

AMATEUR

"Pilot"

written by

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DRAFT ONE

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COLD OPENING

FADE IN:

INT. NAOMI'S BATHROOM - MORNING

NAOMI, early 30's, holds a smile in her mirror. It's starting to hurt. She relaxes her face so it is droopy and pained.

NAOMI (V.O.)
Fooled you. I'm not actually happy.
I'm just acting.

After a moment, she pushes out an even bigger smile.

INT. TRENDY COFFEE SHOP - LOS ANGELES, CA - MORNING

In her barista uniform, Naomi hands change and a fancy coffee drink to a customer. Her MANAGER leans over her should.

MANAGER
Don't forget to smile.

Naomi brightens her face into a million dollar smile.

NAOMI (V.O.)
Sure, I make a living slinging
overpriced coffee to gentrifying
yuppies...

EXT. BUS STOP - LOS ANGELES, CA - AFTERNOON

As Naomi waits for the bus, a HOMELESS MAN dances up to her.

HOMELESS MAN
Ey babycakes, can papa get a smile
from ya? Papa needs a smile real bad.

Trying her best, Naomi puts on a smile and back away from the man, quickly hopping on the bus as soon as it arrives.

NAOMI (V.O.)
...but every day I meet new characters
who inform my craft.

INT. BUS - AFTERNOON (MOVING)

Naomi rides the bus and reads a script next to an ELDERLY WOMAN, who sneers at her as she looks Naomi up and down.

ELDERLY WOMAN
You're not a mother, are you?

NAOMI

Not...currently.

ELDERY WOMAN

A bigger smile would change that.

The woman nods defiantly. Naomi cannot focus on her pages.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Material. For characters. For the stage. Theater. Life. But when you aren't working on your craft, you gotta keep smiling. Never know who you are going to run into that is going to book you a job for your smile.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

In a dimly lit back office, Naomi auditions for a commercial in front of a PRODUCER seated at a table and a DIRECTOR operating the camera.

NAOMI

...which is why I always choose to go with Veritas Systems, expert craftsmen in the art...of data recovery.

(beat)

Thank you.

Director and Producer exchange looks.

DIRECTOR

I think she's smiling too much. Looks fake, huh?

PRODUCER

Way too fake. Uh, babe, could you try it again, but not smile so much this time?

EXT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Storming out of the office, Naomi she kicks over a stand with free newspapers, picks up the rack, and throws it into oncoming traffic where it is demolished by a semi-truck.

NAOMI (V.O.)

It's okay. You're fine. Just...smile.

But she can't. The flood gates open. Naomi screams.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

EXT. TRAIN STATION - SAN DIEGO, CA - MORNING

With a duffle bag at her feet and a box in her arms, Naomi waits by the curb for her ride.

A busted up station wagon chugs up. Naomi peeks inside to see MORGAN, late 30's, M-to-F trans, in the driver's seat.

NAOMI

Thanks for coming to get me.

MORGAN

Welcome back to San Diego, babe.

Naomi tosses her stuff in Morgan's car and they speed off.

INT. MORGAN'S CAR - MORNING (MOVING)

Morgan and Naomi ride in silence.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Morgan's my ex-boyfriend. I still love her because she's the only one who will accept me for me. He was so handsome. Now she's sexier than me.

NAOMI

I'm a failure.

MORGAN

You're not.

NAOMI

I am...

MORGAN

You are too hard on yourself.

NAOMI

Then why couldn't I hack it in L.A.? Why am I back here now?

MORGAN

Universe will provide.

NAOMI

I'm a big, dumb failure. With big dumb dreams and nothing to show for it but my fat ass packing away food to ease the pain of watching my dream die.

MORGAN

I've always liked your ass.

NAOMI

Oh, sweet Jesus. No great actor has a good ass. Look at Meryl Streep.

MORGAN

Love Meryl.

NAOMI

The best.

MORGAN

Definitely.

NAOMI

Three Oscars!

MORGAN

Three?

NAOMI

But her ass...

MORGAN

What ass?

NAOMI

Exactly.

MORGAN

Are you sure? How can you have three Oscars and no ass?

NAOMI

Because...she did it. She made it.

Morgan can't argue with that.

MORGAN

Sounds like you need a burrito.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Goddamnit, she knows me so well.

NAOMI

Yes please.

MORGAN

Anything for my Meryl.

INT. EL ZARAPE TACO SHOP - DAY

Morgan delicately dips her chips in every single flavor of salsa before taking a little taste test nibble. Across the table, Naomi crams a burrito into her mouth and barely chews.

NAOMI

I mean, what's my problem? Be honest.

MORGAN

You never liked honesty.

NAOMI

Are you high? I love honesty.

MORGAN

But you were never honest on stage. At least the times I saw you.

Naomi sets down her burrito and pushes it to one side.

NAOMI

And what...does that mean?

MORGAN

You remember when we did Glengarry Glen Ross in high school?

NAOMI

Such a strange pick for high school.

MORGAN

Strange indeed. And do you remember your Ricky Roma monologue? About the train cars?

NAOMI

They all smell vaguely of shit.

MORGAN

You said it like the lines were meant to be said to an audience on stage that was filled with people who came to see you perform. There was no pathos. No complexity. No underlying agenda. Just a girl who knew she liked to be praised in front of a willing crowd of family and friends.

Naomi wipes her mouth with a napkin, casually wraps up her burrito, and heads towards the exit.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Oh, Jesus. Naomi!

Too late. Naomi has left the building.

EXT. EL ZARAPE TACO SHOP - DAY

Naomi power walks down the block. Morgan runs out of the taqueria and catches up to her.

NAOMI

I don't want to hear it.

MORGAN

Funny, because this is exactly what I'm talking about.

NAOMI

Y'know, sometimes I feel crazy telling people I'm an actor. Like, I'm trying to really convince them of a lie. But I'm not lying. I'm a good actor!

MORGAN

You're...fine.

NAOMI

A ringing endorsement. Thanks.

MORGAN

Technically, you are good.

NAOMI

Undergrad. Grad school.
Conservatories. Studio classes.

MORGAN

All great things for the mechanics,
but nothing for the soul. Live your
truth and speak that truth on stage.

Naomi stops in her tracks and turns to confront Morgan.

NAOMI

Where is all this coming from? You
haven't acted since high school!

MORGAN

As a matter of fact, I got cast in
Noises Off downtown and rehearsals
have been going beautifully.

NAOMI
Noises Off? Really? That's deep.

MORGAN
We're looking for a stage manager, if you are interested.

NAOMI
Thanks for the consolation prize.

MORGAN
The director said I'm a natural and that my acting has both range and nuance.

NAOMI
Morgan, I'm sorry, but you just don't get it. Acting is all about reacting.

A skinny BRO JOCK walks by on his way to El Zarape.

BRO JOCK
Nice faggy shoes, bitch.

MORGAN
Oh, like this?

Morgan removes one of her heels and calls to the Bro Jock.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Hey, Rapist In Training...

The Bro Jock spins around in time to get clocked upside the head by the shoe Morgan threw at his face.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Be. Nice.

Bro Jock, shaken and embarrassed, nods with understanding.

NAOMI
What did you just do?

MORGAN
Reacted honestly.

NAOMI
Does that stage manager job pay?

MORGAN
A stipend. Why? You broke?

NAOMI
In more ways than one.

MORGAN

I won't argue with that.

NAOMI (V.O.)

C'mon, Naomi. This is all part of the process. The struggle. The life of an actor. Use this.

INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

Naomi, seated in the audience next to ANSEL, the director, watches rehearsal. She boils as the CAST MEMBERS on stage over-analyze the script and second guess their blocking.

An OLDER ACTOR on stage tries to deliver his line in a funny fashion, but keeps stopping and starting.

OLDER ACTOR

Sardines! No. Wait. Let's try: sardines. Ansel, am I saying that right. Sar-deens? That doesn't sound like a real word.

ANSEL

You're saying that perfectly.

OLDER ACTOR

Thank you, dear friend. Lovely to be back in the theatre again with you.

ANSEL

You as well, you salty tart you.

BAD ACTOR

Why am I calling for sardines?

ANSEL

I'm not entirely sure. But it is in the script.

Naomi catches Morgan's attention in the wings and pantomimes hanging herself with rope. Morgan motions for her to knock it off. The Bad Actor finally notices the interaction.

OLDER ACTOR

I'm sorry. I cannot concentrate with all your mocking hand gestures and rigamarole.

ANSEL

Sorry, is there a problem?

NAOMI

Glad you asked, Ansel. There isn't a single problem here. There are multiple.

Naomi marches up on stage. Morgan runs out to stop her.

MORGAN

Naomi, no --

NAOMI

-- Naomi yes.
(to the Older Actor)
Stella would tear you to pieces.

OLDER ACTOR

Don't try to bring your Tinsel Town attitude up in her, honey. Stella was making me cry before you were even a gleam in your mother's eye. You might not recognize good acting when you see it, but me and the rest of the cast are quite experienced. Isn't that so, Ansel?

Ansel gulps and nods.

NAOMI

You get this is a comedy, right? That the stakes are high. Look at your body language. How can you hit your target if you are physically not going to put yourself out there? Take charge of the scene!

The Older Actor approaches Naomi with fire in his eyes. She stands her ground. Ansel meekly stands, trying to regain control of his rehearsal by clapping his hands.

ANSEL

Perhaps it's time for a break. What do you think?

NAOMI

Thinking?! This is not about thinking. This is about being present in the moment and listening to what your scene partner is giving you.

OLDER ACTOR

I could give you a slap up side the head. How would that be for a connection, honey?

NAOMI

That would at least be interesting.
All of you are making boring choices.
Except you, Morgan. You're great as
Poppy. Love your instincts so far.

MORGAN

Thanks. Mind getting off the stage?

NAOMI

To be honest, you and I are the only
ones worthy of being on the stage. The
rest of you suck!

ANSEL

No one sucks. We all bring something
to the table.

Naomi shakes her head in disagreement.

NAOMI

People don't come to see actors bring
something to the table. They come to
see the table destroyed. Demolished.
By a story that moves their hearts and
souls. You can't go on like this. Fire
everyone but Morgan and recast. This
is Spider Man musical level terrible.

Ansel's tongue tied.

OLDER ACTOR

Don't bother, Ansel. I quit.

He storms off stage.

NAOMI

Great. Now I can play your part.
Right, Ansel?

ANSEL

Well...

NAOMI

Thank you. I'm humbled. Who's ready to
burn the midnight oil getting off
book?

The other cast members throw their scripts down and walk off
stage in solidarity.

Morgan shakes her head. Naomi waves good-bye to the former
cast members leaving until all of them are gone.

ANSEL
What do we do now?

NAOMI
We do Tennessee. Anton. August.
Sophocles. The Bard. Theresa. Lin-
Manuel, maybe?

ANSEL
Who is Lin-Manuel?

NAOMI
If you have to ask, I can't help you.

Ansel slowly backs away. Morgan hangs her head in defeat.

NAOMI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Morgan, was right. It feels so good to
speak my truth.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. LAUGH LOUNGE - NIGHT

At a comedy club bar, after rehearsal, Morgan kicks back shots. Naomi swigs her beer. Both are a little drunk.

NAOMI

Hey, take it easy. You're supposed to be driving us home.

MORGAN

"Take it easy..." Funny coming from you. Little Miss Takes Nothing Easy.

On stage, an open mic is taking place, with a new comic jumping up: LUCY, early 20's, sharp and charming.

LUCY

Thank you so much! All five of you. None of whom are my friends or family that I invited and never show up.

NAOMI

They stunk. The whole cast. And that director reeked.

LUCY

Don't worry, though. We're going to have a fun time up here.

MORGAN

Ansel was trying to do his best. We all were. Except now there's no cast. No director. And probably no show!

LUCY

The idea of time being fun is strange. Words are strange. Language, especially English, very strange.

Naomi reaches out and places her hand on Morgan's.

NAOMI
It's better this way.

LUCY
For example, it's good to have a big
dick...

MORGAN
For who? Just you, huh?

NAOMI (V.O.)
Don't say it, Naomi.

NAOMI
I still love you. Y'know...

LUCY
...but it's bad to be a big dick.

Morgan retracts her hand.

NAOMI (V.O.)
Well, you said it.

MORGAN
And on that note...I'm getting an
Uber. The casita in the backyard
doesn't have a lock, but it has a
futon. Sleep well. I expect a full
apology in the morning.

Grabbing her stuff, Morgan leaves. Naomi tries to think fast
but can only call out to Morgan all the way down the bar:

NAOMI
Kidding! See! I'm...acting!

Lucy clears her throat into the microphone.

LUCY
Are you done, sweetheart, or do we
need to call your parents to come give
your needy ass some more attention?

Shaking her head, Naomi downs her drink and begins her stroll
up to the stage.

NAOMI
Oh ho ho! You're funny.

LUCY
It's why I'm on stage and you aren't.

The small CROWD chuckles.

NAOMI

I'm actor. I'm on stage all the time.

LUCY

You need to have someone stage an intervention for you.

Another laugh from the audience. Lucy addresses them:

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh look, you're finally awake.

NAOMI

Took you long enough to get there.

LUCY

I don't like to hit it and quit it, honey. Prefer to ride it out long and steady.

Naomi has now made it to the edge of the stage.

NAOMI

You...can't do what I do.

LUCY

But y'know what I can do?

Lucy kicks Naomi right in the face. Naomi falls back and blacks out.

EXT. LAUGH LOUNGE - NIGHT

Naomi wakes up with a cold water bottle on her face. She removes it to reveal a black eye swelling up. Her vision comes into focus: Lucy looking over her.

NAOMI (V.O.)

This is all part of the process. This is all part of the process. This is...? What is this?

Lucy, sitting on the curb outside the club, smokes a joint with Naomi's head in her lap.

NAOMI

What happened?

LUCY

We got eight-six'ed.

NAOMI

You kicked me!

LUCY

And then they kicked us out. Not the first time. Won't be the last. Want a hit?

Lucy offers Naomi the joint. She takes it.

NAOMI

Thanks.

LUCY

Least I can do.

NAOMI

Sorry for...whatever I did back there.

LUCY

Least you listened to part of my set.

(beat)

I'm Lucy. In case you didn't catch my intro.

NAOMI

Naomi. You're a comedian?

LUCY

Aspiring.

NAOMI

Meant what I said. You are funny.

Lucy rolls her eyes.

LUCY

Thanks. Means a lot. So...you're an actress according to your heckling?

NAOMI (V.O.)

Say yes. Just say yes. It's true. It's real. You are. You know it.

NAOMI

Aspiring.

LUCY

Aren't we all.

NAOMI

Was in L.A. I mean, I still am. I'm just down here. Taking a break back home. Trying to rejuvenate my senses and come back fresh for pilot season.

LUCY
I act sometimes.

NAOMI
You do?

LUCY
Sure. Films. Some web content.

Naomi sits up, back to life.

NAOMI
No joke? You're being serious?

Lucy takes the joint back and nods with a puff.

NAOMI (V.O.)
You have no shame. Ask.

NAOMI
Do you have an agent?

LUCY
Agent? Nah, I just work with a
director and a company who likes me.
Did an audition about a year ago. Been
getting steady work ever since then.

NAOMI
Do you...think...you could maybe set
up an audition for me?

Lucy laughs.

LUCY
With your face about to look like
diseased scrotum?!

Naomi gingerly touches her wounded face. Lucy calms down
realizing that it might not be the right time.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Y'know what, let me see what I can do.
Okay? The next one does involve a
female prison. You got the look.

NAOMI
Oh my god, really? Wow, thank you so
much. Oh my god. Thank you so much.
For setting that up. And kicking me in
the face. Very method.

LUCY
No problem.

INT. MORGAN'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Naomi, lapping up a bowl of colorful cereal, her eye a deep shade of purple, spills everything to Morgan over breakfast.

NAOMI

...and so now I have an audition!

MORGAN

For what?

NAOMI

For...a movie! Or something! I don't know, but she knows the producer and says once you get in with him, you are set for steady work. Oh, which reminds me, could you drive me there this afternoon?

Morgan rips off a piece of her toast, chewing and staring at Naomi incredulously.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Damnit. I know that look. It means I messed up.

MORGAN

You maybe want to say something to me?

NAOMI

Do you want an audition slot? I could call Lucy and see --

MORGAN

-- no, Naomi. I want...God, you should know this by now. I want an apology.

NAOMI

For what? We were drunk.

MORGAN

You said you still loved me.

NAOMI (V.O.)

I did, didn't I?

MORGAN

And that...brings up all sorts of issues that maybe we don't have time to get into before I go to work.

(MORE)

MORGAN (CONT'D)

But if you are going to be staying here and living with me while you begin to figure out this new chapter of your life, I need you to start by saying you are sorry for acting like you did last night.

Naomi sighs.

NAOMI

You're right. I'm sorry.

MORGAN

For what?

NAOMI

For getting drunk.

MORGAN

And?

NAOMI

Saying I still love you. Which, I do. But just as a friend now.

MORGAN

Plus...?

NAOMI

Hijacking your rehearsal where I turned into Lee Strausbitch and drove away the entire cast and director.

Morgan takes a long sip of coffee, letting Naomi stew in silence for a moment. Finally:

MORGAN

Apology...accepted. If...if you can replace the cast and find a new director for the show. And don't ask me for a ride to your audition. Figure it out yourself. Universe will provide.

And with that, Morgan leaves the breakfast table. Naomi pulls out her phone and tries to turn it on, only to get a message reading: "**SERVICE DISCONTINUED.**"

NAOMI (V.O.)

Okay Universe, so what would I do if I were on my way to an audition in L.A.?

INT. TRENDY COFFEE SHOP - SAN DIEGO, CA - DAY

The BARISTA attempts to read a name on a large cup of coffee.

BARISTA

Gnocchi?

Naomi rushes over to the counter to get her drink.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Get caffeinated.

NAOMI

That's probably me!

BARISTA

Great smile there, Gnocchi.

Naomi beams.

NAOMI

Oh, thank you!

The barista gives her a shaka hand sign.

BARISTA

Stay wet.

NAOMI

Thank...you.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Naomi slams back her coffee as the bus approaches. The doors open to reveal the DRIVER yelling at some PASSENGERS in back.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Call someone to pick me up.

DRIVER

Ya get off this goddamn bus right now
'fore I toss ya ass off like a salad!

NAOMI

Does this bus go to El Cajon?

DRIVER

Yep. Goes past the University, then
'bout s'mile from there.

Seeing this as a good cosmic sign, Naomi gets on the bus.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS (MOVING)

Naomi takes seat next to a MISSIONARY.

NAOMI (V.O.)

And find someone to run my lines
with...if I had a script, I guess.

He breathes deeply.

MISSIONARY

You have a terrific...smell.

Naomi changes seats to one that is as far away from the missionary as possible.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE - DAY

Naomi walks across the parking lot to a low-level warehouse in the middle of nowhere.

INT. INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She enters an the empty hallway, heads towards the sounds of YELPS, SLAPS, and MOANS. She reaches a door with the sign:

"LUDE PRODUCTION: DEEP CU_TS"

She opens the door and steps inside.

INT. LUDE PRODUCTIONS - FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Naomi enters the waiting room with a pleather couch, a dead house plant, another door, and a desk where EFRAT, 50's, Israeli, scrolls through her phone to alleviate her boredom.

NAOMI

Hello. Naomi Sherwin. Lucy sent me.

Efrat looks Naomi up and down.

EFRAT

Lucy send you?

NAOMI

Yeah. I'm an actress. Down from Los Angeles.

EFRAT

And you are here for...?

NAOMI

My general audition. With Ludwig Von Schlegel, I believe?

Behind the second closed door the VIOLENT NOISES increase in volume, but still are muffled and unintelligible.

Efrat nods, taking in all this information, and motioning towards the couch.

EFRAT

Have seat. I go get him.

Naomi pulls out her resume and headshot just as Efrat gets up from behind the desk to reveal she is not wearing any pants, just a bright red thong.

NAOMI

Brought my headshot and resume so --

Efrat opens the second door and barks something in Hebrew. Somewhere in the back, a MALE VOICE with a thick European accent shouts back. Efrat clicks her tongue a few times, mumbles to herself, and then slams the door behind her.

EFRAT

He be right with you.

NAOMI

Thanks. I like your costume.

Efrat hacks up a loogie and spits. Naomi hesitantly takes a seat. Something is off around here.

EFRAT

You do this before?

NAOMI

All the time.

(beat)

Where did you study?

In a frantic frenzy, the second door opens again and LUDWIG "LUDE" VON SCHLEGEL, late 40's but looks older, German gothic attire, enters the office. He sees Naomi, exchanges a few hushed words with Efrat, and then looks back to Naomi.

LUDE

Lucy sent you?

NAOMI

Yes. I'm Naomi. I'm here for the prison...film...audition...?

Lude snorts, swallows, then motions for Naomi to follow him back through the door. She timidly obeys.

INT. LUDE PRODUCTIONS - STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Trailing behind Lude, Naomi steps into the large cavernous space of a warehouse turned homemade production studio. They are walking closer and closer to a set where cameras, lights, and a small FILM CREW are prepping for the next scene.

LUDE

Would I have seen your work anywhere?

NAOMI

I'm not sure. I was a stand-in on Big Bang Theory a few seasons ago.

LUDE

Big bang? Really? That's impressive.

NAOMI

Well, y'know, work is work. Uh, I'm sorry, but can I just ask what kinds of stuff do you guys make here?

LUDE

Only best. Amateur, sure. But high quality always.

NAOMI

Because your sign out front said "deep cuts." What does that mean exactly?

LUDE

I've been meaning to replace that missing "N." But for now, let's have you jump into next scene and show us what you got.

Lude and Naomi reach the set, which is a crudely constructed prison cell. TONY, 30's, an actor, dressed in an orange jumpsuit costume, is bent over a cot on the set, pants down.

Behind Tony, dressed like a busty police officer with aviator sunglasses is Lucy, holding an absurdly big and phallic night stick. She removes her sunglasses.

LUCY

Hey! Naomi! Over here. It's Lucy.

Naomi freaks out and screams. This time, internally.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Wait is this a por...NOOOOOOOOOO -- !!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. LUDE PRODUCTIONS - SAME

Lude and the rest of his crew are finishing up some last minute lighting changes.

Tony meditates on the prison cot. Efrat plays with her phone on a chair near the set. Both remain sans-pants.

Naomi, now dressed the same costume as Lucy, stands on set as the WANDA, the make up girl, touches her up.

NAOMI

What did you get me into?

LUCY

You said you wanted an audition.

NAOMI

Yeah. For a movie.

LUCY

This is a movie.

NAOMI

This is porn.

WANDA

There is a plot to this thing.

NAOMI

Oh, I'm sure there is. And how much of that stuff do you need to cake onto me? Jesus.

Wanda pulls back.

WANDA

I can make you look good or you can go on looking like the trailer trash you are currently making yourself out to be. Your choice, high maintenance.

NAOMI

Continue.

Lude walks over to Naomi, handing her a script.

LUDE

Fun stuff here. In this scene, Naomi, you and Lucy be playing parole officer to Tony over there.

Tony, hearing his name, snaps out of his meditation and right into character.

TONY

I'll do anything to get free!

LUDE

Save it for when we roll. Now, you need to punish Tony -- who's name in the movie is Tushy -- real bad. Because he a bad boy. I give you direction as we go, yeah?

LUCY

Sounds good.

Lude gives two big thumbs up and walks back behind the camera. The crew members get into place.

NAOMI

What have you got me into? I don't want to do this. This isn't what I signed up for.

LUCY

Look, you're nervous. I get it. But don't let Efrat scare you because you're reading for her role.

Efrat looks up from her phone to lock eyes with Naomi. She blows a bubble of gum and distain. Naomi takes a deep breath.

LUDE

And...action!

ON CAMERA: Naomi looks down at her script while Lucy smacks Tony's bare ass with the baton.

TONY

I'm so bad! Swear I'll try to be good!

LUCY

The law is the law and you will bend over to its whim.

NAOMI

(reads)

Yes...you see, you've been punishing
yourself all this time...

Naomi looks up. Takes in her surroundings. The bright lights.
The shabby sets. Tony's ass cheeks exposed to the sweaty air.

All of it melts together, swirling into a hazy mist that
overwhelms Naomi.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Punishing yourself this whole time.
That's what it's been, hasn't it? You
don't know what you are doing. You're
drowning. But you don't ask for help
because you're too proud. Too selfish.
You wanted something so much that you
lost sight of who you were as a
person. And now you're here. They told
you go to school. Train. Do the fall
play. The spring musical. Internships.
Work hard. One day it'll pay off. And
you believed them. You still believe
them because you think at the end
there's some golden ticket. But really
there's no prize. There's nothing.
Just you. Here. In a prison of your
own making. And you're not supposed to
be here.

Lude snakes his head out from behind a monitor.

LUDE

What did you just say?

Naomi looks to Lucy, who is equally shocked. Glancing around
the set, Naomi notices all the crew staring at her in
disbelief.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Wait, did I say that out -- ?

LUDE

Say that again.

NAOMI

I'm...I'm not supposed to be here.

LUDE

Good, good. Very good. Now, try it
with a smile.

It's the straw that breaks her back. Naomi cannot hold it in any more and she starts to cry.

NAOMI

I'm not supposed to be here. I'm not supposed to be doing this. I had goals. And dreams! And ambitions! And I know that this is a moment that I can use in my craft, but I don't want to be in the moment. I want to be in the art!

Wanda, standing next to RONALD, the camera man, starts to get choked up. Ronald and the sound guy, CHET, both blink away their teary eyes.

RONALD

You crying, bro?

CHET

Nah, dude.

Turning to Lucy, Naomi notices watery make up running down her cheeks. Tony, curled into a ball, wails into his arms.

Efrat blows another bubble of gum, unaffected.

EFRAT

Very sad. Very moving.

She returns to her phone. Lude approaches Naomi.

LUDE

Beautiful. So raw. So real.

NAOMI

Thank you.

LUDE

Let's talk. Step into office.

Placing a hand on Naomi's back, he guides her off the set.

INT. LUDE PRODUCTIONS - FRONT OFFICE - DAY

Still in costume, Naomi sits on the couch with a tissue box in her hand. Lude joins her, holding Naomi's resume/headshot in one hand and extending a box of candy in the other. She takes one and pops it in her mouth.

LUDE

Candy always cheer me up.

NAOMI

Sorry for ruining your shot.

LUDE

Ruin my shot? That was amazing. Never seen anything like that before. What is your daily rate?

NAOMI

I'm not acting in your films.

LUDE

Not to act! For training.

NAOMI

What are you talking about?

Lude reads over her resume.

LUDE

This. Very impressive. You have a lot of skill. Lots of experience.

NAOMI

So what?

LUDE

Everyone here...we all had dreams of making it big. In one way or another. Maybe we aren't top of Hollywood food chain or nothing, but we have this. That being said, I know this can be better. Lucy is funny, but her acting is so not great. Tony neither. The crew are all uninspired. Myself included. Then...you show up today...

NAOMI

I'm sorry. I don't follow.

LUDE

Teach my actors how to act. Show me how to direct. I have a film in my mind. Adaptation of Shakespeare. But it needs the right finesse. It needs experience. Hands on. You could show us how it is done.

NAOMI

Y'know, I wish I could, but --

LUDE

We pay you a grand a week.

Naomi perks up.

NAOMI
Don't have to ask me twice.

LUDE
So...when do we start?

A light bulb clicks on for Naomi.

NAOMI (V.O.)
She's going to kill you for this.

NAOMI
Lude, are you familiar with the play
Noises Off?

Lude takes a moment to think about it. Hard.

INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

Ansel and Morgan wait on the stage for rehearsal to begin.

ANSEL
Maybe a few will come back.

MORGAN
Maybe. I mean, look at us. We're here.

ANSEL
I felt bad about yesterday. How things
went down.

MORGAN
You don't need to feel bad, Ansel.
It's Naomi's fault. She has to fix it.

ANSEL
A lot of the cast members I see at
church. They're very forgiving. I'm
hoping they'll reconsider.

MORGAN
Doubtful.

ANSEL
Yeah. They all say I'm weak. And it's
true. I am.

MORGAN
Don't say that. You're the director.
You must have confidence, even if you
need to fake it. Nobody pushes you
around, okay?

Ansel let's this sink in.

ANSEL

You're right. I won't let anyone push me around.

From the back of the house, the doors fling open. Morgan and Ansel exchange hopeful looks.

Naomi enters, followed by Lude, Lucy, Efrat, Tony, Wanda, Chet, and Ronald. Everyone bustles with excitement.

MORGAN

What is this?

NAOMI

Your new cast and crew!

MORGAN

This is incredible.

NAOMI

Owe it all Ansel right here.

ANSEL

Me?!

NAOMI

You said everyone needs a chance to learn and we're going to give Lude Productions a chance to shine as thespians!

ANSEL

Wow! That's amazing. Hi everyone! I'm Ansel, your director.

NAOMI

Correction: you're Ansel, our stage manager. I'm the director, both on and off stage. And this is my apprentice, Ludwig Von Schlegel. Now, go out and get us some water for the cast and some beers for the directors.

Ansel, now defeated, slinks out of the theater.

LUDE

Beers! Water! What kind of craziness will happen next?

The Lude Productions team jumps up on the stage, getting acquainted with their new digs.

Morgan struts over to Lucy, offering her hand.

MORGAN

You're that comedian that kicked my ex-girlfriend in the face.

LUCY

The one and only.

MORGAN

Let me know how I can thank you later.

Morgan winks. Lucy blushes.

Naomi snaps her fingers in an attempt to get everyone's attention.

NAOMI

Everyone! Excuse me! Over here!

Lude whistles, but it does not work. Efrat stomps her foot and orders everyone at the top of her lungs to shut up in Hebrew. This is not the first time this has happened and the new cast and crew immediately go quiet.

EFRAT

They all yours.

NAOMI

Okay, people. This is it. We've got four weeks to mount a show. Sure, it's in a terrible community theater space. You won't get paid. You might not even get a decent audience. And you certainly won't get an Obie. But by god, you'll get an ass kicking in what it means to be an actor.

Naomi waits, expecting an applause. After a brief silence, Lude starts to a slow clap. His crew picks up on it, joining in. Then Lucy. And much to her chagrin, Morgan does too.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

This is it. This...is the theatre!

Naomi soaks in her moment, genuinely smiling for the first time in a long time. She might be on her way to some sort of happiness.

NAOMI (V.O.)

And...scene.

END OF PILOT