

SUBURGATORY

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OVER BLACK:

TESSA (V.O.)  
*If someone asked me the biggest  
difference between the suburbs and  
Manhattan, I would have to say...  
it's the Moms.*

FADE IN:

INT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY

A LONG LINE OF MOMS stand in line at the grocery store. They busy themselves by checking items off their to-do lists, sanitizing their hands, inspecting their produce, adjusting their ponytails...

TESSA (V.O.)  
*It's like the Million Mom March.  
The place is crawling with them.*

INT. MALL -- DAY

A MALL MOM strides out of FOREVER 21 with her TEENAGE DAUGHTER and her TEENAGE FRIENDS. They are all laughing and loaded down with shopping bags.

TESSA (V.O.)  
*They're in the malls...*

INT. STADIUM -- NIGHT

A CONCERT is in progress. A GROUP OF TEENAGE GIRLS wearing concert t-shirts SCREAM and SING ALONG to the music. Behind them, a GROUP OF THEIR MOMS do the same.

TESSA (V.O.)  
*They're at the Lady Ga-Ga  
concerts...*

EXT. TANNING SALON -- DAY

A TAN MOM and her TAN DAUGHTER in matching velour sweat-suits emerge from the salon, smiling.

TESSA (V.O.)

*They're shuffling out of the  
tanning salons in their mani-pedi  
flip-flops, with their ever-present  
daughters and enormous frozen  
coffee drinks...*

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- DAY

A BEAT UP U-HAUL barrels down the pristine suburban street. Inside, our narrator, TESSA, 16, in a faded hooded sweatshirt, stares out the window at group of PRETTY BLONDE MOMS, chatting away in their pastel cardigans. They look at the U-haul with disgust as it passes. It's an eyesore.

TESSA (V.O.)

*Having grown up with just my dad,  
it really made me wonder--  
(then, aloud)  
What is with these mothers?*

INT. U-HAUL -- CONTINUOUS

Tessa's father, GEORGE, late 30's, glances sideways at his daughter from the driver's seat.

GEORGE

They're people, okay? Just like  
you and me.

TESSA

Are you kidding? That dog has  
nicer hair than I do.

ON A GOLDEN RETRIEVER lounging happily on the grass. Its blonde mane gleams in the sunlight.

GEORGE

(looking)

There's no way that's his natural  
color.

George cracks a half-smile at Tessa. She doesn't smile back.

TESSA (V.O.)

*Things had been a little tense  
between us since the unauthorized  
"search and seizure" Dad conducted  
in my room.*

INT. APARTMENT -- FLASHBACK

Tessa sits on her bed watching George RANT and RAVE about the BOX OF CONDOMS he is holding, that he found in her drawer.

TESSA (V.O.)

*The truth is, they weren't even mine. They belonged to my best friend Lucas, who yes, is a guy, but no, is not someone I was having sex with. But dad was judge and jury. And totally paranoid. So I was sentenced to three years in Suburgatory.*

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- SAME AS BEFORE

The U-haul continues on its path through the picturesque town.

TESSA (V.O.)

*He u-hauled my ass out of the city in pursuit of preppy friends and squeaky-clean influences. Like in a J.Crew catalogue.*

Tessa looks out the window at TWO MOMS WITH STROLLERS who AIR KISS each other hello.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*Pretty ironic that a box full of rubbers landed me in a town full of plastic.*

The U-haul rounds the corner and barrels away from the camera towards Tessa's new home.

EXT. ALTMAN HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Tessa and George stand on the front lawn, staring at their new home, a slightly run-down Spanish-style.

TESSA

What color would you call that?  
"Circus Peanut?"

GEORGE

(sighs)  
It's a very traditional color for a Spanish style home.

TESSA

I know.

(then)

But it's definitely in the vomit family, don't you think?

George narrows his eyes at Tessa.

GEORGE

Why don't you grab your bag and go criticize the inside of the house.

Tessa heads over to the U-haul and retrieves her bag. George walks off to inspect the back yard. As Tessa heads up the driveway with her bag, we hear a strange sound. "FFFFFFTTTT." Tessa turns to see her new neighbor, SHEILA SHAY, 40, stay-at-home-mom, watering her lawn across the street. Sheila WAVES at Tessa, enthusiastically. Tessa hurries up the driveway without waving back. Once inside, Tessa can't resist a backwards glance. Sheila is still standing there. WAVING. Her smile is so wide it looks like her face might crack.

SHEILA

(calling, cheerily)

Hiya, neighbor! I'm Sheila. Are you the new family from New York?

Tessa lets the door SLAM SHUT without answering. She turns to find George standing there giving her a look.

TESSA

What? You taught me not to talk to strangers.

INT. TESSA'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Tessa lays in bed. Her eyes slowly flutter open.

TESSA (V.O.)

*The next morning, I was startled awake by an unfamiliar sound. Silence.*

INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM -- SAME

George bolts upright in bed, having a similar reaction. He crosses to his bedroom window and opens it. Listens. Nothing. No car alarms, no garbage trucks, no yelling cab drivers. He looks across the street. Sheila is at it again, watering her lawn. She WAVES at George. George WAVES back.

SHEILA

(calling)

Tell your wife I'm going to drop  
off a pot-roast later!

GEORGE

(calling back)

I don't have a wife!

George's words ECHO across street. He winces. He hadn't quite meant to *broadcast* that information. George WAVES and closes his window abruptly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Crap.

INT. KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

George hustles to get coffee. Tessa sits at the breakfast table with a highlighter pen, reading a book entitled "HOW TO BECOME AN EMANCIPATED MINOR."

GEORGE

(noticing)

Ha ha. That's very funny.

Tessa doesn't look up. Instead, she HIGHLIGHTS a passage, quietly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Okay. Time to get going. You've got a big day ahead of you. New school. New friends.

TESSA

Yeah, I'm not here to make friends. I'm just gonna serve my time and get out.

George clenches his jaw. Tessa's such a piece of work.

GEORGE

Guess you'd better hurry and join the other inmates, before the warden marks you late.

Tessa dog-ears the page she was reading and closes the book.

TESSA

(calmly)

Which reminds me. There are no subway stations, so I won't be taking the R train.

(MORE)

TESSA (CONT'D)

I don't have a car. Or a license.  
So how, praytell, am I going to get  
to school?

GEORGE

Aha! I'm glad you asked! Follow  
me.

George grabs his coffee mug and leads Tessa to the GARAGE.  
There, amongst the boxes and clutter, is an OLD RETRO BIKE  
modeled after the ones from Amsterdam. It has a big wicker  
basket on the front.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Tada!

Tessa looks at George.

TESSA

"Tada" is when something good  
happens.

GEORGE

Oh come on! It's cool. What do  
you think?

TESSA

I think it looks like something I  
would ride to go pick up my  
Metamucil--

GEORGE

Stop it.

TESSA

I don't even know *how* to ride a  
bike, George.

GEORGE

Don't call me George. And that's  
gonna be one of the fun suburban  
things we do together! But for  
today, you're gonna have to walk.  
I have a consultation on a remodel  
right after my breakfast at the  
Country Club.

TESSA

Breakfast at the *country club*? Do  
you realize that any street cred  
you had just disintegrated with  
that very sentence?

GEORGE

I'm sure it sounds a lot fancier  
than it is.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB -- DAY

Not so. George's U-haul pulls up to what is an *extremely*  
fancy water-front country club. It is brimming with BLACK  
CARS and WHITE PEOPLE. There is a roaring outdoor fire-place  
and VALET PARKING.

GEORGE

(tossing his keys to the  
valet)  
Careful with her, fellas.

A GREETER smiles at George brightly as he approaches.

GREETER

Cucumber-lime water?

INT. COUNTRY CLUB -- SAME

George enters, self-consciously drinking his cucumber-lime  
water. He scans the busy BREAKFAST ROOM with his eyes.  
There, at a window table, is his college buddy, NOAH WERNER  
also late 30's. He is too tan for the season with white  
teeth and professionally tousled hair. He talks to his  
office via Bluetooth, while thumbing through "Men's Health."

NOAH

So let her come at four. Is it  
just a consultation? Okay, that's  
fine. And block out the rest of my  
day.

(noticing George)

Gotta run. My breakfast is here.

Noah stands to greet George.

GEORGE

I'm your "breakfast?"

NOAH

You're my breakfast *meeting*, you  
snide bastard. Good god, George.  
You're pale as a corpse.

GEORGE

And you, antithetically, are the  
color of a Nerf ball.



NOAH  
"Antithetically." Listen to you.  
You must never get laid!

The men sit down and look at the MENU in silence.

GEORGE  
(finally)  
Eggs.

NOAH  
Yeah.  
(then)  
So you did it. You finally took  
the plunge! How many years have I  
been trying to convince you? And  
now, here you are. A suburbanite!

GEORGE  
A martyr, is more like it.  
Honestly, I did it for Tessa. She  
needs this. Cleaner air. Better  
schools. She's special, you know?

NOAH  
Special, like retarded?

Georges stares at Noah.

GEORGE  
No, special like special.

NOAH  
Oh, totally! Yeah. No, she really  
is.

GEORGE  
Besides, there's less trouble for  
her to get into out here.

NOAH  
(smiles)  
She was getting into trouble?

George rolls his eyes.

GEORGE  
Constantly hanging out with this  
group of boys. All boys. And this  
one kid, Lucas, was always at our  
place. The whole thing drove me  
crazy. I kept asking her, can't  
you make a few girlfriends?  
(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

She insisted it was all completely platonic. But then I found condoms.

NOAH

(teasing)

That little gang-banger...

GEORGE

Don't even joke! I'm sure if it was your kid you wouldn't be joking.

A CUTE WAITRESS approaches. She takes special notice of George as she deposits the bread basket on the table.

NOAH

Are you kidding? I would jump for joy if Jenna hung out with some boys. Got into some trouble. I would do a freakin' backflip. All that kid cares about is school. She's a bookworm! I used to make fun of kids like her.

(then)

I told you she got into Brown?

GEORGE

Yeah.

NOAH

(pause)

Early acceptance?

GEORGE

Yeah, I know. You told me.

NOAH

Anyway, I predict this move is gonna be great for you two. Tessa will straighten her act out. And that displaced New Yorker bit of yours is gonna kill out here. You're like an exotic import. You're a Bugatti! Do you see the way our waitress is looking at you?

Noah nods at the Cute Waitress who is lingering a few paces away. George looks over at her. She LIGHTS UP and jogs back to their table eagerly.

PRETTY WAITRESS

Did you need me? Well not "need me" but want me?

(MORE)

PRETTY WAITRESS (CONT'D)

I mean, in a food service way?  
Wow! Stop talking. I'm Jocelyn  
and I'm your server. Would you  
gentleman care to hear the  
breakfast specials? We have a  
Benedict Florentine today, which is  
very good, a little rich, honestly  
it upset my stomach. I would stay  
away from it. Let me get you some  
fresh-squeezed OJ to start.

She retreats to her waitress station, clearly flustered and embarrassed.

NOAH

See how nervous you made her? It's  
your urban edge.

GEORGE

I doubt it. Besides, chasing some  
waitress with irritable bowel isn't  
exactly on the top of my to-do  
list.

NOAH

What is?

GEORGE

Finding the right influences for  
Tessa.

NOAH

Sounds like a pretty boring list.

GEORGE

Come on, Noah. Think about my dad.  
Think about your dad. Everything  
we learned about being men, we  
learned from them. Tessa has no  
one around to teach her how to be a  
woman! In the city, her only  
female influence was Gladys.

NOAH

Who's Gladys?

GEORGE

The homeless tranny that lived  
outside the bagel shop.

NOAH

Well, lucky for you, the suburbs  
are brimming with upstanding women.  
Like our waitress, Jocelyn.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

So after you bang her... find out  
if she's willing to drive carpool.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- DAY

Tessa trudges towards school with her oversized backpack.

TESSA (V.O.)

*To properly navigate suburbia, one  
needs a stay-at-home mom to drive  
you places. Without one? You're  
living like the early-settler.*

A SERIES OF SUVs drive by in a procession. Each car is  
filled with TEENAGE GIRLS who look at Tessa with pity, as  
they pass.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*I was Laura Ingalls. But without  
the braids and a deep-seated  
resentment for Pa.*

As Tessa steps off the curb, a CADILLAC ESCALADE filled with  
HIGH SCHOOL BOYS speeds by, almost running her over.

TESSA (CONT'D)

(instinctively)  
SLOW DOWN, D-BAG!!!

The car SCREECHES to a halt. The WINDOWS LOWER. A handful  
of ruggedly handsome HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS lean out of the car.  
Amongst them is RYAN SHAY, in the passenger seat.

RYAN

Did you say D-bag? Or D-bags?

TESSA

D-bag, to the driver.

RYAN

See, Shawn! I said she was talking  
to you.

The car bursts out into LAUGHTER.

TESSA

However, the rest of you are D-  
bags, by association.

The laughing abruptly stops-- except for Ryan who laughs  
harder.

RYAN

Good one!

As the Escalade tears off, one of the D-bags in the back seat chucks a can of SUGAR-FREE RED-BULL at Tessa. It moves towards her in SLOW MOTION.

TESSA

*At that particular moment, I had no idea what it was. It was just a streak of silver and blue, hurtling towards my head, about to make impact.*

THE CAN-- hits Tessa square in the head and falls to the ground. She picks it up and studies it, like an alien.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*But I would later find out, it was a potent popularity elixir, consumed in mass quantities by the ruling class. I'd never seen this drink where I was from. But it dominated suburbia. It was--*

*(reading, aloud)*

*"Sugar-Free Red Bull."*

Tessa rubs her head where the can hit her. It left a mark.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*And it left a mark. My descent into Suburgatory had officially begun.*

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

TIGHT ON the inside of a refrigerator. It is STOCKED with Sugar-Free Redbull. A TAN and MANICURED hand reaches inside and plucks one. We hear a DOORBELL ring.

DALLAS (O.S.)

Coming!

REVERSE ANGLE ON-- DALLAS ROYCE, 40, with giant lips full of Juvederm and sizable fake breasts. She pads towards the front door in her miniature exercise clothing. We are--

INT. ROYCE HOME -- DAY

She opens the door to find George standing there. He takes in the lavish foyer.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

(slight drawl)

Hi, I'm Dallas! You must be George? The architect?

GEORGE

Wow, that is not a good way to answer the door.

DALLAS

Beg pardon?

GEORGE

You just supplied me, a perfect stranger, with all the information I need.

Dallas stares at George.

DALLAS

All the information you need for *what*?

GEORGE

(bewildered)

I can just say "Why, yes! I am George, the architect." Then I can step inside your beautiful foyer and violate you.

Dallas takes a long sip from her Redbull.

DALLAS

So are you an architect? Or a rapist? Because you look like an architect.

GEORGE  
(long pause)  
I'm an architect.

DALLAS  
Oh, good. Then come on in.

George follows Dallas inside the house and up the stairs. ON  
THEIR BACKS as they go--

DALLAS (CONT'D)  
You make a real strange first  
impression, George.

GEORGE  
Sorry. I'm... from New York.

INT. DALIA'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

George and Dallas enter the bedroom of her teenage daughter.

DALLAS  
This is Dalia's bedroom. She's my  
princess.

George surveys the opulent pink and gold room. The closet is  
bursting with clothes. There are pictures of Dalia  
everywhere, along with prize ribbons and pageant trophies.

GEORGE  
(pointing)  
She's a thoroughbred.

Dallas smiles.

DALLAS  
(grandly)  
I want to put a skylight over the  
place where she slumbers.

George thinks for a moment.

GEORGE  
You mean her bed?

DALLAS  
(nods)  
That way, in the morning, the sun  
will beam down upon her. And come  
evening? The moon will bathe her  
in its milky glow.

George sits down on Dalia's bed.

GEORGE  
(re: mattress)  
Wow. Seriously?

DALLAS  
It's a Tempurpedic.  
(then)  
So what do you think about the  
skylight? From a design  
standpoint?

GEORGE  
From a design standpoint?  
Completely superfluous. From a  
parenting standpoint? Very sweet.  
You would give anything to make  
your daughter happy. I get it.

DALLAS  
I breast-fed for sixteen months.

GEORGE  
I don't have breasts. Tessa drank  
formula.

DALLAS  
That sort of thing creates a bond,  
you know. And there *is* no greater  
bond than that between a mother and  
her daughter.

George's smile FADES.

GEORGE  
I sure hope that's not true.

Dallas sits next to George on the mattress.

DALLAS  
A mother understands what a child  
does not say.  
(then, softly)  
George, if there's anything I can  
do to help. It must be hard  
raising her all on your own.

GEORGE  
How did you... know that?

Dallas smiles.

DALLAS  
My neighbor's husband plays golf  
with your neighbor's husband.  
(MORE)



DALLAS (CONT'D)

Fred Shay? Maybe you met his wife,  
Sheila?

GEORGE

I think she might be making me a  
pot-roast.

DALLAS

It takes a village.

GEORGE

I'm grateful for the dinner, don't  
get me wrong. But I think what  
Tessa really needs doesn't come in  
a slow-cooker. She needs this.  
Motherly love. And maybe some of  
this girly stuff. To be honest,  
that's part of the reason I moved  
her out here.

DALLAS

Well, the girly stuff is nothing  
one trip to the mall can't fix.

GEORGE

She would kill me for asking you  
this-- but do you think maybe we  
could tag along with you sometime?  
I don't know much about malls.

DALLAS

Are you kidding? That would be  
great! What about today after  
school?

GEORGE

I mean, if it's not an imposition.  
I think it would be really good for  
Tessa.

DALLAS

Shopping is never an imposition.  
We'll take her to Dalia's favorite  
store! She'll love it. And she'll  
love Dalia. Everyone does.

INT. HIGHSCHOOL HALLWAY -- AT THAT MOMENT

DALIA ROYCE, 16, with flat-ironed hair and undersized  
clothing, stands next to Tessa, giving her the head-to-toe.  
Dalia's gaze rests on Tessa's clunky MOTORCYCLE BOOTS which  
she frowns at as though they cause her some degree of  
physical discomfort.

TESSA (V.O.)  
*Dallas' daughter Dalia. Her  
personality was as flat as her  
hair.*

DALIA  
Are you a lesbian?

TESSA  
You mean, because I'm not dressed  
like I have a pole in my locker?

Dalia stares at Tessa blankly.

DALIA  
(definitive)  
Those are lesbian boots.

MRS. WOLF, 50, Tessa's guidance counselor, steps out her  
office to introduce the girls.

MRS. WOLF  
Tessa, I'm Mrs. Wolf. Your  
guidance counselor. I'm here to  
help you absolutely any time you  
need me-- between the hour of 12  
and 12:45pm. And this is Dalia.  
Dalia is your buddy.

TESSA  
How so?

MRS. WOLF  
Buddies are volunteers who show new  
students around the school--

DALIA  
-- for extra credit.

MRS. WOLF  
For extra credit.

DALIA  
"Buddies" are not your friends.

MRS. WOLF  
(nods)  
Not necessarily, no.

TESSA  
(pause)  
Have you ever thought about maybe  
calling them something else?

EXT. HIGHSCHOOL HALLWAY -- ELSEWHERE -- CONTINUOUS

Tessa and Dalia walk the halls. Dalia is TEXTING the whole time. Every few steps she flatly announces the name of each place they pass, without ever looking up from her phone.

DALIA

Auditorium. Cafeteria. Nose job.

A GIRL with a NOSE BANDAGE stares into the mirror in her locker, dotting concealer on her BLACK EYE to cover it. Tessa looks around and notices SEVERAL MORE GIRLS with BLACK EYES and NOSE BANDAGES.

TESSA

Guess I know what the school's most popular elective is...

DALIA

(busy texting)

Music room. Gymnasium. Bathroom.

Tessa hangs a HARD RIGHT into the bathroom, ditching Dalia without her noticing.

INT. GIRLS BATHROOM -- HOURS LATER

Tessa sits inside the HANDICAP STALL with her feet up, reading her "Emancipated Minor" book.

TESSA (V.O.)

*It had its own sink. Natural lighting. An exposed brick wall. In Manhattan, the "handicap bathroom" would have leased for 950 a month. I stayed there for the better part of the morning and all through lunch.*

Tessa reaches for her juice box, perched on the window sill. She loudly SIPs what's left, still consumed in her reading.

OUTSIDE THE STALL -- Dalia and her FLUNKEYS enter. They size up LISA SHAY, 15, with lots of frizzy hair, who is working on her appearance in the mirror by the sink.

DALIA

(studying her)

So, Lisa. Your older brother must be really jealous of you.

LISA

Why would he be jealous of me?

DALIA

Well, because you can grow a  
mustache and he can't.

Dalia's flunkeys crack up laughing. The BELL RINGS calling the students back to class. Dalia and her girls EXIT heading off to class. Lisa fights back tears as Tessa emerges slowly from the stall.

TESSA (V.O.)

*I had not intended to make any new friends. But Lisa Shay reminded me of this stray dog I once found, but couldn't keep, because our building didn't allow pets.*

Lisa is REALLY SOBBING now. Her face is all blotchy and her chin is quivering like crazy. She WIMPERS softly to herself.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*Her hair was frizzled. Her nose was blotchy. And clearly, she needed me.*

Tessa puts a hand on Lisa's knee.

TESSA (CONT'D)

(softly)  
Hey...

LISA

(screams)  
Stay away from me, you lesbian!!!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- LATER

WIDE SHOT of Tessa, with her giant backpack, huffing and puffing down the street.

TESSA (V.O.)

*You know you're a loser when you get dissed by the school loser. My dad thought I was a skank. My classmates thought I was a vagitarian. Honestly, I didn't know what or who I was...*

Tessa rounds a corner.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*But I did know suburbia was the last place to try to figure it out.  
(then)  
I was half-way to the train station when the hostage crisis occurred.*

A JAGUAR slows next to Tessa. Its heavily-tinted window lowers.

GEORGE

Tessa!

TESSA

(looking inside)  
Dad? What are you-- whose car is this?

The window lowers further to reveal Dallas sitting beside George in an impossibly small tank top.

DALLAS

Hey, girl!

Tessa stares at Dallas blankly.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

(then, explaining)  
I'm a friend of your Daddy's.

TESSA

(to George, incredulous)  
She *is*?

GEORGE

Tessa, don't be rude. Get in the car.

Tessa opens the door to reveal Dalia sitting in the backseat, sipping a Sugar-Free Redbull. She looks even more miserable than Tessa.

INT. CLOTHING STORE -- LATER

Dallas and Dalia eagerly sift through racks of naughty school girl clothes. Lots of tiny plaid shirts shown with super-short pleated skirts. Tessa watches in horror.

TESSA

*For several hours, I was held against my will at what can only be described as the most demoralizing place on earth. Or as it's known to the layman: Abercrombie and Fitch.*

Dallas holds up a tiny pair of SHRUNKEN DENIM SHORTS.

DALLAS

Ohmigosh! How cute are these "boyfriend" shorts?

Tessa looks at them, skeptically.

TESSA

I mean, whose "boyfriend" are we talking about? Really?

Dalia holds up a tiny skirt.

DALIA

This will show off my belly ring.

TESSA

You know what else it will show off? Your vagina.

George approaches in a cold sweat. He is clearly having an adverse reaction to the mall environment.

GEORGE

Are the lights really bright in here? I feel like there's less oxygen, somehow...

Dallas turns George by the shoulders.

DALLAS

Go get yourself a snack from the food court and sit down on that dad couch over there.

Dallas points to a couch filled with DADS eating and looking at their PHONES.

GEORGE

Oh. Okay. Tessa, do you want anything?

DALLAS

She certainly does not! We don't gorge on snacks before we try on clothes. That's girl 101.

GEORGE

"Girl 101." Got it. Okay. I will sit down on that dad couch and just stay out of the way.  
(then, grasping)  
Let the ladies do they thang.

TESSA

Great. If you run into my dad, tell him I hate it here and I want to go home.

INT. DRESSING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Dalia and Tessa are both dressed like "nordic nymphos" in short skirts, shrunken fair isle sweaters. Dalia wears fuzzy platform boots with pom-poms. Tessa still rocks her black boots. They stare at their reflections in the mirror.

DALIA

That's so lame your mom died, biyotch.

Tessa turns to Dalia.

TESSA

My mom didn't die. She's just... gone.

INT. APARTMENT -- (FLASHBACK)

YOUNG TESSA, 11, sits on the floor eating a bowl of cereal and watching the TV SCREEN intently.

TESSA (V.O.)  
*Dad did the best he could to  
explain things...*

YOUNG TESSA  
(turns to her dad)  
*What's the movie called again?*

GEORGE  
*"Kramer Vs. Kramer."*

George makes a "shush" sign and points back at the screen. Keep watching. Young Tessa turns back around and does.

TESSA (V.O.)  
*And that was pretty much the only  
explanation I ever got.*

INT. DRESSING ROOM -- SAME AS BEFORE

Dalia examines her split ends in the mirror.

DALIA  
(doesn't care)  
So you turned lez to get back at  
her?

TESSA  
What? How would that get back at  
her?

A KNOCK on the dressing room door.

DALLAS  
(calling, sweetly)  
Tessa? Sweetheart? If you need  
any help in there or you have any  
questions or you feel lost or  
confused or you just need a hug--  
let me know. I'm right outside  
this door. And I'm not going  
anywhere.

Tessa rolls her eyes.



TESSA

I know why we're doing all this.  
It's because your mom feels sorry  
for me.

Dalia adjusts her skirt so that her belly ring shows.

DALIA

No, it's because my mom wants to  
bone your dad.

TESSA

(thinks)  
Doesn't she bone your dad?

DALIA

Doubt it. They've slept in  
separate bedrooms for, like, ever.  
If I ever have a marriage that's a  
total sham just put a bullet in my  
head.

TESSA

Are you sure? Because, I will...

Dalia smirks and struts out of the dressing room.

DALLAS (O.S.)

Tessa? Should we hit the shoe  
department? I'd love to find you a  
nice, heterosexual dress shoe.

Tessa stares at her reflection, miserably.

TESSA

No thanks. I'm good.

INT. JAGUAR -- LATER

George drives home. Dallas sits in the passenger seat,  
checking herself out in the mirror.

GEORGE

So that was fun. Was that fun?

George glances in the REARVIEW MIRROR. Dalia has headphones  
on and is listening to music. Tessa is reading her book on  
becoming an Emancipated Minor.

DALLAS

(turns to George)  
I had a blast.

INT. JAGUAR/EXT. ALTMAN HOUSE -- LATER

George pulls up in front of his house.

GEORGE

Thanks again, you guys. That was  
really great. Right, Tess--

George turns to see Tessa is no longer in the car. She is  
racing up the path with her shopping bags.

TESSA (V.O.)

*I was home-free. Or so I thought.  
I had no idea it was an ambush.*

Sheila Shay seems to come out of nowhere holding an enormous  
cast iron POT.

SHEILA

Hola, neighbor! I'm just gonna set  
this pot-roast down on the steps  
while we have some girl talk!

Sheila drags Tessa across the street by the arm. As they  
pass the Jaguar Dallas WAVES.

DALLAS

Hi, Sheila!

SHEILA

(waving back)  
Hi, Dallas! Put that roast in at  
350, George! It needs another  
hour. Covered!

Sheila whisks Tessa inside her home and closes the door.

DALLAS

(turns to George)  
I told her to give Tessa some  
motherly love, like you said.

George smiles weakly.

GEORGE

Perfect. Thanks.  
(then)  
She's going to kill me in my sleep.

INT. RUMPUS ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

TESSA (V.O.)

*Twenty-seven percent of kidnappers  
already know their victims.*

Tessa sits in Sheila's rumpus room with an untouched snack tray in front of her. Sheila smiles her face-cracking grin.

SHEILA

If you need someone to talk to--

TESSA (V.O.)

*I could hear the police report now.  
Two counts of disingenuous smiling.  
One count of rancid snack.*

SHEILA

I'd like that someone to be me.  
Whether it's concerns over an  
unusually heavy menstrual flow--

TESSA (V.O.)

*And three counts of unsolicited  
lecturing, on topics ranging from  
sanitary napkins to the importance  
of a good brassiere.*

IN THE BG-- Sheila's daughter, Lisa, does homework while trying to go unnoticed. Her older brother Ryan smiles at Tessa as he grabs a DRINK from the spare REFRIGERATOR.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*It's not like Sheila was doing such  
a bang-up job with her own kids.  
Her daughter, Geraldo, was  
completely neurotic. And her son  
from the Escalade was probably  
going to be a serial killer...*

RYAN

Hey, Summer's Eve! Go long!

Ryan chucks a can at Tessa. This time she catches it.

EXT. ALTMAN HOUSE -- LATER

George and Noah stand on his front lawn, watering with a hose. Several other NEIGHBORS do the same. The sound of the water spraying ("Ffffffft") is deafening.

GEORGE  
(staring at Sheila's)  
She's been in there too long...

NOAH  
Doesn't that lady have a teenage  
son?

GEORGE  
Today didn't go well. I think  
maybe Tessa just doesn't *identify*  
with the girls at her school. I  
need another strategy. What about  
Jenna?

NOAH  
What about Jenna?

GEORGE  
Tessa always looked up to her when  
they were kids.

NOAH  
Yeah, but that's when they were  
like, seven...

GEORGE  
I know but what if they totally hit  
it off? Jenna could really be a  
great influence on Tessa...

NOAH  
Well, that's for sure. Julie has  
book club tonight. You want us to  
grab a couple of pizzas and come  
over?

GEORGE  
Actually, I have a roast in the  
oven.

NOAH  
(pause)  
What?

GEORGE  
A pot-roast? It's in there cooking  
at 350, so... yeah.

Noah smirks at George.

NOAH

So what, you've been holed up in the house all day? Making pot-roast?

GEORGE

No.

(softly)

I also went clothes shopping at the mall.

The men stare at each other for a moment. George's phone BUZZES. George hands the hose to Noah and looks at his phone. Then looks at Noah.

NOAH

I gave someone your number.

GEORGE

(reading)

"Can I get you a refill on that OJ?"

NOAH

The waitress from the club.

GEORGE

I really wish you hadn't done that...

NOAH

(sarcastically)

I know! How awful. Now she might pursue you. And then you'd be forced to take her out to dinner. Or a movie. And who knows, she *might* even want to have sex with you. And that would suck.

Noah rolls his eyes and acts like the hose is his penis. He directs the "stream" onto George's shoes.

GEORGE

I can't believe you're somebody's father.

Noah hands the hose back to George.

NOAH

Speaking of which, I better go pick Jenna up from her lesson at the club so she can talk some sense into that kid of yours.

INT. TESSA'S ROOM -- LATER

Tessa and Jenna sit cross-legged on her bed. Jenna hands Tessa a ROLODEX.

JENNA

Here's who you call for weed.  
Here's who you call for pills.  
Here's who you call if you get  
knocked up.

(pointing)

That guy saved my *iznass* freshman  
year.

TESSA

You know what? I remembered you  
differently.

Other than the provocative advice, Jenna, 16, looks just like you'd expect her to. Bookish, with a tidy haircut and small wire-frame glasses.

JENNA

Now, your dad wanted me to talk to  
you about the importance of  
schoolwork...

TESSA

Yeah, well, frankly, I'm all talked  
out today, Jenna. I just don't  
have your drive when it comes to  
academics.

Jenna reaches in her bag and hands Tessa a prescription box.

JENNA

Now you do.

TESSA

What's this?

JENNA

Pro-Vigil. I like to wash it down  
with--

TESSA

Sugar-Free Redbull?

JENNA

(nods)

I find it really gives me the  
winning edge.

TESSA

(reading box)

Along with tremors, dry mouth and vertigo?

(then)

I don't think I'm cut out for the suburbs.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Girls! Dinner!

INT. DINING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

George, Noah, Tessa and Jenna EAT POT-ROAST in silence. Only the sound of their forks and knives scraping against the plates.

GEORGE

So this is pretty nice! Tessa, don't you think? When's the last time dad put a home-cooked meal on the table?

TESSA

And suddenly that's what matters in life? Meatloaf?

GEORGE

Don't be ridiculous.

(then)

This is pot-roast.

The group continues eating.

NOAH

So, Tessa. I heard you had a pretty eventful first day.

TESSA

Not as eventful as Dad's. In spite of his busy schedule, he was able to contract a couple of loaner moms to give me advice I didn't want and handpick a couple of girls for me to be friends with that I can't stand.

Tessa tries not to look directly at Jenna.

GEORGE

I didn't "contract" anyone.

TESSA

So what was it? Charity work?

GEORGE

Those moms were just trying to help.

TESSA

Help what?

GEORGE

Help you.

TESSA

I don't need "help."

NOAH

Can I get a little more of the sauce? The sauce makes it, don't you think?

George angrily ladles some sauce onto Noah's plate.

GEORGE

You know, Tessa, no one is expecting a "thank you" but a little gratitude would be nice. I mean, you got motherly love and girl 101 and a whole bunch of *rilly* cute back-to-school clothes from A&F.

Tessa stares at George, wide-eyed.

TESSA

Oh my god, listen to you! Are you delusional? I didn't want *any* of those things! And I certainly didn't want to relocate to the land of Frankenmoms and prescription drug abusers!

This time Tessa looks directly at Jenna who drops her fork.

JENNA

God, Tessa. Don't be so judgemental.

GEORGE

Are you kidding? That's the hallmark of her existence!



TESSA

These kids are the ones who judged me. Since we got here, I've been labeled, ridiculed and bludgeoned with a can of Sugar-Free Red Bull.

NOAH

I'd *kill* for a Sugar-Free Red Bull. You don't happen to have--

GEORGE

You're acting like this move was a punishment!

TESSA

From my perspective, it is!

GEORGE

Well, then maybe you should try to see it from my perspective. Because everything I do is for you. This whole move is about you!

TESSA

Oh, don't kid yourself, George.

GEORGE

Stop calling me George--

TESSA

This move isn't about me. It's about you. Your fear. And your guilt. I knew you didn't trust me. I just had no idea that you didn't trust yourself.

GEORGE

I trust myself.

TESSA

Well, then call them off. Call them all off. Because I don't need a mom, okay? I just need you to be my dad.

Tessa EXITS. We hear her STORM up the stairs. Her bedroom door SLAMS SHUT. Noah wipes his mouth. Frowns.

NOAH

Well. On the down side, you're probably gonna need to re-hinge that door. But on the bright side, you're definitely gonna have left overs.

INT. BREAKFAST ROOM -- DAY

Tessa sits at the table eating cereal and reading her "Emancipated Minor" book. WIDEN TO REVEAL George is also at the table, eating cereal, and reading a book entitled: "IS ADOPTION RIGHT FOR YOU?"

TESSA (V.O.)

*The next morning, we didn't speak. Instead, we expressed our feelings through passive-aggressive reference books.*

The DOORBELL RINGS. Tessa tosses her book aside and goes to answer it. It's LISA SHAY from across the street.

LISA

My mom wanted me to bring you this pamphlet on the importance of regular, self-administered breast exams. And this homemade cookie.

TESSA

(taking the pamphlet)  
Tell her I'm not interested in the cookie.

Tessa starts to close the door. Lisa stops her.

LISA

My brother said he thinks you're cute.

TESSA

Your brother's into "lesbians?"

LISA

Look, I'm sorry I wiggled out on you in the girls room.

(then)

It's rough in there, you know?

TESSA

Yeah, actually. I do.

Lisa heads off. Tessa looks down at the pamphlet.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*Maybe her mom did ask her to bring that pamphlet. But I knew it was something else. An olive branch.*

INT. TESSA'S ROOM -- AT THAT MOMENT

The door is closed but the sounds of CONSTRUCTION are heard from within. HAMMERING, DRILLING, etc. We CUT INSIDE THE ROOM to see what George is doing.

TESSA (V.O.)

*It wasn't a skylight. But it was a sign.*

REVERSE ANGLE-- there, plastered on the ceiling, is an old SUBWAY SIGN. Specifically, the R train. The same line she rode to school every day.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*... a sign that he was trying to see things from my perspective. So maybe I could try too.*

EXT. ALTMAN HOUSE -- DAY

Tessa walks out the front door to find George standing there, with the OLD LADY BIKE. She takes a deep, cleansing breath.

GEORGE

This means a lot to me.

TESSA

(nods)

Let's do this before I change my mind.

GEORGE

Okay! I'll hold her steady while you climb on.

Tessa straddles the bike.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Comfy?

TESSA

Comfy? I could have *four asses* and still be comfy. Could this bike seat be any bigger?

GEORGE

It's a nice safe bike. Now, I'm going to keep holding on until you find your balance. So find your balance. Find your balance. And now just... start pedaling.

Tessa starts to pedal, tentatively. George is struggling to hold the bike up, running alongside her.

TESSA

Like this?

GEORGE

A little faster, maybe.

TESSA

Like *this*?

Tessa pedals FASTER. George is still holding the bike.

GEORGE

That's it! That's perfect! See?  
You found your balance!

George isn't looking where he's going. He runs into a MAILBOX and goes down like a ton of bricks. Tessa glides OS and we hear a CRASH followed by a CAR ALARM.

TESSA (V.O.)

*His heart was in the right place.  
His pelvis, however, no longer was.  
And my leg was broken in three  
places. But I guess no one goes  
through Suburgatory without a few  
bumps and bruises along the way.*

INT. LIVING ROOM -- THAT NIGHT

Tessa lays on the couch. Her leg is in a cast.

TESSA (V.O.)

*After the biking incident, there  
was no calling the moms off. They  
couldn't help themselves. It was  
like they smelled our blood in the  
water.*

Sheila tells George how to reheat the ZITI she's holding.

SHEILA

350. For about an hour. Foil on.

ON GEORGE-- BLOODY and BANDAGED but listening diligently.

TESSA (V.O.)

*That's when I realized that it  
wasn't just me who was stuck in  
Suburgatory. Dad was here too.*

(MORE)

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*So I guess the two of us will have to learn how to navigate these mom-infested waters. Together.*

Dallas attempts to put a knit BLACK BOOTIE on the foot with the cast. It looks just like Tessa's lesbian boot.

TESSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*And maybe I had judged the moms too harshly. Maybe sometimes the smiles aren't phony. And maybe, sometimes, beneath a pair of giant synthetic boobs... you can find a giant, non-synthetic heart.*

Tessa stares at Dallas' cleavage as she struggles to inch the bootie higher on her foot.

DALLAS

There. How's that feel?

TESSA

That feels... pretty good, actually.

END OF SHOW

TAG

EXT. STREET -- MANHATTAN (DAY)

GLADYS, the homeless tranny, struts her stuff outside the bagel place. A BAGEL SHOPPE EMPLOYEE emerges from within the shop with a LARGE MANILA ENVELOPE. He hands it to Gladys.

GLADYS

What, I got mail?! You lying.

The Bagel Shop Employee shows Gladys the envelope. It is addressed to her care of the Bagel Shoppe. Gladys tears it open and discovers the back-to-school clothes from Abercrombie and Fitch. She SQUEALS with delight.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Tessa, girl, you hooked it up!!!  
This kilt is pimp!

As Gladys tries on her clothes and struts her stuff we FADE OUT.