

Consumer Media

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INT. (STUDIO) THE MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM - NIGHT

Light emanates from the small late night TV talk show set in the middle of this otherwise dark stage.

On edge, CREW MEMBERS stutter about in preparation for tonight's guest.

THOMAS

Last looks, everyone. Picture is up!

Centered, MARTIN Caan, a forgotten product of the spray tan era, sits statuesque at his desk as INEZ and JEREMY frantically apply the finishing touches of hair and makeup.

Jeremy fumbles his brush and crumbles to the floor, crying.

Martin's confident hand comes to rest on Jeremy's shoulder.

MARTIN

We can do this.

Jeremy wipes his tears and gets back to the task at hand.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

TAMMY and STEVEN sit before a wall of TV monitors displaying live feeds from the set of the Martin Caan Show.

Too far to hear, Tammy and Steven watch as SHELLY absolutely reams CARLA about something before exiting to the stage.

Carla walks back, untangling her walkie.

CARLA

(murmuring)

Try to put a muzzle on us? As if we don't understand the consequences.

She lifts her head. Discovering that Tammy and Steven have been watching, she perks up and projects a cheap smile.

CARLA (cont'd)

Don't worry, guys, I'll get us through this.

Tammy and Steven roll their eyes, turning to be alone with their respective monitors.

Carla straightens up and finishes fitting her ear piece.

CARLA (cont'd)
(enthusiasm from a
can)
Thirty seconds, guys.

INT. (STUDIO) THE MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM - NIGHT

THOMAS receives and then relays Carla's direction as crew
continue to buzz all around him.

THOMAS
Thirty seconds everyone!

JESSICA swings her wardrobe rack across.

NSRS (NON-SPEAKING ROLES) work feverishly to untangle wires.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Leave it, leave it, leave it. Get out
of here! Get!

They scatter.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Fifteen seconds!

Jessica secures her wardrobe rack at the wheel.

Jeremy and Inez jam-pack their makeup bags before scurrying
off set.

Martin straightens up.

Shelly takes her place stage right, just outside the scope
of the Martin Caan Show broadcast.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Settle...

INTERCUT BETWEEN STUDIO AND CONTROL ROOM

Sweat becomes grime on anxious faces as everyone stays as
still as humanly possible.

CARLA
Ten seconds. Nine, eight...

Carla's countdown continues, now through Thomas' ear piece.

CARLA (V.O.)
Seven, six...

Thomas holds up five fingers, counting along for Martin.

CARLA (V.O.) (cont'd)
Five, four...

A small thud stalls the count and stings everyone's attention to the roll of fallen painter's tape.

SCREECH - Thomas, looking over his back shoulder, follows the rolling tape with frightened eyes in a rigid body.

SCREECH - Jeremy and Inez follow the rolling tape with equally frightened eyes in equally frozen bodies.

Already crouched and kneeling, NSRs watch shoulder-to-shoulder as the roll of tape goes by.

It finally slows before toppling over on its side.

From the stabilized tape, we see that Jessica in here BLUE DAMASK skirt is to blame. Eyes wide, she jerks her head right.

Shelly shakes her head in contempt.

Mouth agape, Jessica's gaze whips from face to face, begging for some form of reassurance.

The NSRs keep their heads down.

Jeremy and Inez look to Thomas.

He turns away to finish signaling the count.

CARLA
Two, one...

INT. (BROADCAST) THE MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM - NIGHT

The set itself is remarkably plain. Decorated with stained wood and fabrics familiar only to middle class apparel.

MARTIN
Hello and welcome back to The Martin Caan Show, I'm your host Martin Caan.

Our guest tonight is one of the most decorated men in the history of the United States military.

(MORE)

MARTIN (cont'd)
With a career spanning over forty years, he has served as secretary of state, attorney general of the United States, vice president, and most recently, interim president of the United States. Please welcome to the show, General Wander Tibitts!

Studio applause roars as our dry cleaned military official, General Wander TIBITTS, takes his rightful seat.

INT. (STUDIO) THE MARTIN CAAN SHOW - NIGHT

Inez looks to Thomas for confirmation, he nods.

Martin settles the audience down before re-taking his seat.

Inez lowers the studio audience applause dial to off.
Jessica pops out, roll of painter's tape in hand.

JESSICA
We love you, Wandie!

Jessica's grin plummets as she looks upon her crew mates.
Halting her swiveling observation, she sees -

Shelly, who glares at Jessica with muted violence.

Chin down, Jessica slinks backward into the shadows.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Steven looks to Tammy for some form of assurance. Her shrug is static, but her widened eyes dart from left to right.

Carla watches the monitors.

The long wait continues... then -

TIBITTS
(uncomfortable)
Why thank you. I - I love you too?

Studio applause roars and then leaves again.

MARTIN
A lot of love in here tonight.

TIBITTS
That's good. That's very good.

Relief briefly crosses Carla's face.

MARTIN
Uh, so, Mr. President - how does that
feel by the way?

TIBITTS
Being called Mr. President?

MARTIN
Yes.

TIBITTS
It feels correct.

Tammy leans over her desk with the heel of her hand peeling
her eyelid down, revealing the gums of her eye.

TAMMY
(under her breath)
You fucking monster.

Carla notes Tammy's reaction before shifting her attention
back to the wall of monitors.

INT. (BROADCAST) THE MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM - NIGHT

Martin adjusts.

MARTIN
You've held so many titles.

TIBITTS
Here's hoping I get to keep this one.

Martin laughs along with the studio audience sound.

MARTIN
Having been running mate to one of
the least popular, albeit successful,
campaigns...

Tibbits' expression sours.

MARTIN (cont'd)
- and given your predecessor's recent
disappearance, and with you certainly
being the more controversial figure
of the two.

INT. (STUDIO) THE MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM - NIGHT

Martin finally looks over to see the angered Tibbits. Then he glimpses something over the general's shoulder. Off stage, Shelly sternly shakes her head from left to right.

MARTIN

(backtracking)

I mean, Lyndon Johnson couldn't do it, Al Gore couldn't do it. What makes you different?

There is a long pause.

Inez turns her head to look, with great apprehension, at the "ON AIR" light - it remains dormant.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Carla watches the screens, gnawing her thumb nail nearly to the point of bleeding. She suddenly pauses the fingernail maceration in anticipation of -

Tibitts adjusts to sit in a more confident posture.

TIBITTS

I think the key word to take away from that is *successful*.

She rubs her thumbnail dry and tucks it away, for now...

INT. (STUDIO) THE MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM - NIGHT

Along side the silhouettes of crew and equipment.

TIBITTS

There is very clearly a silent majority out there that you may choose to ignore, but let me assure you that they are in fact very real. Good, hardworking and honest people.

MARTIN

And how do they feel about your policies?

TIBITTS

Our policies are necessary and humane
methods /against the student
population, that drastically reduce
the amount of crime in our great
nation.

MARTIN

You can't seriously suggest that
those camps / are humane.

Tibitts halts everything with a glare.

He looks sidelong in Shelly's direction.

Martin's TV smile deflates as he follows Tibitts' gaze.

Shelly finally has Martin's attention. She drags her
extended thumb across her neck line to signal "you're dead."

Martin racks back to see Tibitts' expression of satisfied
confidence.

Martin nervously pretends to sort his show notes.

MARTIN (cont'd)

Let's see.

His full-to-the-brim cup of coffee knocks over.

MARTIN (cont'd)

Oh no.

Entire crew looks to the "**ON AIR**" light.

The sound of a refrigerator clicks on. The sixty cycle hum
is weak, but present.

Jeremy gulps.

Martin starts again and the humming immediately stops.

MARTIN (O.C.)

Let's maybe back track here.

Martin is cleaning himself up.

TIBITTS

Let's.

INTERCUT BETWEEN (STUDIO) MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM AND
(BROADCAST) MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM

Martin puts on a smile, clearly still trembling underneath.

MARTIN
What uh, tell me, what do you think
of the show?

TIBITTS
Well I'm not sure I'm qualified to
answer a question like that.

MARTIN
An unusual question, sure, but you're
an unusual guest, with an unusual
amount of power. I'm certain with
your influence you could make a few
changes -

Carla draws back.

MARTIN (cont'd)
- if you felt them necessary of
course.

TIBITTS
I don't know that it's as easy as
snapping my fingers.

Tibitts snaps his fingers and Martin barks like a dog.

Tibitts betrays himself with a chuckle. He straightens up.

Martin wipes his mouth.

MARTIN
No, I mean it, are you a fan of the
show?

TIBITTS
I'd rather not say.

MARTIN
Come now, Mr. President, of all the
times, now's not one to be bashful.

TIBITTS
(begrudgingly)
It's alright.

MARTIN
The president thinks the show is all-
right ladies and gentlemen!

Sarcastic studio applause chimes in.

MARTIN (cont'd)
Any suggestions?

TIBITTS
This again?

MARTIN
Let us in on that big creative brain
of yours, Mr. President.

TIBITTS
Well I guess there is one thing.

MARTIN
I'm all ears.

TIBITTS
The name.

MARTIN
Not regal enough for your taste?

TIBITTS
No, but The Martin Caan Show? Seems
like every Tom, Dick, and Harry has a
show named like that.

MARTIN
The Tom, Dick, and Harry Show was
taken.

Studio laughter chimes in.

MARTIN (cont'd)
And Tom's harry dick seemed a little
too on the nose.

Studio laughter roars in. Tibitts laughs, genuinely laughs.

TIBITTS
... even so, I think you could've
come up with something a little more
creative than The Martin Caan Show.

MARTIN
Sir, that is way above my pay grade.

TIBITTS
Really? A big star like you has got
his hands tied?

MARTIN
(elbowing)
Only when I can afford it.

Studio laughter roars in.

Tibitts wipes tears of joy from his face.

TIBITTS
... you're too much!

The laughter dies down. Things settle.

MARTIN
No, If I'm being honest with you sir,
I hate the show too.

The sixty cycle hum blares back on. Inez looks to the **"ON AIR"** light with desperation as she cranks the studio laughter, but it just darkens and hastens.

Martin coos his desk.

MARTIN (cont'd)
I'm sorry, honey, I'm sorry.

Both men start laughing hysterically.

Jeremy looks to the **"ON AIR"** light.

Giant and slow, spit flies from Tibitts laughing lips as he rocks tectonically forward.

With the dial all the way in the "off" position, the laughter continues to grow.

Inez backs away from the laugh box. She looks to Thomas.

Thomas looks to the **"ON AIR"** light.

Still hysterical, Martin slaps his knee.

Shelly looks to the **"ON AIR"** light with hardened concern.

MARTIN (cont'd)
(laughing)
Now, I'm not supposed to ask this
next question, but I am!

"**ON AIR**" light flips to "**OFF AIR**".

Absolutely silent, the crew look to each other in anticipation.

Thomas and Inez make tense eye contact. The sound of isolated footsteps running. Thomas looks to it just as the sound of an opening door begins.

Everyone looks to the sound where Martin just escaped through the exit door just under the "**ON AIR**" light. They look to each other in frozen anticipation.

All at once, everyone evacuates through the same door.

Jessica stops in her tracks, seeing a fallen NSR.

JESSICA
I'll save you!

He escapes, thanks to Jessica, but Shelly comes out of nowhere and immediately shoves her to the ground.

SHELLY
Get the fuck out of my way!

Jessica, in her BLUE DAMASK skirt, is trampled by cast and non-speaking-role (NSR) alike.

JESSICA
NO! GOD NO! DON'T FUCKING LEAVE ME!

Carla overlaps our view of Jessica failing to crawl.

CARLA
Hurry, GO, GO, GO!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The stampede stalls in the surgically white hallway that bottlenecks to the width of the green room's door.

TAMMY
Get that fucking door open!

STEVEN
Back up! Back up!

Steven finally gets enough room to turn the knob.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

The stalled stampede falls into the green room. Dusting themselves off, they settle into this room's apparent safety.

Thomas applies pressure to Tammy's head wound as they enter.

It resembles a windowless high school chemistry classroom. The far counter supports the distant and weary Martin in his now loosened suit.

CARLA

What was that, man?

MARTIN

What?

CARLA

You closed-the-door. Why would you do that?

MARTIN

(weathered)

I can't do this. I told all of you I can't do this! I'm not built for center stage, I don't want this!

CARLA

That's no excuse.

MARTIN

I had to look out for my own!

Shelly cleans her finger nails with a switch blade.

SHELLY

Smart thinkin'.

CARLA

What the hell Shelly? That could've been it. We could all still be out there.

Shelly shrugs.

CARLA (cont'd)

Oh god. Did anyone get a head count? Did we lose anybody?

THOMAS

We lost Jessica.

CARLA
Jesus Christ. You see what you did
Martin?

INEZ
Shelly pushed her.

CARLA
What the fuck, Shelly?

SHELLY
Every man for themselves.

CARLA
That is not what we agreed on.

SHELLY
Plans change, people change.

CARLA
Since when?

Shelly just shrugs and walks away.

TIBITTS
Excuse me, but what is happening
here?

CARLA
Sit down, Gene.

TIBITTS
Gene?

CARLA
Or Constantine, or James, or Tibitts,
or whatever coping mechanism you're
going with that fits oddly
thematically.

Carla goes to break up a scrum between a couple of NSRs on
the other side of the room. They fight like feral cats.

TIBITTS
How dare you walk away from me. I am
Wander Tibitts, President of the
United States of America, and you
will listen when I speak!

SHELLY
Give it a rest, Gene.

TIBITTS
You'll do well to remember who you
work for!

SHELLY
I don't work for you.

TIBITTS
That much is clear! How much are they
paying you? I want to know the price
of loyalty.

Shelly turns her back to him, walking away.

Tibitts tugs at her shoulder and she slowly turns her raised
eyebrow to glare at the man's unimposing hand.

SHELLY
You better wake up already if you
know what's good for you.

TIBITTS
What's your plan then? Ransom? I'll
have you know you won't get it. I am
not like other men, I / am greater,
far greater.

Shelly pops him in the mouth.

Tibitts drops to the ground and scampers back.

TIBITTS (cont'd)
(yapping)
Bitch, you bitch!

Heels slipping and squeaking as he shrivels against the
cabinets, Tibitts applies pressure to his now-leaking face.

Dead-eyed, Shelly just watches him squirm.

SHELLY
You done yet?

TIBITTS
I'll have you tried for treason -
disbarred!

She takes a single step forward -

Tibitts' flinches, covering his face.

CARLA
Gene, what did you do?

Carla drops to one knee to examine Tibitts' wound.

CARLA (cont'd)
(stern)
Shelly, we need his face.

Shelly just shrugs and goes back to cleaning her nails.

CARLA (cont'd)
What is your deal? Things get
postmodern around here and you go all
tough guy on me?

TIBITTS
I am general Wander Tibitts of the
United States of America, and I will
not be ignored!

CARLA
God damn it, you are not a U.S.
General! You're not the president.
Your name is Gene, you are a kind man
who is beyond grateful just to be
average. Now please snap out of it.

Carla's friendly hand on his shoulder seems to almost
generate a legitimate shadow of a doubt. He examines himself
and the situation for a moment, considering...

Carla gets just a glimpse at her exhausted teammates.

Thomas and Steven work to dress Tammy's head wound.

Martin shakes and holds himself.

She goes to Martin, leaving Tibitts in contemplation.

Tibitts lifts his head, noticing the exit door.

Carla looks through all the cabinets and drawers.

MARTIN
You know there's nothing there.

CARLA
I don't see you trying anything.

MARTIN
It's not enough just to try. This is
survival. Plain and simple.

SHELLY

Here here.

In the background, Tibitts makes it to the exit door.

CARLA

It doesn't have to be. We can streamline and and make a plan that will help us survive.

MARTIN

Streamline?

Carla pauses in shame.

STEVEN

Carla can you give us a hand over here?

CARLA

I'll be right there.

Just think about it Martin, alright?
There's gotta be something we can do.

MARTIN

O-kay...?

It's a solid door, almost resonates at the frequency of a sixty-cycle hum.

Tibitt's gives it a legitimate effort, but the knob won't turn. He pulls and pulls, but it doesn't budge.

Carla's shaky hands try to close Tammy's head wound.

CARLA

Why won't it stop bleeding?

STEVEN

Apply pressure.

CARLA

There's no angle to apply pressure from. Somebody get me a t-shirt. Get me some tape.

THOMAS

We don't have any tape.

CARLA

Get me something!

Thomas and Steven walk off. Shelly crosses her arms and rolls her eyes at Carla playing leader.

Carla applies pressure as best she can.

CARLA (cont'd)
It's alright, Tammy. You're gonna be alright.

TIBITTS
(calmed)
Why you?

CARLA
What? Another time, Gene. You got any tape over there, Marty?

Martin labors his head from left to right, shaking it "no."

TIBITTS
My name isn't Tibitts, but his is still Martin?

CARLA
Coincidence, Gene, leave it alone.

Carla snaps her fingers at the NSRs.

CARLA (cont'd)
Tape, huh? Any of you got tape?

They feel around themselves and search.

TIBITTS
What is it you people want from me?

CARLA
My hands are a little full here, Gene.

TIBITTS
I think I of all people deserve an explanation!

Carla re-positions her grip, lifting her thumb, taking a patch of flesh with it, like moist cornbread. No blood -

Carla watches, waiting for it to start bleeding.

- then a lot of blood.

Her eyes bug as her hands slip and grip to now close two wounds.

TIBITTS (cont'd)

Well?

CARLA

Get back!

TIBITTS

I step aside for no one!

CARLA

If you could just / give us a little space.

TIBITTS

No!

CARLA

I'm begging you / just one god damn second!

TIBITTS

Enough of this charade!

CARLA

Just one god damn second!

Tibitts takes a step closer, basically on top of the crouched woman. Jabbing at her with his forefinger.

TIBITTS

You either tell me what is going on here, or let me go!

The finger jabbing causes Carla to lose her grip.

CARLA

(deep sigh)

Why, WHY? Okay.

Carla slaps a napkin on the wound and Tammy holds it there herself. Carla stands up over Tibitts.

CARLA (cont'd)

Alright, you're the president?

Tibitts retreats back one step.

Blood soaks through the napkin on Tammy's head wound.

TIBITTS

Yes.

CARLA

And we're on a television show.

Tammy looks like a scared child as she watches them fight above her.

TIBITTS

Yes.

CARLA

Where was the audience then?

TIBITTS

At home.

SHELLY

The studio audience, Jackass.

TIBITTS

My security detail wouldn't allow / a live audience.

CARLA

Where was you security detail? Where are they now?

TIBITTS

They uh... I assume they're what we, or rather you, are hiding from.

SHELLY

Jesus, fuck with this guy.

MARTIN

That is not what is out there.

They all look to the hallway door as the sound of the sixty cycle hum grows from it.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Black tie and looking completely refreshed, no bruises or cuts on anyone, the actors as themselves sit around a large round table in a room that is otherwise completely dark.

JEFF GERHARD, not a single hair out of place, wears possibly the nicest suit of all, even though he leaves the top few buttons casually undone.

JEFF

Come on over.

The cast sarcastically raucously beckon the shadowed figure to their table. The actor playing Carla (Carla') slides into the open seat and sets down her drink.

CARLA'

What I miss?

Laughter subsides.

JEFF

Let's go ahead and get you a coaster there.

CARLA'

Thank you.

JEFF

(to camera)

Hello and welcome to Hollywood Reporter Round Table: Consumer Media. My name is Jeff Gerhard. I am joined by:

MEDIUM CLOSE UP of each actor as they are introduced.

JEFF (cont'd)

(very quickly)

Jessica', Martin', Shelly', Jeremy', Inez', Gene', Steven', Thomas', Tammy'-

There is no epoxied wound on her forehead, as this is the actor playing Tammy, not the character Tammy herself.

JEFF (cont'd)

- and Carla'.

Comedy is the only escape available to man comparable to death, true or false?

JESSICA

Can I just say this is an incredibly large table.

Cast laughs and causes commotion.

JESSICA (cont'd)

Not to escape your question.

STEVEN'

I think true, right? That brief moment that you are truly funny or that you witness something truly funny it's almost, yeah I would say it disassociative. Like you sort of exist without your life for a moment.

SHELLY'

But then your life comes crashing right back in, and like for me I either just heard an amazing joke and am now jealous that I didn't come up with it, or I just told an amazing joke or was part of something very funny and am upset that it only lasts, you know, in its immediacy.

JEREMY'

It kinda reminds me of this trend, or whatever you would call it in middle school, where you would flex all of the muscles in your body to get rid of a boner.

Everyone breaks out in laughter. Shelly' mimes the motion of the joke flying away as the laughter subsides. Tammy and Steven both acknowledge the mimicry as Jeremy begins again.

JEREMY' (cont'd)

No, no. There's a point to this. Like everyone here, well everyone here who had a penis in the eighth grade, probably remembers it much as I do. As just a sort of obstacle course of not having public erections.

GENE'

At least not noticeable ones, no.

JEREMY'

Right, right. Anyway, for that 30 seconds or whatever that you flex all your muscles as the bus pulls into school you can distract yourself until you get off the bus and sit down at your desk and have to worry some more.

JEFF

Interesting analogy. Carla' what are your thoughts?

CARLA'

On adolescent boners or on the prompt?

JEFF

The prompt.

CARLA'

It seems like we're all more or less trying to distract ourselves or escape something because I think in a lot of ways we're all dealing with something under the surface. Some trauma, or the escape has gotten so good that we're bored and need an escape from our boredom. I mean, (gesturing to costars)
Right, we're all, right?

Costars mostly nod.

CARLA' (cont'd)

And for some of us that leads to great talent and some of us it just leads to nothing and it seems like there's this general acceptance that the more traumatized a person is the more potential they have for greatness, which I don't know whether that's true or not. Whether I act or you fit pipes, it's almost... We're both just spinning our wheels whether we think it or not. And I can agree that comedy does offer a sort of moment of freedom from that, but I don't know what happens or if you can really call death an escape. Maybe there's an afterlife. I'm not, you know, I'm no authority.

SHELLY'

Mother fucking better be.

Costars laugh.

INT. (STUDIO) SAMMY'S PLAYHOUSE - DAY

Carla peels up a corner of the napkin blood-sealed to Tammy's forehead to get a better look. Slowly... -

Slowly peeling, pausing... Blood immediately begins to pool.

CARLA

Shit.

Carla resets the napkin and steps back, no blood yet.
Thomas and Steven are back.

CARLA (cont'd)

Well?

THOMAS

There's nothing here.

STEVEN

I don't know what you expected.

TAMMY

Honestly guys, I feel fine.

Blood seeps from beneath the napkin, she's covered in it.

STEVEN

No!

CARLA

Hang on.

Thomas steps in to try to apply pressure. Carla bustles toward the alcove on the other side of the room.

Jeremy and Inez discuss at the mirror.

INEZ

Put your finger up to it.

JEREMY

Okay.

INEZ

Does the reflection touch itself?

JEREMY

No, there's a gap.

INEZ

Then that's a two way mirror.

JEREMY

Whoa.

INEZ

Or maybe that means it's not a two way mirror? Here, let me try.

Inez flinches at the sudden sound of Carla's voice.

CARLA
Do you two have any tape, or a needle
and thread, or some dental floss?

INEZ
I have some glue.

CARLA
Where did you get glue?

INEZ
The stage.

CARLA
How? Whatever, let me see it.

Inez hands over the jar of epoxy.

Carla winces at the idea.

The stage has taken on the appearance of the interior of a
quaint Pittsburgh home.

Tammy sits in one of the director's chairs while Carla seals
her wound with epoxy.

Shelly drags Tibitts over by his shoulder, carrying his
costume for the next set in her off hand.

TIBITTS
Get your hands off me.

Carla licks a napkin to maternally clean the dry blood from
Tibitt's mug.

CARLA
How we feeling, Gene?

TIBITTS
Will you stop calling me that?

She sets down the epoxy.

CARLA
Alright fine - Wander. We don't have
a lot of time here. I'm gonna need
you to change into this outfit, okay?
(patronizing)
You're gonna play a mail man.

TIBITTS
I'm not an actor.

CARLA
Yes you are! God damn it, Gene, will
you just put it on?

TIBITTS
Why don't you put it on?

SHELLY
Why don't you ask Gene? He knows all
about it.

Martin and fellow members of the crew surround the stage
curtains made of the blue DAMASK skirt their fallen
colleague and friend Jessica was wearing when she died.

Martin feels the curtains.

MARTIN
So young.

Carla grips the mailman outfit.

CARLA
Please just put on the outfit.

TIBITTS
Why a mailman?

MARTIN
(from stage)
So we can fucking exist!

Shelly shoves the outfit at Tibitts.

SHELLY
This'll go a whole lot smoother if
you stop asking stupid fucking
questions.

Carla takes the outfit.

CARLA
Will you quit?

SHELLY
(packing chewing
tobacco into lip)
Someone's got to look after the herd.

CARLA
Where'd you get tobacco?

SHELLY
It just showed up.

CARLA
Let me have some.

Tibitts notices, and slowly drifts off toward, the exit door adjacent the empty studio audience seating.

SHELLY
Alright, but we gotta ration it.

Carla makes a spitter out of an empty beer can.

CARLA
Obviously.

Tibitts reaches the exit door and opens it.

It's been walled off with brick. A brick-dust covered sledge hammer leans conveniently against the wall.

Carla packs her dip and takes her first spit.

Some of the wall paper begins to peel.

CARLA (cont'd)
Oh man, that's good shit. That Cope?

SHELLY
(reading)
Ubi... I don't know, the label is pretty faded.

CARLA
Still tastes fresh.

Script falls and Carla picks up the loose pages.

CARLA (cont'd)
I'm really worried about Gene. It's never lasted this long before.

SHELLY
Yup.

CARLA
Could you fill in if we needed you to?

Shelly smooths her eyebrows with dip greased pinkies.

SHELLY
(starry-eyed)
My time to shine.

Steven, Thomas, and some NSRs work to place mics and finish dressing the set.

Thomas observes the peeling wallpaper, then -

shakes his head at Tibitts smashing the brick doorway with a hammer in the distance.

THOMAS
This show is falling apart.

His cohorts affirm and then go back to work.

Tibitts turns away to wipe his brow. Behind him, the beaten brick wall wheels off. He peels his shirt off over his head and a new brick wall wheels in. Finally turning around -

He stands shocked in the now-seemingly towering wall's apparent re-construction.

Carla digs her dip out, tosses it, and does several postmortem spits. She turns around.

CARLA
Oh great, we decided to play along.

Bewildered, Tibitts examines his new outfit.

TIBITTS
We did?

SHELLY
Rub it in, why don't you?

Shelly's hard shoulder knocks Tibitts a full step back as she walks past.

TIBITTS
What?

Carla turns away from Tibitts to the set area.

CARLA
Places, everyone!

Tibitts just stands there while everyone flies to their positions around him. Carla eventually grabs him.

Leaving the can of chewing tobacco waiting there.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Jeff turns to Carla'.

JEFF

Carla'

CARLA'

Oh no, here we go.

JEFF

You are sort of known for growing up poor. Do you draw on that or relate to what Shelly' is saying at all?

CARLA'

I'd like to think I'm known for my craft, but uh, yeah I suppose we all probably draw on our childhood in some way or another. But, um, I really stopped saying I grew up poor, and this isn't, I don't mean this as a jab at you at all Shelly, but I really stopped telling people that I grew up poor when I realized, or I guess I didn't even realize it but I saw it on some sports radio show, oddly enough, that uh, you know, compared to some people's upbringing in the South or even some parts of Asia, I really didn't have that tough of a time.

JEFF

Do you have other things you draw on then?

CARLA'

I do, I do, but you know acting is more than just drawing on past experiences. It's practice, and body control, and chemistry, and it is really an experience in itself.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone enters calmly and resumes their spot after yet another difficult show.

Carla rushes past everyone, toward the bathroom.

MARTIN

What do you think that's about?

SHELLY

What?

MARTIN

The whole going-to-the-bathroom thing? You haven't had to go to the bathroom since we got here, have you?

SHELLY

Nope.

MARTIN

Or eat, or drink, or anything?

SHELLY

(apathetic)

Probably part of her brilliant plan to get us all out of here.

MARTIN

It seems pretty obvious where here is and you tend to assume people don't get out of it.

SHELLY

That's a definite possibility.

STEVEN

She probably thinks she's doing it for our benefit. It's a necessary part of the human psyche to -

Shelly turns away, refusing to listen.

TAMMY

What do you think she's doing in there?

Shelly turns back in.

MARTIN

What do you mean?

TAMMY

I mean, what do you think she is actually doing in there? Just counting to a hundred or something?

JEREMY

I'll bet she gets really into it.
Takes her pants down, lights a few
candles, the whole gambit.

INEZ

You light candles when you go to the
bathroom?

JEREMY

No, but, just making the whole thing
like a ceremony is all I'm saying.

INEZ

I'll bet she's calling the doctor to
ask about her recent bout of
constipation.

SHELLY

Yes, hello doctor, I have had the
most outrageous day and now my bowels
won't budge an inch!

(punched by fantasy)

Oh man, what if she stole that toy
telephone from Sammy's playhouse and
is pretending to make calls in there?

STEVEN

Really adds to my theory of her being
a mental patient and us being
figments of / her imagination.

Shelly turns away again.

STEVEN (cont'd)

How come he gets to assume that this
is hell or purgatory or whatever and
I don't get to postulate even a
little?

SHELLY

Postulate?

STEVEN

You know what it means.

Shelly says something under her breath as she turns away.

STEVEN (cont'd)

(under breath)

Coward.

SHELLY
The fuck you just say?

Tibitts steps forward.

TIBITTS
Alright, I've had just about enough
of this.

SHELLY
Here we go.

TIBITTS
I don't know who you think you are,
but I'm not just going to sit here
and wait while you all try to make me
look like some kind of idiot. I'm
important damn it! I'm a man who
doesn't take no for an answer. A man
whose presence is felt the second he
enters a room -

SHELLY
Tell us more about your character,
we're loving it.

TIBITTS
A man who walks in the footsteps of
giants, in real Italian leather and
100 PERCENT REAL VICUNA suits. And if
you think you're keeping me from
walking out that door -

SHELLY
By all means...

Wind breathes through the now-cracked open hallway door.

Tibitts smooths his suit.

Martin shoots Shelly a sharp glance, but she's moved her
attention to the more pressing matter of flipping a quarter
between her knuckles.

Everyone watches as Tibitts exits with absolute confidence.

Gene screams brutal and tormented shrieks in the hallway,
off camera, and a proud smile comes across Shelly's face.
Studio applause comes in.

INT. THE MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM - NIGHT

Studio applause dies down as Martin interviews Shelly.

MARTIN
 Congratulations on the album, it's a
 terrific album.

SHELLY
 Thank you.

MARTIN
 (presenting CD)
 The album is / *Witness*.

SHELLY
 This is an amazing tablecloth.

The horror lives only in Martin's eyes as he, the consummate professional, never breaks character.

MARTIN
 You like that? 100 PERCENT REAL
 VICUNA.

Shelly pets the cloth in feigned amazement.

SHELLY
 It's incredible. You said it reminds
 you of an old friend?

MARTIN
 (single tear escapes)
 That's right.

INT. (STUDIO) THE MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM - NIGHT

The crew watches in horror; finishing with Carla whose horrified face shakes from left to right in incredulity.

Click off to straight BLACK.

The screen warms up. The sound of static electricity attaching itself to glass. Then the analog click.

INT. LOOK FOR RFUBICX IN YOUR LOCAL GROCERY STORE COMMERCIAL

Mother administers medicine to her child, sick in bed.

COMMERCIAL 2 (V.O.)
We were there when you were a child,
sick in bed.

Same child, now an exhausted adolescent, gets pulled out of her soccer game.

Her mother notices, from the stands, that something isn't quite right.

As the daughter takes her seat on the wet aluminum bench, her mother comes out of nowhere to offer her a few pills.

COMMERCIAL 2 (V.O.) (cont'd)
When you didn't want to miss out on a single minute.

Same child, now an adult, stressing over all the paperwork on her desk, drops some tablets in her glass of water.

COMMERCIAL 2 (V.O.) (cont'd)
And we were there when the Johnson account just would not quit.

All grown up, she administers the same medicine she was given as a child to her elderly mother, sick in bed.

COMMERCIAL 2 (V.O.) (cont'd)
We've always been there when you needed us, and we always will be.
Look for Rfubicx in liquid, tab, and gel form in you local grocery store today.

INT. HEATING AND COOLING COMMERCIAL

Technician removes water heater tank.

COMMERCIAL 4 (V.O.)
When it comes to your home, there are few things more costly than a defective water heater. At Polar Heating and Cooling we offer quality service, installation, and repair.

Technician exchanges pleasant conversation with home owner.

COMMERCIAL 4 (V.O.) (cont'd)
Consider trying our new tank-less water heater.

Technician installs tank-less water heater.

COMMERCIAL 4 (V.O.) (cont'd)
 With its nearly endless supply of hot
 water, it's guaranteed to keep you
 warm from your first shower to your
 last.

Contact information frame.

COMMERCIAL 4 (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Polar Heating and Cooling, for all
 your plumbing, heating, and
 electrical needs.

INT. HEARING AID COMMERCIAL

Mother gives her daughter breakfast cereal.

MOTHER
 Oh my god, what is that smell? Honey,
 did your grandpa remember to take his
 exocrine pancreatic insufficiency
 medicine?

DAUGHTER
 Mom! Grandpa is right there...

MOTHER
 Oh, don't worry, sweetie. He doesn't
 have his hearing aid in, there's no
 way he can hear me.

GRANDPA
 (Dramatic turn, proud)
 Yes I can.

Mother and daughter watch incredulously.

GRANDPA (cont'd)
 Don't be sorry.

Grandpa looks directly at the camera.

GRANDPA (cont'd)
 Thanks to my all new Schuster inner
 ear implants, it's like I'm hearing
 the world with all new ears.

Active diagram of the inner ear implant.

COMMERCIAL 3 (V.O.)

The inner ear implant works by grafting a small receiver on the outer ear and using modern Bluetooth technology, the sound is transmitted to a microspeaker deep within the inner ear.

The three play Hasbro Parker Brother's Monopoly. The daughter goes to collude "quietly" with the mother, but grandpa wryly catches them and points to his Schuster ears.

GRANDPA

So ask your doctor about Schuster inner ear implants today!

EXT. SPACESHIP

Barbell-shaped space ship floats in space.

SUBTITLE: 34 HOURS BEFORE INCIDENT

INEZ

Does anyone ever swim down?

INT. COPERNICUS - TAMMY'S OFFICE

Carpeted therapists office. Feels very lived in, greasy. Steven and Tammy have their session.

STEVEN

Really makes you think, neurotically speaking, whether or not there is any difference between having the disease and believing you have the disease. I certainly have the symptoms.

TAMMY

I don't know that you do.

STEVEN

Yes, but a well man certainly does not falsely believe he has symptoms.

TAMMY

Do you feel that that means you're sick?

Inez and Tammy.

INEZ

You know, when they cliff dive, do they ever accidentally swim down. Not on purpose, but you know, thinking that they're swimming up toward the surface?

INT. COPERNICUS EAST

Thomas floats around the padded cockpit checking buttons and dials.

CARLA (O.C.)

(from earpiece)

How're we looking over there, Tommy?

THOMAS

Just a few more checks and I should be ready.

CARLA (O.C.)

(from earpiece)

Alright, I'll be up in a bit then.

THOMAS

Copy.

INT. COPERNICUS - HALLWAY

Grimy metal corridor with grates for a floor and concave walls. Carla stops short to eavesdrop on the remainder of Tammy and Steven's session.

INT. TAMMY'S OFFICE

Tammy sits at her desk while Steven paces around the room.

TAMMY

I don't understand.

STEVEN

You understand. You just choose to not believe me.

TAMMY

But there's nothing actually wrong with you.

STEVEN

Says you!

TAMMY

I'm trying here, Steven, but you have to understand that I can only do so much.

STEVEN

I'm just gonna fucking end it.

TAMMY

Please don't talk like that.

STEVEN

You don't care. Nobody actually cares. You all just sit there, pretending to listen to me.

TAMMY

You are absolutely vital to this mission, literally everyone here needs you.

STEVEN

It's not about needing me. It's about wanting me here. It's about not actively ignoring me.

INT. COPERNICUS - HALLWAY

Carla, still eavesdropping.

SHELLY

Don't worry,

Carla flinches.

SHELLY (cont'd)

When I do mine, I'll make it look like an accident.

CARLA

(worried)

What?

SHELLY

Huh?

CARLA

What did you say?

SHELLY

Nothing. I was joking.

CARLA

O-kay...

Shelly leaves, admitting nothing. Carla, petrified, seems forced to just watch as she leaves.

INT. COPERNICUS - TAMMY'S OFFICE

Slides of various self-afflicting gun wound victims play on the ancient overhead projector.

TAMMY (V.O.)

Do you see my point, Steven?

Lights up. Projector off.

TAMMY

These people all nearly succeeded in exactly what you are thinking about doing.

STEVEN

Yes, but -

TAMMY

And now, they look like this. This is after a face transplant - the best that medicine can afford - and they still look like this, and always will. And you know what? Even though life is far harder for them physically, and most likely even more so now emotionally, they still don't try to do it a second time. What does that say to you Steven, huh? Maybe not such a great idea. Maybe count your blessings a little bit.

INT. STEVEN'S ROOM

Darkness. The dresser drawer slides shut, revealing Steven closing it and the surrounding dorm-like room.

MARTIN

I don't know how you can say that.

STEVEN

No, no, no. You're getting me all wrong. There is absolutely nothing funny about rape. Nothing at all.

INTERCUT BETWEEN STEVEN'S ROOM AND HALLWAY

Shelly passes several open rooms on her way to the kitchen, overhearing conversations.

STEVEN

But rape jokes are hilarious.

Rolling her eyes in exhausted disapproval, Shelly moves on.

MARTIN

(laughing
uncomfortably)

I don't, you can't / say that.

STEVEN

And don't get me wrong, I absolutely
love her...

She begins to roll her eyes again.

STEVEN (cont'd)

but not for her work as an actor.

She seems pricked mid-eye roll, stopping her in her tracks.

MARTIN

Really?

STEVEN

No, I mean, she's a fine actor.

Shelly squints as she leans in to listen.

STEVEN (cont'd)

But she is just such a wonderful
person. With her businesses and
humanitarian work, she's even got a
band.

MARTIN

Wow, that is one active...

Shelly gives up, moving on toward another inaudible conversation a few doors down.

MARTIN (O.C.)

... I hated that place.

Examining the familiar conversation, she looks back to the room she just came from and then to the room she is approaching. Martin and Steven are somehow in both.

MARTIN (O.C.) (cont'd)
There was no way to sit at the bar
without having your back to the door.

STEVEN (O.C.)
Oh?

She approaches the outer doorway.

MARTIN
You know that's how Wild Bill Hickok
died, right?

Steven, with his back to the door, looks over his shoulder
to find Shelly observing them with an incredulous look on
her face.

STEVEN
Hi.

She moves on.

Steven scoffs to Martin as soon as she's gone.

INT. NSR'S ROOM

Shelly passes the doorway as NSRs do lines of some narcotic.
NSR 2 does his line and leans back in his chair, letting his
head drop all the way back in euphoria. His eyes shut.

INT. COPERNICUS - CHOW HALL

Shelly recognizes that this is the penultimate scoop of
coffee, loads the pot anyway, dons her apron, and distracts
herself by preparing dinner.

She reels back to sneeze, but, before she is able to, Steven
walks by.

STEVEN
(hurried)
God bless you.

Now unable to sneeze, Shelly fumes as she follows Steven and
his cheap smile toward the bathroom, kitchen right.

Anger and concern grow in Shelly's expression as she slowly
opens the bathroom door. It sounds like someone is washing
their hands. She continues to creep in, revealing...

INT. COPERNICUS - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nothing, there's no one there. The sink isn't running. The paper towel mechanism hasn't dispensed anything.

Shelly pauses and looks around the room in confused concern.

INT. SPACESHIP KITCHEN/CHOW HALL - NIGHT

Shelly comes back in from the bathroom. Steven sits in the chow hall with Jeremy and Inez.

STEVEN

The food on this ship probably doesn't help with that.

JEREMY

A lot of brown rice, but -

INEZ

You don't like brown rice?

JEREMY

It's fine.

STEVEN

Absolutely not.

INEZ

I kinda like it, feels good to eat healthy.

STEVEN

Brown rice is NOT healthy.

INEZ

I thought it was the healthier one?

JEREMY

Yeah, like the glycemic index thing?

STEVEN

Sure that part's healthier, but all brown rice comes from India and it's got fucking lead in it.

MARTIN

Really?

STEVEN

Yes. Did you par boil this, Shelly?

SHELLY
I did not.

STEVEN
Oh god.

INEZ
Par boil?

STEVEN
You boil it for like five minutes and then rinse it. All the lead is in the hull.

INEZ
The hull?

SHELLY
It's the part in rice that -

STEVEN
It's not *in* rice, it's the outer covering of the rice.

SHELLY
Right. 'Cause I'm the one who doesn't know what they're talking about.

STEVEN
I've lost sixteen pounds on this mission and the chubby fry cook is gonna give me a lesson on nutrition?

SHELLY
The fuck you just say to me?

Carla and Thomas enter abruptly.

CARLA
What are we all talking about tonight?

Everyone crouches over their food, avoiding the question.

Carla seeks out Shelly.

CARLA (cont'd)
Wow, this looks great.

SHELLY
Thank you.

CARLA
How are you feeling?

SHELLY
Fine...

CARLA
Just checking in. I'm here if you need me.

INEZ
Jeremy here was just explaining to us why they would possibly try an experiment like this before hammering out hyper sleep first. Weren't you Jeremy?

JEREMY
(cagey, desperate)
Enemas.

CARLA
A little late, but alright.

STEVEN
Hyper sleep is supposedly a myth. However, I happen to know, that in some levels of the government, so secret that even I don't have clearance for it, they've lost hundreds of
(air quotes)
people
(end air quotes)
in the perfection of a real live working hyper sleep system.SHELLY
How do you know about it?

STEVEN
My friend has clearance.

SHELLY
Sure you do.

INEZ
It would probably sell pretty well domestically. Could you imagine how many of those real housewives of orange county types would buy one?

JEREMY

Only use it eighteen hours a day.
That way by their step son's
graduation it'll look like they've
only aged five years instead of
twenty and nobody'll bat an eye when
they totally kiss.

THOMAS

Why do you always have to take it
there?

JEREMY

What? We were all thinking it.

THOMAS

I wasn't.

SHELLY

I heard Igenbeldtch was working on a
gene therapy one. Similar to
hibernation in bears.

Steven rolls his eyes.

INEZ

Perfect! That way when you wake up
ten years in the future, instead of
just a geriatric butler and a ripe
stepson, you'll also have cancer!

JEREMY

Yay cancer!

THOMAS

You two are perverse.

STEVEN

Carla, will you talk to Shelly about
par boiling the rice?

CARLA

You're not par boiling the rice?

STEVEN

She is actively killing us.

SHELLY

Will you just shut the fuck up?

Everyone freezes.

STEVEN
What did I say?

SHELLY
You aren't interesting and no one
here thinks that you are interesting.

Everyone hides in their seat, uncomfortable.

SHELLY (cont'd)
And I'm sick and tired of watching
you listen to yourself talk, you
delusional fuck.

STEVEN
(emboldened)
I'm delusional? You don't even belong
here.

Steven looks to the other crew members as they keep their
heads down and pretend to eat.

STEVEN (cont'd)
Come on, I can't be the only one who
thinks it.

Carla, mouth pursed, her stern look insists he stop.

STEVEN (cont'd)
I mean they got it right putting one
of you in the kitchen, but.

A laugh escapes Martin and he immediately covers his mouth,
ashamed of himself.

Steven stands there with a proud grin.

Shelly flies at him, holding a paring knife to his throat.

STEVEN (cont'd)
What? It's a joke - it's a joke.

He looks to Jeremy and Inez for support, but they just keep
their eyes down and shake their heads in disappointment.

Steven gulps in shame and the knife draws a drop of blood.
He peels Shelly's arm back.

She continues, gaining little.

Carla steps forward, hand extended. Too slow, she shrinks
back, disappointed in herself.

Tammy grabs Shelly's knife hand and holds her opposite shoulder.

TAMMY

Hey, hey come on. Let's put it down.
It's not worth it.

Shelly looks Tammy in the eye, then glares through her brow at Steven, drops the blade, and turns away.

She goes back to putting things away in the kitchen.

CARLA

Alright everyone. Let's just finish
our meal, and -

Everyone gladly leaves the room as fast as they can, ignoring Carla.

CARLA (cont'd)

Go back to our rooms...

Carla looks to Shelly working by herself and lets out a pitiful sigh.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Martin leans back.

MARTIN'

Sometimes I can't breathe. I'll walk
into a restaurant and before my ass
even has a chance to hit the seat
I'll get asked for a selfie.

STEVEN'

Exactly.

MARTIN'

And I gave up on trying to please
people a long time ago. I'll be nice
and say hello and I'm glad to meet
most people, but what they don't
realize is that if I take a selfie
with them, then the other hundred
people in this restaurant are gonna
want one and I didn't really come
here to spend three hours eating a
bowl of soup.

JEREMY'

I would take that in an instant.

(MORE)

JEREMY' (cont'd)

The most I get is some kid at the grocery store glaring at me when I'm buying milk because I played the bad guy on the TV show they watched this morning. And I gotta be like "no that's not me that's a character I don't, I didn't... you know?"

STEVEN'

I hate that shit.

JEFF

What do you hate?

STEVEN'

I'm an actor. I play Brutus and I play Waylon, right now I'm playing Steven'. But there's this perception that somehow I believe the things that my character does or that I somehow am that character responsible for what they're doing and it's just like I am showing you reality. Whether you like it or not that's a person that exists, but that person is not me. And you know, following that, I should really be able to, theoretically, play any character.

JEFF

Carla', you're sort of shaking your head. Do you agree that character is sort of separate from the actor?

CARLA'

Um, let's see... I would say theoretically, sure, an actor is just a vessel of sorts, but you know it's it's dangerous. When it comes to, I mean, this stuff we do is, it can cause real harm. Especially with comedy. There's a lot of arm chair comedians out there that see something and say "that's funny because it's not okay," and they stop there and replicate instead of really diving in and seeing what's being said. And there's always got to be some, you know, coming back to using comedy as a weapon for good, there's always got to be something you're drawing attention to.

STEVEN'

Okay but you take that the other
direction and -

Steven' grin falls as he looks to his fellow cast

Inez' and Jeremy' keep their eyes down, Martin' checks his
left and right.

Shelly' in her FULL BLACK JUMPSUIT holds her palms up,
amused, mouthing "what?" to Carla'. Carla' mouths "yikes"
and looks away.

Clearly outnumbered, Steven' backtracks.

STEVEN' (cont'd)

You know it's funny, I remember when
I first got on the set of Paradise
Crossing and I look right into the
eyes of Mel, intimidating as hell by
the way,

SUBTITLE: Paradise Crossing was released in 2002 written and
directed by Mel Gibson Starring Steven' and Joel Shipman.

STEVEN' (cont'd)

And he tells me that he only wants to
do the scene once because he hated
the character so much. And that was
just like mind blowing to me that a
character could affect someone that
much.

JEFF

Let's maybe change topics here.

INSERT - PRE TRIP PHOTO

Wearing matching jumpsuits, the crew looks so happy. Steven
was a lot heavier back then. Carla and Shelly have their
arms over each others shoulders, laughing hysterically.

INT. COPERNICUS - STEVEN'S ROOM

It's revealed that Carla is holding/enjoying the photo.

CARLA

What happened?

STEVEN

How should I know? I can't even keep
my stupid fucking mouth shut.

Carla addresses Steven's back as he fiddles at his desk.

CARLA
It's not that big a deal.

STEVEN
Not that big a deal? You saw my slip
up out there. I finally get an
audience and that's what I have to
say?

He starts smacking himself in the head.

STEVEN (cont'd)
Stupid! Stupid!

Carla takes a step forward to intervene, losing courage in
time for him to stop hitting himself.

CARLA
You just gotta move on.

STEVEN
Now everyone is really gonna avoid
me.

CARLA
That's not true.

STEVEN
Yes it is!

CARLA
The fact is that they *have* to work
with you. Whether they like you or
not is by no means life or death.

STEVEN
Why don't you try telling that to
Shelly?

CARLA
Why don't you try staying in your own
lane?

Steven mutters something under his breath. He's shaking.

Tears roll slowly down his puffy face as he clenches his jaw
tight. His hands shake as they otherwise work expertly to
chalk up two lines of yellow crystalline powder.

He rails the first line and is instantly relaxed, smile
forming, leaning back in his chair revealing -

Carla watching him, jaw ajar.

CARLA (cont'd)
What is that?

He wipes his tears on his sleeve.

STEVEN
Huh? Oh, 'Crystallized some of the
benzo drip.

He offers her the rolled up Ulysses S.

STEVEN (cont'd)
You want some?

She reaches for it, but ultimately retracts.

CARLA
No thanks, I wouldn't know how.

STEVEN
(excited)
It's really simple, you just inhale
or ingest.

CARLA
No... I'm good.

Steven pops up and immediately steps to his bookshelf.

STEVEN
Do you want to learn how to make it?
Super easy, grade school chemistry
stuff.

CARLA
Is it safe?

Steven throws the chemistry book on his desk and rolls
through the pages.

STEVEN
So long as you don't do too much at
once.

He takes a seat, leafs through a few more pages before
abandoning the task to close his eyes, touch his forehead to
the book, and support himself on his forearms.

CARLA
No, I mean, don't we need that for
the, uh?

Carla rolls her hand at her hip.

STEVEN

What? Oh, yeah, There's enough of
this stuff on board for three
missions. Don't worry.

Steven falls away from the desk and slides down in his chair
to a much more melted posture.

STEVEN (cont'd)

That's why I like you, Captain,
always thinking ahead. That's why you
and I are gonna make it.

CARLA

I'd like to think we're all gonna
make it.

STEVEN

Not at this rate. No, it's time to
face facts. Speed a light may just
not be attainable. The Icarus
couldn't do it, the Alexander
couldn't do it. All one common
denominator, human error.

CARLA

Well, I think we have the right crew
to try.

Steven gets up, eyes sealed, and heads toward his bed.

STEVEN

Aye, Captain. Try we shall.

He labors into his top bunk.

Carla hits the light switch for Steven and exits.

INT. COPERNICUS - SHELLY'S ROOM

Much smaller room. Shelly is clearly the only occupant.

CARLA

I was talking with Steven and he's
really sorry.

SHELLY

What a desperate fuck. I get it, he
doesn't have any friends, But he
needs to stop trying to make that my
problem.

CARLA

Everybody needs a friend sometimes...

Shelly looks up to see -

Hands at her side, almost looking up, Carla's earnest and
toothless smile begs Shelly to engage.

Shelly cringes at the sight and doesn't lift her head again,
almost crouching against the wall away from Carla.

SHELLY

Please stop.

CARLA

Just tell me what I did.

Shelly just shakes her head and lets out a sigh.

CARLA (cont'd)

If I did something to make you upset
or if I crossed some line...

Carla begins crying.

CARLA (cont'd)

Please just let me know so that I can
fix it. I can't stand everyone here
thinking that you hate me.

This almost pricks Shelly's head up in rage, but instead she
clenches her jaw and just shakes her head no.

Carla cries even harder.

CARLA (cont'd)

Please tell me, Shelly, please.

Shelly raises slightly to get a peripheral look at Carla.

Carla begs with her puppy dog eyes.

Shelly stands up straight, breathing hope into Carla's
expression.

INT. COPERNICUS - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Shelly shuts the door in Carla's face. Straightening up and forcing a smile, Carla power walks away.

Tammy has been watching from behind her door. She releases the door frame, turning back into her room.

INT. COPERNICUS - TAMMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

In her room Inez, Jeremy, and a non-speaking role (NSR) are just sitting around, chilling. Beloved radio DJ Gene Camadore chimes in through the FM radio. Jeremy turns it up.

GENE

Alright, folks. Next up we've got one
from the album that Jimmy Hendrix
famously said he hated more than
going to the dentist. Here's -

Jeremy tries to tune out of the static, but it's no use.

Tammy steps over to accept the rolled Ulysses S. and then rails her line of benzo from the coffee table. Then Inez goes and so on...

INT. STEVEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Steven snores in his top bunk.

INT. SHELLY'S ROOM

Shelly pulls out a small baggy of powdered benzodiazapine from her carved out copy of "Critique of Pure Reason."

INT. COPERNICUS - CARLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carla makes the difficult decision to fit in and rails a line alone in her room.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Jeff turns to Shelly'.

JEFF

Shelly'.

SHELLY'

Huh? Yeah, what, what's up?

JEFF

The character you play is largely by herself, on her own - a real loner. Was that a relatively easy role for you to slip into or did you find it difficult.

SHELLY'

I have friends, Jeff.

Everyone chuckles.

Jeff doesn't budge.

SHELLY' (cont'd)

I may have prioritized my career over the years, but I don't have trouble meeting people and having fun.

JEFF

Any long-lasting friendships?

SHELLY'

Long lasting? Well...

Shelly looks around the ceiling trying to think.

Jeff continues staring her down.

With a cheap grin, Shelly' brings her eye line back to the table. The grin fades into near frown as she sees the "joke" didn't land with any of her cast mates. Then she see Jeff.

SHELLY' (cont'd)

I...

CARLA'

Shelly' and I have been working together since, what '93?

SHELLY

That's right! Carla' and I have known each other forever. Sure, I've done more experimental pieces where she's gone more Hollywood, but we've still kept in touch.

JEFF

So you're friends?

Shelly' immediately nods her head "yes" but ceases as soon as she looks to Carla's half grimace.

CARLA'

Eh...

INT. COPERNICUS - OUTSIDE CARLA'S ROOM

Steven and Shelly meet in front of Carla's door.

STEVEN

Why are you walking like that?

SHELLY

Belt broke, don't worry about it.
What's going on?

She has clearly lost some weight.

STEVEN

Carla hasn't come out of her room yet.

SHELLY

Have you tried knocking?

STEVEN

No.

SHELLY

Go ahead and knock.

Steven gingerly taps the door before immediately reaching for the handle.

SHELLY (cont'd)

Fucking pussy.

Shelly stops him and knocks for real.

INT. COPERNICUS - CARLA'S ROOM

Shelly's knocking punches Carla awake. The room is littered with the familiar paraphernalia of crystallized benzo and Nancy Drew mystery novels.

INT. COPERNICUS - OUTSIDE CARLA'S ROOM

The rest of the crew has congregated around Carla's door.

MARTIN

What do you think she's doing in there?

SHELLY

No idea.

TAMMY

Maybe she's -

Carla springs out.

CARLA

Alright. Let's get to our positions everybody.

TAMMY

Are you alright to do this?

CARLA

Huh? Yeah no, I'm great. Steady as a rock.

Carla holds up her shaking hand as an example.

Terrified disapproval covers Tammy's face.

Carla hides her hand. Does a dismissive sniff.

CARLA (cont'd)

Let's do this.

Carla peps her way out as the crew stagnates.

Tammy looks to Thomas for some form of reassurance, he shrugs and follows after Carla.

The remaining members of the crew trickle out.

INT. COPERNICUS EAST

Thomas fiddles with dials and switches.

CARLA (O.C.)

How we looking over there Copernicus East?

THOMAS

All systems are looking normal. Shutting down artificial gravity in three... two... one.

INT. COPERNICUS WEST

Carla, Tammy, and Steven all float and tumble, enjoying the zero gravity.

CARLA
Alright Copernicus East, we're gonna buckle up and then we should be able to get this show on the road.

INTERCUT BETWEEN COPERNICUS EAST AND WEST

Shelly looks at her already buckled self and then at the also-already buckled Martin, Inez, Thomas, and non-speaking roles 1-8; NSRs 1-8 obviously seated down the hall.

Carla buckles in and gazes out at the surrounding stars.

CARLA (cont'd)
See you in another life.

CARLA (V.O.)
Closing shade.

Shelly looks at the already closed shade on their side.

Carla flips several switches.

CARLA
Beginning synchronization in three... two... one.

Shelly sees the "sync" square light up blue.

CARLA (cont'd)
Here it is guys, no turning back now.

CARLA (V.O.)
Accelerating in three... two... one.

The crew members of Copernicus East rock back and forth in cadence as the spinning ship speeds to fluidity.

For a moment the ride is smooth, but as it reaches higher velocity, the surrounding objects shake and vibrate.

Shelly notices the phenomenon.

At its zenith the tremor appears completely still, and all the objects surrounding her seem to simultaneously expand and contract; breathe.

Shelly starts to sweat.

After a few "breaths", the objects lose their borders and become one smeared image.

These smearing colors reflect in Shelly's face shield. She frowns in concern.

The colors burst into flame, striking fear.

Reflecting in Shelly's eyes, the flame and magma rage. Then, suddenly, pure darkness.

She floats across the dark void.

SHELLY

Hello?

A more hardened Shelly crawls naked through some giant intestinal tunnel.

Back in her suit, floating around, Shelly seems to have been watching the hardened Shelly along with us.

SHELLY (cont'd)

Guys?

She alternates between being Shelly floating across an empty space and a fluorescent dot floating across an empty screen.

The dot resembles a heart beat. The heart beat dot fills the sky above. The feral Shelly, nose deep in an ocean of blood, watches the fire on the shore, waiting.

She confusedly floats in darkness. She squints at something in the distance.

There's a spotlight on a round table out there.

She runs for it as fast as she can, before...

Agitated, she watches in her helmet's reflection as her face begins growing old.

She rips off her helmet and again starts sprinting toward the spotlit table.

Perplexed, **Shelly'** observes her surroundings, then squirms to get the helmet off as it fills with blood. She drowns, going limp, and the pressure finally pops the helmet.

Shelly surfs the blood on one of the broken shards of glass. She tries to take it with her, but it unfortunately transforms into a parachute.

Shelly' floating in darkness again.

She fights and squirms trying to get her helmet off as it fills with sand. The helmet becomes heavy, sending her headlong into free fall.

She smashes into the floor. Small crustaceans emerge from the sand. Oysters dance along in single file to the Martin Caan theme song coming from the king crab's shiny flute.

Bloody feet, going the opposite direction, pass quickly.

Shelly scavenges a shard of broken helmet glass and scurries away.

Pale-black and thick as horse skin, Shelly shaves the queen spider's thigh to give it its shots.

A snare drum comes in and the flute tune mutates into a much darker, faster sound; probably fucking synth.

Shelly uses the shard of broken glass as an ice ax to crawl through snake intestine. The incline is too much. She starts carving a large gash into the intestinal wall.

The flute slows to melancholy as she seals herself in the absolutely dark tunnel membrane flap.

Floating in darkness again, **Shelly's** suit starts dissolving off. Revealing her FULL BLACK JUMPSUIT.

She struggles to salvage the oxygen supply as the rest of her suit turns to dust. The oxygen is the last to go, but she doesn't seem to need it.

Completely alone, **she** cowers as the light dims and the flute fades until we reach apparent nadir.

Fully illuminated, the can of chewing tobacco floats by, a few yards from **Shelly'**.

She finally figures out to use a sort of swimming motion.

It bounces off of **her** finger tips a few times before she finally snatches the can and holds it tightly against her chest, closing her eyes and re-entering the fetal position.

The interior of the green room fades in around **her**.

TAMMY (O.C.)

At least we got to hear Gene's voice again.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Shelly' raises her pale and sweaty head out from between **her** knees and wonders at her surroundings.

Thomas supports Tammy, who is wearing a homemade tourniquet just above her knee, with her lower leg missing entirely.

CARLA

That was nice. Just focus on putting pressure on that leg for me, okay Champ?

By herself on the other side of the room, **Shelly'** in her BLACK JUMPSUIT feels around, assuring the tangibility of all the objects. Finally, touching Carla's back shoulder.

CARLA (cont'd)

Shelly? How the hell did you get back here?

SHELLY'

What?

CARLA

We thought it fucking had you.

INEZ

Too bad it didn't.

Shelly' looks to Carla for support, but she has a lack of it to offer.

SHELLY'

What the hell did I do?

STEVEN

Are you serious?

SHELLY'

What?

Shelly' searches from face to face.

CARLA

You killed two people Shelly, and now Tammy's lost a leg -

SHELLY'

Which one plays Tammy again?

INEZ

Fucking bitch!

TAMMY

Ow, god!

Seeing everyone shaking their heads and actively hiding from eye contact, **Shelly'** leans forward to plead her case.

SHELLY'

**I've done things, horrible things.
Unbelievable, unforgiveable things,
but not this. Like it was me, but it
also wasn't me. If that? I don't...**

They all look to Tammy for an answer.

TAMMY

That was a character I was playing on a TV show. I'm not actually a psycho analyst. You all know that.

Steven steps in.

STEVEN

And I'm not suicidal. Just pointing that out too.

Nobody touches that one.

SHELLY'

**I know that I, did them, and I'm
remorseful, that's not what I'm
trying to say. It's just that, well
maybe... maybe some things only exist
as memories, like scars, or even less
than that. Like the memory of a scar.
Adults tell you about it. Your
brother acts it out. You can't
remember it, yet somehow you can.**

NSR 1 speaks directly into camera 2, testimonial style.

NSR 1

I think someone is really starting to lose it.

SHELLY'

**And when those memories are so
horrible that all you are left with
is their essence, you realize what
you really are capable of. Not just
for survival, but with greed and
malice, desire - real evil.**

(MORE)

SHELLY' (cont'd)

And you don't know why you have that affirmation that you are bad or that you contain bad, but it's there and it's always been there.

STEVEN

So that's it? Were just gonna let her off the hook?

Inez shushes Steven. She and Jeremy sit holding their knees to their chests, fully entertained.

STEVEN (cont'd)

So when she talks you guys listen?

Carla shushes him.

STEVEN (cont'd)

She killed two people!

They all give him the death stare.

SHELLY'

**And that confusion of, "how could I possibly have done something like that?" The lie you tell in the mirror every morning,
(melancholy)
and then the realization that you are nothing more than that image.**

Shelly' gets a look at the door.

SHELLY' (cont'd)

(depressed)

Maybe we better just give up, absolve ourselves.

Carla peers around as she seems to be the only one hearing the whispers and unsettled chairs.

SHELLY' (cont'd)

It's not as though we aren't already *fucking objects* anyway.

We hear the phantom agonizing screams of the studio audience in Carla's head.

SHELLY' (cont'd)

Maybe it's willing to make a deal.

INT. STUDIO AUDIENCE SEATING - NIGHT

Brief flash back of the NSRs, they look around, very confused as to how they got transported here. A scream off camera. Then, recognizing, they run for their lives.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

The NSRs are missing.

SHELLY'
How painful can it really be?

INT. STUDIO AUDIENCE SEATING - NIGHT

Full on flash back shows the pandemonium of the NSRs running for their lives from an invisible force.

NSR 2 passes/watches NSR 3's bones crunching and his blood popping as he is compressed into nothingness.

The remaining NSRs all run and scream, but still meet the same brutal fate as NSR 3.

SHELLY'
Maybe we deserve it.

NSR 1 continues his breaking-the-fourth-wall interview, he's still here in the greenroom.

NSR 1
Coo koo. Coo koo.

Shelly's soliloquy fades as Carla peers at the murmuring coming from the other side of the room. She goes to it.

Coming upon NSR 1 rocking back and forth whispering screamo.

INEZ
Ooh, opposites!

Carla drops down to console NSR 1, but it's no use.

INEZ (O.C.)
Beethoven!

A giant ST. BERNARD comes running in and cheers NSR 1 up.

CARLA
That can't be good.

Carla looks at the wide open hallway door. Then over to **Shelly'**, whose heavy eyes beg for relief.

The green phone rings.

Everyone's attention jerks to it.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Jeremy is in the middle of something.

JEREMY'

- Or laughing before the punch line.

INEZ'

The worst is when they think that they're giving you a compliment.

Rest of the cast agrees.

JEFF

How do you mean?

INEZ'

Well because you know that they're being honest, or at least trying to be nice. It's not like when someone you know in the industry gives you a compliment or compares you to someone notorious, you know? Because there's a chance that they're doing it just to be mean, but when my grandma from Nova freaking Scotia tells me that she really liked my movie because it reminded her of... Well I better not say here, but of a movie that has not received, um, just a bad movie, but popular, it's just sorta, she's trying to be nice and it just -

JEFF

How does it make you feel?

INEZ'

It cuts deep. It really does.

JEREMY'

I describe it as debasing.

SHELLY

(too excited)

Crazy...

Shelly is clearly dirty and bruised, but her face and forearms up to her sleeve look sink-cleaned.

INT. STUDIO FLOOR - NIGHT

Carla and Beethoven go first, passing by as the rest of the crew work to get Tammy through the doorway. **Shelly**' limps in last.

Carla and Beethoven are stopped short of the stage in awe of what they see. Catching up, the rest of the crew stops short of the stage as well.

The newest set is just a cheaply costumed version of the green room that they just came from.

CARLA
That can't be good.

Beethoven lets out a bark.

INT. LOOK FOR **REDACTED** IN YOUR LOCAL GROCERY STORE
COMMERCIAL

Mother sits at the foot of her child's bed to administer translucent cough medicine.

COMMERCIAL 2 (V.O.)
We were there when you were a child,
sick in bed.

Same child, now an exhausted adolescent, sits on the end of the wet bench at a high school soccer game. She sniffles and her mother gives her a few invisible pills.

COMMERCIAL 2 (V.O.) (cont'd)
When you didn't want to miss out on a
single minute.

Same child, now an adult, stressing over all the paperwork on her desk, drops some invisible tablets in her water.

COMMERCIAL 2 (V.O.) (cont'd)
And we were there when the Johnson
account just would not quit.

Now the child sits at the end of her elderly mother's bed to administer the same medicine she was given as a child.

COMMERCIAL 2 (V.O.) (cont'd)
We've always been there when you
needed us, and we always will be.
Look for **REDACTED** in liquid, tab, and
gel form in you local grocery store
today.

INT. GREEN ROOM SHOW - NIGHT

Steven, in a Carla costume, ties together bed sheets,
forming a rope. Inez, costumed as Martin, tries to talk some
sense into him.

INEZ
There isn't a window Carla.

STEVEN
That doesn't mean I can't try! I'm
gonna get us out of here. No matter
what, something good always comes out
of trying.

INEZ
That's just not gonna happen and you
know it.

Steven storms off to the bathroom.

Carla, wearing a Shelly costume, turns away, having been
stung by watching her own actions played out in theater.
Inez resets for the next scene in the background.

Thomas and Jeremy tend to the still-wounded Tammy.

INEZ (cont'd)
Why does he keep doing that?

CARLA
What?

INEZ
The whole going-to-the-bathroom
thing? You haven't had to go to the
bathroom since we -

Everyone breaks character to look up at the ceiling as it
sounds like someone is vacuuming on the floor above.

INEZ (cont'd)
You haven't had to go since we got
here have you?

CARLA

Nope.

INEZ

Or eat, or drink, or anything?

CARLA

(apathetic)

Probably part of her brilliant plan to get us all out of here.

INEZ

It seems pretty obvious where here is and you tend to assume people don't get out of it.

JEREMY

He probably thinks she's doing it for our benefit. It's a necessary part of the human psyche to -

TAMMY

You know I could have been a model.

Nobody touches that one. Inez and Thomas share skeptical glances. Thomas is wearing an Inez wig as well as her clothes.

TAMMY (cont'd)

What? It's true. I was miss teen Iowa for two years. Then, when I was seventeen, a man approached me in the mall asking if I wanted to do some catalog work.

CARLA

That's great, Tammy, but we need to / stay on track here.

Carla gestures to the "**ON AIR**" light.

TAMMY

I would've done it too, but mom said it was too dangerous and that I needed to finish high school. So maybe don't be so quick to assume that you're not all just figments of *my* imagination. I could be a main character.

CARLA

Nobody meant it that way, Tammy. We don't know if anyone is a figment of anyone's imagination, okay? It's just a game we were playing.

Everyone settles.

JEREMY

Who do you think will be next?

Thomas glances down, as though it's obvious, at Tammy.

INEZ

Hopefully no one will be next. All we need to do is work together and / find a way out of here.

Shelly' steps forward, sweating through her oversize VICUNA suit, and wipes her cheek with the back of her hand.

SHELLY'

(frenetic)

Alright, I've had just about enough of this.

Hand won't stop shaking at her side.

CARLA

Oh boy, here we go.

Carla looks up from cleaning her fingernails with a switchblade and outright guffaws at the words coming out of her own mouth.

SHELLY

I don't know who you think you are.

Shelly' wipes sweat on her sleeve, jerky and desperate.

Carla looks at the "ON AIR" light before making the difficult decision to continue.

CARLA

That, coming from you?

SHELLY'

Me?

Shelly''s tremor ceases. She picks up her head, finally seeing Carla.

Carla's eyes beg **Shelly'** to stop.

The poor, damp girl is only able to frown and continue.

SHELLY' (cont'd)
**But I'm not just gonna sit here and
 wait while you all try to make me
 look like some idiot.**

Tears begin to well in **Shelly''s** eyes.

SHELLY' (cont'd)
**I'm important damn it. I dine with
 foreign dignitaries and wear 100
 percent real vicuna suits.**

Carla chokes her lines out.

CARLA
 Tell us more about your character,
 we're loving it.

SHELLY'
**I jump and they say how high, not the
 other way around. And if you think
 you're stopping me from going out
 there.**

CARLA
 By all means.

Shelly' stands in the doorway to the hall. She and Carla share their final moment. CREAK. Sadness dropping from her face, **Shelly'** focuses on -

The opening bathroom door behind Carla.

Shelly' looks back and forth between Carla and the bathroom door with politeness and grim determination.

Illusion broken, Carla turns to sneer at the opening bathroom door and then back at **Shelly'**.

Shelly' is focused on the bathroom door, offering only a quick glance at Carla.

The bathroom door actually begins to open.

CARLA (cont'd)
 Don't go.

Carla immediately covers her mouth.

Shelly' shares a final look of goodbye with Carla, whose tears run down the hand covering her own mouth.

Shelly' nods and mouths "it's gonna be ok."

Carla shakes her head "no."

Shelly' exits.

Carla reaches for the handle, but is thrown back as the sixty-cycle hum slams the door shut.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Steven' responds.

STEVEN'

It seems different for everyone. For some people it's just irony, or referential stuff, or doing something to make others uncomfortable, or some combination of the three. I think on some primal level that laughter is no more than just human being's reaction to feeling uncomfortable or not knowing what to do in a situation. Like a placeholder.

SHELLY'

I feel like my best jokes weren't even things that I said, but things that people misheard me say.

The cast just look at her with blank faces.

JEFF

Go on.

SHELLY

Oh that's all I uh, that's all I really had.

Jeff desires more.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Well, like, uh, well we take trauma right and it's... Well it's not all great.

Cast nod and lean forward.

SHELLY

Let's not forget all the negative and lifelong effects of things like childhood trauma.

JEFF

Do you harbor any of these effects?

SHELLY

(too casual)

Oh yeah...

JEFF

Really?

SHELLY

What are we all if not just the
constant dodging of our predilections
for evil...

(nervous laugh)

right guys?

She looks for a big laugh from the others, but none comes,
leaving her looking from face to face.

JEREMY'

I always thought my predilections for
mouth breathing and staring directly
into bright lights would keep me from
ever working on a movie set, yet here
I am.

Laughter all around, happy group.

Shelly crosses her arms and pouts.

A click beckons Shelly to look to her right.

The laughter fades for Shelly as she watches the knob-less
black door open to her, into absolute darkness.

She uncrosses her arms and sits up. The laughter grows
around her and melds with the -

Sixty cycle hum emanating from the door.

The laughter grows.

INT. COMEDY DUNGEON - NIGHT

Laughter dies down. The audience is masked by darkness as
the spotlight shines on Carla and her lone microphone.

CARLA

(depressed)

My second grade girlfriend told me
that I eat too much salt.

Laughter.

CARLA (cont'd)
So I looked her right in her eyes and
said...

Carla crouches to look her imaginary second grader
girlfriend in the eyes.

CARLA (cont'd)
you know you're not allowed to tell
anyone about me, right?

Laughter.

INT. GREEN ROOM SHOW - NIGHT

Everyone stands around, leaning on things, exhausted.

Carla crawls over to tighten Tammy's tourniquet. Then slumps
down next to her. Steven missing, **Shelly** missing.

TAMMY
It's my birthday today.

Everyone's attention goes to her.

TAMMY (cont'd)
The big 2-5. Sure didn't think I was
gonna be spending it in a place like
this.

INEZ
You're 25?

TAMMY
Yes, why?

INEZ
What?

TAMMY
Yes, I'm 25, why?

INEZ
No reason.

TAMMY
I don't look 25?

INEZ

No, I mean, yeah you look about 25,
sure.

Tammy releases her side eye on Inez to begin soliloquizing.

TAMMY

Prime of my life, and I'm stuck with
this sorry lot. Funny ain't it? Us
moving down this river.

Carla seems to be the only one who notices that their stage
has morphed into a World War Two era boat.

TAMMY (cont'd)

Don't feel like we're moving a'tall,
but like the river is moving around
us, but we are, we are. Is there a
word for that? The rock that splits
the river in twain? There ought to
be.

INEZ

There's a lot of layers to this, like
a croquet.

Carla looks to the "**ON AIR**" light, it remains on.

She reads Beethoven's collar, "U-B..." it's too faded.

TAMMY

Should be splitting pints with my
friends. My best friends...

THOMAS

*Come with me and you'll be
in a world of pure imagination.*

Thomas continues singing in the background.

JEREMY

I wouldn't be surprised if the next
one is a cooking show.

INEZ

Oh, that'd be fun!

Tammy pops open a bottle of the good stuff.

TAMMY

I suppose you'll have to do.

INEZ

I suppose if it really is last-man-standing style, a cooking show would make sense.

CARLA

Last-man-standing?

JEREMY

Hi, I'm Jimbo, a nudist from Saratoga, and I'm here to show that this country boy has got what it takes.

CARLA

Where is this last-man-standing thing coming from?

INEZ

Hi, my name is Albert, I'm a recovering alcoholic from Buffalo, and I'm here to prove to my wife and kid that there is a life after involuntary manslaughter.

TAMMY

(drunker)

With friends like these.

CARLA

Guys, what do you mean last-man-standing?

INEZ

Just something Shelly said.

CARLA

Did she say anything else?

THOMAS

If you want to view paradise -

JEREMY

I'm rooting for Albert. Seems like he really needs a win.

CARLA

Did Shelly say anything else I should know about?

INEZ

You ever see Proctor and Gamble in the same place at the same time?

Tammy pours out some of the bottle.

TAMMY
A few for my falling comrades.

THOMAS
Living there, you'll be free
If you truly wish to be

CARLA
You guys, what did Shelly say?

The green phone blares, but the "**ON AIR**" light remains on.

It becomes oddly quiet. Can't even hear the waves against the boat anymore.

INEZ
What do we do?

CARLA
(afraid)
We've got to get to the stage. Our show is about to start.

TAMMY
I'm wet.

CARLA
What? Oh god.

The boat is nearly full of water.

INEZ
Abandon ship!

They heave Tammy over the side.

Inez struggles, she is not a strong swimmer.

Suddenly she's alone.

She watches the "ON AIR" light switch to "OFF AIR" as she drowns.

Her corpse just touches the bottom as the last bit of light dims out.

A beat.

Lights up, she wakes, having been transformed into a child. Expertly removing the handcuffs, she exits the tank.

INT. BASEMENT/DEN - NIGHT

Thomas pulls her out with a towel.

THOMAS
Inez the magnificent does it again!

Setting her down,

THOMAS (cont'd)
What do you think Jeremy, is your
stepsister impressive, or what?

Jeremy is also younger. Not as young as Inez, but younger.

Thomas mans the camcorder.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Okay Jeremy, now I'm gonna need you
to help dry your stepsister off.

JEFF (O.C.)
What are you doing?

Thomas turns around slowly, caught.

THOMAS
...What?

JEFF GERHARD is standing there holding some papers.

JEFF
What are you doing?

THOMAS
Who?

Jeff gestures with the transcript.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Nothing. Just some magic tricks.

JEFF
Why don't you come take a seat?

THOMAS
Why?

JEFF
Just come take a seat.

Thomas obliges.

JEFF (cont'd)
What are you doing here?

THOMAS
We were just doing some magic tricks.

JEFF
What about the camcorder there?

THOMAS
Just something to show their parents.

JEFF
Really? Not something to -
(reading from
transcript)
Make a total mint off of guys?

THOMAS
I don't / know what to say.

JEFF
How old are you?

THOMAS
34 years old, sir.

JEFF
Do you think this is appropriate
behavior for a 34 year old?

THOMAS
No, sir, I do not.

JEFF
And yet you still do it. Why?

THOMAS
I thought that I could counsel them.

JEFF
That one is in a bathing suit. Do you
think that's appropriate?

THOMAS
No, sir, I do not.

JEFF
Where is your wife?

THOMAS
She's at a friend's house, sir.

JEFF

Does she know that you're doing this?

THOMAS

No, sir, she does not.

JEFF

She doesn't?

THOMAS

No, sir.

JEFF

She's probably going to be pretty shocked when she sees this then.

THOMAS

Yes, sir.

JEFF

What did you expect was gonna happen here tonight?

THOMAS

Honestly, I don't even know, sir.

JEFF

You don't even know?

THOMAS

No.

JEFF

Well I will tell you what is going to happen. You are going to jail.

THOMAS

Yes, sir.

JEFF

And these children are coming with me.

Tears well in Thomas' eyes as he watches Jeff take the kids.

Inez looks back to see Thomas has turned away from them to lean on the mantle and cry, exposing the denim mold created by the can of CHEWING TOBACCO in his back pocket.

She runs and grabs hold of the CHEWING TOBACCO. Thomas turns to embrace her. They watch in fear as Jeff takes Jeremy.

Jeremy pulls at Jeff's hand, trying to free Jeff's grip. He punches and scratches. Jeff jerks him forward, taking Jeremy's feet out from under him. Dragging, he still fights.

Thomas and Inez hold each other tighter as they watch Jeremy drug further and further.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Inez and Jeremy face one another.

INEZ '
Knott's berry farm?

JEREMY
Yeah.

INEZ '
My whole life it's been Knottsberry farm.

JEREMY
No, it's a berry farm owned by someone named Knott's.

INEZ '
Not a farm owned by someone named Knottsberry?

JEREMY
I'm certain.

Inez turns back to Jeff.

INEZ '
It's not a great example, but you get the point. It's a rhythm that we get into. Took a lot of work.

JEREMY
Tireless hours.

INEZ '
Took a lot out of us.

JEFF
Do all of you have something you share with your character?

CARLA '
Probably.

TAMMY '

Uh huh.

Jeremy and Inez' both nod.

INEZ '

Yeah.

Jeff turns to Thomas.

Thomas slouches in his chair.

THOMAS '

No.

JEFF

You're sure about that?

He sits up.

THOMAS '

I don't know. There's some stuff in there that... I mean, I've read Stanislavsky and Meisner and I understand, or at least I think I do, the necessary kinship with a character, but not this time.

Jeff looks displeased.

MARTIN '

I can agree with Jeremy to some extent. I didn't agree with all, or really any, of my character's beliefs when I played Herman Goebbels, but sometimes you create a character just for sacrifice, or at least a form of it.

JEFF

(intrigued)

Really?

INT. DELI/DINER - DAY

Bell atop the door rings as it opens.

Tammy finishes swinging it open and hobbles in on her crudely attached and bleeding peg leg.

TAMMY
 (Michael Caine voice)
 Vice Corporal Johnson reporting for
 duty Sah!

Studio laughter chimes in.

Martin wipes the counter.

MARTIN
 Not this again.

Studio laughter again chimes in and then out. Martin perks
 his head toward the sound of Beethoven lapping something up.

Beethoven laps up the growing puddle of blood.

MARTIN (cont'd)
 What is that?

CARLA
 Daddy, I think something's wrong...

Wider shot reveals the blood is coming from Carla's stained
 jean crotch.

TAMMY
 That, Sah, is family business, Sah!

BEGIN FAMILY BUSINESS MONTAGE

INT. CARLA'S FAMILY BUSINESS BEDROOM - DAY

Carla sits on her bed picking the caked blood off the crotch
 of her jeans.

MONTAGE (V.O.)
*When you're feeling down,
 and no one's around*

INTERCUT BETWEEN CARLA'S FAMILY BUSINESS BEDROOM AND DELI
 Bell dings.

MONTAGE (V.O.)
In comes that sound

Beethoven runs over to cheer up Carla. A warm smile comes
 across her face as she looks directly into the camera.

SUBTITLE: CARLA VERMILIAN AS CARLY

MONTAGE (V.O.) (cont'd)
That's family business...

Flash frame of Beethoven being crucified.

Martin yells from behind the deli, muted by the theme music.

MONTAGE (V.O.) (cont'd)
When you hear that drone

Tammy lays unconscious in the booth seat.

MONTAGE (V.O.) (cont'd)
And nobody's home

Warm smile comes across Martin's face as he looks into the camera.

SUBTITLE: MARTIN CAAN AS MARTY

MONTAGE (V.O.) (cont'd)
That's family business...

Beethoven noses around, trying to get behind the dresser. Carla pulls it forward to help him. They both dig.

MONTAGE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Chip off the old block

Carla pulls out a petrified sock. Beethoven lets out a bark that cuts through the theme music.

MONTAGE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Don't touch that sock!

Tammy mops, stopping suddenly and leaning into the mop for support, smiling as she watches -

Carla teeters on top of the counter to change a light bulb in a fixture that is just out of reach.

MONTAGE
*There's few things as close as
 family,
 even when some apples fall far from
 the tree*

Carla falls and Martin runs over to nurse her knee.

A warm smile comes over Tammy's pale-as-a-ghost face. She looks right into the camera.

SUBTITLE: TAMMY ESPERENZA AS LIEUTENANT

MONTAGE (V.O.)
*'cause I've got you and you've got
 me.*

Martin watches as Tammy teaches Carla how to walk with her
 gag peg leg. Tammy nearly faints, but Carla catches her and
 the two chuckle.

MONTAGE (V.O.) (cont'd)
*And there's no other way I'd rather
 it be.*

Carla wakes Tammy, who has fallen unconscious on the piles
 and piles of paperwork atop the massive round table that the
 three of them do accounting work at.

Caught, Tammy looks right at the camera and shrugs "whoops."

MONTAGE (V.O.)
That's family business...

FADE TO: BLACK

INT. DINER - DAY

Martin wipes the counter.

MARTIN
 Hey, Lieutenant, how'd you like to do
 some work for a change?

Studio laughter pipes in as we see an incredibly pale Tammy
 propped up in one of the booth seats with sharpie eyes drawn
 over her closed eyelids.

MARTIN (cont'd)
 Lazy bastard.

Carla skips toward the door with her backpack on.

MARTIN (cont'd)
 And where do you think you're going,
 Little Missy?

CARLA
 Over to old man Shekel's house. He
 tutors me on Saturday's, remember
 Dad?

MARTIN

Oh yeah, old man Shekel. Hey you tell that old bastard I called him a Nigger. He'll know what it means.

Carla starts an "Oh Dad" eye roll, but then she hears what he said and leans away in disgust.

Beethoven lets out a bark and one of the studio walls comes crashing down.

The "**ON AIR**" light flips off and Carla sprints to get Tammy.

Carla struggles. Martin comes in to help.

CARLA

(flinching)

Don't fucking touch me.

MARTIN

This is gonna take two of us.

They heave, but can't move the unconscious Tammy.

MARTIN (cont'd)

Do we just leave her?

Tammy sucks in a huge breath of air as she resurrects.

TAMMY

Don't you fucking leave me.

CARLA

Okay, okay. Jesus we thought you were dead.

MARTIN

Lean up.

TAMMY

I can't you gotta lift me.

Carla gestures to the dormant "**ON AIR**" light.

CARLA

We're not working with a ton of time here Tammy...

TAMMY

Just fucking lift me!

Carla and Martin manage to get Tammy up and hobble back to the green room.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Carla, Martin, and Tammy all sit against the wall. Tammy more lays on the floor with the back of her head against the cabinet, chin to chest.

TAMMY

God you're one crazy bitch, Carla.

MARTIN

(high energy)

Yeah, you're one crazy bitch.

TAMMY

Watch your fucking mouth.

Martin gets some distance from their glares.

CARLA

I really can't believe you said it,
Martin.

TAMMY

Really not cool, man.

MARTIN

It's not like I wanted to say it.

CARLA

You still did though.

MARTIN

I didn't have a choice!

TAMMY

I really don't think I would have
said it.

MARTIN

You weren't made to!

TAMMY

I still really don't think I would
have.

Martin looks to Carla for support, but she has none to offer.

MARTIN

Okay. Okay. So I'm the monster now.
Fine. Maybe I better go out there and
live with all the other monsters
then.

TAMMY
That would probably be best.

MARTIN
(shocked)
What?

CARLA
Yeah, Marty, we would really be a lot
more comfortable if you weren't here.

Beethoven drops a duffle bag at Martin's feet. He looks up
from the bag into the eyes of his friends.

They avoid his gaze.

He drags the bag as he walks slowly enough for them to call
his bluff, looking back constantly.

MARTIN
Here I go...

He drags the door open.

MARTIN (cont'd)
I'm really doing it.

He dips his toe into the hallway.

MARTIN (cont'd)
Syonar -

Carla shuts the door in his face.

Tammy heaves her fist up.

TAMMY
Fuck yeah.

Beethoven brings Carla a PEN.

CARLA
What ya got there. Oh, thank you,
Beethoven.

TAMMY
Such a good boy.

CARLA
Are you doing alright? You've lost an
pretty significant amount of blood.

TAMMY
I think the bleeding has stopped.

CARLA
We really need to get you to a hospital.

Tammy coughs up some blood and Beethoven barks.

Carla starts inspecting all the cabinets and drawers.

CARLA (cont'd)
There's gotta be something we haven't tried. Some lever or trap door or something. Some way out of here.

Tammy watches Carla. Then looks to the exit sign atop the door to the hallway.

TAMMY
Maybe you should tap your heels together three times.

Carla stops her performative search. She plays along, tapping her heels, but it's no use. Then she takes her seat next to Tammy again.

CARLA
Beethoven, come here buddy. Come here. Good boy.
(clapping Beethoven's paws together)
There's no place like home. There's no place like home.

From Beethoven's POV, Carla claps our paws together.

CARLA (cont'd)
(muffled)
There's no place like home. There's no place like home. There's no place like home.

Still from Beethoven's POV, Carla closes her eyes and continues the chant, so our dog eyes close too.

CARLA (V.O.)
There's no place like home. There's no place like...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Waking up from his coma, Beethoven jerks his head from left to right, trying to understand his surroundings.

CARLA

Tammy, Tammy come in here! He's waking up!

Tammy limps in with her cane. They're all so clean and healthy looking.

TAMMY

It's about time. How ya feeling buddy?

CARLA

I'm sure he's very confused. There was an accident, Beethoven. You're lucky to be alive.

TAMMY

You've been in a coma for three months.

He whimpers.

CARLA

It's alright, boy. Take your time with it, we know it's hard.

Martin comes in dressed as a doctor.

MARTIN

There he is. How we feeling, buddy?

Beethoven freaks out.

CARLA

(holding him down)

We know. We know. Shh. Shh.

MARTIN

Now, Beethoven, there were some complications.

Beethoven looks to Carla.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Beethoven, with the assistance of his wheelchair, brings Carla back her tennis ball. Then jerks at the sound of a truck horn.

CARLA
Everything alright, Beethoven?

Carla takes a minute before throwing the ball again.

TAMMY
What's the matter, Carla?

CARLA
I don't know. Just seems like
Beethoven's got something heavy on
his mind.

INT. CARLA AND TAMMY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Beethoven starts inhaling his food the second it hits his bowl. His head jerks to the sound of a jar of jam breaking on the floor.

CARLA
Shit!

Beethoven barks at the pool of spilled jam.

CARLA (cont'd)
Sorry, Beethoven. I'll clean it up.

Beethoven whimpers and lays down to watch Carla clean the spilled jam. He shuts his eyes for just a moment.

INT. DELI - DAY

Beethoven's eyes open to the sight of Carla skipping over the dried pool of blood toward the door.

MARTIN
... he'll know what it means.

Carla rolls her eyes and skips out the front door.

Beethoven whimpers and lays down, giving up.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Carla, eyes closed, claps Beethoven's hands together.

CARLA
There's no place like home. There's
no place like home. There's no place
like...

She grins at Beethoven not letting her clap his paws in. She opens her eyes to the sound of Martin shrieking from the hallway. Tammy screams and screams and Carla turns back to -

Beethoven has been fully crucified with her hands still holding his paws.

Tammy continues screaming, crawling over to the bloody mess.

TAMMY
NO! NO! NOT BEETHOVEN! GOD NO! WHY?
WHY HIM? NOT HIM.

Tammy drags herself, screaming at the ceiling.

TAMMY (cont'd)
HE DIDN'T HURT ANYBODY! YOU SON'S OF
BITCHES. YOU MOTHER FUCKING SON'S OF
BITCHES!

She leaves a trail of blood in her wake, only able to make it a few feet in her weakened state.

INT. COMEDY DUNGEON - NIGHT

Carla does stand up on the stage by herself.

CARLA
(Depressed)
Gave my cat the dose of Olanzapine
this time and *it* stopped talking to
me.

Crowd laughs. Hysterically, but deep and dark.

CARLA (cont'd)
The corpse was a little inconvenient
to get rid of, but it's nice to
finally have some peace and quiet.

Tears well in Carla's eyes as the crowd laughs.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Carla takes up Beethoven's fallen collar and consoles Tammy.

TAMMY
I wish I was dead.

CARLA
Don't talk like that. We need to keep
our spirits up.

TAMMY
Come to me with a real plan or leave
me alone. I can't keep doing this.

Tammy turns away from Carla to lay on her side.

Carla sulks for a while, playing with the Beethoven's PEN.
She takes out a napkin and begins writing. Then pauses.

CARLA
It's a TV show, we know that.

TAMMY
Yep.

CARLA
Okay, so what kinda TV show can exist
with only two cast members?

TAMMY
A talk show.

CARLA
Okay, what else?

TAMMY
I don't know.

CARLA
Think, damn it!

Come on! Come on! Think! Think!

TAMMY
I can't! Okay? I'm not creative like
that. Sure, if someone has an idea, I
can play it out or maybe add to it,
but... Just...

CARLA
Never mind, that's not important. How
do you kill a TV show?

TAMMY
You eliminate all its characters...

CARLA
Not an option.

TAMMY
No idea then.

CARLA
Okay, let's try, what happens when a
tv show dies?

TAMMY
They get really into character
development. Everything becomes self-
referential. There's usually a clip
show.

CARLA
A clip show?

Carla jots down a few lines. Then hands the napkin to Tammy.

TAMMY
(reading)
Say, you remember that one time
Beethoven came in second place in the
pie eating contest? Exterior State
fair - day.

EXT. STATE FAIR - DAY

Carla pins a blue first place ribbon on Beethoven's cherry
covered shoulder.

CARLA
And the winner is, Beethoven!

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Tammy perks up.

TAMMY
That was pretty good.

CARLA
(reading)
Or that one time Gene was a mailman?

INT. FLASHBACK - DAY

The sound of a sixty cycle hum blares over the white screen.

A closer view reveals the mold of a small vibrating, ring in the white.

We see men within the white liquid surface. Paste-like men fighting over each other, reaching. Each drowned by their successor. Their gaping mouths produce our sixty cycle hum.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Tammy is sitting up, fully engaged.

TAMMY

Oh yeah, that was a good one.

(action star voice)

"Never meet your heroes, kid"

They chuckle.

TAMMY (cont'd)

Or that one time Shelly beat cancer.

INT. DINER - DAY

Shelly, very gaunt and pale, sits opposite the happily betrothed Inez and Thomas.

SHELLY

Wow, so you stayed with him through all of that?

INEZ

Sure did.

SHELLY

Through all those trials and tribulations? Thick and thin?

INEZ

Yep.

SHELLY

The good, bad, and the ugly?

INEZ

Uh huh.

SHELLY
That's one strong relationship.

THOMAS
That's right, cancer can't keep us
down!

SHELLY
No, sir, it cannot.

INEZ
We really didn't think he was gonna
make it, but here we are, three
months into remission.

SHELLY
So you beat this thing?

THOMAS
Not exactly.

SHELLY
How's that?

THOMAS
You never really beat cancer.

SHELLY
Ah, yes, remission.

THOMAS
I'm in remission. Relapse could
always be right around the corner.

SHELLY
I see.

Shelly starts playing footsie with Inez under the table.

SHELLY (cont'd)
And you're straight?

INEZ
Yes, I'm straight.

THOMAS
Have you all tried the cherry pie
here? It's amazing.

SHELLY
No, I haven't. Why don't you go grab
us a slice.

Shelly and Inez don't break eye contact as Thomas leaves them alone at the table. Shelly slides on the leather booth seat to get shoulder-to-shoulder with Inez. They giggle.

INT. SHELLY'S PAD - DAY

Inez curls up to Shelly, postcoitous.

INT. CHEAP APARTMENT - DAY

Binocular set up watches Shelly's pad. We pull back to reveal Thomas has hanged himself.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Tammy smiles while shaking her head.

CARLA
(epihany)
Shelly's alive?

TAMMY
That rascal.

CARLA
Hang on a second... When was the last time we were all together, all of us?

TAMMY
Don't do it.

CARLA
Say, Tammy, do you remember that time you lost your leg?

INT. COPERNICUS - CHOW HALL - DAY

Inez walks by.

INEZ
(greeting)
Captain.

Astonished, Carla looks to Tammy.

CARLA
We did it.

Repairing the automatic door, Tammy takes her hand away from the ground wire to make a shushing motion at her lips, but the door immediately slams shut on her leg.

CARLA (cont'd)
Oh my god. HELP! HELP!

INT. INFIRMARY HALLWAY - DAY

Small cart wheels move quickly on the hospital floor.

Inez and Carla rush Tammy, on gurney, to the infirmary.

CARLA
Everything is gonna be alright,
Tammy. Just hold on.

TAMMY
(Michael Caine Voice)
You always were a lousy liar, Cap.

Tammy passes out.

CARLA
Tammy? Stay with me!

INT. HEARING AID COMMERCIAL - OPERATING ROOM

The small dental drill macerates cartilage as it makes room for the grafting on of the inner ear implant.

Grandpa's eyes click wide open during his procedure.

GRANDPA
With just one simple in office visit.

The several doctors performing the in-office procedure back up to create a path. Grandpa is given the affirmative and walks out of the operating room and into his kitchen.

GRANDPA (cont'd)
You'll be walking home the very same
day!

MOTHER
Morning, Dad.

GRANDPA
Morning, Sweetheart.

Grandpa finishes fixing his coffee, raises it to his lips, but stops short in order to address the camera.

GRANDPA (cont'd)
So what are you waiting for? Ask your doctor about / **redacted** today!

MOTHER (V.O.)
Oh great, coffee. I'm sure that's not gonna upset your stomach at all.

Things darken, doom settles.

GRANDPA
What?

MOTHER
I didn't say anything.

Daughter walks in, avoids Grandpa, and goes straight to her coloring book on the table.

DAUGHTER (V.O.)
Please don't touch me. Please don't touch me. Please don't touch me.

Mother rips at the cord, trying to free it from the vacuum.

DAUGHTER (V.O.) (cont'd)
What is that smell?

Ashamed, Grandpa avoids her side eye.

MOTHER (V.O.)
When are you gonna hurry up and die already?

DAUGHTER (V.O.)
Gwen doesn't have a Grandpa.

GRANDPA
What's going on here?

MOTHER
(pleasant)
You okay in there, Dad?

GRANDPA
I'm...

Grandpa takes a second to straighten up to the suddenly serene setting.

Daughter enjoys her coloring book on the kitchen table.

GRANDPA (cont'd)
Everything's / fine...

He turns to Mother in the living room.

She rips savagely at the cord, like a demon.

Mouth agape, his wide eyes suck him back against the wall.

DAUGHTER (V.O.)
I hope not.

MOTHER (V.O.)
No, I don't want to go to the god
damn casino.

Daughter draws a picture of the family: Mother, Daughter,
and Grandpa.

MOTHER (V.O.) (cont'd)
Why couldn't Mom have been the one to
live?

DAUGHTER (V.O.)
Gwen's lucky.

MOTHER (V.O.)
Those fucking implants.

The sound of the cord being ripped increases dramatically in
tempo. Sweat forms on Grandpa's brow.

DAUGHTER (V.O.)
Grandpas smell so bad.

Grandpa smells it now, adding gagging to his panic.

DAUGHTER (V.O.) (cont'd)
Stop looking at me, you fucking
pervert.

Grandpa doesn't know where to look.

MOTHER (V.O.)
I'm gonna be in so much fucking debt.

Daughter mockingly gags in her voice over.

MOTHER (V.O.) (cont'd)
Piece of shit mother fucking -

Their thoughts begin yelling now that the vacuum is on.

MOTHER (V.O.) (cont'd)
- worthless piece of -

DAUGHTER (V.O.)
Die! Die! Die! Die! -

Daughter stabs the picture of Grandpa with her crayon.

MOTHER (V.O.)
cock-sucking garbage!

DAUGHTER (V.O.)
Die! Die! Die! Die! -

MOTHER (V.O.)
Get out of my house! Get out of my
house! Get out of my -

DAUGHTER (V.O.)
Die! Die! Die! Die!

Sweat pours down Grandpa's face. He tries to escape to
assumed refuge in the bathroom.

DAUGHTER
Why does he keep doing that?

MOTHER
What?

DAUGHTER
Going to the bathroom?

INT. BATHROOM

Grandpa looks himself in the mirror. He pats at the sweat.
Horror fills his eyes when he notices his kerchief has taken
off a substantial amount of skin.

INEZ (V.O.)
What do you think he's doing in
there?

Grandpa struggles to scoop and stilt his melting face.

CARLA (V.O.)
What do you mean?

He secures it in place with both hands. He searches the
bathroom for something to tie it off with.

Leaning his face against the wall, he rips parts of his t-shirt into long pieces in order to bandanna his face at the forehead and at the chin.

Looking at his feet, he notices a wire sticking out of the side of his calf. He taps the wire a few times.

Then he grabs it and his ear-plant blasts him with a 60 cycle hum, forcing him against the wall in agony.

He holds his jaw and settles.

He bites down on a towel and rips hard at the wire; fighting through the pain and blaring sound, the wire rips out like a piece of twine buried in clay.

Once the wire reaches his face, his right jaw muscle pops off like a clod of mud, removing the wire and ear implant.

INEZ (V.O.)

I mean, what is he actually doing in there? Just like counting to a hundred or something?

Grandpa's eyes squint at a piece of removed clay in the reflection. Grandpa removes another piece. Then another, speeding up, scraping at it.

Clods of makeup fill the sink. He steps back.

Looking himself in the mirror, STEVEN touches his face as if he doesn't recognize it. Then he looks around the unfamiliar room in a moment of realization.

He searches the cabinets again, but there's nothing there.

Squatting at the lower cabinets - a knock at the door...

He looks over his shoulder and side to side before creeping up to his feet.

Finally opening the door, he finds a giant metal staircase.

First he looks up and hears the disgusting sounds of machines of flesh hard at work. Then he looks down.

It seems like a normal staircase.

He turns his head to hear the distant sounds of...

TAMMY

(distant)

The big 2-5. Sure didn't think I was gonna be spending it in a place like this.

INEZ

(distant)

You're 25?

TAMMY

(distant)

Yes, why?

INEZ

What?

TAMMY

Yes, I'm 25, why?

INEZ

No reason.

Steven jumps at the opportunity to go up instead.

SHELLY

No no no, it can't be that easy.

STEVEN

Shelly?

Shelly takes off the Daughter wig from the previous scene.

SHELLY

Hello, Dad.

Steven turns and runs up the stairs.

She snaps her fingers.

Steven is suddenly covered in sweat. His steps slow and his posture fails. Reaching for the handrail, he slips, falling hard.

SHELLY (cont'd)

Careful.

Steven is forced to crawl, but he can barely manage.

Shelly spits on him.

Dirty, sweaty, and bloody, he's slowing.

SHELLY (cont'd)
I know, try postulating your way up!

STEVEN
Why me? What did I ever do to you?

SHELLY
Why do you think? Come on now, just a few more steps.

He makes the mistake of stopping to look up, there's a lot more than a few.

SHELLY (cont'd)
You could always roll down. It's a lot more painful, but at least you won't have to / struggle.

Shelly pops like a water balloon of blood.

Steven's eyes widen at the sound footsteps slowly walking out from the bathroom. He fights up the stairs even faster.

Calm dress shoes walk out from the darkness of the bathroom.

INT. INFIRMARY - DAY

Carla mourns by Tammy's hospital bed.

INEZ
I'm sorry, there was nothing we could have done.

CARLA
I understand.

Carla studies Beethoven's collar in her hand.

CARLA (cont'd)
I actually thought we had figured something out back there, but now... I just can't remember.

Carla laughs to herself until it turns into sobbing. Inez offers her a sympathetic hand.

CARLA (cont'd)
What happened to you guys?

THOMAS
I don't want to talk about it.

INEZ
I turned into a child for a little while.

CARLA
A child?

INEZ
Yeah, 10 year old girl. It was weird. You forget how malleable you felt back then.

CARLA
Huh, I played a young girl, but my body didn't transform at all.

INEZ
Huh.

CARLA
And you, Tommy?

Thomas hides from the question.

INEZ
Thomas was there.

CARLA
Oh...

Carla takes a long time studying Beethoven's collar in her hands. Nearly broken, she puts it on. She barks.

"ON AIR" light turns off.

The set becomes fractured and saddle shaped. Carla pulls Inez along as they narrowly escape the uphill staircase of former set.

Thomas loses his footing and slides into the jagged hole of splintered stage. He's sucked down further.

Inez looks back to Thomas, his bloody waist being sucked into the hole.

THOMAS
What are you waiting for? Go! Now!

Carla and Inez exit through the hallway door.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

NSR 1 fights for his life swimming toward shore.

NSR 1
- and bam! The illusion is broken.
She feels how misshapen my head is
and suddenly she's miraculously
distracted from this supposed life-
altering experience.

NSR 1 drowns.

NSR 1 (V.O.)
She might as well have pulled out a
tuft of hair she's so off put. I of
course am freaking out at this point.
I go faster, and she's nice, you
know, pretends.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

NSR 1 soliloquy becomes monologue at the dilapidated Carla
and Inez.

NSR 1
Anyway, that's the exact moment I
knew that she was gonna break my
heart.

INEZ
What are you talking about?

NSR 1
It's like a bookend.

CARLA (O.C.)
What is that?

INEZ
Probably just a mirage.

CARLA
You sure? I didn't think mirages
jumped like that.

NSR 1
Let's check it out.

CARLA
Why don't you hang back while Inez
and I head over, save your strength.

NSR 1 obliges.

Carla and Inez walk off.

NSR 1
(still going, fading
out)

Sure the more brazen barbers will bring it up right away, "you've got a hell of a cowlick there," and even the less bold ones will noticeably observe it, but, as all hair dressers are necessarily salesmen, they'll find a way to try to recover. "You've got such thick hair," or uh "hair like a model," is a common one. Then now I'm the one who feels bad for them. It's effective, I tip well, but they never seem to get the look quite...

INEZ
What are you talking about "jumping"?

CARLA
I don't know, I just wanted to get away from that guy.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

The sound of a woman singing Algerian folk-like sounds, similar to the Police's genre defying hit "Desert Rose" plays, followed by the rattle of a rattle snake's tail.

AERIAL SHOT OF CARLA AND INEZ HIKING THROUGH DESERT

Inez trails behind Carla.

INEZ
You know, I get this horrible sinking feeling that this has nothing to do with us.

CARLA
Conserve your energy, Inez.

INEZ
You know, like, we're just caught up in something. It definitely feels like there's something.

CARLA
Save your energy, Inez. Do you have any idea how much water you lose by speaking?

INEZ
I'll just suck your tits dry once you fall.

CARLA
What's that?

INEZ
Nothing.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Inez' continues her story.

INEZ'
So I decided to meet with him in the most simple way possible. I went to New York, found the nearest bodega, slit a lamb's throat along the jaw from ear to ear, and nailed it to the outer door frame. Within minutes we had a deal.

INT. (STUDIO) ROUND TABLE - DAY

Totally cheesy "photo shoot" of the cast - absolute cheddar. It's noticeable now how many of them are wearing black leather. None of them are taking this seriously.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Covered in dusty sweat, Inez rushes to the cold drinks and starts chugging.

CARLA
Inez! Stop acting like that. You know we haven't got any money.

INEZ
Desperate times call for -

CARLA
Inez!

INEZ
There's no one here. Take whatever
you want.

Inez hands Carla a cold drink. Her dry throat gulps. She
pops the tab open and, as she drinks it, eyes the novelty
Busch light NASCAR jacket for sale.

INT. HEATING AND COOLING COMMERCIAL

Dimmer now, Technician removes water heater.

COMMERCIAL (V.O.)
When it comes to your home, there are
few things more costly than a
defective water heater. At Polar
Heating and Cooling we offer quality
service, installation, and repair.

Technician exchanges pleasant conversation with home owner.

COMMERCIAL (V.O.) (cont'd)
Consider trying our new tank-less
water heater.

Technician uses snakes to install the water heater.

COMMERCIAL (V.O.) (cont'd)
With its nearly endless supply of hot
water, it's guaranteed to keep you
warm. From your first shower...

Woman gets bath ready for her baby.

COMMERCIAL (V.O.) (cont'd)
To your last...

Hot water showers onto the corpse of an elderly woman,
motionless on the floor of the tub.

COMMERCIAL (V.O.) (cont'd)
Polar Heating and Cooling, for all
your plumbing, electrical -

INT. DARKNESS - NIGHT

Following Carla through darkness of pure speculative
emptiness, Inez pounds her cold drinks and tosses the empty
bottles over her shoulder.

INEZ
No crashing sound.

CARLA
Huh? Oh yeah, weird.

Carla wipes sweat from her brow and removes the novelty NASCAR jacket.

Inez has run out of cold drinks.

INEZ
I don't know how much more of this I
can do.

CARLA
Just a little while longer.

Inez starts crying and falls. Carla drops the jacket to go help. On it's reverse side, it appears to be a suit jacket.

INEZ
I can't fucking do it.

CARLA
Why are you crying?

JEFF GERHARD appears.

JEFF
What was your lowest point?

CARLA
(jumping back)
Who the fuck?

The suit jacket moves a little on its own.

INEZ
What?

JEFF
Your lowest point?

Jeff touches Inez on the shoulder. His hand transforms into a proboscis-like appendage, seemingly growing/grafting/dissolving/consuming with Inez.

INEZ
Probably when we lost Jeremy.

JEFF
(glowing as he feasts)
How did that make you feel?

INEZ
Or when we lost Beethoven.

Jeff hisses and draws back, slurping all of his proboscis-like appendage back into a hand again.

The suit jacket shifts again.

CARLA
Get away from her!

JEFF
This does not concern you.

A glass case raises from the ground around Jeff and his prey as he transforms into a snake, suffocating Inez and licking her tears, masked by the growing smoke.

INEZ
(muffled tears)
Help me, Carla, please. Please help me. I can't stop him, Carla, please.

CARLA
(backing away)
I... I don't -

Carla turns away, gaining view of the moving suit jacket.

INEZ
I can't stop him, Carla, please.

CARLA
Hang on, Inez, I'm coming!

She runs to it. Sticks her hand inside. Pulls it out and it's covered in a sticky black fluid. She examines it for a moment, then reaches the whole length of her arm in.

INEZ (O.C.)
Help me, Carla.

CARLA
I'm coming, Inez!

Carla tries to pull out, but is stuck. The jacket drags her to the ground and wraps her fighting body in multiple and seemingly endless sleeves.

The jacket continues consuming her. Wrapping tight, drawing blood from her limbs. Her hand reaches down for something.

INEZ (O.C.)
Why aren't you helping me?

Supine, she fights and squirms, losing. The jacket begins melding her and itself into the floor.

She keeps fighting to reach her hand down toward... the pocket of the novelty Nascar jacket.

She's falling unconscious.

Her hand loses an inch.

INEZ
Carla...

Her eyes shoot open.

One last burst of effort and she is able to grip something from the pocket.

The jacket fades away.

Everything fades away.

Carla opens her hand, revealing the can of chewing tobacco.

She jumps up.

CARLA
Inez? Inez, are you alright? Inez?

INEZ (O.C.)
It's okay Carla, everyone knew you were gonna be the last one anyway.

Carla walks toward Inez's distant voice.

CARLA
Don't talk like that. We only need to go a little further.

INEZ
Goodnight, Carla.

She picks up the pace.

CARLA
Inez? Inez where are you?
(MORE)

CARLA (cont'd)
(running, crying)
Inez? Please Inez, I can't do this
alone. Inez!? Inez!?

She stops running and takes a seat.

CARLA (cont'd)
Inez? Beethoven? Anybody?

Relapse to darkness.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

JEFF
Alright, we're gonna end with some
softball questions.

Everyone seems noticeably tense and eager now.

JEFF (cont'd)
First job.

TAMMY
This is actually kinda embarrassing -

JEFF
Really?

TAMMY
But, uh yeah, I've never had a real
job.

JEFF
Really?

TAMMY
No, yeah, I guess I did some light
catalog work as a teenager, but it's
always been acting for me. I guess I
did try working at a car wash once,
but, I didn't even last the entire
day. I got so overwhelmed that I quit
right there.

JEFF
No kidding?

TAMMY
No, yeah, that's my story.
(gulp)
That's me.

Jeff looks to Thomas.

THOMAS

Mowed lawns.

SHELLY

Pool cleaner.

Jeff looks to Steven.

STEVEN

I sold baseball tickets at the
cardinals stadium.

INEZ

Army national guard, six years. Then
I worked a cash register at a small
movie theater for a while.

JEREMY

Coincidentally enough, I also worked
at a small movie theater.

JEFF

Not the same one, I hope.

JEREMY

No, god no.

Not that there'd be anything wrong
with that.

Jeff looks to Carla.

CARLA'

You know, it's funny, we talk about
"making it" in show business and all
of that, but honestly there was a
long time there that I didn't know if
I was gonna make it in life.

SUBTITLE: Carla began acting later in life at the age of 42.

CARLA' (cont'd)

I went from working at the Dairy
Queen to working at the Jiffy Lube to
working at a car wash to cutting
hair. I was a plumber's assistant. I
didn't last at anything for more than
a couple of weeks, tops.

Jeff is loving this, licking his lips.

CARLA

I was such a screw up. There was a few really bad years there where I seriously considered, you know, suicide.

JEFF

(blood in the water)

Actually?

CARLA

In the end I could never do it, because I was just too worried that I'd fuck that up too.

Jeff is at a loss for words, stunned.

INT. (STUDIO) MARTIN CAAN SHOW TM - NIGHT

Carla whimpers through the studio, examining it.

The exit door is cracked open.

She rushes over.

There's no brick. A light breeze even comes through.

She's about to take her first step toward assumed freedom when a few papers can be heard falling from a desk.

The script loses a few pages to the errant wind.

She gathers her courage and walks over to pick it up.

CARLA (V.O.)

Interior studio The Martin Caan Show TM - Night. Light emanates from the small late night TV Talk show set in the middle of this otherwise dark stage.

Carla looks up to see the light emanating from the TV Talk show set in the middle of this otherwise dark stage.

CARLA

On edge, crew members stutter about in preparation for tonight's guest. Thomas: last looks everyone. Picture is up.

The "shunt" sound of a light being turned on.

CARLA (cont'd)
Jeremy fumbles his brush -

Carla jerks to the sound of a small brush falling, but there's nothing there.

Incredulous, she grips the script harder and continues.

CARLA (V.O.)
Thirty seconds everyone.

Sound of a clock striking midnight.

Carla blazes through the rest of the script.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Thirty seconds everyone!

JESSICA (V.O.)
God no! Don't fucking leave me!

SHELLY (V.O.)
Get the fuck out of my way, bitch.

TAMMY (V.O.)
It was nice to hear Gene's voice again.

The sound of Gene shrieking off camera in voice over.

INEZ (V.O.)
Knott's Berry farm?

JEREMY (V.O.)
Enemas.

MARTIN (V.O.)
You two are disgusting.

SHELLY' (V.O.)
Maybe we should just give up.

THOMAS
Fifteen seconds.

Carla looks up from the script to see Jeff at the round table. Populated by the Hollywood makeover version of her cast mates, and filmed by NSR 1, the table beckons her.

JEFF (V.O.)
Sweat becomes grime on anxious faces as everyone stays as still as humanly possible.

INT. ROUND TABLE - NIGHT

Jeff in his seat.

JEFF

Hello and welcome to the Hollywood
Reporter Round Table. I'm your host,
Jeff Gerhard.

INT. (STUDIO) MARTIN CAAN SHOW - NIGHT

Jeff puts away the stage tables and chairs by himself as the
credits roll.