

"Pop Diva"

By

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FADE IN:

SCENE EXT NIGHT: "The PARADISE" a rock bar in a bad part of town. In an alley strewn with garbage, a crowded line-up is illuminated by a bare light bulb and the bar's neon sign. Patrons huddle on the rain-slicked sidewalk.

A GRAVELLY VOICE BREAKS THROUGH IN VOICEOVER

MIKE PARNELLI (V.O.)

There are lots of versions of the story. But I'm probably the only one left who can give it to you straight. All of it. It was what - twenty years ago?

We hear A THUMPING, DRIVING BEAT, MUFFLED BUT GROWING IN VOLUME and a mix of VOICES, LAUGHTER, and the SHOUTS of a ROCK CROWD.

Like a supermodel on a catwalk, JENNY stalks past the crowd lined up at the door. She's jaw-droppingly hot - you can't help but stare at her, even though you know you shouldn't. If other girls tried to dress like her, you'd think they were skanks - but she pulls it off and still seems classy.

MIKE PARNELLI (V.O.)

Jenny wasn't just hot. She was smart and funny too. While other kids spent a night on cold pavement to get tickets, she just showed up the night of the show. She was a walking, talking, all-access pass.

JENNY flips her long glossy hair over her shoulder, stops at the BOUNCER'S SHOULDER. He's a man-mountain who looks like he belongs in a cell block or the front four of a football team. She locks eyes with him, giving him flirtatious, knowing look, which splits into a grin. She whispers a word in the massive bouncer's ear. He laughs and waves her in.

MIKE

She had just turned 18 and the one thing she loved more than music was the guys who played it. Especially

lead singers. Bass players, not so much. It was a night like this that changed her life for good

INT. ROCK BAR - NIGHT

THE AFTERSHOVES, a four-piece pop-rock band, are ONSTAGE, dripping with sweat in the middle of their set. These guys are on fire. ANDY, the lead singer, has an Adam Ant / Mick Jagger vibe.

ANDY

This one's called "Could have been anyone"

The drummer taps out a quick four count and the band crashed into a rock tune.

ANDY

First time I saw you baby, I  
thought you were fine

Second time I saw you baby, I knew  
you'd be mine

Come monday morning you might think  
I'm not your speed

But tonight your sweet kiss is what  
I need

It could have been anyone

(Never think of could have beens)

It could have been anyone that  
night

(Never think of should have beens)

It could have been anyone

Never think of could have beens

It could have been anyone that  
night

Never think of should have beens

JENNY strides through the bar and works her way effortlessly up to the stage.

ANDY locks eyes with her and grins. She looks back at him with her eyes hooded, like a jungle cat sizing up a meal. For him, everyone else in the crowd is suddenly irrelevant.

He is singing every note straight to her.

ANDY

Next time I saw you baby, you said  
you were scared

Wouldn't ever do that baby, I  
wouldn't have dared

Old regrets and looking back in  
anger ain't my style

But I'm sure I'll see you in a  
while

It could have been anyone

Never think of could have beens

It could have been anyone that  
night

Never think of should have beens

It could have been anyone

Never think of could have beens

It could have been anyone that  
night

Never think of should have beens

[Breakdown]

Never think of could have beens

Never think of should have beens

The band wraps up the song with a solo.

INT. BAR - BACKSTAGE: A HALLWAY papered with rock posters and covered in magic marker graffiti that leads to the BAND ROOM. Greenish, flickering fluorescent lights show three teen groupies - SINDI, TAMMI and JANIS - in low-cut clinging dresses shifting uncomfortably on their heels. They look like they're 14 going on 16. SINDI, the one who's closest to the door - wearing make-up that would put a whore to shame - steps up to a shaggy, bored-looking security guy. She's got a trace of a lisp. And braces.

SINDI

C'mon, mister. They promised me we  
could wait in there.

DARREN

Who told you that?

SINDI

Johnny did.

DARREN

Well we'll find out.

He raps at the door. ZIFF, a wiry, twitchy promoter in his late 20s or early 30s pops his head through the door like he's a jack-in the box and pushes his glasses up his nose.

ZIFF

What? WHAT? Haven't those jokers finished their encore? We've got to be on a bus for Cleveland at 6am tomorrow.

DARREN

Did Johnny give these girls the greenlight?

ZIFF

Johnny gives no one the greenlight. I say who stays, who goes. First off, I want to make sure all of you girls are over 18. I don't want a replay of that age of consent bullshit we got in Toledo.

JANIS

I'm 18 (through her braces)

ZIFF

Whatever kid. The number one item on my client's rider: No getting busted for corrupting a minor.

A DOOR DOWN THE HALLWAY KICKS OPEN to a roar from the crowd behind. The band, a sweat-soaked foursome carrying their instruments, stream into their dressing room. The Groupies lunge forward and their girlish shrieks turn into squeals that would bend metal but are held back by DARREN. One band member blows kisses.

SINDI

Oh, oh, come on!

ZIFF

Come back when you get a retainer.

JENNY walks up and sails past the groupies.

JENNY  
I'm with the band.

DARREN  
Jenny! Come on in.

ZIFF  
Heyy! Great to see you!

QUICK CUTS of JENNY drinking beer and toking with bands in different change rooms, necking with band members.

MIKE (V.O.)  
She was always with the band. It was the greatest summer of her life. Four months of free shows and staying out till the sun came up. You can't live like that forever.

INT. ROCK BAR

Jenny pushes her way down a hallway packed with too-cool-for-school hipsters and rockers towards a toilet. She looks green and worn, smudges under her eyes, her hair is greasy. She gulps like she's keeping down puke, and pushes past someone into the can where she ralphs.

MIKE V.O.  
But she didn't think it would end like this.

INT: SMALL-TOWN PHARMACY - DAY

JENNY looks worried and shifty. With little makeup and her hair messed up she looks younger and more vulnerable. She looks around to see if there's anyone she knows in the store, making her look suspicious. IRMA, a prim middle-aged clerk with stiff dyed hair, gives her a look: is this kid about to steal something.

IRMA  
Is that everything for you?

JENNY  
Y- yeah.

IRMA  
Twelve fifty.

JENNY throws down her cash, gets her change and starts to leave.

IRMA

Miss - your purchase!

JENNY snatches the bag and rushes from the store.

INT: A grubby bathroom. JENNY is looking at herself in the mirror. She's shifting and nervous, takes a look at her watch.

JENNY

That should be enough time.

She takes a breath like she's preparing to dive into a cold lake. She looks down at her hands. She's holding a pregnancy test. And it's positive.

JENNY

What am I gonna do?

MONTAGE & VOICEOVER

MIKE talks over a series of images of a little girl growing up - a toddler staggering around apartments as bands jam around her. Photos of a little girl at a drum kit, dressed up in glasses and singing into a pretend microphone.

MIKE (V.O.)

She had the kid, a little girl named Lily. They bounced from place to place. Crashing on couches. If she'd been in New York or L.A. she might have found a sugardaddy. But she was in the middle of nowhere. So Jenny just kept drifting down. But Lily was made of teflon. She always kept smiling. And she loved music like her mom did.

CAPTION: 20 years later

EXT: LOW-RENT TRAILER PARK at DUSK. There's a rusty fizzing neon sign with sputtering letters: EDWARDS TRAILER PARK.

INT: TRAILER HOME

JENNY, older and beaten down by the years is washing dishes in the sink in a greasy kitchen. There are piles of dishes everywhere. You can hear the sound of young woman singing

and strumming guitar in the background. JENNY squints out the window and ducks down to make sure that what she is seeing is real. She drops the dishes in the sink and runs from the kitchen stripping rubber gloves off her hands.

She's outside and running down the steps towards Cal, 35. A slight man, he's wearing a trucker cap over his mullet, more than 5 o'clock shadow and a handlebar moustache. He's carrying a jacket in one hand.

JENNY

Do you have the mail? Is it here?

Is it?

Cal looks up at her sadly. He's quiet but his eyes says no. The light goes out of her eyes when a grin splits his face and he holds up the mail like a poker hand.

CAL

It's here.

INT: TRAILER HOME

JENNY enters with a bang, peeling her way through the letters.

JENNY

Bills, bills, last notice, bills,  
bills.

She stops on the last envelope, gasps and rips it open and starts reading it aloud.

JENNY

"Dear Ms... received your tape...  
pleased to inform you have been  
chosen for the audition." Oh yes!  
Yes! Wait let me just read that  
again to make sure.

CAL

Jenny - just wait a second.

JENNY

YES! LILY!

LILY (SHOUTING BACK THROUGH A WALL)

I'm PRACTICING!

JENNY

No you're not!

INT. LILY'S ROOM

Lily is sitting hunched over a guitar on her bed, playing

along with a backing track on a cassette tape player. She's punky, her hair in a kind of platinum Cleopatra-bob with black roots and smudges of makeup around her eyes. Almost like Darryl Hannah in Blade Runner. She got ripped black tights and a mini skirt. Her walls are papered with classic posters and bands from the Ramones and the Who Maximum R&B to Shania Twain and Christina Aguilera.

LILY

Yes I AM!

The door opens with a crash and JENNY rushes in and punches off the cassette player.

LILY

What did I tell you about knocking?

JENNY

I know, I know. But this is it. We got it. We made the auditions for KTV.

LILY is looking at her mother in disbelief.

LILY

Are you serious?

JENNY

I mean you got it. But this is the break we have been waiting for. We can get out of here, pay off our bills and get someplace nice.

LILY

That's awesome Mom.

She hugs her.

Cal slumps into the doorframe.

CAL

Don't you think we're getting a little ahead of ourselves?

LILY

What's loser doing here?

JENNY

You know his name is Cal. Not "loser".

CAL

Getting an audition is not a ticket to the big time.

LILY

Like you would know?

JENNY

It's a foot in the door, and that is better than nothing.

LILY

I've got to get going. I've got a gig tonight. I have to help pay the rent.

LILY brushes past him.

JENNY

Break a leg honey! (She turns to Cal) What did you say that for?

CAL

Whoa -- I'm just trying to keep it real. Don't get me wrong, she's got talent. But she's your daughter. I'm not saying you shouldn't encourage her, of course you should. But if you overdo it, you are just setting her up for a big disappointment down the road.

JENNY

Honestly, Cal. I don't know if I should kiss you or kill you.

CAL

I know which one I'd prefer. Say, I gotta split too. Poker night.

JENNY

Poker night? I should definitely kill you. Stanton cleaned you out last time.

CAL

This is strictly a fun game. Nickel and dime stuff. Gimme some credit, will ya?

JENNY

When it comes to credit, you are way over your limit. But I love you anyway.