

#24

COPY + RETURN
ASAP

MISS CONGENIALITY

Written by
Marc Lawrence
&
Katie Ford
&
Caryn Lucas

Master

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- EVENING

We're in the West Forties. The usual street traffic, tourists, etc. A restaurant, the "ODESSA," advertises "authentic Russian cooking" on its window.

INT. ODESSA RESTAURANT -- EVENING

The place is about half-full. There's a table with a young couple eating, a table with two older couples, and a larger table where three men sit together, speaking Russian and laughing. And a table where one woman sits by herself, reading a book, eating her soup. This is GRACIE HART. She reads, eats, and spills a little soup on her pants.

GRACIE

Oh, damn.

She starts blotting her pants with a napkin when her attention is caught by another man, a huge slab of a human being who enters from the back of the restaurant, smoking a cigar. This is VICTOR KRASHOW. The others rise to greet him, speaking Russian and hugging him. He's clearly the star of whatever show they've got going.

Gracie watches out of the corner of her eye, then leans into her book and starts speaking quietly.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Zhivago had landed.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- EVENING

It's the same street we were on before, except now we notice one more detail--a van parked across from the Odessa.

INT. VAN -- EVENING

A group of five men sit wearing FBI jackets, surrounded by surveillance equipment. They can see a video input of the inside of the restaurant. The Senior Agent is HARRY MCDONALD. Also listening in on headphones is ERIC MATTHEWS, good-looking, cocky, a bit of a cowboy on the job. The other Agents are CLONSKY, FELL, and HARRIS.

ERIC

(into a microphone)

Give us a better look, sweetheart.

INT. ODESSA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Gracie carefully moves her salt shaker on the table.

GRACIE

Roger. And don't call me sweetheart,
Beefcake.

INT. VAN -- NIGHT

The Agents can see the table where the Russian mobsters sit.

ERIC

Okay, ladies, showtime.

They all begin pumping cartridges into rifles, adjusting
bulletproof vests, etc.

MCDONALD

Remember, this guy's a killer. Eyes
open, stay cool, stay strong.

ERIC

You heard the Boss. Let's do it!

They begin piling out of the van, leaving McDonald watching
the video screens and talking into his headset.

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

A WAITRESS comes over to Gracie's table.

WAITRESS

Do you know what you want for an
entree?

GRACIE

Nothing. Just the soup.

WAITRESS

Borscht is not a meal!

GRACIE

I also had bread. I'm full.

WAITRESS

Let me tell you the specials--

GRACIE

(frighteningly tough)
I'm full! Get back in the kitchen
right now.

The Waitress turns and heads away. After a moment, Agents
burst in, guns drawn.

ERIC

FREEZE! FBI!

Gracie jumps up with her gun drawn. The Russians don't move. It's incredibly tense.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Put your hands on your head! Do it!

KRASHOW

(in broken
English)

No...English.

There's a tense moment.

GRACIE

Vadeska koya!

Everyone in the room, agents and Russian mobsters, look over to her, surprised. Gracie puts her hands on her head to illustrate her point.

KRASHOW

Ah! Vadeska koya!

The Russians nod, when suddenly another Russian bursts out of the kitchen, firing at the Agents.

All Hell breaks loose. Customers drop to the floor. Gracie throws a table over and ducks behind it.

Through the chaos, she sees Krashow try to escape out the back behind one of his guards. The Guard gets shot. Krashow changes direction and jumps through a window. Gracie sees the other agents pinned down by gunfire, so she leaps out the window in pursuit.

EXT. BACK ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

Gracie can just make out the hefty figure running down an alley.

GRACIE

Freeze! FBI! Freeze, goddamit! What's the word--Freezivich!

Krashow keeps running.

KRASHOW

Taxi!

GRACIE

Hey! Give it up! You'll never get a taxi on Eighth Avenue! All the Broadway shows are letting out!

Krashow's about to turn the corner. Gracie gets into firing position. She's got a clear shot. She hesitates. The look on her face is one of total paralysis. She waits a moment too long...and Krashow disappears around the corner.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Damn it!

Gracie gets up and takes off again in pursuit.

EXT. EIGHTH AVENUE -- NIGHT

Krashow heads towards the subway. Gracie follows at a full run.

INT. SUBWAY -- NIGHT

Krashow is huffing badly as he runs towards the turnstiles. A train is pulling in. He roughly pushes people out of the way as he slowly lifts himself over the turnstile. Gracie rushes in. The line at the turnstile has re-formed.

GRACIE

Move! FBI! Get out of the way!

No one moves fast enough. Gracie leaps up, grabs onto a steel beam and swings herself over the crowd and the turnstile.

She looks to see Krashow getting on the train. The doors shut and the subway starts to pull out. Without hesitating, Gracie leaps onto the platform between cars.

INT. SUBWAY -- NIGHT

Gracie bursts into Krashow's car. Krashow grabs a crutch from a man to defend himself. He swings it at Gracie who gracefully ducks, and then kicks him in the gut. Krashow staggers as Gracie slaps him up against a pole and handcuffs him. Then she hands the crutch back to the man.

GRACIE

Here you go, Sir. Sorry for the inconvenience.

EXT. 50TH STREET STATION -- NIGHT

Several Agents escort Krashow to a waiting car. Gracie is there with McDonald and Eric.

ERIC

You're the man, Hart.

GRACIE

Right back to you, girlfriend.

ERIC
(to McDonald)
She did a helluva job, didn't she,
Sir?

MCDONALD
Well, we got him.

McDonald walks off.

GRACIE
What did I ever do to him? You think
it's a woman thing?

ERIC
Nah. No one thinks of you that way.

GRACIE
So what is it?

INT. BAR -- EVENING

This is an FBI hangout. Eric and Gracie play pool while Clonsky, Fell and Harris watch, along with several other agents, including another woman, SANDERS. Gracie sinks a shot and raises her cue in triumph.

GRACIE
I believe you owe me fifty dollars,
Sir.

ERIC
No, no, I meant fifty cents. I just
said let's play for fifty--

GRACIE
So if you won, you could ask me for
say, fifty pairs of pants.

ERIC
Aren't you happy I lost?

CLONSKY
Rematch!

ERIC
Love to, but I've got a pressing
social engagement to fulfill--

A very attractive, very young woman enters the bar.

GRACIE

Come on. One more game. It'll take her a few minutes to find her fake proof.

ERIC

Sorry to disappoint you, New Jersey Fats.

Eric heads off to the girl.

SANDERS

You could get him on the firing range.

GRACIE

Nobody's a better shot than him. I could get him wrestling, but I don't think he could deal with me taking him down. It's a guy thing. I know how that works.

CLONSKY

I bet you do.

Gracie hits him as she heads over to the bar, where the Bartender slides her a beer.

GRACIE

Thanks, Bill.

Eric wanders over with his young date, BETH.

ERIC

Hi, Bill. We need a beer and...

BETH

White wine spritzer.

The Bartender heads off after giving Beth a look.

BETH (CONT'D)

So most of the people in here are agents?

ERIC

Yeah, it's kind of an FBI bar. FBI standing for "Free Beer Inside".

Beth laughs. Gracie rolls her eyes.

GRACIE

Bill, give me another one and some Pepto-Bismal.

ERIC

As a matter of fact, here's an agent--
Gracie Hart, this is Beth Carter.

BETH

Oh, wow.

GRACIE

Right back to you.

ERIC

Beth is at N.Y.U., and she's doing
an article on law enforcement. I'm
helping her get an inside look.

GRACIE

I'm sure she'll do the same for you.

BETH

Gracie, I'd love to get a woman's
point of view--

ERIC

You're barking up the wrong tree,
Beth. Right, Hart?

Gracie grabs her crotch in the typical male gesture. Bill
brings the drinks over to Eric and Beth.

ERIC (CONT'D)

See you later, Hart.

They head off to their own table. Gracie watches them go for
a minute, and turns around to see Agent Sanders and Clonsky
kissing together. She turns back to the bar, where Bill slides
over another beer and some Pepto-Bismal.

INT. GRACIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Gracie enters this modest, one-bedroom apartment. She turns
on the lights, and we see the place in all it's lonely
splendor. Marginal furnishings, functional furniture. Poster
of Springsteen on the wall, a Giants pennant. A dog lies on
the floor, making not a single gesture of greeting to his
master.

GRACIE

I'm home...don't get up...

She lightly nudges the dog, who lets out a low whimper.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

You know, I could've gotten a cat or a husband if I wanted this kind of greeting...

The dog makes a disapproving sound.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Walk yourself.

Gracie heads into the kitchen, goes to the refrigerator, gets out a Lean Cuisine for one, and pops it into the Microwave. Dissatisfied, she stops the Microwave, gets another Lean Cuisine, and pops that in as well.

She heads over to the Answering Machine and presses a button.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Hey, honey. Just wanted to remind you that I'm getting married tomorrow at six-thirty and I expect my only daughter to be there...And don't worry, Francine's not mad that you missed the Bridal Shower...or at least that's what I told her.

The Machine Beeps.

MACHINE

End of messages.

Then the microwave beeps. Gracie gets the two dinners out and heads back into the living room. She turns the TV on, finds an old re-run of the "Mary Tyler Moore" show and settles in to watch. Then she puts one of the dinners on the floor for the dog, as they both eat in silence.

EXT. NEW JERSEY STREET -- MORNING

A K-Car pulls up outside this small apartment house. After a moment, Gracie emerges dressed for work. Pantsuit, sunglasses.

INT. CAR -- MORNING

Eric is at the wheel.

GRACIE

So, how was your orgasm?

ERIC

Good. How was the rest of your night?

GRACIE

The normal. Came home, had a little dinner, read the Bible.

ERIC

You know, it's funny--Beth asked how come you and I never got together.

GRACIE

That is funny. She's funny. Don't let her go.

ERIC

I told her we were partners and friends, and we didn't want to let anything get in the way of that. And it's hard for two agents to have a relationship, because there's always a chance of one of them getting shot or blown up, and it's hard to raise a family and everything --

GRACIE

And she stayed up for this whole speech?

EXT. HOLLAND TUNNEL--JERSEY SIDE -- MORNING

The K-Car heads into the Holland Tunnel from the Jersey side.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- DAY

The car screeches to a halt outside a Starbucks. Eric and Gracie emerge, sunglasses on, all business.

ERIC

Ready?

GRACIE

Let's do it.

INT. STARBUCK'S - MORNING

There's a gigantic line. Gracie and Eric enter. People stop to look at them as they cut to the front of the line.

GUY ON LINE

Hey, I've been waiting --

GRACIE

(flashing her badge)

Federal Agent, Sir. You'll want to stay out of this.

Everyone is impressed. But not this guy, a young hotshot Wall Street type.

GUY ON LINE

So what? That doesn't give you the right to just burst in here--

GRACIE

Where'd you get the watch?

GUY ON LINE

My watch?

GRACIE

The Rolex knock-off. Did you know it was a knock-off when you bought it? Because if you did, that's a violation of the Interstate Commerce Act, which falls under our jurisdiction. Maybe we should go down to the Federal Building and talk about it.

GUY ON LINE

No...no, I didn't know.

Eric is now at the head of the line.

ERIC

I need four caffe lattes, two double espressos, two mocha cappuccions -- what does Harris like?

GRACIE

Tea.

The Guy on Line smiles at Gracie, fully intimidated.

GUY ON LINE

I like tea too.

Gracie just stares at him, all business. The guy looks like he's going to cry.

EXT. FBI HEADQUARTERS - FEDERAL PLAZA - MANHATTAN

The nondescript white building is in the background. Eric's car races around the side of the building and disappears into an underground garage.

INT. FBI MEETING ROOM -- DAY

A bunch of agents are standing around, drinking the Starbucks. After a moment, McDonald enters, grabs a coffee. The room quiets down.

MCDONALD

Two days ago, we got a call from one of our undercover--Helen Franklin. She was infiltrating the Daughters of the New American Revolution. Mike--

AGENT SIMPSON pops in a tape and it comes up on the screen. We see a burning office building in Manhattan.

MCDONALD (CONT'D)

They're the folks who torched the offices of Carmen and Rice Publications, the company that publishes several X-Rated pornographic magazines, including "She" and "Everybody Loves Big Ones."

A shot of a beauty pageant comes up.

MCDONALD (CONT'D)

This is the Miss Pennsylvania pageant.

Suddenly, the lights go out in the pageant. There are screams from the pageant audience.

MCDONALD (CONT'D)

The Daughters knocked out the power, trashed the stage, cut the hair of several of the contestants and set the building on fire.

The screen goes blank.

MCDONALD (CONT'D)

Apparently there was a power struggle going on in the Daughters, and a radical faction won out. At least that's what Franklin was reporting. Until two days ago. That's when we lost contact with her. We think her cover was blown.

Now the Agents in the room are really interested.

MCDONALD (CONT'D)

We searched the last location Franklin reported from, a farm upstate, but the Daughters were long gone. That's all we know. Except for one more thing--Franklin said if the radical faction won out, the Daughters were going for the big time--the Miss United States pageant. They're planning to kill the winner. Onstage.

There are mummings in the room.

MCDONALD (CONT'D)

We're going to stop these people and get our agent back. The Pageant's in San Antonio, but the Daughters are our jurisdiction, and the Director wants it handled from here. Matthews, get a team together.

ERIC

(surprised)

You want me to take point?

MCDONALD

Five years you've been talking about running an op. This is it. I want preliminaries on my desk by Tuesday. Mike will give you all the background.

McDonald starts to head out of the room. Gracie goes to him.

GRACIE

Sir, I'm very happy for Agent Matthews, but I've been here longer than he has.

MCDONALD

And that means...

GRACIE

At some point, I'd like to be considered for heading an op--

MCDONALD

I'll tell you what I'm considering you for, Hart. A desk job doing Security Checks.

ERIC

Sir, Gracie rocked on the Russian thing--

MCDONALD

I reviewed the tapes. We had surveillance in the alleyway. You had him dead on, Hart. No bystanders, no chance of civilian casualties, and you didn't take the shot.

It's a tense moment. All the Agents are listening. Gracie doesn't know what to say.

GRACIE

Well, I...I know, but, at the moment,
I thought...

McDonald just starts out. Gracie is embarrassed. The other Agents pretend nothing happened, going back to their coffee.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

(to McDonald)

It's two-fifty for the coffee, Sir.

MCDONALD

Watch it, Hart.

McDonald stares at her, then walks out of the room.

GRACIE

He's going to pay me, right?

CLONSKY

Look, you know why he resents you.
He thinks you don't belong here.

GRACIE

Why? I took the test, I passed
Quantico like everybody else.

SANDERS

Yeah, but everybody else isn't the
daughter of a legend who got promoted
over him.

Simpson comes over.

SIMPSON

(to Eric)

We should get going.

ERIC

Yeah.

(to Gracie)

Hang in there, buddy.

INT. FBI BUILDING - DAY

As Gracie walks through the halls dejectedly, she passes by a row of photos of past agents, an Agency Wall of Fame. All of them men. Until she gets to a photo of an attractive woman with the inscription -- "Emily Hart - 1940-1985" -- Gracie looks at it for a moment.

GRACIE

(quietly)

Sorry, Mom.

EXT. HOUSE -- DAY

This is a small house on a non-descript street somewhere in upstate New York.

INT. BASEMENT -- DAY

An FBI Agent, HELEN FRANKLIN, is tied to a chair and gagged. SIX WOMEN in their thirties come downstairs, led by NORA.

NORA

Would you like to hear tonight's specials, Miss F.B.I? It's healthy and nutritious, and by the time we finish with you, you'll be able to fit into a swimsuit like one of those little plastic pageant bimbos we're going to unwrap.

Helen lets out an unintelligible whimper.

NORA (CONT'D)

Don't want to hear the specials? Oh, well, too bad. Maybe dessert.

The ladies laugh as Nora signals them to head back upstairs, leaving the agent alone in the dark basement.

EXT. CHAPEL - EARLY EVENING

Gracie sits on the lawn outside a church, looking incredibly uncomfortable in a Bridesmaid's Dress. After a moment, JAY HART, her father, an amiable man in his sixties, comes and sits next to her.

JAY

Hey, beautiful.

GRACIE

Hey, liar. Sorry about missing the Bridal Shower. But at least I sent a gift.

FRANCINE

Oh, yeah. Francine really loved the Lo-Jack.

GRACIE

I still can't believe you're marrying a woman who cuts her hair exactly like Martha Stewart, but I'm happy you're not going to be alone anymore.

JAY

Thanks, honey. I wonder when I'm going to be able to say the same thing to you?

GRACIE

I'm not alone. I'm with you.

JAY

You know, there's more to life than catching bad guys. Even your Mom had me and you --

GRACIE

Excuse me, Sir--are you perhaps trying to tell me something?

JAY

I just want you to be happy.

GRACIE

I'm happy. Now back off or I'll have to shoot you.

There's a moment of silence between them.

JAY

Honey, are you a lesbian?

GRACIE

Oh, Dad--I wish.

A BELL BEGINS CHIMING in the background.

INT. WEDDING RECEPTION - DAY

Gracie is at a table with a group of single people. They're all talking. Gracie is playing with her silverware, tapping to the music. Finally, one guy, STEVE, turns to her.

STEVE

How you doing? I'm a dermatologist.

GRACIE

I have a theory about dermatology. You use the same cream for everything, don't you? Big vat in the back?

Jay and FRANCINE ascend the bandstand and bang their glasses. Francine is a meticulous, Martha Stewart type.

FRANCINE

Quiet, quiet, please.

The crowd quiets. Gracie looks around the room. She observes an older couple holding hands, a few of the single people at her table self-consciously flirting with each other, a young married couple holding their five-year-old daughter. It all accentuates her loneliness.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

The first time I met Jay, I knew I was in love. I said Jay, this is going to cost you.

Everyone laughs. Gracie swallows her champagne in one shot as Steve puts his arm on hers.

GRACIE

Ah, Doctor --

STEVE

I love the way you fill out those sleeves.

GRACIE

Let me guess. You're single?

ANGLE BACK on Jay and Francine.

JAY

What can I say? I'm the luckiest man in the world. Maybe not the richest, but the luckiest.

The crowd laughs again.

JAY (CONT'D)

I want to thank everybody for coming, and God willing, we'll all be together again soon for my daughter's wedding.

Steve's hands move into forbidden territory. Gracie grabs him and flips him onto the table, which collapses with a crash.

JAY (CONT'D)

Or not.

EXT. GRACIE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

A car pulls up. The door opens. Gracie stumbles out, a little drunk.

GRACIE

Goodnight, Dad. Goodnight Francine. I had a really nice time.

FRANCINE (O.S.)

I will never forgive you for ruining
our wedding night! Never!

JAY (O.S.)

Alright, Francine, calm down--

FRANCINE (O.S.)

How can I calm down! She resents me!
I can't help it if I'm not in the
FBI like her mother.

JAY (O.S.)

Honey, would you like to come home
with us tonight?

GRACIE

Oh, that is so nice... And so
pathetic. I only moved out a year
ago.

As Gracie starts to get back in the car, a voice calls out.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hart?

Gracie turns around to see Eric standing in the shadows under
a streetlight, leaning up against his car. He looks
attractive in a Stanley Kowolski kind of way.

ERIC

Nice dress. Got a minute?

GRACIE

(into the car)

I can stay here tonight.

INT. GRACIE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Eric and Gracie enter.

ERIC

Wow--I've never been inside before.

He looks around the relatively barren place. And he can't
think of anything to say.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Nice sheet rock.

GRACIE

Take a seat.

Gracie starts to sit, but misses the chair.

ERIC

So, I've been working on this Miss United States thing.

GRACIE

Yeah? How does it feel to be in charge?

ERIC

I'll tell you when I feel like I'm in charge. But at least we came up with a preliminary plan. We're going to do a full scale op. Surveillance on-site and off, undercover judges, waiters, ushers, choppers, metal detectors, big time. And I want you on the team.

GRACIE

Get out! Really? What am I doing?

Eric takes a second.

ERIC

Like I said, we've got an undercover blanket on this place. Except because it's a beauty pageant, there's a few places we can't get to.

GRACIE

What places?

ERIC

Places they don't let men go in pageants. Places where only the contestants go. Onstage.

There's a moment of silence as Gracie takes this in. She looks too shocked to speak.

GRACIE

Miss United States? Me? Me? In the Miss United States contest?

Gracie laughs uproariously for a minute, then gets up and rushes to the bathroom. WE HEAR RETCHING from another room.

ERIC

Obviously, you weren't our first choice.

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)

But you'd be surprised how difficult an assignment this is to fill. We conducted an extensive search.

CUT TO:

INT. FBI COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Eric is hunched over a console. A COMPUTER OPERATOR, JENSEN, sits at the keyboard.

ERIC (V.O.)

We compiled a visual read-out on every female Agent under the age of thirty, excluding for Agents with high visibility, current assignment, and excessively large hips.

Jensen hits some buttons. From the Agents POV WE SEE various women show up on a bank of screens, each with their name and division. Jensen hits another button, which places each candidate in full figure, disrobes them down to their underwear, dresses them in an evening gown, then a swimsuit.

The room has taken on the feel of a bachelor party, as it's filled with scores of male agents, whooping it up and cheering as each figure comes on the screen. They put a picture of Eric up and dress him in an evening gown to a round of cheers. Eric sits at the keyboard, presses some buttons, and McDonald comes up in a swimsuit. The laughter quickly dies down.

ERIC (CONT'D)

He's right behind me, isn't he?

Eric turns around to see McDonald standing there. Jensen sits back down, hits some more buttons.

JENSEN

Wait a minute. Here's one.

They all look. It's a shot of Gracie in a swimsuit.

MCDONALD

Jesus.

INT. GRACIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gracie is now sitting on the bed wearing a washcloth that says "Hers".

ERIC

If it's an inside job, this is the only way to be sure we're completely covered.

GRACIE

No...freaking...way.

ERIC

Why not? You do a few butt-shaping exercises, we could pull this off.

GRACIE

I am not parading around in a swimsuit like some airhead bimbo in a network televised soft-core porn film.

(imitating a contestant)

"Hi, my name is Gracie Lou, and I want to save the world through peace, love and crochet."

ERIC

Now you sound like a Daughter of the New American Revolution.

GRACIE

They're right about this. Beauty pageants!?! You don't need an agent for this. You need a model, or one of those pre-schoolers you date.

ERIC

Gracie --

GRACIE

It's because McDonald hates me, right? He's trying to punish me --

ERIC

Hey--I had to beg him to let you do this!

Gracie takes this in.

GRACIE

You're kidding.

ERIC

Like it or not, you screwed up that night. I know you caught the guy, but you should've shot. McDonald can nail you to a desk job for the rest of your life, so I'd think about this.

Gracie sits down, overwhelmed with this news.

GRACIE

I can't believe it...You mean I'd have to do the whole thing--the dancing and the bathing suit and the smiling and the twirling...Where would I put my gun?

ERIC

No place I want to know about.

GRACIE

Eric...look, I didn't grow up like other girls. On my fifth birthday--

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

There's a birthday party going on. Young Gracie sits at the table unwrapping a present while EMILY, her mother, Jay, and her Grandmother and Grandfather look on. Finally, she gets the present open. It's a doll.

GRANDMOTHER

It's a doll, sweetheart!

GRACIE

Thanks, Grandma. It's so...you.

Her mother hands over a present.

EMILY

This is from Daddy and me, honey.

Gracie rips it open. It's a holster with two water guns.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh, for God's sakes.

GRANDFATHER

Well, this makes it official. She's not going to be Amish.

GRACIE

It's just what I wanted! Thanks, Mom! Thanks, Dad!

JAY

Your welcome, Sweetface.

EMILY

Now remember--we only use guns to--

GRACIE/EMILY

Protect those who can't protect
themselves.

EMILY

Badges!

Gracie pulls out a mini-FBI badge as her mother pulls hers
out.

CUT TO:

INT. GRACIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

GRACIE

I don't even own a dress. I'm not
beautiful the way those women are --

ERIC

I think you're potentially attractive.

GRACIE

You've never seen me in a bathing
suit.

ERIC

Sure I have. On the computer.

GRACIE

And?

ERIC

We can make it work.

EXT. HOTEL IN SAN ANTONIO - DAY

Print on screen: MISS UNITED STATES HEADQUARTERS.

INT. MISS UNITED STATES HEADQUARTERS--OFFICE - DAY

Eric and McDonald are sitting with STAN FIELDS, in his
fifties, distinguished, the host of the Miss United States
contest. Alongside him is the Director of Operations for
the contest, KATHY MORNINGSIDE. She is absolutely gorgeous
and regal, befitting a former contestant, which she was.

STAN

I don't know if I'm hearing this
correctly --

KATHY

Stan, these gentlemen -- they want
to have one of their agents in the
contest.

STAN

That's crazy. You want her to win?

ERIC

No, Mr. Fields, we just have to get her into the top five, so she'll be on stage at the big moment -- we'll have to rig the judging.

MCDONALD

We've got some good leads on this group, we're moving towards apprehension right now. But we still want to do everything we can to protect the beauty pageant --

Kathy nearly jumps out of her chair.

KATHY

What did you say?

Eric looks at McDonald, mystified.

KATHY (CONT'D)

This is NOT a beauty pageant! This is a scholarship program! It was when I competed in the contest, and it's even more so now.

MCDONALD

My wife and I watch every year.

KATHY

These women have struggled, rehearsed and prepared for this night most of their lives. I won't let it be ruined for them.

MCDONALD

We want to work with you-- for the safety of the girls. Women. Scholarship... ladies.

ERIC

We don't want to take a chance on anybody getting hurt. And neither do you.

There's a moment of silence.

KATHY

I will not agree until I'm able to meet the young woman you choose.

MCDONALD

Fair enough.

KATHY

How are you planning to get her into the contest?

MCDONALD

If Miss New Jersey and the first runner-up become unavailable, it's at the discretion of the State Committee to choose another contestant.

KATHY

And how will you deal with Miss New Jersey and the first runner-up?

ERIC

All I can tell you is, we won't kill 'em.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO STREET -- DAY

McDonald and Eric walk out.

MCDONALD

You better be damn sure Hart can pass muster with that Pageant fanatic.

ERIC

(not so sure)
No problem, Sir.

INT. AEROBICS CLASS - DAY

A group of men and women in sweats are pounding away to some funky music. Eric and Gracie enter.

ERIC

Which one is Miss New Jersey?

Amidst the sweating, panting, huffing people in the room, WE SEE JENNIFER BARRON, a thin, perky blonde, who despite her exertions, is not even sweating.

GRACIE

I'm guessing the pretty one with make-up.

Eric starts to bob a little. The class ends. Everybody starts to grab their towels. Eric and Gracie stop Jennifer.

ERIC
Excuse me, Miss Barron?

JENNIFER
Yes?

ERIC
I'm Agent Matthews. This is Agent
Hart. FBI.

They show their badges.

JENNIFER
It wasn't me. It was my sister.

GRACIE
We're not here about that.

ERIC
Your sister look like you?

JENNIFER
Just in the bust.

ERIC
(taking out his pad)
We'll need her number, of course.

GRACIE
Miss Barron, we've got a national
emergency and we need your help.

JENNIFER
Oh my God? What is it?

GRACIE
We can't tell you.

JENNIFER
Wow.

ERIC
But we need you to relinquish your
Miss New Jersey title.

There's a pause.

GRACIE
It means give up. You'd have to
give up your title.

JENNIFER
No way. No how. Uh-uh.

ERIC

Miss Barron --

JENNIFER

I've worked my entire life to get where I am now. While all the other girls went out after school to eat hot fudge sundaes, I was eating celery and cottage cheese. Have you ever had that? You know what it tastes like? It tastes like victory. I knew with each bite I was getting one step closer to my dream. My dream of walking down the aisle with a crown on my head and a sash that said Miss United States. And no one is ever going to take that dream away from me. Ever.

Eric takes out a checkbook. He writes a figure out and shows the check to Jennifer.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Make it out to Jennifer Barron --

INT. BOWLING ALLEY

NIKI DEAN is at the counter, handing out shoes, score sheets, etc.

NIKI

(yelling in a thick
New Jersey accent)
Hey, lane fourteen! Lose the heels.
(to herself)
You big horse.

Eric and Gracie approach her.

ERIC

Are you Niki Dean? First runner up
in this years Miss New Jersey contest?

NIKI

Why?

ERIC

I'm Agent Matthews. This is Agent
Hart. FBI.

NIKI

Well, that's not going to help you
get a lane. It's Seniors Night.

ERIC

There's been a problem with Miss New Jersey.

NIKI

(hopefully)

Is she dead?

ERIC

No. She had to pull out of the contest.

Niki explodes in joy.

NIKI

Yes! Yes! I knew it. I knew that silicone whore wasn't classy enough to represent the Garden State.

(calling out)

I quit! I'm done here! Hey Bernie, I quit, you son of a bitch!

GRACIE

Hold on, Bernie.

(to Niki)

We need you to resign from the contest.

NIKI

Are you crazy? You just told me I won.

GRACIE

You'd be doing a service to your country. And we'd be happy to compensate you.

NIKI

No fucking way.

GRACIE

How did she not win?

ERIC

I'd think twice about this, Wanda.

The mention of the name "Wanda" brings Niki to a dead stop.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Agent Hart?

Gracie hands over a typical post-office "Wanted" picture.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Wanda Kowolski. Wanted for bank robbery in Alaska. Your hair's different in the picture. Longer. I guess you needed to keep warm in the getaway sled.

NIKI

(pause)

What kind of numbers we talking about?

INT. TELE-COM BOARD ROOM -- DAY

This is the corporate Boardroom of Tele-Com Corp, a multi-media giant. The room's floor to ceiling windows afford a spectacular view of San Antonio. ALAN SPIRO, President of Tele-Com, mid-forties, successful, British, is there along with his Vice-President, ROB OKUN. Kathy enters.

KATHY

Alan! How are you?

There are kisses and hugs all around.

SPIRO

Kathy, please, have a seat. You know Rob Okun, our new head of marketing.

KATHY

Rob, of course.

SPIRO

So, to what do we owe the pleasure of this visit?

KATHY

Well, since we discussed the ratings decline at our last meeting I came up with a few ideas to pep things up a bit. I thought we could add some special effects, like an animated character who talks to the girls.

SPIRO

I love that! Rob, jot that down.

ROB

Got it.

SPIRO

But I do think it's going to take more than that. I think we have to update the whole look and feel of the pageant.

KATHY

I also had some other thoughts--

Kathy takes out a pad.

SPIRO

Kathy, I know how hard this is to accept. You and Stan have been with the pageant for thirty years.

ROB

But our research indicates Stan has almost zero recognition with the 18-49 demographic. And when I say almost zero, I mean he has negative recognition. They think he's somebody else.

SPIRO

And if we're bringing in a new management and production team, they're going to want their own people on board. They all have way too much respect for you to take charge while you're still there.

Kathy looks saddened and hurt.

SPIRO (CONT'D)

Of course, we'd want you to remain on in a consulting capacity.

KATHY

But...this is my pageant.

SPIRO

No, actually, it's Tele-Com's pageant.

KATHY

There's nothing I can do to change your minds? I'll adapt. I'll change. I'll listen to gangsta rap.

SPIRO

Kathy, let's go out in style and make this the best pageant ever. Alright?

Spiro smiles. Kathy looks crushed.

EXT. BATTERY PARK -- DAY

Gracie is in sweats, running through the park at a fast clip. After a minute, Eric catches up to her, running just as fast.

ERIC

Ready to start Operation Make-Over?

GRACIE

What do I have to do except buy a pair of heels and get a lobotomy?

Eric hands Gracie a piece of paper.

ERIC

Go to this restaurant. You'll meet a Mr. Victor Moorehouse there.

GRACIE

As much as I enjoy the whole "Spy versus Spy" thing, who is he?

ERIC

The Michael Jordan of beauty consultants. This guy has coached more Miss United States winners than anybody else. And now he faces his greatest challenge.

Eric laughs. Gracie does not look happy.

GRACIE

You coming?

ERIC

Love to, but Beth only got a C on her law-enforcement paper. We're gonna see if we can't get it up.

GRACIE

Are you actually this superficial?

ERIC

Hard to believe, isn't it? Have fun tonight.

INT. MANHATTAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An upscale eatery. Gracie enters direct from jogging and immediately feels out of place -- underdressed, still sweaty. She looks over to see a dapper MAN dressed in a perfect suit at the bar, sipping a martini. He wears a single white carnation. This is VICTOR MOOREHOUSE. When Gracie enters, Vic stands.

VIC

If you're Gracie Hart, I quit here and now.

GRACIE

Too bad. I was really hoping to look like you when we finished.

VIC

Charming. I suppose we'd better get to know each other. Are you hungry?

GRACIE

Yeah.

VIC

Yes.

GRACIE

Yeah.

VIC

Yes.

GRACIE

Yeah.

VIC

Yes.

GRACIE

You know, I have to be somewhere next Friday.

VIC

Always "Yes". Never "Yeah". Miss United States is well-spoken and polite.

GRACIE

But I'm not Miss United States, am I?

Gracie turns around and spits her gum into a receptacle. Then she gets a whiff of her underarms.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Yow. I should've showered.

VIC

Oh, but why? Eventually, you'll just get dirty again.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Vic is carefully eating his meal. Gracie is chomping away on a steak, drinking a beer, a sport jacket thrown over her sweats. Vic signals the waiter, who quickly comes over.

VIC

I'll have another Merlot Laffite,
please. Another keg for you?

GRACIE

(mouth full)

I'm okay, thanks.

VIC

That's all for now, Phillip.
Incidentally, the complimentary sport
jacket will require dry cleaning.

WAITER

Yes, Mr. Moorehouse.

The waiter walks off.

GRACIE

So, how long have you been doing
this pageant consulting?

VIC

I'm sorry. What was the question? I
was distracted by the half-masticated
cow I saw rolling around your wide
open trap.

GRACIE

What's your problem?

VIC

My problem?

GRACIE

Yeah. Excuse me, yes. You've been
giving me crap since I walked in
here. What's the deal? Did I offend
you in some way?

VIC

Other than in an olfactory sense?
Meaning--

GRACIE

Smell. From the Latin "Olfactoris."
I went to college.

VIC

Where? Dagnet U?

GRACIE

Yale.

VIC

That's impossible. I went to Yale.

GRACIE

They can take up to three people a century now.

VIC

Alright, then. I will tell you my story. I was the most sought after, highly paid consultant in pageant history. Every season girls would plead with me to train them. Ten of the past eleven years, my girl was crowned, and the only time I lost the winner was a deaf mute. How can you beat that?

GRACIE

Life can be so unfair.

VIC

Then there was last year.

Vic pauses and takes a drink of wine.

VIC (CONT'D)

Sara Ann Lowell. A perfect package of poise, grace and teeth. She'd made it into the Final Five, of course, and was waiting to chat on issues of the day. Normally, she was a fountain of Bon Mots, but that night, when Stan Fields asked how she felt about affirmative action, she froze like a puddle in Antarctica. Finally she mumbled something about how "we should all be affirmative, and we should all take action." Then, she started to cry. And then sob. Then heave.

GRACIE

So I take it she didn't win.

VIC

No, she didn't win! But that's not the worst of it. Afterwards, she told a reporter she froze because of the pressure I had placed on her. That I was a crazed perfectionist who nitpicked and harangued her within in an inch of her sanity.

GRACIE

Did you?

VIC

Of course! How else could I transform some dormitory slut from a Junior College in Alabama into Miss United States?

GRACIE

Well, there's always next year.

VIC

No, there isn't. After the article came out, my business dried up. Nobody wanted me. I was reduced to prepping women for the local auto show. I started putting on weight and drinking domestic wine.

GRACIE

So, with all due respect, how come the Bureau went after a loser like you for this job?

VIC

Because everyone else worth having already has a contestant! They have their Southern Belles, Midwest Farmers Daughters, spunky Western cowgirls. And I have...Dirty Harriet.

INT. FBI SCREENING ROOM - DAY

ON SCREEN WE SEE a video of a woman walking gracefully down the aisle in a swimsuit and heels, smiling and waving. Vic sits with Gracie, watching.

VIC

This is the legendary Kathy Morningside. Watch how she walks -- as if she's floating, lightly ascending from cloud to cloud towards heaven. The smile, the spin --

GRACIE

The horror. These are not actual women, are they? These things were created in a offshore rubber factory by non-unionized workers.

Suddenly another piece of film comes up with a contestant performing an opera -- shrieking an opera is more like it.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

If we were dogs, we'd be dead now.

INT. BLOOMINGDALE'S -- DAY

Vic and Gracie walk through the Women's section. Vic picks up a tiny one-piece bathing suit.

VIC

Now this is absolutely scintillating.

GRACIE

I've worn band-aids bigger than that.
Why can't we go to the GAP?

Vic turns to Gracie angrily.

VIC

Let me tell you something--yours is a generation that prides itself on it's so-called individuality. All this trumpeting of false bravado about expressing your true Generation X selves, and yet, like sheep, you troop en masse to the same store to buy the exact same pair of baggy stone washed jeans and overpriced faux baseball jersey. That is not a revolution. That is a lack of taste and a spiritual void which reflects the true GAP at the center of your generation, our culture, and the entire civilization.

GRACIE

What about Banana Republic?

VIC

You're hopeless! I quit.

GRACIE

Okay.

VIC

Not okay! I can't quit! I need to redeem myself. No. I am going to rise to the challenge. I am going to take a veritable farm girl--

GRACIE

I'm from Paramus--

VIC

A woman without a detectable smidgen of estrogen and transform her into something magical and elegant. And when I do, they'll all come crawling back, offering riches beyond description.

GRACIE

I don't care if they offer Hoover's old dresses. I'm not wearing that bathing suit.

VIC

You must change your thinking. You must visualize yourself as someone... else.

Vic takes Gracie to a mirror. They gaze into it.

VIC (CONT'D)

I am the most beautiful woman in the world. Now you.

GRACIE

Isn't it bad luck to lie into a mirror?

VIC

It's the power of suggestion. If you believe it, so will everyone else.

GRACIE

(unconvincingly)

I am the most beautiful woman in the world.

VIC

I didn't believe that. Not for a single bloody second.

GRACIE

That makes three of us. You, me, and the mirror.

A guy walks past them.

GUY

Four.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL - DAY

Gracie tries to walk down a line painted on the floor carrying books on her head. Vic occasionally hits her with a stick to fix her posture.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL - DAY

Gracie is taking a break. She's about to bite into a candy bar. Vic snatches it away from her. Scolding with his finger. He hands her a stick of celery. Gracie looks at the celery, then pulls her gun on Vic. Vic hands back the candy.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL -- DAY

Gracie is practicing sitting. She sits like a man, her legs apart, hands in pockets. Vic rushes over, grabs Gracie's hands and folds them, then crosses Gracie's legs. He steps back and looks on approvingly as Gracie does a Sharon Stone "Basic Instinct" move. Vic reacts with disgust.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL -- DAY

Vic is now walking with books on his head, demonstrating the proper technique while Gracie watches.

INT. FBI LAB - DAY

An all-white, sterile laboratory area. Eric leads the way. Gracie follows along with Vic.

ERIC

We cooked up a few little tricks to help you at the "Scholarship Program".

There's a piano in the middle of the room. Eric sits down and plays a Mozart piano concerto. He plays well.

ERIC (CONT'D)

For your talent, you'll play piano.

GRACIE

That will be a talent, because I don't play piano.

Eric steps away from the piano. It keeps playing.

ERIC

Cool, huh?

Gracie sits, trying to follow along with the keys. She starts getting into it, kicking the piano bench out from behind her, a la Jerry Lee Lewis. Vic shakes his head.

INT. FBI LAB - DAY

Gracie is in a one-piece bathing suit. She wears sweats on her bottom half. Eric and Vic watch as a technician stands a few feet away at a remote control. He presses a button, and the bathing suit sucks in at the waist. Then he presses another button. The breasts start to inflate.

GRACIE

Now's the time to apply for that job
at my local Hooters.

The Technician starts to panic.

TECHNICIAN

Hey--I can't turn this off. The
hydraulics are jammed.

The Technician frantically presses buttons, but the breasts keep inflating until Gracie is barely visible. Eric and Vic rush over and try to hold the breasts down.

VIC

What new crevice in Hell have I fallen
into?

ERIC

Look out! They're gonna blow!

They dive for cover as the breasts explode. Gracie winds up flat on her back in a daze.

GRACIE

Can someone check and see if the
real ones are still there?

The Technician and his assistant lead a woozy Gracie off.

VIC

You realize this will never work.

ERIC

What are you saying?

VIC

I'm saying with a few weeks of
intensive work, she might be ready
to join one of the finer bowling
leagues.

ERIC

Listen, Liberace. She's doing a press
conference at the Atlantic City Hilton
tomorrow.

VIC

She's not fit to be seen on the subway --

ERIC

You have her ready by tomorrow morning
or I'll punch your face in.

VIC

Are you threatening me?

ERIC

Are you kidding?

Vic realized Eric means business.

EXT. IN FRONT OF GRACIE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Eric rings the doorbell. After a moment, the door opens. Vic walks out, looking exhausted, carrying various outfits, combs, make-up and brushes.

ERIC

How'd it go?

Vic just growls as he walks by. A moment later, Gracie slowly emerges. She's dressed in a tasteful sleeveless dress, with her hair done--she looks terrific. Eric stares in amazement.

GRACIE

I'm wearing a dress, I've got gel in
my hair, I've been up all night and
I'm armed. Don't fuck with me.

She walks past him to the car.

INT. HILTON HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A press conference is about to start. Gracie stands nervously at the podium. BRIAN McNICHOL, a man in his forties, calls for attention. A small gathering of press people are there.

MCNICHOL

Thanks for coming, everyone. As
Director of the Miss New Jersey
pageant, I'm happy to announce that
we've overcome our recent setbacks,
and finally have a terrific young
lady to represent us in this year's
pageant. I proudly present Miss New
Jersey, Gracie Hart.

Gracie nervously steps to the front as the flashbulbs pop. She starts to unfold a prepared statement, her hands shaking.

GRACIE

(in a monotone)

It is my privilege to be representing--

PRESS #1

How did you win if you weren't even
in the contest?

The question startles Gracie. She glances over to Eric and Vic. They can't help. Other questions start coming.

Suddenly, someone else steps up to the podium -- Kathy Morningside. There's a buzz. The press recognize her.

KATHY

Good morning, everyone. I'm Kathy Morningside, Director of Operations for the Miss United States Pageant. I haven't had the privilege of meeting Miss Hart yet, so you're all here at a historic moment.

Kathy shakes Gracie's hand as the cameras roll.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Now, in answer to your question, the by-laws clearly state that if Miss New Jersey and the first runner-up become unavailable, it's at the discretion of the state committee to choose another contestant.

PRESS #2

But why not somebody from the contest?

GRACIE

(quietly)

Well, most of them were so bitter they put on a few pounds.

There's a big laugh from the press. Gracie relaxes a bit.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Besides, if they were so good in the first place, they would've won.

There's more laughter.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

And nobody could love Jersey more than me. From Springsteen to the hot dogs at Giants Stadium to the... what else do we have here?

There's another big laugh.

PRESS #3

We can see that you're very personable, but what's your talent?

PRESS #4

What's your platform?

The questions start to come fast and furious.

KATHY

It's been a very busy day for Miss Hart. We have to let her get her beauty rest.

GRACIE

See you in three weeks when the Valium wears off.

Gracie raises her arms to wave to the crowd, and it's at that moment we realize she doesn't shave her underarms. Vic runs up and slaps her arms down.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - DAY

Kathy and Gracie walk along the Boardwalk.

KATHY

I haven't been here since we moved the pageant to San Antonio. It's a shame what happened to this city. It forgot who it was.

GRACIE

That happens to me a lot.

Kathy laughs.

KATHY

You're very clever. That's why you did well in there. I was impressed.

GRACIE

No, you saved me.

KATHY

That's my job. You're one of my girls now. Which means you'll have to behave like a real contestant.

GRACIE

I'm in training right now.

(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Tomorrow I work on talent, interview skills and thighs.

KATHY

And you must have a platform.

GRACIE

We're picking shoes next week --

KATHY

An issues platform. Something you believe in. What causes are you interested in?

GRACIE

The truth is, I don't have much time for causes outside work. My whole life is pretty much the Bureau.

KATHY

Well, this may give you a chance to broaden your horizons. You see, the pageant is a training ground for the rest of your life. Succeed here, and you can succeed anywhere.

GRACIE

Thanks for the advice, Kathy. May I call you Kathy?

KATHY

Of course you can, Miss New Jersey. After all, you're one of us now.

Kathy waves as she steps off to a waiting car.

EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL IN NEW JERSEY -- DAY

Gracie walks towards a school accompanied by Vic.

GRACIE

There must be some other way to get a platform.

VIC

Everything else was already taken. Abused woman, handicapped children, AIDS prevention--if you don't get in there right away, you're stuck without a disease or social problem.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM -- DAY

Gracie stands in this Public High School gym, dressed nicely, as befits her new status. Vic is off to the side, watching. A rowdy group of kids and a few teachers are gathered around, waiting to hear her as PRINCIPAL BARLOW, an African-American woman in her forties steps to the microphone.

PRINCIPAL

Quiet down, everybody. We have a very distinguished guest with us today. She's from New Jersey, just like all of you. But she's Miss New Jersey, representing our state in this year's Miss United States Pageant. And her platform is education awareness in our public schools. So give her a warm welcome. Miss Hart?

Gracie steps up to the microphone to almost no applause.

GRACIE

Don't take drugs. Don't get pregnant.
Don't smoke. Any questions?

Vic shakes his head in disgust.

KID IN THE BACK

Show us your tits!

There's some giggling as a GYM TEACHER, JOE, whistle around neck, steps forward.

GYM TEACHER

You put a lid on that, pal!

GRACIE

Hey, if I could find them I'd show 'em to you.

The kids laugh a little.

KID IN THE BACK

I'll find 'em for ya!

PRINCIPAL

Behave!

GYM TEACHER

Who said that? Right now!

The Gym Teacher rushes to find the culprit as all the kids laugh and yell. The Principal rushes back to the microphone. It's bedlam.

PRINCIPAL

We'd all like to thank Miss Hart for coming in today to speak to us.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD -- DAY

Vic and Gracie walk out of the school, as kids play basketball, huddle in groups, etc.

VIC

Well, that was delightful.

As they walk through the schoolyard, a taunt can be heard from the same kid.

BOY (O.S.)

Yo, Miss New Jersey! Do you swallow?

Gracie stops.

VIC

Let's just keep moving. You've already done so much good for these kids--

GRACIE

Just chill out.

Gracie starts towards the crowd.

VIC

We don't want to miss our bikini wax--

Gracie moves towards the basketball court, where she sees TOMMY, a huge kid, with all his friends.

GRACIE

You've got a big mouth, you know that?

TOMMY

Hey, lady, you best get off my court--

GRACIE

Make me.

The crowd whoops it up now. This is going to be fun.

TOMMY

Hey, girl, I don't know what you think you're doing, but you better run home to Mama--

GRACIE

What'd you say about my Mama?

TOMMY

You heard me. Now get your baton-twirling ass out of here--

Gracie shoves him. Tommy lunges at her, but it's no contest. She flips him. He hits the ground with a thud, and then Gracie pulls his arm behind his back as she kneels on him.

GRACIE

For your information, being loud and obnoxious doesn't make you cool. Brains, sensitivity, and a six-figure income--that's what women want.

She lets him go. The crowd is now in awe of her. A boy walks over and timidly asks her a question.

BOY

How'd you learn to do that?

GRACIE

Oh, it's a routine part of the Miss New Jersey training.

GIRL

Cool. How'd you get into the contest?

Gracie starts to talk to the kids until Tommy attacks her again with some of his friends. Gracie starts whirling and spinning, knocking people off left and right. Vic gets into the melee and is immediately knocked over.

INT. FBI HEADQUARTERS - FEDERAL PLAZA - MANHATTAN

Gracie sits with a bandage on her face, her hair a mess, ripped blouse. Vic looks worse. Eric enters.

ERIC

The Miss New Jersey Committee just got calls from the Principal and the Gym Teacher at Paramus Middle school. But most of the kids are standing up for you, so you're not fired yet.

GRACIE

The kids stood up for me? That's cool, because I thought we were really starting to relate--

VIC

Excuse me--are you implying we have to continue with this charade?

GRACIE

I know what you're going to say--

ERIC

You knew I was going to say you're a coward?

GRACIE

No, I thought you were going to say I was never going to make it as Miss New Jersey. Coward I don't like.

ERIC

This whole fear of beauty pageants is garbage. You're trying to sabotage everything because you're scared you can't hack it as an agent anymore.

GRACIE

Do me a favor. Just because child psychology works on your dates, don't use it on me.

ERIC

You don't have enough guts to be honest, that's your problem.

GRACIE

Yeah, that's my problem, genius.

ERIC

Liar.

GRACIE

Egomaniac.

ERIC

Wimp.

GRACIE

Fetus dater.

VIC

Oh, why don't you two just kiss and get it over with already?

GRACIE

Oh, please.

ERIC

Yeah, please.

GRACIE

I may not have had a date this century, but I'm not that desperate.

VIC

Before the year is out, the two of you will be kissing passionately in some Godforsaken alleyway.

GRACIE

Maybe. But not each other.

INT. GRACIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gracie is in bed, staring at the ceiling, wide awake, her dog lying on the foot of the bed.

GRACIE

I'm actually worried about how my hair's going to look in the morning.

She keeps staring at the ceiling. Then she jumps out of bed, starts pacing and finally picks up the phone.

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

Gracie is there when Eric walks in, looking very tired.

GRACIE

Thanks for coming.

ERIC

Every second you speak in another REM cycle lost.

GRACIE

Look, you were right, McDonald was right-- I didn't shoot. The thing I was trained to do, the thing I was so sure was in my blood--I couldn't do it. I don't know why. Maybe it's because we spent so much time doing surveillance on the Russian guy, he became like an actual human being. I mean, this guy's got grandchildren. One minute he's slicing off people's heads and dumping them in the East River, and then he goes home with a talking Teletubbie...The worse part of the whole thing was walking past that picture of my Mom.

ERIC

Listen, you're lucky. At least you had a parent who took this job seriously. My Dad's a high school football coach. He told me I was crazy trying to make the Bureau instead of going pro.

GRACIE

You could've played pro?

ERIC

Twelfth round draft pick! Dad said that was my best bet, because I didn't have a brain in my head. Blew my SAT's, lousy G.P.A., I suck big time at Jeopardy. I bet you're great at Jeopardy.

GRACIE

What is "I can hold my own".

ERIC

Sure. You went to Yale. 1450 Boards.

GRACIE

How'd you know that?

ERIC

I'm in the F.B.I. Don't you recognize me? I'm the muscle guy. Good with a gun, good with a punch. But this is the first time they're letting me run things. So if I do good, it means I prove my Dad wrong. Now, I'm not going to blow a chance as big as that on the wrong girl. Am I?

Gracie takes this in.

GRACIE

I won't let you down.

ERIC

That's what I want to hear.

GRACIE

I mean, truthfully, I might. But I'm going to try to avoid it.

ERIC

It's like football--you did your training, went over the playbook a

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)

million times, so when they snap the ball, you don't hesitate. You hear "hike" and you go.

GRACIE

Thanks...You know, I'm shocked, but you're actually a good listener.

ERIC

Thanks. Don't make me do it again.

EXT. HOUSE IN UPSTATE NEW YORK -- NIGHT

A woman enters the house.

INT. HOUSE -- NIGHT

RITA, walks to the kitchen table carrying a bag of groceries. In the kitchen there's a picture of Pat Buchanan's head pasted onto the famous Farrah Fawcett Majors poster.

RITA

Who wants vegetable lasagna?

Nora enters in a bathrobe, fresh from the shower.

NORA

You get the stuff?

RITA

Yeah. Tomatoes, sauce, vegetables, and for a little extra bang...

She takes some wires and fuses out of the bag, and then a time-device. They all look at it, and Nora takes it.

NORA

Lovely. Get started on the dinner. And no garlic this time.

Nora picks up the phone.

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Stan Fields is stepping out of the shower as the phone rings. He picks it up.

STAN

Hello? Right...I'm ready on this end. Okay.

Stan hesitates, and then hangs up the phone.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO AIRPORT -- DAY

A small jet zooms through the sky.

INT. JET -- DAY

The jet is filled with FBI personnel. Eric comes over and sits next to Vic.

ERIC

So--you think she's ready?

Gracie emerges from the plane's bathroom. As she walks past, we see she has a paper toilet seat cover stuck to her rear. Vic just gives Eric a look.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO -- DAY

Outside a hotel there's a message on the marquee: "WELCOME MISS UNITED STATES CONTESTANTS! YOU'RE ALL WINNERS!" Cars pull up as valets rush to take them. After a moment, a K-Car arrives. Gracie, Eric, and Vic emerge. Gracie sees a few young women, obviously contestants, beautiful, slim, self-assured, entering the hotel. She looks pale.

GRACIE

I'm sweating through my sash.

ERIC

You'll be great. Just don't attract attention to yourself.

VIC

Remember the three P's--poise, posture, personality.

Gracie stands more erect, and plasters a smile on her face.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- DAY

As the FBI contingent enters, Kathy walks over to greet them.

KATHY

Miss New Jersey. Welcome!

GRACIE

Thank you, Kathy. You know Eric and--

KATHY

Victor Moorehouse. Well, I didn't think we'd be seeing you this year--

VIC

May I say you are more stunning than ever, Miss Morningside. A picture of perfection.

KATHY

You may! Vic, why don't you and Eric have the bags sent up to Gracie's room and then head over to the Palm Lounge for the Chaperone orientation-- Gracie, you're needed in the Ballroom.

Kathy notices someone else.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Ah, Miss Arizona.

She moves off. Gracie turns to Eric.

GRACIE

Here goes.

ERIC

Hike.

They slap each other five and she heads off.

VIC

(off Kathy)

One mistake in eleven years and suddenly I'm a bellhop. That pompous bitch.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- DAY

Gracie heads towards the Ballroom, but she isn't quite up to it yet. So she veers off to the Ladies Room.

INT. LADIES ROOM -- DAY

Gracie walks into a room of beauty contestants, expertly applying make-up, adjusting their hair, etc. A contestant next to her whips out a make-up kit like a gun, filled with hidden compartments, mirrors of various sizes. Miss Ohio is squeezing Preparation-H out of a tube. Gracie stares.

MISS OHIO

You want some?

GRACIE

Gee, is it that obvious? Actually, I find a warm bath with Epsom Salt really helps.

Miss Ohio appears confused, then starts applying the Preparation-H around her eyes. Gracie is horrified. She grabs Miss Ohio's arm.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

You could blind yourself!

MISS OHIO

It reduces swelling around the eyes.
Removes unsightly bags. Didn't you know that?

Miss Ohio chuckles. A few of the other woman laugh, as several others also hold tubes of Preparation-H. Gracie laughs along.

GRACIE

No, of course I knew that. I thought you were putting it IN your eye. I was like, whoa, girlfriend, it's not worth it! Sure, lay some "H" on me.

Miss Ohio squeezes some into Gracie's hand.

MISS OHIO

And you'll want some Vaseline for your gums. They're a little dull.

GRACIE

Can you imagine? Almost walked out there with dull gums.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM - DAY

Gracie enters. A faint white outline surrounds her eyes from the ointment. She's licking her lubricated gums. The room is packed with contestants. A dais is set up at the front. Gracie takes a deep breath.

GRACIE

(to herself)

Poise, perfection, personality, poise--

An attractive but slightly diminutive woman pops up to meet her. This is CHERYL WILLIAMS.

CHERYL

Hi! I'm Cheryl Williams. Miss Rhode Island.

GRACIE

Nice to meet you. I'm --

CHERYL

Gracie Hart. Miss New Jersey. I memorized the orientation pamphlet! I know all forty-nine ladies by name and picture! Come meet the rest of the girls. I saved a place for you at our table.

Cheryl brings Gracie over to a table where four women sit.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Ladies, I'd like you to meet Gracie Hart, Miss New Jersey.

Everyone ad-libs hello's. KAREN KRANTZ, from New York, is brash and outgoing. LESLIE DAVIS, Miss California, is African-American, gorgeous, an aspiring actress and huge flirt. MARY JO WRIGHT, Miss Texas, is pure pageantry, all Southern charm and venom. And ALANA KREWSON, Miss Hawaii, appears to be a normal person, pretty, Filipino, engaging. But there is a menacing intensity under the island charm.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Gracie, this is Karen Krantz, Miss New York, Leslie Davis, Miss California, Mary Jo Wright, Miss Texas, and Alana Krewson, Miss Hawaii.

GRACIE

Hi, hi.

Gracie sits down at the table with the other girls. No one says anything for a minute. Gracie goes to eat a piece of bread. It slides off her well-oiled gums.

MARY JO

I just want y'all to know, I believe what it says on that sign out front. We're all winners.

LESLIE

Absolutely. The important thing is we're getting our issues out there for people to hear.

ALANA

It's an honor to have made it this far. Especially when you come from a small state --

CHERYL

Oh, that's so true. Us Rhode Islanders --

ALANA

I wasn't finished. Did it sound like I was finished?

Cheryl is the kind of person who immediately shrinks upon being attacked.

CHERYL

I'm sorry. I didn't --

She mimes zipping her lip.

MARY JO

Let's all be friends now. We have so much in common.

ALANA

(under her breath)

All you mainlanders, you mean.

KAREN

Mainlanders? Who ever called somebody a mainlander? Is that an insult? What is that?

ALANA

You know how many people come to Hawaii and don't know it's a state? They think it's just a big floating vacation.

CHERYL

I am so sorry, Miss Hawaii --

KAREN

What are you apologizing to her for? She's obviously spent too much time under a coconut tree --

ALANA

How'd you like a nice Hawaiian punch --

Gracie notices other people staring at their table, so she jumps in, trying to keep the peace and not attract attention.

GRACIE

(to Miss Hawaii)

You know, I've always wondered, don't you use "Aloha" for hello and goodbye?

This stops all conversation.

ALANA

So?

GRACIE

So I guess in Hawaii, the Beatle song would be "Aloha, Aloha, I don't know why you say Aloha, I say Aloha".

Cheryl bursts out laughing.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

See? She thinks it's funny.

They all look at Cheryl, who immediately dissolves into tears.

CHERYL

Please don't look at me.

Kathy stands up at the dais and calls for attention.

KATHY

Good morning everyone. My name is Kathy Morningside.

There's applause.

KATHY (CONT'D)

To my right is our Master of Ceremonies, Stan Fields.

Stan stands up and takes a bow.

STAN

Don't eat too much breakfast, ladies!

There's good-natured laughter.

KATHY

Unfortunately, this will be Stan's final year MC'ing the show, as he's decided to retire.

Disappointed moans go through the room.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I guess he's finally going to get a chance to do that fishing he always talks about.

There's more laughter as Stan smiles.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Now ladies, remember -- my door is always open. See you all at the parade.

Kathy steps down to big applause.

CHERYL

That's a shame about Stan retiring.

MARY JO

Oh, he's not retiring. I spoke to him a few minutes ago, the poor man blurted out the whole thing--they're firing him. Going for somebody newer and younger. I hope it's Ricki Martin.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO -- DAY

The Miss United States parade heads down Houston Street in downtown San Antonio. Crowds line the parade route as contestants sit on cars marked with the name of their state, cruising along slowly. A few local news crews are on hand, taping the event.

Walking along the parade route, dressed inconspicuously, are Clonsky, Fell, and other agents.

Gracie waves to the crowd, just like the other contestants.

GRACIE

(sotto)

Hi. How you doing? I'm not really in the contest. I have a gun. Hi! How you doing?

Suddenly Gracie notices a glint of light shoot off something. Something metal. She squints, but it's hard to see. She reaches over to the driver and pulls his sunglasses off.

DRIVER

Hey --

GRACIE

Shut up and keep driving.

DRIVER

No wonder you're Miss New Jersey.

She puts the sunglasses on. From her shaded POV she sees the glint again -- it could be a candy wrapper, it could be a gun.

GRACIE

What the Hell --

The Man holding the shiny object moves forward. Now Gracie gets a better look at it. It's definitely a gun.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Gun! Gun!

No one can hear her above the noise. Gracie leaps out of the car and heads towards the crowd. The news cameras turn away from the parade and towards the onrushing Miss New Jersey. From Gracie's POV, we can see the gunman taking aim at the parade.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Gun! Gun!

The other agents take notice. They see Gracie rushing towards the man and rush in the same direction.

The Man is crouched, ready to fire. Gracie leaps in front of the gun. Other agents fly in, piling on top of the man. People in the crowd scream. News crews run towards the scene.

CUT TO:

A video image of the same scene. WE PULL BACK to see that we're watching on television in Kathy's office. Eric and Gracie watch along with Kathy and Stan.

NEWSCASTER

In an incident that has yet to be explained, Miss New Jersey leaped out of her car and tackled a man in the crowd who was lighting a cigarette.

ANGLE ON GRACIE being pulled out of the pile-up holding the "Gun". It's a cigarette lighter. Gracie turns to the cameras.

GRACIE

As everyone knows, all the women in the pageant are actively involved in trying to end America's dependence on tobacco. And needless to say, I think this gentleman will think twice before he lights up again.

CUT BACK TO THE NEWSCASTER.

NEWSCASTER

The man, identified as Bernard Raskin of Austin, is in stable condition at Memorial Hospital.

Kathy switches off the TV. There's silence in the room.

KATHY

What are we going to do about this? Other than sending some flowers to Mr. Raskin?

STAN

I already took care of that. Tulips.

ERIC

Every operation is bound to have
it's screw-ups. We just had ours.

KATHY

(looking at
Gracie)

As far as I can see, she's still
with us.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Eric and Gracie walk down the hall. Eric looks steamed.

ERIC

I can't wait to give my report to
McDonald tonight. This should be
fun.

GRACIE

Try not to mention me, okay?

Gracie laughs. Eric doesn't.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Listen, did you know that Stan Fields
was being forced to retire?

ERIC

Gracie, we did background checks on
Stan, Kathy, everybody including the
guys who mop the floors. So just...

GRACIE

Just what?

ERIC

Just leave that part to me, okay?
Don't jump off cars or beat anybody
up for a a few days.

GRACIE

Then what am I doing here?

ERIC

You're Miss New Jersey.

GRACIE

So I'm just a piece of meat?

ERIC

(losing it)

Yes! Exactly! You're meat! If you put this mission down on your resume, you'd write "I was meat at the Miss United States" contest. Just do your freaking job!

Eric walks off, angrily.

INT. GRACIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gracie is lying in bed, reading "Pageant" Magazine.

GRACIE

(reading)

"Spray hairspray on your buttocks. This will prevent your swimsuit from disappearing into the nether regions." Oh God, there's a picture.

There's a knock on the door. Gracie snaps up in bed.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Who is it? Vic? Eric?

There's no answer. Gracie grabs her gun. She walks to the door and looks through the peephole.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Oh.

Gracie drops the gun in her bathrobe pocket and opens up. Standing there is Cheryl, holding a thermos and some cups.

CHERYL

Hi. I hope I'm not disturbing you.

GRACIE

No, not at all. I was just brushing up on my grooming tips. Come in.

Cheryl enters -- timidly, as she does everything else.

CHERYL

I made some of my famous hot chocolate. Non-fat of course.

They sit down as Cheryl starts pouring it out.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

I asked a few of the other girls, but as soon as they heard chocolate
(MORE)

CHERYL (CONT'D)
they slammed their doors. They didn't
even give me the chance to say non-
fat.

They each take the two cups, ready for a toast.

CHERYL (CONT'D)
Well...here's to peace on earth.

GRACIE
To peace on earth.

They both drink up with savoring sips.

CHERYL
I have to tell you, I thought it was
so great how you settled that argument
today at Orientation. You're really
articulate.

GRACIE
I don't know what to say.

CHERYL
And you're so beautiful and fresh
and vibrant.

GRACIE
And it's not easy to stay that way
in New Jersey.

CHERYL
And you're so funny and smart --

GRACIE
Cheryl, are you coming on to me?

Cheryl seems shocked.

CHERYL
No. Oh, no. Oh, you're kidding.
You see! That's why you're definitely
going to win. You're so clever!
You should tell jokes for your talent.

GRACIE
No, I'm on the old eighty-eight keys.
That's original, huh? But I guess
it could be worse. I could do baton
twirling... What's your talent?

Cheryl doesn't answer.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Cheryl, I'm sorry. I didn't realize.

CHERYL

It can be a real art. Once I saw this girl doing it at a football game, a cheerleader -- she lit her batons on fire! And she did this sexy dance -- I wish I could do something like that.

GRACIE

Why can't you?

CHERYL

Oh, my parents would never speak to me again. They don't like anything ostentatious. And they really don't like fire.

GRACIE

Cheryl, you have as good a chance as anybody to win. And you obviously believe in yourself enough to have made it this far, so maybe you have more confidence than you know.

Cheryl thinks this over.

CHERYL

Really? Wow. You're so nice, and so smart, and so sensitive--you're definitely going to win!

Gracie sighs.

EXT. HOUSE IN UPSTATE NEW YORK -- NIGHT

The Daughters of the New American Revolution head out to a van parked in front of the house.

NORA

San Antonio, here we come!

They whoop it up as they pile in, and the van pulls out.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Stan is standing at the microphone talking to the audience.

STAN

Saturday night this auditorium will be filled with lights, cameras and
(MORE)

STAN (CONT'D)

media from all over the world. But the ten finalists for the telecast will be selected based on their scores in these preliminaries.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - BACKSTAGE- DAY

WE PAN around the room to see contestants in various states of undress, their chaperones harnessing and dressing them. Vic and Eric are there. Vic is looking at his watch.

VIC

Where is she?

ERIC

I don't know where she is.

A few of the other beauty consultants--two men and one woman--walk by with their girls.

CHARLES

Vic. Nice to see you again.

RALPH

Loved your girl at the parade.

VIC

Charles. Wonderful to see you...Ralph, you look well. Charlene. We should all get together soon.

They walk by, and a few steps later, start to giggle and laugh, obviously at Vic.

VIC (CONT'D)

Well, this is splendid. She's got her swimsuit preliminaries in five minutes, and all I have is the swimsuit. Which truth be told, stands a better chance of winning without her.

ERIC

I'm sure she'll be here. You know how I'm sure? Because if she's not, I'll kill her.

VIC

Ah, yes. Your subtle powers of persuasion. Have you ever met anyone you didn't threaten to kill?

ERIC

Listen to me, you old fruitcake--

VIC

Fruitcake? I'll have you know I've slept with over twenty pageant contestants in my life. Actually, it was one contestant twenty times.

As Eric and Vic argue, Gracie runs in. They turn on her.

GRACIE

Hold it! I've got a problem. Remember you told me to shave my legs?

Gracie lifts her sweats to show a highly bandaged leg.

VIC

That's not a job for a razor. You need a machete!

The all start arguing again as a matronly Pageant official comes over.

PAGEANT LADY

Miss New Jersey, you're in the next group of ten. Good luck!

This galvanizes Eric, Vic and Gracie. They spring into action.

INT. DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

Gracie is pulling herself into the one piece bathing suit. She's having trouble getting into it. The automatic breasts start inflating.

GRACIE

No! Down!

She finally hits the disconnect button.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER-BACKSTAGE -- DAY

Eric, Gracie and Vic are a flurry of activity. Vic tucks Gracie into her swimsuit. He takes out a can of hairspray, pulls off the cover, and aims it at Gracie's rear.

GRACIE

You don't have to explain. I read about this.

Vic fires away. Eric laughs.

VIC
Will you grow up?

Vic sprays again, pulls out the ends of Gracie's bathing suit and lets it slap up against her buttocks.

VIC (CONT'D)
(to Eric)
Hold this in place while I prepare her foundation.

GRACIE
Whoa, whoa, whoa--

ERIC
Hey, he has to prepare your foundation. I'm just holding it.

Gracie can't bear this.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Gracie walks out in her bathing suit, trying to be like the rest of the girls. She seems to be doing an adequate job of it. She gets to the end of the runway, turns, and heads back. Suddenly there's laughs through the Convention Center as the outline of Eric's hand on Gracie's rear is plainly visible.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

A podium is set up where each contestant stands and faces a panel of five judges, who fire questions concerning various issues of the day, resumes, etc.

ALANA
There's nothing wrong with mothers working. Or staying home to take care of their children. In Hawaii, we believe in freedom of choice. And that means more than choosing between a daiquiri or a pina colada.

CUT TO:

MARY JO
We have a saying back in Texas--"to each longhorn his own." Now, personally, I believe the Bible says homosexuality is wrong, but that doesn't mean there should be legal discrimination against them... the
(MORE)

MARY JO (CONT'D)

gays. Which is what I believe they prefer to be called.

CUT TO:

LESLIE

Abortion is a very serious, difficult issue which needs to be dealt with in a very serious manner. That's a lovely tie by the way.

CUT TO:

KAREN

Pornography should be legal. It's protected by the First Amendment. And for some men I know, it's the only reading they do.

CUT TO:

CHERYL

(softly)

Affirmative action has served a very useful --

JUDGES #1, 2,

Could you speak up!

Cheryl nearly falls over.

CUT TO:

JUDGE

Why do they call New Jersey the Garden State?

GRACIE

Because it's hard to fit "oil and petrochemical refinery State" on a license plate?

WE PULL BACK TO SEE THE JUDGES. Clonsky is there, along with some other FBI Agents we recognize, giving Gracie a deciding three out of five votes.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Gracie is "playing" the piano. Suddenly, there's a malfunction in the mechanism. It continues playing the same phrase over and over. Gracie keeps up with it, then gives the piano a good kick, and it moves on to the next phrase.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL - EARLY EVENING

On-stage, all fifty contestants are practicing the big production number, accompanied by the song "I AM WOMAN." Above the stage, a huge Statue of Liberty stands in a simulated harbor filled with water. The Choreographer, SCOTT, is yelling out instructions. The woman move in rigid formation, except for Gracie, who is absolutely horrible.

SCOTT

Miss New Jersey! You're turning the wrong way! For the billionth time! I haven't seen dancing this bad since my Bar Mitzvah!

GRACIE

I was just trying to follow Miss Hawaii.

ALANA

Hey, you're saying it's my fault? I turned left like he said.

KAREN

She did. Towards the mainland.

ALANA

I heard that.

Alana shoves Karen.

CHERYL

Come on, girls. Shake hands.

KAREN

I'm not shaking hands with her. She's Macadamia nuts.

ALANA

How'd you like to go back to the Big Apple in a crate?

GRACIE

Hey, guys, knock it off. Let's try and get through this ridiculous production number before midnight.

SCOTT

Ridiculous?

GRACIE

I didn't mean ridiculous--it's not as bad as the Super Bowl halftime show or anything.

SCOTT

That was mine! I don't need this
abuse! I quit!

The Choreographer stalks off.

INT. KATHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gracie, Eric and Vic stand in front of Kathy, who's steaming.

KATHY

You are the most incorrigible woman
I've had in thirty years of pageantry!
The fighting, the arguing, the
horrible dancing--I won't stand for
it!

While Kathy talks, Gracie looks around the room. She focuses
on the desk, where she sees a photograph of Kathy as Miss
United States, holding her bouquet of roses and bearing her
sash and crown.

KATHY (CONT'D)

And the worst part is, you're leading
the others astray. Miss Hawaii, Miss
Texas--that whole gang is following
your lead! I'm placing all of you on
probation--

VIC

Kathy, I hope you won't hold this
against me. Henry Higgins himself
would have slit his wrists--

KATHY

I want you to know that I've called
Agent McDonald to complain about
your conduct here.

Eric sighs.

GRACIE

Can I ask you something? What do
you have against me? I'm trying to
protect these women.

KATHY

You are a disgrace to the pageant,
and the pageant is my life. Simple
enough for you?

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Gracie, Eric and Vic walk out of Kathy's office.

VIC

If you'll excuse me, I'm going down to the bar and with any luck will never be seen again.

He walks off.

GRACIE

Eric.

ERIC

I don't want to talk about it.

INT. HOTEL SUITE -- EVENING

This room has been set up as an FBI command post. There are Agents all over, listening equipment, maps, etc. Gracie makes her way through the room and finds Eric going over a map of the Convention Center with Clonsky.

GRACIE

Look, I told you this was never going to work. I can't be in a beauty pageant. My mother--

ERIC

You're not your mother!!!

All the Agents in the room stop and look.

GRACIE

I know I'm not. Because she would never have humiliated herself like this--

ERIC

You're absolutely right. Your mother would never have been here.

This takes Gracie by surprise. Eric takes Gracie aside.

ERIC (CONT'D)

My instructor at Quantico, Jameson? She knew your Mom. She said Emily Hart was one of the bravest people ever to carry a badge, the perfect Agent, smart, loyal, dedicated--and nobody liked her.

Gracie shoves Eric.

GRACIE

That's not true! Everyone liked my mother.

ERIC

No, everyone respected your mother. You on the other hand -- I don't know if anyone respects you. But they do like you.

Gracie takes this in for a moment.

GRACIE

No they don't.

ERIC

They do! It happened at the press conference, it happened with the girls at Orientation--you're nice, and you're going to have to accept it!

Clonsky walks over.

CLONSKY

Eric -- McDonald for you.

ERIC

Get me a loaded gun! Now!

Eric walks off to take the call.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - EVENING

Gracie is in the hallway holding a pizza and a few six-packs of beer. She walks to a door and knocks. Mary Jo opens the door. Gracie can see the other ladies in the room.

MARY JO

Oh, look. It's Miss Let's Ruin the Contest for Everybody.

CHERYL

Mary Jo, please. Remember, we're all here for each other.

MARY JO

Oh shut up, Cheryl. Really.

Mary Jo throws the door open to Gracie. She enters.

INT. MARY JO'S ROOM - EVENING

GRACIE

I'm sorry I got everybody on probation. It wasn't all my fault -- we've all been pretty bitchy to each
(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)

other -- but I was the catalyst, so I take responsibility for that. And I was wondering if you'd like to have a beer and pizza -- on me.

The other girls start laughing.

LESLIE

Are you crazy? We're on probation!

ALANA

Not to mention how many calories you're talking about.

GRACIE

It's light beer, you can take the cheese off, and you're all going to throw up anyway.

CHERYL

I'll have some.

MARY JO

Cheryl, don't.

Cheryl takes the pizza from Gracie and opens the box.

MARY JO (CONT'D)

At least scrape off the toppings.

Cheryl picks up a slice. She stares at it. Then she stares back at the girls.

GRACIE

Today a pizza, tomorrow flaming batons.

Cheryl hesitates for one more moment, and then takes a tiny bite of the pizza.

CHERYL

This is what I imagine sex is like.

The other women explode towards the pizza in a rampage.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Daughters of the New American Revolution's van passes a sign reading "Now Entering Missouri -- Please Drive Safely"

EXT. HOUSTON STREET -- NIGHT

The women are all watching a fire-eater on the street.

KAREN

That's exactly how I feel after that
pizza.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO STREET -- NIGHT

The women stop near a small street band, playing a hip-hop
version of "I Am Woman." They all begin dancing to it.

EXT. RIVERWALK -- NIGHT

The ladies walk along the beautiful waterway.

ALANA

We better go in before somebody sees
us.

KAREN

Not yet! This is so cool! I know --
How about a game of Truth or Dare?

CHERYL

Okay, I'm still a virgin.

LESLIE

Are you serious?

KAREN

So what? Maybe she hasn't met the
right man yet. Or maybe she's gay.

MARY JO

Can we not talk about that? It's
disgusting.

KAREN

Really? For your information, Lady
Bird, I'm gay.

There is a HUGE SILENCE.

MARY JO

Get out.

KAREN

I just did.

The other ladies all stare at her.

ALANA

Can we save something for the game?!

GRACIE

So, how do you play?

MARY JO

Are you kidding me? You've never played Truth or Dare?

CHERYL

It's easy. You pick truth and you answer a question, or you pick dare and you have to do what we tell you. Gracie, you start! Truth or dare?

GRACIE

I pick not playing.

The other ladies howl in protest.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Okay, okay. Truth, I guess.

CHERYL

This is going to be so fun! What is the worst thing that happened to you in high school?

GRACIE

Oh, that's easy. My mom died.

MARY JO

That's not funny. I thought this game was supposed to be funny.

CHERYL

You poor thing. How did she die?

GRACIE

She was shot by terrorists. Who else can say that about their mother?

KAREN

I wish.

LESLIE

Were you close?

GRACIE

Close doesn't start to describe it. I idolized her. And I knew I wanted to be just like her when I grew up.

CHERYL

Are you?

GRACIE

Well, I thought I was...

They all take this in for a moment.

LESLIE

When I was in high school, I got attacked by this man. He was a teacher.

GRACIE

Leslie.

LESLIE

I never told anybody before. I don't know why I just did. Must've been the pepperoni.

ALANA

It happened to me, too. Some tourist at the Hana Laki hotel where I was doing the evening luau performance.

MARY JO

When it happened to me, my Mom said I shouldn't say anything, because it would hurt my chances of getting into the pageant.

GRACIE

I can't believe this--all you guys?!

KAREN

It never happened to me. Although I've been attacked by several large women.

GRACIE

(outraged)

Who were these idiots? What's their names? Did you report them?

LESLIE

What are you so shocked about? It happens all the time.

GRACIE

Well, it's not going to happen to me. And it's not going to happen to any of you again. Cheryl, come here.

Cheryl looks a little frightened.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Okay, Leslie. Get up. I want you to show me exactly how this guy

(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)
approached you, because there's a
couple of simple maneuvers--

LESLIE
Gracie, forget it! I'd rather not re-
live the experience.

It's a tense moment.

MARY JO
We should get inside. If Kathy finds
out --

ALANA
She's got a real chip on her shoulder.

MARY JO
She's just upset because they're
canning her too.

GRACIE
Who? Kathy?

MARY JO
Yeah--Stan told me she was out after
this year.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO FBI OFFICE -- NIGHT

Gracie gets out of a cab and heads up the steps. She gets to
a guard and shows her badge. He lets her in.

INT. SAN ANTONIO FBI OFFICE -- NIGHT

Gracie is hard at work at a computer, doing research.

INT. HOTEL BAR -- NIGHT

Eric is sitting at the bar, having a drink, talking to some
young local women. Gracie runs in and drags him away.

ERIC
Hey, I was having a discussion--

GRACIE
Yeah, sorry to pull you away from
the think tank. Look, I know I'm
just meat, but Kathy's being fired
too.

ERIC
And let me guess--that's why she's
going to kill Miss United States?

GRACIE

There's more. Do you realize Kathy never won the pageant?

ERIC

Oh, let's definitely bring her in.

GRACIE

She's got pictures of herself in her office wearing the crown, a sash that says Miss United States, holding a bouquet of roses--but she never won!

ERIC

What does she have to do with the Daughters?! They're the ones threatening the pageant.

GRACIE

Maybe she's working with them. Maybe she's using them as a cover.

Gracie spreads some papers down on the bed.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

I was just down at San Antonio H.Q., and I did another background check.

Eric comes over and looks.

ERIC

(reading)

"Former Miss South Carolina Kathy Morningside has divorced her husband, Sgt. Harry Rascombe of the Amarillo Police Department after seven years of marriage. They have one daughter."

Eric puts down the papers.

ERIC (CONT'D)

This is it! You blew the case wide open!

GRACIE

We should go see this guy. Amarillo is only an hour away--

ERIC

Are you nuts? Don't you think--

Eric's BEEPER goes off. He checks it.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Uh-oh. You're not going to believe this.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT

A small jet pulls up. Eric and Gracie wait with some of other agents on the job. McDonald comes down the ramp.

MCDONALD

People, listen up. I've just come from outside Tulsa, Oklahoma, where a van containing seven women, maps of the San Antonio convention Center and bomb-making devices were recovered.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Daughter's Van passes a State Trooper hidden in a speed trap. He immediately pulls out in pursuit.

MCDONALD (V.O.)

The van was sighted speeding along U.S Route 11 by a State Trooper, who took off in pursuit.

The Daughter's van continues until it spins out of control and crashes into an embankment.

MCDONALD (V.O.) (CONT'D)

After a high-speed chase the truck hit an embankment, leaving no survivors.

After a moment, Nora crawls out of the wreckage and heads into the nearby woods carrying a backpack.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO AIRPORT - NIGHT

McDonald is still addressing the troops.

MCDONALD

We also found the location of their safe house, and rescued Agent Franklin.

The Agents applaud.

MCDONALD (CONT'D)

Well done, Matthews. Nice job, everyone. Let's do our wrap-up and be out of here in the morning.

GRACIE

Sir, what about me? I'm still Miss New Jersey.

MCDONALD

I just got off the phone with Kathy Morningside. She'll announce you developed some kind of last minute illness. It's happened before.

McDonald starts off.

GRACIE

I think this situation bears further scrutiny, and our continued presence at the contest.

MCDONALD

Hart, we're all going home. Any problem with that, Matthews?

ERIC

No, Sir.

GRACIE

I request permission to stay along with a small contingent of Agents.

MCDONALD

Denied.

GRACIE

Then I request permission to stay alone.

MCDONALD

Denied! Don't say another word, Hart! I saw that parade! You're this close to being de-badged.

There's total silence. McDonald starts to walk off again.

GRACIE

Sir, Kathy Morningside is in this.

ERIC

(sotto)
Will you shut up?

GRACIE

Why? You're shutting up enough for both of us --

McDonald stalks back over to the scene.

MCDONALD

You want to stay here, stay here.
As a private citizen. Give me your
damn badge.

Gracie hesitates. Then she steels herself, reaches inside her jacket, takes out her badge and hands it to McDonald, who grabs it and walks off. The rest of the group breaks up. Gracie turns to Eric.

ERIC

What? Don't look at me like I betrayed you.

GRACIE

Betraying me implies an action. You just stood there.

ERIC

Hart, you have absolutely nothing to go on!

GRACIE

I have an unstable delusional woman about to be fired who has free rein to every single solitary inch of that convention center. And I've got a hunch and an instinct.

ERIC

Look, I'm not as smart as you. But I know my limitations. I always have. I'm a company man. And I like this job!

GRACIE

You're smarter than you give yourself credit for, you jerk.

ERIC

If I am, I don't want to know about it.

GRACIE

Well, that's too bad, because contrary to your most deeply held beliefs, life isn't just football. Sometimes you have to think. Otherwise, your father was right about you.

Eric walks off. Gracie watches her go.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO - LATE NIGHT

A taxi pulls up in front of a house. Nora gets out holding the blue backpack. The taxi pulls away. Nora walks up to the door and knocks. Finally, the door opens. Kathy is standing there. Nora pushes her way into the house as Kathy lets out a yelp of surprise.

INT. KATHY'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Nora stares at Kathy.

FRANK

Mom.

KATHY

Honey.

They embrace.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO CONVENTION CENTER -- MORNING

TV Newsvans and trucks pull into the parking lot.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Gracie runs down the hall and knocks on a door.

VIC (O.S.)

Come in!

Gracie enters.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Vic has various outfits all over the room.

GRACIE

Thank God you're still here! I thought you went with the rest of them.

VIC

Of course not. I have to pack my dresses first.

GRACIE

You're leaving?

VIC

They fired me. C'est fini.

GRACIE

Vic, these women are in danger and I have to be on that stage at the end! Our judges are gone. After the top ten are announced, I'm on my own. I can't do my own make-up, I'm faking a Mozart piano concerto and my platform is school kids I beat up! I need you.

VIC

Dear, my career is over. Everyone will know that Victor Moorehouse is finished when they see you lumber down the walkway. I'm going back to New York, calling a few friends at Vogue and hoping to get a job designing sundresses for J.C. Penney.

Vic continues packing.

INT. FBI JET -- MORNING

The jet is getting ready to head back to New York. Agents file on. Eric sits in his seat, looking out the window.

EXT. LAS VEGAS HOTEL - DAY

Mary Jo, Alana, Karen, Leslie and Cheryl are waiting for the bus to take them to the Convention Center. They all seem extremely tense.

ALANA

(to Karen)

No insults today?

KAREN

You're a Don Ho.

Alana just shrugs.

CHERYL

Has anybody seen Gracie?

LESLIE

Maybe she couldn't take the pressure. She ate four slices last night.

MARY JO

Yeah. And we all saw her piano performance. She's not making the top ten.

KAREN

Oh, and you are? With that stupid
"Light Up My Life"?

MARY JO

It's "You Light Up My Life." And
you think that flute thing you did
was so great? It was shrill.

KAREN

Eat me, Texas.

Mary Jo throws a Tic-Tac at Karen, but it hits Leslie.

LESLIE

Hey! Stay away from the hair! It
may not be as big as yours, but it's
already set!

CHERYL

Don't you see what's happening here?
As soon as Gracie's gone, there's no
one to stop our fights! If we don't
find her we'll kill each other before
the show!

In the distance, Gracie runs towards the bus, dropping make-
up and costumes as she goes.

INT. KATHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Kathy is there with Stan and Nora. Stan is sweating.

STAN

I think we should re-consider --

KATHY

Stop whining, Stan! You're pathetic!

STAN

I don't want to kill anybody --

Kathy grabs Stan by the collar.

KATHY

Listen to me, you old fruit. They
were all ready to throw you out like
yesterday's trash. The network,
Telecom -- Nora and me are the only
ones who care about you.

Kathy lets go of Stan. Then Nora grabs Stan.

NORA

You're not screwing this up for us.
We're going to kill Miss United
States. Listen to my Mother!

Nora lets Stan go. Kathy grabs him again.

KATHY

Stan, for years Nora and I were
estranged. She hated everything I
stood for, everything about this
pageant. But when it comes down to
it, blood is thicker than politics,
and we she heard Tele-Com was planning
to dump us, she agreed to help.

NORA

Because Tele-Com is one of the most
anti-feminist chauvanistic companies
in the whole macho pig-faced world.

KATHY

And the money didn't hurt her decision
either. Now, you're family too, Stan.
So we stick to the plan and we're
all rich. Do you understand?

Stan is clearly terrified.

STAN

Not really.

KATHY

After Miss United States has her
head blown off on national TV, it'll
be the biggest show everybody missed.
Which means next year, when the
pageant gallantly continues, flying
in the face of terrorism, they get
the best ratings they've ever gotten.

NORA

Who wouldn't watch, Stan?

KATHY

The network knows this, so they sign
a new, bigger deal. And the severance
package I negotiated after they dumped
me guarantees a five percent piece
of any network renegotiation. You're
in for thirty thousand, Stan.

NORA

You're in, right, Stan?

Stan continues to look horrified.

STAN

What about Miss New Jersey? I just saw her in the hall. She's still here.

NORA

Don't worry. That's why I'm here.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

The MUSIC STARTS UP, the crowd cheers, as an ANNOUNCER'S VOICE booms across the stage.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Welcome to the Seventy-Fifth Miss United States Pageant! With your hosts, Stan Fields and star of television and movies, Sally Corman!

The applause rings out as Stan and Sally, a blonde from a sit-com walk out on stage together.

STAN

Good evening, America! Welcome to Las Vegas and a night of beauty, talent and poise! And I'm not just talking about my co-host!

SALLY

Stan, you charmer. You forgot to mention incredible intelligence.

INT. CONTROL BOOTH - NIGHT

This is the brain center for the broadcast. Monitors show the proceedings on various screens, and a window looks into the Convention Center. Nora, dressed in an evening gown, stands beside Kathy.

KATHY

(to one of the technicians)

This is Jenny Harbert. She's here doing an article on the pageant for "Good Housekeeping."

Everyone nods hello. WE ZOOM IN to see Nora's all-access pass on her gown.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER -- DAY

The opening promenade is in progress.

STAN

Miss New Jersey, Gracie Hart!

Gracie walks out, getting into it, smiling.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO AIRPORT -- DAY

Eric waves down a cab. He gets in.

ERIC

I need to go to Amarillo.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

The "I Am Woman" production is in progress. Gracie gets to her big turn, and she turns left--the way she's supposed to. Alana smiles at her.

The number finishes with the automated Statue of Liberty descending into the reflecting pond. As the crowd applauds, Stan and Sally walk to center stage.

STAN

Thank you, ladies. Well, we've come to the first big moment of the night. This is when we announce the Top Ten finalists, chosen based on their performance during the preliminaries this past week. You ready, Sally?

SALLY

I'm shaking. You better do it.

STAN

I've got a better idea. Why don't we get somebody who's really qualified. Folks, please give a warm welcome to the reigning Miss America, Lori Wheeler!

The crowd goes wild as LORI WHEELER walks out, wearing her crown for the last time.

INT. HOUSE IN SAN ANTONIO -- NIGHT

Eric sits with Harry Rascombe, Kathy's ex-husband. He's a heavysset man wearing a cowboy hat.

HARRY

I know why you're here. Always thought one day Kathy would snap. She's wound tighter than a rubber ball.

ERIC

Did she ever mention anything about this year's pageant--anybody she was angry at?

HARRY

I sure wouldn't know. I haven't hardly spoken to the woman in ten years.

ERIC

I see. So how long were you married?

HARRY

About six years. We didn't have much in common. She was always on the go, always wanted to move up and get more money and whatnot, and I was content to sit around and get fat.

Harry laughs. This is getting nowhere. Eric gets up to go.

ERIC

Well, thanks for your time, Mr. Rascombe.

Eric is on the way out when he suddenly notices a picture on the mantle.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Who is this?

HARRY

Well, that there's the one thing we do have in common. Our daughter, Nora.

Eric continues to look at the picture.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Don't see much of her anymore either. Went off and joined some nutty group, the Daughters of Something or other. Kind of out there, like her mother. Into blowing things up.

Eric looks pale. WE SEE the picture is a shot of Nora.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

Eight girls are out, including Alana, Mary Jo, and Karen.

LORI

Our ninth finalist is Miss New Jersey!

Gracie comes running over. She trips on her heels and goes down. She quickly bounces back up.

STAN

That had to hurt! And our final member of the Top Ten --

LORI

Miss Rhode Island!

Cheryl comes out crying. Gracie hugs her.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Nora walks into the backstage area. A Security Guard goes to stop her, but she smiles and holds up her pass. The Security Guard waves her on.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Gracie walks over to Cheryl, who's clutching her batons, ready to go on.

GRACIE

I have something for you.

Gracie hands Cheryl a box. It's from the local magic shop. Cheryl opens it. Inside are two gold batons. Cheryl looks up at Gracie, surprised.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO STREET - NIGHT

Eric's taxi is stuck in a traffic jam. He jumps out and starts running.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

Cheryl is on stage. She's twirling her batons at breakneck speed. They suddenly burst into flames. The crowd applauds.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

A group of contestants are getting undressed as Eric appears, completely winded. The ladies scream and cover themselves.

ERIC

Where's Miss New Jersey?

The ladies part, revealing Gracie standing in her underwear. Eric grabs her and pulls her aside.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I went to see Kathy's ex-husband.
Their daughter is in the Daughters
of the New American Revolution.

GRACIE

So what are we doing? Full Security
Implementation?

ERIC

I told McDonald I wanted to check
out the guy in Amarillo, and he said
"drop it or you're fired too."
They're already gone.

The Pageant Matron walks over.

MATRON

Dear, your up right after Miss Nevada
in the talent competition.

She walks off. Eric looks stricken.

ERIC

Uh-oh. They took the piano.

GRACIE

My piano?

ERIC

McDonald wanted everything out. He
cleaned house.

GRACIE

What am I supposed to do? Learn to
play in thirty seconds?

ERIC

I don't know, but you've got to make
it into the Top Five!

GRACIE

How? Our judges are gone! I have
no piano! Even if I did I have no
talent! I have...

Gracie thinks for a minute.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

Gracie walks to center stage, dressed in sweatpants, her
"Jersey Girl" sweatshirt and sneakers.

GRACIE

Good evening. I know the program says I'm supposed to play piano for you tonight -- but there's something else I'd like to do. Something more important. Like it or not, while laws and education are the primary means of controlling violence against women in our country, I believe no woman should be without some basic knowledge of self-defense.

The other ladies start to peer out from behind the curtains.

Gracie nods to the wings, and Eric walks on stage, also in sweats, incredibly uncomfortable in the limelight.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Maestro, please.

The band starts up something totally inappropriate, like "I Will Always Love You", as Gracie and Eric square off.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Now if a man comes up and grabs you --

Eric does it timidly.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

No, really grab me.

Eric grabs her hard.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Bring your foot directly up into his groin area --

Gracie does so.

ERIC

Jesus!

The crowd is completely loving it. So are the other ladies.

INT. BACKSTAGE - EVENING

While this demonstration continues on-stage, Kathy walks over to Lori Wheeler.

KATHY

Feeling nostalgic?

LORI

Kathy, I can't believe it's over.
It was such a blast.

KATHY

Well, it's not over yet. Oh, look
at that crown... That's disgraceful.

LORI

What's wrong?

KATHY

It's so dull.

Kathy reaches up and takes the crown of Lori's head.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Let's see if we can't get it to really
shine for you.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

The ten finalists are lined up. Sally rips open the envelope.

SALLY

Our five finalists are... Miss
Hawaii, Alana Krewson!

Alana steps out, all smiles.

STAN

Miss Rhode Island, Cheryl Williams!

Cheryl runs over, crying.

SALLY

Miss Nebraska, Kelly Beth Kelly!

She comes out.

STAN

Miss New Jersey, Gracie Hart.

Gracie walks out.

SALLY

And our fifth finalist, Miss Texas,
Mary Jo Wright!

Mary Jo steps out as the crowd applauds.

STAN
(to the losers)
Thank you, ladies. You were
magnificent.

The losing five start to go. Then Karen grabs the microphone.

KAREN
I just want to let all the lesbians
out there know, if I can make it
into the top ten, so can you!

There's a stunned silence as Karen walks offstage. Then
Gracie starts applauding for her, followed by the others,
and maybe a quarter of the audience.

STAN
And we'll be right back with the
Final Five interviews right after
this message from your local lesbian --

SALLY
Sponsor!

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Kathy walks down the hall. She passes the crown to Nora,
who's walking in the other direction.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

Sally Corman sits on a chair surrounded by the five finalists,
who all sit on couches as they're interviewed.

CHERYL
There's no greater challenge than
addressing the issue of global
warming, because black or white,
young or old, American or Asian, the
earth is our one and only home.

INT. BACKSTAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Nora is imbedding a tiny jewel colored device into the crown.
It's perfectly camouflaged. Then she takes out a small,
hand-sized remote-control device and hands it to Kathy.

NORA
Remember -- it's short range, so
Stan's got to be right next to her.

KATHY
I'm so proud of you, honey.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER--STAGE - NIGHT

Gracie is talking to Sally.

GRACIE

I went to public school, and I felt lost there with all the different cliques--the cool group, the greasers, the nerds--oh, wait, that was my group.

There's a laugh from the audience.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

The truth is, the first time I really felt like I fit in anywhere was this week at the pageant -- because even though we all secretly hope the other person loses control of her bowels during the talent competition, we all kind of pulled together. I'd like to help get that kind of cooperation and understanding in our schools, because then kids might not get so lost. Which is important, because sometimes they're hard to find again.

The audience applauds.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Eric runs in.

ERIC

Kathy Morningside! Where is she?

DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT

Probably backstage somewhere.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The final five are there. Lori Wheeler comes by, her crown on her head. Gracie is looking around for Eric.

MARY JO

Can I rub your crown for good luck?

LORI

Better not. Kathy just took it to get polished.

ZOOM TO GRACIE, who goes white. But before she can do anything, chaperones begins ushering the five finalists out towards the stage.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

The music finishes. The five ladies are assembled. Stan and Sally are there. So is Lori Wheeler.

This is it. Gracie catches Eric's eye in the audience. She tries to signal that it's the crown by pointing to her head, but Eric clearly doesn't know what to make of this.

SALLY

Stan, it was a privilege to work with you, and I know everyone involved with the pageant feels the same.

STAN

(sadly)

Yes, Sally. Thanks.

A tuxedoed man walks out and hands the envelope to Stan. His hands tremble as he opens it.

STAN (CONT'D)

The fourth runner-up is Miss Hawaii, Alana Krewson!

There's applause as Alana steps out to be guided off stage by a tuxedoed male chaperone.

ALANA

Free Hawaii! Free Hawaii!
Independence for the Aloha State!

SALLY

The third runner up is Miss Nebraska, Kelly Beth Kelly.

Kelly starts crying immediately, as she's escorted away.

STAN

The second runner up is--Mary Jo Wright, Miss Texas.

MARY JO

Are you kidding? I'm not winning?

They escort Mary Jo off stage. Cheryl is beside herself with excitement, but Gracie is still trying to signal Eric.

SALLY

This is it. THE moment. One of these ladies will win a thirty-thousand dollar scholarship, and one will win a forty-thousand dollar scholarship, along with a twenty-five thousand dollar award to the school of her choice.

Stan looks at the envelope. The audience is completely hushed.

STAN

The First Runner Up is Miss New Jersey, Gracie Hart. Which means that our new Miss America is Miss Rhode Island, Cheryl Williams!

The crowd goes wild. MUSIC STARTS. Cheryl hugs Gracie.

GRACIE

(talking into
Cheryl's ear)

Don't take the crown.

CHERYL

What?

GRACIE

(louder)

Don't take --

But Gracie is drowned out by the noise. Lori Wheeler approaches Cheryl with the crown as a chaperone comes to lead Gracie off to the side.

In the audience, Eric looks around frantically, searching for the danger that's lurking somewhere.

Kathy is watching from the side of the stage.

KATHY

Press it! Press it!

ZOOM IN ON STAN FIELDS, who's holding the small remote.

Cheryl is starting her walk down the aisle. Gracie suddenly breaks free of her chaperone. She charges towards Cheryl and grabs the crown. Cheryl screams and grabs it back.

GRACIE

Give it to me! It's going to blow up!

CHERYL

I don't get it! You build up my
self-confidence and now this!

The tug of war continues between Gracie and Cheryl, except now it's Gracie fighting against Cheryl, Lori Wheeler, and several male chaperones. Eric realizes what's happening.

ERIC

The crown!

He rushes towards the stage. Stan finally throws the remote down on the floor and runs. Eric sees this.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Move! Out of the way!

Eric races towards the remote. Just as he's about to grab it, Nora trips Eric. She and Eric begin fighting. In the bedlam of the stage panic, people are running over the remote, barely missing stepping on it.

Gracie punches Cheryl, who goes down. Then she begins karating anyone else in her way. She flips Lori Wheeler off the stage. The crown hits the floor.

Eric is holding Nora. He's winning the battle until the Security Guard who saw Nora's fake I.D. pulls Eric off. Nora immediately dives for the remote. Eric turns to see Gracie grabbing the crown.

ERIC (CONT'D)

GRACIE!

She turns, and in a flash, throws the crown like a frisbee into the reflecting pond on the stage. There's a huge explosion as water flies everywhere, and people scream. The bottom half of the Statue of Liberty is blown away, leaving the head and crown suspended by a wire. Gracie collapses on the stage for a moment, exhausted by her efforts.

ANGLE ON Kathy as she pushes through the crowd holding a gun. She gets to the stage and stands over Gracie.

KATHY

Next time you're fired, leave.

There's nothing Gracie can do except shut her eyes. No one notices in the pandemonium. Kathy pulls the trigger -- but before it clicks she pitches forward, as if she's been kicked from behind. Standing there is Vic, holding a hair dryer.

VIC

Nobody screws up all my hard work!

Gracie picks up the gun. Vic holds Kathy down. Suddenly a scream pierces the air. Gracie and Vic look to see Nora holding a gun to Cheryl.

NORA
Everybody freeze!

Gracie has a clear shot at Nora. She and Eric make eye contact. He's urging her to shoot. She hesitates. And then makes a decision. She puts the gun down.

GRACIE
Listen, I know who you are --

NORA
You shut up! You're FBI!

Everyone looks at Gracie in amazement.

MARY JO
You're with the FBI?

GRACIE
Well, technically I was just fired.

LESLIE
I knew it. That's why she could eat like that.

GRACIE
The point is, we don't want anybody to get hurt. Now, the whole country is watching you right now.

Nora looks towards the cameras.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
Forty million people know who you are. There's no chance you're going to get away with this. If you pull that trigger, you're sealing your own fate. I think they have the death penalty here in Texas --

MARY JO
Oh, that's right. We'll fry her --

GRACIE
Thank you, Mary Jo. So put down the gun. Before it's too late. The fact that you didn't kill anybody means maybe you won't have to spend your whole life in jail.

Nora hesitates.

NORA
(looking towards Kathy,
who's held down by
Vic and a Security
Guard)

Mom?

Everyone looks towards Kathy in amazement. Gracie doesn't miss a beat.

GRACIE
Believe me, I know how important a parent's approval can be--but in the end, we have to lead our own lives.

Nora is still staring at Kathy. Gracie turns to her.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
And Miss Morningside, you've done so much for young women. If you do the wrong thing now, that's all you'll be remembered for -- instead of being America's premiere Beauty Queen. Not to mention a wonderful mother.

Kathy looks incredibly moved. Then she calls out to Nora.

KATHY
Shoot her!

Gracie spins around to face Nora. Without hesitating, she aims and pull the trigger.

The shot hits the top of the Statue of Liberty. Gracie leaps onto Cheryl, knocking her out of the way just as Lady Liberty falls to the ground, smashing Nora beneath it's torch.

It's not enough to kill her, just enough to knock her down. As she tries to stagger to her feet, Eric subdues her. Gracie turns to Cheryl, who's out cold. Vic comes rushing over.

VIC
She fainted. I've had experience with this kind of thing.

Vic takes out a bottle of perfume and waves it under Cheryl's nose. She starts to come to.

GRACIE
(to Vic)
I knew I could count on you.

VIC

You should have won! You were perfect!
Except for the shoes during Evening
Gown.

Police and Security Guards rush the stage.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO STREET -- MINUTES LATER

Gracie and Eric walk out of the Convention Center. Police cars and fire trucks zoom towards the Center behind them.

GRACIE

I can't believe Kathy told her to shoot.

ERIC

Hart, you can't talk everybody out of everything. Just because you talked me out of my job and my whole life on your stupid hunch.

GRACIE

I knew you were smarter than you thought. And don't worry--McDonald will hire you back. You'll probably even get a promotion.

ERIC

You too.

GRACIE

I don't know if I want it.

Eric stops.

ERIC

Come again?

GRACIE

My Mom lived for this stuff. She couldn't get enough of it. But now that I've done it--I don't know if I want to do it again.

ERIC

So what do you want to do?

GRACIE

Full time beauty queen?

They both smile at this one. Then some local cops come over.

COP

Agent Matthews, we need you over here.

ERIC

One of us has to go back to work.

Eric stands up and puts his hand out.

GRACIE

You still owe me fifty bucks.

They shake, and Eric walks off.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO CONVENTION CENTER -- MORNING

The Newsvans and trucks are pulling out of the parking lot.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

Gracie emerges from the elevator carrying her suitcase. She's immediately accosted by Mary Jo, Leslie, Karen and Alana.

ALANA

There you are.

MARY JO

We've been looking all over for you.

KAREN

We've got to go to the ballroom. They're honoring you know who again.

GRACIE

I've got a car waiting--

LESLIE

Come on. They're taking a group picture. It'll just be a minute.

INT. BALLROOM - MORNING

As Gracie enters, Cheryl is at the podium wearing her crown.

CHERYL

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'd like to present my best friend -- -- a friend to us all, and this year's Miss Congeniality, Gracie Hart!

Everyone stands and applauds as Gracie, totally stunned, stops in her tracks. The girls push her to the podium as she accepts a sash.

Gracie looks up to see Eric, Clonsky, McDonald, Vic smiling and applauding, and then her attention is directed over to her father and step-mother.

Gracie collects herself for a moment.

GRACIE
(to Cheryl)
I never thought I'd thank a woman wearing a sash, but thank you.

CHERYL
Thank you, Gracie. You taught me to stand up for myself. You taught all of us how to defend ourselves and not to kill each other--you're a great teacher. A lousy dancer, but a great teacher.

Gracie considers this as the crowd applauds and we:

DISSOLVE TO:

A TIGHT SHOT of Gracie once again sitting alone at a table eating her lunch.

WE PULL BACK to a sign saying "Teacher's Lounge" as Joe, the GYM TEACHER we saw during Gracie's earlier visit to the school strides angrily through the room.

GYM TEACHER
Some damn ruckus in the playground. I'm telling you, these kids--

GRACIE
Joe, I'll take care of it. You look like you're ready to kill someone.

GYM TEACHER
It's a fight, Gracie. It could be rough out there.

GRACIE
If I need back-up, I'll call you.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD -- DAY

A crowd of teenage kids are engaged in a fight. Gracie comes running out into the middle of the melee.

GRACIE
Okay, time out! What happened?

All the kids start screaming. Gracie raises her arms for silence. She points to a girl.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Susan?

SUSAN

Jimmy was beating up Kevin so I punched Jimmy and he punched me--

GRACIE

Jimmy, were you hitting Kevin?

Jimmy looks down, obviously guilty.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Jimmy, we don't believe in violence, right? And if you do it again you'll have to deal with me, and as you all saw during Field Day, I can break a board with my head. Kevin, you okay?

Kevin nods.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Good. Remember, fighting doesn't make you cool. Brains, sensitivity and a six-figure income--that's what women want. And Susan, you're really brave, but if there's a problem, you come tell me or one of the other teachers. You're not a one-woman police force. Okay?

Susan nods.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Fantastic! It's a historic day here at "Lord of the Flies" Junior High School. Now all three of you shake hands.

They do.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Now shake your other hands.

They do.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Now shake your booties.

The kids laugh and do as they're told.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Now get lost so I can finish lunch.

The kids scatter. Gracie looks up to the sky.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

And you thought terrorists were tough?

Gracie starts back to the building when she sees Eric standing there. She's startled.

ERIC

Hey, teach. Long time no see.

Beat.

GRACIE

Six months. How are you, Agent Matthews?

ERIC

Special Agent Matthews.

GRACIE

Get out of here! You got it?!

ERIC

Today. And I went out to the bar with everybody, had a few beers, and I realized, something's missing. Do you know what that was?

GRACIE

Your keys?

ERIC

I wish.

GRACIE

Wallet?

Eric walks closer to Gracie.

ERIC

I was thinking, you're not an Agent anymore. So now, if we ever had a kid or something, only one of us would be in danger of being killed.

GRACIE

No, it'd still be two. You haven't been here during recess.

ERIC

Well, I don't know, but I was wondering if you'd want to maybe go out to dinner sometime...

GRACIE

You're asking me to go to dinner with you? Socially? Like a date?

ERIC

No, I mean, it's just dinner...If we have sex afterwards, so be it.

Gracie takes this in for a moment.

ERIC (CONT'D)

You don't have to answer now--

GRACIE

Seven o'clock okay?

ERIC

Seven's good. It's very very good.

Eric goes to kiss her.

GRACIE

(off the kids)

Don't. They'll lose respect for me.

All the kids in the schoolyard start "Whooing."

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Hey! Knock it off!

The kids scatter.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Now I've re-established my authority.

And now Gracie and Eric kiss, as we:

FADE OUT:

THE END