

CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

EPISODE 1

Written by

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ACT I

FADE IN to the sound of a rock song..

INT. TRINITY STREET APARTMENT – DAY

We move through a fancy loft apartment with a view of contemporary London outside the floor-ceiling windows, the walls are lined with modern pop-art and funky décor.

In the middle of the apartment is the living-area turned gaming center.

Here, TAYLOR ASHFORD, a preppy post-grad skillfully plays the soundtrack on *Guitar Hero Live*. She's white, blonde, and conventionally attractive, if not a little boy-ish.

TAYLOR

(into the headset)

I'm coming for you Jeff. Like Liam Neeson in Taken. But I have your screen name, so I know who you are and I swear to god if you cheat again I will find you, and I will kick your sorry lawyer ass like the prosecution of life!

MAIN TITLES:

Civil Partnership

INT. THE APARTMENT - DAY

YOU ROCK! Says the TV display. Taylor finishes the round in first place.

TAYLOR

(into the headset)

Schooled like in school, buddy-boy.

Taylor's avatar shoots to the top of the leader board.

JEFF (O.S.)

(through the headset)

Damn you and your kind.

In the background, A YOUNG WOMAN'S generic trainers pace around the apartment.

These shoes belong to ELLIE WRIGHT. She is mixed-race, nicely built, with bright green eyes; stunning.

Ellie, panicked, roots through drawers – looking for something.

ELLIE
Taylor? Taylor?!

Taylor's eyes do not divert from the screen.

TAYLOR
(into the headset)
Your kind is my kind, you blue blooded son of a bitch. Why don't you go have an organic chia tea latte and shut the fuck up?

ELLIE
Taylor!!!

Taylor spins around.

TAYLOR
(nonchalant)
What's up babe?

ELLIE
Where. Is. The. Certificate?!

Taylor frowns and looks around suspiciously.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Taylor, you specifically said you'd make the copies as you didn't want me messing with your printer. Which is fine. But now, before I lose my shit, tell me you printed it off?

Taylor says nothing. Awkward.

JEFF (O.S.)
(loud, through the headset)
You gonna let a woman talk to you that way! Beat her ass! You're your own god damn woman god dammit.

Ellie grabs the headset.

ELLIE
Jeff, don't you have some scum bags to be defending?

JEFF (O.S.)
Don't you have some scum bags to be
keeping behind bars?

Ellie releases the headset and turns her attention back
to Taylor.

ELLIE
Yes! And that is why I need Avia's death
certificate. Now, think. Where is it?

TAYLOR
(sheepish)
On my computer.

ELLIE
You had six months. You had six fucking
months, Taylor, to press a damn button!

Ellie storms out. She slams the door, which shakes
the whole apartment and makes Taylor wince.

TAYLOR
Happy anniversary to you too.

JEFF (O.S.)
Trouble in paradise?

TAYLOR
Just a little. It doesn't matter anyway,
at least not after tonight. I, Jeff my
old buddy, have a master plan.

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE - DAY

JEFF, a handsome lawyer guy much like Taylor is at work,
dressed in a fancy three-piece suit - he plays Guitar
Hero on his iMac.

JEFF
(into the headset)
Oh yeah, and what is that then?

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

JEFF (CONT'D)
Shit! Gotta go. Meet at the Green.

Jeff looks at his proximity alarm. A GUY in a swanky suit
approaches on the CCTV.

Jeff's door snaps open. PATRICK ASHFORD strides in.

PATRICK

Jeffery! Have you got those contracts?

Jeff now looks like he's working, he busily reads books and writes stuff.

JEFF

Mr. Ashford! Of course, so nice of you to drop by.

INT. THE APARTMENT – DAY

Taylor picks up the mail. She flicks through it. Junk, pizza menu, junk, bills, more junk... she gives up, tosses the mail on the table.

She fails to notice one letter that isn't junk; an official document with the court of England's seal on it.

She takes out her iPhone and dials 'Wifey'.

ELLIE (O.S.)

You've reached Ellie Wright. Please leave a message.

TAYLOR

I'm making an executive decision. It's our anniversary so we are going to allow ourselves a temporary reprieve from all the shit that's happened lately. I've booked us a table at The Savoy, seven PM. Don't be late. I love you.

INT. PRISON – DAY

Ellie sits opposite the prison GOVERNOR; her boss.

GOVERNOR

How was the time off?

ELLIE

Let's just say I'm glad to be back, Sir.

GOVERNOR

Well then, I am very sorry for your loss. Both of your losses. Please pass on my condolences to Taylor.

EXT. TRINITY STREET – DAY

Taylor heads outside her apartment. She walks three shops down the street and into a fancy tea room.

INT. THE GREEN ROOM CAFE – DAY

Taylor walks into a really fancy café – like the kind you get adjacent to the gift shop in a museum. She waves at the barista.

Taylor spots Jeff, hunched over a MacBook. He eats a panini. Taylor takes the seat opposite him.

TAYLOR

Yo.

JEFF

You're late, man! I got twenty minutes before I've got to be in court. This better be good.

EXT. JULES' GARDEN – EARLIER THAT DAY

Taylor walks around the grounds of a Surrey Mansion with JULES, a woman she looks awfully like.

JULES (CONT'D)

But you're already married?

TAYLOR

Pre-Obama, pre-Cameron sucking up to Obama. Technically still a civil partnership. Mother, come on, I want to marry her, properly. Reaffirm our love in the eyes of God.

JULES

Taylor, you don't believe in God.

INT. THE GREEN ROOM CAFÉ – CONTINUOUS

Jeff and Taylor sip new coffees.

JEFF

This is a terrible plan. Don't tell me she gave you the ring?

Taylor brandishes the ring and beams.

TAYLOR
(almost singing)
I'm her only shot at Grandbabies.

JEFF
You can't get married if you are already
in a Civil Partnership, in legal terms
that's still bigamy.

TAYLOR
It's to the same person?

Jeff finishes his coffee. He leans forward, serious.

JEFF
Taylor. Just because what you want to do
is something that is so bizarre they are
yet to make a law against it, doesn't
mean it isn't illegal.

Taylor leans forward, grins.

TAYLOR
Ex. Post. Facto.

Jeff softens, he smiles and leans back.

JEFF
Alright, fuck it. This is a great plan.
Consider me your best man.

INT. THE SAVOY BAR – NIGHT

In the Beaumont bar, a WAITER pours Taylor a generous
serving of Remy Martin XO.

WAITER
The Cognac regions of France are
supposed to be quite excellent this time
of year. Maybe you should take Ellie
there on your second honeymoon.

TAYLOR
It's not her Riviera. Where is she
anyway? It's gone quarter past.

Across the room, Ellie enters the restaurant.

Taylor finishes her drink.

INT. THE SAVOY RESTERAUNT AREA – LATER

Taylor pours Ellie a glass of red wine, the last of a bottle. Taylor looks at Ellie, properly looks at her, as if admiring something precious. And smiles.

TAYLOR

I love this restaurant. It reminds me of Konnos Bay. You know? That beach in Cyprus. The one you had to wait for the tide to go out to get to? That's where I first said I love you.

Ellie sips her wine rather quickly.

ELLIE

Actually, you first said I love you when I was showing you how to make origami, on the London underground. When we saw Aerosmith at the O2. You said it by accident and then tried to cover it like "I love... *this*." Instead of you. But I knew what you meant.

TAYLOR

Oh yeah. I was in awe of the crane. It's still in my room at my parent's house. It's one of the-

Ellie sips the last of her wine.

ELLIE

(interrupting)

Taylor. Stop. Before we go off down memory lane, we need to talk.

TAYLOR

Yes, exactly so-

ELLIE

No let me finish. I need to say something...

A WAITER approaches the table.

WAITER

Are we ready to order?

TAYLOR

Yes.

ELLIE

Not yet.

Ellie grabs the menu. She scans it without reading.

TAYLOR
Five minutes, please.

ELLIE
I'll have another Merlot.

The waiter leaves.

TAYLOR
Ellie, is everything ok? Look I want to ask you something...

Taylor fumbles in her jacket pocket, looks for the ring.

ELLIE
(quickly)
I think we need a break.

Taylor pulls out the ring box.

TAYLOR
What? I was going to...What do you mean a break? A break from what?

Ellie spots the ring box.

ELLIE
Is that a...?

Taylor's mood shifts. She becomes defensive.

TAYLOR
Well, we are married, so what are you saying? You can't just have a break.

ELLIE
I want to split up; I want things to change and I don't think you know how. Nothing affects you, not Avia, not my pain, nothing. I have to do the suffering for both of us and I can't anymore. I'm sorry.

TAYLOR
You're telling me this now? It's our anniversary!

Ellie gets up to leave.

ELLIE
I'm sorry, Taylor. But I can't pretend to be happy when I'm not.

Ellie walks off as the waiter brings out Ellie's wine

WAITER
Merlot for the lady. Would you care for
another drink?

Taylor composes herself, and acts like nothing happened.

TAYLOR
Yes. Thank you.

INT. THE APARTMENT – NIGHT

Through the door to the apartment, a silhouette fumbles
with keys. The keys drop, clang off the floor.

TAYLOR (O.S.)
Fuck.

The keys jingle, then the lock clicks. The door opens.

Taylor stumbles in; drunk. She turns on the light, winces
at the brightness, and turns it down using the dimmer.

INT. THE APARTMENT - LATER

Taylor plays guitar hero – badly. And drinks brandy.

JEFF (O.S.)
(through the headset)
Have you had some kind of musical
lobotomy? Hate to break it to you buddy
but it was kind of all you had going for
you and YOU SUCK!

Taylor starts crying.

JEFF (O.S.)
Now who's a bad loser?! Taylor? Taylor?

Taylor chucks the guitar controller on to the ground,
smashing it like an out of control rock star with a BANG!

She couples over on to the sofa and cries uncontrollably.

INT. THE APARTMENT – A FEW DAYS LATER

Taylor slouches in front of the TV. She is now dressed in
her old Oxford University track shirt and joggers.

Jeff sits next to her, he watches her.

She angrily plays Super Mario Bros on her DS and gets disproportionately annoyed when Mario dies.

TAYLOR

You deserve to die you useless twat!

Jeff pets her hair almost sarcastically.

JEFF

Buddy. It's been almost a week. You need to leave the house. Or at least leave the sofa.

Taylor says nothing, she just stabs the buttons on the video game with her thumbs.

JEFF (CONT'D)

She didn't say it was over. She just said she needed a break. I give it a week and she'll come to her senses. Come on, I know what will make you feel better.

TAYLOR

If you take me to a spa I will cut your nuts off with a spork.

EXT. SURREY COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

The sign outside this stately home reads: ORCHARD HILLS SHOOTING RANGE.

JEFF (O.S.)

Pull!

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

A plate is catapulted into the sky. Taylor shoots it into a cloud of dust and gun powder. Jeff watches in awe.

JEFF

Ooosh! Nice shot.

TAYLOR

What am I going to do? We were talking about having another kid not long ago. Now she doesn't want to be with me? I'm gonna win her back, Jeff. She's the love of my damn life.

Taylor shifts, focusing.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
(seriously)
I could get a job.

Jeff sniggers, he cocks his rifle.

JEFF
As your lawyer I strongly advise against
that course of action. Pull!

Jeff aims, and fires. BANG! He blows the plate to bits.

TAYLOR
Nice. Oh yeah, and why's that? I'll have
you know there are law firms that would
kill to have me on their books.

INT. PATRICK'S OFFICE — DAY

Taylor sits opposite Patrick, Jeff's boss. Patrick scans
Taylor's CV.

PATRICK
Graduated from Oxford University with
honors in Law... Interned at Dominic &
West... All very good. Well, um, why do
you want to work here then, Taylor?

TAYLOR
My father said it was a very respectable
firm. And I trust my father.

Patrick cracks a smile.

PATRICK
I'm sure your 'Dad' has exceptional
taste, however I am not sure this is
exactly right for you. Maybe, you should
look into doing an internship in the
type of law you actually want to
practice before you get stuck into
associating. Thank you for coming in.

Taylor gets up, she goes to leave. However, she stops and
turns back, with strength.

TAYLOR
Dad. Ellie's gonna leave me if I don't
get a job. Please?

PATRICK
I'll think about it.

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE – NIGHT

Taylor and Jeff play *Nidhogg* on Jeff's iMac.

JEFF
Why do you want to work here though?
Didn't you do Financial Law and
Accounting?

TAYLOR
I don't. I'm happy living off my trust
fund until I'm retired and the state's
problem. But Ellie wants me to prove I
can change. So, I will. Plus my Dad is
sort of contractually obliged to hire me
anyway so how hard can it be?

JEFF
So you're gonna change, huh? You're
actually going to contribute to society?

Taylor shrugs, then smiles confidently. Her avatar kills
Jeff's avatar spectacularly. Taylor wins.

TAYLOR
We'll see.

END OF ACT I.

Act II

EXT. SPRING GARDENS CEMETERY - DAY

A beautiful, tranquil garden. Trees, water features, and flowers cover the grounds. The beauty is secondary, to the sadness of the garden's purpose; it's a graveyard.

Ellie kneels before a gravestone and lays a bunch of lilies down. We take in the message upon the grave:

Rest in Peace Avia Wright. Beloved Daughter.

JULES (O.S.)
They're beautiful.

Ellie jumps to her feet when she sees Jules.

ELLIE
Jules. Hey. Look-

Jules holds her hand up to stop Ellie.

JULES
Ellie, what's going on between you and Taylor, stays between you and Taylor. I'm here to mourn my Granddaughter.

Ellie nods, accepts that.

They both kneel in front of the grave. Ellie's eyes tear up. She looks at Jules.

Jules says nothing. But tentatively rests her hand on Ellie's shoulder.

AN ALARM STARTS TO BLARE...

INT. THE APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Now a very loud alarm BLARES! Taylor snaps awake. She scrambles over to the bedside table and stabs at her phone. The alarm stops. Taylor groans.

INT. THE APARTMENT - DAY

Taylor walks through the apartment. It's quiet. There is no longer any sign of Ellie's stuff. Taylor makes herself a coffee using the espresso machine. She spots Ellie's phone lying on the bar stool. She picks it up, and smiles to herself.

INT. PRISON ADMINISTRATION OFFICES – DAY

Ellie, who looks tired and stressed, fills out release paperwork for an INMATE in front of her.

A GUARD pops into frame. Ellie glances over at him.

GUARD

Ellie, your wife called. You left your phone at home. She's bringing it in.

ELLIE

Can you go and get it for me, Dave? I'm just de-briefing Hodges.

GUARD

I'll do that. You go ahead.
(to the inmate)
Hodges, so do you understand the conditions of your release?

Ellie pauses, and reluctantly walks off to meet Taylor.

INT. PRISON RECEPTION – DAY

Ellie stops just short of reception, she pauses; readying herself. Then, with added strength and empowerment, she goes into reception. Taylor is not there, Jeff is.

ELLIE

Jeff?

Ellie almost breathes a sigh of relief.

JEFF

Ellie, hey, Taylor asked me to drop this off for you. She would have bought it in herself but she's at work.

Ellie can't help but look surprised.

ELLIE

Work?

JEFF

I know right! Maybe you asking for a split was finally the kick she needed to start getting her life on track, and damn dude it is working!

EXT./INT. JEFF'S AUDI — DAY

Taylor removes her Ray Bans, she watches Jeff leave the prison and head towards her. Jeff jumps in the car. They fist bump.

INT. ASHFORD-WELLS GROUND FLOOR — DAY

Taylor walks in to the building, she nurses a giant cup of coffee and carries a second cup in tow.

INT. PATRICK'S OFFICE — DAY

Taylor knocks on the open door. Patrick doesn't look up. Taylor clears her throat.

PATRICK
Come in. Close the door.

Taylor hands her father a large Starbucks coffee cup.

PATRICK
Thanks. Erm... here's the thing. I can take you on as an intern, but Taylor, darling, here's the thing.

Patrick pauses, unsure how to phrase this.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Here's the thing. I think, given your experience or lack of, at the moment, the best I can do is offer you an entry level position.

Taylor frowns, confused if not slightly annoyed.

TAYLOR
What does that mean?

INT. THE INDEX VAULTS — DAY

In the basement that time forgot, Taylor is led through the legal achieve library by some kind of admin douchebag supervisor — this is PETE.

The index vault is the personification of a fifteen-year-old hard-drive. Every file, every piece of paper that has ever been used in this building, here is where they come to die.

PETE
You take a file, you find out where it
goes. You put it away. Any questions?
No? Good.

Pete leaves.

TAYLOR
Dick.

Taylor's phone rings:

ELLIE CALLING. Taylor slides to accept the call.

TAYLOR
(into the phone)
Hey, you ok?

CUT BETWEEN

INT. PRISON LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Ellie, hides away in the locker room, on the phone.

ELLIE
Hey, I just wanted to call and say thank
you for getting Jeff to bring my phone
in.

TAYLOR (O.S.)
Oh, no worries. It's cool...

CUT BACK TO

INT. THE INDEX VAULTS - CONTINUOUS

Taylor smiles bashfully.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
...I know how crazy you get without it.

INT. PRISON LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ellis nods, and pauses for a moment. As if she doesn't
quite know what to say.

ELLIE
That's very considerate of you. Thanks.
How... Are you?

TAYLOR (O.S.)
Good. I'm good. How are you?

ELLIE
I'm good too.

INT. THE INDEX VAULTS - CONTINUOUS

Awkward pause.

TAYLOR
Well, I'm gonna have to get back to work
but it's lovely to talk to you, and I
miss you. A lot.

ELLIE
I know. I miss you too. Well, bye then.

TAYLOR
Bye. Love you.

ELLIE
Yeah, you too.

Taylor smiles to herself and clutches the phone to her heart; there's still hope.

Taylor jacks in her headphones and cues the soundtrack.

SONG: "The Anthem" – Good Charlotte

Taylor looks at the stack of boxes that await her.

MONTAGE:

- A) Taylor opening boxes.
- B) Unpacking files, putting them away.
- C) More opening boxes.
- D) The box collection slowly going down.

Taylor finally puts the last box away.

BANG! The rock and roll music ends. The doors slam open and in rolls Pete with a trolley full of fresh boxes.

Taylor hangs her head, and sighs heavily.

JEFF (O.S.)
The court is now in session!

INT. THE COURTYARD – NIGHT

Clocking off time in the rock bar with a theme taken from the Courthouse across the street.

Beer tankards clink together in cheers. Taylor and Jeff have a night cap.

TAYLOR

I feel good man. This is gonna be good.

JEFF

You're in the freaking basement, man.

TAYLOR

It's a job. And it's a fucking start.

JEFF

Well, I'll drink to that! Don't worry. He makes every intern start off down there so you can learn how to correctly file case notes. I was out in- Shit!

Jeff suddenly hides behind his beer.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Did he see me?

TAYLOR

Did who see you?

Another lawyer bloke (PAUL) walks by.

JEFF

He didn't see. Phew! That's Paul. The guy's a total dick, he's totally poaching clients for commission or whatever's. I'll have his job by the time I'm thirty you watch.

INT. THE INDEX VAULT – DAY

Taylor flicks through a file.

PETE (O.S.)

You're supposed to be putting the files away, not bloody reading them!

Taylor looks up to see Pete wheeling in a new trolley of boxes. She tries not to roll her eyes.

TAYLOR
Erm, this is wrong.

She holds up the file she was reading. Paul doesn't look at it.

PETE
No, it isn't. Get back to filing.

Taylor opens the file and shows him the index marker.

TAYLOR
C/D/06/19932. Corporate/Dismissed/month of entry/docket number.

PETE
Thanks for the indexing lesson.

TAYLOR
But this case wasn't dismissed.

Pete gets a little annoyed.

PETE
Since when were you a fucking lawyer?

TAYLOR
Since I graduated law school two fucking years ago. There should be an order of dismissal, or a contract of settlement with a voluntary dismissal order signed by both parties. That's not in there so this file cannot be filed in the dismissed archives.

Pete sighs; dejected.

PETE
Fine. Go and speak to corporate.

INT. ASHFORD-WELLS — DAY

The lift doors open with a DING! And Taylor steps out into the Corporate Law department of Ashford-Wells.

She walks over to reception.

TAYLOR
Hey, I'm not sure who to speak to. I was filing and this is incorrect.

RECEPTIONIST

Er, this is one of Paul's cases. What's wrong with it, sorry?

TAYLOR

It's missing an order of dismissal.

The receptionist flicks through the folder.

RECEPTIONIST

It's also missing Paul's case notes; a summary of the case before we close it.

Just then, Patrick walks by.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Patrick!

Patrick walks over to the reception counter.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

We've got a file here with missing case notes.

(to Taylor)

Did Pete tell you that he couldn't accept it incomplete? He does that.

TAYLOR

No I was just reading it on a break and thought it was odd.

PATRICK

Let me take a look.

TAYLOR

Hey, Dad.

Patrick walks off with the file in hand, ignores Taylor.

The receptionist looks both ways, and leans forward.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

If Paul found incomplete files from a junior associate he'd flip out. Kind of funny he's breaking his own rule.

EXT. TRINITY STREET — DAY

Taylor walks down Trinity street, heading home. She takes out her phone and calls JEFF.

TAYLOR
(into the phone)
Yo man, let's go for a beer tonight. I think I might have found something that could get me out of the basement a little faster than planned.

Taylor reaches the security door, and lets herself into the apartment building.

INT. THE APARTMENT – DAY

Taylor walks in, in a world of her own, she looks at her phone rather than what's in front of her.

She stops, looks up, only to see Ellie. And instantly cracks a smile.

TAYLOR
Ellie. Hey.

ELLIE
Hey. I'm heading to the cemetery and I didn't want to go in my work shoes.

Ellie holds up her trainers – as if to prove herself.

TAYLOR
Oh right. Yeah. I was thinking of going today too. Maybe we could go together?

Ellie considers this.

ELLIE
Okay. Sure.

EXT. SPRING GARDENS CEMETARY – DAY

Ellie leads Taylor to the grave. Taylor carries the flowers. They reach Avia's resting place.

The sadness returns to Ellie, Taylor notices.

TAYLOR
I thought when you agreed to marry me was the happiest moment of my life, until I held her for the first time.

Ellie glances over at Taylor, almost with love or at least empathy.

ELLIE

You were good when she was born. Like for the first month I didn't have to do anything for her because you'd already done it.

Taylor's permanent charm fades away, we see her face contort with pain and sadness.

TAYLOR

I liked doing it. I loved her too, you know? It bothers me too.

Ellie nods, a lot, like she wants to believe her.

ELLIE

I never doubted that. But just not as much as me.

(emotional)

I mean, you're fine and I have to take pills and go to fucking therapy just to-

TAYLOR

Therapy? I didn't know you went to therapy. Why?

Ellie's expression changes from sadness, to anger.

ELLIE

Because Avia was fucking murdered!

TAYLOR

(defensive)

That happened to me too, Ellie.

Ellie climbs to her feet, she looks down at Taylor.

ELLIE

How can you say that? How can you... After everything...All you care about is yourself.

Ellie storms off. Taylor sits alone.

TAYLOR

Not true. I care about you.

(quieter)

I care about you.

Taylor looks back at the grave. She rests her hand on the gravestone, tearing up slightly.

INT. JULES' APARTMENT — DAY

Jules opens the door, to see Taylor on the other side.

JULES

If you've come to return your
Grandmother's engagement ring, I'll hit
you.

Taylor walks into the apartment. It's even bigger and more expensive than hers, but Jules has more old-fashioned taste.

TAYLOR

You've never hit me before in my life
you're not going to start now. Besides,
I haven't given up just because she has.
Can I go in my room?

INT. TAYLOR'S OLD BEDROOM — CONTINUOUS

Taylor walks into her old bedroom and goes over to her bed. She yanks out the under-bed storage container, flicks through it until she finds a module handbook: *THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO INTERNAL AUDITING*.

Taylor flicks through it excitedly until she gets to the page she was looking for: *Fraud in Financial Reports*.

TAYLOR

Got ya.

Taylor looks around her old room. She spots the paper crane Ellie made for her all those years ago on the underground. Taylor gets up and goes over to the dresser, picks up the crane and touches it gently.

Next to the crane, is a photo of Taylor and Ellie. Both of them look beautiful. They stand in front of an old oak tree, staring at each other in happiness, perfectly framed by the oak's branches; like a fairytale storybook cover. Underneath reads; *Taylor & Ellie FOREVER!*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III

INT. ASHFORD-WELLS – DAY

Taylor walks into the corporate department of Ashford-Wells Law Firm, carrying files, barely looking where she is going.

RECEPTIONIST

Taylor! Hey.

Taylor looks around until she spots the receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Patrick wants to see you in his office.

EXT. PATRICK'S OFFICE – DAY

Taylor knocks on Patrick's office door.

PATRICK (O.S.)

Come in!

Taylor braces herself – she stops looking confused and paints a confident expression on her face. She enters the office.

INT. PATRICK'S OFFICE – DAY

Patrick looks very serious. His desk is piled high with case files. Patrick doesn't look up. He madly stabs away at his computer keys, as if the idea will run off if he doesn't get it down fast enough.

Taylor enters, cautiously.

TAYLOR

Hey... You wanted to see me, Dad? I mean, *Patrick*.

PATRICK

Dad is fine, and yes, yeah. Take a seat.

Patrick still doesn't look up. Taylor sits, waits for an awkward second – unsure whether to speak or not.

TAYLOR

I-I've been doing what you said. Head down, cracking on. Not being late or leaving early. Maximum effort.

Patrick finally stops what he's doing. He takes off his glasses and rubs the bridge of his nose.

Patrick looks at Taylor – almost studying her. He picks up the file Taylor found the other day.

PATRICK

You didn't show this to Jeff, did you?

TAYLOR

No.

PATRICK

I need to make sure no-one but me and you know about this.

TAYLOR

Dad, I came into reception and then you walked passed and I gave it to you. Remember?

PATRICK

Yeah. Ok.

Patrick nods, satisfied, and then turns his attention back to his desk. Taylor shifts, guesses it's time to leave.

She gets up, as Patrick looks at her.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

You've audited expense accounts right?

Taylor nods.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Ok. Good. You can go now.

Taylor gets up, more confused than ever before. She makes her way to the door and is just about to open it when:

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(quickly)

I'm not saying you will, but if you find any more cases with incorrect index's, can you flag them up to me?

TAYLOR

Sure.

Taylor opens the door to leave.

PATRICK

And Taylor? Keep it on the down low. No telling Jeff, or anyone else for that matter.

Taylor nods, then finally, leaves.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE – DAY

Ellie sits opposite a THERAPIST, they have grief counselling / talk-therapy.

ELLIE

I wanted a baby so bad. I actually went to the first appointment without telling Taylor. It all worked out in the end though. When I told her I was pregnant she was fine with it.

The therapist looks up from making notes.

THERAPIST

Fine with it? I would have thought most people finding out their wife was pregnant would be very happy.

Ellie frowns, thinking of how best to say this.

ELLIE

I don't mean 'fine', she was happy. A little nervous, but that's to be expected from a twenty-two-year-old who still didn't know how to boil an egg. She knows now, by the way. She went on a home economics course before Avia was born. Taylor was great all through the pregnancy, and after Avia was born. She was just shit when it went wrong. And that's the bit that counts.

The therapist nods, then leans forward/

THERAPIST

You do know in order to get divorced, you must be able to prove that the marriage has irreversibly broken down. In order to prove that, you must at least try and reconcile with Taylor, even if it's just a formality.

Ellie thinks on this.

INT. APARTMENT – NIGHT

Taylor plays Guitar Hero Live. She plays expertly, as usual, but Jeff is better.

TAYLOR
Take this, you son of bitch.

Taylor plays a six strum straight, like Brian May. Jeff plays in Hero Power – and wins.

JEFF (O.S.)
Read it and weep you cocky little shit.
At least I don't work in the basement!

TAYLOR
Neither will I for much longer.

JEFF (O.S.)
Oh yeah, what's that?

Taylor's phone rings: ELLIE CALLING.

TAYLOR
Oh shit. Dude, got to go. Talk to you later.

Taylor takes off the headset, pauses the game, and accepts the call.

TAYLOR
Hey. You ok?

ELLIE (O.S.)
Look I was thinking that maybe I was a little harsh in the cemetery the other day. Maybe we could go to couple's therapy?

Taylor sits up more straight. She looks around the apartment, knowing something is missing.

TAYLOR
Yeah, sure. I mean, I thought we weren't a couple anymore.

ELLIE (O.S.)
We're still married. I think we owe it to ourselves, and to Avia, to at least discuss our feelings.

TAYLOR
Yeah. Ok. Cool.

ELLIE (O.S)
Tomorrow four pm at Dr. Collin's office,
off the Jewelry quarter junction.

TAYLOR
I'll be there.

Taylor hangs up. She throws the phone up in the air and catches it again. She cracks a smile and nods, hopeful.

INT. ASHFORD-WELLS – DAY

Taylor collects the 'ready to index' files from the reception drop box in the Corporate Law department. Patrick comes out of his office.

PATRICK
Taylor! You free? I need someone to take notes at an Investigation Meeting.

TAYLOR
I was just collecting..

Patrick continues walking. Taylor follows him.

INT. MEETING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Patrick leads Taylor into an executive meeting room. Already in the room sits a handful of LAWYERS, Law-firm PARTNERS and Paul (the guy from the bar Jeff avoided).

Patrick takes his seat at the table.

Taylor takes the only available seat, far away from the table, in the corner.

PATRICK
Let's jump right into it. Our time is money, after-all. Paul, take a look at these.

Patrick slides photocopies of many different case files.

PAUL
What am I supposed to be looking at here Patrick?

PATRICK
Due diligence. Read that.

Patrick stabs his pen at the bottom of one page.

PAUL
"I hereby sign to confirm that this folder contains the declared evidence and all relevant paperwork signed Paul Wells." So?

PATRICK
So you filed it incorrectly, without the relevant evidence and you lied by signing the due dil.

PAUL
Oh come on, Patrick, I oversee hundreds of cases a month. So what if I miss a few admin tasks out?

Taylor frowns, she checks through her notebook.

TAYLOR
Patrick?

Patrick waves her off.

PATRICK
Where are your notes? Where is the Dismissal order? You can't sign a case off without it, Paul. You should know that.

PAUL
Jeez, Patrick...

Taylor gets up, she passes her father the note book. He doesn't look at it.

A BOARD MEMBER leans forwards.

BOARD MEMBER
Paul, can I just remind you that the administration system is put in place to prevent the need for audits. Can you please see to it that all of your files are filed correctly from now on please?

PAUL
Yeah, sure. I'm sorry.

Patrick reads the note from Taylor:

Why was it filed as dismissed when it was settled out of court?

PATRICK
Taylor. Come here.

Taylor gets up, slowly approaches the table. Paul grins.

PAUL
Who's this?

Patrick rests a hand on Taylor's shoulder.

PATRICK
Taylor, this is Paul Wells, one of the partners here and the current Financial Associate for Corporate. Paul, this is Taylor, she was the one who bought your sloppy filing to my attention.

PAUL
Ah! Well fresh eyes are always appreciated.

Paul smiles in the same way a fox does. Like an evil grin type of thing. Taylor doesn't buy it.

TAYLOR
Why did you file the case as dismissed when it was settled out of court?

The board members shift a little, curious.

PAUL
Because it wasn't settled out of court.

BOARD MEMBER
Young lady, maybe you should get back to filing and let us do the investigation.

PAUL
No, it's ok. An accident probably. You'll come to realize that they do happen in law firms as big as this one, Taylor.

Taylor looks at her note book. She has lots of facts and figures all written down with question marks.

TAYLOR

So why was there no commission received by Ashford-Wells if you provided the claimant with legal assistance during the settlement agreements?

PAUL

Patrick, please tell this intern not to question superiors.

PATRICK

Answer the question, Paul.

Paul shifts uncomfortably, he looks between the faces of those present.

TAYLOR

Ashford-Wells didn't receive commission because you filed it as dismissed, and didn't run the settlement through the books. In legal terms, as I'm sure you'll already know; that's embezzlement.

PAUL

I this is a matter to be discussed with solicitors present.

The board members look at Taylor and Paul. Patrick smiles at his daughter; impressed.

INT. ASHFORD-WELLS — DAY

Patrick, Taylor and the board members leave the meeting room. The board member walks up to Taylor.

BOARD MEMBER

Have you ever thought about being an Associate? I heard corporate was looking for a new Financial Associate. Patrick! Why don't you offer this nice young lady an internship in corporate?

Patrick smiles, he drapes his arm around Taylor's shoulders.

PATRICK

Because, this young lady is my daughter, and I was going to offer her a job.

(to Taylor)

Come on, we'll get lunch.

Taylor glances at her watch. It's almost four pm.

TAYLOR

I was supposed to be meeting Ellie.

PATRICK

You can meet her anytime. Come on. I want to introduce you to the rest of the board while they're still impressed.

INT. THERAPY - DAY

Ellie watches the clock. It's five past four. Ellie sighs, tries not to get angry.

ELLIE

She's always late when it fucking counts.

Ellie scoffs.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Did you read about Avia's death in the paper? The little that Patrick allowed them to print.

INT. ASHFORD-WELLS - CONTINUOUS

Taylor and Patrick walk towards the elevator, just as Paul walks out.

PAUL

Taylor Ashford. How long have you been investigating me, Patrick?

Patrick says nothing.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I knew there was something weird about you putting your trust fund brat in the index vaults. Was Jeffery in on it too?

PATRICK

You're guilty, asshole.

PAUL

Since when did that matter? As for you, Taylor, after all you went through with that kid of yours, I'd advise you to watch your back.

Paul smiles at Taylor, through his teeth, the elevator pings open and he climbs in.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ellie wipes her eyes with a tissue.

ELLIE

"I'm sorry for your loss" I'm so sick of hearing that. We didn't lose her. She didn't just die of some tragic childhood illness. She was murdered. My kid was murdered.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Taylor and Patrick board the elevator. Patrick gives Taylor a smile and drapes his arm around her.

PATRICK

You're fine, my new Financial Associate.

Taylor gulps. Knowing what that means.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What? You didn't think I was going to keep you in the basement forever, did you?

INT. THERAPY - CONTINUOUS

Ellie is now properly crying.

ELLIE

Taylor's got money, you know? A lot of it. And a degree in how to make money off the interest alone. I think that's why they targeted her.

THERAPIST

Who targeted her?

ELLIE

See that's the thing. No-one fucking knows about. Avia was kidnapped. For a ransom. I wanted to go to the police, the press, get the whole country looking for her but Taylor said no, keep it in the family.

THERAPIST

That wasn't necessarily a bad decision,
things are less likely to go wrong if
the extortionist gets what they want.

ELLIE

But they didn't get what they wanted.

INT. THE APARTMENT — LATER

Taylor walks into the apartment. She picks up the mail
and chucks it on the earlier pile. This time, however,
she notices the letter with the court seal on it.

Taylor opens it quickly. The heading reads: *Petition for
Dissolution*

She checks the date, and then screws up the letter and
throws it at the wall. She takes out her phone.

JEFF (O.S.)

What do you want, Taylor?

TAYLOR

Dude. I need to tell you something.

JEFF (O.S.)

I've already heard. You're the new
financial associate. Congrat-u-fucking-
lations.

TAYLOR

What? Ah c'mon man don't be mad about
that. That's not why I called. Ellie
filed for divorce... A fucking week ago!

JEFF (O.S.)

Yeah? Well, I don't blame her.

Jeff hangs up.

TAYLOR

Fuck!!

She throws the phone against the wall. Taylor picks up a
sofa cushion and SCREAMS into it.

Then she calms down, picks up her keys, and walks back
out of the front door. Slamming it behind her. The
apartment shakes with the force.

INT. JULES' APARTMENT — DAY

Jules sits at her kitchen island, reads *Cosmo*. Taylor paces around, reading the letter over and over again.

TAYLOR
Unreasonable behavior. Unreasonable behavior? What have I done that's unreasonable?

Jules doesn't look up from the book.

TAYLOR
Mother! Ellie has filed for a divorce.

JULES
I thought you said you're not married. That a civil partnership is different?

TAYLOR
No I said they feel different. Legally we are a married couple. How have I been unreasonable? She put that I'm emotionally distant. She spent a month just crying inconsolably. If I didn't act normal, our life would have fallen apart.

Taylor stops pacing. She focuses, thinks for a moment.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Alright, she wants a divorce. Then she can have it.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV

INT. ASHFORD-WELLS — DAY

The lift doors slide open. Taylor walks into Ashford-Wells Corporate department. She walks past reception, past Patrick's office and down the hallway. Until she reaches a closed door.

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE — DAY

Taylor storms into Jeff's office. He's playing Guitar Hero.

JEFF

Hey, knock! Dammit.

TAYLOR

You said you don't practice outside of our duels, you lying git. Now, come on. Sulking time is over.

Jeff rolls his eyes. He puts the guitar controller down and gives Taylor his full attention. He sighs, softening.

JEFF

She really filed a week ago? So all that crap about trying to work things out, that was just to help her case?

Taylor nods. Jeff shakes his head, he gestures to the chair next to him. Taylor takes a seat.

JEFF (CONT'D)

What a bitch!

Taylor nods, then shakes her head in disbelief.

TAYLOR

I don't think this is about me not being able to change.

JEFF

Of course it isn't. You don't need to change, you just need to get a job and act like you care about contributing to society.

Taylor runs her hands through her hair and sighs.

TAYLOR

You know what? I'm not acting, Jeff. I want to put my degree to good use, no more living off the trust fund. I want to do good, seek the truth and all that lawyer bullshit.

Jeff shifts. Sitting upright.

JEFF

Do you think she'll go after the money?

Taylor thinks for a moment.

TAYLOR

I honestly don't know.

INT. MEETING ROOM – DAY

Taylor and Jeff face off with Ellie and her lawyer Paul – yeah, the same Paul from earlier.

Ellie faces Taylor like a lion eyeing up its food. Taylor slouches like a teenager in the head teacher's office.

ELLIE

Isn't it sort of a conflict of interest that this meeting is taking place in a building owned by the defendant's father?

TAYLOR

Respondent, not defendant. Defendant implies that I have done something wrong.

Ellie leans forward – almost threatening.

ELLIE

That's arguable.

TAYLOR

Well baby I can argue all day!

Jeff sits forward, he speaks with a sudden degree of confidence. He's in his element.

They all turn their attention to him as he speaks.

JEFF

(lawyer voice)

Ladies! Firstly, thank you both for agreeing to this meeting. The first stage of a divorce or in this case a dissolution is mediation. This is where we try and establish what the next step is or if there will even be a next step. Ellie, as the petitioner, would you like to explain to Taylor why you are here?

Paul whispers something in her ear. Ellie nods.

PAUL

This has gone past the point of mediation. Miss Wright is seeking separation, not reconciliation. May I remind you, that the petition has already been filed. You now need to respond.

JEFF

I understand that but-

Just then, the door SLAMS open. Patrick storms in. He strides over confidently to Ellie and Paul. Paul stands.

Patrick and Paul square up.

PATRICK

Paul.

PAUL

Patrick.

PATRICK

Nice to see you again, Ellie. My client is contesting the petition on the grounds in which it was filed-

Jeff pipes up.

JEFF

Mr. Ashford we were-

PATRICK

If you think for one second you are going to convince a judge that my daughter has been anything other than a loving committed partner then you have a-

Paul's bark matches his.

PAUL

Your client didn't pay her own daughter's ransom! How's that going to look in court? Or better, how's that going to look in the press?

PATRICK

I guess we'll have to see.

PAUL

I guess we will. Nice to see you again, Taylor.

Paul and Ellie depart. Jeff runs his hands through his hair, he stands.

JEFF

Sir, I was handling that.

PATRICK

You weren't handling shit. You think I'm going to let some second year associate represent my daughter in a multi-million pound divorce case?

Taylor sits up.

TAYLOR

Whoa. When did this become about money?

Jeff and Patrick look between each other suspiciously.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

I asked you a question. Both of you.

Patrick looks to Jeff to answer.

JEFF

Well, we kind of always said one day Ellie would crack and go full on revenge mode over Avia.

TAYLOR

Yeah but why would she want money? Money can do a lot things but it can't change the past.

JEFF

No but it can change the future.

PATRICK

Taylor, in legal terms, there ain't no fury like a woman scorned. And you've pissed her off. She's gonna come after everything you own.

EXT. SPRING GARDENS CEMETARY – DAY

Ellie collects all the stray weeds and dead flowers, she cleans the grave stone. And lays down new flowers.

A car can be heard entering the courtyard. Ellie looks over at the metallic black Porsche.

Jules exits the car, and makes her way over to the grave.

ELLIE

Jules, I-

Jules slaps Ellie across the face.

JULES

I felt sorry for you, I did. I know what it's liked to be married to a lawyer, and knowing why they think with their heads, but wishing to god they thought more with their hearts. But you broke my daughters heart.

ELLIE

Well fair is fair as she broke mine first!

JULES

How dare you?! Taylor is not responsible for Avia's death. The men who kidnapped her are.

ELLIE

If Taylor had paid the ransom..

Jules interrupts.

JULES

Then they would have killed her and gotten Taylor's money, too.

ELLIE

Our money. Married, remember?

Jules leans back, realization dawning.

JULES

You told her on your anniversary. You have to be married a year before you're entitled to anything. You're not a victim, you're a waitress who charmed a millionaire into falling in love with you, and then when the shit hit the fan, you're first in line to play the innocent little victim card to ensure your piece of what isn't yours. Mark my words, trailer trash... Taylor will see the real you, if it's the last thing I do.

ELLIE

Well, good luck with that.

INT. THE SAVOY – NIGHT

Taylor and Patrick eat their starters and drink brandy. Taylor doesn't really look at her father, she pushes her food from one side of the plate to the other.

PATRICK

Look if I'm going to represent you I'm going to need to see all the financial documents, any agreements you had in place written or other.

Taylor looks up.

TAYLOR

Actually, Dad. Jeff is going to represent me.

PATRICK

But Taylor-

TAYLOR

Jeff is going to represent me. Ellie's gonna play dirty and I can't call my lawyer to the stand. So it need to be Jeff so you can back me up.

PATRICK

Ok. Whatever you need.

Taylor's phone buzzes: ELLIE CALLING.

Taylor rejects the call.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING — DAY

Ellie lets herself into the apartment building. She walks up the stairs, talks on the phone.

ELLIE

(into the phone)

I thought that was just Patrick being a dick. Surely Jeff has more sense. Ok. Well I'm just getting the rest of my stuff. Ok. Thanks, Paul.

Ellie reaches the exterior of Taylor's apartment. She puts her key in the lock and turns it. Nothing. The key doesn't work. Ellie tries again. Still nothing.

She slams the door and knocks loudly.

ELLIE

Taylor!

Taylor opens the door slightly, with the chain still on.

ELLIE

My key doesn't work.

TAYLOR

That's generally the desired effect when you get the locks changed.

ELLIE

I need the rest of my stuff.

TAYLOR

Well your lawyer can arrange with my lawyer a suitable time for that.

Jeff appears from behind Taylor. In his own clothes, with a beer in hand.

JEFF

Hey Ellie. Funny seeing you here, I thought you moved out.

ELLIE

Rot in hell. Both of you.

JEFF

Lawyers don't believe in hell, only the courtroom! See you there, bitch!

INT. THE APARTMENT – CONTINUOUS

Taylor closes the door on Ellie. She and Jeff fist bump.

JEFF

You ready? Because this is the final
showdown.

INT. THE APARTMENT – LATER

Taylor and Jeff face off on Guitar hero.

SONG: "Tragedy & Time" – Rise Against.

The guitar dual is tense, both of them play really damn well. Jeff is a little better than Taylor. But ultimately, Taylor wins.

TAYLOR

Read it and weep, buddy-boy!

Jeff pats her on the back, accepting defeat gracefully.

JEFF (O.S.)

So this young politician right-

INT. THE APARTMENT – MUCH LATER

On the floor of the apartment living area, Taylor and Jeff down expensive brandy and lean against the sofa for support.

TAYLOR

How young?

They speak in drunk earnest.

JEFF

I don't know. Young. Late twenties early thirties but compared to all the other old bastards in congress he's young. And youthful. Idealistically, youthful if you know what I mean. Anyway, his first case as Foreign Secretary of state-

TAYLOR

Before you go off on a big fucking tangent, I've told my dad you're representing me because he'll have to be on the stand-

Jeff passes the bottle for her to swig.

JEFF

Wait, you want me to represent you?

TAYLOR

Of course. But yeah, that's what I've told Dad, but in reality I just want you to do it. You're my buddy.

JEFF

Awww. Thanks buddy!

Jeff gives Taylor an almighty hug.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Okay. So politician. He has a terror cell contact the bureau saying we got this guy, an American aid worker. We're gonna kill him, make you watch and make you fear us.

TAYLOR

Please tell me there's an unless.

JEFF

Sure there was. Unless, they said, unless you, the representative of the US, pay us a million dollars. Now our young politician says I want to do right by this guy, I'll pay. Human life matters more than money. But his advisers say no, you never negotiate with terrorists.

TAYLOR

True. So what did he do?

JEFF

Well after much internal struggle our politician listens to his advisers. I mean he has to. He's a young elected in a world less accommodating to conscience than he'd so like. So he doesn't pay.

TAYLOR

Was the dude killed?

Jeff grins.

JEFF

He was not. The cell cut him loose. No fear, no power. No use for wasting human life. How is this empty already?

Jeff holds up the empty brandy bottle with bemusement.

Taylor climbs up to her feet. She staggers to the kitchen.

TAYLOR

Keep going. I'm still listening.

The alcohol hits Jeff's head. He winces.

JEFF

Fuck. Ok. Ok.

Taylor returns with another bottle. She hands him the brandy and sits opposite him.

JEFF

So a few years down the line and Mr. youthful idealist is not so youthful and much less than idealistic now. He doesn't have to listen to his advisers anymore. Now he is the adviser. So this time a woman gets kidnapped, a reporter trying to expose child warfare in Iran. A real pull on your heart strings kind of rescue mission.

TAYLOR

Did he get another call?

JEFF

Yeah, and the guy pays the ransom.

TAYLOR

And then what?

JEFF

They found her body a week later. You don't negotiate with terrorists.

Taylor finishes her brandy.

TAYLOR

That's good precedent. But you know it wasn't a 'do not negotiate with terrorist' thing, right? You were there.

JEFF

I know. You just asked them for more information first.

Taylor's phone beeps. Jeff picks it up and passes it to her. She struggles to read it in her drunken state.

DAD: Turn on the TV!!

Taylor switches the TV over to the news. What the TV says, stuns both Taylor and Jeff. They climb to their feet and look at each other in shock.

The headline reads:

She's to blame for our daughter's death! – Wife speaks out as high-profile divorce goes to court.

REPORTER

So that was Ellie Wright-Ashford who is divorcing multi-millionaire Taylor Ashford, daughter of the owner of London's biggest legal firm, for what has been stated as the unreasonable behavior of not paying the ransom demand that lead to the death of the couple's child just five months earlier. More on this case as it unfolds...

The story cuts away to the weather. Taylor and Jeff take in what they just saw.

TAYLOR

Shit.

JEFF

Shit, indeed. Still want me to represent you?

They look at the TV, and then at each other. What now?

TO BE CONTINUED

IN THE NEXT EPISODE OF "CIVIL PARTNERSHIP"