

Playing with Fire

Pilot

'PLAYING WITH FIRE'

EXT. EDINBURGH. DAY - SPRING

A sandy-colored tram winds slowly through Edinburgh's Prince's street.

The high street, with its 18th-century stone buildings, large glass windows, and revolving doors, creates a harmonious mix of historical and new.

A busker's voice is heard singing Ed Sheeran's Shape of You from a loudspeaker.

And pedestrians stroll the high street happily lured into shops - with white mannequins dressed in summer attire, adjacent to large red signs reading: 40% off sale in the display windows.

INT. SANDWORTHS DEPARTMENT STORY

A once sleek department store with now, a lackluster feel.

Its fluorescent lights and mud-colored wallpaper suit the melancholy feeling of Celine Dion's, '*All by myself*, ' playing in the background.

Large metal shelving units line the walls stuffed to the brim with different comforters, sheets, and bedspreads wrapped in clear plastic storage bags.

The center of the floor is lifeless aside from two teenage girls CAITLIN, a stuffy 17-year-old, and her friend ISLA, 16, who resembles CAITLIN, whispering and laughing as they fold, unfold, then refold the same beach towel.

BIRDIE, a sleek, composed and professional Black American woman in her thirties, stands next to a customer with an Ipad assisting him.

He's a tall, ginger, man with a lot of girth.

CUSTOMER

Ah don't know anything about this stuff.

BIRDIE

It's a beautiful dining set.

CUSTOMER

It better be. It'll cost meh a fortune.

BIRDIE

Is this for a special occasion?

Caitlin and Isla speak with raised voices - like no one else is around.

ISLA

Like, We tried to. He put it in a little bit, but then his face got all weird. And -

The Male customer looks at ISLA appalled.

BIRDIE

Isla! You mind taking those dresses back to the children's section?

CAITLIN

You mind if I put my foot up your arse?

Caitlin and Isla laugh and go back to folding the same towel, whispering.

BIRDIE stares at them intensely.

CUSTOMER

It's an anniversary gift. My pals were like, don't be stupid get her a bracelet or something.

BIRDIE turns her attention back to the customer, feigning interest.

BIRDIE

How many years?

CUSTOMER

15.

BIRDIE

The Crystal year.

CUSTOMER

Aye, is it? Ah'll use that when she opens it. I didn't know what to get her. She's been nagging me about a new dining set. I thought this was a good present: nice and functional.

Birdie picks up a blue Denby dinner plate with gold trimmings.

BIRDIE  
A lot of people like this one.

CUSTOMER  
Blue is mah wife's favorite color.

He thinks for a minute.

CUSTOMER  
I'll take it.

BIRDIE  
Great choice.

She checks her IPAD.

BIRDIE (cont'd)  
We can order that to the store and  
you can come pick it up on Friday.  
Does that work?

CUSTOMER  
That's class.

BIRDIE  
I'll take your information.

Birdie walks behind the counter and shoots CAITLIN and ISLA a death stare.

They continue whispering but have moved on to a second towel.

BIRDIE (V.O.)  
Dear God, give me the serenity to  
accept the things I cannot change.

Caitlin sees Birdie watching and gives her the middle finger.

Birdie pulls a pile of white papers with barcodes.

BIRDIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
The courage to change the things I  
can.

She begins searching through the white papers.

BIRDIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
And the wisdom to know the  
difference.

CUSTOMER  
You'd be okay, right?

BIRDIE  
I'm sorry?

CUSTOMER  
You be okay, if yer husband bought  
it for yer?

BIRDIE  
I'm not married.

CUSTOMER  
Oh, sorry. I just thought...you're  
wearing a ring.

BIRDIE  
Oh.

She twist the ring on her finger self-consciously.

BIRDIE (cont'd)  
It's...a promise ring.

She scans a barcode, but its the wrong one so she deletes it  
on the computer.

CUSTOMER  
A promise ring...?

BIRDIE  
My mother...um, she asked me to  
wear it.

BIRDIE finds the bar code she's looking for and scans it.

BIRDIE (cont'd)  
I'll take your card payment, sir.  
Whenever you're ready.

CUSTOMER  
Thanks.

Pulling his card out of his wallet and places his card on  
the card reader.

CUSTOMER (cont'd)  
(Interested)  
Is that...a cultural thing?

BIRDIE  
What'd you mean?

CUSTOMER  
Do women in your culture have  
to...? Where's that accent from?

BIRDIE  
I'm American.

CUSTOMER  
Oh.

There's an awkward silence.

CUSTOMER (cont'd)  
Is that...Is the ring an African-  
American....?

BIRDIE  
That's your payment gone through.  
You can pick it up on Friday.  
And here's your receipt. You'll  
have 30 days to return them, unused  
and with the original receipt. I  
hope your wife likes it.

CUSTOMER  
I hope so too. Otherwise, I'll tell  
her it was your idea.

BIRDIE lets out a rehearsed laugh - she's done this a few  
times.

The man pokes his chest out, proud to have made her laugh.

BIRDIE looks over and watches ISLA and CAITLIN folding the  
SAME beach towel.

ISLA  
We were kissing, right? And like,  
his mouth, like starts. Like, he's  
looking like he's gonna, you know.

BIRDIE (V.O.)  
A match.

ISLA  
I swear. I thought he was having a  
spasm, or a heart attack, or  
something.

BIRDIE (V.O.)  
A lit cigarette.

CAITLIN picks up a pink child's lacy dress off the pile of  
towels and tries putting it on a hanger.

BIRDIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
That lacy dress - every little girl  
has to have.

ISLA  
He was like this...

Isla makes an obscene face imitating something sexual.

CAITLIN  
Ewww!

ISLA  
Yes -

BIRDIE (V.O.)  
Dress. Candle. Flame.

Suddenly a fire begins in the corner moving slowly across the wall. It consumes everything in its path: towels, bedspreads, and plastic-covered comforters make a popping noise as they burn.

BIRDIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
You ever watch a fire burn...? It's  
got a rhythm. A beauty. A form. But  
not everyone sees it...

As it rounds the corner of the room, the fire picks up speed, engulfing the room in flames, which traps both CAITLIN and ISLA, who turn to BIRDIE in fear.

SAMANTHA  
Bertha! Bertha!

BIRDIE V.O.  
I hate being called Bertha.

BIRDIE turns around to face SAMANTHA. There is no fire.

SAMANTHA, (40'S) a busty and energetic Scottish woman is surveying the sales floor.

SAMANTHA  
Can you fold these towels, please?

BIRDIE  
I'm not...That's not my department  
anymore.

SAMANTHA  
Team player, Bertha.

BIRDIE walks towards the towels, chooses a basket opposite CAITLIN and ISLA, and starts folding face towels and placing them on a rolling table.

SAMANTHA walks behind the beige desk and applies red lipstick in a small oval-shaped mirror on the counter. She examines herself - very proud of what she sees.

CAITLIN and ISLA both make a fuck you face behind Samantha's back while mimicking her movements. They feign innocent when she turns around as they re-fold the SAME towel.

BIRDIE (V.O.)

Five years. Five years I've given them, and what do I get?

SAMANTHA

Bertha, Can I talk to you for minute?

Samantha takes her aside and speaks softly.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

I wanted to check in. You know, make sure there's no hard feelings. I know things got a wee bit tense when we were both interviewed for the job. But I hope you know I have nothing but respect for you as a colleague and a friend.

BIRDIE

Thanks.

SAMANTHA

And we, management and I, didn't want to let the day to go by without congratulating you on your five years of service.

Samantha pulls out a brown, rectangular plaque with the words: Congratulations, Bertha Wilson!

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

Congratulations, Bertha! I hope you know how much we appreciate all your hard work over the years.

BIRDIE takes the plaque and rotates it around in her hand.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

Now, let's have a photo of yer, stand over there.



SAMANTHA places BIRDIE in front of an empty wall. BIRDIE gives a pursed lip smile.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)  
Come on, dear. Show us some teeth.

BIRDIE smiles showing too many teeth. SAMANTHA gives a strained look of encouragement and takes the photo.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)  
There yer go! Gonna hang this up in  
the break room. Congrats, Bertha.

SAMANTHA walks towards another section.

BIRDIE walks behind the beige desk, opens the first drawer, then drops the plaque inside.

INT. SANDWORTHS EMPLOYEE BREAK ROOM

A black tea kettle rest on a long blue tabletop.

On the wall above the tabletop are three large paint-chipped cabinets with doors barely hanging on.

BIRDIE sits alone glaring at a photo of SAMANTHA on the wall with the words: General Manager on a plaque above her head; underneath the image, Samantha has written, *There's no I in teamwork.*

BIRDIE reaches into her purse and pulls out a long burgundy wallet.

Inside the wallet, she pulls out a tiny photograph folded in half.

She opens it and stares at a little Black girl, age 5, in a white dress and a Black boy in a gray suit, around the same age standing in front of a large blue plantation style house.

They're both smiling while holding hands and looking directly into the camera.

SAMANTHA suddenly bursts into the room, struggling with two extra large shopping bags and a small rolling suitcase.

SAMANTHA  
Ah can't wait to go home and try  
these on. Where's all yer shopping?

BIRDIE  
I didn't want anything.

SAMANTHA

What?! It's 40% off with an extra 25% with our discount. It's practically free.

BIRDIE

Practically, but not quite.

SAMANTHA

What 'er you saving for?

BIRDIE

I just don't need anything.

SAMANTHA

Wish I had yer' discipline. I couldnae' decide between the Burberry coat or the Celine bag. So I bought 'em both. Ha!

There's an awkward silence.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

I got yer something.

She pulls out a candle and places it on the table.

BIRDIE stares at it intensely.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

It's lavender. Your favorite, right?

BIRDIE V.O.

It is my favorite.

SAMANTHA

You like it?

BIRDIE

Huh? Um, yeah. Thanks.

BIRDIE doesn't move.

BIRDIE (cont'd)

But...um, my mother...doesn't like candles burning in the house.

SAMANTHA

Who doesnae like candles? It's *your* gift. Enjoy it.

SAMANTHA shoves the candle into Birdie's purse.

BIRDIE stares at it, frozen.

EXT. SANDWORTHS STORE - NIGHT.

Samantha and Birdie are standing outside the employee exit. The parking lot in front of them is empty except for a large bright yellow land rover.

SAMANTHA

You need a ride. 'Am going yer way!

SAMANTHA pulls a key fob from her purse and presses it. The yellow land rover lights up.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

Ah' decided to treat myself. Went down to the dealership and drove it right off the lot. The salesman almost pissed himself when I pulled out that wad of cash. Always wanted to do that. Come on, I'll drop yer off. You must be tired from walking all day. I swear my bunions are killing me.

BIRDIE

Thanks. I'll take the bus.

EXT. NIGHT - BROUGHTON STREET

Birdie walks into a small communal garden and picks up a long stick from under a tree.

The alley way is lined with large overflowing rubbish and recycling skips.

She moves towards a recycling skip and pushes it away.

She examines the brick wall behind it, and finds the loose brick she's looking for.

She takes out the brick and rotates the stick inside and pulls out a black plastic bag.

Inside are a red bull can, an intertwined white string, and a small bottle of lighter fluid.

She takes out the candle - as if holding precious cargo and places it inside the bag.

SHE places the brick back into the hole and quickly exits the alley way.

EXT. BIRDIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE stops in front of a four-story stoned terraced building with a large black door.

As BIRDIE walks towards the door, it swings open, revealing Birdie's Mother, ANNABELLE, a very very chic dark skinned black woman in her 60's.

ANNABELLE

Where have you been?!

BIRDIE

My bus was late.

BIRDIE starts to move towards the door, but Annabelle stops her.

ANNABELLE

Try again. I checked the schedule. It said your bus left on time. *And*, I received the notification when you got *on* the bus. So I'll ask you again. Where - have - you - been?

BIRDIE

I went for a walk.

ANNABELLE

Where?

BIRDIE

Can we do this inside? It's embarrassing. I'm not a child.

ANNABELLE

When I was a child, I spoke and thought as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Have you put away childish things, Birdie?

BIRDIE

I went for a walk.

INT. BIRDIE'S FLAT - NIGHT

BIRDIE enters the corridor of a Bohemian - chic styled flat. The walls are covered in large paintings of Scottish seascapes, photos of exotic places, and abstract paintings.

Annabelle follows Birdie into the living room, which is a grand space with beautiful oriental rugs, a large wooden dinner table, and three bay windows overlooking the street.

ANNABELLE

Your purse.

BIRDIE takes off her purse and hands it to ANNABELLE.

ANNABELLE (cont'd)

I don't like doing this.

ANNABELLE looks through the bag.

ANNABELLE (cont'd)

Your phone.

Birdie gives her the phone.

She puts in the code and scrolls through.

Awkward silence.

Annabelle softens.

ANNABELLE (cont'd)

How was your day?

BIRDIE

It was fine.

ANNABELLE

I know it couldn't been easy. It being the 16th and all.

BIRDIE

Wasn't my favorite day.

ANNABELLE

Henry called. He asked you to call him. Again.

BIRDIE

I called him last month.

ANNABELLE

You called him last year.

BIRDIE

I'll call...soon.

ANNABELLE

Did you hear back about the job, yet?

BIRDIE puts the items back into her purse avoiding Annabelle's gaze.

BIRDIE  
They're still deciding.

ANNABELLE  
Taking their sweet time.

BIRDIE  
My manager said my interview was the best. Very professional, he said.

ANNABELLE  
(proud)  
What did I tell you?

SHE cuffs her hands together and swings like she's hitting a bat.

ANNABELLE  
That Samantha doesn't stand a chance. (Laughing) Has she done anything stupid lately?

BIRDIE  
Bought a yellow range rover.

ANNABELLE  
Of course she did. She's got a lot of lifelines, I tell ya'. Who still has a job after they forget to lock up the store?

BIRDIE  
I'm gonna get cleaned up.

BIRDIE walks toward the corridor to leave this conversation.

ANNABELLE (O.S.)  
The first thing you should do when you get that promotion, fire her.

INT. BIRDIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE shuts the door to her room and exhales.

It's her sanctuary.

Everything is white, so white it feels lifeless.

Birdie takes her phone out of her purse and scrolls through her contacts until she finds Henry's name.

She hovers over it, and decides not to call.

She puts her purse on top of a white chest of drawers.

She opens the third drawer, and pulls out a red sweater.

Inside the sweater, is a small plastic sandwich bag with an aging piece of paper.

Written at the top of the paper are the words: 'Let it Burn', and underneath it are several words that have all been crossed out with checks next to them.

~~Lacy dress. 1990~~

~~Cinderella comforter. 1992~~

~~Trash can. 1992~~

~~The tree behind the school. 1994~~

~~The black dress. 2001~~

~~The Barn. 2011~~

ANNABELLE (O.S.)  
Dinner's ready.

BIRDIE  
I'll be right out.

She carefully puts the paper back into the bag, then places it back into the drawer.

INT. SANDWORTH'S DEPARTMENT STORE - NEXT DAY - AFTERNOON

BIRDIE stands next to ARIEL, (40's) a fun-loving woman who's spent her life in retail.

They stand next to a rolling table, stamping red markdown labels onto dinner plates.

Samantha stands near them admiring her bosoms in the mirror.

SAMANTHA  
Yer don't have to go up a whole cup size. I only did half.

ARIEL  
 (feigning interest)  
 Really?

SAMANTHA  
 Trust me, men say they want plenty  
 to hold on to, but they're happy to  
 have anythin'.

Meanwhile, CAITLIN and ISLA walk through the sales floor  
 carrying H&M bags, and cold sandwiches from Sainsbury.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)  
 (To Caitlin & Isla)  
 Lunch is one hour.

CAITLIN (O.S.)  
 Five minutes left.

CAITLIN and ISLA continue walking towards the break room.

SAMANTHA  
 (Yelling after them)  
 I want to see both of you on the  
 sales floor by 3:15.

SAMANTHA turns back to the mirror admiring her bosoms.

ARIEL  
 Were they expensive?

BIRDIE  
 (whispering)  
 Don't encourage her.

Ariel walks over to the mirror, admiring herself.

SAMANTHA  
 You just have to know the right  
 people, in Slovakia.

ARIEL  
 (Shocked)  
 Slovakia?

SAMANTHA  
 It's the Thailand of eastern  
 Europe.

ARIEL  
 (Dreamy)  
 Thailand. Now that's a place I'm  
 dying to get to.



SAMANTHA places her hands under Ariel's breast.

ARIEL (cont'd)  
Excuse you.

She clutches her breast pretending to be offended.

SAMANTHA  
I'll get you the doctors info.

ARIEL  
Oh yeah?

SAMANTHA  
Don't worry about the cost. They'll  
pay for themselves afterwards in  
drinks at the pub.

BIRDIE (V.O.)  
Why didn't they just let her die on  
the table?

SAMANTHA  
Piece of piss, it was. I went  
during summer, spent three weeks in  
a spa 'recovering'.

Birdie's phone vibrates in her pocket.

The name Henry flashes across her screen.

Birdie stares at the phone waiting for the call to end.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)  
No phones on the sales floor.

Samantha stuffs face towels into Ariel's bra.

BIRDIE  
I'll put it away on my break.

SAMANTHA  
You'll put it away now.

BIRDIE places the price gun on the table, then heads towards  
the back.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)  
And don't forget, you're on stock  
take tomorrow night.

BIRDIE  
What?

SAMANTHA

I put it on the rota, didn't you see?

BIRDIE

I was on stock take three months ago?

ARIEL

I'll stay and help, Birdie. It'll be fun.

INT. BREAK ROOM

BIRDIE stands beside the blue counter top.

Next to the tea kettle is a new item, a counter-top hob.

Birdie stares at it intensely.

BIRDIE (V.O)

Hello, old friend.

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY

Birdie walks down the street.

She hovers over Henry's number and dials.

CUT TO:

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - GEORGIA - DAY

The dilapidated house hasn't been updated since the 70's.

A phone flashes with Birdie's name on the screen.

HENRY

Hello?

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Birdie doesn't respond.

HENRY (O.S.)

Birdie?

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We see a burned arm and hand holding the phone.

HENRY  
You there?

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE  
Hey. I'm here.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
Hey.

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE  
How've you been?

HENRY (O.S.)  
Can't complain. You?

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE (O.S.)  
I'm okay.

We see Henry pick up a box of cigarettes.

He takes one out and flicks the lighter.

His voice slows as he inhales and exhales the cigarette smoke.

As he exhales, we see a clearer view of the right side of his face.

His skin is charcoal black and rippled across his cheek. His nose is disfigured making it harder for him to breathe and the skin above his eye hangs down to his chin.

HENRY  
Thought I'd hear from you  
yesterday.

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIES walks slowly matching Henry's breathing.

HENRY (O.S.)  
I spent the day waiting for you to  
call.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
You forget about me?

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE  
No. No. I've been...busy.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
(attempting a posh English  
accent.)  
Have you dined with the Queen yet?

BIRDIE (O.S.)  
(laughing)  
Working on it.

HENRY  
(joking)  
You know you gon' have to bring her  
some good ole' American food. Don't  
let them get you thinkin' fish and  
chips is a real meal.

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE  
I'm sure the Queen doesn't eat fish  
and chips.

HENRY (V.O.)  
It might be...catfish, or what kind  
of fish they got over there?

She laughs.

BIRDIE  
I ain't never seen catfish. And  
you're acting brand new. You eat  
catfish and fries all the time.

NT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
(laughing)  
You got me. You got me.

Awkward silence.

BIRDIE (V.O.)  
I, uh. I wanted to call to...um...

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE  
I've been thinking about you. I  
think about you...a lot.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
Oh Yeah...What you think about?

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE  
Stuff. The past.

Awkward Silence.

HENRY (V.O.)  
Guess who I saw the other day?

BIRDIE  
Who?

EXT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
William.

BIRDIE stands frozen in the street.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY

He was driving a new car. A Cadillac. I guess that insurance money ain't ran out yet. He said, Say hi to BirdiPy next time you talk to her'.

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE

I don't use that name anymore.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY

Whaaat? Why not? It's who you are. No matter where you go, or what you do, you're always gon' be BirdiePy to me.

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE

I haven't been her in years.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY

We could change that. I just got my passport. Thinking about paying you a visit.

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE

That's not a good idea.

HENRY (O.S.)

Why not?

BIRDIE

It's just...not.

INT. HENRY HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
A leopard can't change its spots.

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE  
I can try...

HENRY (V.O.)  
You miss it. I know you do.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
The smell of pine filling the air.  
The sound of wood popping right  
before it bursts into flames. The  
taste,

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE (V.O.)  
Like sweet tobacco on your lips

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
And the way the flames danced  
against the midnight sky. So wild  
and free...

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BIRDIE  
Swaying in the air higher and  
higher, getting stronger and  
wilder,

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY  
Like it was showing off what it  
could do.

EXT. BROUGHTON ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HENRY (V.O)

Cause we the only two people. The only two people in the world who can appreciate that beauty...That freedom. The fire being exactly who it was. You know what I mean? Doing exactly what it was born to do. You feel me?

Birdie ends the call abruptly.

INT. BIRDIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BIRDIE sits alone on the couch.

She's wearing her uniform from earlier and staring into space.

Annabelle enters the flat.

She's startled to see Birdie.

ANNABELLE

What're you doing home early?

BIRDIE

I'm on stock take tomorrow night.

ANNABELLE

Again? Why didn't they ask Samantha?

She shrugs.

An awkward silence.

ANNABELLE (cont'd)

I'm glad you're home early. I wanted to talk to you about something.

Annabelle sits down and takes Birdie's hand in hers.

She strokes the promise ring on Birdie's finger.

ANNABELLE (cont'd)

My baby...

She strokes Birdie's face.

You're so beautiful you know that? Such a...unique woman.



BIRDIE

Unique? When people use that word,  
it usually means crazy.

ANNABELLE

You know I don't mean that. But you  
are, unique, you know? The way your  
brain works...the things you can  
remember. I always said that if you  
just, hone that...if you could  
just...channel that into  
something...

She catches herself.

BIRDIE

What's going on, Ma?

ANNABELLE

I've been thinking...about that  
judge...the one in Georgia. What he  
said, about you never being able to  
live without a conservator...

BIRDIE

I was eighteen years old -

ANNABELLE

You set a tree on fire!

BIRDIE

I set a dress on fire.

ANNABELLE

You almost burned down half the  
school?!

BIRDIE

I had my reasons...

ANNABELLE

(exasperated)

You always have a reason!

She regains her composure.

ANNABELLE (cont'd)

Listen...I'm not going to be around  
for ever.

BIRDIE

You're made of steel, Ma.

ANNABELLE

(ignoring her)

Please, let me finish. If something happens to me...if I'm not around...They'll assign someone to you. Unless...

BIRDIE

Unless..?

ANNABELLE

I find someone.

BIRDIE

No.

ANNABELLE

It's for your own good.

BIRDIE

My own good? My own good? You know what'd be good for me, Ma? Being in control of my own life.

ANNABELLE

Why Birdie? So you set a fire whenever you want?

BIRDIE

It's been years, Ma. I've never done anything like that again.

ANNABELLE

That's because I've been watching you like a hawk.

BIRDIE

No, it's because I have my... impulses under control.

ANNABELLE

So they're still there? After all this time? After the school, the barn, after you ruined that boys life - left him half a man.

BIRDIE

I'm not the same person anymore. You can trust me. Trust that when I put on this ring, the vow I made. My promise. I meant it.

ANNABELLE

I...

Birdie is exasperated.

BIRDIE

It's never enough...is it? None of  
it?

BIRDIE walks away from Annabelle and looks out onto the street.

BIRDIE (cont'd)

No matter how many cities we move  
to, states, countries. You'll  
always see me as her? The girl who  
plays with fire.

Birdie looks towards Annabelle who fixes her gaze out onto the street.

INT. STANWORTHS BREAK ROOM - END OF DAY

Birdie sits in the break room, eating a homemade sandwich out of a green container - her face glued to her phone.

**Insert**, phone screen article titled 'Stanworths sold for a £1'.

Birdie scrolls the article, finishes her sandwich, then turns off her phone.

She opens her locker and pauses.

Sitting on the top shelf inside the locker, is the black plastic bag from her hiding place.

She lifts the bag slowly, then places the green sandwich container under it.

Birdie hears shouting outside the room.

She closes her locker and exits.

INT. STANWORTHS DEPARTMENT STORE WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Birdie exits the break room and sees a crowd of about twenty employees of various shapes and sizes, gathered in the middle of the warehouse.

The warehouse is a large industrial space filled with tall, large metal frames, with cardboard boxes stacked to the ceiling.

Birdie joins the angry employees in the middle as they speak simultaneously, while Samantha stands in front trying to regain control.

SAMANTHA

Please. Please. We're not even sure if this article's telling the full story.

MALE EMPLOYEE

That bastard is coming for our pensions.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE 1

I've got 2 years, 6 months, and 3 days left, before I retire. And I'm not working a minute more.

MALE EMPLOYEE 2

When will we find out what's happening?

SAMANTHA

I spoke to the head office. They said more information will come soon.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE 2

So we have been sold?

SAMANTHA

Yes, that much I know.

MALE EMPLOYEE 3

For a pound?

SAMANTHA

I don't know all the details of the sale.

ISLA and CAITLIN enter the warehouse from the sales floor.

CAITLIN

I say, we strike!

Trying to avoid work.

ISLA

(enthusiastically)  
Who's with us?

CAITLIN

No more work! No more work.

ISLA

No more work! No more work!

Everyone stares at them deadpan then turns their attention back to Samantha.

MALE EMPLOYEE 3

Is there a way we can cash in our pensions before they're nicked?

SAMANTHA

Management and I are here to ensure that your pensions are protected.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE 1

Ah've been here 30 years - longer than you've been alive. And you've just got this job. (to everyone) She probably doesn't know anymore than we do.

Birdie looks amused.

MALE EMPLOYEE 2

Exactly!

FEMALE EMPLOYEE 1

I say we start calling the head office ourselves, and find out what the hell is going on.

The crowd starts nodding and vocally agreeing in unison.

Samantha senses she's losing them.

SAMANTHA

Listen, that won't be necessary -

MALE EMPLOYEE 2

Half the shops on this street are gone. It's coming...

FEMALE EMPLOYEE 2

We're gonna end up just like BNS. My friend Sue lost all her pension.

MALE EMPLOYEE 4

That bastard CEO ran off and bought a boat with it.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE 3

Ah'd rather see this place go up in flames, before I let some wanker run off with mah money.

Birdie stares at the employee intensely.

The employees voices blur together and become background noise, as Birdie's breathing is amplified.

Samantha's voice breaks through the crowd bringing Birdie back.

SAMANTHA

Listen! Listen! It's the end of the day and we're not gonna have any more news today. I say, let's all go home - except for those on stock take tonight. And tomorrow, we'll come back and hopefully I'll have some information to share. Is that alright?

The crowd silently acquiesces and begins to disperse.

Employees quickly file out of the warehouse door.

The warehouse is nearly empty except for Samantha and two other employees.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

Ah, I need a drink. You know where you are tonight?

Samantha hands Birdie a clipboard.

She scans the sheet.

BIRDIE

There's no way I can count this many towels by myself.

SAMANTHA

I thought you liked a challenge, Bertha. At least, that's what you said in your interview.

Birdie gives Samantha a tense look.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

Ah'm only kidding. Thought you Americans were supposed to have a sense of humor.

Birdie gives a forced smile. Samantha laughs at her own joke - uncomfortable with the silence.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

Alright. Ah've got to get going. Those drinks aren't gonna drink themselves.

She pushes up her bosoms.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)  
And these girls still have a debt  
to repay.

Samantha starts to leave.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)  
I plan on being too drunk to drive  
home. Bye.

INT. BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Birdie enters the break room, locking the door behind her.

She turns the knob on her locker, entering the rotary  
combination.

Then swings the door open with exhilarating energy.

She hesitates, then slowly pulls out the black plastic bag,  
her hands shaking from nervousness and excitement.

She lays the bag on the blue tabletop, and pulls out its  
items, meticulously placing them on the counter.

Candle. Gas. Red bull can. Scissors. String.

She opens the red bull and downs it in one long gulp.

BIRDIE (V.O.)  
Here we go.

**Insert,** Amy Winehouse's song, 'Back to Black'

She turns on the hob and begins.

CUT TO:

Birdie Pours hot water around the candle.

CUT TO:

Birdie cuts the red bull can in half.

CUT TO:

Birdie places the solid block of wax on top of the hob.

CUT TO:

Birdie carefully pours gas into the bottom half of the red bull can sitting in the clear candle glass.

CUT TO:

Birdie carefully pours the wax around the red bull can.

CUT TO:

Birdie places the white string inside the liquid wax.

CUT TO:

Birdie shuts the door to her locker.

INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

Ariel and Birdie are exiting the warehouse.

BIRDIE

Haven't you been here 20 years?  
That's your pension too.

ARIEL

I never put any money in  
the pension fund.

BIRDIE

What do you mean?

ARIEL

Pensions are just another way for  
them to keep your salary.

BIRDIE

You don't really believe that?

ARIEL

Of course I do. That's why most of  
my money is hidden.

BIRDIE

Under your mattress?

They come out the Warehouse door, in front of them is the car park.

Samantha's yellow range rover is in the distance.

It bursts into flames.

Ariel screams and runs back.



Birdie's face a mixture of excitement and terror.  
Freeze.

**END OF PILOT.**