

BEAUTY QUEEN

Written by
Annie Neal

Paradigm
Ida Ziniti & Christopher Smith
(310)288-8000

Benderspink
Jake Wagner & Daniel Vang
(323)904-1800

"No object is so beautiful that, under certain conditions, it will not look ugly."

- Oscar Wilde

FADE IN:

EXT. RUDYARD, MONTANA - NIGHTFALL - DEAD OF WINTER

Down a long country highway on the Montana Highline is a city sign for RUDYARD, MONTANA. It's mostly covered by an icy snow drift but enough can be seen to make out the city's population.

275.

It's January and Rudyard is cold. Barren. Hollow. Endless.

Thousands of acres of shivering cattle and frozen ground.

Off in the distance, the soft glow of a ranch house just barely lights the landscape. It's a small, humble house on a never ending piece of land.

The kind of house you might drive by and think "Who lives there?".

INT. KITCHEN OF THAT RANCH HOUSE - SAME TIME

VIVIAN HUNTSMAN is 36. She's pretty but you can see the long, hard, quiet minutes of life creasing the corners of her eyes, dulling the sheen of her skin.

She opens the oven and pulls out a pitch-perfect roast that would make any chef proud.

But Vivian could give two shits less about it.

She jabs a carving knife and fork into the hunk of meat and carries it out.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian lays the roast on the table.

Her three sons LUKE (18, senior football star), RYDER (14, middle-school-most-popular), JACKSON (11 naughty country boy) and Vivian's only daughter SUMMER (13 going on thirty, *morbidly overweight* and aware) are at the table waiting for the vittles.

Vivian looks at the lone empty chair at the head of the table.

INT. DEN - CONTINUOUS

Vivian's husband LEONARD, late 30's, wrangler-wearing-racist-cowboy, scratches his crotch as he watches an Elk Hunting Video on the VCR that's held together by electrical tape.

VIVIAN

Supper.

Leonard doesn't turn from the TV.

LEONARD

Better be beef. I'm growin' tits
we been eatin' so many god damn
vegetables lately.

ON THE VIDEO: The HUNTER SHOOTS AN ELK DEAD IN THE EYES.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

Man, I gotta get out there more. I
ain't hit a fucker dead in the eyes
like that in ages.

INT. DINING ROOM - A WHILE LATER

The family eats dinner together in quiet unison. The sounds of Kool-Aid being chugged and forks hitting plates the only noise that fills the air.

LEONARD

(without looking up from
his food)

Got a bill today from the dentist.
What you gettin' done that cost
two hundred dollars?

VIVIAN

A root canal. I got a good deal.
It normally would've been five
times that much, at least.

Leonard looks up from his plate for the first time.

LEONARD

Well, next time just have it
pulled. No more of this fancy
Hollywood dentist crap.

A moment of sorry life passes.

VIVIAN

It was a root canal.

Summer looks at her teeth in the reflection of her fork.

SUMMER

I wanna get braces to improve my alignment.

VIVIAN

(smiles)

Summer, you have perfect teeth.

She does.

LUKE

She just wants braces cause Katie and Destinee both got em.

SUMMER

Nuh uh, Luke! That's not true!

LUKE

Yes it is. You're always tryin' to be like them. You're never gonna be popular Summer. May as well stop tryin'.

Ryder and Jackson laugh. Summer gets up from the table and runs to her room.

Vivian is white hot.

VIVIAN

(to Luke)

Don't you ever talk to your sister like that again, do you hear me?

Vivian gets up and goes after Summer.

INT. SUMMER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian knocks lightly on the door and walks in.

VIVIAN

You ok?

Summer is on the bed, buried under the covers and crying loudly.

SUMMER

Yes.

The octave of her wails increase with every breath. Vivian sits on the edge of Summer's bed and pulls the covers from over her head.

SUMMER (CONT'D)
 (tripping on her breath)
 I...hate...all...humans...with...Y.
 ..chromosomes.

Vivian couldn't agree more. She strokes Summer's face to calm her.

VIVIAN
 Oh, sweetie. You love your brothers
 and they love you. They're just...
 (cutting the B.S.)
 Acting like stupid boys because
 boys are stupid.

Summer smiles through her tears.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 You're a a very special girl
 Summer. You know why? Because you
 are both kinds of beautiful. You're
 beautiful on the outside but more
 important than that you're
 beautiful on the inside. That's
 the most important kind of
 beautiful you can be.

Vivian kisses her on the forehead and heads toward the door.

SUMMER
 Mom?

VIVIAN
 Yeah?

SUMMER
 You're both kinds of beautiful too.

VIVIAN
 Thanks baby.

INT. VIVIAN AND LEONARD'S BEDROOM - LATER

Vivian is in bed, her eyes glued to an OLD VHS VIDEO of DIANE SAWYER being INTERVIEWED ON LARRY KING LIVE.

ON THE TV:

LARRY KING
 What was it like to go back?

DIANE SAWYER

After months of searching for them,
trying to find them... and after
the fall of the Taliban, once
again, our cameras in position, and
the door opened...

Leonard comes in the bedroom, and without a word, ejects the
tape from the VCR to watch SPORTSCENTER.

VIVIAN

(stern, for Vivian)
I was watchin' that.

LEONARD

You've seen it like a billion
times. It's gettin' weird. Like
you got some kinda weird lesbian
love on her or somethin'.

Vivian doesn't respond. Her eyes fixed on the wall.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

You know what? If you're gonna be
all pissy I'm goin' out.

Leonard grabs a hat and his Carhart jacket and walks out.
Vivian lets a moment pass, hears the door slam and puts the
tape back in the VCR.

ON THE TV:

LARRY KING

Diane, what a feeling that must
have been?

DIANE SAWYER

It was, it was. Flying in, same
mountains, same terrain, same
beautiful people, and the
completely... well...

(takes a moment)

Hope changes everything, doesn't
it?

Vivian presses pause and stares at Diane, *studies her*. And
then rewinds.

DIANE SAWYER (CONT'D)

Hope changes everything, doesn't
it?

EXT. SCHOOL BUS STOP - SUNRISE

Vivian drops the kids off at the remote end-of-the-road bus stop. They pile out of the mini van bundled from head to toe.

VIVIAN
(shouts after them)
Be good!

INT. WALMART - MORNING

Vivian strolls the cereal aisle. She grabs a box of Post Raisin bran but looks at the shelf and sees that the generic store brand is fifty cents less.

She stares at the two boxes, torn.

She puts the Post back and throws the store brand in the cart, like always.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Vivian sits at the dining room table eating a huge bowl of raisin bran. She stares at the box, wishing with every bite it wasn't generic.

INT. KITCHEN - A WHILE LATER

Vivian hides the box of raisin bran way up high on top of the refrigerator behind a bunch of jars of disgusting looking pickled vegetables.

Vivian doesn't see her but DARLEEN a thirty something, robust ranch wife with eighties hair, elastic waist pants and a great big smile stands just below her with a plate of cookies in hand.

DARLEEN
I made you Snickerdoodles!

Vivian loses her balance and just short of topples over.

VIVIAN
Jesus, Mary and Joseph! You scared
the living shit out of me, Darleen!

DARLEEN
Happens to me every morning when I
look in the mirror.
(then)
(MORE)

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

Came by to see if you wanted to grab lunch in town? It's buy one get one at Pork Chop John's! On me. *Man* I love those chops.

VIVIAN

Thanks but I already did the two hour round trip to Walmart and I need to get something going for supper soon.

(re: hidden box)

Plus I already ate two bowls of raisin bran.

DARLEEN

I don't know how you eat so much of that stuff. Runs through me like a
(whispers)

Kenyan

(full voice)

in a marathon!

VIVIAN

You whisper *Kenyan* like it's a bad thing. I think *Kenyan* people like being *Kenyan*.

DARLEEN

And as for supper, that's why our father in heaven created KFC.

VIVIAN

You know I could *never*.

DARLEEN

Life is too short for *nevers*. I think today is as good a day as any, don't you think?

VIVIAN

Next time, Dar.

Vivian raises her pinky, ala pinky swear.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Promise.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS STOP - ALMOST DUSK

The kids pile into Vivian's mini-van from the blustery, bleak bus stop.

INT. KITCHEN - A WHILE LATER

Vivian pulls out a white paper package that had been defrosting in the fridge. "ELK" written on it in thick, black marker.

She flops it on the counter, opens it and stares at the bloody, gamey meat.

INT. LUKE, RYDER AND JACKSON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The boys lay around playing video games. Homework's not much of a focus around here.

VIVIAN
Boys, I'll be right back.

Summer walks in behind her.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
You and Luke hold the fort down for a little bit, ok?

SUMMER
Ok. Where are you going?

VIVIAN
Just gonna run a quick errand.

EXT. GAS STATION/KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN COMBO STOP - MINUTES LATER

Vivian pulls the mini van into the Gas Station KFC, the only fast food restaurant within thirty miles.

A BANNER that reads "**BUCKET OF CHICKEN AND ALL THE FIXIN'S FAMILY MEAL \$12.99!**" flaps in the blustery, sub zero wind.

FADE TO:

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER....

Vivian is *still* in the car. Mulling it over.

Desperate to take the dive and go in but swirling with uncertainty and fear.

A sudden wave of confidence rushes over her.

And she rides it.

VIVIAN
 (feigned mantra)
 Life is too short for nevers.

She gets out of the car and heads into the KFC.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Vivian brings the BUCKET OF CHICKEN AND CONTAINERS OF SIDES out to the dining room. The kids swoon for the chicken and mashed potatoes.

Leonard looks at Vivian, raging, speechless.

LUKE
 I wish we were rich and could eat like this every night for the rest of our lives.

RYDER
 Me too.

LEONARD
 Well we're not rich.
 (pushes his empty plate away)
 I ain't eating this shit.

Leonard gets up and grabs his Carhart jacket and hat.

VIVIAN
 But Leonard, it's...

LEONARD
 (cuts her off)
 Vivian, I don't want to hear it. I do my job. You do yours. End of discussion.
 (then)
 I'll be late. Don't lock the door in case I lose my keys again.

VIVIAN
 (under her breath)
My birthday.

INT. VIVIAN AND LEONARD'S BEDROOM - LATER

Vivian folds a seemingly endless basket of laundry. She grabs a stack of the folded clothes and puts them in the closet.

She sees an old TONY LAMA BOOT BOX and pulls it down.

Vivian sits on the bed and opens the box, carefully. She pulls out AN ACCEPTANCE LETTER to the University of Montana's School of Journalism, A PHOTO of her giving the valedictorian address in high school, a SCHOLARSHIP OFFER...

VIVIAN
 (sighs, to herself)
 The box of what coulda' been.

EXT. FRONT YARD - 3 AM

Leonard pulls his truck into the driveway, clipping the mailbox on his way in. He parks and spills out.

His KEYS FALL FROM HIS HAND into the snow.

Leonard gets to the front door and searches all of his pockets.

LEONARD
 (baffled, wasted)
 It's like they disappear into the
 god damn thin air.

EXT. BACKYARD - MINUTES LATER

Leonard GRABS A SAW from beside a pile of logs in the yard.

EXT. BACK DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Leonard SAWS A HOLE AROUND THE DOORHANDLE until the handle pops off. He reaches his hand in the newly formed door-hole and unlocks the door.

LEONARD
 (so proud)
 There. Now I don't even need a
 stupid ass key!

INT. VIVIAN AND LEONARD'S BEDROOM - LATER

Vivian is sound asleep with the contents of her "what coulda been box" scattered around her, like a life collage.

Leonard, piss drunk and horny-as-a-mutha-fucka barrels in and wakes her.

VIVIAN
 (startled)
 Leonard! You scared me.

Vivian lays back down and curls into the covers. Leonard undresses. He's stumbling and fowl.

LEONARD
 I thought I said not to lock the door.
 (then)
 Get naked.

VIVIAN
 It's three in the morning. You'll be passed out before you could get it up anyway.

LEONARD
 (buck naked machismo)
 Hey, don't say that. I can get it up like a light switch, baby doll.

VIVIAN
 Fine then.

CUT TO:

TEN MINUTES LATER...

Offensively naked and gyrating in an oddly fast humping motion, Leonard is still trying to get it up. With each gyration, his knees crushing the letters and photos from Vivian's "what coulda been" box.

LEONARD
 (to Vivian)
 C'mon! Help me out! It's like you did some kinda voodoo on it.
 (to his penis)
 Do your thing fucker!

Vivian lays underneath him and stares at the ceiling with a look in her eyes that says only one thing...

"Is this *really* my life?"

EXT. HOUSE - BACK DOOR - MORNING

There's a blizzard outside. It's horrible and status quo.

Vivian dutifully covers the HOLE LEONARD SAWED with electrical tape.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Vivian eats a bowl of her generic Raisin Bran as she admires an old black and white PHOTO OF DIANE SAWYER on the computer.

Diane is wearing a sash and tiara.

THE CAPTION UNDER THE PHOTO READS:

"Diane got her first big break after winning the Junior Miss pageant"

VIVIAN
(jokes to herself)
Well, maybe that's what I should do.

Vivian, just for fun, GOOGLES: "beauty pageants for married women". She gasps when MRS. MARRIED AMERICA PAGEANT pops up, right up at the top.

She clicks on the "BE A CONTESTANT" tab and scrolls down the page. She reads the CONTESTANT CRITERIA section.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
(reads aloud to herself)
Must be a natural born citizen of the USA and currently married. Previous titles should be noted and will be considered and weighed heavily during our selection process. Please fill out the form below and we will mail you an application.
(thinks)
I've got two of the three.

INT. DARLEEN'S KITCHEN - LATER

An excited buzz in her grin, Vivian sits at Darleen's Kitchen table while Darleen PULLS THE INNARDS OUT OF A GOOSE she's about to cook.

DARLEEN
What's the smile all about?
(pulls the neck out of the goose)
Ah, there it is.
(MORE)

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

(then)

Did you kill Leonard?

VIVIAN

(bursting with pride)

I'm gonna be in a beauty pageant!
Well, I think I am. I want to be.
To try to be.

(whispers like it's top
secret)

Mrs. Married America!

Darleen cracks up.

DARLEEN

Mrs. Married America?

Darleen laughs even harder.

VIVIAN

I'm serious!

DARLEEN

I'm sorry, it's just...

(through her laughter)

I have this image of a bunch of
women bustin' outta their old prom
dresses, covered in meat grease and
baby puke.

VIVIAN

(caught in her dream)

It's my ticket Darleen. This is
what I need to do.

(sighs)

But they have to choose me first.
Do you think a lot of women from
Montana will apply?

Darleen puts her goose innard covered hand on the hip of her
oversized ankle gathered sweatpants.

DARLEEN

Well, I can't see why they wouldn't
but that doesn't mean you shouldn't
try.

VIVIAN

They're sending me a packet in the
mail. I gotta fill it out and put a
bunch of pictures in it and send it
in and then they'll decide.

DARLEEN

That's it? That's all you gotta do?

VIVIAN

Well, there's one other thing.

DARLEEN

What's the one other thing?

INT. LIVING ROOM - TWO WEEKS LATER

Leonard and the kids are lethargically laid out in front of the TV watching AMERICAN IDOL. Vivian walks in from the bedroom, dressed in jeans and a coat, carrying a large purse.

She's wearing make up, not much, but some.

Leonard sees her. She looks pretty *and he knows it*.

LEONARD

You don't usually wear make up.

VIVIAN

Thanks for noticing.

LEONARD

Hey kids, don't Mom look kinda like a clown with all that make up on?

The boys laugh.

SUMMER

I think you look pretty Mom.

VIVIAN

Thanks baby.

(to Leonard)

I'll be back in a few hours. These PTA meetings can run real long.

Leonard belches loudly.

LEONARD

Can you grab me one of them leftover deer sausages out of the fridge before you go?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vivian gags pulling the grey, homemade, barely cooked sausage out of the Ziplock bag in the fridge.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian hands Leonard the sausage on a plate. He takes a huge bite of the cold greasy link.

LEONARD

(mouth full, re: American Idol)

The only reason that black girl's still around is cause they gotta keep her on there cause of that damn affirmative action. She can't sing worth a shit.

(to the kids)

That's what we get for having a black president.

Vivian takes a deep breath, composing herself as to not say the *million* things she'd like to.

VIVIAN

Ok, well, I'll be back later.

SUMMER

(only one to look up)

Bye Mom.

EXT. BLUE SKY COUNTY K-12 SCHOOL - LATER

Vivian and Darleen stand before a LARGE SIGN THAT READS: "**4H INDOOR COUNTY CARNIVAL**".

VIVIAN

(nervous)

Well, here goes nothin'.

DARLEEN

I still don't get it.

VIVIAN

It said on the Mrs. Married America website that previous titles are weighed heavily when they're reviewing applications to be a contestant.

Darleen looks at Vivian, sincerely confused.

DARLEEN

And you think this counts.

VIVIAN

It's all I got.

INT. BLUE SKY COUNTY K-12 SCHOOL - 4H INDOOR COUNTY CARNIVAL -
CONTINUOUS

Vivian and Darleen walk into the school.

DARLEEN

Viv?

VIVIAN

Yeah.

DARLEEN

I think this is a little girls
pageant.

REVEAL: Little girls and toddlers in jaw dropping amounts of
make up and ridiculous, cheap sparkly dresses meander through
the halls with their parents.

VIVIAN

Don't be silly. It's for everyone.
There are three age groups. This
is probably just the little ones
getting ready to go on first.

DARLEEN

Oh.

(beat)

What age group are you in?

INT. 4H INDOOR CARNIVAL - SCHOOL AUDITORIUM STAGE - LATER

BRYTNEE ANDREWS, 12, twirls on the stage in a way-too-short-
for-her-own-good mini dress.

The PAGEANT ANNOUNCER (who likely also ran the cattle auction
earlier), is in her 50's, has a bad frizzy hair-do and is
sporting waist high, pocket-less dungarees.

ANNOUNCER

Brytnee is twelve years old and a
sixth grader. Her three favorite
things in the world are Justin
Bieber, Spaghetti O's and Jesus.
When she grows up she wants to be a
Mommy, a wife and a part time hair
stylist. Brytnee Andrews everyone!

BRYTNEE'S MOM, late 20's and a meth-addict with few remaining
teeth shouts from the meager crowd.

BRYTNEE'S MOM
 WORK IT BABY GIRL! YOU GO BRYTNEE!
 SHOW THE JUDGES WHAT YOUR MOMMA
 GAVE YOU!

The PANEL OF JUDGES, comprised of CREEPY OLD RANCHERS take notes.

INT. BACKSTAGE - SAME TIME

Vivian, a ball of nerves, paces back and forth in her 1994, purple, puffy sleeve prom dress.

ON THE STAGE:

ANNOUNCER
 Our next and last contestant in the
 twelve and up category is Vivian
 Huntsman!

Vivian walks out onto the stage. She's clearly embarrassed but steadfast in her determination to win.

Awkward really doesn't even cover it.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
 Vivian is thirty six years old.
 Her three favorite things are her
 kids, Raisin Bran and the internet.
 When she grows up...
 (awkward pause, silence)
 She wants to be just like Diane
 Sawyer.

Brytnee's Mom thrusts her fist in the air (like any meth addict mother would).

BRYTNEE'S MOM
 THIS AIN'T RIGHT! THAT FUGLY OLD
 BITCH IS OLDER THAN ME!

DARLEEN
 (yells)
 GO VIVIAN!

BRYTNEE'S MOM
 (to Darleen)
 I'LL PUNCH YOU IN THE FACE BITCH!
 I'LL PUNCH YOU IN THE FUCKING FACE!

The equally METH ADDICTED MAN with Brytnee's Mom holds her back from climbing the chairs to get to Darleen.

Darleen looks around, surveying the scene.

DARLEEN
(to herself)
Don't do it Darleen.

Darleen stands up, with gusto.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)
(still to herself)
And I'm doing it.
(to Brytnee's Mom)
I'LL PUNCH YOU IN THE FUCKING FACE
BITCH!

Fearful, Brytnees's Mom sits down, silent.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Well that worked better than I
thought it would.

ON THE STAGE:

ANNOUNCER
Thank you Vivian. Next up swimwear
and crowning! But first we'll have
a look at some prize winners from
earlier today!

A GIRL comes out with a BABY GOAT, which POOPS on the stage
and a BOY comes out with a BABY PIG.

MINUTES LATER:

Vivian, in a too-matronly-for-her-age ONE PIECE bathing suit
and Brytnee in a SUPER SLUTTY SEQUINED STRING BIKINI, stand
on stage.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Before we announce the big winner,
we'll announce the Miss Fuzzy Bunny
award for the contestant with the
fuzziest, nicest personality. And
that goes to... VIVIAN HUNTSMAN!

A BOY IN A WHEELCHAIR rolls out, very slowly, to present
Vivian with her prize of A BABY BUNNY IN A CARDBOARD CAGE and
A HEADBAND WITH SPARKLY BUNNY EARS.

Vivian accepts the bunny graciously and puts the bunny ears
on her head.

IN THE AUDIENCE:

Darleen tries desperately to quell her laughter as she takes a photo of Vivian.

BACK TO:

ANNOUNCER

Ok, everybody! I know we're gettin' anxious to get on over to the pig roast next door, does that barbecue smell good or what! So with no further ado, the winner, of this year's 4H Indoor Carnival Pageant is...

(takes a moment to process)

BRYTNEE ANDREWS!

Crestfallen, Vivian smiles graciously.

Brytnee takes center stage. The ANNOUNCER places a small, plastic TIARA on her head and hands her a bouquet of grocery store daisies with the NEON \$3.99 price tag clearly visible.

INT. THE LUMBERYARD BAR - LATER

Vivian and Darleen are bellied up to the old, hole-in-the-country-wall bar.

VIVIAN

I can't believe I lost to a twelve year old girl.

Darleen places her hand on Vivian's back, lovingly.

DARLEEN

Viv. You didn't lose. You won Miss Fuzzy Bunny! That is extremely prestigious.

They both crack up.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

(through her laughter)

I think I actually risked my life tonight cheering for you. You know my Momma always told me not to fight with people with less teeth than I do fingers and looking at that woman, I know why she said that.

VIVIAN

Well, I gave it my darn best.

DARLEEN

I'd cheers to that but we don't have drinks! I hear the new bartender here is cute. He's an adopted son of that big Mormon family that has that ranch down by the creek.

(whispers)

He's *Mexican*.

VIVIAN

Darleen, you gotta stop that! It's not like it's a secret he's Mexican.

The BARTENDER, indeed both cute and Mexican, comes up to the ladies.

BARTENDER

What can I get you ladies tonight?

DARLEEN

Peach schnapps, neat.

Vivian hesitates.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

You are the current reigning Miss Fuzzy Bunny of the 4H! This is something to celebrate.

Darleen plops Vivian's sparkly bunny ears on her head.

VIVIAN

Fine. Make it two.

DARLEEN

Now, that's what I'm talking about.

VIVIAN

(laughs to herself)

What am I even thinking. Mrs. Married America?

(sighs)

Right? I mean, you don't think I should do it, do you? Go for it? Just tell me I'm being crazy. Clearly I need to hear it.

DARLEEN

Honestly?

Vivian isn't sure she wants to hear the answer.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

I think you can do anything you want to do.

(then)

Only problem with you is, you gotta believe it first.

VIVIAN

It says if I get in I have to have a talent.

(thinking)

I don't have any talents. I mean I took piano lessons when I was nine. But that's it.

DARLEEN

Just tape record Leonard for an hour and then tell everyone you live with him everyday.

(then)

Now, THAT is a talent.

VIVIAN

(half-laugh)

You know he wasn't always such...

DARLEEN

An asswipe?

VIVIAN

Yeah, that. I mean was he ever a prince charming? No. But back in high school, he had such a big heart. He handled me getting pregnant with Luke like a real man. But then...

(beat)

It's like each day he just got a tiny bit more angry at the world and now, that's all he is. Angry. At me, the kids, the car. The back door.

The bartender slings their schnapps and slides them down the bar.

DARLEEN

Tonight isn't about him.

Darleen "clinks" Vivian's glass.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)
It's about you. Bottoms up!

EXT. LUMBERYARD BAR PARKING LOT - MANY DRINKS LATER

Darleen and Vivian make their way out of the bar. Darleen is shit canned and Vivian is well on her way.

Just as they walk out, DR. RYAN TAYLOR, late thirties, handsome local dentist, is on his way in.

VIVIAN
Ryan!

RYAN
Vivian?

Ryan is as shocked as he is happy to see her.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Wow, wasn't expecting to run into you here.

VIVIAN
Yeah, I don't get out much.

RYAN
How's the tooth we did the root canal on feeling?

VIVIAN
It's perfect. All the pain is gone.
(smiles)
Thanks again for giving me such a great deal.

RYAN
Anytime.
(re: bunny ears)
Celebrating Halloween a little late this year?

Embarrassed, Vivian quickly takes them off.

VIVIAN
Forgot I had them on. I was just in a beauty pageant. Just a small one next county over. But I'm tryin' to be in a bigger one. I won a pet rabbit but I gave it away.
(beat)
Kinda stupid, right?

RYAN

Well, I'm not surprised you won.

VIVIAN

I didn't exactly win but thank you.

(nervous)

Well, we should go.

(looks around)

Right Darleen?

(shouts out, looks around
more)

Darleen?

(horrified)

DARLEEN!

REVEAL: Darleen squatted down peeing behind a dumpster, not nearly as inconspicuous as she thinks.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

What are you doing!

DARLEEN

No more toilet paper inside!

VIVIAN

Well, there's none out here either!

DARLEEN

Now that is a good point!

Darleen cracks up and FALLS OVER.

RYAN

Maybe I should give you guys a ride home.

VIVIAN

We're fine.

DARLEEN

(shouts over)

I ALMOST FELL IN MY OWN PEE! BUT I
DIDN'T. DON'T WORRY! I DIDN'T!

INT. RYAN'S TRUCK - MINUTES LATER

Ryan is at the wheel, all three of them squished in the front cab of his truck. Their big winter coats taking up nearly every available inch.

VIVIAN

It's freezing out there!

DARLEEN

I need to go on vacation where it's hot as Hades.

RYAN

If you dig a hole deep enough you can go to Kerguelen Island.

Vivian and Darleen look at him, confused.

RYAN (CONT'D)

You guys don't know we live on an antipode?

DARLEEN

Sounds like somethin' a doctor would stick up your ass.

VIVIAN

Dar!

RYAN

We here in little ole' Ruyard Montana have the distinction of being the only people in the *entire* United States that have the pleasure of living on an antipode, where there is something directly below us that isn't water. Kerguelen Island. It's somewhere in the Indian Ocean.

VIVIAN

I think I heard about that in school and forgot about it. Like everything else.

DARLEEN

Well, we should go there. Hank and I've been saving forever for some kind of vacation. Be the perfect excuse to break out my thong bikini.

Vivian and Ryan laugh.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

(dead serious)

I look better in a thong than you'd think.

They pull in front of Darleen's house and she hops out.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

All I know is, I hope Hank's up.

She rolls her hips feeling groovy and sexy.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

Cause I feel like some action!

(sings, ala Marvin Gaye)

Let's get it on.

VIVIAN

You are somethin' else.

MINUTES LATER:

Ryan and Vivian are alone in his truck. It's quiet and awkward and you could cut the sexual tension with a knife.

RYAN

She's a piece of work that Darleen.
Hasn't changed a bit since high
school.

VIVIAN

Don't know what I'd do without her.

Vivian looks at Ryan and smiles.

RYAN

You've changed a little. You used
to be vivacious Vivi! Always
looking for life's next great
adventure!

Vivian smiles and puts her sparkly bunny ears on her head.
They both break into a much needed but quiet laughter.

Feeling too silly, she peels them back off.

VIVIAN

Life sure has a way of making you
change even when you don't want to.

A heavy moment passes.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about Laura. I couldn't
bring myself to come to the
funeral.

RYAN

It was a horrible time in my life. I'm not over it, don't get me wrong. But it's been a few years and I feel ok about it now. It was too soon for sure but it wasn't then versus never, you know?

VIVIAN

Yeah.

EXT. FRONT OF VIVIAN'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Vivian and Ryan sit for a moment in the parked car.

VIVIAN

Well, I should get in. I haven't been out this late in I don't know how long. House is probably a disaster.

RYAN

Good night, Vivi.

VIVIAN

Good night, Ryan.

Without a kiss, a hug or even a shake goodbye, Vivian hops out of his truck and waves goodbye.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Vivian turns the key, quietly and tip toes into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Desperate not to wake anyone, Vivian sneaks in. Leonard is awake in the living room, beer in hand, several empties littered on the floor around him.

LEONARD

Well, there she is. How was the PTA meeting?

VIVIAN

Leonard! What are you doing up?

LEONARD

Waitin' for the *celebrity* appearance.

VIVIAN
What are you talking about?

Leonard gets up and steps face to face with Vivian. He grabs her ass and talks into the deep of her ear.

LEONARD
It's a small town Vivian. You lied to me.

Vivian doesn't say a word.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
What the hell are you doin' in a beauty pageant anyway?

VIVIAN
No reason. Just for fun.

LEONARD
Heard you almost won.
(laughs in her face)
Don't get me wrong. You were hot when you were young. Remember fuckin' in the back of my truck? You were all pretty and tight down there.
(Mr. Macho)
I got you pregnant the first time.
(stumbles onto her)
Takes a man to make a man.

He sticks his hand up her shirt.

VIVIAN
You're drunk Leonard. Stop it.

Leonard grabs her crotch and kisses her neck.

LEONARD
I ain't fucked a *beauty queen* before. Now I got one in my own house.

Vivian sees ALL OF THE KIDS STANDING IN THE HALLWAY and pushes Leonard away.

INT. DINING ROOM TABLE - A WEEK LATER

Vivian folds a WRITTEN ESSAY and slides a PHOTO OF HERSELF FROM THE 4H CARNIVAL PAGEANT into her finished application packet and seals it.

INT. POST OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Vivian cradles the application package in her hands.

VIVIAN
 (to herself)
 Dear Jesus. If you ever wanna do
 me right? This is the way.

She opens the lever door on the mailbox and tosses it in.

FADE THROUGH A SERIES OF DAYS:

-- Filled with anxious hope, Vivian CHECKS THE MAILBOX AT THE
 END OF THE DRIVEWAY. She pulls out a stack of junk mail and
 bills.

-- Still brimming with hope, Vivian checks the mailbox. It's
 empty. She looks at the paper still laying in the driveway
 and realizes *it's Sunday*.

-- Vivian waits at the mailbox for the POSTMAN. He hands her
 a meager stack of more junk mail and bills.

INT. HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Vivian is in her pajamas, eating Raisin Bran.

Another day.

Same reality.

There's a knock at the front door, she sprints to get it.

I/E. FRONT DOOR -CONTINUOUS

Vivian opens the door to a FED EX DELIVERY MAN standing on
 her steps with a large envelope in hand.

FED EX DELIVERY MAN
 Vivian Huntsman?

VIVIAN
 That's me!

He hands her the envelope. It's from the MRS. MARRIED
 AMERICA PAGEANT.

FED EX DELIVERY MAN
 Have a good day, mam.

VIVIAN

You too.

BACK INSIDE.

Vivian sits down on the couch and takes a deep breath. She opens the envelope.

Cautious. Doubtful. Desperate.

Reactionless, she reads the letter inside and then folds it back up and places it in the envelope.

EXT. DARLEEN'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Darleen opens her front door to find Vivian, STILL IN HER PAJAMAS.

VIVIAN

I'M GOING!

DARLEEN

(re: her pajamas)

Where? To Crazytown in your
Crazymobile?

Vivian pulls the letter from Mrs. Married America from her pocket.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

NO!

VIVIAN

Yes mam!

(huge smile)

Wanna come? It's in VEGAS!

DARLEEN

Well of course I do.

(without hesitation)

But what did Leonard say?

VIVIAN

Nothing!

Darleen looks at her suspiciously.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Because I didn't tell him yet. I will. I'm just too damn happy to think about that right now!

Darleen gives Vivian a huge hug. The two of them jump up and down and cheer in ecstatic union.

Darleen stops and looks Vivian dead in the eyes.

DARLEEN

I'm really proud of you, Viv.

VIVIAN

Thanks.

(smiles)

I think I'm proud of me too.

INT. KITCHEN - DINNER TIME

Vivian, a bit more dolled up than normal and looking very nervous, piles the last of SEVERAL TYPES OF ROASTED GAME MEAT onto a huge platter and carries it out to the family.

AT THE TABLE:

The kids dig into the food and Leonard looks quite pleased.

LEONARD

Now, this is a supper!

Leonard piles his plate with meat and potatoes.

VIVIAN

So, I got a letter from the Mrs. Married America pageant today!

LEONARD

The Mrs. What?

VIVIAN

Mrs. Married America. A beauty pageant for married ladies.

LUKE

Like people's Mom's n'stuff? Who would watch that?

LEONARD

Nobody is who.

VIVIAN

Anyway, they want me to be in it!

Leonard looks up from his plate and stares at Vivian.

LEONARD

Why the hell they want you in it?
How'd they even know who you were?

VIVIAN

Well, I sent in an application.

Silence blankets the room.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

And they chose me! Can you believe it? All I have to do is get a few things together, dresses and stuff and get myself to Vegas but I figure I can get that all worked out somehow.

Vivian's nerves set in. She instantly starts to backpedal.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

You know, on second thought. It's just too crazy an idea. Forget I even brought it up. I don't even know what I was thinking.

More silence fills the air.

LEONARD

Better not cost us a dime. Not a red penny.
(then)
And make sure your Aunt Jeannie comes and keeps after the kids so I can get some huntin' in.

Vivian bites her lip desperate to contain the bursting excitement she's feeling.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Vivian reads through the letter from the pageant outlining everything she'll need.

VIVIAN

(reads)
Most contestants get local sponsors to cover fees and expenses.
(thinks)
Local sponsors?

She looks up and sees Summer standing beside her.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

This is gonna be a lot harder than I thought.

Summer rests her hand on Vivian's shoulder.

SUMMER

Life's a lot harder than I thought.

EXT. DOWNTOWN RUDYARD - DAY

It's a postage stamp of a western town, with a clearly depressed economy.

INT. RUDYARD HARDWARE - SAME TIME

Vivian, wearing a suit and carrying various pageant materials, smiles brightly. She's just finished her pitch to the SHOP OWNER (60'S, cheerful ole' chap).

HARDWARE SHOP OWNER

Well, I'd love to help!

He opens the register, grabs five dollars and hands it to Vivian.

VIVIAN

(as polite as possible)

Thank you!

HARDWARE SHOP OWNER

And my MeeMaw can help you learn a song on the piano, she's taught in Rudyard for over seventy years!

Vivian looks behind the counter and sees MEEMAW, A BREATHTAKINGLY OLD WOMAN in a chair, half asleep.

VIVIAN

Yep! She taught me when I was nine.

INT. RUDYARD LADIES WEAR SHOP - MINUTES LATER

Vivian walks in the local ladies wear shop. It's a tiny, dusty time warp.

VIVIAN

Hi Betty! I wanted to see if you
might be interested in sponsoring
me for my pageant?

SWING TO:

BETTY (70'S, smoking a cigarette, blueish bouffant hair).

BETTY

Of course sweetie!

Excited, Vivian takes out her clipboard ready for her pitch.

BETTY (CONT'D)

(before Vivian says
another word)

Take your pick!

Vivian smiles as best she can as she looks over to the measly
rack of horrendously dated dresses.

INT. RUDYARD PET AND FEED - MINUTES LATER

Vivian looks at the PET AND FEED SHOP OWNER (50's, rancher
mustache) quizzically.

VIVIAN

Thanks for your support! I didn't
know you were a photographer!

PET AND FEED SHOP OWNER

Sure am! I'll get you some real
great shots for your pageant. Got
a studio right out back in the
shed!

EXT. DOWNTOWN RUDYARD - MINUTES LATER

Vivian looks up and down Main Street, crestfallen.

INT. RUDYARD FAMILY DENTISTRY - SAME TIME

Ryan looks out of the window of his office and sees Vivian.

EXT. DOWNTOWN RUDYARD - MINUTES LATER

Vivian heads for her mini-van.

RYAN

Vivian!

She turns around, surprised.

VIVIAN

Ryan!

(calms herself)

Hi.

RYAN

Just wanted to see how your tooth
was feeling.

(nervous)

Again.

VIVIAN

Great! Really great. Even better
than before it hurt!

Vivian laughs, embarrassed at her obviously nonsensical
comment. Ryan looks at her clipboard full of pageant info.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(embarrassed)

Oh. Just that silly pageant I was
thinking about doing.

RYAN

Doesn't sound one bit silly to me.

Their eyes connect for a moment but Vivian quickly changes
gears, nervous.

VIVIAN

Well, I should go. Need to get the
kids from the bus stop.

RYAN

(re: pageant stuff)

Good luck with all of that. I
think it's really great you're
pursuing your dreams. The older we
get, the harder than can be to do.

VIVIAN

(all smiles)

Thanks.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Vivian is on her hands and knees scrubbing the family toilet.
There's a KNOCK AT THE FRONT DOOR.

I/E. FRONT DOOR - SECONDS LATER

OLLY the local POSTMAN (60's, ruddy cheeks) hands Vivian a letter that she has to sign for.

OLLY THE POSTMAN
Must be important. Sent certified!

VIVIAN
Thanks Olly!

INSIDE:

Vivian RIPS OPEN the Envelope. Inside is a check for FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS and a congratulatory letter from the CITY OF RUDYARD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE for her pageant participation.

At the bottom of the letter is a list of local businesses in the chamber. RUDYARD FAMILY DENTISTRY IS RIGHT DAB SMACK AT THE TOP.

VIVIAN
(to herself)
Ryan Taylor, what did you do?

MOMENTS LATER:

Vivian, on the phone, paces back and forth as the other end rings and rings. Her heart nearly stops when the other line picks up.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Patty Lane, Mrs. Married America
Nineteen Ninety Nine, how may I
help you?

Vivian fans her face to calm her nerves.

VIVIAN
Hi, my name is Vivian Huntsman from
Montana. I'm calling to let you
know I've officially raised all of
me fees and I'm coming to Vegas!

PATTY LANE
Well, that is wonderful news!
Welcome to the Mrs. Married America
family!

VIVIAN
Thank you very much. I am so
honored to have been chosen.

PATTY LANE

Well Vivian, we'll look forward to meeting you and your hubby in Las Vegas! What did you say his name was?

VIVIAN

I'm sorry, did you say my *husband*?

PATTY LANE

Why yes of course! This is Mrs. Married America. What good's a wife without her husband there?

Vivian is shell shocked and crestfallen.

VIVIAN

Right! Of course. What was I thinking. His name is Leonard. The both of us will be there.

(total b.s.)

We can't wait!

PATTY LANE

See you at the pageant!

INT. DEN - AFTERNOON

Vivian does her best to hold it together as she walks away from Leonard. He's clearly just broken her heart and told her he's not going to come.

EXT. DARLEEN'S HOUSE - LATER

Vivian, in tears, knocks on Darleen's door. Darleen opens the door and gives her a motherly, loving hug.

INT. RUDYARD FAMILY DENTISTRY - A WHILE LATER

Vivian tries to hand the check back to Ryan.

RYAN

Keep it. Even if you don't cash it. Just keep it.

Vivian smiles meekly, sad but appreciative of his gesture.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vivian, swollen eyes and a sunken heart puts THE LETTERS FROM THE PAGEANT AND THE CHECK FROM THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE INTO HER "WHAT COULDA BEEN BOX". She puts the box on the shelf and closes the closet door.

EXT. CATTLE RANCH - DAY

Darleen pulls up beside a large cattle ranch in her 1997 F-150.

OUT IN THE FIELD:

Leonard, tossing bails of hay onto the field from an old pick up truck, is startled to see Darleen.

DARLEEN
Hey Leonard!

LEONARD
Darleen. What are you doing here?

Darleen hands Leonard an envelope.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
What's this?

DARLEEN
It's a plane ticket. To Vegas.

Leonard looks at the ticket and tries to hand it back.

LEONARD
I ain't goin to no beauty pageant.
But thanks.

With a robust and cocky smile, Darleen refuses to take it back.

DARLEEN
Oh you're going. You know how I
know you're going?

Leonard looks at her, taken aback and curious.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)
I know you're going because if you
don't? I'll spend all the money I
got puttin' up a big ole billboard
that says Leonard Huntsman gets
drunk and can't get it up.
(MORE)

DARLEEN (CONT'D)
 (then)
 Viva Las Vegas Baby.

Darleen walks away, leaving a stunned and speechless Leonard.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - SUNRISE

Vivian rolls down the window and WAVES TO THE KIDS AND LEONARD as she and Darleen drive away in Darleen's pick-up, which is packed full of pageant wear and duffle bags.

VIVIAN
 (shouts out to them)
 BYE GUYS! I LOVE YOU!!!

INT. DARLEEN'S PICK-UP - CONTINUOUS

Vivian looks back and waves one last time as they pull away, all four kids waving good-bye.

VIVIAN
 Darleen, I don't know what you said to him but I could tell you thank you every day for the rest of my life until I died and it wouldn't cover how much I appreciate that you got him to come.

DARLEEN
 Never tried so hard to get someone I can't stand to come to something in my life.

VIVIAN
 (big smiles)
 We are on the road baby! MRS.
 MARRIED AMERICA HERE WE COME!

EXT. WIDE OPEN COUNTRY - DARLEEN'S PICK-UP - DAY INTO NIGHT

Vivian and Darleen wind through MONTANA.

The red rocks of UTAH.

The hot desert plains of NEVADA.

I/E. CIRCUS CIRCUS HOTEL - DARLEEN'S PICK UP- LATE NIGHT

They pull into the cheesy, dated Vegas strip hotel.

VIVIAN

We're here! I can't believe it!
 (looks around in awe)
 It's beautiful.

Darleen looks up to the TOWERING CIRCUS CIRCUS SIGN. IT'S A LARGE CREEPY CLOWN.

DARLEEN

(horrified)
 Yeah if you're not scared to death
 of clowns. Why do all clowns have
 to look so evil!
 (looks away, panicked)
 SO GOD DAMN EVIL!

INT. CHECK IN - CIRCUS CIRCUS HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Vivian and Darleen wait as a WOMAN AND HER HUSBAND in front of them are helped. The woman has at least ten pieces of KNOCK-OFF LOUIS VUITTON LUGGAGE beside her. Her nails long and red, her hair perfectly done.

WOMAN

I'm here with the pageant. Amberr
 with a double R Lakes, the second R
 is silent. AKA Mrs. Texas!

She canoodles with her husband.

FRONT DESK MANAGER

Well, we're glad to have you here
 Mrs. Texas.

His hands type furiously into the reservations computer.

FRONT DESK MANAGER (CONT'D)

I see you've booked our Golden Tent
 Suite.
 (smiles, hands her a key)
 Dolly Parton once stayed in it.

AMBERR

I love me some Dolly!
 (then, to her husband)
 Thanks for letting me book such an
expensive suite.

Amberr turns around, wearing a SWAROVSKY CRYSTAL PIN SHAPED LIKE THE STATE OF TEXAS and a bitchy snarl of a smile. The scratched red of her Louboutin's flipping up with every step as she walks away.

FRONT DESK MANAGER

Next!

Vivian and Darleen approach the front desk. The Front Desk Manager eyes them with incurious judgement.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CIRCUS CIRCUS - CONTINUOUS

Darleen and Vivian walk into the room. It's likely one of the least impressive rooms in the entire hotel.

Vivian is *really* excited about it.

VIVIAN

It's like I've died and gone to hotel heaven!

Vivian runs to the bed on the far side of the room and sits on it, taking it all in.

She smiles and grabs a PHOTO OF DIANE SAWYER from her purse and tapes it to the wall just above her bed.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

The shower running, the bathroom filled with steam. Vivian, in a towel, wipes a circle clear in the mirror and stares into her own reflection.

She smiles and "waves to the crowd", one hand over her heart in a mark of sincerity.

VIVIAN

I can't believe I won! Thank you everyone for choosing me as Mrs. Married America. This is the greatest honor I could ever imagine for myself. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

SMASH TO:

EXT. CIRCUS CIRCUS HOTEL - BALLROOM - MORNING

A welcome sign beside the door reads:

WELCOME BREAKFAST FOR MRS. MARRIED AMERICA PAGEANT
CONTESTANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

Vivian is BURSTING with excitement.

INT. CIRCUS CIRCUS HOTEL - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian and Darleen head for the CHECK IN TABLE.

Vivian is mesmerized by all of the other PAGEANT CONTESTANTS checking in, she is among the most modest and BY FAR the palest.

VIVIAN
(under her breath to
Darleen)
Everybody's so *tan*!

AT THE CHECK IN TABLE:

A SUPER BITCHY WOMAN is in charge of sign ins at the table.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
Hi there! I'm Vivian Huntsman, Mrs.
Montana.

WOMAN AT THE CHECK IN TABLE
Here's your name tags, sign the
check in sheet over there.

Vivian grabs her name tag from the check in table, her HORRIBLE photo from the RUDYARD PET AND FEED PHOTOGRAPHER is on it. She's WEARING A BIKINI AND A COWBOY HAT AND SITTING ON AN OLD SADDLE.

Vivian looks at the other photos on the name tags, they tend more toward "local realtor" vs. Vivian's which tends more toward "local hooker".

SUPER BITCHY WOMAN
Nice photo! So...
(cutting, petty pause)
...*professional*.

VIVIAN
(happy and oblivious)
Thank you!

Attached is also a name tag that says "Leonard Huntsman" she hands it to Darleen.

DARLEEN
(whispers to Vivian)
*Are you sure I'm supposed to be
here?*

VIVIAN
 It said family could come.
 (smiles)
 And you are family.

DARLEEN
 Well, then let's do this. Oh,
 except one thing.

Darleen grabs a pen from the desk, scribbles out Leonard and writes "Darleen".

DARLEEN (CONT'D)
 I know he's your husband but I'd
 rather gouge my eyes out with a
 blunt butter knife at a slow
 painful pace than wear his name
 tag.

Vivian doesn't bat an eye at Darleen's comment. She looks out to the large bustling banquet room FILLED WITH CONTESTANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

VIVIAN
 (without hesitation)
 Let's go find table six!

MOMENTS LATER, AT TABLE SIX:

It is stone cold silent. Everyone has their eyes glued to Vivian and Darleen. They are all very confused.

MRS. IOWA, 40's, potentially leading a double life as a lesbian, finally speaks up.

MRS. IOWA
 I didn't realize it was legal in
 Montana.

VIVIAN
 What?

MRS. UTAH, 19, blonde hair, cherub faced wife and likely still a virgin.

MRS. UTAH
 (meek, scared)
 Lady lady marriages.

VIVIAN
 (confused)
 Oh, you mean us?

DARLEEN

We're not LESBOS! Not that there's
anything wrong with being a LESBO!
We're just not LESBOS!

VIVIAN

(under her breath)
Darleen! Why are you yelling?

DARLEEN

(also under her breath)
*You said to stop whispering things
so I'm over-correcting for awhile
until I get it right.*

Vivian smiles nervously, the entire room seems to have
quieted in on their conversation.

PATTY LANE, the director of the pageant, 50's and a violent
mix of Botox, Restylane and Juvederm, takes the podium.

PATTY LANE

Good morning everyone! Welcome! I
am Patty Lane director of the Mrs.
Married America pageant. Where we
celebrate and honor the AMERICAN
MARRIED WOMAN!

Roaring cheers flow through the room.

PATTY LANE (CONT'D)

I believe in the power of marriage
because it is a power sent to us
directly from the good Lord above.

Patty points up to the ceiling, robustly. More applause
echoes through the room.

PATTY LANE (CONT'D)

I also believe in the bible. And
in the bible it says Eve came from
Adam's rib. A lot of women in
these modern, end of days times,
say they have a problem with this
idea. With this concept. You know
what I say? Comin' from a rib is
not a bad thing.

(smiles)

I live in Texas and let me tell you
I have had some delicious ribs!

Even MORE applause.

PATTY LANE (CONT'D)

I look out at this room and I get a little misty eyed. Seeing you all here with your families. Your support network. Your handsome hubbies! This...

Patty Lane gestures to the room.

PATTY LANE (CONT'D)

THIS is America. This is what we are about. Family. God.

(smiles)

And BEAUTY PAGEANTS! Look around ladies. Look to your right, to your left, across the table, across the room.

Everyone looks around at each other.

PATTY LANE (CONT'D)

Mrs. Married America two thousand and thirteen is in here somewhere! That's right. She's in this very room! Congratulations to all of you and may the best wife win!

Everyone rises to give Patty Lane a standing ovation.

CUT TO:

TABLE SIX:

Darleen and Vivian stand and clap with everyone else.

DARLEEN

I feel like that thing about the rib was kinda weird, right?

Vivian is too caught up in applause and excitement to hear her.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

Like now all I can picture is that lady is a cannibal.

VIVIAN

(confused/just caught the tail end)

What?

EXT. POOL - CIRCUS CIRCUS - LATER

Darleen in a skirty-dress bathing suit and Vivian in a one piece, both horrifically pale and wearing sunglasses venture out to the COMPLETELY EMPTY pool area.

VIVIAN

Well, time to work on my tan! I can't believe the color brown some of these people are.

CUT TO:

TEN MINUTES LATER:

Darleen is bundled in several towels. Vivian is in her bathing suit, tanning oiled up, sunglasses on.

DARLEEN

You sure you're not cold?

VIVIAN

(lips almost blue, teeth chattering)

Nope! I'm good. So warm. Balmy!

Darleen buries her face under yet another towel to shield from the cold.

INT. GOLDEN TENT SUITE - SAME TIME

The golden tent suite is exactly as *gold, big and ridiculous* as one might imagine.

Amberr/Mrs. Texas, IN PASTIES AND A THONG, gets the finishing touches of her SPRAY TAN by her assistant DAVINE, a late 20's black man wearing leopard print leggings and platform heels.

DAVINE

Girl, you stay your ass still. I made you Africa dark so any streak is gonna show like the dickens.

AMBERR

Thanks Davine. You're the best.

Waiting to dry off, Amberr peers out the window to the POOL AREA DOWN BELOW and sees Vivian and Darleen.

AMBERR (CONT'D)

Davine, you gotta come here. You are not gonna believe what I'm lookin' at.

Davine comes over and looks out the window.

DAVINE CONT'D)

Oh, child. Layin' out in their Walmart clothes in sixty degree weather.

AMBERR

You know what they say. You can take the girl out of Montana.

DAVINE/AMBERR

(in evil unison)

But you probably shouldn't!

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Vivian paces back and forth as she listens to ring after ring on her phone.

LEONARD (V.O.)

Hi, this is Leonard, leave a message and I'll maybe call you back.

VIVIAN

Hi, it's me. Just makin' sure you're all ready to get on that plane tomorrow like you promised you would. I really need you to be here.

(deep breath)

So see you soon.

INT. STAGE - CIRCUS CIRCUS - LATER

The contestants are gathered on the stage for rehearsal. Most are in sexy boy shorts and sports bras.

But not Vivian.

She's in gathered ankle sweats and an oversized T-shirt that says "RUDYARD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL ALL-STARS".

Amberr is just one row up from her.

AMBERR

(shouts for everyone to
hear)

Well, don't you look comfortable!

All eyes in ear shot, instantly cut to Vivian who smiles nervously.

Patty leads the women in rehearsal.

PATTY LANE

Ok ladies! Grab your lyrics and
let's run through the song a few
times first before we add the
choreography! Big smiles!

Patty CUES the PIANO PLAYER. All of the women SING THE
PAGEANT ANTHEM IN UNION.

EVERYONE

*I'm so proud to be an American!
So proud to be red, white and blue.
I'm so proud to be married!
Because I know that love is true.
I make casseroles and change
diapers!
I lead a crazy busy life!
But I'm proud most of all to say,
I'M A WIFE!*

LATER ON:

The CONTESTANTS follow the CHOREOGRAPHER (a thirtysomething fierce and bitchy gay man with a faux-hawk).

CHOREOGRAPHER

Five, six, seven, eight!

The women do their best to follow his moves. Some great, some average and then Vivian.

Vivian has two left feet and almost trips over herself and anyone within a five foot radius around her.

Meanwhile, Amberr looks like she's the current reigning captain of the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders.

INT. AUDITORIUM SEATS - AFTER REHEARSAL

The contestants are gathered in their seats as Patty addresses them.

PATTY LANE

Great job everyone!

(smiles)

Although God didn't grace us all
with the talent like he did Mrs.
Texas over there!

Amberr scoots up a couple inches in her seat, so proud of herself.

PATTY LANE (CONT'D)

Tomorrow this room will be
filled...

(aside)

Well mostly filled, tickets are
still available at thirty five
dollars a piece for any of you that
may need or want them for family or
friends.

(moving on)

With people here to support you!
But they also want to be
entertained. So work on those
steps tonight ladies! And for one
of you, this will be your last
night going to bed as just a
regular wife because for one of
you, tomorrow you will be the new
Mrs. Married America!

Everyone gathers their things. Vivian and Amberr leave at the same time.

AMBERR

I saw you and your friend laying
out by the pool earlier.

(insincere)

Looks like it was lovely.

VIVIAN

It was a little chilly but I think
I got a tan.

Amberr and Vivian both look at Vivian's arms. *She didn't get any sort of tan.*

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

You're a really great dancer! You
must take a lot of classes.

AMBERR

Not really. Like she said, God
given I guess.

Amberr extends her hand, with a bitchy grin.

AMBERR (CONT'D)

Amberr. With a double R. The second R is silent.

Vivian smiles.

VIVIAN

Vivian. All the letters have a sound.

Amberr raises an eyebrow at her quip.

AMBERR

So, Montana? Is this your first pageant?

VIVIAN

No. Technically one other, a local 4H pageant just a few weeks ago.
(smiles, nervous)
First runner up!

Amberr is transparently dismissive of everything Vivian is saying.

AMBERR

Isn't that cute. Myself, well, I'm a lifelong title holder. I even won a pageant in utero when my Momma won Miss Texas State Fair! No one knew she was knocked up, obviously. Then I won twelve before I could walk and I was almost Miss Texas. Third runner up! Once I got married I thought my pageant days were over but no, no, no! I've found *plenty* more to win. Nine to be exact. This is my first national married pageant though. Unlike Montana the competition coming out of Texas is incredibly fierce. I won Mrs. Chardonnay Hills right before I came here. It's the gated community we live in. All semi-custom homes. You'd think it'd be a small pageant being just one little subdivision but it was over eighty women! We even had a celebrity judge. Kirk Cameron. Isn't he just the cutest!

(MORE)

AMBERR (CONT'D)

I could just eat him up. Well, that is if my husband wasn't so hot himself.

VIVIAN

Wow. That's a lot of pageants. Do you have kids?

AMBERR

Three daughters. Makynzie, Makynley and Makayla. We have a full time nanny and housekeeper to make things easier while Mommy is out being busy winning pageants! The girls have a Daddy that likes to keep all his ladies happy.

Amberr non-so-subtly flashes her EIGHT CARAT DIAMOND RING Vivian's way. Vivian, twists her Walmart purchased mini-diamond wedding set to face the inside of her palm and smiles.

VIVIAN

Sounds like you sure hit the jackpot!

AMBERR

I really feel like Jesus sent me himself incarnate sometimes he's so perfect.

VIVIAN

That would be weird.

AMBERR

What?

VIVIAN

If you were married to Jesus.

AMBERR

(miffed and confused)

Well, we should get to our rooms! Beauty sleep is essential if you want to be a...

Amberr runs her eyes up and down Vivian, transparently unimpressed.

AMBERR (CONT'D)

...winner.

INT. ELEVATOR - CIRCUS CIRCUS - LATER

Vivian, Amberr, MRS. OHIO (30's, mid-western and pretty) and MRS. NEBRASKA (late 20's, athletic and cheerful) are on the elevator.

MRS. NEBRASKA

My little girl has a cold and my husband has been taking such great care of her while we've been here. Don't you just love being married? Husbands are the best!

MRS. OHIO

I know, my husband has been giving me foot massages and even surprised me last night by telling me that when I'm done with all this we can start trying for baby number seven! He's such an amazing man, always wants me to be happy!

AMBERR

Vivian, I've noticed your husband isn't here. He is coming, right?

VIVIAN

Yes! Of course he's coming. He's just such a hard working man. Didn't want to take more time off from work than he needed too.

AMBERR

(super fake)

Oh, I am SO glad to hear that.

(then, to everyone)

A little birdie told me that the husband and wife portion of the pageant weighs a lot more heavily in the judging than you'd think. I mean, it is after all what this is all about. Being a married woman, right?

The elevator doors open, Amberr steps off.

AMBERR (CONT'D)

Speaking of husbands, I'm gonna go find that little hubby of mine for some cuddle time! Bye ladies!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Vivian goes over her dance moves, still *no where near* getting them right. Darleen walks in, wearing a LAS VEGAS T-SHIRT and a FANNY PACK.

DARLEEN

I wanted to be a Solid Gold dancer when I was little.

VIVIAN

This stupid dance we gotta do for the pageant is going to be the death of me. I'm awful.

DARLEEN

I'm sure you're not *awful*.

VIVIAN

Trust me.
(then)
What've you been up to?

DARLEEN

Oh just out doing some sightseeing. Wax museum, took a gondola ride at the Venetian. Just like Venice! Not that I've ever been there but I can't imagine how it could possibly be more beautiful.

VIVIAN

Sounds nice.

DARLEEN

(re: her two left feet)
Viv, it's not a dance competition.

VIVIAN

I know. I just want everything to be as perfect as I can make it. Seems like everybody here is a professional dancer, always know the perfect thing to say, they all have these fancy stylists and hair people and assistants.

DARLEEN

Hey now, I went to cosmetology school for a semester and a half.

Vivian smiles.

VIVIAN

(convicted)

All these other women, they really want this. But me? I *need* this. This is the only way I can ever change my life!

Vivian looks over to the PHOTO OF DIANE SAWYER taped above her bed.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Be who I want to be. If I don't win tomorrow, I've run out of options. Plain and simple.

DARLEEN

Viv, don't put that much pressure on yourself.

VIVIAN

But it's true. I mean, what am I gonna do? Move my whole family somewhere so I can go to college and get a degree in journalism? Darleen, this is it. This is my one and only shot at getting anywhere close to my dreams.

Vivian's eyes gaze toward the sad dress she got from the local clothing shop, hanging on the back of the door.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I just have so much working against me.

Darleen doesn't know what to say. Vivian *does* have a lot working against her.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

It's weird, this feeling. Needing something so much you can almost taste it. I've never felt this way about anything.

DARLEEN

You know what? I think you should put those two left feet to work and I'm gonna go hunt down this crepe place I saw over at the Paris hotel.

VIVIAN

Are you sure? I can practice somewhere else.

DARLEEN

I'm sure.
 (smiles)
 You can work this out. I know you
 can.

VIVIAN

Thanks.

Darleen grabs her room key and heads out.

INT. CASINO - SAME TIME

Darleen walks through the casino, casing the various tables
 and machines.

She watches a few rounds of Black Jack and sits at the table,
 lays a hundred dollars down and almost as quickly as she put
 it down, *loses it*.

Darleen finds a QUIET CORNER to make a call.

DARLEEN

(on the phone)
 Hey Hank, it's me...no,
 everything's ok.
 (then)
 I want to talk to you about that
 money we have in the vacation fund?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Vivian, in front of the mirrored sliding closet doors, works
 on her dance.

She watches herself fail time after time. Step after step.

INT. VERSACE STORE - MINUTES LATER

Darleen, in her Las Vegas T-shirt and fanny pack strolls
 through the store. She is TOTALLY ignored by the snickering,
ironically snotty sales staff.

A WEALTHY LOOKING WOMAN WITH A LITTLE DOG walks in and is
 instantly offered a glass of champagne from a silver tray.

There are several glasses on the tray and they do not offer
 one to Darleen.

Darleen pulls A GORGEOUS BRIGHT PURPLE DRESS off the sale
 rack.

DARLEEN
(smiles)
Like it was made for her.

EXT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Vivian, on her phone, paces back and forth with each ring.

SUMMER
Hello?

VIVIAN
Summer! Hey baby. How's
everything there?

SUMMER
Good. I made dinner last night
because Aunt Jeannie's food was too
yucky.

VIVIAN
It was? What did you make?

SUMMER
I made sloppy joes and then I'm
making macaroni and cheese tonight.
From the box but I'm adding frozen
peas for added flavor and
nutrition.

Vivian smiles.

VIVIAN
That sounds delicious. You'll have
to make it for me when I come home.
Is Daddy there? He's not pickin' up
his phone.

SUMMER
No, he's out.

VIVIAN
Well, tell him I called and make
sure he packs and gets to the
airport tomorrow.

SUMMER
I will.

VIVIAN
I love you.

SUMMER

Love you too. Oh and Mom?

VIVIAN

Yeah sweetie?

SUMMER

I know you're gonna win. I just know it.

VIVIAN

Thanks baby girl.

Vivian hangs up the phone and stares at the wall, unsure, uncertain.

INT. VERSACE STORE - AT THE REGISTER - CONTINUOUS

Darleen hands the evening gown to the SNIFFY SALES ASSOCIATE, 20's, gay, wearing eye liner.

He is convinced she's there in ignorant error and makes that abundantly clear.

SNIFFY SALES ASSOCIATE

This dress is on sale but it's still *twelve hundred* dollars. As in one thousand two hundred dollars.

Darleen hands him cash. Dumbstruck, he rings her up.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Vivian looks into the mirror and waves. But this time as she smiles, it's hollow. *Empty.*

For the first time, in a long time, Vivian crumbles, completely.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian crawls onto the bed and curls under the covers, weeping.

INT. VERSACE STORE - CONTINUOUS

The Sales Associate hands Darleen the dress in a garment bag.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I'm just a boring housewife from the middle of nowhere who had so little interaction with the rest of the world that I was able to kid myself into thinking that I was capable of doing something more. Being something more.

Vivian LOOKS AT THE PHOTO OF DIANE SAWYER above her bed.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Now that I'm here, out of my safe little bubble and around all these other people it's abundantly clear who I am.

(then)

Who I'm always going to be.

DARLEEN

I think you're right.

Vivian, surprised, looks back at Darleen.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

If you keep thinking this way. If you keep putting so much pressure on yourself. This isn't the only way you can make a difference in your life. It's your life and you can do whatever the hell you want with it.

VIVIAN

DARLEEN, YOU JUST DON'T GET IT! You're too happy to get it! You don't know what it feels like to live in a cage. To wake up everyday wondering why you bothered to. If it weren't for my kids...

(then)

You're one of the lucky ones. Lucky people always think they know how to fix everyone else. Well guess what? You don't. So quit trying. Quit pretending you know what I'm going through because you don't. You have no god damn idea what it's like.

Darleen stands up and heads for the door.

DARLEEN

I guess I don't.

Darleen grabs the dress, hangs it up in the closet, and leaves.

Vivian lays quiet for a moment. Static. Cold.

SMASH TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Vivian runs for the elevators.

VIVIAN
DARLEEN! WAIT!

She sees Darleen in the elevator and gets to the doors just as they are about to close and thrusts her arm between them.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry. I didn't mean what I said... it wasn't fair... knowing you could never... that you've never...

DARLEEN
Had kids of my own?
(then, smiles)
I know you didn't.

VIVIAN
You're the best friend any girl could have and some days I feel like you're the Mom I never really had. I love you Darleen and I thank god every damn day for you cause I don't know where I'd be if you weren't in my life.

DARLEEN
You're not so bad yourself.
(smiles)
I'll be right back.

VIVIAN
Where are you going?

DARLEEN
Just gonna run and grab something I think might help take your mind of things.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL GIFT SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Darleen is in line with a GIGANTIC bottle of PEACH SCHNAPPS.
As she waits in line she sees AMBERR BUYING A BOTTLE OF WINE.

DARLEEN
(friendly)
Night in with the husband? Sure
miss mine.

Amberr looks at Darleen, the tears streaming from her overly made up eyes.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)
Oh, crap. Not another one.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Vivian answers a knock at the door. It's Darleen....
... and AMBERR.

VIVIAN
(re: Amberr)
What are you doing here?

Amberr raises her bottle of White Zin with teary eyes and a smile.

CUT TO:

THIRTY MINUTES LATER:

Amberr is a total wreck. Mascara streaming down her face in a river of failure.

She takes a swig straight from the almost-empty-bottle of pink wine.

AMBERR
You wanna know the best part?

Vivian and Darleen look on in horror and nod.

Amberr wipes the mascara river with her hand, spreading black all over her face.

AMBERR (CONT'D)
He's already planning on marrying
the cunt. The divorce was just
finalized last week and he's
already moving on.
(MORE)

AMBERR (CONT'D)

So not only am I here like a total fraud because we're not even married anymore but I got the joy of overhearing them talking about wedding flowers this morning while I was taking a poop!

VIVIAN

I'm really sorry Amberr. That's awful.

DARLEEN

How'd you get him to come here?

AMBERR

I told him I'd sign the papers and settle out of court if he came.

(then)

Yes, I'm really that stupid. I gave up my house to be in a fucking beauty pageant.

Amberr takes the last swig from her bottle and looks over to Vivian.

AMBERR (CONT'D)

Your husband cheat on you?

VIVIAN

Oh, I think he'd love to. But he gets so piss drunk I think he forgets to actually do it.

(giggles to herself)

That is if he even could.

She looks at Darleen and Amberr sheepishly. All three of them break into desperately needed laughter.

AMBERR

I'm sorry I was such a bitch to you Vivian.

VIVIAN

It's ok.

Vivian really starts to crack, the laughter spilling out.

AMBERR

What?

VIVIAN

You know, I came here because I want to be the next Diane Sawyer?

Amberr and Darleen sit in a moment of silence.

And then, again, all three careen into a seemingly endless stream of giggles.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I swear. I did! I wanna be everything she is. In my eyes, she's the most perfect person that ever was.

AMBERR

She does have great hair.

VIVIAN

The best hair. It's so good.

AMBERR

You know, even though my life feels like a big Texas sized tornado right now, I'm really having fun with you guys.

The devil shines in Amberr's eyes.

AMBERR (CONT'D)

But somethin' tells me we could have even more fun.

Amberr pulls an American Express card from her purse.

AMBERR (CONT'D)

Asshole is so caught up with his new chickadoo he forgot to take me off his credit cards.

VIVIAN

I don't know if...

DARLEEN

(cuts her off)

Let her do it. LET THE GIRL DO IT!

SMASH TO:

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS IN THE HOTEL ROOM:

-- ROOM SERVICE arrives with A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE, Amberr signs for it.

-- Thirty minutes later Room Service arrives with A BOTTLE OF TEQUILA, Amberr signs for it.

-- Vivian, Amberr and Darleen DOING SHOTS OF TEQUILA.

-- Amberr stumbles over to her purse and MAKES A CALL ON HER PHONE.

I/E. DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Davine is at the door. He hands a SMALL VILE to Amberr with a wink.

DAVINE
You have fun with that girl.

Amberr opens the tiny vile and sees THREE TABS OF ECSTASY. She smiles and puts the vile in her bra.

AMBERR
You're the best, Davine.

BACK IN THE ROOM:

Vivian and Darleen are both on the floor, cracking up as they take yet ANOTHER SHOT OF TEQUILA.

AMBERR (CONT'D)
Alight girls, I say we get ourselves all prettied up and go out there and paint that town red, whattaya say?

Amberr reaches over and grabs her ENORMOUS make up bag from her purse and smiles.

SMASH TO:

INT. BATHROOM - A WHILE LATER

The harsh, cheap, fluorescent lighting of the hotel bathroom only further enhances the garish, awful, tranny-like make up on all three of them as they stare, blankly, at their reflections in the mirror.

DARLEEN
Wow. I don't really know what to say.

Vivian lightly caresses the thick layer of paint like blush upon her cheek.

VIVIAN
Yeah. Wow.

DARLEEN
 I mean, I look...
 (takes a moment, smiles
 proudly)
 HOT!

Darleen swirls her hips like a stripper.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)
 Like hold the hot sauce cause I'm
 ALREADY TOO SPICY HOT!

Amberr smiles, so proud of her work.

VIVIAN
 At first I thought the make up was
 a tinch heavy but the more I stare
 at myself the more beautiful I
 feel.
 (sincere, drunk)
 Thanks for making me have so much
 beautifulness Amberr.

AMBERR
 My pleasure.
 (smiles devilishly)
 You guys up for a little...
 (winks)
 ...extra kick before we go out?

Vivian and Darleen are totally oblivious to what Amberr is talking about.

VIVIAN
 (smiles)
 Sounds great!

CUT TO:

As Vivian and Darleen admire their grotesquely over made up images in the mirror, Amberr pours three shots of Tequila. She pulls the TINY VILE FROM HER BRA and drops a tab in each one of their shot glasses.

Amberr hands Darleen and Vivian their shots.

AMBERR
 Bottoms up!

Darleen and Amberr toss theirs in a flash. Vivian hands hers off to Darleen.

VIVIAN

I lied. I'm too drunk. I can't do it.

Darleen grabs it from her.

DARLEEN

Well, that's what friends are for.

AMBERR

I don't know if you want to do that.

DARLEEN

I'm from Montana, sweetie. This is how we roll.

And with that, she throws it back.

AMBERR

Well then. Let's show this town what we're made of!

EXT. VEGAS STRIP - MOMENTS LATER

Amberr, Vivian and Darleen bust through the hotel door and out onto the Vegas strip.

The chaotic world around them swirls into a vacuum of slow motion the minute they enter it. Stares of confusion and muted laughter, from most everyone they pass, *go completely unnoticed by the three of them.*

Their confident swagger unbreakable.

EXT. CLUB MOONBLUE - MINUTES LATER

The line to get into this white-hot-for-the-moment Vegas nightspot is HUNDREDS OF HIPSTERS DEEP. Amberr, Darleen and Vivian look ANCIENT and COMPLETELY out of place. Everyone else is in up-to-the-minute club wear.

VIVIAN

I don't know guys. That's a really long line. Do you think it's worth it?

AMBERR

Of course it is!
(winks)
I'll be right back.

Amberr toodles off toward the BOUNCER.

SMASH TO:

SECONDS LATER:

Amberr, Darleen and Vivian are whisked past the red velvet rope.

AMBERR
 (to Darleen and Vivian)
 Amazing what a lil' Texas charm
 will do!

INT. CLUB MOONBLUE - CONTINUOUS

Amberr, Darleen and Vivian stare in awe. The blue hued club is dripping from top to bottom with sexy clubsters.

It's powerful and intense. The strong, downtempo club-beats have the entire room bouncing in almost perfect unison.

A group of HOT TWENTY SOMETHING GUYS walk by.

HOT GUY
 DUDES, CHECK IT!
 (laughing, re: Amberr)
 THAT'S THE CHICK THAT SHOWED HER
 PUSSY TO THE BOUNCER AT THE DOOR!

They all wince and laugh as they walk past. Horrified, Vivian turns to Amberr and Darleen. They are both in a trance like state of blissful oblivion as they stare out to the enormous, loud, pumping, dance floor.

VIVIAN
 (shouting over the loud
 music)
 DARLEEN, ARE YOU OK?

DARLEEN
 I'M GONNA BE REAL HONEST WITH YOU
 GUYS. RIGHT NOW? MY BRAIN FEELS
 LIKE IT'S HAVING SEX WITH ITSELF.

Amberr smiles with intoxicated euphoria.

AMBERR
 ISN'T BEING ON E THE BEST?

VIVIAN
 (jaw agape)
 E, LIKE THE ILLEGAL DRUG?

Amberr smiles devilishly.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 OH MY GOD! DARLEEN, YOU'RE ON
 DRUGS! HOW DO YOU FEEL?!

Darleen takes a moment.

DARLEEN
 SO FAR, IT'S A FUCKING FIRST RATE
 EXPERIENCE.

THE DANCE FLOOR:

Amberr and Darleen are in wonderland.

They've joined in the unified SEA OF SEXY CLUB GOERS. Their hands in the air. Hitting the beats. Their eyes swirling with the lights.

The music and their souls pulsing as one.

Vivian dances along side them but she's out of step with the collective energy of the moment. Her dance moves feel more "teenage cousin's banquet hall wedding" than "hot Vegas club".

But she's drunk and loving it and that's what matters.

VIVIAN
 (shouts to Amberr and
 Darleen)
 I BET PATTY LANE WOULD HAVE A HEART
 ATTACK IF SHE KNEW WHAT WE WERE UP
 TO RIGHT NOW!

AMBERR
 FUCK PATTY LANE IS WHAT I SAY!

Vivian gasps, deals with it and then cracks up.

VIVIAN
 HONESTLY GUYS? THIS IS THE BEST
 NIGHT EVER!

Amberr smiles and grabs Vivian and Darleen's hands pulling them off the dance floor.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. OLD WAREHOUSE WAY (WAY) OFF THE STRIP - HALF HOUR LATER

Amberr, Vivian and Darleen look ahead to the old, dilapidated warehouse in front of them.

A small door with swirling lights emanating from it and a SCARY LOOKING, HEAVILY INKED BOUNCER the only signs of life.

VIVIAN
(re: scary looking club
and bouncer)
Are you sure we should go in there?

AMBERR
Davine said this place was *divine*.

INT. CLUB X - MINUTES LATER

Amberr, Vivian and Darleen walk through this tripped out, packed to the walls club. IT'S DECORATED LIKE A FOREST BUT EVERYTHING'S MADE WITH CARPET.

CLUB GOERS, MANY IN TRIPPY COSTUMES and all of whom appear to be on E, rub their bodies against the carpeted walls, trees and each other.

VIVIAN
(horrified)
Guys, I think we might be at a
naked sex party or something.

No response.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
Guys?

Vivian turns around and sees AMBERR AND DARLEEN admiring the TRAY of GLOW STICKS and CANDY that a GIRL DRESSED LIKE SLUTTY WONDER WOMAN is carrying around.

Amberr grabs a GLOW WAND and swirls it around, mesmerized by the neon color and toodles off into the crowd.

Darleen grabs a PACK OF POP ROCKS CANDY.

DARLEEN

(so happy)

I haven't had these since I was a kid!

She rips open the package and pours them in her mouth. The MINUTE THE FIRST ROCK POPS, SHE SPIRALS INTO HYSTERIA and tries to spit them out, CREATING A SMALL RIVER OF MULTI-COLOR DROOL.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

(PANIC STRICKEN)

IT'S LIKE VIETNAM IN MY MOUTH!

Even though she feels badly, Vivian can't help but laugh.

MOMENTS LATER:

Vivian and Darleen rest up against a carpet tree, exhausted. Vivian sips on her drink and Darleen's hands rub up and down the carpeted tree trunk, orgasmically engaging with the fibers.

DARLEEN

(almost angry)

Man, being on drugs is lot to deal with.

VIVIAN

Oh my god, look!

Vivian points across the room. AMBERR IS LAID OUT AND MAKING OUT WITH A GUY IN A NEON BUNNY COSTUME.

DARLEEN

In a weird way, it kinda makes me miss Hank.

VIVIAN

(thinks, smiles)

You know what? I'll be right back.

DARLEEN

Where are you going? Because I don't want to leave this tree. I really love this tree.

Darleen rubs her arms up and down the trunk.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

I love it so GOD DAMN MUCH!

VIVIAN
(laughs)
Stay put. I'll be right back.

EXT. IN FRONT OF CLUB X - MOMENTS LATER

Still sipping on her yard of margarita, Vivian pulls her phone from her purse. Without any hesitation, she dials.

INTERCUT WITH:

Ryan, asleep in his dark bedroom wakes from his ringing phone. He looks at the clock, it's 4:00 AM. He instantly picks up.

RYAN
(groggy, confused)
Hello?

VIVIAN
(drunk, cheerful, nervous)
Ryan! Hey, it's me Vivian! What are you up to?

RYAN
Well, it's four am. I was sleeping.

VIVIAN
(so embarrassed)
Right. That makes sense! I probably should be too.

RYAN'S VOICE
Everything ok?

VIVIAN
Yeah.
(then, nervous)
I just wanted to say thank you again for making this happen for me. I don't have a lot of experience with that. You know, with people doing things for me. It was really nice of you.

RYAN
I think what you're doing is great, Vivi. Glad I could help.

VIVIAN
Well, I should probably get back into the club and check on Darleen.

RYAN'S VOICE

(laughs)
The club?

VIVIAN

If only you could see where I was.
(laughs)
It's been one heck of a time so far.

RYAN

Well, enjoy yourself.
(then)
And be safe. Good night Vivi.

VIVIAN

Good night.

INT. A "COVE" IN THE CLUB FOREST - FIVE A.M.

Darleen, now with glow stickers on her face and silly putty in her hands rests on a carpet tree stump as she comes down from her E high.

Amberr, also coming off her high, sits nestled in the Neon Yellow Bunny's lap, who is playing with her hair.

Vivian, deep in thought, cracks herself up.

VIVIAN

You know what?

DARLEEN

Huh.

VIVIAN

I'm glad I met you Amberr. You have helped me realize that I'm not the only one here whose life is screwed up.

Amberr and Vivian laugh at their weird realities.

AMBERR

I learned a lot of things tonight but number one is, I am going to do more drugs. I love being on drugs so much.

VIVIAN

I bet we're not the only ones.

AMBERR
That love drugs?

VIVIAN
(laughs)
No! I bet we're not the only ones that are this screwed up. I mean think about it? What kind of happy, loved woman who has a great life would enter a beauty pageant when she was married?
(laughs at the thought)
She wouldn't need the validation. The only women here are women who need to have other people tell them they are beautiful. Other people tell them that they're great or smart or talented or whatever.
(yawns)
That's why we're all here.

Vivian's eyes begin to fade. The last thing she sees is Darleen making an imprint of her nose with silly putty.

THE NEXT MORNING:

MAN'S VOICE (OVER BLACK)
Time to go. Party's over.

Vivian peels her eyes open and looks around, dazed. Hungover. Confused. She looks up to see the SCARY BOUNCER.

SCARY BOUNCER
8 am. Party's over.

Vivian panics as it all comes flooding back.

VIVIAN
Oh my god!

She runs over to Darleen and shakes her awake. Darleen has her and Vivian's purses tied around her ankle.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
DARLEEN! Wake up!

Darleen's eyes slowly open. Vivian unties the purses.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
WAKE UP! We gotta go! The pageant, oh my god! What did I do!?

Vivian looks around as Darleen slowly comes to.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
Oh no. Where's Amberr?

Darleen looks at her arm which has "VENETIAN RM. 808" written on it in marker.

DARLEEN
(confused slur)
I don't know.

SMASH TO:

I/E. DOOR TO BIG FANCY SUITE, #808, AT THE VENETIAN - MINUTES LATER

Amberr, in a tiny white babydoll answers the door with a bright and cheery smile.

AMBERR
(like everything is completely normal)
Good mornin' sleepy heads! I was wonderin' when y'all were gonna get here!

A MAN (40's, Indian, slight in build) pops out from under the covers, startling Vivian and Darleen.

AMBERR (CONT'D)
I got a second wind last night after you two went nighty nite.
(so excited)
Davine got me some more drugs. I just took a lil tabbie. Y'all want some?

DARLEEN
Meh, I think I'm good.
(almost sad)
Forever.

VIVIAN
(whispers, re: Indian man in the bed)
Who's that?

AMBERR
Pardeep.
(big smile)
We got married last night!

Darleen and Vivian see the HEAD OF THE NEON BUNNY COSTUME on the floor by the bed.

VIVIAN

Oh.
(then)
Ok.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CIRCUS CIRCUS HOTEL - LOBBY - A WHILE LATER

Vivian, Darleen and Amberr do a group-walk-of-wasted-shame through the hotel's revolving front doors.

They walk through the casino which is already buzzing with the beeping, clinking sounds of slot machines. They're still sporting their slutty make up and look very worse for wear.

VIVIAN

(sudden panic)
Oh, no.

AMBERR

What?

All of them turn their heads to where Vivian is looking and see PATTY LANE GALLOPING THEIR WAY.

PATTY LANE

Looks like you girls are...
(confused)
...up ready for the day?

AMBERR

Actually we're just--

DARLEEN

(cuts Amberr off)
Yes, they are up and ready for the big day! I took it upon myself to get them up early for a work out.

Patty thinks about this for a moment and clearly abandons reason.

PATTY LANE

Now, that's what I call commitment!
If I had gold stars to give out, I would give them to the two of you!

AMBERR

I love gold stars.

Amberr hugs Patty aggressively. Patty is wearing a CASHMERE SWEATER. It feels *really* good on Amberr's hands.

Amberr continues the hug, well past normal time limits, her HANDS RUNNING UP AND DOWN PATTY'S BACK. Patty, awkwardly, peels Amberr off and steps away.

PATTY LANE
(confused, smiles)
Amberr, are you feeling alright?

AMBERR
I feel fantastic!

PATTY LANE
Well, that was a very long hug.
(to Vivian)
I noticed your husband still hasn't signed in at the husband check in table. He's the only one not here. He *is* coming isn't he?

VIVIAN
Just spoke to him not a minute ago. He's on his way!

PATTY LANE
Oh, well that's good news. It would be so terribly awkward if he wasn't here. In fact, aside from one contestant whose husband was called to duty overseas at the last minute...
(does the sign of the cross)
...may he rest in peace.
(then)
It would be a pageant first.

VIVIAN
Well, he's coming and looking forward to it! Said he could hardly sleep last night he was so excited.

PATTY LANE
Guess what they say is true!
Behind every great woman is an even greater man.

AMBERR
(under her breath)
That's a bunch a' bullshit.

PATTY LANE
What was that Amberr?

DARLEEN

She's got that cough that's going around. Better get her upstairs to rest!

PATTY LANE

Sounds like a plan! See you ladies later!

Patty walks away.

AMBERR

(to Vivian)

You haven't heard from him, have you?

VIVIAN

Nope.

AMBERR

Are you sad?

VIVIAN

Disappointment is my normal.

FADE THROUGH:

INT. BACK STAGE OF PAGEANT - MOMENTS LATER

The only contestant there, Amberr, high and wasted stares at her mangled reflection in the mirror.

Her assistant Davine walks in with his crates full of hair falls and glittery make up.

DAVINE

(startled, re: her hair
and make up)

Oh honey child. You need help.

AMBERR

Yes I do Davine.

(a beat)

Yes I do...

EXT. POOL AREA - CONTINUOUS

Darleen, on her phone, paces back and forth crying.

HANK (O.S.)

Hello?

DARLEEN

I did drugs Hank. I did illegal drugs and I didn't even hate it as much as I should have.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Vivian struggles with her room key. Just as she's about to give up, the door opens.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian walks into the room.

VIVIAN

OH MY GOD!

REVEAL: Leonard laying on the bed, drinking a beer and watching ESPN on the flat screen.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Oh thank god! You're here!

(shell shocked)

I can't believe you actually came.

Leonard's eyes stay glued to the TV. Vivian sits down next to him on the bed.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I know you don't like it when I get all emotional so I'm just gonna say this real plain and simple. It means more to me than you'll ever, ever know that you came here today. I know what a big deal it is. This is the first time you've ever left Montana.

LEONARD

I've been to Wyoming.

VIVIAN

Right, I forgot.

Somehow, deep in the dysfunction of their relationship, they share a moment of awkward care between each other.

A very *brief* moment.

LEONARD

Where were you? You look kinda slutty.

VIVIAN
(thinking on her feet)
Uh... rehearsing and stuff. It's
been real busy here. Did you bring
a suit like I told you?

Leonard nods.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
Ok, well we better get you ready.

CUT TO:

Vivian, showered and refreshed, tugs at the suit jacket
Leonard is wearing. No matter what direction she pulls, it's
way too small and he looks ridiculous.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
I told you the black suit from your
grannie's funeral.
(catches herself)
But you look very handsome in this
one.

LEONARD
Thanks. I'm sure once you get your
fancy dress on and stuff you're
gonna look real pretty too.

VIVIAN
Thanks Leonard.
(smiles)
Ok, so all you gotta do is walk me
across the stage and then they'll
ask you a question and you answer
it. That's all and you're done!

LEONARD
What are they gonna ask me?

VIVIAN
I don't know. That's part of it.
That you're supposed to answer on
the spot, to see what you really
think.

LEONARD
Well, what if I don't know what to
say?

VIVIAN
You'll just have to think of
something.

(MORE)

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 You've known me since I was
 thirteen. Shouldn't be all that
 hard, right?

Vivian grabs her dress and her duffle bag full of make up and hair stuff.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 Not to mention, you're only gonna
 have to go up there if I make it
 into the top five.

LEONARD
 Right.
 (thinks)
 Just in case they ask, what's your
 favorite color.

VIVIAN
 Uh, green I guess.

LEONARD
 Right, like your eyes.

VIVIAN
 Yeah.
 (shocked)
 Like my eyes.

Vivian heads for the door.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 You should be in your seat fifteen
 minutes before it starts. Someone
 will come get you when it's time to
 come backstage with me. Everything
 will be really easy. I promise.

Vivian looks Leonard in the eyes, connecting, at some level, with him for the first time in a long time and then heads out.

LEONARD
 Vivian?

Vivian stops in her tracks.

VIVIAN
 Yeah?

LEONARD
 Good luck or break a leg or
 whatever it is I'm supposed to say.

VIVIAN

Thanks.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Vivian is alone. Nervous but determined.

En route, in her mind, to the *last-stop-on-the-life-changing* train.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Darleen swipes her key and walks in.

DARLEEN

Well, Hank took that a lot better than I thought he would.

She looks up and sees Leonard, he's already cracked a mini JD from the mini bar.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

Leonard!

LEONARD

Darleen.

DARLEEN

I came up here looking for Vivian. I guess she already went down.

LEONARD

Yep.

DARLEEN

I'm real proud of you that you came.

Leonard is silent. He takes a swig from his mini-bottle.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

Hittin the mini-bar already are ya?

LEONARD

(softens)

I get nervous in front of people. If she gets in the top five I gotta talk about her to the whole place.

DARLEEN

I get that.

(then)

I get that. Just take it easy, ok?

Darleen grabs her things and heads out.

INT. BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Vivian sits at her spot at a vanity mirror, her modest collection of cosmetics laid out in front of her.

Darleen toodles in.

VIVIAN

I can't believe he actually came.

DARLEEN

I think I'd have been less surprised if I opened my shower door this morning and saw Garth Brooks standing in there naked and waitin' for me.

Darleen hands her the dress bag.

VIVIAN

What's this?

Darleen shrugs. Vivian unzips the garment bag, revealing, inch by inch, the STUNNING PURPLE GOWN INSIDE.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Oh my god! Darleen.

(beat)

I can't accept this! It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, but I just can't.

DARLEEN

Well, you better. Cause I'll spend more on god damn Jenny Craig trying to fit into the thing than I did on the dress itself. Not to mention I'd rather drink rat poison than give the little twat-head that sold it to me the satisfaction of me returning it.

VIVIAN

Thank you so much.

(eyes filled with tears)

(MORE)

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

It looks just like a box of Raisin Bran.

DARLEEN

That's why I knew it had to be yours. You are literally the only person that would ever wear it.

VIVIAN

(laughs)

It's perfect.

DARLEEN

All I ask in return is that you just go out there and do me proud, like I know you can.

(big smiles)

Now let's get this hair and make up done!

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - **FIFTEEN MINUTES BEFORE PAGEANT TIME**

Vivian, in the pageant issued red, white and blue one piece bathing suit, high heels and a glittery MRS. MONTANA sash paces backstage.

Her hair is big and sprayed.

Her make up heavy and shimmery.

INT. AUDITORIUM - SAME TIME

Darleen makes her way through the auditorium.

FAMILIES AND FRIENDS flood in, most carrying SIGNS WITH CONTESTANT'S PHOTOS, MESSAGES OF SUPPORT. Large groups of people for each woman.

Darleen looks at LEONARD'S SEAT.

It's empty.

INT. STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

LOUD MUSIC begins, the CURTAINS LIFT, LIGHTS SWIRLING.

A LIT UP "MRS. MARRIED AMERICA" SIGN graces the entire back of the stage.

The CONTESTANTS, IN MATCHING RED WHITE AND BLUE ONE PIECE BATHING SUITS FLOOD ONTO THE STAGE.

They're singing and dancing with ridiculous amounts of charisma.

CONTESTANTS

(singing)

*I'm so proud to be an American!
So proud to be red, white and blue.
I'm so proud to be married!
Because I know that love is true.
I make casseroles and change
diapers!
I lead a crazy busy life!
But I'm proud most of all to say,
I'M A WIFE!*

When they finish their number the HOST, male, 50's, alarmingly tan and plastic, takes the stage.

HOST

Well, that was something wasn't it!
Good evening and welcome to the
fifty fourth annual Mrs. Married
America Pageant! The pageant that
celebrates the American Married
Woman! Let's meet our contestants
one by one as the judges tally the
first round of scores for swimwear.
After that the very first cut of
the evening will be made and we'll
announce our top ten!

FADE THROUGH:

The CONTESTANTS step through, one by one for their introduction, we get to:

MRS. MISSISSIPPI, a bit overweight and in her 40's.

MRS. MISSISSIPPI

From the home of the Mud Pie I am
Deelynn Frank and I am Mrs.
Mississippi!

MRS. MISSOURI, looks WAY too young to be married.

MRS. MISSOURI

As a cardinals fan, I plan to knock
this one out of the park. I am
Heather Stevens and I am Mrs.
Missouri!

Vivian takes center stage. Confident. Poised.

VIVIAN

From the Big Sky state, I am Vivian
Huntsman, Mrs. Montana!

INT. LOBBY OF AUDITORIUM - SAME TIME

Darleen, on her phone, paces back and forth as she waits for Leonard to answer.

LEONARD (V.O.)

Hi, you've reached Leonard, leave a
message and I'll maybe call you
back.

DARLEEN

Leonard, it's Darleen. I know we
don't see eye to eye on a single
damn thing and this is the last
time I'll ever ask anything of you.
But you gotta get your ass here.
She needs you.

INT. ON THE STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The CONTESTS are all POSED on the stage. Huge hair. Bigger
smiles.

HOST

Alright, ladies and gentleman!
You've just met fifty of the most
beautiful married women in America!
Now for the brutal part. We need
to make out first cut of the
evening. I know it comes sooner
than we'd all like but we've
compiled our first round of scores
from a combination of application
essays, photographs, and
congeniality among contestants.

Patty Lane, in a grotesquely sequined evening gown, delivers
AN ENVELOPE to the Host.

HOST (CONT'D)

Thank you Patty!

(opens the envelope)

When I call your name, please come
to the front of the stage. The
first of our top ten finalists
is...

As he calls their name, the contestants make their way to their marks at the front of the stage.

HOST (CONT'D)

Mrs. Ohio, welcome to the top ten!
Next up, we'll see more of Mrs.
Oklahoma *sooner* than later!
Followed by a big ray of sunshine
from Mrs. California! Well, they
say everything's big in this state,
let's see if we'll get a big win
from Mrs. Texas!

Amberr, *lit up like a Christmas tree on crack* makes her way to her spot.

HOST (CONT'D)

Eight US presidents were born here,
let's see if we can add Mrs.
Married America to that list of
dignitaries, congratulations Mrs.
Virginia! Aloha to Mrs. Hawaii!
Well, why don't you gallop on down
here like a horse in the derby Mrs.
Kentucky! Looks like we'll get to
see more of those peaches from Mrs.
Georgia! Alright ladies and
gentleman, our second to last
finalist is Mrs. Montana!

Vivian gasps when her name is called and makes her way to her spot at the front of the stage.

HOST (CONT'D)

And last but not least Mrs.
Florida! Audience, please give a
big round of applause for our top
ten finalists in the running to be
Mrs. Married America two thousand
and twelve! Up next, we'll see
these lovely ladies perform their
talents for our esteemed panel of
celebrity judges!

THE JUDGES TABLE:

A MOTLEY MIX OF C LIST OR LOWER CELEBRITIES, maybe some super old ice skaters, an ex playboy model and at least one vintage TV star.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Vivian scans her SHEET MUSIC as Darleen powders Vivian's face.

VIVIAN

I'm so damn nervous. What if I go out there and forget how to play the piano or something?

DARLEEN

That would be really embarrassing.
(then)
And weird. And funny.

Vivian rolls her eyes and laughs at Darleen.

INT. STAGE - TALENT COMPETITION

THROUGH A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS WE SEE:

-- AMBERR in a FLAME INSPIRED UNITARD, JUGGLING BALLS OF FLAME. She loses MORE THAN ONE OF HER BALLS and STAGE HANDS have to put them out with fire extinguishers.

-- MRS. OHIO doing an assultingly MACABRE MODERN DANCE DRESSED AS A FLAMINGO.

-- VIVIAN at the piano, she plays the theme song from "LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE". A simple song but she plays it beautifully and totally nails it. (Albeit, with the dramatic enthusiasm that one might express playing something more along the lines of *R. Strauss: Burleske*).

Vivian rises from her "concerto" performance and takes a lady like bow to her audience as they applaud mightily.

INT. STAGE - SAME TIME

The Host makes his way back on the stage, the ten finalists behind him. Nervous. Holding hands. Anxious.

HOST

Wow, I don't know about you but that flame thrower had me on the edge of my seat! If I could welcome back the ten finalists, I have a little envelope here and in it are the names of five of the luckiest married women in the world. With no further ado... first up, Mrs. Texas!

Amberr, looking just-to-the-left of normal, smiles and makes her way to the front of the stage but not without TRIPPING ON THE TRAIN OF HER DRESS on the way.

AMBERR

I'm ok!

HOST

Good to hear.

(reads the card)

Our next finalist is Mrs. Ohio!

Already in tears, Mrs. Ohio makes her way to the front of the stage.

HOST (CONT'D)

Mrs. California!

Mrs. California confidently swaggers her way to the front of the stage.

HOST (CONT'D)

Mrs. Hawaii!

Mrs. Hawaii graciously waves as she takes her place.

HOST (CONT'D)

And last but certainly not least we have a history making finalist. For the first time ever, her state will be represented in the top five, Mrs. Montana!

Stunned and stunning in her Versace gown, Vivian makes her way to the front of the stage.

HOST (CONT'D)

Well, congratulations ladies!

(to the losers)

And to you for making it to the top ten. You may officially leave the stage now.

The Host makes his way over to Amberr.

HOST (CONT'D)

Hi Amberr. How are you feeling, nervous?

AMBERR

(tipsy, slurry mess)
 No, in fact I've never felt so strongly that I was standing in the right place at the right time in my whole life! I'm so happy for myself!

The audience applauds. The Host looks at Amberr suspiciously, her wasted-ness not going unnoticed.

HOST

We are happy for you too!
 (moving on)
 So! We will now begin the question and answer portion of the evening.
 (re: fishbowl on a table)
 I will randomly draw judge created questions from this bowl and ask each of you for your thoughts on things ranging from the political to the personal. Amberr, you're up first!

The Host SWIRLS HIS HAND AROUND IN THE FISHBOWL and pulls out a card.

HOST (CONT'D)

(reads)
 How would you define the *perfect* husband?

Amberr smiles.

AMBERR

That's easy! A man who has character, who is loving, caring, present and a provider. Someone that you want to walk through life with everyday and in the eternities beyond. Oh, and he has to be able to tell a good joke too.

HOST

Wow, well that sounds like a great man.

AMBERR

May I say one more thing?

HOST

You still have thirty seconds on the clock!

AMBERR

Essentially a man that is the exact opposite of my piece of shit poor excuse for a human ex husband. That's right I said ex. I'm a fuckin' divorcee. I may be a little drunk still and I may or may not have taken some Ecstasy last night but that doesn't change the fact that my ex husband has a small penis and got caught looking at gay porn once when we were in college. Honestly, I'd love to stab him in the asshole for treating me the way he has but I won't because he has chronic diarrhea. You can have him Susie-what-ever-the-hell-your-name-is.

INT. AUDIENCE - SAME TIME

A spotlight on him, AMBERR'S EX-HUSBAND GETS UP AND STORMS OUT OF THE AUDITORIUM.

INT. BACKSTAGE - SAME TIME

Everyone backstage (various contestants, stylists etc) come to a COMPLETE STAND STILL, TOTALLY SHOCKED by what Amberr has said.

Darleen STARTS A SLOW CLAP.

DARLEEN

(to anyone that will
listen, re: her slow clap
for Amberr)

Am I right?

No one else joins her.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Vivian smiles proudly. She can't believe her ears, but she smiles.

HOST

Wow, so much to address! First and foremost, if you're no longer married you'll unfortunately be immediately disqualified.

AMBERR
 I said I was divorced.
 (smiles)
 I didn't say I wasn't married.

A collective gasp is heard from the audience.

AMBERR (CONT'D)
 I have a new husband. I LOVE YOU
 PARDEEP! I WANT TO HAVE YOUR ARAB
 BABIES!

Pardeep, who is not Arab, stands up in the audience proudly.

Amberr, on her way back to her spot, trips over the train on her dress again. Fed up she RIPS THE TRAIN OFF and tosses it to the back of the stage.

HOST
 (to the audience)
 Mrs. Texas everybody!

The crowd applauds with confusion.

HOST (CONT'D)
 Up next, Mrs. Hawaii!

We fade through the next few contestants as they nervously answer their questions.

Mrs. Ohio, is at the tail end of her answer.

MRS. OHIO
 In closing, like the seven layers
 of a delicious seven layer dip,
 those are the seven key elements to
 an exciting intimate life with your
 husband without sacrificing your
 Christian ideals!

The crowd roars with applause.

HOST
 Well, ladies and gentlemen, this
 has been one interesting question
 and answer round. Our final
 contestant is up next, Mrs.
 Montana!

The Host steps beside Vivian.

HOST (CONT'D)

Vivian, has it settled in yet that you're making history being the first contestant from Montana to make it to the top five?

VIVIAN

(smiles)

It hasn't settled in yet that I'm even here. This is like a dream to me.

The crowd laughs and applauds.

HOST

Alright, for your question.

EVERYTHING MOVES TO SLOW MO AS HE SWIRLS HIS HAND AROUND THE FISHBOWL.

He pulls out a card and reads it to himself.

HOST (CONT'D)

This is an interesting one.

Small beads of sweat accumulate on Vivian's browline as the magnitude of this moment settles in.

Flashes of reality.

The lights.

The audience.

The other contestants.

HOST (CONT'D)

Do you believe that clearly defined, stereotypical male female roles can help or hurt a marriage? And why?

Vivian's mind is racing. Say what she thinks?

Say what she *should*?

The host smiles out to the audience as Vivian takes a moment.

VIVIAN

Well...

It's only a handful of seconds but to everyone watching it seems like *forever*.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(swallows)

...like most things in life I'd say moderation is the key to happiness. Finding a balance.

Vivian looks out to the eager audience and smiles nervously.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

But that doesn't mean I do. It's hard to find that balance. For example, I, personally, hate to cook. In fact, I loathe it.

A few gasps pop up throughout the audience.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Yep. I do. Can't stand it. Cleaning and laundry? I dread knowing those things are on my daily to do list. But I do those things everyday because I have children that I love so much that I would die for them. So even if it means making a tuna casserole when I'd rather be travelling the world as a journalist, I do it. Because I'm a Mom and that's what being a Mom in my household means. Whether it was what I signed up for or not. It is what it is and I'm good at it. I just hope that someday I can make a tuna casserole after also being able to do something I'm passionate about. Which quite frankly, is a lot more than just being a wife.

Raucous applause flows through the auditorium.

HOST

Well, clearly you've struck a chord with our audience. Thank you Vivian!

INT. BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

As Darleen polishes Vivian's curls, Vivian looks in the mirror, blank.

Withdrawn.

VIVIAN

You're sure he's not out there?
Maybe he's in the wrong seat.

Beat.

DARLEEN

He's not out there, Viv.

INT. STAGE - SAME TIME

HOST

Up next, the finalists walk the stage for in the traditional husband wife parade! This is a tradition that has been a part of Mrs. Married America since our first pageant in 1957. The husbands of these lovely women will escort them across the stage and then answer a question about their beautiful bride. Before we do, let's give a warm welcome to last year's winner, the current reigning Mrs. Married America Lisa Daniels from Des Moines Iowa!

Mrs. Married America 2011 walks onto the stage.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Patty approaches Vivian, flustered and demanding.

PATTY LANE

Vivian, your husband should be back here by now. He's the only one not here.

(cutting)

I'd hate to think we wasted our selection for Mrs. Montana.

VIVIAN

Well, I'm sure you didn't have any other choices anyway.

PATTY LANE

To the contrary. Twelve women applied and I'm sure every one of the other eleven would love to be in your shoes right now. Husband in tow.

The human in Patty Lane emerges. Softening for the first time.

PATTY LANE (CONT'D)

Your essay about wanting to be like Diane Sawyer really struck a chord with everyone and your honesty about losing that pageant to a twelve year old girl and having to wear those bunny ears? We all fell in love with you Vivian. We would've chosen you from hundreds.

Patty Lane walks away.

Vivian thinks about what she just said. Realizing she was actually *chosen*.

VIVIAN

(shouts after her)
How much time do I have?

PATTY LANE

Time? No time. We go back on in five minutes.

Vivian bolts out of her chair and storms past Patty.

PATTY LANE (CONT'D)

Vivian! You'll be disqualified!

Vivian doesn't hesitate for a second, she blasts out the stage doors full steam ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO - CIRCUS CIRCUS - CONTINUOUS

In her gown and sash, half curled hair and full make up Vivian tears through the Casino, scanning the room.

VIVIAN

LEONARD!

INT. BAR - CIRCUS CIRCUS - CONTINUOUS

Vivian sprints into the bar.

VIVIAN

LEONARD!

INT. STAGE - SAME TIME

MRS. MARRIED AMERICA 2011, saunters across the stage. Her HUSBAND and FOUR CHILDREN walk out to greet her.

HOST

Let's give her a big round of applause as she takes her final walk across the stage as the title holder of the most prestigious honor a married woman in America can attain. Mrs. Married America!

The audience cheers.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian plows into the room.

VIVIAN

LEONARD!

SWING TO:

LEONARD ON THE BED, NO LONGER IN HIS SUIT, STAINS ON HIS SHIRT, PASSED OUT IN HIS OWN URINE.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

NO! LEONARD! WAKE UP!!!

Vivian shakes him violently. He comes to, groggy.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(tears start to fall)

Leonard, please! Please wake up!
I need you, please! I've never
asked for anything, not a GOD DAMN
FUCKING THING! PLEASE!!!

LEONARD

What time is it?

Vivian grasps on to just enough delusion to make him worth her while.

She continues to shake him awake.

VIVIAN

It's time to go! I'll grab your
suit, just please get up!

LEONARD

I don't feel good.

VIVIAN

Leonard, you came all the way here.
I've put my whole heart into this.
If there's ever one thing. ONE
THING! Can this please just be it?
Please!!!!!!!

Leonard looks her dead in the eyes...

LEONARD

Didn't figure you'd get in the top
five anyway.

...and then PUKES HIS GUTS OUT over the side of the bed.

Vivian takes a deep breath, regains her composure.

VIVIAN

Fine. Just like EVERY OTHER GOD
DAMN THING I'll do it ALONE! I'll
figure out a way. I'll make it
work.

She makes her way toward the door but stops short. She turns
and faces Leonard.

Faces her reality, her life.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

But Leonard? Just one more thing I
think you should know.

LEONARD

(wiping the puke from his
face)

What?

Vivian smiles, done.

Finally and officially DONE.

VIVIAN

You're never gonna fuck a beauty
queen.

She adjusts her Mrs. Montana sash and fixes the straps on the
Versace gown that drapes her body like a supermodel.

And walks out the door.

INT. STAGE - SAME TIME

Cheesy, romantic instrumental music swirls through the air. Soft pink lighting cascades across the stage. Ghastly silk flowers and a cheap white gazebo have been added to the set design.

HOST

Our first couple of the evening is Janelle Thompson, Mrs. Ohio and her husband Steve Thompson.

MRS. OHIO AND HER HUSBAND stand in a HUGE spotlight and then begin their walk across the stage.

HOST (CONT'D)

(reads from card)

Steve is a firefighter and loving father to their six children. His dream in life is to one day retire and start a professional Folf league.

Mrs. Ohio and her husband approach the microphone, inside the gazebo.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Patty looks at the empty spot where Vivian and Leonard should be standing, ready for their walk.

INT. STAGE - SAME TIME

The Host addresses Mrs. Ohio's husband.

HOST

Steve, like houses and buildings, marriages need foundations. What is the foundation of your marriage?

STEVE

You're looking at her!

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Darleen, dumbfounded and unsure of what to do, sits in Vivian's make up chair.

HOST (O.S.)

Next up, Mrs. Texas!

Patty Lane runs up to Darleen, in a tither.

PATTY LANE

If she's not here in sixty seconds,
she's disqualified.

(stern)

It's clearly stated in the rules.

INT. STAGE - SAME TIME

Amberr saunters across the stage, ARM IN ARM WITH PARDEEP.

HOST

Amberr is walking her husband...
Jack?

The Host looks at his card.

HOST (CONT'D)

Something tells me that's not
right.

AMBERR

(really loudly)
HIS NAME IS PARDEEP!

HOST

Pardeep! I don't know anything
about Pardeep but he sure looks
like a nice guy. Pardeep, I'll
just ask you the question we
already had prepared. When did you
first realize that Mrs. Texas was
the woman you were going to marry.

PARDEEP

About four this morning.

HOST

I see. Well, what was it about her
that caught your eye.

PARDEEP

Her body looked very sexual and
fertile.

HOST

Alright! Well, Pardeep and Mrs.
Texas everyone!

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Darleen isn't sure what to say to Patty.

DARLEEN

I don't...

Darleen looks across the way and smiles.

DARLEEN (CONT'D)

...think that will be a problem.

SWING TO:

Vivian is on her mark, smoothing her hair and ready to go on stage. Patty Lane scurries over to her.

PATTY LANE

Where is he? I thought you said he was here.

VIVIAN

Oh, he is here.

Patty Lane looks at her, befuddled.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

He's upstairs in the hotel room, passed out in his own urine and likely choking on his own vomit.

(smiles)

So, I'm gonna be walking alone!

PATTY LANE

I'll have to check the official rules, I don't know if you *can* walk alone.

HOST (O.S.)

Up next Vivian Huntsman and her husband Leonard!

The bright white of Vivian's spotlight spills backstage.

VIVIAN

I can do whatever I *want* to do.

Vivian steps out into her light. Alone. Confident.

Ready.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Rumbles of confusion scatter through the audience as Vivian DOES THE HUSBAND WIFE PARADE BY HERSELF.

The romantic music, the lights. The other contestants look on in horror.

It's awkward and pathetic.

And the proudest moment of Vivian's life.

She takes her place in the gazebo.

HOST

(confused)

Well, I have a question for your husband but unless he's wearing an invisibility cloak, doesn't look like he's here!

VIVIAN

(into the mic)

No, he's not.

HOST

Well, the question was going to be what his favorite thing about you is. Maybe I should get another question assigned from the judges?

VIVIAN

(without hesitation)

Is it ok if I tell you *my* favorite thing about myself?

The HOST isn't sure what to do. Patty scurries onto the stage, smiling at the audience, WHISPERS SOMETHING IN HIS EAR and then scurries right back off.

HOST

Go ahead, Vivian. You may answer the question.

VIVIAN

And trust me when I say, I don't spend that much time thinking about what's so great about myself. I don't think most of us women do.

(MORE)

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I mean sure we have confident moments, dare to dream dashes but most of the time I worry about how fat I look, even when I'm all by myself in the bathroom three hundred miles from nowhere. Or about my clothes not being right, even when I'm at Walmart on a rainy Monday morning. That's what women do. But I think, to answer the question, the thing I like most about myself is my feet.

A few rumbles scatter throughout the audience.

HOST

Interesting answer. Nicely shaped toes?

(cheeses it up to the crowd)

Maybe a foot modeling career is on the horizon for Mrs. Montana!

The audience laughs.

VIVIAN

Not really. They're pretty ugly. Never had a pedicure in my life.
(deep, cleansing breath)
My feet are what keep me on the ground. My feet run to my babies in the middle of the night when they're sick. My feet are what walked me across the stage in high school when I gave my valedictorian speech. My feet are the first things that hit ground in the morning. Another day that I got to walk on this earth. My feet are what walked me across this stage tonight, alone, without my husband. And my feet are what are going to take me on the next steps in my life even though, right now, I have no idea what those steps are gonna be.

Vivian looks out to the crowd and smiles demurely. She spoke so purely, so sincerely, so unsure of what anyone else's opinion might be. She quietly walks to her place on stage and stands beside the other finalists.

HOST

(taken back)

Mrs. Montana, thank you for your very candid answer. Now, if your husbands don't mind, I'd like to have these lovely ladies to myself for the next few minutes. If your wife is the lucky winner we'll see more of you in just a bit.

The husbands leave the stage.

HOST (CONT'D)

Well, ladies and gentleman, this has been an interesting evening! The judges have tallied their scores from throughout the evening. The moment we've all been waiting for will finally be here. We will crown the next Mrs. Married America!

A MAN walks onto the stage and hands the HOST AN ENVELOPE.

HOST (CONT'D)

Alright ladies and gentleman.

The FIVE CONTESTANTS grab each other's hands. The Host opens the results envelope.

HOST (CONT'D)

The fourth runner up is... AMBERR LAKES! Mrs. Texas!

Amberr approaches the host and accepts her modest bouquet of flowers and small trophy.

HOST (CONT'D)

The third runner up is... Mrs. California!

Mrs. California accepts her flowers and trophy and waves to the crowd as she walks off the stage.

HOST (CONT'D)

The second runner up is Mrs. Hawaii!

Mrs. Hawaii accepts a larger bouquet of flowers and trophy and waves as she exits the stage.

Vivian and Mrs. Ohio hold hands as they nervously await their future.

HOST (CONT'D)

And now, before we crown the winner, it should be known that if for any reason Mrs. Married America cannot fulfill her duties or should be lucky enough to be crowned Mrs. Married World, the first runner up will step into her shoes and become the new title holder. Either way, you are both winners and should be very proud of yourselves as I am sure your families are very proud of you.

(to the audience)

Are you ready for this, this is it! The BIG announcement. The first runner up in this year's Mrs. Married America two thousand and twelve pageant is... VIVIAN HUNTSMAN, MRS. MONTANA!

Vivian is draped in a first runner up sash and handed an enormous bouquet of flowers.

Thunderous applause rolls through the audience.

The applause may be for Mrs. Ohio, who is already in tears, knowing she's won.

But as Vivian waves her last good bye and walks off the stage?

That applause is for her.

Vivian Huntsman.

Beauty Queen.

FADE TO:

MONTHS LATER...

INT. KTMT NEWSROOM - EVENING

NANCY, the local NEWSCASTER, 40's, sporting a very poor haircut and even worse make up, delivers the early evening news.

NANCY THE NEWSCASTER

Thanks for the weather report John, glad we're finally seeing some summer weather.

(MORE)

NANCY THE NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Now it's time for our new
 "Spotlight on Community" segment.
 You might recognize our
 correspondent, she made history as
 the first runner up in the Mrs.
 Married America pageant. Let's go
 to her now as she reports from the
 Eastern Montana Center for the
 Homeless. Vivian?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. EASTERN MONTANA CENTER FOR THE HOMELESS - SAME TIME

Vivian looks to the camera with nervous confidence. She's wearing a simple suit but there's nothing about her, in this moment, that isn't gorgeous.

VIVIAN

Thanks Nancy. Yes, that's right.
 I am here at the Eastern Montana
 Center for the Homeless. I've got
 Randy here. He's been coming to
 the center for a while now.

RANDY, 50's (but looks 70's) a very homeless, very toothless man smiles to the camera.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Randy, how long have you been
 coming to the center?

RANDY

I can't really remember.

VIVIAN

Wow. That long.

RANDY

Maybe. But also I do a lot of drugs
 and drink a lot so I can't remember
 what happened even yesterday.

VIVIAN

(panics)

I see.

(regains composure)

So, why do you come here? What
 does the center offer you that
 keeps you coming back.

RANDY

Food for one. Also, there's just somethin' about the people that work here that make you think there's a chance for something better. Makes me think I should quit drinkin'. I haven't yet but they make me think I should, so maybe I will. I guess what I could say is that coming here... it gives me hope.

VIVIAN

(back to camera)

You heard him. This center is a place that feeds, clothes and offers shelter to many in need in the area. They're currently looking for volunteers to help serve meals. What better way to volunteer than to give people like Randy here a dose of hope.

Vivian nods to the camera and smiles, confidently.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Back to you Nancy.

FADE TO:

I/E. VIVIAN'S CAR - DRIVING - A WHILE LATER

Vivian, sun kissed and wearing a sun dress drives down the long Ruddyard County Highway.

The sun is just beginning to set, cascading across the landscape, showcasing the deep golden hues of the plains.

She smiles as she passes the rows and rows of colorful wildflowers that paint edges of the roadside.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER- SAME TIME

Leonard, six pack of beer beside him, sits in an old Laz-y-boy and watches TV.

Alone.

Drunk.

Without hope.

A letter, finalizing his and Vivian's DIVORCE is on the counter covered in food and beer stains.

INT. BIG FANCY KITCHEN IN A BIG FANCY HOUSE - SAME TIME

Amberr sips on a glass of white wine, fluffs the collar of her track suit and stirs the pot on the stove.

An photo of HER AND PARDEEP HONEYMOONING ON A PRIVATE ISLAND displayed on the counter behind her.

EXT. WIDE OPEN FIELD - SAME TIME

Summer, who's lost a little weight but gained *miles* of confidence, plays a game of catch with her brothers.

INT. DARLEEN'S FRONT PORCH - SAME TIME

Darleen and her HUSBAND HANK (late 30's, short, slight and caring) sit on the porch swing, sipping iced tea and watching the day slowly change to night.

Darleen hands Hank a packet from an Adoption Agency.

He's over the moon.

They continue to swing, blissfully happy.

I/E. VIVIAN'S CAR - DRIVING - SAME TIME

Vivian pulls in front of RUDYARD FAMILY DENTISTRY AND PARKS.

She unbuckles her seat belt, takes a deep breath and smiles brightly.

VIVIAN

Hope changes everything, doesn't
it?

FADE TO BLACK.