

HACKS

"The Remora" - Spec Script

Written by

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EXT. DEB'S VEGAS HOME - REAR - DAY

Statued fountains dribble water. Bees dot the tops of hydrangeas. Koi swim lazily. A GARDENER trims the hedges.

A BOX flies out of the second story window. The gardener dives out of the way. It explodes onto the lawn, sending FACE MASKS everywhere.

A mask lands on top of the Koi pond. It looks exactly like DEB's face, with a picture cutout of Deb behind it. The title reads: DEBORAH VANCE BEAUTY MASK: "LOOK LIKE A STAR!".

DEB (O.S.)

Marcus!

INT. DEB'S VEGAS HOME - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

DEB, wearing one of her own masks, stands near the window, watching the TV. MARCUS enters in a panic.

MARCUS

Are you alright?

DEB

Why the HELL is Fran Drescher selling an eye mask on QVC?

MARCUS

Oh no...

DEB

And they're selling Lisa Rinna's limp plumper. How much bigger could her lips get? She looks half Italian, half bounce-house.

MARCUS

Estelle always gives us first run on beauty. This is unlike her.

DEB

It's a copycat business. Since my special, every old nag put out to pasture is making a comeback.

MARCUS

I don't know about that...

DEB

Her mask is literally called 'Revival'.

MARCUS
I'll settle this.

Marcus dashes out. Deb yells after him.

DEB
You know what trends do? They die.
But I am Lazarus!

OVERHEAD: Koi fish pick at Deb's mask floating in the pond.

TITLE: HACKS.

INT. AVA'S L.A. APARTMENT - DAY

An alarm goes off: 6:30am. AVA rises out of bed. She goes for her 'Daily Affirmations' calendar on her bedside table. It reads: YOU ARE THE MAIN CHARACTER OF YOUR LIFE.

MORNING MONTAGE

- Ava doing yoga.
- Ava eating yogurt and a grapefruit.
- Ava placing pieces of a puzzle on her coffee table. It's 50% finished: we can see flowers and a white house.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Ava sits on a couch across from DR. STRAUM.

AVA
Such a vague term. Moral *inventory*.
Like, I'm fully stocked on
character, but I'm having a supply
chain issue getting empathy.

DR. STRAUM
I think what matters is you look at
your relationship with alcohol.

AVA
I did, and my biggest takeaway was
I was funnier drinking. Anyway, I
guess step four is in the books.

DR. STRAUM
You, you alone, did that. That's
something to be proud of!

Ava blushes.

DR. STRAUM (CONT'D)

We actually have another milestone.
We've seen each other for a year.

AVA

Oh! I didn't get you anything. One
year is paper... How about a check?

DR. STRAUM

Deflecting with humor to avoid
sincerity. Something for year two.

(beat)

Ava, you've come miles. You're
sleeping, you're off the
substances, and you're employed.

AVA

I'm kinda nervous about that.
Season two starts tomorrow and I
sleep-walked through the first. I'm
probably only back because of a
hiring initiative. There are, like,
four female comedy writers.

DR. STRAUM

You don't give yourself credit.
Your sense of self was completely
reliant on Deb's career. You two
together was a toxic combination
that was always going to leave you
coming second. That isn't the
stable woman before me now.

EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Ava confidently walks into the studio lot... and trips.

AVA

Hey, Taylor!

TAYLOR

Ava, how have you been?

AVA

Well, the good news is with the
whole Twitter sale my account got
unsuspended. The bad news is I can
use my account again, which is like
offering Andy Dick a line of coke
and thinking he'll say, "Maybe just
a Fresca?"

TAYLOR

I wouldn't start with that.

AVA

Noted. Hey, listen, I saw most of last year's writers aren't back. I want you to know that I am all in this year. I've got a ton of ideas.

(holds up phone)

Check the timestamps: these were daytime thoughts. No sentence fragments transcribed from PF Chang's-induced sex dreams.

TAYLOR

(reads phone, laughs)

We'll need these. The show barely got renewed.

(beat)

You're back because you're a good writer. Between you and me, we can make this show amazing.

Taylor heads inside. Ava beams.

INT. JIMMY'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

JIMMY is on the phone. KAYLA (Jimmy's assistant) listens in.

JIMMY

I understand. Good luck this season to you and all the other Celtics.

(hangs up phone)

Dammit! I used to get any celebrity commercial work. Now I can't even get a bench-level Blake Griffin near a Butterfinger ad.

KAYLA

Ugh. Sounds like my cousin Meg. She avoids candy too. Diabetic, and very look-at-me about it. We know, you *have* to check your blood sugar. But at my Preakness watch party?

JIMMY

If we don't get some bankable clients soon we are dead.

KAYLA

Y'know I've been seeing a lot of comedy shows and I've made connections with some real talent.

JIMMY

Really? Bankable clients?

KAYLA

I'm talking J-Law before she was discovered in *Red Sparrow*. I could offer a meeting.

JIMMY

Alright, I'm open to meetings. Good initiative Kayla.

KAYLA

Don't give up on the Butterfingers! Except with Meg. Nobody better lay a finger on her glucose meter.

INT. PRODUCTION STUDIO - WRITER'S ROOM - DAY

Ava, Taylor and the writers are laughing around the table.

TAYLOR

OK, for new characters, we have "Ms. Cablash". She's a high society gala planner who accidentally fundraised for the mob, got sued and now has to work at our cut-rate rental shop with our lead. Caroline Astor meets Cruella de Vil. It's a recurring role, juicy enough for a big guest star. Who do we like for casting comps? We're looking for elegant and older comedians.

WRITER 1

Andie MacDowell?

TAYLOR

Brasher.

WRITER 2

Babs?

TAYLOR

Warmer.

AVA

Oh! Oh! Oh!

The room silent, waiting. Ava takes a moment, reconsiders.

AVA (CONT'D)

Jane Fonda.

TAYLOR
Nice! Oh! Do we like Fran Drescher?

WRITER
She's surging. Have you tried her
"Revival" eye mask?

INT. AVA'S L.A. APARTMENT - EVENING

Ava completes a big section of the puzzle. Her phone rings.

INT. JIMMY'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

JIMMY
(on the phone)
Hey, hey, how's my favorite client?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

AVA
Did you butt-dial? This is Ava.

JIMMY
How's my other favorite client?

AVA
Mmm, I love it when a man calls me
his second favorite.

JIMMY
That's not what-- Ava I still don't
know how to balance this. One of my
clients fires the other, I only
have a few clients, and none of
them can shoot free throws! Cut me
some slack.

(beat)
How was the first day back?

AVA
Good, good.

JIMMY
How are we doing... emotionally?

Ava glances into her bedroom, spying her phrase calendar.

AVA
I could feel therapy pay off today.
There's this character we are about
to audition who is basically Deb.

(MORE)

AVA (CONT'D)

I even wrote some of the meaner things Deb's said as her lines.

JIMMY

That's a wide selection.

AVA

Yeah. It was like she was back in my life. Fucking nightmare.

(beat)

So I rewrote it. I can control how much she affects my life now.

Jimmy jots down "SEE AVA'S THERAPIST" on a notepad.

JIMMY

Hang in there kiddo.

END INTERCUT

INT. CAR - DAY

Deborah, reads Vogue in the back of the town car. She turns the page to a movie poster featuring Carol Burnett.

Deb tosses the rag to the floor in disgust and gazes out the window. Instantly she passes a billboard for "My Bad", her comedy special. It's faded and ratty, but she still perks up seeing it... until they pass a billboard for a "One Night with Jane Fonda" comedy special on Netflix.

INT. JIMMY'S HOME OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy picks up a phone call.

JIMMY

Hey, hey, how's my favorite client?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

DEB

What's going on with my memoir?
Where's the ghost writer at?

JIMMY

We only hired her a month ago, so I doubt she's past your first nose jo-- septum recovery surgery.

DEB

What about late night? I'll do that comedians-in-cars-doing-karaoke thing the kids love.

JIMMY

They really only want guests if they have something to promote. You're still not interested in appearing on Law & Order, right?

DEB

You need to be getting me out there, Jimmy. I can tell when I'm getting the light to leave the stage. Your livelihood depends on keeping me up there. Now what about Youtube? Can I get booked on that?

Jimmy fidgets at his desk. His eyes land on the notepad, right on the word "AVA". He grits his teeth.

JIMMY

I may have something.

The other line on his phone blinks.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Deb, I gotta go.

Jimmy punches the blinking light.

END INTERCUT

KAYLA (V.O.)

Molly Swick is here.

JIMMY

Who?

KAYLA (V.O.)

Molly Swick. The phenom I told you about. I'm surprised you don't already know her from Deuxmoi.

JIMMY

Kayla! You have to give me a heads up. I have no research on her.

KAYLA (V.O.)

The only research you need is where to buy a wheelbarrow so we can move all this new moneeee--

Jimmy sets the phone down, pushes his business cards to the front of the desk. He catches his reflection in the window.

JIMMY

(to self)

OK, Lusaque. You got this. You're a kingmaker. Show 'em why you were ninth on last year's "30-under-30 managers to watch" list. Don't get comfy at number 8, Tina Hurwitz!

(into phone)

Send her in.

Kayla enters with MOLLY SWICK, early 20's.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Lovely to meet you Ms. Swick. Would you like some coffee, tea, Perrier?

MOLLY

For free?

JIMMY

Yes...

MOLLY

I'm good! Professional mode.

JIMMY

Your work is very impressive. What are you... most proud... of?

MOLLY

Theater! For sure.

KAYLA

She lives theater. I think she's in character right now!

JIMMY

Oh great. Are you considering TV, or do you want to stay on stage?

MOLLY

I would love to. But once you graduate, you really can't.

JIMMY

Graduate... to a filmed medium?

MOLLY

From high school. Like in my reel?

She types on Jimmy's laptop and brings up a Youtube link.

JIMMY
Your reel is Seussical.

KAYLA
Seussical! How is it day, but the
stars are out?

MOLLY
Ms. Hock, my drama and PE teacher,
said I'd make it one day. How crazy
that day was three months later!

JIMMY
Wonderful. It was so good to meet
you. We'll circle back soon, OK?

MOLLY
Now I know I've made it Hollywood.
People are circling back to me!

Jimmy gazes back at his reflection, shaking his head.

INT. AUDITION ROOM - DAY

Ava, Taylor and Writer 1 watch JANE FONDA reading lines.

JANE FONDA
"... And if you half-ass this
again, it'll be your whole ass
reading the Want Ads!"

TAYLOR
Great, great. I think we have all
we need! We'll be in touch.

Jane exits. A PRODUCER comes in and pulls Taylor aside.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
OK, we have an unscheduled
audition, it seems.

Deb breezes into the room.

WRITER 1
Whoa.

DEB
Hi everyone.

Ava is frozen, eyes locked on Deb. Taylor notices.

TAYLOR

Ms. Vance, thanks for coming. Give us just a few and we'll start.

INT. PRODUCTION STUDIO - KITCHEN - DAY

Ava steeps a tea aggressively, cradling her phone.

JIMMY (V.O.)

-- You've reached Jimmy Lusague. Leave a message.

AVA

Jimmy! I cannot believe you told Deb about the audition. I am signing you up for so many mailing lists. I will sink your inbox in a shit-sea of Prop 42 and MILFs.

Deb approaches from behind.

DEB

Ava.

AVA

Hi! Hi. It's been a while.

DEB

So much to catch up on. I had no idea you enlisted.

AVA

Enlisted?

DEB

In the Salvation Army. I hoped my fashion sense would have had a trickle-down effect.

AVA

I forget, your generation still thinks that worked. I did enlist, actually. My squad rescued forty Ann Taylor shoulder capes from your house.

(beat)

Why are you auditioning? You once said you'd rather narrate your own sex tape than work in TV again.

DEB

I thought I'd put in a fourth pool.

AVA

Could be that. Or could it be the special's a year old, the spotlight is looking for other grey gardens, and you'll be goddamned if you share that more than you have to?

DEB

It's the pool. I'm going to be shaped like Lily Tomlin's face.

AVA

Uh huh.

DEB

This was fun catching up. Maybe I'll be hating this more often.
(turns to leave)
And thanks for the tip on the part.

AVA

I-- you're welcome.

INT. AUDITION ROOM - DAY - LATER

Writer 1 switches off a camcorder.

TAYLOR

That was it! What do we think?

AVA

Jane crushed.

TAYLOR

Yup, I liked her. Deborah Vance gave a pretty good read too.

AVA

Yeah... yeah she did.

TAYLOR

I gotta ask: Did you tell her about the part? You wrote for her, right?

AVA

I really didn't. We haven't spoken in a year. But I do think my manager slipped it.

TAYLOR

Is it weird for you if we have her for callbacks? Or I can shut this down right now.

Ava considers this.

INT. JIMMY'S HOME OFFICE - KAYLA'S DESK - DAY

Jimmy stops by Kayla's desk.

KAYLA

Hey boss man! Just drawing up the contract for Molly. Do we want to sign her for one, or two, decades?

JIMMY

What we're looking for is a little more... established.

KAYLA

Molly was on NCIS!

JIMMY

Did her character have a name?

KAYLA

Yes.

JIMMY

Was there a number in it?

KAYLA

Uncool! Not everyone can play 'Skinned Girl 3' that skinlessly!

JIMMY

They should have some real credits. We're looking for somebodies. At least pre-somebodies.

KAYLA

Pre-somebodies. Who have tape where they are alive. Got it.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

AVA

--so when Nick asks "Am I sexual?", the rest of the Backstreet Boys, age sixteen at the time of recording, respond with a very affirmative "yeeeeah". That was the first time I considered I might never have children.

DR. STRAUM

Mmmhmm. You've shared this insight before. Last time it was during a moment of crisis.

AVA

God, I hate that's my crisis tell.

DR. STRAUM

Is something critical happening?

AVA

Um, I have been thinking about my sobriety. If I was at a wedding, and they're doing a toast: I'm not-going to cheers? That's rude.

DR. STRAUM

It would be breaking your sobriety.

AVA

What about kombucha? Little bitty bit of alcohol in there. I'm off the wagon because I had a kombucha?

DR. STRAUM

This sounds like old Ava. Is there conflict at work? That can make you fall into old habits, and we can't risk all the progress you've made. Maybe we should rethink this job.

AVA

No! No. You said it yourself: I've come a long way. I got this.

DR. STRAUM

You also said that when the Choco Taco was discontinued.

AVA

I did got that!

DR. STRAUM

We had three emergency sessions.

AVA

Again, I've come a long way.

INT. AVA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The puzzle closes in as Ava places the last piece. She admires it: a garden cottage a la Thomas Kinkade.

Ava takes a centering breath. She dials her phone.

AVA
Hey, Taylor. I'm good with Deb for
callbacks.

INT. DEB'S VEGAS HOME - NIGHT

Deb nurses a glass of wine. She looks at a massive framed poster of her "My Bad" cover. Smiles.

Deb dials her cell phone.

DEB
Jimmy! What other writers do you
rep?

INT. PRODUCTION STUDIO - DAY

Deb, Taylor, Ava, Marcus and several WRITERS sit around a large table, scripts in front of them.

DEB
(reading)
"In the gala biz we always gave
100%. Of course now I know 100% was
going to the Five Families."

Laughs around the table. Ava and Taylor give approving grins.

TAYLOR
Let's go from top of nineteen.

Marcus hands Deb a SCRIPT PAGE from his briefcase.

WRITER 2
"What do you mean we missed the
deadline?"

DEB
"The deadline was at 5. If it was a
duel, we're burying you at sundown"

Some laughs. Taylor and Ava, confused, flip through pages.

TAYLOR
Hey, Deb...

DEB
"It's called a DEAD. LINE."

TAYLOR
Let's pause. Deb, are you on V-
thirteen? I've got different lines.

DEB
I'm trying a couple alt's.

TAYLOR
Let's stick with the script lines.
They have network approval.

DEB
These are funnier.

A steely silence.

TAYLOR
We're taking three!

Deb and Marcus huddle around the script, talking and pointing. Taylor pow-wows with Ava on the side.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
A little presumptive. It's still a
two horse race for the part.

AVA
That's her. But it wasn't bad.

TAYLOR
I don't think that's how I hear Ms.
Cablash. It's funnier, but harsher
than how we've written her. There's
hardly any warmth.

AVA
That's also her.

TAYLOR
(to room)
Let's go again. From the script.

LATER

People are packing up. Deb approaches Ava.

DEB
If you wanted to settle there's a
Panda Express down the street.

AVA
You know, we haven't cast you yet.
There's another woman who makes the
lines on paper pretty funny N-B-D.

DEB

Don't use acronyms out loud. It sounds like you caught NBD from a public toilet.

Deb struts off. Marcus follows.

MARCUS

Like old times, right?

Ava smirks.

INT. DEB'S PRIVATE JET - DAY

Deb reads a trade magazine. Marcus closes his laptop hard.

MARCUS

Estelle is playing hard ball. She's not first-running our products any more. I think paying a visit would go a long way. How's Tuesday?

DEB

The screen test is Tuesday.

MARCUS

Don't you think this is more important?

DEB

We can manufacture all the stretch pantyhose we want. We can't buy a Winona...comeback... reemergence... what did they call it?

MARCUS

Winonassaince--

DEB

Actually don't tell me. I've decided its stupid in advance.

Deb gets up and pours herself a vodka.

DEB (CONT'D)

Why do I want this so bad?

MARCUS

Is it possible you just miss Ava?

Deb takes a long sip.

DEB

Don't be ridiculous. Call Jimmy and find out who the other hag they're considering is. And tell him I want Tess in LA for the screen test.

MARCUS

You have an ace you're not playing.

DEB

There's no need to call Artie yet.

MARCUS

I'm just saying not everyone in town knows the head of the network has a hard-on for them.

DEB

Yeah. Just me and David Steinberg. I'll do this my way.

Deb sits back down.

DEB (CONT'D)

You're CEO. Handle QVC your way.

INT. JIMMY'S HOME OFFICE- DAY

Kayla drops a stack of portfolios on Jimmy's desk.

KAYLA

Some reeeal up-and-comers are outside. Here are their credits.

Jimmy flips through the files.

JIMMY

HBO. NBC. Scorsese. OK, nice work.

KAYLA

I got it this time. They are nobodies.

SERIES OF SHOTS

--Mid-20's ACTOR A

ACTOR A

Oh, I was an assistant at Netflix. But my dream is to act on a show at Netflix. That's why I left Netflix.

--Mid-30's ACTOR B

ACTOR B

I have a knack for comedy. Wanna know my superpower? I make wine disappear.

--Jimmy pores over attractive ACTOR C'S resume.

ACTOR D

The filmed medium is dead. AI will replace acting completely. I'm talking one-man shows. No elitist small theaters. Something raw. Can you book bus stops?

--Scruffy, bearded ACTOR D

JIMMY

Tell me about working for Scorsese.

ACTOR D

Yeah, I gardened for him for years. That's why you have to read...

Actor D brings out a SCREENPLAY.

ACTOR D (CONT'D)

"The Sod Savior".

JIMMY

Kayla!

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

Jane Fonda breezes up to a reception desk. A woman is turned away, typing at the computer.

JANE FONDA

Hi, I have a 2pm.

The woman spins around the in the office chair: it's Deb.

DEB

And your name is...?

JANE FONDA

Deb! I haven't seen you since your roast. I confess I laughed when the host said you'd sell your dignity on QVC if it was ever in stock.

DEB
Jane you look amazing. But then again I'd look great if I lost that much husband-- I mean weight, too.

JANE FONDA
What are you doing? Or is receptionist your best studio fit?

DEB
I gave the receptionist a twenty to do that bit, but seriously, I was storming out when I saw your name on the call sheet. I'm saving you.

JANE FONDA
What's wrong?

DEB
You know who has experience with getting canceled? The writers here.

INT. PRODUCTION STAGE - DAY

Writers and assistants stand around, texting on their phone.

TAYLOR
That was Jane's manager. I don't understand why, but she's out.

AVA
Just like that?

TAYLOR
She checked in at the gate, and checked out ten minutes later.

DEB (O.S.)
Hello!

Deb strolls up to the sound stage. Taylor scowls.

TAYLOR
So much for a two-horse race.

LATER

Deb stands with SHEILA, another actor, on a sound stage. Taylor in front of monitors, several SUITS behind her. Ava hangs to the side of stage, reading along.

CAMERAMAN
Rolling.

TAYLOR

Action!

The lights of the cameras turn red.

SHEILA

"I don't understand. You're charging me for the Xerox?"

DEB

"When you're not making company copies, you're damn right."

SHEILA

"So I wanted to promote my band? The company has the money".

DEB

"You can tell that to the company when you're both in the soup line!"

Ava notices Deb is going off-script again. Taylor shoots Ava a glare and mouths 'talk-to-your-girl', motioning Deb.

SHEILA

Um-- "I don't think thirty fliers is going to bankrupt the company"

DEB

"Where do you think Enron is now? Up to their necks in bisque!"

TAYLOR

Cut!

Ava rushes on stage.

AVA

Why do we give you a script? We'd have a better chance of hearing our lines if we hired Anne Bancroft... 's cadaver.

DEB

It just needed a little something.

A GIRL-ASSISTANT hands Ava pages.

AVA

You rewrote our sides? These are way different. Taylor's not going to go for this.

DEB

Oh, screw Taylor. You and I know
this is better. C'mon. Like it was.

Ava softens at this.

CUT TO

Ava sits next to Taylor.

TAYLOR

Did you set her straight? The EP's
are here. I look like an idiot.

AVA

It's OK. These are my rewrites.

Ava hands Taylor some pages. Taylor flips through them.

TAYLOR

What? We never talked about this.

AVA

You brought me back because you
want the show to be spectacular.
This is better for the show.

Taylor gives Ava a long look.

TAYLOR

Let's reset. Back to one.

LATER

The crew breaks down cameras. Ava approaches Deb, carrying
the new pages.

AVA

The execs have left. Looks like
they have all they need.

DEB

No! We wanted to try another line.

AVA

We?

The Girl Assistant runs up with pages loosely stacked in her
arms and hands them to Deb.

GIRL-ASST

Those revisions, Deb.

AVA

Wait, this "Guess Who" tile writes for you? These are her lines?

Ava throws her papers down, disgusted.

DEB

It's really a compliment to you. You showed me the value of another writer in the room. Like Tess here.

AVA

I stood up for you... I told Taylor these rewrites were mine.

DEB

Good. You'll get the credit! Those other lines were trash.

AVA

I wrote those.

DEB

Well. Good thing Tess is here.

Ava looks like she has been slapped.

INT. AVA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ava slams the door, nearly in tears. She sees the cottage puzzle. Closing her eyes, she takes several calming breaths.

... Then grabs the puzzle by the edges and destroys it.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A tall glass of RED WINE fills before Ava's eyes. She offers a credit card to the BARTENDER.

AVA

Keep it open.

INT. JIMMY'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

KAYLA

Last audition coming in!

JIMMY

OK, OK.

Kayla enters, dressed as what could only be described as "Mr. Doubtfire".

KAYLA
Elvis. Elvis Hemsworth. Yes, *those*
Hemsworth's.

JIMMY
I know it's you.

KAYLA
The next big thing in Hollywood?
You bet your biscuity buttcheeks.

Her wig falls off.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A BARTENDER stops at Ava, staring at a glass of red wine.

BARTENDER
Something wrong?

AVA
No, it's fine.

BARTENDER
It's just you haven't touched it.

AVA
I need it. Just not sure if I want
it. Like a milkshake. Or
interpersonal relationships.
(beat)
Could I get some water?

The Bartender sets a glass next to her wine.

Ava's PHONE buzzes. The display reads: MISSED CALL. (1)
VOICEMAIL. She hits 'play'.

DR. STRAUM (V.O.)
Hi Ava, it's Dr. Straum. You missed
our appointment today and I'm a
little worried. Give me a call ba--

Ava hangs up. She opens her contacts to "D" section, seeing
Deb's name. She brings the phone up and we hear an answer.

AVA
 You are unbelievable. I went
 against a year of therapy, and
 sobriety, and vouched for you. And
 you stabbed me in the back.

INT. PALMETTO HOTEL - FRONT DESK - NIGHT

RAY (the hotel employee Ava befriended in season 2) wears a
 confused look as he holds his cell phone.

RAY
 Whoa.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

AVA
 (checking phone)
 Ray? Awww, fuck. I meant to call a
 different person.

RAY
 Who were you trying to reach that
 you would start a call that way?

AVA
 Deb.

RAY
 Our names are not remotely similar.

AVA
 Sometimes I save little notes with
 people so I remember them better.

RAY
 How am I saved in your phone?

AVA
 ...Dead Dad Ray... I'm so sorry, we
 bonded when my dad died! It's not
 that bad. Someone's in my phone as
 Skin Tag Luke.
 (beat)
 Soooo, how are you?

RAY
 I've been reminded my dad is dead.
 Best fifteen minute break ever.

AVA
 I'm gonna let you go.

END INTERCUT

Ava sets the phone down. She finally reaches for the wine.

AVA (CONT'D)

A different... person! That's it!

She grabs the water glass and pounds it, leaving the wine untouched. Ava dashes towards the exit.

BARTENDER

Hey!

Ava spins around. The Bartender waves her credit card.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

You started a tab.

AVA

Oh, right.

INT. DEB'S VEGAS HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Marcus is typing at his computer when his phone rings.

MARCUS

Hi Jimmy, what's... oh no.

EXT. DEB'S VEGAS HOME - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The gardener rakes leaves. His rake snags: a face mask.

DEB (O.S.)

Those fucking snakes!

Script pages fly out of the second story window onto the lawn. The gardener sighs.

INT. DEB'S VEGAS HOME - MEDIA ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Deb paces the room. Marcus's phone is on speaker with Jimmy.

DEB

What are you going to do about this, Jimmy?

JIMMY (O.S.)

It's a new direction. You know the network. There's not much I can do.

DEB

You can't.

Deb pulls out her cell phone.

MARCUS

Can you forward the script?

DEB

Artie, hi it's Deb. Oh you old
flirt! I'm in town. How's dinner?

Deb marches out. Marcus opens an email on his laptop and reads script pages. He raises an eyebrow.

MARCUS

Well that's a way to handle it.

INT. JIMMY'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Kayla removes her false beard.

KAYLA

You said proven! Each of them has
had extensive Improv 102 training.

JIMMY

What was your plan with Elvis
Hemsworth? Lead a double life?

KAYLA

Mulan does it.

Jimmy puts his head in his hands.

JIMMY

I thought you were scouting comedy
clubs. Not classes.

KAYLA

I did go to clubs. The main
comics... most were signed by
Latitude or CAA. So lame. They were
already headlining before the
managers. Repping a sure-thing
client is not believing in them.
Not like how you believed in Deb.

JIMMY

It doesn't change the fact we still
need to make money.

KAYLA

So maybe we take some chances on some turkeys along the way! There is talent out there the agencies won't take the risk on. And you know what turkeys turn into? Swans.

Jimmy gives her a look.

JIMMY

You're not right. But you're right.

KAYLA

So you'll represent them all?

JIMMY

Decidedly not.

KAYLA

Jimmy, those are the BEST performers I've EVER seen.

JIMMY

Huh. You must *really* think that.

KAYLA

I do. In my heart of hearts.

JIMMY

What do you think of Meryl Streep?

KAYLA

Mid.

JIMMY

Robert DeNiro.

KAYLA

Amazing in *Dirty Grandpa*.
Everything else: unsubscribe.

JIMMY

Paris Hilton.

KAYLA

The BEST performer I've EVER seen.
If they ever remake *Sophie's Choice*, she will be Sophie.

JIMMY

I think I get it. So who is the worst performer at your theater?

KAYLA

I wouldn't want to waste your time.

INT. UCB THEATER - NIGHT

Jimmy and Kayla are seated in the crowd of a YOUNG COMEDIAN's show. Everyone is laughing their butts off. Jimmy looks over at Kayla, who is bored-texting.

EXT. UCB THEATER - NIGHT

Kayla watches outside the theater while Jimmy hands his card to the Young Comedian. He returns to her.

JIMMY

I think she has potential.

KAYLA

Forget that loser! You have to see Didi Tan. She juggles soup... while eating soup. My soul left my body.

They walk off together.

INT. PRODUCTION STUDIO - OFFICE - DAY

Ava knocks on the door. The office chair is faced away.

AVA

That rodeo scene: we can't do it in Pomona. A best boy got gored last year so the ranch quit the biz.

The chair turns around: Deb is there, script in hand.

DEB

Sounded like a career-making scene.

AVA

Did you just reveal yourself like a Bond villain?

DEB

It's my thing recently.

Deb gets up and slams a script onto the desk.

DEB (CONT'D)

The rodeo is not the only change.
Ms. Cablash is now a Mr.?

AVA

Our protagonist has a grating aunt,
so she didn't need another
aggressive female in her life.

DEB

That's presumptive. I wouldn't play
her aggressively.

A young ASSISTANT pops into the doorframe.

ASSISTANT

I have the shooting schedule for--

DEB

Get LOST, Bambi!

The assistant can't scam fast enough.

AVA

I'm sure you've got some sort of
laser to cut me in half, but I have
auditions to prep for.

Ava leaves, determined walk. Deb chases after.

HALLWAY

DEB

Why leak the role if you didn't
want to cast me?

AVA

I didn't!

DEB

So you tell our shared manager "I'm
writing a doppelganger of your top
earning client, and if she got it
it'd be a lot of money for you, but
keep it in your diary! Tee hee!"

INT. PRODUCTION STAGE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Deb trails Ava across the empty set.

DEB

Come on. You wanted me here!

This stops Ava.

AVA

I didn't mean to tell him. I just couldn't stop myself.

DEB

Stop yourself from what?

AVA

From putting you first. I do this! I put my own career, my own well-being, second. This whole last year I let myself deteriorate, and you didn't think twice about me.

Ava sits on the ground. Deb takes this in.

AVA (CONT'D)

I don't know, I like to be near greatness, but just so I can serve it. I'm like... those pathetic cleaner fish that only exist so sharks don't get cavities.

DEB

That's a remora.

AVA

I thought that was when the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie.

Deb joins her on the ground.

DEB

DJ was obsessed with aquariums as a girl. I hoped she'd become a marine biologist. Jewelry designer was a close second.

AVA

Why do you even want to be on a show where you have to bring in your own writer?

DEB

I brought someone in to make the character fit me better. So what? When did your jokes become so precious? You wrote a frog circumcision joke that aired.

AVA

The mohel said he shouldn't ribbit for two weeks.

DEB

You weren't wrong before. The spotlight has an eye more wandering than Warren Beatty's. I know I can get it back. It couldn't be just *some* show. It has to be more than good. And I know If Ava Daniels is involved, it'll be greatness.

Ava starts to well up. They share a moment.

DEB (CONT'D)

Law & Order it is then. Would you call a PA to help me up?

Ava rises and helps Deb up. They walk back to the hallway.

AVA

Y'know, making Cablash a guy was taking the role away from Jane too.

DEB

The only thing better than winning is your enemy losing.

INT. PRODUCTION STUDIO - OFFICE - DAY

Deb grabs her purse, about to leave. She stops at the door.

AVA

We WILL have other roles. Taylor has a lot of really good ideas.

DEB

I do think about you. And I fired you so you could become your own shark. Too subtle, I guess.

Deb exits. Ava wears a quizzical look on her face.

INT. CAR - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Deb gets in the backseat. Marcus is behind the wheel.

DEB

Well?

MARCUS

Remember Yatna Textiles? They made our fall line... before we learned they are basically a Bengali daycare.

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

They were still on QVC's vendor list. Estelle is very happy I've identified that to her first, and not CNN.

DEB

Way to go, Man-cy Drew.

MARCUS

I've been assured Vance products get first look right back, and Fran's mask is "better suited for other retailers".

DEB

I wouldn't consider garage sales 'retail'.

MARCUS

How'd it go with Ava?

Deb smiles.

INT. PRODUCTION STUDIO - OFFICE - DAY

Ava is lost in thought. Taylor enters with a BANKER'S BOX.

TAYLOR

Already sizing the place?

AVA

Huh?

TAYLOR

I'm just grabbing my things.

AVA

Oh, no, no. You got--

TAYLOR

Fired? Oh, no. I'm running a new show! The head of the network called me. It's an amazing opportunity: Apatow is producing, Carell is starring. There's no way it doesn't go three seasons.

AVA

What? No. Who is taking over our-- the show?

Taylor gives a bent Ava an eyebrow raise.

EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Taylor carries the box out. A panicked Ava is on her heels.

AVA
I've never run a show!

TAYLOR
Artie seems to think you can.

AVA
I can't do this. I'm a remora.

TAYLOR
Huh?

AVA
I'm having an anxiety attack. I
need a Choco Taco.

TAYLOR
You clearly have a different vision
for the show than I thought we had.
Make it whatever you want. Good
luck, Ava. You'll need it.

Taylor struts away. A group of PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS flank her. She points to Ava, breathing heavy and pacing.

PA 1
What's tomorrow's call time?

AVA
When do we normally--

PA 2
Locations needs you to scout this
ranch in Ojai...

PA 3
Ms. Daniels, can you approve the
golden time for the Teamsters?

More crew forms around Ava. She spots Deb's car idling. Deb smiles in the rear view mirror... right before a battalion of underlings drown her sight out.

END.