

Reception

A Half-Hour Serio-Comedy Pilot -- This is "Empathetic TV."
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INT. HEAVEN. (WHERE EVERYONE'S RECEPTION IS PERFECT.)

A soft, bright, all-encompassing white light. A voice soothingly repeats 'Welcome.'

High in the clouds, happy RINGING BELLS are heard, as soul-after-soul reaches the PEARLY GATES. A line of people are greeted, one-by-one, by a smiling procession of ANGELS. The angels hand each person their own angelic ROBE and say "Welcome to Heaven." One person tries theirs on. GASP! A perfect fit!

The robes give them an angelic glow and they zip happily through the pearly gates. This is the ultimate reception.

But wait. Is this too good to be true? (Ow, my head.) This can't be happening. (My head hurts, blinding light.) It isn't happening.

**INT. CORTINA MASSAGE THERAPY INSTITUTE, MIDTOWN NYC.
RECEPTION DESK. MORNING.**

We are just inside Erica's head as she accidentally smacked it on a new, low-hanging Cortina SIGN. Erica is 27, white, heavy-set, and from Alabama; the thick accent comes-and-goes. Her eyes stared at a bright ceiling LIGHT temporarily making everything go WHITE.

ERICA (V.O.)

Ow! Hey, I use that head to think!

When her eyes ADJUST and her mind comes to, we see she is not in heaven, but instead in the RECEPTION area of Cortina Massage Therapy Institute -- the opposite of heaven. In an overly-lit room, there is a reception desk, a few couches and chairs, and CORTINA "Welcome" signs galore.

Everything CHANGES from the the way it appeared a moment ago:

1) The line of people receiving their angelic robes becomes the line of anxious STUDENTS waiting for their new Cortina massage robes. The students bark, "When do we get our massage table?"

2) Gently ringing church bells become the elevator's endless, piercing ding, dumping more students into the crowded hall.

3) The Angels repeating "welcome" become the admins in the student receiving line, who apathetically hand out a (much crummier, ill-fitting) massage robe to each new student, and are nowhere near as cordial and kind as Erica's vision from a moment ago.

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Erica looks around, notices the changes, and takes a deep, sad SIGH.

The STUDENTS slowly exit the tiny elevator and make their way into school through the narrow, extremely CROWDED hallway. They are packed in and the line is slow-moving, because today is... Student Orientation Day! OK, this is hell.

No one asks if Erica is alright. Instead, Erica's snooty, snotty boss, Liz, the director of this Cortina location, scolds Erica. Liz is 34, white, pregnant and always touching her belly.

LIZ

Watch the new sign. Corporate is floating around. *Come on.*

Erica rubs her head, sighs again.

While other admins hand out packets and check names off of lists, Erica is getting overwhelmed by the endless line of students she must hand robes out to.

ERICA

Welcome to Cortina. Welcome to Cortina.

Suddenly, she feels very COVID-crowded; only a few students are wearing masks. She grabs her mask and puts it on. The students notice and Erica wants to keep things light. She tries a joke.

ERICA

Anybody else feel like cattle? If you haven't been branded yet, go through the doors to the left.

Erica laughs. No one else thinks it's funny. The ADMINS glare at ERICA.

ERICA (V.O.)

Wait. Cattle jokes are funny. *I'm* funny. Aren't I? When did I stop being funny?

As ERICA continues handing out robes, she is overwhelmed by it all; she goes numb and loses her words. She instead releases sharp, staccato, cave-woman-style grunts, with each robe she hands out.

ERICA (greeting, smiling)

Welcome to Cortina. UG. UG. UG.

LIZ

Erica. Erica? You're just grunting.

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ERICA
 Oh, sorry. (V.O., realizing) I am.
 I am just grunting. When did I
 start grunting?

LIZ (sharply, to the students)
 Have your vax cards OUT. You must
 provide proof of FULL vaccination.

ERICA, forcing a smile, hands a robe to a student.

ERICA (V.O.)
 Can't think well lately. Mind
 jumbled. *Welcome, welcome.* All
 meaningless. Maybe it's the new
 COVID variant? Maybe it's cancel-
 culture!

RE: All the bodies. She keeps that smile on her face.

ERICA (V.O.)
 Packed in like fucking sardines.
 Didn't used to bother me. You can
 feel the breath of the person next
 to you on the subway. But now, I--

A student accidentally STEPS hard on her foot. Erica tries so
 hard to be kind through her pain.

ERICA
 Ow! Jesus. Yikes. That's OK.
 Simple accident.

The student unapologetically takes the robe, says nothing,
 turns, and goes.

ERICA (V.O.)
 Prick! I hope your first client
 tries to grab your dick! No, don't
 think that way.

We see:

1) The students being crushed in the hallway. Ah, New York
 City. Some of them are trying not to panic.

2) BARRY (65, white), the building's security guard, is
 DOWNSTAIRS in the LOBBY, ogling the girls, and snarling at the
 students of color as they enter the elevator. ROCKY (20,
 Latinx) is the last person to jam herself on the elevator.
 Barry gives her a nasty look. She tries not to let it affect
 her.

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3) Rocky exits the elevator and enters the crowded hall. She's disheveled, but eager, and though heavy-set, she has an intuition and resilience that gives her lightness.

LIZ (above the din)
Are you Rocky M.?

ROCKY nods.

LIZ
I need you in my office. Wait. VAX card?

ROCKY fishes for it, hands it over. Liz doesn't want to touch it; she holds it by the tips of her fingers, glances at it, hands it back, and sanitizes her hands.

LIZ
Yeah, great. Did you take care of that issue with your dad? You can't have your table until you're all paid up.

Rocky is embarrassed that everyone overheard. Liz and Rocky squeeze their way past the throng and into Liz's office; they shut the door.

Denise (40, Filipino-American, from NJ), the director of financial aid, squishes her way over to Erica, who is still numb and grunting, and continuing to hand out robes.

DENISE
Liz is extra dragon-y today. Hey, I saw you whack your head. Are you OK?

ERICA ("yeah, I'm good, thanks.")
UG.

Denise sees her son, CHANCE (6) running around in the back office area. He runs by Liz's window. From her office, Liz gives Denise the stink-eye.

DENISE (wtf?)
Do you have a cavewoman audition coming up or something?

ERICA (huh?)
UG?

CHANCE screams and runs off. DENISE rushes off after him. Erica realizes she's been grunting again.

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ERICA (V.O.)
Must. Stop. Grunting. Must offer
students *something*. They're young.
And eager. And they've ALL GOT
COVID!! AGGGGHHH!!!!!!

**INT. NYC AUDITION SPACE. RECEPTION/WAITING AREA.
MORNING.**

The scream CROSSFADES, as Pat (27, white, skinny) is SCREAMING
in his own mind. He just got off an elevator, and is also
surrounded by bodies.

PAT (V.O.)
AGGGGHHH! Bodies everywhere.

His mask on, he makes his way to the audition's HANDSOME
PROCTOR.

HANDSOME PROCTOR
Name?

PAT (his own caveman-grunt)
UG.

HANDSOME PROCTOR
Dude, take that thing off, I can't
understand you.

PAT (reluctantly sliding the mask
down)
UG. Name, UG.

HANDSOME PROCTOR (wtf?)
...

PAT
I mean, *Pat*, sorry. Not 'Pat
Sorry,' Pat Snyder. Is my name.
Sorry.

HANDSOME PROCTOR (snickering at
the fact that PAT is not muscle-
bound)
You're here for the muscle milk
super body ad?

PAT (lowers his voice)
Yeah, um, no, the, uh...I'm here
for the Leprechaun audition.

HANDSOME PROCTOR (laughing)
Audition? OK. It's for a catering
company.

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PAT

A what?

HANDSOME PROCTOR

Yeah, a catering company is doing a St. Patrick's thing tonight at some dinner. You're signed in. Have a seat.

Pat turns to look at the unmasked room full of handsome, muscle-bound guys there to audition for the super body ad. The only available CHAIR is between two hunky dudes.

PAT (V.O.)

OK, here we go. First time back. No more sending audition self-tapes from home. This is the real deal. Geez. Room so small. And almost no masks?? I don't like this...

He sits, squished in.

PAT (V.O.)

Look at all these stupid hunks. Not here for some ridiculous catering company thing. Honey lied to me. Again! When I talk to her I'm gonna--

He sees a young, ATTRACTIVE WOMAN going around asking if the hunks want anything to drink. She SKIPS Pat.

PAT (V.O.)

Sure, skip me. I'm just a human being. She probably only asks guys with sleeve tattoos and sex addictions who insist they're "influencers". Well, I'm thirsty, too! How come I'm not good enough to--

She turns back to him.

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN

Sorry, did I skip you? Would you like something to drink?

PAT (sliding his mask down; super awkward)

Oh, uh, yes. I'll have some...some...UGH, what's the clear drink that gives you...life?

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ATTRACTIVE WOMAN

Water?

PAT

Water! Yes. That's it. Thanks. I don't know why but lately I can't remem--(she hands him water and goes. (V.O.) Ah yes, familiar abandonment. Hello, old friend.

He takes a sip.

PAT (V.O.)

Why am I grunting? Why can't my brain...connect to my words? What's going on?

HANDSOME PROCTOR

Pat S.? Pat S. for the *Tip of the Tongue Catering* Leprechaun?

PAT

That's me.

He stands, the hunks snicker.

PAT (V.O.)

Why do their eyes have to follow me? Why scrutinize? I'm a regular person!

HANDSOME PROCTOR hands Pat a LEPRECHAUN costume complete with a full LEPRECHAUN HEAD.

HANDSOME PROCTOR

Here.

PAT takes it, slides his mask down.

PAT

Where do I put it on?

HANDSOME PROCTOR

I dunno, dude, out here? The bathroom?

PAT

Out here??

He sees all the faces staring at him.

PAT (V.O.)

Anxiety, crippling. Feet locked. Head going to explode!

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MARCY, the no-nonsense catering company representative, approaches.

MARCY
Space is *the* premium in this city.
Let's try it on out here.

She takes the oversized pants and holds them out for him to step into.

MARCY
In you go. Like a warm bath.

Pat tries to step in but his foot catches at the waist and he goes crashing to the floor, Marcy on top of him. She's not flustered but the hunks are barely stifling laughs.

INT. INNER AUDITION ROOM. MIDDAY.

PAT is dressed fully in his offensive LEPRECHAUN costume. The costume head covers PAT's entire head. Marcy's camera is on and ready to go. She starts some *Lord of the Dance* Irish music.

MARCY
OK, now dance.

PAT
Dance?

MARCY
You'll be dancing most of the night. Give me big St. Patty's day energy, I have eight more to see.

PAT (V.O.)
Eight? Jesus! Thanks capitalism.
You're a real fucking treat,
capitalism.

Pat goes for it. He tries to dance how he thinks a LEPRECHAUN might dance. He does a lot of bowing, and pointing, and kicking of his heels. He goes hands-on-hips for a bit, striking odd angles, before tipping his buckled hat and doing a deep bow.

The door to the reception area opens and the HUNKS get a full view of PAT dancing. He hears the hard laughter and turns to see them.

Instead of seeing PAT's face react, we get a SLOW ZOOM CLOSE UP of the maniacal, unchanging LEPRECHAUN face.

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EXT. BRYANT PARK. MIDDAY.

PAT bursts onto the NYC streets, furious, and near tears. He goes to use his phone, but it rings in his hand. It's his agent, HONEY (67). She's ORANGE, shriveled, and has become a caricature of herself over the years.

PAT (answering)
I can't believe you didn't tell me
this was for some stupid catering
co--

HONEY
Pat, I've got the audition of a
lifetime for you.

PAT
I'm not going.

HONEY (her glasses on, reading the
breakdown)
You'd play a surfer. Ridin waves,
bro. Hanging ten. He's the envy of
Yang...yang zyoo Province. Now, it
looks like you gotta go shirtless
but this is A-list, kiddo!

PAT
A-list?

HONEY (she's holding the list)
Well, it's on a list.

PAT
Look Honey, I may only be twenty-
seven, but I've been in New York
five years already -- and that's
five years too long to keep doing
this shi--

HONEY (enticing him)
You'd play the main Chinese
surfer, called 'Surf-Fried Rice.'

PAT
What?? No! That's racist! I'm
obviously not doing that. You
should know me by now. Look,
Honey, I've been...I'm not happy!
I'm disconnected. From all this.
From the last twenty auditions you
sent me on. All of them
ridiculous!

(MORE)

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PAT (CONT'D)

The one where I had to interview those women on the toilet? Or that gameshow for sex offenders? Or how about that Proud Boys recruitment video? Huh? I was "Cuck #1?" I'm not doing it anymore, Honey!

HONEY

No, no, no, no! I'm going back to the big times, Pat my boy, and I'm taking you with me!

PAT

I'm not a hunk! No one is gonna offer me something to drink and I get thirsty, too!

HONEY

Of course you do. That's why I've got the audition of a lifetime for you. Blackface is out of the question, obviously, but how about brown face? COVID didn't slow down Bollywood a bit! (reading) You play Akhil, a rogue vampire monk with a heart of bronze!

PAT ends the call. He stands in the middle of BRYANT PARK a moment, lost. The throng of people scares him. He puts his mask on. He watches a bird flit happily about, and land in a sunny patch on a tree, it's natural home.

PAT (V.O.)

Huh. Where do I fit?

A MAN without a mask bumps into PAT, COUGHS, and keeps walking. PAT cringes and rushes toward an empty park bench. He sits. He again watches the birds in the sky. They all seem like they belong.

Pat sees a BLACK STREET PERSON with a saxophone in hand, getting ushered "politely" out of an upscale liquor store by two WHITE managers, until the STREET PERSON produces cash out of the sax's bell. The white men look at each other, each with a face that says, "Well, I guess if he's got the money..." They let him back in.

PAT (V.O.)

Jesus. Does anybody get treated like they belong anywhere?

Pat is SUDDENLY INSPIRED to pull out a notebook and a pen. He excitedly writes a poem about what he sees.

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PAT (V.O.)
 The black jazz bird...improvises
 only fitting notes,
 and...harmonizes with his upright
 bass, an oak. While a black jazz
 man cannot find a melody...c'mon
 Pat, this is shit! I wrote so well
 in college. Maybe if I darken
 things up a bit; since it's a jazz
 bird, maybe I could give it an
 opiate addiction -- hey! I'm not
 grunting! I'm...I'm *thinking!*
 Full, complete sentences. (a test)
 Yes, I am currently thinking in
 full and complete sentences. Wow,
 I am! Look at me, reforming the
 English language from my own
 brain! Nothing can stop me now.

PAT grabs a half-full diet coke bottle from his backpack and
 takes a drink. He stifles making a face.

PAT (V.O.)
 Must get better vodka. That is
barely drinkable.

He continues to write the poem.

PAT (V.O.)
 This isn't a bad poem. I'm
 actually writing a *good poem!* How
 long has it been? Since I've
 written anything at all?

Pat looks up and around, taking in the world again.

PAT (V.O.)
 I can hear myself! When I write, I
 I don't feel my *crippling anxiety!*
 It's almost like I have a vague
 undersatnding of what they call
 "self-confidence."

The STREET PERSON reemerges, a MASSIVE GRIN on his face, and he
 does a little happy dance as he walks off with his new bottle.
 A FLOCK OF BIRDS bursts into the sky. Pat smiles.

PAT (V.O.)
 Things find their own little
 harmony, sometimes, don't they?
 Maybe I've found mine and I won't
 feel disconnected anymore!

He texts Erica. We see WORDS ON SCREEN as we HEAR Pat say:

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PAT (V.O.)
 Audition went terribly. Done with
 Honey for good. I wrote a poem
 about jazz birds and a drunken
 homeless man and now I can think!

He takes a long drink from his vodka/soda bottle.

**INT. CORTINA MASSAGE THERAPY INSTITUTE, RECEPTION AREA.
 LATE MORNING.**

Erica is putting on HAND SANITIZER when she gets the text and is like "huh?" She has to wave her hands dry so she can text back. WORDS ON SCREEN as we HEAR Erica say:

ERICA (V.O.)
 It's "houseless", not "homeless".
 And done for good? Wow! What
 happened? Are you still coming
 early so I can get to my audition?

Meanwhile, the students have finally been ushered into a classroom to watch a presentation, and Erica picks up trash from the chaotic AFTERMATH. Her front-desk (reception desk) phone rings. She rushes to answer and whacks her TOE along the way.

ERICA (grimacing)
 Ow! Damnit! Thank you for calling
 Cortina, this is Erica, how ca--

Dail tone. They hung up.

ERICA (V.O.)
 Maybe if I break my entire foot
 next time, they'll stick around to
 hear me scream. They probly get
 off on it. God, I hate people.

She nearly whacks her head *again* on the low-hanging Cortina sign, but senses it, dodges it, and is pleased with herself. But not too pleased, because while she sterilizes her phone receiver, she overhears two TEACHERS talking as they walk by.

TEACHER
 I wish I taught at a real school.
 These kids are hopeless. Every
 effing orientation.

ERICA (V.O.)
 They're not hopeless! And if they
 are it's 'cause of hack teachers
 like you.

(MORE)

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ERICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
No, don't think that way. She's
probably really good
at...something. Not doing her
hair, obviously, but something.

ERICA sees a group of BLACK students walk by.

ERICA (V.O.)
It's 'cause most of them are
black, isn't it? What, are you
gonna call the cops and have them
all gunned down?

The POLICE arrive. Erica is freaked out but they're casual;
they come here pretty frequently.

POLICE #1
Hey, is Liz around? We're looking
for a Tayvon Miller.

LIZ (emerging from her office;
respectful of police, but annoyed
to see them)
Of course! *Of course* on
orientation day. Hi, boys. Who do
we want today?

POLICE #1
Miller, Tayvon.

LIZ (looking it up)
OK, yeah, he checked in, but then
he disappeared. Erica go grab him.
(she shows ERICA a digital
picture) Maybe he got "confused"
and went upstairs to the abandoned
floor. Be careful, he's (catches
herself) new.

INT. CORTINA STAIRWELL.

Erica climbs the stairs, looking for Tayvon.

ERICA (V.O.)
Why *always* a black kid? Don't
white people do anything wrong?
It's racist harassment. I don't
know how to break this to ya, but
sometimes the folks that end up at
a massage therapy school are a
little down-on-their-luck.
(MORE)

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ERICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And if you intend to harass people
of-color every time they try and
get an education, then you're
just...I mean, it makes me SO--

Erica hears crying. She pokes her head around. It's Rocky,
slumped into a stairwell corner.

ERICA
Hey. Hey, it's OK. Rocky, right?
What's wrong?

Rocky stands and tries to seem fine.

ROCKY
I'm OK. I just got turned around.
Is the exit on this floor?

As Rocky gets closer, Erica secures her mask.

ERICA
Leaving already? Look, I know
things were a little crowded and
chaotic downstairs, but--

ROCKY
No, it's not that. I'm fully
vaxxed, btw.

They lock eyes. In a freeing moment, Erica slides her mask
down. Rocky sees Erica is earnest and genuine.

ROCKY
It's actually, um, one of the
teachers...

Erica gets a text from Liz. WORDS ON SCREEN: "Cops are
waiting!" Erica reads it and ignores.

ROCKY
The one with the -- (demonstrating
the bad hair)

ERICA (nodding)
Mh-hm...

ROCKY
She told me I wasn't a good fit
for this program. That my size is
"prohibitive to this profession"
and that I might want to consider
a different career path.

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ERICA

Well, that's fucking nonsense.
I've seen lots of people of all
sizes not only graduate but go on
to have legit careers. You and me
should go talk to Denise, the director
of financi--

Rocky's phone dings; she checks the text, and an apologetic look comes over her face.

ROCKY

I gotta go. Sorry.

She rushes off, Erica is left upset that she couldn't do more.

INT. CORTINA HALLWAY.

Erica is looking for the missing student. She sees him and they make eye contact as he quickly ducks into the men's room.

INT. OUTSIDE THE MEN'S ROOM.

Erica cracks the door, doesn't look in.

ERICA

Tayvon? Hey buddy, um, can you
come out?

TAYVON

I didn't do anything!

ERICA

Oh, I'm certainly not saying you
did. Frankly, Tayvon, I don't love
that it's my job to come get you.
Can we talk? Please?

TAYVON

What're they gonna do to me?

She's seen the news and knows what happens to unarmed black men. She can hardly bring herself to say...

ERICA

If you didn't do anything,
probably nothing.

TAYVON (quietly)

What if I did it though?

ERICA (not wanting to ask)

Did what?

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TAYVON

Took this guy's laptop. From Starbucks. You guys kept saying you *have to have* a computer and I can't afford one and this guy had *three*.

He slowly reveals himself. We see a skinny, very young-looking, scared, 18 year-old kid. His face asks, 'What's gonna happen to me?'

Erica takes a deep breath. She feels horrible for him. She pushes past her COVID fears, and reaches out for him. He pushes past fears and resentment of his own and comes toward her. She pats him on the back and they walk down the stairwell.

INT. CORTINA. RECEPTION. AFTERNOON.

Erica sees Liz talking to the cops. She's smiling, overly-friendly, touching their arms, laughing at their non-jokes. Everything about how Liz treats the police is 180-degrees the opposite of how she treats students-of-color. Erica notices it all.

LIZ

Can I have someone get you boys more coffee? Who's around? (she looks for someone to get them coffee)

Barry has been hovering, annoying everyone as he always does when the cops arrive.

BARRY

Yeah, I knew it was a ten-thirty-one the second I heard it come over the radio.

POLICE #1 (annoyed)

Where did you get another scanner?

Liz sees Erica and Tayvon.

LIZ

Finally. Where was he hiding?

TAYVON (attitude)

I wasn't *hiding*.

Liz glares at Tayvon. Two white female students walk by and Liz gives them each a quick (forced) SMILE, then goes back to GLARING at Tayvon. Erica sees this, too.

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The police start to take Tayvon away, no handcuffs, no violence. It's still awkward and depressing.

POLICE #1 (responding)
No one said you're under arrest.
We're gonna go outside and talk,
that's all.

He shrugs a police hand off his shoulder, and goes for his phone.

TAYVON (attitude)
I'm gonna call my mom.

He drops his phone. Erica PICKS it up. Her face shows her genuine desire to help him as she hands it to him. TAYVON is skeptical that she'll do anything. She watches the police usher him away. She is upset about it. She writes "Tavyon - Computer?" on a post-it and sticks it to her computer monitor.

She then watches Barry fidget with the police scanner like a goober. Erica puts on more hand sanitizer.

ERICA (V.O.)
He looks like those white kids
that wanted to be black growing
up. Desperate to fit in, but still
totally out-of-place. What did we
usta call them? Wiggers!
Definitely can't say that anymore.
Look at him. Barry the police
wigger. Barry the pigger. Ha!

She thinks, "I know that's funny!" and smiles as she writes that down. Denise comes running from the back offices into the reception area.

DENISE (frantic)
I can't find Chance.

INT. CORTINA STAIRWELL.

Erica searches for Chance.

ERICA (V.O.)
Why is so much of my life spent in
a stairwell? I'm not a
receptionist, I'm a stairwell-ist.
I'm a stairwell-ista. I'm
positively stairwell-ian.
(cockney) Banisters are me
specialty, govna'.

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She goes to the abandoned floor, checks the door. It's unlocked.

INT. CORTINA. ABANDONED FLOOR.

Desks are untouched, as if everyone left during an air-raid drill. Erica pokes her head in. The lights are off.

ERICA (V.O.)
Unlocked. That's odd. (aloud)
Chance? (V.O.) What are they gonna
do with all this empty space? Must
be so expensive in Manhattan.
Cortina comes in, buys up the
company, lays everyone in upper
management off, and basically
abandons the floor.

She looks around, flips on the lights. Denise texts Erica.
WORDS ON SCREEN: "I'm getting scared. Have you found him?"
Erica texts back: "not yet."

Erica looks at the many doors connected to the large, open-plan room, and wonders what to do next. Suddenly, she hears a little kid laughing. She moves quickly toward the sound, opens the door, and finds Rocky and Chance smiling and playing with toy trucks. Rocky sees Erica and is afraid she's done something wrong.

ROCKY
Vroom, vroom. (she stands) Um,
hey. He was having a fit and I
started talking to him and he
calmed down. I'm sorry.

Erica smiles warmly at Rocky, mouths "it's OK," and texts Denise. WORDS ON SCREEN: "He's OK. On 3rd floor. A student found him."

Erica sees something special in Rocky. It's as though Rocky's MOVEMENTS are fluid, connected, and her energy is uniquely able to heal.

Denise enters, breathless, and mouths a sincere "thank you" to Rocky, then calmly goes to Chance and sits down next to him as he plays with a truck.

DENISE
Hey buddy. You had me worried.

Rocky goes to the door.

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ERICA

How did you get him to calm down?
He can be a handful. One that
people (whisper) like *Liz* don't
always have the patience to deal
with.

ROCKY

He's on the spectrum, isn't he?
(Erica nods) I put my hands gently
on him and he...like...melted,
kinda, into them.

ERICA

You're gonna be a *great* massage
therapist.

The smile on Rocky's face fades, and a new sad one replaces it.

ROCKY

I better go. I'm sure I'm missing
more stuff.

Erica watches her go, the sounds of a giggling Chance in the
background. Erica checks her watch.

ERICA (V.O.)

Yikes! Audition's in an hour.
Gotta go over my sides.

INT. CORTINA STAIRWELL. LATE AFTERNOON.

Erica is hurrying back down to her reception desk when she runs
into Pat, who is arriving to take over the shift for her.

PAT

Hey!

ERICA

Hey. (V.O.) More stairwells? I'll
call my memoirs "*Erica the
stairwell comedian; One step in
the right direction.*" Ha. That's
not funny.

He takes her by the shoulders.

PAT

Listen. I'm quitting acting.

ERICA

You smell like booze.

Made in Highland

PAT
I haven't been drinking.

She looks at him like "yeah, right."

ERICA (lowering her voice;
disappointed)
Are you carrying a soda bottle
again? You quit that for like a
year! I know COVID has been
brutal, but they've smelled it on
you before, Pat.

PAT (popping a mint)
Listen, I started writing again. I
wrote a poem. And I feel unlocked.
I can think!

ERICA
You noticed you were...grunting?

PAT
You too?? (she nods) But I wrote
this poem and I think I'm supposed
to be a writer. Here, listen. (he
clears his throat, reads grandly)
"The black jazz man--"

ERICA (walking back downstairs)
We have that scheduling meeting
and then I have to prep for *my*
audition!

PAT
I know, I know, but -- "the black
jazz man cannot find a melody,
while...(he reads on while she
rushes away)

ERICA (V.O.)
Oh god, I'm being assaulted by
poetry. It's Edgar Allan Poe
summer camp all over again!

She's gone. He yells after her.

PAT
I'm free, Erica! I'm not an actor
anymore! I'm FREE!

INT. FLASHBACK: 9 YEARS EARLIER. WEBMAN COLLEGE. DAY.

WORDS ON SCREEN: "Nine years earlier."

Made in Highland

A plaque outside the classroom/theatre reads "Webman College Acting Conservatory. St. Louis, Missouri."

Two student actors are presenting their scene while 25 others sit on the floor and watch. Three professors sit in chairs and watch.

The actors finish their scene with a passionate embrace, and during the clapping, wait nervously for the teachers to respond. Arrogant PROFESSOR BILL speaks up and disperses the applause.

PROFESSOR BILL

The ending embrace isn't the
issue! The issue is, when Sarah
Louise is pounding on the door,
Percy, you're standing there
weakly mumbling *please stop*,
please stop and that to me screams
LIE.

Everyone is aghast, and terribly uncomfortable, including other teachers.

We PAN around the room to see (a younger-looking) Erica and Pat, sitting cross-legged on the floor, wide-eyed, mouths agape, watching in HORROR as their classmates are berated.

PROFESSOR BILL

You're paying to lie to me and
you're paying me to hear lies.

INT. FLASHBACK CONT'D. WEBMAN HOUSE PARTY. NIGHT.

Pat and Erica stand in a corner of a house party, assessing. She nibbles endlessly on snacks while he constantly drinks from a big plastic cup of whiskey.

ERICA (looking around)

Have you seen Nick?

PAT

Are you gonna drool all over him
all night? He's so rude to you.
(V.O., watching her eat) More
food? Aren't you full yet?

ERICA (V.O., watching him drink)

More whiskey? Aren't you full yet?

NICK approaches.

Made in Highland

NICK

Yo, Pat, I saw that little play you wrote. Not bad, bro. You should write more. (causally) Hey, Erica.

ERICA (dreamy)

Hey, Nick.

PAT

Are you sure it didn't "scream lie."

NICK

Yeah, what was that? Bill is such a prick.

PAT

My scene goes up next week -- I just hope I don't get cut. What is it, November? I've been in college three fucking months, and all that's happened is I've developed an acute anxiety disorder. (he drinks)

NICK AND ERICA

Me too.

ERICA

Jinx. Gotta buy me some self-esteem.

NICK (laughs)

You were super funny in the Tuesday showcase. Yeah, you're a funny one, Bauman. (he punches her arm lightly, the touch lingers a moment)

ERICA

Really? Thanks. (she puts down the food, trying to be super casual)
So, are we still going out after rehearsal tomorrow?

NICK

Johnny!

Nick sees a friend, rushes off. Erica tries not to look upset.

PAT

Don't sleep with him.

Made in Highland

ERICA
I wasn't going to!

PAT (studying her)
You already did, didn't you!
Jesus, Erica, you're gonna run out
of guys!

ERICA
Look who just walked in.

We see Sandra, blonde and stunning, entering the party.

ERICA
My turn to tell you not to make
more bad decisions.

Pat nervously guzzles his whiskey. It's clear he has feelings
for Sandra.

INT. WEBMAN HOUSE PARTY. MINUTES LATER.

Erica, Pat and others listen to Sandra's story. The boys hang
on her every word, Pat especially, while Erica seethes.

ERICA (V.O.)
I hate you. Effortless bitch. No,
not bitch.

Guys clamber to give Sandra a drink.

ERICA (V.O.)
Like she's a princess. Everywhere
she goes they fall at her feet.
She's so pretty they assume she's
nice.

SANDRA
...and I was like, if I wanna go
to the fuckin ghetto and buy some
weed then I'll go the fuckin
ghetto. I don't care. Black guys
love my big booty.

Everyone laughs but Erica. Pat puts a flirty hand on Sandra's
shoulder, while Erica looks around to see if anyone of-color
heard Sandra's remark. One young man did, his eyes are down.

INT. PRESENT. CORTINA MEETING ROOM. DAY.

Erica, Pat and Denise (with Chance) chat in the meeting room
while they're supposed to be working on scheduling.

Made in Highland

Papers are spread out on the table. They've been discussing their college years.

ERICA

Yeah, even at a liberal arts school, we didn't know how to stick up for *anyone*. So embarrassing.

PAT

Yeah, but we were freshman, like, what, *nine* years ago? We were young, too! (no one is impressed). Fine, the gay kids, we did OK with them.

DENISE

Or at least that's what they told you.

Erica and Pat ponder that.

ERICA

I know things are finally changing back to pre-COVID, like travel is basically reopened and all, but it's funny, the way I see people in space has changed. It's like, my awareness of myself, and I guess other people too, *just* kicked in for the first time in my whole life.

PAT

And don't forget the grunting. It's like we lost our words.

DENISE

Yeah, you two have been doing that for a while. Have *I* been grunting?

PAT

No, you just get really, really quiet.

ERICA (prompting)

Like you didn't say a word for three days last week.

DENISE (her mood changes)

Chance and I went to a PTA meeting. No matter how exhausted I get it, you're supposed to socialize, socialize, socialize.

(MORE)

Made in Highland

DENISE (her mood changes) (CONT'D)
That's what helps with ASD. So, we went. Antonio said he'd come pick Chance up. Relieve me, so I could go home to cook. Antonio never came. Was gone for 72 hours. God knows where. He says he just needed to get his own space, clear his head, but...

Pat and Erica are stunned.

DENISE
And when he did come home, Chance seemed scared of him. Like he didn't know him. Never met him. I've been making Antonio sleep on the couch. And I can't sleep without him. So. I never sleep.

Heavy. Pat and Erica try and process. Liz bursts into the office.

LIZ
They're having sex! Ewwww. Go take care of it!!

ERICA
What?

DENISE
Who's having sex?

LIZ
There are two new students, right now, in the abandoned third floor, having sex! I looked in the window and saw clothes on the floor and I heard giggling. How did it get unlocked?

Liz closes the door and lowers her voice.

LIZ
Ever since the government started that program, we've had *the bottom of the effing barrel* in here. We've got new owners floating around! Pat, go up there and write them their first warning. Maybe they'll do it again tomorrow and we can have them gone by the end of the week. Go! You're not helping in here anyway.

Made in Highland

She opens the door, Pat reluctantly walks through it.

ERICA (wanting Liz to leave)
Are you sure they're having sex?
Maybe they're just lifting free
weights. Or juggling raw chicken
cutlets.

Denise makes an "ew!" face and covers Chance's ears. Liz starts to leave, turns back.

LIZ
Oh look, a receptionist that does
more than grunt.

She points to the work on the table like, 'let's get back to that,' and exits. Erica and Denise hate Liz.

INT. CORTINA. ABANDONED FLOOR. DAY.

Pat turns the corner and sees Barry looking in a window. He comes up quietly behind Barry, and notices that he is watching female students change in the distance.

PAT (calling him out)
Hi, Barry.

BARRY (startled)
Oh! I was just, uh. Welp, no ISIS
here.

He rushes off. Pat looks through the window.

PAT (V.O.)
They're not having sex, just
changing clothes. I can't blame
them for doing it here and not the
bathrooms. The Yelp reviews about
this place are true. Barry is such
a perv. So, what, he tells them
they can come up here to change,
and then ogles them? Gross.

One of the FEMALE students catches Pat's eye. She gets a look on her face like "what the hell??" Pat freaks, and drops below the window, slumping to the ground.

PAT (V.O.)
Was that assault? Did I just
assault a student? Oh god! Do I go
on a registry now?!?

INT. CORTINA WOMEN'S ROOM. DAY.

Erica is touching up her make-up for her audition. She's finally mildly happy with her appearance. Just as she turns to leave, she sees in the MIRROR, a REFLECTION of Rocky, tucked into a bathroom stall, reading her phone and wiping tears from her eyes.

Erica really wants to help, but checks her own phone; it's time to go to her audition. She debates a moment but reluctantly leaves.

INT. CORTINA. RECEPTION. DAY.

Pat is headed to Liz, as Erica slings her bag over her shoulder.

PAT
I didn't assault anyone! Where's Liz?

ERICA (huh?)
You didn't assault...OK, whatever, wish me luck.

PAT
Good luck! On what?

ERICA
God, you're a dick. My audition.

PAT
I'm kidding! Break a leg! (V.O.)
Note to self: listen to other end of conversation.

INT. NYC SUBWAY. LATE AFTERNOON.

Erica sits smiling on a middling-crowded train. She has her audition SIDES in her hand as her mind races.

ERICA (V.O.)
This is gonna be good. A proper fucking comic audition.

She notices the dead eyes of everyone around her. How she pities them.

ERICA (V.O.)
Look at them all, their cold, dead subway eyes. Poor, unfunny bastards.

Made in Highland

An old Jewish woman has on orthopedic shoes.

ERICA (V.O.)
Orthopedic shoes. Orthopedic *Jews*.
Is that funny? Can I say that?
Well, I *did* say it, and it is
funny. I'm on fire!

She writes down "Orthopedic Jews!" and double underlines it.
She smiles to herself, satisfied.

INT. NYC AUDITION SPACE #2. DAY.

Erica, more confident than usual, walks up to the FEMALE PROCTOR.

ERICA
Bauman, Erica.

The proctor holds up a sexy nightie.

FEMALE PROCTOR
This should fit the measurements
your agent sent.

Erica's face falls.

INT. INNER AUDITION ROOM.

Erica holds the nightie and walks into the inner room. She sees the audition-ers, a scene set up with a bed, and a slew of lights and cameras.

She sees the woman who just finished her audition, changing from the nightie back into her street clothes. She looks miserable.

A pervy male producer catches Erica's eye and comes over.

MALE PRODUCER
Change anywhere you like.

He stares at her. Erica is overwhelmed, and heartbroken. Should she do it? She reluctantly sets her bag on the floor.

EXT. MIDTOWN NYC. DUSK. 12 MINUTES LATER.

Erica bursts outside, her phone to her ear. She wipes tears from her eyes. Honey answers.

HONEY
Honey-dew productions.

Made in Highland

ERICA

You lied! You said it was a regular comic audition!

HONEY

Erica, that *was* a regular audition. This is the biz now. Back in my day--

ERICA

That Hooters Jr. audition? Remember? All those horny little boys, following me around? Or last week when I auditioned for that dairy mascot, Mrs. Udderly Delicious? They make fun of my weight. Or they wanna see my teats--er, tits. Why, Honey? Where is an audition, *any* audition that doesn't degrade me?

HONEY (deep breath, reality check)

Look, in this business...I mean, let's not mince words...size can be prohibitive.

ERICA (looking for words, can't find them)

Honey, you're my *agent*...I mean that's just...UUUUGGGG! Goodbye.

She ends the call and looks around, trying not to appear devastated. She wipes tears from her eyes, takes a breath, and starts aimlessly walking.

EXT. MIDTOWN NYC. SUN SETTING. MINUTES LATER.

Erica wanders and tries to hide that she's been crying. She sees a LINGERIE storefront and stops. She stares at it, looking at the skinny plastic models, and processing.

ERICA (V.O.)

If you don't fit the ideal, you don't fit. Same thing with Rocky. But we *do* belong. I should...I should start a support group! For actors. With differen--with *non-traditional* body types! I'll invite Rocky. It can be for anyone who feels like they just can't fit in. *Just can't fit in*. Ha. Like a...like a Q-Anon-er who actually takes their anti-psychotic meds.

(MORE)

Made in Highland

ERICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Like a white man at an 'Other
People Also Exist' rally. Like a--
hey, when I think about this
stuff, I'm me! I'm funny! I'm
completely grunt-free! Screw you,
Honey! Screw you, industry! Yes,
this is right. This is *all* right.

Erica is super excited about her new endeavor and starts to
text Rocky to invite her to the group.

EXT. OUTSIDE CORTINA, MIDTOWN NYC. SUN NEARLY DOWN.

Rocky smokes a cigarette just outside CORTINA's entrance.
Rocky's phone is in on silent, and doesn't ding. Pat has sent
the last patron into their massage and so has a free moment. He
comes outside and joins her.

PAT (deep breath)
Whew. Rocky, right? (she nods) I
quit those, a while back, but I
don't actually possess any will
power, so, can I...?

Rocky hands him one. They smoke.

PAT
Thanks. How was day #1? (She gives
him a look) That bad, huh?

ROCKY (she needs to tell someone)
My um, my dad is sick. Or, that's
what he's saying. I saved up a
bunch of money for school. And now
he's saying he needs all of it.
For treatment.

PAT
Oh, Jesus. I'm so sorry.

ROCKY
He's not sick. I don't think he
is. But I'm the only one who could
give him money if it's true. It's
like, my family sees me as a
walking dollar sign. I want to
branch out, to go off and be
myself, but that's not how it
works with them...and then I
thought this school was the right
place for me. And now it's like,
is there a right place?

Made in Highland

She takes a breath.

ROCKY
And Liz wants money. Today.

Pat is stunned and sorry.

Rocky is trying to hold it all together. She looks at her phone.

ROCKY
Now who's texting me? Sorry.

She wanders off. Between the buildings, Pat watches the sun setting. He looks at the DIET COKE bottle he's holding in his hand. He wonders if he needs the last few swigs. He finds the will to toss it in the garbage. He's pleased with himself. He walks off camera. He comes rushing back in, fishes it out, looks around, and stares at it. Did anyone see?

INT. QUEENS, NYC. MODEST TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Erica bursts in the door, eager. She goes to a drawer and pulls out a bright red notebook hand-labeled "The Funnies."

ERICA (V.O.)
Alright. Time to dust off the old funny book. Cause I'm a funny gal, damnit. Hello, old friend. Now. I need icebreakers for the first group meeting. To help us purge all our self-doubt-y feelings. I want the group to embrace people from all walks of life. Ha. Sounds like *mall walks of life*. (announcer-style slogan for mall walks:) *Start at the abandoned Sears, and I'll meet you at the abandoned Dillards where they just had that shoot out: Mall Walks.* Ha. That's going in.

She writes it down.

ERICA (V.O.)
These are just one-liners though. I need a way to *purge*.

She texts Pat.

Made in Highland

INT. NYC SUBWAY. NIGHT.

PAT sits on the subway and gets the text.

WORDS ON SCREEN as we hear ERICA say:

ERICA (V.O.)
I'm starting a support group for
people with non-traditional body
types. I need something to help us
purge our feelings. You're a
writer now, can you write us
something?

Pat thinks. Erica texts again.

WORDS ON SCREEN, along with Erica's voice: PS what do you call
everybody's boobs?

He texts back "?" RESPONSE: "Communi-titties."

Pat laughs and texts back, WORDS ON SCREEN along with PAT
voiceover.

PAT
Hahaha. That's funny! I'll start
writing now.

Pat opens his laptop and is instantly nervous.

PAT (V.O.)
First writing task already? Oh,
man. Familiar nervous feeling
returning.

He swigs the last from the bottle, is not pleased that it's
empty.

PAT (V.O.)
Goddamnit, I better be good at
this. Don't be a loser, Pat. Don't
be a fucking loser.

INT. QUEENS APARTMENT. NIGHT.

ERICA (V.O., smiling, pleased)
It is. It is funny. But I'm
working without a net here,
people. Although Annette will be
back Monday. Is that any good? Hm.
(MORE)

Made in Highland

ERICA (V.O., smiling, pleased)
 A bit Henny Comin' man. (she lays on
 a thick, mocking version of her
 Alabama accent) Course, comin'
 from where I done come from, you'd
 a-thunked I'd know more about Mr.
 Jeff Foxworthy. (she thinks,
 accent fades) What about a
 political laundromat called "Spin
 Cycle." Ha. Now *that's* funny! Er--
 is it?

She doesn't know, doesn't care, keeps writing.

INT. QUEENS APARTMENT. NIGHT. 45 MINUTES LATER.

Erica is at the tiny kitchen table diligently writing one-liners as Pat comes in the door, too jazzed, too high-strung.

PAT
 Hey ya, group leader!

ERICA
 Hey there, writer! (they smile)
 Ya know those machines that help
 people breathe while they sleep?
 I'm thinking of a children's book:
 C Pap, C Pap Run. (he smiles) Is
 that offensive?

PAT
 Dunno. All my friends can breathe
 on their own.

ERICA
 You think maybe I really could do
 stand up?

PAT
 Why not? I mean, YES. BUT. I have
 a script for you. Finished it on
 the train.

He pulls out his laptop.

ERICA
 Holy cow! Already?

PAT (he sits)
 Pour me a drink? OK, here we go...

Made in Highland

ERICA

Yeah, hang on though. I was thinking. This group is for people with non-traditional body types, and your body is...traditional.

PAT

Traditional? Like decorating a Christmas tree? Like trampling another shopper to death on Black Friday? How can a body be *traditional*?

ERICA

Well, you may not be the right person to write this script since your body has never been...an issue.

PAT

A) I'm super skinny and that's plagued me all my life (she hadn't considered that) and B) I know these issues inside-and-out -- I've been writing about them for the last 45 minutes! Now, I'm a writer, I'm *supposed* to be drinking.

Pat pours himself a whiskey. Erica sees the news is on and turns up the volume.

STUDIO ANCHOR

...as a new variant begins to spread throughout Asia and is making its way--

She chickens out, and mutes it.

ERICA

Gah! I can't.

PAT

Meh, I'm fine. I'm vaxxed.

ERICA

You are!?? *Fully*? You did it?! Good for you! I've been vaxxed for forever now and I'm still scared. Although, it's funny. Today is the least I've thought about that in...a long time.

Pat takes a swig from the whiskey bottle before drinking from his drink. Erica thinks that's odd.

Made in Highland

PAT
C'mon, let's read the scene.

They sit next to each other.

PAT (reading)
Heavy actors 1 and 2 sit in a
dunkin donuts, piles of food
spread out before them.

ERICA (V.O., this doesn't sound
good)
Uh-oh.

PAT (reading)
Hey Mac, are you full? How come I
never get full?

ERICA (V.O.)
Mac? WTF? (reading aloud) I can't
get full because I'm empty inside.
All these auditions I go on--
(stops reading) wait wait wait. I
don't feel empty.

PAT
Yeah, but these are characters.
I'm engendering a vibe. I'm
constructing a milieu. Keep going.
(reading) Yeah, I know what you
mean. I'm a big, empty pit without
any insides, and I need food
dumped in there constantly
otherwise I--

ERICA (V.O.)
Holy fuckballs! Stop! (aloud)
STOP! Sorry. Just, stop. That um.
Doesn't sound like me, or. Any
heavy person I've ever talked to.
Sorry.

Pat tries not to be dejected. Something dawns on Erica.

ERICA
Look, you're a really talented
writer (V.O.) probably. (aloud)
But maybe, you just, can't be in
charge of creating a narrative you
haven't lived? Or at least like,
really studied?

A beat.

Made in Highland

PAT

Oh.

ERICA

Well, I mean, maybe you can. Let's just talk. I'll tell you what I've felt and you translate it into a...something?

PAT

You think?

ERICA

Yeah, like, I'll give you the emotional nuances, and you can add the writing structure.

PAT

Writing structure, emotional nuances. Lots to learn.

Pat mimics putting a gun to his head and pulling the trigger.

PAT

BANG. Haha. Well. Don't wanna be a loser. Bottoms up!

Erica watches Pat drain his first whiskey, and pour his second.

ERICA (V.O.)

Geeeeeeez.... (she catches herself snacking and drops the food).

PAT (adding ice to whiskey #2, looking around the space)

It's funny. COVID made me appreciate our apartment so much more. It's like you were saying, I feel space everywhere, suddenly.

ERICA

Yeah, and like, how you *feel* in space.

PAT

And how you make people feel. Like Liz, today.

ERICA

Oh, god.

PAT

She only cares about you if she can sell you something.

Made in Highland

ERICA

And nobody says shit to her.

PAT

I don't think anyone has ever, in her entire life, walked up to her, looked her in the eyes, and calmly, but forcefully said: Liz? Shut-the-fuck-up.

ERICA

I nominate me.

PAT

Ha. Yeah, if she was a problem before a massive, no-nonsense corporation bought Cortina...

ERICA

Right. Hey, did you meet that Rocky girl?

PAT

Yeah! She's got kind of a special energy, I thought.

ERICA

I think so, too. I invited her to the group. I really hope she says yes. I think it could help her.

PAT (realizing)

You realize we've carried on an entire conversation without grunting!

ERICA

Woah! We're blossoming! COVID can't stop us! And I'm on a funny roll! I don't feel nearly as depressed.

PAT

And I'm not anxious! Or, I'm still really anxious, but this new anxious is much better than the old one! Writers create their own realities. So. I have much more control now. (he drinks a lot of whiskey).

ERICA

Yeah, good for you. (V.O.) Sheesh.
(MORE)

Made in Highland

ERICA (CONT'D)
He's going faster than I've ever
seen him. Why?

Erica realizes she's holding more food, drops it, and moves away from the table entirely. She forces Pat into an uncomfortable convo.

ERICA
Maybe now that COVID is calming
down, it'd be a good time to talk
to someone. Like, find a
therapist.

PAT (getting drunk)
Ya know, you're my all-time best
friend. In fact, this is, without
a doubt, the healthiest
relationship I have ever had with
a woman.

ERICA
(genuinely touched)
Aw. Thanks. I feel the same about
you. (beat) But, so yeah,
therapist. I could arrange a time
to go. Maybe even like, to an AA
meeting or something.

Pat freezes. His energy changes when he hears "AA". We see his demeanor slide downward. Fall off a cliff, actually. But he pulls up hard, and goes MANIC. He starts to undress.

PAT
Hey, I can do it, right? I can
write for other people. I don't
have to be them to write for them.

ERICA (amused)
What are you doing?

PAT drains his second whiskey and takes all his clothes off but his underwear and socks.

PAT
Do I need a fucking *support group*
for someone to love me? I need to
be held and loved, too! (He yells
out the window) I am worthy of
love!

Erica laughs. Pat runs to the apartment door, slips on dress shoes, and opens the door. Erica stops laughing.

Made in Highland

ERICA
HEY! What are you *doing*?

Pat runs out into the street, wearing only socks, dress shoes and underwear. Erica watches from the window, concerned.

PAT (a wild admission)
Hey everybody! HEY. I'm only *half-vaxxed*! Only half! HA. I get TOO SCARED! I get too fucking nervous to go! Isn't that pathetic! Isn't that FUCKING PATHETIC?

Erica sees a COP CAR spot Pat. They hit their lights and roll up. Erica watches Pat do everything he can to get arrested. He takes off his underwear and runs around. He howls at the moon. He's naked and screaming. But the Police Officer (#2) is super patient and tries to level with him.

POLICE #2
C'mon, man. Hey. Hey. Where do you live? If you just tell me where you live, I'll take you home.

PAT
I can't write for you. I'm not a COP! I don't know your *emotional nuances*!

POLICE #2 (grabbing at Pat, missing him)
Bro, you can sleep this off at home tonight. Settle down and tell me where you live?

PAT
Where do I live? Where do I LIVE?

Pat spits on the ground. It doesn't hit the cops, but it's close.

PAT
THAT'S where I live.

POLICE #2
Cuff him. Fuckin' cuff him!

The cops GRAB him.

PAT
No! No! I'm good. I live there. I live RIGHT THERE. WAIT. STOP!

Made in Highland

POLICE #2 (cuffing)
Too late. Too, late, man. You're
gonna spit? I gave you two
chances. Watch your head.

They GINGERLY put him in the back of the car.

Erica glances back into the apartment, at the TV, and on the news, sees a headline which reads "Unarmed Black Man Gunned Down by Police." She stares hard at the reporter and the crowd of angry black folks gathering at the scene, as the inherent contradiction of the treatment of whites and blacks hits her. She looks back out the window as Pat looks up at her from the back of the cop car. They make eye contact. Pat has calmed a bit but is still drunk.

PAT (V.O.)
Sorry, E. I guess I don't know
about heavy people and you don't
know about drunks. Oops.

Erica's phone dings. It's from Rocky. WORDS ON SCREEN: "I'm giving my dad the money. My family needs it and my size is prohibitive to this profession, anyway, right?" Erica takes that in. She tears up. Her phone dings again. WORDS ON SCREEN: "Your group sounds good tho. I'll try to come. :)"

Erica's face brightens, but shows that there are now at least two narratives she doesn't understand and therefore should not try to control.

She looks at a used laptop on the table with a sticky note reading "For Tayvon" on it.

Her FUNNY notebook is in her hands. She reads "Orthopedic Jews." She scratches it out. She's disappointed with herself. She suddenly feels that familiar worthless feeling, and flings the notebook back into the drawer she pulled it out of. She doesn't close the drawer, though. The notebook's red cover is visible, and she gives it one last glance.

As she stares out the window, the COP CAR lights flash off of her face for just one more second before the cop car is gone. The TV lights replace them, and flash off of her face.

End of Pilot.