

An American Reality

A Play By

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3w - 1m)

Sylvia

(40ish)

A Screenwriter, Fueled By Antidepressants

Cecelia

(35 to 50)

A Midwestern Mother, Her Superpower Is Niceness

Victoria

(30 to 50)

A Hip Hollywood Agent

Zeke

(17)

A Rebellious Tattooed Video Game Junkie

(Sylvia, Zeke and Victoria's race might reflect the diversity that is
Los Angeles - Cecelia is white)

SETTING

A neutral playing area that becomes several overlapping
locations. Think Our Town with little scenery or props.

TIME

The Present

LOCATIONS ARE ONLY SUGGESTED

Agent's Office In Beverly Hills

Crappy Bar On Hollywood Blvd

Forest Lawn Cemetery

Mental Health Ward

Airport Terminal

Burbank Bungalow

PLEASE NOTE

This play can be produced as a two act
or full length one-act

The scene titles are not meant to be projected

An American Reality

(Act One)

[It Sucks To Be A Woman In Hollywood]

Agent's Office, Beverly Hills

(SYLVIA a screenwriter fueled by anti-depressants. She's been kicked around in Hollywood for years, she can take it, but cracks are showing.)

(VICTORIA, a high energy Hollywood agent.)

(We enter mid-crisis.)

SYLVIA

(Dire, frustrated)

I'll do anything. I'll even write for a crappy reality show.

VICTORIA

(While checking her I-phone)

That'd kill your soul. As your agent it's my job to think of your emotional well being, not just your bank account.

SYLVIA

Any reaction to my last script?

VICTORIA

Which one was that?

SYLVIA

The love story about the beautiful Ukrainian woman.

VICTORIA

I need more.

SYLVIA

Who falls in love with the Iowa tractor salesman.

VICTORIA

(Trying to place it)

Right, ah, Iowa... *(Making shit up)* Herb over at Warner Brothers said it was fairly touching.

SYLVIA

But?

VICTORIA

Iowa's not trending at this time. How's the new spec coming?

SYLVIA

Got some pages. You'll like it. It's, I-don't-know, 'Pride and Prejudice' meets 'Orange Is The New Black'.

VICTORIA

But not set in Iowa.

SYLVIA

No.

VICTORIA

(Trying to be upbeat)

Sounds like... an idea. Let's talk when you have something.

SYLVIA

(On a writer's rant)

I shouldn't have charged the head of Sony with sexual harassment. I should've let him masturbate in the elevator, I mean, it's his elevator he can do what he wants in it.

VICTORIA

You did the right thing.

SYLVIA

I'm blacklisted in Hollywood.

VICTORIA

(Lying)

No, you're just in a bit of a slump.

SYLVIA

(Frustrated)

Victoria... I... I...

(She locks up, she's having a panic attack.)

VICTORIA
Xanax?

SYLVIA
(Trying to breathe)
I...

VICTORIA
Oh crap. You need a feel good moment. I'm not good at 'feel good' but okay. Ah... How's, ah, Zack *(Correcting her self)* Zeke.

SYLVIA
(Distracted)
Never comes out of his room. Plays Drone Strike all day.

VICTORIA
Warner Brothers is making an animated movie version of Drone Strike. I was part of the deal. Out next summer.

SYLVIA
(Not happy about that)
Great, that's what the world needs. Your your Dad?

VICTORIA
Tired. Enjoying retirement. *(That's all the feel good she can do, she claps her hands)* Okay, that was our feel good moment/

SYLVIA
(Blurting)
You're not going to dump me are you?

VICTORIA
No. I'm here for you. My father was your agent so I'm your agent, and as long as he's alive I'll never... *(She stops, she's said too much)* I'm here for you, can't we just leave it at that.

(SYLVIA pulls out a crumpled parking slip.)

SYLVIA
Can I get some validation?

VICTORIA
Of course, you are a good writer/

SYLVIA

I mean parking.

VICTORIA

(Seeing the parking slip)

Oh.

SYLVIA

Without validation they charge fifteen dollars an hour.

VICTORIA

(Calling off)

Steph? Would you validate Ms. Parks's parking? Steph? *(She's not there)* She must be in the bathroom.

(During the following VICTORIA takes parking stickers out of her purse and puts them on Sylvia's parking slip.)

SYLVIA

(Pacing)

I see these young screenwriters writing in Starbucks. How do they hear themselves think with all that noise and banging and Facebooking? Writing should be sad, lonely and pathetic, not a public act. *(Beat)* Victoria... I can't go back to being a script supervisor. I need work.

VICTORIA

(Concerned)

It's really that bad?

SYLVIA

I met with a real estate agent today.

VICTORIA

(Taking a breath)

Okay, shit, I might have something - It's total crap.

SYLVIA

I'll be the judge.

VICTORIA

This woman, I don't remember her name, was in here yesterday. She wants to hire a screenwriter to tell her life story.

SYLVIA

Oh jeez.

VICTORIA

Back in Dayton/

SYLVIA

(Grossed out)

Ew...Ohio?

VICTORIA

Got a problem with that?

SYLVIA

No. I just didn't know any decent stories ever came out of Ohio.

VICTORIA

She's got this kid, a teenager, who had like a lung transplant or something and she wants to hire a Hollywood writer to do a script about it.

SYLVIA

(Skeptical)

A movie about a lung transplant?

VICTORIA

You know, Family Channel, Christmas-ie, mid-America type bullshit/Iowa! This would play in Iowa.

SYLVIA

And she's got money?

VICTORIA

I think she said she'd saved up, like, ten thousand out of her allowance.

SYLVIA

(Laughing)

Her allowance? Are you kidding me?

VICTORIA

Or maybe it was money from a lawsuit, don't remember.

SYLVIA

(To herself)

God.

VICTORIA

It's just quick-dirty money. Interview her, crap out a ninety pages, take the money, and send her back to the fly-overs. If it makes you feel better, it doesn't have to be good.

SYLVIA

(Ironic)

A feel good movie about a lung transplant.

VICTORIA

Write it under a pen name. You know, a nom de plume.

(She considers for a moment.)

SYLVIA

...No. No, I've got standards. I'm not writing "Lung" for the Family Channel.

VICTORIA

And I respect that.

SYLVIA

Really?

VICTORIA

No.

SYLVIA

(Blurting)

I am an Emmy nominated writer!

VICTORIA

For a Hulu show that was cancelled after half a season that few saw and no one remembers.

SYLVIA

...Crap. Thanks for the validation.

VICTORIA

If you change your mind, if I can find her name, I'll give it to Steph.

(VICTORIA exits.)

SYLVIA

(Calling after)

I won't change my mind!

(Fade to.)

(Please Note: Scene changes should be uncomplicated. One reality flows to the next with only a light and short music cue.)

[Southern California's Drone Strike Champion]

Sylvia's Bungalow, Burbank

(SYLVIA turns to find her living room. She picks up mail that's come through the door slot and thumbs through the past due notices.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(Calling off)

I'm home. Don't feel like cooking. Pizza? *(Beat)* Zeke? You in there?

(SYLVIA turns to find something she's seldom seen, her son ZEKE is not in his room.)

(ZEKE's a rebellious high school junior. He's got the required nose ring and black hoodie. He's a modern, tattooed Hamlet at 17.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

And to what do I owe the honor of this rare appearance?

ZEKE

(Small)

Shut up.

SYLVIA

You want dinner? I'll order it the way you like it, not a vegetable to be found.

ZEKE

(Troubled)

We gotta talk.

SYLVIA

You want to talk? Now you're really freaking me out.

ZEKE

I'm serious.

SYLVIA

You could be a dead rotting corpse in there, how would I know?

ZEKE

Something's happened.

SYLVIA

Crap. Not the car.

ZEKE

I/

SYLVIA

No, start with how much it's going to cost me, give me a dollar amount, and work back from there.

ZEKE

(Dark)

...I killed someone.

(Pause.)

SYLVIA

(Perplexed)

Okay... Ah. Not good.

ZEKE

I'm serious.

SYLVIA

Is this something you need to talk over with Dr. Altman?

ZEKE

I was flying over southern Nangarhar Province. Afghanistan.

SYLVIA

You were playing Drone Strike.

ZEKE

Yeah.

SYLVIA

You might mention that up front when you say you've killed someone.

ZEKE

I killed Hafiz Saeed Baghdadi, a Taliban commander. I'm not upset that he's gone. He said terrible things about Jews/

SYLVIA

He talks against the Jews? I know these video games are realistic but jeez...

ZEKE

No. In real life.

SYLVIA

In real life what?

ZEKE

I killed him.

SYLVIA

(Incredulous)

Okay, so... What do you want on your pizza?

ZEKE

I was on a scanner mission.

SYLVIA

(Snide)

Scanner, right, I know exactly what you're talking about.

ZEKE

(Dark, honest)

Was near the Pakistan border, was trying not to cross out of Afghan air space, that's minus ten points.

SYLVIA

Of course, minus ten, not good.

ZEKE

When my mission panel lit up telling me that there was a hot target leaving Torkham in a white Toyota Land Cruiser. I accepted the mission. I waited, held my fire.

SYLVIA

Because?

ZEKE

The target was passing a mosque. So I circled, fired, direct hit, blew the shit out of'em. Got 10,000 points and two gold stars.

(She takes a Fat Tire beer from her purse, twists off the top and gulps.)

SYLVIA

(Sarcastic)

Was hoping you'd become a doctor, I'd even take a lawyer, but you got 10,000 points and two gold stars. I'm so proud. Now, would you care to join me for dinner or are you going to eat in your room like you always do?

ZEKE

I made today's news.

(ZEKE show her his iPhone.)

SYLVIA

(Reading)

"Drone strike kills Taliban commander." ...I don't understand.

ZEKE

Read the name.

SYLVIA

Hafiz Saeed Baghdadi.

ZEKE

It was me, I killed him.

SYLVIA

Ah, Zeke, this is a coincidence.

ZEKE

Second time it's happened.

SYLVIA

So what're you saying, that from your bedroom, here in Burbank, you actually, for real, killed a Taliban commander ten thousand miles away playing a video game?

ZEKE
(*Dark*)

The NSA hacked me.

SYLVIA

Zeke/

ZEKE

Don't say it! Don't do what you always do!

SYLVIA

Okay, okay, I believe you.

ZEKE

You do?

SYLVIA

Yeah.

ZEKE

Really?

SYLVIA
(*Irritated*)

No! You're telling me that the NSA is using *you* to control our drones in Afghanistan?

ZEKE

Who better? I am the regional Southern California Drone Strike Champion.

SYLVIA

And what am I supposed to do with this information?

ZEKE

The time and locations of my kills are exactly the same.

SYLVIA

Did you take your Ritalin today?

ZEKE
(*Pissed*)

See, that's what you do! You shoot me down all the time!

SYLVIA

(Frustrated)

Zeke, please, I've had a hard day. My agent is going to drop me, my career is teetering on the edge of female middle-aged oblivion and I can't write at Starbucks!

ZEKE

(Confused by this)

Starbucks?

SYLVIA

Do you want to go live with your father and his child-bride in Pasadena?

ZEKE

Pasadena sucks.

SYLVIA

(Kindly)

I agree. We have something in common. Let's build on that. Now... I'm worried about you. I want you to be healthy and not sit in your room twelve hours a day.

ZEKE

You do the same thing.

SYLVIA

That's different, I'm writing, I have a purpose.

ZEKE

I have a purpose. America needs me.

SYLVIA

Zeke, I need you, I need you to take the lock off your door.

ZEKE

So you can fuck with my computer again?

SYLVIA

And when I knock I need you to answer.

ZEKE

You want me to be a phony!

SYLVIA

How is that making you a phony?!

(ZEKE starts out.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(Pissed)

Don't walk away when I'm talking!

(ZEKE stops. SYLVIA takes a breath.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(Trying a new tactic)

Okay. Who knows. You might be right. The world today is so bat shit crazy, I don't know what's real anymore.

ZEKE

(Tentative)

You proud of me?

SYLVIA

Sure. I'd be prouder if you saw Dr. Altman.

ZEKE

You don't have the money.

SYLVIA

Don't worry about money, I'll get the money!

ZEKE

We could've been a rich! But you had to file charges!

SYLVIA

He was masturbating in an elevator.

ZEKE

So what, that's like any given Tuesday at Burbank High!

(ZEKE walks out. SYLVIA drinks.)

(Fade to.)

[Becky And Her Lung Transplant]

A Crappy Bar On Hollywood Blvd

(SYLVIA drinks a beer at her regular hangout. She's on her cell with her ex.)

SYLVIA

(On her cell, intense, bitter)

...Yes, I'm at a bar, yes I'm drinking, and yes I am fully aware that it's ten in the morning! Don't change the subject! You're three months behind. ...Bullshit. ...You said that last month. ...I'll meet you at the neutral location at noon. ...Bring money and don't bring her, I don't want to see her peppy little ass/

(On 'ass' SYLVIA turns to find CECELIA, a smiling midwesterner. They're a study in contrast.)

CECELIA

Hi.

SYLVIA

...Hi.

CECELIA

(Smiling, upbeat, midwest nice)

Ms. Parks?

SYLVIA

Yeah?

CECELIA

Cecelia Sandburg. An honor.

SYLVIA

(On cell)

Gotta go.

(She hangs up. They shake.)

(There's an odd pause as CECELIA stands there smiling.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Ah. Can I get you something? Morning beer?

CECELIA

Morning beer?

SYLVIA

It's like a regular beer but you drink it in the morning.

CECELIA

No. I'll have a Squirt.

SYLVIA

What's a Squirt?

CECELIA

It's like pop.

SYLVIA

You mean soda pop?

CECELIA

Yeah.

SYLVIA

(Calling off to unseen server)

Hello, when you get a sec, another Fat Tire and a Squirt. *(To Cecelia)* Shall we?

CECELIA

Oh, thank you.

(They sit at a table. Again a stupid pause as CECELIA smiles.)

SYLVIA

(Trying to find a subject)

So, ah, you live in Dayton.

CECELIA

Sure do.

SYLVIA

That's in Ohio?

CECELIA

Sure is. Go, Buckeyes.

SYLVIA

First time in L.A.?

CECELIA

Oh yeah. I took the Universal Studios tour yesterday.

SYLVIA

How was that?

CECELIA

My rental car was stolen from the parking lot.

SYLVIA

Sorry to hear that.

CECELIA

And today I'm going to a taping of "Dancing With the Stars."

SYLVIA

(Unimpressed)

That should be... fun.

CECELIA

You've done it?

SYLVIA

No, but *(Lying)* it's on my bucket list.

CECELIA

You okay?

SYLVIA

Me?

CECELIA

You seem sorta preoccupied.

SYLVIA

Nooooo. Just wondering where the server went. So, ah, your daughter...

CECELIA

Yeah.

SYLVIA

Both kidneys?

CECELIA

Excuse me?

SYLVIA

She had a kidney transplant or something?

CECELIA

Lung transplant.

SYLVIA

That's what I meant. And you want a movie made about it.

CECELIA

Please forgive me, I don't know how this works. I've never met a writer before.

SYLVIA

Well, it's simple, you talk, I take notes and we'll see what happens.

CECELIA

(Sincerely)

Ok. I want to share my story with the world. I want a movie that's so real it creates its own kind of illusion.

SYLVIA

(Bullshitting her)

And that just might happen. You never know. It's Hollywood, nobody knows anything.

CECELIA

You wrote that animated doggy movie, "You've got Pee Mail."

SYLVIA

(Hardly proud of it)

Yeah, long time ago.

CECELIA

I own the DVD.

SYLVIA

Oh...kay.

CECELIA

The character of Diego was my favorite. You really got into the head of a Cocker Spaniel.

SYLVIA

(Chagrin, drinking)

Thanks.

CECELIA

And you were nominated for that gay sitcom thing.

SYLVIA

Right the 'gay sitcom thing'.

CECELIA

You're *known* in Hollywood?

SYLVIA

I suppose.

CECELIA

I mean, you're a *name*.

SYLVIA

No screenwriter in Hollywood is a 'name' but/

CECELIA

But with 'Sylvia Parks' on the script studios'll take notice.

SYLVIA

(Bullshitting)

Well, you see, ah, I use the name Sylvia Parks when I write animated doggy love stories, or 'gay sitcom things' but for this, more of a 'feel good' Family Channel story, I'd use my pen name.

CECELIA

Pen name?

SYLVIA

Yeah, writers use lots of different names.

CECELIA

What name would you use for my story?

SYLVIA

Alan Smithee. *(Calling off to the server)* Hello, I really need that Fat Tire.

CECELIA

And a Squirt, hon.

SYLVIA
(Calling off)

And a Squirt! Hon.

CECELIA
Um, Alan Smithee's a man's name.

SYLVIA
Yeah well, being female in Hollywood is not an advantage.

CECELIA
Is that who I make the check out to, Alan Smithee?

(She opens her large handbag.)

SYLVIA
Ah... We're jumping right to money?

CECELIA
Isn't that how Hollywood works?

SYLVIA
Sure. But... make it out to Sylvia Parks.

CECELIA
Parks not Smithee. *(Writing the check)* Walter said I should pay half up front and half when you finish.

SYLVIA
Who's Walter?

CECELIA
My pastor.

SYLVIA
He should've been an agent.

CECELIA
(Still filling out the check)
Five thousand. A lot of money.

(She shows the check to SYLVIA.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

(To herself as she writes three exclamation points) Boop boop boop. *(To Sylvia)* I put three exclamation points after the amount.

(She holds up the check.)

SYLVIA

What for?

CECELIA

Cause it's a lot of money. Here.

(CECELIA offers the check.)

SYLVIA

Thank you/

(CECELIA pulls it back.)

CECELIA

Wait. If I don't write it down in the check register right away I'll forget.

(She writes in the checkbook register - who does that now? SYLVIA thinks she's entered a episode of the Twilight Zone.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

(Talking to herself as she writes)

Check number 544. Parks. Hollywood money. Five Thousand.

(CECELIA adds three exclamation points to the check register too.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

Boop Boop Boop.

(Making sure no one is looking, an embarrassed SYLVIA grabs the check.)

SYLVIA

Okay, let's get started.

CECELIA

Sure. What do you need to know?

(SYLVIA takes out a pad and takes notes. She doesn't want to do this.)

SYLVIA

Well, for starters, what's your daughter's name?

CECELIA

Becky. Bec for short.

SYLVIA

(Talking to herself, taking notes)

Bec.

CECELIA

'B' for shorter.

SYLVIA

That's about as short as you can get. Is 'B' with you? Can I interview her too?

CECELIA

No, she can't travel, she's had a lung transplant.

SYLVIA

Right. That could inhibit travel. So, tell me a story about Becky-B and her lung transplant.

CECELIA

Well, to begin, Bec wasn't like me, or her father, or anyone.

SYLVIA

(Talking to herself, taking notes)

Daughter, loner.

CECELIA

She liked to volunteer at the local soup kitchen sponsored by the Episcopal church.

SYLVIA

(Taking notes)

Helped the poor.

CECELIA

That's how she met Dominique, a child from the ghetto.

SYLVIA

Ghetto?

CECELIA

Yes.

SYLVIA

I don't think that word is used anymore.

CECELIA

Dayton has a ghetto.

SYLVIA

(More notes)

Okay. Dominique. Ghetto. Got it.

CECELIA

Dominique's parents died when she was nine, so my daughter brought her home to live with us. But my husband wouldn't hear of it. They had a terrible fight. My husband, ex-husband, well almost ex, the divorce isn't final, he's what you'd call kind of a racist.

SYLVIA

Dominique is black?

CECELIA

Yes.

SYLVIA

(Taking notes)

Husband-bad. Daughter-good.

CECELIA

So Bec hid little Dominique in our attic. That's where she grew up.

SYLVIA

(Halted)

Wait. Your daughter hid a child from the "ghetto" in your attic?

CECELIA

Yes.

SYLVIA

For how long?

CECELIA

Five years.

SYLVIA

(Boggled)

Five years? And you didn't know someone was up there?

CECELIA

Sometimes I heard noises but I thought it was squirrels. We'd had problems with rodents before.

SYLVIA

(Taken aback)

Okay, ah, for five years, your daughter hid an orphan-child in the attic.

CECELIA

Brought her food, books, they studied together. Became fast friends.

SYLVIA

And she never left the attic?

CECELIA

How could she? My husband would've her sent to an orphanage.

SYLVIA

Orphanage?

CECELIA

Yeah, orphanage.

SYLVIA

(to herself)

Okay, if you have 'ghettos' in Dayton, I guess you've got 'orphanages' too.

CECELIA

Do you have children?

SYLVIA

A son.

CECELIA

Can you imagine if he never left his room for five years?

SYLVIA

(To herself)

Matter of fact.

CECELIA

Then one day Dominique was discovered, my husband had her arrested and charged with trespassing. My daughter's heart was broken. She became ill. It was as if the spiritual power that linked them had been shattered.

SYLVIA

(Taking notes)

Spiritual power.

CECELIA

(Tears)

And then my Bec was diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and given only three months to live.

SYLVIA

(More note writing)

Not good.

CECELIA

So, on Christmas morning, Dominique escaped from the orphanage to be with her. But just as they were to meet up, Dominique was hit by a truck.

SYLVIA

(More note writing)

Holy crap.

CECELIA

Driven by my husband.

SYLVIA

On purpose?

CECELIA

No, it was an accident. My husband had this... this...

(CECELIA can't go forward, she chokes back tears.)

SYLVIA

It's okay, you can say it.

CECELIA

(Choked up)

...Ford F-150.

SYLVIA

Can I get you something? A morning beer, I mean, a tissue?

CECELIA

(Crying)

As I held Dominique in my arms, her last dying wish was that my sweet Beck get her lungs.

SYLVIA

(Amazed)

Wait. Your daughter has the orphan's lungs?

CECELIA

Yeah.

SYLVIA

(Amazed)

Ah...

CECELIA

Bad?

SYLVIA

No. That's like the perfect Family Channel, feel good/ Wait, were they lesbians?

CECELIA

Who?

SYLVIA

Dominique and your daughter.

CECELIA

No/

SYLVIA

That's the perfect Family Channel, feel good, movie.

CECELIA

(Wiping her tears)

I was trying to come up with a title, like, "Christmas Lung" or "Miracle Lung".

SYLVIA

We can title it later. This is amazing.

CECELIA

(Wiping her tears)

You like it?

SYLVIA

If I can be honest, I wasn't looking forward to this meeting, but this...*(Calling off)* Waiter, hold off on the Fat Tire. Thank you. *(Back to Cecelia)* And it's based on a true story. Hollywood loves that.

CECELIA

(Still sniffling)

Well, not exactly.

SYLVIA

What I mean is that the basic parts of the story are true. The lung transplant.

CECELIA

(Endearing)

Yes. But nothing else.

SYLVIA

Nothing else what?

CECELIA

Is true.

SYLVIA

(Beat, confused)

Ah. Let's start over. Your daughter's name is Becky.

CECELIA

Bec for short.

SYLVIA

And 'B' had a lung transplant.

CECELIA

Yes.

SYLVIA

And her friend's name was Dominique.

CECELIA

No.

SYLVIA

What's her friend's name?

CECELIA

My daughter has no friends.

SYLVIA

...But you said?

CECELIA

My daughter's a meth addict.

SYLVIA

...Excuse me?

CECELIA

You asked me to tell you a *story* about Becky and her lung transplant so I did.

SYLVIA

But in real life your daughter is...

CECELIA

A meth addict.

SYLVIA

(Unable to cope)

Ah... Can we start over again. Your daughter's name is Becky.

CECELIA

Bec for short.

SYLVIA

And 'B' had a lung transplant.

CECELIA

Yes.

SYLVIA

Because?

CECELIA

She huffed too much spray paint.

SYLVIA

(Dumbfounded)

So... ah... Let me get this straight... You want a Christmas movie about a meth addict who huffs spray paint? Have you watched the Family Channel?

CECELIA

I don't want truth. That's why I hired a screenwriter. If I wanted truth, I would've hired a real writer.

SYLVIA

(Ego stung)

I am a real writer.

CECELIA

Mr. Smithee or is it Ms. Parks? I hope you're not upset.

SYLVIA

(Lying)

Me. No, not at all.

CECELIA

In reality my daughter is an addict and my marriage is a failure. Who wants to see a movie about that? Especially if it takes place in Dayton. I want my story told my way.

SYLVIA

But this isn't your story.

CECELIA

It's an alternative telling of my story.

SYLVIA

(Calling off)

Hello! I'm back on with the Fat Tire!

CECELIA

And a Squirt.

SYLVIA
(Calling off)

And a Squirt!

(SYLVIA's phone rings. She checks the screen.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Oh, shit, sorry. Agent.

(SYLVIA answers.)

(Lights up on VICTORIA in her office.)

VICTORIA
(On phone, pissed off)

Sylvia. Me. Your son's in my office.

SYLVIA
(On phone)

Wait, what?

VICTORIA
(On phone)

And I want him out of my office.

SYLVIA
(On phone)

What the hell's he doing in your office?

VICTORIA
(On phone)

Pitching/

SYLVIA
(On phone)

Pitching?

VICTORIA
(On phone)

A television series.

SYLVIA
(On phone)

A television series?

VICTORIA
(*On phone*)

Please stop repeating what I say.

SYLVIA
(*On phone*)

Hand the phone over.

VICTORIA
(*On phone*)

He's in the bathroom. I know we're like family or whatever and he was over at the house a lot when he was growing up but I haven't seen him since he was like twelve and he asked me on a date, so this is just really creepy.

SYLVIA
(*On phone*)

Be right there.

(*SYLVIA hangs up. Lights out on the agent.*)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Can we pick this up later?

CECELIA

Problem?

SYLVIA

That was my agent/

CECELIA

Someone important in her office?

SYLVIA

Yeah.

CECELIA

Who?

SYLVIA
(*Bullshitting, hurried*)

Ah... Ah... Mel Gibson.

CECELIA

'Passion of the Christ' Mel?

SYLVIA

One and the same.

CECELIA

I'd love to meet Mel Gibson.

SYLVIA

Yeah, well, you know, he's kinda busy.

CECELIA

What's he doing in your agent's office?

SYLVIA

(Bullshitting - more lies)

He's, ah, looking for a real writer for a new television series.

CECELIA

Based on 'Passion of the Christ?'

SYLVIA

Yeah, like a weekly, episodic, you know.

CECELIA

But you'd write my script first?

SYLVIA

Of course. But I've gotta take the meeting. I'll call tomorrow.

CECELIA

Oh! Do me a favor?

SYLVIA

Sure.

CECELIA

Get me Mel's autograph?

SYLVIA

...Right. Will do. I'll get his autograph.

CECELIA

Oh. Wow.

SYLVIA

I gotta run.

CECELIA

Oh oh oh!

(SYLVIA stops. CECELIA opens her arms for a hug.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)
(Midwestern nice)

You have a nice day.

(SYLVIA runs out. CECELIA exits.)

(Fade to.)

[I've Lost The Story]

Agent's Office, Beverly Hills

(ZEKE returns from the bathroom. His nose is running. He's uptight. He must be high on something.)

ZEKE

Sorry about that. These pills they got me on make me have to pee like every five minutes.

VICTORIA
(Placating)

No problem.

ZEKE

So... *(Sniffing)* I think you can see how important this is.

VICTORIA

What is?

ZEKE

My pitch.

VICTORIA

Right.

ZEKE

It's timely and current. And it's based on true events. I heard studios are looking for reality based stories. We could even put in the opening credits, "Based on actual events."

VICTORIA

So, the NSA tapped into your/

ZEKE

Wrong. (*Sniffing*) They hacked.

VICTORIA

Hacked/

ZEKE

And not just me, I'm just the local southern California winner, god knows what they've done to national winners or international. China's got some bad ass Drone Strike dudes.

VICTORIA

And they don't know they're actually, for real, killing people in Afghanistan.

ZEKE

And other places.

VICTORIA

And so there's this massive C.I.A. cover up/

ZEKE

N.S.A.

VICTORIA

(*Placating him*)

Right. Well, Zeke, let me, you know, bounce it off some people.

ZEKE

Producers, directors?

VICTORIA

(*Lying*)

Sure.

ZEKE

But don't tell my mother.

VICTORIA
No?

ZEKE
She wouldn't understand.

VICTORIA
(She thinks he's nuts)
Right. It'll be our secret.

ZEKE
How about if I call next week to see where you're at with it.
And thank you for taking the meeting. *(Sniffing)* I mean
normally agents don't, you know.

VICTORIA
Well, to be honest Zeke, when you said it was an emergency
about your mother, I actually thought it was an emergency
about your mother.

ZEKE
Or better yet, instead of me calling, have you thought about
Friday night? Maybe dinner? And, I don't know, do ya like
movies?

(SYLVIA enters, out of breath.)

SYLVIA
(Calling off)
Steph, yes, Thank you. *(Seeing her son)* Zeke. What a
surprise. What are you doing here? *(Trying not to be fake)*
Isn't this something.

ZEKE
(Pissed off, to Victoria)
You called her?

VICTORIA
(Trying to cover)
Me? No, ah, we have a meeting.

SYLVIA
(Covering badly)
That's right we have a meeting.

VICTORIA
Right. So, what did you want to meet with me about?

SYLVIA

(To Victoria)

Oh, ah, I just stopped by to say the meeting with Cecelia went well.

VICTORIA

Who?

SYLVIA

Cecelia.

VICTORIA

Cecelia who?

SYLVIA

The Family Channel thing.

VICTORIA

(Not covering well)

Oh, right, The Family Channel thing.

SYLVIA

We hit it off, she wants me to write it.

VICTORIA

Write what?

SYLVIA

Lung.

VICTORIA

(No idea what she's talking about)

Lung. Right.

ZEKE

(Yelling)

This is bullshit! Total Fucking Bullshit!

VICTORIA

(Tense, to Sylvia)

I'll let you handle this.

(VICTORIA pantomimes to SYLVIA 'get him out of here' and quickly exits. SYLVIA's alone with her son.)

SYLVIA
(Desperate)

What're you doing?

ZEKE

Pitching.

SYLVIA

You're not a writer.

ZEKE

That shows how little you know. I blog all the time.

SYLVIA

That doesn't make you a writer.

ZEKE
(Shouting)

I'm A Writer!

SYLVIA

Can we not do this here? Let's talk in the car.

*(SYLVIA tries to leave. ZEKE
stubbornly refuses to move.)*

ZEKE

You've embarrassed me.

SYLVIA

I've embarrassed you!

ZEKE

You've made me insubstantial.

SYLVIA

You want to be a Hollywood writer, being insubstantial is the first thing you got to get used to.

ZEKE

I have a ground breaking story, an important narrative and you're devaluing it!

SYLVIA

I've begged you to go to Dr. Altman.

ZEKE

I don't want to see my mother's psychiatrist!

SYLVIA

Lower your voice.

ZEKE

Fuck This Bullshit!

SYLVIA

(Desperate)

Oh God. Zeke. Please. We're standing in my agent's office, if you have any respect for me, and my need to make a living, we will give our apologies to Victoria and we will talk in the car.

ZEKE

(Shouting)

I killed Hafiz Saeed Baghdadi!

SYLVIA

Okay! I believe you! But right now I just don't have the, the, brain matter to deal with it.

ZEKE

You're no Salinger!

SYLVIA

What the fuck does that mean? You're not Holden Caulfield!

ZEKE

I'm going to the newspapers/

SYLVIA

Please don't/

ZEKE

They'll believe me!

(Pissed off, Zeke pushes his way past SYLVIA and exits.)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

(O.S. - In the lobby)

You're All A Bunch Of Phonies!

*(SYLVIA's left alone for a moment.
She tries to breathe.)*

(VICTORIA tentatively re-enters.)

(SYLVIA tries to laugh it off.)

SYLVIA
(Deeply embarrassed)

What can I say. He's at an age. I think he needs more structure in his life.

VICTORIA
(Quietly, forceful)

This will not happen again. Goodbye.

*(SYLVIA stands there defeated,
trying to hold it together.)*

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

What?

SYLVIA
(Precarious)

I...

VICTORIA
You're completely embarrassed, you feel like crap, I got all that. Now, I've got to get back to work.

SYLVIA
(Desperate)

...I've lost the story.

VICTORIA
Excuse me?

SYLVIA
I don't feel like I'm in control of my story anymore.

VICTORIA
So? You're a writer, rewrite.

SYLVIA
(Distraught)
I'm not a writer, I'm a mimic.
(MORE)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

I take surgically chosen lines and words from other peoples' stories and I patch'em together without citation. I'm a cut and paste writer. All I do is repurpose words.

VICTORIA

Oh shit, you're drinking again.

SYLVIA

I'm limiting myself to beer.

VICTORIA

(Condescending and angry)

Let me make things clear, your job is to put words on a piece of paper, my job is to sell that piece of paper and then we make our car payments. That's our professional working relationship. I didn't work my ass off dealing with bald sexist middle-age producers, fighting to get a few damn female writers accepted into this all male club, so that one of them could embarrass the shit out of me in front of the entire fucking William Morris Agency staff. And while I'm at it, I'm not the one you call when you need to be bailed out after driving on the 405 with a blood alcohol level of point-one-five. Now, I don't want to hear from you again, until you have some good words, repurposed or otherwise, on a piece of paper!

(SYLVIA stands there, miserable.)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(Pissed off)

What?

(She takes out the parking deck slip.)

SYLVIA

Could you validate?

VICTORIA

Oh for god's sake!

(VICTORIA exits.)

(SYLVIA exits.)

(Fade to.)

[Who Is The Real Alan Smithee?]

A Crappy Bar On Hollywood Blvd

(Several weeks later, CECELIA enters with the finished screenplay.)

CECELIA

(Thrilled, calling off)

Hon, a Fat Tire and a Squirt please.

(She sits and bows her head.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

(Praying)

Dear lord/

(SYLVIA enters.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

Oh, you're here! I read it! And it's wonderful! Just exactly what I wanted.

SYLVIA

(Needing a drink)

Oh. Good.

CECELIA

Oh, I just love the scene where the doctor with the drinking problem, who's been barred from the hospital, rushes in and saves the day.

SYLVIA

Hold that thought I need a...

(SYLVIA starts for the bar.)

CECELIA

Sit. Let me wait on you.

(CECELIA runs off.)

(SYLVIA sits, then suddenly remembers something.)

SYLVIA

Oh shit! That's right.

(She grabs a pen and scrap of paper from her purse, writes something on it and puts it back in her purse.)

(Thrilled, CECELIA reenters with the drinks.)

CECELIA

(Sing song)

Here we go.

SYLVIA

So, you liked it.

CECELIA.

Hold that thought. When I start somethin' I like to finish.

(CECELIA sits, lowers her head and mutters a prayer.)

CECELIA

(We hear only a few words)

Dear Lord, *(Muffled mumbling)* Producers... *(Muffled mumbling)* ...Percentage of gross... *(Muffled mumbling)* Amen.

SYLVIA

What are you...?

CECELIA

Praying.

SYLVIA

Why?

CECELIA

I'm praying that some big Hollywood producer will make this script into a block-buster.

SYLVIA

I'm pretty sure praying doesn't work in Hollywood.

CECELIA

Oh, I just loved the scene where the racist husband goes to the black family and begs for forgiveness. It's just so powerful. I cried.

SYLVIA

Thank you. Suggestions? Notes?

CECELIA

Oh no, I couldn't change a word, it's just so perfect.

SYLVIA

In that case, I'll take the back money and wish you luck.

CECELIA

Well, maybe, one little change.

SYLVIA

You're the boss.

CECELIA

Could you add a new scene?

SYLVIA

(Not wanting to)

...Sure.

CECELIA

Do you remember the moment in the script where the mother takes Becky to the school bus stop?

SYLVIA

Yeah, I wrote it.

CECELIA

Well, I was thinking, every morning, before I took the real Becky to the bus stop, I'd always make her breakfast, blueberry pancakes, her favorite.

SYLVIA

(Taking notes)

So you want a mother-daughter-blueberry-pancake scene.

CECELIA

(Sweetly remembering)

We'd always share a moment - Talk about boys.

SYLVIA

Did you talk about anything other than boys?

CECELIA

Dating.

SYLVIA

Have you heard of the Bechdel Test?

CECELIA

What's that?

SYLVIA

It states that a movie should have at least one scene where two women talk about something other than men, or boys.

CECELIA

Wow, that'd be unique.

SYLVIA

So did you talk about anything else?

CECELIA

(Guessing)

...Politics?

SYLVIA

I can write that.*(Beat)* If it's true. That's true, right?

CECELIA

What do you mean?

SYLVIA

You talked politics over blueberry pancakes with your daughter.

CECELIA

Oh-no. We only talked about boys. And while I'm at it, I should tell you I never made her breakfast. I was too busy working the morning shift. I do it seven days a week.

SYLVIA

Who made her pancakes?

CECELIA

No one did. Becky was mostly raised by her deadbeat racist dad. But he loved her more than anything.

SYLVIA

...And is that true?

CECELIA

No. We found out later that he was her drug dealer.

SYLVIA

(Frustrated)

Cecelia, ah...

CECELIA

Yeah?

SYLVIA

Did it ever occur to you that you want this movie written because you, um, have...

CECELIA

Regrets?

SYLVIA

Trouble dealing with reality?

CECELIA

But what's reality?

SYLVIA

(Frustrated)

Truth, facts, you know, that sort of stuff.

CECELIA

Not anymore. *(Kindly)* Today reality is whatever you can get away with.

SYLVIA

Okay, fine, I'll add a mother/daughter scene over blueberry pancakes. Anything else?

CECELIA

Just one little thing.

SYLVIA

Sure, but then I do have a meeting.

CECELIA

With Mel Gibson/? Oh! Did you get his autograph?

SYLVIA

Got it right here.

(SYLVIA takes out the piece of paper she signed at the beginning of the scene and hands it to CECELIA.)

CECELIA

Oh, wow! *(Reading)* "Dear Cecelia, good luck with your screenplay" Signed, "Mel Gib-fon."

SYLVIA

(Pointing at the scrap)

That's an 's'.

CECELIA

No that's an 'f'.

SYLVIA

No that's definitely an 's'.

CECELIA

(Delighted)

Who would've guessed that Mad Max would have such pretty handwriting. Everyone in Dayton will be so impressed. Maybe I'll get it framed. Should I get it framed?

SYLVIA

Why not. If that's it? I should be//

CECELIA

Oh, just one more thing.

SYLVIA

Sure.

CECELIA

The ending.

SYLVIA

What about it?

CECELIA

It feels fake.

SYLVIA

I disagree.

CECELIA

(Opening the script)

Becky gets out of the hospital, she and her parents go to the airport and fly back to Dayton and there's a rainbow. Fade out. Credits roll.

SYLVIA

What's wrong with that?

CECELIA

I don't like rainbows.

SYLVIA

I'm not married to the rainbow, I'll cut it.

CECELIA

No, it's not just the rainbow, what I'm trying to say is that... I don't like that they live happily ever after.

SYLVIA

Why not?

CECELIA

Cause life isn't that way.

SYLVIA

(Put out)

Well, that's what people want. They want to believe that someday we'll all fly off into the sunset. With or without a rainbow.

CECELIA

I want a different ending. After all, I am paying.

SYLVIA

Okay, whatever. What do you want?

CECELIA

I want the plane to crash.

SYLVIA

(Beat)

...Excuse me?

CECELIA

I want the plane to crash in a big ball of fire. No survivors.

SYLVIA

(Stunned)

Ah, let me get this straight, you want the little girl whose heart stopped beating during the operation but because of the heroic doctor who gave up drinking, rushes in and tries a new experimental procedure thereby saving her life and his career - you want her, and her loving parents to get on a plane, and as they're taking off, there's a, what...?

CECELIA

An engine fire.

SYLVIA

And the plane?

CECELIA

Loses altitude.

SYLVIA

And, what, they all start screaming?

CECELIA

And take crash positions.

SYLVIA

And then they plummet into the ground at five hundred miles per hour/

CECELIA

Impact. Fireball, black out, credits roll.

(Beat. SYLVIA is speechless.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

(Upbeat)

Can you write that?

SYLVIA

Why?

CECELIA

Aren't you tired of happy endings?

SYLVIA

No!

CECELIA

It's time that Hollywood admits that life sucks.

SYLVIA

...But, but, what about your daughter?

CECELIA

What about her?

SYLVIA

How will she feel about having a movie made where she dies in a horrible fireball?

CECELIA

(Stoic)

My daughter's been in a coma for six months. I found out this morning that the doctors want to take her off life support.

SYLVIA

(Halted)

I'm... So sorry... But I have to ask, is that true?

CECELIA

Yes.

SYLVIA

Are you sure?

CECELIA

Know how you can tell?

SYLVIA

Not really.

CECELIA

It isn't pretty.

(Beat.)

SYLVIA

(Giving up)

Okay, fine. I'll write a fireball ending. Is that it?

CECELIA

When you're done will you show it to your agent.

SYLVIA

That's not part of the deal.

CECELIA

I'm sure it was.

SYLVIA

No, I write it, you market it. You can do anything you want with it. You can even put your name on it if you want.

CECELIA

You lied to me.

SYLVIA

What?

CECELIA

I looked up Alan Smithee. It's a fake name that Hollywood writers use when they want to remove themselves from a project they think is crap.

(Beat. Shit, she's on to her.)

SYLVIA

Cecelia/

CECELIA

No, I understand. There's a reason why it's called show *business*.

SYLVIA

Look, I'll add a pancake scene, and I'll kill them all off at the end, and have the script delivered to you today at your hotel. Are we done here?

CECELIA

(Disappointed)

I suppose.

SYLVIA

Can I get my back money?

CECELIA
(*Bitter*)

Oh, sure.

(*CECELIA takes a checkbook out of her massive bag and writes a check.*)

CECELIA (CONT'D)
(*Writing the check*)

You've lived a charmed life, Ms. Parks. If you think it's tough to be a woman in Hollywood, you should try being one in Dayton. (*Writing*) Five Thousand.

SYLVIA
You don't need to put any exclamation points on it.

CECELIA
That's okay. I like to. (*To herself as she writes three exclamation points. Pissed.*) Boop boop boop.

(*She hands over the check, but then takes it back.*)

CECELIA (CONT'D)
Wait. If I don't write it down right away I'll forget.

(*SYLVIA grabs the check.*)

SYLVIA
That's okay, you can do that later.

CECELIA
Oh! I forgot, I came up with the new title.

SYLVIA
Yeah?

CECELIA
Christmas Lung just wasn't right. So I'm calling it "Reality."

SYLVIA
Reality?

CECELIA
Like it?

SYLVIA

Sure.

CECELIA

So put that on the title page. *(Cold)* A pleasure doing business with you Ms. Parks. And you too Mr. Smithee.

(CECELIA exits. SYLVIA is left alone with the check.)

(Fade to.)

[Reality]

Sylvia's Bungalow, Burbank

(SYLVIA turns to find her living room. She's had a hard day.)

SYLVIA

(Calling off)

I'm home. Zeke?

(She hopes for a response.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(Calling off)

I'm ordering Chinese. Zeke?

(No answer.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(Calling off, frustrated)

Okay, fine, we'll play by your rules. I'm going into my room now and I'm going to stare at a screen for twenty hours a day.

(Her cell rings. She answers.)

(Lights up on a time-strapped VICTORIA in her office.)

VICTORIA

(On phone, hurried)

Me. Read it.

SYLVIA
(*On phone*)
Read what?

VICTORIA
(*On phone*)
The script.

SYLVIA
(*On phone*)
What script?

VICTORIA
(*On phone*)
The lung thing.

SYLVIA
(*On phone*)
What? How did you...?

VICTORIA
(*On phone*)
I was about to leave the office when that woman, what's her name?

SYLVIA
(*On phone*)
Cecelia?

VICTORIA
(*On phone*)
Walked in and gave it to me. I wasn't going to read it, but it had your name on it.

SYLVIA
(*On phone*)
My name.

VICTORIA
(*On phone*)
I just couldn't put it down. The scene where the doctor has to take the breathalyzer test right before the operation to prove he's not drunk, touching. And that moment when the mother breaks into her daughter's room and smashes her computer while she's playing drone strike, powerful. I've sent a copy over to Lorenzo Hopper at Sony. We're working on a hot project right now.

SYLVIA
(On phone)

Hot project?

VICTORIA
(On phone)

'Ninja President.'

SYLVIA
(On phone)

What the fuck?

VICTORIA
(On phone)

It's about a president only he's a ninja.

SYLVIA
(On phone)

Seriously, what the fuck?

VICTORIA
(On phone)

Shut up. If the people want a Ninja President they get a Ninja President!

SYLVIA
(On phone)

Look, it's not a good script, I cranked it out in two weeks. I didn't even proof it.

VICTORIA
(On phone)

Gotta another call. Gotta go.

(She hangs up and exits.)

SYLVIA
(To herself)

What the fuck.

(ZEKE enters but not from his bedroom. His deeply troubled eyes are swollen with tears.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
Thought you were in your room... Where you been?

(No answer. Zeke moves towards his bedroom.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Dinner? I'll order out. *(Blurting)* Stop when I talk to you!

(ZEKE stops.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Where you been?

ZEKE

(Small, troubled)

How do you do it?

SYLVIA

Okay, fill me in, do what?

ZEKE

Write bullshit.

SYLVIA

Please, do me a favor and save up all your disdain for me and lay it on all at once. How about if we set aside one day a week for disdain. How about Wednesdays? Wednesdays, from now on, will be disdain day.

(ZEKE tears up. He hugs himself.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

What?

ZEKE

(Losing it)

I don't want to go back to Dr. Altman.

SYLVIA

(Confused)

Okay. I won't make you.

ZEKE

(Desperate)

I want you to commit me.

SYLVIA

Zeke, I'm not committing you. You got problems but/

(ZEKE falls to his knees crying.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Crap. Okay, if it'll make you happy I'll commit you.

ZEKE

(Weeping)

I fucked up. I was tired. Hadn't had anything to eat. I shouldn't have accepted the mission.

(ZEKE loses it. More tears. SYLVIA should hold him but she can't, she doesn't know how.)

SYLVIA

(At wits' end)

I want you to be well. What I'd give for you to be well.

(ZEKE holds up his phone.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

What?

ZEKE

Read it.

(SYLVIA picks it up.)

SYLVIA

(Reading)

"Pentagon admits it was a missile from a US drone that...
(Her heart sinks) Killed twenty-seven members of a wedding party in Afghanistan."

ZEKE

(Weeping)

I keep thinking we're on the right side. Like we're better. But in reality, we pull just as much shit as they do! We're phonies, only we celebrate it.

SYLVIA

Zeke/

ZEKE

Didn't wait for confirmation. Didn't follow protocol. Saw my chance... There were women and children...

SYLVIA

This isn't real.

ZEKE

There was twenty thousand points at stake... And three gold stars!

(ZEKE weeps.)

SYLVIA

(Distraught)

Zeke...

(SYLVIA gets up the courage to hug her son. It's awkward.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(Devastated)

This isn't real. ...This isn't real.

(On the hug, the lights fade.)

END OF ACT ONE

(Please note: the act break can be eliminated)

(Act Two)

[Fireball, Blackout, Credits Roll]

Agent's office, Beverly Hills

(We enter mid-crisis.)

VICTORIA
(Pissed off)

Imagine my surprise!

SYLVIA

I'm so sorry.

(VICTORIA picks up the script and reads the last page.)

VICTORIA
(Reading the screenplay)

"Exterior. Dayton Airport. Day. Orange and purple luminescence pencil the sky as their Airbus comes in for a landing. There is no rainbow." What the fuck does that mean?!

SYLVIA

She/

VICTORIA
Shut up! *(Reading)* "Suddenly the engines begin to whine. Smoke shoots from the wings. An explosion. Captain, voice over, "Brace for impact!" The engine disintegrates taking the wing with it. We hear only the anguished cries of the panicked passengers as they plummet to earth. Fireball. Blackout. Credits roll."

(Beat, VICTORIA is incredulous.)

SYLVIA
I thought you said you read it.

VICTORIA

(Yelling)

I'm An Agent! I Don't Read! Not all the way through! I get the *gist*! I am a *gist* getter! And the *gist* up to page 92 was that they'd land safely and our lung-girl would go on to graduate from college, get married, name her daughter Dominique, and become a US Senator who fights for Universal health care!!! The *gist* was not that she, and her family, were about to be incinerated on a runway in Dayton Ohio! What The Fuck Is Wrong With You?!

SYLVIA

I wrote what she wanted/

VICTORIA

Thank God Hopper thought the ending was a joke. But you can imagine my confusion when he calls, tells me he loves the script, even the stupid scene where the mother and daughter talk politics over pancakes, but we'll have to cut the joke ending and I'm trying to figure out what the hell he's talking about!

SYLVIA

I tried to talk her out of it.

VICTORIA

I know I called her. I tell her she's the luckiest midwestern mama in the world and you know what she says?

SYLVIA

She won't compromise/

VICTORIA

She Won't Compromise!! She won't sell unless its done exactly as written!

SYLVIA

She's kinda attached to it.

VICTORIA

No shit! So I say, okay, and I totally bullshit her, how about if they add that ending to the director's cut? And she says no way. Do you realize how big this is? Hopper wants to cast Emma Watson.

SYLVIA

You're kidding. Why would she do a family channel bullshit movie?

VICTORIA

Because it's not family channel anymore! Hopper wants to make it a real movie. Like a holiday blockbuster. A new 'Miracle on 34th Street'. He wants to rush it into production so it'll be out by Christmas.

SYLVIA

What do you want me to do?

VICTORIA

You are going to make Little Miss Dayton Ohio change her mind and you're going to do it today!

SYLVIA

Can't/

VICTORIA

And then you and I are going do a meeting with Hopper at two o'clock at Sony.

SYLVIA

Can't do it today, my son's in the hospital.

VICTORIA

For?

SYLVIA

He's... He's...

VICTORIA

What!

SYLVIA

(Disingenuous)

He's got Polio.

VICTORIA

What?

SYLVIA

(Fabricating)

It's a new thing, it's not like old Polio but it's like new Polio/ related to Polio.

VICTORIA

Oh, he's in the nut house!

SYLVIA

Please don't.

VICTORIA

Just say it!

SYLVIA

I promised I'd stop by at two o'clock every day. He needs structure in his life.

VICTORIA

(Condescending)

Let me explain how this works - I make a meeting with a big important person, you drop everything you're doing, we go to said meeting, we make lots of money, I buy a new BMW 7-series, you pay your divorce lawyer's bill, and we ride off into the sunset/

SYLVIA

I really need to see my son/

VICTORIA

One more time. I make a meeting with a big important person, you drop/

SYLVIA

Okay!

VICTORIA

(Beat, calming)

You did good. Your career was dead, I didn't tell you, but you were beyond blacklisted, you were nobody. But you came back, you cracked the glass ceiling, and I'm proud of you.

SYLVIA

(Small)

Thanks.

VICTORIA

I'll see you at Sony at 2 o'clock, Judy Garland Building. Don't disappoint me. And if by chance anyone should drop his pants in the elevator, you smile, laugh and say, how witty.

(SYLVIA is too self absorbed to answer.)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

I need a verbal confirmation.

SYLVIA
(Small)

I'll be there.

VICTORIA
(Grabbing her stuff)

Gotta go, got a meeting. And do yourself a favor, go get a hot stone massage, you don't want to look desperate for the meeting. Oh, and while you're at it whiten your teeth.

(VICTORIA exits.)

(Fade to.)

[An Oscar Meyer Corndog With Real French's Mustard]

L.A. Hospital, Mental Health f

(Far off we hear the echo of a hospital intercom calling for a doctor.)

(SYLVIA turns to find herself in the Psych Ward meeting room. ZEKE steps in wearing a bathrobe. He's deflated, dark.)

SYLVIA
(Trying to be upbeat)

Hey.

ZEKE
(Hoarse)

Hi.

SYLVIA
(Trying to find a subject)

The doctors let you have a robe and slippers.

ZEKE

(Hazy, hoarse)

My reward for acting normal. If I keep it up they say I can have my phone back.

SYLVIA

Your voice, kinda hoarse there.

ZEKE

So?

SYLVIA

They tell me you been yelling a lot. You can't do that if you want to get out.

(The conversation dies, SYLVIA tries to restart it.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

...They, ah, feeding you okay?

ZEKE

Had a corn-dog for lunch.

SYLVIA

For what this place costs, they give you corn-dogs/

ZEKE

You're three hours late.

SYLVIA

Traffic.

ZEKE

Three hours?

SYLVIA

The 405, total mess.

ZEKE

(Accusatory)

You were writing.

SYLVIA

I was working. Do you know what this place costs? And it's not all covered by insurance/

(ZEKE fades for a moment. A sinking spell.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

You okay there?

ZEKE

They got me on some shit. The lights got like halos around'em.

SYLVIA

Yeah, forgot what it's called. Supposed to help. You kinda failed to mention you were self-medicating.

ZEKE

Mom.

SYLVIA

Shit.

ZEKE

What?

SYLVIA

It's been so long since you called me 'Mom'.

ZEKE

If you love me/

(SYLVIA's phone rings.)

SYLVIA

Shit. One sec.

(SYLVIA checks, stops the ring.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

You were saying?

ZEKE

Then you'll do something for me.

SYLVIA

Of course. How about a decent meal? We'll order out.

ZEKE
No.

SYLVIA
What then?

ZEKE
Validate me.

SYLVIA
And... how do I do that?

ZEKE
Admit there's a possibility.

SYLVIA
That...

ZEKE
I'm right.

SYLVIA
(Finding her way, uncomfortable)
Zeke... I took your computer down to the shop, they couldn't find any spyware or malware or anything.

ZEKE
Do you honestly believe the NSA would do something that could be detected by a nerd at the Mac genius bar?

SYLVIA
Look, Zeke, life... is just crazy, but if this is true, then life... isn't... life anymore. If it's true then nothing is true.

ZEKE
You got it.

SYLVIA
(Frustrated)
I can't do that. I can't live in a post-fact world.

ZEKE
(Beat, cold)
Will you sign the consent form so I can leave?

SYLVIA

Give it another week.

ZEKE

I turn eighteen Thursday.

SYLVIA

(She forgot)

Didn't forget.

ZEKE

(His eyes narrow)

You didn't?

SYLVIA

No.

ZEKE

At eighteen I can sign my own consent form.

SYLVIA

Please don't get all analytical. I'm not an analytical type, I'm just your average writer.

ZEKE

But you don't write about reality.

SYLVIA

(Getting irritated)

And what is reality? Tell me, I'd like to know.

ZEKE

(Bitter)

Reality is a bite of an Oscar Meyer corn-dog with real French's yellow mustard.

SYLVIA

(Small, confused)

...What?

ZEKE

Don't get it, do you?

SYLVIA

Who would?

ZEKE
(*Small*)

Fuck off.

(*ZEKE starts out.*)

SYLVIA
Okay. I'll stop by tomorrow. Two o'clock on the nose.

ZEKE
Whatever.

SYLVIA
(*Pissed*)
Don't walk away when I'm talking!

(*ZEKE stops.*)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
(*Fed up*)
When it comes right down to it, you're the one who can't deal with reality. You got this fake concept of what a mom is supposed to be.

(*SYLVIA's phone rings.*)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
(*To herself*)
Goddamnit.

(*She stops it from ringing.*)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
You live in a TV-world where it all ends happily ever after. That's not real, sometimes the plane goes down with no survivors. That's when it's so real it hurts.

(*ZEKE brings his arms up mechanically as if he were a drone. He flies towards SYLVIA, buzzing.*)

ZEKE
Bzzzzzzzz.

SYLVIA
(*Calling off*)
Nurse/

ZEKE

(Shouting)

Target Identified! Permission to fire?

SYLVIA

(Confused, backing up)

Zeke/

ZEKE

Permission granted! Engage!

*(ZEKE punches SYLVIA in the stomach
knocking her to the ground.)*

SYLVIA

(Stunned, gasping for air)

Son of a bitch. Nurse!

*(ZEKE stands over her. SYLVIA's
terrified.)*

ZEKE

(Shouting)

Direct hit! No survivors!

SYLVIA

(Desperate)

Nurse! Can I get a nurse please!

ZEKE

Target Eliminated! Twenty thousand points!

SYLVIA

(Desperate)

Nurse!

ZEKE

Two gold stars! Buzzzzzz.

(ZEKE, as a drone, flies out.)

*(SYLVIA is overwhelmed. She pulls
herself to her feet as she begins
to cry.)*

(Fade to.)

[Writing Is Rewriting]

A Crappy Bar On Hollywood Blvd

(SYLVIA finds herself in the bar. She has little energy left. Her stomach still aches from the punch. She sits, empty.)

SYLVIA

(Calling off)

Fat Tire please. No, make it gin and tonic. No ice. And no tonic. Double.

(CECELIA enters with the energy of a bumble bee. Under one arm she has the manuscript, under the other a book on screenwriting. In her hands are a Fat Tire and Squirt.)

CECELIA

There you are. Ready for a work session?

SYLVIA

(to herself)

Oh jeez.

(CECELIA plops down but she's so excited she can't sit still.)

CECELIA

I've been thinking. My mind's on fire.

SYLVIA

(To herself)

Great.

CECELIA

The script. I think it's got problems. I mean, the point of attack is too late and the catharsis too long.

SYLVIA

You're a screenwriter now?

CECELIA

Well sort of, I bought a book. "Screenwriting for Dummies."

(She holds up the yellow and black book.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

I had no idea so much was involved. But after reading it, I'm convinced that our problem is the character of Dominique.

SYLVIA

What's wrong with her?

CECELIA

You've got to give her some depth, bump her up by two percent.

SYLVIA

(Condescending)

Right, two percent, not three.

CECELIA

And now I'm thinking that setting the story at Christmas is too feel-good-ie.

SYLVIA

Feel-good-ie?

CECELIA

Yeah, Feel-good-ie.

SYLVIA

Is that a word?

CECELIA

And while we're at it, the attic scenes have got to go.

SYLVIA

What's wrong with the attic scenes?

CECELIA

They're just too Anne-Frank-ie.

SYLVIA

Okay, I know that's not a word.

CECELIA

This is not a major re-write.

SYLVIA

We don't do rewrites until they tell us what to rewrite.

CECELIA

Oh, that's too bad cause I was thinking about the ending.

SYLVIA

Except the ending. *That* we can rewrite.

CECELIA

I mean with them just crashing, it's just not enough. I thought we could... hold on.

(She opens the screenwriting book to a marked page.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

(Reading)

"Up the stakes."

SYLVIA

And how do you propose we do this?

CECELIA

Got an idea.

SYLVIA

(to herself)

Of course you do.

CECELIA

What if, as the plane is about to land in Dayton, we cut to a family, the Fankhousers from Middletown Ohio, and they're waiting in the terminal, and they're about to take a trip of a lifetime to, like Hawaii or something, and they look up, and they see this huge plane, with its wings on fire, coming right at them. Impact! Fireball! Black out! Credits roll.

(SYLVIA drops her head in her hands.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

You don't like it?

SYLVIA

You can't kill off a family that's just about to go on a Hawaiian vacation!

CECELIA

It's what I want to say.

SYLVIA

It's Hollywood, you don't get to say what you want to say!

CECELIA

But it's my story.

SYLVIA

Cecelia, please, listen, this is a script about hopefulness. It's about overcoming, and about new beginnings, and all that bullshit.

(Again, SYLVIA's cell rings.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Goddammit.

(SYLVIA stops the phone.)

CECELIA

Or maybe the problem is that you're too close to the material? You can't kill your puppies.

SYLVIA

What?

CECELIA

It's an old Hollywood saying. It means that sometimes there's a scene or a character that the writer loves, but you have to cut it out of the script.

SYLVIA

The saying is, kill your *darlings*.

CECELIA

Oh, I thought it was puppies.

(She flips through the screenwriting book trying to find the page.)

SYLVIA

Cecelia, how can I explain this. There are formulas, accepted methods.

CECELIA

But what about my unique voice?

SYLVIA

No one in Hollywood is interested in unique voices. Look, did you ever consider seeing a psychiatrist?

CECELIA

(Taken aback)

What?

SYLVIA

I know a really good one.

CECELIA

Well now, is it your intent to insult me?

SYLVIA

No. It's just that you seem obsessed with killing off everyone in Ohio. Maybe you need help. Like, with reality.

CECELIA

(Elegantly stoic)

Ms. Parks, my divorce is final on Friday.

SYLVIA

And your daughter's in a coma, yes, I got all that.

CECELIA

But she won't be for long. The doctors called this morning. They're going to take her off life support Monday morning.

(Beat. That takes the wind out of SYLVIA.)

SYLVIA

I'm so sorry.

CECELIA

(Kindly)

Is that enough to let you know that I have a firm grip on reality? *(Beat)* Now, the reality is, I got a plane to catch, I gotta go home and say goodbye to my little girl. So let's compromise.

SYLVIA

Thank you.

CECELIA

We'll leave the ending the way it is. They simply crash. No one in the terminal is hurt, although after watching a hundred and fifty people die in front of them I doubt the Fankhousers from Middletown Ohio will be in the mood for Hawaii. Do we got a deal?

(CECELIA offers her hand. Beat, SYLVIA tries a new tactic.)

SYLVIA

(Wits' end)

Cecelia... I have a son.

CECELIA

I know.

SYLVIA

He's in a psych ward//

CECELIA

You mean a mental health facility?

SYLVIA

Doctors say he's suffering from P.T.S.D.

CECELIA

He was in the war?

SYLVIA

No, he got it from a video game. He believes that when he plays Drone Strike he's actually killing people in Afghanistan.

CECELIA

...Wow.

SYLVIA

He thinks he killed twenty-seven people at a wedding party playing Drone Strike. And the terrible thing is, he might be right, because, today, how could I know? How would anyone know what's real? That's why we need the movies. We need to escape. But in such a way that we know the exact boundaries between what's real and what isn't.

CECELIA

But why can't a movie make a point?

SYLVIA

People don't want to know what they already know. They already know that it's all going to end badly. So we need... We need...

CECELIA

Lies.

SYLVIA

If you want to call it that. I prefer innocent fictions.

CECELIA

Like Episcopalianism?

SYLVIA

Well, I wasn't going to get that exact with my analogy, but, okay, Episcopalianism. And...

CECELIA

Batman.

SYLVIA

And...

CECELIA

Presidential elections.

SYLVIA

And...

CECELIA

Methamphetamines.

SYLVIA

...And happy endings.

(Beat.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(Small)

Cecelia, I need a happy ending... Whether it's real or not.

(Beat.)

CECELIA

I'm sorry about your son.

SYLVIA

And I'm sorry about your daughter. I hope you can find peace.

CECELIA

We may be the two worst mothers ever.

SYLVIA

(A sad laugh)

You're probably right.

(Beat. They hold hands. A tender moment. Then...)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Now, the ending.

(Beat.)

CECELIA

Yes.

SYLVIA

There's a lot of money on the line.

CECELIA

Is that so important?

SYLVIA

(Lying)

No. *(Beat)* Although that's part of it.

CECELIA

Sometimes your voice, you know, who you are inside, that's not for sale.

SYLVIA

Cecelia/

CECELIA

I've lived out of a tip jar for my entire life. I gave you a lot of those tips, the least you can do is give me a voice. Okay? Okay.

(CECELIA grabs her big bag.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)
(Midwestern upbeat)

Have a nice day.

(CECELIA exits.)

(SYLVIA sits for a moment. Her phone rings.)

SYLVIA

Goddamnit.

(Without seeing who it is she hangs up.)

(She exits.)

(Fade to.)

[Cut To The Chase]

Hospital, Psych Ward

(Somewhere deep in the bowels of the building.)

(ZEKE enters dragging a chair. He wears a robe. He has a cell phone.)

ZEKE

(On phone, hoarse, despondent)

And of course I get your fucking answering machine. *(Laughs, Sarcastic)* Good news, I snatched a phone from the nurses' station. So, I got a bathrobe and some slippers and a phone and guess what, I found a chair.

(Far off an alarm sounds.)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Hear that? That means they've figured out that I've gone missing. Don't have much time, so let's cut to the chase.

(He pulls the cloth belt from the bathrobe and stands on the chair.)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

(On phone)

This is real. It might've happened in a galaxy far far away, but I still did it. We all did it. And we have to live with it. *(Beat)* Or not.

(He drops his bathrobe. If possible he should be naked, or wearing as little as possible.)

(ZEKE ties the belt of the robe around his neck.)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

(On phone)

By the way, mom, today was my birthday, not Thursday.

(Lights out.)

[Pathetic, Heartless, Bastard]

Agent's office, Beverly Hills

(VICTORIA enters with SYLVIA. SYLVIA's weak, she's been drinking.)

VICTORIA

What the hell happened to you?

SYLVIA

(Pulling herself together)

I need a drink.

VICTORIA

Did you call your son?

SYLVIA

What?

VICTORIA

He called here and left two cryptic messages.

SYLVIA

I was with Cecelia, I'll call him tomorrow.

VICTORIA

Did she agree to the change?

SYLVIA

No.

VICTORIA

Christ. Okay. Fine. I'll tell the lawyer to write the contract up so that she can't possibly figure out what it says. But you screwed up, totally screwed up.

SYLVIA

I don't know why this is so important. It's not even her story.

VICTORIA

Whoa whoa, not her story?

SYLVIA

She made it up.

VICTORIA

But her daughter had a lung transplant, right?

SYLVIA

Yes, but nothing else is true. Her daughter is a meth addict.

VICTORIA

A what?

SYLVIA

It's all a bunch of bullshit.

VICTORIA

But the whole attic thing/

SYLVIA

There is no attic, there is no black friend, her daughter had a lung transplant because she huffed too much spray paint.

VICTORIA

(To herself)

Holy fucking shit.

(Beat. VICTORIA begins to laugh.)

SYLVIA

You think this is funny?

VICTORIA

Woman, our problems are solved!

SYLVIA

How?

VICTORIA

It's not her story - We don't need her permission.

SYLVIA

She hired me. I cashed her checks. There's a paper trail.

VICTORIA

She paid you to write a story. Any story. It doesn't have to be *this* story.

SYLVIA

What do you want me to do, whip out another lung transplant script in a week?

VICTORIA

No, all you need is a script, any script will do. And we have one.

(VICTORIA pulls Sylvia's Iowa screenplay.)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Beautiful Ukrainian bride falls for Iowa tractor salesman.

SYLVIA

Oh, shit, no.

VICTORIA

It's perfect.

SYLVIA

But you already sent that out.

VICTORIA

No, I didn't.

SYLVIA

You told me Herb over at Warner Brothers said it was 'fairly' touching.

VICTORIA

I'm an agent, I lie. I didn't send it to anyone.

SYLVIA

Why not?

VICTORIA

Cause it's crap!

SYLVIA

Thanks for letting me know.

VICTORIA

It has no heart.

SYLVIA

I need a drink.

(VICTORIA takes a flask from her drawer and offers it to SYLVIA. She takes a swig.)

VICTORIA

Now, listen, when she hires her small town lawyers and sues us, which she will, you simply say she pitched you the Iowa tractor salesman story and you wrote it.

SYLVIA

No. No, I have standards.

VICTORIA

You can't copyright an idea, only the script.

SYLVIA

I know, but/

VICTORIA

She's from Ohio. Iowa, Ohio, they even sound alike.

SYLVIA

I can't.

VICTORIA

It makes total sense that this is what she asked you to write. And when you met her she told you about her daughter's lung transplant which inspired you to write your original script.

(SYLVIA wobbles, she's light headed.)

SYLVIA

(Tears)

Victoria, I'm a mess.

VICTORIA

Maybe that's why you wrote such a damn good script. For once, you put yourself into it. Sylvia, this is more your story than hers. She might have inspired you, but you own it. You wrote all those wonderful Anne-Frank-ie scenes in the attic.

(SYLVIA can't believe she said "Anne-Frank-ie.")

SYLVIA

(To herself)

Oh for god's sake.

VICTORIA

And that magnificent moment when the father tells the daughter, for the very first time, that he loves her right before the operation - That scene is Oscar bait. I cried - And as you know I don't cry. That was you, my friend, all you.

(SYLVIA begins to cry.)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Why? Why are you doing that?

SYLVIA

(Drunk)

You don't understand.

VICTORIA

Shit, stop that.

(VICTORIA gives her a tissue.)

SYLVIA

My father...

VICTORIA

What about him?

SYLVIA

(Crying)

...He could never tell me that he loved me.

VICTORIA

And isn't that a good thing? I mean if he had you never would've become a writer. You'd be a normal person, how boring is that?

SYLVIA

And I'm the same... I've never told my son I love him.

VICTORIA

Well now, you just march yourself over to that insane asylum right now and let him know.

SYLVIA

Can't.

VICTORIA

Oh, yes you can.

SYLVIA

No.

VICTORIA

You've made so many great movie moments, you deserve to have one in real life.

SYLVIA

But it's not real.

VICTORIA

Make it real.

SYLVIA

No.

VICTORIA

Why not?

(Beat.)

SYLVIA
(Weeping)

Cause I don't love him.

(Beat. VICTORIA is stung.)

VICTORIA
(Halted)
Well, that's just... not... right. All mothers love their sons.

SYLVIA
(Wiping her tears)
In the movies, not in reality.

(VICTORIA backs away.)

VICTORIA
(Perplexed)
I don't understand. You've written so many wonderful, believable moments between mothers and sons. 'You've Got Pee Mail' the scene between Cathy the Chihuahua and her baby.

SYLVIA
Made it up.

VICTORIA
And the touching scene where Paula the Pekingese holds her son for the very first time, that must have come from somewhere.

SYLVIA
(Barely able to get the words out.)
It's just repurposed words on a piece of paper.

(VICTORIA hugs SYLVIA as she weeps.)

VICTORIA
(Tenderly)
Come on you pathetic, heartless, bastard, I'll drive you home.

(They exit.)

(Fade to.)

[Happy Endings]

Los Angeles International Airport

(LAX airport announcements echo down the corridor.)

(CECELIA enters pulling her overstuffed roller bag and struggling with her massive purse. She's on her phone.)

CECELIA

(On phone, frazzled)

Can't talk, I'm trying to find my gate, and I'm lost, and I hate this airport/ What? ...No, I'm still in LAX. ...Wait, you're talking too fast. Slow down. *(Beat, stunned)* ...What do you mean she came out of her coma? ...Like, she spoke? Like words? What did she say?

(What she hears totally overwhelms her. She is consumed by tears of joy)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

...She asked for a Squirt!

(Elated, she falls to her knees)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

Oh my god! Oh my god! Tell my little snow cone I'll be there soon. ...What are you saying? ...What? ...Okay, we can talk about the divorce but there have got to be changes. Serious rewrites...I'm sorry I'm just a little overwhelmed right now...Do you realize what this means? ...There is such a thing as a happy ending!

(A weeping CECELIA exits pulling her roller bag.)

(Fade To)

[Unhappy Endings]Forest Lawn Cemetery

(After a graveside service. Birds chirp. Sunshine. VICTORIA enters wearing black and a funeral veil. She's on her cell.)

VICTORIA

(On phone)

Look, since the nomination Sylvia can't do every meeting. You're going to have to wait your turn. ...Can we talk later? ...I'm at a funeral. ...Next week.

(She hangs up. Sees someone off.)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(Calling off)

Steven, thank you for coming. Call me.

(SYLVIA enters.)

SYLVIA

Hey.

VICTORIA

Hi.

SYLVIA

(Trying to find something to say)

...Beautiful day.

VICTORIA

Couldn't ask for better.

(They stand beside each other and look out at the crowd. Beat.)

SYLVIA

I knew your father knew everyone in Hollywood but I didn't think that meant he knew everyone in Hollywood.

VICTORIA

(Waving at someone important)

Yeah, all the self-important players are here.

SYLVIA

(Looking out)

Can't imagine this many people at my funeral.

VICTORIA

(Looking out)

That's cause you're a writer. People don't like going to writers' funerals - It's too depressing. *(Beat)* I know I supposed to ask so I will... How did it go at the Betty Ford Center?

SYLVIA

I haven't had a drink in three months.

VICTORIA

And Zeke?

SYLVIA

Living with his father and his child bride in Pasadena.

(VICTORIA waves at another off stage guest.)

VICTORIA

(Calling off)

Bob! Thank you for coming, call me. Let's do lunch. *(Then quietly to Sylvia, doubting)* Shit, I think his name is Bob.

SYLVIA

He answered to it.

VICTORIA

Then his name is Bob.

SYLVIA

You're networking at your father's funeral?

VICTORIA

(Scanning for important people)

You'd be amazed at how many deals are made at funerals in this town. *(In confidence)* Okay, so, act like we're grieving, like you're comforting me, but tell me what you're wearing Sunday night.

(They huddle up as if they are comforting one other.)

SYLVIA
(*Quietly*)

Oscar de la Renta.

VICTORIA
(*Quietly*)

Buying or renting?

SYLVIA

Renting. You?

VICTORIA
Buying. Dress by Armani Prive. Shoes by Jimmy Choo. Hair,
Giuseppe Franco, lips by Dr. Adam Goldstein of Beverly Hills.
(*Beat*) You're going to win you know that don't you.

SYLVIA
Stop saying that.

VICTORIA
Offers are flowing in. Steve at Paramount wants to talk to
you about re-writing the new Kung Fu Panda movie and Jerad at
Columbia wants to meet you on Friday afternoon about writing
the new Lego Angry Birds movie.

SYLVIA
Can't.

VICTORIA
Why not?

SYLVIA
I'll be in New York.

VICTORIA
When you coming back?

SYLVIA
Sunday morning.

VICTORIA
Wait wait wait, you're flying back on Sunday. But you/

SYLVIA
Don't worry, it's a morning flight.

VICTORIA
(*Breaking the quiet talk*)

Are you nuts?!

SYLVIA
I'm taking Zeke to a P.T.S.D. specialist in Manhattan.

VICTORIA
Holy Shit. What if your plane's late?

SYLVIA
It won't be.

VICTORIA
If you aren't there I will personally kill you.

SYLVIA
I'll be there.

VICTORIA
You know this is just temporary, next year no one will remember who won, you need to take full advantage.

SYLVIA
I'll be there.

(*VICTORIA sees someone off.*)

VICTORIA
Rob! Wait, let's talk. I'll be right there. (*Back to Sylvia*)
Okay, see you Sunday. And for your speech.

SYLVIA
I'm not going to win.

VICTORIA
You gotta give that same speech you gave at that Writer's Guild breakfast last week.

SYLVIA
Stop it, I'm not going to win.

VICTORIA
It was brilliant. When you told that story about your son and breakfast and the Blueberry pancakes, there wasn't a dry eye in the house, my friend, not a dry eye.

*(VICTORIA runs off to network with
whomever.)*

*(SYLVIA is left alone with her
thoughts.)*

*(The sound of whining jet engines
as a plane lands.)*

(Fade to.)

[You Have A Nice Day]

Dayton Airport

*(Dayton airport announcements echo
down the corridor.)*

*(Sylvia finds herself at a small
airport restaurant.)*

SYLVIA

(On cell, frazzled)

...No, I didn't *miss* the flight, it was cancelled. ...No, I got rebooked, but I had to change planes in Dayton. ...No, I'm not kidding. I'm in fucking Dayton Ohio. ...Yes, I know I have only four hours.

*(ZEKE enters pulling a roller bag.
He's playing a game on his phone,
earbuds stuck in his ears. He's a
little medicated.)*

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(On cell)

I might not be glamorous, but I'll be there.

(She hangs up.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Do you want something to drink?

*(But he doesn't hear her with the
buds.)*

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Zeke!

(She pulls a bud from one ear.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Do you want a drink? How about a coke?

ZEKE

Whatever.

(For the rest of the scene ZEKE is consumed by a game on his I-phone.)

SYLVIA

(Calling off)

Can I get a coke and a/

(SYLVIA stops.)

(CECELIA enters. She's wearing a server's uniform.)

CECELIA

And a Fat Tire.

(A beat.)

(SYLVIA grabs her things to go.)

SYLVIA

Zeke, we gotta go/

CECELIA

(Kind)

No, it's okay. Don't. Please.

(SYLVIA stops.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)

So, tonight's the big night, huh?

SYLVIA

Ah. Yeah.

CECELIA

Whatcha doing here then?

SYLVIA

My flight was cancelled, I'm reconnecting.

CECELIA

This your boy?

(ZEKE doesn't look up, he's too into his game.)

SYLVIA

Yeah. Zeke, say hello. Zeke!

(He never looks up.)

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

He's kinda...

CECELIA

Off in his own little reality, aren't we all.

(Beat.)

SYLVIA

(Trying to find something to say)

So, ah, how's Becky, Bec... B?

CECELIA

(Up beat)

In a wheelchair.

SYLVIA

I'm so sorry.

CECELIA

Oh no, don't be. My life's great.

SYLVIA

Really?

CECELIA

Yeah. I survived a bout with breast cancer this fall, and my daughter's learning to type with a stick in her mouth and my husband and I reaffirmed our vows - In Hawaii.

SYLVIA

Oh. That must've been wonderful.

CECELIA
Our rental was stolen.

SYLVIA
Cecelia/

CECELIA
It's okay. Don't you know, it still qualifies as a happy ending.

SYLVIA
Does it?

CECELIA
Oh sure. *(Beat)* So, you're going to get all dolled up. And put on someone else's jewelry and, are you taking a limousine?

SYLVIA
Yeah.

CECELIA
Isn't that nice.

(CECELIA's eyes get big, she points out to the runway.)

CECELIA (CONT'D)
(Shocked)
Oh My God! Look!

SYLVIA
Where?

CECELIA
(Pointing out the window)
There/

SYLVIA
What/

CECELIA
There! That plane/

SYLVIA
What plane/

CECELIA
Its Engine Is On Fire!

SYLVIA
(Trying to find it in the sky)

Holy Shit! Where!

(CECELIA smiles and laughs.)

CECELIA
Just kidding.

SYLVIA
What the hell?

(CECELIA laughs.)

CECELIA
Gotcha.

SYLVIA
(Pulling herself together)

I... Gotta go. Zeke.

CECELIA
(Suddenly serious)
You see that's the difference between you and me. You know
that's possible. I don't. So I'll always be happier than you.
(Beat) Have a nice day.

(CECELIA exits.)

(Fade to)

(In the darkness Zeke exits.)

[And The Winner Is...]

*(The lights fade to a single pool
isolating SYLVIA.)*

*(We hear the sound of applause in a
large auditorium and then the
voices of beautiful people.)*

VOICE OF ACTRESS

(V.O.)

And the nominees for best original screenplay are.

VOICE OF ACTOR

(V.O.)

Bryan Winter for 'Lord of the Rings, The return of Sauron.'

VOICE OF ACTRESS

(V.O.)

John Ahart for 'Ninja President.'

VOICE OF ACTOR

(V.O.)

William Strieber for 'Rapture Road Redemption.'

VOICE OF ACTOR (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Thomas Kelly for 'My Lucky Star.'

VOICE OF ACTRESS

(V.O.)

And Sylvia Parks for 'Reality.'

(SILVIA holds her breath in anticipation.)

VOICE OF ACTOR

(V.O.)

And the Oscar goes to...

(SILVIA is totally alone.)

(The roar of an incoming airliner gets louder and louder until it's overwhelming. Then explosion, fireball.)

(Blackout.)

END OF PLAY