

TUCKED

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TEASER

INT. WEISBERG HOUSEHOLD - FRIDAY EVENING

A lively Hasidic Shabbat dinner is underway. GUESTS fill a large dining room table, smiles and joy all around. The warm glow of the Shabbat candles illuminating the room.

At the head of the table is ESTHER WEISBERG (late 20s), a graceful strength to her posture and persona. She wears a modest ensemble consisting of a long black skirt, black cardigan, and a wig. Sitting next to her at the head of the table is her husband AVRAM WEISBERG (late 20s), a stoic and stern presence exuding beneath his beard and *payos*. Beside them sit their four children; RIVKE (6), FAIGY (5), MENDEL (4), and SHAYNA (2).

AVRAM
(singing)
ESHES CHAYIL MEE YIMTZA.

The rest of the MEN at the table join in. Mendel mouths along to the melody, not knowing the words.

AVRAM AND MEN
(singing)
*VERACHOK MI'PNINIM MICHRA BAATACH
BA LEV BAALA VESHALAL LO YECHSAR.*

Shayna runs around the table making noise, visibly embarrassing Avram. Esther picks up Shayna and places her squarely on her lap.

ESTHER
(whispering)
Come sit with mama.

Shayna begins to cry, a tantrum brewing.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Shh, it's okay. Look, look, look.

Esther opens a locket she wears around her neck, revealing a photograph of her and her kids. Something she always wears.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Who is that?

Esther points to the infant in the photograph. Shayna's crying slows. She thinks, then points to herself.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

That's you!

Shayna's face is overtaken by an enormous smile.

Rivke and Faigy move closer to Esther, also wanting to look at themselves in the locket.

Avram watches Esther and the children with relief. He smiles.

OFF this family tableau, we:

PULL OUT of the house, and ZOOM UP over the rooftop of this home and those around it.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

The heart of the Hasidic neighborhood of Crown Heights, New York. MEN with black hats and *payos*, WOMEN in wigs, long skirts and cardigans, and their CHILDREN, all make their way to their respective Shabbat dinners. But we don't stay with them.

We PAN OVER just a few blocks, to the northern side of Eastern Parkway, and ZOOM IN on a much more urban neighborhood. CLUBGOERS roam the decrepit streets, drinking and gossiping, dressed in short, tight and colorful clothing. There are heels and glitter aplenty. It's only now that we realize we are in present day.

The camera PUSHES IN as we enter:

INT. BUBBA'S - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

A rundown club, ragged decor, a rickety stage. A sparse audience watches:

CALVIN JONES aka COCO LABELLE (30s), a lithe, black, drag queen as she stands center stage, singing full out like she's the half time entertainment at the Super Bowl. Despite the downtrodden environment, Coco is undeniably great. Like a modern day Sally Bowles, if Sally Bowles were a man.

MUSIC: Beyoncé's "Sweet Dreams." Like the club, her song choice was in its prime about ten years ago.

COCO
 (singing)
 MY GUILTY PLEASURE, I AIN'T GOING
 NOWHERE / BABY, 'LONG AS YOU'RE
 HERE, I'LL BE FLOATING ON AIR / YOU
 CAN BE A SWEET DREAM OR A BEAUTIFUL
 NIGHTMARE. / EITHER WAY I DON'T
 WANNA WAKE UP FROM YOU.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Make some noise for Coco Labelle!

Some scant enthusiasm rolls over the heavy bass of the music.
 Coco struts offstage, grabs a towel, and dabs her face.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - A FEW HOURS LATER

Esther washes her face, getting cleaned up for bed.

ESTHER
 I don't think your mom liked the
tzimis. Klein's didn't have any
 prunes this week, so I tried figs.
 (using a voice)
 "You ruined perfectly good figs."
 (laughing)
 That's what your mom said. I don't
 know, Channah Goldstein had a
 second helping, so I think some
 people liked it.

Avram appears in the doorway, behind Esther.

AVRAM
 What is this?

Esther turns around to see Avram holding a bill. She freezes.

AVRAM (CONT'D)
 I lost a button and found this
 under the dresser.

Esther opens her mouth to speak, but no words come out. The
 sink continues to run, water dripping from Esther's face.

AVRAM (CONT'D)
 (reading the bill)
 The Manhattan's Women's
 Gynecological Health Center?

ESTHER
I was planning on telling you.

AVRAM
So it's true? This operation?

ESTHER
Let me just finish--I have to dry
my face, and then we can--

Esther splashes some water on her face and turns off the faucet. She grabs a towel and begins wiping her wet face.

AVRAM
Tubal ligation?

Avram lunges and grabs Esther's arm. Hard.

ESTHER
Avram, you're hurting me.

AVRAM
Explain this to me!

He lets go, throwing Esther forward into the sink.

ESTHER
I was going to tell you. I was. I
just--
(ashamed)
my body couldn't take any more--

AVRAM
You just went to some *goyishe*
doctor and decided that you would
keep us from having any more
children?

ESTHER
It wasn't us having them, it was
me.

Avram hits Esther hard across the face. Bam!

Avram stands paralyzed, horrified by what he just did.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
I'm fine.

Esther plays it off, not wanting Avram to think he's hurt her as much as he has. Avram begins to cry.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Avram, we have four extraordinary children.

AVRAM
And we were trying for more.

ESTHER
Any more would have killed me.

Avram shakes his head, distraught. Esther moves closer to Avram, trying to comfort him.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Maybe four is enough for us.

Avram wipes the tears from his eyes.

AVRAM
You don't get to decide what's enough for us by yourself.

Avram walks out, closing the door behind him. Esther looks at herself in the mirror, blood beginning to drip from her nose.

After dabbing the blood, she reaches for her head and takes off her *sheitel* (wig), exposing her short cropped hair.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BUBBA'S - DRESSING ROOM - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON Coco's head as she removes her wig and then her drag make up, staring directly into her reflection in the dirty mirror in front of her.

Coco is seated at a small make-up counter in an overcrowded, dilapidated dressing room. Cracked mirrors, burnt out light-bulbs, and dreams that never quite panned out.

Counters littered with cans of Red Bull, cheap wine, and stale vodka--lipstick-covered straws sticking out of them.

A few other DRAG QUEENS and GO-GO BOYS are in various stages of undress. Next to Coco is a plus-sized drag queen with a missing tooth and a deep husky voice, LOIS FORMA FLATTERY, who adjusts her cleavage.

LOIS
My tits look even?

COCO
 (not looking)
 Sure.

LOIS
 Lost one of my inserts, but I don't
 think you can tell.

Lois squeezes one of her breasts, and part of a sweaty balled-up athletic sock pops out. She stuffs it back in, pops in her fake tooth, and continues to fuss with her tits.

BUBBA (50s, who looks like he sells pizza by the slice, but actually is the owner of this drag club), enters the room.

BUBBA
 Knock knock.

Bubba sees a mostly empty bottle of vodka in front of Coco. He gives her a judgmental look.

COCO
 You gonna top me off?

Bubba hands an envelope of cash to Coco, as he continues to pass out the rest of the envelopes to the other Drag Queens.

Coco looks inside of the envelope.

COCO (CONT'D)
 What's this?

BUBBA
 Your cut.

COCO
 That's cute. Where's my money?

BUBBA
 You're holding it.

COCO
 No, the fuck, I'm not.

BUBBA
 You saw how empty we were.

COCO
 And?

BUBBA
 And that's why that's your cut.

COCO

Don't tell me that's my cut when
you know damn well that I earned
more than this shit.

BUBBA

You earn what I can pay you and
still keep my club's lights on.

Getting in Bubba's face.

COCO

Boo boo, you ain't got a club
without Coco!

BUBBA

And you ain't got Coco without a
club.

Bubba heads towards the door.

COCO

Sweetie, I'm a legend.

BUBBA

(scoffs)

Yeah. Urban legend.

COCO

Still a legend.

Bubba turns to Coco, from the doorway.

BUBBA

You know what's sadder than a dumb
drag queen? A delusional one.

Coco tries to mask the anger bubbling up within her.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Please give a warm welcome to Lois
Forma Flattery!

Bubba leaves. Coco starts after him, but Lois pulls her back.

LOIS

Calm it down, girl.

Lois pushes her tits up as she leaves for the stage.

And with that, Coco labors over to her make up station. She
begins pulling off her fake eyelashes, removing some of her
armor from battle, but not letting anyone see her hurt.

INT. BEIT DIN - SUNDAY MORNING

JUDGE FREIDIN, a stern and cold rabbinical judge, along with a SCRIBE and a FEW WITNESSES, join Avram and Esther in a small creaky room inside of the *Beit Din* (rabbinical court).

Avram stands face to face with Esther. In his hands, Avram holds a *get*, a piece of parchment with Hebrew text written on it which serves as the divorce decree.

AVRAM

With this, you are divorced from me
from here on.

JUDGE FREIDIN

And are hereby permitted to all
other men.

AVRAM

And are hereby permitted to all
other men.

Avram drops the *get* into Esther's upturned hands. She closes her hands around it, raising her outstretched arms up. The Judge then takes the *get* from her and brings it over to the Scribe and Witnesses to examine.

Judge Freidin performs the ritual of ripping the get up. He replaces it with two formal legal divorce certificates, which he walks over and presents to Avram and Esther.

Esther swallows, trying to keep it together.

Avram and Judge Freidin begin to leave, Esther calling out as she chases after them.

ESTHER

Wait, wait.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Avram and Judge Freidin continue walking, looking ahead.

JUDGE FREIDIN

You're no longer welcome here--

ESTHER

I know. But what about my children?

JUDGE FREIDIN

They'll live here.

ESTHER
But how will--how will I see them?

JUDGE FREIDIN
It's best if you don't.

Esther turns to Avram for support.

ESTHER
Avram. I am still their mother!

AVRAM
Not anymore.

ESTHER
Avram, please. Please!

Avram and Judge Freidin walk through a door, which then immediately shuts in Esther's face.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE**INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - MORNING****CHYRON: Two months later.**

The apartment is small, a fixer-upper that should have been fixed up before being lived in.

There are two mismatched refrigerators, two mismatched ovens, and an uneven floor. The sad trappings of this kitchen's attempt to adhere to kosher standards.

Early morning sunlight spills in through the broken blinds of a small window that doesn't close all the way. Next to the window lies Esther on a twin mattress on the floor, asleep.

VOICE (O.S.)

Walk of shame? Bitch, does this
look like a walk of shame to you?

Esther turns in her bed, waking up from the noise.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Uh uh. Ain't no shame in my game.

Esther looks out the window. She sees:

A DRUNK BUM sitting on the sidewalk in front of the rundown apartment building that's Esther's new home, above a liquor store, busking for change from the morning CROWD on their way to work.

REVEAL that Coco is the owner of this voice as she confronts the Drunk Bum on the sidewalk. Coco, now out of drag but wearing heels, hoop earrings, and large sunglasses.

COCO

Oh you wasn't talking to me? Then
who was you talking to?

Esther opens up her window, sticking her head out.

DRUNK BUM

Why you gotta be like this?

COCO

Be like what? Fabulous as fuck?

Coco twirls around in a circle.

DRUNK BUM
 (re: Coco twirling)
 Okay, now you're disrupting my
 place of work.

Esther tries to get a better view of what's going on, but ends up hitting her head against the window.

ESTHER
Du farkirtst mir di yorn!

Coco hears this and looks up, seeing Esther in the window.

COCO
 The fuck is wrong with you! This is
 a place of work!

Shaken up, Esther hurries inside and ducks beneath the window so that she's out of view. In her hurry, knocks several things off of the small end table next to her bed, including a cup, which rolls down the uneven floor of the apartment.

COCO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 So you're a piece of work...running
 a place of work.

DRUNK BUM (O.S.)
 Yeah, and I got the right to refuse
 service. So get.

COCO (O.S.)
 Boo boo, you're so full of shit a
 plumber wouldn't even touch you!

Coco cackles, as her heels clip clop away.

INSIDE:

Esther, head still throbbing, gets up and begins putting the items that fell back onto the small table.

She walks over and grabs the cup that rolled to the other side of the apartment, and brings it to the kitchen sink.

She glances at a pamphlet on her kitchen counter that's for:

Footsteps: A non-profit providing assistance to those who have left, or are leaving, the Hasidic community.

On the pamphlet is a post-it that reads: Next appointment w/Debbie - Tuesday @ 10:30 AM.

Esther looks at a clock. She needs to hurry.

EXT. ESTHER'S STUDIO APARTMENT - A BIT LATER

Esther leaves through a front door at the bottom of a narrow staircase, and walks out onto the dirtied street.

The Drunk Bum from earlier is now asleep on her doorstep.

ESTHER

Sorry, excuse me.

She steps over the sleeping Drunk Bum, apologetically.

Esther walks down the sidewalk and sees someone smoking a cigarette several yards ahead of her. That someone is Coco.

Coco and Esther lock eyes, and an intimidated Esther crosses to the other side of the street.

We stay on Coco, who takes one final drag of her cigarette before putting it out, and entering...

INT. HAIR WITH FLAIR WIG SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Cracked linoleum floors, with peeling painted walls. A cozy shop that has clearly seen better days.

SYLVIA (black, blind, 40s), a regular client, sits in a chair. Her dark sunglasses don't dim her bright personality.

Working inside of the shop are NAIMA PERRIN (biracial, late 20s, not a woman you want as an enemy) and MJ GREEN (early 20s), who is black, overweight, and gender non-binary; someone who doesn't identify as exclusively male or female.

MJ and Naima flank Sylvia, who adjusts a wig on her head.

SYLVIA

That's what I'm saying. See this?
I'm swimming in this thing.

MJ

That's breathing room.

SYLVIA

No, that's a loose-ass wig. And it was not loose when I bought it.

NAIMA

A looser wig is what's keeping your edges laid to the gods.

Sylvia takes the wig off.

SYLVIA
Heifer, I haven't worn this shit
yet!

COCO
We'll fix it, Sylvia. Don't worry.

Coco takes the wig from Sylvia and gives it to MJ, who takes it to a styling station.

SYLVIA
(to Coco)
I'm a loyal customer to your mama,
so don't go tryna rip me off just
cause I can't see shit. I can still
feel when my hair don't look right!

NAIMA
What are you talking about? This
wig is about to be the fiercest
thing to hit the streets of Crown
Heights.

SYLVIA
You think you know Crown Heights?

NAIMA
My dad's black from Morocco, my
mom's Jewish from Brooklyn. Bitch,
I am Crown Heights.

They all laugh.

SYLVIA
She said "Bitch, I am Crown
Heights."

Sylvia laughs harder.

COCO
(to MJ)
Sew in about six inches of some of
that elastic band. The thick kind.

MJ
Yes, ma'am.

SYLVIA
Make sure this shit looks good, you
hear me? I'm already blind. Can't
afford to also be ugly. Got a hot
date, tonight.

NAIMA
You got a hot date?

SYLVIA
Damn right, I got a hot date!

MJ
Oh, yeah? How you know he's hot?

SYLVIA
He told me. Said he looks like
Barack Obama.

NAIMA
How the hell you know what Obama
looks like? You've been blind for--

SYLVIA
Didn't go blind till 2008. I still
saw him on the campaign trail.
Delicious.

They all laugh.

COCO
Where are y'all going?

SYLVIA
I wanna try that new club, Shade?
Supposed to be banging, but it's
not open yet.

MJ
Shade?

SYLVIA
Some fancy new gay club in Chelsea.

COCO
Gay club? They gonna have drag
queens?

SYLVIA
Probably. Place opens Friday. So I
figure we'd go there for our second
date, once it's open.

NAIMA
So you think you're getting a
second date, huh?

SYLVIA
If that wig is right, hell yes.

Naima and MJ laugh. OFF Coco, thinking.

INT. OFFICE - MEANWHILE

Esther sits inside of an office located within Footsteps. She sits across from a desk belonging to DEBBIE ABRAMSON (40s, chubby, butch lesbian) who eats from a microwavable cup of ramen noodles. On Debbie's desk sits a framed photo. In the photo, Debbie's WIFE is kissing her, on what is clearly their wedding day.

ESTHER

Did they say anything about when I can see my kids?

DEBBIE

We won't know anything until after the hearing. We can talk about that in a sec, but let me get through a few more things. Did you get your kitchen all set up and kosher, since we last met?

(off Esther's nodding)

Good. We'll want to show that in court. They'll want to see that your apartment is just as kosher as Avram's.

(off Esther's nodding)

And, mazel tov, they approved your custody hearing request. Which has been set for...one second, let me find it...next Thursday.

Esther's face falls.

ESTHER

I--I can't wait that long. There's nothing sooner?

DEBBIE

Earliest date they had.

Esther sinks back in her chair, the air taken out of her.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Now, we're able to help cover the costs of the initial family court hearing. But any additional appeals or trials--

ESTHER

(worried, but covering)
Of course.

Debbie eats a spoonful of noodles.

DEBBIE
Sorry. Didn't have lunch.

Debbie holds the cup out to Esther, offering her some.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
It's Kosher.

ESTHER
What is it--?

DEBBIE
Ramen.

Debbie sees Esther pretending to know what that means.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
It's good, it's like bad matzoh
ball soup. But saltier.

Esther smiles, ultimately agreeing to try a little taste.
Debbie hands over the cup of noodles.

ESTHER
(praying)
Baruch atah adoni...

Esther finishes a prayer under her breath, then takes a bite,
trying not to appear as hungry as she really is.

DEBBIE
Finish it. I'm supposed to be
watching my cholesterol anyway.

Debbie grabs a manila file folder with various notes inside.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
Judge Ackerman is the judge
assigned to your hearing. He's up
for re-election next year. Makes it
tougher for us.

ESTHER
Tougher?

DEBBIE
Avram's father, Zalman, is the
rabbi of Crown Heights' Lubavitch
sect of the Hasidic community, yes?

Esther nods, taking another bite of the cup of noodles.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

That community is Judge Ackerman's largest voting block of constituents. He makes rulings that the community likes? They vote for him. He makes rulings that the community doesn't like? They don't. Ruling in your favor would mean that Judge Ackerman would be ruling against the leader of his largest voting block, at the exact time he's looking for their upcoming support in the ballot booth.

Esther puts the cup of soup on the desk, her appetite gone.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

I went through something similar with my custody case.

Esther notices the picture of Debbie's wedding on the desk.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

In the Hasidic world, custody usually defaults to the parent remaining in the community. For the "best interest" of the children. They usually tuck that in somewhere in the *get*.

Esther is still staring at the picture, distracted.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Did you know what you were signing? When they had you sign the *get*?

ESTHER

It all happened so quickly--they told me to sign, so I signed.

DEBBIE

That's coercion. What they did.

Debbie notices Esther staring at the framed picture on the desk. Esther's eyes widen, transfixed by what she sees.

ESTHER

That was you.
(piecing it together)
There were rumors, after you left, that a woman had gone off the *derech* and married another...

Esther can't bring herself to say the word.

Debbie gently turns the frame to face away from Esther.

DEBBIE
We're very happy.

A tense silence sits between them. Raw and uncomfortable.

ESTHER
I'm a good mother. You have to believe me.

DEBBIE
It doesn't matter what I believe, it only matters what Judge Ackerman believes. Avram's attorney'll try to prove why you aren't a good mother. My job is to prove why you are. This isn't just about you and Avram anymore. The entire Hasidic community will be invested in this.

ESTHER
I just want them back. More than anything.

DEBBIE
I know you do.
(then)
You find a job yet? Judge will want to see that, too.

OFF Esther, unnerved and overwhelmed.

INT. COCO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - A BIT LATER

Coco, completely out of drag, wears men's street clothes. She unpacks several bottles of medications onto a small table next to BOOTSIE HUMBIRD (60s, black), as stubborn as she is vivacious, who sits in a wheelchair and wears a hijab.

Framed Arabic lettering is displayed on the walls of the room, illuminated by a hanging lantern made of iron and brass. An outdated television set plays "The Price is Right."

COCO
Ma, you want me to put these into your medicine tray?

BOOTSIE
Nah, just leave 'em in the bottles for now.

Coco arranges the pill bottles.

BOOTSIE (CONT'D)

Got a call from the landlord. Said he hasn't got the rent for the shop yet this month.

(raising an eyebrow)

You know anything about that?

COCO

It was either paying rent or paying for your medications. Wasn't enough money this month to cover both.

BOOTSIE

I always pays my bills on time.

COCO

You don't have enough money to do that, at the moment.

Bootsie rolls her eyes.

COCO (CONT'D)

You given any more thought to that developer's offer on the shop?

BOOTSIE

I'm not selling my shop.

COCO

Ma, you're sick.

BOOTSIE

It'll pass. I been prayin' on it.

COCO

MS ain't the same as a cold.

BOOTSIE

That's just a diagnosis. Which is another way of saying "one man's opinion."

Coco begins pouring out various pills into her hand.

COCO

(sighs)

That developer is offering you enough money to live like a queen for the rest of your life.

BOOTSIE

You're the one that wants to live like a damn queen, not me.

Coco looks away. Not wanting to have this argument again.

BOOTSIE (CONT'D)

I'm not letting them tear it down and make it into another one of those luxury apartments for more white people and their small-ass yappy dogs.

COCO

If you sell it to him, you could afford to live there.

BOOTSIE

This man is just like the rest of them. They say they doing things so they can turn the neighborhood around. But all they want is to price us out, kick us out, and turn a profit while they give our keys to the rich folks who can afford to live in the neighborhoods we built.

Coco hands the pills and a bottle of water to Bootsie.

COCO

You need money to afford to live.

BOOTSIE

Don't gotta be his money.

COCO

We're underwater right now. And that's with me working two jobs.

BOOTSIE

One of those isn't a job, it's dressing up like a damn fool.

Bootsie swallows her pills.

COCO

You want me to stop looking after you? You ain't got no money for anybody else to look after you. I'm the best you got.

BOOTSIE

You should be grateful you have a job, thanks to me. How many opportunities you see out there for former convicted felons, with no college education? Huh?

Beat. This stings Coco.

COCO
How 'bout you live your life, and
I'll live mine. That work for you?

BOOTSIE
Works for me more than you work for
me.

Silence. Coco's heard worse. Bootsie closes her eyes, her version of an apology.

BOOTSIE (CONT'D)
(sighs)
I don't want to sell my shop. Okay?
Once I shake this thing off, I'll
be back doing my thing like always.

Coco kisses Bootsie's head, reluctant to take away her hope.

EXT. SCHOOL - NEXT MORNING

A sea of HASIDIC SCHOOL KIDS head into the school, dropped off by their HASIDIC PARENTS. Smiles and laughter abound.

Esther, perched just around the corner, searches the sea of people looking for her kids.

LEAH (6), a classmate of Rivke's walks by on the sidewalk.

LEAH
Rivke!

Rivke jogs over to Leah, the two of them hug. Esther takes in her daughter's joy and smiles, relieved to see her happy.

As Esther turns to leave, before being noticed, she finds herself faced with a poster on a lamppost. The poster has Esther's face on it. It reads:

STOP ESTHER WEISBERG.
DONATE TO AVRAM WEISBERG'S LEGAL DEFENSE FUND.
KEEP OUR CHILDREN SAFE AND IN OUR COMMUNITY!

Esther's face drops, stunned. Panicked, she looks around, wondering how many people have seen the poster.

She tears the poster off of the lamppost, stuffs it into her shirt, and briskly traipses away, praying nobody sees her.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. FOOTSTEPS - AFTERNOON**

A small semi-circle of chairs faces a white board. At the white board is CHAVA, a wavy-haired staff member.

At the back of the classroom Esther speaks with Debbie, showing her the poster she found earlier.

ESTHER

My children could have seen this!

DEBBIE

I understand, but for right now--

ESTHER

Debbie, they're joining together to defend Avram. All of them.

DEBBIE

Let's talk after the class.

ESTHER

How am I supposed to compete with an army?

DEBBIE

Start by taking care of yourself.

Debbie nods towards the rest of the class, and a frustrated Esther joins the small semi-circle of workshop ATTENDEES who are all taking notes.

CHAVA

Great, so for Nachum, he taught at another yeshiva. That's a teaching position, right?

Chava begins to write on the board, as she talks. On the board is a mock resume template, that she fills in.

CHAVA (CONT'D)

So Nachum would put down the name of this second yeshiva, for the employer. Because this is a different job at a different place, even though he was a teacher both times. Make sense?

Everyone nods their heads.

CHAVA (CONT'D)
Who wants to go next?

ESTHER
I would. Please. Sorry, I'm Esther.

CHAVA
Excellent, Esther. Did you work back in the community?

ESTHER
Yes. I worked at Neshama's.

CHAVA
Wonderful. Did you run the register? Did you box the wigs--?

ESTHER
I made them. But it's the only job I've ever had.

CHAVA
That's totally fine.

Chava erases what she wrote in for Nachum, and starts to fill the resumé template in with Esther's answers.

CHAVA (CONT'D)
So we will put that as your position. Because we're applying for jobs in the secular world, I might suggest changing the job title from *sheitel* maker to "wig maker." Yes?

(off Esther nodding)
And then Neshama's goes here, in the spot for employer or company. So that would be it for your previous employment section.

ESTHER
I don't understand. I show somebody this paper and they give me a job? No Hasidic wig shop will hire me.

CHAVA
There are other shops that make *sheitels*. And they're run by more secular Jews. You might consider starting there.

OFF Esther, hopeful.

INT. JEWISH WIG SHOP - NEXT DAY

A Jewish WIG SHOP OWNER, donning a yarmulke, walks through his shop with Esther by his side, holding a resumé.

ESTHER

Please.

WIG SHOP OWNER

I wish I could.

ESTHER

I could be in the back, they don't even have to see me.

WIG SHOP OWNER

What if they recognize your work? If I hire you, I'll lose all of my business.

ESTHER

My custody hearing is in a few days. I need a job, I need the money. I need to get my kids back. Please.

WIG SHOP OWNER

I'm sorry.

MONTAGE:

Esther meets with a half dozen other OWNERS in various Jewish wig shops. They all shake their heads, turning her down.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Esther walks down the street, defeated. The stack of resumé's still in her hands.

She sits down on a bench, drops her head into her hands and sobs. When she pulls herself together, she wipes under her eyes and looks up to see:

HAIR WITH FLAIR

It's definitely not your Bubbie's wig shop. There are posters in the window of women with huge hairdos and tons of makeup, along with some of the wigs they make - all of them extreme.

MJ, standing in front of the shop, finishes up a cigarette and heads inside.

Esther looks down at her resumé, then stands up and surges

towards the shop.

INT. HAIR WITH FLAIR - LATER

Naima and MJ both stand near the register at the front of the store, hip hop music playing on a portable speaker.

Esther walks in with her head held high, taking in this new world. The music, the colors, the types of wigs, all foreign.

MJ

You need a wig?

ESTHER

No. Not really. I, um, I was hoping to speak with someone about--

NAIMA

Was that you out there crying on that bench just a minute ago?

Esther looks at the front window, the bench clearly in view.

ESTHER

No?

NAIMA

Looked a lot like you.

ESTHER

That's...

MJ

You need something?

ESTHER

Sorry, yes. I would like to apply for a job.

MJ

We're not hiring.

ESTHER

I have a resumé here--

NAIMA

We're not looking for anybody new.

LORENZO MORALES (40s), a dapper real estate developer, enters the shop.

MJ
 (to Lorenzo)
 You need a wig?

LORENZO
 I'm here to speak with Mr. Jones?

ESTHER
 (to Naima)
 I have lots of experience with
 wigs.

NAIMA
 (to Lorenzo)
 Sorry, what did you need?

LORENZO
 I have an appointment with Mr.
 Jones. To go over the offer.

A beat. Naima takes this in. Esther waits, uncomfortably.

NAIMA
 I'm sorry, Coco's not--Calvin isn't
 here right now.

LORENZO
 I'm happy to wait, if he's--

NAIMA
 I'll let'm know you stopped by.

Lorenzo gets the hint and leaves.

MJ
 Damn.

NAIMA
 Told you.

Esther looks down, searching for a way to jump back in.

ESTHER
 I have some samples of my work,
 that I could show you--

MJ
 There's a shop out there for you
 somewhere. It just ain't here.

NAIMA
 Look on Craigslist or something.

ESTHER

Oh, thank you. Do you know where I can find him?

MJ

Who?

ESTHER

Craig. The man with the list.

A beat. Then Naima and MJ burst into laughter.

MJ

Honey, there is nobody named Craig. Somebody just made up a job website and named it after Craig or some shit.

ESTHER

(embarrassed)

Oh. I see.

NAIMA

Best of luck, sugar.

INT. SHADE - AFTERNOON

Coco walks into the large club and struts over to the bar.

This is nothing like the dilapidated club we saw Coco singing at earlier. This place is sleek and brand new. Plush leather seats, a marble bar you could eat off, and an entire floor-to-ceiling wall of video screens.

Stocking alcohol on the shelves behind the bar, are two painfully millennial TWINKS; a BLONDE TWINK sporting several piercings, and an ASIAN TWINK with an asymmetrical haircut.

ASIAN TWINK

Sorry, we're not open till Friday.

COCO

I'm here about a job.

Blonde Twink and Asian Twink laugh, meanly.

BLONDE TWINK

We're fully staffed.

COCO

Can't make room for one more queen?

ASIAN TWINK

This is a high class establishment,
mama.

COCO

I need to speak to the manager.

BLONDE TWINK

He'll tell you the same thing. He's
only looking for girls who are
relevant. Not ancient old queens
reeking of thrift shop clothes and
Duane Reade makeup.

ASIAN TWINK

You look like you just started
doing drag on the way over here.

COCO

Child, I was tucking this dick
before yours even showed up on a
sonogram.

BLONDE TWINK

You think that makes you a real
drag queen?

COCO

Boo boo, your rich millennial ass
learned about drag from reality TV
and YouTube tutorials. You wouldn't
know what real drag was if she
strut past you in 12-inch pumps.

AMBROSIA MONROE (late 20s), a long and leggy drag queen in
full drag make up but in street clothing, sashays through the
club.

AMBROSIA

Darlings, will you let Skylar know
that I'm leaving my outfit for
Friday in the dressing room?

ASIAN TWINK

Which one did you end up choosing?

AMBROSIA

The corseted gold leotard.

BLONDE TWINK

(snapping fingers)
Yass, hunty!

AMBROSIA
Shh. Our little secret.

ASIAN TWINK
I'm literally dying for you.

AMBROSIA
Kiss kiss.

Ambrosia saunters out the door.

COCO
That leggy bitch work here?

ASIAN TWINK
Excuse you?!

BLONDE TWINK
That's Ambrosia Monroe. She's got
like a million followers on
Instagram.

ASIAN TWINK
And this bitch thinks she knows
drag...

SKYLAR EVERETT (30s), giving you full-on corporate gay
realness in pressed linen capri pants and velvet loafers
(without socks), paces over.

BLONDE TWINK
(to Skylar)
Ambrosia said she'd drop off--

SKYLAR
She texted me.

COCO
(to Skylar)
Are you the owner? I hear you're
looking for some new queens.

SKYLAR
Sorry, we're fully staffed.

Skylar starts walking to the back of the club.

COCO
You want the best club, you're
gonna need the best queen.

Skylar turns, takes her in.

SKYLAR

You're not what I'm looking for.

COCO

Why the hell not?

SKYLAR

Your wig looks like you got it from a Halloween store. On clearance.

(then)

We open this Friday. Free drink, on me, if you come by. Okay?

COCO

(wheels turning)

Oh I'll be here.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

An exhausted Coco plods her way home, depressed and drinking from a paper bag. She passes by a SMALL CROWD holding an impromptu rap battle.

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

Further down the street, Esther walks along the sidewalk, bundled in a long coat, struggling with a bag of groceries, speaking anxiously into her ancient flip-phone.

ESTHER

(into phone)

I tried a *goyishe* wig store, Debbie. But they weren't hiring. Or they weren't hiring me.

Esther notices a SHADY LOOKING WOMAN appear out of alleyway and stare at her. She crosses to the other side of the street.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

I know how important it is.

(beat)

Yes. I'll find something, somehow.

Esther hangs up the phone. She looks up and the Shady Woman is right in front of her, dead in her path.

SHADY WOMAN

Hand it over.

Esther slips the phone into her pocket.

ESTHER

Sorry, I would if I could, but this is four days worth of groceries that I need to last me seven.

SHADY WOMAN

Not your groceries, your money.

ESTHER

(confused)

My money?

The woman is high on something.

SHADY WOMAN

Whatever you've got on you.

ESTHER

I don't--I--

SHADY WOMAN

Give me your wallet!

ESTHER

No.

The Shady Woman grabs Esther's purse.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

Don't touch me!

At the other end of the street, Coco sees what's going on.

SHADY WOMAN

Just give me your fucking money.

The Shady Woman grabs the locket around Esther's neck, trying to pull it off of her. Esther's eyes go wide with rage, and she throws her bag of groceries at the Shady Woman.

ESTHER

Don't you dare touch my children!

But the Shady Woman continues grabbing for the locket.

Unbridled with fury, Esther knocks her to the ground and lets out an animalistic scream. It bellows from deep within her, a sound she didn't even know she was capable of making.

The Shady Woman, in shock, is hoisted up... by Coco.

COCO

Why don't you make like a tree and get the fuck out of here?

SHADY WOMAN

Get the hell off me, faggot.

Shady Woman rips off Coco's wig. Coco jabs her in the stomach, knocking her back to the ground.

Shady Woman fights to get up, pulling a knife out of her pocket. But a stiletto heel presses against her head and pins her down to the concrete.

COCO

You try it, and I'll put this heel
so far into your skull, you'll be
dreaming about these stilettos.

Shady Woman surrenders. Coco steps off of her and the Shady Woman runs off. Esther begins picking up the salvageable groceries from the ground and placing them back into her bag.

COCO (CONT'D)

You alright, girl?

Coco helps Esther pick up the groceries that are still good.

ESTHER

You're a very strong woman.

COCO

So are you.

Coco helps Esther put the rescued food back into the bag.

ESTHER

I like your costume.

Coco shoots Esther a judgmental look.

COCO

It's not a costume, dear. It's a
look. And one that only this queen
can pull off.

ESTHER

What are--what are you a queen of?

COCO

Am I the first drag queen you've
ever met?

(off Esther's confusion)

I'm a man, but sometimes, I dress
up as a woman.

ESTHER

Like a prostitute?

COCO
No, bitch. Like a goddess.

ESTHER
So, are you a man or a woman?

COCO
Sugar, I'm everything.
(looking around)
See where that skank threw my wig?

Esther looks and finds the wig near her. She picks it up, inspecting it like a doctor.

COCO (CONT'D)
Shiiit.

ESTHER
Your knotting is loose. Especially around the edges. That's why that lace portion is showing.

COCO
(impressed)
Yeah, I know. That's always been my problem with this wig.

ESTHER
You should try using a hot iron to make sure it's all secure.

Esther hands Coco the wig as Coco takes her in.

COCO
Tell you what. You can thank me by fixing it. How's that sound?
(before Esther can answer)
Good. I'ma wear it home for now, but you can pick it up from me tomorrow at my shop.

Coco puts on the tattered wig, adjusting it as best she can, and begins sashaying off. Esther calls after her.

ESTHER
Your shop?

COCO
It's just down on Nostrand. Only wig shop on the block.

Esther is left holding her bag of groceries, and smiling.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. HAIR WITH FLAIR - DAY**

MJ fastens a wig on a wig head, preparing to cut and style it, while Naima unlocks the cash register.

Esther walks in, this time with a little pep in her step, wearing her usual floor-length black skirt, and a sweater on top of her long-sleeved blue oxford button up shirt.

MJ

Can I help you--oh, HELL no.

NAIMA

We already told you. We're not--

ESTHER

No, I know. But I spoke to--

COCO (O.S.)

Is my trainee here?

Coco appears, sees Esther and gasps.

COCO (CONT'D)

What are you wearing?

ESTHER

This is what I always wear.

COCO

Honey. You look like Wednesday Adams just got back from a funeral. I got some extra clothes you can change into before you leave.

ESTHER

Oh, I don't need to change clothes.

COCO

How else am I supposed to burn the heinous ones you've got on now?

ESTHER

I think these clothes are fine.

COCO

Agree to disagree.

MJ

Y'all know each other?

COCO
 (re: Esther)
 Shit, she might underneath that
 tucked in little-blouse-on-the-
 prairie look she's got going on.

Coco and MJ laugh.

COCO (CONT'D)
 (to Esther)
 Just focus on her hair, okay? Look
 at her hair, and then make my wig
 look like that. But better.

Coco starts heading to the break room.

ESTHER
 Where do you keep your human hair?

COCO
 Only got synthetic right now.

ESTHER
 You're going to need human hair to
 make it look like hers.

COCO
 Better go find some.

Esther takes a deep breath and heads out the door to go find
 some human hair.

INT. HAIR WITH FLAIR - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Coco pours herself a cup of coffee, as Naima enters.

NAIMA
 Missed your appointment yesterday.
 Some guy named Lorenzo?

COCO
 I didn't have no appointment--

NAIMA
 Don't. Lying has never been your
 color.

Coco exhales. Naima's right.

COCO
 It's just an option I'm exploring.

NAIMA

I know you're dealing with a lot. But if you showed up a little more and put in some fucking effort, you could turn this shit around. Instead of checking out early to go do one of your drag shows, or stumbling in late and hungover the next morning--

COCO

Naima, that's my life! This? This isn't me. I never wanted this.

NAIMA

So, what. You gonna go try and work at that new club now?

COCO

(scoffs)

Shade is just a stepping stone for me. I'm gonna be an icon.

NAIMA

Wake up! There are queens out there who are half your age, now. You think cause you headlined at Starlite, that makes you some big deal? Starlite closed seven years ago. You're chasing after a fantasy that you're never gonna catch.

A beat. This hits Coco right in the gut. For once, she doesn't have a comeback.

NAIMA (CONT'D)

But what do I know? I just work here. For very little money.

COCO

What're you complaining for? You married some rich white boy from the suburbs. You don't got to work another day in your life, if you don't want to.

NAIMA

I'm not interested in hooking for favors. I earn my keep.

COCO

Honey, life's a brothel, and we all out here hooking for something.

(MORE)

COCO (CONT'D)

I don't care whether it's a place on Park Avenue or a place on a park bench, we all after something. And we all doing what it takes to get it. Ain't no lifeguard on duty in these streets, mama. We out here on our own. Can't rely on much, but thought I could at least rely on you.

Coco turns on her stilettos and walks out.

EXT. HAIR WITH FLAIR - MEANWHILE

As Coco struts out in a huff and walks off, we stay with MJ out front as MJ smokes a cigarette.

EZRA RASKIN (20s), dressed in Hasidic attire, his yellowing *tzizis* fringes dangling over his black pants, approaches.

EZRA

(re: MJ's cigarette)

Do you have another? Of these, uh--

MJ pulls out an extra cigarette and hands it to Ezra, proceeding to light it for him. Ezra cracks a smile.

EZRA (CONT'D)

(re: his cigarette)

I don't, uh, usually do this.

MJ

Me neither.

MJ blows out a ring of smoke, clearly not a novice to this.

MJ (CONT'D)

Your people don't come around this part of Crown Heights. Y'all just kinda stay to your spot.

EZRA

Yes, most do.

MJ

Interesting place, the South Side.

EZRA

Interesting?

MJ

I mean, you can't go just stand on a corner and chill south of Eastern.

EZRA

Why not?

MJ

If you go over there without having any business there...you get beat up. Especially if you look like me.

Ezra doesn't know how to respond.

MJ (CONT'D)

It's cool, like, I respect all people. I'm just saying, if you don't belong south of Eastern...you stay out. Just how it is.

MJ takes another drag.

MJ (CONT'D)

But y'all are totally fine just rolling up here for a cig.

EZRA

You've seen someone like me over here? Some time recently?

MJ

My boss just hired one of y'all like ten minutes ago. Esther someone, I think.

EZRA

Esther?

MJ

Yeah, you know any Esthers?

EZRA

(chuckles)

Several. Popular name.

MJ

(smiling)

How 'bout you? You got a name?

Ezra nods, but hesitates for a moment before speaking.

EZRA

I'm--I'm Ezra.

MJ

MJ.

MJ extends a hand, offering to shake. Ezra retreats--embarrassed.

MJ (CONT'D)

Or not.

EZRA

No, sorry, I--in my religion--I'm not allowed to touch women.

MJ

Who said I was a woman?

EZRA

You're--so are you--a man?

MJ

Didn't say that either.

EZRA

So, um--what--?

MJ

I'm a person.
(pause)
How's that?

MJ offers to shake, again. Ezra thinks for a moment, then shakes it. Their hands touch. Their eyes almost smiling as they meet. A moment passes. Ezra drops his hand, embarrassed.

EZRA

I should go.

MJ

Yeah, I better get back in there.

MJ drops their cigarette, putting it out with their heel.

MJ (CONT'D)

Maybe I'll see you around the next time you need some space to think.

EZRA

Yeah. Maybe.

MJ smiles and heads off. Ezra looks on, his gaze lingering, as he wipes off the hand that he used to shake MJ's with.

INT. APPLEBEE'S - LONG ISLAND - LATER

Esther sits at a booth across from her reserved mother, MALKA (50s). Both wear dark cardigans, skirts, and headscarves, clearly sticking out at this bustling Applebee's.

THREE GUYS, beer-bellied regulars wearing bowling shirts and Crocs, share a plate of wings. They gawk at Esther and Malka.

ESTHER

You don't know how happy I am to see you. It's just been...um, how are the kids?

MALKA

Fine.

ESTHER

And Tateh?

MALKA

Your father is...everyone is fine.

ESTHER

I tried calling. But...nobody will talk to me. Except for you.

Malka's eyes keep darting around the restaurant.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

Trust me, we're safe. No Hasid is going to be in here. And if they are, you can tell on them as quickly as they can tell on you.

Malka smiles, weakly.

MALKA

It's Zadie Sam's *yahrtzeit*--

ESTHER

This Shabbos, I know.

(pause)

Have you seen the posters? With my face on them? They made posters.

MALKA

I know.

ESTHER

Are they still up?

Malka shifts in her seat, unable to verbally answer "yes."

ESTHER (CONT'D)

I--I need your help. I don't know what else to say. I'm doing everything I can, but it's still not enough. But I think with you actually being there, if you could just talk to Avram for me. And ask him to come to an agreement--

MALKA

Esther. I can't.

ESTHER

Can't what? Help?

MALKA

I just...I can't. We--we can't...

Malka holds back a well of tears, on the verge of eruption.

MALKA (CONT'D)

I wanted to tell you in person.

ESTHER

What are you saying--?

MALKA

I love you. More than you know. It's just the way it has to be.

Malka gets out of the booth.

ESTHER

No. No, please--

MALKA

Be well, Esther.

Malka leaves. Esther stays still, frozen in emotion.

INT. ESTHER'S STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

MONTAGE:

Esther stands in front of a shelf with a few different *sheitels* on various wig heads, while holding Coco's tattered wig. She pulls a couple wigs off of the wig heads. She is sweating and frenzied, like a painter attacking a canvas.

AT HER TABLE: She takes a pair of scissors and proceeds to cut the hair off of two of her *sheitels*. Her locket is propped up on the table she works at, the picture of her and her kids in full view.

She draws the hair through a hackle (wire brush). She then ties fine string around small bundles of the hair.

She uses a knotting-needle to knot in the hair to Coco's tattered wig--which sits on a wooden block.

She presses a hot iron against the wig's edges.

She uses a curling iron and hairspray in tandem, as she styles the wig. A sculptor at work.

Esther's phone buzzes. She opens her phone to read:

DEBBIE (TEXT)

Get some sleep tonight. I'll meet
you outside of the courthouse
tomorrow at 8:30 sharp. Rest up.

OFF Esther's exhaustion.

INT. BUBBA'S - NIGHT

We're back at the aging club from the teaser. A drunk Coco is cozied up next to a FRATTY JOCK.

COCO

What's your name, gorgeous?

FRATTY JOCK

Travis.

COCO

I'd shake your hand, but then where
would I hold the drink you're about
to get me?

FRATTY JOCK

Oh, I'm about to get you a drink?

COCO

Vodka cranberry. Hold the
cranberry.

Coco winks at Fratty Jock, as Fratty Jock makes his way over to the bar. Bubba approaches.

BUBBA

What're you doing here?

COCO

Working. Ever heard of it?

BUBBA

You're not on tonight. And you're drunk. How many times have I told you, you can't be drunk in front of the customers?

COCO

I'm not drunk. I'm hydrated.

Bubba sighs. He doesn't want to do this.

BUBBA

I can't have an employee who continually shows up drunk and hostile.

COCO

But those are two of my best qualities.

BUBBA

Coco, you're fired.

Fratty Jock shows up with a vodka cranberry.

FRATTY JOCK

Here you go--

Coco takes the drink, ready to toss it into Bubba's face, but thinks better of it. Instead, she downs the drink, throws the glass on the ground, and kicks Bubba in the balls.

FRATTY JOCK (CONT'D)

Whoa!

BUBBA

Security!

COCO

Can't fire a flame, motherfucker.

A LARGE BOUNCER comes over and grabs Coco.

COCO (CONT'D)

I'm going! I'm going!

CLUB GOERS cheer at the altercation, as Coco turns to leave.

COCO (CONT'D)

Just remember, Bubba. In drag? The audience is always right.

The cheers grow louder, as Coco marches off.

INT. COURTROOM - NEXT MORNING

JUDGE ACKERMAN, silver-haired and sturdy, presides over the court room. Holding a side bar discussion with him, at the Judge's Bench, are Debbie and HERSCHEL, Avram's charmingly manipulative attorney.

Sitting at the Applicant and Respondent Tables, respectively, are Esther and Avram. In attendance behind Avram's table are HASIDIC MEN, including Ezra, and Avram's pensive father-- ZALMAN WEISBERG (50s), the rabbi for the Lubavitch community.

HERSCHEL

It's very simple, your Honor. Ms. Weisberg did not consult the rabbi, did not get permission from him to make biological changes to her body, and did not tell her husband that she had decided to play the role of God in their marriage.

DEBBIE

Your Honor, as a result of repeated pregnancies within a short time frame, my client has suffered from anemia, cardiac arrhythmia, vertigo, and vaginal tearing.

The Hasidic men shift in their seats, uncomfortable.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

She merely took the advice of a medical professional. She never intended to play the role of God.

HERSCHEL

So she gets to pick and choose when she abides by Jewish law?

DEBBIE

My client continues to maintain a Jewish household consistent with the customs of the same religious community that threw her out. All she's asking is for the issue of custody to be revisited.

HERSCHEL

The issue of custody was already agreed to in the *get*.

DEBBIE

Which she was coerced into signing.

HERSCHEL

We are simply looking out for the best interest of the children.

DEBBIE

As are we. Ms. Weisberg has continually proven to be an outstanding mother to these children. To deprive them of her care would certainly not be in their best interest.

HERSCHEL

Surely one cannot claim to be a good mother when their actions show them preventing themselves from mothering any children.

DEBBIE

Mr. Weisberg's counsel seems to be insinuating that my client's value as a parent is solely based on a decision she made about her body, without prior consultation or approval from the rabbi.

JUDGE ACKERMAN

Given the context of the situation, I think that's an important claim.

DEBBIE

My client had four children in five years. The strain on her body, her mental health, and her marriage was weighing heavily on her and putting her at risk.

HERSCHEL

She should have spoken about this with the rabbi.

DEBBIE

The rabbi also happened to be her father-in-law, your Honor.

HERSCHEL

Ms. Weisberg made a choice to halt the expansion of the very family she now wants to be a part of. This was her decision, and she must live with the consequences. We have to think of what's best for the children, your Honor.

JUDGE ACKERMAN
 (to Debbie and Herschel)
 You may both return to your seats.

Debbie and Herschel return to their respective tables.

JUDGE ACKERMAN (CONT'D)
 I've reached my decision.
 (clearing his throat)
 I am granting sole custody and
 parenting rights to Mr. Weisberg.

Avram is still, pained that it's come to this. Esther's body begins shaking as she lets out a cry. Debbie puts her hand on the small of Esther's back, comforting her. Ezra watches.

JUDGE ACKERMAN (CONT'D)
 Ms. Weisberg, I am granting you
 limited visitation rights. You will
 be allowed two three-hour
 visitation periods per month, which
 must be supervised by Mr. Weisberg
 or another individual of his
 choosing. Court is dismissed.

ESTHER
 No! Please!
 (turning to Avram)
 Please Avram!

Judge Ackerman bangs his gavel. Avram, vacant, walks away.

OFF Esther, devastated.

INT. BATHROOM - A BIT LATER

Esther holds onto a sink, full of rage and tears, as Debbie consoles her.

DEBBIE
 You need to stay strong. Everything
 you do from now on will be used
 against you in that trial. Lose
 your job? They'll say you can't
 hold steady employment. Don't pay
 your bills? They'll say you're
 irresponsible. Don't show up to
 your visitation? They'll say you're
 unreliable. Trust me.

Debbie reaches into her purse and pulls out an apple.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

You should eat something.

Debbie turns the sink on, rinsing off the apple.

ESTHER

They took away my children.

DEBBIE

It's not over. We can still appeal.
I went through all of this and more
with my own custody battle.

ESTHER

It's not the same. You chose to
leave. I was thrown out.

Debbie looks at Esther, aghast.

DEBBIE

You think I chose this? I have five
children who I'm never allowed to
see!

ESTHER

How am I supposed to believe you'll
get me my children, when you
couldn't get your own?

DEBBIE

Because I didn't have someone like
me when I went through my trial.

ESTHER

You are nothing like me.

Debbie turns off the sink and reaches for a paper towel, but
the dispenser is out. She looks around for an alternative.

DEBBIE

I know what it's like to keep
something from my family. Just like
you do. Keeping what you did from
Avram. Having to lie about it.

Esther's eyes go wide.

ESTHER

That is not the same. We are not
the same!

Debbie resorts to drying the apple off on her shirt.

DEBBIE

I hid something from my family,
just like you did from yours.

ESTHER

I'm not going to give up on my kids
like you did!

Esther's words shoot through Debbie. She's stung. Hurt.

DEBBIE

Oh, I never gave up. I just ran
out. Ran out of money and energy.

(then)

I'm on your side, Esther. But you
need to trust me.

ESTHER

How can I trust someone who would
betray their family to go off and
marry a...a...

Esther can't even brings herself to say the word "woman."

DEBBIE

Maybe you can't. And that's your
choice.

Debbie places the cleaned apple on the sink next to Esther,
collects herself, and leaves.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**INT. HAIR WITH FLAIR - AFTERNOON**

Coco, hungover and embarrassed by her memories of the night before, sits in a salon chair at a station, facing away from the mirror, as Esther fastens a wig cap to Coco's head.

Esther's eyes are red and puffy, her face dehydrated from tears and swollen with exhaustion.

COCO
You look like shit.

ESTHER
I'm fine.

COCO
Uh uh. Don't try to get out of this. Spill that tea, girl. Come on, what's going on?

ESTHER
It's personal.

COCO
("keep talking")
Mmhmm.

ESTHER
I'd rather not get into it.

COCO
My shop, my rules. Talk.

Coco and Esther stare at each other. Esther finally gives in.

ESTHER
It's my kids. Custody--it's--

COCO
How many you got?

ESTHER
Four.

COCO
With the same dude?

ESTHER
Of course. He was my husband.

COCO

Y'all must've got married young to have four kids by now.

ESTHER

Not really. We were eighteen.

COCO

Eighteen?! What, y'all get married after the prom?

ESTHER

It was an arranged marriage. We only met for fifteen minutes.

COCO

Hold up. You met your future husband for fifteen minutes?

ESTHER

That's how it is for all of us.

Esther adjusts the wig cap on Coco's head.

COCO

Girl. You don't even know what you're missing. It's like you went to a candle store and bought a candle, and that's the only candle you've ever smelled. You don't even know what other motherfucking candle scents are out there!

ESTHER

I wasn't looking for candles. I was looking to make a family. Which I did. But my body just couldn't take any more. So...

COCO

So you divorced him?

ESTHER

I made it so that I couldn't get-- couldn't have any more...

COCO

Oh, shit.

ESTHER

When he found out...that was it.

COCO
You're giving me straight up
Lifetime movie realness right now.

Esther begins fastening bobby pins to the wig.

COCO (CONT'D)
Did you love him?

ESTHER
In our community, we marry out of
obligation. Not out of love. Maybe
you're lucky and it becomes that.
But...

Esther takes the wig and places it on top of the wig cap on
Coco's head, beginning to bobby pin it to her head.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
I've lost everything--my kids have
lost their mother, because of what
I did. Because of me.

COCO
You did nothing wrong. You hear me?

Coco looks to make sure that her words are getting through.

ESTHER
My children are a part of me. I
have all this love to give them,
but I don't have them. It's like
I'm holding a full watering can,
but I don't have any plants to
water. And what good is holding a
watering can if you have no plants?
You're just left holding onto
heaviness.

A beat. Coco meets Esther's eyes.

COCO
You hold onto that heaviness. You
take all that heaviness and put it
into fighting for your children.

Esther turns Coco's chair, facing her towards the mirror.

Coco's jaw drops in awe at her reflection. The wig is
stunning. Big, luscious, flowing, sexy, and powerful.

COCO (CONT'D)
 She. Is. Gorgeous!
 (re: her reflection)
 Pretty bitch.

ESTHER
 You like it?

Coco runs her hands through the wig, feeling it out.

COCO
 Like it? Honey this is some
 straight up fairy godmother
 makeover shit right here. Damn!

Esther smiles.

COCO (CONT'D)
 Shop opens at ten. Employees gotta
 be here at 9:30. Got that?

ESTHER
 You mean--you want me to work here?

COCO
 You earned it.

Esther tears up, grateful beyond belief.

COCO (CONT'D)
 You're gonna be alright. I've been
 where you are.

ESTHER
 (taking Coco in)
 I don't think so.

COCO
 Parents threw me out on the street
 when I told 'em I was gay. I was
 seventeen. I was broke. I was
 homeless. I met all the
 prerequisites to becoming a drug
 dealer. Got caught, put away for
 five years, got out. Couldn't get a
 job to save my life. I remember
 there was some stupid drag contest
 where if you won, you'd get like
 fifty bucks. I entered on a whim. I
 wasn't even all done up or nothin'.
 But I put on those heels, and that
 wig, and girl...it was like I was
 Wonder Woman putting on her cape.
 Everything just felt right.

(MORE)

COCO (CONT'D)

And I'd never felt so free. In that moment...I found my calling.

(touching her wig)

Maybe this is yours. I know queens who would kill for a wig like this.

ESTHER

I'm sorry, about all--your past.

COCO

Sorry 'bout your kids.

A beat. They look at each other, realizing for the first time that perhaps they're not as different as they seem.

INT. COCO'S APARTMENT / ESTHER'S APARTMENT - NEXT EVENING

Coco, on a mat, crouches on the floor in prayer, reciting the Islamic *Maghrib* prayer.

Esther lights a *yahrtzeit* memorial candle, and prays.

INT. COCO'S BATHROOM - A BIT LATER

Brushes, sponges, mascara wands, eye pencils, lipsticks, and more are all lined across the counter. It's like a surgeon's work station. **Coco** inspects her face in the mirror, surveying her canvas. Her face intimately vulnerable.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ESTHER'S BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Esther inspects her face in the mirror, looking at her hairline.

IN THE SHOWER: **Coco** shaves; from her toes up to her neck, then shaves from her neck and up to the rest of her face.

Esther, an electric razor in hand, shaves the sides of her hairline--making sure that nothing sticks out under the wig.

BACK AT THE MIRROR: **Coco** puts on a nylon wig cap.

Esther puts on a nylon wig cap.

Coco applies foundation to her face; ears then neck and chest. She follows this up with sponging on contour. She then takes a make-up blender, and blends the contour into her face. She powders her face to seal in her work.

Esther washes her face with water.

Coco takes an eye pencil, and draws on her eyeliner. She takes a brush, and brushes on eye shadow. Then takes spirit gum and sticks fake eyelashes to her eyelids.

Esther dries off her face with a towel.

Coco puts lipstick over her lips, after lining them with a pencil.

Esther puts on a pair of pantyhose.

Coco puts on two sets of pantyhose, tucks her manhood with duct tape, adds her various padding to give her body shape, and puts on her outfit.

Esther buttons a cardigan, which she wears on top of her crisp button-down shirt and long black skirt.

Coco administers a line of spirit gum along the edge of her wig cap. She grabs her wig and fastens it to her head.

Esther puts her *sheitel* on her head, positioning it just right. Turns to the side, making sure everything looks right.

Coco puts on the wig that Esther restored and gives herself a final look over. Liking what she sees, she winks at herself and struts the fuck off.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS STREET / EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - LATER

Esther blends in as she walks among the sea of Hasidic people, all on their way to Shabbat dinners.

Coco stands out, dressed in a long coat, as she struts down the streets of Chelsea, passing YUPPIES and their puppies.

EXT. SHADE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Coco approaches Shade, then ducks around the corner where there's a window in the wall. She climbs through, muscular legs akimbo as she struggles her way inside.

INT. AVRAM'S HOUSE - EVENING

Esther walks into the dining room of what used to be her house. It is packed with GUESTS. Joy and love overflowing.

SHAYNA (O.S.)

Mama!

Esther turns around to see Shayna running towards her. She picks Shayna up, kissing her cheek as she hugs her tight.

ESTHER
My Shaynaleh! Good Shabbos.

Faigy and Rivke walk over. Esther sets Shayna down and opens her arms to Rivke and Faigy. They stand in place, not moving.

Sensing their hesitation, Esther opens her locket, revealing the photograph of her and her kids.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Come, come. I have this beautiful picture here, but I need some help figuring out who these gorgeous *kinderlach* are inside.

Esther points to one of the children in the picture.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Who is that?

Shayna looks to Rivke and Faigy, who remain perfectly still.

RIVKE
We should sit down for *kiddush*.

Esther, troubled by the cold reception, tries to stay upbeat.

ESTHER
Great idea.

They all go to their seats at the head of the table. Esther sees Mendel already sitting at one of the chairs there.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Don't I get a Shabbos kiss?

Esther leans down, exposing her cheek, but Mendel doesn't kiss her.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
No?

MENDEL
Daddy says you want to turn us into *goyim*.

Esther stops, frozen, just short of her chair.

AVRAM (O.S.)
Your seat is actually down at that end of the table.

Esther turns around to find Avram, readying to sit at the head of the table.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

The open seat on the corner.

Esther looks to see an empty chair at the furthest opposite corner of the table.

ESTHER

Of course.

Esther makes her way to her seat at the opposite end. Everyone takes their seats, her children painfully far away. She paints on a smile.

INT. SHADE - MAIN ROOM - MEANWHILE

Coco walks towards the side of the stage, trying to go unnoticed. She slithers her way towards the EMCEE.

EMCEE

Where's Ambrosia Monroe?

COCO

Still putting on her face. But it's all good, I told her I'd switch with her.

EMCEE

Who're you?

COCO

Miss Coco Labelle.

Emcee grabs his mic. He has a show to run.

EMCEE

Coming to the stage, put your hands together for Miss Coco Labelle.

Coco walks out on stage in the corseted golden leotard that Ambrosia had mentioned leaving behind in the dressing room. Coco strikes a pose and nods her head.

MUSIC: Chaka Kahn's "I'm Every Woman" begins to play.

COCO

(singing)

WHATEVER YOU WANT. / WHATEVER YOU
NEED. / ANYTHING YOU WANT DONE,
BABY I'LL DO IT NATURALLY. / 'CAUSE
I'M EVERY WOMAN. IT'S ALL IN ME.

As the beat drops and the tempo picks up, Coco kicks her leg up to her face and choreographically falls to the floor in a death drop (aka dip). The crowd goes wild.

CLOSE ON the spotlight on Coco, as it flares.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. AVRAM'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON the flare of the flames from the Shabbat candles.

Shabbat is now in full swing. Jubilance abounds.

AVRAM AND GUESTS

(singing)

*MALACHEI HA SHALOM MALACHEI EL YON
MI MELECH MAL'CHEI HA MA LACHIM HA
KADOSH BARUCH HU.*

Esther looks longingly at her children, down at the other end of the table, the distance between them seeming like miles. She keeps her face in a smile, determined to stay strong.

INT. SHADE - MAIN ROOM - MEANWHILE

Coco dances across the stage, while she continues to sing.

COCO

(to the Audience)

Let me hear you, sing it out now.

AUDIENCE

(singing)

I'M EVERY WOMAN.

COCO

I'M EVERY WOMAN.

Coco spins, spins, spins, jumps up into the air, and lands in the splits. The Audience showers her with roaring applause.

AUDIENCE

Yass!/Werk!/Slay!/Let them have it!

INT. SHADE - BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Coco walks offstage where she is immediately greeted by a fuming Skylar. The crowd continues cheering in the distance.

SKYLAR

Out. Now.

COCO

Honey, I've been out for years.

SKYLAR

I don't know who you are or how you got in here--

COCO

All part of the mystery, darling.

SKYLAR

That outfit isn't yours. You're a thief, you're trespassing, and you need to go.

COCO

Sweetie, I believe they're calling for my encore. That's French for, "bring that bitch back." You wouldn't want me to leave and disappoint them all, would you? That can't be good for business.

SKYLAR

(pause)

You're the one from the other day.

COCO

You said don't come back here looking cheap, so I came back looking fabulous.

(pause)

I'm just asking for a chance here.

From behind them we hear:

AMBROSIA (O.S.)

Give the queen a shot.

Skylar looks at Ambrosia as though she couldn't be serious.

AMBROSIA (CONT'D)

Her French is a little off, but there might be a queen in her yet.

The crowd is still cheering. Skylar eyes Ambrosia, debating.

SKYLAR

One shot. That's it. I so much as get a whiff of unprofessionalism, and you're out.

Coco nods, smiling in gratitude. Skylar leaves.

AMBROSIA

I'd say it takes balls to do what you did, but yours seem to be tucked.

(extending her hand)

Ambrosia Monroe.

COCO

Coco Labelle.

AMBROSIA

Nice outfit.

The two smile. Coco gives her wig one last look, one foot already out the door and back onto the stage.

AMBROSIA (CONT'D)

Now tell me something.

(re: Coco's wig)

Where can I get me a wig like that?

OFF Coco, wheels turning.

EXT. AVRAM'S HOUSE - LATER

Avram walks Esther out the front door.

AVRAM

We will be in touch about finding a time for you to visit next month. Good Shabbos, Esther--

ESTHER

How are they?

AVRAM

Everyone is fine.

ESTHER

I'd like to see them more.

AVRAM

That's not up to me. The judge already made his decision.

ESTHER

I don't understand why you have to turn this into a war.

AVRAM

You think this is what I wanted?!
For us, for our family? You made me
do this! I didn't have a choice. I
gave you my love and my trust, and
you broke both of those. You did
that, not me.

(beat)

I'm not a bad person, Esther. Even
though I know you'd like to believe
that I am.

Esther maintains her composure, while biting her tongue.

ESTHER

Good Shabbos, Avram.

Esther walks away.

Zalman and Ezra come out the front door.

ZALMAN

(to Avram)

Du bist gut?

AVRAM

Yes, everything is fine. Thank you.

Avram goes back inside, as Zalman and Ezra stand outside.

ZALMAN

You're continuing to follow Esther?

(off Ezra's nodding)

Nu?

EZRA

Nothing yet.

ZALMAN

Nothing? Not even where she works?

Ezra pauses, thinking of MJ, weighing how to respond.

EZRA

Nothing yet.

INT. SHADE - STAGE - MEANWHILE

Coco is center stage, under a spotlight, working the
microphone as she sings: Patti LaBelle's "New Attitude."

COCO
 (singing)
 I GOT A NEW ATTITUDE. / I'M IN
 CONTROL. / MY WORRIES ARE FEW /
 'CAUSE I'VE GOT LOVE LIKE I NEVER
 KNEW / I GOT A NEW ATTITUDE.

PRE LAP: Coco continues singing throughout the following...

INT. PAWN SHOP - SAME TIME

Esther marches into a florescently-lit pawn shop, making a beeline to the counter. Nothing will stand in her way.

ESTHER
 How much can I get for this?

Esther pulls off her wedding ring and sets it on the counter. The STORE CLERK picks it up and examines it. Semi-impressed, he opens the register and begins counting out bills.

INT. SHADE - STAGE - MEANWHILE

Coco dances her heart out. She's giving you Tina Turner. She's giving you James Brown. She's giving you Janet Jackson.

COCO
 (singing)
 I GOT A NEW ATTITUDE (I GOT A NEW)/
 OOO OOO OOO OOO (ATTITUDE)/
 OOO OOO OOO OOO (SAID I GOT A NEW)/
 I GOT A NEW ATTITUDE!

Coco finishes her song, striking a pose, as applause showers over her.

EXT. DEBBIE'S APARTMENT - A BIT LATER

MIRA, with a smile as bright as the glint from her nose ring, opens her door to find Esther on her doorstep.

ESTHER
 Oh, sorry. I was looking for--

MIRA
 Esther, right?

Esther freezes, not responding. Debbie appears in the doorway, standing next to Mira...her wife.

MIRA (CONT'D)
Can I take your coat?

ESTHER
No, that's--I'm fine. Thank you.

Mira smiles at Debbie, and heads back inside. Esther hands a stack of money over to Debbie.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
I'll give you more when I have it,
but it's a start.

DEBBIE
I can't guarantee anything.

ESTHER
I'm not here for guarantees. I'm
here for my children.

Debbie fixes her eyes on Esther, seeing if she's serious.

DEBBIE
We're just finishing dinner, if you
wanted to...

Debbie opens the door wider, revealing a dining room table set for Shabbat where Mira is already setting a third place setting for Esther.

Esther sees this. She looks at Debbie.

ESTHER
Thank you.

A small smile on each of their faces, an unspoken truce.
Esther takes off her coat and heads into Debbie's apartment.

END OF PILOT