

SEARCH AND DESTROY
PILOT

Written by

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SEARCH AND DESTROY -- PILOT

INT. HOSPITAL -- EATING DISORDER UNIT (EDU) -- MEETING ROOM

Chyron: 1987. Seattle, Washington.

A carpeted, institutional room, with just enough books on the shelves and generic (inspirational and calming) wall art to suggest hominess and warmth. A group of FIFTEEN PEOPLE sit in chairs, arranged in a circle. Some are patients at the long term care center. It is mostly women, though there are a few men as well. They run the gamut of size, from bone-thin to obese. Joining the patients are their spouses, siblings, significant others, and children. We are in the middle of a group therapy session, one that falls during weekend visiting hours, so that families can be part of the healing and recovery process.

The camera moves from body to body, woman to woman. A visibly starving woman sits next to an over-eater. An otherwise attractive woman smiles to expose teeth browned from years of purging. This is someone's POV, but we're not yet sure whose it is.

As we see the faces and bodies, off-screen we hear a WOMAN talking. The camera pauses on the woman. She is around 40 years old with brown hair and pale skin. She is painfully gaunt, with a searching, empty stare. Her sweatshirt and jeans hang off her body like they'd prefer to be elsewhere. The camera continues across the group.

WOMAN

For a long time a lot of my eating disorder was motivated by not feeling like I had permission to exist. I didn't know how to be the right kind of daughter. I don't know how to be the right kind of woman or mother or wife. Maybe my anorexia allows me to be someone different from the roles I feel like I've failed at. I'm good at starving myself. It's a box I can hide in where I recognize who I am, even if I hate what I see.

As the woman finishes talking, the camera lands on KAREN WOLFF (14). Dark hair and eyes, wearing a Rugby shirt, high waisted jeans and Keds sneakers. Karen is not exactly fashionable, she dresses to fit in. Somewhere. But certainly not here.

Karen does her best impression of insouciance, trying to seem at ease in this environment, but inside she is bracing herself. Karen is here because her mother KRIS WOLFF (40) is in the EDU for anorexia. And it is her mother who has been talking.

A FEMALE THERAPIST (mid 40s) speaks up.

THERAPIST

Thank you, Kris.

The group nods and murmurs with encouragement.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

I know your husband and daughters are here. Certainly no pressure to share anything, guys, but if you have anything to say, please feel free to do so. This is a safe place.

As we cut back to Karen, we see that she is sitting next to two people. Her dad, MARK WOLFF (40s) and her sister, MOLLY (11). Mark is boyish and handsome. Slender framed with a worn-in polo shirt and casual weekend slacks. He is wide-eyed, giving him the appearance of a constant curiosity. Molly is sartorially jocular and a tad chubby. She has unmanageable, thick hair and olive skin. She's at the onset of adolescence but can't help still being a child; she conveys an almost heartbreaking sensitivity, clearly missing her mom. Molly's face is stained with tears. Mark gives a closed-mouth smile. Karen stares ahead.

MARK

We just want to say that we, uh, love you and we're happy you're getting the help you need. I know I could work on being more EXPRESSIVE WITH MY FEELINGS.

He talks louder, as if that's a substitute for showing emotion. The therapist smiles at the effort. She looks at Karen and Molly. Neither speak.

THERAPIST

Kris has talked a lot about wanting to be more present with her daughters. And be closer with them, especially Karen.

Karen is silent.

The young woman sitting next to Kris grabs a hold of Kris's hand.

This is Kris's roommate at the EDU, AUTUMN SIMPSON, a bulimic who happens to be Karen's age. Autumn is a Goth, with jet black hair, short bangs, and a preternatural ability to use liquid eyeliner. She addresses Karen.

AUTUMN

I know your mom really loves you.
She's been such a good mother to me
while we've been roommates here.
She talks about you all the time.

The whole room looks at Karen expectantly, like, 'Oooh, do we get to witness a feel-good Oprah moment?!' But Karen remains stoic; she feels numbed out. Karen doesn't relate to these women except for one thing, she's do anything to not be in her body right now.

Finally, Karen opens her mouth. But instead of a word it is a guitar note. Then a drum.

We hear notes, and now a melody. Music begins to overtake the scene:

CUT TO:

INT. ALL AGES CLUB -- PUNK ROCK SHOW

Chyron: 1993. Olympia, Washington

A small, dimly lit, multi-use space. A few white lights are aimed at the low stage.

In the crowd, bodies are loose, enmeshed, and uninhibited. They glisten, forming a beautiful collision. An all-female band is on stage, finishing a song. We hear the singer yell into the mic: "GIRLS TO THE FRONT."

The girls in the audience push through the small crowd and press themselves against the stage. They are sweaty and ecstatic. A new song begins.

INT. REC ROOM -- POST THERAPY -- CONTINUOUS

The music continues from the other scene. The women and families come from the meeting room into the adjoining Rec Room, mirroring the girls pushing to the front of the stage. People stand around drinking Ensure (a food replacement beverage) like they're at a bar, and chat. Mark and Molly play Ping Pong in the background, relieved to be doing something physical.

Autumn approaches Karen. Autumn is so much more sophisticated than Karen, and beautiful. Karen takes her in. Is she jealous of Autumn? Attracted to her? She isn't quite sure. Teary-eyed, Kris approaches Karen and gives her a hug. Karen doesn't reciprocate, staring at Autumn the entire time.

INT. ALL AGES CLUB -- CONTINUOUS

The song continues. And now we really see the band.

Karen (21) is on stage playing guitar. This is not the Karen from the EDU. Though she is still awkward and shy, we see moments of inspired boldness, a sly swagger. Her hair is darker, punker, bangs uneven from an at-home cut. She wears thrift store polyester high water pants, a chunky belt, a tight T-shirt, and men's work shoes. She is a tomboy with flashes of sexiness. Karen is a kinetic performer: jagged, angular, elbows, arms, legs. She twists and glides.

With Karen on stage, and also playing guitar, is CHARLOTTE WILSON (23). Petite, with large, bright eyes. She is oddly pretty. Unassuming perhaps, except that her voice can peel the paint off the walls. She stands still when she plays, contrasting the manic urgency of Karen. Charlotte plants herself, stakes out a territory, grounded and unafraid.

The third band member is ROMY (22, cute, dyke-y) on drums. Romy is wild eyed and out-of-breath as she tries to keep up with a momentum she has very little part of.

Karen moves around, looking happy and free.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME -- LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

MARK

Your mom and I wanted to talk to you about something.

KAREN

Are you going back to the hospital?

KRIS

Your father and I are splitting up. I'm going to move out.

KAREN

Where?

KRIS

Close by. I found an apartment.

MOLLY

Are we coming with you?

KRIS

No. You'll stay here with your dad.

MARK

Do you have any questions for us?

MOLLY

Is mom moving out because Karen's
mean to her?

Karen lets out one loud, clipped "HA".

INT. ALL AGES CLUB -- PUNK ROCK SHOW -- CONTINUOUS

The "HA" turns into an admonishment. Romy's drumming is off.

The band is at the bridge of the song, a crescendo. Romy is in the middle of a dramatic drumroll but can't quite tame it, she has the count wrong. They all come back into the chorus at a different time. The moment and magic are gone. All of the mystery unmasked; a transcendent moment followed by total embarrassment.

TITLE SEQUENCE: SEARCH AND DESTROY

Shots of Olympia. The water. The Capitol building. The dingy clubs. The movie theatres. The record stores. The docks. Asian restaurants. Telephone poles covered in concert fliers.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S APARTMENT -- A CONVERTED HOUSE -- NIGHT

INT. CHARLOTTE'S APARTMENT

Sloped ceilings, a double bed on the floor against the wall, makeshift curtains. A 1950's chrome and Formica kitchen table with chairs that don't match. Everything has been scrounged or is from Goodwill. Two crates full of records and a combination stereo unit with a built-in record player on top. Cheap, stock speakers attached. On the plastic frame of a floor-length mirror, we see a label-maker sticker that says, "You are Strong and Beautiful" and a fashion magazine with the same kind of sticker that says "SEXIST"

Karen is in the kitchen pouring herself some Harvey's Bristol Cream Sherry. She eyes a Calumet baking soda can above the stove, their logo a Native American in a head-dress. Charlotte has used that same label maker to make a sticker that says "RACIST," which she's affixed to the product.

Karen grabs it and shows it to Charlotte, who is lying on her stomach on the bed.

KAREN

You could just not buy this.

Charlotte ignores her.

CHARLOTTE

The Papercuts asked us to open for them in a month. Are you going to talk to Romy or do you want me to?

Karen walks over with a glass of sherry and sits next to Charlotte, offering her a sip.

KAREN

I can do it.

CHARLOTTE

Can you?

KAREN

Yeah, I promise.

CHARLOTTE

Because I would be happy to call her and meet her for coffee this week.

KAREN

NO!

CHARLOTTE

Fine.

KAREN

(Thinking, trying to say something a tad profound). You know, I feel like a band is only as good as their drummer.

CHARLOTTE

That's not true. We're already good.

KAREN

No, it IS true. Think about Peter Criss from Kiss. He sucks.

CHARLOTTE

Who cares about Kiss!

KAREN

Fine. Chris Frantz doesn't have the same..sophistication as the rest of the Talking Heads. And early Bowie drummers, not so great! Those songs could be better.

CHARLOTTE

I don't want to sound like other bands. And ranking shit is boring. I don't know why you make everything theoretical.

KAREN

The drummer from Black Flag!
Weakest link on "Damaged".

CHARLOTTE

Are you repeating something you read?

KAREN

I think Joe Strummer said it. But I agree! It's embarrassing to have someone fuck up the same part over and over again. We should be following her not the other way around. I'm stressed out the whole show.

CHARLOTTE

Just talk to Romy then. And be nice about it. Then we can try to find someone else.

Moments later...

Karen sets the needle down on a record. Lungfish. The song "Friend to Friend in Endtime." She stands in the middle of the room and does a dance. In it's strangeness, it's close to being sexy. Part semaphore, she moves her feet in slow circles and bends her arms at the elbow, turning them like windmills. As she moves towards the bed, Karen auditions a move with her pelvis but gets self-conscious. Yet Charlotte is already watching. Karen lays on the bed next to Charlotte. Karen rolls up her sleeves to expose her biceps, trying out a way being suave and bold, tougher than she truly is.

Charlotte laughs.

KAREN

If I was a guy you wouldn't laugh

CHARLOTTE

Yeah I would!

Sighing, Karen rolls over on her back.

KAREN

Do you ever want to make out again?

CHARLOTTE

No.

KAREN

Good. Me neither. Plus you're a terrible kisser.

Charlotte leans over and kisses Karen. They kiss softly at first, then with more urgency. Karen goes to unbuckle Charlotte's belt and the button of her corduroy pants. Charlotte stops her.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Is this about Greg?

CHARLOTTE

He's fine if I make out with girls but he wants me to keep it "above the belt."

Karen is still trying to be flirtatious and not ruin the mood.

KAREN

Then put your belt at your ankles?

CHARLOTTE

I don't want to be unfair to him. He's really sick. With a temperature of like 103. He's had to stay at his mom's.

KAREN

Who stays at their mom's?

CHARLOTTE

It's serious. He has cat scratch fever.

KAREN

I thought that was just a Ted Nugent song.

CHARLOTTE

It's real.

KAREN

Ok! How did he get it?

Charlotte looks at Karen like she's a dummy.

CHARLOTTE

A cat.

Duh. The sexy time is definitely over.

CUT TO:

EXT THRIFT STORE -- DAY

INT. THRIFT STORE

Song: Fuzzbox "Love is A Slug"

Karen walks through a brightly lit thrift store and goes into a dressing room with an armful of clothes.

She tries on striped izods, old T-shirts from youth sports leagues teams, and polyester pants. Most of this is from the Boys' Section. When she finally finds something she likes, she places her own clothes on the hangers and walks out with a new outfit.

INT. MALL HAIR SALON -- CONTINUOUS

Charlotte sits in a barber chair reading a fanzine. She's getting a strangely mainstream haircut and blowout from a small town stylist. It is a pseudo bowl-cut, very smoothed out and shiny. Charlotte looks pleased.

We hear the sound of the record ending and the needle drop on the next album.

Song. Liliput "Die Matrosen"

CUT TO:

EXT. OLYMPIA STREETS -- TELEPHONE POLES AND SHOP WINDOWS

As the song plays, we see flyers going up around town.
"DRUMMER WANTED -- WE LIKE THE BUZZCOCKS. 943-1978"

Romy (the drummer) walk up to the flier and pauses. That phone number looks familiar. WTF?

INT/EXT. CHARLOTTE'S CAR

Song: Pylon "Stop It" plays on the stereo.

Charlotte and Karen drive in a beige late-1980's Volkswagon Rabbit. Charlotte has her new, "adult" haircut and Karen is in her "cool" new outfit. Charlotte looks pissed but Karen knows she can cut through the ice.

CHARLOTTE

You had one job to do.

KAREN

It never felt like the right time.
And I didn't want her to be mad at me.

Charlotte shoots Karen a look.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Plus you're way better at this stuff than me.

CHARLOTTE

I know I am!

KAREN

You really are. I wish you'd offered.

CHARLOTTE

Well now she's pissed, so thanks a lot.

They drive for a moment in silence.

KAREN

I'm sorry.

Karen hates feeling like she's let Charlotte down.

KAREN (CONT'D)

At least we get to find a new drummer. (Pause). Also, nice haircut.

It worked. Charlotte smiles and does a little move with her head.

CHARLOTTE

I know, right?

They pull up to a house.

EXT. HOUSE -- FRONT PORCH

Charlotte and Karen stand on the front porch of a worn down Craftsman home. Next to them are two small practice amps and their guitar cases. They look like traveling salespeople. They knock.

JOY (30s, white) answers the door. She could be the third member of The Indigo Girls.

JOY

Karen, Charlotte? I'm Joy. Like the feeling. Come on in.

Continuous:

INT. LIVING ROOM

The room is littered with ferns and hanging plants. Tibetan prayer flags. Books of Rumi poetry books on display. Charlotte and Karen drink tea out of mason jars while three cats move around the room. There are two litter boxes. Joy has small drumkit in the corner, which she sits behind.

JOY

A Libra and a Scorpio. That should be interesting. Do you know your rising signs?

CHARLOTTE

We don't.

JOY

My guess is Pisces. I'm good at this stuff, I was a birthday giver in the BeforeWorld.

Charlotte and Karen have no idea what that means. Karen notices something on the wall.

KAREN

(Pointing) What's that?

JOY

My old dreadlock.

Karen and Charlotte exchange glances. This does not need to continue. But wait, it does.

JOY (CONT'D)

I just think it's so cool you want to play in a band with all chicks.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE -- DRUMMER AUDITIONS

Charlotte and Karen load in and load out.

INT. OLYMPIA GARAGE

Next to a sewing workspace and a wicker ball collection, Karen, Charlotte, and MARILYN (60s) finish the last notes of a song. Marilyn smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLOTTE'S CAR

They are driving again. Off to the next tryout.

CHARLOTTE

I liked Marilyn.

KAREN

Me too. And I'm excited for her granddaughter to come to one of our shows.

CHARLOTTE

You're being ageist!

KAREN

No, I'm discriminating against young people. As a retiree, Marilyn deserves better.

Off Charlotte's look...nice try.

EXT. OLYMPIA PUNK HOUSE

A dapper butch girl with short hair and a muscle shirt bounds towards Charlotte's car. This is KILLER (late 20s). Almost before they are parked, she opens the door for Charlotte.

KILLER

Hi. I'm Killer.

CHARLOTTE
Charlotte.

KAREN
Ka-

Killer winks at Charlotte.

KILLER
Let me help you with your stuff.

Killer walks to the back of the car and opens the hatch. She grabs Charlotte's amp and guitar. Karen and Charlotte watch her walk away.

CHARLOTTE
She seems cool.

Karen looks at her like, "Yeah, I bet you think that."

INT. KILLER'S BASEMENT -- LATER

Their gear is set up. Killer sits behind her drumkit putting drumming gloves on.

CHARLOTTE
So. Killer. Is that your real name?

Karen shoots Charlotte a look.

KILLER
Actually, it's Deborah.

Karen mouths to Charlotte "DEBORAH." Charlotte is like, "don't be an ass."

Killer starts in on an overly complicated drum pattern. Is it ever going to stop? Charlotte gives it a moment. Impressed at first. Then she tries to get her attention.

CHARLOTTE
Killer. Killer. KILLER!

Nothing. More flagrant drumming. Finally...

KAREN
Deborah!!!

Killer stops playing. Karen looks at Charlotte. See! I told you.

CUT TO:

INT. KAREN'S BEDROOM-- EVENING

Songs: Throwing Muses "Hate My Way"

Karen is in her bedroom strumming an electric guitar that isn't plugged in. She has a twin bed mattress on the floor that she sits on. Records are lined up on makeshift shelves: plywood planks atop cinder blocks. Her night stand is an upside down milk crate. Her walls are covered in fliers from local shows. TREEPEOPLE, BIKINI KILL, BRATMOBILE, KARP, UNWOUND, SOME VELVET SIDEWALK, KICKING GIANT, etc. There are posters of The Ramones, The Clash, Patti Smith, and Bad Brains as well. She looks at a Rolling Stones LP and takes in a young Mick Jagger. She emulates the pose and tries taking a Polaroid. It's a bad pic. She takes more until she's out of film.

She calls Charlotte.

We cut between Karen's room and Charlotte's apartment. Charlotte is cleaning up, in full domestic mode.

CHARLOTTE

Hey.

KAREN

Hi. What's up?

CHARLOTTE

I'm bummed about the drummer situation.

KAREN

Yeah. I don't know, just because they're female doesn't mean we have anything in common other than our gender.

CHARLOTTE

Sure, but I feel like you've been kinda judgmental about the whole thing.

KAREN

This is the stuff to be judgmental about! You're saying I should lower my standards because they're women.

CHARLOTTE

No. I'm not. Just try to be more open. Worry less about what other people might think.

KAREN

Trust me, I'm tired of thinking in general. I want a drummer who makes it so we just exist. As a band. Where it's not about our gender or how we play "good, for girls".

CHARLOTTE

I guess none of the drummers were right. No one had any feel. Or...power.

KAREN

See?! I want a John Bonham or Keith Moon.

CHARLOTTE

I just want to scare people.

Charlotte is over the sink holding a dish scrubber.

INT. SAIGON RENDEZVOUS -- DAY

Karen, Charlotte, and Romy sit at a booth. Charlotte and Karen on one side, Romy on the other.

CHARLOTTE

Thanks for meeting us, Romy.

ROMY

Sure.

Karen can barely make eye contact with Romy.

KAREN

Hey.

ROMY

Hey.

CHARLOTTE

So, my friend Trapper works with someone named Clyde and her girlfriend Bolt recommended a mediator.

KAREN

What's up with these chosen names? Is there an interim horse phase I don't know about?

ROMY

(To Karen). Clyde's rad.

Everyone looks at their menus.

TRACY (mid 20s) approaches. She has a heavy metal look, dyed black Joan Jett hair, smoky eye make-up, and a leather jacket.

TRACY

Hey. I'm Tracy D/C. Sorry I'm late.

She takes a seat next to Romy. Intros all around.

KAREN

So, is this what you do professionally, are you a counselor?

TRACY

I'm not. But I work at the food co-op.

Beat.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Great. So, I thought we could start with some check ins.

Everyone looks around.

KAREN

Where are we checking in?

CHARLOTTE

Tracy, I think it's okay to just dive in. Go ahead and take charge.

TRACY

Cool. How about a different approach? Let's do a "snap if you agree". Can everyone snap?

Everyone practices snapping. Rose (Vietnamese, 50s) refills water glasses, shooting everyone a look of disapproval.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I am going to name a feeling. And if you feel that way, snap. Ok?

The group nods.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Great. "I feel, like, uncomfortable"

Everyone snaps. Sensing she's on a roll, Tracy runs through a few more emotions.

TRACY (CONT'D)
"I feel, like, angry"

Snap.

TRACY (CONT'D)
"I feel, like, confused"

With each snap, Romy is always a half second late, just like her drumming. Even Charlotte is getting annoyed.

CHARLOTTE
Hey Tracy? Maybe we should just talk things out for a bit.

TRACY
Sure. I'll facilitate though. Romy, you go first.

ROMY
Ok... I guess I just wanna to say that it really hurt my feelings that you didn't tell me to my face that I was out of the band.

CHARLOTTE
I am so sorry, Romy. That was not our intention.

Charlotte looks to Karen, wanting her to take some accountability.

KAREN
When I saw you at King Solomon's Reef the other night you were hitting on some girl and then every time I wanted to talk to you, you were playing pool.

ROMY
So it's my fault?

TRACY
Karen, could you have asked to talk to Romy alone? Or maybe set up a time outside of a social environment?

KAREN
Sure. Sorry. I'm a terrible person I guess.

TRACY

That's not what I was saying.

ROMY

You're still not really
apologizing.

KAREN

I am too apologizing. I didn't know
there was a right way to apologize.

CHARLOTTE

Karen is sorry. We both are.

KAREN

You don't have to apologize for me.

CHARLOTTE

Don't I?

Charlotte really looks at Karen. This stings.

ROMY

You know, I never felt like you
respected me or wanted my opinion.
Ever.

CHARLOTTE

I know.

ROMY

If I could just make a suggestion,
maybe going forward you should get
a fourth member. A bass player or
something, so that there isn't
always a third wheel in the band.

CHARLOTTE

We're not getting a bass player.
The Beatles didn't have a bass
player!

ROMY

Yes, they did. Ever heard of Paul
McCartney?

Rose comes by with the food.

ROSE

Teriyaki Beef on a stick with
vegetarian beef.

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)
 Barbecue Pork, substitute
 vegetarian pork with vegetarian
 prawn.

CUT TO:

EXT. USED BOOK STORE -- DAY

INT. USED BOOK STORE

Song: Dolly Mixture "Everything And More"

Karen and Charlotte stroll through the aisles of a used book store. Charlotte is holding a copy of bell hooks' "Ain't I A Woman." A MALE CUSTOMER (40s) is in the middle of the aisle where Karen is trying to locate a book she wants.

KAREN
 Excuse me. Sir?

He doesn't acknowledge her.

CHARLOTTE
 Sir. I would like you to please
 move. Now. Thank you.

He looks at them, then walks off. Karen shouts after him.

KAREN
 Thank you. Sorry, I just needed to
 grab something.

CHARLOTTE
 You feel bad about all the wrong
 things. I was just being assertive.

KAREN
I'm assertive.

CHARLOTTE
 No you're not, you're angry.
 There's a difference.

Karen finds what she's looking for and pulls the copy of "The Waves" by Virginia Woolf off the shelf.

KAREN
 Have you read this?

CHARLOTTE
 Nuh-uh.

Karen has a her favorite passage memorized. She keeps moving closer towards Charlotte as she talks.

KAREN

"When we sit together close. We melt into each other with phrases. We are edged in mist. We make an unsubstantial territory."

Charlotte stares at her.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Impressive, yeah?

CHARLOTTE

Make up your own words.

Charlotte walks away.

KAREN

Hey. I will! Give me a second. Give me like, like...a year.

Karen opens the cover flap and sees a name. She practically does a double-take. "Autumn Simpson." This is too strange.

Flashback:

INT/EXT. CAR -- CHRYSLER LEBARON -- NIGHT

CHYRON: 1987

The Wolff family is parked outside a Seattle house. Mark is in the driver's seat with Kris next to him. The kids are in the back.

MARK

(To Kris) Should I honk?

KRIS

No. She'll come out.

They wait. Nothing. Mark is impatient.

MARK

We're going to be late. I'm just going to do a friendly honk.

Mark makes a show of trying to honk the horn gently. There is no such thing.

KAREN

Why is Autumn coming with us again?

KRIS
Because I invited her.

KAREN
Oh, like a date. Maybe you should
have brought a corsage.

KRIS
Autumn and I are trying to watch
out for each other. This isn't
easy. She's having a hard time
being back in school.

KAREN
(To Molly). Less places to vomit.

MOLLY
Why aren't we all seeing the same
movie?

KRIS
'Housekeeping' is more of a film
for grown ups. I think you guys
would find it boring.

KAREN
Autumn and I are the same age.

KRIS
Yes, but she grew up in the city.

KAREN
I wanted to grow up in the city.

Autumn appears next to the car. Kris gets out to hug her.
Karen clocks this. Autumn opens the back door.

AUTUMN
Hey everyone! Thanks for picking me
up.

MARK
Hi Autumn!

MOLLY
Why don't I switch so you can sit
with our mom?

Molly gets out.

MARK
Or Kris can drive and the two of
you can sit in the front.

Mark gets out. Now everyone but Karen is outside of the car.

INT. CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Song: Tiffany "I Think We're Alone Now"

Karen, Kris, and Autumn are crammed together in the backseat of the car. Kris is in the middle.

Karen steals glances at Autumn, who looks insanely cool. Karen can't believe they actually ARE the same age. Autumn resembles Winona Ryder in "Beetlejuice." She is wearing black and white horizontal striped tights and black Doc Martens combat boots. Her skin is perfect, as is her eye liner.

KAREN

Can we turn the music off?

MOLLY

You love this song.

EXT. SUBURBAN MULTIPLEX THEATRE -- LATER

INT. THEATRE -- CONCESSION STAND

The Wolff family and Autumn wait in line for refreshments. The mood is light and seems nearly normal.

KAREN

So where do you go to school again?

AUTUMN

Central. It's ok. Lots of poseurs.
And jocks.

KAREN

I play tennis but I'm not a jock.
My school mass sucks.

[Note: In the Pacific Northwest in the late 1980's, "mass" was a slang term used for emphasis in place of "massively"].

Autumn nods. Karen looks at Autumn's Siouxsie & The Banshees T-shirt.

AUTUMN

It's a band from England, you
should check them out.

MOLLY

Steve Winwood's from England. We have a whole lip sync routine to "Higher Love."

Karen looks at Molly. Thank you for sharing.

AUTUMN

(To Molly) You should see Housekeeping with us. It's based on a really wonderful book.

KAREN

Yeah?

They get to the front of the line.

MARK

Alrighty. What does everyone want?

KAREN

Popcorn please. With butter. And a Coke.

MOLLY

Popcorn and a Dr. Pepper!

KRIS

(To Molly). How about a diet soda. (Then, to Mark). Ask them if I can get a cup of water.

MARK

Ok. Autumn?

AUTUMN

Diet Coke please.

Mark pays and hands out the food and drinks. Karen takes her large popcorn.

KRIS

Kar, you wanna join me and Autumn?

Karen looks at the two of them. The offer is more loaded coming from her mom. She puts a conspicuously large handful of popcorn in her mouth.

AUTUMN

That's ok. Enjoy your movie. And your calorie-free beverages.

They separate into two groups and head in opposite directions.

INT. LOBBY -- LATER -- AFTER THE MOVIE

Mark, Karen and Molly's movie has let out first. They have been waiting for Autumn and Kris, who approach.

MARK

Well...?

Kris is drying her eyes.

KRIS

Christine Lahti was absolutely wonderful. Didn't you think?

Autumn nods.

KRIS (CONT'D)

She's an American treasure. I bet she wins an Oscar. (Pause). How was "Three Men and a Baby?"

KAREN

I can't say enough good things about Steve Guttenberg. And that baby!

CUT TO:

INT. BOOK STORE

Karen is sitting on the floor reading "The Waves". Charlotte comes running up.

KAREN

Dude, the girl that was my mom's roommate when she was in the hospital. This book belonged to her. How weird is that?!

CHARLOTTE

Crazy. Look what's also weird.

Charlotte lifts up her shirt to reveal that she has stuffed Patti Smith's "Babel" in her pants.

KAREN

Don't.

CHARLOTTE

Why?

KAREN

Because this is an indie bookstore,
not like some giant B. Dalton or
Crown.

CHARLOTTE

Live a little, Karen.

Charlotte widens her eyes and sneaks away.

INT. BOOK STORE -- COUNTER

Karen takes "The Waves" to the counter. The CASHIER (Female,
60s) examines at the book.

CASHIER

We just got this in.

KAREN

Really?

CASHIER

Hm-mmm. A young woman dropped off a
whole box of classics.

Karen hesitates.

KAREN

Um, I also need to pay for that
copy of Patti Smith's "Babel" that
you have. My friend accidentally
left the store with it.

EXT. OLYMPIA STREETS -- AROUND THE CORNER

Karen walks up to Charlotte, who is giddy with pride.

CHARLOTTE

I did it! People always
underestimate me.

KAREN

Not me, Charlotte. Nice work.

PRE-LAP: Rudimentary drums and noise guitar, a woman's voice.

INT. PUNK HOUSE PARTY -- BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Karen walks through a dark basement lit by a bare bulb and a
table lamp placed on the floor.

A GIRL (20s) with a crop of bleached blond hair reads from a notebook, while a BOY (20s) hits a single floor tom with mallets. Another BOY (20s) noodles around on guitar for effect.

Some KIDS (late teens, twenties) sit on the floor in the front but most stand. In the audience is what feels like the entirety of the local punk scene: Clean cut Mods (Quadrophenia-inspired), queer girls with partially shaved heads, boys in dresses, Hardcore kids with greenish hair and spiky leather bracelets, Riot Grrls in vintage dresses and barrettes.

SPOKEN WORD GIRL

There's a room in my house where I
dare not go. It's the room where my
body was your dress up doll. THIS
IS. HOW. YOU. LEARN. TO. PLAY.
DEAD.

INT. PUNK HOUSE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Karen walks up from the basement and runs into LILAH (mid 20s) and her boyfriend, DUSTIN (Asian, 20s). Lilah is beautiful and confident, sort of the head cheerleader of the scene. Dustin is a stylish and cute Mod. They're in a band called The Papercuts. They share a bottle of 40 ounce malt liquor from a paper bag.

LILAH

That poet is so fucking cool.

KAREN

Definitely.

DUSTIN

I loved it.

LILAH

You're not allowed to love it,
Dustin. You loved hearing some girl
talk about her teenage pussy
getting torn open by her dad?

DUSTIN

That's not what I meant.

They kiss. Lilah looks at Karen during most of it.

LILAH

They're playing Spin the Bottle in
the living room. That way you don't
just have to watch.

Karen is horrified.

KAREN

I wasn't--

LILAH

So, is your band doing that
California tour with us or what?

KAREN

Yeah. If we can find a new drummer
by then.

DUSTIN

You should check out this girl
Jackie who just moved here from
Portland. She's rad. She played in
my old band. I'll give you her
number.

Karen sees Charlotte pass by in the other room. She walks out
after her.

INT. PUNK HOUSE LIVING ROOM

Song: Kleenex "Ain't You"

Karen enters the living room where a group of people play
Spin The Bottle with an empty Zima. Charlotte and GREG (mid
20s) are among the players. Greg is pale and blonde and
definitely looks like his family hails from Scandinavia. He
is sweet and harmless. Everyone likes him, even (mostly)
Karen. She sits down next to them, Charlotte is in the
middle.

This entire scene is an awkward argument/conversation that is
happening in the middle of a supposedly sexy, free-spirited
party game. We cut between insert shots of the bottle
spinning (along with extreme close ups of mouths and tongues
merging) and a furtive, loaded conversation between three
people. It's a balancing act, both fun and horrible.

When she's seated, Karen nudges Charlotte and they smile at
each other. Then she leans back behind Charlotte to chat with
Greg.

KAREN

Hi Greg.

GREG

Hey Karen.

KAREN
Don't you have a communicable
illness?

GREG
I'm on antibiotics. I'm not
contagious.

Karen
According to what doctor? Like,
what is their exact name?

Charlotte chimes in and leans over to Karen. She sounds a
little tipsy.

CHARLOTTE
This is Greg's first time out of
the house in three weeks. He's been
depressed.

Greg leans back behind Charlotte again.

GREG
I've been depressed.

The bottle lands on Charlotte. Greg and Karen watch her
French kiss a BOY. Karen and Greg catch each other both
looking at Charlotte, and they accidentally make eye contact
with one another as well. Greg takes Charlotte's hand.

Karen leans over to Charlotte.

KAREN
Holding hands is so possessive.
It's like, "I own you."

CHARLOTTE
What's your point?

Greg leans behind Charlotte.

GREG
What did you say Karen?

The bottle lands on Karen. She address the BOY whose turn it
is.

KAREN
No offense at all, but I might be
coming down with something and,
like, should probably opt out.
That's the responsible thing to do
in these situations.

Greg leans behind Charlotte.

GREG
Sorry you don't feel well, Karen.

Charlotte leans over to Karen.

CHARLOTTE
I think you actually just want to
kiss girls, even though you say
you're not sure.

KAREN
I just don't like the word
"Lesbian."

CHARLOTTE
You're afraid of it.

A bottle of cheap whiskey gets passed around. Charlotte grabs it.

KAREN
Maybe cool it on the whiskey?

CHARLOTTE
Do you want to hold my hand or not
hold my hand?

KAREN
What are you talking about?

Charlotte reaches her hand out for Karen to take. She is earnestly offering. Karen looks at Charlotte and at Charlotte's hand. She refuses.

CHARLOTTE
That's what I thought.

Greg leans behind Charlotte.

GREG
What's the rule about drinking on
antibiotics?

Karen gets up and leaves.

INT/EXT. KAREN'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Mark Wolff (Karen's dad) is at the front door. In his current iteration, he is as youthful as ever, wearing jeans and a plaid button-up shirt. In his arms he holds a box. Karen is unshowered and in her pajamas.

MARK
Well, hey, Kar.

KAREN
Hi dad.

They try to hug around the box. Physical contact and affection is not this family's forte.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Mark sits on a ragtag thrift store couch. All of Karen's furniture is from different eras. The box sits atop a cheap, laminated coffee table mottled with rings and marks. Karen has not heard of coasters. A few books, including "The Waves," lay on the table.

Karen walks in from the kitchen, sits next to her dad, and sets down a glass of water for him.

KAREN
Sorry, I don't know why it's cloudy. I have some leftover refried beans in the fridge if you're hungry.

MARK
For breakfast?

KAREN
I should shower and get dressed but we could go out. Your treat.

MARK
I'd like to make it to Tahoe before dinner. This won't count as a visit, I just thought I'd drop this off on my way through.

KAREN
Why Tahoe?

MARK
Friends.

Karen looks at him. What friends? Mark takes in the decor.

MARK (CONT'D)
I'm getting rid of so much stuff at the house, if I had known your place was still so sparse I could have brought some of our old art down.

KAREN

Like the Michael Jordan poster you put up after mom moved out? Unframed. Just mounted on poster board.

MARK

I think I got rid of that.

KAREN

I was kidding.

Karen starts digging through the box as Mark looks on.

MARK

I know you said to throw everything out but I thought you'd want at least something.

We see a framed prom photo. Soccer trophies. An Esprit tote bag. A Snoopy. Karen pulls out a rolled-up poster and removes the rubber band.

KAREN

Definitely this Janes Addiction poster and a stuffed Koala you brought back from Australia should stay with me until I die. I hope you chose this over my diaries.

MARK

No, those are in there, too.

Mark stands up, impatient as ever. Karen digs in further and finds old journals.

KAREN

Hey, do you remember Autumn? Mom's roommate from the hospital.

MARK

Yeah.

KAREN

Do you know where she lives now?

MARK

I have no idea. I could ask your mother.

KAREN

That's okay.

Awkward beat. Mark is basically at the door.

MARK

Well....

KAREN

You need to go.

MARK

I should.

Karen walks over to him at the door. They hug. It's as if the box is still there. Mark opens the door, then turns to his daughter.

MARK (CONT'D)

How are you, by the way?

KAREN

Good. You?

MARK

Good.

He's off.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Karen sits on her couch eating refried beans out of a bowl with a flour tortilla as a utensil. She is looking through the White Pages for "Autumn Simpson." The phone rings but she lets it go to her answering machine. Charlotte leaves a message.

CHARLOTTE

Hey. Haven't heard from you but assume I'll see you at Jackie's tomorrow. Ok. Bye.

EXT. JACKIE MORRISON'S HOUSE -- DAY

INT/EXT. FRONT DOOR

Charlotte is standing on the porch with her guitar. There are a few potted plants and a backseat bench from a van in lieu of traditional outdoor seating. Karen walks up and stands next to her. They are barely making eye contact with each other. Karen knocks on the door.

JACKIE (30, biracial) answers. She is pretty and muscular with olive skin. Her demeanor is no-nonsense and a tad curt. She seems older, because she is, and she dresses more like an adult than Karen or Charlotte. Her clothes fit her better.

JACKIE

Hey guys! I'm Jackie. Come on in.

This house is nicer than the other punk/communal houses we've seen. Though it's still furnished with vinyl couches and chairs, there is an intentional Mid-Century aesthetic. Everything is in semi-good condition. Each room is painted a different, bold color. Black velvet paintings and paint-by-numbers art hang on the walls.

Jackie leads them through the house with a swiftness and certainty.

They pass a Rottweiler mix on a dog bed.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

That's Pepper. Don't make eye contact with her. She was abused. My roommate rescued her off the side of the highway. She drove her back to the nearest house and the woman was like, "keep that dog away from here, my husband kicks her." So my roommate took her and now our whole house meets with a dog therapist once a week.

Karen looks at the dog.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

(To Karen) I'm serious. You guys want an espresso?

CHARLOTTE

That you make at home?

JACKIE

Yeah.

KAREN

No thanks.

CHARLOTTE

I'm good.

JACKIE

Water?

She grabs a Brita out of the fridge. Charlotte and Jackie cannot believe how adult this is.

INT. Basement -- continuous

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Sorry about the smell. I'm used to it but I forget other people aren't. We had a possum that got stuck in the wall and died. That was almost a year ago. We had it removed. Obviously.

Charlotte and Karen are a little overwhelmed. They look at each other. Maybe this was a bad idea.

The basement is covered with old mattresses as soundproofing. Cables run every which way. There is an actual PA and microphones.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Hope those amps are okay. They belong to my boyfriend's band but he said you can borrow them.

They are beautiful vintage amps, better than anything either Karen or Charlotte have played through.

They plug in their guitars. Jackie plugs in a fan.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I get sweaty.

Whew. Charlotte and Karen felt like they were holding their breath the entire time. This woman is a force of nature.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

What do you want to play?

CHARLOTTE

We've been trying people out with old songs, but..

Karen cuts her off.

KAREN

Maybe we should play her our new one.

CHARLOTTE

Uh. Sure.

Sensing indecision, or *something*, Jackie takes over.

JACKIE

Let's play the new one!

Karen and Charlotte look at each other. They're nervous. Things still feel icy.

KAREN

Do you want to count in or should I?

CHARLOTTE

I will. 1, 2...1, 2, 3, 4

They start playing the opening guitar lines of their new song. It is angular and aggressive but catchy. Charlotte starts singing, but she sounds hesitant. They stop.

KAREN

Sorry.

JACKIE

Why, what's wrong?

CHARLOTTE

Nothing.

Charlotte gives Karen a look.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Sorry, we can start again.

JACKIE

Want me to count you in?

KAREN

Yes please.

Jackie gives a confident and evenly timed four-count on her sticks. Karen and Charlotte begin again. They play a few bars. Jackie listens.

JACKIE

Stop. Stop.

They stop. Ugh, maybe Jackie hates the song.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I think I have something. Let's start at the top again.

Jackie clicks her sticks again and this time she comes in on the one, right along with Karen and Charlotte. She is hitting with such assuredness and determination that they have to turn up their amps. They stop again.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Are you going to sing?

The song starts again. This time Charlotte sings. She begins quietly, but realizing she needs to compete with the loudness, she steps back and wails. It's a voice that sends chills down one's spine. Jackie guides the song, things tighten up. Karen begins to move her body, feeling powerful. Karen and Charlotte look at each other. It's an entire conversation without words. ["You asshole!" "No, you're the asshole!" "Can we please not fight"?] They smile and laugh and then simply enjoy it. The music is bigger than anything else. Most importantly, they've found their third.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE -- LATER

Karen and Charlotte stand outside their separate cars.

KAREN

Oh my god. I don't even know what that was.

CHARLOTTE

I do. It was our sound.

KAREN

My ears are ringing.

CHARLOTTE

Mine too. I want you to come over tonight.

KAREN

To write?

CHARLOTTE

To hold my hand.

Karen looks confused and also a tad vulnerable.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I'm kidding, silly. Kind of. Come over to celebrate. Our band. Us.

Charlotte leans in and kisses Karen on the neck. They look into each other's eyes. It's on.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Charlotte is alone. She puts a record on (Dusty Springfield's *Dusty In Memphis*) and lights a candle. She applies lipstick and looks in her mirror. She rereads the note affixed to it: "You Are a Strong and Beautiful Woman." Right, she doesn't need lipstick. She wipes it off with the back of her hand.

INT. KAREN'S CAR

Karen sits alone in her parked car. She tries to muster up the courage to go in. Tonight's the night. She looks down at her outfit wondering if she's chosen the right thing. A T-shirt of a British punk band; she hopes it's not too much. She messes up her hair in the rear view mirror, trying to capture the perfect mix of not caring and caring too much.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S APARTMENT

Charlotte takes a sip of liquor, making a funny face as it hits her tongue. She looks at the door, waiting.

INT. KAREN'S CAR

Karen takes a second then opens her car door. She steps out.

Then....

Back in Charlotte's apartment, she checks the clock on her night stand. She turns over a picture of her and Greg.

Karen walks up to the door.

She takes a deep breath.

Karen knocks.

The door opens.

KAREN

Autumn?

It's Autumn Simpson.

END.