

WEB OF LIES

by

Sean Aita

www.schooltours.at

Characters in the play:

ACTOR 1 (f): Lena Dean: a fifteen year old girl who wants to be a singer. / Female Journalist.

ACTOR 2 (m): Charlie Parsons: Her best friend, also fifteen. / Journalist / Police Officer.

ACTOR 3 (m): Danny Doyle: A man in his mid-thirties. / Detective Inspector Wilson.

ACTOR 4 (f): Mrs Dean: Lena's Mother; a woman in her forties. / Receptionist / Pizza Waitress / Police Officer.

The play is set in the present, and in the past. The scene titles show what time period the scene is taking place in.

Worksheet available online
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Scene 1 (Present) - Police Station

A Police press conference is taking place.

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: Ladies and Gentlemen, you all know the facts of the case as they stand. Fifteen year old Lena Dean has been missing since she failed to attend school one week ago. A red jacket belonging to her was found beside the canal near Church Street, but a search of the canal by divers didn't find anything else. We are concerned that Lena may have been abducted, as a young woman who looked like her was seen arguing with a man near the centre of town on the day that Lena went missing. However, it is possible that there may be another explanation for her disappearance, and the police are actively investigating all leads. Mrs Dean would now like to say a few words before we answer your questions. Mrs Dean?

MRS DEAN: Uh.. I'm sorry I'm not used to speaking in public....I just want my daughter back. Lena's all I've got in the world, she means everything to me. If anybody has seen her, if anybody knows anything about where she might be, then please call the helpline. She's only fifteen; she needs to be safe at home with her mother. If someone has taken her, then I beg you, please, please, don't hurt her.

She wipes away tears. She is clearly very upset.

POLICE OFFICER: Thank you Mrs Dean. I'm sure we all appreciate what a difficult situation this must be for a mother; so please try to keep your questions as brief as possible.

MALE JOURNALIST: Dave Miller from the Western Gazette. This question is for you Detective Inspector Wilson. You mentioned a man. Do you have any idea who he is?

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: Not at the moment, no.

MALE JOURNALIST: Is it possible that he was Lena's boyfriend, and she simply ran away with him?

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: I...

MRS DEAN: No! That's not possible. Lena doesn't have a boyfriend!

MALE JOURNALIST: Are you sure about that, Mrs Dean?

MRS DEAN: Of course I am. Lena tells me everything.

MALE JOURNALIST: But...

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: Thank you, Mr Miller. Nothing is being ruled out at this stage in the investigation. Anyone else have a question?

FEMALE JOURNALIST: Mrs Dean? Mary Trevis from the Evening Post. Can

you give us some background details on your daughter please? What sort of a girl is she? It might help our readers to remember seeing her.

MRS DEAN: She's a good girl. She's serious and sensible. She works hard at school. She's always wanted to be a doctor; to help other people.

FEMALE JOURNALIST: A doctor? I spoke one of her school friends who said that she wanted to be a singer.

MRS DEAN: A singer? My Lena? That's totally ridiculous! She would never, ever, want to be a singer.

Scene 2 (Past) - Charlie's House

Lena and her friend Charlie are singing a pop duet together.

CHARLIE: (*Giving her a high five*) That was awesome, Lena! We seriously have to do that track at the school 'Battle of the Bands' next month. Susie can play the keyboards and we could get Dan on the drums.

LENA: Sorry, Charlie. It's not going to happen.

CHARLIE: Because?

LENA: The Battle of the Bands is on a Friday night, isn't it?

CHARLIE: Uh huh. So?

LENA: *So*, I have to go to extra classes for my academic work in Physics, Chemistry and Biology on Monday, Thursday and Friday evenings.

CHARLIE: Can't you skip a week?

LENA: I wish; but mum would freak out. She won't let me miss any of the study sessions.

CHARLIE: Last time I checked slavery was illegal in Britain!

LENA: Not in our house! You know the mock exams are at the end of this term, right?

CHARLIE: I can hardly wait.

LENA: Besides, the lessons cost mum a fortune.

CHARLIE: You have told her you want to do this professionally, right? You have told her you want to be a singer?

Lena shakes her head. Charlie picks up his phone and starts to scroll through messages.

CHARLIE: What are we going to do with you? Why haven't you told her yet?

LENA: Why haven't you told your parents you're gay?

CHARLIE: I'm hoping I won't need to. I'm counting on my obsession with musical theatre, and Disney Princesses to do the work for me. Though if my dad ever does find out I'm pretty sure he'd kick me out of the house and never speak to me again... Oh my God!

LENA: What?

Charlie shows her his phone.

CHARLIE: Check this out.

LENA: Is that Mandy?

CHARLIE: Yep.

They both react to an image on the screen.

LENA: But how could Jack post it? He's supposed to be her boyfriend.

CHARLIE: They split up.

LENA: Ouch! I would *die* if anyone did that to me. Look at her. She won't be able to show her face at school.

CHARLIE: That's not her face!

They both laugh.

LENA: It's not funny really. Poor Mandy.

CHARLIE: Yeah, you're right. Poor Mandy. *(They both laugh again.)* She's an idiot for sending him a picture like that in the first place. Agh!

LENA: What's the matter?

CHARLIE: Pulled a muscle in my neck!

LENA: Here. Magic fingers!

She wiggles her fingers to indicate she will give him a neck rub.

CHARLIE: Thanks, babe.

Lena begins to massage his neck.

CHARLIE: *(pulling away)* Yooch!

LENA: What?

CHARLIE: Cold hands!

LENA: Sorry.

She rubs her hands together and blows on them to warm them up.

CHARLIE: Now answer my question. Why haven't you told your mum?

LENA: You have met my mum, right?

CHARLIE: *(Responding to the neck rub)* Mmmm!

LENA: She's from this tiny village in the middle of nowhere, and when she was growing up they were really poor. She passed her exams and was supposed to go to a really good boarding school that only took the brightest and most academic kids. But grandad wouldn't let her go because he needed her to help him working on the farm.

CHARLIE: So what? What's that got to do with you being a singer?

LENA: Mum always wanted to be a doctor, and she missed out on her only real chance to make it happen. So, ever since I was little...

CHARLIE: She's tried to bully you into doing it for her!

LENA: It's not like that Charlie!

She stops the neck rub.

CHARLIE: OK, Ok, don't get your knickers in a twist!

He indicates that she should continue.

LENA: I always loved playing at doctors when I was a kid, mending my dolls' broken bones, testing their temperatures; you know the sort of thing.

CHARLIE: You do have the healing touch.

LENA: I guess I go along with it all because it makes mum really happy.

CHARLIE: Still, one gig isn't going to be that big a deal is it? You could do the 'Battle of the Bands' gig and still be a doctor.

LENA: Not if I don't study. I'm not that smart unfortunately. I need all the help I can get if I'm going to university medical school.

Charlie breaks away.

CHARLIE: But that's just the point. Isn't it? You're not! Which is why you have to tell her before it's too late or the only theatre you'll ever appear in will be an operating theatre.

LENA: I know you're right, but it's difficult. Anyway, how do I even know if I've got any real talent? I might just be living in a fantasy world.

CHARLIE: Believe me, I've lived in a fantasy world for most of my life; and it beats the crap out of the real one. Trust me though, you're really good. Hey, I've got an idea. Why don't you let me take a video of you singing something, and let me upload it onto this site for new talent? We can see if you get any likes or shares.

LENA: I don't know.

CHARLIE: Your mum will never find out! Cross my heart and hope to die!

Charlie takes his smart phone out.

LENA: You mean we should do this right now?

Charlie nods.

CHARLIE: Hold on a second. *(He fluffs up her hair and adjusts her clothes.)*

Got any lipstick? Remember Lena; sex sells!

LENA: What should I sing?

CHARLIE: Something super hot!

LENA: Oh, I know...

Lena sings and Charlie films her.

CHARLIE: There you go! That was sizzling!

LENA: Aren't you going to upload it?

CHARLIE: No need, you just went out live!

Scene 3 (Past) - Lena's house

Lena's mother is waiting for Lena. She paces up and down.

MRS DEAN: Lena! There you are. Where have you been all this time? I've been worried sick.

LENA: I texted you, mum. Twice!

MRS DEAN: Did you?

LENA: Why don't you ever check your mobile?

MRS DEAN: Where were you?

LENA: I was at Charlie's, studying for the Maths test next week.

MRS DEAN: You spend a lot of time with Charlie these days. You're not...

going out together are you?

LENA: Going out together? You mean dating?

MRS DEAN: Yes, dating.

LENA: No, mum. We're not dating. You don't have to worry about Charlie. It's not like that, we're just good friends.

MRS DEAN: Lena, I know you aren't a child anymore, but you still have a lot to learn about life. Boys might pretend they just want to be friends and do homework together with girls, but there is usually another reason. You know what I mean don't you?

LENA: (*Quietly*) Yeah, he wants me to give him make-up tips.

MRS DEAN: What?

LENA: Nothing!

MRS DEAN: Have you eaten?

LENA: Yeah, Charlie's dad made us some pasta with pesto.

MRS DEAN: What does Charlie want to do when he leaves school? Is he planning to go to university too?

LENA: Er, no. He wants to go to drama school. He's going to be an actor in musical theatre, you know, in the West End.

MOTHER: Musical theatre?

LENA: Phantom of the Opera, Cats, that sort of thing.

MOTHER: How could he earn a living doing something like that?

LENA: I guess it's not about money; it's about doing something that makes him happy.

MOTHER: That's exactly what's wrong with the world today. It's full of people who only think about themselves; all those idiotic celebrities, posting endless pictures, and for what? I'm sorry darling. I don't mean to criticise your friend, but it just makes me angry. I'm so happy you're not like that, and that you genuinely care about other people, not just yourself. (*She gives her daughter a hug.*) My lovely girl. Are you sure you don't want something to eat?

LENA: No thanks, mum. I'm just going upstairs for a shower.

MRS DEAN: Just a minute Lena; we need to talk about this first.

She holds up an envelope.

LENA: Oh!

MRS DEAN: Yes, oh! Your school report. I found it in your room when I was tidying up this evening. When were you going to show it to me?

LENA: Er ... sooner or later.

MRS DEAN: Hmm. Sweetheart, I am really worried about your grades. You always used to be top of the class.

LENA: I know. Don't worry, mum, I'll catch up.

MRS DEAN: What's happened?

LENA: The subjects have got harder this year.

MRS DEAN: You'll need to make sure you don't have any distractions. Will you

promise to make more of an effort?

LENA: I will, I promise. But mum...

MRS DEAN: Yes, darling?

LENA: What if I'm just not cut out to be academic? What if I'm just not smart enough to be a doctor?

MRS DEAN: That's silly, Lena. You're a very clever young woman. You remember what Daddy always told you, don't you?

LENA: Of course I do..... You can do anything in the world if you set your mind to it.

MRS DEAN: Exactly, it just takes a bit of willpower and a lot of hard work.

You'll get there in the end, I know you will. I have faith in you sweetheart.

And when you do finally graduate from medical school I will be the proudest mother in the world. Goodnight darling.

She kisses her.

LENA: *(Sadly)* Good night, mum.

Scene 4 (Past) - The Park

Charlie is taking his dog Rufus to the park. Lena is with him.

CHARLIE: Here, Rufus. Rufus, fetch!

He throws something for the dog.

So you saw the comments online right? You're supposed to bring the stick back! No, Rufus! Leave that nice man alone. Sorry! Come here boy! Here boy! Good dog! Good boy! Rufus! ... No! You're going the wrong way! Get out of those bushes. Rufus! RUFUS!! *(He shrugs)* Oh well, at least he's getting some exercise. What was I saying?

LENA: The comments online?

CHARLIE: Right, yeah, sorry. *And...*

LENA: *And* they were really nice.

CHARLIE: Really nice? Really nice?! That is the understatement of the year.

They were fabulous. Everybody loved you. You rock. So, what about the 'Battle of the Bands'?

LENA: I already told you, I can't.

CHARLIE: Lena.

LENA: Look, Charlie, my mum's been through a tough time since dad died. We both have. I sometimes think that her ambition for me to go to medical school is the only thing that keeps her going. I can't let her down.

CHARLIE: One lousy gig, Lena. It's not the end of the world.

LENA: Charlie!

CHARLIE: What?

LENA: Rufus!

CHARLIE: What about him?

LENA: Is he supposed to be eating that?

CHARLIE: Yeuk! Rufus, put that down! That is really disgusting.

LENA: OK. People might like the video post, but it doesn't mean I could make a career out of it anyway. It's just a dream. It's probably best it stays that way.

CHARLIE: OK. I was saving this bit for last. There's this record company 'A & R' woman who has messaged me.

LENA: 'A & R'? What does that mean?

CHARLIE: It's short for 'Artists and Repertoire'. It means that she's a talent scout for Alectra Records, one of the biggest labels right now, and she's interested in cutting a demo with you.

LENA: Seriously?! (*Charlie nods.*) How do you know it's genuine?

CHARLIE: I'm not stupid, I googled her. Look, Alice Britton, Alectra Records.

LENA: Oh my God! What did she say?

CHARLIE: She said; can you see Rufus?

LENA: She said what?

CHARLIE: Can you see Rufus? He's gone. Rufus! RUFUS!

LENA: It's OK, he's over there.

CHARLIE: Where?

LENA: By that poodle.

CHARLIE: Oh yeah. (*After a pause*) Oh, oh!

LENA: What?

CHARLIE: It's not OK. That's a girl poodle. Rufus! RUFUS! Come here! I swear I'm going to take that dog to obedience classes!

LENA: So?

CHARLIE: So what?

LENA: So what did Alice Britton say?

CHARLIE: She said that if you're interested, you should message her. You are interested aren't you?

Lena pauses for a moment, she is torn.

CHARLIE: You could just get in touch, make a demo and see how it goes. You can always back out later if that's what you really want. A chance like this doesn't come along every day of the week you know.

Lena finally nods her head, and Charlie embraces her.

CHARLIE: (*Stands up*) Right, come on let's go get Rufus before he has a chance to..... Oh!

LENA: What?

Charlie lifts up his shoe.

CHARLIE: I think he left us a present!

Scene 5 (Past) - Lena's Room / A Street

Lena is sending a message.

LENA: Hi, Alice, I'm really happy you liked my video, and I'm excited about the chance to make a demo for you. Can you tell me what you want me to do next?

A man enters, he is about thirty five years old. He takes out his phone. When he types to reply we hear the voice of a woman speaking the lines.

MAN: Hi, Lena. Glad you got in touch. Your video was great, and I really think there is a lot we could do together in the future. What we need to do first of all is get you together with my 'go to' talent development team. I use them to put a bit of polish onto new acts. They shoot some publicity pictures, and create a really high quality video demo. Your post was charming, but we need something with a bit more punch. I'm putting together a new girl group at the moment, and I think you could fit in beautifully.

LENA: Wow! Thanks Alice.

MAN: My number one guy for demos is a really cool film-maker who knows exactly how to shoot someone who's just starting out in this business. I trust his taste and he's never let me down. So, can you be free on Saturday?

LENA: I think so.

MAN: Great. Then come to The Watermill Studios at 10.30am and ask for Danny, and we can get this show on the road.

LENA: I'll be there. See you then.

Scene 6 (Present) - Police station

Lena's mother is waiting. A male Police Officer enters.

POLICE OFFICER: Thanks for coming in again, Mrs Dean.

MRS DEAN: Is there any news? Has something happened?

POLICE OFFICER: You said in your statement that Lena doesn't have a boyfriend. Are you certain?

MRS DEAN: She isn't interested in boys. Not in that way. I told you she was friendly with a boy called Charlie, but he isn't her boyfriend.

POLICE OFFICER: Charlie Parsons. He's on our interview list. So, there was nobody that she had a closer relationship with as far as you know?

MRS DEAN: Certainly not. Let me remind you she's only fifteen.

POLICE OFFICER: Plenty of girls her age have boyfriends, Mrs Dean.

MRS DEAN: Not my daughter.

POLICE OFFICER: Very well. One of our officers has been working on recovering documents from Lena's laptop. I'm sorry to have to tell you that we have found something on her computer.

MRS DEAN: What? What have you found?

POLICE OFFICER: Are you sure you don't know?

MRS DEAN: I have no idea what you are talking about.

POLICE OFFICER: We have found some images of your daughter.

MRS DEAN: Images? What sort of images?

POLICE OFFICER: Revealing images. Images that she would not want to be made public.

MRS DEAN: No!

POLICE OFFICER: The officer tells me that the images were not taken by your daughter, but were taken by someone else. Were you aware of this?

MRS DEAN: Certainly not! It's not true. These images must be fake, they can't be real. I know my daughter. Lena would never do anything like that.

Scene 7 (Past) - Watermill Studios

Danny is adjusting a video camera on a tripod. There is a light on a stand. The doorbell rings. He exits and then returns with Lena. She is clearly a bit nervous.

LENA: The woman on reception said to come straight up.

DANNY: Yeah, it's fine. I'm almost ready for you. Lena is it? Great. Just need to do a bit of tweaking with the camera. So, Alice sent you, right?

LENA: Isn't she here?

DANNY: She doesn't usually get 'hands on' until she gets the full demo. Once she signs you to the label, then she'll be with you twenty-four seven. She really looks after her talent brilliantly. She always gives ten thousand per cent. You don't know how lucky you are she saw your video. There are lots of sharks out there, but she's one of the good guys.

LENA: Cool. So, how does this work? I mean what do you want me to do?

DANNY: I want you to have fun, to relax and be yourself. We're going to make the best possible demo together Lena. We also need to get a few publicity shots, so that the PR team can take a look. From what I understand from Alice she's starting a girl band, and she wants each of the girls to have an individual identity.

LENA: Right.

DANNY: First though, you need to fill out a model consent form. You're under eighteen, right?

LENA: Yep.

DANNY: OK. You will need to get your parents or some other suitable adult to sign it, and then send it back to me in the post.

LENA: Oh! I'm not sure I can do that.

DANNY: Wait a minute. You did tell your parents you were doing this?

LENA: My mum, no.

DANNY: I see. Are things tricky at home?

LENA: A bit.

DANNY: So, your mum wouldn't be very happy with you doing this shoot?

LENA: Not really.

DANNY: Then I should send you straight home you know. You could get me in

a lot of trouble.

LENA: I'm sorry. I didn't realise. Do you want me to leave?

DANNY: *(After a pause)* No, you're alright. I understand how tough some parents can be. They still think their kids are ten years old, when they're really adults. It happens all the time. We can usually get things sorted out. They tend to change their minds when they see how successful their children can be.

LENA: It's not really like that in my case, but thanks.

CHARLIE: Let's do the shoot, see what Alice thinks, and deal with everything else later on? Sound OK to you? What do you say? Are we good to go?

LENA: Yeah. Thanks a lot.

DANNY: No problem. OK. Let's try a couple of test shots. What do you want to do first? I know, how about a few goofy, crazy poses? Just for a bit of a laugh, to help you unwind.

Danny takes a few pictures of Lena. He makes her pull some silly faces and do some goofy poses.

DANNY: Have you done many photo shoots?

LENA: You're joking. This is my first ever.

DANNY: No way! You're a complete natural. It's going to be easy working with you. The main thing to remember is that you always have to go with the flow; let the photographer lead. You have to trust me to know what works best. So why don't we start with something you feel comfortable with. How about singing something?

LENA: Sure, why not?

DANNY: Great. I'll just switch to video.

LENA: What should I sing?

DANNY: Whatever you want to.

LENA: *(After a moment)* OK. Ready?

DANNY: Born ready.

Lena sings.

LENA: Was that alright?

DANNY: Perfect. I'm sure Alice is going to love it.

LENA: I'm so happy that Charlie made me shoot that other video, the one she saw.

DANNY: Is Charlie your boyfriend?

Lena laughs.

LENA: No.

DANNY: Why is that funny?

LENA: Everybody's asking me that question.

DANNY: Is that so weird?

LENA: Considering he's actually gay, then yeah.

DANNY: Oh. I see.

LENA: Oops! I promised not to tell anybody.

DANNY: Don't worry, my lips are sealed. I'm an expert at keeping secrets. Now the video is done, all we need are some publicity style shots.

LENA: Fab.

DANNY: Normally I have my stylist Sasha with me, but she's got a stomach bug so it's just me. Do you mind if I do something with your hair?

LENA: Uh, no.

Danny takes a hairbrush from a side table. He walks behind her and begins to slowly brush her hair.

DANNY: You really have beautiful hair.

Danny is very close to her. Lena looks a little uncomfortable.

DANNY: There. Perfect.

Danny opens a trunk and hands Lena some clothes, hot pants and a very short crop-top.

DANNY: Now we just need a change of style. I think these should be about your size. You can use the room next door to slip into them.

Lena holds them against herself. Danny goes to the camera.

LENA: Uh, Danny.

DANNY: Yes?

LENA: Um, sorry but these are both really short, aren't they?

DANNY: Yeah, I know.

LENA: Do I have to wear them?

DANNY: Not if you don't want to.

LENA: OK.

She puts them down.

DANNY: It's just that, to be honest, teenage girls want someone to admire, and teenage boys want someone to fancy. Like it or not, you are a very pretty girl, and it will help you if you are willing to show it. I told you that you should trust me to know what works in this business, didn't I?

LENA: Yes.

DANNY: I'm afraid that there's an old saying in the music industry; 'sex sells'.

LENA: Charlie said that to me.

DANNY: He's clearly a smart young man.

LENA: I guess I kind of see myself as more of an Adele than a Miley Cyrus.

DANNY: I understand, and I admire you for it, believe me. But like I said, you have to trust me Lena. You will look sensational in that outfit.

LENA: I don't know.

DANNY: I think you're just a bit shy. There is nothing wrong with having talent and a good figure. Look at Ariana Grande.

LENA: I guess you're right.

DANNY: Of course I am. Look, if you're not comfortable with any of this then it's not a problem. We can forget about the whole thing. Some people are just not cut out for this business. I'm sure Alice will understand.

LENA: No, I...

DANNY: Hey, Lena, you don't need to worry about me.

LENA: Uh, sorry, what do you mean?

DANNY: Your friend Charlie and I have something in common.

LENA: Are you telling me that...?

DANNY: Yes, I am. So you can relax, because you are *really* not my type.

Lena laughs and so does Danny.

LENA: OK. I'll put them on.

DANNY: Excellent. Now that's sorted, I'm getting myself a diet coke from the fridge, can I offer you anything?

LENA: Sure, why not? Have you got a lemonade?

DANNY: Two minutes.

He exits.

Lena looks through the clothes box. She picks out a rather sophisticated looking long dress and admires it. She then sees something else in the box. She reaches in and pulls out a very small lacy bra. She holds it up and looks at it, not sure what to think. Danny returns with the drinks, the cans are open and the drinks are in glasses. Lena hurriedly hides the bra behind her back and then drops it back into the box without him seeing her do it.

DANNY: See anything you like?

LENA: Uh, this dress.

DANNY: You've got good taste. It's designer. If I told you who made it I'd have to kill you.

They both drink their drinks.

LENA: So how did you first meet Alice?

DANNY: Oh, we were both at school together.

LENA: In New York?

DANNY: Huh?

LENA: I looked up her profile on the Alectra Records website and it said she went to school in New York.

DANNY: Uh, yeah. That's right. I lived in the US for a few years when I was a teenager.

LENA: You didn't get the accent?

DANNY: I didn't move to New York until I was nearly sixteen.

LENA: I've always wanted to go to New York.

DANNY: Yeah, it's pretty cool.

LENA: *(Sings)* Concrete jungle that dreams are made on, now you're in New York, New York.

She begins to laugh.

DANNY: Are you OK?

LENA: I'm terrific. Hey, I have a joke about New York. You want to hear my joke? It's a really good joke. Why does Adam live in New York? Because Eve fell in love with the Big Apple. The Big Apple, New York, get it? She fell in love with the Big Apple!

She tries to stand but is dizzy and almost falls.

LENA: Woah!

DANNY: Here let me help you.

LENA: I'm fine. I just have to.... I'm going to....

DANNY: Let me take you into the other room. There's a couch, you can lie down in there. Come on, everything's going to be fine.

LENA: *(Singing)* If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere, it's up to you New York, New York.

Danny helps her offstage. There is a pause. Danny returns. He removes the camera from the stand and smiles.

DANNY: Time to take some close ups.

He exits again.

Scene 8 (Past) - Charlie's House

Charlie and Lena. Lena is crying.

CHARLIE: You have no idea what happened?

LENA: It's a complete blank. When I woke up, I was lying on a bench near the canal. It was nearly dark.

CHARLIE: What did you do?

LENA: I went back to the studios, but the whole building was locked up.

CHARLIE: Do you think he did anything to you?

LENA: No.

CHARLIE: Are you sure?

LENA: Yes.

CHARLIE: But, why not? That's what I don't understand. From what you tell me you were out cold, so he easily could have...

LENA: I don't know. Maybe something happened, he got scared and chickened out; then just dumped me nearby.

CHARLIE: Thank God for that. I'm so sorry, Lena. This is all my fault.

LENA: What? No, it isn't.

CHARLIE: It is. I shouldn't have let you go and meet him on your own.

LENA: Never mind about that now. What are we going to do?

CHARLIE: You have to report this to the police.

LENA: I can't go to the police.

CHARLIE: Why not?

LENA: My mum will find out everything.

CHARLIE: But we have to do something. You had a narrow escape, but another girl might not be so lucky.

LENA: How could I have been so stupid?

CHARLIE: You're not stupid, he's evil. We need to call Alice Britton. She sent you to that scumbag, she needs to know what he's really like.

LENA: You're right. Send her a message.

CHARLIE: Ok. Oh! Unless....

LENA: What is it?

CHARLIE: I don't know. Maybe it wasn't really her we were talking to online. I haven't got her phone number or anything, we just sent messages to each other using that talent website. I guess it *could* have been a fake account.

LENA: A fake account! You're telling me this *now*?

CHARLIE: I'm really sorry Lena. I'm the one who's stupid. I can't believe I was so idiotic. Mr Rogers in IT class has been going on about online safety since we were both in Year Eight. What was I thinking? Here, this is the number of the record company offices. I'm going to call them now. (*He calls the number*) Hi, can I speak to Alice Brittold please? Who am I? Uh, it's Ed. Ed who? Uh, *Sheeran*. Yes. That's right, *the* Ed Sheeran. OK, no problem, I can hold. (*Whispers to Lena*) I guess voice calls can be fake too!

CHARLIE: Hello? Is that Alice Brittold. No, look I'm sorry, I'm not Ed Sheeran. Please don't hang up, I just need to ask you something really important very quickly. Have you ever heard of a singer called Lena Dean? Dean? Lena Dean. You haven't? You're sure? OK! OK! And are you setting up a girl band at the moment? Alright! Alright! There's no need to be rude! (*He ends the call.*) It was a hoax. She didn't know anything about you. The messages *must* have come from a fake account.

LENA: So what can we do?

CHARLIE: First of all we need to check out those studios, and find out exactly who this guy is. Then we can make an anonymous call to the Police, and try to get them to question him. It's Sunday, so the studios will be shut all day today, but if you pretend to be sick on Monday morning, we can skip school and go round to the building.

LENA: What if he's there?

CHARLIE: If he is there then I might just smack him in the face. My dad made me do five years of boxing, before I insisted on changing to jazz and tap.

LENA: Thanks, Charlie. You're the best.

CHARLIE: Apart from the fact that I am a complete idiot, that is so true.

Lena hugs him.

Scene 9 (Past) - The Reception Desk at Watermill Studios

A female receptionist is filing her nails.

CHARLIE: Hi.

Pause.

LENA: Excuse me. Sorry to bother you. Do you remember me from Saturday?

RECEPTIONIST: (*Not looking up*) I see a lot of people in my job. Some are more memorable than others.

LENA: You sent me up to the third floor, to meet with a guy called Danny. Do you know him?

RECEPTIONIST: No.

LENA: But he works here. Surely you know the people who work in the building?

RECEPTIONIST: The studios are all let on a daily, weekly, monthly or hourly rate. Do you want to hire one or are you going to stand here all day asking me pointless questions?

LENA: We need you to tell us who rented the top studio on Saturday.

RECEPTIONIST: I can't do that.

LENA: Why not?

RECEPTIONIST: Data protection laws.

CHARLIE: (*Very angry*) Are there any laws against providing rooms to child molesters? If there are, then we will make sure you get fired, if you don't help us RIGHT NOW! OK?

The woman looks at Charlie and then turns the bookings register around so that they can see it. Charlie leans over and tears a page out of the book. The receptionist is shocked.

RECEPTIONIST: Hey! What are you doing?

CHARLIE: What does it look like I'm doing? Have a nice day!

Scene 10 (Past) - The Street

LENA: That was hilarious. I thought you were just going to take a picture of the number and name, not tear the register in half.

CHARLIE: It served her right for being so miserable! Anyway my phone battery's dead. Right, I've got the number here. OK, Mr Danny Doyle, let's see what you've got to say for yourself.

Charlie dials a number.

A pizza restaurant waitress enters she is speaking on a phone.

PIZZA WAITRESS: Hello? Luigi's Super Size Pizzas.

LENA: What's going on? Is he there?

CHARLIE: Can I speak to Danny please?

PIZZA WAITRESS: I'm sorry we don't have a Danny working here. My name is Sharon, now would you like to make an order? We have a special offer on a twelve inch crispy crust Quattro Stagione today.

CHARLIE: No thanks. Bye!

LENA: He wasn't there?

CHARLIE: Not unless he's changed his name to Sharon. It was a pizza restaurant. I suppose he wouldn't be stupid enough to give his real personal details.

LENA: No. I guess not. So that's it? (*Charlie nods.*) I can't believe he's got away

with it. To be honest, it's put me off the world of pop music. You don't get people like that hanging round hospitals.

CHARLIE: Uh, yeah, you do. My cousin's a nurse. There are plenty of weirdos out there. Trust me. Besides, he's nothing to do with the music industry.

LENA: I'd better get home before mum gets back from work for lunch. I'm supposed to have a really dodgy stomach upset and diarrhoea.

CHARLIE: I'm really glad you told me that. See you tomorrow at school?

LENA: Yeah. See you at school.

Scene 11 (Present) - Police Station.

Charlie is being interviewed by a female police officer.

POLICE OFFICER: And you claim that was the last time you saw her?

CHARLIE: Yes! I said so before.

POLICE OFFICER: So when she didn't show up at school the next day you weren't concerned?

CHARLIE: Of course I was. Look, she'd been through a really horrible experience, and I figured maybe she wanted to pretend to be sick for a bit longer; to get her head together. It wasn't till I saw the newspaper that I realised she was missing.

POLICE OFFICER: You didn't phone her?

CHARLIE: Of course I phoned her. You know I did, you must have checked my phone logs. She didn't answer. I thought she was mad at me for getting her into this mess in the first place. I sent her loads of messages. Hang on, surely you can track her down through her phone's GPS? Can't you? I've seen that on TV, CSI Miami, I think. It's easy, isn't it?

POLICE OFFICER: If the person still has the phone with them, yes.

CHARLIE: And she doesn't?

POLICE OFFICER: I'm afraid I can't answer questions about an ongoing police investigation.

CHARLIE: You need to find out who this Danny Doyle really is. He's behind her disappearance, I know he is and you must know it too!

POLICE OFFICER: Mr Parsons, I want to ask you something important, and I want you to think very carefully before you answer.

CHARLIE: What is it?

POLICE OFFICER: Is the story you told us about Danny Doyle true?

CHARLIE: What?

POLICE OFFICER: It's a simple question. Is the story you told us about Danny Doyle true? Is there really a Danny Doyle, or did you just invent him?

CHARLIE: Invent him? That's crazy.

POLICE OFFICER: Nine times out of ten, in cases of this kind, we discover that

the person involved is someone close to the victim. Mrs Dean tells us that her daughter spent a lot of time with you.

CHARLIE: So what? We're friends, good friends.

POLICE OFFICER: Just good friends?

CHARLIE: Yes!

POLICE OFFICER: That's all?

CHARLIE: Yes! Look, the story I told you is true. Why don't you speak to the receptionist at the Watermill Studios?

POLICE OFFICER: We have. She told us that you tore a page out of the bookings register. Is that true?

CHARLIE: Yes, but...

POLICE OFFICER: Rather an unusual thing to do. Do you still have it?

CHARLIE: No.

POLICE OFFICER: Where is it?

CHARLIE: I threw it away, it wasn't the right number.

POLICE OFFICER: I see. So there is no evidence of this man Danny Doyle booking the studio as you claim?

CHARLIE: I'm telling you the truth.

POLICE OFFICER: I'd like to believe that but without evidence to back your story up....

CHARLIE: What about CCTV? If there are any cameras covering the street outside the studios, then you'll be able to find his picture. That'll *prove* I'm telling you the truth!

POLICE OFFICER: Thank you, Mr Parsons. I'm sure my colleagues have already thought of that. So, there's nothing else you'd like to tell me at the moment?

CHARLIE: No.

POLICE OFFICER: Very well. We'll be in touch if we have any further questions for you. But, for now, I have to ask you not to leave the town without telling the Police where you are.

CHARLIE: Don't leave town? Am I a suspect?

POLICE OFFICER: You are merely helping the police with their enquiries Mr Parsons. Why do you ask? Should you be a suspect?

CHARLIE: No, of course not! I've already told you. Please, listen to me. You need to find out what happened to Lena *after* I left her that day.

Scene 12 (Past) - Lena's Room / A Street

Lena is in her room listening to music. Her phone beeps. She has a message. She picks up the phone and reads the screen.

LENA: From Alice?

Danny enters. He is using his phone to message. This time when we hear him - the voice is his own.

LENA: What is this? An attachment? *(She double clicks.)* Oh my God! Oh my God!

DANNY: I hope you like the photoshoot, Lena.

LENA: How could you? You're sick!

DANNY: Now, now, it's rude to call people names.

LENA: What do you want?

DANNY: I like that. Straight to the point; no messing about. OK. Hold on. I'm going to swap to a video call. I want to see that sweet little face of yours again.

LENA: I won't answer it.

DANNY: Do you want all of your friends at school to see those pictures?

LENA: You don't have their contacts.

DANNY: As a matter of fact, I do. I downloaded them from your phone when you were unconscious. You really should have a PIN on it.

Lena doesn't respond.

DANNY: Hello! Lena?

LENA: What?

DANNY: Answer the call.

He switches to video. They can talk more quickly and easily like this.

DANNY: There you are! That's better isn't it?

LENA: What do you want?

DANNY: I'm just a businessman, Lena.

LENA: A businessman? You want money, is that it?

DANNY: I'm not after your money. I don't think you've got enough anyway.

No, I'm in the modelling and the film business. If you don't want your friends and family to see those pictures then you'll come and do some work for me.

LENA: Never! I will never do that.

DANNY: OK. It's up to you. Bye.

He looks as if he is going to end the call.

LENA: No! Wait, what are you going to do?

DANNY: Three guesses. School friends first I think, and then mummy. She's going to be so proud of you.

LENA: No! Don't, please! I'm begging you.

DANNY: That's better. I'll pick you up in fifteen minutes.

LENA: What do you mean?

DANNY: Be at the corner of Church Street. I'll be in a black van.

LENA: But.....I...

DANNY: Don't be late. You know what will happen if you are.

Danny ends the call. Lena stands for a moment in shock, looks at her watch, and then hurries to put her jacket on.

She exits.

Scene 13 (Past) - Montage

Charlie's home & a street near Lena's home.

Charlie enters. He is clearly worried.

CHARLIE: Lena. Where are you? Pick up the phone!

Lena enters on the other side of the stage. Her phone is ringing, she is about to answer it when Danny enters. She hits the button to cut off the call.

DANNY: Come on. I'm parked over there.

He takes her by the arm and pulls her towards his van. Charlie is dialling her number again.

LENA: Ow! You're hurting me.

DANNY: Then hurry up!

CHARLIE: Lena, pick up!

VOICE OVER (PHONE): You have reached the mailbox for 07979 952593
please leave a message after the tone.

VOICE OVER (RADIO): This is radio South West with the news from the
region. Police are concerned about the safety of a teenage girl who has gone
missing. Fifteen year old Lena Dean was wearing a

The voice fades out.

Scene 14 (Present) - Lena's House

Mrs Dean is alone; she is holding a framed photograph of Lena. She takes out a handkerchief and wipes her eyes. The doorbell rings. She hurries to answer it. A moment later she returns with Detective Inspector Wilson.

MRS DEAN: Detective Inspector Wilson, what is it? Has something happened?

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: Don't worry, Mrs Dean. It's good news.
We've found your daughter.

MRS DEAN: Thank God! Where was she? How did you find her?

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: Her image was spotted on a CCTV
camera at Waterloo Station.

MRS DEAN: In London?

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: That's right. We managed to trace her to
a homeless persons' hostel in Camden. It appears she's been sleeping rough
in London since she left here.

MRS DEAN: Oh my goodness!

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: Don't worry, Mrs Dean, she's not been hurt. Another officer from the Metropolitan Police force is driving her home now. They should be here soon.

MRS DEAN: I don't understand. Why was she there? What happened to her?

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: I think it better if I let your daughter give you the full details when she comes home, but as I understand it, she was being blackmailed about the pictures we found on her computer. It seems she chose to run away rather than give in to the blackmailer's demands.

MRS DEAN: But why did she run away?

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: I imagine she didn't want to face the shame if the blackmailer sent the pictures to her family and friends.

MRS DEAN: What about the blackmailer? And what's going to happen with the pictures?

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: Our technical team found a link between the images and a website we've been aware of for a while now. We've finally tracked down the owner, and expect to make an arrest very soon. Your daughter gave us a full description of the man in question, which will help a lot.

MRS DEAN: Why didn't she tell me what happened? I'm her mother!

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR WILSON: I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I can't answer that question, Mrs Dean. It's something you should discuss with your daughter when she gets home.

Music plays during a transition. We see Lena and her mum meet and embrace. The mother exits and Charlie enters.

Scene 15 (Present) - Charlie's House

CHARLIE: You got into his van?

LENA: I know.

CHARLIE: How crazy are you?

LENA: I know, I wasn't thinking straight. I was totally freaking out about the pictures. I couldn't stand the idea of anybody seeing them.

CHARLIE: Uh huh. I get it. So what happened next?

LENA: He had a flat tyre.

CHARLIE: A flat tyre?

LENA: As we were passing the canal in the centre of town there was this really loud noise and the van started shaking. He swore and then pulled into the side of the road. He told me to wait and went round to the back to get the spare tyre. While he was changing the tyre I realised that I didn't have to go with him, or do what he wanted. I had another option; I could just disappear. I opened the door to the van, got out and began walking quietly towards the

bridge.

Danny enters and the scene is performed as well as narrated (flashback).

LENA: Unfortunately he saw me.

DANNY: Hey! Get back here!

LENA: I was about to run, but I slipped on the pavement and twisted my ankle.

Agh!

DANNY: *(Grabbing her and pulling her.)* Come on! In the van!

LENA: No! Get off me!

CHARLIE: Then what happened?

LENA: My jacket got dragged off in the struggle and dropped into the canal.

We see this happening.

I was making so much noise I think he realised that if anyone saw him they'd call the police.

CHARLIE. And?

LENA: He let go of my arm, so I punched him in the nose.

She hits Danny.

DANNY: Agh!

CHARLIE: You did what?!

LENA: I know!

CHARLIE: *(Giving her a high five.)* Go girlfriend!

LENA: I remembered what you said about hitting him in the face. I think I broke his nose!

Danny is moaning in pain.

While he was trying to stop it from bleeding, I ran as fast as I could all the way to the station, and bought a ticket on the first train to London.

CHARLIE: Why didn't you answer your phone when I called you?

LENA: I was going to, but you called me just as Danny arrived. Then later on I couldn't call you.

CHARLIE: Why not?

LENA: The phone was in the pocket of my jacket.

DANNY: And the jacket was at the bottom of the canal! How did you manage to survive in London all this time?

LENA: I had some money in my purse at first, and then I had to beg.

CHARLIE: You do know that running away was pretty stupid? It's incredibly dangerous on the streets, especially for girls.

LENA: Yeah. I found that out. It was so scary Charlie. I'm glad the police found me when they did. I just wanted to be a couple of hundred miles from that creep. I didn't come back because I didn't know what had happened... I didn't know if he'd published the pictures and sent them to everyone, like he said he would.

CHARLIE: You don't have to worry about that now, not since the police arrested him. You haven't really told me how your mum reacted to the whole thing.

LENA: Surprisingly well. I think she's just happy to have me home.

CHARLIE: Did you tell her *everything*?

LENA: Yep.

CHARLIE: Including why this all happened in the first place? You told her that you want to be a singer?

LENA: I did.

CHARLIE: And what did she say?

LENA: She's not happy about the choice I want to make. In fact she hates the whole idea of me being a singer.

CHARLIE: I'm waiting.

LENA: What for?

CHARLIE: The word 'but' at the end of that sentence.

LENA: Charlie Parsons you know me too well. *But....*you remember the 'Battle of the Bands'?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

LENA: Good, because we're going to be in it.

CHARLIE: Awesome!

LENA: Just promise me one thing.

CHARLIE: Anything.

LENA: No photocalls!

Charlie gives a count in, and they go into a finale number, as if at the school for the 'Battle of the Bands.'

The End