

PAUL IS DEAD

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Rev: 8/27/23

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INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - NIGHT

LIV (late 20s) walks down the hallway passing dressing room after dressing room. She is dressed in tight black leather pants and a frilled vest. Her long black hair continuously sweeps across her eyes to be tossed out of the way by a quick, casual flip.

She walks past a dressing room door, left ajar. She does a double take. She backtracks a few steps and looks through the open door. Inside the room, "PAUL" (late 20s) sits on the couch plucking at an acoustic guitar. He is wearing a crop top, flowing sequin pants, and a pair of sunglasses pushed above his forehead. Liv enters the--

DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

"Paul" stops playing, looks up, and runs a hand through his curly, blonde hair.

LIV
Uh... Who are you?

"Paul" laughs. He goes back to plucking at the guitar.

LIV (CONT'D)
I asked you a question.

"PAUL"
What're you on about?

LIV
Who are you and where is Paul?

"PAUL"
I'm Paul.

LIV
OK, well where's the Paul who plays in the band?

"PAUL"
I'm the Paul that plays in the band.

LIV
No, you aren't.

"PAUL"
Yes, I am.

LIV
No, you're not.

"PAUL"

Yes. I am.

LIV

No-- ... I'm in the band. I know
you're not in the band.

"PAUL"

I know you're in the band because
I'm in the band with you.

LIV

No, you--

"PAUL"

LIV! Are you high? We're about to
go on.

LIV

I'm not-- ...You've got to go, Man.
You can't just walk around back
here.

A STAGE ASSISTANT pops their head into the room.

STAGE ASSISTANT

Hey, Paul-- Oh, hey Liv... You all
right?

Liv looks at the assistant in shock. She points at "Paul".

LIV

That's not Paul.

The stage assistant looks at "Paul" then back at Liv. They
laugh.

STAGE ASSISTANT

All right. That's-- Y'all are
funny... But uh... we need you on
stage.

They turn to go.

STAGE ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Seriously. We need you up there
stat.

"Paul" pats Liv on the shoulder as he gets up.

"PAUL"

Good joke... Don't get it. But good
joke.

Liv watches "Paul" leave the room, dumbstruck.

LIV
What--

BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Liv walks down the hallway and up the stairs towards the stage.

LIV
--the--

EXT. ON-STAGE - NIGHT

Liv walks out onto stage. She watches "Paul" pass by, swinging the guitar strap over his head. She grasps the mic stand, holding it away from her mouth, staring dumbstruck at "Paul".

LIV
--fuck--

LATER, AFTER THE SET

Liv waves as the crowd cheers but is still looking at "Paul" open-mouthed. She turns and walks off stage.

LIV
--is-- "PAUL" (O.S.)
--we love you, New York!

BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Liv walks down the hallway and turns into the--

DRESSING ROOM

Liv slams the door shut.

LIV
--happening?!

"Paul" slumps down onto the couch, looking up at Liv. He watches Liv pace back and forth.

LIV (CONT'D)
You're not-- ... You aren't Paul!

"Paul" runs fingers through his hair, smiling disarmingly.

"PAUL"
Have a drink, Liv.

"Paul" begins pouring a tall glass of whiskey. He watches as Liv fidgets. "Paul" finishes pouring and Liv stares at the drink for a long couple seconds. She reaches out and picks up the glass but--

LIV
I--

Liv sets the untouched whiskey down on the coffee table and rushes to a box on the dressing room cabinet and begins rifling through a box of polaroids. She triumphantly pulls a PHOTO from the box and rushes over to the door, calling out into the hallway. "Paul" wipes sand off of the now empty coffee table, looking slightly annoyed.

LIV (CONT'D)
Hey! Hey, come here. Yeah-- You,
come here.

She motions someone out in the hallway towards the dressing room. The same stage assistant from before is pulled into the room by Liv.

Liv points at the photo: a photo of Liv who's arm is around PAUL. This Paul is someone who, while they don't look unlike "Paul", looks more like someone who you might say offhandedly looks like "Paul" in front of a bunch of other people and everyone makes fun of you for it.

STAGE ASSISTANT
What am I looking at?

"Paul" rolls his eyes. Liv gestures back and forth between the photo and "Paul".

LIV
These. Are. Not. The. Same. Person.

The stage assistant glances between the photo and "Paul". They point at "Paul"

STAGE ASSISTANT
That's the same guy.

Liv shoves the stage assistant right out the door and slams it shut behind them. She turns back to "Paul" who is neatly arranging LINES OF COCAINE on the table. "Paul" stares at Liv, not looking down as his hands cut up the coke.

LIV
How much are you paying them?

"Paul" continues to just stare at Liv, the corner of his mouth twitches before he smiles up at Liv.

"PAUL"

Liv... Can you just sit down and do a line with me?

LIV

Don't-- Stop saying my name like that... Like you *know* me.

"PAUL"

I do know you!

LIV

Fuck off!

"Paul" blows sand off the table and a syringe is suddenly in his hand. "Paul" flicks the needle, tying a knot at the crook of his elbow.

"PAUL"

Let's just relax... We can shoot up in celebration of a great show!

Liv stares at the needle, her concern now masked by a desperate need. She takes a step towards "Paul". "Paul", first only grinning slightly, starts to smile wider and wider. He doesn't blink.

LIV

We talked about--

"PAUL"

No, no, no... Come on... You've earned it.

Liv takes another step forward. She goes to place the polaroid down and sees herself with her arm around Paul, looking back at her. She looks at "Paul".

LIV

You-- You're not Paul.

"PAUL"

Come on, Liv. Just shoot up with me.

"Paul" lowers his chin, now looking up through half-lidded eyes. He licks his lips, his tongue darting out quickly.

"PAUL" (CONT'D)

I know you want to.

LIV
Fuck you. You don't know me.

"Paul" grins menacingly, his smile now strangely wide. Sand pours through his fingers where the needle used to be.

"PAUL"
I know everything about you.

LIV
F-- ... What did you just say?

"Paul"'s whole demeanor has changed, his grin growing wider and wider into a manic, toothy smile.

"PAUL"
It's just you and me now, Livvy.

LIV
Don't look at me like-- ... Don't call me Livvy.

"PAUL"
Oops. I meant it's just you... and me... And Paul!

"Paul" slams his fist down on the arm of the couch and the entire room shakes. The dressing room closet door flies open and Paul, cut into six pieces, crumbles to the floor, his arms and head rolling in separate directions.

Liv just stares down at the dismembered body. She slowly turns his head to face "Paul", mouth open in horror. "Paul", and the couch upon which he sits, grows larger and larger. Soon he is knocking the walls and ceiling over and off of the small room. "Paul" towers over Liv.

"PAUL" (CONT'D)
Aren't you even the least bit happy that Paul is dead?

"Paul" leans down, his face taking up the entirety of Liv's field of view. He tilts his head to the side, looking at Liv with one massive eye.

"PAUL" (CONT'D)
He can do it can't he. Shoot up. Snort. Drink. And it's... sexy. But not you... You have a problem. It's a sickness... You're... *disgusting*.

"Paul"'s smile stretches across the entire width of the room.

"PAUL" (CONT'D)
So, you're happy aren't you.

"Paul" just looks at Liv for a second, she stares back.
"Paul" falls backwards onto the couch, throwing his head back in fits of laughter. Liv, frozen in shocked horror, looks down at her feet and sees Paul's head. It is face-up, looking at her in anguish. As his disembodied head speaks, blood leaks from his neck.

PAUL
Liv... Liv, help me.

"LIV" sneers and kicks Paul's head away. From the other side of the room Liv watches herself laugh as Paul's head rolls into the closet. "Liv" looks up at "Paul", laughing.

"PAUL"
But I write the songs. I write the music.

"Paul"'s giant hand slams down onto "Liv" squishing "her", sand flies out from underneath his giant palm. "Paul"'s monstrous head snakes down in front of Liv, leering at her.

"PAUL" (CONT'D)
You are *nothing* without me!

"Paul" lurches forward towards Liv, laughing. Liv falls, scrambling backwards.

"PAUL" (CONT'D)
Nothing but a talentless...
witless... aimless... Junkie!

Liv's back meets the dressing room cabinet and she lets out a small yelp. "Paul" opens his palms towards Liv and sand spills onto the floor in one huge pile.

"PAUL" (CONT'D)
But it would be so easy to forget.

"Paul" moves closer and closer, until he's only a few feet away from Liv who cringes in terror. "Paul"'s head just floats there for a second, staring at Liv for an uncomfortably long time.

"PAUL" (CONT'D)
Boo.

The lights go out, plunging Liv into darkness. *WHAM!* A single, powerful spotlight illuminates Liv in a ring of light.

Sand falls from above in a thin line, dripping onto Liv's head. She looks up in surprise and lights start flashing on around her with echoing booms revealing that she's sitting on the pick-guard of--

AN ENORMOUS GUITAR

Her rapid breathing shallows as she's looking around the gigantic guitar. A hand slaps down on the very edge of the body. Liv's head whips to face the figures as they pull themselves up onto the guitar and start to crawl towards her. Another hand. Then another.

In seconds, hundreds of "Pauls" are climbing onto the lower bout of the guitar and scrambling towards Liv.

"PAULS"
(in unison, creepily)
Sing for us Liv. Come with us and
sing!

They bound across the surface of the guitar towards Liv, a writhing mass of bodies. Liv hurriedly gets to her feet and flees towards the headstock. She jumps over the high E string and starts racing up the neck. The "Pauls" slam into the strings in their pursuit creating a ringing cacophony of dissonant tones.

"PAULS" (CONT'D)
(in unison)
Why are you running, Liv? We can
make you feel better!

Liv reaches the end of the headstock and stares down into the never-ending abyss below. She turns to see the "Pauls" all cramming themselves across the neck. Some plummet off the edge in their rush. They stop themselves at the nut and all stare at Liv: a pile of bodies, all eyes on her.

Hands reach out from the pile of "Pauls" all holding bottles of liquor, packets of powder, and needles. The "Pauls" all speak together.

"PAULS" (CONT'D)
(in unison)
Let's forget, Liv. Let's feel
better.

Liv, doubt flashing across her face, takes a step towards the "Pauls". They smile wider, arms straining out towards Liv.

Liv looks down at her hands and sees the picture of her and Paul. She stares down at the photo. She takes a step back.

"PAULS" (CONT'D)
 (in unison)
 Come on, Liv. It would be so
 easy...

Liv takes another step back. She's teetering on the edge of the headstock.

"PAULS" (CONT'D)
 (in unison)
 Don't you want to feel better?

Liv shakes her head.

LIV
 Nah... I'm good.

Liv takes a final step backwards and falls backwards into the abyss-- *THUMP!* Liv lies suspended in the air, her feet inches from the edge of the headstock. Liv looks up at the "Pauls", they all look quite sheepish.

LIV (CONT'D)
 What the fuck.

Liv feels around her, as if she's touching the floor. She closes her eyes.

INTERCUT BETWEEN DRESSING ROOM AND GIANT GUITAR:

CUT between the dream world, the GUITAR, and the real world, the DRESSING ROOM. With her eyes closed, Liv is experiencing the real world sensorily and shutting out the dream world.

DRESSING ROOM

Liv is lying on the floor of the dressing room. "Paul" stands above her, nervously looking down at Liv. Liv feels around the floor, eventually grabbing hold of the coffee table and pulling herself to her feet.

GUITAR

Liv stands, seemingly levitating above the abyss next to the guitar. Her eyes closed, she feels blindly around the space.

DRESSING ROOM

"Paul" ducks out of the way as Liv feels around the room towards the dressing room cabinet.

"PAUL"

Uh... Don't you--

GUITAR

Liv, now having found her way back onto the headstock, blindly feels her way forward. The "Pauls" collapse backwards, fleeing from her blind touch.

DRESSING ROOM

Liv feels her way across the dressing room cabinet and finally to Paul's guitar. She grasps the neck of the guitar, turns and swings the guitar. "Paul" ducks out of the way.

"PAUL"

Hey, watch it!

GUITAR

Liv, pantomiming as if she's swinging a guitar back and forth in her empty hands, steps towards the "Pauls" who all fall backwards off the neck of the guitar.

DRESSING ROOM

"PAUL"

Woah, woah--

Liv swings Paul's guitar and cuts "Paul" short with a glancing blow to the head.

Liv tentatively opens her eyes as she swings the guitar downwards. She watches, back in reality, as the guitar crunches into "Paul" spraying blood up and across Liv's face.

Liv, wide-eyed, continues to swing the guitar over and over, the impacts slowly becoming more and more wet. Liv stands above the mangled corpse of "Paul". She wipes blood off her face, breathing hard.

The door opens and PAUL (late 20s) walks into the room, he looks confused. Liv, now covered in sand instead of blood, holds a guitar, broken at the neck, above her head. She stands over a large pile of sand, granules scattered all over the room's floor. Everything else in the room has reverted back to normal.

CUE: *Mister Sandman by The Chordettes*

PAUL
What the fuck--

CUT TO BLACK.

END.