

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - MORNING (DAY 1)

A woman's hand, polished pail pink nails and several thin gold bracelets, flips a horizontal series of light switches.

Lights pop on along the ceiling of the office. It's a large, spare space with flat screens on the wall and two frosted glass private offices at either end. Assistant desks in front of the offices face each other across rows of cubicles.

Giant black letters fill an accent wall announcing the name of this chic lifestyle website: **CRITICAL MASS ONLINE**

KATIE PRESTON (23), an attractive redhead with a "go getter" vibe in a modern pencil skirt and blouse, radiates confidence as she clings to her large coffee and leans against one of the two assistant desks. She surveys the empty office, her domain, then looks at her analogue watch: **7:10 AM**

KATIE

Huh. Five minutes early. *Bang.*

We see Katie kicking off her day with an effortless poise:

She flips on her computer and it CHIMES to life.

She walks down the series of flat screens flipping them on.

She quickly sorts the loose stack of mail on her desk.

She opens saved sites on her computer: **US WEEKLY, TMZ, PEOPLE**

She flips on the coffee maker in the break alcove.

She retrieves several red pens from an office supply cabinet.

She drops the pens into a pirate themed "HELLO KITTY" mug on her desk next to a photo of Katie looking fabulously bored in a dress and sun glasses with a big sign that reads: **"GOSSIP."**

She opens her e-mail and her eyes immediately land on a red flagged message: **WILL BE IN TODAY, PLEASE PRINT. PRIVATE!**

Suddenly raw panic eclipses any serenity on Katie's face.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Oh fuck.

Katie spins to look at the frosted glass office door behind her. The stenciled letters read: **ANN MARIE RINGER, EDITOR**

She grabs Clorox wipes from one drawer, a fresh ream of white printer paper from another, and disappears into...

INT. ANN MARIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Her boss's office. Chic. A glass top oak desk, modern chairs, a leather couch, and a fur rug. The wall behind the desk has the same block letters: **CULTURE IS FREE. DON'T ASK, JUST TAKE**

Katie uses the Clorox wipes to clean everything including the phone handset, fills a small printer with the fresh printer paper, sets out several tabloids in an orderly line, pours a bit of water into an elaborate orchid, and places a single bottle of Orangina and a straw on a napkin.

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Katie steps out of the office, closes the door, and drops the Clorox wipes back into her drawer and selects print on the red flagged e-mail just as the phone on her desk RINGS. She slips into her chair and scoops it up...

KATIE

Critical Mass Online, Ann Marie  
Ringer's office. This is Katie.

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - LATER THAT MORNING

Katie is in the same place working away, but now the cubicles are full of writers and reporters, the air alive with TYPING, PHONES, CHATTER. The flat screens glow with CNN, E!, MSNBC.

The IM sound PINGS on Katie's computer: **WYATT: "DRINKS TONIGHT? HAVE TO REVIEW A BAR. THE THIRSTY CROW."**

Katie glances over the cubicles to see Wyatt (23), gay, mustached, polished hipster writer, the fun kind of deadpan hateful, pop up from his desk and mime chugging a drink.

Katie types: **"SHE'S HERE TODAY!! MIGHT NOT SURVIVE."**

Wyatt mimes shooting himself in the head.

Katie LAUGHS but her view is blocked as ANDREW (21), a good natured slacker intern with a jock body under a casual polo and a boyish invincibility, steps up to her desk with a grin. He's clutching a stack of folders. As he opens his mouth...

Katie's phone RINGS. She holds up a finger for him to wait.

KATIE

Critical Mass Online, Ann Marie  
Ringer's... Yes, actually, she *is*  
in office today. But I'll need to  
take a message.

Andrew's eyes go wide in horror. He looks at the door. He drops the folders on Katie's desk and mouths the words...

ANDREW

She's in there?!

Katie also mimes shooting herself in the head. She hangs up the phone as she jots down a message.

KATIE

Andrew. Just roll out of bed? Don't most interns dress to impress.

ANDREW

So I was gonna compliment your shoes, but you screwed it up. You in a bad mood because *she's* here?

KATIE

*She's* a legend. *She* does pop culture stories no one else can.

ANDREW

Pshah, it's glorified gossip.

The IM sound PINGS: **TESS: "DROOLING ON THE INTERNS MUCH?"**

As she continues speaking, Katie eyes down the opposing assistant desk where TESS (25), an icy blonde straight out of In Style magazine, is "smiling" back at her. It's not nice.

KATIE

Well, that's what we do here: reviews, politics, gossip, so get on board. And I've read Ann Marie's stories obsessively since I was a teenager. I want to work with her. It's... better when she's here.

ANDREW

Now say it without the weird pause.

KATIE

*I do like her.*

ANDREW

That's why you mimed shooting yourself? Come on, it's terrifying on the random days she shows up.

She reaches up and slaps his arm. The IM sound PINGS: **WYATT: "BE SURE YOU CARRY SCISSORS OR A STAPLER FOR PROTECTION."**

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Ouch. You're lucky I'm an intern.  
If I fully worked here, I'd file an  
assault complaint with HR.

Katie types: **"NO SCISSORS. I MIGHT STAB ANN MARIE TO DEATH."**

KATIE

And what would HR say about you  
hitting on me every morning?

ANDREW

That I'm dedicated?

He puts up his hands in faux surrender and backs away as  
Katie's IM sound PINGS. **TESS: "WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?"**

Katie looks at the side by side IM windows - only to realize  
she accidentally sent the IM about stabbing her boss to Tess!

ANN MARIE (O.S.)

Katie! Now!

INT. ANN MARIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ANN MARIE RINGER (40s/50s), a well-preserved party girl who  
carries herself like an empress in Betsy Johnson, is on the  
phone. She drinks her Orangina. Her voice is like an axe.

ANN MARIE

What *exactly* is happening here?

KATIE

I set up your Björk meeting. It was  
a *lot* of Icelandic. And we got  
photo approval for the Zac Efron-

ANN MARIE

No. Can you tell me what's wrong  
with this straw? In my Orangina?

With an unamused face, Ann Marie bends the flexi straw.

KATIE

I had no idea it was a flexi straw.

ANN MARIE

Ugh, I realize I'm here as little  
as possible, so it's not entirely  
your fault that you're *untrained*.  
But isn't your worthlessness just  
exhausting? Now, I don't see the  
pages I e-mailed this morning?

Katie nervously glances over at the empty personal printer.

KATIE

Oh, it must have routed to the main printer instead of your private-

Ann Marie hangs up the phone without breaking eye contact, arches an eyebrow, and toys with her simple gold necklace.

ANN MARIE

Stop. Katie, one of the *private* documents that I send to you as *private* encrypted files and forbade you to read because they're *private* is now on the public printer?

KATIE

Oh no, it's not public. It's right-

ANN MARIE

Why am I surprised? If you were even mildly competent you'd be *writing* here not answering phones. Please understand that tiny details like straws and printers invalidate any other moderately decent work you might do for the rest of the day. My job is telling *the truth*, things people might not like to hear, and the truth is *you think you're good at your job. But you are not.* Now go get my document.

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Katie makes a beeline for the printer.

ANN MARIE (O.S.)

And bring me a *normal* straw!

But JOSH (30), cocky, tailored, and too attractive to be a political writer, leans against the machine. He knows he's in her way. Katie stops at the sight of him, quickly wipes away her post-Ann Marie tears, and tries to search around him.

JOSH

So I heard Ann Marie shouting.

KATIE

Josh, don't. Was there a print out?

JOSH

Don't let her talk to you that way.

KATIE

I'm her assistant, it's my job.

JOSH

That's called Stockholm syndrome.

KATIE

I'm fine. Hero worship, crushing student loan debt, and zero options can all inspire a thick skin.

JOSH

Amazing you haven't snapped yet.

KATIE

Plus, she promised me my own column if I can make it two full years.

JOSH

I've been a political editor at this website for three years. She's had five assistants. *Five*. None of them became writers, but two of them are catatonic now.

KATIE

Next time you drunk text for a hook-up, maybe I'll be catatonic, too.

JOSH

Drunk texting worked at least once.

Josh holds up the stack of pages Katie needs. Katie leans in, guilty, and snatches the papers from him...

KATIE

That was a one time slip up and I blame really strong whiskey. If you want another shot with me, late night texting will not get it done.

JOSH

I'm gonna keep trying though.

She winks at him and walks back towards Ann Marie's office. But she quickly detours past Tess's desk...

KATIE

Sorry, Tess. That IM about stabbing Ann Marie was just a silly joke.

TESS

And it was *so* funny. *Bye*.

INT. ANN MARIE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Ann Marie is still on the phone. Katie pops her head in and holds up the pages and a new straw. Ann Marie aggressively waves her out of the office.

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - MORNING

Katie drops the pages on her desk and sits. The phone RINGS.

KATIE

Critical Mass Online, Ann Marie Ringer's office. This is Katie. She's on the phone, but I'll check to see if she's wrapping up.

Katie puts the call on hold and presses the other line.

ANN MARIE (FROM PHONE)

...thinks she can do anything, sitting outside my office like a useless strawberry patch. Really, she smells like citrus. And her writing just *grates* on my me. I only need her through the buyout, then I'm firing her. I've already discussed it with-

Katie hangs up the phone. She sits motionless, shell shocked, as the OFFICE SOUNDS swallow her up. She picks up a letter opener and begins to vacantly open mail. Her phone RINGS. Startled out of her shock, she accidentally stabs her hand.

KATIE

*Ouch! Holy shit. Shit.*

Her palm begins to bleed. She quickly grabs tissues from a box on her desk to cover the wound. Clasping her injured hand, Katie SIGHS and lets her head fall onto the desk. Her phone continues to RING. Someone drops more work on her desk.

ANN MARIE (O.S)

Katie! *Now!*

OPENING TITLES: **SELF-PROMOTION**

EXT. THIRSTY CROW - EVENING (NIGHT 1)

Katie's Prius stops at the valet stand in front of the bar.

INT. KATIE'S PRIUS - SAME

Katie looks in the rearview mirror to check her face. Her hand is conspicuously bandaged with white gauze and tape.

KATIE

It's not official, maybe she'll change her mind. Just keep your mouth shut. Got it?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. THIRSTY CROW - LATER THAT NIGHT

Katie has not kept her mouth shut. It's packed. It's LOUD. It might need **subtitles**. Katie, Andrew, and Wyatt are at a dim, cramped table littered with empty glasses. And they're drunk.

KATIE

*I can not believe she's firing me!*  
It's the *only* place I want to work.

WYATT

It's *the best* place to work. It's like Vogue and the Huffington Post had a really chic baby website.

KATIE

*It's more than that.* It's stories about exciting lives and drama and secrets and just *more* than this.

ANDREW

What else did she say?

KATIE

Are you old enough to be in here?

ANDREW

God, I'm 21. And being supportive.

KATIE

Yes. She said I smelled like fruit. And that I think I can *do anything*.

WYATT

You're perfume *is* a little much. And you *can* be a little haughty.

Andrew glares and mimes throat cutting at Wyatt.

KATIE

*I swear, Wyatt, I will punch you. We started the same week and now you're writing bar reviews and I'm watering her weird plants.*

WYATT

*That's because she's evil. Don't hit me, go hit Ann Marie Ringer.*

ANDREW

*Look at that injured hand, maybe she already took a swing or two.*

KATIE

*Over a year. A year of that shit...*

Katie leaps up on her chair, toasting the full bar.

KATIE (CONT'D)

*I hate Ann Marie Ringer!! And Karma is a real bitch!*

Some people in the crowded bar APPLAUD, including Wyatt, as Andrew carefully pulls Katie back down into her seat.

ANDREW

*Okay, killer. I'm gonna go ahead get you some water instead.*

Andrew winks and wades towards the bar.

WYATT

*Oh no. He loves you soooo much.*

KATIE

*I really can't with that right now. I can not. My hand hurts, my dreams are dead, ugh, what am I gonna do?*

He picks up his mason jar full of liquor and toasts her.

WYATT

*Look, I realize I review artisanal cocktails online for a living, but take my advice: You still have time to turn things around, so don't put negativity out into the universe.*

KATIE

*Oh wow, did you just say that with a straight face?*

Her phone BUZZES on the table. She looks at the screen and spits out a LAUGH as Andrew sets down a glass of water.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil. Ann Marie left her precious print outs at the office and I have to fetch them.

ANDREW

Wait, you're leaving?

WYATT

Andrew, *please* play it cool better.

Katie and Andrew exchange an awkward glance in the face of Wyatt's blunt assessment.

WYATT (CONT'D)

And Katie, I love you, you're drunk. You're not driving back to the office, so sit down.

KATIE

I'll expense an Uber. While I can still "expense" things. Bang.

INT. UBER SEDAN - NIGHT

Katie is in the back seat. The UBER DRIVER (30s), scruffy and the kind of mysterious sexy that makes you think he does this job for fun, is eyeing her in the rear view mirror.

UBER DRIVER

So you had a few drinks, huh?

KATIE

I'm tipsy and get anxious talking to Uber drivers. So I'm gonna just awkwardly dive into my phone, okay?

He adjusts the mirror so only his lips are visible now.

UBER DRIVER

You're the boss.

KATIE

Not. Even. Close.

She is focused on crafting a text to Josh: **"AFTER TODAY, I COULD REALLY USE ONE OF THOSE DRUNK HOOK-UP TEXTS."**

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - LATER

Katie is standing alone in the cavernous lobby when the elevator SOUNDS and the doors open to reveal...

Josh and Tess. She is clinging to him, both arms around him, and LAUGHING. It's at least flirting, but probably foreplay. They see Katie and Josh immediately pulls away. Tess looks between them and then smiles, leaning against Josh...

TESS

Oh my God, how *embarrassing*.

JOSH

Katie, why are you here so late?

KATIE

Thought my terrible day was over,  
but turns out I was *totally* wrong.

She steps into the elevator and they shift out. Josh looks guilty as he slips away. Tess smiles over her shoulder.

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - NIGHT

Katie enters the dark offices. Only a few accent lights are on that illuminate the **CRITICAL MASS** wall, but she knows the place like the back of her hand. So she effortlessly heads straight towards Ann Marie's office without turning any lights on. She mumbles furiously to herself as she walks...

KATIE

Of course he's screwing her. *Her*.  
Because *the worst*. It's not like  
you deleted Tinder. It was one hook  
up, he's not serious. He should be.

She reaches for Ann Marie's door handle and there's a NOISE from somewhere in the office. She turns and squints.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Hello?

The front door to the office is open. But she might have done that. She relaxes and heads into Ann Marie's office...

INT. ANN MARIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She drops her purse on the desk and picks up an envelope. She shoves the envelope into her purse, pulls open one of Ann Marie's desk drawers, and takes out a bottle of Scotch. She swigs from the bottle and then EXHALES sharply.

INT. UBER SEDAN - NIGHT

Katie is in the back seat again as the sedan pulls to a stop.

UBER DRIVER  
Here we are. Impressive gate.

KATIE  
My boss's house. She's a hateful  
bitch who should die. I'll tell her  
you like it.

UBER DRIVER  
Great.

KATIE  
I'll be back in a minute.

EXT. ANN MARIE'S HOLLYWOOD HILLS HOME - CONTINUOUS

Katie hops out in front of a privacy hedge/wall combination that obscures the probably beautiful home.

The ajar door to the sedan BEEPS as she drops the manila envelope into the mail slot and gets back into the car.

INT. UBER SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

As the car starts to move, Katie's phone BUZZES. She looks. It's a text from Josh: **"SORRY ABOUT TONIGHT, I CAN EXPLAIN."**

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Katie comes in and flips on the lights to find her roommate WINTER (24), Asian, an odd mix of a little bit naughty librarian, a little bit stoner, making out with a RANDOM GUY on the couch. Half dressed, he covers his lap with a pillow.

WINTER  
No, don't be shy. He shouldn't be  
shy, Katie. It's pretty big.

Katie starts to WEEP. It's out of nowhere and extreme. She quickly turns the lights off and stumbles to her room...

INT. KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Where she falls onto the bed and pulls the comforter over herself. Winter KNOCKS while coming in and sits on the bed. She turns on a tiny bedside lamp that casts a soft light.

WINTER

So that crying thing was... odd?

KATIE

I'm drunk. I'm sorry.

Katie peaks out from under the comforter with her adorable stuffed deer but is still covered up. It's sad and cute.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Ann Marie is going to fire me.

WINTER

She'd spontaneously combust without you. She'd be a total wreck. And PS that stuffed animal is creepy.

KATIE

Even when I do find something else it won't be *Critical Mass*. Jesus, I can not ask my parents for help.

WINTER

Who cares what your parents think.

KATIE

Ugh, my Mom is the worst. She thinks writing is a "hobby." Your parents don't ride you?

WINTER

They named me Winter Moody so they can kind of fuck off.

Katie CHUCKLES, reaches out, and slaps at Winter.

WINTER (CONT'D)

Whoa. *What happened to your hand?*

KATIE

I'm fine. Did I ruin your date?

WINTER

Nope. We're celebrating surviving our property law midterm. He accidentally celebrated on his own when you walked in, so now he needs about 20 minutes before he can celebrate again with me. I'll wash the pillow.

KATIE

Josh is "celebrating" with Tess.

WINTER

The hot office bitch who hates you  
for no reason? Your day is *the*  
*worst* day. Shhh, pass out now  
before another awful thing happens.

Winter gets up, turns off the lamp, and closes the door.

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - MORNING (DAY 2)

Just like the day before, a hand reaches out to flip the  
lights on in the office. Only now it has a fresh bandage.

The lights pop on over the empty office again as Katie makes  
her way to her desk with her purse and large coffee.

She sets down her purse and notices a red stain on the  
bottom. She lifts it to realize it is saturated with dried  
blood. Then she notices more dried blood on her coat sleeve.

KATIE

Jesus, how much did I bleed?

The fresh bandage on her hand is white as snow. She flips on  
her computer with a PING and gets out the Clorox wipes to try  
and clean up while the computer loads. She glances at her e-  
mail, but nothing from Ann Marie.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Nothing, Ann Marie? That's a first.

She then notices a bloody shoe print near Ann Marie's door.  
Then another. She drops the wipes and opens the door to...

INT. ANN MARIE'S OFFICE - SAME (INTERCUT)

A horror scene. There is blood on the desk, blood she  
clearly, drunkenly set her purse in the night before. Blood  
on the floor, overturned chairs, scattered paper, the phone  
receiver hanging off the desk. But no Ann Marie.

KATIE

Oh... God. Oh my God.

She backs away from the door and looks around for someone to  
say something to, but the office is silent and empty.

She grabs her cell phone and calls "**ANN MARIE RINGER.**" After  
one RING, Katie hears a MARIMBA RINGTONE from the office.

She creeps in, follows the sound, and finds Ann Marie's phone  
RINGING under the couch and a gold necklace near the blood.

Back at her desk, trying not to hyperventilate, Katie clutches at her desk phone and dials 9-1-1...

She INHALES sharply and looks at the bloody shoe prints. Her shoes. Then her eyes go wide as images from the day barrage her aggressively in a fast jumble, maybe even at odd angles:

At the elevators with Josh and Tess...

JOSH

Katie, why are you here so late?

With Winter at home...

WINTER

Whoa. *What happened to your hand?*

In the Uber sedan...

KATIE

...a hateful bitch who should die.

With Josh at the printer...

JOSH

...amazing you haven't snapped yet.

At the Thirsty Crow yelling at the crowd...

KATIE

I *hate* Ann Marie Ringer!! And Karma is a real bitch!

The IM accidently sent to Tess...

**KATIE: "NO SCISSORS. I MIGHT STAB ANN MARIE TO DEATH."**

At her desk with Andrew...

Katie mimes shooting herself in the head. This image hangs for a moment. Then all at once, we're back in real time as she turns to examine the carnage of Ann Marie's office.

911 OPERATOR (FROM PHONE)

911 what is your emergency?

In a kind of trance, she calmly hangs up the phone, picks up the Clorox wipes and steps into the office. She closes the door behind her, disappearing from view.

END ACT 1

INT. ANN MARIE'S OFFICE - MORNING

It's still early, but the sound of PHONES, CHATTER, the office at work, spill in from outside as Katie finishes cleaning up. The desk is straightened, the trash bin is full of the scattered papers, and there is a huge stack of used, gruesome-looking Clorox wipes on the desk.

Katie is on her knees, sweating from the effort of scrubbing the blood off the concrete floor. She sits back to examine her work. The stain is still visible.

KATIE

Are you kidding me?

Suddenly a KNOCK at the door. Katie is immediately up on her feet and shoving all of the Clorox wipes into a small trash bag. Another KNOCK.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Just a second.

She uses her foot to pull the area rug over the stain while dropping the plastic bag behind Ann Marie's desk just as the door swings open. Katie stands innocently next to the desk.

BO BANKS (40s), African-American, managing editor with chiseled features and a God complex, steps into the office.

BO

Where the fuck is she?

Katie presses towards him, tactically backing him outside.

KATIE

Oh, Bo, Mr. Banks, can we just, I'm so sorry, but can we respect Ann Marie's rule about no people being in her office?

BO

Good thing I'm not "people." I'm the God damn Managing Editor.

KATIE

100% true. Then can we respect Ann Marie's rule about you never being in her office? It's so not my rule.

Katie has now backed him outside and pulls the door closed behind her. He gestures to the TV screens, all plastered with images of LUCY BELLE (19), Disney starlet, paparazzi fodder.

Images of her looking strung out or yelling at photographers.  
Captions like: "**FALL FROM GRACE**" and "**SEX, DRUGS, & LUCY**"

BO

Critical Mass needs a response to  
this Lucy Belle scandal.

KATIE

Lucy Belle, the Disney starlet?

Glancing at the screens, Katie is confused. She's been  
cleaning up a crime scene all morning. Bo takes it as sass.

BO

Either you're being sassy, which is  
bad, or you don't know what's  
happening, which is actually worse.  
*What is your name?*

KATIE

What? Katie. Katie Preston. I've  
worked here for over a year now.

BO

Mm hm, and what do you think Ann  
Marie would say about the way her  
*assistant* is treating a superior?

Katie wipes the hair out of her face, fixes her skirt, and  
tries to stand up a little straighter.

KATIE

Honestly? Okay, well, she'd  
probably say: "I am this website,  
my exposes bring the eyes and ad  
dollars, so tell that 'respectable  
journalist' to take his travel  
essays and art critiques and stay  
the Hell out of my office."

There is an odd version of a Mexican stand-off. Katie seems  
unsure how what she just did will go over. Then...

BO

That's a good impersonation. But *no*  
*one* wants two Ann Maries running  
around here. Most of us can barely  
tolerate one. *Remind* her that her  
job is pop culture and *tell* her to  
come up with something fast.

He walks back towards the other frosted glass of his office  
at the opposite end of Critical Mass.

Katie EXHALES and starts to go back into Ann Marie's office. She reaches for the handle and notices her own hand shaking.

TESS (O.S.)

Katie?

Katie spins around, frazzled, to find Tess.

TESS (CONT'D)

Bo wants me to tell you to remind Ann Marie to do a rush job on this Lucy Belle hookers and coke thing.

KATIE

He literally just said, ugh, can you cut me some slack today, Tess? Just because *our bosses* hate each other, doesn't mean we have to.

TESS

Oh no, don't be silly. That's not why I hate you.

She heads back to her desk. Katie GRUNTS and slips inside.

INT. ANN MARIE'S OFFICE - LATER

Katie picks up the bag of bloody Clorox wipes. Her phone, sitting on Ann Marie's desk, BUZZES. She glances at the screen: "WINTER MOODY (6 MISSED CALLS)"

Katie dials her phone while tying off the plastic bag.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - SAME (INTERCUT)

Winter is standing in the living room in pajamas eyeing blood on the door handle and a bloody handprint.

WINTER

I've been trying to call you. Is your hand alright? Because there's sort of blood on the front door.

KATIE

My hand is fine, but I need-

WINTER

It's more blood than seems okay.

KATIE

I think I need your legal advice.

WINTER

Don't say that. Don't say that when I ask you about *blood*.

KATIE

Just, okay, something bad might have happened to Ann Marie. She's not in the office, but there's-

WINTER

She's probably just at home today. Katie, how did you hurt your hand?

Katie glances down and locks eyes on Ann Marie's phone. Winter slowly crosses towards Katie's room.

KATIE

Of course! *Maybe* she's at home. *Maybe* it's not even her blood.

WINTER

Are you having a psychotic episode?

Katie hangs up, grabs Ann Marie's phone, drops it into her purse with her own phone, and leaves with the trash bag.

Winter stands quietly in the doorway to Katie's room where bloody high heels are next to the bed and the comforter is pulled back to reveal some blood on the sheets. Most disturbing, the adorable stuffed deer has blood on its face.

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - MORNING

Katie walks swiftly towards the office front door trying to be inconspicuous with the practically clear trash bag of bloody wipes. She passes Andrew's cubicle and keeps moving.

KATIE

Quick errand for Ann Marie.

She passes Wyatt's cubicle and keeps moving.

WYATT

I drunkenly found dozens of My Little Pony "haters gonna hate" GIFs. Expect many text messages.

KATIE

Sounds great.

WYATT

Oh, and I took one of Ann Marie's Oranginas, okay bye.

She passes Tess's desk and keeps moving. Tess gives her some heavily suspicious side eye as she hurries past.

She's almost to the doors when Josh steps in front of her. She practically runs into him.

JOSH

*Whoa, there.* Good morning.

Katie immediately whips the trash bag behind her back.

KATIE

Hey! *Hey.* I kind of need to run.

JOSH

Cool, cool. But about last night-

She pulls him to the side and leans in with intensity.

KATIE

*What about last night?*

JOSH

Tess. Which is not *really* a thing.

KATIE

Oh! Oh. Look, I promise, who you're sleeping with is *nowhere* on my priority list today. Okay?

JOSH

Good? Oh, and I finally read over the sample columns you gave me.

Katie suddenly stops eyeing the door and looks at him.

KATIE

Wow, you really do feel guilty.

JOSH

Who cares why I finally read them, I just did. And they're strong.

KATIE

Strong is good.

JOSH

Sure, but it's bizarre. You write *exactly* like Ann Marie.

KATIE

She's my role model, so still good.

JOSH

No, I mean that you should try writing with your own voice.

KATIE

My own...?

JOSH

You want honest, right? Look, what use is it to write exactly like someone else? That's not a career.

KATIE

Okay. Okay, thanks. *Thank you.*

She's genuinely hurt, but she brushes past him and is out the door before he can see it. She drops the plastic bag into the large trash can by the elevators in passing.

EXT. ANN MARIE'S HOLLYWOOD HILLS HOME - DAY

Katie's Prius pulls up outside Ann Marie's home. She gets out and pulls the manila envelope from the night before out of the mail slot and uses a key fob to open the gate revealing a beautifully landscaped, modern bungalow home.

INT. ANN MARIE'S HOLLYWOOD HILLS HOME - DAY

Katie cautiously enters through the front door with her keys.

KATIE

Ann Marie? Are you home? *Please be home and not a murder victim.*

She moves through the eclectic home from room to room looking for Ann Marie. The bed in the bedroom is made. The closet door open just a crack. Clean kitchen. The dining room table is covered with work, all organized. Finally, the office...

On her desk, Katie finds a stack of manila envelopes identical to the one she brought yesterday. They're all open.

Her phone BUZZES. She looks at it: **"WINTER MOODY"**

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Winter is holding her cell phone to her ear and nervously watching Katie's stuffed deer spin in the washing machine.

INT. ANN MARIE'S HOLLYWOOD HILLS HOME - SAME

Katie silences her phone, pulls out some of the pages, and reads. Her eyes go wide. And absentmindedly leans on the desk with her bandaged hand and then pulls back with a wince. She looks down and the bandage is bloody from the wound.

KATIE

Still?

She notices she's left a bloody handprint on the desk.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Of course. More to clean up later.

She rolls her eyes, takes the entire stack of manila envelopes, and leaves.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Katie walks in, drops everything, and leans against the closed door to catch her breath. She looks over to see Winter sitting in an arm chair clutching a golf club like a weapon.

KATIE

Why do you have a golf club?

WINTER

No reason.

KATIE

Where did you even get that?

WINTER

You don't know everything about me.

KATIE

Okay, I'm not sure exactly how to-

WINTER

*Did you attack your boss?*

KATIE

No! What?! No. You've known me for years, how can you even ask that?

Winter drops the golf club and visibly relaxes.

WINTER

Thank God. I believe you. But I've never trusted my own instincts.

Ann Marie's MARIMBA RINGTONE emerges from Katie's purse. She digs for it, pulls it out, checks it, and silences it.

WINTER (CONT'D)

Whoa, I thought you'd *never* switch from that annoying tiny Japanese wood block ring tone?

KATIE

It's not my phone. It's people hounding Ann Marie for opinions on Lucy Belle's meltdown.

WINTER

Why do you have Ann Marie's phone?

Katie kneels down and violently dumps her bag out onto the coffee table. She finds the blood-flecked gold necklace that was on the floor in Ann Marie's office, sets it out next to Ann Marie's phone on the coffee table, and then drops the stack of envelopes next to them.

KATIE

Look, are you high right now?

WINTER

I was, but this is really sobering.

KATIE

Good. Good. Okay, so as an almost lawyer, I need you to tell me if I'm going to prison.

END ACT 2

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER (DAY 2)

Katie is now on the couch. Winter is pacing, swinging the golf club back and forth like a sword.

KATIE

I'm clearly the prime suspect. So then everything else just *happened*.

WINTER

No one would have thought that!

KATIE

You *know* me and you were wielding a golf club for protection.

WINTER

*I'm eccentric on a good day, I'm a bad barometer. And this is crazy.*

KATIE

*Too late now. And it gets worse.*

WINTER

*How on Earth does it get worse?!*

Katie opens one of the manila envelopes and hands the pages to Winter. She scans them as Katie speaks. Her eyes bug out.

KATIE

Pages and pages of hacked celebrity phone calls, e-mails, this is her secret weapon. No killer instinct.

WINTER

I shouldn't read, wow! *He's gay?!*

KATIE

And *I've* been printing it all out. I'm fully an accessory to whatever.

WINTER

In California it's felony theft. Did you see this Lucy Belle stuff?

KATIE

Stop reading it! *Oh my God, what did I do?*

WINTER

Beyond saying really incriminating things, it sounds like you've tampered with evidence, obstructed justice, and if she's dead-

KATIE

Don't say "dead." Just say "gone."

WINTER

Wait. No one knows any of this? So if you don't go to the police...?

KATIE

I was just, I went insane for a minute, they'll understand that.

She smashes her face into the couch cushions in despair.

WINTER

No way. But... if, and I'm saying if, you hide that she's "gone."

Katie looks up at her in disbelief.

KATIE

What and just pretend she's not missing, just carry on like-?

WINTER

Wait, just listen. No one ever wants to talk with her directly. *Ever*. You say that all the time, right? They hate her. And she's never there, you already run her life by proxy. Plus, I'll help you! Maybe if you can pull it off long enough to find out what happened to-

KATIE

*Who am I? Nancy Drew?* I'm not launching some rogue investigation!

WINTER

It's just a *hypothetical* vigilante detective plan A, okay? Plan B is get arrested.

Katie snaps out of it. SCOFFING at herself, it's a ridiculous idea. She grabs everything and jams it back into her purse.

KATIE

I'll put it all back, get through today and just... figure it out.

WINTER

So a firm "no" on the cover-up?

Katie SIGHS and heads out the front door.

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - DAY

The flat screens are still dominated by Lucy Belle. Katie drops her purse on her desk just in time for Wyatt to appear.

WYATT

Hey, Bo's been looking for you. We know because he pokes his head out and yells, "Where's the red head?!"

KATIE

Thanks. Lucy's still melting down?

WYATT

She's going to rehab and someone took down her coo-coo coconuts Twitter feed. Look, are you okay?

KATIE

Yes. Totally. Yes.

WYATT

Because I told you I took one of the dragon lady's Oranginas and usually you'd cut my hand off. Plus, your hair is sort of sad.

KATIE

I'll try to, I'm trying to fix it.

She heads towards Bo's office and walks right past Tess.

TESS

Katie, you can't just walk in-

INT. BO'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bo's office is a mess of white boards covered in layouts. But **CULTURE IS FREE. DON'T ASK, JUST TAKE** covers his wall, too. He looks up at Katie before she even reaches his desk.

BO

*Where?* Where is the piece?

KATIE

I'm so surprised she hasn't-

BO

*Where is it?* I know she's not in that office. We have a multi-national trying to *buy* us and we need to be on our best behavior.

KATIE

I completely understand.

BO

She better understand and *she* better have something amazing to say about Lucy Belle ASAP or I'm going to her house with a shotgun and torch and forcing my way in.

As soon as the threat leaves his lips, Katie gets a little panicky, eyes wide.

A flash of her bloody hand print still sitting on Ann Marie's abandoned home desk. The hand print "to clean up later."

Back in Bo's office, Katie's making calculations in her head.

Her eyes lock in even tighter on the wall: **Just Take**

KATIE

The article is... probably in my inbox. I just got back. So I'll...

INT. ANN MARIE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Katie is at Ann Marie's desk, computer open. She has three pages pulled from the manila envelope and set in front of her. It looks like brief bursts of text, a conversation.

Katie looks at the blinking cursor on the blank screen. She shakes out her hands and psychs herself up.

KATIE

Okay. Buy some time. Use her info. Write like her, got it, ready, go.

She begins to type.

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - LATER

Katie sits at her desk. She looks more relaxed than we've seen her. She turns her back to the office and makes a call.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - SAME (INTERCUT)

Winter answers her phone, backpack on, about to leave.

WINTER

I'm about to go to class, please don't need bail or anything?

KATIE

I might have just successfully plagiarized a piece to buy some time on this Ann Marie thing.

WINTER

Wait, you're doing the cover-up?!

KATIE

I don't know, the wall in Bo's office told me to take control of my fate, ugh, never mind. You're right, I have to find out what happened to Ann Marie before someone points the finger at *me*.

WINTER

I'm all over this. I'll criminally facilitate you like a champ.

KATIE

I'll go through her e-mail tonight to see if anyone threatened her. It's *at least* a place to start. And I'll keep my job. *For now*.

WINTER

Yes. We need to know *who* they are and *what* they even did to her and definitely *how* they-

BO (O.S.)

Katie!

Katie hangs up and spins in her chair to see Bo approaching. He's carrying a document. Stern as always.

BO (CONT'D)

You have *no idea* how stunned I was to get Ann Marie's Lucy Belle expose. Has it been through legal?

KATIE

It's with legal right now. But... It is a pretty scathing piece.

BO

Inventing the addiction and faking the sex tape to hype her album, Ann Marie can back this up?

KATIE

She doesn't talk details with *me*.

BO

Let's get it up on the cover page  
as soon as it gets legal's okay.

He walks back to his office. As soon as he leaves, Tess is revealed waiting, hand on hip. She's LOUD on purpose...

TESS

No reason to start a turf war with  
you since you're leaving.

Katie is surprised but manages to cover pretty well. People around the office are clearly taking notice of the show.

TESS (CONT'D)

I *heard* Ann Marie talking to Bo  
yesterday. You're walking dead.

KATIE

You must have misunderstood. *In fact*, Ann Marie thinks I need some additional responsibilities so she can be here even less. So... yep.

TESS

You're being promoted before *me*?

KATIE

Okay. It definitely *sounds* like it.

TESS

Fine. *Fine*. I'm not even worried.  
Girls like you don't make it far.

KATIE

Girls like, wait, girls *like me*?

TESS

Girls that can't keep their hands  
off other girls' things. Josh much?

Katie is instantly clear on why Tess doesn't like her.

KATIE

I didn't even know you had a  
"thing." Maybe go *talk to him*.

Tess cocks an eyebrow and smiles. It's not nice. She leaves.

ANDREW (O.S.)

So you are seeing Josh?

And of course Andrew is standing right there.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I wasn't eaves dropping. It's just a pretty small office.

KATIE

It's fine. I'm not seeing Josh. Or that's not what I'd call it.

ANDREW

None of my business. But I mean, you could probably find someone a little less... flashy.

He puts up his hands in the familiar surrender gesture, but this time it's not playful. He backs away into the cubicles.

Her phone RINGS. She picks it up.

WYATT (FROM PHONE)

*I was eavesdropping. Josh, huh? You have a thing for cocky pretty boys?*

Katie looks up and sees Wyatt in his cubicle looking back.

KATIE

Really not worried about it. But he *is* the kind of guy I end up dating.

WYATT

And you're single. Imagine that.

She hangs up and calmly YELLS at him across the office...

KATIE

*You owe Ann Marie one Orangina.*

INT. ANN MARIE'S HOLLYWOOD HILLS HOME - EVENING (NIGHT 2)

Katie at the computer at Ann Marie's desk, looking through a file helpfully labeled "**DEATH THREATS**" and it's not a small file. A modern/industrial desk lamp is on in the otherwise dark house. She has a mug of tea nearby.

Her phone rings with the LITTLE JAPANESE WOODBLOCK sound. She looks at the screen and rolls her eyes: "**JOSH WELSH**"

INT. JOSH'S SUV - SAME (INTERCUT)

He's driving down Sunset, passing neon signs and bars.

KATIE

Sorry, Josh. Working. Writing.

JOSH

This late? I thought we could-

KATIE

You said to find my voice. It's not like I can just *take* Ann Marie's.

Josh LAUGHS. A shadow moves past the office doorway.

JOSH

That was, I will never live that down. So... maybe *later* tonight?

Katie looks at her phone like maybe it will come to life and agree that Josh is the single cockiest guy on the planet.

There is a muted NOISE from another room. Katie leans to look out the door. Too dark. But now she's distracted.

KATIE

I have to make some good choices.

JOSH

Katie, I'm *such* a good choice.

KATIE

We'll see. Tell Tess I said "Hi."

She hangs up, gets up from the desk, picks up a weird angular paper weight, creeps into the hall, and flips on the lights.

Nothing. Empty. Quiet.

Her phone suddenly lights up with the JAPANESE WOOD BLOCK sound again, breaking the silence and scaring her to death. She looks at the screen: "**JOSH WELSH**" And then silences it.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Ugh, I really *do* think I'm in a Nancy Drew mystery.

She heads back into the office and doesn't notice the front door of the house slowly, gently CLICKING closed. Someone else was just in the house.

END ACT 3

INT. CRITICAL MASS OFFICES - MORNING (DAY 3)

The office is alive. One flat screen has Lucy Belle screaming with the caption: "**BREAKDOWN HOAX?**" Katie leans on her desk with her bandaged hand and coffee. Watching the office. Guarding Ann Marie's door. Alert.

Wyatt walks up and sets down a single bottle of Orangina.

WYATT

Balance restored. You look great.

KATIE

You're just saying that.

Andrew drops a stack of folders on Katie's desk.

WYATT

I never "just say" nice things.

ANDREW

Once you said my jeans fit nice.

Katie LAUGHS. Wyatt looks Andrew up and down.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

So this Lucy Belle thing is huge.

KATIE

Ann Marie's really good at her job.

Out of nowhere, the glass front door of Critical Mass SHATTERS. Lucy Belle, a tiny train wreck of leggings and fur, storms in with rage-filled eyes and an aluminum baseball bat.

LUCY BELLE

Where *the fuck* is Ann Marie?!

As a SECURITY GUARD picks Lucy up, she's still swinging.

LUCY BELLE (CONT'D)

Oh! She's hiding?! My lawyers will find her! *That lying bitch will see me in court before she can blink!*

Andrew and Wyatt both look at Katie.

KATIE

Holy shi-

Smash to black.

END EPISODE