Sam, beaming, and they kiss.

She hands Sam the book.

LEILA

Read it to me again?

Sam takes the book, rolling her eyes but smiling.

As the car turns, Leila looks thoughtfully over Sam's shoulder out the window to The DeFranco House.

She turns back and snuggles into Sam as Sam begins to read.

EXT. THE DEFRANCO HOUSE. FRONT - DAY

The car moves on but we stay with the house, with Joe and Ellie.

SAM

(voiceover)

"Sometimes all you're waiting for is for something to happen. Sometimes it happens. Sometimes it feels like all you leave behind is shadows. Sometimes all that keeps you going is the shadow that remains. It's hard believing you're real 'til someone you believe in tells you..."

We move - past Ellie and Joe waving them off - towards the house.

And if we look close enough we might cry at the shadow that remains in the window.

THE END