"Pilot"

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

1 INT. DOCTOR’S OFFICE - DAY (D1)

CLOSE ON:

DOCTOR PAUL HUDSON. White lab coat, bow tie, gravitas. He starts to say something, then sighs and looks down. We see that he is sitting across from a woman in her late sixties: PEARL FOXTON, self-possessed, well put-together, a force of nature. Doctor Hudson gathers himself, takes a deep breath and tries again, this time uttering ONE WORD:

DOCTOR HUDSON

Cancer.

PEARL

Cancer?

DOCTOR HUDSON

Cancer.

PEARL

Cancer cancer?

DOCTOR HUDSON

Cancer cancer.

PEARL

Cancer.

DOCTOR HUDSON

Cancer.

PEARL

Fucking cancer.

CUT TO:

A2 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY (D2)

BILLY FOXTON walks down the street, talking on his phone.

BILLY

Toenail fungus?

INTERCUT WITH:

2 INT. RADIO STUDIO SET - DAY (D2)

Tiki Barber is on the other end of the line.
TIKI BARBER
That’s right.

BILLY
Come on, Tiki. I got you a million dollar deal for a memoir. I don’t think the first two chapters should be about your battle with toenail fungus.

TIKI BARBER
It was disfiguring. I couldn’t wear open-toed shoes in the summer. I really think I could help a lot of people deal with the shame.

BILLY
You absolutely could, and it’s a noble cause. I just think you might want to focus more on, you know, the stuff that made you famous.

TIKI BARBER
Maybe you’re right. See, this is why I should always listen to you.

BILLY
Thank you. Alright, I’ve got to run. I’m meeting my mom for lunch.

Billy stops by a HOT DOG CART and holds up two fingers to the VENDOR.

TIKI BARBER
Tell me she’s not making you go to Chez Provence again.

BILLY
She’s not making me, I like it there.

TIKI BARBER
Really? So you’re not stuffing yourself with hot dogs before you go, like you usually do?

BILLY
No.
(loud)
You want grilled onions on these?

Billy holds the phone to his chest to muffle it and gives the guy a “You’re killing me here” look.

TIKI BARBER
Dude, you’ve got to stand up to Pearl for once. Tell her you want to go someplace else.

BILLY
You’re right. I should tell her that. You know what? I will.

INT. CHEZ PROVENCE - DAY (D2)

An empty chair. Billy, slightly out of breath, sits down. An ATTRACTIVE WAITRESS hands him a menu.

WAITRESS
Welcome to Chez Provence.

We widen to see that Pearl is seated across from him, and that the restaurant is a riot of Provencal patterns.

PEARL
I was starting to worry you were standing me up.

BILLY
Sorry, I got held up with a client.

He notices a small mustard stain on his tie, and surreptitiously scrubs it off.

WAITRESS
May I bring you a drink, Madame?

PEARL
Oui. Je voudrais un verre de vin blanc.

WAITRESS
Un Sancerre ou un Chenin Blanc...?

PEARL
Un Sancerre serait parfait.

WAITRESS
Bien sur. And for you, sir?
BILLY
I’ll have une Arnold Palmer, please.

The Waitress walks away.

PEARL
So, tell me, how is that brilliant grandson of mine?

BILLY
He’s great. As is his twin sister, your granddaughter. Do you think you could try not to play favorites with my kids the way you did with me and Olivia?

PEARL
Don’t be ridiculous. I have always loved you two equally. It’s just that you were always perfect and she was always a pain in my ass. Still is. Living out in that godforsaken hick town, birthing goats, listening to her hayseed boyfriend play “Dueling Banjos”...

BILLY
Come on, Kurt’s not so bad.

PEARL
He’s a walking bag of mulch. I’ve got an ottoman with more personality.

BILLY
You know Olivia, she likes extremes. She was a Goth, and then she climbed the corporate ladder, and now she’s all “Little House on the New Jersey Prairie”. Kurt’s just part of this “slow living” phase.

PEARL
Slow living doesn’t mean living with someone slow. I told her that.

BILLY
And how did that go over?

PEARL
She hasn’t spoken to me since. Anyway, how are things in the world of literature?
BILLY
Great. I sold a manuscript for seven figures this week.

PEARL
Really? Was it the new Jonathan Franzen?

BILLY
What? No. I don’t represent Jonathan Franzen.

PEARL
I’ve told you you should pursue him. Who could say no to you? Even as a newborn, you were exceptional. Such a strong latch.

BILLY
Not sure he’s basing his business decisions on my suckling abilities.

PEARL
Only an hour old, it was incredible. (then) And how is Sara?

BILLY
Well, we’ve actually... hit a bit of a rough patch lately. She says she needs to “figure out who she is”. And evidently, in order to do that, she wants a... trial separation.

PEARL
Oh, thank God!

BILLY
What?

PEARL
I’ve dreamed of this day! She’s not good enough for you. If your skin had cleared up sooner, you would never have settled for her.

BILLY
I didn’t say we’re getting divorced. It’s just a trial separation.

PEARL
Those always end in divorce.
BILLY

Not always!

PEARL

This is fantastic. You could have anyone.

Pearl addresses the Waitress, who has returned with drinks.

PEARL (CONT’D)

You would date my son, wouldn’t you? He’s smart, he’s handsome, he’s about to sign Jonathan Franzen—

The Waitress smiles awkwardly, and retreats.

BILLY

Mom! Stop! I shouldn’t have said anything—

PEARL

I know just who to set you up with. There’s a darling woman I met at Curves. Nadia. She’s a landscape architect—

BILLY

No! You’re not setting me up with anyone. I’m still married. You need to slow down.

PEARL

I can’t. I’ve got to get you and everyone else in this family straightened out and I don’t have a lot of time to do it.

BILLY

What are you talking about?

PEARL

I have cancer. I’ll be dead in six months.

She takes a sip of her wine.

PEARL (CONT’D)

Oh, this is very nice.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. CHEZ PROVENCE - CONTINUOUS (D2)

Pearl and Billy are as we left them.

BILLY
I don’t understand. You’ve been in remission from the breast cancer for years.

PEARL
It came back. In my liver this time. Little diamond-shaped mass on the CAT scan. It actually would have been quite pretty, if it wasn’t a sign of my impending death.

BILLY
I just can’t believe this...

PEARL
Look, there’s no point in dwelling on it.

BILLY
You told me one minute ago! I can’t have one minute of dwelling? How are you so calm about this?

PEARL
I’m just not going to waste time on self-pity. I’ve had a great life. I’ve been everywhere I wanted to go, I’ve had kids and grandkids and two great husbands. Well, your father was great. Len’s a B plus.

BILLY
Oh God, how’s Len taking this?

PEARL
He’s such an eternal optimist. It’s always irritated me. He’s in complete denial. And every time I try to talk to him about who he should marry after I’m dead, he finds a way to change the subject.
BILLY
Why would you talk to him about that?

PEARL
Because Janet Gottshalk is just waiting to pounce. The second she hears I’m sick she’ll start picking out a sexy outfit to wear to the wake. And I’ll be damned if I’ll have her move in and redecorate my house with her tacky leopard-print throw pillows.

BILLY
This is really what you’re worrying about?

PEARL
Yes. If it happens, I’m counting on you and your sister to stop her. Olivia’s boyfriend must have a crossbow or a... musket.

BILLY
Have you told Olivia about this yet?

PEARL
No, as I said, she’s not speaking to me. If only there were some handsome and skilled negotiator who could broker the peace between us.

BILLY
(sighs)
I guess I could drive out there and tell her the news.

PEARL
See, this is why you were always my favorite. Not that I had a favorite. While you’re there, see if you can get her to come over to my house for dinner this weekend. I want to spend as much time together as a family as possible while I can.

Before Billy can respond, the Waitress returns to take their order.
PEARL (CONT’D)
Now let’s order. You’ll probably want something light after those hot dogs.

Billy starts to deny it, but realizes it’s futile.

A5
EXT. RURAL ROAD/OLIVIA’S HOUSE - DAY (D3)
Billy drives down a woodsy road, talking on speaker.

BILLY
So Babe, I just think, considering what’s going on with my Mom, we should put a pin in this whole separation thing.

INTERCUT WITH:

B5
INT. SARA’S APARTMENT - DAY (D3)
SARA is in an unfurnished apartment, on her phone.

SARA
Look, I feel bad about Pearl, but this is really important to me.

BILLY
So, you’re really going to get your own apartment?

SARA
I’m just thinking about it.

She turns, and we reveal a REALTOR in the apartment with her. Sara mouths to her, “I’ll take it”.

BILLY
Okay, but--
(the line gets crackly)
Ah, I’m gonna lose the signal because I’m getting close to my sister’s stupid--
(he loses the connection)
Dammit.

5
EXT. OLIVIA’S HOUSE - DAY (D3)
Billy pulls up at a cute little farmhouse. Some chickens and pygmy goats roam around. OLIVIA is holding some firewood in a log carrier.
OLIVIA
Hey, Doofus. What are you doing out here?

BILLY
I heard there was a barn that needed raising.

OLIVIA
There is. And we need someone to repeatedly hit their thumb with a hammer and then complain about the cell phone reception.

BILLY
I’m your man.

They hug affectionately.

OLIVIA
Kurt will be excited to see you.
(calling off)
Hey Kurt! My brother’s here.

KURT ambles around from the side of the house, holding a shovel. He’s tall and ruggedly handsome. He speaks in a laconic, uninflected manner. Olivia heads inside, leaving them alone. Billy brings his energy level up to try and counter Kurt’s lack of affect.

KURT
Hey.

BILLY
Oh, hey Kurt! How’s it going?

KURT
Good.

BILLY
How’s the lumber business? Is this a busy time of year?

KURT
Yeah.

BILLY
That’s awesome. Glad to hear it. You, uh, doing some digging there?

KURT
Yeah.
Billy enters Olivia’s totally analog home. No electronics in sight. Cast iron pans, hand-cranked coffee grinder, a loom, etc. Olivia is stacking firewood.

**BILLY**

Listen, Liv, I’ve got to talk to you. It’s about Mom.

**OLIVIA**

I should have known she sent you out here.

**BILLY**

She didn’t send me. She doesn’t tell me what to do. She... drops hints, and I pick up on them. Anyway, it’s serious. She went to her oncologist and her cancer’s back. It’s in her liver and it’s... well, it’s terminal.

**OLIVIA**

(C seemingly concerned)

Cancer?

Billy nods, gravely.

**OLIVIA (CONT’D)**

Wow, this is a new low. She’s playing the cancer card? Just to get me to talk to her?

**BILLY**

It’s not a card. It’s real. I spoke to her doctor. She has about six months. A year max.

**OLIVIA**

Six months? But... she’s too bossy to die.

**BILLY**

I don’t think that’s a thing.

**OLIVIA**

Wow. I guess this means I really have to invite her to my wedding now.
BILLY
Your wedding? You and Kurt are...?

OLIVIA
Yeah, he proposed to me a couple days ago. Made this whole flowery speech. It was so romantic.

BILLY
Really? I mean, that’s great. So, so great. You have to tell Mom.

OLIVIA
Why? Am I supposed to make nice just because she’s dying?

BILLY
Yes. That’s exactly what you’re supposed to do. Look, she wants all of us to come to dinner at her house this weekend. It’ll be nice. You can tell her the news then.

OLIVIA
Alright, fine. I guess I can do that. And it’ll be good to see Sara and the kids.

BILLY
Well, it’ll just be the kids. Things are kind of rocky with Sara and me right now.

OLIVIA
Oh no. Stay for lunch, you can tell me all about it.

She takes a small hatchet off a peg on the wall.

OLIVIA (CONT’D)
(testing the blade)
Chicken okay?

Billy smiles weakly.

EXT. PEARL AND LEN’S HOUSE - NIGHT (N4)
An establishing shot of Pearl and Len’s large colonial house on a pleasant, leafy street in suburban New Jersey.

INT. PEARL AND LEN’S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (N4)
The dining table has a Provencal patterned tablecloth like the one at Chez Provence.
LEN is putting place settings down on the table. Pearl follows after him, minutely adjusting everything he does. Len can sense that she’s anxious.

LEN
Pearl, relax, it’s just a dinner.

PEARL
I haven’t had both my kids over in a long time. I want everything to be perfect.

LEN
And it will be. If you go easy on Olivia.

(off Pearl’s look)
Which of course you’ll do. I’m sure it’s going to be wonderful.

PEARL
Coming from you, that means absolutely nothing.

LEN
Hey, M.I.T. has an alumni trip to the Galapagos next July. I’m going to sign us up.

PEARL
Sounds great. You can bring my corpse. Maybe give it a bareback ride on a giant tortoise.

LEN
Will you stop talking like that?

PEARL
I’ll tell you, even dead I would be better company than Janet Gottshalk.

LEN
I’m not marrying Janet Gottshalk. I don’t want to be married to anyone but you.

PEARL
I know you don’t, but you’re going to have to be. You’re a brilliant man, but you have the self-reliance of a toddler. Don’t worry, I’ll find you someone good. Someone from my Breast Cancer Survivors Group...
LEN
Pearl, there are medical breakthroughs all the time. You have to think positive.

PEARL
I will murder you if you say that again, I’m positive about that.

There is a knock at the door.

PEARL (CONT’D)
They’re here. For God’s sake, fix that knife.

She heads off to answer the door. Len looks at the knife in question but can’t find anything wrong about it.

INT. PEARL AND LEN’S HOUSE – ENTRYWAY – NIGHT (N4)

Pearl opens the door. Billy, QUINN and HENRY (both 8) are there.

HENRY/QUINN
Grammy!

They give her big hugs. While she fusses over them, Billy gives Len a handshake/hug.

BILLY
How are you hanging in, Len?

LEN
I’m super-duper.

BILLY
No, I mean with what’s going on with...
(indicates Pearl)
...you know.

LEN
Pearl? Oh, she’s going to be fine.

The kids break free of Pearl and head for Len.

HENRY/QUINN
Papa Len!

They give him a big hug, too. Billy looks at him, “Wow, that is some serious denial.” Pearl gushes over Henry.
PEARL
I swear, you are looking more and more like your father all the time.
(to Quinn, less affectionately)
And you, like your mother.
(then)
Wait, Grammy’s got presents.

She hands them two wrapped packages. Henry opens his first. It’s a vintage boxed set of The Chronicles of Narnia.

PEARL (CONT’D)
They were your father’s. I saved them all these years just for you.

HENRY
(inordinately excited)
Cool! I know what I’m doing on the ride home!

He fist pumps to the idea of himself reading in the back of his dad’s car. Quinn opens her present. It’s a picture book with a $3.99 Costco sticker still on it.

QUINN
Fancy Nancy. Thanks, Grammy. I’ll read this just as soon as I finish The Lord of the Rings.

Billy is annoyed, but stifles it. Henry sees Olivia and Kurt heading up the front steps.

HENRY
Hey, Aunt Olivia and that farmer guy are here.

BILLY
His name is Kurt, Henry.

Pearl stands in the doorway to greet them.

PEARL
Oh, it’s so wonderful to see you, honey. Now make sure to really use the welcome mat. Last time you were here, I had to scrub some sort of dung off the Turkish rug.

It’s Olivia’s turn to stifle her anger. She over-zealously scrapes her shoes on the mat, then comes in and hugs Pearl.

OLIVIA
Hi, Mom.
PEARL
Hi, dear. And hello, Kurt.

KURT
Pearl.

PEARL
You know, I just read an article in The New Yorker about how the Asian Beetle has spread to the New Jersey forest. Is that affecting your lumber business at all?

KURT
Nope.

She catches Billy’s eye, points to a colorful ottoman nearby.

PEARL
More personality.

INT. PEARL AND LEN’S HOUSE – DINING ROOM – NIGHT (N4)
Everyone is at the dinner table.

PEARL
Well, bon appetit.
(to Kurt)
That’s French for “enjoy your meal.”

Olivia reacts.

PEARL (CONT’D)
Oh, shoot, I just realized I forgot the butter for the rolls.

HENRY
(a la Harry Potter)
Accio butter! Just kidding, I’ll go get it.

PEARL
Thank you. Such a gentleman.

He exits, smiling and repeating his Accio joke.

QUINN
Grammy, my napkin has a burn hole.

PEARL
I know. You burned it playing with a candle the last time you were here, so you get it again.
Quinn looks to her dad. He shakes his head, “Let it go.”

PEARL (CONT’D)
So Len and I just saw a wonderful exhibit at MoMa.
(to Kurt)
That’s the Museum of Modern Art.

OLIVIA
Mom. You don’t have to keep translating for Kurt.

PEARL
Well, I want him to be able to follow along.

OLIVIA
He’s not a child--

Billy steps in, keeping the peace.

BILLY
The lamb’s delicious, Mom.

PEARL
Oh, make sure you try it with the yogurt sauce.

BILLY
It’s great the way it is. Everyone’s enjoying it.

PEARL
But it’s so much better with the sauce. You really have to have it with the sauce. It’s barely worth eating without the sauce.

Billy starts to protest, but Len catches his eye. While drenching a piece of lamb in sauce, he gives Billy a look, “You’re never going to win this one”. Billy dips a piece of lamb in the sauce, takes a bite, and forced-smiles at Pearl.

BILLY
("amazed")
You know, I didn’t think it could get any better.

Henry comes back from the kitchen holding two family photos. A face has been cut out of both of them.

HENRY
Why has Mom’s face been cut out of these pictures?
BILLY
What? Let me see.

He looks and sees that Sara’s face has been cut out. It’s been done with an exacto knife and her hair is still visible. Billy is at a loss for how to explain this to the kids.

BILLY (CONT’D)
Um, it’s because...

OLIVIA
Your Grandma’s doing an arts and crafts project. She’s going to make a collage of pictures of your Mommy’s face and give it to her for her birthday.

HENRY
Oh, she’ll love that.

QUINN
What? That doesn’t make sense. Mom’s birthday was two months ago.

OLIVIA
Oh well, I tried.

In a rare moment of perceptiveness, Len steps in.

LEN
You know what? Why don’t you kids come into my office. I’ll show you pictures on the computer of all the animals Grammy and I are going to see in the Galapagos.

The twins head off with Len. As soon as they are out of earshot, Billy turns angrily to Pearl.

BILLY
Why would you do that, Mom?

PEARL
Well, I like the pictures. I didn’t want to get rid of them just because you’re getting divorced.

BILLY
We’re not getting divorced! It’s a trial separation! What happens when we work things out?
PEARL
You’re not going to work things out. She’s cheating on you.

BILLY
What?! That’s crazy! No, she’s not!

PEARL
Women don’t leave their husbands and children to “find themselves”. They leave because they’re having sex with someone else. Now can we please stop with the drama, it’s like an O’Neill play.
(to Kurt)
Eugene O’Neill was an Irish-American dramatist, known for--

Olivia slams her silverware down, exasperated.

BILLY
Oh my God! You are-- Aargh!

PEARL
Do you have something to say?

BILLY
I do, but I can’t!

PEARL
Why? Because I’m dying?

BILLY
Yes!

PEARL
Don’t pussyfoot around me. I’m not dead yet. And I’m not going to spend the next six months being treated like some fragile flower. I’ve lost a husband and two great breasts without ever asking for an ounce of pity, and I’m certainly not going to start asking now. So if you’ve got something to say to me, say it.

BILLY
Fine! I’ve been on the receiving end of your unsolicited opinions my whole life. And I don’t let them get to me. My back is worn smooth from letting things roll off it.

(MORE)
BILLY (CONT'D)
But when you start mutilating photos and accusing my wife of cheating, that is too far. This is my life and my family. Whatever’s going on with me and Sara, you need to stay the hell out of it!

OLIVIA
Billy.

BILLY
What? Now suddenly you’re protecting her? You’re the one who wasn’t going to invite her to your wedding!

PEARL
Her wedding?

OLIVIA
(to Billy, pissed)
Thanks for that.
(to Pearl)
Not exactly how I would have chosen for the news to come out but yes. Kurt and I are getting married and we actually would like you to be there.

PEARL
Oh, no no no. This is just supposed to be a phase. Like, when you were a Gothic.

OLIVIA
A Goth, and what do you mean? This isn’t a phase, this is my life. I’m in love with him.

PEARL
With him? Come on, you need to hold a knife under his nose just to check if he’s breathing. You can’t possibly marry him.

Kurt gnaws on a lamb bone, in his own world.

BILLY
See, this is what I’m talking about! That’s it--

OLIVIA
Oh my God! Why did I think I could talk to you? You know what--
BILLY
I’m leaving!
(calling upstairs)
Kids!

OLIVIA
Come on, Kurt.

Kurt, expressionless, slowly folds his napkin neatly and puts it on the table. He gives Pearl a little nod, then gets up and heads out the door with Olivia. Meanwhile, the kids come downstairs, looking confused as Billy ushers them outside. Just before Billy exits, he turns back to his mom.

BILLY
Oh and one more thing. The lamb was better without the sauce!

Billy exits.

PEARL
Now, that is just objectively not true.

Len comes down the stairs.

LEN
Where did everybody go?

We linger on Pearl, alone at the table.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
FADE IN:

EXT. CRAFT FAIR - THE NEXT DAY (D5)

Pearl is strolling through a craft fair with the other members of her Breast Cancer Survivors Group. JOY is worldly-wise and the one most able to hold her own with Pearl. ARLENE is sarcastic and glass-half-empty. DEEDEE is sweet but gullible and often the butt of the group’s jokes.

ARLENE
You really said that right in front of Kurt?

PEARL
In my defense, it’s very easy to forget he’s there.

JOY
Well, if your goal was to make peace with Olivia, sounds like it was a roaring success.

PEARL
You should be ashamed of yourself, mocking a dying woman. Speaking of which, there’s a little favor I need your help with.

JOY/ARLENE/DEEDEE
Of course. / Anything you need. / We’re here for you.

PEARL
After I die... I need one of you to marry Len.

This causes the group to stop walking.

JOY/ARLENE/DEEDEE
Ooh, I don’t think so. / Did I say “anything”? / Can’t help you there.

PEARL
Come on, he’s a catch. He’s got money. He does pretty much whatever you tell him to. He’s great at calculating the tip.

ARLENE
This is a morbid conversation, even for a Cancer Survivors’ Group.
PEARL
Look, you’re the only people standing between him and Janet Gottshalk. And if there are no volunteers, I’ll just have to designate someone. Joy, you’ve got the job.

What?

DEEDEE
Wait, what’s wrong with me and Arlene?

ARLENE
Well, I’m obviously married.

PEARL
That’s not why. The way Todd eats, you’ll be single soon enough. But Len likes to travel, and with your hip, I don’t think you could handle the long haul flights. And DeeDee. You’re best in small doses.

Deedee tears up.

PEARL (CONT’D)
Really, tears? Over that?

DEEDEE
No, it’s just... who’s going to say things like this after you’re gone?

PEARL
Don’t go all sappy on me now. Joy, congratulations, you’re the future Mrs. Len Stillman. His sexual needs are manageable, but you will have to watch an excruciating amount of Nova.

JOY
Pearl, honey. I know you feel the clock ticking, but you can’t just go around telling everyone what to do. Whether it’s me, or your kids.

This really registers for Pearl.

PEARL
I just... need to know that everyone’s going to be okay.
(MORE)
But, you’re right, maybe I’m going about it all wrong.

DEEDEE
Yeah, maybe you should just let things work themselves out.

PEARL
DeeDee, please. No, I just need to be a bit more... (wheels turning) strategic. This was helpful, ladies, thank you.

She walks off.

JOY
Why do I feel nervous for her kids right now?

ARLENE
I feel nervous for you.

Through the kitchen window, Olivia sees Pearl’s Camry pull up. Pearl gets out of the car and, unaware she’s being watched, looks around with obvious distaste. She shoos away a chicken with her foot as if it were carrying a disease, then comes inside. Olivia stands with arms folded.

PEARL
Hi, honey. The place looks wonderful. Although it was quite a long drive, especially since I lost the NPR signal thirty minutes ago. Did you make that tapestry? It’s beautiful. You’re so talented with your hands. You get that from your father. That, and your tiny breasts.

OLIVIA
Mom, why are you here?

PEARL
Well, I’m here because... The fact is that... This is very difficult for me to say, but... I’m sorry.
OLIVIA
You’re... sorry?

PEARL
Yes. What I said was hurtful and unkind. I think I just don’t know Kurt the way you do. But I look forward to getting to know him better. As my son-in-law.

OLIVIA
What’s your game here, Mom?

PEARL
There’s no game. You know, Olivia, you and I, we’re very much alike.

OLIVIA
Yeah, twinsies.

PEARL
I mean it. You’re stubborn just like me. You stand your ground. I admire that about you. It’s why you’ve always been my favorite.

Olivia can’t believe what she’s just heard.

PEARL (CONT’D)
Don’t tell Billy.

OLIVIA
I don’t know what to say.

PEARL
Say you’ll let me help plan your wedding.

OLIVIA
Plan the--? Ooh, I don’t think so. We’re not going to have the kind of wedding you would approve of. We’re not going to release white doves.

PEARL
Of course not. It would be too hard for Kurt to resist blasting them out of the sky.

(offs Olivia’s look)
I’m kidding. Don’t be so serious.

She touches Olivia affectionately. Olivia smiles.
OLIVIA
This is nice. You should get cancer more often.

Pearl laughs. They enjoy this unexpected, but welcome truce.

OLIVIA (CONT’D)
So, what are you going to say to Billy?

PEARL
Oh, I’ve learned my lesson. I’m not going to say anything to Billy.

INT. SARA’S APARTMENT - DAY (D5)

The apartment is still mostly empty. Sara is unpacking some belongings. There is a knock at the door, she answers it and is shocked to find Pearl there.

PEARL
Hi, dear. May I come in?

SARA
Pearl? How did you get this address?

PEARL
That’s not important.

She blows past her into the living room.

SARA
I haven’t even given it to Billy yet.

There are paint swatches on the walls of the living room. Pearl examines them.

PEARL
Really getting settled in here, aren’t you?

SARA
What do you want, Pearl?

PEARL
I assume Billy has told you about this pesky incurable cancer situation?
SARA  
He has. I am so sorry.

PEARL  
Don’t be. I only bring it up to say that I’m on a bit of a deadline. Now I know you don’t like to take my advice. If you did, you would have had the twins vaginally like I told you to. But, I want you to put my son out of his misery.

SARA  
What are you talking about?

PEARL  
I get it. You’re keeping him on the hook, because you don’t know what’s going to happen with this man you’re seeing--

SARA  
I’m not seeing any--

PEARL  
Please, let me finish. These men who go for married women aren’t always the most reliable, and you’re smart, you know that. But even if it does fall apart and you go back to Billy, it won’t be the same. You’ll have a secret that you can’t share, and it will poison everything. It’ll end up much worse than if you were just honest with him now.

SARA  
(with less conviction)  
But I’m not--

PEARL  
I’m dying, Sara. But I’m okay with that, and you know why? Because my conscience is clear. When your time comes, believe me, you’re going to want to be able to say the same thing.

Sara is quiet. Pearl has seen right through her and she knows it.
PEARL (CONT’D)
One more thing. When you tell
Billy the truth, please don’t
mention we had this conversation.
Oh, and if you could wait to tell
him until tomorrow around noon,
that would be helpful to me.
(on her way out, re: paint
swatches)
None of these work.

She exits, leaving Sara alone with her conscience.

INT. PEARL AND LEN’S HOUSE – THE NEXT DAY (D6)

Olivia and Pearl are at the kitchen table, with a binder and
wedding-planning paraphernalia.

PEARL
...I like the idea of having it in
the woods, I do. I just think we
should take steps to minimize the
number of guests who contract Lyme
Disease.

OLIVIA
Mom. Be honest. You’d rather I
was marrying Travis, wouldn’t you?

PEARL
What? Travis. God, I haven’t
thought about him in ages. What
makes you say that?

OLIVIA
I don’t know. I just feel like he
was the only boyfriend I ever had
who you approved of. You know,
because he was a lawyer, and he
went to Yale.

PEARL
Oh, Travis was a pompous ass.
Whatever his shortcomings, Kurt is
a much more genuine person. Now
can I get back to talking you out
of this woodland wedding idea?

SFX: front door opening.
BILLY (O.S.)
What did you say to her?

Billy enters, with a head of steam.

BILLY (CONT’D)
What did you say to her, Mom?

PEARL
(all innocence)
Say to whom?

BILLY
Sara. I know you said something, because she suddenly admitted that she’s cheating on me.

OLIVIA
Whoa. Sara’s cheating on you? And you’re mad at Mom?

BILLY
Yes, because I specifically told her to stay out of it.

PEARL
Well, I couldn’t do that. I couldn’t let you keep living in denial. You’re as bad as Len.

BILLY
I wasn’t in denial. I was trying to make it work. I was thinking about the kids.

PEARL
So was I. That situation wasn’t good for them. It was going to end anyway, I just... gave it a nudge.

BILLY
But why? Why couldn’t you just leave it alone?

PEARL
Because I can’t die not knowing that you’re settled with someone worthy of you! I can’t.

Billy sighs. He looks to Olivia, “Can you believe this?”

OLIVIA
(apologetically)
She’s right.
BILLY
Of course she is! I finally stand up to her and she turns out to be right. It’s so maddening.

PEARL
I know it is, honey, I know.

BILLY
What am I going to do now? I don’t have Sara. And soon I won’t have you...
(Hard for him to say)
You know, when Dad died, I... I wished it was you. I did. He was my hero, and you were just my mom. I wish I could take those thoughts back. Because now, it’s so hard to imagine--

He chokes up, unable to finish the thought. Pearl puts her arms around him.

PEARL
I know you’re going to miss me, kiddo. I’m going to miss me, too.

She hugs him. Emotion plays over her face, but she doesn’t give in to it. Olivia stands witness to this, feeling somewhat awkward. After a beat...

OLIVIA
And you’ll still have me, Doofus.

This gets a small smile from Billy.
PEARL
And as for Sara, I’m certain you’ll have no trouble moving on, once some time has passed.

A pretty woman enters from the backyard, holding a digital tape measure and a pad. This is NADIA.

NADIA
Um, Pearl, I’m finished taking measurements out here.

PEARL
Oh.
(to Billy and Olivia)
Excuse me for a moment.

Pearl goes over to pow-wow with Nadia. Billy looks at the wedding planning stuff.

BILLY
What’s going on here?

OLIVIA
I don’t know. I think Mom and I are... friends now?

Pearl brings Nadia over.

PEARL
So this is my son, Billy, who’s in from Manhattan.
(smiles knowingly)
Billy, this is Nadia, the landscape architect I told you about.

BILLY
(through gritted teeth)
Not enough time, Mom. Not enough time.

Nadia looks confused.

PEARL
Don’t be rude, honey. Now would you mind showing Nadia out?

BILLY
Fine.
(to Nadia, awkward)
It’s the door you came in from.
Nadia smiles, and they head toward the front door, Billy throwing an "I can’t believe you" look over his shoulder. Olivia looks at Pearl in amazement.

PEARL
(all innocence)
What?

OLIVIA
You are shameless.

PEARL
I’m sorry I don’t know what you’re talking about. Now come on, we have a wedding to plan.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
TAG

FADE IN.

INT. LAWYER’S OFFICE - DAY (D7)

ANGLE ON Pearl, sitting in a well-appointed office.

PEARL
...and I have an estate attorney in New Jersey, but I worry she’s not very good. Which is why I wanted to talk to you, Travis.

We reverse to see that she is talking to a handsome, African-American man in his late 30’s. This is TRAVIS.

TRAVIS
I’d be happy to help. It’s really nice to see you, Pearl, despite the circumstances.

PEARL
Thank you.

TRAVIS
So, how is Olivia?

PEARL
She’s great. You know I’m sure she would love to see you. I mean, if your wife is okay with that. I assume you’re married?

TRAVIS
I am.

A look of disappointment passes over Pearl’s face.

TRAVIS (CONT’D)
Well, we’re actually in the middle of a trial separation at the moment.

PEARL
(to herself)
I can work with that.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW