

FIERCE!
PILOT
"shemergency"
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TEASER

1 CLOSE ON - TAPE RECORDER

1

An aged QFX Tape Recorder, worse for the wear, but a classic never dies. Its cassette tray pops open. A hand slides a CASSETTE into the slot then hits RECORD. The spools spin.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (O.S.)

This is Sheriff Tibbles. It's
December 23rd, 2008. Time is 2:23
a.m..

2 EXT. THE GRIND - NIGHT

2

Red, white, yellow, and blue lights sparkle off the falling snow, a promising prelude to what awaits inside for the long line of Patrons that hang alongside alongside a muraled wall, eager to get into the club around the corner.

They wait, huddled close to one another, eager to get inside while clutching cocktails in their hands.

Cocktails? Yep, they may be dressed to impress. Taking a closer look, it's clear that aren't eager; rather, they're in shock. The front of the line is not to get them into the club...

SHERIFF TIBBLES (V.O.)

Shortly after midnight, there was a
shooting at The Grind, a gay
nightclub out in Ferndale.

...it's to talk to POLICE. Those flickering lights? They're coming from the Police Patrol Vehicles that block each end of the club. Police are either redirecting traffic or taking statements from the Patrons.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Patrons there for the show weren't
harmd or injured.

(beat)

Just one casualty.

A HUSH falls over the crowd. Even those taking a statement stop to watch two CORONERS haul out a BLACK DUFFEL BAG on a gurney from the club and into the back of an AMBULANCE.

Some of the PATRONS down their drinks in one gulp, still traumatized by the events they just witnessed.

Next to the ambulance are two police vehicles. Each car holds a WOMAN, who hides herself from view.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 We have a couple suspects in custody. One of whom is here to make a statement. Ezra Mavis.

The TWO Police Cars with the suspects drive out. The ambulance follows close behind them.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Do you understand why you're here, Mavis?

CLOSE ON - TAPE RECORDER

The spools in the cassette keep turning, even though there is no reply.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (O.S.)
 Mavis?

Still no response. Then...

VOICE (O.S.)
 My name Cupcake, baby.
 (beat)
 You can call me Mavis when my dick isn't duct-taped to my ass.

3

INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

3

SHERIFF TIBBLES sits at one side of the table closest to the tape recorder. He's your good-cop caught on a bad night.

Across from him sits a fabulous BLACK DRAG QUEEN. These florescent bulbs don't bring out her best features. What's worse, her makeup is a hot mess.

This is CUPCAKE. Out of drag, he is Ezra MAVIS (32). Judging off of her look, the gown, the makeup, this isn't her first night in drag, but it just might be her last.

NOTE: CUPCAKE will be written with 'she/her' pronouns. Out of drag, Ezra MAVIS will have 'he/him' pronouns.

SHERIFF TIBBLES
 May I remind you that you're speaking to an officer of the law...Cupcake?

CUPCAKE

Where was he when all this was happening, SHERIFF? You left me on read!

Sheriff Tibbles doesn't respond. Instead, he reaches into a nearby folder and pulls out a PHOTO.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Do you know this man?

Cupcake doesn't look. She knows who's in the photo. Instead, she keeps her gaze on Sheriff Tibbles.

CUPCAKE

Seems a bit leading, don't you think, Sheriff?

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Fine. Care to explain why you shot him?

CUPCAKE

Allegedly! I know my rights!

SHERIFF TIBBLES

You shot him in front of a live audience! I need something to work with, Cupcake.

CUPCAKE

You wanna know? Fine.

(beat)

Get me a mimosa.

Sheriff Tibbles laughs, humored by Cupcake's nerve.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

A mimosa? This isn't the club.

CUPCAKE

Maybe not, but you're working my damn nerves. So I'll give you two options, 'kay?

(beat)

I could keep quiet, lawyer up.

(beat)

Or gimme some Veuve, a drop of OJ, then I'll spill that T, henny.

Sheriff Tibbles frowns. This is gonna be a long night.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

4 **INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT** 4

Cupcake holds up a coffee mug inscribed with the words "World's Greatest Dad." Sheriff Tibbles pours champagne into the mug.

Just before he can lift the bottle back up, Cupcake's fingers push it back down to top it off.

CUPCAKE
For my blood sugar.

Sheriff lifts the bottle back up. Cupcake doesn't protest, she takes a sip. Sheriff sets the bottle on the table then reaches into his shirt to pull out a cigarette.

SHERIFF TIBBLES
Whenever you're ready...in your own words.

He takes a drag. Its EMBERS GLOW behind the ash.

Cupcake stalls. Her attention is fixated on that cigarette. She could ask, hell, even demand one, but that would be pushing it, even for Cupcake.

He takes another drag before letting it hover over an ashtray. He flicks the cigarette butt. Cupcake watches the ashes fall. They descend with grace, like snowflakes...

MATCH CUT TO:

5 **INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT** 5

CLOSE ON - WINDOW

Outside, a snowy storm. Florescent street lights, above and out of sight, tint this winter wonderland with an orange hue. From this window, at least.

Soft tufts of white cling to the panes, clutching for warmth on a cold, isolated night.

PAN OUT, retreating INSIDE, where it's warmer.

Only this room is just as cold, but not from this winter storm. The room is large, lavishly decorated with plush furniture, a fireplace, even a California king bed.

In the corner, in front of the makeup vanity set, a WOMAN stares into the mirror. Her crestfallen reflection is her only comfort and company.

Hard shadows fall over one of her eyes. The Woman nurses her eye, wincing to her delicate touch. She turns her head slightly to show a black, blue, and red spot over her eye.

This is JANET, early-30's, trapped, isolated, and looks like she's the only woman in a world full of violent men.

SONG: DEAR SANTA (BRING ME A MAN) by the Weather Girls

She reaches for her vanity light. She dims it low, as if to not shed too much life on what her life has become.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.)
*Every time the holidays come
 along...I want to be...*

(NOTE: MUSIC and LYRICS cue up ACTION. Sadly, the Weather Girls will not make an appearance.)

She pulls one of the VANITY DRAWERS out and her MAKEUP rolls to the front. The odds and ends, CONCEALER, LIP STICKS, HIGHLIGHTERS, and BRONZERS.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Close to someone...

She reaches for the concealer. Its broken seal spills makeup onto an OLD POLAROID. She picks it up.

It's from much BETTER, much YOUNGER DAYS. A 17-year-old JANET, wrapped in a BOA with a young MAVIS. Both 17, both happy. Both posing as if auditioning for Kids Incorporated.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Someone who cares. Someone...who
 really understands.*

Her lips crack a smile. She winces from the black eye.

She loses focus to notice another photo, resting on her vanity. Her WEDDING PHOTO. The smile has waned into one of dread. Of regret. Of choices she made, years ago.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I hold him in my arms.

Then back into the mirror, conflicted between the times, the BETTER and...the WORSE. The Better Memories win. She smiles.

BEAT. She gets up from her VANITY and races for her closet.

6 **ESTABLISHING SHOT - DETROIT - THE GRIND NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT** 6

This time, no police vehicles in sight, just a long line of people around the same corner, hoping to get in to see the show.

The Grind is busy. Flashing LED lights and DISCO MUSIC BOOM through the streets of Detroit.

7 **INT. THE GRIND NIGHTCLUB - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT** 7

It's packed! Standing room only, folks. The only vacant chairs are on the stage.

NOTE: **Song lyrics will be lip-synced by the characters.**

From the audience, the SPOTLIGHT centers on a DRAG QUEEN, CUPCAKE. Despite her initial appearance, she knows how to paint up a face. Confident. A force to be reckoned with.

CATEGORY IS: Mz. Claus Realness. She dressed in a velvety robe, with a muff. She ready to ride that open sleigh.

Using the music, she lip-syncs for her life and her rent.

CUPCAKE
(lip-sync)
*Bring me a maaaaaan, this
Christmas!*

Cupcake works the hungry crowd, stopping only to pick up dollar bills, flirt if the money's good. Or sit on a Gentleman's lap if the money is just right.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)
I need a man to keep me warm!

A Man entices Cupcake by sticking a \$20 from his button-up shirt. She dives her hand down his shirt to retrieve it.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)
*It's getting late, so send him
here, I don't think I can make it
through another year.*

She works the room, flirting, unafraid to caress the scruffy chin of every man catching her eye. She picks up that money like fresh lettuce.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)
Come on Santa, come through...

Cupcake throws her muff and money onto the stage.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)
...bring me a maaaaaan!

She whips out a fan, THWOORP! And continues dancing!

8

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

8

Snow falls across a dark house. A powdery-white front yard. The DOOR opens and Janet crosses through the fresh snow, bags in hand, towards an IDLE CAR parked on the street.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.)
*A gentle place, a strong embrace, a
pillow and a blanket by the
fireplace, dim the lights down low,
and let it snow!*

She swings the car door open and throws her stuff inside. The SONG plays through the radio.

JANET
You my Uber?

The UBER DRIVER looks into the rearview mirror.

UBER DRIVER
You Janet?

Janet takes a seat.

JANET
Yes, now drive. Hurry.

The Uber Driver sees the haunting shadow over her eye. He takes off without a word.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.)
And let it snow.

Just as it EXITS the FRAME...

NEW ANGLE - EARL'S CAR

A DODGE CAMERO PULLS up to JANET'S HOUSE. The GARAGE DOOR opens and he drives inside. The car turns off and out pops a BEEFCAKE MUSCLE MAN. He steps out, with a dry-cleaned dress in his hand. This is Janet's Husband, EARL.

9

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

9

He steps into the bedroom, hoping to see Janet there.

EARL
Honey, I'm back.

He notices the CLOSET LIGHT is ON. Then sees discarded clothes scattered about the bedroom.

10 **INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

10

Earl searches the house, searching the KITCHEN, LIVING ROOM, for Janet.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.)
I can almost feel him.

EARL
Honey? You ready?

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.)
Feel his lips touching mine and darling, I reach out.

His gaze falls on an OPEN FRONT DOOR. He sees FOOTPRINTS in the snow.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Reach out.

CLOSE on HIS FACE. Janet's FOOTPRINTS. Oh, he real mad, girl.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Reach out!

He STORMS out of the house, SLAMMING the SCREEN DOOR.

11 **INT. THE GRIND NIGHTCLUB - STAGE - NIGHT**

11

Cupcake is now on a Shirtless Hot Daddy Santa's lap. The stage is set up like a Santa's Village. A nearby camera snaps photos.

CUPCAKE
I've been a good girl all year long!

Between the drums and camera snaps, she changes poses.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)
Done my best, right or wrong.

Another pose. The Crowd is loving it.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

*Not been naughty, only nice. Check
yo' list and check it twice!*

Another Drag Queen comes on stage. This is SWEETIE TODD.
Cupcake's confidante and best friend.

SWEETIE TODD

*Can't you see it's just not fair.
Another cold night I just can't
bear!*

Sweetie Todd approaches Daddy Santa.

SWEETIE TODD (CONT'D)

*Come on Santa won't you please?
Look at me, I'm on my knees!*

She gets on her knees, suggestively. Cupcake and Sweetie play
it up, tugging on Shirtless Daddy Santa from both ends.

CUPCAKE

Oh, bring me a man!

Cupcake and Sweetie fight over the Hot Daddy Santa Claus. The
Crowd loves it.

SWEETIE TODD

This Christmas.

CUPCAKE & SWEETIE TODD (CONT'D)

I need a man. Keeping me warm.

SWEETIE TODD (CONT'D)

Fire's out.

They tug on Santa one way...

CUPCAKE

The Chimney's clean.

...and the other.

SWEETIE TODD

*This girl's heart is open and it
don't mean a thing.*

CUPCAKE

Place him under my tree.

CUPCAKE AND SWEETIE TODD (CONT'D)

Mister Cee!

Hot Daddy Santa exits. Cupcake and Sweetie reach out.

12 **EXT. CHICAGO - UNION STATION - NIGHT**

12

The snow falls. Janet races out of the car and races inside. Her PHONE RINGS. She looks down to see who's calling: EARL.

She ignores the call and races into the station.

A BEAT LATER, a familiar Dodge Camero pulls up and parks over the RED NO PARKING CURB. It's EARL!

13 **INT. UNION STATION - GREYHOUND TICKET BOOTH - NIGHT**

13

She leaves the Ticket Booth. Ticket in hand! Only now, JANET looks lost, a sheep lost in a different flock.

Nevertheless, she persists. Janet studies the different signs, before she finds TRACK 7 on an ELECTRONIC MARQUEE.

NEW ANGLE - EARL

He huffs his way through the Union Station, a Wolf seeking out his sheep.

ANGLE - JANET

She travels towards the descending staircase which leads down into the terminals. She tries her best to blend into the crowd. She doesn't see where she is going and bumps into a woman cradling a BABY, who...

CRIES OUT! JANET REELS back to accidentally catch...EARL'S GLARE!

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.)

Come on. Come on. Come on.

Janet races down the stairs, trying her best to not be rude to the other travelers.

JANET

Excuse me.

Earl tries to maneuver his way through the crowd, but they are too starstruck to care, asking for selfies and autographs, blocking his path from Janet.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.)

Dim the lights down low.

He races down the stairs, after her.

14

INT. UNION STATION - GREYHOUND TRACK 7 - NIGHT

14

Janet sprints through the dirty snow. Up ahead, the Greyhound BUS awaits her, so close, yet so far. It REVS to LIFE.

She doesn't have time. Even if she runs, Earl will catch up.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.)

Come on. Come on. Come on.

Janet looks back up to see Earl racing down the flight of stairs after her. Pushing anyone who stands in his way.

Next to her, a Homeless Woman sits on the stairs. Janet reaches into her purse and pulls out a BLUE BEANIE. She gets an idea.

EARL reaches the bottom of the stairs to see a long line of departing busses. He catches sight of a familiar BLUE BEANIE trotting down the sidewalk.

She isn't running fast. In fact, she's running towards a hot dog stand. He could easily catch up to her.

Earl sprints after her. He grabs her and spins her around to see...

IT'S NOT JANET! It's the HOMELESS WOMAN, wearing Janet's Beanie, holding a TEN DOLLAR BILL.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Wait your turn, jerk face!

Earl appears confused, then hears a distant, familiar cry:

JANET (O.S.)

Wait!

Across the terminal, a Beaniless Janet jumps into the bus, moments before the door closes! Once she's inside, it takes off.

JANET sits. Proud, she watches the bus pass by her husband, Earl. She FLIPS HIM OFF.

WEATHER GIRLS (V.O.)

Let it snow!

The HOMELESS WOMAN PEPPER SPRAYS EARL in the face, who recoils and writhes on the floor. Janet watches her husband and relishes in his pain.

15 **INT. THE GRIND NIGHTCLUB - STAGE - NIGHT** 15

Cupcake and Sweetie dance together on stage. Finale moment!

CUPCAKE AND SWEETIE
Let it snow!

The stage explodes in SMOKE and FAKE SNOW! The CROWD HOLLERS casting DOLLAR BILLS into the air!

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)
Bring...him...in...my arms!

16 **EXT. DETROIT - STREET - NIGHT** 16

Janet disembarks the bus, alone. In an abandoned part of town.

She looks down at the CONCEALER-STAINED photo. On the back is an address. She pulls out her phone and orders another UBER.

17 **EXT. STREETS - NIGHT** 17

Cupcake and Sweetie walk together, still in drag, dancing and lip-syncing in the snow-covered street.

CUPCAKE AND SWEETIE
*Do your best, but make it quick.
Believe in me and I'll believe in
you, Saint Nick!*

Cupcake and Sweetie get to Cupcake's house. On the steps, a sleeping woman. It's JANET. They both walk up to her.

JANET
(Sheriff's Voice)
Mavis?

Cupcake watches Janet, confused. What's she doing here?

SHERIFF (PRELAP)
...Mavis!

18 **INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT** 18

Sheriff stops the TAPE RECORDER. The SONG ALSO STOPS. It stirs Cupcake from her focus.

CUPCAKE

Why'd you stop?
 (beat; playfully)
 You said in my own words.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

I don't have all night!

Cupcake rattles her handcuffs around.

CUPCAKE

But I do.

Sheriff snuffs his cigarette, grinding its butt into the ashtray. Fed up with Cupcake's bullshit.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Let's just get one thing clear. You don't run this show.

CUPCAKE

But you asked for the truth, did you not?

Sheriff gets up from his chair. He crouches down next to Cupcake, who won't meet his gaze.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Why doesn't any of this scare you?

CUPCAKE

You think it doesn't?
 (beat)
 What scares me even more is who I'm talking to. You sound like every cop out there. The kind that would throw any Black man in jail. Regardless if I'm innocent or not.
 (beat)
 I thought I was talking to my friend. Not some stuck up Sheriff.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

I am your friend, but I also took an oath to uphold the law. I need you to be straight with me.

Cupcake flashes him a look with the word 'straight.' Realizing this, Sheriff offers a cigarette.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (CONT'D)

You know what I mean.

(beat)

(MORE)

SHERIFF TIBBLES (CONT'D)

We might have started off on the wrong foot. Cuz it's not every day your friend is a suspect...

CUPCAKE

Alleged.

Sheriff Tibbles relents. Not in the mood to fight.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

How about we start fresh?

Sheriff lights Cupcake's cigarette. She takes a drag.

CUPCAKE

A'ight, Sheriff.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

When did this all start?

CUPCAKE

Three weeks ago.

Sheriff Tibbles walks back to his seat. He pushes a PHOTO her way, the same one that was hidden from us before.

PHOTO

EARL lays on the floor. Two shots in his chest, blood pooling under his jacket. Cupcake doesn't need to look at the photo. She slides it back.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

I'll tell you who shot him.

(beat)

So if you don't mind...

Cupcake points to the TAPE RECORDER. Tibbles hits record, but the RECORD button switches back up.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Tape's full.

Cupcake takes another drag from her cigarette. Sheriff ejects the TAPE.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXTREME CLOSE ON - BOOMBOX

A NEON MAXWELL CASSETTE TAPE goes into its slot.

19

INT. MAVIS' CHILDHOOD HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

19

CLOSE ON - VENETIAN CLOSET DOORS

They slide open. Behind old jackets, some blankets, and other knick-knacks, a VACUUM awaits.

A HAND reaches for the vacuum and UNWRANGLES its CORD.

Plug it in. Boop!

Hands get the vacuum in position. But, before they can go to work... the HAND hits PLAY on the BOOMBOX. MUSIC PLAYS!

VACUUM glides up and down the shag carpet, in time to MUSIC.

The carpet is transformed from matted to static. Its bristles practically stand on end.

YOUNG MAVIS, 17, a true multi-tasker, is lip-syncing, dancing, and vacuuming across the living room floor.

Next to him, his best friend, YOUNG JANET, 17, tosses her hair like she's Jennifer Beals in Flashdance. She's a maniac.

The two are lost in the music. Their imaginary world-tour finale. Young Mavis uses the vacuum's handle as his own microphone. Young Janet joins him.

Young Mavis sashays into the next room.

MATCH CUT TO:

20

INT. MAVIS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

20

All grewed up. He's out of drag, bald, but he doesn't need a wig to feel fabulous. He owns it! Enough to jam out to the same old tunes, just a MUFFLED SOTTO through his HEADPHONES.

He continues his vacuum-voguing into the living room, where Janet sleeps. Or tries to, at least. Janet covers her head and lays on her side. Anything to stifle the sound.

Mavis continues vacuuming, knowing full well that his uninvited guest is awake.

After a BEAT, Janet sits up on the couch. She throws the blankets off her.

MAVIS
Good morning.

Mavis turns off the vacuum. The very sight of Janet annoys him.

MAVIS (CONT'D)
How was your sleep, Snow White?

Janet responds with a grunt. Her back is killing her as she sits herself up.

MAVIS (CONT'D)
Now I know it's not your usual Ritz-Carlton reservation, but it sure beats the streets.

JANET
Can I use your shower?

MAVIS
Say what?

JANET
I thought since you let me stay...

MAVIS
...that I become a Holiday Inn? Not a chance, baby.

JANET
My first name ain't baby, it's Janet!

MAVIS
Miss Jackson if you nasty.

Janet's perplexed, caught between disappointment and the nostalgia of seeing her high school bestie.

JANET
I was just hoping...

MAVIS
That what, you could swoop on into Detroit and we cool?

Mavis serves some serious side eye. Bitch be crazy.

JANET

No, more like, what if we picked up where we left off?

MAVIS

Left off? You mean when you ditched your best friend to be Prom Queen?
(beat, unenthused)
Yeah, real cute, girl.

JANET

I can't change the past. But I can change the now.

MAVIS

The Now's doing just fine without you.

Mavis looks down to see she is still wearing her WEDDING RING. You can tell the man went to Jared's.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

(re: ring)

Looks like it was doing just fine back in the Windy City too.

Janet nods, hoping that Mavis can see how simple it would be. Just the two of them. How it was supposed to be. But it's not, far from it. Janet gets it.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

It's a long ride back home.

JANET

But...but, I can't...

MAVIS

What is it you can't face? It's simple, all you gotta do is walk right out that door!

KNOCK! KNOCK! Janet gets off the couch, races into the closet, and slams the door. Mavis rolls her eyes, walking to the door.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Ain't nothin in that closet! It's the reason why I came out!

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! Mavis heads towards the front door.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Yeah, I hear ya. Keep your tits on.

21

INT./EXT. MAVIS PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

21

Mavis opens the front door. Earl stands outside on the porch, looking cold, eager to get his hands on Janet.

Mavis looks him up and down. He's seen better men on his porch.

MAVIS

Now don't tell me...you're here to sell speaker systems from your stepmother's van.

Earl laughs, to be polite. But like the weather, his smile is icy: Proceed with caution.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Wait, I know you.

EARL

Class of '98. Wabash High. It's been a while.

MAVIS

Not long enough, henny.

(beat)

So what are you selling?

EARL

More here for my wife. Janet. Have you seen her?

Earl shows Mavis the same Wedding Photo Janet saw before she left home.

MAVIS

You're still with her? Damn, and they say high school sweethearts ain't true love.

Earl humors Mavis with a light chuckle. He's not one to be fucked with.

EARL

Can we go inside to chat? It's kinda cold out here.

Earl assumes Mavis is gonna step aside for him. When he doesn't, Mavis leans in with the same icy glare. Try me, I dare you.

MAVIS

This cold's no stranger. You from Chicago, ain't you?

EARL

I just want to find Janet.

MAVIS

And I just wanna finish vacuuming before work. So can I get back to it?

Mavis isn't stupid. He's seen far too many men try this same stunt in the past.

EARL

She left Chicago a couple hours ago. She said she was going to visit a sick friend.

MAVIS

You ask them?

EARL

I'm talking to 'em.

MAVIS

The last time I saw her was when she sold out to be with the star Quarterback. How's life in the big leagues?

EARL

No one can go for a wide receiver like I can.

MAVIS

(snide)

I beg to differ.

Mavis slams the door in his face.

22

INT. MAVIS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

22

CLOSE ON - CURTAINS

A HAND peeks through them. Earl storms back to his car and slams the door. Steam ebbs from his engine. Just as grumpy as its owner.

Mavis storms back into the living room, about to say something, until he sees Janet on his couch, looking out the window. Janet holds a CELL PHONE in her lap.

The tears stream down her face, pure terror. Janet wipes the tears off her face, unaware that her makeup just smeared.

JANET

He will never leave. He knows I'm here. It's my fault.

The smear reveals, underneath that once-perfect cheekbone, a BRUISE. Mavis notices the bruise and phone. He could react, get upset, or he could help.

BEAT. Mavis softens, almost empathetic.

MAVIS

Girl, why me?

Janet reaches into her pocket. She pulls out the PHOTO from their younger years and hands it to Mavis.

JANET

I just need a friend. A friend who always saw me at my best and through the worst.

Mavis' gaze hides a sort of darkness while studying the photo. Deep within those years of makeup and wigs...this moment—this very Kodak moment—started it all.

MAVIS

You don't have to go home....

Janet beams....until...

MAVIS (CONT'D)

...but you can't stay here.

...then drops, crestfallen. Out of options...and hope.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Lemme make a few calls.

Mavis continues to look at the black eye, haunted. Janet sees the foundation is on her sweater and covers her face.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Shower's down the hall on the right.

Mavis pulls out her phone, and, on her Favorites, she selects the contact: "SHEmergency."

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

23

INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

23

Sheriff Tibbles pours another cup of coffee.

SHERIFF TIBBLES
Shemergency?

CUPCAKE
Yeah. Who'd you think I'd call,
Ghostbusters?

SHERIFF TIBBLES
What does that even mean?

CUPCAKE
It's a girl's bat-signal, so to
speak, for when she's in trouble.

SHERIFF TIBBLES
So who gets the call? Can you find
them in here?

Sheriff Tibbles hands Cupcake a MANILA FOLDER. Inside
contains several PHOTOS, Cupcake pulls out TWO.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (CONT'D)
Two?

CUPCAKE
Three if you include yourself.
(re: handcuffs)
If only you picked up the phone
earlier, I wouldn't be in these.

Sheriff averts any possible shame by studying the photos.

One is SWEETIE TODD. The other is a PINUP LADY we'll later
know as LUCKY STRIKES. PRELAP of a RINGING PHONE.

24

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

24

A beam of sunlight pierces through a room darkened by
blackout curtains. A hand hangs over the bed. That level of
exhaustion only earned from late nights and a pending
hangover.

A PHONE VIBRATES on the nightstand! A HAND TWITCHES to LIFE.

The hand reaches for the phone. A face emerges from under the covers wearing a sleep mask. A BOY with RED HAIR tossed about his face and freckles.

This is SWEETIE TODD out of DRAG. Just TODD, sweetie.

VOICE (V.O.)
Hello, is this Sweetie Todd?

Girl, he just woke up. He's clearly not a morning person, especially after twelve whiskey sours.

TODD
(groggy)
'allo...

VOICE
Sweetie, this is Mark...
(inaudible)

VOICE FADES to a INAUDIBLE MUMBLE because Todd pulled the PHONE away to read the CALLER ID: RESTRICTED.

TODD
Who?
(quick beat, then)
Look, there're only two people who call from a restricted line. It's telemarketers and my ex.

MARK (VOICE)
I can understand...

TODD
...you wanna know the common denominator between the two? Money.

MARK
I am talking to Sweetie Todd, right?
(beat)
You did send us an audition tape.

BEAT. Todd's wide-awake now. Audition TAPE?

TODD
(customer-service friendly)
This is she.
(beat)
You might need to refresh my memory, which production company did I send an audition tape to?

MARK
World of Wonder.

TODD
That's Ru's...
(BEAT to think, then)
Oh. My. God.

MARK
ConDRAGulations. You're a winner,
baby.

Todd hides under his blankets and SCREAMS!

25

INT. THE BEACON - BAR - DAY

25

TODD IS STILL SCREAMING! Only now he's behind the bar with a shot in his hand. Across the bar, the PINUP from the PHOTO: LUCKY STRIKES. A BIO-QUEEN who holds up a shot of her own.

NOTE: BIO-QUEEN is a cis-woman or non-binary person who dresses in drag. For Lucky, she's all woman, henny.

An aspiring Bettie Page, Lucky Strikes is dressed like she just got skull tattoos and malt shakes with Bobby Ray. Despite her appearance, her demeanor is as welcoming as peach cobbler; however is still oblivious to Todd's excitement.

They both kick back the shots.

TODD
Can you believe it?

LUCKY STRIKES
Shhh! You'll wake them up!

Todd trying to contain himself is like shaking a soda can. He can't help it!

TODD
I mean, can you just...Mavis and
yours truly...on Drag Race!

LUCKY STRIKES
Is that a show?

TODD
It's more than a show. It's church,
honey.

A VOICE emerges from the sales floor.

SPANISH VOICE (O.S.)

And with her screaming, che's
trying to be Mother Superior.

This is PETER PAN DULCE (he/him). He just turned 18. Not old enough to drink, but young enough to be reckless. He walks out wearing a long Tee-shirt and a leather jacket.

Lucky Strikes serves a once-over of Dulce's look. She may not be his mother, but Hell would sooner freeze over before she lets him wear that to work.

LUCKY STRIKES

Excuse me, you think you can work
today's shift looking like that?
Think again.

PETER PAN DULCE

(re: shirt; Puerto-Rican
accent)

This is fashion.

TODD

That's a nightgown. You're lucky
Mavis isn't seeing you in that.

PETER PAN DULCE

Che wasn't upstairs.

TODD

(to Lucky)

She's usually in the office by now.
Where is she?

Dulce doesn't move. He just stands there, hoping Sweetie and Lucky change their minds.

LUCKY STRIKES

Go, Dulce! We open in thirty!

Dulce exits to change, stomping his feet along the way. Lucky Strikes casts a shady glance at Todd.

LUCKY STRIKES (CONT'D)

Nice job. Now he's gonna be cranky.

TODD

(sotto)

I'm sorry!

Todd's and Lucky's PHONE start RINGING. Both looks at the
CALLER ID: SHEMERGENCY!

LUCKY STRIKES

She's never called from this line.

Todd picks up and puts it on Speaker.

TODD

Did Ru call you too? Can you believe it?

CUPCAKE (O.S.)

(on Speakerphone)

Ru call who? No, Sweetie. I need you and Lucky here.

LUCKY STRIKES

Mave, we open in thirty minutes. Where are you? You okay?

CUPCAKE (O.S.)

Remember that woman from last night?

TODD

(to Lucky)

Janet. She go through your shampoo?

CUPCAKE (O.S.)

Worse, can you two come over? Her husband is outside and we need a diversion to bring her to the Nest.

(beat)

Oh and bring the Sister Sarah outfits with you?

Cupcake ends the call. Lucky and Sweetie exchange glances.

LUCKY STRIKES

You know I can't leave Dulce by himself.

TODD

You know we can't refuse to help in a Shemergency.

LUCKY STRIKES

So take Dulce in my place.

(beat)

You woke him up. You deal with him.

Todd groans. Lucky raises an eyebrow. The decision's been made. Todd turns back to the Salesfloor to go after Dulce.

26

EXT. STREET / INT. EARL'S CAR - LATER

26

Earl sits in the driver's seat, chewing on some beef jerky and sipping his protein shake. He's on his phone, where an app, FIND MY FRIENDS, shows Janet's location is just beyond Mavis' front door.

His car's radio plays, where an EMCEE announces the latest sports news.

EMCEE

(from the radio)

Day after the big game and where is Carpenter? The Bear's Star Quarterback? More on that next.

Fog condenses his car windows. All that heavy breathing. He wipes it off with his jacket. Still got eyes on the target.

The RADIO stops and his screen lights up, alerting him of an incoming call. He answers it.

EARL

Johnny, whaddup?

The voice on the other line is Earl's COACH, JOHNNY.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

You tell me, hot shot. Why ain't you at practice?

EARL

You suspended me, coach.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

Still gotta train. Get your ass on the field.

EARL

That's gonna be kinda tough.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

Why's that?

EARL

Janet's got...a sick friend in Detroit.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

Great. Fly her up and I'll see you in thirty.

EARL

It's more complicated than that.
I'm here too.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

And what will ESPN say when they
get wind that you aren't here?
(beat, before realizing)
...and in Lion territory?

EARL

You didn't have to suspend me.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

You made a bad call. You didn't
have to flip off that ref.
(beat)
You being up in Lion territory
ain't paintin' a pretty picture
either.

EARL

Then paint a better one, Picasso.
One that ends with the whole "our
thoughts and prayers" shit.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

Don't make a fool outta me, man.

Earl ends the call. His PHONE reverts back to the APP.
Janet's DOT is ON THE MOVE.

He sets his phone next to a Rental Car Agreement. He turns
the ignition on his car. It ROARS to LIFE. He waits for his
prey to emerge from hiding.

27

INT. MAVIS' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

27

The back porch door opens. SWEETIE TODD and Dulce enter the
living room, dressed up in Red Cloaks, bonnets, boots, all
vintage Salvation Army garb a la Sister Sarah from "Guys and
Dolls."

Janet kneels over a suitcase on the living room rug, rifling
through her clothes. A towel drapes over her frame. She just
reapplied some makeup, so her bruise is gone.

Sweetie practically swoons at the sight of Janet, in all her
awkward glory.

SWEETIE TODD

We finally meet in the flesh!

PETER PAN DULCE

And in her chones, tambien.

A little off guard, all Janet can do is nod her head. Sweetie Todd hands a BLACK GARMENT BAG to Janet.

SWEETIE TODD

Hope this fits you, girl. Didn't really know your size.

Janet takes the bag. Cupcake emerges from the living room, her makeup flawless from the neck up. The rest of her is padded and waiting to get into her drag.

SWEETIE TODD (CONT'D)

(to Cupcake)

You however. Lost cause.

CUPCAKE

Can't be shady, now. Not when you're dressed to deliver good news, Sister.

SWEETIE TODD

You might wanna call me UberEats, cuz I brought the goods.

CUPCAKE

Girl, you're more like AHF. No one thanks them when they're getting a shot in the ass.

Sweetie and Cupcake stand off for a BEAT, awaiting for the other to one-up their sassy comment. Janet is not used to this, so she stands between them, unsure what to do.

Sweetie and Cupcake can't help it, they both bust up laughing before they hug and kiss one another.

SWEETIE TODD

You got new padding? Or you finally cleaned your old ones?

CUPCAKE

Carved em last week. Now where's my dress?

Sweetie hands the garment bag to Janet, who excuses herself to change. Peter Pan Dulce steps into the living room.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

Where's Lucky?

SWEETIE TODD

She had to open shop.

(beat)

What's with Janet?

Dulce finds a mirror in the living room and twirls. He loves this outfit.

CUPCAKE

She's paranoid. This diversion would work better if Lucky were here and not Jessie Arnez.

PETER PAN DULCE (O.S.)

It's Desi! Sabes que, I can hear you guys.

CUPCAKE

(a la Kris Jenner)

Keep on twirling, sweetie! You're doing great!

SWEETIE TODD

It's penance.

(re: dress)

Remember the last time we wore this?

CUPCAKE

Girl, that Salvation Army Santa was shook!

PETER PAN DULCE (O.S.)

Dressed as his ho, ho, ho's?

Sweetie stifles her laughter. Dulce looks back to get Cupcake's approval. Cupcake is humored but she would never give Dulce, a mere child, the satisfaction.

CUPCAKE

Oh, Dulce got jokes now.

Cupcake makes her way over to Dulce to make some minor alterations to his outfit.

SWEETIE TODD

We were protesting the Salvation Army. They still think my sexuality is a choice.

CUPCAKE

You know what is a choice? That lip color.

Sweetie's lip color is a bright red. Against her pale skin, it is practically glowing.

SWEETIE TODD

You just mad because it makes these
DSL's pop.

CUPCAKE'S PHONE VIBRATES. Sweetie sits up, anticipating Cupcake's special call. Cupcake answers it...then after a BEAT...hangs up.

CUPCAKE

(re: phone)
Okay, Sam is on her way.
(beat, remembering)
What did you mean by call, earlier?

Sweetie can barely contain her excitement, then suddenly:

PETER PAN DULCE

RuPaul called him.

...before Cupcake can respond, Janet steps out, dressed like Dulce and Sweetie. A True Sister Sarah. Real blood and fire.

SWEETIE TODD

Well, look at her! Dame's got
class.

JANET

Is this really necessary?
I feel silly.

SWEETIE TODD

You should try lip-syncing to other
people's songs.

CUPCAKE

Don't look a cinched waist on the
mouth, honey. It's our only way to
look uniform for this to work.

SWEETIE TODD

Go get dressed, Cups. I'll fill
Janet in on the details.

CUPCAKE

What do you mean Ru...

SWEETIE TODD

Not now, Cups. We got work to do.

Cupcake exits. Sweetie works on Janet's outfit.

28

EXT. STREET - DAY

28

Earl waits in the car. The ENGINE ROARS, ready to pounce.

BEAT. From his windshield, he sees TWO RED CLOAKS EMERGE from Mavis' place. He smiles to himself, this is too easy. Just before he can take his car out of Park...

...the rear of his car is LIFTED! He pokes his head out of the window. Behind him, his car is hitched to the back of a TOW TRUCK.

He looks up the street to see the two RED CLOAKS moving further away. He opens the driver's side door to find he is several feet in the air. He jumps out then storms over to the Tow Truck.

EARL
Hey listen, man!

Of course he says that without looking up. When he does, he sees a tough-as-nails TOW TRUCK LADY driver.

TOW TRUCK LADY
Man?

EARL
Ma'am! That's my car you're towing.

TOW TRUCK LADY
Uh-huh. You see those signs?

Tow Truck Lady points to the STREET SIGNS: PERMIT ONLY.

EARL
You can't be serious!

TOW TRUCK LADY
Still gotta do my job, man.

EARL
I'll move my car! I'll pay you!

Tow Truck Lady shifts gears into drive, smirking to herself.

TOW TRUCK LADY
Nah, this is more fun.

The Truck drives off, with the car still in tow. He races after it on foot, hoping the Tow Truck Lady changes her mind.

After a BEAT, Earl loses steam. The Tow Truck drives on. He takes a BEAT to catch his breath, Earl snarls, then pursues the two RED CLOAKS as they duck around a corner.

29 **EXT. DETROIT - STREET - LATER**

29

The RED CLOAKS travel side by side, like two nuns late for Vespers. Unaware they are being followed. Or are they?

Earl is not far, but not near enough to see them up close. He jogs behind them by a half-block and gaining speed.

The RED CLOAKS reach an intersection. Speculating which turn to make next.

BEAT. They split up. Only they MULTIPLY from TWO RED CLOAKS to FOUR! ONE heads to the LEFT, ANOTHER on the RIGHT, and TWO CONTINUE FORWARD.

He stops, unsure which one to pursue. He looks up each street, trying to decide which one he'll take.

He goes with his instinct. Janet doesn't know this city, why would she go alone? He goes after two RED CLOAKS.

30 **EXT. DETROIT - STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

30

Earl breaks into a sprint to catch up, they are half a block up ahead. So close!

Just when he is within reach, the RED CLOAK on the RIGHT enters a COFFEE SHOP while the OTHER continues up the street, farther into the snow and fog.

Earl growls under his breath and follows RED CLOAK into the COFFEE SHOP.

31 **INT. CAFE - FLOOR - CONTINUOUS**

31

Unlike outside, the atmosphere is now bustling to the sound of ESPRESSO MACHINES, MILK STEAM WANDS, and LAPTOP KEYBOARDS. Baristas call out drink orders to the crowd of people waiting for their drinks.

Earl enters. It doesn't take long to find Red Cloak. She stands among a small crowd of Patrons by the handoff station.

The SEATED GUESTS look up. Much like the UNION STATION, people know who he is. He's the Quarterback for their rival team. Everyone murmurs to one another when they see him. They whip out their phones to record this moment.

CROWD

(random voices, ad lib)

Omigod, it's Carp. No way, man!

Earl stands by RED CLOAK WOMAN.

EARL

It would be a lot easier if you
just follow me.

Red Cloak faces Earl. Padded, tucked ...she's a little Latin boy in drag. Peter Pan Dulce.

PETER PAN DULCE

(Spanish accent)

Sure, papí, jour place or mine?

Dulce laughs. Earl reacts confused, then angry. Just before he can lose his cool, he sees patrons have their phones out, taking pictures and video.

Each one, demanding a picture, except lil' Peter Pan Dulce, who dips out of the way to escape.

Earl looks towards the window. Two Drag Queens dressed in vintage Salvation Army uniforms, Cupcake and Sweetie Todd stand outside looking at Earl.

32

EXT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS

32

Earl steps outside to confront the three cloaked queens. His rage couldn't be more palpable.

CUPCAKE

Why you gaggin', bae?

Earl clenches his fist. He rolls up his sleeves.

SWEETIE TODD

Why must men always resort to
violence?

EARL

I'm tired of playing these games.

CUPCAKE

Glad we can agree on something.

Earl steps forward. Cupcake isn't afraid, she takes a step as well, only to be stopped by Sweetie Todd.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

You seriously want to beat up a
bunch of girls in front of your
fans?

She's right. Earl glances inside. Everyone got their phones out, filming a modern day standoff. He flashes an award-winning smile. Everything's fine.

EARL

You're right. Your dad did beat me to the punch, then kicked you out into the streets and into that dress.

Despite its sting, Cupcake is unaffected by Earl's words.

CUPCAKE

Baby, sometimes it takes a real man to see things from a woman's point of view.

EARL

Don't kid yourself. You were never a boy. Now you want to call yourself a man?

That one stings Cupcake, she takes a BEAT to regather herself. Earl turns his back and walks away from them, from the cafe, into the snow.

EARL (CONT'D)

Where is Janet? She was in your house. Her phone's GPS said...

CUPCAKE

...you mean this?

Cupcake reaches into her bra and pulls out JANET'S PHONE.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

Yeah, she mailed it to me. She instructed me to call an Uber from the Station back to my place. On your dime, of course.

(beat)

Must've been planning to leave you for quite some time.

Cupcake tosses Janet's phone with little regard if Earl caught it or not. They make their exit through the alley.

Earl catches the phone with little effort. The only audience to witness it are his café patrons, who are still recording the event with their phones.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (PRELAP)

What was your relationship to Earl back in high school?

33

**INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS
LATER**

33

Cupcake rolls her eyes. Rhetorical questions, really?

CUPCAKE

You know the story.

Sheriff points to the TAPE RECORDER between them.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

For folks back home?

Cupcake rolls her eyes.

CUPCAKE

It's ancient history. Quarterback on-field, bully off. They called him the Quarter Pounder.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

So this was a vendetta?

CUPCAKE

It was nothing but karma. He had it coming.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

So you admit to shooting him?

CUPCAKE

Nice try, Sher.

(beat)

What I will say is about the Carpenters is trouble between them started way before I came into the picture.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

And where was Janet in all of this?

CUPCAKE

On her own.

Cupcake sips from her mug.

SWEETIE TODD (PRELAP)

Remember to step together. He can't know there are four of us.

34

INT. DETROIT - STREET - DAY

34

The Four Red Cloaks walk together. Cupcake and Dulce take the lead. Sweetie and Janet trail behind them.

PETER PAN DULCE

Jou're gonna be fine, mamá.

Sweetie Todd reaches her hand out to Janet and gives it a good squeeze.

JANET

I still don't know why I have to do this by myself.

CUPCAKE

The same reason why baby joeys have to travel to their mother's pouches after birth. Survival.

Sweetie hands Janet a folded piece of paper.

JANET

And these directions will help?

CUPCAKE

Yes, henny. Don't trip.

JANET

I'm not tripping.

CUPCAKE

Good. Now, break!

Cupcake and Dulce continue walking forward. Sweetie takes a left and Janet, though reluctant, moves to the right.

35

EXT. DETROIT - STREET - CONTINUOUS

35

Janet stands in the center of an empty road. Now on her own. The snowfall obstructs her view up ahead, rendering the street into a long walk into oblivion. She zips up her cape and walks down the streets of Detroit.

She passes by empty buildings along empty streets. In some, the windows are smashed in, or in complete disrepair, like passing down a street of haunted houses.

She passes by markets and tailors, who remain open, as if to defy the odds. The Clerks watch her from inside their stores, curious, hungry for her business.

Janet ignores them. Her gaze is focused on the street signs above her and the folded piece of paper in her hands.

She glances back, paranoid. But there's no one, just a passing car...its ENGINE sounds just like Earl's! Better safe than sorry, she retreats into...

36

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

36

...and leans up against the brick wall. She holds her breath for a BEAT, scared even her condensation would give her away. The Car passes by...it's a DETROIT POLICE PATROL CRUISER.

She takes a sigh of relief before looking up the narrow passage. A Homeless Mother and young Daughter taking shelter from the snowfall. The Mom watches her hungrily, as if her prayers have been answered.

Janet shares a moment of empathy for them. She reaches into her purse and hands the Mother a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL before exiting. The Mother takes it, beaming with gratitude.

37

EXT. STREET - LATER

37

Each turn only makes her more lost. A right here, a left there. They all the same to her.

She consults the FOLDED PAPER. LAST LINE in the DIRECTIONS say: FIND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD AND WAIT. HELP IS ON THE WAY.

She faces the Riverfront, where a series of sculptures stand along the water's edge.

38

EXT. DETROIT RIVERFRONT - CONTINUOUS

38

Sculpted Figures stand in wonder of the freedom that lay at their feet. The Detroit River glides downstream.

Janet approaches the Underground Railroad monument and takes notice of two sculpted kids. A boy pointing to some distant, unknown object while a young girl watches, equally entranced with newfound freedom and the world that awaits her.

She hears the CLOSING of a CAR DOOR behind her. Through the veil of snowfall, she sees a MAN stepping away from a car. The CAR's HEADLIGHTS burn through the thick snowfall. Janet has nowhere to turn. She's trapped.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

39

EXT. DETROIT RIVERFRONT - MOMENTS LATER

39

The MAN's SILHOUETTE draws closer. She can hear the SNOW CRUNCHING UNDER HIS BOOTS just around the sculptures.

When the MAN finally approaches, he notices Janet almost immediately. He's in disbelief. The Man is SHERIFF TIBBLES.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Janet?

After hearing his voice, Janet eases from panic. After a BEAT, she recognize the Sheriff. It's been fifteen years since she last saw the Tibbles.

JANET

Tibbs?

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Yeah! Quite a ways from Chicago. Though Mavis also said I'd meet a blast from the past!

JANET

How long have you lived here?

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Came up here after high school. Have family up this way.

(beat)

Mavis asked me to pick you up.

JANET

He did...

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Yeah, I can take you to his shop. We can catch up along the way.

Sheriff Tibbles and Janet walk back to his PATROL CRUISER.

40

EXT. DETROIT / INT. TIBBLES' PATROL CRUISER - DAY

40

They drive down through downtown Detroit. Some cars pass by, but for the most part, despite the tall buildings, these city streets are just as empty as the suburbs.

JANET

Streets are rather dead here.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Been dead since this summer, but
the blizzard certainly isn't
helping.

JANET

Why's that?

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Detroit went bankrupt a couple
months back.

JANET

Really?

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Yup. Industries up and left, taking
their workers along with them.
Districts losing power.

(beat)

Hell, I'm surprised Mavis has been
able to keep his shop open.

Driving in the opposite direction, a familiar TOW TRUCK
passes by, with Earl's CAMERO still hitched to the back.
Janet shudders.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (CONT'D)

God, Earl would lose it seeing that
Camero in tow. Always loved them
muscle cars.

(beat)

How's he doing? He out here too?

JANET

Yeah, he's around.

Sheriff notices she is trembling a little. Unaware, he turns
up the heat.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

A little cold?

JANET

Thanks, wind-chill is a bit colder
up here than Chicago.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Say, how's that throwing arm of
his?

JANET

(biting)

...still packs a punch.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Shame about his suspension. But I stand by my Lions.

JANET

He made a bad call. You know Earl.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

A short fuse, that one. But, like it or not, helluva quarterback.

JANET

Yup.

Up ahead, Sheriff Tibbles' Patrol Cruiser approaches a building on the corner. Its bright neon lights guide Sheriff Tibbles' Patrol Cruiser through the fog.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Here we are.

Janet looks up ahead, a NEON SIGN says it all: BEACON.

A VERTICAL NEON SIGN with a BEACON insignia. The MARQUEE reads: FIVE-AND-DIME / VINTAGE FINDS.

41

EXT. THE BEACON - MOMENTS LATER

41

Tibb's Patrol Cruiser parks under the sign. Janet opens the door and steps out.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

My wife should be inside.

JANET

Wife? You don't say.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

It's her second home while I'm working. She goes by Lucky Strikes.

JANET

I'll be sure to.

(beat)

Thank you for the ride, Tibbs.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

You betcha. Hey, we should catch up with you and Earl over dinner, like old times.

Janet nods as she waves goodbye to Sheriff Tibbles as he drives off. Janet enters the Beacon.

42

INT. THE BEACON - SALESFLOOR - CONTINUOUS

42

Beacon is a glorified thrift store. But don't ever let Mavis catch you saying that.

Picture Vita Boheme's place in "To Wong Foo" and you wouldn't be far off. Gowns, suits, wigs, all dripping with fringe, sequins, and taffeta. This is glamour for the gods, sweetie.

Any employee would boast this place as more than just retail. If Janet looks past the sales floor, she'll see a bar space in the back. Drinkable dinner and a fashion show, all in one.

Janet looks overwhelmed by the glamour. Where does one even begin to scavenge a place like this? She starts by following the sound of a RADIO and SEWING MACHINE.

Just behind the sales counter on her right, Lucky Strikes devotes her attention to hemming a garment.

LUCKY STRIKES

You must be Janet.

(beat)

Hope my husband didn't yammer on about the game.

This breaks Janet's disoriented spell from everything that is the Beacon.

JANET

No, he was a gentleman, as always.

LUCKY STRIKES

Good. Welcome to the Beacon!

JANET

Thanks. This is quite the place!

LUCKY STRIKES

It's great. We even have a bar in the back.

JANET

Get out.

LUCKY STRIKES

Hell yes. Go take a look around! I'll get Cupcake.

Janet looks overwhelmed. She turns to the racks and studies the clothes, as if they would contain the answers to her troubles.

Meanwhile, Lucky leaves her sewing machine to make her way up a set of stairs behind the Sales Counter to the Manager's Office.

CUPCAKE (PRELAP)
 Little Red Riding Ho's gotta go!

43

INT. THE BEACON - MANAGER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

43

Lucky enters the Office to see Cupcake, Sweetie, and Peter Pan Dulce. Sweetie is counting the safe. On the desk, a telephone's red light flashes, indicating a VOICEMAIL.

SWEETIE TODD
 She might hear you!

CUPCAKE
 Remind me when to give a shit.

LUCKY STRIKES
 Dulce, can you watch the sales floor for me?

PETER PAN DULCE
 (outfit)
 Can I still wear this?

Dulce spins around in her Salvation Army uniform.

CUPCAKE
 Yes, but don't spill anything on it. She vintage.

Dulce skips out, leaving Lucky, Sweetie, and Cupcake alone.

SWEETIE TODD
 We have faced more dangerous men than him.

CUPCAKE
 I don't know, girl....

LUCKY STRIKES
 Where do you suggest she go?

CUPCAKE
 The fuck home for all I care.

SWEETIE TODD
 My my. Practice what you preach much?

CUPCAKE

Huh?

SWEETIE TODD

Since I met you, she's all you talked about. Janet this. Janet that. You are who you are because of her.

(beat)

Now that one friend you once idolized is back in your life and all you wanna do is throw her out.

CUPCAKE

We can't risk the safety of the other girls.

SWEETIE TODD

True, but who else knows about the Nest? Sheriff Tibbs?

They glance over at Lucky Strikes, who shakes her head.

CUPCAKE

Earl can endanger the other women.

SWEETIE TODD

Look, it's obvious you two still have some unfinished business. What better way to work it out than in hiding?

Cupcake clenches her fists.

CUPCAKE

Fine. I'll give it a shot.

(beat)

Way to put me on blast, Sweetie.

SWEETIE TODD

Would I ever hold back from my sister?

(beat)

Now can you check that voicemail, already? The suspense is killing me!

Lucky shoots a glance at Sweetie, nervous. Cupcake presses the voicemail button. The excitement suffocates the room.

VOICE (V.O.)

We are calling to congratulate you.

Sweetie and Lucky grab each other's hands.

VOICE

We have extended the warranty of
your vehicle! Call us today...

Lucky hangs up and shoots a glaring look at Sweetie.

44

EXT. BOB'S TOWING - DAY

44

A taxi pulls up to the impound. This is the place where dirty snow lives, a run-down part of town.

Earl steps out of the taxi. Earl drudges through the slosh and enters the Tow Depot. A barbed-wire fence keeps the cars from their owners. Earl finds his car hiding under fresh-fallen snow.

The impound office is a repurposed mobile home. Two jagged holes cut into the exterior. Plexiglass and an intercom is all that stands between Earl and a LADY DISPATCHER, VERA, 19.

OFF VERA's appearance, she looks like she earned every single one of her years from winning bar fights. Her nails, her painted eyebrows, even her gaze, all not to be fucked with.

When Earl approaches her window, she's in the middle of finishing a phone conversation. But Earl can't wait that long.

EARL

I'm here to...

Without even looking at him, she lifts up one finger. Her nail is just as long as her finger. With the other hand, she returns the phone to its cradle and turns to face him.

EARL (CONT'D)

I'm here to pick up a car.

VERA

Make and Model?

EARL

Dodge...it's actually a rental.

VERA

Have you contacted the rental company?

EARL

My phone is actually in the car.

VERA

Then show me your rental agreement,
please.

EARL

That's also in the car.

VERA

Dang, someone came prepared.

EARL

Look, it was towed when I was
inside the car.

VERA

But since you don't own the car,
they will have to come pick it up.

EARL

And my stuff?

VERA

Sir, do I look like a lost and
found to you?

EARL

But it's your fault I got towed in
the first place! Do you even know
who I am?

Vera stands up, not having his shit. You get a bad bitch mad,
you pay the consequences. The moment she stands up, two
MASSIVE MEN in FACE TATTOOS appear behind Earl.

VERA

Let's get one thing straight, kay?
Raising your voice doesn't get your
car back.

(beat)

And as for your entitlement and
ego...you're in Lion territory,
lil' cub.

(beat)

Those two guys behind you? Yeah,
they lost about \$500 in that game
last night. So if you want your
stuff back, pay up.

The TWO MEN draw closer to Earl, ready to kick his ass.

EARL

You accept Venmo?

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

45

INT. THE BEACON - SALESFLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

45

Janet stands in awe of a STATUE in the center of the store. It's JULIE NEWMAR, holding the same pose from a famous photograph, thanking a certain Wong Foo for everything.

Like immigrants stepping onto American soil, or seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time, Janet finds solace in the Statue. Bright futures ahead.

Cupcake stands behind her, trying to not interrupt the moment. Conflicted at the crossroads of risk versus opportunity.

CUPCAKE

Isn't it beautiful?

JANET

I think we wore out the VHS when it came out.

CUPCAKE

Yeah, we did.

JANET

Where did you find this?

CUPCAKE

Some old theatre in downtown. It's where we also found these outfits.

JANET

I just can't believe...after all these years.

(beat)

You own all of this?

Cupcake nods her head.

CUPCAKE

This whole block, actually. Just cost me one dollar.

Janet is in awe.

JANET

How?

CUPCAKE

The City offered a residency to artists.

(MORE)

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

Come to Detroit, restore neighborhoods, and bring back business in exchange for free rent.

JANET

Why a thrift store?

CUPCAKE

Excuse me, thrift store is where you drop off your junk. You see any?

Janet shakes her head. Cupcake draws her gaze on a gorgeous evening gown next to her.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

The Beacon is a place where you can find new sides to yourself. A place to guide wayward souls home. Beyond fashion.

JANET

I don't have any money.

CUPCAKE

Your money wouldn't work here even if you did.
(beat)
Besides, do you want to stay looking like Sister Sarah?

Janet shakes her head. Janet follows Cupcake. Sweetie and Lucky watch the two enter the Parlour Room.

46

INT. THE BEACON - PARLOUR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

46

Unlike dressing rooms in retail stores, the Parlour Room is a circular room with a chaise lounge in the center. Around the circumference a rack of gorgeous outfits. Each one with its own unique style.

Cupcake leads Janet into the room and shuts the door behind her. Opposite the doors hang a three-angled mirror.

CUPCAKE

Go on.

Janet is spellbound. Unsure where to begin, let alone understand its purpose.

JANET

Is it weird that I forgot how to shop?

CUPCAKE

How else do you find a new look?

Cupcake shows off some looks. Janet looks at the outfits. Intimidated by its individual elegance. No way in hell would she wear anything like this.

Cupcake studies Janet as she passes each one.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

You don't like any of these dresses?

JANET

No, I do. They're gorgeous.

CUPCAKE

So what's the matter?

JANET

All my life, my mom selected outfits for me. Now our publicist takes up the job, from nights on the town to simple moments at home.

CUPCAKE

Then who is Janet?

Janet shrugs her shoulders. Cupcake searches the racks. Reflective, but she's not giving up.

Janet sees Cupcake holding an elegant evening gown. Category is: Red-Carpet realness. Janet looks away.

JANET

Reminds me of my life back home. As his trophy, his arm piece.

CUPCAKE

(laughs)

Arm piece. Girl, any man who calls you an arm-piece would be better off flaunting a purse.

Cupcake returns the dress back to its rack. Janet wanders around. Nothing really stands out for her.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

Okay. What if we tried a different approach? May I dress you?

Janet, at her wit's end, closes her eyes. Surrendered.

47

INT. SILVER SPIGOT SALOON - EVENING

47

A BELL RINGS across the bar. It's a small dive with one large overhead TV, home to local industrial workers just coming in for a nightcap.

Earl enters. Not many people out tonight. Just a small handful seated at the bar. Earl dressed in a beanie, sunglasses, and a backpack. Discretion is key. They take no notice of him as he takes a seat.

The BARTENDER approaches him and throws down a napkin.

EARL

Can I get a beer?

BARTENDER

Sure, stranger. Can I see your license, mister stunna shades?

Earl shows his license as he removes his sunglasses. The Bartender looks at his ID, a little perturbed.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Got a lot of nerve showing up here in Lion territory after last night's game.

The Bar Patrons are none too pleased with seeing Earl. Bartender gets his beer.

EARL

It was the heat of the moment.

BAR PATRON

Poor sport's what I'd say.

The Bar Patrons murmur to one another. Unlike before, Earl keeps his cool. It was a mistake to come here.

He retreats to his phone, looking up the next ticket back to Chicago. Bartender returns with his beer. He drops a Black AMEX card.

EARL

Keep it open.

The Bartender leaves with his card.

Before he can even get a sip in...FROM ABOVE, one of the TELEVISIONS:

ESPN ANCHOR

(from TV)

Quite a turn of events for Bear's Star Quarterback, Carpenter. Before the ink could even dry in Carpe's suspension, he's spotted in Detroit, playing hooky.

ESPN ANCHOR 2

(from TV)

Only from the video we received this morning, it looks like he is switching teams, and I don't mean to the Lions.

Above him, ESPN airs the video footage from the CAFE. Three drag queens berating the Quarterback.

Underneath the footage is the HEADLINE: WHO'S RECRUITING WHO? The Bar Patrons erupt in laughter.

BAR PATRON 2

Gonna play the powderpuff division next season, Carp?

Earl raises his glass and downs his beer. Yup, total mistake. He's had worse nights. He ain't no quitter. He motions his empty glass to the Bartender, who replies a knowing glance.

Earl returns to his phone, unaware someone's approaching him.

From behind, a VOICE emerges.

VOICE (O.S.)

Anyone sitting here, friend?

Earl's eyes don't leave the screen, but he motions the open seat all the same.

EARL

Just you.

The Voice takes a seat. It's Sheriff Tibbles, out of uniform, sporting a t-shirt and jeans. He takes one look at his neighbor and immediately recognizes him.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Earl? Man, what are the odds?

The Bartender hands Earl a full glass of beer.

EARL

Yah.

SHERIFF TIBBLES
 It's Tibbles. We played ball
 together back at Wabash high?

EARL
 Hey man! What brings you up here?

SHERIFF TIBBLES
 I'm the Sheriff 'round these parts.

BARTENDER
 Hey Tibbs, your usual?

SHERIFF TIBBLES
 You bet.
 (re: Earl's beer)
 Oh, and put his on my tab.

EARL
 Much obliged, Sheriff.

SHERIFF TIBBLES
 Just dropped off your better half a
 bit ago...

Now, Tibbles has Earl's undivided attention.

EARL
 You don't say. When did you see
 Janet?

SHERIFF TIBBLES
 Found her along the waterway. Took
 her to the Beacon. Mavis' shop. You
 remember him, right?

EARL
 Who can forget?

Earl glances at his phone. A POP-UP WINDOW asks if he's ready
 to purchase a ticket. He pockets his phone then shifts back
 to Sheriff Tibbles.

EARL (CONT'D)
 You know, I just might pop over to
 pay an old friend a visit.

Earl and Tibbles clink beers. Earl's gaze darkens as he takes
 another deep swallow.

48

INT. THE BEACON - PARLOUR ROOM - LATER

48

Cupcake puts on the final touches of the outfit. When she is confident, she steps back.

CUPCAKE

Okay, now open them.

Janet opens her eyes, takes in the view.

She stands in front of the mirror, wearing a latex jumper with bell-bottoms. She's a couple decades late for the disco, but doesn't mean she still can't catch the Saturday Night Fever, especially with a Farrah Fawcett wig on her head.

Janet laughs, then catches herself. She just laughed! She's having fun. When was the last time this happened?

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

See, how about that?

She meets Cupcake's gaze. The laughter was only a temporary reprieve. Janet removes the wig.

JANET

I wouldn't be caught dead wearing this.

(beat)

You're right. I don't know why I came here.

Janet steps off the pedestal. Back to feeling defeated.

CUPCAKE

To find a new you.

JANET

What's wrong with me now?

CUPCAKE

You're hurt. This place can help.

JANET

Sure, an outfit can solve all my problems.

CUPCAKE

It's more than a store.

(beat)

When was the last time you were truly happy?

Janet reflects for a beat. She continues searching the rack.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

When that laugh wasn't just temporary?

She looks around, poised, focused, until her gaze catches that PERFECT OUTFIT.

She stands in front of the mirror, back in the clothes she wore to flee Chicago. Only with the final piece to complete the look: A BOA. She simply poses in front of the three-angled mirror.

Then the mirrors open, turning inward to reveal a hidden passageway. Janet takes a couple steps away from the mirror, petrified. Cupcake steps into the mirror and holds her hand out to Janet.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

C'mon.

JANET

What's on the other side?

CUPCAKE

Your new home. A safe place where folks can heal.

Cupcake moves close to an insecure Janet, adjusting her boa.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

You're a brave woman, you know?

Janet scoffs the thought with a smile.

CUPCAKE (CONT'D)

I'm serious. You know how many women would just wish they could walk right out that door?

JANET

Like you? What happened after we took that photo? I came by and you were gone.

SHERIFF TIBBLES (O.S.)

Yeah, what happened?

49

INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

49

Cupcake sips the last of her mimosa. Sheriff watches her.

CUPCAKE

Come again?

SHERIFF TIBBLES

We had study hall together,
remember? One day, you stopped
showing up to class.

Cupcake shakes the empty mug in her hand. Sheriff Tibbles
rolls his eyes and grabs the champagne bottle.

50

FLASHBACK - INT. YOUNG MAVIS' HOUSE - DAY

50

A POLAROID PICTURE pops out of the camera. Young Janet shakes
it around to the beat of the music. Young Mavis dances with
her. She hands the photo to him. He admires it.

BEAT. His smile vanishes. He turns ashen. He can see his dad
hanging in the BACKGROUND of the PHOTO.

YOUNG MAVIS

You better go home. My dad will be
here any minute.

Young Mavis walks his best friend to the back door.

YOUNG JANET

But we're not done cleaning.

YOUNG MAVIS

I'll finish up. I'll see you
tomorrow.

YOUNG JANET

Mmkay, but I'm keeping this.

Young Mavis closes the door, but not before Young Janet
snatches the PHOTO away from him. He watches her leave
through the glass panes on the door.

Behind Young Mavis, a TALL MAN, his FATHER, enters.

FATHER (O.S.)

What'd I tell you 'bout playing
dress-up, boy?

(beat)

C'm'here...

Young Mavis doesn't move. He may not see it, but he hears
Father UNDOING the BELT FROM HIS JEANS. The CLINKING SOUND of
METAL, the zip of LEATHER against denim, and its flapping
against each belt loop.

Father approaches Young Mavis, who keeps his gaze on Young
Janet, who's dancing out of his yard and back onto the
street.

51 **INT. THE BEACON - PARLOUR ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

51

Cupcake rolls up her sleeves and wipes away Janet's silent tears.

JANET

It wasn't that easy, you know.

CUPCAKE

Yes, I know.

There are SMALL SCARS in her skin. More like craters you might find on the moon, only on otherwise flawless skin.

JANET

I didn't come all this way to hide.

CUPCAKE

Neither do caterpillars, but they still find a spot and cocoon, so they can become butterflies.

Janet faces the mirror. Affirmed and ready for takeoff. Janet takes the first step, then another, and another. And like Alice, Janet steps through the three-angled looking glass.

52 **INT. THE BEACON - SPIRAL STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER**

52

CLOSE ON - MIRROR BALL

The Ball spins, slowly, illuminating the SPIRAL STAIRCASE below in a dazzle of swirling squares.

Janet looks up the staircase, her skin bedazzled in shards of light. Cupcake follows close behind her.

CUPCAKE

Go on, now.

Janet climbs the stairs, admiring FRAMED PHOTOS that hang on the wall. Each PHOTO holds a different INSPIRATIONAL WOMAN who dared defy the odds. From Tina Turner, the SUFFRAGATE MOVEMENT to the women behind the BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT.

If you look close enough, you might even see some familiar faces: like Rupaul and Ripley from "Alien" to name a few.

53 **INT. THE NEST - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS**

53

When she reaches the landing, the room opens up to a large open space with a theatre on the other side. She is unaware standing in the historic Vanity Ballroom.

NOTE: The Vanity was a famous Jazz club that was historically popular in the 20's to the 1940's. It's left in ruins to this day. That is, until Cupcake came in.

It's still in ruins, but with the scaffoldings and plastic lying around the floor, it's a work in progress.

Sweetie Todd stands in front of the landing to greet Janet. Behind her, the NESTERS, the other folks also in hiding. It's a small group, but they come from all genders and origins.

SWEETIE TODD

Welcome to the Nest!

Sweetie and the Nesters remain still, as if waiting for permission to make contact. When Janet moves towards them, they embrace their new sister.

Cupcake hangs behind her, stepping forward when Janet does...until her PHONE RINGS. She reaches into her bra and fishes it out.

The CALLER ID: RESTRICTED.

Cupcake looks up to catch Sweetie's gaze, who crosses her fingers for Cupcake. After a BEAT, Cupcake answers the phone.

54

EXT. DETROIT STREET - THE BEACON - NIGHT

54

Earl watches the Beacon's sign from across the street. He drinks a liquor from a brown-paper bag. Its neon colors casts a glowing hue through the snowfall.

Earl starts to cross the street, but stops in his tracks when his phone rings. He answer it without checking the Caller ID.

JOHNNY

I want you on the first flight
back. And pull another stunt like
that, you're off the team.

EARL

You're bluffing, Coach. I have a 4-
year contract with the Bears.

JOHNNY

Only binding if you're in good
standing. 8 a.m sharp, Carp.

Earl hangs up and YELLS before turning away from the Beacon.

55

INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

55

A Female Cop enters the room and stands behind Sheriff Tibbles.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

What is it?

FEMALE COP

We got footage of the show. She's free to go.

CUPCAKE

Told you I didn't do it.

Sheriff Tibbles exchanges a glance with Cupcake. He nods and the Female Cop lets her go.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

One last question, Cup. Why didn't you tell me about the shelter?

CUPCAKE

Lucky thought it best to be on a need-to-know emergency.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

It wasn't "need to know" before the Beacon fire?

CUPCAKE

We protect our girls, which means we keep the location a secret, especially from cops. Ta-ta, Tibbs.

The Female Cop is about to undo the handcuffs when...

SHERIFF TIBBLES

Actually...

CUPCAKE

Sir?

Huh?

FEMALE COP

SHERIFF TIBBLES

We may have the alleged person in custody, but I don't have the why.

CUPCAKE

But I didn't do it.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

You still owe me a story. That cigarette and mimosa weren't free.

With a nod of his head, the Female Cop escorts Cupcake out. Then...from down the hall...

SHERIFF TIBBLES (CONT'D)
We'll talk again soon, Cups. Bring out the alleged shooter.

56

INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELL - MOMENTS LATER

56

Female Cop and Cupcake drudge down the different holding cells. Each one is packed with Drunks, Ruffians, and Sex Workers.

She throws Cupcake into a cell that has three other women. One of them is dressed in something she said she would never be caught dead in. A certain ABBA cover band reject polyester suit. JANET.

Only now, her outfit is covered in blood. Her gaze, miles away.

FEMALE COP
Miss Carpenter. Gonna ask you to put out that cigarette.

JANET
It's Miss Weiss.

FEMALE COP
Divorce is still not finalized, Miss Carpenter.

JANET
Taking your sweet time with that death certificate, I see.

FEMALE COP
Remorse isn't a good look on you.

Janet shakes her head as she sits back down.

JANET
Those slacks aren't doing those hips any favors either, Officer.
(beat)
Did my lawyer show up?

FEMALE COP
Nope. Actually not here for you.

The Female Cop looks past Janet to someone in the back. Janet looks back to see who it is.

57

INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

57

CLOSE ON - SHERIFF TIBBLES

He inserts another TAPE into the QFX Tape Recorder. Troubled.

SHERIFF TIBBLES

The time is 4:26 a.m.. I am unable
it to interview this suspect.

We can't see them yet, but we hear their voice.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

I...we...did nothing wrong.

Across from him sits his wife, LUCKY STRIKES.

END OF ACT FIVE

END OF PILOT