

BRODY (VO) /DI
SCENE 8

(Applause crescendos as we hear the voiceover of a game show announcer.)

MALE VO

And now, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the place where feeling bad is great, the excruciating is exalted, and no pain truly is no gain...it's The Suffering Contest!

(Crowd cheers and applauds as lights come up on three podiums. Vivian and Carla are standing behind two of them.)

Here's your Hostess of Hardship, your Emcee of Agony, your Master of Competitive Caring:

Di Joxin!!

(Crowd cheers, as Di enters dressed like a game show host, in red suit and chunky glasses. She waves and interacts with the audience before taking her place behind the center podium.)

DI

Thank you, thank you, wow, what a welcome!

(pointing to someone in the audience)

I'm guessing you have no life. Trying to find a shred of joy, right?

(Crowd whoops and cheers.)

But you

(pointing to a person sitting next to them)

have social anxiety. You're experiencing fight or flight at this very moment, amiright?

(Crowd makes louder whoops and cheers.)

The question is:

(Crowd chants: "WHO...HAS IT...WORSE?")

DI

That's right! We all know that all suffering is not equal. Each of our contestants are here today to prove that they have the shortest end of the stick, have been dealt the worst hand, and that the world owes them big time.

The winner will receive the title of Queen Sufferer, a pallet of Kleenex boxes, and a special algorithm that puts all their social media posts at the top of everyone's feed for a month. They will of course receive no cash prize, so neither will be able to claim anything good has ever happened to them.

So now let's meet our contestants!

(Crowd whoops and cheers.)

She's only nineteen but already her father left the picture, her mother has died, and she spends her days working with perishables and pantry staples. You could call her Distress in a Dress, please welcome Carla Patton!

(Crowd whoops and cheers as Carla waves.)

And up against her is a woman who is staring down the barrel of dementia. She never had children and her only friend is the geriatric nymphomaniac who lives next door. Give it up for the Raging Aging, Vivian Walters!

(Crowd whoops and cheers.)

VIVIAN

Not only do I hear sex through the wall, but I have to hear her describe it afterwards.

DI

And right out of the gate, she's competing! Tell us more.

VIVIAN

She calls it her "festive time" and says he likes to see her body through the holes of her crocheted blanket.

DI

Wow, talk about TMI! Point for Vivian.

(Crowd cheers.)

CARLA

I didn't know we were starting!

DI

And Carla's competing too.

CARLA

When I bend down to stock the bottom shelves at work, my manager stands there staring at my ass.

VIVIAN

Clearly you never lived through the sixties.

CARLA

See? When you're young, people dismiss you.

DI

Good point. When it comes to suffering, does ageism come into play?

VIVIAN

Yes. Nobody wants to think about the elderly. The young and beautiful always get more sympathy.

DI

Why would you say that's true?

VIVIAN

Because people think it's tragic when the young can't enjoy their carefree days.

CARLA

Boom! That's right! My mother died, my dad's an addict, I live alone, and I didn't even get to go to the prom!

(She takes a victory lap around the stage while the crowd goes wild.)

DI

Point for Carla! Vivian, you better be careful you don't make the case for your opponent!

VIVIAN

I have no little toe. And I can't even bend down to take off my shoe and show you.

(Crowd ooohs and gasps.)

CARLA

Not true! She does old lady yoga!

DI

Vivian, tell us how you lost the toe.

VIVIAN

I cut it off myself when I was a prisoner of war.

(Crowd ooohs.)

CARLA

What??

DI

This is the perfect time to remind our audience of The Suffering Contest rules. Lying is acceptable, as long as it is done convincingly and is plausible.

Now Vivian, which war were you a prisoner of?

VIVIAN

My marriage.

(Crowd ooohs again.)