

WILD CHILD

(pilot)

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. RUPERT'S SOHO LOFT – MORNING

The camera moves through a polished Soho loft. With floor to ceiling windows and sculptural furniture likely from Roche Bobois, it's clear the person who lives here is very successful. In every arena but one...

RUPERT (O.S.)
Good grief! This is just-- silly.

GRETCHEN (O.S.)
It's *fine*! Don't worry.

RUPERT (V.O.)
(exasperated)
It's like "Hello? Is this thing on?"

GRETCHEN (O.S.)
Oh babe, don't... don't *talk* into it.

INT. RUPERT'S BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

In bed, we find RUPERT, 30's, tan, naked, flaccid. With long sandy hair and a wrist wrapped in Tibetan prayer beads, he offers apologies to GRETCHEN, 30, the gorgeous brunette next to him, wearing a sympathetic expression and very expensive lingerie. Gretchen loves Rupert-- but she seriously has *five* more minutes to spend on this, before she needs to leave for work. Gretchen has a big job and a big morning ahead of her.

RUPERT
It's a puzzler, though, you have to admit! Testosterone levels are meant to be at their peak in the morning. And here I have this gorgeous girl, in a chartreuse charmeuse chemise, that I literally die for and yet--

Rupert peers under the covers again. Nothing.

RUPERT (CONT'D)
(laughs at the audacity)
I mean, what the frog?!

GRETCHEN
Maybe it's *dietary*?

RUPERT
Well now, that's interesting.
Hmmm. Why don't I lay off the soy,
and we'll see what sort of a boner
tomorrow brings.

GRETCHEN
Sounds like a plan!

Gretchen leaps from the bed, relieved to have an out.

RUPERT
In the meantime--

Rupert lifts the sheet one more time and shakes a fist at his
penis, scolding it.

RUPERT (CONT'D)
Get your act together, mister!
Shape up or ship out!

Gretchen speeds away, down the hall. She throws on her
trench, grabs her bag, swipes a piece of fruit from Rupert's
exotic fruit bowl and calls over her shoulder:

GRETCHEN
Love you! Talk later!

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Gretchen rides the elevator with an ARTSY TENANT, 60's, who
is going for a walk with her DOG. The woman steals sideways
glances at Gretchen with a coy smile. Finally:

ARTSY TENANT
(starstruck)
*I know who you are. I recognize
your picture from the masthead.
You're Gretchen Cochrane! Style
Director for Architectural Digest.*

Gretchen self-consciously touches her messy hair and puts her
hands up.

GRETCHEN
Ya got me!

ARTSY TENANT

I didn't know you lived in this building. What a thrill! That must mean I chose wisely...

GRETCHEN

Oh, I don't live in this building. I couldn't afford to live in this building. My *boyfriend* lives in this building.

ARTSY TENANT

(winks)

Then I guess we *both* chose wisely. Anything exciting in the works?

GRETCHEN

(confidentially)

I'm on my way to shoot a celeb home in Hudson Valley. This place, you would swallow your tongue. Hand-scraped oak floors, textiles up the ying-yang, can't say who it belongs to but his first name is Ralph.

(off her blank stare)

Last name is Lauren.

ARTSY TENANT

Oh good lord! What does one even wear to a photo shoot at Ralph Lauren's house?

GRETCHEN

Funny you should ask...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. UPSTATE NEW YORK HIGHWAY – DAY

Gretchen speeds down the scenic highway in upstate New York driving a bright red Alfa Romeo Spider. A cover of "Hot Child in the City" by Nick Gilder underscores.

GRETCHEN (O.S.)

A bright red 1969 Alfa Romeo Spider that perfectly matches my favorite lipstick *and* color coordinates with my vintage Hermes scarf.

(beat)

Plus jeans and a tee.

Gretchen smiles confidently at her reflection in the rearview mirror as the wind whips her hair around. Nailed it! But that smile quickly fades as the car starts SPUTTERING, LURCHING and making terrible GRINDING noises.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)
Oh, no. No, no, no!

Gretchen tries to muscle the car into gear but it STALLS OUT.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)
Crap!

She veers off the highway and takes the exit, coasting into the parking lot of--

EXT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Exasperated, Gretchen beats the steering wheel with her hands and spews curses. A MOURNING DOVE coos in the distance. Its calming, melodic, call in stark contrast to Gretchen's.

INT. DINER - DAY

Gretchen blows into the diner and the place grinds to a halt. The working-class PATRONS stare, unsure what to make of this windblown woman, frozen in the doorway, her Hermes scarf lightly flapping in the breeze. Gretchen awkwardly waves.

GRETCHEN
(an alien)
Hell-o.

A beat. Then RUTH, a gruff waitress in her late 50's, shoves a plastic-covered menu at her.

RUTH
Anywhere you like, doll.

Gretchen sits herself down at the counter and surveys the sticky menu, with a frown.

GRETCHEN
(to Ruth)
I don't suppose there's a *latte* to be had--

Ruth pours Gretchen a cup of coffee.

RUTH
What else can I get you?

GRETCHEN
Truthfully? A mechanic. I have a
hugely important work event and I'm
having car trouble--

Another waitress, DOTTIE, mid 50's, surfaces alongside Ruth.

DOTTIE
(bubbly)
How about some hot, fluffy
pancakes? Ours were voted best in
New York State.

GRETCHEN
I don't doubt it, Dottie, but I was
just explaining to your colleague
that I'm having a problem with my--

DOTTIE
(pledges)
There's not a problem on God's
green earth that a stack of our
pancakes can't fix.

Gretchen stares at Dottie for a beat. Then:

GRETCHEN
How about obesity.

The waitresses stare back for a moment, before bursting into
laughter.

RUTH
(wiping tears)
That's a good one! She got you,
Dot! She sure got you!

DOTTIE
She sure did!

RUTH
Hotcakes are on me.
(shouts to kitchen)
Short stack, easy cow paste, side
of Vermont!

Gretchen glances at her watch, anxiously.

GRETCHEN
Jesus...

Gretchen swivels on her stool and surveys the diner.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Every person *in* here looks like
they know how to fix a car...

Ruth is back with a stack of golden, fluffy pancakes. She sets them before Gretchen who stares, dumbstruck. They are, for lack of a better word, gorgeous.

RUTH

Get 'em while they're hot.

GRETCHEN

(marvels)

I haven't had pancakes since I was
a kid...

Dottie nods, encouragingly. Try. Gretchen drizzles some glistening amber syrup across the top then picks up her fork and knife. Ruth and Dottie watch with bated breath as Gretchen cuts herself a triangular bite and places it in her mouth. Gretchen's eyes roll into the back of her head.

DOTTIE

Well?

She slams her palms down on the counter.

GRETCHEN

Are you KIDDING me with these? Are
you KIDDING me?

Gretchen takes another bite, this one heartier, and sways on her stool in ecstasy.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

Can I GET some milk?

RUTH

(shouts to kitchen)

Lactate in a glass for me!

At the end of the counter, watching this display, is HANK, 30, a regular at the diner. Ruggedly handsome, outdoorsy, and clearly amused by Gretchen, he slides into the empty seat next to her.

HANK

Tranny?

Gretchen, still chewing, looks offended.

GRETCHEN

Excuse me?

HANK

You said you were having car trouble. What kinda tranny? She manual?

GRETCHEN

Oh! Yes. She... is. Keeps stalling out on me.

HANK

(nods)
You letting the clutch out too fast?

GRETCHEN

I don't believe so--

HANK

Revving too low? Did you check the rpms?

GRETCHEN

(no idea)
I mean--

HANK

Who taught you to drive stick?

GRETCHEN

A college boyfriend.

HANK

I see. And how long were the two of you together?

GRETCHEN

Is that-- relevant?

HANK

No, just curious.
(swipes keys off counter)
I'll go take a look.

Gretchen pops up. She drops a 20 dollar bill on the counter.

GRETCHEN

I'll go with you!
(to Ruth)
Good coffee! Can I get one to go, with cream?

RUTH
(yells)
Lemme get a dirt-water! Give it
shoes and make it moo.

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER – MOMENTS LATER

Hank is in the driver's seat now with Gretchen beside him. It's close quarters and they are knee-to-knee. Gretchen stares at Hank, as he tries the key in the ignition. She's just now noticing how handsome he is...

GRETCHEN
See? It won't turn over.

HANK
You gotta pump the gas a little,
when you start her.

GRETCHEN
I did!

HANK
Not too much or you'll flood the
engine.

GRETCHEN
How many times do I pump?

HANK
It's not a number, it's a feel.
You gotta feel her out. You gotta
listen to what she wants. She's an
old girl and she's European--

GRETCHEN
(nods, softly)
On my father's side--

HANK
She doesn't wanna be manhandled--

GRETCHEN
I don't think she'd mind--

The car finally turns over-- but then dies.

HANK
Huh. You feel that?

Gretchen nods. Her eyes drift to Hank's Adam's Apple, which she finds incredibly sexy. In fact, his whole neck, Gretchen decides, is sexy.

GRETCHEN
So is this what you do? You fix cars?

HANK
Fix anything, really. Just like to work with my hands.

Gretchen's gaze travels down to Hank's sizable, calloused hands, gripping her steering wheel.

GRETCHEN
You're really... good at it.

HANK
(frowns)
I think you have a carb issue.

GRETCHEN
Did you see how many pancakes I ate?

HANK
And possibly... a faulty starter.

GRETCHEN
Just like Rupert.

HANK
Who?

GRETCHEN
What?

HANK
Someone's gonna need to spend a little time under her hood. Really sniff around down there.

The sexual innuendo has become too much for Gretchen to bear. She leans in closer to Hank.

GRETCHEN
(murmurs)
Are we still talking about the car?

HANK
I am.

Their faces are very close now.

HANK (CONT'D)
Or... I was.

Gretchen grabs Hank and kisses him, passionately. She pulls him into the passenger's side and Hank obliges by hand-cranking Gretchen's seat back...

GRETCHEN (O.S.)

I don't know what came over me! It was primal! Maybe because I haven't had sex with Rupert for so long?

GRADY (O.S.)

Who's Rupert?

SMASH TO:

INT. TOW TRUCK – NEXT DAY

Gretchen FaceTimes with her younger sister MEREDITH, late 20's, as she rides back to Manhattan in a tow truck. Beside her, GRADY, 40's, the tow truck driver, is fully immersed in the conversation. Gretchen holds up an index finger.

GRETCHEN

Just so unlike me. To blow off work to have sex with a *stranger*? In a *car*? And then again at his *house*? *Two more times*? Have you ever known me to be that horny?

MEREDITH (O.S.)

Not really. Three times in 24 hours? That's a lot.

GRADY

(mouths)
Cranberry juice.

GRETCHEN

(mouths back)
I know.

INT. RESTAURANT – AT THAT MOMENT

Meredith is doing side work (marrying ketchups, rolling silverware into napkins, etc.) at her waitressing job. She has the phone propped up on the table.

MEREDITH

So is there potential? Think you'll see this guy again?

BACK TO:

INT. TOW TRUCK – SAME AS BEFORE

Gretchen laughs and grabs Grady's arm, for emphasis.

GRETCHEN

Are you kidding me?! Uhhh, no.
"Neeewh." It's a hard *neeewh*.
This was purely sexual. We're from
completely different worlds. He's
"Into the Wild" and I'm--

GRADY

"The Devil Wears Prada."

Gretchen looks at Grady.

GRETCHEN

It's not *not* true...

MEREDITH (O.S.)

Gotcha. What I don't got, is if
this dude is some backwoods yokel,
completely wrong for your city-girl
lifestyle... why are the three of
us still talking about him?

Gretchen considers. She looks at Grady, solemnly.

GRETCHEN

We're not. We're never talking
about him again. We're not even
thinking about him!

Grady mimes locking his lips and throwing away the key. As
they ride in silence we FREEZE FRAME on this image.

NARRATOR

And for a while, it was easy.

GRETCHEN'S LIFE MONTAGE #1

We see a glamorous and fast-paced montage of Gretchen's life,
at the office, photoshoots, lunches, red-carpet events, in
the park with Rupert...

NARRATOR

*Gretchen kept her mind busy. She
threw herself into work. Work
events, work lunches, work drinks.
And on the weekends, when she
wasn't working?*

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*Picture-perfect outings with
Rupert, featuring light, bordering-
on-platonic kisses, in the park.*

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

Gretchen steps out of a high-end Upper East Side HAIR SALON looking and feeling like a million bucks.

NARRATOR
*Until Thursday, at approximately
3:45 pm. Right after a bitch got
her roots done.*

Something she sees across the street takes the wind from her sails. Gretchen looks like she's seen a ghost. REVERSE ON: The Alpha Romeo Spider, parked across the street.

QUICK FLASHES of Gretchen and Hank in that very car.

NARRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*It all came rushing back to her.
The pancakes. The passion. The
undeniable truth that Gretchen
could no longer ignore: she was
gonna barf.*

Gretchen rushes over to the trash can on the corner and violently WRETCHES into it. When she brings her head up we are--

INT. MEREDITH'S BATHROOM - LATER

Gretchen has just finished throwing up again in her sister's toilet. She tosses her positive pregnancy test at Meredith.

MEREDITH
Wow. So... mazel?

GRETCHEN
No, not mazel. The opposite of
mazel. This is a *nightmare*. I
have a very demanding lifestyle and
size 4 wardrobe, neither of which
will accommodate a frickin' BABY.

MEREDITH
(smirks)
You're gonna be a great mom.

GRETCHEN

(wails)

Oh my god, this baby is screwed!
This baby is so screwed. We don't
even know who the *father* is--

MEREDITH

Uh, yeah we do.

GRETCHEN

What are you talking about? It
could be diner guy or it could be--

MEREDITH

You can stop right there.

GRETCHEN

Rupert. Of course it could be
Rupert! I've had sex with him at
least twice this year. Granted,
one of the times we were fully
clothed. But theoretically, this
baby *could* be his. It *should* be
his!

Meredith looks skeptical.

MEREDITH

Sorry. But my money's on diner
dude. Something tells me Rupert's
sperm aren't as robust as his bank
account.

Off Gretchen's look of dread it's the--

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. RUPERT'S SOHO LOFT – NIGHT

Rupert cheerily comes home from another great day at work, where he made gobs and gobs of money. He carries his briefcase and a small paper bag. As Rupert enters the loft, he's surprised to find it's dark.

RUPERT
Gretchen, darling? Are you home?
I sourced an ethical foie gras--

A SNIFFLE is heard from within the dark. Rupert ventures closer to find Gretchen, quietly weeping at his petrified wood dining table.

RUPERT (CONT'D)
What's wrong, my love?

Rupert's face clouds as he kneels beside Gretchen.

RUPERT (CONT'D)
(worried)
Oh no. You aren't going to end it
with me, are you?

Gretchen blows her nose, miserably.

GRETCHEN
You're going to end it with me,
when you hear what I have to say.

Rupert sighs with relief.

RUPERT
Wrong! Absolutely wrong! There's
nothing you could say that would--

GRETCHEN
(blurts out)
I'm pregnant.

Rupert looks surprised.

RUPERT
Pregnant? Well, that's curious.

Gretchen scans Rupert's face, desperately trying to read it.

GRETCHEN
Well, we did have sex that one--

Rupert shakes his head.

RUPERT

No. No, Gretchen, I've been keeping something from you as well. I've been to the doctor and I'm sterile. Low sperm count, low testosterone, it's no wonder you cheated.

GRETCHEN

Oh, Rupert, no! It isn't that--

RUPERT

Gretchen, listen to me. Although the blood flow to my penis is limited... the blood flow to my heart is not. I love you!

GRETCHEN

I love you too!

RUPERT

Then marry me, Gretchen! I'm already down on one knee! Marry me and I'll make sure you have everything you ever need.

FREEZE FRAME-- on that image.

NARRATOR

Except sexual intercourse! But of course, that's not where Gretchen's mind was at the moment. She was just so happy to be forgiven, so grateful for the stability that Rupert's love would provide, that she said--

UNFREEZE:

GRETCHEN

Yes! Yes! A million times yes!

As Gretchen and Rupert embrace we hear CHAMPAGNE POP and--

GRETCHEN'S LIFE MONTAGE #2

We see a fast-paced montage of Rupert and Gretchen's glamorous engagement party, black-tie wedding, moving in together.

NARRATOR

*And for a while, no one questioned
this decision. Least of all,
Gretchen.*

TIME PASS to Gretchen, now visibly pregnant, working with a dozen DESIGNERS and CONTRACTORS on a baby nursery that is literally being assembled around her. When it's finished, Rupert steps in. A CAMERA FLASHES and this image becomes the cover of the latest issue of Architectural Digest. We see it on the newsstand, as Gretchen walks by on her way to--

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - BRUNCH

Gretchen, looking adorable in designer maternity clothes, sits across from Meredith who is chomping on the garnish of her second Bloody Mary.

NARRATOR

*Until Sunday, at approximately
11:45 am. When a bitch went to
brunch.*

A WAITER delivers a crisp, thin, golden, translucent circle to Gretchen on a plate, with a white iceberg on top.

WAITER

Our 14 karat breakfast crepe.
Served with a maple-meringue
formation.

Gretchen hits the formation with the back of her fork. It sounds like glass.

GRETCHEN

I hate it.

WAITER

You haven't even--

MEREDITH

(royal decree)
Hates it!

The Waiter rolls his eyes and takes the plate away.

NARRATOR

*That brittle, frigid crepe was a
far cry from the golden, fluffy
upstate New York hotcakes that
Gretchen was still so horny for.
The ones she went to bed at night,
fantasizing about...*

EXT. UPSTATE NEW YORK HIGHWAY – DAY

Gretchen's car fights a snow storm as it heads upstate.
"I Don't Know" by Lisa Hannigan underscores.

NARRATOR

And so Gretchen decided to make the pilgrimage, back to that old fateful diner, in search of her beloved short stack, easy cow paste, side of Vermont and if she was being totally honest...

INT. DINER – CONTINUOUS

Gretchen is back at the diner DEVOURING pancakes.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Hank.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: Dottie and Ruth watching her, concerned.

DOTTIE

*(whispers)
She's pregnant?*

RUTH

*(whispers)
She's married? He's gonna be destroyed.*

The door JANGLES and Hank walks in, shaking off snow. His hopeful gaze scans the counter.

NARRATOR

Hank had been looking for Gretchen since the day she left.

Dottie and Ruth watch spellbound as Hank's gaze rests on Gretchen and he discovers what they already know.

HANK

Were you planning on telling me?

Gretchen freezes, a forkful of pancakes hovering just outside her mouth. She turns to face Hank and the electricity between them makes her drop her fork.

RUTH

She dropped her fork!

DOTTIE

I'll get her a clean one.

Gretchen's eyes settle on Hank's perfectly pronounced Adam's apple. She stares at it, fondly, then snaps herself out of it.

GRETCHEN

What makes you think it's yours?

Hank moves closer and places his big hands on her belly.

HANK

Mine. I knew the night it happened. I could feel it then, just like I can feel it right now.

DOTTIE -- surfaces between them, with the clean fork.

DOTTIE

I'll just put this on the counter.

Gretchen smiles awkwardly.

GRETCHEN

This is... awkward. Do you not find this incredibly awkward? We hardly know each other and we're standing in the middle of a diner discussing a theoretical baby we may or may not have made together.

HANK

From the size of things, I figure we have a few months left to get to know each other, before--

GRETCHEN

Yeah, about that.
(flashes ring finger)
I'm kinda sorta married, now.

Hank frowns.

HANK

Why'd you go and do that?

The whole diner is listening, waiting for an answer.

GRETCHEN

Because my boyfriend proposed? Because he wants to spend the rest of his life with me? Because he wants to... take care of me? And the baby. And because, I don't know the first thing about you! I don't even know your last name--

A patron in the back, JIM-JOHN, stands up and points.

JIM-JOHN
Lewis! That's Hank Lewis!

GRETCHEN
I don't know what your favorite
band is or if you--

HANK
Gotcha, gotcha. Well, the road's
are getting pretty messy. Guess
you better head on back.

The diner GROANS in disapproval. Gretchen is dismayed by
Hank's reaction as well.

GRETCHEN
Guess I better.

Gretchen throws some money on the counter and EXITS into the
cold. Hank watches her go with regret, then looks up to see
the entire diner staring back at him like he's crazy. AD LIB
reactions ("Go after her!", "C'mon Hank!" etc)

EXT. UPSTATE NY DINER – CONTINUOUS

Hank chases after Gretchen in the snow, catching her just
before she gets to her car.

HANK
Gretchen!

Gretchen stops in her tracks and looks back at Hank. He
stares at her for a moment, in her fancy coat, about to get
into her fancy car. Hank could never give her any of those
things. Shaking, Hank just now realizes he left his coat,
and his courage, back inside the diner.

HANK (CONT'D)
If it's a boy how 'bout John?

The wind HOWLS and SNOW SWIRLS as it blizzards even harder.

GRETCHEN
(shouting)
John a family name?

HANK
(shouts back)
No! I just... I love The Beatles.
That's my favorite band. So you
know.

Hank shrugs and smiles. Gretchen smiles back.

NARRATOR

It wasn't a boy.

GRETCHEN'S LIFE MONTAGE #3

We see a fast-paced montage of Gretchen's water breaking, going into labor, giving birth, and coming home from the hospital with her baby.

NARRATOR

*But as a little shout-out to Hank?
She named me Lennon.*

We now understand that our Narrator is none other than Gretchen and Hank's daughter, LENNON. We TIME CUT to Lennon getting her first tooth, then losing her first tooth, playing in her mom's makeup...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

My childhood was pretty unremarkable. All major milestones were met. Crawled, walked. Got a tooth, lost a tooth. With Rupert constantly off traveling for work, Mom raised me her way. More like a BFF than a daughter. We were super tight.

Gretchen puts lipstick on YOUNG LENNON so they both have the same bright red pout.

GRETCHEN

Twinsies!

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

A class of 4th graders, Young Lennon amongst them, sit at their desks giving their attention to the TEACHER.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But soon, I started developing my own interests.

TEACHER

Class, in honor of John Lennon's birthday, we have a volunteer here to teach us all about The Beatles.

We start a slow PUSH IN on Young Lennon, mesmerized, as the OS volunteer plays "Something" by the Beatles on guitar.

NARRATOR

In that moment, I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my life. And once I got my own guitar? I was never without it.

CLOSE UP: of the volunteer's hands, expertly playing a gorgeous Fender Telecaster. TRANSITION TO:

INT. RUPERT'S SOHO LOFT – NIGHT

The exact same guitar is now in Young Lennon's hands. She strums badly while wearing a pair of Gretchen's favorite sunglasses.

YOUNG LENNON

(matter of fact)

I'm gonna be a musician.

GRETCHEN

I bet you are!

ON RUPERT-- looking concerned.

RUPERT

(sotto)

Have you *heard* the child play? She's not good.

GRETCHEN

Hey, Len?

(then)

Those are mommy's favorite sunglasses, okay? Don't lose those. I want them back where you found them.

We FREEZE FRAME on Gretchen's stern face.

NARRATOR

There! Did you hear that? That was literally the strictest my mom ever was with me. Unlike most parents, she didn't believe in yelling and she didn't believe in punishment.

TRANSITION TO:

LENNON'S LIFE MONTAGE #1

A fast-paced montage of Teenage Lennon's life:

NARRATOR

She believed in self-expression...

Lennon with freshly dyed blue hair PERFORMS at Webster Hall to a packed room.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Self-exploration...

Lennon gets off stage and falls into the arms of her girlfriend, CASS, 17, who's waiting in the wings. They KISS.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

As well as self-service.

Lennon sits in bed reading a book by Dr. Laurie Mintz called, "Becoming Cliterate: Why Orgasm Equality Matters."

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She taught me not to fit in, because it was way better to stand out. Report cards went into the trash, unopened, because she didn't believe people should be graded. And again, the only time I ever remember her getting mad at me was--

INT. LENNON'S ROOM - ANOTHER NIGHT

Gretchen sits on the edge of her daughter's bed with a frown. Lennon mostly ignores Gretchen as she noodles with her ever-present guitar.

GRETCHEN

*I'm very lenient with you, dude. I really am. Don't ask a lot. All I asked, was that you *don't* lose my sunglasses.*

Lennon shakes her head and chuckles.

NARRATOR

Classic Gretchen. I was literally failing out of tenth grade and this was what she was upset about! Also: I didn't lose her sunglasses.

Gretchen stares at her daughter and purses her lips.

GRETCHEN

It annoys me that you won't ever admit when you're wrong. It's a bad quality. Just own up to it.

(MORE)

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)
Say, "I lost your favorite
sunglasses."

NARRATOR
I DIDN'T!

Lennon stares back at her mom, giving her absolutely nothing,
as she strums. Gretchen shrugs, sadly.

GRETCHEN
Well, they're deadstock. I can't
even re-purchase them. So, I hope
you're happy.

Gretchen gets up and exits, closing the door behind her.

NARRATOR
*When I think back on that day and
realize that was the last time I'd
ever see my mom? That the last
conversation the two of us would
ever have? I don't know whether to
laugh or cry.
(then)
Actually, I do.*

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The camera moves down the hallway, peeking inside the
classroom where Lennon sits at her desk.

NARRATOR
*I remember being excited when I got
pulled out of class. I thought:
"Cool, I'll get to miss my math
quiz." What an idiot.*

We watch as the TEACHER sends Lennon into the hall, where
Meredith and some POLICE OFFICERS are waiting.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*They said a car lost control and
jumped the curb. They said it
killed two pedestrians. I still
didn't understand why they were
telling this to me...*

PRELAP:

ON TV -- ABC local news is covering the accident, their
reporter live at the scene.

REPORTER

I'm standing on the corner of 69th and Madison where hours ago, a driver lost control of his car striking and killing hedge fund billionaire Rupert Ross and his wife Gretchen Cochrane.

IMAGES OF THE TWO appear on the screen. PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. DINER — AT THAT MOMENT

THE TV is mounted on the wall in the diner and Hank, seated at the counter, is watching. He drops his cup of hot coffee, shattering the mug and covering himself in shards and mess. Ruth and Dottie, older now, in their 70's, spring into action, wiping the counter and a scalded Hank, who doesn't react to either.

DOTTIE

(crying, wiping)
Hank, I'm so sorry--

HANK

(hoarsely)
Thank you.

RUTH

(blotting Hank's clothes)
What a terrible loss--

HANK

Thank you.

A FEW MORE PATRONS rally around Frank, AD-LIBBING CONDOLENCES and giving side hugs. Hank quietly thanks them all, his eyes still locked on the screen, trying to will the reporter into saying there's been a mistake. It isn't true.

HANK (CONT'D)

Thank you so much, that's very kind.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY FAMILY COURT — DAY

NARRATOR

My Aunt told me not to worry. She said she'd petition the court for custody. She said she'd move into our loft and everything would be fine. But it wasn't.

INT. NEW YORK CITY FAMILY COURT – CONTINUOUS

Meredith, dressed somberly, stands before a JUDGE. Lennon sits vacantly, in the courthouse. This is all a bad dream.

MEREDITH

Your honor, I'm seeking sole physical and legal custody of my niece, Lennon. As I'm sure the court is aware, I am next of kin, since both her parents are recently deceased.

HANK (O.S.)

I object.

Meredith and Lennon, turn to see where the voice is coming from. REVEAL: Hank, in the last row of the courtroom.

MEREDITH

I'm sorry? You object to *what*?

JUDGE

(wearily)

Mr. Lewis--

Hank rises and walks to the front of the room.

HANK

I object to the statement that both her parents are deceased.

Meredith shakes her head slowly. Fuuuuck.

MEREDITH

Diner guy.

JUDGE

Ms. Cochrane, be advised, this individual, Hank Lewis, has *also* petitioned the court for custody and was able to provide paperwork establishing paternity.

ON LENNON-- staring blankly, into space.

NARRATOR

Riiiiight about then, I started wondering if maybe I did something terrible, in a past life. Maybe I embezzled from orphans or tortured alpacas.

MEREDITH

(mutters)

Gretchen, you idiot...

NARRATOR

What happened next was a lot of yelling and finger-pointing and gavel-banging. My Aunt said she was going to "lawyer up" but based on my failing transcripts and robust truancy records, the court ordered--

JUDGE

A trial period of three months, in upstate New York, to see if the child fares better under the care of her biological father.

As the gavel drops, all three adults turn to Lennon.

NARRATOR

I still hadn't cried. Part of me was afraid if I started crying, I might never stop. I think they thought this news would put me over the edge. But it didn't. I didn't feel... anything. And without my mom, nowhere felt like home, so it really didn't matter where I lived.

Lennon slings her bag over her shoulder and looks at Hank.

LENNON

Congratulations.

(then)

It's a girl.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. RUPERT'S SOHO LOFT – DAY

Lennon, wearing sneakers, men's dress trousers, and a tank that shows off substantial armpit hair, exits the building. She cringes at the sight of Hank and his pickup truck, adorned with his company's "Handy Hank" logo.

LENNON

(mutters)

"Handy Hank." Sounds like a porn star.

JIMMY, the doorman, approaches Lennon with wet eyes.

JIMMY

I'm sorry for your loss--

LENNON

Could you grab my bag?

An emotional Jimmy takes Lennon's bag and guitar case and puts them in Hank's truck.

HANK

(re: Jimmy)

That wasn't very nice.

LENNON

Yeah, well, neither is having your parents killed.

HANK

He *knows* that. That's why he was offering his condolences--

LENNON

Awww, Daddy's first "teachable moment."

Hank backs off and silently opens the passenger door for Lennon. Ignoring it, she jumps into the flatbed.

HANK

I'm not sure if that's safe.
Or legal.

Lennon stretches out with her hands laced behind her head.

LENNON

That sounds like a "you" problem.

Hank nods. Yes, it does. It all does, frankly.

EXT. UPSTATE NEW YORK HIGHWAY – LATER

“County Line” by Cass McCombs can be heard as Lennon lies in the back, looking up at the changing colors of the trees as the truck winds up the scenic highway towards--

EXT. DINER – DAY

Hank’s truck pulls into the diner where it all started. The diner where he first met Gretchen. He stands there, a bit choked up and unsure how to get his kid out of the car without starting a fight.

NARRATOR

Hank had never had a daughter but he had dealt with wild animals. He felt it imperative to establish himself, as the alpha.

Hank WHISTLES, the way you would for a dog. Lennon jumps out of the truck and heads inside the diner, without a word.

HANK

(sotto)

Can’t believe that just worked.

In the distance, the MOURNING DOVE cries.

INT. DINER – CONTINUOUS

Hank follows Lennon towards a booth passing SEAN, 17, a bus-boy, carting a tub of dirty-dishes.

SEAN

(to Lennon)

Sorry for your loss.

LENNON

Sorry for your face.

HANK

(apologetically)

Thanks, Sean. And your face looks great, please ignore her.

Hank slides into the booth across from Lennon who is eating a packet of sugar.

HANK (CONT'D)

This is a civilized town. People from here, they show *compassion* towards one another. *Civility*.

LENNON

I'm not from here. I'm from New York.

HANK

This is New York.
(then, re: sugar)
Don't eat that.

LENNON

So what's the right reaction to "I'm sorry for your loss?" It's a meaningless platitude.

HANK

It's something to say, when there's *nothing* to say.
(fighting emotion)
It's the offer of one tiny little matchstick, when the light in your life has gone dark.

Lennon stops eating sugar. She looks at Hank, baffled by how choked up he is over a woman he didn't even *know*.

LENNON

Unrequited love, man. It's a bummer.

Ruth and Dottie surface holding menus and trying to hide the raw emotions they're feeling. Ruth is doing a better job than Dottie, who is already in tears.

RUTH

(proudly)
You must be Hank's daughter?

LENNON

(shrugs)
That's what the court tells me.

DOTTIE

It's a beautiful thing, seeing the two of you--

RUTH

Dot.

DOTTIE
Your mother--

 HANK
Dot!
 (then, smiles)
She'll have the pancakes.

 LENNON
No, thanks.

 HANK
 (reassuringly)
Pancakes.

 DOTTIE
Your mom loved 'em, I bet you will
too.

 LENNON
I'm not my mom. And I don't want
pancakes.

Hank shoots Ruth and Dottie a look.

 RUTH
We'll give you two a little time...
with the menu.

Ruth and Dottie scat.

 HANK
Now, look here. Sometimes, in
life, we do things because it will
make *someone else* happy. That's
why you're gonna eat those pancakes
and I'm gonna do The Pony with Dot.

Hank gets out of the booth and walks over to the jukebox. Hank throws a coin in the jukebox and "Pony Time" by Chubby Checker fills the diner. Hank points at Dottie and reels her in, using an imaginary fishing rod. Dottie dances her way over to Hank and the two of them pony across the linoleum floor together. Lennon watches in disbelief. Sean slides into Hank's empty spot, across from her.

 SEAN
 (leans over)
Dottie's husband used to dance with
her every week. He's been gone
about a year now. Your dad's been
filling in for him, ever since.

Lennon looks at Sean.

LENNON
I like girls.

EXT. HOUSE – LATER

Hank's truck is now parked in someone's driveway. Lennon, miserable, hangs over the side.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
*On the way home, we stopped so Hank
could fix someone's "sump pump."
(then)
I waited in the truck.*

The MOURNING DOVE coos to Lennon from the treetops.

LENNON
(points at the bird)
Annoying! So annoying!

INT. HANK'S HOUSE – MOMENTS LATER

Lennon walks through Hank's modest woodsy cabin and surveys his belongings. Lennon nods her head, slowly processing.

LENNON
You know all their money is in
trust, right? It can't be touched
until I'm 18.

Hank chuckles.

HANK
Listen, hun. If you think I'm
after your money, you're insane. I
do *not* aspire to the lifestyle that
you were leading--

LENNON
What do you know about my
lifestyle?

HANK
I know you spent 56 thousand
dollars on Louis Vuitton caskets,
for the two of them to be buried
in.

Lennon stares at Hank coldly.

LENNON

First of all, those caskets were incredibly dope. My Mom would have lurved them. And second of all, did you stalk our funeral? How dare you? Take the hint, dude! She clearly wanted nothing to do with you, which is why I didn't even know you existed!

HANK

Well, I exist. Sorry! No, no, wait-- sorry NOT sorry.

LENNON

(laughs)

Did you learn that on the internet? In 2012?

HANK

Look, I'm not your mom. And this is my house so things are gonna run a little differently--

LENNON

Lemme guess: be a good little lemming! Stay in school! Get good grades!

HANK

No, I don't care about either of those things. I want you to learn a trade.

LENNON

A *trade*?

HANK

Plumbing. Electrical. HVAC. Part of the reason you have no respect for money, is because you've never earned any. And you can *support* yourself with a trade, unlike--

Hank stops.

LENNON

Unlike what?

HANK

I checked out some of your music online--

LENNON
Such a friggin' stalker!

HANK
It's real good, Len. But you know that's more of a hobby than a career path, right?

LENNON
Riiight. Gotcha, gotcha. So don't live in Manhattan, don't go to my school, don't care about music and... what, be a plumber? I hate to disrupt your "delusions of daddy" but I'm never gonna be like you, okay?

HANK
Uh, if we're judging by armpit hair... you already are!

LENNON
Don't you body hair shame me!

HANK
Pick a lane, kiddo! You can't be a nonconformist and max out your mommy's credit cards!

LENNON
(points at herself)
Okay, see this? This is the second woman in my family that wants nothing to do with you!

Lennon storms off. Then, shouts:

LENNON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
WHICH ONE OF THESE BEDROOMS IS
MINE?!

HANK
(shouts back)
SECOND DOOR ON THE LEFT!

A door SLAMS. Hank smiles. Yep. That's definitely his kid.

INT. LENNON'S NEW BEDROOM – LATER

Lennon talks to Meredith on FaceTime as she plays guitar.

LENNON

I started keeping a list of all his parental missteps, for the court.

MEREDITH

Have there been parental missteps?

LENNON

Uhh, yeah! He force-fed me pancakes.

MEREDITH

He *forced* you to eat them?

LENNON

Well, he forced me to order them. I ate them because I was hungry.
(then)
And because they were delicious.

MEREDITH

I'm not sure he'll hang for that...

The call of the MOURNING DOVE can be heard outside.

LENNON

Ugh! The most annoying bird. It's literally followed me everywhere! I looked it up on my birding app--

MEREDITH

You have a *birding app*? Okay, who are you?!

LENNON

Apparently it's called a Mourning Dove. So I guess it knows I'm in mourning *and* being held captive by a stalker. Seriously, did anyone do a background check on this rando?

As Lennon continues talking, she unpacks, dumping an armload of clothes on the closet floor. She fails to notice Hank's guitar, in the corner. The exact same Fender Telecaster that inspired Lennon to get hers...

LENNON (CONT'D)

I mean, maybe there's a reason mom didn't want him in her life. Maybe--

Lennon opens a dresser drawer and falls silent.

MEREDITH

Len? Did I lose you?

LENNON

No, I'm still here. Sorry, can I call you back?

REVERSE ON: Gretchen's "missing" sunglasses in the top drawer. A stunned Lennon picks them up. As she does, something outside the window catches her eye. A grey dove is right there, on the window sill. We PUSH IN ON THE MOURNING DOVE as it blinks at Lennon, intently.

NARRATOR

A million crazy thoughts were racing through my mind but the craziest, involved my dead mother reincarnating as a bird, which begged the question:

LENNON

(to the dove)
Bitch? That you?

INT. HANK'S BEDROOM – AT THAT MOMENT

Lennon barges into Hank's room, brandishing the sunglasses.

LENNON

Okay, either you broke into our apartment and stole these or... it wasn't unrequited love.

HANK

It was... complicated.

NARRATOR

No, it wasn't. My mom was having an affair with my dad. He wasn't a stalker and he wasn't some rando. He loved her and I'm guessing she loved him too. Clearly, she'd spent time here. Who knows what they were planning? Who knows what he was hoping? Maybe he dreamed of the three of us being together. Maybe he was grieving the death of that dream too.

Lennon stares at Hank for a beat then, quietly whispers:

LENNON

I'm sorry for your loss.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. UPSTATE NY DINER – DAY

Lennon and Hank, both holding their knives in their fists, like genetically linked cavemen, eat pancakes. Sean walks by and smiles at Lennon.

SEAN

Hey.

Lennon doesn't look up or reply. Hank answers on her behalf.

HANK

"Hey, Sean."
(reminder)
Civility. Compassion.

LENNON

Right, right, I forgot. On it.

Lennon wipes her mouth and heads over to the jukebox.

LENNON (CONT'D)

Hey, Dot! It's Pony Time! Get Up!

Sean and the rest of the PATRONS watch slack-jawed as Lennon pulls Dottie onto the floor and DIRTY DANCES with her to "The Pony." Hank's face is bright red as he watches Lennon mime smacking Dottie's ass. When the number ends, the whole diner bursts into applause. Dottie fans herself:

DOTTIE

She has me questioning everything I thought I knew about myself!

Lennon slides back into the booth and continues eating.

HANK

You're gonna make a full-time job out of embarrassing me, aren't you?

Lennon, still chewing, angles her fork at Hank.

LENNON

Ahhh, but why are you embarrassed? You need to look at that, Hank.

Hank smiles and nods. Yep. She is.

END OF SHOW