

SWEAT

Written by:
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Genre: Horror

Logline: Set against the VHS workout craze of the 1980's, a directionless young woman is indoctrinated into a cult through a Network Marketing opportunity where she undergoes a transformation that could prevent her from ever escaping.

OVER BLACK

A pacing drum machine kicks in. Synth heavy dance music swells. The sound quality is poor.

TITLES: "SWEAT"

A WOMAN'S voice is yelling commands.

V.O.

Stay with me. Keep up. Don't stop
now. We're going to step and bring
our legs up. Are you ready? And Go!

A crackling picture appears on screen of an old workout video. The kind where an instructor is leading a group of people and facing the camera.

The WOMEN are dressed in brightly colored, layered spandex outfits with French Cut waists. The MEN wear tight shorts and low tank tops.

They are running in place on step blocks. Big arm movements. The camera moves in slowly on the WOMAN leading the routine.

WOMAN IN FRONT

Push it. Let's do this together.
Feel that burn. And step. And step.
And we're moving into punches in
3...2...1...

CUT TO:

INT. WEST VALLEY MALL - DAY

Music continues.

SUPERIMPOSE (PINK BAYSHORE LETTERING): "1986"

It's late morning in a busy shopping mall. It's the height of the consumer era and this is the summit.

MONTAGE OF SCENES AROUND MALL:

- Customers are walking in and out of brightly lit stores.
- A group of teenagers are hanging out by a bench and leaning over a railing.

- The food court is full of people taking a break from shopping with bags sitting next to them.
- The SPACE PORT arcade is packed with kids gathered around game machines and lit only by neon lights and the screens.
- In LAPELS, a men's store, a guy is trying on a comically large pinstriped suit in front of a mirror with a salesman.
- People are walking into the MOONRISE CINEMA movie theater handing their tickets to a ticket taker.
- In LIMELIGHT VIDEO, a young woman is ringing up a customer.

INT. LIMELIGHT VIDEO - CONTINUOUS

At the cash register, MEL (mid-20's, dark haired female employee who wouldn't look out of place in a punk band) makes an imprint of a credit card and hands the customer their bag.

She then stares up at a mounted TV playing the group workout video from the opening scene.

A radiant, blonde WOMAN with a walkman on her hip and headphones on, comes dancing through the doorway in a funny, confident strut. This is KRIS (mid-20's, magnetic but sheltered).

KRIS

Morning, hot stuff. Is Nicole here?

MEL

Hey Kris. She's writing you up for being late.

Kris stops her dancing.

KRIS

What? Really?

MEL

You're too gullible. She's doing the bank run today.

KRIS

Oh, thank god.

MEL

Dude, who cares. It's not like she's going to do anything.

KRIS
Still, the last thing I need today
is a lecture about a job no one but
her cares about.

Mel's concentration doesn't break from the tv.

MEL
Uh huh.

Kris glances up at it too.

KRIS
What's this one?

MEL
Some new video, "Toning To The
Maxx". Two X's.

KRIS
I'm surprised you kept it on.

MEL
They never stop smiling. No one
should be this happy about
sweating.

KRIS
Oh yeah? How do you think they
choose them? Is there like a
competition or are they
professional background dancers?

MEL
They must give them facelifts. How
do you smile that hard?

KRIS
Maybe they show up to an audition
and start bustin' moves in front of
a panel, like in Flashdance?

MEL
Maybe. See if those people are in
any of the other videos we have.

KRIS
Do your own detective work. I just
got here.

A middle aged, female CUSTOMER interrupts the conversation.

CUSTOMER
Excuse me, do you have The Music
Man on VHS?

MEL
(Without turning from the tv) No.

CUSTOMER
Can you look?

MEL
Was it on the rack?

CUSTOMER
I didn't see it.

MEL
Then no.

CUSTOMER
Well can you at least check?

MEL
I could, but you'll be
disappointed.

CUSTOMER
How do you know?

MEL
Because if it's not on the rack we
don't have it.

CUSTOMER
What happened to customer service?

MEL
It was killed by entitlement.

CUSTOMER
Bunch of punk kids.

The customer huffs and storms out of the store.

A brown haired woman browsing across the store watches the
interaction before walking out.

KRIS
Really, Mel?

MEL
Whatever. She knew we didn't have
it, so why would I pretend to look?

KRIS
Because it's your job?

MEL
No way. You've gotta be direct with these people so they'll learn to stop wasting your time.

KRIS
Like your time is precious.

Mel turns her attention to Kris.

MEL
Did you call me precious?

KRIS
Hardly. You wanna get lunch soon?

MEL
Definitely. As far as Nicole knows you've been here since start of your shift. She can deal with all these grossos when she gets back.

KRIS
Chinese?

MEL
Too heavy. And I had Panda Express yesterday. What about some Orange Juliuse-s? Jul-ies? Juli-ei?

KRIS
Oh, I could go for that.

NICOLE, (late 20's, all business) wearing teased hair and shoulder pads comes marching in.

Behind her a WOMAN with a handful of pamphlets is being lead out of the mall by a SECURITY GUARD.

WOMAN
I have every right to be here! This is a public space!

SECURITY GUARD
We told you, there's no soliciting.

WOMAN
Let go of me. I'm helping people.

SECURITY GUARD

Well help outside then, fifteen feet from the sidewalk.

WOMAN

You'll be sorry when this is all gone.

Nicole stops watching the interaction and turns back to Mel and Kris.

KRIS

Poor woman.

NICOLE

They're parasites. Those solicitors are leaching off our business. They just come here to lure people into their scams and take advantage of them. And I'm surprised to see you here on time Kris.

MEL

Did it just get brighter in here?

KRIS

It's like a fresh spring breeze just blew in.

MEL

Just positive vibes all around.

NICOLE

Knock it off you two.

KRIS

So where's the interview, Nicole?

NICOLE

Funny Kris. I look professional. You dress for the job you want, which is why Mel should apply to muck stables.

MEL

Half the movies here are shit anyway, so it's basically the same.

NICOLE

You know Mel, you would probably have more friends if you weren't so sarcastic all the time.

MEL

Maybe. I'm not really a people person though.

NICOLE

You work in a mall! No, I'm not starting the day like this. Kris, can we talk for a minute?

KRIS

Oh, we were just on our way to grab lunch. How about when I get back?

NICOLE

Wait, you can't leave together.

The girls back out of the store.

MEL

Nicole, you can handle the store alone. You're a MODERN WOMAN. Those shoulder pads say "I shatter glass ceilings".

Then quickly turn and walk out of sight.

INT. FOOD COURT - DAY

They meet Jenny. She comments on how Kris still looks good and puts down her job.

Both girls find a table and sit down with Orange Julius' in their hands chatting.

MEL

- so I asked like, why are you even here? He wasn't into the music.

KRIS

Was the band any good?

MEL

No, they sucked. But that's not the point. I'm sick of these tools hanging out there just to be seen. It's becoming such a show now. Which means soon they'll stop getting cool bands.

The same brown haired woman that was browsing the store walks through the food court and briefly locks eyes with Kris.

As they sit down, Kris is looking past Mel and cuts her off.

KRIS
Whoa. Deja vu.

MEL
I didn't tell you about this yet.
It just happened yesterday.

KRIS
No. I feel like I've seen that
person before.

MEL
I dunno. You probably see the same
people shopping here every week.

KRIS
Maybe. How much stuff can someone
need?

MEL
It's a trap. They need the new
stuff. And there's always going to
be new stuff.

A blonde haired WOMAN approaches the table dressed in
brightly colored, posh, sporty casual clothes. She is angular
and intense looking. She pauses, then leans in.

WOMAN
Oh, my God! Kristy?

KRIS
Yeah?

WOMAN
It's JENNIFER! JENNIFER GRIMM well,
I go by JENNY now. I can't believe
it. I never run into people from
high school anymore. How are you?

KRIS
Jennifer? I mean Jenny? Um...I'm
good. How are you?

JENNY
Me? Living the dream. I'm doing
wonderfully. Sorry - did I
interrupt your lunch?

KRIS
No, you're fine. I was just talking
with my friend Mel.

JENNY

Hi Mel. So nice to met you.

MEL

Hi Jennifer.

JENNY

So last I heard a few years back
you were stuck working in some
video store. What do you do now?

KRIS

I'm still working in a video store.
It's Limelight, just back there.

Kris says this as she catches a glare off of Jenny's diamond
hanging earrings.

Her multiple bracelets seem to jingle louder. There is a
radiant glow of success coming off her.

JENNY

Well, I'm sure you'll find your
way. I'm running my own business. I
could never go back to working for
someone else now. But at least
you're looking good, as always.

KRIS

Thanks. Well Mel and I are so busy,
we don't even want careers yet.

Jenny just stares at her blankly for a moment.

JENNY

Well, good for you. We need to have
more fun, right?

KRIS

Oh yeah, of course. Nothing but fun
times here.

JENNY

Well, if you ever are interested in
a career I might have something for
you. My business is taking off.

MEL

OK, I'll bite. What's your
business?

After a brief silence...

JENNY

Alright. Since I know Kris, I'll let you guys in on a secret.

MEL

Here we go.

JENNY

Two words: Network. Marketing. I run my own shop and I make commission on my entire downline.

KRIS

Looks like you're doing well.

JENNY

It's revolutionary. Stores will become extinct in a few years.

KRIS

Yeah? The mall still seems crowded.

JENNY

Just wait. Once the word is out, everything will change. You should get in while you can.

MEL

I'm happy getting a paycheck from a corporation where I can do as little as possible. But you go hustle or whatever.

JENNY

OK, OK. So anyway, still talk to anyone in the popular crowd?

KRIS

Oh, no. I don't really talk to anyone anymore.

JENNY

How come?

KRIS

Honestly, we were friends out of convenience. I think a bunch of them moved away too.

JENNY

So did you go anywhere?