

SENSE OF DREAD

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FADE IN.

EXT. PORTLAND STREET INTERSECTION - NIGHT

The streets are silent and nearly empty.

A marked police cruiser pulls up behind a beat-up Honda, stopped at a green traffic signal. Its lightbar throws off brilliant bursts of red and blue in every direction.

The traffic signal CLICKS through its cycle: Yellow. Red. Green. The Honda doesn't move.

A single siren WHOOP pierces the late-night silence. The cruiser's spotlight ACTIVATES. Engulfs the Honda in blinding white light.

A uniformed officer, BALLARD, early 20s, exits the cruiser and approaches the Honda. The Honda's engine is RUNNING.

INT. HONDA - NIGHT

The driver - ZAYDA, late 40s - SNORES quietly, slumped forward. Her head rests on the steering wheel.

An insistent TAP TAP TAP on the driver's window. Zayda stirs. Squints against the glare of Ballard's flashlight.

EXT. HONDA - NIGHT

Ballard makes a lower-your-window motion. The window comes down. Zayda is dressed in jeans, a black shirt, and a black leather jacket.

Ballard scans the interior with his flashlight. The car is littered with fast food wrappers, soft drink and beer cans, paper coffee cups, cigarette packs.

On the passenger seat is a transparent plastic flask, half-filled with an amber-colored liquid.

He redirects the flashlight to a bleary-eyed Zayda.

BALLARD

Turn the engine off for me, please.

**SUPER: FOUR MONTHS LATER**

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

A run-down gray building with character. A sign reading "COMMUNITY CENTER" hangs from an arch over the front door.

A sandwich board sign in front of the entrance reads, "**RUN FOR COVER: PORTLAND'S ULTIMATE COVER BAND COMPETITION - WELCOME, CONTESTANTS!**"

The sign is covered with black-and-white snapshot photos of musicians and bands.

A city bus stops in front of the center. Zayda, in jeans and a flannel shirt, exits the bus, carrying a black gear bag.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

A cramped room with worn carpeting, acoustic tiles, and a battered piano in one corner. LIZ, 17, dressed in shorts and a Deep Purple t-shirt, stands in the middle of the room. She holds an electric guitar plugged into a portable amplifier.

On a chair beside her is a cell phone atop a record album. MUSIC - a slow reggae riff - plays on the phone.

A rapid KNOCK on the door. Zayda enters. She's used to being the center of attention. Rock star looks tempered by time and lifestyle.

ZAYDA

I know that song.

Liz stares for a moment, then taps the cell phone screen to turn off the music. She smiles, wide-eyed and star-struck.

LIZ

You're Zayda. I can't believe it.

Zayda puts her gear bag on the floor.

ZAYDA

Well, it was this or jail, so don't get too excited.

Liz's smile fades, just a bit.

LIZ

Oh.

ZAYDA  
Liz, right?

Liz nods. Still star-struck.

ZAYDA (CONT'D)  
I hear you wanna cover one of my  
songs.

LIZ  
(recovering)  
I do, yeah - "Sell Off."

ZAYDA  
Cool. Tell me why.

Liz picks up the album. In the upper left hand corner: the words SENSE OF DREAD, block-stamped at an upward 45 degree angle. In the lower right hand corner, block-stamped in the same style: DAWN OF THE DREAD.

Front and center, a live concert photo features a much younger Zayda, mid-scream at a microphone, playing a vintage Les Paul Cherry Sunburst guitar. Two female bandmates, on bass and drums, are in the background.

LIZ  
(rattles off the reasons)  
You're the reason I learned to play  
guitar. Sense of Dread is my  
favorite band. Dawn of the Dread is  
one of the best debut albums ever.  
And first prize in the contest is  
five thousand dollars.

Zayda thinks about it. Nods.

ZAYDA  
Pretty good reasons.  
(nods at the album cover)  
I'm guessing you want me to sign  
that.

LIZ  
Would you, please?

ZAYDA  
Sure. Let's do this first.

Zayda opens her gear bag and pulls out the Cherry Sunburst guitar from the album cover. A musical instrument and a work of art.

Liz looks at the guitar. At the album cover. At the guitar.

ZAYDA (CONT'D)  
That's right - I played this on the  
Dawn of the Dread tour. Meet the  
Cherry Bomb.

LIZ  
It's beautiful.

ZAYDA  
Right?

She loops the guitar strap around her shoulder, attaches it to the Cherry Bomb, and faces Liz.

ZAYDA (CONT'D)  
The "Sell Off" intro is hard to  
play.

LIZ  
I think I figured it out.

Zayda smiles. She's skeptical.

ZAYDA  
Let's see what you got.

Zayda waits. Liz puts the album back on the chair and fiddles around with her guitar.

LIZ  
'It was this or jail.'

ZAYDA  
Say what?

LIZ  
You said, "It was this or jail."  
What did you mean?

Zayda stares at Liz, who doesn't make eye contact. Zayda hesitates. Collects herself.

ZAYDA  
A while back, I got popped for a  
'dewey.'

LIZ  
I don't know what that is.

ZAYDA  
(impatient)  
A 'dewey.' A DUI. Driving under the  
influence. You know what that is,  
right?

LIZ

Yeah. I know what that is.

ZAYDA

Technically speaking, I wasn't even driving at the time. Plus, my lawyer says DUI arrests are a big racket. So the whole thing was kind of a bullshit deal.

Liz plays a few amplified LICKS on her guitar.

LIZ

That doesn't seem right.

ZAYDA

I know! Anyway, I pled out and the judge gave me community service. Eighty fucking hours. Which is why I'm here today. Your official contest mentor.

LIZ

Guess I lucked out.

Liz taps her foot, begins to play a slow REGGAE intro.

ZAYDA

(cuts in)

What's that?

Liz stops playing.

LIZ

The intro. Is something wrong?

ZAYDA

Only if you're trying to play "Sell Off."

LIZ

The contest is called 'Run for Cover.' This is my cover.

ZAYDA

Oh, okay. I just wrote the song, so what do I know? Go ahead.

Liz nods, COUNTS under her breath, and begins to play again.

After a few seconds, Zayda looks down and smiles.

Liz notices and stops playing. She shakes her head, then unstraps her guitar and puts it in her gear bag.

ZAYDA (CONT'D)  
Hey! We're just getting started  
here.

Liz unplugs her guitar from the amp. Hesitates.

LIZ  
My dad got arrested for drunk  
driving. Almost a year ago.

Zayda LAUGHS.

ZAYDA  
That sounds familiar. I bet he pled  
out, too.

LIZ  
Yeah - he did.

ZAYDA  
How many hours did he get?

LIZ  
I'm not sure. How many hours are  
there in ten years?

ZAYDA  
Ten years?

Liz zips her gear bag shut and stands up. She picks up her  
phone, but leaves the album on the chair.

LIZ  
He was driving home from a bar and  
ran into a light pole. His  
passenger died, so they charged him  
with vehicular manslaughter. He  
pled guilty and got 120 months. Ten  
years.

Zayda reacts. She takes a moment before responding.

ZAYDA  
I am so sorry. How is your family  
holding up?

LIZ  
Not that good.

She heads for the door.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
The passenger was my mom.

FADE OUT.

THE END