

CRATERING  
(working title)

written by

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INT. BACKSTAGE OF GOOD DAY USA! - DAY

TONY (late 30s-early 40s exudes charisma and confidence, a sharp-dressed, slightly too-tanned man) and CEECEE (late 30s-early 40s, serenity and warmth personified, in head-to-toe Eileen Fisher) are standing in the wings of a daytime talkshow. The host, ESPERANZA EDWARDS, introduces them.

ESPERANZA (O.C.)

If I've got bags under my eyes,  
it's because I was up all night  
reading a book called CRATERING:  
*How to Make a Massive Impact on  
your Existence*. If you are  
searching for happiness, look no  
further. Come on out, Tony and  
CeeCee!

Chiron: *Tony and CeeCee LaFlamme: authors of CRATERING.*

TONY

(under his breath)  
You are an affront to humanity.

CEECEE

(under her breath)  
I hope you die in a fire.

The two slap smiles on their faces and walk with energy to the couch to meet ESPERANZA. Tony a magnanimous handshake. Ceecee a soulful hand clasp. They sit. To the TV audience, they would appear loving, kind, and generous.

Chiron: "Tony AND CeeCee LaFlamme: Delivering New Hope."

ESPERANZA

I'm nervous -- my hands are  
actually shaking. This has never  
happened to me, and I've  
interviewed Stephen Hawking, the  
Pope, and -

TONY

Stop.

ESPERANZA

-Vladimir-

TONY

Just stop. You're only nervous  
because you want to be. Just stop.

ESPERANZA

Well, I don't-

CEECEE

We're wasting our time here.

Tony and Ceecee both get up and start to pull off mics and leave. Producers start scrambling.

CEECEE (CONT'D)

There are people out there right now who are ready for our help.

TONY

Yep. Let's go.

ESPERANZA

No, wait! I'm ready!

Tony and Ceecee turn back. A confused crew member hastily reattaches mics.

CEECEE

Esperanza I want you to try something completely radical.

(sharing a smile with Tony)

We're gonna do a little kung fu fighting.

Tony holds up an imaginary object.

TONY

Here's your fear about meeting us today. I want you to use all your will to chop it out of existence while you say your own name.

Esperanza gives a half-hearted self-conscious chop.

ESPERANZA

Esperanza.

CEECEE

YOUR LIFE IS AT STAKE FOR GOD'S SAKE. CHOP. YOUR. FEAR!

Esperanza is shocked by the screaming and chops harder out of fear for her life.

ESPERANZA

ESPERANZA!

TONY

Here's your fear of being replaced by your younger co-host.

QUICK CUT TO: younger co-host with shellacked hair.

ESPERANZA  
ESPERANZA!

Ceecee calls out to the crew sharply.

CEECEE  
Someone else. Name her fear.

A quiet moment as crew members look at each other, unsure if this is ok. MAKEUP PERSON meekly pipes up.

MAKEUP PERSON  
People might see your turkey neck.

ESPERANZA  
ESPERANZA!

SOME PA  
We all know about your secret open marriage.

ESPERANZA  
Esperanza!

The dam breaks. The entire crew calls out Esperanza's fears. It builds to a cacophony.

OTHER CREW MEMBERS	ESPERANZA (CONT'D)
That recording of you farting	(kicking and punching
on camera. You're way older	the air)
than your wikipedia page	ESPERANZA! ESPERANZA!
says.	ESPERANZA! ESPERANZA!

As insults continue, the chiron operator even gets in on it. CHIRON: "BREAKING: YALE HAS NO RECORD OF YOU GRADUATING."

OTHER CREW MEMBERS (CONT'D)	ESPERANZA (CONT'D)
You don't know how to say	ESPERANZA! ESPERANZA!
nuclear. You'll never get the	
anchor desk!	

This last one fully breaks Esperanza and she collapses to the floor in paroxysms of tears and karate chops.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)  
FUCK YOU DAD! ESPERANZA!

Off camera, crew members scramble. One PA watches raptly and whispers "Dave!" under his breath while subtly chopping to himself.

A producer or two start to approach to help Esperanza up. Tony stops them.

TONY

NO. She needs to do it herself.

CeeCee crouches down to Esperanza. Esperanza looks up, her mascara running and makeup smeared.

CEECEE

(whispering)

Guess what. You're still alive.

Esperanza gets up and dusts herself off, seeing the world for the first time.

TONY

Ladies and gentlemen, this is Esperanza Spalding and today is her new birthday!

Applause as Tony and CeeCee, on either side of Esperanza, raise her hands skyward. Esperanza is triumphant.

ESPERANZA

We'll be right back. And I'm gonna find out where these two have been hiding since they wrote this book ten years ago.

This last comment elicits a look between Tony and Ceecee.

INT. GREEN ROOM AT GOOD DAY, USA! - DAY

HOLYOKE (early 20s, eager-to-please, guileless, gentle) sits on the couch, eating fruit with toothpicks, and watching TONY and CEECEE's interview with rapt attention. MCKENZIE (early 20s, unimpressed, symbiotic with social media) enters. She is madly texting. HOLYOKE mutes the TV and stands.

HOLYOKE

Oh hi! I'm Holyoke. You must be McKenzie.

MCKENZIE

Uh-huh.

HOLYOKE

I'm so excited to work with you. Go team!

(when McKenzie doesn't respond...)

(MORE)

HOLYOKE (CONT'D)  
 You wouldn't believe how good this  
 melon is.

MCKENZIE  
 Uh-huh.

HOLYOKE  
 It's free. I saved you some  
 cantaloupe.

MCKENZIE  
 I only eat locally-sourced fruit.

HOLYOKE shrugs good-naturedly, as if to say, "more for me!"  
 And he goes to town on the fruit tray.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)  
 (holding up her phone)  
 Social media is blowing up for Tony  
 and CeeCee. They're killing it out  
 there.

HOLYOKE  
 Of course they are.  
 (he holds up a copy of  
 CRATERING. With lots of  
 bookmarks)  
 This is brilliant.

MCKENZIE  
 Is it?

HOLYOKE  
 Wait. You didn't read it?  
 (MCKENZIE shakes head)  
 How can you publicize a book you  
 never read? Do you want me to  
 Amazon Prime you a copy?

MCKENZIE  
 I don't read books. They're so...  
 long, I guess? Tl;dr it for me.

HOLYOKE  
 A what in the what now?

MCKENZIE  
 (sighing at how uncool  
 Holyoke is)  
 Give me the short version.

HOLYOKE  
 I wouldn't know where to start.  
 Every word has value. Every comma.  
 (MORE)

HOLYOKE (CONT'D)  
 Even the negative space is  
 important.

MCKENZIE  
 Let me guess. This is the first  
 book you've interned on?

HOLYOKE  
 (impressed)  
 What are you, a witch? Yes! This is  
 my first week at Pilgrim  
 Publishing. Oh jeez, I hope you're  
 not offended -- I was joking about  
 the witch thing. I respect Wiccans.

MCKENZIE  
 This is usually the point in a  
 conversation when I pretend to take  
 a call. Maybe you should just eat  
 some more melon and watch your  
 gods.

HOLYOKE is not offended. He is superpsyched to get back to  
 that honeydew. He grabs the remote control and turns up the  
 set.

INT. PILGRIM PUBLISHING OFFICES - DAY

NANETTE SHELDON (sixties, pulls no punches, over it) sits at  
 the desk in her cluttered Manhattan high-rise office. Across  
 from her sits children's author ERIC FRUM, (heartfelt and  
 flimsy) clutching a copy of his picture book. NANETTE splits  
 her attention between ERIC and a TV playing live muted  
 footage of TONY and CEECEE on Good Day USA.

ERIC  
 ...told me about how my other book  
 "I'm Chocolate and You're Vanilla"  
 helped her explain her daughter's  
 adoption to her.

NANETTE  
 What a bunch of horseshit.

ERIC  
 Excuse me???

NANETTE  
 (Referring to TV)  
 I was talking about that.

ERIC  
 (relieved.)  
 Oh! How funny. I thought you were talking about my new book and I was like-

NANETTE  
 We're pulling the plug on your contract.

ERIC  
 But --

NANETTE  
 It's out of my hands. You can thank our new glorious leader and his whims.

Nanette is referring to the looming, icy portrait of Media Corp. chairman and CEO Ragnar Atherton. She pulls out a bottle of bourbon and pours two shots. She clinks one against the other...

NANETTE (CONT'D)  
 Proost.

...and downs it. Eric just looks at his shot.

NANETTE (CONT'D)  
 Buck up. Life's all about disappointments. I spent my career clawing my way up the ranks to VP of fiction, only to get shoved aside by this idiot for a 22-year-old YouTube celebrity. Now I'm stuck here, pushing self-help drivel like...

She gestures to his book.

Nanette's ASSISTANT appears at the door.

ASSISTANT  
 (over speakerphone)  
 I have Ragnar Atherton for you.

NANETTE  
 Speak of the devil.

Nanette dumps his shot into a paper coffee cup.

NANETTE (CONT'D)  
 Here. Take this to-go.



Eric trudges out of the room, crestfallen. Nanette picks up the handset. (We will never see Ragnar; we'll only hear his flawless, lightly-Dutch-roasted English over the phone.)

NANETTE (CONT'D)

Ragnar. I was just admiring your hale visage.

She silently, violently flips off his painting.

NANETTE (CONT'D)

I assume you're watching?

RAGNAR

You Americans and your self-help obsession. Unseemly.

NANETTE

You're the one who spent our entire quarterly budget on these two hucksters just because Oprah discovered their book.

RAGNAR

(wistful)

The bidding war was blood-drenched and glorious.

NANETTE

(shaking her head)

You know this morning was the first time Tony or CeeCee have spoken to each other in the ten years since they wrote that book. I haven't seen people hate each other this much since Mel Gibson and the Jews.

RAGNAR

I'm sure you'll find a way to get them on the best-seller list in short order. Because if you don't, I'm shutting down your imprint.

Ragnar is off the line. Nanette hangs up, furious.

INT. SET OF GOOD DAY USA! - DAY

Tony and CC sit on the couch across from ESPERANZA on the air on Good Day USA!

ESPERANZA

Not everyone gets the privilege of  
having you two... brutally  
transform their lives in person.

CEECEE

(with head bow and hands)  
Namaste.

ESPERANZA

For everyone else, there's the  
book. Tell us about the program.

TONY

Let's start with step one:  
cratering.

ESPERANZA

That's like "bottoming out" in AA,  
right?

Tony and Ceecee share a look "that's cute."

TONY

Respect to AA, but we want you to  
go so low that rock bottom feels  
like a penthouse apartment.

CEECEE

Plus, alcoholics might waste a  
decade destroying their liver --

TONY

--or building to that tragic hit-  
and-run --

CEECEE

Exactly. [beat] We do that in a  
*weekend*.

ESPERANZA

Isn't that a little dangerous?

CEECEE

You're god damn right it is.

ESPERANZA

Wow. Mind blown.  
(hears something in ear)  
Oh- fun! We have a little surprise  
for you.

(MORE)

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

A little bird told me your daughter was with you backstage today and we're bringing her out. Connie, come say hi!

A nine-year-old girl, CONNIE, comes out. She is quite shy but she is the spitting image of Tony. It's clear Tony has never seen this child before.

CEECEE

(covering discomfort)  
Wow...hey, hummingbird!

TONY

(covering confusion)  
...hi!

Connie goes straight for CeeCee and hops up in her lap.

ESPERANZA

Welcome, Connie. What a sweetheart you are. Tell America all about your mom and dad.

Connie shrugs shyly.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Aw, she's uncomfortable.

CeeCee looks side-eyed at Tony, who is frozen.

CEECEE

She must sense the discomfort of someone else in the room. She has a very high emotional IQ...just like her mom.

ESPERANZA

Neat! And what special talent do you share with your dad, Connie?

CONNIE

My mom says my dad died during childbirth.

CEECEE

(covering)  
That's a little joke we do. She loves her dad.

ESPERANZA

I can't get over it. She's the spitting image of her father.



CEECEE  
 (emphatically)  
 Just NO sugar please? She's never  
 had it before. Ever.

INT. GREEN ROOM AT GOOD DAY, USA! - DAY

HOLYOKE  
 ...and that is why my moms named me  
 Holyoke, after their beloved alma  
 mater.

MCKENZIE  
 Where did they go to college?

HOLYOKE  
 Wait. Are you joking? It's hard to  
 tell.

Holyoke's phone rings, and a moment later, McKenzie's phone  
 starts chiming with hipster noise.

HOLYOKE (CONT'D)  
 Hello, this is Holyoke Marcetti-  
 Greenbaum-Tanaka! How can I --

NANETTE (V.O.)  
 Shut up and listen. We have a  
 massive fire on our hands and I  
 need you two to put it out. Under  
 the radar.

MCKENZIE  
 (reading her phone)  
 Oh man, this is super bad.

NANETTE  
 The legal department just informed  
 me that a gentleman named Earnest  
 Best was following...[the sound of  
 papers shuffling] let's see...

MCKENZIE  
 (her phone tweets)  
 Holy fuck. A guy died while  
 Cratering.

Holyoke's attention is torn between his phone and McKenzie.

NANETTE  
 ...the first step in Tony and  
 CeeCee's book.  
 (MORE)

NANETTE (CONT'D)  
Unfortunately, and I am quoting  
here, "He had a massive coronary  
yadda yadda...while he..."

MCKENZIE  
(her phone dings)  
He was getting spit-roasted by two  
hookers while zonked on poppers.

NANETTE  
"...fell victim to this dangerous  
program, developed by two  
unqualified charlatans."

HOLYOKE  
Charlatans! That's disgusting  
slander!

NANETTE  
I'm reading, verbatim, from the  
family's lawsuit.

HOLYOKE  
Oh, well then... if it's in print,  
it's libel, not slander. My bad.  
Apologies.

MCKENZIE  
(typing simultaneously  
with both hands on TWO  
phones now)  
Tony and CeeCee are getting bashed  
more than Lena Dunham when she  
announced she was bummed she never  
had an abortion.

NANETTE  
Put me on speaker, Artichoke.  
(Holyoke does)  
Listen kids, you gotta get to  
Queens tout suite and fix this. My  
assistant is texting you the  
address now.

MCKENZIE  
(holding up multiple  
phones)  
On it! I just ordered a Rickshare  
and a FemmeCar. We will jump in  
whichever shows up first.

NANETTE

Good girl. If this lawsuit isn't dropped, the book is gonna get pulled from the shelves and we all lose our jobs.

HOLYOKE

I'm sure we can reason with the family...

Holyoke and McKenzie grab their stuff and rush out the door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

McKenzie and Holyoke run down hallway.

HOLYOKE (CONT'D)

...you can count on us, ma'am!

(Pause. He puts the phone to his ear.)

Hello? We must have gotten disconnected.

MCKENZIE

Come on, Sarah Lawrence, we gotta make like a tree.

HOLYOKE

My name is... oh, ok... you were joking.

As they push through the exit door, they pass Connie who is savoring candy she is picking off an M&M sculpture of Richard Simmons.

PA

Hey, kid, that's a prop!

Panicked, Connie breaks off Simmons' nose, and jams it in her mouth as she runs off.

INT. STUDIOS OF GOOD DAY USA! - DAY

Over by a food table Tony and CeeCee are with PAT THE PRODUCER. Tony finishes signing a copy of CRATERING for him.

TONY

...never too busy for enlightenment. Enjoy.

PAT THE PRODUCER  
Thanks. Help yourself to whatever.  
I'll come find you in a few  
minutes.

Pat is off. Tony and CeeCee grin widely in thanks until the instant his back is turned.

TONY  
What the fuck!

CEECEE  
I don't want to talk about this  
right now.

TONY  
Who the hell is Connie?

CEECEE  
She's... my daughter.

TONY  
But who's her dad?

CEECEE  
Are you an idiot --

TONY  
--no. Because you know what? I  
don't care. It's not me, and I  
don't give a shit who got my floppy  
seconds.

Unseen by Tony and CeeCee, Connie enters silently and stands behind the craft services table. She is sipping from a can of Coke and sneaking sugary treats as she listens to Tony and CeeCee argue.

CEECEE  
You are the same old douche canoe.  
You know what? You're totally  
right. Connie is definitely NOT  
your kid. You are the last person  
we need in our lives.

TONY  
(sarcastic clapping)  
Oh. Nice try.

Tony's sarcastic clapping briefly turns "positive" as Pat the Producer walks by and waves. CeeCee covers as well, taking a mock bow. Once the staffer is gone, the clapping falls quickly back into angry/sarcastic.



TONY (CONT'D)  
 LIAR. You would kill to have me  
 around again.

CEECEE  
 (scoffs)  
 Once I got rid of the crabs you  
 gifted me, I didn't give you an  
 inch of my emotional real estate...

TONY  
 (mocking voice)  
 ...oooh, *emotional real estate*...

CEECEE  
 ...I don't need a man in my life. I  
 have Confidence.

She shows a picture of Connie on her phone, unaware that the  
 real Connie is listening just a few feet away.

TONY  
 Connie is short for Confidence?!?!  
 OH MY GOD.

Pat walks by and turn his head at the "OH MY GOD." Tony and  
 CeeCee cover, clasping each other's hands aloft.

TONY (CONT'D)  
 That's wonderful!

CEECEE  
 The magic of life!  
 (then)  
 Look, Connie is all I have. We are  
 practically one person, we're so  
 connected. This whole thing might  
 not be a big deal to you but I need  
 this book money so I can afford to  
 get us out of my parents' basement  
 and find a decent place to  
 homeschool her and the cats.

TONY  
 Oh turn off the faucet Farrah. You  
 wanna hear problems? I've got a  
 storage unit full of Herbalife I  
 can't move. Last night some guy  
 tried to repo my hair plugs. And  
 I've been sleeping in the back of  
 my Camaro for seven weeks. IT'S  
 BUILT FOR PERFORMANCE NOT COMFORT!

A beat.

CEECEE

Wow. You win. You really are the most pathetic.

TONY

Thank you.

Pat approaches and sees Tony and CeeCee glowering at each other.

PAT THE PRODUCER

We're ready for you now.

TONY

(full of rage)  
GREAT!

CEECEE

(manic and angry)  
YAY!

They stomp off. Connie puts a handful of sugar cubes in her mouth and crunches like a nervous squirrel as she watches them go. Her eyelid twitches.

INT. HOME OF THE LATE ERNEST BEST - DAY

Holyoke and McKenzie enter and stand in the foyer as they examine the mourners of the late Ernest Best. McKenzie indicates a group of people being comforted by others.

MCKENZIE

That must be his family.  
(Holyoke starts forward)  
Where do you think you're going?

HOLYOKE

To offer my sympathies.

MCKENZIE

The last thing we do is say "I'm sorry for your loss." It insinuates fault. Also, you're not going anywhere.

HOLYOKE

But Nanette said --

MCKENZIE

Nanette said to get them to drop their lawsuit, which is what I'm going to do.

HOLYOKE

How can I help?

MCKENZIE

You? You're useless to me. Hey,  
there's some fruit at the buffet.  
Go eat some orange smiles and give  
me space.

They part ways. His feelings hurt, Holyoke trudges to the buffet. He takes a plate, hands one to an OLDER WOMAN, and begins to silently pile on the food. McKenzie approaches BRAD, CARL, and ANNIE (All late-20's, built like Olympic swimmers).

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

(interrupting a convo)  
So... death. Am I right?

BRAD

Who are you?

MCKENZIE

Cutting to the chase. I like that.  
(she extends a hand to  
shake)  
Wow, you all have massive hands. It  
must make it hard to text.

ANNIE

How did you know our dad?

MCKENZIE

Does anyone really know anyone  
else?

BRAD

She's just here for the food.

The three step a little closer.

MCKENZIE

No, I don't even eat before  
sundown. I work for the PR firm  
hired by Pilgrim Publishing. I  
represent "CRATERING."

BRAD

Uncle Ted!

TED (50s, same build as young people) joins the group.

ANNIE

She's here to make us drop the  
lawsuit.

BRAD

Uncle Ted is our uncle. He's also a lawyer.

The four step closer to McKenzie. Across the room, Holyoke is sitting with the older woman from ealier - MRS. BEST (50s-60s, kind-faced) - although he doesn't know who she is yet. Holyoke has an orange smile in his mouth, he takes the peel out of his teeth and puts in on his plate. He looks dejected.

HOLYOKE

I eat so much when I'm upset.

MRS. BEST

Don't I know it. I had to unbutton my skirt an hour ago.

HOLYOKE

It's a beautiful spread. Full disclosure: Jell-o molds are my guilty-pleasure.

MRS. BEST

Me, too! Especially the ones with the canned fruit.

HOLYOKE

And Cool Whip. I haven't had one this good since my bubbie died. Oh here, you dropped your napkin.

MRS. BEST

You're sweet.

HOLYOKE

I'm just trying to stay out of the way.

MRS. BEST

Me too.

They eat in companionable silence for a moment.

MRS. BEST (CONT'D)

Do you like Whitman's Samplers?

HOLYOKE

"Whitman's Sampler" was my nickname in high school.

(Mrs. Best laughs)

I wasn't joking, but I can see how you'd think so.

MRS. BEST  
(She stops laughing)  
Oh, bless your heart. Come with me.

They leave their plates on their chairs and sneak upstairs.  
On the other side of the room, the adult children are holding  
something above McKenzie's head.

MCKENZIE  
You're all awful. Give me my phone  
so I can destroy you on Twitter.

ANNIE  
That shitty book ruined our family.  
My dad never spent a dime until he  
read it.

BRAD  
But once he started "cratering," he  
spent everything.

ANNIE  
Our whole inheritance.

MCKENZIE  
(jumping for phone)  
This is about your dad's money?

BRAD  
This is about OUR money.

UNCLE TED  
(cutting off their answer)  
Please stop talking to my clients.

CARL  
But we're not your clients.

ANNIE  
Carl....

CARL  
What? Only mom can drop the  
lawsuit, anyhow.

UNCLE TED  
Shut the fuck up, Carl.

MCKENZIE  
(like a wild animal)  
Which one is your mother?

They menacingly close in around McKenzie.

INT. BACKSTAGE OF GOOD DAY USA! - DAY

From a low POV we make our way through the hubbub backstage at Good Day USA! Movements are jittery and furtive.

We see our prey through an open door in a dressing room: a perfectly plated jelly-filled donut. We creep toward it and see this is the dressing room of Hafthor Björnsson - "the Mountain" from Game of Thrones.

Our nine-year-old hand extends toward the donut. Thor turns suddenly.

HAFTHOR BJÖRNSSON  
Hey, that's mine!

We whip around to see Connie, red jelly streaming out of both corners of her mouth. She clutches the donut and hisses at him like Gollum. Thor squeals as Connie makes off with her precious.

In the hallway, she narrowly avoids running into an oblivious Tony and CeeCee.

INT. GOOD DAY USA SET - CONTINUOUS

Tony and CeeCee walk with Pat.

PAT THE PRODUCER  
You'll be making buffalo bacon  
butter blasters with Lance  
Düdricksen.

TONY  
Hey! The "flavor laser" guy!

CEECEE  
Ugh. The "flavor laser" guy.

Producer gets intel through his headset.

PAT THE PRODUCER  
OK, and...we're on.

CEECEE  
I hope there's a vegan option.

Tony groans as he and CeeCee are thrust through a curtain onto set with Esperanza and LANCE DÜDRICKSEN (40s and portly. Sammy Hagar-esque.)

TONY  
(to CeeCee)  
Please just go along with this and  
don't make it an animal thing.

CEECEE

Oh, you mean don't talk about how pigs are as intelligent as a three-year-old child?

Across the set, serious news guy BRIAN GRAVES finishes his segment on air.

BRIAN GRAVES

...no known survivors. Truly tragic.

(then)

On a lighter note, let's go back to Esperanza Edwards in the kitchen where they're making, am I reading this right? Buffalo bacon butter blasters.

Brian sighs quietly as the camera finds Tony, CeeCee, Esperanza, and Lance.

ESPERANZA

We are back in the kitchen with America's randiest chef, Lance Düdriksen.

LANCE

Looks like you're cookin' today, good lookin'!

Lance does his trademark dice-throwing gesture and catch phrase.

LANCE (CONT'D)

*SNAKE EYEZ!*

ESPERANZA

We are thrilled that Tony and CeeCee LaFlamme, authors of Cratering, are with us again. Lance, get us started.

LANCE

Ok, first, you want to go ahead and get you a good old handful of salted butter and form that into a patty.

Everyone forms a patty from the block of butter in front of them except for CeeCee, who looks uncomfortable.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Then, what you want to do--

CEECEE

I'm sorry, do you have a coconut  
oil or flax-based butter substitute  
I could use for my zapper?

LANCE

A what in the what now?

TONY

(shooting Ceecee a look)  
She's just yankin' your chain,  
Lance.

After a moment, CeeCee backs down and, sickened, picks up a  
glob of butter.

LANCE

(RE: CeeCee)

Young lady yer gonna be gettin'  
those sweet little hands dirty. You  
probably want to take that ring  
off.

TONY

(shocked)

You're still wearing that thing?!  
(then, mocking)  
I guess I do take up a lot of your  
emotional real estate.

CeeCee is clearly embarrassed and tries to conceal it from  
him.

CEECEE

It's not what you --

ESPERANZA

Ooh, what an interesting ring, can  
we get a closeup of that?

Closeup of ring on her finger is on the monitors. It's a  
cheap dime-store knockoff that clearly has some miles on it.

TONY

Esperanza, I got her that  
engagement ring at an interstate  
gas station. It was all we could  
afford -- in fact, we couldn't even  
buy me one. From the looks of it,  
she hasn't taken that ring off  
in...oh, I'd say *ten years*. She  
must really love me.



He moves in for a little smoochy-smoochy. Ceecee hides her disgust.

ESPERANZA

That is so romantic I can't even stand it.

CEECEE

(fending off Tony)  
Yeah, I can barely stand... it... either.

CeeCee strains to remove the ring. It's not budging. Lance comes over and applies some butter.

LANCE

Here, you just need a little lube, babe.

Lance does the "dice shake" move with a glob of butter and flings it on CeeCee's hand while he says...

LANCE (CONT'D)

SNAKE EYEZ!

CEECEE

It usually comes right off but my fingers are inflamed from...swelling.

TONY

Probably from carrying that torch for so long. Eh, babe?

Lance leads a cat call barrage that is joined by the entire crew. A beat. CeeCee looks directly into camera.

CEECEE

We'll be right back.

ESPERANZA

Actually, we have about three more minutes in the segment.

Tony and CeeCee awkwardly pick up bowls and start whisking.

INT - BEDROOM OF THE WIDOW BEST - DAY

Mrs. Best and Holyoke sit on a neatly made bed, looking through a photo album, eating from a Whitman's Sampler.

HOLYOKE

I am so sorry for your loss. I didn't realize you were the... I didn't mean to take you away from your guests.

MRS. BEST

Don't be silly, Holyoke. This is the first time I've been able to breathe all day.

HOLYOKE

(pointing to a photo)

Oh wow, is that Blazing Fury at Dollywood?

MRS. BEST

Good eye! My husband and I used to love watching rollercoasters.

HOLYOKE

You mean riding rollercoasters.

MRS. BEST

Oh no, Earnest was not keen on having his feet off the ground, but we sure did enjoy seeing other people have fun!

HOLYOKE

(turning the page)

Huh. There you are watching other people parasailing.

MRS. BEST

(pointing to a photo)

Here we are waving to strangers hiking to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

HOLYOKE

(closing the book)

Mrs. Best...

MRS. BEST

Call me Louise.

HOLYOKE

Louise, if I may be so bold, these photos depict "the life of a spectator."

MRS. BEST

Come again?

HOLYOKE

I was quoting. That's from page 34  
of Cratering.

Holyoke removes a worn copy of the book from his purse, and  
hands it to Mrs. Best.

MRS. BEST

Get that out of my sight. Ernie  
bought it last week and stayed up  
all night reading it. The next day,  
he went crazy.

HOLYOKE

(rapturously)  
I know the feeling.

MRS. BEST

Well, I never want to see it again.

HOLYOKE

I get why you're upset. I even  
understand why you'd be angry at  
this book. But I can promise you,  
Louise, if this book is to blame  
for anything, it's for inspiring  
Mr. Best to live outside something  
we call "The Cage."

MRS. BEST

And I was "the cage?"

HOLYOKE

Oh no. No! The Cage is something we  
all create subconsciously to keep  
us safe. "But life isn't meant to  
be safe. It was meant to be lived."

MRS. BEST

That's beautiful.

HOLYOKE

Page 73.

MRS. BEST

But that book urged Ernest to do  
horrible things.

HOLYOKE

Well, like what?

Mrs. Best opens another album.

MRS. BEST  
 There he is driving his new  
 Maserati. It's not even a sedan!

Close up: photo of old man in a convertible.

MRS. BEST (CONT'D)  
 Ok, there he is, buying a grill.

Close up: photo of same man getting gold teeth.

MRS. BEST (CONT'D)  
 And there he is being invaded by a  
 young lady with a massive strap--

HOLYOKE  
 (impressed)  
 Is that Katy Perry?

MRS. BEST  
 I have no idea.

HOLYOKE  
 Louise, I don't know how to say  
 this, but Mr. Best looks way  
 happier in these pictures than he  
 did in all the rest of the albums  
 combined.

MRS. BEST  
 I only ever wanted him to be happy.  
 But --

McKenzie comes flying into the room, slams and locks door  
 behind her. There is pounding on the door.

HOLYOKE  
 Oh, hi! McKenzie, this is Mrs.  
 Best. Mrs. Best, this is --

MCKENZIE  
 Those people are monsters!

BRAD (V.O.)  
 Hey PR lady, come out to pla-ay!

MCKENZIE  
 Save me!

INT - GOOD DAY USA SET - DAY

ESPERANZA

And we're back again with the English-speaking world's huskiest chef, Lance Dudriksen.

LANCE

*SNAKE EYEZ!* So we've got our butter patties and we've wrapped them in thick-cut bacon and rolled them in crushed up fruity pebbles. What's the holdup down there, CeeCee?

CEECEE

I don't really do dairy, Lance. Non-judgmentally, I feel it exploits the mother-child bond of another species.

TONY

She's really into protecting that mother-child bond. The father-child bond...not so much.

LANCE

OK! It's time ta hit this thing with Lance Düdriksen's  
(winding up)  
BIG OLE...

ESPERANZA and some of the crew join in right on cue...

LANCE ET AL.

FLAVOR LASER!

Lance squirts his patty with his disgusting sauce.

LANCE

It's mayo, blue cheese, tuna juice and just a couple drops of motor oil.

ESPERANZA

Woohoo!

TONY

You have to wonder if he would have made a good father to that calf, if only someone would have given him a heads up.

CEECEE

I don't have to wonder. That bull was a selfish liar and didn't deserve to be a father.

LANCE

This is getting weird! Let's get the ball back on the court and finish these bad boys off by frying them in five hundred degree chicken fat!

Tony grabs a glob of butter and aggressively greases CeeCee's hand with it.

TONY

You know what CeeCee, let's get that ring off. It really doesn't seem appropriate that you have it on now.

They struggle. As the ring pops off, we enter SLO-MO and see everyone's individual reactions as it flies past them. A heroic Lance dives to save the ring from landing in the deep fat fryer. He makes the catch, but his clasped hands plunge into the boiling oil.

We slam back to regular speed as chaos hits. Lance snatches his hands from the fat, screaming. No one else is quite sure what to do.

Lance turns straight to camera.

LANCE

We'll be right back?

DANIELLE THE DIRECTOR

And...cut!

People rush in to escort Lance off set.

LANCE

Snake...eyezzzz...

In the background, CeeCee unties her apron, throws it into Tony's face, and stomps off.

INT - BEDROOM OF THE WIDOW BEST - DAY

There is now furniture piled up against the door. From the other side, we hear banging, name-calling and threats.

MCKENZIE

I can't get a signal up here. Does anyone have a phone that works?

Mrs. Best hands her the landline that sits on a nightstand.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

(as if speaking to an idiot)

I said a *phone*. Oh, nevermind.

There is a slam and the door pushes inward a bit. Holyoke and McKenzie jump. Mrs. Best is looking at a photo of Ernest wrestling an alligator. Through the following dialogue, McKenzie rushes around the room, trying to get a signal.

MRS. BEST

He does look happy.

HOLYOKE

How many people get to experience so much joy in such a short time?

MRS. BEST

I just wish he invited me to join him.

HOLYOKE

The Program can only be worked alone. It's the rules.

MRS. BEST

Rules? You don't think he... left me out?

HOLYOKE

Oh no! I bet he was doing this to make your life together even better.

MCKENZIE

(opens the window)

I'm going to see if I can get a connection out here.

She climbs out, but Holyoke and Mrs. Best don't pay attention.

MRS. BEST

Ernie always was so good to me.

HOLYOKE

You were so lucky you were married  
to a man willing to test all his  
limits to make your life better.

MRS. BEST

I really was blessed.

MCKENZIE (V.O.)

Three bars!

MRS. BEST

I feel so foolish now.

HOLYOKE

You? Stop. How?

MRS. BEST

Oh nothing. A silly lawsuit. I'm  
going to drop it. I should've never  
let my kids --

There is a big slam, and the door opens a bit further. Arms  
reach into the room.

MRS. BEST (CONT'D)

Stop! Grow up out there!

McKenzie's head pokes in the window.

MCKENZIE

I called a Begley Bike. And a  
CanineCart. I'm going to shimmy  
down the trellis now. Come on!

She disappears. The cacophony grows.

MRS. BEST

You should go.

HOLYOKE

I'm not going to leave you alone.

MRS. BEST

Holyoke, you're the only selfless  
person in this house. A real angel.  
Remind me, how did you know Ernest?

HOLYOKE

Oh, my gosh, I totally forgot to...  
I work for --

There is a massive crash as the door opens more, and Mrs.  
Best puts her weight against it.



MRS. BEST  
Go help your friend. I can only  
hold them off so long. Here.

She hands him the candy box.

HOLYOKE  
Awww! One good turn deserves  
another.

He hands her his dog-eared book.

Mrs. Best holds the book to her chest as Holyoke disappears  
out the window.

MCKENZIE (V.O.)  
Jump, Bryn Mawr! Jump!

Mrs. Best draws back in horror at the sound of Holyoke  
hitting the pavement.

INT - HALLWAY OF TV STUDIO - DAY

Returning from their trip to Queens, Holyoke and McKenzie  
enter the long hallway. Holyoke's arm is in a makeshift sling  
made out of his necktie. He is buzzing with the excitement of  
victory. The following dialogue is a walk-and-talk.

HOLYOKE  
No, I swear, I wasn't even trying  
to convince Louise --

MCKENZIE  
(reluctantly)  
You rocked it. You get shit done.

HOLYOKE  
I do get stuff done!  
(he makes a muscle like  
Rosie the Riveter)  
Hashtag "I Can Do It!"

MCKENZIE  
And...you ruined it.

HOLYOKE  
I got greedy.

Their phones ping with text messages.

MCKENZIE  
Nanette says the lawsuit has  
formally been dropped.

Their phones ping again.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)  
 (disgusted)  
 She also says she wants to tongue-  
 kiss us.

HOLYOKE  
 That's so sweet.  
 (texting Nanette,  
 innocently)  
 I would be honored, madam.

MCKENZIE  
 Nope.

They stop in front of Tony and CeeCee's green room door.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)  
 K. Keep it together. They can't  
 know anything was wrong.

They gather themselves, and push open the door.

INT. GREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Holyoke and McKenzie walk in, all-smiles. It is eerily calm  
 and quiet. Tony and CeeCee pack up their stuff.

HOLYOKE  
 Great work out there today you two.  
 We saw the WHOLE thing.  
 (overt wink to McKenzie)

More quiet.

MCKENZIE  
 Um... everything ok?

CEECEE  
 It's great. Because after today, I  
 don't have to be in the same room  
 with this walking bottle of  
 Rogaine.

HOLYOKE  
 What?

TONY  
 We can't make it work. Sorry.

Tony and CeeCee start to leave.

MCKENZIE

But you signed a contract.

TONY

Fine. Tell Nanette to sue us. I would happily go bankrupt and go back to manning a vitamin kiosk if it means I don't have to look at this boner-killing pube-farm ever again.

CEECEE

Natural bush is beautiful, you low-budget George Hamilton.

TONY

You realize I only ever had sex with you out of sympathy.

CEECEE

Please. Like you've found any other women who let you scream "I'm sorry Mommy" when you come.

A moment of silence. Ceecee has crossed a line. Tony grabs a muffin and shoves it in her face.

CEECEE (CONT'D)

THAT HAS GLUTEN IN IT!

The two are at each other like a couple of squabbling toddlers. McKenzie tries to come between them but gets caught in the crossfire.

MCKENZIE

Guys...aaah!

THUNDEROUS VOICE (HOLYOKE)

ENOUGH!

As though someone has discharged a firearm in the air, everyone stops what they're doing and looks up. The thunderous voice came from Holyoke.

HOLYOKE

You two are throwing away an incredible gift. Why? Because you guys have a kid you didn't tell him about? Because you have a weird sex thing we can never ever unhear? Well suck it up.

(MORE)

HOLYOKE (CONT'D)

There are billions of people out there who are dying of unhappiness and just don't know it yet. Until I read your book I was one of them.

Everyone starts to soften.

HOLYOKE (CONT'D)

And look at me now. I got to meet my heroes, I'm jet-setting on national TV, and I just rode on a scooter with my legs wrapped around Mr. Ed Begley Jr. Doesn't everyone out there deserve to be as happy as me? You two need to get out there and prove to the whole world how miserable they are, too!

Tony and CeeCee just stare at Holyoke for a moment.

CEECEE

(to Tony)

He's so earnest, it almost breaks my heart.

TONY

Kid, that book's a bunch of bullshit. We made it all up.

CEECEE

We wrote it while we were in a cult ten years ago and no one gave it a second thought.

TONY

THANK GOD. If anyone actually followed it, I'm pretty sure they'd die. We should have destroyed all the copies when we had the chance.

Tony and CeeCee move again to leave.

CEECEE

(to Holyoke)

Trust us, hun. The world is safer without Cratering in it.

INT - HALLWAY OF TV STUDIO - DAY

The green room door opens and CeeCee, Tony, Holyoke, and McKenzie trudge out. This is a stylized, slo-mo walk like Reservoir Dogs if Mr. Pink and the gang were walking to their execution.

A hall door swings open and a ragged Connie exits, her sugar-high fading. All of her clothes have been replaced with an oversized GOOD DAY, USA! T-shirt. She tries to take Tony's hand, but Tony shakes her off. CeeCee sees this and lunges toward Tony. Tony puts his hand on her face to push her away. As they approach the exit door, Holyoke and Mckenzie dive in again to separate the escalating physical violence.

EXT - TV STUDIO - DAY

The door swings open, and the pile of CeeCee, Tony, Holyoke, Mckenzie, and Connie stumble outside into the bright light of day. They are stunned by the crowd of people staring at them. In turn, the crowd of people looks stunned at their indecorous entrance. Then, the silence is broken by a ping on Mckenzie's phone. She looks at the text.

MCKENZIE

Holy fu--

The crowd goes wild, drowning out her words. The mob clamors for autographs, they hold up copies of "Cratering" and wave homemade signs. Good Day USA's security team needs to hold them back.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

(showing phone to Holyoke)

They're number one.

HOLYOKE

That's what I've been trying to say all day.

MCKENZIE

No, you walking greeting card, they are number one on the New York Time's Best sellers list.

Tony and CeeCee gape at their adoring fans. Without looking at each other, they clasp hands and raise them above their heads, waving to the crowd. The crowd goes nuts.

CEECEE

(Behind a false smile)

Why is this happening? Didn't they see the show?

TONY

(the same)

Who the hell cares? Just smile. But not too wide, you're very gummy.

AMY THE ADORING FAN (V.O.)  
They're so real!

ADAM THE ADORING FAN (V.O.)  
We love you CeeCee and Tony!

CEECEE  
(waves at the crowd)  
We love you more! I want to help  
all of you!

Tony and CeeCee approach the crowd -- they shake hands, they hug fans, they take selfies with the mass of people around them.

HOLYOKE  
Sorry to tear you away. The limo is  
here.

Holyoke ushers the group to the limo. Tony and CeeCee are calling out to their fans and waving. CeeCee is blowing soul kisses. Tony catches the eye of a hot group of 15-year old girls and he is boosted by their attention.

INT. LIMO - DAY

MCKENZIE  
You guys are lit! I'm so gonna get  
you on the Tonight Show. No, better  
-- I bet I can get you guest slots  
on SNL.

HOLYOKE  
You both should be very proud.

They are indeed proud, all doubts squashed because their egos have been fed. Mackenzie busies herself with her phones, Holyoke with his Whitman's Sampler. The limo pulls away from the curb. Tony and CeeCee smiles shift to more contemplative expressions as The Sound of Silence Plays, a la The Graduate. A beat or two passes.

CEECEE  
Hey, can you turn that off?

DAN THE DRIVER (O.C.)  
Sorry.

The car goes silent. As the energy dissipates completely, Tony and CeeCee realize their hands are still clasped. They snatch their hands apart.

A long beat.

TONY

So... you think we can actually pull this off?

CEECEE

Oh definitely... Well, I mean, we have to.

HOLYOKE

Of course you can. A. Your book is brilliant whether you know it yet or not. B. You're better together. And most importantly, C. You're --

His words are cut short as Connie projectile vomits rainbow colors all over the adults in the back of the limo. She is a puke machine that shows no sign of stopping... then finally, she does. CeeCee opens her mouth to say something, but Connie projectile vomits in her face, cutting her off.

INT. PILGRIM PUBLISHING OFFICES - DAY

Nannette sits at her desk. Her computer screen shows headlines touting the best-selling status of "Cratering." Next to her is a new painting of Ragnar on the wall, engaging in some heroic pursuit like space travel or breeding Neopolitan Mastiffs.

Her assistant appears at the door.

ASSISTANT

I have Ragnar Atherton for you.

Nanette offers an obscene gesture as she picks up.

NANETTE

Ragnar. I assume you've seen the Times bestseller list?

RAGNAR (V.O.)

Yes, enjoy a victory lap. It seems I underestimated you and your imprint.

NANETTE

Thank you-

RAGNAR (V.O.)

-A mistake I shall not replicate. My expectations of your financials are now astronomically increased.

NANETTE

A what in the what now?

RAGNAR (V.O.)

You'll be hearing from me much more often. Congratulations.

Ragnar is off the line. Nanette hurls a copy of "Cratering" at Ragnar's portrait. She pours herself a shot. Just before picking it up she spies the book, which has landed open to chapter one. She looks at it for a moment, puts down the shot glass, and drinks deeply from the bottle.