44 MINUTES: SHOWCASING ISSUES IN JOURNALISM THROUGH SCREENWRITING

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This thesis is an attempt to discuss contemporary issues in journalism in the form of a screenplay. This script builds upon the classic films that preceded it, but differs by engaging in a dialogue of contemporary issues in journalism. This work focuses on two main issues in journalism: how modern business models affect journalistic content; and the current, widely-debated topic of net neutrality. This thesis attempts to discuss these issues, while using the classic narrative screenplay structure.
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**Introduction:**

Over the last 40 years, the economic structure behind journalism has changed dramatically. As control of the media falls into fewer hands, media scholars worry about how this will impact that this concentration of power will have on the content of the news, and society as a whole. This power concentration is stunning: as of 2012, 6 corporations controlled 90% of the media in America (Lutz, 2). This thesis seeks to creatively address how concentrated media power effects journalism. With this text, I have combined my primary academic focus of journalism with my creative passion for comedic screenwriting. The result: a creative thesis in the form of a screenplay, which discusses pertinent issues in journalism.

**Background:**

Throughout my time at the University of Oregon, I have focused much of my energy into my two passions: journalism and film. Through my major in journalism, I have learned the art of storytelling, along with the importance of authenticity and asking questions. Through the different film courses I have taken, I’ve learned the structure and theory of film.

I saw Steve Martin’s Bowfinger when I was 7-years-old, and, since that day, I have wanted to make movies. Thus, most of my extracurricular work has centered on film. I have taken screenwriting workshops, and, since my freshman year, I have been involved with student television production. I have written and produced comedy series for Duck TV and Quackd. I also led the Honors College Film CHIP for two years, and I worked as Production Coordinator on the independent film Bad Exorcists in the summer.
of 2013. Due to my experience in film and academic background in journalism, I feel I am uniquely qualified to produce this creative thesis.

**Screenplay Goals:**

I have several goals with this thesis. First, I want to discuss contemporary issues in journalism, while providing an entertaining, thought provoking and funny narrative. In addition, I want to combine my academic knowledge of journalism with my extracurricular experience in film. Finally, this thesis is also my first feature-length screenplay. I would love to work as a screenwriter and actress, and another goal with this thesis is to begin building my portfolio.

**Combining journalism and screenwriting:**

This screenplay relies heavily on my research in two categories. The first research category is issues concerning journalism and media. The second research category is on screenwriting structure and form. I present my research under the next two sections: ‘Research and Methods,’ and ‘Screenwriting and Structure.’

**Research and Methods:**

**Research Topic 1: Concentration of Power in the Media**

There is a great quantity of scholarly work done on how economic structures affect media, and media conglomeration is at the center of this work. The *Business Insider* article referenced in the introduction states that in 1983, 50 different companies owned 90% of American media (Lutz, 1). However, the same article states that in 2012, Comcast, News-Corp, Disney, Viacom, Time Warner, and CBS owned 90% of the media. In addition, the economic landscape of the media is evolving so quickly that this article is now out of date; the proposed merger of Comcast and Time Warner in
February 2014 would consolidate this figure into just 5 parent companies. In this likely scenario, Comcast, after horizontally integrating with Time Warner, will have a customer base of 30 million people, constituting up to 30% of the US pay-television market (Kessenides, 1). This huge shift in power represents an ongoing trend as media companies continue to merge into fewer and fewer conglomerates.

Media concentration has become both horizontal and vertical. In his book *Understanding the Media*, Eoin Devereux discusses how political economy theory views the concentration of power in the media world: Devereux writes, “a growing number of media conglomerates are horizontal in structure,” (Devereux, 58). Vertical Integration is when “one owner acquires all aspects of production and distribution of a single type of media product” and horizontal integration is when “one company buys different kinds of media concentrating ownership across differing types of media…” (Devereux, 58). For instance, Comcast owns NBC News, XFINITY TV and Internet, Fandango and Hulu. Time Warner owns HBO, CNN, Time U.S., *In Style*, and Warner Bros. Entertainment (Columbia Journalism Review). The variety of media ownership has decreased by ten times what it was thirty years ago, and media scholars are worried.

In his book *Commercial Culture*, Leo Bogart writes, “As conglomerates extended their operations beyond entertainment to encompass news media, the compatibility of corporate profit and independent journalistic judgments was inevitably called into question,” (Bogart, 53). This critique is not arbitrary; referring to the Time Warner merger, Bogart cites that Time Inc. managing editors and other executives were “required to sign a pledge ‘not at any time [to] denigrate, ridicule or intentionally criticize the Company or any of its subsidiaries or affiliates, or any of their respective
products,’” (Bogart, 54), obviously infringing on journalistic objectivity. A decade later, in the midst of more power concentration Devereux writes,

The contraction of the public sphere, the rise of ‘infotainment,’ the decline of critical investigative journalism, the casualization of much media work, the homogenizing tendencies inherent in media globalization and the so-called ‘dumbing down’ of much media content (and of news and current affairs in particular) are all seen as resulting directly from this increased concentration. (Devereux, 57)

Devereux, like Bogart, was concerned with the political economy of journalism. The concentration of power has not resulted in media homogenization, but conflicting loyalties in news outlets, which are caught between deference to their parent company and deference to objectivity. Both of these scholars argue that journalism tied to ratings and economic incentives declines in quality, a phenomenon that is presented in my screenplay.

Research Topic 2: Net Neutrality

The concentration of power in the media has also complicated the issue of Net Neutrality, which plays a major role in my screenplay. According to the Federal Communications Commission, or FCC, Net Neutrality (Network Neutrality) is synonymous with Open Internet. Open Internet is “a level playing field where consumers can make their own choices about what applications and services to use, and where consumers are free to decide what content they want to access, create, or share with others,” (FCC). The most recent controversy surrounding Net Neutrality occurred early in January 2014, when a court ruled that the FCC did not have the power to stop
cable companies from charging websites more money for faster Internet speed
(Ammori, 1).

A good example of this ruling’s effect is Verizon and Comcast’s treatment of
Netflix in late 2013 and early 2014. Netflix provides its own speed index to show its
performance on different ISPs (Netflix). The index revealed that Netflix’s performance
on Verizon and Comcast steadilysteadily declined over a four-month period. In February 2014,
Netflix agreed to pay Comcast an undisclosed amount and its Internet speed increased
dramatically. At the time of this thesis, Netflix is in similar talks with Verizon
(O’Toole). In May, 2014, Netflix announced it would gradually raise its price by two
dollars. While the company claims the price hike is to “continue adding more movies
and TV shows,” the timeline of the price hike and the Comcast deal looks suspect
(Grandoni). This is an example of how large media conglomerates can force Internet
companies to pay more for better Internet speed. The issue also concerns smaller
companies that cannot afford to pay for faster speed, such as small start-ups and non-
profits. The recent court ruling against Net Neutrality makes it so these companies can
do this legally—unless the FCC votes to change it.

Efforts to change the law have thus far been unsuccessful. Early in January,
2014, a federal court struck down parts of the FCC’s Open Internet rules because they
were never actually laws, but policies (Ammori, 1). Wired writer Marvin Ammori, a
lawyer who in the past has filed complaints against Comcast for secretly blocking
technologies, discusses what this ruling means:

Because with the recent ruling, cable and phone companies like Verizon
and AT&T now have the legal right to block any website, webpage,
blog, video, web technology, app, cloud sync technology, or anything else running online through their pipes. Put another way, Comcast or Time Warner Cable can now block Netflix, BitTorrent, or even this article. (Ammori, 1)

This quotation illustrates where the two issues of media conglomeration and Net Neutrality meet. For some conglomerates, it is in their economic interest lobby against Net Neutrality policies becoming laws. A 2006 *Bloomberg* article concerning lobbying and Net Neutrality discusses the fight between Cable companies and websites concerning Net Neutrality. Peterson and Salant write that telephone and cable television companies “spent $71 million last year on their overall lobbying in Washington, dwarfing the $20 million spent by the Internet companies,” (Peterson, 1). The authors show the legislative votes supported the cable companies against Net Neutrality. The issue here is that the more concentrated power becomes, the more money can be spent on lobbying, and the more policy favors the powerful. This has dangerous implications for a free and open media landscape, journalism especially, considering that large corporations could block journalistic content.

The legal situation is currently in flux. In May of 2014, the FCC voted 3-2 to open the issue to a public debate, with the three democratic members voting in favor of public debate, and the two republican members voting against debate (Wyatt). The FCC claims that they will prevent media conglomerates from discriminating against websites unfairly, but as discussed above, the FCC has no legal authority to do so—unless it reclassifies broadband Internet as Title II instead of Title I (Kang, 1). Title I classifies
broadband providers and Title II classifies landline and mobile phone companies, which are legally forbidden to discriminate amongst users (Ammori, 1).

My screenplay engages with the complex relationship between the FCC, the media, and the media conglomerates by drawing inspiration from these real life conflicts.

**Screenwriting and Structure:**

Due to the fact that this is my first feature-length screenplay, I’ve constructed a narrative film that follows the traditional Hollywood story format, also known as the three-act structure (Corrigan, 264). While I have experience in screenwriting from workshops and my film background, I used two popular screenwriting handbooks: *Save the Cat!* and *Save the Cat! Goes to the Movies* by Blake Snyder, a renowned story expert and script doctor. I used Snyder’s books as guides for writing this traditionally structured screenplay because of his in-depth analysis on story structure, his unique discussion of genre and the frequency with which he looks at previously produced scripts. I also implement his story beat structure, or his “beat sheet,” in my screenplay.

Snyder believes that all successful narrative screenplays can be broken down into 15 story beats. These beats and their corresponding page numbers are as follows:

The Opening Image (1), Theme Stated (5), Set-Up (1-10), Catalyst (12), Debate (12-25), Break into Two (25), B Story (30), Fun and Games (30-55), Midpoint (55), Bad Guys Close In (55-75), All Is Lost (75), Dark Night of the Soul (75-85), Break into Three (85), Finale (85-110), and the Final Image (110) (Snyder, 70).

I modeled my script around these beats, to ensure that I followed a strong and proven outline.

Snyder also coined ten of his own film genres that have titles such as “Monster in the House,” “Golden Fleece,” and “Out of the Bottle.” When I first envisioned my
screenplay, I could not imagine it would fit into any of these different and unknown
genres—I just wanted it to be a comedy. After studying Snyder’s book, it became clear
that my screenplay unequivocally fit into Snyder’s category of “Institutionalized” films
(Save the Cat!, 25). As Snyder describes it, “‘Institutionalized’ tells stories about
groups, institutions, and ‘families.’ These stories are special because they both honor
the institution and expose problems of losing one’s identity to it,” (Save the Cat!, 38).

One of the most helpful aspects of Snyder’s book is that he offers examples of
movies that fit into his different types of genre. In his second book on the subject, Save
the Cat! Goes to the Movies, Snyder breaks down the Institutionalized genre even
further, into the categories of Military, Business, Family, Issue and Mentor Institutions
(Save the Cat! Goes to the movies, 222). Because the institution in question in my
screenplay is a business, my screenplay falls into Snyder’s “Business Institutionalized”
genre. Using Snyder’s definition of “Business Institutionalized,” I was able to find and
critique other films in the same genre. While researching and critiquing other films
concerning the same issues, I used Snyder’s definition of genre as a lens through which
to analyze them. A few of the examples that Snyder provides in this category include
One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest, 9 to 5, Network, Glengarry Glen Ross and Office
Space. In addition to these films, I analyzed Anchorman 2 because it fit into the
Institutionalized category, deals with issues in journalism and is a comedy.

Snyder says that all films in Institutionalized category have (1) A group, (2) A
choice, and (3) A sacrifice (Save the Cat! Goes to the Movies, 222). He defines the
sacrifice in the story as “the act of surrendering our individuality to the group or
destroying the institution when it proves to be less than advertised,” and this end comes
in the form of the protagonist joining the institution, burning it down and/or (metaphorically) committing suicide (Save the Cat! Goes to the Movies, 223). Snyder says that the primal question at the basis of every film in this category is: “Who is crazier—they or me?” (Save the Cat! Goes to the Movies, 221). In this thesis, I present critiques for the films Network and Anchorman 2 according to Snyder’s paradigms.

**Existing Literature:**

**Analyzing Network (1976)**

*Network* is the ideal film to critique for this project because it fits perfectly into the “Business Institutionalized” genre, and it focuses on journalism and mass media conglomerates. This film is a satire about a network that gets absorbed by a larger company; as the show rapidly declines in quality, its ratings simultaneously soar.

The film’s ensemble plot follows a news anchor, Howard Beale, who becomes mentally ill and yet is kept on the air because of his high ratings. Beale’s news program is eventually altered into a revolving stage that features him, a psychic and a gossip columnist. Roger Ebert compares this ‘70s prophecy to some of the news and entertainment shows on today (Ebert, 1).

*Network* addresses many of the issues discussed in my screenplay, including political economy and the declining quality of media content. *Network* addresses larger ideas about how media affects culture and society. My screenplay differs from *Network* in that it limits itself to a discussion of journalistic ethics and reflects current issues in journalism, the very ones *Network* predicted. *Network* has a large ensemble cast from which a protagonist is hard to pin point. While this screenplay has an ensemble cast, it
is smaller in size and has a clearly defined protagonist. Another difference is that this screenplay alludes to a hopeful future for journalism, where *Network* does not.

*Network* can also be analyzed through Snyder’s “Institutionalized” genre. Under Snyder’s paradigms, “Institutionalized” films need a Group, Choice and Sacrifice. In *Network*, “The Group” is the network after a larger company absorbs it. “The Choice” faced by the employees is to join the new company’s ratings-obsessed regimen or to lose employment. Losing employment, or leaving the group, is what Snyder describes as metaphoric suicide. One character metaphorically commits suicide by leaving the network. I won’t reveal “The Sacrifice”; however, without spoiling the ending of an amazing film, I will quote Snyder and his discussion of the genre: “Often, it is the sacrifice of the individual that is the finale of many such tales, and the cautionary end point to what we know about joining [the institution],” (*Save the Cat! Goes to the Movies*, 223-224).

**Analyzing Anchorman 2 (2013)**

*Anchorman 2* is another ideal movie to critique for the purposes of this thesis because it is a comedy concerning trends in the quality of journalism. In this sequel set in the 1980s, Ron Burgundy becomes a newscaster on the Global News Network GNN—the first 24-hour news program. After wagering that he can beat another anchor’s viewership, Ron and his team begin producing news that they think people want to see, rather than producing content that is good for the public. Their show’s new focus includes stories about puppies and investigative stories about hotel beds. This sets off a chain reaction, as other news outlets begin to copy Ron in order to compete for ratings. At one point, Ron is the first journalist to ever broadcast a car chase,
sensationalizing it and making up facts. This ensures no one watches his ex-wife Veronica’s simultaneous interview with Yasser Arafat.

This comedy does a good job of satirizing a major shift in news from information to entertainment, what Devereux calls ‘infotainment,’ (Devereux, 57). Like Network, this film also fits under Snyder’s “Institutionalized” genre. “The Group” is GNN. “The Choice” is that Ron must choose to present another uninformative newscast, or make amends with his family, and lose his job. “The Sacrifice” is his burgeoning career. In the end, Ron rants on-air about how bad GNN is for producing content solely for ratings. While he simultaneously ruins his own rising career, he also takes down the institution. This fits the genre perfectly, as Snyder would say that the protagonist both (metaphorically) committed suicide and burned down the institution.

**My writing process:**

One thing that all screenplays must have is a logline, which is a small, concise pitch you could give to Steven Spielberg if you ran into him in an elevator and only had ten seconds. Snyder writes, “The logline is your story’s code, its DNA, the one constant that has to be true…The logline tells the hero’s story: Who he is, who he’s up against, and what’s at stake. The nice, neat form of a one- or two-sentence pitch tells you everything,” (Save the Cat!, 63).

The logline I came up with:

*When given the chance at her dream job, a journalist must choose between her ethics and her career.*

Snyder’s book instructs screenwriters to finalize the protagonist and logline before creating a story beat sheet. There are different perspectives on story structure of
screenplays, beginning with Syd Field’s *Screenplay: The Foundation of Screenwriting* that uses a more basic beginning, middle and end structure. I’m followed Snyder’s more in depth, 15-point Beat-Sheet. After coming up with a clearly defined logline and character, I outlined a beat sheet that followed Snyder’s, writing a brief paragraph for each of the 15 beats. I then moved on to what Snyder calls *The Board*. *The Board* is a corkboard divided into the three acts with tape. Snyder writes, “though it is not really writing, and though your perfect plan may totally be abandoned in the white heat of actually executing your screenplay, it is on The Board where you can work out the kinks of the story before you start,” (Snyder, 100). Snyder limits writers to 40 notecards, which describe the conflict of each scene in the screenplay. Using this tool, I was able to put up all of the scenes I had imagined, fill in holes on the board and create the parts of the story I was missing. I spent about a week arranging and rearranging my board, and whittling it down to just 40 cards. By the time I finished, my script had grown well beyond its beat sheet. From here I was able to write a complete outline, and then the actual screenplay.

**The Evolution of the Script**

The final screenplay is the sixth draft of the script. The first draft was a very long, jargon heavy, 99 paged script. In its final draft, the screenplay is 91 pages. The plot, the tone and the characters have evolved immensely from the first draft, thanks to feedback from my thesis committee and my peers. By the third draft I was ready to delete entire scenes or cut them down by half. This final draft is a shorter, punchier and more accessible version of the narrative.
**Analysis of 44 Minutes:** (meant to be read after the screenplay)

*44 Minutes* follows the genre of “Business Institutionalized.” The narrative follows the protagonist, Brooke Lane, as she chooses between the institution and individuality. “The Group” in my screenplay is the show *44 Minutes.* “The Choice” is that Brooke must choose between a successful career on the show, and her morals. “The Sacrifice” occurs at the end when Brooke chooses both to burn down the institution and metaphorically commit suicide. My script follows Blake Snyder’s model, while engaging with the issues discussed under Research and Methods.

I’ve shown my script’s relation to Blake Snyder’s beat sheet below:

1. **Opening Image (1)** – Brooke trick or treats with her Nana dressed as a journalist, and promises her grandmother she’ll be a better journalist than her father.

2. **Theme Stated (5)** – Aubrey asks Brooke what the point of being a journalist is if you can’t tell the truth. This sets up the theme of individual vs. the institution.

3. **Set-Up (1-16)** – The set-up introduces Brooke as a disheveled and controversial journalist whose ideas aren’t taken seriously at work, and reveals her deep desire to be a great journalist. The competition between Brooke and Mark is also implemented in the set up.

4. **Catalyst (16)** – The catalyst of my screenplay occurs on page 16, when Aubrey brings Brooke the idea of doing a controversial story about Net Neutrality that could potentially anger the network, or get Brooke the job.

5. **Debate (16-21)** – This is the debate where Brooke resists taking Aubrey’s story. Brooke wants to do something edgy, but her parents encourage her to play it safe and get ahead.
6. **Break Into Two (21)** – The world of Act Two begins on page 21 when Brooke runs into news satire host Jessica Steves and is inspired to make something worthwhile. She enlists the help of Aubrey’s digital journalist friends to begin researching the Net Neutrality story.

7. **B Story (29)** – Snyder’s B story is generally a relationship between two characters. In this screenplay, it is a love triangle between Mark, Brooke and Ethan. This mirrors the choice of the A Story. Mark is the good-looking, well-liked journalist, but he is not a very good person. Ethan is the nerdy, intelligent, caring friend that would be a more individualistic choice. He isn’t the classic example of a leading man, but he’s the right choice for Brooke. Brooke must have to choose between what society dictates is the right choice, and what fits her best as an individual.

8. **Fun and Games (30-50)** – Brooke and her new news team must go on adventures to collect the interviews they need. They hack into schedules, create distractions and crash gala events.

9. **Midpoint (50)** – *Snyder defines the midpoint as either a false victory or a false loss for the hero. I am going with false victory.* Brooke is dating Mark MacKay and Andrew Gordon has helped her solidify an interview with the FCC chairman for the final episode. He believes in her and it looks like she will win the competition. This is Brooke’s false victory.

10. **Bad Guys Close In** (roughly 50-68) – After everything Brooke has ever wanted is within reach, the bad guys close in. Andrew Gordon reveals his true colors.
He tells Brooke that in order to get the dream job, she must go easy on the FCC Chairman.

11. All Is Lost (69) – At all is lost, Brooke has chosen the institution over herself, she has lost all of her friends, and she finds out Mark is a bad guy.

12. Dark Night of the Soul (69-72) – Brooke arrives at her parents’ house, alone and covered in chili. Her parents are no help to her situation, and she realizes how alone she really is.

13. Break Into Three (72) – The third act begins as Brooke realizes that maintaining her friends and her integrity is more important than pleasing her parents or career climbing. She sets out to win her friends back and take down the institution.

14. Finale (84-89) – Brooke wins her friends back by producing a story Aubrey has always wanted to do. With the help of the Stalker team, Brooke is able to take down the FCC and her parent company, and effectively burns down the institution.

15. Final Image (102) – At the end, we see Brooke in a similar newsroom setting as the beginning, and she pitches the same story to The Weekly Show. We see that in the new world of the third act, Brooke’s individuality is rewarded, and the future of journalism looks bright.
Conclusion:

Overall, writing this screenplay has been one of the best learning experiences and challenges for me concerning writing. This project pushed me to do intensive research on my two main areas of study, and synthesize them creatively. This screenplay forced me to confront issues in writing I never had before, and showed me the value of rewriting and feedback. While this script could still improve, I am very proud to have completed a feature length screenplay about a topic I care greatly about. This process has been one of the most difficult and satisfying things I have ever done.
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EXT. SIDE WALK - EVENING

It is Halloween. YOUNG BROOKE (9) is trick or treating with NANA (80's). They are in a group with 8 little girls, all dressed like fairies and princesses.

Brooke is dressed as a news anchor with a microphone. She walks up to another little girl and sticks the microphone in her face.

BROOKE
And you, miss, what is the best flavor of candy tonight?

The girl blows a raspberry at Brooke and runs away.

NANA
That's alright, Brookie. You can ask me questions.

Brooke smiles and sticks her microphone in Nana's face.

BROOKE
Nana, can I be a journalist someday like Daddy?

NANA
As long as you promise to be a real journalist. Better than your father.

BROOKE
Who could be better than Daddy?

NANA
If you do it for the right reasons? (a beat) You could, Brooke.

A beat. Then Brooke sticks her microphone in Nana's face.

BROOKE
Nana, why did you dress up like a grandma for halloween?

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

A group of journalists sit at a table. ANDREW GORDON (54), authoritative and mustached, stands in front.

ANDREW
Great job, everyone. Ratings were way up on that last show. (MORE)
ANDREW (CONT'D)
Clockturner corporation is rewarding us with a free taco truck!
The group applauds.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Let's all thank Mark for his hard-hitting piece on health tips from FLOTUS.

Everyone cheers. AUBREY, (28) with brown hair and thick-framed glasses, rolls her eyes.

BROOKE (now 31) tries to sneak in late. She accidentally bumps into an intern and spills coffee down her blouse.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Ah, Brooke! Welcome.
The intern hands Brooke napkins, which she promptly drops.

BROOKE
Hi. Sorry Mr. Gordon. Everyone.
Traffic on the bridge-

ANDREW
Quite alright. Great job on that flood story, Brooke, but I don't suppose Senator Roberts appreciated those gotcha questions. I don't think that's something Arthur Lane ever did.

Awkward laughs from around the table. Brooke sits down.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Alright, team, let's wow them again. Who has pitches for next week?

KRISTEN (31), an eager-looking blonde, raises her hand.

KRISTEN
I wanted to do a story on the shift from Judy Blume books to the Hunger Games. How has violence in literature affected teen girls?!

ANDREW
Interesting, Kristen!
KRISTEN  
(mouths silently)  
Yes!

MARK  
I was hoping to do a follow up on  
the puppy adoption story. Where is  
Tucker now?

Everyone smiles – except ETHAN (32), Brooke and Aubrey.

ANDREW  
Brooke, what’re you thinking?

Brooke clears her throat.

BROOKE  
I’d really like to do an  
investigative piece on micro beads  
in face wash and beauty products.  
They are made of plastic and are  
polluting the ocean in a major way.  
Some animals are dying from  
mistaking them as food. AND they  
don’t even really help acne.

Everyone, except Aubrey and Ethan, laugh and exchange annoyed looks.

ANDREW  
I don’t know, Brooke. That sounds  
pretty depressing. And I don’t  
think Clockturner would want us to  
do a story that disvalues our  
sponsor ProAcne.

MARK  
(trying to be helpful)  
We could pivot back to Tucker  
instead. An expose on cystic puppy  
acne?

He smiles at Brooke. Brooke smiles sarcastically. Mark  
doesn’t notice.

ANDREW  
... Maybe next week, Mark. Anything  
else Brooke?

BROOKE  
We could do an interview with a  
physicist about the recent  
discovery of the dust that could  
potentially be from the big bang?
ANDREW
Like the Cosmos show - I love it!
Just don't make it too complicated!

INT. BROOKE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER
Brooke pulls a new shirt out of a desk drawer. She wipes down her old shirt with napkins. Aubrey and Ethan sit at her desk. Everyone looks disheartened

BROOKE
Why doesn't he ever take our first pitch?

ETHAN
Because he's under pressure from the Network to produce awful stories.
(a beat)
Television news is where journalism goes to die.

BROOKE
This is not what I signed up for.

ETHAN
At least they're letting us do the Cosmos story.

AUBREY
They're only letting us do that because it's some trendy Fox show! Remember my Sriracha pitch?
Following up on what it is like to actually live near a plant? That was timely, relevant and it was immediately forgotten by all other media outlets. That got passed up for Kristen's juice cleanse expose. I'm going to find a story so good they will have to let us do it!

BROOKE
I know, Aubrey. All we can do is keep pitching good stories and hoping that they catch.

AUBREY
(to Brooke)
What's the point of being watchdog journalists, if we can't report what's going on in the world?
Brooke opens her mouth to answer, but her phone rings.

INT. PHIL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke and Mark sit across from PHIL (45). Phil, worldly and distinguished, is Executive Producer of 44 Minutes.

In the corner stands John Lamb (58), President of the News Division.

PHIL
I've called you both in here to let you know that Andrew Gordon will be leaving his position as the lead anchor of 44 Minutes.

Mark slaps his thigh.

MARK
Alright!

BROOKE
Why is he leaving the show?

JOHN
Andrew will be taking a management position with ClockTurner.
(a beat)
We need to replace him, and the Network is deciding between you two.

Brooke chokes on nothing.

BROOKE
What?

JOHN
We are going to watch what you do next very closely, and based on the packages you come up with for the final show, we'll make the decision.

Mark slaps his thigh.

MARK
Alright!

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Brooke and Ethan ride the elevator. Silence.
Well. This is awkward.

Brooke laughs. She trails off.

I think the competition will be fine. Either one of us would make a great replacement.

(a beat)
But if you're talking about the unspoken sexual tension in the elevator, then yeah, this is pretty awkward.

Mark smiles. Brooke rolls her eyes and laughs.

Sure, uh huh.

The door opens and Brooke gets out.

Good luck, little lady. You're gonna need it.

He winks at her. Brooke turns back around and bumps into an intern, who spills coffee on her.

NOT THE SPARE SHIRT!

The elevator door shuts.

INT. BREAK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ethan and Aubrey eat junk food. They're arguing.

You are the most pathetic person I know. You like Brooke. TELL HER!

It's not like that. We're just good friends.

Oh. Right. So, you're gay.

For the last time, I'm not gay! You sound like my parents.
AUBREY
Then stop acting like the gay best friend and tell Brooke how you feel!
(a beat)
Hold on, why are you sweating so much?

ETHAN
I'm sweating because the humidity in here is insane. The only reason you're still dry is because of your icy heart.
(a beat)
We're too good of friends. We're just two, really good friends.

AUBREY
At least you're not going to dinner with her parents or anything.

Brooke bursts in the room, ecstatic.

BROOKE
YOU GUYS! Andrew is leaving and the network is choosing between Mark and ME to replace him!

ETHAN
Whoa, B, that's awesome!

AUBREY
Ew, why are they even considering Mark?

ETHAN
Someone needs to keep the bar low.

BROOKE
We have to think of something amazing to do for the final show!

AUBREY
I'm meeting with a lawyer who has a story? It's edgy, though.

BROOKE
That's good! Edgy is what we need. Stop by tomorrow and fill us in. C'mon, Ethan, we gotta go. My mom said to be there at seven.

Brooke starts to walk away and Aubrey stares appalled Ethan. He rolls his eyes at her.
AUBREY
(mouthing)
Really?

Ethan throws a crumpled up Cheetos bag at Aubrey and flees the room.

INT. BROOKE’S CAR

Brooks eats a burger with one hand and drives with the other.

ETHAN
Remind me again why you’re eating dinner before dinner?

BROOKE
(with her mouth full)
All my mom makes now are Kale-Quinoa salads and I can’t survive on rabbit food.

ETHAN
I personally like Kale-Quinoa salad.

BROOKE
Your loss.

Brooke looks over at Ethan. He is clearly sweating.

BROOKE (CONT’D)
(mouth full)
Are you sweating?

ETHAN
No.

Brooke takes her hand off the wheel and starts touching Ethan’s shirt. Probing. Ethan slides away.

ETHAN (CONT’D)
(defensive)
A little.

BROOKE
I thought you only sweat this bad when you get nervous?

ETHAN
(indignant)
No, it's really just, whenever.

Silence.
ETHAN (CONT’D)
Your mom is intimidating.
Brook laughs, spilling ketchup down her white shirt.

BROOKE
Ah! Not again. Can you take the wheel a second? I have a few shirts in the back.

ETHAN
Seriously? It's gotten so bad that you keep "a few shirts in the back?"

BROOKE
Yeah! You should try it. You're about to turn your whole shirt a shade darker.

ETHAN
At least sweat dries!

BROOKE
Shut up and take the wheel.

Ethan takes the wheel and concentrates on not looking at Brooke as she swaps shirts.

INT. BROOKE'S PARENT'S HOUSE
Brooke and Ethan greet ELAINE, Brooke's mom.

BROOKE
Hi, Mom!

ETHAN
Hi, Elaine!

Elaine, noticing Ethan, is startled and jumps back.

ELAINE
AHHHHH!!!! Oh dear, Ethan, you frightened me. Hello, dear.
(a beat)
You're quite damp.

ARTHUR, Brooke's dad, enters.

ARTHUR
Hello, Brooke.
BROOKE
Hi, Dad.

ETHAN
Hello, Mr. Lane, it is an honor to join you for dinner.

ARTHUR
(to Brooke)
Who is this sweaty fellow?

BROOKE
It's Ethan, dad. Remember? We worked together in college at the paper.

ETHAN
I'm a producer on 44 Minutes now, sir. You uh, wrote a letter of recommendation for me. Thanks again!

ARTHUR
Ah. Well then, you're welcome. What happened to Tim?

Brooke looks embarrassed.

BROOKE
Oh, I meant to tell you guys. That didn't work out.

ELAINE
Oh, but honey he was such a catch.

BROOKE
Yeah, well, we just, disagreed about a lot of stuff.

ARTHUR
Like what?

BROOKE
Patriarchy, politics. You know, human decency.

ARTHUR
Well, he was a fine man that one. Like Deb's husband.

Brooke looks at the floor and wrings her hands.
BROOKE
Oh, is Deb joining us for dinner tonight?

ELAINE
Oh no, dear. Deb and John had to go to Djibouti on state department business.

ARTHUR
Our CIA star.

ELAINE
Come into the kitchen for some quinoa and radish cakes.

INT. BROOKE’S PARENT’S DINING ROOM - LATER
Brooke and her parents pass around ridiculous-looking health food.

ELAINE
So, how are things at the show?

BROOKE
Really good! In fact-

ARTHUR
We so enjoyed Mark McKay’s piece on the first lady and her health advice. We’ve been doing the three S’s all week.

Brooke looks perplexed.

ELAINE
Sleeping, stretching and cycling!

Ethan enters the room carrying a casserole dish. Elaine SCREAMS in terror. She holds her chest, surprised.

ELAINE (CONT’D)
Oh, Ethan! I forgot you were here. Please, dear, serve yourself as much as you want.

Brooke smirks at Ethan and serves him a lump of orange mush. Ethan is visibly shaken.

ETHAN
... Thanks, Elaine.
ARTHUR
That Mark McKay is a fine journalist. There’s the next Ed Murrow.

ELAINE
Or Arthur Lane!

The two stare at one another fondly.

BROOKE
(clears her throat)
Anyway, they just told us that Andrew Gordon is leaving the show and the network is looking to replace him.

ARTHUR
With Mark?!

AUBREY
Not exactly. They’re actually choosing between Mark and...me.

ELAINE
Oh. (a beat)
That sounds like a tough competition.

BROOKE
Yeah, but I think Ethan and Aubrey and I can beat him. We’re looking to do something a little different. Take them by surprise.

Arthur and Elaine exchange worried looks.

ARTHUR
This isn’t the time to be make waves, Brooke. That’s like choosing to play with a foam at the PGA golf tour.

ELAINE
Yes, dear. Is this really the time to take risks? That’s why Mark is so successful. He knows when to take risks and when to play it safe.

ETHAN
When does Mark ever take risks?
Elaine jumps in her seat, gripping her chair.

ARTHUR
Brooke, I wouldn’t throw away an opportunity like this just to make some point.

Brooke looks down at her plate.

ELAINE
Something wrong with the pumpkin mash, Ethan?

Ethan looks down, gulps, then stuffs a big bite in his mouth.

INT. BROOKE’S PARENT’S KITCHEN - LATER
The lights are dimmed. Brooke’s parents are in the other room watching TV, and Ethan and Brooke clean the dishes.

ETHAN
Want to take any of this squash spaghetti home with you?

BROOKE
Are you trying to be funny?

Brooke turns around to see Ethan pretending to throw up the spaghetti.

BROOKE (CONT’D)
Ew.

She throws a spoonful of pumpkin mash at him. Ethan pretends to throw up more spaghetti. Brooke laughs and turns around.

ETHAN
Seriously, Brooke, I wouldn’t worry about this whole selling out thing. You know what they say. When life gives you lemon, make shitty news! Anything’s considered news when Mark McKay sets the bar!

Brooke splashes Ethan with water. Laughter erupts on the kitchen TV.

Brooke looks longingly at the TV. JESSICA STEVES (35), host of a news satire show “The Weekly Show,” makes fun of a Mark’s latest segment.
Really? "Princess Bride: Where are they now?" I did however, find it news that Billy Crystal was in the film.

The audience laughs.

JESSICA STEVES (CONT'D)
In other news the FCC Chairman has again publically refused to man up to protect Net Neutrality. Said the chairman, "No. I still have no balls"

Brooke watches as clips of the FCC Chairman fill the screen. Ethan throws spaghetti at Brooke. She smiles.

ETHAN
But seriously, Brooke, you're a good journalist. Just show that to the Network.

BROOKE
Thanks, Ethan. I just wish Jessica Steves knew that I'd do better stories if they let me.

ETHAN
She's a comedian. She can say whatever she wants. We can't.

BROOKE
We should be able to do that. I'm not ready to let go of TV journalism yet.

ETHAN
But who wants to watch the truth? Princess Butter Cup, FLOTUS diet secretes, and basically a blank screen are more appealing to our viewers.

Brooke splashes him.

Brooke grabs a fifth from the shelf above her parents fridge. She pours two shots.

BROOKE
To journalism?

ETHAN
To journalism.
They take the shot.

INT. BROOKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Brooke and Ethan toss a ball back and forth.

ETHAN
Hmmmm. What if we did an investigative piece on drones? War pressure from the private sector?

He throws that ball to Brooke.

BROOKE
No, that's not topical enough.

Brooke throws the ball back to Ethan.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Hmmmm. What if we did something on Big Data? How advertisers collect information about you through Candy Crush?

ETHAN
Yeah, they will definitely allow that.
(mocking)
We are nothing without our advertisers.

He throws the ball back to Brooke.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Is just throwing this hacky sack making me too sweaty?

BROOKE
(a beat)
No. Not at all.

Brooke throws the ball.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Hmmmm.

ETHAN
Hmmmm.

Aubrey bursts in.

AUBREY
I have a story!
Ethan throws the ball to Aubrey. Brooke and Ethan look at each other.

AUBREY AND ETHAN (CONT’D)
(jokingly)
Hmnnmm....

Aubrey throws the ball hard at Ethan.

AUBREY (CONT’D)
Ew. Why are you so sweaty?

Ethan looks offended and throws the ball at Brooke. She laughs guiltily.

AUBREY (CONT’D)
Another federal court has struck down Net Neutrality!

ETHAN
Ahhh the network would love another story on fish.

AUBREY
HA-HA...

BROOKE
That's insane. How is that possible?

AUBREY
Because it's only a policy. The FCC says that all content on the internet should be free and equal-

ETHAN
Free to swim! Free of nets!

Brooke throws the ball hard at Ethan.

AUBREY
But it's not an actual law.

ETHAN
Everyone knows that. What's the angle?

AUBREY
Nobody has done an investigative piece on it, yet. At least nobody big. My friends at Stalker have been working on it.

Brooke and Ethan look at each other.
AUBREY (CONT'D)
Stalker is cool you guys!

ETHAN
Stalker has like 5 readers.

BROOKE
Stalker: the only ones following the case!

Brooke and Ethan laugh.

AUBREY
They're just not big enough yet. Digital native companies are the future. I know it's a little risky, but Brooke, this is kind of story that could make you lead anchor.

Brooke looks conflicted.

EXT. 44 MINUTES HEADQUARTERS - LATER

Brooke leaves the office. She balances a coffee on top of a large box of files. Mark catches up with her.

MARK
Hey, Brooke. Need some help?

BROOKE
Oh, sure. Thanks.

They walk in silence.

MARK
So, I know that we should be hating each other and being enemies and what not, but I was wondering if you'd like to get dinner with me.

BROOKE
What? Tonight?

MARK
No, I think tonight we'll both be duking it out over who wins the Chancellor Award.

BROOKE
Right, yeah. Prepare to die. Or not. You know. It's cool. We're cool.
Mark laughs.

MARK
Right. How about tomorrow night? I can buy you dinner to ease the pain of losing to me.

BROOKE
Sure, I'll let you pay so you can still feel like a big man after I beat you.

MARK
Alright then. See you tonight.

He walks away. Brooke fidgets with her keys.

MARK (CONT'D)
Brooke!

Startled, she drops her coffee on her shoes.

MARK (CONT'D)
Sorry. Just wanted to say good luck.

Brooke shakes her legs, slightly annoyed.

BROOKE
Thanks. You too.

He walks away again. Brooke stares down at her covered shoes.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - EVENING
Brooke and Ethan exit a cab and half jog. They are dressed very nicely.

BROOKE
We're going to be late!

Brooke drags Ethan down the street.

ETHAN
Well, if somebody didn't spill beer on her white dress we would've been here thirty minutes ago!

BROOKE
Shut up.
INT. BALLROOM - LATER

The room is packed with white linen tables. Everything looks beautiful and the crowd is about 300 people. Brooke and Ethan sit at a table with a centerpiece reading "44 Minutes."

They are talking with Andrew Gordon.

ANDREW GORDON
So Brooke, I'm looking forward to seeing what you come up with for the final show.

Brooke and Ethan exchange a look.

BROOKE
Yeah, we have a few ideas we are working on.

ANDREW
Can't wait to hear them.

Mark leans over to Brooke.

MARK
(to Brooke)
Me too.

Ethan stares at Mark, annoyed.

A microphone sound cracks through the speakers. Everyone at the table gets quiet.

ANNOUNCER
Every year we honor one investigative journalist for their contributions to the field.

Aubrey raises her eyebrow at Brooke. Ethan gives a thumbs up.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
For the investigative piece on color discrimination in dog adoption, we are proud to honor Mark McKay.

The room applauds. Brooke takes a large gulp of her drink.

INT. BALLROOM - LATER

Brooke is tipsy. She leans on Kristen's shoulder, trying to whisper, but actually yelling. Aubrey and Ethan watch, worried.
BROOKE
(In Kristen's ear)
The problem? The problem with journalism? Well that's obvious.

KRISTEN
Oh, uh, I didn't say "the problem with journalism, I said "I love my job in journalism." Jobin journalism, not problem journalism.

BROOKE
Exactly! The jobin is nobody wants to see good journalism.

KRISTEN
What?

Brooke almost falls out of her seat.

BROOKE
At least not our viewers. They just want puppy racism, and Billy Crystal and to know why FLOTUS is so thin.

KRISTEN
What's FLOTUS? Is that a new yoga flow?

BROOKE
Our viewers don't want to hear about hunger, or pollution, or anything longer than one syllable.

Brooke burps.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
(louder)
-They can't handle the TRUTH!

Brooke gestures grandly and spills her drink on herself. She blows on the stain.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke stands in front of the mirror. She turns on the water and starts pulling paper towels out of the dispenser.

A toilet flushes and a woman emerges from the stall. Jessica Steves from "The Weekly Show," walks over to the sink and washes her hands.
BROOKE
(slurring)
You're Jessica Steves.

JESSICA
You're Brooke Lane.

BROOKE
Are you nominated for a journalism award?!

JESSICA
No. I am here to give a funny speech.

BROOKE
Well you should.

JESSICA
What?

BROOKE
You should be getting an award.

A woman exits a stall. Brooke turns to her excitedly.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
SHE SHOULD BE GETTING AN AWARD!

The woman, terrified, reenters the stall.

JESSICA
I'm not a journalist.

BROOKE
Sure you are! If I'M a journalist, then YOU'RE a journalist.

JESSICA
I just watch the news and say what's wrong with it.

BROOKE
EXACTLY! You're watching! Like a watchdog. And me, I'm a- a- a watch-puppy! A stupid labrador that listens to his master and knocks over things and smells bad.

Jessica stares incredulously at Brooke.
BROOKE (CONT’D)
You can actually say the truth!
You’re the last real journalist on television.

JESSICA
I make people laugh. It’s still just entertainment.

BROOKE
IT’S THE NEWS!

The woman tries to exit the stall again.

BROOKE (CONT’D)
GET BACK IN THE STALL!

The terrified woman rushes back in the stall.

Jessica laughs.

JESSICA
Okay, okay. Look, I’ve seen what you’ve done. Your pieces are the only thing about 44 Minutes that don’t make me want to puke.

BROOKE
Really? You do make fun of the show. A LOT.

Brooke leans on the counter.

JESSICA
Want me to stop ragging on your show?

BROOKE
Yes please.

JESSICA
Make something that I can’t make fun of.

BROOKE
What?

JESSICA
Make something that I can’t make fun of.

Jessica exits. Brooke moves to follow, but then turns around.
BROOKE
Sorry. You can come out now.

INT. BROOKE'S APARTMENT - LATER
Aubrey and Ethan drag Brooke into the apartment. She flails drunkly.

BROOKE
This is it, guys!

ETHAN
Uh huh, yeah, Brooke, that's what you've been saying.

BROOKE
The end of bullshit! The beginning of journalism.

AUBREY
Sure, Brooke. Okay.

BROOKE
No, I'm, I'm serious.
(to Aubrey)
Call up your weird journalist friends! Rally your internet nerds. Tomorrow! Tomorrow is the day of the watch-puppy!

Ethan and Aubrey plop Brooke onto her bed.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
What's the point of doing this if it's just something she'll make fun of...

ETHAN
What? Who?

Brooke is asleep and snoring.

INT. BROOKE'S APARTMENT - DAY
An alarm goes off. Brooke, still in bed, flings her hand to shut off the alarm. When she pulls back her hand, a sticky note is attached.

INSERT ON STICKY NOTE
Be at [Insert Address] at 9:00am.
Brooke looks at her clock. It's 8:30.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK – DAY

Brooke, disheveled and in sunglasses, walks with a sticky note on her forehead. She reaches a paper a building.

INSERT ON PAPER SIGN

Stalker Media Group

She enters.

INT. STALKER HEADQUARTERS – DAY

A group of awkward looking people stand around a table. Brooke walks in and a hush falls over the crowd. Aubrey looks over at Brooke.

AUBREY

Morning sunshine. You ordered some journalists.

BROOKE

Please, don't shout.

Ethan hands Brooke a coffee. He looks concerned.

BROOKE (CONT’D)

Thank you all for coming. We're all very impressed by Stalker at 44 Minutes.

MARTIN (27), with long dark hair and glasses guffaws.

MARTIN

Uh huh. Right.

Brooke removes her sunglasses and squints at the journalists around her. JANE (45), a tall woman with a blonde pixie cut steps in front of Brooke. She wears a black leather jacket, cut off jeans and combat boots.

JANE

(practically shouting)

Welcome, Brooke! I'm Jane Krazinsky, editor-in-chief of Stalker Media Group.

Brooke cringes and sits down.
BROOKE
Nice to meet you.

AUBREY
This is Rachel.

Aubrey points to RACHEL (23), an awkward, shy girl in the corner. She smiles awkwardly and then averts eye contact.

RACHEL
I write about business news. Talk to me after if you’d like to meet my geckos.

AUBREY
And this is Martin.

She points to Martin in the corner.

MARTIN
I write tech news. It's more complicated than anything you would see 44 Minutes of garbage.

Rachel and Martin fist bump. Rachel smiles at Brooke, guiltily.

AUBREY
They've been working on the FCC story for a while.

JANE
(projecting loudly)
We've been compiling research for the last year on lobbyists, corporations, mergers and the potential implications of losing Net Neutrality!

Brooke shudders.

MARTIN
Yeah. But no one will read it.

RACHEL
(whispering)
Yeah.

BROOKE
Why not?
JANE
We're what you call under the radar. The mainstream media thinks we're dangerous, but the mainstream won't pay attention to us. We're not 44 Minutes.

MARTIN
Of garbage.
(a beat)
I'm saying I don't like your show.

Brooke nods, and looks confused.

AUBREY
They're willing to give you their research and resources. They just want people to know about the story.

MARTIN
Even if it's on that daytime soap opera you call news.

JANE
We just want the story out there.

RACHEL
And to make friends!

JANE
Maybe after, Rachel. Lower priority.

BROOKE
Alright. Thanks so much. Where do we begin?

JANE
(Shouting)
At WebFilms!

Brooke closes her eyes.

MARTIN
The CEO of WebFilms has been releasing data that shows that a few major Internet providers have been lowering the his internet speed for months.

Rachel takes a sip from a full pot of coffee.
RACHEL
This means that the top five media conglomerates can charge websites more money for faster internet. They control the internet pipes, and now they get to control what travels through them.
Right?

Jane nods encouragingly. Rachel holds out the coffee pot.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
(to Brooke)
Coffee?

Brooke shakes her head no.

MARTIN
This means that they can charge the bigger Internet companies as much as they want, and prevent non-profits and small start ups from getting fast internet. Essentially, the FCC is putting the five richest companies in charge of censoring the Internet.

JANE
That's why we need to interview the CEO of WebFilms. We need to show how not having Net Neutrality already affects American businesses. He won't outright accuse the Internet providers, so we have to get in to see him and convince him.

BROOKE
Okay so we'll call his secretary and go to his office.

Everyone snickers.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
What?

JANE
He's not particularly fond of giving interviews. He is quite the character.

BROOKE
Okay. So what then?
JANE
Could you talk to him and try to convince him?

BROOKE
Sure, I'll give it a try.

JANE
That's the spirit!

Jane slaps Brooke on the back. Brooke throws up.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - LATER
Brooke hails a cab. Ethan runs after her.

ETHAN
Hey Brooke!

Brooke whips around.

BROOKE
Hey E. I've got to run.

ETHAN
I just, I wanted to see if you wanted to grab dinner tonight with me.

Brooke looks taken aback.

BROOKE
I'm so sorry, Ethan, I can't tonight. I've, um, I'm actually going to dinner with Mark.

Ethan's face falls.

ETHAN
What?

BROOKE
It's not a date, just, like, a dinner thing. We're still on for my parents' next week, right?

Brooke punches him on the shoulder awkwardly and gets into a cab. Ethan looks down and notices he has sweated through his shirt.

ETHAN
Shit.
EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - LATER

Brooke walks quickly down the street on her cell phone. She wears a dress and heels.

BROOKE
Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me.

PR PERSON
I'm quite busy so if you could get to the point.

BROOKE
Yes, it's just that for this story, we really need a face to face interview with Mr. Burton. What's happening to WebFilms could be happening to everyone soon and-

PR PERSON
I don't know. We're already pissing off a lot of people by posting the speed index. And Jake is not very good with interviews.

BROOKE
This might lead to change! It's in WebFilm's best interest to give the interview. Imagine the PR. All press is good press.

A beat.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Alex?

PR PERSON
Fine. I'll put you on the schedule. Mr. Burton has some specific guidelines for where he conducts interviews, though.

BROOKE
That's fine! Just email them to me. Thanks so much!

(a beat)
Alex?
INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

A very nice restaurant with linen table cloths. Brooke and Mark are seated at a table by a waitress. The waitress smiles seductively at Mark.

WAITRESS
I'm Jenna and I'll be your server.
(to Mark)
Let me know if I can help you with anything.

Mark looks at Brooke, perplexed.

MARK
We will.

The waitress exits.

BROOKE
What was I talking about?

MARK
You were saying that you still really believe in TV journalism.

BROOKE
Oh, that's right!
(a beat)
When I was little I was never allowed to watch the TV shows that my friends did. So the only real TV I got to watch were these long investigative pieces that my dad did.

Mark looks intensely interested.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
They were my superheroes. They were keeping an eye on the bad guys. And so while my friends grew up wanting to be wonder woman, I grew up wanting to be Katie Couric.

Brooke laughs.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, am I monologuing?

MARK
Wait, were you talking? I'm so sorry, I totally spaced out for a minute.
Mark laughs. Brooke laughs, unsure if he's joking.

BROOKE
What about you? How'd you end up in this field?

MARK
Well, I really wanted to go to business school, but my GPA was too low, and so I thought, journalism doesn't look too hard!

Brooke's face falls.

MARK (CONT'D)
I've always really looked up to your dad.

Brooke smiles.

MARK (CONT'D)
He was a legend. I actually took classes from him at Columbia. He taught me that you have to be able to read people, and notice details no one else can see. For instance...

Mark grabs Brooke's hand.

MARK (CONT'D)
I can see you've recently painted your nails, and knowing you and that your nails are normally lack luster, I can draw the conclusion that you're trying to impress someone.

Brooke laughs.

BROOKE
Fine. I'll admit it. I painted my nails for tonight.

MARK
Well I waxed my chest for tonight. We all have our things.

He kisses Brooke's hand. Brooke smiles, again unsure.

EXT./INT. BROOKE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Mark walks Brooke to her door.
BROOKE
Well, thanks for dinner.

MARK
I had an amazing time.

Mark stares into Brooke’s eyes for too long. Brooke looks uncomfortable. She laughs.

BROOKE
Well, good night!

Brooke turns towards the door, but Mark spins her back around. He presses her against the door and kisses her.

MARK
An amazing time.

Brooke pulls back, dazed.

BROOKE
Yeah. Pretty good.

She goes inside her house and shuts the door. She leans against it and smiles, confused.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Brooke and Aubrey add milk and sugar to their coffee.

BROOKE
But in a weird way it was fun. He was still pretty weird, but I think there’s something really interesting underneath that whole, 'I'm a good looking douche' veneer.

Aubrey exhales audibly.

AUBREY
Brooke, he's horrible.

BROOKE
I know, but he was also kind of sweet.

(a beat)
And that kiss!

AUBREY
Like kissing a golden retriever?

BROOKE
Shut up. It was amaaaazing.
AUBREY
Shut up about the kiss! Kisses are really hard to mess up. He's terrible. He's a moron.

BROOKE
But I liiiiiike him.

AUBREY
There are better guys out there.

BROOKE
Like who?

AUBREY
Like everyone.

INT. WEBFILMS HEADQUARTERS - DAY
The group wanders into the very nice lobby.

JANE
How did you convince him?

BROOKE
I had to agree to some...interesting terms for the interview.

The group arrives at the front desk where primly dressed RECEPTIONIST (24) sits at her desk.

JANE
Hello!

RECEPTIONIST
Can I help you?

JANE
We're here to interview Jake Burton.

The receptionist looks annoyed.

RECEPTIONIST
Follow me.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY
The group is following the receptionist.
RECEPTIONIST
We typically don't allow journalists in the building.

Rachel sticks a microphone in her face.

RACHEL
Why did you let us in?

RECEPTIONIST
Because we are not staying in the building.

The receptionist leads the group down a hall and out into a courtyard. In the center of the courtyard is a giant willow tree. A man dressed all in white sits in lotus pose underneath it. JAKE BURTON (38) looks up from prayer pose and smiles.

JAKE
Hello. Welcome.

EXT. BOTANICAL GARDEN - DAY

The group is mid-interview. Brooke and Jake both sit in lotus pose. Martin crouches awkwardly with the camera, and everyone else sits behind him.

JAKE
...As a kid I loved spending time in video stores. They were like a church to me, much like this garden.

Jake stares up at the tree for a very long moment. Martin shakes his head in disbelief.

JAKE (CONT'D)
It just seemed like the natural next step to create a virtual video store. A virtual temple, if you will.

BROOKE
Ah. That's great, Mr. Burton.

Jake begins to chant "Om."

Brooke clears her throat.
BROOKE (CONT’D)

Mr. Burton, you’ve been providing
the data of your website’s
performance on different Internet
providers since WebFilms first took
off. Why is that?

Jake cuts off from his Om, and stretches his hands above his
head.

JAKE

There are a few reasons. One is to
show viewers which Internet Service
Providers best support our product,
so our customers can make decisions
based on that.

BROOKE

And the other reasons?

Jake closes his eyes and stretches to the right.

JAKE

To keep everyone honest.

BROOKE

And by everyone, who do you mean?

JAKE

I mean everyone.

He opens his eyes and smiles mischievously.

BROOKE

These speed reports show your
Internet speed has dropped
dramatically over the last four
months on two of the largest
internet service providers. Do you
know what would cause that to
happen?

Jake takes a twist pose and faces away from the camera.
Everyone silently stares daggers at him. Jake turns back
around.

JAKE

If the majority of Internet service
providers lower our Internet speed,
then they might be able to convince
WebFilms to pay more for better
bandwidth.
BROOKE
Hmmm, and how does the recent court decision to not uphold Net Neutrality affect this?

Jake takes a side body stretch. Martin exhales loudly.

BROOKE (CONT’D)
I'm sorry Mr. Burton, could you stay in the camera frame?

Jake takes a long, audible breath.

JAKE
Yes.
(a beat)
The court ruling means that legally, these corporations can exploit me.

BROOKE
So all of the money that these corporations have been spending to lobby against Net Neutrality, this is the payoff?

JAKE
I cannot speak to what goes on inside the minds of other men.


Jake rolls his head in circles.

JAKE (CONT’D)
But it's general knowledge that that is the goal of their lobbyists and other efforts.

BROOKE
What other efforts?

The receptionist reappears behind Martin. She interrupts the interview and whispers into Jake's ear.

JAKE
I'm sorry, but I must end this dialogue now.

BROOKE
What? Why?
JAKE
The universe has called me to another journey.

BROOKE
Okay...
(a beat)
Can we come back? We still have more questions.

JAKE
(distracted)
Yes, yes, of course. Thank you all for coming. Namaste.

Jake takes off his mic and glides back towards the building. The receptionist looks at the group impatiently. The group awkwardly shuffles up from the floor.

EXT. WEBFILMS HEADQUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER
Brook and the group stand outside in a circle.

BROOKE
Well, guys, I'm sorry. I'm not sure what to do now.

The rest of the group smiles back at her.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
What?

JANE
We have somewhere to go.

EXT. THE FCC - DAY
They enter the building.

BROOKE
(whispering)
What are we doing here??

JANE
You didn't think we'd have a back up plan?

BROOKE
What?! You don't just walk up to the office and ask for an interview.
JANE
Well, of course you can't do that!

BROOKE
Then what are we doing here?

Rachel covers Brooke's ears.

RACHEL
SHHHHHHHH!

JANE
Code Narc?

MARTIN, RACHEL, AND AUBREY
Code Narc!

Brooke looks worried.

INT. THE FCC - MOMENTS LATER

The group breaks into two in the lobby. Aubrey and Jane lead Brooke up to the front desk, while Rachel and Martin wander around the lobby. RECEPTIONIST (27), sits at the desk.

RECEPTIONIST
Hello, how can I help you?

JANE
Hello! We are from 44 Minutes.

RECEPTIONIST
Okay.

AUBREY
You may recognize America's sweetheart Brooke Lane?

BROOKE
... Hi.

RECEPTIONIST
Yes! I watch that show. I love Mark McKay.

AUBREY
Of course you do!

Brooke shoots Aubrey a mock offended look.
JANE
Anyways! We are doing research for a story Mark is doing on government buildings.

RECEPTIONIST
Oh. Well, this is really the type of thing you need to call ahead on.

A loud BANG is heard from the other side of the lobby.

MARTIN
She'd dead!!!

Rachel lies face down on the floor.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
Help!

JANE
We should go help them!

Jane and the receptionist run over to try to revive Rachel.

Aubrey rushes behind the reception desk.

BROOKE
What are you doing?

AUBREY
Pulling up the FCC Chairman's schedule.

The receptionist shrieks.

RECEPTIONIST
Someone needs to call an ambulance!

Aubrey looks up panicked.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
I'll go call someone!

Aubrey looks at Brooke.

BROOKE
Go!

AUBREY
No! I'm a doctor! I'm a doctor!

Aubrey runs over to the scene. Aubrey kneels next to Rachel.

Brooke starts typing on the computer.
AUBREY (O.C.) (CONT’D)
I can feel her heart beat!

Brooke looks over at the chaos. She types quickly. She pulls about a notepad and scribbles something.


RACHEL
Oh, no. This is so embarrassing.

RECEPTIONIST
What?! Oh my God! She’s alive!

Rachel stands up with the help of the receptionist.

RACHEL
Narcolepsy is so inconvenient. Ugh.
Steven, we’re late for the thing?
We have to go.

RECEPTIONIST
(to Martin)
You didn't know?

MARTIN
She has narcolepsy. I have amnesia.
We're late. We’ve got to go.

The pair runs out. Brooke, Jane and the receptionist walk back to the reception desk.

RECEPTIONIST
Now, that’s the oddest thing I've seen in this lobby.

Jane laughs.

JANE
Some people. Well, we will get out of your hair. Mark will call and make that appointment.

AUBREY
Thanks so much!

Brooke, Jane and Aubrey exit. The receptionist looks perplexed.

EXT. GOP FUNDRAISER - EVENING

Brooke and the group approaches an elegant gala.
The chairman's schedule said he'd be at the Lincoln Days Dinners, which is here, tonight.

(a beat)
It's weird because normally that information would be public.

JANE
Why would he secretly come to a fundraiser?

BROOKE
Also, how are we going to get in?

AUBREY
We're a news team. Let's go film some news.

The group walks to a door where other journalists are lined up. Martin and Rachel nod at each other.

Rachel approaches a man with a camera.

RACHEL
Hello, how may I help you?

CAMERA MAN
What?

RACHEL
Who are you wearing tonight?

He looks at his anchor, confused. Martin sneaks behind him and unlatches his press pass from his pants and passes it to Brooke. Martin coughs.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Excuse me, I'm very busy and important.

Rachel rejoins the group as they walk into the gala. Brooke flashes their press pass and they are in. A MEDIA GUIDE approaches them.

MEDIA GUIDE
Hello, my name is Allison and I'll be taking you around the events.

Aubrey nudges Brooke.

BROOKE
I'm Brooke Lane from 44 Minutes. Thanks for having us.
The media guide smiles and they walk into the ballroom.

INT. BALLROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The media guide weaves the group around well dressed people holding cocktails. Martin wears jeans and a dirty T-Shirt. Jane wears a leather jacket and her hair is half blue today. Rachel is dressed up like the catering staff.

They stand out. People stare.

MEDIA GUIDE
Over here are some congressmen and women who would LOVE to speak with you.

The group splits into two to search for the chairman. Rachel, Martin and Brooke go with the Media Guide.

MEDIA GUIDE (CONT'D)
Let me introduce you to Congresswoman Carey. She's been integral in planning this event!

BROOKE
(to the media guide)
Do you by chance know where the FCC Chairman is?

MEDIA GUIDE
(dismissive)
He's not really central to this event.
(a beat)
Nancy! Come talk to 44 Minutes!

CONGRESSWOMAN CAREY approaches.

MEDIA GUIDE (CONT'D)
This event couldn't be put on without her.

CONGRESSWOMAN CAREY
You know what I always say, show them a lobster and they'll show you their checkbooks!

Congresswoman Carey and the Media Guide laugh hysterically.

CONGRESSWOMAN CAREY (CONT'D)
That's an inside, private joke among friends.
That's great. Rachel, could you mic the congresswoman?

BROOKE

Brooke scans the room. The chairman isn't there.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

So how did this event come together?

CONGRESSWOMAN CAREY

Well it's a very long standing tradition! Each year in cities all across the US, these dinner parties -

Brooke sees Aubrey waving from across the room. Aubrey points to the FCC Chairman and his entourage exiting the ballroom.

BROOKE

AH! Um. Excuse me. I need to talk with my, um, Executive Producer.

BROOKE throws her mic to Rachel.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Rachel will continue your interview!

Rachel stares into the camera and smiles awkwardly.

INT. MEETING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke follows the FCC Chairman out of the dining room. He veers into a meeting room. Brooke cracks open the door and peers in.

The chairman is at a table with a large group. Among the group is John Lamb.

BROOKE

(to herself)

What?

She sits outside the door and looks confused.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Rachel interviews Congresswoman Carey.
RACHEL
How many jelly beans do I have in my mouth right now?

CONGRESSWOMAN CAREY
I beg your -

RACHEL
(to the camera)
From the great state of Wisconsin!

WITH JANE AND AUBREY

Jane and Aubrey are conduct interviews on the other side of the room.

AUBREY
So, Greg, you're saying there shouldn't be a limit to how much private citizens can donate to campaigns?

GREG
Please, call me Senator Johnson. And, yes, that is exactly what I'm saying.

AUBREY
Doesn't that prevent outsiders from having a voice?

GREG
What? Of course not. Ensuring citizens are able to contribute to multiple candidates or causes who share their views -

Jane laughs uncontrollably.

JANE
Sorry! I' sorry!

Jane catches her breath.

JANE (CONT'D)
It's just, it's just too funny.

The senator looks angrily at the camera.

GREG
This interview is over.

He rips off his mic and storms off.
BACK WITH RACHEL

Rachel interviews a custodial worker.

RACHEL
So how many of you can fit in this building?

DONOR
I beg your pardon?

RACHEL
If you all squeezed in real tight, how many donors could be packed in here? I'd say about 900.

DONOR
I'm, uh, not really sure...

RACHEL
Who are you wearing tonight?

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Brooke sits slumped against the wall near the meeting room. Her phone buzzes. A text from Mark.

INSERT ON PHONE
"Thinking of you :)

Brooke smiles, texting back, absorbed in her phone.

The chairman and his entourage exit the room. Brooke looks up in time to see his back reenter the dining room.

Brooke jumps up and run after him.

BROOKE
Mr. Chairman!

He exits, but Brooke catches a woman by the arm in his entourage.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Excuse me, I'm Brooke Lane.

The woman stares at her, unimpressed.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
I'm an anchor on 44 Minutes.

The woman stares blankly.
BROOKE (CONT’D)
I was really hoping to get a few moments with the chairman tonight. Could you help me?

WOMAN
I’m sorry, he has no time for media interviews tonight. Can you let go of my arm?

BROOKE
It wouldn’t be an interview, I just wanted to talk to—

WOMAN
I’m sorry. There will be no interviews.

The woman exits. Brooke looks defeated, and then looks down at the stolen press pass. She looks resolute.

Brooke bursts through the door.

INT. DINING ROOM—CONTINUOUS

Brooke catches up to the chairman.

BROOKE
Hello Mr. Chairman, I’m Brooke Lane.

Rachel appears behind her.

RACHEL
We’re from Stalker!

FCC CHAIRMAN
You’re a what?

RACHEL
I work at Stalker Media.

FCC CHAIRMAN
No interviews.

RACHEL
Just give us two seconds!

FCC CHAIRMAN
Excuse me.
The chairman walks away. Brook rushes after him and knocks over a caterer and her cart of desserts. They are both covered in cake.

BROOKE
Oh god!! I'm sorry!!

Rachel grabs a mini cake, and eats it.

INT. BAR - LATER
Aubrey, Martin, Rachel, Jane, Brooke and Ethan sit at the bar drinking.. Everyone is solemn.

ETHAN
It sounds like you guys gave it your best shot.

MARTIN
Sometimes you give it your best shot, and other times you assault a caterer.

BROOKE
I didn't assault the caterer! She just, got in the way.

RACHEL
Well I personally thought it was delicious.

ETHAN
Brooke, do you need another round? Or should we hit the next bar? (a beat) Aubrey, you like alcohol.

AUBREY
No. I have to go do stuff.

Ethan raises his eyebrows.

JANE
Rachel and I are going put put.

RACHEL
It's glow in the dark. Come with us!

ETHAN
That could be fun. Brooke and I will crush you at mini-golf.
At that moment, Mark enters.

BROOKE
Oh, I would, but Mark said he would give me a ride home. I'm sorry, if I had known earlier...

She looks guiltily at Ethan and Mark waves at Brook.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Night guys.

Brooke exits with Mark. Ethan stares after them.

ETHAN
I guess I should head home anyway.

JANE
Oh, no you don't, Ethan! Martin makes four.

RACHEL
Put-put, bitch!

EXT. ANDREW GORDON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Andrew Gordon's house is decorated for the annual staff party. Brook and Aubrey sit in Mark's car as he parks.

AUBREY
We're late.

MARK
(to Aubrey)
Well, if someone hadn't been a backseat driver the whole time, maybe I could've driven quicker. It's like having an angry librarian in my car.

Aubrey grunts.

AUBREY
That makes no sense.

Ethan outside the front door, arm in arm with Kristen. Brooke looks surprised.

AUBREY (CONT'D)
You guys came together? Like on a date?!
BROOKE
Kristen, I love your dress.

KRISTEN
Thank you, it's red.

Mark smiles and looks her up and down.

MARK
Yes, it is.

Ethan puts his arm around Kristen, defensively.

BROOKE
Ethan, you're looking dry tonight.

ETHAN
Kristen has a very calming vibe about her.

Ethan leads Kristen into the house. Brooke looks miffed.

INT. ANDREW GORDON'S HOUSE - LATER

The house is filled with well-dressed journalists and executives.

MAN 1
Brookie! Come say hello.

Brooke walks up to the group of old men standing around the sofa.

MAN 1 (CONT'D)
How is your old man?

WITH ETHAN AND AUBREY

Aubrey turns to Ethan.

AUBREY
Seriously? How pathetic are you?

ETHAN
What? Kristen is a very stimulating person to talk to. She's very good with her colors.

Kristen returns with three drinks.
KRISTEN
They didn't have soda water, they only had club soda. I'm sorry, Aubrey.

Kristen hands Aubrey her drink. Aubrey raises an eyebrow at Ethan.

AUBREY
I'm going to go find cheese.

Aubrey stalks off.

Ethan makes eye contact with Brooke. He puts his arm on the small of Kristen's back.

ETHAN
Thanks for the drink, Kristen.

KRISTEN
Ooh! That tickles!

She stabs Ethan in the ribs with her finger. He spills his drink. Kristen giggles.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
You're fun.

Brooke turns away.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
How'd it get on your face?
(a beat)
Are you sweating?

Ethan looks upset. Brooke heads upstairs.

INT. ANDREW'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Brooke strolls through the hallway. She peers in an office door - it's Andrew's office. She enters and stares at his photos.

ANDREW (O.S.)
I see you've found my lair.

Brooke jumps.

BROOKE
Ah! Mr. Gordon. I'm so sorry, this is a total invasion of your privacy.

(MORE)
BROOKE (CONT’D)
I was just looking for the bathroom and well, these are just amazing.

ANDREW
Call me Andrew. And yes, being lead anchor does open a world of possibilities of acquaintances you might make.

Brooke stares dreamily at a photo. She gasps.

BROOKE
You knew my dad?

ANDREW
I idolized him. He was such a strong lead anchor.

Brooke stares at the photo.

ANDREW (CONT’D)
And the apple doesn’t fall too far from the journalist.

BROOKE
What?

Brooke laughs.

BROOKE (CONT’D)
No. I’m nowhere near as good as he was.

ANDREW
Why’s that?

BROOKE
I can’t even lock down my segment. We’re struggling with the last interview for my final segment. The FCC Chairman is being slippery, and the show sort of hinges on his interview.

ANDREW
Dan? I know him. I’ll see what I can do. I’ll tell him he absolutely must give you the interview.

BROOKE
Really? You’d do that?
ANDREW
Of course. I want my replacement to have the best segment possible.

BROOKE
What?

ANDREW
I've followed your career Brooke, you're extremely talented.

BROOKE
Thank you, sir.

Andrew.

BROOKE
Sorry, Andrew.

ANDREW
If you excuse me, I must get back to my guests.

The two exit the room. They shake hands and Brooke descends the stairs. Mark watches enviously from another room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS
Aubrey watches Kristen drunkenly schmooze an executive. Ethan stands by stupidly.

KRISTEN
And I told them who needs a degree when you have people skills?

She grabs his tie.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
People like meeee.

Brooke enters and pulls Aubrey away.

BROOKE
Andrew Gordon just told me he is picking me as his replacement!

AUBREY
What?!

BROOKE
Yes! And he's getting us an interview with the FCC Chairman.
AUBREY
No way!

Aubrey and Brooke cheers. Mark walks up.

MARK
What are we toasting to?

AUBREY
The fact that someday, you will die.

The group falls silent. Kristen stumbles up to the group, dragging Ethan.

KRISTEN
Ethannnnn. Can we go now? Kwisten is Tiwed.

Aubrey and Brooke stare in mock horror at her.

BROOKE
...Yeah, we should be going too.

AUBREY
Not riding with Mark!

INT. MARK'S CAR - NIGHT
Brooke and Mark drive in silence.

BROOKE
How's your segment coming?

MARK
Good, I'm working an interview for some conflict in Sudan. Borrrring.

BROOKE
We're getting close to the show, shouldn't you know what it's about?

Mark looks irritated.

MARK
I'm Brooke Lane and I need to be right!

Brooke rolls her eyes.

BROOKE
I'm Mark McKay and I have no idea what I'm talking about!
Mark laughs, not registering Brooke's sincere tone.

MARK
Well we both know that's not true.
(a beat)
How is your story going?

BROOKE
I was really worried about it, but
Andrew just agreed to help me get
an interview that I really needed,
so now it's going really well.

MARK
Looks like someone's getting
special treatment for being a hot
babe.

Brooke laughs, frustrated.

BROOKE
Are you kidding me? Are you really
accusing me of that? Coming from
you...I-

MARK
That's alright, sometimes women
need a little push to be able to
compete.

He grabs her hand and smiles. Brooke looks at their hands,
disgusted.

MARK (CONT'D)
My place?

BROOKE
Can you just drop me off at home?

MARK
Excellent.

Mark grins.

A few seconds pass.

MARK (CONT'D)
... Wait, what did you say?!

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Brooke, Ethan and the Stalker crew set up an interview with
ANTHONY (45), a lawyer.
BROOKE
Where's Aubrey?

ETHAN
She said she had something to work on.

JANE
All set!

Brooke sits in her chair and faces Anthony.

BROOKE
Thank you so much for doing this interview.

ANTHONY
Of course. I'm really happy you took an interest in the story-

RACHEL
-Oh, no. There's a fly in the room.

ANTHONY
... That's alright.

RACHEL
I hate flies.

A beat.

BROOKE
Can we start with just who you are and your background?

ANTHONY
My name is Anthony Reynolds. I'm a lawyer and I work on issues with Internet freedom.

BROOKE
Can you tell us a little about the cases you've worked on?

Rachel creeps in the background of the interview and hits at the fly with a rolled up magazine.

Anthony pauses to stare for a moment.

ANTHONY
I've mainly done legal work for internet companies that support net neutrality.
Rachel sits on the couch near Anthony, trying to bait the fly with her arm.

BROOKE
Can you tell us about a specific case you worked on?

ANTHONY
In 2005 CB&G Media Group wanted to introduce a new business model to charge Internet companies for faster Internet, and my firm challenged it.

Rachel lies between them on the floor, but out of the camera frame. She tries to lure the fly to her.

Anthony is distracted.

BROOKE
What happened?

ANTHONY
We lost because net neutrality wasn't a law, it was just a policy then, and it still is now.

Rachel smacks Brooke's foot. The fly escapes.

BROOKE
And what are the effects of not having an open Internet?

ANTHONY
What happens to information when access to it is left up to a few elites, who historically, have never had the public's best interest at heart?

Rachel stands on the couch behind Anthony's head. Reaching up for the fly.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
If the FCC doesn't do something, these mega corporations will be able to discriminate against any website, any company, for any reason they choose.

BROOKE
What would have to happen to make it a law?
The fly lands on Anthony's knee and he quickly shakes it to avoid Rachel's ensuing smack.

ANTHONY
It would be so easy. The FCC would simply have to reclassify broadband Internet companies as Title II, instead of Title I. Title II includes phone companies, and they are legally forbidden to discriminate amongst different companies. Equal quality of access.

BROOKE
If it's that easy, why won't the FCC do it?

ANTHONY
That, my friend, is a good question.

Rachel smacks Anthony in the face.

RACHEL
Got it!

EXT. BURGER RESTAURANT - LATER

The Stalker team is inside the restaurant playing pin ball. Ethan and Brooke are outside eating burgers in silence.

BROOKE
...So, how was your date with Kristen?

ETHAN
Oh, it was good. Yep. Quite good.

BROOKE
Quite?

ETHAN
Yep. Quite...

Brooke smirks.

BROOKE
Did you guys...?

ETHAN
No! I mean, no. I, uh, don't think we're going to go there. I mean she's great, but...
BROOKE

But?

ETHAN

But... she listens to Miley Cyrus. And she has like 7 dogs.

BROOKE

Shouldn't that be illegal?

ETHAN

It should, shouldn't it?

The two break into smiles. The moment hangs. Brooke's brow furrows.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

What?

BROOKE

Why won't the FCC just change the policy?

ETHAN

That's something you can ask the FCC chairman.

BROOKE

Yeah...

ETHAN

What's up? Are you not excited?

BROOKE

Actually, no. It's just, maybe Andrew's helping me because I'm Arthur Lane's daughter.

Brooke eats a fry.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Or worse, because he's attracted to me.

Brooke grimaces. Ethan laughs.

ETHAN

Are you kidding me? Who could be attracted to you?!

Pretending to be offended, Brooke throws a fry at Ethan. They both laugh.
ETHAN (CONT’D)
No, seriously, anyone who thinks that is a bigger moron than Mark.

An awkward silence.

ETHAN (CONT’D)
Sorry, I-

BROOKE
No, it's ok. Thanks.

Ethan looks down to his food. Brooke stares at him affectionately.

INT. WEBFILM HEADQUARTERS - LATER
After lunch, the group enters WebFilms Headquarters.

JANE
Let's use what the hot lawyer told for this interview. WebFilms is the poster child for net neutrality!

The group walks up to the receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST
I'm sorry, you're not on the schedule.

MARTIN
(to the group)
I smell crocodile shit.

RECEPTIONIST
Mr. Burton had to cancel the interview.

BROOKE
What? Why?

RECEPTIONIST
I can't disclose. He no longer wishes to contribute to the story.

BROOKE
That doesn't make any sense. Can you call up to him for me?

RACHEL
Um, Brooke...
BROOKE
In a second, Rachel.

MARTIN
Brooke...

BROOKE
In a minute!

ETHAN
Brooke, seriously, look.

Brooke turns to a TV in the lobby. The Weekly Show is on.

JESSICA STEVES
(on the TV)
In recent news, and please sit down if you're standing, your WebFilms account might be running a little smoother today.

Applause from the audience.

INSERT ON TELEVISION
An info-graphic shows a tombstone with Net Neutrality written on it.

JESSICA STEVES (CONT'D)
WebFilms CEO Jake Burton has struck a deal with ClockTurner Media Group. The media mogul has agreed to pay the corporation an undisclosed sum for faster Internet speed. "Thanks, Mr. Burton!" said corrupt elites and no one else.

The group stares open mouth at the screen.

INT. BROOKE'S OFFICE - LATER
Brooke and Ethan enter the office as Aubrey walks by.

BROOKE
Aubs! Can you do a quick meeting?

AUBREY
Nope. Busy

Aubrey rushes past. Brooke looks miffed.

Brooke and Ethan sit at Brooke's desk. Ethan tosses her a ball.
ETHAN

Hmmm. So, ClockTurner finds out about the WebFilms interview. They try to intimidate him.

He tosses the ball to Brooke.

BROOKE

Hmmm. But wouldn't they have just shut us down?

She passes the ball to Ethan.

ETHAN

Hmmm. Probably. What else could have happened?

Ethan throws the ball to Brooke.

BROOKE

Maybe they appealed to his new age, universe loving spirit?

ETHAN

I doubt it any of that was authentic.

Brooke furrows her brow.

BROOKE

That slimy turd used our interview as leverage to get a better deal from them?

She throws the ball way over Ethan's head, triumphantly. The ball hits the wall, making a thud.

ETHAN

Ah, the bittersweet sound of truth.

BROOKE

So, why would he do that?

ETHAN

Maybe he thought we couldn't win on net neutrality?

BROOKE

I hate people.

Brooke's phone rings.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Hello? Yes. Be right in.
INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke knocks on the door.

BROOKE
Hey Mr. -er Andrew. You wanted to see me?

ANDREW
Yes Brooke, take a seat.

They sit down across from each other.

ANDREW (CONT’D)
I've confirmed the FCC chairman for Friday.

Brooke sighs in relief.

BROOKE
That's so good to hear. This could not have come at a better time, thank you.

ANDREW
And of course there are some formalities we should discuss.

BROOKE
Yes, I would love to know how you think I should attack the interview.

ANDREW
Well, that's the thing Brooke. I want to let you know that I am indeed planning on selecting you as my replacement-

Brooke beams.

BROOKE
That's wonderful Andrew -

ANDREW
- And so attack isn't the word I would use for the interview.

BROOKE
What do you mean?

Aubrey walks past the open door, just in time to catch -
ANDREW
The FCC Chairman agreed to do the interview, but he sent over a list of approved questions he is prepared to answer.

BROOKE
And? That's bad journalism. We don't do that. We don't preapprove questions. He's not Putin.

Aubrey smiles.

ANDREW
We do if we want to interview the FCC Chairman.

BROOKE
Excuse me?

ANDREW
Brooke, I got you this interview. He is only doing it as a strict favor to me. Your dad used to handle situations like this all the time. That's why he had such a successful career.

BROOKE
Well...

Brooke looks around at all of the photo of Andrew and famous interviewees.

BROOKE (CONT’D)
(a beat)
Sure. I can do that.

Aubrey's face falls. She angrily stalks off.

ANDREW
Thanks so much. You can go now.

EXT. ORGANIC FARM - DAY
Ethan walks ahead of Brooke, not speaking to her. Brooke jogs after him.

BROOKE
Ethan, stop!

ETHAN
Really, Brooke?
Brooke lugs video equipment through the mud.

BROOKE
If I go soft on the chairman I'll get the job, and then we can make a real difference. Or, we can do this story on organic food and I don't even have to talk to the chairman!

ETHAN
You think that if you act as his puppet now he'll cut your strings later?

BROOKE
I-

Ethan throws his camera bag on a hay stack.

ETHAN
He'll have you investigating new ways to use Sriracha before he'll let you do Aubrey's idea about the societal effects of industry.

Brooke picks up his bag.

BROOKE
Let's get this footage, and show it to Stalker. I won't have to ask the FCC Chairman anything!

ETHAN
How could this GMO story possibly compete with net neutrality?

Ethan pulls up his foot. It's covered in horse poop.

BROOKE
It's for a GMO story! Why won't big companies label our food? I'm outraged, aren't you?!

ETHAN
This isn't interesting! These are vegetables!

He kicks a carrot and sprays mud on Brooke's white shirt.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Shit. I'm sorry Brooke.
BROOKE
Maybe you can just shoot me from my collar bone up. Like, you know, right in the head with a gun.

Ethan doesn't laugh.

ETHAN
I'm sorry, Brooke. I just thought you were ready to do this.

Ethan walks back towards the van, leaving Brooke alone at the farm.

INT. STALKER HEADQUARTERS - LATER
A panning shot of a farm plays at on a flat screen. The footage ends and the lights come up.

BROOKE
What do you think?

JANE
What. Was. That?

BROOKE
We could cover the GMO conflict instead of the net neutrality! This farm is organic.

RACHEL
I have a farm.

MARTIN
That is 44 Minutes of bullshit.

BROOKE
It's edgy! it's topical. It's Stalker.

JANE
This is the opposite of Stalker. I wouldn't touch this story if it meant Rachel's life!

RACHEL
What?

BROOKE
We gave it a really good shot, guys, but there was a reason the story didn't pick up when you guys did it.
JANE
And what's that?

BROOKE
This piece could only be published on a website like Stalker.

RACHEL
Thank you!

MARTIN
What do you mean a website like Stalker? A website that tells the truth instead of whatever it is your crappy show considers news.

BROOKE
I just mean that, this isn't how you treat journalism. You can't steal schedules and hack into emails.

MARTIN
But you can allow pre-approved questions? Or completely ignore the truth all together?

BROOKE
I'm trying to change the story so I don't have to do either of those. We thought too big. We got the interview, but I can't attack the FCC on national television.

MARTIN
We didn't even want to work with you. Aubrey convinced us that you were like us. We would have never-

RACHEL
I thought you were my friend!

BROOKE
Rachel I am your friend! I am like you guys.

The stalker group exits.

INT. 44 MINUTES HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Brooke enters the building looking disheveled and distraught. She walks towards Aubrey's office. She knocks on the wood panel.
BROOKE
Hey, can I talk to you for a sec?

Aubrey says nothing. She is putting things into a box.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Aubrey?

Aubrey says nothing.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

AUBREY
I quit.

BROOKE
What?

AUBREY
I. Quit.

What? Why?

AUBREY
Because this show is bullshit.
(a beat)
And so are you.

BROOKES
Aubrey, it's not my fault! What was I supposed to do?

AUBREY
Don't flatter yourself. This isn't about you. I'm tired putting work in that doesn't count for anything.

BROOKE
But, Aubs, if you hold on a little longer, it will be different.

AUBREY
I don't think so, Brooke.

BROOKE
C'mon, Aubrey. I still believe in 44 Minutes, so does Ethan.

Aubrey laughs.
AUBREY
Are you kidding me?

BROOKE
What?

AUBREY
You think Ethan is still here because he believes in the show? Ethan could have any job he wants!

BROOKE
Then why is he still here?

Aubrey rubs her palm against her face in frustration

AUBREY
Because, like an IDIOT, he still believes that one day you will stop friend-zoning him and wake up and realize that all the assholes you date are, in fact, assholes, and that he is, in fact, the guy for you.

BROOKE
Wha-

Aubrey exits.

INT. 44 MINUTES HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Brooke, in tears, walks down the hallway. She hears Mark's voice.

MARK
That's exactly what I think.

Kristen giggles. Brooke enters the lobby where they are talking.

KRISTEN
Wow, you're so smart, Mark. I'd like to get inside that head of yours.

MARK
Well I'd tell you what I'd like to get inside you...

Mark whispers in Kristen's ear.
Brooke bolts for an exit door, but sets off a loud, annoying alarm. She grimaces and turns around.

BROOKE
Whoops.

Brooke tries to smile and wipes tears from her eyes.

MARK
Oh, Brooke, don't be dramatic.

BROOKE
I'm not. Theses are not-

MARK
-Look, Brooke, no need to overreact here.

Brooke stares daggers at him and then bolts through the fire exit, leaving Mark and Kristen covering their ears from the alarm.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Brooke walks quickly down the street, tears streaming down her face. She stops at a hot dog stand.

BROOKE
Two chili dogs please.

HOT DOG VENDOR
Whoah, two?

BROOKE
Three then!

HOT DOG VENDOR
Okay. Okay.

He hands Brooke the three chili dogs. She stumbles to a nearby bench, and, sobbing, begins to eat. A man next to her reads a newspaper.

INSERT - ON THE NEWSPAPER

FIRST HEADLINE

Man finds hope through softball.

SECOND HEADLINE

Jessica Steves voted second most trusted journalist. The first, Mark McKay.
Brooke's phone buzzes.

**INSERT - ON THE PHONE**

"Are you still coming for dinner?"

Brooke stands -- just as a pedestrian knocks into her, spilling the remaining two chili dogs down the front of Brooke's clothes.

**BROOKE**

**AHHHHHHHHHH**!

**INT. BROOKE'S PARENT'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Brooke sits at her parents' kitchen counter, wearing one of her dad's big t-shirts while the washing machine in the kitchen runs. She is holding a cup of tea.

**ELAINE**

Where's Ethan?

**BROOKE**

He couldn't make it.

**ELAINE**

Well that's too bad, I made him pumpkin mash to take home.

**BROOKE**

Mom, no one likes your pumpkin mash.

**ELAINE**

What?

**BROOKE**

I'm sorry, mom, it's like eating orange dirt.

**ELAINE**

I know that! I just kept making you dinners like this because I thought you wanted.

**BROOKE**

What? What would give you that idea?

**ELAINE**

That investigative piece you did on dishes with less meat and buying locally and seasonally.

(MORE)
ELAINE (CONT'D)
We were just trying to give you an 
ethical meal you could feel good 
about.

Brooke stares at her mom in shock.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
I'll just order a pizza! For 
heaven's sake, why didn't you say 
anything?

INT. BROOKE'S PARENT'S DINING ROOM - LATER

Brooke and her parents sit silently. Brooke plays with the 
crust of her pizza.

ARTHUR
How's the competition going?

BROOKE
It's good. I'm hitting a small road 
bump but -

ARTHUR
Is Mark proving to be too tough of 
competition?

BROOKE
(starting to cry)
It's not that.

ELAINE
Oh, Brooke, you know how we feel 
about crying at the table.

BROOKE
Jesus! Are you kidding me?

ARTHUR
Brooke, you're being really weak. 
You're a journalist. You need to be 
tough.

BROOKE
I'm having a bad day! Sometimes 
people have bad days! Sometimes 
people have to make hard choices.

ARTHUR
I know, Brooke, I lived it. I had 
to make hard choices all the-
BROOKE
You never made any choices! You did whatever you were told and just smiled a lot! No wonder you like Mark, no wonder Mark likes you.

ARTHUR
Mark likes me?

BROOKE
I know the difference between us! I have a conscience. The reason that it's so much harder for me is that, unlike you, I care!

ELAINE
Oh, Brooke, don't be dramatic.

Brooke stares at the table shaking her head. Her dad puts Sriracha sauce on his pizza. Brooke stares at the hot sauce furrows her brow.

She abruptly triumphantly from the table.

BROOKE
Dramatic? I'll show you dramatic!

Brooke storms out of the house. A beat. She storms back in.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Mom, I need pants.

EXT. OUTSIDE SRIRACHA PLANT - DAY
Brooke, wearing a face mask, addresses protestors outside of a factory.

BROOKE
Excuse me, ma'am! Would you tell us why you're here?

PROTESTOR
Yes! Once the media crews rolled away, we stayed at the Sriracha plant! We still have to live in this spicy death cloud.

BROOKE
What exactly are you protesting?
PROTESTOR
No spicy sauce is worth the pollution of our air and neighborhoods. We are suffering so college students can add more sodium to their top ramen!

Brooke adjusts her mask.

BROOKE
And what has to change before positive steps can be taken?

PROTESTOR
People like you need to take off your masks and wake up!!

BROOKE
I actually have a really bad pepper allergy...I can't.

PROTESTOR
Take off your mask!

All the protestors start chanting for Brooke to take off her mask. She looks at Ethan and he shrugs. Brooke takes it off and they start cheering wildly.

BROOKE
This isn't so bad. It's a little spicy...

Brooke starts coughing out of control and starts chugging water.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
This-(cough)
this is-(cough)
awful-(Cough cough cough)
Someone needs to do something!

Brooke starts leading protestor chants. Ethan smiles.

INT. NEWS VAN - LATER
Brooke chugs water. Ethan laughs.

ETHAN
This was a really good idea,
Brooke. I just hope she sees it.
BROOKE
Thanks, Ethan. Me too.

A beat.

BROOKE (CONT’D)
I'm so sorry Ethan.

ETHAN
I know.

INT. STALKER HEADQUARTERS - LATER
Brooke stands in front of the Stalker group and Ethan.

MARTIN
The prodigal daughter returns.

BROOKE
I wanted to tell you all how sorry I am, and how bad I feel about how I treated you.

RACHEL
Whatever, Queen Latifa.

BROOKE
...And I was hoping you guys would still be willing to help me.

JANE
We're not doing the GMO story. Everyone and their grandma is doing that. Our readers don't care.

MARTIN
Yeah, but I'm sure Fart McKay would love that idea.

Rachel and Martin fist bump.

BROOKE
I don't want to do the GMO story.

A beat.

MARTIN
So you're going to ask your softball questions to the chairman?

BROOKE
No.
ETHAN
But Brooke thought you might not believe how serious she is, so here's an act of good faith.

Ethan turn on the TV. We see Brooke coughing at the Sriracha plant.

INT. AUBREY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS
Aubrey is eating take out food and flipping through channels, aggressively.

AUBREY
Stupid, stupid, what? Stupid, ridiculous, stu-

She stops and sees Brooke coughing in front of the Sriracha plant. She gets her game face on.

Aubrey takes out her phone.

AUBREY (CONT'D)
Hello? Hi. I'm going to need those documents after all.

Aubrey hangs up and puts down her fork.

AUBREY (CONT'D)
I hate Chinese food.

INT. STALKER HEADQUARTERS - LATER
Jane stands at the head of the room drawing a concept map.

MARTIN
What about other players involved?
Like smaller internet companies.

Aubrey bursts into the room. The room falls silent.

Brooke moves over to her.

BROOKE
Hi.

AUBREY
Hey.

A beat of silence.
BROOKE
Did you like it?

AUBREY
It was ok.

BROOKE
Thanks, Aubs. That means a lot coming from you.

AUBREY
I know.

A beat.

BROOKE
So, where have you been?

AUBREY
That might better be explained by my friend.

A knock on the door. Jessica Steves enters.

BROOKE
Jessica, hey, wow, good to see you.

Rachel stands awkwardly close and stares at Jessica.

JESSICA
Hello, everyone.

BROOKE
So you were gone because you were hanging out with Jessica?

AUBREY
Not exactly.

JESSICA
We've been working on a similar Net Neutrality story at The Weekly Show.

AUBREY
Except they couldn't get an interview with the chairman.

JESSICA
You guys are a serious program. It makes sense to break the story on 44 instead of Weekly.
BROOKE
We have the interview, but we don't really have a story. All we can really do is ask the-

Brooke looks at Jessica.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Wait I'm sorry did you say break the story?

AUBREY
I've been helping Jessica research a theory she's been working on.

JESSICA
We started looking into the relationship between the FCC and ClockTurner. I mean, it would be so easy for the FCC to reverse the ruling, and to keep the internet free.

MARTIN
Yeah, so there's lobbyists, and elites whose interests are at stake.

AUBREY
Exactly. We wanted to find out how deep their interests ran.

BROOKE
What are you saying?

JESSICA
I'm saying that what we found shows that there is lot more than lobbying going on.

BROOKE
And you're willing to give this information to me?

JESSICA
I'm willing to give you the opportunity to do something I can't make fun of.

Jessica winks. Rachel winks too.
INT. STALKER HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Brooke and everyone sit strewn around the table. Everyone is asleep. A cell phone alarm goes off.

Brooke opens her eyes.

BROOKE
Everyone, wake up. It's time. We've got to go.

Brooke stands up. She is a mess. She straightens out her outfit, and pours some coffee.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Alright, I'm ready!

JANE
Not looking like that you're not.

BROOKE
What do you mean?

MARTIN
You're about to take down the head of one of America's biggest institutions.

BROOKE
And?

RACHEL
And you look like you're being released from jail.

BROOKE
Well, we only have 20 minutes.

JANE
Come with me to my spare shirt closet.

BROOKE
You have one too?

JANE
All great journalists do.

Jane opens a secret compartment to reveal a full closet. The clothes are mostly spiked, leather and have skulls on them.

BROOKE
... No.
Jane slides hangers around to reveal and normal looking, but cool skirt suit.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
That could work.

INT. 44 MINUTES HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Brooke walks into the headquarters with her production team. She is wearing one of Jane's edgy black skirt suits, with eyeliner. She looks incredibly put together, very different from the beginning of the film. She holds coffee, and when an intern bumps into her, she artfully dodges him, not spilling.

Mark flirts with an intern and looks over, and baffled, drops the files in his hand. The whole newsroom stares. Ethan pulls Kristen aside and starts whispering in her ear. The group walks into the control room.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The group sets up. Andrew enters.

Andrew moves Brooke by the elbow the corner of the room.

BROOKE
What's up, Andrew?

ANDREW
Do you remember what we discussed?

BROOKE
Of course I do! Nothing to worry about.

Andrew beams.

ANDREW
You are your father's daughter.
BROOKE
That's true. I wrote an acceptance speech to read to the staff and Mark, you know, to let them down easy. It's on your desk, would you be able to take a look at that now?

ANDREW
Of course, I'll say hello to the chairman and then head back to my office.

BROOKE
Thanks so much.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - LATER
Brooke and the FCC Chairman watch parts of the segment that have already been filmed.

BROOKE
Thanks for sitting through this. I'm sorry we have to do your portion live, but we will just cut to this interview in between our other footage.

FCC CHAIRMAN
Oh, I don't mind one bit.

BROOKE
Good. So you and Mr. Gordon are friends?

FCC CHAIRMAN
Yes, Drew and I go way back.

BROOKE
That's nice.

They continue watching. After a few moments, Aubrey signals the interview will begin soon.

FCC CHAIRMAN
Your father was a really talented journalist.

BROOKE
Yeah, everyone tells me that.

FCC CHAIRMAN
He was one of the best.
Brooke takes a beat.

BROOKE
I don't think so.

The chairman looks confused.

Ethan counts her down from the control room.

ETHAN
In 3, 2, 1

BROOKE
Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for finding the time to meet with 44 Minutes.

FCC CHAIRMAN
Of course, Brooke, thanks for having me.

The chairman beams into the camera.

BROOKE
Can you explain to our viewers where the FCC stands on the issue on Net Neutrality?

FCC CHAIRMAN
The FCC has had supported an Open Internet policy since 2010.

BROOKE
But that's not what's happening now is it?

The chairman looks reproachfully towards Brooke. He smiles at the camera and continues.

FCC CHAIRMAN
In light of the recent rulings, the FCC policy can't be enforced. (a beat) However, we are committed to maintaining an open internet.

BROOKE
So, are you saying you support the court ruling?

The FCC chairman looks sternly at Brooke.
FCC CHAIRMAN
I'm saying I support the US court system.

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS
Andrew enters his office. He looks over at the letter on his desk and turns up the live broadcast on his office TV.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS
BROOKE
You said that would prevent conglomerates from unfairly charging Internet companies. How will you implement this?

FCC CHAIRMAN
The FCC would review complaints.

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS
Andrew opens the letter, and begins to read.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS
BROOKE
But legally, you couldn't do anything, right?

FCC CHAIRMAN
Of course we could. It is our job to regulate.

BROOKE
But doesn't the most recent ruling say that legally you can't do anything?

FCC CHAIRMAN
Well, yes, but again that's the court's decision, not ours.

BROOKE
Hmmm. Is that so?

FCC CHAIRMAN
What are you implying?
INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS
Andrew looks up at the TV. He looks concerned.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BROOKE
Why won't the FCC reclassify these companies as Title II and make it so the internet is legally free?

The chairman awkwardly looks at the camera.

FCC CHAIRMAN
The FCC would have to vote on it.

BROOKE
So, why aren't you?

The chairman scoffs.

FCC CHAIRMAN
This is uncalled for. The FCC is considering ALL available options, including those for appeal.

BROOKE
But you haven't decided yet have you?

FCC CHAIRMAN
No.

Brooke is toying with him.

BROOKE
When do you think this will be?

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS
Andrew looks angry. He gets up to exit his office, but the door won't open.

INT. 44 MINUTES HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS
Kristen stands holding a chair locking Andrew in his office.
INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FCC CHAIRMAN
There are other factors to consider.

BROOKE
What's stopping you? Just reclassify the cable companies. That would be best for everyone, right?

FCC CHAIRMAN
It's more complicated than that.

BROOKE
Okay.
(a beat)
Well, onto a new set of questions! Mr. Chairman, how long have you known Andrew Gordon?

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Andrew bangs on the door, screaming. He sprints to his phone. He looks down at Brooke's letter and skims to bottom.

INSERT ON LETTER
"And so, I regretfully must resign from 44 Minutes."

ANDREW
Oh, no.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The FCC chairman relaxes, relieved.

FCC CHAIRMAN
Ah, Drew, well, we've been friends since college. We met in student government.

BROOKE
Aw, that's sweet. And how long have you illegally been accepting money from his and other companies to not reclassify cable companies?

The chairman's smile falls. He looks angry. Then chuckles.
FCC CHAIRMAN
That's a ridiculous claim. I would be very careful at what you say next, Ms. Lane.

Brooke exhales.

BROOKE
I probably won't be.

Brooke hands him an envelope.

The FCC Chairman takes the envelope as photos appear on the screen. The show does a close up of several photos showing the FCC Chairman, Andrew and executives laughing, drinking, exchanging a briefcase.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
These were taken last week. So, as I said, how long have you-

FCC CHAIRMAN
- This is absurd Ms. Lane! You have no proof that there is money in that briefcase.

BROOKE
You're right, I don't. But how do you explain these purchases...

Images flash on the screen.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
A house in Connecticut. Two new Mercedes. And a rare type of ferret.

FCC CHAIRMAN
That's not proof!

BROOKE
You're right, it's not. I guess we'll let the public decide.

The FCC Chairman rips off his mic.

FCC CHAIRMAN
(whispering)
You're finished.

BROOKE
They can still hear you through my microphone.
He exits the studio. The show cuts to the interview with Jake under the tree.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS
Brooke and the team stand in the control room, high-fiving and hugging.

JANE
That was amazing.

BROOKE
Thanks, Jane.

AUBREY
You ready?

BROOKE
No. But, you know.

ETHAN
Let's go. You got it.

They walk out of the control room.

INT. 44 MINUTES HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS
Brooke and the crew enter into the main room. Some bystanders clap, but they mostly stare, nervous.

RANDOM COWORKER
Way to go, Brooke!

RANDOM COWORKER 2
Nice job, guys!

MARK
Wow, Brooke. You've made some pretty interesting moves, but this is definitely the dumbest one in your career! And since you're obviously not Andrew's golden child anymore, it looks like I won.

Brooke smiles.
BROOKE
First of all, you idiotic moron, the work "since" is used to denote time, as in "since 3:00pm." The word you are looking for is "because" as in "because I am a gigantic tool." Who the hell let you be a journalist?!

MARK
I was j-

BROOKE
You know what Mark, you are exactly like my dad. His stories never did shit for the world and neither will yours! You're right.
(a beat)
No one could run this show better than you can.

The doors burst open. Andrew runs in, followed by Kristen.

ANDREW
Brooke! How could you do this after everything I've done for you?!

BROOKE
I'm sorry, Andrew. I really am.

ANDREW
I trusted you!

BROOKE
And millions of Americans trusted you. We all make bad judgement calls.

Police sirens can be heard outside.

ANDREW
You'll never work in this industry again!

BROOKE
If you were in charge of this industry, I'd rather work for MTV.

Everyone gasps.

EXT. 44 MINUTES HEADQUARTERS - DAY
Brooke and her crew walk outside.
Let's go to O'Connors!

Woooo!

Who can hope there on one leg the fastest?!

That was fun!

Yeah. It was ok.

Kristen and Martin smile at each other and walk arm in arm.

Ethan and Brooke remain in front of the office.

Brooke, you were amazing in there. Really impressive.

Ethan is sweating. Brooke moves towards him and trips. Ethan lunged and catches her.

Thanks, Ethan.

Anytime, Brooke.

They both smile.

Jane stands in front of a larger group of journalists running a meeting.

And who do we have doing the front page?

My story on the Ukraine.

Excellent. And what else is going up?
MARTIN
A story on the negative environmental impacts of Apple products.

JANE
Great.

KRISTEN
Um. The sociological effects, uh, how email is taking over our lives.

JANE
Nice, Kristen.

Kristen smiles at Martin.

RACHEL
I'm doing a follow up on the Virginia water contamination.

Ethans pops in the room.

ETHAN
C'mon guys, we better get going.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY
Inside a new newsroom. Brooke clears her throat, looking nervous.

BROOKE
So, there's this phenomena where there was this giant floating thing of plastic in the ocean, and no one could figure out what it was. And animals were dying from it and it was getting really big, and it turned out to be microbeads. From beauty products. And I just think that's really stupid.

One by one their heads whip to the head of the table to reveal Jessica Steves.

JESSICA STEVES
I love it. Let's run with that tonight. Start writing.

Brooke beams.
INT. WEEKLY SHOW SET - NIGHT

The Stalker crew all take seats. They see Brooke from the side of the stage and wave. The show begins.

JESSICA
Today, the Nielsen ratings came out and 44 Minutes had a 70% drop from last year. I wonder if that had anything to do with the recent arrest of Andrew Gordon? Well let's just say that shows going to need a lot more than Mark McKay's straight white teeth if they want to survive. I don't know...maybe some ethics?!

The audience laughs.

FADE OUT.
Works Cited


