

QUEEN AMERICA

Written by

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INT. - VICKI ELLIS'S OFFICE. - DAY

TIGHT ON THE FEROCIOUS, URGENT FACE OF **VICKI ELLIS**. The definition of "Blonde Ambition" but with a bit more sun damage. Her makeup is meticulous - but all the makeup in the world couldn't soften her edges. Soft Oklahoma accent which she's worked hard to tame.

VICKI

I have one rule: never settle for anything that you already are. What we do here isn't about who you are today. It's about who you're going to be when you wake up tomorrow. Because what you are today isn't good enough. That's why we call it the American Dream. Do you hear me?

We zoom out to REVEAL:

HAYLEY STONE, 21, runs at a manic pace on a treadmill. She wears a PAGEANT CROWN on her head and is drenched in sweat. Beautiful - but terrifying in the way that Taylor Swift is often terrifying. If you cut her she might not bleed at all - but if she did, she would bleed ambition. A lifetime of privilege has convinced her she's capable of anything.

HAYLEY

I hear you!

The room is covered in PHOTOS OF VICKI posing proudly with PAGEANT QUEENS. BANNERS hang on the wall: Miss Tulsa, Miss Oklahoma City, etc. **A DISPLAY CASE is filled with CROWNS.**

Perched on Vicki's desk is a **TINY DOG** the size of a fist; Vicki's Micro-Teacup-Yorkie (yes, a real thing) named **GEORGE**. *(Note: George is with Vicki at all times unless specifically noted otherwise. He may not be acknowledged, but he's there.)*

A WIDESCREEN TV plays a past MISS AMERICA PAGEANT. Studying the screen is Hair and Makeup extraordinaire **NIGEL** (40's); gay, beautiful, black. He has an elegance to him that often seems out of place in Oklahoma.

Timing Hayley's run is **MARY** (30); former pageant queen turned fitness trainer. Her beauty has faded with bitterness (and let's be honest, cocaine) but her abs are magic. Mary's visible emotions range mostly between two points: simmering rage or utter apathy. Mary checks her stopwatch;

MARY

You're at 5.15 now. You finished yesterday at 6 minutes flat.

Hayley speaks through desperate gasps for air -

HAYLEY

Why do I - have to wear - the crown
- right now?

VICKI

To remind you who you were when you
woke up today, and who you're going
to be when you wake up tomorrow.

Okay -

HAYLEY

5:35 -

MARY

NIGEL

(re: TV)

It's interesting. They've stopped
doing red lips in the past few
years. At least within the top 5.

HAYLEY

I might not be okay -

VICKI

Who were you when you woke up this
morning, Hayley?

HAYLEY

(dying)

Miss - oh sweet Jesus - Miss Tulsa!

VICKI

And who are you going to be when
you wake up tomorrow?!

HAYLEY

Aghhhh! Miss Oklahoma!

MARY

5:48, you fat, slow bitch!

VICKI

And what are you going to be in
three months from now?

HAYLEY

Miss fucking America! Fuck
motherfucker Hell God!

VICKI

And what has no Miss America in the
history of our nation ever had??

HAYLEY
Love handles!

MARY
Or?

HAYLEY
(crying)
Cellulite!

VICKI
That's right, baby girl.

The TREADMILL BEEPS. Hayley slows to an agonized, heaving stop - doubled over and panting.

MARY
5:55. Nice. You need the bucket?

NIGEL looks up sharply from the TV SCREEN -

NIGEL
No! Mary, no!! I just whitened her teeth this morning! You let her vomit right now and you ruin everything.

HAYLEY
I'm not gonna vomit.

Vicki puts a perfectly manicured hand on Hayley's back. Hayley continues to gasp for air and life.

VICKI
Good girl. You can take the crown off now.

HAYLEY
It's okay. I like how it feels.

VICKI
I thought you might.

HAYLEY
A little bit safer.

VICKI
I know, baby.
(as Hayley pants for air)
I don't want you to think of this feeling as pain, I want you to think of it as improvement.

(MORE)

VICKI (CONT'D)

If everybody lived like that, no one would ever have to be mediocre again.

Vicki watches the TV. Onscreen the winner is being crowned.

VICKI (CONT'D)

See that? The Disbelieving Pause. Crucial. The winner has that brief moment to show the audience that she can't fucking believe it. And we have to believe that she can't fucking believe it. Because nobody likes a pretty girl who expects big things to happen to her.

HAYLEY

Can I lay down?

Vicki continues - eyes glued to the CORONATION ONSCREEN. The NEWLY CROWNED BEAUTY QUEEN in humble tears.

VICKI

She has to act grateful to the point of apologetic. At least, if she wants to be Miss America.

NIGEL

(crossing himself)

Amen.

OPENING TITLES: QUEEN AMERICA

INT. TULSA NEWS STATION. - DAY

A local MORNING NEWS program. Live on air, VICKI is interviewed by a FEMALE ANCHOR.

ANCHOR

Tonight, hopeful young women from across the state will compete for the title of Miss Oklahoma - and maybe even the chance to be Miss America. Here with us today is Oklahoma's reigning pageant expert Vicki Ellis, with hundreds of girls vying to be her client every year. Good morning Vicki.

VICKI

Morning. Thanks for having me.

ANCHOR

Now, 12 of the last 15 Miss Oklahoma's have been your clients, and they all placed in the top 5 at Miss America. That's a good record.

VICKI

Well I'm blessed that I work with very talented girls.

FEMALE ANCHOR

So you've just finished two nights of preliminaries - are you excited for the final night tonight?

VICKI

I am. It's always interesting to see who makes the top 10.

FEMALE ANCHOR

And this year you're representing Miss Tulsa, Hayley Stone. Do you think she'll take home the crown?

VICKI

Well only the judges and Jesus can answer that. But if I were a gambling woman - which I am - I'd put my money on Hayley.

ANCHOR

So what do you have to say to the critics of the Miss America Organization? People who say the pageant reinforces superficial values? That it's just a glorified beauty contest?

VICKI

Well the Miss America pageant is about a lot more than just beauty. Girls are judged on talent, poise, social awareness... This is an organization that teaches girls from all different walks of life, that with hard work - they can be whoever they want to be. So firstly I would say to critics - Miss America is **not** a beauty contest.

ANCHOR

Well that's -

VICKI

But then I would also say; what part of life *isn't* a beauty contest, on some level? When we get right down to it?

The ANCHOR is briefly speechless. Vicki smiles pleasantly.

EXT. - TULSA, OKLAHOMA. - DAY

Establishing shots of Tulsa; the BUCKLE OF THE BIBLE BELT. New Money, oil, and Jesus make this city go round. More churches than homes. And the churches here are big.

We see BILLBOARDS advertising MILLIONAIRE TELEVANGELISTS, MONSTER ROLLERCOASTERS and US ARMY RECRUITMENT. We see ALL YOU CAN EAT BUFFETS and STRIP MALLS. And lots of cars. The cars are almost as big as the churches - SUV's or TRUCKS.

Driving fast - too fast - is a glossy JAGUAR, sleek and incongruous among all the trucks. It weaves aggressively through traffic, other drivers honk angrily at it. From the open windows the song "9 to 5" by DOLLY PARTON blares.

INT. VICKI'S JAGUAR. - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Vicki's nails drum happily on the wheel as she smokes a cigarette. She is calm and upbeat despite her maniacal driving, as if maybe she's not aware of it. (For the record she's totally aware of her driving - she just considers it other people's problem.) She ignores their LOUD HONKING.

She stops at a LIGHT. The DRIVER in the car beside her rolls down his window - redfaced and furious. He bellows at her.

DRIVER

You're a real fucking genius, you know that??!

VICKI puts her hand to her heart in mock gratitude -

VICKI

Aww. Well thank you so much, hun.

INT. ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY - AUDITORIUM. - DAY.

11,000 seat auditorium. Onstage 50 GIRLS ages 18-23, rehearse an OPENING NUMBER to a POP SONG. The pageant's **DIRECTOR** watches from the nearly empty audience.

DIRECTOR
Stay on tempo girls!

SECURITY GUARDS guard the rear doors of the auditorium.

The doors blast open as VICKI marches in. She breezes past the guards. They react wearily (and nervously) to her -

SECURITY GUARD
Miss Ellis, you know you're not supposed to come through this way, the coaches are supposed to stay backstage -

They're helpless as she marches down the aisle towards the stage. She stops and watches the performance - eyeing her girl HAYLEY outshining the others.

The DIRECTOR sees VICKI- then turns to look at the GUARDS as if to say "Why'd you let her in here?" The guards shrug powerlessly - they have no control over her.

VICKI flashes the director a huge grin and wave. She knows she's not supposed to be there but also knows he's too scared of her to say anything. The DIRECTOR sighs wearily and waves back to her. He doesn't have the energy to deal with her today. He turns his focus back to the girls.

DIRECTOR
Miss Owasso, you're bringing the whole tempo down! That goes for you too, Bartlesville!

Vicki returns her hawklike attention to the stage. She motions to HAYLEY about her posture. HAYLEY straightens up.

RICK BISHOP, 40'S, Australian, approaches Vicki. He proudly wears a NAME BADGE around his neck signifying his VIP status as a member of the PAGEANT BOARD. Rick is attractive in a bleached, fake tan kind of way. Idiots find him charming but only because his accent masks the filth.

For the sake of any possible onlookers, he and VICKI plaster on smiles despite their obvious and venomous hatred. They half ignore everything the other says.

RICK
Vicki Ellis. Giving young girls eating disorders since 1945.

VICKI
Better than giving them herpes, Rick.

RICK BISHOP

Tell me, do you have any tooth enamel left, or are they coated entirely with stomach acid?

VICKI

You know, I've never understood how an Australian is even eligible to be on the pageant board. When you think about it, Australia's not even a real country. Just a bunch of criminals England didn't want.

Rick motions to Hayley onstage.

RICK BISHOP

You two have been waiting for this night a long time. You nervous?

He's hit Vicki's Achilles Heel. She doesn't take his bait.

VICKI

I've had a lot of girls in a lot of pageants.

RICK BISHOP

Yeah but not like her. Hayley's your golden girl. You know, I still remember when Hayley was flat chested and brunette, losing all the Miss Teen titles.

VICKI

Yeah, they don't let you near the teens anymore, do they Rick? Not since that incident with Miss Teen Sapulpa at the PetSmart fundraiser.

RICK BISHOP

It's amazing the sort of slander childless middle aged women have time to spread. Are you masturbating enough? I know it's lonely, but it does kill time between menopause and death.

VICKI

Hey Bishop, you wanna hear a joke?

He's suspicious but allows it;

RICK BISHOP

Alright.

VICKI
 How does an Australian practice
 safe sex?
 (then)
 He paints the legs of the sheep
 that kick.

Rick rolls his eyes but Vicki continues -

VICKI (CONT'D)
 Australia: Where men are men, and
 sheep are nervous.

<p>Okay...</p>	<p>RICK BISHOP</p>	<p>SHARI</p>
		<p>What does an Australian call a bunch of sheep tied to a lamp post? A recreation center.</p>

RICK BISHOP
 Have fun with this Vicki -

He starts to leave - she grabs his arm - suddenly serious.

VICKI
 Wait. I'm sorry, Rick. I actually
 have a real question.

He hesitates - studies her face then decides she's serious.
 So he waits. She looks at him earnestly, then;

VICKI (CONT'D)
 Why do Australian horses run so
 fast?
 (beside herself)
 Because they see what they do to
 the fucking sheep!

RICK walks off. Vicki yells after him, thrilled with herself.

VICKI (CONT'D)
 What do you call a sheep in
 Australia? FUCKED!

INT. BACKSTAGE - DRESSING ROOM. - HOUR LATER

Girls change into normal clothes, each one surrounded by her
 own personal entourage.

HAYLEY undresses with the help of VICKI and NIGEL. MARY is busy on her iPhone EDITING a PHOTO OF HAYLEY in her EVENING WEAR - she uses a PHOTOSHOP APP CALLED "FACETUNE," we watch as the APP perfects Hayley's skin, lengthens her legs, etc.

HAYLEY

Did you notice Miss Stillwater wearing the same color as me?

VICKI

Oh, bigger fish, Hayley - Miss *Stillwater*?? Where in God's hell is Stillwater?

NIGEL

It's just up North - about an hour-

VICKI

I know where Stillwater is! Stillwater's in fucking Stillwater and YOU are Miss Tulsa. The most important city in the state.

HAYLEY

What about Oklahoma City?

VICKI

Miss Oklahoma City has a severe lateral lisp and a snowball's chance in hell.

MARY

I'm posting this photo to your Instagram - just tightening the waist a bit.

MARY shows the team; onscreen HAYLEY'S already small waist SHRINKS TO SOMETHING UNACHIEVABLY TINY. The others nod in approval;

Post it.

VICKI

Post it.

HAYLEY

*
*

MARY posts the photo to Instagram, glances at the clock.

MARY (CONT'D)

Hurry up so we can get going to the infrared. Sweat out any last puff.

VICKI

Be sure you get her back here by 4.

HAYLEY

Wait. You're not coming to watch me sweat??

VICKI

I'll be back before you even start hair and makeup, baby girl. I've got a thing I have to do.

MARY and NIGEL share a knowing look. HAYLEY is horrified.

HAYLEY

What thing?? No! I need you!

VICKI

What you need is to go sweat out some sodium, get a hug from your mother, and then meet me here at 4.

HAYLEY'S bejeweled iPhone pings - she looks at it and smiles.

VICKI (CONT'D)

What was that?

HAYLEY

(quickly)
Nothing.

VICKI reaches for the phone, trying to grab it from HAYLEY -

VICKI	HAYLEY
Give it to me, Hayley -	No - Vicki - stop -

*

VICKI struggles for the phone - finally reaches down and squeezes HAYLEY'S above-the-knee-tickle-spot that makes your legs give way. HAYLEY shrieks, drops her phone -

HAYLEY (CONT'D)

I hate it when you do that!

VICKI calmly scans through HAYLEY'S phone -

VICKI

Everybody does. The knees are incredibly sensitive.
(handing the phone back)
Well. At least it's not a picture of his dick this time.

HAYLEY

He just wanted to wish me luck.

VICKI

You do not engage with that boy today.

(MORE)

VICKI (CONT'D)

Tonight's the most important night
of your life. Repeat that back to
me.

HAYLEY

Tonight's the most important night
of my life.

VICKI

Damn fucking right it is.
(to Nigel and Mary)
Don't let her out of your sight.
These young kids discover toxic sex
for the first time, and it's like
trying to pull a Muskogee girl out
of a meth den.

Suddenly a loud crash - they look to see "**Miss Claremore**"
SAMANTHA COLE, 21, flat on her face on the floor, a GARMENT
RACK AND BALLGOWNS collapsed on top of her.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry! I didn't know that was
so unsteady!

SAMANTHA scrambles to her feet - putting the gowns back on
the stand. Though clumsy, she is heartbreakingly beautiful -
like a true life Barbie Doll. There's something angelic and
naive about her, which is easily mistaken for stupidity.

VICKI and the team stare daggers across the room at SAMANTHA.

HAYLEY

Can you believe that trainwreck? I
mean how is she even *here*?

VICKI

Two words: swimsuit competition.

MARY

(genuinely betrayed)
We should've won the swimsuit
preliminary. We worked so hard.
Your thighs practically levitate,
and that girl's ass is fake.

NIGEL

(a gasp)
You think her ass is fake?

MARY

No, probably not.

VICKI

That girl doesn't matter! You think they're gonna send a Miss Claremore to represent our state at Nationals? Claremore isn't a town, it's a gas station.

HAYLEY

Yeah, but *look* at her.

VICKI

Have you heard her try to talk??

HAYLEY

Look, I know I deserve to win. But I mean, I *could* lose. Injustice happens all the time. Like what Hillary Clinton did to the Bengalese Tigers.

MARY

The what?

NIGEL

No, honey... that's not -

VICKI smacks her hands together - silencing them -

VICKI

Everyone shut up!

Vicki takes Hayley's face in her hands.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Hayley. In all my years of coaching, I have never believed in a girl like I believe in you. I have known you since you were 12 years old and you are a born champion. You know why? Because you understand that all of this, everything we do here - it's not just about being the best, it's about *making* yourself the best. You're not just a winner, you're a fucking mountaineer. If they cut you open, I believe they'd find fire and steel in your veins. I'm surprised you don't sweat out little bits of chromium.

HAYLEY

(moved but confused)

I don't know what that means.

VICKI
That's okay.

They hug passionately.

HAYLEY
I love you Vicki.

VICKI
I love you too.

INT. VICKI ELLIS'S HOME. - BEDROOM - DAY

An expensive home in the affluent UTICA PARK NEIGHBORHOOD of MIDTOWN TULSA.

The house itself is elegant, but Vicki's personal taste is a touch more vulgar. The decor is expensive but not totally tasteful. Opulence to the 10th degree, like someone with no money suddenly had a lot (which is exactly what happened.) And of course, a framed painting of George the Yorkie.

Vicki hurries to choose an outfit - trying different shirts on. She goes to the mirror, dabs concealer under her eyes.

Her cell rings, the CALLER ID says **KATIE ELLIS**. VICKI answers-

VICKI
Hey Katie - you on your way?

INTERCUT WITH

INT. KATIE ELLIS'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

VICKI's sister **KATIE ELLIS**(40's-50's), goes through a PILE OF MAIL while talking on the phone, sorting BILLS and COUPONS.

KATIE's home is the exact opposite of Vicki's; tiny, messy, cheap. KATIE wears ill fitting jeans and a sweatshirt. Zero makeup. She could be pretty if she tried, but KATIE's life is about practicality, not beauty.

KATIE
(on phone)
Yeah, uh, sorry Vicki, I don't think I'm gonna be able to drop Bella with you. I've got loads to do around the house. Any way you can come pick her up here?

VICKI

You want me to drive all the way to Okmulgee? Jesus Christ, Katie, that's a forty-five minute drive -

KATIE

Well it's not any quicker for me to get to Tulsa, now is it?

VICKI

This is just like you. I go to the trouble of making specific plans, trying to do something nice for my niece -

KATIE

Give me a break Vicki. I always have to go to you, you never come to us. And you know, I'm sure if you shower later, you'll be able to wash the stench off.

VICKI

Oh don't be so ridiculous. I'd love to get back there more often, I'm just busy.

KATIE rolls her eyes -

KATIE

Look. It's a big day for you. Why don't we raincheck this afternoon, and Bella will just see you tonight when I drop her at your pageant?

VICKI

The whole point of this afternoon was so I could get her an appropriate outfit to wear to the pageant! There's an audience dress code!

KATIE

I'm sure we can find something just fine in her closet.

VICKI

Like what??

KATIE

Well she's not into dresses, but she's got some proper looking Khakis -

VICKI

Oh God. No. Shit. Okay - I'll come get her. Just make sure she's ready to go when I get there.

KATIE

If you take the 75 North it's quickest -

VICKI

I remember the God damn way.

VICKI hangs up, furious.

EXT. OKMULGEE COUNTY - STREETS - DAY

OKMULGEE COUNTY is a 45 minute drive from Tulsa but light years away. The kind of place where Dairy Queen is a legitimate option for a first date. A place where gun and liquor stores far outnumber dentists.

Vicki's **JAGUAR** is offensively out of place as she drives past MOBILE HOMES, RUNDOWN HOUSES and PICKUP TRUCKS. One house boasts a YARD SIGN that says "GOD, GUTS AND GUNS MADE AMERICA FREE." VICKI eyes her surroundings with familiar disgust. It's been a while, but she knows this place well.

Vicki pulls up to KATIE'S **TINY HOME**. She parks next to Katie's ancient SUBURU; on the Suburu is a bumper sticker that says "PROUD PARENT OF AN OKMULGEE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT."

INT. KATIE ELLIS'S HOME - DAY

KATIE ELLIS tidies up the cluttered home.

KATIE

Bella! She's gonna be here soon!

BELLA ELLIS, 16, enters. To put it bluntly, Bella is obese. 100 pounds away from a healthy weight. She dresses to hide her body in baggy clothing. Right now she's miserable.

BELLA

Mom. Do I really have to go?

KATIE

It's important to your Aunt Vicki. And you might have fun. She'll buy you something nice to wear to the pageant tonight.

BELLA

But I don't even wanna go to the pageant. I can't believe you're making me.

KATIE

Bella, please. We're being supportive.

BELLA

Then why don't you have to go?

KATIE

Vicki could only get one ticket.

BELLA

Yeah right. You're sending me like a - a sacrifice. Like a sacrificial lamb or horse or something.

KATIE

Nobody ever sacrificed no horses.

BELLA

Then I guess I'm a fucking lamb.

KATIE

Lord, you are dramatic. You know who else was dramatic at your age? Your aunt Vicki.

BELLA glares at the insult - KATIE smirks, amused. The DOORBELL RINGS. KATIE gives a warning look to BELLA and goes to open the door.

VICKI enters - her Louboutins, perfect makeup and skintight pencil skirt are painfully out of place here.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Hey Vicki.

VICKI and KATIE hug awkwardly. Physical affection isn't the most natural thing between these two, but they attempt it.

VICKI

Hi. It's been way too long.
(pulling away)
Now. Where is that gorgeous niece of mine??

VICKI turns and sees BELLA, her smile almost falters as she surveys her - Bella's only gotten bigger since the last time she saw her. Bella's weight is something that Vicki simply does not understand. But Vicki forces a huge grin.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Hey there Bella.

VICKI hugs BELLA; this is who VICKI is really here to see. She may not have the warmest feelings towards Katie, but VICKI adores BELLA. BELLA begrudgingly allows the hug. The feelings are not mutual.

BELLA

Hi Aunt Vicki.

Vicki looks around the messy room, thinly veiled disdain -

VICKI

The place looks nice...

KATIE

Well, it ain't Utica Square, but it'll do.

VICKI

Isn't. It "*isn't*" Utica Square.

Bella gives Katie a "Kill me now" look. Katie plows ahead;

KATIE

So what time's the show tonight? 8?

VICKI

No. Seven. But the doors open at 6:30. I sent you a detailed email.

KATIE

Sorry. 7 o'clock. Cool.

VICKI

But doors open at 6:30.

KATIE

I got it.

BELLA

You're sure my mom can't come too? She said she really wants to go.

BELLA grins evilly. VICKI and KATIE both panic slightly - neither of them want this. They talk rapidly over each other -

VICKI

Oh - well - unfortunately there's not enough seats -

KATIE

No, no, no - I mean I would've loved to, but I'm not even feeling that well -

*
*
*
*

VICKI
Maybe next year you can both come.

KATIE
That would be great.

Awkward beat. Katie changes the subject.

KATIE (CONT'D)
So, what do you have planned for today?

Vicki looks excitedly at Bella.

VICKI
Oh, we are gonna have a fun afternoon. I'm gonna get you all glammed up. We're gonna go to Dillard's, swing by the makeup department. Then I'm gonna treat you to a nice outfit.

BELLA
I don't like makeup.

VICKI
Everybody likes makeup.
(to Katie)
I'll have her back here by three.

BELLA
Three?? That's like four hours. At Dillard's.

VICKI
Well you have to account for travel time, Bella.

KATIE
Three is perfect.

Katie gives Bella (furious) a kiss.

INT. DILLARD'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MAKEUP DEPT. - DAY

Vicki browses as Bella lingers behind, miserably. Vicki sees a MOTHER and DAUGHTER getting a makeover together from one of the salesgirls. Their makeup looks terrible.

Meanwhile, Bella stares skeptically at George the Yorkie.

BELLA

I can't believe George is still alive. I didn't think those micro dogs were meant to live past 6 months.

VICKI

This is George the second, actually.

BELLA

Oh, okay. That makes more sense.

VICKI

Their tiny little hearts, you know. Just can't take too much stress.
(holding up a lipstick)
A light pink would be nice on you.

BELLA

I don't wear any pink clothes. It wouldn't match anything.

VICKI

Well, Bella, lipstick doesn't have to match your clothing, sweetheart. That would be... very bizarre.

BELLA

I don't like colors on my face.

VICKI

Okay... Well, how about a clear gloss then? Give you some shine?

BELLA

Whatever.

Vicki takes a lipgloss from the shelf, trying to stay upbeat.

INT. DILLARD'S DEPARTMENT STORE. - CLOTHING SECTION. - DAY

Bella looks through clothes, she has a few T-SHIRTS picked out. Vicki comes over, also holding a few finds.

VICKI

Oh, let's see what you got there!

BELLA holds up the boyish, shapeless T-Shirts.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Okay, Bella, you see, T-shirts are fine for around the house.

(MORE)

VICKI (CONT'D)

But what about when you go
somewhere special?

BELLA

I don't go anywhere special.

VICKI

Well you're going somewhere special
tonight. This might look nice.

VICKI holds up a modest dress. Bella eyes it nervously.

BELLA

It's sort of girly.

VICKI

Well, honey, I hate to break it to
you, but you are in fact a girl.
Come on. Just try it on. Humor me.

Begrudgingly, BELLA follows VICKI towards the dressing room.

INT. DRESSING ROOM AREA. - DAY

Vicki waits outside the dressing room.

BELLA (O.S.)

I don't like it.

VICKI

Well come out and let me see it.

BELLA

No, it's fine. I don't need
it -

VICKI

Bella, let me see the dress -

*

VICKI aggressively opens the DRESSING ROOM CURTAIN - poking
her head in. BELLA screams at her -

BELLA

Aunt Vicki! What the heck!

Blindly unaware of how invasive she's being, VICKI examines
the problem: Bella can't get the zipper up. It's too small.

VICKI

You just need a different
size...

BELLA

Will you please get out?

BELLA closes the curtain. VICKI turns to a SALES GIRL.

VICKI

Excuse me - my niece needs a bigger size. Bella, just open up a bit so she can see the dress.

Mortified, Bella pulls back the curtain slightly.

SALES GIRL

Okay, I'll look. What size is that?

BELLA sees TWO GIRLS, 18, slim cheerleader types, looking over at her with cruel smirks. BELLA turns beet red.

BELLA

Twenty-four.

SALES GIRL

Oh. That's actually our biggest size. I'm sorry.

BELLA pulls back the curtain, embarrassed. The SALES GIRL walks away. VICKI speaks through the curtain.

VICKI

What about the blue one?

BELLA

The blue one's a tent.

VICKI

Well, does it fit? Let me see.

BELLA

If I put it on, can we leave?

VICKI

Let's just see it, Bella.

Vicki notices the TWO SMIRKING GIRLS. She snaps at them -

VICKI (CONT'D)

You two find something amusing? Or is that just what your face does since your budget nose job? Yeah, I could spot that uneven left nostril from fucking Missouri. Where'd you get that done, Wal-Mart?

The GIRLS scramble off, scared. VICKI calls after them.

VICKI (CONT'D)

That's right, I'll serve you some god damn tea.

Bella opens the curtain. She wears a shapeless blue dress that fits like a cotton trash bag. Vicki forces a smile.

VICKI (CONT'D)
It brings out your eyes.

BELLA
I look like a sleeping bag.

VICKI
We can keep looking if you want.

BELLA
No! Please, god, no. I'll just -
I'll get this one. Okay?

VICKI
Well I don't want you to pick
something you don't like.

BELLA
I won't like any of them. I don't
wear dresses. I wear T-shirts. For
going unspecial places and doing
unspecial things.

VICKI
Lower your voice. This is a
department store, not Golden
Corral.

BELLA
I know you're into all this stuff.
But to me - it is profoundly
unimportant.

Bella closes the curtain. Vicki is silent.

INT. INFRARED SAUNA. - DAY

HAYLEY is wrapped up in what looks like a space-age sleeping bag, AKA an INFRARED BED. She sweats profusely. Miserable.

INT. INFRARED SAUNA WAITING ROOM. - DAY

NIGEL and MARY wait for HAYLEY in silence.

NIGEL checks his watch and glances over at MARY. He notices that, despite her calm face, Mary's hands are gripping the CHAIR HANDLES mercilessly, her knuckles going white. NIGEL stares at MARY'S VIOLENT GRIP until suddenly -

- the door opens, HAYLEY walks out, hair soaked with sweat, face bright red.

HAYLEY
All done!

NIGEL
How you feel?

HAYLEY
Great.

HAYLEY takes two steps forward and plummets to the ground from light-headedness. Nigel and Mary jump up quickly to help-

HAYLEY (CONT'D)
I'm good, I'm good...

NIGEL MARY
Let's sit you down for a second - Easy there -

HAYLEY (CONT'D)
How are my cheekbones?

NIGEL
They're very pronounced, honey,
here you go...

EXT. INFRARED SAUNA. - PARKING LOT - DAY

NIGEL, MARY and HAYLEY exit the sauna. HAYLEY drinks coconut water, feeling better now.

HAYLEY
So I'll just go see my parents
quickly, then I'll meet you at 4?

MARY
Don't be late.

HAYLEY heads to her car (a LEXUS). She is up to something. She gets out her bejeweled phone. Dials a number. A grin;

HAYLEY
Hey baby. Where are you?

INT. VICKI'S JAGUAR. - DAY

Vicki drives, Bella in passenger. The air is tense.

VICKI

I won't tell your mom you exploded at me.

BELLA

Do whatever. Look. I know you're trying to be nice. I just don't like the same stuff as you.

VICKI

Well, I like lots of things.

BELLA

Like what? Besides makeup and clothing and factory made dogs that aren't even meant to exist? I mean honestly, that thing's an affront to real dogs.

VICKI

Please don't take this out on George, he's blameless here.

(beat)

What I do is about more than just makeup and clothing. And it means a lot to a lot of people. I help girls become better versions of themselves. Maybe if you came and spent more time with me in Tulsa, you'd see that.

BELLA

I don't like Tulsa. Everybody's fake.

VICKI

You've barely spent any time there.

Silence. Bella pulls out a candy bar from her backpack. She begins eating it. Vicki tries not to look disgusted.

VICKI (CONT'D)

You just carry candy bars around with you?

BELLA

I got Funyuns too. Want some?

Silence. Bella rolls her eyes at Vicki's obvious discomfort.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Everything you do with your life is about preventing girls from being like me.

VICKI
That's a terrible thing to say.

BELLA
You hate ugly girls.

VICKI
You are not ugly. You hear me? I mean, who do you think told your mama to name you Bella? And Bella means "beautiful."

BELLA
If I showed up to one of your pageants, you would laugh me off the stage.

VICKI
I would never laugh at you. You are my niece.

BELLA
Well then someone else's niece, who looks like me.

VICKI
That is not true.

Silence. They drive. GEORGE growls at the Air Conditioner.

INT. KATIE ELLIS'S HOME. - DAY

KATIE watches TV. Suddenly the front door slams - BELLA storms inside and immediately into her room.

KATIE
Bella??

VICKI enters, drained. She sets down a large DILLARDS BAG and GEORGE THE YORKIE onto the floor. KATIE turns on VICKIE.

KATIE (CONT'D)
What happened??

VICKI
That girl is spoiled rotten, that's what happened. I tried to show her a good time. She was totally ungrateful.

KATIE
I knew this was a bad idea. What did you do to her?

VICKI

Oh like you just assume it's my fault?? No. This has to do with her attitude. This ain't because of me.

A beat - Vicki realizes her own mistake -

VICKI (CONT'D)

Isn't. This *isn't* because of me.

KATIE can't help but give a small laugh at this - which only infuriates VICKI more -

VICKI (CONT'D)

Wipe that smile off your face.

KATIE

I'll try.

VICKI

And by the way, what the hell are you feeding that child?

KATIE

Excuse me?

Vicki points out packaged food and old dishes laying around-

VICKI

Look at this shit!

VICKI grabs a bag of FRITOS and holds it up in horror -

VICKI (CONT'D)

Fritos??? Who the hell eats Fritos anymore besides Appalachian teenagers?!

KATIE yanks the FRITOS away from VICKI -

KATIE

I do!!

VICKI doesn't pause - continues her rant as she scans the room furiously -

VICKI

Mac n' Cheese over there. Over here what looks like something that used to be a pastrami sandwich, even though I've warned you repeatedly about white bread, and - oh holy shit, Katie, is that a frozen corndog?

(MORE)

VICKI (CONT'D)

Tell me that's not a frozen fucking corndog. Looks like it wasn't even properly thawed before you started eating it - what, you just couldn't wait?!?!

KATIE

I'm sorry I can't afford gourmet meals every day, Vicki. But I live in the real world. Something you've never done.

VICKI

You're supposed to be taking care of her. And instead you're fattening her up like a god damn Miss Piggy, sending her out there to be laughed at! That's the "real world!"

KATIE

I do my best! She has a lazy thyroid and an insatiable appetite.

VICKI

Then tape her god damn mouth shut! Put a fucking lock on the fridge!

KATIE

You have no right to tell me how to raise my kid.

VICKI

Oh right, "your kid." Well, maybe it's time for her to know the truth about *that* story.

Without warning **KATIE punches VICKI solidly in the face.** Trailer Park Style. With a cry, VICKI doubles over in shock - clutching her face. She gasps. GEORGE runs in manic circles.

VICKI (CONT'D)

You - you punched me! In my face!

KATIE

You come to my house and say dumb whore shit, you're gonna get punched in the face like a dumb whore.

VICKI looks in the WALL MIRROR frantically -

VICKI

That better not leave a fucking mark.

KATIE

Well if it does, that's what makeup is for. And lord knows you got plenty of that.

(beat)

You and I agreed 16 years ago to keep certain things to ourselves. And if you decide to start going back on that now, you better expect a fucking shitstorm from me. I know you think you've got the market cornered on shitstorms, but you and I come from the same mother and she taught us both how to rage.

VICKI glares daggers at her, hand still on her face.

VICKI

You were supposed to give that girl a good life.

KATIE

I gave her the life I could give her. And Vicki: this is it. I'm not ashamed of it, even if you are. I'd like to see what life you'd have given her - wannabe sorority girl flashing her cooter to any hick in Okmulgee who would look at it. Hopped up on diet pills, talking about Miss America all day long. You think your life is better than mine? Well you've got the life you've got now 'cause you didn't have to spend years wiping up a baby's ass. So when you walk in here with your fancy shoes and your 1500 dollar genetically engineered dog, you remember who made that possible. And you show me some god damn respect.

Silence. Vicki quietly begins to fix her hair, tries to pull herself together.

VICKI

I respect you, Katie. I just don't like you much sometimes.

KATIE

Well we're family, we don't have to like each other. We just gotta get on with it.

Silence. Vicki picks up the DILLARDS bag. She takes out Bella's LIPGLOSS and DRESS, sets them on the table.

VICKI

These are for her. The dress will be more flattering if she belts it at the waist. I'd recommend silver or black, but brown isn't an option.

(silence)

Just 'cause I'd like the world to look a little better doesn't mean I don't live in the "real" one.

She picks up GEORGE and heads to the door. She stops -

VICKI (CONT'D)

And for the record, George was a gift from a client. I didn't spend a dime on his adoption.

She leaves, letting the door slam behind her. Katie sighs.

INT. HAYLEY'S CAR. - DAY

Hayley's LEXUS is parked on a remote neighborhood street. In the backseat she gets fucked from behind by **ANDREW HIGGINS** (28) a former frat boy with a lot of problems.

ANDREW

Oh god. I'm gonna come.

HAYLEY

Wait - pull out -

It's too late - Andrew comes inside her with a loud groan.

HAYLEY (CONT'D)

Jesus, Andrew! You idiot!

ANDREW

(climbing off her)

I didn't want to get your seat dirty. It's a Lexus.

HAYLEY

So you wanna knock me up instead?

ANDREW

Relax. I got you a Plan B.

He pulls out a package of the MORNING AFTER PILL. Hands it to her. She glares, but puts it in her purse.

HAYLEY

I'll take it after swimsuit tonight. The hormones make me bloat. If Vicki finds out I saw you today she'll murder me.

ANDREW

I don't get why you're always so worried what she thinks.

HAYLEY

She's my coach.

ANDREW

Yeah, but it's not like she does it for free. Your parents pay her a shitload of money.

HAYLEY

Because they know she's the best.

ANDREW

Well you're definitely gonna win.

HAYLEY

You really think so?

ANDREW

Babe, you look like Pepsi commercial Britney Spears.

This is a huge compliment. She kisses him - they make out.

INT. VICKI'S HOUSE. - KITCHEN - DAY

VICKI enters, shaken. She opens the fridge- it's meticulously organized with SLIMFAST and DIET FOOD. She closes it.

She goes to the CABINET and opens a BOTTOM DRAWER to reveal a GUILTY SECRET STASH: twinkies, candy, chips; classic binge food. At the very top of the stash are SEVERAL PACKAGES OF FRITOS - the exact food she ridiculed her sister for.

VICKI sits on the floor and grabs the Fritos. She rips the package open and eats, slowly at first, then faster, until she's finally shoving Fritos in too fast to taste them.

She grabs other foods too - twizzlers, potato chips, candy bars. Compulsive. More and more and more.

INT. VICKI'S HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - DAY

Behind a SHUT DOOR we hear A TOILET FLUSH. The door opens, VICKI exits and walks to the sink. She washes her face.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DRESSING ROOM. - DAY - AN HOUR LATER

Girls get primped by their personal hair and makeup teams.

The one girl all by herself, no team, is the lovely but clumsy SAMANTHA, aka MISS CLAREMORE. She does her own hair and makeup without help. Meanwhile, she scrolls through INSTAGRAM on her phone - she looks at HAYLEY'S INSTAGRAM PAGE: it is a perfectly curated Instagram, each photo shows HAYLEY as the consummate "Miss Tulsa," always surrounded by her entourage, doting family, or fans. Hayley donating blood in one photo, Hayley reading to school-kids in the next. SAMANTHA stares, intimidated by all the perfection.

SAMANTHA lands on the LATEST PHOTO which was recently photoshopped by MARY: HAYLEY in her evening wear, with her (fraudulent) micro waist. SAMANTHA stares at the photo; she doesn't have a shot in hell. SAMANTHA glances meekly across the room at HAYLEY and her mini entourage of NIGEL and MARY.

SAMANTHA puts her phone down and refocuses on her own hair.

We shift our focus to HAYLEY AND HER TEAM; NIGEL does HAYLEY's hair. MARY stares off into space bizarrely. HAYLEY and NIGEL watch MARY, creeped out.

HAYLEY

(a whisper)

What do you think she's thinking about?

NIGEL

Enemies.

NIGEL notices SAMANTHA across the room, curling her own hair.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Oh good lord that is the saddest thing I've ever seen. That child is doing her own hair and makeup.

HAYLEY

Did you see her evening wear? I doubt she can afford a glam squad.

NIGEL

That breaks my heart. Aren't there charities for things like that?

VICKI bursts in - rushing to the group.

VICKI

Hi ladies! Hayley - you're glowing!

HAYLEY

I had a great sweat.

VICKI gives them kisses. NIGEL wrinkles his nose as her face nears his, he smells something. He speaks discreetly to VICKI-

NIGEL

I think you need a piece of gum, babe.

They share a look (she's busted) as he hands VICKI a stick of gum. She takes it. The others are oblivious.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Your day go okay?

VICKI

Oh yeah, great! But never mind. Tonight is about Hayley.

She levels herself to HAYLEY's face.

VICKI (CONT'D)

This is the start of your entire future.

INT. ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY - BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - NIGHT

VICKI hurries down the hallway - her phone beeps - VOICEMAIL. She plays it - it's from her sister:

KATIE (O.C.)

Hey Vicki, it's Katie. I'm sorry, but Bella's not gonna be able to make it tonight. She isn't feeling well. But good luck. I'm sure you'll win. You always do.

VICKI's face falls as the message ends. She recovers quickly - shoulders back, she marches towards the WINGS.

INT. ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The show has begun. The girls parade onstage as each introduces themselves. HAYLEY walks to the front microphone, she is rehearsed and polished within an inch of her life;

HAYLEY

Hi. I'm Hayley Stone, representing the city of Tulsa. My passions include country music and the great outdoors. My platform is preventing malnutrition in American children. If I'm crowned Miss Oklahoma, I'll dedicate my year to making sure no child in our state goes hungry!

The crowd cheers. **IN THE WINGS**, Vicki, Mary and Nigel clap. The next girl steps up to the mic - SAMANTHA. She's much less polished, but she is genuinely excited to be there.

SAMANTHA

Hi. I'm Samantha Cole, from Claremore. My interests include bike riding and horses.

Vicki covers her eyes as if witnessing a car wreck -

VICKI

Oh good lord. I can't.

SAMANTHA

And my platform is Sex Slavery. I mean - putting an end to Sex Slavery. In Oklahoma. To protect them.

VICKI

Sex slavery?! *Ew.* No one wants to hear about sex slavery at a pageant! Stick to trees, or something.

INT. ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY - STAGE - A LITTLE LATER

The TOP TEN are being announced. Three more to go. The girls hold hands anxiously as the HOST reads the list.

HOST

And number eight in our Top Ten who will be competing tonight... Miss Broken Arrow, Cara Brown!!

MISS BROKEN ARROW screams and joins the TOP 10. In the wings, VICKI and NIGEL hold hands. Across the stage in the other wings VICKI sees RICK. He smirks at her, she flips him off.

HOST (CONT'D)

And number nine on our list... It's Miss Tulsa, Hayley Stone!

VICKI, NIGEL and MARY stifle screams - jumping up and down. HAYLEY reacts perfectly as she joins the TOP 10.

NIGEL

Her pause was fucking perfect!

HOST

And now the final spot. Drumroll...
(beat)
It's Miss Claremore! Samantha Cole!

SAMANTHA shrieks at the top of her lungs - zero restraint. Legitimately embarrassing. VICKI, NIGEL and MARY'S jaws drop. Even HAYLEY, onstage, has difficulty masking her shock.

INT. DRESSING ROOM. - NIGHT

Frenzy. Many girls cry. The TEAM scrambles to get HAYLEY into her TALENT COSTUME, an elaborate opera gown worth 5k easy.

VICKI

Now just remember. Breathe. And save up for that last note.

Suddenly SAMANTHA approaches them. She's wearing a simple TAP DANCING costume that's basically a leotard. Somehow it works.

SAMANTHA

Hi Hayley. I just wanted to congratulate you on making the Top 10. I knew you would.

HAYLEY looks at her team - confused. They all are.

HAYLEY

Uh, thanks...?

SAMANTHA

It's an honor to be in the same group as you. You're really talented. Anyway. Break a leg tonight.

SAMANTHA hurries off - her tap shoes clinking loudly. Vicki, Hayley, Nigel and Mary stare at each other. Confusion.

HAYLEY

Was she trying to fuck with us?

VICKI

If she wasn't - then she's even
dumber than I thought.

INT. ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY - STAGE - NIGHT

A MONTAGE of the competition. The girls compete in TALENT. Several singers, a ballet dancer, even a juggler. SAMANTHA tap dances - she's surprisingly good. But still, tap dancing is just embarrassing. HAYLEY sings an upbeat, slightly poppy song beautifully.

INT. ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY - BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - NIGHT

VICKI leans against the wall, breathing deeply, calming her nerves. NIGEL approaches her.

NIGEL

It's time.

VICKI nods and straightens up. He takes her hand in his. She smiles at him. They walk towards the wings, hand in hand.

INT. ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY - STAGE - NIGHT

The winner is being announced. The TOP 5 include Hayley, Samantha, and three other girls. One has already lost.

HOST

3rd runner up and winner of a
\$5,000 scholarship goes to: Miss
Bixby!

Disappointed, Miss Bixby fake smiles as she takes her place.

HOST (CONT'D)

And the 2nd runner up and winner of
a \$6,000 scholarship goes to - Miss
Oklahoma City!

Miss OKC takes her place. Only Hayley and Samantha remain. Samantha looks like she's about to piss her pants. She tries to hold HAYLEY'S hand in solidarity - HAYLEY yanks it away.

In the wings VICKI holds hands with NIGEL and MARY.

HOST (CONT'D)

And now. 1st runner up and winner
of a \$10,000 scholarship goes to...
Miss Claremore, Samantha Cole!

The crowd erupts. HAYLEY screams in almost anguished joy.
Backstage VICKI screams too.

HOST (CONT'D)

That means our new Miss Oklahoma is
Hayley Stone, from Tulsa!

The MISS AMERICA music plays as last year's QUEEN places the
crown and MISS OKLAHOMA BANNER on HAYLEY. Hayley is in tears.

MARY, NIGEL and VICKI jump up and down in a group hug.
Uncharacteristically emotional - MARY weeps openly.

INT. CHARLESTON'S STEAKHOUSE. - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

The restaurant is full of HAYLEY's friends and family - she
is surrounded by unconditional love. Her PARENTS, THE STONES,
watch her adoringly; they are wealthy republicans who believe
their daughter is literally the Second Coming, and they've
invested a fortune in her accordingly.

At a table across the room, NIGEL, MARY and VICKI watch their
golden girl with pride. They've done a good job.

VICKI

I'm thinkin' we change up the
talent routine for Nationals. I'm
worried too many girls will do pop
songs. It's been a whole fad this
year. A ballad would be a better
bet.

NIGEL

If we do a sad song, I can give her
glitter tears. People will lose
their minds.

VICKI

Oh I love that. But subtle.

NIGEL

Oh of course. Always subtle.

A HOT MALE BARTENDER smiles at NIGEL across the room.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Excuse me ladies.

NIGEL walks off towards the bartender.

At the bar, HAYLEY clinks a spoon on her champagne glass, getting everyone's attention -

HAYLEY

Excuse me! I'd like to make a toast!

The group quiets. Hayley beams at all of them.

HAYLEY (CONT'D)

Hi everyone. I'd just like to thank all of you for coming out to support me tonight. I truly believe that Oklahoma is the greatest state, in the greatest country in the world. And I am so proud that I get to represent all of you at Nationals this year. It has been a hard battle to get here - not only physically, but also emotionally, mentally and spiritually - but when I take the stage in Atlantic City in a couple months, it'll all have been worth it.

HAYLEY raises her glass - everyone drinks and applauds.

HAYLEY'S PARENTS go to her in a hug; MARY watches them.

MARY

Her parents are friendly people.

VICKI

They are.

MARY

They seem like the type that went to all the parent teacher conferences.

VICKI eyes MARY; she knows Mary is drunk, but Vicki is not in the mood to put up with yet another person's shit today.

MARY (CONT'D)

(matter-of-fact)

Was I as good as her?

VICKI

No. You could've been. If you'd had that kinda focus.

MARY

Hmm.

(beat)

You know, sometimes I feel like I could be really nice. Like I get this feeling that - I've got something really good I want to say, something really kind. But there's nobody that deserves to hear it.

VICKI notices MARY'S fists clenched tight. Knuckles white.

VICKI

I think you should go to a meeting again soon.

MARY

Why?

VICKI

Because I can smell it on you.

Mary laughs this off, she rolls her eyes as she stands up -

MARY

Well I can smell potato chips and dairy on you, and we all know what that means. I gotta go pee -

She starts towards the restroom but VICKI'S voice stops her -

VICKI

Mary.

MARY stops and looks at her - VICKI'S face says she's not fucking around. This is the first time we've seen MARY look nervous. VICKI'S eyes and words are deliberate, and they sting like they're meant to;

VICKI (CONT'D)

After about twenty-five, it just makes a girl seem used up. And I'm sorry, but nobody wants used. So cut this shit out, and start pretending like you're brand fucking new. For your own sake.

A beat. MARY finally smiles politely but coolly, in submission.

MARY

Thank you.

MARY goes to the bathroom.

INT. CHARLESTON'S STEAKHOUSE. - NIGHT - LATER

The party is still going. HAYLEY still surrounded by people.

VICKI makes her way through the crowd; finally getting to HAYLEY. HAYLEY throws her arms around her. She then whispers;

HAYLEY
Was my toast okay?

VICKI
It was fine.

They pull apart. Vicki smiles at her;

VICKI (CONT'D)
It's time for me to call it a
night, baby girl.

HAYLEY
Okay. Will you call me tomorrow? I
want to start prepping for
interviews ASAP.

VICKI
I will. I'm so proud of you. I'm
taking you to Miss America - and
you know what? We're going to win.

VICKI and HAYLEY hug again.

They pull apart. VICKI weaves through the crowd towards the door. VICKI looks back at HAYLEY - already engrossed in more love. Hayley's PARENTS are hugging her again, her MOTHER showers her with kisses.

A twinge of envy crosses VICKI's face as she watches the family - then she leaves, alone.

Back on HAYLEY - her phone pings. She looks down to see a TEXT from ANDREW. It reads: "Celebrate?" HAYLEY smiles.

INT. VICKI'S CAR. - NIGHT

VICKI drives home, the window rolled down. On the radio "*Down the Line*" by Jose Gonzalez plays.

Vicki turns onto RIVERSIDE DRIVE - the long stretch of road that runs alongside the ARKANSAS RIVER and takes you all the way from the largely commercial SOUTH TULSA (where the pageant takes place) to the more desirable and residential MIDTOWN/UTICA area. But first you have to drive through some ugly parts. The river is eery and silent beside her, and the road mostly empty save for a few headlights.

Vicki smiles to herself, remembering the night's victory. She comes to a STOPLIGHT.

At the stoplight is a HOMELESS WOMAN, bloated and dirty. She holds a sign that says simply "*Looking for Kindness.*"

Vicki's smile fades as she notices the woman, Vicki is suddenly uncomfortable. The woman makes eye contact with Vicki. She smiles at VICKI.

Vicki looks away quickly and rolls up her window. She presses the LOCK BUTTON on the car doors.

The LIGHT GOES GREEN and Vicki drives, unsettled.

INT. VICKI'S HOUSE. - BEDROOM. - DAY

The next morning. 7 AM. VICKI sleeps with an eye mask on - GEORGE curled up by her neck. Her phone is ringing loudly. She sleeps through it. Finally she begins to wake. She pulls her mask off groggily, reaches for the phone, confused -

VICKI
(she answers)
It's 7 AM, Nigel. What is it?

A beat. Horror spreads across her face as she sits up slowly.

VICKI (CONT'D)
Fucking dogcock - she did *what*?

INT. PAGEANT BOARD OF DIRECTORS. - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

TEN MEMBERS OF THE BOARD (including RICK BISHOP) sit across from VICKI. A FLATSCREEN TV plays a local news program. An ANCHORWOMAN speaks onscreen:

ANCHORWOMAN
High drama this morning in the Oklahoma pageant world. Only hours after being crowned Miss Oklahoma, Hayley Stone was arrested in connection with a drunk driving incident.

A PAGEANT PHOTO of HAYLEY comes onscreen.

ANCHORWOMAN (CONT'D)

Miss Stone was with her boyfriend when he drove his car through the wall of a Panda Express restaurant. No injuries were reported, but -

NANCY SUMMERS (50) the dignified **President of the Pageant Board of Directors**, turns off the TV. She turns to Vicki.

NANCY

As president of the board, this has put me in a terrible position.

VICKI

Nancy. Please hear me out. Hayley wasn't even the one driving. We can spin this! She'll change her platform to be about the dangers of alcohol and - and peer pressure -

NANCY

I'm sorry Vicki -

VICKI

It's a redemption story! She'll speak at rehab centers!

NANCY

Vicki -

VICKI

This is a good girl, Nancy, she deserves a second chance -

NANCY

Vicki.

(silence)

Our decision's already been made. Samantha Cole will be the new Miss Oklahoma.

VICKI

Are you insane?? Samantha Cole won't stand a chance at Nationals! She'll bring shame on the entire state!

RICK BISHOP

Like crashing through the side of a Panda Express?

VICKI

In five years Samantha Cole will be *working* at a Panda Express!

NANCY

We wanted to give you the curtesy of hearing the news from us. As long as I've been president, you've been a vital member of the Miss Oklahoma community. You've done a lot for our girls. This incident doesn't change that. We hope you'll continue on to Miss America with our new crown holder. Samantha is a hard worker. I know with your guidance, she could do very well.

VICKI is silent. RICK BISHOP smiles at her with faux sympathy, loving this. Finally VICKI stands, exits out into -

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

HAYLEY sits in the hallway, head in hands. Face swollen with tears. VICKI enters - they stare at each other.

HAYLEY

We can fix this, right? I mean, I won that crown! They can't just take it back!

VICKI

Of course they can take it back.

HAYLEY is near hyperventilation - through grit teeth -

HAYLEY

They'll have to pry it out of my dead cold fingers!

VICKI

And I'm sure they'd be happy to. Anything's possible now that you brought Panda fucking Express into the equation.

The finality of her situation begins to dawn on HAYLEY.

HAYLEY

Oh my god. I'm not even gonna get a parade.

(she weeps)

I'm sorry I let you down.

VICKI watches her weeping, she remains icy. No sympathy.

VICKI

Me? You didn't just let me down.
 You let Nigel down. Mary. Your
 parents. So many people just
 pouring support onto you. Do you
 know how many girls out there have
 nothing but themselves? Most girls
 have to give their own pep talks,
 'cause sure as hell nobody else is
 giving them. You had it easy, babe.
 You should get up every day of your
 life and thank your lucky fucking
 stars, because trust me, they are
 lucky. You've got no idea how much
 smoother the road is when you've
 got people lifting you up instead
 of pulling you down. Do you?

VICKI studies HAYLEY'S face for any understanding - there is none. Just confusion, self pity and despair.

VICKI (CONT'D)

No. You don't.

HAYLEY cries - VICKI walks off, holding back any emotion.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY. - DAY - CONTINUOUS

VICKI enters. Reporters mingle, taking their seats. The room has been setup for a press conference. NIGEL rushes to VICKI.

NIGEL

Is it true?
 (off her face)
 Oh my god. Those Nazis.

VICKI

No. They did exactly what I
 would've done in their shoes.

NIGEL

But - what about Hayley??

VICKI

Hayley did this to herself. We
 become what we choose to become.
 Nobody makes our choices for us.
 And today, Hayley chose to become a
 cautionary tale of mediocrity.

VICKI exits. NIGEL watches her go.

EXT. BUILDING. - DAY - CONTINUOUS

SAMANTHA COLE paces excitedly - her life just got made.

VICKI exits. The two women stop cold when they see each other. SAMANTHA's face freezes with a mix of fear and hope.

VICKI looks her up and down with disdain. She lights a cigarette and marches to her car. SAMANTHA hurries after her.

SAMANTHA

Mrs. Ellis! Excuse me -

VICKI

It's Ms. Ellis. I'm not married.
Rule number one, do your homework.

SAMANTHA

Oh right, sorry, it's just a habit.

VICKI

Why? Because every woman over 35 is married?

SAMANTHA

Um. Yeah? I guess?

VICKI gives her a look then continues to her car.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Wait. Ms. Ellis. Please??

SAMANTHA is still chasing her. VICKI stops, begrudgingly.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I really am sorry about Hayley.
It's not the way I wanted this to happen.

VICKI

You're Miss Claremore and your talent is tap dancing. You should just be grateful it happened any way at all.

This hurts, but Samantha takes it.

SAMANTHA

I totally understand how upset you must be. But I'm gonna be Miss Oklahoma now. And I know you always coach the winner for Nationals.

(MORE)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I've only got three months to get ready for Miss America, and I would love to have you as my coach. I know your fees are pretty high, so I might have to pay you in installments, but I'd swear to pay you every last cent -

VICKI

Stop. You think you can just buy my dedication?

SAMANTHA

No. That's not what I meant, I just-

VICKI

I've waived my fees for plenty of girls if I believed in them. That's the thing - I only coach girls I believe in. You said I always coach Miss Oklahoma for Nationals, but those girls all had one thing in common; they won. They didn't get the crown 'cause the real winner got drunk and made an asshat of herself. And frankly, it takes a lot more than a good thigh gap to do well at Nationals. I mean Christ, swimsuit only counts for 15 percent!

VICKI has arrived at her car. SAMANTHA is desperate.

SAMANTHA

Ms. Ellis, I want Miss America more than anything.

VICKI takes one last inhale and puts out her cigarette.

VICKI

Don't we all, babe.

VICKI gets in her car and drives off. SAMANTHA stares after her, devastated.

INT. BUILDING. - PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

The journalists continue to gather. NIGEL walks down the hallway. He turns the corner and passes an empty room with the door slightly ajar -

- inside is SAMANTHA, she sits alone, crying. She's a mess, makeup smeared all over her face.

She holds a hand mirror and a small cosmetic bag, trying to fix herself. She stops when she sees him.

SAMANTHA

Sorry. This is so embarrassing. They're about to announce me at the press conference, and I've got mascara everywhere -

NIGEL enters the room, shuts the door behind him.

NIGEL

Shhhh. It's okay. Let's fix you up.

INT. ROOM. - DAY - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

NIGEL has worked his magic. SAMANTHA's makeup is fresh and clean. He does her hair. She is still very emotional - holds back any fresh tears that might ruin NIGEL's work.

SAMANTHA

Everyone says if Vicki coaches you, you're guaranteed top 5 at Miss America.

NIGEL

Vicki's just been dealt a huge blow. She's upset.

SAMANTHA

Honestly, I was happy even being Miss Claremore. Everyone was a lot nicer.

NIGEL

The thing about any competition is - nobody ever thinks anyone else deserves to be there.

SAMANTHA

I know I wasn't a frontrunner or anything. My dad doesn't even want me doing this. He thinks pageants are ridiculous, but they help pay tuition. My sister got an academic scholarship, and there was no way that was gonna happen for me, so pageants kinda saved me.

NIGEL

Look. Everybody's got to use what they've got. Whether that's a great mind or a great ass.

(MORE)

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Not using it doesn't make you more enlightened, it just makes you poor.

SAMANTHA

I guess. I mean, I know I look good in a swimsuit. But I'm not dumb enough to think that's gonna last forever. The way I see it, in twenty years I could just be some middle-aged woman with a community college degree who people used to think was really hot. Or I could be a former Miss America.

(beat)

This is gonna sound stupid... I know people think I'm pretty. I do. But, sometimes... I just feel so ugly.

She looks at him.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Do you know at all what I mean?

He looks at her with total understanding, moved;

NIGEL

Oh honey, I know completely what you mean.

INT. VICKI'S HOUSE. - DAY

VICKI drinks WINE and flips through an OLD PHOTO ALBUM. Pictures of KATIE with BELLA as a baby. Pictures of past clients. And many, many pictures of HAYLEY through the years.

Suddenly A LOOSE PHOTO falls out; it's older than the others: it's a photo of VICKI and KATIE as kids, sitting in the back of a PICKUP TRUCK, smiling. Standing off to the side is a worn out looking woman - fat, sunburnt and exhausted by poverty. This is **VICKI'S MOTHER**.

VICKI's face clouds as she studies the photo - suddenly the FRONT DOOR slams in the other room. VICKI tucks the PHOTO away.

VICKI

Hello??

NIGEL enters.

VICKI (CONT'D)
What are you doing here?

NIGEL
Came to see how you were.

VICKI
Oh great. Just basking in hilarity. And in a couple hours I gotta go to the party at Nancy Summer's house, with the whole damn board there. I need to show face and make sure I don't burn the bridge entirely. Don't wanna mess things up for our clients next year.

NIGEL
Our clients will be fine and the bridge will be fine. If there's one thing you know how to do, it's claw your way out from under a pile of shit.

VICKI looks at him, surprised - unsure whether that was an insult or not.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
Don't worry, it's a compliment.
(then)
I saw Samantha Cole. She was upset.

VICKI
Some people don't have thick enough skin to handle honesty. And you know where those people don't belong? Pageants.

NIGEL is silent for a moment;

NIGEL
You know the day I knew you'd be my best friend?

VICKI
When I let you fuck me senior year 'cause you needed to make sure you were definitely gay?

NIGEL
No. The day the basketball team spray painted the word Faggot on my car.

VICKI

Huh. I don't remember that being a peak moment for us.

NIGEL

You went and smashed in every single one of their cars with a baseball bat. You drove all the way to the Port of Catoosa to smash up Eric Peterson's car, 'cause he knew you were looking for it and was too scared to park it on campus. But you tracked that Chevy down and smeared dog shit on the windows. I remember thinking: *fuck*, this white girl is a genuine product of trailer park breeding. But I also thought - god damn if this redneck bitch isn't loyal.

Silence.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Hayley Stone has had a lot handed to her all her life. Rich parents, blueish green eyes, and a lot of other shit you and I never had. So I understand why you were so harsh with her. But Samantha Cole and the things you said to her - that's different.

VICKI

What's your point, Nigel? That I'm not a "nice girl?"

NIGEL

Lord no, you'll never be a nice girl. You've got a mean streak wider than the Arkansas fucking River. You're a god damn junkyard dog. My point is - I know sometimes we get a kick out of putting these bitches in their place, and I truly believe that someone has to do that. But let's keep it to the bitches, shall we? You're getting too old to be a cunt for no reason. It's a tired look.

NIGEL stands. He takes Vicki's wine glass and downs it, hands the empty glass back to her. He exits. VICKI sits alone.

INT. NANCY SUMMER'S HOUSE PARTY. - NIGHT

A civilized gathering of "old money" Tulsans. Board members, sponsors. SAMANTHA is the center of attention as she accepts congratulations. She looks like a deer in headlights.

At the BUFFET, Samantha dishes food on her plate. She eyes the CAVIAR with confusion. Suddenly RICK appears beside her.

RICK BISHOP

Here. You do it like this.

He puts caviar on a cracker, garnishes it. Then instead of handing it to her he holds it to her mouth. Uncertainly, she eats it. She does not like it, but pretends.

SAMANTHA

Mmmmmmm.

(she chews)

Do I - I swallow this?

RICK BISHOP

Yes. You swallow it.

She swallows, a manic and painful grin on her disgusted face -

RICK BISHOP (CONT'D)

So. You must be a little overwhelmed.

SAMANTHA

Yeah. I don't know anybody here.

RICK BISHOP

Well you're handling this with a lot of grace. You know, I shouldn't say this but - I wanted you to win.

SAMANTHA

Really?

RICK BISHOP

Really. You're so authentic. Not like these other girls, coached since they were in preschool.

SAMANTHA

Wow. Thank you Mr. Bishop.

RICK BISHOP

Rick. Here, have this.

He hands her a tequila shot. She chatters nervously.

SAMANTHA

I'm a real lightweight. I hardly ever drink, except at Christmas and Thanksgiving. Sometimes Halloween. I really love Halloween. It's my favorite holiday.

He holds the shot glass higher - silencing her ramble - and dares her with a smile. She can't help but smile back. She is Rick's target demographic: naive girls who've never heard an Australian accent before. She takes the shot.

EXT. NANCY SUMMER'S HOME. - BACKYARD - NIGHT - LATER

The party continues. VICKI talks to NANCY. Diplomatic.

VICKI

I'm sorry about earlier. I will respect your decision.

NANCY

I appreciate that. But you're sure you won't consider coaching Samantha?

VICKI shakes her head.

VICKI

That girl just isn't a winner. I'm sorry.

EXT. NANCY SUMER'S HOUSE. - FRONT DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Later still, SAMANTHA and RICK walk down the idyllic suburban street. Passing parked cars of guests. SAMANTHA is wasted.

SAMANTHA

You sure you don't mind driving me?

RICK BISHOP

Not at all. You're our crown holder now. It's my duty to keep you safe.

SAMANTHA giggles at this. They get to his car. She reaches for the door but suddenly he's next to her. He looks down at her. Finally he kisses her. Aggressively. She lets him -

SAMANTHA

Wait. Isn't this bad?

RICK BISHOP

You don't like it?

SAMANTHA

No, I do. I think. I mean, you're being really nice to me...

He opens the door, leads Samantha into the backseat.

INT. RICK'S CAR. - CONTINUOUS

Rick climbs on top of her, kissing her.

RICK BISHOP

You're so beautiful... I really want to help you.

SAMANTHA

Um, help me how?

In response he immediately pulls down her top - exposing her boobs. He begins kissing them.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Oh man. I don't want to get in trouble.

RICK BISHOP

I swear, you're safe with me. I swear on the lives of my children.

SAMANTHA

You have children??!

RICK BISHOP

You know what I would love? I'd love to feel your hand on my cock. I'm getting hard just thinking about it. Don't hurt my feelings.

EXT. NANCY SUMMER'S HOUSE. - NIGHT

VICKI exits the house. She walks down the street, past the parked cars. Completely drained. She lights a cigarette.

Suddenly she notices RICK'S CAR - the back door is slightly ajar. She slows and sees two bodies moving. Her eyes widen.

INT. RICK'S CAR. - CONTINUOUS

They speak between kisses -

SAMANTHA

I don't want to be rude or anything, but I'm really drunk.

RICK BISHOP

What if you just put your mouth on it?

The door flies open - VICKI stands there, furious.

VICKI

What the hell do you think you're doing you kangaroo piece of shit?

RICK BISHOP

What the fuck?

SAMANTHA

Oh my god-

VICKI grabs a fistful of RICK's hair and pulls him out of the car. He shrieks in pain- pants around his ankles, ass bare.

RICK BISHOP

Let go of me you fucking bitch!

VICKI ripsss the fistful of hair out of his scalp, he howls-

VICKI

You're the fucking bitch, bitch!

RICK BISHOP

(staring at her fistful)

Oh my god, did that come from my head?!

She smothers his face with it - shoving hair into his mouth as he struggles to get away - pressed up against the car-

VICKI

Do you know how old she is? She's 19!

SAMANTHA

I'm twenty-one -

VICKI

Shut up!

RICK frantically tries to pull up his pants but VICKI grabs his crotch brutally - he shrieks. She holds on tight.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Now you're gonna listen to me you dingo fucking twat.

(she twists - he shrieks)

(MORE)

VICKI (CONT'D)

I do not like how you deal with women. I do not like it at all. See that girl? Not only is she clearly intoxicated past the point of consent - she is the crown holder in our pageant. Which means as an employee of said pageant you have a duty not to inflict harm on her. And guess what that includes??
 (twists harder)
 Sexual fucking coercion! You know what happens now?

RICK BISHOP

Whatttt?

VICKI

You're gonna stop showing your dick off to all the contestants like it's a fucking ice-cream cone. And you are never, EVER going to come within ten feet of my client again.

At the words "my client" SAMANTHA'S ears perk up.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Now get out of my sight. And next time I hear about you pulling this kinda stunt - I swear to God I will shove a lawsuit so far down your throat, your shit will smell like me for years.

She lets go. He scrambles to pull up his pants and get into his car. He speeds off in a hurry. VICKI yells after him.

VICKI (CONT'D)

I hope you drive into a Eucalyptus tree and die, you Koala fuck!

He is gone. VICKI and SAMANTHA are alone in the night. Beat.

SAMANTHA

Did you call me your client?

VICKI turns on her - fierce.

VICKI

And YOU. You keep your legs shut and your head on straight from now on. Because let me tell you something;

(MORE)

VICKI (CONT'D)

this happens one time, and he's a sexual predator, he's the bad guy, and everyone wants his dick on a wall. But this happens a second time? And you're just a slut from Claremore who no one wants to hear from. You understand me?

SAMANTHA nods slowly.

SAMANTHA

Yes ma'am. But um. You called me your client just now?

Silence. VICKI looks her up and down. Then, with finality;

VICKI

Call an uber, get home to your parents and sleep with some egg whites under your eyes. Those circles remind me of a homeless shelter and tomorrow morning we start diction lessons. Your accent is whack. And nobody ever won Miss America sounding like Miss Claremore.

VICKI turns sharply towards her car. SAMANTHA is elated.

SAMANTHA

Thank you Vicki! I promise I'm not gonna let you down!

SAMANTHA rushes back to the house with joy. VICKI glances over her shoulder at SAMANTHA - running gracelessly and clumsily through the dark. VICKI sighs at the sight of her.

VICKI

Shit.

END OF PILOT