

# **Pop Star**

by

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Setting

An office.

Time

Now and then.

Cast

SUZIE - A talent agent in her 20s-50s.

BEN - A talent manager in his 20s-50s.

TORIN - A pop star in his late teens-early 20s.

*In a typical office, SUZIE sits behind a desk while BEN paces. It's very tense as they each compulsively check their phones every five seconds.*

BEN

He's coming, right? You talked to him?

SUZIE

Yes, I talked to him! He'll be here! He's very punctual.

*Phones are checked again, until there is a noise off-stage.*

BEN

That's him!

*BEN and SUZIE begin jabbering business-speak into their phones as TORIN enters. He's a good-looking young man with an easy smile and demeanor. BEN and SUZIE hold up fingers indicating TORIN should wait. The phone calls end simultaneously.*

SUZIE

There he is!

BEN

Torin, my main man!

*SUZIE kisses TORIN multiple times on both cheeks as BEN tries to perform some kind of elaborate handshake, then settles for a simple, old-fashioned one.*

BEN

God, you look great! Doesn't he look great, Suzie?

SUZIE

He always looks great! And you know why? Because he is great!

TORIN

Thanks, guys. So what's up?

BEN

WHAZZUP!!!!???

SUZIE

Torin in da house!!!

*BEN and SUZIE execute a disturbing little bump and grind routine as they sing.*

BEN AND SUZIE

He's a rock star!  
He's got it!  
He's our rock star!  
We got it!

*BEN and SUZIE end their routine by "raising the roof" with their hands, then salaaming to TORIN.*

TORIN

You said you wanted to see me?

SUZIE

Yes, yes, we did. Have a seat, Torin.

*BEN ushers TORIN to a chair, then stands behind him, sometimes pacing, sometimes giving TORIN a shoulder massage. SUZIE sits back down behind the desk.*

SUZIE

So, how are things?

TORIN

Good! I finished the concert tour six weeks ago and the new album's on track to be released in three months.

SUZIE

That's great!

BEN

That's fucking outstanding!

SUZIE

But what I meant was, what are you up to now?

TORIN

Right now? Just relaxing playing some video games with friends...oh, and I've been visiting Civil War battlefields. They're amazing!

BEN

Well, sure! I feel you! Civil War battlefields...that's on my bucket list! Are you kidding me?

SUZIE

History is so great, isn't it?

TORIN

Yeah! In fact, I was just at Gettysburg last week at this place called Cemetery Ridge, which they left exactly the same as it was back in 1863, and I started thinking about what happened there, you know, Pickett's Charge, and all the men who died, and I just started crying. And I'm feeling a little embarrassed, but then, like twenty yards away, there's this huge guy, and he's just sobbing. And his wife is trying to console him and he says to her, "It hurts my heart, Mama." And it does. It really does. It's incredibly moving.

SUZIE

Right.

BEN

And don't you be ashamed of crying. I'm a huge fan of crying and you are a rock star!

SUZIE

Absolutely! But Torin, the thing is, and Ben and I were talking about this, we're concerned that you might be dropping off the public's radar a little bit.

TORIN

I was just on a seven-month international concert tour that made fifty million dollars.

SUZIE

Which ended six weeks ago.

BEN

And in entertainment terms, that's like when dinosaurs ruled the earth.

SUZIE

Bingo! And with the album not coming out for another three months, that's a concern. We need to keep your Q Score up to get the traction we're looking for on the album.

BEN

Exactly! So, as your agent and manager, it is our responsibility to keep your name out there, up there, and in there. Capisce?

TORIN

I think it's pretty out there. When I buy a gallon of milk at the drug store, half the magazines on the counter have my face on them.

BEN

Only half?

SUZIE

See, that's a problem. The public has the attention span of a brain-damaged mosquito and we cannot allow you to go four or five months off the grid. So, Ben and I have come up with a little publicity booster for you. Ben?

BEN

Okay, here's what we've set up. You're going to love this! First, you get legally drunk, which is going to be a blood alcohol level of at least zero point eight. Then, around midnight or so, you get in your Lamborghini, head out to Highway 42, and crank that baby up to 150, 160 miles an hour. We'll make a call to the state police saying there's some maniac on Highway 42, you'll get pulled over, and when you get out of the car, you say...

*BEN holds out his hand and snaps his fingers. SUZIE gives him a sheet of paper, which he hands to TORIN, who reads it out loud.*

TORIN

"What the fuck is this? This is bullshit. Who the fuck do you think you are? Do you know who I am?"

SUZIE

And that's the important line, "Do you know who I am?" Make sure the cop isn't in the way of his dashboard camera. We want that nice and clear for TV and the Internet.

*TORIN looks from to SUZIE to BEN in disbelief.*

TORIN

I don't talk like this.

BEN

Well, no, of course not! But you're drunk! You're out on a wild, midnight rampage! That's the way you roll! No laws, no limits, you're a rebel!

TORIN

And I don't own a Lamborghini.

BEN

You don't own a Lamborghini?

(to SUZIE)

Why doesn't he own a Lamborghini?

*SUZIE scribbles down a note.*

SUZIE

I'm on it, I'm on it!

BEN

I make another call to the paparazzi who will be at the police station by the time you arrive. You swear some more, try to cover your face, but not really, maybe throw a punch or two, and we're golden.

TORIN

You're saying you want me to become a criminal?

SUZIE

No, of course not! Not a real criminal!

BEN

Not a criminal criminal!

SUZIE

A celebrity criminal! There's a big difference.

BEN

Huge difference! And you've got to give your fans--

SUZIE

Your core fans--

BEN

--a little something extra once in a while to prove that you still have it. We're talking street cred, my man!

SUZIE

And I'm sorry, but with all due respect, having a bit of a cry at some cemetery isn't going to do that.

BEN

You will not be tamed! Yes, you sing catchy pop tunes, but you're tortured and sad and lonely.

SUZIE

Incredibly lonely, which is why you go out for drunken, late-night reckless drives by yourself. To kill the pain!

BEN

That's what your public wants, someone to worry about...

SUZIE

...to care about...

BEN

...someone they could love and save if they ever actually got the chance to meet you, which, don't worry, they won't.

SUZIE

And that's what we're selling here, Torin. We're selling hope. But you need to give your fans something to hope for--

BEN

--which you're not doing if you're happy and well-adjusted and taking tours of historical sites.

TORIN

I don't know. You're asking me to break the law.

*BEN throws his hands up in exasperation.*

BEN

You see? What did I tell you, Suzie? I give up. You can't help someone who doesn't want to be helped.

SUZIE

Ben, just let me handle this.

(to TORIN)

Okay, we didn't want to bother you with the whole big-picture thing, because that's our job. But the big picture is this. You're a very attractive and bright young man--

BEN

He's a fucking genius! Everyone knows that! MENSA should be asking to join you!

SUZIE

--and you know this whole "pop star" thing is going to fade away. That's just how these things work. Now, we talked about getting you into movies and acting, remember that?

TORIN

Sure! I'd love to act.

SUZIE

Okay then! Look at this whole drunk driving arrest deal as research.

TORIN

How is it research?

SUZIE

This is what actors do! It's not enough to simply imagine a role! You can't just pretend! You need to know what it's like to be drunk and see those police lights in your rearview mirror! Know what it's like to be booked and photographed and thrown into a cell with convicted felons! You need to see it and taste it and smell it so you can draw upon those experiences when you're making a movie!

TORIN

So, Method Acting?



BEN

There you go! Brando, Pacino, Hoffman...all those nut jobs! When Jim Carrey made those *Dumb and Dumber* movies, he wasn't just playing dumb, he was really that dumb! He immersed himself in complete, moronic, idiotic, stupidity. And he did that for us!

SUZIE

For all of us!

TORIN

So this would be research?

SUZIE

The best kind of research! Not just reading about it, but living it.

BEN

And hello! Bonus! The Twitterverse would explode! Ooh, best idea yet! We'll get you a dash-cam for your drunken drive, then leak the footage to TMZ and Buzzfeed!

SUZIE

Oh my God, I just got moist.

BEN

Me too!

(to TORIN)

So, that's the plan! What do you say, big dog?

*TORIN stands up to think.*

TORIN

How fast did you want me to go again?

BEN

Minimum one-fifty. But hey, if you're feeling it, crank it up, bad boy! Let the Lambo unwind!

TORIN

But I don't think I've ever gone over eighty-five. How about this? I'll go...ninety, and I don't need to be drunk or have a Lamborghini, I'll just use my Jeep. How would that be?

SUZIE

What part of this are you not getting?

BEN

Aside from everything?

TORIN

I'm just not comfortable with getting drunk and driving a sports car a hundred and fifty miles an hour for publicity.

BEN

I don't know what to say. I thought you were serious about your career.

SUZIE

Ben! Stand down, okay? We'll...we'll just have to come up with someone else--something else!

TORIN

Okay, that would be great.

(an idea strikes him)

I like helping out at animal shelters and talking at teen centers!

SUZIE

We'll keep that in mind.

TORIN

Great. Well, thanks you guys. Thanks for understanding.

BEN

We'll call you.

*There's an awkward moment as TORIN looks around, but BEN and SUZIE avoid eye contact. TORIN exits.*

BEN

And you can stick a fork in his ass, because he is done.

SUZIE

It's so sad. I mean, we tried, didn't we?

BEN

Hey, there's some people you just can't help.

SUZIE

Well...onward and upward. What do you got for me?

*BEN touches his phone and does a quick scroll.*

BEN

Nebraska girl. Sixteen. Farm-raised and corn fed, blue eyes, size two, slightly pigeon-toed. You?

*SUZIE scrolls on her phone.*

SUZIE

Twin brothers from the Bronx. Eighteen. Bi-racial with green eyes, but complexion issues...

BEN  
(checking his phone)  
Emo suburban kid, nicely tatted, good hair--

SUZIE  
Can he actually sing?

*BEN bursts into laughter and SUZIE  
joins him. BEN points at SUZIE.*

BEN  
You still got it!

SUZIE  
(pointing back)  
You still got it! You know what? I'm saying farm girl.  
America's new Dairy Queen!

BEN  
Sold! Let's ride that pony till she drops!

*They touch their phones together,  
toasting their new plan, then start  
tapping maniacally at their phones as  
lights fade.*

END OF PLAY.