

EXT. ROADSIDE. DAY

EMMA, 20, pretty, long-hair, burdened by a rucksack and a guitar in a gig bag, takes determined steps while cars whizz past.

She starts hitchhiking.

A shiny Mercedes stops for her. Behind the wheel is ABIGAIL, 40's, smiley, dressed for business. Emma opens the passenger door and peeps in.

EMMA

Are you going to London?

INT. CAR. CONTINUOUS

Abigail drives in the fastest lane of the four-lane motorway. Emma looks around the leather interior of the car. Through the window she spots a road sign 'LONDON 122 miles'.

ABIGAIL

Travelling to a uni?

EMMA

No. Uh... Work.

ABIGAIL

What kind of work do you do?

EMMA

I don't know yet. I've fallen out with my parents and left home.

ABIGAIL

(surprised)

Today?

EMMA

Yes, today.

Awkwardness fills the car.

EMMA

But I have a few irons in the fire.

ABIGAIL

(unconvinced)

Good.

EMMA

Are you from London?

ABIGAIL

Yes.

EMMA

What job do you do there?

ABIGAIL

This is my job. I drive people around. Today I had a drop-off in Birmingham.

EMMA

(confused)

What did you drop off?

ABIGAIL

Abigail laughs. It's a bubbly laugh.

EMMA

Who did you drop off?

ABIGAIL

A weird snobbish guy.

Emma worried.

EMMA

I hope you're not gonna try to charge me...

ABIGAIL

Of course not. Nobody charges hitchhikers. I just fancied some company.

Emma nods in understanding and relaxes a little.

ABIGAIL

What kind of music do you play on your guitar?

EMMA

I don't know what kind of music it is. I don't want to put it in a box. I write my own songs.

ABIGAIL

Your own songs?! Wow! (pause) I used to play piano.

EMMA

Why did you stop?

ABIGAIL

Because I am constantly at work
because I have a mortgage to pay...
and I can't be bothered to do
anything when I finally get home.

EMMA

I find it terrifying to imagine
that I would lead an ordinary life
like everybody else.

ABIGAIL

Of course. You're very young.

EMMA

I don't want an ordinary life. Not
even when I'm not very young
anymore. I want to achieve
something. So that when I die,
people know that I was a somebody.

ABIGAIL

That would be the worst thing you
could do with your life!

Emma gobsmacked. Gives Abigail the *Are you bloody serious?*
look.

EXT. STREETS OF LONDON. LATER

The Mercedes pulls up in front of an underground station.
Emma gets out and pulls her rucksack and guitar from the
back.

Heading for the entrance to the underground station, Emma
passes a MALE BEGGAR, 20's, sitting on the pavement with his
dog, an empty coffee cup containing a few coins in front of
him.

Emma enters the underground. She seems insecure.

INT. PIG'S APARTMENT. DAY

Emma sits on a dated sofa in a squalid apartment. The carpet
is covered in dust, breadcrumbs and god knows what else. A
man, PIG, 40's, not bad looking but sleazy and neglected,
with a rude stare, sits in a sturdy, old armchair.

PIG

As you can see, there's not much housekeeping to do.

EMMA

(hesitant)

Yeah...

PIG

I'm looking for someone who's very, very flexible. Do you understand what I mean by 'flexible'?

EMMA

(hesitant)

Yeah...

PIG

Good. Would you like a drink?

EMMA

No, thanks, I'm fine. When could I start?

PIG

Tomorrow?

Emma nods, anxious.

EMMA

Yeah. I can start tomorrow.

EXT. LONDON STREET. LATER

Emma walks down the pavement along a busy street. Her rucksack and guitar weigh her down badly. She stops to readjust the guitar case strap on her shoulder. She is tired and her spirit is broken.

INT. PUB. MOMENTS LATER

Emma enters a pub and looks around. It's almost empty. She walks over to the table with JOSH, 25, handsome, in trendy clothes.

EMMA

Hi. Are you Josh?

JOSH

I am indeed. Nice to meet you.

A handshake. Charismatic, confident smile on Josh's face. Emma shy and clumsy with her guitar and rucksack.

JOSH
Finally face-to-face.

Emma drops her belongings in a nearby corner and sits down.

JOSH
You certainly have potential, both
as a performing and a recording
artist.

EMMA
(blushing)
Really? Thanks. Did you listen to
all three demos?

Josh hesitates for a second.

JOSH
Oh, yeah, of course. (pause) I can
get you to the top, but it's gonna
be a long climb. A lot of hard
work.

Emma doesn't like what she just heard.

EMMA
I don't need to get to the top. Not
just yet. At the moment I need a
job. I'm interested in the position
in your ad.

JOSH
Which one was that?

EMMA
A musician, singer in a bar?

JOSH
Oh, that one. It's gone, I'm
afraid.

EMMA
Okay.

Emma silently disappointed.

JOSH
But I can help you find a job no
problem. I have contacts. A very
good friend of mine has a modelling
agency-

EMMA
Hang on, I'm no Claudia Schiffer.

JOSH
You have a pretty face and a good
body.

EMMA
I've had no training as a model.

JOSH
Doesn't matter. Enthusiasm - that's
what counts these days.

Emma impressed by his smart talk.

EMMA
Well, it certainly sounds better
than the job I was offered a couple
of hours ago.

JOSH
What job was that?

EMMA
House keeping. Live in.

JOSH
(sarcastic)
Wow.

EMMA
Unlimited blow jobs, that's what
that pig wanted. Plus somebody who
will clean up his filth.

JOSH
Sounds like an easy job.

Emma looks at Josh questioningly. Is he sarcastic or
genuine?

Josh eyes Emma's luggage in the corner.

JOSH
Where are you staying overnight?

EMMA
Dunno.

JOSH
You can stay in my flat if you want
to.

Emma goes from subdued to hopeful within seconds.

EMMA

Thank you.

She tries hard not to make her excitement visible but the sparkle in her eyes gives it away.

EXT. STREET. MOMENTS LATER

Emma and Josh exit the bar. Like a donkey, Emma carries her guitar and rucksack. Josh carries nothing.

They get into the back of a black shiny Mercedes waiting for them by the roadside.

INT. CAR. MOMENTS LATER

Emma shuts the door. The rucksack and guitar act as a partition between her and Josh. The driver behind the wheel turns to Josh. She's Abigail - the woman who drove Emma to London earlier.

ABIGAIL

Where to, Josh?

JOSH

My residence.

The flash of recognition lights Emma's face.

EMMA

You gave me a lift in the morning, didn't you!

ABIGAIL

Oh, you're the hitchhiking songwriter. Not easy to forget.

Emma in a dream-like state. She looks out of the window, at the houses and people of the rich London street. Looks at Josh next to her and shyly smiles at him. She's besotted. Josh smiles back. It's a smile of a street-wise young man.

ABIGAIL

How are your new music dealings going, Josh?

JOSH

Very well. That's why we hooked up, me and Emma. To make some great music.

EMMA
(to Josh)
Do you play anything?

JOSH
Sometimes I play on people's
nerves.

Emma giggles.

JOSH
I can play drums when forced.
They drive past an underground station.

EMMA
(to Josh)
I bet you don't take the tube very
often.

Josh gives her a wide grin.

JOSH
Never!

INT. STAIRCASE, BLOCK OF FLATS. LATER

Recently carpeted staircase, clean walls. Emma struggles to carry her guitar and rucksack up the stairs. Josh carries nothing.

INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT. DAY

They enter a modern apartment. Emma looks around.

EMMA
Very nice!

Josh turns the TV on and only then takes his coat off.

Emma puts her guitar in the corner and takes her heavy rucksack off her shoulders. She moans with relief and stretches her back.

Josh sits down and flicks through the TV channels, ignoring Emma, who is now quietly sitting on the sofa, unsure about her rights in this place.

INT. MODELLING AGENCY. DAY

MIKE, 30's, handsome with shifty eyes, sits behind his desk. Emma sits opposite him, nervous but hopeful, polite smile on her face.

MIKE

So, I will take a head shot and a nude body shot.

Emma's smile vanishes.

EMMA

I'm not prepared for a nude body shot.

MIKE

No? So why are you here?

EMMA

Because Josh told me you had a modelling agency.

MIKE

I do. But nobody hires glamour models these days, you know.

Emma swallows hard.

MIKE

Look. I have jobs for you. It pays good money and you'll have lots of fun.

Emma bites her lips, fighting tears.

MIKE

Actually, you can earn some cash in (he glances at his watch) 'bout an hour's time. The photographer's coming all the way from Edinburgh. There's some spare make-up and clothes in the dressing room, the other girls will show you.

The resigned expression in Emma's eyes...

INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT. EVENING

Emma enters the living room, carrying a poly bag instead of a handbag.

Josh sits slumped in a bean bag, peering into his phone. Emma throws her poly bag on the floor angrily. Josh lifts his eyes.

EMMA

A modelling agency, my arse! It's all about shooting fucking porn! You lied to me! You tricked me!

Josh looks at her, gathering words.

JOSH

I'm sorry it's not a job you wanted. But we need the money.

EMMA

We need the money? Holy shit! Am I your cash cow or what?

Emma collapses on the sofa. Josh quiet, buying time. Emma quietly sobs.

JOSH

Listen. I've had a very rough month. I had this guy, a rapper, and he pulled the plug at the last minute.

Emma lifts her tearful eyes and looks at Josh.

EMMA

I don't believe a single word you say.

JOSH

Listen. We are both very talented people. We have to persevere. Every start is difficult.

The words seem to have taken effect. Emma gets a tissue out of her pocket. Calmly wipes her eyes and nose.

JOSH

I have to pay the rent for this place tomorrow. I'm a hundred quid short. Did you get paid?

Emma fishes in her pocket and pulls out scrunched up bank notes.

EMMA

I have eighty quid. I need to keep
a twenty for tomorrow - for the
travel card and food...

She separates one twenty-pound note. Hands the rest to Josh.

INT. MODELLING AGENCY. DAY

Emma sits in the office with another girl, both in sexy
underwear, high boots, leather gloves and heavy make-up.
Mike sits across the table, his mobile to his ear.

MIKE

(into the phone)

Tell him to get his arse over here
quickly! We won't wait for ages...
(pause) He's not coming at all?
(pause) No, I never got any
message. I have chicks waiting
here, that's the problem, mate.

Mike ends the phone call and tosses his phone on the desk.
Doesn't even look at the girls.

MIKE

That arsehole is not coming.

The other girl snorts with disapproval. Emma silent, despair
grabbing at her.

INT. APARTMENT BLOCK. LATER

Emma walks up the stairs, carrying her poly bag. She
approaches the door to Josh's apartment and gets alarmed.
Stacked-up boxes are towering by the apartment door. Two
people hang around by the door. One of them is Abigail.

EMMA

Oh, hello.

ABIGAIL

Do you know where he is?

Meant Josh.

EMMA

No.

Emma fishes in her poly bag for the keys. Notices her guitar
propped against the wall and freezes.

EMMA

Oh, what's my guitar doing here...

ABIGAIL

Oh, you have the keys to the flat!

EMMA

Yes.

Emma tries to push the key in the lock. It goes in only a few millimetres.

EMMA

It doesn't fit.

ABIGAIL

(sighs)

The landlord must have changed the lock.

EMMA

Why would he do that?

ABIGAIL

Because Josh is a conman. He owes me almost five hundred quid.

Emma freezes. Thinks hard.

EMMA

I'm probably the most naive person you've ever met.

ABIGAIL

You could say the same about me. He gave me a sob story about how he got ripped off by some people. Said he would pay me this week.

Abigail chuckles bitterly. Emma smiles a very sad smile.

ABIGAIL

Have you got anywhere to stay?

EMMA

I'll call my friends.

ABIGAIL

Do you want my phone number, just in case?

EMMA
 (nods, quietly)
 Okay, thank you.

INT. APARTMENT BLOCK. LATER

Emma bobs down next to the stacks of boxes. Goes through the contents, recovering her items. Hairbrush. Jeans. Her rucksack.

She gets her mobile out and tries to call Josh. RING RING RING. No answer. She scrolls through the contacts again. Stops on DAD. Considers calling. No, she won't. Drops the mobile on the carpet in the hallway in a momentary emotional melt-down.

Tears running down her face...

INT. TRAIN STATION. EVENING

Emma sits on the floor inside a train station. Run-down with fear. Paralysed by emotional distress. Her guitar is propped against the wall. People walk past, giving her various kinds of looks. Curious. Concerned. Disapproving. A PASSER-BY, male, 50's stops.

PASSER-BY
 Are you alright?

EMMA
 I'm fine, thanks.

The passer-by departs, unconvinced. Emma takes her mobile out of her pocket. Finds Dad in her contacts list. RING RING RING. No answer. Next one is Abigail. RING RING RING. No answer.

Emma finds Pig in her contact list. Resignation shows in her face as she's calling the number...

EMMA
 (into the phone)
 Hi. Do you still need a housekeeper?

INT. PIG'S APARTMENT. DAY

Emma sits on the shabby sofa of the run-down apartment. Takes a few big gulps from a whisky glass. She shuts her eyes as alcohol burns inside her throat.

Pig fishes out a small metal case from behind the TV. Opens it and takes out a tiny plastic bag with white powder. A plastic card and a short straw follow. He makes a line on the table.

PIG
Would you like some?

EMMA
No, thanks. What is it?

PIG
It's good stuff!

The man snorts the line using the straw. Emma watches him.

EMMA
Can I have some more whiskey?

PIG
Sure.

Pig brings the bottle of whiskey over and pours a glass for Emma. He sits down next to her on the sofa and puts his hand round her shoulder. Emma stiffens up.

EMMA
(points at the drug)
Can I have some?

PIG
Okay. But only a little. It's not good to mix it with alcohol.

He makes a line for Emma. Emma snorts it. Grimaces.

EMMA
Disgusting. And it doesn't do a thing to me!

PIG
Wait ten or fifteen minutes!

Pig puts his arm around her again. Sneaks his other hand under her top. Emma freezes.

At the other end of the room, a mobile starts RINGING. Emma wriggles out of Pig's arms and stumbles across the room. Pig looks at her with suspicion.

PIG
Who's calling you?

After a wobbly effort, Emma fishes her mobile out of her rucksack.

EMMA
(slurred)
Oh, that's my Dad.

Pig stares at Emma as she answers the phone.

EMMA
Hi Dad. I'm fine. Do you think you
could come and pick me up from
London?

Emma locks her eyes with Pig's. She's scared but determined.

EMMA
As soon as possible. At Victoria
train station. In front of the main
entrance.

Emma hangs up and starts gathering her belongings.

EMMA
I'm sorry but I gotta go.

Pig is pissed off.

EXT./INT. VICTORIA TRAIN STATION. CONTINUOUS.

Emma's FATHER, early 50', don't-mess-with-me look about him, waits by the entrance. He walks inside the hall and looks around. People stride purposefully in various directions. They all know where they are going, nothing seems to trouble them.

Father goes back outside. Catches sight of a young homeless man sitting nearby with the dog, begging for money. He's the same young man that Emma saw a few days earlier.

INT. PIG'S APARTMENT. CONTINUOUS.

Emma makes a few hurried but unsteady strides through the hallway towards the apartment door, dragging her rucksack and guitar with her. She grabs the door handle but the door is locked.

EMMA
(yells)
I want to get out!

PIG (O.S)
I want a helicopter!

Emma kicks the door angrily but struggles to stay on her feet.

PIG (O.S)
You think you can drink my whiskey
and take my expensive gear and then
just piss off?

EMMA
I feel sick. I'm going to throw up
right here if you don't let me out!

PIG (O.S)
Gimme a blow job, and then you can
piss off!

Emma collapses on the floor.

INT. PIG'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM. LATER

Emma hangs onto the toilet seat for dear life, violently throwing up. Pig watches her, concerned. Emma stops throwing up but starts shaking.

PIG
Right. I've unlocked the door for
you. Go and see your daddy now!

Emma can't get up. She is breathing fast. Pig's concern increases. He bites his nails.

PIG
Stupid bitch! Mixing gear and
booze! Shit, shit, shit!

Emma in no fit state to react.

EXT. VICTORIA STATION. CONTINUOUS

Emma's father paces in front of the shops inside the train station hall. He takes his phone out, finds EMMA in his contacts. RING RING RING. No answer.

INT. PIG'S APARTMENT. CONTINUOUS

Emma's mobile RINGS in the rucksack abandoned by the front door. Pig walks past but he's busy on his own mobile.

PIG
 (into the mobile)
 An ambulance, please.

Pig re-enters the...

BATHROOM

He looks at Emma, who is lying on the floor, looking lifeless.

INT. POLICE STATION. NIGHT

Emma's father sits in a small room with his face buried in his hands. He lifts his head as a POLICE OFFICER enters.

POLICE OFFICER
 We found a female matching your
 daughter's description.

Said in a tone that suggests no good.

FATHER
 Did you?

POLICE OFFICER
 This young woman's in a hospital.

FATHER
 What's happened to her?

POLICE OFFICER
 A drug overdose.

FATHER
 (startled)
 That won't be my daughter.

INT. HOSPITAL. DAY

Emma sits on a hospital bed in a hospital gown. Her father and MOTHER, early 40's, submissive, enter.

MOTHER
 Thank God you're okay.

Emotions run high, tears well in their eyes. Mother leans over the bed and hugs Emma.

EMMA
 (tearful)
 I was so stupid, Mum. I thought I
 could make remarkable music, you
 know, do something big.

MOTHER

It's a part of growing up.

EMMA

It shouldn't be. It's everywhere around us - on the TV, inside all the magazines - all these successful people - successful film directors, actors, psychiatrists... It's all a scam.

Mother and Father exchange startled looks, trying to make sense of what their daughter is trying to say.

EMMA

(accusingly)

And you always had this idea in your heads that I will be a high-flyer.

FATHER

Emma... all parents want the best for their children.

MOTHER

The most important thing for us is that you're happy.

FATHER

And avoid drugs.

Mother gives father a look of disapproval.

MOTHER

(to Father)

Not now, please!

FATHER

(bossily)

I'll just say one more thing, and then I'll say no more. I don't want anybody to know about the drug overdose. It was food poisoning, okay?

Emma looks away, disappointment and contempt showing in her face.

INT. HOSPITAL. LATER

Emma is now dressed in her clothes. A hospital porter hands her her coat. She puts it on. With slight irritation, father picks up Emma's rucksack and guitar. RING RING RING. It's Emma's mobile. She hesitates as everybody's attention fixates on the RINGING. She answers.

EMMA

(into the phone)

Hi Abigail. (pause) Yes, I tried to ring you because I had nowhere to go. (pause) Yes, I'm still in London.

Emma glances at her frowning parents. They are questioning her with their eyes.

EMMA

Yes, please, if it's not too much trouble for you. Can you text me your address? (pause) What time can I come?

Father's face hardens. He gives mother a consternated, meaningful look. She shakes her head in disbelief and her face twists with emotional pain.

EMMA

(into the phone)

Okay, thanks.

Emma finishes the call. Looks at her parents. Braces herself.

EMMA

I'm not coming home with you. I'm staying in London.