

MAX & NANCY

"Step One" (Pilot)

Written by  
Ryan Willison

04.07.19

rgwillison@gmail.com  
949.423.4268

INT. GELSON'S - NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA - MORNING

CLOSE ON a pair of hands turning over a scrap of paper. They belong to NANCY RHODES: blonde, brittle, 50, in the checkout line. Christmas decorations abound. It's 74 degrees outside.

ANOTHER WOMAN queues up behind her. Nancy smiles before looking down, unfolding the paper. It reads, "Leave yesterday behind, today" in Papyrus font.

CASHIER

Hi, there.

NANCY

Oh. Hi!

She steps up, beaming, nothing in hand to check out.

CASHIER

(beat)

Finding everything alright?

NANCY

Yes, absolutely. Probably too well. I'm actually, um... I'm here to make something right.

CASHIER

Are you with the Labor Board?

NANCY

Oh, no! No. I'm an alcoholic.

Beat. Silence from the CASHIER and the other customer.

NANCY (CONT'D)

See, part of my recovery is to make amends for any harm I may have caused others? And I have stolen a lot of Chardonnay from this store. Not just this store, if that helps, but you guys were definitely... you were home base. For sure. I used to live right over here, so it was just impossible, right? I'd leave home specifically without enough cash to buy anything. Definitely not Kim Crawford. But every time, driving home, there it was. That Gelson's sign, like a tractor beam. (nervously, re: candy) Pomegranate seeds? Fun.

CASHIER  
You probably want to speak to my  
manager about this.

NANCY  
Oh no, I'd rather--

CASHIER  
(over the PA system)  
Jorge to Register 3, please.

The other customer escapes to the relative peace of Register 4. Nancy frowns, balling her affirmation up in her fist. Enter JORGE, the very serious Gelson's manager.

JORGE  
Good afternoon, ma'am. Finding  
everything alright?

NANCY  
Fine, I'm fine.

CASHIER  
She stole.

NANCY  
(betrayed)  
Not today!  
(to Jorge)  
It was years ago! Half... a year.

They both scrutinize her. Nancy tries to stay calm.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
(to Cashier)  
You know, this is an important part  
of my sobriety journey. I was  
really hoping it would be a  
meaningful, one-on-one interaction--

JORGE  
If you want to have a one-on-one  
interaction with someone about  
stealing from my store, you can  
have it with me. I'm the manager.

Off Nancy - well, this is fucked.

INT. CANYON CLUB - LATER

Nancy recounts the experience, sort of, to a group of other ALCOHOLICS in folding chairs.

NANCY

... And he just looked at me and said, "Thank you." And I looked him and said, "No, Jorge. *Gracias a tí.*"  
 (laughing after a beat)  
 Of course I was a mess. Just sobbing, you know. But I felt... free. Totally unburdened. And even though I only have a few months in the program, I'm so grateful to the steps for that. And grateful to you all for letting me share. Thanks.

GROUP

Thank you, Nancy.

Applause. Everyone looks genuinely happy for her - all except for CORY, a butch older woman in the back row.

CORY

Cory, alcoholic.

GROUP

Cory.

CORY

Thanks for your share. Brought me back to when I did Step 9 for the first time. Two years into the program.

She looks right at Nancy, who furrows her eyebrows a little.

CORY (CONT'D)

I'm just so grateful I did things at the pace I did, you know? Got a sponsor. Did the waltz: 1, 2, 3. 1, 2, 3. Just the first three steps, all that internal work first.

An apprehensive MEETING SECRETARY chimes in.

SECRETARY

Just a reminder that at this meeting we don't allow any cross--

CORY

That wasn't cross-talk.  
 (small beat)  
*That* was cross-talk. Anyway, that's all I got.

GROUP

Thank you, Cory...

No applause from the group. Cory continues to look at Nancy, who looks away. A depressive-looking YOUNG MAN speaks up.

TIM

Tim. Alcoholic-addict.

GROUP

Hi, Tim. / Tim.

TIM

So, uh... fuck. Havin' a hard time lately. My old dealer sent me a text like, "Yo, got some bomb new pizza, want a slice?" But he wasn't talking about pizza. He was talking about crystal.

Nancy frowns. She stands up quietly from her aisle seat and starts to sneak out. She looks at the Secretary, tapping her watch, mouthing "sorry," and slips out the back.

INT. NANCY'S CAR - LATER - MORNING

Nancy gets into her car. Puts her purse down, checks her hair in the mirror. She closes her eyes and takes a deep, deep breath. Pushing some things back down.

Her eyes snap open, an effortful smile on her face. As she drives off, MATCH CUT TO--

INT. UC BERKELEY - COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

MAX (19, an effeminate waif) wearing a fresh black eye and decidedly *not* smiling. He sits across from LORRAINE, a conservatively-dressed disciplinary counselor.

LORRAINE

So. Max.

MAX

Lorraine.

LORRAINE

I'm sure we both know why you're here. You provided campus police with this statement...

She fishes out a form on which has been scrawled, in block letters, "I'M SORRY I'M DRUNK AND I'M SORRY I'M GAY."

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

... But obviously that doesn't tell the full story.

Max blinks hard for a second, mortified but stoic.

MAX

I don't really see why you're involved, I mean this is very much a personal, one-on-one issue.

LORRAINE

I'm involved because you forced your way into another student's apartment.

MAX

Okay but he's not allowed to just *not text back*.

LORRAINE

You also pulled out another student's hair. His girlfriend.

MAX

Oh my god it was a clip-in extension.

LORRAINE

It wasn't.

MAX

(not good)  
...It wasn't?  
(beat)  
Well I'm the one with the black eye so she's not exactly Sharon Tate.

LORRAINE

We're looking into that too, but Max this is a very serious --

MAX

Look, I get it. Damage control. But I don't think anyone saw, and if there's one thing that fucker is good at, it's being discreet.

LORRAINE

There's a video, Max.

Awful silence.

MAX

There's a what?

LORRAINE

There are certain expectations for  
how we handle cases like this--

MAX

Shh shh shh, hold on.

He has his phone out, playing the video. We can only hear it.

MAX (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

(heavily slurring)

Your secret's safe with me, okay?!  
I won't tell anyone you let me blow  
you at Winter Bash.

A mix of LAUGHTER and SHOCK from the onscreen crowd.

MAX (CONT'D)

Oh my god.

MAX (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

Just come out here. Please.

(beat)

I will not be *ignored*, David!

Max puts his phone away and closes his eyes. He wants to die.

LORRAINE

Were you quoting *Fatal Attraction*?

MAX

(exploding)

YES okay?! I had just rewatched it  
when she lost for *The Wife*!

He bolts, heading for the door.

LORRAINE

Max, we need to talk about your  
future at this institution.

MAX

What future?!

He slams the door behind him.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

Nancy paces, biting her nails, her cell phone to her ear.

INT. BROOKSTONE - INTERCUT

HENRY, Nancy's ex-husband (50s, mid-life crisis written all  
over him), answers as he surveys a bevy of hi-tech fans.

HENRY

Yello.

NANCY

Henry. There you are.

HENRY

What's up, Nance?

Nancy hears loud music on his end, speakers getting tested.

NANCY

I-- is now a good time?

(no answer)

I wanted to ask about the check. I never got it? It's been weeks now.

HENRY

Yeah, the wire's coming in Monday.

NANCY

Okay... Sorry, what does that mean? Because there's always some sort of "wire" and I'm just confused.

(beat)

You owe me a lot of money, Henry.

HENRY

Money money money. Never enough.

Henry points to one of the fans and mouths to the SALES ASSOCIATE, "This is perfect."

NANCY

That's not exactly fair.

HENRY

Hey, try to enjoy the holidays, alright?

NANCY

I'd love to, I just--

He's hung up. END INTERCUT. Nancy is surprised and smacks her phone on the counter. Closes her eyes. Another deep breath.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

On a calendar of Tuscan Villas, Nancy writes "81" in today's date. Just 9 days away, circled, is: "90 Days Sober!!"

She moves her pen to a taped-up sheet of paper where she crosses through "STEP 9: MAKE DIRECT AMENDS." STEPS 1-8 are similarly crossed out.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In a notebook, she makes a list of THINGS TO BE GRATEFUL FOR:

- "1) My health and sobriety.
- 2) My beautiful new apartment.
- 3) My exciting date tonight!"

She writes the number 4, then hesitates. A KNOCK from outside.

NANCY  
Who could that be?  
(to herself, playful)  
My number four?

INT./EXT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The knocking continues, now insistent and rhythmic.

NANCY  
Coming, coming. Keep your shirt on.

She opens the door. No one's there.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
Hello?

She pokes her head out into the hallway, confused, when--

MAX  
BOO!!

Max jumps out from a corner. Nancy screams. Gutturally.

NANCY  
OH MY GOD!

Max bursts out laughing while Nancy catches her breath. It takes her a minute to recover.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
Jesus Christ. Max. Don't do that.

She hits his arm, still in shock. One of those pranks that sounded funny but got weirdly raw.

MAX  
Wow, when you said "my door is  
always open" you really were being  
generous, huh?

NANCY  
You're supposed to be at school!

MAX

That's the beauty of being close  
by. I can surprise my mama anytime  
I want.

He kisses her cheek insistently, teasingly. He's still  
laughing at her. Nancy joins uneasily.

NANCY

Let's go inside.

Max charges ahead with a conspicuously large duffel bag. He  
surveys the apartment, horrified, as Nancy closes the door.

MAX

Wait. Mom. Is everything okay?

NANCY

I don't know, Maxie, why don't you  
tell me?

MAX

Like I knew you were downsizing,  
but... this is bleak.

Nancy looks around - it's all candles and seashells.

NANCY

Well we'll survive, I just don't  
have a formal dining room anymore.

MAX

How long have you been here?

NANCY

Just a few months.

Max drops his bag in the middle of the entryway and wanders  
around. Nancy stands, apprehensive.

MAX

Oh, pictures of... everyone but me.  
Love that.

NANCY

Don't be silly, they're in your --

MAX

Aunt Megan made the cut. The  
Jehovah's Witness.

NANCY

Max. What are you doing here? When  
did you leave campus?

MAX

Like noon.

NANCY

You got here in *five* hours?

MAX

(barreling through)

Yeah I went ninety-five. Finals are nuts and it sounded nice to study at home. Wasn't that the whole point of me staying in-state?

NANCY

Of course. You're always welcome, honey.

MAX

Now, what are we watching tonight? And don't say *Age of Adaline*, we will *never* see eye to eye on Blake Lively --

NANCY

I have plans.

Beat. Max is finally quiet for a moment. He flicks his eyes over his mother, then turns back to the photos.

MAX

Got it. Cool. I'll call Micaela. She'll be excited I'm home.

NANCY

I'm sorry, sweetie. It's so last minute, I'd just seem rude if I --

MAX

No, yeah. I'd hate for you to seem rude...

(then)

We'll hang out before I head back.

NANCY

(flooded with shame)

You can come sit in my room while I get ready.

MAX

Mom, it's fine. I don't need to be all up in your space.

CUT TO:

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MAX

I wouldn't wear that.

Max is sitting criss-cross on Nancy's bed. She stands there in a demure, blue-and-white cocktail dress.

NANCY

I would hope not.

MAX

Are you going more for "I'm a mom but I'm slutty" or "I'm a slut but I'm a mommy"?

NANCY

Neither. Jesus!

MAX

Kidding! God. Wear the green one.

NANCY

(softening)

Oh, I love that one.

She goes back into her closet.

MAX

So tell me about this guy. Is he another hedge fund manager? Sleek and worldly and low-key evil?

NANCY (O.S.)

He's not a hedge fund manager, no.

MAX

(not listening)

Everyone in Newport is so predictable. It's like, we get it, you care more about your taxes than literally saving children, we know.

NANCY (O.S.)

He's an artist. So. Probably a Democrat.

MAX

Oh, an *artist*. Then he's sensitive. One could say unstable.

Nancy emerges in her green dress. She looks great.

NANCY  
I'm not listening to you.

MAX  
You and green.  
(chef's kiss)  
I just hope he doesn't have a mood disorder. Or a fucked-up adopted daughter who comes out of the woodwork for money.

NANCY  
That'd be so hard to relate to.

She got her first jab in, a polite one. Max's jaw drops.

MAX  
I am *not* adopted.

Nancy shrugs playfully - "who knows?" Then --

NANCY  
I should go. God, I'm kinda nervous.

MAX  
Well you have nothing to fear,  
because *I* am going to mix us up a  
little batch of liquid courage.

Max bounds off the bed and heads out to the kitchen.

MAX (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Let me guess, three bottles in the  
drawer with a backup in the hamper?

We stay with Nancy, frozen. Terrified, even.

NANCY  
Um...

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Max is rummaging through the fridge.

MAX  
What the hell happened, did you  
have a bender or something?

Nancy walks out from the bedroom, sheepish.

NANCY  
I've actually...

Max turns to look at her. She doesn't know what to say.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
I've been cutting back.

Max deflates. A beat.

MAX  
Oh. I really *should've* told you I  
was coming.

INT. "THE BUNGALOW" STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

Nancy sits across from her date CLIFF, a tall, beachy older man with a great head of hair. The SERVER fills his glass with Tempranillo. Nancy stares at the wine, distracted.

CLIFF  
I love all the national parks, but  
Yosemite really is the most  
special. At least, in my opinion.

MAX (V.O.)  
(in Nancy's head)  
How controversial.

CLIFF  
My daughters and I go every year.

MAX (V.O.)  
So they have nothing better to do?  
Clingy...

The server starts to fill Nancy's wine glass. She snaps.

NANCY  
No! No.  
(awkwardly recovering)  
None for me. Thank you.

SERVER  
Of course... I'll leave you two  
with the menus.

The server heads off.

CLIFF  
Sorry, I just assumed we'd both be  
having some.

NANCY  
Oh, don't worry at all. I'm sorry.  
So you said you had two daughters?

CLIFF

Yep, the lights of my life. Sarah's almost 23 now, which I still can't wrap my head around, and we adopted Ruby 16 years ago. My ex and I.

NANCY

(quick pause)

Oh! Oh, adopted.

(another beat)

Wow, that's, um... brave. Not *brave* -- well, sure, brave. Admirable.

CLIFF

She's just the same as Sarah to me.

NANCY

Of course, of course.

(tries to resist, but)

So she's, you know, got a good head on her shoulders? Everything good there?

Cliff pauses for a moment, a touch defensive.

CLIFF

Yeah, I'd say so.

NANCY

Great. That's so great!

Nancy goes to reach for her wine glass, but it's empty. She laughs nervously, then takes a big sip of water.

INT. MAX'S CAR/EXT. BUNGALOW PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Max sits in his car with his partner-in-crime MICAELA (African-American, down for whatever) in the passenger seat, staking out the entrance.

MAX

So what, my mom's going on Bumble dates now? Next thing you know she'll be with some libertarian and it's "sorry Max, we tried to keep your room, but Ron needed somewhere to put his assault rifles."

MICAELA

Dude, she should date. Your mom's way too hot to die alone.

MAX

She has me.

MICAELA

Which Greek play is this? I forget.

Max is on his phone, distracted by INCOMING TEXTS: "Seriously where are you?" "What happened???" "Was that actually you?"

Micaela just swigs from a water bottle full of orange liquid.

MAX

What the hell are you drinking?

MICAELA

Vodka and Emergen-C.

MAX

Excuse me?

MICAELA

You put the powder right in, it's so easy.

MAX

(beat)

You're honestly a genius.

INT. THE BUNGALOW - WOMEN'S RESTROOM - MINUTES LATER

Nancy fixes her bangs in the mirror, talking to herself, rehearsing for Cliff.

NANCY

You know, I love adoption. My sister-in-law -- ex-sister-in-law -- brought home two boys from Guyana. Cute as can be.

She blots her lip together, smoothing over her lipstick.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Cute as can be.

INT. THE BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Nancy walks back to her table. As she approaches, she notices Cliff handing the server his card. The server catches Nancy's eye and nervously walks away. Nancy sits.

NANCY

Everything alright?

CLIFF

Nancy. I think we make our most meaningful impressions within the first ten seconds of knowing each other, and I knew almost immediately that we just aren't on the same wavelength. So rather than waste my time or yours, I think we should just call it a night. Alright?

Off Nancy, too caught off guard to really react.

INT. MAX'S CAR/EXT. BUNGALOW PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Back to Max and Micaela, now sharing a vape pen.

MAX

God, it's so triggering being back.

MICAELA

Why? Everyone loves you here.

MAX

Please, even our Trig teacher called me "faggot." And he was co-rrrect.

(then)

Oh my god there she is.

ANGLE ON Nancy awkwardly standing at the valet with Cliff.

MICAELA

Damn, he could get it.

MAX

Grow up. He's probably a serial killer.

MICAELA

I really wish that changed things for me, unfortunately it does not.

Nancy gets in her car. Max and Micaela get down.

MAX

Shit, she's going home, I have to beat her.

(then, game face on)

You ready to see how bad gays are at driving?

MICAELA

Vroom vroom, bitch.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Nancy lets herself in. She puts her purse down in the entryway, sighing, before she registers MUSIC playing.

MAX

Hi.

She turns. Max is standing there, much less manic than before, looking happy to see her.

NANCY

Hi Maxie... Is this Roxy Music?

MAX

They're the best.

NANCY

(pleasantly surprised)  
I love Bryan Ferry.

MAX

How was the date?

NANCY

Oh. It was fine. It went okay.

MAX

Good! I'm glad. You should come sit, you must be fried.

NANCY

Honestly? I really am.

Nancy smiles wearily, taking her shoes off. Max walks back into the living room. She follows him, then stops short. Max has two wine glasses full of spritzers right on the table.

MAX

Your favorite.

NANCY

Max.

MAX

I know, I know. I have --  
(revealing)  
The tumbler of cranberry juice.  
Not my first rodeo.

He pours a little cranberry into one of the spritzers.

NANCY

Sweetheart... I'm really beat, I don't think I have it in me tonight.

MAX

What?! I just got home!  
(off her silence)  
Whatever, just come sit. We've barely spent two seconds together.

A beat. She gingerly sits on the couch next to him. The drinks are in her line of sight. Max takes a long sip.

MAX (CONT'D)

(re: drink)  
"The Hurricane Nancy." Bra-fucking-va. It's your masterpiece.

NANCY

So how's school? You must have a million things going on up there.

MAX

You know me...  
(delicate beat)  
I actually had something I wanted to ask you.

Nancy is completely unsure what to expect.

MAX (CONT'D)

Would it be okay if I stayed here for a little bit?  
(noticing her hesitation)  
Not for a long time or anything. I just, it feels good to be home and things are so stressful this semester. It's been really intense. Academically, I mean. All my finals are take-home, and just knowing I have family here and this kind of oasis is like... the only thing keeping me from cracking, you know?

Nancy looks at him for a moment. And despite herself --

NANCY

Of course.

MAX

Thanks, Mom. You're the best.

Max hugs her.

MAX (CONT'D)  
 (singing)  
*Reunited and it feels so good.*

He holds on to the hug. Nancy looks at the drinks.

NANCY  
 Well. Cheers to that.

Max pulls away. He smiles at her.

MAX  
 Cheers to that.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - LATER - MONTAGE

PHIL COLLINS is BLARING now, mostly obscuring the dialogue we see in QUICK CUTS:

- Max is telling a story animatedly.
- Max refills their drinks.
- Now it's Nancy telling a story. They're both laughing.
- Max and Nancy play a thumb war. Nancy wins as Max screams.
- Nancy stands up and demonstrates a balletic dance move. Max shakes his finger approvingly, like you would at a drag show.
- Max tops them off again.
- Nancy rests her hands on top of Max's. He flips his up and slaps hers repeatedly, winning handily.
- Nancy pointedly puts a coaster under Max's glass. He moves the glass back onto the table, teasing her. And repeat.
- Why not? Another refill.
- They dance together, yelling along to the song.

MAX AND NANCY  
*Su-Su-Sussudio!*

MAX  
 What does that even mean?!

NANCY  
 Nobody knows!

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - LATER - END MONTAGE

Max and Nancy sit on the couch, having a drunken heart-to-heart. Now it's "Forever Young" playing.

NANCY

You probably blame me for everything.

MAX

No, are you serious? Dad was such an asshole.

NANCY

It was both, we both --

MAX

You gave him everything and he couldn't even ask you how your day was. He sucks.

NANCY

Max, just don't do what I did. Don't attach your life to someone and make them your everything escape plan, you just don't know. You don't know.

She looks away, lost in thought.

NANCY (CONT'D)

(singing along)

*Forever young, I wanna be forever young...*

She's suddenly emotional.

MAX

Mom. Don't cry!

(spoken, to the song)

Do you *really* want to live forever? Forever?

They both laugh. She sniffles some tears away. She looks at the empty glasses and covers her face with her hands.

NANCY

Oh god. This is bad. This is really, really bad.

MAX

Are you sleeping enough?

NANCY  
I'm not sleeping at all.

MAX  
Okay, that's not okay. I have  
something for you. It's gonna help.

Max gets up and goes into the other room. Nancy looks up, in a drunken daze.

NANCY  
What is it?  
(then alone, to the song)  
*Some are like water, some are like  
the heat --*

HARD CUT TO:

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Nancy is conked out in bed, sun streaming in hard. It's late morning already. A loud GARDENING NOISE finally stirs her.

She opens her eyes painfully, groaning, as if from a yearlong coma. She reaches for water from her nightstand, then immediately spits it out in shock. It's leftover wine.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nancy vigorously brushes her teeth. She can't look at herself. The sobriety calendar hangs nearby, still on "81."

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Nancy stumbles in wearing a thrown-together outfit - yoga pants and a ratty blouse. There's food everywhere. Cookie dough in the carpet. The oven is on at 400 degrees.

NANCY  
What the --? Max?  
(calling off)  
Max?

No response.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - PARKING DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Nancy rushes along to her car, in a truly foul mood. And then she sees it, gasping loudly.

NANCY  
No!

REVEAL her car, completely totaled, bashed in on both ends. The one behind hers is pretty beat up too.

NANCY (CONT'D)

What the fuck? What the fuck?!

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - SECURITY OFFICE - LATER

An irritated SECURITY GUARD scrolls through last night's footage as Nancy rubs her temples, deadly hungover.

NANCY

Please. I'll pay for the damage. I just need to see the tape.

She makes a call on her phone, but no answer.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Max, *pick up*. You need to come home right now and tell me what happened to my Prius!

The guard notices a FIGURE ON SCREEN by Nancy's car while fast-forwarding. He plays the footage back.

SECURITY GUARD

Here we go.

Nancy hangs up and leans in, desperate for evidence.

ON SCREEN: Ambien Nancy emerges. She gets into her car. Starts it. Drives right into the wall in front of her. Reverses. Drives right into the car behind her. Then exits the car with her purse still over her shoulder.

As hungover, morning Nancy takes this in, speechless --

ALCOHOLICS (PRE-LAP)

God, grant me the serenity. To accept the things I cannot change...

INT. LAGUNA CANYON CLUB - DAY

Nancy slumps in her chair, sunglasses on. Disheveled. Angry. She does not join in the prayer.

ALCOHOLICS

The courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

The meeting SECRETARY takes over. She's young, tatted-up, and can't read with inflection to save her life.

SECRETARY

Are there any newcomers at this meeting or anyone with less than 30 days of sobriety.

ANGLE ON Nancy, stone-faced.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Please stand and introduce yourself so we may get to know you.

Two people, BARB and RANDY, stand timidly.

BARB

I'm Barb.

GROUP

Barb.

RANDY

Randy, alcoholic.

GROUP

Randy.

BARB

(flustered, sotto)

Alcoholic.

Nancy balls up her fists repeatedly, nervously. ANGLE ON Cory, looking over her way. Inscrutable as always.

EXT. LAGUNA CANYON CLUB - A LITTLE LATER

Nancy books it outside, the first to leave. Cory follows.

CORY

Hey. You okay?

NANCY

(turning)

What? Me? I'm fine.

CORY

Okay. Just because--

NANCY

(snapping)

Because you've got me pegged, right? You see through all the bullshit, you don't trust me, you know better, or whatever that smug, shit-eating grin on your face is supposed to tell me.

She hisses it out, surprising herself. Silence between them, until said grin plays on Cory's face.

CORY

Can I give you my number?

EXT. CORONA DEL MAR HIGH SCHOOL - LITTLE THEATER - SAME TIME

Max sits with Micaela in his high school theater in one of the audience seats, holding court for a group of STUDENTS and the doting Drama teacher MS. STURGEON.

MAX

So I'm standing there waiting for the accompanist to *find the song* -- Mr. Jamora, that was his name, right? Does he still work here?

MS. STURGEON

He does.

MAX

Fire him. Immediately.  
(over laughter)  
And I said, totally in character, "No, I promise, it's a great story. Just let me think of it!"

They all laugh at the story, Max hardest of all.

MS. STURGEON

Are you in any shows up at school?

MAX

They don't really, um... I'm more directing now actually.

MS. STURGEON

Oh Max, that's wonderful! You know our theater here is always yours.

MAX

Well be careful what you wish for. I want to do an all-female *Hamlet* where Hamlet is three different actresses -- the id, the ego, and superego. My stuff is super bonkers.

MS. STURGEON

I just wish you kids could've seen Max as Bobby in *Company*.

Max looks down, the humble artist.

STUDENT 1  
I love *Company*!

MICAELA  
Was that the one where the set  
looked like a Radisson?

MS. STURGEON  
Have... we met?

MICAELA  
No, you didn't do plays with black  
people so we never really  
overlapped.

Ms. Sturgeon reacts, mortified, interrupted by --

STUDENT 1  
Sing for us.

MAX  
What? No.

STUDENT 2  
Do it! C'mon.

The group starts to chant "Sing! Sing! Sing!"

MAX  
Guys. Seriously? Stop.

CUT TO:

INT. CORONA DEL MAR HIGH SCHOOL - LITTLE THEATER - LATER

Max is onstage, belting his heart out.

MAX  
*Being aliiiiiiiiiiiiive!*

INT. CORONA DEL MAR HIGH SCHOOL - BATHROOM - LATER

Max locks the stall door behind him and sits on the toilet  
fully clothed. He pulls out his phone and sees SIX MISSED  
CALLS and TWO VOICEMAILS from Nancy. He ignores them.

Instead, he pulls up the video from campus. He presses play.

MAX (ON VIDEO)  
Come on, you remember. "Code of  
silence!"

STUDENT (ON VIDEO)  
 (laughing)  
 Dude, you're not exactly silent.

MAX (ON VIDEO)  
 Fuck off, you budget Ryan Reynolds!

The SPECTATORS crack up. Students start to mock him.

ANOTHER STUDENT (ON VIDEO)  
 Hey Brett, code of silence!

Max turns the video off. He looks devastated. He gets another text from someone named CLARA: "Max, please come back. It's gonna be fine, they just want to talk to you."

On Max as he struggles to type out: "I can't." He goes to send it, then deletes the text.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Nancy enters, completely fried. She drops her purse on the floor and just stands there. Then she smells something.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - MAX'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nancy enters to find Max smoking a joint.

NANCY  
 Max, where have you been?!

MAX  
 At school. My old school.

NANCY  
 Why?

MAX  
 I was visiting the teachers who were most formative, what?!

NANCY  
 And now you're smoking marijuana in my house?

MAX  
 It's legal now, you can call it "weed." And this is not a house.  
 (then)  
 I'm only smoking because I'm hungover, thanks to you.

NANCY

Thanks to me? You gave me a fucking horse tranquilizer last night.

MAX

Okay it was Ambien, highly recognized, widely available.

NANCY

Whatever it was, my car is completely destroyed. It's gonna cost me a fortune --

MAX

Everything's always about money.

NANCY

Everything *is* about money, Max! In the real world! Where adults live!

MAX

I'm just one giant sunk cost that you're waiting to see profit on. Maybe I should stay with Dad instead. Even though he hates me because I never played lacrosse.

NANCY

Is that supposed to make me feel guilty? That sounds terrific! You can go ruin his life for a change.

MAX

Wow. Kicked out of my own home.

He stuffs a tangle of clothes back into his luggage.

NANCY

What a heartbreaking refugee story.

MAX

Like you even care about refugees! You voted for Trump!

NANCY

I didn't vote for anybody!

MAX

SO YOU VOTED FOR TRUMP!

Max storms out. Nancy grabs her head with both hands, then rips his comforter off the bed.

INT. NANCY'S CAR - EVENING

Nancy speeds through a yellow light, on speaker phone. No answer. She spots a liquor store. Passes it.

NANCY  
Come on, pick up, pick up.

She sees by the Gelson's sign. Bright, beckoning...

NANCY (CONT'D)  
Pick. UP!

INT. EL TORITO GRILL - A LITTLE LATER

A SERVER sets down --

SERVER  
Two sparkling waters. And your  
extra lemon.

REVEAL Cory sitting in a plush booth with a worn-out Nancy.

CORY  
This is our life now. Five lemon  
wedges is a big night out.  
(off Nancy's silence)  
So let me guess, you relapsed. It's  
almost Christmas. Been there.

NANCY  
I didn't relapse.

CORY  
Okay. But you have family in town?

NANCY  
Are you just gonna throw shit at  
the wall to see what sticks?

Cory just sips her water.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
(exasperated)  
My son.

CORY  
Your son. And you've been keeping  
your sponsor on speed dial.

NANCY  
I don't have a sponsor.

CORY  
 (slapping the table)  
 I knew it!

Cory laughs to herself and whoops, a little exhilarated.

NANCY  
 What is the matter with you?!

CORY  
 You're a con artist! You come in,  
 you share a big share, you get the  
 applause, and then --  
 (Nancy impression)  
 "Gotta run!" Out the back.

NANCY  
 You don't know anything about me!

CORY  
 I know you're full of shit.

Nancy starts to grab her purse.

NANCY  
 I don't even know why I called you.

CORY  
 Because you want someone to snap  
 you out of it. You're not even  
 working the program.

NANCY  
 I've been working the *hell* out of  
 this program, thank you very much.  
 I'm already on my tenth step.

CORY  
 Lady, it's not a race, your dry-  
 drunk ass can take several seats.

NANCY  
*Why* are you so vulgar?!

CORY  
 Because when we're polite about  
 this shit, we turn up dead!  
 (then)  
 There's no point lying to keep a  
 high score. This disease doesn't  
 care about your pride.

NANCY

I'm not going to die from white wine.

CORY

Something tells me you had a little more than white wine last night.

On Nancy, guilty as charged.

CORY (CONT'D)

"Step one: admitting we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable."

NANCY

What's unmanageable is my son. He shows up at my door and it's like everything I've worked for, all the sanity, all the composure... it just unraveled. He makes me *batshit*.

CORY

You know the only person who can make you drink is you.

NANCY

You haven't met Max.

CORY

Did you tell him you were in the program?

NANCY

I didn't, no. He can't let me have one thing for myself. He would burn it to the fucking ground.

CORY

Don't you to think you have to hash this out with him now before you can have any peace in your life?

NANCY

(beat)

I hate this program.

CORY

No easy way out, m'dear. Not if I'm your sponsor.

NANCY

(taken aback)

Who said you were my sponsor?

CORY

Look, I'm a bitch. Always have been. But Mickey wasn't very nice to Rocky either, and look how that turned out. Bye bye Apollo.

NANCY

I don't know who those people are.

CORY

We'll get you up to speed.  
(beat)  
And I can smell a relapse. So you better start telling me the truth.

Off Nancy, unsure what she's signing up for.

EXT. NEWPORT COAST TOWNHOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

The front door opens. A heavily Botoxed WOMAN of indeterminate age answers.

WOMAN

Hi, are you with Postmates?

REVEAL Nancy at the door. She takes a minute with that one.

NANCY

I'm not. I'm here for my son.

WOMAN

Ooooooh, you must be Nancy.  
(stage whisper)  
Henry doesn't want us to meet each other.

NANCY

Oh no?

WOMAN

I'm Touch.

She holds out her hand. Before Nancy can respond --

INT. NEWPORT COAST TOWNHOUSE - BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Max rests his head on the counter, staring at an assortment of nail polishes - Touch's, presumably. He picks one up and twirls it back and forth. He's lost in thought, taking us to--

INT. NEWPORT BEACH HOUSE - 10 YEARS AGO (FLASHBACK)

Nancy sits at a big vanity mirror, looking at herself. Younger Nancy is a little spacier, haughtier.

NANCY

Not so much, Maxie. That stings.

REVEAL 9 YEAR-OLD MAX applying nail polish remover to her nails. Streaks of fuchsia run onto the marble countertop.

MAX

What if we just did the clear?

NANCY

Baby, the polish is for grown-ups.

MAX

Daddy doesn't wear it.

NANCY

Exactly my point. Other hand.

She holds out her left hand. With her right, she pulls open a drawer, retrieving a delicate blue-and-white case. Inside are pills of every shape and color (well, most are white).

NANCY (CONT'D)

Pick a number, any number.

MAX

Ninety *trillion*.

NANCY

As tempting as that sounds...

MAX

Fiiiiine. Five.

Nancy delicately counts out five pills.

NANCY

Perrier.

Max hands over a big bottle of sparkling water. She tosses everything back. She takes a breath and smiles at her son.

NANCY (CONT'D)

You're so good. Mommy's helper.

(affectionate beat)

*If we take it off right away, maybe I'll let you do one hand.*

MAX

With clear?!

NANCY

You pick, sweetie. Any color.

MAX

Pink! Pink pink pink.

He holds his hand out to her like a little prince. She laughs to herself - she's in trouble.

NANCY

I was worried you'd say that.

(then)

Just remember. What's the one rule?  
What's the only thing Mommy asks?

MAX

(an action movie)

Code. Of *silence*.

They both "zip" their mouths shut, twist it three times, and throw away the keys.

INT. NEWPORT COAST TOWNHOUSE - BATHROOM - BACK TO SCENE

Max snaps out of his reverie when he hears Henry's voice.

HENRY (O.S.)

Nance? What are you doing here?

Off Max, sitting up sharply.

EXT. NEWPORT COAST TOWNHOUSE - SAME TIME

Henry nervously dismisses Touch.

HENRY

I got this. Go make queso.

TOUCH

Alright, hon.

Touch retreats, mouthing "Nice to meet you" to Nancy like "we're so bad!"

NANCY

I'm here to talk to Max.

HENRY

Oh you mean our son who's in town,  
and nobody thought to tell me?

NANCY

Henry, the last thing I need --

MAX (O.S.)

Mom?

Max appears in the entryway.

NANCY  
Hi, sweetheart.  
(to Henry)  
Could you give us a minute?

HENRY  
After some of the things you said  
to him, I think I should stay.

MAX  
Mom, it's fine. What do you want?

NANCY  
I want to apologize... I want you  
to come home. There's a lot we  
should talk about.

HENRY  
He's staying with me, okay Nancy?

NANCY  
He's an adult!  
(suppressing her anger)  
Max, it's up to you. You can stay  
with your father or you can come  
with me.

HENRY  
Don't let her bully you, son.

INT. NANCY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Max and Nancy fasten their seatbelts. Awkward silence. Then --

NANCY  
Touch seems great.

Beat. They both crack up, dissolving into hysterics. It's  
cathartic. ANGLE ON Henry watching them laugh from his door.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
Wave to your father.

They wave. After the laughter subsides, they're both feeling  
a little raw.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
I had no right to blame you for  
what I did. I don't... appreciate  
that you gave me a psychoactive  
sleeping pill while I was already  
drunk, but I'm your parent.  
(MORE)

NANCY (CONT'D)  
 I should know better.  
 (another beat)  
 I'm an alcoholic, Max.

MAX  
 I know.

NANCY  
 But I'm in the program.

MAX  
 Oh. Whoa.  
 (beat)  
 Isn't that like a Jesus cult?

NANCY  
 No. Kind of. Look, all I'm saying  
 is, you had no context for what I'm  
 going through. And I can't expect  
 you to understand if I don't fill  
 you in. So from now on I will be  
 fully honest with you. And I hope  
 you feel like you can do the same.

MAX  
 (a little internal)  
 I do.

NANCY  
 I'm glad, honey.

Nancy smiles and starts the car.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
 You can stay with me as long as you  
 want. Until you go back to school.

MAX  
 Okay.

She pulls away from the curb and starts driving.

MAX (CONT'D)  
 I dropped out.

Nancy slams on the brakes.

END OF PILOT