

Blue Revisions - April 19th, 2016
1st Production Draft (White) - April 16th, 2016
Writers Draft - May 4th, 2015

BETTER THINGS

"PILOT"

EPISODE #1

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1

INT. OFFICE BIG BOX STORE - DAY

1

SAM, 40's- is shopping with her daughter, Max, 15. Sam is consulting a large shopping list.

SAM

---(To Max) Where's the freaking graph paper? No one actually works here. This is like a pre-apocalyptic nightmare.

MAX

Calm down, mom.

A woman with two kids walks by.

MAX (CONT'D)

(grossed out)

That woman smelled like my dad's girlfriend.

Sam ignores this comment.

SAM

(reading)

Graph paper. Journal notebooks. Spiral notebooks. Folders. None of that is anywhere. Where's the graph paper?

MAX

I don't know, mom. I'll get the binders and the rest of the stuff.

As Sam turns away from Max---to find the graph paper----Max calls out "I have it!" But Sam doesn't hear and is already in another aisle. She looks through the stacks of spiral notebooks and lined paper packs. Sam walks across the ends of the aisles looking for help, getting increasingly frustrated. She then goes into the middle of the store.

SAM

---(Yelling) Hi. Does anybody work here? Anybody?!

ANGLE ON: Someone down the aisle from Sam looking at her yelling.

ANGLE ON: Someone in a different aisle hearing her from a distance.

SAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Does ANYONE work here?!

A gay-ish guy with an apron on who is in a back corner at a copier with a couple yells back

GAYISH GUY

Yes! I do! But I am with customers right now.

SAM

Can you please just tell me where to find graph paper?

GAYISH GUY

---(very eye rollingly) Aisle 8.

SAM (O.S.)

Thank YOU!!!!

2

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

2

Sam starts the car.

MAX

That was great, mom. Freak out in the store, why don't you?

SAM

It's fine, I didn't freak out, just nobody works there.

MAX

I wish you smoked pot, mom.

SAM

Hah?

MAX

It would be good for you. Stoners aren't losers, mom. And it would mellow you out.

SAM

I'm perfectly mellow.

MAX

Can I ask you something? (pause)
Oh. Never mind. You'll just freak out.

SAM

Well, Ok. You don't have to, but now you know you're going to.

MAX

Can you get pot for me?

SAM

What?!

MAX

Gabby Schuster's mom told her that if she ever wanted to smoke pot she would get it for her, like it would be so much better than like street weed or shake, you know? Like good nugs.

SAM

Good nugs... Max, I don't know what to say. I can't get pot. I don't even know where to get it. I don't know what to say. I can't even get Gran pot for her arthritis. Ok, how about this. I'm not gonna buy you pot.

MAX

It's so easy mom, you get a prescription. You just have to be 18.

SAM

Ay ya, Max. Please, baby. Can we just get through this? Like, the regular hard things? Like school supplies?

MAX

You should be happy that I'm honest with you. I could just get it and not tell you

SAM

Yeah. That might be better.

MAX

Seriously?

SAM

Yeah. These things are normal, but you should be a little ashamed of them.

MAX

Why? You're my mom. I want you to know if I have sex and if I want to get high.

SAM

AaaaA. Well. Hide things from me.
Please.

MAX

----(takes out her phone and starts
texting---under her breath) That's
great. I love how you care.
Whatever, Mom. (Pause----puts her
phone down) Can I drive?

SAM

No! Jesus. How many laws do you
want me to break in one day?

4

INT. SAM'S BATHROOM - DAY

4

Sam is looking in the mirror. She is putting on lotion.

SAM V.O.

I laugh when I'm scared now
The only things that are funny--
hurt
I'm growing a beard...

She takes a tweezer to her chin.

ECU of The whisker as she is trying to grasp it with the
tweezer but failing.

SAM

(calling to another room)
Max?... Max!

She keeps trying to catch the whisker.

Max walks in the room.

MAX

What?

SAM

Can you help me get this whisker?

She hands the tweezers to Max who starts attacking the
whisker.

ECU of the whisker being pulled away.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ow.

MAX

This is so weird that you get these.

SAM

No. This just happens.

MAX

Women turn into men?

SAM

Just get it off me. I have to get to a meeting.

MAX

(realizing)

Oh my god. Is this going to happen to me????!!

SAM

...No. Honey. Never. Just to me.

MAX

Thank god.

She puts down the tweezers and leaves.

5 INT. ROOM - DAY

5

An actress who resembles Pamela is standing in a room looking straight ahead.

AWRP

Listen Jack. I started this firm and you're not getting rid of me. I don't care what you and that bimbo try to pull, I will eat your goddamn lunch on this deal.

CUT WIDE and behind her to reveal there is a table with people sitting and watching her say this. It's an audition.

6 INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

6

CONSTANCE ZIMMER is sitting in a chair in a waiting room reading from a script, whispering out loud.

CONSTANCE ZIMMER

Listen Jack. I started this firm. And you're not-

ANGLE ON: Another actress in the same room who is blonde and pretty and not very good. She is reading the lines and trying to seem warm while tough.

BLONDE ACTRESS

You're not getting rid of me. I don't care what you and that...

ANGLE ON: Sam reading the script.

SAM

Listen Jack. I started this firm.
(breaking character)
Ah, Jesus.

She puts down the script, giving up. Looks at Constance.

SAM (CONT'D)

What's the time Mr. Zims?

CONSTANCE ZIMMER

Samuel. (She makes a face at Sam, they both giggle)

SAM

How are you?

CONSTANCE ZIMMER

Busy. Crazy. Good. What's new with you?

SAM

Um. Everything. Never boring. Always new every day. House full of young women. Kicking my ass.

CONSTANCE ZIMMER

Haha. Yeah. Hey, not to be nosy, but are you dating Luke Thatcher? I heard you guys were together.

SAM

What? Oh no. No. I'm dating my daughters. Those is and are my love life and everything in between.

CONSTANCE ZIMMER

Ok, well. I'm gonna look at the material.

Sam takes a breath and picks up the script.

SAM
Listen Jack-
(to Constance)
I can't...haha.

CONSTANCE ZIMMER
I mean who writes this shit? What
happened to us?

SAM
I know! I don't know!

A door opens with gales of laughter and joy flowing out of the room. JULIE BOWEN walks out followed by the person running the meeting.

PERSON
(Hugging her) Sooooo good to see
you, and so glad you're back. This
is gonna be great. You're in town
for a while, right?

SAM
(quietly)
Great.

CONSTANCE ZIMMER
Yeah. Awesome.

There is a visible reaction of the actresses in the waiting room as they see this.

JULIE BOWEN
Absolutely. Staying put. For a
while. Got my boys---can't be
traipsing around anymore. Have to
stay home. For the kids. The fam.
So please give me a job, so I can
at least leave the house every day.

PERSON
Hahahahaha! You got it.

Julie exits.

9

INT. MALL BENCH (NEXT TO JEWELRY KIOSK) - DAY (LATER)

9

Duke, 8, (Sam's youngest) is crying bitterly and horribly. WIDEN OUT to reveal that Sam is sitting next to her, legs crossed, texting and ignoring her.

ANGLE ON: An older woman is shocked that she is letting this poor girl cry. Sam catches her looking and waves at her sarcastically.

SAM

Hi!

The woman looks angry.

SAM (CONT'D)

(pointing at crying Duke)

You want to buy her the earrings?
That's why she's crying. Because
of six dollar earrings that she
already has them at home but wants
them for right now. You should go
in that store and buy them for her.
I'm not doing it. Or stop looking.

The woman looks away and leaves. Sam finishes her text and gets up to leave.

SAM (CONT'D)

Okay lets go. You want hot dog on
a stick?

Duke nods, still crying and follows her mom.

10 INT. MALL BATHROOM - DAY (LATER)

10

Sam and Duke are at the sinks. Sam's phone rings---she slides to answer too soon. Sees the phone says "RICHARD"

SAM

(into the phone)
Uuuugh.

11 INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - DAY

11

Richard, a "guy" in an office, talking to Sam.

INTERCUT DURING CALL

RICHARD

Uuuugh? What happened? Haha. Hi
Sam. It's Richard.

SAM

Yes Richard. Hi there.

RICHARD

Hey. I just wanted to say again.
That I had a great time at our
lunch.

SAM

That's great.

RICHARD

You know so much about sushi.

Throughout this phone call Sam is doing various miming things
of wanting to throw up/kill herself/from the phone call she
is having with Richard to Duke.

SAM

Hah.

RICHARD

So...

SAM

Richard-

RICHARD

I got tickets to see the new
Chicago this weekend. They have a
new frontman. I know their manager.
Do you want to go?

SAM

Yeah um...

RICHARD

Oh boy. That doesn't sound good.

SAM

Look, Richard. I... feel like...
you're... great. I'm just...
living... my life right now?
Richard, hang on a tic.....

DUKE

(whispery mouthing bigly)
WHO IS THAT?

SAM

(mouthing)
SOPHIE'S DAD!

SAM/DUKE

EEEEEW/EEEEEW

SAM

Hi. Sorry about that.

RICHARD

Oh, that's ok. Um..so, you don't want to go out again.

SAM

...Yeah. That's what I'm saying, Richard. Thanks.

RICHARD

Can I ask why?

Sam shuts her eyes with pain.

SAM

Why?

RICHARD

Yeah. Is there something wrong with me?

SAM

Oh.

(thinks it over.)

Richard? I'm gonna hang up now.

RICHARD

Oh. Ok.

SAM

I'll see you at school things.

RICHARD

Ok.

She hangs up. Relieved. Pretends to throw the phone across the bathroom. Sam and Duke both shake off the willies.

12 INT. BEDROOM - DAY (LATER)

12

Sam is half dressed. She is hunched over her computer which is on her bed. She is trying to search porn sites.

ECU: she is typing in "Mature lady sex real" A big picture of a fist in an asshole or something comes up.

SAM

No no!

She clicks away from it.

CUT TO:

13 INT. DOWNSTAIRS - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 13

The front door opens and it's Frankie who throws down her school stuff and comes clomping up the stairs.

14 INT. BEDROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 14

SAM
(hearing Frankie coming)
No, don't come in here!

Frankie is knocking loudly at her bedroom door.

FRANKIE
MOM!

SAM
WHAT?! Don't come in here!

Frankie bursts in the door.

FRANKIE
I need my!-

Sam slams her computer shut.

SAM
Get out of here!

FRANKIE
Jesus mom. You're so bipolar!

Frankie flops down on the bed.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Did you know that girls in Africa get their clitoris' cut off when they're, like, thirteen, on their birthday? What if I did that, as a protest? That would be sooo like real.

SAM
Get out. Get out. Get out of my room.

FRANKIE
No.

SAM

Get out. Get out of my room.

FRANKIE

No!

SAM

(walking away, furious)

Frankie! You didn't even knock! And no you're not getting your clit cut off!

15

INT. MAKEUP TRAILER - DAY

15

Sam is having her makeup done by JACE (fifties, tattoos, suicide girl)

JACE

Aw, sweetie. Ok. What are you looking for? What do you want to look at?

SAM

I want like. I wanna see. Something real. Like real, you know?

JACE

Oh...

SAM

Yeah like I want it to at least, feel real.

JACE

What are your search words?

SAM

What?

JACE

Everything you want is out there. You just need to know how to narrow it down to search words. Close your eyes and picture anything and there is porn of that on the internet. You want to see a fat man farting into a girl's mouth? Type in "Fat fart mouth"

SAM

OOoh.

JACE

Try it. Think of what you really want to see and boil it down to three words.

Sam sort of closes her eyes and thinks.

JACE (CONT'D)

What do you got?

SAM

Nothing. Scary... Penis. Maybe.

Jace laughs.

16

INT. LIVING ROOM --- SET OF A TELEVISION SHOW - DAY

16

Sam is dolled up in a high end dress. Hair and makeup/tits all on point. She is arguing with STAN a guy in Hugh Hefner pajamas.

SAM

Stan. I told you we don't do that anymore. We're not a couple. We are business partners.

STAN

Oh, but Josie. Baby, I'd burn our business to the ground if I could get just one sniff of your panties right now.

SAM

(melting)

Aw.

She lets him kiss her neck. He starts to go down and down her body.

SAM (CONT'D)

Um. hold on.

STAN

Huh?

SAM

Just.

(to off camera)

Can we just.. Stop? Sorry, guys. I need a second.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Cut.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Cuttiiiiing!

People fill up the set. This is a TV show. JOHN, a rumpled showrunner, approaches.

SAM

Sorry, Gary.

STAN/GARY

S'okay, Sammy. I love you.

He walks away.

JOHN

Hey. You okay?

SAM

John. Look. You know I'm a gamer. I come here and I throw down.

JOHN

That's why I love you.

SAM

Right. But.. Okay I have three kids. Girls. Daughters.

JOHN

I know. I love those guys. When they gonna ever come and visit the set?

SAM

Huh? Well, my oldest is in high school now. Remember Max? And in the interest of her car pool I drive every morning....

CUT TO:

17

INT. VAN - DAY - FLASHBACK

17

This is a quick silent FLASHBACK (we still hear her talking to John) where we see Sam driving. She is looking through the rear view mirror at the backseat. Max has on headphones and is putting on eye liner in the passenger seat next to her. Two boys sitting in the back seats are hornily grinning at Sam. She rolls her eyes.

BACK TO STUDIO - PRESENT

JOHN
What's the problem?

SAM
What I'm asking is... can we dial
it down a little. Just there's a
little moment in this scene that...
I'm not sure I want to live with.

JOHN
Sure. Tell me. What part?

He shows her the script.

SAM
The part where my legs are up in
the air, and this one-

Points at Gary who is walking by. Gary grins and waves.

SAM (CONT'D)
Is eating my pussy and his son
walks in and sees us.

JOHN
Oh... you mean the funny part.

Sam sighs, beaten. John pats her on the arm.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Thanks, Sammy. You're the best.

He walks off.

SAM
Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

18

CARTOON

18

We see an animated animal of some kind. He is waving his
arms around and talking. We hear Sam's character voice
coming from his mouth as he talks.

SAM AS CHARACTER (V.O.)
Wait! Don't go in there! The
wizard will see us and he'll try to
rez us down!

We hear a cell phone ring. The character is still moving
it's mouth but Sam's regular voice is coming out instead.
It's sort of in sync still.

SAM (V.O.)

Hello? Hi Miss Jacobs. Yes I'm sorry Duke had her homework but I forgot it in my van. It's really my fault. I took her to the dentist today.

19

INT. VOICE OVER BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

19

Sam is on her phone. The character on her monitor freezes. She motions to the engineer that she's sorry as she continues to talk. He waves that it's okay.

SAM

Yes, you know after school hours they never have appointments and she was in a lot of pain and... I realize that but... I realize that too, and I'm sorry if you... Hey, Amanda? Give me a break. You know I have three of them and I work... No... No, he does not help... No. They haven't seen him in a month. I didn't say that was your problem. Hey. Miss Jacobs? You know what?...

(breath)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry Duke was absent for part of today. I'm sorry her homework wasn't in her bag. I take full responsibility. Yes... yes. I'll send a note. And one from the dentist too. Thank you. So much... No I won't. I promise.

She hangs up. Nods to the engineer.

SAM (CONT'D)

Yeah. Let's go again. Sorry, Devon.

FULL SCREEN CHARACTER AGAIN. WE HEAR HER VOICE.

SAM AS CHARACTER

Wait! Don't go in there! The Wizard will...

Sam slips back into her voice now coming out of the mouth again.

SAM

That woman is pure shit on a stick.
Goddamn it I can't wait till my
daughter leaves that school so I
can tell her what a cunt her
fucking teacher was.

20 EXT. SAM'S DRIVEWAY - DUSK (LATER) 20

Sam is dragging her garbage cans in.

A21 INT. MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT A21

Max is on the phone in her room.

MAX

Why?.... Why did she say that?...

B21 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) B21

Frankie sits at the piano, tapping at the keys.

21 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 21

Duke sits at the little table, watching funny animal videos
on an iPad. An exhausted Sam is cleaning up the kitchen.

CUT TO:

26 INT. UTILITY ROOM - NIGHT 26

Sam is giving ear drops to one of her dogs while shoving away
the other dog with her elbow.

SAM

Yes sweetheart. You're a good dog.
I'm a bad dog mom.

27 INT. STAIRWAY/HALLWAY/MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT 27

Sam is going up the stairs. As she passes Max's door...

MAX

Mom!

SAM

(a little weary, more
pissed than she wants to
sound)

What, Max?

MAX

What?

SAM

Nothing. What?

MAX

Mom. I didn't even say anything.

SAM

Neither did I!

MAX

Then why are you mad at me?

Sam takes a deep breath.

SAM

Baby. Just... I love you. What.

MAX

Paisley is having a bad problem.
She's like, so upset. Can she come
over? And can Adam bring her?

SAM

Now?

MAX

Yeah. She's really upset and needs
a friend. And Adam's dad is like
being a total dick. It's bad. He
can pick up Paisley and they can
both come over and sleep over. And
then Adam can drive us all to
school in the morning. Can they,
Mommy?

SAM

Honey. It's almost ten o'clock.
It's a school night. And you are a
good friend. But this is a part of
life. People have to sometimes get
through a night.

MAX

Mom.

SAM

I know you want to be there for her. And... Adam...

MAX

Mom.

SAM

But you should call her now and talk for a little and then see her at school tomorrow.

MAX

Mom. (rolls her eyes) Uch, I can't call her, I'm not gonna call her. She can't talk. You don't get it. You don't get it.

SAM

Get what? What? What do you mean?

MAX

I also have to do a French project and she can help me. We're partners.

SAM

What. Now? Wait. I don't understand.

MAX

Never mind. Forget it. I knew you'd say no!

SAM

But. When is the project due?

MAX

Forget it, Mom. Goodnight. Love you! (slams the door)

Camera follows Sam down the hall. She picks up socks and a g-string and stuff as she goes. Her phone makes a text noise. She looks at it. The text, from a phone number, not a name. It says "hey." It stops her. She smiles secretly. She writes back "hey." Immediately the response says "I'm thinking about you right now." Sam looks around the hall. She writes back "You are?" "Yup."

Sam approaches the door with a cold bottle of Prosecco and a salami or some kind of food.

Her hands are full so she can't use her key card. She knocks with the bottle. We see from a side perspective a MYSTERY MAN'S arms reach out and grab her under her ass and pull her in. Door slams. We hear Sam's laughter from the other side.

29 INT. HALLWAY - BACK TO PRESENT 29

Sam remembering this. She texts...

"Where are you?" "Seattle." "When are you here?" "Next week." "Will you be alone?"... She sees three dots appear, then disappear. She waits. No answer. Her smile drops.

She pockets the phone and moves on to Duke's room.

30 INT. DUKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER) 30

Sam is picking up clothes and straightening as much as she can this big mess. Duke comes in, throwing her computer down and gets in bed. Sam seamlessly goes from straightening to tucking her in. She is making a burrito out of the comforter around her. Duke smiles with her eyes closed. In heaven.

SAM
Burrito. Burrito. My little burrito.

DUKE
Mmmmm.

SAM
Did you brush?

DUKE
Yes. (she looks away)

SAM
Let me smell.

Sam takes Duke's face in her hands and puts her nose to Duke's mouth. Duke dutifully opens her mouth and breaths out heavily. Sam acts like she is passing out, making Duke chuckle.

SAM (CONT'D)
Go brush. Why do you say yes? You didn't brush. Why not just say no and go brush?

DUKE
Because. I don't knooow why. I'm so tiiired.

(MORE)

DUKE (CONT'D)
(She is curling up into
her bed already.)

SAM
Do you want to be a kid with orange
teeth?

DUKE
I'm soooo tiired.
(Her eyes are fluttering
maniacally closed--- Then
stay shut.)

SAM
Promise to brush in the morning?

DUKE
(eyes shut)
Yes, mama.
(She pats the side of the
bed-eyes still closed))
Lay here. Mama. Come.
(pats again)

SAM
Oh boy. Ok. Just for a second.

Sam lays on top of the covers next to Duke.

DUKE
No.
(pulling out the covers)
Get under.

SAM
Oh boy. (looks at her watch---It's
10) I can't get under, baby.

DUKE
Come on, Mama. Play a song.

SAM
Ok. Just don't touch me, I swear to
god. If your baby hands touch me
I'll pass out and I still have a
lot of stuff to do.

She is going through her phone finding a song she plays "Ride
Into the Sun" or maybe "Dear Mama" Duke starts stroking Sam's
head.

31 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 31

A quiet shot of Sam's house with all the lights on.
Crickets.

32 INT. DUKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (LATER) 32

Sam is fast asleep next to Duke. All is quiet. She wakes up with a start. Looks around, disoriented. She checks her watch. It's 1:45. She checks her phone. Her text is still the last one. "Alone?" She quietly leaves the room.

33 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER) 33

Sam, rubbing her eyes, walks by Max's room. She quietly opens her door and peeks in.

34 INT. MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT 34

SAM'S POV

Lights are dim. A crystal light is glowing. Max and her friend, Paisley are quietly giggling looking into a laptop. Paisley is in a bra and booty shorts. Max is still wearing only her underwear and a tiny hand cut top. A giant boy/man is in a corner thumbing a guitar quietly. Paisley looks up at Sam. Max looks stricken at first, then defiant. Sam grabs clothes from a pile next to her and throws one thing at each girl.

MAX

Hi mom. You were asleep, so I just had them come over.

PAISLEY

Oh my god, Sam! I can't believe this is you! You were like Duke's age! I love this show!

SAM

(Looking directly at Max)
Yep. That's me.
(doing her catchphrase in her little girl voice)
Life sucks!

Paisley rolls on the floor laughing. As she backs out of the room, Sam drills eye bullets at Max. Max rallies her eye bullets with a cunty face shrug. Sam exits.

40 INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER) 40

QUICK CUTS: Sam walks into her room with a glass of ice. Sam turns off the TV that was blasting very loudly from earlier in the day. She goes into a dresser or something and pulls out an airline sized bottle of whiskey and pours it into the ice. She opens a door to a small side balcony off of her bedroom and goes out.

41 EXT. SAM'S BALCONY - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 41

Sam lights a cigarette. And looks up at the stars. She looks at her phone again. Three dots appear. Then a text from him. "Hey." She shakes her head and puts the phone away. We hear Boomtown Rats "Mondays" start to play as Sam exhales. Relaxes. Then----Very loud Persian music starts blasting with a voice speaking Persian to a party in Farsi---THEN----

VOICE (O.S.)

Mama?

Sam throws down her cigarette and quickly goes into her bedroom. It's Duke.

SAM

(as she's going to her bathroom sink to wash her hands) Hi baby. You're up. Why you up?

DUKE

You left.

SAM

Well, yes I did, honey. But I slept in there with you for a loooong time. Long time.

Sam comes out of the bathroom and sees Duke has already gotten into Sam's bed. She's fast asleep. Sam gets into bed next to her. She lays there. She looks up.

SAM'S POV of a balding man looking down at her in the bed. He is wearing clothes from the 70's. The room looks different. It's her dad.

SAM'S DAD

Sammy. Wake up. Wake up, baby. Hi. Hi Cookie. You want to hear a story?

A woman's voice (English) shouts from another room.

SAM'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Now, don't go in there and wind her up! I've just gotten her down....

SAM'S DAD

Sssshh. Sammy. Your dad had a good day. I got irons in the fire, kid. See this guy called me about a story I wrote. Remember the one about the Junkman?....

ANGLE ON: SAM. Remembering this. She closes her eyes and goes to sleep.

END OF SHOW