

A group of young adults, two men and two women, wearing aprons are smiling and serving plates of food to a group of elderly people seated at a table. The elderly people are also smiling and looking at the food. The setting appears to be a community center or a dining room with other people in the background.

**COVERFLY: "RED LIST"**

**January 2025. Family Feature**

**EXTREME SCREENWRITING**

**"Recommend"**



# DROP-INSQUAD

*This! (Or Something Better)*

**by Hester Schell**

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**There's a housing crisis.  
Let's just call it an emergency.**

## Writer's Vision.

This film lives at the intersection of two often-invisible communities: youth exiting the child welfare system and low-income seniors struggling to maintain independence. The visual language is naturalistic, intimate, and character-driven—handheld where appropriate, composed and poetic in reflective moments.

Aesthetics reflect the PNW climate: overcast skies, soft lighting, and lush textures mirror the emotional tone. We focus on faces, gestures, and small victories. This is a story of resilience and quiet rebellion.



# LOG LINE

There's the family you're born into  
and there's the one you choose:  
Aging out of foster care meets senior aging in  
place when a sharp-witted teen and a feisty  
elder activist team up to conquer  
the housing crisis in a world  
stacked against them.

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# SYNOPSIS

There's the family you're born into and the one you create. An eighteenth birthday and high school graduation loom on the horizon for a super smart teen, Dianna, aging out of foster care with few options. Homeless? Wait listed for how long to get subsidized housing? The housing crisis has her scared. And it is frustrating. Her best friends Antoine and Janey, teenagers in love, jump in to help start an up-cycling business - household appliances (for the copper) - to raise cash for deposit and rent money before she turns eighteen. Happenstance brings her a mentor, Joan, a community activist, who hand selects one foster kid a year in need of a boost to launch into adulthood. Seeing Dianna's potential, Joan hires her to help with senior hot meal home delivery. Bingo. More income.

Through life-threatening circumstances while on the delivery route they bond, and soon adopt each other as grandmother and granddaughter, creating family where there was none. Thanks to Joan, Dianna and her besties add house cleaning and lawn care for elders in need to the business plan. The Drop-In Squad is born. Facilitated by Joan, Dianna moves in with Widow Sarah, who is on the meal delivery route. Sarah lives alone in a big house with lots of empty bedrooms, a house in dire need of cleaning and yard work. Welcome the rent-work exchange. Dianna adds a "Great Aunt" to her new family.

The caseworker has been secretly communicating with her mother, now out of prison after serving ten years for the murder of Dianna's father, revealing how she landed in foster care. It's graduation day. Dianna's mom and brother arrive unexpectedly for commencement. Dianna's wants nothing to do with her blood family. Joan has been quietly checking out this weird court case. Why was a seven year old put in foster care when there are other family members? What's going on with the brother? The case will be reopened, and our teen will not be returning "home." Leave the past in the past, forgive and move forward.

A new home, a new family and a growing business Dianna is launched into adulthood. Joan and Sarah find the care and emotional support they needed. And next year, Joan will mentor another foster child, as she has done for years, in service to others. Out of chaos comes order. Out of challenge come solutions by redefining what it means to be part of a family.

In secret, Sarah changes her will: at her death, Dianna will be given the house.





Hot Meals Make a Difference.

## GENRE

Dramedy: Coming-of-Age, Social Realism

## TO NE

Bittersweet, hopeful, grounded, socially-conscious with moments of humor and warmth

## KEY THEMES

Aging out of the foster care system

Elders aging in place with dignity

Intergenerational community and chosen family

Economic disparity and survival

Environmental and social justice activism

## TARGET AUDIENCE

**Audiences drawn to films about justice, equity, and found families**

Young Adult/Teen, Senior/Baby Boomer, Intergenerational

Indie cinema lovers, festival audiences

Socially-conscious viewers (18–65+)

Millennials and Gen Z + aging Boomers

**LIKELY RATING** PG-13 or M for language and sexual situations



# PRODUCTION SNAPSHOT

**BUDGET RANGE:** Low to Med.

Budget, \$1.2M – \$2.5M

**LOCATIONS:** 7–10 key locations.

Community Center, High School,  
Foster Care Apartment, Van, Mobile  
Home Park, Laundromat, Sarah's house

**FORMAT:** Digital Cinema (Arri Alexa,  
Red or equivalent)

**UNION:** SAG-AFTRA Ultra-Low or  
Low Budget Agreement

# COMPARABLES

## LOW BUDGET INDIES

**NOMADLAND\*** (2020) (performed well in foreign markets

2.7+m domestic earnings on low budget) Francis McDormand.

Budget	\$5,000,000
Opening weekend	503,000
Gross (US & Canada)	3,700,000
Gross (World)	39,458,207

**SHORT TERM 12** (2013) (low budget high return, successful ROI)

Budget	\$ 400,000
Opening weekend	56,206
Gross (US & Canada)	\$1,013,100
Gross (World)	1,645,164

**THE SOUND OF HOPE: THE STORY OF POSSOM TROT** (2024)

VERY Successful ROI

Opening weekend	\$3,078,758
Gross (US & Canada)	11,647,099
Gross (World)	11,723,502

**TV SERIES The Fosters**, Drama (2013-2018) Teenager Callie Jacob is placed in a foster home with a lesbian couple and their blend of biological, adoptive, and foster children.

## STUDIO STAR POWER\*

**ELEANOR THE GREAT** ( 2025)

Budget

Opening Weekend (05/20/2025)

**THELMA** (2024) multi award winner, June Squibb

Opening weekend	\$2,303,222
Gross (US & Canada)	9,002,073
Gross (World)	12,703,844

**THE BLIND SIDE** (2009) Oscar winner, Sandra Bullock

Budget	\$29,000,000
Opening weekend	34,119,372
Gross (US & Canada)	255,982,860
Gross (World)	309,231,694

**THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS** (2006) Oscar Nom, Will Smith

Budget	\$55,000,000
Opening weekend	26,541,709
Gross (US & Canada)	163,566,459
Gross (World)	307,127,625

Documentary

**AGING OUT** 2004)

**NO TOMORROW**, character driven spin off of Aging Out

European Release:

**FOSTER BOY**2012 A Swiss-German rural peasant family takes Max, a crude 15-year-old boy, into a foster situation of constant bullying. Soon, a foster girl is added to the mix.

DATA SOURCE: IMDbPRO

## **Social Impact & Marketability**

- Drop In Squad provides a platform for foster youth and elder care awareness.
- Potential for nonprofit partnerships (aging, foster youth, food insecurity)
- Aligned with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion values.
- Festival & grant appeal: Sundance, Tribeca, SFFILM, ITVS, Chicken & Egg, NEA, etc.

## **Sales Strategy & Festival Pathways**

- Premiere at Sundance, SXSW Tribeca, Portland Panorama, Telluride, San Francisco, Cinequest
- Target distribution: Streaming. A24, Roadside Attractions, Netflix, NEON, Amazon Originals
- Position for award-season in Spirit Awards, Humanitas Prize, or Audience Awards

# CASTING THOUGHTS

Dynamic roles for women aged 16 - 80. Ethnic & Culturally Diverse Characters

**JOAN** Lead. (60s–70s) Meryl Streep, Kathy Bates, Margo Martindale, Frances McDormand, Sally Field.

**DIANNA** Lead. (17–18) Lydia Pentz (!) Young breakout talent (Zendaya-type in early career) Lead.

**ANNESSA** Supporting. (60s–70s) Latina, Rita Moreno, Olga Merediz type.

**ANTOINE & JANEY** Supporting. (17 African American, 17 Latina) Young breakout talent, grounded, authentic teen actors with strong chemistry.

# TEAM

**WRITER** - Hester Schell, MFA — Schell pens inclusive political, environmental and social good stories featuring diverse roles for mature and senior characters. An award-winning theatre director, shorts writer / director / producer, arts educator, Phi Kappa Phi, SAG / AFTRA, retired Professor of Film and Theatre. whose work includes: Finalist, Scriptapoolza features competition, 2024, (A Matter of Time); optioned screenplay (Invisible) She is the author of CASTING REVEALED: A Guide for Film Directors, Routledge Press, now in its 2nd edition.

**DIRECTOR** TBD — Emerald Fennel, Catherine Hardwicke, Leslie Bloom  
Seeking a female director with strong indie credentials and humanist style.

**PRODUCER(s)** Looking to attach experienced indie producers with social impact focus.

## NEXT STEPS

- Finalize attachments (Director, Producer)
- Budget breakdown and finance plan
- Submit to granting agencies / fiscal sponsors
- Package for equity investors and impact funds

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Let's Tell This Story!  
Let's Make a Difference!

