

Once More, with Feeling

FADE IN.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

A pristine, spa-like bathroom – white cabinetry, marble counters, and beige tiles – glows under warm overhead lights.

NICK (40s, overweight, perpetual five o'clock shadow) sleeps in the jacuzzi tub, buried in bubbles. An empty wine glass rests on the edge.

His wife, KATHERINE (40s, well-groomed), balances on a vanity stool inside their walk-in shower – barefoot and nude, except for a "Best Chef" apron.

Katherine inhales deeply and carefully lowers a laptop tethered by rope, down the other side of the glass panel, directly over Nick's head.

CLANG! The laptop clips the glass. Katherine tenses. Nick stirs. Doesn't wake.

Katherine exhales. She steps off the stool, trails her fingers down the taut rope to the 15-pound kettlebell on the shower floor.

She tiptoes to Nick, watches him sleep for a beat. Then turns to the counter. Laid out before her – a heavy wooden rolling pin, duct tape, a modified set of extra long handcuffs and a screenplay.

She takes the cuffs, loops the chain through the shower door handle and snaps a cuff on one of Nick's wrists. Then the other.

SLAM! She shoves the door closed, with her buttocks. The chain goes taut -- Nick's arms jerk sideways. He jolts awake, disoriented.

He sees Katherine before him, smiling eerily.

NICK  
Katherine?! What are you--

Katherine rips a strip of duct tape with her teeth.

Nick is too stunned to react. It's not until she slaps the tape across his forehead, fixing him to the glass, that he tries to yank himself free – but this shit is seriously heavy-duty!

NICK  
Come on, Katherine. Take the tape off. This isn't funny!

Katherine turns her back on Nick. He thrashes in the tub. Water splashes across the gleaming tiles.

KATHERINE

We've got a long night ahead of us,  
Nick. I wouldn't wear yourself out,  
if I were you.

Too late. Nick's wheezing like a guy whose only cardio is a  
bimonthly fuck.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine turns to Nick, gripping the rolling pin like a bat  
— gently stroking the wood with her manicured nails.

NICK

What are you going to do with that  
-- bake me into one of your failed  
creations?

Nick chuckles.

KATHERINE

No, not tonight.  
(smiling)  
This is to play piñata with your  
laptop.

NICK

What?!

Nick looks down at the water, horrified.

KATHERINE

(shakes head, tutting)  
Cold.

Nick looks up, as far as the duct tape will allow.

KATHERINE

Hot, hot, hot!

NICK

(gasps)  
Dolly!

KATHERINE

God, I hate that you named your  
laptop after a fucking country  
singer!

NICK

Get her down now, Katherine, or  
I'll--

KATHERINE

What? Haven't you noticed -- you're  
incapacitated, babe.

Katherine sets the rolling pin on the counter and picks up the last untouched item – the screenplay.

KATHERINE  
Now here's the deal.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Light spills from beneath the bathroom door.

LACEY (14) steps into the room, shoulders slumped. She drops her backpack with a dull thud, crosses to the bed, and collapses face-first.

LACEY  
(muffled by comforter)  
Mom, are you in there?

Lacey lifts her head, listening for Katherine. Shadows shift beneath the bathroom door.

Lacey crawls across the bed, approaches the door and KNOCKS.

LACEY  
Mom?

The door creaks on its hinges as Lacey gingerly steps inside.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

LACEY'S POV:

Nick slumps, unresponsive, in the tub.

A wet, ink smudged screenplay rests on the bathmat, next to a set of unlocked handcuffs.

A laptop emerges out of the bubbles.

Katherine – buttocks exposed – trembles in a pool of her own urine, clutching a rolling pin.

Lacey covers her eyes, horrified by the scene.

LACEY  
Ew, gross! Are you guys role  
playing right now?!

Lacey peeks through her fingers.

LACEY  
Okay, you're making this so much  
more uncomfortable by just standing  
there. If you're worried I'm gonna  
tell someone -- don't.  
(MORE)

LACEY (CONT'D)

I'd rather spend the rest of high school cast as the *male understudy* than ever talk about the twisted details of my parents' sex life.

Katherine turns to Lacey. Tear-stricken, pupils dilated.

KATHERINE

Lacey? What are you doing home?

LACEY

Rehearsal was cancelled. Are you okay?

Katherine bursts into tears.

LACEY

Mom, what's wrong?!

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - SAME NIGHT, FLASHBACK

Katherine kneels on the bathmat, holding the screenplay inches from Nick's face.

KATHERINE

Once more, with feeling.

NICK

Please, Katherine! My ass hurts like hell. I'm turning into a goddamn prune, here!

Katherine picks up the rolling pin, points it towards the laptop.

KATHERINE

Start from the beginning, or say bye-bye to Dolly.

NICK

You can't be serious. It's a ninety page script, for Christ's sake!

Katherine, stone-faced, brushes the rolling pin across Nick's cheek. In her other hand, the screenplay dips. Its edge sinks beneath the waterline.

NICK

Careful! It's my only copy.

Katherine lifts the screenplay out of the water. Nick exhales, relieved.

NICK

What have I got to do for you to let me out of here?

KATHERINE  
You know what.

NICK  
It's not possible!

KATHERINE  
That's what I've been telling you  
for years.

BACK TO SCENE.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lacey, tearful, avoids looking at Nick's lifeless body.

LACEY  
You killed dad because he didn't...  
perform, perfectly?

KATHERINE  
No, it was an accident!

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - SAME NIGHT, FLASHBACK

THWACK! The laptop jerks as Katherine beats it with the rolling pin. It twists, swinging from the rope like a busted piñata.

Nick shrieks like a little girl. Katherine keeps on swinging.

NICK  
Jesus, Katherine! You're gonna kill  
me!

KATHERINE  
Oh relax! It's not plugged in.

NICK  
I don't think that--

SMACK! The laptop cracks off Nick's head and slides into the tub.

A surge of electricity rips through the water. Nick convulses - limbs flailing, eyes wide.

The duct tape gives. Nick slumps in the tub, smoke rising from his skin. Katherine lets out a blood-curdling scream.

BACK TO SCENE.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lacey stares blankly ahead. Katherine grips Lacey's shoulders.

KATHERINE

I didn't want him to die, Lace. I just needed things to change. I couldn't handle another goddamn dinner--

LACEY

(confused)

This is about cooking? Is that why you're wearing that apron?

KATHERINE

(looks at apron)

No! This is about him ruining every dinner I've made for the last five years -- forcing us to perform a fucking table read every damn night, like some twisted puppet master!

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING, FLASHBACK

Katherine, Nick, and Lacey sit around the dining table, each clutching a different screenplay from earlier. Beautifully prepared platters of food remain untouched.

NICK

Dammit, Lacey! You sound scared. Rena's not scared, she's anxious to see Ezra. Start again!

Lacey mutters the line to herself, eager to nail it.

KATHERINE

Nick, come on, let's eat first. I spent all afternoon making this. I haven't eaten since breakfast--

Nick lifts his empty plate. CRASH! It shatters against the wall. Neither Katherine nor Lacey utters a word.

NICK

Not until we get this right!  
(clicks fingers)  
Read the action -- give Lacey something to work with.

BACK TO SCENE.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lacey's expression shifts -- maybe Katherine has a point.

KATHERINE

He thought you enjoyed it, you know? He tried to convince me that hours of table reads would make you a better actor -- but did he ever once run lines with you for any of your school plays?

LACEY

No.

KATHERINE

(to Nick)

Bastard!

Lacey risks a glance at Nick -- bloated and pale, almost unrecognizable. She makes it to the toilet bowl, just in time.

KATHERINE

(rubbing Lacey's back)

Oh, hon. If it's any comfort -- he died quick. A heart attack... probably.

Lacey wipes her mouth with the hand towel. Katherine gently brushes the hair from Lacey's forehead.

KATHERINE

We could make it look like he nodded off while working. The laptop slipped. He electrocuted himself, accidentally. What d'you think?

Lacey sniffles, unsure. Katherine cups her face, thumbs away the tears.

KATHERINE

We'll need to get our story straight -- in case the police start asking questions.

LACEY

But it was an accident?

Katherine nods. *That's good, baby. Stay on script.* Lacey takes in the room, wondering if this really was an accident.

KATHERINE

Why don't I clean things up, okay, hon? You just focus on what you're going to say.



LACEY

Okay... I'll be in my room.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

Katherine surveys the room. Dressed in a satin slip and matching robe.

The laptop floats in the tub. The empty wine glass, now on its side. The screenplay rests on the bathmat. Any trace of her involvement in Nick's death - gone.

Katherine rehearses in the mirror:

KATHERINE

Please, help me! I need an ambulance! I think my husband's dead!

NICK (DECEASED)

Too dramatic.

Katherine looks at Nick's reflection in the mirror, tries again:

KATHERINE

I need an ambulance. I think my poor husband's had an accident.

*Deceased* Nick cackles in the tub. Katherine looks at him - *What's so funny?*

NICK (DECEASED)

It's going to be you who screws this up - not Lacey. This is the role of a lifetime, and she's got the talent to fill it. Wish I could say the same for you.

INT. HOUSE - LACEY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Lacey sits in her window seat, bathed in the slow pulse of red ambulance lights.

Katherine stands in the doorway - rigid as a board.

KATHERINE

Lacey, honey. You ready?

Lacey nods - a little too eager.

NICK (DECEASED) (O.S.)

What did I tell you?

FADE OUT.