

HARMONY RISING

by

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

A ceiling fan lazily spins in a room so hot the walls seem to sweat. Through the whirl of the blades we see HARMONY, 28. She lies in bed in her bra and panties, reading a book entitled Our Andromeda. She turns the pages rapidly.

A bedside alarm clock radio strikes 8:00 AM, and a DJ's ebullient voice breaks the dreamy silence.

DEEJAY

(on radio)

Good morning, Los Angeles, and I'll
be damned if it ain't a scorcher!
Temperatures look to reach a
hundred twenty degrees downtown,
making this the hottest day in
recorded history - and we're only
getting started. Not to be outdone
by the weather, gas is set to reach
ten dollars a gallon, and
unemployment to top twenty percent.
Also in the news, the water
shortage continues...

Harmony marks her place in her book with a strip of wallet-sized photographs of a couple in their early 20's in a variety of silly poses. The bottom edge of the strip is ragged, suggesting that a fourth photo has been ripped away.

She closes the book, and for the first time, we see her face. Two things are immediately apparent about Harmony: first is her exquisite beauty; also, an intensity squeezes her features into a furrow of...what? worry? concentration? sadness?

Curled up next to Harmony is her sleeping son, KIDD. Kidd is six. She brushes his hair aside and kisses him. On the other side of the bed is JESSE, 20's. Jesse is still sleeping but it's pretty clear he is not the young man we just saw pictured in the photo strip.

DEEJAY (CONT'D)

(on radio)

Here's a little ditty just for you,
City of Angels. Happy sweating!

Billy Idol's HOT IN THE CITY begins: "Stranger..."

Harmony turns off the radio but the song continues as:

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Harmony sits on the toilet, urinating. She winces in pain.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Still in her underwear, Harmony stands over a frying pan in which bacon sizzles in its own fat. She cracks two eggs and drops them in the pan. Sweat glistens on her skin. She runs a wet towel over her face and neck, wiggles her hips. Breakfast never looked so sexy.

Then, she arranges the food so that the eggs resemble eyes and the bacon strips a smile. She dances the plate over to the table, pours a tall glass of milk, shakes the last drops down her throat and tosses the carton in the trash.

The song ends.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Now dressed, Harmony sits on the edge of the bed and puts on her boots. As her son crawls out of bed, she holds out her cheek for a kiss. Then, she slings her book bag over her shoulder and as she follows Kidd out of the room, Jesse grabs her wrist.

JESSE
(sleepy)
Babe...

HARMONY
(knows what's coming)
Can't. On the rag.

JESSE
How about some of that Plan B?

Harmony pulls her hair back and crawls onto the bed. She kicks the bedroom door shut.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Harmony brushes her teeth vigorously, spits into the sink.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Kidd sits at the table eating his breakfast. Harmony appears behind him and kisses the top of his head.

HARMONY
Go easy on Jesse today, huh?

KIDD
He's not my dad.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Rush-hour traffic is at a standstill, exhaust belching from tailpipes, horns bleating, sun blazing. A garbage truck chugs by.

Harmony exits the walk-up apartment, stops at the curb before a HOMELESS MAN who has fallen asleep on the sidewalk. She pulls the man up to a seated position. She hops on her skateboard and scuttles down the sidewalk.

We follow Harmony as she zigzags in and out of traffic. She hitches a lift on a bus by grabbing hold of the bus's rear bumper. She lets go of the bus and crosses several lanes of traffic to head left and arrive at:

EXT. PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER - MORNING

She knocks on the auditorium's heavy metal door, tries the knob, but it is locked.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Harmony skates along the sidewalk sucking on a milkshake. She stops in front of a walk-in clinic, where a sign shows two muscular young men in briefs holding hands. The sign reads: "Free STD Screening."

INT. CLINIC (WAITING ROOM) - MOMENTS LATER

Harmony stands at the counter. The BORED RECEPTIONIST looks up from her magazine.

HARMONY
I might have a urinary tract
infection.

RECEPTIONIST
You'll need to see the doctor.

HARMONY
I was hoping somebody could just
write me a prescription.

The receptionist shakes her head, hands Harmony a form to fill out. Harmony looks across the street. The auditorium door is still closed. She takes the form and sits.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - MORNING

Harmony now lies spread eagle on the examination table, wearing stirrups and a gown, and not looking too happy about it. The DOCTOR (20's, wispy, effeminate) sits between her legs, his head covered by her gown. In the corner of the room, a NURSE stoically waits.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Used to be HIV was the rage. Now it's gonorrhoea of the throat. Hmm, hmm. You get it from performing oral sex. Makes a person long for the days when a blow job was the safe bet.

(laughs; clears his throat)

Some weather we're having.

He emerges from beneath the gown and hands the sample to the nurse, who leaves the room.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

It'll only take a minute. They just have to run it through the thingamajiggy.

He picks up her chart and studies it as they wait...

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(making conversation)

Heroine. Is that French?

HARMONY

(shrugs)

I think my mother was high the day she named me.

DOCTOR

(continuing)

It's funny...remove the "e" there at the end, and you're a highly addictive drug. With it, and suddenly you're a remarkably brave woman.

HARMONY

Yeah, well, I'm more of the former.

He looks at her quizzically.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

(playful)

Pretty irresistible.

(MORE)

HARMONY (CONT'D)

(he laughs)

Anyway I go by Harmony. My middle name.

And wait...

DOCTOR

(continuing)

What's that saying...the devil's in the details? It was originally God is in the details, meaning whatever you do should be done thoroughly.

And wait...

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Which reminds me I forgot to ask...do you perform regular breast exams?

HARMONY

No, but my boyfriend does all the time.

(laughs)

Sorry. No.

DOCTOR

We can wait for the nurse to return, if you'd feel more comfortable.

HARMONY

(sighs; uncrosses her arms)

It's fine.

INT. EXAM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The doctor stands beside Harmony. His hands are beneath her shirt.

DOCTOR

Any family history of breast cancer?

HARMONY

(nods)

Mom.

DOCTOR

How's mom doing?

HARMONY

They had to remove her breast, and she'll be on medication for the rest of her life.

DOCTOR

Well, you tell mom she is lucky to be alive. And while you're at it, tell her she should keep off dairy.

Harmony, who had been drinking her milkshake, freezes mid-sip.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Organic or not, doesn't matter. Filled with hormones, growth factors, and other...junk.

(laughs)

Did you know the World Health Organization predicted the cancer crisis the world now faces?

(nods)

They faulted the public dietary guidelines promoting meat and dairy as necessary foods. That was thirty years ago. Hardly anyone listened. People believe what advertising tells them. "Milk does a body good," and "Real men eat beef,"--

HARMONY

Ow!

DOCTOR

That hurt?

HARMONY

(wincing)

A little. Ow!

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

The doctor leads a worried Harmony down the corridor.

DOCTOR

(reassuring)

Just a little pin prick.

INT. MAMMOGRAPHY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Harmony winces as a RADIOLOGIST inserts a needle into her right breast, up by the armpit. He's looking at a radiographic image of her breast as he does this.

INT. RADIOLOGY READING ROOM - LATER

The radiologist stands before a viewer discussing the mammogram with the doctor. Harmony sits outside the room looking at them through the glass.

RADIOLOGIST
Could be calcification. Then again,
maybe just an artifact.

DOCTOR
Malignant?

RADIOLOGIST
We won't know until we get the path
report.

Harmony pounds on the glass.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

The doctor leads Harmony back to the front desk.

INT. CLINIC (WAITING ROOM) - DAY

He hands her a sheet of paper.

DOCTOR
Results should be available in
about a week. Call if you haven't
heard from us by then.

HARMONY
(resolute)
I'll wait right here.

DOCTOR
I'm sorry, Ms. Horowitz, but there
is a process--

HARMONY
All I wanted was a goddamn pill!

She marches to an empty seat and sits. The doctor laughs nervously. Then, she closes her eyes and emits an ear-piercing scream that goes on for a terribly long time. When it ends:

DOCTOR
I'll see what I can do.

INT. WAITING ROOM - LATER

Harmony scans the room impatiently. She leafs through magazines. Beneath the magazines, a BOOK. She picks it up, looks at the wall clock. It is noon.

INT. WAITING ROOM - LATER

Harmony reading. The room has thinned out considerably. It is now two o'clock.

INT. WAITING ROOM - STILL LATER

At five o'clock, Harmony finishes the book. She is alone in the waiting room.

The doctor appears.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

The doctor sits with Harmony. He holds the pathology report.

DOCTOR

Pathologist is an old queen. He owed me a big favor, and when I mean big...

Harmony glares at him.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

No need to thank me.
(looking at report)
"Fibrocystic breast disease." It's not really a disease. Are you currently menstruating?

HARMONY

No. Probably in a day or so.

DOCTOR

Makes sense. A woman's breasts get swollen and tender at the start of her menstrual cycle. Completely normal. You see, nothing to worry about!

As she stands to go:

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Oh...and your urine came back clean.

HARMONY

So I don't have a UTI?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kidd sits on the floor in front of the TV playing with baseball cards. Harmony enters, squats down and kisses her son on the forehead.

HARMONY

Did Jesse take you to the game like he promised?

He shakes his head. Harmony frowns.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Where is Jesse?

Kidd points to the bedroom. Harmony hands her son a Rubik's Cube.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Here, work on that.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Harmony enters the bedroom to see Jesse in bed having sex with a WOMAN.

HARMONY

(recognizing)

Megan?

INT. BUS (MOVING) - NIGHT

Harmony and Kidd sit in silence, Harmony stewing, Kidd playing with his toy.

HARMONY

Wanna hear about mommy's day? Well, I never made it to my seminar. Got held up at a walk-in clinic where I was misdiagnosed with breast cancer only to get downgraded to STD, thank you Jesse.

(more to herself)

Which made me late for work, third time in as many weeks, and so I got canned. Which allowed me to arrive home in time to catch my boyfriend sleeping with my best friend. Sleeping is a euphemism, you do realize.

Across from them an OLD WOMAN eavesdrops in disbelief.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

I don't know what I saw in him, really. Actually, I do. He was the cutest boy in the bar and I always get the cutest boy.

(sighs)

But I suppose he had a point. I practically refused to have sex with him. That's not really true. But once or twice a week was fine for me. Maybe I have a low sex drive?

The woman glowers at her. She is working up to saying something.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

I remember back in school, the nuns used to tell us that the purpose of sexual intercourse was to show love for your spouse, or to procreate. Well, Jesse wasn't my husband. And as for making babies, I already have you.

(to herself; wistfully)

And I guess I didn't love him all that much, either.

The woman has had enough.

WOMAN

Young lady, that talk is not right for such a young child! Really, you should be ashamed!

HARMONY

(genuine)

But I'm his mother.

WOMAN

Shame on you all the more.

HARMONY

Can I ask you a question? Do you have children of your own?

WOMAN

(proudly)

Three sons. All grown to fine young men.

Harmony takes her son's hand and stands.

HARMONY

When people told you how to raise
your boys, how'd that make you
feel?

The woman says nothing.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Mother and son walk up a quiet residential street in an
upscale neighborhood. Big houses, large lawns, gates.

HARMONY

(more to herself)

So it's back to grandma's. Which
shouldn't be so bad. Except there
will be Earl to deal with.

KIDD

Ron, mom. His name is Ron.

(beat)

I want ice cream.

HARMONY

That reminds me. Mommy read how ice
cream is, like, the number one
cause of allergies. And guess what,
you don't have asthma. You are just
allergic to milk. Starting today,
it's no more dairy, no more meat,
and no more eggs. Are you excited?

(beat)

Give me your inhaler.

He hands his inhaler to his mother. She drops it in a nearby
garbage can.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Now are you excited?

As they continue walking:

HARMONY (CONT'D)

It's time for your mother to grow
the fuck up. Excuse me, but there's
more to life than looking cool and
dating the hottest guy, and I have
to cultivate better taste in
friends, maybe even be my own best
friend for a change.

KIDD

You are, mommy.

HARMONY

I am what?

KIDD

My best friend. Now can I have ice cream?

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens to reveal Harmony's glamorous mother, ELAINE GOODRICH (50's).

ELAINE

(to Harmony)

Well look who the cat drug in.

HARMONY

Dragged.

ELAINE

(ignoring; to Kidd)

Come here, you!

KIDD

I want ice cream.

ELAINE

You've come to zee right place, daahling!

Kidd bolts for the kitchen.

HARMONY

(exasperated)

Mother!

ELAINE

What did I do?

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harmony and her mother walk past Elaine's husband, Ron (70's), smoking a cigar on the couch.

HARMONY

(to mother)

You let him smoke inside the house?

ELAINE

Don't get any ideas.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mother and daughter sit at the kitchen island watching Kidd lose himself in a large bowl of sorbet.

ELAINE

Aren't you supposed to be at work?

KIDD

(between mouthfuls)

She got canned.

HARMONY

Please, can we not discuss it?

(off son's ice cream)

You're sure that isn't made with milk? Because we're not eating any more dairy. Neither should you. It probably caused your breast cancer.

ELAINE

Milk? Says who?

HARMONY

Scientists. Famous ones.

RON (O.S.)

Are these the same scientists who inform the public that milk builds strong bones?

HARMONY

(to Ron)

No, that's the dairy industry!

(to Elaine)

Milk actually weakens bones. It leaches calcium.

(beat)

Was I breast fed?

ELAINE

(thinks about it)

For the first few days. But I couldn't produce enough milk. You were one hungry baby.

HARMONY

So you fed me cow's milk?

ELAINE

(nods)

Formula. It was before soy.

HARMONY

Did you know that infants given cow's milk are more likely to get diabetes and other autoimmune diseases? I'm lucky I don't have multiple sclerosis.

ELAINE

Blaming mom for how you were treated as a baby? How very teenage of you.

HARMONY

(ignoring)
And ear infections.

ELAINE

You had several of those, growing up.

HARMONY

Also caused by cow's milk.

ELAINE

(getting it)
So this is what you're into now? A foodie, isn't that what those people are called? How long will this phase last?

HARMONY

It's not a phase.

ELAINE

What happened to save the whales?

HARMONY

(quietly; sees herself in the mirror)
Dolphins.

ELAINE

Now it's what, save the cows?

HARMONY

It's not about cows. Maybe it is. I don't know. But it's much bigger than that.

ELAINE

It always is.

Harmony shoots her mother a look.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
What about the dolphins? Your
father, lest we forget--

HARMONY
Lest we remember! You don't have
one picture of him in this whole
damn house.

ELAINE
It's Ron's damn house, and keep it
down.

HARMONY
(softer)
Not one. You didn't waste any time
getting remarried.

ELAINE
(familiar territory)
Harmony, it's been seven years
since your father passed away.
Seven years. That's longer than
most marriages!

Harmony shakes her head.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
I had to think about myself. Your
father didn't leave me much choice.

HARMONY
Because he left his money to me? Is
that it? Some good it's done. You
won't even let me touch it.

ELAINE
Your father put that money in trust
for you to invest in your future,
not to fritter away on...how's
Jesse?

KIDD
He got canned.

This wins a smile from Harmony.

ELAINE
(feigning surprise)
I never would have guessed.

HARMONY

Okay, okay!
 (changing the subject)
 Mind if we crash here?

ELAINE

If you don't mind "crashing" on the couch.

HARMONY

What about the guest room?

ELAINE

Our new fitness center. It's more convenient than joining a gym.

HARMONY

What about Kidd?

ELAINE

Kiddo can sleep with me.

HARMONY

What about Ron?

ELAINE

We converted the entertainment center into a spare bedroom.
 (off her daughter's look)
 Yes, we sleep in separate beds.
 It's what old people do.

HARMONY

So Ron has his own room?

ELAINE

(nods)
 But he usually sleeps on the couch.

HARMONY

Then what about me?

Kidd yawns.

ELAINE

Time for bed. Is it a school night?

HARMONY

It's Friday. Anyway, school doesn't start for another week.

ELAINE

Wonderful. A week with grandma.
 I'll take him to the club.

(MORE)

ELAINE (CONT'D)
 (to Kidd)
 You can watch your nanny whip
 grandpa Ron at tennis.

KIDD
 Milkshakes!

ELAINE
 All this boy thinks about is food.
 (to Kidd)
 Now off to bed you go!

Harmony accepts a kiss from her son, who then skips out of the room. She seems depressed.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
 What's wrong, dear?

HARMONY
 (on the verge of tears)
 I just had a really long day.

Elaine softens. She opens the island drawer and pulls out a framed photograph, taken perhaps thirty years ago, of her and Harmony's father, Harmon, who could pass for a Billy Idol impersonator. They look thoughtfully at the picture for a long moment. Then Elaine returns it to the drawer.

ELAINE
 Your father will always be my great
 love.

HARMONY
 Then why did you move on?

ELAINE
 (laughs through tears)
 I suppose I needed someone to beat
 at tennis. Just don't tell Ron.

RON (O.S.)
 I heard that!

HARMONY
 (pleading)
 We can split dad's money. You're
 the trustee. Just dip in.

ELAINE
 (shakes head)
 Your father's dying wish was for
 you to become a professional.

HARMONY

(teary)
But, why?

ELAINE

I suppose because he was a professional.

HARMONY

I don't want to be a lawyer.

ELAINE

Neither did he. He hated the law. His dream was to be a musician - but the man couldn't carry a tune. The point is, your daddy-o saw so much promise in you, but he also knew that you came at everything like a...what's the word?

HARMONY

(rolls eyes)
Dilettante.

ELAINE

That's right. You'd dabble, get the gist, whether it was sports...and in school you were good at all the subjects. Genius IQ.

HARMONY

(heard it before)
Mom...

ELAINE

I'm serious. You were tested. And remember what a great artist you were? How you loved to paint! Then you graduate college, enter the real world, and, what? You just sort of dropped out. There wasn't anything you couldn't do, and now you're not doing anything. And at twenty-eight you're turning out to be a professional, what, slacker.

HARMONY

(emotional)
Hey, I'm a mom, mom.

ELAINE

And you're a good one. So there's that.

Elaine dabs her daughter's tears away.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Become an expert. Get to the bottom of something. Really delve. You can make a difference, if you stay focused, and pursue your passion.

(catches herself)

I'm beginning to sound like that preacher on TV.

HARMONY

That, or a bumper sticker.

ELAINE

(nudges daughter; then:)

Your father wanted you to believe in something the way he believed in you. He named you Heroine, for God's sake.

HARMONY

(surprised)

I thought that was you.

Elaine shakes her head.

ELAINE

"Harmony" was me.

HARMONY

(feeling better)

Thanks, mom.

ELAINE

(standing; cheery once again)

Enjoy the couch.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Harmony looks into the living room and sees Ron sprawled out on the leather couch, snoring loudly.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Harmony skates down Sunset Blvd. smoking a cigarette. She wears headphones and kicks and cuts back and forth to a rhythm only she can hear.

EXT. RESTAURANT (EMMA'S PLACE) - NIGHT

Harmony skates to a stop in front of a "Help Wanted" sign hanging in a restaurant window.

As she approaches the door a hand turns the "Open" sign over to read "Closed." She knocks on the glass anyway.

A red-haired woman opens the door. This is EMMA. She is Harmony's age, and spunky.

EMMA
Harmony Horowitz?
(beat)
Emma Scarborough. Beverly High.
Class of like...whatever!

The recognition is one-sided.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What are you doing here? I mean,
welcome to my restaurant.

HARMONY
(steps back)
You're closed. It's cool. I'll come
back.

EMMA
No, no. Come in.

INT. EMMA'S PLACE - NIGHT

Harmony and Emma sit at a four-top table by the entrance. Behind them, a BUSBOY sweeps the floor. On the table are several plates of food. Harmony eats while Emma goes through the evening's receipts.

EMMA
(pointing)
Those are sweet potato fries, baked
not fried. Gluten-free pizza.
Vegan, of course. Like everything
on the menu. And that's flourless
chocolate cake.

HARMONY
(through a mouthful)
Amazing.

Harmony pushes the empty plate away from her.

EMMA
So what have you been doing with
yourself?

HARMONY
(avoidant)
I sure could use a beer.

EMMA
 Sorry. No liquor license.

Harmony starts to light a cigarette. Emma shakes her head.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 You can never get the stink out of
 the velour.

Harmony removes the cigarette.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 So...this is sort of like an
 informal high school reunion. Did
 you go to the actual shindig last
 month? Me neither. I wasn't exactly
 what you'd call popular. Unlike
 you.

(remembering)
 I'd get so excited when you'd say
 hi to me in the halls. You were,
 like, the coolest girl in school.
 Oliver Peoples shades, faded
 Levi's. Every guy's wet dream.
 Didn't you get caught having sex in
 the stairwell? Yes! That was you!
 Legend!

HARMONY
 (quietly)
 Yes, well, some things have
 changed.

EMMA
 (continuing)
 I, on the other hand, excelled at
 nothing. Of course we were in AP
 Latin together.

HARMONY
 (remembering now)
 Pizza face!
 (beat)
 Sorry.

EMMA
 (hurt but hiding it)
 It's fine.

HARMONY
 I never called you that, if it's
 any consolation. Anyway, your skin
 is flawless.

EMMA

Thanks.

(beat)

So what are you doing these days? I thought for sure you'd be famous by now.

HARMONY

(uncomfortable)

I don't really measure myself by my accomplishments.

EMMA

So...pretty much nothing, huh?

They share a smile.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Me, after college at Columbia I went to business school, but I was bored out of my friggin' mind. So I opened the restaurant, and now I'm making the world a better place one mouthful at a time. That's our slogan. Did you know that the water used to make one burger--

HARMONY

(brightening)

--could provide a person with a seven-minute shower every day for a year. I read that! And eating a burger is like driving a car every day for a month.

(beat)

But I don't own a car, so...

EMMA

(mock astonishment)

Does that mean you eat meat?

HARMONY

Not today.

Emma places the receipts in an envelope and seals it.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

(trying not to seem interested)

So you're hiring? I mean, I saw the sign.

EMMA

No. Well, yes. But for kitchen prep. Why?

(getting it)

One five-foot Mexican can do the work of three gringas. Besides they'd never leave you alone back there. Right, Gomez?

The busboy looks up from his broom.

BUSBOY

Si.

EMMA

But you're kidding, right? Why would the girl who got into Stanford want to scrub dishes?

HARMONY

I didn't go to Stanford.

EMMA

Still!

Harmony grabs her bag and abruptly stands.

HARMONY

You're right. Thanks for the chow. It was nice running into you.

EMMA

Wait! I'll walk you out.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Emma locks up. Harmony lights a cigarette and sets down her skateboard.

EMMA

You are not riding that thing home.

She cocks her head in the direction of her car.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Harmony and Emma enter her apartment. A FAT GRAY CAT crawls out from beneath the couch.

EMMA

(petting him)

Samson has to eat at midnight. One second late and he claws the furniture.

HARMONY

You should have him declawed.

EMMA

I know, but I prefer to keep him wild. Oh, and before I forget: if Sam gets too close to you just knee him in the nuts.

HARMONY

Your cat?

EMMA

No, my boyfriend, Sam. You're sleeping over, right?

INT. APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Harmony quietly exits the apartment.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Harmony skates down the street.

INT. BOOKSTORE - MORNING

Harmony sees a "We're Hiring" sign, enters. The cashier shakes his head and removes the sign. She walks out.

EXT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - MORNING

She visits an outdoor swimming pool, looks up at the lifeguard. He shakes his head, no.

EXT. LOCAL LIBRARY - MORNING

Harmony skates past the public library, sees a long line of people. She approaches a guy reading a book with the title CBEST Exam Prep. She hands him a ten dollar bill and he gives her the book.

EXT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Harmony sits beneath a tree speed-reading her book.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Harmony sits in a room with other test takers. She's scanning test questions and bubbling in her answers.

INT. STAIRWELL - EMMA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Harmony climbs the stairs, Emma exits carrying a trash bag.

EMMA
 (hugging her)
 Hey you!

HARMONY
 I think I may have left my smokes
 here?

EMMA
 (as she drops the trash
 down the cute)
 Whoops, there they go. I was afraid
 Sam would find them. He smokes
 anything that lights. I'm serious,
 once I caught him lighting up one
 of my tampons.

HARMONY
 It's okay. Well, later.

Harmony turns to go. Emma takes her by the hand and leads her
 into the apartment.

EMMA
 You just got here. Where have you
 been all day?

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Two overgrown frat boys sit on the couch watching a boxing
 match on TV. On the table before them are beers, chips,
 brownies, drug paraphernalia, etc.

EMMA
 (over TV)
 Guys, this is Harmony.

Neither looks away from the TV.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 (louder)
 Guys!

THE GUYS
 (in unison)
 Hey.
 (turning to see Harmony)
 Hey!

EMMA
 Sam, Harm just got her teacher's
 credential. You should see about
 getting her a job.

Sam grunts and he and his buddy walk out the front door.

EMMA (CONT'D)

We're going to a party. You should come!

HARMONY

I'm not really in the mood. Is it okay if I crash here?

EMMA

Mi sofa es su sofa.

(beat)

You sure you don't want me to stay?

HARMONY

(brightens)

I'm fine. Really. Go. Have a good time.

Emma hesitates.

SAM (O.S.)

Emma. Elevator!

She stands on her toes and kisses Harmony's forehead. It is a tender moment. The distance is bridged. Harmony laughs nervously, averts her eyes. Emma play punches her on the chin.

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

Emma!

Emma backs towards the door and blows Harmony kisses.

Billy Idol's LA WOMAN plays as:

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Harmony opens the fridge, takes stock. She sees a plate of brownies, grabs one and takes a bite.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She is on the couch with her brownie, reading a book.

EXT. BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER

Now she's on the balcony, glass of red wine in hand, entranced by the spectral glare of downtown Los Angeles. The image blurs. She sways, blinks.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Now she's back on the couch, eating another brownie and watching "Ren & Stimpy." She laughs so hard she almost spits out her food.

The song ends.

The door opens and Emma enters. Harmony turns down the volume.

EMMA

It's just me. I came to check in on you.

HARMONY

(loosey-goosey)
Where are the homeboys?

Emma takes in the scene. Cartoons, glazed eyes.

EMMA

You ate a brownie, didn't you?

Harmony shrugs, covers her mouth, finishes chewing.

EMMA (CONT'D)

A whole one?

Harmony holds up two fingers, then three.

EMMA (CONT'D)

My God...how do you feel?

She smiles. Totally baked. Emma hands Harmony a glass of water, sits next to her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

We should have a girl's night!

HARMONY

Okay.

Emma pours herself a glass of wine, they clink glasses.

EMMA

I have an idea.

She goes over to the wine cabinet, opens a bottom drawer, and pulls out a clear plastic bag.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 Ever done 'shrooms?
 (heads to kitchen)
 I make great tea.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emma returns with two cups of tea. She clinks the spoon to the glass, imitates an English lady. Harmony drains hers in one swig.

HARMONY
 I was thirsty.

Not to be outdone, Emma does the same. They sit back and watch cartoons for a moment.

EMMA
 How about something a little more stimulating?

She leaps off the couch, reaches above the TV, gets a DVD and pops it in.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 I'm so excited I get to pop your cherry!

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

ON TV: The documentary Earthlings or something like it plays. Images of animals being slaughtered: filth, gore, guts. "Ren & Stimpy" this is not.

As she watches, Harmony's face is frozen in a look of terror. The mood in the room has definitely changed.

ON TV: Violent images converge in rapid succession. Butchered, mangled, and dismembered animals come to life and leave the TV and walk past her with their entrails dragging across the floor.

As she watches these animal ghosts trail by, she catches herself petting a healthy pig, who smiles at her. She looks at the animal a long moment and blinks.

She turns back to the TV. She sees herself pictured on the screen. Wearing a white nightgown, she stands alone on a prairie. Then, the walls close in and she's inside an empty slaughterhouse. The TV Harmony closes her eyes. The screen goes black, then:

Scenes of her life flash before her: a baby Harmony drinking a bottle, then a 3-year-old Harmony being fed a hamburger by her mother at McDonald's as she plays on the swings, then Harmony feeding her son a bottle of milk, taking a 3-year-old Kidd for his first hamburger, perpetuating the cycle...now she's a little girl fishing with her father, catching a catfish, smelling it and wincing in disgust...

This gives way to a series of rapid images: roadkill, a crow picking at the innards of a dead possum, a coyote tearing a rabbit to shreds, a cow shot with a stun-gun, strung up by its limbs, then...kids dance around an apple tree in the morning sun.

The mixture of the beautiful and the ugly is so jarring and the children's laughter mingled with the animal's groans so cacophonous that:

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Harmony vomits into the toilet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emma plays "Time Forgotten" on the violin, while Harmony weeps, for herself, for the world.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

The violin music continues as now the two women are in the bathtub. They sit facing each other as the shower head sprays them with water.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Back in the living room, they are dancing to Michael Jackson's "Rock with You." Feeling great again. As the song ends, Harmony collapses back on the couch.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Emma wakes a sleeping Harmony and drags her off the couch and towards the front door.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - MORNING

Harmony and Emma browse the vendor stands.

HARMONY
(breaking the silence)
Dude, what a night.

EMMA
 (cheerful)
 It was real.

HARMONY
 I'm totally hung over.

EMMA
 I assure you it was not the
 mushrooms. I feel fine.

Emma buys two baskets of figs and hands one to Harmony, who watches as she devours her basket.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 What? Once I ate eight bananas for
 breakfast. Another time, half a
 watermelon. And I was hungry like
 an hour later.

The girls continue to stroll. As a PEDESTRIAN crosses the street, an ANGRY MOTORIST lays on the horn. Two KIDS roughhouse on the corner.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 Did you know that when an animal is
 butchered its bloodstream gets
 flooded with adrenaline and other
 stress hormones? It gets into the
 meat.

HARMONY
 Can we not talk about this? After
 last night, I'm sort of at my
 limit.

EMMA
 Alls I'm saying is, it's like their
 stress becomes our stress.

They stop in front of an assortment of greens: Swiss chard, kale, collard greens, etc. Harmony takes a deep breath, invigorated by being outside.

HARMONY
 I've never been to one of these
 before.

EMMA
 They are a must. Better prices than
 grocery stores, and everything is
 local.

She watches Emma select items and interact with vendors.

HARMONY
(re: greens)
Those for the restaurant?

EMMA
No. My chef does most of the
restaurant shopping.

Emma waves at a BURLY GUY WITH TATOOS who waves back.

EMMA (CONT'D)
There's Stan the man. But these
greens are for me. For us.

HARMONY
(reaches in her purse)
On me.

INT. BUS (MOVING) - NEXT DAY

Harmony rides a crowded bus as it moves through the city.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Outside stand TWO ARMED GUARDS. The place is loud and rowdy.
Teenagers, mostly blacks and Mexicans, loiter out front. They
check Harmony out as she enters.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Harmony enters the school's office.

SECRETARY
May I help you?

HARMONY
I'm here to see--

Sam enters the office.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
Sam. What up?

SAM
(neutral)
Hey. What are you...can I...what's
up? I'm, like, very busy at the
moment.

The school principal, DR. MARKOWITZ, happens to walk past
them. Sam stands at attention.

MARKOWITZ
Sam, do you have a minute?

SAM
Of course, sir.

MARKOWITZ
(to Harmony)
If you'll excuse us, Ms.--

HARMONY
Horowitz.

MARKOWITZ
(looks her up and down;
pleased)
Horowitz. Fine last name. Principal
Markowitz, Ms. Horowitz. Call me
Maury.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Harmony and Sam sit facing Dr. Markowitz.

MARKOWITZ
(to Harmony)
Are you familiar with the term "at-
risk youths"?

Harmony shakes her head. His cell phone rings.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)
If you'll excuse me a minute.

As Markowitz takes the call:

SAM
(hushed; to Harmony)
Do not go there. They're deviants.
Thugs. The worst of the worst. One
kid tried to shank me. Just say no.

Markowitz hangs up, faces Harmony.

HARMONY
I'll take it.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Sam leads Harmony through the school quad.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A smattering of very well-behaved students sits at their desks. MR. CREWS, a muscular black man in his fifties, leads Harmony into the book room.

INT. BOOK ROOM - DAY

Mr. Crews sits. He gestures to a chair but she remains standing. She scans the bookshelves as he talks.

CREWS

Where did you do your undergrad,
Ms. Horowitz?

HARMONY

UCLA.

CREWS

I won't sweat you. 'SC man myself.
(down to business)
Markowitz...the man's an idealist.
He thinks he can sweep these
delinquents off the streets and
like magic hand them a high school
diploma and send them on their
merry way. When that happens, and
it happens for about five kids in a
hundred, it is Mr. Crews who makes
it happen. That's a lot of
paperwork. And that's just what
this job is. You gotta be part desk
jockey part parole officer -
otherwise these kids will walk all
over you. Seen it happen too many
times. That's my spiel.
(hands her a set of keys)
Class is from 8 AM to 2 PM. You
start tomorrow.
(rising)
Questions?

Harmony takes a BOOK off the shelf. On the cover appears a bare male torso on which is painted a shield with the letter P inside. She holds it up to Mr. Crews. He chuckles as he leads her to the front.

CREWS (CONT'D)

That...interesting story. Real
colorful guy, Boomer. Used to teach
here. Before he went on to get his
medical degree. Has an office in
Beverly Hills. Fancy pants.

HARMONY

Is it okay if I borrow it?

CREWS
 (nods; to students)
 Kids, say hello to Ms. Horowitz
 now.

STUDENTS
 (lackluster)
 Hello Ms. Horowitz.

CREWS
 Stand up now!

The students stand.

CREWS (CONT'D)
 And welcome.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Harmony exits the school grounds and just misses catching the bus. Across the street she sees a burger joint, looks around.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Harmony sits in the alley behind the restaurant scarfing down her burger.

A group of STUDENTS crosses the street and heads over. Embarrassed, she turns away.

An EMPLOYEE exits the back door with a garbage can and empties it into the dumpster. Harmony winces at the smell. A rat crawls by. Disgusted, she throws her burger in the trash.

INT. BUS (MOVING) - DAY

Harmony sits on the bus reading the nutrition book. She looks outside and contemplates the setting sun.

INT. BUS (MOVING) - NEXT MORNING

The sun rises over downtown. Harmony sits on the bus in a black sundress, and she's still reading. She closes the book, turns it over, and on the back cover notes the author's contact information.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Harmony enters the classroom and it's mayhem. Students are talking loudly, sitting on desks, eating, throwing paper around. Mr. Crews' chair is vacant.

Harmony sits at Crews' desk and sets her book bag down. Out of it falls the nutrition book. She calls the number on the back cover.

HARMONY

(on phone)

Dr. Davidson? This is Harmony Horowitz. You don't know me, but I'm a new teacher at Crenshaw.

DAVIDSON (O.S.)

My ole stomping grounds. What may I do you for?

HARMONY

(on phone)

Are you available for a guest lecture?

DAVIDSON (O.S.)

Hell yes. I've been on Crews' back about it for some time now.

HARMONY

(on phone)

Great. How's today?

DAVIDSON (O.S.)

(laughing)

You have to give me more notice, Ms.--

HARMONY

(on phone)

Horowitz. Please, sir.

Two students break out in a fight. Other students cheer them on. Harmony looks around for help, but there's no one there.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

(on phone; desperate)

It's my first day.

DAVIDSON (O.S.)

(gets it)

I'll be there as soon as I can.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

The mayhem continues. Harmony sits at her desk, red-faced, trying to correct papers. As she reaches for the stack, a student sits down on her hand. Kids roll dice in one corner. Girls gossip in another. A kid break-dances for a small audience.

HARMONY
 (explodes)
 SHUT-THE-HELL-UP!

The class quiets down.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
 (softer)
 I can't hear myself think!

At this precise moment, BOOMER DAVIDSON appears at the door. He's tanned and well-muscled, in his 40's but doesn't look it. He wears linen pants and a Hawaiian shirt unbuttoned at the chest. As he strides into the classroom we see he wears no shoes.

DAVIDSON
 (to Harmony)
 Greetings.

The room is so silent you can hear a pin drop.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)
 Seems you've restored order, Ms.--

HARMONY
 (pumps his hand)
 Harmony. Thank you so much for coming.

DAVIDSON
 Your lucky day. I'm usually never on this side of town.

HARMONY
 Usually or never?

DAVIDSON
 (laughs)
 You got me. I brought some copies of my books.
 (raises voice so students can hear)
 Security is walking them over.

STUDENTS
 Security? Shit!

The students scramble to their seats. Davidson winks at Harmony and steps to the front of the classroom. He puts his bare foot atop the empty desk in front of him. The girls giggle.

FEMALE STUDENT
You have pretty feet.

DAVIDSON
Thanks. I moisturize.

THE SECURITY GUARD, a large black man, enters carrying a stack of books.

GUARD
Here you go, Dr. D.

DAVIDSON
Thanks, Jimmy. Just set 'em down on the desk by the door there, the kids can pick 'em up on their way out.

GUARD
Sure miss you around here, Dr. D.

DAVIDSON
Likewise, my good man. Give my best to the missus. See you in clinic.
(beat)
Where was I?
(to a student)
You a Juarez?

STUDENT
Ramirez.

DAVIDSON
You look like a girl I used to teach. Sofia, I think her name was.

STUDENT
She's my cousin.

DAVIDSON
Sweet gal, Sofia. You give her my best now.

The girl blushes and looks at her girlfriends, all whispers and giggles.

A JOCK yawns and tosses a football in the air. Dr. D reaches over and catches it.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)
(off letterman jacket)
Dorsey High?

JOCK
Yup, if they'd let me back.

DAVIDSON
How many credits you need?

JOCK
Five.

DAVIDSON
Listen carefully to what I'm about
to say, and you got 'em. Got it?

The student brightens and sits up. Davidson tosses back the
football.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)
That goes for the rest of you. Five
credits for two hours of your time.

STUDENTS
Five credits? That's like two
months of work!

The kids sit forward, all ears.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Davidson stands at a laptop connected to an overhead
projector which displays a diagram of the human
gastrointestinal tract. He uses a laser pointer as he
explains:

DAVIDSON
The human GI tract is a thirty-foot
tube that begins in your mouth and
ends in your anus.

STUDENTS
He said anus!

DAVIDSON
This set-up is the same as our
primate cousins, the ape,
chimpanzee, baboon, which leads us
to infer that we should be eating
as they eat.

A student yawns. Davidson changes gears, shows students the
USDA "MyPlate" icon.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)
 However, if you followed USDA
 guidelines you could eat 15 egg
 yolks and 9 slices of cheese per
 day. That's over three thousand
 milligrams of cholesterol. The
 government would call you healthy.
 Before long your friends would
 start calling you hefty.

Scattered laughter.

JOCK
 Milk does a body good.

DAVIDSON
 That's right, and all the stars
 drink it. Tennis pros, Olympians,
 Jordin Sparks, Michael Jordan,
 sportin' the milk mustache. That's
 just fancy marketing. The milk
 industry spends billions of dollars
 to convince you that a secretion
 which is instinctively revolting is
 somehow a health food.

Davidson picks up a carton of chocolate milk and throws it
 away.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)
 No animal drinks the milk of
 another species or drinks milk into
 adulthood except humans, and humans
 are by far the sickest Earthlings
 on the planet, with record-breaking
 rates of heart disease, diabetes,
 and cancer.

STUDENT #1
 My dad has diabetes.

STUDENT #2
 So does my abuelita. Cancer, too.

STUDENT #1
 Your grandma is ancient. You got to
 die of something.

DAVIDSON
 Point taken. But what if I told you
 that milk, and meat, and eggs,
 cause cellulite, and acne, and
 bitch tits, pardon my French?

A skinny student pats the chest of his heavy-set friend. The class laughs.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)

And yet the average person eats about seventy pounds of meat each year, mostly pork. Over a lifetime, that's 2,000 chickens, 7 cattle, and 12 pigs, eaten through and through. Why?

STUDENT

Because fast food is cheap. You can get a McDouble for like a dollar.

DAVIDSON

But is it really cheap? The cost of bringing that same McDouble to your plate, if it weren't for government subsidies, would be enormous.

(beat)

But you're probably thinking, will plant foods make me stronger, fitter, faster, smarter? Yes, yes, yes, and yes. Even if you don't work out, just by choosing fruits and vegetables you are in better shape than the exercising carnivore. It's been studied. And the carbohydrates in fruits and vegetables are brain fuel. Animal products have none, which explains that afternoon sluggishness.

Davidson stops beside the desk of a sleeping student, pulls his arm out from under his chin. The student awakens with a start.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)

But not the red eyes, stoner.

The class laughs. On the overhead projector appear celebrity photographs.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)

Famous vegans include Mike Tyson, Bill Clinton, Alanis Morissette, Alicia Silverstone, Andre 3000.

Shouts of "Dre!"

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)

Oprah, Ellen, Woody, and a host of others.

On the screen appears the outline of a person's head, like a generic profile picture, and in it, a question mark.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)
Will the next one be you?

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Davidson stands at the door as the students file past him. He hands each student a copy of his book. Beside him is the TEACHER'S ASSISTANT, handing out credit slips.

T.A.
Five credits, five credits, five credits...

As the last student leaves, Davidson turns to Harmony and smiles.

HARMONY
(glowing)
May I buy you lunch?

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Harmony and Davidson go round the salad bar. She follows his lead, piling her plate high with spinach, carrots, celery, cucumbers, artichoke hearts, garbanzo beans, kidney beans, etc.

HARMONY
That was some talk you gave.

DAVIDSON
I'm not sure what good it does, really. Meat eating is so firmly entrenched in the household and in the community, they'll go home and eat what their folks serve, or stop at Jack's along the way.

As they walk to a table, two TEENAGERS pass by munching on fried pig ears and sipping on oversized Cokes. They could be Harmony's students for all we know.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)
I'm going to go out on a limb here. Teaching is not your life's dream. You probably just sorta fell into it, like a fluke. I love that word. Fluke. I was very much in your shoes about ten years back. Pushin' thirty, no clue what I wanted outta life.

(MORE)

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)
 Hadn't done squat since college,
 except get into trouble. Yeah, I
 was good at that.

They sit.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)
 Maybe I'm reading you wrong?

HARMONY
 (sitting forward)
 Please go on.

DAVIDSON
 I didn't think I made much of a
 difference. Sure I shepherded a few
 students onto graduation, but were
 they any better off for knowing me?

HARMONY
 (meaning it)
 You're kinda hard to forget.

DAVIDSON
 What I'm saying is, without a
 message, how can you possibly be
 heard?

I/E DAVIDSON'S CAR - DAY

Davidson drops Harmony off. As she exits.

HARMONY
 Thanks for your help.

DAVIDSON
 You know what fluke really means,
 don't you?

HARMONY
 Something that happens by chance,
 like an accident.

DAVIDSON
 Could be that - or a stroke of good
 luck. Which one depends on you.
 (beat)
 You know, I was wrong to think I
 didn't make a difference in their
 lives. You can. The question is,
 will you?

HARMONY
 But how?

DAVIDSON

Teach 'em what you'd wanna learn.

He drives off.

The Beatles' "Revolution" plays over the following MONTAGE:

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Harmony watching Earthlings and taking notes.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Harmony at her computer scrolling through Internet sites on food and nutrition.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Harmony watching Emma prepare food.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

Harmony stands in front of a vendor's stand with a group of students. She holds up different types of greens and points out their distinguishing features: kale, Swiss chard, bok choy, mustard greens, collard greens, etc.

One student, KEVIN, grabs the collard greens and runs off with them, then stops in front of the rotisserie chicken truck and reaches for his wallet. He hands out a dollar but the CHICKEN VENDOR shakes his head: not enough cash. Then, a CHINESE WOMAN grabs his dollar and points at the greens in his hand. He has just bought himself a salad.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

Now they are at the banana stand. Two students, GORDA and GRINGA, engage in a banana-eating contest. Gorda finishes her last banana, holds up all ten fingers, raises her hand in victory. Even Emma is impressed.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Emma gives the students a lesson in food preparation. She cuts the stems off kale by folding the leaves over. Kevin tries to grab the knife but she swats his hand away.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

The students eat their salads and watch the documentary Forks Over Knives, specifically the segment featuring UFC fighter and vegan Mac Danzig. The male students flex their muscles.

EXT. JACK'S BURGERS - DAY

The students picket Jack's Burgers. On their signs read: "Stop Deforestation," and "End the Water Shortage" and "End Government Subsidies of Slaughterhouses" and "Blame It on Your Burger."

As they march, one of the students exits the restaurant eating a chicken sandwich.

Song ends.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The students listen to Harmony read from Upton Sinclair's The Jungle.

HARMONY

(reading)

"And now was one to believe that there was nowhere a god of hogs, to whom this hog personality was precious, to whom these hog squeals and agonies had a meaning? Who would take this hog into his arms and comfort him, reward him for his work well done, and show him the meaning of his sacrifice?"

She closes the book.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

What's next? Current events. Who's up?

Gringa stands up and faces the class.

GRINGA

My article is titled: "Pink Slime For School Lunch: Government Buying 7 Million Pounds Of Ammonia-Treated Meat For Meals."

Eeews from the students.

GRINGA (CONT'D)

(reading in a monotone)

"The USDA is purchasing 7 million pounds of 'slime' for school lunches.

(MORE)

GRINGA (CONT'D)

Officially termed 'Lean Beef Trimmings', the product is a ground-up combination of scraps, connective tissues and other by-products treated with chemicals to kill bacteria. The trimmings are then ground up into hamburger patties."

More Eeews.

In the back of the classroom, Kevin is sweating and growing more and more queasy. Then, vomit launches from his mouth and splatters on the chair in front of him.

The students turn.

HARMONY

Kevin!

Kevin clutches his abdomen and runs out of the class.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

(trying to restore order)

Take your seats. Just a little vomit. It was food a minute ago. Thank you, Gringa, you may take your seat.

(calling out)

Who's next?

The next presenter goes to the front of the class. The students watch their teacher wipe up the mess.

STUDENT

How can you not be grossed out?

HARMONY

I've seen worse. Wait till you're a mom.

(to presenter)

Yer up.

PRESENTER

The title of my article is:
"Bacteria Seen in Nearly Half of U.S. Meat."

HARMONY

(gets an idea)

What did Kevin have for lunch?

KEVIN'S FRIEND

Southwestern barbecued chicken. He always gets that.

HARMONY

(hands the student money)
I need you to go buy one. Do not eat it.

She finishes cleaning up and deposits the paper towels in a plastic zip lock bag.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Who's up for a field trip?

INT. DR. DAVIDSON'S CLINIC - DAY

Several students sit around Dr. Davidson as, hunched over a light microscope, he analyzes a slide.

DAVIDSON

Just as I surmised, the strain of bacteria in the vomitus matches the sample taken from the rancid chicken.

(to students)

Here, take a look.

One by one the students peer into the light microscope to see the round, grape-like structures of bacteria.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)

Probably staph. It would account for the rapid onset of symptoms. He'll be fine in a day or two. That's more than I can say for Jack's Burgers.

(into intercom)

Ms. Childs, get me the network.

(to Harmony)

Ever been on TV?

EXT. JACK'S BURGERS - DAY

A CAMERA CREW has assembled outside the restaurant. Yellow tape marked "Do Not Cross" bars the front door. The reporter, a statuesque woman in her 40's named MARSHA BRADY, addresses the camera. Behind her stand Harmony, the students, and Dr. Davidson.

REPORTER

(into camera)

I'm here with Ms. Harmony Horowitz outside Jack's Burgers on Crenshaw, where an outbreak of food poisoning may have been narrowly averted.

(to Harmony)

But why don't you tell us in your own words. Most cases of food poisoning go unreported. What inspired you to take action?

Harmony looks at Dr. Davidson, who nods encouragement. She turns back to the reporter.

HARMONY

Recently I had a health scare, and um, when the doctor said maybe it was the food in my diet, food by the way which is marketed as health food, I felt...raped.

REPORTER

Did you say raped?

HARMONY

(nods)

Violated, you know?

REPORTER

Yes, I understand.

HARMONY

And, um, either I could waste all my energy being pissed off, or I could, you know, do something about it--

STUDENTS

(in background)

--and America, SO SHOULD YOU!

The camera holds on Harmony's face, the activist unleashed.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Kidd sits in front of the TV, watching his mother being interviewed. Behind him, Elaine looks on.

REPORTER (ON TV)

"America," you heard it from the source. This is Marsha Brady reporting live for Fox Local News.

On the couch holding the remote, Ron snorts and changes the channel.

INT. CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

Harmony enters the classroom wearing a new dress and still glowing from the prior day's excitement. She is surprised to see Crews at his desk in front of a stack of papers.

HARMONY

Welcome back. Feeling better?

Crews angrily gestures to an empty seat in front of him.

CREWS

(holding up a stack of
credits)

Each of these credit slips is worth an entire course in school, in some cases an entire year's worth of education. And you gave them away like coupons? What did you have, a raffle?

HARMONY

I can explain.

CREWS

I don't need your explanation. I needed you to grade these goddamn papers!

HARMONY

I'll get to work right away. I'll take work home, whatever you need me to do--

EXT. STREET - DAY

Harmony trudges down the street looking gloomy. The weather matches her mood. It begins to rain. She passes Jack's Burgers, which is once again open for business.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Harmony uses a key to enter the apartment. Sam sits on the couch watching TV, a pint of Haagen Dazs ice cream between his legs.

SAM

Hey. Some weather, huh?

HARMONY
(glumly)
The planet is in crisis.

SAM
(re: ice cream)
Want some?

HARMONY
I'm good.

She plops down on the couch.

SAM
I heard what happened.

HARMONY
It really bugs. I was making a
difference, you know? So what if I
left out a few little details.

SAM
Forgetting to take roll is pretty
major.

Harmony sighs and closes her eyes. She doesn't want to talk
about it. She whacks a cushion.

SAM (CONT'D)
Wanna get baked?

Harmony takes a hit from his bong, coughs once.

HARMONY
I need a nap.

SAM
If I said I could get you your job
back, would you be interested?

HARMONY
Crews made up his mind. Refused to
even negotiate.

SAM
(suggestive)
There is always room to negotiate.

HARMONY
What's that supposed to mean?

Sam shrugs and turns back to the TV. She shakes her head and
closes her eyes.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Harmony has fallen asleep with her legs tucked under her. She is turned away from Sam. Sam reaches over and unclasps her bra. Harmony shifts, but does not awaken. Using the remote, Sam changes the channel to soft porn. He sets the remote down beneath his right thigh, strokes her bare back as onscreen two blonde girls make out in a bubble bath. He takes a bite of ice cream.

Then, the front door opens and Emma enters.

Sam starts, the volume on the TV goes to Max, and the ice cream between his legs spills all over his shorts. Harmony awakens, looks down at her boobs, sneers at Sam, looks at Emma.

The three trade looks for a long uncomfortable moment. Emma drums her fingernails on the counter. Sam starts to whistle.

EMMA
(staring at floor)
I think you need to leave.

Harmony rises, grabs her bag, and exits. As the door closes:

EMMA (CONT'D)
(to Sam)
You heard me. Leave!

INT. GRANDMA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Elaine is teaching Kidd how to bake chocolate chip cookies. Harmony enters carrying a bag of kale.

KIDD
(cooly)
Hi, mom.

Harmony kisses her son's head and hugs her mom.

ELAINE
Well hello stranger. Are you wet or just glad to see me?

HARMONY
(holds up kale)
I brought dinner.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The three eat their salads at the kitchen island. Kidd takes a bite, pushes the plate away.

KIDD
I want cookies!

Harmony shoots her mother a withering look.

HARMONY
(persevering)
Don't you want to be strong like
Popeye?

KIDD
Popeye ate spinach, not this.

HARMONY
This is like spinach, only a
helluva lot more expensive.

Kidd goes back to his Rubik's Cube. Harmony watches her mother pour olive oil and honey over Kidd's salad without his noticing.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
(to Kidd)
Will you try again, for mommy? Just
one bite, then cookies.

Kidd sighs, takes a bite, chews, likes it, pulls the bowl closer to him and eats more.

ELAINE
(to Harmony)
A little trick I learned raising
you. Kids like any combination of
sugar, salt, and fat.

KIDD
Like cookies!

HARMONY
Like kale!

Harmony and Elaine go back to their meals.

ELAINE
We saw you on TV.

HARMONY
Yeah, well...

ELAINE
Seems you've found something you
believe in, even if it's just
apples and oranges.

KIDD

And kale.

ELAINE

(to Harmony)

Your father would have been proud.
I was.

HARMONY

(sullen)

Yesterday's news.

Harmony's phone rings. She puts the call on speaker.

VOICE (O.S.)

Ms. Horowitz? We'd like you to join
our cause.

HARMONY

(on phone)

Who is this?

VOICE (O.S.)

Can you meet us at the Nuart
Theater? It's on Santa Monica.

HARMONY

(on phone)

Yeah I know where it is.

VOICE (O.S.)

Say, around midnight.

The line goes dead. Harmony stares at her mother.

ELAINE

A midnight rendezvous with the
leader of a secret party? Ah, to be
young again!

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Harmony enters the auditorium. A man stands on stage. He is in the middle of a presentation. Dressed in a sports coat and slacks, he could be a younger and more stylish Al Gore. His name is CASSIDY.

Above him, a movie screen displays the title, "Revo-nation: The Environmental Impact of Food."

Harmony looks around to see a smattering of twenty-something audience members, sits.

CASSIDY

In the modern factory farming system, a hundred thousand animals are herded together on huge feedlots: crowded, filthy, stinking places with open sewers and choking air.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Seat taken?

Harmony turns to see a man in his 30's standing beside her. This is RANDALL JAMES. He sits down next to her.

JAMES

I realize there are many empty seats in the house, but I can't resist the opportunity to be so close to one so fair.

He says this unabashedly. It's not a come-on, and it charms her.

On stage:

CASSIDY

Each cow generates over one hundred times the waste of a human. Sixty billion animals are killed for food each year. That's ten times the Earth's population, every year. And thirty-five million of them are cattle. That adds up to a lot of shit. And it can't be used as fertilizer. There's too much of it. So it goes into man-made lagoons. These cesspools foul the air and infiltrate the water supply.

In the audience, James leans over:

JAMES

This is where "Rocky Horror Picture Show" plays, ain't it?

HARMONY

(whispering)

On Saturday nights.

JAMES

And I came all this way...

On the stage:

CASSIDY

How can beef cost less than
broccoli? Meat and dairy receive 75
percent of food-related federal
subsidies. Fruits and vegetables?
Less than half of one percent.

(beat)

The question is, why. Why is
Congress delegating billions of
dollars to boost production of
poison, while fruits and vegetables
receive almost no funds?

On the screen appears the face of a man in his 60's. He looks
like an overgrown pig: bloated, sweaty, pink, and bald, with
beady eyes and wearing all white.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

This man. He has invested millions
of dollars to finance campaigns and
effectively seed Congress with
members who vote the way he says.
He is the Devil incarnate, as close
to the Antichrist as there ever
was, and his name is Houston Harris
III. You probably have no idea who
he is. Take a good look at him,
'cause you'll likely never see him
again.

In the audience, James shovels a handful of Milk Duds in his
mouth.

JAMES

(re: screen)

Looks a bit like Boss Hogg to me.

Harmony smiles politely. He offers her some candy. She
declines.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You from around here?

(she nods)

Actress?

HARMONY

No. Just curious.

JAMES

Well, Ms. Curious, meet Randall
James, Jr. You can call me RJ, or
JR. Don't matter.

Harmony turns her attention back to the stage:

CASSIDY

It's no secret we are in the midst of a record heat wave. Hot temperatures in a human being indicate a fever, do they not?

(beat)

The source of fever may be a bacteria or virus in the human body, but here on Earth, it's humans. We are the hostile organisms who plunder the planet for our own selfish gain and then reproduce indiscriminately. We are the tumor that the Earth is struggling to rid itself of.

In the audience, James laughs. An ANGRY AUDIENCE MEMBER shushes him.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

What happens in the human body when a fever goes uncontrolled?

Temperatures spike as the body tries to rid itself of impurities - microorganisms do not fare very well at high temperatures, neither do we. Uncontrolled fever, such as the Earth herself is suffering, causes dehydration, which is happening on the planet, in the form of drought; febrile seizures, analogous to the devastating natural disasters we've been having - earthquakes, tsunamis, and the like; and hallucinations, which we as a race are clearly suffering. How else could we fail to notice the elephant in the room.

Politicians debate unemployment, the deficit, global warming, gas prices, the health care debacle, while both sides fail to mention the ultimate cause of it all. Our appetite for flesh. We are the cause of the fever. We are also the cure.

(beat)

The way to heal the planet is not to try and move a bill through Congress. We've already tried legislation, and it failed. As long as there is a demand, there will be a supply.

(MORE)

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

The crusade is waged not by
pointing fingers and calling names
but by doing our part on a small
scale to make a change. I'm talking
you and you and you.

James leans over again to Harmony.

JAMES

(quieter)

What'd you say your name was?

HARMONY

I didn't. It's Harmony.

JAMES

I like that even better than
curious. Your parents hippies or
somethin'?

The angry guy shushes them.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(quieter)

How's about we go somewhere to
chat?

HARMONY

(gesturing to stage)

I'd rather listen.

JAMES

That's fine, because I'm not a real
good listener. Kinda makes us a
match.

ANGRY GUY

She meant listen to the presenter,
dweeb!

JAMES

(amused)

Dweeb?

On the stage:

CASSIDY

Until we come to our senses and say
no as a society, it must be a
personal choice. Choose plants.
More than anything else you do, the
impact of this decision will likely
be the single greatest achievement
in your life. That's all I have.

Scattered applause. The overhead lights come on. Cassidy steps off the stage and moves down the aisle towards Harmony, shaking hands as he goes.

JAMES

(to Harmony; unimpressed)
He cribbed most of his talk from
Food Revolution. Have you read
Robbins?

Harmony nods absently, her attention focused on Cassidy as he arrives in the aisle beside her.

CASSIDY

Ms. Horowitz? Steven Cassidy. I'm
the one who called you.

She stands and they shake hands.

HARMONY

You and I have been reading the
same books, Mr. Cassidy.

CASSIDY

Have we? I am an atmospheric
sciences professor at LMU and the
author of two definitive texts on
global warming.

HARMONY

(undaunted)
Congratulations. I'm a young single
mother and currently unemployed.
(beat)
Youngish.

She turns to see that Randall James has vanished.

CASSIDY

(continuing)
I have a proposal for you, Ms.
Horowitz.

HARMONY

(coquettish)
A proposal? For me? But we've only
just met.

CASSIDY

Some people like to make lame jokes
when nervous. I get it. Please
follow me.

HARMONY

Lead the way.

INT. THEATER PROJECTION ROOM - NIGHT

Harmony and Cassidy sit in the projection room above the theater. Cassidy's assistant, TRISH, sits off to the side taking notes.

CASSIDY

Look, if all the stuff I went on about is common knowledge, how do you explain the lines around the block of your local KFC. Kids getting milk as part of their state-sponsored lunch... McDonald's is even in hospitals, for Chrissakes!

HARMONY

So how to change that? Getting the government to stop subsidizing animal products is an uphill road to nowhere, as you said.

CASSIDY

Did I say that?

HARMONY

I paraphrase.

CASSIDY

We need to connect with people on a personal level. Visceral. Ms. Horowitz, we want to use your image. Brand you, if you will. Maybe change your name.

HARMONY

To what?

CASSIDY

We were thinking Penny Lane. It's fun, it's catchy...

HARMONY

It's also a cliché. A cliché of a cliché.

CASSIDY

(over her)

It's recognizable.

(more to himself)

Then, we make some videos, come out with a book or two--

TRISH

(interjecting)

You're thinking out loud again, Mr. C.

(to Harmony)

I'm supposed to tell him when he does that.

CASSIDY

(to Harmony)

Well whaddaya say?

HARMONY

(feels pressured)

I say I'm in way over my head. A week ago - not even - five days ago, actually - I was a milk-swilling bacon-munching egg-frying meat and potatoes girl, hold the potatoes. Now it's kale and quinoa, which, you know, and it's fine, I'm getting used to it, but the fact that I'm even participating in a discussion about making me the face of--

CASSIDY

Revo-nation. Our movement. Revo-nation. It's a play on the word "renovation," a combination of "revolution" and "nation," if you will. Right now it's just me and Trish, my assistant, whom you've met. And Habib.

Harmony turns to see a HINDU GUY standing in the doorway. He waves.

TRISH

(to Harmony)

You heard about the seven minutes of Deep Throat that got spliced into the Disney Channel's regular programing, just last week?

HARMONY

I watched it. So did my six-year-old.

TRISH

That was Habib.

CASSIDY

Join us and you'll go viral.

A beat as Harmony considers.

HARMONY
 (rapid)
 I'll need to be paid.

EXT. STREET/BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

Harmony walks out of the theater. As she passes a bookstore, Randall James exits carrying a teetering pile of books and turns in her direction. They collide and the books tumble to the ground.

Harmony looks up at James, then sees the store's name: "Harlot Books XXX." She helps him pick them up, averting her gaze, more embarrassed than he appears to be.

JAMES
 When I see a used bookstore, I have to go inside. Help keep 'em alive. Dying breed in a digital time. And you'd be surprised what you'd find therein. A little Sartre, dash of Neitzche. And this.

He hands her Brenda Shaughnessy's Interior with Sudden Joy.

HARMONY
 I'm reading her latest.

JAMES
 What's it about?

HARMONY
 (thinks)
 It's this parallel universe where pain and suffering don't exist.

JAMES
 Like Utopia.

HARMONY
 She calls it Andromeda.
 (hands back book)

JAMES
 Consider it a gift.

HARMONY
 I couldn't. I don't even know you.

JAMES

If you prefer, the first half of a book exchange, to be completed at a later date.

HARMONY

Okay.

By this time they have collected the books and Randall stands up holding the pile. He peers at Harmony from around it.

JAMES

Not to sound presumptuous, but how will I get the book?

Harmony sets down her skateboard, reaches into her backpack.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(off skateboard)

At this hour there are drunk pedestrians. How about I give you a lift to your place?

HARMONY

Then you'd know where I live. Out of the question. You could be Ted Bundy.

JAMES

Ted's dead, honey.

Harmony hands him her number. James almost drops the books.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Mind if we have this conversation on the way to my car?

INT. JAMES' CAR - NIGHT

They drive in silence. Harmony absently studies the book he gave her.

JAMES

What's it say?

HARMONY

Pardon?

JAMES

Always when I buy one of them, the first thing I do is flip through the pages, see what the prior owner had to say. They mostly write in pencil, for some reason.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

Sometimes there's even a name on the inside cover. Men annotate more often than women, I find, but women's notes are better.

HARMONY

Better?

JAMES

More lucid, like.

HARMONY

Well, there's only a dedication.
(reads)
"To Dotty."

JAMES

Sure there's nothing else?

HARMONY

(suddenly tired)
Maybe they suffered from writer's block.

She puts the book in her bag and stares out the window. James drives for a while.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Turn here. I'm just up on the right.

He pulls over. Then:

JAMES

Sorry if I came on too strong. Being in a different town every week gets a little lonely after a while. Disposable friends, you know?

Harmony smiles wanly. She's tired but tries to seem cheerful.

HARMONY

Thanks for the lift.

As she exits, James hands her his card.

JAMES

If you forget, no big deal. There are adult book stores in every major city.

HARMONY

Night, Randall.

JAMES
Randy. Night.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Harmony awakens on the couch.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Harmony enters the kitchen. Elaine and Kidd are eating breakfast.

HARMONY
(to Kidd)
Wanna go for a ride?

Kidd nods.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
(to Elaine)
Can we borrow your car?

EXT. CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX - DAY

Harmony and Kidd pull to the curb outside Cassidy's oceanside condo. Harmony holds up his business card to verify the address.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

They knock on Cassidy's door. No answer.

She peers into the glass beside the door to see a normal looking kitchen and home office. This seems to satisfy her. Then:

HARMONY
(to Kidd)
Wanna go to the beach?

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Harmony and Kidd sit on a bench looking out at the ocean. The sun is setting and everything is bathed in golden light. They watch the waves roll in.

HARMONY
My dad - the grandfather you never had but would have loved, trust me - used to take me here. We'd sit in this very spot and stare out at the ocean, just like you and I are doing right now. He gave me this.

Harmony takes a pendant off her neck and shows it to her son: a FIGURINE of a mermaid riding a dolphin. Kidd holds out his wrist. She clasps the pendant around it, looks at the ocean to see:

A SCHOOL OF DOLPHINS at the break line, unbelievably close to the shore. They watch the dolphins ride a wave.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
 (to herself)
 Something great is coming our way.

Kidd holds up his wrist. The pendant catches the light and really sparkles.

KIDD
 Looks kinda girlie on me. You can have it back, mommy.

Harmony laughs and takes the pendant off her son's wrist. As she returns it to her own neck:

HARMONY
 I've always had a thing for dolphins. Highly intelligent, graceful, and eminently free. Always smiling, unlike your mother. And strong, boy. So strong they can beat up sharks.

KIDD
 They look like sharks!

HARMONY
 They do. It's their fins. But in fact, dolphins often defend humans from shark attacks. Sadly, we - humans, I mean - are their most dangerous predators.

KIDD
 If a dolphin can beat up a shark, and a shark can beat up a human, how can a human beat a dolphin?

Harmony looks at her son, stumped by the impeccable logic of a child.

HARMONY
 I agree...it makes no sense.

Then, Randall James, who has been sitting nearby for who knows how long, turns to Kidd.

JAMES

It's true, what your mama says. Once while I was surfing, this big ole shark appeared out of nowhere, swam right up and bumped me so hard, he almost knocked me off my board. I could see his huge teeth, just like "Jaws."

KIDD

Did you scream?

JAMES

Before I could even summon the courage, there came Flipper and his friends. They formed a ring around me, protectin' me like? Then one of 'em, musta been a bull - that's what they call males - he hit the shark flush on the belly, with his snout. Knocked the air clean out of him.

KIDD

Sharks don't breathe.

JAMES

Water then, or, whatever sharks got in their lungs.

KIDD

They don't have lungs. They have gills.

JAMES

(continuing)

Practically knocked the beast unconscious.

KIDD

(considering)

You for real?

James rolls up his shorts and shows a snake-like gash over his right knee, which looks more like a surgical scar.

KIDD (CONT'D)

(touches the scar; clearly impressed)

Damn.

JAMES

Wherever dolphins swim, sharks better beware.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)
 (to Harmony)
 Ain't that right, mom?

HARMONY
 Kiddo, I'd like you to meet Randy.
 (to James, a little
 freaked)
 What in God's name are you doing
 here, Randy?

JAMES
 Just enjoying a stretch of nature.
 I'm staying at the hotel over
 yonder.
 (points vaguely in the
 distance)
 I leave tomorrow on an early
 flight, so I don't have much to do
 till then...

He's throwing out the line, but Harmony doesn't bite.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 (shifting gears; to Kidd)
 I find that the best way to learn
 about dolphins, is to go experience
 them firsthand. Wanna go for a
 swim? With your mom's permission of
 course.

Kidd jumps off the bench and runs toward the ocean.

HARMONY
 I haven't seen him this excited
 about anything other than food in,
 well, ever.

JAMES
 I'll take that as a yes.

James runs after him. Harmony watches them play by the shore.

EXT. STREET - DAY

They are on the sidewalk at James' car. Kidd sits in the
 passenger seat with the door open as James cleans his feet
 with a towel.

HARMONY
 Why don't you let me do that?

JAMES
 I don't mind, really. I love kids.

KIDD
I'm hungry, mommy.

James hands Harmony the towel and disappears offscreen. Harmony cleans off her son. A moment later James returns carrying a box of nachos. He hands them to Kidd, who begins noshing. Harmony frowns.

JAMES
Come on, you can't tell me you've never faltered.

HARMONY
(confessing)
If you must know, there was the matter of a little back alley burger a few days back.

JAMES
(chuckles)
One of them impulse buys. They say most fast food purchases are.

HARMONY
(nods)
The same joint that I had a hand in shutting down. Pretty ironic, huh?

JAMES
The one on Crenshaw? I saw you on the news.

HARMONY
(to Kidd)
That's enough of those. You'll spoil your appetite.
(to James)
We're due for dinner.

KIDD
(to James)
Wanna eat dinner with us?

James looks at Harmony, who holds her breath.

EXT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Harmony and Kidd pull into the driveway, where a swarm of REPORTERS rushes to the car. They launch a barrage of questions at her. Out of the noise we can make out the words, "Penny Lane."

She charges through the reporters, opens the door, and enters the house, slamming the door behind her.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She stands with her back to the door and mouths the words,
"What the fuck?"

HARMONY

Mom?

ELAINE (O.S.)

In here.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elaine and Ron watch TV. On the tube, a music video plays. On the video, a girl sings and dances a la Judy Garland to "Puttin' on the Ritz," only this song is called "Put Us on the Fritz." Harmony's face has been superimposed on a showgirl's body clad in fishnet and silk bra and panties. She wears a top hat and dances up and down stairs which light up, as the lyrics appear at the bottom of the screen. The video plays over the following scene.

DIGITAL HARMONY

(singing on TV)

When you're hot
And you don't got
A single cent
To pay the rent
Blame the blitz
It put us on the fritz.
All the hype
They want your vote
Stars and stripes
Will get your goat
Just so much glitz
Put us on the fritz.
Worried about this year's water
shortage
Trying hard to pay your great big
mortgage
With last week's porridge.
Come let's fix
What the fellas
With their tricks
So yella
Stuck in shit
Put us on the fritz.
Tired of that great big global
warming
Watchin' on TV the thunder storming
Prices soaring.
Come let's fix
What the fellas
With their tricks

(MORE)

DIGITAL HARMONY (CONT'D)

So yella
Stuck in shit
Put us on the fritz.

HARMONY

(re: TV)
What's this?

ELAINE

The news. You're all over it. Your
digitally enhanced self, rather.

RON

(re: laptop on his lap)
Your music video already has one
million views.

HARMONY

My music video?

ELAINE

It's actually very flattering,
honey. I love Judy Garland. You're
a celebrity.

RON

Like one of those Kardajanian
twins. Sixty-second celebrities, I
call 'em. Famous for being famous.

HARMONY

Oh yeah? What's my claim to fame,
other than a video of me I've never
seen that's not even of me?

RON

(shows Harmony laptop
screen)
The mother of Michael Jackson's
love child is you.

ELAINE

There is that.

RON

The third child, the one they call
Blanket.

ELAINE

It's on the news.

HARMONY

The kid's like fifteen. That would make me thirteen when I gave birth, twelve when I conceived. I didn't get my period until I was...why are we even having this conversation?

ELAINE

Also, you had an affair with the President - allegedly.

HARMONY

Wha?

She dials Cassidy's number.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

(on phone)

What the hell?

CASSIDY (O.S.)

There is no such thing as bad publicity.

(beat)

I'll admit, I may have taken it a little too far.

HARMONY

(on phone; exasperated)

Ya think?

The doorbell rings.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Would you tell them to go away, mother?

ELAINE

I've already tried. They've been here since noon.

RON

(starts to get up)

I'll get my gun.

Harmony turns to the door and sees Randall James through the glass. He holds a bouquet of flowers.

HARMONY

(on phone)

I have just one word for you: Stop.

(hangs up; to Ron)

There's a man at the door who is not a member of the press.

(MORE)

HARMONY (CONT'D)

I've invited him over for dinner.
Please be nice. I'll be right down.
(to mom, handing over her
son)
Help?

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

James and Ron are seated on the sofa with cigars and Scotch and looking very merry. Kidd plays with baseball cards in front of the TV.

Harmony enters wearing a dinner dress and pearls.

James stands to greet her. She curtsies, laughing.

RON

Randall here shooed the media people off the property. Didn't even need my gun.

JAMES

I just told 'em they had the wrong address. Drove 'em next door.

HARMONY

I'm sure the neighbors will love you for it. Sorry I'm late.

James and Harmony brush cheeks.

JAMES

(in a whisper)
The suspense was killing me, but the wait was hella worth it.

Elaine enters.

ELAINE

Knock it off, you two. Dinner's served.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

The five sit at the table over dinner. Elaine and Ron are at opposite ends, James and Kidd on one side face Harmony.

JAMES

Mighty fine meal, Mrs. Horowitz.

ELAINE

I haven't been Mrs. Horowitz in...
(off Harmony's look)
...please, call me Elaine.

JAMES

Elaine, would you mind passing me those delicious pork chops?

As he serves himself:

JAMES (CONT'D)

Pork chops happen to be my favorite, and you make 'em just the way my mama does. Seared crispy on the outside, juicy and tender on the inside. Quick-fried in butter, am I right?

ELAINE

(nods)

And finished in the oven.

Elaine blushes. It's nice to have her cooking recognized.

JAMES

Butter is so much tastier than oil, I find.

James sets the pork down by Kidd, who grabs the serving spoon. Harmony reaches across the table and slaps her son's hand away.

HARMONY

(to James)

You're setting a bad example.

ELAINE

(to Harmony)

He's being a gracious guest.

James finishes his wine.

RON

Care for some more moonshine, Randall?

JAMES

I think I will, Ronald.

Ron pours him some more Scotch. James raises his glass.

JAMES (CONT'D)

To Penny Lane.

Now it's Harmony's turn to blush.

I/E ENTRY WAY - NIGHT

Elaine and Harmony walk James to the door. He's shambling a bit.

ELAINE
Harmony, why don't you walk Randy
to his car.

James grasps the door knob sloppily and his hands slips.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
Maybe even drive him home.

HARMONY
Mother!

James opens the door, takes a deep breath of fresh air.

JAMES
It's okay. I'm fine.

He dances back and forth over an imaginary line, humming the tune "Puttin' on the Ritz."

HARMONY
Very funny...

Mother and daughter watch him hop in his car and drive away.

ELAINE
I don't trust him.

HARMONY
He ate your pig.

ELAINE
He's a liar.

HARMONY
What did he say?

ELAINE
It's what he didn't say. It's
customary upon meeting someone to
tell the person your name. I had to
ask him his.

HARMONY
Mother...and you thought I was
being critical? He was probably
just nervous.

Elaine shakes her head. There's no changing her mind.

Kidd appears by his mother's side.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
Well, Kiddo likes him, don't you?

KIDD
He's not my dad.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Harmony is asleep on the couch. Ron sits beside her in his armchair reading Fast Food Nation. He sets it down, picks up his DOUBLE BARREL SHOTGUN, resumes polishing it.

Then, on TV:

TV REPORTER
(on TV)
Tonight, on late-night news. A
charlatan exposed...

On TV, security cam footage of Harmony eating a hamburger in the alley behind Jack's Burgers.

Ron clears his throat, perhaps too loudly. Harmony awakens and looks at him. He points to the TV screen.

EXT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Harmony sits on the front steps smoking a cigarette. Her cell phone buzzes. She pulls it out of her robe pocket. On the screen, under Cassidy's name, a text message reads: "Hypocrite."

Harmony returns the phone to her pocket, comes out with Randall James' business card. She dials the number:

PHONE RECORDING (O.S.)
This number is no longer in
service.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Harmony sits in front of her laptop computer. In her browser's search engine she enters the name, "Randall James," and the company on his business card: "P.S. Plumbing." The search yields no results.

Her mother appears behind her.

ELAINE
Not his real name, huh?

HARMONY
 (holding up the card)
 This is all I got.

ELAINE
 (thinking aloud)
 Can't you just, scan it into your
 phone? There must be some kind
 of...tracer app for that!

HARMONY
 Actually...

Harmony scans the card on her phone and a "fingerprint app"
 reveals Randall James' face and information.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
 His real name is Todd Henry Smith.
 Originally from Morganton, North
 Carolina.

ELAINE
 What did I tell you?

HARMONY
 The app will provide his address
 and phone number for only a dollar
 ninety-nine.

ELAINE
 I'll spot you the cash.

Harmony pulls up the phone number, dials.

HARMONY
 (on phone)
 Todd Henry Smith?

JAMES (O.S.)
 Well hello there. Need I say I'm
 impressed?

HARMONY
 (on phone)
 You're probably out of the state by
 now.

JAMES (O.S.)
 Actually, I'm outside your front
 door.

Harmony looks at her mom.

I/E ENTRY WAY - MOMENTS LATER

The two women open the door to see Randall.

JAMES
 (to Harmony)
 You can tell a lady by how she
 looks straight out of bed, and you,
 my dear, are a vision.

Harmony steps outside and closes the door. She is now alone
 with Randall on the front steps. We can tell she's angry.
 James can, too.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 (explaining)
 They hired me to keep an eye on
 you. Storm patrol. You know, before
 your ripples became waves.

HARMONY
 Who's "they"?

JAMES
 Who aren't they?

He holds up a USB flash drive, a small rectangular device
 used to digitally store data - music, files, or in this case,
 a video.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Made this during my interview
 process, when they unfurled my job
 description.

HARMONY
 Which was?

JAMES
 Basically PR. Keep their public
 image clean by discrediting the
 opposition. You.
 (beat)
 The attack on Jack's really turned
 some heads high up.

HARMONY
 So it was all an act?

JAMES
 I'll be straight with you. I like
 you, your son, family. And your
 mother's pork chops are the best
 this side of West Texas.

HARMONY
North Carolina.

JAMES
There too. Which is why I'm giving
you a shot at payback.

HARMONY
Payback?

JAMES
At me, through them. They hired me
to tarnish your name, I supply you
with the information which
tarnishes theirs. Poetic justice,
like, wouldn't ya say?

HARMONY
(suspicious)
Because you like me.

JAMES
(suddenly serious)
Because I don't like monopolies.
Messes with our basic freedoms.
(explains)
Guy fills up on fried chicken,
busts a coronary, goes to one of
them fancy hospitals and gets
stitched up, they make money on
both ends.

HARMONY
Fast food and fancy hospitals?

JAMES
Uh huh. Owned by the same people.
Person, as in singular.

HARMONY
As in Houston Harris III.

JAMES
(nods)
He owns practically everything
under the sun. Government, pharma.
Hell, one day he'll own the sun
itself - if it don't scorch him to
death first.
(off USB)
It's all on there. I made it for
job security. Now, they can't fire
me because I quit.

James hands her the USB and turns to leave. As he struts down the driveway in his tight jeans, Harmony wrestles with her admiration. He turns, strides back up the steps and kisses her full on the lips.

Across the street, a MAN snaps a photo.

JAMES (CONT'D)

If only we'd met on Andromeda...

And James walks away.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Harmony at her laptop watching the video.

VIDEO

It's poor quality, taken while Randall is seated, phone in his hand by his hip, half of the frame obscured by his thigh. The visible half is trained on a man. It's grainy, but clear enough that we recognize him from Cassidy's presentation. He's talking but the words are unclear.

Harmony opens a dictionary and looks up the word "ghrelin." She read the definition: "a hormone that stimulates appetite."

Her phone rings. It's Emma.

HARMONY

(on phone)

Hey.

EMMA (O.S.)

Hey. I've been following your vicissitudes online.

HARMONY

(on phone)

Tell me about it. I'm still dizzy.

EMMA (O.S.)

If there is anything you need...

HARMONY

(on phone)

Thanks. I'll abide.

EMMA (O.S.)

I'm closing the restaurant.

HARMONY
 (on phone)
 What? Why?

EMMA (O.S.)
 Do you even have to ask? This damn
 economy.
 (beat)
 Oh and good news: Sam's out. Moved
 in with his butt buddy, Charles.
 We're still friends though.

HARMONY
 Of course we are.

EMMA
 I meant...I mean...I'm sorry for
 barking at you.

HARMONY
 I'm sorry I didn't knee Sam in the
 nuts like you said, so we're even.

Elaine appears. She sets down a PERSONAL CHECK made out to
 Harmony. We don't see the amount, but Harmony's eyes light
 up.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 On second thought, Em, I could
 really use your help. I just need
 to figure out how.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

It is dawn as Harmony jogs down the street.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Harmony stands at the kitchen island packing a lunch box
 while reading the newspaper. Beside her, Kidd finishes his
 breakfast.

HARMONY
 Listen to this. The mayor of New
 York has banned supersized sodas
 and outlawed smoking in parks, but
 has not addressed the role animal
 foods play as opponents of our
 children's health.
 (flips page)
 And the presidential candidates
 have failed to address global
 warming. No mention whatsoever.
 (MORE)

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Again.

(beat)

Wouldn't it be great if there were a ban on burgers? Since the cholesterol, saturated fat, pesticide and fertilizer residues, not to mention the bacteria, heavy metals and general...yuckiness make animal foods as deadly as chain smoking or carrying a loaded gun. Wouldn't it?

Kidd burps his assent.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Maybe you should run for President. You got my vote.

Elaine enters.

ELAINE

You're up early. What's for breakfast?

HARMONY

Bananas with raisins and flax seeds, a dash of cinnamon, and a side of orange juice, fresh squeezed.

ELAINE

And he likes it?

Kidd pushes his empty plate away, burps. The women laugh.

HARMONY

Sugar, fat, and salt, just like mom taught me.

ELAINE

What about protein?

HARMONY

(sighs)

Did you know mother's milk contains only five percent protein? Five percent at an age when we grow more rapidly than any other time in our lives. Five percent. A banana has six percent.

Elaine peels a banana and takes a bite.

ELAINE

And for lunch?

Harmony shows her mother the lunch box she is preparing to close.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

That's a lot of food.

HARMONY

(with authority)

Frequent meals and snacks are important at Kidd's age, as well as large portions. Parental controls should be absolute and not up to the discretion of the child.

(beat)

Verbatim.

KIDD

No more ice cream. Mom tossed it.

HARMONY

I told you not to tell!

ELAINE

It's okay I can buy more.

HARMONY

Mother...you're incorrigible.

Harmony hands her son his lunch box. As they leave:

ELAINE

(calling out)

Happy first day!

Ron enters, takes a bite of his wife's banana, and kisses her.

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Cracks in the pavement, chipped paint, grimy walls. Typical LAUSD.

Harmony squats in front of her son, tucks in his shirt, and hikes up his pants. They're a little tight.

HARMONY

(wistfully)

Growing up so fast...

Kidd kisses his mother's cheek and runs into the classroom. The TEACHER waves at Harmony and closes the classroom door.

Harmony strolls through the campus. She passes the cafeteria, where students finish their breakfast. The bell rings and the students scatter.

EXT. CAFETERIA - MORNING

Harmony approaches the tables and examines the leftovers: bacon, sausage links, runny eggs, cornbread, greasy hash browns, and cartons of milk litter the tables.

She walks up to the glass food case where CAFETERIA EMPLOYEES clean out the platters. Behind them, CHEFS prepare the day's lunch items. Chicken sizzles on the grill, and French fries sit in troughs of oil. One WOMAN flips burgers. The raw patties resemble the pink slime we saw in the student presentation.

HARMONY

Excuse me?

The woman, GLADYS, turns.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

(recognizing)

I remember you. I was once a student here. Now it's my son's turn. He's in the first grade.

The woman smiles.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Those burgers. Are they normally so fluorescent looking?

GLADYS

Well, no...come to think of it. Only in the past, I dunno, year, maybe two.

HARMONY

Do you know why?

GLADYS

(shakes head)

But you can ask that man over there.

She points to a nearby table, where the school's PRINCIPAL finishes his breakfast. Harmony approaches him.

HARMONY

Mr. Scupine?

PRINCIPAL

Yes?

HARMONY

Harmony Horowitz.

The name doesn't register.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Heroine?

PRINCIPAL

Now there's a name I'll never forget. Hell on wheels...

HARMONY

Still am.

PRINCIPAL

Welcome back.

HARMONY

Thanks. Do you have a minute?

He glances at his watch, frowns.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Maybe it's better if I come by your office?

PRINCIPAL

Just up the quad, on the left there. Door's always open...unless I'm in a meeting.

EXT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - LATER

Harmony waits outside. The door is closed. She checks her watch.

EXT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Harmony waits outside her son's classroom. The afternoon bell rings. The door opens and the students burst out. Kidd is the last to leave.

HARMONY

(to teacher)

Everything okay?

TEACHER

He had a tough first day.

HARMONY
 (to Kidd)
 Where's your lunch box?

Kidd turns, goes back to the classroom.

TEACHER
 (sunny)
 Kids can be cruel at this age.
 They're resistant to anything that
 seems different, sometimes flat-out
 opposed. It's called xenophobia. It
 usually disappears by the fifth
 grade, but until then...
 (shrugs)

Kidd comes back carrying his lunch box. As they walk away, it
 falls open and kale and quinoa scatter across the pavement.

KIDD
 They said it looked like bird seed.

HARMONY
 (philosophical)
 It kinda does.

KIDD
 They grabbed me like this.

He wraps his arms around his mother's legs and squeezes
 tight.

HARMONY
 Who did? Who grabbed you?

Kidd points at a group of ROWDY STUDENTS entering the bus.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
 Those are first graders? They're
 huge!

The kids disappear into the bus.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
 Where was your teacher when all
 this went down?

Kidd shrugs. Harmony looks back at the classroom. The door is
 closed.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
 Lemme show you something. Turn
 around.

Kidd turns around and from behind she puts her arms around his arms, in a bear hug.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Now, listen closely, I want you to do as I say. Stomp on my foot, and at the same time, push your fists down and back, like you're punching the ground. Stomp, then punch down.

Kidd follows her instructions. She winces as his heel contacts her foot.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

That was very good! Palm thrust to the groin is optional.

KIDD

What's a groin?

HARMONY

The family jewels.

Kidd laughs.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

If a bully ever touches you again, that's what you do. Got it?

Kidd nods, wipes the tears away with his fist. Other mothers stare at them. Harmony puts on a plastic smile and waves at them.

Then, she takes her son by the hand and as they walk to the car:

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Tell mommy what you had for lunch.

KIDD

Pizza with pepperoni.

Harmony starts to react, then sees that the door to the principal's office is open.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Mother and son sit facing Mr. Scupine.

PRINCIPAL

My secretary just told me she saw you on the news. Seems you've become quite the media darling.

HARMONY

(down to business)

Mr. Scupine, my son doesn't eat animal products. The bullies in his class won't let him enjoy the lunch I prepare for him, and the cafeteria doesn't offer any items to suit his diet.

PRINCIPAL

Sure they do. There's grilled cheese, pizza--

HARMONY

He doesn't eat cheese.

PRINCIPAL

I'm sorry to hear that.

HARMONY

And I know mothers would be sorry to hear about the ground up, chemically-treated dog food their kids are being served at school. Trimmings, Mr. Scupine. Guts, sinew, hooves. Crawling with bacteria. Doused in ammonia, a known poison.

PRINCIPAL

I assure you, Ms. Horowitz, that everything on the cafeteria menu is USDA approved.

HARMONY

(grunts)

That's not saying much. Pink slime doesn't have to be labeled because it's a process, not an ingredient. Sure it's 100% beef, in that it comes from a cow, but...how do you feel knowing you ate a bull's rectum for lunch...maybe even his balls?

PRINCIPAL

Ms. Horowitz, please!

HARMONY

Rectum.

He frowns at her.

KIDD

Balls.

He frowns at Kidd. Mother and son share a high five.

PRINCIPAL

(standing)

Ms. Horowitz!

HARMONY

(also standing)

Mr. Scupine! I'm prepared to use this school as an example of just what's wrong with America. I can see it now. Picketers chanting, "No more slime, no more slime!" After all, I'm quite the media darling.

PRINCIPAL

(sits; gives in)

What is it that you want?

HARMONY

Good food shouldn't be a luxury. These kids are America's future.

PRINCIPAL

I agree, in principle. But the government sponsors the lunch program, you'll have to take it up with Uncle Sam. That is, unless you can think of a better idea.

EXT. CAFETERIA - NEXT DAY

It's lunch time. The kids sit at tables and watch as COOKS unload trays of individual lunches wrapped in aluminum foil from trucks marked "Emma's Place" and cart them to the cafeteria.

Kidd sits with his classmates.

CLASSMATE

(eating pizza)

You sho' this ain't cheese?

KIDD

I told you, it's nuts.

CLASSMATE

You're nuts!

He smiles and takes another bite.

In front of the cafeteria, the TV reporter Marsha Brady interviews Mr. Scupine.

PRINCIPAL

(to reporter)

We felt it was important for children to eat nutritiously regardless of their economic status. Good food should not be a luxury. This is, after all, America's future.

Off to one side stand Harmony and Emma, watching.

EMMA

(to Harmony)

I can't believe a state-funded school agreed to pay for all this.

Harmony smiles but says nothing. It's her little secret.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Harmony, Emma, and Kidd enter. Half the apartment is gutted - the half that used to be Sam's. In place of his stuff are some odds and ends belonging to Kidd and Harmony. His toys, her books.

Kidd goes to the laptop computer and turns it on.

EMMA

I have a feeling that Roscomere will be the first of many accounts. I should make a flyer and run it by other schools in the area. Food trucks are definitely the way to go.

On the computer screen, the video Randall James made plays.

HARMONY

(to Emma)

You have to check this out. Apparently there's this new secret ingredient, an appetite stimulant. They're putting it in the meat.

EMMA

Who is?

HARMONY

The guy being filmed. He's the new Hitler, or so I am told. Only his name is Harris. Houston Harris III.

On the video:

HARRIS

(on video)

I'm the one makes 'em sick, I'm the one makes 'em well. It's all profit.

Emma winces at the grainy image.

EMMA

Can they do that? I mean, is it legal?

HARMONY

(shrugs)

If there's no proof a crime has been committed, is there a crime?

Then, a knock at the door. As Emma goes for it:

EMMA

You could always post it on YouTube.

This gives Harmony an idea.

HARMONY

(to Kidd; hands him Cassidy's card)

Go to my e-mail account and punch in this address.

Emma opens the door. A UPS GUY hands her a package. It's a 12"x12" cardboard box addressed to Harmony.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

Who even knows I live here?

EMMA

(excited)

Do you live here?

HARMONY

Remind me to start paying you rent.

Harmony opens the package's tape. Inside the box is what appears to be somebody's hair.

EMMA

Is that a wig?

Harmony pulls the hair out of the box and holds it up.

HARMONY
It's attached to a scalp.

EMMA
Barbaric!

KIDD
(looks up from computer)
Cool!

Harmony reaches into the box and digs out a hand-written note. It reads: "This could happen to you."

HARMONY
We should go.

EMMA
What if they're outside?

HARMONY
You're right.
(thinks)
I need a gun.

Emma's eyes bulge, then she considers: not a bad idea.

EMMA
(thinks)
Sam.

Emma grabs her purse. As she heads for the door:

HARMONY
Be careful.

EMMA
It's you they want. Not me.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Emma exits the building and moves briskly down the street. A MAN emerges from the shadows. We recognize him as the man who snapped pictures of Harmony and Randall James. He has a lantern jaw.

He follows her from a distance.

She enters an apartment building. Lantern Jaw lights a cigarette, dials a number, and puts his phone to his ear.

Then, a black car turns onto the street, pulls to a stop fifty feet from where the man is standing. He nods to the car, stubs out his cigarette.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Harmony paces the room; Kidd plays with his baseball cards.

HARMONY

I'll take you to see the Dodgers
real soon, I promise.

KIDD

(correcting)
Angels.

She checks her watch, calls Emma's cell. It rings on the couch. She hangs up, scribbles a note and leaves it on the kitchen table. She grabs the USB stick.

HARMONY

Let's go see nanny.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Emma exits Sam's apartment clutching her purse tightly to her side. As she reaches the sidewalk, Lantern Jaw grabs her and forces her towards the street. The black car speeds over and pulls to a stop in front of them. The back door swings open. Lantern Jaw throws Emma in the back seat and follows her in before closing the door. The car speeds away.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

It's Emma and two men. The DRIVER is a real bruiser.

EMMA

A girl and two guys go for a
ride...that sounds like the
beginning of a really bad, really
dirty joke.

DRIVER

This could get bad.

LANTERN JAW

And dirty.

Wasting no time, Emma lurches for the door but Lantern Jaw is too fast. He seizes her by the arm.

EMMA

Hey!

LANTERN JAW

Keep your mouth shut.

EMMA

Or what?

LANTERN JAW

Or I'll shut it for you.

EMMA

Screw you!

Lantern Jaw puts his hand around her mouth. Emma bites down on his fingers. He shrieks.

She reaches in her purse and comes out with a PISTOL. It's ancient looking, probably from WWII, and it looks pretty ridiculous in her hand. She trains it on the men, trying to look mean.

LANTERN JAW

Your hands are shaking.

DRIVER

You don't even know how to use that.

EMMA

Wanna bet?

She points the gun up and pulls the trigger, but the safety is on!

DRIVER

What did I tell ya! Ha!

Emma lurches forward, grabs the car's emergency brake, and yanks back on it.

I/E CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car peels into a 360 and spins through the intersection at high speed. The gun flies from Emma's hand and heads slam against windows. They crash into a parked car and then into a fire hydrant, which gets blown off the ground. Water launches fifty feet into the air.

Emma, shaken up, looks at the men. Both are unconscious. The car's windows are cracked and bloodied. She touches her forehead. Her hand comes away crimson. She grabs the gun off the floor and puts it in her purse, exits the car and looks around.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

An OLD MAN WALKING A DOG calls to her from the sidewalk.

OLD MAN
Are you all right?

Ignoring him, Emma walks away from the car, hesitant at first. As heads poke out of houses, her pace quickens. Soon she is clattering away at full speed.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
You can't flee the scene of an accident!

EMMA
(fading into the distance)
Sue me!

INT. BUS (MOVING) - NIGHT

Harmony and Kidd ride the bus. She looks at other passengers. Everyone is now a potential threat.

INT. EMMA'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Emma driving. A welt has formed above her left eye.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Harmony and Kidd enter. She turns on the entry way light, looks around. Something is not right.

KIDD
I wanna go see nanny.

Before she can respond he dashes up the stairs. She sets her bag down by the entry way and creeps around the house.

She passes through the living room to enter the study.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kidd enters Elaine's room, sees Elaine and Ron tied up on the bed. Kidd opens his mouth to scream but a MAN'S HAND covers it.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Harmony enters the study to see a man sitting behind the desk, facing her. It is dark. The man takes a sip of a drink, swirls the ice, but says nothing. Harmony approaches the desk.

HARMONY
Ron?

The man lights a cigar. The flame ignites his features. It is not Ron. He turns on the desk lamp.

HARRIS
We finally meet.

HARMONY
Where's my mother?

HARRIS
Sit down.

HARMONY
I'll stand.

HARRIS
I said sit down!

HARMONY
(calling out)
Kiddo!

She turns to the door to see:

Kidd standing in the doorway. Behind him, a THUG holds the boy by his shoulders.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
(to thug)
Don't you hurt him.

HARRIS
No harm will come to the boy...if
you play by the rules. Now sit
down.

Harris directs her to a chair in the far corner of the room. She sits, twisting so as to keep an eye on her son.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
(to Harmony)
You have really been a thorn in my
side, Ms. Horowitz. Then again,
maybe just a splinter. Let's make
this simple, shall we? Hand it
over.

She takes out the USB and sets it on the desk between them.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
That was easier than I expected. I
thought you'd have a little more
fight in you.

HARMONY

(sarcastic)

Maybe I'm a little star-struck.
It's not every day that a girl gets
to meet the CEO of everything.

HARRIS

The CEO of everything. I like that.
'Course, most don't know it, and I
prefer to keep it that way. What's
that line about Lucifer? His
greatest accomplishment--

HARMONY

--is convincing everyone you don't
exist.

(beat)

So Randy was right.

HARRIS

Shame about dear ole Randy. And
what a head of hair! Would that we
all could be so genetically gifted.

He takes off his cowboy hat and rubs his smooth, shiny pate.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Well, I do believe our business is
done here.

Harris slowly makes his way around the desk to stand in front
of Harmony. He places the USB device inside his pocket. He
comes out holding a gun, trains it on her.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

(to thug; looking at
Harmony)

Kill the kid.

Emma appears at the doorway. She knocks the thug over the
head. His eyes roll back and he drops like a sack of
potatoes.

Kidd runs over to his mother but as he passes the desk Harris
grabs the boy, keeping his gun trained on Harmony.

EMMA

(to Harris)

Let him go. I'm warning you.
Safety's off this time, bitch!

Emma clumsily cocks the trigger, then wipes her brow with the
back of her hand as blood drips into her eye. Harris leads
Kidd back behind the desk and sits, still clutching the boy.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I said, I'm warning you.

HARRIS
(to Emma)
And I, you.

A SECOND THUG appears at the door and knocks the gun out of Emma's hand. It slides across the floor to land at Harmony's feet. She picks it up, points the gun first at Harris, then at thug #2 as Emma and Kidd struggle to free themselves.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
Put down the gun, or this won't end pretty.

HARMONY
You think you can just have your way with everyone. Know what you are? You're a bully! A great big fat bully! Bullybullybully!

Kidd takes his cue and stomps on Harris' foot, then punches the man in the family jewels. Harris winces in pain and releases the boy who runs over to his mother. Meanwhile, Emma frees herself from her distracted captor and joins Harmony and Kidd in the far corner of the room.

Thug #1 regains consciousness on the floor.

HARRIS
(to Harmony)
Three guns to one. You lose.

The men start to converge on them when:

RON (O.S.)
Don't move, you sonsabitches!

Ron and Elaine stand at the doorway, in their bathrobes, holding shotguns.

KIDD
Yeah!

HARRIS
Looks like it's three to three.
That's a tie.

RON
Our guns are bigger. Drop 'em.

Harris chuckles.

RON (CONT'D)
I said drop 'em. Now!

Ron cocks his trigger. Harris puts down his gun. The thugs do the same.

RON (CONT'D)
(to Harris)
Now hand over the whatchamacallit.

A beat. Then:

HARRIS
Ah, what do I care.
(gives Harmony the USB)
Show it to whomever you choose.
You can't prove it's me, and
nobody'd believe you anyway.
(beat)
To think, chemically-engineered
beef more addictive than nicotine
or heroin, so irresistible you
can't stop eating it, to the point
your insides burst - almost, 'cause
if you burst, that'd be bad for
business. That's a good one. That's
hi-hilarious, haha!
(suddenly serious)
You should see the rats.

HARMONY
Why do it?

HARRIS
(barking)
Because there's too much meat!
(beat)
Why should I sacrifice profit when
there's more money to be made!
Demand must match supply. It
must...catch up. That's why. And--

HARMONY
--because you can.

HARRIS
That's right. I hope for your sake
you never get a taste of power, Ms.
Horowitz. The appetite becomes
insatiable.

He drains his drink, rises.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
 Come on, boys.
 (tips his hat to Ron)
 Thank you for your hospitality.

RON
 Not so fast.

The men freeze.

RON (CONT'D)
 Girls, fetch our guests something
 to drink.

HARRIS
 I assure you, I've had enough of
 your fine Southern whiskey.

RON
 (over him)
 Girls, kindly serve these men some
 tea. Get 'em some of that special
 blend.

EMMA
 (gets it)
 Right away, sir.

HARMONY
 Damn Ron! And here I thought you
 were just a dead weight. Old man,
 old money, whiskey-swilling, cigar-
 chomping, boob tube-watching, golf-
 playing, Republican-voting, NRA-
 supporting, beef-loving, cranky
 hoary high-brow old-fashioned fart.

RON
 (snorts)
 I don't know about the rest of it,
 but I am a proud member of the NRA.

He cocks his shotgun again.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The three villains sit on the couch in front of the TV. They
 take hesitant sips of their tea as their hosts watch them
 over the barrels of their shotguns.

HARRIS
 It's good. Zesty. Herbal?

EMMA

Fungal.

HARRIS

Fun gal?

EMMA

You will be in a minute.

He takes another sip. The thugs munch on Elaine's homemade chocolate chip cookies, which are burnt to a crisp.

RON

(rushes them)

Finish the tea, boys!

(softer)

Just being a good host.

The men drain their cups.

RON (CONT'D)

And now, for the evening's entertainment.

He nods at Harmony, who dims the lights and turns on the TV.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The three men watch footage of animals being slaughtered. We can see the images play over their watery eyes. They are starting to trip, and they look pretty freaked out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The video ends. The lights come on, the men are stone-faced.

RON

I reckon you girls got your point across.

(to Harmony)

Anything else you'd like to do with them, now's your chance.

HARMONY

What say we take a field trip?

INT. ENTRY WAY - LATER

The two thugs sit facing each other on the entry way rug. They are making funny faces, giggling, cooing, oblivious to Ron, who ties their hands and feet together.

RON

(explaining)

Boys, the gordion knot is widely considered to be the hardest knot in the world to untie. It's well nigh impossible - unlike the simple square knot you thought to use on me, a decorated war veteran.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

The group files into the car. Ron and Elaine are in front, and Kidd and the girls sit in the back on either side of Harris, who is crammed in the middle. He wears a muzzle and he's looking pretty bug-eyed.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

They're driving along the I-5. Kidd yawns.

HARMONY

(to Kidd)

Did you know that Harris Ranch is one of the biggest factory farms in the world? Just ask Mr. Harris.

She removes Harris' muzzle. His mouth hangs open. Harmony runs her index finger back and forth over his lips.

HARMONY (CONT'D)

(to Emma)

Is he gonna be all right?

EMMA

He'll be happier than a pig in shit, just you watch.

Harmony stuffs the sock back in Harris' mouth.

INT. CAR - LATER

They drive. Miles of barren fields stretch in every direction.

I/E CAR/RANCH FARM - LATER

They approach a large industrial complex. Smoke stacks belch thick plumes of smoke into the night sky. It spreads in vast clouds that unite in an oily river stretching as far as the eye can see. In the distance can be heard the sussurant moans of thousands of unseen animals.

EMMA

Can you feel it? It's like a vibration.

HARMONY

(sniffs air; winces)

Turn here.

They pull into a driveway and stop at a booth, where a cadaverous GUARD reads the funnies.

GUARD

(approaching)

Help you?

HARMONY

We'd like to take a tour of the ranch please.

GUARD

(laughs)

On whose authorization?

HARMONY

We have Mr. Harris himself.

The man peers into the car. Harris smiles dumbly and waves.

GUARD

Is he drunk?

HARRIS

(growling)

Fuck you, you runt!

The man disappears back inside the booth. The gate opens. As the car passes the gate:

HARMONY

(to guard)

Would you be so kind as to point us in the direction of the manure lagoon?

GUARD

Why the heck would you want to go there?

HARMONY

Tell him why, Mr. Harris.

HARRIS

(dazed)

Because I said so.

GUARD

Down the road, a left, then a right, then another left. Can't miss the stench.

He hands them a bag of oxygen masks.

GUARD (CONT'D)

You'll be needing these.

EXT. HARRIS RANCH (MANURE LAGOON) - NIGHT

The car pulls to a stop outside the manure lagoon. Harmony hands out masks to everyone. She hands one to Harris, who pushes it away.

As he exits the vehicle he is hit by an invisible wave of fumes which practically knock him to the ground. He holds out his hand and accepts a mask.

They walk along the wooden bridge toward the lagoon.

KIDD

Why did we come here, mommy?

HARMONY

I dunno. Something told me to bring Mr. Harris out here. Let's ask Mr. Harris.

Harris walks in front of the others.

HARRIS

(entranced)

Granddaddy took me out here once when I was a boy. Couldn't get the stink out of my nose hairs for weeks after that. And now...

(taking off mask)

...I find it smells like roses.

He takes a big whiff and looks out at the steaming sludge of shit and piss that makes up the lagoon. Above, a thick greyish yellow haze hangs heavily.

HARMONY

(explains to Kidd)

This particular lagoon contains millions of gallons of excrement, which emit gases like hydrogen sulfide and ammonia, and the chlorine they use to treat the water forms hydrochloric acid, which can melt your lungs if you're not careful.

A guard appears behind them.

GUARD

(to Harris)

You'll take caution not to go out so far, Mr. Harris sir. It's undergoing maintenance, you see. Pipe's busted.

HARRIS

I'll do as I please.

He walks farther out on the planks.

GUARD

Mr. Harris, sir...

HARRIS

I am Houston Harris III, I say, and this is my land. I'll do as I damn well please!

GUARD

Be advised to heed the signs, sir!

Mr. Harris crosses through the gate draped with YELLOW TAPE and marked DO NOT ENTER and DANGER and POISON and now he stands at the edge of the plank, overlooking the seething cesspool.

GUARD (CONT'D)

(into walkie-talkie)

I need back-up.

HARRIS

Roses, I tell you...it smells like--

HARMONY

(to guard)

Come to think of it, he is drunk...on his own power.

Then, above Harris, a large pipe disgorges its contents into the manure. Steaming sludge launches over his head.

GUARD
(yelling)
Get away from there! I told you the
pipe is busted!

Harris pays no heed. He raises his arms in the air and twirls around, like some evangelical figure having an epiphany. Then, the outflow starts to belch wildly from the pipe and some of the sludge sprays him and he loses his balance and falls headlong into the muck.

Everyone gasps.

KIDD
He got stenchd!

They rush over to see Harris drenched in shit, but he is swimming around, seeming to enjoy himself.

HARMONY
You said it, Em, happier than a pig
in shit.

Houston backstrokes off into the distance.

HARRIS
I'm Houston Harris III. Roses, I
tell you...roses!

As we move past him and past the lagoon and to the hill beyond, we see a single FLOWER pierce the dawn sky, and beyond it, the sun begins to rise.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - MORNING

Heading home on the I-5. Kidd sleeps in his mother's arms.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

The car pulls into the driveway.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Harmony carries her sleeping son past the two thugs as they are led away by POLICE OFFICERS.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Harmony lays her son atop the bed. From his hand drops a photograph.

She picks it up to see it is the fourth photo from her bookmark/photo strip, featuring her and her mystery man. In this picture, he wears a baseball cap.

Kidd opens his eyes.

KIDD
(re: photo)
Dad.

HARMONY
I suppose you're old enough. Get under the covers.

As Kidd does so:

HARMONY (CONT'D)
It was the perfect date. Quiet dinner by the beach. Then a stroll over to the pier, a ride on the ferris wheel and then, we took these...

She takes out her photo strip and joins the photos together.

HARMONY (CONT'D)
I made him take off his cap, but in this one, he snuck it back on.

KIDD
And then what?

HARMONY
And then he dropped me off back home.

KIDD
(knowing there's more)
And?

HARMONY
And one thing led to another...and you were born nine months later.

KIDD
Gimme details.

Harmony tickles him.

HARMONY

Okay okay. When I found out I was, you know, with child - remind me we need to have the birds and bees talk at some point, we're kinda jumpin' the gun here - I, well, I had already had an abortion - we need to have that talk, too, by the way - and I vowed never to have one again, an abortion that is.

(remembering)

I knew I needed to keep the baby...you...

(far off)

...and never tell him.

KIDD

Why not?

HARMONY

We were young, and I knew there was no way he'd want to raise a child. I'd only be disappointed. And so I...made myself unavailable. Eventually, he stopped coming by, and soon he stopped calling. Probably thought I wasn't into him, which couldn't have been further from the truth.

KIDD

Why don't you call him and say hi?

HARMONY

Believe me I've thought about it many times. But all I had to go on was his first name. Buddy. Bud. That's your father's name.

KIDD

That's a sad story, mommy.

HARMONY

It has a happy ending.

(taps him on the nose)

You.

(beat)

Now get some sleep and tomorrow we'll go see the Dodgers.

KIDD

Angels!

HARMONY

Deal.

She kisses her son. As she passes the dresser she picks up her son's Rubik's Cube, rotates it in her hand. It is solved. She looks back at Kidd, who is already fast asleep.

EXT. ANGELS' STADIUM - DAY

A series of scenes:

The car parks out front of the stadium. Harmony, Emma, and Kidd pile out. Harmony hands Kidd his ticket.

They enter the turnstiles.

Harmony buys Kidd an Angels' cap.

They are seated right behind the 3rd base dugout. Great seats. They watch a batter get a hit.

Emma takes out their tupperware lunches.

EMMA

(to Harmony)

Didn't peg you as a sports fan.

HARMONY

Who are the Angels again?

A CHILD Kidd's age watches Kidd eat his salad. His father hands him a hotdog. The child takes a bite.

Now, it is seventh inning stretch time, and the crowd stands to sing "Take me out to the ball game..."

At the end of the song, the scoreboard goes fuzzy. Then:

A SERIES OF IMAGES

On the scoreboard we see a cow's eyes, then, in rapid succession, as though on fast-forward, the cow gets strung up, his throat slit, blood gushes in a hot stream, he's sliced down the middle, gutted, hacked into pieces on a dirty slaughterhouse floor, ground into a burger, thrown over a grill in an even dirtier fast food joint, everything combining with dizzying speed to culminate in an open-faced hamburger, served by a smiley-faced clerk, and an unwitting consumer taking a big bite.

The SEVEN-SECOND IMAGE ends.

In the stands, the kid with the hot dog looks at his food and frowns. We hold on this hesitation.

His father grabs the dog from his son's hands and eats it.

The game resumes.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Pinch hitting for your Anaheim
Angels, number nine, Bud Thomas.

The crowd applauds.

Kidd looks up from his baseball cards, points.

KIDD
(quietly)
Dad.

Harmony looks down at the baseball card, then up at the batter.

HARMONY
(quietly)
Bud?

KIDD
(louder now)
Dad!

HARMONY
(louder)
Bud!

Fans turn to watch them. On the field, BUD THOMAS turns to look at them, first at Kidd, then at Harmony. A glimmer of recognition turns into a hopeful smile. Hold on that smile.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Randall James, Jr., a.k.a Todd Henry Smith pays for a copy of the book Our Andromeda.

CLERK
(recognizing)
You cut your hair.

James runs his hand over a quarter inch of stubbly growth.

JAMES
Needed a fresh start.

He takes his book and leaves.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END