

THE WOMEN IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR WORKSHOP  
MAIN SCENE PREP NOTES

<b>DIRECTOR:</b>	Jill Riley
<b>MAIN SCENE TITLE:</b>	Janet gets taken to <i>parenting school</i> by acquaintance & neighbourhood "Mother of the Year" Leigh.
<b>AS OF DATE:</b>	January 3, 2013
<b>SCENE DESCRIPTION:</b>	
<p>Janet's on her way out of the grocery store, chatting to her husband and baby daughter on her cell phone when she runs into Leigh, the neighbourhood "Mother of the Year". Leigh notices Janet's case of formula – despite her best efforts to conceal it – and sees this as a <i>teaching moment</i>. Kindly and generously sharing her hard won expertise, Leigh offers advice, sympathy and even a joke about her abundance of breast milk. Janet, on the other hand, feels busted, beaten up and humiliated.</p>	
<b>LOCATION WITHIN THE NARRATIVE: (what happens just before and just after this scene)</b>	
<p>Before: Janet (along with husband Mark) has made it her mission to document her journey as a new parent via video diary on-line. Janet's determined to raise her child in stark opposition to how she was brought up by practicing exclusively 'natural parenting'. Breastfeeding her daughter is her top priority and after doing everything possible to make it happen, they decide it's best for Lola to switch to bottle-feeding. Janet feels like a failure as a mother but she's doing her best to deal with it, mostly through her video posts on her blog. After: It's three years later and Janet's challenged with discipline issues involving 3 1/2 year old Lola's stubborn behaviour and lack of listening skills. There's a flashback of Janet's mother administering the wooden spoon to her as a child and later Janet's taken aback by her own daydream fantasy of doing the same to Lola.</p>	
<b>CHARACTER BIOS</b>	
<b>Janet:</b>	(30s, any race) In middle management at a non-profit environmental lobbying agency living in the Riverdale neighbourhood of Toronto. She (along with husband Mark) spearheads a campaign to document their first time parenthood journey via video on-line. She's determined to raise their child as naturally as possible – a stark contrast to her upbringing of round the clock television and TV dinners. Chief among her goals is to breastfeed her daughter exclusively. After numerous experts tell her she doesn't have enough "supply" she reluctantly concedes, feeling strongly that she's failed her daughter.
<b>Leigh:</b>	(30s, caucasian) A freckly blonde vegan with dreadlocks, Leigh's a stay at home mom who volunteers at a homeless shelter and takes in stray cats. Her husband's a musician in a popular indie rock band with which he tours extensively. When he's in town, he's often partying to all hours of the night. Leigh doesn't have a lot of control over her own life – she's put her own career as an alternative life coach on hold for several years to look after the kids. Her husband's not around a lot and she secretly wishes she could go back to work and get a break from the kids, the cooking etc. These days her identity is all tied up in her kids and her self imposed role as earth mother to all. -
Mark: (OS – V.O., on phone only)	(Mid-30s, any race) A copywriter at a small advertising agency, Mark's good humoured and easy-going. He loves Janet and watching her go through the disappointment of having to give up nursing their baby has been hard on all of them. He'd do anything to make Janet feel better about being a new mom.

**MOOD and TONE:**

This is a bittersweet comedy. In the larger film, much of the action and dialogue is delivered directly to the camera through the couple's video logs making this scene the longest "straight" scene within the short as a whole. Both the comedy and the drama should arise out of very real moments between the actors –requiring as realistic a style as possible, almost a documentary feel. I'm interested in looking at honest, genuine connections (or disconnections) between the characters in hopes to engender recognition and empathy in the audience.

In the actual film, I will encourage the actors to improvise (within an agreed upon beat structure). This sort of loose, cinema verite approach will go a long way to achieving the kind of fly-on-the-wall feel I'm after. I'm interested in humour and heart but also how these often intersect with oftentimes awkwardness and tension. (Please note: for the purposes of the Main Scene exercise for the WIDC, we won't be doing any improv – but I thought it was important to point out that in the "actual" film this will be essential to the tone and mood.

**LOCATION /SETTING:**

(The Fiesta Farms vestibule: it's the space between the entrance into the store & the store itself. This is where the grocery carts live, lined up in rows. Perhaps there's a bench, a metal stand where the store fliers sit, a community bulletin board with listings of apartments for rent, lost cats signs etc.

**SEASON / WEATHER / TIME OF DAY:**

It's a fresh, crisp spring day around 6'oclock in the evening, there's just a faint chill in the air.

**VISUAL STYLES / IMAGES:**

Generally speaking I prefer to film things in such a way that allows the story and characters to speak for themselves. In terms of camera movement and style I like it to grow organically out of the emotion story being told and the journey of the protagonist and other characters. I am interested in a cinema verite kind of style but I also know that the name of the game here is learning and exploration. I'm definitely very keen to learn about the camera department:: different lenses, angles, movements. Mostly I want to focus on the actors, their faces and their interactions, the dynamic between the characters. I'm interested in juxtaposing the joy of Janet's phone call with her daughter and husband to her despair at the end. The journey of how she gets there will be pretty comic and rapid fire but the emotional story still needs to be told. Obviously the formula is a key visual element, as well the visual contrast between Janet and Leigh (casting will supply a lot of said contrast as will hair, makeup & wardrobe). I love the collaborative nature of filmmaking and have always worked closely with my DOP on the look of my films – I'd very much like to meet with the DOP and figure out how to approach things visually.

**SOUND / MUSIC INSPIRATIONS:**

I like the idea of Muzak on the grocery store loud speaker/PA system. (I had mentioned that my singer/songwriter boyfriend might be able to provide some Muzak versions of one of his radio hits from the 90s – unfortunately, there was no time to put that together). However, I'm flexible enough to try to figure out something else out, when the time comes). There will be the sounds of people coming and going, carts wheeling, bumping into things etc. There'll be announcements on the P.A. as well, "Clean up in aisle 5" or "Price check lane 3", that sort of thing. Also, likely some incidental sounds grocery bags rustling, car horns, doors opening, dogs barking, maybe a siren etc.

**OTHER NOTES (props, wardrobe, special effects, etc.):**

**Props**

1 smart phone  
1 case of organic infant formula  
1 sling (w/infant doll)  
3 dolls (as stand-ins for Leigh's toddlers: one @ 18 mons, one @ 2 1/2 years, one infant)  
various groceries (including: a bakery box of brownies, a bouquet of flowers, heirloom carrots, arugola & a couple of organic things  
a red, wooden wagon  
2 sippy cups (different colours) & snacks for the kids (carrots, Sha sha cookies)  
re-useable grocery bags (including a "Whole Foods" one for Leigh)

**Wardrobe**

Janet: well-worn jeans & sweater or cords with a long sleeved tee (a cool palette: blues, greens, violets). A designer purse and a spring trench, ankle boots with a bit of a heel.

Leigh: a hippie skirt, shoulder bag, head scarf and loose cotton top, pulled together with a macramé hip belt (all natural fibres – very key). A warm palette: cream, mustards, curries, browns, rusts. Boots or sandals (no leather).