

*PITCHDECK PRESENTATION BY:
RITA HANNER-WARD*

THE PILLAR



Legacy, loyalty, and the trouble we choose.

Logline

When a mausoleum remodel casts her parents' crypt into shadow, a stubborn elderly woman declares war on management, dragging her attorney-granddaughter into a battle over contracts, pride, and the little lies families tell to protect each other.



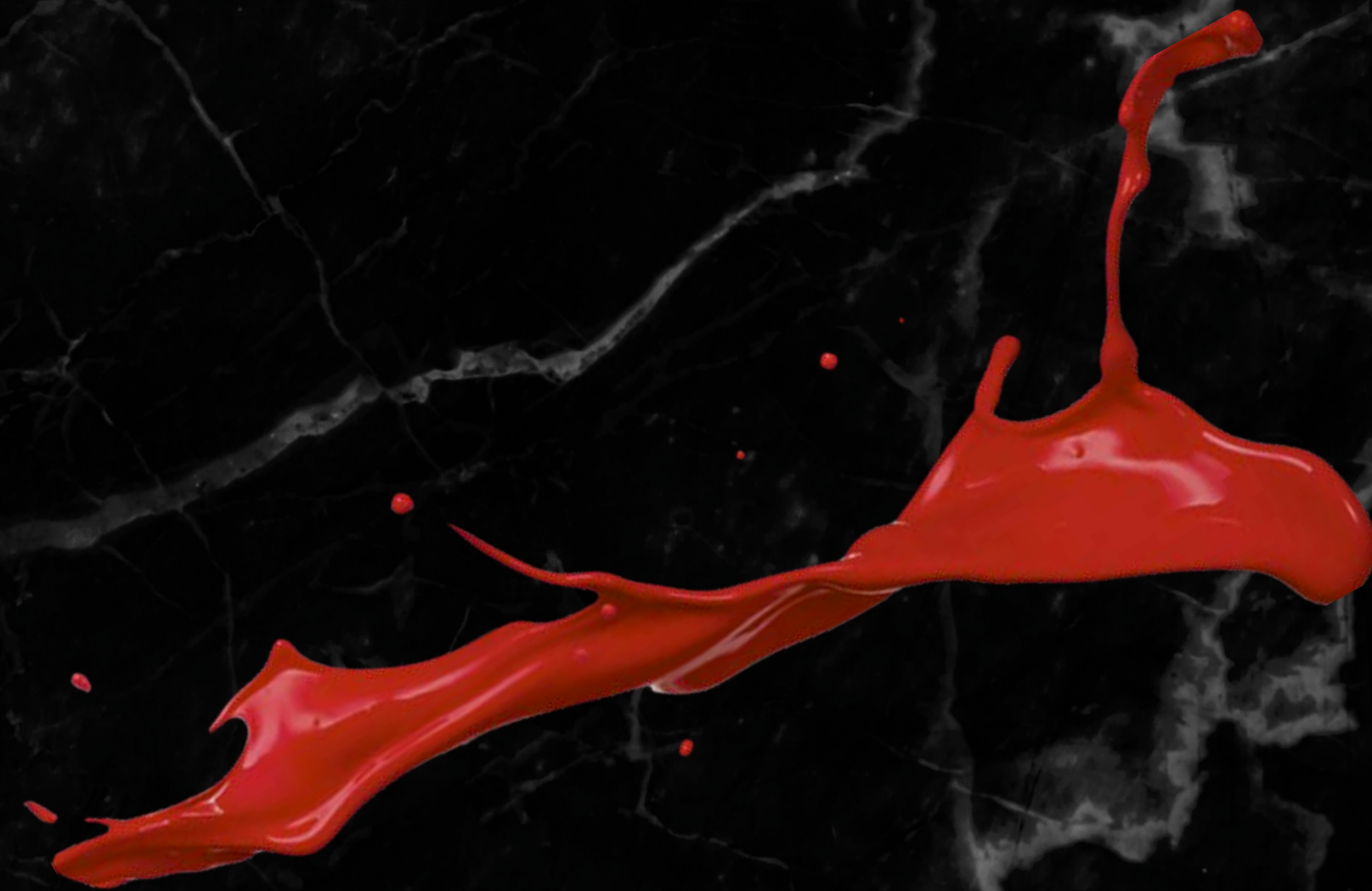
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Synopsis

Eighty-four-year-old Anita storms into the Cactus Bloom Mausoleum, demanding answers after discovering that a new marble pillar now blocks the morning light her parents paid for. Furious at the disrespect – and unwilling to be dismissed – she launches a one-woman crusade that culminates in a spectacular splash of bright red paint.

Her granddaughter Marie, an attorney and her reluctant conservator, rushes in to contain the fallout, only to find herself navigating bureaucratic egos, a sympathetic deputy, and Anita's razor-sharp wit. As the dust settles, grandmother and granddaughter confront the truth about aging, agency, and the fierce love that refuses to fade.



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Characters

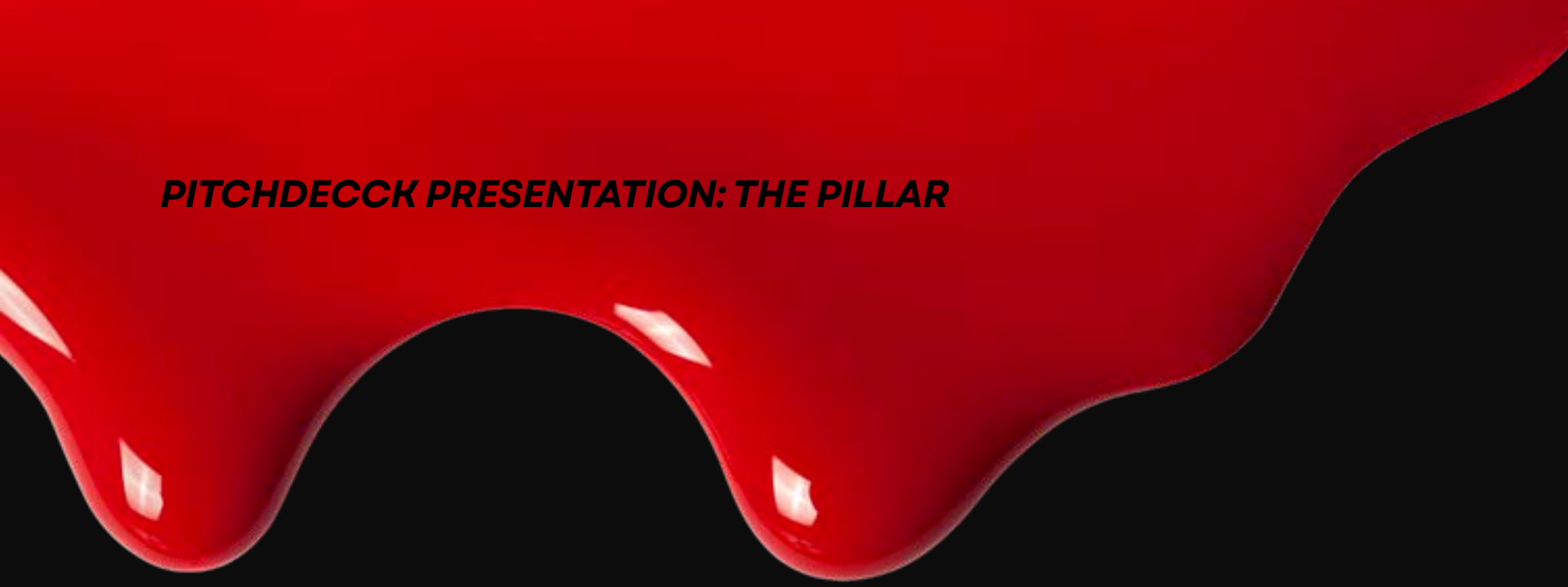
Anita, Marie, Vicki, Tyrone, Mark, and Mr. Cummings:

A stubborn matriarch on a mission, her overqualified granddaughter always trying to keep her out of trouble, a helpful hardware store employee who knows paint, a cop who'd rather not see anything that requires paperwork, a mausoleum employee who'd rather be gaming, and a director whose heart is buried under layers of formality—together navigating one unforgettable day at *The Pillar*.

While main and supporting roles could attract recognizable talent, *The Pillar* is driven by a grounded ensemble of indie actors at its core.

Potential Casting:

- Anita: Socorro Santiago, Ivonne Coll
- Mark: Skyler Gisondo, Owen Teague, Charlie Bushnell
- Vicki: Liv Hewson, Jesse James Keitel
- Marie: Aimee Garcia, Dania Ramirez
- Tyrone: Justice Smith, Shameik Moore
- Mr. Cummings: Richard Riehle, Stephen Root



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Director's Vision

REAL-TIME MOMENTUM. ONE UNFORGETTABLE DAY.

The Pillar is designed as a fast-moving, real-time comedy built on visual momentum and character contrast. The film's pacing mirrors Anita's urgency, with the camera acting as an extension of her determination — always pushing forward, always in motion. The visual language emphasizes immediacy, friction, and the humor that emerges when generations collide under pressure.

Wide pans, sharp close-ups, and constant movement drive the film's energy across two contrasting spaces: the mausoleum's sterile grandeur and the hardware store's cluttered practicality. Tight framing captures Anita's laser-focused glare, Marie's quick calculations, Tyrone's strategic non-seeing, Mark's Candy-Crush apathy, and Mr. Cummings' softening sternness. Dynamic blocking — crossing aisles, weaving hallways, leaning over counters — keeps the comedy active while underscoring the deeper themes of aging, agency, and the small legacies we fight to preserve.

Hype Media

A fast, character-driven short rooted in humor, heart, and generational tension, *The Pillar* offers filmmakers a grounded, modern story with a strong emotional core. Its ensemble dynamics and themes of aging, memory, and agency create a relatable, human narrative that aligns naturally with storytellers drawn to intimate, meaningful films.

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Why this story now?

The Pillar celebrates the fierce, unshakeable spirit that often goes overlooked in older generations. In a world that tends to sideline the elderly, this story reminds us that conviction, humor, and the desire to set things right don't fade with age. It's about memory, legacy, and the quiet rebellions that protect the people and places we love. At its heart, the film honors the strength of will that outlives flesh – the human spirit determined not to be erased.

Writer's Statement:

"I wrote this short to honor an elderly friend whose grit, humor, and fierce independence shaped everyone around her. I wanted to show that aging doesn't diminish a person's strength – it reveals a different kind of courage. At its core, this story is about the messy, stubborn love within families and the quiet battles we fight to protect one another, even when help feels like the hardest thing to accept."





Genre Tone Style

The world is modern, familiar, and grounded. But beneath the everyday setting, generational themes loom large:

- Aging as both a challenge and a source of power.
- Memory—what we preserve, what we lose, and what we fight to honor.
- Agency—especially for an older woman determined to complete her final task her way.

The humor is character-driven, not slapstick. It comes from the friction between personalities, the absurdity of bureaucratic spaces, and the tenderness that emerges when people collide with one another's vulnerabilities.

Film Comparisons: *Harold and Maude*, *The Farewell*, and *Little Miss Sunshine*.

Film Budget

The Pillar is a 15-minute, performance-driven short designed for an efficient indie production, with six contained locations: a mausoleum, a director's office, a hardware store, a car interior, and two parking lots.

While the film could technically be shot in a single day, a two-day schedule allows for higher production value, stronger performances, and more intentional visual design. With actors at the heart of the film, the budget is primarily driven by cast, location access, production design, and a lean but skilled crew.

Estimated production budget: \$100K–\$500K, depending on casting choices, location fees, and the desired production scale.



- Cast – 25% Actors are the core of the film; this includes day rates, rehearsal time, and potential cameo-level talent.
- Locations & Permits – 15% Mausoleum access, hardware store rental, parking lots, and any municipal or private permits.
- Production Design – 10% Set dressing, props, the cactus memory garden, mausoleum interior upgrades, and visual continuity.
- Crew & Labor – 25% Director of photography, sound, gaffer, ACs, production assistants, makeup, wardrobe, and on-set support.
- Equipment – 10% Camera package, lighting, grip, sound ear, and any specialty rentals.
- Post-Production – 10% Editing, color, sound mix, score, deliverables, and festival-ready mastering.
- Contingency – 5% Unexpected costs, weather, location adjustments, or additional shooting time.

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Festival & Distribution Strategy

FESTIVAL STATUS

The Pillar has been submitted to a small group of festivals and competitions as part of an intentional, slow-roll strategy. While it was not considered by HollyShorts or the Nashville Film Festival's Short Screenplay Competition, it remains under active consideration with several respected programs, including:

- Scriptation Showcase
- Phoenix Film Festival
- Austin Revolution Film Festival
- Wiki Screenplay Contest
- Palm Springs Diversity Showcase

This measured submission approach allows the film to enter the festival circuit with a polished pitch deck, refined casting vision, and a clear production plan.

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TARGETED DISTRIBUTION

Primary Targets:

- Festival Circuit – comedy, dark comedy, and character-driven shorts programs.
- Curated Online Platforms – Short of the Week, Omeleto, Film Shortage, NoBudge, Vimeo Staff Picks consideration.
- Niche Streaming – IndieFlix, Argo, Seed&Spark (post-festival window).

Release Path:

- 12–18 month festival run for visibility and momentum.
- Online premiere on a curated short-film platform.
- Niche streaming or educational/library licensing.
- Ongoing use as a calling-card piece for future development and industry outreach.

Audience Alignment: With its PG tone, multicultural cast, and grounded humor, *The Pillar* appeals to audiences from late teens through older adults who enjoy dry wit, dark comedy, and character-driven storytelling.

Writer | Creator



Rita Hanner-Ward is a screenwriter and contemporary American author whose work centers on emotionally grounded, character-driven storytelling. She writes drama and dark comedy with a focus on transformation, reconciliation, and the moments that define relationships. Her work is known for emotional clarity, intimate character arcs, and a restrained visual sensibility that honors the spaces between words.

Screenwriting Recognition

Feature – What We Leave Unsaid

- Finalist – Wiki Screenplay Contest
- Semifinalist – Santa Barbara International Screenplay Awards
- Quarterfinalist – Palm Springs Diversity Screenplay Contest

Short – Six Degrees of Ted

- Finalist – Wiki Screenplay Contest
- Semifinalist – Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival
- Quarterfinalist Outstanding Screenplays Shorts Competition
- Official Selection – Oregon Short Film Festival

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THANK YOU

for your time and consideration!

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