

EXT. THE COMEDY STORE - NIGHT - LONDON

CHYRON: LONDON, 1980

It's night, and it's bitter winter. There is a light snow falling. We see the famous London Comedy Store lighting up the dark night like a beacon. There's a line around the block.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - BACKSTAGE

Backstage, in a smoky room that is at once bare and full of electricity, we pan over a sea of MALE COMICS, talking, drinking and smoking cigarettes. KATHERINE NEWBURY (19, very nervous) enters. She has a freshly-skinned knee which is bleeding.

Heads turn. We see a man holding a clipboard, the MANAGER. Katherine approaches.

KATHERINE

Hi, I'm here to perform for the Sunday Showcase? I signed up weeks ago--

MANAGER

Name.

KATHERINE

Katherine Newbury. I'm so sorry I'm late. I took the train from Cambridge-

MANAGER

(grimacing)

What happened to your knee?

KATHERINE

I ran here from the station.

MANAGER

You'll have to go last. If we run over, you're cut.

KATHERINE

Don't they usually put the new people in the middle?

MANAGER

Don't like the spot, don't have to perform.

Katherine nods. The manager glances at her bleeding knee.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Clean that up. It's very unappealing.

KATHERINE

Of course. I'm so sorry.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine looks at herself in the mirror. She is wearing a simple dress and has terrible pit stains. She dabs her knee with a wet paper towel and applies lipstick.

INT. BACKSTAGE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Katherine looks out at the room of men. She retreats to a corner. Katherine holds index cards with scribble on them. She studies them. A few comics near her gossip.

BEARDED COMIC

You know, Walter Lovell is in the audience tonight.

Katherine perks up.

OLDER COMIC

Who is that?

KATHERINE

The American comedy producer. He's a legend. He manages Richard Pryor and half the cast of Saturday Night Live. He's really here?

The room regards her with silent suspicion.

BEARDED COMIC

Yes.

(then)

Whose girl are you?

KATHERINE

I'm no one's...I'm performing. Stand-up.

OLDER COMIC

You done stand-up before?

Katherine braces herself.

KATHERINE

Yes. I did a youth hostel in Soho
and a club called Lentils.

BEARDED COMIC

Lentils? The vegetarian restaurant
on Carnaby?

KATHERINE

(defensive)

They have a comedy night the first
Tuesday of every month.

The comics look at each other, who is this lightweight? Then
turn away from Katherine.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - BACKSTAGE - A LITTLE LATER

Katherine watches a comic onstage from backstage. She
impatiently checks her watch. It's getting a little late.
Will she be able to go on? Her knee starts to bleed again.
Dammit. She pulls tissue from her armpit and dabs her knee

INT. COMEDY CLUB - BACKSTAGE - LATER

Katherine nurses a soda. There are two other glasses in front
of her. Then from stage:

EMCEE

Katie Newbury is next. This is her
Comedy Store debut. I know
literally nothing about her except
she is-
(judgement)
From Cambridge.

Katherine bolts from her seat. As she passes the emcee, he
whispers:

EMCEE (CONT'D)

You have three minutes.

KATHERINE

My set is longer than that--

EMCEE

They're drunk and they're tired.
You have three minutes.

Katherine is stunned and nervous and nods, walking onstage.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - LONDON - LATER

Katherine walks onstage. It is magical and overpowering. For a moment it goes silent and Katherine closes her eyes. Being on this stage is intoxicating. Then suddenly:

The light is blinding and the crowd is packed and wild. It's Friday night and they are drunk.

We hear Katherine's breathing. It's loud and scared.

KATHERINE

Hello, everyone. My name is actually Katherine Newbury, not Katie. I'm fairly new to stand-up. I'm not saying I'm nervous, but if tonight goes badly, I will kill myself.

There is a ripple of some surprised laughter.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

The problem with being depressed - which I am, both clinically and conversationally - is that the highs and lows are not remotely equivalent. If tonight goes badly: I kill myself. If tonight goes well: I get a little drunk and take a train back to my university.

People are now beginning to pay attention. Who is this girl?

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I was talking about it with my psychiatrist and I could tell I was depressing her, which is a whole new level of depressing for me--

Then suddenly:

HECKLER

Fuck off you stupid cow!

Katherine is thrown completely. She stumbles to regain composure.

KATHERINE

-So, um, the ups and downs are not the same.

It's too late, she's totally thrown.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - LONDON - MINUTES LATER

We hear a smattering of pity applause. The emcee takes the stage. Katherine walks offstage past the comics, flushed and fighting off tears.

BEARDED COMIC
It's not so bad, Cambridge.

OLDER COMIC
You don't have to be funny with a face like that.

She grabs her coat and leaves, humiliated.

EXT. ALLEY - LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Katherine storms outside. It's now snowing quite a bit. Holding back tears, she walks towards the street to hail a cab.

MAN (O.C.)
Hey! You dropped this.

Katherine turns to see a dashing 50 YEAR OLD AMERICAN MAN. He holds out a tube of LIPSTICK. Katherine walks back and takes it.

KATHERINE
Thank you.
(re: cigarette)
Do you have another?

WALTER
I do. But I'm not going to give it to you.

Katherine looks at him quizzically.

WALTER (CONT'D)
I saw you onstage tonight. You need to cope with failure in a healthier way. If not you'll be smoking a lot of cigarettes.

Oh, fuck this guy. She stalks off.

KATHERINE
(under her breath)
Wanker.

WALTER
 (calling off to her)
 Oh, c'mon. I was just kidding.

Katherine keeps marching away.

KATHERINE
 Fuck off.

WALTER
 Well, it wouldn't be a Tuesday
 night unless a comedian told me to
 fuck off. Last week it was Richard
 Pryor.

Katherine stops and turns around. Is it? Could it be?

KATHERINE
 Are you...?

She walks back slowly.

WALTER
 Walt Lovell. Comedy producer.
 American. Wanker.

KATHERINE
 I'm so sorry, I had no idea who you
 were.

WALTER
 Out of curiosity, what does wanker
 mean, exactly?

KATHERINE
 (weakly)
 It's not that bad. It can be
 affectionate.

WALTER
 You're a terrible liar. But, I
 deserved it. I shouldn't even be
 talking, I'm not a performer. The
 piano a little bit...

KATHERINE
 (very miserable)
 I can't believe you saw that. They
 told me I had three minutes, and I
 had a twelve minute set-

WALTER
Twelve minutes? Jesus. What would
 you possibly have to say in--
 (MORE)

WALTER (CONT'D)

(off her heartbroken face)

Okay..lets do this: to make up for me being a wanker, I'll tell you what I thought of your performance in the amount of time it takes me to finish my cigarette.

KATHERINE

Thank you so much.

WALTER

I was thinking about the reason it went so poorly. Your material isn't bad, and it's definitely not as bad as the reaction you got, which was, I think we can both characterize as, very negative. I think the reason is because you're so clearly a winner. Which makes people dislike you to begin with, and on top of that--

(gestures to her outfit,
face)

-you're *trying* to look pretty. Which I bet you're doing to project confidence, but it makes you seem like you don't have any.

Katherine is devastated over by this assessment.

KATHERINE

That was very...candid.

WALTER

It's how I would talk to a man.

KATHERINE

It's hard to have confidence when every comic there either hates me or wants to fuck me and nothing in-between. When you're literally the only woman to show up at these open mics--

WALTER

That's your problem. You can't have contempt for them. You are them. You are one of them. You're not a woman, you're not a man. You're a comedian.

Katherine thinks on this.

WALTER (CONT'D)

And when you first walked onstage I leaned forward to see what you had to say. That's not something that I do for many people. You're smart. You connect.

KATHERINE

Thank you.

WALTER

But this outfit, the dress? Not right.

KATHERINE

I wanted to show that I cared.

WALTER

You don't look like you cared. You look beautiful. Like the most beautiful girl I've ever seen.

Katherine is stunned. Immediately Walter feels vulnerable, he didn't mean to say this to her.

WALTER (CONT'D)

But that's not the point. This lipstick? That's your problem. You're not a sex object, you're a comedian.

She thinks about it. He finishes his cigarette and flicks it on the ground.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Perfect timing. Good luck.

He starts to head back in. She steels up her courage.

KATHERINE

Do you want to come back with me?

WALTER

Back with you?

KATHERINE

To my dorm. At my university. We would have to take a train, unless you have a car.

(then)

Do you want to come home with me?

Now Walter is taken aback.

WALTER

I'm old enough to be your father,
Katie.

KATHERINE

It's Katherine, not Katie. And
you're older than my father.

WALTER

I'm married.

KATHERINE

I know.

He walks up to her, shocked how attracted he is to her. He takes her arm and they begin to walk away.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

How's that for confidence?

She drops her lipstick in the snow, and they walk off into the snowy London night.

INT. KENNEDY CENTER, WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Katherine (in her 50's, magnificent, our heroine) gives an acceptance speech at the Kennedy Center. She is receiving the Mark Twain Prize for American Comedy. She is doing well.

KATHERINE

...well, I think America is in a tough spot if they're giving the Mark Twain Award for American Comedy to a foreigner. You're really scraping the bottom of the barrel. Isn't there someone still around from Laugh-In? Is Carol Burnett dead?

Some laughter.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

America is my great love because I fought to be here. I will never take it for granted. Because I view it as a privilege and not as a right.

Then.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

And for young people watching, maybe you need to think about if you've fought enough for your privilege to exist here. Do you have the same drive and determination as the immigrants around you? Or are you plagued with the self-reflexive sickness that is the narcissism of social media? If I sound like I am speaking about it with contempt - you're right, I am.

People listen.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Most of you know very little about me. And that is on purpose. I don't have a publicist, I detest interviews. I don't have a brand. I don't have an app. It's about my work. It's always been about the work. My personal life is private. But here is what I can tell you. I can tell you that I have been married for thirty six years to the love of my life, Walter Lovell.

We see Walter, now 86, in a wheelchair in the audience. There is applause.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Walter taught me about excellence. And seeking excellence has been my obsession ever since I met him. I have spent decades in search of it; both from myself and the people around me. Too many young people I meet think that being expressive is the most important quality. "I need to say it, therefore it must be important." I disagree. Quietly learning to be good, rather than expecting the world to see the innate goodness in you - that's important. And all the social media in the world can't teach you that. So thank you America, Mr. President, Mark Twain, for this award. It's been an honor to lecture you here tonight. Because it wouldn't be a Katherine Newbury speech without a bit of a dressing down, would it?

She smiles. More applause.

INT. - KENNEDY CENTER- RECEPTION HALL - LATER

At the Presidential reception, there is a long receiving line for Katherine. Two GROWN MEN take a selfie with her. She cringes. She turns to an AIDE.

KATHERINE

Can you direct me to the bathroom,
please?

The aide pulls her aside and they walk out. She walks straight through a side entrance into the street, where the car is waiting.

INT. KATHERINE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine leafs through the trades. There is picture of BONNIE MORTON, head of the network at NBC, early 50's, tiny and beautiful in a way that infuriates other women. There's a photo of her in a suit looking powerful with her hand on her hip. Katherine frowns as she reads.

Katherine's phone rings. It's her executive producer, BRAD, (40's, looks 50's, wan, brilliant, overworked) on the phone.

BRAD

How'd the speech go?

KATHERINE

Terribly.

BRAD

Did you like what the writers
wrote?

KATHERINE

No. I threw out everything, which
is a pity because I pay them a lot
of money. I rewrote it myself.

BRAD

You always rewrite it. If Mark
Twain himself wrote your Mark Twain
acceptance speech, you'd have
rewritten it.

KATHERINE

Yes, but probably a little less.
Bradley, why are you bothering me?

BRAD

The network has been trying to reach us. You have to call Bonnie back. She's the head of the network.

KATHERINE

I'm actually reading an article about her right now. Listen to this. "As the female president of the network," - don't start a sentence with "As a female", how tacky - "I need to care about things that my male counterparts don't. Making dinner for the kids, getting my hair colored. It's a balancing act." Uch, regular Elizabeth Cady Stanton, isn't she?

BRAD

Who's that?

KATHERINE

A woman who never colored her hair.

BRAD

Also, Gabe Eichler wants to talk to you.

KATHERINE

Who the fuck is Gabe Eichler?

BRAD

He's one of our writers. I've told you repeatedly.

KATHERINE

Can't you just do it?

BRAD

He requested you be there. I think it's about a raise.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL BAR - GEORGETOWN - NIGHT

Katherine, still wearing her gown, drinks whiskey by the bar. She texts Walter.

KATHERINE (TEXT)

Did you get back safely? I'm sure you have notes on the speech.

WALTER (TEXT)

My only note is that your husband looks much too old for you. Don't drink too much, my love.

KATHERINE (TEXT)

I won't. See you tomorrow.

Katherine smiles and puts down her phone. Just then, there is a loud wave of laughter through the bar. People are rapt, watching a TV, where an arena stand-up comedian in his 40's is pacing a stage in an HBO comedy special. He's animated, he's great-looking, with charisma to burn. He's also a manic asshole. This is DANIEL PERKINS.

PERKINS

You know what I hate? When someone tells you to take off your shoes when you go to their house. I'm like: "this ain't Japan". This is the United States and I will take my filthy fucking shoes all over your white carpet. So the next time you go to someone's house who asks you to take off your shoes, do this: take a shit in one of the shoes.

A bunch of YOUNG BANKERS in their 20's (look like they went to Duke, but definitely not as smart) sit next to Katherine, watching the TV and laugh loudly. One of them, good-looking, notices Katherine.

BANKER

You're on TV, aren't you.

KATHERINE

Katherine Newbury. Tonight with Katherine Newbury.

BANKER

Holy shit. That's awesome. You should have Perkins on your show. He's great.

KATHERINE

He's certainly very popular. What do you like so much about him?

BANKER

He's just really funny. He says all this crazy shit, it's just like, crazy.

KATHERINE

Crazy how? Is it absurd or non-sequiturs?

Banker has no idea what she's talking about.

BANKER

It's just like he's the funniest guy in my frat, he says the stuff you think about and just don't say.

KATHERINE

Maybe there's a reason you shouldn't say it.

He looks at her quizzically.

BANKER

Can I buy you a drink?

KATHERINE

I've had enough to drink. I'm in room 612. Come alone.

She leaves.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Katherine and the Banker finish having sex.

BANKER

So, you're married, huh? I just looked you up.

Katherine goes ice cold.

KATHERINE

When I come back, you should not be here.

She enters the bathroom and shuts the door.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - MORNING - VARIOUS

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KATHERINE'S OFFICE -
NEXT DAY

Katherine and Brad sit across from GABE EICHLER (comedy writer, nebbish, 40's). He looks nervous.

GABE

I'm here to ask for a raise.

KATHERINE

Okay. Why do you think you deserve one?

GABE

Well, you know, I am in a single income household. And Jen and I just had our second baby. Taylor. A girl.

He shows her a photo on his phone. Katherine nods politely.

BRAD

She's getting so big--

KATHERINE

(rote)
Very cute.

GABE

I'm facing a lot of new expenses at home, I've been at the show for over a decade, I love working here and I think it's time for a raise.

There is a long beat as Katherine mulls this over.

KATHERINE

I see. Gabe, this is actually exciting.

GABE

(light up)
Really?

KATHERINE

Yes. Because what you are describing here is the most clear-cut example of the classic sexist argument for the advancement of men in the workplace I have ever heard. This is why in the fifties men were promoted over the women they worked with. "Family men" got promoted and single women were not. I've never encountered it in such a clean, teachable way.

GABE

I don't think that's at all what's happening.

KATHERINE

Of course it is. I can't give you a raise. It's like if I gave a drug addict a raise.

GABE

I do not see that at all.

KATHERINE

It's practically identical. A drug addict makes certain decisions outside of work for their sense of comfort and self. Then their addiction demands more money, more time, more attention. Like a child.

GABE

Taylor is like a drug problem?

KATHERINE

Exactly! You are saying that because you had a child - something no one asked you to do - you should get special treatment. If you had put in more hours this past year it might make some sense. But no, in fact you've been here less frequently because of your personal situation.

GABE

How did you know that?

Katherine leans in.

KATHERINE

I know everything, Gabe.

Brad nods. She does.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I can't do it. You can imagine how unfair that would be to a single man. Or a woman.

GABE

Well, there aren't any women on this staff. And there haven't been for as long as I've been here.

BRAD

Gabe-

GABE

And the reason there aren't is because you can't stand women. You hate them. So you can sit here and spout off your pseudo-feminist reasons to not give me what I deserve, but we all know what's going on here.

Katherine is silent.

KATHERINE

Well, we should change that.

GABE

Really?

KATHERINE

(to Brad)

We need to hire a woman.

GABE

I think that would be really cool.

KATHERINE

(to Gabe)

You're fired. Obviously.

Gabe stands to leave.

GABE

Fuck you, everybody hates you.

KATHERINE

That would mean a lot more from someone who had a job.`

Gabe leaves.

BRAD

I don't think you dealt with that in the best way.

KATHERINE

I was right.

BRAD

But you didn't have to do it that way.

KATHERINE

I don't know how else to do it, okay? Brad, I don't hate women.

BRAD

I don't think so either.

KATHERINE

So why the fuck aren't there any women on this staff?

BRAD

It's hard. I want the show to be really funny.

KATHERINE

I am a woman! And I'm in at least small part responsible for why the show is funny.

BRAD

That's true. But you are very rare.

KATHERINE

I'm going to stop this conversation before it descends another rung. I never want to be put in that position again. Replace Gabe. With a woman.

BRAD

I have a short list but I don't know if there's a woman-

KATHERINE

Bradley.

BRAD

Would a gay guy work?

KATHERINE

No.

Brad stands and leaves. Katherine sits back. It's a bad day.

MAIN TITLES

EXT. 30 ROCK - MORNING

30 ROCK glitters in the morning light.

MOLLY CHATERJEE (30's, Indian, nervous) stands in front of 30 Rock, looking up at it like a cathedral.

She's wearing a Talbot's skirt-suit and looks like a paralegal. She closes her eyes and whispers:

MOLLY

"I have spread my dreams under your feet. Tread softly because you tread on my dreams."

It's from "He Wishes For The Cloths of Heaven" by William Butler Yeats. Molly opens her eyes. She is immediately shoved by an angry commuter.

ANGRY COMMUTER

Out of the fucking way, bitch!

Molly is knocked out of her moment and scurries into the building.

INT. 30 ROCK - ELEVATOR BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Molly steps into the elevator. She presses the button for 32nd floor.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hold the door!

HAYES CAMPBELL (21, polished, gets everything in the world without ever having to ask for it) enters.

MOLLY

Which floor?

HAYES

Same.

She steps back. Looks around the elevator.

MOLLY

So much majesty, isn't there?

He nods and gives a tight smile.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

So much history in this building. I've never been in 30 Rock before.

HAYES

I've been here several times.

MOLLY

Oh, like on a tour? I tried to get on one but they were kind of expensive. So I tried following a tour from a few feet behind but the tour guide figured it out and yelled at me.

HAYES

Not like on a tour. My brother works here and my dad worked here. I'm Hayes Campbell.

Molly takes this in, feeling foolish.

MOLLY

Oh. I'm here for an interview. At Tonight with Katherine Newbury.

HAYES

Are you going in for Brad's assistant? I can put in a good word for you.

MOLLY

No. I'm interviewing to be a writer.

HAYES

For Tonight with Katherine Newbury?

MOLLY

Yes.

HAYES

So am I.

They're quiet for awhile. The door opens.

HAYES (CONT'D)

Sorry I assumed you were going to be an assistant.

MOLLY

It's fine.

They exit.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - OPEN OFFICE AREA - DAY

Molly and Hayes sit in the waiting room on opposite ends of a sofa. Suddenly, the door opens and writers pour out. They are wearing almost facsimiles of what Hayes is wearing. It's his brother TOM CAMPBELL (30's, perfectionist, brilliant, very anxious. He's the kind of guy whose homework everyone copies), CHARLIE CALDWELL (30's, good-looking, has too much sex, a stand-up comedian), REYNOLDS (first name Chris, gay, well-dressed, well-liked), SIMMONS (30's, shy, extremely overweight, no one remembers his first name). Hayes pops up. Tom lights ups.

TOM
There he is.

SIMMONS
Hey, bro, looking good, dude.

They hi-five and hug him. Molly is a little crowded.

REYNOLDS
Timing is great. Gabe got fired
last week.

CHARLIE
He asked to be home for dinner with
his kids. Suicide.

TOM
So, when you go in there: no
commitments, no girlfriend, you
have nothing else going on. Got it?

Molly is spying and catches the eye of Charlie, who gives her a little grin. She looks away. She looks back at him. He winks at her. She reacts. Charlie turns his attention to Hayes.

CHARLIE
Good to see you man. Good luck.

They leave, Tom glances at Molly and Hayes sits down.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BRAD'S OFFICE - DAY

Molly sits across from Brad. Molly gives him her resume.

BRAD
Oh, we don't usually need... okay.

He glances at the resume.

BRAD (CONT'D)
You worked at Chemical Plant? Is
that a cable show?

MOLLY
No, it's a place. It's a chemical
plant. I still work there. My dad
got me the job, he works there too.

BRAD
I don't understand. How did you
even hear about this job?
(MORE)

BRAD (CONT'D)

Your submission came from Human Resources. Who is your agent?

Molly was hoping he wouldn't ask this.

MOLLY

I'm currently not represented by a traditional agency per se. Margaret Yang at NBC Employment Opportunities set this up.

BRAD

I still don't get this.

Molly sighs. She really doesn't want to tell this story.

MOLLY

Well, um... The chemical plant I was talking about, where I work? It has a kitchen, where we go for breaks. And in the kitchen there's a corkboard with notices on them. Blood drives, someone selling a bike, etc. One day I was in there and I saw a notice for a company-sponsored essay contest, where the prize was you got to meet with an executive.

BRAD

An essay contest.

MOLLY

Yes.

BRAD

To meet an executive, like the president of your plant?

MOLLY

I think that's what you could have picked. Traditionally.

BRAD

But you didn't.

MOLLY

No. I picked Vernon Gleason, the head of Human Resources for all of Mainline Chemical which owns my plant, and Comcast, which owns NBC Universal, which owns Tonight With Katherine Newbury.

BRAD

So you met with an executive at our parent's parent company to ask about this job. And they were fine with that?

MOLLY

They thought it was a little weird. But the flyer did say any executive, so.

Brad smiles a little at this.

BRAD

That's very...enterprising.

MOLLY

Anyway! I met Vernon, then Vernon put me in touch with Margaret. I gave her my stuff...and that was last week.

BRAD

So you're here because of an essay contest.

MOLLY

(defensive)

My material is really funny. There's a sketch packet in there, a spec---

BRAD

But you have no experience in comedy.

MOLLY

I have so much experience in comedy. I'm obsessed with comedy. I grew up watching every episode of Saturday Night Live, every book ever written about it, every documentary. I do some stand up!

BRAD

Oh, you have? Like at Carolines?

MOLLY

Oh, no, at this women's shelter I volunteer at. I don't want to be a stand-up, it's just that there's only one way to find out if my jokes are working.

(earnest)

(MORE)

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I just need to tell you that I've dreamt of this moment my entire life. I can't tell you how much this job would mean to me, personally.

Brad blanches, this is thirsty and not what he wanted to hear. Molly notices. She remembers Tom's advice to Hayes.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I also wanted to add that I have no commitments, no boyfriend, I have nothing going on. This job would be my life.

BRAD

Well, that is very refreshing to hear, actually.

Brad gets a text. "Did you find a woman yet?" From Katherine.

BRAD (CONT'D)

You know what? I think it's great. You're great, I like this energy. You're hired.

MOLLY

But you haven't read my material.

BRAD

It's okay, I have a good feeling about you. Come with me.

Molly is shocked. She stands, Brad takes her by the arm.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Brad opens the door of the writers' room. A table of men look up. The room is musty packed with papers, detritus and the table is stained with ink and years and years of lunches, but there is a ripple of electricity in there too. Molly's eyes go wide with excitement.

BRAD

Guys, this is Margie. She's starting tomorrow.

TOM

(horrified)
As what?

BRAD
 A writer, dipshit.
 (to Molly)
 Be here tomorrow at 10.

MOLLY
 My name is Molly, actually. I'm
 honored to meet all of you. This
 show has made such an impact on the
 person I am---

BRAD
 See you tomorrow!

He pushes her out of the room and shuts the door.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - ELEVATOR - MOMENTS
 LATER

Molly gets on the elevator. As the doors close, she sees
 Hayes read a text and stand up from the sofa, shocked.

HAYES
 (to himself)
 You gotta be fucking kidding me.

The doors close. Molly looks around the elevator, holds the
 rail, dizzy. She then begins to sob uncontrollably. The doors
 open. Two office workers get on, a man and woman. They are
 alarmed.

MAN
 Miss, are you okay?

MOLLY
 No. I'm so happy I feel sick.

They inch away from her, very weird-ed out. Molly continues
 to sob.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - OPEN OFFICE AREA - DAY

Katherine's young male assistant, TONY, sits at his desk,
 peeling an ORANGE. The phone rings. He picks up.

TONY
 Katherine Newbury's office. Yes.
 Thank you.

He hangs up, springs up, drops his orange on the floor, it
 rolls away. He picks up a COFFEE on his desk, a bunch of
 PAPERS and runs to the elevator bay. Katherine appears.

He takes her COAT and PURSE and hands her a coffee and some pages and walks with her.

TONY (CONT'D)
These are the rewritten monologue jokes from last night.

KATHERINE
These are the same jokes.

TONY
They're the same set-ups with different punch lines.

Katherine drops them in the trash.

KATHERINE
Tony, tell the writers that if they want to do fifty percent of their job, then maybe I should cut the staff by fifty percent.

TONY
Yes, Katherine.

KATHERINE
I'm joking, Tony.

Tony laughs nervously in a loud, concerning way.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Stop laughing, it's gruesome.

Katherine bends down to pick up the orange. She puts it in her pocket.

TONY
Of course. Bonnie Morton's office called again.

Katherine stops. This is big.

TONY (CONT'D)
Third time since yesterday afternoon. Can I connect you before rehearsal?

KATHERINE
Not yet. Let's make her wait.

She goes into her office and closes the door.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - DAY

Katherine finishes the show. MILA KUNIS sits next to her.

KATHERINE

That's our show, everyone. I hope I earned the privilege of your time.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine starts unbutton her cuffs, then begins unpeeling the orange.

INT. KATHERINE'S DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine enters. Bonnie is there.

BONNIE

Where did that catch phrase come from? "I hope I earned the privilege of your time."

Katherine takes her in. She then walks by, sits down and begins to unpeel her orange.

KATHERINE

It came from me. A sign of respect for my audience.

BONNIE

It's so proper and old fashioned. I thought it might be from a Shakespeare play or something.

Katherine laughs.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

Did I say something funny?

KATHERINE

It's just, it must be very hard to balance your contempt for me and your Anglophilia.

BONNIE

It's a sweet little send-off phrase. I doubt most of your audience knows what the word "privilege" means anyway.

KATHERINE

That's a bit insulting to them,
isn't it?

BONNIE

You know what's insulting? Waiting
twelve hours for one of your
employees to call you back.

KATHERINE

I apologize. Some of us have more
to do than go to spin classes and
get our hair colored.

BONNIE

You don't color your hair?

KATHERINE

I do, but I don't announce it to
the press.

BONNIE

It humanizes me. I've found they
don't write pieces about you if
you're woman if they don't think
you're a human first.

(then)

I came to tell you that this is
your last year.

The room goes still.

KATHERINE

What do you mean?

BONNIE

This season is your last season.

KATHERINE

You're cancelling the show?

Katherine's voice is the 20 year old Katherine's voice, not
her own.

BONNIE

No. I'm cancelling you. Tonight is
a valuable asset that I can't let
you degrade anymore. Your ratings
have been a steady decline the past
two years. I know this is bad news
but on some level you must have
known. We'll do a big send-off for
you, don't worry.

(MORE)

BONNIE (CONT'D)

You should let your staff know that in March they should be looking for new jobs.

Bonnie heads towards the door, then:

BONNIE (CONT'D)

I hope I earned the privilege of your time.

Bonnie leaves and we stay on Katherine. We are tight on her face. Her breathing begins to quicken and become uneven. She grabs her coat.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Katherine opens the door to her townhouse, very shaken.

KATHERINE

Walter. Walter!

An 8 year old, ANNIE appears and runs down the stairs to greet Katherine. She hugs her tightly.

ANNIE

Granny!

(calling back to someone)

Granny's here.

JOAN, early 50's, Katherine's step-daughter, follows.

KATHERINE

Annie? What are you doing here?

JOAN

We're here for dinner.

KATHERINE

(under her breath)

Shit.

Annie is still hugging Katherine.

ANNIE

Granny, you smell like funny.

JOAN

She smells like cigarettes, honey.

KATHERINE

Katherine, Annie. You should call me Katherine.

(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Your real grandmother wouldn't like
you to be calling me that.

ANNIE
I'm too young to call you by your
first name.

KATHERINE
I would prefer Katherine.
(then, to Joan)
Is there any way we could
reschedule?

Annie peels off Katherine's COAT and hangs it up. Katherine
begins walking to the kitchen.

JOAN
I'm afraid not. I wanted to have a
serious discussion about getting a
caregiver for Dad. Have you given
it any thought?

KATHERINE
(distracted)
I don't think he wants one, though,
does he?

JOAN
Yes, which is why I need your back-
up here. Because he is being
stubborn about it and it's not safe-

KATHERINE
You know, tonight is not a good
night for this--

JOAN
I understand that you are very busy
but you are not the only one with a
life here.

KATHERINE
I know, Joan.

JOAN
This is a matter of my father's
health. We can't keep putting it
off.

KATHERINE
I understand.

JOAN

I even texted you this afternoon to confirm.

Joan gets out her phone and waves it in Katherine's face.

KATHERINE

I don't need to look at your fucking phone right now, Joan!

Walter enters the room, looking concerned.

WALTER

What is going on here?

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Katherine paces next to Walter.

WALTER

Who are they replacing you with?

KATHERINE

She didn't say. Why didn't I go to her stupid parties? Those wretched charity events. The one where they fix children's faces so they don't look hideous?

WALTER

Because you said they were a waste of time.

KATHERINE

They are a bloody waste of time!
(then)
Why do I even care so much? It hasn't been fun in years. Hasn't felt important, either.

WALTER

You care because, you hate losing, my dear.

KATHERINE

I do.
(then, vulnerable)
Maybe the show going away is a good thing. Maybe she's right, maybe I've lost it. I can retire. Read. Learn how to cook. We can spend more time together.

Walter reacts viscerally to this.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

What?

WALTER

It's just...in all my years of knowing you, I have never see you lie to yourself before.

KATHERINE

I need this show, Walter. I need it badly. Maybe I've been asleep, maybe I've let it slip, but it can be great. I know it can.

WALTER

Then you must fight. Which you haven't done in a long, long, time.

Katherine nods, resolute.

WALTER (CONT'D)

(then, warmly)

Also, I don't need to spend more time with you. Look at your behavior tonight, you're a monster.

Katherine laughs, in spite of herself.

KATHERINE

Do you need someone here, to help you during the day?

WALTER

Believe me when I say that I would rather you push me off the roof.

KATHERINE

You're a lovely man, Walter Lovell. I don't why you love me.

They laugh. She then gets a look of resolve.

INT. BRAD'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brad is in bed, watching TV with his wife, Vanessa. The phone rings, and he picks up.

KATHERINE

I'll be in the room tomorrow.

BRAD

The writers' room?

KATHERINE

No, the supply room for some Fedex slips. Yes, the writers' room. Is there a problem?

BRAD

No, just... you haven't been in the room since 9/11.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry that you think I need a national tragedy to approach my writing staff, Bradley.

BRAD

I just think they will be a little startled.

KATHERINE

If a room of grown men are startled by my very presence, they are really not going to like it when I start screaming at them. I will see you at 8.

BRAD

The room doesn't usually start until 10.

KATHERINE

I will be there at 8.

Brad's wife rolls her eyes at the news.

INT. MOLLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Molly's PARENTS Skype with her. Molly is in a room upstairs in her aunt and uncle's place.

MOLLY'S MOM

Are you going to go out and have fun and celebrate with your friends?

MOLLY

(lying)
Hm-hm.

MOLLY'S MOM

That will be so fun. You deserve it, sweetheart.

MOLLY'S DAD

We're so proud of you.

MOLLY

Well, I should head out. I don't want to keep my friends waiting.

She closes her laptop and then turns on the TV and watches old reruns of Katherine's show to celebrate. She starts eating pasta straight from a pot. She is content, but it is a strange little depressing scene.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KITCHEN - DAY

The clock says 7:45 AM.

Tom and BURDITT, late 50's, looks like he survived Vietnam, drink coffee. Charlie enters, extremely grumpy.

CHARLIE

Why the fuck am I awake this early?

TOM

Don't look at me. I've been up since six.

Reynolds enters, perfectly dressed and chipper.

CHARLIE

I was addressing the normal people in the room. I'm a comedian, my night doesn't even start until ten.

REYNOLDS

(disgusted)

Uch, Charlie, you reek of sex. Heterosexual sex.

CHARLIE

I have other pursuits, too.

TOM

I wonder what's going on. I'm a little nervous.

BURDITT

(not looking up from paper)
You're nervous? That's surprising.

Tom throws him a look.

REYNOLDS

Tony said Bonnie Morton was here yesterday.

TOM

(voice rising)

Bonnie Morton? Why would the head of the network be here?

Now Burditt is a little nervous too.

REYNOLDS

Bonnie Morton is a tiny evil doll. I hate that I love her.

SIMMONS

I hope they're not laying people off. Margot and I are going to the Galapagos for Thanksgiving.

TOM

They did fire Gabe.

BURDITT

They should've fired him years ago.

SIMMONS

The Galapagos isn't even a resort, but it's ten times more expensive!

CHARLIE

There are a number of reasons Bonnie could be here. Maybe she wants to fuck me.

TOM

(to Charlie)

Hey man, it's too early for you to be this sexually charged.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

Why am I the only person in this room?!

INT. MOLLY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Molly tries on hoodies and sweatshirts. She wears a Hard Rock Cafe London sweatshirt and khakis. Her little cousin, PRIYA (12), sits on her bed, watching her.

PRIYA

Why are you dressed like a lesbian?

MOLLY

Uh, a) I don't know that that's okay to say, and b) I'm not dressed like a lesbian! This is what people dress like at my job.

PRIYA

Is it a room full of lesbians?

MOLLY

No, actually. I think I'm the only woman.

Uch, even more nervous.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - DAY

Katherine sits at the head of the writers' room table.

REYNOLDS

I just have to say, it's an honor to meet you, Ms. Newbury.

SIMMONS

I too feel very honored.

KATHERINE

I don't know who any of you are.
(to Brad)
I don't know who any of them are.

TOM

Hi, Katherine. I'm Tom, I write monologue jokes? I'm by the monitor during taping.

KATHERINE

Yes. You normally wear glasses.

TOM

...No.

SIMMONS

My name is Eugene Simmons--

KATHERINE

No. No. I'm not going to remember any of this. Okay, here's what we're going to do.

(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 (pointing to Simmons)
 One. You're One.

Katherine goes around the room, pointing in order.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Two, Three, Four, Five.

She lands on Charlie. They make eye contact for a split second. There's some history there. She knows his name.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 (not hesitating, to
 Charlie)
 Six.

Charlie flinches. Katherine continues numbering.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Seven, eight.

Katherine lands on Burditt.

BURDITT
 (gruffly, the only one who
 knows Katherine)
 Hi Katherine.

KATHERINE
 (smiles, relieved)
 Burditt. Thank God, Burditt.
 (then, all business)
 Nine, Ten, Eleven, Twelve. That's
 what I will be calling you from now
 on. It's just easier.

The writers take this in. Reynolds raises his hand.

REYNOLDS
 Are we allowed to call each other
 by our names?

BRAD
 Learn the numbers, Reynolds. Come
 on.

People are like "Okay, what the fuck." And start writing little glossaries down on paper.

KATHERINE
 I will be joining you in the
 writers' room for the foreseeable
 future. Now let's talk about
 tonight's show. Pitch to me.

Reynolds texts Tom under the table.

REYNOLDS

(TEXT)

Hey, Four. Why is she here?

Tom looks at him and shakes his head. He has no idea.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Molly carries two large CUPCAKE BOXES on the subway. People bump into her and she's very protective of the cupcakes.

MOLLY

Please, don't jostle the cupcakes!

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - OPEN OFFICE AREA - DAY

Molly shows up with her cupcakes. No one is in the open office area, so she goes to the room.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - DAY

Molly comes in with her cupcakes.

KATHERINE

Who are you?

MOLLY

I'm Molly. I'm a new writer.

KATHERINE

What are those?

MOLLY

They're cupcakes.

KATHERINE

You're late.

MOLLY

I'm so sorry. I actually thought I was almost two hours early.

KATHERINE

Does it look like you're early? I'm telling you you're late.

CHARLIE

Brad actually told her yesterday we start at 10.

Molly smiles at him gratefully. Molly looks for a seat. She is about to sit in an empty seat.

SIMMONS

That's where Matt sits. He's in the bathroom.

MOLLY

Oh, okay.

She goes to sit somewhere else.

TOM

That's Martin's. He's on a call.

KATHERINE

Sit down, please.

MOLLY

I really, really want to.

Burditt makes space for her, and Molly finally sits.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

It's such an honor to be working here-

KATHERINE

You're 13.

MOLLY

Hm?

BRAD

Your name is 13.

MOLLY

(no idea what is happening)
My name is Molly.

KATHERINE

You're fucking 13! Sit down! None of this is important! Why would any one care what your name is?! Don't any of you understand what is at stake here?

(then, overwhelmed)

I am being replaced. As host of this show.

TOM

What?

KATHERINE

I've been told that the show is being taken away because of declining ratings and a general lack of quality in the past few years of shows.

CHARLIE

This is outrageous.

TOM

The show is great.

REYNOLDS

Fuck the network.

TOM

The work we're doing is great.

BURDITT

Lets see them put on three hundred shows a year.

More grumbling. Fuck them. Then:

MOLLY

I feel like there might be some room for improvement.

All eyes turn on her.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I have seen literally every episode of this show since I was 9 years old. I would go to the library and take out old VHS copies of it. And I do think that the past few years have maybe fallen into some of the same...rhythms.

TOM

I'm sorry that the show doesn't appeal to the heightened sensibilities of your friends at the factory.

MOLLY

It's a plant not a factory!

KATHERINE

Four's right. You don't come in here on your first day and criticize a room full of people who have been doing this for years. It's bad form.

MOLLY

I was just being honest. I'm sorry.

Molly is chastened. Tom shoots her an imperious look.

KATHERINE

But I don't disagree with her. In fact, she's being kind. The show hasn't just been "not fresh". It's been fucking terrible. There hasn't been an exciting moment or comedy idea in well over a year, if that. And now, because of the culture of complacency in this office, I am in the position of fighting for my show back.

Damn.

BRAD

What do you want us to do?

KATHERINE

From this moment on, no one in this room has a life. No one has wives, no one has kids. You have only this. You live this show. You breathe this show. When you masturbate you think about this show. You're finally going to earn that big fat paycheck that's been paying for your divorces and Priuses. Tomorrow I want you to come in with twelve pitches. Each. Twelve ground-breaking ways we can make this show great. Again.

Katherine leaves. The writers are like "oh shit."

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - OPEN OFFICE AREA - DAY

Everyone trickles out of the room. Molly's cupcakes go uneaten.

MOLLY

Where is everyone going?

CHARLIE

Their offices.

MOLLY

Oh.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BRAD'S OFFICE - DAY

Molly pokes her head into Brad's office.

MOLLY

Brad, you know I hate bothering you. But, can I ask where my office is?

Brad sighs. Of course.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - CHARLIE AND TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Tom, Charlie, Reynolds all gather around Reynolds' computer. There's a LinkedIn type page with a dorky picture of Molly and her bio.

REYNOLDS

Molly Chatterjee. Luzerne County Community College. Eh. Hobbies and special skills include "humor and stand-up comedy."

CHARLIE

No, it's too sad. No more.

TOM

I think she's some kind of pathological liar. She told my brother she was here for an assistant job.

CHARLIE

Tom, don't be stupid.

TOM

But why would you tell someone that?

REYNOLDS

Who even cares? We are all going to be unemployed in four months.

TOM

Don't talk like that.

Tom sits on a bean bag chair.

CHARLIE

Guys, it makes sense. Do any of your friends talk about the show anymore?

REYNOLDS

She wasn't asked to host any awards shows. There's no buzz on the show and there hasn't been in months.

TOM

We're fine. What are they going to do, fire her? It would take them a month to remove all her Emmys.

REYNOLDS

Who knows? Maybe little Miss chemical plant can help us.

TOM

Don't even joke. It's insulting to me. To my contribution to this show.

CHARLIE

I don't know. I thought she was kind of cute.

TOM

You're insane.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BURDITT'S OFFICE - DAY

We hear The Doors through the door. Brad opens the door. It's spotless and empty except a desk and a sofa, and a nice-sized GLASS BONG. And Burditt.

BRAD

Hey, man.
(to Molly)
Molly, this is Burditt. You'll be sharing this office.

BURDITT

What?

BRAD

We'll get you a desk tomorrow. Until then, just, kind of make a space for yourself.

He leaves. Molly comes in and starts unpacking framed photos and other tchotchkes from a tote bag. She looks around the office.

MOLLY

So nice that we're going to be office mates. Are you new too?

BURDITT

I've been here twenty-six years.

Molly looks around the stark room.

MOLLY

You have no stuff.

BURDITT

In case I get fired I don't want to get too comfortable.

Molly puts her framed photos back in her bag.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Molly takes a few steps. She then sees Tom on the phone.

TOM

It's political. Right now it's hostile climate to be an educated white male. No, it's staggering how unfair it is. Staggering.

(beat)

Her? No, she's not good. She's nothing.

Molly steps forward. Are they talking about me?

TOM (CONT'D)

It's a diversity hire. She'll only be here 13 weeks. I think she's like a single mom or something.

Molly clears her throat. Tom notices. Fuck.

TOM (CONT'D)

(mortified)

Oh, hey.

The subway pulls up.

MOLLY

I'm actually not a mom. I just look like one. And I'm old enough to have a kid. But I'm not.

Molly turns and walks onto the subway. Tom reacts.

INT. 30 ROCK - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Katherine rides the elevator. A GOOD-LOOKING MAN in his 40's gets on, NATHAN. He is a producer for NBC SPORTS. TWO YOUNGER WOMEN(PAs) also get on, who are starry eyed upon seeing her.

NATHAN

Do you have plans tonight?

KATHERINE

I have dinner with my husband.

NATHAN

That's too bad.

The PAs glance at each other. Katherine shoots him a look and leaves.

INT. MOLLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Molly throws her stuff on the floor and falls into bed. She notices several missed calls on her phone from her parents. She texts them back.

MOLLY (TEXT)

Great first day!

The phone rings, it's from MOM. Molly hesitates, then presses "ignore".

MOLLY (TEXT) (CONT'D)

Still at work, late night. I will call this weekend.

DAD (TEXT)

Okay. We are so excited. We are so proud of you. Love you.

Molly reads the text, her eyes brimming with tears. She puts down the phone and clicks on the TV.

She watches an old episode of Katherine's show.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KITCHEN - MORNING

The next day, Charlie, Reynolds, Tom and a few others are eating breakfast. Molly comes in, wearing a skirt and boots.

REYNOLDS

You look nice.

MOLLY

Thank you. Man, I'm nervous about pitching. Did you guys come up with a lot of funny stuff?

Molly pulls out her notepad. There is silence.

TOM

We don't really talk about our ideas before we pitch.

MOLLY

Why?

TOM

Because...I don't know. They're our ideas. So Katherine knows who is coming up with the best ideas.

MOLLY

But if someone could help your idea be funnier or if you could help mine, wouldn't it make it a funnier pitch?

TOM

Yeah.

MOLLY

And wouldn't that make the show funnier?

TOM

Possibly.

MOLLY

Then why would we not---

BURDITT

(kindly)

Hey. It's not how we do things here.

Molly is incredulous. Charlie notices her.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WOMEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Molly enters. Charlie walks out of the stall. Molly is mortified.

MOLLY

Oh my god. Sorry! I thought I was in the women's room.

She turns on her heel and starts to leave.

CHARLIE

Stop! Stop. It is the women's room.
We've just never had any women
here. So, we use it.

(then, sheepish)

It's actually where we come to take
a shit.

Charlie washes his hands.

MOLLY

I don't understand anything about
this job.

CHARLIE

You're right about the way we
pitch. It sucks. And the show would
be better if we worked on stuff
together before we showed
Katherine.

MOLLY

Then why don't you do that?

CHARLIE

Because this job isn't really about
making the best show. It's about
making her think you're the
funniest person in the room and not
firing you.

MOLLY

That's horrible.

CHARLIE

Ahhh, I see. You think the feeling
you have watching the show should
be the same as the feeling of
making it. It's not. And she's not
the same person you see on TV every
day.

Molly looks crestfallen.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You know who is as good as they
seem? Me. I'm doing stand-up at
Caroline's tomorrow night. Come see
me. We can get a drink after.

Charlie brushes by her to get a paper towel.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I gotta say though. Love this
naivete. It's hot.

Charlie smiles at her and leaves. Molly is a little taken
aback.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - DAY

Reynolds is pitching.

REYNOLDS
The Miss America pageant is next
week, I thought we do something
with that.

KATHERINE
The Miss America pageant is
irrelevant and reprehensible. I'm
not glamorizing that.

REYNOLDS
You wouldn't be glamorizing it.
Satirizing it.

KATHERINE
I'm not giving that horrid
competition a second of free press.
It's an anti-intellectual parade of
women run by a sexist megalomaniac.
These are terrible ideas. No more,
9. Where is John? John Phillips? I
want to hear his pitches.

There is a silence. Katherine looks around. What?

MARTIN
John died in 2012.

KATHERINE
John's dead?!

BRAD
Yes.

KATHERINE
That's terrible. He was so funny.

Molly raises her hand. Charlie shakes his head imperceptibly-
"don't raise your hand". Molly pulls her hand down.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Yes.

MOLLY

Hi. I just want to say it's an honor to even be in this room with all of you.

Katherine puts her head in her hands.

KATHERINE

Jesus Christ. I wish I was John Phillips.

MOLLY

I think what you just said about the Miss American Pageant was really smart and people should hear that. I think it's a great window into your personality.

KATHERINE

That's my private opinion, no one needs to hear that. Next?

MOLLY

I'm sorry--but if I may...I don't know why you wouldn't want to share about yourself and your life, that's the most interesting thing about you. When you get riled up about something, that's when you really come alive as a performer.

Everyone looks around: this is not appropriate.

KATHERINE

That's when I come alive as a performer?

REYNOLDS

I just want to say I am no longer attached to this idea in any way.

MOLLY

Yes! And from personal experience onstage? My best shows are when I talk about my life and personal stuff.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry, I think I missed your HBO special. Was it at Carnegie Hall?

MOLLY

No, I mostly perform at the Quik n' Klean in the Lower East Side.

KATHERINE

The Quik n' Klean. I've never heard of it.

RANNELLS

It's a laudromat.

MOLLY

It has an open mic! And it can fit up to sixty people not including the people who are there doing laundry.

KATHERINE

I'm sure at the laundromat you could kill with those ideas. This is a nationally broadcast comedy show that has been around for seventy years. I don't need some rambling hipster who bores people at an open mic to tell me her assessment of my comic persona. I need hard jokes. This room is an engine and you are a piston. You're not the captain. Do you understand that, 13?

MOLLY

Yes.

Molly begins to cry.

KATHERINE

Don't do that. Don't be the only woman in here and cry. You think any of these guys cry when I yell at them?

Molly stands up and leaves the room.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Next. 7. Next!

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WOMEN'S ROOM - DAY

Molly runs into the bathroom to cry. Reynolds enters.

REYNOLDS

I'm sorry, I really have to go.

Molly, overwhelmed, leaves.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BURDITT AND MOLLY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Molly enters the office, walks by Burditt at his computer, and goes into their closet, shutting the door. She cries. Burditt glances over, then goes back to his computer.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KATHERINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

It's late, people file out. Katherine walks with Brad to her office.

KATHERINE
Who is that, that girl?

BRAD
You asked for a girl.

KATHERINE
A normal girl. A girl with experience in the actual realm of the entertainment business. How long is her contract?

BRAD
Twelve weeks. Then she's gone. She's the least of your problems.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KATHERINE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They enter and Katherine shuts the door.

KATHERINE
Does anyone out there know about this yet?

BRAD
Nothing online yet. But it's only a matter of time.

He turns to leave.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Go home. You're tired.

KATHERINE
I'm always tired.

BRAD
Katherine? It shows.

He leaves. Katherine pours herself a whiskey.

INT. MOLLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - NEXT DAY

Molly gets ready to go out. PRIYA sits on her bed again.

PRIYA
Are you guys going to have sex?

MOLLY
No, it's not even a date.

PRIYA
Do people like you better at work?

MOLLY
Not really.

INT. CAROLINE'S - NIGHT

Charlie does stand-up. It's killing.

CHARLIE
You ever at a bar and you're making
headway with a girl, and then some
British guy shows up? He opens his
mouth and it is over. And he's not
even good-looking. He has a
hunchback. He's literal garbage in
England. All of a sudden he's
classy here.
(girl)
"I loved that British hunchback.
He's so classy."

Molly smiles.

EXT. CAROLINE'S - NIGHT

After the show, outside, Charlie is crowded by fans, a lot of women. Molly sees, and then, feeling insecure, starts to walk away. She makes it about ten feet when she gets a text.

CHARLIE (text)
You're not even going to buy me a
drink?

She smiles and turns back. He waves at her from a far.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

CHARLIE

What was your favorite part?

MOLLY

Oh, because you assumed I have one?

CHARLIE

I was watching you. You liked it.

MOLLY

I did like it.

CHARLIE

What about you? Are you good?

MOLLY

At stand-up? Well, I've never done Caroline's.

(tentative, but then)

I am doing a show soon. It's a benefit for a women's shelter for the town I come from in Pennsylvania. It's no one big, just other aspiring comics.

CHARLIE

I'll do it.

MOLLY

You'll do what?

CHARLIE

(laughing)

I'll do your show, stupid.

MOLLY

(alarmed)

Oh, no. It's not anyone famous, or even good.

CHARLIE

Great. I'll be the best one.

Molly stops him.

MOLLY

Why are doing this for me?

CHARLIE

'Cause I'm a nice guy.

MOLLY

I know you're not. But why?
Katherine hates me, you barely know
me.

CHARLIE

I dunno. I like you. Probably
because you're the only girl at my
job. You're also prettier than you
think you are.

Molly blushes.

MOLLY

Well, I'm really grateful. I don't
know how to thank you.

CHARLIE

Why don't we go back to your place.
I bet I can come up with some
ideas.

MOLLY

I am staying with my aunt and uncle
in Queens.

He smiles.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Charlie and Molly have sex by a dumpster in the alley behind
the bar. They finish.

CHARLIE

Wow, I didn't even have to take you
to dinner first.

They laugh.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - THE
NEXT DAY

Molly is pitching.

MOLLY

You know how they do all those
terrible holiday-themed movies?

Katherine jots down notes. Charlie is next to Molly, his leg
is next to hers. Tom, sitting on the other side of Charlie,
glances down, and notices.

Molly crosses her legs away from Charlie (she's trying to focus), Tom's eyes flicker back to Molly's face.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

So the bit is like what if they run out of other federal holidays? Like, beyond President's Day, so they start doing months? Like what if he like do it for like, Black History Month.

Molly waits for Katherine's response.

KATHERINE

You said "like" twenty-two times just now. Next.

Molly's face crumples.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - MOLLY AND BURDITT'S OFFICE - DAY

Molly is crying in the closet again. Burditt hears Molly crying, sighs, stands and opens the door.

BURDITT

This has to stop.

Molly looks up.

MOLLY

I can cry more quietly.

BURDITT

No. You can't even be miserable well. Sit down.

Molly sits at her desk.

BURDITT (CONT'D)

People do not like you here.

MOLLY

Really? I feel a real surge of affection from everyone.

BURDITT

Start with Tom.

MOLLY

Tom? Tom whose brother's job I stole? We should stop now I think.

BURDITT

He's a snob, but he's not a bad guy. And he's respected. And he's a damn good writer.

MOLLY

Tell me more nice things about my mortal enemy.

BURDITT

But he's also a guy. A horny guy. You're technically a woman. So use that.

Molly leans forward, aghast.

MOLLY

(hushed disbelief)

You want me to sleep with him?

BURDITT

Calm down. No one wants you to sleep with them. Just, be nice to him.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITER'S ROOM - DAY

As Burditt narrates we see the room.

BURDITT (V.O.)

No one is more vulnerable than him when he pitches. It's because he cares. Let him know you think he's funny.

Molly sits across from Tom.

TOM

...The premise is, if Brexit happens, it starts a trend of secession world-wide. Can we leave North America?

It goes over just okay. Katherine frowns. Molly starts laughing. Tom looks at her, surprised.

MOLLY

Can we kick states out of the US? Like, do we really need West Virginia?

Katherine looks at her.

KATHERINE

It's not anything yet - it's a
fragment of a thing - but work on
it.

Tom nods and glances at Molly, a little grateful.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - MOLLY AND BURDITT'S
OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BURDITT

The next one is the harder. Stand
up for yourself.

MOLLY

I do that already! That's why
everyone hates me!

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' OFFICE -
ANOTHER DAY

Molly is finishing a pitch.

MOLLY

And you say you need money, so
you're now lending your voice to
GPS apps for cars. Then we roll a
clip of people in cars listening to
you scream at them for messing up
your simple instructions.

BURDITT (V.O.)

No, you explain yourself. Standing
up for yourself means you're
concise. But strong.

KATHERINE

No. Next.

Molly takes a deep breath.

MOLLY

I think it's a good idea and people
will respond to it.

KATHERINE

(surprised)
Excuse me?

MOLLY

It'll be funny visually and easy to produce. It would be a mistake to not do it.

Silence. Katherine considers this.

KATHERINE

Flesh it out more, and keep it short.

Molly smiles to herself.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - MOLLY AND BURDITT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BURDITT

This last one is going to be really hard for you.

MOLLY

What does that mean?

BURDITT

You need to shut up.

MOLLY

Pardon?

BURDITT

If you hear something you don't agree with, you have to resist the urge to give your opinion.

MOLLY

I will not be marginalized by the iron fist of white privilege that pervades this work environment---

BURDITT

I'm not trying to silence your strong female Indian woman of color spirit blah blah blah. You're still a new writer with no experience. I mean this with respect, but you have to learn to shut the fuck up.

Molly winces.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - DAY

The room is rapt as Molly shows a clip on her phone.

MOLLY

This is Joseph Mendoza, aka Stupid Vines, an incredibly popular vine star whose videos have taken over every form of social media. He was on the cover of Rolling Stone.

Katherine watches Joseph. He smashes several plates over his head and then pretends to pass out. Molly, Charlie, and Burditt laugh in spite of themselves. Tom is furious.

KATHERINE

Wow, I hate this.

TOM

(disgusted)

As do I. As should all of you.

KATHERINE

I agree with 4. We can't have this man on our show. I'm not Make A Wish, this is a network television show.

BURDITT (V.O.)

Even when you know you are right...

MOLLY

He's bigger than a network television show.

BURDITT (V.O.)

And everyone is being a dick about it....

KATHERINE

I don't doubt that it's popular, but it doesn't mean that it's good.

BURDITT (V.O.)

You still have to shut the fuck up.

Burditt looks to Molly. It's time to stop talking. She gets it and sits down.

MOLLY

I understand and I respect your decision.

Katherine looks at her: "that was weird to say". But then continues on. Burditt throws Molly a supportive glance.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Katherine sits at her computer. She has her reading glasses on and stares at the Google homepage for a few long moments.

KATHERINE
(muttering)
Fuck it.

She types in "Katherine Newbury". Hundreds of hits pop up. She clicks on one. Ice Princess. In quick cuts, we see a few more. "The Queen of No." "Not The People's Princess". She dials her cell phone.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
I need a publicist.

BRAD
I'll set it up.

She hangs up, unceremoniously, glued to the screen.

KATHERINE
(disgusted)
Wankers.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KATHERINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Katherine sits across from a very chirpy publicist in her forties, ROBIN.

ROBIN
I think we can do extraordinary things with your brand.

Katherine is nauseated but nods.

KATHERINE
Good.

ROBIN
Making you accessible to the average American is our mission. You're not above them, or looking down at them, you're one of them. You're America's sweetheart.

KATHERINE
(incredibly difficult)
Yes. That is how I've always felt. I'm excited for you to capture that.

(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 (standing up)
 I think this is a great start.
 Thanks, Robin.

Brad sees Robin out. Katherine mimes slitting her wrists.

THIS KICKS OFF A MONTAGE:

- Molly is about to walk into the women's room then catches herself and knocks first. Simmons comes out. She's learning.

- Tony helps Katherine with a Twitter page at her computer in her office. Katherine has trouble with it but keeps at it.

- In the kitchen, Reynolds and Tom look at a sign for Molly's stand-up show, featuring Charlie. They look over at Charlie, who shrugs.

TOM
 Dude, if you want to sleep with her, just sleep with her, but you don't have to promise you'll do her standup show.

CHARLIE
 Who knows, maybe I'm in love with her.

Tom makes a face and turns back to his work.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITER'S ROOM - LATER

Katherine sits while Brad runs the room. Molly sits nervously.

BRAD
 So we have the monologue, lets move onto the remote--

MOLLY
 I have a joke for the monologue.

Everyone turns and looks at her.

TOM
 You don't write the monologue.

MOLLY
 Well, I wrote a joke for it.

TOM (CONT'D)
 If you had one it should go through me.

MOLLY
I just have one joke, and if you hate it, whatever.

TOM (CONT'D)
Again, you should email it to me and I will read it---

KATHERINE
I cannot listen to this idiotic conversation anymore!
(to Molly)
13. Go. For God's sake, go.

Molly looks around the room and clears her throat.

MOLLY
"Oklahoma Senator Martin Davis, a pro-life Republican, is the sponsor of a bill which would make abortion illegal in the state of Oklahoma. In Alaska, Senator Jerome Ryan has a similar bill on tap, as does Senator Henry Rasmussen of Louisiana. So many white men bent on stripping reproductive rights. Kind of depressing, isn't it, ladies? Although I have to say, it was the first time I was happy to be going through menopause."

Everyone is stunned.

KATHERINE
Wow.

MOLLY
No other talk show hosts can make that joke. It's brave. And you're pro-choice, aren't you?

KATHERINE
I am.
(to Tom)
4, what do you think?

TOM
My philosophy is that the show is best without the specter of abortion.

BRAD
Or menopause.

REYNOLDS
(excited)
I think it's audacious.

BRAD

No, no. You've never made your political views known on the show.

KATHERINE

I haven't. Maybe it's not a bad idea.

BRAD

So start with fracking! Let's work our way up to abortion!

Katherine looks at Burditt.

BURDITT

People would talk about it for sure.

(then)

And, you believe it.

KATHERINE

Take out the line about the white men, and put it in the monologue tomorrow.

Molly gasps, suppressing her excitement.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - NEXT DAY - AFTERNOON

Molly watches with Tom at the monitor.

TOM

You're crowding me.

MOLLY

Sorry.

KATHERINE

...It was the first time I thought, I'm happy I'm going through menopause.

The audience is shocked, then delighted. There is an explosion of shocked laughter. Molly watches.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - MOLLY AND BURDITT'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

MOLLY

Then she said "That'll do, you're hovering over me, now get off the stage and stand over there." Which was amazing for two reasons. One, "that'll do" which means she liked the joke and "stand over there" which means she wanted me on set. On set next to Tom. Tom.

BURDITT

I'm sure he was happy about it.

MOLLY

He hated it. I could feel the hate radiating off his body. This might be the best day of my life.

BURDITT

Wanna smoke? Or are you gonna be annoying?

MOLLY

You're inviting me to get high? Oh my god, I'm cool now.

BURDITT

Yup, you'll be annoying.

MOLLY

No! No! I'm not. I'm cool about drugs. Let's do it.

Burditt shrugs. That's good enough for him.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - DAY

Katherine and Brad enter the room.

BRAD

Announcement. Hey, you fuckfaces, listen up.

KATHERINE

You are all invited to a Christmas party at my home.

BURDITT

You mean your annual Christmas party? The one we go to and you never attend?

KATHERINE

(stiffly)

Well, this year I will be there. I hope to see you there.

She turns abruptly and leaves.

MOLLY

This is very exciting.

BRAD

Listen up. Press is going to be there. She hired a publicist. Named Robin. We are all going to go and act like we are working in the golden age of television and she's Lucille fuckin' Ball. this isn't just a free meal and a low-rent date night for you and your wives.

TOM

I'd like to use my plus one to bring my younger brother.

BRAD

Fine, but no one else can bring men. You must bring women. And you're all gonna say smart shit to the press! This is important. Burditt, you need to buy a new suit, and Simmons...is there any way...can you lose some weight?

SIMMONS

How much weight?

BRAD

I don't know, like 30 pounds? This is serious, guys. She's doing interviews for the first time in twenty years.

They don't know what to make of this. Exciting.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - MOLLY AND BURDITT'S OFFICE - DAY

Burditt and Molly enter and sit down.

MOLLY

Why doesn't she come to her own party?

BURDITT

NBC made her have that party 20 years ago, and that was the last one she ever attended. The cleaning staff arrives at midnight sharp, that's how we know to leave. Shit, I have to look nice.

(vulnerable)

What should I wear? I have a belt with whales on it.

MOLLY

(gently)

Here, I'll help you.

She goes over to his side and clicks open a shopping website.

INT. MOLLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Molly brushes her teeth and walks around her room in spanx tights and a bra. She holds up two sparkly dresses in front of the mirror. She hates both. She is nervous.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Katherine, looking beautiful and festive, puts on her watch. She looks a bit nervous herself.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The townhouse looks gorgeous, lit up with holiday decorations on a snowy winter night.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

B-roll shots of her fancy holiday party. It's in full swing. We see cameos of real people at the party. SETH MEYERS, CHARLIE ROSE, SOLEDAD O'BRIEN. Katherine, makes her way through the party, her publicist Robin glued to her side.

BILL CARTER

Your final season has been your best yet.

KATHERINE

Thank you, Bill.

BILL CARTER
Any word about your replacement?

Katherine winces.

KATHERINE
I wouldn't be qualified to comment
on that.

FEMALE JOURNALIST
There's been a real uptick in your
ratings. It's almost like you're
fighting the announcement.

KATHERINE
I just want to make a relevant show
and be the best I can be.

Robin nods, this was clearly a talking point. Robin moves her to another journalist. Charlie watches Katherine, impressed. We see Molly, in a new dress that we didn't see earlier. She spots Charlie, and pops over to him, grabbing two egg nogs off a tray.

MOLLY
Egg nog?

CHARLIE
Is there booze in this?

MOLLY
No, I don't think so.

He distractedly puts it on the fireplace.

CHARLIE
(noticing her)
Is that a tag?

Charlie notices a tag hanging off of Molly's dress. Molly is mortified. She rips it off.

MOLLY
I bought it on the way here. I hate
all my clothes. Does that ever
happen to you?
(changing subject)
Do you have plans after this?

CHARLIE
I'm gonna do some work. Go over
some new material.

He pats her arm and leaves. Molly is disappointed.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Katherine takes a shot of tequila. Joan comes in.

JOAN

Oh. Do you need a moment?

KATHERINE

(yes she does, but oh well)
No. Hello Joan. Merry Christmas.

JOAN

Merry Christmas. Did you get a chance to look at those resumes?

KATHERINE

Resumes?

JOAN

For the part-time nurses who could come assist Dad?

KATHERINE

(this again)
I haven't had a chance.

JOAN

That's what you said last time. I can't stress to you how important this is to me.

KATHERINE

I know. I know. But you can't possibly think that bringing this up at our work holiday party is the best time for this discussion.

Charlie appears at the door.

JOAN

That's the problem, there is never a good time.

(eyeing Charlie)

You know what? I'll let you get back to what's important.

Joan leaves. Charlie ambles in.

CHARLIE

You're incredible tonight. Rare form.

KATHERINE

I think my step-daughter might disagree.

She pours him a shot and he takes it.

CHARLIE

That's crazy that you're the same age. Is that ever weird?

KATHERINE

Yes, it's very, very weird. Pretty much all the time.

CHARLIE

It's a pity she doesn't understand how amazing you are.

KATHERINE

I'm not going to fuck you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

If my memory serves me, we both had a pretty good time of it-

KATHERINE

It was a mistake and it's never going to happen again.

Katherine leaves. Charlie is wounded.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Molly wanders into a room. She looks around, socially anxious. She turns and bumps right into Tom and his brother Hayes. She spills egg nog on Tom.

MOLLY

Oh, I'm so sorry.

TOM

(annoyed)

I just got this blazer.

(then)

Is that tag?

There's another tag on Molly's dress, this one by the neck. She rips it off.

MOLLY

(under her breath)

Motherfucker.

TOM
Hayes, you remember Molly?

Hayes nods.

HAYES
By the way, I'm so happy you got
the job. It's cool that they did
that. It's important.

Dick. Molly perceives this comment for what it is.

MOLLY
(frosty)
Thanks. I think it's important to
hire the funniest and most talented
people, too.

She leaves, cool.

TOM
She won't last past next month.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - PARLOR - SAME TIME

Molly walks into the parlor. Walter is playing the piano. He stops when he sees her.

MOLLY
Oh! I'm so sorry. I didn't think
anyone would be in here.

She begins to leave.

WALTER
That's a very nice dress.

MOLLY
Really? Thank you. I just bought
it.

WALTER
I can see that. There's a sticker
on your breast.

Indeed, there is a clear round sticker with an "L" on it.

MOLLY
Dammit!

WALTER
I'm Walter Lovell.

MOLLY

I know who you are. You were Katherine's manager and then became her husband. You were one of the greats.

WALTER

Were. Yes. "Were."

Molly realizes she made a mistake.

MOLLY

And you're still very accomplished! Aren't you a professor emeritus at NYU?

WALTER

"Emeritus" is what they call you when you're not dead yet but they don't want you to come in.

MOLLY

I can relate to people not wanting you to come in. I write on the show.

WALTER

She has never mentioned you.

MOLLY

That doesn't surprise me. She doesn't actually like me that much.

WALTER

Sounds like her. What do you do that annoys her the most?

MOLLY

That's hard to pinpoint. I think... everything? Just my whole deal?

WALTER

Here's a word of advice: Be useful. Make it so that even if she hates you, she needs you.

MOLLY

"Be useful". I like it. Simple. A little difficult to know how to apply to my current situation, but I think if I just--

WALTER

And don't talk more than you need to.

Molly nods, emphatically.

EXT. KATHERINE'S BROWNSTONE GARDEN - SAME TIME

A female JEZEBEL REPORTER is now talking to Katherine. Robin stands with Katherine.

KATHERINE

And I've always stood for that. Excellence is the only important thing.

JEZEBEL

And you have made that the central premise of your career. Believing in a meritocracy.

KATHERINE

I might venture to say that the only true meritocracy is in comedy. It doesn't matter what you look like, where you're from, what your parents do, funny is funny.

There is a smattering of applause.

ROBIN

Thanks so much, Katherine needs to talk to other journalists--

Jezebel interrupts.

JEZEBEL

Or in the case of your show, all white men from elite colleges.

Katherine reacts. Jezebel consults her phone.

JEZEBEL (CONT'D)

On your show, people are selected on the basis of their ability, as long as they are white men.

ROBIN

I said, that's enough questions--

Other journalists notice this. Molly too.

KATHERINE

(caught)

I--I think that is a gross characterization.

MOLLY

I'm not a white man.

People turn and look.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Molly. Chatterjee. I write on this show.

Jezebel turns her phone on her.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I'm actually not that great. But I have this job because Katherine specifically asked for a woman of color. Her show was my favorite show growing up and all I wanted was to be able to work for her one day.

JEZEBEL

(patronizing)

That's a very sweet story.

MOLLY

I don't know if it's sweet, but it's true. I mean, in this culture of exceptionalism for women, where most shows have this attitude of "there can only be one", Katherine really didn't want to have anything to do with that.

JEZEBEL

Does she even know your name? I heard she refers to the writers by number.

Katherine looks caught. Molly jumps in.

MOLLY

"Molly!" She says, "You're a very promising new writer."

KATHERINE

It's true. Molly is definitely making an impression.

Katherine pats her awkwardly. Molly surges with confidence.

MOLLY

I told her she was my hero during the interview. She was so touched. She offered to let me be her protegee.

Katherine shoots her a look. Don't get carried away.

KATHERINE

It was a nice moment. I'm going in to talk to my guests, please feel free to ask my writers questions.

Katherine steps away, people swarm Molly, who is animated and chatty. Brad steps in line next to Katherine.

BRAD

That was good.

Katherine sighs, annoyed. Angle on Tom and Hayes, who witnessed the whole thing.

HAYES

I don't think she's going to be gone in a month.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Katherine and Walter talk and are pleasantly buzzed. It is a great night. Daniel Perkins sees them, across the room, and walks over, a little nervous.

PERKINS

Katherine?

Katherine turns.

KATHERINE

Daniel Perkins.

Katherine takes him in. He looks great, he is smiling widely. She hates him.

PERKINS

I was hoping to get a chance to talk to you. You were such an inspiration for me growing up.

KATHERINE

Thank you. I hope you didn't take a shit in someone's shoes?

PERKINS

Excuse me?

KATHERINE

From your stand-up routine? You take a shit in someone's shoes when you're asked to take them off?

PERKINS

Ah, yes. Well, we're not all exactly the way we come off in our acts.

KATHERINE

I disagree with you. I am exactly as advertised.

PERKINS

Well, it's an honor to be the one replacing you, then.

This hits her like a ton of bricks.

KATHERINE

Replacing me?

PERKINS

On the show. My god, did the network not tell you?

A knife in her heart.

KATHERINE

Excuse me.

She leaves, shaken.

INT. BONNIE'S OFFICE - THE NEXT MORNING

Katherine opens the door of Bonnie's office. She is with two EXECS.

KATHERINE

With Perkins? You're replacing me with Perkins?!

BONNIE

(to the execs)
We'll pick this up in a hour.

The execs head to the door.

EXEC
(to Katherine)
I'm such a fan.

KATHERINE
Oh, fuck off.

The execs leave.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Our ratings are up, we are being
written about in every magazine.
You can't do this.

BONNIE
Yes, that surprised me. You
actually don't seem like a corpse
out there. You're actually earning
your salary. Sorry if I'm not
waxing more ecstatic about it. Your
final year will be a swan song. Now
this can be easy for you, you can
welcome him, make it seem like you
were part of the decision making,
be his mentor, or it can be hard.
The choice is entirely up to you.
It's your legacy. Would you like a
cup of coffee? Or, maybe tea?

KATHERINE
I don't think you want me to
holding a hot beverage right now.

BONNIE
I'll take that as a "no."
Katherine, do you ever wonder if I
think you are funny?

KATHERINE
No.

BONNIE
Do you think I should think you're
funny, as the president of the
network you are on?

KATHERINE
I have seen six presidents of this
network come and go while I have
been here. Somalian warlords have
had more job stability.

BONNIE
You didn't answer my question.

KATHERINE

If you're asking me if I have ever respected your taste, then the answer, Bonnie, is no.

BONNIE

You don't think it matters if I think you're funny.

KATHERINE

If you want to replace me with a meme, whose hatred of women and minorities is so plainly apparent it makes me want to move back to England, to make yourself seem relevant, then by all means, give it a try. But there's no obligation that I need to respect you.

(then)

To answer your question, I think it is important that America thinks I am funny, and since you are an American, then technically, I care if you think I am funny. The tiniest fraction of an amount.

She turns and leaves.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Katherine enters, slamming the door behind her.

KATHERINE

Book that internet idiot.

BRAD

That could mean any number of people.

KATHERINE

The stupid fellow.

Molly looks up excitedly.

MOLLY

Stupid Vines?! Are you serious?! That's awesome!

KATHERINE

(cringing)

Yes. Is that really his name?

Molly nods.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
I want Stupid Vines.

TOM
Absolutely not.

KATHERINE
He hasn't been on network television yet?

MOLLY
No. He's been holding out. He has a lot of integrity actually. His parents are immigrants and they love that about you. He talks about it a lot on his vines--

TOM
I can't believe I have to say this, but I did not go to Harvard to work on a show that--

KATHERINE
This is exactly why you went to Harvard. To look down your nose at people like this. Please just book him before I hit someone.

Tom shakes his head. Molly is excited.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM

Molly gets up. She takes her coffee cup and throws it in the trash. She is half-way out the door when-

KATHERINE
Where are you going?

MOLLY
Me?

KATHERINE
Yes, you, the person I am looking at.

MOLLY
I'm just using the bathroom.

KATHERINE
Why did you bus your area and push the chair back in?

MOLLY

(busted)

I'm going to a comedy show. I'm the host. It's a benefit for domestic abuse. I said yes to it before I got this job.

KATHERINE

Who is performing?

Molly looks to Charlie, who looks down. He's not going. Molly takes this in, disappointed.

MOLLY

No one big. No one you've heard of.

KATHERINE

Then you can miss it.

MOLLY

I can't.

The room stills.

KATHERINE

What?

MOLLY

I have to go. I'm so sorry.

KATHERINE

Did you explain to them that we are in here fighting to save the very institution that pays for all of our livelihoods?

MOLLY

I did not tell them that, I think that would stress them out.

KATHERINE

As it should. This is a very stressful situation. Please get out of it and don't tell me how you did it.

MOLLY

I gave my word. It's a benefit for women and I need to be there. And as a woman in comedy--

KATHERINE

"Woman in Comedy"? Look around this room.

(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

It's all men and they're all staying. Women your age, you want to be respected the same as men, paid the same as men, so what do you do? You leave work early to go to rallies and panels and moderated discussions to shout empowerment from the rooftop. While the men stay at work. Doing all the work. This is how you help women? By being the only person to leave when everyone else is working a late night?

MOLLY

I made a commitment to these people-

KATHERINE

You made a commitment to me!

MOLLY

I'm really torn right now--

KATHERINE

You shouldn't be torn! And you shouldn't let me know you're torn! You can't just download your emotional state and assume your honesty will exonerate you.

There's a pause.

TOM

Upload.

KATHERINE

What?

TOM

Upload your emotional state. Download is when you take something off the internet, upload is when you put something on there. So if this conversation is the internet, then she was uploading her emotional state-

BRAD

Shut up.

TOM

Yes.

MOLLY

I will come straight back, I
promise.

KATHERINE

Molly, I need you here. If you
leave, don't come back.

Writers are shocked. This is the first time Katherine has called any of them by their name.

She then turns and leaves. Everyone is shocked. This kind of defiance has never happened here. It is silent. Tom clears his throat.

TOM

You should know, she told me she would have to leave early, and submitted a packet of jokes to me already.

KATHERINE

Throw them out. And come up with new ones.
(pointed)
Download them from your brain and upload them into the show.

INT. PS 122 - NIGHT

A small black-box comedy theater in the East Village. Molly arrives for the show, shaken up. A STAGE MANAGER finds her and hugs her.

STAGE MANAGER

Are you okay?

Molly nods, on the verge of tears.

MOLLY

Give me the line-up.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - NIGHT

Someone is pitching a long joke. Katherine's distracted, and she walks out in the middle of the pitch without explanation.

SIMMONS

What do we do?

BRAD

I don't know, but we're all staying. We're all just gonna sit here.

They sit back, annoyed and puzzled.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Katherine grabs Molly's flyer off the wall.

INT. KATHERINE'S CAR - NIGHT

Katherine reads the flyer in her town car. Crumples it up angrily.

INT. PS 122 - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

A dorky looking STAND UP COMEDIAN is shaking nervously. They're about to announce her. Katherine walks up to her.

KATHERINE

Do you mind if I go before you?

The comedian is speechless.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I'll take that as a "no."

INT. P.S. 122 - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

While another stand up is on stage, Molly turns to the stage manager.

MOLLY

Who's next?

STAGE MANAGER

Katherine Newbury.

MOLLY

What?

STAGE MANAGER

The next performer is Katherine Newbury. Do you not know who she is?

MOLLY
(shocked)
No, I do. She's here?

INT. P.S. 122 - STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Molly walks out to stage.

MOLLY
The next performer is, um, a really
big deal? And she's my boss. It's
Katherine Newbury.

Katherine comes out. The audience goes crazy, there are
shocked reactions and loud applause.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - NIGHT

TOM
Are we seriously just gonna sit
here and wait? We don't even know
where she is.

REYNOLDS
Holy shit. She's at the show.

CHARLIE
What show?

REYNOLDS
Molly's show.

Everyone gets out their phones and checks Twitter.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Katherine is out on stage. It is a small black box, much
smaller than her theater. But she is nervous. The light feels
brighter. The applause dies down.

KATHERINE
Thank you, thank you very much. How
are you guys? I'm doing well. I
would be better though if I didn't
get so many emails every day. It
never ends. Every morning I wake up
and I look at my phone and there
are more emails. Dozens more
emails, all saying the same
bullshit I don't care about. And
it's a marvel, actually.
(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I know that writing each of those emails is the most nerve-wracking thing that person will do that day. "Wow, I'm sending an email to Katherine Newbury". And their greatest fear - that I won't read it - comes true every time.

There is a silence. No one knows what to make of this rant, which is neither funny nor likable. Katherine looks out at the crowd. A few people are filming this with their phones, most are staring at her, waiting for something wonderful, anything but this.

She is bombing.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

(aloud but to herself)

So that's not very relatable I guess. That's not working.

Katherine paces the small stage in silence. The audience is witnessing this famous comedian processing failure live, on stage, and it's a stunning and horrifying thing.

We see Molly backstage, panicked. Katherine paces in silence.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Well shit, I don't know, guys, I just don't know. Guess I know now why they're taking my show from me. But if I can't kill in this room full of comedy nerds and unemployed hipsters, then I don't know who should hire me.

People laugh. She holds up the flyer for the show.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Maybe don't put "money goes to the domestic abuse shelter" on a comedy show flyer. Nothing says "I love to laugh" like the phrase "domestic abuse". Or "shelter". Actually, this is remarkable, you've taken the two least funny concepts in the world and put them on a flyer for a comedy show.

She is killing.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 I've never had experience being
 beaten, but then again my husband
 is in a wheelchair.

INT. P.S. 122 - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

KATHERINE (O.S.)
 (to the audience)
 Thank you. I hope I've earned the
 privilege of your time.

The audience goes nuts. Katherine walks offstage after her
 set.

MOLLY
 You were incredible.

KATHERINE
 Get in the car.

Molly runs on stage.

MOLLY
 That's the show, everybody,
 goodnight!

Molly and Katherine leave together.

INT. KATHERINE'S CAR - NIGHT

The ride back is mostly silent.

MOLLY
 I think some of your strongest
 stuff was towards--

KATHERINE
 Shut up.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The writers are hanging out in the kitchen. Burditt gets a
 text from Molly that they're coming back.

BURDITT
 They're coming back, they're coming
 back.

Everyone runs back to the room.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - NIGHT

Katherine's invigorated after the stand up show.

KATHERINE

I am the only woman in late-night television. The only woman. And we haven't even been using it. I've been doing the same old format, the same jokes, hell, the same cadences as these other guys. You don't take three apples and a banana and paint the banana red and hope people don't notice it doesn't have seeds. I'm different than them and we should be taking advantage of that.

TOM

How? More jokes about female issues?

KATHERINE

I'm not asking you to write me a tight five on menstruation. I just don't want any more jokes that could be uttered by any road comic making a stop at Yuks Yuks in San Antonio. I don't want any more of the jokes that you reject from your own stand up.

CHARLIE

I use the jokes that you reject for my own stand up.

KATHERINE

I want shit that only I can say. This is the last they might ever hear from me, so they might as well hear from me.

(To Tom, pointing at Molly)

She's writing monologue jokes with you now.

Tom is stunned.

TOM

She has literally no experience. I would prefer to choose a writer to train. In a month or so of shadowing me I could bring them into the fold.

KATHERINE

What "fold"? In a month or so there isn't going to be any "fold".

TOM

This isn't a screen writing course at the JFK Marriott. I can't teach joke writing to a total novice overnight.

KATHERINE

You won't have to. You're not teaching her anything because I want someone who doesn't think exactly the same way as everyone else in the goddamn room. She's writing monologue jokes with you, Tom.

End of discussion. Tom is pissed - Molly is excited.

This kicks off a MONTAGE:

INT. UP LATE STAGES - NEXT DAY

Katherine delivers a monologue about a show with a political bent. It's visceral and funny. She's alive, on a roll.

INT. COMEDY CELLAR - NIGHT

Katherine in a t-shirt and jeans work-shopping a joke onstage. The young crowd is packed, kids are sitting on the floor of the stage. She is loving it.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Molly and Charlie go at it in bed, Charlie pulls off his sweater.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BRAD'S OFFICE - MORNING

Tony drops off a newspaper. Brad opens to the LIVING/ARTS section. There's a picture of Katherine. Bill Carter, NY Times headline: "WHAT WILL SHE SAY NEXT?"

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - AFTERNOON

Tom and Molly go over monologue jokes with Katherine.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - REYNOLDS'S OFFICE - DAY

The guys are in there.

REYNOLDS

"Up Late with Katherine Newbury has become a must-watch again."

The writers high-five as he reads it aloud.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - AFTERNOON

Tom and Molly stand by Katherine at her desk during rehearsal. She's agitated.

KATHERINE

This Central Park carriage horse joke isn't working. It's too New York, people don't care.

TOM

Maybe we add a little more pipe at the top, it will work.

KATHERINE

Making it longer won't make it funnier.

TOM

Just enough to give them a frame of reference. "In New York, we have these horse drawn carriages, like Cinderella--"

KATHERINE

Then they're going to think of fucking pumpkins, Tom. It's not going to work. Kill it. What else do you have?

Tom is caught. He doesn't have anything else.

TOM

Uh, just give me a few minutes and I can come up with--

Molly senses an opening.

MOLLY

"According to a recent poll in USA Today, 50% of male viewers find me to be "cold" and "stuck-up". That's terrible!

(MORE)

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I'm not cold and stuck-up. It's just my accent. If I spoke like a Yank you'd think I was Taylor Swift." Then maybe you can do your American accent to announce the guests.

TOM

She doesn't do an American accent.

KATHERINE

I'll do it. That'll work.

Tom looks dejected and leaves. Molly glances over at him, smirking. Katherine notices.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

He's not terrible just because he's privileged, you know.

MOLLY

I don't know, I think when your father worked on the show and you're fourth-generation Harvard...

KATHERINE

I went to Cambridge. I'm not the person to whom to complain about elitism.

MOLLY

He's a dick.

KATHERINE

That's not kind.

MOLLY

If you're my barometer for kindness, I'm fucked.

(then, immediately)

Sorry.

Katherine laughs, in spite of herself.

KATHERINE

We're done here. Go.

(then, as Molly leaves)

If his very worst qualities are elitism and snobbery, that's not really all that bad, is it?

Molly takes this in, unsure why Katherine added this.

END MONTAGE

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KATHERINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Katherine is smoking a joint. There is a knock at the door. She ignores it. The knocking continues. She ignores it for as long as humanly possible. She wafts the air a bit and opens the window.

KATHERINE

What? What is it?

Brad enters.

BRAD

Hey.

(sniffs)

Oh, come on. You're worse than the guys.

KATHERINE

It's Walter's. To deal with pain. Or to deal with me.

BRAD

Well, in that case, maybe I should get a prescription.

KATHERINE

(frost)

What do you need, Bradley?

BRAD

It's not good news. For sweeps they want you to introduce Perkins as your replacement.

KATHERINE

And have him as a guest on the show?!

BRAD

Exactly. Make it really official.

KATHERINE

So nothing makes a difference?! Nothing I'm doing, no amount of hard work can make a difference here.

She throws her Emmy out the window. Katherine grabs her coat and leaves.

BRAD

Jesus Christ, Katherine! There are people downstairs!

INT. 30 ROCK - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Katherine is sullen and steps into the elevator. The doors close. The doors open. Nathan is there, and steps into the elevator.

NATHAN

Busy tonight?

KATHERINE

Meet me in the garage.

INT. KATHERINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Katherine comes home from her tryst. Walter is asleep. She peels off her coat and shoes and climbs into bed. She hates herself.

INT. 30 ROCK - ELEVATOR - NEXT DAY

The next day, Brad gets on the elevator with Tom and Molly. Simmons also tries to get on.

BRAD

Get the next one.

Door closes. Molly and Tom look at each other, what is going on?

BRAD (CONT'D)

Network wants Katherine to introduce Perkins as her replacement on the show today.

TOM

What?!

MOLLY

Are you serious?!

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Are you fucking kidding me? That is the biggest load of bullshit I have ever heard, Brad!

TOM

I would not have put it like that, but I agree.

BRAD

Well, guess what? There's nothing we can do about it. Okay? So don't rile her up, it's happening. Just go in there, do your jobs, be quiet, and do not. Rile. Her. Up.

They nod, dismayed.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KATHERINE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Katherine is getting her makeup done, very withdrawn.

TOM

And then end on the Supreme Court joke if it kills. If not, there's two more on cards.

KATHERINE

Fine.

BRAD

Okay, well, you guys can go to stage, now.

Molly and Tom start to head out. Molly stops and turns back.

MOLLY

I just wanna say - no, I just need to say - you don't have to do this.

BRAD

Molly. Go.
(to Katherine)
Don't listen to her. You need to do this.

TOM

I think introducing him is the classy thing to do. Look like this was your decision. It's the best we can do.

MOLLY

(to Tom)
No it's not!
(to Katherine)
This is your show. Who you are means something, it meant something to me. That's why I work here. So show everyone it's your show.

(MORE)

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Whatever you do, the show is an expression of who you are, so use that. It's still the Katherine show, so give 'em one hell of an Katherine show.

KATHERINE

Are you done?

MOLLY

I think so.

We hear from the monitor that Burditt is wrapping up warming up crowd.

BURDITT (O.S.)

Thank you very much, let's keep the energy up!

KATHERINE

Get out. I have to get ready to do my show.

Brad drags Molly and Tom and throws them out.

MOLLY

You shouldn't do this! It's your show!

They exit and the door slams behind them.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Tom grabs her arm.

TOM

Are you fucking crazy? You can't tell her stuff like that. They made a decision and now it's our job - our literal job, Molly - to come up with a way for our boss, a national treasure, to tell America she is stepping down, in a way that makes her look classy, smart, and for all of us to save face.

MOLLY

Ah, saving face. The most important pillar in the WASP handbook to life.

TOM

There are no "pillars" in a "handbook", get your metaphors straight. If she followed your advice, she would have made a fool of herself. And she's not you, she can't afford to do that. That's not how things work, Molly.

MOLLY

You know what, Tom? Fuck how things work. If I cared "how things work" I wouldn't even have this job.

TOM

Which would be great!

MOLLY

Oh, fuck you, Tom.

Molly turns and leaves. Tom is about to shout something at her, but stops himself.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - LATER

Katherine interviews Perkins onstage.

KATHERINE

Now, there are some rumors out there. That you might be replacing me.

PERKINS

You're a legend. The first late night female talk show host. I would be beyond honored.

KATHERINE

Thank you. But... I don't want to go.

The audience laughs, and so does Perkins.

PERKINS

I get it. Who would want to leave this place? Katherine Newbury, everyone. Let's make some noise.

There is riotous applause. Katherine narrows her eyes at Perkins. That's her crowd, not his.

KATHERINE

Thanks for the noise. So, I find myself in a strange position. Because, I don't want to go.
 (to audience)
 Do you think I should go?

The audience boos. Perkins is a little weirded out but tries to gain control of this.

PERKINS

Don't we wish she could stay?

The audience cheers.

KATHERINE

Do you really think I should stay?

The audience reaction gets bigger and bigger.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Well.. Maybe I'll consider staying. You know what? I'll stay.

The audience goes nuts.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

We have to take a break, we will see you back here shortly.

They break for commercial. Perkins rips off his mic and stands. Brad, Robin and other producers swarm around Katherine.

PERKINS

Nice little stunt. Fucking bitch.

He stalks off stage, his manager and publicist filing in next to him, anxiously. He walks right by Molly and Tom.

TOM

Holy shit.

Katherine looks over at Molly and nods.

MOLLY

Whoa.

INT. BONNIE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Bonnie watches the feed. She slaps her mug of tea off her desk.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - PERKINS'S DRESSING ROOM
- SAME TIME

Perkins angrily leaves with his entourage.

PERKINS
(to his manager)
I'm gonna fucking destroy her.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BACKSTAGE

Katherine walks backstage. Everything comes to a stop. She looks up. After a long moment, the crew and writers start to applaud her.

INT. 30 ROCK - ELEVATOR

Molly and Tom stand in the elevator, shocked.

TOM
I was wrong. That was awesome. And
I'm sorry.

Molly takes this in, still too stunned to gloat.

MOLLY
It's okay.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Katherine comes home late, tipsy, and walking on air. Walter is waiting up for her. He is quiet and he looks worried.

KATHERINE
(excited)
Did you see it? Did you hear about
it? He was so smug. He was so
certain I would play ball. It was
glorious, Walter.

WALTER
You were good.

KATHERINE
But?

WALTER
I'm worried.

KATHERINE
Worried?

She sits by him.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
I thought you said I should be
confident.

WALTER
This isn't confident. This is
dangerous. You've never made
enemies before. You humiliated
Perkins and he's powerful.

KATHERINE
I haven't felt like myself in ten
years. I feel alive, Walter. I
won't be bullied.

She leaves to change, and we stay with Walter, still very
concerned.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - DAY

Katherine sits with the STUPID VINES STAR, JOSEPH MENDOZA. He
is nervous and sweating through his Hawaiian shirt. We see a
clip rolling of one of his vines, where he is throwing and
catching a frisbee in his mouth with low-tech editing.
Katherine clearly hates this, and Joseph can tell.

STUPID VINES GUY
I was inspired to make this one
from playing frisbee with my dog.

KATHERINE
Yes, I can see the correlation.

The audience laughs.

STUPID VINES GUY
It has over eighty million views.

KATHERINE
(amazed)
That has eighty million views?

STUPID VINES GUY
Yes. More people watched that than
voted in the last election.

Katherine glances over to Molly, who gestures vehemently to
her: "Be nice!" Katherine turns back to him.

KATHERINE

Well, I must admit, I think it is quite stupid. But it has its charm.

Stupid Vines breaks out into a wide grin.

STUPID VINES GUY

(psyched, chanting)

Yeah! Stupid Vines! Stupid Vines!

He high-fives Katherine. He starts a chant of "Stupid Vines! Stupid Vines!" with the audience.

KATHERINE

So, you immigrated here from Laos when you were fourteen.

Stupid Vines is caught off guard for a second. He has never been asked this type of question.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

That must have been quite a transition for you. I admire that you have made so much for yourself in that time.

Stupid Vines is now very moved.

STUPID VINES GUY

Thank you. Yes, I bought my mother a house and a Hummer. She had never even owned a car.

KATHERINE

I think you could've split the difference there. There's a huge jump from "no car and walking" to "Hummer".

Audience laughs again, as does Stupid Vines. They love Katherine with this guy. She's being very appealing.

STUPID VINES GUY

That is why I admire you so much. We're both immigrants who it made it big in entertainment.

KATHERINE

Yes, almost identical in every way, you and I.

(then)

I will admit, my show is fairly stupid as well.

This kills. Molly smiles. She gets a text from Charlie.

CHARLIE (TEXT)
You coming to see my show tonight?

MOLLY (TEXT)
I have a dinner with two agents.

CHARLIE (TEXT)
That's too bad. I was looking
forward to fucking you later.

Molly blushes. Tom glances over at her phone, and she hastily puts her phone away. They stand in silence, watching the interview.

TOM
Don't let the agents know you're
impressed by them.

MOLLY
(frosty)
Thanks, I think I'll be fine.

He leaves. She thinks this advice over.

INT. MASA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

We see this fancy midtown restaurant.

ENTHUSIASTIC AGENT (V.O.)
This is where my wife and I had our
anniversary.

Molly sits stone-faced with two agents, both male, in the very fancy Masa. One is the older, polished SENIOR AGENT and the other is the younger very ENTHUSIASTIC AGENT that will certainly be representing Molly when the Senior Agent dumps her on him.

SENIOR AGENT
No kidding. Matt Damon's over by
the window, we should say hi to him
before we leave.

They check to see if she's impressed. She is, but she hides it well. She clears her throat.

SENIOR AGENT (CONT'D)
We think what you're doing is
amazing.

ENTHUSIASTIC AGENT

We represent most of your staff.
They say the nicest things about
you.

MOLLY

Really? I'm not very well liked.

SENIOR AGENT

(ignoring this)

We think you have a huge future.
And we want to be a part of that
future.

MOLLY

That sounds really cool. May I ask
how much you commission?

They are startled by this.

ENTHUSIASTIC AGENT

Ten percent. That's standard.

MOLLY

Is that negotiable?

ENTHUSIASTIC AGENT

The percentage? No.

They laugh, a little uncertain.

MOLLY

If I sign with you, I'm not going
to pay commission on this job. I
found it on my own.

SENIOR AGENT

That's not how it works,
sweetheart. You know, when I first
signed Tina Fey, she had a similar
energy to you--

MOLLY

That's how it will work with me,
though.

SENIOR AGENT

What?

MOLLY

That's how it will work if you
represent me.

ENTHUSIASTIC AGENT
Are you serious?

MOLLY
I am. I mean, I don't really need
an agent. I have a job.

The agents look at each other.

SENIOR AGENT
Okay, fine. We won't take
commission on Tonight.

MOLLY
Thank you. Also. I want a car.

ENTHUSIASTIC AGENT
What?

SENIOR AGENT
You want us to buy you a car.

MOLLY
Yes. It doesn't have to be a fancy
car, but I want a car.

SENIOR AGENT
We can't just give you a car. We're
a talent agency.

MOLLY
Well, that's what I want. No
commission, and I need a car. Did
Tina Fey ask for that?

The agents look at each other, considering.

EXT. CAROLINE'S - LATER - NIGHT

Molly walks down the street, jubilant. She pulls out her
phone.

MOLLY (TEXT)
We finished early, I'm around the
corner--

While walking, she then sees Charlie, arm around a woman,
hailing and getting into a cab. Molly's face crumbles.

ONE WEEK LATER

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Katherine and the writers are at her house working in the living room. Molly comes into the room, there is an empty seat by Charlie. She goes out of her way to sit next to Reynolds on the other side of the dining room. Charlie and Tom notice.

BRAD

Okay, let's get started.

People buckled down. Molly opens a notebook, ignoring Charlie, who is looking at her.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - FOYER - LATER - NIGHT

Katherine answers the door. It's Joan.

KATHERINE

Joan. What a nice surprise.

JOAN

It's not a surprise. It's Annie's birthday. We're having her birthday dinner here?

(then)

You forgot. Of course.

The writers' attention flickers over to them. Katherine, self-conscious, pulls her into the living room.

KATHERINE

I love your hair, did you cut it?

JOAN

I cut it nine months ago. You ask me that every time I see you and it's always the same length.

KATHERINE

Well it's a great length on you.

JOAN

(re: staff)

Are they going to be here all night?

KATHERINE

They need to be here.

JOAN

It's Annie's birthday. She was excited to have dinner with you two.

KATHERINE

With all due respect, what 10 year old girl wants to spend her birthday with her grandparents?

JOAN

We told her you wanted to spend it with her.

KATHERINE

Well look, if none of us wants to do it, why don't we just call it off?

JOAN

Did you know that my dad fell last week?

Katherine flinches. The answer is obvious.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I guess he doesn't want to be the old husband telling his young wife that he has health problems. I'm sure you understand. You certainly keep things from him.

Joan's glances over at the dining room, where we can see Charlie. Her insinuation is clear.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Nevermind. I'll take Annie out to dinner. I hope you have a wonderful night.

She leaves. Katherine reacts.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Katherine enters. The writers all look up.

KATHERINE

We're done. Please leave.

She leaves.

BRAD

That was unexpected. But we'll pick this up in the morning. Everyone out. Simmons, hurry up, don't take forever.

People start getting their things. Charlie finds Molly.

CHARLIE

Trouble in paradise.

MOLLY

You don't know that.

CHARLIE

Things have a way of catching up with you.

MOLLY

Don't talk about her like that.

Charlie reacts. What has gotten into her?

CHARLIE

Defending her now, huh? That may be a bit of a one-sided friendship.

MOLLY

Screw you.

Charlie, pissed, grabs his stuff and leaves.

EXT. COMMERCE STREET - NIGHT

Molly walks, angry. Tom catches up with her, and walks with her. She glances at him but says nothing.

TOM

That's the other shoe.

MOLLY

What?

TOM

That's the other shoe dropping. With Charlie.

MOLLY

I really don't want to talk about this with you.

TOM

You like him 'cause he's kind of a dick. Now you see what being a dick is really like.

MOLLY

(annoyed)

You ran up to me to tell me "I told you so?"

TOM

Not "I told you so". "Join the club". Our freshman year we both saved up to go see Pearl Jam in Chicago, where his parents live. It was going to be this whole road trip. And the drive there was like the best three days of my life. We laughed, and got high every day, shared motel rooms, and got these tattoos of compasses on our thighs.

MOLLY

That's pretty homo-erotic.

TOM

It was! In that awesome way that two stupid 18 year old straight guys don't understand yet. But in Chicago, at the concert, I went to buy a t-shirt at the merch stand, and he met a girl. He left with her and I never saw him again.

MOLLY

Until you met him back at his parents house that night?

TOM

He didn't go back to his parents house. I didn't see him again that summer. He took the car and spent two weeks with her. I hitchhiked back to his parents place, and his dad put me on a bus back to Boston. That's when I learned about the other shoe.

MOLLY

That's awful. Why are you still friends with him?

TOM

I guess when you work with someone you've known for eighteen years you have to decide if you're mortal enemies or best friends. You can't be lifelong acquaintances. And mortal enemies felt like a lot of work.

MOLLY

Also, I bet you have a hard time making friends.

TOM

(smiling)

I deserved that.

They smile.

MOLLY

You still have that tattoo?

TOM

Oh yeah. It's horrible.

Molly laughs.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - MOLLY AND BURDITT'S OFFICE - MORNING

Molly sits on the ground, reading a newspaper with a highlighter, looking for jokes.

MOLLY

Burditt, is there anything with Anthony Weiner? Is that clammy now? I'm obsessed with Huma. I think she would like me.

BURDITT

(distracted)

Jesus Christ.

MOLLY

She's way too cool to like me, you're right.

BURDITT

No. Come here.

Molly comes over, they see on the NY Daily News, an article called "Woman Of The Night", with photo of Katherine going into a hotel with NATHAN.

There are also photos of other men, like the Banker and others. Molly and Burditt are taken aback.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - DAY

Katherine is interviewing a guest, STEPHEN KING. She throws to commercial.

KATHERINE

When we come back, more from our guest, Stephen King.

The band plays and we go to commercial. Robin walks briskly over to Katherine's desk. Brad whispers in Katherine's ear.

STEPHEN

I would love to get a photo with you-

Stephen tries to take a selfie but Katherine bolts from her chair. We SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BRAD'S OFFICE - EVENING

Katherine and Brad read Gawker. They scroll through a report, "KATHERINE'S AFFAIRS". Katherine sits in disbelief.

INT. BONNIE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Bonnie watches a news report on EXTRA. Same headlines, same news story.

INT. EQUINOX - SAME TIME

Perkins does crunches at the gym. He sees the same report on a TV and stops for a moment, smiling.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - REYNOLDS'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

The writers all pore over their phones.

REYNOLDS

Holy shit. This is insane.

TOM

There are so many of them. Some banker from Georgetown on the night Mark Twain thing. Nathan Turner, that producer from the Today Show?

Charlie is especially panicked.

CHARLIE

Who else did they say?

REYNOLDS

It's all coming out now.

(re: Charlie at his computer)

Why are you googling yourself? This is a way bigger deal.

Charlie nods, worried, and closes out of the screen.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KATHERINE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Brad paces while Katherine sits in a daze.

BRAD

This is fucking Perkins. This is some Anthony Pellicano shit.

KATHERINE

So many people corroborated this. A housekeeper at The Four Seasons. My driver. They must've known for years... they just didn't care until now.

Brad pats her arm, trying to be console her.

BRAD

Hey, it's bad for all of us. Vanessa called me worried that someone you and I...

KATHERINE

(incredulous)

You and I what?

BRAD

She wanted to know if there'd been anything between the two of us.

KATHERINE

(disgusted)

Oh for fuck's sake, Brad. Tell Vanessa she has nothing to worry about.

BRAD

Okay, okay.

KATHERINE

I mean, these are young, handsome men. I would never, ever, ever--

BRAD

I get it! I'm just saying it's hard on all of us!

Brad and Katherine sit, both very upset.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - DAY

Katherine gets out of her town car. Joan is helping Walter in a different car. Katherine runs to Walter, panicked.

KATHERINE

Walter! Where are you going?

JOAN

He's going to stay with me.

KATHERINE

Walter, please. Let me explain---

WALTER

I knew it was happening. I just thought you'd protect me. I'm sad for you. I'm sad for me for feeling sad for you.

KATHERINE

My love, no. Please, no. Walter--

JOAN

Stop it. He doesn't want to talk to you.

Walter gets into the car while Katherine struggles to keep the door from closing. Suddenly she slips on an icy patch and falls to the ground.

WE FLASH BACK
TO:

EXT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT - 1980

Katherine, 19, has slipped on the snowy ground on the street near the Comedy Store. She stands up, and has a bloody knee. She looks like she is about to cry.

JOAN (V.O.)
Get a hold of yourself.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - PRESENT DAY

Joan closes the door, then helps Katherine up. Katherine has a bloody, skinned knee.

KATHERINE
Thank you.

Joan opens the passenger seat of the car. But then stops and turns to face Katherine.

JOAN
You know, I forgave you. I forgave the twenty year old you who got swept up by a 50 year old. Even though it tore apart my family and I was a the girl whose father abandoned his whole life for a twenty year old English girl. I can forgive her because she didn't know what she was doing. But you know who I can't forgive? This version of you. Because you know what you're doing.

Joan walks around to the front of the car, gets in, and the car drives off. Katherine stands watching.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - NEXT DAY

Molly comes into the empty room with a note pad.

BRAD
We're dark. Didn't you get the email?

MOLLY
I got it but I disagreed with it.

BRAD
 (I give up)
 Sure, anyone can just do whatever
 they want.

MOLLY
 Is Katherine not coming in?

BRAD
 No, we are dark. No one's coming
 in.

MOLLY
 We have to go on and address this.

BRAD
 Well, she doesn't want to.

MOLLY
 Brad, we must. This is like The
 Crucible. We are confronted with
 the very face of sexism in
 Hollywood.

BRAD
 Molly, this isn't your American
 studies class at Luzerne State.
 You're exhausting me. Leave.

Molly turns and leaves, incensed.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Katherine is alone. Tons of paparazzi are outside.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Molly arrives, gets past the paparazzi.

PAPARAZZI
 Hey, we've been out here for hours,
 you can't just push your way in.

MOLLY
 You think I'm...
 (disgusted)
 ...one of you?

PAPARAZZI
 You ain't Miss America.

Molly is appalled and pushes her way through.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A housekeeper opens the door.

MOLLY

Lo siento. Esto es muy urgente.

Molly pushes by her and walks down the hallway.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Katherine? Katherine!

HOUSEKEEPER

I speak English. You can't go in there!

It's too late. Molly is down the hallway and opens the door of the parlor.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Katherine sits polishing Walter's piano and smoking, inside.

MOLLY

Katherine?

Molly starts coughing.

KATHERINE

Do you see any smudges on this?

MOLLY

Are you insane? Open a window for God's sake.

Molly opens the window, a bitter wind comes in. Molly wraps her sweater around her tighter.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Look, I know this is bad. But I have a plan.

KATHERINE

He played this piano for years and I never listened. Not really.

MOLLY

What? Look, are you going to come back to work?

KATHERINE

Yes.

MOLLY

Great. I've been working on the monologue, I think we have an opportunity to really say something here.

KATHERINE

I'm not addressing it.

MOLLY

What?

KATHERINE

I'm not addressing it. We'll be dark this week, then when we come back on, we won't mention it, and then in two months I'll be gone. I'm going to finish this season and end the show.

MOLLY

When did you decide that?!

KATHERINE

Not long after I was outed publicly for being an adulterer. But hopefully sometime before my husband officially files for a divorce?

MOLLY

Why are you doing that?

KATHERINE

I think because of my total and complete humiliation in the eyes of the American public? The fact that I'm a national punchline? At first I thought maybe I was being too hard on myself. I'm an American icon, I've broken barriers for women. This past year, I opened up a little bit about my personality, showed them I still had it! But you know the American public. One little sex scandal that involves me fucking over a dozen men for more than two decades. Somehow, they can't see past it. Like it doesn't matter that I had a Vine star on my show.

MOLLY

You have an opportunity to vindicate yourself.

KATHERINE

No.

MOLLY

You have to fight this. You are being demonized and it's not right. A man would never have to deal with this!

KATHERINE

I should be demonized. The flip side of me saying extolling the virtues of excellence is that when you fuck up, you face the consequences. I fucked up. I don't deserve the show.

MOLLY

I think you're wrong.

KATHERINE

And you have over four months of experience in television!

MOLLY

You're ashamed of what you did and you don't want to face it. But you must.

KATHERINE

"I must"? You know what's fascinating about people in your generation? You're obsessed with catharsis. It's so narcissistic. In fact, catharcissism, you should call it -- where for some reason, because you choose to discuss something publicly, you get redemption. I'm not going to use that trick. I owe it to him and I owe it to me. It's called having a backbone. It's called grit.

MOLLY

You want to talk to me about grit? I don't have any friends. I'm not pretty. I didn't come from a rich family or have a man whisk me away when I was twenty years old and tell me I was a genius.

(MORE)

MOLLY (CONT'D)

And guess what? I'm probably not a genius! But I'm pretty fucking good at my job. And this? This show? This is my life. This is all I have. So fuck you for giving it up, because it's not all about you. If you give it up, you destroy what I am living for. You're selfish and you're scared and you've deluded yourself into thinking that that's the moral high ground somehow.

KATHERINE

Well, you don't have to worry about it, because you're fired.

MOLLY

God, you're such a bitch!

KATHERINE

I know! That's what everyone has been saying. Why has it taken you so long to figure it out?

Molly leaves.

INT. MOLLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Molly paces. Calls someone -- we don't see who.

MOLLY

Can you talk?

INT. MOLLY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Tom is with Molly in her bedroom.

MOLLY

Thanks for coming here. I didn't want to cry in public.

TOM

I'm just happy I'm not the one making you cry.

Molly wells up and sits on the bed. Tom drops his messenger bag on the floor and sits next to her.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey, hey. Stop. You're going to be fine.

MOLLY

I just got fired after less than a year of working on the show of my dreams. Now I have to go back to Pennsylvania and work in a factory.

TOM

I thought it was chemical plant.

MOLLY

(inconsolable tears)
It's basically the same thing.

TOM

Don't be silly, you're not going back to the plant. You need to keep working.

MOLLY

Who will hire me? I'm such a fucking loser and I make the worst first impression on people.

TOM

There is some truth to that, but, look, go to Los Angeles.

MOLLY

LA?! That place is crazy! Have you not even heard the song "Midnight Train To Georgia"? "Hm, LA, proved too much for the man"!!

TOM

You could stay with my parents. Above our garage in Pasadena.
(then)
They already know about you.

Tom immediately regrets saying this. Molly takes this in.

MOLLY

Oh. Probably said terrible things.

TOM

Hey, listen to me. If you can't work on this show, you still need to work. You're good. I don't know how you did it because you were terrible for a while, but now...you're good. And who knows? Maybe I'll be joining you there in a year.

Molly considers this.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - MOLLY AND BURDITT'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Molly packs up her side of the office. Charlie is there.

CHARLIE

Where are you going to go?

We see Burditt is about to step into the office and overhears this conversation.

MOLLY

I don't know. Maybe LA? Tom's parents have a room over a detached garage? Which is I guess normal there?

CHARLIE

I'm going to work for Perkins on his new show. I know him from stand-up and he asked me who the best writers are, who's worth keeping, and I just said me and you.

MOLLY

Thanks, but I could never do that.

Charlie is stung but covers.

CHARLIE

I don't even know why I tried.

MOLLY

And I don't think you should work for him, either, Charlie. You know he sucks.

Charlie looks at her long and hard.

CHARLIE

It must get so tiring for you. To only want things that are unrequited.

He leaves.

BURDITT

He's a dick.

MINDY

Yeah. He's kind of right, though if you think about it.

BURDITT

Don't think about it, then.

(after a moment)

I guess this is goodbye, huh?

Molly nods. They stand in their empty office.

BURDITT (CONT'D)

If I had anything I would give it to you.

She hugs him.

MONTAGE OF TIME PASSING

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - DAY

The writers are back at work (but no Molly).

REYNOLDS

Are we going to address this?

BRAD

No.

There is a long silence.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Let's talk about the monologue. Senate has that HB2 bathroom stuff--

TOM

Brad?

BRAD

Yeah.

TOM

It might be a good idea to address it.

Some others nod. Brad looks around the room, then gets a steely look in his eyes we have not seen yet. There is a long pause.

CHARLIE

Brad? Are you okay?

BRAD

Everyone here thinks I just follow orders like I'm fucking Eichmann at the Nuremberg Trials. But I'm not Eichmann. I'm a producer. I produce a vision. And the vision I produce is that brilliant woman who has given us our entire livelihoods for the past five, ten, twelve, twenty years. I don't not question her because I'm lazy, or scared of her, or just don't give a damn. Guess what? My wife questions her. My agent questions her. America questions her. But I don't question her because I trust her. That's my job. And your job is to make her the funniest fucking version of herself. So I would stop worrying about what I need to do and start doing your fucking job.

They take this in, shocked.

BRAD (CONT'D)

So, back to HB2. I think we can do something with that.

They pick up again.

INT. BARNES & NOBLE UNION SQUARE - DAY

Molly stands in the travel section, leafing through a Los Angeles guide book. She is reading a section on Pasadena. She stops and looks around for a second, a little sad, then goes back to reading.

TV SCREEN

Jimmy Kimmel does his monologue:

JIMMY KIMMEL

My competitor, Katherine Newbury, is in the paper for alleged several affairs with men. I guess she took the advice to get the male demographic to heart.

This joke kills.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

Paparazzi follow Nathan from outside of 30 Rock.

INT. MOLLY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Priya helps a gloomy Molly pack.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Katherine sits in bed, in her nightgown. She glances over to the empty side of her bed. She then reaches over to the lamp and turns it off.

INT. MOLLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Molly packs up her room. It's empty. She leaves and her Tonight poster is still there.

EXT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - NIGHT

Paparazzi follow Katherine outside her town car.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - VARIOUS

We see a passage of time of about a month. It's not pretty winter anymore. It's ugly winter. Snowy, dirty, too cold and too dark, all the time.

INT. JOAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In a cozy living room, Walter sits, watching the news:

LESTER HOLT

Tomorrow, the speculation is that Katherine Newbury will announce her retirement after weeks of not commenting on her alleged sex scandal. This caps off one of the most interesting seasons in late night television in recent years.

There is a photo of Katherine onscreen. Walter winces.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - WRITERS' ROOM - SAME TIME

Katherine comes to the writers' room. The writers look up, surprised. Katherine sits.

TOM

Do you need help with your speech?

KATHERINE

No.

(then)

I'm sure you've all lined up something after this.

(then, after a beat)

I wanted to say thank you.

Katherine looks around the room. The writers are shocked. Then, slowly, tentatively:

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Simmons, Pat. Alex. Lee. Reynolds. Burditt.

They each nod when they hear their name, incredibly surprised.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Charlie... Thomas. And you two went to college together.

(off their nods)

You're best friends.

They nod.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

And you hate each other.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

TOM

Yes.

KATHERINE

(very emotional)

How did John Phillips die?

BURDITT

Esophageal cancer.

Katherine begins to tear up.

KATHERINE

He always wore that one t-shirt that didn't fit him right. With the dog on it?

Katherine begins to cry. Burditt jumps up and hands her a box of tissues.

BURDITT

It was a Black Dog Nantucket t-shirt.

Katherine nods.

TOM

Don't worry, you sent flowers to the funeral. It was really nice.

PAT

John's family really liked it.

KATHERINE

They did? I remember being so hard on him.

REYNOLDS

You gave him a job.

KATHERINE

But I wasn't nice to him.

TOM

We're not here because you're nice.
We're here because you're good.

They sit in a strange, but not unhappy silence. After a moment Katherine gets up and leaves.

INT. MOLLY'S CAR - NIGHT

Molly drives in her new, small, completely packed car. She is driving cross-country to LA. Tom's in his office, on the phone with her.

MOLLY

Holy shit, she cried?

TOM

Yeah. I didn't understand what was happening at first.

MOLLY

It was probably fake.

TOM

I don't think it was.

MOLLY

Did anyone notice I was gone?

TOM

Of course. Burditt was extra grouchy.

Molly smiles.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey, I gotta go, she's gonna announce tonight. Are you gonna watch?

MOLLY

No. I'll be somewhere in the Ozarks, trying not to get murdered. Most of this country is basically backdrop for "In Cold Blood".

TOM

Molly. I really think you should watch the show. You worked so hard--

MOLLY

Tom, go to work. Talk to you later.

He hangs up. Molly takes this in and takes a deep breath.

EXT. P.S. 122 - NIGHT

Katherine sits in the back of her town car. She is asleep, but wakens when the car stops. She looks out the window.

KATHERINE

Why are we here?

INT. P.S. 122 - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine walks out onto the stage of the theater. It's empty and the house lights are up. Walter is there, in his chair.

KATHERINE

Walter?

WALTER

It's a little theatrical, I know. I just needed to see you. Someplace those people weren't camped out.

He gestures out at the empty seats.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Isn't this a funny life we've chosen? That this is what we sanctify. So much work, so much sacrifice, for seconds of laughter. Moments of connection that disappear so quickly. We want that connection so badly.

Katherine stands, eyes brimming with tears. Weeks of his absence from her life comes out in this moment. She begins sobbing and kneels before him in his chair, embracing him.

KATHERINE

Forgive me.

Walter holds her. They sit in a silence for a moment.

WALTER

I am not here as your husband, I am here as a man who has advised you your entire adult life. Are you sure you are making the right decision?

KATHERINE

If the show ends in one year or ten, what's the difference? It will be over. And what did I leave behind? No friends, no children, no husband.

WALTER

Anyone can have those things. You didn't want them. You wanted excellence, which almost no one gets in their lifetime. You craved it. You cannot live without it. And now you have it again. Just make sure you're ready to give it up.

KATHERINE

(vulnerable)

I don't know if I'm strong enough for excellence.

Walter kisses her head.

WALTER

Katie, my Katie.

They sit on the empty stage in silence.

EXT. VARIOUS NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

The night turns into morning.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - KATHERINE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom and Brad go over the monologue with Katherine. There's a KNOCK at the door. It's Bonnie.

BONNIE

I hope I'm not interrupting.

Katherine nods to Tom and Brad, who sail out of the room, dutifully. Bonnie walks around the room and gestures to the paper in front of Katherine.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

Is that the speech?

There's a moment. Katherine hands it to her.

KATHERINE

Yes.

BONNIE

I got into this business because I wanted to make relevant television. Yes, I know when I say "relevant" you think I mean "pandering" or "lowest common denominator" because I'm stupid and don't know the difference. But I do know the difference.

KATHERINE

I need to prepare for my show.

BONNIE

I was nothing more than a fan of yours, and you pushed me away, belittled me. Even when I became your boss. I've dreamed of this day.

(then)

Unfortunately, you are relevant now.

KATHERINE

What are you saying?

BONNIE

You have something to say. I was listening Daniel Perkins on Stern this morning. He was killing. Talking about how you're cougar and a sex addict.

KATHERINE

(flinty)

I don't have time to defend myself--

BONNIE

-And I realized I didn't care what he was saying about you. I don't care about what he's saying about anything. I wanted to know your take. And it's because you're the one that everyone wants to hear from now.

(then)

So, it's yours. The show is yours for as long as you hold up your end of the bargain. Be relevant. Give a damn. You don't even have to respect me.

Bonnie hands back the speech and leaves. Katherine sets down her speech on the dressing table, taking this all in.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

We follow Katherine as she walks backstage.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - NIGHT

Katherine walks by Brad and Robin who are by the stage at a monitor, and stops.

KATHERINE

Tell them to turn off the teleprompter.

ROBIN

What?

KATHERINE

Turn off the teleprompter.

BRAD

(stunned)

Okay.

She continues to walk backstage.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Katherine stands by the curtain. She is announced.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Katherine enters through the curtain. She makes her way to her mic.

She stands in front of her audience, as she has done hundreds of times before this, but this time it feels different. The theater is at once dark and blindingly bright light.

We FLASH BACK for a moment to the stage in 1980 at the Comedy Store in London when Katherine stood nervously in front of her first real audience.

We hear Katherine's breathing. It's loud and it is scared.

KATHERINE

Thank you. Thank you. What a boring few weeks it's been, huh?

The crowd laughs and applauds.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Nothing like a public sex scandal during sweeps, is there? I would say my employers have never been happier with me despite that fact that they are trying to fire me. Very confusing for them, I bet. My heart goes out to them.

More applause.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Until a few minutes ago, I told myself I wasn't going to talk about this. Why? Because I'm Katherine Newbury, and to me, my privacy is sacred. Read any profile of me and that's the take-away. "She's so very cold. So very English."

The audience does not know what to make of this.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

A month ago, four separate media reports came out saying I'd cheated on my husband. And, I will be the first to admit: it's true. I've been sleeping with men who are not my husband.

Angle on:

Brad by the monitor.

BRAD

Holy shit.

Back to Katherine:

KATHERINE

I learned an interesting term this week, "slut shaming." Supporters of me have said that men do this kind of thing all the time and that this is a double standard and that I should hold my head high. Well, here's what I think: if a man my age were doing this it would be reprehensible, and guess what? I'm a woman who's doing it and it is also reprehensible. And none of this would even matter if I was not Katherine Newbury, who is so very hard on everyone, whose standards are so high she has defined her career by it. The truth of the matter is, my family is my husband. In fact, he is my everything. So when this happened, I thought "Well, I don't deserve these things anymore. Him, the show." But now, at the ripe old age of 56, I have learned something else. What I've realized is that even if Daniel Perkins calls me a slut and a sex addict on national television, I still need to do this. It's not because I deserve it anymore, it's because I need to do it, and I'll do it wherever I can. If they keep me here, I'll do it here, or I'll do it in a ninety-nine seat theater in the East Village, but I will be doing it one way or another, because that's who I am.

(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Because it's not about what you
deserve, it's about what you need.
I met a young comedian who told me
I needed to talk about this because
people needed to hear me. Maybe
she's right. But I know one thing:
I need to be heard.

INT. MOLLY'S CAR - NIGHT

We see Molly crying as she watches the speech on her phone.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Tom is stunned. Bonnie is standing next to Tom, proud.

INT. JOAN'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Joan and Walter watch. Walter is very moved. She takes his
hand.

INT. TONIGHT WITH KATHERINE NEWBURY - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The audience is on its feet.

KATHERINE

Thank you. I hope I earned the
privilege of your time.

She sits down at her desk.

CHYRON: ONE YEAR LATER

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

We see various shots of Los Angeles: downtown, Hollywood.

INT. SHRINE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Molly is at the Emmy Awards with Tom. They are in black tie.
She grabs his program.

TOM

Where's yours?

MOLLY

My hands were too sweaty and I made mine wet.

Tom hands her his program and kisses the side of her head. He reacts.

TOM

Wow, you're sweaty all over.

MOLLY

I shouldn't have come, this was a mistake. I thought she didn't come to these things!

TOM

You're gonna have to deal with the fact that you're gonna run into her.

Molly spills her wine on herself.

MOLLY

Dammit. I'm going to the bathroom. When I come back let's try to keep a low profile.

TOM

We're not famous, so I think that will be very easy.

She throws him a look, like "you know what I mean." He smiles at her. Molly leaves.

INT. SHRINE AUDITORIUM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Molly goes to the bathroom to clean up a stain. Katherine comes out from a stall. They look at each other for second, not speaking.

MOLLY

Hi.

KATHERINE

Hello.

There is another long pause. This is Molly's living nightmare. It's interrupted by a woman coming into the bathroom and going into a stall.

MOLLY

I'm sorry I called you a bitch. You know, the last time I saw you.

Katherine moves to the sink next to Molly and turns on the water to wash her hand. She is icy.

KATHERINE

I had forgotten. Thank you for reminding me.

That went badly. Katherine moves to get a towel. Molly knows this is one opportunity to ask her this.

MOLLY

Was I the young woman in your speech?

KATHERINE

What?

MOLLY

The young woman in your speech. The night you said you needed to stay. You said there was a comedian who made you think about things differently.

KATHERINE

I don't think that was in it.

MOLLY

It was. I have it memorized.

KATHERINE

Of course you do. No. The answer is no. People just make that stuff up. You have to personalize it or people don't care.

Molly is disappointed.

MOLLY

That makes sense.
(then)
I hope you win tonight.

KATHERINE

That would be nice.

She turns to leave. Then turns back.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Molly?

Molly turns.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I hope we win tonight.

Katherine leaves. Molly looks in the mirror, then smiles, stained dress and all.

THE END.