

STUDIO 7
on the Sunset Strip

Pilot

Written by
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TEASER

From the BLACK we HEAR--

LARRY (VO)
How many of you have been watching Studio
7 since high school?

APPLAUSE and CHEERS--

LARRY (VO) (CONT'D)
How many since junior high? —

FADE IN:

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT

We're in the moments before a live broadcast. An audience of 400 is seated on three sides of a huge thrust stage with several playing areas that can be dressed for various sketches as well as an area for the house band.

Network PAGES wearing blazers man the aisles and we'll start to notice the logo of UBS, the United Broadcasting System.

LARRY, with a pleasant and easygoing manner, is doing the warm-up.

LARRY
How many have been watching since the
show went on the air in 1986?

CHEERS and APPLAUSE--

LARRY (CONT'D)
(to a GIRL in the audience)
You weren't born in 1986.

We can't hear what the GIRL says 'cause she's not mic'd.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Hm?
(beat)
No, excuse me pal, I'm trying to hit on
your girlfriend.

LAUGH from the AUDIENCE...

LARRY (CONT'D)
(beat)
Those are re-runs on Comedy Central
you're talking about, this is the real
thing. It's our 20th season, we're very
proud of that...

(CONTINUED)

LARRY glances to the back of one of the vomitoriums under the seats where WES, the Executive Producer, is in the middle of a heated argument with a NETWORK EXECUTIVE. LARRY's glanced back there because some of the argument--inaudibly--is making its way out to the stage. He casually motions for a PA to come over without tipping the audience that anything's wrong.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You all know how it works. We start with what's called a cold-open, then we smash into the VTR, or Video Tape Recording which is the main titles. And over the VTR I say, "Liiive, from Studio 7 on the Sunset Strip, it's Friday night in Hollywood--"

The places breaks into CHEERS at the signature announcement--

LARRY (CONT'D)

(reacting to the cheers)

Not yet. Don't waste it.

(quietly to the PA)

Tell those guys we can hear 'em out here.

The PA heads off--

LARRY (CONT'D)

All right, we've got about three minutes to air. It's gonna be a great show, an exciting night. From the ABC smash hit *Desperate Housewives*, Felicity Huffman is here.

CHEERS--

LARRY (CONT'D)

(over the cheers)

Counting Crows are here.

CHEERS--

LARRY (CONT'D)

Let's give it up one more time for Bobcat Willy and the Studio 7 Band. Willy, take us to the starting line.

And the HOUSE BAND kicks into warm-up music.

We've FOLLOWED the PA to the back of the vomitorium where WES is in the middle of it with the network executive, JERRY.

WES

No let's keep this rational, okay, let's have some rationality, I've been here--

(CONTINUED)

PA
Excuse me--

WES
(to the PA)
I want Jack Rudolph on the phone.

JERRY
Wes--

PA
Sir, I don't know how to call--

JERRY
Jack's at a dinner party.

WES
Let's disturb him.

JERRY
Jack pays me to make these calls.

WES
And Jack pays me to do this show, you
ridiculous fat-ass.
(to the PA)
What's your name?

PA
Suzanne.

WES
Get me the Chairman of UBS.

PA (SUZANNE)
(way over her head)
I can ask someone for the number and--

JERRY
(to SUZANNE)
Stay where you are.

WES
Now you're telling my people where to--

JERRY
I'm trying to save us all a lot of tsuris.

WES
Jerry, it's a funny sketch. It killed at
dress and funny has been in short supply
around here lately.

JERRY
I'm in charge of Broadcast Standards and
Practices, I'm not in charge of funny.

(CONTINUED)

WES
Who's gonna be offended by this?

JERRY
Wes--

WES
Who?

JERRY
People who--religious people. God, Wes,
and you knew that when you--what do you
want me to say to the 50 million people
who are gonna go out of their minds as
soon as it airs?

WES
Well first of all, you can tell 'em we
average 9 million households so at least
41 million of them are full of crap.
Second, you can tell 'em that living
where there's free speech means sometimes
you're gonna get offended.

JERRY
You gotta cut the sketch.

WES
And replace it with what?

JERRY
Whatever you want. Peripheral Vision Man
is ready, you can--

WES
Peripheral Vision Man isn't funny and
it's never been funny. I want to talk to
Jamie McDeere.

JERRY
You can't.

WES
She's at a dinner party too?

JERRY
Yes, yes she is, it's the same dinner
party. It's a dinner party for Jamie
McDeere. You don't have a lot of time.

WES
(beat)
What happens if I say no. What if I go on
the air with the sketch?

JERRY
I'm not gonna answer that.

WES
Why?

JERRY
'Cause if you still had the muscle to do it you wouldn't have asked.

WES
(pause--then to SUZANNE)
Tell the control room we're cutting 4A and filling with Peripheral Vision Man.

SUZANNE heads off...

JERRY
Thank you.

And JERRY heads off...

WES stand there a moment. He looks out onto the stage from the back of the vomitorium and sees RICKY and RON--two guys we'll get to meet later. They catch his glance and give him a nod. WES looks at them the way a king looks at illegitimate sons who are plotting to take his throne. Then he heads off as we

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Three tiers of seats facing banks of monitors--one of which, we'll notice, is marked "DELAY". Three clocks, Eastern, Central and Pacific and a large digital read-out counting us down to airtime. The room's being very capably run by CAL, the Director, and LILLY, the Assistant Director.

We HEAR a man's voice over LILLY's console phone--

MAN
(over phone)
Studio 7, this is the broadcast center, you're up on Router 2, have a good show.

LILLY
(into phone)
Thank you.
(hangs up)
Two minutes.

ASSISTANT
(pushing a button)
Two minutes to cold open. We need Tom and Dylan set. Larry standing by. Felicity Huffman standing by.

(CONTINUED)

LILLY
You want the cameras to call in?

CAL
Thank you.

SUZANNE comes in--

SUZANNE
We're blowing off 4A.

The whole room reacts. They liked the sketch too.

LILLY
You're kidding.

SUZANNE
No.

LILLY
It killed at dress. It was smart.

CAL
It never had a chance. What are we
filling with?

SUZANNE
Peripheral Vision Man.

CAL
We're just gonna keep doing that one till
somebody laughs, huh?
(back to LILLY)
What was the time on 4A?

LILLY
4:10.

CAL
What's the time on Peripheral Vision Man?

LILLY
3:45.

CAL
Alright, tell the writers room they're
gonna have to stretch it another 25
seconds, and that I'm sure that making it
longer was the missing ingredient in
making it funny.

LILLY
(into headset)
Stand-by, we've got a change at 4A.

(CONTINUED)

ASSISTANT
90 seconds live.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

We HEAR the House Band as the CAMERA takes us past open dressing room doors. Two cast members, SIMON and TOM, who we'll also get to know in a bit, pass each other with a low-five--

TOM
Good show.

SIMON
Eat 'em up.

And we move into--

INT. HAIR AND MAKE-UP - CONTINUOUS

--where final touches are being put on FELICITY HUFFMAN's hair as she looks over cue-cards that are being held in front of her.

FELICITY HUFFMAN
(reading to herself)
"...which isn't how we'd do it on Wisteria Lane. On Wisteria Lane--"--you know I actually was told this was gonna change. Are these the newest cards?

CUE CARD MAN
Yeah, we just copied them down.

WARDROBE ASSISTANT
Felicity, decision time. Are we going with the slutty dress or the very slutty dress?

FELICITY HUFFMAN sees WES walking past the open door--

FELICITY HUFFMAN
Hang on. Could you--Wes?

She grabs the cue cards and goes out into--

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

FELICITY HUFFMAN
Wes?

There's something absent from WES now...he's going through the motions.

(CONTINUED)

WES
(turning around)
Hey, you look great.

FELICITY HUFFMAN
Yeah, I'm not dressed yet, but I wanted to ask you about the *Desperate Housewives* run in the monologue? I'll do what you want, but I thought we decided it didn't really work, which the rehearsal audience kind of confirmed.

WES
(pause)
Yeah.

FELICITY HUFFMAN
Plus we're doing two *Desperate Housewives* sketches, so I thought it was decided--

WES
Yeah, I apologize. I really do. We weren't able to get to it.

FELICITY HUFFMAN
(beat)
Are you all right?

WES
Yeah. I'm sorry I wasn't able to spend that much time with you this week.
(beat)
You're in a class by yourself, Felicity. Knock 'em dead.

WES starts to walk away--

FELICITY HUFFMAN
Wes?

He turns around--

FELICITY HUFFMAN (CONT'D)
Is there anything you can tell me that'll make me feel better about the monologue?

WES
(pause--thinks)
Your instincts aren't wrong. It isn't funny.

WES walks off.

A CAST MEMBER across the hall has observed this...

(CONTINUED)

CAST MEMBER

He doesn't seem right tonight, does he.

FELICITY HUFFMAN's not exactly bathed in confidence as the
WARDROBE ASSISTANT steps out to help--

WARDROBE ASSISTANT

Come on, babe. Just tell me what you
need.

FELICITY HUFFMAN

I need the very slutty dress and somebody
else to wear it.

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

A part of the stage is set for an Oval Office sketch and TOM,
who'll be playing George Bush is sitting behind the desk
getting last touches. Same thing for a CAST MEMBER playing
Dick Cheney, who's standing off to the side.

The HOUSE BAND winds up and finishes.

APPLAUSE and CHEERS...

LARRY the announcer is at a podium off-stage.

LARRY

All right, folks, 30 seconds till we're
live in the East. And here's our
Executive Producer, Wes Mendell, taking
his seat.

WES absently acknowledges his APPLAUSE as he takes his seat in
front of a quad-split and puts on a headset...

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The digital display counts down. The DELAY OPERATOR takes his
seat in front of his monitor.

LILLY

15 seconds.

CAL

Ready 1.

LILLY

Last looks.

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

FLOOR MANAGER

We're live in 8, 7, 6, 5, 4--

He silently counts in the last three seconds before pointing at the actor playing Bush--

TOM (AS BUSH)

My fellow Americans. I'm here to speak to you tonight about a very serious subject. My legacy. Legacy is a 480 S.A.T. word which, it turns out, does not mean a woman with nice legs. As in, "Paula Zahn, a gal who's got some serious legacy goin' on." Or, "Angelina Jolie--primo legacy." No, my friends, legacy means--

WES

Stop this.

TOM (AS BUSH)

--the impact one leaves behind.

WES

Stop it, Tom.

There are all kinds of ASSISTANTS and PRODUCERS near WES's chair, all of whom are suddenly confused--

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

(quietly)

We can hear you.

WES has gotten out of his chair and stepped on stage.

TOM (AS BUSH)

(still sticking with the cue cards)

I've asked my Vice President, Dick Cheney, to join me this--

WES

We're gonna stop it, fellas.

TOM

Did we lose the feed?

WES

No. I want you both to clear the stage, I don't want anyone to think you were a part of this.

The AUDIENCE is laughing a little bit, assuming this is part of the show.

(CONTINUED)

WES (CONT'D)
(again)
Clear the stage.

TOM and the cast member playing Cheney step to the side, but not too far away as they're a little concerned.

WES (CONT'D)
(to the audience)
This isn't gonna be a very good show tonight and I think you should change the channel.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

People are flipping through their scripts--lost--

LILLY
What the hell?

ASSISTANT
When did this get put in?

WES (ON MONITORS)
You should change the channel right now, or better yet turn off the TV.

LILLY
(into headset)
Does anybody know what the hell is going on?

Off an AUDIENCE laugh--

WES
No, I know it seems like this is supposed to be funny, but tomorrow you're gonna find out it wasn't and I'll have been fired by then. This isn't supposed--this isn't a sketch.

CAL
This is for real.

WES
This show used to be cutting edge political and social satire but it's gotten lobotomized by a candy-ass broadcast network hell-bent on doing *nothing* that might challenge their audience.

(CONTINUED)

At the edges of the stage, cast and crew are starting to grow nervous. Just not sure what's happening or what they're supposed to do.

WES (CONT'D)

We were about to do a sketch you've already seen 500 times. Yes, no one's gonna confuse George Bush with George Plimpton, we get it. We're all being lobotomized by the country's most influential industry which has thrown in the towel on any endeavor that does not include the courting of 12-year-old boys.

TOM has been silently joined by SIMON, who we saw give him the low-five backstage. At one point, SIMON will make a gut reaction move to go out and get WES, but TOM will just hold his hand out to stop him.

WES (CONT'D)

And not even the smart 12-year-olds, the stupid ones, the idiots, of which there are plenty thanks in no small part to this network. So change the channel, turn off the TV. Do it right now.

JERRY, the network executive we saw before, bursts into the control room as WES continues.

JERRY

Get him off!

CAL

How?

JERRY

Get the camera off of him!

CAL

And put it on what?

JERRY

Cut the boom mic, then!

CAL

It's his show, I take my instructions from him.

WES

...and there's always been a struggle between art and commerce, but now I'm telling you art is getting its ass kicked, and it's making us mean, and it's making us bitchy, and it's making us cheap punks and that's not who we are.

(CONTINUED)

JERRY
(to the DELAY MAN)
Are you bleeping this out?

DELAY MAN
He hasn't said anything you're not
allowed to say.

JERRY
He's telling people to change the
channel.

CAL
I don't think you have to worry about
anybody changing the channel right now.

JERRY
Get him off or you don't have a job
tomorrow.

CAL
I'm running a live national broadcast,
can you threaten me later?

JERRY
I'm the network executive in charge here
and I'm threatening you now. Get us outa
this!

WES
...We're eating worms for money, "*Who
Wants to Screw My Sister*", guys are
getting killed in a war that's got theme
music and a logo. That remote in your
hand is a crack pipe...

JERRY
Cal--

CAL
I'm waiting for him to say something that
isn't true.

JERRY
(turning on the room)
Who else in here knows how to do this?

CAL
Don't talk to my staff.

JERRY
Get him off!

LILLY
(quietly to CAL)
You got two kids in school.

CAL

What?!

JERRY

She said you got two kids in school whose father's five seconds away from never working again.

WES

...and it's not even good pornography. They're just this side of snuff films, and friends, that's what's next 'cause that's all that's left.

LILLY

(gently urging)

Cal.

WES

And the two things that make them scared gutless are the FCC and every psycho-religious cult that gets positively horny at the very mention of a boycott.

CAL's almost made up his mind. It's like he's a trained and experienced policeman but this is the first time he's faced live fire.

CAL

All right--I think we're just gonna go to titles. Stand by VTR.

WES

These are the people they're afraid of, this prissy, feckless, off-the-charts greed-filled whorehouse of a network you're watching. This thoroughly unpatriotic--

CAL

Go VTR! Go VTR! Roll titles! Now!

And we

SMASH CUT TO:

OUR MAIN TITLES

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

TITLE:

Against a black screen, we see the name

Jamie

EXT. JACK RUDOLPH'S HOUSE/POOL - NIGHT

It's a spectacular house with an incredible view of the L.A. lights. There's a dinner party underway--14 or so guests--and a catering staff that looks like the cast of *The O.C.* is at work.

WILSON WHITE is tapping his wine glass with a fork, gathering attention to offer a toast to the guest of honor. The guest of honor is JAMIE MCDEERE. JAMIE's an instantly likeable 30-something woman who we'll get to know as we go on. She's one of the stars of our show and someone who every man's wife can find an irrational reason to hate.

WILSON WHITE is the 70-something Chairman of The Atlantic Media Group, parent company of UBS.

We're at the home of JACK RUDOPH, the 40-something Chairman of UBS.

WHITE

If you'll give an old man your attention?

JACK

I'm the only old man here, Wilson.

WHITE

Well I suppose we're all older than we think. I'd like to offer a toast to Jamie. Two years in Business Affairs at Atlantic Records, two years as Vice President in charge of Production at United Artists--a company I was surprised to learn still existed--

The GUESTS laugh...

WHITE (CONT'D)

--four years at NBC, where she shepherded such modest hits as *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, *Mad About You* and *Frasier*, and where she saw to it that Jay Leno spanked David Letterman on a regular basis. I believe you were personally responsible for booking Hugh Grant after his Sunset Boulevard mishap.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

Yes, but that was the only thing I was personally responsible for with regard to Hugh Grant.

JACK

What about the spanking of Letterman?

The table laughs...

WHITE

To the news division you went and the CBS Morning Show, where you took the program from a 16 to a 19 share and a 13% increase in the demo. Jack, I commend you for making such an astute hire. Jamie, I welcome you to The Atlantic Media Group, and as the new President of the United Broadcasting System, I ask only one thing of you: Huge success. To the newest President of UBS, Jamie McDeere.

ALL

Here here.

Everyone clinks glasses...

JAMIE

Well thank you very much, Mr. White--

WHITE

Wilson.

JAMIE

I'll have to get used to that. And thank you Jack and Marylyn for hosting this wonderful party.

(calling out a little)

I also want to thank the caterers, this food is really incredible. I didn't immediately recognize a lot of it, but it was all delicious.

JAMIE notices that one of the WAITERS is standing right by her side with a note for her.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

(to the WAITER)

Oh I didn't--the food was really great.

WAITER

(quietly, re: the note)

The woman said it was important.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE
(taking the note)
Excuse me, I'm sorry.

JAMIE reads the note--

JAMIE (CONT'D)
(to the table)
It's from my assistant. Something's
happened at Studio 7.
(to JACK'S WIFE)
Could I use your phone?

JACK'S WIFE (MARYLYN)
Yeah, in the kitchen.

JAMIE
(starting toward the kitchen)
It can't be that big a deal. Nothing
bad's gonna happen on my first day,
right?

And at that moment, cell phones and blackberries begin going off around the table--two, three at a time, until it's a 14-piece band of ring-tones, all spelling emergency--

JAMIE takes this in a moment and we

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO 7 SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT

As a small caravan of Range Rovers, Porsches and BMWs scream up to the stage door, knocking down orange pylons as they do.

CREWS from *Entertainment Tonight*, *Access Hollywood*, *E!* and all the local news plus CNN have begun to arrive and take up positions.

Out of various cars spring JACK, some NETWORK EXECUTIVES from the dinner party and JAMIE.

JACK
(to an EXECUTIVE, referring to
the press)
How the hell did these guys get on the
lot?

EXECUTIVE
They were here already covering the party
for the thing.

They bust through the stage door and into--

INT. BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

--where JERRY is waiting for them.

JACK
What happened?

JERRY
I cut a sketch and he went crazy.

JACK
I need Shelly Green, I need Steve Cantor.
I need a tape, somebody play this thing
back for me. I need a room. —

PA
(covering her headphone)
Excuse me, we're still in the middle of a
show.

JACK
Shut up.
(to another PA)
Who's using this room?

PA #2
Counting Crows, but they're backstage at
stand-by.

JACK
In here.

JACK and a growing entourage of network people step into--

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

--which is foggy with pot smoke. JACK immediately reacts--

JACK
Oh man, are you kidding me?!

JERRY
We do need to keep it down.

JACK
Somebody want to get rid of the bong and
the loose joints?

JAMIE
I'll grab the loose joints.

A PA runs in with a three-quarter inch tape which JERRY tries
to slam into the half-inch VCR--

(CONTINUED)

JACK

We need it on half-inch for the love of--
we work in television!

But before he can even finish his sentence, another PA has run in with a half-inch tape, which gets tossed to JERRY and slammed into the VCR.

WES (ON MONITOR)

No, we're live. I want you both to clear the stage, I don't want anyone to think you were a part of this.

(pause)

Clear the stage.

(pause)

This isn't gonna be a very good show tonight and I think you should change the channel.

As WES continues on the TV, we see JACK's face turn blood red. Behind him is JAMIE, who's watching poker-faced.

The tape of WES continues on and JAMIE watches a bit before she slips out of the room and into--

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

JAMIE

(to a PA)

Where is he?

PA

(pointing)

The green room.

JAMIE moves down the hall to an open door, outside of which stand two STUDIO SECURITY GUARDS.

She steps into--

INT. GREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

WES sits alone on the couch. The show feed is on the monitor.

JAMIE

How are you?

WES

I'm fine. Who are you?

JAMIE

I'm Jamie McDeere, I'm the new president of--

WES

I'm sorry, I didn't recognize you.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE
What was the sketch about?

WES
What?

JAMIE
That got cut.

But before WES can answer, JACK and the crowd can be heard coming down the hall.

JACK comes in--

JACK
We're meeting in the 18th floor conference room in 30 minutes. Legal's gonna be there along with publicity. Jerry's in charge here and they'll figure out a way to deal with the opening 60 seconds for the West Coast air. Wes?

WES
Yeah.

JACK
You're fired.
(to the SECURITY GUARDS)
Escort him off the lot. He doesn't talk to any press while he's on this lot.

JACK and the crowd leave.

JAMIE
I'm sorry.

JAMIE turns to leave and hears the start of a new sketch coming from the stage and over the hall monitors. There's ominous music, then--

DEEP VOICED ANNOUNCER (VO)
In times like these, the world needs a superhero with a full 180 degree field of sight. The world needs...*Peripheral Vision Man!*

JAMIE shakes her head and we

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

A bank of 12 televisions are being turned on for the benefit of JACK, JAMIE and everyone else in the room.

(CONTINUED)

The volume will get turned up on the monitors that interest them, and there are a growing number, which will all start to play simultaneously.

MONITOR #1

In a scene reminiscent of Paddy Chayefsky's classic film, *Network*, Studio 7 Executive Producer Wes Mendell hijacked tonight's live broadcast and instructed his audience to--

MONITOR #2

In a stunning impression of Peter Finch's Oscar-winning performance in the 1977 film, *Network*, Wes Mendell, longtime Executive Producer of Studio 7--

MONITOR #3

He was mad as hell and he wasn't gonna take it anymore. The UBS flagship program, *Studio 7*, celebrating its 20th season on the air, had a message for its viewers tonight--

MONITOR #4

Disaster and embarrassment at UBS as tonight's broadcast of *Studio 7* got off to a start that would've made Paddy Chayefsky smile--

JACK

You believe this?

JAMIE

I'm pleasantly surprised these guys have heard of Paddy Chayefsky.

JACK

Everybody sidddown.

People start to take seats and JAMIE sits, SHELLY, the head of publicity, confides in her--

SHELLY

(quietly)

That was a faux pas back there.

JAMIE

(quietly)

Where?

SHELLY

(quietly)

At the dinner party. You don't compliment the caterer in front of the hostess.

JAMIE

(quietly)

I don't want to start throwing my weight around, Shel, but that's probably not gonna be a high priority tonight.

JACK

Shelly, muzzles on the cast, mouths shut, nobody talks until I say so. Howard, what's legal thinking?

HOWARD

They're looking at the tape. There could be anything from the FCC to a class _ action suit.

JACK

What about the news division?

ALAN

They're not gonna like the crack about having theme music and a logo for the war.

JACK

Advertiser relations?

ZELDA

We're trying to get 'em on the phone, but it's not easy this late on a Friday.

MITCH

Same thing with the affiliates.

JACK

(beat)

The remark about worm eating and "Who wants to screw my sister"? He was talking about our shows?

MICHAEL

We don't know.

JAMIE's trying not to laugh--

JACK

Is there something funny about this, Jamie?

JAMIE

Oh God, Jack, there's like nine things funny about this. We're not sure which sister-pimping show he was talking about?

MICHAEL

I meant that--

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

The FCC doesn't have us on anything and a law suit wouldn't pass the laugh test.

HOWARD

They're worried a class-action suit--

JAMIE

--being brought by who? People with bad taste? They all got together and hired a lawyer to sue for defamation? Mitch, when the advertisers and affiliates see the east coast overnights and the fast nationals they're gonna be plenty happy and by the way, you can try, but you can't stop the cast from talking to the press. Certainly not the Big Three.

ALAN

The news division?

JAMIE

The news division can kiss me, report the damn news.

HOWARD

Who are the Big Three?

JACK

She's talking about Harriet Hayes, Tom Jeter and Stiles, they're the leaders in the group. Jamie, are you saying we're over-reacting to this hideous, humiliating and possibly actionable event that occurred on our air?

JAMIE

No, I'm saying you're dramatically under-reacting to it. Look, we caught one break. It happened on a Friday night and nobody ever learns anything new on a Saturday. But I'll bet my stock options against anyone's in this room that by Monday noon, Wes's rant will be the most searched for hit in the history of the Internet. I mean, it's gonna break records. And they'll say he was crazy and they'll say he lost his marbles but you know what else they're gonna say?

JACK

What?

JAMIE

That he was right.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE (CONT'D)

They're gonna say he was right and courageous and hallelujah somebody said it. Every cable show's gonna have non-stop roundtables about how Hollywood's taking our national culture to hell on a speedboat and we just became the symbol of that. I don't know who the bookers are even gonna get who are gonna be on our side. People for the American Way isn't gonna show up to defend UBS's primetime schedule.

JACK

When the hell did there become two sides to this?

JAMIE

When you fired Wes. He's a martyr now.

JACK

Jamie, you can't be suggesting--this is what happened in the damn movie--you can't be suggesting we give him his show back.

JAMIE

Absolutely not. What he did was unforgivably irresponsible and he put me, to say nothing of his cast and crew, in a terrible position. He's done at this network.

JACK

Then what are you suggesting?

JAMIE

Let's talk in my office.

JAMIE gets up and exits. JACK, with not many choices, follows her out into--

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

--where JAMIE's standing there--

JAMIE

I don't know where my office is.

WES shakes his head and points and JAMIE follows him into--

INT. JAMIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She hasn't moved into it yet, this being her first day. Unopened packing cartons are everywhere. She's got a hell of a view out her floor-to-ceiling windows, though.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
What are you suggesting?

JAMIE
We need a new story and Studio 7 needs a new Executive Producer and head writer. I want to hire Matt Albie and Danny Moore.

JACK
No no no no no no.

JAMIE
Yeah.

JACK
I have a history with those two guys.

JAMIE
No kidding.

JACK
I fired them.

JAMIE
I know the history, Jack, people in Kansas know the history. That's why it's a good story. It's a big story and we get to control it. We're gonna hire two people who hate your guts and we're gonna do it 'cause we're committed to quality. It's a tacit admission of guilt and a silent act of contrition and that's what's required here.

JACK
What the hell am I guilty of?

JAMIE
Jack--

JACK
What am I guilty of?

JAMIE
We don't have that kind of time.

JACK
You talk to your bosses at NBC like this?

JAMIE
Everyday. That's how I became president of a network.

JACK
I'll look completely de-balled.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

You don't need all the fingers on one hand to count the number of people who care about your balls tonight.

JACK

I got news for you, sister, as long as I'm one of 'em, so are you.

JAMIE

Wes basically gave 'em the show when they were there. They were his boys.

JACK

Yeah, Wes didn't seem to kick up much of a fuss when I fired his boys, which, by the way, doesn't seem to have hurt their careers any.

JAMIE

Well that's between them.

JACK

I'm not the bad man here.

JAMIE

We don't need to debate four years ago. They're exceptionally qualified, it's a splashy choice. They're classy, and we need that right now.

JACK

My thought was that we'd promote Ronald Oswald and Richard Beck. They've been co-execs for three years, they know what they're doing, they know the current cast and staff, it'll bring stability and they're--what's the word I'm looking for--

JAMIE

Hacks. Ron Oswald and Ricky Beck are hacks and stability isn't what we're looking for, we're looking for surprise.

JACK

The most expensive thing in television are executive producers you can't control.

JAMIE

The most expensive thing in television is a show that doesn't work.

JACK

You're never gonna get these guys.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE
I will.

JACK
How?

JAMIE
I'll get 'em.

JACK
They've got a hit movie out right now.

JAMIE
A critical hit, but nobody's buying a ticket.

JACK
They're still gonna be offered everything.

JAMIE
I'm gonna get them to come back to television.

JACK
You know something I don't know?

JAMIE
Yeah, and we're keeping it that way.

JACK
When do you want to do this?

JAMIE
Now. Tonight. I want this all done and together for a press conference Monday noon to announce and take questions.

JACK
You're gonna get this all done on a Friday night.

JAMIE
Yeah.

JACK
You're gonna have to pay these guys.

JAMIE
Oh I'm gonna back up a Brinks truck. And I'll have to do what it takes to get 'em Wes's blessing.

JACK

They're not gonna care about Wes's blessing, Wes is at least as guilty as I am of--

JAMIE

They're gonna care.

JACK

'Cause they're classy.

JAMIE doesn't say anything...

JACK (CONT'D)

Do you have a thing for one of these guys? Or both of these guys?

JAMIE

(beat--smiles)

I don't know either one of them personally. Is that a question you were asked when you hired me?

JACK

You bet your ass it was.

JAMIE

I need to get started now. I need to get to Matt and Danny.

JACK

I'm gonna want to meet with 'em before any hands are shaken.

JAMIE

They're not gonna audition for you, Jack.

JACK

We're gonna have a conversation.

JAMIE

And what will you say in this conversation?

JACK

Whatever I damn well please.

(beat)

I don't think it's a secret to you that I want Wilson White's job. I'm gonna be CEO of Atlantic Media and to do that I've gotta show White I can delegate when it comes to UBS and particularly the entertainment division. But you saw how fast I fired Wes Mendell? Screw this up and I'll fire you faster.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm not like every other heterosexual man in show business, Jamie. I don't find you charming. And you've earned the loyalty of absolutely no one.

(beat)

So you go ahead and take your first steps toward making us all classy again. We've been waiting for you.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

TITLE:

Matt and Danny

We HEAR the sound of plates, glasses and silverware crashing around for a moment and then

FADE IN:

INT. BEVERLY HILTON BALLROOM - NIGHT

--as MATTHEW ALBIE, 33, sits on the floor, having tried to sit in a chair that wasn't there. He's grabbed a bit of the tablecloth on the way down, upsetting some of the place settings. None of his friends at the table seem terribly shocked. As MATT makes his way back up, he apologizes...

MATT

Sorry. I'm on some medication right now that makes me--I guess--not know where chairs are.

It's the Writers Guild Awards and the stage of the ballroom is decked out for the occasion. GUESTS and NOMINEES sit at tables in black tie and evening gowns. We're in the dinner portion and a small jazz band is playing so the guests have to raise their voices sometimes.

MATT's wearing a black-on-black tuxedo. Also at the table is DANIEL MOORE, 35--Matt's best friend and partner. DANNY's date is MARTHA, a sexy red-headed journalist.

DANNY

He means he's on back medication. Matt Albie, this is Martha Moyer from the LA Times.

MARTHA

I'm a big fan.

MATT

Thanks, that's nice of you. Are you doing a piece on Danny?

MARTHA

No, I'm not working tonight. We're on a date.

MATT

Great.

MARTHA

How did you hurt your back?

(CONTINUED)

MATT

It happened when a surgeon sliced it open with a knife.

DANNY

He had back surgery a few days ago.

MARTHA

You're on Vicodin?

MATT

Yeah. I may have exceeded the recommended dosage.

MARTHA

Should you be out of bed?

MATT

(beat)

Am I?

DANNY

They haven't gotten to your category yet. They're doing the awards between courses this year.

MATT

Great. Martha, you're writing on the op-ed page now, aren't you?

MARTHA

Yeah, I just got my column.

MATT

Sure, you're doing terrific, keep it up.

MARTHA

Thank you. That's a nice tux, is that Hugo Boss?

MATT

Yes. And the way I know is that a huge Bavarian model came to my house with a rack of tuxedos and said--

(German accent)

--dees ah from Hugo.

DANNY

Well you picked a nice one.

MATT

You think?

DANNY

You look like the Number 2 guy in a Colombian drug cartel.

(CONTINUED)

MATT
I think it says formal but not stodgy.

DANNY
I think it says Hi, my name is Johnny
Cash.

Another guest speaks up--

PAUL
How you doin' over there, my friend?

MATT
Is that Paul?

PAUL
Yeah, how you feelin'?

MATT
Good as new. Where's Julie?

JULIE
(right next to PAUL--raising
her hand)
Right here.

MATT
Sure. I didn't see you. I'm on Vicodin
and Percocet and a steroid called
Neurontin, the side effect of which is
mania--I swear to God, it says so right
on the bottle.

DANNY
Martha got invited to the Friday night
wrap party, so I thought we might go over
after, what do you think?

MATT
For Studio 7?

MARTHA
Yeah, I'm friends with Felicity Huffman
and she's guest hosting tonight.

MATT
Noooo, no no.

DANNY
Come on.

MARTHA
You don't like Felicity?

MATT

No I like Felicity fine, but I used to date one of the cast members and we broke up and it would be awkward if I went to the party and...

(beat)

...killed her in front of all those people.

MARTHA

Which one?

MATT

Harriet Hayes.

MARTHA

(quickly)

Oh she's amazing, I love her. How many women in the world are there who are that beautiful and that funny? She's one of a kind, she's special.

MATT

I feel a lot better now about the break-up.

PAUL

What happened?

DANNY

Please don't ask him what happened.

MATT

It was because of the Star Spangled Banner, can you believe it?

DANNY

Please don't ask him--

JULIE

What happened with the Star Spangled Banner?

DANNY

--about the Star Spangled Banner.

MATT

She was singing it before a Dodger game.

PAUL

Who were they playing?

DANNY

What could it possibly matter?

(CONTINUED)

MATT

St. Louis. But Danny and I had just gotten back from London to do press for the movie and that's an 11 hour flight with an 8 hour time change and a pre-operative spinal cord so I wasn't able to make it out to the stadium.

PAUL

And that's what pissed her off?

MATT

No.

DANNY

I'll give you a thousand dollars if you don't ask what pissed her off.

An M.C. takes the podium--

M.C.

Well ladies and gentlemen, it's time to give out some more awards. To present in the category of Outstanding Original Screenplay is two-time Academy Award winner and two-time Writers Guild Award winner Robert Towne.

ROBERT TOWNE comes out to great APPLAUSE. We'll HEAR him giving an introduction in the background and then announce the nominees as the scene continues at the table.

PAUL

I'm sorry, but what did you do to--

MATT

It was later that night. She was still giving me a hard time about not going to the game and she said, "I was great, by the way, I got a standing ovation." And I said, "Harriet, I'm sure you were great, but it was the National Anthem, they were standing already." And that's pretty much when all hell broke loose.

And at that moment, the ballroom bursts into APPLAUSE. Everyone at MATT and DANNY's table--as well as the near surrounding tables--stands up in their ovation. DANNY grabs MATT and hugs him, which MATT misinterprets as--

MATT (CONT'D)

(quietly in DANNY's ear as they embrace)

Thanks, man. I really miss her. I do. I appreciate your support.

(CONTINUED)

DANNY
Matt?

MATT
Yeah.

DANNY
Go up on the stage now.

MATT
Why?

DANNY
You just won.

MATT
Really? Hey, that's great.

And MATT begins making his way up the aisles, shaking outstretched hands and saying a word or two to people.

MARTHA
Is he gonna be okay up there?

DANNY
Accepting awards in front of ballrooms full of people is the only place he is okay.

From another direction, BLAIR, a good-looking 40ish agent, comes quickly up to DANNY, closing her cell phone as she does. It's urgent but she also doesn't want to draw a lot of attention.

BLAIR
I need to talk to you.

DANNY
Our boy just won.

BLAIR
I need to talk to you outside.

DANNY
We're gonna listen to this.

BLAIR reaches up and whispers in DANNY's ear for a moment.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(to MARTHA)
Excuse me.

DANNY follows BLAIR out of the room as we join MATT on stage, who's already begun his acceptance.

(CONTINUED)

MATT

...and the Writers Guild really couldn't have done me any greater honor than to have nominated me alongside Nick Pileggi, Steve Zailian, Carrie Fisher and Akiva Goldsman. Before I go any further, I want to acknowledge Danny Moore.

The place breaks out in APPLAUSE--

MATT (CONT'D)

Whether it's on the set or at my desk he's never not been there for me. Would you put that followspot on Danny at Table 15.

The spotlight moves to where DANNY was sitting, which is now an empty seat in front of a half-used dinner plate.

MATT just shakes his head and smiles a little. Then he steps casually over to the TROPHY GIRL--the model who handed him his award--and says--

MATT (CONT'D)

You see that there's nobody there too, right?

The TROPHY GIRL nods her head 'yes' as we

CUT TO:

INT. BEVERLY HILTON LOBBY - NIGHT

DANNY and BLAIR are huddled--

DANNY

When can I see a tape.

BLAIR

It's coming in the door right now.

BLAIR'S ASSISTANT is coming through the front doors of the lobby with a tape--

DANNY

And I want to find Wes, I want to see if he's okay.

BLAIR

Yeah.

(to the ASSISTANT)

We need a room with a half-inch deck.

MARTHA comes out of the ballroom--

(CONTINUED)

MARTHA
Danny?

DANNY
Yeah.

MARTHA
I just got a text message from my paper.
Something happened at Studio 7.

DANNY
Yeah.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKYBAR - NIGHT

PAPARAZZI and AUTOGRAPH SEEKERS with instant cameras and picture-phones are held at a safe distance behind police barricades as car doors are opened by VALETS.

TITLE:

The Big Three

As soon as HARRIET HAYES steps out of her SUV, the fans start cheering and cameras start flashing.

HARRIET, in her 30's, is effortlessly sexy. She's a multi-talented performer but a world-class sketch comedienne. Most of the time she's able to carry herself with a quiet polish that comes from swimming upstream most of her life, but she's as capable of coming apart at the seams as we all are.

There are some NEWSPEOPLE staked out who are shouting semi-decipherable questions--"*Harriet! How do you feel about what happened tonight?!"*--"*Has Wes been fired?!"*", "*Harriet, over here!"*" etc.

DAPHNE, an early 20's publicist's assistant calls out--

DAPHNE
Just get her inside.

And two well-dressed men the size of Suge Knight escort HARRIET to the door.

SECURITY MAN #1
Right this way, Miss Hayes.

SECURITY MAN #2
You had some trouble tonight, huh?

HARRIET
Little adventure.

(CONTINUED)

They step through the doors into--

INT./EXT. SKYBAR - CONTINUOUS

The regular Friday night wrap party is underway. It's indoor/outdoor, tiki torches, glowing blue pool, CAST, CREW, GUESTS--

DAPHNE

All right, Stevie's in New York, but I'm in constant contact with him and everybody coordinating through Shelly at the network. You're the one everyone wants to talk to 'cause of the nature of the sketch that got cut--you know what I'm saying? They're gonna want to know if you thought it was offensive.

HARRIET

I'm not an expert on Christian people, Daphne.

DAPHNE

Well Stevie says you don't have anything to say to the press right now.

HARRIET

Stevie doesn't have to convince me of that.

HARRIET continues into the party, passing a WAITER who knows to ask--

WAITER

Kettle martini rocks?

HARRIET

Thank you very much.

WAITER

The boys are in the corner.

HARRIET

Thank you.

HARRIET sees CAL, the director from the Teaser, sitting by himself at the bar. She slips up behind him and gives him a friendly scratch on the back...

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Tight show tonight.

CAL laughs a little in spite of himself.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

What went on in the control room?

(CONTINUED)

CAL

We got word the sketch was cut, next thing I knew Wes was up on stage, Standards blew into the room and I waited 53 seconds before I pulled the plug.

HARRIET

There had to be a lot of confusion, it's not like there are rules or procedures for this kind of thing.

CAL

No, there are strict rules and procedures for this kind of thing, I just didn't follow any of them. What's Matt saying?

HARRIET

What do you mean?

CAL

Have you talked to Matt?

HARRIET

Matt and I broke up.

CAL

Oh. I'm sorry. Not my night. Anyway, I've been told to sit tight and wait for word. Rock stars and cocktail waitresses--there are certainly worse places you can be told to wait.

HARRIET

Word on what?

CAL

I faced off with Standards during a live broadcast, Harry, there's gonna be a consequence.

HARRIET

We'll stick together.

CAL

I'm sorry about Matt. I'm a big fan of his and I like him a lot.

HARRIET

I'm a big fan of his and I hate his breathing guts.

CAL

There you go, then.

HARRIET

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CAL

I think the boys are waiting for you at your table.

HARRIET gives CAL a pat as she continues through the party and runs into RON OSWALD and RICKY BECK, the illegitimate sons we saw at the beginning, who were clearly seeking her out.

RON

Hey.

HARRIET

Ron. Ricky.

RON

It's a mob scene out there.

RICKY

It's a mob.

RON

Listen kiddo--You alright?

HARRIET

Yeah.

RON

You sure?

HARRIET

Yeah.

RON

You'd tell me if you weren't, right? You know you can talk to me.

RICKY

Both of us.

RON

Unbelievable situation. Never seen anything like it in 23 years in television.

HARRIET

Where were you when it happened?

RON

Down on the floor. I know we're next in command, but what are we supposed to do, shoot him with a dart gun?

HARRIET

Cal needed some back-up in the control room is all.

(CONTINUED)

RON and RICKY can sense that she's not quite with them.
HARRIET starts to walk away--

RON
We're all gonna stick together on this
Harriet.

HARRIET
Yeah.

As HARRIET moves on, she doesn't hear RICKY, under his breath,
say--

RICKY
(quietly)
Bitch.

CUT TO:

EXT. A DIFFERENT PART OF THE PARTY - NIGHT

TOM JETER and SIMON STILES who we saw at the beginning and who, along with Harriet, are the three biggest stars of *Studio 7*, are sitting in a more private area of the party. A few other cast members and writers are there, along with some hangers-on and the gorgeous women who seem to be around SIMON wherever he goes. SIMON's a good looking black man and no occassional dosage of hip-hop attitude is gonna disguise the fact that he went to the Yale School of Drama.

TOM might be a couple of years younger than SIMON. He's winning with a nimble comic mind. It isn't that he's on all the time, it's just that when he's not crafting a joke in his head, he's not sure what he's supposed to be doing.

TOM and SIMON are united by their mutual respect, their dedication to their show and nothing else.

TOM
An ad parody. Ephedra or Wellbutrin.

ALEX
Wait, listen to this.

TOM
Through a Vaseline lens we shoot skinny supermodels with attitude. Despite the fact that they're young, rich, beautiful, famous and don't work for a living, they're sad and they don't know why.
(looks around for an example)
Like that one over there. So we're seeing these gauzy shots and I don't know what the voice over is but the tag line is:
"Ask your doctor if food is right for you."

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TOM (CONT'D)

(beat)
It's an ad for food.

(beat)
Generically.

SIMON
Are you pitching me a sketch?

TOM
Yes.

SIMON
Now?

TOM
It came to me.

SIMON
How 'bout we do a sketch where a madman
blows up a network television show and I
spend what's left of my career playing
the Ben Vereen part in *Pippin* at the Burt
Reynolds Dinner Theatre in Jupiter,
Florida--No wait, we just did that one!

TOM
I saw *The King and I* there, it was good.

SIMON
(beat)
What?

TOM
The Burt Reynolds Theatre, it's good.

SIMON
So help me Hannah, I am this close to
going Russell Crowe on your ass.

TOM
(seeing her)
Harry.

HARRIET sees them and comes over.

HARRIET
I had to navigate 14 people asking me if
I was offended by the sketch and if I'd
spoken to Matt.

SIMON
Does anybody know where Wes is?

HARRIET
He's at his house, he's meeting there
with somebody.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Has anybody talked to Felicity?

HARRIET

She was gone after the good-byes and I think she deserves a medal for making it that far.

TOM

We should probably send her a fruit basket.

SIMON

Yeah, that should do the trick.

TOM

Have you talked to Matt?

HARRIET

Matthew and I broke up.

SIMON

Over the damn Star Spangled Banner?

HARRIET

It wasn't over the Star Spangled Banner and it doesn't matter so let's just...not...in any way ever talk about him again.

DAPHNE comes over--

DAPHNE

Harriet, you want some nice news on a bad night? Matt just won the Writers Guild Award.

HARRIET

That's wonderful. Really. I'm so happy I could kill myself.

And a young guy, DYLAN, a little too cool for himself--maybe a Jack Black wannabe--speaks out from the other end of the group.

DYLAN

Hey Harriet. You pray before every show. What happened tonight, did it not work?

Suddenly a sense of humorless tension sets in on the group.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(beat--laughs)

Did it not work?

(CONTINUED)

TOM
(quietly to HARRIET)
He's drunk.

DYLAN
Why'd the sketch get cut?
(beat)
Why'd the sketch get cut? Did somebody
who's going to heaven complain to
Standards?

HARRIET
(pause)
You know what, rook? When you start
making a contribution to this show you
can talk to me any way you want. But you
had two lines tonight and you stepped on
one of them. So until you either accept
Jesus Christ as your personal savior or
make somebody laugh, why don't you go
drink at another table.

There's frozen silence for a moment until...

SIMON
(staring him dead)
Do exactly as she said.

DYLAN gets up, along with a couple of his friends, and they
move on...

TOM
(to HARRIET)
Were you offended by the sketch?

HARRIET
I was offended I wasn't *in* the sketch. I
thought the writing was of a level we
haven't had in years, and frankly I was
surprised that Wes was capable of it.

SIMON
Are we sure that Wes wrote it?

TOM
Well it wasn't Ron and Ricky.

SIMON
You sure?

TOM
Ron and Ricky suddenly being able to
write like that would be like me suddenly
being able to play the cello.

DAPHNE's hanging up her cell phone--

(CONTINUED)

DAPHNE
You're being called back to the studio.

TOM
Who?

DAPHNE
Everybody.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

DANNY is standing in front of the TV, holding a remote and watching--for the tenth time--playback on WES's rant. His agent, BLAIR, sits on the couch talking into the room phone while holding her cellphone.

WES (FROM TV)
...and it's not even good pornography. They're just this side of snuff films, and friends, that's what's next 'cause that's all that's left.

There's a KNOCK on the door and BLAIR gets up and answers. It's JAMIE, who gives BLAIR a friendly pat on the arm and an inaudible 'hello' and slips into the room unnoticed by DANNY.

WES (FROM TV) (CONT'D)
And the two things that make them scared gutless are the FCC and every psycho-religious cult that gets positively horny at the very mention of a boycott.

JAMIE
Well there are gonna be some horny psycho-religious cults tonight.

DANNY turns around...

JAMIE (CONT'D)
Danny, I'm Jamie McDeere.

DANNY
(pause)
I'm sorry are we in your room? The hotel just let us in to use--
(to BLAIR)
--are we in somebody's room?

BLAIR
Jamie's come to see you.

DANNY
(pause)
Isn't today your first day?

JAMIE
As a matter of fact my contract doesn't start till Monday. Technically, I suppose, I could blow all this off and go to Cabo for the weekend. You wanna come?

DANNY
I have a date waiting downstairs in the lobby.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

Your date's gonna win a Pulitzer Prize within three years, you heard it here first.

DANNY

I've actually heard it before but I'll pass along the compliment.

JAMIE

Well since you won't go to Cabo, what about this? You and Matt Albie run Studio 7?

DANNY

(pause)

You want Matt and me to run the show?

JAMIE

Yeah. Right now as a matter of fact. Your cast and crew and staff are gathering at the--

DANNY

We're making a movie right now, I'm gearing up to start production on a new screenplay of his.

BLAIR

Danny--

JAMIE

I don't think you are.

DANNY

Look, I'm not even comfortable having this conversation without--you fired Wes?

JAMIE

Yeah.

DANNY

Well I'd like to do for him what he never did for us and ask--

JAMIE

--for his blessing. You have it.

DANNY

I'm sorry?

JAMIE

You have his blessing. You can call him if you want.

(CONTINUED)

DANNY
You've already talked to him?

JAMIE
Yeah.

DANNY
What did you say to him?

JAMIE
I said I want your blessing and I want your endorsement. In gratitude I'll pay the full term of his contract. If he'd said no, I'd have sued for damages and won and while the case was pending for seven years I'd have successfully sought an injunction against his working at any other network.

DANNY
You threatened his life.

JAMIE
In so many words.

DANNY
You bought his blessing.

JAMIE
Yeah.

DANNY
That's okay with you.

JAMIE
Well it's not me he's blessing.

BLAIR
Jamie, I think we ought to talk about what we're talking about.

DANNY
What did you mean when you said--I said we're making a movie and you said I don't think so.

BLAIR
Jamie knows about the test.

DANNY
I'm sorry?

JAMIE
I have an ex-boyfriend who's an executive at Great Western Mutual and he tells me things he's not supposed to tell me.

DANNY
'Cause he doesn't want to be your ex-boyfriend anymore.

JAMIE
I know you failed your physical.

(beat)
And I'm sorry to bring it up like this, it's certainly none of my business. You'll be able to get bonded again in 18 months and I need you for two years so it just about works out.

DANNY.
It does?

JAMIE
Yeah.

DANNY
You're blackmailing me.

JAMIE
I absolutely am not. The information I have interests me only inasmuch as it means you're available to do a job that you're great at and that you love. And the money's not bad either. Blair and I'll settle in on something but you'll be the highest paid showrunners in the business. It'll be roughly three times what you'd make directing a feature which you're not gonna be able to do for another year and a half anyway. What I'd like you to do is to come over to the studio and talk with Jack.

DANNY
(pause)
Am I on the Jamie Kennedy Experiment?

BLAIR
Danny--

Grabbing his coat--

DANNY
I have to talk to Matt.

JAMIE
Matt's not down there anymore.

DANNY
Where is he?

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

He's meeting you at the stage, he's being taken in a separate car.

DANNY

Why?

JAMIE

'Cause the press is about 8 minutes behind all of us tonight.

DANNY

I'm going over there now, but I'm not going over to talk to your boss, I'm going over to tell Matt before you do.

JAMIE

Danny, I have no intention of telling Matt or anyone else.

DANNY

That's nice, but I have no reason to trust you and every reason not to.

JAMIE

Why?

DANNY

You work in television.
(handing BLAIR a ticket)
Would you call down for my car please.

DANNY bolts out of there as we

CUT TO:

INT. BEVERLY HILTON LOBBY - NIGHT

As the elevator doors open and DANNY flies off. He looks around quickly and sees who he was looking for--MARTHA--and runs over and grabs her hand.

DANNY

Marty. I'm sorry. I have to go right now and I can't take you home and I can't take you with me.

MARTHA

That's okay. You're going to the stage?

DANNY's led MARTHA outside to--

EXT. BEVERLY HILTON - CONTINUOUS

--where hundreds of people are waiting to get their cars from the VALETS.

(CONTINUED)

DANNY

I can't really talk about it. You see a black BMW?

MARTHA

We're in Beverly Hills, I see six black BMW's without turning my head. I have friends at the paper who know I'm here tonight.

DANNY

What does that mean?

MARTHA

I get the text message about what happened at the show, I see you getting hustled out by your agent, I see Matt getting hustled out of the press room after he wins, I've got Felicity Huffman telling me Jack Rudolph and Jamie McDeere met immediately after the show and she's preparing for a press conference on Monday.

DANNY

Where's the damn car?

MARTHA

I'm a columnist but I have friends who work on the news side and they get very pissed when they get scooped.

DANNY

I on the other hand don't care at all if they get scooped and neither does anybody else.

MARTHA

Are you dropping Matt's new screenplay and taking over the show?

DANNY

I gave the guy a hundred dollars to keep the car up here.

MARTHA

I'm gonna get in trouble if I don't--I have to tell them what I've seen.

DANNY, who's had it, takes MARTHA's arm and moves her slightly to insure secrecy--

DANNY

I can't direct Matt's script. 8 days ago I failed a drug test and I can't get bonded.

(CONTINUED)

MARTHA

(beat)

I don't understand what that means.

DANNY

Movie studios take out completion bonds. Insurance. So that when Tom Cruise breaks his arm during principal photography and you have to shut down for three weeks, you're covered. I failed my physical and with my history I won't be able to get bonded until I've had 18 months of clean tests. The new president of UBS knows this, so pretty soon everyone else will. You guys are gonna have me for lunch and I don't care. I just want to get to Matt and tell him before somebody else does.

(shouting to the crowd)

SO I HAVE MY CHECKBOOK HERE, AND I AM WILLING TO BUY THE NEXT CAR THAT GETS BROUGHT OUT!!

MARTHA

(calming)

Danny.

DANNY

Call your guys on the news side and tell 'em that, and then let's get this rectal probe started.

MARTHA

There are good reporters and bad reporters, and confusing me with other people is no way to get me into bed with you.

DANNY

(beat)

Well if I'd known that was a realistic possibility, I never would've--

MARTHA

Your car is here.

DANNY

I'm sorry. Can I call you a cab?

MARTHA

I got it.

DANNY

Can I call you?

(CONTINUED)

MARTHA

Yeah. But I don't think you're gonna have time 'cause my reporter's instinct says you're gonna agree to take over the show.

DANNY

I don't mean to insult you twice in the same minute but your reporter's instinct sucks.

DANNY heads for a black BMW--

DANNY (CONT'D)

(to the valet)

Right here.

MARTHA

(calling)

Danny.

DANNY

(calling back)

Yeah.

MARTHA

(pointing to a different black BMW)

That one.

DANNY

(calling back)

Thank you.

DANNY gets in the car and screeches away from the hotel as fast as he can as we

CUT TO:

INT. SOUNDSTAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

HARRIET is coming the down the hall with two cups of coffee. The hall is lined with framed photos from 20 years of *Studio 7*. She stops at one and looks at the picture of herself with SIMON and TOM, laughing at rehearsal with MATT and DANNY. She regards the photo for a moment before she moves on into--

INT. SIMON'S DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TOM's got his feet up on the table, smoking a cigarette and SIMON's lying down on the couch. They're waiting...and while they're waiting, TOM's doing some talking...

TOM

We're witnessing the rise of the hack. A sort of celebration of mediocrity.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET
(giving the coffee to TOM)
Here.

TOM
Thanks. You mind if I smoke?

HARRIET
No.

TOM
You can blame the blogs, but I blame The New York Times. They quote the blogs like they've found a source. CNN quotes the blogs. "Beverly, Editor-in-Chief of the BeverlyBlog, says the Fed should cut interests rates to counter the drop in consumer spending over the past fiscal--" who hell is Beverly? I don't believe in free speech, I think it should require a license. What happened to credentials? What happened to being impeccably credentialed, and when did elite stop being a good word?

SIMON
They should be Ethiopian.

TOM
Who?

SIMON
In the Wellbutrin ad parody. Instead of skinny models, they should be Ethiopians.

TOM
You want to do jokes about starving children?

SIMON
It has more bite.

TOM
Yeah, 'cause it's a joke about starving children.

SIMON
No, it's a joke about Pfizer or Kaiser or whoever makes it and it's a joke about us. They need the minimal elements for survival and we have a pill for when you're not in a good mood.

TOM
I just think you made the whole thing not funny in a hurry.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

What in the hell are you two talking about.

TOM

An ad parody shot like Ephedra or Wellbutrin. Gauzy images of glum supermodels.

HARRIET

Or Ethiopian children.

TOM

Yeah. The tag is "Ask your doctor if food is right for you."

HARRIET

(pause)

Okay, well it's definitely not the Ethiopians.

SIMON

All right, the skinny models.

TOM

"Side effects may include energy, cohesive thought and hip bones you can't carve trophies with."

SIMON

Fine.

(to HARRIET)

Ricky and Ron are up in Wes's office right now with Jamie McDeere and Jack Rudolph. The smart money's saying they're the new Executive Producers.

TOM

(completing his point)

The rise of the hack.

HARRIET

(pause)

I'm gonna go see what's going on. People are running around like chickens out there. I think the best thing is not to listen to rumors and be calm.

She gets up to walk out and walks right into MATT who's just stepping into the doorway--

HARRIET (CONT'D)

(screaming from surprise)

Aaggh!

(CONTINUED)

MATT
How you doin'?

SIMON
Matty.

TOM
Matt.

MATT
What did you guys do that made that man
go that crazy?

SIMON
Just the same stuff we used to do to you.

HARRIET
Can I speak to you for a moment please?

SHELLY, the P.R. lady we met in the first act, has been
escorting MATT.

SHELLY
They want me to put you in the green
room.

HARRIET
This'll just take a second.

SIMON
Hey congratulations.

TOM
Yeah.

HARRIET
(to TOM and SIMON)
Do the two of you have to be nice to
everybody?
(to MATT)
Come with me.

HARRIET leads MATT down the corridor and through two steel
doors onto--

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

They're standing under the bleachers in one of the
vomitoriums.

HARRIET
Two things. What are you doing here and
could you please stop telling people we
broke up because of the Star Spangled
Banner.

(CONTINUED)

MATT

Well I'm here because I was asked to come here and I can't remember the second thing.

HARRIET

Would you please stop telling people we broke up because of the Star Spangled Banner. It makes me look like an idiot.

MATT

Actually, the consensus is it makes me look like an idiot.

HARRIET

Be that as it may, and truer words were never spoke, could you please--

We HEAR DANNY shouting off-screen--

DANNY (OS)

Matt!

MATT

(calling out)

Danny?!

DANNY appears on stage out of breath--

DANNY

I need to talk to you.

HARRIET

What are you both doing here?

DANNY

They're offering us the show.

HARRIET

You're kidding.

DANNY

No.

And HARRIET screams and jumps into DANNY's arms--which DANNY accepts but ignores--

DANNY (CONT'D)

I need to talk to you.

MATT

Where the hell did you go?!

DANNY

Can I just talk to you.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET
Can I tell Simon and Tom.

DANNY
No.

HARRIET
Why?

DANNY
We're not doing it.

HARRIET
Why?!

MATT
We're being offered the show?

DANNY
Yes.

HARRIET
And you have to do it.

DANNY
Why? What do you know?

HARRIET
I'm just saying if you don't do it it
goes to Ricky and Ron.

That got the attention of both of them--

DANNY
(finally to MATT)
I have to talk to you.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

It's empty as DANNY opens the door and ushers MATT in. We can see part of the Hollywood sign in the distance out the window.

DANNY

In here.

MATT

I had them move the follow-spot over. I said "He's never not been there for me", and then there was a klieg light on a basket of dinner rolls.

DANNY

I understand.

MATT

They're offering us the job?

DANNY

Yeah, but that's not what I want to talk to you about. Somebody else has to direct the movie, I can't do it.

MATT

What are you talking about?

DANNY

I can't do it. I took my insurance physical and tested positive for cocaine. I can't get bonded for 18 months.

MATT takes it in...nods...

MATT

(pause)

Okay--are you alright?

DANNY

I'm, yeah, I'm fine.

MATT

Okay so wait.

DANNY

Look--

MATT

No wait--

DANNY

Matt--

(CONTINUED)

MATT
I'll bond you.

DANNY
What?

MATT
I'll pay for the bond.

DANNY
How much money do you have?

MATT
Well, with alimony and my percent of the first dollar gross on *this* movie...65 dollars.

DANNY
Matt--

MATT
We make some budget cuts, we shoot in Vancouver.

DANNY
We're not shooting in Vancouver. Vancouver doesn't look like anything, it doesn't even look like Vancouver. It looks like Boston, California. Now we can make the movie for 65 dollars but it's gonna end up looking an awful lot like an only slightly more polished version of *The Blair Witch Project*. You need to go to another director. Go to Soderbergh, go to Curtis Hanson, go to--

MATT
Wait a second.

DANNY
Ang Lee.

MATT
Wait a second.
(beat)
They must know. That's how they knew we were available.

DANNY
A guy at the insurance company wants to sleep with Jamie McDeere.

MATT
Who doesn't want to sleep with Jamie McDeere?! Are they swinging this thing in front of your face?

(CONTINUED)

DANNY
The point is, the new movie doesn't have
to be--

MATT
Sons of bitches!

MATT bolts out of the room--

DANNY
Matt--

DANNY follows him out into--

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

--and follows MATT quickly down the hall. There are a few people there who are surprised and delighted to see them both, so they get a couple of "Hey, look who's here"'s and respond with a couple of genial "Hi"'s and "How you doin' "'s until MATT goes into--

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

--where JACK RUDOLPH, JAMIE and a few of the EXECUTIVES we saw earlier are sitting around the table. DANNY comes in a few steps later.

MATT
Excuse me.

JAMIE
Matt, I'm Jamie.

MATT
Matt Albie.

JAMIE
I couldn't be a bigger fan of yours.

MATT
Thank you.

JACK
Matt--

MATT
You don't have to introduce yourself, Jack, we've met. Are you people using the confidential information that Danny failed a drug test to force him into taking over *Studio 7* to deflect attention from what happened on the air tonight?

There's a long, puzzled silence in the room...

(CONTINUED)

JACK
(to JAMIE)
He failed a drug test?

JAMIE
Yeah, actually Matt, I was the only one who knew about that. Shoulda trusted me a little, Danny.

MATT
(turning confidentially to DANNY)
Sorry about that, that one was all me.
(to the group)
Ironically, I'm the one who's high as a paper kite right now. But legitimately. I had back surgery Tuesday. L-5/S-1, if that means anything to you. Stop talking now? You bet.

JACK
Well now that I understand Jamie's magic ingredients tonight, why don't we sidddown.

MATT and DANNY take a moment and then sit...

JAMIE
Hey, congratulations on the WGA Award.

MATT
Thank you.

JACK
What did you think of Wes's speech tonight?

DANNY
(pause)
Which one of us are you talking to?

JACK
Either one.

DANNY
It was unprofessional, it was indefensible, what do you think I think?

JACK
I'm not talking about the presentation so much as the content.

DANNY
Its content? It's a little hard--I thought he tried to cram a lot of large generalities into a short period of time.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
Do you think television is bad?

DANNY
Why do you ask?

JACK
Because that's what you'll be asked by
the press.

DANNY
No, I think *My Mother the Car* was bad, I
think this is something else.

SHELLY
Well that's a terrible answer.

DANNY
Sorry.

JACK
Matt?

MATT
What the hell are we talking about? You
fired us four years ago from the number
two spot, we went out and got famous and
now you want us back 'cause you're in a
jam, isn't that what's going on?

JACK
Well it sounds like you're in a bit of a
jam too, fellas.

DANNY
We're done.

DANNY gets up and exits...MATT doesn't move...

MATT
We're gonna take the job, I'll bring him
around. I'm not sure threatening him was
the way to go.

JACK
I didn't make a threat and by the way I
didn't fire you either, you quit.

MATT
Please, Jack. The wind started blowing
hard in another direction and suddenly my
jokes weren't so funny anymore. You put
the flag over the network logo--God
forbid you should lose the network logo
altogether--and you pointed me toward the
door, which is understandable.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MATT (CONT'D)

What isn't understandable is how you could also fire Danny. All he ever did was two things--make the show good and keep me from killing you.

JACK

For the record, when I pointed to the door, it was your hero Wes Mendell who opened it.

MATT

(pause)

Yeah.

JACK

There's gonna be a press conference at noon on Monday announcing that you two are running Studio 7. I know I can count on you to answer questions in a way that doesn't embarrass the United Broadcasting System. Will that be hard for you?

MATT

I wouldn't think it would be hard for anybody. 'Cause if you pointed a camera at two people masturbating it'd be among the least embarrassing things on the United Broadcasting System. I'll tell Blair to start working on the deal.

MATT gets up and exits...After a silence...

JAMIE

(pause)

I've already got a dual masturbation show in active development, so...

JACK

(beat)

Keep laughin', Jamie. This is all on you.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

MATT walking down the corridor sees SUZANNE, the PA from the teaser.

MATT

Excuse me, do you work here?

SUZANNE

Yeah.

MATT

I'm Matt Albie.

(CONTINUED)

SUZANNE
I know. I'm Suzanne, I'm a PA.

MATT
How many of the cast, crew and writing staff would you say are in the building right now?

SUZANNE
Probably almost all of them. Are you coming to save us?

All MATT can do at the moment is just kind of hear the question and laugh a second to himself at the impossibility of it...

MATT
Would you page everyone to the stage please.

SUZANNE
Yes sir.

MATT continues down the hall and KNOCKS on the dressing room door marked HARRIET HAYES.

HARRIET (OS)
Come in.

MATT opens the door to--

INT. HARRIET'S DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MATT
Danny and I are taking over the show. I'm your boss now, so we're gonna have to continue this fight in a couple of years.

HARRIET
Or we could just end it now.

MATT
That would be fine too.

HARRIET
We didn't break up because of the Dodger game.

MATT
No.

HARRIET
When you were promoting the movie I was holding your hand every step of the way. When I had a CD to promote in 52 markets in 15 days, you disappeared.

(CONTINUED)

MATT
I didn't disappear.

HARRIET
You got cold and you got mean.

MATT
Right after you went on *The 700 Club*, is that timing lost on you?

HARRIET
It was an album of spiritual music, those are the people who buy spiritual music!

MATT
I don't care if it was an album of the three wise men covering the Doobie Brothers, you put on a dress and sang for a bigot.

HARRIET
I sang for his audience, not every one of whom is necessarily the grotesque stereotype you'd like them to be. Most of these people have nothing except their faith, and that moves me.

MATT
Throw in the Halloween costumes and you got yourself a Klan rally.

WHACK!--

HARRIET smacks MATT across the face...

HARRIET
(pause)
I'm sorry.

MATT
Fortunately I'm on about 8000 milligrams of painkillers right now.

HARRIET
And I'm sorry if my going on Pat Robertson offended you and if I had to do it again I wouldn't. But the sketch that got cut? I stood by that sketch all week, and I've stood by it all night and I'll stand by it in front of the press, and you know what the sketch was called? "Crazy Christians".

MATT
The *700 Club* isn't a comedy show.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

There's no way to get this idiotic argument behind us?

MATT

No. But score for us on Friday nights and we won't have a problem. I'm looking forward to working with you.

And MATT takes a few steps and walks through the double-steel doors onto--

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

DANNY is sitting alone on the stage as MATT walks in.

MATT

We're doing it.

DANNY

Matt, you can get another director, you can get someone good.

MATT

I don't want someone else, I want you.

DANNY

(beat)

The joke was "I don't want someone good, I want you."

MATT

I know where the joke was. What happened?

(beat)

What happened?

DANNY

Nothing happened. It just happened.

MATT

Once?

DANNY

Yeah.

MATT

You talked to your sponsor?

DANNY

Yeah.

MATT

You're back at meetings?

DANNY

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

MATT
Why didn't you tell me? When I screw up
you know about it.

DANNY
When you screw up I read about it.

MATT
No, I tell you, you're the first one I
tell. Now we're back in the NFL and only
one of us can screw up at a time and I
think we both know that most of the time
it's gonna be me. You're the big
shoulders.

DANNY
I hear you.

MATT
Good, 'cause I'm pretty stoned and I
can't really remember what I said.

DANNY
(smiles)
Don't worry, I do.

During the above scene, a few cast and crew members have begun
trickling onto to the stage and taking up positions in front
of the bleachers. Their conversations are hushed and they keep
their distance from MATT and DANNY.

JAMIE appears coming out of a vomitorium with a few rolled up
sheets of paper--

JAMIE
Boys? Let's not have another meeting like
that again, okay? It just makes my job
harder.

DANNY
Why do I care about your job being
harder?

JAMIE
Because you don't know it yet but I'm
gonna be your dream come true.

DANNY
I appreciate the sentiment but I'll
believe it when I see it.

JAMIE
Yeah, I get that a lot. You know what
happened the morning after it was
announced I was the new president of UBS?

(CONTINUED)

DANNY

What?

JAMIE

AMG stock dropped three-eighths of a point. I actually caused a dip in the NASDAQ index just by showing up to work in the morning. I don't think a lot of people are bettin' on me.

DANNY

How much latitude do we have with personnel?

JAMIE

Some. Some you're gonna have to keep though. Ricky and Ron have two more years on their contract.

MATT

I don't want Ricky and Ron.

JAMIE

They're getting 30 thousand an episode, we're not gonna eat that.

MATT

You're paying Beavis and Hackboy 30 thousand an episode?

JAMIE

I'm not the one who made the deal but it's there so they're your co-execs.

More people have been filtering in and taking places down in front of the bleachers.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

(re: the rolled up papers)

Hey, you know what this is? It's the sketch that got cut. I just read it, I thought it was inspired, but I'm not an expert--Matt, read it and tell me what you think.

MATT

Nah, I'm not gonna read it.

JAMIE

Just read it and tell me if it should've gone on the air.

MATT

I don't need to read it.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

Matt--

DANNY

He doesn't need to read it.

JAMIE

Why?

MATT

Because I wrote it. Four years ago.
Shortly before I apparently quit.

JAMIE

I know.

(pause)

Alright, so want me to prove it? Here's
my first try.

(handing the sketch to DANNY)

Open with it next week.

JAMIE walks off and disappears...And now we HEAR the low-pulsing intro to a familiar DAVID BOWIE song.

A horseshoe of about 80 people--cast, crew, writers--are standing excitedly and waiting to be addressed. The buzz is growing.

MATT and DANNY are looking off after JAMIE...DANNY turns back to MATT--

DANNY

You gotta give her style points.

MATT

Yeah.

DANNY

And you gotta ask yourself.

MATT

What.

DANNY

What if she's for real?

MATT

Yeah.

The DAVID BOWIE pulsing is building as DANNY sees CAL and waves him over--

DANNY

Cal.

CAL comes over...

(CONTINUED)

CAL
Hey.

DANNY
You left him on for 53 seconds?

CAL
(pause)
Yeah.

DANNY
It had to have been a chaotic situation.

CAL
A lot of mistakes were made.

DANNY
You're gonna stick around, right?

CAL
Danny, I understand if you have to--

DANNY
You gonna stick around?

CAL
(smiles)
Yeah.

DANNY
If you'd kept him on for 54 seconds I'd
have given you a raise.

DANNY looks at MATT--

DANNY (CONT'D)
What are you smiling about?

MATT
It's a nice studio. It's a great facility
with an incredible history. I feel
privileged to be here.

DANNY
You like it?

MATT
Yeah.

DANNY
Good, 'cause we live here now.

And the two of them stand still for a moment, and just as
small smiles creep onto their faces, DAVID BOWIE's voice
smashes in with

(CONTINUED)

DAVID BOWIE
"Pressure!--"

DANNY motions easily to a FLOOR MANAGER as he and MATT move to address their team--

FLOOR MANAGER
Alright, quiet please everybody. Quiet please.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF SHOW