

SEA OAK

Based on the short story by George Saunders

Pilot

Written by
George Saunders

Draft of October 28, 2016
"SeaOakPILOT"

INT. CHURCH CONFSSIONAL - DAY

AUNT BERNIE (mid-fifties, tight perm: a prim, timid-looking woman) kneels on one side of the divider, opposite FATHER BRIAN, a young priest.

FATHER BRIAN
Unkind thoughts about...?

BERNIE
My nieces. Like they should get jobs. Like...lazy. Like...spoiled.

FATHER BRIAN
Well, people...do. Get jobs.

BERNIE
I wouldn't want to hurt their feelings.

FATHER BRIAN
Do they ever hurt *your* feelings, Bernie? By, for example, not working? When you, at your age, are still working?

This sinks in.

BERNIE
I don't - I can't. I got a lot of that as a kid. A lot of... correction. Yelling. Smacks. I just want things to be nice.

FATHER BRIAN
Are they? Are things nice?

SILENCE.

BERNIE
Very nice.
(beat)
I have a very nice life.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

BERNIE gingerly makes her way back down the aisle of the empty, old church. Tired and weak. In her face, a hint of a former beauty untended over many years of work and loneliness.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A snowy day on the wrong side of town. The gray church looks like a relic from another century, dropped down between a shuttered oil-change shop and an abandoned car lot.

JADE and MIN wait in an old K-Car. They are both pretty enough, but...trashy: mismatched sweatsuits, too much makeup. Babies (TROY and MAC) sleep in car seats in the back.

MIN
 (reading from a GED study
 guide)
 OK, chick: "What is Biafra."

JADE
 That is a type of juice.

MIN
 That is not a type of juice.

JADE
 Then that is a planet. With them
 rings on it.

BERNIE comes out of the church and starts mincing down a long flight of icy stairs...

MIN
 "Two friends travel in trains
 approaching one another at a rate
 of sixty-five miles per hour."

JADE
 On the same track?

Bernie goes DOWN - painfully. Gropes blindly for her veil, which has come off in the fall.

JADE (CONT'D)
 Should have gone on different
 tracks. Train-dude fucked up.

Bernie struggles to her feet. Manages a weak wave...which the girls don't see. FATHER BRIAN hustles out of the church, rushes down the steps to BERNIE.

JADE (CONT'D)
 (puzzled)
 How many sides has a triangle?

MIN
 Wait.

She hears something: FATHER BRIAN shouting.

JADE
Oh, shit, Bernie!

INT. "POSERS" -- DAY.

We PAN IN through a a tawdry viewing area, with three (empty) rows of bleachers, to find:

COLE, sitting cross-legged, in a loincloth, talking on his cell, inside a life-sized Egyptian-themed DIORAMA: a water well, a wooden cart loaded with fake stones being "pulled" by a fake donkey, a stuffed coyote looking askance at the fake donkey. In a backdrop painting, a long line of SLAVES carry stones toward the Great Pyramid.

COLE is rugged, warm-looking: an incredibly handsome young guy. He should be off at college somewhere, breaking hearts.

COLE
Well, why didn't you take her to the clinic?

MIN (O.S.)
She said she's fine.

BERNIE (O.S.)
I'm fine!

COLE
I'm coming home.

EXT. OMNICLINIC FACILITY - DAY

COLE and BERNIE stand shivering before an ATM-like screen. Just beyond a set of glass doors is a clinic: doctors and nurses move efficiently around inside. COLE tries the (locked) door. This attempt triggers:

CLINIC MACHINE
Welcome to OmniCare! Where healing you, is what we do. Please speak or say the name of your affliction.

COLE
Uh, hi...she fell down some steps. Seems to have hurt her--

BERNIE
I'm fine though.

COLE
Bern, don't talk when I talk.

CLINIC MACHINE
I think you said: Can't talk. Is that correct?

BERNIE
(to the machine)
No, I can *talk*. My nephew here's taking it way too serious.

CLINIC MACHINE
I'm sorry, I didn't understand that.

COLE
Bern, wait.
(to MACHINE):
FOOT.

AUNT BERNIE
It ain't broke. For sure it ain't--

COLE
FOOT!

CLINIC MACHINE
I think you said: FOOT. Is this correct?

COLE
YES.

CLINIC MACHINE
Please speak or say the name of your insurance company.

COLE
We don't...NONE.

AUNT BERNIE
I used to have it but I got bumped down. To part-time.

COLE gives BERNIE a look.

CLINIC MACHINE
I'm sorry, I didn't understand that.

COLE
None.

CLINIC MACHINE
I think you said: NONE. Is this correct?

AUNT BERNIE
(to machine)
It don't hurt as much as it did. I just fell down a couple of steps is all.

CLINIC MACHINE
Please wait.

BERNIE waits, reprimanded.

CLINIC MACHINE (CONT'D)
The estimated minimum medical cost for UNKNOWN INJURY, FOOT, is two thousand, five hundred dollars. Please state the amount you have available for the requested service of UNKNOWN INJURY, FOOT.

COLE
None.

BERNIE
There's only the two of us working, so--

CLINIC MACHINE
Please wait.

Bernie waits...but can't restrain herself...

BERNIE
Six people in one house and only two working. I mean, two of the people are babies. But still--

CLINIC MACHINE
At this time, your amount available for service, NONE, is LESS THAN your estimated minimal medical cost. Please return again when your amount available is GREATER THAN your estimated minimal medical cost. We appreciate the opportunity of serving you. At OmniClinic, healing you, is what we do.

COLE stands there, stumped.

AUNT BERNIE

Let's go home. I'll soak it.

CLINIC MACHINE

Welcome to OmniClinic, where healing you is what we do. Please speak or say the name of your affliction.

COLE

(exasperated)

God.

CLINIC MACHINE

I'm sorry, I didn't understand that.

EXT. DOLLAR BIN - DAY

COLE pulls into the parking lot of DOLLAR BIN, a square little contemporary building (cheap, new, charmless) that sits between two vacant lots, like it's waiting for the rest of its strip mall to show up.

COLE

I don't see why you can't just call them.

AUNT BERNIE

We don't do it that way. That would be disrespectful, maybe. Mr Krupp might think that. He's tough. Tough, but very good. This is my *job*, Cole. I have to take it serious.

COLE

Let me help you in, at least.

AUNT BERNIE

No. That might look weird. The customers might not like it.

COLE looks around. The parking lot is completely empty.

AUNT BERNIE (CONT'D)

Just wait.

(beat)

If you don't mind.

(beat)

Dear.

As COLE watches uncomfortably, she gets out, hobbles up to the door, works hard to get it open, disappears inside.

INT. DOLLAR BIN - DAY

BERNIE (in pain) sits on a plastic chair outside an open office door. Nearby sits CONNIE, a young girl in the DOLLAR BIN uniform, on her phone.

CONNIE

(on PHONE)

It's not twins, it's just huge.

And when it kicks, I--

(beat)

I know! I never thought I even wanted any of this. But now I'm like: I wasn't *anybody* before.

(beat)

Exactly! Like this is why I was *put* here. So corny!

CONNIE glances over, BERNIE gives her a smile, but CONNIE does that vacant on-the-phone thing - her eyes just pass over BERNIE.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

(on PHONE)

Oh, he's *the best*. Rubs my feet at night, the whole--

MR KRUPP

(from OFFICE)

Connie.

CONNIE

(on PHONE)

Gotta go.

CONNIE gets up, goes into the OFFICE.

During what follows, we stay ON BERNIE:

MR KRUPP

(O.S., from inside OFFICE)

Have a seat, kid. So, we're going to be doing some shuffling around. I'm taking Betty-

CONNIE

(O.S., ditto)

Who's Betty? We don't have a Betty.

MR KRUPP

(O.S.)

The old - the ah...you know, like:

And it seems that here he might be doing an impression of BERNIE...

CONNIE

(O.S.)

Bernie. But, uh, she's--

(And here she means: She's sitting right outside...)

STILL on BERNIE: Who is taking all of this in, uncomfortably.

MR KRUPP

(O.S.)

Bernie, right. So I'm transitioning *Bernie* off Cashier and down to Greeter. What we want in terms of Cashier is a certain pep, zest. So you're a Cashier now.

A happy SQUEAL from CONNIE.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOLLAR BIN - DAY

BERNIE comes hobbling back out. COLE gets out, runs around, opens her door.

COLE

How'd it go?

AUNT BERNIE

Fine. Very good.

(beat)

I think you were right though.

I'll just...I'll call it in.

Let's go home.

INT. CAR - DAY

COLE drives BERNIE home, through a rough neighborhood.

COLE

Bern. Did you ever want...more?

She seems to be giving this some thought.

AUNT BERNIE

I don't know what you mean.

COLE

Well, I mean, you've had a nice life and all-

AUNT BERNIE

Yes. Yes, I have.

COLE

But, then again. You didn't get married. Or have kids--

AUNT BERNIE

I see it as you kids are my kids.

COLE

Right, but we're not really...I guess I just mean--

AUNT BERNIE

You know what I do if something bad happens? Don't think about it. Don't take it so serious. It ain't the end of the world. That's what I do. That's what I always done. That's how I got where I am.

On COLE, as he decides not to say what he'd like to say: Yeah, but where are you? All these years of living and nothing to show for it.

AUNT BERNIE (CONT'D)

I'll tell you a secret, Cole: you always been my favorite. You know why? You never complain. Whatever life gives you, you just take it. That is a very good quality.

COLE isn't sure what he thinks of this compliment.

EXT. SEA OAK COMPLEX - DAY

COLE helps BERNIE up the sidewalk in a rough-looking apartment complex: faded white boxes that were new twenty years ago.

INT. SEA OAK APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

In their minimally furnished apartment, the family sits watching TV, eating dinner. Bernie's in her rocking chair, foot elevated.

COLE

I'm just saying, if a person falls down a flight of stairs and can't walk--

JADE

She said she was fine.

COLE

So maybe you decide. Is she fine? Does her foot look fine to you?

BERNIE can't stand the tension.

BERNIE

So, what's this? What we're eating?

MIN

Stars-n-Flags.

BERNIE

Pretty.

On a forkful: misshapen but vaguely flag-shaped pasta chunks, each blotted with red-white-and-blue splotches.

COLE

(reading from the can)
Sugar. Fructose. Corn syrup.
Dextrose...

JADE

Addictive.

MIN

I had like five bowls already.

JADE

Them brown streaks in the flags?
Caffeine.

COLE

Someone could cook.

JADE

Dude, you cook. We've been babysitting.

COLE
Babysitting your own--

MIN
You've just been sitting on your
ass all day. Looking pretty.

JADE
Wow, check this out.

ON TV: A SLAUGHTERHOUSE SPOKESMAN in white lab coat is being interviewed by a pretty young reporter, ANGELA SILVERI.

JADE (CONT'D)
Is that...

MIN
Oh my God! Angela.

ON TV: a group of SQUEAMISH SCHOOLKIDS being led through the slaughterhouse.

ANGELA SILVERI
(on TV)
Local Nebraska Beef employee Phil Alvern has pioneered an approach to animal education for area school children learning about animals and how they eventually become our food.

A WORKER tosses a chunk of meat towards a conveyor belt, narrowly missing a KID.

MIN
She looks good.

JADE
She does.

ANGELA SILVERI
(on TV)
These lucky learners get to see the ying and the yang, bringing home a rich picture of even the simplest meal!

JADE
(to COLE)
You oughta hit that.

MIN
Look how hot you are. Who wouldn't want you?

BERNIE

She was nice. What happened with her?

COLE doesn't want to go there.

COLE

I don't know. Can't remember.

JADE

"Can't remember." Dude cried for a month.

MIN seems to hear something, MUTES the TV...

MIN

Uh oh.

Then they all hear it: distant GUNSHOTS. Well, not THAT distant. They know the drill: The gather up the babies, get down on the floor.

The SHOTS come closer, closer...one seems to hit something just OUTSIDE.

JADE

Yikes.

BERNIE

Our Father, who art in Heaven,
hallowed be thy--

SHOUTS, FOOTSTEPS racing past...then SILENCE.

They give it a few seconds...

AUNT BERNIE

Done? Done, I think.

...then rise cautiously into sitting positions.

MAN

Man, fuck this crap.

JADE

Freak this crap, you mean. You want the babies growing up with shit-mouths like us. Crap-mouths, I mean.

MIN

I just want them growing up,
period.

JADE
Boo-hoo, Miss Dramatic.

MIN
Fuck off, Miss Ho.

AUNT BERNIE
Girls, for crying out loud! We should be thankful. At least none of them bullets hit anybody.

MIN
In here.

BERNIE
Nobody in here, that's right.

MIN steps cautiously out.

MIN
Ah, great. Look at this shit.

She hauls in one of the babies' walker, which has - or used to have - a DUCK HEAD on it. But the DUCK HEAD's been shattered by a stray round.

MIN (CONT'D)
Actually, you know what? I think that looks even more like a real duck now. Because sometimes their beaks are cracked? I seen one like that downtown.

MIN (CONT'D)
Oh my God. The kid's duck gets shot in the face and she says we're lucky.

AUNT BERNIE
Well, we are lucky.

JADE
Somebody's beak is cracked.

AUNT BERNIE
I mean, complain if you want, but I think we're doing pretty darn good for ourselves.

JADE
Man, what an optometrist.

INT. SEA OAK APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- NEXT MORNING

The early-morning rusharound: babies in highchairs, JADE and MIN getting the babies fed, Bernie's in her rocker and the TV blaring. COLE comes out: dressed up: shirt and tie.

JADE
Hey, nice!

MIN
Ooh, good luck.

JADE
Go for it. You are so smart.
Everyone likes you.

MIN
You'll totally get it.

JADE
Bern, we're going to the mall.
You wanna come?

BERNIE
I'm just going to sit here and
enjoy my sick day.

JADE
Don't answer the door.

MIN
Too many freaks around here.

COLE
If work calls, I'm at the dentist.
I'll be in late.

BERNIE
At the dentist. Be in late.

MIN
Here's the phone, here's the
remote.

BERNIE
What a treat. Whole day to
myself.

JADE pulls COLE aside.

JADE
I really hope you get it. You
deserve it.

INT. COMMCORP - DAY

A gleaming hi-tech office. MR BENT, conducting the interview, is a few years younger than COLE. And better dressed. And more at-ease.

MR BENT

And so, superficially at least, your value-aspect would be to speed the throughflow of our major cost-center opportunity modules, as these assume viability in Rechenstein supply environments.

COLE

O.K.

MR BENT

Father Brian spoke highly of you. So let's see what we've got...

MR BENT scans COLE's resume. Winces.

COLE

I know it's kind of...weird.

MR BENT

No, no. You're working, right? That's a positive. And you've been there for...

COLE

Three years.

MR BENT

Wow.

COLE

I appreciate your time.

MR BENT

Cole. Don't give up. This country rewards a fighter. Eventually. But also - you might take that off your resume.

COLE

But...wouldn't it look like I hadn't been doing anything the last three years?

This statement sort of *hangs* there...

MR BENT

Better to just...I'd take it off.

INT. "POSERS" - DAY

We TRACK down a long hallway, past a series of open doors. In each: a young man or woman behind a glass window, in some sort of diorama, in a state of "sexy" undress. But things seem pretty slow:

In a 1940s vignette, in a faux NYC apartment, a girl in period lingerie sprawls on a couch, checking her phone; in an African Safari vignette, a strapping shirtless Safari Guide meditates in front of his tent; a pair of hot futuristic twins in skimpy space costumes play cards at the controls of a low-rent "starship."

COLE, at least, has some company: three tiny older EUROPEAN WOMEN cluster around him, happily taking selfies with him.

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #1 speaks to COLE in some complex Russian-sounding dialect.

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #2

She is say: she thinks you are very appeal.

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #3

She wish her view to be all. So send to friend back home.

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #2

She want she take selfie, down below.

They lower their eyes suggestively to COLE's loincloth.

COLE

We aren't allowed to do that. Legally.

The LADIES confer heatedly in their strange language. As COLE waits. LADY #2 pulls out a hundred-dollar bill.

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #2

One photo, her face, down below.

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #3

For joke only.

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #2

You take off little towel, show total, by her face.

COLE
I'm sorry. I can't.

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #3
You disappoint our trip so much!

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #2
Why harm? You have, it hang, we
snap, no badness.

EASTERN EUROPEAN LADY #3
In our land, men fight to let such
a lady put her face so close to
what they have hanging.

A CELL-PHONE rings from inside the cart of pyramid stones.

COLE
Will you excuse me?

MIN (O.S.)
(shouting on phone)
Get home! Get home right now!

COLE
Min? Calm down, tell me what--

MIN (O.S.)
GET THE FUCK HOME!

INT. "POSERS" HALLWAY - DAY

As COLE rushes past, he sees the Safari Guide showing it all
to the EUROPEAN LADIES.

INT. SEA OAK - DUSK

COLE enters to find that the place trashed - drawers emptied,
tables overturned. BERNIE sits motionless in her rocking
chair, BABIES at her feet, pawing at her legs.

MIN
Get the babies! I don't want them
touching something dead!

JADE
Don't call her something dead,
man!

MIN
We came home and she was like
this.

JADE
 (to COLE)
 I think she's in a comma.

COLE goes over, checks for a pulse.

COLE
 Guys. She's not...she's not.

MIN
 WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

JADE
 WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU MEAN!

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT - STORM

COLE and two PARAMEDICS stand on the sidewalk. BERNIE's body lies under a sheet on a gurney. The wind whips the sheet around, a slanting rain drenches it.

PARAMEDIC #1
 (to COLE)
 Not a mark on her.

PARAMEDIC #2
 I suspect she died of fright? Fear
 of the intruder.

PARAMEDIC #1
 My guess is yes.

PARAMEDIC #2
 Although that broken foot throws
 me.

COLE
 It was like that. She fell down
 some stairs. Yesterday.

PARAMEDIC #1
 Lord. That's a bad day.

PARAMEDIC #2
 Poor dear.

COLE reaches under the sheet, takes one of BERNIE's hands.

COLE
 (whispers)
 Sorry. Sorry I wasn't here when
 it happened.
 (MORE)

COLE (CONT'D)

Sorry you never had any fun in your life. Sorry I couldn't get you out of here. All your life you worked hard. Never hurt anybody. Sorry.

The paramedics wheel BERNIE away, over the broken, uneven, sidewalk.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

JADE, MIN, BABIES, and COLE and MA (mother of COLE and MIN, aunt of JADE) are greeted by MR LOBTON, a mournful, muscular guy with a weird tic of involuntarily flexing and unflexing his right bicep.

LOBTON

Such a sad thing.

MA

She was my sister. The most beautiful-

His bicep flexes. They notice. It's a pretty big bicep. Embarrassed, he scowls at his own bicep for its unprofessionalism.

LOBTON

Sorry. It just does that.

INT. FUNERAL HOME, DISPLAY AREA - DAY

A row of open coffins -- plus a Stairmaster, which Lobton has made an effort to hide under a black cloth.

JADE

O.K. So how much? I mean, like for basic. Not superfancy.

MIN

But not crappy either. Our aunt was so sweet.

LOBTON

I'm guessing you're over here, in our "Dignity Value" section.

He leads them to a coffin that is basically a cardboard moving box.

LOBTON (CONT'D)
 This is "Sierra Sunset." Prior to
 usage we'll moisture-proof this
 with a spray lacquer. Makes it
 look quite woodlike.

JADE
 That's all we can get? Cardboard?

LOBTON
 Not exactly cardboard. More of a
 fiberboard. My uncle was buried
 in this.

MIN
 Not this exact one.

She's joking but Lobton misses it.

LOBTON
 Whole different one.

His bicep FLEXES.

JADE
 I don't know. Seems pretty gypsy.
 No offense.

FLEX.

LOBTON
 Maybe we consider something
 more...upscale.

He leads them to a slightly nicer coffin.

LOBTON (CONT'D)
 This would be "Amber Mist." More
 of a double-thick balsa, two coats
 of lacquer. I'll throw in a two-
 hour wake. And if you pay it off
 over seven years...

MA
 Can we think about it?

LOBTON
 Absolutely. Last time I checked
 this was still America.

He realizes how this sounds.

LOBTON (CONT'D)
 In a good way.

LOBTON exits, the family takes a closer look at the coffin.

COLE

Doesn't matter, right? She knows we loved her. It's just...a money thing.

MA

It goes right in the ground and we never see it again. So who cares?

MIN

Ma, come on. What is that "Sunset" shit? Look at this. Fold Tab A into Slot B?

JADE

No freaking way. Work your whole life and end up in a Mayflower box? I doubt it.

MIN

I frigging doubt it.

JADE

We gotta get her the good one. She never had anything nice in her life.

MA

But seven years, jeez.

MIN

Let's do something freaking right for once.

EXT. CEMETERY, BERNIE'S GRAVE - DAY

The "Amber Mist" rests at the edge of an open grave.

FATHER BRIAN stands before a (pitifully small) crowd.

FATHER BRIAN

At this time, if any family members or friends would like to share any special memories of Bernadette...

An awkward silence.

MR KRUPP

I was Bernie's boss at DollarBin. One thing I really admired about her was, she never stole. To my knowledge. So many of these people, you know, they feel like, the big faceless corporation owes me, I'll just take whatever. But not Bernie. That I know of.

From somewhere nearby, a jarring HEAVY MACHINERY NOISE. A new grave being dug? It's really loud.

A pretty young Hispanic woman speaks up, needing to shout to be heard.

ROSIE

So...I worked with Bern. She was always so nice. This one time, I had a headache. And she gave me some Tylenol. I mean, we work at DollarBin, they've got all these mini-packs of Tylenol around. Except they don't like you using stuff unless you pay.

MR KRUPP

(also almost shouting)

Which is reasonable. I mean, it *is* a business.

The MACHINE stops.

Birdsounds.

MR KRUPP (CONT'D)

Dollar here, dollar there, pretty soon, place closes, nobody's working.

ROSIE

Anyway she totally helped me out that time.

Awkward silence. The MACHINE fires up again.

MA elbows FREDDIE (her boyfriend).

FREDDIE

(shouting)

To me, who, I am not actually part of the family, being as how I am just living with the sister here, I didn't know Bernie long but she was--

The machine goes QUIET. Freddie brings his voice down.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

She was a awful nice lady and left behind a lot of love. While it's maybe true she didn't do much in her life - no husband, no kids, big accomplishments, no awards or what-not - still she was very dear to those of us that knew her and never made a stink about nothing but was always content with whatever happened to her etc etc. Basically just a nice lady who took a lot of crud in her life and never pissed and moaned about it, which, although that's not the way I personally handle it when someone gives me crud, still I could relate to it.

FATHER BRIAN looks around: anybody else?

More SILENCE. Then, finally...

MIN

I remember Bern from...forever. She was always just *there*. Always just *happy*, you know. No big opinions. Whatever happened was cool. Which...which made it nice. You didn't have to even think about her.

FREDDIE signals COLE: Go for it.

COLE

Uh, well, Bernie was a person who...I think it would be hard to see her life as sad, exactly.

He pauses, trying to think of how to push this lie uphill, so to speak.

COLE (CONT'D)

I think she felt like the three of us were her kids. So, although it might seem like her life was lonely, and for sure the way it ended was -- I mean, she was a private person, so trusting, and if she could have known that somebody would - I mean, you're sitting there, a nice old lady, and somebody breaks in and you're so scared your heart stops? It just...

JADE

It sucks so bad!

COLE

But it doesn't change the fact that -- she was loved.

MIN

For sure.

COLE

And we're going to find whoever did this, and make them pay, no matter how long it--

This is not what he intended - announcing a vendetta at a funeral.

FATHER BRIAN

Let us pray: Lord, we are thankful for the gift of Bernadette. Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

MIN, JADE, MA, and COLE lean into one another, losing it.

JADE

She's in heaven now. So weird, you know? Bernie in heaven. Wow. She's not here. But she's *somewhere*.

MA puts a finger over Jade's lips, hushing her.

EXT. CEMETERY, HILLSIDE - DAY.

The family, leaving the graveyard, stumbles awkwardly down a hillside, out of control in their (rarely worn) dress shoes.

JADE

We gotta come out here like every week.

MIN

I know I will.

JADE

What, like I won't? She was so freaking nice.

MIN

I'm sure you swear at a grave.

JADE

Since when is freak a swear, chick? Plus we're not at the grave.

MA

Girls.

They've reached the bottom, out of breath, and look back up.

MIN

Bye, Bern.

The HEAVY MACHINE kicks in again. Then a SECOND, and a THIRD: a chorus of machine-rage, as if they're grieving what they are helping to bury.

INT. TRABANTI'S RESTAURANT - DAY.

A faded neighborhood restaurant that this family considers elegant -- 1970s decor, greasy walls. They're apparently already a few drinks into their mourning.

FREDDIE

(raising his glass)

To Bernie. A excellent lady.

JADE

Remember how she always called lunch dinner and dinner supper?

MIN

Remember how when her jaw clicked she'd say she needed oil?

JADE

We were here last week. She was sitting right there.

At a nearby table, another LITTLE OLD LADY sits. Noticing their attention, she smiles sweetly. The WAITER, a smiling Vietnamese man, comes over.

MIN

I'd like to kill that fuck that killed her.

MA

How about we don't say fuck at lunch?

MIN

It's just a word, Ma, right? Like pluck is a word? You don't mind if I say pluck? Pluck pluck pluck?

FREDDIE

Well, shit's just a word too. But we don't say it at lunch.

The WAITER clears his throat.

MA

Same with puke.

MIN

Shit puke, shit puke.

The WAITER goes away.

The SWEET OLD LADY scowls at them.

MA

I love you girls' manners.

FREDDIE

Especially at a funeral.

MIN

This ain't a funeral.

FREDDIE

The question in my mind is what are you kids gonna do now?

(MORE)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Because I consider this whole thing a wake-up call, meaning it's time for you to pull yourselves up by the bootstraps like I done and get out of that dangerous craphole you're living at.

COLE

Says Mr Phone Poll.

FREDDIE

Phone polls is honorable work.

JADE

Anyways it ain't that dangerous.

FREDDIE

A lady gets killed and it ain't that dangerous?

MIN

All's we need is a deadbolt and a eyehole.

JADE

What's a bootstrap?

MIN

It's like a strap on a boot, you doof.

MA

What Freddie's saying is it's time for you girls to get jobs. Maybe one could work, one could baby-sit?

MIN

I don't see why I should have to work so she can stay home with her baby.

JADE

And I don't see why I should have to work so she can stay home with her baby.

MIN

It's like a freaking veece versa.

JADE

Maybe we could come stay with you guys.

FREDDIE

I personally would love that and you know that, but who would not love that is our landlord. He didn't even like it back when I had my bird.

(beat)

Cole. You ok with this? Getting walked over by the lazy twins here?

COLE

They work. They work hard.

MIN

Thank you.

But COLE is distracted: ANGELA SILVERI, the TV newscaster from earlier, is at a nearby table with an attractive DATE. COLE's been thinking about this moment for years but this -- post-funeral, with MIN, FREDDIE, JADE, MA along - is not what he had in mind.

FREDDIE

Let me tell you kids something. Something about this country. Anybody can do anything. But first they gotta try. And you guys ain't. Two don't work and one strips naked? I do not consider that trying. You kids make squat. And therefore you live in a dangerous craphole. And what happens in a dangerous craphole? Bad tragic shit. Look, it's the freaking American way -- you start out in a dangerous craphole and work hard so you can someday move up to a somewhat less dangerous craphole. And finally maybe you get a mansion. But at this rate you ain't even gonna make it to the somewhat less dangerous craphole.

JADE

Like you live in a mansion.

FREDDIE

I do not claim to live in no mansion. But then again I do not live in no slum. The other thing I also do not do is strip naked.

MIN
Thank God for small favors.

JADE
Anyways he's never actually naked.

MIN
Right, Cole?

COLE
Guys, could we lower our voices?

MIN
(in a comic "low" voice)
You always got something on,
right, Cole?

JADE
Mr Sensitive all of the sudden.

MIN
Be proud of your work, man.

FREDDIE
Says the girl who don't work.

MIN
I work as a mother.

FREDDIE
Some mother.

MIN
Well, fuck you too.

FREDDIE
No wonder we never take these kids
out to a nice lunch.

MIN
I do not even consider this a nice
lunch.

ANGELA and DATE pass by on the way out.

ANGELA SILVERI
Cole? My God!

COLE
(rising)
Angela, hi! Wow.

MIN

We just seen you on TV! That thing about how those guys killed the cows so the kids could watch or whatever?

ANGELA SILVERI

Cole, this is Brian. Brian, Cole.

BRIAN

Ah, the infamous.

JADE

Can you get us some free steaks?
Ha.

ANGELA SILVERI

I read about your aunt. She was always so sweet to me.

JADE

Yeah.

A little remembering silence.

COLE

Nice to meet you, Brian.
(beat)
You're a lucky guy.

Awkward.

BRIAN

Well, and you're...you're very lucky too.

Out they go.

JADE

(to COLE)
Nice.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

COLE sits on the steps. Can't stand the thought of going inside. MR CRANE, an elderly African-American gentleman, makes his way slowly across the lawn.

MR. CRANE

Louise and I are sorry for your loss. We couldn't make it for the service. She's not well.
(MORE)

MR. CRANE (CONT'D)

I keep a careful watch on all comings-and-goings. And record them in my logbook. There was no car here. On that day. Not a one. So: it was one of our own who did this. Someone from within the Sea Oak community.

COLE

I'll mention that to the police.

MR CRANE

Or you may shout it to the heavens. Or mumble it into the river.

MR CRANE turns and begins the long journey home.

INT. SEA OAK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

JADE and MIN are watching TV, eating ice cream. They've both been crying.

COLE

You guys ok?

MIN

Just sucks. I miss her so bad.

JADE

What's wrong with us, you know?

MIN

We suck. We must suck.

JADE

I can't stand that that happened to her. To *her*, you know? She was so good.

MIN scoots over, wraps JADE up in a big hug, pulls a comforter over the two of them.

MIN

We're gonna make it. We're gonna hug it out. We're gonna LOVE it out--

In spite of her good intentions, she's being a little obnoxious, smothering/harassing JADE...

JADE

Chick, stop.

MIN escalates, they roll on to the floor.

MIN
STOP! I frigging mean it--

The BABIES come crawling over.

MIN (CONT'D)
Look at this. So cute.

JADE
They're like: Give it the fuck up!

MIN
We'll give it the fuck up,
sweeties, don't worry. We didn't
forget about you.

MIN squeezes an amazing amount of Hershey's syrup into TROY's baby bottle.

COLE
You think that's a good idea? He's
going to weigh seven thousand
pounds.

MIN squirts some syrup into her mouth.

MIN
Do I weigh seven thousand pounds?

JADE
(indicating TV)
Bern used to love this shit right
here.

(ON TV): EXT. IN ANIMATED SEGMENT. NEIGHBORHOOD. DAY.

An animated MUSTACHED MAN in a flannel shirt is chopping wood in his back yard.

HOST (V.O.)
A normal day. But Bruce Bitner's
world is about to be totally
transformed! By "The Worst That
Could Happen!"

Suddenly, the man chops off his OWN HAND and goes running around the neighborhood, screaming for help, stump spewing blood.

HOST (V.O.)
 Is this *the worst that could happen?* I only wish this were the case!

A huge TORNADO sweeps up the street. The MUSTACHED MAN screams as the tornado sweeps him up.

HOST (V.O.)
 Is *this* the worst that could--

The phone rings. COLE answers.

COLE
 (on phone)
 Hello? Oh, hi Father.

ON TV: A PREGNANT TEACHER happily leads a group of cute kindergartners out for recess. The MUSTACHED MAN drops out of the tornado and CRUSHES HER FLAT.

MIN
 Damn.

JADE
 I never even thought of being scared of that.

COLE
 (on phone)
 What?
 (beat)
 You've got to be kidding.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

COLE, MIN, JADE, and BABIES drive through the night.

JADE
 Defaced. What does that mean, 'defaced?'

MIN
 It means like fucked it up.

JADE
 But how? I mean like what did they do?

MIN
 We don't know, dumbass. That's why we're going there.

JADE

And why? Why would someone do that?

MIN

Check out Miss Shreelock Homes. Someone done that because someone is a asshole.

JADE

Someone is a big-time asshole.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

BERNIE'S GRAVE sits open. The Amber Mist lies crookedly in the grave, violently bashed open.

JADE

What the hell? Where's Bernie?

MIN

Somebody STOLE Bernie?

On the pile of dirt: a butt-shaped mark...and a pair of red pumps.

MIN (CONT'D)

Her little shoes. Oh my God.

JADE

Are those them?

MIN

Those are them.

JADE

I am freaking out.

MIN

I am totally freaking out.

JADE

What I don't get is who'd want her.

MIN

She was just this LADY.

FATHER BRIAN

I'm sorry. You seem like nice people. Nothing like this has ever happened here before.

INT. "POSERS" -- DAY

COLE is struggling with a combination of grief and boredom in the EGYPTIAN ROOM when his boss, Mr. FrenDt, comes in.

MR FRENDT

Slow day. And not just for you.
Sometimes I think this idea of
mine was misguided.

COLE knows that it was, but doesn't want to say it.

MR FRENDT (CONT'D)

Word to the wise, Cole: having a
dream or vision does not mean that
dream or vision is good.

(beat)

Name is nice, though. "Posers."

(beat)

We may have to shut down some
rooms. Or work strictly on
commission. No selfies, no pay.

(beat)

Well, not "may have to." "Are
going to." Starting Monday.
Commission only. I'm excited.
Two dollars per selfie. Generous.

MR FrenDt starts out, pauses at the door.

MR FRENDT (CONT'D)

Oh, and Cole - sorry about your
aunt. We were going to send
flowers. Jen and I. Or, we did,
actually. Did you get them?

COLE

No.

MR FRENDT

I know we intended to send. And
thought we had. Anyway - sorry.
I wish I could have met her. And
that the flowers had come. And
been ordered. The whole thing. I
wish it all for her.

COLE

You did meet her. At the company
picnic. Last summer.

MR FRENDT

So sad. Prime of life. There's a
lesson for all of us.

(MORE)

MR FRENDT (CONT'D)

Go for the gold. Make your
business succeed. Whatever it
takes.

(beat)

I feel good about this.

EXT. SEA OAK - DAY

COLE arrives home. The door to the apartment is hanging off
the hinges. This is weird...

INT. SEA OAK -- DAY.

Inside, MIN and JADE are sitting, still and alert, on the
couch, BABIES gathered into their laps.

They cut their eyes LEFT.

COLE sees:

BERNIE.

Well, BERNIE's body. In her ROCKING CHAIR. Same perm, same
glasses, same burial dress. The corpse is slumped, slightly
discolored, shoeless, filthy.

COLE

Who did this? Who the fuck would--

BERNIE's eyes snap OPEN. She lifts her head with some effort,
looks at COLE.

BERNIE

Sit the fuck down.

COLE drops to the floor, right where he is.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

(to COLE, agitated,
staccato)

You mister, are going to start
showing your cock. If a lady comes
in, wants to see it, if she'll pay
to see it, you get it out. That's
cash, so no taxes. No withholding.
See? That's the beauty of it.

Some dirt falls out of her mouth as she licks her lips with a
swollen black tongue.

COLE

Bernie?

JADE
Is she a zombie?

BERNIE glances at a lamp on an end table and IT ZINGS OVER and HITS JADE in the head with incredible power.

BERNIE
Zombie, my ass.

JADE
OK, OK!

AUNT BERNIE
You kids don't know this but I died a freaking virgin. No babies, no lovers. Nothing went in, nothing came out. Ha ha! Dry as a bone, completely wasted, this pretty little thing God gave me between my legs. Well I am going to have lovers now, you fucks! Like in the movies, big shoulders and all, and a summer house, and nice trips, and in the morning, in my room, a big vase of flowers, and I'm gonna get my nipples hard from standing in the breeze from the ocean, eating shrimp from a cup, you sons of bitches, while my lover watches from the veranda, big shoulders shining, all hard for me, that's one damn thing I will guarantee you kids! Ha ha!

MIN
Oh my God.

AUNT BERNIE
Cover me up. Blanket. Need my rest. Tell anyone I'm here, you all die. Plus they die. Whoever you tell, they die. I kill them with my mind. I can do that. I am very freaking strong now. I got powers!

BERNIE is shaking and grinding her teeth. One tooth falls out. She picks it up, looks at it, sets it aside. JADE, MIN, and COLE rise, backpedal into the...

INT. SEA OAK , BEDROOM - NIGHT

MIN
It looks like her.

COLE
It is her.

JADE
It is and it ain't.

From the living room they hear:

A TREMENDOUS CRASH

AUNT BERNIE (O.S.)
SEE HOW STRONG I AM!

INT. SEA OAK , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The MICROWAVE has been ripped out of the wall and flung somehow across the room - has taken a gash out of the far wall and lies in a shattered heap on the floor.

And BERNIE is still sitting in her chair.

BERNIE (O.S.)
BLANKET!

COLE scrambles out with a blanket...

BERNIE (CONT'D)
TV!

COLE turns it on.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Louder!

Cole turns it up.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
LOUDER!

Cole cranks it up to a nearly unbearable volume.

COLE
You like it that loud?

BERNIE
Hate it. But it helps me understand. What we're up against.

COLE

Bern. Do you...do you remember me?

BERNIE looks at him. Seems to be working through something.

BERNIE

Cole.

COLE

Do you still love us?

BERNIE gives a rueful shake of her head: can't think about that right now.

BERNIE

Blanket. Remote.

COLE hands over the remote, covers her up.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Head too. I need it dark. To heal.

COLE does as instructed. She looks like a covered statue of a sitting person, trembling wildly.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

You got a radio? Computer? More SOUND. It helps. Helps me understand. How to fix you.

COLE

Me?

BERNIE

All three of you stupid fuckers.

INT. SEA OAK , BEDROOM - NIGHT

MIN and JADE and the BABIES sleep together on the bed. COLE sits awake on the floor, facing the doorway, baseball bat in his lap, just in case.

From the living room, the TV tirade continues, supplemented now by two radios and a cranked laptop: a cacophony of news and information and strange American affluent decadence. BERNIE mumbles and laughs and shouts along with the sound of the cranked, maniacal media tirade.

TV/RADIO/COMPUTER NOISE

(all simultaneously)

...*"a victory beyond all victories
as it races up the pop and hip-
hop"/"Oh you are weak, aren't you?
Get up. Get up and die!"/"...my
breasts finally look like MY
breasts"/"...thousands fleeing, no
food, water, or sanitation..."*
/"Carol? A THREESOME? With
ERNIE?"/ "The victim was fed his
own spleen"/"A house this dope
screams out "WINNER!" Etc.

MIN bolts awake.

MIN

What does she want?

COLE

She said she's going to fix us.

They ponder this. Well, they could use some fixing. But does it have to come like *this*?

We MOVE OFF THROUGH the doorway, into the living room, where BERNIE, under the blanket, still rocks feverishly back and forth, absorbing all that maniacal media-sound, waiting for morning. And then we shoot UNDER the BLANKET, and see:

BERNIE's face - bruised, discolored. We hear her labored breathing. Up comes her hand. She reinserts her lost tooth. Bites down. More labored breathing. She reaches into her mouth, tests the tooth: All good.

She SMILES.

END OF PILOT