THE BRIDGE

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FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

JORDAN SMITH (14) messy hair, free spirited, bracelet around her wrist that reads “Ashley”, lies on a trampoline and stares up at the stars.

Beside her, ASHLEY FOSTER, (14) organized, twin pigtails, lies next to her with a bracelet that reads “Jordan”, on her wrist.

Together the girls stare out into the abyss above.

JORDAN
You don’t think we’ll get stuck with Mrs. Patterson, do you?

ASHLEY
My mom said she’s retiring after summer school.

JORDAN
Thank God. Gabriel said his sister had her last year and she was giving out like two hours of homework every day.

ASHLEY
Ugh, Gross. Ooh, do the voice.

JORDAN
K.
(fake British accent)
Ladies, your homework was due chewsday. Care to explain yourself?

The two girls GIGGLE.

Slowly the GIGGLES fade. Only the sounds of the night can be heard as they peer up into the night sky.

ASHLEY
You nervous?

JORDAN
Not really... Kind of... I don’t know.

Ashley takes a slow deep breath.

ASHLEY
Me too.

Both girls hold, thoughts racing.

ASHLEY
You don’t think it’s gonna get weird, do you?

JORDAN
What do you mean?

ASHLEY
Like, what if we end up in totally different classes, and only see each other in the hall, and you end up finding new friends, and then just give me an awkward wave as you pass by.

JORDAN
Yeah... Not happening.

ASHLEY
You don’t know that.

JORDAN
Yes, actually I do know that. Just because we’re going to high school doesn’t mean all that suddenly stops.

ASHLEY
Yeah, but everyone keeps telling me,
(mocking voice)
Once you get to high school everything changes.

JORDAN
Yeah, well, everyone’s wrong. Nothing changes. Ever. Deal?

ASHLEY
Promise.

Ashley holds out her pinky with the hand that has the bracelet.

JORDAN
You’re such a dork.

Jordan raises her hand with the bracelet and locks pinkies with Ashley.

ASHLEY
You love it!

With enormous smiles both girls lay back down on their backs, pinkies still locked together.

A long beat.

ASHLEY
You wanna work on another song?

Jordan slow turns her head to Ashley with an enormous smile. Ashley smiles back.

Jordan grabs her notebook, and Ashley her guitar.

They scoot to the edge of the trampoline and let their legs dangle over the edge.

JORDAN
Verse, chorus, bridge?

ASHLEY
Yup.

Ashley tunes her strings.

JORDAN
You want me to throw out some lyrics first, or do you want to give me a melody to write to?

Ashley rolls her head to face Jordan.

ASHLEY
Lyrics.

JORDAN
Lyrics.

Both girls smirk once more, every part of their being in sync.

Jordan looks back to her blank paper, taps her pen and thinks on it for a moment.

JORDAN
Got it!

Instantly Jordan scrolls her pen across the paper. The words flow like a river. Fast and furious.

JESSE SMITH (7), in pajamas and pigtails, comes out the back door of the house.

JESSE
Jordan!

JORDAN
(eyes on her paper)
Go away!

JESSE
Mom says it’s late and you have to come in.

With a hint of frustration, Jordan looks up from her notebook.

JORDAN
Well dad said I can be out here till nine.

JESSE
It’s nine thirty.

Jordan turns to Ashley who quickly glances at her phone, cringes, then gives a nod.

ASHLEY
I should probably head home anyway. I have cheer in the morning.

The disappointment on Jordan’s face is apparent.

Jesse scurries her way toward Jordan and Ashley.

ASHLEY
I can come over before the barbecue if you wanna finish it then.

JORDAN
Yeah. That’s fine.

Jordan and Ashley both hop down from the trampoline. As they do, Jesse finishes her approach.

JESSE
Mom said, now!

Jesse snatches Jordan’s notebook from her hands.

JORDAN
Give it back!

An immediate game of duck duck goose ensues as Jordan chases Jesse around the trampoline.

From the far side, just as Jordan is about to catch her, Jesse quickly ducks under the trampoline on her hands and knees and scrambles across.

Once in the clear, Jesse makes an all-out sprint for the house, SQUEALING the whole way.

Jordan stands half defeated, then glances at Ashley who's enjoyed the show.

ASHLEY
I'll see you tomorrow.

JORDAN
Yeah, I gotta go murder Jesse anyway.

Jordan makes her way back toward the house, and Ashley, guitar in hand, makes her way to a gate on the side of the house.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

BUBBA SMITH (40) a country fella, with jeans and boots that have seen as much hard labor as his callused hands, stands at a barbecue grill and flips hot dogs.

BRAD FOSTER (33) tall, cowboy hat, boots, and a big silver buckle, stands next to Bubba and "supervises" the grill.

BRAD
All I'm saying is no matter how many times you turn that dog, it ain't gonna get no better.

BUBBA
Yeah, but the longer it takes me to make it, the longer I get with this beer.

Bubba snatches a beer from the edge of the barbecue and takes a swig.

BUBBA (CONT'D)
Why do you think the fire's so low. Hey, mind taking over for me? I need to get another beer out of the fridge.

Brad gives a smirk and a salute, and Bubba walks inside.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - KITCHEN

LUCY FOSTER (33) a petite country girl, but still well put together, slices tomatoes and places them on a platter.

NORMA JEAN SMITH (32) in sweat pants and a loose fitting shirt, shuffles about the kitchen and gathers the remaining condiments.

Bubba comes in and brushes against Norma Jean wordlessly, grabs a beer from the fridge and heads back outside.

Lucy places the last of the tomatoes and onions on the platter, grabs ahold and turns back to Norma Jean.

LUCY
Where do you want these?

NORMA JEAN
(flustered)
Uh. Maybe just, you know what, here.

Norma Jean takes the platter from Lucy, then with one hand shoves a few things to the side on the kitchen tables and shoves the platter in its place.

LUCY
You okay?

Norma Jean stops and lets a SIGH escape her.

NORMA JEAN
Not really.

LUCY
You wanna talk about it?

Norma Jean lifts her eyes to Lucy and holds, contemplating the thought.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BACKYARD

Brad flips burgers as GARY (40) a neighbor with a beer stands near by.

GARY
How long you back in town for?

BRAD
Ten days, then I've got a three week run through Ohio and Indiana.

GARY
Sounds exhausting.

Brad lets out a soft, dry LAUGH.

BRAD
Yup, but if you ain’t on the road, you don't exist.

LUCY (O.C.)
And the bills don’t get paid.

Lucy walks up, with a tray of sliced tomatoes and onions. She sets them down on the side table, her smile tight.

LUCY
Though with the price of gas, I wonder if we ain’t paying for him to be out there.

Gary CHUCKLES.

GARY
Literally paying the dues, huh?

LUCY
(scoffs)
Ain’t that the truth.

Brad reaches out and gently places a hand on Lucy’s shoulder.

Lucy pats Brad’s hand with a smile then makes her way off to other guests.

BRAD
It’s a grind no doubt, but they say for every overnight success, that guy’s put in twenty years of work.

GARY
Well, you’ve got the talent, hopefully you ain’t gotta wait the full twenty.

Brad looks over at Ashley, who laughs with her friend across the yard, then turns back to the grill.

BRAD
Hopefully.

ANGLE ON:

Ashley, guitar in hand, and Jordan, notepad in hers, sit on the edge of the trampoline and let the feet swing free.

Jesse jumps on the trampoline.

Jordan's hand and pen struggle to keep steady on the paper. She whips her head around.

JORDAN
(to Jesse)
Can you please stop for five minutes?

JESSE
Mom said I can be out here.

JORDAN
What did dad say?

JESSE
He said, I don't care what you do as long as you go away.

With a scowl, Jordan bites her lip and turns to Ashley.

ASHLEY
If you stop jumping we'll let you help us with a song.

Jesse instantly does her best attempt at a front flip that looks more like a cartwheel and rolls herself right into position between Jordan and Ashley.

Jordan is still less than pleased.

Jesse has a grin plastered across her face.

ASHLEY
(shrugs)
At least she stopped jumping.

LATER

Three other neighborhood couples join the party, and line up to serve themselves from a folding table, then make their way to a picnic table.

Ashley with her guitar, and Jordan with her notebook, still on the trampoline, ignore it all, focused on writing songs.

Bubba and Norma Jean stand off to the side and argue quietly.

Bubba's frustration builds, his anger more visible with each passing second. Eventually he storms off.

A few of the guests, including Brad, notice the tiff.

Moments later the ROAR of an engine is heard and the RUMBLE of the exhaust gradually grows softer until it can no longer be heard.

In an attempt to break the tension, Brad grabs his guitar and makes his way to a small plywood stage with a mic.

A chord snakes its way back to an outlet. He clicks the mic on, then clears his throat and taps the mic.

The thump from the small amplifier below grabs everyone's attention.

Jordan and Ashley pause their progress and give their attention to Brad.

BRAD
Thought maybe since I have y'all here it'd maybe be a good chance to use y'all as a test audience.

STEVE (34) one of the neighborhood dads at the picnic table lowers his food to heckle Brad.

STEVE
It better be good or I'm asking for my money back.

BRAD
(points to Steve)
Security, can we get that guy out of here!

CHUCKLES and LAUGHTER spill out from the guests.

BRAD
This here's a song I wrote a few months back. I think it's pretty good, my agent thinks it's good, but at the end of the day, all that matter is y'all enjoy. I hope y'all like it.

Scattered LAUGHTER, smiles, and CHEERS fill the backyard as Brad jumps into his song "Backroad To My Heart".

BRAD
(singing)
Guess some heartaches last longer than the scars/
On this long, long backroad to my heart/

Ashley and Jordan turn to one another.

JORDAN
(to Ashley)
That's crazy good!

ASHLEY
Yeah. Until you've heard it as many times as I have.

Ashley and Jordan share a LAUGH, then gradually fall into a sway and head-bob with the tune.

Brad hits the last chord and the song finishes.

The neighbors CLAP and CHEER. A few let out WHISTLES.

A few of the men come up and slap Brad on the back.

Behind this gaggle, Ashley struggles to reach her dad.

Finally she ducks under and squeezes through.

Finally at her father's side, Ashley leans in and whispers into his ear. He listens, then nods.

BRAD
(in the mic)
Well everybody! I'm glad I got a chance to open for y'all, but the main act has arrived. Straight off their world tour, and here to wow you with their newest hit. AJ... Or as y'all probably know 'em... Ashley and Jordan!

Polite LAUGHTER and half-hearted CLAPS fill the backyard as nearly all of the guests return to their meals and small talk.

Jesse runs to Norma Jean.

JESSE
Mom, I want to sing, too!

Norma Jean gives her a small smile and ushers her away.

NORMA JEAN
Not now. Let your sister do her thing.

Jesse plops down on the steps and pouts.

The girls climb onto the stage and Brad adjusts the mic.

BRAD
There ya go girls.

Ashley and Jordan sing a sweet, simple song, about forever friends. “Till the End of Time”.

JORDAN/ASHLEY
(singing)
Girl, you’ve got a friend in me/
Till the end of time/

Those lines hit hard and several guests stop and listen.

The song ends to genuine APPLAUSE from the guests.

Just off to the side of the stage, Lucy approaches Brad with his phone.

LUCY
Brad, phone!

Lucy hands the phone to Brad, then heads off.

Brad checks the caller’s name. It reads: TONY.

BRAD
Hey, Tony. What’s up?

Lucy stands beside Norma Jean with a slight look of concern on her face.

LUCY
What do you mean he just left?

Norma Jean shrugs.

LUCY
Left like, going to get more ice,
or...

Norma Jean does her best to hold back her emotions, but the devastation is clear.

Lucy reaches out tentatively and wraps her arms around Norma Jean, who dissolves into tears.

Jordan and Ashley step off the small stage with enormous smiles.

Jordan catches sight of her mother’s tears and holds. Her glee dissipates.

Ashley lifts the guitar strap over her head, still reeling from the high of applause.

ASHLEY
(to Jordan)
That was crazy good. Did you see everyone stop eating when I hit that line you wrote about...

The sight of Jordan, lost in the moment as she glares at her mother in pain, silences Ashley.

Ashley turns to see her mother hold Norma Jean, then shifts her attention back to Jordan.

ASHLEY
What just happened?

Jordan looks to Ashley about to speak, but before she can open her mouth, Brad calls from across the yard with pure joy.

BRAD
Lucy! You ain't gonna believe this!

Ashley and Jordan share a look of both concern and confusion.

QUICK SHOTS - JORDAN'S HOUSE/ASHLEY'S HOUSE SCREEN

A SONG PLAYS OVER

- Brad pops the cork on a bottle of champagne.

- Brad and Lucy Toast.

- Ashley jumps up and down with excitement.

- Bubba and Norma Jean are in the middle of a shouting match.

- Jesse and Jordan sit quietly on the couch.

- Jesse hugs her stuffed toy.

- Jordan tries to focus on the TV.

END SEQUENCE

EXT. ASHLEY'S SUBURBAN HOUSE - STREET - DAY

A moving van sits in front of Ashley's house.

Workers move furniture out of the house.

Ashley sits on the front steps while workers step over her with the family's personal belongings en route to the moving truck.

She looks forlornly at Jordan's house next door.

The shades on Jordan's bedroom are closed.

Lucy sticks her head out the front door.

LUCY
Baby, you've got to move out of the way. Either you're gonna get hurt,
(gestures to movers)
Or one of these guys will.

With a large SIGH, Ashley rises to her feet and scoots to the side, allowing the movers to pass.

Lucy and the movers retreat back into the house.

Ashley's attention turns back to Jordan's house, then after a moment, she musters some inner strength and walks next door.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - FRONT - DAY

Ashley steps up to Jordan's door and KNOCKS.

Norma Jean, clearly drunk, with a glass of whiskey in her hand, answers the door and posts up in the doorway.

NORMA JEAN
Hey, Ash.

ASHLEY
Hey.

NORMA JEAN
I see y'all are movin'.

ASHLEY
Yeah, my parents bought a place out on the lake.

NORMA JEAN
Old Hickory lake?

ASHLEY
Yeah.

NORMA JEAN
That's high cotton out there.

ASHLEY
Yeah, I guess... Is Jordan home?

NORMA JEAN
She’s in her room.

ASHLEY
Can I talk to her?

NORMA JEAN
Come on then.

Norma Jean rolls her body off the doorway and allows Ashley to pass.

NORMA JEAN
You know the way.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Jordan sits on the edge of her bed and writes in her notebook with determination.

INT. ASHLEY’S HOUSE - HALLWAY

Ashley KNOCKS on Jordan’s bedroom door. Nothing but silence.

ASHLEY
Hey, JJ?
(beat)
Thought I’d come say goodbye.

INTERCUT JORDAN/ASHLEY

Jordan lifts her head from her paper and peers over at the door.

ASHLEY
Still best friends forever, right?

Jordan looks away from the door and does her best to hold in her emotions.

ASHLEY
JJ, please.

Jordan’s façade almost cracks, but holds, though her eyes begin to swell with tears.

Unsure how to respond to the silence, Ashley hesitantly turns, then gradually makes her way from Jordan’s door.

After a beat, Jordan breaks and a single tear falls. She quickly wipes it, doing her best to stay strong.

A door CLOSES in the distance.

Jordan rises to her feet and steps to her window. She lifts a section of the blinds and peeks out.

EXT. ASHLEY'S SUBURBAN HOUSE - STREET - DAY

Jordan watches Ashley make her way across the yard and climb into her family's car, packed with belongings and boxes strapped to the roof.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Jordan watches the sedan back out of the driveway and head off down the street.

Through the back window Ashley turns and stares at Jordan's house, chin on her arms.

INT. CAR - SUBURBAN HOUSE - STREET - DAY

Ashley catches a small glimpse of Jordan, just before the blinds slap shut.

With a heavy heart, she spins back in her seat, faces forward, and slumps down in her seat.

FADE TO BLACK

OVER BLACK

TITLE: THREE MONTHS LATER

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - EVENING

Jordan sits on the edge of the trampoline. Jesse bounces as close as she can to Jordan so she can look over her shoulder.

JORDAN
Mom! Can you please come get Jesse? She's just trying to be annoying.

JESSE
(to Jordan)
No I'm not.

JORDAN
Yeah. You are.

JESSE
(mocking face)
No. I'm not.

Norma Jean, exhausted, hair a mess, looks as if she hasn't slept in days, sticks her head out the back door.

NORMA JEAN
Jesse!! Stop pestering your sister and get your little rear end in here and finish packing your room like I asked.

Jesse grudgingly hops down from the trampoline, sticks her tongue out at Jordan.

Jordan fakes like she's gonna give chase.

Jesse lets out a small SQUEAL, then quickly tucks tail and runs inside.

With a hint of frustration, Jordan claps her notebook closed, then sets it down.

She allows herself to fall back onto the trampoline, then peers up at the sky as the first stars twinkle on.

Ashley peaks her head around the corner of the house.

ASHLEY
(tentatively)
Hey, you.

Jordan quickly rises at the familiar voice.

JORDAN
What are you doing here?

Ashley makes a continued slow approach to Jordan and the trampoline.

ASHLEY
I miss my friend.

Jordan sits in silence and Ashley momentarily stops.

ASHLEY
(takes a few steps forward)
I didn't want to move, JJ.

JORDAN
I didn't want you to either.

ASHLEY
You know it wasn't my choice right?

Ashley now stands directly in front of Jordan.

Jordan finally lowers her guard and looks at Ashley, but holds for a beat before allowing the words to escape her.

JORDAN
My parents are getting divorced.

ASHLEY
I'm sorry, JJ.

Ashley moves to the trampoline and hops up, taking a seat next to Jordan.

JORDAN
(holding back tears)
My dad's kicking us out. He wants the house so we're having to move to a trailer.

ASHLEY
I knew your parents were having problems but I guess I didn't realize it was that bad.

JORDAN
Mom said we can't take the trampoline because there's no room.

Ashley doesn't know how to respond. A moment of awkward silence fills the air.

ASHLEY
If it makes you feel any better my new school's super weird. We have to wear a stupid uniform every day and have like three hours of homework each night.

JORDAN
Sounds like you would have been better off getting Mrs. Patterson...
(British accent)
Chewsday.

Both Ashley and Jordan lower the guard for a moment and allow a small hint of LAUGHTER escape them.

Gradually the LAUGHTER fades as does their smiles.

ASHLEY
I tried out for cheer and made the team, so that was pretty cool.

With clearly visible hurt feelings, Jordan's head turns to Ashley with a hint of jealousy.

ASHLEY
The girls on the team are actually pretty cool.

Jordan climbs off the trampoline.

JORDAN
You know what, Ash. I'm glad you have such a perfect life. And I'm glad you've got all these cool friends to hang out with.

ASHLEY
Wait. What just happened?

JORDAN
No really, that's really cool.

With her jaw clinched, Jordan marches towards her house, leaving Ashley behind.

Ashley hops down from the trampoline and calls out to Jordan.

ASHLEY
I'm sorry. I just thought you'd want to know what I have going on too.

Jordan storms into the house and never looks back.

Ashley stands shaken for a full beat. She looks around in shock, then slowly walks back out the gate.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - FRONT - NIGHT

Ashley makes her way to a limo parked in front of the house and climbs in.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jordan marches through the house, past boxes that clutter the room.

Norma Jean tries to pack dishes with a tumbler of vodka in her hand. It's not going well.

Jesse's parked in front of the TV watching cartoons, never acknowledging Jordan as she passes through.

A door SLAMS in the distance and momentarily grabs Jesse's attention.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jordan throws herself onto her bed and with a deep breath to decompress, stares up at the ceiling.

Tears begin to form. She turns to her side, and snuggles her head into her pillow.

CREAK! Little by little the bedroom door opens and Jesse peeks in.

JORDAN
Go away, Jesse.

Jesse holds with a hint of concern.

JESSE
Are you okay?

JORDAN
I'm fine, please just go away!

Jesse thinks better of it and softly makes her way to Jordan.

Without a word, Jesse climbs into bed behind Jordan and snuggles in tight next to her.

JESSE
I'm sorry I'm such an annoying little sister.

Jordan's tears continue to roll.

JORDAN
You're not annoying... All the time.

A subtle smile emerges onto Jesse's face, and small CHUCKLE escapes Jordan through the tears.

Jordan and Jesse snuggle in and comfort one another.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DAY

Norma Jean moves boxes from the car into the trailer.

Jesse runs off to play with some boys her age a few trailers over.

NORMA JEAN
Jesse! Make sure you stay where I can see you!

Jesse doesn't slow or skip a beat.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

Jordan carries a box of clothes into the bedroom she now shares with Jesse. She drops the box on the floor, looks around. The place is a dump.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DAY

A magnificent estate sits lake-front with a boat dock.

A car with an interior design company logo sits in the driveway.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - DAY

The place is filled with luxury furniture, antiques, and wall art. Lucy quietly talks to the interior designer.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DOCK - DAY

Ashley walks morosely down to the dock with her guitar. She takes a seat in a folding chair and STRUMS her guitar.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - PLAYGROUND - DAY

Jordan sits on a rusty swing in a rundown playground. She looks as if she's lost her only friend.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DOCK - DAY

Ashley looks like she's lost her only friend as well.

Ashley struggles to strum out a melody.

Frustrated, Ashley throws the guitar down and places her hands to her temples, then runs her hands through her hair.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - PLAYGROUND - DAY

Jordan writes in her notebook, then scratches through all of her words dejectedly. She throws the notebook into the dirt.

Her matching bracelet still reflects the sunlight.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DOCK - DAY

Ashley's bracelet reflects the sunlight as she peers out across the lake, lost from within.

EXT. NASHVILLE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY

Jordan walks across, backpack on her back.

GRABLE (15) a street musician, but clean cut, sits with his guitar, busking for tips.

Jordan stops mid-stride, taken aback by the song. She listens intently.

Grable finishes the song.

JORDAN
Hey, did you write that?

GRABLE
Yeah.

Jordan takes a seat next to Grable.

JORDAN
It's perfect. Beautiful lyrics, perfect rhymes, great bridge. Where'd you learn to write like that?

GRABLE
I spend a lot of time in my dad's studio on 16th.

Jordan cringes at the obvious advantage.

JORDAN
Ah. Makes sense.

GRABLE
Yeah. When you're around it all day, it's hard to not pick up a thing here or there.

Grable lets a smirk escape.

JORDAN
What I wouldn't give to have access to a studio all the time.

GRABLE
Who says you can't?

Jordan falls silent, knowing her situation.

GRABLE
If that's really something you want, you just have to find a way to make it happen.

JORDAN
Sounds great, but it's not like I can just say,
(half mocking)
Hey dad, can I use the studio today?

Grable gives an agreeing nod.

GRABLE
I see what ya did there.

JORDAN
Sorry.

GRABLE
Don't be. Do you write?

JORDAN
Yeah.

GRABLE
Sing something for me.

Jordan considers, about to say no, but catches eyes with Grable who's dead serious.

JORDAN
Okay. Key of C?

GRABLE
Let's do it.

Jordan begins to sing “Back To You”.

JORDAN
Here we are, living in the same hometown lives/
Two country girls who took different roads in life/
No matter what we go through/
I’m glad I found my way back to you/

Grable catches the melody and accompanies her on guitar.

Pedestrians stop and listen. They throw bills in Grable’s guitar case.

The song ends, and both Jordan and Grable sweat with the heat and the excitement of the moment.

PEDESTRIAN
Great song, Little Lady.

JORDAN
(to the Pedestrian)
Thank you.

GRABLE
Where’d you learn to write like that?

JORDAN
The melody’s not mine. Just the lyrics.

GRABLE
Well it was absolutely amazing.

JORDAN
Thanks.

GRABLE
Don’t take this the wrong way, but would you like to write together? We could meet up at my dad’s studio.

Jordan looks at the ground, then LAUGHS.

JORDAN
I don’t even know your name!

GRABLE
Grable. It’s Grable. What’s yours?

JORDAN
Jordan.

GRABLE
So Jordan, what do you think?

JORDAN
You're serious?

GRABLE
Yeah. I actually have some time set aside at my dad's label tomorrow if you're free.

JORDAN
Seriously?

GRABLE
Why do you keep asking that? Yeah, seriously. So... Tomorrow at three?

An undeniable smile emerges on Jordan's face.

JORDAN
Yeah. Sure... Tomorrow at three.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - STREET - DAY

Jordan walks toward the trailer clutching her notebook with a huge, contented smile. She stands a bit taller than before.

INT. PERFORMANCE VENUE - NIGHT

In a small intimate venue, Ashley and Lucy, decked out like country music royalty, stand in the wings just out of sight from the audience, while Brad sings onstage.

Everyone in the crowd, on their feet, knows every line. The place ROCKS.

For Ashley, the world disappears... All except for her and her father. She listens in awe and envy, as if they are the only two in the room.

The song ends with a wave of the hand from Brad, and a deafening APPLAUSE from the crowd.

Ashley and Lucy overflow with excitement. They smother Brad with hugs as he steps off the stage.

ASHLEY
Oh, my, gosh, Dad. That was incredible.

BRAD
I'm glad you like it, Baby.

LUCY
You know who else liked it?

The cheers of ENCORE can be heard from the crowd.

BRAD
Apparently them.

LUCY
And everyone else. Tony texted me and said you just moved into the top twenty on the billboard charts.

BRAD
Are you serious?

LUCY
Looks like Momma's gonna get to upgrade the kitchen.

BRAD
(light laughter)
After what we paid for that house, I'm pretty sure the kitchen's fine.

LUCY
Exactly. But, fine ain't stunning.

Brad seems a little put off, but lets the comment roll off his back.

ASHLEY
(to Brad)
Hey, do you think you can help me with a couple of the lyrics on my new song when you get home?

BRAD
Doesn't Jordan usually write with you?

ASHLEY
Yeah, well...

LUCY
Ashley, Honey, why don't you let your dad get some rest when he gets home? He's got two more shows this week and we need him at his best.

Ashley's disappointment is visible though she does her best to hide it.

ASHLEY
Yeah. It wasn't really that big a deal anyway.

Lucy ushers Brad further back stage to talk business.

LUCY
(to Brad)
Okay, so Tony said that if things keep progressing the way they have been we'll be on pace to hit gold by the end of the month.

Ashley stands alone at the edge of the stage and watches as her mother and father make their way through the clutter of backstage gear.

EXT. NASHVILLE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY

Jordan, backpack on, and notebook in hand makes her way across the bridge, Nashville skyline behind her.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE - DAY

Jordan makes her way down 16th Avenue. She finally sees a sign over a building, "Big Sound Records", then enters.

INT. BIG SOUND RECORDS - FOYER - DAY

Jordan enters and glances around at the records, posters, guitars, and music memorabilia on the wall.

Grable exits from the back and greets Jordan.

GRABLE
You made it.

JORDAN
(still taken aback)
Yeah.

GRABLE
You wanna come back?

Jordan gives a nod and follows Grable back into the studio.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DOCK - DAY

Ashley sits in a chair at the end of the dock with a notebook on her lap and strums her guitar.

She lifts the notebook and pen. She holds the pen to the paper. Her thoughts race.

Frustration building, Ashley finally closes the notebook and drops it down on the dock, beneath her chair.

She sinks back into the chair, and having given up, plucks one single string on her guitar over and over.

BRAD (O.C.)
Cool song.

Ashley rolls her head to the side and catches sight of Brad as he takes a seat in the empty chair next to her.

ASHLEY
Funny.

BRAD
So, you wanna tell me what's going on?

ASHLEY
Aren't you supposed to be resting like mom said?

BRAD
Aren't you supposed to be doing the dishes like mom said?

Ashley and Brad hold each others gaze for a moment.

ASHLEY
I won't tell if you don't.

BRAD
Deal.

Brad reaches out and locks pinkies with his daughter. Both settle into their chairs.

For a moment they just look out at the lake. Ashley plucks that one sad string over and over.

BRAD
Alright. Put the pity party down a second.

He reaches over and stills the string with one finger.

BRAD
You're a fine songwriter in your own right. And you got a voice folks would pay good money for. So. Pick up that guitar, and give me your notebook.

ASHLEY
I don't write, Dad. Jordan writes. I just sing whatever she puts in front of me.

BRAD
Singin' is writin', baby. You just do it out loud.
(taps his temple)
The rest of it's already up here. You're just scared to let it out.

She hesitates, then hands Brad her notebook. Brad clicks his pen.

BRAD
Okay. Gimme somethin' to hang it on. A truck. A dirt road. A girl who up and left...

ASHLEY
(groaning)
Dad. That's every song on the radio.

Brad points his pen at her, delighted.

BRAD
Well, would you listen to that. Okay, Miss too-good-for-the-radio. You pick.

Ashley looks out at the quiet water, the big empty house behind them.

ASHLEY
This. Right here. When it's just quiet, and nobody needs anything from anybody.

BRAD
Okay. That’s good.

Brad scribbles, mutters a line, scratches it out. Slides the page to Ashley.

BRAD
There. Now find me the tune that lives under it.

Ashley reads. Frowns. Sets her fingers, tries a progression. Stops. Tries another. Then her hand finds something, and a melody arises.

Brad sits up, watches his daughter.

BRAD
Where'd that come from?

ASHLEY
(taps her temple)
Up here. Same as you said.

She plays it again. Brad grabs the page, scribbling fast now, feeding words to her melody. They lean into each other.

INT. BIG SOUND RECORDS - STUDIO - DAY

Jordan holds her pen to her notebook and jots down a few lyrics.

Grable tunes his guitar, then strums a few chords.

JORDAN
So. Thoughts on a story line?

GRABLE
Depends. If you’re wantin’ to do a country song, we can go standard and do trains, rain, prison, trucks, or mama.

Jordan lets a smile slip.

JORDAN
Is that the kind of singer you wanna be? Standard?

GRABLE
Okay, CMA songwriter of the year. What you got?

Jordan stares across at Grable for a moment. The two seem to be momentarily lost in one another's eyes.

JORDAN
How about a love song?

Grable smiles, neither breaking eye contact.

GRABLE
Yeah. I love it.

With smiles growing, Jordan quickly catches herself, and snaps back to reality.

JORDAN
Okay!

Jordan places her pen to paper and writes a few lines. She hands the notebook over to Grable for a read.

Grable's eyes are locked on the notebook, clearly lost in the lyrics. His eyes lift and meet Jordan's once more.

GRABLE
That's... Incredible.

JORDAN
Okay then,
(slight mocking)
CMA vocalist of the year. What you got?

Grable strums his guitar and CLEARS HIS THROAT.

Grable creates the melody as he goes along to Jordan's lyrics. A heart-felt song about love and loss.

Jordan listen's intently, lost in the love song and Grable's clear connection with the song. They're equally lost in the moment.

Grable strums the last chord, and the echo of the tune slowly fades. Both Grable and Jordan hold, gazing into one another's eyes.

Grable is the first to break.

GRABLE
So... What do you think?

JORDAN
Are you kidding me? That was incredible.

GRABLE
I meant the melody.

JORDAN
Uh, are you serious right now?

GRABLE
What?

JORDAN
Your melody, my lyrics, and...

Jordan catches sight of Grable's gazing stare once more. His building attraction to Jordan is clear. She becomes lost in his eyes.

JORDAN
Your voice...

Grable hangs on every word.

JORDAN
This is gonna sound cheesy.

GRABLE
No, tell me.

Their eyes are locked.

JORDAN
It's almost as if they were meant to be together.

The surroundings disappear as if Jordan and Grable were the only objects in the room.

Their breathes deepen and their hearts pound.

CLICK! SQUEAK! The door opens and Grable and Jordan quickly snap back to reality.

CAITLIN (35) dressed country but classy, pokes her head in.

CAITLIN
Hey, Grable. Your dad called and said he's gonna have to cut your session short today because (FAMOUS COUNTRY ARTIST) called and needs the space.

GRABLE
No worries. Thanks Caitlin.

Caitlin closes the door.

Grable and Jordan turn back to one another. The room is now filled with an awkward silence.

Jordan grabs her notebook and quickly rises to her feet.

JORDAN
I should probably...

Grable rises with her.

GRABLE
No wait!

Jordan and Grable both hold.

Grable’s mind races, quickly trying to find a reason for her to stay.

GRABLE
You wanna hang out a little and listen to a (FAMOUS COUNTRY ARTIST) song?

A smile fills Jordan’s face.

JORDAN
I’d love to.

For Grable, the smile is contagious.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DOCK - DAY

They're deep in it now. Brad plays his guitar. Ashley harmonizes a line on hers, shakes her head, tries it again. Brad grins, writes it down.

BRAD
Okay. Okay. Landing it now. Last line's gotta pay the whole thing off...

He hums, searching, pen hovering.

BRAD
There's a house on the lake... to bring me back to...

He trails off hunting for the last word. Ashley looks up from the guitar.

ASHLEY
You.

Brad gives a slow grin.

BRAD
(soft)
Yeah. That's the one.

He writes it down, then counts her in with a nod. Ashley strums on guitar.

BRAD/ASHLEY
(singing)
In our house on the lake where the morning waters shine/
We'll let the world go quiet and make some room for time/
When the days feel loud and busy we need a clearer view/
There's a house on the lake to bring me back to you/

The last note rings out. Father and daughter both glowing.

BRAD
Beautiful.

ASHLEY
Thanks, Dad.

Brad sets the guitar down, looks at his kid.

BRAD
You know. I forget sometimes. Charts and gold records and your mama's stunning kitchen are good and all.
(he smirks, with a nod over his shoulder)
But this here is the whole reason I ever picked up a guitar. Right here. Just this.

Together they sit quiet in the moment. Then...

BRAD
Been a long time since I did it for nothin' but the song.

Ashley studies him.

ASHLEY
Then let's do it again tomorrow.

BRAD
Deal.

He crooks his pinky. She locks it with his.

LUCY (O.C.)
There you are.

They both flinch. Lucy comes down the dock, all business.

LUCY
What are you two up to? Writin' me a new hit, I hope.

Ashley half-smiles, less than pleased at the interruption.

BRAD
(a private wink to Ashley)
If Ash keeps goin' the way she is, you're gonna end up with two major recording artists on your hands.

LUCY
I like the sound of that. Speakin' of recording artists...
(to Ashley)
I need to steal your dad for a bit. He's got contracts to get back to the lawyers 'fore end o' day.

Brad rises, leans in, kisses Ashley's forehead.

BRAD
Good job, Kiddo.

ASHLEY
Thanks, Dad.

Lucy escorts Brad back up the dock, already talking numbers. Ashley watches them shrink toward the house.

She's alone again. But she looks down at the song they made. And this time she doesn't put the guitar away.

QUICK SHOTS - MODERN COUNTRY MUSIC PLAYS

- The sun rises over Nashville.

- The bustling city sets the tone for the new day.

- Jordan crosses the pedestrian bridge, backpack on, but lighter on her feet than we've seen her.

- Earbuds in, Jordan nods to the rhythm of something only she can hear.

- Jordan passes the spot where Grable busked, glances at the now empty space. A smiles materializes and with renewed vigor, she picks up her pace.

INT. BIG SOUND RECORDS - STUDIO - DAY - MONTAGE

- Jordan scribbles in her notebook. The “Ashley” bracelet on her wrist glistens.

- Grable plays. Jordan holds up a line from her notebook and Grable shakes his head. Jordan crosses it out and tries again.

- Grable sits nearly against Jordan with his guitar and peers down at the notebook with her. He points at a line in her notebook: that one. Both nod and smile profusely. They catch each others eyes once again, but quickly clear the moment.

- Grable teaches Jordan a chord on his guitar. Her fingers fumble. He repositions her hand. She gets it and beams with joy.

- Jordan and Grable sit on the studio floor and eat vending-machine food. The notebook and junk food on the floor is all that separates them. They argue about a rhyme with their mouths full.

- Jordan SINGS a phrase. Grable closes his eyes and nods while he listens. She finishes and his eyes open and find hers for a beat too long.

- Jordan hands a completed set of lyrics to Grable on a sheet of paper. Grable takes the sheet and adds the melody using the Nashville Notation System of chords (NNS).

- Jordan and Grable lie on the floor and stare up at the ceiling as she once did with Ashley. They LAUGH and enjoy the moment and each others company.

END MONTAGE

Grable lifts himself and caps his pen. Jordan sits up. Both are exhausted.

GRABLE
Okay. I think we have it. Yeah?

JORDAN
Yeah. I think so.

Grable grabs his guitar and strums it. He starts with the melody.

Jordan joins in with vocals and they sing, “Building a Bridge”, together.

JORDAN/GRABLE
(singing)
Let’s start building a bridge/
One board at a time/
If you’re willing, I’m willing/
Let’s start building a bridge/

The song ends. They look at each other with glee.

GRABLE
You wanna record?

JORDAN
Do you even need to ask?

Grable CHUCKLES.

GRABLE
Good, because there’s someone I want to hear it.

JORDAN
Someone who?

GRABLE
(side smirk)
Just take it from the top.

Grable hits the record button on the console, then he and Jordan sing and play again.

The song bleeds into...

INT. BIG SOUND RECORDS STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

DON MURPHY (40), Grable's father and a country music legend, with glasses perched on his forehead, leans back from the console and listens.

Jordan stands stiff by the door, like she might bolt.

The SONG PLAYS. Don doesn't move. Doesn't tap. Just listens.

The song ends. Silence.

DON
Who wrote the lyrics?

JORDAN
(barely)
Me.

DON
The melody?

GRABLE
Kinda both of us.

JORDAN
Mr. Murphy, Grable wrote the melody.

Don swivels his chair to face Jordan. Takes his glasses off.

DON
How old are you?

JORDAN
Fourteen.

Don rubs his face, but it appears he could be either impressed, or unsure how to let them down.

DON
I've known writers in this town that are twice your age that can't land a line like the one you did in the second verse.

Jordan doesn't know what to do with her hands.

Don leans forward, elbows on his knees.

DON
I think the song is good enough it might could go on my next album, but not as my song. As yours.

Jordan and Grable share an unbelieving look, then turn back to Don.

DON
So if it does, you and Grable here go on as writers.

JORDAN
That sounds... Unbelievable!

DON
Believe it. If the song wasn't good enough we wouldn't be having this conversation.

JORDAN
So, now what?

DON
If... I decide to use it, We put it through my publishing company. Do a proper split, for both of you.

JORDAN
(stunned)
You're saying I'd get paid... Sorry... We'd get paid for our song?

DON
I'm saying nobody takes your name off what you've created. At least not while it's got my publishing companies name on it.

Jordan's eyes go glassy.

JORDAN
Okay.

DON
Okay?

JORDAN
(laughing)
Yeah. Okay. Okay!

Grable grins at her. She grins back.

Jordan throws herself into Grable's arms for a quick hug.

INT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Glass walls and kids in matching uniforms fill the area. A long table of CHEER GIRLS eat politely and LAUGH.

Ashley sits among them in her uniform, plate untouched.

BRITTANY (15), the clear captain of the group, tells a joke.

BRITTANY
So then Madison goes, "that's not even my horse," and the trainer's just standing there with a stupid look on his face, like he's never seen one before.

The table ERUPTS. Ashley LAUGHS, but a half-second late. It’s clear she didn't get the joke.

The girls at the table take notice, but let it slide.

MARISA
Ashley, you're coming to Brittany's lake thing, right? Your dad could totally just helicopter you over.

ASHLEY
We have a lake at our house.

A small, weird silence. The girls exchange a look.

BRITTANY
(saccharine sweet)
Oh my gosh, that's so cute. "We have a lake."

LAUGHTER again spreads through the group.

Ashley faux smiles, absorbs the comment, then tunes everyone out.

Beneath the table, her thumb plays with her Jordan bracelet.

The cheer girls continue to banter among themselves.

Isolated within the group, Ashley pulls her phone out. She swipes it open to a “JJ” text thread.

The last message on the phone is months old. Unanswered, but left on read. Her thumb hovers.

BRITTANY
Ashley. Hello?

Ashley quickly snaps from her trance.

BRITTANY
Is your dad doing the CMA thing or not?

Ashley quickly lowers her phone.

ASHLEY
Yeah, he’s doing the thing.

But the girls at the table have moved on without her.

Ashley stares out across the room.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - EVENING

Jordan walks down the dirt road towards her new trailer home, notebook in hand, HUMMING the melody she and Grable wrote.

Jordan comes to an abrupt stop, along with the HUM.

Her father’s beat-up pickup truck is parked near the trailer.

Jordan backpedals and half hides behind a tree, but keeps her eyes on the truck.

The trailer door flings open and Bubba, in a grease-stained work shirt, steps out and makes his way to his truck.

Never seeing Jordan, he climbs into the driver’s seat and closes the door.

Bubba fires up the truck and backs out of the driveway, then places it in drive and heads out toward Jordan.

Jordan quickly dips out of sight and looks away, showing only her back to Bubba’s truck.

INT. BUBBA’S TRUCK - EVENING

Bubba catches a quick glimpse of Jordan and does a double take.

He stops the truck and lets it idle.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - EVENING

Jordan peeks over her shoulder at her father’s truck, waiting to pull back onto the road.

She catches a glimpse of him in the side mirror.

INT. BUBBA'S TRUCK - EVENING

Bubba stares at his side mirror and Jordan’s reflection.

With a heavy breath, and a moment of thought, Bubba swallows hard, then pulls out into the road.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - EVENING

Jordan stumbles as she turns and watches Bubba’s truck speed away.

INT. TRAILER - EVENING

Norma Jean, in her robe and socks, hair wild, sits at the kitchen table, passed out. A bottle of vodka and half-empty glass sit next to a manila envelope and a small stack of papers.

Curious, Jordan makes her way to the table and lifts the papers. On the front: DIVORCE DECREE

Jordan drops the envelope back onto the table and walks into the living room. She scans the room for Jesse.

INT. TRAILER - HALLWAY - EVENING

Jordan quickly moves down the hall and pokes her head into each room.

JORDAN
Jesse.

She’s not there. She’s not anywhere.

Jordan speed walks down the hall.

JORDAN
Jesse!?

INT. TRAILER - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Jordan makes a b-line for Norma Jean and tries to wake her.

JORDAN
Mom! Where’s Jesse?

Completely flustered and clearly intoxicated, Norma Jean fails to answer, but tries to sit up.

Jordan grabs Norma Jean’s shoulders.

JORDAN
Mom! Where is Jesse?

NORMA JEAN
She was right here. She was... I told her to stay where I can see her.

JORDAN
Mom!

Norma Jean stumbles to her feet.

NORMA JEAN
She was right here, Jordan.

JORDAN
How long has she been gone?

NORMA JEAN
(panic mode)
I closed my eyes for a second and...

JORDAN
Forget it, I'll find her.

Norma Jean wavers, then slowly lowers herself onto the couch.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - STREET - DUSK

Jordan pounds on a door. No answer.

She moves on to the next trailer.

JORDAN
Jesse?!

Jordan cuts between trailers and intently looks and listens.

A flicker of TV light in a window three trailers down and LAUGHTER of older kids grabs Jordan's attention.

She crosses to it and KNOCKS hard.

JORDAN
Jesse!?

INT. NEIGHBOR'S TRAILER - DUSK

The door cracks open. BLAKE (16) and ETHAN (16) watch a movie too loud playing on an old TV.

Cross-legged on the floor, wide-eyed and oblivious, Jesse watches the movie.

JORDAN
Jesse!

Jesse jolts and looks. Jordan, relieved but furious, steps in and takes Jesse's hand.

JORDAN
(to the teens, flat)
She’s seven.

BLAKE
Yeah, well she also just wandering over here by herself. What did you want us to do? Send her back home to the drunk?

Jordan holds, unsure what to say.

With Jesse by the hand, she storms out, pulling Jesse behind her.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - STREET - NIGHT

Jordan and Jesse walk back through the trailer park, hand in hand.

Jesse looks up at her.

JESSE
Am I in trouble?

JORDAN
No.

JESSE
Then why do you look so mad?

JORDAN
I’m not mad at you.

JESSE
Who are you mad at?

Jordan stops and takes a knee. She’s face to face with Jesse.

JORDAN
Don’t ever wander off like that again.

Jesse holds in fear of her sister.

JORDAN
I had no idea where you were. Mom didn’t even know you were gone.

JESSE
I told Mom I was gonna go play, and she got mad that I woke her up.

Jordan holds for a moment and processes the statement.

JESSE
Is Mom still mad?

JORDAN
Mom will get over it. Just... Please don't go where I can't find you. I don't want anything to happen to you. If you do it again, I'll probably have a heart attack, and I'm sure you don't want that, do you?

Jesse lets a small smile out.

JESSE
No.

Jordan pulls Jesse in tight, wraps her arms around her and squeezes.

JESSE
I miss our old house... And the trampoline.

Arms still wrapped around her sister, Jordan sinks into the moment.

JORDAN
Me too, Jesse. Me too.

Jordan stands and takes her by the hand.

Side by side they make their way back to the trailer.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Jordan leads Jesse in.

Norma Jean stumbles from the couch, drops to her knees, pulls Jesse into her.

NORMA JEAN
Oh, thank God.

Norma Jean pulls Jesse back out to arms length.

NORMA JEAN
Don't you ever, ever wander off like that again.

Jesse glances back up to Jordan for direction.

JORDAN
Jesse, go brush your teeth.

JESSE
K.

Jesse makes her way through the trailer and off down the hall.

The second the bathroom door CLICKS, Jordan turns to her mother and steps in close to her.

JORDAN
She was in a stranger's trailer with a couple teenage boys, watching God-knows-what, while you were passed out drunk.

Norma Jean holds in the embarrassment, unsure what to say.

JORDAN
Luckily, nothing bad happened.

NORMA JEAN
I had a hard day, and...

Jordan throws her hands up in defeat.

JORDAN
You always have a hard day, Mom!

Norma Jean's face crumples and she reaches for a chair, then lowers herself into it.

NORMA JEAN
I'm doing the best I can, Jordan.

JORDAN
This is your best?

NORMA JEAN
What do you want me to do? Your dad left us with nothing.

JORDAN
You can start by not getting so drunk that your seven year old daughter wanders off without you ever knowing.

Silence fills the room.

Norma Jean's eyes swell and tears fall.

JORDAN
(quietly)
Mom, you need help.

Norma Jean wipes a few tears away and responds only with a nod.

JORDAN
I’m not supposed to be the parent. I’m fourteen. I’m supposed to be out jumping on the trampoline and talking about which teacher I hate the worst, not out knocking on doors looking for my sister because you passed out on the couch feeling sorry for yourself.

The words hit. Norma Jean doesn't argue, just presses both hands over her mouth, cries, and nods.

The moment once again lingers.

Jordan lowers her guard and allows her mother’s visible pain to sink in.

With a hint of guilt from her outburst, Jordan steps into her mother and wraps her arms around her.

NORMA JEAN
I’m sorry.

JORDAN
Just... stop drinking, please.

Norma Jean, still wrapped in her daughter’s arms, nods.

With a little pep in her step, Jesse scuttles into the room in her pajamas.

JESSE
Done!

Jordan and Norma Jean release one another and turn to Jesse.

JESSE
Uh oh. I’m in trouble, huh?

NORMA JEAN
No. You’re not in trouble.
(waves Jesse over)
Come here.

Jesse approaches, still apprehensive.

Jordan stands by as Norma Jean pulls Jesse in for a group hug. The three of them stand like this for a beat.

NORMA JEAN
I'm sorry I haven't been the best mother lately.

JESSE
It's okay. Jordan does a pretty good job at it.

LAUGHTER filled with tears from Norma Jean says it all.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DOCK - DAY

Ashley sits at the end of the dock, guitar across her lap and notebook open to a blank page.

She holds her phone open. The unanswered "JJ" thread glows.

The patio door on the house slides open behind her.

ASHLEY
Dad?

Ashley turns to find ISABELLA (26), plump, the new maid, with a glass of tea in a mason jar.

Isabella approaches and hands Ashley the tea.

ISABELLA
I'm sorry, Miss Ashley. He just left for Tulsa ten minutes ago.

Ashley takes a sip, then lowers the jar onto the dock.

ASHLEY
Do you know when he'll be back, we were supposed to write?

Ashley looks up to see Isabella already half way back to the house.

Ashley lowers the phone and lifts the pen. She holds it to the blank page. Nothing.

Frustration overflowing, Ashley lowers her guitar, pen, and paper to the dock. She draws her knees up, and rests her chin on them.

Ashley's eyes begin to well with tears, but she fiercely brushes them away.

INT. TRAILER KITCHEN - DAY

Norma Jean sits slumped at the kitchen table.

An empty bottle of vodka sits next to her along with the divorce decree, now stained with sweat rings from the bottle and glass.

Jordan comes in from the back of the trailer, still half asleep. She holds at the sight of her mother and the mess on the table.

JORDAN
Have you been up all night?

Norma Jean doesn't respond.

Jordan walks to the table, gathers the divorce decree and slides them back into the envelope, then puts them into a kitchen drawer.

She grabs the empty vodka bottle and drops it into the trash. It CLINKS loudly against other empty bottles.

NORMA JEAN
(slurring, reaching out)
He's really not coming back.

JORDAN
I know, Mom.

NORMA JEAN
How could he do this to us?

JORDAN
I don't know.

Jordan hoists her mother up.

JORDAN
Let's get you to bed.

Norma Jean leans heavily on her, mumbling apologies.

NORMA JEAN
I'm sorry, Jordan.

JORDAN
I know.

Jordan half carries Norma Jean towards the hall.

INT. TRAILER - HALLWAY - DAY

Jordan guides Norma Jean into her room.

INT. TRAILER - NORMA JEANS ROOM - DAY

Jordan lowers Norma Jean into her bed and pulls her covers over her.

NORMA JEAN
You think I'm a bad mother.

Jordan holds.

JORDAN
Get some sleep.

Norma Jean rolls to her side, back towards Jordan.

NORMA JEAN
It's okay... You're not wrong.

Jordan swallows hard, about to speak, but doesn't. With a deep breath, she backs out of the room and closes the door behind her.

INT. TRAILER - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jordan hears her phone BUZZ and light up on the counter.

Jordan lifts it and takes a look. It's a new message from Ashley.

ASHLEY (TEXT)
Want to come over to the lake house tomorrow? We can work on the song.

The glow of the screen lights Jordan's face.

Jordan looks around the cramped, suffocating trailer. Her mother's cries can be heard through the thin walls.

Jordan texts.

JORDAN (TEXT)
Can't. Busy unpacking. Don't think I can work on the song anymore.

Jordan hits send, then turns the phone completely off and places it face-down on the counter.

INT. BIG SOUND RECORDS STUDIO - DAY

Jordan sits cross-legged in the rolling chair. Grable sits beside her.

With headsets, both half off, they watch Don through the window in the control room.

The song they wrote plays through the studio monitors, now fully orchestrated with the Don Murphy Band.

Don’s deep voice booms out with his backup singers doing harmony.

The track ends.

Grable peers over at Jordan. She shakes her head in disbelief.

GRABLE
What?

JORDAN
It’s crazy to think we wrote this. Like, a real song... Like on Spotify or iTunes or something.

GRABLE
Why is that crazy? You’re a talented writer.

JORDAN
(shrugs)
I guess I’ve really only had one other person believe in me like you do.

Grable smiles, looks at the floor. Slowly his eyes lift to Jordan.

GRABLE
Can I say something without it being weird?

JORDAN
That's a horrible way to start a not-weird thing to say.

Grable LAUGHS, but gently and more to himself.

GRABLE
Before you walked up to me on that bridge, I hadn't finished a song in like four months.

Jordan holds Grable's look and his genuine tone takes hold.

GRABLE
It's like... Like I was meant to be waiting for you.

Jordan peers between the chairs at Grable, deep in thoughts. Her heart pounds.

GRABLE
You know?

Grable inches closer, but just slightly.

JORDAN
(softly)
Yeah.

Jordan's eyes never leave Grable's.

The space between Jordan and Grable shrinks, both struggling to control their breaths.

Grable's phone BUZZES on the console between them.

Neither breaks, though the forward progress has paused.

They are but inches from one another.

GRABLE
I should probably.

JORDAN
Yeah, you probably should.

The phone continues to BUZZ, but ignored by Jordan and Grable.

GRABLE
Yeah.

JORDAN
Yeah.

Grable glances at it. Just a flick of the eyes.

The control room door swings open and Don enters with his glasses up, grinning like a child, quickly breaking the spell between the two.

DON
There she is.

Jordan takes a deep breath and looks up at Don.

Grable grabs his phone.

DON
Jordan are you sittin' down? Never mind, you're sittin' down.

Jordan lets a small CHUCKLE escape at Don's child-like enthusiasm, then turns to Grable.

Jordan notices Grable's slightly off key demeanor as he's locked on his phone.

JORDAN
(leans in quietly)
You okay?

Grable lowers his phone and snaps back to Jordan.

GRABLE
Huh? Yeah. Sorry. I just got a text from Sam, I guess she...

DON
Hey. Are you two payin' attention?

GRABLE
(whispers)
I'll fill you in later.
(to Don)
Locked in. What ya got for us?

DON
I played it for the label.

JORDAN
The song?

DON
No. Video games. Yeah the song.

Jordan glances at Grable who rolls his eyes at the failed joke attempt.

DON
It's on the album.

Jordan's eyes shift between Don and Grable, unsure whether she's heard correctly.

JORDAN
What do you mean, on the album?

DON
I mean, the song you and Grable here wrote is on the album. Track nine.

Jordan leaps from her chair and throws herself at Grable. She hugs him tight, nearly knocking him from his chair.

Jordan reaches over and shakes Don’s hand vigorously.

DON
I thought you might like that.

JORDAN
I don’t know what to say.

DON
So you’ll need to have a parent or guardian down here no later than the end of the day tomorrow so we can get the paperwork locked up and get this record out. Say four pm?

Jordan covers her mouth. Looks at Grable, then back at Don.

JORDAN
Okay. Yeah. Okay.

Don RAPS the doorframe and ducks back out. Grable grins at her.

GRABLE
Told ya.

Jordan LAUGHS. Grable smiles.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Jordan bursts through the door, still glowing, and stops short.

Norma Jean stands at the stove in clean clothes, hair pulled back, and stirs a pot. There’s a hint of a shake in her hands.

NORMA JEAN
(nervous smile)
Hey. I, uh. I made spaghetti.

Jordan holds in the doorway and assesses the situation.

JORDAN
It smells good.

NORMA JEAN
Yeah?

JORDAN
Yeah.

Norma Jean allows a genuine smile.

The moment is shared by Jordan.

Jesse barrels in with a book in hand, flies through the air, and tosses herself onto the couch.

Jordan watches as Jesse positions herself comfortably and opens the book.

JORDAN
(to Jesse)
Are you reading?

JESSE
(sarcastic)
Uh, Yeah.

JORDAN
Since when?

JESSE
Since always, Dufus.

Jordan shoots Jesse a little glare.

JORDAN
Lucky for you I have some amazing news, so I'm gonna not kill you right now.

JESSE
Well, lucky for you, you're still a Dufus.

JORDAN
Mom?

NORMA JEAN
Jesse stop.

JESSE
Fine. I'll leave the Dufus alone.

JORDAN
Mom!

NORMA JEAN
Jesse!

JESSE
Fine!

Jordan shoots an “I win” scrunch face look at Jesse.

Jesse mouths the words “Dufus” then sticks her tongue out at Jordan.

NORMA JEAN
So, what’s this amazing news?

JORDAN
There's this guy...

NORMA JEAN
A guy?

JORDAN
It’s not like that.

NORMA JEAN
I sure hope not.

JORDAN
It’s not. Mom, will you just listen for a second?

NORMA JEAN
Sorry, go ahead.

JORDAN
Anyway, Grable and I wrote a song together and showed it to his dad. And he loved it!

NORMA JEAN
K.

Jordan waits for the major reaction.

Norma Jean waits for the amazing part.

NORMA JEAN
I mean, you’ve always been a talented writer, Jordan. That’s not really a surprise to us.

JORDAN
What if I told you Grable’s dad is Don Murphy and he’s putting our song on his new album?

NORMA JEAN
THE Don Murphy?

Jordan nods her head with a huge grin.

NORMA JEAN
A record?

Norma Jean holds in disbelief.

The spaghetti boils over and quickly brings Norma Jean back into the moment. She quickly turns the stove off, then turns her attention back to Jordan.

With a clear love only a mother can convey with a look, Norma Jean approaches Jordan and wraps her arms around her.

NORMA JEAN
I don’t know what to say.

Jordan and Norma Jean pull apart, but only to arms length.

JORDAN
Can you go down to the studio with me tomorrow? I need a parent to sign the contract since I’m a minor.

NORMA JEAN
I wouldn’t miss it for the world.

Over Norma Jean’s shoulder, Jordan spots Jesse who mouths “Dufus” one more time.

Jordan sticks her tongue out at her sister, then both smile.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DOCK - NIGHT

Ashley sits at the end of the dock. Same spot. No guitar. Just her and the water.

The patio door SLIDES OPEN behind Ashley, and HEAVY FOOTSTEPS approach. Ashley continues her gaze out at the lake.

The footsteps stop and Brad sits down beside Ashley. She throws her arms around her dad.

ASHLEY
Dad!

BRAD
Your mama says you've been comin' out here dang near every night.

Ashley shrugs.

BRAD
Nice and quiet...
(gazes out)
Or lonely dependin’ on how you wanna see it.

ASHLEY
I guess.

BRAD
You been writin’?

ASHLEY
Tried.

Brad nods slowly.

BRAD
Nothin’ spillin’ out, huh?

ASHLEY
Not exactly.

BRAD
You know what you could do if you’re all stalled out?

ASHLEY
Call Jordan.

The comment slips out before she can stop it.

Both Brad and Ashley sit with it.

BRAD
There a reason you don’t?

Ashley hangs her head and thinks on the reply.

ASHLEY
I don’t know. Things just haven’t been the same since we left.

Brad sits up tall and takes a good look back at the house and his surroundings.

BRAD
Ain’t that the truth. You know things are getting pretty wild. I’m not going to have the time to sit and write with you very often like the other day.

ASHLEY
I know, Dad.

Brad doesn't say more, but puts an arm around Ashley. She leans in and her Jordan bracelet glints in the moonlight.

EXT. NASHVILLE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY

Jordan bounces toward downtown, notebook under her arm.

Off the bridge, Jordan continues downtown into the crowd.

EXT. BIG SOUND RECORDS - STREET SIDE - DAY

Jordan rounds the corner toward the studio with a smile that engulfs her completely.

EXT. BIG SOUND RECORDS - STUDIO ENTRANCE - DAY

Grable stands with SAM (15) pretty, long blond hair in a cute, short skirt. Both LAUGH, and stand within each others clear personal space.

A packed DUFFEL sits at Sam’s feet.

EXT. BIG SOUND RECORDS - STREET SIDE - DAY

Jordan comes to a screeching halt along with the smile she brought with her.

Tunnel vision consumes Jordan as she watches Grable pull Sam into a long, tight hug. Sam holds on.

Jordan is in utter dismay.

Grable and Sam eventually part, then she leans in and presses a kiss to his cheek.

He says something, but it’s too far for Jordan to hear. Sam wipes a tear from her eyes, LAUGHS, then picks up the duffel bag and heads off into the distance.

Grable is left behind watching.

With Sam gone, Grable scans the street, and nearly catches sight of Jordan. She steps behind the corner and places her back against the wall.

With her world crashing down around her, Jordan sinks down to the sidewalk, back still against the wall.

Undecided on her next move, she checks the time on her phone.

Eyes rapidly shifting, Jordan takes another peek around the corner from her rear end.

She watches as Grable glances down at his phone, dials, then places it to his ears. His eyes continue to scan the streets.

Jordan's phone BUZZES and she quickly pulls herself back around the corner and clocks her phone.

The screen reads: Grable, and shows a selfie of her and Grable in the studio, goofy, mid-laugh.

Heartbroken and unsure what to do, Jordan can only stare at the phone until it stops.

The phone BUZZES once more. A text drops down.

GRABLE (TEXT)
Hey, where are you?? Thought we were signing today.

In clear panic mode, Jordan is unsure how to respond.

Jordan rises to her feet and peeks out to get another look at Grable, but just in time to see him disappear into the studio.

BUZZ. Jordan glances at her phone again.

GRABLE (TEXT)
Jordan?

Jordan rolls back out of view from the studio and ponders her response as people, like her opportunity, pass by.

Jordan flips her phone and swallows her pride.

JORDAN (TEXT)
Hey, I'm running a little behind. Text me when my mom gets there to sign.

GRABLE (TEXT)
K. I was getting worried something happened.

Jordan lowers her phone and hurriedly walks away.

EXT. NASHVILLE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY

Jordan recrosses the bridge, head down.

Halfway across, Jordan stops at the rail, grips it and breathes.

Jordan lowers her forehead to her arms and sinks in the moment, defeated.

She sits on the bench where she and Grable once shared their moment.

Jordan reaches for her phone and texts Grable.

JORDAN (TEXT)
Has my mom been there to sign yet?

Jordan fires off another quick text to her mother.

JORDAN (TEXT)
Have you signed the contract yet?

Jordan watches pedestrians pass by as she impatiently waits.

BUZZ. Jordan quickly raises the phone.

GRABLE (TEXT)
She hasn't been here. We've been waiting for half an hour. Don said he can only wait another twenty minutes. Where are you?

Jordan's frustration and emotions overflow.

With deep controlled breaths to keep herself under control, she takes her phone and fires off one more text.

JORDAN (TEXT)
Mom!!! Where are you?

Jordan's patience at an end, she finds her mother's number, then presses call and places the phone to her ear.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

Jesse, lifts the phone from the table. The bottle of vodka, shot glass, and divorce decree still linger.

JESSE
Hello?

JESSE / JORDAN - PHONE CALL - INTERCUT

JORDAN
Jesse, where’s Mom?

JESSE
She’s asleep.

JORDAN
What do you mean asleep?

JESSE
I mean she’s asleep on the couch.

Jesse turns back to see Norma Jean passed out on the couch, face down, with one arm dangling to the floor.

JORDAN
Go wake her up.

JESSE
K.

Jesse gingerly approaches Norma Jean.

JESSE
Mom.

Norma Jean doesn’t move.

JESSE
Mom!

NORMA JEAN
(mumbling)
Jesse, go. Put on a movie or something.

Jesse holds a sad stare at her mother for a moment, then lifts the phone back to her ear.

JESSE
I don’t think Mom’s gonna wake up.

Jordan’s eyes shift, the realization hitting her.

JESSE
Jordan, can you come home? I don’t like being here by myself.

Jordan sinks into her self and life that she'll clearly be contending with.

JORDAN
Yeah. I'm on my way. Just stay inside till I get there please.

JESSE
K.

BACK TO SCENE

Jordan hangs up the phone and with a heavy heart, makes her way down the bridge.

INT. TRAILER - JORDAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Face-up on her bed, Jordan lies awake and stares at the ceiling. Jesse lies in her bed next to her.

The phone BUZZES and lights up on the floor. Once. Twice. Grable's name flashes, then dark.

Jordan never reaches for it.

INT. TRAILER - JORDAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jordan wakes to the sound of her phone BUZZING. Jesse is gone.

She glances to the phone and it reads: Unknown Number. She doesn't answer.

The phone BUZZES again. This time she answers.

JORDAN
(sleepily)
Hello?

BRAD (O.S.)
Jordan, this is Brad Foster, Ashley's dad.

Jordan instantly wakes and sits up.

JORDAN
Is everything okay?

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - PATIO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Seated, Brad looks out at the lake.

BRAD
For the most part.

INTERCUT - BRAD/JORDAN

Jordan listen’s intently.

BRAD
I’ll cut right to it. I need to ask a favor.

JORDAN
(tentatively)
Okay.

BRAD
Ashley’s having a rough go of it out here and she just ain’t been herself. I got a few hours booked at my label’s studio this Thursday and I was thinkin' maybe the two of y’all could come in and write somethin'.

Brad waits for a response.

JORDAN
I uh...

Brad senses the hesitation in Jordan’s voice.

BRAD
No pressure. Just you and her and a couple mics.

JORDAN
(hesitant)
I don’t know.

BRAD
She misses you.

JORDAN
She said that?

BRAD
She didn’t have to.

Jordan again falls silent for a moment.

BRAD
Thursday from four to six. It’s two hours.

Jordan looks out her filth covered windows at the other trailers in the park.

JORDAN
Thursday's fine.

BRAD
Thank you.

JORDAN
Yeah.

Jordan hangs up the phone and falls back onto her bed.

EXT. NASHVILLE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY

Jordan crosses the bridge, backpack on, notebook held to her chest and earbuds in.

Head down, Jordan passes the spot where she met Grable without a glance.

EXT. 16TH AVENUE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jordan rounds the corner and walks ahead comparing addresses to the one Brad texted. Suddenly she freezes. She's standing in front of the same studio she and Grable wrote in! She checks the address in the text to be sure of the address. Yep.

At a loss, she looks up and down the street as if looking for an answer. Finally, she climbs the stairs and timidly opens the door.

EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - DAY

Ashley, in designer clothes, walks down the front steps.

DARRELL (30) muscular, holds the door open to a black SUV.

DARRELL
Afternoon, Miss Ashley. How was school?

Ashley climbs in the back seat. Darrell closes the door and makes his way to the driver's side and climbs in.

INT. SUV - DAY

ASHLEY
Darrell, I don't fit in here. No one really likes me. They think I'm country, and I guess I am.

DARRELL
Now you can't say that. You're smart, you're beautiful, and a great singer too! It's just gonna take some time, Miss Ashley.

ASHLEY
You're the only person I can talk to anymore. Mom and Dad are too busy. My best friend won't talk to me.

DARRELL
Now I know that ain't true. Friendship takes work. You just keep working, and you'll have more friends than you can count in no time. You're on the way to meet Jordan, right?

ASHLEY
Yea, I hope it works out.

Ashley slumps in the backseat, unconvinced.

INT. NASHVILLE RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Jordan comes in the same studio where so much magic happened with Grabble. Alone, she slumps on the couch, checks the clock. 4:00 pm.

With one foot tapping the floor, Jordan's impatience grows. She reaches for her phone and scrolls.

Ashley bursts through the door, guitar case in hand.

The clock reads 4:05.

ASHLEY
Hey.

JORDAN
(not looking up)
Your dad said four.

ASHLEY
Yeah, I know. Traffic.

A bit peeved, Jordan allows her eyes to shift to Ashley.

JORDAN
I walked here from school.

ASHLEY
Understood. Sorry.

JORDAN
Your dad said we have the studio for 2 hours, so let's get it done and over with.

Ashley sets her guitar case on the couch, unlatches it, pulls out her guitar and starts to tune it.

ASHLEY
Right. So... Duet, just like old times?

Jordan flips her notebook open and grabs her pen.

JORDAN
(opening notebook)
Verse, chorus, bridge. Something simple. We have two...

Jordan glances at the clock.

JORDAN
Correction one hour and fifty two minutes to write and record.

Jordan's phone BUZZES. She takes a quick glance at the screen.

GRABLE (TEXT)
Hey. I'm not sure what's going on, but can you please call me. I'm getting worried.

Just as fast as she reads it, she turns off the screen and flips it over.

ASHLEY
Who was that?

JORDAN
No one important.

Ashley's guitar is tuned.

ASHLEY
Ready?

JORDAN
Yup.

Jordan writes, then stops. She looks up at Ashley who already has eyes on her, waiting for a line.

JORDAN
Remember when we used to write together all the time?

ASHLEY
You say that like I'd forget, JJ.

A bit hurt, Jordan turns back to her notebook.

JORDAN
Right. So... Growing up? Change? Moving forward?

ASHLEY
Moving forward works. Seems a little fitting, considering.

JORDAN
Considering what?

ASHLEY
Nothing.

With a bit of attitude, Jordan allows her eyes to fade back to her notebook.

Jordan writes in her notebook.

QUICK SHOTS

- Ashley plays chord progressions softly, testing melodies.

- They work separately, occasionally glancing at each other.

RETURN TO SCENE

After a moment, Jordan looks up.

JORDAN
Okay, I have something.

The clock reads: 4:15.

Ashley pulls up a chair and sits beside Jordan.

Jordan reads from her notebook, voice tentative.

JORDAN
We used to talk for hours/
Never worried about the day/
Was that small and simple/
When you were just a step away/

Ashley glances up at Jordan.

ASHLEY
That's... Kind of sad.

JORDAN
It's real.

ASHLEY
Can we do something people actually want to hear?

JORDAN
People? Or your dad?

ASHLEY
What is your problem?

JORDAN
I don’t have a problem. I have a verse. You have an opinion!

Ashley rises.

ASHLEY
Why ask if you don’t want to hear what I have to say?

After a moment of silence, Jordan crosses out lines in her notebook.

Ashley picks up her guitar and plays to help drown out the awkwardness.

The clock reads: 4:30 PM.

Neither have an idea that works.

Ashley stops. Something in her sparks and she quickly lowers her guitar.

ASHLEY
Let me try the second verse.

Jordan drops her notebook on the couch, sits back and crosses her arms.

Ashley grabs her iPad, types fast, pounding on the keys.

Jordan watches, arms crossed, jaw tight.

After a moment, Ashley picks up her guitar and plays a more upbeat melody.

ASHLEY
(singing softly)
Every ending starts a brand new day/
The future's calling, we can't stay/

Jordan considers for a moment.

JORDAN
Hallmark card.

ASHLEY
Then you write something... And happy for once.

JORDAN
I write what’s true.

ASHLEY
True for who? For the girl who thinks the whole world owes her something?

JORDAN
No, for the girl who takes the bus to school. Not a limo.

A silence fills the room, leaving only the HUM of the lights.

Both Jordan and Ashley face away from each other.

The clock reads: 4:40.

ASHLEY
You know what? Forget it. This was a stupid idea anyway.

Ashley packs up, moves toward the door, and grabs the doorknob.

JORDAN
You stopped calling.

Ashley's hand freezes on the doorknob.

ASHLEY
You stopped answering.

Ashley turns around, still at the door. They hold a look.

JORDAN
You moved away.

ASHLEY
So did you, and in case you don't remember, it's not like I had a choice, just like you didn't.

Jordan holds on the thought for a moment.

ASHLEY
You're literally the only person I know who could care less about how popular my dad is.

Finally, a flicker of empathy in Jordan's eyes, but the anger remains.

JORDAN
You haven't even invited me over.

ASHLEY
You haven't invited me over, and yes, I did. Remember? You just said I'm too busy unpacking.
(beat)
You want me to pull up the text?

Jordan takes a deep breath and ponders her response.

JORDAN
Why would you want to go to a trailer park when you have an amazing house on the lake, and a whole new group of popular friends to hang out with?

Ashley looks away and her anger deflates. She moves away from the door and sets the guitar case down slowly. Still distant, but no longer out the door.

ASHLEY
To hang out with you.

Jordan lowers her head and a silence fills the air.

Both Ashley and Jordan hold in silence, each unsure of how to move forward or what to say.

Ashley opens her guitar case back up, removes her guitar and places it on her lap. She plays a few chords with no pretense this time. Just pure emotion from the moment.

Jordan's interest is piqued and she turns to Ashley and listens.

Jordan lifts her pencil, flips open her notebook, and with an invigorated renewal, writes.

JORDAN
Play that again.

Ashley repeats the melody. Jordan writes, crosses out, writes again.

JORDAN
What if we... What if the bridge is about accepting change?

ASHLEY
Not fighting it?

JORDAN
Not pretending it didn't happen.

The tip of Jordan's pen races across the notebook as she writes: "A bridge only stands if both sides hold".

Ashley leans over Jordan's shoulder and reads the line.

ASHLEY
That's it! That's the line!

QUICK SHOTS

- Ashley strums her guitar.

- Jordan writes.

- With smiles both girls happily discuss the song while they work.

- Ashley and Jordan sing a small section together and agree on the melody and verses.

BACK TO SCENE

The clock reads: 5:32 PM.

JORDAN
(singing)
We used to talk for hours/
Never worried about the day...

Ashley joins in and finds the harmony.

ASHLEY
(singing)
Was that small and simple/
When you were just a step away/

Jordan and Ashley share a look of excitement and continue to sing together.

JORDAN/ASHLEY
(singing)
But time can slip between us/
Like a river running wild/
Somehow we stopped crossing/
To the other side/

MOMENTS LATER

Jordan writes alone again, Ashley reads over her shoulder.

They're both in the moment. Everything else forgotten.

ASHLEY
Okay, I love this bridge.

BOTH
(tentatively)
If both sides hold/
We can build it back together/
If both sides hold/
We can walk across the weather/

They stop and stare at one another.

Suddenly they jump and scream, touching but not quite hugging, like the two fourteen-year-old girls they are.

The reality of the moment hits and they part, but both still over the moon.

JORDAN
This is good... Like, really good.

ASHLEY
Yeah.

RECEPTIONIST
(over the intercom)
Fifteen minutes girls.

JORDAN
I miss this.

ASHLEY
Me too.

They share a sad, yet hopeful expression.

ASHLEY
We should record.

An uncontrollable smile emerges on both girls.

INT. NASHVILLE RECORDING STUDIO - BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Jordan and Ashley stand in front of two mics, headsets around their necks.

Ashley STRUMS her guitar a few times and adjust the levels on the mixer in front of her.

JORDAN
Check. Check.

Ashley pulls back from the mixer and readies herself.

ASHLEY
Ready?

Jordan responds with a nod.

Ashley pushes the record button and moves back into place.

Jordan and Ashley stand face to face and count each other in.

MONTAGE - SONG PLAYS OVER

JORDAN/ASHLEY
(singing)
If both sides hold/

- Jordan sings. Genuine emotion finally breaks through her careful control.

- Ashley’s voice is warm, amplified, by the quiet weight of their widening worlds.

- Jordan sings. A single tear sheds she doesn't wipe away.

- Ashley notices and gives her a supportive smile as they continue to sing.

- The two of them in the studio, the space between them still present, but the music bridging the gap.

- They sing the first verse, chorus, and bridge.

- Nothing but pure pleasure from Ashley and Jordan.

BACK TO SCENE

The song ends.

Jordan and Ashley stand back, emotionally exhausted. They can only smile at each other. No words.

INT. NASHVILLE RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Ashley moves to the console and saves. Jordan steps in next to her.

Ashley clicks replay, and they listen to the playback together. They share a smile.

Jordan moves back to the couch and gathers her belongings.

The recording plays softly in the background.

ASHLEY
JJ?

JORDAN
Yeah?

ASHLEY
I'm glad you came today.

JORDAN
(small, sad smile)
Me too, Ash.

Jordan continues to pack up her things and Ashley does the same.

Their movements are slow, neither wanting to be the first to leave.

The clock reads: 5:55 PM.

They stand awkwardly by the door.

Ashley holds out her hand, the little finger crooked.

They “pinky swear”, then drop their arms.

JORDAN
See you around?

ASHLEY
Sure.

EXT. NASHVILLE RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Jordan and Ashley exit the building together.

Darrell holds the door open for Ashley’s SUV.

Jordan walks away, both backpack and heart heavy.

The distance between them grows.

Jordan looks back once.

Ashley stands beside the car door and peers back at Jordan as she walks away.

Ashley almost calls out, but doesn't.

After a short moment, Ashley climbs into the SUV.

INT. SUV - DAY

Ashley settles into her seat and Darrell closes the door.

On her phone, Ashley sends a quick text, then drops her phone on to the seat beside her.

EXT. NASHVILLE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY

Jordan walks across the bridge carrying her backpack. Her phone BUZZES.

Still moving forward, Jordan pulls her phone from her pocket and sees an attachment from Ashley.

Jordan doesn’t open the attachment, but rather slides her phone back into her pocket and continues forward across the bridge.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - PATIO - DAY

Ashley sits on the patio steps, phone in hand, still riding the high of the studio.

Brad exits the house with two sweet teas in mason jars and lowers himself next to Ashley. He hands her one.

BRAD
Darrell said you must a had quite the time today. Said he seen the first real smile on you in a month.

Ashley smiles again, truly happy, as she once was.

BRAD
I’m glad you enjoyed yourself.

ASHLEY
You wanna hear it?

Brad shoots a look of “seriously” at Ashley.

BRAD
Come on now.

With renewed vigor, Ashley thumbs her phone, finds the song and presses play. She holds the phone up between them.

The opening of "If Both Sides Hold" drifts out of the tiny speaker.

Brad goes still. He lowers his tea and listens with true intrigue.

The clip ends and both sit in the moment for a long beat.

BRAD
You write that?

ASHLEY
Me and Jordan.

BRAD
Baby, that’s a hit.

ASHLEY
Stop. You’re just saying that because you’re my dad.

BRAD
Come on now... You know me better than that. If it weren’t no good, I’d a told you what needs fixin.

ASHLEY
I suppose.

Brad lifts his tea.

BRAD
I suppose, she says.

Brad takes a sip from his tea and savors the flavor.

BRAD
I’m glad to hear you and Jordan got things worked out.

She turns to her father.

ASHLEY
The whole thing felt...
(finds the word)
Right.

Brad reaches his hand out to Ashley for the phone. She places it in his hand. He scrolls back and plays the chorus again.

ASHLEY
It was almost like we never left.

Brad pauses the song and nods to Ashley, though it seems his thoughts have gone somewhere else.

BRAD
Go on and send me that.

Ashley taps the screen and sends the song to Brad.

ASHLEY
You think things will ever go back to the way they were?

Brad holds on the moment, shrugs.

INT. BIG SOUND RECORDS - A&R OFFICE - DAY

Glass and gold records line the walls.

RANDALL PIKE (54) sits behind a large desk with a nameplate that reads “Randall Pike / A&R”

Brad and Ashley sit across from him. "If Both Sides Hold" plays from a speaker on the credenza. It ends.

Randall taps a pen and nods slow, deep in thought.

RANDALL
That's the one. That's the debut.

Ashley lights up.

ASHLEY
Really?

RANDALL
As soon as we get you back in to track it solo, we...

ASHLEY
Wait. Cut Jordan's part?

RANDALL
I had a feeling that may be an issue.

Ashley looks to her father with concern.

RANDALL
When was the last time you heard a duet on the radio?

Ashley can only shrug and shake her head unsure of the correct answer.

RANDALL
It’s because they ain’t movin’ right now. Radio wants a face. One face. They’re looking to sell a personality, just as much as a song. Your personality.

ASHLEY
But it’s a duet. We wrote it as a duet. Jordan wrote the lyrics and...

RANDALL
And as a writer, she’ll get her split, and credit. Ain’t nobody stealin’ nothin’ from her. But the artist on the cover, that’s you.

Randall hits the intercom.

RANDALL
Janie, can you bring in our standard artist contract, please?

ASHLEY
Dad.

Brad shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

BRAD
Unfortunately this is how it works, baby. I'd give my right arm for a debut this strong.

ASHLEY
What about Jordan?

BRAD
Baby, if Jordan's a true friend, I think she'll understand.

Ashley grows evermore agitated.

ASHLEY
She won't, and neither do I.

Randall leans back in his chair and looks across at Ashley and Brad as he examines the situation.

RANDALL
Take the weekend to think on it. Let's talk on Monday.

JANIE (25) brings in a folder and hands it to Randall, who pushes it to Ashley.

ASHLEY
(quietly to Brad)
I'm not cutting her out.

Brad and Randall trade a look as Ashley gathers her things and leaves alone.

INT. BIG SOUND RECORDS - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Brad checks his phone and moves down the hall.

Don rounds the corner from the opposite direction.

DON
Foster! There he is.

They shake hands.

BRAD
Heard the new album's comin' along.

DON
Better than comin' along. My son Grable found himself an incredible cowriter this week. Wrote a song that put me right on the floor.

BRAD
That right?

DON
Fourteen years old. Wrote a second verse that I'm still thinkin' about two days later. Line like that, I couldn't have written at forty, let alone fourteen.

BRAD
(chuckling)
Careful, Don. Ain't good for the ego, gettin' shown up by a kid.

DON
Tell me about it.

DON
Puttin' the song on my record. As hers. Her and my boy's names both on it.

BRAD
That's a hell of a gift to hand a kid.

DON
Ain't a gift. It's just how it's supposed to work. I don't take a kid's name off the thing they made. Not while it's got my name on it.

Brad gives a short laugh, claps Don on the shoulder.

BRAD
Well, look at you. Regular saint of Music Row.

DON
Somebody's gotta be.

BRAD
Give my best to the missus.

Brad continues down the hall. Don walks the other way.

Brad reaches the exit, hand on the door, and stops.

He glances back down the now empty hall, a troubled look on his face.

After a moment, he pushes through the door and out into the daylight.

INT. TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

Norma Jean sits at the table and fidgets with a cup of coffee. A bottle of vodka on the table.

Jordan enters from the hall with Jesse's backpack.

Ready for school, Jesse follows behind.

NORMA JEAN
Jordan.

Jordan ignores Norma Jean and guides Jesse towards the door.

NORMA JEAN
Jordan!

Jordan stops, but doesn't turn back.

NORMA JEAN
I’m sorry.

JORDAN
For what this time?

Norma Jean swallows her pride, then speaks.

NORMA JEAN
I know I was supposed to meet you in town to sign.

JORDAN
You’re sorry?

Jordan turns to her mother with an are-you-serious look.

JORDAN
You were passed out, Mom. All I needed was one parent, for one signature. Just one and since dad clearly ain’t here, my entire future depended on it being you.

Norma Jean's eyes fill with tears and she rises from the table.

NORMA JEAN
Maybe we can call ‘em. I'll...

JORDAN
Don Murphy waited an hour for you. Don Murphy!

NORMA JEAN
I know, and I’m sorry.

JORDAN
I know. You keep saying that.

Jesse appears frozen, taking it all in.

Jordan grabs Jesse and opens the door.

JORDAN
(to Jesse)
Let’s go or we’re gonna miss the bus.

Jordan walks Jesse out, then SLAMS the door behind her.

Alone, Norma Jean sinks back into her chair at the table, her eyes fall on the bottle of vodka.

After a moment, Norma Jean rises with a determination, grabs the bottle, then moves to the sink and empties it down the drain.

The door opens and Jordan steps back in. She stops dead in her tracks, eyes on her mother at the sink.

Empty bottle in her hand, Norma Jean turns her tear filled eyes to her daughter.

NORMA JEAN
You’re right.

Jordan begins to speak, but holds.

NORMA JEAN
I'm not gonna stand here and promise you the world, seein’ as you’ve heard it before.

JORDAN
Mom, I can’t keep...

NORMA JEAN
You won’t have to.
(beat)
The last thing I want to do is drag you and your sister down with me.

JORDAN
I hope you’re right this time.

Norma Jean responds only with a heartbroken nod.

Jordan grabs her backpack from the floor, then makes her way out the door, closing it behind her.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - PATIO - NIGHT

Ashley sits at the table, contract folder in front of her, pen in hand.

She opens the folder and stares at the signature line.

Ashley lifts the pen and holds it to the page. She’s frozen, unable to sign.

Ashley SLAPS the folder closed and sets the pen down, then pulls out her phone and opens it to the thread to "JJ."

ASHLEY (TEXT)
I have to tell you something.

Ashley’s thumb hovers over send, but never pushes down.

After a short moment of thought, Ashley deletes the text, then drops her phone onto the table.

Ashley wraps her arms around her knees, tucking in tight. The "Jordan" bracelet glints in the moonlight.

INT. TRAILER - JORDAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jordan and Jesse lie in their beds, Jordan eyes wide and staring at the ceiling, unable to sleep. Jesse, passed out and sprawled across her bed, snores softly.

Jordan sits up, then scoots back against the wall and grabs her notebook.

She opens the notebook and places it on her knees, then writes quickly, crosses it out, tries again.

Jordan’s phone lights up on the floor. The screen reads: GRABLE.

Jordan glances at the phone and continues to let it BUZZ.

The light on the phone goes out, then lights again with a text from Grable.

Jordan lifts the phone and takes a look.

GRABLE (TEXT)
Jordan, can you please call me and
let me know what’s going on?

Jordan stares at the message. Her thumb hovers, then she presses the power button and tosses the phone onto the mattress.

She returns to her notebook and the blank page.

INT. TRAILER - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Norma Jean, clear-eyed and sober, sits on the couch with Jesse under one arm.

Jordan sprawls on the floor with her notebook.

On the ancient TV a local entertainment segment plays.

A REPORTER (35) stands outside a popular music venue.

REPORTER
(on TV)
...and you cannot talk about Nashville right now without talking about Brad Foster, whose single just cracked the Billboard top ten.

Jordan stops and listens.

REPORTER
(on TV)
But the real buzz tonight is all about a Foster you haven't heard of yet. Sources say Big Sound Records is fast-tracking a debut single from Brad's fourteen-year-old daughter, Ashley. A self-written song insiders are already calling the song of the summer.

Jordan sits up and listens intently as a clip of the song plays.

Norma Jean and Jesse rise in their seats.

NORMA JEAN
Isn’t that the studio you...

JORDAN
That’s our song!

Jordan rises to her feet.

JORDAN
Are you kidding me right now? That's MY song! I wrote that, not her.

NORMA JEAN
Jordan.

JORDAN
What? She's putting her name on it like I never existed.

Jordan paces, then makes a break for the door.

Norma Jean quickly rises to her feet.

JORDAN
Jordan, where are you going?

JORDAN
I’m gonna go call her out. That’s where I’m going.

NORMA JEAN
It's six o'clock at night.

JORDAN
So what? She stole my song and I’m not gonna just sit by and let her get away with it.

NORMA JEAN
Well she's also an hour across town, by car, and behind a gate.

JORDAN
So.

NORMA JEAN
So nothing’s gonna get fixed tonight. We’ll reach out in the morning and figure out what’s going on. Maybe this is all just a misunderstanding.

JORDAN
The only misunderstanding is who wrote the song.

Bitter and ready to explode, Jordan holds for a moment, then storms off back towards her room.

The door down the hall SLAMS.

Norma Jean, with a worried expression, peers over at Jesse, silent on the couch.

JESSE
Did Ashley really steal Jordan’s song?

NORMA JEAN
I don’t know, Baby, but we’ll find out tomorrow.

INT. TRAILER - JORDAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Jesse is fast asleep, sprawled sideways across her mattress, clutching a worn stuffed animal. She breathes softly.

Jordan paces between the beds. She stops at her small dresser. On it sits her notebook, open to the lyrics of "If Both Sides Hold."

Jordan stares down at the page. In the margin, there is a silly doodle of a stick-figure band they drew while laughing on the studio couch.

She looks down at her wrist. At the "Ashley" bracelet.

With a sudden jerk she tries to rip it off, but the elastic holds. It pinches her skin, leaving a red welt.

She grabs the notebook and hurls it across the room with everything she has.

SLAP!

The notebook hits the wall hard. It’s spine cracks as it flutters to the floor, pages bent.

Jesse jolts, rubbing her eyes, looking around the dark room.

JESSE
(sleepy)
JJ?

Jordan tries to smooth her voice.

JORDAN
Go back to sleep.

Jesse looks at the notebook lying crumpled on the floor, then up at Jordan’s shadow.

JESSE
Are you gonna go to sleep?

JORDAN
In a minute.

Jesse hesitates, then pulls her blanket up to her chin. She rolls over, her back to Jordan, but her eyes stay open in the dark.

INT. TRAILER - KITCHEN - MORNING

Norma Jean stands at the counter with a cup of coffee.

She turns to find Jordan posted behind her.

JORDAN
I need to go see Ashley.

NORMA JEAN
Jordan, you know she's at school right?

JORDAN
Don't care.

NORMA JEAN
Where you should be.

JORDAN
Still don't care.

With a SIGH and nod, Norma Jean gives in.

NORMA JEAN
Let me get your sister up, and I'll drive you.

JORDAN
(appreciative)
You don't have to.

NORMA JEAN
I know I haven't exactly been there for you lately like I should have been, so I'm gonna be there now.

Jordan gives a weak smile.

Norma Jean picks up the keys.

JORDAN
I'll go grab Jesse.

Jordan heads off the get Jesse.

EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - STREET - MORNING

Norma Jean and Jordan sit in their dented, rusty sedan, across the street from the exclusive girl's school. Waiting.

Jesse sits in the back, clearly bored, and upside down in the seat.

NORMA JEAN
Want me to come with you?

JORDAN
No.

JESSE
I'll go.

JORDAN
No!

NORMA JEAN
No!

Norma Jean and Jordan share a quick look.

NORMA JEAN
I'll be here if you need me.

Jordan shoots her mother a genuine smile, then leans in and hugs her. They release the embrace.

NORMA JEAN
Go!

Jordan gives a quick nod of the head, then hops out and closes the door.

EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - DAY

Jordan stands beside the car and scans the mass of arriving girls with an intensity in her eyes.

SUV's and black sedans disgorge girls at the curb.

EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - ENTRANCE - DAY

Jordan stands across the street, out of place in her hoodie and worn sneakers. She scans each face like an FBI profiler.

Through the crowd, Jordan sees Ashley, flanked by Brittany and two other cheer girls as they pile out of one SUV together. They all smile and LAUGH.

The "Jordan" bracelet still hasn't left Ashley's wrist.

With a bitter determination, Jordan crosses the street.

JORDAN
(shouts)
Ashley!

Ashley turns. She spots Jordan headed her way as the color drains from her face.

Jordan approaches, now face to face with Ashley.

ASHLEY
JJ, what are you doing here?

Brittany and the other two cheer girls stand behind Ashley and listen in.

JORDAN
What's the name of the song?

ASHLEY
What do you mean?

JORDAN
The single. Your big debut. The self-written one.

Jordan steps closer.

Caught off guard, Ashley freezes, unable to answer.

JORDAN
What's it called, Ashley?

Brittany and the cheer girls exchange delighted glances. A scene, and they've got front-row seats.

Brittany pulls out her cell and starts recording.

Ashley glances back at Brittany and the other two. Her cheeks burn.

JORDAN
(low, urgent)
Can we not do this here?

JORDAN
What’s it called, Ashley? Say the name.

ASHLEY
Jordan...

JORDAN
Say it!

Ashley holds for a beat and her eyes fill with tears.

ASHLEY
(quietly)
If Both Sides Hold.

The words hit Jordan hard.

Jordan gives a soft LAUGH.

JORDAN
Self-written. By Ashley Foster.

ASHLEY
That's not... That's the label, Jordan, not me. I would never say that.

JORDAN
You sent it to your dad, didn’t you?

ASHLEY
I sent it to you first, JJ. I swear.

JORDAN
And THEN you let them take it.

ASHLEY
JJ.

JORDAN
You stood out there at your fancy lake house and let them put your name on the one real thing you and I made together.

Brittany leans into Ashley from behind.

BRITTANY
(whispers)
Is that the trailer park girl?

Ashley wheels on her.

ASHLEY
Brittany, shut UP!

Jordan grabs the Ashley bracelet on her wrist and works it off.

JORDAN
Everyone in my life either leaves me or takes advantage of me. But you know the worst part? I walked into that studio thinking it could be like it was before. That you were there for me.

Jordan holds the bracelet up to Ashley.

JORDAN
But I guess that was my mistake, not yours. Stay away from me. Forever!

Jordan chucks the bracelet at Ashley and it bounces off her chest.

Ashley glances down and watches the bracelet hit the ground at her feet.

Furious, Jordan storms back across the street to her mother and Jesse in the car.

ASHLEY
(choking on the words)
I never signed it, JJ!

But Jordan's already gone. She climbs into the car and slams the door behind her.

Ashley bends and picks up the bracelet from the ground.

Brittany and the others drift away and head into the school.

INT. CAR - PRIVATE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Jordan drops into the passenger seat and stares straight ahead, shaking and fuming.

Norma Jean reaches over and places a hand on Jordan's shoulder. She's about to speak, but chooses to say nothing.

Jordan crumples into her mother's arms and SOBS.

Jesse slowly rotates herself up right in the back seat, and silently watches her sister break.

After a long beat, Jordan sits up and wipes her tears away.

Norma Jean reaches into her purse and removes a tissue, then hands it to Jordan.

Jordan wipes her tears.

Jesse reaches over the seat and wraps her arms around Jordan.

Norma Jean places the car in drive and pulls away.

EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - DAY

Norma Jeans car pulls out into traffic and heads off down the road.

Ashley stands and watches.

INT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY - LATER

The room is bright, sterile, and quiet.

MR. HARRIS (43) drones on at the whiteboard, writing out calculus equations.

Ashley sits near the back and stares blankly at her desk.

Her eyes are red-rimmed. The "Ashley" bracelet is clutched tightly in her left hand, hidden beneath her desk. She still wears the “Jordan” bracelet.

A sudden burst of stifled GIGGLES erupts.

Ashley turns, and three desks over Brittany is huddled with two other cheer girls.

They all lean in close, heads over Brittany’s phone.

On the screen, Jordan’s face is frozen on pause.

Brittany taps play and a quiet playback of Jordan’s voice leaks out: "...and let them put your name on the one real thing you and I made together.”

The girls press their hands over their mouths and shake with silent, cruel laughter.

One of the girls glances at Ashley, then whispers something to Brittany.

Brittany smirks and taps the screen to loop it again.

Ashley’s blood runs cold.

MR. HARRIS
(without turning from the board)
Ladies in the back, let's keep your focus on the derivatives.

Never looking up, Brittany whispers loudly to the girl next to her.

BRITTANY
(loud whisper)
I mean, look at her shoes. Did she get them from a dumpster? And Ashley’s just standing there crying like...

A CHAIR SCRAPES violently against the floor as Ashley rises to her feet, then crosses the gap between their desks.

Brittany looks up, her smug smile falters as Ashley towers above her.

BRITTANY
What? It's just a video.

Ashley lunges and snatches the phone out of Brittany’s hands.

BRITTANY
Hey! Give it back!

Without hesitation, Ashley raises the phone high and hurls it to the floor, then STOMPS on it.

The screen shatters and pieces skitter across the floor.

The classroom goes dead silent.

Mr. Harris freezes, marker suspended in mid-air.

Brittany stares at whats left of her phone, then instantly goes flush with anger.

BRITTANY
(screaming)
You broke my phone, Psycho!

Ashley stands over Brittany. Her chest heaves and her hands tremble with a mixture of rage and adrenaline.

ASHLEY
Record me again and see what happens... I dare you.

Mr. Harris finally drops his marker and turns.

MR. HARRIS
Ashley Foster! Principal’s office. Now.

Ashley grabs her backpack, slings it over one shoulder, then walks out of the room.

INT. RECORD LABEL - DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Don sits behind his desk and listens to Jordan an Grable’s track on his credenza speakers.

Grable stands on the other side of the desk.

Don taps a button and cuts the music. The silence is heavy.

GRABLE
All I’m saying is if you cut that track, you’re cutting not only Jordan, but me and what we both know is a potential number one.

DON
Potential or not, I can’t put a track on my record that I don’t own, and without a signature, I don’t own it.

GRABLE
I’ll get you the signature.

DON
Son, you can lead a horse to water, but...

GRABLE
But you can’t make it drink, yeah I know. But she’s not a horse.

DON
I don't know what's wrong with you kids today. I hand you both an opportunity on a silver platter, and you throw it away.

Grable gestures toward the speakers.

GRABLE
She’s fourteen, Dad. She can’t sign it anyway. Don’t take this away from her because her mom screwed up.

DON
I was talking about you and Sam. You and your sister seem to wanna squander away anything handed to ya.

Don thinks on the comment.

DON
But maybe that’s on me for not makin’ y’all earn it.

GRABLE
We aren’t running. We’re doing exactly what you just said we’re not... Trying to earn it on our own. But I’m here now, and I’m asking for help. I know your "my way or the highway" attitude is how you got where you are, but if you lock Jordan out now, you’re proving you care more about control than me and the music.

Don stares at Grable, his eyes drilling holes.

Don adjusts his cuffs, his voice drops to a cold, flat register.

DON
Tomorrow by five.

GRABLE
(all smiles)
Thank you.

DON
(cutting him off)
If Jordan and a parent aren’t in those chairs with a pen in their hands by 5:00 PM tomorrow, the spot is gone.

Grable rises to his feet and makes for the door, then exits.

DON
(sotto)
Damn kids.

Don turns Jordan and Grable’s track back on and listens.

INT. FOSTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lucy paces the length of the kitchen, a printed email from the school in hand. She vibrates with anger, half panicked.

Ashley sits at the island and stares down at her hands.

Brad stands near the refrigerator and pours himself a glass of water. He watches the scene quietly.

LUCY
A three day suspension, Ashley! For property damage and "threatening behavior"? Do you have any idea how fragile this all is?

ASHLEY
Brittany was sharing a video of me and mocking Jordan!

LUCY
I don't care if she was sharing your bank account! You do not break other people’s stuff like trailer trash.

Ashley’s head whips to her mother.

ASHLEY
Funny, that’s what Brittany called Jordan.

Lucy takes a second to gather herself.

LUCY
I called the headmaster personally and apologized to Brittany’s mother, and I expect you to do the same to Brittany.

Ashley keeps her jaw clenched.

LUCY
We’re about to launch your single and something this stupid can end it all like that.

Lucy SNAPS her fingers.

Brad continues to monitor the situation.

LUCY
The label is watching everything you do...
(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)
And they're not the only ones. If the press gets hold of a school suspension for violent behavior...

ASHLEY
Is that all you care about? The label and the press?

Lucy stops dead, walks over to Ashley, leans over her.

LUCY
I care about keeping us out of our old house and going back to counting pennies at the grocery store checkout, or praying the card won't decline.

ASHLEY
Mom, that's not...

LUCY
We finally have a life and a future where you don't have to worry about survival and you're willing to throw it straight in the trash for someone who won't even return your calls.

Ashley looks like she's been slapped.

LUCY
Jordan's an anchor, Ashley. She's dragging herself down, and if you keep holding onto her, she'll take you down with her.

Lucy grabs her car keys off the counter and heads to the door.

LUCY
I'm going to pay for Brittany's phone and you're gonna write an apology letter, because you obviously can't call her.

Lucy exits and slams the door behind her.

Ashley, head down, waits for the lecture from Brad.

Brad holds his position and takes a sip of his water.

Gradually, Brad approaches Ashley, but doesn't sit.

Ashley slowly looks up at Brad, her eyes defensive.

Brad looks toward the door where Lucy left, then looks back down at Ashley.

Ashley catches a slow, proud smile creeps onto Brad’s face.

Without a word, Brad just taps the counter twice and walks out of the kitchen.

For the first time all day, a genuine breath of relief escapes Ashley's lips.

INT. TRAILER - JORDAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Defeated, Jordan sits on the edge of the bed in the dark.

She pulls out her phone, finds Grable, and presses call.

INTERCUT - JORDAN / GRABLE

Grable, fast asleep at home, bolts upright when his phone goes off. Sees Jordan’s name, pushes accept.

GRABLE
Jordan?

JORDAN
Hey.

GRABLE
Before you say anything else, let me explain.

Jordan sits silent on the other end of the line, lips pursed, ready for the sure-to-be outlandish explanation.

JORDAN
The girl outside the studio... Sam... That’s my sister.

JORDAN
Sure it was.

GRABLE
I’m serious. She lives with my mom in Kentucky and came down to cut some demos. Every time she leaves it’s a whole thing where she cries and is all dramatic for no reason.

Jordan listens, but stays silent.

GRABLE
Here, I'll prove it.

Grable quickly scrolls his phone and shoots Jordan a quick photo.

Jordan's phone BUZZES.

GRABLE
Look at the picture I sent you. That was me and Sam when we were like in third and fifth grade.

Jordan opens her phone and looks at a picture of two young kids on a playground. Her heart sinks as she realizes the mistake.

GRABLE
Jordan?

Jordan SIGHS.

GRABLE
Can you talk to me please.

JORDAN
I feel stupid.

GRABLE
Why?

JORDAN
I saw you with her and I just... People like me don't get the studio, and the famous dad, and the whatever this was.

GRABLE
Jordan.

JORDAN
And now I really feel stupid.

GRABLE
Jordan!

Jordan falls silent.

GRABLE
It was simple misunderstanding. I'm sure if I walked around the corner and saw you hugging some guy... I'd be crazy jealous too.
(MORE)

GRABLE (CONT'D)
In fact, I don't even want to think about the girl I have a crush on hugging another guy.

Jordan eases at the comment.

JORDAN
Did you just say you have a crush on me?

Grable rewinds. He tries to find the words, but they won't come.

Jordan can hear the stutters on the other end of the line. A smile emerges.

JORDAN
So... How upset was your dad?

Grable finally breathes, able to move past his comment.

GRABLE
Upset enough to pull the track from the record.

Jordan goes still.

GRABLE
But... I talked to him and he said as long as you and your mom sign by five tomorrow, you're good.

Jordan lets out a SIGH of relief.

JORDAN
Oh. Thank you.

GRABLE
He doesn't chase people, Jordan. He made an exception for you.

Grable pauses. Jordan's too stunned to reply.

GRABLE
But, you can't no-show again.

JORDAN
We'll be there tomorrow!

GRABLE
You're sure? Because if you miss...

JORDAN
Yes! I'm sure.

Grable holds a moment.

GRABLE
Please don’t make me regret this.

JORDAN
I won’t. I promise.

GRABLE
Good. Hey, when you're ready and if you want, maybe we could... Do you wanna write with me again?

Jordan LAUGHS through the tears in her eyes.

JORDAN
Yeah. Yeah I do!!

GRABLE
Good. 'Cause I haven't finished a decent thing since you stopped showin' up.

Jordan settles into the moment, and both ends of the line go quiet for a moment.

JORDAN
Hey, Grable.

GRABLE
Yeah.

JORDAN
Thank you.

GRABLE
For?

JORDAN
Being such a good friend.

Grable smiles.

JORDAN
I’ll see you tomorrow.

GRABLE
K.

JORDAN
K.

GRABLE
K, bye.

JORDAN
(all smiles)
K, bye.

Jordan hangs up the phone.

END INTERCUT

Jordan springs from her bed and races out.

JORDAN
Mom!

INT. BIG SOUND RECORDS - OFFICE - DAY

Don sits behind a desk, glasses up, a single sheet of paper and a pen on the desk in front of him.

Jordan sits beside Grable, trying her best to look calm, but failing.

Norma Jean, hair done up, in the nicest thing she owns, sits beside them, with Jesse at her side.

DON
(to Jordan)
You know what this is?

JORDAN
The contract?

DON
This is the piece of paper that makes sure your name goes on what you made forever.

Don slides the contract across the desk.

DON
Jordan, you sign here, and we'll have your momma sign here.

Jordan grabs a pen and signs the document, then looks to her mother.

Norma Jean grabs the pen and slowly signs.

Don takes the contract, turns the page around, checks it, caps the pen with a CLICK.

JORDAN
What now?

DON
(to Norma Jean)
Now you just keep bein' a flat-out menace to every songwriter in this town.

Jordan, Grable, Norma Jean, and Jesse all CHUCKLE.

Don rises to his feet and extends his hand to Jordan.

Jordan rises and shakes hands with Don. Norma Jean steps in and does the same. Then Jesse.

DON
Jordan Smith. Welcome to the family, kid.

Jordan smiles. Grable bumps his shoulder with hers.

Don lowers himself into the seat and leans back. He reaches into a drawer, removes a fat manila envelope and tosses it onto the desk. Lanyards spill halfway out.

DON
Now. My label-mate Brad Foster's playin' Nissan Stadium Friday night. Fifty thousand seats, sold out.

Don taps the envelope.

DON
I got more passes than I got friends, so Grable, you're comin' whether you like it or not. Bring the menace. All of you, come see how the big dogs do it. Floor, fifth row, center. You're welcome.

Jordan's face falls at the name Foster. Don catches it, but doesn't understand.

JORDAN
I don't really... I'm not exactly a Brad Foster fan right now.

JESSE
A real concert? Mom... Please say we're going!

Jesse turns to Jordan.

JESSE
JJ, please. Pleeeeease.

Jordan looks at her sister's face. At her sober mother. At the lanyards.

JORDAN
Yeah... Yeah, let’s do it.

Jesse explodes into a victory dance.

Norma Jean LAUGHS.

Don scoops the lanyards back into the envelope and hands it to Norma Jean.

DON
(to Norma Jean)
She’s somethin’ else, that girl of your’s.

Norma Jean takes the envelope from Don.

NORMA JEAN
Yeah, she is, ain’t she.

Norma Jean smiles, eyes on Jordan.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - PATIO - DAY

Ashley sits on a chaise lounge, guitar propped up behind her.

On the cushion between her legs are the two friendship bracelets. She turns them over in her fingers.

The patio door slides open.

Brad and Lucy make their way through the patio door with Randall a step behind. He carries a leather folder.

BRAD
Ash, you remember Randall.

ASHLEY
(sotto)
How can I forget the guy who ruined my life?

RANDALL
Ash, we just need to get your signature quick.

Randall holds the folder out to Ashley.

ASHLEY
I’m not signing it.

Randall looks to Brad for answers.

BRAD
Ash, we need to get this signed so we can get you back in the studio for a vocal redo by tomorrow.

ASHLEY
And if I don’t?

LUCY
Ashley, we don’t really have a choice at this point. The pressing’s been booked and marketing’s on hold just waiting for you.

RANDALL
This is your big opportunity.

Ashley stands, but doesn’t take the contract.

ASHLEY
It sounds like it’s your big opportunity, not mine. I’m not signing it.

Brad, Lucy, and Randall blink.

ASHLEY
At least not as a solo. If you want me signing a contract it’s gonna be as a duet, like Jordan and I wrote it.

RANDALL
Sweetheart, we’ve been over this. Duets don’t...

ASHLEY
I don’t care if they do. Without Jordan’s name on it, and her standing next to me, I ain’t signing it.

Lucy steps in.

LUCY
Ashley Marie. Do you have any idea what your father had to do to get you this deal?

Brad steps in.

BRAD
The same thing he would do again to make sure his daughter's integrity and loyalty are as protected as she is.
(to Randall)
Randall, you're either changing the contract or she ain't signing it.

RANDALL
(to Lucy)
You agreein' with this, too?

LUCY
Doesn't look like I have much of a choice, now does it, Randall?

RANDALL
(to Ashley)
You sure this is what you're wantin' to stick with?

Ashley picks up both bracelets, glances at them, then closes them in her fist.

ASHLEY
What kind of friend would I be if I didn't?

Ashley walks past her parents and Randall into the house.

Brad watches her go, but his look full of pride.

He turns to Lucy.

BRAD
Lu, it's the right thing to do. And you know it. We need to protect her or this town will eat her alive.

LUCY
I hope you know what you're doing. She may have just lost the best chance she'll ever have.

Dejectedly, she and Randall head toward the patio door.

BRAD
Oh, hey you seen Bubba lately?

LUCY
Of course not. He left his poor wife and kids in a trailer.

BRAD
Went by the old house to talk to the Realtor. Saw Bubba. Gave him a ticket for Nissan and told him he better show up. Man kept that old car of ours runnin' good. Deserves a seat.

INT. NISSAN STADIUM - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The place is a controlled madhouse. Crews with headsets, rolling equipment, and the muffled ROAR of fifty thousand people.

Brad, in his stage clothes, paces, ready to take the stage.

LUCY fusses with Brad's collar, while Randall hovers nearby with an iPad.

RANDALL
Crowd's primed!

Eyes focused on the stage, Brad responds with a quick nod.

BRAD
What about Ashley?

RANDALL
We've tease the single all week. Couple of billboards, radio spots, and social media ads. We'll bring her out third song and let it debut live.
(beat)
This is the moment America falls in love with both you and your daughter on live stream.

BRAD
You know she's not signing that contract, right?

RANDALL
She'll sign it.

Brad shoots Randall a doubtful glare.

RANDALL
The fans, the cheers, that's addictive. Nobody walks off that stage and says no.

BRAD
I guess we'll see soon enough.

Randall gives a quick glance around.

RANDALL
Where is Ashley?

ASHLEY (O.C.)
Right here.

Brad, Randall, and Lucy all turn to Ashley. She stands calm, hair done, makeup stage-ready. Both bracelets are looped around her wrist.

BRAD
There's my girl. You ready?

Ashley responds only with a head nod.

With a tilt of the head, Brad questions the response.

BRAD
You sure?

ASHLEY
(pure confidence)
Yeah. I'm ready.

Lucy is more suspicious, and shows it.

Ashley peaks out at the crowd and Norma Jean, Don, Jesse in the fifth row with two empty seats.

INT. STADIUM - BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ashley walks down a service hall and finds Darrell leaning against a door. She grabs his sleeve and gives a tug.

DARRELL
Hey, Miss Ashley! You ready for your big night?

ASHLEY
Actually Darrell, I need your help.

DARRELL
Anything, Miss Ashley. You know I got you.

ASHLEY
(urgently)
I need you to leave.

DARRELL
I'm sorry, did I do something wrong?

ASHLEY
Not like, leave, leave, sorry. Let me explain.

INT. STADIUM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lucy steps to the end of the hall and watches Ashley and Darrell speak.

Ashley's overly animated, while Darrell nods his head repetitively.

INT. STADIUM - BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Darrell straightens.

DARRELL
On my way.

Ashley gives Darrell a quick hug.

ASHLEY
Thank you.

DARRELL
Like I said. I got you, Miss Ashley.

Darrell makes his way down the corridor and Ashley turns and spots her mother at the end of the hallway.

They hold in a momentary stalemate before Ashley marches Lucy's direction.

LUCY
Everything okay?

ASHLEY
It will be.

Ashley pushes past her mother and starts her way back towards the stage.

LUCY
Hey, Ash.

Ashley stops and turns back to her mother.

LUCY
I'm proud of you.

Ashley hold at the unexpected comment, then throws herself into her mother's arms.

Lucy pulls her daughter out to arms length and peers into her eyes with a loving smile.

LUCY
Knock 'em dead out there.

A smile slowly grows on Ashley.

With a nod, Ashley spins back and heads off towards the stage, Lucy right behind her.

EXT. NASHVILLE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The bridge is mostly empty. He finds a teen girl busking near the foot of the bridge.

DARRELL
Is your name Jordan?

The busker shakes her head. Darrell turns around in a panic. He sees a girl walking his direction carrying a guitar.

DARRELL
Excuse me. Is your name Jordan?

She shakes her head.

In the middle of the bridge, Darrell spins, then slowly turns and walks dejectedly back the way he came.

In the distance, Darrell catches a boy and a girl SINGING. Mixed in are CLAPS.

Darrell hustles toward the music. He spots Grable and Jordan.

They sit in the spot on the bridge where they first met. Both are dressed in bluejeans and t-shirts.

Grable's guitar case is open with a few bills inside.

Together they sing a duet, the song they wrote together.

The song ends to APPLAUSE from bystanders.

Jordan LAUGHS, breathless.

GRABLE
We're gonna be late for your concert.

JORDAN
It's not my concert. It's Brad Foster's.

GRABLE
Yeah, you've reminded me several times.

JORDAN
You know your dad's gonna be pissed if you don't show up.

GRABLE
I'm not going without you.

JORDAN
Yeah, you've reminded me several times.

GRABLE
He'll get over it.

Jordan looks into Grable's eyes.

With a deep breath, Grable breaks and starts another tune.

Jordan closes her eyes to find the melody.

Darrell HUFFS his way up the bridge slope and stops in front of Jordan.

Jordan and Grable stop their song and take a good look at Darrell, now WHEEZING, bent over, hands on his knees.

Darrell looks up, out of breath.

DARRELL
You Jordan?

JORDAN
Can I help you?

DARRELL
Only if you're Jordan.

JORDAN
(hesitant)
K.

DARRELL
Ashley sent me. She wants you backstage. Like ten minutes ago.

Jordan’s face hardens.

JORDAN
Nope.

DARRELL
She said you’d say that.

JORDAN
Then she knows me better than I thought.

GRABLE
Hold up... Back stage like at Brad Foster’s concert?

Darrell still trying to catch his breath, rises, places his hands on his hips and nods.

JORDAN
Cool. I’m good.

Jordan turns to Grable, ready to sing.

DARRELL
Look. I been drivin’ that girl all year, Miss. Pickin' her up from that fancy school, drivin' her home to that big ole house. Every single ride, she's got her phone out, lookin' at the same photos of y’all two together.

Jordan looks to Grable with a hint of guilt, then back to Darrell.

DARRELL
I heard all about it when you done went and threw that bracelet at her. Broke her heart. She told me the whole thing. The studio, the song, all of it. She ain't sign no papers. She wouldn't. Stood up to her daddy and that record man and everything.

Jordan's armor cracks, but only slightly.

INT. STADIUM - BACKSTAGE/AUDIENCE - NIGHT

The ROAR of the crowd is deafening.

Onstage, Brad belts out the song “Living My Best Life”. the crowd sings along to every word.

BRAD
(singing)
Living my best life standing on
this big stage/
Got a crowd singing back to me like
we’re on the same page/

In the audience, fifth row, Norma Jean and Jesse, are over the moon with excitement.

Don sits next to them and the still two empty seats searching the isles and entrance doors.

INT. STADIUM - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Ashley impatiently scans the area for Jordan, but continually glances back at the stage as Brad nears the end of his second song.

Darrell hustles Jordan and Grable through a maze of cables and back stage mess.

There, in the wings, stands Ashley.

Jordan stops ten feet away, eyes locked on each other.

Darrell and Grable wait in the wings behind Jordan.

For a moment, neither girl moves.

ASHLEY
You came.

After another small moment, both girls break into a LAUGHTER.

Ashley closes the distance.

ASHLEY
I never signed it.

JORDAN
I know. Darrell told me. And I
finally believed it.

ASHLEY
I wouldn’t do any of this without you, JJ.

From the stage, Brad's song crests toward its finish. The crowd SCREAMS.

Ashley takes the bracelets from her wrist. Separates them and holds out the one that reads Ashley.

Jordan looks at the bracelet, then Ashley. She holds out her wrist. Ashley slides the bracelet on Jordan’s wrist, then puts her own Jordan bracelet back on her wrist.

INT. STADIUM - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

On stage, the song ends. The stadium erupts into CHEERS.

BRAD (O.S.)
Thank you Nashville! You been so good to me tonight. If y’all don’t mind I’ve got a surprise for y’all, how’s that sound?

More CHEERS and APPLAUSE from the crowd.

BRAD
Now some of y'all might a heard a rumor about a new song.

Brad holds for more CHEERS.

BRAD
Folks I can’t tell you how proud I am to bring out the girl behind it. My daughter, Ashley!

The crowd ERUPTS.

Ashley grabs Jordan's arm and pulls her towards the stage, but Jordan quickly pulls back.

JORDAN
I’m not walking out there in front of a million people like this.

BRAD (O.S.)
Ashley, Baby. Don’t tease us!

Ashley peers over at Jordan.

ASHLEY
You’ll be fine. Trust me.

Ashley reaches out her pinkie.

ASHLEY
I promise.

Jordan smiles, then locks pinkies with Ashley.

INT. STADIUM - STAGE - NIGHT

Ashley walks out into the light to thunderous APPLAUSE. She turns to see that Jordan isn't behind her, goes back to grab her arm and pulls her onstage with her.

Lucy's mouth falls open. Randall yells into a headset.

Jesse jumps up and down on her seat and SCREAMS.

Brad, still onstage in front of the mic, stares over at the two girls. But that quickly turns into a proud smile.

BRAD
Ladies and gentlemen, my daughter Ashley, and her best friend and co-writer of the song, "If Both Sides Hold", Jordan Smith.

Ashley walks to the mic, calm, with a stage presence beyond her years. Jordan sheepishly trails behind.

Ashley looks out at the ocean of light, then pulls Jordan in beside her.

ANGLE ON: Brittany and 3 cheer girls, high in the stands, sit in stunned silence, mouths agape.

In the fifth row, Don and Norma Jean sit frozen. Jesse stands on her seat ready to explode.

ASHLEY
Hey, y'all. I want to introduce my best friend in the whole world. The girl who wrote every word of this song. Jordan Smith.

Ashley turns to Jordan, and says the next part just to her, but the whole stadium hears it.

ASHLEY
A bridge only stands if both sides hold.

Don breaks into a knowing smile.

Brad lowers his mic, then steps back and lets the girls take command of the stage.

Eyes locked with Jordan, Ashley gives a nod, then counts them in.

Jordan and Ashley sing "If Both Sides Hold”.

Norma Jean has both hands pressed over her mouth as tears stream down.

Jesse jumps up and down on her seat and belts out every word she's heard her sister sing a hundred times.

Don glows, nodding along. Grable in the wings, fixated on Jordan.

CLOSEUP: Brittany, hands templed in front of her face.

ANGLE ON: Bubba, sitting 3 rows behind his family and smiling proudly.

Scattered through the floor seats, a dozen GIRLS, twelve, thirteen and fourteen, cry and SHOUT.

The bridge swells. Both voices on the last line, together.

JORDAN/ASHLEY
If both sides hold.

A half-second of held breath across fifty thousand people, and then the stadium goes absolutely, completely insane.

Jordan and Ashley look at each other in the ROAR.

Breathless, laughing, and crying they jump, scream, grab and hug each other, oblivious of the crowd.

END CREDITS

The fully orchestrated version of “If Both Sides Hold” plays.

EXT. NASHVILLE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY

The sun shines. The two girls walk across the bridge together.

One with a backpack, one with a guitar case, talking over each other and LAUGHING.

They cross to the other side.

FADE OUT.