

UNTITLED COUNTRY MUSIC

Written by

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Pilot

"Stop At Nothing"

The Jackal Group  
Sandbox Entertainment

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INT. RECORDING STUDIO, AUSTIN - DAY (FLASHBACK 1995)

NICKY ROMAN, 14, eyes closed, sings into a studio mic --

NICKY

*It's the way you love me. It's a  
feeling like this. It's centrifugal  
motion. It's perpetual bliss.*

Nicky's voice is pretty enough, but the emotion she brings, paired with her natural beauty, is magic. This girl's a star. She opens her eyes. With guileless reverence --

NICKY (CONT'D)

What did you think, Mama?

DOTTIE CANTRELL ROMAN, 40, a five foot two inch shot of Maker's Mark: so caramel sweet you don't notice the burn 'til it's too late, pulls a Winston Red from her burgundy lips, sits up on her chaise, her powder-blue fur draped around her.

DOTTIE

What I think, baby...  
(Nicky's dying)  
...is we've got a hit.

Nicky BEAMS, Dottie's approval is all she needs. Dottie shoots a loaded glance at EARL, her ageless hairdresser/makeup wizard/confidant. Earl nods back. Trouble's coming.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, BACKYARD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK 1995)

TWINKLE LIGHTS wrap around oak tree branches, as a who's who of Austin sip champagne in their '90s fashion, here to celebrate Nicky, dolled up, and her song's first radio play. The guests gather around Nicky, ALBIE, 40s, LUKE, 13, and NELLIE, 38, while Dottie circles, like a predator preparing to pounce. GIGI, 10, chubby, in pjs, scrambles out, yelling -

GIGI

Turn that off! It's time!

Albie cranks up the radio. The intro plays. Then the vocals. Something's off. Heads turn to Nicky, devastated, humiliated in front of everyone who matters to her.

LUKE

Nicky, that ain't you. It's Mama.

Mortified, she bursts into tears, and runs inside.

INT. THE BRAMBLES, NICKY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK 1995)

Dottie finds Nicky crying into her Laura Ashley comforter.

DOTTIE

It's an important lesson, baby.  
Better you learn it from me, than  
from some cold-hearted stranger.

Nicky's bawling only grows louder. Dottie softens --

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

Nicolette, if being a star is  
really your dream, get used to  
getting hurt...And hurting other  
people if need be.

Nicky's sobs subside. Finally, she lifts her head up, her  
face wet with tears, eyes red, and turns to her mom.

NICKY

You said I'd have a hit song.

DOTTIE

No, darling, I said it *was* a hit  
song. Which is why I recorded it.

NICKY

But you already have tons of hits!

DOTTIE

And every one may be my last.

Dottie takes Nicky's swollen face in her hands.

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

Once you hit forty in this  
business, they might as well stick  
a fork in you. A woman my age can  
stop at nothing to stay on top.  
Someday you'll understand. I just  
pray when that time comes you'll  
have the strength to keep fighting.  
And you may not feel it now, but  
today you got a little stronger.  
Come out and celebrate Mama's hit.

Nicky shakes her head. She can't do it. Dottie's not asking --

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

Clean yourself up. Put on your  
prettiest Nicky smile, and join us.  
Nobody likes an emotional girl. And  
Lord help an angry one.

(Nicky takes this in)

Do what's best for the family.

Dottie kisses the top of Nicky's head, and turns to leave.

Gigi stands just outside the bedroom, watching. Dottie moves past her. Nicky looks at herself in her mirror. Eyes red and puffy, cheeks wet with tears. Heart broken. By her mother.

GIGI

We'll go out there together.

Nicky makes a choice. She'll do what it takes to get her dream. Nicky dries her eyes, wipes her cheeks, and flashes her pretty Nicky smile. She and Gigi head back to the party.

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM STAGE - DAY

That same Nicky smile, only now she's 41, on stage singing a ballad, and on the verge of getting her dream. It's a rehearsal, but everyone working has stopped to watch Nicky. As she finishes, they CHEER. Nicky smiles warmly.

NICKY

Aw, thanks y'all.

Nicky hops off stage to find her brother, LUKE ROMAN, 40, a tall drink of corn-fed trouble. A few yards behind him stands a gorgeous BLONDE in a pilot's uniform. Nicky sizes it up -

LUKE

Pilot on my flight.

NICKY

Of course. Where's Gigi? She's supposed to get her credentials.

LUKE

Went to the hotel. Which is where Captain Marci and I will be heading once I sign tonight's releases.

(holds up a *People*)

Did you see this?

NICKY

I know. Can you believe someone would leak that about Mama?

LUKE

Not that. *This*.

Luke opens it to a photo of WADE STELLINGS, early 30, cowboy hotness. The headline asks "THE FUTURE OF COUNTRY MUSIC?"

LUKE (CONT'D)

I'm going to try and sign him.

NICKY

We don't need an insurance policy.

(then)

Though the man *is* hot.

INT. THE BRAMBLES, MAIN HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

An ornate lavender bedroom. DOTTIE, now 60s, sits before Earl, who is doing her hair. They peruse the cover of the same *People* Luke had, in her lap: a large photo of her expertly painted face, with the headline "YES, I'M DYING."

DOTTIE

Who would do this? What have I ever done to a single living soul?

Earl's eyebrows scream *you've got to be kidding, sis.*

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

To leak that I'm dying?! It's bad enough I'm having those nightmares.

EARL

Never know it to look at you. Thank you Jesus and Creme de la Mer. But why not deny it?

Dottie pours some Dr. Pepper into her bourbon. Takes a sip.

DOTTIE

Earl, that's not what the Romans do. We tell the truth, even when it's hard.

Earl knows better. He leafs through the magazine.

EARL

This is not terrible. They talk about the tour and the weekend. "What began 34 years ago as a small family musicale has exploded into the hottest ticket of the year, with many exclusive family events."

DOTTIE

But look here, Earl! "Will the Roman era go on without her?"

(then)

You're goddamn right it will!

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM STAGE - DAY

Alone now, Nicky approaches the LIGHTING and SOUND GUYS.

NICKY

Bobby, I told you I needed a small diaphragm condenser with a ribbon mic. My fiddle sounded like an asthmatic dolphin.

BOBBY

Most artists prefer --

NICKY

We are not most artists. And Ray, you have one job. To light me so I do not look my age. The yellow's a nightmare. And the angle's 15 degrees too high. You were making me squint and you know what squinting does? It causes wrinkles!

RAY

Sorry, Ms. Roman.

INT. GRIZZLY ROSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK 1994)

Nicky, 13, bows as the crowd HOOTS and APPLAUDS. She's all smiles and sunshine. Heading offstage, she passes the band -

NICKY

Jim, that note you missed is an 'F'. Made me sound like shit.

Nicky walks to the wings where Albie and Dottie wait to go on. As the EMCEE patters, Dottie grabs Nicky's arm hard.

DOTTIE

You keep that sass to yourself. And that language -

NICKY

But Luke speaks like -

DOTTIE

Luke is a boy. Different rules.

NICKY

That's not fair.

DOTTIE

Fair? Forget fair. Ask your sister if it's fair that you got my looks.

(Nicky gets it)

It's hard enough clawing our way to the top as it is.

(MORE)

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

A woman can be Mother Theresa every day of her life, then she doesn't say please or thank you one time, and she's known as a bitch.

BACK TO PRESENT - Nicky turns on that megawatt smile --

NICKY

You're fine, Hon. I know you'll get it right tonight.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, POOL - DAY

We see a MAN from behind, in a robe, head for the pool, smoke wafting. Without breaking stride he sheds the robe, baring his toned backside, drops the joint in a cup, and dives in.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, MAIN HOUSE BACKYARD - LATER

Dottie exits the house, smoking. Earl scurries behind toting her Louis Vuitton luggage. Her sister, NELLIE CANTRELL, 58, appears. All the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't make Nellie look 35, but she pulls off sexy.

NELLIE

Dot! I'm working on the guest house assignments for this weekend and they have Wy and Naomi together --

DOTTIE

Do I look like someone who has time for whining? Just fix it.

NELLIE

You won't forget to thank me in your speech again, right?

DOTTIE

'Course not, Sweetie.

Dottie stops at the pool. Albie swims laps, his naked torso visible in the water. Nellie and Earl enjoy the view.

NELLIE

Yum.

EARL

Amen.

ALBIE ROMAN'S head pops up from the water. A man's man of quiet intensity, his eyes sparkle with boyish mischief.

DOTTIE

Our ride's waiting on us.

She nods toward the field, where a Bombardier Challenger 850 with a rose painted on it waits on an airstrip.

INT. JET - MOMENTS LATER

While Albie gazes at her, Dottie gazes out the window as they ascend over THE BRAMBLES: house, pools, gardens, stables, thoroughbreds on rambling hills, guest houses, chapel -- Dottie turns to meet Albie's gaze. Dammit, fifty years on, this man still gives her butterflies. He rolls his neck.

DOTTIE

Let me loosen you up.

Dottie leads him back into the plane's private bedroom.

EXT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM, NASHVILLE - EVENING

COUNTRY STARS walk the red carpet. Nicky, exuding country glamour, stands with husband CLIVE GRAYSON, 40s, a scruffy-gorgeous Brit. Nearby, their son ACE, 18, a young Henry Golding, and cute daughter TATUM, 15, chat with Uncle Luke.

As Nicky takes fan selfies, Nellie arrives, blows kisses to REPORTERS, cameras SNAP. The action halts as Dottie and Albie emerge from a limo. The crowd parts like the red sea. Reporters yell: "Dottie, how are you feeling?" "Are you performing tonight?" "How long do you have?" Albie growls --

ALBIE

Don't believe everything you read.

Dottie guides him away when she spots Nicky.

DOTTIE

Angel!

Bee-lines for her. Albie greets Clive and the kids.

LUKE

Hey, Dad. Big night.

ALBIE

Hey, Luke.

(then)

Ace! How's my boy?

(to reporters)

Meet my grandson, Ace. When you hear him sing, you'll never believe we ain't blood.

He turns his back to Luke, who's stung. Close by, Dottie and Nicky speak in quiet shorthand, camera-perfect grins never faltering even as Dottie looks hard at Nicky's face.



NICKY  
What is it, Mama?

DOTTIE  
Nothing we can fix now.

WE MOVE TO THE START of the red carpet. A young STAFFER stops a WOMAN from going any further.

STAFFER  
I'm sorry, but *regular* people need to use the main entrance.

The woman is GIGI TAYLOR-ROMAN, late 30s, pierced nose, in ripped jeans, and zero makeup. Gigi's a natural beauty with Lizzo-like confidence. When her last girlfriend suggested she drop 100 lbs, she dropped the girlfriend.

GIGI  
Here's the thing, while I am a regular person, I'm also supposed to meet my family out there.

EVENT STAFFER  
May I see your credentials?

GIGI  
I didn't get them. Look, this whole thing tonight, it's for my parents.

EVENT STAFFER  
You're a Roman?

GIGI  
I know, shocks me too sometimes.

BACK WITH Nicky and Dottie, who spots Gigi, shakes her head. Nicky turns, GROANS. Nicky looks to her mother, nods, she'll handle it. Nicky scoots over to Gigi, smiling.

NICKY  
You couldn't even pretend to care?  
You look like roadkill.

GIGI  
I look like a mom who left work to fly a thousand miles to support her parents. If that keeps me off the cover of *Vogue*, so be it.

NICKY  
At least let me put a little lipstick on you real quick. I've got your shade in my purse.

Gigi takes Nicky's hand. They pose. Two sisters - the same DNA yet they're night and day. SNAP! SNAP! SNAP! The Reporters call, "Nicky! Nicky!" Not one says, "Gigi."

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM - EVENING

The Roman family sits in the front row watching a Ken Burns style documentary. A sepia-toned photo of Albie at 8.

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON(V.O.)  
Albie Roman picked cotton from dawn to dark. At night he taught himself guitar. Chance Cantrell, who owned the fields, invited Albie to come play with his family band.

The "Cantrell Family Band": CHANCE and MARY CANTRELL, their daughters DOTTIE, 10, NELLIE, 4 and son CHANCE, JR, 12.

KRIS (V.O.)  
The Cantrells took him in when his mother passed and his father went to jail. But that wasn't the end of Albie's troubles. At 21 he began a two year sentence for murder.

A MUG SHOT of Albie, 21, with a black eye.

KRIS (V.O.)  
Dottie was on a sold-out tour, but came when she could. When he got out, she was waiting. Thus began a love story and partnership for the ages.

The screen announces: "CMA presents Country Music Hall of Fame Inductees Albie Roman and Dottie Cantrell Roman." A curtain rises, revealing KRIS himself at the podium.

KRIS  
The Texas Truthteller and his rose have 12 Grammys, 18 CMAs, and more hits than I can name. Y'all don't need these medallions. You are the King and Queen of country music.

DOTTIE  
We'll take them anyhow!

Raucous LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE from the audience.

KRIS  
Due to unforeseen circumstances,  
Dottie can't sing tonight.  
(MORE)

KRIS (CONT'D)

But we have the next best thing. Performing the iconic hit that declared his love for Dottie and started it all, *The Rose and the Brambles*, I give you Albie and Nicky Roman.

A spotlight reveals two chairs, an old guitar and a fiddle. Albie and Nicky take the stage.

KRIS (CONT'D)

I get all that right, boss?

ALBIE

It was manslaughter. And the sonofabitch had it coming.

Albie picks up the old six-string and begins to play ***The Rose and The Brambles*** -- an achingly beautiful song about how no bramble could ever keep him from the love of his life.

Nicky joins in harmony. Not only is her voice angelic, when she looks into the audience, she *connects*. Everyone's on cloud 9. Except the rose herself, Dottie, who looks troubled.

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM, NASHVILLE - MOMENTS LATER

Albie and Dottie on stage with their medallions. Nicky, her family, Gigi, Luke, and the whole crowd are on their feet. Nicky looks longingly from Dottie to her adoring AUDIENCE.

ACE

Mom, you'll be up there one day.

Nicky smiles, that's all she wants. Clive takes her hand.

DOTTIE

How about my beautiful Nicolette?

(more applause)

I'm gonna speak for both me and Albie for a change.

(laughs from the audience)

You're all family. Thank you for your trust, support and love all these years.

(tears stream down)

As you've heard, this is the last time I'll be on this stage. But the Roman legacy will live on. The next generation, led by the one and only Nicky, is even more talented.

Nicky blushes. The dream she's been waiting for.

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

Most importantly, like us, she will always tell you the truth. Take care of her and my family as you have of me, and I promise they will keep you entertained for years to come. I love you all.

The audience leaps to its feet. Dottie tearfully exits --

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM, NASHVILLE, BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Over roaring APPLAUSE, Dottie cries pretty in Albie's arms. The family's there. Nellie glares at Dottie, having been left out of her speech.

DOTTIE

Thank y'all for making the trip.

ACE

Like we were going to miss it.

ALBIE

Grandma knows you wouldn't, she just wanted to hear you say it.

DOTTIE

I've lived a full life. There's nothing more vital than family. I love you all for being mine.

There's not a dry eye. Hugs are given. Dottie heads towards her dressing room. Nicky comforts Ace, who's taking it hard.

ACE

But she looks so good.

GIGI

Always did and always will.

NICKY

But she is sick, and we have to get used to it, no matter how painful.

(to Tatum, on her phone)

It's okay to be upset, Tatum.

TATUM

So, you know how I feel?

NICKY

Course not. But I know how much she loves you, and how much you love her. That's all. This is so sad for all of us.

Dottie, still emotional, emerges from her dressing room door, gives Nicky a look. Nicky nods back, turns to her family --

NICKY (CONT'D)

You guys go ahead.

Gigi watches as Nicky heads off to be with their mom.

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM, DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Nicky steps in, and pulls the door closed behind her. Whatever emotion Dottie had moments before is long gone.

DOTTIE

We gotta talk business.

NICKY

You mean the *People* article? Who would've betrayed us --

DOTTIE

No. We need to show the world that the Roman family legacy will carry on beyond me. We are the first goddamn family of country music.

(squeezes Nicky's hand)

This is my last Family Weekend. Our chance to show who we are. Now and forever. I need you to make sure it goes perfect so I can die in peace. Then it's your turn, baby. Just like we always planned. Starting with the world tour.

NICKY

Don't talk like that, Mama. The doctors said you have months! You're not dying any time soon.

Dottie walks to the mirror, touches up her lipstick.

DOTTIE

Oh yes I am. I'm dying Saturday night, right after the concert.

(beat)

And you're going to do it.

OFF Nicky, reeling.

**END OF ACT 1**

ACT 2

INT. THE BRAMBLES, NICKY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK 1988)

Nicky, 7, lays in bed, crumpled Kleenex on her bedside table. Sick as a dog. Dottie's in the doorway, turns off the light.

DOTTIE  
You get some sleep.

NICKY  
I'm not tired. Will you sing?

Dottie's got things to do, but gives in. Nicky slides over to make room, smiles. Dottie lays down beside her.

DOTTIE  
Close your eyes.

Nicky does, as Dottie softly sings ***Sweet Baby James...***

DOTTIE (CONT'D)  
*There is a young cowgirl, who lives  
on the range, her horse and her  
cattle are her only companion...*

The calm is shattered by PANICKED BREATHING--

INT. NICKY'S MANSION, BATHROOM - NIGHT - PRESENT

Nicky's in her bathtub, no water in it. Panicked about Dottie's ask. Nicky steps out of the tub, heart pounding faster and harder. Trouble breathing. Nicky catches her reflection in the mirror. Fear. Weakness. Unrecognizable. She stares hard into her own eyes.

Nicky slaps her cheek. Hard. Hits the other one. Her face pink. But her breathing has calmed. Nicky's regained control.

EXT. NICKY'S MANSION, PORCH - MORNING

Clive finds Nicky seated outside, cupping a mug of coffee.

CLIVE  
You okay?

There's not a whole lot left in their marriage, but there is enough to hold onto. Nicky looks shredded, exposed. Clive settles beside her. Nicky can't tell him. She pivots --

NICKY  
I had a nightmare. Mama was sick,  
asked me to help. I let her die.

CLIVE

She knows you'd help if you could.

(he stands)

I better get going, I need to bring Tatum to the barn. Oh, and before I forget, I'm flying to LA tomorrow.

NICKY

What about the Family Weekend? Our show? And Ace's debut! He needs you there. I need you there.

CLIVE

And I'd love to be there, but I have re-shoots. I need to put *my* career first for once. I'm at the mercy of James Rathbone. The director of an \$80 million movie doesn't care if it's a big weekend for your wife's family.

Clive heads off, leaving Nicky, hurting. Her phone RINGS.

NICKY (INTO PHONE)

Hey Luke... Shit. I'm on my way.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL RESTAURANT PATIO - MORNING

Nicky and Luke sit across the carb-free breakfast table from MICHAEL RAPINO, 50s, the LiveNation CEO, all business.

NICKY

I get it, it can't be the ROMAN LEGENDS tour anymore, it will have to be more of a tribute to Mama --

RAPINO

You don't get it. Without her, there is no tour. It costs \$50 million to put together a stadium tour. I can't take that kind of risk, especially now. I'm sorry.

LUKE

We always sell out.

RAPINO

With her. Your father's a legend, but he hasn't had a hit in a decade-

NICKY

He's got me!

RAPINO

-- And you're very talented. But you're not her.

NICKY

I will be.

RAPINO

With all due respect, you're on the wrong side of for--

A gut punch, one that even Nicky can't hide.

NICKY

Don't you dare.

RAPINO

To make it at the level you're talking about it's gonna take more than a big last name and a remix of your Mama's greatest hits.

NICKY

(fire in her eyes)

Come to our show Saturday. You'll see that that even without Mama, the Roman family is undeniable.

INT. DR. RAHMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dottie and Albie wait in a doctor's office.

DOTTIE

The kids will need you. Gigi's always leaned on you, but Luke, my sweet Luke, will be devastated. And Nicky, because she'd never ask, let her know you're there for her.

ALBIE

What are you talking about?

DOTTIE

I know they're grown ups, but you're going to have to fill in for the both of us, once I'm gone-

ALBIE

You're not going anywhere.

DR. RAHMAN, 40s, enters. Albie jumps ahead of pleasantries-

ALBIE (CONT'D)

What'd you find out?



DR. RAHMAN

Dottie, I'm afraid you don't qualify for any of the trials.

ALBIE

We'll pay, make a donation, build a wing. Whatever the hell it takes.

DR. RAHMAN

Mr. Roman it doesn't work that way.

ALBIE

There's gotta be some exotic cure the FDA won't approve. People get goddamn pig lungs put in them --  
(his anger grows)  
This disease already stole her voice...You got one more chance, Doc, what are you gonna do for her?

DR. RAHMAN

I'm so sorry.

Albie lunges at Rahman, grabs him and lifts him into the air.

DOTTIE

Albie, honey, it's not his fault.

Dottie's tone works. Albie lowers the doctor, fixing his collar. As the doctor leaves, Dottie takes Albie's hands.

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

We've traveled this road together. Wherever it's taken us. And whenever it ends, I'm okay. Because I'll always have you by my side.

A swell of emotions surges up in Albie, but he swallows it.

INT. THE BRAMBLES, MAIN HOUSE, DINING ROOM - DAY

Nicky stands at the head of a long table across from an oil portrait of Dottie wearing a regal, JEWEL-ENCRUSTED HAT. Luke sits with Gigi, looking much like she did on the red carpet.

GIGI

Does Mama know it's off?

LUKE

She won't have to. Yet. Nicky convinced him to come to our show.

NICKY

Once Rapino sees us all on stage --  
Daddy, me, you and Ace, he'll be  
back on board. It'll be a real  
family tour! Our fans'll love it,  
and we'll pick up a new generation.

LUKE

We better. The company has a ton of  
money at stake.

NICKY

Screw the money. Mama and Daddy  
have spent their lives building  
this family's legacy. That's what  
we need to protect. That's what  
this tour will do.

GIGI

Even if the tour happens, how can  
we all go if Mama's still alive?

NICKY

She won't be.

They look at Nicky, how can she be so sure? She scrambles -

NICKY (CONT'D)

From what the doctors say. Look,  
let's focus on what we can control.  
Saturday's show has to be perfect.  
It's how we'll save our tour.

LUKE

Is Ace up to it?

NICKY

Ace isn't who I'm worried about.

Luke follows Nicky's eyes to Gigi, who folds her arms. Luke  
sees the willful look on Gigi's face. He remembers --

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, 1995 - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Luke, 15, is headed to his room, drinking from a carton of  
milk, when he's stopped in his tracks by the sound of MUSIC.

INT. GIGI'S ROOM, 1995 - SAME (FLASHBACK)

Gigi, 13, stands at a full-length mirror singing into her  
hairbrush, reading hand-scribbled lyrics out of a notebook.  
Luke opens the door, she stops abruptly, embarrassed.

LUKE

You could be a star, Gig!

Gigi looks in the mirror. Sees a heavy, frizzy-haired teen. She turns to look at him. With tears in her eyes --

GIGI

No. I can't.

Luke rushes to her, gives her a warm, brotherly hug --

GIGI (O.C. PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

I'm not doing it.

INT. BRAMBLES DINING ROOM - DAY (RESUME SCENE)

NICKY

It's one song, Gigi, and you're already in the program.

Luke shows his phone to Nicky - a photo of the sisters from the prior night. The headline is "Beauty and the Beast."

GIGI

Ooh! Which one am I?

NICKY

Those people are mean. I get you don't want to put yourself out there. But we all have to do things we don't like, for the family.

GIGI

And what exactly do you have to do?

Nicky, wishing she could tell her siblings, looks up at the portrait. Dottie, regal in her hat.

INT. ROSE ENTERTAINMENT, RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Glamorous offices with an enviable collection of Grammys, CMAs. GREG RASKIN, 40s, strikingly handsome, with magnetic eyes, talks to HANNAH, the receptionist, 20s.

GREG

When will he be available?

HANNAH

He...I must've double-booked y'all. He'll be in rehearsal all day.

CATT (O.C.)

Where?

CATT PHOENIX, early 40s, turns from the awards display, stunning in thigh-high snakeskin boots, long black hair cascades from a wide brimmed hat and red talon-like nails. Sitting in big arm chair is ANA PHOENIX, 17.

HANNAH

I'm sorry, I can't say.

Greg notices her fingertips are raw. He leans in, so only Hannah can hear, and speaks to her with respect.

GREG

You look like a musician, so I know you'll understand, we came a long way for this meeting. It's a dream come true for my client. Is there any way you can tell me where to find Luke? It won't come back to you.

She knows she shouldn't, but --

HANNAH

He'll be at the chapel at the Brambles for rehearsal around 3pm.

GREG

Thank you. And try soaking your fingertips in apple cider vinegar after you play.

Greg turns, and the three of them head to the elevators. Catt spots a photo of Albie and Nicky performing together.

CATT

How sweet.

ANA

Mom, are you sure we should leave?

CATT

We didn't come here to beg. They should be begging us. Right, Greg?

As they enter the elevator, Greg's eyes are on the prize --

GREG

I'll drop you two at the hotel. Then I'll find Luke Roman.

The doors close.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES - ENTRANCE - DAY

Luke, Nicky and Gigi emerge into the sunshine --

LUKE  
See y'all at rehearsal.

As he heads to his car, Nicky and Gigi walk the grounds.

NICKY  
I get why you don't want to sing,  
I know getting made fun of sucks -

GIGI  
Ha. No you don't. No one's ever  
made fun of you. But that's not  
why. This is what you wanted. And  
what Mama wanted for you. Not me.

There's a deep bond between them, that trumps all bullshit.

NICKY  
Right. Sorry. It's been a... day.

Nicky's desperate to tell Gigi about Dottie's plan.

GIGI  
More than Mama, and the tour?  
(Nicky nods)  
Not Clive again?

NICKY  
I think so. I'm not sure, but --

GIGI  
He has no idea how lucky he is.

NICKY  
Well, I'm not twenty anymore.

GIGI  
You hated being twenty.

Nicky finally lets it out, the wound that still stings.

NICKY  
Rapino thinks I missed my window -

GIGI  
What? He said that?

NICKY  
Close enough. He may be right.

GIGI

Dolly, Reba, Emmylou, Mama -

NICKY

They all became stars when they were way younger than I am. This tour could be my last shot.

GIGI

Screw that. You are Nicky f-ing Roman, and you are just warming up.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, MAIN ROAD - DAY

Nicky runs down the long road, trying to put everything out of her mind. Suddenly, an ENGINE RACES behind her. Faintly --

DOTTIE (V.O.)

Run, girl!

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, MAIN ROAD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Dottie, early 30s, drives her robin's egg blue Cadillac convertible. Nicky, 12, chubby, sits in the passenger seat.

DOTTIE

What do you want out of life, baby?  
To be a big star like Mama?

Nicky looks at her mother. This is her truth --

NICKY

No. I want to be bigger than you.

Dottie SLAMS the brakes, stops the car in the middle of the road. There are hedges on both sides, no path.

DOTTIE

Stardom doesn't come for free.  
Neither does beauty. If you ain't gonna stop eating, you better get moving.

Dottie SHOVES Nicky out of the car. Nicky lies in the dirt, confused. Dottie HONKS the horn.

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

Get in front of the car. Now.

(Nicky stares at her)

I said, get in front of the car.

Nicky, crying, scrambles to the front of the car --

DOTTIE (CONT'D)  
 Stop your crying! What have I  
 taught you?

                  NICKY  
 A queen doesn't cry.

Nicky wipes away tears. Dottie slides into the drivers' seat and revs the engine.

                  DOTTIE  
 Run, girl!

Dottie drives toward her terrified daughter. The car chases Nicky, who runs as fast as she can to the house, a mile away--

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, MAIN ROAD - DAY (RESUME SCENE)

Nicky looks back, but there's nobody.

INT. THE TILTED WHEEL - DAY

Gigi's old-school Honky Tonk. Albie talks as she sets up.

                  ALBIE  
 Do you think I'm crazy?

                  GIGI  
 I think you're trying everything to  
 save the woman you love, Daddy. I  
 expect nothing less from you.

Albie smiles, these two have a special connection.

                  GIGI (CONT'D)  
 Nicky's putting a ton of pressure  
 on me to sing Saturday night --

                  ALBIE  
 You never made decisions based on  
 pressure from Nicky, or Mama, don't  
 start now. You live life your way --

                  GIGI  
 Well, I didn't exactly fit into  
 Mama's way, a fat lesbian circle in  
 her perfect square peg.

                  ALBIE  
 I know you felt like an outsider.  
 But you never became a victim. You  
 showed your grit and made a family  
 where you're an insider. I expected  
 nothing less from you.

GIGI

That family may be getting bigger.  
We're talking about having another  
baby.

ALBIE

Best news I heard in a long time.

Albie gives Gigi a hug. Both of them elated.

EXT. CONGRESS AVENUE BRIDGE - DAY

Dottie, wearing a kerchief and large sunglasses, looks out at  
Lady Bird Lake. A few feet away, his back to the river, is  
MARTY BLY, 50s, a bear of a man in an ill-fitting suit.

MARTY

They want double this month. Half a  
million. They saw the article.

DOTTIE

That's not the deal!

MARTY

The deal is you pay them what they  
demand every month --

DOTTIE

For the rest of my life.

MARTY

After which they will turn over the  
documents. They never said they  
wouldn't up the amount.

DOTTIE

What guarantee do I have that once  
I'm gone they'll hand them over?

MARTY

I'll see it done. You have my word.

DOTTIE

You've always been good to us,  
Marty. Thank you.

MARTY

See you next month, Mrs. Roman.

She turns and walks away, her kerchief blowing in the wind.

**END OF ACT 2**



ACT 3

INT. NICKY'S RANGE ROVER - DAY

Nicky drives on the 410. She skips through the stations. Luke Combs...Blake Shelton...Thomas Rhett...

NICKY  
Never a woman.

DJ (O.S.)  
Next up, Wade Stellings with *End of the Day*. Man, what a voice!

She sighs. Wade's voice fills the car. She presses BLUETOOTH--

NICKY  
Text Michael Rapino.  
(then)  
Wade Stellings opens for the Roman Legacy Tour. Home run. Send.

Nicky's phone rings. It's JAMES RATHBONE. She answers.

NICKY (CONT'D)  
James! Hi!

JAMES RATHBONE (O.C.)  
Sorry I missed you earlier. But yes we'd love to come to your event this weekend! Margot's a huge fan.

NICKY  
What about...the re-shoots?

JAMES RATHBONE (O.C.)  
What re-shoots? We're locked.

Nicky mutes herself. SCREAMS. Then unmutes.

JAMES RATHBONE (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Looking forward to seeing Clive, too. To be honest, when your team pushed to cast him I was skeptical, but he surprised me.

NICKY  
He does that. See you soon. Bye!

Nicky ends the call. Speaks to her BLUETOOTH --

NICKY (CONT'D)  
Call Gigi.

It rings. Gigi answers, behind the bar. Nicky jumps in --

NICKY (CONT'D)

I was right. I'm such a moron.

GIGI

I'm sorry. Wanna come get drunk?

NICKY

Desperately. But I got work to do.  
Just needed to hear your voice.

GIGI

Okay. If you change your mind --

Nicky ends the call, looks up, SLAMS on her brakes, screeches to a stop, inches from hitting the car in front of her.

INT. ROSE ENTERTAINMENT, LUKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Luke leans back on the outside of his desk. KAYLA, 30s, bold, sits across from him.

LUKE

Bring your clients to Rose. We have access to the best songwriters.

KAYLA

I do fine. Access-wise.

He holds out his hand, she takes it.

LUKE

We should be on the same team, Kay.

KAYLA

I like being my own boss.

LUKE

You do like to be the boss. I've always loved that about you.

KAYLA

We shouldn't do this...

But she doesn't pull her hand away. Or step back.

LUKE

You're right.

She looks into his eyes, the heat palpable. She reaches out, pushes the hair from his face. Traces his shoulder --

KAYLA

This is the last time.

She kisses him. Slowly. And again, more intensely, her hands running through his hair. He pushes her against the wall. She GROANS as he moves down her neck, unbuttons her blouse. She slides up her skirt, wrapping her legs around him as --

INT. THE BRAMBLES, MAIN HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Dottie sips a drink as Earl does her hair. Nicky enters -

NICKY

Mama, I need to talk about... what we discussed last night.

DOTTIE

Sorry, hon, Roman Family Weekend begins tonight, and Earl has his work cut out for him. Soon.

As Earl keeps working, Nicky nods, and leaves.

INT. THE BRAMBLES, ALBIE'S OFFICE/MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Albie and Ace listen to an old, crackling, live vinyl record.

DOTTIE (ON RECORD)

How many country singers does it take to change a lightbulb, Al?

ALBIE (ON RECORD)

Two. One to do it, one to sing about all the good times he had with the old lightbulb.

ACE

Two. One to do it, one to sing about all the good times he had with the old lightbulb.

Albie smiles. There's a real tenderness between them.

ALBIE (CONT'D)

This was soon after I got out. I was in a bad place. Grandma saved me, and now -- If I could just hear her sing one more time.

ACE

I'm sorry. I know it's hard.

Albie's eyes fill. He turns to his grandson.

ALBIE

You do know, don't you?  
(then, upbeat)  
But you also know we never quit.

(MORE)

ALBIE (CONT'D)  
I'm going to help her, just like  
she helped me.

Nicky appears with a platter of fish tacos for them --

NICKY  
I see rehearsal's going well.

ALBIE  
He sounds great. There's only so  
much finger picking a kid can do.

NICKY  
Someone should've told Mama that.

Nicky puts the food down. Albie stands, looks to Ace --

ALBIE  
I need mom for a minute. If I come  
back and all those tacos are gone,  
there will be hell to pay.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, BARN - DAY

Albie bites into a carrot, feeds the rest to a horse.

NICKY  
Brazil? Dr. Ken Horowitz?

ALBIE  
He's American. He practices there.

NICKY  
That doesn't sound suspect at all.

ALBIE  
People fly in from all over the --  
(off Nicky's skepticism)  
All I'm asking is for help to get  
her on that plane Monday. She  
thinks I'm crazy, grasping for  
miracles. But she listens to you.

Nicky aches, knowing the heartbreak in store for him.

NICKY  
Okay, Daddy, I'll help.

Albie calms, relieved and grateful.

INT. LAMBERT'S BBQ RESTAURANT - DAY

Luke and WADE STELLINGS finish a BBQ feast in the upscale eatery. A gorgeous WAITRESS takes their plates away.

WADE

She's beautiful. But I so much as look at a girl these days and it shows up in the tabloids. I miss having fun like a normal person.

Luke registers this, when Nicky appears. Luke's surprised to see her. Wade, ever a gentleman, stands up, captivated -

NICKY

Wade Stellings, I'm a big fan.

WADE

Really? Wow, I've been a fan of yours since I was --

NICKY

Let's not finish that thought.

They lock eyes. Nicky slides in beside Luke. Luke resumes --

LUKE

Wade, I've made no secret of how bad I want to sign you. To welcome you into the fold, I want to invite you to my, our, family's little shindig this weekend. We're kicking it off tonight at my sister's bar.

NICKY

Our baby sister, Gigi.

WADE

The Roman Family weekend? Will your father be there?

NICKY

Sure will. Dad's a huge fan of yours. Says you're the real deal.

To Wade, this is like god himself paid him a compliment.

WADE

You can't imagine what it's like to hear *Albie Roman* appreciates you.

LUKE

You're right I can't.

OFF Luke, making light of how shitty Albie makes him feel.

INT. THE BRAMBLES, STUDIO/REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

A converted chapel. Greg Raskin slips in. Ace paces back and forth on stage, band behind him. Nicky and Luke watch, tense.

LUKE

Let's try it again. You got this!

ACE

I...I didn't know there was a whole tour on the line --

NICKY

Why the hell did you tell him?

LUKE

I thought it would motivate him!  
I'm not a shrink!

NICKY

No, you're a goddamn CEO. Try acting like one.  
(to Ace)  
Do your breathing.

Ace takes the mic. The band PLAYS. Ace misses his cue. He's breathing heavily, his eyes dart. He starts to SHAKE.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Everybody out!

The band rushes backstage as Ace falls to the floor. He's having a VIOLENT SEIZURE. Nicky rushes to him.

NICKY (CONT'D)

It's ok, baby...

Greg calmly marches to Ace, touches his forehead.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Don't you touch my son!

GREG

Is he on phenobarbital?

Nicky nods. Greg looks Nicky straight in the eyes.

GREG (CONT'D)

I may be able to help him.

Something in his gaze convinces her. She nods. Greg takes Ace's face in his hands, stares into his eyes. Mouths words no one else can hear. In seconds, Ace is back. Nicky hugs Ace, who now holds a BLACK CRYSTAL, looks to Greg--

NICKY  
Are you a doctor?

GREG  
I manage talent. Much more  
demanding.  
(Nicky laughs)  
Greg Raskin. I'm here to see Luke.  
We had an appointment to discuss a  
client.

LUKE  
Never heard of you.

NICKY  
Luke!

GREG  
I tend to fly under the radar.

ACE  
Mom, I feel...good. I want to sing.

She nods to a SOUND GUY, who goes backstage to get the band.

LUKE  
Leave a demo at the office.

GREG  
I get you're busy, but my client,  
Ana Phoenix, has offers from  
several labels already. You haven't  
heard of her either. But you will.

NICKY  
Stay. We'll talk after rehearsal.

The band plays. Relaxed, Ace, stone in hand, starts to sing  
and -- WHOA. A voice like Sam Hunt with the swagger to match.  
Nicky's face LIGHTS up. She looks at Greg, intrigued.

INT. THE BRAMBLES, STUDIO - LATER

Greg and Nicky watch a Tiktok. Ana sings **The Rose and the  
Brambles** in Spanish. Luke and Ace enter. Nicky's impressed.

ACE  
I've seen this. She has like a  
million views.

NICKY  
It feels classic, but totally new.

GREG

I've got a handful of clients, all talented, but Ana's the only one who will be a superstar. So no matter how many people blow off meetings with me, or haven't heard of me, I won't stop showing up until she gets a seat at the table.

Nicky loves his passion. She goes with her gut --

NICKY

We'll do better than whatever those other labels are offering.

LUKE

Nicky.

NICKY

This girl's showing the world how timeless our family's music is.

(to Greg)

Since you're joining the Rose family, why don't you come to our show Saturday? Bring Ana.

Greg smiles at Nicky. The moment's charged. Ace offers the stone to Greg, in awe at what it, and Greg were able to do.

GREG

Keep it. I've got others.

Ace is impressed, which impresses Nicky. Luke rolls his eyes.

INT. THE TILTED WHEEL - NIGHT

A raucous night. Family and FRIENDS celebrate the kick off to Roman Family weekend. Nicky spots Tatum reach for pretzels, wags her finger: *I wouldn't*. Tatum scowls. Gigi joins Nicky --

GIGI

Have you confronted Clive yet?

NICKY

I'm lying in wait, for the right moment.

GIGI

Remind me never to betray you.

NICKY

I was always certain I'd have a fairytale marriage, like Mama and Daddy's.



GIGI

And you will. To someone who values you. Any time something really shitty happens, you find a way to make something special from it. When you found out you couldn't get pregnant, you adopted two beautiful babies, and became the kind of mom to Ace and Tatum I hope I can be to Summer.

NICKY

Thanks, Gig. I couldn't have gotten through that without you.

GIGI

Hey, I finally read that article about Mama. It mentions that baby brother she had who died. Nobody outside the family knows about it.

Nicky sips, scans the room. Her eyes land on Nellie.  
ACROSS THE BAR Luke watches as Albie and Wade shake hands.

WADE

It's an honor, Mr. Roman.

ALBIE

Albie. Glad he's signing a real country artist. Not more of that bubble gum shit --

LUKE

I've raised revenues 28 percent --

Albie tips his hat to Wade and walks off. Wade, hopeful --

WADE

Hey, is Nicky here?

Luke doesn't hear. He's waving over a gorgeous REDHEAD.

LUKE

I want you to see how well we treat our artists. This is Roxanne, she'll take good care of you.  
(off Wade's confusion)  
Don't worry. She's super discreet.

Luke pats Wade on the back, Gigi steps to the mic.

GIGI

Welcome to Roman Family Weekend  
2021, y'all!

(MORE)

GIGI (CONT'D)

Luke, come get us started. It's  
time for a little Family Tradition.

Luke joins Gigi. Albie holds out his hand for Dottie, walks her to the middle of the floor. Luke sings --

LUKE

*Country music singers have always  
been a real close family --*

Luke continues to sing Hank Jr's **Family Tradition** (to be joined by his siblings, Nellie, Ace and Tatum). A nostalgic romp. The two-step begins. The eye contact between Albie and Dottie is enough to make anyone jealous.

Clive holds out a hand for Nicky. As much as she wants to break every one of his fingers, she must make a show of their perfect marriage, even as she watches her parents' actual perfect marriage. Dottie looks at her and smiles. Kayla, Luke's make-out partner, arrives. He eyes her from across the room. As the song ends, Gigi returns to the mic.

GIGI

A few announcements as we start the  
34th annual Roman Family Weekend.  
Boys: hunting at 5 AM. Family  
dinner's at 7. The Roman Ball is at  
6 on Saturday, and we go on at 730.

Kayla marches to the mic. *Is she about to say something?* No. She lays a passionate kiss on Gigi. The audience CHEERS.

GIGI (CONT'D)

(grins)  
Y'all know my wife, Kayla.

**END OF ACT 3**

ACT 4

INT. THE BRAMBLES, MAIN HOUSE, DOTTIE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

The wardrobe of every girl's rhinestone dreams. Nicky shows Dottie a pair of Louboutins. Dottie wrinkles her nose. Nicky puts the shoes down, braces herself --

NICKY

Mama, we need to talk about --

DOTTIE

We will. But this is such a stressful time with that article...

NICKY

I know Nellie was the leak.

DOTTIE

(shocked, shocked!)  
My own sister betrayed me?

NICKY

'Course not. You made her do it.  
How could you keep what you're going through from your fans? You deserved to write your own tribute. That's what I would've done.

Dottie beams. *Yes, Grasshopper.* She opens a closet. Nicky's face lights up.

DOTTIE

It's time for me to show you what you're wearing tomorrow.

NICKY

It's perfect!

DOTTIE

You're perfect. I never just wanted to be a star, Nicolette. I wanted to create a dynasty. And I have. We've always known with your god-given beauty and talent you were destined to continue our legacy. But the strength to do whatever it takes...we had to build that.

(beams)

Look at you now. You're ready to carry this family forward.

Nicky looks at her mother. She's struggling with something.

NICKY

Mama. America fell in love with you and Daddy when you were 19. I may be your daughter, but that doesn't mean they'll love me like they love you. What if it's too late for me?

Dottie ignores Nicky's question, and removes a glass case holding a white hat encrusted with jewels, places it on a table. The hat from the painting. Nicky is SPEECHLESS.

DOTTIE

I'm gonna die like I lived. With a smile on my face and flawless hair. After the concert you're gonna meet me in my room and give me what I need to go out on a high note.

NICKY

You've had a perfect life. Fame. True love. Every woman wishes she was somebody's Rose like you are to Daddy. But why now?

DOTTIE

There are things I need to take with me to the grave. The time has come.

Dottie takes the crown out of its case. Nicky steels herself.

NICKY

I always do everything you ask, but not this...I'm sorry, Mama.

DOTTIE

What's that darlin'?

NICKY

(firmly)

I said no. I can't kill you. How could I look Daddy in the eyes again? Or Luke and Gigi? My kids? Think of what it would do to me.

DOTTIE

We have both worked too hard for you to blow it now. This is your final test, girl. I'm not asking.

Nicky doesn't say anything. Dottie lifts up the crown --

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

Heavy is the head that wears the crown, baby.

And returns it to the case. OFF Nicky, with no right answer, and no crown.

EXT. A FIELD - MORNING

Albie, Luke, Ace and several male FRIENDS and COUSINS, all with shotguns, follow Albie's Lab, Dolly, through tall grass. Their eyes are all peeled for pheasant. All except Luke.

LUKE

It wasn't my fault, Dad.

ALBIE

"I'm sorry, Mr. Roman, but Rose Entertainment doesn't comport with my values." What did you do?

A pheasant flies overhead. Albie shoots, but misses. Other members of the party shoot and miss, too.

LUKE

Someone else lured him away!

ALBIE

Stop making excuses.

LUKE

I'm not.

ALBIE

You really want to do this now?

LUKE

I've got your attention for once.

ALBIE

Don't get above your raisin', son.

LUKE

My "raisin'?" I was born in the VIP wing of a hospital in New York City and flown home in your private jet!

ALBIE

All your mother's doing. And that's why you've got no grit. You think Ace would be making excuses if he failed at something? No, because he's been through things. He's known real suffering, too --

ACE

Hey Grandpa. Let's not --

LUKE  
I don't need you to defend me, kid.

ALBIE  
It seems like you do.

LUKE  
Just because no one put out  
cigarettes on my arm doesn't mean  
I've never suffered.

Then Luke turns and marches away --

ALBIE  
TURN AROUND.

ACE  
It's ok, Grandpa. Let him go.

ALBIE  
TURN AROUND and face me like a man!

Luke doesn't. BOOM! Albie fires over Luke's head. Luke stops, turns, his father's gun is IN HIS CHEST. Albie's hands shake.

ALBIE (CONT'D)  
What is it you want to say to me?

LUKE  
You and I have more in common than  
you think. I didn't have a father  
who loved me, either.  
(re: gun)  
Go ahead, do it. Because once she's  
gone I won't have a single person  
in this world who believes in me.

Albie is frozen. The men all look at each other, paralyzed.  
Ace approaches Albie, very delicately.

ACE  
Grandpa, we're all upset about  
Grandma. All of us. Nobody's  
thinking straight. Don't do  
something you can never take back.

Albie stares into his son's eyes. Sees the pain there.  
A tense, silent moment. Finally, Albie turns to Ace. Very  
subtly, he nods, realizing Ace is right. He drops the gun.

INT. ACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ace buttons up his dress shirt, poses in front of the mirror.

Nicky knocks and enters, a walking *Vogue* spread on country casual (mink stole, big belt, turquoise choker).

NICKY

Don't you look handsome.

(then)

I know how much you want to perform tomorrow night. And I know how much Uncle Luke built it up --

ACE

He didn't build it up, he was honest. The future of our family's career depends on that show.

NICKY

Your future is what I care about most. I don't want you out there. Let's take the pressure off until we get things under control. Grandma will understand.

Ace nods, incredibly relieved.

INT. NICKY'S BATHROOM - EVENING

Clive takes a bath in an enormous tub. Nicky enters. She plugs in her curling iron. Sees Clive--

NICKY

What are you doing? We need to go --

CLIVE

My flight's in a couple hours. I'm headed to LA, remember?

NICKY

Rathbone didn't call you? The re-shoots are off. It's like they never existed at all. Rathbone's wife is a fan so I invited them down for the event.

She walks to the tub, still holding the plugged-in iron.

CLIVE

Baby, I --

NICKY

Oh I know. You're sorry. You have reasons. How old is she this time, Clive? Is she able to vote?

Nicky leans over the tub. Clive's nervous, about to beg --

NICKY (CONT'D)

Lemme guess. "It's so hard being Mr. Nicky Roman." You know what's hard? Never, ever having visible roots. Taking a redeye home from Japan to make Tatum's horse show or go to Ace's therapy appointment. Staying to get a photo with every last fan when your feet are swollen in six inch heels. I am never not hungry. I have to smile for most of my waking hours. What's hard, Clive, is being goddamn perfect.

CLIVE

No one's asking you to.

NICKY

I don't have a choice, not if it means being the next Dottie.

CLIVE

You really believe your Mama can anoint you, and you're an icon?

She dangles the curling iron over the tub. He's terrified.

Nicky DROPS the iron. Clive GASPS as she catches it by the cord just before it reaches the water.

NICKY

We'll deal with this later. Tonight we celebrate two people who have actually been true to each other, even when things got hard.

Nicky looks in the mirror, holds up the iron. But she's already perfect. She unplugs it and leaves. Clive knows there'll be hell to pay sometime, somewhere.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, RIVERSIDE - NIGHT

A candlelit riverside feast. The family's on one side of the gorgeous table, Dottie in the center.

ALBIE

People wait months to see him. The girls think it's a great idea.

DOTTIE

If nothing else, at least you got them to agree on something.



ALBIE

It's worth a shot. Worst thing that happens is he can't help us, and we get some time alone on a beach.

She smiles. Nicky leans in towards her mom, looking at Gigi --

NICKY

Guess who's refusing to perform.  
Can you talk to her?

Dottie considers --

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, MAIN ROAD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Dottie drives the Caddy. It's just her and Gigi, 14, pierced nose, overweight. Dottie stops the car.

DOTTIE

It's your turn, Georgina. Get out.

GIGI

No, Mama.

DOTTIE

I said "git!" In front.

Dottie shoves her out. Gigi walks in front of the car.

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

Run!

Defiantly, Gigi lays down in front of the car. Dottie gets out and walks to her. Gigi looks her mama dead in the eyes.

GIGI

You can kill me, Mama, but you can not tell me what to do.

Just like her father. Dottie can't help but smile.

THE BRAMBLES, RIVERSIDE - NIGHT (RESUME SCENE)

DOTTIE

This is on you now.

Nellie claps her hands joyously.

NELLIE

This table looks like it was painted by Mr. Leonardo DaVinci himself!

Luke sneaks over to talk to Mama.

LUKE

Mama, you're as beautiful as ever.

She takes both his hands, whispers into his ear --

DOTTIE

I am so proud of you, Lukie. You can do anything you set out to do. Anything. Never forget that.

Touched, he kisses her on the cheek. Kayla chats up Ace.

KAYLA

I just signed Wade Stellings!

LUKE

You did what now?

KAYLA

Did you know his father's a pastor?

Albie glares at Luke.

ALBIE

Congratulations, Kayla.

Luke, unable to lay into Albie or Kayla, lashes out at Gigi.

LUKE

You knew I was working on him! How could you let her do this? This really is the last supper, Judas!

Nicky steps in, trying out her role as future Matriarch.

NICKY

Easy, Luke. But he has a point, God forbid you put family first, Gig.

GIGI

Kayla IS my family.

NICKY

And we're not?

GIGI

Not enough. Not like I needed.

LUKE

Nicky's right. Family is blood.

Ace and Tatum blanch. Nicky realizes. Hisses at Luke.

NICKY

I didn't say that, shithead.

Nicky's lost control, but before she can try to calm everyone down she realizes Dottie's gone. Everyone has. They see Dottie, candle in hand, walk to the river. Then they hear a faint, birdlike sound. It's singing.

DOTTIE (O.C.)

*As I went down in the river to pray  
Studying about that good ol' way  
And who shall wear the starry crown  
Good Lord, show me the way.*

Her voice starts off feeble but becomes clear. Albie looks up to the heavens in gratitude. The family follows her to the river. She stands on the edge, lit by the candle.

Gigi takes Nicky's hand. Ace puts his arm around Tatum. Brimming with love, the Roman family sings **Down in the River to Pray**. In the wake of the song, under the Texas moon, Albie kisses his wife. She beams like an angel.

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

Tomorrow's going to be a day none  
of us will ever forget.

On Nicky, filled with dread. PRELAP: Plaintive GUITAR PLUCKS--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT/INT. THE BRAMBLES - NIGHT/DAY

The SUN RISING. QUICK CUTS...The estate prepped for the big event...Fancy cars arriving...The tent filling with beautiful PEOPLE, excitement thick enough to spread on your cornbread.

ALBIE walks to Dottie's dressing room, tuning his guitar...

INT. THE BRAMBLES, DOTTIE'S DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Nicky, dressed all in white, touches up her powder.

ALBIE (O.C.)

Mama sang last night!

NICKY

It was a miracle.

ALBIE

What have I been saying? She's  
gonna defy the odds, like always.

Nicky puts down the brush, turns to her father, direct.

NICKY

No Daddy. She's not.

ALBIE

I heard what that man did for Ace, with the crystal. I'm meeting with him tomorrow morning. If that doc in Rio can't cure Mama, he will.

NICKY

You need to prepare yourself. You need to say goodbye. The only way we'll get through it is together. That's what she wants. And that's what I want.

(Albie's unmoved)

I know Mama's part of who you are. And I can't imagine how you feel.

His wall of self-protection cracks a little.

ALBIE

Like the ground under my feet is about to drop out and I got nothing to hold on to.

NICKY

Hold on to me. I will never leave you, Daddy. Ever. I swear.

He stares into her eyes. His are full of tears. But they're not tears of sadness. They're tears of pride.

ALBIE

Don't think it means I'm giving up.

NICKY

Didn't even cross my mind.

Albie picks up his guitar and walks out.

INT. THE BRAMBLES, DOTTIE'S DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Nicky opens a velvet hat box. And there it is. The Crown. Her hands SHAKE. She violently SLAPS her right hand with her left, which stops the shaking. Nicky puts the hat on her head, looks in the mirror. And finally, sees the Queen.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, TENT - NIGHT

A huge tent with twinkling lights and Texas wildflowers. The smell of bbq and weed in the air. Ferris wheel, hay rides. MIDLAND plays somewhere.

Members of the family mingle with Country Music's BEST. By the bar, Nicky spots Rapino chatting up KELSEA BALLERINI and LAURA BUSH. Nicky feels like it's all falling into place. Wade approaches, very happy to see her --

WADE

You mad I didn't sign with y'all?

NICKY

Nope. Because when we do sign you, which we will, you'll see everything you're missing out on.

Wade's intrigued. Luke waves Nicky over, frantic --

LUKE

You told Ace not to sing?

(Nicky nods)

What about Rapino seeing the family perform together? Saving the tour?

NICKY

I guess Daddy and I will just have to blow the goddamn room away.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES - PARTY ENTRANCE - SAME

An USHER leads Greg, Catt, and Ana to their seats. The back row. As guests rise to let them through, Catt fuming --

CATT

What are they thinking sticking their newest client back here?

GREG

My guess is, they weren't thinking at all. With Dottie Roman sick, her son's in way over his head. It's not a well-run company these days.

CATT

It will be when you take over.

Catt grabs Greg's hand, then leans in to Ana -

CATT (CONT'D)

One day you'll have your own concert here, Anastasia. And when you're on that stage I'll be front and center cheering you on.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, BACKSTAGE - SAME

Nicky peeks out into the audience - Dottie, front and center, chats up Rapino. Gigi, with Summer in her lap, and Kayla are a few rows back. The lights go out. Nervous excitement. A SPOTLIGHT finds Albie, with his guitar. The AUDIENCE erupts.

ALBIE

Y'all ready?

Albie begins a chant, quickly joined by the crowd --

ALBIE AND THE CROWD

FRIENDS! ROMANS! COUNTRYMEN! LEND  
ME YOUR EARS!

The audience goes crazy, then slowly quiets.

ALBIE

Every family tells its own story.  
But I'm the luckiest man in the  
world because my family's  
storyteller is the legend herself,  
Dottie Cantrell Roman. But tonight,  
the rest of us will do the talking.

(strums the hook to **The**

**Rose and the Brambles**)

Baby, tonight's for you.

(Dottie waves)

Get ready, the debut of Ace Roman!

Nicky panics, trying to get Albie's attention, let him know Ace isn't singing -- until she sees Ace amble onto the stage. Smiling, but nervous, and pale. He strums along with Albie.

ALBIE (CONT'D)

My grandson may not look like us,  
but his voice is all Roman!

The crowd CHEERS, Dottie lights up. Albie sees Ace's nerves, gives him a wink, it's okay. Ace nods, sweating, misses some notes. Nicky, anxious, lock eyes with Dottie - fix this! Nicky feels the show unravelling, is unsure what to do.

Ace steps up the mic to sing, and suddenly seizes. His eyes roll back, he drops to the floor. Thud. The crowd quiets. Albie stops. Dottie GASPS. Nicky rushes out. Greg jumps up to help, until Catt pulls him back down. The curtain drops.

**END OF ACT 4**

ACT 5

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, TENT - NIGHT

Luke, anxious, addresses the crowd. No idea what to do.

LUKE

Thank you all for your patience.  
Ace is fine. Just hold on --

Luke catches eyes with Dottie, worried for a host of reasons.

LUKE (CONT'D)

And Nicky and my dad will be out to  
play you some classic Roman tunes.

Luke scurries under the curtain. Ace is not fine. He's on his back, the seizure slowing. Nicky and Albie kneel beside him.

NICKY

Do your breathing. You're okay.

Nicky slips the shiny black rock from Greg into Ace's hand. When the seizure finally ends, Luke approaches Ace...

LUKE

That was scary. You alright?

ACE

Yeah, Uncle Luke. Sorry.

Something occurs to Nicky, who turns to Luke with rage --

NICKY

Did you make him do this?

ACE

No. It was my idea. I wanted to  
surprise you. And Grandma.

Nicky looks at Luke, sorry. A restless grumbling from the crowd. Luke starts to panic.

LUKE

You and dad need to get out there.

Albie stands, the show must go on. Nicky looks at Ace, sees he's fine. Wheels turn --

ACE

Mom, go, I'm okay.

Nicky shakes her head.

LUKE

Nicky, dad cannot show Rapino what our family can do all by himself.

ALBIE

Don't be so sure. Even an old dog has some new tricks up his sleeve.

Luke can feel the tour slipping away, baffled why Nicky won't do anything. Albie grabs his guitar, heads towards the stage. Nicky doesn't budge. Almost as if she's waiting for something - They hear a swell of CHEERS. Albie stops. *What's happening?*

Then a WOMAN'S VOICE, singing ***Does He Love You?*** -- it's powerful, soulful. Who is it?

WOMAN (O.S.)

*I've known about you for a while now-*

Nicky, her eyes smiling, knows exactly who it is --

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, TENT - NIGHT

Gigi commands the stage, unpolished, but bursting with raw talent that blazes. The AUDIENCE is rapt. Dottie thrilled.

DOTTIE

Thank you, God.

Then the curtain rises, revealing Nicky. The CROWD goes wild. Nicky joins Gigi in a duet. The visual juxtaposition is remarkable. Wade watches, eyes on Nicky, big crush. Raskin also seems dazzled by her. We see Albie, Luke and Ace watching from the wings. Clearly Ace is better.

As the sisters perform together, Dottie wipes tears from her eyes. Her daughters have come through-- For her. For the family. She turns to Rapino, who is entranced. Dottie grins.

On stage, Gigi's not holding back, eviscerating every note. And loving it. Nicky hides her shock, but she is blindsided. The GLOVES ARE OFF. The song pushes each of their voices to the limit -- Nicky's no match.

At the song's end, the audience is on their feet, including a surprised Rapino, who looks like he's found Jesus.

MICHAEL RAPINO

*There's the future of country music. Where've you been hiding her?*

DOTTIE

We do like to pick our moments.



From the stage, Nicky sees Dottie with Rapino. Dottie winks at Nicky. The tour is a go. Nicky smiles, relieved. In the glow of the audience's love, Nicky hugs Gigi. Whispers --

NICKY

Thank you.

GIGI

I did it for Mama.

NICKY

I knew you would.

INT. BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Nicky and Gigi walk offstage to chanting: *GIGI! GIGI!*

NICKY

You were afraid for nothing.  
(a little stung)  
They're crazy about you.

GIGI

I wasn't afraid. I love it out there. I knew I would.

NICKY

Then why didn't you do it before?

GIGI

This is what you always wanted, I wasn't gonna --

NICKY

Hold up. You stayed out of the spotlight because you thought you'd outshine me?

GIGI

"There can only be one queen."

A cloud passes over Nicky's face. *Oh hell no.*

NICKY

You want to be a star? Bring it on, sister.

EXT. THE BRAMBLES, OUTSIDE MAIN HOUSE - LATER

In the moonlight, Earl walks Dottie to the door. In the distance, we hear the concert still going. CHEERS as Garth Brooks is introduced. Dottie hands Earl a NOTE --

DOTTIE

You give this to Albie tomorrow.  
 (kisses his cheek)  
 Nighty night, Earl.

EARL

Oh no you don't!

He takes out a tube of lipstick and touches her up, tears in his eyes. He presses the tube into the palm of her hand. Kisses her hand. Then he gets into his car and drives off. From the tent, Garth begins to croon *If Tomorrow Never Comes*.

Just as Dottie's entering the house --

ALBIE (O.C.)

It was a beautiful night, my rose.

She turns to face him. Suddenly filled with rage.

DOTTIE

Don't you dare look me in the eye  
 and call me your Rose. I know the  
 truth. I've always known.

(off Albie's horror)

I never told you because I wanted  
 this life, and I have enjoyed the  
 hell out of it. But I will not  
 leave this earth with you believing  
 I was a fool. I was never a fool.  
 Texas Truthteller, my ass. Albie  
 Roman, you are a cheat and a liar.

He stares at her, his mouth agape. She stares back. An intense moment passes. Then, without warning -- She grabs him and kisses him passionately.

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

And I will love you forever.

She enters the house, SLAMMING the door behind her. Leaving Albie Roman in the dust.

INT. THE BRAMBLES, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicky lays next to her Mama in bed (a mirror of the earlier flashback). Dottie looks angelic. A half-empty glass of whisky rests on the table next to a vase of lilacs. Nicky's emotional, while Dottie is serene.

DOTTIE

Aunt Hattie's Buttermilk pie recipe is in the coffee can in the bottom drawer of the sideboard. Don't let Nellie get her grubby hands on it.

NICKY

We've been a little hard on Nellie.

DOTTIE

She'll be fine. I'm leaving her Earl.

(Nicky smiles)

Never miss a Thanksgiving dinner together. All of you. No matter what. I mean it, Nicolette.

NICKY

How are you feeling? Has the medicine kicked in?

DOTTIE

I feel at peace.

Nicky gives Dottie a sip of whisky. She's fading.

NICKY

I'm sorry I didn't tell you about the tour.

DOTTIE

You proved you'll always protect the family. Now promise me you won't give up on your dreams no matter what happens.

NICKY

'Course not --

DOTTIE

Promise me.

NICKY

I promise. I just may not get it the way I thought I would. Which makes me want it even more.

Dottie closes her eyes. Nicky takes her mother's hand.

NICKY (CONT'D)

I love you, Mama.

Nicky kisses Dottie's hand. Tears swell in Nicky's eyes.

DOTTIE  
Sing for me, baby --

Nicky takes a deep breath, composes herself, and sings --

                  NICKY  
*There is young cowgirl, who lives  
on the range --  
                  (fully crying now)  
Her horse and her cattle were her  
only companions --*

Dottie's eyes start to close, she catches herself, sits up.

                  DOTTIE  
It's almost time... But I need to  
tell you something first.  
                  (stares into Nicky's eyes)  
I'm not your father's Rose.  
I killed her. And someone knows.

Nicky's eyes go WIDE. Dottie whispers something and Nicky  
leans in to hear as --

INT. BRAMBLES, MAIN HOUSE, HALLWAY - SAME

Elated from her performance, Gigi steps down the hall toward  
her mother's room. The door is closed. She puts her hand on  
the knob and turns. She opens the door and --

SHOCK and HORROR on Gigi's face.

REVERSE TO REVEAL: Nicky stands over their DEAD MOTHER. She  
turns, tears and mascara running down her cheeks. In her  
hands, the white silk pillow with Dottie's final lipstick  
print on it.

**SMASH TO BLACK.**

**END OF PILOT**