

DOWNCYCLED: CREATING AN ORIGINAL SERIES

by

MADDIE DUNKELBERG

A THESIS

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and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
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An Abstract of the Thesis of

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Title: *Downcycled: Creating an Original Series*

Approved: _____

Priscilla Peña Ovalle

Spurred on by the extreme lack of diversity on the production side of the television entertainment world, I have created an original series that provides a space for both women writers and women performers. I begin my thesis by examining the current climate for comedy television. I focus on the role women currently play in writing and “showrunning” TV comedy, and on the direction in which the format is moving—toward streaming content. I then discuss my writing process, from the inception of the series idea to outlining the series “bible” to writing the first two episodes of the series. After I explore the choices I made in writing those episodes, I include the series bible and the two “pilot” episodes themselves. With this collection of materials, I believe I have created a series ready to be executed, a series that both reflects my experiences and style and diversifies the TV comedy market.

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Introduction

The Project

As a woman beginning a career in comedy, I have an impressive lineage of ladies to thank for paving the way. For years, the most famed television creators were men. Men like Norman Lear became stars—not for their career as actors, but as auteurs. Now the Tina Feys and Mindy Kalings of the world are proving that women can create, write, produce, direct and even star in their own series—and win Emmys for their work. Nevertheless, with women accounting for the minority of writers in both film and television, the entertainment industry can seem inhospitable to female newcomers.

I want to see more roles I could fill as a writer and performer. I want to see more writers' rooms that welcome an equal number of men and women. And most importantly, I want to see writers' rooms that are *run by* women. So why not look at this lack of opportunities as an opportunity in itself? For my thesis, I have created a television series that could be produced for the web. Placing myself in the role of showrunner (the creator and producer) for my series, I researched the duties of creating a show so that I might ensure that my production is diverse in its execution. I studied the work of other female showrunners and studied series I admire to better understand the format. From there, I created a solid base of character, location and plot information upon which a future writing staff could build, and wrote the first two episodes of my series, *Downcycled*.

Downcycled is a coming-of-age dramedy (a common industry genre descriptor that I will explain shortly) series about a young woman, Del, who abandons her life as

an identity-confused, floundering wanna-be environmentalist for a new one after her grandmother dies and leaves Del her condo in a retirement community in Palm Springs. Here, as a fish out of water, Del re-learns to be Del. It was important to me that my series revolve around a female protagonist, largely because, as I mentioned, female protagonists are in the minority, but also because I wanted to explore the challenges of being a not-so-stable twenty-something woman in 2015 in a way that allows that woman to be flawed *and* three-dimensional. One of my goals is to create a product that normalizes the experience of anxiety and failure as a young woman through comedy.

Background and Statement of Artistic Purpose

While my previous study is in writing screenplays for short and feature films, I chose to write for television for my thesis. As a viewer, I enjoy watching comedy on television more than on film because I believe comedy benefits from the shorter form. I often find that feature-length comedy films use unnecessary gags as filler, or stress plot and jokes above character. In television form, we have multiple episodes to spend with characters, so we might find humor in simpler situations (perhaps just through character study). Situations do not have to be dragged on for two hours—but there is also the option of calling back to things that happened in previous episodes. As a writer, writing for television can offer more freedom to explore.

Currently, women are actually better represented onscreen and behind the scenes of television than they are in film. While only about 29% of major characters in the top films are female, a study conducted last year reveals that 40% of major characters in

broadcast, cable and Netflix shows are women (“Boxed In”). Still, women account for less than half of the speaking characters in these shows. Why is this so? Perhaps because only 25 percent of the writers of these shows are women—and the same research shows that without women on the writing staff, the number of female characters drops an average of seven percentage points (“Boxed In”). If I run my own show, I can put women in my writers’ room.

Recently, the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film has begun to factor subscription-based television like Netflix into their research. Subscription-based means that viewers pay a monthly fee to have access to the services’ library of movies and shows that they can then stream online. But while Netflix and Amazon Instant Video both produce female-run, female-centric shows like *Orange is the New Black* (2013-present, which follows an ensemble of women in a prison) and *Transparent* (2014-present, about a father who transitions from male to female), adding these networks into the mix only ups the percentage of women writers by one point (“Boxed In”). Given the novelty of these new streaming platforms, it is disheartening that men already dominate them.

Independent film producers, actors and creators of all kinds are gravitating toward subscription- and streaming-based television. Gregg Goldstein, a writer for the entertainment industry publication *Variety*, argues that new, streaming-based outlets like Netflix are particularly hungry to capture new and exciting shows, because they win subscriptions based on the publicity and recognition a show earns (Goldstein). According to Goldstein’s logic, shows that are critically acclaimed but receive low viewing ratings could stay in production longer, instead of meeting the fate of programs

like *The Sarah Silverman Show*, which was nominated for Emmys but was cancelled after two seasons due to low revenues (O’Neal). In a perfect world, this would mean that streaming services would take risks on shows that might be seen as niche projects, especially shows that have greater diversity of gender, race and sexuality.

Unfortunately, to have such lofty expectations for these new media could be slightly utopic. As of yet, there is no public data to suggest that viewership of streaming services like Netflix and Amazon is any more diverse than broadcast television viewership. These two streaming giants do not disclose data on their demographics, and the current industry standard for gauging viewership of streaming services, the Digital Audience Ratings™ or DAR, uses social media to track viewer engagement, but not viewer demographics (Jarvey, Klein). And even if the streaming viewers *are* more diverse, these streaming services are run by the same hegemonic structures that restrict diversity in broadcast television. All of Netflix’s “Officers and Directors,” for example, are white, and 14 of the 18 directors are men (“Officers and Directors”). So instead of expecting this whitewashed board of directors to realize that shows that revolve around women and people of color have critical and commercial value (as proved by the success of *Empire*, a network show with an almost all-black cast whose finale was the most watched show of the week), I’ve got to take matters into my own hands (Kissell). I’ve got to produce my own work. I’ve got to be the showrunner of my own program.

Interestingly, the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film study does not list the percentage of women who serve as showrunners. Perhaps this is because “showrunner” is not technically a credited position in television, though it is a common industry concept. A showrunner is generally a combination writer/creator,

executive producer and script editor (“Showrunner”). Much as a director is often considered responsible for the final product of a film, a showrunner is often considered the auteur or author of a show—or, as Joss Whedon humbly put it, “I’m responsible for everything in every frame of every show” (Newman 38). Given the power of the showrunner position, there needs to be more diversity in this field.

Approach

First, I set out to solidify my style. I looked to streaming shows that I admire for inspiration. Two such shows are *Orange is the New Black* and *Transparent*. Both are shows with female showrunners (Jenji Kohan and Jill Soloway, respectively). To give context, *Orange is the New Black* (based on the memoirs of Piper Kerman) follows WASP-y Piper Chapman into prison after she is convicted of a crime years after the fact. *Transparent* follows the Pfeffermans, a Jewish family living in LA, as their patriarch Mort (played by Jeffrey Tambor) transitions from male to female. The three grown children of the family all deal with the change in their own inappropriate ways as their own lives go through some rocky patches as well. These shows have both caught my attention for their unique blend of genre—both live in the “dramedy” world between comedy and drama—and independent film style.

To research style, I was lucky enough to obtain the teleplays to the first season of *Transparent* in order to study their structure. This was vital for me, given my lack of experience in television writing. Reading these scripts, particularly for the pilot episode, helped me understand the minutiae of television writing. After seeing small details, such as the way Soloway bolded and underlined her scene headings or the way she added a

header at the top of each page, I was able to tweak my screenwriting style to better reflect the television medium.

I was also able to get a better idea of how Soloway wrote to achieve her very distinctive style. Even her character and setting descriptions have a very clear sense of voice. She uses a unique and almost conversational vocabulary (Soloway). Reading this, it became clear to me that I needed to make my teleplays stand out not only in the dialogue, but also in all the descriptions of action that you won't hear read aloud, because that really informs the style. Of course, the dialogue style is extremely important as well. Soloway writes very naturalistic dialogue, with a lot of overlapping lines, lines that stumble, lines that trail off mid-sentence, and lines that are peppered with made-up words.

Another way I studied *Transparent* was through an aesthetic and sonic analysis. I examined the pilot episode of *Transparent*, for example, to find the differences between this show and more mainstream multi-camera, laugh-tracked sitcoms like *How I Met Your Mother*. Most of the scenes are shot on location instead of in a studio, so settings appear very realistic. Sonically, the rhythm of the dialogue differs from traditional television comedies. Non-diegetic sound (sound that comes from outside the world the characters live in, sound that they cannot hear, such as a film score) occurs sparsely, and the dialogue has a natural, overlapping rhythm that is often peppered with improvised lines. The improvisation in particular stood out to me, because as an improviser myself I consider improv essential to my brand of humor.

One might think of the director or art director as having control of these style elements, and one wouldn't be completely wrong. But these elements are things I can

heavily influence with my writing; these are things my writings can set in motion. By keeping in mind the genre in which I was writing (a dramedy with independent film influences), I tailored my dialogue to match that style, and wrote action and scene descriptions that suggested this atmosphere. For example, I took extra care to describe the colors and textures of the Golden Sage retirement complex, where much of the action in my teleplays takes place, so that when filmed, the final project will reflect the worn-out, sun-drenched, vintage aesthetic that I had imagined. While in playwriting the playwright is primarily responsible for dialogue and writes little stage direction or setting, in screenwriting the writer creates much more action and description than dialogue (though the screen directions are still concise). And, in both cases, the writer is responsible for the initial creation of the world.

Once I better understood the world of the show, I moved on to a structural analysis of an episode of *Transparent* so I could learn the structure in which Soloway presents that world. In a structural analysis, I broke the pilot episode down scene-by-scene. I noted what actions happen in each scene, and note the “scene point” (SP) of each, describing the purpose of its inclusion. I also marked important moments like reversals (moments where things change for the better or for the worse for the protagonist), the inciting incident (the moment when the status quo is disrupted) and the climax. For example, the scene in which the inciting incident occurs looks like this:

Scene 9: After the kids leave, Mort slips into his women’s clothing and wig and is able to become Maura. *SP: Maura’s secret is that she is transgender. **Inciting incident (at about 11 minutes in).***

Breaking apart an episode scene-by-scene was an important step to understanding the structure of the writing. This episode, written by Soloway, begins with a series of short scenes that establish the frame and introduces the characters and their status quo. We know from these vignettes what the Pfefferman children's everyday lives are like. We know, even before Maura comes in almost halfway through the episode, that she is important in the kids' lives. Then, a longer scene lets us explore the whole family's dynamic and builds up to the inciting incident. This comes very late in the episode, especially for a comedy—about halfway through. Yet such a late inciting incident feels appropriate, not just because this episode must set up the entire series, but also because of the indie-film style and the serial nature of the series. One episode picks up where the last leaves off, unlike a traditional episodic sitcom where each episode, while it may carry over certain details about character arcs, usually starts over with a completely new issue and the characters lives remain fairly static. All of this information helped give me an idea of how to better structure my piece.

That said, it is important to note that my series differs considerably from my inspirations—I don't, after all, want to simply copy *Transparent*. One large difference is that I am not writing for well-known television stars like Jeffrey Tambor and Judith Light. It can be helpful to create characters with certain actors in mind; however, I tried to write a series that my peers and I could feasibly produce on a very low budget (read: no budget, using my own camera). Also, my subject matter is slightly lighter than that of *Transparent*. I do deal with themes of mental illness, grief and identity, but at a less intense level than *Transparent*, which deals with infidelity, divorce, illegitimate children, and, of course, coming out as transgender. The protagonist of my series is

younger, too, than *Transparent*'s Maura and her children, who are all in their 30s or 40s.

I also needed to consider my intended audience. Who would be watching my series? The target audience I wrote for was viewers who are old enough to handle more mature language and content. My series is not quite as explicit as *Transparent* or *Orange is the New Black*), but I did not want to be restricted by the need to heavily censor my content—I wanted to be able to stay as true to my characters' lives as possible. I wanted to write especially for young women and young people of color—and I wanted those viewers to see themselves represented in my show. Because of the age of my protagonist (22), I anticipate that my show will be more appealing to younger audiences, and especially appealing to young women aged 18-30. Of course, since the show takes place in a retirement community, I hope that older viewers will also appreciate the content.

Techniques

In creating my show, much of the work was creative. For me, the writing process begins with a germ, or a simple and concise idea. In this case my germ was this: *A girl learns of the death of her grandmother, with whom she was extremely close, but the only way she can get to the funeral is to bike across the country.* From there, I journaled extensively about my main character and about the frame of the show, or the “settings, the mood, and the overall look” (Lucey 35). I used prompts from the screenwriting books I have described in my annotated bibliography as well as questions I have developed myself (“What music plays in the main character’s head as she walks down the street?” “How would this character vote in the 2016 presidential election?”). I

settled on character names. For my main character, for example, I wanted a name that reflected her energy and personality—straightforward, and not overtly feminine, but a little cheeky. I wrote up a long list of short androgynous names that could be shortened from longer, feminine names (Cam for Camille, Jack from Jacqueline) and eventually settled on Del, short for Delilah.

This journaling, which was an ongoing process that continued as I began writing the scripts, formed the basis for my show’s bible, the “compendium of information about every character and plot twist in the life of the series” (“Showrunner”). This bible theoretically provides all the information necessary for a team of writers to write subsequent episodes.

In my journaling I also sketched out episode arcs for the two I planned to write. In this process, my plot ideas changed radically. First, I realized I would rather set the show in places I was familiar with—Oregon and California. I also realized that the biking was logistically difficult to write and added little to the series. I wanted to take more time to explore Del’s relationship with her brother Henry, her soon-to-be-ex-boyfriend Dakota, her late grandmother and other characters.

From there, I wrote the logline of my newly reimagined show, which lays out the character, genre, plot and controlling idea in a concise, elevator-pitch format.

This series is a coming-of-age dramedy about a young woman who, after her grandmother dies, abandons her life as a failed college environmentalist for a new life in her grandmother’s Palm Springs retirement community. In this new and foreign landscape, she ultimately learns how to define her own identity even when the things she normally clings to are trashed.

This logline gave me a jumping off point for the series.

The next step was to build more complete synopses or treatments of each episode. The treatments included what happened in each scene, and even in each beat (each incident of action and character). I then broke the action down into beats and wrote that out in bulleted form in what is called a beat sheet, so that I was ready to write the scripts using the screenwriting software Final Draft.

Of course, even after I completed drafts of my two episodes, my content went through drastic changes. Part of this is simply due to the nature of creative writing. To quote Hemingway, “The first draft of anything is shit.” But part of the editing process was learning how to adapt my film writing style to television. In the first draft of my pilot, much of the action was set in Oregon, while most of the action in the series overall takes place in Palm Springs, California. I also wrote very short scenes in a multitude of locations. As I learned from further study of television writing, TV comedies generally stick to a small amount of locations to minimize their budget. I migrated most of my pilot to Palm Springs and scaled back the number of locations. Still, my style does reflect more of an indie-film sensibility, much like *Transparent*, which utilizes a lot of short scenes that are shot on location—and that influence is okay, as long as I remain aware of the limitations that television production will impose.

So What?

Imagining myself as the showrunner of a series is not simply a vain exercise. If I am going to create a show, I want it to be a show that reflects my sense of humor, sure. I want it to reflect my background in improvisation. I want it to explore the issues I face as a woman in her early twenties who struggles with anxiety and a lot of social awkwardness. I want it to be heartfelt, personal, and funny. But more than that, I want it

to be a diverse show. Young women should see themselves represented as in this show. Women of color should see themselves portrayed as characters with lives that are equally as full as the white female characters. The way to ensure that these things happen and that this holistic representation continues past the first few episodes that I write is to imagine myself as a showrunner.

Just because I am the show runner does not mean I will be able to guarantee that women are well represented. If my show were picked up by a network or streaming service, I could be subject to the whims of the predominantly white male board of directors. But for the purposes of my project, I imagine myself as an independent showrunner, as someone who plans to produce her own show and release that show on the web. In that capacity, I can make sure women are well represented in my writers' room. When women write for television (as shown in the study by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film), women receive representation on television. The beginnings of this series will provide strong female roles where they are lacking. My work will add to the too-small percentage of women writing for television. Greater representation of women in television, I believe, can contribute to greater representation and better treatment of women in the workplace and in everyday life, from the self-esteem of young girls to the respect of women on the street. And, because it is geared toward streaming online, my show will be accessible. I'll be able to produce it much more easily, and it won't go forever unviewed as it might have before the advent of streaming television. I will be creating work for myself, and representation for my peers.

Downcycled Series Bible

In the simple words of Development Executive Daniel Lutman, whose job revolves around creating and pitching new shows, the “Show Bible” for a television show—be it narrative or non-narrative, multi-camera or single-camera—“sets the world of the show” (Lutman). Says Lutman, “It should include detailed information on anything and everything from locations and characters to episode synopses and multiple season story arcs.” Below, I have included the bible for my series, *Downcycled*.

Episode Synopses

“Two to five sentences that cover your A-story, B-story, and (sometimes C-story) of the episode. Do they wrap up every episode or will it be a season long story?”

The series will be more serial than episodic. A la *Transparent*, each episode will pick up more or less where the last left off, though there will be more time between each episode than there is in *Transparent*. The story arc will be season-long. Though specific situations wrap up fairly well in each episode (Del decides to stay in Palm Springs in episode one, and she makes it through a difficult memorial in episode two), the series will be contingent upon watching the episodes in order, much more so than the traditional sitcom. I have chosen to write the series in a serial style so that I may take full advantage of the longform storytelling tools that television provides. What drew me to television writing was the way that shows utilize a novel-esque format to extend the life of characters beyond what they can be in the two-hour film structure, and continuing the storyline from episode to episode allows me to join in this tradition.

Again, following the model of Amazon Studios streaming shows like *Transparent* and *Mozart in the Jungle*, both single-camera dramedies, I have planned for a ten-episode season, with episodes lasting about 22-25 minutes each. I have provided synopses for the first three episodes only, because my goal would be to create the rest of the episodes with a team of writers. Typically, series creators do not write each episode, but tend to write the pilot and final episode. Jill Soloway, for example, wrote the first two episodes and the season finale of *Transparent*, and the episodes in between are credited to other members of Soloway's writing staff. I have written the first two episodes of my series. I have also outlined the third episode so that the writer who picks up where I left off has a model of what I'm looking for in an episode. My plan is to collaborate with other writers to create the rest of the season following the season arc I have outlined, and once we have a more complete idea of where the season is going, I will write the final episode.

Episode One

A-Story: Del, a 22-year-old college student, finds out from her brother Henry that her grandma Jane, who Del lived with from age 16-18, has died. This awakens her to the fact that her life at the Oregon university she attends is less than satisfactory, and she decides to ditch school to travel to Palm Springs for Grandma Jane's funeral. Though her road to Southern California is rough, she eventually makes it. Once there, her and Henry visit Clara, their grandmother's roommate and the executor of her will. Clara reveals that Del has inherited co-ownership of the retirement community condo Clara shared with Grandma Jane. Given the state of Del's life, she decides to drop out of school and move into the condo.

B-Story: The upheaval in Del's life leads her to examine her relationship with her boyfriend Dakota. Dakota struggles to understand the way Del deals with her anxiety. Del's poor airport planning leads to a fight that results in Del breaking up with Dakota.

C-Story: Del, upon realizing that her work with the Environmental Justice club meeting she runs at school is essentially useless, tries to find a new life path. She ends up taking an interest in garbage and recycling collection, introducing herself to two young waste removal workers, Amelia and Michael.

Episode Two

A-Story: On top of adjusting to the new community she has chosen, Del has to plan and live through her grandmother's memorial. What makes this so challenging is the presence of her parents, with whom she has a tumultuous relationship. Del has to confront her parents about the way they have treated her and the way they treated her grandmother, all while defending her new life change.

B-Story: Del has to navigate her relationship with her new roommate, the fiery 75-year old Clara. Despite Clara's bluntness, they grow closer over the course of this episode when Clara steps in and acts as a much-needed maternal figure—a position her grandmother has just vacated, and a position her actual mother is incapable of filling.

C-Story: Henry strikes up a friendship with the hip young priest of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Conner Radler. Their friendship is laced with sexual tension. And weed.

Episode Three

A-Story: Del interviews for a job at Palm Springs Garbage and Recycling, and accepts a position. Amelia and Michael begin to take Del under their wing. Del feels a little shy,

but instantly knows that these are the kind of people she *wants* to be around. She is gratified when her to go “dump drinking”—tipsy dumpster diving—which is more thrilling than it sounds.

B-Story: Del, with Henry’s help, struggles to throw away Grandma Jane’s stuff. They both end up holding on to different things—Henry to G-J’s clothes, Del to her books and journals, but eventually they both realize that these physical objects aren’t *her*, and they let some of it go.

C-Story: Del fights against Southern California parking. She gets into multiple situations where her anxiety leads her to take an incredible amount of time to park. She ends up getting in trouble with the police for suspicious behavior when she anxiously circles around the block too many times.

Season Story Arcs

“What story are you telling? What changes from season to season? How do the events affect your characters? How do they change? Do they change?”

The first season is about Del trying to adjust to this new life and these new people. She takes a new job that is completely different than what she thought she would be doing, and has to come to terms with the fact that, even if she might not be great at it, she has to stick with something. Through it all, she tries to deal with her anxiety—but never does anything really concrete about it. She tentatively tries to start new relationships, trying to show Michael she is interested, but he backs away from her. She watches Henry’s relationship with Connor Radler, the young pastor, flourish, and feels like even more of a failure.

Meanwhile, the relationships Del did not expect to be rewarding end up providing her with the most joy. Clara becomes a maternal figure and keeps life interesting with her inappropriate comments. Randy, Del and Clara's next door neighbor, becomes a confidante, and is one of the first to get Del out of the house and into the Palm Springs world, introducing her to the gay culture—and to the best bagel joint—in Palm Springs. Del also begins to notice that Amelia may have feelings for her, and is not sure how to process that. This leads her to question her sexual identity, among other things. By the end of the season, she realizes that in order to make these new relationships truly meaningful, she needs to repair some of her more long standing, damaged relationships—namely, her relationship with her parents.

If the first season is about Del settling in, the second is about her trying to move up from there. She makes some beginning attempts to connect with her parents. She begins a tentative relationship with Amelia, but Amelia grows frustrated with Del's nervousness and lack of commitment. Reaching out to her parents causes her to examine the roots of her anxiety, and her relationship with Amelia leads to a continued examination of her sexual identity. She actually tries to tackle her anxiety, failing spectacularly at therapy and medication, but she begins becoming more comfortable with this kind of failure.

In the third season, Del decides to commit to her relationship with Amelia. She learns how to navigate this. She deals with the declining health of Clara, and with Henry's breakdown as he confronts what he's realizing is the detrimental relationship *he's* had with their parents. She learns that she is, for once, able to be the caretaker instead of the one being taken care of—even if she does fail sometimes.

Character Breakdowns

“Age, Description, Backstory, Point of View, Wants/Goals. You should be able to answer any question someone would throw at you in regards to your characters.

How does so and so feel about _____ ?”

Del McConnell

Age: 22

Description: She has thick dark hair that isn’t curly enough to be fun or straight enough to be cool and she often rolls it up into a bun. Her freckles are abundant. She’s on the tall side of average and on the curvier side of it, too—she’s no stick-thin model. Her voice is a little deeper but prone to some dweeby cracking and squeaking.



Figure 1: Del’s style

This relaxed, thrown-together outfit is typical of something Del might wear (*Today’s Outfit*).

Backstory: Del grew up in Northern California with her parents. Her father came from humble origins—her mother from a moneyed family—and together they had started a

successful outdoor wear chain, already a local staple by the time Del was born, already bringing them across the country to set up new franchises. They worked constantly, leaving her to play with only Henry, and in the care of their grandmother Jane (her father's mother). When Del was a sophomore in high school and Henry had already left for college, her parents moved to the east coast to establish an important franchise in New York, leaving Del in Jane's care full time. Del resolved to be the opposite of them—to have a genuine love for the earth instead of simply selling that image, and to move far away from their legacy, or at least as far as she could afford to without having to rely on her parents' finances (Oregon). She became consumed with her activities there, often neglecting contact with her Grandmother and refusing to reach out to her parents. But the anxiety she had always experienced became more severe in college, leading to breakdowns over trivial—or were they?—things. She had a hard time forming deep friendships in college. She made some good acquaintances and briefly had some roommates, but found she lived better alone. She clung to the relationship she had with Dakota, who he began dating her junior year, because he seemed safest and most immediate.



Figure 2: Del's house

The messy but light style of this house is how I imagine Del's Oregon house (Kuan).

Point of View: Del is intensely independent but not always intensely capable. Del McConnell is someone who lives in constant anxiety, but tries to hide what feel like constant fuck-ups with jokes. Really, she's capable, but life keeps throwing her things that she feels incapable of handling.

Del is fiercely liberal. Maybe not always the most informed, but when she tries to be informed, she is *smart*, and she'll argue you to death.

Wants/Goals: Del is someone who wishes she could be alternative and hip, but really can't escape her essential squareness. She's a little too type-A to be an easy-going hippy, but a little too disorganized to be a beacon of mainstream goodness.

She knows Henry loves her, but she also wants him to think she's cool.

She wants to work for an organization like the Sierra Club because that's what she knows. But she'd kind of rather work in an office than out in the field.

She knows she wants to do something big and impactful, but the road to making that impact is fuzzy. She feels a frustrated, constipated feeling low in her gut that

washing out her Nancy's yogurt container and tossing it in the recycling might not really do anything. So sometimes she throws it in the trash.

She wants things to be better, but she's afraid of change, so she tries to convince herself that her boyfriend is the boyfriend she needs, that the school is the school she needs, that the club she runs is the club she needs to run—but eventually must accept that as hard as she works at those things, they might just be the wrong things. And she has to leave those things behind.

Fears: Of not being perfect, which will lead to failing. Even at the Garbage and Recycling job, she constantly feels inadequate.

Of being guilty for messing things up for everyone else.

Henry McConnell (Del's brother)

Age: 25

Description: Henry is tall and skinny. He is clean cut and always dressed like he fell out of a J. Crew ad—though his gangliness makes him look like a little bit less of a dick. His hair is dark like Del's and, like Del, he also gets those freckles.



Figure 3: Henry's style

This outfit typifies Henry's fashion sense—except for the words on the sweater (*Look 4*).

Backstory: Henry shares a much more stable relationship with his parents. He lived with them throughout his high school career. He still doesn't quite agree with them on most things, but he views their behavior with more of a sense of humor than of scorn. They paid for half his college tuition at Loyola-Marymount University in LA (he earned the rest through scholarships and working). He did, however, feel the pressure of their conservatism and remains closeted to them. He tends to downplay his sexuality, fearing that, like his parents, people will respect him less if they know he's gay.

Point of view: Definitely as liberal as Del but more levelheaded about it. He digs reading about politics and even had a political science major in college. He would volunteer for Hillary, probably.

He definitely experiences some of the anxiety that Del does, but processes it in a different way. He moves more calmly through the world.

Wants/Goals: Henry enjoys his job, but he wants to do something creative and independent that would get people to notice and remember him as unique—like his parents did. He fantasizes about doing something rad like opening a craft brewery, but then he feels kind of disgusted with himself for being just as hipster as his hipster friends who get on his nerves so much. Instead of living a life of being painfully cool, he'd really rather just have a sweet house and a family and a dog (but isn't sure how to get that while also having a successful career).

Fears: Of dying alone, of his parents seeing him as unsuccessful.

Dakota Larson (Del's ex-boyfriend)

Age: 23

Description: Dakota is tall and lightly muscled. He plays around with a moustache, and he pulls it off—even if it's a bit wispy. He favors long shorts, vans, t-shirts and bike hats—and is always biking everywhere.

Backstory: Dakota got burnt out on success in high school. He got A's and was popular, spurred on by his doctor parents who were always inviting his friends over and encouraging him to excel. He got more into bike riding and racing in high school as an escape, and threw himself more into that than school. He went to an Oregon public university instead the private school they'd wished, and studied environmental studies and worked at the bike barn instead of doing pre-med. He found he was happier in this space than in the hyper-competitive one of his parents—which is why he has a hard time dealing with Del's anxiety and perfectionism.

Point of View: Dakota is not apathetic, but rather has chosen not to get too involved with issues like Del has—it stresses him out.

Wants/Goals: He wants to own his own bike shop, and he races semi-professionally. He knows he's not the kind of person who could be a professional racer, but he loves riding. He wants to find someone who wants this same level of contentedness.

Conner Radler (priest who presides over Del's grandma's funeral; Henry's love interest)

Age: 27

Description: More youthful and attractive than you'd expect a priest to be, with curly dark hair and a sturdy build. His eyes always look a little more mischievous than you might think a priest's would, and he always looks like he's about to laugh.

Backstory: Connor was a bit of a jock in high school—popular. But when his mother died, and his father became depressed and had a hard time supporting the family, Connor had to quit those sports and found himself leaning on his Catholicism to get him through. He entered the seminary after college, and decided to become a priest. He was sent to a parish in Palm Springs, but quickly realized he was way too liberal for the Roman Catholics. He decided to be ordained as an Evangelical Catholic church, so that he could get married, and so that he could be openly gay. And maybe smoke some pot and piss people off less. He remained in Palm Springs, moving his little church from senior center to senior center.

Point of View: He's more into being good and kind than being right and morally perfect.

Wants/Goals: He wants to build an actual church—preferably not in Palm Springs—and also wants to have a house and a dog and be able to have fun.

Grandma Jane McConnell (Del's grandmother)

Age: 80, deceased.

Description: G-Jane was skinny and strawberry blonde. She always worried more about her appearance than anybody could believe, because everyone thought she was beautiful.

Backstory: Grandma Jane was Del's paternal grandmother. Her husband left when John McConnell was young, so she raised Del's dad a single mother. She remained close to her son despite his lack of reciprocity in the relationship. She clung to her grandkids. She was largely responsible for raising Del, but backed off when Del went to college, wanting to give her space. She moved down south when Del moved up North, and eventually moved in with her best friend Clara (without telling Del). She was diagnosed with breast cancer Del's freshman year, but didn't want to worry her, so gave her minimal updates.

Point of View: G-Jane loved shiny things. She loved tennis. She loved her grandkids. She was a social butterfly.

Wants/Goals: She wanted her grandkids to have a more wholehearted life than her son, and a less fraught life than her own.

Clara Hernandez (Grandma Jane's, and now Del's, roommate)

Age: 75

Description: Short, a little round, and never caring to wear any makeup—who needs it? She wears her hair short and kind of spikes it up. She does love earrings, though. Dangly ones.

Backstory: Clara also raised her son as a single mother, which is one of the reasons (besides tennis) why she and Jane became such close friends. She lived in East LA, daughter of immigrants from México, and worked at a phone company for years to support her son. She now has a granddaughter, and lavishes her attention on her—though her granddaughter isn't super into it. Clara is a bit of a queen bee at Golden Palms.

Point of View: Clara never became rich, but she still believes in that bootstrap mentality, which her son scoffs at her for. But she still voted for Obama.

Wants/Goals: Clara wants her granddaughter to like her. She wants to see her son succeed. She wants to travel.

Michael James (Del's coworker/friend)

Age: 24

Description: Black, impossibly handsome for a Garbage and Recycling employee. Has a hard time being serious. Kills people with his smile. Short hair.

Backstory: Michael wanted to study Environmental Studies like Del did, but couldn't afford it. He grew up in downtown LA, and moved to Palm Springs to take care of his grandmother. He took this job in the hopes of getting some experience in the field and someday being able to afford college. He checks Del's privilege when she complains about paying for college by herself.

Point of View: Thinks politics are bullshit and that actual activism is the only way to get things done. He knows the cycle of poverty is real and it's shitty. But he knows what he wants and he's gonna get it.

Wants/Goals: To work for an environmental activism firm, or maybe as an environmental lawyer. To move out of Palm Springs, and away from Southern California.

Amelia (Del's coworker/friend)

Age: 23

Description: Short and curvy. Dark, wildly curly hair. A pretty bohemian style. Cares very little about her appearance.

Backstory: Grew up in Palm Springs. Had no desire to go to college, at least not at the moment. Her mother is Latina and her father is white—they both also worked for the city. She got in a bit of trouble for weed possession in high school and had to do some community service in a garden, and found she really liked working with her hands, actually.

Point of View: She very much rejects the status quo, but she hasn't really figured out where she belongs yet, or what she believes.

Wants/Goals: She's interested in music but can't take herself seriously enough to actually play music. She thinks she might end up an elementary school teacher but feels a little bit silly about it so doesn't tell many people.

Randy Cohen (Del's new neighbor)

Age: 78

Description: Randy is a gay Jewish man hailing from Berkeley. He always seems to be wearing a t-shirt from a 5K he ran in the 70s. He's got a curly mop of wispy white hair

and some tortoiseshell glasses that Del envies. His body has seen better days, but he loves to run laps around the pool downstairs.



Figure 4: Randy's attire

No doubt Randy would have been an active annual participant in the San Francisco staple, the Bay to Breakers race. And no doubt he still has—and still wears—his old T-shirts (Michelle).

Backstory: Randy's partner passed away last year, and he just recently moved into Golden Sage alone. Clara, being the social butterfly she is, took it upon herself to welcome Randy into the community, and they quickly became best friends. Del realizes that she and Randy have a lot in common, too. Randy was a grassroots organizer in his day, and he is also very good at making bagels, which is one of Del's deepest passions. He becomes a bit of a father/grandfather figure to Del.

Point of View: Randy has seen a lot in his life, but he is the first to laugh at any situation. He's always smiling, which can be aggravating. He still has some strong political leanings, but he can't take politics too seriously anymore.

Wants/Goals: Randy has some healing and mourning left to do, but he is determined to live out the rest of his life in sunshine and positivity.

Jessica Hernandez (Clara's granddaughter)

Age: 15

Description: Jessica wants so badly to be cool, but she's mostly surly. She favors American Eagle sweatshirts and converse. Her posture is closed off.

Backstory: Clara's daughter and son-in-law both work for the city full time, so Jessica often gets dropped off at Golden Sage with Clara. She doesn't like that she has to interact with someone new when Del comes along. She never speaks Spanish until Del comes around, and then she uses it so she won't have to speak to Del.

Point of View: Jessica deals with a lot of insecurities, so she usually agrees with the pack. Her public views are whatever her friends would think are cool. But she still has a SpongeBob pillow because it's her favorite—she just hides it when her friends come over.

Wants/Goals: Jessica wants to be ignored by a lot of people, but she wants attention from the people she isn't getting it from—her parents, and the kids at school.

Lisa McConnell (Del's mother)

Age: 53

Description: Perfectly coiffed, thick blond hair—which somehow still looks natural.

Small and fit. A sporty but impossibly pristine style. A clipped and strong voice.

Backstory: Her parents owned a Bay Area upscale hotel chain, so she grew up in a preppy set. For her, success and appearance were always very important to fitting in. She met John at UC Berkeley when she went there to study business.

Point of View: If people are being difficult, they can always be persuaded to come around—it's them being obstinate, not her.

Wants/Goals: She is really the driving force behind her and John's business operation, and she wants people to know it—but she always wants to appear to be a loving mother and wife.

John McConnell (Del's father)

Age: 53

Description: Del's father, Grandma Jane's son. Tall and handsome, with salt and pepper hair and an athletic build. His head always seems to be somewhere else.

Backstory: Grew up an only child of single mother Jane. He admired her immensely, and picked up her keen business sense (she ran a boutique). After leaving to study business at Cal, though, he became convinced that he had only himself to thank for his successes.

Point of View: Probably thanks to his rise to business success, he believes in that bootstraps mentality, and is a bit of an unforgiving Republican.

Wants/Goals: For his company to be a powerhouse that rivals REI. For everyone to think his family is great and solid.

Locations

“This should include any and every on-camera location you can possibly think will encompass the world.”

Henry’s apartment (Los Angeles)

Henry knows his design. The lines (and the sinks...and the floors) are clean. The furniture is intentional—very minimalist, slightly mod—but very contemporary. Lots of white and neutrals with rich red and black accents. Henry has some framed vintage photographs and illustrations that reflect his aesthetic: hip enough to make Del fake-barf, but warm, and with enough self-reflexive humor so as not to be insufferable.

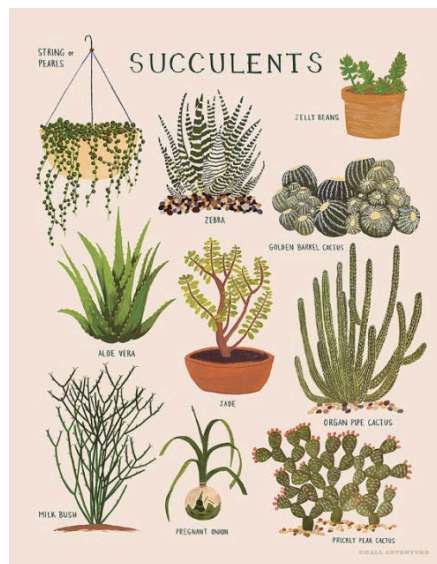


Figure 5: Henry’s art

This vintage illustration of a typology of succulent plants typifies the style and palette of the kind of art Henry would have in his apartment (Rodarte).

Golden Sage (Palm Springs)

The overall aesthetic of Golden Sage is a strange mix of faded and vibrant—much like its occupants. The colors are stuck in 1973: burnt oranges and pewter greens

deck the walls. Palms and succulents line tenants' windows. But the people who dwell there, though all over 64, bring splashes of color to the space. Bright reds, mod turquoises.



Figure 6: Golden Sage color inspiration

I was inspired by images of vintage signage from the 1960s when creating the color palette and overall aesthetic of Golden Sage (Vintage Signage).

Golden Sage: Rec Room

The bookshelves are full of faded old action, mystery and romance paperbacks. The foosball table handles are well worn. But the worn-down-ness of the furniture and the room in general make it cozy. It is big enough to hold a reception comfortably, but not so big that it would seem insanely empty if you were there playing Ping-Pong with your grandma.

Golden Sage: Clara's condo

Clara's condo is more nicely kept than the rest of Golden Sage. The carpet is pristine, white and lush. The couches are upholstered neatly. The bedspreads are down and satiny. The counters are marble and she has a penchant for glass tables—something that was probably Grandma Jane's influence. This is not to say the place is sleek—it's a

little cluttered with shiny baubles and knick-knacks, and an obscene amount of outdated old magazines.

St. Mary's Catholic Church

The Catholic church is also slightly dated—how can it not be, being in such close proximity to Golden Sage?—but in a rich, regal way. The church is small, more of a chapel, really, but ornate. There is a lot of wood paneling, and the carpet is a deep crimson. The benches are dark wood. The church's antiqueness makes it feel homier than a more modern church would.

Recycling center

In the third episode, Del begins work at Palm Springs Garbage and Recycling. To her surprise, their office is decorated like an elementary school, with tiled floors, lots of geometric shapes and primary colors, and motivational posters. Most of the employees work in fairly open cubicles and the supervisors are often walking around with their coffee.

Henry's work

Henry works in a graphic design firm that looks like his apartment on steroids. In this open-office plan building, the furniture is all sleek and mod and there is an abundance of rimmed glasses and cuffed pants. There is a bike wall, of course.

Apartment of friends who work at recycling center

Del meets another girl, Amelia, who is much more successfully hippy than she, who also works at the Garbage and Recycling center. Her apartment is all upcycled

wooden boxes and herb corners and fermenting kombucha. But her friend is so warm that Del feels comfortable here—especially compared to the other more alien environments she has been facing. This girl lives in the same apartment as the cute boy she meets at her work—Michael. His apartment is much more straightforward, but there is something comforting about that. He has a normal, cushiony couch, and square TV, a kitchen full of cereal. Del does not feel like she has to try and be anything here.

Connor Radler's apartment

After Del decides to stay in Palm Springs and Henry bonds with Connor (the priest), he begins hanging out with Connor. Because Connor is not a Roman Catholic Priest but an Evangelical Catholic Priest, he does not have a permanent church or a house connected to the church. He lives in a small, modest apartment near Golden Sage. His furniture is second hand, and his bed is just a mattress on the floor with white sheets. His apartment is messier than Henry expects of a priest—the bed is never made—and with more sports posters than Henry expected (he's a Notre Dame fan).

Oregon Locations

Because the pilot episode contains a number of flashbacks to Del's last days at her Oregon university, I have included these locations; however, they will only be used in the first episode, and only briefly, and so by no means do they need to be actually filmed in Oregon.

The EJC meeting space (Oregon)

The Environmental Justice Club meeting (to which nobody comes) is held in an empty classroom in one of the older buildings on campus. The room is small, but seems

big because the ugly wooden desks are arranged in row after row (and only three people show up). The chalkboard is oppressively blank, the walls white, bare and slightly peeling, and the lighting fluorescent.

The airport (Oregon)

The airport is much starker than the locations that have appeared thus far. The spaces are open, but in an overwhelming and uninviting way. The colors are gray and white, and the lighting is fluorescent, making everything a little too bright and washed out. The resulting feeling is a cold one. The hard, polished floors of the lobby create a harsh sound and look. In the TSA line, the loud and shiny machines, the ropes, and the crowds make Del feel like a herded cattle—only adding to her anxiety. The open space in the lobby creates a further feeling of distance between her and Dakota.

The bus

The bus is dingy, a charter bus that hasn't been renovated since the '90s. The square televisions built into the ceiling only play VHSs, and the tracking sucks. The seats are the same kind of fake-airbrush design that you might find on an old Dixie cup. The cushions are ripped and the floors are sticky and gray. The lighting is horrible. There is a draft. But it's also cramped for Del, who gets stuck next to a chatty man. She's isolated in a different way—being stuck with people she doesn't feel comfortable with.

DOWNCYCLED

101

PILOT

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INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

DEL, 22, sleeps curled up on a clean, mod, Ikea-looking sofa. The nice white duvet she sleeps under contrasts with her brown, curly mass of hair and her holey brewery sweatshirt.

We hear **FOOTSTEPS** from the kitchen, and some **ETHEREAL NOISE-MUSIC** -think *Social Network* soundtrack- floats out loudly from there.

Del **GROANS**, rolls over and frowns.

HENRY, 25, already alert, thick dark hair combed and dressed like a J-Crew ad, walks in with a messenger bag, coffee and a bagel. He offers the bagel to Del.

DEL

If you're gonna wake me up, can you wake me up with, like, *actual* music?

Henry withdraws the bagel.

HENRY

Uh, first of all, you're *welcome* for letting you stay here, and second, this *music* is HypeMasc, Del, and Pitchfork fucking *loves* them.

Del fake barfs.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Whatever, loser, we know what music you listen to.

DEL

That is between me, you, and One Direction, ok, punk?

Henry locks his lips and throws away the key. He sits in the chair kitty-corner to Del with his coffee, placing the bagel on the coffee table.

HENRY

Clara called.

DEL

What, like Grandma's roommate Clara?

HENRY

She wants us to come down to Palm Springs.

DEL

Today?

HENRY

Yeah, to talk funeral prep. She wants to see the slideshow.

DEL

You didn't put that godawful picture of me in there, did you?

HENRY

What, you mean...

Henry digs a photo out of his bag.

HENRY (CONT'D)

...this gem?

He displays a glossy '90s disposable camera photo of a woman, **JANE**, then 61, wearing a shiny, brocaded jacket with her back to the camera, face half turned and laughing hysterically. The seat of her pants is covered with cake. A **THREE-YEAR-OLD DEL** stands next to her, sobbing.

Del **GROANS** and rolls herself into a blanket burrito.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You are so lucky you lived with her in high school. I would have been stealing those jackets on the daily.

He stuffs the photo back in the bag.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Oh, Madame Executor wants to do will stuff, too.

Del scrunches up her face.

HENRY (CONT'D)

That's why you're down here, bud.

DEL

I know.

HENRY

How are you not flipping shit about missing school and Environmental Justice club and stuff, by the way? That's very un-Del of you.

Del **SCOFFS**.

DEL

Are you kidding? That's all such a mess that I'd be flipping shit if I was *there*.

Henry finishes his coffee.

HENRY

Aight, let's get this show on the road.

Del covers her face in the blanket.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Come on.

Henry rolls Del in her burrito blanket off the couch.

DEL

Ow?

Henry grabs the bagel and waggles it in front of her face.

HENRY

Cooooome on.

Del grabs for it, and he moves it away. She crawls for it and reaches again. They continue this until Henry has coaxed Del offscreen.

2 **EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - TWO DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON**

Del runs down the hallway barefoot, out of breath, backpack flopping. Her **PHONE RINGS** and she tries to check it as she runs. It's Henry. She stuffs it back in her bra and throws herself at the door of a classroom, labeled with lined paper in ballpoint pen lettering:

environmental justice club 5pm

3 **INT. CLASSROOM - TWO DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON**

Del flies into the room, flinging her backpack aside.

DEL
Sorry I'm late, my rent was due and
I was 10 bucks short so I had to
sell my shoes--

Del freezes when she realizes that the classroom is empty, save for **RYAN**, 21, a very bored and granola-looking kid. He sits on a table at the front of the room, jamming to whatever's in his earbuds.

A used plastic water bottle hangs off the edge of the table. Taped to its left is another sad sign:

recycle

Del looks to the floor, where a box full of supplies sits untouched.

DEL (CONT'D)
It's 5:15. Did nobody show up?

Ryan pulls his earbud out.

RYAN
What?

The door opens slowly and a **TINY GIRL** wearing a black cocktail dress steps in.

DEL
Ah! Hi! Welcome to EJC!

TINY GIRL
Oh...sorry, I thought this was the
Tri Delt pledge meeting...sorry...

The girl backs out. Del looks at Ryan, who is again listening to his music. Del picks up her box and walks out.

4

INT. DAKOTA'S CAR - TWO DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON

DAKOTA, 23, tall and lightly muscled with a couple days of stubble and a snapback hat, waits in the car, looking annoyed.

Del opens the passenger door

DEL
Thank you sooo much for coming
early.

DAKOTA

Yeah, can you get in? I have to get
back to work.

Del crawls in, settling her giant box on her lap. She gives
Dakota a kiss on the cheek.

He drives.

DEL

Well, I've officially failed the
Earth. Club was a bust.

Dakota rolls his eyes.

Del sees a garbage truck pick up a bin.

DEL (CONT'D)

I'm probably just gonna end up
doing that.

DAKOTA

Well, at least then you'd be
getting something done.

Del just looks at him. She pulls out her phone:

5 missed calls

All are from Henry. Del calls back. After two and a half
rings, Henry picks up.

DEL

Hey, Hen, what's up?

Silence for a sec. **SNIFFLING** on the other end.

DEL (CONT'D)

Henry?

5

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - TWO DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON

Henry's sitting on his bed. His face is red and puffy. He
takes a deep breath but his voice is still shaky.

HENRY

Hey.

6 INT. DAKOTA'S CAR - TWO DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON

DEL
Henry. What's wrong.

7 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - TWO DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON

Henry breaks down.

HENRY
Del...Grandma died.

8 INT. DAKOTA'S CAR - TWO DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON

DEL
...what?

HENRY
Today.

DEL
(fighting tears)
But...she didn't say anything, I
thought she...

9 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - TWO DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON

HENRY
She was weak from the chemo and she
fell. They took her to the
hospital. I tried to call you...

10 INT. DAKOTA'S CAR - TWO DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON

Del drops the phone into her box and covers her mouth as
tears hit her. Dakota, alarmed, pulls the car over. Dakota
touches her lightly on the shoulder, and she collapses on the
dashboard in tears.

11 EXT. GOLDEN SAGE PARKING LOT - PRESENT - MORNING

Del gets out of Henry's Prius, now wearing the same
sweatshirt but with shorts and Birkenstocks. Her hair is wet
from showering.

She looks around.

Everything is brown, except the very retro sign by the entrance to the retirement complex (mint cursive lettering on an asymmetrical background):

Golden Sage

She frowns.

DEL

I can't believe we never visited.

Henry locks the car.

HENRY

At least you had an excuse.
Apparently I was just too fucking
busy to drive an hour and a half on
the 10.

Del wanders away, squinting at the buildings of the complex.

They all look the same--white stucco with red-tiled roofs.

She wanders up to the gates of the pool, where **RANDY**, 78, runs slow laps around the edge of the enclosure.

DEL

Excuse me...

Randy, clad in a faded shirt that reads "**BAY TO BREAKERS 1978**," continues running.

DEL (CONT'D)

EXCUSE ME!

Randy looks up, smiles, and trots over to the gate.

DEL (CONT'D)

Hi...do you know where condo, ah...

Del turns to Henry.

DEL (CONT'D)

What condo is it, Hen?

Henry catches up.

HENRY

220.

Randy lights up.

RANDY

Ooh, you're here to see Clara,
aren't you! Jane's grandkids?

Del nods, surprised.

DEL

Ah, yeah. Yeah, we are.

RANDY

Oh, wonderful. Clara's my next door
neighbor--such a treat, isn't she?

DEL

Um, I've never met her.

HENRY

I've only met her the one time, at
the hospital, but, uh, yeah...a
treat.

Randy sticks his arm through the bars of the gate.

RANDY

Randy.

Del shakes his hand.

RANDY (CONT'D)

You know, I didn't know your
grandmother for very long,
but...she was a wonderful woman.

Del nods.

Randy waves and takes off jogging again.

12

EXT. GOLDEN SAGE - CLARA'S CONDO - MORNING

Henry and Del wait at Clara's door.

CLARA, 75, Latina, opens the door and **SQUEALS**.

CLARA

Aaah, queridos!

She gives each of them a hug, surprising them both.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Get in here!

13

INT. GOLDEN SAGE - CLARA'S CONDO - MORNING

CLARA

You got the slideshow?

Henry digs in his bag and produces a flash drive.

CLARA (CONT'D)

On this thing?

HENRY

Yeah, the flash drive? You just--

Clara waves him away.

CLARA

Aah, tell me later. Lemme show you around...

Clara steps out of the entryway and onto the plush white carpet.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Living room.

The living room consists of two white couches and too many boxes full of old magazines.

Clara points to the adjoining kitchen, separated only by a tall bar-like counter.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Dining room. Kitchen.

Clara points down the hallway.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Bedrooms.

Clara claps her hands and beams.

DEL

...wow.

Clara grabs Del's face.

CLARA

Oh, mija, you look so much like your grandma.

A smile sneaks onto Del's face.

CLARA (CONT'D)
Except shorter. And...curvier.

DEL
...Thanks.

Clara lets her face go.

CLARA
She would have been so happy to see you kids here. I mean, she'd probably rather be alive but--¿más vale tarde que nunca, eh?

Clara starts walking down the hallway.

CLARA (CONT'D)
There are a lot of things in your abuela's room.

HENRY
(whispers to Del)
Dibs on the jackets.

CLARA
You might need some help moving things...maybe that boyfriend of yours? Montana?

DEL
Um, Dakota's not coming anymore...

But Clara doesn't hear--she's already entering Grandma Jane's room. She realizes that Del and Henry are still standing in the entryway. She waves them over.

CLARA
¡Vamos!

Del and Henry look at each other. They follow.

14

INT. AIRPORT FRONT DESK - ONE DAY EARLIER - DAY

Dakota, carrying just his backpack, moseys up with a coffee as Del checks in her luggage. She fidgets from foot to foot. The **ATTENDANT** (1) hands Del her ID and boarding pass back.

ATTENDANT
And here's this.

DEL

Thank you.

She stuffs the ID in one of her two backpacks.

Another **ATTENDANT (2)** steps up to the desk.

ATTENDANT 2

I can take your bags now, ma'am.

DEL

Yes. Thank you.

Del pushes her suitcases over, shoulders both backpacks, grabs her duffel back and turns to go.

ATTENDANT 2

Ma'am?

Del keeps booking it over to Dakota.

Attendant 2 has to chase Del down.

ATTENDANT 2 (CONT'D)

Ma'am, you can't carry on all those items.

DEL

I'm sorry, I'm late.

ATTENDANT 2

I'm sorry, but you're going to need to pay for one of them.

Del sighs heavily, and shrugs one of her backpacks off. She trudges back to the desk and hands over her debit card to Attendant 1 while making frigid eye contact with the smug Attendant 2.

Attendant 2 grabs the backpack and tosses it onto a conveyer, and it rides away, alone on the belt.

15

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY - ONE DAY EARLIER - DAY

The airport security line winds around the space, which is packed to the brim with **SCREAMING** children, slow moving elderly people, and confused tourists.

Del and Dakota are almost to the front of the line. Del clenches and unclenches her fists. She bends her knees. She tries to stretch but remains tense. Dakota keeps looking at her.

DAKOTA
 You're making me nervous.

Del snaps up.

 DEL
 You being not nervous is making me
 nervous.

 DAKOTA
 We're almost there, we've basically
 made it already.

Del bends over and hangs her tense arms. Dakota crouches down to meet her eyes.

 DAKOTA (CONT'D)
 Why don't you get your stuff out?
 Usually double checking stuff
 chills you out.

Del slowly rolls up. She digs around in her backpack for a moment. Then her hands slow.

 DEL
 Shit.

She sticks her head in the backpack and digs faster.

 DEL (CONT'D)
 It's not here.

Dakota tries to grab her by the shoulders.

 DAKOTA
 Ok, Del, before you freak out, take
 a deep--

She tears away. She drops to her knees and rips through the backpack, throwing reusable water bottles and granola bars onto the carpet.

A middle-aged **MOTHER**, carrying her daughter's tiny pink suitcase, taps Dakota on the shoulder.

 MOTHER
 Excuse me? Some of us have a plane
 to catch. Can you move your wife
 along?

Dakota glares at her, but helps Del to her feet.

DAKOTA

Del, let's just ask the TSA lady.

Del doesn't look at Dakota. She hisses at him.

DEL

She's going to think I'm so *stupid*.

Dakota ignores her and pushes her toward the **TSA AGENT**. The TSA Agent is unfazed by Del's hyperventilating.

TSA AGENT

Identification.

Dakota hesitates, but Del isn't even looking at the TSA agent.

DAKOTA

Ah...here's...mine...

Dakota slides over his driver's license.

Del slaps around in her backpack and finds her Blockbuster card.

The TSA Agent raises an eyebrow.

TSA AGENT

I'm sorry, but I'm gonna need a valid state ID and not...

The TSA Agent picks up the card.

TSA AGENT (CONT'D)

...a frequent renter's card for a video store that went bankrupt three years ago.

Del **GROANS** and covers her face.

Dakota looks at her, waiting for her to recover, but she doesn't.

DAKOTA

I'm sorry, she left it in the--

DEL

I left it in the fucking checked bag.

The TSA Agent reaches into her podium and pulls out a laminated card.

TSA AGENT

Ok ma'am, I'm giving you this card to get back in line, but you're gonna have to go retrieve that bag before I can let you--

Del snatches the card and storms off, loudly muttering.

DEL

Fuck, fuck, fuck!

TSA AGENT

--fly.

Dakota watches her, looks mournfully behind him at the crazy long line, and looks at the TSA agent apologetically. He runs after Del.

DAKOTA

Del!

The TSA agent rolls her eyes and reaches out her hand for the next ID.

16

INT. NEAR AIRPORT FRONT DESK - ONE DAY EARLIER - DAY

Del's eyes are unfocused as she tears through the airport, back toward the front counter.

Dakota speedwalks toward her.

DAKOTA

Del, come on!

She doesn't stop until he catches up to her and grabs her arm.

Del yanks away and spins to face him.

DEL

Would you stop telling me to "come on" and "calm down" and "chill out?"

Dakota looks around.

DAKOTA

Just--

DEL

I can't chill out, okay, because I just made myself miss a flight to my grandma's funeral that I paid for with all of my money and I'm a stupid, stupid--

DAKOTA

Del, we're in the middle of the fucking airport.

DEL

I don't care!

Dakota moves in closer, lowering his voice.

DAKOTA

Well, I fucking care.

DEL

It's not--

DAKOTA

It's not what? It's not the same for me? I paid a lot of money for that flight, too. I took a week off work!

Dakota separates himself, walking it off.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm tired. It's just-- every time, it's always--you're always like this.

Del stares at him.

DEL

I don't think you should come.

DAKOTA

What?

DEL

Dakota, I think you should go.

Dakota stops.

DAKOTA

Del, what are you saying?

DEL

I know I always do this. And I know it's stupid. But I'm tired of feeling stupid about being stupid. And...I don't think I can be with you anymore.

Dakota's turn to stare.

Del turns and walks toward the front desk.

Dakota stands, staring at her back. Then he turns and leaves the airport.

17

INT. AIRPORT FRONT DESK - ONE DAY EARLIER - DAY

Del talks to Attendant 1.

DEL

So, is there any way of--

ATTENDANT

I'm sorry, it's already out at the plane at this point.

Del just nods.

Through the overhead speakers, an **ANNOUNCEMENT** blares.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Last call for boarding Flight 857 to LAX.

Del glares at the ceiling.

DEL

Do you have any other flights to LAX today?

ATTENDANT

We have a couple spots on the 9:50.

DEL

How much are those?

ATTENDANT

\$367.

Del grits her teeth.

18 **EXT. AIRPORT - ONE DAY EARLIER - DAY**

Del walks out the revolving door with just her carry-ons in tow. She is deflated.

A shuttle van marked "Greyhound station shuttle" pulls up right in front of her. She keeps walking, then stops, and slowly turns back toward it.

19 **EXT. GREYHOUND STATION - ONE DAY EARLIER - DAY**

Del climbs aboard the Greyhound bus with a ticker that reads "Service to LA."

20 **INT. GREYHOUND BUS - ONE DAY EARLIER - DAY**

Del settles into her seat. A skinny **ELDERLY MAN** with wispy hair and several missing teeth sits next to her.

ELDERLY MAN

Hello, gorgeous.

Del grabs a notebook out of her backpack and writes, "Sorry, I'm deaf."

OLD MAN

Perfect, then. I can talk all I want!

Del lightly slams her forehead on the window.

21 **INT. GOLDEN SAGE - CLARA'S CONDO - PRESENT - MORNING**

Clara places two styrofoam cups of coffee in front of Del and Henry, who sit on bar stools at the kitchen counter. Henry is now wearing a windbreaker with metallic embellishments--clearly Grandma Jane's.

CLARA

Ok, lemme grab the papers and we'll get started on all this will business.

Clara bustles off. Del turns to Henry.

DEL

Is everything fucking styrofoam in this place?

HENRY
Easy, Captain Planet.

Clara bustles back. She stands on the other side of the counter, an official-looking manila file folder in hand. She flips through the pages.

CLARA
Okaaaay. Page one, blah blah
blah...the finances will be managed
by the son, John McConnell, and his
wife Lisa...

Clara looks up at them.

CLARA (CONT'D)
I'm not even going to ask why your
parents aren't here.

HENRY
They've got...business. They'll be
here.

Del rolls her eyes at the ground.

Clara returns to the file.

CLARA
Ok, here's where it gets good.
Henry, you get the car--oh, there's
a sticky note on this.

Clara hands the note to Henry.

HENRY
"Henry--I know you have a car. Sell
mine and..."

Henry puts the note down and smiles.

HENRY (CONT'D)
"...buy something fabulous."

Clara smiles mischievously at Del.

CLARA
And Del.

Clara clears her throat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

"Delilah McConnell will now share the deed to the condominium with current co-owner, Clara Hernandez."

Clara and Henry stare at her.

DEL

What?

HENRY

What?

CLARA

Look, mijos, it says right here: Delilah McConnell will now share the deed to the condominium with current co-owner, Clara Hernandez...

HENRY

Wait...why? Can she do that?

Del grabs the file and stares at it.

HENRY (CONT'D)

'Cause Del is *not* 64.

CLARA

Rent to own, chiquito. We can do what we please.

HENRY

Maybe we can work something out.

DEL

I want it.

HENRY

She's still in school, she--what?

DEL

I want it.

HENRY

Del, can I talk to you outside for a second?

22

EXT. GOLDEN SAGE - CLARA'S CONDO - MORNING

HENRY

Whaaat is going on.

DEL
Hen, it's kinda perfect.

Henry rubs his temples.

HENRY
Explain to me how it's perfect.

DEL
Dude, I've failed at *everything* in Oregon, I'm broke...

HENRY
Then ask Mom and Dad for some cash!

Del shoots him a look.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Del. I know they're a lot, but with all this shit going down, couldn't you just forgive them a tiny bit?

DEL
Easy for you to say. If their empire of down jackets and discount yoga pants paid for *my* private school, I'd have to forgive them.

HENRY
Whoa, it's not my fault you boycotted their financial aid, dude.

DEL
You would have too if they chose opening a franchise in New York over your teenage years.

HENRY
Ok, ok--but what are you going to do down here?

Del throws up her arms.

DEL
I don't know, ok? Plant a tree on the 101?

Del slides down the wall next to Clara's door and covers her face.

DEL (CONT'D)
I don't know.

Henry looks at her, his face softening.

DEL (CONT'D)
(quietly)
I guess I just want to be close to
her.

HENRY
Heeey. Bud.

Henry swoops down next to her. He draws Del into a side hug. She leans on his shoulder and he holds her close. They sit like that for a moment.

HENRY (CONT'D)
You're right. Nothing can excuse
them choosing fucking McConnell
Outerwear over you.

He messes with her hair.

HENRY (CONT'D)
But G-J...now *that's* real family.

Del smiles sadly.

HENRY (CONT'D)
So you don't have a plan. Who needs
a plan.

DEL
Yeah. Fuck plans.

They both **CHUCKLE**.

HENRY
Why don't you just think about it
for a second, ok?

Henry gets up and grabs Clara's front door.

HENRY (CONT'D)
But whatever you decide--

Henry reaches out his foot and pokes her in the side.

HENRY (CONT'D)
I support you, Deli Meat.

Del swats him away.

He goes inside.

Del rocks up and goes to stand by the railing. She looks down at the pool, where Randy is still running laps.

Her gaze travels over to the edge of the parking lot, where a garbage truck is parked.

Two people in their mid-20s--**AMELIA**, short, curvy and dark tan with dark, wildly curly hair, and **MICHAEL**, very tall with dark skin and a huge smile--carry garbage bins down to the truck.

On the side of the truck is a tagline:

PALM SPRINGS GARBAGE AND RECYCLING - KEEPING THE DESERT GREEN

Del **SNIFF-LAUGHS**. Her gaze wanders away.

Her eyes light up. Her gaze snaps back.

She runs down the stairs.

DEL

Hey!

23

EXT. GOLDEN SAGE PARKING LOT - MORNING

Amelia and Michael stare as Del runs toward them.

DEL

Hey!

She catches up to them.

Amelia smiles, bemused.

AMELIA

...hey...

Del realizes what an awkward situation she's created and fiddles with her hair.

DEL

Um...you guys work...here?

She points at the truck.

Michael **LAUGHS**. He raises his eyebrows and nods.

Del takes a breath.

DEL (CONT'D)
Are you hiring?

AMELIA
You want to work for the garbage
company.

Now she joins Michael in the **LAUGHS**.

MICHAEL
Seriously though, you're
interested?

Del nods.

Amelia shrugs.

AMELIA
Alright, girl. Tell you what. I'll
drop an application off next
Wednesday.

DEL
Ah, I have a...an event that day...

AMELIA
Ok...

DEL
But, I mean, it's here! I'll be
here! In the rec room!

Amelia smiles again.

AMELIA
Ok then. See you around...

DEL
Del.

AMELIA
Amelia.

She gestures to Michael.

He waves and beams.

MICHAEL
Michael.

Del nods and matches Michael's smile.

DEL
Ok. Wow. Thank you!

Del runs back toward the stairs.

DEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Thank you!

Amelia looks at Michael.

AMELIA
Güeras, man.

25 **INT. GOLDEN SAGE - CLARA'S CONDO - MORNING**

Del returns to Clara's apartment to find Henry sitting on the couch, reading a 2002 *Oprah* magazine. He looks up.

Del plops down next to him.

He raises his eyebrows--so?

DEL
I have. A plan.

A smile creeps on to Henry's face.

HENRY
Welcome home, bud.

Clara pops out from the hallway, where she has heard the exchange. She dances around the couch and toward Del, **SQUEALING** all the way.

She squishes Del in a hug.

CLARA
Welcome home, mija.

Del looks at the ceiling, but smiles in spite of herself.

Clara pulls away.

CLARA (CONT'D)
Hoosh.

Clara waves her hand as she walks back down the hallway.

CLARA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Let's get *you* some deoderant,
honey.

Del looks at Henry, mouth agape.

HENRY
She said it, not me.

Del playfully shoves Henry. He grabs a pillow, stands up, and wacks her.

DEL,
Oh, it's on.

Del grabs the O magazine and rolls it up.

A full-on Pillow and Magazine battle begins.

26

EXT. GOLDEN SAGE PARKING LOT - MORNING

The garbage truck pulls away. It drives by the swimming pool.

Randy is still running laps. And he just keeps running.

END PILOT.

DOWNCYCLED

102

PAY YOUR RESPECTS

Maddie Dunkelberg

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INT. GOLDEN SAGE - REC ROOM - MORNING

DEL sets up for Grandma Jane's funeral in the rec room, a long room with white walls (decorated with hotel room watercolor paintings) and gray carpet. At the back end is a foosball and ping-pong table; at front is bookshelf and a couch that's been pushed to the wall to make space for mingling. In the middle is a cluster of circular card tables.

Del struggles to set up a microphone stand at the front.

She's on the ground, trying to plug a cord into the stand.

DEL

How does this even...

She stands up and **TAPS ON THE MIC**.

HENRY enters from the courtyard with a stack of folding chairs.

DEL (CONT'D)

(into the mic)

Thank you all for gathering to celebrate the life of Henry McConnell, the last person we ever expected to die in a NASCAR-related incident.

Henry leans on a chair he's just set up.

HENRY

Mmm. Thanks for that stirring eulogy.

Del leaves the mic to come hug Henry.

HENRY (CONT'D)

How have your first couple days been, bud?

DEL

Oh, you know. Mostly funeral stuff.

HENRY

Chillin' well with the roomie?

DEL

Ah...

We cut to...

INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - EARLIER THAT MORNING

Del and **CLARA** stand on each side of the pulpit in St. Mary's Church, a small but ornately decorated chapel, if a bit shabby and dated, having last been updated in the mid-70s (the deep-crimson carpet shows). A flowery wreath sits on top of the pulpit.

Clara wrinkles her nose and swats at the flowers.

CLARA

Of all the flowers, you chose
these, eh?
(skyward)
Sorry, Jane!

DEL

She loved orchids!

CLARA

Mija, I lived with her. I know what
she likes.

DEL

Well, *I* lived with her. I know what
she likes.

They stare at each other for a second.

Clara breaks the stare and hustles out of the church.

CLARA

Randy! Can you make a run to the
flower shop?

Del **GROWLS**. She rips a flower from the wreath and throws it, very unsatisfyingly, after Clara.

Cut back to...

INT. GOLDEN SAGE - REC ROOM - MORNING

DEL

...yes.

Clara enters from the courtyard with **AMELIA**.

CLARA

I ran into this one on the way in--
she was looking for you.

Amelia nods at Del and lifts a hand in greeting at Henry.

Clara heads out.

CLARA (CONT'D)
Don't get too chatty. I need you
across the street sorting photos.

Amelia looks after Clara.

AMELIA
You've got some fun friends, girl.

She hands a piece of paper to Del.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
As promised.

HENRY
Could it be? Is that a job
application I see?

DEL
As a matter of fact, it is.

Henry bows to Amelia.

HENRY
You are a savior.

Del shoves him.

DEL
You're welcome to stick around for
a real fun memorial.

AMELIA
Sounds like a riot, but I'm
working.

DEL
Your loss!

AMELIA
Good luck on that app.

She turns to go.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
And come get a drink with us some
time. Michael thought you were
fucking hilarious.

DEL
Oh, he likes when I act like an
idiot, huh?

Amelia **LAUGHS**. She holds up a "later" hand as she walks out.

Del smiles. She looks over at Henry.

HENRY
Awwww. Frieeend!

DEL
Shut up.

5 **INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - MORNING**

Del and Henry sit on the floor with photos spread between them.

Del picks photos up, glances at them, and quickly discards them.

Henry works more methodically, taking each in and then setting them gently aside.

DEL
Bla! Another one of just shoes.

HENRY
I like those.

He grabs it.

DEL
We're looking for pictures of GJ,
dude. Not her shoes.

HENRY
I know, but like...I don't know,
it's cool. It's what she loved.

DEL
I mean, obviously. There are like
20 shoe pictures to each grandchild
picture.

Del keeps sorting. She comes across another shoe picture. When Henry isn't looking, she folds it.

HENRY
Oh my god.

Del hurriedly pockets the photo.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Mom and Dad.

Henry shows Del a photo taken circa 1994 of a young **JOHN** and **LISA** McConnell, standing triumphantly under the "Grand Opening" sign on their first McConnell Outerwear storefront. **GRANDMA JANE** is in the corner of the frame, holding Del and chasing Henry.

DEL
I don't need to see that.

HENRY
Del, come on. It's Grandma's funeral today, can we forget about that stuff for a second?

DEL
It's Grandma's funeral, and that's why I want to not think about Mom and Dad.

They keep sorting.

HENRY
They're sad too, Del.

Del doesn't look at Henry.

Henry scoops up a handful photos and stands.

DEL
Ah, Hen?

HENRY
Hmm.

DEL
You gonna stay the night in Palm Springs after the reception?

HENRY
I dunno, Del. I have to work tomorrow. I think I'm gonna head back to Silver Lake.

He walks away. Del sits alone, small amidst the huge pile of photos.

6

INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - FOYER - MORNING

Henry sticks the photos onto a piece of posterboard with double sided tape. **CONNOR RADLER**, a clean-cut, tall and lean man about 26, comes over.

CONNOR
Your grandmother was a beautiful woman.

HENRY
Ah..thanks.

CONNOR
I'm glad I could be a part of the service.

HENRY
Yeah, me...too...who are you?

CONNOR
Oh! Sorry.

He unzips his jacket, showing his stiff white collar.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Priest.

HENRY
Ooooh.

Connor sticks out his hand.

CONNOR
Father Radler. Connor. Radler.

HENRY
Radler. Like the beer. I mean...you probably don't--

Connor **LAUGHS**.

CONNOR
I know.

HENRY
Oh! You do?

CONNOR
Sure. Love me some Stiegl.

HENRY
Oh.

CONNOR
And you?

HENRY
Love Stiegl?

CONNOR
Your name.

HENRY
Oh!

Henry extends his hand again.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Henry.

Connor shakes firmly.

CONNOR
Nice to meet you, dude.

HENRY
You too...dude.

Connor waves and heads up to the front of the church.

Henry stares after him. He goes back to putting the pictures up.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Dude?

7

INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Del and Henry stand in the lobby greeting people. A group of **AGE 60-ISH WOMEN** in tennis whites pass by. Then an **ELDERLY MAN** in pajamas. Then an aging **DRAG QUEEN**.

RANDY, wearing a suit jacket over a faded T-shirt, stops to greet Del and Henry.

RANDY
Hey, kiddos.

DEL
Hey.

Randy clumsily embraces both "kiddos."

RANDY
You kids need anything?

Del shakes her head.

RANDY (CONT'D)
You just let me know. When Jeffrey died...your Grandma, she helped get me through.

DEL
Thanks, Randy.

RANDY
Hey, how 'bout those parents of yours? They around?

HENRY
Ah, no...no, they're not here yet...

DEL
Big surprise.

Henry shoots her a look. Randy looks uncomfortable and shuffles away. Del files in after him, Henry swooping after.

HENRY
(a stern whisper)
Chill.

DEL
I'm chill.

8

INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Del and Henry sit in the front row next to Clara and some of Grandma Jane's other elderly friends. The ceremony has begun and **THREE WARBLING ELDERLY WOMEN** are **SINGING** a hymn.

WARBLING WOMEN
And I will raise you up on eeeaaa-
gles wings, beeeear you on the
breeeeeath of daaaawn...

Del leans in to Henry.

DEL
This song...is ridiculous.

HENRY
(feigning sternness)
Shhh.

The song reaches a climax now. The warbling woman with the highest part (and hair) raises her hand dramatically and shakes her head as she **CRESCENDOS** out of key.

WARBLING WOMEN
AND HOLD! YOU! HOLD YOU IN THE
PAAAALM...OF HIS HAAAAND.

We see Del shaking from behind.

Her head is buried in her program, but when she lowers it it's clear she's **LAUGHING**. She looks to Henry for a laughing buddy.

But Henry is **SOBBING**.

Del immediately begins **SOBBING** too--sincerely.

When Henry sees *her* **SOBBING**, he starts **LAUGHING** through his sobs. Which makes Del start **CHUCKLING** while she wipes away tears.

9 **INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - AN HOUR LATER**

Clara walks up to the pulpit and adjusts the mic for her short height.

Henry and Del watch, calmed down now.

CLARA
Thank you for attending the
memorial, everybody.

A "woo" comes from somewhere in the back. Clara nods and smiles as if this is normal.

CLARA (CONT'D)
There will be a reception across
the street in our rec room for
anyone who's interested. We've got
booze! And some of us will share
our memories of Jane.

Henry elbows Del. She grimaces.

10 **INT. GOLDEN SAGE REC ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

Del and Henry stand awkwardly by the foosball table while the colorful host of elderly mingle.

Henry spies Connor chatting with Randy and is intrigued.

HENRY

I'm tired of being a sad fuck. I'm gonna go chill with Randy.

Del frowns, but he goes. She fiddles with the foosball.

Clara comes over with two plastic cups.

CLARA

Del. The mic's all ready. You want some punch before you go up?

She does a Liza Minelli wink.

CLARA (CONT'D)

It's spi-iiiked.

DEL

No, I'm--

CLARA

Take it. You look awful. Oh, Deena! Hiii!

Clara pushes the cup into Del's hand.

DEL

--good.

Del makes her way to the makeshift stage: a cleared-off wall at the end of the room with a mic stand.

DEL (CONT'D)

Ah, hi everybody.

The room quiets.

Del takes a shaky breath in.

DEL (CONT'D)

(under breath)

Shit.

She downs the entire cup of punch.

DEL (CONT'D)

(under breath)

This is for you, GJ.

DEL (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming. Ahm. I'm Del. I'm the granddaughter. The one, the only. Ha.

The colorful crowd stares blankly at her.

Del takes a shakey breath in.

DEL (CONT'D)
I really loved Grandma Jane. Um.
That sounds obvious but like, I
really...but all of you here,
clearly, you loved her too--

Del freezes.

She sees her parents **JOHN** and **LISA** enter the rec room, both wearing black McConnell Outerwear parkas despite the warm weather. They stand in the back.

Del slowly returns to the mic.

DEL (CONT'D)
Clearly...you loved her too...

Del freezes.

The crowd murmurs.

HENRY
(whispers)
Come on, Del.

Del looks out at her parents.

John checks his watch. Lisa has already dressed one of the warbling women in her parka.

LISA
Now, *that's* what you really needed.
Are you a McConnell Rewards Member?

Del closes her eyes for a second. Then she runs off the makeshift stage and out the door, knocking the mic off balance in the process. Clara grabs it.

We hear a **VOMITING** noise from the just outside the door.

CLARA
Okaaay, now we'll hear from
Barbara, who just turned 90. Give a
hand for Barbara!

11 **EXT. GOLDEN SAGE COURTYARD - LATE AFTERNOON**

Del runs her hands through her hair and rubs her eyes.

Henry joins her.

HENRY
Brief. But beautiful. You okay?

Del hides her face in her hands.

DEL
Augh. Nooo.

HENRY
Ah...well, ready yourself, it's
about to get worse.

Henry points to the rec room door, where John and Lisa enter
the courtyard.

Del grabs Henry's arm.

DEL
Do not. Leave.

HENRY
Del...

Del pleads with her eyes. Henry sighs, but stays.

LISA
Henry, darling.

Lisa opens her arms for Henry to come hug her. Henry looks at
Del but acquiesces.

John extends a hand to Henry.

JOHN
Hey, Hen.

Henry shakes his hand.

HENRY
Dad.

John nods at Del.

JOHN
Delilah.

LISA
Oh, Lilah, you poor thing.

HENRY
Mom...

LISA

Tensions are running high. It's a sad day. I mean, your father lost his *mother*. Just look at him.

John scrolls through his phone. He realizes Lisa is talking about him.

JOHN

What?

LISA

I'm sure what you wanted to say was very...sweet.

Del takes a breath.

DEL

Actually, what I wanted to say was that G-Jane deserved better than a thankless family who only wanted her for the free daycare.

HENRY

Del, here?

DEL

Yes, here. It's not like I plan on flying home for Christmas or anything.

JOHN

Oh, we'll be in Berlin at Christmas.

DEL

Of course you will.

LISA

Lilah, you're being unreasonable. Henry, can you talk to your sister?

Henry shakes his head, and starts to answer.

DEL

Oh, don't expect me to behave like Henry! At least you stuck around until *he* graduated high school!

HENRY

Jesus, Del.

Henry turns to go back inside.

DEL

Henry...

HENRY

Del, I can't mourn *and* fight this fight right now. Mom, Dad, I'll catch you later.

Del deflates a little.

JOHN

Henry said you're studying...what, biology?

DEL

Environmental studies. *Was* studying.

LISA

God, Lilah. What are you going to do with that?

DEL

Isn't your *outdoor gear* company supposed to be into the *outdoors*?

JOHN

Business. That's what you should study.

LISA

And we make dresses too, you know. I sent you some when you were in high school.

DEL

I didn't want *things!* I wanted you to *call me*. If you gave a shit about me, you would know I'm not even in school anymore, and that I'm living here! Ok?

LISA

What makes you think you can handle that?

Del opens her mouth to say something, but then breaks away and runs inside.

12 INT. GOLDEN SAGE REC ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Henry sits at a table. Randy sits to his left, and another **ELDERLY MAN** and **WOMAN** sit to his right. He watches the **SMALL CROWD OF RETIREES** dance up by the makeshift stage, a group mostly of **GAY MEN** and **SINGLE OLD WOMEN** dancing to **DISCO**. Randy watches too, wistful.

One of the gay men dances over to Randy and extends his arm with a flourish. Randy looks gleefully at Henry and flashes a thumbs up. They dance away.

Henry looks to his right. The other elderly couple are making out. Henry leaves the rec room.

13 INT. GOLDEN SAGE REC ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Del stands, staring at the posterboard with the photos of Grandma Jane.

DEL

I'm sorry I never visited after you moved from the Bay. College was a mess...but clearly you had a good time.

She glances at the dancers. Randy and the other guy are dancing to a **DONNA SUMMERS SONG**.

DEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I never thanked you, either.

She flicks at one of the photos that's peeling off the board.

DEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry all we gave you in memorial was a shitty collage.

From the dance floor, Clara notices Del.

DEL (CONT'D)

I wish you would have told me you were getting worse...I would have called...I'm so stupid...

Clara swoops in and grabs Del by the shoulders.

CLARA

Heey, mija. Nobody's stupid here. Or--no, we're all stupid here.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)
This is a celebration of life,
baby. Let's get more stupid.

Clara steers Del away from the board.

14 **INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - EARLY EVENING**

Henry enters the back of the church and peaks around. Nobody is there. He sneaks over to the confessionals.

15 **INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONFESSIONAL - EARLY EVENING**

Henry ducks into the confessional. He sighs with relief. He pulls a joint out of his pocket and kisses it.

HENRY
At last, we're alone.

Henry reclines against the bench. He sits there in blissful silence for a moment.

The sliding door between the priest and confessant's stalls slams open, startling Henry.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ!

The culprit, Connor, jumps back as well.

CONNOR
Whoa, watch it, bud.

HENRY
What are you--you were *not* in here
30 seconds ago.

Henry looks for a place he can stab out his joint while he talks.

CONNOR
Easy, easy.

Connor reaches his hands through the slot in a "cool it," gesture.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
No need to waste good weed.

HENRY
No--what?

CONNOR

Or bad weed, by the smell of it.

Henry gives Connor the side eye.

HENRY

I do not understand you.

Connor shrugs and smiles.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Do you...

He wiggles the joint.

Connor smiles wider.

16

INT. GOLDEN SAGE REC ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Clara sits at a table with Del. Two women stand by Clara, one **RED HAIRE**D WOMAN (clearly a wig) and one **SPIKY GRAY HAIRE**D WOMAN, both in their late sixties and heavily made up. Clara leans in as the wigged one whispers in her ear.

Clara **GASPS**.

CLARA

No!

Both women nod.

CLARA (CONT'D)

She slept with him?

Clara squeals.

CLARA (CONT'D)

!esa cabrona! Del, your abuelita...

Clara shakes her head and lifts her plastic cup.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Jane, points off for not telling me, but you are a goddess among women.

The three woman toast, and the two standing ones walk away. As Clara's about to drink, she sees that Del has zoned out.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Once again. You need this more than I do.

Del takes the cup without argument this time.

Clara looks long and hard at Del.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I might be getting this wrong, but it seems like some people are making this night even harder on you than it already is.

Del shrugs.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Uf. People. Making someone else's funeral about themselves.

DEL

I think *I'm* guilty of that.

CLARA

Mija, you're fine. It's other people trying to air their dirty laundry. The only dirty laundry we want to see is Jane's.

(laughs)

And she had some, I'll tell you that much. She was pop-u-lar in this complex.

Del raises her eyebrow

CLARA (CONT'D)

Mmhmm.

Del drinks.

DEL

I just feel like...she came and visited me once while I was at school. And she knew everything about me. But I knew nothing, *nothing* about her life here.

Clara leans in close and takes Del's hand.

CLARA

Here's the thing. Your grandma loved you. She was over the *moon* about you. And you know what she wanted? For you to live your own life. You didn't need to live hers for her to know you loved her.

Del just looks at Clara.

CLARA (CONT'D)
Ok, mija?

LISA (O.S.)
Delilah, there you are.

CLARA
Uf.

Lisa powerwalks to the table, John sauntering behind.

LISA
Lilah, I know you don't understand
right now. That's okay. I just
didn't want to leave with bad blood
between us, so...

Lisa slides an envelope to Del. Slowly, Del opens it. She
stares at it.

DEL
A check.

LISA
That should be enough for you to re-
enroll. So the next time you're
wondering if we care about you--

CLARA
Hold on a second.

LISA
Excuse me?

CLARA
You really trying to do this here?
Right next to the foosball table?

LISA
I--

CLARA
I'm sure you mean well, but please.
This is not what this girl needs
right now.

LISA
I don't have to stand around and be
spoken to like this in front of *my*
daughter.

CLARA

Go then. But take leftovers. We have tons.

Del looks on with mouth agape.

Lisa wrinkles her nose.

LISA

John, let's go.

John doesn't hear. He's playing with the foosball table.

LISA (CONT'D)

JOHN.

John snaps out of it and obediently follows Lisa as she storms out of the room, stopping only to yank the parka off the woman she'd put it on before.

Del gawks.

DEL

Oh my god.

CLARA

Drink up, baby. They're not gonna bother you any more tonight.

DEL

I owe you, like, a million favors.

Clara gets up.

CLARA

Start by taking the trash out, huh? While I go break up these two.

She points to Randy and the other guy, who are now making out on the snack table, and heads off.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Ay, I have a room available over in complex two...

Del watches her, rapt.

DEL

Yes, ma'am.

17 **EXT. GOLDEN SAGE REC ROOM - EVENING**

Del heaves a trash bag out the door and dumps it into the dumpster around the corner.

DEL

Hmm. I *am* good at this.

She's about to walk away when she hears **LAUGHTER** floating over from the across the street.

She stops to listen.

The **LAUGHTER** comes again. Definitely from the church. Definitely from Henry.

She furrows her brow.

18 **INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONFESSIONAL - EVENING**

Both Henry and Connor are **LAUGHING**, with their heads leaned against the slot.

CONNOR

So it all depends on the *intention*.

HENRY

Bullshit.

CONNOR

And since my intention is to connect with a parishioner--

Henry passes Connor the joint, and he takes a puff.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

It's fine, you know?

HENRY

I'm hardly a *parishioner*.

CONNOR

Today you are. Look, it's like getting a beer with the guy who does the readings.

HENRY

Sure.

CONNOR

Except this is more fun.

HENRY

Hey. I'm honored.

CONNOR

I mean, if I was an *actual* Catholic priest like I used to be, they'd probably be pissed. But I'm just a lowly Evangelical Catholic priest now, so I'm *allowed* to be gay, get married, all that, and I'm my own boss, so...I'm allowed to smoke.

Connor passes the joint back to Henry, who is still a bit taken aback from what he just heard. He snaps back and takes the joint. Their fingers brush. Henry **LAUGHS** nervously.

Del opens the door to Henry's stall.

DEL

Hen? You were supposed to drive home...

HENRY

...whoops.

DEL

(begrudgingly)

Well, I guess you're crashing here tonight.

Del **SNIFFS**.

DEL (CONT'D)

Are you...

Del sees Connor leaning against the slot.

DEL (CONT'D)

...Ahh...hi...

Connor does a stately wave.

Del starts to leave.

DEL (CONT'D)

I'm just gonna--

CONNOR

No, stay.

DEL

Stay?

HENRY

Sure.

DEL

O--okay.

Del squishes into Henry's tiny stall.

19

**INT. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONFESSIONAL - THIRTY
MINUTES LATER**

Del, Henry and Connor **LAUGH** even harder now. Del, curled up in the corner on the ground, clutches her stomach in pain.

DEL

STOP. Stop, I'm gonna puke.

HENRY

Get out of this confessional, oh my god.

CONNOR

Ah, yikes, speaking of which, I really have to go.

He gets up.

DEL AND HENRY

Noooo!

CONNOR

Sorry buds. But Del--I'll see you around, right?

Del nods.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

And Henry...

HENRY

I'll be visiting.

Connor smiles.

CONNOR

Good.

He leaves the confessional.

Del smiles slyly at Henry. She **GIGGLES**.

Henry blushes.

HENRY

Shut up.

20 **INT. CLARA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM (GOLDEN SAGE) - LATE EVENING**

The doorknob wiggles for a bit, until finally Del and Henry open the door. They SHH each other and GIGGLE quietly.

HENRY

(whispers)

Oh my god.

He goes to the bookshelf by the television.

HENRY (CONT'D)

So. Many. Magazines.

DEL

Yeah...Clara's a small hoarder.

Henry runs his finger along the dusty *Sunset* magazines.

HENRY

I can see why her and Grandma were friends.

21 **INT. CLARA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Henry is nestled on one of Clara's couches under a knitted blanket.

22 **INT. CLARA'S APARTMENT - GRANDMA JANE'S/DEL'S ROOM - NIGHT**

The room is lit only by a bedside lamp. Del moves to grab her pajamas from her suitcase by the dresser, but trips on a weird statue of a shoe.

DEL

Ow.

Del flicks on the lamp atop the dresser.

On top of the dresser is frame after frame of pictures of Del, Henry and Grandma Jane. Del looks at them for a moment.

She pulls on her pajama pants and off her dress, and the check falls out.

She picks it up and is about to rip it, but stops.

She grabs a pen from the suitcase.

23 **INT. CLARA'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Del scribbles on the check's envelope:

FAVOR #1. CONSIDER IT RENT.

She slides the check under the Clara's door across the hall.

24 **INT. CLARA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Del settles into the big, soft chair next to Henry's sleeping couch.

HENRY
(barely awake)
Del?

DEL
Hmm.

HENRY
I'm proud of you.

25 **INT. CLARA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - A WHILE LATER**

Del has fallen fast asleep. Henry **SNORES**.

Clara tiptoes into the room, a little uneven (tipsy) herself. But gently as can be, she lays an afghan over Del.

She kisses Del's forehead and turns out the light.

END EPISODE TWO.

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