

Constant Change
(TV Pilot)

written by

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FADE IN

INT. OFFICE - DAY

GRAHAM CONSTANCE, 50's, tubby, beard, is relaxed in comfy but old chair, pen and paper in hand. Wearing a t-shirt displaying rock band Kiss with business jacket over top. He listens intently.

MALCOLM (O.S.)

...And then the lady in the shop wouldn't let me return the item...and that's when the name calling started. Then the pushing...then the fighting...then the stapler incident and that's when security came.

We pull back to see Malcolm 30's, neat, crisp looking, sitting on a modern looking chair opposite Graham. They are sitting in an office with desk, bookshelves, graduation certificates framed on walls.

GRAHAM

All because the item didn't hang straight in your wardrobe?

MALCOLM

Right. They must use different style coat hangers or some sort of special effects in the store.

GRAHAM

Ok. Let's have a break. You know where the coffee is kept. I have some cognitive behaviour role plays to try next, so we'll take 10 hey.

MALCOLM

Do you think I'm getting better Dr. Constant?

Graham carefully removes his glasses. Looks positive.

GRAHAM

No.

MALCOLM

No?

GRAHAM

We've been trying to get you to be friends with being uncomfortable or not in control and you spent the first half of your double appointment putting my record collection into barcode order.

MALCOLM

There was no logic to how you had it.

GRAHAM

And my Starwars figurines?

SHELF

We see Starwars figurines perfectly organised in height order with perfect gaps between them.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Modern bright kitchen with long island bench. JACKSON, who likes to be known as 'J', 12 year old boy who looks rather androgynous, sits at kitchen table drawing. KAREN walks in talking on mobile phone in agitated manner. She is in her 40's, attractive, dresses to her own made up style.

KAREN

Well I'm not happy with those chapters so I am re doing them. That's why I missed the deadline.

Opens pantry cupboards looking for something. Malcolm walks in but everyone is oblivious.

KAREN (CONT'D)

(to herself)

God, this pantry is dis-organized.

She paces across kitchen. Head tucked into phone.

Don't question my ability RACHAEL, I've just got a lot going on right now.....Thursday ok...no wait, Monday. Ok bye.

Karen walks over to Jackson at the table. In the background we see Malcolm starting to take things out of the pantry and reorganize it.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Still want to go shoe shopping today J?

JACKSON (J)

Depends where we are going.

KAREN

Well I was thinking the plaza.

JACKSON

Daddy said you got banned?

KAREN

Banned is a strong word sweetie...it was more like.. try again another day.

JACKSON

Daddy says there's a picture of you in the shop.

Graham walks in to find Malcolm has pantry items all over the kitchen bench and is reorganizing it.

GRAHAM

These role plays aren't gonna work.

Karen turns around to see what has happened.

KAREN

Can you hold off curing him until after he's finished Graham? Do you think we can even squeeze in the garage?

An older larger women storms into kitchen pushing through Graham and Malcolm. She is Karen's mother Cindy. She is 66 but dresses like she is 46. She is harsh and critical looking, wearing expensive clothing and jewelry. She walks to coffee machine.

CINDY

What a surprise, I come down from a relaxing sleep-in to find everyone sitting in the kitchen instead of working.

Cindy looks at Malcolm.

CINDY (CONT'D)

And yet again, Graham has done the opposite to his boundaries lecture and brought his work into our family sphere.

Cindy looks at Malcolm.

CINDY (CONT'D)

So, what's wrong with you mister?

GRAHAM

Back to the office Malcolm.

They exit.

CINDY

(shouting out)

When are you going to bring me a sex addict?

June walks over to the table.

CINDY (CONT'D)

So Jackson -

KAREN

J. We had a family meeting and we all decided "J" is appropriate.

CINDY

Whatever. OK then....J, I hear you need some new shoes.

J

Mine are too small.

CINDY

Would you like me to take you shoe shopping?

J

Mom says shopping with you is like a civilian form of water torture.

Cindy glares up at Karen.

CINDY

Really.

KAREN

Every shopping trip with you ends up in disaster.

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

We always end up fighting because I know what I want, I have it clear in my mind and you keep trying to get me to buy something different -

CINDY

Something better.

KAREN

Better? All I wanted was a new fry pan and I came home with a 35 piece cooking set and special clothes to cook in.

CINDY

Well you have to look your best in all circumstances dear. You have gone a little frumpy of late and you know what they say - sex starts in the kitchen.

J

I want to go with Mom, it'll be fun.

CINDY

I'm sure it will be.

Cindy looks Karen up and down.

CINDY (CONT'D)

But first maybe go through your Mom's wardrobe and see if the words trendy, fashionable and classy scroll through your mind.

INT. SHOPPING PLAZA - DAY

Automatic doors open. Karen and J walk hand in hand into busy shopping centre. As they walk past security guard, he gives Karen a suspicious look. Karen stares back. Security guard talks into his shoulder radio. J wears a female style top, jeans but obviously looks like a boy. Gets strange looks from some shoppers.

J

How long is Grandma Cindy going to live with us?

KAREN

Well when Grandpa died, his business owed a lot of money so Grandma sold the house and asked if she could stay with us until she can afford a new place.

J

But she doesn't earn any money.

Look of realization on Karen's face.

J (CONT'D)

Maybe you can buy her a house when you finish your next book.

KAREN

Well that might be a while with the way it's going. Why? Don't you like having Grandma around?

J

I do but someday it's like having two of you.

INT. SHOE SHOP - DAY

Karen and J walk in to a colorful kids shoe shop. They split up and browse. Jessie looks at boys style sneakers area. Middle aged overweight SHOP ASSISTANT woman with thick glasses comes over.

SHOP ASSISTANT

How can I help you today?

KAREN

Oh, I need some new shoes for daughter.

SHOP ASSISTANT

Well this is the boys area.

KAREN

I know that. It's just that ... my ... I thought my child That's her over there.

Shop assistant turns to see J looking at high heels.

SHOP ASSISTANT

(cheery shop assistant voice)

Right then.

(MORE)

SHOP ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Well we may not be able to help you with your problem today, ok.

KAREN

Don't OK me sister or I'll KO you. And it's not a problem we have.

(Points her finger at assistant)

Since when has buying shoes become a problem. The only problem we have

-

Karen sees the security guard walking past slowly, looking intently at her. She quickly withdraw her pointed finger. J holds up a pair of shoes with glitter and pony decals.

J

Mom, I really like these ones.

KAREN

They're nice. But you know I was just talking to the lady here and she said these ones over this side are really really popular.

SHOP ASSISTANT

I'll leave you to browse.

J walks over, looks at range of boys sneakers with little approval.

KAREN

You know with school sports starting soon, I thought one of these would be ideal. Fast, comfy, and I bet all the other kids would be jealous if you had a pair of these.

J

I don't know. I don't really like them.

KAREN

You don't really like vegetables either but you eat them.

J

I like the ones with the pony on them.

Karen scours the shelves with intent. Picks up random shoes.

KAREN

Maybe there is one here with a stallion on them. Or a bear. What about a shark or a storm trooper.

J

You don't like it when Grandma tells you what to wear.

KAREN

This is different J. The kids at school are going to start to notice things are different. I'm trying to protect you sweetie.

J walks out of shop.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

Graham is reclining in chair, reading a book. TV on low in background. J and Karen walk in front door.

GRAHAM

Hey, how the shoe shoppers go. Are you the new Imelda Marcos? She's the lady from the Philippines who has over 1200 hundred pairs of shoes.

J

Well I'm gonna be more like Bruce Willis in the first Die Hard.

J walks off to her room.

GRAHAM

How did J end up seeing Die Hard?
(slams book shut)
Cindy. Damn her. We can't let them stay up late together anymore.

Karen flops herself on couch. Lays down like a patient.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

It's a double consult fee after five.

KAREN

We have no shoes. Shoes, we don't have. You think it would simple wouldn't you.

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

You know lady at the store, miss almighty gatekeeper of the shoes, miss 'shoey mcshoe face' said she couldn't help with our problem. And I thought since when is buying shoes like solving third world debt or failing a maths test or getting another speeding ticket on the way home.

GRAHAM

What was that last part?

KAREN

Graham, you're missing the point. Seriously, how do keep your clients? The point is, it's always going to be a problem. Shoes, clothes, birthday parties, schools, jobs.

GRAHAM

These are challenges. Not problems. All parents face these. J is adamant she wants to be this way, so our challenges may be stronger. Though raising a 66 year old cantankerous cynical mutton who dresses like lamb may be harder.

KAREN

But I know what the best shoes are for J. I know what she needs. I know what's best.

GRAHAM

Are we still talking about the shoes? It sounds like you think because you failed at buying shoes, you think you're failing as a parent to J.

Cindy walks in.

CINDY

You didn't buy shoes? What did you do all day?

Karen sits up.

GRAHAM

Why is it whenever you walk in the room my work unwinds like thread from a spool.

(MORE)

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

You should have to pass through border checkpoints before entering rooms.

CINDY

I'm just surprised you couldn't buy shoes. Get married, nah. Publish a book, no way. But buying your child shoes -

KAREN

Well I'm surprised you can stand on your on two feet -

CINDY

But at least my feet have shoes.

GRAHAM

Why don't you take J shoe shopping tomorrow then Cindy? Maybe get to know your grandchild better. Who knows maybe you could even take your son-in-law shopping one day and get to know him better.

CINDY

Since when has Jessie been a bigamist?

INT. SHOPPING PLAZA - DAY

J and Cindy walk through the shopping plaza. J is wearing boys clothes and doesn't like it one bit.

CINDY

Now doesn't it feel better dressed like that Jackson.

J

I like dresses Grandma but I also want you to be happy so its ok I guess.

CINDY

Thanks Jackson. This reminds me of going shopping with your Uncle Marlon when he was a boy. He used to love shopping and hanging out the local mall. He'd always come home with so many toys and clothes and CDs and all sorts of things.

(MORE)

CINDY (CONT'D)

I don't know where he got the money, he never earned any pocket money at home.

J

Where is Uncle Marlon? How come we don't see him very much.

CINDY

He's in prison. Well, not quite prison, now he just can't leave the house unless he goes to visit the police station twice a day. Ummm, you know your other cousins are going well. Michael is playing football now and Jake made the swimming team. What about you? What sports are you going to play?

J

Mmmm. Not really sure. I don't like a lot of sports.

CINDY

Well what do you like?

J

Raspberry Pi

CINDY

Ooh yes, I like that too.

J

I put it on my Christmas list but Mom said I wasn't allowed to have it.

CINDY

Not allowed to have Raspberry Pie?

J

Nope.

CINDY

Tell you what, it's a good thing I moved in. Everyone could do with some parenting.

J

Would you buy me a raspberry pi Grandma?

CINDY
Of course dear.

CUT TO:

BAKERY WINDOW

Cindy and J look at some pies in the window.

J
No Grandma. This way.

J leads Cindy away.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Karen has got out of the shower, hair still damp, wearing jeans and a bra with unbuttoned shirt. She combs her hair while walking. Walks into hallway.

KAREN
Freak me out.

A man is standing in the hallway admiring family pictures on the wall. Ray, 30's, wearing white gloves.

RAY
Oh sorry. You must be Mrs.
Constant. Dr. Constant said I could
go for a walk while we had a break.

Karen does up her shirt.

KAREN
I am sure Dr. Constant meant
outside. Graham! Come and get your
patient.

RAY
Oh I don't like going outside. Too
many people, you know germs. These
are lovely photos by the way.

KAREN
Well there are plenty more
downstairs. I even think there are
quite a few in Dr. Constant's
office.

Karen ushers him downstairs.

KAREN (CONT'D)
 (too herself)
 We need a toddler gate on these
 stairs.

INT. SHOPPING PLAZA - DAY

Cindy and J stand at counter of electronics shop looking at a Raspberry Pi computer on the counter.

CINDY
 Eighty-Nine dollars? Is that Lira?

Shop manager, male, 60's, balding, glasses, smiles.

SHOP MANAGER
 Kids love em. They disappear for
 hours.

CINDY
 And that's the problem. They
 reappear when they're 21, dressed
 in black having missed life.

J
 Please Grandma, you promised.

CINDY
 What do you want to do again with
 it?

J
 Program, you know code and stuff. I
 wanna write a program that suggests
 what dress I should wear based on
 the weather.

Strange look from Store Manager as Cindy hands over money.

CINDY
 You write me a program that tells
 me when it is safe to talk to your
 Mom without getting my head bit off
 and it's yours.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Karen sits on grass, near tree with a shade sail attached.
 She stares at her laptop.

KAREN

(To herself)

C'mon girl, the third one is in me
somewhere. Just relax. Calm blue
ocean, clam blue ocean. Calm Blue -

CRASH

A huge thud of a ball smashing into the backyard fence. Young
kids giggle, talk.

KID 1 (O.S.)

Great goal. My turn.

KID 2 (O.S.)

Great idea Dad. Painting soccer
goal on the fence. It's awesome.

CRASH. Ball hits the fence.

Karen slams laptop shut.

KAREN

Yeah great idea Dad. You
inconsiderate numpty. No-one wonder
your wife is banging the girl from
number 32.

INT. SHOE SHOP - DAY

Cindy and J are in the shoe shop from day before. The same
shop assistant walks over to Cindy.

SHOP ASSISTANT

And how can I help you today?

CINDY

I just want to get a nice pair of
sports sneakers for my grandson
Jackson.

J, who was wandered off into the girls section holds up a
bright pair of shoes with rainbows on them.

J

These ones Grandma. These ones.

The shop assistant realises it is the same child as yesterday
and looks at Cindy.

SHOP ASSISTANT

Well good luck with that.

Shop assistant walks off.

CINDY
Jackson, come over here.

J walks over. Cindy pulls a nice sporty looking sneaker from the shelf.

CINDY (CONT'D)
Do you like these? Try them on.

J
But Grandma...

CINDY
Try dear. You got your raspberry quiche, now you can do something for me. Try them on.

J puts shoe on, walks up and down in a line with a sad look.

CINDY (CONT'D)
They look great. Are they comfy?

J shrugs shoulders.

J
I guess.

CINDY
Done then.

Cindy signals to Shop Assistant as J walks of sad out of the store.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

Karen sits in front of coffee table, laptop open, several coffee cups on table.

Cindy and J walk in but J storms off out of lounge to bedroom. Door SLAMS.

KAREN
So no success for you either. I told you it wasn't easy.

Cindy places shoe box on table.

KAREN (CONT'D)
It is easy if you stop being so process driven and be more outcome focused.

Karen looks in box.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Mom, these are boy shoes.

CINDY
Like it or not, Jackson is a boy.
And whether straight, queer, trans
gender or whatever, they are the
child not the parent. Kid needs
shoes, I got shoes.

Cindy looks at open laptop.

CINDY (CONT'D)
It looks like the Beatles 'White
Album' cover.

KAREN
Well maybe if i wasn't dealing with
mothers, kids, publishers and
neighbours and kleptomaniac
patients who keep raiding my mantle
piece, I'd have something started.

CINDY
There were shops asking for sales
people, why don't you forget this
writing caper and get a regular
income. Your last book is now
selling in the three dollar bins.

KAREN
The last book paid for a lot of
this house, helping you out and
letting Graham start his home
practice and my next book will pay
for you to be put in a home.

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

J sits on the trampoline, sulking. Graham climbs on and
starts jumping.

GRAHAM
Gonna jump.

J
No.

GRAHAM
Well I need to. Man those patients
stress me out sometimes.

Graham points to new shoes on the ground.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Hey aren't those the shoes all the kids are wearing? They look great.

J

You can have them.

GRAHAM

I don't think they'd fit.

J

But Mom is always saying to her friends how you have small feet and then they all giggle.

Graham angrily jumps, curses under his breath and with fists clenched. Stops and sits next to J.

GRAHAM

What don't you like about the shoes?

J

They're not me. I really wanted the girls ones.

GRAHAM

I think Mom and Grandma just want you to be focused on your school and not distracted by what other kids might say. They think the shoes might help. But you know what, today I had a patient who likes to spy and eavesdrop on people. He told me about some of what your Mom and Grandma said so I came up with a solution.

Graham pulls out markers from his back pocket.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Fabric markers.

J's eyes light up.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Now, I don't want you going overboard, but you can do some artwork on the shoes to make them your own ok.

J
Cool. Dad. Thanks.

They hug.

J (CONT'D)
Thanks so much, I'm gonna get started.

J jumps off trampoline and heads inside.

GRAHAM
Try and keep it on the back of the shoe, nice and subtle. I don't want it looking like your trippn acid.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Cindy sits at kitchen table. Dinner plates set. Karen prepares dinner. Graham walks in, hands in the air in champion style.

GRAHAM
The shoe problem is solved. I am the greatest.

KAREN
Oh yeah you float like a anvil and sting like a wet lettuce.

Karen hands Graham and lettuce and knife.

GRAHAM
You two are just jealous.

CINDY
If I'm going to have any sins it's going to be gluttony. How far away is my meal?

GRAHAM
27 miles. There's a great Chinese place, here take my keys.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

Karen and Graham relax on couch. Watch tv together.

KAREN
Do you think we'll be ok. I mean bills, my Mother, J, your home business, my book.

GRAHAM

Well I tell my clients that sometimes when things seem overwhelming to try and remove just one stresser from their life. So if we could just get rid of your mother -

Karen slaps Graham.

KAREN

You did good with the shoes though. Letting J decorate her pair. I mean it's ruined an eighty dollar pair of shoes but J is happy and I'm happy.

GRAHAM

We're not going to have to let her decorate every piece of clothing though are we?

KAREN

I just hope the kids at school on Monday are good to her. They're coming into that age where they notice whose different, whose in, whose out, who totally sucked at high jump and cost the school their only chance of a medal at inter-school sports day. The usual.

GRAHAM

I think J will be fine. I think my idea rocks and I can't see a single thing going wrong.

TAG

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

Door bell rings. Karen walks over and opens it.

A group of angry Mom's barge in holding their children's sneakers which are now covered in markers and artwork.

MOM 1

Your child encouraged my Mickey to paint his shoes. Do you know how much these were?

MOM 2

All the kids are now doing it, what do you have to say. Whose idea was this?

Yelling and carry-on from MOM's. Karen pushes them outside.

KAREN

Graham. Graham. Graham get out
here.

FADE OUT