

PHYSICAL

"PILOT"

Written by

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INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Three arched windows frame the Pacific Ocean on a run-of-the-mill perfect day. Sun sparkles on the water. Waves lap the sand. And because it's San Diego, no one thinks to notice.

WIDER and we are on the second floor of a dance studio in the final stages of preparation for a video shoot. Bulky video camera setup. A table laid with snacks and drinks.

Clumps of dancers stretch, chat, smoke. A pot-bellied camera operator eats a doughnut by the trash can, when... BAM! A door shuts and everyone SNAPS to attention, stubbing out cigarettes, dropping doughnuts, scurrying into formation.

In a MYSTERY POV: our HERO walks through the room. From the tension and eagerness greeting them, we can tell they have power. A general surveying the troops. Tight smiles, tight bodies, tight leotards. A female voice booms out.

VOICE

Are you ready to do this thing?

A LOUD CHEER from everyone assembled, as our mystery Hero turns and faces the lights, and PULSING, RHYTHMIC MUSIC COMES UP, burning us in to....

INT. SHEILA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON SHEILA, 35, an objectively fucking beautiful woman. Wavy chestnut hair. Tan, slender shoulders. A gossamer gypsy dress shot through with metallic threads draped over her delicate frame. Behind her is a field of wildflowers. A voice. Hers.

SHEILA (V.O.)

I mean, look at you.

She leans closer.

SHEILA (V.O.)

No, really. Look.

Closer. We see it. In the folds of her emerging laugh lines: a tiny but unmistakable zit.

SHEILA (V.O.)

See that hideous thing? Because everyone else sure as shit will.

She pulls out a stick of cover-up as we WIDEN TO SEE: she is not, in fact, in a field of wildflowers. She's in the master bathroom of her San Diego home.

Behind her is a blown-up photograph transferred onto wallpaper, a stylish thing to do in 1980.

(Oh, it's 1980. But Sheila, her fashion, and her surroundings, aren't all from exactly 1980. She's a whole person, formed from all 35 years she's lived until today.)

She leans back and smiles. Frowns. Smiles. Frowns. Testing it out, then:

SHEILA (V.O.)
Nice try. Still there. Only now,
it's even bigger.

She moves closer, presses even harder, then... BANG BANG BANG. An insistent knock on the door.

DANNY (O.S.)
Hello? Everything okay? Babe?

SHEILA
Just a second.

DANNY (O.S.)
You've been in there forever. You
sure you're all right?

SHEILA
I said just a second!

She makes one more attempt with the coverup before opening the door to reveal DANNY, her husband: short, wiry, mid-30s, and holding a drink and a joint.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Sorry.

DANNY
Don't be. I was just worried.

SHEILA
I'm sorry. My stomach was just...
it's fine now.

DANNY
Everybody left already.
(then, sotto)
Except Simone. She's still down
there. And I'm pretty sure... I'm
actually entirely sure she's down
to hook up. Everybody said goodbye,
and she just... stayed. You want to
go... you know... close the deal?

He reaches out to stroke her face and she recoils.

SHEILA

I don't know.

DANNY

You always said you wanted to do this--

SHEILA

I'm not sure I said *wanted*. I think I said I was *open*--

DANNY

Look, if you changed your mind, that's cool. I understand.

SHEILA

I didn't change my mind... are you sure she wants this?

DANNY

She was flirting with me like crazy. You saw her. And she was never MY student, she was in a different department. So we're cool on the whole ethical trip. She ASKED to come tonight. Now, she doesn't want to leave...

(beat)

I thought you wanted to prove you could still be-- you know-- after the baby, but if I'm wrong...

SHEILA

You're not wrong.

Sheila looks in the mirror. We see her brown, soulful eyes. Her enviably formed features. All she sees is that zit.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

I just feel a little unsexy. A lot. I feel like a... monster?

Danny looks at her in the mirror.

DANNY

I don't see a damn thing in front of me but my stone cold sexy wife.

(closer, touching her)

I don't want you to do anything you're not one hundred percent comfortable with, but... baby. Remember? The old days? The...

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

freedom we had? Don't you want to feel that again? Did you like it in those days? Us against the world?

SHEILA

I do, but-- it's now, and--

DANNY

She's so young. That girl down there. She doesn't even know what it was like. We could show her.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Not "we." You. You'll show her, unless you want him to know. Who you really are--

SHEILA

I'll go talk to her...

She crosses off as Danny's face widens into a smile...

INT. SHEILA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila walks downstairs to the living room where she finds SIMONE, early 20s and pin-armed thin in a backless halter dress. She's flicking nervously through a stack of records...

SIMONE

I put something on. Hope that's like, okay and everything. You guys have the raddest classic records. I am fucking freaking out over this Memphis soul. Ever since I took Professor Jacobs' Afro-American music seminar I have been vibing on this. People my age, at least in this stupid fucking cultural wasteland, they don't even know about this sound. Listen to those horns. They're like, my heart.

Sheila watches Simone swaying to the beat, her shiny blonde hair swaying just behind her...

SHEILA (V.O.)

She feels you looking. Say something.

Sheila's about to when Simone takes a big drag of her messily rolled joint and starts to cough violently.

SHEILA
Are you all right, sweetie?

She's not. She inhaled a piece of the joint and it's stuck in her throat. Her eyes start to fill with tears and panic. SHE CAN'T BREATHE. Sheila walks over, opens up Simone's mouth, and fishes out the stuck bud with a hooked pinkie finger.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
You're okay. It's okay.

Simone gags and coughs. Her smooth act blown.

SIMONE
Thank you. So embarrassing. You're like, the best. Oh my God. You saved my life.

SHEILA
Don't mention it. It's all right.

SIMONE
God, Professor Rubin is so lucky.

SHEILA
You can call him Danny.

SIMONE
Danny. Okay, it sounds so weird to say that! I mean, Danny's like, obviously brilliant. But, you're just so cool and deep... and you're obviously like, a total fucking fox to top it off. If my mom was even half as rad as you-- oh, shit.

SHEILA
It's okay. I'm sure I could... be.

SHEILA (V.O.)
Her mom. You're old enough. And still. Getting. Zits.

SIMONE
No way. I mean you're in the same generation as my mom, I guess? But she voted for Reagan and you guys are like... all stuck in the whole sixties thing. I mean, not stuck.
(beat)
God, pot's the worst. It makes me so stupid. What's the word I want?

SHEILA

Rooted?

SIMONE

Totally! You guys are so rooted. In another time. That's why you're so super cool to me. But, also why Professor, I mean Danny, is so, you know...

SHEILA

Controversial?

SIMONE

Disliked. I guess? In the department? It's kinda what I came to say, but... I thought the pot would give me courage? But it's like the words just don't want to leave my mouth.

Sheila gets close to her. Equal parts seductive and maternal.

SHEILA

What do you need courage to say?

SIMONE

Professor Rubin's getting fired.

On Sheila, rocked by this. Trying to accommodate it.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

There's a bunch of us, or like, some of us, who still totally love him, but in the department, I guess he's sorta totally done? I wasn't gonna say. But then I thought about what it would be like, walking around, not knowing something so gnarly... and it just felt too...
(thinks, then...)
Gnarly.

Simone nods, confident that no other word would do.

SHEILA

You did the right thing. But I think you should probably go.

SIMONE

I shouldn't like, say goodnight?

SHEILA

I will give Professor Rubin your best.

Simone crosses out, and as the door shuts Danny emerges, naked, hairy, vulnerable, and optimistic. He looks at Sheila, whose face tells him it's not happening. Before Sheila can explain, Danny shakes his head and disappears into the bedroom, leaving Sheila alone with herself.

SHEILA (V.O.)

You'll give him your best? You chicken shit.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Low morning sun knifes through the Rubin's kitchen as Sheila prepares a toad-in-the-hole for her impatient toddler MAYA who sits noisily at a high chair. Banging. Throwing. But Sheila doesn't notice right now.

She's inhaling the odor of a melting square of butter. The voice in her head starts out gentle, kind. Like a patient, caring grandmother.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Today, you will eat clean, healthy foods.

She pulls a round hole out of the slice of bread. It's uneven. She makes it even.

SHEILA (V.O.)

After school drop-off, you will go directly to ballet class.

She drops the slice of bread into the pan.

SHEILA (V.O.)

You will do the full class without a break.

She cracks an egg into the hole. Sizzling.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Afterward, you will have a veggie pita from the place next door and no chips. And no soda. You don't need any of those things.

Sizzling. Cooking. She eyes the leftover circle of bread. Greedily.

SHEILA (V.O.)

If you do all these things, then after dinner you can have a reasonable serving of cobbler with no ice cream. A glass of skim milk is just as good. And no fat.

She flips the toast. Brown. Golden. Perfect. The voice starts to get sharper, angrier in tone.

SHEILA (V.O.)

None of these things are particularly hard to do. With a little fucking discipline. If you weren't so lazy, you wouldn't have to do this. Other people don't need this kind of fucking hand-holding--

Suddenly, her inner life is intruded on by Danny's voice.

DANNY

Do you hear me? Earth to Sheila!
Which tie should I wear?

She snaps out of it to see him holding up a couple of old ties. Clearly, not a uniform he's used to wearing.

DANNY (CONT'D)

For the meeting? With the provost?

SHEILA

I like the mustard one. I bought it for you. For your uncle's funeral.

DANNY

Oh yeah. That bastard.

As he pours hot water into his instant coffee, Sheila gives him a nervous smile.

SHEILA

What... meeting?

DANNY

They called me in. Probably just looking for the usual dog and pony show. They knew what they were getting when they hired me. Right?

He's acting tough, but he clearly needs reassurance.

SHEILA

I love you. Whatever happens...

DANNY

You think something bad will happen?

SHEILA

No.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Chicken shit.

DANNY

Because I was thinking maybe something good would happen. There's an acting chair position open. I know I'm considered controversial, but--

Sheila considers telling him what she knows, then:

SHEILA

You remember the Logans are coming for dinner?

DANNY

Oh God, is that tonight?

SHEILA

Any thoughts on what I should make? I could make my pasta primavera. But George travels so much now, with his books, I don't want to seem too provincial. I could try out that Moroccan tagine I got during your sabbatical--

DANNY

I don't want to think this much about food! Just figure it out. Something really good and interesting, but not too uptight.

Embarrassed, Sheila tightens her kimono belt. Before he goes, Danny sidles up and tucks his mouth into her ear...

DANNY (CONT'D)

You owe me one. Remember that.

He squeezes her ass with ownership and holds it a beat, before releasing her. The voice berates Sheila:

SHEILA (V.O.)
 Tell him! You were up all night
 thinking about it. Say it!

SHEILA
 Simone told me something. Last
 night. About your job. That it's
 in... danger?
 (off Danny, stone-faced)
 But I've been thinking. Maybe, this
 is a good thing! You never wanted
 to teach political history, you
 wanted to make history. Maybe, this
 is your chance. To step off the
 sidelines and get in the game. To
 run for office!
 (beat)
 Sorry, it's just-- I've been
 thinking about this. For a while.
 That's why it sounded so...
 ruminated.

She regrets this word the minute she says it. Drops her head.

DANNY
 Honey, Simone is a cock tease
 without a clue. I'm going to work.

SHEILA (V.O.)
 You stupid bitch.

Off Sheila, the air taken out of her...

EXT. PRESCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

A sign reads: "Our Lady of Perpetual Sunlight Unitarian
 Church Nursery School." Underneath it: "No Beach Parking."

WE WIDEN to reveal: all the surfers ignoring this request.
 Golden-haired men with rippling paddling muscles are towel-
 changing into wetsuits before an exquisite surf break.

Sheila pulls into the lot to catch GRETA, mid-30s and plump,
 staring at the nearly naked surfers before Sheila catches her
 eye and she drops her head, ashamed...

GRETA
 Oh, hi. Morning. I was just looking
 at the, uh, waves. Doughnut?

She holds out a box of doughnuts to Sheila, who takes in
 their greasy scent, then--

SHEILA
No, thank you.

GRETA
I get them for the twins. Then I
finish them. 'Cause I'm disgusting!

She throws this out like a joke, but it lands as real. Sheila waits a beat too long before faux-objecting:

SHEILA
No, you're not!

SHEILA (V.O.)
She is. Look at the back-fat
spilling over her bra-strap. She
looks like a discarded couch.

GRETA
Do you... want to go for a walk
around the new mall with me?

SHEILA
Oh that sounds great...

GRETA
If I make it around three times, I
let myself go into Giovanni's and
have one of his espressos. Have you
tried espresso yet?

SHEILA (V.O.)
Don't get sucked in. She's a rip-
tide. She'll suck you out to sea--

SHEILA
Sorry, I have ballet, or I would--

Sheila releases Maya out of the car and she bolts up a hill covered in ice plant and eucalyptus leaves to a clearing with climbing trees, tire swings, an old canoe. Nursery school, seventies-style.

We find PAIGE, a teacher, an older woman from another time. Taking a wide, lusty stance around a tree stump, she waves at Sheila, exposing steel grey tufts of armpit hair.

PAIGE
Beautiful morning! Join us for
Sunrise song? Judah's mom made
pumpkin bread and it's still warm!

SHEILA
Sounds great, but I can't.

As Sheila heads back to her car, the voice gets darker.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Of course she wants you to have
pumpkin bread. She wants you to
turn into a pumpkin. Like her.
Round, lumpy. She wants to lure you
into the realm of the old, grey,
invisible witch--

SHEILA

(YELLING)

Stop it!

Sheila looks up to see SURFERS with zinc-oxidized mouths agape.

SURFER

S'up lady?

She looks at them, embarrassed, covering...

SHEILA

You're not supposed to park here.
There's a sign.

SURFER

Well you're not supposed to be a
fucking bee-yotch. Bee-yotch!

They all laugh at this lame excuse for a joke.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Eat a bag of dog shit, dumbass.

But her outer voice settles for:

SHEILA

Sorry.

As Sheila enters her car, she makes eye contact with Greta, who looks at her with longing, eager for connection, but Sheila stays the course.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Don't look at that doughnut face of
hers. You have places to go.

EXT. SURFSIDE MINI MALL - DAY

Sheila pulls into a rundown old strip mall near the ocean. She grabs her dance bag. The voice is getting anxious.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Even if you're late, you got here.
So you miss a little warm up...

As she shuts the car door, she is taken by the eerie quiet of the mini mall. Nervous, she crosses to the storefront, where we see a sign in fanciful cursive: "Abigail's Artistique." But it's dark inside. Sheila tugs on the door.

JUAN (O.S.)

It's closed.

Sheila turns to see Juan, the manager, pushing a cart with a few odds and ends on it. Phones, etc. What's left behind...

SHEILA

What? When?

JUAN

This week. You're surprised?
Everything else was gone already.
The travel agency, the tanning
salon. Abigail held out as long as
she could...

She looks around to see the mini mall is dark. A sign on the wall reads: "FUTURE SITE OF ANOTHER BREEM TEAM EXPERIENCE."

SHEILA

They sold out.

JUAN

Everyone does, eventually. Hey, you
need a tanning bed? I should say
"want." No one needs a tanning bed.

Sheila crosses back to her car when she spots:

A WHITE RABBIT. More specifically, a white VW Rabbit convertible driven by a woman with a huge nimbus of permed blonde hair. This is BUNNY-- in Sheila's POV, we take in her thick ropey shoulder muscles, her gleaming leotard...

SHEILA (V.O.)

There she is, again. God damn it.
Where the hell is she going? And
why can't you go there too?

Just then, Bunny turns and CATCHES SHEILA'S EYE.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Now you've done it. She sees you
watching her. She sees everything
about what a fucking mess you are.

And... ZOOM, she peels off. Leaving Sheila dazzled in her wake...

EXT. CO-OP MARKET - DAY

Off a mural of Che Guevara and Cesar Chavez surfing side by side, we FIND Sheila rolling a wooden cart along the outdoor aisles, past fat red strawberries and plump white corn...

SHEILA (V.O.)

Fruits and vegetables. That's what you're here for, since you skipped dance class you lazy bitch--

She passes STARHAWK, late 30s, dreadlocked, the proprietor.

SHEILA

How many eggplants do you think I need for four people?

STARHAWK

What kind of people?

SHEILA

Old friends. From the Bay Area. They're buddies from the movement days. Only now, he's a successful author...

(aware she's overstating)

Oh. Vegetarians. Like us.

STARHAWK

Six.

Starhawk sticks his finger idly into a big pot of honey and then into his mouth. It's filthy. But sexy. Then:

STARHAWK (CONT'D)

Honey's sterile. The raw, unprocessed kind like this. Magic stuff. Try?

He offers a sticky finger to Sheila who hesitates.

SHEILA (V.O.)

You skipped ballet. But you can still go running. It's not too late. If you don't get stuck...

But it's too late, Sheila sticks her finger in, lifts it out, and begins to lick off the strands of dangling honey...

SHEILA (V.O.)
You filthy bitch.

INT. SHEILA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila is driving down the coast highway. The groceries in the cart next to her. The voice is now a total bitch.

SHEILA (V.O.)
You didn't even walk today, let
alone run, or do ballet... And now,
look at you, disgusting, sticky,
you might as well just give up!

She turns on the radio, drowning it out. Local public radio station. An announcer with a speech impediment (his "r"'s sound like "w"'s).

RADIO HOST
Ouw guest John Bweem, ow as he's
mowe widely known, the captain of
the Bweem Team pwopewty group,
plans to officially open the new
mall with a Family Appweciation
Day.

Sheila can't believe it. Even worse than the voice. This guy?
On the radio?

BREEM
(on the radio)
We believe the mall is not just a
place to shop, it's a modern day
agora.

The patronizing voice of the radio host chimes in.

HOST
(on the radio)
That is the Gweek word for
gathewing place.

Sheila stops at a stoplight and stares into her basket, containing six eggplants and a wide open jar of honey.

BREEM
(on the radio)
That's right. Len, the American
family is in a crisis. Divorce,
teen pregnancy. Because the family
doesn't gather anymore. They sit on
the couch, staring at a screen.
Eating microwaved individual meals.

Sheila hurriedly opens the jar, dipping her finger in...

BREEM (CONT'D)

(on the radio)

But at a Breem Team property like
Playa Del Vista, there's shops and
stimulation for every generation.

Licking it. Decadent, then... digging her whole hand in.
Scooping out a massive quantity of honey and shoving it in
her face, dripping, sticky...

BREEM (CONT'D)

And at our international food
court, the whole family can gather
at one of our signature picnic-
style tables, enjoying foods from
around the world...

Sheila is scooping, licking, eating. Mindless. Consumed...

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Music. A trippy combination of bright electronic pop and
Breem's voice. We are IN SHEILA'S HEAD NOW. The manic state.

Sheila is at a drive-thru bank stop. Her breathing is fast,
intense. She takes her checkbook out of her bag. Her hands
are STICKY. DIRTY. She licks them clean like a dog, enough to
rip out a check and write it out to cash, roll down the
window, shove it into a pneumatic tube and send it off...

SHEILA

Come on, come on, come on...

It's an eternity as she waits for the money. It feels like it
anyway. A car pulls up beside her, and its DRIVER looks at
her, smiles. Sheila is dead-eyed, distant, not even there...

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Sheila is now stopped at a FAST FOOD drive thru, ordering.
The voice is now drowned out by a cacophony of images and
sounds:

--The speaker vibrating with the inaudible voice of the fast
food employee.

--A wad of sticky cash hastily jammed in her purse.

--The indifferent scowl of the young employee handing over
one, two, three bags of food...

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

--A small TV screen with a long antennae playing a fuzzy black and white baseball game.

--A thickly made up MOTEL CLERK. Goopy mascara and melting blue eye shadow. A dangling cigarette.

--Sheila slides over one, two, three fifty-dollar bills. The clerk slides back a room key...

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

THE MOTEL ROOM. MORE MANIC. MUSIC AND VOICES ARE FASTER. HIGHER-PITCHED. GETTING NEARLY UNBEARABLE. BUT SHE'S ALMOST THERE. SHE'S IN RITUAL MODE NOW. AUTOPILOT:

--Sheila draws the curtains closed in three fast, sharp pulls: ONE. TWO. THREE.

--Sheila takes the thin motel bedspread and peels it off, then accordion-folds it: ONE. TWO. THREE.

--She places the fast food bags on the bed, equidistant: ONE. TWO. THREE.

--She removes her shirt, skirt, bra, underwear and lays them next to the bed in equidistant piles: ONE. TWO. THREE.

--She stands a beat, eyes closed, deep breath, and then, ONE. TWO. THREE. As she reaches out for the bags of fast food to begin her binge, we...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

We are back with Sheila, who knows how long later. And everything is different now. Calm. Peaceful. One towel wrapped around her clean, naked body. Another around her clean, washed hair... From the TV, the sound of a commercial:

COMMERCIAL VOICE

Now you can get salon-worthy highlights, without leaving the comfort of your own home.

Sheila snaps off the TV and opens the curtains, allowing natural light to pour into the nondescript room. All evidence of her binge and purge is gone. She lays on the bed. Still. Quiet. Did it even happen?

ANGLE ON: a bulging plastic trash bag knotted tightly and placed by the door. The only remaining evidence.

Sheila sits up and drinks a long, cold gulp of water from a glass beside her. The voice returns. Gentle. Compassionate.

SHEILA (V.O.)
 Tomorrow, I will eat clean, healthy
 food. I will find a new dance
 class. I will walk on the beach.

On the trash bag bulging with the remains of her binge, we see a message: "Have A Nice Day!"

SHEILA (V.O.)
 Tomorrow, I will have a nice day.

On Sheila: Breathing. Smiling. Reset. Until, turning to the clock, she becomes aware of the time, as we...

CUT TO:

INT. SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

CLOSE ON a daisy-printed platter. Rondelé herb cheese being spread into mushroom caps. PULL BACK to Sheila, prepping hors d'oeuvres as Maya plays with a wooden spoon and pans on the floor. The door SLAMS. Sheila turns, nervous, her face an exercise in neutrality, as Danny appears in the doorway.

MAYA
 Daddy!

Danny gives his daughter the slightest glance, then:

DANNY
 I don't want to talk.

SHEILA
 Okay. Can I fix you a drink?

DANNY
 I don't want to drink. I don't want
 any food or liquid. I don't want to
live.

MAYA
 Hi Daddy. Daddy. Daddy. Daddy--

DANNY
 Hello! Okay?

Maya starts to cry. Sheila picks her up and comforts her as Danny flops into a chair and drops his head in his hands.

SHEILA
(to Maya)
It's okay.

Danny, eyes closed, assumes Sheila is talking to him.

DANNY
It's not okay. It was the most humiliating... I'm sitting there. In a tie. Like an asshole. You could have warned me.

SHEILA
I feel like I... did.

DANNY
When I think about the time and talent I have wasted at that two bit shithole of a college? And they fired me?
(then, despairing)
I have nothing.

SHEILA (V.O.)
If he's nothing, what are you?
Worse than nothing, you're--

SHEILA
I disagree!

Danny looks at her, surprised by the outburst.

DANNY
You're gonna tell me this is my chance? The political phoenix rising from the ashes?

SHEILA
Yes. We didn't move here for you to teach. We moved here... we moved here when we drove down the coast and saw... and saw that limitless horizon open up in front of us... right when that Beach Boys song came on the radio...

DANNY
"Wouldn't It Be Nice?"

SHEILA

It was meant to be. Our home.
Remember?

DANNY

Of course I remember.

SHEILA

And now that awful real estate
developer? John Breem? He wants
every inch of our coastline to have
one of his shopping malls on it,
separating every shallow housewife
from her husband's money...

SHEILA (V.O.)

Hypocrite. Listen to you! Like
there's anyone shallower--

SHEILA

And who's going to stop him?
There's no one with the vision you
have. No one with the brains--

DANNY

No one gives a crap about brains in
politics anymore. Ronald Fucking
Reagan was just elected president.

Angle on Maya, playing with a doll and babbling. They pay no
attention to her.

MAYA

Fuck-ing Reagan.

DANNY

I'll have to find another job
somewhere. Denison College reached
out a while ago.

SHEILA

(upset)
Ohio?

DANNY

Losers can't be choosers. Or
whatever the idiotic expression is.

Doorbell.

SHEILA

Jesus. They're early.

DANNY

Who?

SHEILA

The Logans.

DANNY

That's tonight? You didn't tell me...

SHEILA (V.O.)

Yes you did but he's too fucking wrapped up in his own--

SHEILA

I feel like... I did.

She absolutely did. But she's not pressing it. Not yet.

DANNY

What am I supposed to say to him, huh? With his fucking book deal and his fucking...

ANGLE ON: Maya. Listening. Playing.

MAYA

Fuck. Ing. Fuck. Ing.

SHEILA

If you want to go upstairs, I suppose I can say you don't feel well. I can deal with them...

DANNY

No. You get the stuffed mushrooms. I'll get the door.

Sheila scoops up Maya and tidies things up as Danny tucks in his shirt and gathers his strength, heading for the door...

INT. SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Later, Sheila is in the living room with TANYA LOGAN as her husband JACK and Danny are on the porch, smoking cigars. Visible through the sliding glass door. Tanya is Sheila's age but short, stocky, lacking her natural beauty. She's well put together though-- hair, makeup... a couple of glasses of wine in, a little buzzed...

TANYA

He hasn't told anyone this, but we just got some news. He's going to be a guest on Phil Donahue!

SHEILA

The television program? We don't watch much. Just a black and white in the office. For Danny's baseball games.

TANYA

Oh, Sheila, you're still so Berkeley sometimes.

(giggling extravagantly)

It's the most popular thing. Phil's a huge fan of the book, apparently. Our editor's out of her mind about it. Huge for sales. Hee-uge.

(beat)

The thing of it is, Jack just had this, I don't know if you'd call it, revelation? I mean, a kind of clarity. The real way to make a difference is to make a fortune. And then, you know, be a person of influence. Be heard.

Sheila takes this in a beat, then:

SHEILA

Well. It's very exciting. Jack must be thrilled.

TANYA

He's a basket case. Being on TV? Harrowing for him. He was never the public speaker. Danny was the one who could rile up a crowd. Inspire us. All those years in the movement. When Reagan ordered the National Guard to come. How scared we all were? It was Danny that spoke to us. Reminded us what we were fighting for. Made us calm. Made us brave. Remember?

SHEILA

Of course. It's... why I fell in love with him.

TANYA

We all did. But you got him!
(a forced laugh, then)

(MORE)

TANYA (CONT'D)

Jack's doing a series of VIDEOTAPES now. Just him talking, sharing his wisdom... People are buying them like crazy. Playing them right at home on their Beta Max machines... I mean... can you imagine? My Jack. No one saw that coming. Certainly not you.

SHEILA

Danny's still... known. We get speaking requests. Not Phil Donahue, but... Danny still can be inspiring, when he gets the chance.

Tanya nods politely. Taking a sip of her drink.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Look at her stomach bulging out. You're still skinnier. Prettier. She's the one who's "hee-uge"--

SHEILA

More cobbler?

TANYA

I can't.

SHEILA

Oh, sure you can. You had the tiniest sliver.

TANYA

You didn't have any!

SHEILA

I had some.

TANYA

No, thanks. I somehow have to fit into the clothes I packed for this crazy whistle-stop tour we're on...

SHEILA

Oh, stop. You look great.

SHEILA (V.O.)

She looks fat. Bloated. Tired. At least you look better. You have that.

Sheila looks outside to see the men looking relaxed and laughing. She feels trapped as Tanya leans in to her.

TANYA

You didn't eat one bite of cobbler.
Don't think I didn't see.

Sheila is about to respond when Danny opens the door and enters with a roaring Jack.

JACK

Well, did you know we've got a
future State Assembly man here?
Danny's running for office. He's
got a hell of a platform too.
Coastal conservation. Fighting real
estate developers...

Danny looks at Sheila, a little plea for mercy. Puppy dog eyes. She sighs and smiles, deciding she won't call him out.

TANYA

Well, it's about time I say.
Cheers, you two. Oh, and we have
some news we were going to share
later. But we might as well...
(looks at her husband)
We're expecting... a baby!

And off Sheila, covering her disappointment...

SHEILA (V.O.)

Fucking fatty.

EXT. BEACH - NEXT MORNING

Sheila and Danny walk together on the thin stretch of hard sand along the beach. Sheila has Maya in a backpack that she's getting too big for, making it a strain to keep up with Danny, who has a new vigor in his step. He's shirtless.

DANNY

I spoke to the Alperts and they say
if I'm up for the task, they're up
for the endorsement. That's huge. I
just need to come speak to his
group, dust off the old soap box...

He keeps walking faster, Sheila struggling to keep up.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Fucking fatty.

SHEILA
 (out of breath)
 That's excellent news. I'm so...
 happy to hear....

DANNY
 So I've got to make the rounds,
 glad-hand all the democratic
machers, let them know I'm a
 contender... Do I have a suit? I
 have to write a speech, too. Shit.

SHEILA
 The one from your dad's funeral.

DANNY
 You want me to use the speech from
 my dad's funeral?

SHEILA
 The suit.

DANNY
 Oh, right. My funeral suit. Buried
 both my parents in that thing. But,
 that Shakespeare quote I used... it
 might actually work.
 (beat)
 You don't think it's too... dark?

SHEILA
 I don't think so: "He was a man,
 take him for all in all..."

DANNY
 I meant the suit. Is it too formal?
 Will people see me as just some...
 phony? Some short, hairy Jewish
 nobody from Berkeley trying to
 pretend he's someone he's not?

He faces her, vulnerable. Bristly shoulder hair backlit in
 the setting sun.

SHEILA (V.O.)
 Tell him. How it disgusts you. All
 that hair. Shoulders. Back. Balls.

But she sees the need etched in his face, and:

SHEILA
 They'll see you for what you are. A
 man of substance and intellect. A
 born leader.

She delivers this with such apparent sincerity that Danny can't help but soak it in with gratitude.

DANNY

You know what you are?

SHEILA (V.O.)

A liar. A pathetic, fat liar?

DANNY

You're the bass line. Underneath the melody. Undetectable at times, but necessary. You know that? Without you... there's no song. There's nothing.

He pulls her close, grateful. Kisses her, then:

DANNY (CONT'D)

We need ten thousand dollars to get going. To get on the ballot. And from there, we can start to fundraise... We absolutely have it in our savings. I mean, what were we holding onto that for?

And at this, Sheila starts to feel panic rising in her.

SHEILA (V.O.)

TEN.

(then)

Nine, eight, seven, six, five, four...

Danny looks out at the water, spotting someone.

DANNY

Big riptide today. Look at that guy out there, trying to swim against it. Just gonna wear himself out. Gotta go parallel to the shore... Tourists. Amateurs.

But while he has his eyes out on the water, Sheila is in her own riptide, ready to drown...

SHEILA (V.O.)

One. Boom.

On Sheila, ready to explode...

INT. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Sheila stands in line at the bank. She's next. As a TELLER frees up, Sheila approaches with a cheery grin and slides over her paperwork.

SHEILA

Yes, I'd like to check my balance?

TELLER

It will just be a moment.

Sheila chatters nervously, as the Teller types.

SHEILA

I know there's an ATM machine now.
But I just, like a human being to
talk to! Call me old-fashioned!

The teller smiles with patient indifference. She rips off the dot matrix print out and hands it over... Sheila takes in the number, a beat. Shocked.

TELLER

Thank you. Next customer, please?

But Sheila's not leaving yet.

SHEILA

I'm sorry. Is there any way you can
show me my recent... history?

The teller sighs, annoyed at the inconvenience. Then she dutifully types, prints, folds, rips, hands over...

CLOSE ON THE PAGE: we see a series of withdrawals: \$200, \$200, \$200, \$200. They form a pattern down the printout. The evidence of her ritual. Right there before her eyes. Draining all her savings...

ON Sheila, panic rising, paralyzing her...

TELLER

Anything else you need? Because--

SHEILA

Yes. I, uh, I need...

She reaches, tries, but there's only one route. One coping strategy, one way to go...

SHEILA (CONT'D)

To make a withdrawal?

Sheila looks at the printout. The Balance remaining: \$287.13.

TELLER
How much do you need?

SHEILA
200 dollars.

The voice is back. A cruel, pulsing, punishing rhythm to it as we GO CLOSE ON SHEILA, HER EYES TIGHTLY CLOSED....

SHEILA (V.O.)
200 plus 200 plus 200 plus 200 plus
200 plus 200 plus... FAT FUCK! YOU
FAT FAT FUCK! YOU FAT FAT FAT FAT--

GRETA (PRE-LAP)
Hey. Hi! Hello?

SMASH TO:

EXT. OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUNLIGHT UNITARIAN CHURCH - DAY

Sheila is now back in the parking lot of the nursery school.
(How much time has passed? We're not sure.)

GRETA
Are you all right?

Sheila is not all right. She covers, smiling.

SHEILA
Yeah, sorry. Didn't get a lot of...

GRETA
Breakfast?

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Sleep.

GRETA (CONT'D)
Anyway, when Buddy told me Danny
got in touch with him, asking for
support...

SHEILA
Buddy?

GRETA
My husband? He's Chairman of the
City Club? They pretty much decide
who is and isn't getting campaign
support... I thought I told you
this... I know I did actually.

SHEILA
Oh, of course. I just...

GRETA
Weren't listening to me! Just
another fat, boring housewife,
going on and on...

SHEILA
No, don't say that...

SHEILA (V.O.)
That's exactly what she is. Fat.
Boring. Who would listen to her?
Who would want to fuck her? That's
where you're headed, that's where
you'll end up...

The voice is so relentless now, Sheila needs relief--

SHEILA
I'm so sorry, Greta. I have to...
I'm sorry.

And as Sheila hurries away, we

SMASH TO:

INT. SHEILA'S CAR/VARIOUS - DAY

We are back in the heat of a binge with Sheila at another
drive-thru. A Foster Freeze knockoff. Nostalgic American
images: Red, White and Blue. A broadly grinning eagle. We are
in her head again-- voice, music, images:

--Speaker vibrates with the voice of the fast-food employee.

SHEILA (V.O.)
No money.

--The wad of twenties hastily shoved in her purse.

SHEILA (V.O.)
That bitch and her round baby
belly.

--The tight white grip on the steering wheel...

SHEILA (V.O.)
He's gonna fucking kill you--

And then, in Sheila's POV, we turn to see: Bunny, aka The
White Rabbit, has pulled up right next to Sheila.

Her convertible top is down. We see her skin, streaked with orange-hued tanning oil. Silver frosted lips wrapped around a straw pulling pink liquid into her mouth. Bunny turns again and looks at her. This time, Sheila doesn't look away. SHE'S GOT NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE.

SHEILA (V.O.)

You're dead already. You might as well see where the hell she's going.

Sheila's drive to binge is replaced with something else: the drive to follow The White Rabbit wherever she may go.

And when the light turns green and Bunny is off, Sheila zooms along close behind...

INT. SHEILA'S CAR/VARIOUS - MOMENTS LATER

The White Rabbit pulls into a pristine new parking garage and drives up, up, up, to the very top of a three story structure, rolling into a spot.

Sheila's car pulls in right after, parking a discreet distance away, and...

Bunny hops out of the car and we see the whole look: leotard, cropped bomber jacket, unapologetically bright metallic spandex tights and white high tops. She's a rocket, zooming off, knowing exactly where she needs to be and being late, late, late...

But for Sheila, this is a foreign planet. She has no idea where she is, and when she gets out to follow, she suddenly loses sight of Bunny...

Did she take the stairs? The elevator? Which one? And as Sheila stares down the labyrinth of the winding staircase, the logo above proudly announcing, "Vista Mall, Another Broom Team Shopping Experience"...

INT. MALL - UPPER LEVEL - DAY

The staircase disgorges Sheila into the upper level of the mall: the International Food Court.

We spin around, looking for Bunny, and see many doppelgängers: but they turn and, no. They're someone else. Shit. Where did she go?

Sheila takes in the brightly lit aerie of the mall, skylight pouring in majestically, exalting the offerings: Aloha Burger, Seaside Sushi, Ocean Dragon Chinese... And then, down a floor below, she spots:

Bunny's distinctive bouncing ponytail zooming across the mall. As Sheila gives chase...

INT. MALL - LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Sheila jumps off the escalator and heads in the direction she last saw Bunny when a familiar voice stops her in her tracks. In the center of the courtyard, the focal point of the whole majestic mall edifice, stands none other than JOHN BREEM, handsome, 40, square-jawed and twinkly-eyed, giving a version of the speech he gave on the radio earlier, this time sanctifying the opening of a new store: Video World.

He stands, mic in hand, framed by the neon sign of the store:

JOHN BREEM

The hallmark of our properties is innovation. And there is nothing more exciting, more telling of the future, than the arrival of Video World! Where videotape allows the family to make wholesome entertainment choices that can be enjoyed together around the electric family hearth...

Sheila gets momentarily distracted until she spots, before her, the entrance to BODY FIRM, the mall's fitness center, and Bunny's ponytail bouncing into it. As she follows after it...

INT. BODY FIRM - MOMENTS LATER

Music blasts through the space, and we find ourselves smack in the middle of a High Impact Aerobics class, just beginning.

An energetic crowd of twenty or so attendees, tripled in impact by the mirrors on three sides of the room, claps along eagerly to the music as Bunny bounds in, a meteorite of energy...

BUNNY

You ready to do this thing?

A roar of assent from the students as Bunny begins the class with a pounding march. High knees, hard claps. Joint-rattling intensity. The students follow, energy building.

BUNNY (CONT'D)

Take it to the left!

(clap)

Take it to the right!

(clap)

Now, punch, punch!

(clap)

Punch, punch! Add the knee! Give me a kick!

Tight close-ups:

--A tan bicep curling a purple hand weight.

--A blonde ponytail whipping around, sweat flying off it.

--Fists punching the air.

--White sneakers pounding the floor.

A room of adrenalized female bodies. Feet flying. Hearts pounding. Arms reaching up to the sky. Church.

And the camera finds Sheila, plastered to the wall, undeniably FEELING IT. This pulse, this energy, she can't help but join in, marching, punching, kicking...

We are with her, the smile, the music, the feeling of connection to her body. A new ritual rushing in where the old one was:

Clap. Punch. Kick. Clap. Punch. Kick.

We feel the rush of her adrenaline kicking in as she shifts into a new gear altogether, the music and energy building in the room and inside her until the images start to swirl, the lights starting to blur, and the curtains begin to close, as Sheila stumbles, and begins to fall to the ground as we...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. VARIOUS - DAY

Glistening water. Beautiful waves. And on top of them, Sheila is dancing, free. On the water? Oh, hang on, she must be...

INT. BUNNY'S OFFICE - DAY

Unconscious. Sheila is lying on a peach leather couch in a small... office? Apartment? Hard to say. Her mouth is open, a puddle of drool growing around it, until...

Her eyes shoot open. She looks around, bewildered, trying to put the pieces together:

Sheila's POV: Industrial carpet. A desk littered with papers and soda cans. A duct-tape mended surfboard propped against the wall, sand fossilized into its waxy surface.

WHERE THE FUCK IS SHE?

In front of her, on a glossy Formica coffee table, a glass of pinkish liquid with a sign next to it that says, "DRINK ME."

Skeptical but parched, she picks up the glass and, drinking it.... WOW. Sour, bubbly, medicinal...

BUNNY (O.S.)

You're up! D'you drink your Pink?

We see: Bunny, standing at the door to the small room, gesturing to the cup of pink lemonade with her lit cigarette.

SHEILA

Where... am I?

From behind a door we hear a woman panting, shouting, crying out, "Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah...!" The unmistakable sound of a woman putting on a show of erotic pleasure...

BUNNY

That's Tyler. He's almost done.

The sound of the woman shrieking stops, and is it... rewinding? And then playing again? Sheila is perplexed.

BUNNY (CONT'D)

He makes these movies. About surfing. Sometimes. Just drink. Don't think. Where are you from?

SHEILA

What... time is it? How did you get me in here?

BUNNY

I'm asking the questions. Who is it, huh? Studio Cindy? Body-by-the-Bay? Who the fuck sent you to spy on my class and steal my moves?

SHEILA

Nobody.

BUNNY

I fucking see you. Following me. In my car. Was it Breem? Are you one of his Mormon morality spies?

(steely)

I SAID DRINK THE PINK. FINISH IT.

Sheila dutifully guzzles the rest. Bunny comes close and examines her face. Cigarette smoke winds around them.

BUNNY (CONT'D)

Why were you so good at the moves, huh? Tell me that.

SHEILA

I... dance. Ballet. So I know how to follow...

(indicating drink)

What's in this?

BUNNY

Pink Lemonade Crystal Light.
And speed. Feeling better?

The rhythm established in aerobics comes back in score. Insistent. Building: CLAP, PUNCH, KICK. CLAP, PUNCH, KICK.

SHEILA

I'm feeling... awake. More awake than I have in... I can't remember.

The adjacent door flies open, revealing TYLER (a surfer's body: wide shoulders, narrow hips, indifferently sun-bleached hair.) Behind him we make out, behind the nests of wires and stacks of video editing equipment... a messy futon.

TYLER

Where the hell is my one-hitter? I can't work without my one-hitter.

BUNNY

You have to put it down in the same place every time.

TYLER

Don't start with me, Bunny. I've been up all night--

SHEILA

Do you guys live... here? In the mall?

Tyler and Bunny look at each other, nervous.

TYLER
She kinda sounds like a spy.

BUNNY
I told you she might be a
spy!

Sheila doesn't deny it this time. She's blank. Inscrutable.

TYLER (CONT'D)
This is my studio. I make movies
about surfing. Sometimes.

BUNNY
And sometimes we work late. And
crash.

TYLER
But we don't live here. Because
that's against the rules.

Tyler looks at Sheila. A challenge. She meets his gaze.

SHEILA
Your one-hitter's over there. On
the windowsill.

Tyler looks and indeed: there it is. He turns to Bunny.

TYLER
At least someone around here gets
it. Now if you ladies don't mind, I
need to get back to my work.

BUNNY
Your "work"?

TYLER
The fuck's that supposed to mean?

BUNNY
Nothing.
(then, explosive)
Just because you bought a fucking
video camera, with my fucking
credit card, doesn't make you a
fucking movie director!

TYLER
Then what am I editing in there
right now?

BUNNY
A porno!

TYLER

A lot of real filmmakers started out... you know what? I don't need this shit! I don't need you not believing in me!

The threads are weaving together, underscored by that rhythm. Loud, clear, insistent: CLAP. PUNCH. KICK.

SHEILA (V.O.)

The only way to make a DIFFERENCE.
The only way to MATTER. Be HEARD.
Be HUGE--

SHEILA

MONEY.

Sheila just stares. Gives her nothing. Gets encouragement from her inner voice for once.

SHEILA (V.O.)

That's it. You let them have it.

CLAP. PUNCH. KICK.

BUNNY

How much?

SHEILA

Ten grand. Ten fucking grand or I tell him and you're so kicked out.

TYLER

That's like half of what we saved.

BUNNY

You fucking pothead you just told her... now she can ask for more!

CLAP. PUNCH. KICK.

TYLER

I meant that's all we have!

BUNNY

You can't put that genie back in the bottle. Just get the coffee can.

TYLER

Seriously?

SHEILA

And... I want your video camera.

TYLER

What?

SHEILA

I need it.

TYLER

Why? You want to make a movie?

SHEILA

No. I want to make a fortune.

TIGHT ON SHEILA, high as shit on speed and lies, as we clap, punch and kick into...

DANNY (PRE-LAP)

We are no longer citizens. We are
consumers.

CUT TO:

INT. CITY CLUB - DAY

Danny speaking to an enthusiastic crowd in the ballroom of a beachfront hotel. His charisma on full display.

DANNY

Defined not by our values, but by
our purchasing power. Not by what
we do, but by what we own. Not by
our words, but by our credit card
statements...

WE ANGLE ON: Sheila in the appreciative crowd. Looking every bit the supportive political wife Danny wants. Needs.

DANNY (CONT'D)

We think we're doing the consuming,
but in reality... we're the ones
being consumed...

CLOSER on Sheila and we see that behind the smile, she is elsewhere, conjuring a new future for herself. She closes her eyes, and we are IN HER HEAD NOW, a pulsing music building louder and louder, a rhythmic prophecy of what's to come...

END OF PILOT