

SCRIPT TITLE

Written by

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Based on, If Any

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DIETLAND

INT. VARIOUS -- ND

MOVING OVER A PALE, PLUMP ARM

Speckled with tiny red bumps.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

*Dear Kitty, what are these gross  
red bumps on my arms? How do I get  
rid of them?*

NOW A YOUNG WOMAN'S LUSH ASS, clad only in a thong.

DIFFERENT FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

*Dear Kitty, big butts are "in", but  
mine isn't sexy big. It's just fat.  
What can I do to get a "bubble  
butt?"*

A FEMALE HAND, TEARING A LENGTH OF DUCT TAPE FROM A ROLL

GIRL'S VOICE (V.O.)

*Dear Kitty, my boyfriend made me  
have sex when I didn't want to.  
Should I break up with him?*

And the duct tape goes over a MAN'S QUIVERING MOUTH.

Now the images SPEED UP, grow more VIOLENT. And some of the images feels displaced, out of pattern. Moments from an abduction of TWO ADULT MALES, by gloved assailants.

The VOICES grow urgent, overlapping:

A CHORUS OF FEMALE VOICES (V.O.)

*Dear Kitty, all the models in your  
magazine are so skinny girls are so  
lucky I never drink eat do dairy or  
talk to strangers when I masturbate  
and I shave down there or do I just  
ignore him when I hate my eyes,  
nose, ears, thighs, calves, clit,  
skin, breath, voice, wrists, nails,  
hair, laugh, smile...*

FLASHES OF:

- A roll of fat pinched hard between sharp, red fingernails
- A finger pulling at a wrinkle until it goes smooth

- A syringe piercing a thick man's BICEP
- Hair steaming in a straightening iron
- A compression garment pulled over a woman's ample hips
- A hair plucked from a brow
- Male hands bound with a zip tie
- A red, raw foot as it emerges from a stiletto heel
- A laser zapping a woman's face
- A finger being stuck deep into a woman's mouth
- Makeup going over a woman's bruised black eye
- A small wad of PAPER being forced into a slack male mouth

AND THEN:

ON A WOMAN'S CHEST -- HER SMALL, BEAUTIFUL BREASTS

As she CUTS herself methodically with a razor, tracing around her nipples. It's quiet. Then a sweet, young voice:

YOUNG WOMEN'S VOICE (V.O.)  
*Sometimes I cut my breasts with a  
 razor. I like to cut around my  
 nipples and watch the blood seep  
 through my bra. It hurts. But it  
 feels good too.*

CLOSE ON

A man's drugged, open EYES as a BODY BAG is zipped closed over them.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. PLUM'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

PLUM STANDS into frame from her sink, matching the upward action of the zipper. She wears a black tank top and her face is scrubbed clean.

She contemplates her wet skin with resignation. Nothing to see here.

Plum, early 30's, is beautiful. Alabaster skin. Deep red lips. Elizabeth Taylor eyes. She weighs over 300 lbs.

PLUM (V.O.)  
 That's me. Alicia Kettle. But  
 everyone calls me Plum. Because I'm  
 succulent and round. Clinical term  
 -- obese.

INT. PLUM'S APARTMENT -- VARIOUS -- DAY

Plum lives in a nice second-story two bedroom in Brooklyn.  
 She has clean, good taste.

We watch as Plum dresses in all black. Her entire closet,  
 except for a small section, is filled with black outfits.

And her full length mirror is covered with a sheet.

PLUM (V.O.)  
 It's okay. I'm allowed to say it.  
 It's kind of like the "N-word" that  
 way.

She takes her a prescription pill -- called simply "Y".

PLUM (V.O.)  
 I've always been big.

She crosses in front of the TV, which is almost always on as  
 company in her quiet apartment. It's tuned to CNN, the sound  
 turned way down.

PLUM (V.O.)  
 But now I'm "death fat".

She carefully weighs and serves herself an orange and a half  
 cup of bran cereal with skim milk.

As she does , **numbers "75" and "60 and "45"** appear over each  
 food item. The calories for each.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- DAY

Plum, a computer bag over her shoulder, walks the single  
 block from her house to a local coffee house. She lives in a  
 nice neighborhood.

PLUM (V.O.)  
 Which doesn't just mean my size may  
 kill me, it's how people look at  
 me.

She keeps her head down, avoiding the curious or vaguely  
 hostile looks from passersby. A child, too young to know  
 better, says:

CHILD

Mom. That lady is fat.

The mom gives Plum a sidelong glance, hisses at her kid:

MOM

Shhhh. Don't say that...

Plum just looks at her feet. Keeps walking.

PLUM (V.O.)

Like they'd prefer me dead.

As Plum moves on she MORPHS INTO A STOP-MOTION ANIMATED  
VERSION OF HERSELF

CUT TO:

STOP MOTION DIORAMA

A white box, within which rises a map of Plum's neighborhood. There's something sinister about the diorama, rather than "cute."

Plum's black-clad figure moves along a dotted line from her apartment to CARMEN'S CAFE, which is marked with an "X."

PLUM (V.O.)

When I think of my life at that time, it's like it was contained in a box.

Then the figure moves to a CHURCH. Also marked with an "X".

PLUM (V.O.)

Everywhere I went was within a 5 block radius. Apartment. Cafe. My Waist Watchers meetings. Apartment. Cafe. Meetings...

The figure moves over and over between the same 3 points, tracing a black triangle as it goes.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET/CARMEN'S CAFE -- DAY

CLOSE ON PLUM

Her downcast eyes rise and look straight at us. Impassive.

INT. CARMEN'S CAFE -- DAY

Plum sits at her usual table in a cosy, vintage-feeling cafe. Pale green walls with cream vinyl booths and flowery china plates mounted on the wall.

She opens her computer to a portal for DAISY CHAIN MAGAZINE. Scrolls through the articles like "30 Days to Great Skin!" and "You CAN read his mind!"

PLUM (V.O.)

I'm a writer for Daisy Chain magazine. You know, "17" but less cool. Which is to say, not cool.

OVER A BRIGHT YELLOW BACKGROUND

Covers for DAISY CHAIN through the years appear, one on top of the next.

They start in the late 50's, with bright-eyed pony-tailed girls looking all fresh and wholesome next to headlines like "Sweaters, Sweaters, Sweaters!"

PLUM (V.O.)

The original intent was all about inspiring great young women...to become great young wives.

The covers move through the 70's, 80's and all the way to present day. The final one has a sexy teen pouting in a bikini top with the headline -- "Tease Him with Kinky Stuff!"

PLUM (V.O.)

I don't think those folks would be thrilled with today's trashy sex pointers.

CARMEN (O.C.)

Go on, read me one.

BACK ON PLUM IN THE CAFE

As Carmen, a large, smiling woman -- currently hugely pregnant, lowers herself into the chair opposite Plum. She slides an Oatmeal cookie to Plum.

PLUM (V.O.)

That's Carmen. She owns the cafe and is basically the only human I talk to on a regular basis other than my mom.

Over it, the **number of calories, 355**, appears.

PLUM

"Dear Kitty, is it always wrong to have sex with your father?"

CARMEN

No!

ON SCREEN WE SEE

A page from Daisy Chain magazine. A circle drawn around a photo of KITTY on the Editor's page.

PLUM (V.O.)

And I'm not exactly a real writer. I answer personal letters sent to the current Daisy Chain editor, Kitty. I'm like her obese shadow self, giving advice from the ether.

BACK ON CARMEN AND PLUM

CARMEN

You're making that up. Please, God.

PLUM

Yeah. But it wouldn't shock me.

CARMEN

(hands on her belly)

We thought we wanted a girl, but girls are scary.

PLUM

Not on the surface. Only when you dig deep.

CARMEN

Oy... Hey. Can you work tomorrow? We have a prenatal appointment in the morning so I can't open.

PLUM

(hesitates)

It's just -- I'm on my food plan--

Carmen

You don't have to eat, just bake.

PLUM

So just smell the heroin. Don't snort it.

CARMEN

I thought you were trying to save some money for your dumb surgery.

## PLUM (V.O.)

Yeah. That. I'm getting my stomach stapled. Before you judge, here are some of the things I have tried to lose weight:

MONTAGE -- QUICK, ASSAULTIVE CUTS AS:

## PLUM (V.O.)

Exercise, no white foods, only apples, the cabbage soup diet, green tea diet, Fen Pfen, sweat cure, hypnotism, acupuncture, waist watchers, Baptist Weight loss clinic, the sleep cure, meditation, master cleanse, Herbalife, raw foods only, the paleo diet, chia seeds, fasting, the Southbeach diet, Infared Sauna, journaling, hot yoga, fatblockers and...prayer.

- \* Little Plum, 10, does calisthenics in front of the TV
- \* Little Plum eats from a plate filled with only broccoli.
- \* Little Plum uses one of those old fashioned body vibration machines, with the strap around her butt. She jiggles like a blob of buttered noodles
- \* Teen Plum raises her hand in a BAPTIST WEIGHT LOSS meeting
- \* Teen Plum jogs in a SAUNA SUIT, red as a lobster
- \* Teen Plum unloads piles of BAPTIST WEIGHT LOSS products from a bag
- \* Teen Plum wraps herself in PLASTIC WRAP
- \* Adult Plum meditates to a weight loss CD
- \* Adult Plum loads her fridge with pineapple
- \* Adult Plum takes a handful of PILLS
- \* Adult plum does downward dog in yoga
- \* Adult Plum plum drinks vinegar out of the bottle
- \* Adult plum eats a plate of cooked meat
- \* Adult Plum attaches a WAIST TRAINER AROUND HER BELLY
- \* Adult Plum is hypnotised by a creepy looking guy

- \* Adult Plum walks with headphones on
- \* Adult Plum boils heads of cabbage
- \* Adult Plum with acupuncture needles piercing her ear
- \* Adult Plum chugs water with lemon in it
- \* Adult Plum writes in a food journal
- \* Adult Plum does CROSS FIT until she vomits

PLUM (V.O.)

I'd lose weight. And then I'd put it back on. Plus a little for good luck. It was time to stop the madness.

BACK ON PLUM AND CARMEN

Plum pushes the oatmeal cookie back toward Carmen.

PLUM

It's not dumb -- I'm already eating better. The operation is going to speed things up, that's all.

CARMEN

I read that it's pretty dangerous--

PLUM

Oh my God. Have you been talking to my mom?

CARMEN

I just care about you. I want you to be happy.

PLUM

I am. I mean, I will be.

Carmen looks at Plum for a beat. Decides not to push it.

CARMEN

Up to you. If you want to undergo life-threatening surgery with an appallingly low success rate, go for it.

PLUM

Thanks. That didn't sound at all judgemental.

CARMEN

(sighs/then)

I'm offering you extra work. You said the letter writing thing pays crap.

PLUM

Yeah but my uncle offered to lower my rent on my apartment and--

CARMEN

(cutting her off)

Again? Pretty soon he's going to be paying you for staying there--

PLUM

He should. I water his plants.

(off Carmen's look)

Fine. I'll bake. Be dazzled by my iron will.

CARMEN

Thanks, doll. You're the best.

Carmen heaves herself up and off. Plum goes back to her computer, puts on some headphones.

PLUM (V.O.)

Aside from Carmen and a few other people, I'd learned to live deep inside myself. My body was just a thing I used to move my head around.

Now a CIRCLE appears around the TV mounted in the corner of the cafe. Where a news reports freezes on an AMTRACK TRAGEDY.

PLUM (V.O.)

So I missed a lot.

Another circle appears around the frozen image of a YOUNG WOMAN, LEETA, who sits across the cafe from Plum.

She has a goth look -- black rimmed eyes, a t-shirt with an image from the movie FIGHT CLUB on it, combat boots and bright tights. And she's looking at Plum while taking notes.

PLUM (V.O.)

A lot.

CUT TO:

DIORAMA

The Plum figure walks to the church.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- DAY

Late afternoon. Plum nears the church but catches sight of LEETA out of the corner of her eye, walking behind her. Plum quickens her step. So does Leeta.

Plum ducks into the church stairwell that leads to the basement. Leeta passes her. Plum watches her go.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT -- CURTAINED AREA -- DAY

CLOSE ON

The numbers settling on a digital scale. 304.

Plum steps off the scale, which is in a small area made private by a portable curtain. Her meeting leader, SUZY, nods approvingly.

SUZY

Good job! That's another two pounds this week.

PLUM

My home scale said four.

SUZY

I know. My god, it's like a person can just look at a french fry and put on water weight. You're making progress. That's what matters.

Plum goes to put on her shoes, etc.

SUZY (CONT'D)

You're staying for the meeting, right? We have our one-on-one after.

Plum takes this in, not thrilled about it.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT -- MEETING AREA -- DAY

Plum sits in a circle of women. A few are in Plum's weight range, but some don't seem to have much of a weight problem. Type-A women trying to lose that stubborn last five pounds.

One of these slimmer women, KAREN, is sharing. Holding back tears of frustration.

KAREN

...I mean, I've been doing everything right. Exercising every day and that's not easy with the kids home. And I log every bite I eat. Why won't the scale move?

SUZY, average weight and very put-together, is very upbeat and smiley.

SUZY

Okay. Let's talk about that "Scale Mentality"--

She stops as a LATE COMER enters. JANICE, late 20's, wears boots and a vintage dress. Her hair has vivid streaks of pink and blue.

And she's BIG. At least a 100 lbs larger than average.

JANICE

Sorry! Fucking bus.

She smiles and sits. All the woman give her a long look. Large women usually don't allow themselves to fill space the way she does.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Proceed. Sorry.  
(off their looks)  
Janice. First time. I'm pumped.

Janice sits next to Plum. Smiles at her. Plum kind of gapes, not sure what to make of this peacock of a fat girl.

SUZY

I was just telling Karen that the scale is only one measure of our success. I mean, she's doing this to look great naked!

KAREN

I am. I'm doing this to look great naked.

Janice scoffs a little at this. Plum notices, as do the others.

SUZY

And you've been so good. I want you all to appreciate that Karen isn't giving up on herself. She's willing to push through--

JANICE  
(raises her hand/speaks)  
But she's doesn't need to lose  
weight.

SUZY  
It's Janice, right? Everyone's goal  
is personal--

KAREN  
That's not what my husband thinks--

JANICE  
Fuck your husband--

SUZY  
Janice, we try not to use profanity  
here--

JANICE  
Sorry. But fuck him. I mean, do you  
*know* he thinks that? Does he say  
that?

KAREN  
He doesn't... But he barely touches  
me after the baby--

JANICE  
Maybe he's tired! Sounds like you  
have a communication problem,  
because you don't have a fat  
problem.

Janice catches Plum's eye -- like "can you believe this  
shit?!" Plum quickly looks away.

SUZY  
Janice. I love your enthusiasm,  
but, again, Karen wants to be  
comfortable in *her* body. Just like  
you're here to become *your* best  
self.

JANICE  
Excuse me?

SUZY  
Plum, why don't you tell Janice our  
philosophy? Plum's been doing such  
good work.

PLUM

"People don't come to Waist Watchers feeling good about themselves. They come because they're *ready* to feel good."

Janice goes red at this.

JANICE

Are you fucking kidding me? I feel good. Very. I fucking love myself--

SUZY

Janice!

Janice stands, knocking her chair over.

ON PLUM

As she starts, looks at the floor. She can't stomach conflict.

JANICE

No! Fuck this fucking ass-sucking bullshit. I came here for help losing some weight because I have back problems, not because I hate my body--

SUZY

Let's take this outside--

Suzy moves to escort Janice out, but Janice jerks away:

JANICE

Don't touch me, wench. I am a fucking Goddess!

Janice storms out as she yells:

JANICE (CONT'D)

And I get more hot dick than I can handle!

And she's gone. Suzy, shaken, returns to her seat. Everyone is stunned.

After a beat, Suzy smiles. Shakes her head.

SUZY

So sad, right? So much denial.

Plum nods along with the others. So sad.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT -- MEETING ROOM -- DAY

Later. The room is cleared out and Plum sits with Suzy. Suzy's looking over some paperwork.

SUZY

Looking great! Nice, steady loss.  
And you still have 7 weeks to  
practice good habits before the  
surgery. Any slips?

Plum looks uncomfortable. She doesn't enjoy this part of the process.

PLUM

Just one.

SUZY

Okay. Let's talk about that.

PLUM

I ate some Snackwells.

SUZY

*Some* or the whole box?

PLUM

10.

SUZY

Ouch. That must have felt bad. You  
know that after you have your  
surgery, you eat more than this...

Suzy makes a small circle with her fingers. Makes a frowny face.

SUZY (CONT'D)

...at a time, you'll get sick.  
Very. My bypass clients say it's  
*torture*.

PLUM

I know. I think, since I won't be  
able to pig out after the surgery--

SUZY

But *now* is when you have to dig  
deep to figure out why you felt the  
need to sabotage. If you stretch  
your stomach after the surgery all  
this effort will be wasted.

(serious)

Plum.

(MORE)

SUZY (CONT'D)

It's time to say goodbye to food as a source of comfort. What were you feeling?

PLUM

Hungry. Angry at being hungry.

SUZY

Good identifying. Next time you tell that anger that you're in control and your "thin person within" wants out! Okay?

PLUM

Okay. Yeah. Thank you.

SUZY

And you're still taking the "Y."

PLUM

Yeah.

SUZY

How long have you been on that?

PLUM

Since college. A while.

SUZY

Gotcha. Getting an education can be so stressful. When I was getting my GED I gained 25 pounds.

PLUM

I loved school. I just...

ON PLUM

A memory pulling at her...

SUZY (O.C.)

What?

INT. COLLEGE LIBRARY -- DAY

An overcast day. COLLAGE AGE PLUM stands at a window overlooking the commons below. She weighs less, is a bit more fit.

Tears are silently falling down her face. She looks heartsick. Lost.

A young librarian comes up behind her, concerned.

LIBRARIAN

Sorry. Are you... Do you need help?

SUZY (O.C.)

Plum?

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT -- MEETING ROOM -- DAY

Plum turns her head back to Suzy, a vacant look on her face.

SUZY

I was asking, if you loved college,  
why did you decide to go on the  
"Y"?

Plum makes herself focus. Lies:

PLUM

Oh. I think... I don't handle  
stress that well, I guess.

SUZY

Gosh, stress is just... I would say  
90% of the people I see in Waist  
Watchers say it's what makes them  
binge. That and loneliness. It's so  
funny. Sometimes I think it's the  
computers and phones. They just get  
people all... I'm not sure being  
able to see *everything* turns out to  
be all that helpful.

PLUM

No, probably not.

An odd blank moment as they sit with that. Then Suzy shakes  
it off.

SUZY

Well! Being on an antidepressant  
*will* be helpful. Some people get a  
little blue after the surgery. It's  
hard to say goodbye to bad  
behaviors like eating.

PLUM

I've been having some bad nausea. I  
get these waves and I feel like I  
need to throw up. Could that be  
related to the Y?

SUZY

Are you taking it on an empty  
stomach?

PLUM

My stomach always feels empty.

SUZY

Good for you. But that could be the problem. Or you're having some break-through anxiety. When you see your psychiatrist for your pre-surgery eval, mention it.

(off Plum's nod)

And are you planning follow up surgery? Thigh lift? Skin removal?

PLUM

Not right away. I'm already putting some of the bypass on credit, what insurance and my savings won't cover. The whole thing is so expensive.

SUZY

Well, save your pennies. Because I think you're going to do great and you'll have a lot of loose skin.

Suzy laughs and holds her arms out.

SUZY (CONT'D)

This one girl I know said she looked like a flying squirrel!

Off Plum, a little horrified, taking this in.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- DAY

Later. The sun is setting as Plum walks home from the church.

PLUM (V.O.)

Of course, I didn't tell Suzy the whole truth about college.

CLOSE ON PLUM

As she remembers:

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

A cosy college classroom, New England style. Students sit around a large table. Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is under discussion.

COLLEGE AGE PLUM sits across from an average looking GUY. His name is TRISTAN.

TEACHER

So aside from the obvious themes -- what makes us human, what makes us a valuable member of society -- what else do you guys take from the book?

Tristan raises his hand. The teacher nods to him.

TRISTAN

I think -- Kafka's plea for tolerance? Gregor's accepted by his family when he's like them, but when he's transformed, and they can't understand it, part of what makes him a monster is their *idea* of him as a monster. Also, Gregor wants to fuck his sister.

Everybody laughs. Plum is intrigued. He catches her look to him and, unlike most men, he smiles and holds her gaze.

Plum looks away, shy. Blushing.

PLUM (V.O.)

There was a guy.

INT. CAMPUS COFFEE HOUSE -- DAY

Plum sits alone, a book open. She reads, underlines a passage.

TRISTAN (O.C.)

Hey.

Plum looks up, surprised to see Tristan standing over her.

TRISTAN (CONT'D)

You're in European Lit, right?

PLUM

Yeah.

TRISTAN

Your comments in class are always dead on. You should talk more. How you doing on your paper?

PLUM

Oh. I...finished.

TRISTAN

You're one of those, huh?

PLUM  
 (smiles a little)  
 Don't hate me because I'm punctual.

TRISTAN  
 Punctual. I've heard of you. But  
 I've never actually seen one in the  
 wild.  
 (then)  
 I'm kind of stuck on one argument,  
 maybe you can hear me out?

Plum nods, kind of dumb struck. Tristin sits, starts talking.

EXT. CAMPUS PATHWAY -- NIGHT

Another day. Tristin and Plum walk and talk animatedly,  
 laughing. Over them we hear:

PLUM (V.O.)  
 After that, we were kind of  
 inseparable. For the first time, I  
 stopped hating happy people. I was  
 like them.  
 (then)  
 Tristin was the one. He was going  
 to be my first. I just felt it.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- DAY

BACK ON PLUM

Who shakes the memory off.

PLUM (V.O.)  
 Except I'm still waiting for my  
 first. So what did I know?

Plum gets an uneasy feeling and looks behind her, only to  
 find LEETA following her again.

Plum stops. Turns and faces Leeta. Blurts:

Plum  
 Are you following me?

Leeta pulls out her earphones. Plum hears music blare from  
 them.

Leeta  
 Sorry. I didn't hear you.

PLUM  
Are you *following* me?

LEETA  
(bemused)  
Following you? No. I don't know  
what you're talking about.

PLUM  
Well, I -- it seemed like...

Plum runs out of steam. Leeta gives her a wry look. Is that it? Then passes her. Plum, nonplussed, just watches her go.

EXT. PLUM'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- EVENING

Plum climbs her stoop, which takes some effort.

PLUM (V.O.)  
The thing about that girl... I was  
used to being stared at. But she  
didn't look at me that way. It was  
more like interest, not disgust...  
(then)  
I might have dwelled on that one.  
But my box came, full of fresh  
hope.

Sees a BOX waiting for her. She snaps it up eagerly.

INT. PLUM'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Plum opens the box, which holds a white dress with purple  
trim in size 6.

PLUM (V.O.)  
My mom was the first one to call me  
Plum. I never expected it to stick.  
So I'd decided, when my "thin  
person within" was finally carved  
from the butter statue that was  
me...

She pulls the sheet off the mirror. Holds the dress up to  
herself. Right now it would barely cover her leg.

PLUM (V.O.)  
...her name would be *Alicia*. And  
she would burst out of my diorama  
into her big, sexy life.

Then she moves to her closet and puts it away with in her  
small section of colorful, size 6 clothes.

INT. PLUM'S LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Plum snaps the TV on.

ON TELEVISION:

CHERYL CRANE MURPHY, Nancy Grace style newscaster, is on.

CHERYL CRANE MURPHY

*Today, a community in shock over  
the apparent kidnapping of two men,  
both former military, both heroes.*

Plum lowers the sound and moves away. As she does a CIRCLE APPEARS over a frozen image of Cheryl Crane Murphy, the crawl along the bottom says: MILITARY MISSING.

Plum, in the KITCHEN area, pulls a grey-looking TURKEY CUTLET MEAL (the number 230 appears over it) from her microwave.

Her phone rings. She sees who's calling. Hesitates. Then answers.

PLUM

Hey mom.

INNERCUT WITH

Plum's MOM, a solid woman, trim and kind, sits on the outside porch of a small house in Glendale, California. It's a gorgeous sunny day.

She throws a ball to a small, yappy dog who chases and returns it through the whole conversation.

Plum's tone with her mother is patient but firm. She genuinely likes her mom, but she can't give her an inch.

PLUM'S MOM

Hello! You picked up.

PLUM

Yes I did. But I'm about to head out.

Plum stirs the unappetizing looking food. Makes a salad that's just a bag of lettuce and vinegar.

PLUM'S MOM

(wry)  
That's a lie.

In the background the TV REPORT changes and we see images of a Metrolink train crash at UNION STATION in Los Angeles.

PLUM  
You good?

CHERYL CRANE MURPHY  
(on TV/in background)  
...as the mysterious identity  
of the girl involved in the  
fatal metrolink crash 10 days  
ago only grows more  
complicated...

PLUM'S MOM  
(skeptical)  
Really? You're leaving the house.

PLUM  
Mom! How's your shoulder?

Plum's mom rotates her shoulder, kneads it a little as she talks. The dog races after the ball.

As she speaks a CAR PULLS UP and some tourist-y looking folks jump out of the car and take PICTURES OF THE HOUSE. Plum's mom ignores it completely.

PLUM'S MOM  
Better. I bowled the other night.

PLUM  
Nice. How are the fine ladies of  
the league?

Plum sits down in front of the TV and the report about the Metrolink crash continues. Plum takes a bite of the food. Sighs. It's something at least.

PLUM'S MOM  
(ignoring her)  
Did you get that article I sent  
you?

Another car pulls up. More tourists lean out of the car, talking to the people on the street. More pictures. Mom ignores them. We're on the tourists as Plum tells us:

PLUM (V.O.)  
Oh. That. Yeah, we'll get to that  
at some point. But suffice to say,  
I come by my ability to ignore the  
world honestly.

PLUM'S MOM  
What are you doing? Are you eating?

PLUM  
Sorry. Yeah.

PLUM'S MOM

Good. You should eat. That's what the article says. Only 1 in 100 people who do that stupid surgery--

PLUM

Stop. I swear I'll hang up on you.

PLUM'S MOM

(laughs a little)

Ha! I know you will. I just wish you could be happy with what God gave you. You have grandma's body.

PLUM

Grandma was fat.

PLUM'S MOM

Grandma was married. She lived a good, full life. She knew who she was.

PLUM

A fat wife.

PLUM'S MOM

Oh well, fine. You're in a mood.

PLUM

I just want to talk about something else.

On the TV we hear Cheryl Crane Murphy going on about the Metrolink story.

We see gruesome images of a BODY on the track. The crawl says "Identity of Suicide Victim Still Unknown."

PLUM'S MOM

They cancelled my program.

PLUM

Oh yeah? Which one?

Plum picks up the remote and SWITCHES THE CHANNEL to a loud, colorful sit com. As she does a circle appears around her finger tapping the remote.

PLUM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Ignore. Ignore. Ignore.

INT. PLUM'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Later. Plum lies in bed, sleepily staring at the ceiling. Her stomach grumbling and empty.

PLUM (V.O.)  
Even at night. When I could finally  
stop thinking about how hungry I  
was and sleep, I ignored my dreams.

Exhaustion takes over and she sleeps. Has a DREAM:

CUT TO:

STOP MOTION/DIORAMA

Plum, in the white and purple dress she just received, moves LIKE A KAFKAESQUE INSECT on all fours into living room, where the TV is on.

There's an ad for an ALL YOU CAN EAT BUFFET, but instead of food it serves up BODY PARTS. A leg, a boob, ruby red lips...

A thin and "TV glamorous" PLUM, AKA ALICIA, appears on screen, in the white and purple dress. She holds out an empty plate to PLUM. An invitation to the self-carnage buffet.

Plum reaches for the plate -- leaning toward the screen and FALLING INTO the TV.

And then Plum is tumbling through a bottomless void -- falling, falling...

PLUM (V.O.)  
They were trying to wake me up...

CROSS FADE TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES FREEWAY OVERPASS -- NIGHT

Out of the dream now. Across the country. The two BODY BAGS are dragged from the back of a van by black clad figures in ski masks.

PLUM (V.O.)  
...to a war I didn't even know I  
was fighting.

Over the ski masks the figures wear TRANSLUCENT MASKS WITH FEMALE FEATURES -- MADE-UP LIPS AND HEAVILY LASHED EYES, etc.

The men inside the body bags struggle, but the silent figures work together and HEAVE THEM OVER THE SIDE OF THE OVERPASS onto the freeway below.

Cars honk and swerve, a TRUCK hits one body bag, which careens across the lanes. An SUV hits the other, skidding to a halt.

On the overpass, the figures disappear into the van and peel away. A single translucent mask the only thing left behind. A message.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARMEN'S CAFE -- DAWN

The next morning. Cool dawn light colors Plum's neighborhood. Plum lets herself in. Switches on a light. It's warm and cosy inside.

INT. CARMEN'S CAFE -- KITCHEN -- DAY

Plum switches on the radio. Music plays. There's a note from CARMEN that reads "THANK YOU" with a heart.

MONTAGE:

PLUM (V.O.)

I didn't set out to write vague advice *from somebody I wasn't* to sad girls I didn't know... I'd wanted to be a journalist. Or a baker -- which I'd always been drawn to. The beauty of baking is that it's tangible. And precise. Follow a few simple rules, and you create something that feels like love.

As Plum speaks, she bakes scones, cookies, a pie.

It's a sensual experience, full of luscious smells and textures. Plum tastes things here and there -- then spits out whatever she's put in her mouth.

A cute male server, BEN, enters, ready to start the day. He takes a deep inhale. Smiles.

BEN

Oh yeah. It's a Plum day!  
(re: scone)  
May I?

PLUM

I made extra.

He takes a bite. Swoons. She smiles. Pleased.

BEN

Damn! You're like a professional, right? Like, you trained in Paris or something?

PLUM

Glendale, California. My Aunt owned a restaurant. She taught me.

BEN

She taught you good, Pretty Plum.

Ben grins, snatches a cookie and moves out. Plum watches after him, was that a dig or an actual compliment? She shakes it off. Goes back to work.

INT. CARMEN'S CAFE -- DAY

Later. It's busy. The morning rush. Tables are full. Plum moves to take an order. It's LEETA. Plum stops. Wary.

PLUM

...Oh. Okay. May I help you?

Leeta reaches out and takes Plum's hand. Plum's too stunned to say anything. With Leeta's other hand she pulls a LIP PENCIL from her pocket and uncaps it with her teeth. Her eyes on Plum the whole time.

She writes a single word on Plum's wrist. "DIETLAND."

Plum looks at the word -- going red with shame.

PLUM (CONT'D)

Hey--

But Leeta turns and moves back to her table, leaving the lip pencil behind.

Plum picks it up and examines it. The shade is called "JUICY PLUM. Plum reacts, surprised and a little scared.

INT. CARMEN'S CAFE -- KITCHEN -- DAY

Later. Plum is gathering her things to go. She's cleaned up, wearing a scarf around her shoulders. A bit of make-up and some earrings.

She looks at her wrist where there's still a faint hint of the word that Leeta scrawled there. She goes to the sink and scrubs at it some more.

INT. CARMEN'S CAFE -- DAY

Plum comes into the front. Carmen is back, but it's quieter now, and she's enjoying one of Plum's scones.

Leeta is still at her table, earphones on. Writing in a SMALL RED LEATHER JOURNAL.

CARMEN

Ohmygod. These scones are beyond.  
I'm telling you, if you baked  
everyday--

PLUM

I have a job.

Carmen notices that Plum's a little off. Tight and holding down hurt.

CARMEN

You okay?

PLUM

It's a Kitty day. Time to go kiss  
the editor's ring.

CARMEN

Why does she make you go in there?  
Don't they have phones at Daisy  
Chain?

PLUM

I think she needs to see someone  
like me once in a while. Reminds  
her that "Nothing tastes as good as  
skinny feels."

CARMEN

Don't say that--

Plum's gaze moves to Leeta.

PLUM

See that girl, queen of darkness?

CARMEN

Yeah. She's in here all the time  
lately.

PLUM

She basically told me to go on a  
diet. Wrote it on my hand. In  
lipstick.

CARMEN

What? What a cunt! I'm going to tell her to get out--

PLUM

Don't. Stuff like that -- happens. I'm leaving anyway.

CARMEN

(glaring at Leeta/pissed)  
Well, I don't want her here.

PLUM

Fine. Just -- wait until I go. I don't want a whole thing.

CARMEN

I hate people.

Plum nods. Yeah.

CUT TO:

DIORAMA

Plum's small black figure leaves her "triangle" -- rides a train to a tall silver skyscraper against MANHATTAN'S distinct skyline.

PLUM (V.O.)

Daisy Chain was part of corporate giant, Austen Media. My monthly command performance for Kitty forced me out of my comfort zone...

EXT. AUSTEN MEDIA TOWER -- DAY

Moving through busy mid-city streets, Plum approaches the massive structure. It looms above her.

PLUM (V.O.)

...and into their imposing silver monolith.

INT. WAITING ROOM/KITTY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Plum waits for Kitty, looking out the floor to ceiling windows at the ant-like people moving through busy New York traffic far below. Huge DAISY CHAIN covers line the walls.

All the employees with the exception of Kitty's super gay male assistant, ELADIO, are slim, severely fashionable women.

Eladio has a Midol box on his desk. Plum eyes it. He notices.

ELADIO  
Want some?

PLUM  
I'm good.

ELADIO  
They're just jellybeans.  
(off Plum's look)  
There's so much lady juice around  
here, I'm syncing up with their  
cycles.

PLUM  
Got it.

ELADIO  
Kitty's still in that meeting.

PLUM  
Sure.

Plum sits. Sighs. This is how it goes.

After a beat, a HANDSOME MAN in a suit moves to Eladio's desk. Speaks quietly with him. Plum can't help but stare.

The man, DOMINIC, moves to the waiting area. Sits across from Plum. He nods, she nods and looks away. But he surprises her by extending a hand.

DOMINIC  
Dominic.

Plum shakes his hand. Trying not to blush. Dominic is confident, precise and slightly rough in the way native New Yorkers can be. Sexy as hell and he knows it.

PLUM  
Plum.

DOMINIC  
You work here?

PLUM  
Kind of? I answer letters to the  
editor. For Kitty. So I work from  
home.

DOMINIC  
Sounds like a good deal. I'd like  
to work from home.

PLUM

It's good and bad. It gets lonely.

Dominic looks at her a little more closely. Then:

DOMINIC

Sometimes you need somebody to talk to. Yeah. All I do is talk to people, so I forget.

PLUM

What do you do, if you don't mind my asking?

DOMINIC

Not at all. Detective. NYPD.

PLUM

Wow. I... That sounds fascinating.

DOMINIC

It does to people. But a lot of times it's just sad. People with bad lives hurting each other.

PLUM

A lot of the letters I get are sad too. Lost girls.

(smiles)

So we're just two gainfully employed, sad folks.

DOMINIC

(laughs)

Could be worse, I guess.

PLUM

I bake too. That's happy. I make an incredible chocolate cake.

DOMINIC

Do you now?

PLUM

I *do*.

DOMINIC

I'd kill for good chocolate cake.

PLUM

At least you'd have a strong lead on the investigation.

(quickly)

(MORE)

PLUM (CONT'D)  
Because you did it. The cake  
murder.

DOMINIC  
Yeah, I got it.

He smiles. There's an electricity growing between them. A genuine flirtation.

ELADIO (O.C.)  
Plum?

The spell is broken. Plum looks up to see Eladio standing over them.

ELADIO (CONT'D)  
Kitty's ready for you.  
(to Dominic)  
You'll be right after.

DOMINIC  
Got it.

Plum stands, looks at her feet -- self conscious. She barely glances at him as she says:

PLUM  
Nice to meet you, Detective.

DOMINIC  
You too.

Plum starts off.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Hey--

Plum stops. Dominic stands, taking his wallet out and retrieving his business card. He seems genuinely awkward and a bit shy as he asks:

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Maybe you'd want to grab a coffee  
sometime? When you need a person.  
To talk to. Because you work at  
home.

PLUM  
Yeah. I got it.

She looks at him, skeptical.

DOMINIC

Or, you know, if you need a cake tester.

Plum takes his card. But shuts down. Like she's waiting for a blow. Physical or emotional.

PLUM

Okay. Have a nice day.

She turns and goes. Dominic looks after her, a little thrown. He's not used to being blown off.

ON PLUM AS SHE WALKS TOWARD KITTY'S OFFICE

PLUM (V.O.)

I'd met men like him before. It's a kink. A fetish. And it never ends well. They want to fuck girls like me, but they marry women like...

INT. KITTY'S OFFICE -- DAY

ON KITTY

Sunlight streaming from behind her, casting her in a fetching, dramatic silhouette and warming her Medusa-like red curls.

PLUM (V.O.)

This.

As Kitty turns toward us, we see that she's highly groomed, super skinny, botoxed and filled to the brim.

Probably best viewed from afar.

We get the sense that what follows has a ritual quality to it and Plum knows the drill.

KITTY

So. How are my girls?

PLUM

Well--

KITTY

You know, everyone talks about *Vogue's* September issue, but arguably, ours is more influential. My girls are going back to school, which is their opportunity to say, hey, I'm *new*.

(MORE)

KITTY (CONT'D)  
 I'm desirable in a whole new way.  
 That's the theme this month, 30  
 days to sexy.

Kitty hands Plum a thick packet.

KITTY (CONT'D)  
 Here's all the information. Make-  
 up, fashion, fitness...

PLUM  
 Great. Did you get those pitches I  
 sent?  
 (off Kitty's blank smile)  
 For articles? I thought it might be  
 interesting to--

KITTY  
 Oh, I *wish* you had time for that,  
 but aren't you just swamped with  
 letters? My girls have such a  
 special connection with me. Before  
 I found myself I was just like  
 them. Bad skin, bad hair,  
 bad...everything.  
 (then)  
 And *look now*. I give them hope. And  
 you give them hope. Someone like  
 you has such insight into what  
 they're going through.

Plum knows what she means. Exactly.

PLUM  
 Oh? Well. Thank you.

KITTY  
 So. How are my girls?

Now Kitty sits, ready to take notes.

PLUM  
 We've had a lot of cutters.

KITTY  
 (writing)  
 Cutters.

Kitty sits back, muses.

KITTY (CONT'D)  
 You know. Just last night, it was  
 so strange.

(MORE)

KITTY (CONT'D)

I was testing a new shave cream --  
I had my leg stretched so my foot  
was resting on the sink...

ON PLUM

As she SEES:

PLUM'S KITTY VISION

A hazy, almost dream-like world with an ornate, gilded bathroom. Kitty is in a diaphanous white bathrobe and her long pale leg is stretched, ballerina-like, to the sink.

KITTY (V.O.)

I didn't realize I nicked a little  
scab on my calf. And this *tiny* drop  
of blood just dots the bathroom  
floor.

Plum sees the DROP OF BLOOD splash to the floor.

KITTY (V.O.)

My bathroom is entirely white and  
this red is the only color.

Now the bathroom turns WHITE AND MODERN, the red drop of  
blood almost vibrating with color.

KITTY (V.O.)

And I'm staring at it and it's just  
so *beautiful*. And I thought, *that's*  
*my blood*. Girls, we see our blood  
every month, but this wasn't gross.  
I ran the razor over the scab *again*  
and there were more drops of blood  
and some of it ran down my calf...

In Plum's imagination Kitty DIPS HER FINGER in the blood and  
TASTES IT. It colors her lips. It's both sensual and spooky.  
Kitty the vampire.

KITTY

(abrupt)

If my boyfriend hadn't knocked on  
the door I would've done it all  
night.

ON PLUM

Completely lost in the fantasy.

KITTY (CONT'D)  
 You know what I mean?  
 (off her silence)  
 Plum?

PLUM  
 Oh sorry.  
 (searching/off her look)  
 I -- how was the shaving cream?

KITTY  
 Nothing special.  
 (then)  
 It was just the first time I could  
 understand the appeal. These girls  
 hacking away at themselves...  
 (then/claps)  
 What else?

PLUM  
 Purging.

KITTY  
 (writing)  
 Purging.

PLUM  
 Confusion about female anatomy.

Kitty waves that away.

KITTY  
 There's nothing I can do about that  
 one. Those parental groups will  
 target us if we use the word  
 "vagina." Of course that makes our  
 articles on tampons hard...

She sighs. Thinks. Then yells out the door to Eladio.

KITTY (CONT'D)  
 Think of some euphemisms for  
 vagina!

ELADIO (O.C.)  
 Poontang?

KITTY  
 Nothing sexual! Medicalized things.  
 Come up with a list and send it to  
 the girl writing the tampon piece.  
 (to Plum)  
 (MORE)

KITTY (CONT'D)

The best advice I can give to a 13 year old is use tampons as soon as you can, but I can't tell her where to put it!

(to Eladio)

And send the list to Plum too, in case she wants to use it.

She smiles benevolently at Plum.

KITTY (CONT'D)

You can use it too.

(off Plum's silence)

I know some of this seems silly, but we're helping these girls. I truly believe it.

Kitty claps again -- stands. They're done for the day.

KITTY (CONT'D)

Good. Okay.

Plum takes the cue and also stands. But before she heads to the door, Kitty says, trying to sound casual:

KITTY (CONT'D)

One more quick thing. You haven't had any...unusual letters or anything? I mean disturbing in an out of the ordinary way?

PLUM

No. Just...everyday disturbing.

KITTY

Has anybody contacted you wanting information about me or the magazine? Any strange encounters?

Plum hesitates. Thinking about Leeta.

PLUM (V.O.)

I thought about the girl. Her dark rimmed eyes and combat boots. Writing on my hand in lipstick...

(then)

But something stopped me from saying anything. Whoever she was, whatever she meant -- she was *mine*.

PLUM

No. Nothing like that. Is something wrong?

KITTY

We had a eensy security breach. A hacking incident. We're just trying to figure out where the leak came from.

Kitty smiles, but something about her overly casual tone seems forced.

PLUM

Like, for credit card information?

KITTY

No, *that* we have all kinds of fire walls for. This was more...personal.

PLUM

That's why that detective is here?

KITTY

(worried)

Yes. They got my home address and phone, and all the members of the Austen family. Including *Stanley*. It's...

Kitty catches herself. Knows she's said too much. She pastes on another glittering smile.

KITTY (CONT'D)

Absolutely *not* serious.

(then)

But why are the bad people always after the good people? Did you see the news? Those two military boys who were murdered? *Veterans*. Tossed like cats in a bag over the side of the freeway. Their bodies were so mangled it took them forever to identify them...

(then)

Our Hollywood correspondent was stuck on the *wrong side* of the 405 for hours and hours. Awful.

Plum winces suddenly. A flash of pain across her features...

KITTY (CONT'D)

Plum? Are you alright?

PLUM

Oh. Sorry. I'm just a little... My stomach has been bad...

KITTY

(a little panicky)

Oh dear well let's get you to the ladies before we have a mess.

(yells)

Eladio!!

Off Plum, looking unwell.

INT. AUSTEN MEDIA TOWER -- BATHROOM -- DAY

Plum bangs into a stall and dry heaves.

After a fruitless beat, she sits on the toilet, holding herself around the middle. She's in a cold sweat, nauseous. She moans a little.

Somebody else enters the bathroom. Plum goes silent. After a moment, LEETA'S BRIGHT TIGHTS AND COMBAT BOOTS are visible under the stall door.

LEETA (O.C.)

I left something for you in the kitchen.

INT. AUSTEN MEDIA TOWER -- KITCHEN -- DAY

Mostly recovered, Plum enters the employee kitchen. There's a bossy sign on the refrigerator that says "Do NOT Take Kitty's Almond Water!"

PLUM (V.O.)

This definitely counted as "unusual contact." I considered telling, or ignoring her -- just going home.

There's a table with another sign over it that says: "Freebie Table. Take ONE only."

PLUM (V.O.)

But instead, I found myself in a kitchen full of bossy signs and fat-free, dairy-free yogurt.

Plum looks at the table, which has a motley assortment of lipsticks, hair products, etc. Out of all the items, one stands out: a hardcover book called "ADVENTURES IN DIETLAND."

PLUM (V.O.)

And then I saw it. Dietland.

FADE TO:

DIORAMA

Colorful stop motion animation. As the sun rises over Plum's neighborhood...

INT. CARMEN'S CAFE -- DAY

Another day at "work". But Plum can't focus. She picks up the "DIETLAND" book next to her computer. Puts it down again.

Carmen comes to the table with a coffee for Plum. Sees the book.

CARMEN

What's this?

PLUM

(eager to talk about it)

Remember that girl, the gothy girl--

CARMEN

The one I told to leave and never darken my door with her skinny, pale ass again?

PLUM

Yep. She gave me that--

CARMEN

A diet book? What a bitch--

PLUM

No, that's the thing. I Googled it. It's basically a screed *against* dieting.

(then)

I'm kind of afraid to open it. What if it has, like, anthrax in it or something?

CARMEN

Right. That's what's happening.

Carmen shakes the book open -- nothing.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Nope.

(then)

Seriously? It's screed-y?

PLUM

Yeah. Goth Girl showed up in the bathroom at Daisy Chain.

Carmen sits now. Yells to the cute male server:

CARMEN

Ben! Cover the cash register for a bit.

BEN

There's no customers.

CARMEN

Thank you, Captain Literal. If somebody else comes in.

He nods. Carmen pages through the book. Plum looks more animated than we've seen her before, equal parts excited and concerned as she says:

PLUM

It's getting weird, right? It's written by the *daughter* of the woman who started the Baptist Weight Loss Clinics.

CARMEN

Never heard of them.

PLUM

Because the daughter of the woman who started them, Eulayla Baptist, shut them all down after Eulayla died.

CARMEN

Seriously? Why?

PLUM

Well, according to the Google, Verena, the daughter, hated everything the clinics stood for. She's some kind of uber feminist, I guess.

CARMEN

That's kind of awesome. Verena Baptist, huh? Sounds like my kind of lady.

PLUM

A bunch of former "Baptists" hate her. They think it's her fault they're still fat.

CARMEN

(laughs)  
"Baptists?" Doesn't that get confusing?

(MORE)

CARMEN (CONT'D)  
 Like, which kind of freak are you?  
 Religious or chunky-style?

PLUM  
 Oh, you can tell. The Chunky  
 Baptists are like that joke -- "How  
 can you tell if someone's vegan?"

CARMEN  
 Okay. How?

PLUM  
 "Don't worry, they'll tell you."

CARMEN  
 (laughs/then)  
 So you actually did this diet? Did  
 it work?

#### FLASHES

(more images from Plum's earlier memories of dieting efforts,  
 plus the money she spent)

PLUM (O.C)  
 Yeah. I was hard core into it for a  
 while.

\* Teen Plum signs a CONTRACT at the Baptist weight loss  
 center. Writes a check. Big photos of woman BURSTING through  
 their "fat clothes" line the walls.

\* Teen Plum shotguns a pre-packaged Baptist Meal Replacement  
 drink. Makes a face but keeps it down.

PLUM (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
 The shakes tasted awful, but I got  
 used to them.

\* Teen Plum at a group meeting, getting weighed in. She's  
 lost 6 pounds. She smiles and fights tears as the other  
 ladies clap for her.

\* Teen Plum pays for more BAPTIST WEIGHT LOSS products. In  
 cash. Which she painstakingly counts out.

PLUM (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
 Later I found out it was basically  
 expensive vitamin water. And fiber.  
 Lots of fiber.

BACK ON PLUM AND CARMEN

CARMEN

So this book is fuck you to her  
thin, dead grifter of a mom. Nice.

PLUM

Maybe? Verena's a licensed  
psychologist.

CARMEN

Well, she's right on. The diet  
racquet is a scam--  
(delighted)  
Oh my God! You think your *mom* hired  
Goth Girl to deprogram you!?

PLUM

Unlikely. But how did Goth Girl  
know I was a Baptist?

CARMEN

(paging through  
book/reads:)  
"Chapter 3. Pay to Lose, Pay to  
Fail." I take everything back. Goth  
Girl gets free scones from now on.

PLUM

I don't know. It's creepy.  
Following me, pushing the book.  
Knowing stuff about me...

CARMEN

Maybe she's one of those body  
acceptance activists. Saving big  
lives, one book at a time.

PLUM

But why me? I'm not special.

CARMEN

You are the only one who thinks  
that, Plum.

Carmen says it with real affection. Plum can't take it in.  
Deflects with:

PLUM

Oh -- I almost forgot! There's been  
a *security breach*, a hacking thing  
at Daisy Chain. Kitty tried to  
sound like it was no big deal, but  
she looked kind of freaked. Crazy--

CARMEN

On no. Maybe somebody stole the secret to better brows!

PLUM

(laughs)

Right? It's kind of ridiculous. She said they stole their home addresses. *Stanley Austen's* home address. The CEO.

CARMEN

Okay, yeah. That's faintly alarming. That guy is worth the GDP of Jamaica or something.

PLUM

And he's a dick. There are definitely people who'd want to hurt him.

CARMEN

Or maybe somebody wants to kidnap Kitty and see what she'd look like with a *makeunder*. Torture her by letting her Botox wear off...

Plum, amused, quips:

PLUM

I love you.

CARMEN

I know.

Plum's phone rings. She sees who's calling. Makes a face to Carmen and answers:

PLUM

This is Plum. Uh huh... Can't I do it over email?

(then)

Okay. Give me an hour.

She hangs up. Looks exasperated.

PLUM (CONT'D)

I have to go all the way back to the office to fill in some stupid form.

CARMEN

Ben can drive you when he makes his deliveries or--

PLUM

It's okay. I'm not getting anything done anyway.

(then)

And maybe Goth Girl will be around. I'll ask her if my mom recruited her off Facebook.

Plum starts to gather her stuff. She reaches to take the book from Carmen, who pulls it back.

CARMEN

Can I borrow this when you're done?

INT. SUBWAY CAR -- DAY

The car is FULL and now other people are trying to pretend that Plum's invisible. Giving her wide berth or bumping up against her and saying nothing, looking away.

ON PLUM

Eyes dead.

PLUM (V.O.)

The thing about the book, the girl... as much as it felt like an invasion? Something in me welcomed it.

INT. AUSTEN MEDIA TOWER -- HUMAN RESOURCES -- DAY

Plum sits across from an impatient HR WOMAN in a nondescript cubicle. Like all the women at Austen Media, she is slim and well groomed.

PLUM (V.O.)

At least, something was happening. Something new.

Plum signs her form.

HR WOMAN

Let me walk you to the elevator.

PLUM

That's it? Really?

HR WOMAN

That's it if you want your insurance.

She smiles tightly.

INT. AUSTIN MEDIA -- HALLWAY -- DAY

The HR woman trails Plum as she moves to the elevator. Plum looks back and notices her CRUMPLE THE FORM and throw it in the trash.

PLUM

Hey--

The HR WOMAN gets close and her demeanor changes completely. Suddenly she's hushed, looking around warily.

HR WOMAN

Go to Basement Two. B2.

PLUM

Excuse me?

HR WOMAN

Basement 2. Just go.

PLUM

Not unless you tell me why.

HR WOMAN

They have *answers* down there--

The Elevator arrives, full of business men and women. The HR woman pastes on a big fake smile.

HR WOMAN (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming in, Plum. Have a great day.

With that, the HR woman turns on her heels and goes.

A bit stunned, Plum gets on the elevator. Again, she draws looks. People hug the walls so they won't touch her.

Plum feels their eyes on her. She looks at the BUTTONS on the elevator panel. B2. She hesitates. Her finger hovering.

She makes a decision. And hits B2.

CLOSE ON PLUM

As she descends out of frame along with the elevator. Down the rabbit hole.

INT. AUSTEN MEDIA TOWER -- BASEMENT HALLWAY -- DAY

The elevator opens, empty except for Plum. It's dimly lit, shadow-y. She follows a sign for the BEAUTY CLOSET to a pair of metallic double doors.

There's a keypad with a doorbell on it. Plum rings the bell. No response. After a moment, Plum rings again.

Finally, heels click clack on the other side of the door. A lilting southern accent calls:

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Coming!

The door opens a few inches and a heavily made-up eye peeks out.

JULIA

You must be Plum. Come in, come in.

INT. AUSTEN MEDIA TOWER -- BEAUTY CLOSET -- DAY

Plum enters and stops, amazed.

The place is HUGE, with row and rows of stainless steel shelves that climb so high, the glare of the lights above make them appear to ascend into the heavens.

And every one full of beauty products, all nestled in black lacquered trays.

Each row of shelves is labelled. LIDS, BROWS, LASHES, FACE, BODY, SHAMPOO and so on.

JULIA, her host, is a buffed and beheeled blonde in glasses, cream slacks and a silk blouse. Around her slender waist is black utility belt, filled with make-up and brushes.

Julia's manner is as crisp as her appearance. She talks quickly, a wry twinkle in her expression. But at the moment she's silent, taking Plum in.

PLUM

You...call this a closet?

From her tool belt Julia pulls a lip pencil and hands it to Plum.

JULIA

For you.

It's "Juicy Plum". Plum takes this in, stammers:

PLUM

I -- this is, there was a girl.  
Following me. She--

JULIA

Leeta, yes. I asked her to do that.  
I'm Julia Cole, manager of the  
beauty closet.

PLUM

You asked her to do that, *why*?

JULIA

We'll get to that.

Julia heads down one of the long aisles. Plum follows. Julia notices her stop and read a sign: "LIPS -- MINORA AND MAJORA".

JULIA (CONT'D)

That's a little closet humor-

PLUM

Will you please tell me what I'm  
doing here.

Julia stops.

JULIA

My, my. Aren't you an eager beaver.

PLUM

I just want to understand.

JULIA

Don't we all, doll, don't we all.

Julia walks her deeper and deeper into the cavernous room. To the more obscure aisles. Labels read things like: "DISCONTINUED EYES" and "EXTRACTION".

PLUM

What is all this for, anyway?

JULIA

We're under 52 floors of *lifestyle*,  
Hon. Magazines, television shows,  
sponsored YouTube channels... Every  
face needs to be perfect, every  
body needs to shimmer.

(abrupt)

Before we go any further you have  
to agree that everything I say to  
you is confidential.

PLUM

Sure. Okay.

JULIA

I sent you a message. Under an assumed name. To the Dear Kitty account.

Julia pulls out her phone and finds an email on it. As she READS THE WORDS FROM HER EMAIL ARE TYPED OVER THE BOTTOM OF THE FRAME and we read along.

JULIA (CONT'D)

"Dear Kitty, as one of our great intellectual minds of all time"--  
(smiles)

You should have known it was fake from that alone.

(reads again)

"I would like to ask you -- who is more oppressed, a woman covered from head to toe in a burka, or one of the bikini-clad models in your magazine?"

FLASHBACK

Plum at her TABLE IN CARMEN'S CAFE. Julia's message can be seen on Plum's computer.

Plum smiles a little at the question. Considers...

We see her reply TYPED ON SCREEN as she writes it.

PLUM (V.O.)

My answer? "You pose an interesting question, one that I'm not sure I can answer. One woman covers her body, while the other exposes herself. You could consider it two sides of the same coin."

BACK ON PLUM AND JULIA IN THE BEAUTY CLOSET

JULIA

There is *no way* on God's Green Earth that Kitty wrote that. She is many things but a deep thinker is not one of them. I'd heard a rumor that she had somebody answering her letters. Somebody *interesting*. So I tested the theory and you passed.

(then)

Eladio's a chatterbox after you get a drink in him. Once I knew who you were, I had my intern check you out.

PLUM  
Right. Is Leeta here?

JULIA  
She's away on personal business.  
(then)  
I wanted her to tell me if you can  
be trusted. The work I do here is  
highly confidential--

PLUM  
You mentioned. And what is that  
work, exactly?

JULIA  
Patience, lovely. After reading her  
notebook, I fear Leeta may have  
overstepped her bounds. You weren't  
even supposed to notice her.

Plum notices LEETA'S SMALL RED JOURNAL tucked into her tool  
belt. She reaches for it but Julia stops her. Grins a little.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
Now now--

PLUM  
She kept *notes* on me? I could have  
called the police.

JULIA  
But you didn't. Why?

PLUM  
(sputters a little)  
Well -- I mean, I wasn't sure. But  
then she gave me that book--

JULIA  
Dietland. That was all her. She  
grew fond of you. She thought you  
might appreciate the message--

Before Plum can answer the DOORBELL RINGS.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
Shit. Come with me.

Julia hustles back to the door. Plum follows -- her gaze  
falling on the NAMES of lipsticks...

EXTREME CLOSE ON

Circles of lip color with their names in BLACK. "I'M EASY, "AROUSSED", "BITE ME", "TRAMP", "KISS OF DEATH"...

Plum looks up as a VERY PREGNANT WOMAN -- skinny but for the bulging basketball on her middle -- teeters in on way too high heels. She's in a constant state of agitation.

PREGNANT WOMAN

What took you? I can't stand up that long.

JULIA

Maybe it's time for flats.  
(off her sharp look)  
Kidding! Of course not.

PREGNANT WOMAN

(eyes Plum/yick)  
Who are you?

JULIA

She works for Kitty.

The pregnant woman's eyes slide off Plum, dismissive.

PREGNANT WOMAN

I need some perfume. All day long I've been smelling this -- ass smell. And then I realized it was *my ass*. My gross pregnant sweat.

JULIA

No problem.

Julia leans over her desk and opens a drawer. Searches through some samples. She's turned away from the Pregnant Woman and her blouse opens so Plum can see her chest.

CLOSE ON JULIA

Her boobs SHIFT -- revealing that they are nothing more than a stuffed bra. And under it, her chest is scarred and flat. She's had a double mastectomy.

Over the scars, she has a large tattoo of blood red ROSES on curling, thorny vines.

ON PLUM

Transfixed by the sight. But Julia snaps back up with some samples and chimes:

JULIA (CONT'D)

No more smell. Put these in your desk for future emergencies.

The pregnant woman snatches them out of Julia's hands.

PREGNANT WOMAN

No more emergencies. If I don't have this kid by the end of the week I'm going to cut it out with a kitchen knife.

With that she's gone. Julia relaxes, relieved.

JULIA

Cunt.

(smiles/to Plum)

Not the good kind.

(then)

Do you know that two years ago I got my Ph.D in woman's studies. My Ph.D! You'd think the folks here would wonder why I sort lipsticks in a windowless closet all day long. But lucky for me, they're too concerned with how they smell and if their hair is "super glossy!"

Julia indicates her body, her face...

JULIA (CONT'D)

Please believe I would never do any of *this* if it wasn't necessary for--

PLUM

Your confidential, undercover work?

Julia stops at this. Smiles a little.

JULIA

Exactly.

PLUM

Are you responsible for the "security breach" Kitty told me about? Some woman's studies style covert action or--

JULIA

Of a sort. Plum, how much time would you say you've spent trying to better your outsides?

PLUM

God. I don't know.

JULIA

The average woman devotes an hour a day to grooming. On just hair and makeup. That's *years* of a life. Not to mention the dieting, the self loathing and denial...

PLUM

I know but it's just...how it is.

JULIA

Who says? Austen Media is part of the *dissatisfaction* machine. A hugely profitable machine. We actually pay them to tell us how broken we are, and then we pay for the products to fix it. But we're never fixed. There's always some new way we don't please the eye of our Big Brother Beholder. It's time to fight. To deprogram our girls.

This hits Plum deeply. But she as much as she wishes it could be that way...

PLUM

You make it sound like a conspiracy. It's just human nature. People like pretty things.

JULIA

But you're not a thing. You're a woman. And you should decorate your *self* however pleases *you*.

Again, Plum is moved. Nobody's ever talked to her like this. Julia comes closer to Plum, her expression shifting. Turning soft and almost -- is it lusty?

JULIA (CONT'D)

Open your mouth.

PLUM

Excuse me?

JULIA

Just do it.

Despite her reservations, Plum complies. Julia leans in, very close, and removes a lipstick from her belt. Slowly backs Plum against a shelf.

PLUM  
Does Verna Baptist have anything to  
do with this?

JULIA  
Shhhh. No more questions for now.

CLOSE ON PLUM AND JULIA

As Julia slowly, sensuously applies lipstick to Plum's lips. Plum can feel Julia's breath on her neck. It's as intimate as a kiss. Then...

JULIA (CONT'D)  
That color suits you. Your skin is  
as white as a rose... What color  
are your nipples?  
(then)  
To match.

She shows Plum a blush brush in her hand.

PLUM  
Uh... Pink.

Julia opens a compact and shows Plum a shade.

PLUM (CONT'D)  
Lighter.

JULIA  
Like this?

Plum nods. Can't deny the charge in the moment. Simply having this energy directed at her is arousing.

Julia leans close again, gently brushes the apples of her cheeks. Openly staring into her lovely eyes.

Plum looks away, shy.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
Doesn't anyone ever tell you you're  
beautiful? As you are?

A moment between them. Feels like Julia is going to kiss her...

PLUM  
(abrupt)  
Just -- tell me. Why am I here?

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- EVENING

Plum walks slowly, in a kind of a daze.

PLUM (V.O.)

Julia finally told me that she wanted the names and emails of the girls who had written to Kitty. To send them "counter intelligence". She wanted them to fight back. Like she want me to.

INT. SUBWAY -- NIGHT

Plum rides home. Sitting now. Lost in her phone as she pulls up her spreadsheet with all the names and emails of the girls she's written to.

PLUM (V.O.)

50,000 emails. 50,000 girls, lonely and desperate enough to write to Kitty. And Julia wanted them all.

Plum looks up. Thinking. There's a pixilated news ticker mounted above a row of seats.

A banner runs across it "Metrolink Crash Suicide Victim identified... The 13-year-old rape victim had been harassed after she accused neighborhood men of the attack...

Plum *notices* this time. Takes in the horrifying news.

Plum puts JULIA'S ADDRESS in an email forwarding the spreadsheet.

PLUM (V.O.)

If I got caught, I could lose my job. And if I lost my job, I lost my insurance. Which meant no surgery.

(then)

And that's assuming I didn't get arrested.

Plum changes her mind. Puts her phone away.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- NIGHT

Plum moves toward her neighborhood. A busy street lined with convenience markets, drug store, etc.

She doesn't notice a group of rowdy teen boys stand not far away. They glance at her, snicker.

One of the boys makes eye contact, nods and says:

TEEN BOY

Hey. You. My friend here likes you.

Plum snaps out of her reverie.

PLUM

What?

The boys howl as one kid mutters his protest, walks away.

Plum drops her head and walks past them, awash in shame and anger.

TEEN BOY

Hey! Where you going, sexy?  
He wants to fuuuuuk you...

More laughs. She speeds up but they decide to drop it. She turns a corner and is confronted by:

EXT/STREET -- DIORAMA -- NIGHT

Plum sees the dividing line.

On this side -- life, all of it.

On that side: an animated version of her street in dusky daylight.

And multiple black clad versions of HER, moving from home to cafe to church, home to cafe to church...

Crossing each other with her head down, trying not to draw attention. Over and over again.

PLUM (V.O.)

It was stupid. It was wrong.

PUSH IN ON PLUM

Holding back tears. She makes a decision.

She pulls out her phone and looks at the email to Julia. In the heading she writes: FIGHT BACK. And presses send.

PLUM (V.O.)

But something had started.  
Something bigger than me. And  
that's saying something.

CROSS FADE TO:

INT. AUTOPSY ROOM -- NIGHT

We move across pulverized bodies of the men who were thrown off the freeway overpass. A faceless man performs an autopsy on one of them.

A hand opens one of the men's jaw and a long pair of tweezers digs into his throat. The tweezers emerge with a rolled up piece of paper in their tongs. The doctor unrolls the paper.

On it is written a single word -- JENNIFER.