

Civilized People

written by

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TEASER

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

DATED HOME VIDEO QUALITY.

A young LESLIE BANNER (9) sits on a DIRECTOR'S CHAIR. Her MOTHER films her.

A COSTUME DESIGNER in a very 80's outfit with teased hair pulls a WIG CAP onto Leslie's head.

YOUNG LESLIE  
OW! HURRY UP! YOU'RE HURTING ME!

A RED CURLY WIG stretches across the cap.

MOM (O.S.)  
Leslie, sing your little song for  
the camera honey!

Leslie glares at her mom behind the CAMERA.

YOUNG LESLIE  
Mom!

MOM (O.S.)  
Come on peaches, let's hear it!

Leslie shakes her head and crosses her arms.

VOCAL COACH (O.S.)  
Leslie, you really should warm up  
before the show.

Leslie whips her head around to glare at the man. The camera follows her gaze.

He looks to the floor, and runs a hand through his hair.

Leslie rolls her eyes. She opens her mouth, and begins to sing.

YOUNG LESLIE  
(singing)  
*The sun'll come out tomorrow. Bet  
your bottom dollar that tomorrow,  
there'll be sun!*

The room falls silent as her little voice rings out.

Her mom CRIES. The CAMCORDER shakes with her movement.

The costume designer secures pins in her wig as she sings.

YOUNG LESLIE (CONT'D)  
 (singing)  
*Just thinkin' about tomorrow,  
 clears away the cobwebs and the  
 sorrow, til' there's none.*

Leslie slips off her chair and walks to the MIRROR on the wall.

YOUNG LESLIE (CONT'D)  
 (singing)  
*When I'm stuck with a day that's  
 gray and lonely, I just stick out  
 my chin and grin, and say-*

Leslie stares at herself in the mirror. She looks up at her red wig slowly.

YOUNG LESLIE (CONT'D)  
 (angrily)  
 AHHHH!

Leslie SOBS. She pulls at the pins in her hair as she tries to rip off the wig.

The costumer designer runs to her with her arms out to stop her.

Leslie WAILS and runs out of the room.

VOCAL COACH  
*Leslie-for fuck sake-Leslie, please  
 don't do this! Leslie, come on  
 back!*

He follows Leslie, right behind the costume designer.

MOM (O.S.)  
 Leslie, sweetheart, you go on in  
 ten! Leslie!

The camera wobbles as her mother follows after.

Cut to-

INSERT: BLACK TITLE SCREEN

"CIVILIZED PEOPLE"

Title fades. Black screen remains.

ACT ONE

LESLIE (PRELAP)  
Just stop reading the sites then,  
Mom.

END INSERT

INT. LESLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Leslie (now 30) waits by a TOASTER on a marble countertop. Her PHONE rests between her shoulder and cheek. She holds a JAR OF PEANUT BUTTER, and reads the LABEL.

She's tiny in stature, short and slim. She's dolled up in Old Hollywood glamour - a floral summer dress with a red lip. Her hair is curled up just at the bottom, very 50's.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
I know it upsets you, but it's not  
just gonna go away.

Leslie fiddles with a piece of hair between her thumb and finger. Her eyes stay fixated on the toaster.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
Yeah, well, all that shit is  
exaggerated anyway.

Leslie SIGHS as she moves the phone to her other ear.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
Yeah, today.

Another pause as she listens. Her eyebrows furrow as she takes in what's being said.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
I'm not cancelling Cabo! It's this  
weekend, and I-

She pauses as her mom interrupts.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
I thought moving out and, you know,  
turning 30 meant you'd be off my  
back?

Leslie looks impatient and SLAMS the peanut butter jar onto the counter.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
You paid my rent one time, Mom, one  
time! And you-Mom, I've got to go!  
(MORE)

LESLIE (CONT'D)

Yes-yes, I love you too. Stay off  
the computer, please, I don't need-  
yes I'll call after. Okay. Oka-  
Okay. Bye.

Leslie hangs up the phone and sets it on the counter. At the same time it hits the granite, the toaster POPS. She SQUEALS and jumps at the sound.

CUT TO:

EXT. POSH LA SIDEWALK - DAY

Leslie, now with a HEADSCARF and large SUNGLASSES on, marches down the street, pure determination on her face.

A large BOUQUET of expensive looking, extravagant flowers rests on her arms.

We hear the CLICK CLACK of her HEELS against the cement.

She pulls her PHONE out of her PURSE and stares at the screen.

She raises her head to see a stunning renovated Victorian home. She nods her head and walks toward the gate.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - DAY

Leslie walks up the steps to the front door. She GULPS in a nervous manner, KNOCKS rhythmically, then steps back with a huge grin on her face. It's almost off-putting.

The door opens to reveal a smiling middle-aged woman, KATHERINE STANSON, clad in a hippy-chic sundress and a wide-brimmed hat.

Her eyes rest on Leslie and her smile falls.

KATHERINE

What the hell are you DOING here?  
Leslie, there's a goddamn  
restraining order -

Leslie SHUSHES her frantically while pushing the FLOWERS toward her.

LESLIE

Listen, I know, I know. Please, I'm  
not here to do or say anything but  
sorry.

The flowers land atop the woman's chest. She sinks down at the weight of them.

KATHERINE

You know what, no. No!

She turns around and sets the flowers on the ground inside the door.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I'm not going to be bribed by some spoiled rotten little...

(BEAT)

Leslie's fists clench up into tight balls on either side of her, and she takes a deep, shaky BREATH.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Look at you! You're fucking deranged! You're lucky I don't call the cops right now!

Leslie begins to panic at her threats. Her anger dissolves.

LESLIE

Katherine, please! Wait! You have to listen to me. They're making me go to counselling because of this...this tiny fucking misunderstanding! It's n-

Katherine looks at her as if she has two heads.

KATHERINE

A misunderstanding! You are unbelievable, Leslie. So it was just a misunderstanding when you assaulted me then? Over an audition that you butchered, by the way. Am I getting that right?

Katherine's voice becomes a nasty growl.

LESLIE

Are you really gonna call that assault, Katherine? I barely touched you!

KATHERINE

You rode on my back like I was a fucking pony and threw one of those trashy hooker heels at me!

Katherine points down to the same pair of HEELS Leslie dons now.

Leslie raises her brows and smirks. She crosses her arms and looks Katherine up and down.

LESLIE

Coming from the girl in a fucking  
muumuu-

Katherine turns and ducks her head into the doorframe.

KATHERINE

(shouting)  
Sandy! Call the cops!

Leslie suddenly drops to her knees, her PURSE falls beside her. She grabs at the hem of Katherine's dress, pleading.

LESLIE

Please! Please, I-I'm sorry, I just  
need a-just give me one more  
chance, and I promise, I'll-

KATHERINE

Get up, Leslie! Get up!

Leslie scrambles to her feet as Katherine yanks her arm upward. She stares at Katherine expectantly.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

You need to go home. Just-Just get  
the fuck out of here.

Leslie stares at her wordlessly.

Katherine opens her eyes wide and gestures her hands in a questioning manner.

Leslie sighs and puts her head in her hands, exhausted.

LESLIE

I came all the way here, I fucking  
grovelled; why are you doing this  
to me?

Katherine shakes her head.

KATHERINE

Leslie, take some fucking  
accountability for once! You ever  
stop to think that maybe you've  
done this to yourself?

Leslie stares at the ground, deep in thought. She runs a hand through her hair, then looks up at Katherine with fierce eyes.

LESLIE  
(monotone)  
Give me my flowers back.

KATHERINE  
You're serious?

Leslie bends down and begins removing her heel.

A look of fear flashes through Katherine's eyes as she's reminded of before, and she hastily pick up the bouquet from beside the door and throws them to Leslie's feet angrily.

Katherine walks inside, and SLAMS her screen door shut as a barrier between her and Leslie.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
See you on the big screen, champ.

Katherine then shuts her main door, leaving Leslie and her now destroyed flowers alone on the porch.

EXT. LESLIE'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Leslie, FLOWERS in hand, does a version of the walk of shame up the driveway to her home. She looks defeated.

Her head hangs low. As she approaches the front door to her sleek, modern home, her eyes on the concrete, she sees a pair of black pointed heels on the ground in front of her.

She slowly lifts her head to see her manager, PAULINE SIMMONS (late 30's) sitting on her front steps. She's got a deep brown pixie haircut, and chiseled, intense features. Her navy slacks and white turtleneck compliment her tall frame.

PAULINE  
Nice flowers.

Leslie, keeping eye contact with Pauline, hesitantly walks up to Pauline, handing the bouquet to her.

LESLIE  
They were.

PAULINE  
How was Katherine?

LESLIE  
Still a witch.

PAULINE  
You're unbelievably lucky I have a good rapport with her. She's only holding back charges because I'm your agent.

LESLIE  
Yes, lucky is my middle name.

Leslie takes a seat next to Pauline on the steps.

PAULINE  
You can't pull shit like that, Leslie. She thinks you're insane.

LESLIE  
She also thinks those rocks she wears around her neck will make her immortal, so not the best judge of sanity.

Pauline looks at Leslie through the sides of her eyes, a smirk playing at her lips.

PAULINE  
Well let's remember, she's the reason we're not in a courtroom right now. We should be thanking her.

LESLIE  
Yeah. She's also the reason I'm headed to fucking counselling in-

Leslie checks her WATCH.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
An hour.

She shrivels her nose in disgust.

PAULINE  
About that - any questions for me before you go?

LESLIE  
Hm...Sure, I can think of a couple. Why does God hate me and are you the Devil?

Pauline laughs, then gets really quiet.

PAULINE

I don't want to make you miserable,  
Leslie.

Leslie sighs. She pats Pauline's arm while staring straight ahead.

LESLIE

(sighing)  
I know Pauly.

Pauline shrugs innocently.

PAULINE

There's worse things.

LESLIE

Yeah, there are worse things. I  
could be you. Then, I'd have to  
deal with me.

PAULINE

Exactly.

Pauline smiles at her warmly. She grabs Leslie's hands in hers.

PAULINE (CONT'D)

Never go to Katherine's house  
again.

Leslie does a sarcastic salute in response.

Pauline laughs as she stands up from the steps and starts walking to her CAR parked across the street.

PAULINE (CONT'D)

This is really not what I expected  
when I signed on "Theatre's  
Darling".

LESLIE

You've met my father, right?

Pauline raises her brows with a grin.

PAULINE

You'll do great. Play nice. Don't  
hit anybody.

Leslie nods, a frown stuck on her lips as she watches Pauline get into her car and start it.

PAULINE (CONT'D)  
 (shouting)  
 I'm rooting for you, Leslie!

Pauline whizzes around the corner. Leslie watches her drive off, looking solemn.

A large truck passes by Leslie, blocking her from view.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BLVD. - DAY

When Leslie is revealed again, she stands outside a luxurious white building that reads "Serenity Private Practice". She has that same stone-faced look on her as she reads the SIGN and takes a deep breath.

LESLIE  
 I should've just been an alcoholic.

She leans her head back, GROANS, and swings the front doors .

INT. SERENITY PRIVATE PRACTICE LOBBY - DAY

Leslie walks through the doors and GASPS at the beauty of the interior.

The floors are a clean white marble, there're PLANTS and GREENERY around every corner. She can hear the BABBLING of water from somewhere in the room.

She stops to admire the place briefly before shaking her head. She marches on to the FRONT DESK, where a young RECEPTIONIST'S acrylics can be heard TAPPING on a keyboard.

Leslie approaches the counter, and looks at the woman through her huge shades.

The woman smiles back at Leslie, who is in full Hollywood glamour.

RECEPTIONIST  
 Welcome to Serenity!

Leslie can't help but shudder at her chipper voice.

LESLIE  
 (flatly)  
 Yeah, hi. Is this where I check in for-

RECEPTIONIST

Yes hon, the consultation room is just down that hallway.

The receptionist points a long, neon pink fingernail toward a corridor where a SIGN reads "Plastic Surgery Consultation Room".

Leslie rips her SUNGLASSES off and glares at her.

LESLIE

Where do you get off? I would NEVER go near a scalpel...again. I am a well respected actress thank you very much.

The receptionists lights up at the word actress.

RECEPTIONIST

OOH, actress! What would I know you from? TV or film?

Leslie looks around the room. She slides her sunglasses back over her eyes.

LESLIE

I...I do theatre, musicals mainly but I've done some othe-

The receptionists face falls once she hears theatre, and she resumes TAPPING on the keyboard.

RECEPTIONIST

Name.

Leslie HUFFS in frustration, then takes a BREATH and clasps her hands together to calm herself.

LESLIE

(sighs)

Leslie Banner.

More CLICKING.

RECEPTIONIST

Ahhh, the Annie chick! Stevie mentioned you'd be coming.

Leslie goes stiff, and looks at the floor as she tries to ignore the comment.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

"Theatre's Darling" in anger management?

(MORE)

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)  
 Guess all that child actor stuff is  
 true, eh? Ugh, I love Hollywood.

She has a sickeningly sweet smile on her face as she hands  
 Leslie a WAIVER to sign, along with a PEN.

Leslie snatches the pen from her hand and SCRATCHES her name  
 onto the sheet.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)  
 Down that hall to the left. Dr.  
 Stevie's office. Oh, and here-

She hands Leslie a BUSINESS CARD for the plastic surgeon with  
 a big smile.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)  
 You get half off lip filler when  
 you refer someone. Just something  
 to think about.

Leslie shakes her head in disbelief, and tucks her lips into  
 her teeth.

She STOMPS across the lobby to the office, red in the face.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)  
 Break a leg!

LESLIE (O.S.)  
 Go to hell.

INT. DR. STEVIE HARRIS' OFFICE - DAY

A giant of a man with a NAMETAG reading "DR. STEVIE HARRIS"  
 sits at a DESK much too small for him.

He appears to be pleading with somebody on the PHONE.

STEVIE  
 Maria, please. You took the cat,  
 you took my car, what els-Maria I  
 rode my bike to work today. It took  
 four and a half hours!  
 (BEAT)  
 Yes I love nature, but it's not  
 about th-A man needs a better way  
 around, Maria!

He bites at his nails. His eyes scream coward.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 I do know how to pump my own gas  
 now, thank you!

He begins scratching at his neck, his skin pink with stress.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 What if I took the car three days a  
 week?  
 (BEAT)  
 Two?

A KNOCK on the door makes him jump out of his seat.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 Maria - Maria, I have to go.  
 (BEAT)  
 Okay, one day a week.  
 (BEAT)  
 Sundays? Really? Maria-

Another KNOCK, this time much louder and harder.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 We'll talk later. I really have to  
 go. Okay, bye Maria. I... I still  
 love y-

He puts the receiver down.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 You.

He gets up from behind his desk and walks to the door. He takes a deep BREATH, tightens his TIE, and swings the door open wide.

Leslie stands outside his office. Her arms are crossed defiantly, her STILETTO TAPS the floor rhythmically.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 Why hello there! Welcome!

Dr. Harris flashes Leslie a huge smile, which she barely returns. She has a look of shock on her face.

She looks Dr. Harris up and down, having to physically move her head from floor to ceiling to take in his alarming height.

The pair stand there for a moment, and Dr. Harris LAUGHS awkwardly.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Please - um, come in! Don't be shy.

Leslie drags her feet into his office, and takes a look around the room.

Bright and open, WINDOWS everywhere. A glamorous CHANDELIER hangs down in the centre of the room, begging to be drooled at. Leslie does just that.

Dr. Harris takes a seat behind his desk, deep green tropical PLANTS littered behind him. In his too-small space, the leaves brush his arms and face, looking to almost pull him in.

He gestures for Leslie to sit in the lavish red velvet CHAIR across from him.

She sits down and sinks in to the deep, fluffy cushions. She holds on the sides awkwardly.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

(nostalgic)

Leslie Banner...

Leslie adjusts herself and sits on the very edge of her seat. She smiles back flatly, no teeth.

LESLIE

That's me.

She crosses her legs, and smooths her dress down on her thighs, avoiding eye contact.

STEVIE

Theatre's Darling, they called you!  
You know, I saw you in Annie, how long ago was that now...fifteen, twenty years ago? You were a-

LESLIE

Listen, I appreciate the trip down memory lane, but I really am busy today, so if we could just get on with it...

He clears his throat, seeing her distance.

STEVIE

Sure, sure, I- I just have to ask you a couple quick questions before we move on. Is that okay? May I ask you these questions?

Leslie rolls her eyes behind her sunglasses.

LESLIE

Well, you just asked me two, so,  
was that it?

Stevie sits up, stiff as a board. He CLICKS a couple keys on his KEYBOARD and laughs awkwardly.

STEVIE

Oh, you...Okay, let's begin!

His finger glides along the COMPUTER screen as he reads from it.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

First question, do you want to be  
here? You can be completely honest  
here, it's a safe spa-

LESLIE

No.

Stevie adjusts his shoulders, and nods.

STEVIE

(BEAT)

Thank you for being open with me.

LESLIE

My pleasure.

STEVIE

Next question... Have you always  
been angry or did something  
specific happen to trigger these  
outbursts?

Leslie leaps to her feet.

LESLIE

What the hell kind of question is  
that? How dare you? I-What do you-  
No! What do you mean outbursts?

Stevie leans back and cowers. He begins rapidly typing while staring at her in surprised fear.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

Wait, stop! Don't-Don't write that  
part down!

STEVIE

I'm-I'm so sorry, these are the questions we ask to everyone. I'm so sorry if it-I, uh, upset you, it was never what I-I meant, I have to record your answers, it's standard practi-

Leslie crosses her arms menacingly and gives Stevie an absolute death stare that may have literally taken a few years off his life.

He quickly TAPS and holds down the BACKSPACE KEY, nodding at her frantically.

Leslie relaxes a tad, and returns to her seat.

LESLIE

Please, just-just get on with this stupid thing.

STEVIE

Okay, sure-um, yes. Let's carry on, then.

Stevie closes his eyes and INHALES. He holds it in, his lips mouthing the numbers 1-5, silently counting in some sort of meditation-style.

He EXHALES loudly, blowing a large PUFF of air directly into Leslie's face. This sends her hair and bangs flying back, wind-swept.

She adjusts her hair aggressively and SCOFFS while looking at Stevie in disbelief.

He opens his eyes just as she's fixed her hair, unaware of the problem.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Okay. Next question...

Leslie laughs under her breath in annoyance.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Did Bianca give you a referral card for lip injections?

Leslie stares at him wordlessly. She removes her SUNGLASSES from her eyes, and cocks her head in a questioning motion.

LESLIE

(BEAT)

Is that a joke?

STEVIE

Unfortunately not. She forgets all the time! That's what you get when you hire family!

Stevie smiles large.

The pair sit in silence before Leslie cracks.

LESLIE

That's it! I'm done. You've wasted about enough of my time, "DOCTOR". I'm not answering another damned thing on that list.

She slings her purse over her shoulder.

STEVIE

Leslie, please! There's still twenty-seven more questions left on the short questionnaire!

Leslie slides her sunglasses back into place.

LESLIE

Hmmm...Guess I'll have to mail it to you.

He begins to panic. He slides his CHAIR back and gets caught in the tangles of the plants, shooing them away.

STEVIE

Leslie, please, just-just humour me, alright? We haven't even started the session, and I need to just-

LESLIE

Wait, wait, hold on a sec. This-this isn't part of the session?

STEVIE

No, no. It's just the introduction. I guess now's as good a time as any to meet the rest of the group?

We focus in on Leslie as her face slowly begins to reveal her horror at the word "group".

She tilts her head to look up at Stevie through the top of her sunglasses.

LESLIE

Excuse me?

ACT TWO

INT. SERENITY PRIVATE PRACTICE HALLWAY - DAY

Leslie walks behind Stevie, arms crossed, furious.

STEVIE

I guess there was a teensy little  
mix-up between you and your agent?

Leslie LAUGHS sarcastically.

LESLIE

Just a bit.

(BEAT)

Do you know how much money I paid  
to be here? I shouldn't have to beg  
for a solo session!

Stevie keeps his eyes ahead as they continue to walk down the  
endlessly long hallway.

STEVIE

Well our private rates go about  
double our group rates, so...

LESLIE

(whispering)

We paid you 12,000 fucking dollars!

Stevie looks back at her. He smiles lightly and nods his  
head.

STEVIE

And the single sessions start at  
\$25,000 for the year.

Leslie's eyes open wide. She closes her mouth tightly, and  
shakes her head aggressively.

LESLIE

(under breath)

This FUCKING day...

Stevie quickens his pace, Leslie at his heels.

STEVIE

You'll-you'll love them. I've met  
with them all prior to this meeting  
- great folks. Lots of talent,  
charisma, mone...motivation to get  
better! Awesome bunch.

Stevie stops at a large set of thick, deep oak DOORS with a sign above that says "COUNSELLING ROOM A". He pulls one door open, and uses his body to keep it ajar

He gestures at Leslie to step through. She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath before walking in.

INT. COUNSELLING ROOM A - DAY

Leslie stops just inside the room and can't help but ogle at the stunning room. Everything is the same clean white, but with deep oak accents.

Floor-to-ceiling WINDOWS stretch across each wall showcasing the beautiful city skyline - it's a tourists dream view.

Her eyes rest on the large U-shaped white leather COUCH resting on a fluffy, white RUG in the middle of the room. On that couch are sat three strangers spaced as far from each other as they can be.

Stevie walks in behind Leslie and gives her a light, comforting nudge toward the couch.

She arches her back in distaste to his touch, but walks forward.

STEVIE

Just grab that empty seat right in the centre there, Leslie.

(BEAT)

Yes, hi everyone, sorry to keep you all waiting. I was just finally meeting with our fifth and final addition to the group. Everyone, meet Leslie Banner!

Leslie fumbles as she's introduced just as she's sitting down, causing her to do an awkward bounce before taking her seat.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Just lemme pull up a chair here.

Stevie begins to noisily drag a huge LOUNGE CHAIR from across the room over, leaving streaks on the marble flooring.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Oh! Uh...

He then grabs one of the RUGS from that side of the room and slides it on top of the streak marks lazily.

He makes his way back to the lounge chair, and plops himself down.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 Alrighty, guys! Reminder: I'm  
 Stevie, thanks for being here!

Stevie smiles sickeningly at each of the members of the counselling group. He is met with dead eyes gazing back at him.

TIBBY WILLIAMS (18), who's model-esque and elegant in stature with the voice of a valley girl, only has eyes for her PHONE. She sports a black bob and an asymmetrical top.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 So...You all know me, I know all of  
 you, but you don't know each other!  
 That's exciting stuff!

Crickets from the group.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 And you know what? I think you're  
 all gonna get along just fine. In  
 fact, I've never had a group full  
 of this many attractive people  
 before, so maybe you'll get along a  
 bit too well if you know what I  
 mean!

Stevie lets out a breathy laugh while one of the men, CYRUS AZIZ (late 50's) face-palms. Cyrus walks and talks like a handsome, grizzled cowboy except he wears a PORK PIE HAT and stylish GLASSES.

Stevie looks around the room and gulps.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 Like Bartolo over here, he looks  
 like trouble doesn't he!

Stevie points to BARTOLO MORENO (late 30's) playfully and laughs. Bartolo, a short, well-groomed, fast-talking and very flamboyant Italian man, looks at Stevie unamused.

STEVIE (CONT'D)  
 Woah-oh-oh, we've got a real ladies  
 man on the loose, folks! Look out  
 girls - lock it up!

Leslie and Tibby both look at Stevie like he's got three heads.

Stevie blushes hot pink and looks around at the ceiling uncomfortably.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

(stumbling)

I mean, lock up your hearts, that is, not, you know, your-your like...your-

His finger begins to gesture toward his crotch region before Bartolo hops out of his seat and takes over.

BARTOLO

Oh, no no no no. Stop right there, big man.

He SCOFFS and stands in a "mother about to give you a lecture" stance.

BARTOLO (CONT'D)

Let's pretend for a minute that I fuck women, okay? You really think I'd want anything to do with Skeletor and Skeletor's mom over here?

He points to Leslie and Tibby with his thumb without making eye contact.

The two girls simultaneously cross their arms and GASP at the insult, Leslie's slightly louder.

LESLIE

Watch it!

TIBBY

Okay, who the hell is Skeletor? He better be hot!

Tibby shakes her head matter-of-factly, like she's convinced herself that Skeletor is indeed, hot.

STEVIE

Okay, okay, let's watch how, you know, how we're speaking to each other, and the, um, the language we are using.

Tibby rolls her eyes.

TIBBY

I've heard worse at Bible Camp.

Stevie chuckles nervously, trying to keep the room light.

CYRUS

My wife used to protest outside a  
Bible Camp just around here,  
actually.

Tibby's eyes light up and they connect with Cyrus's.

TIBBY

Oh my God, the one near Glendale  
park?

Cyrus points a finger at her and nods his head.

CYRUS

That's the one!

They laugh in unison.

Suddenly, the doors to the counselling room BURST open, and a  
frazzled looking man, CAIN DERMON (29), in a silk tracksuit  
and a GYM BAG over his shoulders comes barrelling in.

Stevie nearly falls off his chair in frightened surprise.  
Everyones heads zoom toward the commotion.

CAIN

(panting)

Fuck.

He leans his back against the doors and slides down them in  
dramatic exhaustion, sweat running down his forehead.

Nobody moves or says a word as they eye the suspicious man.  
Bartolo seems to stare particularly hard at the newcomer,  
squinting his eyes.

Stevie collects himself and smiles at Cain in pure joy.

STEVIE

Way to make an entrance, Cain!

Cain sits on the ground with his elbows on his knees, his  
head hangs low as he tries to catch his breath.

BARTOLO

No. Fucking. Way.

Bartolo throws his head back in obnoxious EXPLOSIVE laughter.

Leslie quickly becomes annoyed by Bartolo's volume.

LESLIE

What? What could possibly be so  
funny?

Bartolo just points a finger at Cain as he laughs.

CAIN

Thanks, man. Love getting laughed  
at by strangers. My dream come  
true.

Bartolo's laughter slowly fades out as he wipes at his eyes.

Stevie looks between the two, confused.

STEVIE

Please, come sit, Cain. I promise  
the couch is more comfortable than  
the floor.

BARTOLO

(mocking)

Here, come sit next to me, Cain  
Derman.

Cain eyes open wide and he looks at Bartolo in surprise.

CAIN

I can't fucking escape it! I can't!

He walks over to the couch and falls into it between Leslie  
and Bartolo.

Leslie scoots away from him, her nose scrunched up at his  
sweat.

He removes his gym bag and sets it on the ground beside the  
couch.

BARTOLO

I'm sorry, but as if. Cain fucking  
Derman!

STEVIE

Ohhhhh, I see what's going on here!

Stevie grins and points his shoulder toward them playfully.

CAIN

I-I don't think you do...

Stevie winks at them.

STEVIE

Don't worry, boys. Plenty of time  
for "your session" after our  
session!

CAIN

Jesus Christ, Dr.Stevie, I'm not having sex with this man! I've never met him in my life!

BARTOLO

Not. My. Type.

Cain turns to Bartolo with a straight face.

CAIN

I have never felt such a mutual feeling.

TIBBY

Holy shit, sexual tension much?

CAIN

There's no! Fucking! Sexual! Tension!

All of a sudden, Cyrus makes a sound of realization, and Cain whips his head toward him.

CYRUS

Ahhhh, you're that guy who got kicked out of MLS, aren't you?

Cyrus's discovery restarts Bartolo's chuckles.

BARTOLO

(through laughter)

I swear to God, in all my years, I've never seen a more entertaining game of football in my life.

TIBBY

Aren't you, like, way too tiny to be a football player?

CAIN

Yes I am, so let's change the subject.

Bartolo and Cyrus continue to chuckle.

CYRUS

He was so mad, he just kept scoring and scoring on his own net. Dammit that was good.

BARTOLO

Even the refs abandoned the match!  
His team had to pin him to ground  
to make him stop!

The pair keep on their howling.

Cain looks like he wants to disappear.

LESLIE

Um, think we could get this show on  
the road? Please?

Stevie CLEARS HIS THROAT, trying to re-gain control of the  
situation.

STEVIE

Yeah, I mean, now that the gangs  
all here, let's dive in!

CAIN

I'm sorry I was late, fucking press  
followed me to my car, practically  
chased me inside.

CYRUS

Can't imagine my worst moment bein'  
broadcast like that - 'least mine  
was just the paper.

STEVIE

Hmmm, let's explore that a little  
more. Tell us what you mean, Cyrus.

Leslie rolls her eyes at Stevie's formality, but turns her  
head toward Cyrus.

CYRUS

Well, apparently I made some kid  
cry at my book readin'. Guess it  
was allergy season - little brat  
wouldn't top sneezin' through my  
story, and I just...Snapped.

His story prompts a SNORT from Bartolo. Cain narrows his eyes  
at him.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Now, look, I'm not proud of it,  
Bart, but you-

Bartolo suddenly SLAPS both of his palms down on the leather  
of the couch loudly, snapping everyone's attention to him.

Tibby's phone is thrown to the side. She watches in excited wonder.

BARTOLO  
(shouting)  
Don't you dare!

Cyrus looks at Bartolo like he's got four heads.

BARTOLO (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
Don't you dare call me that name.

Cyrus GUFFAWS at Bartolo's dramatics. This prompts Bartolo to get up and walk toward Cyrus in his best attempt at menacingly, and stares down at Cyrus who remains seated.

BARTOLO (CONT'D)  
I am a playwright, not that  
wretched yellow cartoon bastard!  
(BEAT)  
And, I am certainly not too proud  
to punch an elder.

Cyrus stares at Bartolo for a moment, unmoved. He then stands up, and absolutely towers over Bartolo.

Bartolo takes in his height, and slowly backs away, muttering inaudible Italian curse words.

Bartolo suddenly collides with Cain's gym bag and trips over it, falling onto his bottom.

Cain looks down and begins to chuckle. He offers Bartolo a hand up.

Bartolo is a deep crimson. He SCOFFS at Cain and gets himself up off the floor in a scramble.

He begins to inspect his clothing, dusting the knees of his slacks. He peers in close, and makes a sound of surprised horror.

BARTOLO (CONT'D)  
You stupid oaf of a man! Look at my  
slacks!

Cain rolls his eyes and sits up defensively.

CAIN  
Come on man, seriously?

Leslie looks over at Stevie in furious shock.

LESLIE

Can we maybe behave like civilized people for a fucking minute?

Bartolo snaps his head to Leslie, his eyes filled with rage.

BARTOLO

You got something to say? Unless you're offering to pay for these unsightly damages caused by this clown, then zip it.

LESLIE

You're fine - I think you can afford another pair from the sale section at Gap.

Bartolo GASPS like his life depends on it.

BARTOLO

They were not on sale during time of buy, thank you very much!

CAIN

There's no way that tear is from me. You...you barely fell.

BARTOLO

Are you calling me a liar? Look at it!

Cain looks at the mentioned tear and shrugs carelessly.

CAIN

Maybe you oughta buy some better quality clothes. Or, you know, don't sweat the small stuff - either one.

Bartolo looks like he's about to implode.

Tibby shakes her head at Cain in frustration.

TIBBY

Oh that's riiich coming from you, Mr. Comfort. Seriously, you couldn't even do jeans?

Cain looks at Tibby through furrowed brows.

CAIN

Well I didn't expect to be analyzed by the damn panel of Best Dressed!

BARTOLO

No, just two people with working eyes.

Tibby snorts back a laugh while Cain looks between the two helpless. Cyrus can't help but snicker at the comment himself.

Cain shoots Cyrus a look, and Cyrus smirks.

CYRUS

You gotta lighten up, pal.

CAIN

I was light as a damn feather before I had thing one and thing two on my back!

Bartolo and Tibby fire back in defence, and the whole group begins to argue noisily.

LESLIE

Stevie! What are you...Fucking do something!

Stevie looks at Leslie, eyes wide and fearful.

Leslie gets up from the couch and swerves her way through the group to get to Stevie.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

You have to do something. This is out of control.

Stevie begins to sniffle to stop from crying. He looks deep into Leslie's eyes, hopeless.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

You've...You've never done this, have you?

Stevie wipes at his nose.

STEVIE

Please, I've done this plenty of times...in scenario training.

Leslie stares at him, baffled.

LESLIE

Oh, for fuck sake!

Leslie's phone CHIMES, and she quickly looks at her screen.

INSERT: PHONE SCREEN

Message from Pauline:

How's it going?! Call me when ur done!!!

END INSERT

She looks toward Stevie's chair, and sees it's now empty. She shakes her head and exits the room, unnoticed by the rest of the group.

INT. SERENITY PRIVATE PRACTICE HALLWAY - DAY

Leslie presses some buttons on her PHONE, and places it to her ear angrily.

PAULINE (V.O., FILTERED)  
You can't be done already?

LESLIE  
Oh, lucky for me, it's barely started!

PAULINE (V.O., FILTERED)  
What do you mean? What's happening?

Leslie tilts her head back and GROANS. She plugs one ear with her finger to block on the volume of the group from the other room.

LESLIE  
I'd love to answer whatever you just asked me, but I can't hear you over these fucking psychopaths!

PAULINE (V.O., FILTERED)  
Leslie, I can barely hear you - what the fuck is going on?

INT. DR. STEVIE HARRIS' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Stevie is on his hands and knees in his office, PAPERS and BINDERS strewn across the floor. He is shaking while he frantically FLICKS through pages, searching for something.

He comes across THE FILE he'd been looking for with a big red STOP SIGN printed on the front, titled "ANGER MANAGEMENT FOR DUMMIES".

He RIPS it open, and begins reading in a WHISPERED CRY. TEARS stream down his face as he rocks back and forth, his finger tracing along the page as he goes.

INT. SERENITY PRIVATE PRACTICE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Leslie paces back and forth outside the DOORS to Counselling Room A.

PAULINE

Where's the fucking therapist?!

Leslie lets out a BOOMING, sarcastic LAUGH.

LESLIE

Oh, you know, he just fucking abandoned the session! No where to be found! Pauline, what did you sign me up for?

PAULINE

Leslie, we picked out Serenity together! This is - this is out of my control.

Leslie's body-language reads PISSED.

LESLIE

That's not what the fuck I'm talking about, and you know it! Pauline, I'm asking you why the fuck I have to be here with all of these loonatics who have spent the entire fucking session screaming bloody murder at each other-

INT. COUNSELLING ROOM A - CONTINUOUS

The group hear Leslie SCREAMING in the hallway through the doors over their own SHOUTING, and begin to quiet down and look at each other, confused.

LESLIE (O.S.)

And why did I have to blindly walk into a group session? Was that your idea of a fun little surprise for me? I'm stuck sitting on a fucking white couch like I'm in the crazy ward with a bitch who's half my age with half a brain-



PAULINE (V.O., FILTERED) (CONT'D)  
 You're broke and you continue to  
 lease a car you can't afford,  
 vacation constantly - Jesus,  
 Leslie, you spend like your Britney  
 Spears' dad!

Leslie listens silently, her face blank, her eyes on the  
 ground.

PAULINE (V.O., FILTERED) (CONT'D)  
 So before you blame me and the rest  
 of the world for your problems,  
 take a good hard look in that \$5000  
 mirror of yours first.

Leslie is quiet as she takes in what was just said to her.

LESLIE  
 Pauline, I-

PAULINE (V.O., FILTERED)  
 Have fun in Cabo, Leslie.

The DIAL TONE plays in Leslie's ear a couple of times before  
 she lowers the PHONE and hangs up.

INT. COUNSELLING ROOM A - MOMENTS LATER

Leslie pulls open the door to the room, and enters slowly,  
 paying no mind to the group.

When she realizes it's completely silent, she looks up to see  
 everybody staring at her with vicious faces.

TIBBY  
 You find the other half of my brain  
 while you were out there?

Tibby's arms are crossed in a menacing way. She looks like  
 she's straight out of Mean Girls.

CYRUS  
 Yeah, and, uh, who's gay De Niro?

Bartolo elbows Cyrus in the ribs.

Leslie INHALES slowly and shakes her head.

LESLIE  
 Sorry. Listen, I'm fucking sorry.  
 But that was a private phone call,  
 you-

BARTOLO

I'm gonna stop you right there,  
princess. I sure hope you're not  
about to blame us for hearing your  
absolute temper tantrum and being  
offended when you had the gull to  
call US crazy!

Leslie can barely take another confrontation, but luckily,  
she has a fighting spirit.

LESLIE

So if that was a tantrum, what do  
you call...

LESLIE (CONT'D)

(mocking Bartolo)

"Ooh, there's a tear in my stupid  
pants! Waaah, look at me acting  
like a stupid fucking baby! My  
precious pants!"

She flocks around the room flamboyantly, kicking off her  
HEELS to match Bartolo's height.

Cyrus hides a smile.

BARTOLO

Yes, that certainly makes me look  
more stupid than you.

There's a CHUCKLE among the group.

Leslie stops her mockery and turns to them.

LESLIE

You all think you're better than  
me, huh? That's real cute.

CAIN

All I'm thinking is that some of us  
need to be here more than others.

Cain looks up at Leslie and makes direct eye contact with  
her. She holds it for a minute before breaking it angrily,  
and marches to the couch to get her purse.

LESLIE

I'm fucking leaving.

TIBBY

Ugh, thank god. That was about to  
get really awkward.



ACT THREE

INT. SERENITY PRIVATE PRACTICE LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Leslie carries on running through the lobby, noticeably crying and cursing as she goes.

She jogs by the receptionist desk where Bianca watches her pass by.

RECEPTIONIST

Aw, rough time hun? Cheer up, you know what they say...

Leslie slows down and turns to her, wiping her eyes.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

(singing)

*The sun'll come out tomorrow, bet  
your bottom dollar, that tomorrow-*

Leslie stands and stares while she SINGS. She begins to walk toward her angrily, her fist in a ball, before she shakes her head and GROANS an angry cry. She carries on running out the front door.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

(singing)

*Tomorrow! Tomorrow! I love ya,  
Tomorrow!*

INT. LESLIE'S PORSCHE/EXT. SERENITY PARKING LOT - DAY

Leslie sits in the front seat of her PORSCHE CONVERTIBLE, sobbing. She rips her PURSE off her shoulder, grabs her KEYS from an inside pocket, then throws the purse into the back seat.

It HITS the leather hard, causing its contents to empty all over the seat and ground. Leslie watches in pure rage.

She turns to STEERING WHEEL and gives it as hard a PUNCH as she can. It lets out a long HONK, and she recoils her hand in pain, making a face as she holds her fist with her other hand.

She then realizes in horror that the HORN continues to HONK even after her hand raised away from it. She begins SMACKING the wheel, trying to stop it.

LESLIE

No, no, no, no, no, no!

She gives it one last hard SLAP, but no avail.

Her hands drop to her sides, and she just stares out her windshield into nothingness.

Her shoulders heave with waves of SOBS.

Just then, the group wanders out the front door, looking around for the source of the HONK, when they spot Leslie in her car unmoving.

CAIN  
(hands cupped around  
mouth)  
Hey Le-

Suddenly, Leslie let's out a blood-curdling SHRIEK in unison with the HORN.

The group are frozen in place,. They watch in awed silence.

The SCREAM lasts for several moments. Cyrus' jaw drops half-way through.

She runs out of breath. Red in the face and panting, she looks over at the group to see them all staring at her in shock.

Bartolo GASPS when they get a look at her face, which is smeared in makeup from her breakdown.

Red lipstick is dragged down her chin, her cheeks are littered with streaks of black.

LESLIE  
(shouting over the  
distance)  
Laugh it up, you guys! Didn't you  
all want this? You wanted to see a  
mess, right? Well, you're looking  
at her!

They all continue to stare at her silently.

Bartolo then looks at Tibby, and motions with his head for her to go to Leslie.

Tibby motions back at him to go to her instead.

Bartolo SMACKS her arm lightly, and motions with more aggression.

Tibby SMACKS his arm back, fiercely, and stands her ground.

Cain rolls his eyes, and walks over to the car.

Her CYRING BREATHS become audible over the HORN as he approaches Leslie. He has to SHOUT slightly to be heard.

CAIN

Leslie, we're sorry...Especially me. We are all here for own reasons. I'm-I'm no better than you.

Leslie wipes at her eye and shakes her head.

LESLIE

I acted like such a fucking idiot.

CAIN

That's true.

They both chuckle slightly.

LESLIE

(crying)

I'm a failure. I failed my career, I failed my boss, fuck I even failed at therapy. How can one person fail all those things, Cain?

Cain spots a little pack of TISSUES that had fallen out of Leslie's purse in her backseat. He reaches in the car, grabs them, and hands them to her.

Leslie smiles at the sweet gesture, and accepts them.

Cain opens her car door.

CAIN

Come back in?

LESLIE

Really? After everything I said?

Cain grins.

CAIN

You should've heard what we said about you when you left!

Leslie laughs and wipes her nose with a TISSUE. She takes a deep breath, rolls her neck, and steps out of the car with Cain.

Cain turns to her steering wheel, and gives it a hard punch to try and stop the horn.

It begins to stutter rather than hold steady. He shrugs, and they walk back to the group who accept Leslie with open arms.

They all head back into Serenity, chatting with each other in a friendly manner. Tibby puts her arm around Leslie.

INT. COUNSELLING ROOM A - DAY

The group are all seated on the couch, listening intently to Bartolo, mid-story.

BARTOLO

-So I typed in "White Russian", you know, I was curious, I'd never had one, Papa used to love 'em. Anyway, I'm scrolling and scrolling for the recipe, and they're all calling for milk, and I'm thinkin' "Nah! That can't be right!" you know? "Nobody's putting milk in their vodka!" Anyway, I'm still scrolling. By this point, I've hit, what, page 30 on Google, it's sick of me, it wants me gone, you know? "Pick a damn recipe and make the bitch!" Anyway, page 31 suddenly says "You know what? Screw it. You're not here for drinkin', you're here for cummin'", and I shit you not, alllll porn. Yupp! Best night of my life! None of that vanilla shit, you know? They're White Russians, they're fuckin' nuts!

The group is in hysterics. Tibby wipes a tear from her eye as she cackles.

BARTOLO (CONT'D)

Next thing you know, I got about a hundred bookmarks of the best shit you've ever seen in your life, and a new favourite porn site. All I'm trying to say is, you know what, life's fucked. You're so sure you're looking for one thing, and suddenly something so much better appears right in front of your eyes.

Leslie stares at Bartolo in silent admiration while the rest of the group laugh. She smiles slightly at him, and he winks at her.

Leslie pulls out her PHONE, and opens her text messages.

INSERT: PHONE SCREEN

She selects Pauline and types a quick message...

Pauline. I'm sorry. I love you.

END INSERT

She looks around at the group, and sees everyone sitting closer together. She looks to her left at Cain, who is leaned back listening with a huge smile on his face.

Leslie's phone buzzes, and she peeks at her screen.

INSERT: PHONE SCREEN

Pauline: Love you back, for the most part. xx.

END INSERT

She smiles and flips her phone over.

TIBBY

Am I the only one here who has no  
idea what a White Russian is?

Everybody GROANS as Tibby shows her age. They LAUGH at her and she rolls her eyes.

CYRUS

I don't know, kid, just don't  
google it!

The group erupts in LAUGHTER.

FADE OUT.

TAG

INT. SERENITY PRIVATE PRACTICE LOBBY - NIGHT

Leslie is on her way out of the building, and passes by the receptionist desk. In the lobby, you can still hear her horn BLARING in the background.

She sees Bianca behind her DESK and gives her a big grin.

Bianca flinches back at her appearance, as she's still covered in her ruined makeup from earlier.

Leslie walks to the door unbothered, HUMMING "The Sun'll Come Out Tomorrow" as she goes.