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Has-Been

Katherine M. Adams
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Has-Been

A Screenplay

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Film & Television,

Loyola Marymount University of Los Angeles, California

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

By

Katherine Adams

This feature length screenplay written by

Katherine Adams

under the guidance of a faculty committee from the School of Film & Television at Loyola Marymount University, and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the thesis requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting.

Advanced Screenplay Project Committee:

Committee Chair: SCWR 690

Committee Member: SCWR 691

Graduate Director

Dean, School of Film & Television

5/9/13

Date

ADVANCED SCREENPLAY PROJECT APPROVAL

The Advanced Screenplay Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting submitted by the candidate fulfils the requirements and standards set forth in the University Bulletin by the Division.

Screenplay Title: Has-Been

Student: Katherine Adams Date: 5/6/2013

Committee Co Chair: SCWR 690 STEPHEN DUNCAN

Signed: _____ Date: 5/6/2013

Committee Co Chair: SCWR 691 Karol Ann Hoeffner

Signed: _____ Date: 5/9/2013

Graduate Director: SYLVIA MORALES

Signed: _____ Date: 5/9/13

Dean: _____

Signed: _____ Date: 5/9/13

APPROVAL TO ADVANCE TO CANDIDACY

The following student has met all the criteria to advance to candidacy
for an M.F.A. in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Screenwriting

Student: Katherine Adams Date: 5/6/2013

Committee Co Chair (690): STEPHEN DONOHAN Date: 5/6/2013

Committee Co Chair (691): Date: 5/9/2013

Advanced Screenplay Project Title:

Has-Been

Criteria for advancement to candidacy:

Student has demonstrated sufficient ability and knowledge to complete the thesis project.

✓ Approved to Candidacy

_____ Not Approved to Candidacy

Comments:

HAS-BEEN

By

Katie Adams

A thesis presented to the

Faculty of the Department of
Screenwriting, School of Film and Television
Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts in Feature Film Screenwriting

May 9, 2013

8821 Reading Ave.
Los Angeles, CA - 90045
847 650 5836
Kadams615@gmail.com

OVER BLACK

We hear uproarious applause. Triumphant music from an unseen orchestra plays. Something horrifically glamorous and opulent must be underway . . .

FADE IN:

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - DAY

A bright and spacious, if slightly rundown and dusty, dance studio. Trophies, plaques, and crowns line the shelves and fill glass cases. The walls are covered with photos: all of a pint-sized beauty queen with big hair and a Colgate smile.

Mixed amongst the photos are framed newspaper articles that have headlines like: "McKenzie Meyers: Pint-Sized Pageant Superstar" and "Local Beauty Queen Wins Big."

At the far end of the studio stands MCKENZINE 'MAC' MEYERS (32), in her blazer and heels, she's way more dressed up than her dingy surroundings hint necessary.

She claps along to the beat of Tea For Two, blasting from a nearby boom box as a FAT eight-year-old and FATTER eleven-year-old try their best to tap dance along.

MAC
Come on, ladies! Eyes up! Back straight! Suck it in!

The chunkers huff and puff, their arms flailing about, tiny feet tapping away. With a mildly exasperated sigh, Mac shuts off the boom box. Fatter falls to the ground with a THUD.

MAC (CONT'D)
Ok, it's getting better. But if you want to win the pageant this weekend and qualify for regionals, you're going to have to really bring your A game. Competition's going to be stiff, but as long as you do what I've taught you, you'll be fine. Extensions! Smiles! Eye contact! Understand?

Fat and Fatter nod.

MAC (CONT'D)
Good. Now go take your diabetes medication.

The little girls waddle off as Mac turns to a nearby trophy case. With the sleeve of her blazer, she rubs a smudge off of one of larger trophies. The brass title plate reads: McKenzie Myers - Miss Teen Indiana, 1996.

She smiles at her reflection in the trophy and then winks.

INT. MAC'S KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Mac eats her cereal over the sink as her boyfriend, DANNY ZIZES (30S), a proud scumbag in Ed Hardy, sits at the table with his laptop.

Mac eyes a stack of mail on the counter: mostly past due notices.

DANNY
(to laptop)
. . .Well, that's it for today's show. Remember to subscribe to my channel, I put up new videos every Tuesday and Thursday! I'm Danny Zizes, and you've just been Zized!

Mac rolls her eyes. Danny types away, uploading his video while Mac sits beside him.

MAC
What's next week's video gonna be?

DANNY
It's gonna be great. I'm gonna make a compilation video of me juggling the heaviest stuff I can find.
(then)
Set to Nickleback anthems.

MAC
(of course it is)
Well, sure, why wouldn't it be?

DANNY
Exactly.

Danny continues typing manically.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I'm up to about sixty subscribers, but this one's gonna get me at least five more, and last week's video's up to three hundred views already!

Mac tries to look impressed.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I swear, Mackie, I'm THISCLOSE to going viral. Then after Perez gets a hold of my videos it's only a matter of time til I sign a book deal, I'm hittin' the town with Ryan Seacrest, and then-

MAC
A steady paycheck?

DANNY
Nope. A fragrance.

Mac grips her coffee mug tightly and purses her lips.

MAC
Dan, you know I've always tried to be super supportive, but don't you think in the process of becoming the next Kardashian, or whatever it is you're-

DANNY
It's called entrepreneurship, Mac, and it's the backbone of the economy.

MAC
(no it's not)
Okay, well, *meanwhile*, do you think you could work on getting a job that pays money? We're pretty behind on bills, rent's due-

Dan scoffs.

DANNY
YOU get a job that pays money.

MAC
I'm a pageant coach, Dan, you live above my studio.

DANNY
You're a baby-sitter with a tiara.

MAC
What the hell is that supposed to mean?!

DANNY
It means your ONLY two students are fat chicks.

MAC
Well, no, they're not sticks, but-

DANNY
-You haven't won a title since you were sixteen, so nobody even knows who you are anymore-

Mac tries to object, but Danny cuts her off.

DANNY (CONT'D)
You're washed up. A has-been. You'd be doing us both a favor if you'd finally give up pageants and become a real estate agent or something.

This stings. Her blood is boiling. She pushes her chair away from the table, and stomps away. On her way to the door, she turns to Dan and maliciously picks up the receiver on their land-line. She tosses it to the ground.

DANNY (CONT'D)
GODDAMMIT, MAC!

She slams the door on her way out, as Dan puts the receiver back in place and then sits back down behind his computer. He types for a moment before sitting back with a scowl as the god-awful sounds of a dial up connection buzz in our ears.

EXT. MAC'S STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Mac throws on a pair of sunglasses and hops in her rundown Dodge Neon. The accelerator makes a sound like an old man getting off the couch as she pulls out of the driveway and heads down the street.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SHIRLEY - CONTINUOUS

Shirley, Indiana is: a hardware store, a funeral home, a pizza parlour, Mac's studio, a shitty trailer park, and on the edge of the township, an even shittier one.

Mac drives past a few streets worth of lovely suburban homes, kids playing in sprinklers, people walking their dogs, a couple cornfields, and turns her Dodge Neon into the clearly shittier trailer park.

EXT. LORETTA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mac approaches a double wide trailer with plastic flamingos in the grass-less front lawn. A sign out front reads, "Loretta's Family Hair Care."

INT. LORETTA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mac lets herself inside. It's cluttered, cramped, and reeks of hair bleach, but it's homey.

MAC
Ma, ya home?!

LORETTA (O.S.)
In the kitchen!

Mac makes her way to the back of the trailer. Hair extensions, products, and flat irons clutter the kitchen counters, where LORETTA (50s) washes a client's hair in the sink.

Loretta was probably pretty a few years and a couple of mild melanoma cases ago, but her raspy voice hints at a lifetime of chain-smoking, and her leathery skin makes her look twenty years older than she really is. This woman has never bought sunscreen in her life.

The woman who's head is in the kitchen sink is MARGIE (50s) and she's just as weathered, though maybe less abrasive than Loretta. Mac kisses her mother on the cheek when she enters.

MAC
Hey Ma, hey Margie.

LORETTA
Hi hon- hey, grab a beer!

MAC
Nah, I'm alright.

LORETTA
Well grab me another, will ya.

Mac reaches into the fridge and grabs a couple cans.

MAC
You want another Margie?

MARGIE
Sure hon, thanks!

Mac tosses the two women their beers and then flops down in an easy chair on the other side of the kitchen counter.

LORETTA
I just gotta finish up Margie, here, and then I'll get you uh . .

Loretta pauses, searching for actual names.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
Fat and Fatter's hair pieces for sectionals.

MAC
Great, thanks.

MARGIE
How's training goin'?

MAC
Great! The girls are really improving.

Loretta lifts Margie's head out of the sink and tosses her a hand towel to dry her hair with.

LORETTA
Well that's just super! Think ya'll will place this weekend?

MAC
We *better* place. Christ knows I could definitely use the prize money . . .

Loretta slurps from her beer can, eyes narrowed at Mac, who stares at her own hands.

LORETTA
Runnin' into some money trouble there, Mackie?

MAC
A little. You know I hate to ask, but is there any way you could lend me some cash? I'll be able to pay ya back after this weekend.

LORETTA
How much money we talkin' here?

She hangs her head, embarrassed. A hideous beat of silence before Margie slurps from her can of beer and the belches.

MAC
A couple hundred maybe?

LORETTA
Mckenzie Lynn, you know damn well I don't got an extra couple hundred bucks to lend ya.

Mac groans and runs her hands down her face.

MARGIE
Can't your boyfriend help ya out?

MAC
Nah, Dan's real busy trying to get his youtube channel off the ground. He swears he'll be viral soon, but until then, incomes kinda on me.

Loretta pats the top of Mac's head, sad. She takes a swig of beer and offers some to Mac, who politely refuses.

MAC (CONT'D)
I mean, I'm fine. It'll be fine. The girls will place at the pageant this weekend, and I'll be back in the game like that.

Mac snaps her fingers for emphasis, but neither Loretta nor Margie seem convinced.

MARGIE
Well, hey now, what about Penny? Think she'd be willin' to lend her little sister a few bucks?

Mac grimaces as Loretta nervously adjusts her stiff bouffant.

LORETTA
Mackie, babe, I know you two don't always see eye to eye, but looks like she's your only option.

MAC
Ah, Ma, I dont wanna go over there and ask . . .

MARGIE
Why the hell not?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PENNYS KITCHEN - DAY

Mac and PENNY (35) pretty, but in a makeup-less, house-mom way, sit at the kitchen table. Mac watches Penny happily shuffle a deck of playing cards and start to play solitaire with herself. All the while, a gaggle of screaming boys run through the room.

Mac flinches in her chair. The kids are dirty, they stink, and they're loud. They've all got snot on their faces and stains on their shirts. One particular boy sprints through the kitchen, completely nude. Shrieking in naked-glee.

This is Mac's nightmare. Penny sticks two fingers in her mouth and WHISTLES loudly. The kids immediately quiet.

PENNY
Take it outside, kids!!

The ragamuffins shuffle out of the room. The two women sigh, content with the silence.

MAC
Ever stop to think about how animal services doesn't let Mom have six cats, and yet the government pays you to have a dozen kids?

Penny rolls her eyes, focusing on the cards in front of her.

PENNY
Y'know, as much as I appreciate you comparing my foster parenting to corralling cats, I'm very busy. What do you want?

MAC
I'm offended you think I have to have a reason to come over and catch up with my big sister-

Penny's stone-faced. She scoops up her cards and shuffles them loudly. Mac shifts uncomfortably in her seat.

MAC (CONT'D)
Wow, ok, um, here's the thing, Pen. I know you've always thought what I do is a little ridiculous-

PENNY
That's one word for it.

MAC
And you know I'd never ask unless I seriously had no other options, but I need help.

PENNY
Is that women's liberation group sending you death threats again?

MAC
Not exactly . . . I need money.

Penny rolls her eyes and sweeps her arm, presenting her messy kitchen: pots and pans fill the sink, baskets of laundry sit in the doorway.

PENNY
Don't we all.

MAC
No, really, my students haven't won any prize money in a while, or ever, and I'm about to lose my studio. Danny's no help at all-

PENNY
Well I can't understand why, the man's such a brain trust. If you ask me, losing your studio wouldn't be the worst thing in the world. Maybe then you can focus on getting a job that actually benefits society. Be a real estate agent or something.

Mac rolls her eyes, gags at the thought. Penny turns her attention back to playing with her deck of cards.

MAC
I don't know what to say. I mean, how would you feel if someone told you being a foster parent was a ridiculous and offensive way to spend your time?

PENNY
Nobody would ever say that.

Mac throws her hands up in an I-give-up type of gesture.

MAC
Okay, would you please just stop playing with your creepy cards and LOOK at me?! I need help!

Penny sighs before begrudgingly putting down her deck.

MAC (CONT'D)
Pageants are all I've ever known, Pen. I'm sorry not all of us can jump on the same moral high horse as you, but this, not school or being a mom, ***this*** is the only thing I've ever been good at or cared about. I know you think they're stupid, but they're not to me. *Please*.

Penny waits a hideous beat before reaching into her purse. She pulls out a checkbook and writes Mac a check.

MAC (CONT'D)
Thank you. I'll be able to pay you back after this weekend.

PENNY
(not believing)
Mhm . . .

Just then the swarm of children comes bounding through the kitchen again, yelling and tripping over each other.

A small girl, the only girl in the whole bunch, comes up to Penny and proudly hands her a small bouquet of wilting dandelions. This is MAGGIE (7). She wears a crown of dandelions on top of her head.

MAGGIE
I picked these for you, Mama Penny!

Penny takes them with a beaming smile. As if Maggie has just handed her diamonds.

PENNY
Thank you, Maggie! I'll have to put these in a very special vase!

Maggie flashes a smile, revealing a gap where a baby tooth used to be, and bounds away, chasing after her foster brothers. She's a billion different shades of adorable.

Mac shoots Penny a "you gotta be kidding me" look as she fills a small flower vase with water.

MAC
They're weeds, Pen.

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - LATER

Mac pulls her car up to the studio and gets out. In one hand she's got two Styrofoam heads with ratty, curled hair-pieces on them. With the other hand she grabs the mail from the mailbox and unlocks the front door.

INT. MAC'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mac enters her apartment and sets the heads and the mail down on the counter.

MAC
Hey Danny, I'm home!

No answer. She peers into the living room. Nobody.

MAC (CONT'D)
Dan?

Still no answer. She takes her cell phone out of her purse, dials, and begins to sift through her pile of mail.

MAC (CONT'D)
(into her phone)
Hey Danny, look, I'm sorry about earlier. My sister lent us some money for rent, and I'll pay her back with my winnings this weekend, so don't worry about it. I'll see ya when you get home.

Mac hangs up and picks up an issue of Pageantry Monthly. On the cover is a stunningly beautiful blonde woman in a little black dress and a big, sparkly crown.

The headline reads: "Eden Phillips: Midwest's Premier Pageant Coach, Leads Students to Nationals." Mac stares hard before tossing the magazine in the trash.

She shuffles across the apartment and into her bedroom.

INT. MAC'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mac flops down on her perfectly made bed. She closes her eyes and hums the Miss America theme song. Everything's quiet.

Suddenly, Mac's eye's fly open. Something's not right. She sits upright and looks around. Something intangible, indescribable, feels different.

She stands up and walks to her closet and throws the mirrored doors open. Half of the closet is completely empty, save a few wire coat hangers.

She immediately sits down at her computer desk. She taps her foot anxiously as she waits for the dial-up to connect. She pulls up Youtube, and goes to Danny's channel. Face scrunched in confusion, Mac clicks on the latest video.

CLOSE UP on computer screen. The video starts: Danny talks into the camera as he's seated in the exact seat Mac sits in now.

DANNY
(in video)
Hey dudes, I know this is my second video of the day, but I just had to let my many fans in on the ultimate happenings of my life!

Danny's voice is loud and dripping with douchebaggery. Mac's eyes narrow.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(in video)
I've recently decided that I'm way too big of a deal to stick around this wack town, or my relation*shit with my loser of a girlfriend* for a second longer!

Mac's jaw drops as she continues watching. Frozen in shock. Danny shows the camera his packed suitcase.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(in video)
So I've packed up my crap, and I'm headed to VEGAS, BABY! Catch ya on the flippy flop, homies!!

Danny sticks his tongue out and gives the camera the 'rock on' sign with his right hand.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(in video)
Mackie, you're a fucking loser. It's seriously embarrassing. Get your old, sad, life together.

He smiles, very pleased with himself.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(in video)
YOU'VE JUST BEEN Z-Z-Z-Z-ZIZED!

The video turns into a bizarre montage of Danny jumping and dancing shirtless in front of a flashing, neon-colored background to screaming music. All the while, he's wearing one of Mac's pageant crowns. Finally, he kisses one of his biceps, and the video goes black. It's over.

Mac slowly pushes her chair away from the computer desk. She takes a deep breath before FREAKING. THE HELL. OUT.

She stands up and in one swift motion, picks up her bedside lamp and chucks it at the mirrored doors of her half-empty closet. Glass shatters everywhere.

She yanks the comforter off her bed and throws it across the room, tries to overturn the mattress, but she's not strong enough. She stomps out of the bedroom.

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Mac throws open the heavy door leading to her studio. She rips her framed photos and newspaper clippings off the wall and smashes them all on the ground, one-by-one.

She heads to a trophy case, throws the door open and grabs a trophy. Chucks it across the room. She grabs a crown, and winds up to throw it even harder. But then, stops.

She looks at the crown in her hands before crumbling to the floor in defeat. She sits cross legged on the hardwood, places her crown on her head, and looks around at her mess.

A mouse scurries across the floor.

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - NEXT DAY

Significantly less dressed up than usual, Mac stares as Fat and Fatter earnestly practice their tap numbers.

Mac sits an the couch next to Fat and Fatter's REDNECK MOTHERS (both in their thirties, but don't look a day younger than fifty five), who share a bucket of fried chicken.

Mac scowls as Tea for Two blasts from the boom box and the girls tap away. One misplaced step, and Fatter slips on the slick hardwood. She tumbles to the ground with a loud THUD.

Mac anxiously runs her hands through her hair.

MAC
No, stop. This isn't working.

She stands and turns off the music.

MAC (CONT'D)
Look, if you two can't get your acts together this second, I'm cutting you both from the pageant.

Their tiny mouths drop in shock.

FAT
But why??

FATTER
I promise we'll do better!

MAC
Yeah, well, you won't! Okay?! You wont do better, because it doesn't matter how hard you work in life or how badly you want something, someone skinner and blonder and whore-ier is just gonna snatch your dreams away from you!

The horrified mothers stare in shock. It takes them both a few tries to stand up off the couch.

MAC (CONT'D)
So if you two aren't going to shape up real quick, then just do everyone a favor, quit wasting MY time and **GIVE! UP! NOW!** Go become real estate agents or something!!

The mothers waddle over to the little girls, tears running down their chubby faces.

REDNECK MOTHER
We don't need this from you! Tina and Lillian are STARS! Come on, girls!

She grabs the hands of the little girls, and they start walking out of the studio.

MAC
Wait! We have a pageant this weekend, and I can't win without students! Where are you going?!

REDNECK MOTHER
Chicago's only a three hour drive away, looks like if we want to be coached by a winner, we'll have to go to Eden Phillips!

MAC
DON'T EVER SAY THAT WHORE'S NAME TO ME! **I'M** A WINNER! **ME**!

The smell of fried chicken wafts in the air even after the rednecks leave, the door jingling shut behind them.

MAC (CONT'D)
(Quieter, to herself)
Shit . . .

Mac turns away from the door to face her empty studio. An overhead light flickers and then goes out.

Another JINGLE and Mac turns back around. Her face lights up when she sees one of the mothers waddling back inside.

MAC (CONT'D)
Oh thank God-

But the mother passes Mac and heads straight for the couch where she was sitting. She grabs her half-eaten bucket.

REDNECK MOTHER
Fergot ma' chicken.

Mac's shoulders slump once more as the mother sees her way out for the final time.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Grainy, home video footage of a child beauty pageant. A young beauty queen crosses the stage as if she's floating. She looks thirteen going on thirty-five as she holds the hand of a taller, blonder, child beauty queen.

A lounge-lizard type ANNOUNCER stands behind them.

ANNOUNCER
And the winner of the 1990 Midwest Preteen Princess is . . .

The two beauty queens hold their breath and clutch each other's hands, huge smiles plastered on their faces.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
McKenzie Meyers!!

The young Mac drops the hand of her competitor, screams, and cries as a stagehand places a large, rhinestoned crown on top of her head. She wipes away hysterical tears of joy as she waves to the audience.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

We PULL OUT to discover the video footage is playing on a TV in Mac's studio. Dressed in sweatpants and a robe, Mac sits on the floor, rifling through a boxes of pageant mementoes.

Mac pulls out old newspaper clippings with headlines like: "Meyers Disappoints at Universal Royalty" and "Pageant Studio Fails to Attract Local Talent." She sighs as she reaches back into the box and pulls out a crown.

Mac stands in front a mirror, pulls her shoulders back and places the crown on top of her head. She steps back, poses, and smiles at her reflection, mimicking herself on TV.

MAC
I'm a winner . . .

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - LATER

Mac knocks frantically on Penny's front door, until Penny finally answers, frazzled and confused.

MAC
I need your kid!

PENNY
Excuse me?

MAC
Your girl kid. I need to borrow your one girl kid so I can enter it in the pageant and save my studio.

PENNY
It?!

Mac pushes past Penny and lets herself inside.

INT. PENNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

PENNY
Didn't I just write you a check to help "save" your studio?

Penny puts air quotes around the word, save.

MAC
Yes, and as hurtful as your air quotes are, I really appreciate it, but Danny left me.

PENNY
So? Mac, he was a loser.

MAC
Exactly! The biggest loser on the face of the planet! HE. Left. ME.

Penny shrugs, not sure she understands.

MAC (CONT'D)
So how much of a loser does that make me? . . .

Penny recoils, but doesn't disagree.

MAC (CONT'D)
Don't you see? Just keeping the studio standing isn't enough anymore. I can't just continue being this loser I somehow turned into, I have to be a STAR again!

Penny starts to say something, but Mac cuts her off.

MAC (CONT'D)
(manic)
JUST GIVE ME THE DAMN KID! PLEASE!

Penny's eyes get wide with horror just as a CRASH and a several-children-scream echoes from the back of the house. A small, naked boy runs past, shrieking.

PENNY
Oh Christ, I gotta go fix whatever just broke, but no. There's no way in hell I would let you subject any of my kids to your ridiculous delusions. Just go home and get over a break up like the rest of the working world: watch Titanic and eat some ribs.

Penny rushes away after the destructive child sounds, leaving Mac fuming in the foyer. She waits a moment before ducking up the stairwell.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mac makes her way down the hallway, the floor cluttered with toys and shoes. She pokes her head in a room: nobody. She pokes her head in another room: bathroom. She continues down the hall for a few more steps before she trips, and tumbles to the floor with a THUD.

MAC
OW! SONOFA-

She looks back to see what she's tripped on, and it's Maggie; sitting cross legged on the floor, surrounded by half-clothed Barbies. She sucks loudly on a lollipop and rubs her shoulder where Mac tripped over her.

MAGGIE
Ow!

MAC
Well, you're bound to get stepped on, sittin' on the floor like that!

MAGGIE
I'm playing dolls . . . Wanna play with me?

MAC
Uh, yeah. Sure.

Mac scoots next to Maggie, picks up a doll and starts absentmindedly playing with its hair.

MAC (CONT'D)
Hey, you know what's just like dressing up Barbies, only better?

Maggie looks up, intrigued. Slurps from her lollipop, her mouth getting sticker by the second.

MAC (CONT'D)
Real-life dress up. Have you ever seen a beauty pageant, Maggie?

Maggie shakes her head, no.

MAGGIE
Mama Penny says they're stupid.

MAC
(defensive)
They're not stupid, they're frivolous, there's a difference! Penny's just jeal-
(calming down)
That's her opinion. But I promise, they're tons of fun. You wear a sparkly dress, lots of grown-up makeup, and then you sing and dance in front of judges, and you get a big crown, and it you're really good, you get a big check!

MAGGIE
Just for being pretty?

MAC
Sure! HEY. Here's an idea: There's a beauty pageant coming up this weekend. Think you might wanna give it a try?

Maggie purses her lips, thinking it over.

MAGGIE
But I don't know how . . .

MAC
That's okay, I'll teach you! I'll be your personal pageant coach, and I won't even charge ya anything. Top tier coaching, totally free.

Maggie takes one of her Barbies by its ponytail with one hand, grabs a pair of safety scissors with the other, and abruptly chops off all the doll's hair. Mac flinches.

MAGGIE
Okay.

MAC
Yeah?!

Maggie nods with a smile and shrugs.

MAGGIE
I like playing dress up.

MAC
Oh believe me, I'll teach you how to be a star. We gotta keep it secret though, okay? No telling Penny what we're doing.

MAGGIE
How come?

MAC
Because she doesn't like this kind of stuff. Pageants and all.

MAGGIE
How come?

MAC
I don't know, she's a grinch, I guess.

MAGGIE
How come?

MAC
Christ, I don't know, why do you ask so many dumb questions?

Maggie looks up from her Barbie and shrugs.

MAGGIE
I've only been around for seven years. There's a lot of stuff I don't know.

Mac purses her lips and almost smiles, intrigued. Maggie sucks one last time on her lollipop before biting down on it with a loud CRACK.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Outside the local elementary school, Maggie's brothers yell and fight, and tumble into Penny's huge van.

MAGGIE
Mama Penny, can I go over to my friend Sarah's house today?

Penny's so distracted corralling the other kids, she can hardly hear Maggie.

PENNY
Uh, who? Sarah? Well how are you gonna get home, I don't have time to come get you.

MAGGIE
Sarah's mom can drive me.

PENNY
Uh, ok, I guess. Just call when you get there, buckle up, and sit in the back. And don't be any trouble.

Maggie smiles and takes off down the block. Around the corner, we see Mac, not-so-patiently waiting in her Dodge.

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - DAY

Mac barks direction at Maggie as she fumbles in her brand new tap shoes. She's awkward and clumsy. Mac's patience is thin.

INT. NAIL SALON - DAY

Maggie is definitely the tiniest customer at the beauty parlor. One small Asian woman manicures her tiny fingernails.

INT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - DAY

Maggie sits in a chair in front of Loretta's sink. Mac stands by and supervises as Loretta drinks a tallboy with one hand and sews a hair piece to Maggie's head with the other.

Maggie flinches as Loretta jabs her with bobby pins.

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - DAY

Mac unveils the baby dentures for Maggie and shoves it in the little girls mouth. Maggie makes a face, uncomfortable.

MAC
Smile.

Maggie smiles. The gap where one of her front teeth were missing is completely filled. Mac nods in approval.

INT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - DAY

Loretta and Mac root through a closet in Mac's childhood bedroom. The closet is still stuffed full of sequined costumes and extravagant gowns.

Loretta finally produces a tiny, sparkly dress, about Maggie's size. Mac nods approvingly.

INT. MAC'S STUDIO

Maggie sucks in her baby fat as Mac ties her into the hand-me-down dress. The little girl can hardly breathe.

MAC
. . . You might have to take up smoking.

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Maggie perfects her tap dance. She's only okay. Definitely not a natural. Mac shrugs when she's done. It'll do.

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Maggie sits inches away from the old television set in Mac's studio. She watches pageant videos intently as Mac looks on.

Maggie reaches up and points to the screen, at a pre-teen Mac preforming an enthusiastic tap dance routine on stage.

MAGGIE
That's you, right Aunt Mac?

MAC
Yeah, that's me.
(under her breath)
Back when my life had meaning . . .

MAGGIE
What?

MAC
Nothing. Now, remember what I told you the most important thing was? Whenever you're on stage, no matter what, you keep . . .

MAGGIE
Smiling!

MAC
Right. And also?

MAGGIE
Eye contact with the judges!

MAC
Exactly. That's a big one. They'll take away huge points if you're not engaging the judges, got it?

MAGGIE
Got it!

Maggie reaches up and points to a tall blonde who takes the stage after younger Mac is done tapping. She's stunning and poised as she starts to belt out an aria from La Boheme.

It's the same tall blonde from the cover of Mac's pageant magazine; this is EDEN PHILLIPS.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Wow, she's pretty! Who's that girl?

Mac's jaw tightens as she watches Eden glide effortlessly across the stage in her beautiful gown. Angelic.

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM - FLASHBACK

Super: 1997

The Radisson Hotel is a flurry of teenage beauty queens, their frazzled mothers, and overbearing coaches. Clouds of hair spray and glitter surround a sixteen-year-old McKenzie Meyers, who carefully applies lipstick in a vanity mirror.

A younger, but probably just as weathered, Loretta stands behind her, teasing her hair, and a very bored looking, teenaged Penny reads a book in a chair off in a corner.

At a neighboring vanity table, a teenaged-Eden glues fake eyelashes onto her face as her very classy and put-together coach attaches a giant hair piece.

A stagehand with a tight ponytail and a headpiece rushes through the changing room.

STAGEHAND
Seven minutes, ladies! Seven minutes until show time!

Mac and Eden eye each other from across their vanity mirrors. Mac smiles sweetly, while Eden death-glares the smile right off her face.

Did she just mouth the words, “you’re gonna die” ?! Mac recoils in her seat, maybe a little intimidated.

INT. MAC’S STUDIO - NIGHT, PRESENT DAY

Mac snaps out of her daydream, stomps over to the TV and shuts it off.

MAC
That’s enough for tonight.
(then)
And she’s not pretty. She’s boney and has a man-jaw.

INT. MAGGIE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maggie earnestly practices her tap routine. TAP. TAP. TAP. TAPPIDY TAPPIDY TAP. Beads of sweat form on her forehead. She concentrating so hard, she doesn’t even notice when Penny appears in her doorway, carrying a basket of folded laundry.

PENNY
What are ya doin’ in here, Mags?

Maggie stops, mid-tap.

MAGGIE
Uh . . . just tap dancing.

Penny furrows her brow.

PENNY
You know how to tap dance?

MAGGIE
(thinking fast)
They're teaching us in gym class.

PENNY
Huh . . .

MAGGIE
Actually, um, I have this thing I have to go to this weekend. It's all weekend and it's a show. A tap show. And um, I *have* to go.
(beat)
for gym class.

Penny thinks for a second, lips pursed and eyes narrowed.

PENNY
It's a requirement? Do I have to sign something?

She shakes her head, no.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Will there be other parents there chaperoning?

Maggie just nods hurriedly.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Okay . . . As long as-

Something CRASHES and several kids scream and laugh. The phone rings, kids are screaming, and a pants-less five-year-old runs past Maggie's room, shrieking with naked joy.

Penny drops her laundry basket full of folded clothes and runs after him, forgetting about Maggie.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Myles! Get your pants back on! I'm serious, penises stay in the bathroom!!

Maggie sighs, shuts her bedroom door, and continues tapping away. Even more determined than before.

EXT. SUPER 8 - DAY

Mac's Dodge Neon races into the parking lot with a screech. Mac and Maggie get out of the car. They quickly unload costume and makeup bags from the trunk, place them on a luggage cart, and race inside.

MAC
Come on, we're late!!

Mac notices a perfectly permed and pearled mother and her two beauty queen daughters staring at the dingy and slightly frazzled spectacle.

MAC (CONT'D)
Hey, take a picture, it'll last longer!

She flips them the finger and the appalled mother gathers her kids and they scurry away.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Mac and Maggie make their way to a table where a pleasantly southern WOMAN sits. A sign on the table reads, "Pageant Check In."

WOMAN
Well hello there! Here to check in?

Maggie nods, her excitement boiling over.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
You're cuttin' it close, darlin', but we'll see if we can get ya sorted out. What's your name?

MAGGIE
Maggie Wilks.

The woman scans her list. Pouts.

WOMAN
I'm sorry, I don't see any Maggies on this list . . .

MAC
She's registered under Destinee Gold. Destinee with two E's.

Maggie makes a face and looks up at Mac, questioning.

MAC (CONT'D)
It's your stage name. Maggie Wilks is a spit-covered foster kid. Destinee Gold is a superstar.

Mac leans over and tries to wipe some sticky lollipop goo off Maggie's face, to no avail. The woman checks the name off.

WOMAN
Okeedokie then! Here's your program and number, Destinee.

The woman hands Maggie her program book and bold number tag. She's number 9. Mac looks at it and smiles.

MAC
I was number nine at my first local.

MAGGIE
Really?

Mac nods. Maggie holds the number close to her chest and beams through her lollipop.

WOMAN
You'd best be gettin' at it, all the other contestants are already in hair and makeup!

Mac grabs Maggie's hand and the two scurry off, dragging their rolling suitcases behind them.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Maggie sits at a vanity table, inspecting her newly made-up face. With her new spray tan and fake eye lashes, she looks seven, going on thirty.

Maggie looks around the room at the other child-beauty-queens, all being primped by their mothers and coaches. As Mac attaches a giant, curly headpiece to the back of the little girl's head, Maggie grimaces with each bobby pin jab.

MAC
Beauty is pain, remember? Now turn around, I'm gonna cut a deeper V-neck into your leotard.

Maggie turns around and Mac kneels down to cut.

MAGGIE
Hey, um, Aunt Mac?

MAC
Mhm?

MAGGIE
Thanks for hanging out with me so much.

Mac smirks.

MAC
Well, we're not *hanging out*, Maggie, I'm coaching you.

MAGGIE
No, I know that. I just mean that you're really funny. And I like your house.

MAC
Really? It's kind of a dump . . .

MAGGIE
Yeah, but . . . There are no penises running around it.

Mac abruptly stands up and points a finger in Maggie's face.

MAC
HEY! I could HAVE a penis in my house if I WANTED a penis in my house!

Maggie's eyes widen, as do the eyes of the multiple women and girls who have stopped and are STARRING at Mac. She pulls herself together and kneels back down to finish slut-ing-up Maggie's leo.

MAC (CONT'D)
I'll tell ya what, kid. You win today and go on to regionals, I'll let you come over and *hang out* whenever you want.

MAGGIE
Really?!

Maggie throws her arms around Mac's waist. She squeezes tight. Stiff and uncomfortable, Mac just pats the top of Maggie's head.

MAC
Okay, well, don't get ahead of yourself. I'm not, like, *adopting* you or anything. And if you flat out lose, I probably won't even wanna look at ya for several weeks.

She pulls the little girl off her waist.

MAC (CONT'D)
So practice. Now. Go run your tap number in the corner over there.

Maggie bounds off to the corner with a smile and begins running her number as Mac eyes the other competitors.

Two chunkers bearing a striking resemblance to Fat and Fatter apply lipstick in a vanity mirror. A homely, gangly girl with too-fake-looking hair gets primped by her mother. A girl who practices a much more complicated tap number than Maggie's, topped off a light-up unitard and flaming batons.

Mac takes an anxious breath.

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM - LATER

The pageant is underway! The audience is filled with hysterical mothers with crewneck sweatshirts bearing the faces of their children silk-screened on the front.

A few fathers are dispersed around the audience as well. As the mothers cheer, they just stare forward, with dead eyes and hearts.

INT. BANQUET ROOM, SWIMSUIT COMPETITION

Poppy, upbeat music plays as each contestant parades herself up and down the stage in a skimpy bikini. Except for Maggie, who's draped in a handed-down one-piece.

INT. BANQUET ROOM, BEAUTY COMPETITION

Next is the beauty competition! The girls, now all dressed in frilly cupcake dresses, pose at each end of the stage. Again, Maggie's in her hand-me-down dress that's too tight on her.

The homely gangly girl strikes a final pose, causing <u>HIS</u> wig to fall off... <u>SHE'S A DUDE</u>! The audience gasps. A gangly and manic MOTHER stands up in the back of the banquet room.

MOTHER
Goddammit, Kyle!!

Poor Kyle runs off the stage in tears.

INT. BANQUET ROOM - TALENT COMPETITION

One by one the girls show off their skills. Fat and Fatter awkwardly dance, barely managing not to fall on their butts.

The girl with the light up unitard does her tap dance perfectly. But when she ends in the splits, shes too distracted trying to catch her flaming batons, she opens her mouth too wide, and her flipper falls out.

Tiny baby dentures fall to the stage with a loud CLATTER. The audience GASPS, and the poor girl scoops up her fake teeth as tears begin to run down her face.

INT. BANQUET ROOM - TALENT COMPETITION - LATER

Finally it's Maggie's turn! Mac holds her breath as she performs her tap routine with a giant smile. While not totally at ease, she's certainly trying her best.

Mac applauds enthusiastically once she's done, finally able to breathe again, though obviously not fully relaxed.

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM, CROWNING

The tiny contestants stand on stage in their glitzy dresses. Mac paces nervously in the back of the room while the lounge-lizard of an ANNOUNCER stands at the mic.

ANNOUNCER
Alright, everyone, let's give another round of applause for all of our beautiful contestants!

The crowd of mothers and coaches give a roaring round of applause for their living Barbie dolls.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
First runner up, and winner of *TWO* gift certificates to Big Al's Auto Barn is . . .

Mac holds her breath.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Lacie Cohen!!

Mac's face lights up as the girl with the light up unitard and the defective flipper accepts her tiny trophy.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Which means the all-around winner of the crown and five thousand dollars cash, who will be advancing onto regionals in Chicago next week is . . . Destinee Gold!!

Mac stands up and shrieks with joy. Maggie waves and smiles wide as a stagehand places the large crown on her head.

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM - LATER

Maggie poses with her crown for photographers. The crowd in the banquet room begins to disperse. Losers cling to the waists of their mothers and coaches, as they leave in shame.

Mac smiles when she sees Maggie run up to her. She holds her crown on her head with one hand, and her winner's sash with the other. Mac crouches down and hugs Maggie tight.

MAGGIE
Aunt Mac! Did ya see? Did ya see me up there??

MAC
Yeah, I saw ya! Way to go, kiddo!

The two high five and Mac stands up.

MAGGIE
I've never won anything before!!

MAC
Feels pretty good, huh?

Maggie nods through her smile as she hugs her huge trophy.

MAC (CONT'D)
Don't let that crown get too comfy up there, now. We've got much bigger fish to fry at Regionals.

Maggie doesn't deflate at all.

MAC (CONT'D)
I mean it, Chicago's a different animal. Think you can handle it?

MAGGIE
I'll try!

Mac laughs, grabs her hand, and the two start walk out of the banquet room. She looks down and takes the crown off of Maggie's head. She examines it closely.

MAC
I swear, these suckers are gettin' bigger . . .

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - DAY

Mac and Loretta examine video footage from sectionals on the huge TV in Mac's studio. Mac points to Maggie on the screen with a critical finger.

MAC
See? There. Why does her face do that? There's something wrong with her face!

LORETTA
Well for Christ's sake, the damn kid's dress is so tight, she can hardly breathe. Did ya expect her to look like she's on Percocet?

MAC
. . . Should I get her some?

LORETTA
She needs her own dress, not one of your hand-me-downs.

Mac sighs and runs her hand down her face.

MAC
I know she does . . .

LORETTA
So drive up to Chicago, to that nice, designer place we used to go to and get her one there. You've got enough for a sale rack dress.

The two women turn when they hear the front door of the studio JINGLE open. Her backpack bouncing on her back, Maggie comes bounding inside with a smile.

MAC
Mags, what's the deal? I told ya to get here by four!

MAGGIE
I had to wait to sneak out!

MAC
Ok, we only have a week to train for regionals, sweets, and we need A LOT of practice, so we've got to be a lot slicker at hiding this from Penny, got it?

MAGGIE
Got it!

MAC
Tell her you joined some sort of after school thing.

MAGGIE
Ok . . . Like what?

Mac throws her hands up in frustration.

MAC
Jesus, Mags, I don't know, what do kids do that keeps 'em away from home after school?

MAGGIE
Like . . . A sport or something?

MAC
Sure, or like, a club? Tell Penny you joined your school's, uh-

LORETTA
Fight club.

MAC
Sure. Tell Penny you joined your elementary school's fight club. See how that works out.

Loretta shrugs and cracks open a beer.

MAC (CONT'D)
Soccer. Does your school have a soccer team?

Maggie shrugs.

MAC (CONT'D)
Ok, I bet they do. So just tell Penny you're going to soccer practice whenever you need to be over here, got it?

MAGGIE
Got it!

MAC
Good, now let's practice. I'll be Penny, you be you.
(mimicking a naggy voice)
Hey, Maggie where ya headed off to?

MAGGIE
Soccer practice!

MAC
Oh, you're on a soccer team now? When did you join?

Maggie freezes. This kid clearly isn't a habitual liar.

MAC (CONT'D)
Mags, you gotta be quicker than that, alright? Penny's gonna ask you questions, and you gotta be prepared. So tomorrow you're gonna tell Penny you have a soccer game and you'll be gone all afternoon. Then you and I are going up to-

LORETTA
Woah, hey, I'm not coming too?!

MAC
Uh . . . No? Why do you have to come?

LORETTA
Mckenzie Lynn, I have purchased OR made every single one of your pageant dresses!

MAC
Yeah, but this has nothing-

LORETTA
Nope, shut it, I'm coming!

Loretta puts her hands on her hips, authoritative-mom-style.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
You retiring from competing was hard on me too, ya know. I was a proud, pageant momma for seventeen years, and I wanna help my girl be a winner again!

Maggie looks back and forth between the two women.

MAGGIE
And me, right? I'm a winner too!

LORETTA
(hardly listening)
Yeah, sure, you too, honey.

MAC
Fine. Alright? Just, fine.
(to Maggie)
Mags, get your tap shoes. We've got work to do.

Maggie dumps her backpack on the floor and starts warming up.

INT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maggie bounds in through the front door, Loretta trailing behind. She skips into the living room, where Penny sits in front of the coffee table, playing with her deck of cards. She hugs Maggie when she comes in.

Maggie sits down next to Penny and begins playing with the cards too, stacking them into the beginnings of a house of cards.

PENNY
Hey, kiddo, where were ya?

Maggie steals a glance in Loretta's direction.

MAGGIE
Soccer practice.

PENNY
You don't play soccer . . .

MAGGIE
Um . . . Soccer practice.

PENNY
. . . What?

MAGGIE
I- uh, I joined today.

Penny notices Loretta standing in the doorway.

PENNY
Ma, what are you doing here?

LORETTA
Uh, well, Maggie's soccer team practices in the vacant field behind my doublewide, so, ya know, I offered to drive her home.

PENNY
Oh. Well, thanks, I guess.

An awkward beat of silence. Loretta doesn't come over much. Maggie and Loretta exchange looks as Penny turns back to her playing cards. Loretta fake-coughs at Maggie.

MAGGIE
Um, Mama Penny? I have a soccer game tomorrow.

PENNY
Oh yeah? What time?

Maggie freezes, her eyes wide with fright.

LORETTA
(cutting in)
It's their first game, it'll probably take all afternoon. I'll make sure she gets home okay.

PENNY
Well, if you have a game, sweetie, then I want to come watch and cheer you on, of course.

MAGGIE
NO!

Penny's taken aback.

LORETTA
Uh, she just means that you can't take time away from the other kids now, can you Penny?

Penny scowls at Loretta.

PENNY
Really Mom? Parenting advice?

LORETTA
What the hell does that mean?

PENNY
Anyway, that's not a problem, I'll just bring the boys to the game.

Maggie looks back up at Loretta, silently pleading for help.

MAGGIE
No, I don't want all of you there!

PENNY
Maggie, that's not nice!

LORETTA
Um, I think what Maggie means is just that she's nervous, right?

Maggie nods.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
And it is important for siblings to support each other, so here's what we'll do: *I'LL* take all the kids to the soccer game, we'll all cheer on Maggie, and then when she gets more confident on the field, she'll have you come watch.

MAGGIE
Yeah! You can come later!

Penny's stares. This doesn't make any goddamn sense.

PENNY
Really? But you're not too nervous to let Grandma come watch you?

Answer-less, Maggie looks back up to Loretta, who scratches her bouffant with a long, acrylic nail.

LORETTA
Uh . . . Well, who gives half a hoot what I think?!

Penny shrugs it off, halfway agreeing.

PENNY
Ok, I guess. God knows I haven't had a day without the kids in a decade.

LORETTA
There ya go! Maybe you'll be able to do something with your day besides folding laundry and playing with your creepy cards.

INT. LORETTA'S VAN - LATER

Loretta drives her rusted van through town, talking on her cell phone with one hand, applying lipstick in the rearview mirror with the other, and steering with her knees.

MAC (O.S.)
(over the phone)
How'd to go with Penny? Did she buy it? Did Maggie remember her lie?

LORETTA
You worry too much, Mackie. Just settle down, worry about the pageant, and I'll handle Penny.

MAC (O.S.)
(over the phone, skeptical)
Okay . . .

LORETTA
I'll handle it!

INT. PENNY'S MINI-VAN - DAY

Loretta's at the wheel while Mac rides shotgun, Maggie's wedged between the two of them, and the dozen foster boys scream in the back.

MAC
This isn't handling it, Ma.

The boys bounce around in the back as the mini-van barrels down the interstate.

LORETTA
What's the problem?!

Mac's about to pull her hair out.

MAC
Ma, I was on the fence about how essential it was to have YOU come with me and Maggie; we certainly didn't need to drag along THAT screaming pile of germs!

Mac turns around, horrified at the screaming ragamuffins.

MAC (CONT'D)
Myles, where are your pants??!

LORETTA
Well I couldn't very well offer to baby-sit JUST Maggie, could I?

Mac sighs and runs her hands nervously through her hair.

EXT. CHICAGO - DAY

Chicago, Illinois. Big, bustling, and ten zillion times better than *anywhere* in Indiana, let alone Shirley.

Maggie stares out her window in delight and amazement as they pass by the endless skyscrapers, the Navy Pier Ferris Wheel, and Lake Michigan.

She's never seen anything so amazing in her entire life.

MAGGIE
I love Chicago, Aunt Mac!

Mac laughs at Maggie's enthusiasm.

EXT. DRESS STORE - DAY

Mac, Maggie, Loretta, and the foster kids unload from the mini-van in the parking lot.

Loretta cracks open a can of beer as the herd walks to the fancy store. Mac rolls her eyes.

MAC
Christ, Ma . . .

LORETTA
What?! I've got a koozi!

Loretta's koozi has a picture of a giant pair of knockers, under which reads "Got Milf?"

INT. DRESS STORE - DAY

The store is obviously for the very richest of pageantry cliental. Maggie runs her hands along the racks and racks of expensive gowns and cupcake dresses.

MAGGIE
I'm gonna get one of these dresses Aunt Mac?!

MAC
Uh, almost, sweetie. Follow me.

Maggie follows Mac to the very back of the store. In a hidden corner are a couple of metal racks filled with clearance dresses. Still obviously expensive, but just tacky enough to understand why they're on the clearance rack.

Mac eyes the price tags and makes an exasperated face. The foster kids run past and scream. Loretta runs up, arms full of several bolts of fabric and sparkly trim.

LORETTA
Mackie! Mackie! They've got CRAZY sales going on - if you buy two full bolts, you get five yards of trim thirty percent off! Why don't I just make Maggie's dress??

Mac looks at the fabric in Loretta's arms: neon green and hot pink zebra print.

MAC
Ma, no . . .

LORETTA
Why not?! I made all of yours!

MAC
Jus-

WOMAN (O.S.)
McKenzie Meyers?!

Mac's eyes get wide with terror as she turns and she's face-to-face with EDEN PHILLIPS (30ish) blonde and stunning. Her photo on the cover of Pageantry Monthly was clearly not airbrushed. Perfection in a little black dress.

EDEN
Well as I live and breathe, McKenzie Meyers, how long has it been?

Eden's all smiles as she strides up to Mac. She makes an awkward almost-hug kind of motion before simply placing a hand on Mac's shoulder. The tension is palpable.

MAC
Uh, jeez, Eden, I don't know, probably about fifteen years.

EDEN
Oh, yes, of course, fifteen years! At uh, oh what pageant was it? The-

Eden snaps her fingers, pretending to search for the word.

MAC
(reluctant)
Universal Teen Royalty Pageant.

EDEN
That's right! Oh, wow . . .

Eden reaches up and repositions a stray hair on Mac's head.

EDEN (CONT'D)
Well heavens to bits, what are ya even doin' now? Rumor had you'd stepped away from pageantry.

MAC
I actually own my own studio.

EDEN
Shut the front door!

MAC
What does that even mean? . . .

EDEN
Well there were rumors flyin around for years that you'd gone had yourself a little mental breakdown or somethin' - Anyway, I'm sure you've heard, I actually own a studio myself, and little Paisley here is one of my star students!

Eden grabs a tiny beauty queen by the arm and stands her in between the two women. PAISLEY PARKER(8) has perfect dimples, and curly, golden hair. A mini-Eden.

Maggie sticks to Mac's side and sizes up Paisley. She looks down at her little-kid-pot-belly and sucks it in.

MAC
So what are ya doin' here, Eden?

EDEN
Well gettin a new dress for regionals, of course! I was about to ask you the same question, actually.

Eden eyes the rack of clearance dresses.

EDEN (CONT'D)
Though I also had no idea this store even had a clearance rack.

Loretta rolls her eyes, sips from her beer, and walks away as the gaggle of screaming kids runs through the aisle again.

LORETTA
HEY! KIDS! Let's go play in the parking lot!

Loretta corrals the kids and they all run outside.

Maggie makes a loud SLURPING sound on her lollipop and Eden looks down at her for the first time.

EDEN
And who's this little cutie?

Eden leans over so she's eye-level with Maggie. Maggie sticks out her hand to shake Eden's.

MAGGIE
I'm Ma- er, um . . . Destinee. With *two* E's.

Mac nods approvingly.

EDEN
Nice to meet you Destinee! I heard you won sectionals last weekend, congratulations!

MAGGIE
Thank you!

Eden shakes Maggie's hand with a smile and immediately wipes her hand on the side of her dress.

EDEN
Paisley's a sectional champion as well, so I can assume we'll be seeing you back here for regionals?

MAGGIE
Ye-

MAC
Oh, you WILL see us at regionals.

There's a hideously awkward beat as the two women stare each other down, and their little students cling to their sides.

EDEN
Well, we best be off. Gotta get back to training, of course. But we'll see you ladies this weekend!

Mac watches with a death glare as Eden and Paisley sashay away. Maggie waits a second before tugging at Mac's sleeve.

MAGGIE
Aunt Mac? . . . What's wrong?

MAC
Nothing, Mags, let's go.

INT. PENNY'S MINI VAN - PRESENT DAY

Loretta's at the wheel again, with Mac riding shot gun, and Maggie squeezed between them. She smiles wide and clutches the handles of a shopping bag, stuffed with something frilly.

Mac rests her head against the window and closes her eyes as the children in the back scream and jump all over each other.

LORETTA
I can't believe you still let her talk to you like that . . .

MAC
Can we talk about anything else?

LORETTA
You know Eden's mother was the exact same way. Uppity, condescending, a real whore. And with gin on her breath at nine in the morning, she had real nerve kicking *us* out of the carpool-

MAC
Ma, just shut it, alright? Please!

LORETTA
Well I'm just sayin', is all-

MAC
Well DON'T just say. Seriously.

Loretta finally clams up. But one can hardly think over the ruckus of the foster kids screaming in the back.

Suddenly, Loretta stomps on the breaks and the mini van comes to a screeching halt. The kids not wearing seat belts come tumbling forward as Mac braces herself on the dashboard. Loretta turns to the back seat.

LORETTA
HEY! IF ALL YA'LL DON'T SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP THIS SECOND I'M GONNA START THROWIN' YA THROUGH THE AIR LIKE A BUNCHA GODDAMN LAWN DARTS, SO CAN IT!

That does it. Loretta starts the car back up and continues driving, the mini-van now in total, terrified silence.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
It's enough to drive the pope to drink . . .

Mac watches as Loretta uses her non-driving hand to crack open a tallboy that sits in the cup holder. She takes a long sip and sets it back down.

MAGGIE
. . . I thought Miss Eden seemed like a nice lady!

Mac rolls her eyes and rests her head against the window.

MAC
Fifty bucks says you get robbed someday by someone you thought seemed like a nice lady.

INT. MAGGIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie stands in front of her full-length mirror, practicing her beauty poses. She jumps when there's a soft KNOCK at her door. She turns, and it's Penny.

She timidly sticks her head in.

PENNY
Hey, baby. Can I come in?

MAGGIE
Sure!

Penny comes in and sits on the edge of Maggie's bed.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Did I do something wrong?

PENNY
Oh, no, sweetheart, I just wanted to see what you were up to up here all by yourself. I feel like I haven't seen you much recently.

Penny produces a deck of playing cards from her pocket.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Wanna play our game?

Maggie's face lights up and she nods, enthusiastically. The two sit down on the floor, Penny gives Maggie half the deck, and they start building a house of cards together.

It's almost unsettling how quickly and precisely Maggie assembles the cards.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Hows soccer going, ya liking it?

Maggie nods.

PENNY (CONT'D)
How'd your game go this afternoon?

MAGGIE
Good.

Penny waits for Maggie to elaborate. She doesn't.

PENNY
Oh, good! When's your next one?

MAGGIE
This weekend . . .

PENNY
Maybe I can come watch this time?

MAGGIE
Um . . . I don't know.

PENNY
Ok, well, I don't want to make you feel like I HAVE to.

Maggie nods, not super comfortable with the secrecy. But before long, a naked, shrieking, Myles sprints through the bedroom and demolishes Maggie's house of cards.

PENNY (CONT'D)
MYLES, GET BACK HERE!

Penny immediately runs after the naked boy, leaving Maggie sitting on the floor alone, surrounded by the scattered deck.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAC'S STUDIO - MORNING

Mac, Loretta, and Maggie load up Mac's Dodge with plastic tubs of costumes and makeup. With one final shove, Loretta slams the trunk shut.

LORETTA
Welp, that about does it! Let's hit the road, gang!

MAGGIE
Chicago, here we come!!

Mac and Maggie high-five and they all pile into the car.

INT. PENNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Penny folds clothes at the kitchen table as the dozen foster kids run around, screaming. Penny looks over at the kitchen counter and her eyes linger on the vase of dandelions: the same dandelions Maggie gave to Penny when we first met her.

They have since wilted and look very much like the definition of weeds now. Penny smiles to herself, pokes her head out the kitchen, sticks two fingers in her mouth and WHISTLES.

PENNY
HEY! KIDS! Everyone grab a coat! Big kids, help the little kids get their shoes! We're going to Maggie's soccer game!

Penny's face brightens with a smile as she picks up her land-line and dials a number.

PENNY (CONT'D)
She'll be so surprised!

She waits a moment as the phone on the other end rings.

PENNY (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
Yeah, hi, Shirley Elementary? Can you tell me the number of the school's soccer coach, please? I need to make sure I know how to get to the game this weekend.

Penny's face drops and eyes narrow.

PENNY (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
What do you mean, the school doesn't *have* a soccer team?...

INT. MAGGIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Penny bursts into Maggie's bedroom. She begins ransacking the place, looking under the bed, in dresser drawers, and in the closet.

She removes a box of Barbies from the top shelf of Maggie's closet, and from underneath, Maggie's crown, trophy, and sash from sectionals come tumbling out.

Penny holds the trophy in her hands and reads the nameplate. "**2013 Southern Indiana Sectional Petite Princess Pageant Ultimate Grand Supreme: Destinee Gold.**" Scotch taped to the side of the trophy is a picture of Mac and Maggie.

Mac kneels next to Maggie, who holds her trophy and wears her crown proudly. Both of them are full of smiles. It takes Penny a moment or two before it all finally clicks.

PENNY
Oh, SONOFA-

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MIDWESTERN HIGHWAY - DAY

Mac's rusty, Dodge Neon barrel-asses down the empty highway, passing fields of corn, the occasional steel mill, and barely breaking for deer.

INT. MAC'S DODGE - DAY

Loretta's at the wheel, happily oblivious to the terror that is her driving skills, Mac white-knuckle-clutches the wahoo handle above her passenger-side door, and Maggie sits in the back, squished up against giant plastic tubs full of makeup, hair extensions, and glittery whatevers.

MAC
Ma, maybe I should drive some.

LORETTA
Oh, absolutely not, you need to be concentrating on the pageant. Don't worry about the drive, I'll get us to Chicago.

The car lurches with a giant THUMP as the Dodge runs up and over a raccoon. Mac looks back, horrified. Loretta shrugs.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
That'll teach his raccoon babies to venture out during daylight.

MAGGIE
Did we just run over an animal?

MAC
No, Mags, that was, uh- I don't know. A rock.

Maggie goes back to happily staring out the window at the passing fields.

MAC (CONT'D)
Hey, why don't ya listen to your talent music on your Walkman? Do a few mental run-thoughs before we get to the hotel.

Maggie nods with a smile and slips on her headphones. She leans her head back and closes her eyes, deep in concentration.

MAC (CONT'D)
Gettin' excited?

MAGGIE
Definitely!

Mac smiles at the little girl in the rearview mirror; but her eyes narrow as she notices something else. She makes a face, glances into the mirror again.

Loretta keeps her eyes on the road, happily oblivious.

MAC
Hey, Ma...?

LORETTA
What?

MAC
What exactly did you say to Penny when you picked Maggie up this morning? . . .

Loretta's face falls and eyes get wide. She looks up into the rearview mirror, groans, and with one hand on the wheel, she cracks open a tallboy with the other.

LORETTA
Ah- well . . . Dammit.

She takes a long gulp from her can before **STEPPING ON IT.** Mac's head slams against the head rest as the Dodge zooms down the highway.

EXT. MIDWESTERN HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Not far behind is Penny's mini-van. Penny at the wheel, boiling with rage, and the back packed full of the rowdy foster boys.

Both cars accelerate, going faster and faster down the interstate.

MAC
We gotta lose her, can't ya go any faster?!

LORETTA
The highway goes straight from here to Canada, Mac, how do ya want me to *lose* her? Off-road your friggin Dodge?!!

Penny's van starts to close the gap between the two cars as they speed past a state trooper. His lights immediately go off and siren WAILS. He joins in the chase. Mac looks behind her, frantic.

MAC
Shit!

Loretta speeds up.

LORETTA
Ya don't gotta outrun the bear, Mackie, ya just gotta outrun the other campers.

MAC
Are you serious?!

Mac watches as Penny pulls her van over and she and the cop are quickly out of sight. Loretta triumphantly pumps her fist in the air.

LORETTA
Yeah!! Beat 'em!

She holds her hand up for a high-five. Mac just scowls.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
What?!

MAC
She's got the boys in her car . . .

Loretta groans, seriously put out, before pulling a U-turn in the middle of the highway.

EXT. MIDWESTERN HIGHWAY - LATER

Mac's Dodge is pulled over on the side of the highway, Penny's giant mini-van is parked a little ways behind it, the cop car behind the van, and in the middle, Mac and Penny scream at each other.

Loretta waits impatiently at Mac's car, tapping her foot, as Maggie watches from the back seat.

The COP, fit and majestically mustached, tries to keep the screaming women off each other as a half-hand-cuffed Penny flails about. Penny points a finger in Mac's face.

PENNY
I TOLD you I didn't want you subjecting my kids to this kind of jackassery!

MAC
This isn't *jackassery*, Pen, it's-

PENNY
Do you realize I could have you arrested for KIDNAPPING!?
(to the cop)
Sir? Sir! This woman KIDNAPPED my child!! Cuff *HER*!!

The cop just rolls his eyes.

COP
(I hate my job)
Yeah, I'm totally gonna believe whatever you say, you seem super mentally stable right now.

MAC
Officer, we're kind of in the middle of a family issue-

COP
Ma'am I can see that. The fact is this woman was driving double the speed limit. That's a felony and I'm gonna have to take her in.

PENNY
Sir, I can't go to jail, as you can see I've kind of got my hands full.

She motions to the highway-side field where her boys run amuck.

MAC
Officer, can we just please try to sort this out amongst ourselves before you cart her away?

The cop sighs and begins walking back to his car.

COP
You have two minutes . . .

Mac and Penny walk back to Mac's Dodge.

PENNY
You're psychotic, you know that?! BOTH of you!

Loretta just rolls her eyes.

MAC
Penny, please, you gotta hear us out on this-

PENNY
I'd be happy to debate with you about why pageants are horrific for the billionth time, but first we gotta figure out how to get me out of going to jail!

Loretta sizes up the cop, purses her lips, takes a final swig from her beer, and tosses the can to the side of the road.

LORETTA
I got this.

INT. MAC'S DODGE NEON - LATER

Mac, Maggie, and Penny sit in the Dodge. Both women are seething. Through the back window we can see the cop car rocking back and forth.

Maggie sit in the backseat, laptop on her lap, and headphones in. She's watching video footage of her at sectionals.

PENNY
Just as a heads up, I don't have the cash to keep paying rent on YOUR studio AND the therapy required to fix whatever neurotic complexes you've given Maggie with this pageant crap.

MAC
She WON last week, Pen! The winnings are almost enough for me to pay you back, and if she does well at regionals, she'll get an even *bigger* check!

PENNY
Well Maggie's not competing at regionals, because I *forbid* you to take her!

MAC
You *forbid* me to take her?! What the hell does that mean?! We're halfway there!

PENNY
LOOK! Maggie's *my* kid, and she's had a hard enough life already, she doesn't need to end up like **YOU** on top of everything else!

Mac's face drops. This is probably the meanest thing Penny has ever said to her.

Penny deflates for a moment or two of silence as she nervously runs her fingers through her hair. Her voice shakes as she talks, more hurt than actively angry now.

PENNY (CONT'D)
. . . And of course Mom's in on this with you, she always sided with you over me.

Mac furrows her brow in confusion.

MAC
Wait, you don-

PENNY
(not listening)
You were always mommy's little star. Her princess. Her *beauty queen*. And I was just her *other* daughter. The one she couldn't be bothered to spend time with or really care about . . . Because I didn't care about stupid pageants.

Sad, Penny drops her head. And fidgets with her hands in her lap. Subtle tears start to well up in her eyes.

PENNY (CONT'D)
I'm not gonna let that happen to Maggie, I refuse to let you two let pageantry ruin her childhood like it did mine.

MAC
You actually think Mom cared about me more than you growing up?

Penny nods. Well, obviously.

MAC (CONT'D)
Pen, at every competition I went to, while other girls' moms were helping them with their hair and makeup, guess where ours was.

Mac waits a second for Penny to guess, but she wont.

MAC (CONT'D)
She was boning the hotel bartender. Or the bellhop. Or the pageant announcer. Or some married, but probably gay, pageant dad.

Penny lets this sink in, not totally surprised.

MAC (CONT'D)
Just because she came with me, doesn't mean she was any more *there* for me than she was for you.

Penny sniffs back a tear and glances out the back window at the rocking cop car. She scoffs and they share an eyeroll.

PENNY
Our mom is kind of a whore . . .

MAC
Yeah . . . I think she means well. Most of the time.

PENNY
Maybe . . .

Maggie takes her headphones out of her ears.

MAGGIE
What are you guys talking about?

PENNY
Lasagna recipes.

MAGGIE
Oh.
(beat)
Are we gonna keep driving to Chicago soon? I wanna swim in the hotel pool when we get there.

Mac shoots Penny a glare. Exasperated, Penny just sighs.

PENNY
We're just deciding on some stuff, sweetie. Whatcha watchin' on there?

MAGGIE
Me! Wanna see?!

Maggie hands the laptop to Penny who sets it on her lap and watches intently. Footage of Maggie plays on a loop. Her face drops. She's never imagined her little girl so dolled up.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
See?! Look how pretty I am! Aunt Mac made me a winner!

MAC
She's really good, Pen. Truly.

Penny sighs and looks from Mac to Maggie.

PENNY
Sweetheart, you're a beautiful winner, regardless. You don't need all of that makeup and glitter to feel pretty . . .

MAGGIE
I know that, Mama Penny, but . . .

Maggie looks back at the laptop, the footage still playing.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I like to feel like a winner THIS way.

Penny looks back at Mac, feeling so out of her element, it's gross.

PENNY
I- I just don't understand . . .

MAC
Let me ask ya something, Penny; Look at Maggie on stage. Imagine she's in her normal clothes. Imagine she's not wearing any makeup at all . . . Have you ever seen her look *that* happy?

She shakes her head no.

MAC (CONT'D)
Yes, pageants are ridiculous. And it's weird to dress up little girls like mini-adults. But if it makes her happy, then who the hell cares?

Penny sighs, tired and exasperated. She's sick of this fight.

PENNY
You can't make me feel weird about not wanting my seven year old to put pounds of shellack on her face.

All of a sudden, Loretta KNOCKS on the driver's side window. Mac rolls it down.

PENNY (CONT'D)
What happened?!

Loretta tucks her shirt back in and hands Penny a ticket.

LORETTA
I got us out of everything except for a littering ticket.

MAC
Littering??

LORETTA
From when I tossed my beer can.
(to Maggie)
Mags, sweetie, toss Grandma another beer from the cooler behind the drivers seat.

Maggie hands Loretta a beer can out the window.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
So what are we talkin' about?

MAC
Penny's complaining that little girls shouldn't wear makeup.

LORETTA
You know Penny, you can be a real grouch. Sometimes you sound just like *my* mother.

Mac and Penny's faces both drop in concern.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
She never let me wear makeup either.

PENNY
Oh God, we have to go to the pageant.

MAGGIE
Really??!

MAC
No shit?!

Penny sighs loudly and holds her head in her hands, defeated.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Yeah. Fine. Maybe I'll luck out and it'll just turn out to be a weird phase or something.

Maggie lunged forward and hugs Penny from behind.

MAGGIE
THANK YOU!!

PENNY
And even if it's not, I'll still be there, at every pageant. As long as it makes you happy, I'll have to support it . . .

MAC
Alright!

Maggie climbs into the front seat and she, Penny, and Mac share a three-way hug. Loretta tries to lean in through the half-open window and share in the hug, but her giant boobs get stuck. She finally gives up, leans against the side of the Dodge, and drinks her beer.

She waves at the cop car as it drives past.

LORETTA
So we gonna hit the road, or what?

MAC
(to Maggie)
Ready to kick some Paisley ass?!

MAGGIE
Yeah!!

Maggie pumps her little fist, triumphantly. Mac smiles.

EXT. CHICAGO RADISSON - DAY

Mac's sputtering Dodge Neon, followed by Penny's rusty van, pull into the parking lot at the hotel.

INT. CHICAGO RADISSON LOBBY - DAY

The automatic doors slide open and the dozen foster kids immediately race in: a loud, sticky, smelly whirlwind. Mac, Maggie, Penny, and Loretta stride up to the check-in desk where a heavily make-uped WOMAN sits with a clipboard.

WOMAN
Hello there! Welcome to Chicago - here to check in?

MAC
Yes, Destinee Gold. She's in the seven to ten division.

MAGGIE
Destinee with two E's!

Penny shoots Mac an exasperated glare.

PENNY
Are you kidding me with this?

Mac shrugs, not sorry.

WOMAN
Fantastic! Here's your program book and your number. And don't forget about the welcome dinner for all contestants and coaches in the banquet room tonight.

PENNY
Are parents allowed at the dinner?

The woman glares at the dozen foster kids who are screaming, laughing, and climbing all over a luggage cart.

WOMAN
No.

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

A large sign at the door to the banquet room reads, “Land O Lakes Butter Presents: 2013 Midwestern Petite Princess Pageant - Welcome Contestants and Coaches! You’re ALL winners!” Gag.

A long buffet table is filled with trays and trays of seafood and shellfish. Little girls and women pile their plates high with crab legs and lobster tails.

MAC
Your beauty dress is still just a little too tight on you, so I brought you your dinner, okay? Don’t go anywhere near the shellfish.

Mac hands Maggie a small Ziploc bag with five carrot sicks and a Go-Gurt.

Suddenly, they’re stopped by JOEL MCMAAN (40s) a walking haircut. A sleezeball in a suit. It’s hard to tell if what you smell when he walks past is his overwhelming hair gel, or his breath, which perpetually reeks of scotch.

He leans in and flashes a molester’s smile.

JOEL
Well, McKenzie Meyers, if it’s even possible you’re more radiant than you were fifteen years ago.

He’s definitely handsome, but he’s laying it on so thick, you could choke on his desperation. Disgusted, Mac looks up and scowls, making no attempt to look decent, much less radiant.

MAC
Joel, if it’s even possible, you’re more *disgusting* than you were fifteen years ago. Still sleeping with every contestant in sight?

JOEL
That's not really fair, Mac, just like you, I'm fifteen years older and more mature.

Mac raises an eyebrow. Not convinced.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I've moved on to mothers now.
(There we go)
And coaches.

He gives Mac a suggestive nudge.

JOEL (CONT'D)
You know I've got a lot of pull with the judges this year . . . If you were at all concerned on little Desire-

MAC
Destinee.

JOEL
Little Destinee's chances, you could come up to my room later tonight, we cou-

MAC
Fifteen years later, it's still 'no', Joel. Please go be creepy somewhere away from me.

Mac hustles away with Maggie. Obviously not all that distraught, Joel scans the lobby looking for his next clueless victim. He spots her.

JOEL
Gloria!

He rushes away to the other end of the banquet room.

MAGGIE
(to Mac)
What's wrong with that weird man?

MAC
A lot, probably. Don't go near him.

Mac and Maggie are about to sit down at a table when a WOMAN, large and heavily make-uped, stops them.

WOMAN
McKenzie Meyers! I'd heard you were here!

She pulls Mac into an uncomfortable hug and holds it too long, a giant (fake?) smile plastered on her mystic tanned face.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Heavens, we haven't seen you around a pageant since, oh, um . . .

MAC
(reluctant)
Universal Royalty. 1997.

WOMAN
That's right! My goodness, I'd thought you'd stepped away from pageantry!

MAC
NO! Why does everyone keep saying that?! I didn't flee pageants in shame, I wasn't hospitalized after a mental breakdown, and I didn't *kill myself*!

The woman seems taken aback as she lets out a nervous laugh.

WOMAN
Well thank goodness for that, am I right?! It's just that Universal Royalty was so mortifying for you, we all assumed you were too ashamed to come back. But, can't always believe what ya hear, I suppose! Good luck to ya!

The woman rushes away with a nervous smile, and Mac takes Maggie by the shoulders.

They finally find an empty table and take a seat. Maggie munches on her carrot sticks and Mac nervously picks at her plate of shellfish. She jumps, when Penny sits down next to her with a plate of food.

MAC
What are you doing here?

PENNY
Mac, there's a ten foot long table filled with free shellfish. TRY to act like my name isn't all over it.

Mac watches Penny wrap handfuls of jumbo shrimp in napkins and shove them in her purse.

Burberry perfume wafts through the air as Eden glides up to the table. Mac grimaces and avoids eye contact.

EDEN
Mckenzie, dear, how are you?!

MAC
Fine, Eden.

EDEN
Well I gotta tell ya, it's so great to see you here, we were all takin' bets as to whether or not you'd even show up.

MAC
Why wouldn't I show up?

Eden scoffs and eyes Penny's purse full of shellfish.

EDEN
Well, all I'm saying is, unless it's a guaranteed win, it's a waste of time.

She puts a hand on Maggie's back.

EDEN (CONT'D)
As long as you have fun though, am I right?! And Mac, let's just hope, for everyone's sake, we don't have a repeat of Universal Royalty 97!

With a too-wide, super-fake smile, Eden walks away. She immediately wipes her hand that was on Maggie's back on the side of her skirt. Penny scowls as she watches Eden walk back to her table and sit down.

PENNY
I see Eden's still a twat . . .

Mac just rolls her eyes.

MAC
I'm convinced she lays awake at night plotting ways to make my life a living hell.

Mac turns back to Maggie as Penny stands and stomps across the banquet room. She zones in on Eden, seated at another table, chatting flippantly with several other beauty queens.

In one swift motion, Penny takes a small bottle of Visene out of her purse, and as she glides by, squeezes the entire thing onto Eden's plate of seafood. She then slips away, unnoticed.

As soon as Penny's gone, Eden takes a bite and then shovels some of her food onto Paisley's plate. As soon as Eden's back is turned, Paisley shares a few of her oysters with another little girl.

That girl's coach tries a bite from her plate, then shovels some of the food onto another girl's plate. That little girl takes her plate of food, walks over to the buffet table, and after taking a bite, dumps her plate back into one of the serving bins.

A moment later, Mac and Maggie walk up to the buffet table.

MAGGIE
Aunt Mac? What happened at Universal Royalty in 1997?

Mac looks down at Maggie, lips pursed.

MAC
Nothing, it's not important. Eat your carrots.

Mac ladles some food from the buffet onto her plate.

INT. AUDITORIUM - FLASHBACK

Super: 1997

Sixteen-year-old Mac readies herself in the dressing room. She replaces a hairpin in her vanity mirror. Checks her lipstick. Practices her beaming smile. Very confident.

A stagehand enters the dressing room and yells into a headset.

STAGEHAND
Five minutes, ladies. Five minutes till show time!

The teenagers start to hustle towards the door, gabbing about their dresses, and smoothing down their hair. At an opposite vanity table, we see teenage Eden.

She secretly dumps an entire bottle of liquid laxative into a water bottle. She shakes the bottle until it's blended together, and then screws the cap back on with a devilish smirk.

She scurries up to Mac at her vanity.

TEENAGE-EDEN
McKenzie, hi!

TEENAGE-MAC
Oh, hey Eden.

TEENAGE-EDEN
Gettin' nervous?

Mac shrugs.

TEENAGE-MAC
I don't know, not really. I just like to go out there and have fun.

TEENAGE-EDEN
Well yeah, but I mean, winner goes on to Nationals. It's a big deal.

TEENAGE-MAC
Yeah, I guess so.

The two girls follow their fellow teen-beauty-queens through the heavy double doors.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

The gaggle of beauty queens huddle together in their sparkly dresses, a bundle of nerves.

TEENAGE-EDEN
So what's your talent gonna be this time, Mac? You did a great dance number at regionals last year.

TEENAGE-MAC
Well thanks! Actually I'm gonna sing an aria from La Traviata tonight.

TEENAGE-EDEN
Oh, wow, I can't wait to hear it. Must be pretty difficult though, huh?

TEENAGE-MAC
Yeah, I've been practicing a lot.

TEENAGE-EDEN
Sure, but you'd hate to get out there and feel a tickle in your throat. Want a sip of my water?

Mac thinks this over.

TEENAGE-MAC
Actually, would you mind?

TEENAGE-EDEN
Of course not! Can never be too hydrated.

She happily hands the laxatived water bottle to Mac, who unscrews the cap and takes a sip. She offers the bottle back to Eden, who immediately holds her hand up to decline.

TEENAGE-EDEN (CONT'D)
Nah, it's yours. I'm got another in the dressing room.

TEENAGE-MAC
Wow, thanks!

TEENAGE-EDEN
You're so welcome.

Eden smirks as she watches Mac chug the water bottle.

Triumphant, orchestral music swells from the auditorium. Some of the girls cross their fingers, rub their crosses, and gives each other hugs. Eden smiles menacingly at Mac.

TEENAGE-EDEN (CONT'D)
Show time!

TEENAGE-MAC
Good luck, Eden!

TEENAGE-EDEN
You too, McKenzie. B*est* of luck.

Mac smiles, oblivious to what will shoot out of her within the hour . . .

INT. PAGEANT AUDITORIUM - LATER

Teenage Eden, teenage Mac, and all of their teenage beauty queen competitors perform an intricate choreographed dance number on stage for the audience.

Mac and Eden seem to have the biggest smiles of all and the audience applauds and cheers loudly when the music stops and the number is over.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

A stagehand with a headset rushes through the busy dressing room as all of the contestants hurry to get any last minute details together.

STAGEHAND
Five minutes, ladies! Five minutes until talent!

Teenage Mac sits at her vanity. She replaces a hairpin, smooths down any flyaways, and takes a deep breath. Nerves are kicking in.

From deep in the pits of her stomach, we hear an awful GURGLING sound. Mac makes a face and looks around, embarrassed, to make sure nobody heard.

Eden plops herself in a chair at the vanity mirror next to Mac. She reapplies lipstick and admires her own smile.

Mac's stomach GURGLES again. Louder this time, and Eden stifles a laugh.

TEENAGE-EDEN
McKenzie, are you feeling okay?

TEENAGE-MAC
Yeah, I'm fine. Lunch just must not be sittin' great. Or nerves, maybe.

Eden nods, a smirk, growing.

TEENAGE-EDEN
I know what you mean. We've been in a lot of pageants together, you and me, but this one is really huge.

Mac nods and takes another sip from her water bottle. Another awful GURGLING sound. Mac leans over slightly and moans quietly.

TEENAGE-EDEN (CONT'D)
Oh, dear, maybe you need to run to the bathroom really quick?

TEENAGE-MAC
Um, yeah, maybe . . .

Mac pushes her chair away from her vanity and stands up, searching across the room for the nearest bathroom.

Suddenly, the lady stagehand with a headset runs behind her.

STAGEHAND
McKenzie Meyers! You're up! Talent routine! Now!

Mac's eyes widen with fright. She's now sweating profusely.

MAC
Shit . . .

EDEN
Yeah! Shit!

Eden can hardly contain her smile.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

The stage is perfectly lit, and the audience applauds loudly as a pretty teenage beauty queen bows and exits the stage. A younger Joel stands behind his podium and smiles into his microphone.

JOEL
Thank you, Sandy! Wasn't she lovely ladies and gentlemen?!

The crowd cheers and claps even louder.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Up next we've got our reigning regional champion, three-time Universal Royalty Ultimate Grand Supreme, McKenzie Meyers singing an aria from La Traviata! Give her a hand!!

The audience goes ballistic. The applause is deafening. A giant smile is plastered on Mac's face, though sweat continues to drip off her head and onto her dress, and her skin becomes increasingly greyish in color.

She makes her way to center stage, signals for the orchestra that she's ready to begin, and takes a shaky breath. Her stomach GURGLES one final time right before the music begins.

Behind the curtain backstage, all of Mac's competitors watch, some with adoring smiles, and some with jealous glares. In the front of the pack, we can see Eden, an evil smirk on.

Under the hot spotlights, Mac starts singing. It's hauntingly beautiful, in perfect Italian. Everyone's mesmerized. Mac makes it through the first several bars of her aria, but she lets lose with a piercing high note, and with it, a trickling stream of liquefied shit runs down her legs.

Fear and shame wash over Mac's face, but she doesn't stop singing. Her voice wavers for a moment, but then she goes back to her perfect, beautiful, Italian, praying that nobody notices the puddle of crap forming around her heels.

People in the audience and the girls back stage drop their jaws in shock as they start to realize what's happening. Even the judges are too disgusted to breathe loudly. People start to giggle and whisper behind their hands. She doesn't stop singing.

Finally finished, she forces a smile, and bows, one final GURGLE echoing from the pits of her stomach.Mac uncomfortably waddles off stage, her head hung in ultimate shame. A lone clapper applauds for a moment before it's silent again.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Uh, thank you, McKenzie.
(quieter, into the mic)
Can we get a mop up here please?

INT. MAC'S HOTEL ROOM - LATE AT NIGHT, PRESENT

Mac lays in bed, wide awake and staring at the ceiling. Restless, she fiddles with the edge of the blankets.

Penny sleeps soundly in the bed next to her, snoring slightly from behind her eye mask. Maggie sleeps soundly, clutching a teddy bear, in the second twin bed.

The dozen foster children all sleep with their mouths hanging open, strings of drool trailing their way out. They're all scattered across the room, some on cots, some on the floor, curled up with blankets and throw pillows.

Mac gets up, tiptoes over the sleeping kids, and leaves.

INT. PAGEANT AUDITORIUM - LATE AT NIGHT

With a lot of effort, Mac pulls open the heavy, double doors to the auditorium and lets herself inside. The stage is decorated and set up for the pageant tomorrow; lights, set pieces, sound equipment.

Mac runs her fingertips along the armrests of the chairs as she slowly walks down the aisle. When she reaches the stage, she hops up, turns, and looks out into the empty auditorium.

Instinctively, Mac takes center stage. She pulls her feet together in fifth position, pulls her shoulders back, head high, and holds her arms out, as if presenting an extravagant evening gown.

An audience that isn't there starts to cheer. Triumphant music, coming from an orchestra that isn't there, begins to swell, and Mac smiles wide as she crosses the stage as she did when she was still competing.

She's wearing a bleach-stained T-shirt and oversized, men's sweatpants, but as far as she's concerned, Mac's decked out in the most extravagant gown she's ever owned.

The non-existent orchestra plays the Miss America theme song and Mac waves proudly to the non-existent audience. The nostalgia is overwhelming.

But Mac snaps out of her daydream when a very loud and very sarcastic, slow CLAPPING comes from the back of the auditorium. Mac holds a hand up to shield the spotlights, and see who the clapper is.

It's Eden. Standing proud, arms crossed across her chest, dressed in her sleek black turtleneck and black pencil skirt.

EDEN
Re-living the glory days?

Mac grimaces, unsure if she should answer.

MAC
Something like that.

Eden makes her way down the aisle. Mac shifts her weight, suddenly feeling very exposed in her grungy pajamas.

EDEN
Paisley and I were going over last minute touches on her routine. Just checking out stage logistics.

MAC
Kind of late for Paisley to be up, isn't it?

EDEN
Paisley's a winner, McKenzie. She knows that she has to do whatever it takes to win. Runner Ups sleep.

Mac rolls her eyes and starts to climb down off the stage.

MAC
Whatever, Eden.

EDEN
Oh, wait, I'm sorry. Runner ups don't sleep, they just shit themselves on stage and are never heard from again.

Eden smiles at her dig, and Mac's face tenses with rage.

MAC
JESUS CHRIST, is there ANYONE who's not gonna bring that up to me today?! You *cheated*, Eden!! You couldn't stand being *MY* runner up any more, so you pumped my goddamn water bottle full of laxatives!!

Eden stares, a slight smirk spreading across her lips.

MAC (CONT'D)
Jabba the Hut would've won Miss Universal Royalty if his biggest competition was dealing with shit flowing out of her like the Hoover Dam!

Eden only shrugs. Ice queen.

EDEN
Look where it got me: I live in an apartment on the Goldcoast, my students go to nationals every year, mothers slash tires to make sure there's room for their kid in my company classes, and who are you? You're the girl who peaked in middle school.

This stings. Mac deflates.

EDEN (CONT'D)
Face it, honey. You're a Shirley loser and you'll always be a Shirley loser. Don't take it out on those of us who had the guts to do whatever it took to get out just because you never did.

Eden spins on her heel and struts out the heavy, double doors, her very high heels CLACKING with every step.

EDEN (CONT'D)
Good luck, tomorrow.

The doors slam shut behind her and as if on cue, the spotlights overhead shut off. Mac's left alone in the very dark auditorium.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

The dressing room is abuzz with little girls in sequined dresses, frantic mothers with bobby pins stuck in their teeth, and poised coaches with lethal amounts of hair spray.

Maggie sits perfectly still, sucking on a lollipop, in front of a vanity mirror, as Mac pins in her curly hair piece. Penny stands behind them, half-overseeing the hair-pinning, half-wrangling her dozen kids who are climbing up the walls.

They're disturbing everyone around them, and while the foster children are oblivious to the glares, Penny and Mac aren't.

MAC
Pen, do something with the kids?
They're really causing a scene.

Penny runs her hands down her face, exhausted.

PENNY
Ugh, I know. Mom said she'd watch
'em, but I couldn't find her!

INT. HOTEL BAR - CONTINUOUS

Loretta leans over the bar and laughs at something the young bartender says. She seductively licks the edge of her glass.

LORETTA
Hey now, you're cute-

She leans over the bar a little further and glances down at the bartender's hand.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
Oh, I see you're married . . .

Loretta sits back down on her stool and begrudgingly drinks.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PENNY
I'd send them up to the room to watch TV, but I'm afraid they'll trash the place.

MAC
Well, we can cross that bridge when we come to it. Just get them out of here before someone calls security.

Penny grabs one of the older boys and hands him the room key.

PENNY
Take everyone upstairs, and I swear, if you do anything besides quietly watch TV in there, there will be serious hell to pay.

The kid nods and then corrals his brothers out of the dressing room. Penny breathes a sigh of relief before placing a reassuring hand on Maggie's shoulder.

PENNY (CONT'D)
How ya feelin' honey?

MAGGIE
Great!

Just then, a tiny beauty queen races up to a trash can right behind Mac and Penny, and **UPCHUCKS.** The little girl moans in agony as her mother rushes to hold her hair back.

Mac and Penny look on in judgment.

PENNY
They're a little young for bulimia to be a viable training method, aren't they?!

Mac shrugs and turns her attention back to Maggie.

MAC
There are no rules in pageantry.

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

And the pageant begins! The same auditorium is packed with frazzled mothers, scolding coaches, and child-Barbie-dolls. Joel McMaan stands at his usual spot behind the podium.

JOEL
Welcome, ladies and gentlemen to the 2013 Midwestern Miss Petite Princess Pageant! Let's welcome all of our beautiful contestants!

The crowd goes wild, and the curtains open, revealing the dozens of contestants, all around Maggie's age, decked out in matching glittery ball gowns.

INT. AUDITORIUM, SWIMSUIT COMPETITION

Poppy, upbeat music plays as each contestant parades herself up and down the stage in a skimpy bikini. Maggie proudly prances about in her one-piece.

INT. AUDITORIUM, BEAUTY COMPETITION

The same girls, now all dressed in frilly cupcake dresses, pose at one end of the stage and then the other, showing off their modeling and smiles.

Maggie seems much less stiff and more confident than she did at sectionals, though her competitors all seem to be increasingly sweaty and pale-looking.

INT. AUDITORIUM, TALENT COMPETITION

One by one the girls show off their skills. One girl plays an incredible solo on her flute. Another constructs a bicycle out of balloons. Another girl twirls her flaming batons.

As soon as baton girl steps off stage, she leans over in agony, and moans, clutching her stomach.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mac gives Maggie one final spritz of hair spray.

MAC
Okay, go get your shoes on. You're up after Paisley.

Maggie hops off the chair and runs to get her tap shoes. Mac takes a deep breath and gives herself a nod in the mirror before Maggie sadly shuffles back.

MAC (CONT'D)
What's wrong, Mags?

MAGGIE
I jus- please don't be mad at me.

MAC
Sweetheart, what's wrong.

MAGGIE
I, um- I can't find my tap shoes.

MAC
WHAT?!

Penny comes over and kneels so that she's eye-level with Mac and Maggie.

PENNY
What's wrong?

MAC
Maggie lost her tap shoes!

MAGGIE
I didn't mean to! They were in my bag and now they're not! I don't know where they went!

Maggie's eyes start to well up with hysterical tears. Mac scans the dressing room until she locks glares with Eden, who looks confident, if slightly pale and sweaty.

Mac deflates. There's no fighting that witch. She puts a hand on Maggie's shoulder and tries to calm her down.

MAC
Maggie, sweetie, it's ok, alright? Just listen to me, you're fine. We just have to think of something else you can do for your talent.

MAGGIE
(sniffing)
But I can't do anything!

Penny's eyes get wide. She reaches into her purse, and unveils a worn deck of playing cards.

PENNY
Yes you can . . .

INT. TALENT COMPETITION - CONTINUOUS

Paisley does her acrobatic number involving her putting both feet behind her head and back flipping through the air. She looks sick to her stomach, but the crowd goes ballistic.

In the front row, Eden applauds, proud. She dabs her sweaty neck with a tissue and **SWALLOWS** hard.

The second she gets off stage, Paisley rushes over to a trash can and **HURLS.** Bystanders cringe as the little girl moans. Eden's by her side in an instant.

EDEN
(whispering)
Hey! Pull yourself together!

INT. AUDITORIUM, TALENT COMPETITION - LATER

It's Maggie's turn. She crosses the stage in her tap costume, but no tap shoes. She takes a shaky breath.

The auditorium is silent as Maggie takes Penny's deck of playing cards out of her pocket and goes to work. Before we know it, Maggie's built a tall and elaborate house of cards.

She places the last card in place, steps back, and with an elated smile, poses with a flair. The crowd, which hasn't made a peep this entire time, goes absolutely wild!!

Out of nowhere, a half-naked Myles comes running down the aisle. Mac sees this, gets out of her seat, and snatches the boy up before he can run on stage and ruin Maggie's talent.

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

As the judges deliberate, contestants and mothers mill about the auditorium, all trying to guess results. It's important to note the increasingly pale and sweaty look of everyone in the audience. Everyone is *MISERABLE* looking.

Mac, Penny, and Loretta all stand near the back doors. Mac taps her foot anxiously, and Loretta makes eyes with a very obviously married man across the room.

Maggie runs up to the women with a smile.

MAGGIE
Did ya see me Mama Penny?! You don't hate pageants anymore, huh?!

Penny smiles and picks her up.

PENNY
You were beautiful, baby girl!

MAGGIE
When am I gonna get my crown?

MAC
The judges are just deliberating, Mags. It'll be a little while longer before crowing.

MAGGIE
Some of the girls are so nervous, but I'm not! Kelly even PUKED backstage!

MAC
(to Penny)
Why the hell is everyone blowing chunks at this pageant?!

Penny just shrugs.

MAC (CONT'D)
(to Maggie)
Well, why don't you go wait with the other little girls?

Maggie nods and bounds off to the other side of the room, where the tiny, glitzed up beauty queens all huddle together, anxiously. Mac turns back to Penny with a worried look.

PENNY
What's wrong?

MAC
I'm freakin' out, Pen.

PENNY
Why? Maggie's fine.

MAC
Well bully for her, cause I'm not!

PENNY
Why? She's great, you said so yourself . . .

MAC
Oh grow up, Penny, were you even watching?! These kids are pros! I'm afraid if I don't do something drastic, she'll come in tenth or something god-awful like that!

PENNY
Well, drastic, like what?

MAC
Ok, this is gonna sound gross, but Joel McMaan made a pass at me last night . . . I'm pretty sure he might have some pull, so-

PENNY
Mac, no!

Loretta, who hasn't been paying attention, perks up.

LORETTA
What's wrong now?

PENNY
Mac's considering *sleeping* with the announcer in order for Maggie to place higher.

LORETTA
Which announcer? Joel?!

Mac nods, ashamed, but Loretta just waves it off.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
Well that's no big deal, I've slept with that guy before!

Mac and Penny's faces both drop in horror and disgust.

MAC
Gross, Mom!

LORETTA
I thought you knew that, honey, I slept with plenty of judges and announcers if I thought it'd help you get crowned.

A horrific beat as Mac silently wishes for death and Loretta locks eyes with another man across the room.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
You're welcome, by the way.

And she's off, sidling up to the side of any man who seems even two percent interested. Once she's gone, Penny gives Mac a condescending look.

PENNY
You wanna end up like that?!

MAC
Pen, all the kid wants is to feel special! That means winning! This is beyond me keeping my studio or getting my name back out there, I really just want her to win so she can feel good about herself!

Penny deflates and turns Mac's shoulders so that they're both looking back at Maggie, laughing with one of the other contestants. Huge smile, perfectly oblivious.

PENNY
Have you ever asked Maggie about her birth parents?

Mac shakes her head, no.

PENNY (CONT'D)
They were fifteen-year-old crack heads who tried to sell her for a hundred bucks and a six pack of Busch Light.

Mac keeps her eyes on Maggie, who's blissfully unaware they're talking about her. This really hurts Mac's heart.

MAC
Oh Jesus, really?!

PENNY
It's not just on A&E's Intervention, Mac, those kinds of people exist in real life. You're not one of them. Probably the last thing Maggie needs is a mother-figure in her life telling her that winning's so important, you need to cheat to get there.

Mac takes a deep breath, and then walks over to Maggie. Mac kneels down so that she's eye-level with Maggie and then wraps her arms around her, pulling her into a hug.

MAC
I just wanted to tell you I'm so proud of you . . .

Maggie lets loose with a huge smile and throws her arms around Mac, squeezing her tightly into the biggest, least uncomfortable hug Mac has ever received.

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

The contestants pose in their dresses on stage.

JOEL
Let's give another round of applause for all of our beautiful contestants!

The crowd gives a round of applause. Joel opens an envelope.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Now remember, you're *ALL* winners!

The audience holds their breath.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

Several little girls on stage hold tiny trophies. Paisley, Maggie, and a few other girls still have empty hands.

JOEL
Best Smile, goes to . . . Destinee Gold!!

Maggie beams with pride as the stagehand places a sash around her neck and hands her a tiny trophy. She waves excitedly at Mac and Penny in the audience.

Penny cheers and claps excitedly. Mac's a little more lackluster about it, though keeps a genuine smile. She wipes her increasingly sweaty brow with her sleeve.

PENNY
(to Mac)
Why aren't you more excited??

MAC
Best Smile is half a step up from participation trophy. She's out of the running for Nationals.

Penny absorbs this, shrugs, then leans over closer to Mac.

PENNY
And yet, look how happy she is.

Mac and Maggie lock eyes. Maggie smiles and waves. She holds up her tiny trophy for Mac to see better from the audience. Mac smiles back and gives the little girl a thumbs up.

PENNY (CONT'D)
You made her feel special. For the first time in her life, that little girl feels like a winner.

Maggie continues to beam with delight on stage, clutching her trophy and admiring her sash. Never happier.

PENNY (CONT'D)
You did that. You should be proud.

Mac smiles, absorbing all of this.

JOEL
And the winner . . . Of the Midwestern Petite Princess Pageant, along with a 10,000 cash prize, and a spot to compete at Nationals next month . . . Is . . .

Everyone but Mac and Eden seem to be holding their breath.

JOEL (CONT'D)
PAIS-

Out of nowhere, little Paisley leans over and HURLS all over Joel's perfectly shined shoes. Everyone stares at the stage in absolute horror. Crickets.

Joel stares at his shoes, sighs hard, looks back at his results card, and then tears it up.

JOEL (CONT'D)
(sotto)
You know what, fuck it.
(louder)
DESTINEE GOLD!!

The crowd bursts into applause, Maggie shrieks with elation, and Mac and Penny hug each other, sighing with relief.

Stone-faced, pale, and pissed, Eden storms up to Mac.

EDEN
(so not serious)
Congratulations, Mckenzie.

MAC
Uh . . . Thanks, Eden.

Mac looks hard at Eden, examining her increasingly grayish and clammy skin. Her own skin doesn't look much better.

MAC (CONT'D)
Are you feeling, okay?

EDEN
I feel like a winner.

We hear a woman in the back of the room moan and then **VOMIT.** A little girl SHRIEKS as several more people start **VOMITING.** Mac and Penny look around the room, more confused than disgusted. The entire room has turned into one, giant, barf-fest.

Maggie stands paralyzed with disgusted fear on the stage as her competitors lean over and continuously vomit. Mac looks over at Eden, gray and sweaty.

MAC
. . . You sure you're feeling okay?

EDEN
I told you, Mac. I'm a winner. I feel like a winner.

Mac purses her lips and nods, and very suddenly, Eden leans over and HURLS on Mac's shoes.

Mac looks down in horror and disgust and clings to her older sister, who's shocked to near-silence.

MAC
GRIPES!

PENNY
OH, JESUS!

Eden wipes her mouth with her paper program book and stands up straight.

EDEN (CONT'D)
Ugh! Why aren't you sick too?? Did you do this??!!

Mac takes a shaky breath, closes her eyes, and **HURLS**, pummeling Eden right in the face.

There are no more words.

At the back of the auditorium, Loretta and the hotel lobby bartender come tumbling out of a supply closet, hair mussed, and clothes half-on.

LORETTA
What the hell?! . . .

Loretta looks around in shock at the barf-fest happening around her. She calls across the room to Mac and Penny.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
Hey girls! Girls! This is what the reception to your father's and my wedding looked like!

Mac and Penny aren't amused.

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

The auditorium has emptied save for Maggie, Penny, a very pale-looking Joel, a very sweaty Mac, and half a dozen paramedics carting away the remaining vomiting beauty queens.

A couple of janitors mop up vomit in the aisles. Joel takes a breath, seems to swallow down some vomit, and then heads over to Maggie, who stands proudly at center stage.

JOEL
Since every other contestant is spewing like a busted fire hydrant-

He shudders.

JOEL (CONT'D)
It's my pleasure to name you, Destinee, the 2013 Midwestern Petite Princess Grand Supreme.

He places the crown on Maggie's head and Mac and Penny clap and cheer loudly from the edge of the stage. A janitor mops over their feet.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Mac and Maggie sit behind a long table and two microphones, before several local news crews during a press conference.

Cameras flash, reporters yell out questions. Mac seems very much in her element, despite having to take several swings from a Pepto Bismol bottle, while Maggie's a little more timid. A reporter shoots her hand up.

REPORTER
Destinee! How do you feel?!

MAGGIE
. . . like I need to take a shower!

The crowd chuckles. Another reporter shoots their hand up.

REPORTER2
Ms. Myers, what will you focus on with Destinee as you prepare for Nationals?

Mac swallows hard, fighting back more upchuck.

MAC
I think we're going to put a lot more work into Destinee's overall stage presence and try to make it more unique. There's a lot of young talent that's coming to Nationals, and we certainly won't underestimate it.

She smiles and nods to another reporter with her hand up.

REPORTER3
Ms. Myers, it seems as though the food poisoning everyone is suffering from came from the banquet dinner last night.

MAC
That's what I've heard, yes.

REPORTER3
Well, would you like to comment on how it came that Destinee was the only one who didn't get sick?

The room quiets as Mac decides how to answer.

MAC
She didn't get sick because I didn't *let* her eat any of the food.

REPORTER3
Interesting . . .

An awkward beat as a tense vibe washes over the room. Another reporter shoots his hand in the air.

REPORTER4
You don't think it's suspicious that your student was the ONLY contestant who didn't eat any of the food?

MAC
This is ridiculous; Destinee's on a strict diet, as are most contestants in pageantry, and-

REPORTER4
-Would you be willing to testify to all of this in court? Perhaps a polygraph test to prove you had nothing to do with the poisoning of the dinner?

MAC
(getting heated)
No, I certainly will not take a lie detector test . . .

The vibe gets weirder as the room begins to stir with whispers and furious note-taking. Maggie shifts behind her microphone, uncomfortable.

She looks back and forth, nervously, between Mac and Penny, who stands, her arms folded, in the back of the conference room. Penny's brow furrows and her eyes narrow in concern.

In the back of the room, not far from Penny, a very pale-looking Eden sticks her hand up.

EDEN
If you had nothing to do with the sabotage, then what are you afraid of?

She holds her fist up to her mouth and swallows hard, pained, fighting back more vomit. The crowd murmurs in agreement.

MAC
Who said anything about sabotage?! I'm sick too, Eden, and besides, seafood goes bad all the time!

EDEN
Sure, all the time. Especially when a psycho has-been beauty queen decides to settle a score . . .

Mac and Eden share a cross-room death glare of genocidal proportions.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO RADISSON - CONTINUOUS

The doors to the hotel fly open and Mac and Eden, entangled in a whirlwind of an angry girl-fight, burst through a crowd of reporters, spectators, and angry mothers swarm around.

Cameras continue to flash as Mac and Eden scream, punch boobs, and pull each other's hair.

They tumble to the ground and Mac REVS UP FOR ONE FINAL **PUNCH** to Eden's face. It takes four policemen to pull Mac off Eden.

EDEN
SHE ATTACKED ME! ARREST HER!!

Mac kicks, screams, curses, and flails about. Penny holds Maggie back by her shoulders as the two of them plus the dozen foster kids and Loretta stare in shock at Mac going ballistic.

PENNY
Don't worry, Mac! We'll figure something out!!

Mac tries to flail out of the policemen's arms, to no avail.

MAC
Penny! Ma! You guys gotta bail me out! I FUCKING DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!!

Penny covers Maggie's ears. Mac starts to scream again, but Mac stops when she notices someone in the crowd:

It's Danny! Just as douchey as ever, decked out in Ed Hardy, and a greasy faux-hawk. He's holding his cell phone up, recording the entire scene, with a giant smile. Mac's stunned to silence.

Well. Almost.

MAC (CONT'D)
What the FUCK are you doing here?! Get the HELL out of my face with that!

Mac tries to swat the cell phone out of Danny's hand, but the cops stop her and hurry her to the police car.

DANNY
PLEASE. You think I'd miss a Mckenzie Myers freak out?! This shit's going viral, baby, VIRAL!!

He fist pumps triumphantly as Mac gets tossed into the back seat of the cop car and the door slams shut behind her.

DANNY (CONT'D)
YOU'VE JUST BEEN ZIZED!!!!

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL CELL - LATER

In her orange jumpsuit, Mac sits on the bottom bunk of her cell, arms crossed across her chest. She stares with a scowl as her BURLY CELL-MATE attempts to scratch open a hole in the floor with a filed toothbrush.

Another skinny and TATTOOed CELL-MATE hangs halfway off the top bunk and STARES at Mac as she pulls hairs out of her head, one-by-one.

Mac stares, wide-eyed, at the ground, until a cop appears at the cell door.

GUARD
Ms. Meyers, you have a visitor.

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL VISITATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The male cop leads Mac, handcuffed at the wrists and ankles, to a table in the middle of the communal visitation room. He sits her down and SNAPS the cuffs shut to the table and chair legs before walking off to the side.

MAC
This seems super unnecessary . . .

Across the table from Mac, Loretta waves at the occasional inmate walking past.

MAC (CONT'D)
Ma, what are you doing?

LORETTA
Please, I went to high school with half of these women.
(and then)
MARGIE!

Loretta waves enthusiastically at Margie, the same neighbor-friend who's hair Loretta was washing in her sink when we first met her.

Margie enthusiastically waves back. Loretta chuckles.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
That crazy broad.

She looks back at Mac, smiling sympathetically.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
You know orange really isn't your color, Mackie.

MAC
Yeah, I know, Ma. Thanks.

LORETTA
You keepin your ass to the wall?

MAC
You might be confused about what happens in a women's cellblock.

Loretta shrugs.

LORETTA
Well, I'm just sayin' is all.

MAC
Ma, please, I need you to stay on topic. Nationals is in two weeks.

Loretta nods.

MAC (CONT'D)
Have they set a trial date?

LORETTA
First hearing's scheduled for next week, but Penny and I just spoke with your public defender. We're working on getting it pushed up.

MAC
Where's Penny now?

LORETTA
Watching the kids.

MAC
Maggie okay?

LORETTA
A little frazzled from all the commotion, but otherwise, fine.

Mac drops her head to the table. Sighs loudly.

MAC
All I want to do is get out in time for Nationals. I just- I have to be there for Maggie. I have to be . .

Loretta stares at Mac over pursed lips and thinks.

LORETTA
Don’t worry, Mackie. I’ll take care of everything.

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL CELL - LATER

Back in her jail cell, Mac sulks on the bottom bunk. Her tattooed cell mate sits TOO-CLOSE, simultaneously staring and pulling out her hair, one-by-one. Burly cell mate continues to chip away at the ground with her filed toothbrush.

MAC
(to Tattoo)
Uh . . . How long has she been chipping away at that hole in the ground.

TATTOO
Forever.

MAC
Forever, like, all day? Or forever, like, all week?

TATTOO
Four months.

Mac looks back over at Burly. The hole she’s made is maybe half an inch deep.

MAC
. . . *Clawing* at the ground might be more effective.

All of a sudden, all the lights SHUT OFF. There are several beats of SILENCE as Burly stops digging and Tattoo looks to the cell door.

Burly gets up, shuffles over to their cell door, and slowly SLIDES IT OPEN. She looks back tentatively at Tattoo and Mac, who furrow their brows in confusion.

The sound of many other metal cell doors SLIDING OPEN echoes down the hallway. Burly takes a step OUT of her cell. Tattoo tentatively follows.

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Burly and Tattoo step out into the hallway, now lined with several other confused inmates. For maybe half a second of caution, the haggard women stare at each other...

And then finally, THEY RUN!

The swarm of escapees take off down the hallway, laughing and shrieking, all just a little too fast for the bumbling security guards chasing after them.

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL CELL - CONTINUOUS

Mac makes a face and tentatively gets up off her bunk.

MAC
(sotto)
What's going on?! . . .

She shuffles out into the-

HALLWAY. Mac looks up and down the hallway, now totally empty. She takes several steps, peering into the empty cells as she goes.

MAC (CONT'D)
. . . Is it lunchtime?!

She doesn't make it much further down the hallway, before a fat and bumbling security GUARD rounds the corner, huffing and puffing.

GUARD
HEY! Stop where you are!!

Mac makes a confused face and points in the direction all the ladies ran in.

MAC
Yeah, hey, uh- I think I might have missed-

But befoe Mac can finish her thought, the fat guard TASES her.

Mac convulses and collapses to the ground with a THUD.

EXT. COOK COUNTY JAIL - CONTINUOUS

The escaped ladies of Cook County jail race away from the Jailhouse. At the front of the pack is Margie. She stops short in the alleyway and throws her arms up in the air in an ode to Shawshank Redemption.

She holds for a moment before running again with the rest of the women, up to their getaway van, parked in the street with it's side door open.

As the final ladies pile into the van and they slide the door shut, the van peels away, **Loretta** cackling at the wheel.

INT. GETAWAY VAN - CONTINUOUS

Loretta pumps her fist, victorious, barely keeping her eyes on the road. She high fives Margie, who cackles in the passenger seat and cracks open a can of Busch Light.

LORETTA
AHA! We did it!

She looks behind her into the back of the van at the cheering escapees.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
. . . Where's Mackie?

INT. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT - LATER

Mac sits on a bench in an empty room, with nothing, and no one else. She takes a shaky breath, looks around. Nothing.

She anxiously taps her foot. Runs her fingers through her hair.

INT. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT - WHO KNOWS HOW LONG LATER

Mac lies down on the same bench, her face a little more weathered than before. She rubs her temples and breathes heavily. She begins to hum the Miss America theme song.

INT. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT - WHO KNOWS HOW LONG LATER

Mac manically paces around her cell. She continues to hum, but louder and louder, as her pacing gets quicker and quicker.

INT. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT - WHO KNOWS HOW LONG LATER

Mac, face ever more gaunt-looking, and hair visibly thinning, jumps, twirls and dances around her empty cell, SINGING the Miss America theme song, and occasionally throwing herself into the cell door.

MAC
THERE SHE IS! MISS AMERRRICAAAAA!!

BANG! As she throws her body into the door.

MAC (CONT'D)
THERE SHE IS, YOUR IDEAAAALLLL!!

BANG! Mac rubs her shoulder where she rammed into the door, but continues spinning and jumping around, until finally, her cell door opens and a GUARD appears.

MAC (CONT'D)
Thank god! Human interaction! Christ, how long have I been in here??!

The burly prison guard stares in shock.

GUARD
Thirty-five minutes, ya big baby!

Mac crumbles to the floor and starts yanking at her hair with a pathetic whine.

GUARD (CONT'D)
But you're acting worse than dudes who've been in solitary for a year and a half. I'd do anything to make ya shut up!

The guard rolls in a large, out of date, TV set and turns the channel to E! Mac happily perks up to watch.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - LATER

A frazzled Penny and a worried Maggie walk hand-in-hand up the front walk to their house.

PENNY
Don't worry, sweetie, we'll get Aunt Mac out of jail in no time, you'll see. Everything will work out.

Penny looks up and notices Loretta's van parked in her driveway.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Huh . . . I wonder what your grandmother's doing here.

The two walk up the front steps and open the door.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Penny walks inside and immediately **SHRIEKS** when she sees a dozen prison escapees, still dressed in their orange jumpsuits, sprawled out across her living room floor and furniture.

The rowdy foster boys are scatted amongst the escapees. Burly looks up from a Home&Garden Magazine and gives Penny a "what's up" nod.

Loretta walks in from the kitchen, arms wrapped around a 48 pack of Busch Light.

LORETTA
Oh, Penny, here you are. Listen, Mackie's still in the slammer.

PENNY
What?!

TATTOO
Punk was draggin' her feet!

Penny flinches when Tattoo punches her own palm. Loretta nods and tosses Tattoo a beer can.

INT. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mac continues to happily watch TV, but her face scrunches as Giuliana Rancic and the rest of the E! News team stare in horror at the world's latest Youtube sensation . . .

CLOSE UP on TV:

It's video footage of Mac and Eden's very public brawl outside the Chicago Radisson. Just as we remember it, the two women wrestle each other, pulling hair, ripping clothes, and punching boobs.

CLOSE UP on computer screen:

In some cubicle-filled office building, a dozen assistants and interns crowd around a singular computer screen and stare with their mouths hanging open, at the video of Mac wrestling Eden to the ground.

CLOSE UP on a television:

In an appliance store window in downtown New York City, dozens of bystanders stop and STARE at a a giant, flat-screen, on which Mac revs up and CLOBBERS Eden in the face

CLOSE UP on iPhone:

The same video continues to play, finally ending with an unflattering close up of Mac's angry face, followed by Danny giving a triumphant "rock-on" sign to the camera.

DANNY
(on video)
YOU'VE JUST BEEN ZIZED!!

We PULL OUT to see that the iPhone is being held by RYAN SEACREST.

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL VISITATION ROOM - LATER

Ryan sits across the table from Mac in the Cook County Jail visitation room.

RYAN SEACREST
It's gone totally viral.

MAC
I don't understand how this is happening to me, it hasn't even been twenty-four hours!

RYAN SEACREST
That's really all the time Joel McHale's interns need . . .

Mac throws her hands up in an I-give-up-manner.

MAC
So, what? Why is Ryan Seacrest visiting a has-been beauty queen in a county jail?

RYAN SEACREST
Well, excuse me for being blunt, Ms. Meyers, but you are a hot, hot mess.

Mac scowls.

RYAN SEACREST (CONT'D)
In that forty-second youtube video alone, you really come off crazier than a shithouse rat.

Mac tries to speak up, but Ryan Seacrest cuts her off.

RYAN SEACREST (CONT'D)
So I can only imagine what sort of batshit insane crap you do or say at home or at work . . .

Mac's getting more insulted by the second.

MAC
Are you *done*?!

RYAN SEACREST
Please, I don't think you're understanding. I've made my *living* off of whack jobs like you. I mean all of this as a compliment.

MAC
Oh . . . Thanks?

RYAN SEACREST
I'd like to offer you your own show.

Mac exhales a nervous laugh. She scans Ryan Seacrest up and down, absolutely positive he's fucking with her.

MAC
. . . Fuck off.

He laughs.

RYAN SEACREST
Really. We think you'd be a really fun character to watch grow as you coach aspiring beauty queens.

MAC
So it'd be about me coaching?

RYAN SEACREST
Exactly. Mostly Maggie, I think she's got something I think a lot of viewers will get hooked on. I'm thinking eight episodes to start, and then depending on the ratings we'll go from there.

Mac sits back in her chair and lets all of this sink in. She takes a shaky breath before answering.

MAC
. . . No.

RYAN SEACREST
Excuse me?

MAC
I'm not going to make some sort of sick, reality TV spectacle out of a sweet little girl like Maggie!

Ryan Seacrest scoffs.

RYAN SEACREST
With all due respect, Ms. Meyers, look at yourself. Your entire, pageant-centered life is a spectacle. And you were more than happy to bring Maggie along for the ride.

MAC
Sure, but I never *exploited* Maggie, you'd be exploiting her. She's not some freak show you go to gawk at at the zoo, she's a little girl who's had a hard life and just wants to feel special.

Ryan Seacrest doesn't see the problem here.

RYAN SEACREST
And what better way to feel special than having your own show?!

MAC
No way, Seacrest.

Ryan nods, pushes his chair back from the table and stands.

RYAN SEACREST
Fine. You know, your loss. Maggie could've been the next Honey Boo Boo.

MAC
(soaked in sarcasm)
Oh God, what have I done?!

RYAN SEACREST
I'm leaving, I've gotta do American Idol.

Mac makes a face as Ryan leaves.

MAC
That's still a show?!

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL VISITATION ROOM - LATER

Back in the communal visitation room (though considerably less crowded than during Loretta's visit) Mac sits across the table from Penny and Maggie.

PENNY
Mac, I don't understand why you wouldn't take it. With your own show, you could buy your studio, probably get Ma out of that doublewide-

MAC
Penny, I can't believe you, of all people, are rooting for this . . .

Penny shrugs, not disagreeing.

PENNY
Well, call me crazy, but you were the one clawing at my front door, begging for cash to pay your rent not all that long ago.
(and then)
You still owe me back, by the way.

Mac shoots her a look.

PENNY (CONT'D)
So what if the show's just about you? Leave Maggie totally out of it . . . Your character's already shot to hell, you might as well make some money off of it.

A few beats of silence pass. Cheerfully oblivious Maggie lets her feet swing from her metal prison chair. She looks back and forth from Penny to Mac.

MAGGIE
How come you don't wanna be on TV, Aunt Mac?

MAC
Oh, sweetie, it's not that I don't want to be on TV . . . But it wouldn't be fair to you.

Mac looks to Penny for help as she gropes for words..

MAC (CONT'D)
It's just a bunch of silly grown-up stuff you wouldn't understand . . .

Maggie let’s this sink in. Looks back and forth between Mac and Penny.

MAGGIE
Bu- but I would still be allowed to do pageants, right?

MAC
Well . . . Yeah . . .

Maggie shrugs through an adorable smile.

MAGGIE
So who cares if it’s silly?

Mac tilts her head to the side and lets a very slight smile spread across her lips.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Pageants make me feel special, Aunt Mac.
(beat)
Now It’s your turn to feel special.

Mac looks up from her hands in her lap, and locks eyes with Maggie, who smiles wide.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - AFTERNOON

Atlantic City, New Jersey, in all of it’s skeezy glory.

We sweep through the streets, littered with tourists decked out in their finest stretchy pants, visors, and fanny packs.

From now on, we will see our story through the cameras of Mac's reality show camera crew. Handle-held, documentary style.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY HOWARD JOHNSON - CONTINUOUS

An airport shuttle van pulls up in front of the hotel, the doors slide open, and Mac, Penny, Maggie, Loretta, and the dozen foster children all come piling out.

Another airport van pulls up behind their's and unloads a camera crew along with all of their luggage.

Mac and Penny struggle to corral the kids, and Loretta, decked out in her very best stretchy gold pants, floral visor, and fanny pack, takes in the sights.

LORETTA
Everyone, get together, we have to take a picture!
(to the camera crew)
Larry! Boys! You too now!

The scraggly MTV camera crew huddles up with the rest of the family and they all smile wide, posing in front of the hotel.

Loretta holds her plastic, disposable camera up to her face.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
Okay, everyone say, 'Atlantic City HoJo!'

EVERYONE
Atlantic City HoJo!

CLICK!

LORETTA
Perfect!

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - TALKING HEAD INTERVIEW

Loretta gushes in front of the camera.

LORETTA
I've always wanted to come to Atlantic City, it's just SO glamorous!

Something down the street catches her eye.

LORETTA (CONT'D)
OH, LOOK! PENNY SLOTS!!

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Mac and Maggie stand backstage. Maggie shakes her hands, getting her jitters out. Mac kneels down beside Maggie so that she's eye-level with her.

She puts a hand on the little girl's shoulder and smiles.

MAC
Hey.
(happy beat)
You're a winner. You know that, right?

Maggie smiles the biggest smile the world has ever seen.

MAGGIE
Yup. And you are too.

Mac exhales a short laugh.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
You know that, right??

Mac nods, a very proud smile spreading across her lips.

MAC
Yeah. I do.

MAGGIE
Good!

Mac looks out from behind the curtain to take a peak at the audience, all bustling and murmuring in their seats. Music from the orchestra begins to swell, and spotlights shine.

MAC
Ready?

MAGGIE
Ready!

The two of them high-five and Maggie struts out from behind the curtain to the stage.

Mac smiles, proud, as she stands upright and crosses her arms across her chest. She looks back over her shoulder at the camera, takes a deep breath, and nods, confidently.

MAC
(sotto)
We're winners.

The crowd cheers and claps loudly.

MAC (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Maggie came in fifth . . .

DIP TO BLACK:

INT. PAGEANT AUDITORIUM - 2020

A sixteen-year-old, very glamorous and naturally gorgeous Maggie stands alongside three other teen beauty pageant contestants, smiling wide.

MAC (V.O.)
. . . That year.

A MAN in a suit holds an index card and a black microphone in front of his face at the side of the stage.

MAN
And the winner of the 2020 Miss Teen America Pageant is . . .

The girls hold their breath. In the front row of the audience sits Mac, also seven years older.

MAN (CONT'D)
MAGGIE WILKS!!

Maggie screams with joy. Happy tears flow down her face as a stagehand places an absurdly large crown on her head and a bouquet of roses in her arms.

She waves proudly to the crowd as she gets to the edge of the stage. Maggie and Mac lock eyes. Mac gives her a very proud and maternal thumbs up.

DIP TO BLACK:

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

A nineteen-year-old Paisley Parker, dressed in all black and much plainer looking that she was in her pageantry gear, futzes with an older woman's permed hair.

MAC (V.O.)
Paisley Parker dropped out of pageantry all together and focused on her true calling: cosmetology. She graduated with honors from the Shirley School of Beauty . . .

DIP TO BLACK:

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

A much more dolled up Paisley, dressed in nothing but a sequined bra and panties wraps herself around a stripper pole and smiles wide as grown men throw singles at her.

MAC (V.O.)
. . .working Her way through as a stripper.

DIP TO BLACK:

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

A collage of pictures of stripper Paisley hangs ceremoniously in the front foyer of her strip club. A lone candle burns on a table in front of it.

MAC (V.O.)
She was last seen in a pet store somewhere in the Philippines. So if you've seen her, or know anything about her whereabouts, please call the Indiana State Police.

DIP TO BLACK:

EXT. YACHT, SOMEWHERE OFF THE FLORIDA COAST - DAY

Danny Zizes lies shirtless on a large yacht during a beautiful afternoon. He sips a cocktail as a busty blonde wraps herself around him.

MAC (V.O.)
After Danny's video went viral, he appeared on several talk shows and started dating a Real Housewife of Fort Lauderdale.

A Coast Guard boat appears in the distance and makes its way towards Danny's yacht.

MAC (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Three months later he was arrested for tax evasion, and two weeks after that, he scored a book deal.
(beat)
His memoir, Life With My Dick, is due out in bookstores next Christmas, in paperback and for Amazon Kindle Fire.

DIP TO BLACK:

INT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

Eden Phillips hangs her head as she slips on a pair of dark sunglasses and glides through the local drugstore.

MAC (V.O.)
After Regionals, Eden had a mental breakdown, started shooting up, and gave all her money to the Scientologists . . .

Eden eyes a security camera hung in an upper corner of the drugstore, as she sneakily swipes several EPT tests off the shelf and into the pocket of her Michael Kors trench coat.

MAC (V.O.) (CONT'D)
. . . She started shoplifting pregnancy tests to sell to high school girls at Saint Agnes's two towns over.

Before Eden can get three steps out the front door of the drugstore, she's tackled by a large, bald, and sweaty security guard.

INT. ROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP of a newspaper photo of Eden.

MAC (V.O.) (CONT'D)
While in prison, she entered a cell block Beauty Pageant . . .

The banner and paper crown Eden wears in the photo read: Illinois Cell Block, 2nd place.

MAC (V.O.) (CONT'D)
. . . She came in second.
(beat)
As for me?

DIP TO BLACK:

INT. MAC'S STUDIO - DAY

It's Mac's studio, but renovated. Bigger, brighter, cleaner.

Where pictures of Mac in her glory days used to hang all over the walls, now hang pictures of Maggie at her various pageants, as well as several other successful students. There are three times as many crowns and trophies lining the shelves and award cases.

Mac sits at her front desk and talks into the camera: a talking head type of interview for her show.

MAC
I'm doin' pretty great. Enrollment at my studio's up, like, ten billion percent, and uh . . .

Mac flashes a huge smile and confidently nods at the camera.

MAC (CONT'D)
I'm back.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
And cut! Great job, Mac.

Mac stands up and removes a microphone from the waistband of her pants.

A small camera crew: mostly men in their twenties and thirties, all wearing bleach-stained t-shirts and dirty baseball caps start milling about, re-adjusting lights and changing camera lenses.

Loretta, a cigarette in one hand, and a can of beer in the other, shameless flirts with one of the camera guys. Behind her is Maggie, as well as several other young beauty-queen-hopefuls.

Penny kneels beside a young beauty queen, gives her a quick spritz of hair spray, and then shoos her into the mirrored studio space.

PENNY
Go on, now, it's time for class.

CAMERA GUY
Okay, Mac, we're gonna start up again in two minutes.

MAC
Got it.
(to kids)
Okay, everyone, let's line up!

She claps her hands and corrals all the foster kids into the studio classroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ALL-AMERICAN LIVING ROOM - DAY

A gaggle of teenage girls rush into the living room, tossing their backpacks aside, and plopping down in front of a large television set.

One of the teens grabs the remote and turns the TV to E!

CLOSE UP on the television as McKenzie Myers comes on screen. Rambunctious pageant-dressed toddlers run around her feet against a neon-colored backdrop.

Mac juts her hip to the side and in the most sassy way possible, smirks and puts her hands on her hips.

The opening credits roll to the tune of a girlish rock song, and finally, the title pops up on screen:

HAS-BEEN, starring: McKenzie Myers

Mac gives a cheesy smile and a wink to her viewers.

FADE OUT.