

TINSELTOWN
By Joe Hanrahan
Three Short Plays

SECOND PLAY

JUST OFF SUNSET

Characters: HANK, older Rock 'N Roller
TEENAH DAVIS, once successful Rock singer. looking for her second wind

He in worn Southern Rock jeans/jacket/cowboy hat
She in current understated Rock Goddess gear

Setting Side street off Sunset, Alley behind a Rock Club Couple of trash cans, a bit of litter
(paper, cans)

MUSIC: A song from inside Club, From TEENAH DAVIS and her band

HANK enters as TEENAH DAVIS song ends, half-leans against a trash can. Taking a sip from his flask. Using his vapor.

MUSIC/SFX: Applause from inside the Club.

(As applause fades, TEENAH stomps out. Doesn't notice HANK. She's cursing, in mime and murmurs, the trouble she's going through with her band and her music. After a stretch, she winds down, now bouncing a bit with a few harsh syllables.)

HANK: Hey, y'know ...ya just gotta...fuck 'em if they can't take a joke.

(TEENAH starts, surprised. Looks him over. Walks a few steps away. Peers at him. Kind of recognizes him, wags a finger at him, and relaxes. After a bit, steps back.)

TEENAH: Yeah. Hey...You're...I know you. You, uh...(gestures toward Club)...you've played in there...

HANK: Yeah.

TEENAH: Sorry about the ranting and raving...Y'know...

HANK: Oh, I surely do.

(pause, she catches her breath, shrugs her shoulders, and starts to go back inside)

TEENAH: Gotta go face the music.

HANK: Hey. You were good tonight.

TEENAH: Aah. You saw. Well, thanks.

HANK: Few problems.

TEENAH: You saw?

HANK: Y-e-a-h...

TEENAH: It's a new band. New record coming. I'm trying to get it all together.

HANK: Some good new songs.

TEENAH: (considers him before answering) They're just not...right. Right now. I don't know. Maybe when we get in the studio.

(pause)

HANK: It's your drummer.

TEENAH: The drummer?

HANK: Get rid of him.

(pause. Nods. She's been considering this.)

TEENAH: You think?

HANK: Oh yeah.

TEENAH: I was thinking that...I don't know...he works hard...

HANK: No mercy.

TEENAH: Won't be easy.

(pause)

HANK: Sleeping with him?

(pause, they exchange looks, then give their own takes on the next line)

TEENAH & HANK: Drummers. (they laugh)

TEENAH: Was...was with him. No more.

HANK: Go ahead and can him. He's not up to your standards.

TEENAH: Huh! What's my standards?

HANK: Hey, you've done some good stuff. Great stuff. First album. Whoa. You can do more. Good new songs tonight.

TEENAH: (regards him again) Yeah. Thanks. You... (pointing in "I know you" fashion)... you've played here, huh?

HANK: Backed up a few people in there.

TEENAH: I thought so. Guitar?

(HANK nods)

TEENAH: Who'd I see you with?

HANK: Everybody.

TEENAH: Not lately. Where you been?

HANK: I been...uh...down in Nashville...Nashville cat.

TEENAH: Session work?

HANK: Kept me alive.

TEENAH: Yeah, it's been tough. For everybody. Pandemic.

HANK: Yeah.

TEENAH: Especially people who count on playing live.

HANK: I know, dried up. This your first show?

TEENAH: Yeah. Another one next weekend in San Diego. Before we hit the studio. You?

HANK: Naaah. Just sessions. Thankfully - Nashville - they just kept recording.

TEENAH: That's good.

HANK: All kinds of stuff. Commercials...

TEENAH: But you're back here now, or...?

HANK: Commercials were killin' me. Keepin' me alive and killin' me. Came back here to try to do some real music again.

TEENAH: Yeah?

HANK: Not much luck. Not much happening...for me, anyway? But you, good to be back out there now, huh?

TEENAH: Yeah. Really looking forward to getting out on tour. I like the writing, recording, but the real charge is playing for people.

HANK: Yeah, that's the charge.

TEENAH: You bet. That's why I was disappointed about tonight. Can't wait to get back out next weekend. If I can get this band together.

HANK: You will.

TEENAH: I saw you here. Few years ago. What's your name?

HANK: Hank. Hank Riley.

TEENAH: I'm...

HANK: Teenah Davis. Nice to meet ya. I don't want to keep you if you need...

TEENAH: No, I need a little more air.

HANK: OK. Teenah Davis. Got some of your early LPs.

TEENAH: Huh. Vinyl?

HANK: Oh, yeah. That's the only way, vinyl.

TEENAH: So you played here...I saw you...backing up...uh...?

HANK: Somebody. Everybody.

TEENAH: Never did any of your own...?

HANK: Started a band or two. I got here a little late. Missed my window.

TEENAH: Where'd you come in from?

HANK: I was a...a...mostly San Francisco, before here.

TEENAH: Summer of Love?

HANK: Missed that. Few years later.

TEENAH: Didja play with...?

HANK: Everybody. New versions of San Francisco groups...Airplane...Hot Tuna...Commander Cody.

TEENAH: Whoa. Everybody.

HANK: Everybody.

TEENAH: San Francisco.

HANK: (laughs) Yeah. That was a scene. Got a little wonky there. Me and the place.

TEENAH: Mmmm.

HANK: Yeah.

(pause)

HANK: Yeah. Drugs. The good ones. Too good. Came down the coast to get warm.

(pause)

You...were always here...Yeah?

TEENAH: Yeah...

HANK: Yeah Yeah, saw you back then, saw your stuff. You were with a girl band when you... started..?

TEENAH: Yeah...

HANK: What was it called, I don't...

TEENAH: Rag.

HANK: Rag?

TEENAH: Rag

HANK: (remembering, with big laugh) Rag.

TEENAH: Joan Jett thing.

HANK: Yeah...

(pause)

TEENAH: Didn't last long. I went solo.

HANK: You did some good stuff.

TEENAH: That's what I'm trying to get back to. That...that stuff...that place. That...that ... I used to...you know, when you wake up in the morning, you've got a song in your head, or a start of a song. Maybe just a melody, a couple words, but you know you've got something.

And the whole time, long as it takes, the whole time you're working on it, you're just flying, flying...and everything you do with it, even lyrics you cut, you cut out, whatever, it's all great. It's all just a pleasure. And then you finish...you think you're finished...you're on top of a mountain. You walk around like you've got something...something you did, something that's your own, and you own the world. You know that ...feeling?

HANK: I never wrote...I tried but...

TEENAH: Aaaaah. It's something. Whole process. First time you play it for somebody. Get a response. Then you get the band, and everybody...adds something to it. You're in the studio. Gets better and better.

(TEENAH pauses a moment, thinking about it)

And first time you hear it on the radio. And then the record comes out, you're holding it in your hands. And then you read that it's charting.

HANK: You did good stuff.

TEENAH: And then...these moments. I was in a hotel, New York City, sleeping in, we were on tour, and my manager calls me, wakes me up, to tell me...I have a Grammy nomination. So cool.

HANK: (laughs) That's right. I remember that. Grammy. That's great!

(pause)

HANK: (takes out a flask, hands it to her) Congratulations!

TEENAH: Just a nomination.

HANK: (extending flask again) C'mon. Still. Grammy!

(TEENAH takes flask, takes a drink, hands it back. HANK drinks. HANK then toasts her.)

HANK: To another one! (drinks)

TEENAH: Oh yeah.

HANK: I'd like to get back there...do some real playin'. Played on some really good records...felt like I added someptin' to 'em, y'know. But it's been a while, since...

TEENAH: Yeah?

HANK: Yeah. Too long. So...what...happened to you? After Grammy. You been...quiet...for a while?

TEENAH: Toured after that...didn't draw the crowds we wanted...the next album...seemed like...something was gone...then the next...I was still pretty young...Got my head...messed up a bit.

Then the label...dropped me. Just dropped me. I said fuck it! And took off.

HANK: Where'd you go?

TEENAH: Everywhere. Around the world.

(pause. HANK nods)

HANK: But now you're back!

TEENAH: Yeah. Old friend. At an...independent label. Comeback!

HANK: Good, good. So you're, uh...home now?

TEENAH: California girl.

HANK: (sings) Aaaaah. Wish they all could be California gir...

TEENAH: Did you ever play...

HANK: I do. I do wish they could all be California Girls. (Toasts TEENAH with flask)

(they laugh)

TEENAH: So you ever played a Brian Wilson session?

HANK: No.

TEENAH: Never part of the Wrecking Crew?

HANK: No, no. They were something, boy. I know...knew some of those guys.

TEENAH: And a woman.

HANK: Yeah. Carol Kaye. Bass.

TEENAH: Yeah. They were something.

HANK: Played on everything...didn't they?

(pause)

HANK: I did get to play with Dylan.

TEENAH: You what? Dylan! You did?

HANK: Toured with him, filled in for a guy who was sick. Couple weeks. Japan.

TEENAH: Whoa. So, you played with him? When was this?

HANK: 90's. After his religious stuff. He was just getting his never-ending tour going.

TEENAH: Didja travel with him, and...?

HANK: Oh, yeah, yeah, we traveled, we were a band.

TEENAH: And you got to hang out, and....

HANK: Yeah, couple parties, some late night drinkin'...we were a band.

TEENAH: Wow. So, tell me. What...What's he like? Dylan.

HANK: Dylan...he's...well, he's...

(long pause, HANK thinks)

HANK: ...I have no idea.

(they both laugh)

TEENAH: Love him.

HANK: Oh, yeah. It was so...great.

TEENAH: Yeah, I bet.

(pause)

TEENAH: I gotta go back in there. Maybe...maybe fire the drummer. Tell everybody else we gotta rehearse tomorrow. Then tell everybody else I fired the drummer. Go home tonight. Write some new arrangements. Few new lyrics. Start looking around for a new drummer. (shakes head) Wow.

(HANK hands her the flask again. She takes it, sips, without looking at him. Another sip, then hands it back.)

TEENAH: How do I fire this guy?

HANK: Fast. Do it fast. Be honest. Tell him he'll find another gig soon. Which he will. He's not that bad. Tell him it's the best thing for him. Which it is. If you kept him, it'd just get painful.

TEENAH: We broke up...a few weeks ago...

HANK: Naaah, the music. Music'd get painful.

TEENAH: Mmmm.

HANK: Can't fool it. If you don't have just the right...mix, of people, it's...extra painful, cause it's...music

TEENAH: Week after next we're in the studio. Then get ready for a tour. Show next week, studio, tour, no drummer. God.

(pause)

HANK: Y'know...I...know a guy...

TEENAH: Yeah?

HANK: Yeah.

TEENAH: Good?

HANK: That's why I'm bringing him up. I think he'd...fit in with you, the way he plays. Think he'd like it.

TEENAH: What's he been doing?

HANK: New in town. Met him a bit ago. Likes playing live, clubs.

TEENAH: Any studio work...

HANK: I don't know. Think he told me he did some session...

TEENAH: Uh...how...old?

HANK: How old? I don't know, younger, hasn't been out here too long.

TEENAH: Where's he from?

HANK: Texas. Austin, I think.

TEENAH: Any problems with...

HANK: Drugs? Naaah. Well. Booze. Weed.

(HANK looks at her, she looks away, they give their own takes on the next line.)

HANK & TEENAH: Drummer.

TEENAH: Well, since I'm going to be desperate, and he may be just what I need...got his number?

HANK: I do...some place here. (takes out his phone, scrolling)

He's playing tonight, somewhere in the valley. OK. Here it is.
512-685-4211.

(TEENAH takes out her phone, copies the number)

TEENAH: 512?

HANK: Austin.

TEENAH: ...685...

HANK: 685-4211.

TEENAH: Uh, hey, what's his name?

HANK: Bone Shark.

TEENAH: Bone Shark?

(They look at each.)

HANK & TEENAH: Drummers. (Both laugh)

TEENAH: All right. Bone Shark. Hey, so thanks. Glad I ran into you.

HANK: Yep. Nice meeting you.

TEENAH: Going to be playing anywhere?

HANK: Aaaah, no. Just nothing going...not here. Going to be leaving soon.

TEENAH: Tour, or...?

HANK: No, no...headin' home.

TEENAH: Where's that?

HANK: Georgia.

TEENAH: Atlanta? Lotta good music there. I have some friends...

HANK: Naah. St. Mary's.

TEENAH: Georgia?

HANK: Little town. Old town. Right on the Coast. Barrier Islands.

TEENAH: Mmmm. How'd you ever...?

HANK: Family moved there when I was young.

(pause)

HANK: It's the home of a...it's a naval base. US Navy. My dad was a...an officer.

TEENAH: Aah. Still there...?

HANK: No. Just died.

TEENAH: Mmm. Sorry.

HANK: Yeah, he was old.

TEENAH: Did he...he ever hear...your music?

HANK: No. Oldest rock 'n roll story in the book. He never...approved...what I was doing. Made sense, though. Him not gettin' rock 'n roll. He ran the base. It's a Submarine base. Subs with...trident missiles.

TEENAH: Whoa.

HANK: Yeah. Thermo...Nuclear.

TEENAH: Whoa. He musta been an interesting guy, though.

HANK: Yeah, he was. We just never got along. But he was interesting. (HANK takes out flask, another sip) Gotta go back, take care of his stuff, y'know. Maybe dry out a little.

(pause)

HANK: What about you? Your parents...and your music...

TEENAH: Dad...Dad's been gone a long time. Don't know where. Don't care. Mom's my biggest fan.

HANK: That's good.

TEENAH: Yeah. Well, time to go back to work.

HANK: Go get 'em. I hope to get around somewhere to catch you on tour. When ya go?

TEENAH: Well, do the album...I'd say a couple months. I've got a movie song to do before then.

HANK: That's cool. What's the movie?

TEENAH: GEORGIA. Not about the state, or your island...it's about Georgia O' Keefe.

HANK: Oh, yeah, with the flowers?

TEENAH: Yeah.

HANK: Didn't they do...?

TEENAH: Yeah. That was a while ago. Didn't do well. This one's gonna focus on her in New Mexico, painting...

HANK: OK. Who's...?

TEENAH: Beverly Montclair.

HANK: Beverly Montclair. That'll be a stretch.

TEENAH: She's got a name. Helping get the thing done. Director's a buddy a mine.

HANK: Sounds good. Knock 'em dead.

(pause)

TEENAH: All right. (Starts to go back in. Stops. Comes back.) Hey, Hank. So, when you leavin' for Georgia?

HANK: I don't know. Sometime soon.

TEENAH: I was thinking. We're going in the studio. I'm thinking, we could...probably...use... another good guitarist.

HANK: Oh, yeah?

TEENAH: Yeah. Somebody like you. I remember your playing...good rhythm guitar, yeah?

HANK: That's what I do.

TEENAH: That's what we need. You heard some new stuff tonight. Think you'd like to play?

HANK: You serious?

TEENAH: Yeah.

HANK: When you start recording?

TEENAH: We're going in week after next. Can you do that? With your going home and all...?

HANK: Week after next?

TEENAH: Wednesday of that week. Starting about 2.

HANK: I'll be there at 1.

TEENAH: (laughs) OK. But going home...?

HANK: That can wait a bit. Where ya recording?

TEENAH: Capitol Studios, On VIne.

HANK: Yeah, I know it. Good place. Your independent label's takin' care of you.

TEENAH: Yeah. Good friend. So this is so cool. You played with Dylan, now...

HANK: Now playing with Teenah Davis!

TEENAH: So cool. I think...I think it might be fun. You're going to add something.

HANK: I will surely try.

TEENAH: All right. I better go.

HANK: Teenah...thank you. Y'know. (She nods). Hey, I'll try to see next weekend in San Diego.

TEENAH: Deal. You can buy the band a round. (He nods.) Thanks again for...(uses phone to gesture)

HANK: Yeah, sure. Tell 'em hi for me. Hell, maybe I'll tell him myself. Next week.

TEENAH: Bone Shark?

HANK: Bone Shark.

(They smile. TEENAH does a small wave, starts to leave, stops, looks back. They've got their cue now.)

TEENAH & HANK Drummers.

(TEENAH exits)

HANK: All right, man.

HANK takes a big celebratory sip from his flask.

THE END

INTERMISSION MUSIC

"Down In Hollywood" Ry Cooder

"California" Joni Mitchell

“California Dreaming” The Beach Boys