

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT

By Joe Dorsch

FADE IN:

INT. DIMLY LIT BASEMENT - OMINOUS

A cloaked figure is sitting in the dark. Across from them is an old-style boxy TV. The glow from the TV is the only light source in their lair. They're watching commercials, but the sound is muted. Directly in front of them is an ornate chessboard with a lone king, no other pieces.

The commercials end. The game show resumes. The figure presses 'unmute' on their remote. They're wearing gloves, and they're fixated on the show.

HOST (VOICE ONLY)

Welcome back to another EXCITING episode of-  
(the audience joins in)  
FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

The camera pans across the cheering studio audience, then switches focus to the well-dressed, quintessential host: WALTER O'NEIL (58).

WALTER

Thank you! Alright, let's settle down.

(waits for the applause to subside)

Before we start our last round for today's show, I have an unfortunate announcement. The network will probably kill me for telling you this, but... Our show is being cancelled.

(the audience says 'aww...' sadly)

I know, I know. Not my choice. It's been a great first season, but you know how these shows are, it's all about 'ratings'...

(more sympathy from the crowd)

So, if you have ideas for how to make our finale more exciting, more thrilling, more... MEMORABLE... Please, let us know - we're all ears. You guys, the audience, have always been the backbone of our show, and I know we'd love to keep the fun going as long as possible. Sound good?

As the audience cheers, the cloaked figure reaches out and casually tips over the king on the chessboard...

INT. MAIN STUDIO SET - DAY

The set is serene - there's no audience yet, just hundreds of empty seats. On stage, several technicians are testing the microphones and equipment for their upcoming episodes.

The only person in the audience is NIA BARTLETT (31), the executive producer. She's watching the technicians with mixed emotions, and gazing out at the empty room.

After some quiet contemplation, she sighs, and examines a postcard that she had been holding.

On one side, there's a picture of Walter's face in the crosshairs of a gun. Below it is a hand-written message: 'Prepare for a KILLER finale'. The back of the card reads: 'From your biggest fan'

Nia stands up, composes herself, then leaves the set.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - DAY

A handful of employees are at work, but it's mostly quiet. Nia passes a few of them and smiles politely while she searches for the security guards.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - DAY

Nia knocks on the door, then lets herself in. There are three guards sitting at an array of computer monitors.

There's LEROY (50), a crusty but benign man who looks like your typical security guard. And two peppy young women who are also identical twins: BISHOP and ROOK (both 24).

NIA

Hi. Security, right?

LEROY

Sure is. Come on in.

Bishop and Rook look her over melodramatically.

NIA

So... Is this everyone?

ROOK

Who wants to know?

NIA

I'm Nia, Bartlett, executive producer.

BISHOP

A likely story...

NIA

Yes, because it's true... Sorry, I just, I wasn't aware we even had security, that's all.

ROOK

How suspicious... Shouldn't the executive producer know these things?

BISHOP

Doesn't add up. You better explain yourself.

NIA

I don't actually hire the staff, I mostly help run the show. Plus, we've never needed security, it's not like there's much money in the show... Sorry, what are your names?

BISHOP

Hmm...

ROOK

Who wants to know?

LEROY

They watch too many true-crime shows, in case you couldn't tell.

(he stands up and shakes Nia's hand)

I'm Leroy. Pleasure to meet you, Ms. Bartlett.

The twins refuse to shake her hand, they just stare with exaggerated intensity. Nia is genuinely puzzled, but Leroy just rolls his eyes.

Finally, they conclude she's not a threat and they both shake her hand.

BISHOP  
Name's Bishop.

ROOK  
Rook.

NIA  
Are those your real names?

ROOK  
Who wants to know?

LEROY  
Alright, let's give the nice lady a break.

He glares at Rook and Bishop. Their facade switches to amusement and they giggle mischievously. Once again, Leroy rolls his eyes.

LEROY  
How can we help?

NIA  
We got a death threat. I wasn't sure what to do, we've never gotten one before.

ROOK  
Seriously?

BISHOP  
This means we've MADE it. Nice!  
(she and Rook high-five)  
Who's the target?

NIA  
Walter. Probably just a crazy fan, but... I wanted to run it by you all.  
(she hands Leroy the postcard)  
Any thoughts? Should we call the police, FBI, or is it just somebody pulling a prank?

Leroy examines the postcard, then hands it to the twins, who obsess over it excitedly.

BISHOP

The handwriting is CLEARLY female.

ROOK

Unless it was a man who got a woman to write it FOR him.

BISHOP

Ooh, I didn't think of that... Excellent point. What about the photograph? Clearly, they can use Microsoft Paint...

ROOK

Or can they...?

While they theorize wildly about the postcard, Leroy chats with Nia about their options.

LEROY

It's probably nothing, but just to be safe, especially seeing as it's the finale, I'll call the police, let them know.

(Nia nods in agreement)

And we can also set up bag checks for when the audience members arrive, nothing too invasive, but any deterrent will help.

NIA

Sounds like a plan. Thank you so much.

(they shake hands again)

And please, PLEASE don't tell Walter.

WALTER

Tell me what?

They're all a bit startled to see Walter standing abruptly at the door. He waltzes in nonchalantly.

WALTER

I didn't know we HAD security, not like there's much money in the show...

NIA

Walter, what are you-

He smiles and flashes an identical postcard.

WALTER

I got one too.

NIA

Well, so much for not telling you.

WALTER

Indeed.

(he hands the twins the card)

So what's our plan?

Nia defers to Leroy, while the twins eagerly compare the two postcards.

LEROY

I think we should call the police, check bags,  
and generally keep an eye on the audience.

WALTER

Wrong answer. Don't call the police, this is too  
important to leave it in their hands. And we're  
NOT checking people's bags, what is this, 9/11?

(Nia and Leroy are confused)

No, I have a different idea. Somebody is gunning  
for my life, turns me on just THINKING about it.

NIA

Ew. What.

WALTER

If they want a killer finale, give them one!  
Put them on stage! That'll teach the network!  
I still can't believe they're bumping us for that  
Vox Populi show, what even IS it?

NIA

Wait, wait wait wait. I understand your issues  
with the network - I'm on your side there. But,  
we are NOT putting a psychopath on the show.

WALTER

Why not? What's the harm?

(Nia throws up her hands in confusion)

Alright, here's what I'm thinking. We're doing two episodes today. So. First episode - normal. No change in how we run things. But, DURING the first episode, the three of you-

(gesturing to the guards)

-look for the four most suspicious contestants, hope that at least one is the killer, then we purposely select them for the FINAL episode.

ROOK

Works for me. I can spot a killer a mile away.

BISHOP

Challenge accepted.

NIA

No! ... NO! This is NOT happening, Walter.

WALTER

Nia... Sweetheart... I have parking tickets that are older than you. We're ending this show my way, and my way is: find the killer and give them the finale they want. Plus, RATINGS.

NIA

Walter... First of all, we pick the contestants randomly, so if we CHOOSE them, then we're basically fixing the game, which is illegal. Second of all-

WALTER

We can just bypass the program.

NIA

Technically, we CAN, but like I said, we'd be fixing the game. But let's, let's set that aside for a second and consider the larger issue, that you are literally asking for someone to KILL YOU ON TELEVISION!

Walter doesn't see the problem. Nia is speechless.

WALTER

So, can we make it happen?

ROOK

Oh, we can make it happen.

BISHOP

I've been training for this my whole life.

WALTER

Looks like THEY'RE on board.

(pats Nia on the shoulder as he leaves)

It'll be fun! You'll see!

He leaves excitedly. Nia is still speechless.

LEROY

Well, as much 'fun' as this may seem, we're certainly not indulging his death wish.

ROOK

But Leroy...

BISHOP

You heard the man, it'll be fun!

LEROY

Ms. Bartlett, we good with the original plan?

(Nia is staring ahead intensely)

Ms. Bartlett?

NIA

If Walter wants this...

LEROY

You can't be serious...

NIA

I am DONE with him, quite frankly, so... Screw it, honestly, I don't care anymore. Do what he says, it's HIS show, right??

She walks out in a rage. Leroy bites his tongue. The twins are understandably ecstatic.

ROOK

And with that, the king and queen departed.

BISHOP

He, apparently suicidal, the iconic mad monarch of many a Shakespearean drama.

ROOK

And she, flummoxed, nay, ENRAGED by his descent into said madness.

BISHOP

Thus, it was left to the bishop, the rook, and the kindly knight to discover the killer pawn.

LEROY

Look, I'm not going to be responsible when fit hits the shan. We need to be adults about this and keep in mind that a man's life may be at-

ROOK

(talking over him)

Sensing that the knight would be of no help, the rook and bishop undertook the journey alone.

LEROY

The knight will be on guard, ready to neutralize the pawn once they're discovered, seeing as the other pieces in the room WON'T.

BISHOP

And thus, the bitter knight grudgingly agreed to aid them in their quest.

LEROY

I suppose he did.. And you both realize that the pawn is the lowest value piece in the game, so, it couldn't feasibly kill the king..

ROOK

What if the pawn crosses to the other side and becomes the queen? Huh, Mr. Knight?

She and Bishop snap their fingers triumphantly.

LEROY

So... One of the contestants will transform into the executive producer? Once they go onstage?  
(the twins don't have a response)  
And who's the opponent? Is one side all pawns?

BISHOP

Ohmaigosh, Leroy, it's not a perfect metaphor!

ROOK

Or is it?

LEROY

I'm just trying to follow your logic.

BISHOP

You put the 'log' in logic.  
(Leroy is puzzled)  
But you are just a knight, so that's normal.

ROOK

Nobody really likes the knight anyways, it just moves in a weird L.

BISHOP

L! Like LEROY! Eyyyyy.

ROOK

Eyyyyy.

They snap and giggle. Leroy rolls his eyes.

LEROY

I just ask that we take this seriously and not treat it like a CSI episode. Okay?

ROOK

Puh-leaze, Leroy, this is MUCH better than CSI.

She and Rook swivel towards the monitors - a trickle of audience members are starting to arrive in the studio.

BISHOP

And thus, the hunt for the rogue pawn began...

INT. MAIN STUDIO SET - DAY

The show has a decidedly retro style, with popping colors and bright lights (think *The Price is Right*). And the room is slowly filling up with a diverse, excited crowd.

Some attendees are obsessed devotees of the show, with hand-made posters and 'Fake it Till you Make it' attire. But even the laid-back fans are having a fun time as they find their seats and chat with each other.

Two of the more 'normal' members (the first two pawns) are HALEY HARTLEY (32) and JOHN MATTHEWS (33). They're both searching for their seat assignments.

HALEY

Row 8... Row 8...

JOHN

(British accent)

Excuse me, you're also row 8?

(she pauses and turns to him)

Sorry, I'm not quite sure where to go... It's all rather overwhelming, but I LOVE it.

HALEY

(chuckles)

It really is! I think it's up here. I'm seat L.

JOHN

Splendid! I'm in...

(checks his ticket)

K! Guess we're seatmates. I'm John.

HALEY

Haley. Nice to meet you. Love your accent!

JOHN

Thanks. Love yours, too.

(she's confused)

American.

Haley chuckles and shakes his hand. They both meander down their row and sit happily next to each other.

The next two pawns are NATE WHEELER (16) and his overly enthusiastic mother JOSIE (45). She's standing in front of her seat with a bright pink sign and a custom visor.

JOSIE

This is so EXCITING! WOOWOO!!

(to Nate)

You ready to fake it till you make it?

Nate looks like he wants to die. He's wearing two jackets (both black), black jeans, black boots, black earrings...

NATE

(mumbles)

This show is for the terminally pathetic.

JOSIE

What was that? You gotta speak up, I can't quite hear you over the-

NATE

(louder)

I said this show is stupid.

JOSIE

What are you talking about? You LOVE this show!

NATE

YOU love this show.

JOSIE

Please... We watch it all the time, you were practically BEGGING me to tag along.

NATE

Keep telling yourself that...

JOSIE

Attitude. Careful.

(back to cheering)

WOOWOO!! FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

Nate groans, pulls out his headphones from his backpack, then turns on his heavy metal music to drown her out.

Pawn five is CHARLES RIVERA (57), who's sitting casually near the back of the room, taking notes, and looking out over the audience.

His focus is broken by pawn six: SHELLEY GRAVES (35), who sits down next to him. Charles is mystified by her outfit: she's wearing sunglasses, a fedora, and a trenchcoat.

CHARLES

Somebody's looking very noir... But why?

SHELLEY

Mmm.

CHARLES

Just an FYI - I say this as somebody who's had experience with the show - they don't pick you based on what you're wearing. It's random.

SHELLEY

Mmm. Is that so?

CHARLES

... It is...

SHELLEY

Mmm.

CHARLES

Not that it's unbecoming, but I'm just saying: if you're doing it to get picked, won't work.

SHELLEY

If you say so...

CHARLES

I do. Name's Charles. Charles Rivera.

SHELLEY

Mmm.

Confused but intrigued, Charles resumes taking notes, but then glances at Shelley again out of sheer curiosity. Shelley is expressionless and purposely avoids his gaze.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - DAY

In the back offices is pawn seven: GARRETT COLEMAN (22). We'll meet his partner, pawn eight, in due time.

Garrett is anxiously practicing his speech to himself, walking past employees and technicians as they run around in preparation for the show.

GARRETT

Hi Ms. Bartlett. Garrett Coleman, possibly THE biggest enthusiast of the show, I've never actually MET you, but I feel like I know you...

No, that's creepy. Ms. Bartlett? I'm a fan, technically a SUPER fan, and I've been on almost every episode since the show started, and well, it's about time I got picked, quite bluntly.

No, too forceful... Nia! Nope, no first name, that's REALLY creepy. Ms. Bartlett. Miss B... Wouldn't it be ideal to have a contestant who KNOWS the show in the finale? It'd be... Poetic...

That was dumb... Okay, Garrett, focus, FOCUS!  
(he slaps himself)

Ms. Bartlett! Hi! I know that, technically, you're not allowed to choose people, but if you could find it in your heart to... Too desperate...

Finally, he finds Nia's office, takes a breath, and knocks on the door. No response. He knocks again.

GARRETT

Ms. Bartlett?

After a few seconds, Nia swings the door open.

NIA

What? Can I help you? Also, the audience isn't allowed back here, so please-

GARRETT

We need to talk...

INT. SECURITY ROOM - DAY

Rook and Bishop are scanning the crowd intently, while giving a running commentary (much to Leroy's annoyance).

ROOK

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe we've found our first viable candidate in the hunt for Walter's stalker and future murderer.

BISHOP

Fascinating, Rook. Who have you got?

ROOK

Let's look at row 4, left end.

(she points to one of the monitors)

Meet Angst Central.

(it's Nate)

Definitely giving off psychopath vibes.

BISHOP

Let's look him up. What is that, seat C, D?

(she pulls up the audience list)

4C. Nate Wheeler, here with his mother Josie.

ROOK

Nate. Fasci-NATE-ing.

BISHOP

What a stellar pun, Rook. Now tell me, why is Nate, 'Angst Central', such an obvious pick?

ROOK

Well, look at him! He clearly hates being here, undoubtedly he got dragged along by his mother, he sticks out like a Goth thumb. I suspect he wants to kill Walter, not because WALTER did anything wrong, but to get revenge on HER.

BISHOP

And by 'her', you mean his mother?

ROOK

I do, Bishop. I do.

BISHOP

Noted. We'll keep him in mind. Now, I TOO have a possible contender.

(she points to another monitor)

Notice anything suspicious about her?

She's highlighting Shelley (trenchcoat, hat, sunglasses).

ROOK

Let's look her up... That's row 25...

(searches her information)

Shelley Graves. Ooh, Graves... Fitting.

BISHOP

I mean, her look speaks for itself.

ROOK

But isn't it TOO obvious?

BISHOP

Elaborate on that theory.

ROOK

Well, at least Angst Central is playing to a known type. It's common for teenagers to be angsty and annoyed, so at least his character fits into known patterns of behavior. But, for an adult like Ms. Graves to act that way...

BISHOP

You're saying she's overly suspicious?

ROOK

Exactly. A teenager is dumb enough to dress in alignment with their dark motives. But an adult, well, they'd try to HIDE their motives and dress as unsuspectingly as possible, right?

LEROY

That's actually not a bad point...

The twins spin towards Leroy excitedly. He grudgingly pivots his chair towards them.

BISHOP

So the knight has decided to join the hunt.

ROOK

We knew you couldn't avoid the drama forever.

LEROY

Don't read into it... I'm just saying, you're on the right track. If somebody in the crowd is gunning for Walter - and to be clear, they may not even be here - they'd keep a low profile.

ROOK

But if they keep a low profile, how are we supposed to find them?

LEROY

That's the million dollar question, isn't it?

He turns back to his computers without answering. Rook and Bishop groan audibly until he turns back.

LEROY

What?

ROOK

How are we supposed to find them if they're blending in??

BISHOP

Teach us, sensei.

Leroy grumbles, stands up, walks over to their monitors, and looks them over. Rook and Bishop giggle with delight.

ROOK

It's fun, isn't it?

LEROY

Yeah yeah... Let's see here... What about... Actually, never mind, forget I said anything.

BISHOP

What? What did you see?

Leroy sighs and braces himself.

LEROY

It's not what you think. Hold your judgment.

ROOK

What is it?

LEROY

Rows 15 through 17, right side.

BISHOP

15 through 17... LEROY!

They look at the three rows he mentioned, and see that there's a large group of black fans all sitting together, at least forty or fifty of them.

ROOK

You should be ashamed.

LEROY

Can I explain?

BISHOP

You BETTER.

LEROY

It's all about patterns, and finding breaks in the patterns. We RARELY have big groups, mostly the audience is singles, couples, and families. Now I don't think they're even particularly suspicious, they seem fine, but-

ROOK

But they're black. Wow.

LEROY

That's not it. But forget I brought it up.

BISHOP

Oh, we will.

Leroy walks back to his seat just as Walter bursts in.

WALTER

Ladies! How goes the search?  
(he skips over gleefully)  
Who have you got so far?

BISHOP

Well, so far just one, an angsty kid giving off  
school shooter vibes.

WALTER

Good, good... Who else?

ROOK

Nobody else at present, but we're looking.

Suddenly, Nia also bursts in.

NIA

Add Garrett Coleman.

BISHOP

Garrett Coleman...  
(looks him up)  
Row 11, seat S.

ROOK

Why him?

NIA

He just showed up at my office and demanded that  
we put him on. Very intense, and very desperate,  
even for a fan.

WALTER

Perfect! We're halfway there!

NIA

Who else do you have?

ROOK

Nate Wheeler, Angst Central.

BISHOP

You can see him on that monitor.

Nia looks closer, then nods in approval.

NIA  
So just him and Garrett so far?

ROOK  
So far, but we're on the case.

WALTER  
Excellent. And remember ladies, we've still got the full first episode to choose the other two, so don't stress about time, just concentrate on finding the right person. Godspeed!

He leaves, apparently thrilled. Nia sighs with frustration and exchanges tense looks with Leroy.

LEROY  
Say the word, and we'll call the police.

NIA  
Don't you dare. He is NOT worth it.  
(to Rook and Bishop)  
Keep me up to date on who else you find.

ROOK  
Will do.

BISHOP  
We won't let you down.

NIA  
(as she leaves)  
WALTER!

Once she's gone, Leroy shakes his head in disbelief, while Rook and Bishop resume their commentary.

BISHOP  
The queen's patience was clearly running thin, which begged the question:

ROOK  
How thick was her patience to begin with...? Hmm...

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - DAY

Nia is chasing after Walter amidst the chaos of the crew scrambling left and right.

NIA

Walter!!

(he spins around)

I just want it on the record that you are clinically insane.

WALTER

Of course I am. Part of the job, that's why they call it SHOW business.

NIA

What?? That doesn't-

(she rubs her temples)

Look, they need you on stage in a few minutes.

WALTER

And with any luck, I'll be dead in a few hours.

(he strolls away and starts singing)

*And our ratings will be through the rooooooof..*

Nia groans and storms off in the other direction.

INT. MAIN STUDIO SET - DAY

Back in the main auditorium, Garrett has found his seat next to the final pawn: HAROLD IRWIN (41).

GARRETT

Hi, Garrett, nice to meet you. I'm a regular, welcome to the show! Is this your first time?

(Harold nods)

That's awesome! You picked a good one, this is the finale of the series, which is unfortunate... I'm hoping - well, WAS hoping, probably won't happen now, but I HAD hope that this show would kick start my acting career, because the show is all about acting, and APPARENTLY... Talent scouts attend the show covertly...

HAROLD

Do they now?

GARRETT

Like I said, apparently, all rumor, but the show is a great showcase for acting. Acting is only one part of the puzzle though, and it doesn't guarantee that you'll win. It's like the SAT's. It's not as much about the actual QUESTIONS, instead, it's testing to see how well you can take the test. Or in this case-

HAROLD

How well you can play the game.

GARRETT

Exactly. Hence my commitment to the show is better described as strategy. But here I am, talking your ear off when I promised myself NOT to do that, but I'm just so floored every time being on set, it's like my brain is... Sorry, enough about me. What brings YOU here...

HAROLD

Harold.

GARRETT

Harold. Sorry for not catching that earlier.

HAROLD

You're fine. I'm here for my honeymoon.

GARRETT

Aww. That's delightful! Where's your spouse?

HAROLD

She's in the hotel room with another man.

(Garrett is silent)

She was a fan of the show, not me, I've never even seen it. But we had tickets, so I'm here to spite her.

GARRETT

Oh... That's nice...

There's an awkward pause.

GARRETT

Well, would you maybe... Like some pointers?

HAROLD

I would LOVE some. Hit me.

SWITCH FOCUS TO HALEY AND JOHN.

HALEY

So are you from here, or...

JOHN

No, I'm on holiday for the month.

HALEY

That's awesome! Well, welcome to America.

JOHN

Thank you. This is one of my last stops, actually, experiencing an American game show.

HALEY

That makes two of us, it's my first time, too.

JOHN

Really? What prompted YOU to be here?

HALEY

I just needed a fresh start... Wanted to try out something new, you know?

JOHN

I do. I hope this proves to be the... Fresh start that you're looking for.

(he smiles warmly)

But I will say... American TV is objectively worse than British TV.

HALEY

(chuckles)

Oh, are we going there already?

JOHN

Mm-hmm. American shows are all flash, all glitz and glamor, smokescreens, spectacles... But they lack substance, there's no MEAT. Americans even define them as 'guilty pleasures', like you KNOW that they're bad for you.

HALEY

But they're so FUN, it's nice to just turn your brain off and watch something mindless.

JOHN

So you admit that they're inferior?

HALEY

Not inferior, per se. Just... amusing. Literally. Sometimes you need dessert too, not just meat.

JOHN

Well, you can't live off dessert.

HALEY

But you can't enjoy life without it.

JOHN

Fair enough.

(they chuckle)

I'm just saying, American TV has nothing on us.

HALEY

And Americans love to be blissfully unaware of their shortcomings.

They chuckle again - there are obvious romantic sparks.

JOHN

For what it's worth... We invented Who Wants to be a Millionaire.

HALEY

Well, we invented all the others, so...

JOHN

Touché.

SWITCH FOCUS TO NATE AND JOSIE

Nate is sulking and blasting his music, while Josie chit-chats with another middle-aged woman in the next row.

He looks around the room dismissively, as if the whole audience is beneath him. Then he checks to make sure his backpack is tucked securely under his seat.

Suddenly, he's interrupted by Josie snapping her fingers to get his attention. He takes off his headphones briefly.

NATE

What?!

JOSIE

Switch with me. My seat's not very comfy.

NATE

Mom, they're literally all the same...

JOSIE

But this one's hurting my back, and it's very... Creaky... Come on, get up.

NATE

Oh my gosh, can you stop being a karen for like FIVE MINUTES?

JOSIE

Careful. Up!

Nate grudgingly stands up and switches places with her. Josie rocks back and forth. It creaks. Nate laughs.

NATE

(sarcastically)

You wanna switch back?

JOSIE

No, I won't be a 'Karen' about it, it's fine.

She goes back to chatting with the other woman, and Nate resumes listening to his music.

SWITCH FOCUS TO CHARLES AND SHELLEY

Charles is still intrigued by Shelley's costume, and tries to make conversation.

CHARLES

Can you actually see very well? Isn't it dark with those on?

SHELLEY

I'm perfectly fine, thank you.

CHARLES

It just... I can't imagine it's comfortable.

SHELLEY

I'll manage. But now I have a question for YOU. Why are you taking notes?

CHARLES

Helps me relax.

SHELLEY

You know what else can help you relax?

CHARLES

No...

SHELLEY

Me neither.

There's a pause. Charles is enamored, to say the least.

CHARLES

You know, typically the femme fatale is a FICTIONAL fixture. What's your play?

SHELLEY

My play? I play to win, of course.

(suddenly her phone buzzes. She reads the message, then gets up and leaves)

Excuse me.

As she brushes past Charles, he watches in fascination.

SWITCH FOCUS TO GARRETT AND HAROLD.

Harold is genuinely interested in Garrett's advice, and Garrett is more than happy to give it.

GARRETT

So, since you've never seen the game, we'll need to do a crash course. And this is all assuming that you get picked, which is highly unlikely, but still possible I suppose...

The main thing to remember is: get the audience to like you. Knowing the mechanics is helpful for people like me, because I've been described as 'prickly', which isn't endearing. Ergo, I can't count on my winning personality.

HAROLD

I didn't want to say anything.

GARRETT

See? That was good, that was funny. Use that. Because every round, the audience votes on their favorite contestants. So if they like you, you'll make it farther.

HAROLD

Got it.

GARRETT

Now in your case, I'd say, definitely do NOT mention your wife - ex-wife? - nobody likes seeing a downer, no offense.

HAROLD

None taken.

GARRETT

And play up the fact that you've never seen the game before, because they will LOVE the underdog aloofness of a beginner's success story.

HAROLD

Makes sense.

GARRETT

Thank you! I try... Any other questions?

(Harold shakes his head 'no')

Perfect. Just in time. If you have any other-

He's interrupted by the sounds of screaming fans as Walter strides on stage and the lights go up. Josie is among the dozens of fan-'girls' cheering loudly for Walter.

Walter basks in their praise, beaming with delight, before finally calming them down.

WALTER

Thank you, as always, you're all too kind!

RANDOM FAN

I LOVE YOU WALTER!!

WALTER

I love me too!

(the audience laughs)

Good afternoon, folks. Welcome to an exciting taping of Fake it Till you Make It!

(the audience cheers)

Now, the cameras aren't rolling yet. We're still getting some last-minute sound checks, but we'll be recording soon. In the meantime, a few quick house-keeping items.

First of all, how this works is that we'll be filming TWO episodes today. So if you don't get selected for this first episode, don't worry, you'll have another chance to be on.

Second... It pains me to say this, but today's episodes are the last two EVER for the show... We're being cancelled after today.

(the audience reacts sympathetically)

I know. It's a bittersweet day for everyone. Still an exciting one though, let's not let it get us down. Sound good?

(they cheer)

Alright. Lastly. If you'll all take out the clickers - they should be under your seats - we'll test those out now.

As Walter walks them through how to use their clickers (which they'll use for voting later), Shelley returns without her trenchcoat/sunglasses/hat. She's dressed in normal clothes. Charles doesn't recognize her at first.

CHARLES

Excuse me, sorry, the seat is taken.

SHELLEY

I know. It's me - I'm Shelley.

(they shake hands)

Nice to officially meet you.

CHARLES

Wow, my apologies. You just look...

SHELLEY

Less ominous?

(they chuckle)

After you said they didn't pick people based on what they're wearing, I was too PROUD to admit that I was wrong. But you were right, it wasn't very comfortable, especially if it won't get me on the show.

CHARLES

At least you tried, right?

(they chuckle again)

You know how to work the clicker?

She looks around for the clicker, finds it, then notices that Charles doesn't have his out.

SHELLEY

Is yours missing?

CHARLES

I'll get it when it's time.

SHELLEY

Whatever you say, Mr. HUMDRUM... You ready??

CHARLES

As much as I'll ever be.

SWITCH FOCUS BACK TO WALTER.

WALTER

Alright, looks like we're all set. Now remember, whenever either of these green lights are on, that means the CAMERAS are on. And even though the show is NOT broadcast live, each episode is one take, NO RESHOOTS. So be alert, be filmable, and get ready to-

(the audience says it with him)

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

(they start clapping and cheering)

And we're rolling in three... Two...

(the green lights turn on)

Hello there, America, and welcome to another SPECTACULAR episode of:

(along with the audience)

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

They cheer wildly - the camera pans over the audience as the theme music plays. We briefly see all eight pawns:

- Haley and John are excited; John is mouthing the words 'this is overrated!', which makes Haley laugh.
- Shelley is cheering. Charles is mildly interested
- Josie is the most enthusiastic, standing with her sign and screaming with the other moms. Nate tunes them out.
- Garrett and Harold are clapping, but Garrett also looks impatient and eager to get on with the first round.

Back to Walter

WALTER

What a great audience we have today! I LOVE it!

(they cheer, then settle down)

So, let's get started. Computer!

(a large monitor behind him lights up)

Let's see who today's lucky contestants are!

The monitor starts flipping rapidly through random letter/number pairs, then stops on one: 3-F!

WALTER

First up - row 3, seat F! Come on up!

The woman in 3F is ecstatic, and she hurries on stage while the audience cheers (we haven't seen her before).

The computer picks two more contestants (no pawns yet): seats 22-S and 14-Q. The crowd cheers each time as Walter announces them and they go up front.

The last pick is... 11-T! Which is Harold!

WALTER

Row 11, seat T! Join us!

Harold is genuinely surprised, and very excited. Garrett tries to be supportive.

GARRETT

That's great!

(as Harold goes by him)

Remember - be endearing, be a newcomer.

HAROLD

Got it!

GARRETT

Good luck!

(once Harold is out of earshot)

Of course he gets picked... Should have chosen T, but no, 11 S is your lucky seat... Okay, be happy for him, his success is YOUR success. Relax... You still have one more chance... Yeah, Harold!!

As Harold goes on stage, a curtain behind them opens up, revealing a table with four chairs, and a big neon sign that reads: Panel of Experts.

WALTER

Alright, contestants - we're jumping right into round one. It's time for-

(along with the audience)

PANEL OF EXPERTS!

The audience cheers as the four contestants walk over to their seats at the table. Except Harold, who looks like a deer in the headlights.

WALTER

Do you need a map?

(the audience laughs)

What's your name, partner?

HAROLD

Harold. Sorry, I'm a bit- I've never actually seen the show before.

WALTER

You've never seen the show before??

HAROLD

No sir, just heard about it, but what better way to learn than jumping in blind, right?

Walter laughs, then puts his hand on Harold's shoulder and addresses the audience.

WALTER

What do you think? Should we help out Harold, or watch him stumble through it on his own?

(they laugh)

I agree, we'll keep him in the dark.

(they laugh again)

How about it, Harold? You'll give new meaning to the phrase Fake it Till you Make it!

HAROLD

(laughs along with them)

I'll give it my best shot!

WALTER

That's the spirit! Best of luck!

(the audience cheers)

Now go! Get outta here!

(Harold looks confused)

To your SEAT, Harold, at the table!

(he pretends like he just got it)

This'll be a looooong episode.

More laughter. Harold walks over to his seat (the other three candidates are already seated at the table).

SWITCH FOCUS TO GARRETT.

GARRETT

He's actually not bad... They grow up so fast...

He turns to his other seatmate, an elderly man who looks like he's half asleep.

GARRETT

I taught him everything he knows.

OLD MAN

(pulls his hat over his eyes)

Wake me if they call my seat.

SWITCH FOCUS BACK TO WALTER AND THE CONTESTANTS.

WALTER

Alright. Let's go down the line.

(to the first contestant)

Name?

JUDITH

Judith Knudsen, can't believe I'm here!!

She's beaming, the audience cheers.

WALTER

A pleasure, Judith. What about you, ma'am?

HELEN

My name's Helen Schultz, mother of three, also can't believe I'm on the show!

WALTER

Your husband and kids are with you?

HELEN

My husband's in the audience, and my kids are watching at home.

(she waves to the camera)

We watch the show all the time, huge fans.

She grins excitedly as the audience claps and cheers.

WALTER

Well, we're glad to have you, Helen! And-

(sees Harold)

I see you found your spot.

(they laugh)

You all remember Harold.

(more laughter)

And last up, you are-

BRENT

Name's Brent.

WALTER

You here with anyone special, Brent?

BRENT

Here with my girlfriend, she's pretty jealous that I got picked - sorry, Jessica!

WALTER

If it makes you feel better, Jessica, it wasn't random, we just don't like you.

(the audience boos playfully)

Kidding, KIDDING! It is random, although we do like Brent better.

BRENT

(laughs with the audience)

I'll play for the both of us. This is for you, sweetheart!

WALTER

Aww... You're a lucky girl, Jessica.

(the audience awww's)

Let's get started. Computer! What is today's topic for our panel?

The monitor cycles through dozens of random subjects: economics, geology, mathematics, archaeology...

After a few seconds, it slows down, and finally lands on:

AUDIENCE

METEOROLOGY!

Walter chuckles and addresses the contestants.

WALTER

Alright... Starting with the lovely Judith.

A question pops up on the monitor, Walter reads it.

WALTER

What role does the troposphere play in the formation of fronts?

Judith stares at him blankly. The audience laughs.

WALTER

It's a very simple question, Judith.

More laughter. Judith fumbles for an answer.

JUDITH

Well, I mean... Fronts? The troposphere is, well, so whenever there- oh, FRONT, like a cold front! So the air is... I'm- it's IMPORTANT, in a front, but it's, it's also... I have no idea...

She laughs and buries her head in her hands.

WALTER

Is that your answer?

(she looks up and nods, still laughing)

Alright. The answer is: it's IMPORTANT.

(the audience laughs)

Next up, Mrs. Schultz.

(another question pops up)

Describe the process of frontogenesis.

HELEN

Frontogenesis. I believe that's when you have multiple pressure systems, as defined by their atmospheric METRICS, and they... Collide, causing precipitation, typically sleet or hail, which localizes over EQUATORIAL zones.

WALTER

Wow. Yeah, can't argue with that.

The audience claps and cheers for her. She's very proud, and Walter is genuinely impressed.

WALTER

Now, Harold, tell me:

(another question pops up)

What are your thoughts on the Hadley Cell?

HAROLD

The Hadley Cell...?

(suddenly the lightbulb goes off)

Ohhhh, we're supposed to pretend like we're experts on meteorology. Got it.

Walter rolls his eyes, the audience laughs

WALTER

Yes, Harold, that's why there's a big sign that says Panel of EXPERTS.

(they laugh)

So, Harold the 'expert', what are your thoughts on the Hadley Cell?

HAROLD

Oh, I think it's TERRIBLE.

(they burst out laughing)

I think Hadley would be... Pretty embarrassed to see what his cell has been up to.

WALTER

Forecast shows a 90% chance of BS.

(they all laugh)

Finally... Brent, the LOVER.

(the last question pops up)

How does surface temperature correlate to barometric pressure?

BRENT

Oh shoot, I actually... Oh what was it, shoooooot, what was the formula...  $PV = nRT$ ? So, if P stands for pressure... I would say, pressure is POSITIVELY correlated with temperature, so if temperature goes up, so does the pressure, and vice versa.

Walter and the audience cheer for him.

WALTER

Sounds like you actually WERE an expert.

(Brent smiles proudly)

Alright, audience. Time for you to pick the candidate you thought was the best expert. Whenever you're ready!

While the audience members vote on their favorites, the monitor shows a live count for each of the contestants.

After 10-15 seconds, all the votes are in. Helen wins, Harold and Brent virtually tie for second, and poor Judith is in last.

WALTER

Well Helen, you're off to a rip-roaring start! You've won \$200, and you'll be advancing to the next round, along with Harold and Brent!

(the audience cheers)

Sadly, Judith, we'll have to say goodbye, but it was a pleasure having you.

(the audience claps sympathetically as she smiles and walks offstage)

Don't go away. We'll be right back, after this commercial break.

The audience claps and cheers, and Walter motions for them to keep going until the green lights go off.

Once the lights are off, the crowd settles down.

WALTER

Great job, everyone! Alright, we'll take a quick five-minute break, get everything repped and pready for round two, then we're back on.

There's a murmur as people in the audience start chatting. Garrett immediately gets up and leaves the room.

On stage, Walter asks the contestants to come up front. Once they're out of the way, several of the crew members close the curtain and quickly change out the set pieces.

SWITCH FOCUS TO JOHN AND HALEY.

HALEY

Well? What do you think so far?

JOHN

Quite the rush, actually. And if I'm correct, this next round is my favorite.

HALEY

Oh? I think it's the critic one.

JOHN

Then yes, this is my favorite part. My friend actually works for the show as the chef.

HALEY

As the CHEF?

JOHN

Mm-hmm. Because sometimes for this segment, they'll critique FOOD, and so they need a chef, naturally. He also works at an eatery, but this is his side hustle.

(Haley is impressed)

Actually, if you'd like, I could take you backstage during the intermission.

HALEY

Really? I didn't think we're allowed.

JOHN

Bah. My friend tells me the security here is... MINIMAL, trust me, nobody will mind. You'll get the full Fake it Till you Make it experience.

HALEY

Wow... This day just keeps getting better.

JOHN

You stole the words right out of my mouth.

They chuckle playfully, lock eyes romantically for just a split second, then both turn away shyly.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - DAY

Once again, Garrett is roaming the busy backstage area.

GARRETT

Ms. Bartlett. Garrett again. Sorry to keep meeting this way, but I don't think I was QUITE clear the first time. Obviously not...

No, be more direct. Ms. Bartlett. I don't know what sort of joke you're playing by choosing the seat NEXT to me, but I don't appreciate it.

Maybe not that direct... Ms. Bartlett, please, please please PLEASE put me on the show...

He knocks at Nia's door. She opens it quicker this time.

GARRETT

Ms. Bartlett?

NIA

Not happening, Garrett!

She closes the door, but he blocks it with his foot.

GARRETT

If I could just have a minute of your time.

NIA

Garrett, that's not how the show works.

GARRETT

I can PAY you, is it about money? Here-  
(opens his wallet)

I have... No cash. Good planning, Garrett, STUPID!  
Please, I would KILL to be on the show.

NIA

I gathered as much. Now leave me alone, or I'm calling security.

He takes his foot out, she slams the door, and he dejectedly returns to the studio.

INT. MAIN STUDIO SET - DAY

Nate is bobbing his head along with the music when Josie interrupts him. He grudgingly takes his headphones off.

NATE

Now what?

JOSIE

Do you have any snacks?

NATE

Snacks? Why didn't YOU bring any?

JOSIE

I completely spaced. I have water, I just need something to hold me over.

NATE

Why don't you ask your fellow karens?

JOSIE

Careful.

She reaches for his backpack - he holds it away, but she glares at him, and he reluctantly gives it to her.

NATE

There's nothing you'd want. Also, PRIVACY.

JOSIE

Oh, hush.

(rummages through his bag)

You have brownies? Why didn't you tell me??

NATE

I would NOT eat those.

JOSIE

Why not? They don't have to be perfect, sweetie. I didn't know you baked!

NATE

Interesting choice of words...

JOSIE

What else do you have in here...?

NATE

Mom!

JOSIE

Alright, sheesh.

She grabs three brownies, then gives him his backpack.

JOSIE

Thank you, by the way.

NATE

You have been warned...

JOSIE

Oh, don't be hard on yourself.

(she takes a bite)

Mmm... MMM, I don't know why you're so worried,  
these are GREAT! You get that from my side.

Nate watches in shock as she devours all three, but he doesn't say anything. Instead, he chuckles and resumes listening to his music, while Josie turns back to the friends she's made in the audience.

SWITCH FOCUS TO GARRETT.

As he returns to his seat, he's talking to himself.

GARRETT

You're good, Garrett, there's more to life than  
this show, or so I've been told. Excuse me.

(his sleeping seatmate doesn't notice as  
Garrett passes in front of him)

There's this man. Very relaxed, very zen, very...  
Disconnected from reality. Which, ironically, is  
a phrase people have used to describe ME...

(he takes a few deep breaths)

You still have one more chance. Just be content  
knowing that, if YOU can't succeed on the show,  
at least your protégé can.

Having calmed down a bit, he cheers with the audience as Walter begins round two.

WALTER

Thank you, thank you. Welcome back to another fantacular episode of-

(along with the crowd)

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

(they cheer, then settle down)

And yes, I did just say 'fantacular'. See, the trick is that I SOUND LIKE I know what I'm talking about. Much like our contestants.

(the curtain goes up behind him)

Speaking of which, it's time for:

(along with the crowd)

EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!

The audience claps and cheers. The new set has another giant neon sign which reads: Everybody's a Critic.

Underneath it, the set looks like a high-class museum: there are framed paintings, display cases with old books, pretentious sculptures, and ornate pedestals with fancy plates of food on them.

WALTER

Contestants, are you ready?

(they all nod and clap)

Computer! What are they critiquing today?

The computer cycles randomly through several categories: food, painting, film, book... It lands on:

AUDIENCE

SCULPTURE!

WALTER

Sculpture it is! Bring it out!

Two crew members wheel out a mysterious sculpture shrouded in a white sheet. The audience ooh's in wonderment.

WALTER

Wonder what it is... Try to keep up, Harold.

The audience laughs. The computer monitor gives details about the piece: Serendipity, Resin, Reginald Morse, 2007.

WALTER

Serendipity... Alright, let's see it!

The crew members dramatically pull off the sheet, then quickly retreat backstage.

The sculpture is of two giant blue shapes suspended above the platform, as if they're floating. One is a plank, and it's intersecting a slightly deformed, donut-shaped ring at a crooked angle.

Suffice to say, very abstract, and VERY cool.

WALTER

We'll start with you, Helen. Tell us. In your 'professional' opinion as a critic, what does Serendipity represent?

HELEN

Glad you asked, Walter. Clearly, the artist is attempting to infiltrate the mainstream culture by blurring the line between fact and fiction. Should we sympathize with the shapes? Or are we meant to be provoked? Personally, I find them deeply psychosomatic... But that's just me.

Walter and the audience are impressed at her critique, and they cheer loudly as she smiles humbly.

WALTER

Brent, what's your take on 'Serendipity'?

BRENT

I think it's... Oof, I'm more into paintings, personally, but this one is... Well, it's... DARING, is the word I'm looking for. But not original, because they're just basic shapes. And the blue doesn't do it for me... That's all I got.

He chuckles, and the audience laughs/cheers with him. Walter pats him on the back.

WALTER

Well said, Brent, well said. I agree with you, the blue isn't setting well with me either...

(they laugh)

But I want to return to Helen's point: should we sympathize with the shapes, or should we be provoked by them?

(Brent shrugs. The audience laughs)

I think we can work with that. The art world appreciates your perspective.

(the audience claps and cheers for him)

And finally... Hapless Harold.

(Harold and the audience laugh)

What do YOU see in this sculpture, Harold?

HAROLD

It looks like they're having sex...

The audience half-gasps, half-laughs, and Walter is comically offended.

WALTER

HAROLD! This is a FAMILY show!

HAROLD

But it DOES! Right??

(they laugh harder)

I mean, it is called Serendipity...

Walter's facade breaks, and he bursts out laughing too. Harold chuckles and shrugs as if to say 'I'm not wrong...'

WALTER

Well, that's certainly...

(they can't stop laughing)

And, unfortunately, I can't unsee it now.

(more laughter)

Alright audience, which critic do you think captured the spirit of the work best? Vote now!

The computer shows the live results as the audience votes, and after 10-15 seconds, the results are in. This time, Harold wins in a landslide, followed by Helen, then Brent.

WALTER

Well Harold, your instinct paid off. You've won \$500, and you'll be moving on with Helen to the next round. Congratulations!

(the audience cheers)

Sadly, Brent... Buddy... You did pretty good, but, let's face it, Jessica would have done better.

(Brent laughs along with the crowd)

Pleasure to have you on. Take care.

BRENT

Thanks for having me!

The audience claps as he returns to his seat.

WALTER

Don't go away, we'll be bite rack!

The audience continues clapping and cheering, until the green lights are off.

WALTER

You all are AWESOME!

(they laugh)

We're on again in five, keep up the energy!

Like before, the audience members start chatting, and the crew members swap out the set pieces.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Don't worry, I didn't forget about the security guards. Unfortunately, they haven't found two other potential killers yet (not that Leroy is looking).

ROOK

Still no leads?

BISHOP

This trail is colder than a wife...

They keep staring at their screens. Suddenly, Rook's eyes light up, and she draws Bishop's attention to the monitor.

BISHOP

No way...

ROOK

Is that who I think it is?

LEROY

Who've you got?

They both turn to Leroy excitedly and answer in unison.

BISHOP/ROOK

The South-Side Succubus!

LEROY

The what?

BISHOP

I can't believe she's here...

ROOK

Technically, she WAS acquitted.

BISHOP

TECHNICALLY.

LEROY

Wait, who is this?

BISHOP

Let's check quick to confirm.

(she pulls up the guest's information)

Yep, it's her alright.

ROOK

Oh, this is lurid, Mr. Knight. LURID.

Leroy walks over and checks the monitor. Finally, we see who they're talking about: Haley!

BISHOP

Hattie. Hartley. She registered under the name  
HALEY Hartley, but it's definitely her.

LEROY

(he walks back to his seat)  
Unless she has a twin... So what's her deal?

ROOK

Twins? Please Leroy, leave the twins to US.

BISHOP

As for her 'deal' - she killed her husband while they were DOING it.

ROOK

But she's rich, had one of the best lawyers that money could buy. So they let her walk.

BISHOP

She did it though. Everyone knew it.

ROOK

Everyone. It was hashtag scandalous.

LEROY

And what did you call her again?

BISHOP/ROOK

The South-Side Succubus!

Suddenly Walter bursts in.

WALTER

Hattie Hartley? She's HERE??

BISHOP

Mm-hmm. Meet candidate number three.  
(shows him the screen)  
She registered under HALEY, but it's her.

ROOK

No question.

WALTER

Titillating... I can't wait to meet her...

Nia also walks in unexpectedly.

NIA

Meet who?

WALTER

Hattie Hartley.

NIA

Who?

WALTER/ROOK/BISHOP

The South-Side Succubus.

NIA

Gross. Please don't say that again. Who else?

ROOK

So far it's her, Garrett, and Angst Central.

NIA

And number four?

BISHOP

Still looking.

ROOK

We'll find 'em though. Although let's be real...

BISHOP

It's Hattie. No question.

WALTER

I hope so. She can succu MY bus.

Walter skips away and hums to himself. Nia rolls her eyes.

NIA

Let me know when you have them all, I need to update the computer.

ROOK

Will do, your majesty.

Nia is puzzled, but brushes it off and leaves. The twins continue their search for the final candidate...

INT. MAIN STUDIO SET - DAY

Meanwhile, Josie is a mile high. Nate is genuinely amused watching her giggle and ramble with the other fans.

SWITCH FOCUS TO CHARLES AND SHELLEY.

Charles is taking notes, and Shelley is taking photos. Finally, she puts her phone away and turns to him.

SHELLEY

Okay, serious question: why do you take notes?

CHARLES

I told you already, to relax.

SHELLEY

I know that's what you TOLD me, but I'm not convinced that's the whole truth...

(Charles looks up at her)

You can take notes ANY time, but this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. For Pete's sake, you are on a GAME SHOW! You are personally part of a cultural PHENOMENON. Which is mind-blowing. But you're not ABSORBING it.

CHARLES

Fair. This IS how I absorb it. And truthfully, the magic has worn off on me...

SHELLEY

So you're a regular?

CHARLES

Mm-hmm. I assume it's your first time?

SHELLEY

It is. I've been meaning to be here forever, especially NOW, since it's being cancelled...

(her phone buzzes, she checks the message)

Excuse me, sorry. Hold that thought.

She walks by him. He watches her briefly, then goes back to taking notes.

SWITCH FOCUS TO WALTER.

The crowd starts cheering. The green lights go on.

WALTER

Welcome back, everyone, to the set of:

(with the audience)

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

(they cheer, then settle down)

I like to say, this show combines two classic American traditions: making money fast!

(the audience laughs)

And pretending to know what you're doing!

(they laugh again)

Let's give it up for today's two top pretenders: Harold Irwin and Helen Schultz!

(the audience cheers)

Now, I have to say, we've got a bit of a feud going on here, don't we? Because Helen, you're a dedicated fan of the show, right?

HELEN

I am, Walter, my whole family is, we watch it every Tuesday and Thursday.

WALTER

And it's paid off! You've been excellent!

HELEN

Well thank you!

She smiles giddily as the audience cheers.

WALTER

But then on the complete other end is Harold.

(the audience laughs)

Harold has NEVER seen the show before, and yet, somehow has made it this far.

HAROLD

Beginner's luck, I guess.

WALTER

I don't know what else it COULD be...

The audience laughs, then starts cheering as the curtain rises behind the contestants.

WALTER

Whatever it is, I hope you're ready for:  
(along with the audience)  
THE PERFECT PITCH!

There's another big sign with the name of the game, suspended over two pastel-colored podiums.

Helen and Harold walk over to the podiums and stand opposite each other. Walter is in the middle, moderating.

WALTER

Alright. Let's see who's the fether babricator.  
(the audience laughs)  
What's our pitch today?

The computer scrolls randomly through a list of things: Blockbuster, Sport, Technology, Household Product, Food, Piece of Furniture, Celebrity... It lands on:

AUDIENCE

BEST-SELLING BOOK.

WALTER

Best-selling book. Helen, since you know how to play this round, we'll let you start. Tell us about a best-selling book you read recently.

HELEN

Hmm... Well, I did read an interesting mystery on the New York Times Best-Seller list, it was an intriguing story about... A woman who supposedly... She worked as a con artist, and her father was, he tried to be part of the con with her.

BUT, there was some obvious tension, because of their troubled past, and so she actually ends up tricking HIM, but making him- making him THINK that it was all part of her plan. But of course, spoilers, it ends with them reconciling, and leaving that life behind.

The audience applauds loudly as Helen smiles sincerely and takes a bow. Walter is stunned.

WALTER

Helen, that was... Was that all on the spot?

(she nods)

Wow... Let's give her another hand, folks!

(the audience cheers, Helen blushes)

Tough act to follow, Harold.

HAROLD

I'll say. So let me get this straight, it's not, I'm not describing a REAL best-seller, right?

WALTER

You are not, hence the 'Fake it' part.

The audience laughs. Harold thinks it over for a minute.

HAROLD

Alright, I think I got something... It's about... Okay, so I also read a Times best-seller, which was about a student who was super obsessed with the SATs. He had it down to a science, like, he was a pro. And what else...? So, other students, they would pay him to take the test for them.

But eventually... Hmm, so the guy, the guy learns that there's more to life than tests, and so he... Oh, okay, and so the book ends with him failing on purpose, and moving on with his life.

Walter and the audience are also impressed with his story, and they cheer loudly for him.

Harold grins and looks out at Garrett, who's actually flattered that Harold used his comments for inspiration.

WALTER

I must say, Harold, not bad for your first time, you've certainly got the hang of things.

HAROLD

Thank you. I'm doing this for my wife, Tessa.

The audience aww's romantically.

WALTER

That's great. I'm sure Tessa is thrilled.

HAROLD

I certainly hope so. We're on our honeymoon.

WALTER

You're just having a great day, aren't you?

(Harold nods and grins)

Is she in the audience.

HAROLD

Nah, she's in our hotel room with another guy.

I'm just here to stick it to her.

Walter and the audience go dead silent. Harold keeps smiling proudly.

WALTER

Well... That's... Okay, shall we vote?

The room is awkwardly quiet as the audience votes, and Helen wins every vote almost immediately.

WALTER

Oh thank God. Helen! You've won \$1000, AND, you'll be in the final round. Congratulations!

(the audience cheers wildly)

Harold...

(he doesn't know what to say)

Coming up, Helen will have the chance to win \$2000 on the final round of today's episode!

We'll be back, don't chan the change-el!

As the audience cheers, Harold happily steps out of the spotlight and returns to his seat. Walter and Helen smile and wave at the camera until the green lights turn off.

WALTER

Alright people, last round, keep it up!

Same routine: the crowd chats while the stage is reset.

SWITCH FOCUS TO GARRETT AND HAROLD.

GARRETT

Welcome back. I see you ignored my advice, but still turned in an admirable performance.

HAROLD

I knew what I was doing.

GARRETT

I don't understand, you, you had it in the bag, why did you-

HAROLD

Why'd I self-destruct?

(Garrett nods)

Because of that book I read. About the SAT guy.

(he winks at him)

You'll understand when you're older.

GARRETT

Please, don't patronize me. I understand that there's more to life than winning.

HAROLD

Do you?

(Garrett is silent)

Hey, want to split the prize money?

GARRETT

Are you trying to buy me off?

HAROLD

No... I wouldn't have made it this far if you hadn't helped me out, so I'm good to split it...

GARRETT

I don't want your dirty money.

(he gets up intensely)

I need to speak to somebody. Excuse me.

He awkwardly squeezes past the sleeping old man, which completely deflates his intense exit. Harold chuckles as Garrett tries to maintain his intense composure.

SWITCH FOCUS TO CHARLES.

Charles's note-taking is interrupted by the sight of Shelley returning with a giant fruit basket on her head.

CHARLES

Umm...

INT. SECURITY ROOM - DAY

Rook is fixated on one of the monitors.

ROOK

What the...

She's looking at Shelley wearing the fruit basket.

BISHOP

What is it?

(she looks at the screen)

Who's that?

ROOK

Not sure. But what an accoutrement. Is she the...

(she rewinds the footage)

No, it's not who I thought.

(the footage goes back to the beginning)

Wait! Yes, it is! Trenchcoat lady. She went from trenchcoat and hat and sunglasses-

(she fast forwards)

To a normal outfit.

(the video catches up with the livestream)

To a-

BISHOP

A fruit basket. But why?

ROOK

I have no idea. But talk about odd. Have you found anyone else?

BISHOP

Nope, nothing out of the ordinary.

LEROY

You should just pick fruit basket lady and be done with it.

ROOK

Hate to say it Leroy, but I think you're right.

BISHOP

Quick, good knight, ride off into the forest, tell your somber tidings to the king and queen.

LEROY

Yeah, yeah...

Leroy grumbles half-heartedly, slowly stands up, then goes to look for Walter and Nia.

ROOK

The board was set. On one side, the king, queen, bishop, rook, and knight.

BISHOP

On the other side, four pawns.

ROOK

One angsty teen.

BISHOP

One desperate superfan.

ROOK

One succubus.

BISHOP

And a woman with fruit on her head.

ROOK

The stakes couldn't be higher.

BISHOP

The kingdom was on the verge of being cancelled.

ROOK

But that was all about to change...

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - DAY

Leroy finds Walter first. His microphone is being adjusted by a technician.

WALTER

Ah, Leroy! Just the man that wants to see me right now.

(whispers)

Has the fourth package arrived?

LEROY

It has.

WALTER

(at normal volume)

Good. Godspeed!

(Leroy leaves. Walter smiles and turns to the technicians)

You're fired!

(the technician is startled)

Not really.

Next, Leroy looks for Nia. He sees her walking angrily while Garrett follows her.

GARRETT

Think of it like a Make a Wish request, with me, the terminally obsessed fan, and you, the-

NIA

(turns towards him)

OH MY GOSH, YOU WILL BE ON THE EPISODE! OKAY??

Garrett stops, suppresses a smile, and leaves. Nia doesn't notice Leroy as he follows her.

LEROY

Ms. Bartlett?

NIA

WHAT??

She stops and composes herself.

NIA

Sorry.

LEROY

No worries, you've got a lot on your plate.

(she nods in agreement)

Just letting you know, we have the fourth one, whenever you want to swing by, we'll have their seat assignments ready.

NIA

Who is it?

LEROY

Don't know her name. Gal with a fruit basket.

NIA

Sure. Why not.

She walks away in disbelief. Leroy returns to his post.

INT. MAIN STUDIO SET - DAY

The crowd cheers. The green lights turn on. Garrett finds his seat, and Harold is surprised to see him grinning from ear to ear.

WALTER

Welcome back America to the final round of:

(with the audience)

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

(they cheer, then settle down)

I'm here with Helen Schultze, our resident faker.

Helen has been just SUPERB today, hasn't she?

(the audience cheers)

Now Helen, what'll you do if you win this round?

You've already got twelve-hundred dollars, and you could win an extra two thousand... Any plans?

HELEN

Well, I think my family and I will probably take a vacation, maybe go to Hawaii, I just- it's, everything is so surreal right now.

WALTER

I know what you mean. Being on the other side, it's something else. But you're well on your way to that vacation, and I couldn't think of a more deserving winner.

(the crowd cheers)

Are you ready for the final round?

HELEN

I am, I'm incredibly ready.

WALTER

INCREDIBLY ready, I love it!

(as the curtain goes up)

Let's play:

(with the audience and Helen)

LAST MINUTE STAND-IN!

This set is minimalist. As usual, there's a neon sign with the title of the game. Beneath it is a bright lime-green circular platform. And on the back wall is a giant timer with 1 minute on the clock.

Helen eagerly goes to the center of the platform. The timer is still at 1 minute, it hasn't started yet.

WALTER

Alright Helen, I won't drag this out, you know how this round works. Computer! Tell us, what is Helen standing in as?

The computer monitor scrolls through random occupations, before landing on:

AUDIENCE

FLIGHT ATTENDANT.

WALTER

Flight attendant. Pretend like this is on your trip to Hawaii.

(Helen and the audience laugh)

On your mark... Get set...

He gives the signal. The countdown starts.

HELEN

Hi, hello, good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, we'll be taking off shortly. Nonstop flight from Austin to Honolulu.

(53 seconds left)

We have a brief safety demonstration, so if you, could I have your undivided attention please. Please be sure to fasten your seatbelts and stay seated while the seatbelt sign, light, is on.

(42 seconds left)

If there's a water landing, we have life jackets under your seat, please inflate those if needed, and your seat cushion will also double as a flotation device. Hopefully we won't need to, but we are flying to Hawaii today, so that's a distinct possibility

(she bursts out laughing with the audience, then quickly refocuses. 27 seconds left)

If we... Oh, if we lose cabin pressure, a mask, oxygen masks will pop out of the- they'll, from the overhead area. Please put your mask on first if you're travelling with children, and then put theirs on when you're done.

(15 seconds left)

And finally, the- we'd like to thank you for flying our airlines today, we'll be stopping by later with refreshments and snacks, so please, sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight!

(she looks at the clock - 5 seconds)

And... Hawaii is LOVELY this time of year!

Zero seconds. The audience gives her a standing ovation, and she almost faints. But she smiles sincerely as Walter walks over to congratulate her.

WALTER

Helen, HELEN! What a performance!!

(the audience keeps cheering)

I think I know the answer, but audience, was Helen convincing as a flight attendant?

The audience is overwhelmingly proud of her, and she's moved to tears by their support. But they're tears of joy, and she can't stop laughing with relief.

WALTER

I don't know, I think it's UP IN THE AIR.

(they all laugh)

Kidding! Helen, congratulations, you've won an additional TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS!!

(more cheering)

Thank you everybody! Until next time!

The audience continues to cheer for Helen even after the green lights turn off.

Finally, they settle down, Helen walks cheerfully offstage, and Walter addresses the crowd.

WALTER

And to think, we're only halfway done!

(they laugh and cheer)

Alright, we'll have a fifteen, catch that, FIFTEEN MINUTE intermission. So stretch, get up, use the restroom if you have to, and then we're back for the FINALE-

(they cheer)

Which might be our most KILLER episode yet!

There's a fun surprise in store.

(the crowd is intrigued)

So, be ready in fifteen. And... Break!

SWITCH FOCUS TO GARRETT AND HAROLD.

Garrett is still grinning. Now that the cameras are off, Harold asks him about it.

HAROLD

Okay, I'll bite. What are you happy about?

GARRETT

Sometimes, persistence pays off.

HAROLD

Oh? You mean you're, you'll be-

(Garrett nods excitedly)

Wow. Congratulations.

Garrett smiles and rocks back and forth anxiously.

SWITCH FOCUS TO JOSIE AND NATE.

Josie practically falls over Nate as she leaves her seat.

JOSIE

I'll be just a must-it, musket, MINUTE...

(she bursts out laughing)

You're so TRIPPY. Get it? Because I'm, you, because I TRIPPED on you.

(she giggles)

And if this was a TRIP, it's a TRIPPY TRIP.

Finally she manages to leave their row. Nate is actually enjoying this more than he thought.

SWITCH FOCUS TO JOHN AND HALEY.

They're also leaving their row, but much more orderly.

JOHN

We should be back in plenty of time, but we'll keep it quick, just to be safe, and I already texted him, so he's expecting us.

HALEY

Sounds like a plan.

JOHN

Ready to see the inner workings?

HALEY

That sounds vaguely sexual.

JOHN

I don't think it does... I think YOU are just MAKING it vaguely sexual.

HALEY

Either way, yes, I'm ready.

(she winks at him)

After you.

John smiles back, then they make their way out of the room to the backstage offices.

SWITCH FOCUS TO CHARLES AND SHELLEY.

Shelley is still wearing the fruit basket. She's surveying the room proudly, like she's royalty.

Charles can't take his eyes off the fruit.

CHARLES

Dare I ask?

SHELLEY

If I do get chosen, I want to be memorable.

CHARLES

You certainly will be... You're a lady of many decisions, technically, IN-decisions.

SHELLEY

I'm flattered.

Charles looks confused.

CHARLES

Why?

SHELLEY

Why what?

CHARLES

Why are you flattered? That doesn't make sense.

(Shelley winks at him)

Forgive me if this sounds indelicate, but do you have dissociative identity disorder?

SHELLEY

No... I'm just... Multi-faceted.

CHARLES

Clearly...

He goes to use the bathroom, leaving Shelley on her own. After a few seconds, she gets a text message, reads it, sighs with relief, and takes off the basket.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Walter is standing by the monitors while Rook and Bishop give their notes on their selections.

ROOK

Now, the obvious suspect here is Hattie.

WALTER

Obviously.

BISHOP

Angsty teen and fruit basket are PROBABLY just quirky but not deadly.

WALTER

But we can't be too careful.

BISHOP

And Garrett the superfan, he's probably your other contender.

WALTER

Got it.

ROOK

As for the-

LEROY

Hey, sorry to interrupt, but you all might be interested in this.

(he waves them over)

This is the backstage area...

(he zooms in)

Isn't that your gal?

The feed is showing Haley, John, and the chef chatting casually backstage next to plates of food.

WALTER

She's diabolical.

ROOK

Is that for the food challenge?

WALTER

It might be. Where's Nia?  
(he looks around the room)  
Where am I?

LEROY

The security office...

WALTER

Right. NIA? NIA!

LEROY

I'll go get her.

He's about to stand up, but suddenly Nia arrives.

LEROY

How did you get here so quickly...

NIA

Do you have the list?

ROOK

We do!  
(she hands Nia a sheet of paper)  
All four, ready to go.

NIA

Perfect. I will cue them up.

WALTER

Hey, you're the producer, right?

Nia stares at him in disbelief.

WALTER

It's the mad cow. Question: on the critic round,  
will it be food this time?

NIA

No, Walter, the chef is here for fun.

WALTER

Why would he be here for fun?

NIA

It was a JOKE, YES, we're doing FOOD.

WALTER

What food specifically?

NIA

I think it's foie gras.

WALTER

Exotic...

NIA

UGH...

(she walks out angrily)

WE'RE ON IN FIVE, PEOPLE!

WALTER

So what you're saying is-

ROOK

Don't eat the foie gras.

WALTER

No gras. This is so RIVETING! I LOVE IT!

He walks out elatedly. Bishop and Rook fist-bump and pivot in unison towards their monitors. Leroy rolls his eyes.

INT. MAIN STUDIO SET - DAY

Josie returns, still out of it, and trips on Nate again as she goes to her seat.

Charles also returns and is baffled to see Shelley without the hat. She smiles sheepishly at him.

John and Haley return to their seats. Their hands touch, just for a moment, and they exchange romantic looks.

And Garrett is nearly falling out of his seat with anticipation, which Harold finds entertaining.

Nia is watching from backstage. Walter winks at her, pretends to shoot himself, then strides out confidently.

The crowd cheers as Walter kicks off the show.

WALTER

Hello America, I'm Walter O'Neill, and welcome to the FINAL episode of:

(with the crowd)

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

(they cheer, then settle down)

Now, as you know, this isn't just final as in final episode of the SEASON... It's also the final episode of the SHOW.

(the audience reacts sadly)

I know, I know! Right? Tell you what, I promise that tonight's show will be GRIPPING.

NIA

(to herself)

Don't say it...

WALTER

That it'll be EXPLOSIVE!

NIA

Don't.

WALTER

It'll be FULL of surprises.

NIA

Say.

WALTER

And one of those surprises is:

NIA

It.

WALTER

OUR VERY OWN GOSPEL CHOIR!

Nia is taken aback. Walter grins playfully.

WALTER

Ladies and gentlemen! From First Pentecostal,  
please welcome, the Healthy, Wealthy and Wise  
Gospel Singers! HIT IT!

The three rows of black fans come to life and stand up.

LEAD SINGER

ONE! TWO THREE! FOUR! *YOU GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER

*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER

*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER

*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!*

CHOIR

*OH LORD, OH LORD, OH LORD, OH LORD!*

As the choir dances and sings their way to the stage,  
everyone else starts clapping along to the music, while  
Walter shimmies and shuffles onstage.

LEAD SINGER

*YOU GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER

*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER

*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER

*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!*

CHOIR

*OH LORD, OH LORD, OH LORD, OH LORD!*

WALTER

*EVERYBODY NOW! YOU GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER

*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER

*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER

*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE

*OH LORD, OH LORD, OH LORD, OH LORD!*

LEAD SINGER

*ONE MORE TIME! YOU GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE

*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER  
*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE  
*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER  
*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! GOTTA FAKE IT!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE  
*FAKE IT!*

LEAD SINGER  
*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE  
*OH LORD, OH LORD, OH LORD, OH LORRRRRRD!*

As the choir holds the last note, shaking their bodies and their tambourines, the crowd goes wild.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - DAY

The guards are all speechless.

INT. MAIN STUDIO SET - DAY

The room is absolutely electric. Walter is over the moon, the crowd couldn't be more hyped, and the stage is set (literally) for an epic finale.

WALTER  
Thank you, THANK YOU! To our good friends from First Pentecostal!  
(the crowd cheers)  
I would ask you all to quiet down, but why muiin the rood? Let's jump right in! It's the moment you've all been waiting for: Choosing our final four contestants!

The computer monitor starts shuffling through seats, and the choir hums in the background suspensefully.

WALTER  
First pick is... 8-L!

CHOIR  
*8-L! 8-L!*

LEAD SINGER  
*Always do well with-*

CHOIR  
*8-L!*

8-L is Haley. She's caught off guard, smiles at John, then goes to the front.

WALTER  
Next up is... 25-F!

CHOIR  
*25-F! 25-F!*

LEAD SINGER  
*Gotta call the ref for-*

CHOIR  
*25-F!*

25-F is Shelley, all the way in the back. Her reaction looks fake, almost as if she was expecting to be chosen.

WALTER  
Third contestant is... 11-S!

CHOIR  
*11-S! 11-S!*

LEAD SINGER  
*It's heaven-ous! It's-*

CHOIR  
*11-S!*

11-S is Garrett, who also doesn't look too surprised, but he's ecstatic nonetheless.

WALTER  
And last but not least-  
(the final seat shows on the screen)  
4-C!

LEAD SINGER  
4-C! 4-C!

LEAD SINGER  
*The one for you and me! It's-*

LEAD SINGER  
4-C!

4-C is... Josie. It doesn't even register at first that her seat was called, but when it does, she laughs giddily and stumbles up front.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - DAY

Bishop and Rook are puzzled.

ROOK  
Who the heck is SHE?

BISHOP  
Wait, 4-C is Angst Central...

ROOK  
Then who- Is that his mom?

BISHOP  
Did they switch seats?

LEROY  
(from behind them)  
Is she HIGH??

Bishop and Rook are horrified. Leroy bursts out laughing and walks back to his station.

LEROY  
Just when I thought we'd seen it all...

INT. MAIN STUDIO SET - DAY

As the contestants walk up to the stage, Walter turns to the gospel choir.

WALTER

Did you know which seats we were picking, with 11-S and 'heavenous', or 4-C and 'you and me'?

LEAD SINGER

The best music is all about improvising, Walter.

WALTER

I'm with you there. YOU should be on the show!

LEAD SINGER

You know, in a way, I already am!

Everyone laughs and starts cheering. As the curtain rises on the 'Panel of Experts' set piece, Walter prepares for the commercial break.

WALTER

When we come back, we'll-

He's startled as Josie accidentally grabs him and almost pulls him to the ground. He helps her keep her balance.

JOSIE

Hi Walllllter, hi, I can't believe-

(she bursts out laughing)

*Fake it! Fake it! Fake it till you make it...*

WALTER

Well, who do we have here? Mrs...

JOSIE

MISS Wheeler, my husband died YEARS ago...

(she giggles, the audience doesn't know how to react)

I'm just so HAPPY though, that song, OH, that beautiful song. And my son Nate - hi, Nate!

(Nate hides in embarrassment)

Don't tell anyone, but-

She breaks down laughing for a few seconds. Walter and the audience watch with morbid curiosity.

JOSIE

Nate is a CHEF. He gave me BROWNIES, and he didn't didn't didn't want to me, but I inSISTed, no, I in-MOTHERed, get it? Got it? Gucci.

(she laughs)

Don't tell anyone though.

Walter and the audience are amused now that they know what's going on.

WALTER

Ms. Wheeler, forgive me, you said your son gave you BROWNIES?

(she nods)

Regular brownies?

JOSIE

I think so... Why?

(she waves her hand around like she's swatting a fly)

Why, why... And Z... That's a good song TOO.

WALTER

Are you sure you're feeling okay, Ms. Wheeler?

(she nods)

Maybe you'd like to sit this one out?

JOSIE

No, silly! It's the last spespisode. Spessipode. Do-si-do-pisode, stipode.

She giggles and stumbles over to her seat at the table, where the other three contestants are already seated.

WALTER

Well, this is unexpected on a few levels...

(he glances at Nia, she's just as confused)

You know what? Why not! It's our last episode, and technically it's legal in this state.

(the audience laughs)

We'll be right back after these messages!

SWITCH FOCUS TO BACKSTAGE.

While the gospel choir leads the audience in another round of the theme song, Walter confers with Nia. She's livid.

NIA

I don't even know where to start... First, why did we go to commercial break before round one?

WALTER

Do your veins always pop like that?

NIA

WALTER!

WALTER

What?? Umm, commercial break, oh! I thought that the choir might have thrown off our timing.

NIA

I see, well that leads us to my next question:  
WHY IS THERE A GOSPEL CHOIR?

WALTER

Why ISN'T there a gospel choir?

NIA

Because we don't NEED one.

WALTER

But it's so SPIRITUAL!

NIA

THIS IS NOT A SPIRITUAL SHOW, WALTER!

WALTER

We also don't allow MURDERERS on the show, but look where THAT got us.

NIA

THAT WAS **YOUR** IDEA!

WALTER

Tomato, tomorrow. What else?

NIA

What else??

(she stares at him incredulously)

Um, HIGH MOTHER???

WALTER

I'm not your mother, Nia, are you feeling okay?

Is your 'mother' visiting for the month?

He winks at her, she kicks him in the groin, he recoils.

NIA

We cannot have somebody who's HIGH on stage.

WALTER

She's high on LIFE.

(Nia rolls her eyes)

Besides, what will the network do? CANCEL US?

NIA

I hope you realize that neither of us will EVER find work again after tonight.

WALTER

Good thing I can retire.

(she kicks him again)

Ow! What?? Is this about you losing your job?

(Nia glares at him)

Oh, oh sweet child, I didn't realize, fear not.

Walter takes good care of his girls.

NIA

Ew. No! I will kick you again!

(Walter braces himself)

I really do hope someone is trying to kill you.

WALTER

That's the spirit!

(he goes back onstage)

Alright choir, PANEL OF EXPERTS. HIT IT!

NIA

(as she goes to her office)

This is all a dream, it's alllll a bad dream..

SWITCH FOCUS TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE.

The crowd, the contestants, and Walter are singing along with the next song.

CHOIR  
*IT'S THE PANEL!*

AUDIENCE  
*THE PANEL!*

CHOIR  
*THE PANEL OF EXPERTS! IT'S THE PANEL!*

AUDIENCE  
*THE PANEL!*

CHOIR  
*THE PANEL OF EXPERTS! IT'S THE PANEL!*

AUDIENCE  
*THE PANEL!*

LEAD SINGER  
*THEY PRETEND LIKE THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE  
TALKING ABOUT!*

AUDIENCE/CHOIR  
*THE PANEL!*

LEAD SINGER  
*GIVING CONFIDENT ANSWERS WITHOUT ANY DOUBT!*

AUDIENCE/CHOIR  
*THE PANEL!*

LEAD SINGER  
*AND YOU NEVER CAN TELL IF THEY'RE IN THE KNOW!*

AUDIENCE/CHOIR  
*THE PANEL!*

LEAD SINGER  
*BECAUSE THEY'RE REALLY JUST ON A GAAAAME SHOW!*

AUDIENCE/CHOIR

*THE PANEL! THE PANEL! THE PANEL OF EXPERTS!  
THE PANEL! THE PANEL! THE PANEL OF EXPERTS!*

LEAD SINGER

*SO SMART IT HURTS!*

AUDIENCE/CHOIR

*THE PANEL! THE PANEL! THE PANEL OF EXPERTS!*

LEAD SINGER

*SOOOOO MANY BIG WORDS!*

AUDIENCE/CHOIR

*THE PANEL! THE PANEL! THE PANEL OF EXPERTS  
IT'S THE **PANEL!***

Everybody cheers and applauds loudly. Walter waits until they've settled down before continuing.

WALTER

Thank you, choir! Aren't they INCREDIBLE?  
(the audience claps and cheers)  
Alright... WOO! What a buzz! So, let's meet our  
four FINAL contestants! First up is:

SHELLEY

That song is CATCHY! *Panel of experts...*  
(everyone laughs)  
Hey everyone, I'm Shelley!

WALTER

Shelley! Or can I call you Shell?  
(they both fake laugh)  
Pleasure to have you. And next up, we have:

GARRETT

Hello Walter, my name's Garrett, long-time  
listener, first-time caller, so to speak.  
(the audience laughs)  
Glad to finally showcase my talent.

WALTER

Somebody's confident! I love it!

The audience cheers. Garrett smiles and briefly looks out at Harold, who's giving him a thumbs-up.

WALTER

And here we have:

HALEY

Haley. I'm all atingle to be here.

WALTER

What a coincidence! So am I!

(they laugh)

Now, you look familiar... Weren't you in the news recently for murder?

(the audience gasps)

Something about a... Succubus?

(another gasp)

Are you THE Hattie Hartley?

HALEY

No Walter, that was my sister, I'm HALEY.

(Walter isn't convinced)

We're identical twins, believe me, BELIEVE ME, people mix us up all the time.

WALTER

If you say so... Good to have you, I suppose.

(scattered applause)

And lastly...

(he starts laughing)

Ms. Wheeler.

JOSIE

Where?

(she looks around, confused, they laugh)

Who are you- oh, ME! Hi Walter! I remember you from earlier!

(more laughter, she whispers)

Is this LIVE?

WALTER

The cameras are rolling, yes.

(Josie smiles and waves)

Is there anything you'd like to tell America?

JOSIE

Tell AMERICA? Wow, that's heavy... I would say, remember, YOU are the real America.

(they laugh)

Right? The real America is right in front of us all this time, and we don't even SEE it.

WALTER

I wish I knew what you meant!

(they all laugh)

Great to have you, Ms. Wheeler.

JOSIE

Great to be HAD, Walrus, Walter, oh I'm sorry...

(they laugh, she's embarrassed)

And you're not even FAT, so it's not that FUNNY.

WALTER

I think I'll manage.

(they laugh)

Alright! Computer! What is our topic today?

The computer cycles through the topics, then lands on:

AUDIENCE

THE LEGAL SYSTEM!

WALTER

Alright, order in the court!

(they laugh)

We'll start with Shelley. Tell me:

(the first question pops up)

How would you define normative jurisprudence?

SHELLEY

Juris-what-now?

(laughter)

Umm... It's the NORMAL type of jur-is-pru-DENCE? Instead of the DIFFERENTATIVE type, and so, it, it's the juris- I can't say that word...

(more laughter)

It's the one you use normally, like in court, like a NORMATIVE court. You know, for a fine or traffic ticket, minor MISDEMEANORS. And such.

The audience laughs and cheers, Shelley giggles at how ridiculous her answer sounded.

WALTER

Your honor? I'd like to request new counsel.

(they all laugh)

Now Garrett, see if you can follow that up:

(the next question appears)

What is the difference between 'in rem' and 'in personam'?

GARRETT

Hmm.. Well, 'rem' comes from the Latin 'res', meaning 'thing'. And 'personam' means 'person'. Thus, 'in rem' means relating to something, like evidence or a verdict. Whereas 'in personam' is related to the people, so, the defendant, judge, prosecutor, or witnesses.

Garrett nods confidently, the audience cheers, and Walter is impressed.

WALTER

Your honor, the defense rests.

(they laugh)

Next we have Ms. Hartley:

(he reads the third question)

In the context of a criminal trial, what is the exclusionary rule? You might actually know this...

HALEY

Well, like I said, it's my SISTER, not me...

(no reaction)

The... Exclusionary rule, it says - you can be EXCLUDED if the... Reasonable doubt isn't there, provided that there's sufficient... Guilt?

There's some light applause, not much laughter though.

WALTER

Maybe you really ARE her sister... Or you're pulling a double fake by pretending to be exceptionally clueless. Either way, you look guilty to me.

The audience chuckles, and a few people boo, but Haley smiles and tries to ignore them.

WALTER

Moving on. Ms. Wheeler.

(the last question appears)

Compare and contrast tort law and contract law.

JOSIE

I LOVE torte, it's so TASTY.

(the audience bursts out laughing)

Do they have a LAW now? Are tortes illegal?

What's next, tiramasseuse? Mousse, tiramousse.

(Walter and the audience laugh)

I wonder if mooses have laws... If they do, they probably have ANTLER court.

(more laughter)

And you know what rhymes with court?

WALTER

Tort?

(Josie nods and giggles)

Well, we've gone full circle. Any objections?

(the audience laughs and cheers)

Case closed. Audience - who was the best expert?  
Whenever you're ready.

The computer shows a live tally. After 10-15 seconds, all the votes are in.

Josie is the obvious winner, Garrett is a close second, Shelley trails in third, and Haley has almost zero votes.

WALTER

Well Ms. Wheeler, you better thank your son for those brownies, you've just won \$200!

(the crowd cheers)

You'll be joining Garrett and Shelley in the upcoming round. And sadly, Ms. Hartley-

(more booing)

Tough crowd, but that's what you get when you kill your husband...

(Haley looks irked)

Any last words?

Haley smiles politely, then looks out over the crowd until she spots John. He's shaking his head 'no'.

HALEY

I just... I had a lovely time, thank you.

There's very little applause as she returns to her seat. Instead, everyone focuses on the choir as they sing the theme song. They run through the main chorus twice, then the green lights go off.

As usual, the crew prepares the next set, while Walter makes small talk with the three remaining contestants.

SWITCH FOCUS TO HALEY AND JOHN.

Haley walks past their row, too ashamed to look at John, but he gets up and follows after her. Several people boo.

INT. STUDIO LOBBY - DAY

The lobby is empty except for Haley and John. She's trying not to cry, but the pressure is getting to her, and she can't bring herself to look at him.

HALEY

I can't keep doing this... I thought maybe, MAYBE this could help me start over, but-

JOHN

Once a pariah, always a pariah...

HALEY

I just want this all to end, I thought that...  
(she dabs away a tear)  
You'd THINK that being acquitted would make them believe me, right?

JOHN

You would think... But kids are cruel.  
(he steps toward her slowly)  
But I believe you, Hattie. It is you, right?  
Nobody ever mentioned a twin during the trial...

Hattie nods and starts sobbing quietly. She still refuses to look at him.

HATTIE

You don't have to pretend, nobody else does.

JOHN

I do believe you, honest. You don't look like a succubus to me.

(she laughs while crying)

I actually knew it was you the moment we met.

(she turns to him)

But I suspected it was the LAST thing you wanted to talk about. So, I didn't bring it up.

HATTIE

Thank you. And thanks for stopping me.

JOHN

Of course. Your declaration of innocence would have fallen on deaf ears.

(she chuckles)

I do think you were robbed... Your answer was at LEAST as good as that stoned woman...

HATTIE

(she chuckles again)

Yeah... They would have voted me off regardless.

JOHN

Agreed. Ah well.

HATTIE

Bloody Americans...

They both laugh, pause, lock eyes, and then tenderly kiss.

JOHN

You want to get out of here?

HATTIE

You have no idea.

And with that, they run off into the sunset. The end.

Well, for them anyway... SWITCH FOCUS TO THE MAIN SET.

The crowd is singing and swaying to the next gospel song.  
Even Nia is reluctantly humming along backstage.

As they sing, the curtain rises on the next set. Walter is  
dancing badly but whole-heartedly, and it's delightful.

AUDIENCE/CHOIR

*A CRITIC! A CRITIC! EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!*  
*A CRITIC! A CRITIC! EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!*

CHOIR ONLY

*EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!*

LEAD SINGER

*WHAT RHYMES WITH CRITIC?*

CHOIR

*EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!*

LEAD SINGER

*NO REALLY, WHAT RHYMES WITH CRITIC?*

CHOIR

*YOU DON'T HAVE A RHYME??*

LEAD SINGER

*WHAT ARE YOU? A CRITIC?*

CHOIR

*WELL YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY!*

LEAD SINGER

***EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!***

AUDIENCE/CHOIR

*A CRITIC! A CRITIC! EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!*  
*A CRITIC! A CRITIC! EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!*  
*A CRITIC! A CRITIC! EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!*  
*A CRITIC! A CRITIC! EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!*

They all cheer for the choir. Walter catches his breath and  
waits for them to settle down.

WALTER  
Everybody is INDEED a critic!  
(still catching his breath)  
Welcome back America to our final, literally  
BREATH-TAKING episode of:  
(with the audience/choir)  
FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!  
(more cheering)  
I need to work out more...  
(they laugh)  
Let's get the rall bolling! Computer! What will  
our contestants be critiquing today?

The monitor cycles through the choices and lands on:

AUDIENCE  
FOOD!

WALTER  
Food it is! Where's our chef? Come on out!

SWITCH FOCUS TO THE SECURITY ROOM.

The twins are watching intently as the chef hands out four  
fancy plates of foie gras.

ROOK  
The succubus had set her trap and left the scene  
to avoid suspicion.

BISHOP  
But the king was wise to her wiles, and refused  
to partake in her deadly entree.

SWITCH FOCUS TO THE STAGE.

WALTER  
Chef, what's on the menu today?

CHEF  
We have for your culinary pleasure: pan-seared  
foie gras with figs and brioche.  
(he hands the last plate to Walter)  
Bon Appétit!

WALTER

Thank you, chef.

(the audience claps as the chef leaves)

Foie gras, is it? I've never had it myself...

(he turns back and looks at Nia)

This looks positively to DIE for.

(he takes a big bite, Nia rolls her eyes)

And now we wait for the effects to set in.

(the audience is confused)

Of the TASTE! We wait for the effects of this scrumptious ensemble to set in. Let's hear it once more for the chef!

The audience cheers for him. Walter is confused as he munches on the food. Quick cut to Bishop and Rook watching in horror. Back to Walter.

WALTER

Maybe it takes a minute...

(to the contestants)

Shelley! How would you describe the meal?

SHELLEY

(between bites)

Mmm... It's very rich, very... Flavorful. And the...  
Could use salt, maybe?

(she laughs with the crowd)

Tastes like chicken?

(more laughter)

I'd give it a three star out of five.

The audience laughs and claps for her, she giggles and continues eating.

WALTER

Short and sweet. Like my lifespan. Garrett!  
What's your take?

GARRETT

Well, the acidity of the liver complements the overpowering sweetness of the figs, but I detect a subtle hint of rosemary. No, sage? Regardless, the brioche balances the richness of the dish, with a light chiffonade to the crunch.

The audience laughs and cheers, Garrett smiles proudly, and Walter pats him on the back.

WALTER

But does it taste like chicken?

GARRETT

(laughs)

I'm picking up hints of chicken.

WALTER

HINTS of chicken. Got it.

(they laugh again)

And finally, Ms. Wheeler. What do you-

JOSIE

(interrupts him)

You know what would be REALLY good with this? Peanut butter! And TORTILLA CHIPS.

(everybody laughs, she takes another bite)

I dunno what they're talking a-boot, because I'm Canadian now, because BACON would be perfect! Bacon would... What are we- NO! Right, you two!

(she points to Garrett and Shelley)

You're WRONG! It DOESN'T taste like chicken...

The crowd laughs. Walter catches Josie's plate as she absent-mindedly drops it.

JOSIE

Why are the lights on, is it over?

WALTER

No, Ms. Wheeler, you're on television.

Her eyes light up excitedly.

JOSIE

Hi everybody! Hi! Nate, are you there? LOVE YOU!

Quick cut to Nate, who's sunken into his seat with both jacket hoods covering his face.

Back to Josie smiling and waving. Walter reins her in.

WALTER

Alright Ms. Wheeler, let's use our inside voice.

(she giggles)

Audience? Who was the best critic? Vote now.

The computer shows the live results: Josie easily wins, Garrett is in second, Shelley is in last.

WALTER

Well, once again - Ms. Wheeler! Congratulations! You've won \$500, and you'll be moving on to the next round with Garrett!

(everyone cheers for them)

Shelley - it was fun while it lasted, sorry your journey has to end here.

SHELLEY

It was everything I hoped it would be.

(blows kisses to the crowd)

Thank you everyone! Thank you, thank you!

As the crowd cheers for her, Shelley briefly turns toward the backstage area, looks around until she notices Nia, then smiles and winks at her.

SWITCH FOCUS TO THE SECURITY GUARDS.

As the monitors show Shelley walking offstage, and the choir sings the theme song, Bishop's eyes light up.

BISHOP

Did you see that?

ROOK

See what?

BISHOP

Leroy, come look!

(Leroy walks over as she rewinds the tape)  
Right there! Shelley, see? She knows somebody from the show! But who?

LEROY

Let me check...

He goes back to his station and rewinds the footage from the backstage area. He spots Nia smiling and waving back.

LEROY

Ms. Bartlett? Good catch.

BISHOP

Bring her in.

LEROY

On it.

On his way out, he passes by Walter.

WALTER

Ladies? I'm not dying... What's going on?

ROOK

It wasn't Hattie. It wasn't the foie gras.

WALTER

It wasn't?? Then who IS it?

BISHOP

It might be Shelley.

WALTER

But she just got eliminated...

ROOK

But she knows Nia.

BISHOP

And I think...

(starting to put the pieces together)

I think she's the one.

(Leroy returns with Nia)

Ah, right on cue.

NIA

This better be good.

BISHOP

Take a seat, Ms. Bartlett. We know everything.

Nia stands at the door with her arms crossed, staring at Bishop until she continues. Leroy, Walter and Rook all listen attentively to her explanation.

BISHOP

Let's face it. You and Walter don't get along. So, you hatched a plan to kill him by getting your friend Shelley on the show. You had means, since you can control who's selected, right? You even had her send a threatening note.

But there was a snag. Walter overrode you and forced you to only pick SUSPICIOUS contestants, which meant you couldn't just choose Shelley, rather, she had to be suspicious to be chosen.

So, she dressed in a trenchcoat and sunglasses, but that seemed TOO obvious, TOO suspicious, and we overlooked her. When you found out she hadn't been selected, you told her to tone it down.

Then she appeared in NORMAL clothes, which was ALSO not suspicious. Once again, you found out she STILL hadn't been selected, so you told her to do something WEIRD.

ROOK

Maybe, I don't know, wear a FRUIT BASKET.

BISHOP

And THAT got our attention, and we realized, she'd done so many costume changes, something MUST be amiss. So we picked her.

ROOK

And you almost got away with it too, but then, she smiled at you backstage.

BISHOP

And her cover was blown. Your plan was almost flawless until then.

ROOK

Almost. But the truth won out.

The room is silent. Walter isn't convinced.

WALTER

But she got eliminated, and she didn't try to kill me...

BISHOP

Maybe she planted something on stage.

ROOK

A bomb perhaps?

BISHOP

Regardless... You two certainly know each other.

Nis is mildly impressed.

NIA

That was actually mostly accurate, nice work. Just a few MINOR problems. One: While I would LOVE to see Walter dead, I would do it myself, not hire somebody.

WALTER

Aww... You'd kill me yourself? That's so sweet...

NIA

(rolls her eyes)

SECOND... Shelley is my girlfriend, and she wanted to be on the final episode. And I WOULD have chosen her had we done a NORMAL episode, but SOMEBODY threw a wrench in that.

(she glares at Walter)

So we had to improvise, and your play-by-play sums it up perfectly. But she's not the killer.

(as she leaves)

Good detective work though!

WALTER

Wait, so who is it??

LEROY

You know Walter, I've been thinking this over, maybe the killer isn't actually here.

WALTER

What do you mean, not actually here?

LEROY

Well, you have fans all over the country, right? Maybe it's from somebody who's not here, today, in the studio. Maybe they're watching at home, pulling a prank, trying to scare you.

(he gestures to the monitors)

Look at who's still left: a fan whose obsession is pathetic, not psychopathic... And a middle-aged mother who doesn't know she's high.

(back to Walter)

Do you honestly think one of them is a killer?

WALTER

Good point...

(his eyes light up)

Maybe they're BOTH killers. We did get TWO separate notes...

LEROY

What? No, they were identical!

WALTER

Great minds think alike...

(he walks out excitedly)

Or maybe they're in cahoots! We shall see!

Leroy waits to make sure he's out of range before addressing the twins.

LEROY

Okay, so I know I said I wouldn't get involved...

ROOK

It's fun, isn't it?

BISHOP

We knew you'd come around.

LEROY

(sighs)

That all just confirms a hunch I have.

ROOK

Ooh. Do tell.

LEROY

I think HE is behind it. OR, he snapped.

(the twins are eager to hear his theory)

Think about it. He has been... I think 'odd' is a gross understatement. We tell him that someone wants to murder him, he wants them on the show. Tell him that the food is poisoned-

BISHOP

He eats it...

LEROY

Mm-hmm. Tell him that the final two contestants couldn't possibly be the ones, he assumes it's BOTH of them. And the pièce de résistance:

He walks over to their station, looks around, and finds one of the threatening postcards.

LEROY

Who is it from?

BISHOP/ROOK

His biggest fan... HIMSELF... Of course...

They're both convinced, Leroy has a slight grin of pride.

BISHOP

So now what?

LEROY

Now... We don't worry. We just let him continue with his fantasy, finish the show. And we'll continue to monitor the audience, to be safe... Realistically though, he'll be fine.

ROOK

It was the mad king all along... Plot twist...

Leroy chuckles, and they all return to their stations to watch the next round.

SWITCH TO THE MAIN STUDIO.

The cameras are rolling, the gospel choir is singing,  
Walter is dancing, and the audience is having a blast.

CHOIR/AUDIENCE

*THE PERFECT PITCH! THE PERFECT PITCH!  
WHICH OF THE CONTESTANTS HAS THE PERFECT PITCH?  
THE PERFECT PITCH! THE PERFECT PITCH!  
WE'RE WINDING UP NOW FOR THE PERFECT PITCH!*

LEAD SINGER

*NOW THE NAME 'PERFECT PITCH' IS A CLEVER PUN!*

CHOIR

*BECAUSE 'PITCH' HAS MANY MEANINGS, NOT JUST ONE!*

LEAD SINGER

*IT'S A MUSICAL TERM! OR A SPEECH! OR 'TO THROW'!*

CHOIR

*BUT ENOUGH ABOUT LINGUISTICS, IT'S TIME TO GO-*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE

*TO THE PERFECT PITCH! THE PERFECT PITCH!*

LEAD SINGER

*SON OF A GUN!*

CHOIR

*WE CAN'T SAY BITCH! CAUSE IT'S A FAMILY SHOW,  
SO WE HAVE TO SWITCH!*

LEAD SINGER

*AND WE'LL PROBABLY BE CENSORED.*

CHOIR

*IT'S JUST A SMALL HITCH!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE

*ON THE PERFECT PITCH! THE PERFECT PITCH!  
WHICH OF THE CONTESTANTS HAS THE PERFECT PITCH?  
THE PERFECT PITCH! THE PERFECT PITCH!  
WE'RE WINDING UP NOW FOR THE PERFECT PITCH!*

As usual, the crowd shouts and cheers enthusiastically.  
Walter has to talk louder just to be heard.

WALTER

Why did we not do this SOONER?

(they all laugh)

Thank you, choir, and welcome back to:

(all together)

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

They settle down. Walter takes out a tissue and wipes off  
the sweat from his forehead.

WALTER

Oof... Who is this old man, and what has he done  
with my body?

(laughter)

Now, as a reminder, this is our FINAL episode...

(sympathetic reaction)

I know, sad day, but it's been fun, right?

The crowd cheers. Walter smiles, then walks over to the  
podiums where Garrett and Josie are standing.

WALTER

Now, Garrett, my sources tell me that YOU are  
QUITE the fan.

GARRETT

I am, Walter, I've been here for almost every  
episode since the show started, so, yes.

WALTER

And you're finally up on stage!

GARRETT

It was worth the wait.

WALTER

That's the spirit!

(the crowd cheers)

And I'm guessing, so you've seen LOTS of pitches  
haven't you? You've probably even planned some  
that we haven't done yet, isn't that right?

GARRETT

I mean... I practice hypotheticals, yes, just like I've practiced for the other rounds, I want to maximize my success, naturally.

WALTER

You practice for the show? You single, Garrett?  
(Garrett nods)  
There's a surprise...

The audience laughs. Garrett is embarrassed and annoyed.

GARRETT

Why don't we just start the game...

WALTER

Okay, sorry I asked.

He looks comically apologetic, and the audience chuckles, but Garrett isn't amused. He just waits impatiently.

WALTER

You're FASER-located, my friend. Computer!

The computer starts scrolling through choices. It picks:

AUDIENCE

GAME SHOW!

WALTER

Well, this is certainly META...  
(they laugh)  
Alright Garrett, have you practiced this one?

GARRETT

I did, actually.  
(he grins, Walter motions for him to start)  
So. I watched this exciting new game show called Icebreaker. The contestants do icebreaker games: two truths and a lie, never have I ever... And for high dollar prizes, spin the bottle...  
(the audience laughs)  
And it's very low-key, kind of a get-to-know-you feeling to it, but it's a fun time!

The audience claps and cheers. Garrett smiles proudly.

WALTER

Your practice certainly paid off, impressive...  
Didn't miss a beat!

(Garrett exhales with relief)

And now Ms. Wheeler... Miss Wheeler...

(he walks over to her, they laugh)

You're just soaring today, aren't you?

The audience laughs, Josie giggles.

WALTER

Tell me, what's a game show that you-

JOSIE

(interrupting him)

What if you did like Wife Swap, but instead, you swapped KIDS... Now THAT would be a fun show, not watching ICEBREAKERS... BOOOO-RING.

She laughs with the audience. Garrett isn't amused.

GARRETT

First of all, the premise of Wife Swap is essentially a child swap, if you think about it. Second, that's not a game show. Third-

JOSIE

Ooh, ooh ooh! Okay, wait, so what if-

(she bursts out laughing)

It's like The Dating Game, but instead it's parents and their KIDS. Get it? Got it? Gucci.

GARRETT

That's actually been done, I believe it was called the Family Game. And you're supposed to pretend like these are real shows, not ones that you're thinking of on the fly, and certainly not ones based on pre-existing-

JOSIE

(cuts him off again)

I've got it! GAME SHOW ROULETTE!

GARRETT

This is ridiculous. Icebreaker is a perfectly-

JOSIE

No no no, we can work yours IN with this, with GAME SHOW ROULETTE. It's like each round is a DIFFERENT GAME SHOW. So yeah, one week they play Wheel of Fortune, and then next week, Jeopardy, then ICEBREAKER, then Fake it to the Make it...

GARRETT

Once again, those are not original ideas...

WALTER

Au contraire Garrett, the roulette concept is STRIKINGLY original.

JOSIE

See? And he's FRENCH, so he knows... He KNOWS...

GARRETT

Are you seriously going to side with her? Wow, what a STACKED game... I can't believe that-

WALTER

Oh, lighten up. Audience - who do you think had the perfect pitch? Vote now!

Garrett watches in frustration as Josie wins.

GARRETT

THERE'S a surprise.

He storms offstage. The audience isn't sure how to react, and Josie feels bad for him.

JOSIE

I promise we'll do ICEBREAKER as one of them.

(the audience 'awws')

I'm sorry Walter, I didn't mean to...

WALTER

(consoling her)

It's okay, Ms. Wheeler.

More 'awws' from the audience.

JOSIE

I promise Walter, I didn't mean to... Nate? Nate??  
Tell them I didn't mean to... I'm sorry..

WALTER

You didn't do anything wrong. Actually, you won  
ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS! And, you'll be playing in  
our final, FINAL round!

The audience cheers, Josie's face brightens.

WALTER

Don't go away, we'll be right back!

JOSIE

Nate, I'm on the show! Hi sweetie!

The audience laughs, then starts singing the theme song  
with the choir. Josie and Walter dance onstage.

SWITCH FOCUS TO GARRETT

Garrett, meanwhile, is sulking in his seat, deliberately  
ignoring Harold.

HAROLD

So you DO care about winning..

Garrett doesn't respond. Harold chuckles.

HAROLD

Hey, for the record, you had a good pitch.

GARRETT

Not good ENOUGH. Maybe I should have been DRUNK.  
That would've gotten more votes..

(looks at his other seatmate)

Or maybe ASLEEP, there's an idea.

HAROLD

I still don't understand how he managed to sleep  
through all the music..

Garrett isn't amused.

HAROLD

Come on, I thought that was funny.

GARRETT

It is baffling, now that you mention it... So...  
You thought the pitch was good?

HAROLD

I do, honest. You just- You didn't play up your  
socially awkward demeanor.

GARRETT

It was my demeanor that got me eliminated...

HAROLD

No, it was your attitude. They liked it when you  
were awkward, but not when you turned ornery.

GARRETT

That's... Yeah, that's fair, actually. TOUGH, but,  
I appreciate the insight. I'll recalibrate.  
(extends his hand sincerely)  
Thank you.

HAROLD

(shakes his hand)

You are so weird...

They both chuckle - Garrett seems more content now.

SWITCH FOCUS TO NATE.

Nate is still intensely embarrassed. As the crew finishes  
preparing the final set, he reaches into his backpack for  
a brownie (for himself), and then does a double take.

Something's wrong, but what exactly? He looks confused and  
shifts his focus to the stage, where his mom is flirting  
with Walter and tripping over herself.

Nate isn't sure what to think, but he's clearly unsettled  
as he tries to make sense of everything...

SWITCH FOCUS TO THE STAGE.

The final round begins. The green lights go up, and the crowd joins the choir in one final toe-tapping number.

CHOIR/AUDIENCE  
*THE LAST MINUTE STAND-IN!*

LEAD SINGER  
*THEY'VE GOT A MINUTE TO WIN IT IN-*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE  
*THE LAST MINUTE STAND-IN!*

LEAD SINGER  
*THEY'RE ONLY PRETENDIN' IN-*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE  
*THE LAST-MINUTE STAND-IN! LAST MINUTE STAND-IN!  
EVERYTHING IS DOWN TO THE LAST MINUTE STAND-IN!*

LEAD SINGER  
*NOW IF YOU THINK ABOUT THIS ROUND,  
IT'S THE EASIEST ONE!*

CHOIR  
*BECAUSE BEFORE IT EVEN STARTS,  
YOU'VE EFFECTIVELY WON!*

LEAD SINGER  
*YOU'RE THE AUDIENCE FAVORITE,  
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO FEAR!*

CHOIR  
*SO JUST LAST FOR ONE MINUTE,  
AND YOU'LL BE ALL CLEAR!*

CHOIR/AUDIENCE  
*IN THE LAST-MINUTE STAND-IN!  
JUST A MINUTE TO WIN IT IN  
THE LAST MINUTE STAND-IN!  
THEY'RE ONLY PRETENDIN' IN  
THE LAST MINUTE STAND-IN. LAST MINUTE STAND-IN!  
EVERYTHING IS DOWN TO THE LAST MINUTE STAND-IN!*

Everyone cheers louder than before, and Walter beckons for them to give the choir a standing ovation.

WALTER  
AREN'T THEY INCREDIBLE?? WOW! GIVE IT UP FOR THE  
HEALTHY, WEALTHY AND WISE GOSPEL SINGERS!!

The cheering lasts a bit, and the choir is both grateful and excited to be part of the show.

Finally, they settle down. The curtain pulls back, and Josie bumbles over to the platform. The audience laughs.

WALTER  
Now, for our final round, we have a SPECIAL  
contestant today. Ms. JOSIE WHEELER!  
(they all cheer)  
Josie - can I call you Josie?

JOSIE  
You can call me rosey-posey, dosey...  
(she giggles)  
Last minute stosie...

The audience laughs, Walter shakes his head in amusement.

WALTER  
Josie, what a delight it has been having you on:  
(with the crowd)  
FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!  
(they cheer, then settle down)  
So, you have the chance to win \$2000, just by  
being the last minute stand-in. You ready?

JOSIE  
Setty! SETI, like aliens! Like a UFO...  
(she looks at the circular green platform)  
Is this really ALIENS, Walter?

WALTER  
Honestly, stranger things have happened today.  
(they all laugh)  
Now, actually, we're doing something different,  
something more... High stakes. Cut the computer.

The computer starts scrolling the options.

WALTER

No, no no, I said CUT the computer.

(he looks backstage)

Turn it off! And the timer, too!

The technicians scramble to turn them off. Walter winks at Nia and mouths 'I got this'. She flips him off.

Finally, the screen and timer go blank. The audience is on the edge of their seats.

WALTER

You know, Josie, I got a death threat earlier.

(he pulls out the postcard)

It says: Prepare for a KILLER finale. From your BIGGEST fan.

(the audience gasps)

Now, I want you to do a last-minute CONFESSION. Pretend YOU are the biggest fan, and you're here to kill me. How did you do it?

JOSIE

How did I DO it?

WALTER

How did you do it? Walk us through your plan.

JOSIE

Ooh, mysterious, okay, okay...

(she giggles)

Well, I AM a big fan. And you said you wanted an exciting finale, so I- Well, first, I had to be ON THE SET, DOI!

(the audience laughs)

And then I had to make sure I got PICKED, and... Hmmm, but I know you pick RANDOMLY, so I needed to force your hand, with that little NOTE.

(she giggles)

And I know YOU, Walter, I know you pretty well. You wanted DRAMA, so you probably said, 'let's find the most SUSPICIOUS people and pick THEM!' How now, am I how doing soooo far?

WALTER

Better than you know.

JOSIE

Yay!

(she giggles, they laugh)

What else... Hmm... Oh, so I had to be SUSTICIOUS, Superspicious? But look at me, I'm not really... No, my SON is sussafuss. So I dragged him here, cause I knew you'd want HIM, not ME, right? But...

(she giggles again)

We switched SEATS, so I got picked instead, and apparently it WORKED, because I'm here..

WALTER

I see... So how'd you make it to the final round?

The audience doesn't seem to buy her story, but Walter is hanging on her every word. Josie grins.

JOSIE

I had to fake it till I MAKE it. I knew my son brought brownies, so I brought some too, so he'd THINK I ate his... But I didn't.

(she smiles at Walter)

I'd say it was a darn good performance. Got me this far, right?

WALTER

Let me get this straight... You're NOT high.

(she shakes her head 'no')

So you ARE here to kill me.

JOSIE

No, Walter, I LOVE you. I couldn't hurt you.

(she pulls out a gun. The audience gasps)

Unless you didn't love me BACK. And even then, I'd rather take you HOSTAGE before I kill you. The gun is just for motivation.

WALTER

Josie, what a tangled web you've woven.

(he steps closer to her)

I just have one last question.

JOSIE

Shoot.

(she winks)

Get it?

WALTER

Got it.

JOSIE

Gucci.

WALTER

Josie Wheeler.

(their eyes lock)

Will you marry me?

He gets down on one knee. Josie's eyes light up, and she blithely tosses the gun behind her. It fires a bullet, everyone screams, but nobody gets hurt.

JOSIE

Oh, Walter, I was hoping you would ask. I DO!

Walter stands up, they kiss passionately, and they both seem genuinely happy.

SWITCH FOCUS TO THE SECURITY GUARDS.

All three are watching the finale on the monitor, all are completely bewildered.

Finally, the kiss ends, Walter and Josie hold hands, and Walter wishes the audience a good night. Then he and Josie run happily backstage.

Needless to say, everyone's confused. The choir awkwardly starts singing the theme song again, and half the audience joins in until the green lights go off..

Then it's just the bustle of the crowd as they all leave and try to understand-

BISHOP

What the heck just happened??

The three of them continue staring at the monitors.

ROOK

So was this all staged?

BISHOP

Was she IN on it?

LEROY

Excellent questions.

(he goes back to his station)

And we may never know.

(suddenly Walter bursts in)

I guess we will.

WALTER

Great work, all of you! What a show!

BISHOP

Wai-wai-wait, so did you two know each other?

ROOK

Did you plan everything?

WALTER

Nope. Never met her before. But she's dynamite, isn't she? Fiery, clever, devious, she likes me, AND - the big one - she may have single-handedly saved my show!

(he dances his way out of the room)

We're going to JAMAICA! WOOOO BABY!

BISHOP

So... The pawn DID become the queen?

LEROY

It doth appear that way.

Leroy chuckles, while the twins marvel at what happened. Then Nate enters the room.

NATE

Hey... Umm, kinda random, but do you guys know anything about getting emancipated?

SWITCH FOCUS TO GARRETT AND HAROLD.

As Garrett says goodbye, Harold nudges the old man awake.

GARRETT

Well Harold, it was quite the experience.  
Appreciate your constructive criticism, and I  
wish you the best in your future TV endeavors.

HAROLD

Likewise.

GARRETT

Wanna exchange numbers? Now that we're both  
members of the 'fool me once' club?

HAROLD

No.

He smiles politely and walks away.

GARRETT

It was great meeting you!  
(once he's out of range)  
Great meeting you too, Garrett...  
(looks around)  
Now, where are those talent scouts...

Speaking of... SWITCH FOCUS TO CHARLES.

Charles approaches Helen (the previous winner), who's  
heading out with her husband.

CHARLES

Helen Schultz?

HELEN

Hi! Can I help you?

CHARLES

Charles Rivera. Talent scout. I'd love to  
represent you if you're interested.

Helen is VERY interested, and her husband grins proudly.

SWITCH FOCUS TO SHELLEY.

Shelley goes up on stage, and passes by the gospel choir as they disperse.

SHELLEY

You guys were AWESOME, by the way.

LEAD SINGER

Thank you!

(she hands her a business card)

We also do weddings and funerals.

SHELLEY

Neat! I will... Keep that in mind.

AND FINALLY... SWITCH FOCUS TO NIA.

She's on the phone backstage - she smiles when she notices Shelley approaching.

NIA

(mouths the words)

Sorry, the network.

(Shelley doesn't mind)

Yes?... Okay, wow, I'm sure he'll be pleased...

(she bursts out laughing)

That is a HARD pass... I know, but I don't care...

(she hangs up)

Well, they're renewing the show.

SHELLEY

And it sounds like you won't be producing it?

NIA

They'd have to kill me first.

They both laugh, then embrace and kiss romantically, while the crew bustles around them.

FADE OUT.