PEOPLE IN NEW JERSEY

"Pilot"

Written by

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We hear a CELL PHONE RING.

CARL (O.S.)
I'm so glad it's you. The craziest thing just happened.

FADE IN:

EXT. YMHA - PARKING LOT - DAY

CARL LEVIN, 40's, walks out of a cinder block building in Livingston, New Jersey, holding his cell phone.

MELANIE (O.S.)
Before you tell me, did you speak to Mom today?

CARL
No. She left me a message but I didn't have the time to descend into every small detail of her life. I'll call her later when I have a three hour window.

He reaches his car and gets in.

CARL
So I was swimming at the Y and I was really excited that I had my own lane.

INT. YMHA - SWIMMING POOL - EARLIER.

Carl swims not unlike an eighty year old lady.

CARL (V.O.)
Then something terrible happened.

He looks up to see an extremely LARGE HAIRY MAN looming over him about to enter his lane. His name is LARRY.

LARRY
Do you mind?

Carl looks up at him, trying to hide his upset.

CONTINUED:

CARL
Uh, no. I was just leaving.

LARRY
You were? You sure?

CARL
Yeah. Of course. I've been here for hours.

Carl gets out of the lane.

MELANIE (O.S.)
So then what was the big deal?

EXT. BLOOMINGDALES - SHORT HILLS MALL - PRESENT

We INTERCUT MELANIE LEVIN, 40'S, smoking a cigarette, as she talks to CARL, now driving down Livingston Ave.

CARL
I'd only been there five minutes. But I didn't want to share a lane with all these large hairy limbs flying everywhere.

MELANIE
What's wrong with you? Are you four years old?

CARL
Yes, I am four years old.

Another WOMAN exits the building. Melanie smiles.

MELANIE
Bye, Nina. Have fun.

Nina waves distractedly. Melanie's smile fades.

MELANIE
My new boss is such a bitch. Okay, I should get back before --

CARL
You haven't heard the crazy part.

INT. YMHA - TREADMILLS - EARLIER

Carl is on the treadmill, watching Sex and The City, shaking his head. He makes eye contact with a WOMAN who is also watching it.

CARL
I love Charlotte.

WOMAN
I know it's going to end up okay but it's really hard when she's trying to get a kid.

CARL
Totally.

They are silent for a moment. Larry walks past Carl. He does a double take. Carl looks embarrassed.

CARL (O.S.)
The guy caught me.

EXT. BLOOMINGDALES - PRESENT

MELANIE
How do you know he knew?

CARL
First off, I know what everyone is thinking at all times. Even when they don't know it.

MELANIE
No you don't.

CARL
God, I wish you were right, but you're not. Especially this time.

INT. YMHA - LOCKER ROOM - EARLIER

Carl changes into his real life clothes. Larry walks past. Carl looks relieved. Then Larry comes back.

LARRY
Listen, can I ask you something?

CONTINUED:

CARL
Oh. Sure.

LARRY
Did you get out of the swimming lane because I got in?

CARL
No not at all.

LARRY
Yes you did. Tell me the truth.

Carl looks at him.

CARL
Okay, I did.

LARRY
Why?

CARL
I just wanted to swim in my own lane today. I'm sorry.

Larry studies him.

LARRY
It's not because I'm large and hairy?

CARL
No of course not.

LARRY
So if I had been a small Asian lady, you would have gotten out of the lane?

CARL
Look, I don't know what to say here.

LARRY
You can say it's because I am large and hairy and you are repulsed by me.

CARL
I'm a nice guy, I --

CONTINUED: (2)

LARRY
Just say it.

CARL
You're large and hairy and I am repulsed by you.

LARRY
That's a shitty thing to say.

CARL
You made me say it!

LARRY
You're really sick, you know that?

INT. CAR/EXT BLOOMINGDALES - PRESENT

Back to Carl and Melanie.

MELANIE
Why couldn't you just share a lane with the man? He has a right to swim in the lane.

CARL
Exactly! But I have an equal right to get out of the pool if I want to! Don't I?

MELANIE
Is that the end of the story?

CARL
No.

MELANIE
Of course not.

INT. YMHA - FRONT AREA - LATER

Carl is exiting. The DESK PERSON looks up.

DESK PERSON
Carl?

Carl turns back.

CONTINUED:

DESK PERSON
Someone registered a complaint against you.

CARL
A large hairy man?

The desk person nods. Carl nods and exits.

EXT. BLOOMINGDALES - PRESENT

Melanie tosses her cigarette.

MELANIE
I have to go. The large hairy man used up my whole break.

CARL
Wait -- did you want to talk about Mom?

MELANIE
We can talk tomorrow. Have fun on your date tonight.

CARL
Dating is so archaic. Can you believe dating co-exists with computers?

MELANIE
Yes. You still get diarrhea before a first date?

CARL
No. Not at all.

INT. CARL'S BATHROOM - LATER

Carl sits on the toilet. Clearly, he still gets diarrhea.

EXT. WEST ORANGE AVE - NIGHT

Carl turns into a condo development. He pulls into visitor parking. He sighs.

CONTINUED:

CARL (O.S.)
(overly buoyant)
Hey.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carl stands in the open door, facing ERICA HABER, 40's, nervous, holding her cell phone.

ERICA
Come on in. I'm just in the middle of something.

She rushes back to her computer. She gestures to two little shoe boxes on her dining room table.

ERICA
I ordered these shoes on line for my nieces and they are totally different colors than I thought.

Carl takes a seat nearby.

ERICA
I've been waiting for an operator for hours.
(screams into phone)
Operator!

Carl looks unnerved.

ERICA
Operator! Human! Operator!
(to Carl)
I'm sorry. I won't be able to concentrate if I don't finish this. Is that weird?

CARL
No. You know what really doesn't work out on-line? Marriages.

ERICA
I know people who married people they met on-line.

CONTINUED:

CARL
Me too. But it all unravels after a couple of years. You'll see.

ERICA
Operator! Operator!

INT. ERICA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - 20 MINUTES LATER

Carl flips through a magazine. Erica is still on hold.

ERICA
Clementine and Isabella are so cute. They're twins.

CARL
Twins are scary. There should only be one of each person.

ERICA
What are you reading about?

CARL
Ashley Tisdale.

ERICA
Do you know who that is?

CARL
I don't care.

INT. MAPLEWOOD AVE - LATER

Carl and Erica walk down a street full of small shops and restaurants.

CARL
It was just me and my sister but my parents acted like they had eighty kids.

ERICA
My mother was the same way. We were always too loud for her.

CARL
Why are kids so loud?

CONTINUED:

ERICA
I guess because no one listens to them.

CARL
If they want people to listen, they should be more interesting.

Carl stops at a door and tries to open it. He tries again. The door won't open. Erica looks in the window.

ERICA
Looks closed.

CARL
It can't be. I was just here last week. I'm sure it's open.

Carl looks in the window.

ERICA
Maybe the owner didn't pay his taxes.

CARL
Why would you even say that? You don't know anything about the situation. I'm sure Mario paid his taxes. Now what the fuck are we supposed to do?

Erica stares at him, wondering why he is so upset.

ERICA
We can go somewhere else.

CARL
Mario's is the only place around here with a garden you can eat in. This sucks.

ERICA
Why are you having such a fit?

CARL
It's just a good place for a first date.

CONTINUED: (2)

ERICA
Do you always take your first dates here?

CARL
No, not always.

She looks at him. Clearly he always does.

ERICA
We can go to Don's.

CARL
I don't want to go to Don's. It's so greasy.

ERICA
Ground Round?

CARL
Gross. Sorry. Let's just go to Don's.

ERICA
I don't want to make you go somewhere greasy.

CARL
It's fine. I hate food anyway.

ERICA
Have you been to Lorena's? Everyone says it's great.

CARL
(sighs)
Everyone says everything is great.

INT. LORENA'S RESTAURANT - LATER

Carl and Erica are in the middle of dinner.

ERICA
Your father was a locksmith too?

CARL
Yeah. I took it over when he died. I like it. You meet interesting people. Like you.

CONTINUED:

ERICA
(she blushes)
The lock works perfectly by the way. Thank you.

CARL
Glad I could help.

They just chew for a moment. Like little kids.

ERICA
Mine tastes fantastic. I guess because it's all seasonal.

CARL
Seasons are so much bigger now than they used to be. You like farmer's markets?

ERICA
(nods)
You?

CARL
Not really. I don't really like the energy of having to buy something from people. I took a sample from this pastry guy then didn't buy it and he looked like he was going to murder me.

ERICA
The guy on Route 10 on Saturdays?

CARL
Exactly.

ERICA
He's creepy.

CARL
My last girlfriend said I had a problem differentiating my needs from other people and --

ERICA
This is Karen?

CARL
Yeah. Have I been talking about her a lot?

CONTINUED: (2)

ERICA
(yes)
No.

CARL
We just broke up a couple of months ago. I guess the wound is still fresh.

He is silent for a moment.

CARL
When was your last relationship?

ERICA
It's been a while.

CARL
It's rough out there.

ERICA
Yeah.

CARL
Like a year or two ago?

ERICA
A little longer.

CARL
Oh. A few years ago?

ERICA
Actually it's been a really long time.

Carl looks at her.

ERICA
Twenty years.

CARL
Oh my God.

ERICA
Do you think I'm weird?

CARL
No, not at all.

CONTINUED: (3)

He picks up something on his plate and puts it in his mouth nervously.

CARL
Twenty years is a really long time.

ERICA
I shouldn't have told you.

CARL
Not at all. It's no big deal.

Erica nods, thankful.

CARL
Were you like abused or --

ERICA
(firmly)
No.

CARL
I shouldn't have asked that. Really, it's no big deal. We should just drop it.

EXT. LORENA'S RESTAURANT - LATER

They walk to Carl's car.

CARL
I mean, maybe it's a good thing. You can't repeat old patterns if you didn't make the patterns.

ERICA
Let's just go home.

INT. CARL'S CAR - LATER

Carl studies Erica as he drives.

CARL
Has there been dating?

Erica points at the road.

CONTINUED:

ERICA
Um, there's a kid on a bike up there. You're going to hit him.

He looks back at the road.

ERICA
I can tell you're judging me.

CARL
I'm not. I mean, I am. But I am hiding it successfully.

ERICA
I broke up with my boyfriend and then I didn't go out for a while. And then I just got busy and then time went on and it didn't seem worth it. Maybe I got in a bit of a rut?

CARL
(utter total disbelief)
Maybe?

ERICA
You're not better than me.

CARL
What is that supposed to mean?

ERICA
You live in the same place you grew up in.

CARL
No I don't. Not at all. I moved one town over.

ERICA
Right. So you drive down all the same streets you have driven down your entire life looking at all the same exact things since you were a little kid.

CARL
That's true.

CONTINUED: (2)

ERICA
Plus you always have to park in the same spot at the gym --

CARL
It's the best spot. Why would I want a spot not as good?

ERICA
You always take your first dates to the same restaurant. You always date the same kind of woman for about the same amount of time. And if you have to do something new, like share your swim lane with someone you don't like for some reason, you freak out.

CARL
I didn't freak out. It was the large hairy man who freaked out. What are you trying to say anyway?

ERICA
We all want control. We're all scared of something new. It just comes out in different ways.

INT. CARL'S CAR - LATER

Carl pulls up in front of Erica's building. They look at each other.

CARL
Okay, it wasn't a perfect first date.

ERICA
It sucked, Carl.

CARL
Yeah. But maybe we should try again just for the --

ERICA
Eh, I don't think so.

CARL
Yeah, me too.

CONTINUED:

Erica gets out of the car. Carl looks at his cell phone and starts checking his email/messages. Nothing interesting. He tosses it on the passenger seat. He pulls out and drives for a few moments.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Hello? Carl? Carl, is that you?

Carl looks freaked out, then looks down at his phone.

CARL
Shit.

Carl picks it up.

CARL
Hi Mom.

INT. RACHEL LEVIN'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

RACHEL LEVIN, 60's, is in bed. The television is on.

RACHEL
Why are you calling me so late?

CARL
Sorry. I ass dialed you.

RACHEL
What does that even mean?

CARL
My phone called you by accident.

RACHEL
Oh. Don't ever say that to me again.

CARL
How are you?

RACHEL
I don't want to talk to you if you called me by accident.

CARL
Come on.

CONTINUED:

RACHEL
I have cancer.

CARL
You what?

RACHEL
I mean, I almost have cancer. There is a spot on my lung. The doctor wants to do a test on Thursday to get more results. It seems I am going to have a mercilessly quick demise but one filled with grueling pain.

CARL
I'm going to go to the doctor with you.

RACHEL
Melanie can take me. She's tougher than you. And she already thinks I love you more which I do. It will be a special moment for her to be the one to be there when I get my cancer news.

CARL
That will make up for a lot.

RACHEL
I know I always think I'm dying, but this time I really am.

CARL
Okay, this time you're really dying.

RACHEL
Thank you.

EXT. LIVINGSTON, NEW JERSEY - THE NEXT AFTERNOON

Carl drives down Livingston Ave. He looks at all the same old building and signs he has seen for a million year. He stops at a light and looks at a candy store.

INT. CARL'S CAR - SAME TIME

Carl is suddenly FOUR YEAR-OLD CARL, looking at the candy store with a smile. There is HONK.

FOUR YEAR-OLD CARL
Asshole.

Four year-old Carl drives away.

EXT. YMHA - PARKING LOT - LATER

Carl drives in. He is Carl again. He pauses in front of his usual spot. He thinks for a moment. Then decides to try a new spot. He pulls into one a few feet away. He gets out and starts toward the Y. He stops. He goes back to his car, gets in and quickly takes his usual spot. He gets out again, and smiles widely from ear to ear. He becomes FOUR YEAR-OLD CARL once again and joyously runs into the Y.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. UNION, NEW JERSEY - THE NEXT DAY

A row of small houses. The sun is coming up. We hear the sounds of someone RUSTLING, every movement being done VERY CAREFULLY so as not to wake up someone.

INT. MELANIE LEVIN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Melanie lays asleep as ALLAN HANSEN, 40's, gets dressed. He has a small suitcase that he takes to the bathroom. He puts a toothbrush in his bag. Melanie's eyes go open. She watches him. He turns around, and she shuts her eyes. Allan studies her, perhaps sensing on some level he was being watched. Melanie pretends to sleep and Allan decides he was wrong. He exits. Melanie's eyes pop open again.

INT. A & P SUPERMARKET - LATER

Melanie pushes a cart down an aisle. She turns the bend and sees ALLISON McDOWELL, 40's, with three LITTLE KIDS. Melanie quickly starts to turn around to go back where she came from.

ALLISON
Melanie?

Melanie grimaces, then turns around and smiles.

MELANIE
Hey Allison. How are you?

They kiss hello. Allison speaks very LOUDLY and SLOWLY to Fin --

ALLISON
Fin, you remember Melanie. Mommy knows her from high school.

FIN McDOWELL, 8, shakes her hand. The other kids are younger, not paying attention.

ALLISON
Melanie is an accountant at McKinsey. She likes numbers.

MELANIE
Oh, um, I'm at Bloomingdales these days.

ALLISON
Melanie works in a store. She likes clothes.

MELANIE
Actually, it's housewares. It's just part-time.

Fin grabs a toy from one of the younger kids, and the three of them get into it with each other.

ALLISON
Melanie. I know that you saw me and that you turned around.

CONTINUED:

MELANIE
It's true. I did see you and did turn around.

ALLISON
Well I want to say you really hurt my feelings when you hid from me.

MELANIE
I'm sorry. I just didn't feel like talking to anyone.

Fin turns back to Allison and Melanie.

FIN
What are you guys talking about?

ALLISON
Melanie hid from Mommy. Melanie made Mommy feel bad.

Melanie turns to Fin.

MELANIE
I just wasn't in the mood to chat.

ALLISON
You have to talk slower and enunciate more clearly.

MELANIE
No I don't. I really don't. You know what, it's really annoying that people talk to kids that way.

FIN
What is the lady saying?

ALLISON
The lady is saying I am annoying her! I'm not sure why.

MELANIE
Because you are annoying!

Melanie turns around and walks away.

CONTINUED: (2)

MELANIE (O.S.)
What's wrong with me? I'm so out of control. What am I really angry about?

INT. CARL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Carl is on the phone with Melanie.

CARL
First off, Allison Davis is annoying. She always has been, even before she had kids.

MELANIE
It's true. She always used to say everything was yummy. "This pasta is yummy!"

CARL
Second, you have a right to hide from people. People are scary.

INTERCUT INT. MELANIE'S CAR

Melanie is on the phone.

MELANIE
No they aren't. Something is wrong with us Carl.

CARL
What's wrong is we are living in the wrong world. We should live in a world where people like being told what is wrong with them. So it's the world that is wrong, not us.

MELANIE
That's definitely true.

INT. RACHEL LEVIN'S KITCHEN - LATER

Rachel sits at the table, her coat on, staring. There is the sound of the back DOOR opening and Melanie enters.

CONTINUED:

MELANIE
Sorry. Am I late?

RACHEL
No.

EXT. ST. BARNABAS HOSPITAL - LATER

Melanie's car pulls up a circular drive.

INT. MELANIE'S CAR

Melanie and Rachel are both scrutinizing where to go.

RACHEL
I think you made a wrong turn.

MELANIE
I know what I'm doing.

RACHEL
You were supposed to turn over there. The sign is very confusing.

MELANIE
I've been here a million times. I know where to go.

RACHEL
We're going around in circles.

MELANIE
I made a wrong turn.

INT. DR. FIELDSTON'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - LATER

Rachel reads a library book. Melanie turns to her.

MELANIE
What are you reading?

RACHEL
Alice Walker. It stinks.

Melanie picks up a magazine.

CONTINUED:

RACHEL
Did I have a bad relationship with your father? Is that why you and your brother never married?

MELANIE
Let's not have this conversation again.

RACHEL
My sister used to always say there is something wrong with people who don't get married.

MELANIE
I am in a healthy long term relationship with someone I care about deeply who cares about me.

RACHEL
You never even see Allan.

MELANIE
He travels for work.

RACHEL
There's something wrong with people who travel for work.

INT. DR. FIELDSTON'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - LATER

Rachel sits on the table, Melanie looks out the window.

RACHEL
We've been here for hours.

MELANIE
At least we made it to the examination room.

RACHEL
What's the difference?

MELANIE
I don't need progress. As long as I have the illusion of progress.

The door opens and HILARY, 50's, a nurse, enters.

CONTINUED:

HILARY
I'm so sorry. Dr. Fieldston is going to have to reschedule.

MELANIE
What?

HILARY
An emergency came up.

MELANIE
You can't put someone in the examination room then not examine them. It's unethical.

RACHEL
I might have cancer.

HILARY
I'm so sorry Mrs. Levin. He is going to have to look at you another time.

RACHEL
This is outrageous.

MELANIE
Who the fuck does he think he is? Why do all doctors think they can fucking do anything and get away with it like we're not people?

RACHEL
We're people! We're fucking people!

HILARY
Dr. Fieldston's wife has just had a heart attack. She is about to have emergency triple bypass surgery.

They are silent for a moment.

RACHEL
Oh. Just out of curiosity, is he still in the office?

The nurse looks at her and shakes her head "No".

INT. ST. BARNABAS HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - LATER

Melanie and Rachel walk down the hall.

RACHEL
How do we even know it's true?

MELANIE
You think the nurse made up that Dr. Fieldston's wife had a heart attack?

RACHEL
People lie. The whole world is a lie.

MELANIE
The whole world is a lie?

RACHEL
Absolutely. Even Sybil was a lie. I just read that in the New York Times.

MELANIE
Who's Sybil? Do we know a Sybil?

RACHEL
The multiple personality. Sally Field.

MELANIE
Wow.

RACHEL
I know. If you can't believe Sybil, what can you believe in?

MELANIE
Nothing.

Melanie stops suddenly.

MELANIE
Actually, I know one thing you can believe.

Rachel follows Melanie's gaze to Dr. Fieldston, waiting outside an operating room. Rachel nods.

CONTINUED:

RACHEL
Dr. Fieldston.

MELANIE
Do we have to go over?

RACHEL
No, we can just hide.

They turn and walk down from where they came from.

INT. MELANIE'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Melanie pulls up in front of Rachel's house. She looks at Rachel.

MELANIE
I'm sure everything is going to be fine. There's absolutely nothing to worry about.

Rachel nods, kisses Melanie and gets out. She looks particularly frail as she walks to her front door. The door closes and Melanie suddenly bursts into tears. She picks up her cell phone and dials.

MELANIE
Can I see you? It's an emergency.

EXT. UNION AVENUE - A LITTLE LATER

The center of town. Melanie gets out of her car and races down the sidewalk. She almost knocks someone over, then reaches her destination and goes inside. We see it is a storefront that has a sign "PSYCHIC READINGS".

MELANIE (O.S.)
Does she have cancer?

INT. PYSCHIC READINGS STOREFRONT - LATER

Melanie sits across from DOLORES RENAULDI, 50'S, her eyes closed, silent for a moment.

CONTINUED:

DOLORES
My spirits do see something.

MELANIE
Oh my God.

DOLORES
But they can't be sure of what it is. Whatever it is, your mother is going to be able to handle it.

MELANIE
That seems doubtful. She's never been able to handle anything.

DOLORES
There's so much change happening in the universe right now.

MELANIE
Isn't everything always changing?

DOLORES
It's a different kind of change.

Dolores starts to say something, then stops.

MELANIE
Okay, well I guess I should ask about other things as long as I'm here. But I don't have any questions.

DOLORES
Nothing about Allan?

MELANIE
He's fine. And nothing about getting a new job. Lately, I just don't care. Remember how I always used to ask you about some guy or some job?

DOLORES
There have been so many. Of both.

MELANIE
You know what's crazy? I realized the other day that I have been coming to you for over twenty years. Do you know how many haircuts of mine you have seen?

CONTINUED: (2)

DOLORES
A lot.

MELANIE
Yours has always been the same. I admire that. For you. Anyway, do the spirits have anything they think I should talk about?

Dolores closes her eyes.

DOLORES
My spirits say there is... I'm sorry, I can't do this anymore.

MELANIE
Do what?

DOLORES
This. It's not right.

MELANIE
What do you mean?

DOLORES
Melanie, I'm seeing someone.

MELANIE
Yeah. So?

DOLORES
He's in AA.

MELANIE
I've dated guys in AA. They're never any fun. I guess that's because they're not drinking.

DOLORES
Phil says I need to make things right with people. Like you.

Melanie just looks at her.

DOLORES
I'm not pyschic.

MELANIE
Of course you are.

CONTINUED: (3)

DOLORES
I have no powers.

MELANIE
What?

DOLORES
No spirits. Nothing. God, it feels good to say that.

MELANIE
Is this is some psychic mid-life thing?

DOLORES
Listen to me. I have never been psychic. Not one day.

MELANIE
Never? All this time... why?

DOLORES
It was a job.

MELANIE
Okay. But you're really intuitive, right?

DOLORES
No. Not really. Not at all.

Melanie stands up and kicks her chair over.

DOLORES
That's my good chair.

MELANIE
I brought you flowers when your cat died. Wait. Did you even have a cat?

DOLORES
Melanie, you met my cat.

MELANIE
My mother just told me everything is a lie. Maybe she is right.

DOLORES
Or maybe everything is the truth. And some of it we can't face.

CONTINUED: (4)

MELANIE
I don't know what that means. Does that mean anything?

DOLORES
I'm sorry, Melanie.

MELANIE
I can't believe all the time I have wasted here. I just can't believe all the time I've wasted.

DOLORES
You're my friend. I needed to tell you the truth.

MELANIE
Friends don't tell each other the truth.

Melanie shakes her head and walks to the door. She exits. Dolores looks after her.

EXT. STOREFRONT - MOMENTS LATER

Dolores rushes out.

DOLORES
Wait!

Melanie turns around. Dolores walks to her.

DOLORES
As your ex-psychic, I'm worried about you.

MELANIE
Why?

DOLORES
For some time now, you've stopped asking me questions. You used to want so much. Now you're just so accepting of everything in your life.

MELANIE
Aren't we supposed to be accepting?

CONTINUED:

DOLORES
Not if it's eating us alive.

MELANIE
I'm definitely being eaten up alive. I mean, inside me, it's all just eaten.

DOLORES
You used to dream. You can dream again. You should dream again. It's not too late.

Melanie looks skeptical.

DOLORES
Look at me. I'm making a new start.

MELANIE
What are you going to be?

DOLORES
A stylist.

MELANIE
That's depressing.

Melanie turns and walks toward her car.

INT. MELANIE'S CAR - LATER

Melanie drives, staring intensely ahead of her.

EXT. MELANIE'S HOUSE - LATER

Melanie pulls up and gets out. She looks over at DEBBIE SOSKIN, 80's, her neighbor gardening.

DEBBIE
Hi Melanie. Pretty sweater.

MELANIE
Thanks. Your flowers look nice.

CONTINUED:

Melanie walks toward her house. Then stops. She goes back to Debbie. She just looks at her.

DEBBIE
Melanie?

MELANIE
We've been neighbors for a long time. And usually we keep things at a superficial level. But I am at a crossroads and maybe I have been keeping everyone and everything in my life at a superficial level and finally I need something more. So I want to know if you are up for that?

DEBBIE
Uh, sure.

MELANIE
Debbie, you seem really, really content. What's your secret?

Debbie is quiet for a moment.

DEBBIE
I don't know that I can reduce it to just one --

MELANIE
Debbie, I need answers!

DEBBIE
Okay then. It's gratitude. Every day I get up and I start my day by thinking of all that I am grateful for. Then periodically during the day, I get in touch again with it.

Melanie nods.

DEBBIE
Do you want to say your gratitudes with me?

MELANIE
No. But I will.

Debbie takes a breath.

CONTINUED: (2)

DEBBIE
I am grateful for my breath.

MELANIE
I am grateful for... my health.

DEBBIE
I am grateful for my friends.

MELANIE
I am grateful for my family. Sort of.

DEBBIE
I am grateful for Jane Austen.

MELANIE
I am grateful for Kate Bush.

DEBBIE
I love Kate Bush. I should listen to her more often.

Melanie laughs.

DEBBIE
I am grateful for this feeling of of the air on my face.

MELANIE
I am grateful for the sound of the leaves in the trees.

Debbie takes Melanie's hand.

DEBBIE
I am grateful for my neighbor.

MELANIE
I am grateful for my neighbor.

As they continue to hold hands and say their gratitudes, we... FADE OUT.