

DUMB BLONDE

Written by

Todd Bartels & Lou Howe

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"It takes a smart brunette to play a dumb blonde."

- *Marilyn Monroe*

A glorious sunset sky. Purple, gold, heavenly. And the words:

This here's a true story, y'all.

A BUTTERFLY flutters past us. And we follow it down through:

EXT. PINE FOREST. DUSK.

A canopy of majestic, 100-foot-tall pine trees. Down to the shadowy, dank forest floor, covered in mist, ferns and moss.

An otherworldly, magical landscape.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Sittin' on the front porch...

A FIVE-FOOT-TALL WOMAN with towering blonde hair sings softly to herself as we follow her, never seeing her face.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

On a summer afternoon...

She moves up a hill, past a creek, and steps into a clearing. Where she's bathed in shafts of golden, magic hour light.

Up ahead, she spots a WOODEN STRUCTURE, obscured in the mist. The sight makes the woman stop, take a deep, calming breath.

This is her GOD PLACE.

As her ruby red lips open to sing, we MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DINER. MEN'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Those same lips, scrubbed bare, no lipstick, singing--

WOMAN

In my Tennessee mountain home...

The SAME WOMAN, but with wispy dirty blonde hair, waitress uniform topped with a Santa hat, mops a grimy, fluorescent-lit bathroom. A world away from the enchanted forest.

But she hums, EYES CLOSED, still inwardly in the God Place.

Her name tag reads DOLLY. Yes, that Dolly. But not the one we know and love. Not yet. This is YOUNG DOLLY PARTON, age 20.

TITLE CARD:

1966

A TOILET FLUSH breaks her reverie and her eyes snap open--

As a FAT MAN emerges from a stall, buckling his giant belt buckle. He stops, looks her up and down, stares at her chest.

FAT MAN
Well Merry Christmas to me.

DOLLY
You ain't gettin' nothin but a lump
of coal and a kick in the chestnuts
if you don't move it along, mister.

Not her first rodeo. He pushes past her out the door--

FAT MAN
Don't be a bitch about it.

Ugh. She holds her breath, mops into the stall, gagging...

INT. DINER. BREAK ROOM. LATER.

PUNCH! PUNCH! Dolly clocks out, finally free from her day job hell. She checks a mirror. Teases up her hair, as high as it goes. Frowns at her reflection. Doesn't love what she sees.

A BALD COOK, her boss and bane of her existence, calls--

BALD COOK
Hey Santa! You best not leave
before it's spic and span in there!

DOLLY
It's as shiny as your damn scalp.
Merry Christmas!

She grabs her coat and beat up guitar case, busts out into--

INT. THUNDERBIRD. MOMENTS LATER.

SPITTING RAIN. Dolly speeds through Nashville traffic in a T-Bird. A cool car at some point, but a real piece of shit now.

As she drives, she CLOSES HER EYES, back to the God Place.

DOLLY
*Watch the kids a' playin, with
junebugs on a string...*

HONK!!!!!!!!!!!! She almost hit someone! She jerks the car back--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
Sorry!

EXT. JERRY'S HONKYTONK. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly pulls into a muddy field behind a tin-roofed shack.

She checks the rearview. Eyes her cleavage, undoes a button on her work uniform. Still not in love with how she looks.

She steps out of the car and straight into a muddy puddle--

DOLLY

Shit!

INT. JERRY'S HONKYTONK. MOMENTS LATER.

A MUDDY HIGH HEEL drags through a sea of cowboy boots.

DOLLY

Sorry, y'all. 'Scuse me. Sorry!

All five feet of Dolly weaves through a crowd of ROWDY MEN, who slug shitty beer and ignore a shitty BLUEGRASS BAND.

As she passes, the men look down at her hungrily, licking their chops. Bears awoken from a beer-buzzed hibernation.

As the band wraps up, a MAN frowns down at her from the--

STAGE. CONTINUOUS.

It's BILL OWENS (30s), Dolly's cool uncle. Slicked-back-hair, Marlboro dangling from his lips, guitar over his shoulder.

BILL

That sumbitch keep you late again?

DOLLY

Nah, I stopped by the spa. Got me a massage and a pina colada.

He chuckles. She pulls out her guitar, scans the crowd. Feels their eyes on her, judging. And her confidence vanishes.

She looks to a small photo taped inside the guitar case. A young, handsome SOLDIER. She smiles, reassured.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

New song's ready.

Bill nods, steps to the mic. The crowd barely registers--

BILL
 Hey y'all! Here's a new tune for
 ya. Called "Tennessee".

Heads turn as Dolly steps up, nerves raging. She feels the
 men's stares. Flinches at a CATCALL WHISTLE. Sings meekly--

DOLLY
*Sittin' on the front porch, on a
 summer afternoon...*

We recognize what will become her classic "Tennessee Mountain
 Home", but a slow, sad version. And the lyrics aren't there.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*In a straight backed chair, lookin'
 out at the field...*

Dolly scans the crowd, searching for approval. Instead--

DRUNK HECKLER
 Play somethin' you can shake that
 ass to! Not this mopey shit.

DOLLY
Butterflies and junebugs...

DRUNK HECKLER
 Shut up and strip, you dumb whore!

She CLOSES HER EYES, trying to return to the God Place--

DOLLY
*Life is as peaceful as a baby's
 sigh...*

And she feels a little better, more confident. But of course--

DRUNK HECKLER
 I said show us your tits, blondie!

Dolly's eyes SNAP OPEN, brimming with tears.

DOLLY
 I ain't no stripper, asshole!

DRUNK HECKLER
 Coulda fooled me by the look of ya!

Before she can respond, Bill steps in--

BILL
 All right, y'all. Here's a song
 you'll know a little better.

He starts an UPBEAT GUITAR LICK. Dolly fumes, but joins in--

EXT. JERRY'S HONKYTONK. BACK ALLEY. LATER.

Dolly paces by the dumpster, rattled by the show. She catches her breath, puts a dime in a PAYPHONE, dials...

DOLLY
Is Carl there? I mean Private Dean.

Dolly waits, touches the simple gold band on her ring finger.

CARL (O.S.)
That you, kid?

A soothing baritone. Relief washes over Dolly.

DOLLY
There's my man.

CARL (O.S.)
How was the show? You try out the new song?

DOLLY
(tearing up)
How come everybody wants to look at me instead of listenin' to me?

CARL (O.S.)
Well, can't really blame 'em. You sure are nice to look at.

DOLLY
Liar.

CARL (O.S.)
Now when have I ever lied to you?

Dolly smiles a bit. But Carl can hear how demoralized she is.

CARL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
How about you sing it? Just for me.

DOLLY
No! I'm OK in my head, or for the pigs back home. But I try to sing for people, all hell breaks loose.

CARL (O.S.)
Then I'll be your pig. Oink oink.

She smiles, looks around. She's alone. A concert for one--

DOLLY

*Sittin' on the front porch, on a
summer afternoon / In a straight
backed chair on two legs, lookin'
at the field...*

Her voice is gorgeous. Pure. It hangs in the air...

CARL (O.S.)

Voice of an angel. Now who gives a
shit 'bout some drunk rednecks? I
know you're special, Dolly Parton.
And deep down, you know it too.

Wow. Just what Dolly needed to hear. She smiles deeply.

DOLLY

I miss you so damn much, Carl.

CARL (O.S.)

I miss you so damn much, kid.

Off Dolly beaming, totally in love...

TV ANNOUNCER (PRE-LAP)

Direct from Nashville, Tennessee,
America's #1 country music program,
The Porter Wagoner Show...

INT. BILL'S TRAILER. LATER.

Dolly and Bill watch TV in a tiny motor home, trying to shake
off the bad night. Bill's wife SARAH bounces their WAILING
BABY at the stove. Welcome to Dolly's palatial abode. ON TV--

TV ANNOUNCER

Now, here he is... Porter Wagoner!

A LIVE STUDIO AUDIENCE erupts for a wiry MAN, 40, blonde hair
combed into a pompadour. His Nudie Suit covered in symbols of
the Old West -- wagons, cacti -- and studded in sparkling
rhinestones. He looks like a mythical figure.

This is PORTER WAGONER.

PORTER

A great big howdy, and a special
welcome to our show today. Now it's
time to bring on out the little
lady who graces our stage every
week. Pretty Miss Norma Jean!

NORMA JEAN (late 20s, brunette girl next door) walks onstage with a guitar. Porter puts his arm around her as they sing...

On the couch, Dolly stares at Porter. Entranced by his charm.

DOLLY

This is what I should be doing. My own band. My own show. Like Porter.

BILL

You'd be lucky to be like Norma. No girl singer's got her own show.

DOLLY

Well, no girl singer's like me.

BILL

You wanna get on TV, you better figure out these honkytonks first.

He chuckles. Dolly shoots him a look, but knows he's right.

DOLLY

You like the new song? Be honest.

BILL

Sure I do. But folks want what they know. The hits. You want people to like you, give 'em what they want.

Dolly furrows her brow. A lot to chew on. Bill notices--

BILL (CONT'D)

Doll, this business ain't fair. Take Sarah. Sweetest voice in Nashville, and look at her now.

SARAH

That's just cause some deadbeat knocked me up.

BILL

Easy now!

(to Dolly)

All I know is, opportunity's gonna knock one day. We just gotta be ready to open the damn door.

Dolly nods. Hopes he's right, but hope seems a long way off.

DOLLY

I'm tired of sittin' around. Gonna get me a steak dinner. I earned it.

BILL
How the hell you payin' for that?

But Dolly's got a plan. Off her mischievous grin...

INT. THUNDERBIRD. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly drives the struggling T-bird downtown. Pulls over...

EXT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly heads for the doors to the Ritz-Carlton of Nashville.

INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. LOBBY. CONTINUOUS.

Soaring ceilings, chandeliers, an opulent restaurant. Dolly strides through, singing a little ditty to herself--

DOLLY
Get me a big ol' steak tonight...

But then walks right past the restaurant, to the elevator...

INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. HALLWAYS. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly creeps down a hallway, rooms on both sides.

DOLLY
Juicy n' thick, what a delight...

She finds what she's looking for: a used room service cart. She's a vulture looking for scraps. If she's lucky, steak.

She approaches a plate covered by a metal dome. Grips it... lifts it with a flourish! *But the plate's licked clean.*

DOLLY (CONT'D)
Damn.

QUICK CUTS of Dolly, searching ravenously. Every cart, empty.

She slumps, defeated. But then--

On one cart, she spots tiny bottles of ketchup and mustard. Her stomach grumbles. She resigns herself and gets to work.

Dolly spoons some ketchup into a bowl, then some mustard. Pours in water, mixes it up into brown slop. She sings--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*Got me ketchup soup instead.
 Shoulda just gone to bed...*

Dolly sits on the floor, spoons up a bite. Gags, but muscles it down. She steels herself, then quickly inhales the rest.

Food is food, but it's a sad, desperate moment. To escape, Dolly closes her eyes, goes back to the God Place--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*Watch the kids a' playin / With
 junebugs on a string...*

Tears start to flow, eyes closed. Until they overwhelm her, force open her eyes to face grim reality. Alone, she sobs.

INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. LOBBY. MOMENTS LATER.

The elevator doors DING open. Defeated, Dolly slinks into the lobby, past the bar, where she spots a MAN DRESSED IN BLACK, a BLONDE BEAUTY on his arm. JOHNNY CASH and JUNE CARTER!

Dolly's eyes go wide. Her wheels turn. And she grins...

DOLLY
 Time to open the damn door.

She strides to the bar--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
 Johnny! Hey! It's me, Dolly Parton!
 You introduced me at the Grand Ol'
 Opry when I was 14. Remember?

Johnny sways, shitfaced, has no clue who Dolly is. He grumbles, stumbles back to the bar. June smiles at Dolly.

JUNE CARTER
 I started when I was a kid too. You
 still singin'?

DOLLY
 Yes ma'am! Played tonight, in fact.
 A real shithole, but a gig is a gig
 is a gig.

June laughs. Gets a kick out of her. Everyone does.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
 But someday I'm gonna have my own
 show. Like Porter Wagoner.

JUNE CARTER
I bet you will. Just keep at it.

They share a smile. Dolly making fast friends. John returns.

DOLLY
So. What y'all doin' tonight?

JUNE CARTER
Goin' to a party.

DOLLY
Can I come?

The famous couple laugh, head for the door.

JUNE CARTER
See you 'round, Dolly. Good luck.

Dolly watches them go, thinking. And her grin returns...

INT. THUNDERBIRD. MOMENTS LATER.

The T-Bird tails JOHN AND JUNE'S LIMO. The car sputters--

DOLLY
Goddamned piece of shit T-Bird!

EXT. BRENTWOOD. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly follows the limo into the Bel Air of Nashville, the opposite of her trailer park. She marvels at the mansions.

DOLLY
Ain't in Kansas no more.

The limo pulls into the driveway of the nicest house on the block. Dolly pulls over at a safe distance. John and June get whisked inside. Dolly thinks. Then hops out of the car.

EXT. FANCY NASHVILLE BRICK MANSION. MOMENTS LATER.

A MAID IN ANTLERS opens the heavy door, a bustling party inside. Her smile drops at the underdressed Dolly.

DOLLY
Evenin'! John and June invited me
to come along. We're old friends.

Dolly waves at John and June over the maid's shoulder. June laughs. The maid frowns, suspicious, but lets Dolly in.

INT. FANCY NASHVILLE BRICK MANSION. CONTINUOUS.

Dolly steps into a whole new world. Roaring fireplaces, wood-paneled everything, a giant Christmas tree. Martinis in every hand beneath a cloud of Lucky Strike smoke.

She spots a buffet table. An impressive spread -- shrimp cocktail, Christmas cookies, slice-it-yourself filet mignon.

DOLLY
Praise the Lord.

Dolly makes a beeline, loads up a plate with steak, digs in.

As she chews, she eyes the crowd. Men in thin '60s ties chat with other men in thin '60s ties. *Where to start?*

She spots a bevy of WHITE MALE RECORD EXECUTIVES. One man stands out: taller than the rest, in a brightly colored, rhinestone-covered suit and bolo tie. Dolly's eyes go wide.

PORTER EFFING WAGONER.

She takes a martini from a passing tray as she lingers near the CIRCLE OF MEN. She eavesdrops, looking for an in. Seems they're all pointing at a WELL-COIFFED MAN across the room.

EXECUTIVE #1
His poor wife. He's about as
straight as a left hand turn.

EXECUTIVE #2
I caught him peeking at me at a
urinal once. Told him I'd kick his
teeth in if he wasn't careful.

The men all laugh. Except Porter. Dolly sees her in.

DOLLY
Well, if he's married, and sleeping
with men on the side, then he's
getting laid a helluva lot more
than y'all. Probably more than all
of us combined. But hell, I'd like
to give him a run for his money!

From on high, the execs look down at tiny Dolly. She holds her breath... until Porter LAUGHS. The men all join in, kissing the ring of the reigning King of Country.

EXECUTIVE #1
Whoa, Nelly! Listen to this one.

EXECUTIVE #2

Wonder what else that mouth can do.

PORTER

Damn! Can't y'all keep it in your pants for one minute? Treat the little lady with some respect.

That shuts them up. No one goes against Porter.

DOLLY

Thank you, Mr. Wagoner.

PORTER

Porter, please. Have we met?

DOLLY

Not yet, but I feel like I've known you my entire life. I'm Dolly. Dolly Parton. I drop off songs for you and Norma every week.

Porter has no idea what she's talking about.

PORTER

Oh yeah. Real good stuff. Say, have you met our host? Mr. Chet Atkins.

Porter steps behind a MAN in the fanciest suit of all: CHET ATKINS, head of RCA Records. Dolly's jaw drops.

DOLLY

Mr. Atkins. I've tried to get past your secretary for years. You're the most important man in town.

CHET

Porter might have a thing or two to say about that.

DOLLY

Well, who signs his checks?

The men all laugh. Chet smiles. *Who is this girl?*

CHET

Say, how'd you get into this party?

DOLLY

Easy. I walked in the front door.

The men laugh again, charmed. But Chet's had about enough.

CHET

Then my dear, you'll know where to
show yourself out. Merry Christmas.

He closes the circle of men. *No women allowed.* Walking away,
Dolly waves to Porter. He nods back, intrigued. She's almost
to the door, but spots Chet with his back turned, and--

DUCKS BACK INTO THE PARTY. To her favorite place: the buffet.

Dolly reaches for a shrimp, bumps into a MAN'S fat fingers--

Dolly smiles, but the man already has a mouthful of shrimp,
and he wanted one more. Cheap suit, plate piled high. Not
quite as high-powered as Chet or Porter. This is FRED FOSTER.

DOLLY

What you goin' for, a world record?

The man holds up a finger, chews athletically. Finally he
swallows, wipes his hand on his pants, and offers a shake.

FRED

Fred Foster, Monument Records.

Dolly's slightly grossed out, but smiles as she shakes hands.

DOLLY

Dolly Parton, country singer in
need of a record company.

FRED

Sorry to tell ya missy, but country
music's dead as a doornail. Those
boys from England are takin' over.
Rockabilly's what the people want.

DOLLY

Well they ain't met me yet.

As Fred reaches for even more shrimp, he eyes her chest.

FRED

You got a man, Dolly Parton?

DOLLY

Sure do. Husband down in North
Carolina, doin' his Army service.

Fred nods, clearly less interested. But he's a "nice guy"--

FRED

Word of advice. Don't tell nobody
you're married. Bad for business.

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

But hey, you got a good look. I'd put up the money to record you. If you sing rockabilly, that is.

DOLLY

Thank you, Mr. Foster, but I'm country 'til the day I die.

FRED

Suit yourself. But it'll be a long, lonely road. Probably to nowhere.

DOLLY

I'll take my chances.

Fred grins at her stubbornness. Hands her his business card.

FRED

Call if you change your mind.

He returns to his beloved shrimp. Dolly frowns at the card, frustrated that no one else seems to believe in her. But that just means she's got more to prove...

Just then the MAID IN ANTLERS arrives, glaring. *Time to go.*

EXT. MUSIC ROW. THE NEXT MORNING.

Dolly doubles down, pounding the pavement, doing it her way.

She hustles along a suburban street lined with ranch houses. Each one a record company that makes or breaks thousands of hopeful country stars every year.

She's freezing, in a thin coat over her waitress uniform. She holds a stack of SHEET MUSIC, knocks on EVERY SINGLE DOOR--

SECRETARY #1

You again?

DOLLY

Ho ho ho! Christmas came early!

Dolly smiles, hands over some songs, as each door SLAMS!

SECRETARY #2

Nothin's changed, Dolly.

DOLLY

Well now, that's just against the laws of nature!

Smile, music, SLAM!

SECRETARY #3
Still ain't signin' girl singers.

DOLLY
Well it's your lucky day, cause I
ain't a girl singer, I'm a singer!

SECRETARY #3
It's Christmas Eve, honey. Go home.

Smile, music, SLAM! Dolly's smile drops. *A long road indeed.*

INT. DINER. DAY.

Christmas Day. And Dolly's working, miserable in her Santa hat again. She cleans a table as TWO MALE CUSTOMERS head out.

DOLLY
Sir, I think you forgot a tip?

CUSTOMER #1
Gotta earn one, sugartits.

Her smile drops as they go. ANOTHER WAITRESS approaches--

WAITRESS
Fella at table four says he'll only
order from you.

Dolly looks over at a MAN alone in a booth, his back to her, face hidden behind his menu. Dolly groans. *Another asshole.*

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
No, he's sweet. Real cute too. Have
fun.

Dolly rolls her eyes. She stomps over to the man--

DOLLY
All right. What'll you have?

MAN
Well, I'm lookin' for a singer.
Gotta have the voice of an angel.

Her jaw drops. She knows that soothing baritone. She beams.

DOLLY
Well I just happen to be a singer.
But I sure as hell ain't no angel.

The man drops his menu. It's the SOLDIER from Dolly's photo. A tall, handsome, good ol' boy in uniform, 24 years old.

This is CARL DEAN, Dolly's husband.

CARL
Merry Christmas, kid.

Dolly jumps on him, straddling him, kissing him all over.

DOLLY
My man! Why didn't you tell me you
were comin'?

CARL
What kinda surprise would that be?
And it sounded like you could use a
good surprise.

She kisses him again. Then smiles her mischievous smile...

DOLLY
Where's your truck parked?

INT. CARL'S CHEVY. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly rides Carl in the front seat of his pick up. Hard.
She's free, in the moment. HER EYES CLOSED. They climax
together, shouting in unison, then collapse on each other.

CARL
Hot damn, kid.

DOLLY
Told you I wasn't no angel.

Dolly finally opens her eyes. To find Carl smiling at her.

CARL
Where'd you go? Thinkin' about
somebody else?

DOLLY
What? Hell no.

CARL
So why you always close your eyes?

DOLLY
I dunno! Safer in there, I guess.

CARL
It's safe out here with me too.

Dolly smiles deeply. The cook swings open the kitchen door--

BALD COOK
Parton! You out here?

They slump down in the seats, hiding. Carl whispers--

CARL
You hungry?

DOLLY
Is the Pope Catholic?

CARL
Got a spot in mind. Real romantic.

They giggle as Carl fires up the truck and PEELS OUT--

EXT. MCDONALD'S DRIVE-THRU. MOMENTS LATER.

Carl pulls up in his truck, speaks into the receiver--

CARL
Two Big Macs, please.

DOLLY
What you doin', ordering for me?

CARL
You don't want a Big Mac?

DOLLY
I don't want someone to assume what
I want without asking me first.

CARL
OK. Order whatever you want then.

She leans over Carl--

DOLLY
Two Big Macs, please.

EXT. SPARKMAN STREET BRIDGE. LATER.

Dolly and Carl scarf burgers in the parked pick up, on a historic bridge spanning the bucolic Cumberland River. In the distance, the Nashville skyline backed by a glorious sunset.

She puts her head on his shoulder. Two peas in a pod.

CARL

Couple months, I'll be back. Get me
a job, get us a house, you quit
that dump, we start us a family.

They smile. But then something dawns on her. She sits up.

DOLLY

What about my career?

CARL

That's what I mean. No more damn
diner. Just singin' and babymakin'.

DOLLY

But I gotta get a little farther
along first. Uncle Bill's wife was
a singer, 'til she had a baby.

CARL

You can do both.

DOLLY

Easy for a man to say! You won't be
the one takin' care of 'em.

CARL

I'll help you. But I wanna get
started soon as I get back. So
career-wise, you best get crackin'.

He takes her hand, aiming for sweet and flirty. But she heard
an ultimatum and tensed up. So he tries to lighten the mood.

CARL (CONT'D)

Hey. Got a little something.

He points to some KETCHUP on the corner of Dolly's mouth. She
eyes him, still feeling pressured, but decides to make peace.

DOLLY

Get it off, then.

He grins. Leans in, kisses her, takes the ketchup with him...

INT. BILL'S TRAILER. BATHROOM. LATER.

Bill sits on the toilet with a magazine. The door busts open--

DOLLY

We gotta get crackin'!

Bill struggles to cover himself.

BILL
C'mon now! This is my Bill time.

DOLLY
Soon as I have kids, there goes my
career. We gotta record us an album
before Carl gets back!

BILL
That's a real cute plan, but you
know how much studio time costs?

Dolly stops. Didn't think of that. *Shit*. But then...

DOLLY
Shrimp Man!

BILL
Shrimp who now?

INT. MONUMENT RECORDS. DAY.

Dolly's in Fred Foster's office (AKA Shrimp Man from the
Christmas party), holding her guitar, in saleswoman-mode--

DOLLY
You're gonna hear this song and
think, golly gee, lucky me, I'm
about to sign me a big ol' star!

FRED
Uh-huh. Is it a country song?

Dolly freezes, caught. Fred stalks around, mansplaining--

FRED (CONT'D)
Dolly, you seem like a nice gal.
And you're pretty as all get out.
But the chance of you makin' it as
a country singer, well, it's about
the same as a snowball makin' it in
the fiery inferno of damnation.

DOLLY
Fine way with words, Mr. Foster.

FRED
Thank you kindly. Now, maybe you've
noticed that no one in this town
signs girl singers. Might be 'cause
there've only been two female solo
stars in the history of country
music. Patsy Cline and Kitty Wells.
(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

Where are they now? Kitty's washed up, Patsy's six feet under. That's not a bet guys like me wanna make.

Dolly's dejected. She knows all this, but it's tough to hear.

FRED (CONT'D)

I know it's hard to let go of your dreams. But you gotta compromise. And I know the way: rockabilly.

Off Dolly, disheartened. *But beggars can't be choosers...*

INT. RECORDING STUDIO. DAY. WEEKS LATER.

Dolly frowns at the mic, Bill and some DORKY GIRL BACKUP SINGERS behind her, Fred behind glass in the control room.

Dolly's in a rockabilly get-up, bandana in her slicked hair, high-waisted jeans. Think Rizzo from *Grease*. It's real weird.

DOLLY

What do you think about lovin', baby?

DORKY GIRL BACKUP SINGERS

It's all right!

DOLLY

Oh what do you think about lovin', baby?

It's not working. Dolly closes her eyes, hoping to sell it better. But no luck. Behind the glass, Fred's getting pissed.

FRED

Take five everybody. Bill?

Bill hustles to the control room. Through the glass, Dolly sees Fred and Bill argue silently. She checks her makeup when-

FRED (CONT'D)

... pretty girl, world class tits. But her voice is just too high.

Dolly's eyes go wide. Fred has sat down on the console, unwittingly on the INTERCOM BUTTON. She can hear every word.

FRED (CONT'D)

She sounds like a damn toddler.

BILL

Just give us one more shot-

DOLLY
I can hear y'all!

They spin, caught. She's furious, at the end of her rope.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
What the hell do my tits have to do
with anything? And my voice ain't
the problem, Fred. Maybe it's your
damn ears! Must be full o' shrimp!

BILL
All right, Dolly. Take five.

DOLLY
If you'd let me sing country like I
told ya, we'd be just fine!

BILL
Take five Dolly!

DOLLY
Y'all men think you know it all,
but really you don't know your ass
from your goddamn elbow!

BILL
TAKE FI-

DOLLY
I'm takin' more than five!

EXT. RECORDING STUDIO. PARKING LOT. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly hops in her car and peels out, as Fred chases her--

FRED
I knew you was bad for business!

INT. THUNDERBIRD. LATER.

As night falls, Dolly rolls through downtown, defeated.

She turns onto Broadway, the bustling heart of the nightlife scene. Neon signs line the street, crowds waiting to get into honkytonks, dive bars. Strains of live music mingle together.

Dolly takes it all in. This is the place she always dreamed of, but now the bloom is off the rose. As she drives by...

A bar fight CRASHES out onto the street--

A young COWBOY spews vomit into the gutter--

And at a red light, an AGING BUSKER croons with a guitar--

A great voice, but he must be pushing 70. Been at it for decades, nothing to show for it but a few coins in his hat.

Dolly stares hopelessly, a glimpse of her possible future.

Ever the optimist, the harsh reality of her failing career finally breaks through. *How much longer can she do this?*

EXT. BILL'S TRAILER. LATER.

Dolly pulls up, stunned to see Carl waiting on the steps in civilian clothes, grinning. She stands out of the car.

CARL

Private Dean, reporting for husband duty.

She smiles, but the weight of the day is heavy on her. He pulls her into a hug, but senses how down she is.

CARL (CONT'D)

Hey. Y'all right, kid?

She collapses into him, grips his back, tries not to cry.

DOLLY

I dunno. This business, it's...

CARL

I'm back now. We'll figure it out together. And I got somethin' to cheer you up.

He smiles at her. Off Dolly, comforted...

INT. CARL'S CHEVY. MOMENTS LATER.

Carl parks in front of a modest ranch house. Dolly eyes it, and smiles deeply. *Their new home.*

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.

Carl carries Dolly over the threshold of their new house.

CARL

They call this here the foyer, and I'm gonna put my shed out front-

DOLLY
Put! Me! Down! I'm heavy!

Carl puts her down, both giggling. Dolly beams. They kiss...

LATER.

Their clothes in a heap on the floor in the otherwise empty living room. Dolly and Carl lie post-coital, both grinning.

CARL
Damn, kid. Wore me out.

DOLLY
I'm just gettin' started.

Carl laughs. Dolly leans over and kisses him again...

CARL
Should we pull the goalie? We got the house, now we gotta fill it up.

She stops, leans back.

DOLLY
I can't have no career once I'm somebody's mama.

CARL
Well... you sure you wanna keep at this? Today seemed pretty rough.

DOLLY
I been singin' since I was fourteen. Been dreamin' about it my whole life. I can't just give up.

CARL
Kid, you know I think you're as talented as they come. But this business is brutal. I don't want you to keep gettin' hurt. And you don't have to give it all up. You can always write. We'll fill up this house with kids, and it'll be burstin' with joy and love. That's what you deserve, Dolly, not all this sufferin'. I just want you to be happy. Let me take care of you.

Dolly's moved. For the first time, thinks he might be right.

THE NEXT MORNING.

Sun blasts right into Dolly's eyes as she blinks awake, lying on a makeshift bed, a few blankets on the floor. She sits up to see Carl in the kitchen, already dressed.

DOLLY
You leavin' already?

CARL
Gotta figure out how to pay this mortgage. You off to Music Row?

Dolly considers.

DOLLY
Think I might take some time off.

He stops, surprised he got through to her. He smiles, nods.

CARL
I'll grab dinner on my way home.

DOLLY
It's all right. I'll cook.

CARL
You? Dolly Parton? Cook?

DOLLY
Excuse you! I got tricks up my sleeve you don't even know about.

He crosses to kiss her, smiles as he exits.

With Carl gone, an eerie silence descends. Dolly looks around at her new domestic life. *This will take getting used to...*

INT. PIGGLY WIGGLY SUPERMARKET. LATER.

Muzak blares as Dolly pushes a cart down an aisle. She checks a handwritten shopping list, grabs canned corn from a shelf.

A HOUSEWIFE passes with her own cart. Dolly smiles, but the woman just stares back, dead eyed. Dolly takes a deep breath.

In the next aisle, Dolly passes another exhausted HOUSEWIFE, this one with a SCREECHING TODDLER. Dolly starts to PANIC...

She passes another WIFE, another SCREECHING BABY. Then two more. All around her, glimpses of another possible future...

EXT. PIGGLY WIGGLY SUPERMARKET. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly busts out of the store, overwhelmed, gasping for air--

She stumbles down the sidewalk, struggling to calm down.
Stops outside an ELECTRONICS STORE, when...

PORTER (O.S.)
Howdy, y'all!

Dolly turns to a WALL OF TVs towering over her. All showing the Porter Wagoner Show. Dolly looks up at so many Porters--

PORTER (CONT'D)
Here's a new song by one of the
most talented songwriters in all of
Nashville, Mr. Curly Putman. It's a
real fun one. How 'bout it, boys?

Porter's band kicks in with banjos and bass. The song is
uptempo, lively. Dolly leans forward, intrigued by the sound.

The flickering colors from the TVs splash onto Dolly's face.

She realizes... *This is it. Where she wants to be, where she
belongs.* A new look flashes in her eyes: pure determination.

INT. CURLY PUTMAN'S OFFICE. LATER.

Dolly pushes into the waiting room of a small office. A gruff
SECRETARY sits at the desk. Dolly slaps on a smile.

DOLLY
Hi there. Is Mr. Putman in?

SECRETARY
No honey, he ain't.

DOLLY
Well, when's he gonna be here?

SECRETARY
He's gone for the day.

Just then a DEEP LAUGH comes from the inner office. The one
with CURLY PUTMAN on the door. Dolly glares at the Secretary.

DOLLY
You think I'm a moron?

The Secretary glares back at her, then shrugs. *Maybe.*

Dolly fumes. She's had enough of people underestimating her.

She's not waiting for opportunity to knock anymore. *She's breaking the damn door down.* She BUSTS into the inner office--

CURLY PUTMAN himself stops, mid-laugh on a phone call. A mess of sheet music on his desk. The Secretary chases her, but--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

'Scuse me, Mr. Putman? I'm Dolly Parton. I love that song you wrote for Porter Wagoner. Would you write something like that for me?

CURLY

Sweetie, you can't just barge in here. I got real work to do. So why don't you run along back to the supermarket or wherever.

He turns away. The Secretary tries to usher Dolly out, but they're both unaware Dolly's a VOLCANO about to blow. And...

She ERUPTS! Grabs his sheet music, RIPS IT TO FUCKIN' SHREDS--

DOLLY

I ain't your damn sweetie! I know y'all think I'm just some dumb blonde. But I'm a serious writer and singer and I'm fixin' to be a star! So you'd be wise to board this train before it leaves the station. 'Specially when it's headed straight to the big leagues. And I know I'm mixing my meta-fives or whatever, but you know what I mean! SWEETIE.

Curly's stunned. So's the Secretary. Perhaps most stunned is Dolly herself. She looks down at the sea of ripped up music--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Oh God, I'm so sorry Mr. Putman. I-

But Curly's lips curl into a grin.

CURLY

What'd you say your name was again?

EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.

In the yard, Carl hammers together 2x4s, the start of a work shed, when Dolly's T-Bird screeches to a stop. She jumps out--

DOLLY
Guess who I just met?

CARL
Where you been? I thought you were
gonna cook dinner.

She flashes a McDonald's bag, pulls him into a kiss.

DOLLY
C'mon, we're celebratin'.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly chows down on a Big Mac, talking a mile a minute.

DOLLY
... so he's writin' me a song.
"Dumb Blonde". It's genius. 'Cause
everyone always assumes I'm just a
dumb blonde, but then they meet me
and don't know what hit 'em. That's
what the song's about. Don't judge
people's insides by their outsides!

Dolly grins, hoping Carl is excited, but he's just confused.

CARL
I thought you were takin' time off.

DOLLY
I ain't cut out to be no housewife.

CARL
But we said once I got back, we'd
start us a family.

DOLLY
I didn't make no promises.

CARL
Well when's it gonna happen then?

DOLLY
Not now, Carl! I been waitin' for a
break like this for years. Aren't
you happy for me?

Carl nods, trying to be a supportive husband. Dolly knows
she's between a rock and a hard place. She tries for peace--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
 I want a family too. But just one
 last song, OK? Then I'm all yours.

Dolly smiles at him, expectant. Carl considers, then nods.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO BOOTH. DAY.

Dolly's at the mic, in her own clothes, not much makeup,
 natural hair teased up. Eyes closed, she SINGS HER HEART OUT--

DOLLY
*Just because I'm blonde, don't
 think I'm dumb / Cause this dumb
 blonde ain't nobody's fool!*

The band finishes with a flourish. Dolly and Bill smile, look
 through the glass. There, Curly stares, stone-faced. Dolly
 holds her breath as he presses the intercom...

CURLY PUTMAN
 That there, is what we call a hit.

Everyone erupts in CHEERS! Dolly's on cloud nine...

INT. SPERRY'S STEAKHOUSE. NIGHT.

A MAITRE D' leads Dolly, Carl, Bill and Sarah through a
 Nashville institution. Red leather banquettes. Dark wood.

A WAITER makes bananas foster tableside. Flames shoot up--

BILL
 This is what a hit song buys you?

DOLLY
 Yup. You get to watch 'em burn your
 bananas up close. Real high class.

AT THE TABLE, they all raise a glass--

BILL
 To our Dolly, off to the big time!
 Always knew she'd ditch me someday.

They all clink glasses. Dolly makes eye contact with Bill.

DOLLY
 Hey. I ain't ditchin' nobody.

Bill nods, but doesn't seem so sure. They all read the menu.

BILL
 You think they burn everything
 here, or just the bananas?

Everyone laughs, except Carl, who seems slightly on edge, perhaps unsure what Dolly's hit means for them as a couple.

But this is Dolly's night. She soaks it all in with a big smile, so excited for the future. But it's wiped away by...

INT. BOBBY LORD SHOW STUDIO. DAY.

A SPOTLIGHT blinding us. A TV show taping. Dolly stares out at the audience. Her smile long gone. She's terrified.

The applause sign flicks on. The host, BOBBY LORD, a small man in a slick suit, steps up.

BOBBY LORD
 Welcome back to the Bobby Lord Show
 folks. We're thrilled to introduce
 you to a brand new performer...
 Miss Dolly Parton!

Polite applause, and the spotlight finds Dolly.

BOBBY LORD (CONT'D)
 Well Dolly, this song's one of the
 biggest hits of 1967. So why don't
 you sing for us, dumb blonde?

The sexist joke gets no laughs. Dolly just smiles along.

BOBBY LORD (CONT'D)
 No, that's not what I meant. Wait a
 minute now. Dolly Parton recorded a
 song called "Dumb Blonde". She is
 about to sing it for you!

Ok, man. Not ready to rock the boat, Dolly swallows it.

DOLLY
 Thank you, Bobby.

Dolly's stage fright rages. She keeps her eyes open, singing meekly, trying to get through the song, as we MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PORTER WAGONER'S HOUSE. DEN. NIGHT.

DOLLY SINGING ON THE TV. In an opulent den -- shag carpet, paisley fabric, gold plated everything.

Watching TV is none other than Porter Wagoner, smoking intently. Even if Dolly's timid, he sees something in her...

INT. CARL'S CHEVY. THE NEXT MORNING.

Carl races through traffic. Dolly in shotgun, all nerves.

DOLLY

Maybe he wants me to open for him?
I dunno if I can open for Porter
Wagoner. I might have a stroke.

Carl screeches to a stop outside a TV studio. Dolly stares at it, terrified. Then turns to Carl, unsure what he's thinking.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

You sure you're OK with this?

He reaches over and holds her hand.

CARL

Whatever he wants, you worked damn
hard for it. So go on and get it.

Dolly, touched and emboldened, kisses him, grabs her guitar--

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly steps into a long hallway, and her face drops. It's lined with YOUNG WOMEN all with guitars, waiting their turn.

They all look just like NORMA JEAN -- tall, brunette, and wholesome. Dolly's short, blonde, and anything but wholesome.

PORTER (PRE-LAP)

Next!

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PORTER'S OFFICE. CONTINUOUS.

Dolly's turn, finally. Her eyes wide as she steps into a wood-paneled sanctuary. Gold records line the walls. Behind a huge mahogany desk, Porter Wagoner lights another Newport.

PORTER

Close the door.

She snaps out of it, quickly closes the door behind her. Then turns to see him staring at her, stone-faced.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Name?

DOLLY

Dolly. Dolly Parton? Nice to see
you again, Mr. Wagoner.

Porter takes a drag of his cig. An inscrutable, cold stare. A
completely different guy than at Chet's party. All business.

PORTER

I need a new girl singer. Norma
Jean's moving back to Oklahoma.

DOLLY

Oh well, that's very exciting-

PORTER

You got about two minutes. I
wouldn't waste it.

She jolts into action, grabs her guitar, and sings--

DOLLY

*Don't try to pry your way out of
this / Don't try to lie-*

PORTER

That the one Curly wrote? Heard it
on Bobby's show. What else you got?

Dolly stops short. Her mind races.

DOLLY

Well... there is something I wrote
myself. But I don't know-

PORTER

Minute and a half, honey.

Dolly's unnerved, rushes into a slower, more soulful song...

DOLLY

*Sittin' on the front porch on a
summer afternoon...*

She misses a note, stumbles on a chord change. Porter frowns,
lights another Newport. She's fucking this up...

Now or never, so she closes her eyes... and she's better!

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*In a straight backed chair on two
legs, lookin' out at the field...*

It sounds great. She's more confident, nailing it! But then--

PORTER
Open your damn eyes.

She stops short. Opens her eyes to see Porter glaring at her.

PORTER (CONT'D)
I didn't say stop playing.

DOLLY
Sorry, I-

PORTER
If I can rattle you, you think you
can handle thousands of people?

She doesn't know what to say. A deer in headlights.

PORTER (CONT'D)
What the hell's that song?

DOLLY
It's an original. 'Bout where I
grew up in the Smoky Mountains.

PORTER
I grew up poor as dirt too. Ozarks.
Do you see me singin' about it?

DOLLY
No, but-

PORTER
We don't do sad stuff here. Me and
Norma, we give people a good time.
Sorry honey, but you're not what
I'm lookin' for.

Dolly deflates. She starts to put away her guitar, but then stops. Turns to him, calm and collected...

DOLLY
Mr. Wagoner, if y'all just wanna
repeat what worked before, get you
a new Norma, go on ahead. But I
ain't interested in all that. I'm
interested in bein' me. Dolly
Parton, the one and only.

Mic drop. And with that, Dolly walks right out of the room.

EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly slumps into the car. Carl looks to her hopefully--

DOLLY
I didn't get it.

Carl nods, reaches for her hand lovingly. But just then--

SECRETARY (O.S.)
Miss Parton?

They spin to see PORTER'S SECRETARY at the window.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Mr. Wagoner wants you and your
husband to come over for a drink
tonight. Seven o'clock. Sharp.

EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

A huge brick mansion, barely smaller than Chet's. Dolly rings the doorbell as Carl makes sure his denim shirt is tucked in.

CARL
Told you I shoulda worn a jacket.

She pecks him on the cheek, just as the door swings open--

PORTER
There they are!

Porter opens the door grinning, in a denim shirt of his own.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Like your style, hoss. Get in here!

INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly and Carl sit awkwardly on a couch, admiring the fancy digs. Porter across from them, much more relaxed than at work. RUTH WAGONER brings them two beers, smile plastered on.

PORTER
This is my wife Ruth. Thanks honey.

DOLLY
Hi I'm Dolly!

Ruth just keeps smiling, sits next to Porter, silent.

PORTER
Y'all enjoy. I'm a bit of a
teetotaler myself. Keeps me sharp.

DOLLY

Mr. Wagoner, I wanna apologize for today. I didn't mean to be rude.

PORTER

Don't you worry. I just wanted the four of us to chat. So everything can stay above board. See, people are gonna assume that me and Dolly are in a relationship. They did that with Norma Jean, with every girl singer I've ever worked with. But it's all part of the show. You understand?

Dolly and Carl do not understand.

DOLLY

Hold up. What are we talkin' about here? Are you sayin' I got the job?

PORTER

'Course. Didn't the girl tell you?

Dolly's jaw slowly drops. Then she jumps up and hugs Porter.

DOLLY

Thank you so much, Mr. Wagoner! I won't let you down.

He laughs as she climbs off of him.

PORTER

We sure do have a firecracker on our hands, don't we?

He grins at Carl, who fakes a smile back.

PORTER (CONT'D)

So there's gonna be rumors. But Dolly and me, this is a business relationship. And all I care about is business. You have my word.

DOLLY

Sounds good. I ain't worried 'bout nothin' but business either.

But Carl stares, skeptical. Porter stands to loom over Carl, offers a hand shake. Carl hesitates, but bites his tongue.

PORTER

We good?

Carl looks at Porter's outstretched hand... and they shake.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. LATER.

Carl sits in bed silently. Dolly rummages through her closet.

DOLLY
You think they'll give me a dress
or I gotta bring my own?
(puts on announcer voice)
Welcome to the Porter Wagoner Show,
featuring Dolly Parton! Can you
believe it?

She jumps in bed, curls up to Carl. He chooses his words...

CARL
I know how much this means to you,
and I'm real proud. But be careful.

DOLLY
What do you mean?

CARL
Everybody knows he and Norma were
sleeping together.

DOLLY
People talk, but they don't know.

CARL
I trust you, kid. But I trust him
about as far as I can throw him.

DOLLY
I been handling Porters my whole
life. Don't worry. I'll be fine.

She kisses him. Both their minds race, on different tracks...

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MORNING.

First day of school! Dolly steps into the hallway, now
bustling. No one pays her any mind. She spots the Secretary.

DOLLY
'Scuse me, I'm-

SECRETARY
This way.

And she takes off, Dolly racing to keep up.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly follows the Secretary onto a dark, massive soundstage. Porter and his band THE WAGONMASTERS rehearse under bright lights. Dolly and the Secretary are the only women in sight.

PORTER

Goddamn it, Don! I told you to keep it tight on the bridge. Take it from the top of the third verse.

DON

You got it, Chief.

That's DON WARDEN, 40, lead guitarist and loyal sidekick.

DON (CONT'D)

OK now. 3, 2, 1, and-

PORTER

Hold up! Is that her?

Porter squints into the darkness. Dolly meekly waves.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Why didn't anybody tell me she was here? Jesus. Don, run it again 'til y'all get your heads outta your asses. I'm back in five.

Porter hustles toward Dolly. The Secretary hands him a towel.

SECRETARY

Sorry Chief, I was waiting for-

Porter raises a hand and she goes silent. He wipes the sweat from his face, and stares at Dolly, who awkwardly smiles.

PORTER

Howdy. Walk with me.

He heads into the dark, Dolly chasing. He lights a Newport, talks over his shoulder to Dolly, struggling to keep up.

PORTER (CONT'D)

That's a new number we're playing on tonight's show. Might have to get me a new drummer first though.

A COSTUME DESIGNER appears, holding a Nudie Suit-in-progress.

COSTUME DESIGNER

Chief, how's-

PORTER
Wider lapels! They can never get
too wide. C'mon now.

The designer nods, scurries away. Porter pushes a door--

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS.

Back into the bright hallway. Dolly's blinded for a second as they pass door after door.

PORTER
Back here's all the dressing rooms
and offices. Belly of the beast.

A MAN pops his head out, grinning goofily, legal pad in hand.

MAN
Chief! Check this one out.

Porter spins to the show's comedian, SPECK RHODES. He reads--

SPECK
Folks, I just saw the best looking
policewoman out front. Doggone it,
she was so pretty I just wanted to
take the law into my own hands.

Dolly frowns. But Porter chuckles. And Speck winks at her.

PORTER
That'll play, Speck. That'll play.

Dolly chases Porter to the last door at the end of the hall,
a star labeled NORMA JEAN still on it. He doesn't notice.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Get settled and come on up for
rehearsal. We tape at 5pm sharp.

DOLLY
I been meanin' to ask, what about
my Uncle Bill? We play together.

PORTER
I hired you, Dolly. I didn't hire
no Uncle Bill. See you up there.

DOLLY
Thank you Mr. Wagoner.

PORTER
Porter!

He heads off with a charming grin. She eyes the Norma star.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Dolly enters. Big mirror, big closet, big couch. Big leagues.

She sits at the mirror, so nervous. Finds the Army photo of Carl, wedges it in the mirror frame. Smiles at it, comforted.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly heads to rehearsal. Hears LAUGHTER, peeks into a room. It's the BAND, on a coffee break in the canteen. All veterans of the show, old friends, and men. Dolly's none of the above.

DOLLY
Hey y'all.

They all stop, turn, stare. Not so much as a smile. Until--

DON
Dolly Parton! In the flesh.

Don, big smile, hurries over to shake her hand.

DON (CONT'D)
Don Warden. Big fan. Happy to have
you on board!

Dolly smiles. *Maybe Don will be an ally.*

PORTER (O.S.)
Put down them coffees, boys!

Porter's in the hall. The band straightens up. Party over.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Got a show to do. Unless y'all fuck
it up! Lookin' at you, Don Warden!

DON
You got it, Chief!

PORTER
Hot damn! Best man I know.

Porter walks on. *He and Don are best friends.* Dolly gulps.

DON
He's all bark, no bite.

PORTER (O.S.)
I heard that! WOOF! WOOF!

Don smiles, rolls his eyes at her. Dolly gulps again.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. THAT EVENING.

On a long line of FANS, Carl holds a bouquet of flowers. An ASSISTANT moves the crowd up to the seats, but stops Carl--

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Bleachers are full. Rest of y'all
watch from the pen.

He herds Carl and the fans to a roped off area in the back.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Dolly at the mirror, her hand shakes as she applies lipstick--

INTERCOM
Sound check onstage, ten minutes.

PORTER (O.S.)
Really good work today. Real good.

She spins, hiding her hand. Porter grins from the doorway.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Don't be shy with that makeup now.

DOLLY
You don't think it's too much?

PORTER
No such thing. We're puttin' on a
show. Gotta be larger than life.
I'll set you up with my tailor. Got
an idea for your hair too.

Dolly nods, overwhelmed. He notices, smiles at her.

PORTER (CONT'D)
You look real nice. Real nice.
They're gonna love ya. I know it.

He finally notices the Norma Jean star on the door.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Shit. We'll get you a new one.

With that, he's gone. Her smile drops to a look of terror.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. SAME TIME.

Carl strains to look around the bleachers at the stage, where Speck Rhodes warms up the crowd with a joke.

SPECK

... this girl had on this little bitty bikini. My wife says ain't that a shame, just plum ridiculous, that girl wearing that little bitty two piece suit. Says, I think she should just wear one piece. I said all right. Which piece you think she should wear, top or bottom?

The audience LAUGHS.

SPECK (CONT'D)

That's it from me. Enjoy the show!

The lights lower. Cue OPENING MUSIC, the twang of a banjo...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Direct from Nashville, Tennessee, America's #1 country music program, The Porter Wagoner Show. And now, here he is... Porter Wagoner!

Lights up ON PORTER, in a sparkling Nudie Suit, center stage:

PORTER

Howdy! Right now I want you to meet the new little lady on our show. Miss Norma Jean has been with us for many years, but had to leave because we work so much, to have a little time for her personal life. And I looked long and hard, and found a little gal that I know you're really gonna love, cause she's a fine singer and one of the loveliest little gals I've ever met. Let's give her a great big welcome as she sings a song that she had a big hit on called "Dumb Blonde". She ain't no dumb blonde though. Pretty Miss Dolly Parton!

CAMERA PANS ACROSS TO DOLLY, smiling meekly, unable to hide her fear, how desperately she wants to be liked. She sings--

DOLLY

*Don't try to pry your way out of
this / Don't try to lie...*

In the pen, Carl grins proudly. He claps along with the audience as Dolly finishes the song. CAMERA PANS TO PORTER:

PORTER

Mighty fine Dolly, come on over a minute. Mighty, mighty nice, thank you a lot, and welcome to the show.

Dolly's voice is so soft it's almost hard to hear.

DOLLY

Thank you, it's nice to be here.

PORTER

We're gonna really enjoy working with you, and you wrote so many fine songs and sing so pretty. So we'll look forward to havin' you around a long, long time.

DOLLY

Well I hope to be, and thank you very much.

PORTER

We'll be right back in just a minute or so.

Lights down. Ad break. Dolly exhales. But the crowd BOOS!

CROWD

Nor-ma! Nor-ma! Nor-ma!

In the pen, Carl looks around at the crowd in disbelief.

PORTER

Hey! Y'all be nice now.

That quiets the crowd. He whispers to a shocked Dolly--

PORTER (CONT'D)

You did great. Don't let nobody tell you any different.

The lights come back up. Dolly still stunned. Porter smiles--

PORTER (CONT'D)

Thank you very much for watching that message. Dolly and I were talking about Miss Norma Jean, and how you never can replace someone.

(MORE)

PORTER (CONT'D)
 But how Dolly's actually a star in
 her own right, and a wonderful
 little gal. You'll all learn to
 love her, I'm sure of it. Now...

Wow. Porter actually heard her. *Dolly Parton, the one and only.* Relieved, she watches Porter move on to the next act...

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. LATER.

After the show, the Production Assistant mans the door from the stage. Carl approaches with his flowers.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
 No audience back here, buddy.

CARL
 I just wanted to give these to my
 wife. Dolly Parton?

The PA's moved on. Carl spots Porter down the hall with Don.

CARL (CONT'D)
 Oh hey, Porter!

Porter looks up at Carl, but then just turns back to Don.
 At the end of the hall, Dolly closes her dressing room door.

CARL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Dolly!

She spots Carl. Grins, heads toward him, past Porter and Don--

DOLLY
 See y'all tomorrow!

PORTER
 Hold up. You ain't done yet.

She looks from Carl to Porter. Then hustles down to Carl.

DOLLY
 Sorry. I'll see you at home.

She kisses him, heads back, leaving Carl with the flowers.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. CONTROL ROOM. LATER.

ON SCREEN: Dolly sings "Dumb Blonde", but without sound. Suddenly the image REWINDS, starts to play again...

PORTER (O.S.)
They can tell you're uncomfortable.
See? You're shakin' like a leaf.

Porter mans the controls at a bank of monitors, studying game tape like pro athletes. Dolly's dejected, but she's learning.

PORTER (CONT'D)
We're here to give folks a good time. They can't have a good time unless they believe we're havin' a good time. So no matter what's goin' on inside, your job's to make sure that on the outside, you're havin' a ball. That's being a pro.

DOLLY
I just get so nervous on stage.

PORTER
But then you get off, and you got confidence for days! Got a wit like a whip. So use that. And smile. Always. If it gets bad, look on over at me. We're a team.

Dolly nods. Absorbs the advice like a sponge, mesmerized by the undivided attention of someone she's idolized for years.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Ok. That's enough for tonight.

DOLLY
Thank you, Mr... Porter. Today was a dream come true.

PORTER
You're a star, Dolly. I know it.
Now we just gotta show the world.

He squeezes her hand, a sweet mentor moment. As she goes--

PORTER (CONT'D)
Don't worry about the fans now.
They'll come to love you. No one's ever gonna mention Norma again.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.

Dolly steps into the dark house, finally home. She stops at the sight of Carl's flowers in a vase.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

In the dark, Dolly slips into bed, cuddles up to wake Carl.

DOLLY
I love my flowers. Thank you.

CARL
You were great, kid.

DOLLY
I dunno. But Porter says I did OK.

CARL
You stayed late with him?

DOLLY
We watched the tape of the show.
I'm gonna learn so much.

She leans in to kiss him, but he stops her, turns serious.

CARL
I wanna support you, but I don't
wanna be disrespected like tonight.
I ain't just somebody's husband.

DOLLY
'Course you ain't. You're my man.

They kiss. Dolly rolls over. *This might get complicated...*

EXT. KNOXVILLE THEATER. EVENING. WEEKS LATER.

NORMA JEAN in huge letters on a poster for a Porter Wagoner touring show. Dolly stares at it. *Shit.*

INT. KNOXVILLE THEATER. LATER.

Dolly watches from the wings as Porter introduces her.

PORTER
Pretty little Miss Dolly Parton!

She's terrified, but snaps on a smile as she strides onstage. Meager applause, a smattering of BOOS. She stays positive--

DOLLY
*Don't try to pry your way out of
this / Don't try to lie...*

CROWD
Nor-ma! Nor-ma! Nor-ma!

DOLLY
Or I'll catch you in it...

CROWD
Nor-ma!! Nor-ma!! Nor-ma!!

Dolly closes her eyes, keeps smiling, tears welling up...

DOLLY
*Cause this dumb blonde ain't
nobody's fool!*

She rushes offstage and the floodgates open. She SOBS.

INT. KNOXVILLE THEATER. GREEN ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly shuts the door behind her. Suddenly she doubles over in pain, clutching her LOWER ABDOMEN--

A KNOCK jolts her. She wipes her eyes as Porter peeks in--

PORTER
You OK?

DOLLY
Yeah! No! It's just female pain.
And the crowd, calling for Norma...

The tears rush back in. Porter freezes, so uncomfortable.

PORTER
Sorry. Never was good with tears.

DOLLY
Didn't you have any sisters?

PORTER
I was the one makin' 'em cry. Don't
think I've cried a day in my life.

She smiles. He leads her to a couch. She catches her breath.

PORTER (CONT'D)
You closed your eyes out there
again. What's goin' on there?

Dolly gulps, looks at him, debating whether to open up. He smiles back at her -- *you can trust me.*

DOLLY

When I was little, I found an old chapel in the woods. Everybody'd forgotten about it, except some older kids who'd go make out there. But it was beautiful. And there was an old broke piano. So I'd go there to write songs or just be alone. And sometimes, when I need to escape, I close my eyes and go back. Call it the God Place. Where I'm free to just be me. No one's judging.

Porter watches her, moved. Takes her hand in his. Dolly holds her breath for his reaction. She just opened up wide...

PORTER

You got something special inside. But folks can only see what you show 'em. So let's make the outside just as special.

Dolly's not sure he understood her point. But she's touched by his belief in her. She watches his wheels turn...

PORTER (CONT'D)

How 'bout we sing duets? Build your confidence up. I tell ya, I bet they'll love you if you're with me.

Dolly's skeptical, but Porter's excited. And he's the boss.

DOLLY

What'd you have in mind?

As Porter grins, we enter a **MONTAGE** of the next few months...

PORTER & DOLLY (PRE-LAP)

*Two sides to every story! / We can
straighten this out if we'll take
time...*

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PORTER'S OFFICE. DAY.

Porter and Dolly at his desk, sitting close, working on duets. She plays guitar and sings, he scribbles lyrics.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAY.

Porter and Dolly sing the new song on the show. Dolly's nervous. Porter nods at her. She exhales. *They're a team.*

PORTER & DOLLY
*Two sides to every story! / You
tell yours, and I'll tell mine...*

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. CONTROL ROOM. NIGHT.

Late night tape session. Porter critiques. Dolly absorbs.

EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. LATER.

Porter and Dolly laugh in front of Dolly's car. Don waves goodbye, eyes them as he gets into his car.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.

Home late, Dolly sees the table set for a surprise romantic dinner of Big Macs. But Carl's gone to bed. *Shit.*

INT. PHOTO STUDIO. DAY.

A photo shoot of classic Dolly and Porter DUET ALBUM COVERS--

FLASH! The dynamic duo in matching red turtlenecks, hugging.

FLASH! In rhinestone-covered Nudie Suits, laughing.

FLASH! In baby blue tuxedos, she play-slapping his shoulder.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. EVENING.

Dolly notices a new star on her door: DOLLY PARTON.

She opens the door to find Porter sitting in her makeup chair. He springs up, ready to go. *Field trip time!*

EXT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. LATER.

The holiest shrine of country music, the Carnegie Hall of Nashville. Dolly gazes up at its red brick facade, in awe.

As a CROWD streams in the front door, Porter pulls her around the side, down a dingy alley, and through an UNMARKED DOOR...

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. BASEMENT. CONTINUOUS.

They pass a hissing boiler, in the bowels of the building. Porter bounds up some stairs, two at a time. Dolly chases...

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. BACKSTAGE. CONTINUOUS.

Porter opens a door to find: CHAOS. A crush of ROADIES and GROUPIES and MUSICIANS. Pre-show frenzy. Dolly beams.

Porter takes Dolly's hand, pulls her into the scrum, nodding hellos, slapping backs, arriving at ANOTHER UNMARKED DOOR...

INT. RYMAN THEATER. COSTUME DEPARTMENT. CONTINUOUS.

Porter holds it open for Dolly, wide eyed as she sees...

Hair hair hair! A wonderland of wigs. Every shape and size. She's in heaven, AKA the Ryman Costume Department's Wig Room.

Dolly tries one on. Another. On an upper shelf, Dolly eyes a TRULY OVER-THE-TOP WIG, the biggest and most badass of all...

But Porter vetoes it. Dolly defers, picks a different one.

EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. THAT NIGHT.

Dolly hops out of her car, in a new wig and in her own world. Goes inside, not noticing Carl working in his shed out front.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.

Dolly sits with her guitar, scribbles lyrics. Always writing. Carl enters, considers interrupting, but heads to bed.

END MONTAGE.**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MORNING.**

Dolly arrives for work, a few sheets of paper in her fist. Catches up to Porter and shoves the papers in his face.

DOLLY

If those ain't good enough for RCA,
then Chet Atkins can kiss my ass.

PORTER

In his dreams.

DOLLY

That mean you'll show 'em to him?

PORTER

When you're ready.

DOLLY
Yeah? Well when's that gonna be?

He stifles a grin, pushes through the door to the stage...

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. LATER.

At the end of a long rehearsal, Porter holds up a magazine.

PORTER
Hot off the presses. Billboard
Country Western chart, new number
one. "Two Sides To Every Story", by
yours truly and Miss Dolly Parton!

Dolly yelps, hugs Don. The band celebrates. Ever the showman--

PORTER (CONT'D)
And now, to the parking lot!

EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly and the band exit the building to find Porter, grinning
in front of a brand new Cadillac, a giant bow on its hood.

PORTER
Welcome to the Cadillac Club.

He tosses the keys to Dolly. She bear hugs him.

INT. DOLLY'S CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly drives, Porter in shotgun. Neither can stop grinning.

DOLLY
Not bad. But I woulda picked gold.

PORTER
Beggars can't be choosers now.

DOLLY
Who's beggin'? I'll buy myself a
gold one soon enough.

They share a smile. Then he spots an upcoming turn.

PORTER
One more thing. Take a right.

DOLLY
Porter Wagoner, full of surprises.

EXT. MUSIC ROW. CONTINUOUS.

They roll down Music Row. Porter points out a house.

PORTER
Pull over here.

Dolly parks in front of the biggest house on the street. RCA. She stares. Then smacks Porter in the shoulder. He yelps.

INT. RCA RECORDS. CHET ATKINS' OFFICE. MOMENTS LATER.

Chet Atkins waves Porter and Dolly into his office. Dolly's stunned by the sheer number of gold records on the walls.

CHET
Porter! What a nice surprise.

PORTER
Sorry, Chet. But it's urgent.

CHET
What, Dolly crashed another party?
I gotta bail her out?

DOLLY
Nah, I only like crashin' yours.

Chet smiles. Porter SLAMS the Billboard magazine on the desk.

PORTER
We think it's about time y'all sign
Dolly. As a solo artist.

Dolly is stunned, stares at Porter. Chet shifts in his seat.

CHET
You know I think Dolly's a mighty
talented gal. But we just can't
take on any girl singers right now.

PORTER
Horseshit. You can if you want to.
I'll produce her. Work with her in
the studio. We'll keep up the duets
to introduce her to the public.

CHET
You got time for all that?

PORTER
Dolly's a priority for me.

Dolly blushes, flattered but embarrassed.

PORTER (CONT'D)
I guarantee you won't lose a penny
on her. I'll cover any loss myself.

CHET
I'm sorry, Porter, we just can't-

DOLLY
Porter, come on, you heard the man-

PORTER
If you don't sign her, I'll walk.

This stops the room. Off Chet, realizing Porter means it...

INT. DOLLY'S CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly speeds down the road, HOOTING and HOLLERING.

DOLLY
Were you really gonna walk? Or were
you bluffin'?

PORTER
A winner never shows his hand.

Dolly turns onto Porter's street, parks outside his house.

DOLLY
Thank you, Porter. Really.

PORTER
Like I always said, you're a star.

She blushes. A mentor moment, but maybe more. An added jolt.
They lock eyes. *Are they going to kiss?* But Porter defuses--

PORTER (CONT'D)
You best run along now.

He smiles, hops out. Dolly watches him head inside, confused.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.

Dolly, mind racing, shuts the door, hoping no one's home.

CARL (O.S.)
Kid? That you?

Shit.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly enters, nervous. Carl looks up from reading in bed.

DOLLY

I just got signed to RCA. Solo.

He jumps up to hug her. But senses something, pulls back.

CARL

You all right?

She just nods, turns to the bathroom, leaves Carl confused...

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BATHROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly in a bubble bath, washcloth over her face. Carl pulls up a stool, sits next to her, holds her hand lovingly.

CARL

You should be proud of yourself,
kid. I sure am.

DOLLY

I'm just... overwhelmed I think.

He takes off her washcloth playfully. She smiles.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

You wanna come to Sevierville this
weekend? Givin' me the keys to the
dang city. Callin' it Dolly Day.

CARL

That right? Yeah I dunno. I'll just
get in the way at that kinda thing.

DOLLY

Mama and Daddy are comin'. But I
want my whole family there. That
means you.

He smiles, but Dolly sees he's tired of being her plus-one.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

I just miss you is all.

Now it's his turn to see her. She's asking for his support.

CARL

I'll come to the next one. Promise.

Dolly smiles gratefully. A compromise, sealed with a kiss.

EXT. SEVIERVILLE. PARKING LOT. DAYS LATER.

Dolly parks next to Porter, leaning on his own Cadillac.
Through her window, she hands him a dry-cleaned Nudie Suit.

PORTER
Thank you darling. I owe you.

DOLLY
Put it on your tab.

PORTER
Hey now, who's here supporting you
on your big day?

Suddenly, Porter drops his trousers.

DOLLY
Porter! The hell you doin'?

PORTER
You see a green room 'round here?

Dolly's not sure how she should feel seeing her boss undress.
She watches, then feels a twinge of guilt and looks away.

EXT. SEVIERVILLE. MAIN DRAG. LATER.

On the main drag of a tiny Tennessee backwoods town, Dolly
sits next to Porter in an open car. They wave to their FANS.

Dolly spots a WOMAN ON THE CORNER -- blonde hair piled high,
cleavage bursting, ruby red lipstick. A bold look.

DOLLY
Ain't she beautiful? If I had hair
that high, I'd die a happy woman.

PORTER
C'mon. She's the town tramp, Dolly.
Looks like a damn circus clown.

Off Dolly, still admiring the woman as they drive by...

EXT. SEVIERVILLE. TOWN HALL STEPS. LATER.

SNAP! SNAP! Dolly, Porter, and THE MAYOR pose for photos. She
steps to a podium, a bit shy. 7,000 people are there for her!

DOLLY
Hey y'all.

WOOOO!!!! She shrinks. Porter puts his arm around her.

PORTER

Don't we all just love this gal?
I'm awful proud. She just signed
with the top label in Nashville,
and our duets were nominated for a
Country Music Award. Folks, our
Dolly's on her way to the big time!
With some help from yours truly.

Dolly smiles, used to Porter taking some of the credit.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Dolly, whaddya say? Should we sing?

WOOOO!!!! And she and Porter start singing up a storm...

LATER.

They sign autographs. In the crowd, Dolly spots her PARENTS.

DOLLY

Mama! Daddy!

She skips over to AVIE LEE PARTON, her warm Mama, and LEE PARTON, her stoic Daddy, dressed in their Sunday best.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Did you like the show?

AVIE LEE

Sure did! Ain't that right Lee?

Dolly turns to her Daddy, hoping for a compliment. But he just gives her a half-smile and nod. Clearly he loves her, but has trouble expressing it. Dolly deflates a little, when--

PORTER (O.S.)

Are these the special folks I've
heard so much about?

Porter extends his hand with a grin. Avie hugs him instead.

AVIE LEE

You're so much better looking in
person than on the TV!

PORTER

Ha, thank you a lot. Means so much.

Porter turns to Lee, offers his hand.

PORTER (CONT'D)
So nice to finally meet you, sir.

Lee is silent, barely shakes. Porter smiles, always a pro.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Brought y'all a gift.

From his back pocket, Porter pulls out a copy of THE NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN. He gives the newspaper to Lee.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Look! Dolly's on the front page!

Lee looks at the words on the paper like a confused child. His cheeks flush, embarrassed. If he was standoffish before, he now completely recedes. Even Dolly and Avie Lee tense up.

Porter's confused, until he realizes -- *Lee can't read*. Dolly takes the paper, saves face.

DOLLY
Oh, we ain't really newspaper-
readin' folk, Porter. We're so poor
we use it as wallpaper!

Porter laughs gently, but knows he put his foot in his mouth.

PORTER
Well, pleasure to meet y'all. You
got a very talented daughter.

Porter winks at Dolly and goes. She smiles, touched. But then eyes her Dad. She so wants him to be proud of her. To approve of her. But for now, he just smokes, silently humiliated.

DOLLY
Meet y'all at home, all right? I
got a big surprise waitin' for you!

Mama gives Dolly a smile, then puts her arm around her husband, comforting him. As they walk off, Dolly watches.

EXT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly pulls up to a ramshackle cabin in the Smoky Mountain foothills. Thick groves of pine trees, familiar from the opening sequence. Beautiful, but a dirt poor, tough life.

Dolly parks. Gets out, takes it all in. She watches a BUTTERFLY float by. Gorgeous. Peaceful.

But the moment of calm is interrupted by her Daddy's truck.

INT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly opens the door, her parents trailing. Mama so excited, Daddy relieved to be home as he yanks off his tie.

DOLLY

Ta-da! Had 'em deliver it while we was downtown.

The cabin's been transformed. New chairs, sofa, everything. Mama lights up. Daddy's face drops.

AVIE LEE

Oh my word, Dolly! Thank you!

Avie hugs Dolly, who then turns to Daddy, hoping for a smile at least. He nods, heads outside. She's crushed yet again.

AVIE LEE (CONT'D)

Don't give him no mind.

INT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly explores, trying to shake off her Daddy's reaction. She sees the twin bed she shared with her sisters. The newspaper-covered walls. All the memories flooding back...

In a closet, she finds a trunk of old childhood clothes. Her eyes go wide at a hand-sewn coat of multi-colored rags.

EXT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. PORCH. CONTINUOUS.

Lee chain smokes. Dolly comes out, holding the coat proudly.

DOLLY

Remember this ol' thing? Mama made it for me. I loved it so much.

Lee nods again, almost smiles. But keeps smoking silently.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Do you like the new chairs and all?

LEE

Don't spend your money on us.

DOLLY

I make 60 grand a year. What else am I going to spend it on?

Dolly's trying to keep it light, but he's stung. It dawns on her -- *that's more money than he's made his whole life.*

DOLLY (CONT'D)
 Sorry about the newspaper. But you
 got nothin' to be ashamed of.

LEE
 I ain't ashamed.

But he clearly is. He just has too much pride to admit it.

DOLLY
 Porter was just bein' nice. You
 coulda been nice too. He's my boss.

Lee half-turns. He seems about to say something, impart some
 wisdom, maybe an olive branch. Dolly holds her breath...

LEE
 I may not know much. But I know
 that man is a sack of bullshit.

She slumps, having disappointed him yet again. Mama comes out-

DOLLY
 Bye, Mama. Love you.

AVIE LEE
 Love you more! Say, did Uncle Bill
 get signed at RCA Records too?

DOLLY
 Yeah. It's complicated. Love y'all!

Dolly climbs into her car and escapes.

INT. DOLLY'S CADILLAC. LATER.

Dolly drives, knocked down a few pegs. She looks at the multi-
 colored coat. Starts to hum a new tune, what will become
 "Coat of Many Colors". Closes her eyes, to the God Place...

DOLLY
*Back through the years I go
 wanderin' once again...*

HONK!!!!!!!!!!

DOLLY (CONT'D)
 Sorry!

She looks for a pen. Spots the dry-cleaning tag of Porter's
 Nudie Suit. She jerks the car over, cutting someone else off.

She parks, and scribbles lyrics onto the dry-cleaning tag.

LATER.

Back in Nashville. Dolly pulls into a familiar alley...

INT. RYMAN THEATER. BASEMENT. MOMENTS LATER.

She passes the hissing boiler, on her own this time.

INT. RYMAN THEATER. COSTUME DEPARTMENT. MOMENTS LATER.

Inspired by the woman on the street corner, Dolly marvels at the wigs. She eyes the TRULY OVER-THE-TOP WIG again. Tempted, but she's not ready. She settles for a slightly smaller one.

INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. LOBBY. NIGHT. DAYS LATER.

Back in the fanciest hotel in town for the Country Music Awards. Black tie, industry bigshots. Dolly, in a gown and new wig, smiles at Carl, uncomfortable in an ill-fitting tux.

DOLLY
Means a lot you came.

Carl manages a smile. Chet Atkins approaches--

CHET
Dolly, you look amazing!

DOLLY
Why thank you! This here's my
husband, Carl.

Carl is silent, awkward as he shakes Chet's hand.

CHET
I was startin' to think Dolly made
you up! What line of work you in?

CARL
Asphalt.

CHET
Well, I'll be. Say, how's it feel
to be Mr. Dolly Parton?

Carl winces. Chet laughs, slaps him on the shoulder.

INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. BALLROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

An ASSISTANT leads Dolly and Carl down the aisle. Porter turns from his seat in the third row, waves to Dolly.

PORTER

There she is! You know John, June.

Dolly looks down the row... it's Johnny Cash and June Carter!

JUNE

You could hit heaven with that hair. I love it!

Dolly smiles and waves. Porter shakes Carl's hand.

PORTER

Good to see you, hoss. Kiss your gal goodbye now. Show's startin'.

DOLLY

But Carl's sittin' with me.

PORTER

Just talent down here.

Dolly smiles an apology to Carl.

CARL

Where the hell'm I supposed to sit?

ASSISTANT

Happy to show you, Mr. Parton.

What the fuck. Carl exhales as he gets whisked away--

DOLLY

Love you!

Dolly sits. The lights lower. Porter shakes a pill from a PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE, downs it. He notices Dolly watching--

PORTER

Nervous?

Dolly nods. Porter smiles, puts his hand on her knee. She almost moves it, but doesn't. The relationship shifting...

ONSTAGE. LATER.

Chet Atkins at the podium--

CHEET

It is my honor to announce the 1968
vocal group of the year... Porter
Wagoner and Dolly Parton!

Dolly lights up. APPLAUSE. The orchestra plays. Porter and
Dolly head up, holding hands. He steps to the mic.

PORTER

Thank you very much Chet, and
everyone with CMA. We are certainly
real pleased. Thank you so much,
we're real grateful.

All Dolly has the time or courage to say is, mouse-like--

DOLLY

Thank you.

They're a duo now, but Porter's in charge. They head to their
seats, his arm over her shoulder. Like two kids going steady.

Sitting a mile away, Carl seethes. Next to him, Ruth Wagoner
claps politely, her permanent smile still plastered on.

INT. LIMO. LATER.

Dolly and Carl are silent, tense. He stares out the window.

DOLLY

You ain't never gonna be Mr. Dolly
Parton. You hear me? Never.

Carl looks in her eyes, speaks slowly and deliberately.

CARL

I'm not coming to one of these
things ever again. I ain't turning
into Porter's wife.

She nods. Point taken. She holds his hand. Peace. For now...

EXT. SMALL COUNTRY STADIUM. OFFSTAGE. NIGHT.

Dolly and Porter back on the road. It never ends. They're in
the wings discussing the set list with the Wagonmasters.

PORTER

"Just the Two of Us", then "Always
Always", then-

DOLLY
 "Coat of Many Colors".

PORTER
 No. Too downbeat. And last time I
 checked, this ain't the Dolly
 Parton Show. Don, what show is it?

DON
 Porter Wagoner Show, Chief.

PORTER
 That's right. Don't you forget it.

Yikes. Dolly's stung. A tense silence descends over the band.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 I'm kiddin'! 'Course you can sing
 it. But don't say I didn't warn ya.

Porter moves off. Don stays with Dolly, offers a warm smile.

DON
 Piece of advice. Girl singers got a
 shelf life 'round here, once Chief
 thinks they're too big for their
 britches. Hell, we all got a shelf
 life. But I don't want what
 happened to Norma to happen to you.

Don heads to the stage. Leaves Dolly pondering...

EXT. SMALL COUNTRY STADIUM. ONSTAGE. LATER.

The crowd ROARS as they finish "Always, Always", one of their
 many love duets. Now time for "Coat". Dolly's all nerves.

DOLLY
*Back through the years I go
 wanderin' once again / Back to the
 seasons of my youth...*

It's slow. Just as Porter predicted, the crowd gets restless.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*I recall a box of rags that someone
 gave us / And how my Mama put the
 rags to use...*

CROWD
 Two Sides!! Two Sides!! Two Sides!!

Dolly looks to Porter. He steps in, happy to be the savior--

PORTER
Y'all want "Two Sides to Every
Story?" Well, OK. You're the boss!

WOOOO!!!!!! And Dolly begrudgingly sings it yet again.

INT. TOUR BUS. LATER.

An overnight drive. Dolly's discouraged. Porter pontificates.

PORTER
Country songs are about three
things: drinkin', cheatin', and
heartbreak. "Coat of Many Colors"
breaks the mold. Not in a good way.

DOLLY
But it's about how I grew up.

PORTER
It's about your Mama's rags! Quit
writin' about poor folk. Poor folk
don't buy records. You gotta go
uptempo. No more sad-ass songs.

DOLLY
My songs ain't sad-ass!

PORTER
C'mon. What about "Gypsy, Joe and
Me"? A couple out walking their
dog. The guy dies, the dog dies,
and the girl commits suicide!

DOLLY
That happened to someone I know!
Shouldn't I write what I know?

PORTER
Not if you don't know much! Write
what sells. Uptempo, catchy. Don,
can you help this little lady out?

A row back, Don thinks, then rips off a CATCHY GUITAR LICK.

DON
"Mule Skinner Blues".

Perfect. Porter shoots her a look. Dolly nods, conceding to
the boss yet again. DON'S GUITAR bleeds into...

INT. RECORDING STUDIO BOOTH. DAY.

A full band, fanciest studio yet. The song is pure Porter. Brassy, showy, fun. Dolly steps up, has nothing to lose...

DOLLY

Well good moooooooooorning Captain!

Whoa! She holds the "o" for an insane amount of time.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Good morning to you sir, hey, hey,
yeah / Do you need another mule
skinner, down on your new mud run?*

She is KICKING FUCKING ASS. Across the room, Porter lets out a WHISTLE. He holds a whip. Lets it fly -- CRACK!

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Well I'm a lady mule skinner from
down old Tennessee way / Hey hey!*

She's having a ball. So's Porter. He watches her, transfixed.

PORTER (PRE-LAP)

Like to propose a toast!

INT. TOOTSIE'S ORCHID LOUNGE. LATER.

The famous bar behind the Ryman. Signed photos cover the walls. Patsy Cline, Hank Williams. Porter raises a shot.

PORTER

*Y'all know it's a special night if
I'm drinkin'! Here's to Dolly, who
found God in that studio. May you
never sing a sad-ass song again!*

CLINK! Down the hatch. A euphoric energy to the affair.

DON

*And to the Chief, who did what he
does best. Crack a damn whip!*

CHEERS. Dolly laughs. More shots... and more... and more...

EXT. TOOTSIE'S ORCHID LOUNGE. LATER.

Porter and Dolly stumble out of the bar. Both wasted.

DOLLY

I don't wanna go home yet! Carl'll
just be in bed, snorin'.

PORTER

We could have a nightcap at my
place. Ruth's at her sister's.

Dolly hesitates, tempted...

DOLLY

Probably shouldn't.

PORTER

OK. But I'm givin' you a ride home.

DOLLY

I can drive myself, thank you.

PORTER

No you cannot. You're five feet. I
can carry my liquor better'n you.

Dolly gets up in his face, almost flirtatiously--

DOLLY

Then let's go. *Chauffeur*.

INT. PORTER'S CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.

Porter drives, eyes Dolly. He's the softest we've seen him.

PORTER

You were really somethin' today.

DOLLY

Just followin' orders, captain.

PORTER

Nah. You were special. Like God was
singin' right through you.

DOLLY

Stop! I'm gettin' red as an apple.

PORTER

I've had a lotta girl singers. You
got more talent than all of 'em
combined. Someday you're gonna
change the world.

Dolly's never heard this level of belief in her -- not from
Carl, not from anyone. And coming from the King of Country...

It's intoxicating.

They lock eyes. The energy of the night, the sexual tension over the years, it's bubbling up. About to boil over...

INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly and Porter bust through the door. Kissing, groping, ripping each other's clothes off, clawing at each other--

INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

They jump in bed. But before we see the deed, we CUT TO--

THE NEXT MORNING.

Dolly jolts awake. Hungover as hell. And Porter's long gone.

A note on the bedside table: *At work. See you later.*

EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly exits into the blinding sun, a mess, in last night's clothes. Classic walk of shame. Euphoria replaced by reality.

She looks for her car. Not there. She remembers: Tootsie's.

DOLLY

Shit.

EXT. TOOTSIE'S PARKING LOT. LATER.

Dolly climbs out of a cab, embarrassed. Hops in her car. Inspects herself in the rearview. She looks like sex.

DOLLY

Shit.

INT. DOLLY'S CADILLAC. LATER.

Dolly drives toward her house. Sees Carl working in his shed.

DOLLY

Shit!

She scoots down in the front seat and drives right by.

EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. LATER.

Dolly parks next to Porter's car. No other cars in the lot.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly sneaks in. Looks both ways. Coast clear.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. LATER.

Dolly takes a shower, wiping her face and body of last night.

EXT. NASHVILLE STREETS. LATER.

Dolly drives, freshly showered, still overwhelmed.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly opens the front door. Takes a breath, snaps on a smile.

DOLLY

Hey Carl! Sorry! We were at the
studio 'til all hours. Then a few
of us had a little too much to
drink after. I crashed on a couch!

Carl comes into the foyer. Gives her a small smile.

CARL

Sounds fun.

Dolly heads upstairs. Her face falls, racked with guilt. Carl watches her, knows something's off, but bites his tongue.

PRE-LAP: The upbeat GUITAR STRUMS of "Joshua"...

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAY.

CLOSE ON Porter's big ol' grin, the Wagonmasters behind him.

PORTER

Always a thrill for me to introduce
this little lady. She's gonna sing
her first number one country song
she wrote and recorded, "Joshua".
Pretty Miss Dolly Parton!

CAMERA PULLS BACK to find Dolly, in front of Porter and the band. She is the leader, they are backup. Power shifting...

She's grinning, bopping along to the beat in a big ol' wig.

DOLLY
*Well a good ways down the railroad
 track / There was this little old
 rundown shack...*

It's an upbeat crowd-pleaser, just like "Mule Skinner". She's doing what Porter's taught her, and damn is it working.

The song continues over a **MONTAGE** of the next few months:

INT. RYMAN THEATER. NIGHT.

Porter is onstage in all his glory -- pompadour sky-high, Nudie Suit sparkling like a diamond. Women swoon and shriek.

Porter then points to the wings. As Dolly struts onstage...

The place FUCKING ERUPTS.

Porter counts off the band, and he and Dolly are off...

INT. RYMAN THEATER. BACKSTAGE. LATER.

Post-show, all alone, Dolly and Porter make out in the wings.

EXT. RYMAN THEATER STAGE DOOR. LATER.

Dolly and Porter exit together. A swarm of RABID FANS push for autographs. The duo happily oblige.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO. ANOTHER DAY.

More photo shoots of Dolly and Porter DUET ALBUM COVERS--

FLASH! Their faces side-by-side, framed by '70s psychedelic art. Dolly's wig is now just as high as Porter's pompadour.

FLASH! The pair separated, staring off. Lovers, mid-fight.

And now some DOLLY SOLO ALBUM COVERS--

FLASH! Dolly alone on a couch, surrounded by throw pillows, looking like a badass in a blue satin dress and curly wig.

FLASH! Dolly peering out towards the golden rays of heaven.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAY.

A show taping. Porter and Dolly ham it up as they sing a duet. They smile, pout, flirt. The crowd eats it up.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. LATER.

An ASSISTANT rolls a mail cart down the hall. Hands Porter a few letters, then brings a HUGE BAG to Dolly.

Porter just stares, not used to being second fiddle.

EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. LATER.

Dolly shows off a brand new gold Cadillac. She smiles proudly as Don and the band are impressed. She hops in to head home--

But Porter yells to her from the studio door. *She ain't done yet.* Dolly's surprised but obeys. He's still the boss.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. CONTROL ROOM. LATER.

Porter points at the paused show tape, Dolly next to him. His critiques a little harsher than before. She just nods, bored.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Dolly enters late. She tiptoes upstairs.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

She gets in bed, long day. Carl's eyes open. Suspicious...

END MONTAGE.**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. THE NEXT MORNING.**

Dolly packs for yet another tour. Carl watches, silent.

DOLLY

Chattanooga on Thursday, Knoxville
Friday. What you gonna do when I'm
gone? Go out dancin'?

CARL

Gutters gotta be cleaned.

DOLLY

We can pay someone to do that now.

CARL

I like doin' it.

DOLLY

Ok. Whatever makes you happy.

Dolly zips up her suitcase, notices how tense he seems.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

When I get back, I got a big ol' surprise for you. I mean, big. I'm gonna miss you so damn much, Carl.

She kisses him, heads out. Carl sits there. Then, to no one--

CARL

I miss you so damn much, kid.

INT. WAGONMASTERS BUS. MAIN CABIN. LATER.

Porter shows off a brand new, pimped-out tour bus to Dolly. The interior is covered in gold and rhinestones. He leads Dolly through a curtain to the back of the bus.

PORTER

The staterooms! This here's mine.

He opens a door. A purple velour bedroom, monogrammed "PW".

DOLLY

Wow! Well ain't this grand.

Across the aisle, Porter opens a door to a smaller room.

PORTER

And here you are, neighbor. Got you those white lace curtains you like. You can close 'em in the morning so the sun won't wake you. And it won't wake me either.

Porter winks at her. Dolly blushes.

DOLLY

This is amazing. Thank you, Porter.

PORTER

Long way from Sevierville, ain't it? This here's only the beginning.

He kisses her. She kisses back, but then stops him.

DOLLY
I gotta go warm up. We got a show!

PORTER
Yeah, yeah. You sound like me.

DOLLY
Ain't that the idea?

He laughs. She smiles, slaps him playfully and ducks out.

EXT. COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL. BACKSTAGE. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly strides to the stage. A confidence in her step. But--

MAN (O.S.)
Dolly?

Dolly spins. It's Uncle Bill! Hair still slicked back, but with deeper wrinkles. Dolly squeezes him into a hug.

DOLLY
Uncle Bill! How you doin'?

UNCLE BILL
Fine. Playin' gigs. New wife. Same ol'. Haven't seen you in a minute.

DOLLY
Sorry. Been real busy.

UNCLE BILL
Did you get my messages?

DOLLY
(she didn't)
I sure did.

UNCLE BILL
What do you think then?

DOLLY
Well, I think it's a great idea.
Anything for you, Bill.

UNCLE BILL
So there's room for me in the band?

DOLLY
Oh. Well, no. We're full up.

She's caught. His tone turns from friendly to accusatory.

UNCLE BILL
You didn't get my messages, did ya?

DOLLY
I'm sorry Bill, I been-

UNCLE BILL
Busy.

He heads off. Dolly watches him go, overwhelmed by guilt.

INT. COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL. STAGE. NIGHT.

Dolly and Porter play for a huge crowd. In the spotlight, Dolly's outfit and hair are just as bold as his.

As they finish a song, a FAN in the front row screams--

FAN
We love you, Dolly Parton!!!

Porter smiles, trying to get used to playing the sidekick.

INT. WAGONMASTERS BUS. DOLLY'S STATEROOM. LATER.

Late night, Dolly's in bed, scribbling in a notebook. KNOCK.

DOLLY
Come in!

Porter enters, smiling. Dolly barely looks up, keeps writing.

PORTER
Did you hear them calling for ya
tonight? "We love you Dolly!"

DOLLY
It was mighty nice.

Porter sees she's busy, turns to go, a little disappointed--

PORTER
Well, I just wanted to say hi.

DOLLY
Porter?

Porter turns back with a smile.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
I saw Uncle Bill before the show.

PORTER
Uncle who?

DOLLY
We used to play together. He's a fine guitarist. Could we use him?

PORTER
He ever been in a real band?

DOLLY
None you've heard of.

PORTER
Well then there's your answer.

Porter sits down next to her on the bed.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Dolly, you're entering a new world. Not everyone from your old world is gonna get brought along. There just ain't the space or the time.

Dolly takes this in, wondering who else that might apply to.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Say, what you doin' this weekend?

DOLLY
Takin' Carl to see a house. In Brentwood. Your neck of the woods.

PORTER
Good for you! Why don't you stop by after? I wanna talk to you about somethin'. Somethin' important.

DOLLY
Sure thing.

He puts her hand on Dolly's back. Starts to stroke it, when--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
I'm tryin' to get some work done.

Porter takes his hand away, as she goes back to writing.

PORTER
Course. Goodnight, Dolly.

DOLLY

Night.

He goes, feeling rejected, trying to hide it. Once he's gone, she stops writing, wondering what she's gotten herself into.

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MORNING. DAYS LATER.

Dolly drives with Carl in shotgun. Turns onto a fancy street. We recognize the neighborhood from Chet's Christmas party.

CARL

Why you draggin' me way out here?

DOLLY

What kinda surprise would it be if I just told you? Close your eyes.

CARL

Ain't in the mood for games, Dolly.

DOLLY

C'mon now!

He sighs, covers his eyes as she pulls up to a massive house.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Ta-da! Welcome home.

He takes his hand away. Looks up at the mansion, dumbfounded.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Just gotta sign the paperwork. Loan officer's expecting us later today.

Carl doesn't know what to say.

CARL

What about my shed?

DOLLY

I dunno. You can build a new one. Got a buncha acres out back.

CARL

What if I don't want a new one?

Dolly's smile falters, but she pushes through.

DOLLY

Buncha bedrooms too. Plenty of space for nurseries and bunk beds.

CARL

Oh, you ready for kids now? Feelin' far enough along in your career?

DOLLY

'Course. I mean... Once things slow down a little with Porter.

Carl scoffs. Dolly's smile finally drops.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

I did this for us, Carl. I know I been away a lot. But I'm trying to make it up to you.

CARL

But I don't want some big dumb house, Dolly. I just want you!

Dolly's moved. She knows Carl has always been there for her. And she feels terrible that she hasn't been there for him.

CARL (CONT'D)

Way I see it is: all this money, this big ol' house, it could all go away. And we'd still have each other. That's all that matters.

Dolly melts. She's reminded of why she married him. He's solid. She leans over and kisses him. A tender, warm moment.

DOLLY

From now on, I'm gonna stay at home as much as I possibly can. Promise.

Carl nods, skeptical but appreciative. Dolly starts the car--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Just gotta make one more stop.

EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly pulls into the last place Carl wants to be. He glares.

DOLLY

I know. I'm sorry. It's some big work thing. I'll be quick as I-

PORTER (O.S.)

Am I lookin' at my new neighbors?

They both wince as Porter bounds down the driveway in a plaid golf outfit, Arnold Palmer in hand. Dolly snaps on a smile.

DOLLY
Looks that way!

Porter leans on the open car window, grinning.

PORTER
Congrats! Say, you a golfer, hoss?

Carl just shakes his head no.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Well I'm like the mayor over at the club. Could get you in no problem. They got a great pro if you want some lessons. Hell, I could take you out, show you a few things!

Carl can't even look at Porter. Dolly gets out of the car.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Well, I'm gonna steal our Dolly for a minute. Beer while you wait?

Carl doesn't answer him. Any rekindled warmth between he and Dolly has cooled. She tries to save face with Porter, smiles--

DOLLY
Maybe next time.

Dolly and Porter walk to the house. Carl watches, and fumes.

PRE-LAP: The sound of a champagne cork POPPING...

INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Sitting on opposite couches, Porter pours Dolly a glass.

DOLLY
I ain't got time for a cocktail party. And when did you start drinkin' anyway?

PORTER
Today's a special day.

Dolly considers. *He's still the boss.* She picks up the glass.

PORTER (CONT'D)
To our future.

DOLLY
Nah. To Porter Wagoner.

PORTER

To us.

Cheers. They smile at each other, sip.

PORTER (CONT'D)

That's what I wanna talk about.
See, I been real proud of you.
You're the best bet I ever made.

DOLLY

Aw, thank you.

PORTER

But I think we could be bigger.
Country music ain't just for the
South now. People up North, out
West, they're watching our show.

DOLLY

Yeah, I just got some fan mail from
Maine. Might as well be Timbuktu.

PORTER

Hell, they'll know us there next!
See, I been talkin' to Chet. We're
gonna move the show into a bigger
studio. Up the production value,
get it into more markets. Gonna
start tourin' out West. And we're
doublin' down on the duets.

Dolly sips, hesitates.

DOLLY

What about my solo career?

PORTER

Sure, on the side. But you and me,
that's our bread and butter.

DOLLY

But Chet told me my solo albums are
doin' better than the duet albums.

PORTER

Really? He told me somethin' else.

Porter takes a sip, poker-facing. Dolly tries to change the
subject, looks to the other room. The house is eerily quiet.

DOLLY

Where's Ruth?

PORTER

Oh, that. I haven't told anyone yet, not even Don. She moved out.

DOLLY

Oh God. I'm so sorry, Porter.

PORTER

I ain't. We're callin' it a trial separation, but it's been dead for years. Had to keep up appearances. The fans like it if I'm a family man. Life's a show, Dolly.

Porter touches her hand.

PORTER (CONT'D)

But it's for the best. Sometimes, one person's gotta leave so you have space for another.

Dolly blushes, pulls her hand away. He refills her glass.

PORTER (CONT'D)

So. How was the house hunt?

DOLLY

All right I guess.

PORTER

You know, why you buyin' a house when you could just move in here?

Dolly eyes Porter smiling. Unclear if he's kidding or showing a hint of vulnerability. A HONK outside. She's relieved.

DOLLY

I should go.

PORTER

Hold on. Don't leave without telling me what you think. About us, takin' it to the next level.

DOLLY

Yeah. It all sounds... intriguing.

Not at all what Porter was hoping for. She's poker-facing too, gotten good at playing his game.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Let's keep talking. See you Monday.

He watches her go. His smile drops, rejected again, unsure how much longer he can hang on before she surpasses him...

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly rushes out to Carl waiting in the car, hops in.

CARL
What was that all about?

DOLLY
... He said he wants to tour more.
All around the country.

CARL
You tell him you wanna spend more
time at home?

DOLLY
... I said I'll think about it.

Carl scoffs, starts up the engine. Dolly sinks, embarrassed.

INT. NASHVILLE SAVINGS AND LOAN. OFFICE. LATER.

Dolly and Carl sit, tension still lingering. Across a desk, a LOAN OFFICER gives advice--

LOAN OFFICER
I'd recommend a 30-year fixed...

A SECRETARY enters with coffee. She's objectively gorgeous. Porcelain skin, fiery-red hair.

LOAN OFFICER (CONT'D)
Thank you, hon.

She hands a coffee to Carl, smiling. Clearly has a crush on him. Usually he's only got eyes for Dolly, but this time...

CARL
What's your name there?

SECRETARY
Jolene.

CARL
That's gotta be the most beautiful
name I ever heard. You married?

SECRETARY
Not yet.

CARL

One day you're gonna make some guy
the luckiest man in the world.

They share a smile. Dolly can't believe it, glares at Jolene.

LOAN OFFICER

Sir? 30-year fixed then?

CARL

Oh, talk to my wife. I'm just Mr.
Dolly Parton.

Dolly's glare turns to Carl. He stands with a smile, crosses
to flirt with Jolene in the lobby. Dolly watches, stunned.

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.

Carl drives, smirking slightly. Dolly seethes.

DOLLY

What the hell were you doin' with
that woman?

CARL

Her? Oh, nothin'. Just talkin'
about goin' on tour.

Dolly sees he's not to be fucked with. So she escapes,
closing her eyes to create...

DOLLY (PRE-LAP)

Y'all wanna hear the lick?

INT. RECORDING STUDIO BOOTH. DAY. WEEKS LATER.

Dolly holds a guitar, surrounded by the band, ready to learn
her new song. Porter watches from the side, feels left out.

PORTER

Step aside. I can teach 'em.

DOLLY

I got it, Porter.

Porter suddenly grabs a guitar, trying to maintain dominance.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Well, OK. You're the chief. We're
just part of the tribe.

The Wagonmasters stifle laughs. Don laughs loudest.

Porter plays the lick, clunky and awkward. Dolly watches him try, fail again. Finally, she takes over, plays it perfectly.

He gives up, emasculated. But snaps on a smile.

PORTER
I'll be in the booth.

The band all watch Dolly as she keeps playing the HYPNOTIC, LOOPING GUITAR LICK of "Jolene". It bleeds into:

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAY.

A show taping. Dolly alone in the spotlight, totally at ease.

DOLLY
*Jolene, Jolene, Jolene, Jolene /
I'm begging of you please don't
take my man...*

The song is a blend of Porter -- catchy, uptempo -- with Dolly's emotion and vulnerability. She's finding her voice.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*Jolene, Jolene, Jolene, Jolene /
Please don't take him just because
you can...*

The crowd loves it. But in the dark, Porter simmers with envy. He watches, pops a pill from his PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE...

EXT. ANOTHER ROAD GIG. STAGE. DAYS LATER.

Dolly and Porter back onstage. As she finishes a solo, the crowd ROARS. And Porter's jealousy starts to boil over...

PORTER
Surprised that wig hasn't knocked
ya over yet, Dolly. But hey y'all,
ain't she just about the prettiest
piece o' white trash you ever saw?

The crowd laughs. Porter grins at Dolly. She's hurt. Their honeymoon may be ending. But she's a pro, snaps on a smile.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. LATER.

Another night, another anonymous hotel room. Dolly, under the sheets, watches Porter rummage through the minibar.

DOLLY

Why you makin' fun of my wig? Ain't there no such thing as too big?

PORTER

Darlin', I didn't know there was 'til I met you.

DOLLY

You wanted me to wear 'em! Then I get a big one, you don't like it.

PORTER

Geez! I was just joshin' ya, like always. But OK. No more wig talk.

He crosses to hand her a mini-bottle of vodka, opens one of his own. Sits on the bed, smiles at her...

PORTER (CONT'D)

You give it a think yet? The tour and all? I been patient, last few weeks. But I can't wait forever.

DOLLY

Yeah... I appreciate you believin' in me, Porter, I do. But I always wanted to be a solo act. So I think I need to focus on that for now.

He nods, stands. His smile vanishes.

PORTER

So you think you know better than me? 40 years in this business ain't worth shit, huh?

DOLLY

I ain't sayin' that! I just have my own goals. And everythin' can't always be on your terms.

PORTER

Goddamn. Is there a ghost in here? You sound just like Norma Jean.

Dolly stops. That's a name he never mentions. Porter eyes her, makes sure that he unnerved her. Then kisses her cheek.

PORTER (CONT'D)

But you look a helluva lot better.

He heads to the bathroom. Dolly considers, then--

DOLLY
What happened with Norma?

PORTER
Oh God, let's not get into it.

DOLLY
Tell me. Why'd she leave?

PORTER
You really wanna know? Fine. This opportunity you're passin' up like it ain't shit, I've never given it to anyone. It's what Norma wanted, take our thing to the next level. But I knew she wasn't the one. So I said no. And she started actin' real unprofessional. So I -- we -- decided it was time to move on.

He's not telling her everything. So she goes for the jugular--

DOLLY
Were you sleeping together?

He shoots her a look. *Of course.* Dolly's stunned, swallows a truth she's been denying. Carl was right all along. *Shit.*

DOLLY (CONT'D)
So you go to bed with all your girl singers? That why you hired me?

PORTER
No! I hired you 'cause you're good.

Dolly nods, sees him in a whole new light now. Porter glares, feels spurned. The fun of the night, and the affair, is over.

PORTER (CONT'D)
I gotta get some rest. Why don't you head on back to your room?

DOLLY
This is my room.

PORTER
Oh. Well I don't want nobody to see me in the hall. You know, gotta keep up appearances. Mind trading?

He gives her his most charming -- and chilling -- smile.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly, dressed, carries her shoes down the hall. Humiliated.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly plops onto the bed in an identical room. Looks around. Porter's Nudie Suits in the closet. His boots on the floor.

She stares, shell-shocked. *She's in way over her head.*

EXT. ANOTHER ROAD GIG. STAGE. THE NEXT NIGHT.

Dolly and Porter onstage. Both with an axe to grind tonight.

PORTER

This here's the apple of my eye, or
maybe the pebble in my shoe. Pretty
little Miss Dolly Parton!

Porter puts his arm around her. But she's had enough.

DOLLY

Why you always callin' me pretty
and little?

PORTER

Because you're pretty, and little!

He cackles. Dolly fumes, another eruption brewing. But rather than blow up, she does something more defiant. She DISOBEYS.

DOLLY

Well now this pretty little gal's
gonna sing a pretty little song
about her pretty little childhood,
up in the hollers of East
Tennessee. "Coat of Many Colors".

Porter's confused. *Not on the set list.* Dolly looks at Don, who nods back at her in solidarity. He starts up the band--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Back through the years I go
wanderin' once again / Back to the
seasons of my youth...*

Unlike last time, the crowd loves the song. Either she's a better performer, or "Coat" breaks the mold. *In a good way.*

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*Now I know we had no money / But I
 was rich as I could be / In my coat
 of many colors / My Mama made for
 me / Made just for me...*

As Dolly wraps up the song, the crowd goes ABSOLUTELY NUTS.

CROWD
 Dol-ly! Dol-ly! Dol-ly!

This is the first time they've chanted for only her. She blushes. Porter grins, but underneath his blood boils.

INT. WAGONMASTERS BUS. DOLLY'S STATEROOM. LATER.

Dolly's in bed, writing. KNOCK. Before she can even say "Come in", Porter's in. With a bottle of bourbon, slurring.

PORTER
 "Coat" wasn't on the set list.

Dolly tries to ignore him. He snatches her paper away.

DOLLY
 Porter! I'm working!

He leans in for a kiss. She dodges. He grabs her by the waist. She scrambles away.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
 Just cause we've rolled around a
 handful of times don't mean I'll go
 to bed with you whenever you want.

PORTER
 Jesus. That's all this is to you?

DOLLY
 Porter. Go back to your room.

PORTER
 I offered you the keys to the
 kingdom. You coulda been the June
 to my Johnny. But no. You're only
 interested in your-damn-self.

DOLLY
 You're just jealous! Ego's so big
 you'd rather die than see me
 succeed without you.

Porter stares daggers at her.

PORTER
At least I'm not tryin' to sleep my
way to the top.

Dolly looks at him, stunned. *That was ugly.* He smiles,
knowing he got to her. Then he lunges and grabs her hard--

DOLLY
NO PORTER! FUCK OFF!

She shoves him away. Stung, Porter glares at her.

PORTER
I'd be careful if I was you.

He stalks out. Off Dolly, trying to stay strong, but rattled.

INT. WAGONMASTERS BUS. MAIN CABIN. CONTINUOUS.

The Wagonmasters sit around, playing poker, picking a guitar.
Porter comes out. They all heard Dolly. They stare.

PORTER
What the hell y'all lookin' at?

Don locks eyes with Porter, disappointed. Porter ducks into
his stateroom, tail between his legs.

EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LATER.

The bus pulls into the driveway. Dolly climbs off. Porter
follows her, pulls her into a hug, kisses her cheek.

PORTER
Night, little lady.

He pinches her ass as she goes. Dolly swats him away. *Ugh.*

From an upstairs window, Carl watches, observing it all...

EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. THE NEXT DAY.

Dolly opens the front door, blinded by the midday sun. She
sees Carl driving a small tractor, moving a boulder.

DOLLY
Tried to kiss you last night when I
came in. You were out like a log.

He doesn't even look at her.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
What you doin' there?

CARL
Movin' rocks.

DOLLY
We can pay someone to do that.

CARL
Why pay someone when you can do it
your damn self?

Dolly's surprised by his shortness. She squints at the sun.

DOLLY
What time is it?

CARL
Who knows.

DOLLY
Well, shit. It's late. Let's eat.

She's extending an olive branch. But he just keeps working.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
C'mon. Just us. It'll be nice.

He finally looks at her, turns off the tractor. She smiles.

INT. ARNOLD'S COUNTRY KITCHEN. LATER.

A hot bar. Fried chicken, dumplings, collard greens. A Nashville "Meat & 3" -- a choice of meat and three sides.

A SHY FEMALE COOK serves Dolly.

DOLLY
... I'll do the mac and cheese.
Collards. And aw hell, why not, a
biscuit. I ain't driving!

COOK
Sorry. Are you Dolly Parton?

DOLLY
I sure am. Who are you?

COOK
Nobody.

DOLLY
Come on now. You're somebody.
Everybody's somebody.

COOK
Tammy.

DOLLY
Nice to meet you, Tammy. I'm Dolly.

TAMMY
I just love your songs. Like you're
singin' for all us workin' women.

DOLLY
Well thank you, Tammy! Since you
like me so much, will you give me a
little extra gravy for my chicken?

TAMMY
You can get as much gravy as you
want, Ms. Parton!

Dolly's all smiles. Carl waits, getting frustrated.

DOLLY
I'll be thinkin' 'bout you, Tammy.

Tammy melts. Dolly and Carl bring the trays to a table, sit.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
So why you movin' all them rocks?

CARL
Stone wall.

But Dolly's distracted by a FAMILY waving at her. Carl sighs.

DOLLY
Sorry, I just gotta sign one more-

CARL
You get up from this table,
there'll be divorce papers on it by
the time you sit back down.

Dolly straightens up.

DOLLY
What's gotten into you?

CARL
Are you sleeping with Porter?

DOLLY
Excuse me?

CARL
Are you or are you not sleeping
with Porter Wagoner?

DOLLY
Don't be ridiculous.

CARL
You spend 24/7 with the man.

DOLLY
He's my boss.

CARL
I got a boss, and I don't spend
24/7 with him.

DOLLY
We do a weekly show. We tour. We
record. It takes a lot of time.

CARL
Time. You got time for everyone but
me. All the time in the world for
the people at this Meat & 3.

DOLLY
They're my fans, Carl. It all takes
time. This is the job.

CARL
Well I'm your goddamn husband. And
I need some goddamn time too!

People are starting to notice. Dolly smiles at them. *Nothing to see here.* She pauses, considers how much to divulge...

DOLLY
No, Carl. Porter and I. We ain't.

CARL
Ain't what?

DOLLY
Doin' what you think we're doing.

Carl tears off a bite of chicken, studying her.

CARL
You sure now?

DOLLY
Yes Carl! I think I'd know.

Carl nods, satisfied for now. Dolly tries to change subjects.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
So then. How's the dang wall goin'?

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. BEDROOM. LATER.

From her upstairs window, Dolly watches Carl in his new shed. Overcome with guilt. Knows she's losing him. *What can she do?*

EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. CARL'S SHED. LATER.

Dolly knocks. Carl looks up, keeps cutting wood. Dolly rubs his back, kisses his ear. He leans away--

CARL
Not sure I'm in the mood, kid.

She reaches down, down, down to his crotch, turning him on...

DOLLY
I know I haven't been giving my man
what he needs.

Carl can't resist, despite himself. He lunges to undress her--

CARL
Got a condom?

DOLLY
We don't need one.

Carl stops, looks at her.

CARL
You sure?

Dolly nods. Carl hesitates, skeptical, but the heat of the moment wins out. He picks her up by her thighs, places her on his workbench. He stands between her legs. And enters her.

DOLLY
There's my man. My Carl Dean.

They kiss. And then fuck. Hard. An edge to it. Almost angry.

CARL
Am I your man?

DOLLY
You're... my... man!!!

Carl finishes. They share a smile.

CARL
Kept your eyes open this time.

DOLLY
You make me feel safe.

Carl smiles deeply.

CARL
Look at you, kid. How you've grown.

DOLLY
You too.

She motions to his CROTCH. He laughs heartily. She giggles. Two peas in a pod. He exits her, both smiling. But then--

Dolly SCREAMS, doubles over in pain, holding her stomach...

CARL
You OK? What's happening?

Off Dolly, letting out a DISTURBING WAIL...

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LATER.

Carl holds a hot compress to Dolly's stomach, on a couch.

CARL
How often's this happen?

DOLLY
Around my period. Just cramps.

CARL
Damn. All us men gotta do is shave.
I'll draw you a bath, all right?

DOLLY
Love you.

He walks off. She and Carl are in a better place, but Dolly's worried about whatever is happening with her body...

EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. NIGHT. WEEKS LATER.

Dolly, dressed to the nines, rings the doorbell. Turns to Carl, who looks like he's still in his shed, in dirty jeans.

CARL

Thanks for not makin' me dress up.

DOLLY

Thanks for comin'.

He nods. Both know he'd rather not be there. She kisses him.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Ten minutes. Tops.

Carl rolls his eyes. *Yeah right.* And the door swings open--

INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS.

Dolly and Carl step into a packed New Year's Eve party. The WHITE MEN RECORD EXECs have traded Martinis for Wallbangers, thin ties for wide ties. Everything's showier, tackier. And with a hint of darkness, mistrust. Coke energy, basically.

Welcome to the eve of 1974.

Dolly's swarmed by a growing circle of SUPPOSED FRIENDS. Carl grabs a beer, turns back, but she's already gone, whisked away by Porter. She waves an apology. Carl slugs his beer.

It's an upper night for Porter, in a silver Nudie Suit, his arm around Dolly's waist as they schmooze. He eyes her WIG--

PORTER

What's that beast on your head?

DOLLY

Don't start, Porter.

PORTER

You look like your town tramp.

DOLLY

Nicest compliment you ever gave me.

Porter spots the WELL-COIFFED MAN nearby--

PORTER

Hey Nancy, you buyin' my little lady queer shit?

Dolly's horrified, pulls Porter away, apologizing to the man.

DOLLY
I'm so sorry.

She yanks Porter into a quieter corner.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
I ain't puttin' up with your shit
tonight! I'm a grown-ass woman, not
your little lady. So you best sober
up and leave me the hell alone.

Porter laughs as she stomps away. Dolly, furious, finds Carl.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
Let's go.

CARL
Damn, eight minutes. Praise Jesus.

PORTER (O.S.)
How y'all doin' tonight? Almost
1974, can you believe it?

Porter's at a mic, band behind him. Dolly rushes to the door--

PORTER (CONT'D)
Now where's my little gal at? Y'all
seen pretty Miss Dolly Parton?

She stops short. Caught. Takes a breath, snaps on a smile.

DOLLY
Here I am!

PORTER
Get your little behind on up here!

She shoots Carl an apology look, hustles to Porter. He hugs her. The tension between them simmers just below the surface.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Don't she look... a little
ridiculous tonight? Why do y'all
think a gal so pretty covers
herself up like that?

DOLLY
Probably same reason a grown man
wears tin foil. It's New Year's!

PORTER
Hey! Always been a firecracker! How
'bout a duet for the folks, Dolly?

DOLLY
Sure thing. How 'bout "Two Sides"?

PORTER
Oh, we done that one to death. I'm
feelin' romantic tonight. Here's an
old number called, "I Know You're
Married But I Love You Still".

APPLAUSE! The band starts before Dolly can object. Behind her
smile, her eyes rage. Porter takes her hand as they sing--

PORTER & DOLLY
*I know you're married but I love
you still...*

In the back, Carl glares at the pair, acting all lovey-dovey.

LATER.

Carl's at the bar, slowly getting drunk. Dolly hustles over--

DOLLY
Been lookin' all over for you!

CARL
I'm gettin' real tired, Dolly.

DOLLY
Come on. It's almost midnight.
Dance with me? Once? Please?

LATER.

Carl, a tremendously good sport, dances with Dolly.

DON
Hey y'all! 10 seconds! 9! 8! 7! 6!

CROWD
5! 4! 3! 2! 1!

Dolly and Carl smile, about to kiss... when Porter appears
and KISSES DOLLY. She resists, but he dips her dramatically.

PORTER
Happy New Year, little lady.

Carl suddenly GRABS Porter, PINS him to the wall, forearm to
throat. Carl's ready to kick his ass, and Porter knows it.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Calm down, hoss!

CARL

Lay a finger on my wife ever again,
you won't take another breath.

Porter nods. Carl lets him go, stomps outside. Dolly chases--

EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS.

Carl storms down the driveway. Dolly runs after him--

DOLLY

Carl! He's just hamming it up cause
he's poppin' those pills.

He just keeps walking. She gets around him, runs backwards...

DOLLY (CONT'D)

It don't mean nothin'!

CARL

You know what pisses me off? Not
that you slept with him. It's that
you keep lyin' to my face. You say
you ain't cheatin', or you're ready
to have kids. But you don't know
what you really want! You just keep
tellin' me what I wanna hear. Hell,
you learned a lot from Porter all
right. You learned how to be a
great goddamn bullshitter!

DOLLY

I'm sorry, Carl. I know I screwed
up. But you're my man!

CARL

You say that again, I swear to God--

DOLLY

You're it for me. Only you!

He scoffs. Then stops short, looks her right in the eye.

CARL

Lemme know when you mean it.

He walks off into the night, leaving Dolly devastated...

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAYS LATER.

From the dark soundstage, Dolly approaches the bright set,
where Porter and the band are getting ready for rehearsal.

DOLLY
Porter? Talk to you a minute?

PORTER
Not now, Dolly. I'm busy.

DOLLY
I ain't gonna do today's show if
you don't come talk to me.

That stops everyone short. Porter stares at her.

PORTER
Damn. Is it that time of the month?

He smiles at the band, expecting a laugh, but none comes.

PORTER (CONT'D)
All right boys, take five. Little
lady needs to talk.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PORTER'S OFFICE. LATER.

Porter lights a Newport, his boots on his desk. Dolly paces.

DOLLY
You can't do what you did the other
night, Porter. From now on, I want
us to be strictly business.

PORTER
You and I both know it's a helluva
lot more complicated than that.

Porter takes a drag, trying to stay in control. Dolly resets.

DOLLY
I promised you five years. It's
been seven. I didn't come to
Nashville to be somebody's girl
singer. I want my own band. My own
show. I have my own dreams.

PORTER
Well as your manager, I say you're
stayin' put. And you're
contractually obligated to do
whatever the hell I say.

DOLLY
Whaddya mean, "as your manager"?

PORTER

Your RCA contract lays it all out.
Clear as crystal. Maybe you shoulda
read the damn thing.

Porter stubs out his cig, stomps toward the door. Dolly stops him, takes a breath, doing her best to keep her cool--

DOLLY

I didn't know much back then. I've
learned so much from you. And I'm
so grateful for all of it. But it's
time to go out on my own.

PORTER

Hell, good luck! You know how many
people watch my show? You ain't
never gonna have a bigger audience.

DOLLY

Porter, you built yourself an
empire. You're a legend. But I want
that too. And the only way I can do
it is if you let me go. Please.

He's had enough. He towers over her, spits pure venom.

PORTER

Without me, you'd still be up there
shakin' like a leaf. Chet wouldn't
even know your name. You'd be a
ditz with tits playin' podunk
honkytonks. I made you, Dolly. And
I can end you just as quick.

He storms out. Off Dolly, realizing she might be trapped...

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. CARL'S SHED. LATER.

Carl's hard at work, doesn't look up as Dolly fills him in--

DOLLY

Says I'm "contractually obligated
to do whatever the hell he says."
Direct quote. But my lawyer's
lookin' at the contract now.

Carl just chuckles.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Come on. I'm tryin', Carl.

CARL
If you really wanted to leave,
you'd get the hell out. 'Til then,
it's just more bullshit.

DOLLY
I'm gonna figure it out. I promise!

He sighs, finally looks at her.

CARL
Kid, I don't believe you anymore.

Carl goes back to work. And with that, Dolly's heart breaks.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. DAY.

Dolly CRIES into the mirror, her mascara running. She still doesn't like what she sees in the reflection. Especially now.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. LATER.

Dolly and Porter, mid-taping. As much as Dolly wants out, they're tied at the hip professionally. So it's all smiles.

PORTER
You wanna put your guitar away?

DOLLY
I'll just hang onto it. Just in case. Think I need a security blanket 'round here.

PORTER
Shut up.

Behind Porter's plastered-on smile, we see his blinding rage.

LATER.

Lights down for a commercial break. The band silent, motionless. Until the lights come up, and everyone smiles--

PORTER (CONT'D)
We're back. Me and my sidekick. She just kicked me in the side.

DOLLY
Not yet, but I might after that.

PORTER
If you ever hit me Dolly Parton,
you'll be in trouble.

Dolly glares at him, trying to hide her own blinding rage...

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. LATER.

Porter pushes into the bright hallway. Dolly catches up.

DOLLY
The hell are you doing, Porter?

PORTER
Takin' a leak.

DOLLY
You know what I mean. If it don't
look like we're havin' a good time,
that crowd can't have one either.
You taught me that!

PORTER
Since when do you listen to me?!

Don steps between them.

DON
Y'all are making a scene.

PORTER
This here's my show. I can make a
scene whenever I damn well please!

Porter turns to see the band, the whole crew, even Speck Rhodes staring at them.

PORTER (CONT'D)
WHAT THE FUCK ARE Y'ALL LOOKIN' AT?

Dolly plays the adult, pulls Porter into her--

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

She shuts the door behind them. They both exhale.

PORTER
Listen... I'm sorry, Dolly. I never
meant for it to get like this.

DOLLY
I know. I'm sorry too.

Porter looks at her, then leans in for a kiss. She dodges--

PORTER
Come on, for old time's sake.

Porter pulls her in again. She shoves him off--

DOLLY
Porter! No!

PORTER
But I love you!

Everything stops. That's a line Porter's never crossed.

PORTER (CONT'D)
When I met you, I knew you were special. But I had no idea you were one of a kind. A true artist. I'm just a dime a dozen. And I know I've been a jackass. But it's just 'cause I'm scared. That I'll never have what you have. That I'll lose you. You're the best thing that's ever happened to me. I love you.

Dolly's stunned. For once, Porter's wide open, no fake smile.

PORTER (CONT'D)
I know you feel the same way,
Dolly. Say it. Tell me you love me.

Her mind races. She opens her mouth to speak...

DOLLY
I gotta go.

PORTER
No. Wait!

She rushes out, leaving him alone and heartbroken.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LATER.

Dolly bursts into the house. Bounds up the stairs--

DOLLY
Carl? You home?

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Dolly pushes into their bedroom--

But it's EMPTY. Silent. She yanks open Carl's closet. Nothing but hangers. The drawers, empty. Dolly's in shock.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. CARL'S SHED. LATER.

Dolly pushes into the shed, finds it half packed up.

A note on the bench: *Be back for the rest in the morning.*

Suddenly, Dolly doubles over in excruciating pain, the worst we've seen. She crumples to the ground, SCREAMS--

PRE-LAP: The scream turns into the SIREN OF AN AMBULANCE...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. LATER.

All we can hear is Dolly's BREATHING. She lies in a gown, listening to a DOCTOR explain something we CAN'T HEAR...

He holds a diagram of the female reproductive system. Points to the uterus. Dolly's face makes clear - it's very bad news.

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. NIGHT.

Dolly drives, bottom of the barrel. Looks up ahead at the--

PRE-LAP: "The Bridge."

EXT. SPARKMAN STREET BRIDGE. MOMENTS LATER.

She stands looking out, the Cumberland River rushing below.

This is where Carl used to take her. Where they talked about starting a family. Before everything with Porter. When she was just at the beginning. When all things felt possible...

The lyrics we hear match what Dolly is seeing and feeling:

DOLLY

The bridge, so high, the bridge, so tall / Here is where it started, on the bridge...

Dolly looks to the night sky.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

The moon is big and yellow, and the stars are all aglow / From the bridge I see reflections, in the waters far below...

She closes her eyes, remembering the good times.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*You kissed me for the first time
here, and held me awfully tight /
And the bridge became our favorite
place, we came here often in the
night...*

She creeps to the edge, peering down hundreds of feet below.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*My feet are moving slowly / Closer
to the edge / Here is where it
started / And here is where I'll
end it.*

She almost slips off... but grabs the railing just in time!
She stumbles back, scared half to death.

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly's about to turn the key, when she loses it. She WEEPS.
She hasn't slept in days. She lays on the seat, settles in...

THE NEXT MORNING.

Sunshine blasts Dolly's face. She blinks awake. *Jesus.*

EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LATER.

Dolly pulls in, parks. Sees Carl's shed, all locked up.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.

She doesn't even call for Carl. Knows he's long gone.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. DEN. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly flops onto the couch, facedown, alone. And crashes.

LATER.

Time blurs. Dolly stirs. Same spot, same clothes, surrounded
by used McDonald's bags. She finds one last soggy french fry.

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. NIGHT.

On a late night hunt for more McDonald's, Dolly drives by Jerry's, the honkytonk where she and Uncle Bill used to play.

She stops out front, eyes it...

INT. JERRY'S HONKYTONK. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly, in sunglasses at 2 AM, takes a seat as a CRAPPY COUNTRY BAND finishes up. The crowd is thin. A DRUNK REDNECK reminds Dolly of her old heckler, but this one's passed out.

In a corner, Dolly clocks three HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMEN, having a ball. A WAITRESS approaches--

DOLLY
Water, please.

WAITRESS
Gotta order more than water, hon.

DOLLY
Beer then.

HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMAN (O.S.)
That's on us!

The bevy of women in the corner grin at her.

DOLLY
Thank you.

HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMAN
Thank you! You majestic bitch.

Dolly blushes, spotted. But the women are playing it cool.

HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMAN (CONT'D)
Care to join?

Dolly smiles. *Hell, why not?* She walks over, sits. Removes her shades. And does what she does best -- make new friends.

DOLLY
Hi. I'm Dolly.

HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMAN
Jim. This here's Greg and Marshall.

Dolly's confused. And then it dawns on her: drag queens.

DOLLY

Well, I'll be. You're the most
beautiful women I've ever seen.
Y'all OK out here in the boonies?

MARSHALL

Just cause I'm in a dress don't
mean I can't throw a punch.

GREG

I'm singin' next. Take my spot!

DOLLY

No thanks. Just a fan tonight.

MARSHALL

A fan? You're patron saint Parton!

DOLLY

Y'all are my saints. Takes courage
to have hair as big as yours. I
just don't have the balls.

GREG

You want mine?

Dolly and the drag queens laugh, having a blast.

JIM

Now get your skinny ass on stage!

DOLLY

Don't think I'm up for it, ladies.

MARSHALL

Come on. Ain't nobody judging you.
You're safe here.

Dolly considers... then smiles.

DOLLY

Well, when you put it like that.

She heads to the stage. Her superfans HOOT and HOLLER.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Shit, I don't have a guitar.

The SINGER from the crappy country band lends her his guitar.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

What do y'all want me to play?

JIM
 Whatever you damn please, girl!

Dolly smiles deeply. Starts into the iconic GUITAR LICK...

DOLLY
*Jolene, Jolene, Jolene, Jolene /
 I'm begging of you please don't
 take my man...*

The drag queens CHEER. The waitress watches. Even the redneck perks up. We see the beginnings of Dolly's universal appeal.

She smiles her mischievous smile, and changes up the lyrics--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*Drag queen, drag queen, drag queen
 / Please don't take him just
 because you can...*

The queens LOSE IT! Dolly laughs. *The majestic bitch is back.*

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.

Dolly, riding high, drives down Broadway, past honkytonks, the Hermitage, Music Row. Marveling at how far she's come...

EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LATER.

Dolly pulls in, grinning ear-to-ear. But she looks up at the giant house, dark and empty. And her smile vanishes.

INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. BEDROOM. DAWN.

Dolly wakes, all alone in the big bed. Golden light pours in. She sits up. In the closet, something bright catches her eye--

The coat of many colors. She smiles with an idea. *Home.*

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.

Dolly drives toward the rising sun, turns onto the highway.

EXT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. LATER.

Dolly pulls in. Daddy smokes on the porch, looks up in shock.

INT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly, Lee, and Avie Lee sit, Dolly downloading in a rush--

DOLLY

... Something called endometriosis.
I'm tryin' to leave Porter, tryin'
to make Carl happy, tryin' to be a
singer, wife, mother, but now...

Dolly can't help but cry. Avie puts her arms around her.

AVIE LEE

You woulda made a wonderful mama,
Doll. But God's plan is different
for all of us. Ever since you
started singin' in your grandaddy's
church, we knew God gave you a
gift. You were meant to share that
gift with the whole world.
Everybody's one of your children.

She looks to Lee, but he just stares at the ground.

AVIE LEE (CONT'D)

Ain't that right, Lee?

He takes a breath, looks at Dolly. You will never hear Lee Parton say this many words again.

LEE

All my life, I've been ashamed.
Worried people'd find out I never
learned to read. But Dolly, I ain't
ashamed no more. 'Cause I watch you
and you ain't ashamed. You're proud
of where you come from. Who you
are. And that makes me proud too.

Dolly tears up, moved.

LEE (CONT'D)

You keep tryin' to make everybody
happy, you're gonna make 'em all
miserable, 'specially yourself.
Only person you gotta listen to,
only person you gotta love, is you.

He touches Dolly's knee tenderly, looks into her eyes.

LEE (CONT'D)

Whatever you do, remember -- we
will always love you.

Dolly hugs him. She's gotten what she's always wanted: her Daddy's acceptance. He smiles, a rare sight.

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.

Dolly drives down the road. Sees a trail. Pulls over...

EXT. PINE FOREST. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly walks under a canopy of 100-foot-tall pine trees. A dank forest floor, densely covered in mist, ferns and moss.

This is the otherworldly, magical landscape from the opening.

She sees a clearing up ahead, bathed in golden light. She spots the wooden structure through the mist. And smiles.

INT. ABANDONED COUNTRY CHAPEL. CONTINUOUS.

Dolly enters. Broken windows, splintered floorboards, a mess.

This is the GOD PLACE.

She walks to a dusty piano. Runs her finger over ivory keys. Hits one. It's out of tune. But to her, it sounds gorgeous.

She walks to a wall, where she sees sexual drawings. Studies them. They're crude. But to her, they look beautiful.

She stands in the middle of the broken down chapel. Light streams through a window, illuminating her face.

She's surrounded by her favorite things: God, sex, and music. And she's free from others' judgement. Free to be herself.

She closes her eyes...

And her mind is flooded with IMAGES which fill the screen:

THE SMOKY MOUNTAINS, thick pine groves, flora and fauna...

CHILD DOLLY singing with Mama and Daddy in church...

UNCLE BILL and Dolly playing at honkytonks all over town...

CARL at the altar on their wedding day, so happy...

PORTER on stage, his Nudie Suit rhinestones blinding her...

And then -- Dolly's eyes POP OPEN. She's got it. A new song.

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly hops in her car, starts up the engine, determined.

EXT. SEVIERVILLE. MAIN DRAG. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly waits at a payphone, receiver to her ear. She waves to a FAMILY OF FANS walking by, awestruck. Then, on the phone--

SECRETARY (O.S.)
Sorry Dolly, Carl's in a meeting.

DOLLY
He tell you to say that?

Silence. Dolly smiles.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
All right, can you give him a message then? Ask him to watch my show tonight. Tell him it's real important. Thanks.

Dolly hangs up. Rushes back to her car, on a mission--

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly burns rubber back to Nashville, flying down the road--

EXT. RYMAN THEATER. ALLEY. LATER.

Dolly screeches to a stop, hops out. Bolts through the door--

INT. RYMAN THEATER. COSTUME DEPARTMENT. MOMENTS LATER.

And BUSTS into the wonderland of wigs. She sees the TRULY OVER-THE TOP wig, as big as the drag queens' and the town tramp's. She smiles, yanks the damn wig off the shelf.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. LATER.

The band, Speck Rhodes, and the crew wait on the dark stage as the audience files in for a taping. Porter paces, smoking.

PORTER
Where the hell is she?

DON
She'll be here. Trust me.

PORTER

What, y'all talk on the phone all night? Paint each others' nails?

DON

Dunno what you're talking about.

PORTER

No? Seems you got a new best buddy. And you think I'm a sumbitch!

DON

I don't, Porter. But you ain't barkin' no more. You're bitin'.

Don walks away. Porter fumes, but knows he's right.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. SAME TIME.

In a vanity mirror, Dolly puts on her full regalia.

A sequined dress zipped up in the back. Tiny feet step into impossibly high heels. Ruby red lipstick blotted with a kiss.

And then, the *pièce de résistance*...

The truly over-the-top wig set onto a skull-cap-covered head.

INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. MOMENTS LATER.

Porter smokes his zillionth cigarette, his hands tied. Then--

The studio door busts open. A shaft of light cuts through the darkness. Porter turns, his jaw drops. Everyone's jaws drop.

In the doorway, guitar over her shoulder, like a gunslinger walking into the saloon, stands -- DOLLY FUCKING PARTON.

DOLLY

I'm taking the first song, Porter.

PORTER

Hold up, ain't this still my show?

DOLLY

Not tonight, it ain't. It's mine.

A standoff. Porter knows she's not fucking around. Nor is Don. Mutiny's afoot. Porter's isolated, his empire crumbling.

As the lights come up, he can do nothing but snap on a smile--

PORTER

Welcome to the Porter Wagoner Show,
y'all. Here to kick us off tonight
is everyone's favorite pretty
little lady... Miss Dolly Parton!

The crowd cheers. Dolly steps to the mic. Silence for a long beat. She looks to Porter, smiles wide, like he taught her.

For a moment, she still wants this man's approval. But then--

SHE DROPS THE SMILE. The act, the pressure to please. She's present, calm, confidently standing in the eye of the storm.

She nods at Don. He nods back, defers to her. She strums the first chord of her most famous song. And sings it to Porter--

DOLLY

*If I should stay / I would only be
in your way...*

She keeps her eyes wide open. Deadlocked with Porter's.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*So I'll go, but I know / I'll think
of you each step of the way...*

She's open, vulnerable. She's bringing her inside self to the outside, sharing her God Place with the whole world.

Porter's stunned by the song. And by Dolly's steady stare.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*And I will always love you / I will
always love you...*

Wow. The chorus is simple, transcendent, profoundly affecting. We feel the FANS lean forward in their seats.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Bittersweet memories / That's all I
am taking with me...*

Porter is deeply moved. The love of his life is breaking up with him. TEARS roll down his cheeks, first time in his life.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Goodbye, please don't cry / We both
know that I'm not / What you
need...*

She looks to Porter with a heart full of empathy, compassion--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
*But I will always love you / I will
 always love you...*

She speaks the next verse to him sweetly, as to a friend:

DOLLY (CONT'D)
 I hope life treats you kind / And I
 hope that you have all / That you
 ever dreamed of / And I wish you
 joy / And happiness / But above all
 of this...

She pauses for a breath, then lets it rip, the emotion SOARS--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
I wish you loooooooooooooove...

Dolly's strong, sexy. Not doing what other people want. She's doing what she wants. She's taking up space, not apologizing.

She's finally become the Dolly Parton we all know and love.

For the last verse, Dolly turns directly to the camera...

She looks at HER REFLECTION in the lens. And sings TO HERSELF--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
And I will always love you...

We've come a long way from how she saw herself in the grimy diner mirror. Now she accepts and loves what she sees.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
I will always love you...

She belts out the last chorus, leaving it all on the field--

DOLLY (CONT'D)
I will always love you...

The song hangs in the air. Dolly holds her breath...

The crowd ERUPTS. Leaps up. A STANDING OVATION!

Porter crosses to her. Dolly tenses, nervous. He whispers--

PORTER
 Most beautiful song I ever heard. I
 love you too, Dolly. Good luck.
 (to the camera)
 We'll be right back.

The lights go down. Dolly takes a breath. *She's finally free.*

INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.

Dolly drives alone, toward the setting sun. Face scrubbed, wig gone. She exhales, the adrenaline leaving her system. She's been through so much. She cries tears of relief, joy.

She looks to a glorious sunset. A bright future. And smiles.

EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly pulls in. The house is quiet, seems empty. She gets out of the car. Walks towards the house, when--

The front door SWINGS OPEN. Dolly stops in her tracks.

Carl steps out on the landing. She looks at him, full of hope. He just looks back at her, poker-faced. BUT THEN--

CARL

Still got the voice of an angel.

She smiles, relieved. *He watched the show.* She looks down. Then, as an apology--

DOLLY

I sure as hell ain't no angel.

Carl nods, then smiles. They've been through so much. But the connection, chemistry, and banter that first brought them together, it's all still there in spades. Two peas in a pod.

Off Dolly's grin -- grateful, happy, and a bit mischievous...

PRE-LAP: A COUNTRY BAND warms up...

EXT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. NIGHT.

Fans stream into the cathedral of country music.

SUPER:

ONE YEAR LATER

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. STAGE. CONTINUOUS.

Lights lower. Crowd goes WILD. Dolly struts on, full regalia.

DOLLY

How y'all doin' tonight?

CHEERS. She grins, turns to the band, full of familiar faces--

Don Warden on lead guitar, and a surprise -- older, but hair still slicked -- Uncle Bill. They've reconciled.

Dolly looks to the wings, where Chet Atkins gives her a nod. Chet and Don are now squarely in Dolly's camp.

Nowhere to be seen? Porter Wagoner. This is Dolly's show now.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

When I first started out, people made me feel ashamed for a lotta things. Bein' a woman. Bein' white trash. I wasted a lotta time and energy apologizing for being me. So don't let nobody make you feel bad. Love yourself! Hell, I'm proud to be a woman. And I am white trash!

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE!

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Someone smarter than me once said, "Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken". Remember that, and remember where you come from!

She strikes up the band. And with a relaxed smile, she sings--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Sittin' on the front porch, on a summer afternoon...

CLOSE ON her lips as we MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOWL. NIGHT. PRESENT DAY.

CLOSE ON Dolly's lips again. PAN UP and see her face--

It's real-life DOLLY PARTON!

Full makeup, biggest wig yet. *Looking just like she wants to.*

We scan the AUDIENCE. Pride flags, MAGA hats, drag queens, grandmas, hipsters dressed like rednecks, actual rednecks. All shapes, sizes, creeds, colors. The tapestry of America.

As Dolly hits the triumphant chorus, the crowd SINGS ALONG...

DOLLY & CROWD

*In my Tennessee Mountain Home /
Life is as peaceful as a baby's
sigh / In my Tennessee Mountain
Home!*

A BUTTERFLY flutters past. And we follow it up to the sky, full of twinkling, celestial stars. And then **FADE TO BLACK.**

CREDITS ROLL over "I Will Always Love You", now fully produced with a full backing band. We see PHOTOS of Dolly's almost 60-year career, intercut with text:

"I Will Always Love You" is the greatest-selling song by a female artist of all time.

Whitney Houston covered it for "The Bodyguard" soundtrack.

It's one of over 3,000 songs Dolly has written.

Porter died in a Nashville assisted living facility in 2007.

Dolly was one of the last people to see him.

She held his hand and told him she loved him.

Dolly and Carl still live together in Nashville.

Carl has not been seen in public in almost 50 years.

Since leaving Porter, Dolly has had her own band, her own TV show, even her own theme park.

She still writes, records, and performs, all while growing a billion dollar business empire.

She created the Imagination Library, which has given out 150 million books to kids, encouraging them to learn to read.

She even funded the development of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

She ain't no DUMB BLONDE.

GOODNIGHT, Y'ALL!