

DROP DEAD GORGEOUS

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MINNESOTA - DAY

Vintage black and white stock footage of some farms and farmhouses.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Color footage of cotton fields passing by. We FREEZE and

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE WIPES IN:

1995 MARKED THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE NATION'S OLDEST BEAUTY CONTEST...

THE SARAH ROSE COSMETICS AMERICAN TEEN PRINCESS PAGEANT

A DOCUMENTARY FILM CREW WAS SENT TO

A SMALL TOWN IN MINNESOTA

TO COMMEMORATE THIS OCCASSION.

INT. PAGEANT AUDITORIUM - MOUNT ROSE - DAY

Vintage blue-toned stock footage of a teenage beauty pageant contestant. LEGS WIPE IN.

MALE PAGEANT ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Sarah Rose knows you're a beautiful person....

Blue-toned stock footage of a long row of beauty pageant contestants on stage.

MALE PAGEANT ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

Sarah Rose knows you have an unusual talent. Sarah Rose knows you're a teenage girl.

Blue-toned stock footage of the row of contestants

parading down some steps from the stage as CAMERA TILTS DOWN.

MALE PAGEANT ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

Mmm, and she definitely knows that you are ready for the ultimate teen glamour.

ROUSING PATRIOTIC MUSIC. FAST PACED CUTS feature SMILING TEENAGE CONTESTANTS dancing and waving American flags. APPLAUSE!

MALE PAGEANT ANNOUNCER  
(cont'd)

The American Teen Princess Pageant.

Each contestant wears a BANNER ACROSS her dress reading: AMERICAN TEEN PRINCESS.

MALE PAGEANT ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

And now, a few words...

ANGLE ON

Contestants DROP, ROLL and form a STAR. CHEERS!

MALE PAGEANT ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

...from last year's host, Mr. Adam West.

ADAM WEST

The American Teen Princess Pageant has been enriching the lives of American-made girls since 1945.

TITLES FADE ON SCREEN: Adam West, TV's Batman, then FADE OUT.

ADAM WEST (cont'd)

The American Teen Princess Pageant provides personal growth, scholarship, travel, and you...

Numerous contestants stand up in SHOT and SURROUND ADAM.

ADAM WEST (cont'd)

...might even meet a few celebrities. At the national level, thousands of seventeen year-old girls like yourselves. and compete around the country in places like:

MALE PAGEANT ANNOUNCER

(O.S.)

Beautiful Mount Rose, Minnesota.

ADAM WEST

And make it all the way here to  
Lincoln, Alabama, to compete for the  
title of American Teen Princess.

LIGHTS come UP on the teenaged girls in the pageant as  
they pause. As they WAVE AMERICAN FLAGS. Adam West  
turns back to the camera.

ADAM WEST (cont'd)

And now, a few words from last year's  
host, Mr. Adam West.

Contestants strike a pose around him. THUNDEROUS CANNED  
APPLAUSE!

ADAM WEST (cont'd)

(pointing to camera)

So, which one of you will it b--

SCREEN SUDDENLY STATIC.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

SCENE from "DAYS OF OUR LIVES"

PULL BACK to reveal the VIDEO is on a TV in front of a  
GROUP OF SEVENTEEN YEAR-OLD GIRLS, sitting in gym  
bleachers.

[NOTE: The film is shot documentary style. PEOPLE ARE  
REAL. Their lives revolve around this pageant. All  
speak with a THICK MINNESOTA ACCENT.]

THREE "CIVIL SERVETTES," the local women's group.  
[Picture unattractive Stepford Wives in matching  
windbreakers] stand beside GLADYS LEEMAN, 34, president.  
She STOPS THE VIDEO.

GLADYS LEEMAN

Good God, Iris, you taped your shows  
over it.

IRIS

Sorry.

Gladys turns to the GIRLS in the bleachers.

SUPER: MOUNT ROSE, MINNESOTA POPULATION: 5,076

GLADYS LEEMAN

Now ladies, the rest of the tape - which is now gone forever - goes on about startin' this great American journey we call American Teen Princess...Yah-so, any of you young ladies who'd like to start on that journey, you just come right down here and sign up. And please...help yourselves to some coffee and bars...

SMASH EDIT TO:

Gladys seated with middle-aged women.

GLADYS

Showtime.

SUPER: GLADYS LEEMAN, LOCAL CHAIRMAN, PAGEANT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Do you think that most people would say that teenage beauty pageants are a good idea?

GLADYS

Oh yah-sure, I know what some of your big city, no bra wearin', hairy-legged women's libbers say, "Pageants are old-fashioned" and, uh, and "demeaning" to the girls --

IRIS

(jumping in)

What's sick is women dressin' like men!

Civil Servettes stare at her a beat.

GLADYS

Uh... You betcha, Iris.

(quickly, back to camera)

Yah-I think yous boys'll find that things are different here in Mount Rose...

Civil Servettes AD-LIB AGREEMENT.

GLADYS (cont'd)

For one thing, y'know, we're God  
fearin' folk - every last one of us...

Civil Servettes AD-LIB AGREEMENT.

GLADYS (cont'd)

You won't find a back room in our  
video store...

Servettes AD-LIB "AMEN. YAH-YOU BETCHA." etc.

GLADYS (cont'd) (V.O.)

...that filth is better left in the  
"Sin Cities."

IRIS

A.k.a. Minneapolis - St. Paul.

PULL AWAY from MINNEAPOLIS SKYLINE to COUNTRYSIDE.

EXT. QUAIN T MAIN STREET

The camera drives down the street.

EXT. PICTURESQUE MIDDLE-CLASS NEIGHBORHOODS

The camera drives down the street.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE

A HAPPY FAMILY raises the AMERICAN FLAG.

EXT. SUBURBAN DRIVEWAY

BURLY GUYS look up from washing a FORD TRUCK.

EXT. TRAILER PARK

Sign next to it reads: "Welcome to Mount Rose, Home of  
Freda Klinghagen, Minnesota's Oldest Living Lutheran"  
complete with a photo of the extremely old woman smiling  
and waving.

EXT. CREW VAN

An ELDERLY COUPLE looks in the passenger window of the  
van.

ELDERLY MAN (MAYOR)

Oh, yah-sure, Freda, yah. She was the oldest livin' Lutheran. Now she's dead as a doornail. It's them damn Shriners who ain't taken that Goddamn sign down yet - those lazy sons-a-bitches...

I tells kem, I tells kem every goddamn year, "Take the Goddamn Freda sign down, you lazy sons-a-bitches!"

SUPER: MAYOR OF MOUNT ROSE

INT. GLADYS' VAN - DAY

Through the window a family waves to Gladys.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Two BOYS play basketball in the driveway of their home.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - DAY

SMALL CHILDREN in bathing suits play on a lawn. A boy shoots his water pistol.

INT. LEEMAN STATION WAGON - AFTERNOON

Civil Servettes and crew are piled in. Gladys drives.

GLADYS

...Today's "To Do" list includes a trip to the Mall of America. We need outfits for the "Physical Fitness" number --

IRIS

Nothin' too showy!

GLADYS

Y'betcha, Iris. We still need a third judge and we need to think of a theme.

Servettes react with pleasure.

IRIS

Gladys -- Gladys! Look out!

A CAR SWERVES.

GLADYS

Oh, my!  
(waving out window)  
Hello, Father Donigan! Sidewalks,  
sidewalks?

Iris mimes drinking, "glug, glug."

GLADYS (cont'd)  
Iris, stop!  
(to camera)  
It's not his fault. The communal wine  
just proves too temptin' for some of  
them.

IRIS  
That's why we Lutherans use grape  
Koolaid for the blood of Christ.

EXT. MALL OF AMERICA

In the vast, already full parking lot, we see Gladys  
Leeman's station wagon searching for a parking spot.

IRIS  
Oh, there's a parking space over  
there. Oh, no, that's just a compact.  
Sorry.

GLADYS  
You'd think they'd build the parking  
lot of America to go with the Mall of  
America!

Gladys pulls into a HANDICAPPED SPOT. Servettes and  
CAMERA stand outside the car. Iris points at the sign.

IRIS  
It's a two-hundred dollar fine!

GLADYS  
I said I'd move if a cripple came.  
Let's just run in the store and pick  
out some outfits.

IRIS  
All right, let's go.

EXT. MALL OF AMERICA PARKING LOT

Iris and another Servette start to get out of the car.

GLADYS

Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait!  
Wait! I just thought of the theme.

Iris and the Servette stop.

IRIS

Oh! What is it?

GLADYS (cont'd)

"Proud...to be...an...American."

Servettes react with pleasure.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. MOA PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

So what was the theme of the pageant  
last year?

GLADYS

Last year? It was, "Buy American."

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

And the year before that?

GLADYS

"U.S.A. is A-okay."

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Can you remember the theme of your  
favorite pageant?

GLADYS

"Can I? I'm Amer-I-Can!" People ask  
me where I get this. I don't know,  
it's...maybe a gift from God or  
somethin'.

INT. MOUNT ROSE HIGH - GYM - DAY

PAN DOWN row of EIGHT GIRLS signing up and eating bars.

SUPER: LOCAL PAGEANT REGISTRATION, MOUNT ROSE HIGH SCHOOL

ANGLE ON

LESLIE MILLER - sexy/peppy girl in CHEERLEADING UNIFORM.

LESLIE MILLER

...Hi.

(giggles)

I'm Leslie Miller. I'm signin' up kcause-ah, y'know, I always watch pageants on the TV and my boyfriend thinks I'll win.

SUPER: CONTESTANT #3, LESLIE MILLER

She makes "gills" on the sides of her head with her hands.

LESLIE MILLER (cont'd)

For my talent, I'm gonna be doing the..

Two FOOTBALL PLAYERS interrupt: PAT, her boyfriend, and BRETT, who smiles and gives a nod to Amber. Pat grabs Leslie and kisses her hard.

LESLIE (cont'd)

Uh, Pat, I'm trying to tell them about my...Oh...

Hormones take over and they lock lips again. She wraps her legs around him. He feels up her ass. They continue groping as her Washington Monument slips off.

CUT TO:

Leslie waves and blows kisses while performing a cheerleader chant.

LESLIE MILLER (cont'd)

Hi, Pat! Go, Muskies! Who!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM

AMBER ATKINS - naturally pretty blonde, sweet as sugar pie, stares into camera like a deer caught in headlights.

AMBER ATKINS

(suddenly looking O.C.)

Hi, I-I'm Amber Atkins and, um, I'm signin' up k'cause, ah, my two favorite people in the world competed. My mom and Diane Sawyer...Course I hope I end up a little more like Diane Sawyer than my mom...

She flashes a GRIN, we melt.

INT. FUNERAL HOME/EMBALMING ROOM - DAY

Amber tap-dances as she applies make-up to a MALE CORPSE.

SUPER: CONTESTANT #1, AMBER ATKINS

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Do you do any of the, uh, embalming?

AMBER

(laughing)

Oh, my God, no. Oh, God. I just do the hair and makeup on the deceased.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Amber tap dances at the side of the road as traffic passes.

AMBER (V.O.)

I'm lucky I have an after-school job where I can practice my talent.

EXT. MOA PARKING LOT - DAY

GLADYS

Oh, yeah, sure. You know, every pageant is special, but this one is extra-special to me. When I was seventeen, I don't know if you know this, but I was crowned Mount Rose's American Teen Princess. And this year...drum roll please, my lovely daughter, Rebecca Ann Leeman is competin'.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL

REBECCA LEEMAN stands in front of Amber and addresses the cameraman (O.S.).

BECKY

Is this my mark?

(it is)

Hi, I'm Rebecca Leeman. And I believe this pageant is an important experience for every young woman. It, well, it teaches you what's really important in life, and it has the power to change you in ways you've

never dreamed of.

INT. GUN RANGE

Becky, in shooting goggles and ear muffs, FIRES a Glock-17 9mm pistol with both hands. Sign on wall reads: "Lutheran Sisterhood Gun Club." (See Iona in b.g. with an arsenal of sniper weaponry.)

BECKY

(yelling over noise)

...What?! Klinghagen thinks it'll all come down to me and Amber?

Becky stops firing and takes off her hear muffs.

BECKY (cont'd)

Well, you have to take everything Mrs. Klinghagen says with a grain of salt. Not all your Catholics go to communion for the wafers, if you know what I mean...

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. LUTHERAN SISTERHOOD GUN RANGE - LATER

Becky thumbs bullets into her magazine as she talks.

BECKY

...Yah-my mom gave me this nine-mil for my thirteenth birthday...

SUPER: CONTESTANT #6, BECKY LEEMAN

I'll always remember what she wrote in the card. "Jesus loves winners." That's why, no matter what I do...

She shoves the magazine back in her pistol.

BECKY (cont'd)

I aim to win.

She smiles to camera, then violently fires off a few rounds. Zoom in on the MALE TARGET: several bullet holes in the head.

INT. "NEW YORK, NEW YORK" BEDROOM - DAY

It's all NEW YORK MEMORABILIA. Lisa Swenson - big bubbly

girl - sits on her bed.

LISA

Why? Well, uh, it's kind of like askin', "Why do all the guys chew Copenhagen?" You know? I mean, if you're seventeen and you're not a total fry, it's just what you do.

ETHEL MERMAN's "Everything's Coming Up Roses" PLAYS over speakers.

SUPER: CONTESTANT #7, LISA SWENSON

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Have you decided what your talent is going to be yet?

LISA

I'm gonna sing and dance to, "New York, New York." See, I fell in love with The Big Apple last summer when I was visitin' my brother. He followed his dream to New York.

PICKS UP 8x10's, shows to camera.

LISA (cont'd)

This is Peter as Liza. This is him as Madonna. Oh, here's me with him as Barbara...

INT. "GERMAN SHEPHERD" BEDROOM - DAY

TESS WEINHAUS, wearing an "I love German Shepherds" t-shirt. The room is filled with German Shepherd paraphernalia.

TESS

Uh... I don't know what my talent's gonna be yet...

SUPER: CONTESTANT #3, TESS WEINHAUS

TESS (cont'd)

Kenny. Kenny, come. Come, Kenny.

A DACHSHUND enters and jumps on her lap.

TESS (cont'd)

This is Kenny. Spike, my German

Shepherd, went to live with a nice family on a farm after he attacked me. It wasn't his fault. I had beef jerky in my front pocket.

(pulling up shirt)

They re-made my belly with skin from my butt.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

IONA HILDERBRANDT - librarian, 65+ - stamps books.

SUPER: IONA HILDERBRANDT, MOUNT ROSE AMERICAN TEEN PRINCESS - 1945

IONA HILDERBRANDT

(smoked for sixty years)

I was Mount Rose American Teen Princess in 1945. We were at war with the Japs.

ANGLE ON

A vintage B&W photograph of 18-year-old IONA HILDERBRANDT, looking surprised with hands on cheeks, is being crowned MOUNT ROSE AMERICAN TEEN PRINCESS by TWO SOLDIERS on a GYM STAGE.

YOUNG IONA, wearing TIARA, stands with SOLDIERS and WAR OFFICIALS beside a boiling pot of metal.

IONA HILDERBRANDT (V.O.)

(cont'd)

I didn't even get to keep my damn tiara.

Iona's about to drop her tiara into a recycling bin.

IONA HILDERBRANDT (cont'd)

Had to turn it in for scrap.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOLLY HOWARD'S LIVING ROOM

MOLLY HOWARD, a large white girl, sits between a JAPANESE COUPLE, Mr. and Mrs. HOWARD.

SUPER: CONTESTANT #5, MOLLY HOWARD

MR. HOWARD

(heavy accent)

... So we adopt Molly three year ago when we come to America, to help acclimate us to American.

MOLLY

(smiling)

To America, Dad.

Mr. Howard laughs.

MRS. HOWARD

She all-American girl. She our American Teen Princess girl.

MOLLY

Oh, Mom...

The Howard's biological daughter (they renamed her "TINA") ENTERS FRAME. Although she's the picture of beauty, grace, talent and charm, she represents their old life.

TINA

(in Japanese)

Excuse me, Father, Mother, when are we moving back to Tokyo? I can't stand this place anymore. They put butter on everything.

MR. HOWARD

(turning, suddenly angry)

English! English, you stupid little retard! We America now, Tina!

TINA

(perfect English)

I'm sorry, Dad, but with all due respect, my name isn't "Tina," it's Seiko.

MR. HOWARD

Tina! Tina!! TINA!!!

MRS. HOWARD

"Robert," settle down.

MR. HOWARD

(screaming)

AHHHHHH!

Mr. Howard suddenly grabs his chest.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. MOLLY HOWARD'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Same scene. Mr. Howard is gone.

TINA

Mom, I just finished the third movement of that concerto I was working on. I put, like, this techno beat on this Japanese folk tune - wanna hear it?

MR. HOWARD

(running down the hall)  
No! We not like to hear it! Go to your room and shut up!

TINA

Oh, I almost forgot...  
(removing envelope from pocket)  
I got my acceptance to Tokyo University.

MR. HOWARD

What, you deaf? I say shut up-shut up-SHUT UP!  
(coming at camera)  
Cut her outta this!

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. MOLLY HOWARD'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Same scene on couch.

MR. HOWARD

Now Molly, tell movie man what you talent do.

MOLLY

I'll be line dancin'.

MR. HOWARD

(giving thumbs up)  
Country western!

MRS. HOWARD  
Clint Black! Ruff!

MR. HOWARD  
Hey, what he got I not got?

They all laugh.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - STAGE

CLOSE ON Michelle Johanson's face.

MICHELLE  
... Yah-I'll be performing a dramatic  
monologue.

SUPER: CONTESTANT #2, MICHELLE JOHANSON

MICHELLE (cont'd)  
Right now, I'm thinkin' "Othello"  
or...  
"Soylent Green." Lots of girls make a  
smooth transition from pageants into  
actin', y'know.

SMASH CUT TO:

LOCAL TV COMMERCIAL (VIDEO)

CONNIE, mid-30's, Midwestern attractive, wearing a sash  
and tiara, stands in front of a BLUE SCREEN of a FOREST.

CONNIE  
Competin' for the title of Minnesota's  
American Teen Princess sure was  
excitin'. But, I never coulda won  
without my...

PULL BACK to reveal a table full of PORK PRODUCTS.

CONNIE (cont'd)  
St. Paul Pork Products!

LOCAL TV COMMERCIAL (VIDEO)

SCREEN CHANGES to OUTSIDE FACTORY/STOCK YARDS. Connie  
now wears a coat and hat and acts as if it's chilly.

CONNIE (cont'd)  
I've been enjoyin' St. Paul Pork

Products for years. I grew up right next to these stock yards.

SCREEN CHANGES to VIDEO of a SLAUGHTER LINE. PIG CARCASSES move on hooks. Connie wears a hard hat and blood stained butcher's apron.

CONNIE (cont'd)

It's still the same family-run business that Walter and Vera Polarski started in 1920 when they raised and slaughtered their first pig.

Connie grabs a HOT DOG from O.C. and takes a bite.

CONNIE (cont'd)

Mmm-mmmm. I just love St. Paul Pork Products. In fact, I love kem so much

LOCAL TV COMMERCIAL (VIDEO)

SLIDE CHANGES to VIDEO of the SAUSAGE LINE. Workers stuff sausages. Connie wears a white jumpsuit and hairnet.

CONNIE (cont'd)

I work here now!

INT. BETZ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MRS. BETZ, a large woman, holds a tray of bars. CREW MEMBERS REACH IN THE SHOT and help themselves. JANELLE BETZ sits on the couch, SIGNING EVERYTHING she says.

JANELLE

(slow, due to signing)

...My talent will be an interpretive dance while I sing, "Through the Eyes of Love." I have a dream of spreadin' sign language around the world... Mom? Would you be so kind?

SUPER: CONTESTANT #8, JANELLE BETZ

JANELLE (cont'd)

Yeah. Well, see, uh, I have a dream of spreading sign language around the world.

(to Mrs. Betz)

Mom, would you be so kind.

Mrs. Betz quickly puts down the bars and goes to the piano where she starts "Through the Eyes of Love." Janelle begins to gesticulate and sign words in an overly dramatic performance that looks like a bizarre seizure. SOUND occasionally DIPS OUT as the BOOM OPERATOR reaches for bars.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - LATER

TAMMY CURRY - a cute, jock-type. She wears a LETTER JACKET, covered with VARSITY SPORTS PATCHES.

TAMMY CURRY

Tammy Curry. I'm signin' up for the scholarship'n'all.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM

She POINTS to VARIOUS PATCHES on her LETTER JACKET.

TAMMY CURRY (cont'd)

...This one's for Varsity Soccer, uh, I'm captain.

(pointing)

I run track, and, uh...

(points to small gun patch)

Right here, I'm the new President of the Lutheran Sisterhood Gun Club...

ANGLE ON

LSGC PRESIDENT logo patch.

TAMMY CURRY (cont'd) (O.S.)

I love that one.

EXT. FARM FIELD

Shot from crew van. Sun is setting behind a lovely field of green. A John Deere Thresher travels across the burning red horizon.

DOCUMENTARIAN (V.O.)

Would you say you have a good chance to win this pageant?

SUPER: CONTESTANT #9, TAMMY CURRY

TAMMY (V.O.)

Yeah, you bet I do. I mean, maybe other people think I can't win a beauty pageant. But other people didn't think I could beat out Becky Leeman for President of the gun club, either. And I did. I-I-It's just like Anthony Robbins says, "I'm a winner. Nobody can stop me but me!"

KABLOOM! Tammy's John Deere thresher BLOWS UP!

INT. LUTHERAN CHURCH BASEMENT - KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT

CLOSE ON framed school photo of Tammy Curry. PULL BACK to see her letter jacket - scorched and torn (Lutheran Gun Club patch is MISSING) - and flowers. CONTINUE PULLING BACK to reveal both are surrounded by buns, bars and coffee on a long buffet table. A line of somber and repressed Lutherans help themselves to the food. Servettes stand at the ready. Gladys and Iris face the camera.

GLADYS

Well, you know, I think everyone's doing really well considering the fact that she was so young.

IRIS

It's always hard to see the young ones called home, especially on an exploding thresher. It's just so odd and gross.

GLADYS

You know that sometimes it's hard to understand God's great plan.

IRIS

Yeah.

Iris pats Gladys on the shoulder.

FEMALE MOURNER #1

May I have a tissue?

GLADYS

But the show must go on.

(she faces Iris)

I gotta get a hold of Ted and ask him

if we can use that barn light as a spot again. So you watch the Jell-o salad, okay?

IRIS

All right. Okay.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - LATER

It's smokey as hell. THREE "FRY" GIRLS and a PREGNANT "FRY" GIRL - all with "shelf bangs" - smoke and drink.

FRY GIRL #1

...Oh, yeah-right. I ain't gonna be in no goddamn pageant! Look what happened to that dork-ass farm girl.

PREGNANT FRY GIRL (O.C.)

Tammy Curry?

FRY GIRL #1

Yah-yah. Everyone says this is a big accident? She got iced because she wins everything, and this time someone didn't want her to win.

PREGNANT FRY GIRL

This pageant's like a roach motel.

FRY GIRL #1

Girls check in, but they don't check out.

PREGNANT FRY GIRL

Yeah. And they say smokin' is bad for your health.

FRY GIRL #1

(raising cigarette into frame)

Yeah.

EXT. OLD TWO STORY HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

SIGN painted on GARAGE DOOR: "Dance Studio, Downstairs past the Laundry Room."

CAMERA moves DOWNSTAIRS to converted basement. LISA SWENSON and two other large "ballerinas" practice at a 2x4/ballet barre. MOZART plays in the b.g. CHLORIS KLINGHAGEN watches and smokes. (Picture Betty Davis in

her final days.)

CHLORIS

And tendu. Close. Tendu. Close.  
Tendu. Close. Plie. And repeat.  
Suck in the belly, girls, and tuck in  
the tushes!

SUPER: CHLORIS KLINGHAGEN, CHOREOGRAPHER

CHLORIS (cont'd)

Close those legs! You look like a  
bunch of bowlegged cows! Other side.  
And...tendu. Close. Tendu. Close.  
Tendu. Close. Plie.

CUT TO:

Chloris smokes and talks to camera. "Ballerinas"  
practice.

CHLORIS (cont'd)

Yeah, you boys sure picked a good  
year. If I was a betting woman, and  
there was a line on this in Vegas, I'd  
lay down ten-to-one that it all comes  
down to Amber Atkins and Becky Leeman.  
Oh, sweet Jesus, what a showdown this  
could be if Cain and Abel...

The SOUND RECORDIST enters and Lisa spins out of control,  
taking him out. She leans over and comforts him.

LISA

Ow! Oh, God. It's so em-so  
embarrassing.

EST. SHOT - "DAKOTA COUNTY EATING DISORDERS CLINIC" - DAY

MARY (V.O.)

(labored breaths)  
My winning...the Mount Rose...

INT. PATIENT'S ROOM - DAY

SMILING ANOREXIC GIRL sits in bed - a TIARA in what's  
left of her hair and a SASH over her hospital gown.

MARY

...American Teen Princess Pageant...

SUPER: MARY JOHANSON, REIGNING MOUNT ROSE AMERICAN TEEN PRINCESS

MARY (cont'd)  
...really changed my life.

The TIARA SLIPS OFF her BALDING HEAD and rolls to the floor.

INT. DAKOTA COUNTY EATING DISORDERS CLINIC - MARY'S ROOM

Amber fixes Mary's hair, carefully brushing her balding head. Mary smiles, oblivious.

MARY  
(labored breaths)  
...Amber does my hair...once a week.

AMBER  
(flattered and embarrassed)  
Well...it's the least I can do for the reigning Mount Rose Junior Miss Amer--

Amber pulls the brush away with a clump of Mary's hair dangling from it.

AMBER (cont'd)  
Oh God...

MARY  
What?

AMBER  
Huh? Oh...Uh, just a little snarl...

Amber mouths, "Shhh! Don't tell!" to camera as she tries to pull the clump of hair from the brush.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. DAKOTA COUNTY EATING DISORDERS CLINIC - MARY'S ROOM

Amber ties the tiara and missing clump of hair to Mary's head with a ribbon.

AMBER  
There we go.

She holds the mirror for Mary.

MARY

(delusional)  
Beautiful... Maybe next week... a  
perm.

AMBER  
Yah... sure...

Amber gives a kind but worried smile to camera.  
Suddenly, Becky Leeman enters with a large box of  
chocolates. She's fully aware of the cameras from the  
moment she enters.

BECKY  
Hellooo, Little Mary Sunshine!  
(pretending to notice camera)  
What?! Oh-oh my God! Lights!  
Camera! And me without a stitch of  
make-up on. What are you guys doin'  
here?

She's in full make-up.

AMBER  
What're you doin' here?

BECKY  
Oh, Amber, like you're the only one  
who visits Mary.

MARY  
(to Becky)  
Who are you?

BECKY  
(covering)  
"Who are you?!" Oh Mary, you kill me.  
(to camera)  
She always says that. It's a little  
game we play. Every week - same dippy  
little look on her face. "Who are you  
- who are you?" Just like that.  
(in Mary's face)  
It's me - Becky - and I brought your  
favorites.

Becky puts the chocolates on Mary's lap, a few spill.  
Throughout the following, Mary slowly reaches for them as  
if they're forbidden fruit and she's a very hungry Eve.

AMBER  
How nice, Becky, she's anorexic.

Becky roughly puts her hands over Mary's ears, who's now gently petting the spilled chocolates in her lap.

BECKY

(sotto, reprimanding tone)  
She's skinny, not deaf, Amber.

EXT. TRAILER - LATE AFTERNOON

MONTAGE - Amber taps around the mobile home community,  
HOME FROM SCHOOL - backpack, Walkman, cool music blaring.

INT. TRAILER - AMBER'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Amber stands in a room the SIZE OF A CLOSET. Posters, articles and pictures of great tap dancers and Diane Sawyer cover the walls.

AMBER

... Dreams? Yah-sure I got kem...  
Sometimes I dream of winnin'... I  
dream of gettin' outta Mount Rose and  
bein' a big time reporter like Diane  
Sawyer. I mean, guys get outta Mount  
Rose all the time for hockey  
scholarships or prison. But the  
pageant's kinda my only chance.

INT. TRAILER - AMBER'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Amber points to LARGE PAGEANT PHOTO OF DIANE SAWYER -  
1963

AMBER

... Yah-1963. Her beauty worked  
against her when she started as a  
reporter in Louisville, her hometown.  
Those were different times.

ANNETTE (O.S.)

(yelling, coughing)  
Hey, Amber, y'get my smokes?

AMBER

(smiling)  
That's my mom.  
(yelling)  
I'll get kem in a sec.

ANNETTE ATKINS, Amber's mom - sexy, but tired - OPENS THE DOOR.

ANNETTE

(surprised by cameras)  
Oh shit!

AMBER

They're from L.A. They wanted to see my room and film me for their movie.

ANNETTE

(mock-touched, to crew)  
Oh... How quickly they grow up.  
(exiting, smiling)  
Hey, if they ask you to take off your shirt, get the money first.

Annette is gone.

ANNETTE (cont'd) (O.S.)

And go get my smokes!

JUMP CUT TO:

EST. SHOT - LEEMAN FAMILY HOME - DAY

Landscaped grounds surround this lovely two-story.

INT. LEEMAN HOME - VARIOUS ROOMS

Brief "LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH & FAMOUS" montage of Gladys showing off interiors to the theme from "GONE WITH THE WIND."

INT. LEEMAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

It looks like a Levitz showroom. Gladys sits stiffly between Becky and her husband, LESTER - mid-60's, gruff, "old school" salesman, drink in hand.

LESTER

...You betcha. S'posed to be colder-n-a witches tit tonight...

GLADYS

(nervous laugh)  
Oh, Lester. He loves his weather, y'know.

LESTER

(looking to crew, O.S.)  
Hey, ya like it? Open it...Yah-the  
globe. Pull at the equator there.

GLADYS  
We're not in the showroom, Dear.

Banging and fumbling. A CORKSCREW flies into shot - CREW  
GUY quickly ENTERS SHOT and grabs it.

LESTER  
Fits three full-size booze bottles.  
The cassette deck pulls outta  
Afghanistan, there.

BECKY  
(embarrassed)  
Mommm...

GLADYS  
Lester?

LESTER  
Oh, all right  
(to camera)  
How soon they forget where all this  
comes from.

BECKY  
Japan.

LESTER  
That's enough, young lady.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. LEEMAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

GLADYS  
"Impartial?" Outside this house I'm  
Gladys Leeman, President, Civil  
Servettes - impartial as the day is  
long. But we're inside my home now  
and I've gotta warn you, I'm wearin'  
my "wife apron" and "mom hat." So, I  
can safely say that I'm the mother of  
the most talented contestant Mount  
Rose has ever seen.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. LEEMAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Lester's gone from the couch.

GLADYS

I'll field that one - Rebecca's saving her voice.

Becky smiles admiringly at Gladys.

GLADYS (cont'd)

You-betcha, Rebecca's ready. She's been singin' and dancin' since she was knee high to a pig's eye.

Lester returns to the couch, large drink in hand.

LESTER

Yah-she's damn near as good as that little black fella - with the glass eye.

GLADYS

Sammy Davis, Jr., honey.

LESTER

Yeah, yeah, the Jew.

BECKY

Nice one, Dad. He's dead.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM

Same scene. BOYS' WRESTLING TEAM - tight singlets - runs laps around gym - between Servettes and camera.

GLADYS

...Yah-then, for the "Judges Interview," each girl has a ten minute get-together with the judges before the pageant...

Gladys is distracted by the HARD, YOUNG bodies. All are.

GLADYS

Yes, the Judges Interview.. Each girl has a ten minute get-together with the judges prior to the pageant. Then we have the...

A HUNKY WRESTLER, TONY, waves.

GLADYS (cont'd)  
Hello, Tony.

TONY  
Hey.

GLADYS  
"Hey" to the folks.

TONY  
Yeah, all right.

IRIS  
The Judges Interview.

EXT. DRUGSTORE - MAIN STREET - DAY

JOHN DOUGH - pharmacist, 30-ish, thin, nervous - chain  
smokes outside the drugstore.

SUPER: JUDGE #1, JOHN DOUGH

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)  
So you've, uh, you've judged a lot of  
pageants over the years?

JOHN  
Nope. No. Uh-uh. Never judged a  
pageant before in my life. Nope. No  
way. Never around young girls. Even  
if I was, why would I wanna be,  
y'know? I-I-I don't get off on that  
kinda thing and that's really why  
you're askin', right? S-someone say  
somethin'?

EXT. HAROLD'S HARDWARE HANK - MAIN STREET - DAY

HAROLD - owner, late 40's - stands in front of this  
grubby little store front with his MILDLY RETARDED  
BROTHER, HANK, who SNIFFS and MUMBLES CONSTANTLY.

SUPER: JUDGE #2, HAROLD VILMES

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)  
Do you judge the pageant every year?

HAROLD  
...Nope. Never judged nothin' afore --

HANK

(pointing at camera)

Are we on "Cops?" Are we on "Cops?"

Are we on "Cops?"

HAROLD

Shut up, Hank. This here's business.

Harold CUFFS Hank.

HANK

Ow, Harold - Mom said not the head.

HAROLD

Well, Mom's dead, so shut your fly trap.

HANK

I will if you shut your piehole.

HAROLD

Don't make me kick-ya where the good Lord split-ya.

Harold raises his hand, Hank FLINCHES and  
EXT. HAROLD'S HARDWARE HANK - LATER

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

So are you excited?

HAROLD

...Oh you betcha! We're happier than the day Hanky got acquitted. I get made a judge, then the furniture store hires us to paint the whole damn thing.

(removing cap)

We're gonna use the money to get our mamma a proper headstone. Oh, and move her out to the cemetery.

Suddenly, Hank runs full speed into the window. BAM! He falls to the ground inside.

INT. LEEMAN FURNITURE SHOWROOM - DAY

Follow Lester around cheesy room displays. JEAN KANGAS, his meek, middle-aged secretary follows him everywhere. Lester CALLS OUT to a YOUNG COUPLE sitting in a dining room.

LESTER

Hey Tim, Carla - if yous kids don't try to Jew me down none, I'll throw in a matchin' hutch.

The COUPLE smiles excitedly.

LESTER (cont'd)

(to camera)

See, that there's my specialty. Don't pay me less and I'll give ya more.

(sotto)

Secret is, the hutch is included in the price. Ain't that right, Jean?

Lester smacks Jean on the ass.

SUPER: JUDGE #3, JEAN KANGAS.

LESTER (cont'd)

Take a memo, sweetheart.

EXT. CHLORIS KLINHAGEN HOUSE - GARAGE DOOR

REHEARSAL MONTAGE BEGINS OVER MUSIC.

Contestants run out the side door as if running on stage. Tess Weinhaus trips and falls, causing a chain reaction.

EXT. CHLORIS KLINHAGEN HOUSE - GARAGE DOOR - LATER

Now contestants run out carrying small wooden step ladders. As they reach the CHORUS LINE, they set the ladder down and LEAP FROG over.

SUPER: FIRST DANCE REHEARSAL - 1 WEEK BEFORE PAGEANT

CHLORIS

Four, five, six, seven. And one.

Tess runs out, sets her ladder down, jumps and hits mid-crotch. She then slides painfully down to the ground.

CHLORIS (cont'd)

Put that chair away! Get it! Come on! Get it!

Amber TWIRLS perfectly.

CHLORIS (cont'd)

All right. Let's got. Let's go.

EXT. CHLORIS KLINHAGEN HOUSE - SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

PAN ACROSS NEIGHBORS' sitting in lawn chairs, enjoying the music and the show. END ON JOHN DOUGH, leaning against his car, smoking and holding a video camera at his side.

EXT. CHLORIS KLINHAGEN'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN

PAN DOWN row doing a seated chorus line on ladders. Most suck. Amber and Becky look great. Tess sits on the grass with a bag of ice on her crotch.

EXT. CHLORIS KLINGHAGEN HOUSE - SIDEWALK

On John Dough, beside his car.

JOHN

I'm just out here watching the young girls - contestants - like the rest of my friends and neighbors...

John quickly turns and starts to pry the hood open.

ANGLE ON

Pat and Brett watch the girls. Pat admires Amber's moves.

PAT

(re: Amber)

Are you gettin' her? Uh, the third one, the blonde one.

BRETT

Hey.

PAT

See? Right over there. Right over there.

Brett slaps Pat on the back.

BRETT

Leave him alone, leave him alone.  
It's okay.

EXT. CHLORIS KLINHAGEN'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN

John, his car hood open, is caught aiming his video

camera at the girls performing a dance. They wear partially constructed U.S. Monument Headdresses.

JOHN

Oh, this is just a...camera. I keep it in the glove compartment for car accidents. Insurance... You guys got a camera and no one's accusin' you of anything, right?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - KITCHEN

Move through kitchen. LUNCH LADIES haul, serve and prepare food. Pan over to Amber, who's unhappily scraping and spraying lunch trays as they're dropped off at her window. Becky, flirting her ass off, comes to the window with Brett, handsome football player we saw before. Both carry trays.

BECKY

So, Brett, do you wanna go to the lake with me on Thursday?

BRETT

Um, actually, I got practice on Thursday.

BECKY

...Yah-well, maybe Friday, then. A bunch of us were gonna go cow-tippin'.

SUPER: BRETT CLEMMENS, CAPTAIN, MOUNT ROSE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

BRETT

(seeing Amber)

Uh, I-uh-I'm kinda busy Friday.

Amber looks up to see Brett looking at her. He smiles. She smiles. You can feel the attraction. Amber becomes girlishly self-conscious -- adjusting her rubber apron and brushing hair out of her eyes with her big rubber gloves.

BRETT (cont'd)

(to Amber)

Hi...

AMBER

Hi.

Becky notices their attraction and goes from flirt to uber-bitch in a heartbeat.

BECKY

Giver her your tray, Brett. You're holdin' up the line.

Brett looks at Beck, then at Amber, not wanting to make her clean his tray.

BRETT

Uh...

BECKY

Give it to her!

AMBER

Here, I'll take it. It's my job.

BRETT

NO...

(looking at Becky)

It's all right. I got it. Don't worry about it.

He takes the sprayer from a surprised Amber and starts to clean off his own tray. Becky can't believe his defiance.

AMBER

Well, you're supposed to put it in the...

Becky THROWS her tray on the counter spraying Amber with food as she storms off.

BRETT (cont'd)

Oh man, you got leutefisk in your hair.

AMBER

Then it must be Wednesday.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY

Same scene as "funeral bun" explanation.

IONA

Leutefisk is Cod Fish that's been salted and soaked in lye for a week or so. It's best with lots-a butter.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - KITCHEN

Same scene. Brett removes the offending leutefisk.

BRETT

So, uh, I-I'm not really busy Friday.  
I just said that - y'know.

AMBER

I know.

BRETT

So if, uh, you wanted to do  
somethin'...

AMBER

AMBER/BRETT

Huntin' season.

Shocked at the coincidence, they share a laugh.

BRETT

Well, uh, I'm cuttin' out early today  
to do a little duck huntin'...but, uh,  
maybe I could call you tonight.

AMBER

Yah-sure, fine...fine.

BRETT

Okay...well, bye.

AMBER

Bye.

Amber smiles, gives a shy little wave - then, to camera.

AMBER (cont'd)

Oh, God - you don't think Becky saw  
you guys, do you?

(nervously looking around)

Look, you just shouldn't be in here...

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

It's okay. Doreen gave us hair nets.

AMBER

No, listen.

(whispering as she exits)

We shouldn't talk here. Stop by my house tonight, okay?

She looks around and motions them to rush off.

EXT. HIGHWAY NEAR TRAILER PARK - EVENING

From the CREW VAN we pass the crappy trailer homes that are off the Highway. (Patsy Cline's "King Of The Road" PLAYS on the radio).

EXT./INT. ATKINS TRAILER - EVENING

Camera approaches the trailer. SIGN on the door reads "Annette's Family Hair Care."

Inside, the kitchen has been turned into a mini hair salon. Annette gives Loretta, neighbor, mid-50's - a bouffant.

LORETTA

What do you mean, they take out her butt?

ANNETTE

(seeing camera in window)  
Oh, Jesus H. Christ!

LORETTA

Are we on "Cops" again?

ANNETTE

You could be quiet.

LORETTA

Hi.

ANNETTE

Hi.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. ATKINS TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

ANNETTE

It's just the guys that are...you know, makin' the movie about the pageant. I told you about kem.

LORETTA

Oh, naw. Hi.

ANNETTE

This here's Loretta.

LORETTA

I tell Annette, I says, "You talk to me durin' my stories, you might as well be talkin' to the wall."

(then)

You guys want a beer?

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

No, thank you. Is Amber here?

ANNETTE

No. You just missed her. Amber got called in to the bone gardens tonight. You just missed her. She's in a helluva mood today, anyways.

LORETTA

Say, yous boys been to the Leeman's?

ANNETTE

Loretta, shut it.

LORETTA

Y'know, if you have, you got all the pictures of the winner you need.

ANNETTE

Shut it up, Loretta.

LORETTA

Oh, Christ, it's true.

Annette begins to comb out Loretta's hair.

LORETTA

(drinking beer)

Let's just say who should win, who deserves to win is Amber.

ANNETTE

(mumbled to self)

Why don't you paint a big red target on your ass, Loretta.

LORETTA

She's the prettiest, y'know. The best damn tapper. The most smartest...

ANNETTE

"Most smartest?" Oh, that's good,  
Loretta. Make sure you get a picture  
of that. "Most smartest." We're  
cuttin you off and sendin' you home.

Annette takes Loretta's beer, starts to push her out.

LORETTA

Well, excuse me, Annette, but I'm  
braggin' up your kid, here.

(to crew)

Amber's gonna be the next Diane  
Sawyer, y'know...

ANNETTE

I'll be right back. See ya later.

CAMERA follows Annette and Loretta.

ANNETTE (cont'd)

They're makin' a movie, here, goddamn  
it.

LORETTA

All right, they're makin' a movie.

ANNETTE

You don't know where this is gonna...

LORETTA

I got a hairdo.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT./INT. ATKINS TRAILER - EVENING

Loretta holds onto the door frame so Annette can't push  
her out.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

What makes you think that Becky's  
going to win?

LORETTA

Why do I think Becky'll win? You're  
talkin'...

(to Annette)

Don't pinch!.

(back into camera)

You're talkin' kbout the richest family in a small town. It's front page news when one of kem takes a shit.

(she laughs hard)

Can one of yous boys give me a ride home?

ANNETTE

Don't fall for it. She lives two trailers down.

LORETTA

So? Be real easy.

ANNETTE

Go on home, Loretta. Come on. Go on, the party's over.

LORETTA

Anyone?

INT. LARSON FUNERAL HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A small sign on the door reads: "EMBALMING - Please Knock!"

PUSH INTO ROOM. Amber, back to us, frantically applies blusher to an OLD WOMAN. Another BODY, covered with a white sheet, is on the embalming slab. The top and brim of a HUNTING CAP can be seen. She TURNS AROUND to see the crew.

AMBER (cont'd)

(surprised)

Ahhh! Je-sus-Christ-on-a-cross!

(catching breath)

Look, number one rule in a funeral home - never sneak up on the livin'. You never know who could have an embalming needle or skull saw in their hand. Mr. Larson's son learned that the hard way - he's buried next to my Grandpa!

Amber turns to the slab to continue working. She pulls off the SHEET to reveal BRETT, handsome football player, still wearing his hunting plaid.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. EMBALMING ROOM - LATER

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

AMBER

(covering real emotions)

Upset about Brett? Nah. Hazard of the trade. I don't really have time for guys anyways. It's weird, though. He took it right between the eyes. Don't often see that.

EXT. GUN RANGE - DAY

Becky thumbs bullets into a 12-gauge pump shotgun.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

So you know, Brett just got shot in the head.

BECKY

(cool as a cucumber)

He did? Well, huntin's dangerous...So, anyways, my mom gave me this 30-aught for my sixteenth birthday...

INT. EMBALMING ROOM - LATER

Amber wipes her eyes when Mr. Larson bursts in.

MR. LARSON

Amber, I need Stella now!

SUPER: MR. LARSON, OWNER, LARSON FUNERAL PARLOR

MR. LARSON (cont'd)

The family's steamin' like a cow pie in July. Said she didn't look nothin' like the picture they gave you.

Amber turns from Brett and closes the coffin.

AMBER

Sorry. I just thought she might not wanna meet her Maker lookin' like a cheap whore.

MR. LARSON

Well, your "cheap whore" is this family's "lovin' mother."

(pointing at Brett)  
The Clemens said to make him look like  
he just came from snowmobilin'. Pink  
cheeks, and...

AMBER

(starting to mist up)  
-- red nose and ears. I know, I know.

Mr. Larson PULLS Stella's coffin out.

INT. EMBALMING ROOM - LATER

An obviously upset Amber puts make-up on Brett.

AMBER

Sorry I couldn't talk today  
kcause...I'm scared, okay?  
(deep breath)  
I open my locker right after first  
period and there's a picture of Tammy  
Curry taped inside.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. EMBALMING ROOM - LATER

Amber holds up a snapshot of a SMILING GIRL on a  
THRESHER.

AMBER

This was written on back.

She turns the picture over to reveal, "YOU'RE NEXT!"

EXT. MOUNT ROSE - STREET

TWIN OFFICERS lean against their car. One prepares to  
pack some snuff.

TWIN OFFICER #1

Oh-yah, helluva way to go, there.  
After some extensive investigation, we  
figure the Curry girl musta been  
drivin' and smokin' and KABLEWEY!

TWIN OFFICER #2

(holding a Skoal tin)  
Not enough left of her to fill a tin.

He puts a pinch between his cheek and gum.

INT. EMBALMING ROOM - LATER

A visibly upset Amber still applies make-up to Brett.

AMBER

Yah-sure, Tammy liked to driver her dad's thresher - she said the heavy vibration helped her think, y'know? But I know for a fact she only smoked after a good drive. You ask me or anyone else who isn't scared to talk about it - Tammy was murdered.

(holding back tears)

God, I bet Diane Sawyer never had to deal with crap like this...

(to crew guy)

Toss me "Caucasian #5," would ya?

A crew guy walks IN FRAME and hands her a make-up jar.

AMBER (cont'd)

Man, I can't wait for fishin' season...

Mr. Larson bursts in, white as a corpse.

MR. LARSON

Amber...

AMBER

No, don't say it. Another stray bullet to the head.

She adjusts Brett's red plaid hunting cap.

AMBER (cont'd)

I'm gonna need more caps.

MR. LARSON

You hafta go home. There's some kinda emergency at the trailer park.

AMBER

Relax, that's my ma's code for, "Bring home milk and a carton-a Luckys."

MR. LARSON

No. Loretta called. There's been a... a fire.

She grabs the keys and RUNS OUT.

EXT. TRAILER PARK STREET/INT. HEARSE - NIGHT

Amber drives fast and furious as we come to what's left of her trailer. All the NEIGHBORS are out drinkin' beers, eatin' food and watchin' the excitement.

AMBER

Oh my God - no! Is my mom okay? Was she home?

Hearse SCREECHES to a halt. We hear a THUD, then MOANS from in back. Amber jumps out. Camera follows, a la "COPS." It's pandemonium with fire trucks, neighbors, an ambulance, etc.

AMBER (cont'd)

Mom! Mom!? MOMMMM!

Loretta runs up to Amber as TWO FIREMEN approach.

FIREMAN #1

You family?

LORETTA

No, she's just screamin' "Mom, Mom!" kcause she's got Tourettes... She's Annette's kid, dipshit.

AMBER

(to Loretta)  
Is Mom okay?

LORETTA

She's alive, sweetie.

AMBER

Where is she?!

LORETTA

She's right over there.

Camera pans over to see a semi-conscious Annette as they load her stretcher into the ambulance, shut the doors and start to pull away. Amber runs after them.

AMBER

Mommmm! I'll be right behind you in the hearse!

LORETTA

Don't let that worry you, Annette!

EST. SHOT - FARMINGTON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

INT. HOSPITAL - ANNETTE'S ROOM

A DOCTOR, Amber and Loretta stand beside Annette, who's got an I.V., bandages and her LEFT HAND wrapped and ELEVATED.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

So, doctor, is this sort of an unusual injury here?

DOCTOR

Oh you betcha, this was a doozy. Right now, our chief concern is to stabilize Annette, then, in surgery, remove this here.

Removing BANDAGE to reveal BEER CAN, still held in her hand.

AMBER

Oh, Mom, it's so ugly.

ANNETTE

Ruined a brand-new pair of Lee Press-ons.

(weak)

Well, I sat down for a beer and KA-BLEWEY! Next thing I know, somethin' blows through my kitchen window. Next thing I know, I'm ass up in Loretta's flower bed.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DUSK

SHAKY VIDEO of a 15 year-old rocker KID from the NECK

ROCKER KID #1

(Beavis with a MN accent)

Yah-dude, put another fuckin' book under it.

ROCKER KID #2 (O.S.)

Don't say "fuckin'." My ma's got the windows open.

CAMERA MOVES, then steadies. We see all of Rocker Kid

#1. Rocker Kid #2 runs into the shot with his guitar.

ROCKER KID #2 (cont'd)  
kKay-dude, hurry. We gots like two  
fuckin' minutes left on the battery.

ROCKER KID #1  
A one...two...one-two-three...

SUDDENLY Annette's' trailer EXPLODES behind them! Rocker  
Kids turn to see a BODY (Annette's) FLY through the air.

ROCKER KIDS  
SHIIIIIIIIIIIIIT!!!!

INT. HOSPITAL - ANNETTE'S ROOM

ANNETTE  
(to Amber)  
I shoved your tap shoes in my jeans  
before I was blown outta the house,  
Honey. Check with the guy who cut my  
pants off. He should have kem.

AMBER  
Mom, uh, about that...I-I'm-oh God...

Amber starts to cry and runs out.

ANNETTE  
Oh-Jesus-Mary-n-Joseph, she's  
pregnant!  
(calling after her)  
If you are - come back, sweetie.  
Mommy wants to talk, then KILL YOU!

LORETTA  
(running after Amber)  
Annette, why don't you just see if  
there's any beer left in that can and  
relax a bit.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Loretta and Amber face off.

LORETTA  
You're what?!

AMBER  
I-I'm quittin' the pageant.

LORETTA

I heard you, I was just tryin' to scare you into changin' your mind. Oh for Chrissakes, Amber, the woman clung to your tap shoes while flyin' through the air like a Goddamn lawn dart!

AMBER

Oh God, I'm dead...

A candy striper approaches them.

CANDY STRIPER

Hey, lil' Miss Sad-pants and her friend Serious Sally, how kbout some nice cool mints to turn those frowns upside-down. "S."

LORETTA

(to candy striper)

D'ya think a nice cool mint'd help if I shoved your head up your ass?

Fear sweeps over the Candy Striper - she bolts down the hall! Loretta puts an arm around Amber and starts to walk down the opposite direction.

AMBER

So, what do I say?

LORETTA

Simple. Just say, "Mom, I know you sacrificed everything - relationships, dreams - your tummy, ass and thighs - all to bring me into this world. All so I could have tap lessons and be in the pageant - the same one you were in. But, y'know what? I'm quittin'." There. Easy as pie.

AMBER

Oh my God. I'm so dead...

LORETTA

Yeah, you betcha...

INT. HOSPITAL - ANNETTE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Follow Amber in past the now crying candy striper.

ANNETTE

(throwing mints)

Go on! Get out!

AMBER

Mom, look, don't say anything. First of all, I'm not pregnant.

Amber sits on the bed. Annette grabs her shirt.

AMBER (cont'd)

Mom!

ANNETTE

I ain't lettin' go ktil you tell me what's up. I'm reaching' a point where I'd kill someone for the nicotine on their fingernails.

AMBER

(deep breath)

Okay. Yesterday I...I got this picture. So I kinda, y'know, I'm thinkin' no. I'm gonna, I-I-I'm gonna quit the pageant.

ANNETTE

What?!

She hits Amber with her beer-canned hand.

AMBER

Ow!

ANNETTE

(to camera)

Would yous boys excuse us a second? Loretta, you too.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ANNETTE'S ROOM

SHOT THROUGH the window. Amber paces around Annette's bed.

AMBER

Nice mouth you got there, Mom, but I-I'm not goin' through this again.

ANNETTE

You're not goin' through this again?  
You? You're not the one who knows how  
Jiffy Pop feels.

AMBER

Oh, c'mon... First the picture of  
Tammy, then Brett Clemens, now this?  
It's scary.

ANNETTE

Let me tell you "scary," Amber. Look  
at me. Do you wanna look like you  
been rode hard and put away wet at my  
age? I'm a "lifer" here. Best I can  
hope for is to end up in a descent  
"raisin ranch" where they'll change me  
twice a day.

AMBER

That's it, I'm goin'...

ANNETTE

Honest to God, if I got to do it over?  
I'd start walkin' outta this town the  
minute I took my first step.  
Practically the only thing I wouldn't  
do different is have you...

Amber sits on the bed.

AMBER

God I hope that's you and not your  
concussion talkin'.

ANNETTE

(smiling)

It's me...I just don't want this to be  
the thing you'd do over. This  
pageant's your ticket outta here. I  
know you can win, Amber.

ANNETTE (cont'd)

C'mere. I love you so much.

AMBER

I love you much.

Annette hugs Amber.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Follow a jubilant Amber and Loretta.

LORETTA

Hell-no, she ain't quittin'.

AMBER

No. Mom said if I did, she'd look up my dad and marry him.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

So has your mom kept your dad's life a secret?

AMBER

No. She never hid the fact that my dad picked his career over us. What'd she used to say?

LORETTA

"Once a carnie, always a carnie."

AMBER

Oh-yah.

EXT. MOUNT ROSE STREET - MORNING

The twin officers lean against their car.

TWIN OFFICER #1

The Atkins fire? Foul play? Shit-no. After some thorough investigatin', we determined it musta been a bad wirin'. Mosta them trailer-folk plug a TV, VCR, crock pot and Fry-daddy into one outlet and don't think nothin' of it ktil KABLEWEY!

TWIN OFFICER #2

(taking a pinch of Skoal)  
Not enough left to fill a tin.

INT. HOSPITAL - ANNETTE'S ROOM - DAY

Annette is in bad shape. The candy striper nervously stands beside her, holding a syringe.

ANNETTE

"Bad wirin'?! " Well, if that ain't the biggest crock-a-shit ever.

(turning on the candy  
striper)

Ooowww-Jesus! Did K-Mart have a sale

on dull needles?

CANDY STRIPER

I-I just need one more "do-over."

EXT. MOUNT ROSE V.F.W.

Follow the contestants up to the door.

INT. MOUNT ROSE V.F.W. - MAIN HALL

A smokey room with DRUNKEN VETS at the bar and CONTESTANTS, in Sunday best, crowded around some tables. They couldn't seem more out of place.

INT. MOUNT ROSE V.F.W. - MAIN HALL

SUPER: JUDGES INTERVIEWS - 3 DAYS BEFORE THE PAGEANT

GLADYS

So, remember the three most important parts of a good interview...

IRIS

Okay, everybody, listen up!

GLADYS

Number one, American Teen Princess' don't cross their legs like streetwalkers.

The girls put their knees together.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Excuse me, Miss Penthouse Ninety-eight, put your knees together.

(contestants laugh)

I could drive a boat show in there.

Gladys paces.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Ankles together. Hands resting lightly on your laps. Good. Sit up straight. Smile!

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. MOUNT ROSE V.F.W. - MAIN HALL

GLADYS

All right. Number two: the judges are as nervous as you are.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM

JUDGES - HAROLD, JOHN and JEAN KANGAS (Lester's secretary) sit at a table, clipboards in front of them, STARING at the camera. HANKS sits behind them, fidgeting.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

So are you about ready to start the judging - start the interview, there?

JOHN

(after long beat)

Uh, I-I guess I could answer that. Yep. We're ready. So, we should probably get the young girls in here, then. Y'know, to start the interviews...

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM

Tess enters, sits, then quickly remembers how to sit. Judges nervously look at their clipboards - pencils ready.

HAROLD

(trouble reading)

Uh, "if you could be any tree in the woods, what kinda tree would you be?"

TESS

(long pause)

Dogwood.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON MOLLY HOWARD, seated.

MOLLY

Bonsai.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON LESLIE, seated.

LESLIE

Green?

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON MICHELLE JOHANSON, seated.

MICHELLE

A tree? I can be any tree you want.  
Gimme a minute.

She begins vocal and facial warm-up exercises.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON BECKY, seated.

BECKY

One with strong roots in a community  
like Mount Rose, a solid Christian  
trunk and long leafy branches to  
provide shade for handicapped kids on  
a hot summer day.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON LISA SWENSON, seated, staring for a long beat, then:

LISA

You guys know the retard's pants are  
open?

(laughing)

I don't want to see that.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON THE JUDGES - Harold reads, John stares longingly.

HAROLD

"Who would you pick to be president,  
dead or alive?"

PAN OVER to Molly Howard.

MOLLY

Uh, Emperor Hirohito.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON LESLIE, seated...

LESLIE

Brett Favre!

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON BECKY, seated.

BECKY

My mother, kcause she could solve  
world hunger with one of her blue-  
ribbon rhubarb pies, create world  
peace with one of her prayers and  
still find time to look  
beautiful...for my dad, Lester Leeman.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

John Dough drinks nervously from his water glass.

JOHN

D-do you like to swim?

The other judges look at him, then at their clipboards  
trying to find this question.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON LISA SWENSON

LISA

Oh-yah, I love to swim. When I was in  
New York, I met Greg Louganis at one-a  
my brothers' shows...

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

Janelle, sings a long answer. The Judges look at each  
other confused and frustrated.

JOHN

What the hell is she trying to say?  
(yelling)  
Say it!

JANELLE

The ktards pants are completely off!

The Judges turn and look at Hank.

HAROLD

Close up shop. Close up shop, Hank.

HANK

Harold!

HAROLD

Close up shop!

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

ON HAROLD

HAROLD

You Amber Atkins?

AMBER (O.S.)

Yes. Yes I am. Thank you, hello.

All judges turn a page on their clipboards.

HAROLD

"Name and spell all the United States  
in alphabetical order."

PAN OVER to a stunned Amber.

AMBER

Seriously?

HAROLD (O.S.)

Ah-yep.

Amber can't believe what she's hearing.

AMBER

Well, ah...Alabama. A-L-A-B-A-M-A.  
Alaska. A-L-A-S-K-A. Arizona. A-R-I-  
Z-O-N-A.

V.F.W. - BACK ROOM - MONTAGE

AMBER

West Virginia. W-E-S-T-V-I-R-G-N-I-A.  
Wisconsin. W-I-S-C-O-N-S-O-N.  
Wyoming. W-Y-O-M-I-N-G.

Pan over to Judges. They can't believe it. Hank CLAPS  
retardedly. He loves her.

HAROLD

(looking at others)  
Uh-okay, then.

INT. DAKOTA COUNTY EATING DISORDERS CLINIC - MARY'S ROOM

A NURSE now stands beside Mary.

MARY

With two weeks until the pageant...

(continued labored breaths)

I was practicing my talent. Finishing my costume, brushing up on current events, and running eighteen miles a day on about four hundred calories. I was ready.

The nurse gives her a hit of oxygen. Mary smiles and gives a THUMBS UP from behind the oxygen mask.

DRESSING ROOM - HALLWAY

PAN DOWN long, narrow room. A counter, with mirrors and bare bulbs, cover one wall. Girls set up their areas and change into their talent costumes.

SUPER: DRESS REHEARSAL - DAY BEFORE THE PAGEANT

IRIS

Coupla things...Gladys wants to be sure we go in show order today. All right? So very important. Don't forget that.

CUT TO:

DRESSING ROOM - HALLWAY

CLOSE ON LESLIE MILLER, in cheerleading uniform, standing beside small framed photos of her boyfriend on the counter.

LESLIE

(unusually serious)

Oh-yah, really nervous. It's been about two months. I haven't told my boyfriend yet. How did you know?

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

I meant, nervous about the pageant?

LESLIE

(suddenly perky)

Oh! Nervous about the pageant! Yah sure!

She kisses a photo and GIGGLES.

CUT TO:

DRESSING ROOM - HALLWAY

CLOSE ON BECKY holding a sequin-covered poodle skirt and sweater.

BECKY

There are eight thousand sequins and fifteen hundred beads on the skirt, alone. My mom and Mrs. Lopez make it. She's one of my father's many Mexican (Me'hee'kan) workers he lifts from the poverty they know in Mexico (Me'heek'koe).

CUT TO:

DRESSING ROOM - HALLWAY

CLOSE ON AMBER ATKINS at the far end of the counter.

AMBER

Yah-my ma's clothes all melted onto mine forming like this big polyester meteor in our closet, y'know? But, in some kinda weird miracle, our neighbor boy, Kenny Johanson, found my tap costume on the roof-a their trailer while he was settin' coon traps for his dad. Here's the weird part. It was still on the hanger.

DRESSING ROOM - HALLWAY

CLOSE ON TESS WEINHAUS wearing "I love German Shepherds" sweatshirt, standing beside various trinkets.

TESS

And, uh, this is my lucky bolt. They think it fell from a DC-10. The doctor said I was lucky the flat side hit me, um, otherwise it coulda gone right through my head.

(holds up red tap dress)

I know, I know, gives me the willies, too. I guess the explosion...

Janelle Betz, wearing a flowing, nymph-like dress with

ballet slippers, glides up to Amber.

JANELLE

(slow, due to signing)

Amber? Can we switch numbers? I need to go first.

(smiling to camera)

My cousin just had a deaf baby and I get to go see it!

AMBER

Yah-sure, eight's my luck number anyway. Diane Sawyer was number eight at her local.

JANELLE

Thank you.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

ON STAGE "Through the Eyes of Love" plays as Janelle performs her INTERPRETATIVE DANCE while signing the words. In the f.g., Gladys appears very serious.

GLADYS

(loud whisper)

I'll be honest. This is a hard time for me. This is the part of the pageant when you realize that tomorrow night, all but one of these girls will walk out of here a loser. It's hard for me to know how that must feel, but I'm sure it doesn't feel good.

In b.g., a BIG STAGE LIGHT FALLS on Janelle's head. CRASH! Gladys and CAMERA rush the stage. "Through the Eyes of Love" continues throughout.

EXT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - PORCH - THAT NIGHT

A very shaken Amber paces.

AMBER

Don't you get it? I was supposed to go first. I was contestant number one. That light was meant for my head. If Janelle hadn't wanted to change numbers... God, I owe my life to that deaf baby.

Loretta enters, portable phone and drink in hand.

LORETTA

That was your mom. She wanted you to have this.

AMBER

(taking drink)  
Really, Loretta?

LORETTA

(avoiding eye contact)  
You-betcha.

AMBER

My mom wanted me to have this?

LORETTA

Oh, shut up. I thought it might help you get some sleep.

AMBER

Loretta, never have kids.

LORETTA

Well God-love-ya for thinkin' I still could.

Loretta pulls a bag out of a closet and hands it to Amber.

LORETTA (cont'd)

Here, your ma did want you to have this since your other one got toasted and all.

Amber pulls out an ELEGANT GREEN GOWN.

AMBER

Oh...my...God! It's just like Diane Sawyer's! kCourse it's not a size ten, Diane was a little hippy back then. Oh, thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

She hugs Loretta.

EXT./INT. HIGH SCHOOL - MAIN ENTRANCE - NIGHT

SUPER: NIGHT OF THE PAGEANT

BANNER: "Welcome to the Mount Rose American Teen Princess

Pageant, sponsored by Sarah Rose COSMETICS." The ENTIRE TOWN is excitedly entering.

CLOSE ON

Mr. and Mrs. Howard and their daughter Tina, who's embarrassed and continues to rant as they pass. All three wear T-shirts with MOLLY'S FACE on them.

MR. HOWARD

MRS. HOWARD

Go Molly! Go! Number one daughter!

Behind them Leslie Miller's boyfriend, PAT, and a group of ROWDY GUYS approach.

PAT

Whooo! Leslie kicks Teen Princess ass! Go Muskies!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

STAGE IS DARK. Crowd takes their seats. You can feel the electricity.

We hear the TAPE of a DRUM ROLL. SPOTLIGHT hits center stage. Gladys enters wearing a gaudy gown, takes mic. Applause!

GLADYS

Welcome, welcome. Okay, alright, now. Is this for me or the gown?

Laughter and applause trail off.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Welcome to the Mount Rose American Teen Princess Pageant. While every contestant you'll meet tonight is special and unique, they all have one thing in common. They're all "Proud - to - be - an - American!"

Wild applause! Jazzy patriotic medley tape. Gym doors fly open and like a Felliniesque Vegas review, CONTESTANTS enter wearing gowns and U.S. Monument Headdresses. They struggle to maintain balance as they dance, moving only their arms, on stage.

CUT TO:

Becky, whose head is built like another president into Mount Rushmore, is first at the mic. (The "dance" continues behind each contestant as she steps up to the mic.)

BECKY

I chose Mount Rushmore, because to live in a country where you can take an ugly old mountain and put faces on it, faces of great Americans, who did so much to make our country super great, well that makes me - Rebecca Leeman - PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - MONTAGE

A MONTAGE of OPENING NUMBER INTRODUCTIONS

ON LISA SWENSON

wearing a Statue of Liberty Headdress. (It's a Barbie Doll that holds an unlit birthday candle.)

LISA

Living in a country where Lady Liberty keeps her flame burning bright.

She reaches up with a lighter to light the candle. It's hard to reach and won't light.

LISA (cont'd)

Keeps her flame burning bright...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - MONTAGE

ON LESLIE MILLER

as she seductively strokes the sides of her Washington Monument Headdress.

LESLIE

The Washington Monument...

Guys WHOOP and CHEER O.S.

LESLIE (cont'd)

(enjoying this)  
..makes me, Leslie Miller, proud to be an American.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - MONTAGE

ON AMBER ATKINS

with a MAP OF THE U.S. HEADDRESS, dances up to the mic.

AMBER

Living in a country where no matter  
who you are or where you come from,  
you can grow up and become what you've  
always dreamed of, makes me, Amber  
Atkins, proud to be an American!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - MONTAGE

ON MOLLY HOWARD

wearing an Atomic Blast at Hiroshima Headdress.

MOLLY

Atomic power makes me, Molly Howard,  
proud to be an Asian-American.

As she steps away from the mic, Tess Weinhaus, wearing a  
huge ball of twine headdress, dances up to the mic.

TESS

Uh, this, uh, my Uncle Phil's World's  
Largest Ball of Twine, in Bundy  
Minnesota, makes me, um, it makes me  
proud I'm American - I kinda  
misunderstood the assignment.

The ball of twine falls to the floor and rolls off the  
stage, still attached at one end to her head.

BACKSTAGE - DRESSING ROOM

Pandemonium! Contestants change into their "Physical  
Fitness" outfits. (T-shirts with red flags, shorts)  
Civil Servettes try to help. A LARGE PICTURE of Janelle  
Betz sits at her counter space.

IRIS

Okay, okay! Listen-up. Coupla notes  
from last night's dress rehearsal.

(off clipboard)

Number one, Gladys says a coupla yous  
are gettin' sexy with your hips durin'  
the "Physical Fitness" routine...

AMBER

Oh my God! My-my tap costume's gone.

Commotion stops. Becky continues to get ready.

IRIS

Uh, Amber? We're not puttin' on our Talent costumes.

You need to put on your "Physical Fitness" outfit. And let's shake a leg, ladies.

AMBER

No, wait. It-it was here before the openin' number...wait. What am I sayin'? I should just ask you, Becky. Where is it?

Becky freezes, staring daggers at Amber.

BECKY

What?

AMBER

You heard me. Where is it?

The other contestants slowly clear a path between them.

BECKY

If you're gettin' at somethin', you better just say it.

AMBER

I just did.

BECKY

Well then, you better be willin' to back it up, kcause you're talkin' like crazy.

They start to slowly circle each other - a cat fight's brewin'.

AMBER

Oh-oh, you bring me some of that snotty attitude, Becky - bring it on.

BECKY

Well, as my mother says at Sunday dinner, "Come and get it," bitch!

AMBER

Oh, I'll "get it." I'll "get it" all right. I might even take seconds.

They're moving ever closer...

BECKY

If you want seconds, then I'll make sure it's hot enough for ya.

AMBER

Bitch!

IRIS

(stepping between them)  
Girls! Girls!

BECKY

Give me your stringy-ass hair!

AMBER

I'll get you!

CREW GUY (O.S.)

(barely audible)  
Oh God, don't stop kem now...

BECKY

You're choking my, you fucking bitch!

IRIS

(putting hand over camera)  
Y'know, I-I don't think yous boys should, uh, should be in here while the girls are changin'.

AMBER

I hate her!

IRIS

We all do. Now let's go.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM

Gladys is center stage.

GLADYS

Yah-so how kbout a big round of applause for last year's Mount Rose American Teen Princess, in a farewell performance. Who could forget her lip-

synching to "Don't Cry Out Loud," by  
Melissa Manchester. And here she is,  
Mary Johanson!

Applause! Gladys exits. TAPED MUSIC "It's My Turn." A  
NURSE pushes MARY JOHANSON out in her wheelchair,  
complete with portable oxygen. Mary wears a gigantic  
black wig and silver gown which hangs off her boney body.  
She moves her lips to the words as the nurse pushes her  
emotionally around the stage.

EXT. GYMNASIUM - HALLWAY

Contestants, in "physical fitness" outfits, wait outside  
the double doors, holding freshly painted red, white and  
blue step ladders. Becky and Amber stare at each other  
from opposite ends of the line.

IRIS

All right, why don't we take up the  
stepladders, all right? For the  
Physical Fitness number?

BECKY

(picking up her stool)  
They're wet.

LISA

Hey, my hands are stuck.

MOLLY

(sniffing)  
Uh, I'm kinda dizzy from the fumes.

IRIS

Well, hold kem away from you so it  
doesn't get on the outfits.  
(turning to Servettes)  
What kinda mental retard paints step  
ladders the morning of a pageant.

ON STAGE

Hank is being pulled off stage by Harold. Gladys adjusts  
her dress, frazzled.

HANK

(under throughout)  
Here come the judge - pinch, pinch -  
here come the judge - pinch, pinch -  
here come the judge...

GLADYS

Get back! Get back, you total retard!

LORETTA

Go Hank!

GLADYS

I'm okay, I'm okay - dress is fine.  
I'm okay...well, our other judges are  
Jean Kangas and John Dough...

EXT. GYMNASIUM - HALLWAY

Iris and Servettes go in the gym as Chloris Klinghagen  
comes out.

CHLORIS

(loud whisper)

Opening number looked, uh, good.  
Solid. But now you're gonna have to  
actually dance, so...

(holds up jar of Vaseline)

Here. Put a dab of this on the old  
choppers, ladies. It'll help you  
smile. And when they're lookin' at  
your teeth - God willin' - they won't  
be lookin at your feet.

Chloris gives Amber the jar and exits. From the gym, we  
hear TAPED PATRIOTIC MUSIC. Contestants CHEER and run  
in.

"PHYSICAL FITNESS" ROUTINE - PATRIOTIC MUSIC

As cuts of patriotic dance moves progress, the girls have  
more and more red, white and blue paint smeared on their  
clothes, arms and legs.

Amber's clearly the best.

Taped music ENDS. Contestants, covered with paint,  
strike a final pose - sitting on ladders, standing,  
kneeling. Applause.

BACKSTAGE - WALKWAY

Contestants wait anxiously as they pass a can of  
TURPENTINE and a RAG to remove paint from their arms and  
legs.

BECKY

Hurry up.

LESLIE

Okay, guys, I think we all got some.  
You just take it off.

AMBER

Here, I didn't get any.

LESLIE

Here, have some.

MICHELLE

Hand me another white one.

LISA

Listen, you guys, don't go int the  
bathroom. Tess blew chunks all over.  
Man, she ate a big dinner.

BECKY

Maybe she shoulda shoved that lucky  
bolt down her throat for desert.

Becky storms off.

AMBER

(sotto, to other girls)  
And the winner of the "Spirit" award  
goes to...

Girls laugh quietly. Iris pulls a dazed and confused  
Tess - beg wet spot on her shirt - through the shot.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM

Iris stands center stage, awkwardly holding the mic.

IRIS

(reading from notecard)  
"I'd like to take you back seventeen  
years, when a peanut farmer was in the  
White House, a group-a boys callin'  
themselves kQueen' topped the record  
charts and Gladys Leeman was Gladys  
Wood and she was Mount Rose American  
Teen Princess!"

Gladys enters wearing sash, tiara and plaid culottes.  
Applause. A SLIDE is shown of her at 17.

GLADYS

(taking mic)

Thank you, thank you. You know, I won the talent contest by sewing these culottes, Butterick pattern 7-4-3-2. Can you believe it? They still fit!

LORETTA

She had a big ass then, she's got a big ass now.

GLADYS

(pausing for applause)

Thank you, thank you. Our next contestant is ready, so let's welcome her: Tess Weinhaus!

APPLAUSE. Tess is pushed on stage.

BACKSTAGE - LEFT

Amber paces. ON STAGE Tess drones on at the mic.

TESS

(in the b.g. throughout)

The beagle is known for it's howl. "Aaauuuuhhhh." The Pekinese has it's own distinctive bark. "Yip, yip, yip." Not to be confused with the Chihuahua's, "Yap, yap, yap." But none can compare to the greatest bark of all - the German Shepherd...

AMBER

(to camera, loud whisper)

...Yah-it's just gone...

(eyes welling up)

I mean, I-I just wanna tap, y'know? I'm not sayin' I'm the best, or that I'd even win, but shouldn't I at least get a chance to compete?

(starting to sob)

I just wanted my Mom to see me dance.

CHLORIS KLINGHAGEN enters, small bag in hand.

CHLORIS

(loud whisper)

Amber - Amber, c'mere.

AMBER

Please, Mrs. K, I got so much Vaseline on my teeth, I'm gonna be smilin' for a year.

CHLORIS

No. Here.

Chloris pulls a simple BLACK LEOTARD from the bag.

CHLORIS (cont'd)

It's nothin' special, but talent like yours doesn't need to hide behind sequins.

AMBER

Mrs. K--

CHLORIS

You're... you're special and... Ah hell, go out there and kick some Leeman ass.

Amber, overcome with joy, gives her a big hug.

CHLORIS (cont'd)

Not so hard, sweetie. I heard somethin' snap...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM

ON STAGE: Leslie Miller, in uniform, performs an amazingly sexy cheer as TWO SINGLET-CLAD WRESTLERS wrestle (One is boyfriend, Pat.).

LESLIE

Roll him over --

(clap, clap, clap)

Lay him flat

(clap, clap, clap)

Pin his shoulders

(clap, clap, clap)

To the mat

(clap, clap, clap)

Roll him over, lay him flat, pin his shoulders, to the mat! Yeahhhh!

She JUMPS, KICKS and ends with SPLITS. APPLAUSE!

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - LATER

Michelle Johanson is on stage, sitting on a stool, wearing all black. She smiles warmly. Then, with one sweep of her hand across her face, her smile drops. She's dead serious.

MICHELLE

(without emotion)

Fade in...Earth. The year is two-thousand twenty-four. The question on everyone's mind: What is...Soylent Green?

She sweeps her hand back across her face and she's "in character," pained, near death, and overly dramatic.

BACKSTAGE - LEFT - CONTINUOUS

Amber, now in the leotard, talks to Iris. Michelle performs from "Soylent Green" in the b.g.

AMBER

(loud whisper)

Mrs. Clark, why are you doing this to me? Why're you pretendin' you don't know what's goin' on?

IRIS

Amber, I'm sorry. I really am. But you know the rules. All talent costumes hafta be okay'd by Gladys before the pageant.

AMBER

But, doesn't someone taking your costume so you can't compete, overrule that rule?

IRIS

Sorry. I-I don't make the rules.

AMBER

This, this... This is bullshit!

IRIS

Amber Atkins! That is not American Teen Princess language!

AMBER

Good, kcause this isn't an American

Teen Princess Pageant - it's, it's  
Nazi Germany!

Amber storms off.

IRIS

(shaking head)  
Where do they get this stuff...

INT. BACKSTAGE

CAMERA FOLLOWS AMBER as she storms over to BACKSTAGE -  
RIGHT where Gladys watches Michelle ON STAGE.

AMBER

Mrs. Leeman?

GLADYS

(turning)  
Huh?

AMBER

I-I'm wearin' this costume. I'm, uh,  
I'm gonna do my talent tonight.

GLADYS

Oh really - I don't think so.  
(suddenly aware of camera)  
Uh, Amber, I hate to be the bearer of  
bad news, but rules state that a  
costume must be okay'd at least a week  
in advance. And this...  
(pointing to costume)  
This is why we have the rule. My  
goodness gracious, I couldn't allow a  
neckline this low on stage. We have  
kids in the audience.

AMBER

But, you - I mean... It's not my  
fault. I-I... Please? I didn't do  
anything wrong...

Amber starts to cry.

MICHELLE

(climaxing)  
That's why... I must say...  
(raising arm upward)  
Soylent Green... is... people.

She doubles over. She's given it all. APPLAUSE.

GLADYS

Oops, that's my cue.

Gladys starts out on stage as Molly Howard, dressed like a red, white and blue cowboy, runs up next to Amber. She's twirling toy guns on her fingers.

MOLLY

Wish me luck.

AMBER

(drying her eyes)

Good luck, Molly.

One of Molly's guns flies off her finger. She goes to retrieve it.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM

Molly is line dancing, occasionally taking "pretend" shots into the air. It's incredibly repetitive and dull.

BACKSTAGE - CARL'S "LIGHT AND SOUND" BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

As Billy Ray Cyrus' "Achy Breaky Heart" PLAYS in b.g., Carl, the janitor, sets plastic army figures on fire with a cigarette lighter.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM

Gladys is center stage. Molly Howard walks off crying, having just finished her routine. POLITE APPLAUSE. She's still spinning her guns, again one goes flying.

GLADYS

Thank you, Molly.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL/STAIRWELL - DRESSING AREA

Lisa, top hat, tails, giant "I LOVE NY" button - and others try to console a CRYING Amber. Becky continues singing O.S.

LISA

(arm around Amber)

Oh, Amber...

AMBER

(can't catch breath)

I-I-I-I-I-, j-uh-j-uh-just wanted to  
compe-e-e-e-ete.

LISA

I can't believe this is happenin'. I  
can't believe she said you couldn't...

Getting an idea, Lisa starts to take off her jacket.

LISA (cont'd)

Amber? Here.

AMBER

(still sobbing)

"Here," wh-wh-what?

LISA

My jacket. Take it kcause, y'know, I  
got my costume okay'd before the  
pageant. You can wear it.

MICHELLE

Oh man, Lisa, I wouldn't do this.

LESLIE

(to Lisa)

They're never gonna let you perform  
naked. I asked.

LISA

Shut up, yous guys. Look, Amber, I'm  
not gonna win. And let's be honest, a  
family only needs one "Liza" and you  
know Peter's got much better legs than  
me.

AMBER

Your parents'd kill you.

LISA

Oh c'mon, I love kem, but you know  
they only had me kcause Peter needed a  
kidney.

AMBER

Lis, I want to, I really do, but...  
Oh, I can't.

LISA

Then do it for Peter. Mrs. Leeman  
used to call him a "skinny little fag"

when he'd bag her groceries. He'd pop his Nancy-belt if his old jacket somehow, I don't know, got her back.

AMBER

Yah?

LISA

Oh-you-beccha.

Amber hugs her and takes the jacket.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - STAGE

Gladys guides Molly off the stage.

GLADYS

Now, it's with overwhelming pride that I introduce contestant number six, who also happens to be president of her class - two years running - a member of the honor roll and the new President of the Lutheran Sisterhood Gun Club - Rebecca Ann Leeman!

STAGE GOES BLACK. SPOT HITS BECKY, who sits at the edge of the stage, holding a mic. She's head to toe sequins in her poodle skirt, sweater, saddle shoes, etc.

BECKY

(talking over music)

I don't know how many of you know this, but I've got a very special fella in my life - that's right, I do... And if nobody minds, I'd like to sing a little song, just for him.

SPOT FOLLOWS as Becky stands and walks center stage to what appears to be a COVERED MANNEQUIN. TAPED INTRO TO "I Can't Take My Eyes Off You."

BECKY (cont'd)

You're just too good to be true.  
Can't take my eyes off of you. You'd be like Heaven to touch. I wanna hold you so much. At long last love has arrived and I thank God I'm alive.

Becky removes the sheet, revealing a MANNEQUIN dressed like JESUS as he appeared on the cross: long hair, beard, crown of thorns, loincloth. The ARMS ARE STUFFED so they

move freely. (Hands of stigmata.)

BECKY (cont'd)

You're just too good to be true. Can't take my eyes off of you...

Becky TALK-SINGS - a la William Shatner's "Rocket Man" - and DANCES around the Jesus mannequin doing the jitter-bug, the twist and a slow dance (his arms on her shoulders).

DURING THE SLOW DANCE, THE LOIN CLOTH SLIPS AND BECKY MUST HOLD IT UP - GIVING THE APPEARANCE OF GRABBING HIS CROTCH.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - BACKSTAGE

Iris approaches Lisa who's given her outfit to Amber.

IRIS

C'mon, Lisa. You're up next.

LISA

I quit. And, uh, since my costume, y'know, was okay'd a month ago? I'm givin' it to Amber.

Amber breaks a smile.

Taped music ENDS. APPLAUSE. Gladys, mic in hand, joins Becky for a big hug.

GLADYS

Boy, I'd hate to follow that. Wow!

Becky exits, pulling the wheeled Jesus behind her.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Voice of an angel, that one.

Iris runs self-consciously out on stage, whispers in Gladys' ear, then runs back off stage.

GLADYS (cont'd)

...Uh, I was just told that contestant number seven, Lisa Swenson, has quite the pageant.

CROWD REACTS.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Well, these things happen. At any rate, we still have one more contestant - number eight, Amber Atkins.

Gladys exits. A taped hip, hot DRUM BEAT starts. Suddenly, Amber glides into CENTER SPOT. (Now wearing Lisa's costume, sleeves rolled up.) Her feet burst into an amazing routine. The loud drum beats seem to fly from her hands and feet as they punctuate the rhythm. There's no glitz, just unbelievable skill. It appears effortless as she floats around stage. Like watching Michael Jackson moon walk for the first time, you can't take your eyes off her. She concludes, center stage, with the GREATEST THIRTY SECONDS OF HER LIFE. The audience goes WILD! Amber takes bow after bow - they love her. Gladys enters quickly, mic in hand.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Okay, okay, okay! Well, now, it's finally time to say good-bye to our judges, so they can go make the toughest decision of their lives.

PAN TO JUDGES. They look nervous as hell. A relaxed Hank sniffs from a paint soaked bag.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASS ROOM - NIGHT

Judges stare nervously at the camera - clip boards in front of them. Hank's LOUD BREATHING from the paint soaked bag is obviously getting on John's nerves.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

So who get's the crown? How are you going to figure this all out?

JOHN

Uh, we're gonna, y'know, compare scores and uh, figure out a-a winner. kCause we don't know the winner yet... I mean, I-I don't know who Jean and Harold picked. No idea. Did Gladys send you in here?

HANK

I know the winner! I know the winner!  
I know the winner!

JOHN

No you don't! Shut your goddamn

mouth, you son-of-a-bitch!!

Nerves shot, John suddenly LAUNCHES himself across the table at Hank.

HAROLD

Wait a second.

JOHN

You shut it! You goddamn retard!

Hank freezes, then starts to wail!

HANK

EE-AAAYEEEE-AAAAYOUIAAAEEEEEEEEEE!

HAROLD

Come on! Hankey here can't help it if he was born crazier than a shithouse rat!

Hank stops crying and goes back to the bag.

JOHN

For fuck's sake, why didn't ya leave him with a sitter?

Hank begins crying again.

HAROLD

Real nice. You know the sitter's dead.

DISSOLVE TO:

BACKSTAGE - DRESSING ROOM

Girls, in gowns, sit in silence. Becky and Amber sit at opposite ends of the room. There's obvious tension.

LESLIE

So, anyone talk to Janelle?

AMBER

Yah-I brought her some flowers this morning. She's in the room next to my mom. She's super happy.

Girls ad-lib SHOCK.

TESS

She's happy?

LESLIE

Why happy?

AMBER (cont'd)

Oh -- the blow to her head made her deaf...

Girls ad-lib "Oh, I see. Okay-then." etc. Another LONG BEAT of SILENCE follows. Becky gets up to re-touch her make-up.

BECKY

(losing it)

Oh, good Lord! What're they doin'?  
Lettin' the retard count votes?!

Contestants stare at her in shock. Iris enters.

IRIS

It's time, ladies.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM

Judges are back. Gladys is center stage. Girls enter and form a line behind her. TAPED AMERICAN MEDLEY STARTS.

GLADYS

Welcome back, everyone. Judges. Our  
Second Runner-up and winner of a fifty-

Taped fanfare. Leslie bounds forward, grabs her trophy, stands to one side.

PAT (O.S.)

You rule, Leslie!

Audience laughs. Leslie waves.

GLADYS

Our next prize, a seventy-five dollar  
scholarship --

Audience ad-libs amazement.

GLADYS (cont'd)

...will be awarded to the First Runner-  
up.

Taped DRUM ROLL. Contestants (except Becky) take hands. Iris gives Gladys an envelope and trophy.

GLADYS (cont'd)

And the First Runner-up is -

(opening envelope, face  
drops)

Contestant number eight, Amber Atkins.

Ad-lib audience shock and disbelief. Contestants are stunned. Amber steps forward, humbly takes the trophy and stands beside Leslie. Audience finally quiets.

GLADYS (cont'd)

And finally, the moment I know I've  
been waiting for...

Iris hands Gladys a LARGE TROPHY and envelope. Mary Johanson is wheeled out wearing sash and tiara.

GLADYS (cont'd)

With a scholarship of five-hundred  
dollars, courtesy Leeman Furniture,  
and all expenses paid for next weekend  
when she'll be competin' for the title  
of Minnesota American Teen Princess...

Taped drum roll. Gladys opens the envelope.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Our new Mount Rose American Teen  
Princess is contestant number - ah  
heck, she's my daughter - number  
seven, Rebecca Ann Leeman!

Polite audience applause. Becky rushes forward. Gladys RIPS the tiara and sash off Mary, places them on Becky.

BECKY

Oh, thank you so much!

AUDIENCE

Loretta and Annette watch on.

ANNETTE

Shit.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - STAGE

The ELDERLY MAN/MAYOR, from earlier scene, enters and

sings to a tape as Becky takes her victory walk.

ELDERLY MAN/MAYOR

(tune of "Miss America")

"Here she is, Our Mount Rose American Teen Princess. Look at her, doesn't she look fine. Our hearts swell big, as we look at her. Our Mount Rose American Teen Princess."

EXT./INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

AMBULANCE pulls up. Mary Johanson, unconscious, slumped in wheelchair, is brought out and put in. Amber and Loretta wheel Annette out. Paramedics put her in, too.

ANNETTE

We was robbed.

LORETTA

Okay. Take her purse.

AMBER

Bye mom.

ANNETTE

We was robbed.

AMBER

It's okay.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Amber faces camera as ambulance pulls away.

AMBER

Oh, Mom's okay. They're just givin' her a ride back. She almost blew outta the back of Loretta's pick-up on the way over.

LORETTA

Thank God for bunge cords.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

AMBER

(tearing up)  
...Yah-well, at least, y'know, I got  
to perform. And Mom got to see me.  
(crying)  
I guess number eight only worked for  
Diane Sawyer...

Loretta puts her arm around Amber. They walk off as  
Leslie and Pat approach.

LESLIE  
Hey-hey, I'm Second Runner-up! Whooo!  
I got second place!

PAT  
Third.

LESLIE  
Huh?

Lisa passes by with her parents. They look pissed.

LISA  
No, it was worth it. Amber shoulda  
won.

LISA'S FATHER  
I'll tell ya one thing. Peter never  
woulda pulled a shenanigan like that.

LISA  
Well, y'know what, dad? Y'know what?  
Peter's gay!

She runs off. Her parents stop DEAD IN THEIR TRACKS.

LISA'S FATHER  
What?!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASS ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON BECKY'S FACE. Flashes illuminate it. With each  
photo she changes her smile and expression. She loves  
this.

PULL BACK to reveal two older men, with old-style news  
cameras, flash pictures.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

So, how does it feel to be the new Mount Rose American Teen Princess, Becky?

OLDER MEN turn and look at camera, then take out a pen and note pad.

BECKY

Well, it's all happenin' so fast. Goodness-gracious, it hardly seems real, y'know? I mean, I won! I'm the winner! I'm going to State!

GLADYS

She's the winner and we're going to state.

INT. MOUNT ROSE HIGH - GIRL'S BATHROOM - DAY

Fry Girl #1 and Pregnant Fry Girl smoke.

FRY GIRL #1

What a surprise. Gladys Leeman's finally gonna go to State. And she'll probably ride on Becky's ass all the way to Nationals, too.

PREGNANT FRY GIRL

I wonder how she's gonna fix that one.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Are you ladies going to the parade tomorrow?

PREGNANT FRY GIRL

Nah. I think I'm like, due or somethin'.

MOUNT ROSE MAIN STREET - NEXT DAY

Beautiful sunny day. Lester talks to camera.

LESTER

Ahhh. Beautiful as a whore's ass today. Eh, boys?

In the b.g., Gladys holds a bullhorn, clipboard and points to a LARGE SWAN FLOAT.

GLADYS

(into bullhorn)

Hey! Turn that float around. You think a swan's gonna swim ass first up Main Street?

LESTER

Yah-Gladys had me order that swan special made from Mexico (Me'hee'koe) in case Becky won. I do a lotta business with those people. I always offer to pay kem in tacos.

(laughing)

Whoo, they love that.

EXT. MOUNT ROSE MAIN STREET - LATER

Entire town lines the road. The Mayor and the Lemman family stand behind the red ribbon. Parade PARTICIPANTS are lined up behind them.

MAYOR

(into bullhorn)

Yah-hello-hello...shit! How the fuck do ya work this damn thing, huh? Oh. Welcome to our first ever American Teen Princess Parade - which also happens to be the unveiling of our new sewer system!

CHEERS! Becky cuts the ribbon. More CHEERS!

MAYOR (cont'd)

Yah-so, while Becky gets on her float, then, any questions kbout the new sewer? Yah, Clem?

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNT ROSE MAIN STREET - LATER

THE PASSING PARADE:

- THREE FAT VETS, dressed as the Revolutionary War trio, hold American, Minnesota and POW/MIA flags.

- TWO BATON TWIRLERS stand in front of the Mount Rose High School Band. They play - way off key.

- JUDGES wave from a convertible. Hank, in passenger's seat, struggles to get out. His seatbelt prevents it.

- TWO GRUNGY OLD CLOWNS smoke impatiently.

- TWO FAT WHITE MEN, dressed as Indians, sit on scooters.
- FAT MAN drives a riding lawnmower, pulling a flatbed with A SPEEDBOAT and a FISHING CAMP GROUP.
- FARMER pulls a goat with a sign: "Milk Me for \$1.00"
- A BRIGADE of tap dancing BASSOONISTS.

EXT. MOUNT ROSE - STREET

Harold and Hank pull over and park their truck. Harold quickly gets out, obviously in a hurry, slamming on a pouting Hank.

HAROLD

Let's get this straight right now. We wouldn't have been late at all if it wasn't for you.

HANK

I want to have the big bag of little donuts.

HAROLD

You get nothing, Hank, okay?

HANK

I want to get the big bag of little donuts.

HAROLD

There's your paint can. The next time you drink window cleaner, I'm just gonna leave it in ya.

Harold rushes off for the parade, joining other folks carrying baskets, lawn chairs and flags on the sidewalk.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNT ROSE STREET - BACK TO DOCUMENTARY CAMERA

PAN OVER to see Gladys helping Becky climb on the swan, unaware of camera. In b.g., DOCUMENTARY CREW interviews Amber and Leslie on their convertible behind the swan float.

GLADYS

C'mon, Rebecca, you wanted it. Now

get up there. Ride it side-saddle if you have to - like a horse. C'mon, now.

BECKY

It smells funny. Like gasoline.

GLADYS

Oh for chrissakes, everything smells like that in Mexico.

BECKY

My dress'll reek.

GLADYS

Listen, little missy, this cost your dad a pretty penny. Now get your ass up there and show me some teeth.

EXT. MOUNT ROSE MAIN STREET - LATER

Amber and Leslie, in gowns, look unhappy as they stare straight ahead, exhaust fumes - that appear to come from the swan's ass - cover them and their old convertible.

LESLIE

Amber, if I die from these fumes, will you be sure to cover the hickies on my neck?

AMBER

Yeah...

LESLIE

And the bite marks on my ears?

AMBER

(slowly turning)  
Yes...

LESLIE

I know it doesn't matter, but on my inner thighs.

AMBER

Yes, Leslie!

EXT. MOUNT ROSE MAIN STREET - LATER

Hank rubs his head, then angrily gets out of the truck, SLAMMING THE DOOR ON ONE OF THE SUSPENDERS ON HIS

OVERALLS. He starts to walk, but can't, eventually leaning out from the truck - only moving his arms as if walking.

EXT. MOUNT ROSE SIDE STREET - LATER

Hank, still stuck in the door, is being teased by a GROUP OF KIDS who poke at him with flags and sticks. ANOTHER LITTLE KID taunts him with his cotton candy - keeping it just out of his reach. Hank bats at them like Frankenstein and the torch wielding townsfolk.

EXT. MOUNT ROSE SIDE STREET - LATER

Hank, still stuck in the door, holds the little kid by the back of the shirt in one hand and eats the kid's cotton candy with the other. The kid struggles to get away. A few BROKEN FLAGS are scattered on the ground.

HANK

Help...Hank! Help...Hank!  
Help...Hank! Help...Hank!

ON SWAN FLOAT. Gladys approaches.

GLADYS

Okay, I designed the float, you know. And, what's gonna happen here is that this is going to look like a glistening lake beneath the swan.

IRIS

Uh, Gladys?

GLADYS

What!

IRIS

We need more bars!

GLADYS

This is -- what?

IRIS

Enid ate a whole pan!

GLADYS

I swear to God she can't do anything by herself.

EXT. MOUNT ROSE MAIN STREET - LATER

AMBER

(to camera)

Oh-yah, this is exactly how I pictured it. Chokin' on swan gas.

Suddenly, like a gasoline soaked pinata, it EXPLODES!

Gladys is thrown back. Flames. Screaming. PANDEMONIUM! Becky doesn't have a chance. She's a pink taffeta BALL OF FIRE. The swan's back eventually collapses taking Becky into it's burning belly.

INTERCUT WITH MR. HOWARD'S VIDEO.

Gladys watches in stunned silence as her daughter and only chance at State go up in flames. Suddenly, she CRACKS!

GLADYS

Oh my God! My Baby! The swan ate my baby!

(grabbing at burning float)

Ow-ow-ow! Get up, Rebecca! Get outta there! We've gotta go to State! Oh hot!

(she scorches her blouse)

Oh, damn. I like this blouse.

Rebecca! Get up, angel face. Time to go to State! Ow-ow-ow!

Eventually, Gladys tries to climb up on the float. Iris pulls her off.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Get offa me, you cow!

Gladys spins and notices the silent CROWD.

GLADYS (cont'd)

What're you lookin' at? Huh? A whole God Damn town of losers! That's what I'm lookin' at!

Crowd reacts. Gladys notices Amber and runs up to her car.

GLADYS (cont'd)

You! You piece-a-shit trailer trash! This shoulda been you! Damn, I shoulda killed you when I had the

The crows reacts again. Gladys spins, noticing someone. Lester approaches.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Hey, Ted, sorry. I didn't know your family was in the garage when I set it on fire!

LESTER

Gladys! Stop it!

GLADYS

Guess it wasn't a garage sale as much as it was a bake sale. Ah-hahahahahahaha!

Lester tries to pull her away from the crowd.

GLADYS (cont'd)

Let go-a-me, you old bastard!

She grabs a BURNING 2X4 off a float and starts swinging it.

GLADYS (cont'd)

At least you've got another daughter.

CROWD GASPS. Then stunned SILENCE. CAMERA CIRCLES Gladys and Lester getting reaction shots of the crowd.

LESTER

So help me, Gladys.

GLADYS

Becky was my only shot at state!

LESTER

That's enough!

GLADYS

Let go! Let go of me. Oh my God, it's COPS!

TWIN OFFICERS, followed by "COPS" TV CREW, run up and aggressively tackle Gladys. As the struggle on the ground continues, crew guys go over and shake hands with the "COPS" crew - obviously knowing them.

GLADYS (cont'd)

(pointing to Lester)

He sells reproductions! His  
furniture's as fake as my orgasms!

The COPS crew begins to mingle with the DOCUMENTARY crew.

SCOTT

Hey, man, how're you doin'?

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Hi! What's up, Scott? You remember  
Bruce, right?

SCOTT

Long time, no see.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Bruce, that's Roy.

(they shake hands)

Roy, Bruce.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Lovely hillside. A PASTOR and TOWN FOLK - heads bowed -  
stand beside a FRESH GRAVE.

PASTOR

That's why, dear Lord, it's with such  
great sorrow that we turn over to you  
a young woman whose dream of ridin' on  
a giant swan brought about her  
untimely death. Maybe it's your way  
of telling us to buy American.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - LATER

The funeral is over. Amber, Loretta, Iris and Servettes  
awkwardly face each other beside the grave. Iris takes  
the PARTIALLY MELTED TIARA from the headstone.

IRIS

As, uh, actin' President of the Mount  
Rose Civil Servettes, it's my duty  
since Becky can't fulfill her duties -  
kcause she's dead-n-all - to make you  
Mount Rose American Teen Princess.

She puts the TIARA on AMBER. Loretta FLASHES pictures.

MALE REPORTER #1

Turn around and let me see.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - LATER

Annette, Amber (wearing her tiara) and Loretta are leaving the crowning ceremony. All are happy as they push an extremely drugged Annette out of the cemetery.

LORETTA

What is wrong with you?

AMBER

I don't know. I just didn't wanna win like this.

LORETTA

You stop right there. You are a good person. Good things happen to good people.

AMBER

Really?

LORETTA

No. It's pure bullshit, sweetie. You're lucky as hell, so you might as well enjoy it. Let's get you a root beer float.

AMBER

Okay.

LORETTA

Do you guys want some shots? I'm buyin'.

EXT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - DAY

Amber sits on the picnic table. In the b.g., Loretta exits her trailer with a FED-EX GUY. She pats his buns as he exits. She approaches Amber with a packet.

AMBER (V.O.)

I never liked her, but she didn't deserve to die in the belly of a swan like that. The whole thing's just kinda sad and lame at the same time.

LORETTA

(handing over packet)  
This came for you, sweetie.

AMBER

Ah! It's from State! Oh my God!

Amber rips it open and holds up a color brochure with COLLEEN and TERRY in a glamour shot on the cover.

AMBER (cont'd)

(paging through packet)  
It's all the stuff I get to do. Oh my God, oh my God... Okay, okay... We get a "personal consultation" with a make-up artist -- Eeeh! Okay, um, there'll be a choreographer to the stars and, oh no -- No way. Oh... My... God!

LORETTA

What? For chrissakes, spit it out.

AMBER

I'll be stayin' overnight at... The Airport Howard Johnsons!

LORETTA

Right by the airport - Oh, Amber...

AMBER

There's an indoor swimming pool!  
Ahhhh!

Loretta joins in the screaming.

AMBER (cont'd)

Oh crap - I only got four days. I gotta practice!

EXT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - MORNING

MONTAGE BEGINS over MUSIC.

Amber emerges from Loretta's trailer, Pop Tart in mouth, book bag in hand. SMILES. WAVES.

EXT. TRAILER PARK

Taps her way down the road, out of the trailer park.

INT. CAFETERIA - MONTAGE

Amber scrapes trays. PAN DOWN. She wears tap shoes, practices her routine.

INT. HOSPITAL - MONTAGE - DAY

Amber walks around the room in high heels, balancing a bedpan on her head.

INT. MORTUARY - MONTAGE

Amber dances around the room, using a suit on a hanger as a partner. A naked old man is on the embalming slab, a sheet covering his nasties.

EXT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - NIGHT

In silhouette, Amber taps on the picnic table by the light of the FULL HARVEST MOON.

DIP TO BLACK:

EXT. AIRPORT HOWARD JOHNSONS - DAY

WHITE LETTERS ON BLACK: "STATE FINALS"

We look up at the towering Howard Johnsons and see a huge banner which reads: "WELCOME AMERICAN TEEN PRINCESS, FRIED CLAM PLATTER \$9.99." Suddenly, a 747, not more than thirty feet above the hotel, flies over - the sound is deafening.

LORETTA

All right, say "Airport Ho-Jo."

AMBER

Airport Ho-Jo!

LORETTA

I got it! Yeah, why don't ya take a

Mr. Larson unloads Amber's luggage from the hearse. Loretta leans against it, arm around Amber, smoking and occasionally flipping off people who stop to stare at this unusual sight.

AMBER

Loretta, don't do that.

LORETTA

I'm sorry. They're just starin'.

AMBER

I gotta work with these women.

LORETTA

Okay, sweetie, that's all right.  
Let's go. Let's go.

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - BAR AREA

There's a fake tropical look, with loads of plastic palms, etc. CAMERA FOLLOWS Amber into area. BANNER: "STATE FINALS - SPONSORED BY THE MINNESOTA MODELING ACADEMY" Contestants (25) sit at tables, they seem more mature, more professional. Amber smiles and gives a little wave. Terry approaches Amber.

TERRY

And you are...

AMBER

Mount Rose American Teen Princess.

TERRY

Funny, you don't look dead.

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - BAR AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Colleen and Terry address the assembled contestants.

SUPER: COLLEEN DOUGLAS AND TERRY MACEY - MINNESOTA AMERICAN TEEN PRINCESS STATE BOARD AND OWNERS OF THE MINNESOTA MODELING ACADEMY

COLLEEN

Okay ladies, listen up. I'm Colleen Douglas and this raving beauty on my right --

TERRY

I'm a mirror.

COLLEEN

Correction. This spunky monkey on my right is Terry Macey. And we are your Minnesota American Teen Princess State Board.

TERRY

We're also the co-founders of the Minnesota Modeling Academy. Applications are at the tiki bar. We'll waive the fifty dollar application fee if you list a friend and put her address.

COLLEEN

That's right.

TERRY

Okay?

COLLEEN

Mm-hm.

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - BAR AREA

Loretta, seated at the bar, puts her arm around a man next to her.

LORETTA

So...you're cute. Oh, I see you're married.

(to bartender)

You catch this in your mouth, I'll give you a present. All right? Open wide...

(she throws the olive)

Oh, God, you got that on the first try. Come here.

Loretta kisses the bartender.

LORETTA (cont'd)

You are cute.

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - COURTYARD STAGE AREA - DAY

TERRY

Due to budgetary cutbacks - and the fact that Nationals didn't cough up a damn nickel this year - you won't be stayin' overnight. So pay attention, you've got about eight hours until showtime.

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - STAGE AREA - DAY

A DISCO BEAT POUNDS from a boom box. Mr. Melchoir, the choreographer, watches contestants move in fast-paced crisscrossing formations. Amber is among them. Miss St. Paul screws up.

MR. MELCHOIR

Remember to count, ladies. Cross on the left and arms up on eight! On the beat! On the beat! Keep on it! Keep

movin' it! C'mon, Miss Forest Lake, take that stick out of your ass or I will. All right. Very nice. Now come on, arms out. We're in the front row. Come on, sell it! That's very nice. Remember, figure eights, ladies...

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - BAR AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Colleen and Terry smoke and drink at a tall tiki table that's covered with empties. In the b.g., a pageant worker passes out PINK BAGS to the contestants. All the while, TWO FAT KIDS play "Marco Polo" in the pool.

COLLEEN

(tipsy, holding up glass)

I can sum up our entire philosophy with this glass. I look at it and say, "it's half full." Which, in the beauty pageant biz means, "Where the hell's my waiter!"

She laughs hard, then spins around in her chair.

COLLEEN (cont'd)

(screaming)

Stop with the fuckin' Marco-Polo before I rip your fat little heads off!

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - STAGE AREA - AUDIENCE CHAIRS

A very mature Miss Burnsville talks to Amber who is staring at Miss Burnsville's supernaturally well-supported chest.

MR. MELCHOIR

Miss Burnsville, you're up next...

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. STAGE AREA - AUDIENCE CHAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Amber sits addressing the camera. Miss Burnsville is gone.

AMBER

Don't tell anyone, but, I have a little secret weapon of my own.

Amber pulls out a jar of Vaseline from her purse and smiles innocently.

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - BAR AREA - SHELLFISH BUFFET - DAY

Contestants hungrily fill their plates with seafood.

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - BAR AREA - SHELLFISH BUFFET

Amber stands beside the buffet, holding only a salad.

AMBER

I don't eat shellfish. Mom always says, "Don't ever eat nothin' that can carry its house around with it - who knows the last time it's been cleaned." She should know.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - BAR AREA

Amber eats at a tall tiki table with Miss Minneapolis.

MISS MINNEAPOLIS

... I've done about thirty-five pageants. I guess my most memorable one'd have to be Miss Teen America, 1995. It was in Vegas. My roommate did Adam West.

SUPER: MR. WEST WAS UNAVAILABLE FOR COMMENT

MISS MINNEAPOLIS (cont'd)

She said he was sooo horny.

Amber stares at her with wide-eyed disbelief.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - STAGE AREA - DAY

Amber watches four contestants in a row practice their talents. All are equally amazing.

"THEME from 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY" starts. Miss Minneapolis steps ON STAGE - silver unitard, silver streamers, silver tap shoes. She starts a TAP ROUTINE that RIVALS AMBER'S.

AMBER

(whispering to camera)

Oh my God. Look at her, she's awesome. I should just go home now.

Terry and Colleen stand in front of the stage.

TERRY

Okay, okay, that's enough - I get it.

SUDDENLY Miss Minneapolis FREEZES.

MISS MINNEAPOLIS

Oh - oh my God...

(doubling over in pain)

I gotta go!

She runs off toward the RESTROOM.

COLLEEN

(calling after her)

Well, you're gonna have to do somethin' with those nerves before Nationals. Thirty-million people aren't gonna wait while you run to the john.

Other waiting contestants suddenly double over, ad-libbing "oh no! oh my God!" "I'm gonna puke!" etc. More contestants grab their bellies.

NEWS FOOTAGE: INT. HOWARD JOHNSONS - MORE FOOTAGE

FEMALE REPORTER

(hand on earpiece)

Today, a beauty pageant turned ugly. A salmonella dysentery outbreak, now traced to improperly refrigerated shellfish, was believed to be the cause. Joining us now is David Richardson, a member of the documentary crew filming the pageant. He was there when tragedy struck.

TELEVISION SET

CREW GUY

Fuckin' beauty queens blowin' chunks everywhere. I've never seen anything like it before, and I live in L.A.

(laughs)

Hey, Ed.

FEMALE REPORTER #2

Can you tell us any thing about the controversy? Is there a controversy here? Has there been sabotage?

Follow REPORTER as she runs over to Amber, Colleen and Terry. All three look dazed. Reporters SHOUT questions.

COLLEEN

(with forced sobriety)

People, people - wait, wait a minute, here. Uh, while we haven't ruled out sabotage from neighboring state pageants - Iowa, Wisconsin, North Dakota...

TERRY

Yeah.

COLLEEN

Dakota.

TERRY

Ohio...

COLLEEN

That bitch from...

TERRY

What?

COLLEEN

Wisconsin.

TERRY

All right, then.

COLLEEN

The bitch.

TERRY

The important thing is that we have a winner...

PULL BACK to reveal we're:

INT. MOUNT ROSE V.F.W. - BAR - NIGHT

The mayor and other vets, watch Amber on the TV.

COLLEEN (ON T.V.)

And, on behalf of the Minnesota Modeling Academy, we proudly present Amber Atkins. Your new Minnesota American Teen Princess.

The place ERUPTS in CHEER! ON TV: Terry sets a tiara on Amber's head. FLASHES.

MAYOR

Yah, ain't it just a kick in the fuckin' ass!?!? I'll be a snake's prick if tragedy and pageants ain't got a way of bringin' folks together...

(directly at camera)

Yous boys tell me when want me to start, okay?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY

IONA

Amber?! What-the-hell's goin' on around here? I'm Mount Rose American Teen Princess. Where the hell's my tiara? I bet those sneaky little Japs took it...

INT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cathy and other townsfolk are glued to a small TV set on the counter.

FEMALE REPORTER (ON T.V.)

Amber, how do you feel?

AMBER

I, uh... I feel like... I, uh, I need a shower.

Townsfolk laugh and cheer.

CATHY

Jesus-Mary-n-Joseph I hope Gladys Leeman hangs herself in her cell when she hears this.

INT. WOMEN'S PRISON - REC ROOM

ROUGH HAND HELD FOOTAGE. We see Gladys walking around, holding onto the back of a large black woman's belt.

GLADYS

Uh-huh. No, no. Gosh, no. You know  
I still don't want to be on camera...

SUPER: PHONE INTERVIEW WITH GLADYS LEEMAN FROM MINNETONKA  
WOMEN'S FACILITY

GLADYS (V.O. ON THE PHONE)

Yah - I just wanna say - that little  
bitch better watch her back at  
Nationals kcause I'm makin' friends on  
the inside... Yah-friends who have  
friends on the outside...

FEMALE PRISONER

Get your sweet ass off the bunk,  
Cinnamon.

GLADYS (V.O. ON PHONE)

Gotta go.

Click. DIAL TONE.

EXT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - DAY

Annette (left arm's been amputated and replaced with  
metal pincers which she hasn't mastered yet) sits at the  
picnic table with Amber and Loretta. Throughout the  
following, Annette struggles to open a beer can which  
keeps flying out of her pincers. (Handmade  
"congratulations" posters cover the lawn and trailer.)

AMBER

I just, I just can't believe it. I'm  
Minnesota's American Teen Princess!

LORETTA

Our baby's going to Nationals!  
Lincoln, Alabama - look out!

AMBER

I'm gonna be on TV! Just like Diane  
Sawyer.

Annette opens a beer with a new HOOK replacing her hand.

LORETTA

Annette, just use your hand.

ANNETTE

They told me to practice.

AMBER

Okay, ready? Here's the signal I'm gonna give Ma when I'm on TV.

Amber MIMES inhaling a cigarette and Annette embraces her.

ANNETTE

My little Carol Burnett.

EXT. AIR FIELD

In the middle of a corn field. The "runaway" is a gravel path cut between rows of corn. A FOUR-SEATER plane is on the runway, in front of a group of town folk with hand-made "good luck" signs. Amber (in Minnesota sash and tiara) and the Mayor stand beside the plane. (NOTE: The plane never moves.)

EXT. AIR FIELD - LATER

MAYOR

(into bullhorn)

Here she is, Minnesota's American Teen Princess - soon to be the next America's American Teen Princess - our little Amber!

ZOOM IN ON AMBER as PEOPLE cheer Amber on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SARAH ROSE COSMETICS, NAT'L HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A giant Sarah Rose Cosmetics logo on the wall greets Amber.

SUPER: SARAH ROSE COSMETICS NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, LINCOLN, ALABAMA.

The CONTESTANTS, including Amber, look around for the directory. It reads: FOR LEASE. A sign at the front of the building reads: SEIZED.

SUPER: IN ITS FIFTIETH YEAR, SARAH ROSE COSMETICS WAS SEIZED BY THE IRS FOR TAX EVASION...

As the CAMERA catches the reactions of our contestants -

SUPER: THE SARAH ROSE COSMETICS AMERICAN TEEN PRINCESS

PAGEANT WAS CANCELED...

We STOP on MISS OKLAHOMA. She SCREAMS

SUPER: ...PERMANENTLY

EXT. SARAH ROSE COSMETICS, NAT'L HEADQUARTERS - DAY

As the contestants run out the building...

SUPER: BUT IN ITS PASSING WE ARE INSPIRED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE MANY YOUNG WOMEN WHO WERE ITS HEART AND SOUL...

Contestants THROW and HURL suitcases and items through the glass of the building.

SUPER: ...AND BY THE MANY WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN PURSUIT OF THE TITLE...

The contestants TEAR DOWN the Sarah Rose Logo.

DIP TO BLACK:

EXT. CHASKA SCHOOL OF BEAUTY

A very perky Leslie Miller, with very big hair, stands out front in a white lab coat. She smiles and waves to camera.

SUPER: LESLIE MILLER ENTERED "THE CHASKA SCHOOL OF BEAUTY"...

EXT. STRIP BAR - NIGHT

A COLOR PHOTO of slightly less perky Leslie, wearing go-go boots and a smile, dances in a cage.

SUPER: SHE WAS LAST HEARD FROM SOMEWHERE IN THE PHILIPPINES. IF YOU SEE HER, PLEASE CALL 1-800-X-QUEEN.

DIP TO BLACK:

INT./EXT. HARDWARE HANK

It's a lovely shot of the front window

SUPER: HAROLD VILMES DIED UNEXPECTEDLY OF LYMES DISEASE FROM A DEER TICK BITE

Suddenly, HANK, buck naked, runs back and forth past the window, spanking himself and waving "hi."

SUPER CONT: LEAVING HANK THE STORE

DIP TO BLACK:

EXT. MOUNT ROSE - STREET

MOLLY HOWARD is being helped into a van with "Lutheran Children's Orphanage" painted on the side. She looks sad.

SUPER: MOLLY HOWARD RETURNED TO THE "LUTHERAN CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE" AFTER HER PARENTS WERE GUNNED DOWN BY A SNIPER OUTSIDE THE FOOD SHACK.

INT. ROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP of a newspaper photo of Gladys.

SUPER: GLADYS LEEMAN ENTERED A STATE-WIDE PRISON BEAUTY PAGEANT...

The banner and hat she wears read: MINNESOTA 2ND PLACE, CELL BLOCK

SUPER: ...SHE CAME IN SECOND.

INSERT: NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

"EX-BEAUTY QUEEN ESCAPES PRISON, VOWS "REVENGE ON MOUNT ROSE"

EXT. MAIN STREET - FOOD SHACK

Gladys, wearing Army Fatigues and brandishing a semi-automatic rifle aimed at the FOOD SHACK, holds off a S.W.A.T. team.

GLADYS

Come on out, you little blonde piece of trailer park trash!

LOCAL NEWSCAST

Female reporter is on the scene of the Gladys Leeman stand-off outside the food shack. We see Amber, Annette (with hook hand) and other town folk behind her, watching the action. "LIVE" flashes on screen.

SUPER: DURING THE SIX-HOUR GLADYS LEEMAN STAND-OFF

FEMALE REPORTER

We are here in the sixth hour of a  
shoot-out between Gladys Leeman -

MAN AT FOOD SHACK

Get down!

The female reporter suddenly stiffens and falls over.

SUPER: LOCAL REPORTER PAT MILES WAS STRUCK BY A STRAY  
POLICE BULLET.

Amber steps under the police barricade, over Pat's body,  
takes the mic and continues the newscast. She's a  
natural.

AMBER

This is Amber Atkins reporting live  
from the Food Shack for...KRLH News.  
One of our reporters has just been  
shot.

SUPER: AMBER, SHOWING AMAZING POISE UNDER PRESSURE, WAS  
GIVEN HER JOB.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MINNEAPOLIS NEWS STATION

Amber, now looking like a Midwestern news anchor, sits  
with a BLOND MALE ANCHOR. A LOGO in B.G. reads: TV WAZB  
TWIN CITIES.

BLONDE NEWS ANCHOR

I'm Peter Aitchison.

AMBER

And I'm Amber Atkins for WAZB News.

SUPER: ...was given her job.

AMBER (cont'd)

Good night.

As they smile and laugh, we:

FADE OUT.