

**44 MINUTES: SHOWCASING ISSUES IN JOURNALISM  
THROUGH SCREENWRITING**

By  
MIA SCHAUFFLER

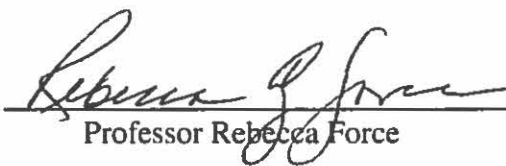
A THESIS  
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## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

**Mia Schaffler for the degree of Bachelor of Arts  
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**Title: 44 MINUTES: SHOWCASING ISSUES IN JOURNALISM  
THROUGH SCREENWRITING**

Approved:   
Professor Rebecca Force

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.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Professor(s) Force, Jasheway-Bryant and Southworth, for their ideas, feedback and support. I am so grateful to have professors who engaged with me so much on my thesis. Thank you for trusting me with such a unique project, and helping me to see it through. Your knowledge of journalism, character and comedy made this screenplay possible. I would like to thank my family and friends for spending countless hours talking through ideas, reading drafts and staying up all night with me in the library. I would also like to thank Blake Snyder for paving the path for new writers and Steve Martin for inspiring me at a young age. Lastly, I would like to thank the Clark Honors College for being an amazing home for the last four years, and supporting me in completing this project.

## **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 a 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 one 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 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 steadily 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—them 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.

44 MINUTES

By

Mia Schaffler

[mia.schauffler@gmail.com](mailto:mia.schauffler@gmail.com)  
971-998-8936  
[cargocollective.com/miaschauffler](http://cargocollective.com/miaschauffler)

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.

BROOKE

Well. This is awkward.

Brooke laughs. She trails off.

MARK

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.

BROOKE

Sure, uh huh.

The door opens and Brooke gets out.

MARK

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.

BROOKE

NOT THE SPARE SHIRT!

The elevator door shuts.

INT. BREAK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

AUBREY

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

ETHAN

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

AUBREY

Oh. Right. So, you're gay.

ETHAN

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.

JESSICA STEVES

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 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)

Hmmm.

ETHAN

Hmmm.

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)  
HMMMMMMMM....

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 drunkenly.

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.

(unsure)

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 guide lines 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 amaaaaazing.

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 raises an eyebrow. Everyone looks annoyed. Rachel applauds.

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  
SHHHHHHHHH!

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.

Jane looks at Brooke. Brooke waves her notepad. Jane pinches Rachel, who yawns and stretches.

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.

BROOKE

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.

BROOKE

... That's great. Rachel, could you mic the congresswoman?

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

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 to 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 pre-approve 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 faces 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.

BROOKE

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. These 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 it's what 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 of 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 your 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  
Brooke.

BROOKE  
Mr. Gordon! Hello.

ANDREW  
A word?

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 fathers 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  
maintaing 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 word "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.

AUBREY  
Let's go to O'Connors!

JANE  
Woooo!

RACHEL  
Who can hope there on one leg the  
fastest?!

KRISTEN  
That was fun!

MARTIN  
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.

ETHAN  
Brooke, you were amazing in there.  
Really impressive.

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

BROOKE  
Thanks, Ethan.

ETHAN  
Anytime, Brooke.

They both smile.

INT. STALKER HEADQUARTERS - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: One Month Later

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

JANE  
And who do we have doing the front  
page?

AUBREY  
My story on the Ukraine.

JANE  
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.

Ethan 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.

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