

HACKS

"There Is No Line"

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OVER BLACK:

We hear a WAVE OF LAUGHTER from a crowd.

WOMAN (V.O.)
...So anyway, he's on top of me, pumping
away, T-shirt still on because his
breasts are bigger than mine and I told
him he had to--

More laughter.

WOMAN (V.O.)
What, I was jealous!

INT. MGM GRAND LAS VEGAS THEATER - NIGHT

We start from behind a WOMAN, center stage, looking out onto the crowd. Her perfectly coiffed hair is silhouetted by the bright spotlight, her sequined coat glinting as she moves.

This is the infamous DEBORAH VANCE.

DEBORAH
And this dummy, he keeps asking me, "are
you close? Are you close?" Finally I'm
like, yeah, I'm close -- close to cutting
off all my hair, buying some flannel, and
finally responding to Melissa Etheridge's
invite to dinner!

The audience laughs.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
I'm still Deborah Vance, good night Las
Vegas!

The curtains fall as the audience cheers. We stay behind Deborah and follow her backstage as she's swarmed by her crew. Her jacket is removed by STAGEHAND #1, STAGEHAND #2 holds open a JEWELRY BOX as she removes her GIANT DIAMOND EARRINGS, and STAGEHAND #3 holds Deborah's hand as she steps into more comfortable shoes. This is a well-oiled machine, and Deborah's on autopilot.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
Those squeak. Let's go back to the
kitten heel.

SNAP! The jewelry box slams shut. Deborah passes a sound mixer, BILL, who's looking at his phone.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
How'd they do, Bill?

BILL

Couldn't cover the fucking spread. I'm
out two grand.

DEBORAH

Oof. Good luck with Beverly. You sleep
on the couch more than my dogs do.

INT. DEBORAH'S DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Deborah enters her dressing room and sits in front of her
makeup mirror. She looks at herself for a beat as we finally
reveal the face of this entertainer and self-made mogul.
She's had work done (she's actually late 60s, but looks a
tight mid-60s.) And she seems bored.

A MAKEUP ARTIST removes Deborah's EYELASHES as her eyes
remain closed. Her assistant, MARCUS (early 40s, Black, gay,
somehow still Christian), approaches.

MARCUS

So after the taping tomorrow, there's
studio space we can use for the Christmas
album cover.

DEBORAH

Book Sheila for makeup. But tell her no
hazelnut coffee -- not for me, for her.
I don't want to smell it on her breath.

Her current Makeup Artist starts breathing through her nose.

EXT. LAS VEGAS TARMAC - LATER THAT NIGHT

Deborah walks towards a private jet, her two beloved CORGIS
in tow, with a sleep mask already on her forehead.

DEBORAH

(picking up one of her dogs)
C'mon baby, let's party.

INT. QVC STUDIOS - WEST CHESTER, PA - NEXT MORNING

INSERT: CLOSE ON ridiculously square, shiny French manicured
nails, pointing out an iPad holder on a bathtub caddy tray.

KATIE (O.S.)

It's got this great slot for your tablet.

CUT WIDE: Deborah and her co-host KATIE (30s, bubbly,
bleached-as-fuck teeth) film a live segment. The signage
behind them reads, "**DEBORAH VANCE ORIGINALS.**"

DEBORAH

Or one of my books! It's got a place for everything. Your candle, your loofah, and there's two cup holders in case you're like me and can't decide between a chardonnay or a pinot gris!

KATIE

(laughing too hard)
Oh my god YES! And look at this detailing -- there's, uh...
(looking through cards, scrambling)
...a tasteful smattering of rhinestones.

Deborah shoots her a look, while staying upbeat.

DEBORAH

There are actually 43 total gemstones, all perfectly inlaid.

Deborah moves the tray a little. It glimmers.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

Gorgeous. Like a million little winks.

KATIE

(a little sheepish)
So lovely.
(then)
Hey, we've got Marcy from Memphis on the line. Hello Marcy, you're on with Deborah Vance!

MARCY (O.S.)

Oh my God! I can't believe I'm talkin' to Deborah Vance!
(to barking dog)
Shut up, Buster! Ugh, I'm such a huge fan, I'm gonna die!

DEBORAH

Well don't do that Marcy -- we don't have the insurance!

MARCY

I went on your Caribbean Cruise in '98, with my mother -- God rest her soul -- and I've never seen her laugh so hard. That was such a special trip for us.

DEBORAH

Oh, that means so much to me. Honey, you stay on the line, I want to send you a bathtub caddy. And maybe some Quaaludes for Buster. Sounds like you could use a break!

Marcy SCREECHES in delight. Deborah smiles.

INT. QVC STUDIO - PHOTO SHOOT - LATER THAT DAY

Deborah, wearing a Mrs. Claus lewk, laughs on a SANTA'S lap as a photographer clicks away. In the background, a TIMID MAKEUP ARTIST (40s, many bangles) discreetly sips a coffee.

EXT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - NIGHT

A black car driven by her driver, MARTY, pulls up to Deborah's massive French Normandy-style chateau, with elaborate manicured greens and trees. Deborah exits with her dogs.

DEBORAH

'Night Marty.

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Deborah takes two pre-made PLATES out of a huge Viking fridge and heats them up. The convection oven DINGS.

DEBORAH

Dinner's ready!

We pause to see who her companion is -- and her dogs come charging in. She places their plates on the floor, and moves to her kitchen island, where she eats her meal all alone. The fork scraping against her plate is the only sound that reverberates through this giant mansion.

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Deborah, face fully slathered in La Mer, gets into bed. There are no less than 12 pillows.

We see her, tiny in the frame, in her huge bedroom as she hits a button and blackout curtains close in all around her.

MAIN TITLES

INT. STYLIST SHOWROOM - DAY

MUSIC CUE: "Evan Finds The Third Room" by Khruangbin

MONTAGE:

- Deborah drinks champagne as she peruses racks and racks of brightly colored, sparkling wardrobe in a showroom.
- Marcus, also drinking champagne, sits and watches Deborah try on clothes. There's a Corgi on each side of him.
- A stylist pulls looks off the racks and Deborah nods "yes" to everything. One dress in particular makes her eyes widen - she LOVES it. She's a shopaholic getting a major fix.

INT. JOËL ROBUCHON RESTAURANT - LATER THAT DAY

Deborah, now wearing the dress we just saw her buy, sits with MGM casino owner KIRK MURREN (70s, a little bloated but still handsome, gold rings squeezing his sausage fingers.) Lots of drinks and laughs -- the mood is light.

DEBORAH

Wow. I would've never guessed plugs.

KIRK

(showing off hair)

Yeah, they have this new system, it's amazing. They took hairs from my back.

DEBORAH

Makes sense. They weren't gonna get any from your balls!

They both laugh.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

It's a shame Michelle never got to see this -- she suffered through the toupee days.

KIRK

(recalling)

Michelle? Wow. You remember my ex-wives' names better than I do.

DEBORAH

Oh please, I remember all your wives -- and hairlines.

A WAITER drops fresh martinis.

KIRK

(raising his glass)

Deborah. Twenty-five hundred shows. What an accomplishment.

Deborah smiles, genuinely proud of this. They cheers.

KIRK (CONT'D)

They're naming a street after you, that's pretty special.

DEBORAH

Oh yeah, "Deborah Vance Drive" -- it'll probably be a dead end with an abortion clinic.

Kirk laughs at this. Deborah takes note -- quickly jots it down on a napkin and slips it in her purse. Always working.

KIRK

Anniversary show's gonna be a lot of fun. And it's probably a good time to talk about the future.

DEBORAH

Oh no, are you proposing again, Kirk?

Kirk doesn't take the bait. He continues, serious.

KIRK

You know you're a part of MGM history, but I think it'd be good if you did a few less shows a year.

DEBORAH

Good for who?

He sighs -- he knows better than to bullshit her.

KIRK

I need some marquee dates for new acts.

DEBORAH

What "new acts?"

KIRK

Well, for example... the Jabbawockeez.

Beat.

DEBORAH

What the fuck is that?

KIRK

They won America's Best Rap Dance Crew?
(off her blank stare)

People love them.

(then)

Listen Deborah, I've got two buckets to fill -- families and idiots in their twenties.

(MORE)

KIRK (CONT'D)

The families want to see dance shows.
And the 20-year-olds want to take molly
and spend a grand to watch a guy in a
marshmallow helmet hit play on an iPod.

DEBORAH

My numbers are solid! And the pre-sales
for my holiday shows are on par with last
year--

KIRK

Deborah--

DEBORAH

I know my name. Stop saying it.

KIRK

You'll still be doing shows! Just less.
I mean, let me ask you, as a friend --

DEBORAH

-- Oh yeah, this feels real friendly --

KIRK

Why do you still want to do a hundred
plus shows a year? Lord knows you don't
need the money. It doesn't look like
you're having fun anymore. Is any of it
still fun for you? I mean, Christ,
you're the only comedian I know who never
laughs.

DEBORAH

I don't "laugh?" Wow. And here I
thought we were having a nice time.

KIRK

Oh, come on -- you're performing. You
think I don't know your fake laugh by
now?

DEBORAH

I don't think you know a woman's fake
anything.

In a huff, she grabs her very large Birkin bag and takes out
a ZIPLOCK BAG.

KIRK

Oh, don't do this.

Deborah hastily puts her steak in the Ziplock and stands.

DEBORAH

Don't forget, I'm the reason people play
this town.

(too loud)

Before me it was just Wayne Newton and
those gay lion magicians!

Deborah storms off as DINERS turn and stare. Kirk sighs.

INT. ASCEND MANAGEMENT - JIMMY'S OFFICE - DAY

AVA DANIELS (mid-20s, young Lizzy Caplan vibes, a bit raw,
hair still a little wet from a poorly timed shower) sits with
her head in her hands.

ANGLE ON: the uncomfortable expression of JIMMY LESAK, JR.
(Paul W. Downs in a Tom Ford suit that he gets to keep),
Ava's manager who sits across from her. There's an awkward
silent beat. He's about to speak when:

AVA

I should just jump out the window!

JIMMY

Well, you'd probably just break your legs
'cause of the fifth floor terrace. But
if you're seriously thinking of hurting
yourself--

AVA

I'm not. And if I was gonna kill myself,
I wouldn't jump out my manager's window.
I'd do it in the dressing room of an H&M -
- it would force them to finally clean
that place.

Jimmy laughs, then stops:

JIMMY

Wait, are you serious?

AVA

(ignoring)

You can't get me a meeting to write on
anything? I'm seriously done because of
one mistake?

JIMMY

Well, it was one mistake, then a couple
of replies, and a few articles that
compiled some other things that you've
apparently said in the past, so--

AVA
I didn't do anything wrong!

Ava starts to cry. Jimmy, sympathetic, hands her a FEW TISSUES. Then he grabs a BUNCH MORE.

JIMMY
For your hair. You're dripping on the leather.

Ava buries her head in her hands and whimpers.

AVA
FUCK!

JIMMY
Look, what's happening to you is unfair. And you know I love your strong female POV! Obsessed.
(then)
But in the future, maybe you don't have to say exactly how you're feeling about everything, at all times.

AVA
Sorry for being "unfiltered and honest" or whatever but that's why I won an Emmy before I could rent a car! Now all of a sudden it's a problem? I mean, where's the line?

SFX: A gchat ALERT chimes. Jimmy ignores it.

JIMMY
...I don't know. All I do know is you just need to lay low for a bit. You know how these things are -- it'll blow over.

AVA
I can't lay low! I need to work. I just bought a house.

JIMMY
Well maybe you should consider selling it.

AVA
I have. My realtor says if I immediately re-list it I'll lose a shit ton of money.
(then)
Ugh. This is probably residual Catholic guilt bullshit, but I can't help feeling like this is all punishment for getting fingered at my uncle's wake.

JIMMY

Okay, great example of what I was talking about. I don't ever need to know where you've been fingered.

(then)

Ava. I'm really trying, and I'm not gonna bail on you. There's just nothing I can do right now.

Ava starts to get more emotional. Jimmy's uncomfortable.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Would a hug make you feel better? I can't technically touch you without another person present, but I can call someone? You can choose the gender--

There's a KNOCK at the door. Jimmy's assistant KAYLA (20s) pops her head in.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Oh, great, I was just about to comfort--

KAYLA

Deborah Vance is on the line.

Jimmy's eyes widen as he throws on his HEADSET.

JIMMY

Ava! Could you please excuse me for just one second, Kayla can you set her up somewhere comfortable?

AVA

We're in the middle of--

Ava is ushered out the door by Kayla.

JIMMY

(into headset)

Deborah! Perfect timing!

INT. DEBORAH'S PATIO / INT. ASCEND MANAGEMENT - INTERCUT

Deborah (wearing a LARGE VISOR) is on the phone.

DEBORAH

The fucking Jabbawockeez?! Did you know about this?

JIMMY

...Do I know about the Jabbawockeez? Yeah, I used to watch them on America's Best Rap Dance--

DEBORAH
Murren wants to cut my dates! Blindsided
me at lunch. The fucking nerve.

JIMMY
(flustered)
This is sucks! I mean, this sucks!

DEBORAH
Apparently he needs to appeal to a
"younger crowd." I could sue for ageism.
You better do something about this.

Jimmy paces, sweating. Then he sees Ava through the glass
wall, blowing her nose. Yes.

JIMMY
Well, okay. I'll call Kurt--

DEBORAH
Kirk.

JIMMY
Yes, Kirk. But also -- I have a pitch.
What if you hire a writer? To help
freshen up the act? I actually represent
this one very in-demand young woman--

ANGLE ON: Ava, inspecting the contents of her tissue.

DEBORAH
I write my own material. I don't need a
"writer" -- I need a manager. Your
father would've handled this. When he
died, I stayed with you because he said
you'd take care of me. Don't make your
father a liar, Jimmy.

Deborah hangs up on him. We stay with Jimmy, who exhales.
He waves Ava back in -- she now has a fistful of M&Ms. He
switches right back into manager mode.

JIMMY
So, that was Deborah Vance. And
incredible news: she is... intrigued by
the idea of you writing jokes for her.

AVA
(mouth full)
The QVC muumuu lady? No way.

JIMMY
They're caftans.

AVA
Yeah, no fucking way.

JIMMY
She's a legend! One of the biggest earners at this company. And you just said you "need to work."

AVA
I do, but come on. *The New Yorker* said I was "Tina Fey meets Joan Didion!" And now you want me to what, go write punchlines about how men don't put the toilet seat down? No. I'm not that desperate.

JIMMY
Respectfully, as your manager, you are that desperate.

Ava's eyes narrow. Not accepting this.

AVA
Well okay, if you can't find me a job, I guess I'll just have to do it on my own.
(turning back)
Also, I need a gift receipt for the Christmas gift you gave me because I'd like to return it for cash.

Ava exits, taking another fist full of M&Ms from Kayla's desk on the way out.

KAYLA
Oh no, I wouldn't eat those, they're super stale.

AVA (O.S.)
Yeah, I'm aware!

EXT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - BALCONY - SUNSET

Deborah is sitting on a chaise lounge, sipping a glass of wine. She is watching her iPad.

ANGLE ON IPAD: A clip of the Jabbawockeez, a bunch of hip hop dancers in masks bouncing around a stage. It cuts to a CROWD OF PEOPLE absolutely losing their shit.

Disgusted, Deborah frisbees her iPad off the balcony into the pool. She calmly walks back into her bedroom.

DEBORAH (O.S.)
(calling out)
Marcus? I need you to go to the computer
store.

ANGLE ON: The iPad floating to the bottom of the pool, still
playing the Jabbawockeez until it fritzes out.

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - BATHROOM - LATER

Deborah is in the bathtub -- LOTS of bubbles. She's using
her Deborah Vance Originals bathtub caddy tray to sign books.
There's a KNOCK at the door.

MARCUS (O.S.)
Deborah?

DEBORAH
("what the fuck")
...Yes?

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - BATHROOM/BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marcus stands at the door. He looks nervous.

MARCUS
I'm sorry to bother you, but... your
sister's on the phone.

Deborah reacts to this.

DEBORAH
My sister?
(beat)
How did she get my number?

Marcus is unsure how to respond.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
No.

Marcus starts to say something, then thinks better of it. He
sadly walks off. Off Deborah's look of concern...

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - BEDROOM - LATER

Deborah, now in a bathrobe, sits on her bed watching TV.
Marcus stands behind her.

ANGLE ON TV: A NEWS ANCHOR speaks to camera.

NEWS ANCHOR

Beloved entertainer Frank Vance has died today at the age of 74, after suffering a heart attack in his Ohio home.

ON TV: Footage of an OLD SITCOM plays. A YOUNG DEBORAH and YOUNG FRANK talk animatedly in a living room set.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Vance's career began in 1973, with the CBS sitcom "Who's Making Dinner?", which he co-created and starred in with his then-wife Deborah Vance.

Deborah's eyes narrow at this...

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

The two made headlines in 1976, when they divorced after Deborah Vance famously set fire to his--

CLICK. Deborah has turned the TV off. A tense beat. Then:

DEBORAH

I cannot believe they chose that clip.

MARCUS

...Do you want to maybe take tonight off?

Deborah slowly turns her head to face Marcus.

DEBORAH

Why the hell would I do that?

Shit. Marcus nods. Got it.

EXT. LA STREET - SUNSET

Ava drives, eating out of a greasy bag of Jack in the Box. She's stopped at a light when she looks over and sees a woman, TAYLOR (35, leather jacket, think Greta Lee), at an outdoor cafe. Ava gasps.

She immediately pulls over and jumps out of her car, leaving the hazards on, and brushing french fry crumbs off of her. It's frantic.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Taylor sits with an OLDER WOMAN.

TAYLOR

--Yeah he's an actor. He says he's been shooting this Richard Linklater movie but I guess I won't know if that's true for like, 20 years--

AVA (O.S.)

Oh my gosh, hey!

Taylor's face drops when she sees it's Ava.

TAYLOR

Ava. Heeey.

AVA

How are you? It's been forever.
How's...
(can't remember)
The husband?

TAYLOR

Mark? He's actually my ex-husband now.

AVA

("fuck")
...Well his loss!

Ava pops a squat at the table. Taylor's like, "oh no."

TAYLOR

...Ava, this is my mom, we're actually just having lunch before she heads to the airport.

AVA

Oh my god, your mom? I should have known -- perfect skin! Zero pores! She could be your sister, get this bitch on Raya!

Taylor's mom smiles, a little afraid. In the background, we hear a CAR LOUDLY HONKING. Taylor and her mom react, but Ava plows ahead.

AVA (CONT'D)

So congrats on season two! So cool. Are you hiring?

Taylor can't believe she's doing this right now.

TAYLOR

Oh, I'm not even thinking about it yet--

AVA
Really? 'Cause I heard you're taking meetings, and I would love to work with you. Obviously, I've been going through a lot--

HONK!

AVA (CONT'D)
And I could really use a job. I mean, really.

The honking is now almost constant. Other diners are turning to look. A VALET approaches Ava.

VALET
Ma'am? Your car is blocking the driveway to Tommy Hilfiger.

ANGLE ON: Ava's car, blocking a driveway, where an ANGRY BMW BRO is leaning on the horn, yelling.

AVA
Oh, that's... no. That's not mine.

VALET
I saw you do it. You're holding the keys. I can move it.

TAYLOR
Listen, why don't we just talk next week--

AVA
Well I'd love to but you haven't responded to any of my texts or e-mails so I think we should just talk now!

Taylor's mom sips her smoothie.

TAYLOR
Fine. I can't hire you. I'm sorry, but I have to protect the show.

The valet tries to pull the keys out of Ava's hand.

AVA
I got it! I'm going!
(to Taylor)
I thought we were friends.

TAYLOR
...Did you? Because you barely talked to me until I got a show.

AVA
(taken aback)
...I don't remember it that way.

TAYLOR
Yeah, I'm sure you don't. Listen, it took me ten years to get where you got in like, two minutes. I know this seems like the worst thing in the world, but it's really not.

An awkward beat. Ava is genuinely ashamed.

BMW BRO
Move your shit box car bitch or I'll fuckin' kill you!

Ava turns to Taylor's mom.

AVA
I'm sorry.
(then, tearing up)
You really do have amazing skin.

INT. MGM GRAND LAS VEGAS THEATER - NIGHT

Deborah is on stage, mid-show. Going through the motions.

DEBORAH
-- So my gyno tells me it's time for my yearly mammogram. Which for me are actually pretty quick, 'cause ya know, mine come pre-flattened.

The crowd LAUGHS -- but not raucously. Deborah clocks this, then pauses for a beat. She decides to try something.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
You know what, let's have some fun. Can we raise the house lights?

ANGLE ON: A techie GARY (58, very long grey ponytail, doing a Sudoku with his feet up) snaps to attention. He spills some coffee as he scrambles.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
Hello? Gary! Can I get the lights up, please. God, good help is hard to find!

The house lights finally come up.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
There we go! Now I can see you all.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
What's happening?! Is there a shooter?

Deborah paces the stage, surveying the crowd. She spots an ELDERLY MAN in the front row.

DEBORAH
(doing crowd work)
Sir, where are you from?

ELDERLY MAN
Huh?

DEBORAH
WHERE ARE YOU FROM, SIR?

ELDERLY MAN
I don't understand!

ELDERLY WOMAN
Don't bother with him! His hearing aid is bad!

DEBORAH
Well, if he needs a new one, check out my merch booth outside! They're also selling black market Viagra for you, sir.

She points to a RANDOM MAN. There's polite laughter. This isn't working.

INT. DEBORAH'S DRESSING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Deborah sits at her mirror, defeated. Marcus is on a couch behind her, on his iPad. Deborah sighs deeply, and then--

DEBORAH
Call Jimmy back. I'll meet the girl.

INT. AVA'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

A big, empty modern house. Lots of unopened MOVING BOXES, a couple pieces of furniture, and some tape on the floor outlining a spot for a couch. Ava mixes a glass of tequila -- the spoon hitting the glass is the only sound that reverberates through the entire house. She's a little drunk.

Her phone DINGS -- it's a text from MOM. It reads, "**How are you honey?**" Ava types back: "**Great. My friends are gonna help me out. Money should be in your account Monday. Love you.**" Ava tosses her phone down, defeated.

An intercom BUZZER goes off. Ava walks over to it.

AVA
Hello?

MAN'S VOICE
Postmates.

EXT. AVA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ava opens the door. A skeezy but kind of cute guy, TRENT, is standing there with a Postmates bag (Jack in the Box again.) He hands it to her. Ava looks at him for a beat, then:

AVA
Do you want to come in?

INT. AVA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Ava's aggressively hooking up with Trent on her mattress (on the floor.) She's in a bra and is ripping off his pants.

TRENT
Do you have a condom?

AVA
Ah shit. No. Maybe it's fine, though.

TRENT
Umm...

Ava groans -- "ok, fine" -- and rolls off of him. She gets up, bottom-less, and crouches over a moving box.

TRENT (CONT'D)
You look so fucking--

PFFFFT! That horrible sound of packing tape being ripped off of cardboard. Trent is like, "yikes."

AVA
Ugh! Fuck. I have one somewhere.

She moves to another box. PFFFFT!

ANGLE ON: Trent, slowly jerking himself off to stay hard as he watches her.

Ava tears into another box: "PFFFFT!" -- not this one either. She moves to another box. It's desperate and sad.

TRENT
(jerking off)
You should really use those reusable moving boxes. It's better for the environment.

AVA
Yeah, I know! They were booked!

PFFFFT! Another box is opened.

AVA (CONT'D)
Why would they put the kitchen shit up
here? God!

Ava pulls out kitchen utensils and tosses them. They clang on the floor. Trent, still silently jerking, looks sad.

INT. AVA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Ava is sleeping when her PHONE RINGS. It wakes her up -- the call is from "JIMMY MANAGER." She looks over to Trent, who's still asleep. She's... not thrilled. She heads to the en suite bathroom (walking over the discarded boxes from last night) and sits down on the toilet.

AVA
Hello?

She immediately starts peeing.

EXT. JIMMY'S BACKYARD/INT. AVA'S HOUSE - INTERCUT

Jimmy sips on coffee in his lush backyard (hearing peeing but choosing to ignore it.)

JIMMY
Hey! Tried you a few times last night--

AVA
Ugh, sorry, I was fucking my Postmate.

JIMMY
Woof. Again, don't wanna know, moving on. So. Deborah's agreed to meet you. You sure you're not interested?

ANGLE ON: Trent, sitting up in bed.

TRENT
Hey, beautiful lady. Should I grab us
breakfast?
(joking)
I won't charge you.

Ava sighs deeply, then just closes the door between them.

AVA
I'll do it.

JIMMY

Oh! Great! She wants to meet today.

AVA

Ugh, okay. Do I have to go all the way to Beverly Hills or something?

JIMMY

Ummm... no.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PLANE - DAY

Ava is squished in the middle seat on a Southwest flight.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Las Vegas. The local time is 1:14 pm. The current temperature is 111 degrees.

The man in the window seat opens up the window, blinding Ava.

INT. MCCARRAN AIRPORT -- DAY

Ava exits her gate. She takes in the scene: tons of LOUD SLOT MACHINES and TOURISTS playing them. What the fuck?

She keeps walking and passes by a SMOKER'S LOUNGE, just as the door opens. A GIANT PLUME OF SMOKE envelopes her. Ava coughs hard. Gross.

INT. LE CIRQUE VEGAS - DAY

Deborah sits across from a reporter, ANDY (40, glasses.) He has his recorder out as he jots notes down.

ANDY

Twenty-five hundred shows is an incredible accomplishment. What do you have to say?

DEBORAH

I'll tell you what I have to say: eat me out, Celine!

He laughs as he jots down a note.

ANDY

So what's kept you going this long?

DEBORAH

I'm addicted to it. As a comedian, you're only as good as your last joke.

(MORE)

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
Plus, someone's gotta pay my tab at
Neiman Marcus.

Andy laughs again.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
But no, it's about the work. I can't not
be working. And I'm not qualified for
anything else. Imagine me changing your
oil?

Andy, smiling, checks his notes.

ANDY
...So, I did want to ask about Frank's
passing.

Deborah shifts in her seat, forces a small smile.

DEBORAH
I have no comment.

ANDY
I mean, your ex-husband, the father of
your only child, your complicated history
-- there must be a lot going through your
mind.

DEBORAH
Wow, you must have been researching me on
microfiche, that's such ancient history.
And I thought this interview was to
promote the anniversary show? Do you
write for the entertainment section, or
the obits?

ANDY
Sorry, I just thought it was related
since he started your career and all.

Deborah's eyes narrow. Uh oh. Shouldn't have said that.
Deborah reaches across the table, hits STOP on his recorder.

DEBORAH
He didn't start anything. It was me, and
only me.
(standing up)
We're done here.

Deborah throws her napkin down on the table.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
You either have spinach or a gap in your
teeth. Either way: fix it.

She walks off as Andy puts his finger to his tooth to check.

EXT. LE CIRQUE VEGAS - MOMENTS LATER

Deborah exits the restaurant in a huff. Marcus trails after her. Deborah approaches the car and tries to open the door, but it's locked. She angrily RATTLES the handle.

Marty, her driver, is smoking a cigarette five feet away. He scrambles to throw his cigarette down and unlocks the car with his key fob.

MARTY

Sorry, Deb--

DEBORAH

What the fuck are you doing?! You should be ready for me and the door should be open! You're done.

(turning to Marcus)

You drive.

(off their looks)

Now.

Marcus takes the keys from Marty's hand and hoofs it to the driver's seat. Deborah lets herself in and they pull off, leaving Marty standing on the street, dumbfounded.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Deborah sits in the back seat as Marcus drives -- her hand is shaking ever so slightly. She's been rattled by the last ten minutes. She stares blankly out the window, shaking her head.

DEBORAH

(to herself)

They're just going to write whatever they want anyway.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - DAY

The strip is filled with TOURISTS and DAY DRUNK PARTIERS. Heat waves rise off the pavement. Ava lugs a BACKPACK and looks at her phone, searching for the rental car center. She's sweaty and miserable.

A loud BACHELORETTE PARTY (Herve Leger bandage dresses, deeply contoured makeup, all with cracked phone screens) walk eight-wide on the sidewalk.

BACHELORETTE

Did they move Eatly?!

One of them knocks into Ava.

AVA

Jesus!

Ava rolls her eyes. Then A MAN (goatee, long cargo shorts) blows smoke from a GIANT VAPE right into her face.

VAPE MAN

(to friend)

Bro, you stuck your dick in some crazy!

Ava wants to die.

EXT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - DAY

Ava pulls her rented Toyota Yaris up to the circle in front of Deborah's giant, gaudy house. Ava takes it all in.

EXT. DEBORAH'S LAS VEGAS MANSION - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ava rings the doorbell. YANIRA (40s, housekeeper) answers.

AVA

Hi, I'm here to see Deborah Vance.

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - SITTING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Yanira leads Ava into a formal, ostentatious sitting room.

YANIRA

You can wait in here.

Ava enters and sits on a Louis XVI-style SOFA.

YANIRA (CONT'D)

Deborah will be with you in...

Yanira just shrugs and walks off. Ava sighs and looks around the gold-encrusted palace.

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - FRONT DOOR - LATER

Deborah enters in a huff. She starts to walk up her stairs when Yanira stops her.

YANIRA

Ms. Deborah, a girl is here?

Yanira points to the sitting room where Ava is inspecting a giant gold tassel. Fuck. Deborah forgot.

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Deborah enters the room and Ava immediately hops to her feet.

AVA

Hi! I'm Ava, it's so nice to meet you--

DEBORAH

(waving her off)

Sit, sit. Please.

Deborah does a once-over of Ava's interview "look." A silk striped shirt (one button too many undone), tucked into black jeans, with Frye boots. Hmm. She sits down across from Ava.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

Do you need anything? Did they offer you a drink? I know writers are usually alcoholics, so feel free to have a vodka tonic. I don't judge.

Ava laughs REALLY HARD at this. Deborah's like "ugh."

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

So. Jimmy tells me you're--

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Let it go!!!

DJ (40s, a bit strung out, carrying a Monster Energy Drink and dressed like Lindsay Lohan circa 2005) comes barreling into the room. Marcus chases after her.

DJ

(whiny)

Mooooom! Marcus is being in-SANE and won't let me leave!

MARCUS

Sorry. She won't show me.

Deborah holds out her hand, like, "give it me."

DJ

Oh my God. There's nothing in there!

(off Deborah's icy stare)

Ugh! Fine.

DJ hands over her ugly purse for Deborah. Deborah inspects its contents. She finds a BOTTLE OF PILLS and rattles it.

DJ (CONT'D)

They're prescribed to me! They're antibiotics, okay?! I have a fucking yeast infection!

Ava reacts to this.

DJ (CONT'D)
Happy?! Sorry I didn't want to explain
to fucking Marcus about my YEAST
INFECTION!

DEBORAH
(re: Monster Energy drink)
Well I'm glad you're getting your fluids,
sweetheart.

Deborah hands the bag back, then leans out her cheek for DJ
to kiss it. DJ begrudgingly does, and then clomps out the
door, shoulder-checking Marcus on her way out. Marcus rolls
his eyes and exits too. Deborah slowly turns back to Ava.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
...You'll have to excuse her. She has a
yeast infection. Oh and her father just
died.

AVA
Oh my god, I'm so sorry. Are you... are
you okay?

DEBORAH
Of course, I'm not the one who's dead.

Ava is taken aback.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
So: why are you here?

AVA
Um, to... interview for the job?

DEBORAH
And why are you interested in this
particular job?

AVA
Oh! Um, well, it would obviously be an
honor to work with someone like you,
who's been working so, uh, successfully
for so long. I mean, you're a legend!

DEBORAH
Wow. A legend. So you're a fan?

AVA
I mean, of course! Would I be here if I
wasn't?

DEBORAH
What's your favorite joke of mine?

That hangs a second too long. You can hear a pin drop.

AVA
Well... that's SO hard...

DEBORAH
It shouldn't be. I've written over
30,000, so just pick one.

AVA
Um... well I would say your TV show is
probably my favorite thing you've ever
done.

DEBORAH
My "TV show"? My sitcom from 1973?
You've seen it?

AVA
I've... seen clips.

DEBORAH
Clips. Wonderful.

A tense beat. Ava tries to push through...

AVA
So on my last show, a lot of the actors
started as stand ups, so I actually have
a good amount of experience writing for--

DEBORAH
--I'm going to stop you right there. I'm
sorry but the position no longer exists.

AVA
Oh. Did that just happen? Because I got
a call this morning saying you wanted to
meet.

DEBORAH
It did just happen.

AVA
Uh, okay. That... sucks?

DEBORAH
Yes, well, luckily you didn't waste too
much time researching me.

AVA
...I'm sorry, did I do something to
offend you?

DEBORAH
Other than walking those chimney sweep
boots on my silk rug? No.

AVA
(thrown off)
Oh, sorry -- I didn't realize it was a
shoes-off situation.

DEBORAH
Well, it's shoe dependent.
(then)
Thank you for your time.

Ava, not sure what else to do, starts to exit.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
(patronizing)
Good luck with your career, honey.

Ava's back is to Deborah, to herself:

AVA
Fucking bitch.

DEBORAH
Do you have something to say?

Ava turns around.

AVA
Yeah, you've just been pretty rude, and I
dropped everything to come here.

DEBORAH
Oh Christ, did you want a gold star for
showing up?

AVA
(exploding)
Kinda, yeah! Because you're right -- I'm
not a fan of yours! Ya caught me! Great
call. This is all just a little fucking
annoying because I flew all the way here
even though I didn't want this job in the
first place! The last thing on earth I
want to do is move to the desert to write
lame jokes for an old hack!

Oof. Deborah's been called a hack before, but certainly not
by a 25-year-old comedy writer to her face.

DEBORAH

You can see yourself out.
(as Ava begins to go)
Please don't steal anything on your way.
You're obviously hard up for cash. Once
again, I'm referring to your outfit.

AVA

Oh don't worry, this place isn't really
my vibe. So cool they let you move into
a Cheesecake Factory, though.

DEBORAH

Oh is that where you wait tables? That
seems like a better fit.

AVA

Yeah, I agree, I'd rather serve Bang Bang
Chicken and Shrimp to tourists than work
here. Jesus. Twelve tassels on one
couch? Even Liberace would think it's a
bit much.

DEBORAH

Well you're incorrect, he actually loved
it. He did poppers on that couch in '85.

AVA

Is that a brag?

DEBORAH

(shrugging)
It's a fact.

AVA

Cool! Glad Liberace's asshole was nice
and loose in your house. Maybe you
should have joined him since yours is
obviously tight as fuck! Oh hey, before
I leave, did you wanna inspect my bag, or
is that just a beloved family tradition?

A beat -- Deborah is shocked by this. And then she laughs --
a big, real, genuine laugh, one we haven't heard before. It
surprises even her.

DEBORAH

Okay. Why are you really here?

AVA

What?

DEBORAH

If you're so "in demand," why'd you come? They don't just send twenty-something "It Girls" to the desert.

AVA

Because I can't get any other job. I tweeted a joke about that closeted senator who sent his kid to conversion therapy. I was trying to call him out, but everyone freaked out and then some conservative asshole dug up other some other dumb shit I said when I was like, 20, and they cancelled my deal and now no one will hire me. Including you, apparently. So my life is pretty much ruined.

DEBORAH

Your life is ruined? Please. Sounds like a Tuesday for me. Besides, you're just a writer. No one cares.

AVA

Well actually, they really do care, it's been a huge fucking problem for me, but yeah, I guess it's not getting quite as much press as when you burned your ex-husband's house down! Yeah, I actually did do my research. Also your Wikipedia says you're 63?! Yeah right, nice try!

Deborah scoffs, then recovers.

DEBORAH

So what was it?
(off Ava's look)
This joke that supposedly ruined your life. I must hear it.

Ava sighs deeply.

AVA

"Senator Rogers is upset because he found out his kid's gay. Apparently he heard it from one of the guys he was sucking off in the Senate cloakroom."

Deborah winces.

AVA (CONT'D)

Yes. I realize now I crossed a line. You and Don Lemon agree.

DEBORAH

Oh, honey, there is no "line." It's just not funny. You should be blacklisted for how bad the joke is.

AVA

...Cool! Thanks! Kinda getting why everyone took your cheating ex-husband's side. BYE!

Ava storms out, leaving Deborah contemplative.

EXT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION -- DRIVEWAY -- DAY

Ava drives down Deborah's incredibly long driveway in her rental car. Just as she nears the gate, a ROLLS ROYCE PHANTOM comes barreling down the driveway -- it's Deborah. Deborah starts HONKING THE HORN wildly. Ava, honestly scared, begins to accelerate.

The Rolls drives OFF ROAD, clipping BOXWOOD BUSHES and violently screeching in front of Ava's car, nearly hitting it. Deborah rolls down her window. Ava, terrified, does the same.

DEBORAH

Smart move sending your son to the middle of the woods with a bunch of other horny gay teens. The only thing he's gonna learn there is whether he's a top or a bottom!

AVA

.....O-kay?

DEBORAH

That's a better joke.

(wheels turning)

Oooh, no -- make it about the closeted dad, not the kid. How about: The hardest part about sending your son to conversion therapy is pretending not to be jealous when he comes home and you hear about all the cute boys he met.

(claps hands)

Ooh, Senator Rogers, Mr. Rogers -- something there. Maybe: if you can't remember the difference between Senator Rogers and Mr. Rogers, it's that one of them takes his suit jacket off in front of little boys and the other one takes off all his clothes.

Ava is just sitting there, not sure how to respond.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

Okay. Write me twenty jokes by tomorrow morning.

AVA

Wait, what? You're hiring me? Even though I... said I didn't want the job?

DEBORAH

Well, you need it.

AVA

But I'm leaving -- I'm on a flight back tonight.

DEBORAH

Cancel it. You can stay in one of the guest rooms.

(reminding)

Twenty jokes. Nothing about Nazis or my tits -- I've done 'em all!

Deborah jerks her car in reverse and screeches up the driveway. Ava sits there in stunned silence. What the hell just happened?

Deborah drives back, a small smile on her face.

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - GUEST ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ava stands in a guest room that looks like it could be in Buckingham Palace. The room is covered in FRAMED PHOTOS of Deborah with Jimmy Carter, Elizabeth Taylor, and other notable figures. Lots of images of Deborah performing in various locations over the years -- Madison Square Garden, overseas on a a USO tour, etc.

There's a framed piece of memorabilia for one of Deborah's comedy albums going platinum -- the cover of the album is Deborah lying on a hospital bed, legs open, "giving birth" to a GIANT PILE OF MONEY. Ava genuinely laughs at this.

Marcus and Yanira enter. Yanira hands Ava a PAJAMA SET.

MARCUS

Here's something to sleep in.

YANIRA

Deborah Vance brand.

(handing them over)

I wear them, too. Silky.

MARCUS

You can give Yanira your clothes to wash.

AVA
Oh, that's okay.

MARCUS
(you will)
It was a Deborah request.

Ava's like "oookay."

AVA
(pointing to photo)
Hey, what is this?

Ava points to an OLD BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO of Deborah,
testifying in front of Congress.

MARCUS
Oh. She testified to a Congressional
subcommittee when she was trying to get
the FCC to let her say "vagina" on air.
1979, I think.

AVA
Wow. Did she win?

MARCUS
She usually does. Goodnight.

They leave. Ava looks at the photo for one more beat. She's
impressed. Then she touches the PJs. Damn. They are silky.

INT. DEBORAH'S VEGAS MANSION - LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Deborah sits across from Ava, reading through PAGES.

DEBORAH
Well most are unusable, and one's so bad
it made me rethink the first Amendment.
I can use this half of this one, though.

Deborah circles something and hands it back to Ava.

AVA
(reading)
Oh, cool. The setup.

DEBORAH
Oh, and that one about 'male jewelry' --
you did that in your movie you wrote. No
rehashes, I'm not taking your sloppy
seconds.

AVA
...My movie? You read that?

DEBORAH

I asked Jimmy to send over all your material last night.

Ava is taken aback. Jesus. This woman works.

AVA

Okay. So you only liked half a joke? Out of all of them?

DEBORAH

Correct.
(looking her up and down)
Are you a lesbian?

Ava is shocked.

AVA

Uhhh, you're not allowed to ask me that.

DEBORAH

"Allowed?" Please. What, am I gonna be arrested?

AVA

I mean, since you're my employer, it is illegal.
(then)
Also, it's a complicated question.

DEBORAH

No it's not. Do you like dick or do you like vagina?

AVA

...Again, you absolutely cannot ask me that. But if you must know, I'm bi.

DEBORAH

(throwing hands up)
Oh Jesus. Okay. We're done here.
(standing)
I'd like to see fifty more, by tomorrow.
And please -- at least one I haven't heard before.

AVA

Well. How about one about your ex-husband leaving you for your own sister? Haven't heard you talk about that.

Deborah stares at Ava.

DEBORAH
(nice try)
...I don't think so.

AVA
...Okay. So I guess there is a line.

Deborah, for once, is speechless -- Ava's got her there.
Marcus sticks his head in.

MARCUS
Car's ready.

Deborah exits without looking at Ava.

INT. PILATES STUDIO - LATER

A hot fitness instructor, MONICA (22), is guiding a class.

MONICA
Just squeeze your pelvic floor. And
breathe... relax the face...

REVEAL Kirk Murren, hanging two feet off the ground in AERIAL SILKS. This is a private aerial yoga class and his ball sack is really being squeezed. Suddenly Deborah barrels through the door. Before Kirk can say anything:

DEBORAH
Oh Jesus Christ, will you just blow him
already so he can stop demeaning himself
like this?

MONICA
Ma'am! You can't--

DEBORAH
It's fine, it'll be quick.
(to Kirk)
I'm not doing fewer dates.

KIRK
It wasn't really a request.

DEBORAH
I know you almost got the Jabba-whoever,
but that's still my stage.

KIRK
"Almost?"

DEBORAH
(innocently)
Oh, didn't you hear?
(MORE)

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

Steve Wynn found out about your offer somehow, and gave them dates at the Encore. Huge up front guarantee, they didn't even counter.

Kirk smiles and shakes his head. Furious, but knows when he's been had.

KIRK

Well, that's okay. Because if I want to replace you with someone younger, all I have to do is pick from literally any person alive.

DEBORAH

(smiles)
We'll see.

She starts to walk off--

KIRK

You really wanna do this, Deb? You really want to try to fuck me here?

DEBORAH

(whipping back around)
Oh, you're the one trying to fuck me. Maybe this time you'll actually make me cum.

Deborah walks away. Kirk sheepishly turns to Monica.

KIRK

...We've never had sex.

As Deborah pushes through the doors:

DEBORAH

Yes we have! And he keeps his T-shirt on!

EXT. PILATES STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

MUSIC KICKS IN --

Deborah walks outside, feeling herself as she puts on HUGE SUNGLASSES.

We CUT WIDE and see Deborah get into her Rolls Royce, which is parked askew across TWO HANDICAPPED SPOTS. She gets in and SPEEDS OFF.

END OF PILOT