

Comediettes

a play

By Stephanie Weber

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Setting: A comedy club in Chicago. Action will alternate between the greenroom and the stage.

Characters: 3 females, 1 male

HOLLY MILBANKS - late 30s female

GERI - 40s female

APRIL FERNANDEZ - early-to-mid 20s female

SUNNY HILSON - late 30s/early 40s male

HECKLER - a heckler in the crowd top of Scene Two. Doubled with actor playing Sunny.

NOTES:

The red light should be faint at first and grow darker, brighter with each subsequent use. At the end, it would be ideal if the red light source could from the stage AND the house.

Scene One is the setup

The rest is the punchline

SCENE ONE

The action alternates from the stage during performances the green room where the comics hang out. The stage can be a microphone center stage with a spotlight.

HOLLY MILBANKS sits. She writes in a small notebook.

GERI vacuums.

HOLLY

Hey, Ger. Ger! Got any drink tickets left?

(Geri turns off the vacuum.)

GERI

I already gave you two. Don't you have to drive home somewhat sober?

HOLLY

Define sober.

(Geri puts the vacuum aside.)

GERI

My bar tab prays for the day when comics go sober.

HOLLY

I usually try that on January 1st. It's like a holiday.

GERI

January 1 *is* a holiday.

HOLLY

Cheers to me then.

(Holly lifts her empty glass.)

GERI

The show hasn't even started yet.

HOLLY

I know, but it's a two-show night. I need to warm up.

(Geri hands Holly two drink tickets.)

GERI

Sometimes I worry about you.

HOLLY

You don't need to.

GERI

Someone needs to.

HOLLY

Thanks, mom!

GERI

Don't even joke about that. Dealing with comics everyday makes me happy I never had kids.

(Geri puts the vacuum away)

HOLLY

Same. That I know of.

I swear that's why I look as young as I do. People are always surprised to hear my age and I'm surprised when I see someone else my age because they usually look so ragged. Like there's no way me and them are the same age, you know? That person must have shitty kids. I know the secret to eternal youth and it's "don't have kids."

GERI

Are you running bits on me?

HOLLY

It depends. Is there anything there?

(Geri makes a 'maybe' motion.)

APRIL FERNANDEZ enters.

APRIL

Hi! Geri? I'm April. April Fernandez. I'm on the show tonight.

GERI

I know. I booked the show tonight.

APRIL

Yes, we hadn't met in person, so I wanted to introduce //

GERI

I'm giving you a hard time. Put your things down anywhere. Very happy to have you tonight, April.

HOLLY

Who's this?

APRIL
(*Starstruck*)

Holly Milbanks!

HOLLY

No, that's *my* name --

(*April extends her hand to shake.*)

APRIL
I'm so honored to be on a show with a Chicago comedy veteran like you.

(*Geri salutes Holly.*)

HOLLY

On the show?

GERI
I invited April to do a guest spot tonight. Sort of an audition. There's buzz around you, kid.

HOLLY
There is, huh? Where do you go up?

APRIL
Here and there. A lot of underground and indie theaters.

HOLLY
Oh, so you're alt? What are you gonna do? Go onstage playing ukelele and eating pie?

APRIL
What?

HOLLY
You think you can handle a club?

APRIL
Yes? I mean my background was in improv and sketch, so I'm good on my feet.

HOLLY
You're booking improvisers now, Geri?

GERI

It's the new generation, Holly. They do it all.

APRIL

Yeah, I sort of dabble. It's what all my peers do really. I try to get as much experience in as many things as I can. That's the best way, don't you think?

HOLLY

No.

GERI

Forgive Holly. She's old school.

HOLLY

I'm not old!

GERI

Oh, that's right. You don't have kids.

HOLLY

See! You liked the bit!

APRIL

What bit?

HOLLY

Don't worry about it.

So how long have you thought this was a good idea?

APRIL

Doing standup? Two years.

HOLLY

Two years! You've only been doing this //

GERI

Hol.

APRIL

But I came from theater, so being onstage is natural to me.

GERI

And she is. She's a natural. Great stage presence.

HOLLY

Presence is only half of it.

GERI

It's a pretty big half.

APRIL

I'm sorry I know you're trying to bust my balls, but I don't really appreciate it before the show. I just want chill vibes back here. If that's okay.

(Holly groans. April takes a seat.)

GERI

Something to say, Hol?

HOLLY

Chill vibes! What the fuck does that even mean? Why does every young person today talk like they are one step away from asking you to join their cult? What, did you walk here from Spawn Ranch?

(April laughs. Uncomfortably.)

GERI

Well, this banter is fun. Thanks for welcoming new comics, Holly. You're a regular diplomat. April, just a reminder: you'll get eight minutes onstage and there is a red light that will flash when you have a minute left. That means wrap it up.

APRIL

Thank you, Geri.

HOLLY

I hope you're not THAT new that you don't know how the light works.

(April studies Holly for a beat.)

APRIL

What's your sign?

HOLLY

My sign? It's "Stop".

APRIL

Scorpio? No, you're being too extroverted. Oooo maybe you're an Aries? With a Scorpio moon?

HOLLY

And a Shut The Fuck Up rising.

APRIL

What's your birthdate?

HOLLY

No, sorry. I'm not playing Star Jesus with you.

(Holly gets up.)

GERI

Just ignore her, April. It's going to be a good show. The headliner won't be here until right before his set //

APRIL

I didn't even ask. Who is the headliner?

GERI

It's a surprise set. He's filming something in town.

HOLLY

You got a good get?

GERI

Oh, yeah. Sunny Hilson.

HOLLY

Sunny!

APRIL

Sunny Hilson? No. No, I'm not doing a show with him.

GERI

What...?

APRIL

Take him off the lineup.

GERI

Take him off // the lineup?

APRIL

Right? Obviously, we are not going to do a show with him.

HOLLY

Wait wait wait. You don't speak for me. You can't just come to a club for the first time and demand that.

APRIL

Yes, I can. Take him off the lineup.

GERI
Are you serious?

APRIL
Yeah.

GERI
Why?

APRIL
Because he's a rapist.

(Beat. Geri and Holly look at each other.)

GERI
Come on.

HOLLY
Alleged.

APRIL
So then you've heard about that?

HOLLY
I have, yeah. But //

GERI
No. We don't listen to gossip here.

APRIL
It's not gossip. This happened. Everyone in the community knows this happened.

HOLLY
You're playing real fast and loose with those generalizations.

ARIL
I'm being serious. It's not like we don't know these women. Jen Wilshire was headlining! She spoke out about what happened to her and now no one wants to book her.

HOLLY
I don't know. Jen Wilshire was always kind of dramatic -

APRIL
And you wouldn't be if this happened to you? She's not the only one who's said something about him, and you know it.

GERI

Well, *I* don't know it.

APRIL

Ok, well, I'm telling you.

GERI

Like I said. I don't do rumors and gossip. I do funny.

APRIL

Book *her* then.

GERI

Who?

APRIL

Jen. The survivor.

HOLLY

"Survivor". I don't know why people say that now. It sounds so fucking condescending.

APRIL

And victim doesn't?

HOLLY

"Survivor" makes me think Jeff Probst assaulted someone.

APRIL

You're seriously running a bit right now?
Geri, you should book Jen instead of Sunny.

GERI

I'm not going to do that.

APRIL

This is insane. You're both defending a rapist. You know that, right?

GERI

I never defended nobody.

APRIL

That's essentially what you're saying by keeping him on the lineup.

GERI

You can't talk to me that way.

APRIL

Okay. Please?

GERI

No. I already booked Sunny.

HOLLY

I'm getting a drink.

(Holly exits.)

APRIL

But it's the right thing to do.

GERI

No. The right thing to do is to honor my previous booking. That's the problem with you young comedians. You don't have integrity.

APRIL

No - what? This is about integrity now?

GERI

Yes. I booked him already. He said yes. I expect him to show up and he expects me to not kick him out of the gig I asked him to come all the way over here to do.

APRIL

Integrity is sticking up for what's right.

GERI

And how do you know what's right?

APRIL

I - I think you want to talk about the allegation, but I'm talking about morals here. Right and wrong.

GERI

Okay, and how do you know what that is?

APRIL

That's not - you're deflecting.

GERI

Sure. Maybe. Only deflecting cause I don't want to continue having this discussion. Okay?

APRIL

Well, what about Jen?

GERI

Jen Wilshire? What's she got to//

APRIL

Like I said: ask her to do the show!

GERI

The same night as him? No way.

APRIL

Okay, that sounds like you *did* know about this.

GERI

No. I told you I don't //

APRIL

Do gossip, I know. So then how would you know not to book her and especially not to book her tonight?

GERI

This whole self-righteous thing is not working for me. I guess this is why I should meet comedians before booking them.

APRIL

I'm not being self-righteous! I'm doing what's right. This is how other comedy shows handle this kind of thing.

GERI

It is not.

APRIL

It is. The ones I do.

GERI

Kid, I was real excited to have you on the show tonight //

APRIL

I'm excited to do the show tonight!

GERI

Are you? You aren't sounding like it.

APRIL

No, no, I am. It's just...I obviously didn't expect an abuser to be on the show tonight.

GERI

That's comedy.

(Geri is about to exit when --)

APRIL

I just think //

GERI

There's more?

APRIL

// and I'm sorry if I'm being annoying or whatever, but I think like these should be safe spaces. You know?

GERI

Safe for who? What did he do to you?

APRIL

Nothing.

GERI

Okay, so?

APRIL

It's the principle of the thing.

GERI

Woof. Principles. I forgot 23-year-olds have those.

APRIL

I'm twenty-four.

GERI

Do you want to do the show or not?

APRIL

Yes, of course!

GERI

I want you to do it, too, but you're testing my patience here.

APRIL

You're going to kick *me* off the show?

(Geri shrugs.)

APRIL

But you made a commitment.

GERI

Cute. That's real cute.

APRIL

But when *is* the last time you booked her?

GERI

Who? Jen? Like I said. I don't do drama.

APRIL

And what does that mean?

(Holly enters. Sips her cocktail.)

GERI

It means that I'm not going to have people working here who cause problems like that //

APRIL

Cause problems?

HOLLY

We're still on this?

GERI

// and - you know what I mean! Run their mouth, turn people against each other, make problems in the community. It's too much to deal with. So, I'm not gonna deal with it. As a policy, I don't feel like dealing with it. No drama. Just comedy.

APRIL

Ok. Then...don't book either of them. Have you ever thought of that? You claim you don't listen to gossip or drama, but you do. Because you stopped booking her. Everyone did. So, you do listen to "gossip". It's just that you chose who to listen to.

(Geri throws up her hands.)

GERI

Okay, so I'm a bad person!

APRIL

That's not what I'm say //

GERI

We're all horrible people cause April and the internet say so.

APRIL

That's not it at all. I'm sorry //

GERI

Isn't that what you're trying to do? Make me feel bad // for booking him?

APRIL

No no no no. I am not trying to //

GERI

You want to persecute me for what? For running a business? For booking a successful comedian that audiences like? So that they like the show so much that they'll come back for more and buy MORE tickets? That's the business. I'm sorry, kid, but show the me crime here.

APRIL

Well.

GERI

What?

APRIL

I mean....I don't understand why this is a debate.

GERI

Woof. Holly, are you hearing this?

HOLLY

I'm trying to stay out of the drama.

APRIL

You're making it sound like I'm trying to start a problem or something.

GERI

It's feelin' that way.

APRIL

It's just I thought we all knew this. And we all knew what to do about things like this. I guess I think it's pretty easy.

HOLLY

Oh, it's easy to tell the comedian with an album and two specials who flew in to shoot an HBO show to go home because an open mic-er in Chicago says so?

APRIL

I do showcases.

HOLLY

Spoken like a true comedian.

GERI

This club is a business. At the end of the day, I put on shows that the audience will like because they're the ones who paid money to be here. They don't know who did what. Hell, they don't know you from Jen. Or from Holly, for that matter.

HOLLY

I mean, I hope they do know the difference between someone who has been doing comedy for two years and someone who has been doing it for fifteen.

GERI

They don't.

HOLLY

Gee. Thanks.

APRIL

And why is that?

GERI

Why is what?

APRIL

Why wouldn't they know the difference between me and Jen and Holly? But they *would* know the difference between Sunny and me?

HOLLY

Oh, come the fuck on.

APRIL

Sunny and Holly? Sunny and Jen? What's the common denominator in all those equations?

GERI

This isn't a 'gotcha' question, April. I've been in this business for thirty years. We all know why I said what I said.

HOLLY

But you don't actually think that, Ger. Right? You believe in funny is funny.

GERI

Yeah, I do. The audience doesn't. Even if they think they do.

APRIL

And there it is.

GERI

Look, ladies. I'm not some kind of - I don't know - misogynist. I - we - just work in a male-dominated industry. We do. In fact, I'm taking a pretty progressive risk tonight having two women open for Sunny.

APRIL

Why? Because we'll get raped?

(Holly laughs.)

HOLLY

Ah, so you are funny! I see it now.

APRIL

I wasn't trying to be funny.

GERI

Then try to be.

(Geri heads for the exit.)

HOLLY

Where are you going?

GERI

To call Sunny and tell him to get his ass over here so we can have a good show.

(Geri exits.)

(Holly hums. She opens up her notebook. Loudly clicks her pen. She writes.)

APRIL
Well?

HOLLY
What?

APRIL
Good job saying anything.

HOLLY
How are you mad at me?

APRIL
You just sat there.

HOLLY
Yeah. So?

APRIL
You didn't speak up for me.

HOLLY
I don't know you.

APRIL
But it's about more than that.

HOLLY
Why exactly did you think I would speak up for you?

APRIL
You know. Cause, like, sisterhood.

(Holly laughs)

HOLLY
I'm not trying to hurt your feelings or anything. It's just that, well, I know Sunny. I don't know you.

APRIL
Is he like your friend or something?

HOLLY
Yeah, kinda. In the way that most comedians I came up with are my friends. They're more like coworkers really.

APRIL

That doesn't mean you know everything about them.

HOLLY

Sure, but it's...I don't know. Don't you have people in your peer group? The people you go to shows and mics with?

APRIL

Yeah.

HOLLY

So when you do this for a long time - like ten, fifteen years like me - you soften on these people. Even if they were pieces of shit at times. Hell, it's comedy. We're all pieces of shit.

APRIL

I don't think I'm a piece of shit.

HOLLY

Good for you.

APRIL

You don't actually think that of yourself, right?

HOLLY

You actually like yourself?

APRIL

Um, yeah. Yeah, I do.

HOLLY

Whatever. I'm not here for therapy.

APRIL

So you're not one of those comedians who thinks they don't need therapy because they can talk about their issues onstage?

HOLLY

What's wrong with that?

APRIL

Ummmm everything???? A therapist challenges you. The audience can't ask you questions or give their insight -

HOLLY

Yeah, they do. They tell me to take off my top.

APRIL

Ew. They do that here?

HOLLY

Were you born yesterday?

APRIL

I was born in -

HOLLY

Don't you dare tell me the year.

(BEAT)

APRIL

I didn't mean to go off on therapy. It's just that if you're friends with a rapist, you might need to talk to a therapist about it.

HOLLY

Friends is...relationships with other comedians are hard to describe. After a while, it's somewhere between coworker and family. I've seen these people eat shit onstage. And I've seen them become stars.

APRIL

You don't want to say anything about Sunny because you watched him become a star?

HOLLY

No, that's not //

APRIL

Being successful doesn't excuse //

HOLLY

I didn't say it did. What I mean is - I'm not saying he's a saint. Most male comedians are guilty until proven innocent anyway. It's just - I don't know - it's weird. You'll see.

APRIL

Yeah, I guess, but I don't think I'd associate with a rapist.

HOLLY

Let's just say I've known this rapist a lot longer than you.

APRIL
So you ad//mit it

HOLLY
ALLEGED.

APRIL
You'd never turn your back on a friend who did something like that?

HOLLY
Things aren't so black and white.

APRIL
In cases like this they are.

HOLLY
He's not a monster. He's...he's really funny.

APRIL
He's *funny*?!

HOLLY
He is!

APRIL
He's funny so he's not a rapist?

HOLLY
The more you say the word the more it loses its shock value.

APRIL
I'm not trying to - are you joking right now?

HOLLY
I wish I were, but you won't let me!
Actually, yeah, can I just - you're killing my pre-show buzz.

(Holly hovers over her notebook, tries to seem deep in thought. Loudly slurps drink.)

APRIL
I'm sorry.

HOLLY
It's ok. Don't apologize.

APRIL

I'm nervous.

HOLLY

It'll be fine. Just focus on the show. Not this other stuff.
I remember my first club gig.

APRIL

Really?

HOLLY

Oh, yeah. It was an audition night. I totally bombed. I ran out
of the venue before anyone could even see me.

APRIL

You were that embarrassed? You?

HOLLY

Yeah. But the second time was so good I passed. And now look.

APRIL

Thanks for sharing that with me. It's nice to get advice and
stories and stuff from older comics.

HOLLY

Would ya quit calling me old?

APRIL

I'm sorry I'm //

HOLLY

I'm teasing. It's fine. I'm like, what? 15 years older than you?
I guess that's a generation.

APRIL

Yeah, you probably remember 9/11.

HOLLY

Hey, we were told to never forget.
Things do seem a lot different. From my perspective. Seeing young
comics like you. You all seem...happier?

APRIL

No, trust me. We're all riddled with anxiety and autism.

HOLLY

And that makes you funny!

(Holly gets up)

APRIL

I'm sorry to bother you. I know I keep talking.

HOLLY

I'd rather talk about this than that other shit. But I have to hang out here. I don't like to go into the showroom before the show. I mean, I peak. I want to see what's going on, but I like to maintain my distance.

APRIL

You want an air of mystery?

HOLLY

Exactly. I don't want some asshole to see me go onstage and say 'hey, that's the chick I saw downing a vodka soda before her set.' But maybe...

(Holly exits. April checks her phone. Holly re-enters.)

HOLLY

Okay, it's packed in there.

APRIL

Really?!

HOLLY

They are going to freak when they find out who is on the show tonight.

APRIL

Yeah. I guess.

HOLLY

Hey. Just remember, they don't know anything.

APRIL

But we know.

(Holly shrugs. She sits down. Opens her notebook)

APRIL

...

So...do you like not help other women?

Huh?

HOLLY

Like young female comics?

APRIL

Like you?

HOLLY

Women like me, yeah.

APRIL

And give up my spots? Dream on.

HOLLY

I'm being serious

APRIL

And here I thought we were comedians! Or, sorry, is that offensive to you? Should I say comedienne?

HOLLY

I prefer comediana.

APRIL

Hahaha, that's good. I like that.

HOLLY

Comediette, even.

APRIL

See! You *are* funny!

HOLLY

You keep saying that.

APRIL

You keep surprising me.

HOLLY

I just meant that if we can't trust the men we're around //

APRIL

I never said that //

HOLLY

//then you should lean more on women for support. Right?

HOLLY

What happened to wanting chill vibes back here?

APRIL

Women supporting women just increases the likelihood of more female comedians and female-friendly spaces and //

HOLLY

Stop preaching the gospel of TikTok. I'm just not into community. I don't do sisterhood. None of it.

APRIL

Bullshit.

HOLLY

It's not malicious or anything. I just have a career to worry about. You know? Like we all do!

APRIL

I guess. It seems...selfish.

HOLLY

Selfish? I hate to break it to you, April, but getting onstage by yourself for fun and validation is not a selfless act.

APRIL

It's a service. We're entertaining!

HOLLY

We're delusional.
You think I'm selfish?

APRIL

No. I'm sorry. This isn't about making you feel bad or anything. You and Geri aren't bad people.

HOLLY

Oh, we're not? You don't think we're as bad as Sunny?

APRIL

No! God, no! I never said you were.
We're just different. That's all. Different approaches to art.

HOLLY

Comedy is not art.

APRIL

It can be. I believe it can be.

HOLLY

It's a craft. You work on it. End of the day, we're all clowns.

APRIL

That's still art. This is still theater.

HOLLY

Great! So? You want to do Hamlet or something?

APRIL

You don't have to make fun of me for my beliefs.

HOLLY

I don't have to make fun of...?! Are we talking about comedy or Catholicism? If you want to be an *artiste*, go do that. Why do comedy?

APRIL

Because I like it.

HOLLY

That's it?

APRIL

Yeah. I mean there's more to it. Like it's how I interpret the world. Like I make people laugh and that's, like, empowering.

HOLLY

Okay, yeah. Same.

APRIL

And we should care about the impact we make on and off stage.

HOLLY

You think I don't? Because I won't do what you say? I have to risk my name, my reputation, my paycheck for you?

APRIL

You wouldn't have to risk any of those things. That's the point.

HOLLY

You're so naive.

APRIL

It's true! You're an established comic. Your voice matters more than mine. Together we can make our voices heard, even in this male-dominated //

HOLLY

Ha! We call this shit male dominated as if women just magically appeared after Joan Rivers set foot onstage. Such bullshit. From vaudeville to Netflix, we've always been here. And they've always tried to keep us out.

APRIL

It's institutional gaslighting.

HOLLY

Whatever the fuck. Do you know how many male comedians have their wives write jokes for them?

APRIL

Yeah, and then they just make jokes about how dumb they are.

HOLLY

Who do you think wrote those jokes? No one knows how to put women down better than other women.

(Holly loudly slurps the last of her drink)

APRIL

You certainly seem to know how.

HOLLY

Huh?

APRIL

All you've done tonight is insult me.

HOLLY

Jesus. I need another drink.

APRIL

No, you don't //

HOLLY

It's comedy, April! I'm not insulting you. This is how comedians talk to each other.

APRIL

Not when you've just met someone.

HOLLY

Are you kidding me? We joke because we love!

APRIL

You don't love me.

HOLLY

Well, I don't know you.

APRIL

Exactly. So you're just being mean.

HOLLY

Gees. Take me to dinner first. I think you need a drink.

APRIL

I don't drink.

HOLLY

What is with your genera -- okay, give me your drink tickets.

*(Holly holds out her hand for the tickets.
April doesn't budge.)*

APRIL

I'm sorry. I guess I'm not used to this aggression. Different generations of comics.

HOLLY

Then why don't you go back to the fucking Lilith Fair shows you're used to?

APRIL

What's Lilith Fair?

HOLLY

Ugh. Forget it.

APRIL

My point is that young female comedians //

HOLLY

Comediennes?

APRIL

Stop it. That's stupid. We're all comedians. We're all equal.

HOLLY

We're not equal. You and I are not the same.

APRIL

Okay. But remember what Geri said?

HOLLY

That she was going to give me more drink tickets?

APRIL

About the audience. They don't know how long anyone has been at this. They just know who is funny.

HOLLY

But they always compare us to each other. *Always*. Have you noticed that yet?

APRIL

Yeah, I have. That and the "you're funny and I usually don't think women are funny."

HOLLY

See! You can be the funniest person on the show and some prick will still approach you afterwards and say you were better than *the other girl*. Fuck you. I wasn't better than *the other girl*. I was better than *everybody*.

APRIL

So you get it. You get it.

HOLLY

Of course, I get it, April. I'm not sexist. I'm just doing my job. I tell my jokes. I never blank. I just do my job.

APRIL

That's what I'm trying to do, too.

HOLLY

Is it? Because you seem hellbent on self-destruction.

APRIL

No, it's opposite //

HOLLY

They see us as a nuisance. And you want to prove them right?

APRIL

I talk into a microphone for a living. Why would I shut up about this?

HOLLY

You have no idea. No idea how it used to be. There used to be no women at all //

APRIL

Are you saying you liked that? When you were the only woman on the show? Did that make you feel special or something?

HOLLY

Sometimes. Sometimes yeah.

APRIL

I'm sorry, but that's garbage.

HOLLY

It's because I know I'm a good representative. You know that's what they think, right? One of us is all of us.

APRIL

I think it sucks to be the only woman in the room.

HOLLY

Do you know what's worse than being the only woman in the room? Do you? It's no women in the room at all. When you're the only one in the room, you can never leave that room. Because the second you do - the second you step out - they all get to agree that it's better without you. So you can't. You can't let them have that opportunity. That's how you fight. That's how you win.

APRIL

That's paranoid.

HOLLY

Paranoid? Oh, yeah? What do you think they agree on when you walk out of the room? The only saving grace is if they all decide you're fuckable. Then they'll *kind of* listen to you //

APRIL

There are good guys, guys who get it//

HOLLY

You think you have male allies?! That's the funniest thing you'll say tonight. What do you think they'd rather do in a greenroom filled with comedians? Do you think they want to stick up for some chick who told them their joke sucked - or belong? In my experience, they'd rather be one of the guys than a pussy.

APRIL

We can change things!

HOLLY

No, I'm not with you, okay? I worked hard to be here.

APRIL

So did I!

HOLLY

No. Not like I did.

APRIL

Why are you being so mean about this?!

HOLLY

JESUS CHRIST I'M TRYING TO HELP YOU!

APRIL

By yelling at me and calling me stupid?

HOLLY

By taking the time to tell you how it really is.

APRIL

Whatever. Just because you escaped any form of abuse on your//journey.

HOLLY

// What.

APRIL

That's it, right? You think those women had it coming? That they deserved it? You think you're better than them because you weren't assaulted?

HOLLY

Fuck you.

APRIL

I'm sorry I didn't mean // to say that.

HOLLY

Oh, but you did, April. None of us - none of us - are here because any of it was easy. You don't think I experienced any of this bullshit? You don't think this has ever happened to me?

HOLLY

The leering, the looks
The touching the touching the
touching.
The excuses. The excuses!
He didn't know better - he
didn't mean it.
He didn't mean pinning me down
Seeing my body outside of
myself
From the ceiling where I was
floating
Floating above myself seeing
Seeing it knowing knowing
knowing: No one will ever
believe you.

APRIL

...
...
Oh no...
Of course
Of course it happened to you.
I'm so sorry.
Jesus, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
I didn't know. I didn't *need*
to know.
I didn't know. But
I believe you.
I believe you.
I believe you.
I believe you.
I believe you.
I BELIEVE YOU.

APRIL

If no one's ever told you before: I believe you.

(They embrace for a long beat.)

(The door opens. Geri.)

GERI

Look alive, ladies. The headliner is here.

(They both pause. They look up.

SUNNY is in silhouette.)

SUNNY

Hey, sorry I'm late.

SCENE TWO

Empty stand up stage. A microphone on a mic stands in spotlight.

GERI (O.S.)

We're going to have a great show tonight. We have two hilarious
local comedians and a special guest to close out the show for you

all. Let's start it off right. Ladies and gentlemen, please help me welcome the very funny Holly Milbanks.

(Holly enters. She picks microphone up from stand. Moves it to the side)

HOLLY

Hello. Welcome! Clap it up if you've been here before. And let me hear it if this is your first time here. Really? Where you been? I'm here every week. You can't get off your ass and come say hi. Rude. That's how I like to start the show: yelling at the audience.

This might shock you all to learn that I'm not famous. I'm actually famous for not being famous. An agent asked me into her office the other day. Wanted me to do a monologue for an audition. A monologue is just talking, right? I can do talking. But I can't do remembering stuff, so I just told her one of my jokes. And sheeeee...hated it. Absolutely hated it. I know she did, too, because I can read a room. I'm really good at reading a room. Like right now I can tell you all think I'm the best comedian you've ever seen. See? I'm good at reading a room.

So I stop and I say, "You hate this, don't you?" And she said "yes." Oof. Hard to misinterpret that. So I asked her, "what were you hoping to see today?" And she sighed and said, "Really. Good. Acting." OH, that's what you wanted?! I left that in the car, BRB. ...Okay, you guys agree with that agent apparently. Hey, I'm tryin' up here, folks!

HECKLER

Try harder!

(Holly squints into the crowd.)

HOLLY

Amazing feedback. Your wife says the same thing in bed.

HECKLER

My wife is dead.

HOLLY

...So she's the lucky one here.

(Laughter. The red light turns on.)

HOLLY

I'm kidding, sir. I'm sorry for your loss. My ex is still alive, so I think you got off easy.

Hey, isn't it weird how your exes don't evaporate when you're not with them anymore? If I want to see an ex again, it should require a séance. I should need a Ouija board. I should have to make a pact with the devil. I should have to answer a troll's riddles three. But nooooo! All it takes is one drunk dial and going to the same supermarket. Next time someone dumps me, I'm hiring a hit man. At least that way I can be true crime famous. I'll be on an episode of *Snapped*. Look ma! I made it and I didn't even need good acting.

All right. That's my time. Let's keep this show rolling...

SCENE THREE

(Sunny and Geri are talking. April sits alone.)

GERI

Everyone's treating you nice out there?

SUNNY

Oh yeah. LA is a lot friendlier than I thought it would be.

GERI

Good. Cause you know I know people. I can become a Karen just like that if anyone is being an asshole to you.

SUNNY

Oh, I believe it. I've seen you throw a tantrum at McDonalds.

GERI

There's no reason for them to stop serving breakfast at 11 am. It's ludicrous.

(Holly dashes into the greenroom.)

HOLLY

Did you all hear that heckler out there?

GERI

Yeah, you made it work. Nice callback.

HOLLY

Yeah. Thanks.

GERI

You started with new stuff up top. You know you shouldn't start with new stuff up top.

HOLLY

Yeah, yeah. But it ended up working, right?

SUNNY

It did. That dead wife thing.

GERI

Yeah, he gave you an assist. You know better.

HOLLY

Come on. They were weird up top. They were stiff.

SUNNY

Don't blame it on the audience. It's never the audience's fault.

APRIL

Men always say that.

(Everyone looks at April. Sunny crosses to her.)

SUNNY

Have we met?

APRIL

I'm April.

SUNNY

Sunny. Don't let me interrupt your observational comedy.

HOLLY

The new stuff. Did it go okay?

GERI

Didn't the heckler already give you notes?

SUNNY

If only you had filmed your set. You could have one of those "comedian destroys heckler" bits.

HOLLY

Hey, I thought it was funny. It just happened the other day!

SUNNY

Still no agent, huh?

HOLLY

No. I'm not big time like you.

SUNNY

It'll happen.

HOLLY

Sure. How's everything going though? You're shooting a show?

SUNNY

Yeah, but I can't talk too much about it. NDA.

HOLLY

Okay, Mr. Hollyweird!

SUNNY

Hey, did you hear about John Klayman?

HOLLY

What about him?

SUNNY

SNL.

GERI

Always knew he had it in him. Kid's a star.

HOLLY

Wow. That's...huh. Good for him. Didn't take him for an SNL guy.

SUNNY

Hey, no one is until they ask you for that sketch packet. Then you're kissing Lorne's ass.

HOLLY

Yeah. I don't know if I could do that.

GERI

Good thing no one's asking you.

HOLLY

Geri!

SUNNY

Damn, Geri!

SUNNY

Ah, I missed you, Geri. And your cutting insults.

(Sunny hugs Geri. Kisses her on the head.)

APRIL

This is insane. Are you all joking right now?

GERI

No, but I think you should be.

(Geri gestures toward the exit.)

APRIL

Fine.

(April stands. Crosses to exit. Sunny stops her.)

SUNNY

Hey, crush it out there.

(He tries to fist-bump her. She exits.)

SUNNY

What was that?

GERI

My head hurts from all this. Can we have fun tonight? Please?

SUNNY

You know it, Ger.

GERI

I swear if it ain't one thing with comics today it's another.

HOLLY

It'll be fine. We're about to have a great show.

GERI

Good. It's all I want everyone to do.

SUNNY

When does that not happen when we're on the lineup?

GERI

Good good. Let's do it. Let's play ball!

(Geri exits.)

SUNNY

What was all that?

HOLLY

I know.

SUNNY

I don't know.

HOLLY

The new girl. She's...she's something else.

SUNNY

What's her deal?

HOLLY

You don't wanna know.

SCENE FOUR

An empty standup stage with a microphone in spotlight.

GERI (O.S.)

Let's keep that energy going, folks. We have an exciting act for you up next. Please welcome to the stage for the very first time: April Fernandez.

(April enters wearing a red clown nose. She also wears either a cutesy dress or a big apron. She carries a ukelele. Strums a chord.)

APRIL

I know I look too cute to do comedy. As if in order to be a good comedian you're supposed to look like you live in your car. Or like a psychopath. Then people will trust you with your biting wit, your harsh truths, your just tellin' it like it is-es. Then they will see the comedian for who they really are: the killer on stage. The crusher of jokes. The destroyer of hecklers.

All of the language around comedy is so violent. Kill it. Crush it. Destroy it. I'm not going to war. I'm telling jokes! I'm not a soldier. I'm a clown. I'm an artist. I'm the court jester!

(Geri enters dressed as a CLOWN. Wig, red nose, bowtie, etc. She pushes a cart carrying whipped cream pies.)

APRIL

But, April, you killed. You crushed. You destroyed. You murdered. You slaughtered. You desecrated. You mutilated. You pillaged. You plundered. You man-slaughtered. You destruct.

(Clown throws a pie in her face.)

APRIL

You destruct.

(Another pie.)

APRIL

You destruct.

(Pie.)

APRIL

You destruct. You self-destruct. Over and over and over again.

(Pie.)

APRIL

And you keep going! You have to keep going! Because it's war. And I'm fighting you. And I'm fighting you. And I'm fighting you.

(Pie.)

APRIL

But you're not fighting! You're not fighting me.
I am.

(Red light turns on. Circus music plays. Clown honks a horn. April stares out. Lights fade to black.)

SCENE FIVE

(Sunny and Holly are where they were left at the end of scene three.)

SUNNY

She's new, right? New comics are usually pretty chill to me.

HOLLY

You mean they usually kiss your ass.

It's...she was upset before the show. It was a whole thing.

SUNNY

You gonna stay vague, Crypt Keeper?

HOLLY

Why's everyone calling me old today? You're older than me!

SUNNY

Cause cryptic...you know what forget it. It's like I always say: if I have to explain a joke //

HOLLY

Then I'm smarter than you.

SUNNY

Exactly. That's what I always say.

(They laugh.)

SUNNY

You get me. That's what I like about you.

HOLLY

That's it? That I get you? Narcissist much.

SUNNY

No, that's not all. You're a genuine person. And a really good friend...to me.

HOLLY

Always circles back to you.

SUNNY

Got to.

So. What was going on before I got here?

HOLLY

What - don't worry about it.

SUNNY

Don't worry about tension and some new comedian walking out in a huff when I enter the room?

HOLLY

It was nothing.

SUNNY

If you say so.

HOLLY

It was. It was dumb. We - we told her she was wrong.

SUNNY

What happened?

HOLLY

Well, she - it's not even worth talking about really.

SUNNY

I want to know!

HOLLY

It's just...she didn't want to do the show.

SUNNY

So?

HOLLY

See? It's stupid //

SUNNY

Well, why not?

HOLLY

Because you're on it.

SUNNY

What? Was I rude ordering coffee at whatever airport Starbucks she works at?

HOLLY

It's...come on, Sun. You - you know.

SUNNY

No. I don't know. What did she say?

HOLLY

She didn't want to do the show because she heard things.

SUNNY

Things? Like the comedy club's haunted or...?

HOLLY

Don't make me say it.

SUNNY

Say what?

HOLLY

I don't want to say what she said.

SUNNY

Uh huh. You won't say it, but she did?

HOLLY

Exactly.

SUNNY

...Well, shit.

HOLLY

Yeah.

SUNNY

So do new comics - they think that? About me?

HOLLY

I don't know. She does.

SUNNY

That's, I don't know, slander. Right? I can sue for defamation!

HOLLY

Geri told her what it was. Gossip. It's // all gossip.

SUNNY

These girls, man. They do this witch hunt thing. And what did I ever do to them? I don't even know her.

HOLLY

No, exactly. I told her that. I told her she doesn't know you. I know you.

SUNNY

We go way back.

HOLLY

Way back. I remember your worst jokes.

SUNNY

And I remember your weird hat phase.

HOLLY

It wasn't that weird!

SUNNY

No one, under any circumstance, should wear a newsies hat. You're not a bald American getting in touch with his Irish roots.

HOLLY

Well, I remember all your shitty girlfriends.

SUNNY

Hey, they were hot. That's important to me. It off-sets how focused they were on ruining my life.

(...)

I should ruin her life.

HOLLY

Who's?

SUNNY

That girl. What's her name? May?

HOLLY

April.

SUNNY

She's the one who shouldn't be on the show.

HOLLY

I think she's onstage right now.

SUNNY

Should she be? She's dangerous to the community.

HOLLY

She's not dangerous.

SUNNY

She's not? She's trying to destroy whole careers.

HOLLY

I don't think she has the power to do that.

SUNNY

I'm gonna talk to Geri. This is her first and last time here.

HOLLY

Hey, let her dig her own grave. She doesn't need your help.

(Sunny takes out his phone.)

SUNNY

I gotta tell the GC about this.

HOLLY

Don't! Come on. She doesn't need a bunch of strange men in a sad group chat hating her before they meet her.

SUNNY

Sad?

HOLLY

How many guys are in that thing?

SUNNY

Not many. Like 10 or 12?

HOLLY

That's a lot of people, Sun.

SUNNY

Imagine how many people she's told this to.

HOLLY

But what good does telling those guys do? They're established comedians.

SUNNY

Not all of them. Randy's in the group.

HOLLY

Okay, yeah, but you know what I mean. It doesn't feel equal.

SUNNY

Are you serious? She's spreading this shit about me.

HOLLY

It's not the same and you // know that.

SUNNY

The guys should know when girls like this are out there!

HOLLY

She's a kid!

SUNNY

Don't give me that.

HOLLY

We were kids when we started. How would you like it if someone tried to stop our careers because of some dumb shit we said?

SUNNY

I did say a lot of dumb shit.

HOLLY

Yeah. We both did. Thank god I deleted my Twitter.

SUNNY

I'm verified.

HOLLY

Of course you are. Let her make her own mistakes. She'll grow out of it. Maybe. If she's smart.

SUNNY

Big if.

You'd feel the same way. You're telling me you wouldn't try to stop this virus before it spreads?

HOLLY

She didn't make this up. She's repeating what she's heard.

SUNNY

Holly. Girls like this are a problem! They all tell each other about men they don't trust. So why can't we do the same? Fight back. Stick up for ourselves.

HOLLY

Because - I don't know. It's different. Right?

SUNNY

So you're saying...?

HOLLY

No!

SUNNY

Did you - I mean, you didn't believe her, did you?

HOLLY

Sunny, no //

SUNNY

You don't see me differently now?

HOLLY

No. I told her. I've known you for years.

SUNNY

We go way back.

HOLLY

We go way back.

SUNNY

Remember that open mic at the O'Shaunessy's?

HOLLY

Or the one at that hemp shop?

SUNNY

With the host who hated his kids? That was...so sad.

HOLLY

And yet we kept going. Like some kind of sick compulsion.

SUNNY

We were on the front lines of terrible open mics like soldiers in a war against...I don't know, I'd say the audience but there never was one.

(They laugh together. It winds down. Beat.)

SUNNY

See, this is nice. Remembering and hanging out with you.

HOLLY

Yeah. It is.

SUNNY

I don't want girls like her to ruin it. You know what I mean?

HOLLY

She's not. Look. We're here. We're fine.

SUNNY

Right. But you can see why I'd worry. She's like poison. Girls like her are a poison.

HOLLY

Honestly, it's best you just move on.

SUNNY

I don't like this. I don't like girls like her talking like this. And for what?

HOLLY

It's for their protection.

SUNNY

Against me?! Holly, you don't think that they need that // do you?

HOLLY

No, just like, they need each other. Let them have their chats and their support. I wish something like that existed when I started.

SUNNY

Really? Something like a schoolgirl rumor mill?

HOLLY

No. You don't under//stand

SUNNY

Like it's the Salem Witch Trials!

HOLLY

Eh. You know it was mostly women who were killed in that, right?

SUNNY

Oh, whatever. There was that guy in the play. The one Marilyn Monroe's husband wrote.

HOLLY

Okay. Think of it like this. They might be talking about actual rapists and stuff. So don't try and shut anything down. They're all...she's just...some kid.

SUNNY

She's some kid trying to cancel me.

HOLLY

You're not canceled, dude. You're literally headlining.

SUNNY

For now.

HOLLY

This -- this rumor, has been around. And you've been fine.

SUNNY

It's been *around*? What do you mean?!

HOLLY

It's not the first time I've // heard this.

SUNNY

Who's been saying it?

HOLLY

Sunny, don't play dumb.

SUNNY

You stick up for me, right?

HOLLY

Yeah. I told you! I told her it was gossip.

SUNNY

A rumor.

HOLLY

Right. She - just let her get her start. I mean, she's a nobody.

SUNNY

And now she'll never be a somebody.

(...)

Hey, should I do my chicken tenders bit tonight?

HOLLY

I'll...yeah, I think so. I'll, uh, I'll check the crowd.

SUNNY

Yeah, get a temp of the room after her set. I mean, is she even funny?

HOLLY

I don't care. You want a drink?

SUNNY

I'm good.

HOLLY

I'm not.

SCENE SIX

GERI (O.S.)

All right, Ladies and gentlemen, let's hear it again for Holly Milbanks!

(Holly steps out on stage. Stands in front of the mic. Doesn't move it. She just stands there. Stares. She blanks. This lasts for forty-five seconds.)

HECKLER (O.S.)

Do something.

(The red light turns on)

HECKLER (O.S.)

Try harder!

(She shakes her head. Looney Tunes theme song plays.)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE SEVEN

(April enters. Sunny doesn't look up from his phone.)

SUNNY

Heard you have a problem with me. Is that true?

APRIL

I don't know you.

SUNNY

You could get to know me. I don't bite. I promise.

(April ignores him.)

SUNNY

This is the part where you tell me about yourself. Where you grew up, how long you've been doing comedy, if you have any pets, et cetera.

APRIL

I guess it's the part where you could ask me any of those questions instead of expecting me to just tell you.

SUNNY

Ouch.

APRIL

Well. Or did you just want to talk about yourself?

SUNNY

I can. I'm Sunny. I grew up in Chicago - McKinley Park. I've been doing comedy for - what? - seventeen years? That sounds crazy. I live in LA now. You probably know that. I don't have pets. I don't think I could even be trusted to take care of a plant.

APRIL

Not surprising.

SUNNY

Now you go.

APRIL

No, thank you.

SUNNY

Okay. So, you're a sassy comedian? That's cute.

APRIL

Cute?

SUNNY

Yeah. What? Is that rude? I'm not trying to be rude.

APRIL

Yeah, I don't care.

SUNNY

Do we have a problem, April?

APRIL

I don't know. Yes.

SUNNY

With what exactly?

APRIL

It seems like you know what.

SUNNY

I want to hear you say it.

APRIL

I'm sorry. I believe what I've heard.

SUNNY

And what's that?

APRIL

What?

SUNNY

The thing you think you've heard.

APRIL

Think I've heard? No. I've heard it.

SUNNY

Do you even know anyone who said I did this to them?

APRIL

Jen -

SUNNY

Personally. Because you know people lie about this stuff.

APRIL

They really don't.

SUNNY

They do! Remember that girl from that college?

APRIL

You're naming ONE story.

SUNNY

You know, I would hate for everyone to believe me when I say you can't be trusted. That we shouldn't book you on shows because you tell lies so that you'll get booked.

APRIL

What? You think that I'm just trying to get booked?

SUNNY

Why else would you say stuff like this? It's for attention. You think - you young comics think this will get you ahead.

APRIL

No, I don't. Why would I // think that?

SUNNY

How about you focus on being funny?

APRIL

How about you focus on keeping your dick in your pants?

(He crosses to April. Moves in on her. She backs up.)

SUNNY

Fine. Jen and I dated. Ask Holly. Jen's just mad at me for being more successful than she is.

APRIL

You raped her because she's jealous?

SUNNY

Watch what you say. Let me - your phone. Where is it?

APRIL

What?

SUNNY

Are you recording this? Trying to get me?

APRIL

You're insane.

SUNNY

Well, what are you doing?

APRIL

Nothing!

SUNNY

Bullshit. What's the end game here?

(Sunny has her against a wall.)

APRIL

Nothing! You asked me!

SUNNY

What do you want from me?

(Geri enters.)

APRIL

I don't want to be in the same room as you.

SUNNY

Too fucking bad.

GERI

HEY!

Forgot to give you drink tickets.

(Sunny relents.)

SUNNY

I'm good.

GERI

Then get me one.

(Geri extends the ticket. Sunny grabs it)

SUNNY

...Fine.

(Sunny exits.)

GERI

Are you okay?

APRIL

Yeah, I...I'm so sorry for everything, Geri. This is not at all how I wanted my first show to go // and now I'm ruining this for everyone and I don't even get why.

GERI

Calm down. Calm down. Calm down. You didn't do anything //

APRIL

WHY is this a thing?! I didn't mean for this to be a thing! I just thought - I just I'm sorry //

GERI

Hey, hey, HEY. It's okay. Listen to me. You didn't do anything.

APRIL

I'm sorry.

GERI

Jesus. You gotta stop apologizing, kid. If you're gonna run your mouth, be confident // about it.

(April hyperventilates.)

APRIL

I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm // sorry

GERI

No no no no. Not that. It's - I'm sorry. Okay? I'm giving you a hard time. Relax. You did nothing wrong.

*(April breathes in and out deeply to calm down.
Geri pats her on the back.)*

APRIL

I didn't? Then why does it feel like I am?

GERI

That's how this kind of thing goes.

(Holly enters. Points at April.)

HOLLY

You. You. You caused me to blank out there.

GERI

Holly, not now.

APRIL

What? How?

HOLLY

You with your bullshit.

GERI

Stop it.

HOLLY

You think you're some innocent little bitch //

GERI

WHOA. Stop.

HOLLY

Who? Me? She's the one who should //

GERI

Cut it the fuck out, Hol.

HOLLY

You're seriously mad at ME right now?

GERI

Listen to me FOR ONCE. Stop this stupid crusade. You're - you're freaking the kid out.

HOLLY

Geri, I don't care!

GERI

Can you fucking try to care?

HOLLY

Whose side are you on, Ger?

GERI

Nobody's!

APRIL

I gotta...I gotta go.

GERI

Where are you...!

(April exits.)

GERI

What is wrong with you?

HOLLY

I blanked.

I never blank, Ger.

GERI

Now you have. So what?

HOLLY

I don't know! And what was all that taking her side? Huh? You want to choose the ingénue over the old hag?

GERI

No. What? You need to calm down.

Maybe -- maybe you've had too much to drink.

HOLLY

You ever just feel bad about everything? And then you feel bad for feeling bad?

GERI

That's called depression.

HOLLY

She makes me sad.

GERI

Don't blame her.

HOLLY

For myself.

GERI

Ah. Yes. The comedian's narcissism always arrives on time.

HOLLY

I'm trying to look out for her. I am. But it just reminds me that, I don't know, no one was looking out for me.

GERI

That's not true //

HOLLY

It is. Not like this. God, why don't I know how to be a person?

GERI

What are you talking about? A person...

HOLLY

I can't seem to get it right. Caring about people. And I do care - I do! But they don't *think* I care. It's like I can only be this character and I just shut down when I'm not onstage. Is this why I feel so alone all the time?

GERI

What? Do you feel alone? You have lots of friends.

HOLLY

Comedians aren't my friends. They're my coworkers.

GERI

How else do you make friends as an adult? You work together or join a book club or something.

HOLLY

Yeah, I'd be the belle of the book club.

GERI

If you feel lonely, just pick up the phone. Text. No, don't text. *Call!* Everyone acts like calling makes you a serial killer, but if I wanted to kill you why would I call first?

HOLLY

I guess I'd call to make sure you're home and tell you not to go anywhere for a minute.

GERI

Huh. Never thought of that. But you have. Are you okay?

HOLLY

You ever think about what people will say about you when you die?

GERI

Christ, Hol.

HOLLY

Well, do you?

GERI

You want me to write your obituary for you or something? She died doing what she loved best: having a breakfast beer in the shower.

HOLLY

If that's how I go out, I deserve a Viking funeral.

GERI

We'll light your body on fire and set you sailing on Lake Michigan. Gary can handle the body.

HOLLY

I only make it as far as Gary!

(They smile. Holly cries.)

GERI

It's a joke! Besides, Indiana is lovely this time of year.

HOLLY

No, it's not.

GERI

Are you really crying?

HOLLY

No. Yes.

GERI

Comedians. You're allowed to tell jokes at my expense, but God forbid I turn the tables. You all turn into whiny little babies. And what am I supposed to do with that? Put bandaids on bruised egos? Kiss it and make it better because your mommy never did?

HOLLY

Yeah, that'd be nice.

GERI

I'm not your mom.
What's going on?

HOLLY

No one told me stuff like that. We didn't talk like that.

GERI

It was just the way it was.

HOLLY

But people could have told me.

GERI

Told you what?

HOLLY

Don't act like you // don't know.

GERI

Don't do a roadshow with so-and-so because he'll try something?

HOLLY

Yes! That. Exactly that. And then some.

GERI

Well. We didn't.

HOLLY

But you knew. Right?

(Silence)

GERI

No one talked like that. These were all secrets.

HOLLY

Open secrets.

GERI

Okay. This is stirring up a lot.

HOLLY

Well, yeah.

GERI

For me, too!

HOLLY

You?

GERI

Well, yeah, I don't want to feel bad! About what I did or didn't do. Who does? But you can't -we shouldn't judge the past so harshly. Things were different then. It doesn't seem that long ago, but shit. April was in grade school when you were starting.

HOLLY

You know I really don't feel old until you all say shit like that.

GERI

Point is you shouldn't judge anyone too harshly for what happened back then.

HOLLY

Not even //

GERI

Yourself.

HOLLY

Not what I was gonna say.

GERI

I know.

(They stare at each other for a beat)

HOLLY

You don't deserve any blame?

GERI

I'm not saying that. But I don't want to think about it. I don't know. My role in any of this? It's different.

HOLLY

It's all different. Word of the hour.

GERI

We should have done that; you should have known this - but we didn't and you didn't. And here we are. We didn't look out for each other back then and the guys really ran with that.

HOLLY

And we all put up with it. Wait. Did you?

GERI

I'm always in a position of power. So not really. Not the same as you. But I've seen it. I've watched it. I've, I don't know //

HOLLY

Enabled it?

GERI

You want another drink?

HOLLY

Funny. But yes.

GERI

Just don't take all this out back here. Or on her. Or on yourself.

HOLLY

On who then?

(Geri gestures to audience.)

GERI

Why not on them?

("Take me Out to the Ball Game" plays.)

SCENE EIGHT

GERI (O.S.)

Boy, oh, boy do we have a fantastic act for you this evening, folks. Coming up next is a brand-new comedy duo. They seem so different - but are they really? Thus, the comedy ensues! Feast your eyes and lend your ears to the comedy stylings of Milbanks and Fernandez!

(Song fades out as Holly and April enter. They wear baseball hats. This must be played exactly like Abbott and Costello's "Who's On First".)

HOLLY

They give these guys strange names these days.

APRIL

Funny names?

HOLLY

Nicknames, nicknames. We've got who, what and I don't know.

APRIL

That's what I want to find out. I want you to tell me the names of these guys.

HOLLY

I'm telling you. Who's on rape, what's on assault, and I Don't Know is on harassment -

APRIL

You know the fellas' names?

HOLLY

Yes.

APRIL

Who's on rape?

HOLLY

Yes.

APRIL

I mean the fella's name on rape.

Who.

HOLLY

The rapist!

APRIL

Who.

HOLLY

I mean the guy who raped.

APRIL

Who is on rape!

HOLLY

I'm asking YOU.

APRIL

That's the man's name.

HOLLY

That's who's name?

APRIL

Yes.

HOLLY

Well, go ahead and tell me.

APRIL

That's it.

HOLLY

That's who?

APRIL

Yes.

HOLLY

When you pay off the guy who raped, who gets the money?

APRIL

HOLLY

Every dollar of it.

APRIL

Who's the guy who gets the money?

HOLLY

He does! Sometimes his wife comes down and collects it.

APRIL

The rapist's wife?

HOLLY

Yes. What's wrong with that?

APRIL

Ok. Who is the assaulter?

HOLLY

No. What is on assault.

APRIL

I'm not asking who's on assault!

HOLLY

Who's on rape.

APRIL

One crime at a time!

HOLLY

Well, don't change the men around.

APRIL

I'm not changing nobody! I don't know!

HOLLY

He's on harassment. We're not talking about him.

APRIL

Now how did I get to harassment?

HOLLY

You mentioned his name.

APRIL

If I mentioned the harasser's name, then who did I say was on harassment?

HOLLY

No.

APRIL & HOLLY

Who's on rape.

(The red light turns on. It pulses.)

APRIL

Look, you got a stalker on this team?

HOLLY

Sure.

APRIL

The name?

HOLLY

Tomorrow.

APRIL

Why can't you tell me today?

HOLLY

I'm telling you now.

APRIL

Then go ahead.

HOLLY

Tomorrow.

APRIL

I don't give a damn!

HOLLY

OH, that's our pitcher!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE NINE

(Holly and April enter the greenroom together. Holly is beaming.)

HOLLY

Great set. You're really good.

APRIL

Yeah. Thank you.

HOLLY

Hey, I know I was hard on you earlier. And I, well, I regret it. You didn't deserve that.

APRIL

Oh. That's nice of you to say. Now that you saw me be funny, I guess.

HOLLY

Yeah. I know. Shit behavior through and through.

APRIL

No. It's fine. It's how it is. Right?

HOLLY

Unfortunately. This is the world that socialized me.

APRIL

Yeah. I'm not loving this side of things. I - I don't know.

HOLLY

Don't know what?

APRIL

What to do. I feel like I'm not really here. Or like I shouldn't be here?

HOLLY

Of course, you should! Geri was right about you //

APRIL

No, like, I want to leave.

HOLLY

No don't.

APRIL

Yeah. I - I don't want to be here.

(April gathers her things.)

HOLLY

No. What are you doing?

APRIL

I told you. Home.

HOLLY

Come on. Please stay. Please do the second show.

APRIL

With him?

HOLLY

With *me*.

APRIL

I don't know.

HOLLY

You already did the first one. That wasn't so bad right?

APRIL

...are you serious? I feel like I might throw up.

HOLLY

That's nerves.

APRIL

No. This has all been so much. I - I just want to go home.

HOLLY

You can go home after the second show. I promise you it will be rewarding.

APRIL

Rewarding? I'm sorry, but this was soul crushing.

HOLLY

Soul crushing?

APRIL

Yeah. I feel like I've already sold my soul doing the first one.

HOLLY

Sold your soul? But you haven't been paid yet.

APRIL

You know what I mean. I'd hear about this stuff with celebrities and big comedians and think 'what's the big deal? Just kick him out. Don't work with him. Ignore him. Whatever.' I thought that's what you do. I thought that it was all better now. I thought that if I were ever in a situation like this...I mean you dream of moments like this //

HOLLY

You dream of this?

APRIL

Oh my god, stop joking! For one second! Stop joking! This whole thing has been fucking surreal for me and you can't let up on one opportunity to make a joke. I mean what's the point? Why do you have to deflate everything?

HOLLY

I'm sorry.

APRIL

You are?

HOLLY

Yeah. I'm sorry. I can't help it anyway. We're all here because we're coping with something, right?

APRIL

I like doing this. But I don't like being here.

HOLLY

I'm glad you're here.

APRIL

Thank you.

HOLLY

Don't you think this is fun? Being onstage?

APRIL

Usually. But this isn't worth swallowing myself.

HOLLY

You don't have to swallow yourself!

APRIL

That's what you two have wanted me to do all night.

HOLLY

No. No. Be yourself. Be a brash, annoying, bitch whenever you want to be.

APRIL

You're just saying that because you think I'm funny now.

HOLLY

I'm not that shallow --

APRIL

Then what should I do? You want me to leave. Now you want me to stay. You want me to shut up and play along. Now you tell me I don't have to. Which is it? What do I do?

HOLLY

Suck it up and do it.

APRIL

Suck it up?!

HOLLY

Air all of this onstage. Do it. Say whatever you need to say.

(April shakes her head. She heads for the exit.)

HOLLY

Who else? Who else did he do this to?

APRIL

What?

HOLLY

Earlier you said...when we were talking about this shit with Sunny, you said that Jen wasn't the only one. Is that true?

(April nods.)

HOLLY

Do the second show.

APRIL

Why.

HOLLY

If you quit the show, they don't replace you with another you. They replace you with another him.

APRIL

Okay.

HOLLY

Okay?

APRIL

If I do it, then I'm going to really do it.

HOLLY

Okay.

APRIL

Like I'm going to say something.

HOLLY

So you're doing the show?

APRIL

Yeah. I'll do it.

You really have my back?

HOLLY

I do.

APRIL

Okay. Because I'm going to use that microphone for good. I don't think I could stomach this any other way.

HOLLY

I support you.

APRIL

Thank you, Holly. Thank you.

(April turns for the exit. Sunny enters. She slips around him. Exits.)

SUNNY

More lies?

HOLLY

Just forget it.

SUNNY

It's good to see you, Hol. Really. You seem good.

HOLLY

I'm ok.

SUNNY

I mean your comedy. It's good. You're better every time.

HOLLY

Thanks.

SUNNY

I mean it. You're one of the funniest people I know.

HOLLY

That means a lot.

SUNNY

So, I was thinking. My agent is putting together a tour for me, and I'd love to take you with me as my opener.

HOLLY

Me?

SUNNY

Yeah. I trust you a hell of a lot more than I trust local comics in bumfuck nowhere. It would all be paid, you'd be put up in hotel rooms, the whole nine yards.

HOLLY

Oh. Wow.

(Sunny texts.)

SUNNY

You in? I'm gonna tell my agent to reach out to you. Send her a clip, too.

HOLLY

Right, right. Always send a clip.

SUNNY

Not for me. You're in if you want to be in. I meant for you. I want to get you representation.

HOLLY

Wow. That's...that's nice of you.

SUNNY

Of course. Aaaaand sent.

(He puts his phone away.)

HOLLY

Thanks, Sunny. I'll think about it.

SUNNY

Please do. Okay?

HOLLY

Going on the road //

SUNNY

With me! And don't worry. I won't let what happened to you back in the day with Jimmy happen to you again. You can trust me.

(Holly nods for a beat.)

HOLLY

I appreciate it. Really.

SUNNY

You deserve it. Cause we look out for each other. Right? We go way back.

(Sunny puts a hand on her shoulder. Squeezes. He exits.)

GERI (O.S.)

Please welcome to the stage your headliner for the evening: Sunny Hilson!

SCENE TEN

(Sunny takes the mic. He faces the opposite direction. Geri, April, and Holly stand in front of the stage facing the audience. In that order. As Sunny speaks, he gets progressively louder:)

SUNNY

Hello everyone. Keep it going for everyone you've seen so far. How're you doing tonight? Is this your wife? Not to brag, but I was sleeping with a woman recently and I didn't know what to do with my hands. So I gave her a high-five. When I came. She deserved it. I love that anecdote because somewhere out there, I'm the villain in a story because I gave a girl a high-five. I was trying to encourage her! Sex is a team sport! Right, fellas? Soooooo, I'm single. If you couldn't tell. But I'm a nice guy! It's hard out here for us nice guys. I'm just looking for a babe who will split chicken tendies with me. But I can't put that in a dating profile. So I treat my dating profiles like job resumes: I just lie. Flat out lies. I'm like: I love hiking, I love trying new things, and I'm proficient in Excel. What are they gonna do? Check my references? I suck at working real jobs, man. That's why I do this. Imagine if you could be honest on a job application. I'd be like I never come in on time, I'm going to steal office supplies, and I cry at my desk every morning. You're hired!

(Laughter grows. His voice crescendos. The red light turns on. Gets brighter throughout this sequence. At the noisiest height, April opens her mouth to scream. Before she lets out a sound, Geri covers mouth. Holly stares straight ahead. April fights. She struggles against Geri's hand. She looks to Holly for help. Pleads with her eyes. Holly finally looks at her. She looks at Geri. Geri nods. Holly helps Geri push April back with their hands covering her until she is out of sight. They silence her. They return to their positions. Holly fights tears. Everything bathed in red. Sunny has been performing the entire time.)

SUNNY

That's my time. You've been a great audience. Thank you so much. Goodnight.

END OF PLAY