

# **DUMB BLONDE**

Written by

Todd Bartels & Lou Howe

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"It takes a smart brunette to play a dumb blonde."

*– Marilyn Monroe*

A glorious sunset sky. Purple, gold, heavenly. And the words:

**This here's a true story, y'all.**

A BUTTERFLY flutters past us. And we follow it down through:

**EXT. PINE FOREST. DUSK.**

A canopy of majestic, 100-foot-tall pine trees. Down to the shadowy, dank forest floor, covered in mist, ferns and moss.

An otherworldly, magical landscape.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
*Sittin' on the front porch...*

A FIVE-FOOT-TALL WOMAN with towering blonde hair sings softly to herself as we follow her, never seeing her face.

WOMAN (CONT'D)  
*On a summer afternoon...*

She moves up a hill, past a creek, and steps into a clearing. Where she's bathed in shafts of golden, magic hour light.

Up ahead, she spots a WOODEN STRUCTURE, obscured in the mist. The sight makes the woman stop, take a deep, calming breath.

This is her GOD PLACE.

As her ruby red lips open to sing, we MATCH CUT TO:

**INT. DINER. MEN'S ROOM. NIGHT.**

Those same lips, scrubbed bare, no lipstick, singing--

WOMAN  
*In my Tennessee mountain home...*

The SAME WOMAN, but with wispy dirty blonde hair, waitress uniform topped with a Santa hat, mops a grimy, fluorescent-lit bathroom. A world away from the enchanted forest.

But she hums, EYES CLOSED, still inwardly in the God Place.

Her name tag reads DOLLY. Yes, that Dolly. But not the one we know and love. Not yet. This is YOUNG DOLLY PARTON, age 20.

TITLE CARD:

**1966**

A TOILET FLUSH breaks her reverie and her eyes snap open--

As a FAT MAN emerges from a stall, buckling his giant belt buckle. He stops, looks her up and down, stares at her chest.

FAT MAN  
Well Merry Christmas to me.

DOLLY  
You ain't gettin' nothin but a lump  
of coal and a kick in the chestnuts  
if you don't move it along, mister.

Not her first rodeo. He pushes past her out the door--

FAT MAN  
Don't be a bitch about it.

*Ugh.* She holds her breath, mops into the stall, gagging...

**INT. DINER. BREAK ROOM. LATER.**

PUNCH! PUNCH! Dolly clocks out, finally free from her day job hell. She checks a mirror. Teases up her hair, as high as it goes. Frowns at her reflection. Doesn't love what she sees.

A BALD COOK, her boss and bane of her existence, calls--

BALD COOK  
Hey Santa! You best not leave  
before it's spic and span in there!

DOLLY  
It's as shiny as your damn scalp.  
Merry Christmas!

She grabs her coat and beat up guitar case, busts out into--

**INT. THUNDERBIRD. MOMENTS LATER.**

SPITTING RAIN. Dolly speeds through Nashville traffic in a T-Bird. A cool car at some point, but a real piece of shit now.

As she drives, she CLOSES HER EYES, back to the God Place.

DOLLY  
*Watch the kids a' playin, with  
junebugs on a string...*

HONK!!!!!!! She almost hit someone! She jerks the car back--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
Sorry!

**EXT. JERRY'S HONKYTONK. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly pulls into a muddy field behind a tin-roofed shack.

She checks the rearview. Eyes her cleavage, undoes a button on her work uniform. Still not in love with how she looks.

She steps out of the car and straight into a muddy puddle--

DOLLY

Shit!

**INT. JERRY'S HONKYTONK. MOMENTS LATER.**

A MUDDY HIGH HEEL drags through a sea of cowboy boots.

DOLLY

Sorry, y'all. 'Scuse me. Sorry!

All five feet of Dolly weaves through a crowd of ROWDY MEN, who slug shitty beer and ignore a shitty BLUEGRASS BAND.

As she passes, the men look down at her hungrily, licking their chops. Bears awoken from a beer-buzzed hibernation.

As the band wraps up, a MAN frowns down at her from the--

**STAGE. CONTINUOUS.**

It's BILL OWENS (30s), Dolly's cool uncle. Slicked-back-hair, Marlboro dangling from his lips, guitar over his shoulder.

BILL

That sumbitch keep you late again?

DOLLY

Nah, I stopped by the spa. Got me a massage and a pina colada.

He chuckles. She pulls out her guitar, scans the crowd. Feels their eyes on her, judging. And her confidence vanishes.

She looks to a small photo taped inside the guitar case. A young, handsome SOLDIER. She smiles, reassured.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

New song's ready.

Bill nods, steps to the mic. The crowd barely registers--

BILL

Hey y'all! Here's a new tune for ya. Called "Tennessee".

Heads turn as Dolly steps up, nerves raging. She feels the men's stares. Flinches at a CATCALL WHISTLE. Sings meekly--

DOLLY

*Sittin' on the front porch, on a summer afternoon...*

We recognize what will become her classic "Tennessee Mountain Home", but a slow, sad version. And the lyrics aren't there.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*In a straight backed chair, lookin' out at the field...*

Dolly scans the crowd, searching for approval. Instead--

DRUNK HECKLER

Play somethin' you can shake that ass to! Not this mopey shit.

DOLLY

*Butterflies and junebugs...*

DRUNK HECKLER

Shut up and strip, you dumb whore!

She CLOSES HER EYES, trying to return to the God Place--

DOLLY

*Life is as peaceful as a baby's sigh...*

And she feels a little better, more confident. But of course--

DRUNK HECKLER

I said show us your tits, blondie!

Dolly's eyes SNAP OPEN, brimming with tears.

DOLLY

I ain't no stripper, asshole!

DRUNK HECKLER

Coulda fooled me by the look of ya!

Before she can respond, Bill steps in--

BILL

All right, y'all. Here's a song you'll know a little better.

He starts an UPBEAT GUITAR LICK. Dolly fumes, but joins in--

**EXT. JERRY'S HONKYTONK. BACK ALLEY. LATER.**

Dolly paces by the dumpster, rattled by the show. She catches her breath, puts a dime in a PAYPHONE, dials...

DOLLY  
Is Carl there? I mean Private Dean.

Dolly waits, touches the simple gold band on her ring finger.

CARL (O.S.)  
That you, kid?

A soothing baritone. Relief washes over Dolly.

DOLLY  
There's my man.

CARL (O.S.)  
How was the show? You try out the new song?

DOLLY  
(tearing up)  
How come everybody wants to look at me instead of listenin' to me?

CARL (O.S.)  
Well, can't really blame 'em. You sure are nice to look at.

DOLLY  
Liar.

CARL (O.S.)  
Now when have I ever lied to you?

Dolly smiles a bit. But Carl can hear how demoralized she is.

CARL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
How about you sing it? Just for me.

DOLLY  
No! I'm OK in my head, or for the pigs back home. But I try to sing for people, all hell breaks loose.

CARL (O.S.)  
Then I'll be your pig. Oink oink.

She smiles, looks around. She's alone. A concert for one--

DOLLY

*Sittin' on the front porch, on a  
summer afternoon / In a straight  
backed chair on two legs, lookin'  
at the field...*

Her voice is gorgeous. Pure. It hangs in the air...

CARL (O.S.)

Voice of an angel. Now who gives a  
shit 'bout some drunk rednecks? I  
know you're special, Dolly Parton.  
And deep down, you know it too.

Wow. Just what Dolly needed to hear. She smiles deeply.

DOLLY

I miss you so damn much, Carl.

CARL (O.S.)

I miss you so damn much, kid.

Off Dolly beaming, totally in love...

TV ANNOUNCER (PRE-LAP)

Direct from Nashville, Tennessee,  
America's #1 country music program,  
The Porter Wagoner Show...

**INT. BILL'S TRAILER. LATER.**

Dolly and Bill watch TV in a tiny motor home, trying to shake off the bad night. Bill's wife SARAH bounces their WAILING BABY at the stove. Welcome to Dolly's palatial abode. ON TV--

TV ANNOUNCER

Now, here he is... Porter Wagoner!

A LIVE STUDIO AUDIENCE erupts for a wiry MAN, 40, blonde hair combed into a pompadour. His Nudie Suit covered in symbols of the Old West -- wagons, cacti -- and studded in sparkling rhinestones. He looks like a mythical figure.

This is PORTER WAGONER.

PORTER

A great big howdy, and a special  
welcome to our show today. Now it's  
time to bring on out the little  
lady who graces our stage every  
week. Pretty Miss Norma Jean!

NORMA JEAN (late 20s, brunette girl next door) walks onstage with a guitar. Porter puts his arm around her as they sing...

On the couch, Dolly stares at Porter. Entranced by his charm.

DOLLY

This is what I should be doing. My own band. My own show. Like Porter.

BILL

You'd be lucky to be like Norma. No girl singer's got her own show.

DOLLY

Well, no girl singer's like me.

BILL

You wanna get on TV, you better figure out these honkytonks first.

He chuckles. Dolly shoots him a look, but knows he's right.

DOLLY

You like the new song? Be honest.

BILL

Sure I do. But folks want what they know. The hits. You want people to like you, give 'em what they want.

Dolly furrows her brow. A lot to chew on. Bill notices--

BILL (CONT'D)

Doll, this business ain't fair.  
Take Sarah. Sweetest voice in Nashville, and look at her now.

SARAH

That's just cause some deadbeat knocked me up.

BILL

Easy now!  
(to Dolly)  
All I know is, opportunity's gonna knock one day. We just gotta be ready to open the damn door.

Dolly nods. Hopes he's right, but hope seems a long way off.

DOLLY

I'm tired of sittin' around. Gonna get me a steak dinner. I earned it.

BILL  
How the hell you payin' for that?

But Dolly's got a plan. Off her mischievous grin...

**INT. THUNDERBIRD. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly drives the struggling T-bird downtown. Pulls over...

**EXT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly heads for the doors to the Ritz-Carlton of Nashville.

**INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. LOBBY. CONTINUOUS.**

Soaring ceilings, chandeliers, an opulent restaurant. Dolly strides through, singing a little ditty to herself--

DOLLY  
*Get me a big ol' steak tonight...*

But then walks right past the restaurant, to the elevator...

**INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. HALLWAYS. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly creeps down a hallway, rooms on both sides.

DOLLY  
*Juicy n' thick, what a delight...*

She finds what she's looking for: a used room service cart. She's a vulture looking for scraps. If she's lucky, steak.

She approaches a plate covered by a metal dome. Grips it... lifts it with a flourish! *But the plate's licked clean.*

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
Damn.

QUICK CUTS of Dolly, searching ravenously. Every cart, empty.

She slumps, defeated. But then--

On one cart, she spots tiny bottles of ketchup and mustard. Her stomach grumbles. She resigns herself and gets to work.

Dolly spoons some ketchup into a bowl, then some mustard. Pours in water, mixes it up into brown slop. She sings--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*Got me ketchup soup instead.  
 Shoulda just gone to bed...*

Dolly sits on the floor, spoons up a bite. Gags, but muscles it down. She steels herself, then quickly inhales the rest.

Food is food, but it's a sad, desperate moment. To escape, Dolly closes her eyes, goes back to the God Place--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*Watch the kids a' playin / With  
 junebugs on a string...*

Tears start to flow, eyes closed. Until they overwhelm her, force open her eyes to face grim reality. Alone, she sobs.

**INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. LOBBY. MOMENTS LATER.**

The elevator doors DING open. Defeated, Dolly slinks into the lobby, past the bar, where she spots a MAN DRESSED IN BLACK, a BLONDE BEAUTY on his arm. JOHNNY CASH and JUNE CARTER!

Dolly's eyes go wide. Her wheels turn. And she grins...

DOLLY  
 Time to open the damn door.

She strides to the bar--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
 Johnny! Hey! It's me, Dolly Parton!  
 You introduced me at the Grand Ol'  
 Opry when I was 14. Remember?

Johnny sways, shitfaced, has no clue who Dolly is. He grumbles, stumbles back to the bar. June smiles at Dolly.

JUNE CARTER  
 I started when I was a kid too. You  
 still singin'?

DOLLY  
 Yes ma'am! Played tonight, in fact.  
 A real shithole, but a gig is a gig  
 is a gig.

June laughs. Gets a kick out of her. Everyone does.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
 But someday I'm gonna have my own  
 show. Like Porter Wagoner.

JUNE CARTER  
I bet you will. Just keep at it.

They share a smile. Dolly making fast friends. John returns.

DOLLY  
So. What y'all doin' tonight?

JUNE CARTER  
Goin' to a party.

DOLLY  
Can I come?

The famous couple laugh, head for the door.

JUNE CARTER  
See you 'round, Dolly. Good luck.

Dolly watches them go, thinking. And her grin returns...

**INT. THUNDERBIRD. MOMENTS LATER.**

The T-Bird tails JOHN AND JUNE'S LIMO. The car sputters--

DOLLY  
Goddamned piece of shit T-Bird!

**EXT. BRENTWOOD. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly follows the limo into the Bel Air of Nashville, the opposite of her trailer park. She marvels at the mansions.

DOLLY  
Ain't in Kansas no more.

The limo pulls into the driveway of the nicest house on the block. Dolly pulls over at a safe distance. John and June get whisked inside. Dolly thinks. Then hops out of the car.

**EXT. FANCY NASHVILLE BRICK MANSION. MOMENTS LATER.**

A MAID IN ANTLERS opens the heavy door, a bustling party inside. Her smile drops at the underdressed Dolly.

DOLLY  
Evenin'! John and June invited me to come along. We're old friends.

Dolly waves at John and June over the maid's shoulder. June laughs. The maid frowns, suspicious, but lets Dolly in.

## INT. FANCY NASHVILLE BRICK MANSION. CONTINUOUS.

Dolly steps into a whole new world. Roaring fireplaces, wood-paneled everything, a giant Christmas tree. Martinis in every hand beneath a cloud of Lucky Strike smoke.

She spots a buffet table. An impressive spread -- shrimp cocktail, Christmas cookies, slice-it-yourself filet mignon.

DOLLY  
Praise the Lord.

Dolly makes a beeline, loads up a plate with steak, digs in.

As she chews, she eyes the crowd. Men in thin '60s ties chat with other men in thin '60s ties. *Where to start?*

She spots a bevy of WHITE MALE RECORD EXECUTIVES. One man stands out: taller than the rest, in a brightly colored, rhinestone-covered suit and bolo tie. Dolly's eyes go wide.

PORTER EFFING WAGONER.

She takes a martini from a passing tray as she lingers near the CIRCLE OF MEN. She eavesdrops, looking for an in. Seems they're all pointing at a WELL-COIFFED MAN across the room.

EXECUTIVE #1  
His poor wife. He's about as straight as a left hand turn.

EXECUTIVE #2  
I caught him peeking at me at a urinal once. Told him I'd kick his teeth in if he wasn't careful.

The men all laugh. Except Porter. Dolly sees her in.

DOLLY  
Well, if he's married, and sleeping with men on the side, then he's getting laid a helluva lot more than y'all. Probably more than all of us combined. But hell, I'd like to give him a run for his money!

From on high, the execs look down at tiny Dolly. She holds her breath... until Porter LAUGHS. The men all join in, kissing the ring of the reigning King of Country.

EXECUTIVE #1  
Whoa, Nelly! Listen to this one.

EXECUTIVE #2  
Wonder what else that mouth can do.

PORTER  
Damn! Can't y'all keep it in your pants for one minute? Treat the little lady with some respect.

That shuts them up. No one goes against Porter.

DOLLY  
Thank you, Mr. Wagoner.

PORTER  
Porter, please. Have we met?

DOLLY  
Not yet, but I feel like I've known you my entire life. I'm Dolly. Dolly Parton. I drop off songs for you and Norma every week.

Porter has no idea what she's talking about.

PORTER  
Oh yeah. Real good stuff. Say, have you met our host? Mr. Chet Atkins.

Porter steps behind a MAN in the fanciest suit of all: CHET ATKINS, head of RCA Records. Dolly's jaw drops.

DOLLY  
Mr. Atkins. I've tried to get past your secretary for years. You're the most important man in town.

CHET  
Porter might have a thing or two to say about that.

DOLLY  
Well, who signs his checks?

The men all laugh. Chet smiles. *Who is this girl?*

CHET  
Say, how'd you get into this party?

DOLLY  
Easy. I walked in the front door.

The men laugh again, charmed. But Chet's had about enough.

CHET

Then my dear, you'll know where to  
show yourself out. Merry Christmas.

He closes the circle of men. No women allowed. Walking away, Dolly waves to Porter. He nods back, intrigued. She's almost to the door, but spots Chet with his back turned, and--

DUCKS BACK INTO THE PARTY. To her favorite place: the buffet.

Dolly reaches for a shrimp, bumps into a MAN'S fat fingers--

Dolly smiles, but the man already has a mouthful of shrimp, and he wanted one more. Cheap suit, plate piled high. Not quite as high-powered as Chet or Porter. This is FRED FOSTER.

DOLLY

What you goin' for, a world record?

The man holds up a finger, chews athletically. Finally he swallows, wipes his hand on his pants, and offers a shake.

FRED

Fred Foster, Monument Records.

Dolly's slightly grossed out, but smiles as she shakes hands.

DOLLY

Dolly Parton, country singer in  
need of a record company.

FRED

Sorry to tell ya missy, but country  
music's dead as a doornail. Those  
boys from England are takin' over.  
Rockabilly's what the people want.

DOLLY

Well they ain't met me yet.

As Fred reaches for even more shrimp, he eyes her chest.

FRED

You got a man, Dolly Parton?

DOLLY

Sure do. Husband down in North  
Carolina, doin' his Army service.

Fred nods, clearly less interested. But he's a "nice guy"--

FRED

Word of advice. Don't tell nobody  
you're married. Bad for business.

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

But hey, you got a good look. I'd put up the money to record you. If you sing rockabilly, that is.

DOLLY

Thank you, Mr. Foster, but I'm country 'til the day I die.

FRED

Suit yourself. But it'll be a long, lonely road. Probably to nowhere.

DOLLY

I'll take my chances.

Fred grins at her stubbornness. Hands her his business card.

FRED

Call if you change your mind.

He returns to his beloved shrimp. Dolly frowns at the card, frustrated that no one else seems to believe in her. But that just means she's got more to prove...

Just then the MAID IN ANTLERS arrives, glaring. *Time to go.*

**EXT. MUSIC ROW. THE NEXT MORNING.**

Dolly doubles down, pounding the pavement, doing it her way.

She hustles along a suburban street lined with ranch houses. Each one a record company that makes or breaks thousands of hopeful country stars every year.

She's freezing, in a thin coat over her waitress uniform. She holds a stack of SHEET MUSIC, knocks on EVERY SINGLE DOOR--

SECRETARY #1

You again?

DOLLY

Ho ho ho! Christmas came early!

Dolly smiles, hands over some songs, as each door SLAMS!

SECRETARY #2

Nothin's changed, Dolly.

DOLLY

Well now, that's just against the laws of nature!

Smile, music, SLAM!

SECRETARY #3  
Still ain't signin' girl singers.

DOLLY  
Well it's your lucky day, cause I  
ain't a girl singer, I'm a singer!

SECRETARY #3  
It's Christmas Eve, honey. Go home.

Smile, music, SLAM! Dolly's smile drops. *A long road indeed.*

INT. DINER. DAY.

Christmas Day. And Dolly's working, miserable in her Santa hat again. She cleans a table as TWO MALE CUSTOMERS head out.

DOLLY  
Sir, I think you forgot a tip?

CUSTOMER #1  
Gotta earn one, sugartits.

Her smile drops as they go. ANOTHER WAITRESS approaches--

WAITRESS  
Fella at table four says he'll only  
order from you.

Dolly looks over at a MAN alone in a booth, his back to her, face hidden behind his menu. Dolly groans. *Another asshole.*

WAITRESS (CONT'D)  
No, he's sweet. Real cute too. Have  
fun.

Dolly rolls her eyes. She stomps over to the man--

DOLLY  
All right. What'll you have?

MAN  
Well, I'm lookin' for a singer.  
Gotta have the voice of an angel.

Her jaw drops. She knows that soothing baritone. She beams.

DOLLY  
Well I just happen to be a singer.  
But I sure as hell ain't no angel.

The man drops his menu. It's the SOLDIER from Dolly's photo. A tall, handsome, good ol' boy in uniform, 24 years old.

This is CARL DEAN, Dolly's husband.

CARL  
Merry Christmas, kid.

Dolly jumps on him, straddling him, kissing him all over.

DOLLY  
My man! Why didn't you tell me you  
were comin'?

CARL  
What kinda surprise would that be?  
And it sounded like you could use a  
good surprise.

She kisses him again. Then smiles her mischievous smile...

DOLLY  
Where's your truck parked?

**INT. CARL'S CHEVY. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly rides Carl in the front seat of his pick up. Hard. She's free, in the moment. HER EYES CLOSED. They climax together, shouting in unison, then collapse on each other.

CARL  
Hot damn, kid.

DOLLY  
Told you I wasn't no angel.

Dolly finally opens her eyes. To find Carl smiling at her.

CARL  
Where'd you go? Thinkin' about  
somebody else?

DOLLY  
What? Hell no.

CARL  
So why you always close your eyes?

DOLLY  
I dunno! Safer in there, I guess.

CARL  
It's safe out here with me too.

Dolly smiles deeply. The cook swings open the kitchen door--

BALD COOK  
Parton! You out here?

They slump down in the seats, hiding. Carl whispers--

CARL  
You hungry?

DOLLY  
Is the Pope Catholic?

CARL  
Got a spot in mind. Real romantic.

They giggle as Carl fires up the truck and PEELS OUT--

**EXT. MCDONALD'S DRIVE-THRU. MOMENTS LATER.**

Carl pulls up in his truck, speaks into the receiver--

CARL  
Two Big Macs, please.

DOLLY  
What you doin', ordering for me?

CARL  
You don't want a Big Mac?

DOLLY  
I don't want someone to assume what  
I want without asking me first.

CARL  
OK. Order whatever you want then.

She leans over Carl--

DOLLY  
Two Big Macs, please.

**EXT. SPARKMAN STREET BRIDGE. LATER.**

Dolly and Carl scarf burgers in the parked pick up, on a historic bridge spanning the bucolic Cumberland River. In the distance, the Nashville skyline backed by a glorious sunset.

She puts her head on his shoulder. Two peas in a pod.

CARL

Couple months, I'll be back. Get me a job, get us a house, you quit that dump, we start us a family.

They smile. But then something dawns on her. She sits up.

DOLLY

What about my career?

CARL

That's what I mean. No more damn diner. Just singin' and babymakin'.

DOLLY

But I gotta get a little farther along first. Uncle Bill's wife was a singer, 'til she had a baby.

CARL

You can do both.

DOLLY

Easy for a man to say! You won't be the one takin' care of 'em.

CARL

I'll help you. But I wanna get started soon as I get back. So career-wise, you best get crackin'.

He takes her hand, aiming for sweet and flirty. But she heard an ultimatum and tensed up. So he tries to lighten the mood.

CARL (CONT'D)

Hey. Got a little something.

He points to some KETCHUP on the corner of Dolly's mouth. She eyes him, still feeling pressured, but decides to make peace.

DOLLY

Get it off, then.

He grins. Leans in, kisses her, takes the ketchup with him...

**INT. BILL'S TRAILER. BATHROOM. LATER.**

Bill sits on the toilet with a magazine. The door busts open--

DOLLY

We gotta get crackin'!

Bill struggles to cover himself.

BILL

C'mon now! This is my Bill time.

DOLLY

Soon as I have kids, there goes my career. We gotta record us an album before Carl gets back!

BILL

That's a real cute plan, but you know how much studio time costs?

Dolly stops. Didn't think of that. *Shit.* But then...

DOLLY

Shrimp Man!

BILL

Shrimp who now?

**INT. MONUMENT RECORDS. DAY.**

Dolly's in Fred Foster's office (AKA Shrimp Man from the Christmas party), holding her guitar, in saleswoman-mode--

DOLLY

You're gonna hear this song and think, golly gee, lucky me, I'm about to sign me a big ol' star!

FRED

Uh-huh. Is it a country song?

Dolly freezes, caught. Fred stalks around, mansplaining--

FRED (CONT'D)

Dolly, you seem like a nice gal. And you're pretty as all get out. But the chance of you makin' it as a country singer, well, it's about the same as a snowball makin' it in the fiery inferno of damnation.

DOLLY

Fine way with words, Mr. Foster.

FRED

Thank you kindly. Now, maybe you've noticed that no one in this town signs girl singers. Might be 'cause there've only been two female solo stars in the history of country music. Patsy Cline and Kitty Wells.

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

Where are they now? Kitty's washed up, Patsy's six feet under. That's not a bet guys like me wanna make.

Dolly's dejected. She knows all this, but it's tough to hear.

FRED (CONT'D)

I know it's hard to let go of your dreams. But you gotta compromise. And I know the way: rockabilly.

Off Dolly, disheartened. *But beggars can't be choosers...*

**INT. RECORDING STUDIO. DAY. WEEKS LATER.**

Dolly frowns at the mic, Bill and some DORKY GIRL BACKUP SINGERS behind her, Fred behind glass in the control room.

Dolly's in a rockabilly get-up, bandana in her slicked hair, high-waisted jeans. Think Rizzo from *Grease*. It's real weird.

DOLLY

*What do you think about lovin',  
baby?*

DORKY GIRL BACKUP SINGERS

*It's all right!*

DOLLY

*Oh what do you think about lovin',  
baby?*

It's not working. Dolly closes her eyes, hoping to sell it better. But no luck. Behind the glass, Fred's getting pissed.

FRED

Take five everybody. Bill?

Bill hustles to the control room. Through the glass, Dolly sees Fred and Bill argue silently. She checks her makeup when-

FRED (CONT'D)

*... pretty girl, world class tits.  
But her voice is just too high.*

Dolly's eyes go wide. Fred has sat down on the console, unwittingly on the INTERCOM BUTTON. She can hear every word.

FRED (CONT'D)

She sounds like a damn toddler.

BILL

Just give us one more shot-

DOLLY  
I can hear y'all!

They spin, caught. She's furious, at the end of her rope.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
What the hell do my tits have to do  
with anything? And my voice ain't  
the problem, Fred. Maybe it's your  
damn ears! Must be full o' shrimp!

BILL  
All right, Dolly. Take five.

DOLLY  
If you'd let me sing country like I  
told ya, we'd be just fine!

BILL  
Take five Dolly!

DOLLY  
Y'all men think you know it all,  
but really you don't know your ass  
from your goddamn elbow!

BILL  
TAKE FI-

DOLLY  
I'm takin' more than five!

**EXT. RECORDING STUDIO. PARKING LOT. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly hops in her car and peels out, as Fred chases her--

FRED  
I knew you was bad for business!

**INT. THUNDERBIRD. LATER.**

As night falls, Dolly rolls through downtown, defeated.

She turns onto Broadway, the bustling heart of the nightlife scene. Neon signs line the street, crowds waiting to get into honkytonks, dive bars. Strains of live music mingle together.

Dolly takes it all in. This is the place she always dreamed of, but now the bloom is off the rose. As she drives by...

A bar fight CRASHES out onto the street--

A young COWBOY spews vomit into the gutter--  
And at a red light, an AGING BUSKER croons with a guitar--  
A great voice, but he must be pushing 70. Been at it for decades, nothing to show for it but a few coins in his hat.  
Dolly stares hopelessly, a glimpse of her possible future.  
Ever the optimist, the harsh reality of her failing career finally breaks through. *How much longer can she do this?*

**EXT. BILL'S TRAILER. LATER.**

Dolly pulls up, stunned to see Carl waiting on the steps in civilian clothes, grinning. She stands out of the car.

CARL  
Private Dean, reporting for husband duty.

She smiles, but the weight of the day is heavy on her. He pulls her into a hug, but senses how down she is.

CARL (CONT'D)  
Hey. Y'all right, kid?

She collapses into him, grips his back, tries not to cry.

DOLLY  
I dunno. This business, it's...

CARL  
I'm back now. We'll figure it out together. And I got somethin' to cheer you up.

He smiles at her. Off Dolly, comforted...

**INT. CARL'S CHEVY. MOMENTS LATER.**

Carl parks in front of a modest ranch house. Dolly eyes it, and smiles deeply. *Their new home.*

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.**

Carl carries Dolly over the threshold of their new house.

CARL  
They call this here the foyer, and I'm gonna put my shed out front-

DOLLY  
Put! Me! Down! I'm heavy!

Carl puts her down, both giggling. Dolly beams. They kiss...

**LATER.**

Their clothes in a heap on the floor in the otherwise empty living room. Dolly and Carl lie post-coital, both grinning.

CARL  
Damn, kid. Wore me out.

DOLLY  
I'm just gettin' started.

Carl laughs. Dolly leans over and kisses him again...

CARL  
Should we pull the goalie? We got the house, now we gotta fill it up.

She stops, leans back.

DOLLY  
I can't have no career once I'm somebody's mama.

CARL  
Well... you sure you wanna keep at this? Today seemed pretty rough.

DOLLY  
I been singin' since I was fourteen. Been dreamin' about it my whole life. I can't just give up.

CARL  
Kid, you know I think you're as talented as they come. But this business is brutal. I don't want you to keep gettin' hurt. And you don't have to give it all up. You can always write. We'll fill up this house with kids, and it'll be burstin' with joy and love. That's what you deserve, Dolly, not all this sufferin'. I just want you to be happy. Let me take care of you.

Dolly's moved. For the first time, thinks he might be right.

**THE NEXT MORNING.**

Sun blasts right into Dolly's eyes as she blinks awake, lying on a makeshift bed, a few blankets on the floor. She sits up to see Carl in the kitchen, already dressed.

DOLLY  
You leavin' already?

CARL  
Gotta figure out how to pay this mortgage. You off to Music Row?

Dolly considers.

DOLLY  
Think I might take some time off.

He stops, surprised he got through to her. He smiles, nods.

CARL  
I'll grab dinner on my way home.

DOLLY  
It's all right. I'll cook.

CARL  
You? Dolly Parton? Cook?

DOLLY  
Excuse you! I got tricks up my sleeve you don't even know about.

He crosses to kiss her, smiles as he exits.

With Carl gone, an eerie silence descends. Dolly looks around at her new domestic life. *This will take getting used to...*

**INT. PIGGLY WIGGLY SUPERMARKET. LATER.**

Muzak blares as Dolly pushes a cart down an aisle. She checks a handwritten shopping list, grabs canned corn from a shelf.

A HOUSEWIFE passes with her own cart. Dolly smiles, but the woman just stares back, dead eyed. Dolly takes a deep breath.

In the next aisle, Dolly passes another exhausted HOUSEWIFE, this one with a SCREECHING TODDLER. Dolly starts to PANIC...

She passes another WIFE, another SCREECHING BABY. Then two more. All around her, glimpses of another possible future...

**EXT. PIGGLY WIGGLY SUPERMARKET. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly busts out of the store, overwhelmed, gasping for air--  
 She stumbles down the sidewalk, struggling to calm down.  
 Stops outside an ELECTRONICS STORE, when...

PORTER (O.S.)  
 Howdy, y'all!

Dolly turns to a WALL OF TVs towering over her. All showing the Porter Wagoner Show. Dolly looks up at so many Porters--

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 Here's a new song by one of the most talented songwriters in all of Nashville, Mr. Curly Putman. It's a real fun one. How 'bout it, boys?

Porter's band kicks in with banjos and bass. The song is uptempo, lively. Dolly leans forward, intrigued by the sound.

The flickering colors from the TVs splash onto Dolly's face.

She realizes... *This is it. Where she wants to be, where she belongs.* A new look flashes in her eyes: pure determination.

**INT. CURLY PUTMAN'S OFFICE. LATER.**

Dolly pushes into the waiting room of a small office. A gruff SECRETARY sits at the desk. Dolly slaps on a smile.

DOLLY  
 Hi there. Is Mr. Putman in?

SECRETARY  
 No honey, he ain't.

DOLLY  
 Well, when's he gonna be here?

SECRETARY  
 He's gone for the day.

Just then a DEEP LAUGH comes from the inner office. The one with CURLY PUTMAN on the door. Dolly glares at the Secretary.

DOLLY  
 You think I'm a moron?

The Secretary glares back at her, then shrugs. *Maybe.*

Dolly fumes. She's had enough of people underestimating her.

She's not waiting for opportunity to knock anymore. *She's breaking the damn door down.* She BUSTS into the inner office--

CURLY PUTMAN himself stops, mid-laugh on a phone call. A mess of sheet music on his desk. The Secretary chases her, but--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

'Scuse me, Mr. Putman? I'm Dolly Parton. I love that song you wrote for Porter Wagoner. Would you write something like that for me?

CURLY

Sweetie, you can't just barge in here. I got real work to do. So why don't you run along back to the supermarket or wherever.

He turns away. The Secretary tries to usher Dolly out, but they're both unaware Dolly's a VOLCANO about to blow. And...

She ERUPTS! Grabs his sheet music, RIPS IT TO FUCKIN' SHREDS--

DOLLY

I ain't your damn sweetie! I know y'all think I'm just some dumb blonde. But I'm a serious writer and singer and I'm fixin' to be a star! So you'd be wise to board this train before it leaves the station. 'Specially when it's headed straight to the big leagues. And I know I'm mixing my meta-fives or whatever, but you know what I mean! SWEETIE.

Curly's stunned. So's the Secretary. Perhaps most stunned is Dolly herself. She looks down at the sea of ripped up music--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Oh God, I'm so sorry Mr. Putman. I-

But Curly's lips curl into a grin.

CURLY

What'd you say your name was again?

**EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.**

In the yard, Carl hammers together 2x4s, the start of a work shed, when Dolly's T-Bird screeches to a stop. She jumps out--

DOLLY  
Guess who I just met?

CARL  
Where you been? I thought you were  
gonna cook dinner.

She flashes a McDonald's bag, pulls him into a kiss.

DOLLY  
C'mon, we're celebratin'.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly chows down on a Big Mac, talking a mile a minute.

DOLLY  
... so he's writin' me a song.  
"Dumb Blonde". It's genius. 'Cause  
everyone always assumes I'm just a  
dumb blonde, but then they meet me  
and don't know what hit 'em. That's  
what the song's about. Don't judge  
people's insides by their outsides!

Dolly grins, hoping Carl is excited, but he's just confused.

CARL  
I thought you were takin' time off.

DOLLY  
I ain't cut out to be no housewife.

CARL  
But we said once I got back, we'd  
start us a family.

DOLLY  
I didn't make no promises.

CARL  
Well when's it gonna happen then?

DOLLY  
Not now, Carl! I been waitin' for a  
break like this for years. Aren't  
you happy for me?

Carl nods, trying to be a supportive husband. Dolly knows  
she's between a rock and a hard place. She tries for peace--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
 I want a family too. But just one  
 last song, OK? Then I'm all yours.

Dolly smiles at him, expectant. Carl considers, then nods.

**INT. RECORDING STUDIO BOOTH. DAY.**

Dolly's at the mic, in her own clothes, not much makeup, natural hair teased up. Eyes closed, she SINGS HER HEART OUT--

DOLLY  
*Just because I'm blonde, don't  
 think I'm dumb / Cause this dumb  
 blonde ain't nobody's fool!*

The band finishes with a flourish. Dolly and Bill smile, look through the glass. There, Curly stares, stone-faced. Dolly holds her breath as he presses the intercom...

CURLY PUTMAN  
 That there, is what we call a hit.

Everyone erupts in CHEERS! Dolly's on cloud nine...

**INT. SPERRY'S STEAKHOUSE. NIGHT.**

A MAITRE D' leads Dolly, Carl, Bill and Sarah through a Nashville institution. Red leather banquettes. Dark wood.

A WAITER makes bananas foster tableside. Flames shoot up--

BILL  
 This is what a hit song buys you?

DOLLY  
 Yup. You get to watch 'em burn your bananas up close. Real high class.

AT THE TABLE, they all raise a glass--

BILL  
 To our Dolly, off to the big time!  
 Always knew she'd ditch me someday.

They all clink glasses. Dolly makes eye contact with Bill.

DOLLY  
 Hey. I ain't ditchin' nobody.

Bill nods, but doesn't seem so sure. They all read the menu.

BILL

You think they burn everything  
here, or just the bananas?

Everyone laughs, except Carl, who seems slightly on edge, perhaps unsure what Dolly's hit means for them as a couple.

But this is Dolly's night. She soaks it all in with a big smile, so excited for the future. But it's wiped away by...

**INT. BOBBY LORD SHOW STUDIO. DAY.**

A SPOTLIGHT blinding us. A TV show taping. Dolly stares out at the audience. Her smile long gone. She's terrified.

The applause sign flicks on. The host, BOBBY LORD, a small man in a slick suit, steps up.

BOBBY LORD

Welcome back to the Bobby Lord Show folks. We're thrilled to introduce you to a brand new performer...  
Miss Dolly Parton!

Polite applause, and the spotlight finds Dolly.

BOBBY LORD (CONT'D)

Well Dolly, this song's one of the biggest hits of 1967. So why don't you sing for us, dumb blonde?

The sexist joke gets no laughs. Dolly just smiles along.

BOBBY LORD (CONT'D)

No, that's not what I meant. Wait a minute now. Dolly Parton recorded a song called "Dumb Blonde". She is about to sing it for you!

*Ok, man.* Not ready to rock the boat, Dolly swallows it.

DOLLY

Thank you, Bobby.

Dolly's stage fright rages. She keeps her eyes open, singing meekly, trying to get through the song, as we MATCH CUT TO:

**INT. PORTER WAGONER'S HOUSE. DEN. NIGHT.**

DOLLY SINGING ON THE TV. In an opulent den -- shag carpet, paisley fabric, gold plated everything.

Watching TV is none other than Porter Wagoner, smoking intently. Even if Dolly's timid, he sees something in her...

**INT. CARL'S CHEVY. THE NEXT MORNING.**

Carl races through traffic. Dolly in shotgun, all nerves.

DOLLY

Maybe he wants me to open for him?  
I dunno if I can open for Porter  
Wagoner. I might have a stroke.

Carl screeches to a stop outside a TV studio. Dolly stares at it, terrified. Then turns to Carl, unsure what he's thinking.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

You sure you're OK with this?

He reaches over and holds her hand.

CARL

Whatever he wants, you worked damn hard for it. So go on and get it.

Dolly, touched and emboldened, kisses him, grabs her guitar--

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly steps into a long hallway, and her face drops. It's lined with YOUNG WOMEN all with guitars, waiting their turn.

They all look just like NORMA JEAN -- tall, brunette, and wholesome. Dolly's short, blonde, and anything but wholesome.

PORTR (PRE-LAP)

Next!

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PORTER'S OFFICE. CONTINUOUS.**

Dolly's turn, finally. Her eyes wide as she steps into a wood-paneled sanctuary. Gold records line the walls. Behind a huge mahogany desk, Porter Wagoner lights another Newport.

PORTR

Close the door.

She snaps out of it, quickly closes the door behind her. Then turns to see him staring at her, stone-faced.

PORTR (CONT'D)

Name?

DOLLY

Dolly. Dolly Parton? Nice to see  
you again, Mr. Wagoner.

Porter takes a drag of his cig. An inscrutable, cold stare. A completely different guy than at Chet's party. All business.

PORTER

I need a new girl singer. Norma  
Jean's moving back to Oklahoma.

DOLLY

Oh well, that's very exciting-

PORTER

You got about two minutes. I  
wouldn't waste it.

She jolts into action, grabs her guitar, and sings--

DOLLY

*Don't try to pry your way out of  
this / Don't try to lie-*

PORTER

That the one Curly wrote? Heard it  
on Bobby's show. What else you got?

Dolly stops short. Her mind races.

DOLLY

Well... there is something I wrote  
myself. But I don't know-

PORTER

Minute and a half, honey.

Dolly's unnerved, rushes into a slower, more soulful song...

DOLLY

*Sittin' on the front porch on a  
summer afternoon...*

She misses a note, stumbles on a chord change. Porter frowns, lights another Newport. She's fucking this up...

Now or never, so she closes her eyes... and she's better!

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*In a straight backed chair on two  
legs, lookin' out at the field...*

It sounds great. She's more confident, nailing it! But then--

PORTER  
Open your damn eyes.

She stops short. Opens her eyes to see Porter glaring at her.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
I didn't say stop playing.

DOLLY  
Sorry, I-

PORTER  
If I can rattle you, you think you  
can handle thousands of people?

She doesn't know what to say. A deer in headlights.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
What the hell's that song?

DOLLY  
It's an original. 'Bout where I  
grew up in the Smoky Mountains.

PORTER  
I grew up poor as dirt too. Ozarks.  
Do you see me singin' about it?

DOLLY  
No, but-

PORTER  
We don't do sad stuff here. Me and  
Norma, we give people a good time.  
Sorry honey, but you're not what  
I'm lookin' for.

Dolly deflates. She starts to put away her guitar, but then  
stops. Turns to him, calm and collected...

DOLLY  
Mr. Wagoner, if y'all just wanna  
repeat what worked before, get you  
a new Norma, go on ahead. But I  
ain't interested in all that. I'm  
interested in bein' me. Dolly  
Parton, the one and only.

Mic drop. And with that, Dolly walks right out of the room.

**EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly slumps into the car. Carl looks to her hopefully--

DOLLY  
I didn't get it.

Carl nods, reaches for her hand lovingly. But just then--

SECRETARY (O.S.)  
Miss Parton?

They spin to see PORTER'S SECRETARY at the window.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)  
Mr. Wagoner wants you and your  
husband to come over for a drink  
tonight. Seven o'clock. Sharp.

**EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. NIGHT.**

A huge brick mansion, barely smaller than Chet's. Dolly rings the doorbell as Carl makes sure his denim shirt is tucked in.

CARL  
Told you I shoulda worn a jacket.

She pecks him on the cheek, just as the door swings open--

PORTRER  
There they are!

Porter opens the door grinning, in a denim shirt of his own.

PORTRER (CONT'D)  
Like your style, hoss. Get in here!

**INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly and Carl sit awkwardly on a couch, admiring the fancy digs. Porter across from them, much more relaxed than at work. RUTH WAGONER brings them two beers, smile plastered on.

PORTRER  
This is my wife Ruth. Thanks honey.

DOLLY  
Hi I'm Dolly!

Ruth just keeps smiling, sits next to Porter, silent.

PORTRER  
Y'all enjoy. I'm a bit of a  
teetotaler myself. Keeps me sharp.

DOLLY

Mr. Wagoner, I wanna apologize for today. I didn't mean to be rude.

PORTR

Don't you worry. I just wanted the four of us to chat. So everything can stay above board. See, people are gonna assume that me and Dolly are in a relationship. They did that with Norma Jean, with every girl singer I've ever worked with. But it's all part of the show. You understand?

Dolly and Carl do not understand.

DOLLY

Hold up. What are we talkin' about here? Are you sayin' I got the job?

PORTR

'Course. Didn't the girl tell you?

Dolly's jaw slowly drops. Then she jumps up and hugs Porter.

DOLLY

Thank you so much, Mr. Wagoner! I won't let you down.

He laughs as she climbs off of him.

PORTR

We sure do have a firecracker on our hands, don't we?

He grins at Carl, who fakes a smile back.

PORTR (CONT'D)

So there's gonna be rumors. But Dolly and me, this is a business relationship. And all I care about is business. You have my word.

DOLLY

Sounds good. I ain't worried 'bout nothin' but business either.

But Carl stares, skeptical. Porter stands to loom over Carl, offers a hand shake. Carl hesitates, but bites his tongue.

PORTR

We good?

Carl looks at Porter's outstretched hand... and they shake.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. LATER.**

Carl sits in bed silently. Dolly rummages through her closet.

DOLLY

You think they'll give me a dress  
or I gotta bring my own?  
(puts on announcer voice)  
Welcome to the Porter Wagoner Show,  
featuring Dolly Parton! Can you  
believe it?

She jumps in bed, curls up to Carl. He chooses his words...

CARL

I know how much this means to you,  
and I'm real proud. But be careful.

DOLLY

What do you mean?

CARL

Everybody knows he and Norma were  
sleeping together.

DOLLY

People talk, but they don't know.

CARL

I trust you, kid. But I trust him  
about as far as I can throw him.

DOLLY

I been handling Porters my whole  
life. Don't worry. I'll be fine.

She kisses him. Both their minds race, on different tracks...

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MORNING.**

First day of school! Dolly steps into the hallway, now  
bustling. No one pays her any mind. She spots the Secretary.

DOLLY

'Scuse me, I'm-

SECRETARY

This way.

And she takes off, Dolly racing to keep up.

## INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly follows the Secretary onto a dark, massive soundstage. Porter and his band THE WAGONMASTERS rehearse under bright lights. Dolly and the Secretary are the only women in sight.

PORTER

Goddamn it, Don! I told you to keep it tight on the bridge. Take it from the top of the third verse.

DON

You got it, Chief.

That's DON WARDEN, 40, lead guitarist and loyal sidekick.

DON (CONT'D)

OK now. 3, 2, 1, and-

PORTER

Hold up! Is that her?

Porter squints into the darkness. Dolly meekly waves.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Why didn't anybody tell me she was here? Jesus. Don, run it again 'til y'all get your heads outta your asses. I'm back in five.

Porter hustles toward Dolly. The Secretary hands him a towel.

SECRETARY

Sorry Chief, I was waiting for-

Porter raises a hand and she goes silent. He wipes the sweat from his face, and stares at Dolly, who awkwardly smiles.

PORTER

Howdy. Walk with me.

He heads into the dark, Dolly chasing. He lights a Newport, talks over his shoulder to Dolly, struggling to keep up.

PORTER (CONT'D)

That's a new number we're playing on tonight's show. Might have to get me a new drummer first though.

A COSTUME DESIGNER appears, holding a Nudie Suit-in-progress.

COSTUME DESIGNER

Chief, how's-

PORTER  
 Wider lapels! They can never get  
 too wide. C'mon now.

The designer nods, scurries away. Porter pushes a door--

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS.**

Back into the bright hallway. Dolly's blinded for a second as they pass door after door.

PORTER  
 Back here's all the dressing rooms  
 and offices. Belly of the beast.

A MAN pops his head out, grinning goofily, legal pad in hand.

MAN  
 Chief! Check this one out.

Porter spins to the show's comedian, SPECK RHODES. He reads--

SPECK  
 Folks, I just saw the best looking  
 policewoman out front. Doggone it,  
 she was so pretty I just wanted to  
 take the law into my own hands.

Dolly frowns. But Porter chuckles. And Speck winks at her.

PORTER  
 That'll play, Speck. That'll play.

Dolly chases Porter to the last door at the end of the hall, a star labeled NORMA JEAN still on it. He doesn't notice.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 Get settled and come on up for  
 rehearsal. We tape at 5pm sharp.

DOLLY  
 I been meanin' to ask, what about  
 my Uncle Bill? We play together.

PORTER  
 I hired you, Dolly. I didn't hire  
 no Uncle Bill. See you up there.

DOLLY  
 Thank you Mr. Wagoner.

PORTER  
 Porter!

He heads off with a charming grin. She eyes the Norma star.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.**

Dolly enters. Big mirror, big closet, big couch. Big leagues.

She sits at the mirror, so nervous. Finds the Army photo of Carl, wedges it in the mirror frame. Smiles at it, comforted.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly heads to rehearsal. Hears LAUGHTER, peeks into a room. It's the BAND, on a coffee break in the canteen. All veterans of the show, old friends, and men. Dolly's none of the above.

DOLLY

Hey y'all.

They all stop, turn, stare. Not so much as a smile. Until--

DON

Dolly Parton! In the flesh.

Don, big smile, hurries over to shake her hand.

DON (CONT'D)

Don Warden. Big fan. Happy to have you on board!

Dolly smiles. *Maybe Don will be an ally.*

PORTER (O.S.)

Put down them coffees, boys!

Porter's in the hall. The band straightens up. Party over.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Got a show to do. Unless y'all fuck it up! Lookin' at you, Don Warden!

DON

You got it, Chief!

PORTER

Hot damn! Best man I know.

Porter walks on. *He and Don are best friends.* Dolly gulps.

DON

He's all bark, no bite.

PORTER (O.S.)  
I heard that! WOOF! WOOF!

Don smiles, rolls his eyes at her. Dolly gulps again.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. THAT EVENING.**

On a long line of FANS, Carl holds a bouquet of flowers. An ASSISTANT moves the crowd up to the seats, but stops Carl--

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
Bleachers are full. Rest of y'all  
watch from the pen.

He herds Carl and the fans to a roped off area in the back.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.**

Dolly at the mirror, her hand shakes as she applies lipstick--

INTERCOM  
Sound check onstage, ten minutes.

PORTER (O.S.)  
Really good work today. Real good.

She spins, hiding her hand. Porter grins from the doorway.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Don't be shy with that makeup now.

DOLLY  
You don't think it's too much?

PORTER  
No such thing. We're puttin' on a  
show. Gotta be larger than life.  
I'll set you up with my tailor. Got  
an idea for your hair too.

Dolly nods, overwhelmed. He notices, smiles at her.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
You look real nice. Real nice.  
They're gonna love ya. I know it.

He finally notices the Norma Jean star on the door.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Shit. We'll get you a new one.

With that, he's gone. Her smile drops to a look of terror.

## INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. SAME TIME.

Carl strains to look around the bleachers at the stage, where Speck Rhodes warms up the crowd with a joke.

SPECK

... this girl had on this little bitty bikini. My wife says ain't that a shame, just plum ridiculous, that girl wearing that little bitty two piece suit. Says, I think she should just wear one piece. I said all right. Which piece you think she should wear, top or bottom?

The audience LAUGHS.

SPECK (CONT'D)

That's it from me. Enjoy the show!

The lights lower. Cue OPENING MUSIC, the twang of a banjo...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Direct from Nashville, Tennessee,  
America's #1 country music program,  
The Porter Wagoner Show. And now,  
here he is... Porter Wagoner!

Lights up ON PORTER, in a sparkling Nudie Suit, center stage:

PORTER

Howdy! Right now I want you to meet the new little lady on our show. Miss Norma Jean has been with us for many years, but had to leave because we work so much, to have a little time for her personal life. And I looked long and hard, and found a little gal that I know you're really gonna love, cause she's a fine singer and one of the loveliest little gals I've ever met. Let's give her a great big welcome as she sings a song that she had a big hit on called "Dumb Blonde". She ain't no dumb blonde though. Pretty Miss Dolly Parton!

CAMERA PANS ACROSS TO DOLLY, smiling meekly, unable to hide her fear, how desperately she wants to be liked. She sings--

DOLLY

*Don't try to pry your way out of  
this / Don't try to lie...*

In the pen, Carl grins proudly. He claps along with the audience as Dolly finishes the song. CAMERA PANS TO PORTER:

PORTR  
Mighty fine Dolly, come on over a minute. Mighty, mighty nice, thank you a lot, and welcome to the show.

Dolly's voice is so soft it's almost hard to hear.

DOLLY  
Thank you, it's nice to be here.

PORTR  
We're gonna really enjoy working with you, and you wrote so many fine songs and sing so pretty. So we'll look forward to havin' you around a long, long time.

DOLLY  
Well I hope to be, and thank you very much.

PORTR  
We'll be right back in just a minute or so.

Lights down. Ad break. Dolly exhales. But the crowd BOOS!

CROWD  
Nor-ma! Nor-ma! Nor-ma!

In the pen, Carl looks around at the crowd in disbelief.

PORTR  
Hey! Y'all be nice now.

That quiets the crowd. He whispers to a shocked Dolly--

PORTR (CONT'D)  
You did great. Don't let nobody tell you any different.

The lights come back up. Dolly still stunned. Porter smiles--

PORTR (CONT'D)  
Thank you very much for watching that message. Dolly and I were talking about Miss Norma Jean, and how you never can replace someone.  
(MORE)

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 But how Dolly's actually a star in  
 her own right, and a wonderful  
 little gal. You'll all learn to  
 love her, I'm sure of it. Now...

Wow. Porter actually heard her. *Dolly Parton, the one and only.* Relieved, she watches Porter move on to the next act...

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. LATER.**

After the show, the Production Assistant mans the door from the stage. Carl approaches with his flowers.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
 No audience back here, buddy.

CARL  
 I just wanted to give these to my  
 wife. Dolly Parton?

The PA's moved on. Carl spots Porter down the hall with Don.

CARL (CONT'D)  
 Oh hey, Porter!

Porter looks up at Carl, but then just turns back to Don.

At the end of the hall, Dolly closes her dressing room door.

CARL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Dolly!

She spots Carl. Grins, heads toward him, past Porter and Don--

DOLLY  
 See y'all tomorrow!

PORTER  
 Hold up. You ain't done yet.

She looks from Carl to Porter. Then hustles down to Carl.

DOLLY  
 Sorry. I'll see you at home.

She kisses him, heads back, leaving Carl with the flowers.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. CONTROL ROOM. LATER.**

ON SCREEN: Dolly sings "Dumb Blonde", but without sound. Suddenly the image REWINDS, starts to play again...

PORTER (O.S.)  
 They can tell you're uncomfortable.  
 See? You're shakin' like a leaf.

Porter mans the controls at a bank of monitors, studying game tape like pro athletes. Dolly's dejected, but she's learning.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 We're here to give folks a good time. They can't have a good time unless they believe we're havin' a good time. So no matter what's goin' on inside, your job's to make sure that on the outside, you're havin' a ball. That's being a pro.

DOLLY  
 I just get so nervous on stage.

PORTER  
 But then you get off, and you got confidence for days! Got a wit like a whip. So use that. And smile. Always. If it gets bad, look on over at me. We're a team.

Dolly nods. Absorbs the advice like a sponge, mesmerized by the undivided attention of someone she's idolized for years.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 Ok. That's enough for tonight.

DOLLY  
 Thank you, Mr... Porter. Today was a dream come true.

PORTER  
 You're a star, Dolly. I know it.  
 Now we just gotta show the world.

He squeezes her hand, a sweet mentor moment. As she goes--

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 Don't worry about the fans now.  
 They'll come to love you. No one's ever gonna mention Norma again.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.**

Dolly steps into the dark house, finally home. She stops at the sight of Carl's flowers in a vase.

## INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

In the dark, Dolly slips into bed, cuddles up to wake Carl.

DOLLY  
I love my flowers. Thank you.

CARL  
You were great, kid.

DOLLY  
I dunno. But Porter says I did OK.

CARL  
You stayed late with him?

DOLLY  
We watched the tape of the show.  
I'm gonna learn so much.

She leans in to kiss him, but he stops her, turns serious.

CARL  
I wanna support you, but I don't  
wanna be disrespected like tonight.  
I ain't just somebody's husband.

DOLLY  
'Course you ain't. You're my man.

They kiss. Dolly rolls over. *This might get complicated...*

## EXT. KNOXVILLE THEATER. EVENING. WEEKS LATER.

NORMA JEAN in huge letters on a poster for a Porter Wagoner touring show. Dolly stares at it. *Shit.*

## INT. KNOXVILLE THEATER. LATER.

Dolly watches from the wings as Porter introduces her.

PORTER  
Pretty little Miss Dolly Parton!

She's terrified, but snaps on a smile as she strides onstage. Meager applause, a smattering of BOOS. She stays positive--

DOLLY  
*Don't try to pry your way out of  
this / Don't try to lie...*

CROWD

Nor-ma! Nor-ma! Nor-ma!

DOLLY

*Or I'll catch you in it...*

CROWD

Nor-ma!! Nor-ma!! Nor-ma!!

Dolly closes her eyes, keeps smiling, tears welling up...

DOLLY

*Cause this dumb blonde ain't  
nobody's fool!*

She rushes offstage and the floodgates open. She SOBS.

**INT. KNOXVILLE THEATER. GREEN ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly shuts the door behind her. Suddenly she doubles over in pain, clutching her LOWER ABDOMEN--

A KNOCK jolts her. She wipes her eyes as Porter peeks in--

PORTER

You OK?

DOLLY

*Yeah! No! It's just female pain.  
And the crowd, calling for Norma...*

The tears rush back in. Porter freezes, so uncomfortable.

PORTER

Sorry. Never was good with tears.

DOLLY

Didn't you have any sisters?

PORTER

*I was the one makin' 'em cry. Don't  
think I've cried a day in my life.*

She smiles. He leads her to a couch. She catches her breath.

PORTER (CONT'D)

*You closed your eyes out there  
again. What's goin' on there?*Dolly gulps, looks at him, debating whether to open up. He smiles back at her -- *you can trust me.*

## DOLLY

When I was little, I found an old chapel in the woods. Everybody'd forgotten about it, except some older kids who'd go make out there. But it was beautiful. And there was an old broke piano. So I'd go there to write songs or just be alone. And sometimes, when I need to escape, I close my eyes and go back. Call it the God Place. Where I'm free to just be me. No one's judging.

Porter watches her, moved. Takes her hand in his. Dolly holds her breath for his reaction. She just opened up wide...

## PORTER

You got something special inside. But folks can only see what you show 'em. So let's make the outside just as special.

Dolly's not sure he understood her point. But she's touched by his belief in her. She watches his wheels turn...

## PORTER (CONT'D)

How 'bout we sing duets? Build your confidence up. I tell ya, I bet they'll love you if you're with me.

Dolly's skeptical, but Porter's excited. And he's the boss.

## DOLLY

What'd you have in mind?

As Porter grins, we enter a **MONTAGE** of the next few months...

## PORTER &amp; DOLLY (PRE-LAP)

*Two sides to every story! / We can straighten this out if we'll take time...*

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PORTER'S OFFICE. DAY.**

Porter and Dolly at his desk, sitting close, working on duets. She plays guitar and sings, he scribbles lyrics.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAY.**

Porter and Dolly sing the new song on the show. Dolly's nervous. Porter nods at her. She exhales. *They're a team.*

PORTER & DOLLY  
*Two sides to every story! / You  
 tell yours, and I'll tell mine...*

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. CONTROL ROOM. NIGHT.**

Late night tape session. Porter critiques. Dolly absorbs.

**EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. LATER.**

Porter and Dolly laugh in front of Dolly's car. Don waves goodbye, eyes them as he gets into his car.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.**

Home late, Dolly sees the table set for a surprise romantic dinner of Big Macs. But Carl's gone to bed. *Shit.*

**INT. PHOTO STUDIO. DAY.**

A photo shoot of classic Dolly and Porter DUET ALBUM COVERS--

FLASH! The dynamic duo in matching red turtlenecks, hugging.

FLASH! In rhinestone-covered Nudie Suits, laughing.

FLASH! In baby blue tuxedos, she play-slapping his shoulder.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. EVENING.**

Dolly notices a new star on her door: DOLLY PARTON.

She opens the door to find Porter sitting in her makeup chair. He springs up, ready to go. *Field trip time!*

**EXT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. LATER.**

The holiest shrine of country music, the Carnegie Hall of Nashville. Dolly gazes up at its red brick facade, in awe.

As a CROWD streams in the front door, Porter pulls her around the side, down a dingy alley, and through an UNMARKED DOOR...

**INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. BASEMENT. CONTINUOUS.**

They pass a hissing boiler, in the bowels of the building. Porter bounds up some stairs, two at a time. Dolly chases...

**INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. BACKSTAGE. CONTINUOUS.**

Porter opens a door to find: CHAOS. A crush of ROADIES and GROUPIES and MUSICIANS. Pre-show frenzy. Dolly beams.

Porter takes Dolly's hand, pulls her into the scrum, nodding hellos, slapping backs, arriving at ANOTHER UNMARKED DOOR...

**INT. RYMAN THEATER. COSTUME DEPARTMENT. CONTINUOUS.**

Porter holds it open for Dolly, wide eyed as she sees...

Hair hair hair! A wonderland of wigs. Every shape and size. She's in heaven, AKA the Ryman Costume Department's Wig Room.

Dolly tries one on. Another. On an upper shelf, Dolly eyes a TRULY OVER-THE-TOP WIG, the biggest and most badass of all...

But Porter vetoes it. Dolly defers, picks a different one.

**EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. THAT NIGHT.**

Dolly hops out of her car, in a new wig and in her own world. Goes inside, not noticing Carl working in his shed out front.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.**

Dolly sits with her guitar, scribbles lyrics. Always writing. Carl enters, considers interrupting, but heads to bed.

**END MONTAGE.**

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MORNING.**

Dolly arrives for work, a few sheets of paper in her fist. Catches up to Porter and shoves the papers in his face.

DOLLY

If those ain't good enough for RCA,  
then Chet Atkins can kiss my ass.

PORTR

In his dreams.

DOLLY

That mean you'll show 'em to him?

PORTR

When you're ready.

DOLLY  
Yeah? Well when's that gonna be?

He stifles a grin, pushes through the door to the stage...

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. LATER.**

At the end of a long rehearsal, Porter holds up a magazine.

PORTER  
Hot off the presses. Billboard  
Country Western chart, new number  
one. "Two Sides To Every Story", by  
yours truly and Miss Dolly Parton!

Dolly yelps, hugs Don. The band celebrates. Ever the showman--

PORTER (CONT'D)  
And now, to the parking lot!

**EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly and the band exit the building to find Porter, grinning  
in front of a brand new Cadillac, a giant bow on its hood.

PORTER  
Welcome to the Cadillac Club.

He tosses the keys to Dolly. She bear hugs him.

**INT. DOLLY'S CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly drives, Porter in shotgun. Neither can stop grinning.

DOLLY  
Not bad. But I woulda picked gold.

PORTER  
Beggars can't be choosers now.

DOLLY  
Who's beggin'? I'll buy myself a  
gold one soon enough.

They share a smile. Then he spots an upcoming turn.

PORTER  
One more thing. Take a right.

DOLLY  
Porter Wagoner, full of surprises.

**EXT. MUSIC ROW. CONTINUOUS.**

They roll down Music Row. Porter points out a house.

PORTER  
Pull over here.

Dolly parks in front of the biggest house on the street. RCA. She stares. Then smacks Porter in the shoulder. He yelps.

**INT. RCA RECORDS. CHET ATKINS' OFFICE. MOMENTS LATER.**

Chet Atkins waves Porter and Dolly into his office. Dolly's stunned by the sheer number of gold records on the walls.

CHET  
Porter! What a nice surprise.

PORTER  
Sorry, Chet. But it's urgent.

CHET  
What, Dolly crashed another party?  
I gotta bail her out?

DOLLY  
Nah, I only like crashin' yours.

Chet smiles. Porter SLAMS the Billboard magazine on the desk.

PORTER  
We think it's about time y'all sign  
Dolly. As a solo artist.

Dolly is stunned, stares at Porter. Chet shifts in his seat.

CHET  
You know I think Dolly's a mighty  
talented gal. But we just can't  
take on any girl singers right now.

PORTER  
Horseshit. You can if you want to.  
I'll produce her. Work with her in  
the studio. We'll keep up the duets  
to introduce her to the public.

CHET  
You got time for all that?

PORTER  
Dolly's a priority for me.

Dolly blushes, flattered but embarrassed.

PORTR (CONT'D)  
I guarantee you won't lose a penny  
on her. I'll cover any loss myself.

CHET  
I'm sorry, Porter, we just can't-

DOLLY  
Porter, come on, you heard the man-

PORTR  
If you don't sign her, I'll walk.

This stops the room. Off Chet, realizing Porter means it...

**INT. DOLLY'S CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly speeds down the road, HOOTING and HOLLERING.

DOLLY  
Were you really gonna walk? Or were  
you bluffin'?

PORTR  
A winner never shows his hand.

Dolly turns onto Porter's street, parks outside his house.

DOLLY  
Thank you, Porter. Really.

PORTR  
Like I always said, you're a star.

She blushes. A mentor moment, but maybe more. An added jolt. They lock eyes. *Are they going to kiss?* But Porter defuses--

PORTR (CONT'D)  
You best run along now.

He smiles, hops out. Dolly watches him head inside, confused.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. LATER.**

Dolly, mind racing, shuts the door, hoping no one's home.

CARL (O.S.)  
Kid? That you?

*Shit.*

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly enters, nervous. Carl looks up from reading in bed.

DOLLY  
I just got signed to RCA. Solo.

He jumps up to hug her. But senses something, pulls back.

CARL  
You all right?

She just nods, turns to the bathroom, leaves Carl confused...

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BATHROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly in a bubble bath, washcloth over her face. Carl pulls up a stool, sits next to her, holds her hand lovingly.

CARL  
You should be proud of yourself,  
kid. I sure am.

DOLLY  
I'm just... overwhelmed I think.

He takes off her washcloth playfully. She smiles.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
You wanna come to Sevierville this  
weekend? Givin' me the keys to the  
dang city. Callin' it Dolly Day.

CARL  
That right? Yeah I dunno. I'll just  
get in the way at that kinda thing.

DOLLY  
Mama and Daddy are comin'. But I  
want my whole family there. That  
means you.

He smiles, but Dolly sees he's tired of being her plus-one.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
I just miss you is all.

Now it's his turn to see her. She's asking for his support.

CARL  
I'll come to the next one. Promise.

Dolly smiles gratefully. A compromise, sealed with a kiss.

**EXT. SEVIERVILLE. PARKING LOT. DAYS LATER.**

Dolly parks next to Porter, leaning on his own Cadillac. Through her window, she hands him a dry-cleaned Nudie Suit.

PORTER

Thank you darling. I owe you.

DOLLY

Put it on your tab.

PORTER

Hey now, who's here supporting you  
on your big day?

Suddenly, Porter drops his trousers.

DOLLY

Porter! The hell you doin'?

PORTER

You see a green room 'round here?

Dolly's not sure how she should feel seeing her boss undress. She watches, then feels a twinge of guilt and looks away.

**EXT. SEVIERVILLE. MAIN DRAG. LATER.**

On the main drag of a tiny Tennessee backwoods town, Dolly sits next to Porter in an open car. They wave to their FANS.

Dolly spots a WOMAN ON THE CORNER -- blonde hair piled high, cleavage bursting, ruby red lipstick. A bold look.

DOLLY

Ain't she beautiful? If I had hair  
that high, I'd die a happy woman.

PORTER

C'mon. She's the town tramp, Dolly.  
Looks like a damn circus clown.

Off Dolly, still admiring the woman as they drive by...

**EXT. SEVIERVILLE. TOWN HALL STEPS. LATER.**

SNAP! SNAP! Dolly, Porter, and THE MAYOR pose for photos. She steps to a podium, a bit shy. 7,000 people are there for her!

DOLLY

Hey y'all.

WOOOO!!!! She shrinks. Porter puts his arm around her.

PORTER

Don't we all just love this gal?  
I'm awful proud. She just signed  
with the top label in Nashville,  
and our duets were nominated for a  
Country Music Award. Folks, our  
Dolly's on her way to the big time!  
With some help from yours truly.

Dolly smiles, used to Porter taking some of the credit.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Dolly, whaddya say? Should we sing?

WOOOO!!!! And she and Porter start singing up a storm...

**LATER.**

They sign autographs. In the crowd, Dolly spots her PARENTS.

DOLLY

Mama! Daddy!

She skips over to AVIE LEE PARTON, her warm Mama, and LEE PARTON, her stoic Daddy, dressed in their Sunday best.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Did you like the show?

AVIE LEE

Sure did! Ain't that right Lee?

Dolly turns to her Daddy, hoping for a compliment. But he just gives her a half-smile and nod. Clearly he loves her, but has trouble expressing it. Dolly deflates a little, when--

PORTER (O.S.)

Are these the special folks I've  
heard so much about?

Porter extends his hand with a grin. Avie hugs him instead.

AVIE LEE

You're so much better looking in  
person than on the TV!

PORTER

Ha, thank you a lot. Means so much.

Porter turns to Lee, offers his hand.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
So nice to finally meet you, sir.

Lee is silent, barely shakes. Porter smiles, always a pro.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Brought y'all a gift.

From his back pocket, Porter pulls out a copy of THE NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN. He gives the newspaper to Lee.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Look! Dolly's on the front page!

Lee looks at the words on the paper like a confused child. His cheeks flush, embarrassed. If he was standoffish before, he now completely recedes. Even Dolly and Avie Lee tense up.

Porter's confused, until he realizes -- *Lee can't read*. Dolly takes the paper, saves face.

DOLLY  
Oh, we ain't really newspaper-  
readin' folk, Porter. We're so poor  
we use it as wallpaper!

Porter laughs gently, but knows he put his foot in his mouth.

PORTER  
Well, pleasure to meet y'all. You  
got a very talented daughter.

Porter winks at Dolly and goes. She smiles, touched. But then eyes her Dad. She so wants him to be proud of her. To approve of her. But for now, he just smokes, silently humiliated.

DOLLY  
Meet y'all at home, all right? I  
got a big surprise waitin' for you!

Mama gives Dolly a smile, then puts her arm around her husband, comforting him. As they walk off, Dolly watches.

**EXT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly pulls up to a ramshackle cabin in the Smoky Mountain foothills. Thick groves of pine trees, familiar from the opening sequence. Beautiful, but a dirt poor, tough life.

Dolly parks. Gets out, takes it all in. She watches a BUTTERFLY float by. Gorgeous. Peaceful.

But the moment of calm is interrupted by her Daddy's truck.

**INT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly opens the door, her parents trailing. Mama so excited, Daddy relieved to be home as he yanks off his tie.

DOLLY

Ta-da! Had 'em deliver it while we  
was downtown.

The cabin's been transformed. New chairs, sofa, everything. Mama lights up. Daddy's face drops.

AVIE LEE

Oh my word, Dolly! Thank you!

Avie hugs Dolly, who then turns to Daddy, hoping for a smile at least. He nods, heads outside. She's crushed yet again.

AVIE LEE (CONT'D)

Don't give him no mind.

**INT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly explores, trying to shake off her Daddy's reaction. She sees the twin bed she shared with her sisters. The newspaper-covered walls. All the memories flooding back...

In a closet, she finds a trunk of old childhood clothes. Her eyes go wide at a hand-sewn coat of multi-colored rags.

**EXT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. PORCH. CONTINUOUS.**

Lee chain smokes. Dolly comes out, holding the coat proudly.

DOLLY

Remember this ol' thing? Mama made  
it for me. I loved it so much.

Lee nods again, almost smiles. But keeps smoking silently.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Do you like the new chairs and all?

LEE

Don't spend your money on us.

DOLLY

I make 60 grand a year. What else  
am I going to spend it on?

Dolly's trying to keep it light, but he's stung. It dawns on her -- *that's more money than he's made his whole life.*

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Sorry about the newspaper. But you  
got nothin' to be ashamed of.

LEE

I ain't ashamed.

But he clearly is. He just has too much pride to admit it.

DOLLY

Porter was just bein' nice. You  
coulda been nice too. He's my boss.

Lee half-turns. He seems about to say something, impart some  
wisdom, maybe an olive branch. Dolly holds her breath...

LEE

I may not know much. But I know  
that man is a sack of bullshit.

She slumps, having disappointed him yet again. Mama comes out-

DOLLY

Bye, Mama. Love you.

AVIE LEE

Love you more! Say, did Uncle Bill  
get signed at RCA Records too?

DOLLY

Yeah. It's complicated. Love y'all!

Dolly climbs into her car and escapes.

**INT. DOLLY'S CADILLAC. LATER.**

Dolly drives, knocked down a few pegs. She looks at the multi-colored coat. Starts to hum a new tune, what will become  
"Coat of Many Colors". Closes her eyes, to the God Place...

DOLLY

*Back through the years I go  
wanderin' once again...*

HONK!!!!!!

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Sorry!

She looks for a pen. Spots the dry-cleaning tag of Porter's  
Nudie Suit. She jerks the car over, cutting someone else off.

She parks, and scribbles lyrics onto the dry-cleaning tag.

**LATER.**

Back in Nashville. Dolly pulls into a familiar alley...

**INT. RYMAN THEATER. BASEMENT. MOMENTS LATER.**

She passes the hissing boiler, on her own this time.

**INT. RYMAN THEATER. COSTUME DEPARTMENT. MOMENTS LATER.**

Inspired by the woman on the street corner, Dolly marvels at the wigs. She eyes the TRULY OVER-THE-TOP WIG again. Tempted, but she's not ready. She settles for a slightly smaller one.

**INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. LOBBY. NIGHT. DAYS LATER.**

Back in the fanciest hotel in town for the Country Music Awards. Black tie, industry bigshots. Dolly, in a gown and new wig, smiles at Carl, uncomfortable in an ill-fitting tux.

DOLLY  
Means a lot you came.

Carl manages a smile. Chet Atkins approaches--

CHET  
Dolly, you look amazing!

DOLLY  
Why thank you! This here's my  
husband, Carl.

Carl is silent, awkward as he shakes Chet's hand.

CHET  
I was startin' to think Dolly made  
you up! What line of work you in?

CARL  
Asphalt.

CHET  
Well, I'll be. Say, how's it feel  
to be Mr. Dolly Parton?

Carl winces. Chet laughs, slaps him on the shoulder.

**INT. HERMITAGE HOTEL. BALLROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

An ASSISTANT leads Dolly and Carl down the aisle. Porter turns from his seat in the third row, waves to Dolly.

PORTER

There she is! You know John, June.

Dolly looks down the row... it's Johnny Cash and June Carter!

JUNE

You could hit heaven with that  
hair. I love it!

Dolly smiles and waves. Porter shakes Carl's hand.

PORTER

Good to see you, hoss. Kiss your  
gal goodbye now. Show's startin'.

DOLLY

But Carl's sittin' with me.

PORTER

Just talent down here.

Dolly smiles an apology to Carl.

CARL

Where the hell'm I supposed to sit?

ASSISTANT

Happy to show you, Mr. Parton.

*What the fuck.* Carl exhales as he gets whisked away--

DOLLY

Love you!

Dolly sits. The lights lower. Porter shakes a pill from a PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE, downs it. He notices Dolly watching--

PORTER

Nervous?

Dolly nods. Porter smiles, puts his hand on her knee. She almost moves it, but doesn't. The relationship shifting...

**ONSTAGE. LATER.**

Chet Atkins at the podium--

CHET

It is my honor to announce the 1968  
vocal group of the year... Porter  
Wagoner and Dolly Parton!

Dolly lights up. APPLAUSE. The orchestra plays. Porter and  
Dolly head up, holding hands. He steps to the mic.

PORTER

Thank you very much Chet, and  
everyone with CMA. We are certainly  
real pleased. Thank you so much,  
we're real grateful.

All Dolly has the time or courage to say is, mouse-like--

DOLLY

Thank you.

They're a duo now, but Porter's in charge. They head to their  
seats, his arm over her shoulder. Like two kids going steady.

Sitting a mile away, Carl seethes. Next to him, Ruth Wagoner  
claps politely, her permanent smile still plastered on.

**INT. LIMO. LATER.**

Dolly and Carl are silent, tense. He stares out the window.

DOLLY

You ain't never gonna be Mr. Dolly  
Parton. You hear me? Never.

Carl looks in her eyes, speaks slowly and deliberately.

CARL

I'm not coming to one of these  
things ever again. I ain't turning  
into Porter's wife.

She nods. Point taken. She holds his hand. Peace. For now...

**EXT. SMALL COUNTRY STADIUM. OFFSTAGE. NIGHT.**

Dolly and Porter back on the road. It never ends. They're in  
the wings discussing the set list with the Wagonmasters.

PORTER

"Just the Two of Us", then "Always  
Always", then-

DOLLY  
 "Coat of Many Colors".

PORTER  
 No. Too downbeat. And last time I checked, this ain't the Dolly Parton Show. Don, what show is it?

DON  
 Porter Wagoner Show, Chief.

PORTER  
 That's right. Don't you forget it.

*Yikes.* Dolly's stung. A tense silence descends over the band.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 I'm kiddin'! 'Course you can sing it. But don't say I didn't warn ya.

Porter moves off. Don stays with Dolly, offers a warm smile.

DON  
 Piece of advice. Girl singers got a shelf life 'round here, once Chief thinks they're too big for their britches. Hell, we all got a shelf life. But I don't want what happened to Norma to happen to you.

Don heads to the stage. Leaves Dolly pondering...

**EXT. SMALL COUNTRY STADIUM. ONSTAGE. LATER.**

The crowd ROARS as they finish "Always, Always", one of their many love duets. Now time for "Coat". Dolly's all nerves.

DOLLY  
*Back through the years I go  
 wanderin' once again / Back to the  
 seasons of my youth...*

It's slow. Just as Porter predicted, the crowd gets restless.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*I recall a box of rags that someone  
 gave us / And how my Mama put the  
 rags to use...*

CROWD  
 Two Sides!! Two Sides!! Two Sides!!

Dolly looks to Porter. He steps in, happy to be the savior--

PORTER  
 Y'all want "Two Sides to Every Story?" Well, OK. You're the boss!

WOOOO!!!!!! And Dolly begrudgingly sings it yet again.

**INT. TOUR BUS. LATER.**

An overnight drive. Dolly's discouraged. Porter pontificates.

PORTER  
 Country songs are about three things: drinkin', cheatin', and heartbreak. "Coat of Many Colors" breaks the mold. Not in a good way.

DOLLY  
 But it's about how I grew up.

PORTER  
 It's about your Mama's rags! Quit writin' about poor folk. Poor folk don't buy records. You gotta go uptempo. No more sad-ass songs.

DOLLY  
 My songs ain't sad-ass!

PORTER  
 C'mon. What about "Gypsy, Joe and Me"? A couple out walking their dog. The guy dies, the dog dies, and the girl commits suicide!

DOLLY  
 That happened to someone I know!  
 Shouldn't I write what I know?

PORTER  
 Not if you don't know much! Write what sells. Uptempo, catchy. Don, can you help this little lady out?

A row back, Don thinks, then rips off a CATCHY GUITAR LICK.

DON  
 "Mule Skinner Blues".

*Perfect.* Porter shoots her a look. Dolly nods, conceding to the boss yet again. DON'S GUITAR bleeds into...

**INT. RECORDING STUDIO BOOTH. DAY.**

A full band, fanciest studio yet. The song is pure Porter. Brassy, showy, fun. Dolly steps up, has nothing to lose...

DOLLY  
*Well good mooooooooorning Captain!*

Whoa! She holds the "o" for an insane amount of time.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*Good morning to you sir, hey, hey,  
yeah / Do you need another mule  
skinner, down on your new mud run?*

She is KICKING FUCKING ASS. Across the room, Porter lets out a WHISTLE. He holds a whip. Lets it fly -- CRACK!

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*Well I'm a lady mule Skinner from  
down old Tennessee way / Hey hey!*

She's having a ball. So's Porter. He watches her, transfixed.

PORTER (PRE-LAP)  
Like to propose a toast!

**INT. TOOTSIE'S ORCHID LOUNGE. LATER.**

The famous bar behind the Ryman. Signed photos cover the walls. Patsy Cline, Hank Williams. Porter raises a shot.

PORTER  
Y'all know it's a special night if  
I'm drinkin'! Here's to Dolly, who  
found God in that studio. May you  
never sing a sad-ass song again!

CLINK! Down the hatch. A euphoric energy to the affair.

DON  
And to the Chief, who did what he  
does best. Crack a damn whip!

CHEERS. Dolly laughs. More shots... and more... and more...

**EXT. TOOTSIE'S ORCHID LOUNGE. LATER.**

Porter and Dolly stumble out of the bar. Both wasted.

DOLLY

I don't wanna go home yet! Carl'll just be in bed, snorin'.

PORTER

We could have a nightcap at my place. Ruth's at her sister's.

Dolly hesitates, tempted...

DOLLY

Probably shouldn't.

PORTER

OK. But I'm givin' you a ride home.

DOLLY

I can drive myself, thank you.

PORTER

No you cannot. You're five feet. I can carry my liquor better'n you.

Dolly gets up in his face, almost flirtatiously--

DOLLY

Then let's go. *Chauffeur*.

**INT. PORTER'S CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.**

Porter drives, eyes Dolly. He's the softest we've seen him.

PORTER

You were really somethin' today.

DOLLY

Just followin' orders, captain.

PORTER

Nah. You were special. Like God was singin' right through you.

DOLLY

Stop! I'm gettin' red as an apple.

PORTER

I've had a lotta girl singers. You got more talent than all of 'em combined. Someday you're gonna change the world.

Dolly's never heard this level of belief in her -- not from Carl, not from anyone. And coming from the King of Country...

It's intoxicating.

They lock eyes. The energy of the night, the sexual tension over the years, it's bubbling up. About to boil over...

**INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly and Porter bust through the door. Kissing, groping, ripping each other's clothes off, clawing at each other--

**INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

They jump in bed. But before we see the deed, we CUT TO--

**THE NEXT MORNING.**

Dolly jolts awake. Hungover as hell. And Porter's long gone.

A note on the bedside table: *At work. See you later.*

**EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly exits into the blinding sun, a mess, in last night's clothes. Classic walk of shame. Euphoria replaced by reality.

She looks for her car. Not there. She remembers: Tootsie's.

DOLLY

Shit.

**EXT. TOOTSIE'S PARKING LOT. LATER.**

Dolly climbs out of a cab, embarrassed. Hops in her car. Inspects herself in the rearview. She looks like sex.

DOLLY

Shit.

**INT. DOLLY'S CADILLAC. LATER.**

Dolly drives toward her house. Sees Carl working in his shed.

DOLLY

Shit!

She scoots down in the front seat and drives right by.

**EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. LATER.**

Dolly parks next to Porter's car. No other cars in the lot.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly sneaks in. Looks both ways. Coast clear.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. LATER.**

Dolly takes a shower, wiping her face and body of last night.

**EXT. NASHVILLE STREETS. LATER.**

Dolly drives, freshly showered, still overwhelmed.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly opens the front door. Takes a breath, snaps on a smile.

DOLLY

Hey Carl! Sorry! We were at the studio 'til all hours. Then a few of us had a little too much to drink after. I crashed on a couch!

Carl comes into the foyer. Gives her a small smile.

CARL

Sounds fun.

Dolly heads upstairs. Her face falls, racked with guilt. Carl watches her, knows something's off, but bites his tongue.

PRE-LAP: The upbeat GUITAR STRUMS of "Joshua"...

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAY.**

CLOSE ON Porter's big ol' grin, the Wagonmasters behind him.

PORTR

Always a thrill for me to introduce this little lady. She's gonna sing her first number one country song she wrote and recorded, "Joshua". Pretty Miss Dolly Parton!

CAMERA PULLS BACK to find Dolly, in front of Porter and the band. She is the leader, they are backup. Power shifting...

She's grinning, bopping along to the beat in a big ol' wig.

DOLLY

*Well a good ways down the railroad  
track / There was this little old  
rundown shack...*

It's an upbeat crowd-pleaser, just like "Mule Skinner". She's doing what Porter's taught her, and damn is it working.

The song continues over a **MONTAGE** of the next few months:

**INT. RYMAN THEATER. NIGHT.**

Porter is onstage in all his glory -- pompadour sky-high, Nudie Suit sparkling like a diamond. Women swoon and shriek.

Porter then points to the wings. As Dolly struts onstage...

The place FUCKING ERUPTS.

Porter counts off the band, and he and Dolly are off...

**INT. RYMAN THEATER. BACKSTAGE. LATER.**

Post-show, all alone, Dolly and Porter make out in the wings.

**EXT. RYMAN THEATER STAGE DOOR. LATER.**

Dolly and Porter exit together. A swarm of RABID FANS push for autographs. The duo happily oblige.

**INT. PHOTO STUDIO. ANOTHER DAY.**

More photo shoots of Dolly and Porter DUET ALBUM COVERS--

FLASH! Their faces side-by-side, framed by '70s psychedelic art. Dolly's wig is now just as high as Porter's pompadour.

FLASH! The pair separated, staring off. Lovers, mid-fight.

And now some DOLLY SOLO ALBUM COVERS--

FLASH! Dolly alone on a couch, surrounded by throw pillows, looking like a badass in a blue satin dress and curly wig.

FLASH! Dolly peering out towards the golden rays of heaven.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAY.**

A show taping. Porter and Dolly ham it up as they sing a duet. They smile, pout, flirt. The crowd eats it up.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. LATER.**

An ASSISTANT rolls a mail cart down the hall. Hands Porter a few letters, then brings a HUGE BAG to Dolly.

Porter just stares, not used to being second fiddle.

**EXT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PARKING LOT. LATER.**

Dolly shows off a brand new gold Cadillac. She smiles proudly as Don and the band are impressed. She hops in to head home--

But Porter yells to her from the studio door. *She ain't done yet.* Dolly's surprised but obeys. He's still the boss.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. CONTROL ROOM. LATER.**

Porter points at the paused show tape, Dolly next to him. His critiques a little harsher than before. She just nods, bored.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. NIGHT.**

Dolly enters late. She tiptoes upstairs.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

She gets in bed, long day. Carl's eyes open. Suspicious...

**END MONTAGE.**

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. THE NEXT MORNING.**

Dolly packs for yet another tour. Carl watches, silent.

DOLLY

Chattanooga on Thursday, Knoxville  
Friday. What you gonna do when I'm  
gone? Go out dancin'?

CARL

Gutters gotta be cleaned.

DOLLY

We can pay someone to do that now.

CARL

I like doin' it.

DOLLY

Ok. Whatever makes you happy.

Dolly zips up her suitcase, notices how tense he seems.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

When I get back, I got a big ol' surprise for you. I mean, big. I'm gonna miss you so damn much, Carl.

She kisses him, heads out. Carl sits there. Then, to no one--

CARL

I miss you so damn much, kid.

**INT. WAGONMASTERS BUS. MAIN CABIN. LATER.**

Porter shows off a brand new, pimped-out tour bus to Dolly. The interior is covered in gold and rhinestones. He leads Dolly through a curtain to the back of the bus.

PORTER

The staterooms! This here's mine.

He opens a door. A purple velour bedroom, monogrammed "PW".

DOLLY

Wow! Well ain't this grand.

Across the aisle, Porter opens a door to a smaller room.

PORTER

And here you are, neighbor. Got you those white lace curtains you like. You can close 'em in the morning so the sun won't wake you. And it won't wake me either.

Porter winks at her. Dolly blushes.

DOLLY

This is amazing. Thank you, Porter.

PORTER

Long way from Sevierville, ain't it? This here's only the beginning.

He kisses her. She kisses back, but then stops him.

DOLLY  
I gotta go warm up. We got a show!

PORTER  
Yeah, yeah. You sound like me.

DOLLY  
Ain't that the idea?

He laughs. She smiles, slaps him playfully and ducks out.

**EXT. COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL. BACKSTAGE. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly strides to the stage. A confidence in her step. But--

MAN (O.S.)  
Dolly?

Dolly spins. It's Uncle Bill! Hair still slicked back, but with deeper wrinkles. Dolly squeezes him into a hug.

DOLLY  
Uncle Bill! How you doin'?

UNCLE BILL  
Fine. Playin' gigs. New wife. Same ol'. Haven't seen you in a minute.

DOLLY  
Sorry. Been real busy.

UNCLE BILL  
Did you get my messages?

DOLLY  
(she didn't)  
I sure did.

UNCLE BILL  
What do you think then?

DOLLY  
Well, I think it's a great idea.  
Anything for you, Bill.

UNCLE BILL  
So there's room for me in the band?

DOLLY  
Oh. Well, no. We're full up.

She's caught. His tone turns from friendly to accusatory.

UNCLE BILL  
You didn't get my messages, did ya?

DOLLY  
I'm sorry Bill, I been-

UNCLE BILL  
Busy.

He heads off. Dolly watches him go, overwhelmed by guilt.

**INT. COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL. STAGE. NIGHT.**

Dolly and Porter play for a huge crowd. In the spotlight, Dolly's outfit and hair are just as bold as his.

As they finish a song, a FAN in the front row screams--

FAN  
We love you, Dolly Parton!!!

Porter smiles, trying to get used to playing the sidekick.

**INT. WAGONMASTERS BUS. DOLLY'S STATEROOM. LATER.**

Late night, Dolly's in bed, scribbling in a notebook. KNOCK.

DOLLY  
Come in!

Porter enters, smiling. Dolly barely looks up, keeps writing.

PORTRER  
Did you hear them calling for ya  
tonight? "We love you Dolly!"

DOLLY  
It was mighty nice.

Porter sees she's busy, turns to go, a little disappointed--

PORTRER  
Well, I just wanted to say hi.

DOLLY  
Porter?

Porter turns back with a smile.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
I saw Uncle Bill before the show.

PORTER  
Uncle who?

DOLLY  
We used to play together. He's a  
fine guitarist. Could we use him?

PORTER  
He ever been in a real band?

DOLLY  
None you've heard of.

PORTER  
Well then there's your answer.

Porter sits down next to her on the bed.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Dolly, you're entering a new world.  
Not everyone from your old world is  
gonna get brought along. There just  
ain't the space or the time.

Dolly takes this in, wondering who else that might apply to.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Say, what you doin' this weekend?

DOLLY  
Takin' Carl to see a house. In  
Brentwood. Your neck of the woods.

PORTER  
Good for you! Why don't you stop by  
after? I wanna talk to you about  
somethin'. Somethin' important.

DOLLY  
Sure thing.

He puts her hand on Dolly's back. Starts to stroke it, when--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
I'm tryin' to get some work done.

Porter takes his hand away, as she goes back to writing.

PORTER  
Course. Goodnight, Dolly.

DOLLY  
Night.

He goes, feeling rejected, trying to hide it. Once he's gone, she stops writing, wondering what she's gotten herself into.

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MORNING. DAYS LATER.**

Dolly drives with Carl in shotgun. Turns onto a fancy street. We recognize the neighborhood from Chet's Christmas party.

CARL  
Why you draggin' me way out here?

DOLLY  
What kinda surprise would it be if  
I just told you? Close your eyes.

CARL  
Ain't in the mood for games, Dolly.

DOLLY  
C'mon now!

He sighs, covers his eyes as she pulls up to a massive house.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
Ta-da! Welcome home.

He takes his hand away. Looks up at the mansion, dumbfounded.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
Just gotta sign the paperwork. Loan  
officer's expecting us later today.

Carl doesn't know what to say.

CARL  
What about my shed?

DOLLY  
I dunno. You can build a new one.  
Got a buncha acres out back.

CARL  
What if I don't want a new one?

Dolly's smile falters, but she pushes through.

DOLLY  
Buncha bedrooms too. Plenty of  
space for nurseries and bunk beds.

CARL

Oh, you ready for kids now? Feelin' far enough along in your career?

DOLLY

'Course. I mean... Once things slow down a little with Porter.

Carl scoffs. Dolly's smile finally drops.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

I did this for us, Carl. I know I been away a lot. But I'm trying to make it up to you.

CARL

But I don't want some big dumb house, Dolly. I just want you!

Dolly's moved. She knows Carl has always been there for her. And she feels terrible that she hasn't been there for him.

CARL (CONT'D)

Way I see it is: all this money, this big ol' house, it could all go away. And we'd still have each other. That's all that matters.

Dolly melts. She's reminded of why she married him. He's solid. She leans over and kisses him. A tender, warm moment.

DOLLY

From now on, I'm gonna stay at home as much as I possibly can. Promise.

Carl nods, skeptical but appreciative. Dolly starts the car--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Just gotta make one more stop.

**EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly pulls into the last place Carl wants to be. He glares.

DOLLY

I know. I'm sorry. It's some big work thing. I'll be quick as I-

PORTR (O.S.)

Am I lookin' at my new neighbors?

They both wince as Porter bounds down the driveway in a plaid golf outfit, Arnold Palmer in hand. Dolly snaps on a smile.

DOLLY  
Looks that way!

Porter leans on the open car window, grinning.

PORTR  
Congrats! Say, you a golfer, hoss?

Carl just shakes his head no.

PORTR (CONT'D)  
Well I'm like the mayor over at the club. Could get you in no problem. They got a great pro if you want some lessons. Hell, I could take you out, show you a few things!

Carl can't even look at Porter. Dolly gets out of the car.

PORTR (CONT'D)  
Well, I'm gonna steal our Dolly for a minute. Beer while you wait?

Carl doesn't answer him. Any rekindled warmth between he and Dolly has cooled. She tries to save face with Porter, smiles--

DOLLY  
Maybe next time.

Dolly and Porter walk to the house. Carl watches, and fumes.

PRE-LAP: The sound of a champagne cork POPPING...

**INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

Sitting on opposite couches, Porter pours Dolly a glass.

DOLLY  
I ain't got time for a cocktail party. And when did you start drinkin' anyway?

PORTR  
Today's a special day.

Dolly considers. *He's still the boss.* She picks up the glass.

PORTR (CONT'D)  
To our future.

DOLLY  
Nah. To Porter Wagoner.

PORTR  
To us.

Cheers. They smile at each other, sip.

PORTR (CONT'D)  
That's what I wanna talk about.  
See, I been real proud of you.  
You're the best bet I ever made.

DOLLY  
Aw, thank you.

PORTR  
But I think we could be bigger.  
Country music ain't just for the  
South now. People up North, out  
West, they're watching our show.

DOLLY  
Yeah, I just got some fan mail from  
Maine. Might as well be Timbuktu.

PORTR  
Hell, they'll know us there next!  
See, I been talkin' to Chet. We're  
gonna move the show into a bigger  
studio. Up the production value,  
get it into more markets. Gonna  
start tourin' out West. And we're  
doublin' down on the duets.

Dolly sips, hesitates.

DOLLY  
What about my solo career?

PORTR  
Sure, on the side. But you and me,  
that's our bread and butter.

DOLLY  
But Chet told me my solo albums are  
doin' better than the duet albums.

PORTR  
Really? He told me somethin' else.

Porter takes a sip, poker-facing. Dolly tries to change the subject, looks to the other room. The house is eerily quiet.

DOLLY  
Where's Ruth?

PORTER

Oh, that. I haven't told anyone yet, not even Don. She moved out.

DOLLY

Oh God. I'm so sorry, Porter.

PORTER

I ain't. We're callin' it a trial separation, but it's been dead for years. Had to keep up appearances. The fans like it if I'm a family man. Life's a show, Dolly.

Porter touches her hand.

PORTER (CONT'D)

But it's for the best. Sometimes, one person's gotta leave so you have space for another.

Dolly blushes, pulls her hand away. He refills her glass.

PORTER (CONT'D)

So. How was the house hunt?

DOLLY

All right I guess.

PORTER

You know, why you buyin' a house when you could just move in here?

Dolly eyes Porter smiling. Unclear if he's kidding or showing a hint of vulnerability. A HONK outside. She's relieved.

DOLLY

I should go.

PORTER

Hold on. Don't leave without telling me what you think. About us, takin' it to the next level.

DOLLY

Yeah. It all sounds... intriguing.

Not at all what Porter was hoping for. She's poker-facing too, gotten good at playing his game.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Let's keep talking. See you Monday.

He watches her go. His smile drops, rejected again, unsure how much longer he can hang on before she surpasses him...

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly rushes out to Carl waiting in the car, hops in.

CARL

What was that all about?

DOLLY

... He said he wants to tour more.  
All around the country.

CARL

You tell him you wanna spend more  
time at home?

DOLLY

... I said I'll think about it.

Carl scoffs, starts up the engine. Dolly sinks, embarrassed.

**INT. NASHVILLE SAVINGS AND LOAN. OFFICE. LATER.**

Dolly and Carl sit, tension still lingering. Across a desk, a LOAN OFFICER gives advice--

LOAN OFFICER

I'd recommend a 30-year fixed...

A SECRETARY enters with coffee. She's objectively gorgeous.  
Porcelain skin, fiery-red hair.

LOAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Thank you, hon.

She hands a coffee to Carl, smiling. Clearly has a crush on him. Usually he's only got eyes for Dolly, but this time...

CARL

What's your name there?

SECRETARY

Jolene.

CARL

That's gotta be the most beautiful  
name I ever heard. You married?

SECRETARY

Not yet.

CARL

One day you're gonna make some guy  
the luckiest man in the world.

They share a smile. Dolly can't believe it, glares at Jolene.

LOAN OFFICER

Sir? 30-year fixed then?

CARL

Oh, talk to my wife. I'm just Mr.  
Dolly Parton.

Dolly's glare turns to Carl. He stands with a smile, crosses  
to flirt with Jolene in the lobby. Dolly watches, stunned.

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.**

Carl drives, smirking slightly. Dolly seethes.

DOLLY

What the hell were you doin' with  
that woman?

CARL

Her? Oh, nothin'. Just talkin'  
about goin' on tour.

Dolly sees he's not to be fucked with. So she escapes,  
closing her eyes to create...

DOLLY (PRE-LAP)

Y'all wanna hear the lick?

**INT. RECORDING STUDIO BOOTH. DAY. WEEKS LATER.**

Dolly holds a guitar, surrounded by the band, ready to learn  
her new song. Porter watches from the side, feels left out.

PORTER

Step aside. I can teach 'em.

DOLLY

I got it, Porter.

Porter suddenly grabs a guitar, trying to maintain dominance.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Well, OK. You're the chief. We're  
just part of the tribe.

The Wagonmasters stifle laughs. Don laughs loudest.

Porter plays the lick, clunky and awkward. Dolly watches him try, fail again. Finally, she takes over, plays it perfectly.

He gives up, emasculated. But snaps on a smile.

PORTER  
I'll be in the booth.

The band all watch Dolly as she keeps playing the HYPNOTIC, LOOPING GUITAR LICK of "Jolene". It bleeds into:

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAY.**

A show taping. Dolly alone in the spotlight, totally at ease.

DOLLY  
*Jolene, Jolene, Jolene, Jolene /  
I'm begging of you please don't  
take my man...*

The song is a blend of Porter -- catchy, uptempo -- with Dolly's emotion and vulnerability. She's finding her voice.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*Jolene, Jolene, Jolene, Jolene /  
Please don't take him just because  
you can...*

The crowd loves it. But in the dark, Porter simmers with envy. He watches, pops a pill from his PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE...

**EXT. ANOTHER ROAD GIG. STAGE. DAYS LATER.**

Dolly and Porter back onstage. As she finishes a solo, the crowd ROARS. And Porter's jealousy starts to boil over...

PORTER  
Surprised that wig hasn't knocked ya over yet, Dolly. But hey y'all, ain't she just about the prettiest piece o' white trash you ever saw?

The crowd laughs. Porter grins at Dolly. She's hurt. Their honeymoon may be ending. But she's a pro, snaps on a smile.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM. LATER.**

Another night, another anonymous hotel room. Dolly, under the sheets, watches Porter rummage through the minibar.

DOLLY

Why you makin' fun of my wig? Ain't  
there no such thing as too big?

PORTER

Darlin', I didn't know there was  
'til I met you.

DOLLY

You wanted me to wear 'em! Then I  
get a big one, you don't like it.

PORTER

Geez! I was just joshin' ya, like  
always. But OK. No more wig talk.

He crosses to hand her a mini-bottle of vodka, opens one of  
his own. Sits on the bed, smiles at her...

PORTER (CONT'D)

You give it a think yet? The tour  
and all? I been patient, last few  
weeks. But I can't wait forever.

DOLLY

Yeah... I appreciate you believin'  
in me, Porter, I do. But I always  
wanted to be a solo act. So I think  
I need to focus on that for now.

He nods, stands. His smile vanishes.

PORTER

So you think you know better than  
me? 40 years in this business ain't  
worth shit, huh?

DOLLY

I ain't sayin' that! I just have my  
own goals. And everythin' can't  
always be on your terms.

PORTER

Goddamn. Is there a ghost in here?  
You sound just like Norma Jean.

Dolly stops. That's a name he never mentions. Porter eyes  
her, makes sure that he unnerved her. Then kisses her cheek.

PORTER (CONT'D)

But you look a helluva lot better.

He heads to the bathroom. Dolly considers, then--

DOLLY

What happened with Norma?

PORTR

Oh God, let's not get into it.

DOLLY

Tell me. Why'd she leave?

PORTR

You really wanna know? Fine. This opportunity you're passin' up like it ain't shit, I've never given it to anyone. It's what Norma wanted, take our thing to the next level. But I knew she wasn't the one. So I said no. And she started actin' real unprofessional. So I -- we -- decided it was time to move on.

He's not telling her everything. So she goes for the jugular--

DOLLY

Were you sleeping together?

He shoots her a look. *Of course.* Dolly's stunned, swallows a truth she's been denying. Carl was right all along. *Shit.*

DOLLY (CONT'D)

So you go to bed with all your girl singers? That why you hired me?

PORTR

No! I hired you 'cause you're good.

Dolly nods, sees him in a whole new light now. Porter glares, feels spurned. The fun of the night, and the affair, is over.

PORTR (CONT'D)

I gotta get some rest. Why don't you head on back to your room?

DOLLY

This is my room.

PORTR

Oh. Well I don't want nobody to see me in the hall. You know, gotta keep up appearances. Mind trading?

He gives her his most charming -- and chilling -- smile.

**INT. HOTEL HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly, dressed, carries her shoes down the hall. Humiliated.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly plops onto the bed in an identical room. Looks around. Porter's Nudie Suits in the closet. His boots on the floor.

She stares, shell-shocked. *She's in way over her head.*

**EXT. ANOTHER ROAD GIG. STAGE. THE NEXT NIGHT.**

Dolly and Porter onstage. Both with an axe to grind tonight.

PORTER

This here's the apple of my eye, or  
maybe the pebble in my shoe. Pretty  
little Miss Dolly Parton!

Porter puts his arm around her. But she's had enough.

DOLLY

Why you always callin' me pretty  
and little?

PORTER

Because you're pretty, and little!

He cackles. Dolly fumes, another eruption brewing. But rather than blow up, she does something more defiant. She DISOBEYS.

DOLLY

Well now this pretty little gal's  
gonna sing a pretty little song  
about her pretty little childhood,  
up in the hollers of East  
Tennessee. "Coat of Many Colors".

Porter's confused. *Not on the set list.* Dolly looks at Don, who nods back at her in solidarity. He starts up the band--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Back through the years I go  
wanderin' once again / Back to the  
seasons of my youth...*

Unlike last time, the crowd loves the song. Either she's a better performer, or "Coat" breaks the mold. *In a good way.*

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Now I know we had no money / But I  
was rich as I could be / In my coat  
of many colors / My Mama made for  
me / Made just for me...*

As Dolly wraps up the song, the crowd goes ABSOLUTELY NUTS.

CROWD

Dol-ly! Dol-ly! Dol-ly!

This is the first time they've chanted for only her. She blushes. Porter grins, but underneath his blood boils.

**INT. WAGONMASTERS BUS. DOLLY'S STATEROOM. LATER.**

Dolly's in bed, writing. KNOCK. Before she can even say "Come in", Porter's in. With a bottle of bourbon, slurring.

PORTER

"Coat" wasn't on the set list.

Dolly tries to ignore him. He snatches her paper away.

DOLLY

Porter! I'm working!

He leans in for a kiss. She dodges. He grabs her by the waist. She scrambles away.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Just cause we've rolled around a  
handful of times don't mean I'll go  
to bed with you whenever you want.*

PORTER

Jesus. That's all this is to you?

DOLLY

Porter. Go back to your room.

PORTER

*I offered you the keys to the  
kingdom. You coulda been the June  
to my Johnny. But no. You're only  
interested in your-damn-self.*

DOLLY

*You're just jealous! Ego's so big  
you'd rather die than see me  
succeed without you.*

Porter stares daggers at her.

PORTER

At least I'm not tryin' to sleep my way to the top.

Dolly looks at him, stunned. *That was ugly.* He smiles, knowing he got to her. Then he lunges and grabs her hard--

DOLLY

NO PORTER! FUCK OFF!

She shoves him away. Stung, Porter glares at her.

PORTER

I'd be careful if I was you.

He stalks out. Off Dolly, trying to stay strong, but rattled.

**INT. WAGONMASTERS BUS. MAIN CABIN. CONTINUOUS.**

The Wagonmasters sit around, playing poker, picking a guitar. Porter comes out. They all heard Dolly. They stare.

PORTER

What the hell y'all lookin' at?

Don locks eyes with Porter, disappointed. Porter ducks into his stateroom, tail between his legs.

**EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LATER.**

The bus pulls into the driveway. Dolly climbs off. Porter follows her, pulls her into a hug, kisses her cheek.

PORTER

Night, little lady.

He pinches her ass as she goes. Dolly swats him away. *Ugh.*

From an upstairs window, Carl watches, observing it all...

**EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. THE NEXT DAY.**

Dolly opens the front door, blinded by the midday sun. She sees Carl driving a small tractor, moving a boulder.

DOLLY

Tried to kiss you last night when I came in. You were out like a log.

He doesn't even look at her.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
What you doin' there?

CARL  
Movin' rocks.

DOLLY  
We can pay someone to do that.

CARL  
Why pay someone when you can do it  
your damn self?

Dolly's surprised by his shortness. She squints at the sun.

DOLLY  
What time is it?

CARL  
Who knows.

DOLLY  
Well, shit. It's late. Let's eat.

She's extending an olive branch. But he just keeps working.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
C'mon. Just us. It'll be nice.

He finally looks at her, turns off the tractor. She smiles.

**INT. ARNOLD'S COUNTRY KITCHEN. LATER.**

A hot bar. Fried chicken, dumplings, collard greens. A Nashville "Meat & 3" -- a choice of meat and three sides.

A SHY FEMALE COOK serves Dolly.

DOLLY  
... I'll do the mac and cheese.  
Collards. And aw hell, why not, a  
biscuit. I ain't driving!

COOK  
Sorry. Are you Dolly Parton?

DOLLY  
I sure am. Who are you?

COOK  
Nobody.

DOLLY

Come on now. You're somebody.  
Everybody's somebody.

COOK

Tammy.

DOLLY

Nice to meet you, Tammy. I'm Dolly.

TAMMY

I just love your songs. Like you're  
singin' for all us workin' women.

DOLLY

Well thank you, Tammy! Since you  
like me so much, will you give me a  
little extra gravy for my chicken?

TAMMY

You can get as much gravy as you  
want, Ms. Parton!

Dolly's all smiles. Carl waits, getting frustrated.

DOLLY

I'll be thinkin' 'bout you, Tammy.

Tammy melts. Dolly and Carl bring the trays to a table, sit.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

So why you movin' all them rocks?

CARL

Stone wall.

But Dolly's distracted by a FAMILY waving at her. Carl sighs.

DOLLY

Sorry, I just gotta sign one more-

CARL

You get up from this table,  
there'll be divorce papers on it by  
the time you sit back down.

Dolly straightens up.

DOLLY

What's gotten into you?

CARL

Are you sleeping with Porter?

DOLLY

Excuse me?

CARL

Are you or are you not sleeping  
with Porter Wagoner?

DOLLY

Don't be ridiculous.

CARL

You spend 24/7 with the man.

DOLLY

He's my boss.

CARL

I got a boss, and I don't spend  
24/7 with him.

DOLLY

We do a weekly show. We tour. We  
record. It takes a lot of time.

CARL

Time. You got time for everyone but  
me. All the time in the world for  
the people at this Meat & 3.

DOLLY

They're my fans, Carl. It all takes  
time. This is the job.

CARL

Well I'm your goddamn husband. And  
I need some goddamn time too!

People are starting to notice. Dolly smiles at them. *Nothing to see here.* She pauses, considers how much to divulge...

DOLLY

No, Carl. Porter and I. We ain't.

CARL

Ain't what?

DOLLY

Doin' what you think we're doing.

Carl tears off a bite of chicken, studying her.

CARL

You sure now?

DOLLY  
Yes Carl! I think I'd know.

Carl nods, satisfied for now. Dolly tries to change subjects.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
So then. How's the dang wall goin'?

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. BEDROOM. LATER.**

From her upstairs window, Dolly watches Carl in his new shed. Overcome with guilt. Knows she's losing him. *What can she do?*

**EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. CARL'S SHED. LATER.**

Dolly knocks. Carl looks up, keeps cutting wood. Dolly rubs his back, kisses his ear. He leans away--

CARL  
Not sure I'm in the mood, kid.

She reaches down, down, down to his crotch, turning him on...

DOLLY  
I know I haven't been giving my man what he needs.

Carl can't resist, despite himself. He lunges to undress her--

CARL  
Got a condom?

DOLLY  
We don't need one.

Carl stops, looks at her.

CARL  
You sure?

Dolly nods. Carl hesitates, skeptical, but the heat of the moment wins out. He picks her up by her thighs, places her on his workbench. He stands between her legs. And enters her.

DOLLY  
There's my man. My Carl Dean.

They kiss. And then fuck. Hard. An edge to it. Almost angry.

CARL  
Am I your man?

DOLLY  
You're... my... man!!!

Carl finishes. They share a smile.

CARL  
Kept your eyes open this time.

DOLLY  
You make me feel safe.

Carl smiles deeply.

CARL  
Look at you, kid. How you've grown.

DOLLY  
You too.

She motions to his CROTCH. He laughs heartily. She giggles. Two peas in a pod. He exits her, both smiling. But then--

Dolly SCREAMS, doubles over in pain, holding her stomach...

CARL  
You OK? What's happening?

Off Dolly, letting out a DISTURBING WAIL...

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LATER.**

Carl holds a hot compress to Dolly's stomach, on a couch.

CARL  
How often's this happen?

DOLLY  
Around my period. Just cramps.

CARL  
Damn. All us men gotta do is shave.  
I'll draw you a bath, all right?

DOLLY  
Love you.

He walks off. She and Carl are in a better place, but Dolly's worried about whatever is happening with her body...

## EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. NIGHT. WEEKS LATER.

Dolly, dressed to the nines, rings the doorbell. Turns to Carl, who looks like he's still in his shed, in dirty jeans.

CARL

Thanks for not makin' me dress up.

DOLLY

Thanks for comin'.

He nods. Both know he'd rather not be there. She kisses him.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Ten minutes. Tops.

Carl rolls his eyes. *Yeah right.* And the door swings open--

## INT. PORTER'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS.

Dolly and Carl step into a packed New Year's Eve party. The WHITE MEN RECORD EXECS have traded Martinis for Wallbangers, thin ties for wide ties. Everything's showier, tackier. And with a hint of darkness, mistrust. Coke energy, basically.

Welcome to the eve of 1974.

Dolly's swarmed by a growing circle of SUPPOSED FRIENDS. Carl grabs a beer, turns back, but she's already gone, whisked away by Porter. She waves an apology. Carl slugs his beer.

It's an upper night for Porter, in a silver Nudie Suit, his arm around Dolly's waist as they schmooze. He eyes her WIG--

PORTER

What's that beast on your head?

DOLLY

Don't start, Porter.

PORTER

You look like your town tramp.

DOLLY

Nicest compliment you ever gave me.

Porter spots the WELL-COIFFED MAN nearby--

PORTER

Hey Nancy, you buyin' my little lady queer shit?

Dolly's horrified, pulls Porter away, apologizing to the man.

DOLLY  
I'm so sorry.

She yanks Porter into a quieter corner.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
I ain't puttin' up with your shit  
tonight! I'm a grown-ass woman, not  
your little lady. So you best sober  
up and leave me the hell alone.

Porter laughs as she stomps away. Dolly, furious, finds Carl.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
Let's go.

CARL  
Damn, eight minutes. Praise Jesus.

PORTR (O.S.)  
How y'all doin' tonight? Almost  
1974, can you believe it?

Porter's at a mic, band behind him. Dolly rushes to the door--

PORTR (CONT'D)  
Now where's my little gal at? Y'all  
seen pretty Miss Dolly Parton?

She stops short. Caught. Takes a breath, snaps on a smile.

DOLLY  
Here I am!

PORTR  
Get your little behind on up here!

She shoots Carl an apology look, hustles to Porter. He hugs  
her. The tension between them simmers just below the surface.

PORTR (CONT'D)  
Don't she look... a little  
ridiculous tonight? Why do y'all  
think a gal so pretty covers  
herself up like that?

DOLLY  
Probably same reason a grown man  
wears tin foil. It's New Year's!

PORTR  
Hey! Always been a firecracker! How  
'bout a duet for the folks, Dolly?

DOLLY  
Sure thing. How 'bout "Two Sides"?

PORTER  
Oh, we done that one to death. I'm feelin' romantic tonight. Here's an old number called, "I Know You're Married But I Love You Still".

APPLAUSE! The band starts before Dolly can object. Behind her smile, her eyes rage. Porter takes her hand as they sing--

PORTER & DOLLY  
*I know you're married but I love you still...*

In the back, Carl glares at the pair, acting all lovey-dovey.

**LATER.**

Carl's at the bar, slowly getting drunk. Dolly hustles over--

DOLLY  
Been lookin' all over for you!

CARL  
I'm gettin' real tired, Dolly.

DOLLY  
Come on. It's almost midnight.  
Dance with me? Once? Please?

**LATER.**

Carl, a tremendously good sport, dances with Dolly.

DON  
Hey y'all! 10 seconds! 9! 8! 7! 6!

CROWD  
5! 4! 3! 2! 1!

Dolly and Carl smile, about to kiss... when Porter appears and KISSES DOLLY. She resists, but he dips her dramatically.

PORTER  
Happy New Year, little lady.

Carl suddenly GRABS Porter, PINS him to the wall, forearm to throat. Carl's ready to kick his ass, and Porter knows it.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Calm down, hoss!

CARL

Lay a finger on my wife ever again,  
you won't take another breath.

Porter nods. Carl lets him go, stomps outside. Dolly chases--

**EXT. PORTER'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS.**

Carl storms down the driveway. Dolly runs after him--

DOLLY

Carl! He's just hamming it up cause  
he's poppin' those pills.

He just keeps walking. She gets around him, runs backwards...

DOLLY (CONT'D)

It don't mean nothin'!

CARL

You know what pisses me off? Not  
that you slept with him. It's that  
you keep lyin' to my face. You say  
you ain't cheatin', or you're ready  
to have kids. But you don't know  
what you really want! You just keep  
tellin' me what I wanna hear. Hell,  
you learned a lot from Porter all  
right. You learned how to be a  
great goddamn bullshitter!

DOLLY

I'm sorry, Carl. I know I screwed  
up. But you're my man!

CARL

You say that again, I swear to God-

DOLLY

You're it for me. Only you!

He scoffs. Then stops short, looks her right in the eye.

CARL

Lemme know when you mean it.

He walks off into the night, leaving Dolly devastated...

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DAYS LATER.**

From the dark soundstage, Dolly approaches the bright set,  
where Porter and the band are getting ready for rehearsal.

DOLLY

Porter? Talk to you a minute?

PORTER

Not now, Dolly. I'm busy.

DOLLY

I ain't gonna do today's show if  
you don't come talk to me.

That stops everyone short. Porter stares at her.

PORTER

Damn. Is it that time of the month?

He smiles at the band, expecting a laugh, but none comes.

PORTER (CONT'D)

All right boys, take five. Little  
lady needs to talk.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. PORTER'S OFFICE. LATER.**

Porter lights a Newport, his boots on his desk. Dolly paces.

DOLLY

You can't do what you did the other  
night, Porter. From now on, I want  
us to be strictly business.

PORTER

You and I both know it's a helluva  
lot more complicated than that.

Porter takes a drag, trying to stay in control. Dolly resets.

DOLLY

I promised you five years. It's  
been seven. I didn't come to  
Nashville to be somebody's girl  
singer. I want my own band. My own  
show. I have my own dreams.

PORTER

Well as your manager, I say you're  
stayin' put. And you're  
contractually obligated to do  
whatever the hell I say.

DOLLY

Whaddya mean, "as your manager"?

PORTER

Your RCA contract lays it all out.  
Clear as crystal. Maybe you shoulda  
read the damn thing.

Porter stubs out his cig, stomps toward the door. Dolly stops him, takes a breath, doing her best to keep her cool--

DOLLY

I didn't know much back then. I've learned so much from you. And I'm so grateful for all of it. But it's time to go out on my own.

PORTER

Hell, good luck! You know how many people watch my show? You ain't never gonna have a bigger audience.

DOLLY

Porter, you built yourself an empire. You're a legend. But I want that too. And the only way I can do it is if you let me go. Please.

He's had enough. He towers over her, spits pure venom.

PORTER

Without me, you'd still be up there shakin' like a leaf. Chet wouldn't even know your name. You'd be a ditz with tits playin' podunk honkytonks. I made you, Dolly. And I can end you just as quick.

He storms out. Off Dolly, realizing she might be trapped...

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. CARL'S SHED. LATER.**

Carl's hard at work, doesn't look up as Dolly fills him in--

DOLLY

Says I'm "contractually obligated to do whatever the hell he says." Direct quote. But my lawyer's lookin' at the contract now.

Carl just chuckles.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Come on. I'm tryin', Carl.

CARL

If you really wanted to leave,  
you'd get the hell out. 'Til then,  
it's just more bullshit.

DOLLY

I'm gonna figure it out. I promise!

He sighs, finally looks at her.

CARL

Kid, I don't believe you anymore.

Carl goes back to work. And with that, Dolly's heart breaks.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. DAY.**

Dolly CRIES into the mirror, her mascara running. She still doesn't like what she sees in the reflection. Especially now.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. LATER.**

Dolly and Porter, mid-taping. As much as Dolly wants out, they're tied at the hip professionally. So it's all smiles.

PORTER

You wanna put your guitar away?

DOLLY

I'll just hang onto it. Just in case. Think I need a security blanket 'round here.

PORTER

Shut up.

Behind Porter's plastered-on smile, we see his blinding rage.

**LATER.**

Lights down for a commercial break. The band silent, motionless. Until the lights come up, and everyone smiles--

PORTER (CONT'D)

We're back. Me and my sidekick. She just kicked me in the side.

DOLLY

Not yet, but I might after that.

PORTR  
If you ever hit me Dolly Parton,  
you'll be in trouble.

Dolly glares at him, trying to hide her own blinding rage...

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. HALLWAY. LATER.**

Porter pushes into the bright hallway. Dolly catches up.

DOLLY  
The hell are you doing, Porter?

PORTR  
Takin' a leak.

DOLLY  
You know what I mean. If it don't  
look like we're havin' a good time,  
that crowd can't have one either.  
You taught me that!

PORTR  
Since when do you listen to me?!

Don steps between them.

DON  
Y'all are making a scene.

PORTR  
This here's my show. I can make a  
scene whenever I damn well please!

Porter turns to see the band, the whole crew, even Speck Rhodes staring at them.

PORTR (CONT'D)  
WHAT THE FUCK ARE Y'ALL LOOKIN' AT?

Dolly plays the adult, pulls Porter into her--

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.**

She shuts the door behind them. They both exhale.

PORTR  
Listen... I'm sorry, Dolly. I never  
meant for it to get like this.

DOLLY  
I know. I'm sorry too.

Porter looks at her, then leans in for a kiss. She dodges--

PORTER  
Come on, for old time's sake.

Porter pulls her in again. She shoves him off--

DOLLY  
Porter! No!

PORTER  
But I love you!

Everything stops. That's a line Porter's never crossed.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
When I met you, I knew you were special. But I had no idea you were one of a kind. A true artist. I'm just a dime a dozen. And I know I've been a jackass. But it's just 'cause I'm scared. That I'll never have what you have. That I'll lose you. You're the best thing that's ever happened to me. I love you.

Dolly's stunned. For once, Porter's wide open, no fake smile.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
I know you feel the same way,  
Dolly. Say it. Tell me you love me.

Her mind races. She opens her mouth to speak...

DOLLY  
I gotta go.

PORTER  
No. Wait!

She rushes out, leaving him alone and heartbroken.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LATER.**

Dolly bursts into the house. Bounds up the stairs--

DOLLY  
Carl? You home?

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.**

Dolly pushes into their bedroom--

But it's EMPTY. Silent. She yanks open Carl's closet. Nothing but hangers. The drawers, empty. Dolly's in shock.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. CARL'S SHED. LATER.**

Dolly pushes into the shed, finds it half packed up.

A note on the bench: *Be back for the rest in the morning.*

Suddenly, Dolly doubles over in excruciating pain, the worst we've seen. She crumples to the ground, SCREAMS--

PRE-LAP: The scream turns into the SIREN OF AN AMBULANCE...

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. LATER.**

All we can hear is Dolly's BREATHING. She lies in a gown, listening to a DOCTOR explain something we CAN'T HEAR...

He holds a diagram of the female reproductive system. Points to the uterus. Dolly's face makes clear - it's very bad news.

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. NIGHT.**

Dolly drives, bottom of the barrel. Looks up ahead at the--

PRE-LAP: "The Bridge."

**EXT. SPARKMAN STREET BRIDGE. MOMENTS LATER.**

She stands looking out, the Cumberland River rushing below.

This is where Carl used to take her. Where they talked about starting a family. Before everything with Porter. When she was just at the beginning. When all things felt possible...

The lyrics we hear match what Dolly is seeing and feeling:

DOLLY  
*The bridge, so high, the bridge, so  
 tall / Here is where it started, on  
 the bridge...*

Dolly looks to the night sky.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*The moon is big and yellow, and the  
 stars are all aglow / From the  
 bridge I see reflections, in the  
 waters far below...*

She closes her eyes, remembering the good times.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*You kissed me for the first time  
 here, and held me awfully tight /  
 And the bridge became our favorite  
 place, we came here often in the  
 night...*

She creeps to the edge, peering down hundreds of feet below.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*My feet are moving slowly / Closer  
 to the edge / Here is where it  
 started / And here is where I'll  
 end it.*

She almost slips off... but grabs the railing just in time!  
 She stumbles back, scared half to death.

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly's about to turn the key, when she loses it. She WEEPS.

She hasn't slept in days. She lays on the seat, settles in...

**THE NEXT MORNING.**

Sunshine blasts Dolly's face. She blinks awake. *Jesus.*

**EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LATER.**

Dolly pulls in, parks. Sees Carl's shed, all locked up.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.**

She doesn't even call for Carl. Knows he's long gone.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. DEN. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly flops onto the couch, facedown, alone. And crashes.

**LATER.**

Time blurs. Dolly stirs. Same spot, same clothes, surrounded by used McDonald's bags. She finds one last soggy french fry.

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. NIGHT.**

On a late night hunt for more McDonald's, Dolly drives by Jerry's, the honkytonk where she and Uncle Bill used to play.

She stops out front, eyes it...

**INT. JERRY'S HONKYTONK. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly, in sunglasses at 2 AM, takes a seat as a CRAPPY COUNTRY BAND finishes up. The crowd is thin. A DRUNK REDNECK reminds Dolly of her old heckler, but this one's passed out.

In a corner, Dolly clocks three HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMEN, having a ball. A WAITRESS approaches--

DOLLY  
Water, please.

WAITRESS  
Gotta order more than water, hon.

DOLLY  
Beer then.

HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMAN (O.S.)  
That's on us!

The bevy of women in the corner grin at her.

DOLLY  
Thank you.

HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMAN  
Thank you! You majestic bitch.

Dolly blushes, spotted. But the women are playing it cool.

HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Care to join?

Dolly smiles. *Hell, why not?* She walks over, sits. Removes her shades. And does what she does best -- make new friends.

DOLLY  
Hi. I'm Dolly.

HEAVILY-MADE-UP WOMAN  
Jim. This here's Greg and Marshall.

Dolly's confused. And then it dawns on her: drag queens.

DOLLY

Well, I'll be. You're the most  
beautiful women I've ever seen.  
Y'all OK out here in the boonies?

MARSHALL

Just cause I'm in a dress don't  
mean I can't throw a punch.

GREG

I'm singin' next. Take my spot!

DOLLY

No thanks. Just a fan tonight.

MARSHALL

A fan? You're patron saint Parton!

DOLLY

Y'all are my saints. Takes courage  
to have hair as big as yours. I  
just don't have the balls.

GREG

You want mine?

Dolly and the drag queens laugh, having a blast.

JIM

Now get your skinny ass on stage!

DOLLY

Don't think I'm up for it, ladies.

MARSHALL

Come on. Ain't nobody judging you.  
You're safe here.

Dolly considers... then smiles.

DOLLY

Well, when you put it like that.

She heads to the stage. Her superfans HOOT and HOLLER.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Shit, I don't have a guitar.

The SINGER from the crappy country band lends her his guitar.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

What do y'all want me to play?

JIM  
Whatever you damn please, girl!

Dolly smiles deeply. Starts into the iconic GUITAR LICK...

DOLLY  
*Jolene, Jolene, Jolene, Jolene /  
I'm begging of you please don't  
take my man...*

The drag queens CHEER. The waitress watches. Even the redneck perks up. We see the beginnings of Dolly's universal appeal.

She smiles her mischievous smile, and changes up the lyrics--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*Drag queen, drag queen, drag queen  
/ Please don't take him just  
because you can...*

The queens LOSE IT! Dolly laughs. *The majestic bitch is back.*

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.**

Dolly, riding high, drives down Broadway, past honkytonks, the Hermitage, Music Row. Marveling at how far she's come...

**EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. LATER.**

Dolly pulls in, grinning ear-to-ear. But she looks up at the giant house, dark and empty. And her smile vanishes.

**INT. DOLLY AND CARL'S BRENTWOOD HOUSE. BEDROOM. DAWN.**

Dolly wakes, all alone in the big bed. Golden light pours in. She sits up. In the closet, something bright catches her eye--

The coat of many colors. She smiles with an idea. *Home.*

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.**

Dolly drives toward the rising sun, turns onto the highway.

**EXT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. LATER.**

Dolly pulls in. Daddy smokes on the porch, looks up in shock.

## INT. PARTON FAMILY CABIN. MOMENTS LATER.

Dolly, Lee, and Avie Lee sit, Dolly downloading in a rush--

DOLLY

... Something called endometriosis.  
I'm tryin' to leave Porter, tryin'  
to make Carl happy, tryin' to be a  
singer, wife, mother, but now...

Dolly can't help but cry. Avie puts her arms around her.

AVIE LEE

You woulda made a wonderful mama,  
Doll. But God's plan is different  
for all of us. Ever since you  
started singin' in your grandaddy's  
church, we knew God gave you a  
gift. You were meant to share that  
gift with the whole world.  
Everybody's one of your children.

She looks to Lee, but he just stares at the ground.

AVIE LEE (CONT'D)

Ain't that right, Lee?

He takes a breath, looks at Dolly. You will never hear Lee Parton say this many words again.

LEE

All my life, I've been ashamed.  
Worried people'd find out I never  
learned to read. But Dolly, I ain't  
ashamed no more. 'Cause I watch you  
and you ain't ashamed. You're proud  
of where you come from. Who you  
are. And that makes me proud too.

Dolly tears up, moved.

LEE (CONT'D)

You keep tryin' to make everybody  
happy, you're gonna make 'em all  
miserable, 'specially yourself.  
Only person you gotta listen to,  
only person you gotta love, is you.

He touches Dolly's knee tenderly, looks into her eyes.

LEE (CONT'D)

Whatever you do, remember -- we  
will always love you.

Dolly hugs him. She's gotten what she's always wanted: her Daddy's acceptance. He smiles, a rare sight.

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.**

Dolly drives down the road. Sees a trail. Pulls over...

**EXT. PINE FOREST. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly walks under a canopy of 100-foot-tall pine trees. A dank forest floor, densely covered in mist, ferns and moss.

This is the otherworldly, magical landscape from the opening.

She sees a clearing up ahead, bathed in golden light. She spots the wooden structure through the mist. And smiles.

**INT. ABANDONED COUNTRY CHAPEL. CONTINUOUS.**

Dolly enters. Broken windows, splintered floorboards, a mess.

This is the GOD PLACE.

She walks to a dusty piano. Runs her finger over ivory keys. Hits one. It's out of tune. But to her, it sounds gorgeous.

She walks to a wall, where she sees sexual drawings. Studies them. They're crude. But to her, they look beautiful.

She stands in the middle of the broken down chapel. Light streams through a window, illuminating her face.

She's surrounded by her favorite things: God, sex, and music. And she's free from others' judgement. Free to be herself.

She closes her eyes...

And her mind is flooded with IMAGES which fill the screen:

THE SMOKY MOUNTAINS, thick pine groves, flora and fauna...

CHILD DOLLY singing with Mama and Daddy in church...

UNCLE BILL and Dolly playing at honkytonks all over town...

CARL at the altar on their wedding day, so happy...

PORTER on stage, his Nudie Suit rhinestones blinding her...

And then -- Dolly's eyes POP OPEN. She's got it. A new song.

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly hops in her car, starts up the engine, determined.

**EXT. SEVIERVILLE. MAIN DRAG. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly waits at a payphone, receiver to her ear. She waves to a FAMILY OF FANS walking by, awestruck. Then, on the phone--

SECRETARY (O.S.)  
Sorry Dolly, Carl's in a meeting.

DOLLY  
He tell you to say that?

Silence. Dolly smiles.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
All right, can you give him a  
message then? Ask him to watch my  
show tonight. Tell him it's real  
important. Thanks.

Dolly hangs up. Rushes back to her car, on a mission--

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly burns rubber back to Nashville, flying down the road--

**EXT. RYMAN THEATER. ALLEY. LATER.**

Dolly screeches to a stop, hops out. Bolts through the door--

**INT. RYMAN THEATER. COSTUME DEPARTMENT. MOMENTS LATER.**

And BUSTS into the wonderland of wigs. She sees the TRULY  
OVER-THE TOP wig, as big as the drag queens' and the town  
tramp's. She smiles, yanks the damn wig off the shelf.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. LATER.**

The band, Speck Rhodes, and the crew wait on the dark stage  
as the audience files in for a taping. Porter paces, smoking.

PORTER  
Where the hell is she?

DON  
She'll be here. Trust me.

PORTER

What, y'all talk on the phone all night? Paint each others' nails?

DON

Dunno what you're talking about.

PORTER

No? Seems you got a new best buddy. And you think I'm a sumbitch!

DON

I don't, Porter. But you ain't barkin' no more. You're bitin'.

Don walks away. Porter fumes, but knows he's right.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. DRESSING ROOM. SAME TIME.**

In a vanity mirror, Dolly puts on her full regalia.

A sequined dress zipped up in the back. Tiny feet step into impossibly high heels. Ruby red lipstick blotted with a kiss.

And then, the *pièce de résistance*...

The truly over-the-top wig set onto a skull-cap-covered head.

**INT. PORTER WAGONER SHOW STUDIO. MOMENTS LATER.**

Porter smokes his zillionth cigarette, his hands tied. Then--

The studio door busts open. A shaft of light cuts through the darkness. Porter turns, his jaw drops. Everyone's jaws drop.

In the doorway, guitar over her shoulder, like a gunslinger walking into the saloon, stands -- DOLLY FUCKING PARTON.

DOLLY

I'm taking the first song, Porter.

PORTER

Hold up, ain't this still my show?

DOLLY

Not tonight, it ain't. It's mine.

A standoff. Porter knows she's not fucking around. Nor is Don. Mutiny's afoot. Porter's isolated, his empire crumbling.

As the lights come up, he can do nothing but snap on a smile--

PORTER

Welcome to the Porter Wagoner Show,  
y'all. Here to kick us off tonight  
is everyone's favorite pretty  
little lady... Miss Dolly Parton!

The crowd cheers. Dolly steps to the mic. Silence for a long beat. She looks to Porter, smiles wide, like he taught her.

For a moment, she still wants this man's approval. But then--

SHE DROPS THE SMILE. The act, the pressure to please. She's present, calm, confidently standing in the eye of the storm.

She nods at Don. He nods back, defers to her. She strums the first chord of her most famous song. And sings it to Porter--

DOLLY

*If I should stay / I would only be  
in your way...*

She keeps her eyes wide open. Deadlocked with Porter's.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*So I'll go, but I know / I'll think  
of you each step of the way...*

She's open, vulnerable. She's bringing her inside self to the outside, sharing her God Place with the whole world.

Porter's stunned by the song. And by Dolly's steady stare.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*And I will always love you / I will  
always love you...*

Wow. The chorus is simple, transcendent, profoundly affecting. We feel the FANS lean forward in their seats.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Bittersweet memories / That's all I  
am taking with me...*

Porter is deeply moved. The love of his life is breaking up with him. TEARS roll down his cheeks, first time in his life.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Goodbye, please don't cry / We both  
know that I'm not / What you  
need...*

She looks to Porter with a heart full of empathy, compassion--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*But I will always love you / I will  
 always love you...*

She speaks the next verse to him sweetly, as to a friend:

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*I hope life treats you kind / And I  
 hope that you have all / That you  
 ever dreamed of / And I wish you  
 joy / And happiness / But above all  
 of this...*

She pauses for a breath, then lets it rip, the emotion SOARS--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*I wish you loooooooooooove...*

Dolly's strong, sexy. Not doing what other people want. She's doing what she wants. She's taking up space, not apologizing.

She's finally become the Dolly Parton we all know and love.

For the last verse, Dolly turns directly to the camera...

She looks at HER REFLECTION in the lens. And sings TO HERSELF--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*And I will always love you...*

We've come a long way from how she saw herself in the grimy diner mirror. Now she accepts and loves what she sees.

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*I will always love you...*

She belts out the last chorus, leaving it all on the field--

DOLLY (CONT'D)  
*I will always love you...*

The song hangs in the air. Dolly holds her breath...

The crowd ERUPTS. Leaps up. A STANDING OVATION!

Porter crosses to her. Dolly tenses, nervous. He whispers--

PORTER  
 Most beautiful song I ever heard. I  
 love you too, Dolly. Good luck.  
 (to the camera)  
 We'll be right back.

The lights go down. Dolly takes a breath. *She's finally free.*

**INT. DOLLY'S GOLD CADILLAC. LATER.**

Dolly drives alone, toward the setting sun. Face scrubbed, wig gone. She exhales, the adrenaline leaving her system. She's been through so much. She cries tears of relief, joy.

She looks to a glorious sunset. A bright future. And smiles.

**EXT. DOLLY AND CARL'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.**

Dolly pulls in. The house is quiet, seems empty. She gets out of the car. Walks towards the house, when--

The front door SWINGS OPEN. Dolly stops in her tracks.

Carl steps out on the landing. She looks at him, full of hope. He just looks back at her, poker-faced. BUT THEN--

CARL  
Still got the voice of an angel.

She smiles, relieved. *He watched the show.* She looks down. Then, as an apology--

DOLLY  
I sure as hell ain't no angel.

Carl nods, then smiles. They've been through so much. But the connection, chemistry, and banter that first brought them together, it's all still there in spades. Two peas in a pod.

Off Dolly's grin -- grateful, happy, and a bit mischievous...

PRE-LAP: A COUNTRY BAND warms up...

**EXT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. NIGHT.**

Fans stream into the cathedral of country music.

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

**INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM. STAGE. CONTINUOUS.**

Lights lower. Crowd goes WILD. Dolly struts on, full regalia.

DOLLY  
How y'all doin' tonight?

CHEERS. She grins, turns to the band, full of familiar faces--

Don Warden on lead guitar, and a surprise -- older, but hair still slicked -- Uncle Bill. They've reconciled.

Dolly looks to the wings, where Chet Atkins gives her a nod. Chet and Don are now squarely in Dolly's camp.

Nowhere to be seen? Porter Wagoner. This is Dolly's show now.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

When I first started out, people made me feel ashamed for a lotta things. Bein' a woman. Bein' white trash. I wasted a lotta time and energy apologizing for being me. So don't let nobody make you feel bad. Love yourself! Hell, I'm proud to be a woman. And I am white trash!

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE!

DOLLY (CONT'D)

Someone smarter than me once said, "Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken". Remember that, and remember where you come from!

She strikes up the band. And with a relaxed smile, she sings--

DOLLY (CONT'D)

*Sittin' on the front porch, on a summer afternoon...*

CLOSE ON her lips as we MATCH CUT TO:

**EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOWL. NIGHT. PRESENT DAY.**

CLOSE ON Dolly's lips again. PAN UP and see her face--

It's real-life DOLLY PARTON!

Full makeup, biggest wig yet. *Looking just like she wants to.*

We scan the AUDIENCE. Pride flags, MAGA hats, drag queens, grandmas, hipsters dressed like rednecks, actual rednecks. All shapes, sizes, creeds, colors. The tapestry of America.

As Dolly hits the triumphant chorus, the crowd SINGS ALONG...

DOLLY & CROWD

*In my Tennessee Mountain Home /  
Life is as peaceful as a baby's  
sigh / In my Tennessee Mountain  
Home!*

A BUTTERFLY flutters past. And we follow it up to the sky, full of twinkling, celestial stars. And then **FADE TO BLACK**.

**CREDITS ROLL** over "I Will Always Love You", now fully produced with a full backing band. We see PHOTOS of Dolly's almost 60-year career, intercut with text:

*"I Will Always Love You" is the greatest-selling song by a female artist of all time.*

*Whitney Houston covered it for "The Bodyguard" soundtrack.*

*It's one of over 3,000 songs Dolly has written.*

*Porter died in a Nashville assisted living facility in 2007.*

*Dolly was one of the last people to see him.*

*She held his hand and told him she loved him.*

*Dolly and Carl still live together in Nashville.*

*Carl has not been seen in public in almost 50 years.*

*Since leaving Porter, Dolly has had her own band, her own TV show, even her own theme park.*

*She still writes, records, and performs, all while growing a billion dollar business empire.*

*She created the Imagination Library, which has given out 150 million books to kids, encouraging them to learn to read.*

*She even funded the development of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.*

*She ain't no DUMB BLONDE.*

**GOODNIGHT, Y'ALL!**