

DEAR DIXIE...

FADE IN

EXT. GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA - NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

BUDDY MATOLSKI, a man in his mid 20's, nice build, ruggedly handsome, and his father JIM MATOLSKI, in his late 50's, overweight, balding, stand next to Buddy's light blue Toyota Camry.

The rusted Camry is showing the toll of years of harsh Minnesota winter's as it sits on a quiet street lined with old oaks and mature maple trees. The sun filters down through the canopy on an early summer day.

Bags are stuffed to the roof in the back seat and the windows are obscured by articles pressed to them.

JIM

Why California? Isn't the publishing industry based in New York?

BUDDY

The only job offer came from LA Today in California. Besides, I can live at Mom's until I'm on my feet.

JIM

(disgusted)

Eight years you've been out of your mother's shadow, now you're racing back into it.

BUDDY

(sighing)

Dad.

JIM

I thought you had it good here, teaching, coaching, and writing that novel.

BUDDY

I do, but I need to see if I can jump start my writing career and have a chance with my novel.

Jim spins away, trying to hide his frustration with Buddy's decision he doesn't support. Taking a calming breath, he looks back at Buddy.

JIM

Okay, but drive carefully. There are a lot of idiots out there.

BUDDY

I'll be fine. I marked all the rest areas on the map.

They embrace, patting each other on the back. Buddy gets into the car and starts it up, a blue puff of smoke wafts from the tail pipe. Buddy gives a wave as he drives away.

Jim waves and watches Buddy disappear in a swirl of blue smoke, his concern apparent on his face.

INT. TOYOTA DRIVING - NIGHT

Buddy is in the car adjusting the controls on the dash board and then opening his window in disgust when he doesn't get the desired results from the vents.

INT. TOYOTA - REST AREA - NIGHT

Buddy sleeps curled up inside his car. He jerks awake as a semi drives by, honking at another truck pulling out of a parking spot.

Buddy puts a hand to his chest, his heart racing after the sudden awakening, his face flush with fear.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

With wonder in his eyes Buddy drives through Las Vegas, the reflection of the glitz and glamour visible in the windows of his beat up car.

INT. TRUCK STOP - LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

Buddy showers at the truck stop. He shuts the water off and steps out, drying himself.

The door bursts open and a TRUCKER, 50 something, large and burly, walks in, his arms full of supplies to freshen up.

The trucker is as shocked as Buddy who stands with his towel barely covering his front, his back side exposed to the shower stall behind him.

TRUCKER

(thick southern accent)

Shit. Flick the occupied sign on the door and lock up when you're in here, boy.

The man spins and exits the room before Buddy can respond.

Buddy hustles over to lock the door and flip the occupied switch. He leans against the door and exhales apprehensively.

EXT. UPSCALE LA SUBURB - DAY

Buddy pulls up to a ranch style house, the lawn manicured, the bushes trimmed and the flowers blooming.

CANDY MATOLSKI, 50 something, very attractive, slender and fashionable, rushes out to the driveway with luggage draped around her torso and pulling another piece on rollers.

Buddy steps out of his car as Candy approaches him excitedly.

CANDY

They have an opening at the resort I've been dying to go to. You have to take me to the airport so I can catch my flight.

BUDDY

I just got here. Can't you take a later flight?

CANDY

I need to meet a special charter in Florida. I have to go now.

BUDDY

(sighing)

Get in.

Buddy takes his luggage from the trunk, drops it inside the door of the house, rushes back to put Candy's bags in the trunk, and slams it shut.

Candy gets in the car, wrinkling her nose as she shuts the door.

CANDY

What's that smell?

BUDDY
 Me. I've lived in here for the
 past four days.

Candy hits the button on the door to lower the window, but a clunking sound from inside door is the only result.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 Sorry. I don't get many
 passengers.

Candy reaches over and turns the air conditioner up, but there is no change in the fan's speed or the air temperature. She looks questioningly to Buddy as they pull out of the driveway.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 (apologetic)
 No air either.

CANDY
 You better get it fixed. You don't
 live in Minnesota anymore. You
 need air conditioning in
 California.

BUDDY
 I'll open my window.

Buddy lowers his window and grimaces as the motor moans its complaint as the window inches down.

Candy shakes her head and rolls her eyes.

EXT. LAX AIRPORT - DROP OFF AREA - DAY

The Toyota pulls up in a cloud of blue smoke, squeaking to a stop as Candy and Buddy jump out. Buddy hands Candy her luggage from the trunk and they embrace. Candy gives Buddy the keys to the house and then stares at her phone.

CANDY
 Oh my god. My phone is dead. E-
 mail my editor. Tell him I can't
 write a new column for a month and
 he needs to run some repeats.

BUDDY
 Use mine.

Buddy extends his phone to Candy who stares at him flatly.

CANDY
I've spent thirty years keeping
Dear Dixie's identity a secret. I
don't want to give it away this
late in the game. If your number
comes up, he might figure it out.

BUDDY
(with comprehension)
Yeah, right.

CANDY
You won't forget?

BUDDY
Mom, I got it.

CANDY
If you forget, I could lose my
syndication and my job.

BUDDY
I won't forget, now get going,
you're going to miss your flight.

Candy stares at him with uncertainty a moment longer, then
gives him a quick hug and rushes off.

CANDY
(over her shoulder)
I almost forgot. Stay away from
baby.

BUDDY
Yeah, yeah. Bye Mom.

Buddy waves and watches as Candy disappears through the
doors. His phone rings. Glancing at the screen, he smiles
as the name HOLLYWOOD MARTIN flashes. Buddy hits the talk
button and puts the phone to his ear.

INTERCUT: LAX AIRPORT DROP OFF AREA / SPORTS BAR

BUDDY (CONT'D)
How did you know I was here?

HOLLYWOOD
I can figure out how long it takes
to drive from Minnesota to Los
Angeles.

There is a long pause and Buddy frowns.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

Okay, Kyle figured it out, but I'm over at Cully's Sports Bar. Get your ass over here.

BUDDY

I'll be right over. Is Kyle there?

HOLLYWOOD

On his way. His old lady made him do something around the house before he could come.

BUDDY

CINDY's alright. Cut her some slack.

HOLLYWOOD

He works on other people's houses all day and then he has to go home and work on his own. Talk about ball and chain.

BUDDY

Kyle's a great carpenter. Why shouldn't he fix his own house?

HOLLYWOOD

Whatever. Get your ass over here. I'm already two beers ahead of you guys.

BUDDY

On my way.

An AIRPORT SECURITY OFFICER approaches Buddy to have him move his car. Buddy hops in the car, starts it up with a puff of blue smoke, and drives away.

The officer coughs, waving the nasty exhaust from his face in disgust.

INT. SPORTS BAR - DAY

Buddy enters, squints while his eyes adjust to the darker setting, and then spots his friends at a table.

RICK (HOLLYWOOD) MARTIN, mid 20's, full head of thick blonde hair, muscular, very attractive, is sitting at a table wearing his FedEx uniform. Hollywood is facing the door and waves Buddy over when he sees him.

KYLE CARTER, mid 20's, brown hair, average looking, slighter build than either Buddy or Hollywood, smiles and stands as Buddy walks up. Kyle reaches over and pulls Buddy into a hug.

KYLE
Been a long time.

BUDDY
Too long.

HOLLYWOOD
(whining)
What about me?

Hollywood stands up with his hands out to his side, Kyle turns to him and gives him a hug.

KYLE
If you insist, but I see you all
the time.

Buddy laughs as Hollywood pushes Kyle away and then pulls Buddy into a hug.

HOLLYWOOD
I meant my boy here. Why did it
take so long to find your way back
home?

BUDDY
(shrugging)
Once I left for college, I didn't
see a reason to come back.

Both Kyle and Hollywood have noticeably hurt expressions.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
No, guys, not you. You know it was
never you.

HOLLYWOOD
Did "she who must not be
mentioned", hurt you that much?

Buddy closes his eyes slowly and sighs.

KYLE
(re: Hollywood)
That's easy for you to say. Steph
was the only girl Buddy ever liked,
and she gets engaged to some
college jerk on graduation day. It
had to sting.

HOLLYWOOD
 (surprised)
 So we can say her name now?

BUDDY
 Nice of you to bring that up two
 minutes into my visit.

KYLE
 Just keepin' it real. You have to
 be over that by now.

HOLLYWOOD
 Dude, it's been eight years. Get
 over it. You will always be in
 Steph's "just friends" zone.

BUDDY
 You're right.

HOLLYWOOD
 Ancient history, men. We need to
 get into some serious libation
 consumption.

Hollywood waves at the BARTENDER, a large man, once athletic,
 but many years from his prime, who nods as Hollywood holds up
 three fingers.

KYLE
 It's good to have you back.

BUDDY
 It's good to be back... I think.

The WAITRESS, 20 something woman, small and bubbly, sets
 three beers in front of the guys. They each take one.

HOLLYWOOD
 Here is to your interview and a new
 beginning in an old place.

Hollywood lifts his beer up as the others clink their bottle
 to his.

BUDDY
 If god is willing...

BUDDY, HOLLYWOOD, KYLE
 (in unison)
 And the creek don't rise.

EXT. CANDY MATOLSKI'S HOUSE - DAY

Buddy's car sits on the driveway, its rusted, dented body out of place in the upscale neighborhood.

INT. CANDY'S HOUSE GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Buddy lays snoring on a bed. He wakes up, wanders down to the office, and turns on the computer.

A message from JARED WARNER, Candy's, aka Dixie's, editor pops up on the screen with the day's letters attached and Buddy freaks when he realizes he forgot to tell the editor to run repeats.

BUDDY

Oh, my god. Shit, shit, shit.

Buddy sits down and types rapidly.

BUDDY (V.O.)

You need to run repeat columns for one month. Thanks, Dixie.

Buddy hits send and leans back staring at the computer. He stands nervously and is about to move away from the desk when a ping is heard as he receives mail. He hurries to open the e-mail.

JARED WARNER (V.O.)

Your contract states a notice is required before the first day of the week in order to cover that week. You must write this week's column and the repeats will start next Monday. Sincerely, Jared Warner.

BUDDY

Crap. What am I going to do now?

Buddy begins to pace, running a hand through his hair as his predicament sinks in. He stops pacing as he gets an idea and sets his jaw.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

(confidently)

You can do this.

He sits down at the computer and opens the first e-mail.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 (reassuring)
 If I can write a novel...

He gives a curt nod and begins to read.

WOMAN 1 (V.O.)
 Dear Dixie, My husband is pestering
 me to get breast implants and I've
 run out of excuses. He says it
 will liven up our romance and put
 the spark back in our marriage.
 Should I do it? Signed, Teenie
 Weenie Bikini.

Buddy tips back in his chair, putting a hand to his face in anxiety. He looks at a picture on the desk with him at about 8 years old sitting on his mother's lap. His mother is smiling proudly.

Buddy gives a smirk as he begins to type.

BUDDY (V.O.)
 Dear Teenie Weenie, Get the boob
 job and keep your man happy.
 Dixie.

Buddy sits back, laces his fingers behind his head, and proudly turns to the picture again. His mother is now grimacing with disapproval. Buddy does a double take and the picture shows his mother's smiling face again.

Buddy puts his chin on his fist as he leans on the desk, thinking. Realization spreads across his face and he erases the response and types it over.

BUDDY (V.O.)
 Dear Teeny, If you want your man to
 desire you as you felt he once did,
 he may be right. Be sure you still
 have the spark for him, first. If
 that spark isn't strong enough, you
 should wait for someone who ignites
 that fire in you before you go
 changing. Good luck, Dixie.

Buddy checks the picture again and finds his smiling mother.

BUDDY
 (relieved confidence)
 Okay, next.

Buddy opens another letter and reads through it. After a little thought, he types up the response.

Buddy sits staring at the computer screen with uncertainty, the curser sitting over the send button.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
Here goes nothing.

Buddy grimaces, crosses his fingers of one hand and reaches with the other to click the mouse.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
No turning back now.

Buddy glances at the clock on the bookcase.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
Shit, I'm going to be late.

Buddy rushes out of the room to get ready for his interview.

EXT. MATOLSKI HOME - DAY

Buddy runs to his car wearing a herring bone wool suit coat with brown suede patches on the elbows. He starts up his rumbling junker and backs out as a neighbor lady gives him a glare. He chugs off with a shrug, leaving her and her dirty look behind in a cloud of exhaust.

EXT. LA STREET - DAY

Buddy pulls up next to an attractive woman in a Mercedes convertible at a stop light as the exhaust wafts around them. He glances over as she fans the smoke away and glares at him. He rolls down his window as she speeds off.

BUDDY
(shouting out the window)
Like I have a choice.

He reaches over and messes with his air conditioner which appears to only blows hot air as sweat pours down his face.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF LA TODAY - DAY

Buddy pulls into the lot, races to the front and takes the last spot open. He jumps out and hurries past a white sign he never notices.

INT. LA TODAY LOBBY - DAY

Buddy enters the lobby, skirting the large abstract sculpture in the middle of a fountain to get to the reception desk. The RECEPTIONIST, a young woman, early 20's with black, shoulder length hair, very tan, smiles warmly.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome to LA Today. How may I help you.

BUDDY

Buddy Matolski. I have a nine o'clock with MS. EVENSON.

The receptionist turns to the clock on the wall as Buddy follows her gaze and grimaces as the clock shows nine fifteen.

The warmth disappears from her face as she turns back to him.

RECEPTIONIST

(disbelief)

You're the nine o'clock?

BUDDY

That would be me.

RECEPTIONIST

Ms. Evenson is waiting in the conference room.

The receptionist gestures to a doorway to her left.

Buddy gives a slight bow and wiggles his legs to get the pants out of his butt crack as he is sweating profusely. He pulls his jacket out when the receptionist isn't looking and stares horrified at the large sweat rings under his arms.

Buddy drops his suit coat back in place uncomfortably. He gives up on jockeying the pants down and reaches to pull them out of his ass as the receptionist gives him a disgusted stare. He shrugs and heads into the conference room.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Buddy stands in the doorway looking into the large conference room.

A giant, elaborate table fills most of the space with high-backed executive chairs around it.

At the far end in front of a large bank of windows STEPH MATTSON (aka Ms. Evenson), mid 20's, stunningly attractive woman, sits with the chair spun away so you see the back of the chair, a pair of shapely woman's legs, and high heels.

STEPH
Come in and take a seat Mr.
Matolski.

Buddy moves over to sit a few chairs away.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Come closer, right down here on the
end.

Buddy awkwardly stands and moves hesitantly to the chair next to the one the woman occupies. He begins to sit down and Steph's chair spins around so they are eye to eye. Shocked recognition spreads across his face as his mouth drops open.

BUDDY
Stephanie Mattson?

STEPH
Hello stranger. It's been a long
time.

BUDDY
I thought I was meeting...

STEPH
You are. Evenson is my married
name. If you hung around after
graduation you would know that.

Buddy's eyes flick down to her hands as they sit on the table to note no wedding ring and lowers himself the rest of the way into the chair.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Divorced.

Steph holds her hand up, wiggling her empty fingers.

STEPH (CONT'D)
After building a name in the
publishing industry, I'll be damned
to start all over again.

BUDDY
(forced)
I, I, I'm sorry to hear that.

STEPH

Liar. You bolted like a rabbit when you heard about it.

BUDDY

It shocked me.

STEPH

You left for Minnesota the next day. You never said goodbye. You didn't even come to my wedding. How do you think that made me feel, my best friend abandoning me?

Buddy cringes at the words, "best friend".

BUDDY

He wasn't right for you, but I didn't want to bring you down. You seemed so happy.

STEPH

If you stuck around, you could have given me a valid reason not to marry him.

Buddy shrugs, at a loss.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Buddy Matolski speechless. This has to be a first.

BUDDY

Did you know you were meeting me?

STEPH

As far as I know, there's only one Buddy Matolski. It's so good to see you again. Remember all the good times we had in high school.

BUDDY

(forcing a chuckle)
We had some good times.

STEPH

When do you want to start?

BUDDY

I got the job?

STEPH

Sure, if you can start today?

BUDDY
Sounds good to me.

Buddy pauses in thought.

STEPH
What is it?

Steph leans closer.

BUDDY
You're not offering me a job
because you feel sorry for an old
friend?

STEPH
Of course I am...

Buddy turns to her, hurt.

STEPH (CONT'D)
(laughing)
I would never do that. I read your
writing samples, you're good. You
still working on that novel of
yours?

Buddy relaxes a bit and sits back.

BUDDY
Yeah. I'm hoping to get some
writing credits to help attract an
agent or publisher.

STEPH
You play your cards right and I'm
sure we can make it happen.

Buddy leans forward smiling, his excitement palpable.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Let me show you around.

They stand and Steph unexpectedly pulls him into an awkward hug with his arms pinned to his sides, his hands flapping nervously.

STEPH (CONT'D)
It's so good to see you.

She steps back, holding him by the upper arms and then pulls him in for another hug.

Buddy is noticeably uncomfortable.

Steph releases him and leads him out of the conference room.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLES - DAY

Steph shows Buddy around, leaning into different cubicles to introduce him to the other writers on staff.

TERESA, 40ish, brooding, thin woman, her glasses perched on the end of her nose and her hair pulled back away from her face, giving her a bird-like appearance.

She pauses typing when Steph and Buddy stand in the doorway of her cubicle.

STEPH

Teresa, this is Buddy, our newest writer. Teresa is in charge of local crime reporting and court cases.

BUDDY

Hi.

TERESA

(disinterested)
Yeah, welcome.

Teresa turns back to her work as Buddy and Steph stand behind her exchanging awkward looks.

They move over to the next cubicle and stop in the doorway, leaning in.

JACKIE, early 20's, attractive woman with long hair, radiant eyes, and a knock out body, glances up at them.

STEPH

Jackie, this is our newest writer, Buddy. Jackie is local business and human interest person.

Jackie stands, walks to the door, and shakes Buddy's hand smiling warmly.

JACKIE

Welcome. If there is anything you need, let me know.

Buddy stares an uncomfortably long time holding Jackie's hand before he lets go, embarrassed.

BUDDY

Uh, hi, yeah, thanks. I sure will.

Steph moves around behind Buddy to the next cubicle as he stands gawking at Jackie.

STEPH (O.S.)
(clearing throat)
Humph.

Buddy shakes his head and gives Jackie a sheepish grin.

BUDDY
Uh, talk to you later.

Buddy hurries over beside Steph in the next cubicle doorway.

TED, 50's, portly, bald man with a contagious positive attitude stands waiting with a smile.

STEPH
Ted, this is our newest writer,
Buddy. Ted covers the political
landscape.

TED
Hey, nice to meet you.

Buddy extends his hand. Ted grips it firmly and proceeds to shake it in an overly enthusiastic manner.

BUDDY
Nice to meet you too.

TED
If you need the lay of the land,
let me know.

BUDDY
Thanks, will do.

Steph takes Buddy to the next cubicle.

STEPH
This is it.

Steph extends her arms like a game show hostess and steps inside, motioning Buddy into the small space with her. Buddy steps in, the confined area forcing them to be oppressively close.

Buddy waits, curious.

STEPH (CONT'D)

(sotto)

I staff four writers and you're number four. As I said, they each cover their own area.

BUDDY

(sotto)

Why are we whispering?

Steph smiles deviously.

Buddy frowns, confused.

STEPH

(sotto)

I like to have one person delve into all areas with a fresh set of eyes. It keeps the others more diligent. You can understand how they would hate for you to find a story in their area they missed.

BUDDY

I'm not sure I like that role. I don't want them pissed at me all the time.

Buddy crosses his arms.

STEPH

Don't worry. Knowing you're here will keep them sharper. I know it will do that for me.

Steph puts a comforting hand on Buddy's shoulder with a grin before walking across the hall into an actual office.

Buddy turns to his new workspace. Four gray walls, a dark Formica desk top, a monitor, and the keyboard tray mounted underneath the desk top.

He rolls the creaky chair out and slides into it. He pulls the keyboard tray out, but it bangs up against the arms of his chair. He goes to push back from his desk, but the wall behind him prevents him from moving back and the keyboard is still hidden under the edge of the desk. Buddy squeezes his hands between the underside of the desk and the keyboard to painfully begin his search of the web.

INT. BUDDY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Buddy surfs the web for story ideas. He sits uncomfortably straight in his chair, trying to get a better angle at the keyboard so his hands fit under the edge of the desk.

JACKIE (O.S.)
Wednesday at two.

Jackie stands in the doorway.

Buddy looks up over his shoulder, surprised, hitting his knee on the desk as he tries to turn around. He grimaces at the pain of the collision.

BUDDY
(in pain)
What?

JACKIE
(stifling a laugh)
Deadline for all work is Wednesday at two. That's when you need to have the polished piece on Steph's desk. We pitch the next week's plan to her at that meeting.

Buddy stares at her in shock.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Kind of strange writing with a deadline, huh?

BUDDY
Yeah. Sitting in my own space writing a novel with no outside pressures seems like a luxury now.

JACKIE
(playfully)
How big are your cojones, Buddy?

BUDDY
(embarrassed)
I, I, beg your pardon?

Buddy looks down reflexively to his lap.

JACKIE
Not those. Your writing cojones. Can you step up and run with the big dogs? Good luck.

Jackie turns and walks out of the doorway.

Buddy stares at the empty doorway, the realization of his new career looming before him.

INT. BUDDY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Buddy sits with his back to the doorway again.

STEPH (O.S.)

Humph.

BUDDY

Don't worry. My cojones are plenty big for you...

Buddy turns to find Steph standing there. He stops with his mouth hanging open.

STEPH

(trying to keep a straight face)

You should have put that on your resume, I might have started you at a higher salary.

BUDDY

(mortified)

I am so sorry. I thought you were Jack-ie-ee.

Buddy tries to stop his statement, but is too late, as Steph raises an eyebrow.

Buddy snaps his mouth shut and shakes his head.

STEPH

That reminds me. You need to go through our sexual harassment course.

BUDDY

It's not like that.

STEPH

Really? Because I swear you were trying to tell Jackie how big your testicles are.

Buddy opens his mouth to respond, but thinks better of it and presses his lips tightly together.

STEPH (CONT'D)

I know you weren't expecting to start today, so head out and I'll see you tomorrow.

BUDDY

(relieved)

Really? Okay, thanks.

Steph turns and walks back into her office as Buddy watches with yearning at her sexy shape.

He switches off his computer, stands, and stretches. Pulling the kink from his back, he glares at the uncomfortable chair.

EXT. PARKING LOT LA TODAY - DAY

Buddy arrives at his car to find a note stuck under his wiper blade on the windshield. He pulls it free, opens it, and reads.

MIKE HANCOCK (V.O.)

Dear asshole, if I find your piece of shit car in my spot again, I won't just have it towed, but towed to a salvage yard, compacted, and set on your desk as a paperweight, right before I fire you.

The note is signed, MIKE HANCOCK, CEO-LA Today.

Buddy's head jerks up to the white sign marking the parking spot reserved for CEO-LA Today. He moans and crumples the note in despair, knowing the first day of his new job may be his last.

Buddy slides into his car, starts it up, and heads out of the lot. He passes a Mercedes SUV with the vanity plates, LA2DAY parked way in the back part of the lot.

BUDDY

Shit!

Buddy's car pulls out of the parking lot with the customary blue smoke as he struggles to get the air conditioning working. The knob comes off in his hand, blasting him with hot air he can't turn off. He presses the button to open his window which starts to move, then stops and grinds in place.

Concentrating on the dilemma in his car, Buddy rolls through a stop sign and a MOTORCYCLE OFFICER pulls him over. The officer steps up to Buddy's immobile window and motions for him to roll it down.

OFFICER
Please roll the window down sir.

With the loud whirring of the fan inside the car, Buddy can't hear the officer and begins to open his door.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Sir, stay in your car.

The officer steps back with one hand on his taser and the other one pointing to Buddy.

Buddy still can't hear him and opens the door.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Freeze.

The officer pulls his taser, pointing it at Buddy.

Buddy steps out of his car, trying to explain. He clears the door of his car when the electrodes imbed into his chest and he flops convulsing to the ground.

EXT. SIDE OF LA STREET - DAY

Buddy is handcuffed, leaning face down over the hood of his car, his eyes slowly open as the officer tosses the contents of Buddy's pockets onto the hood next to Buddy's face. Wallet, change, pocket knife.

OFFICER
You should have froze when I told you. I hate doing that.

BUDDY
(raspy)
My window doesn't open, and my fan is stuck on high so I couldn't hear you.

OFFICER
(bewildered)
For real?

The officer flips Buddy onto his back, leaning him over the hood awkwardly. He picks up Buddy's wallet and fingers through it. He pulls out the MN drivers licence and reads it.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Buddy Matolski. From Minnesota. A little far from home aren't you.

BUDDY

I just moved out here for a job.

OFFICER

Matolski, Matolski, why do I know that name? Who's your old man?

BUDDY

Jim.

OFFICER

No, don't know a Jim. But... do you know a Candy Matolski?

Buddy's stares at the officer with disbelief. Why would a police officer know Candy?

BUDDY

(hesitantly)

That's my mom.

OFFICER

You're shitting me. Really?
You're Candy's kid?

Buddy nods.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

We go riding every once in a while.

BUDDY

Riding?

OFFICER

Bike.

He motions with his head to the motorcycle sitting behind Buddy's car.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

She is one wild chick.

Buddy cringes.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry. TMI.

BUDDY

I'd prefer staying ignorant to my mother's wild ways.

The officer laughs as he turns Buddy around and takes off the handcuffs.

Buddy rubs his wrists urging the feeling back into his hands.

OFFICER

You rolled through that stop sign back there. I don't know how they are in Minnesota, but we watch pretty closely here.

BUDDY

My mind was wandering about the first day at my job. I guess I didn't realize I didn't stop completely.

OFFICER

I'll let you off with a warning, but you need to get your windows and air fixed. I doubt it could pass the emissions testing out here either.

BUDDY

Probably not.

OFFICER

Look into getting something different, even borrow someone's car until you get this one fixed.

BUDDY

I appreciate the suggestion. Thanks.

Buddy takes the warning ticket, rubs the sore spots on his chest, and watches the officer walk back to his motorcycle.

OFFICER

(over his shoulder)

Tell Candy, Carl said hi and I'll call her soon.

Buddy waves at the officer.

BUDDY

I'll be sure to do that.

The officer starts his motorcycle and rides past Buddy with a wave.

Buddy gets into his car and drives off, the blue smoke ever present, but seeming to originate more from the inside of the car now.

INT. CANDY'S OFFICE - DAY

Buddy sits at Candy's desk and takes a swig of coke as he waits for the computer to start up. There is a ping to notify him of mail for Dixie. The first one is from that morning.

JARED WARNER (V.O.)

Dear Dixie, you're a bit bolder in these last responses. Not sure how the readers, not to mention the other editors, will take them. Hey, you're the expert. Take Care Jared.

Buddy chuckles and clicks on the next message from Jared as well.

JARED WARNER (V.O.)

Dixie, the senior editor doesn't like it and wants you to rewrite it. Get back to me, Jared.

Buddy stares with growing concern at the screen, puts a hand to his face in disbelief and glances at the picture on the desk. Candy is not smiling.

Buddy clicks the next message.

JARED WARNER (V.O.)

Dear Miss Dixie, upon further discussion, we have decided to keep the article as is, but will run a disclaimer stating the paper does not endorse any advice you give. If we get too many complaints, your contract will be terminated. Sincerely, Jared Warner.

Buddy stands abruptly from his chair and spins it in disgust.

BUDDY

Those bastards. After all these years, they want to fire her, just like that.

HOLLYWOOD (O.S.)

Fire who just like that?

Buddy turns, startled to see Hollywood and Kyle standing in the office doorway.

Without thinking, Buddy answers.

BUDDY

Mom.

KYLE

They can't do that.

HOLLYWOOD

No way. They can't ax Dixie.

Buddy's mouth drops open with shock.

KYLE

What's the matter?

BUDDY

You know about Dixie?

HOLLYWOOD

Hell yes. We figured it out when we were twelve.

Kyle nods his agreement.

BUDDY

Twelve? She didn't tell me until I was fifteen. How?

KYLE

We were sitting in the den of your house in the old neighborhood and Hollywood asked your mom what she did for money since she never left for work.

HOLLYWOOD

She said if we promised to keep it secret, she'd tell us.

KYLE

We did, and she showed us how she was an advice columnist. It was small back then, before syndication, but it was still pretty cool.

HOLLYWOOD

And we haven't told anyone or spoken about it until now.

KYLE

So why are they trying to fire Candy?

Buddy moves over to the couch on one side of the office and motions to his friends.

BUDDY
(ashamed)
Sit down, I screwed up and now I'm
in a world of hurt.

Hollywood and Kyle walk over and sit down as Buddy paces in front of them and starts to explain.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
It started when I drove into town
and Mom had me take her to the
airport...

Minutes later, Hollywood and Kyle sit on the couch with worried expressions as Buddy stops pacing and turns to them.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
...and now the son-of-a-bitches
want to fire her, or me, if people
don't react well to the advice.

The computer pings indicating more e-mail. Buddy walks over and sits down at the desk, leaving Kyle and Hollywood on the couch.

Buddy opens the new slush pile of letters and pulls out three to answer.

KYLE
What are you doing?

BUDDY
Might as well go out in a blaze of
glory.

HOLLYWOOD
Are you nuts. Shut that off and
leave it alone.

BUDDY
They'll fire her.

The three friends stare at each other. Kyle stands and comes up behind Buddy to read over his shoulder.

KYLE
Show me the ones you sent this
morning.

HOLLYWOOD
Me too.

Hollywood hurries off the couch and begins reading over Buddy's other shoulder as he pulls up the column from that morning.

The men read in silence. Kyle straightens and walks over to the couch and sits down. Soon Hollywood leans back and walks over to join Kyle on the couch where they sit quietly.

Buddy stares at them until their silence finally gets the best of him.

BUDDY
(exacerbated)
What? What do you think?

KYLE
For a college graduate, and a
guy...

HOLLYWOOD
It was pretty good, if you go for
that woman advice stuff.

Hollywood crosses his arms and shrugs.

KYLE
We're lucky you're in touch with
you're feminine side.

BUDDY
What do you mean, my feminine side?

HOLLYWOOD
(tentatively)
There's no easy way to put this.

Hollywood glances at Kyle. With a nod to each other they turn back to Buddy.

HOLLYWOOD, KYLE
(in unison)
You write like a girl.

Buddy's expression at first is anger, then confusion, and finally he nods with acceptance.

BUDDY
But can it save Mom's job?

INT. CULLY'S SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Buddy, Hollywood, and Kyle are sitting at a high boy table having something to eat and washing it down with some beers.

HOLLYWOOD

We've been so busy worrying about saving your mom's job, you never told us if you got yours?

Buddy shakes his head as he swigs more beer and smirks.

KYLE

Okay, you have the biggest shit grin on your face I've ever seen.

BUDDY

Steph is my new boss.

Hollywood and Kyle gape at Buddy in shock.

Hollywood frowns with concern.

HOLLYWOOD

And you're okay with that?

BUDDY

Fine.

KYLE

It doesn't bother you anymore she's "just friends"... forever.

BUDDY

She isn't.

HOLLYWOOD

Buddy, we've been friends since we were two, and I love you, but Steph has always been "just friends". But now that she's married, it puts everyone into the "just friends" zone with her.

BUDDY

(grinning)
She's divorced.

Hollywood and Kyle have deer in the headlight expressions.

HOLLYWOOD

But what makes you think your chances have improved since high school?

BUDDY

I don't know, the way she reacted to seeing me today...

KYLE

Like seeing an old friend after
eight years?

BUDDY

I know what you're doing, but I got
this. I'm going into this with my
eyes wide open.

HOLLYWOOD

But we all know you dream with your
eyes open. You're a writer for
shit sakes.

BUDDY

I got this.

KYLE

(nodding)

I hope you're right.

Kyle slips off the stool and grabs his beer.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I have to head out, Cindy doesn't
like it when I stop off without
telling her.

HOLLYWOOD

When are you going to stop
answering to her?

Kyle downs the rest of his beer, slamming the empty on the
table.

KYLE

(forcefully)

It's not answering to her. It's
being considerate and it makes it
work. See you guys later.

Kyle turns and walks out.

BUDDY

I better head back and tackle some
more letters.

HOLLYWOOD

Yeah, I gotta go too. Want to get
together later this week?

BUDDY

Give me a call, maybe we can get
some beers Friday.

HOLLYWOOD

I'm warning you, tread lightly with Steph. I don't want you to get hurt again.

Hollywood places a comforting hand on Buddy's shoulder.

BUDDY

(reassuring)

I will, pal. Don't worry.

INT. CANDY'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Buddy sits at the desk reading over the e-mail and he clicks another letter open.

GIRL 1 (V.O.)

Dear Dixie, I've been living with my parents while attending college and they're driving me crazy with their rules. I'm an adult now and they should lighten up. They insist I be in at a reasonable time and to call if I'm going to be late. They complain when I have friends over because they eat too much. What can I do? Stuck Student.

Buddy thinks for a moment and then starts typing.

BUDDY (V.O.)

Dear Stuck, you have some good points. As an adult you should have added respect from your parents even though you're still living under their roof. You should also have the courtesy to call and let them know when you will be home so they don't sit up and worry. Buy extra food when your friends are stopping, and one last thing, let your parents know how grateful you are for their generosity. Suck it up, Stuck, and act like the adult you're claiming you are. Good Luck, Dixie.

Buddy leans back, satisfied. He flashes a worried look towards the picture to find his mother smiling. Buddy reaches over and opens another letter.

2ND WOMAN (V.O.)

Dear Dixie, I suspect my husband is cheating on me...

Buddy types an answer.

3RD WOMAN (V.O.)

Dear Dixie, my mother in-law is insisting on meddling with how we raise our kids...

Buddy thinks a minute and then types an answer.

4TH WOMAN (V.O.)

Dear Dixie, I have a crush on a boy, but he treats me only as a friend. How do I get him to see me differently.

Buddy tips back in his chair, exhales deeply and runs a hand through his hair. A knowing smile crosses his face and he types confidently.

BUDDY

Tell him, tell him, just tell him.
If you don't you will regret it and wonder what could have been. Good Luck, Dixie.

Buddy sighs and spins his chair to the window, only then realizing how dark the room is. He turns to the digital clock on the bookcase. Eleven. He reaches over and hits send on his e-mail and turns the computer off.

The screen and room go black on Buddy's apprehensive expression.

EXT./INT. BUDDY'S CAR ON LOS ANGELES STREET - DAY

Buddy's car pulls out of the driveway. He reaches over and reflexively pushes the window button. To his surprise the window rolls down smoothly. He looks out the rearview mirror and the cloud of exhaust is noticeably gone. Buddy raises a curious eyebrow at himself in the mirror and then switches on the air conditioner as he holds his hand up to feel cool air. He happily drives on, hitting green light after green light.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF LA TODAY - DAY

Buddy pulls in, finding a parking spot fairly close to the front, but after hesitating, parks way in the back, hoping to avoid the CEO's attention.

Buddy walks up the sidewalk, noting the Mercedes is not in the CEO spot yet. He grins with relief and has a noticeable spring in his step the rest of the way to the door.

INT. LA TODAY LOBBY - DAY

Buddy rounds the fountain and walks up towards the receptionist desk and veers towards the entrance to the cubicles.

RECEPTIONIST
Good Morning.

BUDDY
Morning.

Buddy proceeds to the rows of cubicles, keeping his head down, trying to make it to his desk unnoticed by the other writers. His role ever present in his mind.

TED (O.S.)
Hey Buddy, morning.

Buddy's expression turns curious.

BUDDY
Morning.

Buddy continues on towards his cubicle, making eye contact with Teresa as he passes her opening.

Teresa nods as Buddy passes.

Buddy returns Teresa's nod and keeps moving.

Distracted by Teresa, Buddy comes to a corner and collides with Jackie. They stumble, but Buddy catches Jackie in his arms and they stare awkwardly at each other for a moment before Buddy rights them.

JACKIE
(gasping)
Thanks.

Buddy quickly pulls his arms from around her.

BUDDY
(embarrassed)
Ah, no problem.

He begins to go, but stops, the confusion returns to his face as he turns to Jackie.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
Why is everyone so cheery?

JACKIE
You haven't heard?

BUDDY
Heard what?

JACKIE
Steph is in the running for Editor
of the Year. She gave us bonuses.
She only needs one killer story to
push her over the top for the win,
but it's a very good day.

BUDDY
I guess.

Buddy optimistically heads straight to Steph's office.

INT. STEPH EVENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Buddy walks in, his arms extended out from his sides.

Steph beams from behind her desk.

STEPH
You heard?

BUDDY
Congratulations.

STEPH
Mike told me after you left
yesterday.

Buddy's expression is blank.

STEPH (CONT'D)
(re: Buddy's confusion)
Mike Hancock, the CEO.

Buddy shows a flash of recognition, and then grimaces.

STEPH (CONT'D)
He told me to fire the bastard who
parked in his spot.

Steph puts her hands on her hips, frowning at Buddy.

STEPH (CONT'D)
(scolding)
Really? You couldn't read the
sign?

Buddy holds his hands out in a helpless gesture.

BUDDY
I was late, remember?

Buddy cringes as the words leave his mouth.

STEPH
(sighing)
I'm aware of that. You're so lucky
I like you.

BUDDY
Yes, yes I am. So I'm not fired?

STEPH
Mike told me I could keep you as
long as you stay out of his parking
spot. You're going to stay out of
his spot, aren't you?

BUDDY
Yes. Thank you. I won't let you
down.

STEPH
(dangerously serious)
No you won't, or I'll kill you.

Buddy stares warily at her for a moment.

BUDDY
Oh-kay... I better get to work.
Congratulations again.

Buddy quickly exits the office.

INT. BUDDY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Buddy is sitting at his desk, surfing the web.

Jackie sticks her head in the doorway.

JACKIE
(short)
Meeting in five, conference room.

She's gone before Buddy can turn around.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -DAY

Steph is at the head of the table with a paper held up, obscuring her face from view.

Buddy walks in and pauses when he realizes he is the first one there. He moves down and sits next to Steph.

The other writers come in and close the door after them, taking seats around the table. After the initial visiting quiets down, they wait in silence as Steph reads the paper.

Steph folds the paper open to the page she is studying and lays it down on the table before her. Her features turn all business.

STEPH

Something big is in the works and we need to be on top of it.

Steph stands and plants her fists on the paper.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Dear Dixie is showing her true colors and her editors don't like it. It seems old Dixie has gotten an attitude and is telling it like it is.

BUDDY

Huh?

Buddy clamps a hand over his mouth.

STEPH

(re: Buddy)

I know.

JACKIE

I've read Dixie my entire life.

TED

How do you know this?

STEPH

The disclaimer the paper added and a source I have, say Dixie is getting feisty in her old age.

Buddy fidgets nervously.

STEPH (CONT'D)

They're waiting to see how the public reacts before they ax her, but they've wanted to get rid of her for years.

JACKIE

How bad is her column?

STEPH

In my opinion, it's her best ever.

Buddy glances around cautiously and then puffs up with pride, a knowing smirk on his face.

BUDDY

(tempered)

It was?

STEPH

To the point, honest, without any of the frosting or sugar coating. The way people like it today. We need to jump on this, now.

Steph turns to stare out the window, then spins back, her jaw set with determination.

STEPH (CONT'D)

We need an interview with Dixie.

Steph points a finger at Ted who shrinks back.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Ted, you have connections, can you get a name or a number for the old broad?

Buddy is irritated by the derogatory connotation.

TED

Uh, no one knows who Dixie is. It could be a guy for all we know.

JACKIE

(amused)

A guy?

The women in the room burst into laughter.

Buddy's face turns red.

BUDDY
 (voice cracking)
 It could be a guy.

The laughter stops abruptly and all eyes turn to Buddy.

Ted burst out laughing this time and the women join in.

Buddy clenches his teeth as anger sizzles beneath the surface.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 (defensive)
 And why not?

JACKIE
 (laughing)
 A man doesn't have the insight
 gene.

Jackie slaps her hand on the table as tears run down her cheeks.

STEPH
 (out of breath)
 Most men are too worried about
 'getting some' (quotation gesture
 with her hands) to care about
 giving advice.

This starts the roar of laughter anew.

Buddy presses his lips together in determination.

BUDDY
 (sotto)
 I'll do it.

STEPH
 (re: Buddy)
 What?

BUDDY
 (building confidence)
 I'll do it.

STEPH
 You'll do what?

Steph wipes the tears from her eyes as the laughter stops and everyone focuses on Buddy.

BUDDY
 (firmly)
 The interview with Dixie.

As Buddy says the words, the realization of what he just did hits him. The room goes quiet and all eyes fall on him.

STEPH
 YOU can get an interview with
 Dixie?

Buddy hesitates, not so sure now. He looks from one doubtful face to another.

BUDDY
 Yeah.

STEPH
 If you do... I'll find a publisher
 for that novel.

Buddy gives a curt nod with renewed confidence.

BUDDY
 Consider it done. When do you want
 it?

The room is silent as everyone stares at Buddy, blown away.

STEPH
 Whenever. If she gets fired, we
 can do a goodbye Dixie interview.
 If she succeeds, we can dig deeper
 into why she changed after all
 these years.

JACKIE
 (brainstorming)
 Kind of like a Dixie 2.0.

Steph points to Jackie.

STEPH
 (excited)
 Exactly.

STEPH (CONT'D)
 That's it. Get back to work.

Everyone stands and begins to leave.

STEPH (CONT'D)
 Buddy, stay a minute.

Buddy stops as the rest file past him.

Teresa leans close to Buddy as she passes.

TERESA
(sotto)
Crash and burn.

Buddy glares after Teresa and waits nervously as everyone files out.

STEPH
(calmly)
Shut the door.

Buddy closes the door.

Steph motions him to over to the seat next to her.

Buddy moves over and sits down, looking up at Steph, wondering what she has to say.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I'll expect her to mention the
interview in one of her columns.

BUDDY
(resigned)
Sure, why not.

STEPH
(stunned approval)
I never knew you had it in you.

BUDDY
Had what in me?

STEPH
It's hard to describe, but I like
it... I really like it.

Steph gives him a look, sending chills up his arms and neck.

STEPH (CONT'D)
Take the rest of the day and see
about setting up the interview.

Steph turns her attention to jotting something on a note pad as Buddy stands and turns to leave.

The sound of paper being torn from the note pad(O.S.)

STEPH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Here.

Buddy stops, looking back to see Steph extending her hand holding the piece of paper. Buddy takes the note and looks at it, confused.

STEPH (CONT'D)

(warmly)

My address. Pick me up at seven for dinner. A jacket is required and please find something other than that ancient wool one you wore yesterday. We have a lot of catching up to do.

Buddy grins and gives her an awkward cross between a salute and a bow. He leaves the conference room, his spirits lifted.

INT. CANDY'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Buddy sits in a chair facing the couch where Kyle and Hollywood lounge, drinking a beer.

Buddy is animated explaining what has happened.

BUDDY

...and now I need to give Steph an interview with Dixie.

KYLE

What were you thinking?

HOLLYWOOD

Shit, Buddy. First you screw up and now you do a swan dive right into the crapper.

KYLE

You're going to have to tell her you couldn't get the interview.

BUDDY

I can't do that. You didn't see the way she looked at me.

HOLLYWOOD

Like you're fucking nuts?

BUDDY

No, like I was someone else. Like she was seeing me for the first time and I was interesting.

KYLE

I don't think this is the time to worry about winning Steph. You have to worry about ruining your mother's career.

Buddy stands, grabs his head, agonizing over what to do. He spins on his friends excitedly.

BUDDY

But I CAN get the interview. I just have to interview me.

KYLE

Are you hearing yourself? Hollywood's right, you've lost it, you are nuts.

Hollywood stands, raising a calming hand.

HOLLYWOOD

So you're going to dinner with her tonight?

Buddy nods.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

You feel it out, see if she gives you the "just friends" look. If she does, you tell her tomorrow you couldn't get the interview.

KYLE

That's some advice. What if she turns out to want more than friendship from him?

Buddy smiles excitedly.

HOLLYWOOD

Like that has a snowball's chance in hell of happening.

The smile disappears Buddy's face as he spins on Hollywood.

BUDDY

(incensed)

Hey!

HOLLYWOOD

Face it, pal, she has never, nor will she ever, like you like that. It's your fate.

Buddy turns to Kyle for support.

KYLE
 (shrugging)
 Hollywood's right. You're a nice
 guy. Nice guys don't get girls
 like Stephanie Mattson. They don't
 see you the same as guys they want
 to date.

BUDDY
 (depressed)
 Thanks for the support.

HOLLYWOOD
 Just keeping it real. We're your
 best friends. Best friends don't
 blow smoke up each other's ass.

They exchange awkward looks.

KYLE
 (deepening his voice)
 What he meant to say is we would
 never lie to you to make you feel
 better.

BUDDY
 Yeah, I know, you guys are the
 best.

Buddy turns and stares out the window.

Hollywood and Kyle exchange concerned looks.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 Thanks for keeping it real.

EXT. CANDY'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Buddy stands in the driveway wearing a nice sport coat,
 lamenting over his wreck of a car. He shakes his head and
 moves over to the garage door remote touch pad to enter the
 code.

BUDDY
 This is an emergency. She'll
 understand.

The door opens slowly, revealing a car sitting covered in the
 garage. The word BABY is embroidered on the black cover in
 silver letters. There is another, smaller object, covered
 off to one side with BABY TOO on it.

Buddy walks over and pulls the back the cover on the car carefully. A grin spreads across his face.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 (lustily)
 Oh baby.

EXT. LA STREET - NIGHT

Buddy pulls up to a stoplight, enthralled by the car, an Aston Martin D89 convertible. A revving engine, (O.S.), pulls his attention to a beautiful woman in a red sports car next to him. She smiles at him with seductive approval.

Buddy grins and speeds off as the light changes green, leaving the woman staring after him.

EXT. STEPH EVENSON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Buddy pulls up to the house with a paver drive, a manicured yard and well kept flower beds. A walkway splits with one path going around to the back and the other leading up to the front steps with a small landing and overhang.

Buddy coasts around the circular drive, stopping in front of the door. He flips off the engine and gets out, staring back at the car as he steps up to the door. Just as he is going to knock, he notices a note.

STEPH (V.O.)
 Buddy, come around to the back by the pool and help yourself to a drink at the bar. I'll be right with you.

Buddy follows the walk around the side of the house to a rear gate. He opens the gate, goes through and turns to make sure it latches behind him.

He looks up in time to see JENNY MALLORY, early 20s, very fit and knock-out gorgeous, in a barely-there bikini, doing a 1 1/2 into the pool off the diving board at the far end of the pool. Jenny splashes in lightly and swims the entire length of the pool underwater.

Buddy walks towards the bar near the house, engrossed, watching as Jenny approaches.

Buddy is leaning against the bar as Jenny climbs slowly out of the pool, whips her hair around, and wrings her hair out with her hands.

Buddy is taking in every shapely inch of this beauty when he realizes he is getting far too excited for his attire to hide. As Jenny turns to him, he reaches over and grabs a towel off the edge of the bar and holds it in front of him, trying to act natural.

Jenny walks over seductively, aware of Buddy's condition. She smirks and moves in close to him.

JENNY

Buddy Matolski, where in the world
have you been?

BUDDY

(uncomfortable)
Jenny? Wow. You've really
changed.

JENNY

(laughing)
You haven't seen me since the
eighth grade.

Buddy stares, still turned on by her in the bikini and there is an awkward pause.

BUDDY

(clearing throat)
What have you been up to?

Jenny's expression is confused and amused as she reaches over and takes the towel from Buddy and begins to dry off.

JENNY

(holding back laughter)
Thanks.

Buddy glances down as his arousal is exposed and quickly turns away. He hurries over to a chair and sits down, crossing his legs to hide his erection.

Jenny follows him, pulling on a robe from the back of a nearby chair.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Are you serious? You don't know
what I've been up to?

Jenny's confusion turns to pleasure.

BUDDY

(pressing on
uncomfortably)
Is there something I should know?

JENNY

Not really, but don't you have TV
or internet in Minnesota?

Now it's Buddy's turn to be confused.

BUDDY

Yeah, were you in some sort of
trouble?

Jenny laughs and Buddy begins to laugh as well.

JENNY

Buddy, I'm an actress. Don't you
go to movies?

Buddy closes his eyes, embarrassed.

BUDDY

Not much. I don't recall hearing
of an actress named Jenny Mattson.

Jenny leans back and bursts out laughing, holding her side.

JENNY

No, I don't suppose you would,
since I changed my last name to
Mallory.

Buddy stares at her, dumbstruck, then holds up a finger in
realization.

BUDDY

I, I, uh, *Until Tomorrow?* That was
you?

Jenny pirouettes for him and he takes it all in.

JENNY

I wore a few more clothes.

Buddy shakes his head and snaps his gaping mouth shut.

BUDDY

No, I see it now, but I wasn't
expecting it. You were awesome in
that.

JENNY

Thank you, considering you didn't
know it was me at the time, I'll
take that as a huge compliment.

BUDDY

You should. I thought you were incredible. The way you brought to life the desires of Sara was brilliant. Really.

Jenny blushes and looks away with a twinkle in her eye.

JENNY

I should tell Steph you're here.

Jenny enters the house as Buddy watches her go, frustrated over his stupidity and lack of control.

Jenny soon returns as Buddy is now standing next to the bar.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Steph will be a few more minutes.

BUDDY

Do you live with Steph?

JENNY

No, I'm visiting. Trying to get away from the spotlight and a bad relationship at the same time. This is a good place to be me.

BUDDY

I can only imagine how hard it is to be under a magnifying glass all the time.

JENNY

(sincerely)

Thank you. Most people have little sympathy for celebrities. They feel it's something we should endure for our fame.

BUDDY

It must suck. I guess we should have thought about that when we wished for fame and fortune back in school.

JENNY

Yeah, I kind of blame you for all this.

Jenny extends her hands to encompass everything.

Buddy frowns.

BUDDY

I've lived in Minnesota for the last eight years. How can you blame me for the problems that come with being a movie star?

JENNY

If you hadn't taken me to all those Saturday matinees, I never would have wanted to be an actress. See, it's all your fault.

BUDDY

(concerned)

I took you to plenty of Angels's games as well, but you didn't become a ball player.

Jenny laughs.

Buddy, realizing she's kidding, shakes a scolding finger at her.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

You're a professional now. No fair using your skills on me.

JENNY

And where would the fun be in that?

They both begin to laugh again.

STEPH (O.S.)

What's so funny.

Buddy and Jenny turn to see Steph standing in the doorway. Buddy gawks at her beauty.

JENNY

Nothing, just talking about old times.

STEPH

That's what we're doing tonight. We'd ask you to come, but you know how the paparazzi are.

Buddy is disappointed at the news Jenny won't be joining them.

BUDDY

(hoping)

Are you sure? We could sneak you in the back.

JENNY

That's sweet, but you two go and get caught up. Maybe we can get together another time.

BUDDY

I'd like that.

STEPH

Come on Buddy, we're going to be late for our reservation.

Steph heads out the gate, not waiting for Buddy. He turns to look at Jenny over his shoulder as he rushes after her.

BUDDY

Night.

JENNY

Good night, have fun.

EXT. STEPH EVENSON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Buddy and Steph walk up to the Aston Martin as Steph eyes it curiously.

STEPH

You holding out on me?

Buddy's eyes open wide, fearing he's been found out.

BUDDY

Uh, me, hold out on you? Why would you think that?

STEPH

(re: car)

You can't afford this on a teacher's salary.

BUDDY

(with relief)

My car is out of commission so I borrowed this from a friend.

STEPH

Pretty good friend.

Buddy opens the door to the car and Steph gets in. He walks around to the driver's side and slides in behind the wheel.

EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT WITH VALET SERVICE - NIGHT

The Aston Martin pulls up with Buddy and Steph inside.

Buddy gets out as Steph is let out by a valet. Buddy pauses and watches nervously as the car is driven off to be parked.

Steph stops just outside the door as a doorman waits impatiently.

Buddy walks up beside Steph, still glancing back in the direction the car went.

Steph slips her arm around Buddy's and they enter as the doorman opens the door.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Buddy and Steph stop to drop Steph's wrap at the coat check.

Buddy waits for the claim ticket as Steph approaches JEFFRY, the maitre de. Jeffry is speaking on the phone with his back to her. He finishes as she gets a few steps away and turns to her familiarly.

JEFFRY

Welcome back Ms. Evenson. So nice to see you again. You're usual table?

Stephanie glances over her shoulder for Buddy, still at the coat check.

STEPH

Thank you JEFFRY. There will be two tonight.

Buddy walks up behind Steph, stopping just short of her.

JEFFRY

Yes, of course, and who should I be looking for this evening?

The maitre de stops and looks past Steph to Buddy.

JEFFRY (CONT'D)

Excuse me, we are by reservation only. I will have to ask you to leave.

The maitre de turns his attention back to Steph.

JEFFRY (CONT'D)

(sotto)

So sorry. All the tourists feel
they can go wherever they like
these days.

The maitre de glares at Buddy as Steph gives him an
embarrassed grin over her shoulder.

JEFFRY (CONT'D)

Sir, I told you...

STEPH

(uncomfortable)

He's with me.

Shock mixed with disapproval covers Jeffry's face as Buddy
steps up beside Steph and she slips her arm around his.

BUDDY

He seems to have run out of words,
finally.

Jeffry snaps his gaping mouth shut and fumes at Buddy.

JEFFRY

Right this way, *Ms. Evenson*.

Buddy and Steph follow Jeffry into the restaurant to the
table.

Buddy holds the chair for Steph as she sits down, helps her
slide in, and then sits opposite her.

WAITER 1 comes over and Steph addresses him before he can say
a word.

STEPH

I would like a bottle of 2002 Bond
St. Eden.

The waiter nods and hurries off.

STEPH (CONT'D)

(re: Buddy)

Why haven't you called in eight
years?

BUDDY

(stammering)

I, I, uh, was kind of busy with
college, and then teaching, and my
novel.

STEPH

You couldn't pick up the phone,
once, to let me know how you were?

BUDDY

I know, I'm sorry, but I wanted to
get away from it all.

STEPH

(hurt)

Me too? We used to do everything
together, and then, when I needed
your support the most, you
vanished.

The waiter returns with the wine and pours a sample in a
glass and Steph tastes it. She nods her acceptance and he
pours more into her glass and then fills Buddy's.

WAITER1

Would you like to order or should I
come back?

STEPH

I'll wave you over when we're
ready.

The waiter nods and walks away.

Buddy sits thinking of how to respond as the waiter and Steph
talk. He stares at her uncomfortably as she turns her
attention back to him.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Well? Why would you disappear on
graduation and then not even show
up at my wedding?

BUDDY

I had a lot going on, a lot of
things I needed to work out in my
head. I doubt if I would have been
any good to you in that state.

STEPH

You were my best friend. Do you
know how it hurt to lose you at the
happiest time of my life?

BUDDY

How many times do I need tell you
I'm sorry?

STEPH

About a hundred more, because you
broke my heart.

Buddy's expression turns curious and hopeful.

BUDDY

I guess I didn't know how you felt
about me.

STEPH

You men are really slow at seeing
the big picture.

BUDDY

I'm back now. Why don't we
concentrate on moving forward and
not so much on the past.

STEPH

Sure. Let's start with how much
you've changed.

BUDDY

I haven't changed. I'm the same
old Buddy.

Buddy cringes as the words come out.

STEPH

(disagreeing)

But you *have* changed. The old
Buddy would never step up and take
on the impossible assignment.

BUDDY

Yeah, about that...

STEPH

It was incredible. I never knew
you had it in you. I really like
it.

BUDDY

(pleasantly surprised)

You do?

STEPH

(unintentionally
seductive)

The aggressiveness is exciting.

BUDDY

Really?

STEPH

You're back in town for two, maybe
three days and then volunteer to
bust the Dixie myth wide open.
That takes guts.

BUDDY

(sotto)
Or stupidity.

STEPH

What?

BUDDY

Why wouldn't I go for the story?
Isn't that my job?

STEPH

(with admiration)
It is, but I'm very impressed with
your gusto.

BUDDY

(with reservation)
Glad to hear it.

Steph motions for the waiter who hurries over.

STEPH

Shall we order?

BUDDY

Sure.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Buddy and Steph finish dinner as Buddy wipes his mouth with
the napkin and sits back. Steph sets her fork down, smiling
knowingly at Buddy.

BUDDY

(re: Steph's stare)
What?

STEPH

I'm so glad I have my Buddy back.

Buddy shifts in his seat and lowers his eyes, embarrassed

STEPH (CONT'D)

Did you find anything out about the
interview?

Buddy's head jerks up with a deer in the headlight expression.

STEPH (CONT'D)
(re: to Buddy's expression)
I didn't expect anything that fast.
That would be amazing.

BUDDY
That's alright, I guess I should have told you.

STEPH
Told me what?

BUDDY
(hesitantly)
It's about the interview with Dixie.

STEPH
(condescending)
Come on, Buddy, I knew you weren't going to be able to get Dixie to speak with you. She doesn't speak to anyone.

Buddy sets his jaw as her lack of confidence in him begins to grind.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I put Jackie on the project too. Maybe she can use her contacts to get the interview.

BUDDY
(softly)
I got it.

STEPH
I don't think any less of you. You don't have to worry about that.

BUDDY
(louder, more forceful)
I got the interview. It's set for tomorrow afternoon.

Steph stares at Buddy with her mouth open.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

I can stop by the office in the morning and discuss any suggestions or questions you might have.

STEPH

(in shock)

That would be great. Wonderful.

BUDDY

(confidently)

Good. I'll come in first thing.

STEPH

Wow.

BUDDY

Yeah. Wow.

EXT. STEPH EVENSON'S - NIGHT

Buddy and Steph pull into the drive in the Aston Martin.

INT. ASTON MARTIN - NIGHT

Buddy puts the car in park and turns off the engine as Steph and Buddy sit nervously in the car, the date coming to an end.

STEPH

Thank you. I had a really nice time.

BUDDY

Yeah, me too. It was nice to catch up.

STEPH

I really missed you.

Buddy lifts his eyes to hers and something passes between them. He begins to lean in for a kiss but Steph turns away and opens the door.

Buddy shakes off his surprise and leaps out to rush around the car and hold the door as Steph gets out. Closing the door, Steph is waiting when he turns around. She slips her arm around his and they walk up to the door.

They stand in silence for a moment and then both lean in and kiss.

The kiss is long enough to have some passion, but short enough to leave them wanting more. They step back and look at each other as if for the first time.

STEPH (CONT'D)
 (nervously)
 Good night.

Steph quickly opens the door and disappears inside, leaving Buddy standing, shell-shocked, on the steps.

INT. STEPH EVENSON'S HOUSE ENTRY - NIGHT

Steph stands with her back against the door, eyes wide with realization.

EXT. STEPH EVENSON'S HOUSE FRONT STEPS - NIGHT

Buddy stands dumbfounded on the steps. A giddy smile spreads across his face as he turns and walks back to his car, a noticeable spring in his step.

INT. STEPH EVENSON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jenny sits reading in a chair. She looks up as her sister enters.

JENNY
 (sing-song)
 How is Buddy?

STEPH
 He's Buddy.

JENNY
 It was so good to see him again.

STEPH
 Yeah, I like him being around again, but...

JENNY
 But what?

STEPH
 (wistfully)
 There's something different about him. I like it.

JENNY
 Like what?

STEPH
 He's assertive. He got an
 interview with Dixie from the Dear
 Dixie column.

JENNY
 (surprised)
 Really? She doesn't give
 interviews.

STEPH
 I know, right? But he got one.

JENNY
 Impressive. Who knew our Buddy had
 it in him.

STEPH
 (breathy)
 Who knew?

INT. CANDY'S OFFICE - DAY

Buddy sits typing on the keyboard and then stops and
 purposefully moves the mouse over and clicks send.

BUDDY
 There, another column as Dixie,
 done. Only two more to go.

Buddy gets up and walks out of the room.

INT. LA TODAY LOBBY - DAY

Buddy enters with a confident stride.

RECEPTIONIST
 Morning Buddy.

BUDDY
 (cheery)
 Good Morning. Wonderful day, isn't
 it?

RECEPTIONIST
 Yes it is.

BUDDY
 Steph in her office?

RECEPTIONIST
(knowingly)
She's waiting for you in the
conference room.

Buddy stops, stares back at her curiously and then walks to the conference room.

INT. LA TODAY CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Steph sits with her chair partly facing the large bank of windows so she can watch the door to the conference room. Upon seeing Buddy standing in the doorway, she lights up.

STEPH
(motioning)
Come in.

Buddy walks over and sits down in a chair next to her.

BUDDY
(hopeful)
You seem happy today. Could any of
it be my doing?

STEPH
Yes, yes it could.

Steph smiles warmly and reaches over to place her hand on top of his as they rest on the table.

Buddy beams back at her.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I want you to know how excited I am
about this interview. You came
through for me again, just like old
times.

Buddy cringes at the old times comment, but maintains his grin.

BUDDY
About last night...

STEPH
Yeah, about that...

Steph stands, walks to the window, and stares out.

Buddy's pleasant expression is now gone, sensing the words coming.

STEPH (CONT'D)

I enjoyed last night very much, but the divorce has only been final for a few months. I feel it's a little early to get into a relationship.

Steph turns back to Buddy.

Buddy forces a supportive expression, trying to come across as understanding.

BUDDY

(masking disappointment)

Yeah, right, of course. We don't want to rush into anything. Besides, I just got into town and we haven't seen each other for years.

STEPH

(relieved)

Exactly. I mean, all the emotions of seeing you again... confused me.

Buddy turns away, visibly hurt.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Not that I didn't enjoy them, but I have to take some time and sort out the feelings I'm having. I'm not sure yet what they mean.

BUDDY

Sure, that makes sense. We don't want to do anything we might regret.

Steph sits down, places her hand on Buddy's again and looks meaningfully into his eyes.

Buddy struggles with the pain, fighting to keep it off his face so she won't see.

STEPH

Still friends?

Buddy's breath catches in his throat.

BUDDY

(forced)

Definitely.

Steph leans back in her chair as Buddy stares past her out the window. His eyes glistening slightly.

STEPH

Now that we have that out of the way... what about Dixie.

Buddy is incredulous, but restrains the feelings before she notices.

BUDDY

Set for this afternoon.

STEPH

Great, great. Here are some questions to include with yours.

Steph passes him an envelope as he stands.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Oh, if you could give this to Dixie for me?

Steph hands him another envelope with Dear Dixie block printed on the front.

BUDDY

No problem.

STEPH

(forcefully)

Don't read it. It's for Dixie's eyes only.

BUDDY

(monotone)

Dixie only, got it.

Buddy takes the envelop and places it with the other and walks towards the door.

STEPH (O.S.)

You're the best.

Buddy walks out without turning back.

INT. CANDY'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Buddy sits reading the questions Steph gave him. The envelop labeled Dear Dixie sits on the desk before him. He reaches over, picks up the envelope and tears it open. He suddenly drops the envelope and turns back to the questions. When the draw of the letter becomes too much, he pulls it out.

BUDDY

(reading out loud)

Dear Dixie, After many years, I have a second chance. When I was in school, I hung out with a boy and we became close friends, but my feelings went deeper. I never had the courage to tell him, always fearing rejection. He left my life suddenly. Now he's back and I have an opportunity to connect with him on a different level. The problem is, how do I put my feelings out there so our friendship won't be destroyed by only one of us wanting more? Signed, Uncharted Territory.

Buddy drops the letter on the desk, jumps to his feet and does a Tiger Woods fist pump after sinking a birdie putt.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Yes.

He turns towards the windows staring out at the back yard pool and begins to pace. He moves out of the room.

(O.S.) Noise of slamming doors and then a pop of a bottle top as Buddy walks back in with a beer. He tosses the bottle cap on the desk as he flops into the chair, leans back and takes a big drink, lifting the letter to read again.

Buddy flips the letter back onto the desk with a spin, takes one more swig of beer and slides forward. He places the beer on the desk and begins to type.

BUDDY (V.O.)

Dear Uncharted, If you want to test the waters you need to warm them up a bit before you jump in. By doing these steps, you will see if he has any interest before you stick your neck out too far.

Buddy thinks for a moment and with a nod, continues.

BUDDY (V.O.)

Leave notes around to let him know there is someone thinking of him. Next, even though cliché, search for his heart through his stomach with his favorite foods to show him you pay attention.

(MORE)

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

Use opportunities which avail themselves to touch him in an affectionate manner. Find instances to speak to him privately, and finally, after all that hasn't scared him away, tell him how you feel. Best of luck, Dixie.

Buddy sits back confidently, hits print, and sends the letter to the printer. He takes an envelope, begins to write Steph's name on the envelope, but hesitates, and then crumples it up. On a new envelope he writes, Dixie's Response.

He takes the letter from the printer, places it in the envelope and sets it aside, turning to the questions from Steph for Dixie.

He hunches over the keyboard and begins.

INT. CANDY'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Buddy stretches back with a sigh, clicks on print, and the whir of the printer begins. The room is dark except for the glow of the computer screen illuminating Buddy. Surprised by the darkness, he reaches over to turn on the lamp on the desk.

Kyle and Hollywood are sitting quietly drinking beer on the couch and Buddy jumps.

BUDDY

(gasping)

Holy shit. When did you get here?

KYLE

An hour ago.

HOLLYWOOD

More like two. What are you so wrapped up in?

BUDDY

(avoiding)

Nothing.

Buddy slides the questions for Dixie under some papers and then pushes the button on the monitor, turning it off.

Kyle stands and walks casually over to pick the papers off the printer. Hollywood turns on a light next to him as Kyle returns to sit beside him on the couch.

Buddy sighs and closes his eyes, resigned.

KYLE
(harshly)
Questions for Dixie?

HOLLYWOOD
What the fuck? Why would you do that?

BUDDY
(defensive)
Because I have to...

KYLE
No, pal, you don't. You're putting your mom's career in danger and lying to get a girl.

BUDDY
You didn't see how Steph looked at me last night when we talked about the interview.

HOLLYWOOD
Because all she cares about is herself, and that interview is going to get her ahead. She doesn't give a shit about you.

Buddy stands aggressively.

BUDDY
Shut up, shut the fuck up. You weren't there. How would you know?

Kyle leans forward on the couch, putting himself between Buddy and Hollywood.

KYLE
(calming)
We got you're back, no matter what, we always got your back, but you're pushing it this time.

BUDDY
Yeah, I guess. You never lie to me.

HOLLYWOOD
(still pissed)
No shit. Even when you ran away, we always had you're back. Even when you hid in Minnesota...

BUDDY
(irritated)
I got it. You always had my back.

KYLE
We don't want to see you get hurt
by Steph like you did eight years
ago. We lost you because of her.

HOLLYWOOD
And I'll be damned to let her do
that again.

Hollywood stands and storms out. (O.S.) The sound of the
door slamming.

Buddy stares helplessly at Kyle.

Kyle stands and begins to walk out, but stops and turns back
to Buddy.

KYLE
(sadly)
You broke OUR hearts when you left.
Did you ever stop to think about
THAT.

Buddy gapes at him, speechless.

Kyle gives a shrug and walks out.

INT. LA TODAY CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Steph sits at the end of the table, beaming as she reads over
the interview.

Buddy sits next to her fighting conflicting emotions.

Steph sets the papers down and gives Buddy a warm smile.

STEPH
(in awe)
You did it. This is incredible.
You took my ideas and added your
own to make an unbelievable
article.

BUDDY
(humility mixed with
guilt)
Thanks.

STEPH

You have the rest of the day off.
Go have some fun. I'll take it
from here.

Buddy stands to leave.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Oh, did she give you the response
to the letter?

Buddy reaches into his pocket, pulls out the envelope, and
extends it to Steph.

Steph takes hold, but Buddy is reluctant to let go. They
play a bit of tug-of-war until Steph yanks it from Buddy's
grasp, frowning at him.

STEPH (CONT'D)

(fearful)

You didn't read it, did you?

BUDDY

No, only Dixie.

Buddy turns away so she can't see his face.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

It was a long night, I'm going to
head home.

STEPH

Good, you deserve it. Oh, by the
way, I was wondering if you could
do me a favor?

Buddy stops, wipes his expression of guilt from his face and
turns to Steph.

BUDDY

Sure, what is it?

STEPH

I'm heading out this afternoon to
New York for the Magazine Editors
Convention. I was hoping you could
hang out with Jenny while I'm gone.

BUDDY

I don't know, I have a lot of work
to do and I'm not sure I would know
how to entertain a movie star.

STEPH

She's still Jenny. It will be good for you to catch up. And besides, she needs to keep her mind off that jerk TERRY KENDAL.

BUDDY

(surprised)

The actor?

STEPH

Where have you been living, the north pole?

BUDDY

Seems like it sometimes.

STEPH

They ended a long relationship and she needs to get out and stop moping. You may be just what she needs.

Buddy hesitates.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Take the rest of the week off. I'll give you some fun money to take her out and get her out of her funk.

Buddy frowns and shakes his head.

BUDDY

(proudly)

I can pay for my own activities, thank you.

STEPH

Buddy, I know you haven't gotten a paycheck for a while and this will be doing me a favor.

BUDDY

I don't...

STEPH

I'll throw in box seats to the Angels. You used to love to go to Anaheim with Jenny.

Buddy perks up at the thought of box tickets to his favorite team.

BUDDY
(resigned)
Alright, you got a deal. Leave
some cash with Jenny and I'll make
sure she gets out and has some fun.

Buddy turns and leaves as Steph triumphantly watches him walk out.

INT. CANDY'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Buddy sits in front of the computer and opens the e-mail from the Dear Dixie Editor.

BUDDY (V.O.)
Dear Dixie, whatever you've decided
to do it's working. The phones are
ringing off the hook. People are
falling in love with Dixie all over
again. Congratulations, Jared.

Buddy leans back, his expression is surprisingly concerned and unhappy.

BUDDY
I've created a monster.

INTERCUT: CANDY'S HOME OFFICE / LIMOUSINE

Buddy's cell phone rings. Buddy looks at his phone, hits the answer button, and puts it to his ear.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
Hello?

Cut to Steph riding in the back of a limousine.

STEPH
I left four Angels tickets and some
cash in the top drawer of your
desk. I didn't have time to run
them home.

Cut to Buddy.

BUDDY
No problem. I'll stop by tomorrow
morning and pick them up.

Cut to Steph.

STEPH

Show my little sister a good time.
See you next week.

Cut to Buddy.

BUDDY

Will do. Bye.

INT. SPORTS BAR - DAY

Buddy, Kyle, and Hollywood are shooting pool in the paneled pool room of the bar and drinking beers as they discuss Buddy's new dilemma. Classic rock is playing and Hollywood is jamming as he looks over his next shot. Hollywood and Kyle have cooled down.

KYLE

They liked it?

BUDDY

Falling in love with Dixie all over again, he said.

HOLLYWOOD

This isn't right. For one thing, a guy giving advice posing as a woman is, well, just wrong.

Hollywood leans over and strikes the cue ball, sending the balls bouncing.

BUDDY

It's only until Friday, that's two more days and then it's over.

KYLE

And your mother will never be the wiser.

Kyle moves over and eyes the table for a shot as Hollywood moves back beside Buddy.

BUDDY

She'll find out, it's a matter of time.

HOLLYWOOD

(disappointed)

So you did it? You actually gave that bitch the interview?

Kyle stops and stares with disbelief at Buddy.

Buddy averts his eyes.

BUDDY
I had to, it was the only way to
get a chance with her.

Kyle tosses the pool cue down onto the table, knocking the
balls around.

KYLE
Hell Buddy, you shit on your mom.

BUDDY
(defensive)
I kept everything anonymous. No one
will ever know it's her.

HOLLYWOOD
It's not going to help. Steph
isn't going to let you out of the
"just friends" zone because you got
the interview.

KYLE
He's right. She used you again.
Just like she did to get an "A" in
chemistry.

HOLLYWOOD
Win homecoming queen by getting you
to sway the band geek vote.

KYLE
And had you write the essays for
her college applications.

Buddy listens, lamenting over the memories of his best
intentions gone wrong, cringing as each is mentioned.

HOLLYWOOD
Next she'll pawn you off on someone
else so she doesn't have to deal
with you.

Buddy's expression is resigned realization.

KYLE
What? Has she done it already?

BUDDY
I'm not sure...

HOLLYWOOD

Who did she ask you to watch out
for?

BUDDY

(sotto)

Her sister.

Kyle and Hollywood stare speechless at Buddy.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Is that bad?

HOLLYWOOD

Normally, I'd say it's a big red
flag, but Jenny Mallory?

BUDDY

Yeah, we're going to the Angels's
game tomorrow.

KYLE

Okay, let's think about this.

Kyle grabs his beer off the edge of the pool table, walks
over and sits at a high top table where Buddy and Hollywood
join him.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Steph asked you to keep an eye on
her movie star sister? How can
that be a bad thing? Right?

HOLLYWOOD

She is damn hot, that's for sure,
but why would Steph set you up with
such a hot babe?

BUDDY

Guys, it's not that kind date.

Buddy takes a long drink of his beer, then stares at them
with fear.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

It can't be that kind of date, can
it?

KYLE

No. No. No. Well...

HOLLYWOOD

(incredulous)

Come on!

(MORE)

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

We're taking about Buddy and a movie star here. Buddy, the guy who couldn't hook up with Steph. Like he stands a chance at hooking up with Jenny?

BUDDY

(with hurt expression)

Thanks, I'm right here. Besides, Jenny sees me as a big brother. We used to go to movies and ballgames when Steph left me behind to go on dates with other guys.

Kyle and Hollywood stare at Buddy like he's lost his mind.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

What?

KYLE

(re: Hollywood)

You don't suppose little Jenny has a crush left over from high school on Buddy here, do you?

HOLLYWOOD

(insightful)

No. She dates celebrities now, she wouldn't drop down to date Buddy.

Buddy slams his beer down, stands, and places his hands forcefully on his hips.

BUDDY

I appreciate your vote of confidence in my appeal to women, but I repeat, we're talking about Jenny. She would never consider me like that.

KYLE

Fine, fine. Sorry. We didn't mean anything by it.

HOLLYWOOD

Yeah, man. I'm sorry. You aren't that bad. You got chicks in college, didn't you?

BUDDY

(outraged)

Yes, thank you very much.

HOLLYWOOD
 (re: Kyle)
 See, he had chicks. You shouldn't
 be so hard on him.

Kyle gawks at Hollywood in disbelief.

KYLE
 I never said...

HOLLYWOOD
 See, there you have it. He's sorry
 he suggested it. Like I said, I
 always got you're back.

BUDDY
 Good, because you're coming with.

Hollywood stares at Buddy, his mouth gaping.

HOLLYWOOD
 (panicking)
 I, I, I'm busy.

BUDDY
 (re: Kyle)
 He's got my back. Isn't that what
 he said?

KYLE
 (pleased)
 Sure did.

HOLLYWOOD
 I gotta work.

BUDDY
 Get there when you can. I'll leave
 the ticket at Will Call.

HOLLYWOOD
 Wonderful.

INT. LA TODAY OFFICE, BUDDY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Buddy walks into his cubicle and is greeted by bright yellow
 post-it notes covering everything. He stands in the doorway
 and stares in disbelief.

BUDDY
 (sotto)
 Number one.

Buddy plucks one of the notes off the wall, still taking in the yellow notes on every surface.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
(reading)
You're kind.

Buddy takes another note.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
(reading)
You're handsome.

And then another.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
(reading)
You're honest.

JACKIE (O.S.)
A secret admirer?

Buddy spins to see Jackie standing with her arms crossed and a smirk on her face.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
How cute.

BUDDY
(embarrassed.)
Knock it off.

JACKIE
Someone has it bad for you.

Buddy begins taking the notes down, grabs the garbage can, also covered in notes, and shoves them in, one after the other.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Someone spent all that time, you should really read them.

Buddy stares blankly.

Jackie shrugs.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Just sayin'.

Buddy pauses, thinking.

BUDDY
You're right.

Buddy picks the notes off his chair and reads them before putting them into the garbage. Once he clears the chair, he sits down and begins to remove the rest, one-by-one.

Jackie watches for a moment, then leaves Buddy to continue in private.

INT. BUDDY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Buddy sits at his desk, placing the last few notes into the garbage after reading them. He leans back stiffly and stretches.

Jackie appears in his doorway.

JACKIE

Well done. You are a man of your word.

BUDDY

Yeah, I know. One of the notes said so.

JACKIE

(laughing)

What are you doing here anyway. I thought you had the rest of the week off?

Buddy spins his chair towards his desk, bangs his knee painfully, then slides the top drawer open as he moans. He pulls the tickets out flamboyantly.

BUDDY

Steph left me some tickets to the Angels's game.

JACKIE

(enviously)

I love baseball.

BUDDY

I've got an extra ticket. You want to come?

Buddy holds up the tickets, waving them to entice her.

JACKIE

Oh, no, I don't want to intrude.

BUDDY

You wouldn't be. You'd have to put up with my friend Hollywood though.

JACKIE
 You have a friend named Hollywood?
 Really?

BUDDY
 (shrugging)
 Long story. What ya think?

JACKIE
 I'll be a little late. Some of us
 have to work.

Buddy laughs and hands her a ticket.

BUDDY
 Come when you can.

JACKIE
 Thanks, Steph was right about you.

BUDDY
 What she say?

JACKIE
 That you're the nicest guy she
 knows.

Buddy groans and rolls his eyes.

EXT./INT. ANGELS STADIUM AT ANEHEIM - DAY

Buddy and Jenny stand along the fence behind home plate as the Angels take batting practice before the game.

Angels outfielder, TORI HUNTER gets out of the batting cage, walks past, and glances up at them. Recognition crosses his face as he lights up with his patented electric smile.

TORI HUNTER
 Jenny, how ya doin', girl?

JENNY
 Great, how are you?

TORI HUNTER
 You know, ups and downs of
 baseball, but it's a long season.

Buddy stands next to Jenny, staring at Tori like a kid in a candy store.

Tori looks up at Buddy curiously.

JENNY

Oh, Tori, this is my good friend,
Buddy.

Tori extends a hand and Buddy shakes it enthusiastically.

TORI HUNTER

Nice to meet you Buddy. You must
have promised Jenny something good.
I haven't seen her at a game for a
long time.

BUDDY

Must be nostalgia. We came here
all the time as kids. I guess she
is humoring me for old times sake.

They laugh.

TORI HUNTER

I better get going. Say hi to
Terry for me. It was nice meeting
you.

Tori turns and hurries off to the dugout as batting practice
finishes.

Buddy turns away, quiet.

JENNY

Sorry about that. Terry and I were
dating for nearly a year. People
still expect us to be together.

BUDDY

Does Terry?

JENNY

I don't know how he feels. We
haven't spoken for about a month.
Do we have to talk about this?

Buddy spots Hollywood.

Cut to Hollywood walking down the steps towards the seats.

BUDDY

It's kind of hard to measure up to
a movie star.

JENNY

I'm not asking you to.

They turn and head to their seats where Hollywood is settling in.

BUDDY

Jenny, I don't know if you remember, but this is...

JENNY

(excited)
Hollywood!

Jenny bends down and hugs Hollywood who is grinning from ear to ear. Jenny leans back smiling.

HOLLYWOOD

(proudly)
How could she forget someone like me?

JENNY

Or the time you got your arm stuck in our rain spout and we had to call the fire department to get you out.

Hollywood blushes.

HOLLYWOOD

(defending)
Our baseball got stuck in there and I was the only one not chicken to get it out.

The three laugh.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

But look at you. A movie star and all.

It's Jenny's turn to blush.

JENNY

I'm the same girl you grew up with.

HOLLYWOOD

Maybe inside, but you sure did grow up nicely on the outside.

Jenny reaches over and gives Hollywood a slap on the arm.

People are beginning to fill the seats so Buddy and Jenny sit down, Jenny between Buddy and Hollywood.

Buddy, Jenny, and Hollywood cheer and react to the game enthusiastically.

Jackie shows up and takes her seat next to Hollywood.

Buddy notices her and leans forward so they can hear him over the crowd noise.

BUDDY

(raised voice)

This is Jackie. She works with me at LA Today. Jackie, these are my friends Jenny and Hollywood.

Jenny and Jackie begin to laugh. Buddy stares curiously and then gets it.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

You know each other?

JACKIE

Jenny stops by LA Today once in a while. We've been friends for years.

BUDDY

So you already knew we were coming when you said you loved baseball?

Jackie laughs.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

I've been set up.

HOLLYWOOD

(flirtatious)

I hope after tonight, I can say the same.

Jackie bats her eyes at Hollywood.

JENNY

I have to use the rest room. Do you guys want me to get you some dogs and beer on the way back?

BUDDY

Sure.

HOLLYWOOD

Cool.

JACKIE

I'll come with.

The girls slip out and walk up the steps as Hollywood and Buddy turn to watch them climb.

HOLLYWOOD

Dude, that Jackie is hot and Jenny,
wow.

BUDDY

(nodding)

Jackie is great. Jenny really has
changed.

HOLLYWOOD

She was in eighth grade when you
saw her last. She is one smokin'
hot woman now, ain't she?

BUDDY

I don't know if I can see her like
that?

HOLLYWOOD

Are you nuts. She's one of the
most beautiful women in the world,
according to People Magazine.

BUDDY

(rolls his eyes)

What do they know?

Cut to game and action on the field.

Jackie and Jenny come back carrying dogs and beers. Jackie
hands Hollywood his stuff and Jenny hands a dog to Buddy.

Buddy takes a bite and his eyes open wide with surprise.

JENNY

(worried)

Did I get it wrong?

BUDDY

No, you got it right. How did you
remember?

JENNY

Some things I'll never forget. The
way you like your hotdog, how nice
a guy you are...

Buddy cringes at the nice guy reference.

Jenny reaches over, touches his arm softly and leans closer
so only he can hear.

JENNY (CONT'D)

(sotto)

There is nothing wrong with being a nice guy. I have always preferred them.

Buddy and Jenny sense something smoldering underneath as they make eye contact. They turn away, embarrassed.

Buddy catches movement out of the corner of his eye and turns in time to see a baseball bat hurtling for them. He throws his body in front of Jenny and the bat makes solid impact with his back, shoulder, and arm. Buddy exhales heavily as the wind is driven from his lungs.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Buddy, are you okay? Can you hear me?

Buddy lays on Jenny's lap, unable to catch his breath as he gasps for air.

Emergency personnel from the stadium surround Buddy and begin to check him out. They sit him carefully back into his seat and he starts to breath normally again.

EMERGENCY TECH 1

Where does it hurt?

BUDDY

(weakly)

I'm fine. It knocked the wind out of me for a second.

EMERGENCY TECH 2

Are you sure, we can take you to the first aid station and check you out further.

BUDDY

(gaining strength)

No, I'm fine.

HOLLYWOOD

Are you sure, pal. You took a pretty hard hit.

JACKIE

Yeah, you maybe should go and get checked out.

Buddy shakes his head.

BUDDY
 (re: Emergency Techs)
 Thanks, but I'm fine.

The Techs accept this and walk away.

Buddy now notices Jenny is holding his hand. She stares at him with concern.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 (embarrassed by the
 attention)
 I'm okay. Really.

Hollywood reaches over and extends the bat to him.

HOLLYWOOD
 Here you are, hero. You've earned
 it.

Buddy takes the bat with a nod.

The stadium erupts with applause and Jenny nudges Buddy, pointing to the huge screen in center field.

Buddy see's himself on the screen with the word 'hero' underneath. He raises the bat in his hand and the crowd cheers louder. They play back the impact and Buddy cringes as the bat makes contact with him on the screen.

Jenny still holds Buddy's hand later into the game. He is uncomfortable at first, but warms up to the attention.

A foul ball comes back a few rows from them and a YOUNG FATHER hurries after the ball, but another MAN beats him to it. The disappointment is apparent in the father's face and he goes back to his seat where a LITTLE BOY sits sadly. The man pats the boy on the back, comforting him at the near miss of a souvenir.

Buddy stands as his companions look at him, questioningly.

BUDDY
 I'll be right back.

HOLLYWOOD
 Do you want me to come with you?

BUDDY
 No, I'm just going over here for a
 second.

Buddy slides past them as they watch with interest. Buddy walks over to where the boy and his father sit and kneels down beside the boy.

Buddy says something to the boy and his face lights up. Buddy hands the bat to the beaming boy, pats him on the shoulder, turns and walks back to his seat.

Jenny, Jackie, and Hollywood follow Buddy with their eyes as he slides in front of them and sits down again.

JENNY
(teary)
That was so nice.

JACKIE
(moved)
Very classy.

HOLLYWOOD
(approving)
Dude.

Buddy shrugs.

BUDDY
Seemed like he needed it more than
I did.

EXT. STEPH'S HOUSE. - NIGHT

Jenny and Buddy sit in Candy's Aston Martin as they say good night.

JENNY
It was a great game.

BUDDY
Yeah, Tori played awesome.

JENNY
I'm glad you invited me.

BUDDY
Me too.

JENNY
Are you sure you're okay?

BUDDY
Yeah, fine.

JENNY
I'd better get going.

BUDDY
Uh, good night.

JENNY
Good night.

Jenny opens the door, steps out, and closes the door behind her.

Buddy rolls down the window.

BUDDY
(blurts out)
I'm having some friends over for
dinner tomorrow night.

Jenny spins around excitedly.

JENNY
I'd love to.

Buddy beams and Jenny blushes.

JENNY (CONT'D)
What should I bring.

Buddy thinks for a moment and it comes to him.

BUDDY
How about some wine.

JENNY
Perfect. I think Steph has some
around here, some pretty good stuff
too. She loves her wine.

The mention of Steph sobers Buddy as he stares blankly at Jenny.

JENNY (CONT'D)
What time should I come by?

Buddy shakes his head to clear his thoughts.

BUDDY
How about five?

JENNY
Night Buddy.

BUDDY

Night.

Jenny walks to the door and goes inside as Buddy starts the car and drives off.

INT. BUDDY'S BEDROOM AT CANDY'S HOUSE - DAY

(O.S.) Tapping noise on the side of the house.

Buddy opens one eye as the noise continues. He sits up and listens, but the sound stops. He lays back down and the sound starts up again.

Buddy gets up, stiff from his encounter with the baseball bat, opens a window and leans out to see a bird pecking at the side of the house on the corner closest to his window.

BUDDY

(arm gesture)

Shoo. Get, scram.

The bird flew away, but there is a sizeable hole in the house's siding.

EXT. CANDY'S BACK YARD - DAY

Buddy and Hollywood stand next to a ladder set up near the hole the bird created. Buddy is holding a can of yellow expanding foam and Hollywood is adjusting the ladder.

BUDDY

Have you done this before? Maybe we should wait for Kyle to get here. He said he'd do it.

HOLLYWOOD

I can do it. I don't have to be a carpenter to fill in a hole with foam.

Buddy turns to Hollywood, unsure.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

Hold the ladder and hand the can up when I tell you.

Hollywood scales the ladder as Buddy moves over and steadies it. Hollywood stops at the top, looks at the hole and then reaches down for the can.

A bird swoops in, hitting Hollywood on the head and he recoils, putting a defensive arm up.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)
What the hell was that?

Before Buddy can answer, the bird attacks again and Hollywood flails at it, falling from the ladder into the bushes below.

Buddy rushes over to him.

BUDDY
Are you alright?

HOLLYWOOD
(moaning)
Fine.

BUDDY
Maybe we should wait for Kyle.

Hollywood gets up, brushes himself off and glares at Buddy.

EXT. CANDY'S BACK YARD

Hollywood stands at the base of the ladder with Buddy next to him, holding a long broom like a sentry.

HOLLYWOOD
If you see the little bastard, keep
him off me until I can get the hole
filled.

Hollywood tucks the foam can in the front of his pants and begins to climb, scanning for the bird.

Buddy is diligent as he searches for the aggressor.

BUDDY
Any sign of him?

HOLLYWOOD
No, must have scared him off.

Hollywood takes the foam can out and sprays it into the hole.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)
Here, catch.

Hollywood drops the can to Buddy who lets the broom fall to catch the can. Buddy watches as Hollywood begins to form the foam in the opening with his hands to get it smooth.

Buddy quickly reads the warning on the back of the can.

BUDDY
(reading)
Avoid contact with skin.

Buddy stares up at Hollywood.

Hollywood leans back, admiring his handy work, his fingers covered in the yellow stuff.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
I don't think you were supposed to touch it.

HOLLYWOOD
(descending ladder)
They put that on to protect against lawsuits. I can use gas and it will come right off.

EXT. CANDY'S BACK YARD - DAY

Buddy and Hollywood are sitting by the pool as Kyle walks up, glancing over his shoulder at the bright yellow spot where they filled the hole.

KYLE
I thought you were going to wait for me?

BUDDY
Hollywood said he could handle it.

KYLE
Pretty good. You got it really smooth. Better than what I can do. What did you use to smooth it?

Buddy chokes down a laugh and Kyle looks at him curiously.

Hollywood slowly raises his hands, covered in a gooey, brownish, yellow mess.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Oh, my, god. You touched it? You weren't supposed to touch it.

HOLLYWOOD
The gas didn't help.

Kyle and Buddy burst out laughing.

EXT. CANDY'S BACK YARD - NIGHT

Buddy, Kyle and his wife CINDY, 20 something woman, pretty, slightly overweight, Jenny, Jackie and Hollywood are sitting around a fire pit, having drinks and visiting.

JACKIE

That was a great dinner. Thanks
for inviting me.

BUDDY

Thanks for coming. I'm afraid
Hollywood would have been too
depressed to come without you.

JACKIE

(with admiration)

It's amazing you saving those
kittens from a burning gunny sack
like that. People can be so cruel.

KYLE

(fighting back laughter)

He's lucky he only got first degree
burns.

JACKIE

But still, it must hurt.

Jackie reaches over and gently cradles Hollywood's hands,
glowing a bright red from palm to fingers.

Jenny gets up, walks over to a table where some food is set
out and picks up a paper plate with a desert bar on it.

JENNY

Anyone want this last bar. Cindy,
these are incredible. You have to
give me the recipe.

CINDY

Sure, they're easy.

Jenny stands holding the plate, waiting for a taker. When no
one speaks up, she takes a bite and grins contentedly.

BUDDY

(re: paper plate)

Just toss that in the fire.

JENNY

Are you sure.

BUDDY

Yeah, we do it all the time at
campfires in Minnesota.

Jenny tosses the plate in the fire and sits back down as they
continue to visit.

Jenny, Cindy, and Jackie are going on about Jenny's next
shoot on location in the Virgin Islands as Buddy and Kyle
drink and stare at the fire.

Hollywood is enthralled with Jackie, his hands still lying
safely in hers.

Kyle and Buddy watch as the ash from the plate floats into
the air, wafts over the group and floats lightly down to land
on top of Hollywood's head. The women's voices blend into
background noise.

The ash glows in a pulsating red that intensifies as the wind
hits the ash, but it remains on Hollywood's head. Neither
Kyle or Buddy say a word, mesmerized by the display.

Cindy looks over at Kyle and follows his gaze to Hollywood's
head. She stands up in shock, pointing at the ash.

CINDY

(excited)

You have an ash on your head.

Hollywood reaches up, brushes it away, and then cringes as
his hands throb from the sudden motion.

Cindy reaches over and slaps Kyle across the head.

CINDY (CONT'D)

Why didn't you say something? It
could have lit his hair on fire.

KYLE

It was so cool, I didn't know what
it was going to do next.

JENNY

(re: Buddy)

Why didn't you say something?

BUDDY

Like he said, it was so cool.

HOLLYWOOD

Thanks guys, what pals.

INT. KITCHEN IN CANDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Buddy, Kyle, and Cindy are cleaning up the dishes from supper. Jenny walks in.

JENNY

Jackie is going to give me a ride home. I've had a little too much wine.

BUDDY

I can take you. She lives on the other side of town.

JENNY

She offered, and you're busy.

CINDY

We got this, go ahead.

BUDDY

Are you sure?

KYLE

(firmly)

Go.

Buddy and Jenny leave the kitchen as Cindy gives Kyle a knowing wink.

EXT. STEPH'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

The Aston Martin pulls into the driveway and stops quietly. Buddy turns the engine off and Jenny begins to open the door.

Buddy jumps out, runs around the car, and pulls the door open. Jenny is partway out still holding onto the door handle.

The force of Buddy's motion yanks her out of the car and into his arms as they stumble to the ground, Jenny on top of Buddy.

Their eyes lock as Jenny smiles seductively and Buddy clears his throat nervously.

JENNY

(sotto)

I won't bite... unless you want me to.

BUDDY
 (uncomfortable)
 I'm not sure we should...

Buddy can't finish his statement as Jenny presses her lips against his. He stiffens at first, but then the passion takes over.

After the long kiss, they stare at each other and nervously get to their feet.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 (blurts out)
 I know you just broke up with Terry, and you don't need any complications right now, but I was thinking about driving up highway 101 and just knocking around tomorrow.

JENNY
 (excited)
 I'd love to.

BUDDY
 (pleased)
 How does ten sound.

JENNY
 See you then.

Buddy turns to go, but Jenny puts a hand on his arm and spins him back into another long kiss. They separate, Buddy's eyes are still closed for a second and then he looks down at Jenny.

JENNY (CONT'D)
 I did that because I wanted to.
 You're not a complication.

Jenny turns and walks confidently into the house, leaving Buddy gawking after her.

EXT. CANDY'S BACK YARD - NIGHT

Buddy walks out to the fire. Cindy, Kyle, and Hollywood are sitting around, staring at the flames.

Buddy sits down with a sigh.

CINDY
 How did that go?

BUDDY
 (sheepishly/curiously)
 Quite well.

Buddy's confused expression brings laughter from the rest.

CINDY
 You'd have to be blind not to see
 Jenny has a thing for you.

BUDDY
 (doubtful)
 Really?

KYLE
 She's into you.

BUDDY
 She had too much to drink. She was
 just being nice.

HOLLYWOOD
 (still staring into the
 fire)
 Jackie says she's really into you.
 Way to go dude.

BUDDY
 But Steph.

HOLLYWOOD
 Forget her. Jenny is cool.

BUDDY
 But her letter...

Buddy turns to Cindy, worried he said too much.

CINDY
 (nonchalant)
 Your secret is safe with me. Kyle
 tells me everything.

KYLE
 (changing the subject)
 Forget that, Jenny is awesome.

BUDDY
 But Steph kissed me after our date
 the other night and...

Cindy, Kyle, and Hollywood stare at him.

KYLE
And Jenny kissed you tonight?

Buddy nodded.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Way to go Buddy!

HOLLYWOOD
I don't see the problem. You, my
friend, are finally in the driver's
seat.

Buddy's face shows fear and shock at being in a place he
never expected to be.

INT. CANDY'S GARAGE - DAY

Buddy goes to get in the car, then pauses, turning curiously
to the cover labeled BABY TOO. He walks over and pulls the
cloth back, his face betrays his surprise and excitement.

BUDDY
Mom, you wild woman.

EXT. STEPH'S HOUSE - DAY

Jenny stands outside on the steps, waiting impatiently.

A rumbling noise turns her attention to a motorcycle as it
cruises into the driveway and pulls to a stop in front of
her.

Jenny looks questioningly at the helmeted rider, and is
shocked to see Buddy pull his helmet off.

BUDDY
Surprised?

JENNY
Yeah. Where did you get a
motorcycle?

BUDDY
(smiling)
Mom is full of surprises. You
game?

JENNY
You know how to ride?

BUDDY

I dirt biked every summer when I
visited Dad in Minnesota.

Buddy offers a helmet to Jenny and she takes it from him.

Jenny slips on the helmet and Buddy replaces his. She climbs on the back and wraps her arms around him as he starts up the motorcycle. They pull out of the driveway.

EXT. HIGHWAY 101 NORTH - DAY

Buddy and Jenny travel up the coast on the motorcycle, enjoying the wind in their faces and the feel of the open road.

EXT. FRUIT STAND ALONG HIGHWAY 101 - DAY

Buddy and Jenny sit at a table set up next to the fruit stand where they eat some fruit.

Jenny is eating an orange and it squirts on Buddy's face when she takes a bite.

BUDDY

Hey.

Jenny reaches over and purposefully squirts him in the face and then runs.

Buddy races after her and catches her as they stumble to the ground laughing.

Buddy stares down at her as Jenny wistfully gazes up at him. He leans close, inches from her face.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Why didn't I see you like this
before?

JENNY

(sotto)

Because I was in eighth grade, and
that would be creepy.

Jenny leans up and presses her lips to his.

They kiss deeply and wrap their arms around each other passionately.

Buddy rolls to one side and stares up at the clouds through the tree's canopy, content.

Jenny moves closer, laying her head on his chest, joining his gaze skyward. The peace showing on her face.

Buddy sits up slowly and then gets to his feet.

Jenny sits up, looking at him curiously.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Where are you going? Let's stay a while.

BUDDY

I have something planned.

Jenny sticks out her bottom lip in a feigned pout.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

You'll like it. I promise.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Buddy and Jenny pull into a vineyard and come to a stop. Buddy slips his helmet off and steps off while Jenny hesitates, looking around uncomfortably.

BUDDY

Are you surprised?

JENNY

Yeah. What are we doing here?

BUDDY

I booked us a table for dinner after a tour and some wine tasting.

Jenny pauses, unsure.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

JENNY

Maybe we could go to another vineyard?

Buddy stares at Jenny, confused.

BUDDY

I tried some others, but this one had dinner available on site, so I thought it would be perfect.

Jenny removes her helmet, shaking her head.

JENNY

No, it is.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Buddy and Jenny enjoy the day touring and sampling at the vineyard. They hold hands and walk arm in arm around the grounds laughing happily.

EXT. VINEYARD RESTAURANT TERRACE - NIGHT

Buddy and Jenny sit on the terrace, enjoying some wine and listening to the music playing softly in the background.

BUDDY

I hope you enjoyed today.

JENNY

It was amazing.

Buddy pauses, unable to disguise his uncertainty.

JENNY (CONT'D)

What is it? Didn't you enjoy it?

BUDDY

(reassuring)

It's not that.

JENNY

Then what?

BUDDY

It's a little intimidating knowing the kind of people you're use to dating, that's all.

JENNY

I really enjoy spending time with you.

BUDDY

But you didn't seem too excited to be here at first.

JENNY

Do you know who owns this vineyard?

BUDDY

No, should I?

JENNY
 (sotto)
 Terry Kendal is majority owner.

Buddy is shocked.

BUDDY
 That's why everyone knew you?
 Besides you being a movie star?

Jenny shrugs uncomfortably.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 (frustrated)
 Great, just great. All the places
 I could bring you, I had to pick
 one Kendal owns.

JENNY
 I tried to tell you, but you were
 so proud of setting this up.

Realization crosses Buddy's face.

BUDDY
 That explains the strange looks the
 staff gave me.

Jenny nods.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 Maybe if I spoke like Kendal, they
 will think you're here with him.

Buddy puffs himself up and impersonates Terry Kendal,
 reciting a famous line from one of his movies.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
 (Australian accent)
 If we can't be together today, and
 maybe not even tomorrow, we will
 one day be together again. This I
 assure you will be reality, some
 day.

Unbeknownst to Buddy, TERRY KENDAL, 30 something, handsome,
 leading man type, walks up behind Buddy and stands listening.

Jenny sees Terry and, at first, tries to get Buddy's
 attention, but then sits chagrined until Buddy finishes.

Kendal applauds and Buddy spins, mortified to see Terry
 Kendal behind him.

TERRY
 (Australian Accent)
 Bravo, very well done, if I might
 say.

Terry turns to Jenny with a smirk of condescension.

TERRY (CONT'D)
 Who is your entertaining friend?

Buddy turns back to Jenny, red faced, as Terry steps up next to their table.

JENNY
 Terry, this is Buddy.

TERRY
 Pleased to me you.

Terry extends a hand which Buddy grips and shakes sheepishly.

BUDDY
 I am so sorry...

TERRY
 No worries mate. They say
 imitation is the highest form of
 flattery.

Terry turns to Jenny as if Buddy is no longer there.

TERRY (CONT'D)
 Why haven't you returned my calls?

JENNY
 I don't think this is the time.

TERRY KENDAL
 So you've moved on with this Joe
 Bloggs?

JENNY
 No, it's not like that.

Buddy is hurt by her answer.

Jenny sees Buddy's expression and turns to him.

JENNY (CONT'D)
 I didn't mean it like that.

Buddy, getting to his feet and tossing his napkin on the table.

BUDDY

There's only one way to take that.

Buddy storms off.

TERRY

I'm sorry if I caused a problem for you and your date.

Jenny stands and moves up close to Terry.

JENNY

(sotto)

It's this kind of arrogant attitude I couldn't tolerate.

Terry reaches around Jenny and pulls her in close for a kiss.

INT. LOBBY OF VINEYARD RESTAURANT

Buddy looks back from the lobby in time to see Jenny and Kendal kissing. He turns and walks out while they are still kissing.

INT. VINEYARD RESTAURANT TERRACE

Jenny pushes Terry away, slaps him hard across the face, and runs after Buddy.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF THE VINEYARD - NIGHT

Jenny rushes out the door as Buddy is racing by on the motorcycle. He brakes sharply when he sees her.

BUDDY

(hurt)

Stay with your boyfriend if you want.

JENNY

He's my ex-boyfriend. I want to go with you.

Buddy hesitates for a moment, then reaches behind him, takes her helmet, and tosses it to her. Jenny climbs on and they burn out of the parking lot.

Jenny wraps her arms around Buddy tightly as he races down the highway, his body language and eyes betraying his fury and hurt.

After driving for about a half hour, Buddy pulls into a picnic area on the side of road, slams to a stop and steps off the cycle.

Taking his helmet and dropping it to the ground, Buddy disappears into the darkness without a glance at Jenny.

Jenny quickly slips from the bike pulling her helmet free, drops it to the ground, and runs after him. After pausing to let her eyes adjust, she makes out his silhouette sitting on a picnic table as the moon shines down on him.

Buddy doesn't acknowledge Jenny as she approaches and slides up next to him, but continues staring up at the moon.

They sit in silence for a moment and Jenny eases her hand over to take his as it sits on his shaking knee.

Buddy ignores the contact, but doesn't pull away either.

JENNY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I should have told you why I didn't want to be there, but you were so excited with the plans, I...

BUDDY

(sighing)

I know. I thought I had it all planned so perfectly.

JENNY

It was wonderful... until that last part.

BUDDY

I understand. I can't compete with someone like him.

JENNY

I'm with you, aren't I?

BUDDY

But the kiss?

JENNY

You mean the one that ended in a slap?

Buddy turns to Jenny in surprise.

JENNY (CONT'D)

I guarantee this one won't.

Jenny reaches over, curls her fingers in his hair and pulls him to her hungry lips. They lay back on the table as the passion overwhelms them and, this time, they give into it.

INT. CANDY'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Buddy sits at the desk, reading an e-mail from his editor, Jared Warner.

JARED WARNER (V.O.)

Dear Dixie, you are on fire. We are getting requests from every talk show. They are wild about you and will take you any way you want to play it. Of course the money is better if you come out, but it's totally up to you. Sincerely, Jared.

Buddy sits back, wondering what if. A thought comes to him and he begins to type.

BUDDY (V.O.)

Dear Jared, I will have to decline, for now, but will get back to you later if I should change my mind. Love, Dixie.

Buddy hits send and there is a knock at the office door.

BUDDY

(confused)

Come in.

Hollywood and Kyle come walking in carrying some beer.

Buddy stares at them curiously, taking the beer Kyle hands him.

KYLE

Did you forget what day it is?

BUDDY

(realization)

Sunday. Football.

HOLLYWOOD

I've been waiting all week to watch the games on your mom's big screen.

BUDDY

Yeah. Sure, let's go.

Buddy gets up and they walk out.

INT. CANDY'S TV ROOM - DAY

Buddy, Kyle, and Hollywood enter the room and Hollywood flops down on the large couch while Buddy and Kyle sit down in a chair on either side.

Buddy now notices a newspaper under Kyle's arm.

BUDDY
(motioning)
What's that?

KYLE
Today's paper. Thought you might
find the front page interesting.

Kyle tosses the paper to Buddy as Hollywood flips through channels on the big screen, a knowing smirk on his face.

Buddy unfolds the paper with the headline "Dixie as Good as Gold".

BUDDY
Holy shit.

Buddy turns to Kyle, at a loss.

KYLE
Yeah, right? You're kicking butt,
pal.

BUDDY
Then why do I feel so terrible?

HOLLYWOOD
What are you feeling terrible
about? You're doing your mom proud
and you not only have one Mattson
girl after you, but you have them
both after you.

Buddy gives Hollywood a blank stare.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)
Oh, shit, I see what you mean. How
do you choose?

BUDDY
It's a little more complicated than
that.

KYLE

What do you mean?

BUDDY

Jenny and I took our affection
to... a new level.

KYLE

Oh... oh! Nice.

BUDDY

(beaming)

I'm kind of happy about it.

HOLLYWOOD

Awesome. You can be with the movie
star, end of problem.

KYLE

So what's the big dilemma? You
keep going with Jenny and the rest
is history.

BUDDY

Then why do I feel like I'm going
to screw this up?

HOLLYWOOD

Habit?

Buddy and Kyle give Hollywood a dirty look, but Hollywood
doesn't look away from the TV.

KYLE

You're finally able to give up the
dream girl and who do you end up
with, but a movie star.

BUDDY

It sounds messed up when you put it
that way.

HOLLYWOOD

Pal, you need to count your
blessings and go with it.

BUDDY

You're right. I need to tell Steph
I'm not interested in her.

KYLE

Good luck with that.

HOLLYWOOD

As I recall, Steph Mattson doesn't
take losing very well.

BUDDY

(apprehensive)

No, no she doesn't.

They look fearfully to each other and take a drink of beer
turning their attention to the game on TV.

INT. STEPH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Steph answers the door as Buddy stands nervously waiting
outside.

STEPH

Buddy. What are you doing here?

BUDDY

(with guilt)

We need to talk.

STEPH

Sure, come in.

Steph motions Buddy in.

INT. STEPH'S STUDY - NIGHT

Buddy follows Steph into the study. She stops and grabs a
box from her desk and hands it to Buddy before he comes to a
complete stop in front of her.

BUDDY

What's this?

STEPH

Your favorite chocolates. I found
a box in New York. It's nearly
impossible to find here.

BUDDY

(sotto)

Step two.

STEPH

What?

BUDDY

(big breath)

I've let this go on long enough.

STEPH
Let what go on? What are you
talking about.

BUDDY
(hesitates, then blurts
out)
I think I'm in love with Jenny.

STEPH
Really. Why are you telling me?

BUDDY
I know you have feelings for me and
I don't want to hurt you.

STEPH
I like you, but what makes you
think I have feelings for you? Oh,
the kiss. I told you I was
confused. The kiss meant nothing.

INT. STEPH'S HOUSE ENTRY OUTSIDE THE STUDY - NIGHT

Jenny comes down the stairs and stops outside the study door
when she hears Buddy's voice. She leans closer to the
slightly ajar door and listens.

INT. STEPH'S STUDY - NIGHT

BUDDY
(sympathetically)
You don't have to pretend. I know
what was in the letter to Dixie.

STEPH
(getting angry)
You said only Dixie read the
letter. You promised.

BUDDY
(guilty)
I wrote the response to the Dixie
letter.

JENNY (O.S.)
What?

Buddy spins to see Jenny, furious in the doorway. He rushes
over to her, trying to explain.

BUDDY
Jenny, wait...

JENNY
(incensed)
You've been playing me this entire
time. You read my letter and wrote
back as Dixie?

BUDDY
(shocked)
Your letter?

JENNY
You asshole.

Jenny turns to leave but Buddy grabs her by the arm.

BUDDY
Jenny, I didn't know. I thought
Steph wrote the letter.

She spins on him in rage.

JENNY
You're nothing but a user and a
phony like every other jerk out
there. And to think I thought you
were different, a nice guy.

Jenny pulls away from Buddy and runs out. The front door
slams. (O.S.)

Buddy starts to go after Jenny, but Steph steps in front of
him, putting a finger in the middle of his chest.

STEPH
(seething)
Hold on there partner.

BUDDY
(frantic)
Get out of my way. I need to tell
her the truth.

STEPH
Oh, I don't think you want to do
that.

BUDDY
She doesn't realize that I *am*
Dixie, at least for this past week.

Steph shakes her head.

STEPH
(threatening)
You won't be telling anyone about
that. Not if you want a job.

BUDDY
(defensive)
I can find other jobs.

STEPH
How about your novel? Can you get
another one of those? Oh, right,
after I'm done with you, no
publisher will touch you, ever.

Buddy's mouth drops open in disbelief.

STEPH (CONT'D)
I thought that would get your
attention.

Buddy sits down heavily in a chair and holds his head with
both hands as if trying to keep it from bursting.

BUDDY
(defeated)
But why? How would the truth hurt
you?

STEPH
Oh, you didn't hear. I won Editor
of the Year. Your Dixie piece
pushed me over the top. Thank you.

BUDDY
Don't mention it.

Buddy hangs his head.

STEPH
Your mom is Dixie? I mean, the
real Dixie?

BUDDY
(crushed)
Yes.

STEPH
I'll keep her secret, for my own
reasons, but tell her she owes me
an interview if I ask.

Buddy glares at Steph, his anger building.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Don't be that way. Oh, I guess you can't help it. In that case, you are fired. The threat of me killing your novel's future will ensure you don't spill your guts.

BUDDY

For how long?

STEPH

Until I decide you've held up your end of the bargain.

BUDDY

Some bargain.

STEPH

Do you want me to kill your career right now? You'll find another job easy enough after your article comes out on Monday.

Buddy gets up and walks dejectedly from the room.

Steph smiles triumphantly, walks over to take a plaque from her shelf, and polishes it with her shirt.

Zoom in as she sets the plaque back on the shelf. It is her Editor of the Year award.

INT. CANDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cindy, Jackie, Kyle, and Hollywood sit in the living room as Buddy paces, telling his story.

BUDDY

(defeated)

She will kill my career and my novel if I go public.

KYLE

That would suck, but you're forgetting one thing.

BUDDY

(exacerbated)

What's that?

KYLE

Your mom's career.

Jackie, Cindy, and Hollywood nod their agreement.

BUDDY
 (comforted)
 At least we're keeping that intact.

JACKIE
 I can't believe you're Dixie. Well,
 you and your mom. Jenny has to
 know.

CINDY
 You can't tell Jenny anything if
 she won't take your calls.

JACKIE
 She's not taking my calls either.
 You could tell her, if you're
 willing to go public, I mean
 completely public.

BUDDY
 It would ruin Dixie forever. I
 can't do that to Mom.

HOLLYWOOD
 What if you could win Jenny back
 without ruining your mom's career,
 would you do that?

Everyone turns to stare at Hollywood.

BUDDY
 (sarcastically)
 No, I wouldn't want to win the girl
 and keep my mom's career intact.
 Of course, but that's impossible.

Hollywood jumps to his feet.

HOLLYWOOD
 Nothings impossible. You leave
 that to me.

Hollywood turns to Jackie.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)
 What public display did you have in
 mind.

JACKIE
 I know where Jenny will be tomorrow
 morning, and it will be nationally
 televised.

Hollywood takes Jackie by the arm and pulls her after him as he heads for the door.

HOLLYWOOD
Tell me on the way.

Hollywood looks back to Buddy and the others.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)
I'll call with the details. Just
be ready to go on a moments notice.

Hollywood and Jackie disappeared out the door.

The others stare after them, oblivious to Hollywood's plan.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - SET OF THE ELLEN SHOW - DAY

Jenny is in the makeup chair as ELLEN DEGENERES stops by.

ELLEN
It's so nice to have you on the
show.

JENNY
I'm a little nervous. It's a
little easier when you have a
script and know what's coming. No
surprises.

ELLEN
(sotto)
You have no idea. It gets a little
crazy around here from time to
time.

JENNY
How do you deal?

ELLEN
No matter what, just keep smiling.
Find the camera and smile.

Ellen pats Jenny on the shoulder and walks off.

INT. BACKSTAGE AT THE ELLEN SHOW - DAY

Jenny waits offstage to be introduced.

Ellen is on stage addressing her audience.

ELLEN

Our first guest is an up and coming actress who drew rave reviews for her role in *Until Tomorrow*. We caught her right before she starts filming her next film in the Virgin Islands. Please welcome, Jennifer Mallory.

The audience applaud and cheer as Jenny takes a deep breath and steps out on stage.

INT. ON STAGE OF THE ELLEN SHOW - DAY

Jenny acknowledges the cheers of the crowd and sits next to Ellen.

Jenny freezes when she spots Hollywood and Jackie in the audience. Her eyes hold theirs for a moment and she begins to turn to Ellen when she sees Kyle and Cindy.

ELLEN

I always like to clear the air right away, so if you don't mind, what's going on with you and Terry Kendal?

Jenny looks uncomfortably at Ellen and forces a smile.

JENNY

Terry is a dear friend and will always have a place in my heart, but I'm swearing off men for a while. It's time to concentrate on me.

The audience applaud.

ELLEN

Would you mind if I bring out the next guest? We will have more questions for you later in the show but this just came up suddenly.

JENNY

(curiously)

Sure.

ELLEN

Our next guest is a little out of the ordinary, and an Ellen scoop.

The audience goes nuts.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Anyone who has read a newspaper in the past thirty years will know the name Dear Dixie...

Jenny's head spins to look at Ellen in shock. Ellen stares at the camera, unaware of Jenny's reaction.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

We have the very first interview ever given by Dixie, and I must ask the audience's patience as this will seem strange at first, but I've been assured the outcome will be worth the wait.

Ellen turns to a STAGE HAND just off stage who gives her a thumbs up.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I would like to introduce, Dear Dixie.

Ellen stands and extends a hand of introduction.

Buddy walks on stage and the audience goes quiet and then begin to murmur.

Buddy comes over, shakes Ellen's hand, and takes a seat next to Jenny.

Jenny stares at Buddy, unable to take her eyes off him and he gives her a little smile. Her mouth is hanging open and Buddy motions to her, by pushing his own chin up, to close her mouth. Buddy looks back to Ellen.

Jenny closes her mouth, but here eyes betray her shock.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I told you. Didn't I tell you?

Ellen turns to the crowd.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(re: Buddy)

First off, can you tell us your real name?

BUDDY

My name is Buddy Matolski.

ELLEN

And besides being Dixie, what is your job?

BUDDY
Until last night, I was a writer at
LA Today.

ELLEN
Isn't that the magazine running an
exclusive interview with Dixie
today? Or should I say, a not so
exclusive interview?

Buddy laughs nervously.

BUDDY
Yeah, that's the one.

ELLEN
Why were you fired from LA Today?

BUDDY
Because I threatened to go public
with my identity.

ELLEN
Aren't you risking your writing
career by going public?

BUDDY
Yes, but this is about doing the
right thing, no matter the
consequences.

ELLEN
We're all ears. Right?

The audience applauds loudly.

BUDDY
This past week, I wrote the Dear
Dixie column instead of my mother.
I forgot to follow through on a
simple task she asked of me,
jeopardizing her career.

ELLEN
Where was your mother, the real
Dixie, during all this?

BUDDY
On vacation. I decided to do my
best to fix the mess before she
returned.

ELLEN
By writing the columns yourself?

BUDDY

Yes. It was that simple, at first. But then the interview for LA Today came up, and I found myself unable to decline.

ELLEN

You do know the country loves the new Dixie, don't you?

BUDDY

I'm truly honored and humbled by that, and want you all to know how grateful I am.

ELLEN

If you're being ordered to keep quiet by LA Today, and being quiet would keep Dear Dixie's secret, why go public?

Buddy exhales slowly, keeping his focus on Ellen and deliberately off Jenny as tears form in his eyes.

Jenny is struggling to stay composed. The urge to cry eating at her.

BUDDY

I hurt someone very special and wanted to make sure she understood I never meant for her to get hurt.

ELLEN

Do you think she's watching today?

BUDDY

I'm pretty confident she will see this.

Cut to Jackie, Hollywood, Cindy, and Kyle, all crying and wiping away tears in the audience. The men trying to hide it.

ELLEN

You figure she'll forgive you?

BUDDY

That isn't too likely, but I want her to understand and not hate me. I couldn't live with myself if I thought she hated me.

There is a long pause as Buddy turns his head away from the camera to wipe a tear from his eye.

ELLEN

You don't have a job, aren't Dixie anymore, what's next.

BUDDY

It's back to my reality of teaching and coaching, but can I say one more thing?

Ellen gives him a smile and motions for him to continue.

ELLEN

Go ahead.

BUDDY

Ellen, ladies and gentleman, may I introduce for the first time anywhere, my mother, Candy Matolski, the real Dear Dixie.

Buddy, Ellen, and Jenny come to their feet applauding as Candy walks on stage. Buddy and Jenny lock eyes for a moment.

The audience cheers and gives her a standing ovation.

Buddy and Candy hug and all eyes turn to Candy as Buddy eases off stage, not looking back.

Jenny watches Buddy leave, but doesn't go after him, the tears welling up in her eyes.

The applause continue as the scene fades out.

EXT. LAX AIRPORT - DAY

Buddy, Hollywood, and Kyle stand before the security checkpoint. Buddy has a duffle bag slung over his shoulder and a ticket in his hand.

KYLE

Are you sure you don't want to stick around a while?

BUDDY

No, I'm lucky I got my teaching job back along with the coaching duties. I need to be there for the start of football practice.

HOLLYWOOD

(forced hopefulness)
But Jenny might come around.

Buddy looks at him, doubtful.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

Okay, maybe not. But we'll miss you.

Buddy reaches out and pulls Hollywood into a bear hug.

BUDDY

You too. Thanks for getting Mom here in time.

HOLLYWOOD

FedEx, we live to deliver. Your mom was a trooper. Not many people can handle riding cross country in a cargo plane.

Buddy releases Hollywood, steps back, and turns to Kyle.

KYLE

Who knew she was ready to go public when the time was right.

HOLLYWOOD

Didn't hurt that Buddy had a shot at love. Candy is a romantic.

There is an awkward pause as the reality that Buddy didn't end up with Jenny hangs over them.

BUDDY

(changing subject)

Remember, you promised to roadtrip up for the first game and bring my car. Right?

KYLE

(nodding)

We'll drive your piece of crap back to the land of salt and rust for you to finish it off.

HOLLYWOOD

I may have to convince Jackie to come along.

BUDDY

(knowingly)

The more the merrier. How about Cindy?

KYLE
 (sighing)
 She doesn't think your car is safe.

BUDDY
 (feigned hurt)
 Come on.

Kyle reaches over and hugs Buddy.

KYLE
 I'll try harder.

Buddy turns and heads toward the security screening area. He glances over his shoulder and grins.

BUDDY
 (raising his voice)
 I'll see you in five weeks. If god
 is willing...

BUDDY, HOLLYWOOD, KYLE
 (in unison)
 And the creek don't rise.

EXT. GRAND RAPIDS MINNESOTA FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Buddy searches the stands for his friends, but they are nowhere in sight. Disappointed, Buddy pushes his feelings aside as he huddles with his team on the sidelines.

BUDDY
 (motivational)
 Remember. Anything worth having is
 worth working for. We put in the
 work, let's go out there and get
 it. Hawks on three.

BUDDY AND TEAM
 One, two, three, Hawks.

The players break the huddle and rush the field. Buddy turns towards the field, but stops as something catches his eye on the sidelines.

Jenny is standing motionless, dwarfed by the large players around her.

Buddy walks towards her, closing the gap between them as recognition surges to the surface. He pulls up a few feet short of her.

BUDDY

What are you doing here?

JENNY

I can't resist the thought of a road trip to a football game.

BUDDY

I'm so sorry.

Jenny raises a hand to stop him.

JENNY

You know what your problem is, Buddy Matolski?

Buddy stares, speechless.

JENNY (CONT'D)

You're a nice guy. Too nice. You put other people before yourself, you let other's pain bother you, and you tell the truth when keeping quiet would be better for you.

Buddy looks around, self-conscious, as his team, the officials, and his coaching staff gather around.

The players and coaches nod their agreement to Jenny's statements.

BUDDY

You had to know the truth.

JENNY

(painfully)

You gave up your novel?

BUDDY

I couldn't leave without you knowing the truth.

JENNY

But your novel!

Buddy bows his head, ashamed.

JENNY (CONT'D)

You spent so much time worried about being in Steph's "just friends" zone, that you forgot to look around and see who was in your "just friends" zone.

Out of the corner of his eye, Buddy notices Kyle, Cindy, Hollywood, Jackie, and Candy walking up behind him, all agreeing with Jenny's words.

JENNY (CONT'D)

I'm here to tell you I'm tired of being in that friend zone. I've loved you since the eighth grade. When you came back into my life, I knew I couldn't let you leave without trying to make you see.

Everyone gathered around is silent, listening to Jenny.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Buddy Matolski, I love you, and I want us to be together, always.

Buddy shakes his head as he moves closer to Jenny. He frowns as he looks her in the eye.

BUDDY

You are wrong about something.

JENNY

(worried)
What's that?

BUDDY

Jenny Mallory has never been in my "just friends" zone.

JENNY

But Buddy, I...

BUDDY

Because I met Jenny Mallory for the first time a month and a half ago, and fell for her that very moment.

HOLLYWOOD

So is that a yes?

Everyone turns to Hollywood as Jackie slugs him.

BUDDY

(re: Hollywood)
Yes.

Buddy turns back to Jenny.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

(re: Jenny)
Yes.

JENNY
Yes?

BUDDY
I want to be with you.

JENNY
You do?

Buddy and Jenny lean in and kiss as the group cheers.

EXT. VIRGIN ISLANDS - DAY

Buddy and Jenny sit on lounge chairs at a beach, Buddy types on his computer.

JENNY
I think you're getting a little
carried away with that.

BUDDY
I have to meet deadline. My edits
for *When I Was Dixie* are due back
tomorrow.

JENNY
(whining)
You're ignoring me.

BUDDY
Aren't you due on set?

JENNY
(feigned pout)
Not for another hour.

Buddy sets his computer aside, stands, and steps over to slide next to Jenny on her chair.

BUDDY
I guess I can give you an hour. If
god is willing...

Pan back to show the back of the chair against the sparkling,
vibrant blue water.

THE END

FADE OUT