

ABSTRACT CREATURES
"Pilot: Who Is Sybil?"

Teleplay by
Juno Dante Night

Based on the book SYBIL EXPOSED by Debbie Nathan
SAMPLE PAGES

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FADE IN:

SUPER: "INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS (UNLESS WE'RE, YOU KNOW, KIDDING OURSELVES). COURTESY OF THE CONTRADICTORY LETTERS AVAILABLE IN THE FLORA RHETA SCHREIBER PAPERS AT JOHN JAY COLLEGE."

TEASER

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Raw dailies, like an amateur documentary on grainy film stock.

SUPER: "Shirley Ardeell Mason. Alias: Sybil Isabel Dorsett. Psychiatric patient of Dr. Cornelia Wilbur. LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY. 1975."

The round yet frail face of SHIRLEY ARDELL MASON, early 50s, glasses, dark hair styled in an old-fashioned do (even for the 70s), no make-up, petite and thin. Neatly dressed in a dark suit, she appears attentive. She eyes the camera curiously. Accompanying her around the room are her marvelous watercolor paintings and family of CATS and LITTLE DOGS.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PRESENT)

SUPER: "Dr. Cornelia (Connie) Burwell Wilbur. Psychoanalyst."

At the table regarding us like she would her patients: DR. CONNIE WILBUR, mid-60s, slender, freckled, flaming artificial red hair. She chain-smokes and exudes a poised, confident air. If she is ever lying, it is difficult to detect.

CONNIE

The moment I laid eyes on Miss Sybil Dorsett, I knew she was no garden-variety. The world needed to know who she was and why. It was simply groundbreaking.

INT. FLORA'S NEW YORK PENTHOUSE - DAY (PRESENT)

SUPER: "Professor Flora Rheta Schreiber. Author of *Sybil*. NEW YORK CITY."

(CONTINUED)

FLORA SCHREIBER, late 50s, stout, full-figured, a loud brunette do boasting too much hairspray, viciously glares at the boom mic invading her lavish home. Sprawled on a lounge chair, she sucks on a cigarette and splashes around a glass of wine. She enjoys the camera far too much.

FLORA

Okay, you know what? Anything Cornelia tells you is utter bullshit. Yeah, put that down in writing. I'll tell you why: that bitch was after fame. I know it, now everyone knows it. Mind, I don't blame her but -- curing Sybil being her sole agenda? Her wanting the book to help Sybil? Lick my ass, Cornelia.

INT. STERN'S HOLLYWOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

SUPER: "Stewart Stern. Screenwriter. LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA."

On the sofa: STEWART STERN, early 50s, strong features, bookish, receding hairline, deep look and a lover of wool-knit sweaters, despite the California heat.

STERN

So, when I first read the book *Sybil*... I... It was... eye-opening, to put it mildly. But I had my reservations. Initially. That was tricky because I had to write the script for the telemovie.

INT. FLORA'S NEW YORK PENTHOUSE - DAY (PRESENT)

Present day Flora ponders.

FLORA

Look, I'm not going to lie to myself. I'm not lying to anyone. I always wanted a national bestseller. Worked my butt off for years to gain that kind of merit. Did I get it or what?

INT. MINNEAPOLIS STAR OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT)

SUPER: "Monty Norris. Reporter. MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA."

MONTY NORRIS, late 30s, professionally dressed, a little compulsive, hovers over his "tidy" workplace of organized chaos.

NORRIS

I was working for the Minneapolis Star. An underpaid intern -- yeah, not that pleasant. That's beside the point. So, this intern -- name's Steve -- he'd been running his trap for some weeks about marrying this woman from some butt-fucking nowhere town called Dodge Center in Minnesota. Well, her father replaced the local physician who died. Name was Dr. Otoniel Flores. The doctor that died, I mean. There was this book out. Been out for a few years then. And everyone, I guess was pretty certain that Sybil was some woman they all knew. The townsfolk were all arguing viciously over whether "Sybil" had been abused like the book said. Thought this could be an intriguing story, so I packed up, flew on down to Sybil's hometown. At least, it was possible that this was Sybil's hometown.

INT. SPIEGEL'S OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT)

SUPER: "Dr. Herbert Spiegel. Psychiatrist and hypnotist. Colleague of Dr. Cornelia Wilbur. NEW YORK CITY."

DR. HERBERT SPIEGEL, 60s, sharp features and except for sporting an unbecoming grey beard, hardly has any hair to account for.

SPIEGEL

I briefly treated "Sybil" notably while Connie took a vacation. Sybil was suicidal, I was told. I agreed. Connie initially was treating her for schizophrenia or hysteria. She called me up one day, said she had a peculiar feeling that this was not schizophrenia at all. She asked

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
me, a specialized hypnotist, if I could examine the patient and help her clarify the diagnosis. This must have been the fifties, late sixties? Mid-sixties, probably. One day during our regression studies, Sybil said, "Well, do you want me to be Helen?" And I said, "What do you mean?" And she said, "Well, when I'm with Dr. Wilbur she wants me to be Helen." I said, "Who's Helen?" She said, "Well, that's a name Dr. Wilbur gave me for this feeling." So I said, "Well, if you want to it's all right, but it's not necessary." With me, Sybil preferred not to "be Helen." With Connie, it seemed she felt an obligation to become another personality.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Connie:

CONNIE
I never lied. No. Had no reason to. If Sybil could tell you herself, she would. Of course, I'd like her identity to remain anonymous -- for her safety. You know.

INT. SPIEGEL'S OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Spiegel:

SPIEGEL
That's when I realized that Connie was helping Sybil identify aspects of her life, or perspectives, that she then called by name. By naming them this way, she was rectifying a memory of some kind and converting it into a "personality." I saw her "personalities" rather as game-playing. I wasn't angry at Connie about this. I thought this was an ingenious way of identifying different episodes and events in Sybil's life, and if they wanted to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SPIEGEL (CONT'D)

label it or name it in a given way, that was fine. But I thought this was all emerging simply because of Connie's wanting to make sense out of the disparate life experience that Sybil had. So, I told Connie and Flora -- they were writing the book then -- that it would not be accurate to call Sybil a multiple personality, and that it was not at all consistent with what I knew about her.

INT. FLORA'S NEW YORK PENTHOUSE - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Flora:

FLORA

Dr. Spiegel is so full of shit. I said to him when he told me that: "But if we don't call it multiple personality, we don't have a book! The publishers want it to be that, otherwise it won't sell!" Kiss my white ass. Unbelievable. Yeah, he lost the opportunity to be part of the book. I'm still not talking to him. Cunt.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Unlike the other subjects, Shirley is painfully shy -- the opposite of defensive, delusional and fame-seeking.

SHIRLEY

Hardly anyone has asked me for my side of the story. Connie and Flora want to retain the mystery of the book, I reckon. I know that there is a lot of mail for Flora right now at Warner Books (the publisher), the TV station and movie company. The movie *Sybil* isn't out yet, but I'm hoping it will do well. I asked Flora recently, "Can you help me to secure the mail and answer it?" Connie and Flora have been telling me I shouldn't, but I want to show my real name, face, identity and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
what has happened to me since the
book and movie. Although, neither
do I wholly reject the name
"Sybil." It's like a... pleasant
nickname. I can attest, however,
that every single word in Flora's
book is true.

END OF TEASER.

EXT. HOME MOVIES - MASON HOUSE (DODGE CENTER) - DAY (1934)

40 YEARS EARLIER: Black-and-white grainy film stock of
11-year-old Shirley, her hair cut short like a boy's and
possesses a deeply mature expression. Behind her is her
one-story white wooden house with black shutters. In boy's
attire, she plays with her elderly father, WALTER WINGFIELD
MASON, 50s, grey, bespectacled, a grim look.

CONNIE (V.O.)
Let's begin with Dr. Otoniel
Flores, the local family
practitioner. He thought Sybil was
anemic when she was in the sixth
grade. She was ashamed -- the
blindness, headaches, tingling,
head colds, running into windows
instead of doors, this crippling
sense of "going blank." I was
convinced she was an hysteric. I've
treated many in my day, including
traumatized G.I.'s. However, I
learned she was... exceptional.

Her mother sits on the porch steps: MARTHA ALICE "MATTIE"
MASON, 50s, tiny like her daughter, her eyes haggard and her
hair prematurely white, pulled back in an old-fashioned bun.
She looks on, distant and depressed.

CONNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
She was educated. Brilliantly
educated. She studied art at the
Mankato Teachers College, some
miles from where she grew up. My
other patients were... married,
mothers, housewives. Limited world
views. Men dominated their lives.
Not Sybil. She had... problems, I
don't deny that. When she came to
see me in 1945, something happened
at college. No idea what, exactly.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
For the moment, she dropped her
courses at Mankato. Her parents
moved to Omaha, Nebraska by then.
She went to go stay with them. She
came to me.

INT. MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING - CONNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: "OMAHA, NEBRASKA. 1945."

Young Shirley, early 20s, anxiously waltzes around the room,
caresses the bookshelves, gazes out the window unable to
find comfort. She "draws" in the air.

A woman we recognize, though younger, her make-up fresher
and her red hair more natural, Connie, 30s, eyes her with a
keen fascination. She records everything Shirley says and
does. Shirley giggles.

SHIRLEY
I'm pretty boring, actually. I have
no idea why Dr. Hall sent me here.

CONNIE
Tell me about your parents.

SHIRLEY
My parents?

CONNIE
Hm-mm.

SHIRLEY
What's so interesting about that?

CONNIE
People, typically, form their basic
identities from their parents
first.

SHIRLEY
I'm afraid I... have nothing
dramatic to share. Mama visited me
on campus often. I'm with Mama and
Father -- constantly, it seems.
They don't let me out of their
sight.

CONNIE
You're twenty-two, Shirley?

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

I'm an only child. That's all. They worry about me.

CONNIE

Perhaps. Though that is, to put it bluntly, unusual.

Shirley eyes a pad of paper on Connie's desk. She caresses the surface, slides it forward, retrieves her colored pencils from her purse and doodles.

SHIRLEY

I mean, I'm frustrated with her sometimes. Mama. Father, too. All the customs you have to follow as Seventh-Day Adventists.

CONNIE

Do you consider yourself devout, Shirley?

SHIRLEY

Devout? No, not exactly. I mean, I do Bible study. But I don't drink, don't smoke, no coffee or red meats and such. But I love stories -- I mean, fiction. Or science.

CONNIE

Really? What kind?

SHIRLEY

Bronte.

CONNIE

Bronte!

SHIRLEY

I dunno, Freud.

Connie laughs, reaches for a book, hands it to Shirley. A work by Sigmund Freud. Shirley grins, fondly takes the book.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

I don't see why the church should ban such lovely pieces of art. However --

(blushes, whispers)

Solitary vices -- masturbation -- is inconceivable. The angels would never permit you into Heaven. S-E-X -- strictly for procreation.

(CONTINUED)

Connie appears smitten.

CONNIE (V.O.)

I had just five sessions with her.
She was cryptically lonely. All she
needed was someone to talk to. The
war ended that summer. The men
wanted their jobs back. Naturally.
The office was kicking me out. I
wouldn't be seeing Sybil anymore.
Though, I still held a job at the
Clarkson mental ward. For a while.
I had no idea yet that Sybil was a
fucking mental wreck. Shit, did she
have problems?

EXT. STREETS - OMAHA - DAY

Shirley, eyes vacant, presses her hand and dives through the
icy roads. Snow envelops her. Blood SPURTS out from an
artery in her hand. PASSERS-BY stare at the trail of blood
she leaves behind.

INT. MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Shirley erupts through the door, yanks the door to the hall
with mad force. The RECEPTIONIST, 30s, professional and
modest, eyes her, surprised.

RECEPTIONIST

Miss Mason, Dr. Wilbur is not --
Miss!

She ignores her, barges down...

INT. MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

... thrusts against PEOPLE. Shirley trips, falls, struggles
back up.

INT. MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING - CONNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Shirley staggers to a chair before Connie's desk, her walls
now bare. Connie is mortified.

CONNIE

Shirley! Shirley! Oh my God!
(to hallway)
I need assistance, please!

(CONTINUED)

(to Shirley)
Here. I'm here. Talk.

Shirley jerks, shakes her head. She storms from her chair, escapes to the window, intensely beats against the glass, smears her blood. Connie gathers herself, gently leads her back to the chair. A TALL MALE DOCTOR, 30s, appears.

TALL DOCTOR
Dr. Wilbur!
(sees Shirley)
Oh, Christ! Let's see --

He attends to her cut.

CONNIE
I believe she's having a seizure of some sort.

TALL DOCTOR
No, anxiety attack.
(to Shirley)
There. You're going to be fine, hon.

SHIRLEY
Hospitalize me, Dr. Wilbur.

CONNIE
What?

SHIRLEY
Hospitalize me. At the Clarkson Hospital. The locked insane ward. I want to be in the hospital...
Hospitalize me!

Shirley breaks down in tears. Connie is moved. Modern day Connie's voice interrupts:

CONNIE (V.O.)
"What the hell is this shit?"

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PRESENT)

On Connie as she works on her seventh cigarette:

CONNIE
I told her parents, frankly, she was an emotionally disturbed young woman. A likely hysteric. There's no telling if Sybil cut herself on
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONNIE (CONT'D)
purpose or not just so I could
admit her to my hospital.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Shirley:

SHIRLEY
Yeah, I wanted to kind of impress
Dr. Wilbur.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE
Why?

SHIRLEY
(shrugs)
Just did. I wasn't a garden-variety
mental case. Dr. Wilbur's words,
not mine. I didn't want her to
think I was ordinary.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Connie:

CONNIE
In any case, the Dorsetts argued.
Their religion wouldn't allow her
into a non-Adventist hospital. Did
I know her mother was a psychotic
then? Shit, no. What was I supposed
to do?

EXT. MASON HOUSE (OMAHA) - DAY

Connie files to her vehicle buried in snow, her expression
pensive. Shirley, eyes red and puffy, claws at Connie's
coat. Her parents restrain her, helpless. NEIGHBORS eye the
commotion, curious.

SHIRLEY
How can you leave me alone with
these people?

WALTER
Shirley, you're making a needless
circus performance out of this!
What are you gaining by doing this?
Stop! Seriously, stop! The

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WALTER (CONT'D)
neighbors are watching us like
we're freaks!

SHIRLEY
I have to go to Clarkson! Oh
please, Dr. Wilbur! You can't leave
me here! You can't! Take me with
you!

Connie refuses to face her, sits behind the wheel. Shirley resists her parents, heads for the car. COLD SLAM. The engine coughs, chugs exhaust, pulls out into the street. Devastated, Shirley delivers a kick to the bumper, watches the car zoom out of sight. She is paralyzed, shakes, heaves. Quiet and -- she charges away. Her parents scream after her.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - OMAHA - DAY

Shirley cuts through the snow, dizzy and distraught and --

EXT. STREETS - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

SUPER: "NEW YORK CITY. 1954."

Shirley, early 30s, feverish, glances behind her. Her world is disorientated and appears to spin uncontrollably. Seemingly paranoid, she marches down the sidewalk, skids over autumn leaves. She smashes through glass doors, into...

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

... flies down the rows of shelves, anxiously scans items. She halts, acknowledges a wooden chest displaying stunning china dishes. There is no hesitation. She grips her temple, strokes the rims of a dish, tips the chest as if deliberate, and -- CRASH. A wave of dishes collide around her. She stops. A beat. She rapidly blinks, crunches on shards, appears to "come to." CUSTOMERS surround her to spectate the accident. The red-faced SHOP OWNER, 40s, shoves through. He invades her space.

OWNER
Ma'am?! Seriously?! What the hell?!
What is your disorder, can I ask
you that?! Were you dropped off
this planet yesterday?!

Shirley is stunned, unaware, heads for the exit. The Owner stalks her.

(CONTINUED)

OWNER

Ma'am, do you even speak fucking
English?! You owe me cold cash,
sis! Hey!

(pushes her against window)

What are you, psychotic?!

SHIRLEY

Help me.

The Owner analyzes her, realizes the weight of his words.

OWNER

(to customers)

Hey, give her space.

(to Shirley)

You have... anyone you can call,
ma'am?

She looks on, hollow.

CONNIE (V.O.)

Where in hell do you think I was, I
ask? After I left Omaha and moved
around a bit, I wound up in the Big
Apple. Precisely where Sybil was
going to grad school.
Synchronicity.

INT. SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT (WHITTIER HALL) - DAY

Several multi-colored PILLS line Shirley's bed: Seconal,
Demerol, Edrisal and Deprisal.

Shirley, in her nightdress, sits groggily on her bed. Her
cat CAPRI climbs on top of her, purrs, rubs. She pets her,
despondent. She gingerly pops in her pills, allows the
effects to sink in. Connie, 40s, stands outside a forest of
easels of unfinished paintings and motherly hovers over her.

RAPID CUTS: the routine continues. Shirley swallows pill
after pill, day after day.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)

I didn't know what was wrong with
me. I was numb, nervous, restless
and in so much physical pain, I was
suffocating. My periods were
miserable. Anxiety-induced thoughts
kept me from sleeping. Schoolwork
was impossible, I was "loosing
time" and --

(CONTINUED)

The lights around Shirley flicker, warp, transform. She is plunged into BLACK. MAGENTA COLORS swallow Shirley. She collapses to the floor. Connie, frightened, comes to her aid. The light returns to normal and Shirley wakes, but -- she is different.

CONNIE (V.O.)

I went from treating her for
hysteria to what I believed was
amnesia. But what afflicted Sybil
was far stranger.

Shirley, disorientated, manages to stand up. Instead of shy and small, she paces in a disordered dance. Connie is concerned.

CONNIE

Is everything all right, Shirley?

SHIRLEY

(loud, childish)

I'm fine, but Shirley isn't. She's
so sick, she can't be here. So I
came instead.

CONNIE

Tell me about yourself. Who am I
speaking to?

A beat.

SHIRLEY

I'm Peggy.

Connie's eyes widen.

INT. FLORA'S NEW YORK PENTHOUSE - DAY (PRESENT)

On Flora, her wine bottle nearly empty:

FLORA

That's all it fucking took.
Cornelia had her own *Three Faces of
Eve*. The book wasn't out yet.
Neither was the Joanne Woodward
movie. But Thigpen and Cleckley,
the bastards that treated Eve took
the story to the APA convention.
Published it in a journal. Yeah, it
was pretty famous even then. All
these doctors were aware of Eve.
The public even read about her in

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FLORA (CONT'D)
fucking *Time* magazine. And Cornelia
said -- not in her exact words --
maybe not right there on the spot
on that particular day, but at some
point she said: dot... dot...
dot...

INT. SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT (WHITTIER HALL) - DAY

Connie tears across the room and fiercely grips Shirley by the shoulders, her expression maddening and obsessive. The performance is over-the-top, to say the least, as though we are watching a stage play from the mind of a madwoman instead of reality (and perhaps, we are):

CONNIE
(in Flora's voice)
"We gotta fucking book, baby!"

DICK CAVETT (V.O.)
My next two guests have an amazing
and frightening story...

This brings us to...

INT. ABC BURBANK STUDIO - NIGHT

SUPER: "THE DICK CAVETT SHOW, ABC STUDIOS. BURBANK,
CALIFORNIA. MAY 1973."

SUPERIMPOSED on a fuzzy color television monitor: RICHARD ALVA "DICK" CAVETT, 37, orange-skinned, thin-lipped, floppy brown hair, dressed in matching brown suit, addresses his audience with a sense of sensationalism under the guise of stern professionalism:

DICK CAVETT
Will you welcome, please, Dr.
Cornelia Wilbur and Professor Flora
Schreiber?

Revealed in the shadows: a PACKED STUDIO AUDIENCE.
Thunderous applause.

From the wings enters TWO OLDER WOMEN. In the lead: Connie wearing a low-cut turquoise evening gown that resembles a bathrobe. The pearls do her no favors.

(CONTINUED)

Tailing gloomily behind her: Flora, pink pearls and head-to-foot in white satin and pink feathers like an outlandish peacock. Both women appear exhausted and inappropriately dressed for the occasion and neither look thrilled to be here.

Connie barely acknowledges the spotlight. Indifferent, she finds her seat. Flora sits to her left.

INT. ABC BURBANK STUDIO - NIGHT - LATER

Dick faces the women, restrained yet intrigued.

DICK CAVETT

This is just one of the
most fascinating cases I guess
that's ever happened in psychiatric
history.

Connie never cracks a smile. Her dark circles, pursed lips and "resting bitch" expression tell us all.

DICK CAVETT

Do you have a feeling that there
are a lot more of them that never
come to light?

CONNIE

Yes, I do. Except, the doctors
don't recognize it.

DICK CAVETT

Has anybody suggested this
is a hoax? We need some
evidence that --

FLORA

Oh, give us some air!

FLORA

(performative)

"Hoax" has been breathed down our
necks by various people at various
stages of this project.

(CONTINUED)

DICK CAVETT
Really? You see --

FLORA
*Actually -- it isn't a
hoax. Tragically -- it
isn't a hoax. It would be
much better for Sybil, and
possibly for all of us,
if it were because this
was dreadful to bear! This
is true! It doesn't sound
plausible, it doesn't sound
possible -- BUT TRUE IT IS!*

The audience is mesmerized. Connie cuts Flora a death glare.

INT. ABC BURBANK STUDIO - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Connie and Flora occupy themselves at their dressing tables, animosity electrified. Flora sweeps wildly around the room like the star of her own Broadway show. With no regard for others, she splashes wine, flicks cig ash, tangles herself in the cord of a telephone, crashes into irritated MAKEUP ARTISTS, HAIRDRESSERS and INTERNS. Her agent stands by, PATRICIA "PAT" SCHARTLE MYRER, 50, smartly dressed.

FLORA
This is the first and *FINAL* time,
Patricia! *FINAL!* This is my book,
my promotion! I should not be
expected to share the stage with
this carrot-top, dunderheaded
shrink! She knows nothing,
absolutely nothing --
(in telephone)
Yes, yes! Kisses, darling! Kisses!
(to Patricia)
-- *NOTHING* -- about giving the
audience out there what they want!
(in telephone)
I'm the best writer your miserable
little company has been blessed
with, you immense pain in my
uterus! Don't you forget it!
(to Connie)
Cornelia, love, you are hardly
mentally equipped for the public
eye. I repeat: *Mentally* speaking,
you are a beautiful wreck.

CONNIE
Does my existence offend you, dear?
My sincerest pleasure. Whoopee.

(CONTINUED)

FLORA

As a matter of fact, you are contaminating my air. I spent sleepless months writing that book -- *sleepless months* -- all in longhand! What did you do, exactly if you don't mind my asking? What gives you any right to take -- not share -- *MY* credit?!

(in telephone)

Yes, yes -- the hideous toad is here! I could hardly hear you over the sound of her atrocious croaking!

CONNIE

Is your memory short-term, Flora? You have my sessions by way of tape, or did that escape your notice?

FLORA

Ha-ha-ha-ha! No character! I reiterate --

PATRICIA

Flora, Flora! Listen: Without Dr. Cornelia Wilbur -- she's a psychiatrist -- the book holds no water, understand?

CONNIE

Psychoanalyst, Pat dear.

PATRICIA

She knows her work, her terminology. The public listens to doctors. Otherwise, people will start questioning the book's claims. Dr. Wilbur being here cements the existence of Sybil.

FLORA

Who advised you, sweetheart, that being my agent was your calling in life? You think of yourself as any kind of literary agent worthy of *MY* time -- not your time? Really?

PATRICIA

All right. You wanna fire me, Flora? What's stopping you? But let me tell you something: You need me, Flora and you know it. You're a scandal waiting to happen.

(CONTINUED)

Uncomfortable pause. Connie strides for the door.

CONNIE

I'd listen to Pat, dear. She's right, you know.

(to Patricia)

Mrs. Myrer, if you wish, you are more than free to come work for me in the event I put out another book -- instead of this babbling baboon.

Flora opens her mouth to speak. Patricia restrains her, waits for Connie to exit out of earshot.

PATRICIA

Flora, look: Cornelia will try to hog the camera. Without a doubt. But you've simply gotta get in there -- like you did tonight -- and fight and interrupt her. You're nailing it, Flora.

FLORA

(strikes a pose)

Can I kill her now or later?

PATRICIA

I don't know. Will I look dazzling with my hair completely white by Christmas?

Flora frowns.

Bouncy MUSIC brings us to:

MONTAGE:

INT. BOOKSTORES - DAY/NIGHT

Multiple locations across the States: Fresh from their packaging, brand new hardcover copies of *SYBIL* by Flora Rheta Schreiber grace the front displays. A swarm of curious PEOPLE, mainly FEMALES (pre-teen children to middle-aged) hungrily gather around, clawing for the next available copy.

Customers are immediately hooked. No matter the hour, readers idle around the stores, enthralled by the pages. The books disappear from the shelves one-by-one.

INT. EDITORIAL OFFICES - NIGHT

A string of offices: CRITICS, sweaty suits and obscured by lit cigarettes and stained coffee mugs, hammer at their typewriters. Two in particular stand out: PROFESSOR D. W. HARDING, late 60s; and DR. JAMES S. GORDON, late 20s.

D. W. HARDING (V.O.)

Professor D. W. Harding writing for *The New York Review of Books*. Titled *Crazy Mixed-up Kids* on June 14, 1973: "The multiple personality thriller is on its way to becoming a standard genre. *Sybil* provides material still more fascinating than *The Three Faces of Eve* and its successor, *Strangers in My Body* (*The Final Face of Eve*). In spite of the competence of the book, the untidiness of some parts of the narrative, as more and more of the sixteen personalities emerge, tends to support the publishers' claim that the story is true."

JAMES GORDON (V.O.)

The many selves of Sybil by Dr. James S. Gordon for *The New York Times*, June 17, 1973: "The account made me uncomfortable from beginning to end. I kept feeling the author was appealing to what I can only describe as a prurient interest. The descriptions of the torments of *Sybil*'s childhood, lacking both clinical detachment and art, are simply voyeuristic. Her sixteen personalities are displayed like too many pieces of jewelry, like freaks at a circus. Dr. Wilbur is both one-dimensionally patient and -- with her barbiturates and her hypnosis -- peculiarly intrusive."

The articles rip from the typewriters and...

INT. PRINTING ROOMS - NIGHT

... press machines pound away.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - PHILADELPHIA - DAY

SUPER: "PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA."

A 13-year-old shy-faced girl, SUZANNE, her forehead flat against her desk, conceals her copy underneath in her lap. She shows no interest in the lesson.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL LUNCHROOM - PHILADELPHIA - DAY

Suzanne sits by herself. Food untouched, she frantically writes a letter on school notebook paper.

SUZANNE (V.O.)

Dear Mrs. (or are you a Miss?)
Flora Rheta Schreiber, my name's
Suzanne. I am an eighth grader. I'm
thirteen, going on fourteen. Your
book is... absorbing. I have no
words. The scenes where Sybil's
mother sexually abuses her with
enemas and flashlights... when I
read that part, I got deeply
involved like I was there watching.
I feel like I know Sybil.

Her eyes water.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NEW YORK - DAY

SUPER: "UPSTATE NEW YORK."

A young stunning brunette, RUTH, 19, sneaks her book as she mundanely stocks shelves.

RUTH (V.O.)

Hello Flora, my name is Ruth -- no
relation to Sybil's personality
Ruthie, by the way. I'm nineteen
years old. I was that young lady
(and the rest of her selves)
through the entire book. I had
stayed up all night, trying to
finish it before work. Never have I
been so moved.

Her eyes bloodshot, Ruth yawns, knocks over a stack of cardboard boxes. CUSTOMERS turn to gawk.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - VIRGINIA - DAY

SUPER: "LYNCH STATION, VIRGINIA."

A solemn teenager, VICKY, 16, sits on her porch, ponders the sky.

VICKY (V.O.)
Greetings, Flora Schreiber. I'm Vicky. I'm sixteen. I share a name with one of Sybil's selves, the personality the closest to Dr. Wilbur, I think. I thought that was interesting. I can't stop thinking about your book. It was almost as though I was living her struggle.

EXT. ROOFTOP - MISSISSIPPI - DAY

SUPER: "MISSISSIPPI, LOUISIANA."

The sun sets over a woodland swamp. In the middle of a clearing is a gorgeous old house. On the ground floor is a mom-and-pop diner. A train shoots by. Removed from the commotion below and atop the roof is SARINA, 12, barefoot, contemplative for her age.

SARINA (V.O.)
My name is Sarina. I am twelve. I live nowhere near the New York City streets where Sybil is, but I, too, dream about Sybil... although she is old enough to be my mother.

EXT. TOWN MARKET - MASSACHUSETTS - DAY

SUPER: "GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS."

A dreamy woman, DELPHINE, mid-20s, juggles bags of groceries. Despite her dreamy look, she appears unhappy.

DELPHINE (V.O.)
Miss Flora. Hi. This is Delphine. Reading your book, I realize I always had times when I wanted to be someone else. I believe I have other "selves" similar in ways to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DELPHINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Sybil, struggling to escape. I am not a multiple personality, but what I mean is, I understand her need to be someone else in order to survive. Like Sybil, I want to be loved. But as an unmarried woman, I am afraid that is close to impossible.

INT. KITCHEN - MASSACHUSETTS - DAY

She unloads her groceries, prepares ingredients and allows a pot of stew to boil over as she eagerly turns the pages of her book. In the background: two elderly people watch television, presumably her PARENTS.

DELPHINE (V.O.)
As I was reading *Sybil*, the question, "What is a whole person?" came to my mind. Another did, too: "Am I a whole person?"

Her stew burns. Delphine, shocked, rushes to turn down the flame. She inspects it. Mostly ruined.

DELPHINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I am grateful for this book, however, for it made me realize that I have to get myself together, learn to be me.

INT. TEENAGE GIRL'S BEDROOM - LOS ANGELES - DAY

SUPER: "LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA."

THREE YOUNG SCHOOL GIRLS, 11-14, lounge around the clustered living quarters, animated. Placed on one of the girls' beds is an already well-read, doggy-eared copy of the book.

OLIVIA
So, do you guys like, think multiple personalities can, y'know, possess us or something? Without our knowing?

KATE
That's so stupid, Olivia.

(CONTINUED)

OLIVIA
Shut up, Kate.

LORI
No, I think Olivia's kinda right.

KATE
Welcome to the effing club, Lori!

LORI
No, seriously. Can you, like, just be walking around minding your own business? And -- like with Sybil -- suddenly, five days have passed and it turns out that different people -- women *and* men -- were inside you the whole time? That's like, so scary and so weird!

KATE
I don't have any men living in me, that's for sure.

OLIVIA
Right? Men are weak.

LORI
Okay, but I just find it utterly amazing that not everyone who has read *Sybil* sees the... fascinating probabilities of understanding not only themselves but the entire universe.

KATE
Whoa.

OLIVIA
Fucking deep.

The girls laugh.

INT. FLORA'S NEW YORK PENTHOUSE - DAY

Patricia bursts through the door. Flora, dressed as elegantly as ever even when away from the public and in her lounge chair, sips wine. Patricia sweats, gasps for breath.

PATRICIA
Flora!

(CONTINUED)

FLORA

Why the hell are you running in here like some deranged, escaped lunatic? What?

PATRICIA

(clutches newspaper)

You will not believe this!

FLORA

I might. Tell me.

PATRICIA

Sybil!

FLORA

By God, tell me, woman!

PATRICIA

It's on the best-seller list!

FLORA

Get out!

Patricia shoves the paper in Flora's face. Flora feverishly snatches it, barely reads it, drops her wine glass and lets out an ear-splitting scream of exhilaration. She kicks her legs, flails her arms, swings Patricia around the room.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Modern day Shirley nervously smiles and plays with her cats.

SHIRLEY

I had no idea it would be like that! A best-seller? I did that. Well, Flora really. She helped. It's the fact that so many faceless strangers wanted to know about me. Well, Sybil. Me -- as Sybil. A part of me wanted to come public. A part of me still does. But another part of me also doesn't. I'll discuss that later. Anyway, the royalties I received were --

She lets out a surprised gasp.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

When I was in college, my dad stopped sending me money because my stepmother, Florence Eichman said, "She's twenty-six now. Come on." I had no work experience outside of teaching. I was only teaching in the first place because I temporarily dropped my studies and because of the war, there was a drastic shortage of teachers. I always had a miserable time getting a job. I was unemployed for the majority of my life. My full-time job now: taking care of Dr. Wilbur. She promised me the book would pay for everything I needed in life. I really needed the money. At one point, I was living off oranges and I needed to pay Dr. Wilbur for all the sessions. You need money to survive. That's not selfish. Now, did I imagine they wanted to make a movie about me, too?

She raises her eyebrows, excited.

INT. LORIMAR OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: "LORIMAR PRODUCTIONS, INC. CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA. 1974."

A hub of studio office ACTIVITY.

Enter Stewart Stern. He is ushered in by a shorter man: PRODUCER LEE RICH, late 50s, nearly non-existent dark greying hair, walrus mustache, open button-down shirt, square-framed glasses pushed up on forehead.

RICH

This is him, Merv! This is the guy
I was telling you about! The Father
of *Rebel Without a Cause*!

From behind a broad desk rises EXECUTIVE MERVYN LEE "MERV" ADELSON, mid-40s, tall, burly, bespectacled, silver hair, bushy eyebrows and prominent nose. He gives Stern a crooked smile.

ADELSON

Christ, here's our Hollywood
celebrity, folks! *Rebel Without a
Cause*, eh? Love that fucking movie.

(CONTINUED)

STERN

(quiet)

Thanks.

ADELSON

Don't be meek, my man! I'm the executive producer of this sinking hellfire, production co-founder of Lorimar, the castle of one of America's comfortable living room entertainment experiences. This place is going to the dogs.

(beat)

I'm messing with you, boy. We're the most successful television production company in operation right now -- hold my beer. Mervyn Lee Adelson. Howdy. These pansies call me Merv. You can go with either -- Adelson, Mervyn, Merv -- I don't give a shit-stained crap one way or another.

(indicates Rich)

Sure Jackass Lee Rich has told you that already. Stern, take a joke. Can I call you Stern? Or do you prefer Stewart?

STERN

Stern is fine, sir.

ADELSON

Stern! Have I got news for you, man! Have you read this?

(unveils first paperback edition)

Women are going crazy, Stern! This shit is flying off the shelves faster than a Lennon!

RICH

My wife hasn't stopped nagging me to make the movie for months now.

STERN

(flips through pages)

Sybil? I can't say I heard of it.

ADELSON

Doesn't matter. Here's the pitch, true story: A young woman, school teacher and art student named Sybil Isabel Dorsett splits into sixteen different personalities.

(CONTINUED)

STERN

What do you mean by "splits"?

ADELSON

Think of it like -- Rich, what's that movie where the kid gets possessed by the devil and vomits green shit on that priest?

RICH

The Exorcist, Merv.

ADELSON

I saw a third of it with my wife. Thought it was crap. Anyway, Sybil -- she's got fifteen people or whatever living inside of her: Veronica --

RICH

Victoria, Merv. She goes by Vicky.

ADELSON

No shit?

RICH

(counts off fingers)

Vicky, Peggy Lou, Peggy Ann, Marcia, Helen --

ADELSON

The whole fucking girls' club.

RICH

Some are adult women, like Sybil. Others, adolescents. The one, Ruthie is just a baby. Sid, Mike -- those are the two young boys.

STERN

Wait, boys?

RICH

Boys.

STERN

All right. Well, I have to say, this sounds like *The Three Faces of Eve*, not *The Exorcist*, don't you think?

(CONTINUED)

ADELSON

No, more complex than that bitch
Eve. Sybil was sexually tortured as
a little girl by her bipolar --

RICH

Schizophrenic, Merv.

ADELSON

Schizophrenic mother. Sickest shit
you could conjure up: Enemas,
button-hooks shoved in her vagina,
suffocation in a wheat crib. The
trauma was too great. Sybil
"splits" to cope.

STERN

Jesus. What about her father?

ADELSON

Who?

STERN

Sybil's father? He had to have
noticed something.

ADELSON

Who knows, Stern? No one knows.

STERN

This is... fiction. Right? It has
to be.

ADELSON

That's not what the book says.

STERN

Like, come on now. Excuse my
French, but this is a perfectly
fucked up story.

ADELSON

That's not important. What's
important is that all those bored
households out there will eat this
shit up. Our producer here, Lee
Rich is the production supervisor
on this ship. We want Joanne
Woodward to play the doctor,
Cecelia --

(CONTINUED)

RICH

Cornelia, Merv. *Cornelia Wilbur*.
She was on TV last year.

ADELSON

It's like poetic justice, almost.
She plays a crazy lady in *Eve*, now
she gets to be the shrink. Joanne
-- that woman can fucking act. But
we don't know who can tackle *Sybil*.
Someone young enough, but
complicated enough to pull off the
meat of the character. We'll figure
it out. Fast-forward: That's where
you come in, Stern. THE brilliant
Stewart Stern who tapped into the
psychological turmoil of James Dean
in *Rebel Without a Cause*. *Sybil*
needs YOU to father her! This
script needs to be better than the
swarms of crap scripts on
television right now! Sick of
tasting horse crap! Look, two guys
already turned us down. You'll cry
me a river when you get a peak at
your paycheck.

STERN

I feel I'm already on the plane of
success. I've been in this business
for, hell two decades.

ADELSON

Look, you've done psychology,
right? We don't make pap shit here.
You understand troubled people,
disturbed kids, all that
hoola-hoopa. Here's the thing: Can
you make a difference for people,
notably depressed, desperate people
that need a story like this? Can
you give *Sybil* the James Dean
treatment, the "Stewart Stern"
voice?

Stern sighs, considers.

INT. STERN'S HOLLYWOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Stern gravely eyes the camera.

STERN

The book, I'm afraid, made very little sense to me. Probably would have been better for me to keep my mouth shut.

INT. FLORA'S NEW YORK PENTHOUSE - DAY

Stern flips through his heavily doggy-eared and annotated paperback; speaks to someone off-screen:

STERN

The characters especially are unmotivated. There are glaring plot holes in Sybil's abuse claims. I have to write the script from scratch, I'm sorry. The book, if I'm honest, lacks dramatic conflict.

Stern, eyes wide, ducks out of harm's way. A GLASS BOTTLE bullets in his direction. CRASH. Shards and red wine SHATTERS against the wall. Flora rocks her glass, waves her cigarettes, charges like a bull. He takes shelter behind her furniture.

FLORA

LACKS DRAMATIC CONFLICT?! ARE YOU MISERABLY INSANE?!

(wrestles newspaper)

DID YOU EVEN READ THIS?! NUMBER ONE BEST-SELLER, MR. STEWART STERN! NUMBER ONE BEST-SELLER -- FOR WEEKS! MONTHS! WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO THAT?!

STERN

Flora, you misunderstand! It's a constructive critique, ma'am! Not an attack!

FLORA

I suppose you don't think I can write the bleeding teleplay, do you Mr. Hollywood?!

(attacks telephone, twirls in cord)

Operator! Yes, yes! Get Patricia on the line! Patricia!

(CONTINUED)

(to Stern)

No conflict in *Sybil*, you say?! Man against man! Also, man against society, man against elements, man against himself! Is that dramatic enough for you, your great elephant-headed highness?!

STERN

Woman against herself, really.

FLORA

Are you a riot? People love my work! Women, specifically, adore my work!

(flexes fan mail)

Is this merely an illusion of success, Great Mr. Stern? I think not! Are you a blind fool?

(in telephone)

Where the hell is Patricia?!

STERN

Flora, you misread my intentions. I want to help you. I want you to help me. *Sybil* needs your input, Flora. Look --

(unearths typed notes)

I was so invested in your book, really, I've written out so many questions over the last -- how many weeks? Over two-hundred questions! Er, can you forward these to Connie, please?

FLORA

Connie!

(in telephone)

Patricia! Phone Lorimar! I want to have a word with those fools!

STERN

So, when *Sybil* had a "fugue" in Dr. Wilbur's office in Omaha and tried to jump out of the windows, Dr. Wilbur said, "I wasn't really disturbed."

FLORA

What the damn are you ranting on about?

(CONTINUED)

STERN

Really? Seems to me Dr. Wilbur
would have been gravely disturbed.

FLORA

I wrote what she told me. You think
I'm lying? Are you an alien to the
term "artistic liberties," Mr.
Stern? I am merely commenting on
your critical thinking skills,
which are frankly non-existent.

(in telephone)

Yes, yes Patricia! I'm still here,
darling!

STERN

Also, the Mayflower Shop -- that's
a floral shop. I looked it up.

FLORA

What's your point?

STERN

Sybil couldn't have possibly
purchased silk pajamas from --

FLORA

I embellished some facts! Readers
literally don't give two shits of
worthless details -- as long as
there's a savory story, Mr. Stewart
Stern! Savory! Think of it as junk
food for the soul! Humans can't
survive without juicy
sensationalism! They breathe it!

STERN

My biggest complaint, unfortunately
is... the mother, mainly. Hattie's
shrill rising laughter when she
tortures Sybil must have been heard
by Grandmother Dorsett upstairs and
the live-in maid, Jessie.

FLORA

What's the problem now?

STERN

How could it -- all the abuse -- go
on in the way described? You know,
because Sybil is from a town whose
hobby was to keep an eye on
everyone. It doesn't make sense.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STERN (CONT'D)

Her mother practically gets away with such excesses as public lesbian play, fooling around sexually with small children, public defecation... And torture?

FLORA

It happened! That's the point, Stern -- that Sybil's mother is never caught and brought to justice! What kind of fluff fictitious fantasy world do you live in? This is reality, Stern! An abused woman with no escape!

STERN

I've done therapy. I know how children's minds work. Look, is it possible that Sybil's memories of the abuse...? Can they easily be the elaborate creation of a child warned constantly that if she didn't behave --

FLORA

(in telephone)

Patricia, call me back! There's a demon here that needs exorcising!

(slams phone)

I gave up ten years of my life -- not five, I stress: *ten* -- ten years to write this bleeding book! You want to reduce your meaningless little teleplay to clichés and silly Hollywood tropes, be my guest, you imbecile!

STERN

Be honest with me, Flora. Has Dr. Wilbur ever had second thoughts? Has she ever thought, as I do, that perhaps the tortures were invented by Sybil? I mean, the enema may have been traumatizing if it went wrong, even if given therapeutically. Could that have mushroomed into the other memories later on? For instance, Sybil misinterpreted events and blew them out of proportion?

(CONTINUED)

FLORA

You accuse me of spinning together a hoax, is that it?

STERN

I do enjoy your book, Flora. I just... am trying to decide how to accurately translate it to screen for a television audience. Allow it to make... sense.

FLORA

Everything in my book -- all the material was given to me by Cornelia, Stern. I feel blessed to talk to a Hollywood screenwriter of this size with such intimacy. Stern, I will say this: I doubted the stories, too. At first. I had so many questions that Cornelia couldn't answer for me and neither could the woman I named Sybil -- well, originally called Sylvia but the publisher hated it; sounded too Jewish for that bastard. I said: "I'm Jewish, you insufferable cunt!" Anyway, I very nearly considered abandoning the book all together.

STERN

What changed your mind?

FLORA

The woman gave me some diaries she wrote in the '40s. Sybil. She was a high schooler then starting college. Her mind, then, appeared fragmented to me. This was before she met Cornelia Wilbur. It sold me. I suspected Cornelia was manipulating her patient in some way. Then, I saw Sybil's writings for myself.

STERN

Apart from these diaries, you say Connie gave you... material? What kind of material?

FLORA

Promise me one thing, Stern: You can't reveal Sybil's identity.

Flora gestures for Stern to follow her into the next room.
He thinks it over, obeys.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

On Shirley:

SHIRLEY

I don't really remember the
sessions, honestly. But I know I
didn't make any of it up.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE

Why don't you recall them?

CONNIE (O.S.)

Hey, no.

The camera finds Connie scowling at us from the kitchen
door.

CONNIE

No, no, no. You -- you can't ask
her that.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE

Why?

CONNIE

(to Shirley)

Sybil, you can't answer that
question. Understand? We went over
this. I really don't want you to
talk to anyone.

(to camera)

Cut that, please. Seriously. You
will not show this to the public.

Shirley twists uncomfortably in her seat.

INT. FLORA'S NEW YORK PENTHOUSE - BACK ROOM - DAY

Curtains drawn, Stern and Flora sit and listen intently to
guttural audiotapes on a cassette:

CONNIE (V.O.)

Now, you look at me, and you begin
to get sleepy. One... Two...
Three... And you may go to sleep...
Something happened last night at
ten minutes after ten... What
happened?

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
(groggy; childish)
She dialed...

CONNIE (V.O.)
Who is she?

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
That -- that other girl.

CONNIE (V.O.)
What's her name? You know it.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
I don't know her name.

CONNIE (V.O.)
Yes, dear, you do.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
No, Doctor. I don't know her name.
I don't see her very many times...

CONNIE (V.O.)
And what did she say?

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
She talked to me.

CONNIE (V.O.)
And what did she talk about?

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
I feel sick.

CONNIE (V.O.)
It's all right, sweetie... What's
your name?

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
I'm Shirley.

CONNIE (V.O.)
Hm-mm. She said her name was
Shirley... How old are you? Hmm?

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
Eleven...

CONNIE (V.O.)
Hm-mm. So there are two Shirleys?
The eleven-year-old Shirley and the
grown-up Shirley? Right? What
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
stopped you from growing up,
sweetie...? Sweetie?

Stern eyes Flora.

STERN
Why does Connie do that? Suggest
things to her?

CONNIE (V.O.)
Sweetie?

STERN
Sybil -- Shirley... She's drugged,
Flora!

FLORA
Of course, she is. Cornelia can do
that. She's a psychiatrist.

STERN
You don't understand. That could
interfere with Shirley's
recollection.

CONNIE (V.O.)
Can you tell me about Mama? What
about Mama? What's Mama been doing
to you, dear? I know she's given
you the enemas. And filled your
bladder up with cold water, and I
know she used the flashlight on
you, and I know she stuck the
washcloth in your mouth, cotton in
your nose so you couldn't
breathe... What else did she do to
you? It's all right to talk about
it now.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
My mommy...

CONNIE (V.O.)
Yes?

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
My mommy said I was bad, and... my
lips were too big like a
nigger's... she slapped me... with
her knuckles... she said don't tell
Daddy. She said to keep my mouth
shut.

(CONTINUED)

The audio grows unclear. Speech is difficult to decipher. Shirley screams, sobs hysterically. Deafening BANGS.

SHIRLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Stop! Stop! Let me out! Let me out!

CONNIE (V.O.)
You're right here, sweetie. Mommy
can't hurt you.

Flora looks on at Stern.

FLORA
That's Peggy. One of them, anyway.
She's trying to get away.

CONNIE (V.O.)
Mommy isn't going to ever hurt you
again. Do you want to know
something, sweetie? I'm stronger
than Mother.

The tape ends. Static NOISE. Stern rubs his eyes, affected.

STERN
Flora... is it possible...? Can
I... talk to Sybil? I mean,
Shirley?

Flora sighs, exasperated.

STERN
Why can't I speak to her?

FLORA
She has requested her complete and
total anonymity.

Stern looks on, stricken.

INT. STERN'S HOLLYWOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Present day Stern frowns.

STERN
See, that was my main problem. I
had all these people telling me,
"This is Sybil." Yet, I wasn't
hearing it from Sybil herself. It
was... suspicious, the whole thing.
Why can't Sybil speak to me? Does
she want to, or is it because Flora
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STERN (CONT'D)
doesn't want her to? It was super
weird. But I saw Connie.

A rasping RUMBLE:

EXT. STERN'S HOLLYWOOD HOUSE - DAY

In the blinding sun, a grotesque PINK LINCOLN CONTINENTAL rolls into the drive. Nearly concealed behind the wheel: carrot-colored hair tied under a scarf. Stewart Stern stands stiffly in his doorway, entranced and appalled.

Out steps Connie in laughable clownish make-up (too white foundation, raucous ultra blue eye shadow, insane fake eyelashes) and garbed in lavish evening wear unusual for the time of day. She takes a drag on her cigarette, strides to the house with a sly smirk.

STERN (V.O.)
It was the morning and Connie --
well, you see it! It was
theatrical! I couldn't believe she
was a doctor.

Stern is in disbelief.

BACK TO:

INT. STERN'S HOLLYWOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Present day Stern laughs.

STERN
I'm good friends with her now, but
that was crazy!

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Connie:

CONNIE
I had more money than I knew what
to do with. I splurged. And that's
a crime?

STERN (V.O.)
Er, can I cut in?

WHIP PAN TO:

INT. STERN'S HOLLYWOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Stern:

STERN

Okay, but where things get sticky
is -- did Sybil's mother abuse her?
Even after completing the script --
See, no one can agree on that.

INT. FLORA'S NEW YORK PENTHOUSE - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Flora:

FLORA

I guess it's what we're all fucking
here for, right? Y'all had to bring
it up sooner or later. *THE FUCKING*
ABUSE CLAIMS!

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PRESENT)

On Connie, looking frustrated:

CONNIE

Hmm... Yes. The abuse claims. Sure,
let's call it "claims." Shit.

INT. FLORA'S NEW YORK PENTHOUSE - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Flora:

FLORA

I wrote what Connie wanted. End of
story.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Connie:

CONNIE

If you've read the book, Sybil's
own father admitted it, didn't he?
I mean, he's dead now. Sorry. Take
my word for it.

INT. STERN'S HOLLYWOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Stern:

STERN
 Connie is my friend. I know she
 wouldn't lie to me. She has an
 incredible self-assurance.

INT. SPIEGEL'S OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Spiegel:

SPIEGEL
 I can't talk for Sybil because I
 wasn't there. However, I do have,
 in my possession, some of her
 therapy diaries. Look.

He displays to the camera pages and pages of beautiful,
 cursive handwriting.

SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
 If you can make it out. Sorry about
 that. So, when I first started to
 hypnotize Sybil, I learned she
 wasn't allowed to have birthdays.
 She was a member of some kind of
 Protestant sect out in the Midwest
 or... something like that.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PRESENT)

Shirley circles around Connie and prepares a pot of tea. She
 looks on, disgusted.

SHIRLEY
 No, I grew up as a Seventh-Day
 Adventist. Dr. Spiegel is wrong.
 For a doctor, you would think he
 could make an effort to get his
 facts straight.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE
 Isn't Adventism a version of
 Protestant Christianity?

Shirley scoffs.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

I certainly don't consider myself a
Protestant. No.

INT. SPIEGEL'S OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Spiegel:

SPIEGEL

I was not involved in these
horrendous stories about how she
was allegedly abused as a child.
Not that I was surprised to hear
that, because I knew that her
mother had been a patient in a
psychiatric hospital and I assumed
that she was schizophrenic. Sybil
having had a bizarre, erratic
mother, I could easily accept the
idea that she had been physically
hurt by her. I didn't interpret her
mother as being intentionally
cruel. She was a psychotic. I don't
know how thorough Connie and Flora
were in corroborating their data.
Don't forget, they were writing a
story.

INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PRESENT)

On present day Shirley:

SHIRLEY

It's all a blur now but... I only
remembered the abuse during my
sessions with Dr. Wilbur.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE

Why might that be?

Connie sits at the other end of the table, her expression
stony. Shirley gazes at the camera, shrugs.

END OF SAMPLE.