TANTRA

"Pilot"
"The Software Company"

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HALF-HOUR PREMIUM DRAMEDY
TV-MA
MONTREAL • PRESENT DAY

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COLD OPEN

INT. NATREL HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Montreal light. Domestic. Almost aggressively normal.

FABIAN NATREL, 74, cardigan, glasses in his hair, is destroying eggs with the confidence of a man who has never once been told his cooking is mid. Three pans. Zero need.

PENELOPE NATREL, 24, McGill hoodie, highlighter, printed paper. She looks like she is trying to murder a committee with preparation.

FABIAN
You didn't sleep.

PENELOPE
I slept.

FABIAN
You slept the way priests sleep before they lose their faith. Eyes shut. Soul pacing.

He puts a plate down. She doesn't look. He leaves it. Their whole relationship is this: he offers, she performs, nobody names the need.

PENELOPE
If Aldous asks me one more question like he already knows I don't know—

FABIAN
You'll know. You've known since you corrected the pediatrician on the dosage at six.

PENELOPE
She was wrong.

FABIAN
She was. You were unbearable. I was proud. Those are not opposites.

A beat. She almost smiles. Swallows it like a sin.

FABIAN (CONT'D)
Your mother did the night-before thing too. Reread everything at two a.m. like the material might grow a conscience if she stared hard enough.

PENELOPE
(softer)
Did it work?

FABIAN
She was the smartest person I ever met. Including you. Don't get wet about it.

PENELOPE
I wasn't going to get wet about a compliment, Dad. Jesus.

FABIAN
Language.

PENELOPE
You started it.

He checks his watch. Nervous under punctual.

FABIAN
Office.

PENELOPE
Software company.

FABIAN
(too fast)
Software company.

PENELOPE
I've never seen a single piece of software with your name on it.

FABIAN
Good software runs underneath everything. Nobody notices until it stops.

She looks at him. Brief.

PENELOPE
That's either profound or the shittiest alibi I've ever heard.

FABIAN
Can't it be both?

He kisses her head. At the door — the almost-confession:

FABIAN (CONT'D)
Penelope.

PENELOPE
Mm.

FABIAN
Nothing. Go get your A.

He's gone.

She looks up late. Something in his voice had a basement.

Then — just to us, dry, tiny:

PENELOPE
(to camera)
He always says "nothing" when it's something.

(beat)
I get that from him. The denial. Not the bacon.

CODY, 12, steals toast mid-flight.

CODY
Dad gone?

PENELOPE
Software emergency.

CODY
There's no such thing. His computer has one tab. Solitaire. Sometimes a recipe he will never cook.

She laughs — real. Ruffles his hair.

PENELOPE
Eat actual food.

CODY
You're not my mom.

PENELOPE
I'm worse. I grade people for sport.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. TANTRA HOLDINGS - DAY

Unmarked industrial building. Brick that has seen things and filed them under payroll.

Fabian sits in the car three seconds. Puts on the other face. Gets out.

INT. TANTRA HOLDINGS - SOUNDSTAGE A - CONTINUOUS

AND HERE IS THE WORLD.

Not a cartoon. Not a carnival. A working adult set in mid-shoot.

A bed that cost real money. Softboxes. A boom op who looks bored in the specific way of people who have seen every angle of human anatomy and still want lunch.

On the bed: two PERFORMERS — JULES, 29, athletic, and AMARA, 31, precise, both naked, mid-scene, actually working. Sweat, breath, direction. Sex as craft. Bodies as instruments. Not glamorous. Not ugly. Professional.

BARNABÉ PAQUET, 35, headset, cigarette he isn't allowed to light indoors, vibrating with taste.

BARNABÉ
Cut — cut, cut, tabarnak — Jules, your face looks like you are assembling IKEA. Amara is not a bookshelf. Look at her like you want her, not like you are waiting for the Allen key.

JULES
I do want her. My lower back wants workers' comp.

AMARA
(flat, still straddling him)
If your lower back is the most interesting thing happening, we have a creative problem.

BARNABÉ
Thank you. See? She understands cinema. Reset. Lube. Hydration. Somebody check the eyeline, we are not shooting a medical training video about how to die of boredom during oral.

A PA hands towels, water, a bottle of lube like it's gaffer tape. Because here, it is.

Fabian walks through this the way a priest walks through a kitchen — familiar, slightly sad, responsible.

WALT VOSS, 61, falls in with a tablet. They talk over the reset like men talking over a construction site.

WALT
Subscriptions up eleven. Back catalog behind the paywall is printing. Barnabé wants a decision on the AI licensing before the quarter. He says if we don't move, some startup in California will deepfake our entire roster into a free trial of hell.

FABIAN
The AI thing is not happening.

WALT
Tell him yourself. He only believes tragedy in person.

On set, Amara sits up, casually nude, scrolls her phone, texts like a person at a bus stop. Jules stretches his hip flexors. A makeup artist dabs shine off a breast with the neutrality of a plumber wiping a pipe. This is the R-rated texture: not shock. Normalization that still has charge.

AMARA
(to no one, to everyone)
If we go again, I want the toy with the quieter motor. The loud one makes me look like I'm reacting to a kitchen appliance.

BARNABÉ
Noted. Art is details.

Fabian and Walt keep walking. Past a monitor where the last take is frozen on a close-up of a mouth — explicit, beautiful, intentional. Fabian doesn't flinch. He built this. Flincing would be a luxury.

FABIAN
Thirty years I've been getting away with it.

WALT
Running a company?

FABIAN
Not telling my kids their inheritance smells like sex and health insurance.

They pass a craft table: fruit, protein bars, condoms in a bowl like mints, Plan B in a locked cabinet with a sign: ASK DENISE. NO DRAMA. NO JUDGMENT. NO TIKTOKS.

FABIAN (CONT'D)
If something happens to me—

WALT
Nothing is happening. You eat like a man daring God.

FABIAN
If something happens. Everything goes to Penelope. Not Beatrice.

WALT
She doesn't know what everything is.

FABIAN
No.

(looks back at the set — Amara laughing at something Jules said, human, naked, ordinary)
She will. And I won't be there to make it sound like love instead of what it also is.

WALT
Which is?

FABIAN
A business. A lie. A life.

(beat)
Same as any other, except you can see the genitals.

He goes into his office. Door closes.

On stage, Barnabé calls action. Bodies move. Sound of breath, skin, a laugh that is real and then becomes performance. The camera does not leer. It observes work.

Hold on Walt's face.

END OF COLD OPEN.

ACT ONE

INT. MCGILL - BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT - DAY

Penelope, sharp as a scalpel, with DR. ALDOUS. TASHA REYES beside her, same hours, less spotlight.

DR. ALDOUS
Mechanism of propagation?

PENELOPE
Horizontal gene transfer via plasmid exchange — though I'd sequence the flanking regions before I said that with my whole chest.

Laughs. Aldous almost smiles.

TASHA
(under)
Show-off.

PENELOPE
(not looking)
Accurate show-off.

She packs up. One second of private victory — then it's gone. Pleasure is a security risk.

INT. MCGILL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

ZOE, 24. LEO, 23. Step-siblings. Here because family is a shift you show up for.

ZOE
Well?

PENELOPE
Fine.

ZOE
"Fine" means you came first academically and refused the afterglow. Which is a sexual problem, by the way. Metaphorically. Mostly.

PENELOPE
Please never say "came first" about my committee again.

LEO
They gave me oat milk when I asked for oat milk and I still feel lied to. That's my whole personality: correctly ordered liquids and ambient distrust.

Phone: WALT VOSS. Unknown. Penelope silences it.

ZOE
Who?

PENELOPE
Spam. Survey. Someone who thinks I want a penis pump.

(to camera, flat)
I don't.

(beat)
I don't think I do. I haven't run the numbers.

Phone buzzes again. We hold. She doesn't.

INT. NATREL HOUSE - CODY'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Rocket kit. Chaos. Penelope on the floor in nice pants, fixing pieces without making him small.

CODY
Do you think Mom would've been good at rockets?

PENELOPE
She'd read the instructions twice and ignore them. Same as you.

CODY
Weird thing to be proud of.

PENELOPE
The only honest kind.

This is the purest love in the episode. Hold it. We'll need it.

INT. NATREL HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

BEATRICE, 47. Still. Phone. Wrong energy before language.

BEATRICE
Penelope.

PENELOPE
What.

BEATRICE
Your father collapsed at his office an hour ago. Sit down.

We stay on Penelope's face. No music heroics. Just the floor leaving.

Cody on the landing. Rocket piece. He heard the silence.

CODY
Penelope?

She goes to him. Body first. Words later.

PENELOPE
Come here. Sit with me.

Beatrice in the doorway. Outside the circle. Always.

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT TWO

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Small funeral. Penelope + Cody close. Beatrice apart. Zoe, Leo, Walt.

WALT
(eulogy)
Fabian used to say do one thing so well that people forgive the rest. He was bad with tools. Worse with calendars. He was good at building things that took care of people — including people polite society pretends it doesn't watch at one in the morning with the sound off.

(beat)
He only showed one face at home. The other paid salaries, negotiated condom brands in bulk, and kept a secret he called protection. Protection and cowardice share a wardrobe. I loved him. I enabled him. Both can be true. Both usually are.

Penelope's face: the portrait cracks.

After: Beatrice, low:

BEATRICE
Whatever's in the will — think carefully.

PENELOPE
We buried him twenty minutes ago.

BEATRICE
Shock makes people generous and stupid. I've spoken to a lawyer.

PENELOPE
At the funeral.

BEATRICE
Death is a legal event. Sex was his business. Paperwork is mine. Don't look shocked — somebody in this family had to touch reality with gloves on.

PENELOPE
Noted.

Walt. Envelope.

WALT
When you're ready. No rush.

She takes it like mail. It isn't.

INT. NATREL HOUSE - PENELOPE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Letter. Transfer. Fabian's handwriting.

FABIAN (V.O.)
Penelope —

The software company was never software. Tantra Holdings is an adult entertainment company. Porn. I built it. I hid it. I left it to you.

I told myself secrecy was love. Some days I still believe that. Some days I know I was afraid you'd look at me and see a man who made money from other people's orgasms and decide I was smaller than the father you invented. So I became a liar. Quieter. Not better.

You can sell it. Burn it. Run it. Just look first. You always looked until things made sense. I'm sorry I made this one so hard to look at without flinching.

I love you.

Dad

Penelope stares at their photo. Him beaming at her like she was proof of goodness.

PENELOPE
You absolute fucking coward.

To camera — eyes wet, voice dry:

PENELOPE (CONT'D)
(to camera)
He left me a porn company.

(beat)
I studied plasmid exchange.

(beat)
This is horizontal gene transfer for liars.

EXT. TANTRA HOLDINGS - DAY

Penelope. Zoe. Leo. The brick.

LEO
Dad's "software company"—

PENELOPE
Yes.

LEO
Was—

PENELOPE
Porn, Leo. Say porn. The word won't impregnate you.

LEO
I wasn't worried about impregnation. I was worried about eye contact.

ZOE
Are you okay?

PENELOPE
No.

(to camera)
But I'm still going to walk in like I am. That's what A students do. We die correctly.

She goes in.

INT. TANTRA HOLDINGS - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

DENISE, 50s. Awards. A bowl of condoms next to mints — not a joke prop; inventory. A sign: STI TESTING EVERY OTHER THURSDAY. PAID. MANDATORY. DON'T BE WEIRD ABOUT IT.

DENISE
You have his eyes. I'm so sorry, honey.

Penelope can't metabolize the kindness. Zoe's hand. Walt.

WALT
I wasn't sure you'd come so soon.

PENELOPE
Anger has better logistics than grief. Show me what he hid.

INT. TANTRA HOLDINGS - HALLWAY / WORLD TOUR - CONTINUOUS

This is the full exploration. Don't rush it. Let the pilot live here.

Wall of stills: decades of explicit, artful work. Bodies, years, styles. History of desire as product design.

WALT
Legal. Accounting. Royalties. Forty-one people. Archive that way — don't open alone unless you like crying in dust about people who used to be famous for their ass.

Through glass: EDIT BAY — an editor, PRIYA, 40s, scrubbing a timeline of an explicit scene with the focus of a surgeon. She marks a cut on a thrust for rhythm, not titillation.

PRIYA
(into headset, not looking up as they pass)
Tell Barnabé the money shot is soft. Not the load — the story. He'll know what I mean. If he doesn't, fire him and marry me.

LEO
(whisper)
I thought there'd be fog machines.

ZOE
It's a business, not a strip club in a music video directed by a virgin.

They pass WARDROBE: racks of lingerie, harnesses, schoolgirl skirts that make Penelope's jaw tighten, a bin labeled PROSTHETICS / PACKERS / "JUST IN CASE", and a handwritten note: IF IT TOUCHES MUCUS MEMBRANES, IT GETS CLEANED. NO DEBATE. NO "IT WAS ONLY A SECOND."

A wardrobe assistant, HECTOR, 50s, irons a sheer robe like it's church linen.

HECTOR
(to Penelope, gentle, clocking her)
First day? Don't touch anything

that looks fun. Fun has a disinfection protocol.

PENELOPE
Noted.

INT. GREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amara from the cold open, now in a robe, ice pack on her knee, eating yogurt. Jules in sweatpants, scrolling casting notices. Another performer, RIVER, nonbinary, 26, oiling their chest for a later scene while arguing about healthcare.

RIVER
I'm just saying if the platform takes thirty percent and my pelvic floor takes one hundred, somebody's math is violent.

AMARA
Union talk again?

RIVER
It's not talk if we keep whispering it like it's a kink.

They notice Penelope. The temperature shifts — not hostile. Curious. Territorial in a work way.

AMARA
You're Fabian's kid.

PENELOPE
Penelope.

AMARA
Sorry about your dad. He was decent. Which in this industry is either a miracle or a branding strategy. With him I think it was both.

(offers yogurt, then realizes that's insane)
I don't know why I offered you my yogurt. Grief makes people stupid with dairy.

PENELOPE
I'm okay.

JULES
Nobody's okay. You're just vertical. Respect.

Barnabé bursts in, mid-war.

BARNABÉ
Walt — fire — not Tuesday fire — existential fire —

(sees Penelope)
The daughter. Perfect. Welcome to the factory of orgasms and unpaid emotional labor. I am so sorry for your loss and also we are being sued by a woman whose face was stolen by a robot with no refractory period.

PENELOPE
What.

BARNABÉ
AI. Deepfake. Five minutes of Renata Okoye "performing" acts she did not perform, with a body double built out of stolen stills and a model that thinks consent is a software setting. She is in my office. She is correct to be furious. I am correct to be spiraling. Your father spent two years saying he'd handle this and then bought a kayak. The kayak has never known water. It is a monument to male avoidance. Come.

INT. TANTRA HOLDINGS - LEGAL / MARGUERITE - CONTINUOUS

MARGUERITE OSEI, 40s. Paper fortress.

MARGUERITE
Standard takedown language will not satisfy Renata. It didn't satisfy the last four. Your father knew. He delayed. Delay is how men turn ethics into real estate for their feelings.

PENELOPE
What does "ahead of it" look like?

MARGUERITE
Likeness and consent policy with teeth. Audit rights. Takedown SLAs. Performer ownership language that isn't written in lube and hope. Something we can point to when a woman's cunt is being sold by

people who never asked her if she was in the room.

Penelope flinches half a millimeter at the word. Marguerite clocks it. Softens zero percent. Respects her enough not to euphemize.

MARGUERITE (CONT'D)
If you're going to run this place, get used to the anatomy. We say pussy, cock, ass, money shot, cream pie, raw, covered — not because we're crude for sport. Because clinical language is how people hide liability, and slang is how workers tell the truth. Pick a dialect. I'd prefer truth.

PENELOPE
Draft the policy. Teeth. Tonight. I'll take Renata.

MARGUERITE
(recalculating)
Alright, software girl. Show me something your father was too scared to finish.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE B - CONTINUOUS (QUICK CUT / TEXTURE)

As they move toward the conference room, we glimpse another set: a director coaching a performer through a blowjob angle like a tennis coach — footwork, neck, camera line.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Slow is filthy. Fast is panic. Find the middle where it looks like you mean it.

Penelope hears this. To camera, walking:

PENELOPE
(to camera)
I am a graduate student in biology.

(beat)
I am also, as of this morning, responsible for the artistic integrity of fellatio.

(beat)
My therapist is going to buy a boat.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - CONTINUOUS

Zoe filming the facade. Leo, haunted in a horny-adjacent way he doesn't understand yet.

ZOE
No logo. No colors. They built a successful sex company and branded it like a storage unit for shame. Shame is a terrible creative director.

LEO
Maybe they're embarrassed because people fuck on camera for money.

ZOE
People fuck for free and lie about it. At least here the invoice is honest.

(beat)
I can rebrand this. Not sanitize it — own it. Desire without the apology tour.

LEO
Does Penelope know you're horny for her dead dad's logistics?

ZOE
I'm horny for competence. Different. Overlapping. Shut up.

ACT THREE

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

RENATA OKOYE, mid-30s. Robe over street clothes — she came from set energy, stayed for war. Composed. Furious. A laptop open: the deepfake playing muted. We see enough — her face, a body, explicit motion — to understand the violation without turning the pilot into the crime.

She slams the laptop shut.

RENATA
Nine years building a name I control. Someone used my face to sell a fucking I did not agree to, did not get paid for, and would not have done in that lighting even if they asked. Your legal team said "wait and see." That's what people say while they decide if you're expensive or disposable.

WALT
That won't be our position—

RENATA
You said that eighteen months ago, Walt. The silence has a subscription model.

Penelope leans in.

PENELOPE
That's not our answer.

WALT
This isn't your area—

PENELOPE
It is biology. Consent. Chain of custody. Who owns a body when the body is also a product. I have overprepared for useless things my entire life. I would like that to become useful.

(harder)
And I would like the men in rooms connected to my family to stop saying "not your area" when the area is women's bodies and the money those bodies make while everyone else gets to feel clean.

To Renata:

PENELOPE (CONT'D)
Takedown notice. Platform response. Every contract he had you sign. Tonight. If it happened to you, it happened to others. I want our list before a journalist builds one.

RENATA
Your father said things like that.

PENELOPE
Did he.

RENATA
Word for word. Then the next fire. Meaning it became a personality. Personality doesn't get my face off a server in Estonia.

PENELOPE
Policy. Real one. Teeth. Not two years. Not a kayak.

(beat)
And if it's only paper, you come back in six months and eviscerate me in front of witnesses. You'll be right. You'll still get to leave.

(quieter, true)
This company doesn't own your face more than you do. That's the only reason I'm not dissolving it. I considered that. In the parking lot. For a long time. While wondering whether my father loved me or just curated a daughter pure enough to never ask where the money came from.

Renata almost smiles.

RENATA
Six months. Writing it down.

(stands)
If you dissolve it, wait for my back-end. I'm not a martyr. Martyrs don't have OnlyFans competition and a mortgage.

PENELOPE
Noted.

Renata goes. Barnabé exhales a decade.

BARNABÉ
I expected crying or a TED Talk. Instead I got a scientist with a knife. I am aroused in a professional way. Do not put that in the minutes.

PENELOPE
Please never tell me that again.

BARNABÉ
I make no promises. Honesty is my kink. Tragically unmarketable.

WALT
Your father would be proud.

PENELOPE
My father would be proud and then delay. Don't compliment me with his name until I decide what of him isn't radioactive.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE A - NIGHT (OPTIONAL TEXTURE BEAT)

Penelope, alone after hours, walks the empty set. The bed. The lights cold. A bottle of lube still on a side table like a forgotten prop from a marriage.

She sits on the edge of the bed. Fully clothed. Ridiculous and holy.

PENELOPE
(to camera)
I used to think sex was a thing that happened to other people while I studied.

(beat)
Turns out it was the family business.

(beat)
Of course it was. The one subject I never revised for.

She stands. Leaves. Doesn't cry here. Not yet.

INT. PENELOPE'S NEW OFFICE - NIGHT

Fabian's desk. Drawer: flip calendar, red circle. Older glasses. She holds them. Sets them down.

Zoe.

ZOE
Four hours.

PENELOPE
I don't know how much of my childhood was a cover story for other people's orgasms.

ZOE
He left you what he built. Not clean. Not nothing. Fashion taught me both can be true and still look good in a campaign.

PENELOPE
He loved me enough to leave me a company and not enough to tell me while he could still watch me hate him to his face.

ZOE
That's the most adult sentence you've ever said. Congratulations. You're ruined. Welcome.

PENELOPE
I have contracts.

ZOE
Spreadsheet with a pulse. Got it. When you want to be a person, I'm here. Also I'm rebranding this place in my head and it's filthy and elegant and you're going to steal it.

INT. NATREL HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Beatrice. Funeral clothes. Wine untouched.

BEATRICE
You went to the office.

PENELOPE
Someone had to. The someone he named.

BEATRICE
I could have handled it.

PENELOPE
He didn't leave it to you.

BEATRICE
No.

(true, ugly, clean)
You get to be devastated he lied. If I'm devastated, it looks like I married a pornographer for the exit package. So I'll look like greed. Fine. I signed up for a secret. I didn't know I'd be outranked by a daughter he never trusted with the truth of her own tuition.

She leaves.

Cody. Pajamas. Listening kids become the moral center.

CODY
Is it true? Dad's company. People at school said porn.

PENELOPE
We'll talk. Properly. Not tonight.

CODY
Deal. But don't protect me by lying. Dad did that. It sucked. It still sucks. And if it's true, I don't want the Disney version where sex is a monster under the bed. I'm twelve, not stupid.

PENELOPE
(cracked smile)
I'd expect nothing less.

CODY
Also Tyler's brother said the word "creampie" like he invented it. He didn't. I checked. The internet is a war crime.

PENELOPE
Cody.

CODY
I'm going to bed. I'm not googling Dad. Yet.

(beat)
That was a lie. I might. Don't be mad if I do. Be mad at Dad.

He goes. Penelope looks to camera:

PENELOPE
(to camera)
I am going to be so bad at this.

(beat)
Or catastrophically good.

(beat)
Those are the same girl, depending on the lighting.

EXT. TANTRA HOLDINGS - NIGHT

Walt by the car.

WALT
First day.

PENELOPE
Barely.

WALT
He'd be proud.

PENELOPE
You didn't know that until today either.

WALT
I was right about him in the ways that paid people and wrong in the ways that matter at kitchen tables. You get the harder column.

Phone: Cody — is it actually porn — then i already know. say it so the secret stops owning us.

PENELOPE
(to herself)
Okay.

TAG

INT. CODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Search bar: Tantra Holdings Montreal. Thumb hovering. Closes phone. Opens. Childhood in installments.

INT. ARCHIVE / OFFICE - NIGHT

Penelope with Walt's key. Boxes. Dust. She finds a recorder:

FOR P. — IF I DON'T SAY IT

Play.

FABIAN (ON TAPE)
Hi, sweetheart.

If this exists, I failed the living conversation.

I'm not going to defend myself. I built a company that makes money from desire. I'm not ashamed of the work. I'm ashamed I was more afraid of losing your respect than of lying to your face. Small man's math.

You don't have to keep it. You don't have to burn it. You have to decide who you are when nobody is grading you.

I think you'll be better than me. That's not a compliment. That's a hope with teeth.

I love you. I'm sorry the first true thing I left you was also the dirtiest and the most honest.

(soft laugh)
Go get your A. Even in this.

Click.

Penelope cries — private, real, Fleabag-short. Then stops. Heel of the hand. Scientist cleaning a slide.

PENELOPE
I'm going to run it.

Not because you asked.

Because the people here deserve better than your fear.

And because I am done being the daughter of a secret that paid for my fucking textbooks.

She turns off the lamp.

In the hallway, someone laughs — late crew, finishing a cut, human, filthy, alive. The building doesn't sleep. Desire is a night shift.

Penelope almost smiles. Almost.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)
(to camera, final)
Right.

(beat)
Porn.

(beat)
How hard can it be?

She knows. We know. That's the joke. That's the show.

FADE OUT.

END OF PILOT.