

# BITTER SWEET SYMPHONY

*The Song You Know, The Story You Don't*

Written by

Matthew Kic & Mike Sorce

PARADIGM  
MGMT ENTERTAINMENT

In the 21st century, the music industry has been rocked by rights controversies involving many of the era's biggest hits – from royalty conflicts over "Blurred Lines" and "Uptown Funk" to high-stakes creative disputes over works by artists like Radiohead, Ed Sheeran, Olivia Rodrigo, Lana Del Rey, and, yes, even Taylor Swift.

But before all these battles, there was one monumental song whose creation and ensuing dispute would set the stage for all music rights conflicts to come.

**This is the story of that song.**

[Playlist Starts Here. Click to Follow Along.](#)

OVER BLACK:

RICHARD ASHCROFT (V.O.)

A classic song. Doesn't matter where it comes from. Doesn't matter how politics or fashion changes. You'll never change a classic song. It's timeless. And I'd do anything, absolutely anything... to write just one classic song that will change the world.

The sound of DRUMS. One, two, three, four, five hits on the snare. Two on the bass. Four on the woodblock.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

In a cramped and cigarette smoke filled recording studio, DAVE WHITAKER (30s) raises a baton. A composed Englishman in a turtleneck. Right now, his backstory doesn't matter.

Instead, pay attention to the music he's creating with the small ORCHESTRA of MUSICIANS filling the room beneath him.

CHYRON: LONDON - 1965

The same drum pattern we just heard recurs once more. Now BELLS join in, the low end of a GUITAR. A sparse sound.

Blank expression, Dave raises the baton again, signaling the rest of the MUSICIANS to join in. And then... it all comes together. Strings, woodwinds, bass guitar. The chugging 4/4 rhythm builds, creating a hypnotic, undeniable atmosphere.

Tight on the faces of Dave and other Musicians populating the room, passion breaks through their concentration. The music is soaring, inspiring. It's rousing, life-affirming. It's--

ALLEN KLEIN (PRE-LAP)  
What the fuck am I listening to?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Behind the soundboard in the control room, the ENGINEER turns down the music we just heard to a FAINT HUM.

Standing behind the Engineer, we find **ALLEN KLEIN** (mid 30s) and **ANDREW OLDHAM** (20s). Klein's American, all business, black suit, puffs a cigar. Oldham's British, hipper, younger.

ANDREW OLDHAM  
What's the problem, Allen?

ALLEN KLEIN

I thought we commissioned an album  
of Rolling Stones covers.

ANDREW OLDHAM

We did.

ALLEN KLEIN

...what the fuck is this a cover of?

ANDREW OLDHAM

"The Last Time". Can't you hear it?

The Engineer raises the volume. Klein scrunches his face, has him turn it down. Walking to a WALL OF 45 RPM RECORDS, he skims through until he pulls out a single labeled "The Last Time" by the Rolling Stones. He plops it on a record player.

The song starts. Fast, short and dirty rock n' roll. And Klein is right, nothing like the cover we see being recorded. Over speakers: *"This could be the last time, this could be the--"* The vinyl scratches as Oldham lifts the needle--

ANDREW OLDHAM (CONT'D)

Okay, it's not a straightforward cover. It's more *inspired* by the original. But I'm telling you, Dave's a genius. It's unique, fresh. Totally something Brian Wilson or George Martin would do.

Realizing he's not getting through, Oldham steps closer. Motions to the Engineer to turn up the dial all the way.

ANDREW OLDHAM (CONT'D)

Seriously, Allen. Listen to this - it's *beautiful*. I know Mick and Keith'll agree.

Klein watches Dave conduct through the window. As the epic, swelling music washes over us, Klein considers it. Then--

ALLEN KLEIN

Whatever. When this fails, we can just scrap together another live album 'til the boys record again.

Oldham's disappointed. Klein stubs out his cigar, nods to the Musicians in the other room.

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)

Cut them a check for the day and send them on their way.

ANDREW OLDHAM

But... Dave composed this. He  
should at least get a credit.  
(off Klein's steely stare)  
You just said it doesn't sound like  
the original...

ALLEN KLEIN

...yet it wouldn't exist *without*  
the original, a song by *my clients*.

ANDREW OLDHAM

I thought it was gonna fail, huh?  
So, what does it even matter?

ALLEN KLEIN

You got a lot to learn about this  
industry, Oldham. Always look out  
for your client's best interests...  
regardless of right or wrong.

With that, Klein's out the door. Oldham sighs. We PUSH IN on  
the glowing red RECORD BUTTON on the outsized sound board--

--PULLING OUT on another GLOWING RED BUTTON that reads 33  
1/3. Nearby, a circular STEEL PRESS lifts, spitting out a  
VINYL RECORD. Then another one. Another. CUT TO--

The vinyl up close: "DECCA RECORDS". It's placed in a sleeve  
as we flip to the back, the last track reading "THE LAST  
TIME" and beneath: "\*PRODUCED BY ANDREW LOOG OLDHAM". CUT TO--

The front, THE ROLLING STONES SONGBOOK by THE ANDREW OLDHAM  
ORCHESTRA. Pulling out, we see the album is stacked on top of  
many others in the back of a TRUCK. CUT TO--

We follow the album cover as it is placed at the center of  
the "NEW RELEASES" section at a RECORD STORE. The hands of a  
YOUNG FAN eagerly grab the album. CUT TO--

The Young Fan listens to it on their bed. We see their  
scrunched face resembles Klein's. They don't get it. CUT TO--

The Young Fan SELLS the album to a CLERK at a USED RECORD  
STORE. The Clerk places the album on the rack, where--

A TIMELAPSE unfolds with the album staying put. CUSTOMERS  
blaze by back and forth, their styles evolving as time moves  
on quickly. The other racks fill, are depleted, fill again.

But NO ONE touches The Rolling Stones Songbook. As it fades  
into obscurity, we push in closer and closer to the album  
until only The Rolling Stones logo remains. FADE TO BLACK.

## TITLE: BITTER SWEET SYMPHONY

INT. CONCERT VENUE - NIGHT

Back on The Rolling Stones logo. But as we pull out, we see it's now featured on a faded t-shirt. Our melodious opening music is replaced by a CACAPHONOUS MIX of PSYCHEDELIC, SWIRLING ALTERNATIVE ROCK.

Pulling out further, we see the shirt belongs to a band's LEAD SINGER. His long, unruly hair conceals his face as he slithers seductively to the music. We'll come back to him, but first, let's meet the others:

Bassist **SIMON JONES** (20s) plays a driving rhythm while drummer **PETE SALISBURY** (20s) keeps a steady, hypnotic groove.

And right now, the centerpiece of the band is guitarist **NICK McCABE** (20s). Shoulder-length, light brown hair. Calm and cool, almost unnaturally immobile as he summons a thunderous, heavenly sound from a worn Fender Stratocaster.

Simon and Pete are riveted by the noise. However, our aforementioned frontman simply stares at Nick. As he brushes dark hair from his eyes, we officially meet--

**RICHARD ASHCROFT** (20s). Tall, extremely thin, magnetic. Carries himself with a put-on mystique. Setting his piercing eyes on Nick soloing away stoically.

Finally, we pull out far enough to see we're in a packed, sweaty club. A banner behind our band reads "THE VERVE".

### CHYRON: WIGAN, GREATER MANCHESTER - 1995

The CROWD is loving Nick's solo. Richard's eyes glint with jealousy. He brings the microphone to his mouth - a bellowing WAIL - putting the audience's attention squarely on himself.

Nick turns to watch Richard roll on the ground dramatically as he continues wailing. Though annoyed, he lets it go.

INT. CONCERT VENUE - LATER

The wild jam session comes to a conclusion as the audience applauds. The band luxuriates in the praise. The crowd chants for another song. Various titles shouted, but one stands out--

VARIOUS VOICES  
*"Slide Away"! Play "Slide Away"!*

The band members look to each other, nodding, Nick especially satisfied. As Pete readies to count in the track, Richard cuts him off, shaking his head vigorously.

PETE SALISBURY  
What?

Richard grabs a nearby acoustic guitar, strapping it on.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Let's do "History".

NICK MCCABE  
No one knows that song, Richard.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
They don't know it yet.

NICK MCCABE  
Why are you trying to kill the mood?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
I don't kill moods. I *create* them.

Before anyone else can interject, Richard moves to center stage, begins to strum the opening to a gentle ballad. Pete and Simon slowly join in, rolling with it. Finally, Nick sighs, reluctantly adding in his ethereal lead guitar.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
(eyes closed, singing)  
*I wander lonely streets/behind  
where the old Thames does flow...*

The song is completely at odds with the loud alt rock we just heard the band play... but if you look at the audience, it's clear that it DEEPLY CONNECTS with them.

Nick looks to the faces in the crowd, unsure how to feel as they hit the soaring chorus--

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
*I've got to tell you my tale/of how  
I loved and how I failed...*

INT. CONCERT VENUE - BAR - LATER

Nick, Simon, and Pete all drink at the bar as ROADIES set the stage for the next band. The boys are ecstatic, even signing albums or shirts for some of the more excited Fans.

But in the middle of the group, Richard simply stares forward as he takes slow drags of his cigarette. No emotion.

He's nudged by **SIMON TONG** (20s), a friend of the band. Yes, there are already two Simons in this story in case you were doubting how British this group is. We'll call them JONES and TONG. Tong looks at Richard with hero worship in his eyes.

SIMON TONG

You guys were amazing. That last song... holy shit. That's going on the new record for sure, right?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

...sure.

Tong's face falls a little. Nick notices, approaching.

NICK MCCABE

Sorry, Si. Captain Rock's in one of his moods.

(leaning closer to Richard)

Why're you so gutted? You played your song, they loved it. You won.

Richard's still silent, staring intently. Another drag as we see what he's eyeing: an OASIS POSTER behind the bar.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You know Liam and Noel sold out Manchester Arena tonight, right? They played at bloody Slane Castle last month as well.

NICK MCCABE

Christ's sake, Richard... last year I was a quantity surveyor and you were living off the dole. We're making a living in music now.

(off Richard's silence)

We may not be playing Slane Castle like Oasis, but there's no need for comparison.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

No, there *is* no comparison. They're rock stars.

NICK MCCABE

And we're not? Look around you.

The Verve undeniably has a good number of Fans at this mid-size venue, but it's not enough for Richard.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Not like Oasis. Or the Stone Roses. Or Happy Mon--

NICK MCCABE

What you're really saying is we're  
not from Manchester.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I have no desire to be a Mancunian.

NICK MCCABE

We're still the biggest band Wigan  
ever produced.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

And *that's* enough for you? To be  
the biggest band in this shit town?  
To be another tombstone outside the  
city gates? Well, it ain't enough  
for me. I won't stop 'til we're the  
biggest in the whole damned world.

NICK MCCABE

You should be happy with where you  
are. With what you are. And look,  
if this is about money--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I could give a rat's ass about  
money! There's more inside me, Nick.  
Something special. A great song...  
one I haven't written just yet--

A THUNDEROUS, DISTORTED GUITAR cuts them off. The audience  
begins to cheer as a NEW BAND immediately launches into ear  
shattering rock. Richard and Nick both grimace.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Fuck me.

Richard eyes the band's singer: JASON PIERCE aka **J. SPACEMAN**  
(late 20s), lead singer of The Verve-rivals SPIRITUALIZED.  
Spaceman and his BANDMATES sport shorter, messy hair hidden  
beneath dark sunglasses. A too-cool-for-school aura.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Anyone ever gonna tell Spaceman  
loud is not the same as good?

NICK MCCABE

He'd probably quit talking to us if  
we did. Besides... kind of  
rockstar, no?

Richard shares a smile with Nick before noting a new sight  
onstage: keyboardist **KATE RADLEY** (20s), statuesque, gorgeous.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Wha... who is that?

NICK MCCABE  
Spaceman's girl. I heard he sorta  
Linda McCartney-ed her into the band.

Richard can't stop staring, mesmerized by her.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
I think I'm in love.

Nick looks to Spaceman onstage, who seems completely out of it. Pale, sweaty, eyes sunken. Off Nick, worried about this.

INT. CONCERT VENUE - BACKSTAGE - LATER

Richard makes his way past writhing bodies to get to the band members of Spiritualized. He spots Spaceman, approaching.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Hey... Jason. Spaceman!

SPACEMAN  
(disheveled, jittery)  
Mad Dick, good to see you... even  
better if you got any gak on ya.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Not... on me, nah. But listen--

SPACEMAN  
(angry now)  
Then fuck off, will ya.

Richard just watches Spaceman pace away, until--

KATE RADLEY (O.S.)  
It's not you... he's just... in a  
state at the moment.

Turning, Richard almost has an out of body experience upon seeing Kate standing close to him. Speechless for a moment.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Hey... I'm Richard.

KATE RADLEY  
Yeah. I've heard. I'm Kate.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
You were amazing tonight. Miles  
better than their last keyboardist.

KATE RADLEY  
I liked that last song of yours.

Despite not knowing each other at all, there's vibes between these two. Clearly, Richard's feelings are reciprocated.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Did ya? It'll be on our new one.  
D'you... think it'll be big?

KATE RADLEY  
Uh... why not? Crowd loved it.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
But do you think it could make us  
the biggest band in the world?

KATE RADLEY  
(laughs, dismissive)  
Uh, sure. Maybe. How should I know?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Nah... It's not the one.  
(suddenly)  
I've got to get home and write a  
better one.

KATE RADLEY  
...what?

Turning on his heel, Richard simply walks away while Kate looks after him, dumbfounded but admittedly intrigued.

EXT. WIGAN - STREETS - NIGHT

Richard walks the Wigan streets, lost in his own world. He picks up a few STARES from random PASSERBY.

PASSERBY  
*Is that Mad Dick?!*

He gives a small gesture acknowledging the shoutout. But right now, Richard's a man on a mission. He hums a tune to himself. As the music COMES ALIVE in his mind--

PRE-LAP: *BANG, BANG, BANG.*

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

In a budget level hotel room, Kate's eyes OPEN to the sound of KNOCKING. She looks to the clock, squinting to see it's barely nine (aka the break of dawn for rockstars). Grunts.

KATE RADLEY  
Come back later, will ya?!

The knocking continues. She gets up, annoyed, quickly throwing on a robe. Grabs the door handle. As she opens it--

KATE RADLEY (CONT'D)  
Didn't I ask for a late checkou--

--she's surprised to find Richard on the other end. He still wears the same clothes as last night, manic, eyes dilated.

KATE RADLEY (CONT'D)  
Richard...?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*Finally. I tried practically every other room in this damn hotel.*

KATE RADLEY  
What are you doing here?  
(staring, confused)  
Did you... cut your hair?

Indeed, Richard is sporting a shorter, mid-length haircut now. That's just the type of rash decision he makes.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
I told you I'd write a better song.

KATE RADLEY  
And you... already did?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Can I play it for you?

Kate notices Richard holds a guitar case at his side.

KATE RADLEY  
What... like now?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Bathed in morning sunlight, Richard strums his acoustic. Soulfully singing his new composition: "The Drugs Don't Work".

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*All this talk of growing old/it's getting me down my love/like a cat in a bag, waiting to drown...*

Whether she likes it or not, Kate finds herself moved.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
Now the drugs don't work/they just  
make me worse/but I know I'll see  
your face again...

Awkward silence fills the room as the last note dies down.  
Richard looks to her expectantly, waiting. But she's quiet.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
You gonna tell me what you think?

As Kate sits with herself, her raw emotion turns to ANGER.

KATE RADLEY  
I think I need to get out of here.

She grabs her purse, rushes for the door.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Wait... what? Kate?

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

As Kate nearly sprints away from the hotel, Richard picks up the pace to catch up. He grabs her hand, stopping her.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Look, you can tell me if it's shit.  
My feelings will endure.

KATE RADLEY  
Wha-- who are you?! Christ, how did you even know I was here?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
If there's something I need to know, I find it out.

KATE RADLEY  
Do you not hear what an enormous wanker you sound like all the time?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Of course I do. I just don't care.

Kate rolls her eyes. *This guy is impossible.*

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
So what's the problem then? The song... made you feel all that?

KATE RADLEY  
Think that much of yourself, do ya?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Well, did it?

KATE RADLEY

God, I'm... I'm going through some stuff, okay? I'm not gonna talk to a complete stranger about it.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You listen to those lyrics? I ain't exactly a ray of sunshine. I've got stuff. Might be able to relate.

KATE RADLEY

But *your stuff* isn't *your dad dying*, now is it?

Richard's struck by that, looking her right in the eye. Softening, showing us a new side of himself.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

That's... exactly what that song is about.

KATE RADLEY

...if this is some kind of joke.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

On my life. It's not.

She's shocked, still unsure she believes him. He's VIBRATING.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Do you believe in destiny?

KATE RADLEY

...no.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Will you spend the day with me anyway?

KATE RADLEY

I... don't think Jason would like that very much.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

What Spaceman don't know won't hurt him.

KATE RADLEY

Not true. You know how sensitive he is.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Well, so am I. And you'll break my  
heart if you reject me right now.

Despite herself, Kate is tempted, charmed in spite of it all.

KATE RADLEY

I don't even know you. *Mad Dick.*

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Let's change that then.

EXT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Richard and Kate stand by a stack of RECORDS. "The Last Time" by the Rolling Stones plays. But Richard pays no attention. He flips through his stack, showing vinyl after vinyl to Kate--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

...so of course Funkadelic. Family Stone. Smiths. Beach Boys. The Stooges. Elvis.

Lastly, he holds up a copy of *HOT ROCKS 1964-1971* by *THE ROLLING STONES* with a reverence reserved for holy texts.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

And most importantly... the greatest rock and roll band the world has ever seen. So there... now you have it.

KATE RADLEY

Now I have... what? I thought this was about getting to know each other.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

It is. I am the music. The music is me. There's nothing else to know.

KATE RADLEY

But what about what you said, about your da--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

The song said it all.

KATE RADLEY

You don't talk about it? Pretty tight-lipped for an "artist".

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Long time ago. Too long to hash up now. Music does my talking for me.

KATE RADLEY

...is that what's behind this need  
for utter world domination then?  
Missing a bit of Daddy's love?

Richard grins, sets the record down, liking the bite on her.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

And what about yours? How long's it--

KATE RADLEY

He's still alive. Just... sick. And  
that's all I'd like to say about it  
for now.

Richard nods, understanding.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I get it. Because I'm an empath...  
(grabs Smiths record)  
...like my childhood hero Morrissey.

Kate smirks. Joining, she grabs *PET SOUNDS* by *THE BEACH BOYS*--

KATE RADLEY

And you're a lunatic with delusions  
of grandeur... like my childhood  
hero Brian Wilson.

Enjoying the game now, Richard grabs the FUNKADELIC album.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

But I still respect my forefathers.  
(picks up THE STOOGES)  
I'm scrappy, from the streets.  
(picks up ELVIS)  
I've seen my fair share of tragedy.

Once again, the last album he picks up is THE ROLLING STONES.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

And one day... I'll be the biggest  
thing in music.

Kate's attention is caught by an album deep below the others:  
**THE ROLLING STONES SONGBOOK** by **THE ANDREW OLDHAM ORCHESTRA**.

KATE RADLEY

...what's this one say about you?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Hopefully nothing. You've never  
heard of the Andrew Oldham  
Orchestra, have you?

KATE RADLEY

Don't try to one-up me. I could  
take you on a musical history ride  
that would make your head spin.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I'm not, I swear. *Nobody's* heard of  
'em. Only reason I have's cause my  
dad used to have it around. Odd  
little side project the Stones  
management did back in the '60s.

Richard's ears perk up, finally acknowledging the song  
playing throughout the store. *"This could be the last time--"*

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Funny enough, they do a cover of  
this one. You gotta hear it.  
Beautiful stuff. But sadly, all  
forgotten to history now.

(thinking)

*History...* I will buy it actually.

KATE RADLEY

If you're *such* a fan... shouldn't  
you have a copy already?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Of course I do. This one's for you.

Kate hates that she can't stop smiling, as a roughly recorded  
version of "The Drugs Don't Work" takes us to--

INT. RECORDING SPACE - DAY

Richard nods his head to the music, waiting eagerly for  
reaction from his bandmates. As the song comes to an end--

PETE SALISBURY

Captain Rock going full Britpop.  
Never thought I'd see the day.

SIMON JONES

That's some intense stuff, man.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

(nodding in agreement)  
Shame it's too late to include it  
on the album--

NICK MCCABE

And where's my guitar meant to be?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
(confused, offended)  
What are you on about?

NICK MCCABE  
Not much room for jamming in a  
sound like that.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
D'you already forget how the crowd  
reacted to "History"? Maybe they  
want a little less jamming from us.

NICK MCCABE  
Jamming is when we're best. Coming  
up with songs together. You say you  
wanna be the best in the world?  
That's when we're best.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
That's when you're best, you mean.

PETE SALISBURY  
Okay, you two--

NICK MCCABE  
Right. Cause *I'm* the one thinking  
about myself here.

Richard stands angrily, no longer taking this.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
You think this shite's easy? I  
poured my soul out. I opened a wound  
in my heart for the world to see.  
It's nothing to do with ego. It's  
just what it takes to be great. And  
maybe you don't have the stuff for  
it. Hiding behind your loud guitars.

NICK MCCABE  
Yeah. Loud guitars is it for me. I  
don't see the problem with that.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
And that's the difference between  
us. You're here to play around.  
Nothing about this is play for me.

Nick just crosses his arms, at a loss. He doesn't have the  
fight in him that Richard does.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
And this...?

Richard points to the "The Drugs Don't Work" recording.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
*This is the sound that takes us next level. You watch - "History" is gonna be our biggest hit yet. And we need to be ready to write something even better. If you're not ready for that...*

Nick finally looks back at Richard, challenging him - "Then what?" Jones and Pete look on nervously.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
Then I'll do it myself.

NICK MCCABE  
(scoffing, shaking head)  
By all bloody means, my friend.

And then Nick's out the door. Richard has little reaction.

SIMON JONES  
He'll come back... right?

PETE SALISBURY  
Course he will. It's too early in our story to break up.

Ignoring them, a fiery glint appears in Richard's eye.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
(sotto)  
It's not our story... It's mine.

#### INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - TIMELAPSE

A TIMELAPSE takes us through the next few weeks as Richard furiously WRITES LYRICS and PLAYS GUITAR (and GETS WASTED via WEED, ALCOHOL, NICOTINE, MDMA, ANYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF).

Kate pops in and out as they spend more time together, plenty of substances being consumed with her as well.

ALBUMS are played for inspiration, Richard voraciously devouring everything he can listen to. An enormous POSTER of The Rolling Stones looming behind him.

The sun RISES and SETS, and Richard pushes forward, intent on doing what he said he would.

As Kate and Richard lie in bed and their eyes connect, the only two people in the world, he's SEIZED by inspiration.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

--Richard plays what we'll come to know as "Lucky Man"--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

*I watch you look at me, watch my fever  
grow/And I know just who I am...*

--Richard plays the drum part for the song now by himself, but his timing isn't where he wants it to be.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Fuck!

--Richard plays the mellow bass line, but he can feel something missing from it. It's not the sound it should be.

--Richard sits still in the space, thinking. This is not going as smoothly as he'd hoped. He reaches over and flicks on the RADIO. And as these things always go--

RADIO DJ (V.O.)

...next up's the latest - and if word on the street's true - last single from everyone's favorite Wiganers. It's from their new album *A Northern Soul* and in classic Mad Dick fashion, it's got prophetic foreshadowing written right there in the title. You asked for it. Here's The Verve... with "History".

As "History" begins, Richard shakes his head, frustrated. His emotion builds until he can't stand it anymore, pacing across the room, and TOSSING a SNARE DRUM against the wall.

INT. BAR - SAME

Sitting alone, Nick nurses a beer, also now listening to "History" ringing out in the bar. The BARTENDER approaches.

BARTENDER

Ain't that song yours, Nick?

NICK MCCABE

Mine...?

Nick considers that, taking a long drink of his brew.

NICK MCCABE (CONT'D)

Not really, nah.

EXT. RECORDING STUDIO - SAME

Outside a studio labeled "MOLES MUSIC", Kate carries her keyboard case to her car. She may not notice, but we see Spaceman despondently watch her from a second story window.

INT. KATE'S CAR - SAME

Turning the ignition, Kate's ears perk as the radio also greets her with "History". She shakes her head, amused.

INT. JONES AND PETE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Pete and both the Simons listen too. They can't hide their ecstatic reaction to hearing it on the radio. As it wraps up--

RADIO DJ (V.O.)

There you have it, as Richard Ashcroft always promised, finally a bonafide hit for The Verve, fully embracing the Britpop sound. Shame the band is now a mere reflection of the title - "History".

Jones and Pete look at each other, realization setting in.

SIMON JONES

Christ, do we have to get real person jobs...?

PETE SALISBURY

Don't talk like that.

But Pete's full of worry too. Just then-- RING! The phone.

SIMON JONES

(picking up)

Yeah?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - SAME

Richard's on the other end, smashed drum set behind him.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

It's Richard.

SIMON JONES

Richard? You've been hearing our song...? It's everywhere.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Yeah, whatever. It ain't earning us  
much, is it? So, listen, I've  
written a solo album, but I can't  
be fucked recording it all myself.  
Will you and Pete come play for me?

SIMON JONES

(hushed, to Pete)

He wants us to play on his solo album.

PETE SALISBURY

Holy shit. Thank you, God.

SIMON JONES

So, we're in then?

PETE SALISBURY

Are you daft?! Of course we're in.  
But don't tell him that just yet!  
We can't be too eager.

SIMON JONES

(back to the phone)

Okay... umm. I'll need to talk to  
Pete about it more, but... I think,  
yeah. Could be cool.

(swallowing)

Umm... are you... calling Nick too?

Richard considers that. As enticing as that sounds--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Nah... is the other Simon there?

Jones looks back to Tong, whose eyes light up with HOPE.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

Now assembled as a new foursome, Pete, Jones, Tong, and Richard play the end of a new wailing ballad: "Sonnet".

RICHARD ASHCROFT

*Yes, there's love if you want  
it/Don't sound like no sonnet...*

Richard rips his guitar off, pacing. The others wait. Then--

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

It's missing something.

PETE SALISBURY

We've played it a hundred times.

SIMON JONES  
A hundred different ways, too.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
And it's still missing something.  
They all are.

Tong hangs his head, pulling his guitar off.

SIMON TONG  
I'm not trying to ruin the best  
thing that ever happened to me. But  
let's be real... it's missing Nick.

As Tong starts for the door, Richard stops him.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Don't go anywhere.

Richard paces out of there. The others look to each other.

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick strums his guitar mindlessly. REVEAL Richard on the couch nearby, neither looking at the other.

NICK MCCABE  
Came to rub it in, then?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Sorry you can't be happy we finally  
have a hit song out there.

NICK MCCABE  
I know you're recording without me.  
All of you. The Verve again in  
everything but name.

Richard tries to swallow his pride a bit, tough for him.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
It's not The Verve without you.

NICK MCCABE  
It's not The Verve then, whatever.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Not whatever. I...  
(excruciating to admit)  
It's not good enough.

NICK MCCABE

Are you taking the piss? Richard  
Ashcroft is telling me his own  
magnum opus isn't good enough?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

The songs are good, man, I stand by  
that. But they just don't sound--

NICK MCCABE

--like they do in your head?  
There's a reason we all wrote  
everything together before.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You want me to beg? Get on my knees?

NICK MCCABE

You're not really asking me back,  
are you? Tong can play perfectly  
well - he taught you, didn't he?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Nick...

But Nick's too stubborn. He's not gonna take this. He puts  
his guitar down, stands up, looking away.

NICK MCCABE

I've been thinking about going back  
to surveying actually. Maybe  
music's not for me after all.

Richard knows he needs to humble himself and apologize. He  
tries to psyche himself up, but... *he can't do it.*

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Fine then, mate.

He reveals two small white tabs of ECSTASY.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

I came here to celebrate with you.  
Some thought that was.

Richard downs BOTH the tabs himself, heads for the door.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - LATER

Richard suddenly bursts back in, pupils fully DILATED.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Let's fucking go again.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Uncomfortable and, even worse, sober, Richard stands beside Kate. He looks up to a respectable, middle class family home.

KATE RADLEY  
You alright...? It's okay if this  
is hard for you...

Richard steps closer to her, arm around her.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
This isn't about me.

KATE RADLEY  
....where's Richard and what've you  
done with him?

INT. RADLEY FAMILY HOME - DAY

KATE'S MOTHER pours hot water into a tea cup for Richard.

KATE'S MOTHER  
It's so nice to finally meet you.

Kate sits beside Richard at the small kitchen table.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
That's rubbish. But you're as  
lovely as Kate described.

Kate's Mother rolls her eyes. We see where Kate gets it from.

KATE RADLEY  
Is Dad awake? Can we see him?

KATE'S MOTHER  
He's been very tired, love.

KATE RADLEY  
I'd like Richard to meet him...

Something silent is communicated between Kate and her Mom.  
This is not a typical request.

KATE'S MOTHER  
...let me check on him.

As she does, Richard spots through the doorway - KATE'S FATHER in a hospital bed. Pale, sickly, weak. It strikes him.

Richard looks away, but can't help having a FLASH of HIS OWN FATHER, lifting a YOUNG RICHARD up and spinning him around.

INT. RADLEY FAMILY HOME - KATE'S FATHER'S BEDROOM - SAME

Richard and Kate sit by Kate's Father's bedside, Richard really struggling to be strong enough for this.

KATE'S FATHER  
Seems my daughter has taken a  
liking to you, Richard.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
First I've heard of it.

That gets a laugh. Kate appreciates it.

KATE'S FATHER  
(coughs, weak)  
And she says you're... a musician?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
I... do my best.

KATE RADLEY  
Don't listen to this fake humility.  
He's a *real* musician, Dad. Full on  
*famous*, and all that.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Not all that. Not... yet, at least.  
Trying to finish a new album.

KATE'S FATHER  
Kate loves... her musicians.

Richard raises his eyebrows at Kate, who playfully shrugs.

KATE'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Could you... play me something?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Oh, uh... I... didn't bring--

KATE RADLEY  
He used to play himself.

Kate digs through the closet, coming out with an acoustic. Richard reluctantly accepts it, pausing before starting the opening notes of "The Drugs Don't Work". Stops himself.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
This one might be a little...  
morbid, actually.

KATE'S FATHER  
All the better then.

Richard looks to Kate for approval. She nods. With that, Richard continues to strum. Finally, he begins to sing, emotional. His voice CRACKS, but he pushes through--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*Now the drugs don't work/they just  
make you worse/but I know I'll see  
your face again...*

INT. RADLEY FAMILY HOME - LATER

Richard emerges from the bathroom into the hall, drying his hands on his shirt. He stops as he hears Kate and her Mother discussing him nearby. He moves closer, keeping quiet--

KATE'S MOTHER (O.S.)  
--he seems like a very driven young  
man. But... what about Jason?  
Aren't you still seeing him?

KATE RADLEY (O.S.)  
I told you. It's complicated, Mum.  
'Cause of the band and all.

KATE'S MOTHER (O.S.)  
Jason seemed so down last time we  
saw him. I hope he's not... I just  
don't want him to fall down the  
wrong path again.

That lands on Richard. The seed of guilt firmly planted.

INT. SPACEMAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A NEEDLE enters a VEIN, pushing BROWN LIQUID inside.

Spaceman pulls the needle from his arm, exhaling pure relief. The space around him is a disorganized mess, drug paraphernalia scattered, the physical embodiment of tortured psyche. A KNOCK at the door barely grabs his attention. He struggles to stand--

Spaceman swings the door open to reveal Richard.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
How ya doing, mate?

INT. SPACEMAN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Richard sits on the couch and tries not to look too hard around the room. Even for him, this is a lot. Spaceman sits across from him, fighting against his high to stay conscious.

SPACEMAN

Checking on me? Very unlike you.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I can be a friend when I need to.

SPACEMAN

When it *suits you*, you mean. Used to be we'd all be out together every night. Now I'm lucky to get a call returned from Captain Rock.

Richard hides how that makes him feel. Spaceman watches him taking in his apartment in silent judgment. He SPILLS--

SPACEMAN (CONT'D)

It's Kate, man...

Richard tenses. *Does he know?*

SPACEMAN (CONT'D)

I... I thought we had something. I brought her in the band and all, and she... she's amazing, that one. But I know she's seeing someone else. She denies it. Probably thinks it'll kill me. But I can feel it. I can fucking smell it on her. I can. And yeah... it *is* killing me. It...

Spaceman is not exaggerating. More specter than man. Richard knows he should tell him the truth. He readies himself.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Listen, J... About Kate--

SPACEMAN

(ignoring that, slurring)  
I been hearing "History" on the radio lately. It's pretty good...

Richard looks to Spaceman, now in a full on drugged daze.

SPACEMAN (CONT'D)

But it's not that *great one* you keep threatening to unleash, is it?

(impersonating)

I'm Richard Ashcroft, and I'm gonna write the best fucking song in the world and be the biggest fucking artist of all time!

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Spot on, J.

SPACEMAN

So, you done it or what?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Done... what?

SPACEMAN

All you been doing is recording,  
right? Haven't seen you perform in  
months. And The Verve's kaput. Seems  
like... you're out of excuses. So you  
written the great one yet... or nah?

Thoughts running behind his eyes, Richard wants to say yes.  
He wants the answer to be yes. But he knows, the truth is--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Nah... not yet, I guess.

SPACEMAN

(taking that in)

Well...

Spaceman forces himself to his feet, nearly stumbling over as  
he stands up. Richard reaches out to steady him.

SPACEMAN (CONT'D)

Listen to this shite. Gonna be the  
opening to our new album.

TIME CUT TO:

Richard and Spaceman stand over a record player as the  
haunting Brian Wilson-esque rock symphony of Spiritualized's  
"Ladies and gentlemen we are floating in space" begins.  
Bells, guitar, timpani, layered voices, space sounds...

The song builds til it turns into an interpolation of Elvis's  
"Can't Help Falling in Love". Richard's mouth falls open, his  
eyes bulge. He's absolutely blown away by this, the feeling  
he's been looking for in his own work since... forever.

Spaceman savors the look on Richard's face.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Is that... you sampled Elvis? How  
the fuck'd you get the rights?

SPACEMAN

Haven't yet. Easier to ask  
forgiveness than permission, right?

Richard takes that in. And as the song continues, his skin is  
CRAWLING with artistic jealousy. He can't be here anymore.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Glad you're well, J. I've gotta go.

SPACEMAN  
Wait, you want...?

Spaceman holds up a spoon and syringe. Richard knows he should be intervening here. He came here to be a friend. But--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Nah... I've... got my own to do.

INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ECSTASY pops into Richard's mouth. LIQUOR chases it.

Richard paces the length of his apartment, hands through his hair, desperately filled with wanting. *Seething*. He rushes over to his records, pouring through, looking for something. Anything. Flipping past dozens, he finally grabs--

--the Andrew Oldham Orchestra LP from our opening. Eagerly putting it on, the first track "Blue Turns to Grey" begins. Almost immediately, Richard shakes his head. He picks up the record, looks at the track list, flips it over, starts again.

"As Tears Go By" gets a few more seconds before he stops it, skips ahead carefully to the final track, *the one we know*. And now, the opening notes of the "The Last Time" ring out through the apartment. RICHARD IMMEDIATELY SHIFTS.

As the song goes on, he closes his eyes, moving to the music, hearing *something* in it. Something MORE than what's there.

He begins to HUM a MELODY TO HIMSELF. In his mind and on the stereo, the song builds and builds.

FLASHES of his Father overcome Richard again. Then--

Richard freezes. His eyes BURST OPEN. He hums the melody louder once more. A MANIC SMILE spreads over his face.

*He's got it. His great song.*

THIS IS IT. *The artistic breakthrough he's been waiting for his entire life.*

INT. STUDIO - VOCAL BOOTH - LATER

Richard wears headphones in a VOCAL BOOTH. He has a quickly scribbled sheet of lyrics in front of him... which are written beneath a title: "BITTER SWEET SYMPHONY".

The music we heard from the Andrew Oldham version of "Last Time" continues... but this time far grander. INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STUDIO - RECORDING SPACE - LATER

Both Simons and Pete play along with the track, adding more of a ROCK EDGE. The drums pummeling, making the song sound even bigger yet. But it's still not the song we know until--

INT. STUDIO - RECORDING SPACE - LATER

An EPIC, INSTANTLY CATCHY VIOLIN REFRAIN is laid over. Like a smaller version of our intro, STRING PLAYERS crowd together in the space, adding yet another layer of majesty. Finally--

INT. STUDIO - VOCAL BOOTH - LATER

--we're back with Richard in the vocal booth. He looks to the lyric sheet once more. He closes his eyes, summons PASSION, and begins to deliver the monumental opening statement:

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*CAUSE IT'S A BITTER SWEET SYMPHONY,  
 THAT'S LIFE/TRYING TO MAKE ENDS  
 MEET, YOU'RE A SLAVE TO MONEY THEN  
 YOU DIE...*

CHYRON: LONDON - 1996

INT. STUDIO - MIXING ROOM - LATER

The Simons, Pete, and two Recording Engineers sit at the mixing board, listening to the nearly-finished product.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (V.O.)  
*I'LL TAKE YOU DOWN THE ONLY ROAD  
 I'VE EVER BEEN DOWN...*

The combination of the bold opening lyrics and Richard's effortless delivery sends a chill throughout the room.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (V.O.)  
*YOU KNOW THE ONE THAT TAKES YOU TO  
 THE PLACES WHERE ALL THE VEINS  
 MEET, YEAH...*

Finally we see Richard, awash with emotion as he hears his own BOOMING CHORUS.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (V.O.)  
*BUT I'M A MILLION DIFFERENT PEOPLE  
 FROM ONE DAY TO THE NEXT/I CAN'T  
 CHANGE, MY MOLD, NO NO NO...*

The band members and Engineers are changed by what they're hearing. It's THE SONG... and they all know it.

It reaches its conclusion, fading out, and we're left in a hushed room. No one sure what to say. But Richard can read the room perfectly. And he knows... he's done it.

Pulling out further, we see also listening to the track is **JAZZ SUMMERS** (early 50s), the band's stylish, thin, slight manager. More silence, until--

JAZZ SUMMERS  
 Well... if no one else is going to  
 say it, I guess it'll be me. I  
 mean... holy shit, gentlemen.

SIMON TONG  
 I'll second that.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
 Brilliant performance... brilliant  
 song. Even the title... "Bitter  
 Sweet Symphony". Everything just...  
 fucking brilliant.

Richard could be glowing with ego here, but instead, he's misty-eyed. He wipes a tear away before anyone can see.

JAZZ SUMMERS (CONT'D)  
 Are you sure you want to release  
 this under your own name, Richard?  
 It's... too big to be just you.  
 (still processing)  
 It could be the biggest thing since  
 "Smells Like Teen Spirit"...

Richard considers Jazz's words. Maybe it *is* bigger than him. But then he shakes that away, putting up faux-principles--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 Yeah, well... we all talked, didn't  
 we? It isn't The Verve without Nick.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
 No. I suppose it's not.  
 (scratching head)  
 And I'm sorry... this uses a Stones  
 sample? Why don't I recognize it?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

It's not the actual Stones. It's a  
cover of "The Last Time".

JAZZ SUMMERS

...but it sounds absolutely nothing  
like "The Last Time".

RICHARD ASHCROFT

All the better for us.

JAZZ SUMMERS

And you... cleared this sample?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Course not. That's a manager's job.

Jazz sits on the edge of the mixing board, thinking on that.

JAZZ SUMMERS

Well, thank God it's not the *actual*  
Stones song. Their manager - Allen  
Klein - what a right fucking prick  
he is. I'm sure he'd be more than  
happy to tell us to fuck off. He  
broke up The Beatles, you know?

PETE SALISBURY

It's five notes. How hard can it be?

SIMON TONG

You've got to clear this one, Jazz.  
It's... this song's the greatest  
thing Richard's ever done, mate.

That affirmation deeply gets to Richard. Feeling magnanimous,  
he decides to share the love a bit.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Nah, Si. It's the greatest thing  
we've ever done.

Richard looks around the room, generosity overcoming him.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

And Jazz is right. It *should* be a  
Verve track. Fuck, it *is* The Verve.  
So... who's gonna get Nick over  
here to finish this thing?

SIMON JONES

Sorry... haven't you two written  
each other off?

Richard stands, vibrating again with pure energy.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
You go tell him then, that I'm  
about to make do on my promise...  
Tell him we're about to be the  
biggest band in the fucking world.

The DING of an entry bell takes us to--

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

In hardscrabble Wigan, Nick anxiously taps the glass case of a pawn shop counter. A PAWNBROKER (40s) surveys a beautiful, faded 1959 FENDER JAZZMASTER. A piece of music lore.

But the Pawnbroker just shrugs.

PAWNBROKER  
I'll give you five-hundred.

NICK MCCABE  
You're joking...? The case alone is  
worth more than that.

PAWNBROKER  
Ain't I seen you around with that  
band? What're you doing here? My son  
said you got a song on the radio.

NICK MCCABE  
Yeah. Well... it was our last one.  
Music industry's shit.

As the Pawnbroker looks over the guitar--

PAWNBROKER  
Pawn industry's not much better.  
So... five-hundred?

It pains Nick that he's actually tempted to say yes. He thinks it over, until-- DING. Tong stands in the doorway.

SIMON TONG  
Nick. What the fuck are you doing?

NICK MCCABE  
Tong... how did you know I was he--

SIMON TONG  
Your mum told me. You're not actually  
doing what I think you are...?

NICK MCCABE  
Real life calls, mate.

SIMON TONG  
Nah, Nick... not yet.

Tong RIPS the Jazzmaster from the Pawnbroker's hands.

INT. STUDIO - MIXING ROOM - LATER

Nick listens as "Bitter Sweet Symphony" blares over the speakers. The two Simons and Jazz stand nearby. Richard is also in the room, but he and Nick resist making eye contact.

The song nears its end, all the layers and layers of music washing over Nick. Richard's voice wails on the track.

Nick bites his cheek. The music is undeniable. It finishes, and silence again returns to the room. Nick hides hurt--

NICK MCCABE  
Do you even need me back?

Richard's ego flares up for a moment before he stops it.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Song's not done. And it never will  
be if you don't lay your stuff down.

NICK MCCABE  
So what then... a farewell single  
and part ways again?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Fuck no. Got a whole album waiting  
for you. Calling it *Urban Hymns*.

NICK MCCABE  
Glad you got everyone's input there.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
You know it's a good title, Nick.

Nick slightly laughs, but can't deny the truth there. Still--

NICK MCCABE  
I don't know if I could look myself  
in the mirror performing under the  
"Richard Ashcroft" banner.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Let's get the band back together  
then.

NICK MCCABE  
I can't let you kick Tong out now.  
It'd kill him.

Tong's eyes widen at the thought. It definitely would.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Nah. Tong's in. You're in. We're all  
in. We're The Verve... the new and  
everlasting. The eternal.

NICK MCCABE  
(mocking)  
Ahh, my Messiah.

That doesn't bother Richard. He outstretches his hand. Nick  
stares at it a beat, but he can't help it. He wants this.

NICK MCCABE (CONT'D)  
Fuck me.

INT. STUDIO - RECORDING SPACE - LATER

Headphones on, nearly-departed Jazzmaster strapped to him,  
Nick creates an OCEAN of shimmering guitar. We faintly hear  
the track beneath his headphones.

Nick looks up through the window to see a BEAMING Richard,  
hands clasped in PRAISE. Nick tries to feel good about this.

INT. STUDIO - RECORDING SPACE - LATER

The Recording Engineer fiddles with the settings on Nick's  
Mesa/Boogie amplifier. Over his headphones, we hear he's at  
the tail end of adding lead guitar to "The Drugs Don't Work".

Through the window, we see Richard with his eyes closed,  
completely mesmerized by what Nick is laying down.

But the Engineer notices a slight look of consternation on  
Nick's face. The song ends, Richard shoots another thumbs up.

ENGINEER  
You don't like that one?

NICK MCCABE  
What do you mean...? It's great.

ENGINEER  
It's just, what... not really you?

Not wanting to agree, Nick shrugs away the sentiment.

NICK MCCABE  
 I was wrong about "History" ... I  
 don't wanna be wrong again.

Nick winces as Richard's voice comes over the headphones--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 Ay, Nick. We're going for a drive.

INT./EXT. - CAR/LONDON STREETS - DAY

A typically grey London Saturday. Richard drives a nondescript sedan as Nick sits shotgun. The Simons and Pete cram together in the back. Holding up a blank CD, Richard smiles.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 First master of "Bitter Sweet".  
 Figured we should listen  
 together... like old times.

There is a palpable excitement in the car. Richard pops the CD in the drive. Everyone's ears perk up as the song builds.

While the rest of the band exude smiles, Richard is dead serious as he takes the car through London's busy streets. He looks out to the throngs of PEDESTRIANS, time slowing.

NICK MCCABE  
 My guitar's a bit low in the mix.

Richard pays that no mind, still focused outside. TIME CUT TO--  
 The song fades out as Richard tightly grips the wheel.

SIMON JONES  
 Well... that's gonna make a hell of  
 a start to the album, boys.

*SCHRR!* Richard quickly brakes as he pulls to the side of the road. His mind is heavy. The others look to him, confused.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 Nah... it's too good for that. *They*  
 need more than that.

NICK MCCABE  
 They... who?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 (pointing outside)  
 Them! The downtrodden wasting their  
 lives away walking to their shit  
 jobs every day for a measly fucking  
 pound. This...  
 (MORE)

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

This is gonna mean something to them. To everyone. It's the modern day blues is what it is.

(intense)

We need to scrap the album.

NICK/PETE/JONES/TONG

*What? What are you talking abou--*

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Everything but "Bitter Sweet" has to go. Start fresh.

NICK MCCABE

Richard... the label would kill us. And the rest of the album is good. Trust me. I'd love to tell you it isn't. But it's great. It is.

(off Richard's silence)

Listen to me... you wanna speak to the people? You already have... You just need to trust what you created. You need to trust us. You've never had any problem opening yourself up in a song, but with us... you're a closed book. You've got to stop that.

Off Richard, not wanting to look too hard at that analysis.

EXT. RICHMOND PARK - DAY

London skyline in the distance, we're now in the middle of the rolling greenery of a city park. Richard, Nick, Pete, and both Simons all sit, looking pensively into the distance.

The SNAP, SNAP of a camera draws our attention to a small PHOTOGRAPHY CREW. The Lead Photographer gets closer.

LEAD PHOTOGRAPHER

Ahh, yes. Keep that pose.

PETE SALISBURY

How exactly is this communicating the whole *Urban Hymns* thing, Rich?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

It's not communicating anything. It's like Nick said: songs're gonna speak for themselves this time.

Richard slightly turns back to lock eyes with Nick for a moment as the Photographer snaps more pics. There's a quiet respect exchanged between them.

On Nick's face, we can see this is profoundly meaningful to him. It's like this time... things might really be different.

Richard quickly surveys the rest of the band. Something on his mind. He points to the Photographer's ASSISTANT, who wears a stylish (for the time) white BUCKET HAT.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Ay. I like that hat.  
(pointing to self)  
Would you mind?

The Assistant locks eyes with the Photographer, who silently encourages them to acquiesce to Richard's demands.

ASSISTANT  
Uhh, sure. Of course.

As Richard is given the hat, he puts it on, adjusts. He looks into the reflection of the large CAMERA LENS.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Brilliant. That looks good, yeah?

Not waiting for a response, Richard puts on more of a pose. Nick watches him, something twisting on his face. He looks to his bandmates, none of them wearing hats. It's like Richard has to stand apart from them... however he can.

LEAD PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)  
Nick... you're staring right at  
Richard. Look off yonder like the  
rest of your mates.

Nick apologetically nods, hiding any discomfort, as he does what the Photographer asks. SNAP--

INT. TAXI - EVENING

Tight on a STILL FRAME of the band in the park. A prototype for the ALBUM COVER. A FINGER taps the picture repeatedly.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (O.S.)  
I'm telling you. This is the one.

CHYRON: LONDON - 1997

Pete, Nick and Richard sit in the back of a Wigan taxi making way through traffic. Pete holds a stack of other prototypes, all variations of the same image. As he flips through--

PETE SALISBURY  
 Thought I saw some other good ones...  
 (off Richard's glare)  
 ...but I'm sure you're right.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 Whatd'you think, Nick?

Nick doesn't look at the images, instead he's focused on the prototype of the LINER NOTES.

PETE SALISBURY (O.S.)  
 I can't believe they're dropping  
 the single so long before the rest  
 of the album...

RICHARD ASHCROFT (O.S.)  
 It's called building anticipation.  
 It's a good thing, means the song  
 really is as good as we know it is.

Nick eyes the top of the tracklist, where it reads: "All songs written by Richard Ashcroft, except where noted."

Nick scans down, asterisks by ONLY THREE TRACKS: "The Rolling People", "Catching the Butterfly" and "Neon Wilderness".

RICHARD ASHCROFT (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Nick? You fucking nodding off on us?*

NICK MCCABE  
 (speaking up, to Driver)  
 Sorry... could you pull over here?

The CAB DRIVER eyes Nick in the rearview, complying.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 What are you doing?

As the car comes to a stop--

NICK MCCABE  
 I just, uh... I gotta walk from here.

Grabbing the handle, Nick exits the car--

EXT. WIGAN - STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The cab zooms off again as Nick stares after it. Realizing things will be a *different* type of different than he thought.

As he walks down the street alone, the now familiar notes of "Bitter Sweet Symphony" underscore the scene--

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

--playing on dingy speakers in a modest living room. Richard, Kate next to him, waits for reaction from the other two in the room - LOUISE (50s), his conservative mother, and DOUG (50s), his visibly more eccentric stepfather.

KATE RADLEY

Well... Richard's too nervous to ask, so I will. What did you think?

LOUISE

I... don't even know what to say.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Is that... good then...?

DOUG

*Good* is not the question.

Long pause as Doug measures his next words.

DOUG (CONT'D)

You've manifested *greatness* here, Richard. Just like we always talked about. *This*... this song is the potential that has long been waiting for you to find it.

(placing hand on Louise)  
Your father'd be beyond proud.

Kate studies Richard's happiness, a bigger elation than he's had from any other compliments. *This* was the confirmation he'd been needing. But it only lasts a fleeting moment until--

LOUISE

Speaking of - your dad's birthday's next week. I was wondering if you were coming with me to the cemet--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I'll be back in London by then, Mum.

Louise forces a nod. It clearly hurts her that Richard won't go. Above the fireplace behind her is a photo of a younger her, beside Younger Richard and his BIOLOGICAL FATHER.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

You really don't have anything to say about the song? Just that you... don't know what to say? It's my best work, Ma. Everyone says. I finally wrote that great one inside of me.

Doug looks to Louise, sensing her hurt and speaking for her--

DOUG  
 It's hard for your mum to put her  
 emotions in words. But remember...  
 (intense)  
 ...the greatest satisfaction for  
 your creation comes from within.

Doug speaks with an esoteric, spacey air.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
 This is just the start. Because a  
 song like that... must've come from  
 true belief in oneself. And if you  
 have that, Richard... then you can  
 write a hundred more great songs.

Richard takes that in, almost surprised, like he thought this one song was his ultimate destiny.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
 This song is proof there really is  
 nothing stopping you from being the  
 biggest band in the world. There's  
 nothing stopping you from *anything*.  
 In all honesty, right now, you  
 could jump out the window this  
 second and fly off into the clouds  
 to leave us all behind. You still  
 believe that, don't you?

Doug has an almost shamanistic level of influence to him, his words touching Richard deeply. Kate studies this curiously.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
 But if you're not going to fly away  
 from here... then you must not rest  
 until you've manifested your words  
 to life - *that The Verve is the*  
*biggest band on this Earth.*

This washes over Richard. He looks to Louise, still silent.

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Richard exhales a thick plume of cigarette smoke into the damp, cloudy night. Kate lights her own.

KATE RADLEY  
 What's the matter? Your stepdad  
 basically declared you the second  
 coming of Jesus in there.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 (smirks)  
 You saying he's wrong?

KATE RADLEY  
 Least I see where all this really  
 comes from now. I just hope you  
 know... you don't actually have to  
 be the biggest band in the world.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 What's that? Jealousy, I hear?

KATE RADLEY  
 Richard, come on... this pressure  
 you put on yourself - that he puts  
 on you - it's not healthy.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 You afraid I'm gonna blow J out of  
 the water with this one? Cause I'm  
 afraid I've got news for you: I am.

Kate crosses her arms, scrunches her face.

KATE RADLEY  
 You realize by saying you'll blow  
 Jason out of the water, you're  
 saying you'll blow Spiritualized  
 out of the water, meaning you'll  
 blow... me out of the water? Our  
 album's gonna be mega too, y'know?

Seeing the look in Kate's eye, Richard softens.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 I didn't mean it like that, love...  
 Besides, you're not recording with  
 them right now, so I figured--

KATE RADLEY  
 Just because we're having a moment  
 doesn't mean... it's not my band.  
 I'm all over that record. The one  
 you're talking about like it's shit.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 Yeah, alright. You're right. And I'm  
 sure it'll be a monster, it will.  
 (can't help himself)  
 "Bitter Sweet" is still gonna blow  
 "Ladies and gentlemen" away though.

Kate shakes her head, can't stop from lightly laughing.

KATE RADLEY

You might actually be right at that one. You know Jason had to remove the Elvis sample? Had to rebuild the whole song basically.

That catches Richard completely off guard. He seizes up.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

What...? But he said it was easier to ask forgiveness than permission--

KATE RADLEY

Well... didn't work this time.  
(sensing his fear)  
But you cleared your sample, right?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

...it's only five notes.

KATE RADLEY

Ours was only fourteen words.

Off Richard, spiraling.

EXT. DECCA RECORDS - DAY

The band's manager, Jazz, looking dapper as ever, stands on a trash-strewn London street. He looks at a two story brown and blue building. SIGN out front: "DECCA RECORDS". The opening drum pattern to Andrew Oldham's "The Last Time" begins as--

INT. DECCA RECORDS - OFFICE - DAY

"The Last Time" plays on a BOOMBOX in front of Jazz. A stuffy EXECUTIVE (60s) puffs away at his pipe while listening.

EXECUTIVE

As I said, I'm familiar with the Andrew Oldham Orchestra.

JAZZ SUMMERS

It just helps to hear it again to--

EXECUTIVE

Can we please get on with this?

Taken aback by his bluntness, Jazz nervously pops a CD out of a jewel case with the preliminary *Urban Hymns* artwork on it. Placing the CD on the tray, Jazz presses play.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Here it is.

"Bitter Sweet Symphony" begins, building and building with its subtle string opening. Executive scrunches his face.

EXECUTIVE  
I'm not exactly hearing the sample.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Just wait.

Then the song fully KICKS IN on the boombox. And hearing them back-to-back, it's undeniable where the sample is. The Executive raises an eyebrow, intrigued.

But as Richard's voice comes over the song, we now clearly hear that this is also totally a creation of The Verve. The Executive can't help from nodding along with the beat.

EXECUTIVE  
It's certainly... grandiose.

Seeing the *Urban Hymns* case, the Executive motions for it.

EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)  
Can I see that?

Flipping it over, the Executive reads the tracklist, first up--

EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)  
"Bitter Sweet Symphony"? This one?  
You're starting off the album...  
with a track you haven't cleared?

Jazz shrugs, apologetically smiles - "Whoops."

EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)  
We could have you by the balls.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
I really wish you wouldn't.

Flipping the case back to the front, the Executive smiles.

EXECUTIVE  
Oh, "The Verve"? The same band that used to be just... "Verve"?

JAZZ SUMMERS  
(perking up)  
You're familiar?

## EXECUTIVE

Only that our distribution arm,  
Verve Records, were the ones that  
forced them to change their name.

## JAZZ SUMMERS

(face falling)

So you've... screwed them over once  
before, you're saying?

The Executive stares back, waiting to speak.

## EXECUTIVE

Look... the song's good. And Andrew  
Oldham's made us *fuck all* the last  
thirty-two years.

Jazz's eyes widen, hope springing.

## EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)

So, if you and the band are willing  
to part with a small, *reasonable*  
cut of the song proceeds... then I  
believe we might be able to make  
ourselves an arrangement.

Jazz exhibits the ultimate professionalism as he reaches his hand for a shake. The Executive may not notice, but Jazz is doing everything he can to not explode. Just as they shake--

## EXT. DECCA RECORDS - DAY

Bursting out the front doors, Jazz makes it just far enough away from the office windows to yell--

## JAZZ SUMMERS

*FUCK... YES!*

The power of Jazz's voice SHOOTS us up into the sky, floating among the CLOUDS, soaring as--

## MUSIC JOURNALIST (V.O.)

"Bitter Sweet Symphony", a new  
single from The Verve, who we all  
thought were done and dusted--

## BBC ANCHOR (V.O.)

"Bitter Sweet Symphony", you heard  
this one?

## RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The Verve are back, and people are  
absolutely loving this track--

We DESCEND slowly, now back in Wigan, making our way down to--

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - DAY

--where all five members of the band are watching BBC on TV.

BBC ANCHOR (ON TV)

This song is everywhere. I have a genuine question now we've all heard it a thousand times: *Did The Verve write the best song of the decade?*

CHEERS erupt as the band members high five and hug.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Spaceman's gonna shit himself. The definitive album of 1997. *Us.*

PETE SALISBURY

Spiritualized never had a chance.

SIMON JONES

All they got now's a fit keyboard player Mad Dick is sweet on.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Don't know what you mean.

SIMON TONG

Come on, Rich. We saw you eyeing her.

Richard's buzz ends as he steps toward Tong, too aggressive.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Shut your mouth with that. Radley's in Spiritualized. She's Spaceman's girl. I got nothing with her.

Awkward as they all stare at Richard. He clears his throat.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Important thing is - The Verve just put out the song of the decade.

The others go back to relishing that, but Nick just watches Richard, knowing there's something there he's not saying.

INT. ABKCO OFFICES - DAY

A RECORD SPINS. THE NEEDLE DROPS. And out comes the opening NOTES of "Bitter Sweet Symphony". We pan up on a young RECORD EXECUTIVE, **SOPHIE PORTER**, early 30s, nodding to the song.

SOPHIE PORTER  
You really don't hear it?

Sophie waits for a reaction, looking across at-- **ALLEN KLEIN**, the amusical suit from our opening, now 30 years older... and 30 years angrier. He's baffled.

ALLEN KLEIN  
Fucking what, Sophie? What am I  
supposed to be hearing?

Sophie slides over - *THE ANDREW OLDHAM RECORD*.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Richard exits a crowded bar, cigarette out. Soon as he lights--

JAZZ SUMMERS (O.S.)  
Fuck, thank God!

--Jazz comes rushing in. Richard smirks at him.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
What is it now? Shattered another  
record? Nominated for another  
award? Album pre-sales too high?

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Shut up. Listen to me, we need to  
go to New York right now--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
New York?

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Are the others inside?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
What's this about, Jazz?

JAZZ SUMMERS  
...the sample.

Richard straightens up, serious now.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Don't need the others then. Let's go.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Staring out the window, Richard watches the lights of England fade away into the darkness.

And as he looks ahead, toward America, he sees the draw of much bigger, brighter lights.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - MORNING

Richard looks up at the mesmerizing city, excited to be here, no matter the reason. His reverie's interrupted by--

JAZZ SUMMERS (O.S.)  
Let's go, Richard.

INT. ABKCO OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A poorly lit, drab conference room is a stark contrast to the wonder of the city. Richard and Jazz sit, anxiously waiting. Richard eyes the ABKCO logo on the wall. Then, finally--

ALLEN KLEIN (O.S.)  
Musical virtuoso Richard  
Ashcroft... here in my office?

In the doorway is Allen Klein, big fat smile on his face. Richard stands, pleased to be recognized.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Right you are.

ALLEN KLEIN  
(mimicking)  
Right you are.  
(normal)  
God, I love that accent. So fun.

Allen shuts the door, takes a seat at the head of the table.

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)  
I hate that we're here right now.  
Trust me when I say I never want to do anything to hurt such a... young and... naïve talent like yourself.

Richard narrows his eyes.

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)  
But the fact is, Richard... you used something that doesn't belong to you.

Before Richard can speak, Jazz raises his hand, halting him.

JAZZ SUMMERS

If I may... we cleared the sample,  
Mr. Klein. I'm not really sure  
legally what the issue is here.

ALLEN KLEIN

Yet you flew all the way to New  
York to speak to me?

JAZZ SUMMERS

As a... courtesy.

ALLEN KLEIN

Awful long way to come for courtesy.

He lets silence set for a beat. Richard fights to stay quiet.

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)

Look, you may have cleared the  
sample with The Andrew Oldham  
Orchestra and Decca Records. But  
you did not clear it with my label,  
ABKCO Records... and you *most*  
*certainly* didn't clear it with The  
Rolling Stones.

Richard can't stay silent any longer--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

We didn't use The Rolling Stones!

ALLEN KLEIN

But you did, because you used a  
cover. You made a copy... of a copy.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

It's hardly even a cover. You know  
well as I do that song sounds  
nothing like "The Last Time".

ALLEN KLEIN

Hmm, I disagree. Perhaps my musical  
ear is better attuned than yours.  
But that's not what matters. What  
matters is how a court sees it. And  
God, those courts... they really  
take their time, don't they? Time  
where your single would be  
pulled... where your album couldn't  
be released in its current form.

Richard nearly turns white, battling himself not to show it.

JAZZ SUMMERS

Okay, Mr. Klein, let's--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Out with it! What do you want, eh?!

JAZZ SUMMERS

Richard...

ALLEN KLEIN

Cutting right to the chase, I like it. Maybe you've got the spirit for this business, after all.

Richard just glares at him.

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)

The Rolling Stones will be so kind as to approve your use of their material in exchange for a mere percentage of the song's profits. As is just and fair - your song *wouldn't exist* without theirs.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Fine. We already gave Andrew Oldham a piece anyway. And when "Bitter Sweet Symphony" comes out here in the States, it's gonna be such a smash, I won't even miss the change taken out of my fat pocket.

Jazz pulls Richard toward him, hushed--

JAZZ SUMMERS

Richard, stop it. What about the others? They need to be consulted.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

And why's that? Their names anywhere on the songwriting credits?

(back to Klein)

Ten percent should be plenty for you. Quite generous, in my opinion.

Allen nods to himself, faux-considering.

ALLEN KLEIN

Ten... Yeah. Ten... doesn't feel like quite enough. Mick and Keith... they'll be expecting more.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

There's absolutely no way Mick and  
Keith are involved in this little  
shakedown of yours.

Silent, Allen simply smiles back.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Fine, fifteen'll do then. Done.

Richard stands, beyond ready to be out of here.

ALLEN KLEIN

*Fifty?* Yeah, that does sound good.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

*Fifteen* I said, you crook.

ALLEN KLEIN

*Crook?* Watch your mouth there, boy.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

What else would you call someone  
resorting to extortion like this? And  
for nothing? You should be ashamed.

ALLEN KLEIN

*Fucking ashamed? I should be?!*  
*You're the one who stole from the*  
*greatest band who ever was. You*  
*couldn't write something great on*  
*your own, so you took it from them.*  
*Cause you're not really a rockstar,*  
*are you? You just play at it.*

Allen stands calmly, adjusting his blazer.

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)

Now: you're gonna give The Rolling  
Stones *fifty* percent of the profits  
on your little song, because that  
is exactly what they deserve for  
what you have done to them.

Richard is doing everything in his power not to leap across  
the table and strangle Klein.

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)

And if you don't... that song will  
never be heard again, and you'll go  
back to whatever village you came  
from and be a bricklayer or a bum  
or whatever you were before this.  
Whichever you choose...

(MORE)

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)  
Doesn't make a whole fuck of a  
difference to me. Either way,  
everyone will know not to do what  
you so arrogantly, stupidly did.

Allen doesn't wait for an answer, leaving Richard and Jazz  
alone to stew in silence. *What the hell was that?*

WALTER STERN (PRE-LAP)  
So, we'll have Richard walk down the  
street pushing past people, not  
deviating from his course, not  
paying them any mind. Rising above  
the confines of society as he sings  
those beautiful lyrics of his.

EXT. WIGAN - STREETS - DAY

Music video director WALTER STERN, 30s, wearing all black,  
talks with the band. A FILM CREW waits behind Walter.

NICK MCCABE  
Right... and the rest of us?

Richard nudges Nick, low--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Walter's last video won an NME.  
Maybe we should listen to him?

NICK MCCABE  
No surprise you like the idea of  
being center of the world.

SIMON JONES  
It... would be nice to be in our  
own video, Richard.

WALTER STERN  
Alright, how about the other band  
members join Richard as he goes then?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Hold on, Walter. I don't want to  
disturb your vision. This video is  
the most important thing we've done.

PETE SALISBURY  
Not as important as stroking Mad  
Dick's ego.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
It wasn't even my idea!

WALTER STERN

Okay, let's start out with Richard as planned, and then you guys join him *at the end*. Ashcroft is singing it, but he can't really do it without the other ones, can he?

Nick just shrugs - "Whatever". He watches Richard and Walter go off to start shooting.

NICK MCCABE

"The other ones". Eh, boys?

Pete and the Simons look to Nick, and for the first time - it's clear, they're now on HIS side.

EXT. WIGAN - STREETS - EVENING

The Crew packs up, shoot over. As the band waits for Richard to finish talking to Walter, Jazz arrives, apprehensive.

JAZZ SUMMERS

Hey, guys, how's everyone feeling?

NICK MCCABE

What, cause of the video hijacking?  
It's bollocks, but that's Richard.

JAZZ SUMMERS

The video-- what? No, I meant  
the... Richard talked to you about  
our... trip to New York, yeah?

Nick narrows his eyes, the others confused as well.

NICK MCCABE

What's this now?

JAZZ SUMMERS

Ah, shit. I've put my foot in it.

Just then, Richard walks up, slapping Jazz on the back.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Jazz, you missed an epic shoot.  
Gonna be a big hit, that.

NICK MCCABE

What's this trip to New York?

Richard freezes, caught. He plays it off. Offers a shrug.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Oh. Yeah... fucking music business  
stabbing us in the back again.

PETE SALISBURY

What's he talking about, Jazz?!

JAZZ SUMMERS

Uh, well, Richard and I had to go  
speak with Allen Klein, the manager  
for The Rolling Sto--

NICK MCCABE

We know who Allen Klein is! Why did  
you have to meet with him? I  
thought we cleared everything.

Richard postures, not going to admit anything's wrong.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Rich asshole saw a chance to take  
his cut. Happens every day.

SIMON JONES

What cut?

Richard doesn't like the guff from someone not named Nick.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

What's it to you? I'm the one wrote  
the song, I'm the one getting it  
out the ass.

NICK MCCABE

I know you forget this, Richard,  
but we're a group. It does actually  
affect all of us... not to mention  
we all recorded that song.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I don't know why you all're so  
miffed. We were in the muck, I fixed  
it. You should be thanking me.

NICK MCCABE

Fuck. I knew it. We shoulda dropped  
the song off the album.

Richard won't take that, getting in Nick's face.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

That song IS the album. It's  
nothing without it. So Allen Klein  
can take his fifty percent--

NICK MCCABE  
FIFTY PERCENT?!

PETE SALISBURY  
Oh... goddamn, Richard--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
There was no choice!

JAZZ SUMMERS  
I know it's tough to hear, but there  
wasn't, guys. We did what we had to.

NICK MCCABE  
No more of this shit, Dick. I'm  
serious. This is exactly what I'm  
talking about - you'll put all your  
darkest feelings in a song but you  
won't tell your own bandmates what  
the fuck is going on. This secret  
shit starts up and I'm done. You  
tell us what the hell is going on  
at all times, starting NOW.

Taking it for once, Richard nods, raising his right hand.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Next time something important  
happens, I will tell you...

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Standing beside Kate at the altar, Richard smiles wide. The  
only others in attendance are their PARENTS. As Richard  
slides Kate's ring onto her finger--

INT. ARENA - GREEN ROOM - EVENING

The band is backstage in a big fancy green room, waiting on  
Richard. He finally rushes in, still grinning huge.

NICK MCCABE  
Jesus, where you been?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Nowhere, sorry. I'm here.

PETE SALISBURY  
You see the people out there?

Richard opens the door a crack, sticking his head around the  
corner to see-- AN ENORMOUS CROWD waiting impatiently.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

All here for us... This is just the beginning, boys.

INT. VARIOUS CONCERT VENUES - MONTAGE

The Verve play to HUGE, SOLD OUT SHOWS around the UK. One after the other, each one bigger than the last.

We hold a moment on Richard taking an outdoor stage with the rest of the band in front of a CROWD of COUNTLESS THOUSANDS.

**CHYRON: WIGAN, HAIGH HALL**

The band is treated like conquering heroes by their hometown. Richard HYPES the crowd into a frenzy.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

*THIS IS MUSIC!*

INT. VARIOUS TALK SHOW STUDIOS - MONTAGE

The Verve are interviewed MOS by excited HOSTS and JOURNALISTS. As always, Richard hogs the spotlight, talking by far the most, Nick just sulking behind him.

INT. RECORD STORE - MONTAGE

In a TIMELAPSE, STACKS and STACKS of copies of *Urban Hymns* are refilled as fast as they're purchased. RAVENOUS FANS can't get enough of this record.

INT. VARIOUS GREEN ROOMS - MONTAGE

Post-show tired, The Verve lounge in nicer and nicer green rooms, DRUGS being done in each and every one.

The tables hold stacks of magazines, sporting headlines like:  
- "'BITTER SWEET SYMPHONY' IS ROLLING STONE'S #1 SINGLE OF '97"  
- "THE VERVE'S 'THE DRUGS DON'T WORK' DEBUTS AT NUMBER ONE"  
- "'URBAN HYMNS' DETHRONES OASIS FOR TOP SPOT"

That last one puts a real smile on Richard's face.

INT. ARENA - GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

In yet another green room, sweaty and exhausted from the show, the band DRINKS and SMOKES. Jazz arrives, applauding.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Amazing show again...

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Not exactly our best. Crowd  
certainly didn't seem to expect  
that much psychedelic riffing.

Instantly annoyed, Nick rolls his eyes.

NICK MCCABE  
What's the point of a show if it  
sounds exactly like the record?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
But that's literally the point.  
They're just here to *see* us do it.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Guys! It was great. C'mon.

Pete, Tong, and Jones just drink, too tired to pick a side.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Why're you dancing around like  
that, Jazz? Something to say?

Jazz sits, opening a binder and flipping through.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
How about... an actual bonafide  
tour... of America?

That summons a mythic level of excitement from the band.

JAZZ SUMMERS (CONT'D)  
We're talking for real this time.  
Not Lollapalooza parking lots in  
forty degrees. America loves *Urban  
Hymns*. They love... you.

They look to each other and all practically jump for joy,  
exhaustion forgotten. Cheers abound. Richard paces to Jazz,  
looking over his shoulder now at what's next on the agenda--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
And what's all this? McDonald's?  
Nike? Columbia Pictures...?

JAZZ SUMMERS  
(grinning, dramatic)  
Those... are all brands that want  
to use "Bitter Sweet Symphony".

Richard immediately shakes his head, disgusted.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Come off it. We ain't sellouts.  
Especially to sweat shop employers.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Richard. We're talking serious  
money here. Maybe even enough to  
temper your integrity a bit.

NICK MCCABE  
Yeah, serious money The Stones get  
half of.

Ignoring, Rich turns to the others, head cocked. Waiting for  
them to weigh in. Though tempted, they share a look, sighing.

SIMON TONG  
Sorry, Jazz. Much as I wouldn't mind  
a free Big Mac or two, Mad Dick's  
got it right on this one.

NICK MCCABE  
We always said no selling out.

Jazz rolls his eyes. "Artists". He flips to his next page,  
one more thing to discuss.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Okay... what about the cover... of  
*Rolling Stone*? Is that selling out?

Whoa. That is the most shocking one yet. Richard is on  
another planet with excitement.

SIMON JONES  
About time a "Rolling Stone cover"  
wasn't about to fuck us over.

But even that can't get Richard down. They've really made it.

INT. ABKCO OFFICES - ALLEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: The BILLBOARD HOT 100 list for the week: "Bitter  
Sweet Symphony" sitting at 12. PULL OUT to see Allen Klein  
looking at this in his dark office, no emotion.

The executive who first alerted him about "Bitter Sweet  
Symphony", Sophie, pokes her head in the door.

SOPHIE PORTER  
You need anything before I go?

ALLEN KLEIN

Yeah, actually. Can you explain  
this to me?

Sophie steps in as Allen grumpily slides the paper over. She analyzes it, confused at what he's looking for from her.

SOPHIE PORTER

Looks to be proof we were right to  
pursue royalties from The Verve.

(off his lingering anger)

And... it also means more money for  
you. Which is a good thing. Right?

ALLEN KLEIN

Wrong. What *don't* you see on that  
list?

SOPHIE PORTER

I... don't know. Is there something  
I should be looking for...?

ALLEN KLEIN

How about The Rolling Fucking  
Stones? You see them anywhere?

SOPHIE PORTER

Allen, the Stones just had an album  
debut at number two last year.

ALLEN KLEIN

And every song on it's already  
vanished off the Hot 100. Yet  
"Bitter Sweet" is still right  
fucking there, isn't it? And *no one*  
even knows where the damn song came  
from... all cause of *our shit deal*.

SOPHIE PORTER

*Shit deal...?* We got The Stones the  
most favorable resolution to a  
creative dispute I've ever heard  
of, financially speaking.

ALLEN KLEIN

But they deserve better... they  
deserve protection. Justice.

Sophie takes a moment, sitting down across from Allen.

SOPHIE PORTER

Sir... you already got them *more*  
than enough justice.

ALLEN KLEIN

Without credit for the song... we  
don't control it. You get that,  
right? I hear they're rejecting  
licensing offers. Who knows how  
much money's been left on the  
table?

SOPHIE PORTER

I don't understand: Do you want to  
do right by The Rolling Stones...  
or do you want to control the song?

Allen stares back, seeming to label the question ridiculous.

SOPHIE PORTER (CONT'D)

Samples have existed since the dawn  
of recorded music, Allen. There's  
an established way of dealing with  
these things. Throwing a wrench  
into that... it'd cause chaos.

ALLEN KLEIN

So what's next then...? Fucking  
Snoop Doggy Dogg loops the first  
verse of "Sympathy for the Devil"  
and grunts over it a few times and  
claims it as his own?

SOPHIE PORTER

That's... a bit diminishing, Allen.  
Creativity thrives on inspiration.

ALLEN KLEIN

This is a surprisingly noble stance  
to take considering you're the one  
who first alerted me to this issue.

Sophie processes what Allen just said, a twinge of GUILT.  
After a moment, she stands, sliding the paper back to him.

SOPHIE PORTER

My advice... pray the song keeps  
climbing the charts and go on  
laughing your way to the bank.

As she leaves, Allen spins toward the window, gazing at the  
endless Manhattan skyline.

PHOTOGRAPHER (PRE-LAP)

Alright now get a little closer in.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

The band has their photo taken for Rolling Stone, all doing their best to look detached cool. The PHOTOGRAPHER snaps one.

ROLLING STONE PHOTOGRAPHER

Cool, cool. Let's try some solo  
shots now. We can start with...  
(pretending to consider)

...Richard.

The other guys step out, Nick most reluctantly. He watches, irritated, as Richard hams it up for his solo shots.

NICK MCCABE

I wonder which bloody shot they'll  
use on the cover...

SIMON JONES

Least it'll still say The Verve.

Nick shakes his head. That's not good enough for him. Just then, Tong rushes up to them, face pale.

SIMON TONG

...a PA just handed me this.

They gather to look at THE SUN, a British tabloid featuring a giant photo of Richard and Kate: "Bitter Sweet... Matrimony?" The guys are stunned, if not even a little hurt.

PETE SALISBURY

...he fucking didn't.

SIMON TONG

Spaceman might really kill him. Or  
himself. Maybe both.

Nick just glares at Richard, still mugging it for the camera.

NICK MCCABE

So much for no more secrets...

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - LATER

SNAP. Richard gets one last photo taken--

ROLLING STONE PHOTOGRAPHER

You're a natural. Something tells  
me I'd still be taking your pic  
even if you weren't a singer.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
I won't disagree with that.

As Richard steps off, he realizes his bandmates are all gone. He just shrugs, unbothered, reaching for his bag.

JAZZ SUMMERS (O.S.)  
Richard?

Richard turns to see Jazz, stricken.

JAZZ SUMMERS (CONT'D)  
There's been some news...

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
What now? Walmart or some shit?

It takes Jazz a moment to get it out.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Allen Klein called again.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
(laughing to himself)  
What does that cowfucker want now?

Jazz grabs Richard's arm, trying to get through to him.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Richard... he wants more.

EXT. LEGAL OFFICES - LONDON - DAY

The streets are slick with rain as a suited Richard steps out of a black town car. He has a large leather SATCHEL over his shoulder, a BRIEFCASE in one hand.

Looking toward the entrance of the Canary Wharf legal offices, Richard locks eyes with Allen Klein.

Klein smokes a cigarette, surrounded by other Suits. There's much unspoken animosity between these two. They simply stare at each other, neither willing to give in.

Finally, Klein offers a threatening smile as he STOMPS out his cigarette. Turning his back, he heads inside. Battle about to begin.

Before Richard can follow, a car drives by BLARING "Bitter Sweet Symphony". It grabs his attention, freezing him.

Looking to the car, Richard sees it's a beat-up piece of shit. The DRIVER wears a construction uniform. He belts out the song with abandon, oblivious to Richard's presence--

DRIVER  
(muffled)  
*I'll take you down the only road  
I've ever been down!*

Richard takes a deep breath, remembering how important this song is to him... and how much he has to lose. He hardens, ready to do this.

INT. LEGAL OFFICES - LONDON - DAY

Richard, with just Jazz at his side, stares across an enormous oak table at the TEAM OF LAWYERS all dressing him down. Klein sits square in the middle of them.

The room completely dwarfs Klein's NYC office. It's visibly clear how much of a David vs. Goliath position Richard's in. Finally breaking the silence, a Lawyer clears his throat.

LAWYER #1  
Mr. Ashcroft... just to be clear,  
you've chosen not to have a lawyer  
present today?

Richard bites his cheek, trying to compose himself. Trying to rid himself of enough anger to speak. Jazz steps in.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Richard... decided we will be  
handling this ourselves.

LAWYER #1  
Okay... well, your manager Mr.  
Summers said you had something you  
wanted to say on your behalf?

Richard still can't bring himself to speak yet.

LAWYER #2  
...Mr. Ashcroft?

Jazz nudges Richard, giving him an encouraging nod.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Come on, Richard. Like we said.

Rather than speak, Richard reaches into his satchel, pulling out a MINI RECORD PLAYER. Some Lawyers raise eyebrows.

Paying no mind, he pops open his suitcase next. Reaching inside, he pulls out several VINYL RECORDS.

ALLEN KLEIN  
Jesus... what kind of dog and pony  
show are you about to give us--

JAZZ SUMMERS  
*Mr. Klein.*

ALLEN KLEIN  
I thought the boy was just going to  
state his case. I didn't know he  
brought fucking props--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*I am stating my case.*

Richard picks up one of the records, revealing it to be a Rolling Stones album titled *Singles - 1963-1965*. He places it on the record player, cuing up "The Last Time".

For the first time we hear the entirety of the first verse and chorus of The Rolling Stones version of "The Last Time". Listening close after hearing "Bitter Sweet" so many times now, it's truly clear they sound NOTHING alike.

Still, there's a deeper point to this.

MICK JAGGER (ON RECORD)  
*WELL THIS COULD BE THE LAST TIME/  
THIS COULD BE THE LAST TIME/MAY BE  
THE LAST TIME/I DON'T KNOW...*

The Lawyers and Klein all blankly stare as the music plays. Richard stops the track after the chorus.

ALLEN KLEIN  
So... what's your point? That it  
doesn't sound like "Bitter Sweet  
Symphony", is that it? Because I've  
got news for you, Richard--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
It doesn't sound like it. But  
that's not my point right now.

Holding up the record cover, Richard points to the title.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
(dripping with disdain)  
You mind reading this, Mr. Klein?

ALLEN KLEIN  
 (rolling his eyes)  
 "The Rolling Stones... Singles 1963  
 to 1965".

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 So you can read? What a surprise.

LAWYER #3  
 Let's try to keep the personal  
 insults to a minimum.

Richard ignores that as he grabs another record. Holding it up, he reveals it as This May Be My Last Time by The Staple Singers. He places it on the record player, cuing it up.

As it starts, we hear that it's an old time folk gospel song. The record quality isn't high, but it screams authenticity. As the song continues, we hear a trio of African-American soul singers harmonizing the following lines--

STAPLE SINGERS (ON RECORD)  
*This may/This may be my last  
 time/This may be the last time  
 children/This may be my last time/MAY  
 BE MY LAST TIME/I DON'T KNOW...*

Not only are they the SAME LYRICS as The Rolling Stones song, the MELODY itself is nearly identical. Some of the Lawyers shift uncomfortably. Richard picks up the record, reading--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 Oh yeah... and what's that say?  
 "Recorded in 1954".  
 (proud of himself)  
 You going to tell me The Stones  
 never heard this track? Because I'm  
 willing to bet they did. In fact...  
 you might even say their song  
 wouldn't exist without this one.

ALLEN KLEIN  
 I didn't realize you were legally  
 authorized to litigate on behalf of  
 The Staple Singers.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 You said I made a copy of a copy.  
 But turns out... it was actually a  
 copy of a copy of a copy. At what  
 point is that just a different  
 song? Mick and Keith ain't given  
 any profits to The Staple Singers  
 after all, have they?

ALLEN KLEIN

Maybe they would've had to if The  
Staple Singers had me. But they  
didn't, and here we are.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

So, to be clear, you're saying it's  
perfectly acceptable for The  
Rolling Stones to rip off little  
known Black artists from the  
American South... but unacceptable  
for someone else to be *influenced*  
by a *cover* of one of their songs?

ALLEN KLEIN

But you weren't *influenced* by it,  
Richard, you fucking stole it!

LAWYER #2

(huffing)

Allen, control yourself.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

How can I have *stolen* from them  
when I negotiated the rights to use  
the *cover*?! And I don't care how  
many times I need to say it: a  
cover that sounds nothing like the  
original!

ALLEN KLEIN

Oh, but that's where you're wrong.  
And today... I can prove it.

Klein looks to the LAST LAWYER at the end of the table.

LAWYER #4

Hello, Mr. Ashcroft. I am actually  
the resident musicologist on the  
panel... And unfortunately it's my  
responsibility to refute your  
claims today. You see...

The Lawyer pulls out a BULKY LAPTOP and starts up a file that  
begins to play The Rolling Stones version of "The Last Time".

## LAWYER #4 (CONT'D)

While it may be difficult to pinpoint at first, the orchestral rendition of "The Last Time" arranged and recorded by Mr. David Whitaker and Mr. Andrew Oldham is in fact very much based on the original... just in a notably different time signature.

The recording of "The Last Time" SLOWS DOWN, playing at half speed. And if you listen closely, you can INDEED hear the basic sonic elements of the orchestral version of the song.

On Richard and Jazz's faces, it's painfully clear they're beginning to recognize the resemblance as well.

## LAWYER #4 (CONT'D)

More importantly, however, is the song's lyrical melody.

On the laptop, Mick Jagger's voice comes onto the track, also slowed considerably.

## MICK JAGGER (ON RECORD)

*I've told you once, I've told you twice...*

## LAWYER #4

You see, this melody in its slowed form constitutes the basis for the primary melodic phrasing of the Andrew Oldham Orchestra's cover...

The file now plays the orchestral cover, and it is true... there's a strong similarity in the lead string melody. Richard's face further twists, fear emerging.

## LAWYER #4 (CONT'D)

...which appears to be what you based your lead vocal melody of the song "Bitter Sweet Symphony" upon, perhaps even subconsciously.

The file plays the first verse of "Bitter Sweet Symphony". Finally, it's clear how it all connects. It's a bit of a stretch, but it's all there to hear. The file stops. Silence.

## RICHARD ASHCROFT

This is just what you do, huh? Dave Whitaker orchestrated the Andrew Oldham version... and all he got for it was a single day's pay. Well...

(MORE)

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

You've already got half my song.  
What else do you even want? You  
gonna force me to license it to  
fucking burger commercials?

ALLEN KLEIN

Richard... the deal we made for  
half the song came about *before*  
these new facts came to light--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

What *new* facts? The song hasn't  
changed.

ALLEN KLEIN

--meaning it was a deal made in bad  
faith on your part. A huge  
violation of the substantial favor  
The Rolling Stones did you by  
letting you use their creation.

Jazz stares at Allen with pure hatred. Allen takes a sip of water, savoring the moment before delivering his next blow.

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)

As a result... we demand 100% of  
the royalties for "Bitter Sweet  
Symphony"...

Off Jazz and Richard, stupefied by that. But Allen's now ready to deliver the real haymaker.

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)

...and for sole songwriting credits  
to be awarded to Mick Jagger and  
Keith Richards.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

*Sole songwriting credits?!* So...  
you're saying my contribution, my  
band's contribution to the song...  
was nothing?! Mick and Keith wrote  
the lyrics, did they? They recorded  
every instrumental we painstakingly  
laid down?!

ALLEN KLEIN

Your "contribution", as you call  
it, was built upon a foundation of  
lies and deceit. And it's time the  
credits reflect that.

Jazz is unable to stop Richard as he leaps to his feet.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Jesus Christ, even if this was a straight cover of "The Last Time" I would still get *something* from it.

ALLEN KLEIN

But it isn't a cover, is it?! It's a forgery.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You act like I've done some sort of grave wrong to The Rolling Stones?! That song was languishing in cobwebs in crumbling record stores until I transformed it into a masterpiece... and now it's making millions! You should be kissing my feet.

(desperation taking over)

You've got to let me at least talk to Mick and Keith. I know I can explain it to them. There's no way they've authorized this.

ALLEN KLEIN

They've authorized *me*, Richard.

Those words strike Richard. He can't accept it.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I'll never agree to this. I'd die before I do.

ALLEN KLEIN

Fine then. You'll just have to take the whole *Urban Hymns* album out of stores right when it's at the top of the charts. And by the time the legal system is done with this... no one will care about you or "your" shitty song ever again!

That's it. Richard can't let this man speak again. He lunges forward, GRABBING HIM by the shirt.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You shut your bloody fucking mouth! No one is ever going to forget this song. You hear me?! Ever!

Jazz desperately tries to get Richard off Allen while the Lawyers scatter in pandemonium.

JAZZ SUMMERS

Let go, Richard. He's not worth it!

ALLEN KLEIN

Someone call security!

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I'll end you, you fucking prick!  
You will not take this from me!

TWO SECURITY OFFICERS come into the room, finally prying Richard off Klein. He's still frothing with rage.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

*Millions of dollars, we're talking here! That's what you're stealing from me, you robber baron.*

Klein adjusts his suit, acting like nothing happened.

ALLEN KLEIN

I don't know what you're so mad about. Thought you didn't care about finances? "You're a slave to money, then you die." Isn't that how you so contemptuously put it?

As the Security Officers drag Richard away, Allen grins--

ALLEN KLEIN (CONT'D)

Look on the bright side, Richard.  
Now you won't have to be a slave anymore... 'cause you're not gonna have a dollar to your name.

Jazz looks at Klein like he is Satan himself. Total disbelief. He turns and runs after Richard.

EXT. LEGAL OFFICES - LONDON - MOMENTS LATER

THROWN out the doors, Richard tries to catch his breath, hands above his head. Jazz quickly appears.

JAZZ SUMMERS

Richard--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Don't! And don't you tell anyone else about this.

JAZZ SUMMERS

They have to know. Nick is gonna--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
I don't care what Nick will do!  
This is *my* problem.

Jazz hangs his head, wondering why he deals with this.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
But, it's just... after that stuff  
with you and Kate--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*What?* I've told you: I've got  
nothing to do with her.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Richard... we've seen the tabloids.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
What're you on about...?

Jazz just stares back, shaking his head. Eyes bulging, Richard rushes down the street to the nearest NEWSTAND, seeing the same *Sun* headline the others saw.

Grabbing the paper, Richard crushes it between his hands. He tosses it down, stomps on it.

NEWSTAND GUY  
*Hey! What the hell are you doin--*

Jazz catches up to Richard, winded.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
You can't keep everything secret,  
Richard. Isn't that what being an  
artist is? Opening yourself up?

Richard takes a breath, considering that. But ultimately--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Shut up. Shut up about all of that  
in there. About me and Kate. About  
everything. Just... shut up.

And Jazz watches as Richard paces off, totally alone.

INT. LIMOUSINE - EVENING

Allen sits alone in the back of the car, approaching a PRIVATE AIRWAY. His cell phone RINGS. He sighs, annoyed.

ALLEN KLEIN  
Yes, Sophie...?

SOPHIE PORTER (ON PHONE)  
Did I actually hear right? You're...  
taking *the whole thing*?

ALLEN KLEIN  
It's what had to be done.

SOPHIE PORTER (ON PHONE)  
But it didn't! This isn't the way  
to do business...

ALLEN KLEIN  
I'm supposed to apologize for  
getting my clients credit for the  
song *they* wrote?

SOPHIE PORTER (ON PHONE)  
...you're not serious, Allen?

ALLEN KLEIN  
I have a flight to catch. And I  
think you should revert to calling  
me *Mr. Klein*.

(one more thing)  
Thanks though, you know I couldn't  
have done this without you.

CLICK. Allen hangs up. Pleased with himself.

EXT. 9:30 CLUB - NIGHT

MOBS of FANS wait outside the revered venue, where a sign  
reads: "THE VERVE U.S. TOUR STARTS HERE".

**CHYRON: WASHINGTON DC - 1997**

INT. 9:30 CLUB - GREEN ROOM - SAME

Waiting, the band sits in the green room. Not looking at each  
other, even as a joint is passed around between them.

JAZZ SUMMERS  
Come on, lads! I get it. There's  
shit happening. But we're here. In  
the capitol of America. The  
country's ours for the taking.

The pep talk fails to enliven the group. The bright lights  
are there but the luster's gone.

SIMON JONES  
Didn't wanna bring the wife, Rich?

Richard just ignores him, popping a tab of ecstasy.

NICK MCCABE

Nah, he's gotta keep it all locked up, Si. The mysterious artist is not for us mere mortals to understand.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

(sarcastic, mostly)

Finally, you're getting it...

NICK MCCABE

Are you really not even gonna apologize? Were you ever gonna tell us about her? We're all friends with Jason, you know? Hell, some of us are even friends with Kate now!

Not wanting to acknowledge the truth there, Richard doesn't even look at Nick. Just heads for the door.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Time to go on.

INT. 9:30 CLUB - STAGE - LATER

On stage, Richard's still who he was always meant to be. Practically flying right off into the sky, like Doug said.

The others keep their cool too, rocking along like nothing's wrong to one of *Urban Hymns*' great deep cuts. But it doesn't matter. Because as they finish up the song, the crowd begins--

CROWD

*"Bitter Sweet Symphony"! "Bitter Sweet Symphony"...*

The band all look to each other, unsure. Nick covers his mic.

NICK MCCABE

We agreed to keep that off the set list tonight. Expand the yanks' perceptions of us...

RICHARD ASHCROFT

It's the only one they want, Nick.  
What are we to do?

Shrugging, Richard grabs the mic, persona back on--

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Alright, you want it so bad...  
we'll give it to you.

Richard nods to Pete, who reluctantly starts up the pre-recorded BACKING TRACK to the song to HUGE CHEERS.

INT. IRVING PLAZA - NIGHT - MONTAGE

At another sold out show, another performance of "Bitter Sweet Symphony" unfolds to the rapt audience.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*Cause it's a bitter sweet symphony,  
 that's life...*

**CHYRON: NEW YORK**

Nick nearly grimaces as his guitar is drowned out by the sea of chanting coming back in his direction.

INT. IRVING PLAZA - GREEN ROOM - MONTAGE

MOS, Nick and Richard are at each other's throats in an all out screaming, shoving match. Chaos as the others watch, alongside dozens of INDUSTRY TYPES and HANGER ONS.

INT. AVALON - NIGHT - MONTAGE

More EXUBERANT CROWDS belt along with the song in unison.

CROWD  
*...trying to make ends meet, you're  
 a slave to money then you die.*

**CHYRON: BOSTON**

INT. AVALON - GREEN ROOM - MONTAGE

More MOS fighting, Pete and Jones involved as Tong watches.

INT. ST. ANDREW'S HALL - NIGHT - MONTAGE

The CROWD with the same message every time.

CROWD  
*We want "Bitter Sweet"!*

**CHYRON: DETROIT**

On stage, even Richard now is getting a bit annoyed by the repetitive request. But he does his best to hide it.

INT. ST. ANDREW'S HALL - NIGHT - MONTAGE

The backstage fighting's getting more violent. The area is more packed than before, but the band doesn't care. BOTTLES are thrown. SHOVING ensues. Even Tong's involved now.

QUICK SHOTS of the REST OF THE TOUR:

As these same occurrences continue in--

- CHICAGO - SEATTLE - LOS ANGELES - SAN FRANCISCO -

INT. PATRIOT CENTER - GREEN ROOM - END MONTAGE

Absolutely drained from the tour, Richard collapses into the green room couch. Tong, Jones, and Pete share a joint amidst the revelry unfolding around them.

SIMON JONES

Hey, Rich, I know things've been...  
(clearing throat)

Just, with the tour wrapping and all,  
we're gonna get a drink, celebrate.  
Just the boys. Like old times.  
(extending olive branch)

You in...?

Richard thinks that over, almost touched, but--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Nah. I think it's time for me to  
rest up from all this.

Despite what he just said, Richard SNORTS a line in front of them. The band barely holds back disappointment.

SIMON TONG

Suit yourself, mate.

They're off. A moment later, Nick enters, eyeing Richard.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

What're you mugging me for?

Silently, Nick tosses a MAGAZINE at Richard. The cover's got a picture of the full band, but unfortunately it's also got the headline: "DID THE VERVE STEAL THEIR BIGGEST HIT?"

NICK MCCABE

Of course *this* is the one time they  
include all our faces.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Don't tell me you're gonna get on  
me about this again now. I'm sick  
of your yelling.

NICK MCCABE

So am I. Doesn't do shit to get  
through your thick head anyway. Just  
wanted you to know it's out there:  
Allen Klein's taking *half the money*  
out our pockets. And everyone's  
wondering... *did Richard Ashcroft  
actually write his great song?*

Nick knows that was cruel. Almost feels bad, until--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

He's not taking money out of *our*  
pockets, though, is he?

NICK MCCABE

He's taking a piece of album sales.  
Wasn't that part of the deal?  
That's my money too, Dick. Last I  
checked, I'm *still* writer on some  
of those songs - and I've barely  
seen any money from it.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You're co-writer, actually.

(deeply annoyed)

What do you care anyway? Once it's  
all sorted, it'll still be a hell of  
a lot more than we were making  
before, which you were perfectly  
fine with back then. Besides, you  
checked the NME noms? We're on  
fucking fire. Yet you're squabbling  
about setlists and... and I don't  
even know what--

NICK MCCABE

Wow. We could get a whole stupid  
award? Won't that make it all better?

Realizing he's being petty, Nick stops himself. Serious now.

NICK MCCABE (CONT'D)

I don't know if this ever occurred to  
you, Richard... but we would've been  
happy for you. About Kate, I mean.  
You could've told us. We woulda been  
there. We shoulda been there.

(MORE)

NICK MCCABE (CONT'D)  
We're supposed to be bandmates. Mates  
is right in the fucking name.

But Richard still says nothing. He wants to. But doesn't.

NICK MCCABE (CONT'D)  
(sighs, turns to leave)  
See you on the next tour, I guess.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Cocaine is snorted through a dollar bill as Richard stands upright quickly, feeling the high. Kate sits behind him, studying him, as the TV plays idly in the background.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
It's like they don't even care that  
I got us here, ya know? I get no  
respect from them.

KATE RADLEY  
Right. But... do you give them any  
back though?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
(ignoring that)  
I mean, we're platinum, we did a  
tour of the United Fucking States,  
nominated for NMEs out the ass.  
What the hell else do they want?

Something else's on Kate's mind and even Richard can tell.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
Sorry, I shouldn't be... I didn't  
mean to be raw about the NME thing.  
(encouraging)  
Regardless of what's going on,  
you're still nominated for those  
NMEs too. You said it yourself,  
you're all over that record. It's  
is as much yours as it is  
Spaceman's. Hell, the first words  
spoken on the damn album came out  
of your mouth, didn't they?

KATE RADLEY  
Yeah, I know, I just... I'd  
rather... still be in the band.

Looking at her, Richard is sympathetic. Even a little guilty.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
It's my fault.

Kate looks at Richard, as much as she might want to blame--

KATE RADLEY  
Getting married was my idea, too.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Spaceman's a real bellend letting  
you go. Guess you were right about  
him after all... too sensitive.

Richard sits on the bed, pulling her down with him.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
I just hope your consolation prize  
is enough.

He tickles her, getting on top of her. She laughs, the  
slightest bit of cheering up before trying to push him off.

KATE RADLEY  
Off me, you big lug.

But Richard leans down, looking in her eyes.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Never. I will never be off Kate  
Radley. Not ever.

He kisses her. She kisses him back. As he looks at her--

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
You know, sometimes, I really do  
feel like my stepdad says, like I  
could just *fly up into the clouds*  
and never come back if I wanted.

KATE RADLEY  
I almost believe you. I just hope  
you remember to kiss me goodbye.

That freezes Richard. He moves his face closer to Kate's.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
You think I'd leave you behind?  
Where'd I even go without you?

KATE RADLEY  
You'd be hopeless. No one else can  
wrangle that massive ego of yours.

Richard smiles. He knows it's true. But the moment shifts as Richard's attention is diverted when he hears behind him--

TV ANCHOR (O.S.)  
*...earlier today, Rolling Stones' iconic guitarist Keith Richards was finally asked directly about the situation with The Verve, and here's what he had to say about it.*

Richard whips around, focus now FULLY on the TV.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 Here we go. Time for a bit of truth. Justice. Keef's gotta be on my side. He knows how music's made.

ON THE TV SCREEN, Keith takes a long time to summon words.

KEITH RICHARDS (ON TV)  
*...look, I'm out of whack here. This is serious lawyer stuff.*

Twisting his face, this isn't what Richard expected.

KEITH RICHARDS (ON TV) (CONT'D)  
 But if The Verve can write a better song... *they can keep the money.*

That last line lands like a BOMB. Richard's face falls, DEVASTATED. Kate turns the TV off, thinking of what to say.

KATE RADLEY  
 Babe... just... forgot him.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 Forget the greatest guitarist of the greatest band to ever walk the earth?! Forget him denigrating me on TV for the whole world to see?

KATE RADLEY  
 Yes. Forget him.

A million emotions pass through Richard, until--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 No. *FUCK HIM.* The Stones stole that song in the first place. Bastards.

KATE RADLEY

Remember what else Doug said. You already wrote one massive worldwide hit. That means you can write a thousand more. Maybe it's time to--

But the thought of writing a new song, one even greater and more glorious than "Bitter Sweet Symphony", fills Richard with existential panic. He stands, pacing, moving on to--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

*The NMEs.* That's the real ticket. Every great British artist has won Album of the Year. The Stones can take all our damn money. They can take the song. But they can't take the whole of *Urban Hymns*. They can't take its legend. And we're gonna win that award, dammit.

Kate exhales. There's nothing else to say beyond--

KATE RADLEY

I hope you do, love...  
(conflicted)  
...I really do.

INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Looking at himself in the mirror, Richard pulls on a long TRENCHCOAT. Assessing.

KATE RADLEY (O.S.)  
You look great. Very punk.

He turns to Kate, stunning in a subtle pink dress.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

More importantly, look at you there. NMEs aren't gonna know what hit 'em with the pair of us.  
(kissing her)  
Have to admit, it is nice being able to go out in public together.

They admire themselves in the mirror together, a perfect fit.

KATE RADLEY

Just... came at a hefty price.  
(swallowing her feelings)  
By the way, something came for you.

Kate extends an envelope with the ABKCO LOGO on it. Upon seeing it, Richard RIPS IT OPEN. Inside is a copy of a CONTRACT to license "Bitter Sweet Symphony".

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*Nike?! Son of a bitch. He's really selling out to sweatshops already.*

In the envelope, Richard also finds a NOTE attached to a check: *"Thought you deserved something for your trouble - Allen".* Looking at the check, it's for a mere \$1,000.

Richard shakes his head, turning red. Trying not to let this throw him, he TEARS the contract up. Kate extends her hand--

KATE RADLEY  
 Like we said. Fuck them, right?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 Tonight's what this was all about anyway. The actual art. The music. This song... was for the people. And tonight... they award us.

Richard reaches into his pocket, quick pop of MDMA--

INT. BRIXTON ACADEMY - NIGHT

The sound of CAMERAS SHUTTERING and CLINKING GLASSES. The CROWD is filled with MID 90s MUSIC HEAVYHITTERS and their extensive ENTOURAGES. This year, the likes of PRODIGY, OASIS, ELASTICA - alongside The Verve and, of course, *Spiritualized*.

CHYRON: LONDON - 1998

Kate sits at a table with Spaceman and the others, very awkwardly keeps to herself. Richard's with the rest of The Verve at their table. He looks over to check she's alright.

LIGHTS FADE and exuberant British comedian of the age, EDDIE IZZARD, takes the stage to LOUD APPLAUSE.

EDDIE IZZARD  
 Welcome to the glorious 1998 NME Awards. I'm your presenter, Eddie Izzard. We've got plenty of music legends in the house tonight. Though seems many of the real ones were too busy to come. Guess we'll see you next year, Beck and Radiohead?

Some light LAUGHTER at that as Richard decides whether or not to be offended.

EDDIE IZZARD (CONT'D)  
 But not to worry, we do have *The  
 Sensational Verve* here tonight.  
 What a year they've had.

That gets a smile as the attention and lights all come to  
 their table. Izzard grins wickedly, setting up--

EDDIE IZZARD (CONT'D)  
 ...guess we can only get the bands  
 who can't write their own songs.

GUFFAWS RING OUT all around Richard, nearly splitting his  
 head. That one definitely offends. The other guys force  
 laughs. Kate looks over, knowing that's gotta kill him.

EDDIE IZZARD (CONT'D)  
 Alright, enough jokes now. First  
 award of the night's gonna be, you  
 guessed it, the most important one -  
*Dickhead of the Year.*

On Richard as he tries to keep himself unflappable.

TIME CUT:

Later in the night, Eddie's back presenting another.  
 Richard's still holding it together best he can.

EDDIE IZZARD (CONT'D)  
 Time for Best Music Video. And the  
 winner is...

Richard moves toward the edge of his seat, fists clamped.

EDDIE IZZARD (CONT'D)  
 Well, I saw this coming so you  
 probably did too: The Verve with  
 "Bitter Sweet Symphony"!

With those words, the whole night is turned around. Richard  
 leaps to his feet excitedly. He even manages to HUG NICK on  
 his way to the stage.

Kate applauds from her table. Spaceman politely does as well.

Standing up there in front of everyone, lights in his eyes,  
 AWARD thrust into his hand, Richard's on his way back. This  
 was what he was waiting for, what he deserves--

INT. BRIXTON ACADEMY - BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Award still in hand, Richard may or may not do a quick BUMP outside of the periphery of any onlookers.

INT. BRIXTON ACADEMY - LATER

Back in their seats, Richard is alive with energy as--

EDDIE IZZARD (O.S.)  
And best single... *again* it's the  
damn Verve with "Bitter Sweet  
Symphony".

Richard's back on his feet again, elated.

INT. BRIXTON ACADEMY - BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Juggling both awards, another possible BUMP.

INT. BRIXTON ACADEMY - LATER

EDDIE IZZARD  
Best Band... yeah, there you have  
it. *The Verve*!

Racing for the stage, Richard crowds the microphone, eyes dilated, a bit manic if we're honest--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
It's important for us to thank those  
took the time to vote for us. This  
song is for you. All of this... is  
for the people. And no one - *no one* -  
can ever take that away.  
(too intense)  
They *will not* take it away.

Pete, Nick, both Simons look at Richard, concern growing.

INT. BRIXTON ACADEMY - BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Awards in hand. Okay, he's definitely doing a BUMP here.

INT. BRIXTON ACADEMY - LATER

Richard's a true livewire now, barely able to sit still in his seat. The others try to ignore his bouncing about as Kate looks over at him, starting to worry what he'll do next.

EDDIE IZZARD

And for the final award of the  
night... we of course have the big  
one: Best Album.

Richard SLAMS his hand into the table way too hard--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

This is it, boys. Time to solidify  
our legend. A full sweep.

Eddie slowly opens the envelope. As he reads the text, a  
smirk appears on his face. It betrays a hint of surprise.

EDDIE IZZARD

Nice one. I've got to say I agree  
with this here. The winner is...

Richard readies himself to stand again, HUGE GRIN spreading.

EDDIE IZZARD (CONT'D)

"Ladies and gentleman we are  
floating in space" ... Spiritualized  
takes it!

The grin disappears instantly. Richard IN SHOCK.

SPACEMAN (O.S.)

Is someone taking the piss...?

Urged to his feet, Spaceman is aflutter. He heads to the  
stage as Kate awkwardly follows. She looks to Richard's  
table, locking eyes with him. He's still stunned, unable to  
bring himself to even send her an encouraging smile.

He looks to his three awards, then to Nick politely clapping.  
A look of total disdain crosses his face.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You serious, mate...?

NICK MCCABE

We all won, Richard. Plenty to go  
around. Be happy for your wife...

Richard looks to Spaceman onstage, then to Kate beside him.  
Knowing he HAS to do it, Richard finally begins to CLAP. But  
a single look at his face tells us it's KILLING him.

And Kate can see it too, irritation rising within her.

INT. BRIXTON ACADEMY - BACKSTAGE - LATER

Show over, heading off toward the afterparty, Richard and the others are hounded by REPORTERS and CAMERAS. They keep their heads down, avoiding them.

REPORTER #1  
*Mad Dick?! Kerrang Magazine*  
 here--

REPORTER #2  
*You have any words for Allen*  
*Klei--*

REPORTER #3  
*Richard, you've got to tell us -*  
*what do you think of what Keith*  
*Richards said about the lawsuit?*

Richard STOPS in his TRACKS. Nick sees that look in his eye, he grabs his arm, stopping him.

NICK MCCABE  
 Don't get mixed up in this shit.

But Richard can't help himself, PACING over to the camera--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 You wanna know what I think...  
 (directly into camera)  
I think "Bitter Sweet Symphony" is  
the best song Jagger and Richards  
have written in twenty years.

That sends a SHOCKWAVE through the British music press in the room. Still embittered, Mad Dick simply continues on his way.

INT. BRIXTON ACADEMY - AFTERPARTY - LATER

Richard drinks miserably with the others and Kate at the NME afterparty. All the Attendees now mingle together. Kate looks to Richard, sloppy beyond measure.

KATE RADLEY  
 Maybe we should go home.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 And leave the afterparty?

KATE RADLEY  
 Richard...

But before she can push harder, appearing from the crowd is Spaceman, Best Album award in hand.

SPACEMAN

Ay... The Verve. You all did very well tonight. Congrats.

Richard eyes Spaceman suspiciously. *Why's he being nice?*

SPACEMAN (CONT'D)

Just a shame you couldn't snag top prize like Kate and me though. Almost like people only care about one of your songs.  
(can't help himself)  
The one that's not even yours.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Get off it, you prick. It *is* mine.  
(off Nick's look)  
Ours.

SPACEMAN

You finally wrote your great one and turns out... not even yours.

Kate sees Rich's temper rising, grabs his hand. Admonishing.

KATE RADLEY

Richard, just leave it. Let's go.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

(ignoring her)

Fuck off, Jason. First off, "The Drugs Don't Work" *also* went number one here. And secondly, you did the exact same shit as me. You just didn't get *fucked* like we did.

Kate exhales, knowing this will only get worse.

SPACEMAN

You make a good point. I actually make money off my shit.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You don't make millions.

SPACEMAN

True. But I didn't give away every penny of my biggest hit either.

Pete's getting annoyed, finally has to jump in.

PETE SALISBURY

It's *fifty* percent of every penny for your information, Jason.

Spaceman is taken aback by that. As is Kate.

SPACEMAN  
Oh God, you don't even know...

NICK MCCABE  
Don't even know what?

SPACEMAN  
Fuck. You may have almost killed  
me, Richard, but... I'm not gonna  
take any joy in breaking this news.

Richard lets Kate's hand go, turning on her.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*You told him?*

KATE RADLEY  
(brow furrowing)  
I didn't know you were keeping it  
some big secret from everyone! *What  
the fuck, Richard?*

SIMON JONES  
Rich... what's he talking about? What  
else was even left to give away?

Richard's silence says it all. A conflicted yet satisfied  
Spaceman backs out of the argument he inadvertently started.

NICK MCCABE  
Richard, no. Please.  
(words catching)  
Was it really... *all of it?*

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
(exhales)  
He was gonna pull the album from  
stores. What else was I to do?

GASPS. The Simons and Pete look to each other, astonished.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
Si, come on. You understand.

SIMON JONES  
Nah, mate. I don't think I'll ever  
understand you...

PETE SALISBURY  
This is gonna eat even further into  
our album profits.  
(MORE)

PETE SALISBURY (CONT'D)

Fuck, are we gonna make *anything*  
when it's all said and done?

Richard turns to Tong, his one true fanboy, his last hope.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Tong. You get it, don't you? I had  
no choice.

Tong just shakes his head, tearful. As those three walk off--

NICK MCCABE

You just had to do your own thing,  
huh...? Write Richard Ashcroft's  
one great song? And look what it's  
gotten us. Fuck all.

Richard holds up his three trophies angrily.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You call this *fuck all*?! And you  
know, I don't see Nick McCabe's  
endless fucking guitar solos at the  
top of the charts. I don't see  
bloody America itself chanting for  
that. They chant for *me*, for *my*  
*album*, for my *song*--

NICK MCCABE

And now it's not even yours a little  
bit. I guess, legally speaking... it  
never was. So, what now?

Richard wonders too what's next. Looking to Kate, remembering--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I'll write another one then.

NICK MCCABE

Another one like *that*? We've never  
had another song like that one.  
It's-- it's not us.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Yeah, it's better than us! It's ME!

Nick lets that sit in the air. He nods.

NICK MCCABE

You can shout that from the  
rooftops all you like, but in name,  
in money... in fucking *public*  
*opinion*, it's just not true, man.

Richard can't take that. Kate pulls on his arm, knowing she's the only possible one who could stop this.

KATE RADLEY  
Please, Richard, look at me! Let's just go home and--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
(ignoring her yet again)  
It's more than you've ever done, McCabe. You've never written anything like that, with that much power, that's touched that many people. And truth is, you never will. And you know it. And that's why you hate me so much, why you do all this. Because the only credits you do have on *Urban Hymns* are the ones I deigned myself to give you. Because you know, in your heart, when it comes down to it... *I'm just better than you.*

*BAM!* Like lightning, Nick's fist CONNECTS with Richard's jaw. Richard's hand goes to his face, stunned Nick really did that.

NICK MCCABE  
I'm fucking done with you, Rich! We all are. Me, Pete, Jazz, both Simons. Kate too, if she's got any sense about her. It's over, man. You've fucked it too many times.  
(anger turns to sadness)  
You were always so set on being "the biggest band in the world". Why couldn't you just be happy enough being The Verve? That's all we ever wanted. We were happy with it.  
(truly hurt)  
Why weren't you?

And Nick walks off for the last time. Kate comes closer, touches Richard's chin, analyzing. But he moves away, not wanting comfort. She shakes her head, beyond irritated.

KATE RADLEY  
Okay. I'm done. *Goodnight, Richard.*  
I'm gonna go celebrate MY accomplishment. Maybe you can figure out how to ever be happy for someone other than yourself.

Off Richard, watching her leave. Now he's really fucked it.

INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richard lies in bed, bruise on his chin, wide awake, staring at the wall. BEEP--

JAZZ SUMMERS (VOICEMAIL)

Richard, get up and call me back. I know what happened after the NMEs, but there's still more shows to play. You do not want venues suing you on top of everyone else...

INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Another night, Richard still hasn't moved. BEEP--

JAZZ SUMMERS (VOICEMAIL)

Richard... fucking Andrew Oldham's filed a lawsuit now too. The prick's going around saying you think you wrote something you didn't. We have real shit to talk about. Call me!

INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richard literally can't move. BEEP--

JAZZ SUMMERS (VOICEMAIL)

Richard... forget everything else for a second: *Slane Castle*. That's how big you are right now. Slane. Fucking. Castle. I don't care what you have going on with the guys... Are you really gonna let Allen Klein stop you from playing this?

BEEP. Richard blinks, and then finally, he GETS UP.

EXT. SLANE CASTLE - NIGHT

LIGHTS shine up on a MAJESTIC CASTLE nestled into the Irish countryside. As we pull back from it, we see--

--a STAGE and beyond it TENS OF THOUSANDS OF FANS CHEER as the MANIC STREET PREACHERS finish up their own hit song "If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next".

JAMES BRADFIELD

Next up, we've got a real treat for you. In just a few minutes...

THE... FUCKING... VERVE!

The Crowd goes absolutely APESHIT as we cut to--

INT. SLANE CASTLE - SAME

Inside the castle walls, the Simons, Pete, Nick, and Jazz are anxious, waiting.

PETE SALISBURY  
What do we do if he doesn't show?

Before they can think, a completely LOADED Richard stands in the doorway. They breathe a fractured sigh of relief... despite not *really* wanting to be around him. Silence.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
(slurring)  
So what we got after this, Jazz?

JAZZ SUMMERS  
This is the last show on the books.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
This is it?

JAZZ SUMMERS  
For now... yeah.

Richard looks around the room, reading between the lines there. A tense gaze is exchanged between all.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Right... *for now*.

EXT. SLANE CASTLE - MOMENTS LATER

Taking the stage, The Verve are welcomed to DEAFENING CHEERS. Richard soaks it in as the others ready their instruments. He looks back to them. Buried emotions. Finally, still slurring--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*How are you, Ireland?!*

SCREAMS are returned to him. A serious look overtakes him.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
*This is a song th-- that they say  
has been stolen...*

Richard's lost in it all. The rest of the band waits for him to continue, wondering if he even will.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
 ...not by us, it isn't. Anyway,  
 this is a song for-- the people.  
 It's modern day blues. This is  
 "Bitter Sweet Symphony"...

The audience completely EXPLODES as the opening strings kick in. Moments later, the band joins in. The sound is bigger than ever. And so is the crowd watching.

The band should be at the absolute height of euphoria. But on the faces of each member, only one thing is clear:

IT'S OVER.

Richard brings the microphone to his mouth, almost in tears.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
*Cause it's a bitter sweet symphony,  
 that's life/trying to make ends  
 meet, you're a slave to money then  
 you die...*

As the crowd chants along with every word, we see Richard's face morph from one of grief... to unbridled ANGER.

The music begins to fade away, replaced by a thudding, ominous ELECTRONIC BEAT--

EXT. WIGAN - STREETS - DAY

Richard paces the rainy streets of Wigan, sans umbrella. He ignores the looks of every Pedestrian who eyes him. Again, channeling the "Bitter Sweet" music video.

**CHYRON - WIGAN, 1999**

Passing a newsstand, the HEADLINES cry out: *"The Verve Call It Quits... Again", "Bittersweet Success as The Verve Split", "Verve Break Up for Second, and Likely Final, Time".*

Richard pays no mind, charging forward and not caring who he bumps into, even as various Passerby snap pictures of him.

INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - DAY

The electronic beat plays on. Opening the door to a MOUNTAIN OF MAIL, Richard is immediately annoyed.

He quickly scans over everything, virtually all LEGAL MAIL of some sort. Rubs his temples, headache forming... until he spots a LETTER FROM THE ACADEMY OF RECORDING ARTS.

Opening it, we see what he does: "...Academy of Recording Arts Proudly Presents this Grammy Nomination to THE VERVE for Best Rock Performance for "Bitter Sweet Symphony". Richard could almost cry, his whole mood turns around until--

--beneath it: "...written by Mick Jagger & Keith Richards"

Now he could *really* almost cry. Trying to move on, he flips through the rest of the mail until he reaches the last piece, an unsealed letter simply labeled "Richard". Tearing it open:

KATE RADLEY (V.O.)  
 Rich, I'm going home for a bit.  
 Need to sort things out... and  
 think about us. Please don't call.

*And that is what officially sends him overboard.* Richard crumbles the letter. He looks to his ANSWERING MACHINE, a red button indicating MANY MESSAGES.

As he spirals, the frantic electronic beat rises along with his emotion. Just as Richard POUNDS his fist against the machine, the music fully breaks out, along with--

JAZZ SUMMERS (VOICEMAIL)  
*Richard, these lawsuits aren't just  
 going to go away by ignoring them--*

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - MONTAGE

A sweaty Richard DANCES WILDLY at a packed rave. Onstage, electronic duo THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS spins their paranoia-soaked Big Beat hit "Setting Sun".

Richard's attention is grabbed by two YOUNG RAVERS in front of him who yell to each other over the music.

RAVER #1  
 ...this right here is the future!  
 Rock n' Roll, Britpop, Songwriters,  
 all that shite is done.

RAVER #2  
 Shitpop's more like it. But hey...  
 they still got Noel Gallagher  
 singing on the track...

RAVER #1  
 ...that's just what they needed to  
 transition the sheep shaggers to  
 the new era!

Richard's dilated eyes widen further. Over the speakers--

NOEL GALLAGHER (V.O.)  
 (singing, distorted)  
*You're the devil in me I brought in  
 from the cold/Said your body was  
 young but your mind was very old--*

The sound of Noel's voice coupled with what Richard's just heard sends him one step closer to oblivion--

LAWYER #5 (VOICEMAIL)  
*Mr. Ashcroft, I'm calling again on  
 behalf of my client David Whitaker--*

INT. WAREHOUSE BATHROOM - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Richard looks at himself in the filthy bathroom mirror as "Setting Sun" literally VIBRATES through the walls. Unable to stand it, he POPS a tab of MDMA.

SPACEMAN (VOICEMAIL)  
*It's Jason. Look, Richard, I've  
 heard from Kate. Even after  
 everything, I thought it only right  
 I check on you like you did for me--*

The SOUND of the answering machine SMASHING tells us that'll be the last message. Richard has a meltdown to attend to.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - MONTAGE

More unhinged, Richard absolutely LOSES IT on the dance floor. Going way too hard, absolutely killing the mood. He doesn't see it, but a BOUNCER is headed right toward him.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Song still erupting, Richard is violently THROWN OUT of the warehouse into the wet night.

BOUNCER  
*How about you go somewhere more  
 your scene, Captain Rock?!*

Richard stands, sends a vulgar gesture right back.

INT. PUB - NIGHT - MONTAGE

A sloppy Richard pounds a pint, gestures for another. As an excited BARGOER approaches--

BARGOER

*Holy shit! Richard Ashcroft? You're not serious about breaking up the band again, are you?*

Richard SHOVES the Bargoer away, not caring what they think.

"Setting Sun" briefly fades away as Richard's ears PERK UP to a different sound. He turns to a TELEVISION in the corner, where a COMMERCIAL is accompanied by "Bitter Sweet Symphony".

Richard's grip on his pint tightens as the commercial displays NIKE'S ICONIC LOGO.

Furious, he HURLS the glass at the television. "Setting Sun" comes roaring back as the screen shatters and PANDEMONIUM unleashes throughout the bar.

Two BOUNCERS instantly grab Richard by the shoulders.

EXT. PUB - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Richard's AGAIN thrown out into the desolate night. Not ready for his night of chaos and debauchery to end, Richard pops another MDMA tab as the music builds even louder.

But then, just as quickly, it quiets once more, because Richard is hearing again -- "Bitter Sweet Symphony". This time, coming out of a nearby luxury car stopped at a light.

Richard stumbles closer, aghast to see three WELL-SUITED MEN inside. Not at all the audience he intended it for.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

No...

WELL-SUITED MAN #1

(noticing him)

What're you doing?

Richard leans through the window, SHUTTING OFF the stereo system and allowing "Setting Sun" to come back.

WELL-SUITED MAN #2

*What the-- you serious, lad?*

RICHARD ASHCROFT

That song... is not for you.

The three Men exchange confused glances as Richard rushes away, desperately looking for anywhere to escape the song that is now haunting him, landing on--

## INT. THEATER - NIGHT - MONTAGE

An even sloppier Richard sits in the back of a crowded movie theater. He smokes a cigarette, more relaxed, laughing inappropriately as THEATREGOERS look back, annoyed. Some might even recognize him, but they're still pissed.

THEATREGOER #1  
*Seriously?! Do you mind?!*

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
What?! Don't tell me you're  
actually enjoying this garbage--

On the silver screen, the ending of the movie *CRUEL INTENTIONS* is unfolding, actresses Sarah Michelle Gellar and Selma Blair in a stand off at a funeral.

One more time, "Setting Sun" fades away as the film's closing MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT begins to play.

You guessed it... Hell, it might even be why you know "Bitter Sweet Symphony" to begin with.

Richard's eyes pop, his face taut. It's like he's seen a ghost. He literally can't escape his own creation.

But before he can even think of making yet another scene, SECURITY walks the aisle in his direction. As "Setting Sun" definitively returns, Richard DARTS out.

## EXT. WIGAN - STREETS - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Richard drinks in public as the night turns into a BLUR.

## INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Dancing again with abandon, Richard SCREAMS into the night.

## EXT. WIGAN - STREETS - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Just like in the video, Richard walks the streets, BUMPING into more Pedestrians with no regard, FULLY PAST THE EDGE.

## EXT. WIGAN CEMETERY - NIGHT - END MONTAGE

The song finally collapses as a drunk and high Richard comes to a stumbling fall outside of a place he's been avoiding for years: WIGAN CEMETERY.

Finally full of enough liquid courage, Richard walks up to the iron gates. He pulls them, only to find they're locked. But there's no turning back now. He takes a deep breath, jumps for it, awkwardly gripping onto the bars.

After a little wrangling, he makes his way over the gate and onto the cemetery grounds. But before he can make his next move, a BLINDING FLASHLIGHT sets right on him.

GROUNDKEEPER (O.S.)  
*Hey! What the hell're you doing?!*

Not thinking, Richard SPRINTS further into the cemetery as the flashlight follows. A hefty GROUNDSKEEPER behind it.

GROUNDKEEPER (CONT'D)  
 Stop right there!

Richard keeps running. Normally, he could go all night. But considering all the substances he's consumed, he can barely keep himself upright, staggering about.

The brilliance of the flashlight tells us the Groundskeeper is getting closer. Richard forces himself forward.

But he can only go so far. He paces about twenty more yards before COLLAPSING to the ground, VOMITING.

The Groundskeeper slows his pace, cautiously stepping ever closer to Richard's body lying between the tombstones.

As Richard wipes his mouth, he looks back to the blinding light in his face. From his perspective, he can only make out the silhouette of the heavyset Groundskeeper.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
 I'm sorry. I'll leave, oka--

GROUNDKEEPER  
Richard...?

Click. The flashlight goes out. And now, Richard can fully see the image of the Groundskeeper. A middle aged man who we've seen several times before, because he's Richard's--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
...Dad?

Indeed, the man staring back is Richard's biological father FRANK ASHCROFT. He looks Richard up and down.

FRANK ASHCROFT  
 You look like hell, son.

Richard still processes what he's seeing, unable to talk. He forces himself to sit up.

FRANK ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
Christ, you look worse than me...  
which is saying a lot, considering  
I'm... y'know, dead.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
I... I don't understand.

FRANK ASHCROFT  
You're the one who's consumed the  
north of England's entire drug  
supply for the month in one night.  
You tell me what this is.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
It's... it's a horror show is what  
it is. The fucking song. It won't  
leave me alone.

For the first time, Richard lets out the tears he's been holding in almost his entire life. Frank kneels to him.

FRANK ASHCROFT  
Oh, son...

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
I'm sorry, Dad. God, I'm--

FRANK ASHCROFT  
And what do you have to be sorry  
for? I mean, outside of  
embarrassing the Ashcroft name to  
hell and back tonight, that is.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
I failed at what I promised you.

FRANK ASHCROFT  
What you promised me...?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
The last time I was here. I told  
you... I swore I'd be the biggest  
in the world. That I'd write that  
great song inside of me... the one  
that would honor you.

Richard continues to let the emotion out. Frank puts his hand on his son's shoulder.

FRANK ASHCROFT

Hey... but you did write that great one, didn't ya? No matter what, no one can take away that you did it.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

I should have everything I've ever wanted now. Instead, I've been fucked six ways to Sunday, and all I want... is to just lay down here and die.

FRANK ASHCROFT

No, you don't. Trust me on that one.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Song's not even mine, y'know? Not according to the rest of the bloody world. It's just... someone else's.

FRANK ASHCROFT

Just cause the song originated from somewhere else... doesn't mean it's not yours too. I created you, Rich - does that mean you're solely *mine*?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

You don't get it. They're actually saying I had nothing to do with the damn song, Dad. Nothing.

FRANK ASHCROFT

*But you know that's not true--*

RICHARD ASHCROFT

What if it is? What if... I really did convince myself I wrote something that I just... didn't? What way would that be to honor you?

FRANK ASHCROFT

Son. You already "honored me" by giving me the best days of my life. Being your dad... was more than enough for me to take with me to where I am now. That's what life is really about, isn't it? Isn't that what that song says, after all?

Richard shrugs, no words left.

FRANK ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

And for fuck's sake, why would everyone under the sun be suing you... if the song wasn't yours?

On Richard as that settles in.

FRANK ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
You did what you set out to do,  
Rich. The Verve were the biggest  
thing in the world... even if it  
was just for one song.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
But I thought... I'd at least get  
to enjoy it when it happened.

FRANK ASHCROFT  
Yeah, well, doesn't always happen  
that way, does it? But now you've  
done it, it's time for you to find  
the next goal... whatever that is.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
But... I don't know what it is.

FRANK ASHCROFT  
You've got no choice but to figure  
it out.

Frank turns his flashlight on once more, shining it back in  
Richard's face, blinding him again.

FRANK ASHCROFT (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
And for God's sake, son, make it  
right with the rest of the boys. If  
not now... then at some point.

Frank's silhouette begins to back away from Richard.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Wait! Where are you going?

FRANK ASHCROFT (O.S.)  
I can't answer that. No one can...  
Goodbye, Richard.

The light becomes ever more intense as--

KATE RADLEY (V.O.)  
*Richard...*  
(louder)  
*RICHARD!*

EXT. WIGAN CEMETERY - DAY

Richard blinks his eyes to life in the blinding sunshine.  
It's morning now. And yes, he still looks like total shit.

KATE RADLEY

Richard, wake up, dammit! Do you  
want to get bloody arrested?

He's stunned to see Kate by his side, nearly as stunned as he  
was to see his dead father.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Kate... are you...  
(words catching)  
...please tell me this is real. You  
are actually here, right?

KATE RADLEY

I am. But are you? You look like  
shit.

Kate's anger lightly subsides as she looks to the GRAVE  
MARKING near Richard: "Here lies Frank Ashcroft..."

KATE RADLEY (CONT'D)

Do we need to go to the hospital or  
somethi--

RICHARD ASHCROFT

How... did you know I was here?

KATE RADLEY

You left me like ten completely  
unhinged messages about it.

(off Rich's embarrassment)  
Had quite the night, did we?

RICHARD ASHCROFT

(rubbing head)  
Feels like we'll have quite the  
morning as well.

Richard takes a breath, awkwardness in the air.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Kate. For everything.

KATE RADLEY

Richard... you know it's not the  
guys' fault what happened, right?  
And it's certainly not *mine* either.

Though silent, we see Richard does know that.

KATE RADLEY (CONT'D)

What Klein did... the way that  
felt...

(MORE)

KATE RADLEY (CONT'D)

You think it's all that different  
from the way *they* felt when *you*  
broke up the band? *Again?*

(fighting tears)

You think it's that different from  
how I felt when Jason kicked me  
out? I don't blame you for it, but  
still, you and me... it's the  
reason I'm out. For fuck's sake,  
you think I wanted to leave the  
band that had the *real* definitive  
album of 1997?

(touching his face)

I've been right here, feeling all  
the same things as you. And you  
won't let me in. The only thing you  
ever let in... is the damn music.

Sun shining behind her head, Kate is literally glowing in  
front of him. And Richard realizes - *he knows what's next.*

RICHARD ASHCROFT

It's time I change that. Time I  
focus on what's next. And for me...  
the only thing next is *you*.

Kate looks to him, wanting to believe his words.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

Last night was... something's  
different in me now, Kate. I swear.  
You don't have to believe me yet. I  
wouldn't. But I'll prove to you what  
I'm saying is true. All I ask is:  
*Will you give me the chance to?*

KATE RADLEY

(measuring words)

Unfortunately for me... I don't  
think I have a choice. Because no  
matter how hard I try, I... I'll  
never be off Richard Ashcroft.

Fighting to his feet, Richard reaches for her hand. His eyes  
misty, a deep gratitude for her coursing through him.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

...you know, now that *neither of us*  
has a band anymore, maybe we  
could... create something together.

Kate stares back. Her eyes water.

KATE RADLEY  
Maybe... we already did.

Richard's not thick enough to miss that.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Oh, my God. You're serious?

Kate softly touches her stomach, simply nodding. Richard is completely overwhelmed with emotion.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
Fuck me. I really *do* need to get  
myself in order, don't I?

KATE RADLEY  
Look where we are, Richard. Do I  
really need to answer that?

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Will you... help me?

Before Kate can answer, Richard summons the words he has NEVER been able to say in his entire life.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
I can't do it without you.  
(swallowing all his pride)  
I can't do it by myself.

Kate looks deep into his eyes, emotional at that. She pulls him into her, holding him close.

INT. ABKCO OFFICES - EVENING

At her desk, Sophie's got large headphones on, mouthing the words to "Lucky Man" as she puts her things into a BOX.

As Allen exits his office, he freezes at the sight.

ALLEN KLEIN  
The fuck is all this?

Sophie pulls her headphones off, continuing with her box.

SOPHIE PORTER  
You don't know "Lucky Man"? Y'know  
"Bitter Sweet" isn't the only good  
song on *Urban Hymns*. These guys  
are, like... actually really great.  
Incredible, even.

ALLEN KLEIN

I'm talking about *the box*. What are you doing?

SOPHIE PORTER

Right, that. Well - you've inspired me, Mr. Klein. I'm going back to school. Pivoting to *music law*.

For the first time, Allen's speechless. Sophie finishes up, popping her headphones in the box last.

SOPHIE PORTER (CONT'D)

That way, next time you do something like you did to The Verve... I'll be sitting on the *other side of the table* from you.

Last thing on her desk: an ENVELOPE. She hands it to him.

Allen watches the door shut behind Sophie, looking down to the envelope addressed to him, originating from *WIGAN*. He opens it to find inside the CHECK he sent to Richard. And scrawled across it in big block letters: "FUCK YOU".

As we take in Allen's ever-dissatisfied mug, we FADE TO--

EXT. WIGAN - DAY

A cab pushes through traffic down a busy Wigan street. In the back of it, we find--

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

--Richard, SHORN BLEACH-BLONDE HAIR, older than we last saw.

**CHYRON: WIGAN - 2007**

The CAB DRIVER tries not to glance in the rearview mirror as he drives, but he clearly recognizes Richard, excited.

Richard doesn't notice, just looking out at the PEOPLE, the fellow Wiganers he's always written his songs for.

CAB DRIVER

Sorry, you're... are you Richard Ashcroft?

Richard assesses the guy, debating whether to be truthful.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

...yeah. You caught me.

CAB DRIVER

Fuck me. Richard Ashcroft in my cab.  
Sorry to bother you like, but man...  
I love your music.

Richard smiles, accepting that in stride--

CAB DRIVER (CONT'D)

*Storm in Heaven. Northern Soul. Urban  
Hymns. Hell, I even love your solo  
stuff.*

--until he hears that.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

*Even my solo stuff?*

CAB DRIVER

I didn't mean it like that. I  
practically got *Keys to the World*  
memorized. But there was just  
something so special you did with  
The Verve, man. You boys... were  
the real deal. Meant a lot to us.

Richard lets it slide, quietly agreeing with the Cab Driver.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

*Yeah. We weren't bad, were we?*

CAB DRIVER

I'm sure you know there's rumors  
about... you all getting back  
together. You think it'll happen?

Turning away, Richard looks out the window again. He smirks.

RICHARD ASHCROFT

*Didn't you hear what I said last  
year...? Be more likely to get all  
four Beatles back onstage together.*

The Cab Driver shakes his head, disappointed. Before he can say more, Richard's phone BEEPS - a text from KATE with a photo of her and their YOUNG SONS making a meal together.

Richard grins at the shot, turns his attention to the window.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)

*It's this one right here.*

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

Looking around the same space where he created *Urban Hymns*, it all looks so different to Richard now. More corporate, less creative. The times and how they change things.

SIMON TONG (O.S.)  
You're shitting me? Is that really  
Mad Dick himself...?

Richard turns to see Simon Tong, also older, more mature. He's got his guitar case at his side.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
You look good, Tong.

PETE SALISBURY (O.S.)  
He's still the ugly Simon though.

They turn to see Jones and Pete, who laughs.

SIMON TONG  
Easy to be the better looking Pete  
when there's only one of you.

As the four of them stand together, an awkward silence takes hold. No one is sure where to take this next.

PETE SALISBURY  
...shame what happened to Nick, eh?

The foursome each exchange serious glances, until--

NICK MCCABE (O.S.)  
Seriously, I gain less than a stone  
and you assholes won't ever let me  
forget it.

Laughter breaks out as we see Nick standing in the doorway.

NICK MCCABE (CONT'D)  
You know we could barely afford to  
eat when we were a band.

As the laughter dies down, there's a loaded look exchanged between Nick and Richard. The others wait to see what will happen. Awkward silence fills the room.

NICK MCCABE (CONT'D)  
Well... here we are. I thought  
Richard Ashcroft said he could do  
it all alone.

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
Two platinum solo albums say I did.

Nick and Richard stare each other down.

NICK MCCABE  
I hate to break it to you, Rich,  
but I ain't written any material  
for this meeting here. Not sure  
where we should even start.

Richard takes a step toward him, an olive branch--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
What do you say... we just jam,  
then? Like the old days.  
(right at Nick)  
We were always best that way.  
Weren't we?

Off that, A NEW SOUND begins as we FADE TO--

EXT. GLASTONBURY - NIGHT

--A CROWD OF A HUNDRED THOUSAND absolutely VIBRATES to a  
newly-reunited The Verve's single: "Love is Noise".

**CHYRON: GLASTONBURY - 2008**

Onstage, the band is ROCKING. Richard, like when we met him,  
slithers around the space. Nick, as always, remains still as  
a statue. Together, they reach the final chorus--

RICHARD ASHCROFT  
*Love is noise, love is pain/Love is  
these blues that I'm singing again...*

As the song finishes, a DEAFENING CHEER rises out from the  
crowd. Richard exhales. He takes a moment to look at each  
band member, saving Nick for last.

There's a lot of pain still between these two. Years of  
regret and hurt feelings and arguments and fractured egos.  
But here they are together, for the world to see.

Richard raises the microphone, addressing the audience.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
You know... It's a struggle. Life's  
a struggle. Monday morning may be a  
struggle for a lot of you. Working  
for a job you despise. Working for  
a bastard you despise.  
(MORE)

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
(stressing)  
A slave to money... then we die.

The audience reacts with ECSTATIC CHEERS, knowing what they're about to hear. The opening strings to the song that's defined Richard's entire life begin to play.

But the strings are alone, the band not joining in just yet. The anticipation builds with each repeated measure.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
You may not be surprised to hear  
there was a time I hated this song.  
After all the shit we went through  
cause of it. All the accusations  
leveled at me cause of it...

He looks back to Nick once more, who finally lets his distorted guitar SQUEAL, adding even further to the anticipation. He and Richard even manage to share a smile.

RICHARD ASHCROFT (CONT'D)  
But then I remembered, that  
*regardless of who wrote it...*  
(looking back to crowd)  
...it's still one of the best songs  
ever fucking written.

And with that, the band FINALLY, FULLY KICKS INTO THE DRIVING RHYTHM OF "BITTER SWEET SYMPHONY". The crowd ROARS. The song sparkles with an electric energy we haven't heard before.

For once, everything is right in Richard's life. He outstretches his arms, looking to the cloudy sky above--

--and his body ASCENDS OFF THE STAGE. He's FLYING, just like his stepdad Doug said he would. He soars higher and higher over the crowd, arms open as the music continues.

**ONSCREEN TEXT:** *"Following a series of triumphant reunion shows, The Verve released another album, FORTH, in 2008."*

As Richard continues upward, FLOATING INTO THE CLOUDS--

--we CUT TO the same arduous process of PRESSING A VINYL we saw in our opening. This one reads FORTH by The Verve.

**ONSCREEN TEXT:** *"They broke up for the third time in 2009. They have not reunited since."*

A STACK of FORTH vinyls are placed on a record store shelf. Just like the Andrew Oldham Orchestra record before it, it disappears into the ether, people passing over it. Sadly, it was not The Verve's biggest success.

**ONSCREEN TEXT:** "Allen Klein passed away the following year at the age of 77, leaving behind a legacy of lawsuits in the music world that have only become more common today."

Back with the other Band Members on stage, fully engaged with the music. Fully alive. CU on each one as--

**ONSCREEN TEXT:** "Simon Tong, Simon Jones, and Pete Salisbury have gone on to play for various other groups, including Gorillaz and Black Rebel Motorcycle Club."

As we focus on Nick--

**ONSCREEN TEXT:** "Nick McCabe has continued to record with assorted musical projects. He has also continued to feud with Richard in the press since The Verve's last breakup. But he has never gone back to surveying."

Back with Richard in the sky--

**ONSCREEN TEXT:** "Richard Ashcroft has released six albums under his own name. Two have gone platinum in the UK."

He closes his eyes. At peace, possibly the first time ever.

**ONSCREEN TEXT:** "He and Kate are still married. They record music together and have two children."

Richard slowly brings the microphone back to his mouth--

**ONSCREEN TEXT:** "The 'Bitter Sweet Symphony' saga redefined the music industry, prompting artists and producers to navigate the complexities of sampling with greater caution."

--preparing to sing like never before.

**ONSCREEN TEXT:** "In April 2019, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards shocked the music world by returning all publishing rights and songwriting credits for 'Bitter Sweet Symphony' to Richard Ashcroft.

*They offered no explanation for their decision.*

*As the history books and legal records will now forever show...*

*Richard wrote his great one after all."*

As Richard begins to belt out the legendary opening refrain--

**THE END**