



Karma is a B*tch

"PILOT"

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COLD OPEN

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

The beautiful daytime street scenes of present day San Francisco: parents walking their kids to school, a trolley car driver making his first stop of the day, tourist traffic on Lombard street, the homeless being ignored by pedestrians.

MARLENA V.O.

Karma. A hasty google search defines it as the relationship between a person's actions and their following consequences. I like to think of it more as a silent cosmic force that makes sure good deeds are rewarded and the bad ones get disciplined.

A BUSINESSMAN hails a cab. It stops in front of him and he opens the door--but suddenly another MAN pushes him aside and jumps into the car, slamming the door behind him!

The cab drives away and the first man is left standing on the curb, visibly angry. The cab drives about 30ft then gets T-BONED by another car running a red light!

EXT. BAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A crappy strip mall bar, with blacked out windows. A lazy looking BOUNCER sits on a stool in front of a huge door.

MARLENA V.O.

Karma's followed me my whole life. Like that time my best friend Jaya and I snuck out of our parents' houses one summer and tried to get into a bar for the first time.

MARLENA (age 18), dressed like a child's concept of a hip adult, shows her ID to the Bouncer.

BOUNCER

Hi, welcome to the Pineapple Mrs...Gorbachev?

MARLENA (18)

Yes, many thank you comrade.

INT. BAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Marlena greets JAYA (age 18), who's already inside, with a shout of glee.

MARLENA (18)
Oh my god, I can't believe he
thought this stupid ID was real!

Behind them at the bar is an entire legion of UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS, who turn to the girls with angered shock.

MARLENA V.O.
How was I supposed to know it was
the police commissioner's wake?

The girls pretend they heard someone else behind them speak.

MARLENA (18)
Is what...my **children** say to me.
(to Jaya)
Run!

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

MARLENA is on a hike with JAYA (both age 14). They sit on a bench at the top of a hill eating their packed lunches.

MARLENA V.O.
Karma doesn't just slap around
humans. The ENTIRE animal kingdom
is on her steely-eyed radar. Like
that time when I was 14, we saw a
starving stray dog.

A pathetic looking small skinny DOG walks up to them and begs. The girls feel bad and Marlena breaks off part of her sandwich to give to the dog. The dog immediately BITES her hand and runs away with the piece of food.

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)
It literally BIT the hand that was
feeding it, and **ran...**

The girls recoil and gasp as the dog runs---over the steep edge of the hill!

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)
Straight off a hundred foot drop.

They rush over to the edge to look, but don't see the body.

MARLENA (14)
M-maybe it landed on top of a bird
and they flew together to safety?

JAYA (14)
I'm gonna imagine THAT from now on.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We see the entrance to the auditorium with a hand-painted sign: "**3rd Grade Class Play: The History of America.**"

MARLENA V.O.
But I think the **earliest** memory I
have of her brutal wrath was from
when I was 8 years old...

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

MARLENA (aged 8), dressed as John Wilkes Booth, waits on the side of the stage for her big entrance.

MARLENA V.O.
My first ever crush was on the boy
playing Abraham Lincoln. I thought
I could rewrite history and reunite
the nation with our love.

Her TEACHER pushes Marlana onstage. She runs out and stands behind the two KIDS dressed as Lincoln and Mary Todd, who sit facing stage left pretending to watch a play with a small sign underneath them that reads "**The Ford Theatre.**"

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)
See Karma is also sneaky. She
doesn't just strike if you do
something morally wrong. She's also
there to pass judgment on your
questionable decisions.

Marlena inches closer behind them, about to enact what the whole crowd is expecting--but then throws down her pistol and turns to face the audience.

MARLENA (8)
I wont do it! Love will save
America! And I love YOU Billy
Daniels!

The audience gasps as Marlana instead SHOOTS Mary Todd with the cap gun! She quickly drops the gun and hugs Lincoln. The teacher runs out and grabs Marlana to pull her off the stage.

ANGRY DAD (O.S.)
 Why isn't she **killing** the
 president?!

ANGRY MOM (O.S.)
 SHOOT HIM IN THE BRAIN!!

Lincoln gleefully picks up the cap gun and SHOOTs Mary Todd again, who starts sobbing uncontrollably.

MARLENA V.O.
 Mary Todd didn't deserve it.
 Apparently this had a strong effect
 on Billy though. But our class once
 wrote a VERY nice letter to him
 while he was in the asylum.

The whole scene is a mess: with the teacher trying to console Mary-Todd, Lincoln RUNS RAMPANT, ripping up stage decorations, and parents yelling in fury.

CONCERNED PARENT
 (whispers to husband)
 Can't wait to see what they do for
 the nativity play.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY (PRESENT)

It's the morning rush at a trendy coffee shop. MARLENA (now 28) sits alone at a high-top table, dressed business-casual.

MARLENA V.O.
 Now Karma doesn't answer at every
 possible moment, and bad things CAN
 happen to good people--but the
 universe always has a way of
 correcting itself. For 28 years
 we've had a colorful relationship--
 but THIS is the day I take full
 control of my destiny!

She takes a sip of her latte.

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)
 Today, I'm making Karma MY BITCH--

--It's way too hot! She spits it out and spills some of what's left in her lap.

MARLENA
 Ahhh CRAP!

She looks around, hoping nobody's noticed.

MARLENA V.O.
 I hope that's not a bad sign.

ACT ONEEXT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Marlena walks out the shop, coffee stain still prominent on her blouse.

MARLENA V.O.

I work for a temp agency--NOT
because I can't make decisions
about a career or love life--SHUT
UP--but because I'm great with
people and like how every
assignment is something new!

On the sidewalk she sees a SCHLUBBY MAN (40s), wearing a ratty suit sitting on a bench, holding a thermos mug. He notices Marlena has a NAPKIN stuck to the bottom of her heel.

SCHLUBBY MAN

Excuse me, miss? You have a--

As Marlena walks by him, she pulls some change from her coat pocket and DROPS IT in his mug.

MARLENA V.O.

Ahh, giving to the homeless. See?
I'm filling up the good Karma tank
all the time.

He's disgruntled--the mug is actually full of coffee. He pours Marlena keeps walking, confidently ignorant.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO - CONTINUOUS

Marlena continues her upbeat stroll through town.

MARLENA V.O.

This week I get to temp at the
company I've always dreamed of
working for since I was a teenager.
The hottest, most culturally
current and fashionably snarky
magazine in America: VULV!

INSERT: Closeup of VULV cover. A sexy model looking smug and copy that reads, "SEX: Why Is It Spelled That Way?"

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)

I kept my cool though when my
staffing boss Avi told me.

INT. TEMP AGENCY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Marlena stands in front of a counter window, her boss AVI (late 50s, hefty and homely) seated in a chair on the other side of it. He slides a packet of papers underneath the window. Marlena's eyes bulge--she spins in pure joy.

MARLENA
(like a drunken streaker)
WOOOOOOOO! AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

Avi is surprised, in his own droll way.

AVI
That's a first.

EXT. VULV MAGAZINE HQ - DAY (PRESENT)

Marlena turns the corner and looks up at the massive, stately office building. It's like a boxy, steel and glass castle.

MARLENA V.O.
I'm gonna impress them so much with my can-do attitude and encyclopedic knowledge of their womanly advice, they'll practically BEG me to work for them full time.

She stops a few feet before the main entrance, to take a deep calming breath, then walks inside.

INT. VULV HQ LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The lobby is cavernous and numerous people flow in and out: assistants with wardrobe racks, tall models with tiny dogs on leashes, old ladies dressed like Karl Lagerfeld patting the butts of their young male assistants, etc.

Marlena is amazed. She walks past large printed past covers of the magazine adorn the lobby with beautiful models and copy like: "**Kill Your Man, Or Don't**" and "**Sex: Always Better When You're Awake.**" She stops at the front desk security and smiles at the SECURITY GUARD (30s). She quickly tucks in her blouse to hide the coffee stain.

MARLENA
Helloooo, I'm temping today for the assistant to the lifestyle editor.

SECURITY GUARD
7th floor.

MARLENA

Must be amazing to work here,
right? What a great magazine!

SECURITY GUARD

I'm out of pepper spray. Can you
not lean on the security desk?

MARLENA

(trying to get away)
7th floor, got it.

INT. VULV 7TH FLOOR

The elevator bings and the doors open. Marlana walks out
beaming. More people buzz by--this place is a machine.

MARLENA V.O.

It's just like the first day of
school! New faces, new smells, new
outfits...

She sees AMBER (28, tall and beautiful) down the hallway.
She's stunning, in an incredibly icy way.

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)

Amber Riley, the most popular girl,
who treated me like garbage--

MARLENA

(terrified)
Aaaaaaaaahh!

Amber is startled and looks at Marlana cautiously.

AMBER

Uh, is everything alright?

MARLENA

(covering)
H-hiii!

Amber walks over to her, curious, as Marlana points to
herself and holds an overly large "It's ME" smile on her
face. Amber doesn't recognize her.

AMBER

Are you the fall intern?

MARLENA

It's Marlana! Jimenez! Everyone
used to say "hey-hey, there goes
Marly J!"

MARLENA V.O.
Nobody ever said that.

AMBER
Aha, I'm sorry. You must be from
the halfway house I donated to.

MARLENA
Wow you donated to a halfway house?

AMBER
Donated to have it demolished.

MARLENA
Oh...no I'm from high school! I
mean, I WENT to high school--with
YOU! We had like, ten classes
together!

AMBER
(fake)
Nice to see you again. Interns
usually start a coffee run at this
time. I take a triple espresso.

MARLENA
Hah! I'm not an intern, gosh that'd
be ridiculous at **our** age.
(chuckles)
No, I'm a temp!

AMBER
I see.

MARLENA
I'm assisting the lifestyle editor.
I can't wait to meet her--ugh, I
bet she's a real slave driver,
right?

Marlena air-elbows Ambers ribs.

AMBER
I try to be. But we're not supposed
to use that term here anymore, not
after the OSHA reported multiple
complaints against us.

Oh crap, Amber's her boss?! Marlena's smile goes from genuine
to looking like it was blasted on her face by a shotgun. She
tries to hide her agony.

MARLENA
G-great...

INT. VULV 7TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Amber struts down the hallway towards her office, with Marlena quickly following.

MARLENA

So, howww has it been going?

AMBER

We're getting sued for not being handicap friendly enough, so next month's lifestyle section is devoted to "decorating your wheelchair." It's giving me an ulcer.

MARLENA

I meant, how are **you**? You know, since high school? Did you marry that guy you were dating senior year?

AMBER

He was already married.

MARLENA

(weird)

Right. Um, so how'd you land this gig? Did you start as an assistant?

AMBER

I was for a month, then got this job after the previous editor died.

MARLENA

Oh my god, that's terrible. How?

AMBER

I don't know, I was at home. Three people can vouch for my being there at the time of death.

Marlena tilts her head in confusion. Amber points her to a small, drab, claustrophobic office with no decorations.

AMBER (CONT'D)

You'll sit in there. My office is down the hall. Sheila should've left instructions for you. This is a very fast-paced office Melissa, I hope you can handle the workload.

MARLENA

It's...Marlena.

Amber doesn't correct herself, and continues walking.

AMBER

And even as a temp, I expect you to dress more appropriate--is that diarrhea or a coffee stain?

Marlena looks down at the bottom of her blouse. The stain from her spill at the coffee shop is still visible.

MARLENA

Oh, yeah it's coffee. Wait, why'd you say diarrhea **first**?

INT. ASSISTANT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Marlena walks in, dejected, and sets her bag down on the floor. She sulks in the cheap chair behind the tiny desk, and looks to see if there are any notes--there's a single post-it note on the desk. It reads: "**Suicide Hotline 415-555-7688.**"

MARLENA

That's a bad sign.

She leans back in the chair, and gazes at her surroundings. Not exactly what's on her vision board, but it's a start.

MARLENA V.O.

Amber friggin' Riley. She stole every guy worth dating in high school, and stabbed anyone who got close to her in the back. How the hell does SHE have MY dream job?! She's got enough bad karma for a thousand apocalypses. There has to be something terminally wrong with her, it's only fair...like she's got spider eggs waiting to hatch in her brain. NO MARLENA--that would kill her, you can't think like that...maybe in her uterus.

Her cell rings. She excitedly answers it.

MARLENA

Hi you!

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

LIAM (early 30s, handsome) is calling her. He's at work in a photo studio taking a break, as various crew people shuffle in the background.

LIAM
Hey, they make you the CEO yet?

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION

MARLENA
Hah! I wish.

MARLENA V.O.
That's my boyfriend, Liam.
We've been dating six months
aaand, I feel pretty good
about it.

We see Liam (while still talking to Marlena on the phone) as her voiceover describes him. He looks at contact sheets.

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)
He's hot enough to brag about, but
not QUITE enough for him to feel
too cocky. We're in a good spot.

LIAM
Celebratory dinner at 7?

MARLENA
I hope they let me out by then.
Apparently it's gonna be crazy busy
all day.

LIAM
Do you like it there?

MARLENA
It's pretty intimidating. I feel
like I'm in a Devil Wears Prada
haunted house--which I know I said
was my Halloween fantasy, but...I
just hope they like me.

LIAM
You're always worried about
everyone liking you. Why wouldn't
they? You're the most positive
person I know.

MARLENA
That's sweet. I just don't want
everything that I've **hoped for**
to...have any cracks in the
foundation. Does that make any
sense? My dad was a contractor.

LIAM
Yeah, I know. You actually say that
phrase **a lot** Marly.

MARLENA

Oh, right.
 (then)
 Anyways, I better start looking
 busy. See you tonight?

LIAM

I'll come by and pick you up?

MARLENA

Ooh, sounds great.

LIAM

See you then.

MARLENA

Alright, can't wait.

LIAM

(awkwardly)
 Allright then.

MARLENA V.O.

We aren't at the "I love you"
 stage just yet.

MARLENA

Ok bye!

INT. AMBER'S OFFICE - DAY

Marlena knocks at the door and peaks into the office.

MARLENA

Heyyy, just wanted to check if you
 needed anything from me. I'm ready
 for the RUSH.

Amber doesn't bother to make eye contact.

AMBER

I'll let you know.

MARLENA

(patiently)
 ...Okaaaay.

--MONTAGE--

-Marlena walks into the office kitchen and is amazed at the
 HUNDREDS of different types of tea and accoutrements.

-She stares out the window and accidentally puts a pen in a
 pencil sharpener, spilling the ink all over the floor.

-She peaks into Amber's office again.

MARLENA (CONT'D)
 Hey, its been an hour, just
 checking in.

Amber clicks away and stares giant computer monitor, and
 doesn't even look up. She wags her finger "no."

-Marlena builds a house with post it notes on her desk

-She gets food from a vending machine and as her chips fall
 she hears a phone ringing from her office--and runs to check.

MARLENA (CONT'D)
 Ah crap.
 (picking up phone)
 Hello? Amber Riley's office.

A fax machine tone blasts into her ear.

MARLENA (CONT'D)
 Ach!!

She hangs up and goes back to the vending machine to see the
 Security Guard from downstairs eating her chips. She backs
 away from him slowly.

-She checks Amber's office again.

MARLENA (CONT'D)
 Knock, knock. Don't you hate it
 when people say "knock, knock" when
 they're already knocking? Um, its
 3pm, just checking in agai--

Amber just turns her chair around, on the phone.

--END OF MONTAGE--

INT. ASSISTANT'S OFFICE - DUSK

It's 6:45pm. Marlena sits at the desk, swiveling in her
 chair, bored out of her mind. She's finished what's now a
 massive CASTLE made of post-its.

MARLENA VO
 Nothing. She hasn't said a single
 word or asked me to do ANYTHING in
 8 hours. I'm being SHUT OUT, just
 like she used to do to the NERDS in
 high school. So WHAT if I joined
 'young presidents' instead of the
 cheerleading squad! That doesn't
 make me a dork FOREVER does it?!

She exhales a long breath.

MARLENA V.O.

...Maybe tomorrow I can start the dream.

She hears a knock at the door, and jolts up, knocking over the post it notes and quickly clearing them off the desk.

MARLENA

I was just, um, assessing the situation with--

LIAM

(walking in)

Hey, they told me you were up here. Ready to go? Got your lunch pail?

MARLENA

Ugh, **not** funny.

She stands up with a huge sigh of relief, and kisses him.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Better just check with Amber.

LIAM

She's probably some tired hag who looks like Andy Warhol, right?

MARLENA

Not...exactly.

INT. VULV 7TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Marlena and Liam walk out into the hallway.

LIAM (CONTD)

Come on Marly. I've worked for these kinda editors before. They're always **goblins**. Clinging on to whatever shred of faded youth they've got left.

AMBER (OS)

YOU...are breaking up with ME?!

LIAM

See? Probably mad at her doctor for refusing one last mole removal.

(whispers)

What if she's in there right now changing out her adult diaper?

Marlena shushes him. They reach Amber's open office door. Liam is taken aback as he sees her for the first time. She's way hotter than he expected.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Whoah.

She's on the phone, the rage of a hundred hells in her voice.

AMBER

(into phone)

NOBODY breaks up with me! **I was the one** who told Prince Harry to try his luck on a basic cable actor! And if you even THINK about calling me later to apologize for YOUR mistake, you're gonna do it through a BREATHING TUBE! Leave your key with my doorman and don't even think about getting that Tesla back--unless its covered in your BLOOD!

MARLENA

(To Liam)

Maybe we should wait a few minutes.

Amber SLAMS HER CELL PHONE down on the desk, cracking its screen. She looks up at a terrified Marlena and Liam.

AMBER

What is it?!

MARLENA

Um, it's almost 7pm and I was going to ask...is **now** not a good time?

Liam steps in to diffuse the tension.

LIAM

Hi, I'm Liam.

MARLENA

Oh, yeah, this is my...boyfriend.

Amber's expression softens. She stands up--her fury turning into confidence.

AMBER

(looks him up and down)

Nice to meet you. I'm Amber. You're a photographer aren't you?

LIAM

Um, yeah. How'd you know?

AMBER

I can always tell a man's profession by his pants--

MARLENA

Are you alright, Amber? It sounds like you just had...a breakup?

AMBER

He's broken. I'm excellent.

(then)

Listen, I'm having an industry mixer at my condo tonight. A lot of important trendsetters will be there. Why don't you come.

Marlena's eyes light up.

MARLENA V.O.

(Gasps) The inner circle!

MARLENA

YES would be amazing.

AMBER

Sure. Both of you. Why not.

LIAM

I think we can swing that, after--

Marlena looks at him, wide-eyed and hopeful.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Or...**instead** of dinner.

MARLENA

Do you need us to bring anything? Like...ice or cups or something?

AMBER

(Irritated)

N-no.

LIAM

We'll be there.

He nods in a 'just go with it' way to Marlena.

AMBER

Great. I'm in the Faardman building. Penthouse.

Amber grabs a mink coat hanging over her chair and walks past them.

AMBER (CONT'D)
 (To Liam)
 See you there.

She walks out. Marlana stands, stunned.

MARLENA
 That was unexpected.

INT. LIAM'S CAR - NIGHT

Awkward silence. This is a drive they've done a hundred times, but the silence is still unnerving to Marlana.

MARLENA V.O.
 Are we so comfortable around each other that we don't need to **talk**?
 Or...am I just a boring person?

She keeps opening her mouth to say something but can't think of what. Finally--

MARLENA
 You know, I like...nights.

LIAM
 What?

MARLENA
 Nights, you know I mean...being together at night. Not needing to talk about **trivial** things. Just enjoying...the night. Together.

Liam just nods.

LIAM
 Y-yeah.

MARLENA V.O.
 Either he thinks I'm the world's dullest vampire, or in need of a personality transplant.

MARLENA
 Why can't people just enjoy being quiet and not always have to think of an amusing social anecdote?

LIAM
 I can tell when you're nervous, because you always get existential.

MARLENA

Ugh, sorry. I just want things to work out at VULV. I feel like this is a rare opportunity, and something that's out of my control is just gonna **screw** it up. I can't be temping for the rest of my life.

LIAM

You're only 28, you've got time.

MARLENA

But...I want something PERMANENT.

LIAM

Is this about **us**?

MARLENA V.O.

It **can** be.

MARLENA

N-nooo. It's just, life is supposed to be about being happy because you get what you've always wanted. Right? I mean, ideally?

LIAM

You will. You just gotta keep your eyes focused right in front of you and go STRAIGHT for it--

Marlena looks ahead--there's a SMALL DOG CROSSING THE STREET!

MARLENA

LOOK OUT!!!

Liam quickly SWERVES the car but we hear a small THUMP!

EXT. LIAM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He stops the car and Marlena darts out.

MARLENA

Oh no! BAD KARMA!

She sees the dog lying down, whimpering and runs over to it.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Please be alive! **Not another one!**

As she approaches, it suddenly STANDS UP and shakes it off.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

It's a miracle! I KNEW I was doing everything RIGHT!

LIAM
 (peeking from the window)
 How bad is it?

MARLENA
 It's totally alive! But we probably
 need to find the owner.

LIAM
 Should we skip the party then?

MARLENA
 Uhhhhh...

The dog growls at her.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMBER'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Amber opens her front door and sees Marlena and Liam--and the dog, haphazardly stuffed into Marlena's PURSE.

MARLENA
 Hiii!

AMBER
 (buzzed)
 Welcome to the party.

She gives them both a double-sided European kiss, then looks down at the dog. She hates animals.

AMBER (CONT'D)
 You brought...a **dog**.

MARLENA V.O.
 Make it sound stylish.

MARLENA
 He's a French Parisian. I
 just couldn't leave him home
 all alone. They're sooo rare.

Marlena puts her nose up to the dog's, who then tries to BITE her--but she recoils in time.

AMBER
 Isn't he a little big to fit in
 your purse?

MARLENA
 They get smaller as they get older.

AMBER
 Hmm, stylish. Come in.

INT. AMBER'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

Amber leads them inside. Her condo is insanely chic. Vulv covers framed on the wall, very expensive looking furniture everywhere and an all-around impeccable interior design.

Dozens of fashionistas, influencers, and otherwise hip looking people are inside drinking champagne and talking shop. Amber takes Liam by the arm.

AMBER

Can I borrow you? I HAVE to introduce you to our photo editor.

LIAM

(to Marlina)

Is that Ok?

MARLENA

Yeah of course!

Amber takes Liam away. Marlina keeps walking through the condo, enamored with her surroundings.

MARLENA V.O.

Whoah. This is like...the nexus of the universe.

She notices a short, impossibly STYLISH MAN (20s, platinum hair) wearing outlandishly colorful clothing.

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)

Oh my god, that's Style-Lerachi. The hottest fashion influencer in the city!

MARLENA

Liam, look at--
(he's not next to her)
Oh. He's so much better at networking than I am.

Marlina walks around in awe of her surroundings. The feeling of being among THE scene in the city fills her with pride.

MARLENA V.O.

This is so--ME. Ok, so it'll take a little more time and a Brinks truck **full** of money, but now I know what my life'll look like in...maybe 50 years?

MARLENA

Ugh--THIS IS WHAT I WANT!

A SERVER holding a tray of hors d'oeuvres thinks she's talking to him, panics and brings his tray over to her.

SERVER
Yes, right away miss.

MARLENA
Oh thanks. Whoah, is this caviar?

SERVER
I don't know, they won't let us taste anything.

MARLENA
Oh that's awful! Here, take some.

She scoops an extra piece to hand to him, but he's offended.

SERVER
Ugh, gross. I'm a paleo-lacto-macrobiterian.

He walks away from her, leaving with a dirty look. Marlena can't help but be fascinated.

MARLENA
Wow, even the HELP is snooty.

She keeps wandering.

MARLENA V.O.
Is Karma telling me that I've done such a good job that I get to SEE what my future holds?

A crowd is gathered and some of them chuckle. TWO FEMALE PARTYGOERS, 30s, walk from the crowd and pass by Marlena.

FEMALE PARTYGOER
Amber knows how to move on fast.

Marlena moves towards the hubbub.

MARLENA V.O.
I guess Liam was right. I gotta go STRAIGHT for what I want. And keep my eyes focused right in front of--

Marlena joins the small group and looks inside the room to see Amber MAKING OUT hard with Liam against the wall! Marlena drops the caviar, and her jaw hits the floor--

MARLENA
NOOOOOOOO!!!

ACT TWO

INT. MARLENA'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Marlena bursts in and shuts the door behind her. Her face is crumpled so hard she could mold diamonds with her expression.

The dog starts BARKING from the hallway.

MARLENA

Ah crap!!

INT. MARLENA'S APARTMENT - SECONDS LATER

Marlena bursts in again, this time holding the dog. She places it down on the floor.

MARLENA

I'll find you some food tomorrow.
Here...

She grabs a cereal bowl and pours a half empty LACROIX CAN into it, setting it on the floor. The dog sniffs it and looks back at her quizzically.

MARLENA V.O.

It's gonna be ok Marly. You're the
most positive person in the world.
Liam always said that...Liam?

She then sees a FRAMED PHOTO of her and Liam on her coffee table. She runs over to it.

MARLENA

Son of a--BITCH!!

She grabs it and readies to throw it across the room, but then looks closer at the frame.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

No--West Elm.

She puts back it down on the coffee table gently. She looks at the dog. Maybe she could throw--

It GROWLS as it meets her eyes. Can it read her thoughts?

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Ach, animal services.

She turns around and sees the bookshelf--her senior high school YEARBOOK. That's the ticket!

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Aaa-HAAAAA!!

She darts over to the bookshelf with confidence and yanks the yearbook off the shelf, immediately trying to tear it apart, like those strongmen who tear up phonebooks on youtube. It's....not easy.

The hardcover might have defeated her but not the pages! She tears them out one by one, crumpling some, throwing others, then stops and looks at a page with HER PHOTO on it--holding an award and standing around a bunch of nerdy kids.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Algebra achievers!? LOSER!

She finally comes across Amber's senior page, and pulls it out to get a good look.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Oh YOU...You MONSTER!

(then, amazed)

How does she look **exactly** the SAME?

Somebody KNOCKS at the door. Marlena is near-feral.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

WHAT IS IT?!

EXT. MARLENA'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

PEGGY, (50s, too much time on her hands) her hippy neighbor stands in the doorway with a look of concern. She's like a cross between a gypsy fortune-teller and yoga class dropout. She's basically who Marlena fears she'll become in 20 years.

PEGGY

I heard screams, everything okay?

MARLENA

(covering, badly)

YES. Why wouldn't it be? I'm fine.

The dog WHIMPERS from inside the apartment.

PEGGY

Are you stressed? You're stressed aren't you? If you ever need to talk over some hashish, my door is always unlocked. Just walk in!

A tinge of worry hits Marlena.

MARLENA

Are you sure that's safe?

PEGGY

Oh please, if someone wanted to kill me...

(thinks about it)

Wait, I guess anyone could just walk in and do it couldn't they?

MARLENA

I'm...sorry for bringing it up?

PEGGY

No--that's what makes it EXCITING! Life throws curveballs at you, and you just gotta KICK em! My ex husband was a pro bowler.

MARLENA

I think you have your sports references confused.

PEGGY

He wasn't a very GOOD bowler.

MARLENA

I'm fine. Sorry for screaming. I'm gonna go back inside now.

She starts to close the door.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

You might hear MORE screaming though. But it's fine.

(lastly)

Unless...I cry for help.

PEGGY

Oh honey, those are the very words I live by.

Marlena goes back inside and closes the door. We hear her SCREAM in anger again from inside. Peggy smiles and calmly walks back into her own apartment.

INT. MARLENA'S APARTMENT - LATER

It's hours later and Marlena is DRUNK and sprawled out on her couch, defeated.

The torn out page of Amber sits on the coffee table--but now with the word "**TWUNT**" written on it in red lipstick.

Next to it is an empty box of white wine and nutter butters on a small plate. The dog is asleep on the floor.

MARLENA

How could I be so BLIND?! Amber Riley! Blonde Darth Vader! Capable of annihilating relationships with one...um...DAMMIT, I'm so mad I can't even think of a good insult!

Another KNOCK at the door. The dog perks up.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

If I ignore her maybe she'll stop.

More knocking.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Ach, PLEASE be the grim reaper.

She opens the door and its Liam! She throws up her hands--

MARLENA (CONT'D)

CLOSE ENOUGH!

She turns away from the door and heads back towards the couch. Liam follow her in.

LIAM

What? Look, I just wanna talk.

MARLENA

Oh this'll be good--this'll be GREAT!

LIAM

Are you...drunk?

MARLENA

Pffffff. You don't KNOW my ass.

LIAM

I know you don't have control of your inner monologue when you've been drinking. Just give me a minute to talk, ok?

Where is this leading? Why is he just looking at her?

MARLENA

Fine. TALK! Let's HEAR the excuse!

She walks over and sits on the couch, and smacks the box of wine off the coffee table, hoping he didn't notice.

LIAM

Okay...The thing is, I don't think there's one person out there for everyone.

MARLENA

CLEARLY.

LIAM

All our lives we've been led to believe that there's this single angelic figure that is just waiting to be FOUND at some point, and will make us nothing but happy and smiley and all that, forever. But out of all the couples you know, how many are legitimately right for each other? How many do you know look like they'll be **truly** nothing but happy for their WHOLE LIVES together?

She thinks about it for a second, but catches herself and shoots him a glare.

LIAM (CONT'D)

We CAN'T work! It's completely unlikely that we ever had a chance to in first place. Society still preaches this INANE concept that there's one precisely **perfect** match for everyone--when that's an impossibility!

Liam joins her on the couch. She shuffles away from him.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Look...it's not anyone's fault that it didn't work out between us. Relationships by and large--save for statistical rarities--aren't MEANT to function in the idealized way we've been raised to believe.

(then)

Marly you're a great person. I mean it, genuinely. Nobody I know loves the world more than you. But remember, life is spontaneous, and--

His cell phone rings and he quickly checks it.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Oh my god, this is that big client I've been telling you about!

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

Everything's been moving so fast in the last couple days--it's like, what's that thing you're always mentioning? KISMET, right? THIS happening right now?? Hah!

He gets up and walks quickly to the door, but turns around for one final word.

LIAM (CONT'D)

We can definitely still be friends.

He leaves. Marlena is stunned like a deer in headlights. What the hell did she just witness? He didn't actually have a **point**, did he?! She looks at the yearbook photo of Amber.

MARLENA

What the hell did you DO to him?

EXT. CAFE - THE NEXT DAY

JAYA (now age 28, whip smart and knows it) sits at a table in a hip cafe with CHRIS, (30s, loud in every way) and a very miserable looking Marlena. Her head is face down on the table and the other two are silent, trying to think of something consoling to say to her. Then--

JAYA

You know what my mom use to say to me? "Boys never act as good as they do in tampon ads."

CHRIS

I've never connected to tampon ads. You'd think **something**--at least on a human level, but nah. Zip. Wait--are there **boys** in tampon ads?

JAYA

I don't remember. The **point** is--in REAL LIFE--guys like Liam just take what they want and MOVE ON.

CHRIS

Right. They're like...what's that animal that also does that?

JAYA

Rats?

CHRIS (CONT'D)

No, rats are pretty communal.

JAYA (CONT'D)

Spiders?

CHRIS (CONT'D)

No--ugh. This is gonna bother me all day.

MARLENA

Can you guys just...concentrate on MY life please! You're here to lift me up and tell me Amber is a hideous demon and Liam will either be shot into space...or come back to me bearing expensive apologies.

Jaya and Chris share a surprised look with each other.

CHRIS

Honey...you STILL want him?

MARLENA

Nooo--I don't KNOW. I want him to feel terrible and want ME--then I can decide to hold his broken heart hostage until I get over it.

(option B)

Or maybe he'll get hit by a bus and I won't have to worry about it.

JAYA

Um...you ever think that maaaaaaybe you've brought this on yourself?

MARLENA

...WHAT?!

JAYA

You have all these evil thoughts and say these terrible things you want to happen--which I personally **love** hearing--but you're way too NICE to people's faces.

MARLENA

What are you talking about? I can BE mean!

CHRIS

Come on Marly. Even now you're stirring MY COFFEE for me.

She looks down and has been unknowingly ADDING CREAM AND SUGAR for him. He grabs the cup from her.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Mmm. Thank you, by the way.

JAYA

Look, you've got two options: make whatever peace with it and move on with your life...

MARLENA

OR...?

JAYA

Dammit Marly--that's the ONLY option! I've been with you through every SINGLE bad breakup! You've NEVER been able to handle them.

CUT TO

INT. MARLENA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Marlena, years earlier, and with a bob haircut, sits on her couch and is on the phone.

MARLENA

Yer actually breaking up with me?

Camera pans to reveal Jaya, with purple extensions in her hair, sigh and rubs Marlena's back to comfort her.

INT. COLLEGE LIBRARY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Marlena (age 20, with super long straightened hair) is chatting on AIM. Her boyfriend's handle, JesseLovesMarly sends the message "***It's over between us.***"

MARLENA (20)

Yer literally breaking up with me?

Camera pans to see Jaya (age 20 with a wild perm) sitting with her back to them at a computer station. She turns to look at Marlena, frowns and reaches to rub her back.

EXT. LAKE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Jaya (age 16, with "the Rachel" haircut) sits behind her TEENAGE BOYFRIEND (16) in a KAYAK.

MARLENA (16)

Yer totally breaking up with me?!

Camera pans to see Jaya (age 16 with braces and braids) behind Marly, the only one rowing. She lets go of an oar to rub Marly's back--but it slips into the lake!

JAYA (16)

Damn.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A TODDLER Marlana (age 3) sits on a patch of grass next to her TODDLER BOYFRIEND (age 4). Marlana smiles at him and hands him a flower.

He looks at the flower then at her, then promptly SLAPS her in the face! She starts crying loudly.

BACK TO:

EXT. CAFE - DAY (PRESENT)

MARLENA
You weren't even THERE for
that one!

JAYA
It still--COUNTS!

CHRIS
GIRLS please--shut up! We need a
solution or else Marly is just
going to keep crying like a sissy
and start the cycle over again.

Jaya is impressed by Chris' outburst.

JAYA
Wow, you're being really aggressive
today Chris.

CHRIS
Thank you. My therapist says I
should start bullying people more.
(ponders)
I'm gonna start texting some family
members--

MARLENA
It's AMBER I should hate the most.
The JOB--MY DREAM JOB! Losing that
would be even WORSE than losing
Liam. How can I keep it?

JAYA
You could always find a way to put
Amber in her place.

MARLENA
But if I walked in there and
punched her in the ovaries--I'd
never get the chance to work at my
dream job again! How do
you...destroy someone's life
without LOOKING responsible?

They all sigh, unable to answer the question.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

You know...I've been thinking a lot about Karma lately.

JAYA

The girl who works at the kombucha shop?

MARLENA

No--the **concept**. The balance in the universe of good and bad. All the crap Amber's done to people her whole life, and yet she gets to live the good life! There has to be a point where the balance tips back against her.

JAYA

If only YOU could be the one that tips it.

MARLENA

Me? No. I'm not **like** that. I have **so much** good Karma--it's practically the ONLY thing I've got left.

CHRIS

Yeah, enough to dole out some bad to everyone else.

(has an epiphany)

Wait! Think about it: if you've got THAT MUCH saved up your whole life...you've probably earned a bunch of credit. You've just got to make sure you do SOME good things to **even out** the terror you're gonna cause your enemies.

Jaya knocks him on the shoulder, proudly.

MARLENA

Pff, yeah...that'd be a good plan.

Marlena's eyes go wide. She takes a huge breath, and stands.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Wait...WAIT! I'VE GOT IT!!

CHRIS

You're just gonna do what **I** said?

MARLENA

YUP!

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Marlena, dressed now in an elegant business suit, struts proudly across the street--the same way she took before.

MARLENA V.O.

How do you beat someone at their own game? You change the rules. Amber is going to **expect** me to be timid and all sad faced--but I'm going to completely throw her off -- that way I can get closer to her. She's spent her entire life taking things from other people, but she's never had to COMPETE with them. I'm gonna give her the rival she NEVER wanted!

She crosses another street, which is showing a red light for pedestrians, just as a BUS IS DRIVING THROUGH.

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)

Amber Riley, prepare to meet your VIOLENT END.

She's in her own head, not paying attention--the bus HONKS!

MARLENA

Wha--OH CRAP!

She turns and darts back--!

CUT TO BLACK

ACT THREEINT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Marlena lies in a hospital bed. She wakes up in shock.

MARLENA

BUS!!!

(Looks around)

Wha?

She sees her right leg strung up and in a cast below the knee. DOCTOR KENT (30s, handsome in a bookish way) walks in.

DR KENT

Hey, look who's awake.

MARLENA

Am I...?

DR KENT

Woozy from the medication? That'll last at least till tomorrow.

MARLENA

I have to get to work--

She looks up and notices him.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Wha--? Whoah.

MARLENA V.O.

Hello Doctor HANDSOME.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

(not fully there yet)
Hello Doctor blam-shum.

DR. KENT

Uhh, its Dr. Kent actually. You've got a grade 3 ankle sprain, and you passed out--probably from being dehydrated. Have you been drinking heavily recently?

MARLENA

Nnnnn-maybe a box or two.

DR KENT

Sooo, YES. That's probably it. Well, you should be happy that bus missed the rest of you, or else you'd be...uh...uh oh--

He gets instantly nauseous.

DR KENT (CONT'D)
 Sorry, I have a little issue with
 talking about death---ohhh boy.

He holds his stomach.

MARLENA
 But...you're a **doctor**. Haven't you
 actually SEEN people d--

DR. KENT
 Don't finish that sentence! We
 all...have our **things**.
 (takes a breath)
 Phew, ok. It'll pass.

He clears his throat and looks at her chart.

DR. KENT (CONT'D)
 The good things is--you're AWAKE
 now. But, we can't really keep you
 here any longer beyond your will.

MARLENA
 You're kicking me out?

DR. KENT
 It's not that bad an injury. If we
 kept you here, it would--well it
 would cost you an INSANE amount of
 money. Just being honest.
 (points out the door)
 We have crutches for you at the
 nurse's station.

MARLENA
 Crutches!? Till when??

DR KENT
 About a month, unless you prefer a
 wheelchair. But then you'd have to
 rely on prettily heavily on ramps
 to get around. Honestly not enough
 places are accessible, it's really
 quite rude.

Marlena brushes that notion off.

MARLENA
 A wheelchair!? Ugh man!...it's just
 my ankle though! I can't take a
 wheelchair that should go to
 somebody who needs it more than ME.
 (MORE)

MARLENA (CONT'D)

It's not like I need people to feel
bad for me--

A lightbulb goes off in her head.

MARLENA V.O.

Wait...

MARLENA

I'VE GOT IT AGAIN!!

She freezes with her arms up victoriously. Dr. Kent awkwardly
waits to see if she'll unfreeze.

DR. KENT

Soooo, I'll just have the nurse
take your bedpan, and you can be on
your way.

MARLENA

(embarrassed)

Yeah, I think it's pretty full.

INT. VULV 7TH FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Bing! The elevator door opens and Marlana sits in a
WHEELCHAIR in the crowded elevator car. Everyone is looking
at her as she struggles to move forward.

MARLENA

This is me!

Several people try to help her, sympathizing.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Oh thank you s much--but if I can't
get there myself, then I don't
deserve to be out of this thing.

She smiles and giggles. People coo and offer condolences.

ELEVATOR PEOPLE

Go get em girl/She's so sweet/I
wish I was in a wheelchair.

Marlana rolls herself out of the car and down the hallway.
She stops at Amber's office.

INT. AMBER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Marlana knocks on Amber's wall and stops in the doorway.

MARLENA

Hello Amber.

Amber isn't looking up from her desk. Her voice is stern and uncaring.

AMBER

It's 2pm. I could fire you for being this late. At Vulv we look down on people who miss work because of a fender bender.

MARLENA

I'm afraid you'll have to **look down** on me for a while then.

Amber looks at Marlena, finally noticing the wheelchair.

AMBER

Oh...I thought...

MARLENA

Yeah, that bus didn't want to stop ITSELF.

MARLENA V.O.

Nailed it.

A FLOWER DELIVERYMAN walks from the hallway and stop in front of Amber's office.

DELIVERY MAN

Excuse me, is there a Marly J on this floor?

MARLENA

Hi! That's me!

MARLENA V.O.

Right on time.

He hands her a huge BOUQUET of flowers.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

Thank you! Hmm, I wonder who these are from...

(reads the card)

Ohhhh, Liam!

Amber's face turns red.

AMBER

What?

MARLENA

**"Hope you have a speedy recovery.
Love always, Liam"**

(then)

Love ALWAYS. Gosh.

(MORE)

MARLENA (CONT'D)

You just never know when people are going to surprise you.

Marlena grins sweetly. Amber flashes a fake smile.

MARLENA V.O.

I know your weakness Amber. You've never handled jealousy well. Little does she know that Liam left some passwords saved on my laptop. Just a quick call to a florist, and remembering his PayPal, and the wheels are in motion for her karmic catastrophe.

Amber, flustered, stands up and grabs her purse.

AMBER

I have to take off early. I have an unscheduled meeting. You--

Marlena turns slowly in her wheelchair, smiling casually.

MARLENA

I'll make up the hours I missed this morning and stay longer. I'll forward everything to your cell. Should I stay in YOUR office to make it faster?

MARLENA V.O.

AND PLOT YOUR DOOM.

MARLENA

I wouldn't want to keep having to wheel in from down the hall back and forth and miss anything on your direct line.

AMBER

(flustered)

Yes...that's fine.

Amber turns to leave her office. Marlena PRETENDS TO GET STUCK on the expensive area rug in front of the desk.

MARLENA

Oops! This carpet's a little high here. Could I get a little help?

Amber reaches out, while trying to keep her feet planted where she is--not wanting to touch the wheelchair. She just manages to nudge the back of it with her CELL PHONE. The wheels just get over the rug.

MARLENA (CONT'D)
Therrrrre we go. Thank you.

Amber finally storms out. Marlena easily wheels to behind the huge desk.

MARLENA V.O.
Hmm. She didn't even mention last night. That's **good**. This is how it starts.

She gets up out of the wheelchair, gingerly, and slips into Amber's executive chair.

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)
You've shown that you operate the same as always Amber. And the NEW Marly is going to cash in 28 years of **GOOD KARMA** to bring you and everyone like you down.

She's in her element now. Ready to dispense justice, with a big devilish grin on her face.

MARLENA V.O. (CONT'D)
WOW. I think I LIKE this feeling! This is going to be JUST like one of those revenge-style TV dramas!

She puts her bandaged foot up on the desk--but then the wheelchair gets off-balance and FLIPS BACKWARD!

MARLENA
Aaah!

Marlena lies there, upside down, legs in the air.

Is this a premonition?

MARLENA V.O.
That was...weird.

TAGINT. MARLENA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marlena has put up a huge WHITEBOARD in her living room, and is writing on it something we don't yet see. She gets a KNOCK at the door.

MARLENA

Come in!

Jaya and Chris come in, holding wine bottles, and shut the door behind them. Marlena turns around dramatically. Reveal the whiteboard which has written in large colorful letters at the top: "**KARMA LIST**" Below the titles, there's a list of each their names, occupations, and potential enemies.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

BEHOLD!

JAYA

Karma List? Sounds like a nerdy club you'd be in after school--

Marlena's looks at he with fire behind her eyes. Jaya remembers that Marlena WAS the nerd in school.

JAYA (CONT'D)

I mean...cooooool.

CHRIS

It looks like you wrote 'kill list' and erased 'kill'

CLOSE UP ON: 'KARMA' with "kill" definitely having been written before underneath it.

MARLENA

(not having it)

You know **how long** it took me to erase that and make it look **nice?! These markers are all dry now.**

Chris and Jaya avert eye contact. With her. Marlena tosses the marker on the coffee table, where it lands among five other colored ones.

MARLENA (CONT'D)

We're GOOD people, and bad things don't HAVE to happen to us. They aren't SUPPOSED TO! This is how we restore the proper balance.

(MORE)

MARLENA (CONT'D)

We can set everything right in our
lives...and maybe, JUST maybe--

CHRIS

The world?

MARLENA

I was gonna say, "and make some
money from it," but sure. It's all
in the same wheelhouse.

Chris and Jaya look at each other. Nod their heads in a
"welp, alright" and place their hands forward for a cheer.
Marlena joins, and they lift them in unison like a football
cheer.

MARLENA/JAYA/CHRIS

WOOOO!

They all stand smiling, looking around--which grows awkward.
Nobody knows what to do.

MARLENA

Should we load up on wine first?

JAYA & CHRIS

Yes please/Definitely.

They start pouring from the box, and getting to business.
Marlena takes a massive gulp.

MARLENA

Yes. Yessss.
(devilish laugh)
All according to plan.

Jaya and Chris turn to her, puzzled.

JAYA

What did you say?

Crap, wine really does mess with her head.

MARLENA

Ach. Stupid inner monologue!

(OUT)