

TRANSPARENT

JILL SOLOWAY

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OPEN ON:

EXT. LOS ANGELES - MORNING

To establish. Sunwashed California gold glints over the hills of Los Feliz and Silver Lake...

EXT. LOS FELIZ MANSION - MORNING

A huge grey and white shingled testament to an idea about Sag Harbor. The lawn is too green, the driveway too clean. This is Sarah's house.

INT. SARAH'S BATHROOM - MORNING

In a field of aqua tile, SARAH, 38, intense and lovely, rubs thick cream into her face and neck, trying to find an angle in the morning light where she likes the way she looks.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - MORNING

Move out of the lush, bouganvilla-scented hills... into the smoggy sketchiness of Ktown.

Find THE TALMADGE, a beautiful but gone-to-seed, unkempt 1920's courtyard building.

INT. ALI'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The half-placed evidence of a life about to either start or end. A ratty couch below a haphazard piece of garage sale so bad-it's-good-art. A shitty lamp.

ALI, 33, dark and awkward and pretty, drinks coffee and alternates between internetting or STARING into the LUSH COURTYARD.

Across the way, her neighbor WALLIS, 50, a past-her-prime Hollywood nutjob, opens her windows like an Italian movie star.

Ali STARES.

Wallis seems to be in her own world. Until she TURNS to Ali.

WALLIS
(straight to Ali)
I see you.

On Ali, freaked. She looks back at her computer. Her PHONE RINGS. She notices who is calling and ANSWERS IT.

ALI
Dad?

EXT. SILVER LAKE - MORNING

Hipsters wait in line for expensive coffee, lock up fixed gear bikes, subconsciously compare beards.

INT. JOSHUA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Perfectly placed self-published Brooklyn style journals. Perfectly placed everything. On a leather couch, find

JOSHUA, 29, scruffy and lanky and adorable. His legs wrap around the half-dressed but wildly fashionable BRANNON, way too young-- maybe 17, maybe 19.

JOSHUA
Ping Pong tournament.

BRANNON
For real?

JOSHUA
It's at the Downtown Standard, it will be an ironic Ping Pong tournament.

BRANNON
Yeah, the kind with artisan beer.
(then)
Except for that's the night we're playing at Hotel Cafe.
(teasing)
I think my label should be keeping better track of our shows.

Joshua smiles as he traces his finger on her tight tummy.

JOSHUA
Your label is understandably distracted.

She brushes his hand away.

BRANNON
Hey. Too tickle-y.

Joshua's phone VIBRATES on the coffee table. He grabs it.

JOSHUA
Yeah?

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK - LATER THAT DAY

Ali hikes with her best friend, the diminutive and spunky LIZ.

LIZ

You worried about him?

ALI

Little outta of character to ask us to come to the house on a weeknight. Hope he's not dying.

LIZ

Uh, yeah.

ALI

Okay, so, ya know that kids' book Are You My Mother?

LIZ

Of course. It was my favorite.

ALI

So I wanna write a parody, but called Are You My Soulmate?

LIZ

Ha and ha.

ALI

It would have that little bird, but instead of getting confused about who it's mommy is, it's about all the inappropriate guys baby bird keeps accidentally fucking.

LIZ

Are you gonna have a picture of that freaky old biker dude you used to bone?

ALI

Yeah, someone similar. They'll sell it at checkout at Urban Outfitters!

LIZ

Uh, yeah, you might get sued.

ALI

Stop thwarting my creative enthusiasm. I have so little of it left.

They notice DEREK, a hot African-American TRAINER in army fatigues, hands on hips, scanning the middle distance as he stands over a pudgy GUY doing HORRIFIC sit ups.

ALI (CONT'D)

See, this is what I love. Ask any white person, what is your biggest fear. They'd say, some like, hulking black man in the park taking your money and forcing you to do things against your will.

They look around. There are at least three BLACK GUYS dotted across the park-- checking watches, placing yoga balls.

ALI (CONT'D)

But look. The money, the forcing, it's all here.

LIZ

This place is lousy with black men making white people do stuff.

ALI

You know what lousy means, right?

LIZ

No.

ALI

Licey. A louse is a singular lice. You just compared people of color to lice.

LIZ

I don't like you.

EXT. LOS FELIZ JCC PRESCHOOL - PARKING LOT

Sarah, looking unmade-up amazing in \$400 linen pants, heads toward the sea of Odyssey minivans and Priuses.

SARAH

(into phone)

Yah, Dad, of course I'll be there. Okay. Love you, Daddy.

Sarah puts her phone away and heads toward the preschool.

In the distance, she sees TAMMY, super fashionable, architectural glasses, no makeup.

Sarah approaches tentatively.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Hi.

TAMMY

Hey Sarah.

Sarah looks around; no one is watching them.

SARAH

You're never here in the morning.

TAMMY

Jan's been doing drop-offs and pick ups, I've been on deadline. Was in Bahrain. For work.

SARAH

Whoa. Bahrain. Intense.

(then)

Hey so I'm sorry I didn't reach out earlier--

TAMMY

I get it-- honestly, I have no hard feelings--

SARAH

When you guys came to the school, I really was going to-- wanted to-- get the girls together. Schedule a playdate. But I've been working on my boundaries, and Len, Len kind of knows-- or more he doesn't know. The extent of-- yeah, I never really told him.

Sarah STARES at Tammy's neck. Time slows down.

On Tammy's skin, her breathing. Finally--

SARAH (CONT'D)

So of course, I thought it could be-- inappropriate. If I really brought you into my world.

TAMMY

I get it.

SARAH

And then I was going to join the fundraising committee when I saw that you were on the fundraising committee--

TAMMY

Well, don't, it's awful.

SARAH

They're all awful.

TAMMY

Yeah. So-- yes. I would love to hang out. When?

SARAH

Good! Today, tomorrow?

TAMMY

Grace naps after pick-up, so, three?

SARAH

Oh, with the girls--

TAMMY

I thought that's what you said-- didn't you say a playdate. You said playdate.

SARAH

Or without is fine?

TAMMY

No, with the kids is better, let me check with Jan about Grace's schedule, I'm a little out of the loop--

SARAH

Absolutely. Check with Jan.

Tammy walks away. As Sarah watches her, she has to catch her breath, get her bearings.

INT. JOSHUA'S HOUSE

Josh's hand is in Brannon's underwear as she texts. They HEAR the SOUND of KEYS in the door.

BRANNON

Who else has keys?

JOSHUA

My sister. She had keys before you had keys.

It's Ali, sweaty from the park. She spots Brannon.

ALI

(dead inside)

Oh, hi.

Brannon gets up and heads to the bathroom, barely covering her nudity.

ALI (CONT'D)

No body shame, that one.

(then)

Okay, so I thought of one.

Ali makes the CRAZIEST face in the world.

JOSHUA

I will allow it.

ALI

Now you.

Joshua makes a CRAZY FACE.

ALI (CONT'D)

You made that one in Snowmass when you were nine.

JOSHUA

I tried to teach Brannon 'make a face you've never made before' but she didn't get it.

ALI

Well, why would she, Josh? WHY WOULD SHE?

(then)

Can I drive with you to Dad's? His whole thing's got a vaguely 'I've got cancer-ish' vibe.

JOSHUA

If he's smart, he'll start gifting us twelve thousand a year til it's gone.

ALI

I know he's got a lot more than that stashed.

JOSHUA

I'll negotiate on your behalf.

ALI

What's to negotiate? He'll split it three ways. He loves us all the same.

INT. SARAH'S LOS FELIZ MANSION - DAY

Sarah zips around her kitchen like a hummingbird, loading a roast and vegetables into a Le Creuset.

In a single bound, she sprays and wipes the counter top, and brings ZACK, 6, and ELLA, 4, cups and snacks in the adjacent GREAT ROOM.

Ella plays a game on her iPad TV as Zack lies on the floor, staring at a TRAIN as it goes around a track.

SARAH

Zacky, don't you want to do something else besides your train?

Sarah's husband LEN, 42, thinning hair, moves through the room, typing messages into his phone manically.

LEN

Okay, go on--

SARAH

--and so I thought maybe she and I would get the girls together after school.

LEN

Coo.

SARAH

So I should have them over here?

LEN

Or put a dinner on the books.

SARAH

With Tammy and her partner?

LEN

Who's her husband?

Beat, then:

SARAH

Tammy Hardwicke. She's the lesbian I went to college with.

LEN

Oh, right. That's fine too. I like lesbians.

Sarah thinks about saying more. She WATCHES LEN adjust his reading glasses, and decides to leave it.

SARAH

Avalea?

(then)

AVALEA?! Have you seen my good bra?

INT. JOSHUA'S BMW - DAY

On the 10 West. Joshua drives a FANCY BMW. He yaks on speakerphone, on a business call.

Ali sits shotgun, picking at her nails.

JOSHUA

--she just plays the fucking violin, she doesn't have any say about the mix. You know what, no, Howie, I will not share that with them right now because I don't want the whole band to despise me.

(then)

My sister is calling, gonna run.
Bah.

Joshua presses a button, switching calls.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

We're at Vermont.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SARAH'S MINIVAN - DAY

Sarah's also on the 10, speaking on speakerphone.

SARAH

I'm at Bundy, but I might be a bit late. He asked me to pick up barbecue for all of us.

ALI

Shotgun Willy's?

JOSHUA

Jimmyfuck McToodle's.

SARAH

Saucy Netherton's.

Atop each other's voices, in unison, they throw as many nonsense names on the pile as humanly possible:

ALI/JOSH/SARAH

Hungry Fingerbang's/Wingtip
McCrosbys/Horndog O'Hannigans/Blue
Balls Beartrappers/Coco-berry
Ragtime/Skipdangity Snackbaggers--

SARAH

Okay friends, let's just collect ourselves. It's Shotgun Willy's.

ALI

Please don't get any cornbread.
I'm gluten-free guys.

JOSHUA

Oh, yeah, this one has come down
with that LA-induced gluten
intolerance. Apparently caused my
smog. Get the cornbread, Sarah. I
NEED it. Ali, we just won't let
you eat it.

ALI

That is mean, guys.

JOSHUA

I'll tie your hands together if
you can't control yourself.

SARAH

So who thinks Dad has cancer?

ALI

Josh said that too! Do ya think?

JOSHUA

Oh, and get cole slaw. Unless it's
the kind with peanuts, then tell
them to go fuck themselves.

INT. SHOTGUN WILLY'S RESTAURANT - A LITTLE LATER

Sarah looks around at the families having dinner. The lonely older
singles at the bar. The sports game on MASSIVE TV.

The BARTENDER's smile is way-too-jovial as he pours cocktails in
the glow of the year-round, colored Christmas lights.

A HOSTESS brings out GIANT BAGS of to-go-food.

SARAH

Thanks.

Sarah signs the bill, gives it back. The hostess looks at the SIZE
OF THE TIP-- it's HUGE.

HOSTESS

Whoa, thanks!

On Sarah, ashamed of something-- she NEEDS to give away her money,
make grand gestures-- yet wishes she could be ANONYMOUS.

EXT. MORT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Post-modern Palisades fabulousness. It's architectural porn, Dwell magazine wish fulfillment, walls of glass, towering Eucalyptus trees. Spotlit driveway.

INT. MORT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

MORT, 70, is a LARGE, IMPOSING man, shoulders hunched from YEARS of some kind of a WEIGHT. As Sarah unloads too much food from the restaurant bags, he kisses Sarah's face. She FLINCHES.

MORT

My good girl. Good good good girl.
You always know just how much to
get.

SARAH

Put it on my headstone.

In the ADJACENT LIVING ROOM,

Joshua and Ali sit on the floor looking through old records.

JOSHUA

YES! Here it is.

He pulls out the The Broadway Cast Recording of Jesus Christ Superstar.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Look, you scratched this guy when
you made it a Barbie skating rink.

Ali sits with her knees inverted, LIKE A CHILD. She flips through the Broadway Cast Album of HAIR, and the Herb Albert and the Tijuana Brass album with a naked woman covered in whipped cream.

Finally, Ali finds JIM CROCE'S OPERATOR.

ALI

This one.
(singing)
Operator
could you help me place this call?

JOSHUA

(singing)
--see the number on the matchbook
is old and faded

JOSH/ALI

(singing)
--she's living in L.A.
with my best old ex-friend Ray

JOSH/ALI (CONT'D)
*a guy she said she knew well
 and sometimes hated--*

Mort WALKS IN and stares at them.

MORT
 Hey. I love you guys.

Joshua and Ali look at each other: is he okay?

SARAH (O.S.)
 Come and get din-din, guys!

MORT
 Sarah went ahead and put dinner
 out on the counter. People can
 just take.

JOSHUA
 By people you mean us, right?

INT. MORT'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Mort, Joshua, Sarah and Ali sit around a big round wooden table,
 eating barbecue.

Throughout the following, Sarah watches everyone gnawing. The
 SIGHT grows more horrific, chewing on bones, food on faces, black
 specks on teeth.

ALI
 --and I see her in the elevator,
 says nothing, down on Wilshire
 buying cigarettes, never a word,
 and then this morning, she's like--
 her name is Wallis-- she's like,
 staring across the courtyard at
 me: "I see you".

JOSHUA
 Creepy.

ALI
 She's one of those casualty
 people. Ex heiress princess
 something. Most beautiful girl in
 whatever town she came from. Every
 homecoming queen and prom king
 from every town in America has
 been coming to LA for the past
 fifty years. And breeding. Making
 an entire generation of turbo-
 beautiful young people.

JOSHUA
Many of whom like to have sexual
intercourse with me.

Sarah can NO LONGER STAND THE SIGHT of her family's barbecue-y
faces.

SARAH
YOU GUYS ARE DISGUSTING.

ALI
What's wrong with you?

SARAH
You have food all over your face.

On Joshua, covered in sauce.

JOSHUA
I do?

ALI
You do.

JOSHUA
(to Ali)
So do you, you've got something on
you, right there.

Joshua gets sauce off of Ali's ear and licks his finger.

ALI
How did I get sauce on my ear?

JOSHUA
It's also on your elbow. See, we
all do. You do too.

SARAH
I do not.

JOSHUA
Oh, Sarah's so perfect because she
knows how to eat barbecue without
getting sauce on her face. Yay
Sarah. Okay, Dad, let the cat out,
what would compel you to ask us to
drive out here on a school night.
In rush hour traffic.

Mort takes a DEEP BREATH. All three kids exchange nervous,
perplexed looks. Finally:

MORT

I want to move out of the house. I think I'm gonna sell.

ALI

Oh my god, Dad, I thought you were dying. We thought you were dying. Jesus.

MORT

Dying?

JOSHUA

Why do you want to move?

MORT

I'm not a Palisades person anymore. Not a house person--

JOSHUA

West side? Santa Monica?

MORT

--or West Hollywood. A condo, an apartment, something I don't have to maintain--

SARAH

Okay, well, please let me talk to Len about it before you do anything. He's been talking about moving us west for years now.

JOSHUA

Wait wait wait-- if we put a few hundred thousand into it we could flip this bitch and make a shit load.

ALI

How come you guys just get to decide what happens with the house? Why can't I have the house?

JOSHUA

Because you don't have any money.

ALI

That's why I need a house, dumb ass. Dad, you have some sauce right here.

MORT

Where?

Ali motions for Mort to get sauce off the side of his nose.

SARAH

It's on your nose, Dad.

JOSHUA

You too, Sarah, you have some in your vagina.

SARAH

God, shut up.

JOSHUA

You do. Sarah has barbecue sauce in her vagina.

Ali LAUGHS. Sarah SCOWLS.

MORT

All right now, that's enough.

INT. MORT'S OFFICE

Close on Mort's hand as he COUNTS OUT SOME CASH, rolls it up and puts it in his pocket.

EXT. MORT'S HOUSE - EVENING

Joshua and Mort are in the driveway, surveying their two cars-- Joshua's BMW, Mort's Mercedes.

MORT

Grand Wagoneer, huh?

JOSHUA

Like, one of the vintage ones, with the wood on the side--

MORT

No, yeah, I remember what they are. Okay, so you're going to pass on the Porsche?

JOSHUA

See, the thing about women is, they say they want you to get the vintage Grand Wagoneer instead of the Porsche-- but they really want you to have the Porsche. Drive too fast, spend too much. Tell 'em where it's at.

A beat, then:

MORT

Some women, I guess.

On Josh, looking at Mort-- huh?

MORT (CONT'D)

You shouldn't categorize-- 'all women this, all women that'.

JOSHUA

Hey, learned that from you.

MORT

I don't know everything.

JOSHUA

You're freaking me out, Dad.
You're talking me out of a
Porsche.

Sarah and Ali EMERGE FROM THE HOUSE into the driveway.

SARAH

--and I know that Len would want
it as is and have us bring in our
own designer.

JOSHUA

Guys, if we don't at least chat
with my guy and get a bead on what
we could pull if we flip it, we're
serious jerkbags. This thing could
be worth a ton. Land alone.

As Joshua and Sarah are distracted, hands on hips, looking the bones of the house up and down, we barely notice

MORT SECRETLY HANDING the ROLL OF CASH to ALI.

Ali gives her dad a surreptitious hug, then mouths:

ALI

Thank you.

MORT

All right guys. Thanks for taking
the news so well.

Mort heads back inside with a wave.

EXT. MORT'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

The three kids are alone in the driveway.

JOSHUA

Did Dad seem weird to you guys?

SARAH

Weird how?

JOSHUA

Like happy weird?

ALI

Probably found a new forty-year old divorcee to bang.

SARAH

Don't say bang.

ALI

Oh, stop it with your refusing to acknowledge that pops is a pussy hound.

JOSHUA

Ew.

SARAH

Marcy hound. Weren't all three of his last few girlfriends named Marcy?

ALI

I think they were.

Joshua types something into his phone, then:

JOSHUA

And coincidentally, I have to check out a band called Marcyhound at the Troubadour.

SARAH

Really?

JOSHUA

Ya *think*, Sarah?

(then)

Can you drive Ali back?

SARAH

Yup.

As they head to their cars, we move to:

INT. MORT'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mort takes a DEEP BREATH. Something's up. And it's not just the house.

He picks up his phone, dials.

MORT
(into phone)
Hi.
(then)
No. I couldn't do it.
(then)
Yeah, just made it about selling
the house.
(then)
Sarah said she wants it. She has a
family. This is a good
neighborhood for families. I might
just give it to her.

A few more beats, then:

MORT (CONT'D)
No, thank you, Francie. Thank you.
There is no way I could get
through this without you.

EXT. MALIBU - NIGHT

The ocean at night.

EXT. BEACH ROAD

Joshua parks his car in front of a small, CRAPPY Malibu shoebox four-plex. Looks around. Makes sure no one sees him.

INT. SARAH'S MINIVAN

Sarah heads into Hollywood to drop Ali off.

ALI
And Len really doesn't care?

SARAH
I'm sure he just assumes that
everyone experiments in college.

ALI
Oh, I get it. That's how you *sold*
it.

SARAH
I didn't have to sell it. That's
the truth.

ALI

Um, actually, no, LUGs are sorority girls who make out at parties for the benefit of boys who are watching. You and Tammy lived together, and like, ran the co-op together. Almost adopted a those two Latino gangbanger kids together.

SARAH

Oh, Jesus, we were never going to adopt Latino gangbanger kids together, we were in college.

ALI

Tammy was in grad school and already working at that social worker place. I distinctly remember you calling me and saying 'Tammy and I are going to adopt a two brothers named Paul and Tino'. I distinctly remember it.

SARAH

Maybe we were going to *foster*.
(then)
They weren't *gangbangers*.

Sarah pulls her car up in front of The Talmadge.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You good with money? You have enough?

ALI

Pretty much.

SARAH

That place ever call?

ALI

They never hire people they don't know. I'm sure I was just lost in a pile of resumes. It would be easier for me to get into Swiss banking.

SARAH

Your settlement money's gotta be running out.

ALI

I'm fine.

SARAH

Let me just give you a little.

ALI

Only if it's easy.

SARAH

Of course it's easy.

Ali GOES THROUGH HER WALLET and hands Ali all of her remaining cash.

ALI

I love you.

SARAH

Love you too.

Sarah watches as Ali gets out and heads into her building.

INT. MALIBU FOURPLEX - APARTMENT - NIGHT

The place has threadbare carpets. A couch with a faded, thin Hawaiian throw on it.

Joshua OPENS THE FRIDGE, grabs a beer. He CALLS OUT to someone unseen.

JOSHUA

You know I'm here, right?

INT. APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

We can HEAR the ocean outside, through a crack in the sliding door.

Reveal Joshua, sitting on the couch, pants around his ankles--
--getting a BLOWJOB from an older, CURVY WOMAN.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - MORNING - TO ESTABLISH

The sun rises through the smog. We find Ali's Koreatown faded beauty building.

INT. ALI'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

Ali pours hot water from a tea kettle into a French Press. She LOOKS FOR WALLIS in the courtyard, but she's not there.

INT. SARAH'S LOS FELIZ MANSION - SARAH'S BATHROOM

Sarah and Len do their morning routines. Casual, married, hetero-bed-death nudity.

LEN

Let me do my due diligence and talk to Howard and Barry. He should at least let us put in an offer.

SARAH

Yeah, that's what I was thinking you were going to think.

LEN

So, GOOD GOOD GOOD then! You finally ready to get out of this ghetto?

SARAH

Los Feliz isn't a ghetto.

LEN

Palisades has better schools for the kids.

SARAH

Yeah. I guess that's a reason to live there.

But on Sarah's face, something's GONE DARK.

INT. JOSHUA'S HOUSE

Joshua and Brannon have just woken up. Light streams in. Joshua stares at Brannon's perfect WASPY nose. He touches it.

BRANNON

What time did you come to bed last night?

JOSHUA

Midnight, angel.

BRANNON

I was awake at midnight and you weren't here yet.

JOSHUA

Twelve-fifteen.

BRANNON

I don't get why you even wanted me to sleep over if you were gonna be that late.

JOSHUA

Shush, because I can't sleep without you next to me now.

BRANNON
Always Ambien.

JOSHUA
I hate taking those.
(then)
My dad is selling my house.

BRANNON
Your house?

JOSHUA
Just the house we grew up in.

BRANNON
How old were you when your parents
got divorced?

JOSHUA
Fifteen.

BRANNON
Know the reason why?

JOSHUA
Only what they told us. That they
weren't in love anymore.

EXT. FANCY APARTMENT BUILDING - A FEW DAYS LATER

Snazzy Marina del Rey Condo highrise.

INT. SHELLY'S APARTMENT

SHELLY, 65 and decked out in 1993 Jewish diva- red glasses, chunky jewelry, Asian-inspired soft dressing-- sits across the table from her husband, the elderly and robotic ED.

SHELLY
(rising anger)
--and I says, I says: I didn't
join this board to watch you turn
it from people who care deeply
about Palm Terrace into a bunch of
newbies who never sat on a condo
board before--

Shelly BLAZES FORTH without noticing whether Ed is listening.

There's a knock at the door. Shelly gets up to open it.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
--and never dealt with special
assessments before and never dealt
with approved bids. Never dealt
with shit, frankly.

She lets Ali in.

ALI
Hi Mommy.

Shelly takes the shopping bags out of her hands.

SHELLY
Yum, what did you bring me?

ALI
Vietnamese. Bahn Mi, Goi Cuon--

SHELLY
Did you get me my turmeric fish
noodles--

ALI
Your turmeric fish noodles--

INT. SHELLY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Ali sit across from Shelly and Ed on the couches. They all eat
from plates in their laps.

SHELLY
--he's going to get a lot of money
from it. Do you know that we
bought that house in nineteen-
seventy-three for fifty-two
thousand dollars? That's quite a
profit.

ALI
You don't get any of it?

SHELLY
He's done paying me out. He
probably needs the cash. Dating
younger women doesn't come cheap
these days.

ALI
Hey, you know what I was
wondering?

SHELLY
No. I do not.

ALI

Why'd you let him keep all the records?

SHELLY

You know I don't care for music.

Ali watches the way her mother and Ed eat.

ALI

Mom?

SHELLY

Yeah?

ALI

How come you guys never taught us how to eat? You just picked up lettuce with your hands.

SHELLY

I taught you plenty. Heard from your brother? He never calls.

ALI

Yeah. In love again, some girl that's too young and too goyishe.

SHELLY

What else is new? How about your sister? She never calls.

ALI

Her life is too busy. If you want to see her you should go help her with Ella and Zacky.

SHELLY

She hovers when I watch those kids. I can't stand it. Anyway, she knows where to find me.

A beat, then:

ALI

(whispering)

Is Ed okay?

On Ed, expressionless.

SHELLY

He can hear you, go ahead and ask him. Everyone thinks that ever since he started losing words he also stopped being able to hear.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
But his hearing is still the same!
HE CAN HEAR.

ALI
Hi, Ed.

Ed smiles.

ALI (CONT'D)
You okay, Ed?

Ed gives TWO THUMBS UP.

SHELLY
See?

INT. SHELLY'S BATHROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Ali pees in the dark. The door opens.

ALI
SOMEONE'S IN HERE!

SHELLY
It's just me.

ALI
Mom, I like privacy.

SHELLY
Oh, I've seen it all. Look at you,
sitting in the dark.

Shelly FLIPS ON THE LIGHT.

ALI
I'M ON THE TOILET!

SHELLY
Ali, I can't take it anymore. I
never get a break, I'm sick of it.
Sick to death of this. He's in
perfect physical health, but his
brain is gone.

ALI
You have to get help, mom.

SHELLY
That's what everyone says, get
help, get help. But you're not
going to come over here and sit
with him.

ALI

I'm trying to get my writing
samples together.

(then)

Hire someone.

SHELLY

I don't have any money.

ALI

Then move.

SHELLY

I can't.

On Ali, THINKING.

INT. SHELLY'S KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

Ali COUNTS OUT SOME CASH from her purse for Shelly--

SHELLY

I'll pay you back.

ALI

You don't have to.

SHELLY

I'm worried about you. I wouldn't
be surprised if you're eating a
lot of cheap junk food.

ALI

No, I'm not, mom I have plenty of
money and I'm eating perfectly
normal food.

SHELLY

You're just a little--

Shelly reaches out and GRABS a bit of flesh on Ali's tummy. Ali
SNAPS the roll of cash back.

ALI

You DID NOT just do that-- Mom,
I'm going to take this money back
RIGHT NOW unless you apologize.

SHELLY

Okay, god, I'm sorry.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - TO ESTABLISH - THE NEXT MORNING

The sun rises through the smog.

INT. ALI'S APARTMENT

Sun rising outside. Ali stands in the light of her fridge, starved for something.

Finds nothing.

She spots Wallis across the courtyard in her apartment. She walks to the window, relieved-- her touchstone is back.

Wallis, NAKED, sings, LOUD AND PROUD, to no one:

WALLIS

*Operator
could you help me place this call?
I can't read the number
that you just gave me*

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MEETING ROOM

A group of FOLKS sit in a circle in a support group-- men, women, old, young. Hard to tell what they all have in common.

We're CLOSE on Mort's mouth, so we can't see his face:

MORT

I have to tell one of them.

On the EMPATHETIC FACES of his support group friends:

MORT (V.O.)

I'm thinking Sarah.

SUPPORT GROUP FRIEND

Is she the one who used to be a lesbian?

MORT (V.O.)

Yeah. She's married to a man now.
(then)
I think she might be the only one who really loves me.

We're BACK, CLOSE ON MORT'S MOUTH:

MORT

For who I am.

EXT. JOSHUA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Josh and Brannon are in bed. Josh fiddles with Brannon's hair.

BRANNON

What?

What. JOSHUA

What. BRANNON

What? JOSHUA

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK - DAY

From a distance, Ali sees Derek. He's doing pull ups. She approaches.

Hi. ALI

Hey. DEREK

ALI
You're-- one of those guys, right?
You work people out in the park?

Yeah. DEREK

ALI
Do you have time in your schedule
for a new-- anyone?

DEREK
What are you looking for?

ALI
I hate my body. I want to change
it.

DEREK
What do you want to do to it?

ALI
Well. I want those sculpted arms.
And a tight little waist. And a
big round ass.
(then)
I want to be rooted to the ground.
I want to be a tree trunk, I want
to not fall over. Just-- planted.

EXT. LOS FELIZ JCC PARKING LOT

Sarah and Tammy talk as they head out of the building.

TAMMY

But don't you think you would miss Los Feliz? Silver Lake, Sunset Junction? The ninety-nine cents store and the pupusa lady?

SARAH

The schools would be better for the kids.

TAMMY

But the people over there. Those moms. I mean, you're so not one of those moms.

Beat, then:

SARAH

Do you remember the house?

TAMMY

Kind of. Thanksgiving, like, the week after your parents told you guys they were getting divorced.

Sarah looks around.

SARAH

Wanna go check it out with me? Drive out there?

TAMMY

Now?

SARAH

What do you normally do when Grace is at school? I mean, when you're not on deadline-- are you on deadline?

TAMMY

Just turned something in.
(thinks, then)
I wouldn't mind seeing the house again.

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK - LATER

CLOSE on ALI'S FACE dropping in and out of the frame as she does PUSH-UPS. Derek's feet move in and out of frame, pacing.

DEREK

We're not going to think about it as deprivation. I want you to think about it as discipline.

ALI

YES. Discipline. Tell me what to do. Tell me what to eat. Make me a menu and I'll eat exactly what you tell me to eat every day. Nothing more.

Ali stops her push ups. Her face is on the ground, FINISHED.

ALI (CONT'D)

Can't do any more. You got 'em all.

Derek's FACE DROPS INTO THE FRAME with hers, planked atop of her body. His strong arms hold his body a push up, just above her.

DEREK

Really now? That's ALL you got for me?

ALI

I'm sure.

DEREK

Gimme one more.

ALI

I can't.

DEREK

(beat, then)
Move that big ass.

Ali smiles, then does a perfect PUSH UP. On Derek-- wow, that worked.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Nice. One more.

She doesn't move.

DEREK (CONT'D)

One more. You-- fat bitch.

ALI

Fat white bitch.

DEREK

Don't tell me what to say.

ALI

Sorry.

Derek laughs.

DEREK
Stop making me laugh. This isn't
funny. Ten more.
(counting down)
Ten. Nine.

Derek dismounts, STANDS, arms folded, looking down at her.

EXT. MORT'S HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

A lizard jumps. A green beetle chomps on a tiny leaf. A humming dragonfly swirls around the swath of wild fennel.

Sarah and Tammy get out of Tammy's car and walk toward the house.

TAMMY
Do you have keys?

SARAH
He always leaves the back open.

Sarah heads to the side gate and towards the yard, Tammy follows. As they make their way through the thick foliage:

TAMMY
I remember this garden.

SARAH
Do you ever think about Paul and Tino?

TAMMY
Of course I do.

SARAH
I hope somebody adopted them.

TAMMY
I hope so too.

They emerge into the yard and go towards the sliding door.

INT. JOSHUA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Joshua and Brannon are fucking.

JOSHUA
I wanna come inside you.

BRANNON
Don't you dare.

JOSHUA
I'm gonna.

BRANNON
I'll kill you if you do.

DEREK (O.S.)
Eight. Seven.

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK

On Derek's face:

DEREK
Six. Five.

INT. JOSHUA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Josh keeps pumping, eyes closed.

DEREK (O.C.)
Four. Three.

It's clear he's GOING FOR IT anyway as he exhales and lets out a LOUD, RELIEVING, orgasm. He's free...

JOSHUA
Aaaaaaaah... I love you.

INT. MORT'S HOUSE - DAY

Sarah unlatches the sliding door as Tammy waits.

SARAH
It's open.

DEREK (O.C.)
Two. One.

We get ahead of them, finding our way to Mort's bed, where an array of LADIES PANTIES are spread out on the bed.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MEETING ROOM

We move across the FACES of the people in the support group.

SUPPORT GROUP LEADER
I think it's Maura's turn to share. Maura?

Reveal a WOMAN, MAURA.

Who happens to be Mort.

HER FACE is made up in lipstick and eye shadow. She SMILES at the group, relaxed-- at home in the world.

MORT/MAURA

This has been a fuck of a week.

The end of Jim Croce doing OPERATOR rises...

JIM CROCE

(singing)

*There's something in my eyes
you know it happens every time
I think about a love
that I thought would save me*

As we:

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END