

STUCCO

by David Orr

FADE IN:

A wall of craggy, faded stucco fills the frame. BEGIN CREDITS.

MOVING DOWN the wall... past wall hangings... Mexican pottery, a smiling sun, a hand-crafted angel... down the dirty surface to the troubled face of LILY GARISH, 30s, a withering baby doll running on empty.

1 EXT. BALCONY - DAY 1

Lily puffs on a cigarette, smoky eyes charged. Sitting on the ground amidst dead plants, she shifts impatiently against the prickly wall. She peeks out through the bars. END CREDITS.

2 EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - FRONT - DAY 2

ANGLE DOWN: A car pulls up to the curb. A YOUNG COUPLE hops out and takes in the area as they approach the building.

LILY (O.S.)
You're late.

They look up to find Lily glaring down at them from her balcony.

LILY
Six minutes late. You're lucky I'm still here.

3 INT. VACANT APARTMENT - DAY 3

Lily leads them down the hallway into the living room.

LILY
New carpet, new paint, new blinds. You won't find anything this nice for the price in all of North Hollywood.

The young woman waves away cigarette smoke.

YOUNG WOMAN
Is this a non-smoking unit?

LILY
We're not a hotel, sweet pea.

Lily opens the patio sliding door, lights another cig. The cluttered rooftop of the neighboring building can be seen. Lily leans out over the rail, motions off to the far distance.

LILY
Got a great view out here. At night, the hills light up. Little sparkling diamonds everywhere. It's breathtaking.

A loud, wheezing COUGH penetrates the walls. The young woman glances in its direction as they wander into the kitchen.

LILY

Kitchen is small, but works.

Lily sidles up to them. She bends over to pick up trash off the floor, exposing a butterfly tattoo underneath a tattered thong which rides above her jeans. The young man gets an eye full. His wife catches him and turns back into the living room.

YOUNG WOMAN

I think we've seen enough, we'll call you if we're interested.

LILY

Why don't I show you the pool.

YOUNG MAN

There's a pool?

LILY

And a gym.

YOUNG MAN

Cool.

He nods that he'd like to see more as the COUGHING persists, growing louder and more grating.

YOUNG WOMAN

I guess we'll have a look.

Lily quickly moves for the door.

LILY

You're going to love the pool.

The young man follows. His wife takes a few steps, but the HACKING through the wall finally gets to her.

YOUNG WOMAN

What is going on over there?

LILY

Oh, that's just Lucille, she's fine. Well, not fine, she's dying actually. Cancer or something. Look, don't worry about her, chances are she'll be gone before you move in.

YOUNG WOMAN

We don't need to see the pool. We'll call. Let's go, bunny.

She strides past Lily and out the door. The young man gives Lily a sheepish look then bolts.

Lily takes a long, weary drag on her cigarette as Lucille keeps on coughing. Lily finally explodes:

LILY
Quiet, Lucille! Quiet!!

4 INT. LILY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

4

TONY, a dapper Asian man, 50s, grey suit/blue tie, and CINDI, an attractive American-Asian woman, 20s, sexy business attire, sit with perfect posture on a couch across from a seated, frazzled Lily. Glasses of wine rest on the coffee table along with a smoldering trucker-chic ashtray.

LILY
It's not my fault nobody wants to live
next to Lucille.

Cindi translates in Mandarin, Tony responds in Mandarin.

CINDI
Maybe we should give Lucille a thirty day
notice.

LILY
You can't evict a dying woman, what's the
matter with you, Tony? By the way, I say
she won't last thirty days.

Cindi translates, Tony responds.

CINDI
That's what you said four months ago.

Lily takes a nervous sip of wine.

LILY
I'm doing everything I can.

Tony leans forward and says something. Cindi repeats:

CINDI
You never had a vacancy problem when you
were young and pretty.

LILY
I do not have a vacancy problem.

Cindi translates, Tony responds.

CINDI

Maybe it is time to go back home.

This sparks something in Lily, she shoots him a look.

LILY

I am an actress. This is where I belong.

Tony doesn't need translation, he calmly responds.

CINDI

Tony says you should have babies while you still have nice breasts.

LILY

This building would be fucked without me. Tell Tony that.

Cindi and Tony banter back and forth. Finally:

CINDI

Lily, you have been good to us for many years, but rotten wood cannot be carved.

LILY

(right at Tony)

You think some cute little fortune cookie will make your life easier? I know you like a fresh set of tits translating for you every three months or so, but let me tell you something, you are not replacing me!

Cindy shifts awkwardly. Lily eyes her.

LILY

Tell him, sweet pea. Tell him.

5 INT. KITCHEN - LATER

5

Lily refills her wine glass and takes a big gulp then refills it some more. She glances out the kitchen window, eyes stirring then suddenly flooding with tears. She drinks down more wine and tries to keep it together.

6 EXT. KITCHEN - CONT.

6

Lily stares out at the world, framed in a sea of ugly stucco.

LILY (O.S.)

Rotten wood cannot be carved.

7 INT. BATHROOM - LATER

7

Lily sits sprawled on the countertop, smoking and drinking wine.

LILY

He actually said that.

She glances at herself in the mirror. The PLUMBER tinkers underneath her, half-buried in the cabinet working on the pipes.

PLUMBER

That's like harassment or something. You should get yourself an attorney.

LILY

Like I can afford an attorney.
(she tosses her cig in the
toilet, goes for another)
Let's face it, my days here are numbered.

PLUMBER

You know, they're looking for a girl to answer phones down at the office.

LILY

Shut up.

Lily glances at herself again in the mirror, almost insulted.

PLUMBER

I'm just saying...

LILY

The thought of having to work some stupid job just to pay my rent makes me ill.

PLUMBER

Boss is pretty cool... hasn't called anybody rotten wood that I know of.

LILY

What if I have an audition?

PLUMBER

That's when you take your lunch.

LILY

Thanks, but this is where I belong.

PUSH IN as Lily burns inside.

8 EXT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT (JUMP CUT SERIES) 8

Lily steps outside to have a smoke. Then out for another. And another. She wobbles more and more as night passes.

9 EXT./INT. APARTMENT - HALLWAY - LATER 9

Lily wobbles drunk through the building. MUSIC blares inside a unit. We follow Lily to the door. She bangs on it.

REGGIE, a handsome black man with energy to spare, opens the door and greets Lily with a big smile.

REGGIE

Hey, baby. What's up?

LILY

Your rent if you don't turn that music down. Do you know what time it is?

REGGIE

Oh, my bad. Didn't know it was a school night. Hang on.

Reggie rushes off and THE MUSIC SHUTS OFF. Lily leans against the door, looking like she's about to pass out.

REGGIE

There you go, Lily. Call off the cops.

Lily stares at Reggie for a moment, eyes wilting.

REGGIE

You okay, girl?

LILY

I've seen your commercial.

REGGIE

How could you miss it? They run that thing to death. Can't complain about the residuals though. Love that mail money.

LILY

Must be nice.

REGGIE

Being known by everyone in town as Viagra Man, isn't so nice. Went to Julliard, Lily... and now I'm pimping penis pills.

LILY

At least you got something.

Lily slides down a little as her eyes shut. Reggie catches her.

REGGIE

Whoa... Hey, why don't I help you back to your pad?

Lily shakes him loose.

LILY

I don't need your help.

Reggie watches her stagger away, concerned.

10 LILY SERIES - MOTION SPEEDS UP AS IT GOES: 10

Lily waters the plants, hose in one hand/cigarette in the other.

Lily kills time with a TV GUY on the roof as he installs a dish.

Lily sweeps the courtyard, only stopping for sips of wine.

SUPER FAST MOTION -- In a DIZZYING, KINETIC FURY, Lily shows the empty apartment to COUNTLESS PEOPLE --

11 INT. APARTMENT - DAY 11

-- the PEOPLE FADE as MOTION SLOWS TO NORMAL and we are left with Lily standing alone in the empty unit. QUIET. So quiet, Lily notices and looks over at Lucille's wall.

Lily steps closer, turning an ear slightly to the wall. Nothing.

12 EXT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 12

FLYING DOWN the hallway, we CATCH UP WITH LILY as she comes out and FOLLOW her as she teeters to the neighboring door.

Lily taps on the door lightly. Nothing. She glances around, then unhooks a set of keys dangling from her belt loop.

13 INT. LUCILLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY 13

Lily enters and shuts the door softly. She glances around.

LILY

Hello. Anyone home? Lucille?

14 INT. BEDROOM - DAY 14

Lily pushes the door open and peers in. She sees --

-- LUCILLE, 80s, in her bed, eyes closed and very still.

Lily quietly walks over. She leans down and hovers an ear near Lucille's open mouth and hears a FAINT BUT STEADY BREATHING.

Lily straightens up with a disappointed sigh, seething. She scans the room, eyes locking on --

-- a pillow resting on an ottoman nearby.

Without thinking, Lily grabs the pillow. She cradles it tight as she looks down at Lucille.

15 INT. LUCILLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONT. 15

The front door opens and CAROL, 30s, garbed in Gap, enters with several plastic bags of groceries.

CAROL

Nana. I'm here. Got your groceries.

16 INT. BEDROOM - CONT. 16

Lily tosses the pillow back on the ottoman. Panic sets in as she realizes there's no place to hide. Before she can step away --

-- Carol walks through the door and stops cold seeing Lily.

CAROL

Lily. What are you doing here?

Lily just stares at her, frozen anguish.

Carol senses all is not right. She carefully steps forward.

CAROL

Is everything okay?

Suddenly, Lucille reaches up and grasps Lily's hand.

Lily jumps slightly in her skin.

LUCILLE

Everything is fine, dear. I asked Lily to come over for a visit.

The coughs kick in as Lucille tries to sit up. Lily helps her.

CAROL

Oh. Well, thanks for keeping her company and checking on her. I know how busy you are around here. I appreciate it.

LILY

Carol, you know I'll drop whatever I'm doing if she needs me.

Carol nods to herself, barely listening.

LUCILLE

They don't come much better than Lily. I have to say, this young woman is the best landlord I have ever had. If it weren't for Lily, I don't know what I would do.

Lucille tears up. Lily flashes a fragile smile. She steps aside as Carol gives her grandmother a quick kiss on the forehead.

CAROL

Ok-ok, let's not get all worked up now...

Lily glances over at the pillow, completely ashamed.

SMASH CUT TO:

UNDERWATER: jacuzzi jets punish Lily as she holds her breath, drowning her in a violent whirl of bubbles.

17 EXT. POOL - DAY 17

CLOSE: Lily soaks up some sun on a plastic pool float.

HIGH ANGLE DOWN: reveals Lily floating in a tiny jacuzzi/pool.

18 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY 18

Mailman JOHN stuffs the boxes near the entrance. Lily, paces about, wearing cheap sunglasses and smoking.

LILY

Anyone on your route looking for an apartment manager?

JOHN

Not that I know of.

LILY

Well, keep your ears open, John.

JOHN

Looking for a change of scenery?

LILY

They are so over me right now. It's one goddamn vacancy! It's just not fair.

JOHN

That's what the dogs say when I pepper spray them... just ain't fair.

John chuckles to himself. Lily's cell phone RINGS.

LILY
(unclipping)
This is Lily... Oh, hey, how are you?
What? Really? Wow...

John glances at Lily as she steps away into the courtyard.

LILY
Uh-huh... when?... okay... thanks...

Lily hangs up, looking somewhat shell-shocked. She sinks onto the courtyard bench

JOHN
You okay, Lily?

LILY
That was a former tenant of mine. She works at a casting office. Gets me auditions every once in awhile. They want to see me again for this movie part I read for last month.

JOHN
A callback! Awesome news, Lily.

John shuts the boxes and locks up.

LILY
Yeah. Awesome...

Tears stream down from under her sunglasses.

JOHN
I hope those are tears of joy.

Lily steps on her cigarette as she stands.

LILY
Look at me, John. Do I look joyful?

JOHN
Uh, I've learned from my wife not to answer questions like that.

LILY
Look at me! They want to me to meet the producers this afternoon. I look like shit and I got nothing to wear!!

She storms past him and up the stairs. John shakes his head with a chuckle as he turns for the door.

JOHN
Break a leg, Lily!

19 INT. LILY'S BEDROOM - DAY 19

Lily rummages through her closet, tossing everything aside with a disgusted pout.

20 INT. LILY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER 20

Amongst piles of clothes on her bed, Lily balls her eyes out.

21 INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY 21

A desperate Lily inserts a key into a washer's coin drop. She turns it and pulls out a drawer filled with quarters. She empties the drawer into her purse then hits the next washer.

22 INT. ZAPALA - DAY 22

At the front counter of a very busy salon, Lily eyeballs the young and trendy RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST
So sorry, but we're all booked up. First avail is next Thursday.

LILY
That's not good enough, sweet pea. I need to see someone right now.

RECEPTIONIST
You know, there's a Super Cuts down the street. Maybe they can squeeze you in.

LILY
Super Cuts?!

Before Lily can rip her pretty little head off...

FREDDIE (O.S.)
Lily?

Lily looks across the salon to FREDDIE who snips away on a client in his chair.

LILY
Yeah...

FREDDIE
My god, I almost didn't recognize you.

Lily clearly doesn't recognize him.

FREDDIE

Honey, it's Freddie from 205. You know, from way back when.

LILY

205... yeah, the Freddie who never paid his rent on time...

FREDDIE

And you're the sweet Lily who let me slide a couple of times... those were the days, huh... that place was such a dump, tell me you're not still there.

Lily sends him a desperate, helpless look.

LILY

Freddie from 205, make me look alive.

23 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

23

SWOOSH across stucco to steps, finding feet... a pair of black pumps, legs in black hose... a SLOW REVEAL stepping down into our view... black skirt... black purse... smart blouse... and finally we see Lily's fresh face and hair -- she looks stunning.

She even walks with new-found confidence. At the mailboxes, Reggie checks his mail and glances up at her as she strolls past.

REGGIE

Whoa, baby. Look at you.

Lily glows at him, tickled that he noticed.

LILY

Hey, Reggie.

She opens the door to the garage stairwell.

REGGIE

Lily?

Lily looks back.

LILY

Yeah?

He walks up to her, pointing with his finger.

REGGIE

You've, uh, got the store tag sticking out of your shirt back there.

Lily reaches for the back of her neck and finds it.

REGGIE

Want me to try to rip it off?

Embarrassed, Lily tucks it in quickly.

LILY

No-no, that's okay. Thanks though.

She disappears through the door. Reggie walks away, impressed.

24 INT. GARAGE - DAY

24

Lily passes cars, reaching a dusty Saturn. She pulls the keys out of her purse and unlocks the door. Her CELL PHONE RINGS. She pulls it out and answers as she gets in.

LILY

This is Lily...

She closes the door, shutting us out of the conversation. She STARTS THE CAR, points the clicker at the garage gate.

The gate kick starts and slowly rises.

Through the window, we watch Lily chat.

The gate reaches the top. Waits a beat then lowers.

Lily sees the gate closing. She hits the clicker again as she rambles into the phone.

The gate reverses directions.

Lily looks a little concerned. She nods then finally hangs up. She TURNS OFF the CAR and hops out.

The gate once again lowers as Lily hurries to the door.

25 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

25

Lily quietly approaches Lucille's bed.

Lucille's eyes flutter open.

LUCILLE

Lily... you look so beautiful.

LILY

What's going on? Carol called... she says you haven't answered the phone all day. She's worried about you.

Lucille stares up at the ceiling, no coughs left in her.

LUCILLE

Honey, I'm tired of being a burden to my granddaughter and to you and to everyone.

Lily sits on the side of her bed.

LILY

Lucille, you're not a burden to me.

LUCILLE

Don't lie to me, Lily Garish. Your life would be much easier without me around. Same goes for Carol. I realize this.

LILY

I can be pretty selfish, I know. Sorry.

LUCILLE

What are you talking about, you don't have a selfish bone in your body. For years, I have watched you take care of everyone in this building, everyone but yourself.

LILY

Here I sit and rot. So I've heard.

Lucille takes her hands in hers.

LUCILLE

You're not rotting, my dear. Not at all. You are so strong and durable. You have permanence, Lily, a spirit that never fades. I really admire you. You're not afraid to dream... and the dreamers make life worth living. I wish Carol had your strength. I wish she had your passion.

Lily gives her a warm kiss on the cheek as she rises. Lucille takes a quivering, deep breath. Her eyes mist.

LUCILLE

I'm scared, Lily. Stay with me.

Lily takes her own deep breath. She glances away, in thought.

LUCILLE

I'm sorry, dear. Am I taking you away from something.

Lily gives her a warm, comforting smile.

LILY

No, I've got nowhere to be but here,
Lucille. Nowhere to be but here...

DISSOLVE TO:

26 EXT. STUCCO WALL - PATIO - TWILIGHT

26

MOVING across the rugged surface -- to a balcony where Lily sits with her feet up, smoking a cigarette and enjoying her wine as she admires the view -- then over stucco again and we --

-- SWOOSH to her view -- the sparkling diamonds in the Hollywood Hills under a magic sky.

FADE OUT.

THE END