



**TITLE:**  
**LOCALE:** Suburbs/NYC area  
**AUTHOR:**  
**PERIOD:** Present  
**FORM:** Screenplay  
**GENRE:** Drama  
**BUDGET:** Low  
**DRAFT DATE:** Unknown  
**COVERAGE DATE:**  
**PREPARED BY:**

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**LOGLINE:** A high school senior, and her younger sister, learn that their loving father is a cross-dresser. The family struggles to deal with this as the girl prepares for her high school graduation.

**SYNOPSIS:**

Present Day. Suburbs somewhere. Two teenage girls, HOLLY and JESS ride in a convertible. Holly talks about her boyfriend Tyler and also says her younger sister, CAITLIN, went away with her friends for the weekend. Jess drops Holly off at her house. Holly walks in, sees her father JOE, wearing his wife's dress, sandals and makeup. Holly confronts her father, but just says everything's okay. Holly runs to her bathroom, locks herself in. Joe leaves. Later, Holly tells her mom, SUE, what happened. Sue isn't surprised and says she "caught him" several times. Holly can't understand why Sue is still with Joe. Sue says she is because of "you girls." Sue also says that Joe doesn't think there is anything wrong with it. Holly says everyone thinks Joe is the greatest dad in the world. Sue says she never wanted Holly to find out. Holly is disgusted.

Caitlin is with her friends LINDSEY and NICOLE. Holly calls, tells her what happened. Caitlin is shocked. Holly says that Joe may have been drunk. Caitlin says "dad doesn't drink." Sue takes the phone from Holly. Sue tells

Caitlin everything is going to be alright, but says her father is a transvestite. Caitlin feels sick. Caitlin wants Joe to go to therapy. Caitlin cries in the bathroom, then rejoins her friends, says her parents got into a fight. Joe calls the house. Sue confronts him. Joe laughs, thinks Holly freaked out too much. Holly doesn't want to talk to him. Joe calls back, talks to Holly. Joe tells her he has done it for as long as he can remember. Joe says Sue married knowing about it. Holly tells him he's hurting the family. Joe says he doesn't want to be a woman, he just likes doing it. He says he did go to therapy once, but felt he didn't need it. Holly says she won't talk to him until he gets help.

Therapist's office. The family meets with a THERAPIST. Holly says she doesn't know her father and is pissed off. Holly does say that Joe is a good father - helpful and dependable. But she says transvestites are psychos. The therapist says many straight men are transvestites. Joe says Holly has caught him before, she just didn't know it. He tells the story of the day she almost caught him. Caitlin says she once thought he slurred his speech. Joe says he doesn't remember being drunk. Caitlin says he used her clothes and tells about when she found her clothes had been stretched out. She felt she couldn't trust him. Caitlin had a boyfriend, TOM, put a new lock on her room. But later, she finds her clothes in her father's gym back. Sue says she feel that her marriage is a sham and has lived with this secret for too long. Sue said she never new it was a "problem" before they got married. The girls don't care if their parents get a divorce. Joe doesn't want the girls losing respect for Sue. Caitlin feels that Sue has deceived them too. Joe says it started when he was 10 and two girls next door dressed him up in girl clothes. Joe's father catches him and yells at him. The therapist asks Joe if had been sexually abused - but he doesn't have to answer.

Holly sits with TYLER and her friends Jess and KRISTY. They talk about their feelings about their upcoming graduation, Kristy talks about her mother who's going through chemo and how hard it is on her. Jess talks about her mother's temper and how strict she is and how she disparages her in front of her friends. Jess says her father doesn't do anything about it. Holly says it will be nice to live away from "our parents." Holly tells them she has a hard time with her parents too, but they don't believe her because they think

her parents are perfect. She gets upset. Jess says she would love to have a father like Joe. Holly freaks a bit, then calms down. Holly and Tyler leave. Kristy says Holly is a "drama queen."

Tyler tells Holly her friends weren't putting her down. Holly tells him she is just worried and sad that school is ending. They tell each other "I love you."

Holly sees woman's clothes in her Joe's gym bag again. Holly and Caitlin talk. Holly hates that everyone thinks they have a perfect family. Holly says she would never tell anyone because it's too humiliating. Caitlin says it's going to be hard on her when Holly goes off to college. Holly says Joe is selfish. They avoid Joe. Caitlin goes over to her friends house and sees pictures of a bachelorette party in New York city where the waitresses were drag queens. Lindsey calls them freaks. Caitlin goes in the bathroom and cries. Graduation Day. Holly tells Caitlin that she wrote a letter to her father telling him not to come to the graduation and that she does not want him in her life anymore. Joe read it and put it back in her room. Holly and her friends gather to take pictures. Sue is there, Joe isn't. GRADUATION. Sue and Caitlin watch Holly graduate. Holly looks for her father, but doesn't see him. But Joe is sitting alone in the back. After the graduation Holly hugs Sue and Caitlin, then they walk away. Holly sees Joe and... runs over to him and gives him a big hug.

**COMMENTS:**

**OVERALL** - This is an engaging story about a young teenage girl who discovers that the father is a cross-dresser/transvestite and how it affects their relationship and their family. The story is unique and deals with an issue that is not often represented in films. The tone and mood of the story are good. The world that the story is set in is clear. There is good emotional truth in the story. The structure of the story needs work. The story is told mostly through dialogue. Screenwriting is a visual storytelling medium, so there needs to be more showing and less telling. There is not enough action in the story to keep the audience fully engaged. The plot points are soft and the story needs more "substance" a stronger narrative engine to keep the audience engaged. Some of the scenes are repetitive and we are reminded of information that we already have seen or knew. The dialogue is a bit "thick," again because the author uses the characters to tell about their feelings rather than showing us them. There is a good story here. A family coping with a unique problem and a daughter coming to grips with a "problem" her father has, even though she loves him very much. The characters however, don't always feel believable and fully motivated. The ending is very sweet and touching. The story and premise have a great deal of promise, but the execution needs to be much stronger.

So with that said, let's look at the details and try to make this script live up to its full potential.

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**CHARACTERS**

**HOLLY** - A good, emotional character - one that will attract actresses. But the author needs to dig deeper into this character and into her relationship with her father. The best protagonists are 1) believable 2) motivated and 3) sympathetic. Holly is sympathetic because she has learned a secret about her father and it scares (disgusts) her. We feel for her, but she would be more sympathetic if we knew her more. The whole story starts a bit too soon. Holly is out with her friends then comes home and catches her father dressed in woman's clothes and makeup. The problem is we never get to see what their family was like BEFORE this incident. Yes, we are told over and over that Joe is a

good father and a good man, but we don't see it. We can't fully sympathize with Holly unless we understand her and we can't understand her unless we know the family dynamic BEFORE the incident and AFTER. Also, she comes off a bit cold. It's tough to sympathize with a girl like that. Yes, it is something very difficult to deal with and the audience sides with her, but she calls her father a freak and a "psycho" and really reacts very strongly, which is good because the ending is more powerful. BUT, we should see that she is more conflicted earlier in the script. Her father is a good man, but he has this "problem." Yes, she is angry that her father does this and has lied, but isn't she angry also that her image of her father is no forever shattered. Show ALL sides to Holly so that she feels like a three-dimensional person, not just a girl who is angry. She is believable because she doesn't know what to make of the whole thing, but we need to REALLY understand her anger, so that when she writes the letter at the end, we feel that it was the right thing to do. Her father does not seem to be an alcoholic, though there are hints that he is, so his only transgression is that he is a cross-dresser. Why does she want to disown him? We need that to be believable, because the ending will be stronger. Just go through and make sure, in every instance, she seems as real as possible.

Her motivations are a bit fuzzy sometimes because we don't know what she wants. Every story can be described this way: somebody wants something DESPERATELY but is having DIFFICULTY getting it. What does Holly want desperately? Does she want her father to give up dressing like a woman? Is that what she wants? Or does she simply want to have him out of her life? She has to actively PURSUE this goal throughout the story. This is the narrative engine that DRIVES the story. What does she want? WHY does she want it? Those are two important questions. Her GOAL is often described as the "WANT" of the character - what they are trying to accomplish in the story. Every protagonist also has a "NEED" - meaning that there is something lacking in their character at the beginning, but is "healed" at the end. Every protagonist usually goes from being a PERSONALITY to PERSON in a movie. That is the character arc. How is Holly a better person at the end? It seems like it is because she is more accepting as a person. That is great. The problem is that there is no arc. She is angry for the whole story, then she is warm at the end. We need to see her SLOWLY change over the course of the story.

Again, make her more emotional and complex (as a human being.)

CAITLIN - Holly's younger sister. She is another good character, but we need to know more about her as well, particularly her relationship with her sister, her mother and her father. Caitlin and Holly should be different and should react to the situation differently. They could almost be the same character in this story. How is Caitlin different from Holly? How does Caitlin handle the situation differently than Holly? What was Caitlin's relationship like BEFORE the incident? This is important - that's why we have to see the family for a few scenes BEFORE the cross-dressing incident happens. We have to know how this incident changes the family dynamic. Perhaps Caitlin isn't bothered by what her father does? Perhaps Caitlin knew about it? Also, what is Caitlin's relationship like with her sister? They are two teenage girls - most likely there is some conflict between them. They seem to get along well. This is a (TITLE) so ALL the relationships should be complex. Highlight their differences. Also, what is Caitlin's relationship to her mother like? How is it different from Holly's relationship with her mother?

SUE - This character needs more development. The teenage girls are easier to get invested in. But both parents are a bit thinly drawn - they don't feel as real as the teenage girls. Sue doesn't seem consistent, she seems angry when they are at the therapist's office, but then she seems accepting and a bit "clueless" when she is at home. How long has Sue REALLY known this was going on? She MUST have suspected something. She MUST have confronted Joe about this before. If so, when? And what exactly has she been doing to help Joe overcome this OR has she just accepted that this is the way that he is and he's a good man. She seems a bit weak in this story. She NEVER did anything about her husband and it's her daughter that seems to make the decisions (about going to therapy etc) and she seems to accept the fact that Holly doesn't want her father to be at the graduation, which is fine, but it would be nice to see a real human scene between Sue and Holly about this issue. Dig deeper into Sue's inner life. Who is this woman? What are her hopes and dreams? Really, WHY has she stayed with Joe? Is he a great husband as well as father? Give her more of a personality.

JOE - Is probably most thinly drawn character of them all. He is a bit of a mystery. He seems callous when Holly first confronts him about catching him cross-dressing. If he tries so hard to keep it a secret, why is he so nonchalant when she finds out AND if he thought it was no big deal, WHY does he keep it a secret for so long? Also, it is not clear if he is an alcoholic or not? If he's NOT an alcoholic it makes the situation more interesting. We've seen so many stories of family's dealing with an alcoholic, but what makes THIS story interesting is that we have rarely seen a film dealing with a cross-dressing father. That is good. There is no need to make him an alcoholic. There are some basic things we need to know about Joe. Where does he work? Where is he from? WAS he sexually abused as a child? This is very important. The therapist doesn't want Joe "to answer the question" but the audience DEFINITELY wants to know and we want to know how that impacts the way he is behaving. We want to have sympathy for Joe as well. Right now, he feels cold as well. We are constantly told what a good man is, but we NEVER see it. Again, that's why we have to see him interact with his family before the incident. Also, we never see his REACTIONS to anything. We don't SEE how he reacts to the letter. We don't SEE how he is when his daughter confronts him with what she saw. It would be better if they were in a room together and that we saw how they were with each other. Let's see him at work. Let's see him interact with his wife. We don't know anything about him. Make him a full, three-dimensional man. Right now, he feels like a caricature.

TYLER - What role does he play in all this? Perhaps Holly should talk to someone outside the family and tell them what is going on. He would be a good choice. They're relationship seems perfect. Is it? What are his struggles in life? The girls all seem to be dealing with something, but Tyler doesn't seem to be.

HOLLY'S FRIENDS - Jessica and Kristy are good. They both have unique problems, but we want to see MORE of how they interact with Holly. Okay, they think that Holly has the perfect life and that they have real problems, but perhaps it would be interesting to see even more conflict between these girls and Holly. We need to see how this affects Holly and her life. Perhaps the whole thing with her dad, causes her to get into problems with her friends. That

would make these scenes more interesting. Show that Holly really IS a drama queen.

CAITLIN'S FRIENDS - Not much here. They just react to Caitlin. Probably should just use one girl, so we can get to know her a bit more. Also, TOM is odd. It's odd that a father would let a young boy into his house and changes a lock on his daughter's room. And who is Tom? We never see him again.

## **STRUCTURE**

The structure needs work. Probably best for the author to pick up a screenwriting book like Syd Field's "The Fundamentals of Screenwriting" to help get the structure down. First of all, again, the protagonist needs to have a goal that she DESPERATELY wants and there needs to be STRONG OBSTACLES that keep her from achieving. Make sure this is all clear. The first act sets up the protagonist and the other characters. It also gets the audience invested in the protagonist's goal and the journey we are about to go on. We need to be brought close to the characters and REALLY get to know them. Again, here the first act needs more of a setup of the family - we need to see how they are BEFORE the incident. The end of the first act has to be strong. It should occur between pp25-30. The protagonist (Holly) has to make a decision, a choice. Then, in the second act we will see her pursue that choice. Here, it seems like Holly decides that she doesn't want anything to do with her father anymore and in the second act we will see if she can do that. That's what she wants, but there are pressures (she IS conflicted) that makes her wonder whether the goal she is pursuing is right or not. The SECOND ACT is the meat of the story. The second act has to have a strong, dramatic drive. What is Holly ACTIVELY pursuing? What are the obstacles that are keeping her from getting what she wants? What are the conflicts between Holly and Sue, between Holly and Caitlin, between Holly and Joe? These all have to be clear. The tension has to escalate in the second act. It should seem by the end of the second act that this family is falling apart. The author needs to ratchet up the tension, keep making it harder and harder for Holly - NOT easier and easier. The end of the second act is often referred to as THE BIG GLOOM. Since, this is a happy ending, the end of the second act (between pp. 75-85) is when Holly looks like she will never get what she wants, or it is when the family feels



like it has totally fallen apart. What is the worse situation for Holly? That is the lowpoint, the end of the second act. The THIRD ACT has Holly pursuing a new goal. Maybe in ACT TWO Holly was trying to make it work with her father and at the end of the second act she gives up. In the THIRD ACT, perhaps she strives to distance herself from her father. Holly's goal in the third act should be different from her goal in the second act. No matter what it is, it has to be CLEAR what Holly is pursuing in the third act. The screenplay should end on pp 100-110. Somewhere in there..

FORMAT - Two small notes. Never use CUT TO: in a professional script. You don't need it. Don't use "begins" or "starts"... Just use active verbs, present tense only. You have "begins" often in the script. Cut them or reword the sentence. The author might want to buy scripts from a place like [www.scriptcity.com](http://www.scriptcity.com) to see how a script really looks.

VISUAL STORYTELLING - This is a big note with this script. The author has the characters TELL us most of what we know. Film is a visual medium. We need to SEE, through the characters ACTIONS. That's how we learn about the characters, not through exposition

SCENES - There are a lot of scenes in this script with characters chitchatting with each other or bantering with each other. No. EVERY scene in a script needs conflict. EVERY SCENE! Conflict is defined as characters with opposing intentions. If a scene does NOT have conflict, it has to be cut or reworked. AND the author needs to make sure EVERY scene accomplishes two things: 1) moves the story forward 2) expand our understanding of the characters. If the scene doesn't accomplish both, it has to be cut or reworked.

TITLE -- (TITLE) is too generic. MANY, MANY films could have that title. Although maybe that's the point. Still, in this readers opinion, it could backfire. This story reminded this reader of "The Ice Storm" or "Ordinary People" or "In the Bedroom." The author is creative and talented, she should have no problem coming up with a stronger title. Titles are VERY important in Hollywood, some scripts sell on the title alone. Spend time making the title a good one.

GENERAL - There are many nice moments in this story and the author has an engaging style. The story needs more "meat" on its bones - more tension, a stronger dramatic engine and more emotions. The story is unique and fresh. It does have good potential. Good luck!



	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>So-So</u>	<u>Not Good</u>
Artistically			X		
Commercial			X		
Premise		X			
Story				X	
Main Characters			X		
Minor Characters				X	
Dialogue			X		
Visual Elements				X	
Title				X	

SCRIPT:           PASS  
WRITER:           PASS