Influencer Nation
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Cast of Characters

BLUMENTHAL

HARRIS

R. F. WILLIAMS

RIAN

JOEY

KT

TY

DANNY

TONY GLOSS

ALEX

Bonus Scenes

MELODIE

JAC'LIN

CHEF

Production Notes

This play should require only minimal props or equipment. The cast is highly flexible. And any of the roles can be performed by anyone of any gender. (Even those couple of roles we used gendered pronouns for. Those pronouns can totally be changed. So feel free to cast as you see fit!)

There are three bonus scenes included at the end of the script if you'd like to extend the play and add three more roles. Just make sure to add the categories into the hosts' banter where noted by an asterisk.

We hope this will lead to some great discussions about influencers and the power they wield in our lives. (We once attended the NewFronts, the yearly presentation major YouTube creators do for advertisers akin to TV's upfronts. During the presentation, they said, "Movie stars are royalty, they're unattainable. TV stars are aspirational, you wish you could be like them. But internet stars are us. They're our friends. Which is why when they try to sell us something, we buy." It was honestly very creepy.) But our point is, influencers are a big business and they're here to stay.

If you have a really creative bunch and want to challenge performers to write some of their own influencer sketches, we welcome that as well!

Break legs! We hope you have as much fun performing this as we had writing it!

—Meg and Carrie

INFLUENCER NATION
by Carrie McCrossen & Meg McCrossen

Scene 1

(The Kennedy Center stage is mostly bare. There are two playing areas: a podium or microphone for presenting and three chairs set up on the other side for interviews.)

ANNOUNCER. *(O.S.)* Please welcome the hosts of the *[insert year]* Kennedy Center Honors, Leslie Blumenthal and Wyndon Harris!

*(*HARRIS *and* BLUMENTHAL *enter from opposite sides of the stage, waving, and approach the podium. They are dressed formally, and their manner is formal.)*

BLUMENTHAL. Welcome to the Kennedy Center! We are your hosts! I'm Leslie Blumenthal.

HARRIS. And I'm Wyndon Harris. You may know us from our popular PBS program *Thoughts on Thinking* where we interview some of the nation's best thinkers, artists, and visionaries.

BLUMENTHAL. Indeed. That is why we've been asked to host tonight's ceremony.

HARRIS. Since 1978, the Kennedy Center has honored excellence in music, dance, theater, opera, motion pictures, and television.

BLUMENTHAL. But after the results of the most recent census, in which 99% of respondents said "We only watch TikTok," and "Sorry, if it's longer than four minutes I'm not gonna watch," and "What's a Kennedy?" this year, the Kennedy Center has decided to do a little something different.

(Both hosts look at each other, confused by the teleprompter they are reading. [Or note cards, if you prefer. No actual prompter is necessary if the actors sell it.])

HARRIS. *(Aside to* BLUMENTHAL*:)* I didn't know about this. Did you?

BLUMENTHAL. *(Aside to* HARRIS*:)* No. But we're professionals. We can roll with a little copy change! *(To audience:)* This year, based on census results, the Kennedy Center has decided to honor . . .

*(*BLUMENTHAL *gasps.)*

(To HARRIS*:)* I can't . . .

*(*HARRIS *looks equally concerned, takes a deep breath.)*

HARRIS. We will instead be honoring the first-ever Kennedy Center Influencer. We're talking about YouTubers. TikTokers. Instagrammers. People famous for being popular *online*.

(Pause as both hosts shudder. Woof. BLUMENTHAL *takes a deep breath.)*

BLUMENTHAL. That's right. Social media influencers affect the behavior—and purchases—of their followers. They have a lot of power.

HARRIS. Tonight we will be meeting the finalists in the following categories*: Comedy, Finance, Fitness, Gaming, Fashion, Beauty, and Politics.

*(*Adjust categories if bonus scenes are used.)*

BLUMENTHAL. In past years, the honorees have been chosen by an advisory committee comprised of members of the board of trustees as well as past honorees and distinguished artists.

HARRIS. This year, pursuant to the *philistines who returned the 2020 census,* America will be *voting* for the winner.

(The hosts look at each other, incensed.)

Categories were chosen by the Pew Research Center with input from the Brookings Institution.

BLUMENTHAL. Once the categories were established, the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCooopers selected finalists by using top-of-the-line data analytics to find the best-performing influencer in each category.

HARRIS. And by best performing, we mean the influencers with the most thumbs-up clicks.

BLUMENTHAL. In other words, THIS WILL NOT BE BASED ON MERIT!

HARRIS. Correct. This is based on popularity. THE *OPPOSITE* OF MERIT!

BLUMENTHAL. Tonight you, the viewer, will be voting for the nation's first-ever Kennedy Center honoree in influencing. What an honor that will be.

Scene 2

HARRIS. We have a special guest here to introduce our first finalist, please welcome last year's Kennedy Center honoree for poetry, r. f. Williams!

(The two hosts cross to the "interview area," where they are joined by R. F. WILLIAMS. R. F. *looks intelligent, maybe they're even dressed like a professor with elbow patches, etc.* R. F. *shakes the hosts' hands. [Can we shake hands again yet??? Is it safe?])*

BLUMENTHAL. Welcome!

R. F. WILLIAMS. Thank you. It's an honor to be back on the Kennedy Center's hallowed stage. It says I'm supposed to introduce the finalist for "shortform comedy." I have no idea what that is.

BLUMENTHAL. Neither do we, but it sounds plebeian.

HARRIS. Well, before you do what you came here to do, perhaps we could interview you? We'd love for our audience to see what an actual artist looks like!

BLUMENTHAL. Yeah. We would love everyone to know what they're missing by honoring "influencers" instead of genuine masters of their craft like yourself.

R. F. WILLIAMS. Well okay, haha. But that's a lot of pressure!

BLUMENTHAL. r. f. Williams should need no introduction. They are a Pulitzer Prize–winning poet, MacArthur fellow, and Rhodes scholar. Basically the opposite of a social media "influencer."

HARRIS. Can you tell us about your process?

R. F. WILLIAMS. I think of writing poetry as my sacred duty. So it's something I'm really precious about. I toss about 99% of what I come up with. The remaining 1% gets polished and rewritten and read aloud and rewritten until it's finally ready.

BLUMENTHAL. Now that's a process.

HARRIS. You know none of these influencers are doing that. Not when they can fart out a "tweet" and get a million thumby signs.

R. F. WILLIAMS. You mean likes?

HARRIS. I don't know! Is that what the thumb button does? I'm not on social media!

*(*HARRIS *and* BLUMENTHAL *get a message over their "earpieces.")*

BLUMENTHAL. I'm afraid we have to move on.

HARRIS. Yes, our producers are going to cut the feed if we don't start talking to influencers.

BLUMENTHAL. That's right. And I want America to know, Wyndon and I will stay professional despite what we may feel about these "influencers."

HARRIS. Yes. We promise to give the best interviews we possibly can, regardless of our personal biases. So let's rip off the Band-Aid and start meeting some of these very influential individuals. r. f., would you do the honors?

*(*R. F. *steps forward.)*

R. F. WILLIAMS. Our first influencer guest is a comedian whose song parody videos have received over a hundred million views on YouTube.

BLUMENTHAL. *One hundred million* people watch song parodies? What?

HARRIS. *(To audience:)* Leslie's just a little shocked because we don't get quite that many viewers for our PBS program.

BLUMENTHAL. Last week we got thirty-seven viewers and that was only because it was sweeps and we played nothing but *Antique Roadshow.*

R. F. WILLIAMS. Please join me in welcoming . . . RIAN DEEDS!

Scene 3

*(*RIAN DEEDS *enters, waving to the audience.* RIAN *and* R. F. *shake hands. Then* R. F. *exits as* RIAN *shakes the hosts' hands.)*

RIAN. Hi guys! Thanks for having me!

HARRIS. So. You write very popular song parody videos for YouTube.

RIAN. That's right!

HARRIS. It also says here you're a dentist?

RIAN. Yes! I have my own practice in downtown Des Moines! But I love to make people laugh. And, you know, I like to use my comedy to speak to what's really important.

(Hmm . . . the hosts are honestly intrigued by this.)

Comedy can sometimes get at the truth in a very surprising way.

BLUMENTHAL. Well said. I think I'm, personally, too quick to poo-poo comedy as not being as important as drama. But you're

right, comedy can be used to break down barriers and to speak truth to power.

RIAN. Absolutely, like Shakespeare or Mark Twain.

BOTH HOSTS. *(Ad lib:)* Oh we love Shakespeare. Mark Twain is my favorite! Which is your favorite history play? Mine's *Richard II.*

BLUMENTHAL. I have to admit, this is not how I thought this interview was going to be.

RIAN. Haha. You probably thought I was going to be some lowest-common-denominator buffoon.

BLUMENTHAL. Yes exactly.

HARRIS. Well I'm pretty excited to hear some of your songs!

BLUMENTHAL. Oh yes! I bet they're as inscrutable as my favorite *New Yorker* cartoons!

RIAN. I'd be happy to sing a couple for you. Here's a little Rihanna:

*(*RIAN *sings to the tune of Rihanna's "We Found Love in a Hopeless Place." And look, if you want to do some fun lighting here, we support you.)*

WE FOUND PLAQUE ON YOUR RIGHT BICUSPID
WE FOUND PLAQUE ON YOUR RIGHT BICUSPID
WE FOUND PLAQUE ON YOUR RIGHT BICUSPID

(The hosts are . . . curious, but want to seem into it.)

BLUMENTHAL. Plaque on your right bicuspid—

HARRIS. A bicuspid is, of course, a tooth, the ones with two small points.

BLUMENTHAL. I'm not familiar with the song you're parodying. But I see that you worked some of your dental knowledge in there.

RIAN. Glad you like it! Here's another one:

(Again RIAN *sings, this time to the tune of Adele's "Hello":)*

HELLO FROM YOUR GUMLINE,
YOU MUST'VE BRUSHED A THOUSAND TIMES,
BECAUSE YOU HAVE SERIOUS GUMLINE RECESSION!
WE MUST DEAL WITH THIS PERIODONTAL SITUATION!

BLUMENTHAL. Okay . . .

HARRIS. So we noticed some more dental terms in there.

(Beat. RIAN *looks confused.)*

RIAN. Well, all my songs are about dentistry. I'm a dentist.

HARRIS. But you said your songs are about what's "really important"?

RIAN. Yes. Dentistry is what's really important! So I make sure to list as many dental terms as I can in all my songs. My songs may be hilarious and edgy—

HARRIS. I don't think they are—

RIAN. But they're also about what's most important. Dentist stuff! I LOVE TEETH! Look, I think you'll get the hang of it if you hear another song.

(To the tune of Lizzo's "Juice":)

IT AIN'T MY FAULT IF YOUR DENTAL WORK IS CRACKED,
GOTTA BLAME IT ON YOUR SNACKS,
BLAME IT ON THOSE CRUNCHY SNACKS, BABY,
IT AIN'T MY FAULT IF YOUR CAVITY IS WHACK,
GOTTA BLAME IT ON YOUR SNACKS,
YOU HAD A CRUNCHY NUT ATTACK,
YA-YA-OW! YA-YA-OW! YA-YA-OW!

HARRIS. That didn't clear anything up for me. How about you, Leslie?

BLUMENTHAL. ALL YOUR SONGS ARE JUST DUMB DENTIST THINGS.

HARRIS. I think what Leslie is trying to say is that, there doesn't seem to be any *deeper* meaning. You just put dentist words into regular songs.

BLUMENTHAL. And it's not even funny! You're nothing like Mark Twain.

RIAN. Well . . . eighty-one million likes say otherwise.

HARRIS. You got eighty-one million people to click on the thumb button?

RIAN. Want to hear some Taylor Swift?

BLUMENTHAL. I think we're out of time—

RIAN. *(To the tune of "Shake it Off":)*

WELL YOU'VE FACED A LOT OF SCORN, SCORN, SCORN,
SCORN, SCORN,
BUT TODAY YOU'LL BE REBORN, BORN, BORN, BORN, BORN,
PREPARE TO EAT SOME CORN, CORN, CORN, CORN, CORN,
LET'S TAKE YOUR BRACES OFF! YOUR BRACES OFF!

HARRIS. Thank you so much, Rian, for giving our ears a root canal.

*(*RIAN *exits, waving and blowing kisses to the audience.)*

Scene 4

BLUMENTHAL. Off to a great start.

HARRIS. I don't understand it. There must be *good* comedians on the internet. How is that guy so popular?

BLUMENTHAL. Because the world makes no sense, Wyndon.

(As BLUMENTHAL *intros the next guest,* HARRIS *exits.)*

(Reading from a note card or prompter:) Our next influencer is a finance guru. Joey Loughton's YouTube channel has amassed a large audience by sharing stock tips, insider knowledge, and market forecasts.

*(*JOEY *enters in a suit. They are carrying a framed photograph of a Maine Coon. [Or instead, it might be fun to have a projector with some images of Joey and their cat flicking by in the background if you have access to one. If not, no worries, a framed photo will do!])*

And Joey separates themself from the pack by getting all those tips from their Maine Coon.

*(*BLUMENTHAL *looks up from their note card/prompter.)*

BLUMENTHAL. Is that a *cat?* Is this real?

JOEY. Hey guys. Thanks so much for this great honor. Fluffy and I are humbled, truly humbled.

BLUMENTHAL. Well, you aren't the honoree yet. Everyone still has to vote.

JOEY. Oh, right, right, right. Thanks for the nomination.

*(*JOEY *winks.)*

BLUMENTHAL. Just tell us your deal.

JOEY. Well, I had just come out of my third start-up flop, and I was hitting the market hard trying to get liquid. Long story short, I was broke. That's when I noticed my cat Fluffy circling her litter box not once, not twice, but thrice before going in.

BLUMENTHAL. What's so special about that?

JOEY. She's usually a once around the track kind of a girl.

BLUMENTHAL. Still not getting the connection.

JOEY. Well, obviously, she was trying to tell me to stopping beating around the box and whip up the courage to buy the stock I was looking at. By closing, I had made over $100,000. So the next day I started tracking her behavior, and it looks like Fluff-Fluffs here really knows her stuff.

BLUMENTHAL. Really. You don't think you're reading too much into this? Couldn't it have just been a coincidence?

JOEY. Well, to the tell you the truth, I was a bit skeptical. At first, I thought maybe Foo-Foo just needed to switch to wet food, and I needed to stop staying up for thirty-six hours at a time. But when she predicted the athleisure craze and the boom in 3D printing, that's when I figured more people would want to know about this.

BLUMENTHAL. And how exactly did she do that?

JOEY. Oh, it was incredible. She hacked up a hair ball on my yoga mat and then knocked my rubber band ball off my desk.

BLUMENTHAL. Those are things cats do all the time.

JOEY. Not my Floofer.

BLUMENTHAL. But couldn't you have easily interpreted that to mean you should *sell* that stock?

JOEY. Yeah, well, obviously you aren't a regular subscriber, or you'd know how absurd you sound.

BLUMENTHAL. All right, all right, I understand you have a big tip you'd like to give us today?

JOEY. Oh, yes, our big announcement. We are ready to tell you today that our little Fluffernutter has got the A1, top of the line, cream of the crop, rad, rad, super stellar dope drop on the next market trend.

BLUMENTHAL. Which is?

JOEY. Print media. Get into it.

BLUMENTHAL. I . . . don't think that's good advice.

JOEY. Well, suit yourself, friend, but Fluffers slept in her cat bed last night, and she hadn't set foot in that thing since I bought it two years ago. She only slept in the empty cardboard box that the cat bed came in. Obviously, that screams INVEST IN NEWSPAPERS.

BLUMENTHAL. What if she decides to claw at your leather couch? Then what? Will you sell your Apple stock?

JOEY. Um, no, weird. Clawing is just clawing. Let's not go crazy here.

BLUMENTHAL. So litter box habits matter but clawing doesn't mean anything?

JOEY. It's good for her nails.

BLUMENTHAL. Okay, this is ridiculous. Does Fluffy even have any credentials? I mean, why should we follow your cat's advice and not the raccoons that dig up my lawn?

JOEY. Fluffy has an honorary degree from Wharton.

*(*HARRIS *runs on to help out.)*

BLUMENTHAL. I thought they weren't giving those out anymore.

JOEY. And Fluffs has a Net Promoter Score of positive 90.

HARRIS. Hey, you went to Penn too, didn't you, Leslie?

BLUMENTHAL. *(Pulls hair out:)* GAHH!

HARRIS. Okay. Well, Joey and Fluffy, congratulations on all your success. Good luck to you in your quest to become our Kennedy Center Influencer.

JOEY. Hey, thanks guys. And for all my followers, don't forget to tune in tomorrow. We'll check in with our Laser Pointer Watch to see if Fluffage is finally ready to make a decision about Bitcoin.

*(*JOEY *waves and exits.)*

Scene 5

(The hosts cross to the podium.)

HARRIS. So that person—and their cat—got more thumb-likes than a real economist? That's ridiculous! How many followers does Ben Bernanke have?

BLUMENTHAL. America, is this what you wanted? You could have honored a genius poet tonight but instead you're going to end up with a constipated cat.

HARRIS. Or a very on-brand singing dentist.

BLUMENTHAL. Let's keep it moving. Want to take the next one?

*(*BLUMENTHAL *exits as* HARRIS *intros the next guest.)*

HARRIS. People who are bored with their fitness routine will often turn to online fitness influencers for innovative workouts like Goat Yoga or Cardioke. Our next influencer is famous for the way they exploded on both the fitness and art scenes by combining kickboxing and photography to create kickboxotography. KT, who runs the YouTube channel Kics and Pics, has inspired people all over the country to maintain a healthy lifestyle while capturing unique images to change their perspective on life. Welcome, KT.

*(*HARRIS *crosses back to the interview area.)*

*(*KT *enters in workout gear, holding a camera [or phone, whatever you have]. She walks in a unique way, always holding her torso at*

a peculiar angle, or low to the ground, or maybe backward? She throws a kick in here and there.)

KT. It's great to be here, Wyndon.

(She sits, but continues to constantly change her body positioning while she talks to HARRIS*, as if she's trying to find the perfect angle to see them.)*

HARRIS. Okay, well, it's good to have you here.

*(*KT *continues pivoting.)*

Are you comfortable enough in your chair there? We can get you another one if that means you'll stop moving.

KT. Oh no, Wyndon! The chair is marvelous. I'm just always looking for the perfect angle. I'll stop when I find the right one.

HARRIS. It is making me little dizzy, but I have a more sensitive inner ear than most.

KT. Oh, there it is.

*(*KT *has stopped in a unique position.)*

HARRIS. So tell me, KT, what made you want to combine kickboxing, which involves continuous jostling, and photography, which demands an element of stillness, and how did you reconcile the two?

KT. Well, Wyndon, I'll show you. With my Kics and Pics Flash Challenge, in two minutes you'll see how you can gain a new vantage point on life while also sculpting killer quads.

HARRIS. Oh, no, no. I don't sport.

KT. Come on, get up! You'll get your heart rate up and new prints for your gallery wall!

HARRIS. Well, I have been a little low on my steps for the week.

KT. The only equipment you'll need for this series is yourself and a Nikon D3500.

HARRIS. Is that a camera? I don't have that.

KT. You can just use your phone!

(Both KT *and* HARRIS *pick up their cameras—cameras can be on a phone, whatever you've got.* HARRIS *takes their jacket off/ loosens tie/rolls up sleeves.)*

Now, a quick warm-up—stand tall, right hand up, pointer finger extended. Now, push that button.

*(*KT*, right hand up, makes a small repetitive motion with her pointer finger as if taking a picture. Everything else is still.* HARRIS*, skeptical, follows along.)*

1, 2. 1, 2. That's right, keep it going for 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Woo! Great warm-up. Moving into the work, first combination is kick, kick, jab, jab, flash, jump, flash, kick! Keep those feet moving!

*(*KT *keeps repeating the motions of the first combination with great intensity.* HARRIS *tries to keep up, but is very uncoordinated.)*

Kick, kick, jab, jab, flash, jump, flash, kick, check-your-aperture-to-shutter-speed-ratio-to-make-sure-it's-the-ideal-setting! Kick, kick, jab, jab, flash, jump, flash, kick!

*(*HARRIS *is very thrown by this camera direction, balance wobbly.)*

Good, good. Stay with me, Wyndon! Next combination, uppercut, uppercut, flash, kick, flash, jab!

(As KT *repeats the combination,* HARRIS *fumbles the camera somewhere in the middle, still trying but not able to keep up.)*

Uppercut, uppercut, flash, kick, flash, jab! Remember to observe your use of negative space and adjust accordingly! Uppercut, uppercut, flash, kick, flash, jab!

*(*HARRIS *is barely hanging on at this point.)*

Now, fifteen-second rest here. Keep those feet in at least a boxer shuffle.

*(*HARRIS *bends over, catching their breath, then picks up the camera to try to take a look at some of the pictures they took.)*

No chimping! Do not peek at the pics until the series is complete! Okay, moving into the final burn-out round. Ready, go! Roundhouse, roundhouse and bob and weave and bob and weave and bob and weave and bob and weave.

*(*KT *continues this last combination. This combo is too much for* HARRIS*. Somewhere on the second or third time through,* HARRIS *loses balance and falls.)*

Don't forget to minimize your longitudinal chromatic aberration!

*(*KT *notices* HARRIS *on the floor.)*

Yes, Wyndon, take it down to the floor, get creative! I find that allowing the form of the strenuous activity of kickboxing to dictate the viewpoint of the photos really gets you out of your head. And last time through—

*(*KT *finishes up the last combination.)*

Woo! Great workout and great shoot session! If you're looking for something a little longer, don't forget to check out my thirty-minute Lens and Cleanse series. Now we can take a look at those photos.

*(*HARRIS *scrapes themselves off the floor and looks at their camera.)*

Tell me what you see.

HARRIS. The ceiling, I see the ceiling.

KT. And how do you feel seeing the ceiling from this angle?

HARRIS. A little grossed out. There are several cobwebs. Somebody should clean up there!

KT. You see! New perspectives that inspire action!

HARRIS. Well, I guess I did reach my target heart rate, but I don't know who would ever want any of these photos. Why don't we take a look at yours.

(They both huddle over KT's camera. As KT *swipes through the photos, she looks pleased.* HARRIS *gets increasingly perplexed. [Again, if you want to project them, great. But it's not necessary.])*

KT. These turned out lovely. You can really feel the movement here. I love the forced perspective in this one.

(The actor can improv a bit here based on the photos.)

HARRIS. But these are also terrible, no better than mine are.

KT. It does take a while to develop the eye.

HARRIS. That is literally a blurry picture of your shoe.

KT. Well, I've already sold three prints from this series.

(Looks down at phone.)

Oh, four!

HARRIS. Well, it's been exhausting, painful, and a little existentially demoralizing, KT. Thanks for everything.

*(*KT *smiles and waves to the audience as she exits the same strange way she entered.)*

*(*BLUMENTHAL *reenters bearing an ice pack for* HARRIS*, who ices their neck.)*

Scene 6

HARRIS. Please tell me our next guest is an opera singer or a physicist. Or at least something sedentary.

BLUMENTHAL. Well, he's sedentary. Our next guest is the top influencer in the category of Gaming.

HARRIS. Gaming? We could be honoring our country's most gifted poet right now—the person *putting words to the human condition . . .*

BLUMENTHAL. But we're not. Please welcome Ty Boom.

*(*TY *enters the stage. If you have the ability, some fun upbeat [punk?] music and lights would be great. Despite the entrance cue,* TY *is hangdog and contrite.)*

Ty Boom, your Twitch channel has amassed more than six hundred million views, more than eighty million subscribers, and a throng of supportive fans—

TY. Can I just say something before we start?

*(*BLUMENTHAL *is interrupted midspiel; the hosts seem taken aback.)*

BLUMENTHAL. Uh—of course.

TY. I just want to say, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. In fact, I'd like to read a statement from my Notes.

*(*TY *reads off his phone.)*

What I said was immature and ignorant. I know I offended a lot of people. And I just want to say, from my heart, that I am truly sorry.

HARRIS. Oh . . . yes. I read about a controversy surrounding some comments you made.

TY. *(Still remorseful:)* It was in the heat of the game. But that doesn't excuse what I said. I just want to say, I'm sorry to dads everywhere. And to goats. I wish I never said any of it.

BLUMENTHAL. Wow. Thank you for that sincere apology.

HARRIS. Now let's talk about your channel—

(If there's a mic, TY *could grab it from* HARRIS *here.)*

TY. And to all of my fans out there, my "Boomers." I just want to say, I'm sorry to you too. I let you down. And I called you a lot of names. Most of which I can't repeat because this is being broadcast live on PBS.

HARRIS. Haha no please don't.

TY. These are the names that I can say on TV: Poopheads, poopie heads, gas guzzlers, mommielovers, mommiehaters, boogerburgers.

BLUMENTHAL. I think we get the—

TY. NOOBS, Nooblers, noobies, nobbs, nobblers, nerfherders, twigs, toilet queens, master builders, king salmon—

HARRIS. I'm not sure these are even insults—

TY. And . . . then all the political stuff.

BLUMENTHAL. PLEASE STOP! I think we all get the idea. You're sorry.

TY. I don't deserve this. Don't vote for me.

HARRIS. Okay, that's a first. You actually don't want to win a Kennedy Center honor?

TY. *(Crying desperately:)* I DON'T DESERVE IT! I'M A MONSTER! I'VE TAKEN MY POSITION OF PRIVILEGE AND USED IT TO PUNCH DOWN! I'VE SAID SO MANY OFFENSIVE THINGS! I'VE TWEETED SEVENTEEN OFFENSIVE THINGS DURING THIS INTERVIEW!

*(*TY *holds up his phone.* HARRIS *and* BLUMENTHAL *look at it closely.)*

BOTH HOSTS. *(Ad lib:)* WHOA! WOW! How did you— That is so MEAN! Do you really think my feet look like bird feet?

TY. *(Woefully:)* I can't stop! I'm very mean!

*(*TY *sobs harder.)*

HARRIS. Okay, well thank you for being here today. I guess we'll say goodbye now.

TY. Goodbye. But before I go, make sure to check out our merch that says "Ty Sorry" and "Ty Bad" and "Flagged as inappropriate" in our online store!

HARRIS. Wait. You're selling apology MERCH?

TY. Gaming is as gaming does.

BLUMENTHAL. What the hell does that mean? "Gaming is as gaming does?"

TY. It's one of our most popular T-shirt slogans!

BLUMENTHAL. But that's nonsense!

TY. I'M SORRY YOU FEEL THAT WAY! I'M SO SO SORRY!

BLUMENTHAL. Ty Boom everyone!

*(*TY *exits, crying and waving.)*

Scene 7

HARRIS. Whelp. Tonight has been exactly what I thought it was going to be.

BLUMENTHAL. Yes. We've found ourselves interviewing the silliest individuals ever to grace the Kennedy Center's stage.

HARRIS. We're presiding over a popularity contest. We might as well be *Ryan Seacrest*.

BLUMENTHAL. I cannot be Ryan Seacrest! I'm—I'm—Edward R. Murrow! I went to Penn, for heaven's sake!

HARRIS. I once interviewed Maya Angelou. Maya. Angelou.

(The two hosts sigh and wonder how they got here.)

BLUMENTHAL. *(Nudging* HARRIS*:)* They want you to intro the next influencer.

*(*BLUMENTHAL *exits and* HARRIS *moves to the podium.)*

HARRIS. Yeah, yeah, I'm doing it. Our next guest is a fashion influencer—

*(*HARRIS *is interrupted by electronic dance music* DANNY *enters the stage. If possible, there are flashing lights.* DANNY *is wearing long underwear and sunglasses and carries a timer of some sort [this can be an egg timer, a small hourglass, a stopwatch—something that would measure roughly one minute], and a laundry bag.* DANNY *empties the contents of the bag—many pairs of pants.* DANNY *does a short preparatory dance, then starts the timer.* DANNY *ferociously begins to put on pair after pair of pants. After each pair of pants gets buttoned or zippered or tightened, there is some kind of small flourish, then onto the next pair. This action continues over* HARRIS *trying to engage their guest.)*

Hello?

(No response from DANNY*, who keeps putting on pants.)*

Hello hello? We seemed to have caught our next guest off guard, although I believe our stage manager gave you ample time to get dressed. We're live on national television.

(Nothing.)

You'd think the fashion influencer would have thought through their outfit a little more thoroughly.

*(*HARRIS *gets slightly curious—)*

Why only pants on top of pants? Is that what the kids are doing these days? What happened to bell-bottoms?

(Still nothing from DANNY*, who keeps putting on pants.* HARRIS *is getting really frustrated now—)*

Now, look, you pushed for the biggest dressing room and now you come out not even—

*(*BLUMENTHAL *stomps on and whispers something in* HARRIS*'s ear.)*

(To offstage stage manager:) But they're just putting on pants . . .

*(*BLUMENTHAL *whispers again.)*

This is the thing?

(They watch DANNY *pull on another pair.* BLUMENTHAL *nods and exits again.)*

Well, folks, I am told that this may actually be the thing . . .
(Trying to salvage the "interview":) Okay, so it looks like there's a stopwatch *(or hourglass or egg timer).* So there must be some kind of time element involved here . . .

(Deep breath,)

If you're just joining us, it turns out that we're watching—

(The timer goes off. [It doesn't have to be the timer the actor has onstage, just a sound cue interrupting the line.] DANNY*, slightly winded by now, stops wherever they are and counts how many pants they have on. They hold up fingers for how many pants they put on. There is a celebratory dance.* DANNY *falls over. It's hard to move in that many pairs of pants.)*

DANNY. PAAAAAAANNTS!

*(*DANNY *exits.)*

HARRIS. . . . the worst thing I've ever seen.

*(*HARRIS *and* BLUMENTHAL *blow past each other as* HARRIS *exits and* BLUMENTHAL *enters.)*

BLUMENTHAL. What was with the sunglasses?

HARRIS. What was with the everything? Who's next?

Scene 8

*(*BLUMENTHAL *walks to the interview area.)*

BLUMENTHAL. Please join me in welcoming our next guest, from the realm of beauty, Tony Gloss.

*(*TONY GLOSS *enters, smiling and waving.)*

TONY GLOSS. Thank you SO much for having me! This is the thrill of my lifetime! So blessed, so blessed!

*(*TONY *makes elaborate prayer hands to the audience and seems genuinely moved.)*

BLUMENTHAL. So Tony, you are a makeup "tutorialist." Tell us what that means.

TONY GLOSS. Absolutely! So. I make vids that show peeps applying makes.

BLUMENTHAL. For anyone out there who doesn't know, "makes" is short for makeup. And "peeps" is short for people.

TONY GLOSS. Ya. Anyone who's seen my vids knows that.

BLUMENTHAL. Right. But in case there's anyone out there who hasn't . . .

TONY GLOSS. If there's anyone out there who still hasn't seen my vids, then I pity them. But it's very unlikely. I'm very pop.

BLUMENTHAL. U-lar. Popular is what he means. So, Tony, you have pioneered a technique called "No-Makeup Makeup."

TONY GLOSS. Right. No makes-makes. It's more than a makeup philosophy—it's a way of life. Like right now, it probably looks like I'm not wearing any makeup. But I very much am. It's No-Makeup Makeup.

BLUMENTHAL. Wow okay. Because I'm sitting right next to you and it really doesn't look like you're wearing makeup.

TONY GLOSS. That's right it *LOOKS* like I'm not wearing anything. When in fact, I have applied foundation, eyeliner, shadow, contour, lipstick, highlighter, blush, powder, and fake eyelashes.

BLUMENTHAL. Wow. That's . . . a lot.

TONY GLOSS. It is!

BLUMENTHAL. So Tony, do you think you could show us how to apply No-Makeup Makeup?

TONY GLOSS. Absolutely! No makes-makes!

BLUMENTHAL. I'm not calling it that—

TONY GLOSS. Let's bring out a mod!

*(*TONY'S MODEL *enters. This can be the actor who plays any of the other influencers, OR* TONY *could apply makeup directly to* HARRIS.*)*

I'm going to start with my go-to foundation: Liquid Shimmer Matte Base by Fattier *(pronounced "Fatty-AY")* in toasted fair. I like it because it's 800 SPF but it still goes on very thin.

BLUMENTHAL. I mean, I can barely tell you're wearing it. So this is what you mean by "No-Makeup Makeup"?

TONY GLOSS. No. This is just step one. Once I've applied this base coat all over my face, I move on to step two.

(He picks up another product.)

This is Eradicate Makeup Remover by SARS.

(He starts wiping off all the makeup he just applied.)

This will take off pretty much anything you have on your face. It gets all the way down to your pores.

BLUMENTHAL. But why would you . . . You're wiping *off* everything you just put on?

TONY GLOSS. That's right. No makes-makes.

BLUMENTHAL. So you're back to wearing nothing.

TONY GLOSS. Believe me, if Lady Macbeth had some Eradicate by SARS she'd have totally gotten away with murder. It stings actually! That's how you know it's working.

BLUMENTHAL. So . . . there's no makeup.

TONY GLOSS. No *makes*-makes.

BLUMENTHAL. So. You're a makeup tutorialist. WHO DOESN'T WEAR MAKEUP? I'm sorry. I'm going to need a second.

*(*BLUMENTHAL *steps offstage to huff and pace.)*

TONY GLOSS. I don't think you're getting it. Look, if foundation isn't your thing, don't worry! There's lots more on my channel! How about when there's a really special occasion? You might want to sport a bold lip. I know I often will.

*(*TONY *takes out a bold lipstick and a liner.)*

Start with moist lips and add a clean line of muted lip pencil, sharpened.

*(*TONY *does this with great attention to detail.)*

Then add the bold lip. This is Shock and Awe by Butterface.

(He applies lipstick carefully. BLUMENTHAL *returns.)*

BLUMENTHAL. Okay . . . that actually looks pretty good.

TONY GLOSS. Thanks! I love this color. Now, you want your lip color to stay put all day, so I suggest a setting spray. This is Formaldehyde by Elford Laboratories.

(He spritzes some on the model's lips.)

Perfect!

(Beat. The model smiles with bold lips.)

And now the final step—

(He takes a big rag and fully wipes the color off the lips.)

BLUMENTHAL. No! You're just—

TONY GLOSS. This is FORGOTTEN by Dementia *(pronounced "Dementi-AY").*

BLUMENTHAL. So you just wiped the lip— OKAY THAT'S ALL THE TIME WE HAVE. THIS WAS TONY GLOSS, CREATOR OF THE CHANNEL NO MAKEUP-MAKEUP AND A POINTLESS PIECE OF GARBAGE WHO DOES ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. NOTHING!

*(*BLUMENTHAL *shoos* TONY *off the stage.)*

Wyndon, you take it from here. I'm going to need a second please.

*(*BLUMENTHAL *once again goes offstage. This time we hear the sounds of a tantrum: things being knocked over, frustrated shouts.* HARRIS *smiles at the audience as if trying to ignore the sounds. After a few beats,* BLUMENTHAL *returns.)*

HARRIS. Did you get it out of your system?

BLUMENTHAL. NOPE! Still furious! What's your secret?

HARRIS. I stopped caring about this twenty minutes ago.

(Tosses pen over shoulder.)

Scene 9

BLUMENTHAL. Right! Our next guest is the most popular political influencer on YouTube. Politics! Finally! Is it someone we know? Is it Gwen Ifill? Mara Liasson? That rake Stephanopoulos?

HARRIS. It says our guest is most famous for his . . . conspiracy theories? Wait, are you kidding me? That's a ludicrous and dangerous thing to be famous for!

BLUMENTHAL. Why are we giving this person a platform? We could be talking about IRREGULAR RHYME STRUCTURES and whether BLANK VERSE OR FREE VERSE IS MORE EXPRESSIVE!

HARRIS. That's a fascinating question and I think it's blank verse.

BLUMENTHAL. You're mad! It's definitely free verse!

HARRIS. America, why can't you just vote for a poet?

BLUMENTHAL. Yeah, just write in r. f.'s name!

HARRIS. Forget all this influencer rubbish.

*(*ALEX PATRIOT *gingerly enters the stage, looking around.* ALEX *is super polite, smiles.)*

ALEX. Hi there! Sorry, I didn't know if it was time for me to come out yet?

HARRIS. We're as ready as we'll ever be. To interview a conspiracy theorist.

ALEX. Haha. Yeah. Thanks for having me!

BLUMENTHAL. Say hello to our esteemed Kennedy Center audience and to all the folks viewing at home.

ALEX. Folks viewing at home? Sorry? Is this being broadcast live?

HARRIS. Yes. Of course, we—

*(*ALEX *looks surprised, then immediately shifts into the intense "Alex Patriot" persona.)*

ALEX. TYPICAL MOVE BY THE MEDIA! GOTCHA JOURNALISM! Well, I'm ready for you! BRING IT ON!

BLUMENTHAL. Dear god.

HARRIS. In case anyone is unfamiliar with your work—like I was prior to this very moment as I read the teleprompter*—Alex Patriot, you are an internet-famous conspiracy theorist?

*(*Obviously, you can switch "teleprompter" to "note cards" if you prefer to use them instead.)*

ALEX. You're not better than me. My tax dollars pay your Public Broadcasting salary. Except joke's on you, I DON'T PAY TAXES.

HARRIS. The prompter is also telling me that you're most famous for your "Oreo conspiracy."

ALEX. Hell yeah. Prepare to get red-pilled. Or as the merch I sell online says, "The truth will set you FREEDOM."

BLUMENTHAL. What the hell does that mean? The truth will set you FREEDOM? That makes no grammatical sense.

ALEX. Buckle up because I don't follow the rules of grammar any more than I follow the rules of the road. I AM A DANGER TO MYSELF AND OTHERS.

*(*ALEX *takes a package of Oreos out of their jacket and holds them out to the hosts.)*

See this? Crisp chocolate cookie. Creamy white filling. Think this looks like a sweet and simple snack?

(Half a beat.)

WRONG! I mean, sure, they might taste good. But wake up and smell the deception, little piggy. What do you think gives Oreo cookies that special, next-level, can't-eat-just-one taste?

(Beat.)

HARRIS. Are you pausing because you think we're going to interact with you? We're not.

ALEX. BECAUSE OREO COOKIES ARE MADE OF PUPPIES.

*(*ALEX *leans back and does that head-exploding gesture.)*

THINK ABOUT IT! Puppies are the best thing in the whole world. They make you feel all warm and fuzzy and for a fleeting moment like you could actually empathize with another living being.

*(*ALEX *takes an Oreo out of the package.)*

What else makes you feel all warm and fuzzy, like, for a fleeting moment, the world isn't garbage and maybe your mom loves you even though she moved to Albuquerque with Ted? Oreo cookies!

*(*ALEX *crushes the Oreo with their fist.)*

Hence. They must be made. Of. Puppies.

(Head-explosion thing again. More graphic this time. BLUMENTHAL *exits the stage.)*

I'm sorry to be the one to tell you but I'm actually not sorry because I love what I do. I open eyes.

HARRIS. Okay. What you're saying is patently, provably false. Oreo cookies list their ingredients on the package. They are made of *(reading from phone:)* sugar, enriched flour, high oleic canola oil.

ALEX. Baa baa baa little sheepman. That's where you're wrong. They're actually made of puppies.

HARRIS. Okay well I went to an Oreo factory with my family and we saw them making Oreos and then we ate them—

ALEX. That was a deepfake.

HARRIS. I was THERE!

ALEX. Then you must be in on it. You, the FDA, the FBI, my mom, you're all part of the cover-up!

HARRIS. I assure you. I am not part of a cover-up.

*(*BLUMENTHAL *returns calmly carrying a glass of milk.)*

ALEX. OREOS ARE MADE OF PUPPIES. OREOS ARE MADE OF PUPPIES. IF YOU DUNK THEM, THE PUPPIES WILL COME OUT IN THE MILK!

BLUMENTHAL. Okay, that is an outrageous claim. We can dunk them right here and prove you wrong.

*(*BLUMENTHAL *dunks an Oreo. No puppies drop out.)*

ALEX. Well not if you do it like *that!* You have to dunk them the right way! ANYWAY, THAT DOESN'T PROVE ME WRONG! I *BELIEVE it so it's A FACT!*

BLUMENTHAL. That's not how facts work.

ALEX. Well, you should know. Working for "PBS," the network of "FACTS."

HARRIS. Why are you putting those in quotes? I really do work for PBS.

ALEX. Everyone knows PBS was invented by 5G as a way to control our minds.

HARRIS. That's absurd. PBS has been around since the '60s and 5G is a new technology. These are facts.

ALEX. Come on, man, don't be such a cuck for facts! You need to wake up. BRRRNG! I AM YOUR ALARM CLOCK TIME TO WAKE UP!

BLUMENTHAL. Okay, I think we've heard enough.

ALEX. Do I really have to connect the dots for you, LITTLE LAMBS? It all circles back to the puppies! And 5G! OREOS! PUPPIES! Think about it.

HARRIS. Well, I think America has made up its mind whether to vote for you for Kennedy Center honoree.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!



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