

FADE IN:

INT. BLACK TOWN CAR - DAY

The car is making its way through mid-day traffic in mid-town Manhattan with two passengers in the back.

WILL MCCALLISTER is close to one side or the other of 40. He's dressed casually in jeans, a sweater and a t-shirt. He's surfing the internet on his laptop.

Next to him is LONNY, his bodyguard, dressed in a dark suit. LONNY's got some postcards and letters he's looking through and from the glimpses of handwriting we can catch, it appears as if they've either been written by 1st-graders or crazy people. It's the latter but we won't worry about that right now.

LONNY

(reading)

"You're going to die today".

(another)

"You're going to die today".

(another)

"When we get done with the ragheads you're next."

(another)

"You're going to die today."

(another)

"I'm going to kill you."

(another)

"Jew controlled media death."

(beat)

I can't make head or tail of that sentence, it didn't have a verb. And why does he think a guy named McCallister is Jewish? You're not Jewish, are you?

WILL

(pause--looks at him)

Have you been talking to me this whole time?

LONNY

Are you Jewish?

WILL

Yeah, William Duncan McCallister, I'm Jewish. I was Bar Mitzvah'd by Rabbi O'Shaughnessy at the Synagogue of St. Mary Beth Emanuel. Just give 'em to security, would you?

LONNY
(reading another)
"Death to lamestream media puppets."
(beat)
"Death" was the verb in that sentence.

WILL
"To" was the verb.

LONNY
That's an interesting question.

WILL
No it's not.

LONNY
These don't bother you?

WILL
Give 'em to security.

LONNY
There's got to be a way to sue the
blogger who gave out your home address.
(another card)
"You're going to die today". He's trying
to disguise his handwriting but it's the
same guy--the "You're going to die today"
guy.

WILL
One of these days he's going to be right,
he's just playing the same lottery
number.

The car's pulled up to a gleaming building--United
Broadcasting Systems. WILL's put his laptop and some briefing
papers in his bag and moves to open the door--

LONNY
Wait for me.

WILL
(ignoring)
Would you please?

WILL steps out onto--

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

--as LONNY gets out the other side.

A few TOURISTS and ONLOOKERS notice WILL's very famous face
and react accordingly. Cell phone cameras come out.

TOURIST
Mr. McCallister, can we get a picture?

WILL
Sure.

TOURIST #2
Can you sign this?

WILL
Yeah.

TOURIST #3
Can I tell you something? Do you mind?

WILL
(while signing whatever's stuck
in front of him)
Nope, go ahead.

TOURIST #3
I disagree with you, but I like you.

WILL
I disagree with me sometimes too.

A MAN with the hood of his sweatshirt pulled over his head is running full speed down the sidewalk toward WILL and shouting--

HOODIE
(shouting)
McCallister! McCallister!

The TOURISTS notice this strange and frightening thing that's happening but WILL doesn't pay much attention.

WILL
Are you guys from out of town?

With WILL chatting up the TOURISTS in the foreground, what we see in the background is LONNY absolutely pancake the HOODIE to the sidewalk.

TOURIST
Oh my God!

WILL
No, don't worry about that. He played defensive end at Clemson. That's a position that combines strength and speed. You guys gonna see any Broadway shows while you're here?

LONNY has the HOODIE in a hold with his knee on his back and is cuffing the guy with plastic wire handcuffs.

TOURIST

Should we call the police?

WILL

He's got it. Let me also recommend the new exhibit on frogs at the Museum of Natural History--it's better than it sounds--renting a boat in Central Park and a nice dinner in Little Italy.

LONNY's pulled out his cell, snapped it open with one hand and dialed 911. He's pulled the HOODIE to his feet and is holding him cheek-first against the building.

HOODIE

You all saw it! I was trying to say my First Amendment rights to free speech and Will McCallister had one of his goons beat me up! You saw it!

LONNY elbows the HOODIE back into the wall--

LONNY

Shut the fuck up.

WILL

(to the HOODIE)

Yeah, you really shouldn't call him a goon. He was a scholarship athlete at Clemson. Not the best in the ACC but still pretty good.

LONNY

Hey you try playin' Florida State and Georgia Tech every year.

WILL

You're pretty sensitive about that season.

LONNY

Missed field goals. What am I supposed to do about that?

WILL

Nothing you can do. Alright, so I'll see you later?

LONNY

Yeah.

WILL
(back to the stunned crowd)
"Jersey Boys" is a lot of fun if you can
get tickets.

WILL disappears into the building--

TOURIST #2
Does anyone know how to upload this to
the internet?

LONNY
(his elbow still in the
HOODIE's back)
Yeah, I can do that for you.

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

CUT TO:

INT. UBS CORRIDOR - DAY

WILL'S walking through a hallway lined with framed one-sheets of the UBS galaxy of news stars--both daytime and primetime-- and walks through a set of double doors with his own picture on it over the logo for "News Night with Will McCallister". He walks through the doors and into--

INT. NEWS NIGHT BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

--where WILL walks into his office without noticing that the bullpen's nearly empty.

It's a sleek, glowing bullpen that also serves as the backdrop for a nightly news show broadcast from a Plexiglas studio at one end of the room. This studio is almost always in use with an anchor's back to us.

The bullpen itself is lined with monitors that are always tuned to news stations from around the country and the world and each desk has at least one computer screen on it.

But it's empty now except for a handful of people including three young staffers standing on the far side of the room. The three--MAGGIE, STEVE and NEAL--stop their conversation as WILL comes in. They watch WILL disappear into his office without clocking that there's anything amiss.

There's something romantic between MAGGIE and STEVE but it's not the greatest relationship and, as we'll learn, MAGGIE deserves better.

STEVE
I told you he wouldn't notice.

MAGGIE
Just...

STEVE
What?

MAGGIE
...not today, okay?

STEVE
Look, I'm sorry, I really am, but I think you're misinterpreting the problem.

MAGGIE
Please--

STEVE
There isn't a problem. You're creating a problem.

MAGGIE
Well I didn't mean to create a problem so let's drop it, okay?

STEVE turns to NEAL, a handsome young Indian staffer--

STEVE
She's mad at me 'cause I'm not having dinner with her parents.

MAGGIE
And now also for announcing it.

STEVE
Neal, gimme a ruling. We've been going out for five months--

NEAL
Yeah, I'm definitely getting involved in this.

STEVE
(to MAGGIE)
You can't stay mad at me. Listen to me. Hey. Listen to me. When you come back from dinner with your parents you get a special massage, that's a fair compromise, don't you think?

And now WILL comes back out of his office, stands there and looks around.

WILL
 (pause)
 Where's--
 (he has to speak up because the
 only people in the room are a
 half a football field away)
 Where is everybody?

MAGGIE makes her way across the room to WILL. The wait for her to get to him seems interminable and is punctuated by the clacking of her heels and an unfortunate run-in with a desk chair.

WILL (CONT'D)
 You couldn't say the answer from over there?

There's a sense that MAGGIE's a little bit nervous talking to WILL. There's a sense that everyone is.

MAGGIE
 (quietly)
 Charlie Skinner needs to see you in his office.

WILL
 When?

MAGGIE
 He said as soon as you come in.

WILL
 What's--is it Ellen?

MAGGIE
 Maggie. Margaret.

WILL
 What's going on?

MAGGIE
 We know as little as you do.

WILL
 Really?

MAGGIE
 We know almost as little as you do.

WILL
 What's the part that you know that I don't?
 (calling)
 Steve, what the hell is going on?

STEVE

Above my pay grade, Will, you gotta talk to Charlie.

WILL

Where's Karen?

MAGGIE

There's no one who works here named Karen.

WILL

My assistant--the one who sits at that desk.

MAGGIE

Angela.

WILL

In my own defense, people come over from the day side for the two week internships in prime time and I don't really start to learn names until they get to the producer level.

MAGGIE

I've been here about a year. I'm an associate producer on the assignment desk.

WILL

Okay, so...one more promotion to go and I'll stop calling you Karen.

MAGGIE

Ellen. You called Angela Karen.

WILL

Who are Margaret and Maggie?

MAGGIE

They're both me.

WILL

Okay.

MAGGIE

Charlie Skinner said it was important.

WILL

This right here? The strangely empty news room and the uncomfortable conversation with a junior level staffer? The Agatha Christie mystery?

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)

This is why I didn't want to go on vacation, Maggie. I'm sorry--Angela.

MAGGIE

Maggie.

WILL

I should've trusted my first instinct.

MAGGIE

I'll have my name legally changed to whatever you want if you'll go see Charlie Skinner.

WILL

Okay.

(beat)

So you understand, my not knowing your name--you know, after three or four tries--it's not a measure of my appreciation for--

(never mind)

--yeah, I'm gonna go see Charlie.

MAGGIE

I'll let his secretary know you're on your way.

WILL

I'm sure that's not your job.

MAGGIE

It's your assistant's job but--

WILL

Karen.

MAGGIE

No one's named Karen, you can take that off the table.

WILL

Alright.

MAGGIE

I'll call up for you.

WILL

Thank you.

(one last look around the almost empty newsroom)

This is strange even for us.

WILL heads off and MAGGIE turns to look at STEVE and NEAL who were watching the hushed conversation from across the room.

MAGGIE

We should just go back to work. Nobody's died. That won't happen for another couple of minutes.

STEVE

I love it when you talk like a senior producer. Special massage.

(to everybody)

She's right, though, back to work.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR BANKS - DAY

"Ding"--elevator doors open and WILL steps off onto a floor that has a more executive feel to it.

WILL walks past a few secretaries and one says--

SECRETARY

You can go on in, he's waiting for you.

WILL

Thanks.

And WILL walks through an open door into--

INT. CHARLIE SKINNER'S OFFICE - DAY

CHARLIE's president of the cable news division and WILL's immediate superior. He's talking on the speakerphone as he waves WILL in. We see New York City out the windows of this corner office on a very high floor.

CHARLIE

(into phone)

Wait--Mr. Will McCallister has just stepped into my office so I need to walk him through this.

VOICE (V.O.)

(from speakerphone)

Shhhhit, how much does he know?

CHARLIE

You're on speaker.

WILL

I don't know anything. Who is this?

VOICE (V.O.)

(beat)

Hey, Will, how was the vaca--

CHARLIE clicks the phone off--

CHARLIE
(as if none of that happened)
Welcome back.

WILL
(beat)
I don't know what just happened there.

CHARLIE
Look at you all rested with a tan. Two weeks in St. Lucia was just what the doctor ordered. You've got pictures?

WILL
No.

CHARLIE
Don't worry about it, TMZ does. You were down there with Erin Andrews?

WILL
There's a picture?

CHARLIE
No, that was a total trap but I knew you were seeing her. How can you not brag about that?

WILL
(pause)
Seriously, what the hell is going on?

CHARLIE
Something great.

WILL
Hardly anybody who works for me is where they usually are.

CHARLIE
I was in a bar in Da Nang.

WILL
(beat)
Last night?

CHARLIE
No, 1969. I was embedded with the 144th Artillery for U.P.I.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

and I was sitting there with a warm coke, watching a beautiful Vietnamese woman doing an exotic dance right in the middle of everybody--a beautiful, beautiful woman--and I thought to myself, "I'll never know what it is to be with a woman like that". And at *that exact moment* the woman spins twice, teeters over and falls right into my lap. And that was a story about how sometimes things fall right into your lap.

WILL

Where's my staff?

CHARLIE

The answer to that question has several parts. First, we're gonna try Elliot out at 10 O'clock. He's starting in two weeks.

WILL

Good. Thank you. Elliot's smart as hell and he's very talented and with the right E.P. he'll do great at 10.

CHARLIE

I think so too and I know how much he appreciates your lobbying so hard for him. He really looks up to you.

WILL

What does this have to do with my staff?

CHARLIE

He's taking your staff.

WILL

What are you talking about?

CHARLIE

Well strictly speaking he's taking your E.P. and your E.P.'s taking your staff.

WILL

Wait, Don's going with Elliot?

CHARLIE

Listen--

WILL

Where is he?

CHARLIE
There's no need for a--

WILL
Where is he?

CHARLIE
Which one, Don or Elliot?

WILL
Don.

CHARLIE
They're both--Don got everyone lunch,
they're in one of the conference rooms.

WILL turns and leaves--

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(calling after)
Will!

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR BANKS - DAY

"Ding"--the doors open and WILL and CHARLIE step out in mid-conversation.

WILL
I give him his first job on the air, I
give him his first job on a panel, I give
him his first job as a substitute anchor
as well as his 2nd thru 20th jobs as a
substitute anchor and I make it known to
everyone who matters that I'd like to see
him at ten o'clock and he poaches Don.

CHARLIE
Elliot didn't poach him, Don asked to go.

WILL
(beat)
He did.

CHARLIE
Yeah.

WILL
He asked to go.

CHARLIE
Yeah.

WILL
Because of what happened?

CHARLIE
What happened?

WILL
The thing. The America thing.

CHARLIE
No, he made it clear that had nothing to do with it.

WILL
Then why's he leaving?

CHARLIE gives him a look and a gesture that says, "Come on, why do you think?"

WILL (CONT'D)
Oh man, you know...I get that there are moments, small moments, infrequent moments, when I'm not the easiest guy to work with, but who the hell is?!

CHARLIE
I am.

WILL
It helps that you're drunk most of the time.

CHARLIE
It certainly does. Do me a favor--

WILL
This is more than unprofessional, it's uncivilized. But more than that, it's unprofessional.

They're now outside a large glass enclosed conference room where 12 or 14 people are enjoying a deli spread.

CHARLIE
Just try not to make a scene in front of the--

WILL knocks on the glass--

WILL
Hey dickless!

CHARLIE
Alright.

Everyone in the conference room stops what they're doing and turns to look at WILL--

WILL

No, not you, you're in a minute. You.

ELLIOT puts down his sandwich and walks out into the corridor to join WILL and CHARLIE.

ELLIOT

Will--

WILL

Congratulations on the show, you're gonna do great.

ELLIOT

I'd have called you, I didn't know where you were staying and I kept getting an out-of-office reply on your--

WILL

You're taking my executive producer?

ELLIOT

Before you go any further, I strongly objected.

WILL

Did you.

ELLIOT

For all the reasons--

DON comes out of the conference room and joins them--

DON

I think this conversation's about me.

WILL

Hello Don.

DON

I tried to get in touch with--

WILL

You asked to leave?

DON

I did. But we have two weeks before Elliot--

WILL

Because of the un-American thing?

DON

No.

WILL

Because the timing is curious.

DON

(to CHARLIE)

Didn't you tell him that--

CHARLIE

Yes, and talk to him when you're talking to him.

DON

It had nothing to do with that. I've never stopped you from self-destructing before. I was saying we have two weeks before Elliot starts and it'll be a smooth transition.

WILL

You asked to leave.

DON

I asked to work with Elliot.

WILL

After all the time we've spent working together.

DON

It's been 14 weeks.

WILL

That's the longest I've ever worked with any executive producer. You were the one, you were my guy, we were like the Everly Brothers.

DON

You'll interview some good candidates.

WILL

Please, I'll replace you in 10 minutes.

DON

Good, then we're all set.

WILL

Come on, let's be friends again.

DON
It wasn't the un-American thing, Will,
it's your personality.

WILL
I'm dreamy.

DON
You yelled at me in front of the crew.

WILL
That's what this is a--

DON
Yes, that's what this is about.

WILL
You--You know, you were talking in my
ear.

DON
That's what I'm supposed to do.

WILL
I had Stanley McChrystal on satellite
from Kandahar, he's being shot at by the
fucking Taliban and you were yakking in
my ear.

DON
I wasn't yakking, I was telling you not
to let him off the hook.

WILL
Was that really something that needed to
be said? Over and over?

DON
Apparently it was, 'cause you let him off
the hook. Then you took it out on me and
you did it in front of the staff the way
you're doing right now.

WILL
**THE STAFF ISN'T HERE RIGHT NOW! YOU'RE
TAKING THE DEPARTMENT HEADS! AND WHO THE
HELL KNOWS WHO THEY'RE TAKING!**

DON
Steve, Neal and Maggie are sitting right
there.

WILL
Her name happens to be Ellen!

MAGGIE shakes her head slightly--

DON

It's Margaret. And simply put, you're a smart, talented guy who isn't very nice. I'll work with whoever you hire to make it a smooth transition over the next two weeks.

DON walks back into the conference room.

ELLIOT

I'm sorry.

WILL

(beat--honestly)

No, no. Good luck with the show, man, I'm here for whatever you need.

ELLIOT goes back into the conference room and WILL and CHARLIE are left alone. WILL was hit a little harder by what Don said than he's willing to let on.

CUT TO:

INT. UBS EXECUTIVE DINING ROOM - DAY

A WAITRESS puts a glass of whiskey down in front of CHARLIE and a Diet Coke down in front of WILL.

After a moment...

WILL

Yeah. I'm not chummy with the staff. I didn't know they got into the news business so we could have sleepovers and talk about Justin Bieber.

CHARLIE

Who's Justin Bieber?

WILL

I'm honestly not sure.

CHARLIE

Don't be rattled by it.

WILL

Don't be rat--I have to reboot the whole show.

CHARLIE

I'm not talking about that.

WILL

Oh. Well then I do know who Justin Bieber is, he's a teenage--

CHARLIE

I'm not talking about that.

WILL

Then what are you talking about?

CHARLIE

You know.

WILL

No I don't. I've guessed twice and I've been wrong.

CHARLIE

I saw your entire soul come unspooled when Don said you're not a nice guy.

WILL

You saw my soul.

CHARLIE

Will--

WILL

You have any other supernatural powers?

CHARLIE

You really give a shit what Don has to say? In five years he's gonna be the third guy off the bench at CNBC. And I'll tell you why you let McChrystal off the hook. It was because after the un-American thing you were gun shy.

WILL

I didn't let him off the hook, he's a general, he's a professional strategist, Charlie, he's schooled in evasive tactics.

CHARLIE

Alright.

WILL

Every department head left. My assistant left. We put out a 25-million dollar reward for any information leading to the capture of Osama Bin Laden and nobody turned. Are you telling me Bin Laden's a nicer guy to work for than I am?

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)

He's throwing office parties and taking an interest in their personal lives?

CHARLIE

No, you're nicer to work for than Bin Laden probably.

WILL

(pause)
I didn't know.

CHARLIE

What.

WILL

I didn't know that people didn't like working with me.

CHARLIE

Do you care?

WILL

No.

(beat)
Of course I care! Anybody would care!
(beat)
But honestly I don't.
(beat)
For the record, I'm a perfectly nice guy.
That said, I think it's important to--

CHARLIE

How soon till you're finished?

WILL

And why are you so laid back about it?

CHARLIE

I'm just waiting this part of the story out so we can get to the drama.

WILL

This wasn't the drama?

CHARLIE

I hired you a new E.P.

WILL

You hired--I'm never going on vacation again--You hired a new E.P. without my meeting him?

CHARLIE

Her.

WILL
Without my meeting her?

CHARLIE
No, you've met her.

WILL
Who?...have you hired to run my
show...without including me in the
process?

CHARLIE downs the rest of his drink in one gulp, then gets up
and moves over to WILL's side of the table and sits right next
to him.

CHARLIE
You know that for this particular job
there's no one better.

WILL
(pause--calmly)
You're not talking about MacKenzie.

CHARLIE
She was in Peshawar for--

WILL
(over)
Oh my God.

CHARLIE
--four months, her guys were filing
stories from caves. She comes home and
her CNN show is canceled six months
later.

WILL
I knew that.

CHARLIE
They don't have a job for her in Atlanta,
D.C. or New York. MacKenzie. Line up any
10 people, 8 of them'll tell you she's
the best E.P. in the business and the
other two'll be stupid.

WILL
I'm one of the 8 but it's not gonna
happen.

CHARLIE
It's happened.

WILL

No.

CHARLIE

She's coming up from D.C. today with some of her people.

WILL

No, listen to what I'm telling you. I can't give my approval.

CHARLIE

The deal's a day away from being signed. Three years.

WILL

I have approval over my executive producer.

CHARLIE

You would think so, wouldn't you?

WILL

I would, yeah.

CHARLIE

Business Affairs went through the whole thing.

WILL

I don't have contractual approval?

CHARLIE

No, but you know what? You're up for renegotiation in 18 months, I'd have your agent put that clause in your--

WILL

(standing up)

No, we're gonna renegotiate my contract right now.

CHARLIE

It's not gonna go your way.

WILL

I generate an annual profit of 120-million dollars on my own--that's not counting the lead-in freight I push to 9 and 10. And that may be tipping money for this company but it's not nothing.

CHARLIE
(stopping him)
Will?

WILL
What?

CHARLIE
When was the last time you saw her?

WILL
I don't know. About three years ago.

CHARLIE
Coincidentally? That's the last time you
were a nice guy.

WILL takes this in...

WILL
I'm gonna have my assistant--*who still
works for me for two more weeks*--get my
agent on the phone. Hopefully we can
clear this up quickly so that you don't
have to explain why UBS had an hour of
dead air at 8 tonight where their most
profitable and respected news show used
to be.

WILL walks off as the WAITRESS comes by--

WAITRESS
(re the empty drink)
Would you like another, Mr. Skinner?

CHARLIE
Yes please.

CUT TO:

A TELEVISION MONITOR

We're watching an afternoon UBS Financial News report being
delivered by one of the new breed of sexy financial analysts
named SLOAN. There are the attendant graphics, banners and
crawls.

SLOAN (ON TV)
Several earnings calls slated for today
after the closing bell. Apple, who's
expected to report a net income soar of--

We PULL BACK off the monitor and we're in

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

--where SLOAN's reading from a TelePrompter--

SLOAN

--88% compared to last year has its shares down nearly 2% in early trades. Internet giant Yahoo! also seeing their shares weaken this morning leading into--

In the background, through the plexiglass, is the still-nearly empty newsroom.

The studio itself has an odd feel to it. The three cameras are robotically operated from the control room so the anchor is the only one in the studio, giving the impression that the anchor desk is a lonely place to be and that whoever is sitting there might well be talking to no one. Off to each side, in the shadows, are anchor desks used for other programs on the network.

SLOAN (CONT'D)

--earnings reports, though Yahoo! shares have consistently outperformed in previous quarters.

JIM HARPER, late-20's, quietly enters the studio. JIM doesn't know that he's an incredibly good looking guy because he saw "All the President's Men" when he was 7 years old and never looked back. He has an easy sense of humor and he's confident without being arrogant. He's here for his first day of work--dressed in a shirt and tie--but he knows SLOAN and he's stopped in to say hi.

SLOAN (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, AT&T this morning posted EPS before a non-cash charge of 59 cents a share, up from 53 cents a year ago and ahead of the Street at 54 cents. For more on that, UBS financial analyst Kelly Slade.

(immediately)

Jimmy, what are you doing here?

A live shot of a reporter on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange replaces the image of SLOAN on the monitor but with the audio off only SLOAN can hear what she's saying.

JIM

Mac brought a couple of us up from Washington to meet Will.

SLOAN

Will?

JIM

Yeah.

SLOAN

Why?

JIM

Will McCallister.

SLOAN

Why are you meeting with McCallister?

JIM

(beat)

Do you not know that I'm working here?

SLOAN

(back on TV)

Kelly, we're hearing reports today that Visa's reached an agreement to acquire CyberSource for 26-dollars a share in cash which would be roughly two-billion if my math is any good. Is anyone confirming that?

(back to JIM)

What are you talking about?

JIM

Do you need to concentrate?

SLOAN

(off her rundown sheet)

Not for another two and a half minutes. You're working here?

JIM

With MacKenzie.

SLOAN

MacKenzie's working here?!

JIM

Doesn't--

SLOAN

Thanks Kelly, we'll be coming back to you. Now shares of Goldman Sachs rose 2% in premarket trading after the bank reported profits of 3.5 billion Tuesday, delivering a much-needed shot to the firm's ailing reputation as it faces questions over its role in structuring security tied to subprime mortgages.

(MORE)

SLOAN (CONT'D)

For today's "Wall Street on Main Street" minute we go to Martin Wing who's standing by with some folks at Munson's Diner in Wheeling, West Virginia. What's the special today at Munson's, Martin?

JIM

Do people here not know what's going on?

SLOAN

I know that Elliot Hersh got 10 o'clock, I know Don Barrowmen's going with him and taking a lot of his staff--

JIM

And Mac's taking Will's show and brought her people with her.

SLOAN

That's impossible.

JIM

I'm standing here.

SLOAN

This is a soundproof room but if Charlie Skinner had hired Mackenzie while Will was on vacation I'd have heard Will's skull exploding from here.

JIM

Excuse me.

JIM bolts out of there--

SLOAN

(calling after)
I love seeing you!

JIM's gone.

SLOAN (CONT'D)

Did we just go to a diner to ask people about security structuring at Goldman?

CUT TO:

INT. NEWS NIGHT BULLPEN - DAY

MAGGIE, STEVE and NEAL are all at their respective desks-- typing, searching the internet, phones to their ears--along with a half-dozen or so others but the room is still oddly empty.

This is what MACKENZIE MACHALE sees when she walks into the room, a purse slung over one shoulder and an overnight bag over the other with a "Vistor"'s pass around her neck.

MACKENZIE is ageless and beautiful. Producing the news is what she does best in the world and everything else is tied for last place.

Even though she's a woman in a man's world she makes no attempt to affect toughness--she's just too confident for that. She can be funny, silly, even sheepish, right up until the moment she wallops you in the kneecaps.

MAGGIE's at the desk closest to the bullpen entrance so MAGGIE is who MACKENZIE walks up to.

MACKENZIE

Excuse me.

MAGGIE

Yes.

MACKENZIE

I'm Mackenzie McHale.

MAGGIE

How can I help you?

MACKENZIE

I'm supposed to be meeting with Will.

MAGGIE

Oh God, I'm sorry. You're MacKenzie.

MACKENZIE

I am. And you are?

STEVE comes running across the room--

STEVE

(calling)

I got this. MacKenzie, I'm Steve Manning,
I'm the SPIC.

MACKENZIE

I'm sorry?

STEVE

Senior Producer in Charge.

MACKENZIE

Okay, I wouldn't call yourself or anyone else the SPIC but it's nice to meet you, Steve. Are there free sandwiches someplace?

STEVE

Are you hungry?

MACKENZIE

No I mean where is everybody?

STEVE

Don's having a long lunch with the new 10 o'clock team.

MACKENZIE

You didn't want to go to the new show?

STEVE

I'm in the decision making process. You already met Maggie Jordon?

MAGGIE

Margaret.

MACKENZIE

Okay. Is Will in his office?

STEVE

He's in his agent's office.

MACKENZIE

He is.

STEVE

Yeah.

MACKENZIE

He's at his agent's office.

STEVE

Yeah.

MACKENZIE

Alright, let me try to guess at something and you tell me how close I am to right. This whole move was done behind Will's back and he just found out this morning that I'm starting as the new E.P. in two weeks.

STEVE

That's exactly right.

MACKENZIE

Okay.

(beat)

Okay.

(beat)

Alright. You're going to witness some things but in the meantime you should do whatever you're doing and I'll just sit over here and wait. By the way, if there are free sandwiches I could really--no, I should stay loose. I should carb up. No, stay loose. I'm fine. I'll sit over here.

MACKENZIE puts her stuff down and takes a seat not far from MAGGIE's desk.

STEVE watches his new boss and turns to MAGGIE to roll his eyes. MAGGIE doesn't give him back what he wants.

STEVE

(quietly to MAGGIE)

You can't stay mad at me. Nobody can. It's impossible.

MAGGIE

(quietly)

Go.

STEVE

(quietly)

Special massage.

STEVE takes off. MACKENZIE's clocked all that and put it in her internal database. She glances around her new home, taking everything in one piece at a time--"What hand have I been dealt"--but what's really on her mind is the incredibly uncomfortable confrontation she's about to have.

She looks back at MAGGIE, who's working hard but snuffles and wipes something from her eye. Is she crying? If she is, she's trying to ignore it and let work occupy her. MACKENZIE doesn't know if she should get involved with this or not--she just met this girl 60 seconds ago.

She gets involved. MACKENZIE steps easily over to MAGGIE's desk and sits down next to her.

MACKENZIE

(privately)

Are you okay?

MAGGIE

(very quiet)

Me? Sure. I've got an allergy.

MACKENZIE

To what?

MAGGIE

(beat)
Oysters.

MACKENZIE

(nodding)
Oysters. I didn't know they were
airborne.

MAGGIE

I'm totally fine.

MACKENZIE

Listen, it doesn't have anything to do
with what happened last night on Glee,
does it? 'Cause I have the last two
episodes Tivo'd and I haven't seen them.

MAGGIE

Why would I be crying about Glee?

MACKENZIE

(beat)
No reason.

MAGGIE

I'm really fine.

MACKENZIE

Well...I'm your new boss and I just want
you to know you can come to me with
anything.

MAGGIE

I appreciate that.

MACKENZIE

Technically I can't ask you about your
personal life in the workplace.

MAGGIE

I should get back to work.

MACKENZIE

And I should just mind my own business.

MAGGIE

Okay.

MACKENZIE

But that's a real challenge for me.

MAGGIE

I can tell.

MACKENZIE

I'm also trying to keep my mind off the very uncomfortable moment I'm about to have.

MAGGIE

Why will it be uncomfortable?

MACKENZIE

Hey this is about you.

MAGGIE

Why...does it have to be that?

MACKENZIE

Is it your boyfriend?

MAGGIE

I don't have a boyfriend.

MACKENZIE

Who's the guy in all the pictures on your desk?

MAGGIE

I meant--No--I meant I don't have a boyfriend in the office. I don't have an inappropriate office relationship.

MACKENZIE

Maggie?

MAGGIE

Yeah?

MACKENZIE

That's Steve. I just met him a minute and a half ago.

MAGGIE's busted.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

I don't care, I'm not reporting you to H.R.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

MACKENZIE

Does he want you to do things in the bedroom you're uncomfortable with?

MAGGIE

NO!

MACKENZIE

Damn.

MAGGIE

I have this work to do for Will before he gets back.

MACKENZIE

Okay, well I'll get out of your way.

MAGGIE

Thanks.

MACKENZIE

Okay.

MAGGIE

(not a big deal)

It's just that my parents are in town and he won't come out to dinner with them.

MACKENZIE

Boom.

MAGGIE

And now I'm gonna have to make up a story for my parents and my father's gonna know I'm lying and he's gonna hate Steve.

MACKENZIE

Yeah.

MAGGIE

I know what you're thinking.

MACKENZIE

Do you?

MAGGIE

I do. He's a great guy, okay? He's brilliant and he's funny and ambitious and by the way if it weren't for him I'd be alone. So all due respect, Ms. McHale--

MACKENZIE

MacKenzie.

MAGGIE

--but I'm very happy with my choices.

MACKENZIE

I'm sorry?

MAGGIE

(starting to cry)

I said I'm very happy with my choices.

MACKENZIE's serious now but both firm and gentle--a great big sister.

MACKENZIE

(real quiet)

It's alright, just face this way and he won't be able to see you, it'll just look like you're talking to me.

MACKENZIE yanks a couple of tissues off the neighboring empty desk and hands them to MAGGIE.

STEVE's clocking this from the other side of the room. He can't tell much except that these two women are in a private huddle.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

(still quietly)

When I start in two weeks I want you to go to your immediate superior with work problems and your immediate female superior with personal problems. That's gonna be me. I'd rather spend three minutes doing this then the whole day with your head someplace else, you understand? Just nod.

MAGGIE nods.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

This one's real simple. When he drunk-dials you tonight at 11 and wants to come by, don't lay on a tone of voice, just tell him real nice that you're hanging with your roommate and you'll see him at work. Do that three times and he'll get the idea. I wasn't questioning your choices.

MAGGIE

No, you're right, I appreciate it.

MACKENZIE

We're gonna be a team, we're gonna be a family, so look around, you're not alone. Or at least look around when there are more people here.

MAGGIE smiles and laughs a little--

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)
Nothin' unprofessional about that.

And JIM comes hustling through the doors into the bullpen--

JIM
(out of breath and a little
worked up)
Mac! Did you know--

JIM's caught his foot on the strap of MACKENZIE's overnight bag which is in the middle of the floor and after two quick steps to try to untangle himself does a full face-plant into the floor.

MACKENZIE
Jim. That's Louis Vuitton luggage.

MAGGIE
Are you alright?

JIM gets himself up.

JIM
I'm fine. Thank you.
(to MACKENZIE)
Can I talk to you a second?

MACKENZIE
Sure. James Harper this is Maggie--

MAGGIE
Margaret.

MACKENZIE
This is Maggie Margaret.

MAGGIE
Margaret Jordan.

JIM
It's nice to meet you.
(to MACKENZIE)
Now please?

MACKENZIE
Did you hurt anything?

JIM
Everything, but please.

JIM leads MACKENZIE to a private area where they can talk.

JIM (CONT'D)

Did you know that Will McCallister didn't know that you were hired as E.P and that he's at his agent's office right now?

MACKENZIE

I didn't know that when the day began but I know it now.

JIM

I quit my job for this, Mac, and so did the three other people you told me to bring.

MACKENZIE

Well...strictly speaking our show was cancelled so we were out of work any--

JIM

I was offered any other show I wanted at CNN.

MACKENZIE

I wasn't.

JIM

(pause)

I'm not sure where that--

MACKENZIE

Oh no, it doesn't matter at all, I'm just saying.

JIM

I put down first and last month's rent. Do I have a job in New York?

MACKENZIE

Yes, of course you do.

JIM

You're sure?

MACKENZIE

No.

JIM

Okay, I'm calling Jim Walton and begging for a job.

JIM starts to head off but MACKENZIE is barely able to grab his shirt by her fingertips--

MACKENZIE

(hushed)

Jim Jim Jim Jim Jim.

JIM

What? And why didn't you tell me there was some kind of problem with you and Will?

MACKENZIE

'Cause that's personal. Do you see me asking personal questions? Now when was the last time you had a passionate relationship with a woman?

JIM

(pause)

What?

MACKENZIE

When was the last time you had a passionate relationship with a woman? When you lit up when you saw her name in your in-box and loved her hands and couldn't handle the idea of another guy touching her and were absolutely certain that your life would be great if she'd marry you?

JIM

(pause)

You know the only reason I'm still standing here is loyalty, right?

MACKENZIE

Yes. When was the last time?

JIM

Never, that's never happened.

MACKENZIE

Right. And you know how you've always had a crush on me?

JIM

I've never had a crush on you.

MACKENZIE

Yeah you've always had a little crush on me, it's been cute.

JIM

I've never had a crush on you but go ahead.

MACKENZIE

The girl you just met? Maggie? *She's me before I grew into myself and got hotter with age.*

JIM

I don't understand why you chose this moment to go insane.

MACKENZIE

Just--

JIM

Why are you afraid to see Will McCallister? You have to tell me.

MACKENZIE

Hey, Jughead, I ain't afraid a nobody. *GAGGHH!* I thought that was a spider. Just look at her. *Not a big look, stupid!*

JIM

I didn't look at all.

MACKENZIE

Oh okay. Just glance over.

Fine. JIM glances over.

And then glances over again--he couldn't help it. Whether he knows it or not he just fell in love with MAGGIE.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Cupid. Boom.

JIM

Can we cut to the chase? What's in this for you?

MACKENZIE

Now why does it have to be like that?

JIM

It doesn't but it is.

MACKENZIE

I need senior people to stick around until I have my feet under me. We can't afford to stumble out of the gate. Steve-- don't look--is Maggie's boyfriend and Steve's a dick. He's going be threatened by you so he'll stay if you stay so he can stay near Maggie.

JIM

(beat)

Well as long as it's all professional.

JIM turns to go again--

MACKENZIE

Jim Jim Jim Jim Jim.

(beat--seriously now)

What did we come here for?

JIM

To do the best news on TV.

MACKENZIE

That's exactly what's going to happen.

JIM

I don't know what's going to happen
because I don't think we have jobs here.

MACKENZIE

Leave that to me. Just sit and relax a
minute. And introduce yourself to your
wife.

The double doors open and WILL walks through.

The temperature in the room changes immediately. Everyone's nervous but no one more than MACKENZIE even though she won't show it in front of a room full of people who are about to be her staff. This is the first time WILL and MACKENZIE have seen each other in three years.

Everyone's just standing still.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Hey, Will. It's good to see you.

(beat)

This is Jim Harper, my Anchor Producer. I
know he's young but--

WILL

Let's go in my office.

MACKENZIE

Sure.

WILL

Someone want to tell Don and Elliot the
lunch party's over and I need someone on
the assignment desk in case there happens
to be, what do you call it, news?

MAGGIE

Would you like any coffee or anything?
Water, or I could--

WILL

We're fine.

WILL makes a half gesture to his office door and that's where MACKENZIE goes with WILL following behind and we move into--

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

--where WILL closes the door behind them. He wordlessly goes behind his intimidating-sized desk and sits in his intimidating-sized desk, leaving MACKENZIE to stand there as if she's been called to the principal's office.

Behind WILL is the New York City skyline and the windows are starting to become dotted with rain. Framed photos on his credenza show him interviewing Obama, McCain, Cardinal Bernard Law, Henry Kissinger, Bono and a Muslim Cleric.

After a moment...

MACKENZIE

I tried to get in touch with you while you were on vacation. Nobody seemed to know how to do that or at least they weren't willing to say.

WILL's response is blank and empty silent...

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

I've tried to get in touch with you a lot of times in the last three years. Did you get all those e-mails?

WILL

Yeah.

MACKENZIE

What did you think?

WILL

I didn't read them.

MACKENZIE

I understand.

(beat)

I watch your show every night. You can't imagine how proud I am of you and everything that's happened.

WILL pulls a cigarette from a wooden box on his desk and lights it with a nice desk-top lighter. He takes a drag, blows the smoke out...

WILL

Thank you.

MACKENZIE

(pause)

You look good after your vacation. You look rested. I've never been to St. Lucia, is it great?

WILL

Yeah.

MACKENZIE

You were down there with Erin Andrews?

(beat)

It's not my business, you can go anywhere with anyone.

WILL

(pause)

Thank you again.

MACKENZIE

Listen...This can work. In fact I've been thinking a lot about it--I've been thinking about it all the time and I think it's going to work great. I asked my agent to negotiate a three year contract. You know me, I think that's the longest contract I've ever--

WILL

It's not a three year contract anymore.

MACKENZIE

I'm sorry?

WILL

It's not a three year contract anymore. It's a one-hundred and fifty-six week contract that gives me the opportunity to fire you a hundred and fifty-five times at the end of each week. We'll wait a few months to make sure it's not a story Sean Hannity can shove up my ass and we'll do it then.

MACKENZIE

How did you get my contract changed?

WILL
I gave the network back some money off my salary.

MACKENZIE
How much money?

WILL
A million dollars a year.

If MACKENZIE were a cartoon character her mouth would be drawn a dead-straight line...

MACKENZIE
You gave back a million dollars a year.

WILL
Yeah.

MACKENZIE
You paid a million dollars to be able to fire me anytime you want.

WILL
Three million dollars and not anytime I want, just at the end of each week.

MACKENZIE
(pause)
How the hell much money do you get paid?

WILL doesn't answer. He just stubs out his cigarette in an ashtray and gets up and goes into his bathroom to brush his teeth and rinse with mouthwash.

CUT TO:

INT. BULLPEN - SAME TIME

JIM is sitting nervously but trying not to show it. He looks up and over at MAGGIE who looks back and JIM gives her a sort of half-nod/smile. STEVE clocks this. NEAL notices the beginning of a triangle and shakes his head slightly in anticipation of the unwanted drama that's just started cooking.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - DAY

WILL's finishing brushing his teeth and rinsing as MACKENZIE speaks.

MACKENZIE

I wish you'd read my e-mails. Or answered my calls. I got a new phone number just so you wouldn't recognize it on your caller I.D. I think if you'd read--

WILL comes out of the bathroom--

WILL

What.

(beat--simply enough)

You think if I'd read your e-mails I'd have what?

MACKENZIE doesn't have an answer...

WILL (CONT'D)

I have to start writing my script for tonight.

MACKENZIE

Do this to me--do this to me all you want, I deserve it, but you can't do it to them.

WILL

Who?

MACKENZIE

I never would have done this if I'd known you didn't know. I swear to God, Will. Charlie engineered this so that--

WILL

I know.

MACKENZIE

I wouldn't have done this if I'd known you didn't know. But listen--people followed me here: Jim, my senior producer, my booker, H&A producer, desk editor, field prod--

WILL

That can't possibly be my problem.

MACKENZIE

Will. Come on now.

WILL

What do you want from me, Mackenzie?

MACKENZIE

They're in the process of moving. They've put down security deposits, they've found roommates, they're looking at pre-schools, they've got--

WILL

YEAH, THEY FUCKED UP, MAC, THEY TRUSTED YOU!!!!

That was an explosion that was three years in the making and while it nearly ripped WILL's throat out it came from a much deeper place than his throat.

MACKENZIE knows she deserved that but it was still startling to hear. She takes the bullet, looks down for a moment and then looks back at WILL. She's staying in the ring.

CUT TO:

INT. BULLPEN - SAME TIME.

Everyone is kind of frozen in place, looking in the direction of WILL's office door where the shout just came from. JIM puts his face in his hands.

Everyone quietly goes back to work.

The quiet is interrupted by a "beep-beep" sound that comes from a computer near JIM. A couple of more computers start beeping. It's basically like a phone that's ringing and JIM's looking around to see if anyone's going to answer it.

JIM

You've got a news alert.

Either no one hears him or no one cares.

JIM (CONT'D)

(a little louder)

Excuse me, Steve? You've got a news alert.

STEVE glances back at the nearest computer--

STEVE

(no big deal)

It's yellow.

STEVE's going to leave it at that. JIM's...not. He's got News OCD and he can't not pay attention. He gets up and goes to a nearby empty desk to stand and check the computer.

MAGGIE's noticing this.

JIM's looking at a screen running "iNews". In the bottom of the right hand corner--in a flashing yellow box--is a small lightening bolt along with the words "A.P. News Alert".

JIM clicks on it and sees--

"EXPLOSION OFF THE COAST OF LOUISIANA"

JIM

There's been an explosion off the coast of Louisiana.

STEVE

How can there be an explosion in the middle of water?

JIM and NEAL, the Indian-American junior staffer we met much earlier who's suddenly become curious, says this at the same time as JIM from across the room--

NEAL/JIM

An oil rig.

JIM is clicking as the News Alert starts updating itself--

"WELL EXPLOSION IN GULF OF MEXICO"

NEAL

(reading)

"Well explosion in Gulf of Mexico"

LEGEND:

April 20th, 2010

STEVE

Alright, Tamara, can you get on the assignment desk and see if this goes anywhere?

A young woman, TAMARA, goes over to the assignment desk and takes a seat in the middle of a horseshoe desk that serves as a small command center.

JIM

(reading)

"Flames reach 150 feet in the air."

CUT BACK TO:

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

It's drizzling a little harder against the windows.

MACKENZIE

I grant you...everything. Everything, I take respon--complete for--complete responsibility for the whole...catastrophic thing and I deserve the hell I made for myself and if you'd read any of the e-mails or answered my calls you'd know that.

WILL

I already did know that and I already didn't care.

There's a single knock at the door and LONNY--Will's bodyguard--sticks his head in.

LONNY

Are you going to the meeting across the street?

WILL

That was moved to tomorrow.

LONNY nods and steps back out.

MACKENZIE

Who was that?

WILL

He works here.

MACKENZIE

Doing what?

WILL

Uh...public relations I guess you could call it.

MACKENZIE

He's a bodyguard.

WILL

The insurance company made the company make the network put a body on me.

MACKENZIE

You're getting threats?

WILL

Yeah, but they're mostly written in crayon.

MACKENZIE

If the insurance company--

WILL

It's nothing.

MACKENZIE

--thinks that there's a credible--

WILL

It's an insurance company.

MACKENZIE

--threat to your safe--can you just put everything aside for a second and explain this to me?! Jesus!

WILL

(calmly and evenly)

I did explain it. UBS Security monitors internet traffic, letters and e-mails and gives that information to the insurance company. There's a guy at the insurance company who determines--when things reach a certain point--that safety measures should be taken. And the fact that you think I can "just put everything aside for a second" speaks box sets about how different we are.

MACKENZIE

I was worried for your safety, Billy. If you think that's ever gonna stop you're crazy. When did it start?

WILL

When do you think?

CUT TO:

INT. BULLPEN - SAME TIME

JIM

(reading off the computer)

"Emergency rescue crews arrive on location at burning well located 50 miles off-shore--12 to 15 people believed missing."

STEVE

Yeah, but it's still yellow.

JIM

Steve, they just haven't changed the color yet. Somebody should tell Will or get Don.

STEVE

I'm not knocking on Will's door right now, I'm in charge while Don's out and you don't work here yet so, dude, relax.

MAGGIE's taking in this dynamic.

DON and ELLIOT, the E.P. and new 10 o'clock anchor we met earlier, come into the bullpen with 8 or 10 staffers behind them.

DON

What's goin' on, sports fans?

STEVE

No new changes for tonight.

JIM

There might be.

STEVE

There won't be.

DON

What is this?

JIM

An oil rig in the Gulf exploded.

DON

The Persian Gulf?

STEVE

The Gulf of Mexico.

(tell him)

Tamara.

TAMARA

BP Deepwater Horizon--British Petroleum--they're about 50 miles southeast of Venice, Louisiana. The Coast Guard's evacuated 7 people--all of them critically injured and they're searching for 11 confirmed missing.

STEVE

It's still yellow.

JIM

Isn't it possible that A.P.'s a little busy right now and they've got an intern on the updates? We can do some investigating ourselves.

NEAL

They may have bigger problems than the missing crew.

DON

Martin, can you make sure the truck in Pasadena's where it's supposed to --

JIM

Hang on. Listen to what he said.

(to NEAL)

What did you say?

NEAL

I said they may have bigger problems than the missing crew.

JIM

Why?

NEAL

I checked out BP Deepwater Horizon. That rig is drilling at 18,000 feet below sea level. There are only a couple of things that could've failed and if it was the wrong one--

JIM

Pressure?

NEAL

It would be like trying to toss a hat on a fire hose.

DON

What the hell are you two talking about?

JIM

There might be a massive oil spill 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana.

DON

Who are you?

JIM

I'm Jim Harper and I may or may not be but almost definitely won't be the anchor producer here under MacKenzie if she still has a job which it sounds like she probably absolutely doesn't.

DON

Well whatever it is doesn't start for two weeks so you're still in my newsroom and you're behaving in a way that's bothering me.

STEVE

Thank you.

JIM

Got it.

DON

(calling out)

The truck in Pasadena. They're five blocks from the courthouse--are they covering the Rose Bowl?

DON goes on but we're not listening to that. JIM's cell phone--resting on his suitcase--is buzzing. He steps over and picks it up.

"Private"

JIM flips open the phone--

JIM

(quietly)

This is Jim Harper.

(listens...listens)

Alright.

JIM looks around. He's looking for someplace private. There's a small empty office and that's fine. We follow JIM into--

INT. SMALL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

--and JIM closes the door.

JIM

(into phone)

I'm alone.

Out the office window into the bullpen we see MAGGIE stealing a glance at JIM--and then and then STEVE checking in on MAGGIE and we

CUT TO:

WILL

For the moment your people can have their jobs. Like I said, I've got to wait to make the move because--

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)

(he picks up Variety and a few other trade publications and drops them back on his desk)
--there was a press release, but when I hire the new E.P. who I will hire by hiring them myself, whoever it is is gonna get to interview the new people.

MACKENZIE

(pause--it's not good but it's better than nothing and she's in no position to complain)
Alright, well I appreciate that. I'll need to tell them they may only have their jobs for a few months.

(WILL nods)

They're really good, Will, you're going to want to keep 'em. Don't just dump them because of me.

WILL

They'll get a fair chance.

MACKENZIE

Okay.

WILL

I haven't started my script.

MACKENZIE

I'll get out of your way.

MACKENZIE goes to the door and puts her hand on the knob but then turns back.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Listen, I think the most important thing in a democracy is a well-informed electorate. When there's no information but much worse, wrong information, it can lead to calamitous decisions and clobber any attempts at vigorous debate. That's why I produce the news and whatever justifiable feelings you're feeling right now you also know that I'm good at it, I'm good at producing you and that you need me right now.

WILL

I do?

MACKENZIE

You used to be so good at not swinging at pitches in the dirt.

WILL

I think I've been scolded enough.

MACKENZIE

They baited you.

WILL

"Are we or are we not the greatest country in the world?" That's not a pitch in the dirt, it's right over the plate. It's not that I don't like the sound of it it's just that there *isn't* a *single statistic to support it!*

(the explosion's been coming for a while too)

We're 7th in literacy, 27th in math, 22nd in science, 49th in life expectancy, 178th in infant mortality, 3rd in median household income, #4 in labor force and #4 in exports. America leads the world in only three categories: Number of incarcerated citizens per capita, number of adults who believe angels are real and defense spending where we spend more than the next 26 countries combined, 25 of whom are our allies, and I'd even be down with that except we seem to be spending the money on fighting the Soviets in Chekoslovakia in 1978! So when they say America's the greatest country in the world, *I don't know what the fuck they're talking about!! Yosemite?!!!* I'd like it to be, but it's not right now.

MACKENZIE

(beat--calmly)

They baited you. You said exactly what they were trying to get you to say.

WILL lights another cigarette...takes a drag...

WILL

I know.

MACKENZIE

And then everybody took two steps back.

WILL

I know.

MACKENZIE

Democrats spent their Sunday morning on TV pretending to be appalled. I'm sure they all texted you after.

WILL

I have to write the script.

MACKENZIE

So now you're trying to change everybody's mind and you're swinging in the dirt.

WILL

I'm not.

MACKENZIE

You are.

WILL

They never came after me before.

MACKENZIE

They always came after you before, I was the one who stopped you from joining the shouting match. You're a brand, you're above it, people trust you. You lose that brand and you never get it back and if you don't have it you don't get to do the only thing you want to do and that's participate in the debate.

WILL

The last time I checked my ratings--

MACKENZIE

You were a rock star, I know. That's why I can't watch you blow this.

WILL

I'm not blowing any--

MACKENZIE

You lost McChrystal, Will.

WILL

Because--

MACKENZIE

Because you were scared to be a liberal the Monday after you said America's not the greatest country on--you've never been scared to be yourself because you're not a liberal you're a newscaster and that was your brand and you're--

(lowering her voice)

--you're fucking it up.

(beat)

MACKENZIE

You could be doing the best newscast, not just on television, but in history, and making it popular at the same time.

WILL

That is impossible.

MACKENZIE

Only if you think an overwhelming majority of Americans are preternaturally and fundamentally stupid.

WILL

I do.

MACKENZIE

I don't and I can prove it but I need you and you need me.

WILL is looking at her. He looks at her for what seems like a long time...

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

What?

WILL

I'm thinking.

(pause)

Yeah, that speech did nothing for me.

We HOLD ON WILL for a moment...because the speech in fact took root. He looks down to fumble with something on his desk and then looks back up at MACKENZIE before we

CUT TO:

INT. BULLPEN - SAME TIME

JIM clicks his phone off and comes out of the small office. He looks around for DON--

JIM

(to MAGGIE)

I'd like to talk to Don?

MAGGIE

(a half-smile)

Are you sure?

JIM knows what she means but nods "yes". MAGGIE points over to where DON's standing and JIM gives her a sort-of wave to say "okay".

JIM walks over to where DON is talking to some staffers--

JIM

Excuse me.

DON

I don't mind if you sit somewhere and observe but I mind you doing anything else.

JIM

(doesn't care)

You got it. But I just got a call from a source.

DON

What kind of source?

JIM

I can't tell you much except that he's an engineer with BP in London. He says he's sitting in meetings where they don't know how to cap the well. This is more than a search and rescue story and it should go at the top of the broadcast.

DON

Who's the source?

JIM

I can't tell you.

DON

Anything else?

JIM

A lot, I've got two pages of notes from my conversation and--

DON

Great.

DON claps him on the back and heads off.

JIM

(to himself)

Okay.

And now JIM's phone buzzes again. He looks at the Caller ID--

"Halliburton"

JIM snaps his phone open--

JIM (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Thanks for calling back.

With the phone still to his ear JIM looks over at NEAL sitting behind his desk. NEAL's looking back at JIM, silently rooting him on and we

CUT TO:

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - DAY

The rain's still coming down.

MACKENZIE
What are you thinking about?

WILL
Right now?

MACKENZIE
Yeah.

WILL
That I wish just once, when someone sent me a death threat, they'd follow through.

MACKENZIE
Will--

WILL
I really have to write my script.

MACKENZIE
I'll write it for you. "The volcanic eruption in Iceland is believed to have started on March 20th and had led to a worldwide transportation disaster. The ash cloud which has hovered over the Atlantic Ocean, causing a week-long suspension of air traffic, was in no way caused by America, which I love, you have to believe me".

WILL
We're not doing the volcano tonight.

MACKENZIE

Who's "we"? "We" just took the first bus outa here. They went with a new anchor to do a show at 10 o'clock that'll have half the audience watching recycled news from 8 o'clock just so they could get away from you, which, by the way, to the rest of the world looks like a mass exodus due to your on-air incident and not because of what I understand is a charming new workplace personality you've been sporting for the last three years.

WILL

I'd like to sit and listen to more flattery but--

MACKENZIE

I came running. Toward you. It took me three years just to have a conversation with you so the least you could do is--

WILL

THE LEAST I COULD DO?!

MACKENZIE

--put the personal baggage down and think about--

WILL

THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!

MACKENZIE

Quieter please--

WILL

Mac--

MACKENZIE

--you're frightening the children.

WILL

(quieter)

My personal baggage? You walked in here.

MACKENZIE

I said "the" personal baggage and I didn't walk in uninvited, I was paid to walk in here.

WILL

And I'm paying the network to walk you out.

MACKENZIE

No, you're paying them to let you own me.

WILL

(thinks about it a half-second)
Mm-hm.

MACKENZIE

And I'm saying fine. Deal. But without reducing anything--without reducing anything that happened--just think about the news for a minute, think about what we might be able to accomplish with your brain and charisma and my ability to stop you from shooting yourself in the face, and don't be the guy who won the lottery and lost the ticket.

WILL looks at her for just a moment...

WILL

I really have to write now.

CUT TO:

INT. BULLPEN - DAY

JIM snaps his phone closed and finishes writing his notes as he walks over to DON.

JIM

Don?

DON

Jesus Christ, we're on it, okay Jimmy Olsen?! We've got 55 seconds for a phoner with the Coast Guard liaison.

JIM

You're chasing the wrong story.

DON

Oh brother.

JIM

Halliburton was the contractor on this special kind of concrete that was supposed to--

DON

Seriously, you're being disruptive now.

JIM lowers his voice to barely a whisper to make sure this is totally between the two of them.

JIM
Come on, man, don't phone it in for two weeks.

DON
What?

JIM
He needs you and he's the horse you rode in on so give him your best. A two-and-a-half hour lunch party, half-assed prep and now there's breaking news and you don't seem to be curious about--

DON
That's it, get the fuck out.

JIM
Okay, you're right.

But JIM just goes to WILL's office door and knocks on it--

DON
GodDAMMIT!

Of course MAGGIE, STEVE and NEAL are watching this unfold--

WILL (OS)
WHAT?!

JIM opens the door into--

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

JIM
I'm sorry to interrupt. Could I talk to Mac for just a second?

DON catches up--

DON
I apologize. Mac, your kid is a pain in the ass.

MACKENZIE
Everyone here is just a glass of sunshine.

WILL
Was that meant for me?

MACKENZIE
No, it was meant for the person I was looking at while I was talking.

JIM
An oil well exploded in the Gulf of Mexico.

DON
(routine)
The Coast Guard's searching for missing crew members--I'll fill you in at the 6:00 rundown.

JIM
There's more.

DON
(to JIM)
He doesn't need to hear this right now.

MACKENZIE
Let's go outside.

WILL
No, if Don doesn't want me to hear it I'd like to hear it.

DON
Oh blow me.

WILL
I want you to not use that language in front of women and to forever not suggest that image to me.
(to JIM)
What's on your mind? And who are you?

MACKENZIE
Jim Harper. My senior producer.

WILL
(to MACKENZIE)
Senior? Is he old enough to drive at night?

MACKENZIE
(ignoring WILL--to JIM)
What happened?

JIM
Two calls within five minutes of each other. The first was from a friend of mine at BP in London saying he's sitting in on meetings where they don't know how to cap the well.

MACKENZIE

Jesus.

WILL

The oil's still spilling?

JIM

(off notes)

At a pretty alarming rate. The first estimate was about 10,000 gallons an hour but my guy says it's closer to 100,000 and could get as high as a quarter of a million.

WILL

Why's this well different from other wells?

JIM

The depth. I need...
 (looking out in the bullpen)
 ...one of your staffers. He's the--he sits in the back and he's--
 (JIM's trying to find a PC way to say Indian-American)
 --the one--

WILL

Are you trying to say the Indian stereotype of an I.T. guy?

JIM

Yes.

WILL

(shouting)
 Punjab!

WILL shouts as he leads the group out into--

INT. BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

JIM

(quietly)
 I don't think that's his name.

WILL

Why not?

JIM

Punjab's a character from Little Orphan Annie.

NEAL hustles over--

JIM (CONT'D)

Tell him about the pressure.

NEAL

Deep Water Horizon's aptly named. They're drilling at 18,000 feet below sea level. So take the Grand Canyon, make it three times deeper, fill it with water and poke a hole in the bottom. You can't just yank the pin out and that's what's happened.

WILL

How do you know all this, you're the I.T. guy?

NEAL

I'm not the I.T. guy, I write your blog.

WILL

I HAVE A BLOG?!

MACKENZIE

(to WILL)

Not the time.

(to NEAL)

How do you know this stuff?

NEAL

I made a volcano in 6th grade.

MACKENZIE

So did I, but I didn't know we were supposed to learn something from it.

(to JIM)

What was the second call?

JIM

My guy at Halliburton.

CHARLIE SKINNER walks into the bullpen--

CHARLIE

What the hell is going on?

DON

Nothing, so can we please get back to work?

CHARLIE

A rig exploded in the Gulf?

DON

It's Yellow.

CHARLIE

Not anymore, it got bumped up to Orange.

JIM

Okay, the rig was due to be moved to its next role as a semi-permanent production platform at a new location and Halliburton was hired to seal the well with cement and both my guys are identifying the failure of the cement's mix as the cause of the explosion but here's the thing--Halliburton performed tests on the cement mix and the tests showed it was gonna fail.

MACKENZIE

Holy mother.

WILL

Hang on, holy mother. I need to know who your sources are.

JIM makes a gesture that says, "Come on, I can't tell you that."

WILL (CONT'D)

Hey I don't know you, Scooter.

JIM's in a tough spot now. He can't reveal anonymous sources but he's got to get WILL on board.

JIM

Look, you don't have to trust me. She trusts me, you just have to trust her.

WILL can't help but laugh at the irony...

WILL

Try another strategy.

MACKENZIE looks down and shakes her head.

SCORE comes in under this now--perhaps for the first time in the show--and it's going to take us through to the end. It will modulate from tension to excitement to glory as indicated.

WILL (CONT'D)

How high up is the guy at BP?

JIM

High enough to be in on the meetings and I never said it was a guy.

WILL

Actually you did. Does he have an axe to grind?

JIM

No.

CHARLIE

What about the guy at Halliburton?

JIM

I didn't say he was a guy but we'll call him that and he's solid. You guys have to follow-up on this. You're going to want to open with the Coast Guard search and then pivot to this because--

(can't think of NEAL's name)

NEAL

Neal.

JIM

Neal says--

NEAL

It's gonna be the biggest environmental disaster in history.

WILL/CHARLIE/STEVE

Whoa/Hey/Come on.

DON

Jesus Fucking Christ, can we get back to work and send the Hardy Boys to their room?

JIM

Neal, tell him.

NEAL

After an explosion-like that the first thing that's supposed to happen is the Underwater Blow Out preventer should automatically close.

JIM

The flames are still 150 feet high, so that obviously didn't happen. Now when they get the fire out they're gonna send a submersible ROV down there to turn the preventer on manually by my source says--

(off notes)

(MORE)

JIM (CONT'D)

--"at that depth, with that much pressure, it has to be the mechanics that failed and not the electronics." In other words trying it manually isn't going to work either.

NEAL

They're going to have to build relief wells and that's going to take months.

JIM

Months--of oil spilling into the Gulf at a rate of 4.2 million gallons a day.

STEVE

(off a computer)

For the record, the Gulf of Mexico contains 643 quadrillion gallons of water so I think you might be over-reacting.

JIM

You are dramatically under-reacting. In four days it'll have spilled as much oil as the Exxon Valdez. It's a week before the oil reaches the Louisiana shores, three days if the wind shifts.

MACKENZIE

Is the wind going to shift?

JIM

Only if Louisiana's luck stays exactly the same. This isn't about wildlife, this is about human life. Hundreds of thousands if not millions of small businesses in Louisiana and Florida are going to be out of business *for good*. Why? Because Halliburton tested the concrete mix, it failed and *they didn't give a shit!*

WILL

That's a relief. I thought I was only going to get to be an environmental alarmist, but if you say I also get to attack Halliburton and be wrong--

JIM

We're not wrong.

WILL

Well that's good enough for me.

JIM
48 hours from now everybody's going to
have this story--why not have it now?

WILL
I don't want to be first, I want to be
right.

CHARLIE
I want to be both.

WILL
Charlie, I can't go after Halliburton and
miss.

CHARLIE
Oh report the goddam news, Will.

WILL
You remember a guy named Dan Rather?

JIM
Dan got it right.

WILL
He's no longer on television.

MACKENZIE
(to JIM)
You've got to tell him your sources.

JIM
I can't.

WILL
Jim?

JIM looks at him...

MACKENZIE
He can't trust you unless you trust him.

WILL
(beat)
Alright, why don't the necessary people
go into my office and close the door.

MACKENZIE nods to JIM that that's what he should do.

JIM
I want Mac as a witness.

WILL
Fine.

WILL, MACKENZIE, JIM, CHARLIE and DON go into--

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

--where the door closes on STEVE.

JIM

The BP engineer's my college roommate. He's a junior VP, he's been there four years.

WILL

And how do I know you're not being fed misinformation by Andrew Breitbart in the hope that I'll run with it and make his day? Who's your Halliburton guy?

JIM

(excruciating)

My big sister. She's got a PhD in Mechanical Engineering and she voted for McCain.

DON

It's a simple search and rescue in which no one's going to be rescued because Michael Phelps with an outboard motor on his ass couldn't outswim the fire and you're letting a guy you just met and a woman who--I don't know what the hell-- spin this into the end of the world and please remember that when you look bad I look bad.

WILL nods that DON's right...but then says--

WILL

Clear the whole show.

JIM/CHARLIE

Yes./Atta boy.

DON

This is out of control!

They burst out of the office and back into the bullpen and the SCORE is reflecting and informing the energy.

DON (CONT'D)

Fine. Steve, get a spokesperson for BP who almost surely will not--

WILL

Whoa whoa. Where are you goin'?

DON

I was just told to put together a new show.

WILL

(to the whole room)

Guys! Can I have your attention! I'm sorry if I've been a little inaccessible or terse lately...or for several years...but if I can just see a show of hands. Who's going with Don to Elliot's new show?

Six...Seven...Eight hands are raised. MACKENZIE notices that STEVE isn't raising his hand. MAGGIE notices too and so does JIM.

WILL (CONT'D)

Alright, I appreciate all your hard work and as a token of that appreciation I'm giving you guys two weeks paid vacation starting right now.

DON

Hang on. You're going to have her run the show?

WILL

Yeah.

DON

Don't do this Will. Friend to friend. I know you're pissed at me, you're pissed at them, you're pissed at the world, but you can't do a national news broadcast with a woman who just walked in the door an hour and a half ago.

WILL

You know I just offered her the most humiliating contract since Antonio got a loan from Shylock. She took it. I don't know what that is but I like it. Or at least more than I like you.

(to MACKENZIE)

Can you start two weeks early?

MACKENZIE

(calling out)

Who's my booker?

BOOKER (KENDRA)

Right here.

MACKENZIE

Jim's gonna tell you who to line up.
Everybody out who doesn't need to be
here.

WILL

Seriously, though, I have a blog?

MACKENZIE

NOW!

MONTAGE:

PREPARING THE SHOW

At high energy we'll go through shards of moments in the
bullpen and WILL's office beginning with--

INT. BULLPEN - EARLY EVENING

The CAMERA moves around the room where staffers are working
the phones and their computers and we're hearing--

JIM

(into phone)

Hello, this is Jim Harper, I'm a senior
producer with News Night on UBS and we're
looking into a story about--

STEVE

(into phone)

Yeah, it's Steve from News Night. I'm
good, I need to speak to someone about--

MAGGIE

(into phone)

This is Margaret Jordan from News Night
with Will McCallister and we're looking
for someone from the EPA to comment on--

KENDRA

(into phone)

We can have a car pick him up and take
him to our studio in New Orleans--

TAMARA

(into phone)

We can send a crew and do that right from
the Coast Guard station--just a producer,
cameraman and a field reporter so we
wouldn't be taking up too much--

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

WILL

You're on speaker and you've got me,
MacKenzie McHale and...

JIM

Jim Harper.

WILL

Jim Harper.

INT. BULLPEN - EARLY EVENING

STEVE

(shouting to anyone)

I need the number of wells in the Gulf,
how many are in deep water, how many have
exploded, how many spills worldwide--

MAGGIE

(to a TAMARA)

What's the status on legislation
regulating off-shore drilling?

TAMARA

Didn't the White House just expand it six
months ago?

MAGGIE

I'm checking now.

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING - STILL RAINING

VOICE (FROM THE SPEAKERPHONE)

If you say that on the air it will be
irresponsible.

MACKENZIE

If we say that on the air, it'll be more
than irresponsible, it will be--if we're
wrong--lying and defamatory and you'll
serve us with a suit in the morning. If
we're not served then we'll assume we're
on the right track and continue pursuing
the story. Not for nothin' but I'd get
involved now.

VOICE (FROM THE SPEAKERPHONE)

(pause)

Mac...can you give me a little time?

MACKENZIE

Absolutely. We go on the air at 8.

INT. BULLPEN - NIGHT

MACKENZIE

I need a geologist. Steve, who's your "go-to" geologist?

STEVE

Our "go-to geologist"? Geology is the study of pressure on minerals over millions of years, there's not a lot of breaking news in geology.

MAGGIE

(off her computer--calling out)
Dr. Leonard Rice at MIT and Dr. Marvin Hasbrook at Stanford.

JIM can't help a smile--

MACKENZIE

Whoever answers the phone first, Kendra. Steve, be on the call and tell me what they know.

WILL'S OFFICE

WILL

(into phone)
Is the DOE ready to comment?

BULLPEN

JIM

(into phone)
Is the EPA ready to comment?

EMPTY OFFICE

MACKENZIE

(into phone)
We're waiting for a comment from BP.

WILL'S OFFICE

WILL

(into phone)
It's Will McCallister for Robert Gibbs.

BULLPEN

STEVE
(into phone)
Halliburton's in it, that ship has
sailed.

CUT TO:

INT. WILL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

As WILL rips the dry-cleaning plastic off his suit.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

This isn't your father's control room. Three tiers of consoles and seats are facing what's basically an entire wall made out of a high-def computer screen that's divided into a couple of dozens screens of different shapes and sizes. Preview monitors, satellite feeds, news feeds from every other network and of course the three camera set-ups in our studio.

The control room is filling and digital read-outs are counting down the time to air.

MACKENZIE comes in and looks around--trying not to betray her nervousness. She's handed a headset and hangs it from her neck.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - SAME TIME

WILL, now dressed in a suit and tie, comes into the empty studio. It's just WILL and the three robotic cameras. He sits in front of the plexiglass, behind which is the newsroom, and which can be turned into any kind of background with the touch of a button--photos, graphics, etc.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - SAME TIME

Hushed conversations are going on between the control room staff and whoever's on the other end of their headset or phone or whoever's sitting next to them.

DIRECTOR
Two minutes.

MACKENZIE
Who's our wardrobe supervisor?

MAGGIE

We don't have one.

MACKENZIE

Let's get one, okay? Charcoal grey, navy blue and black. Zegna, Armani, Hugo Boss.

STEVE

He's gonna look like an elite Northeastern prick.

MACKENZIE

He is, so let's make the most of it.
(hitting a button)
Oh Will?

INTERCUT WITH THE STUDIO--

WILL

Don't talk to me unless you absolutely have to, alright?

MACKENZIE

I absolutely have to. I thought this'd be a good time to get a couple of things straight.

WILL

I'm on national TV in 90 seconds, I don't think this is a good time to get a couple of things straight.

MACKENZIE

See, I think it's the best time to get a couple of things straight.

WILL

Can people hear me in there?

MACKENZIE

Not yet.

She taps a button--

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Now they can.

WILL

Take me off speaker.

MACKENZIE

Not yet. Listen, I did a terrible thing and while I don't know what it's going to be yet I'm going to find a way over the next weeks, months and years to make it up to you and you're going to forgive me.

WILL

Take me off speaker.

MACKENZIE

But the thing you have to know is that between 8 and 9 o'clock, your ass is completely mine. For an hour five times a week, I own you, but in my case it's for the good of all. Say "I understand" so I can get these guys a sound check.

WILL

I don't see it working that way.

MACKENZIE

You don't?

WILL

No.

MACKENZIE

Okay. Where's my graphics producer?

A kid who looks like he should be delivering pizzas raises his hand.

DWAYNE

Right here.

MACKENZIE

I'm MacKenzie, what's your name?

DIRECTOR

60 seconds.

DWAYNE

Dwayne Marbry.

WILL

Could I get some quiet?

MACKENZIE

Dwayne, could I have your seat for just a second?

DWAYNE

Yes ma'am.

MACKENZIE sits at DWYANE's console, does a couple of quick wipes with the mouse, hits a bunch of keys very quickly (she started as a graphics producer and can play this equipment like a piano.)

MACKENZIE

There you go.
(to the DIRECTOR)
Show that to Will please.

DIRECTOR

Are you serious?

MACKENZIE

Yeah. Will, check out your preview screen.

We see what WILL's looking at--

"News Night With Willy McDumbass"

WILL

Get it off of there.

MACKENZIE

Say you understand.

DIRECTOR

30 seconds.

WILL

Somebody's gonna hit a button in there and broadcast that thing, get it off.

MACKENZIE

I have a one-week contract, I don't have a lot to lose.

WILL

I'm just glad no one's invented a way to digitally store images and upload them onto a free website where anyone can see them.

MACKENZIE

Have we invented a way to digitally--

WILL

YOU TUBE! YOU TUBE! GET IT DOWN!

MACKENZIE

Now you're just a crazy guy shouting You Tube.

WILL

Oh God.

MACKENZIE

Just say--

WILL

I understand.

MACKENZIE

Good. You warmed up or you want to screw around some more.

WILL

I'm good.

DIRECTOR

Ten.

JAKE

He has no script, there's nothing on the prompter.

MACKENZIE

Nothing on the prompter is where this man eats.

DIRECTOR

And roll-in.

The "News Night" theme music and animation fills a few screens. We'll keep intercutting with the studio where WILL is looking at a TelePrompter that says "Good evening, I'm Will McCallister"--

WILL

Good evening, I'm Will McCallister.

--and after that it simply says "VAMP".

WILL (CONT'D)

Breaking news tonight in what could be the biggest disaster to hit the Gulf of Mexico since Hurricane Katrina and what could be the biggest environmental catastrophe to stain our shores since the crash of the Exxon Valdez. An oil rig in the Gulf, British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon, 50 miles off Venice, Louisiana, has exploded.

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)

Seven crew members have been evacuated to an area hospital where they remain in critical condition and the Coast Guard is in the fifth hour of a search and rescue mission in the hope of finding eleven crew members that are still unaccounted for. Our coverage begins with Sherrie Stone at the U.S. Coast Guard Station in Baton Rouge. Sherrie?

MACKENZIE

(quietly)

Alright, you'll be coming back to Rear Admiral Loretta Hill of the Coast Guard.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO/CONTROL ROOM - LATER

WILL

But the missing men tonight may be only the tip of this tragedy. UBS had learned exclusively that senior level officials inside BP are scrambling to figure out a way to cap the well which, three and a half miles below the surface of the Gulf, is pouring oil into the sea at a rate of--

CUT TO:

INT. BULLPEN - SAME TIME

People are working the phones--

JIM

(into phone--calmly)

Well surely you'd like to see some kind of statement on the screen. "Our hearts are with the families of the missing crew members." I can do that for you but I'll also need a statement that at this hour you don't know how to cap the well. You got about 25 minutes to get things together over there. And oh, hey, if you feel like blaming Halliburton that's okay with us. Even better, if there's any chance Michelle Bachman was involved--hello?

(to no one)

He hung up.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO/CONTROL ROOM - LATER

MICHAEL CROSBY of the Minerals Management Agency is chyroned on a satellite feed and being questioned by WILL. We only hear WILL's side.

WILL

That was a pretty long statement that did everything but answer the question. When was the last safety check on this well?

(listens)

Sir--

(listens)

And what was the date of that inspection?

Throughout this, the SCORE, which had been tense and impatient has developed into something beautiful and soaring. A team working together on a hard, important task.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO/CONTROL ROOM - LATER

A UBS reporter, OWEN KIDEKIS, is on the satellite feed.

WILL

Owen, most of us, I have to say including me, are hearing about the MMA, the Minerals Management Agency, for the first time tonight. Who are these people, what do they do?

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO/CONTROL ROOM - LATER

NANCY SCHIFF, D.O.E. SPOKESPERSON is speaking on the satellite--

MACKENZIE

Will, why are we drilling 3 miles underwater if we don't have the technology to fix--

WILL

Nancy, why are we drilling 3 miles underwater if we don't have the technology to fix the world's most predictable emergency?

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO/CONTROL ROOM - LATER

DICK WARREN--HALLIBURTON SPOKESPERSON

WILL

Sir, please--please--let's--not--let's just take a breath.

MACKENZIE

(to herself)

Get him, baby.

WILL

Let's just nail down facts. Your company was hired to provide Zone-Seal 2000 and SCR-100--a synthetic cement-like substance meant to seal off the well, yes or no?

CHARLIE

(quietly to his assistant)

Get it out there that he's doing this whole show without a script.

WARREN

Yes, but now you're saying--

WILL

That was all I was saying. Now I'm asking if your company did tests on the substance before installing it at the base of Deepwater Horizon.

WARREN

We do exhaustive tests on everything we manufacture.

WILL

Do you have the results of the exhaustive tests done on Zone-Seal 2000 and--

WARREN

Now I feel like you're being flippant.

WILL

Sir, do you have the results of the tests?

WARREN

Mr. McCallister, this is all happening fast and this is information that isn't at our fingertips. For the moment Halliburton's thoughts and prayers are with the families of the 11 missing--

WILL

You don't have the test results at your fingertips?

WARREN

--of the missing crew members and--

WILL

They're not on a computer, they're buried
in the middle of a wheat field?

JIM runs in with his Blackberry and shows it to MACKENZIE--

JIM

Here it is.

MACKENZIE takes a quick look--

MACKENZIE

Dwayne?

She tosses the pizza delivery graphics kid the BLACKBERRY, who
grabs it out of the air and begins working on a graphic.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO/CONTROL ROOM - LATER

The various UBS field reporters we've seen are up on a tri-
split screen.

WILL

We now have a statement from BP, we'll
put it up on the screen for you. "The
thoughts and prayers of Tony Hayward and
everyone at BP are with the missing crew
members of BP Deepwater Horizon and their
families. We are looking at every
possible solution to the problem of
capping the well and will, of course,
offer our complete assistance to the
various U.S. agencies involved in
repairing and cleaning up the damage done
by this terrible accident."

(beat)

So. Glass half-full, they're offering to
help clean up. I don't know about the
three of you but, "We are looking at
every possible solution to the problem of
capping the well" sounds an awful lot to
me like "At the moment we have no idea
how to cap the well." This is obviously
just beginning and we'll be bringing you
more as this story develops. I'm Will
McCallister, Godspeed and good night.

The control room erupts into CHEERS.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - SAME TIME

WILL sits alone at the desk and quietly exhales. Behind him, people are clapping and high-fiving and hugging in the news room.

There's a "beep-beep" on the laptop computer on Will's desk. He looks down and he sees the news alert climb from orange to red.

We HOLD ON him for a moment longer, sitting alone, before we

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

MACKENZIE's shaking hands with the control room staff and she and JIM share a familiar smile.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWS ROOM - NIGHT

People are packing up their things. JIM goes over to MAGGIE.

JIM

Hey.

MAGGIE

Hi.

JIM

Great job.

MAGGIE

No, are you kidding, you were like Superman.

JIM

Clark Kent at least.

MAGGIE

(smiling)

Right.

JIM

So, Neal and I some...other people whose names I haven't learned yet, we were going to go get food and beer if you and Steve want to come.

STEVE

(joining)

Nope. We're having dinner with her parents. I'm meeting them for the first time.

STEVE gives MAGGIE a squeeze.

MAGGIE

But another night.

JIM

Absolutely. Great job, man.

STEVE

Right back atchya. I think maybe we didn't get off on the right foot but we can try again tomorrow, right?

JIM

We're already on the right foot. Have a good time at dinner.

STEVE

I'm gonna have a good time after dinner.
(tickling MAGGIE)
Special massage.

MAGGIE and STEVE head out. MACKENZIE's seen all this and gives JIM a gesture that says "Don't worry about it, he's nothing compared to you."

JIM

I don't know what you're miming.

MACKENZIE

It was--

(WILL walks into the bullpen)
You're fine.

JIM

And you're impressive.

WILL-

What'd the other networks run?

JIM

(not good news)
Flights resumed in Europe and the iPhone prototype that was left in that bar. They all closed with the oil rig though.

WILL

Spill?

JIM
 (no)
 Search and rescue.

WILL
 (screw it)
 We did the news.

And WILL's started for his office--

MACKENZIE
 (to WILL)
 You got a second?

WILL
 8 to 9's over.

WILL walks into his office and closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR BANKS - NIGHT

MAGGIE and STEVE are waiting for their elevator.

MAGGIE
 Hang on.

STEVE
 What?

MAGGIE
 I forgot my research stuff. I have to
 become an expert on the Minerals
 Management Agency.

MAGGIE walks down the corridor and into--

INT. BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

--where she sees JIM talking to SLOAN, the very beautiful
 financial news anchor we met earlier. JIM's leaning against a
 desk and SLOAN's standing a little too close. She touches his
 arm as he makes her laugh.

MAGGIE feels something but covers as she says--

MAGGIE
 I just forgot my stuff.

SLOAN
 Great job tonight.

MAGGIE

Oh. God. Thanks. Have a good night.

JIM/SLOAN

G'night/Take it easy.

JIM looks a little too long as MAGGIE leaves.

WILL comes out of his office and MACKENZIE's waiting for him.

MACKENZIE

Can I talk to you a second?

WILL's heading out and MACKENZIE's following along--

WILL

I don't know what to say, MacKenzie.
We're not friends.

They walk through the double doors into--

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

--where LONNY's holding an elevator for WILL.

MACKENZIE

I understand. I just wanted to mention something.

WILL

(making a decision)
Hang on. Enough of this shit about being disengaged.

WILL walks into--

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

--with MACKENZIE following.

WILL

Guys? I just wanted to say great job tonight. These things are done by teams and I've got the best team in television and I'm going to make sure each and every one of you know how important you are to me.

(beat)

This isn't our control room.

MACKENZIE

No.

WILL
Then screw it.

They walk back into--

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

--where LONNY's still waiting. MACKENZIE stops him with--

MACKENZIE
Will.

WILL turns around.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)
You won't remember this but the first time you met my parents you had flowers for my mother. You took my father to an Orioles game and then you met us for dinner and I wanted to tell you...that you were perfect. Like I said, you wouldn't remember but I wanted to say thank you for that, it meant the world to me.

WILL
(pause)
The Orioles won 4-3 on a walk-off double from Fernando Diaz with runners on first and third. Your father ordered a beer and I ordered a Diet Coke and he said, "I don't like some of the things you say on TV but you're a grown man and my daughter's in love with you. You can drink a beer on a hot summer day." We ended up having three.

MACKENZIE's going to cry. But here's how it comes out--

MACKENZIE
(pause)
You guys were drunk when you met us for dinner?

WILL
Yeah. Your dad's feeling alright?

MACKENZIE nods "yeah".

WILL (CONT'D)
Have a good night.

WILL gets in--

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

LONNY pushes a button and the door closes. They ride in silence for a moment.

WILL (CONT'D)

(pause)

Am I nice?

LONNY

(almost laughing)

Come on, man.

WILL

What do you protect me for?

LONNY

1400 a week plus health and dental.

WILL nods.

The elevator door opens and LONNY and WILL walk out into--

INT. BACK CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

An unglamorous corridor leading to a side exit. They walk for a moment before--

WILL

I wouldn't take a bullet for 1400 bucks a week.

LONNY

Me neither, pal, so I'd learn how to duck.

LONNY opens the door and a couple of flashes go off as 8 or 10 people are waiting with things for WILL to sign. Cell phone cameras are aimed. The door of a black sedan is being held open.

LONNY's keeping a good eye out as WILL dutifully signs things and poses with people for pictures. Then thinks to ask--

WILL

Did anybody see the news tonight?

BLACKOUT

