ACT I

A NEWS BROADCAST:

INT. “CAMERON GREY UNCHECKED” STUDIO

Star reporter CAMERON GREY - 30s, handsome, emotional - addresses camera.

CAMERON GREY

...the FBI says after spending years posing as ordinary Americans, the members of the terrorist sleeper cell became too fat to carry out their attack.

INT. PRISON ROOM

Just a plain room in a prison. Cameron interviews a VERY FAT TERRORIST in a prison jumpsuit.

FAT TERRORIST

When the day of vengeance came, we could no longer fit into our suicide vests.

PULL OUT from this to reveal it is playing on a monitor in front of--

EXT. ONION NEWS NETWORK HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

The front facade of a modern, metal building. Large monitors show a live feed of Onion News Network.

SCOTT WEST (20s, handsome but a little nerdy, eager) stands stock still on the New York sidewalk, staring at the monitor. He takes a deep breath, and adjusts his tie. He’s nervous.

SCOTT WEST

(to himself:)

OK. OK.

As he walks into the building, we tilt up to see it is a massive skyscraper. We fly up to the top, and end on a massive ONN logo with the New York skyline behind.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - MORNING

A bustling, high tech control room with countless screens playing the Cameron interview.
Programming Director ED MUSGROVE (40s, balding, perpetually harried) runs the room. ABIGAIL, Helena’s assistant (20s, bubbly, Indian) enters.

MUSGROVE
Cameron’s out in 30, Tom, give me a 15 on the 20. Get the B deck double-decked in CDE, ready the squab.

ABIGAIL
Mr. Musgrove --

MUSGROVE
Not now.
(to technicians)
Get a 67 bump on the swabber, deck it up -- and swab it.

ABIGAIL
Sorry, sir. She wants to see you.

INT. HELENA’S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

ONN CEO HELENA ZWEIBEL (50s, tall, imposing) is on the phone.

HELENA
Yes, exclusive coverage when the mine collapses. Tuesday is fine.

As Helena hangs up Abigail enters with Musgrove and hands her boss a green drink and a mouse in a small cage.

ABIGAIL
Ed Musgrove for you, Ms. Zweibel.
And here’s lunch for both of you.

ANGLE reveals a falcon in a cage in a corner of the room.

HELENA
Thank you Abigail. Ed, what the hell is this?

She indicates the monitor, where Cameron is speaking to the same prisoner.

MUSGROVE
Are you upset that we showed Muslims? I know the policy but --

HELENA
I’m upset because the ratings report came out this morning -- even CNN is gaining on us.
She clicks a remote. The monitor shows ratings charts for a million demographics.

HELENA (CONT’D)
Look at these numbers: White males 18 to 25, down. Lesbian baristas, down. Lonesome ranch hands, down. Even our market share of Unemployed half-Black half-Asian dentists is down.

MUSGROVE
But--

She motions to a portrait of her grim father ZWEIBEL holding a skull and a globe, sitting on a “chair” made from an African American and a Chinese man on their hands and knees.

HELENA
Ed, my father didn’t build The Onion into one of the world’s most powerful media, lumber, computer and music stand manufacturing conglomerates by accepting second best. I won’t either.

Helena goes to the cage and puts the mouse into the Falcon’s cage.

MUSGROVE
I’m sorry, Helena it’s just --

HELENA
Don’t give me excuses, I get enough of those from my handicapped son.

As Helena exits, the falcon dives onto the mouse, spattering blood. Musgrove glances at this, then hurries after her.

MUSGROVE
We did get you a missing girl story.

CUTAWAY TO:

EXT. PARK/PLAYGROUND - DAY

11-year-old COURTNEY CARTER is playing in the park. An ONN van with a big logo pulls up, two guys hop out, grab Courtney, and throw her in the van.

BACK TO:
INT. NEWSROOM (BULLPEN) - SAME AS BEFORE

Musgrove and Helena do a Sorkin-style walk-and-talk down a staircase into the newsroom bullpen - the network’s large, open main work area, always bustling with countless staffers.

HELENA
She’s chubby. No one cares about a fat missing girl.

MUSGROVE
(getting desperate:)
Well, we also have that special on the secret sex life of Jesus ...

They pass segment producer JILLIAN CHASE (late 20s, pretty, smart, overworked) who is giving notes to a couple editors. Their computer screen shows a buff Jesus surrounded by babes.

JILLIAN
Go in closer on his abs...
(she spots Musgrove:)
Oh Ed!
(over her shoulder:)
And make sure you can see His cock bulge.

Helena and Musgrove pass a long wall of photos of ONN’s finest moments from early newsreel days up to present.

MUSGROVE
...and we’re projecting very good numbers for America’s Most Shocking Shark Shootings.

HELENA
Get us a hit or I’ll make your our news director in Latvia. You know what the number one hobby in Latvia is, Ed? Sadness.

Helena walks out the door, Jillian walks up.

MUSGROVE
I’ll get it done!
(quietly:)
But it hurts that you didn’t remember it’s the anniversary of our second wedding.

JILLIAN
Did you say something --?
MUSGROVE
I was just talking to myself
quietly about my feelings. What do
you need?

He takes out a pill bottle and dry swallows a couple pills.

JILLIAN
(handing him papers:)
I’ve got the copy for that story
about the mall shooter who was shot
by a second mall shooter.
(off pills:)
You okay, boss?

MUSGROVE
I’ve got numb-liver, Greg’s
Disease, recurring bat rabies, and
only one lung. So no.

West enters at the top of the stairs, and looks over the
whole newsroom. He spots Musgrove.

WEST
Ed Musgrove? I’m Scott West, from
WONN-5.

MUSGROVE
(not interested:)
Oh right, the new reporter. You’re
the one who broke that story about
the boy scout troop that fell down
a well.

CUT AWAY TO:

EXT. WELL - DAY (LOCAL NEWS BROADCAST, GREENSCREEN)

WEST
...three Eagle Scouts and seventeen
tenderfoots tripped and fell into
the open well as you can see here.

Computer animation: Boy scouts marching in single file. The
first one falls into the well, followed by the second, etc.

BACK TO:

JILLIAN
That was you? That story went
national.
WEST
(noticing her, attracted:)
Hi. I mean, yes.

MUSGROVE
Well, you’re gonna have to do better than a couple dozen dead boyscouts if you wanna make it here. Jillian, show him his desk.

JILLIAN
I would but --

MUSGROVE
(coughs pathetically)
Sorry, my one lung is weak today.

Jillian relents, nods. Musgrove starts to walk away.

MUSGROVE (CONT’D)
Thanks. Kid, be nice to Jillian. She’s the glue in our weird sad collage around here. Plus, maybe you’ll have a romantic connection -- just keep in mind any children you two may have will be property of the network. They’ll work in the baby news division.

CUT AWAY TO:

INT. ONN BABY NEWS STUDIO

A cute baby sits behind a baby-sized anchor desk.

BABY
Ba ga ba boobooboo loo loo loo.

Footage of a hurricane destroying homes comes up behind him.

BACK TO:

JILLIAN
Can you walk and talk at the same time?

WEST
Yes, I took a class.

JILLIAN
Come on then.
INT. NEWSROOM (HALLWAY) - CONTINUOUS

West and Jillian walk by a complicated looking machine.

WEST
(looking around, awed)
This place is amazing. Is that a DR-88 over there?

JILLIAN
It’s a DR-90. Two more gigs of D.
Stopped using 88s around here years ago.

INT. NEWSROOM (STUDIO) - CONTINUOUS

DAVID EVERETT (ONN’s oldest and most respected anchor) is just throwing to break. A PRODUCER stands just off camera.

DAVID EVERETT
When we come back, NRA members in Washington today called on congress to give fetuses the right to carry guns. Stay with us.

PRODUCER
Back in 5, everyone!

Jillian hands something to the producer, West and Jillian walk away.

WEST
That’s David Everett! Cronkite and him are my biggest news idols. I even did my thesis on his report about the glory hole in the Berlin Wall.

JILLIAN
He’s a total ego-maniac. He makes us keep a little person under his desk to hand him green tea whenever he’s off camera.

As they walk out, we land on David and see a little hand come up from beneath the desk and hand him an elegant teacup.

INT. NEWSROOM (BULLPEN) - MOMENTS LATER

West and Jillian walk through another part of the bullpen.
WEST
So you’re a reporter?

JILLIAN
(hiding bitterness)
No, I’m just a segment producer. I always wanted to be a reporter, but I failed the facial symmetry test. Only scored 97%. You probably already noticed my right eye is three-tenths of a nano-millimeter lower than my left.

They stop by an empty desk. Jillian points to her eye.

WEST
Oh it’s not that bad--

JILLIAN
I know I’m hideous.

WEST
My dad was a local reporter like me, but he always wanted to be a national anchor. One day, he was covering the unveiling of the world’s largest ball of twine. A freak wind storm kicked up, the twine broke it’s moorings -- I can still hear the sound it made in my head, like --

West makes a high pitched, mournful noise. He takes a framed picture out of his briefcase -- it’s his father, in front of a sign that says “World’s Largest Ball Of Twine.”

WEST (CONT’D)
My dad got crushed to death under that twineball. But I worked hard, and today here I am -- so close to realizing his dream, my dream. The moral is: beware of freak wind storms, and never give up.

JILLIAN
Staff meeting in five, kid.

West leans against the wall, watches her go. He likes her.

INT. NEWSROOM (BULLPEN) - MINUTES LATER

Muscrove strides in, claps.
MUSGROVE
All right, everyone gather round!

Everyone does. West and Jillian stand next to each other at the edge of the crowd. West takes out a notebook and gets ready to take notes. Jillian glances over and smiles, shaking her head -- this kid is so naïve it’s cute.

MUSGROVE (CONT’D)
People, let me get right to the point: In the past month we’ve only had one story get above a six-point share and that’s because it was a cable news trifecta: Sex, violence, and animals. I’m referring, of course, to the bear mauling at the porn star charity car wash. No surprise, that story came from Cameron Grey.

Smattering of applause. Cameron nods proudly.

CAMERON
Three porn stars and a bear named Harvey died that day. They’re the real heroes.

JILLIAN
(whispers to West, bitter)
I found that story.

MUSGROVE
Folks, we need a hit. A story so entrancing that when the most moronic, ape-like member of our loyal viewing public sees it, he will put down his microwaved burrito, stop beating his illegitimate kid for two and a half minutes, and pay attention to the news. Now get to work and do not let me down and DO NOT LET DOWN OUR MINDLESS VIEWERS!

Everyone returns to work, a buzz of excitement in the air. Musgrove, wheezing from the speech, takes a hit from an inhaler. West turns to Jillian.

WEST
I’m going to get that story.

Jillian shakes her head as West hurries off. Musgrove approaches Jillian.
MUSGROVE
Jillian! I need someone to watch the girl we kidnapped.

JILLIAN
But I’m already working on that story about the recall of baby strollers with ejector seats and I--

MUSGROVE
I know I work you as hard as a mule, but you’re the only one I trust with something this menial.

JILLIAN
(reluctantly:)
Fine.

MUSGROVE
That’s my little mule. And here’s something for you: sugar cubes.

He holds out his hand to Jillian, she reluctantly takes the sugar cubes.

MUSGROVE (CONT’D)
Courtney!

Musgrove points to little Courtney, who is tied to an office chair. Jillian sighs and starts to roll her away.

JILLIAN
Okay, come on honey, I’m very busy--

COURTNEY
Don’t call me honey, dickbag.

INT. NEWSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As Musgrove injects himself with some insulin, West trots up to him.

WEST
Mr. Musgrove? I’d like to pitch an important story: corruption in the Senate. If I disguise myself as a butler, I can get into one of those back-rooms where lobbyists--
MUSGROVE
No, you’re going down to south
Jersey to interview a man who just
turned 100 but still goes fishing
every day.

WEST
A fluff story? But sir, shouldn’t I
focus on a more important --

MUSGROVE
New reporters get the old people
stories, that’s the system. Now get
out there.

INT. GIMMEE AWARDS CEREMONY BALLROOM

Cameron Grey is on stage accepting a Gimmee Award: The statue
is a human hand wrapped around a normal looking award statue.

CAMERON
There are no words to describe how
honored I am by this award. Only a
movement.

He begins to do a slow yoga-like movement.

INT. DAVID’S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

David is watching this clip on a monitor. He presses pause.
David’s office is a museum devoted to himself: Photos of
David with informational plaques adorn the walls, his
original microphone is displayed in a glass case, headphones
for an audio-tour hang beside the door, etc.

DAVID EVERETT
I’ve interviewed fourteen
Presidents, the Pope, even Osama
Bin Laden back when we liked him.
And now you’re telling me this
snivelling hippie broke my streak?

David looks at a trophy display case: It has 14 Gimmee Awards
and an empty space marked “15.”

DAVID EVERETT (CONT’D)
Fourteen straight Gimmee Awards.
That fifteenth should have been
mine. Order must be restored at
this network.
Reveal he is talking to Abigail. Abigail’s earlier pleasant demeanor is gone: she’s cold and ruthless as a shark.

ABIGAIL
Let’s cut to the chase. You want dirt on Cameron Grey.

DAVID EVERETT
I want to bring him to his knees and pour wet hot dirt all over his face.

(Abigail is grossed out)
Now I know you’re technically Helena Zweibel’s assistant, but I’ve heard you also have certain ethical lapses I might find useful.

ABIGAIL
I do. But if I help you, you’re going to owe me a favor. Anything I want, whenever I ask.

DAVID EVERETT
Anything? What if you ask me to punch someone?

ABIGAIL
You’d have to do it.

DAVID EVERETT
What if you want me to dress up as a woman of distinction?

ABIGAIL
You’d... have to do that too.

DAVID EVERETT
What if you want me to dress as a woman of distinction, take a young male lover -- a professional dancer, perhaps, or an Olympic swimmer -- and then marry him and be happy for the rest of my life?

ABIGAIL

DAVID EVERETT
Would I have to do that too?

ABIGAIL
I guess so.

DAVID EVERETT
Then I accept, my little Shiva. Go forth and destroy.
EXT. JERSEY DOCKS - CONTINUOUS

West looks around as CAMERAMAN unloads gear from an ONN van.

WEST
The old man is supposed to meet us here. Let’s get this over with.

A couple kids run by screaming. A fisherman sits shaking, his eyes open wide. West approaches him.

WEST (CONT’D)
Excuse me, sir? I’m looking for a very old fisherman -- Kip O’Rourke?

Before he can respond, ancient O’Rourke comes sprinting down the dock toward West.

O’ROURKE
(rapidly)
Oh wow! That’s me! I’m him! I’m O’Rourke! I’m a man, I’m a happy man! I’m as happy as a snail all curled up in his tiny shell! I feel like I’m sweating but I’m not!

EXT. RIVER, FISHING PIER - 20 MINUTES LATER

O’Rourke chatters away, walking very fast down the long pier to his fishing spot. West and the Camera Man chase after him, filming the “interview.”

O’ROURKE
...the time I caught a fifty pounder in the Gulf of Mexico back in ’74 is anyone else’s heart racing?

West looks around: a frog jumps out of the water over and over again, hitting himself against the peer. He frowns, trying to figure out what is going on.

West takes a few steps away and looks out at the rest of the river. The animal behavior is getting crazier: an otter is hitting his head with a clam; a duck jumps onto the pier and honks. West jumps in surprise.

West peers through binoculars, scanning the shores. He spots a factory with a huge pipe pumping yellow liquid into the water. West sees a “Bulls Milk Energy Drink” logo on the building.
WEST
Bull’s Milk Energy Drink.
(excited:)
Blingo.

ACT 2

INT. NEWSROOM (NEWSDESK)

DAYTIME ANCHOR reads to camera, PAs mill about the studio.

DAYTIME ANCHOR
New theories in the disappearance
of Courtney Carter. Could sadistic
bands of pedophiles be roving
America?

In the newsroom behind the anchor, we see a tied up Courtney
at Jillian’s desk.

COURTNEY
Do you have a boyfriend? I bet you
don’t.

JILLIAN
I need to work, Courtney.

COURTNEY
I bet you’re so lonely. I bet when
you go on a roller-coaster, you
don’t even have anyone to go with.

Jillian looks at picture on her desk -- it’s of her on a
roller coaster, alone. She turns the picture over.

JILLIAN
I don’t need a boyfriend. I lead a
very fulfilled life.

COURTNEY
Fulfilled with microwaved Thai food
and Real Housewives marathons?

JILLIAN
I AM A HAPPY, ADULT LADY -- that’s
it, I’m finding someone else to
deal with you.
INT. CONTROL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jillian enters pulling Courtney in her chair and approaches one TECHNICIAN.

JILLIAN

JJ I need you to watch this girl we kidnapped.

TECHNICIAN

I’m kinda busy --

JILLIAN

Remember that time I covered for you when you were on heroin?

The graphics guy notices something over Jillian’s shoulder.

DAYTIME ANCHOR (ON MONITOR)

...two Americans were killed in the genocide.

In the lower-third graphic, the anchor’s name has been replaced: POOP BUTTPOOPER. Courtney giggles as she pecks at a computer with her tied hands. Jillian grabs her.

JILLIAN

Courtney!

Technician shakes his head: No way. Jillian sighs.

INT. NEWSROOM (STUDIO) - MOMENTS LATER

Jillian whispers to a CAMERAMAN as Daytime Anchor delivers a news story in the background.

JILLIAN

Remember that time I covered for you when you were on heroin?

Courtney goes whizzing by behind Anchor, rolling in her chair.

DAYTIME ANCHOR

And a controversial new law defines rape as anything Gary does to a woman. For more...

Cameraman shakes his head. Jillian looks desperate.
INT. NEWSROOM (BULLPEN) - LATER

Abigail sneakily opens a door marked “Cameron Grey’s office. Do not disturb the energies.”

INT. CAMERON GREY’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The floor is covered in grass and the walls are painted with a blue sky and rolling hills, with trees around the edge -- a totally surreal scene in the midst of the busy newsroom. In one corner is a gigantic half completed statue of a strange looking imaginary animal. In another is a small desk, a microwave, and a dressing room mirror.

Abigail raises an eyebrow at the bizarre animal, then opens the desk drawer and sees inside a dreamcatcher, a picture of Cameron’s massaging the Dali Lama and a tube labelled “Pec Oil.” Nothing incriminating. Suddenly she is startled by noise outside.

Cameron enters; Abigail is gone. Cameron picks up a box of microwaveable “Steamy Salad.” He stares at the instructions. Abigail watches them from behind the massive sculpture.

CAMERON
Vivian, can you come here for a second?

Cameron’s curvaceous black ASSISTANT enters.

CAMERON (CONT’D)
(handing her box, quietly)
Can you read this for me?

ASSISTANT
Sure honey. It says “Microwave for three minutes on high, then enjoy your steaming hot salad.” Here, I’ll do it for you, babycakes.

She puts it into the microwave. Abigail looks intrigued.

INT. ONN CONTROL ROOM / EXT. DOCKS - LATER

Mugrove stares at monitor playing a live feed of ONN.

DAYTIME ANCHOR (ON MONITOR)
Late in the hour, could dinosaurs still be alive on a remote island? We’ll show you lots of pictures of dinosaurs, and explain why it’s not likely.
MUSGROVE
Going live to New Jersey in 10. You ready Scott?

WEST
(nervous:)
Yes sir, good to go, 10-4, I’m aces.

MUSGROVE
Take a breath kid.

Push in on a control room monitor where we see the broadcast:

DAYTIME ANCHOR (ON MONITOR)
But first: What would you do if you were 100 years old but still not dead? Scott West has the story...

West stands in front of the plant, O'Rourke does push ups vigorously behind him.

WEST
Thanks Alicia. What keeps a man of 100 from settling into retirement? How about 60 million gallons of taurine being poured into his water supply?

Footage of the pipe dumping Bull’s Milk. Animals being crazy.

WEST (CONT’D)
A massive corporate scandal is unfolding here in New Jersey, where a Bull’s Milk plant has been dumping thousands of excess gallons of energy drink into the river. You can see the disturbing effects for yourself.

INTERVIEW: OLD LADY is sitting next to a O’Rourke doing a crazy dance.

OLD LADY
My husband just started dancing one day, and now he can’t stop. He’s lost his job.

O’ROURKE
I feel good! I feel good! Gotta love it!

INT. DAVID’S OFFICE - LATER

We pull out on Scott’s piece playing MOS on a monitor. In the office, David is speaking to an INTERN who looks very bored.
... and though he was dead, I felt the urge to kiss my father on the lips. And so I did.

Abigial enters.

ABIGAIL
Busy?

DAVID EVERETT
Just talking to my Listening Intern.
(to Intern)
You can stop listening now.

Intern puts on big sound-cancelling headphones.

DAVID EVERETT (CONT’D)
Well, what did you find?

ABIGAIL
I think Cameron Grey is illiterate.

DAVID EVERETT
Aha. That explains why his teleprompter is just pictures.

CUTAWAY TO:

INT. CAMERON GREY UNCHECKED SET
Cameron stands, reading to camera. PAs mill around.

CAMERON
The car chase lasted for two hours, and ended in a fiery, exciting wreck ...

REVERSE shows Teleprompter displaying: sad face, a car, two dots, a fire, and a happy face.

BACK TO:

DAVID EVERETT
We need hard evidence. When you go after the top dog, you better bring a big gun. Trust me, I know a lot about killing dogs.
INT. NEWSROOM (BULLPEN) - SAME TIME

Jillian pulls Courtney in her chair through the newsroom.

COURTNEY
You want to be a reporter right?
But you can’t because of your eye?

JILLIAN
Shut up Courtney -- wait, how do you know that?

COURTNEY
I found your diary in your desk. Then I burnt it.

She holds up her tied hands to show she’s holding a burnt husk of diary.

JILLIAN
How did you even-- What is wrong with you?

COURTNEY
I blame society.

JILLIAN
I am going to be a reporter! But first I’m going to beat you senseless with a ...
(grabs first thing she sees:)
Picture of an ugly man’s family!

MAN (O.S.)
Hey!

Jillian raises the picture. Abigail closes the door to David’s office and sees Jillian brandishing the photo over Courtney. Her eyes light up.

COURTNEY
Go ahead, child abuse me!

Jillian swings the picture down. At the last second Abigail grabs her arm. Abigail is back to her smiling self.

ABIGAIL
Wait, Jillian! Can I take this little scamp off your hands?

JILLIAN
Byeeееееееee!
Jillian practically runs away. Abigail drops the smile.

COURTNEY
(after Jillian:)
Oh sure, leave it up to the brown lady to take care of the little white child. Real original.

ABIGAIL
Listen, you may use insults to cover up your triple-XL insecurities, but it’s not going to work on me -- I won the National Bullying Championships in High School. Now I need you to do something for me, and if you don’t cooperate you’ll be found at the bottom of a lake and we’ll get three days of psychologists speculating about the motivations of your killers. Got it?

Courtney nods, totally quiet.

EXT. ONION NEWS NETWORK HQ - DAY
Scott walks up the building. The Graphics Guy we met earlier walks by him and waves.

GRAPHICS GUY
Hey kid, your story’s all over the place!

He points to a wall of TVs in front of him, where many different channels are all covering the story.

GRAPHICS GUY (CONT’D)
That was pretty ballsy.

WEST
(proud:)
What can I say, I have huge huge balls.

The graphics guy looks a little weirded out. West walks into the building.

INT. NEWSROOM (BULLPEN)
Scott walks through the bullpen, no one’s making eye contact with him. He sees Jillian, she looks worried.
MUSGROVE (O.C.)

WEST!

Musgrove storms up to West. They stop at a standing desk.

MUSGROVE (CONT’D)
I told you to interview a very old man and talk to him about being very, very old.

WEST
But this is a huge story --

MUSGROVE
Bull’s Milk is our biggest sponsor!

He points, and West sees that there is an entire wall of the newsroom filled with Bull’s Milk paraphernalia including a large Bull’s Milk fridge.

MUSGROVE (CONT’D)
Haven’t you ever noticed the brooch Helena Zweibel wears at all times?

CUTAWAY TO:

INT. HELENA’S OFFICE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Helena is laughing with a bunch of Asian investors. She says something in fluent Mandarin. They all laugh. CLOSE-UP on her brooch which is a diamond and jewel Bull’s Milk can.

BACK TO:

WEST
But our job is to report the truth--

Musgrove slams his fists down on the desk, which we pull out to reveal is a large Bull’s Milk can. West is surprised. Musgrove is now sweating profusely.

MUSGROVE
This job isn’t about informing people, it’s about making them think they’re informed while selling them mufflers and cereal.

WEST
But back in the old days, Cronkite--
MUSGROVE
Jesus, kid, Cronkite only covered the Cuban missile crisis to help Sears market their Anti-Radiation Umbrellas.

WEST
I-- I didn’t know that.

MUSGROVE
You’re so naive! You’re hired!

WEST
Really?

MUSGROVE
I misspoke, you’re fired. Get out.

ACT III

INT. BULLPEN, WEST’S DESK - LATER

West boxes up several framed photos of himself from his one day at ONN, all from scenes we already saw. Then he picks up the photos of his dad, looks at it sadly. Jillian comes over.

WEST
My father would be rolling over in his grave, except he can’t cause that giant twine ball just crushed him flat as a pancake.

JILLIAN
Hey.

WEST
(not listening:)
You’d have to flip him, maybe with a spatula--

JILLIAN
Hey! What happened to “never give up” and freak windstorms?

WEST
I was wrong, I thought I was going to rocket straight to the moon, like Apollo 11. Turns out I was more like the Challenger.

He makes an exploding noise. Jillian grimaces.

WEST (CONT’D)
Yeah I guess I didn’t need the sound effect there.
Jillian grabs his hand. Moment of eye-contact. ATTRACTION!

JILLIAN
Look, you made one mistake. You know who else made one mistake. My mom. You know what came from that mistake: you’re looking at her. Remember, the news isn’t about facts. It’s about telling people what to think.

WEST
But how?

JILLIAN
(holds up paper:)
I already wrote up some copy.

WEST
Why are you helping me?

JILLIAN
Your first day is like a roller coaster, and no one should have to ride a roller coaster alone.

INT. CAMERON GREY’S OFFICE - DAY

Cameron is doing yoga shirtless. Abigail, now perky and flirty, enters with Courtney, who is untied, wearing sunglasses and holding a cane.

ABIGAIL
Cameron? Sorry to interrupt. This is Sandy. She’s a big fan of yours but she’s blind.

COURTNEY
I totally can’t see anything.

CAMERON
How tragic. To be so young, yet so blind.

ABIGAIL
Her biggest wish has always been to have you read her favorite book to her. You’d do that for her, wouldn’t you?

CAMERON
Uh, I’d love to! I love to read.
Abigail hands Cameron a kids book, calling his bluff.

CAMERON (CONT’D)
Oh, right now? Oh no, that’s my phone.
(answers it:)
Hello, Hillary Clinton? Sorry Abigail, I have to take this.

ABIGAIL
That’s not a phone.

She grabs his “phone,” it’s just a small stapler.

CAMERON
Ah. No wonder it got such bad reception. Well then, sure I’ll read to you, little blind girl.

He takes the book and starts “reading” but is clearly guessing based on the pictures.

CAMERON (CONT’D)
Uh. Okay. So once upon a time there was a dog... Who had a hat on? And walked. No, danced? To... a store.

Abigail takes a camera out of her pocket, subtly places it in a strange Bonsai tree, and steps out of the room.

INT. ONN CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT
Jillian is running the control room.

DAVID (ON MONITOR)
... at just 4.99, many are calling the Mcdonalds Veal Meal Deal a real steal. Moving on ...

MUSGROVE walks in to watch her. She doesn’t see him.

JILLIAN
Okay, double deck Z and David, get ready to throw to Scott West.

MUSGROVE
Are you out of your mind? I fired him.

JILLIAN
He’s got a good story. I promise.
MUSGROVE
All right, Jillian, but if this
goes bad I have to kill you. Can’t
fire you. You know too much.

DAVID (ON MONITOR)
... go to Scott West for an update
on the Bull’s Milk dumping story we
heard about earlier today.

JILLIAN
(to Tech Director)
Go to 3, swabber it.
(into headset mic)
All right Scott. Ready?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. NEWSROOM (STUDIO, STAND UP POSITION)

WEST (ON MONITOR)
Ready. And Jillian? Thanks.

JILLIAN
(glancing at Musgrove:)
Don’t thank me yet. Going to you in
three, two, aaand ... swabber.

WEST
Thanks, Cameron. New information
indicates the Bull’s Milk
contamination I reported on earlier
may actually have benefited the
community. Individual productivity
has increased by 50%.

Bar graph shows Individual Productivity comparing 2011 and
etc. Are all up.

WEST (CONT’D)
And the Bull’s Milk is already
reducing childhood obesity.

EXT. DOCKS - DAY

Three kids run by screaming.

KID
I can’t feel my face!!!!
INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jillian is intense. Musgrove’s expression gives nothing away.

   JILLIAN
   (into mic)
   Don’t forget skateboarding, Scott.

   WEST (ON MONITOR)     JILLIAN
   And scientists say the Bull’s     And drink...
   Milk -infused drinking water
   also makes you an awesome
   skateboarder.

INT. STUDIO B - CONTINUOUS

West chugs a whole can of Bull’s Milk in one go.

   WEST
   Tasty. Scott West, Onion News
   Network.

   JILLIAN
   And we’re out. We did it!

   WEST
   (dazed from Bull’s Milk)
   My eyes are dancing.

Jillian looks up for Musgrove’s reaction, but he’s gone.

EXT. SHADY PART OF TOWN - EVENING

Abigail and Courtney stand outside an ONN van in a weird
alley. Abigail has a big contract in her hand.

   ABIGAIL
   ... you agree to tell the police
   that you were taken by an African-
   American or a Latino - your choice.
   And that’s it, you can be “found.”

   COURTNEY
   I want all the royalties from any
   book or movie deals I make relating
   to this “kidnapping”.

   ABIGAIL
   (impressed:)
   Fine, we can make that happen.

Courtney nods, and signs the contract.
ABIGAIL (CONT’D)
You did good today, Courtney. I think you might have the lack of morals you need to make it in the news business. When you get a little older, you should come back and intern for us.

COURTNEY
Be an intern? You think I’m fucking stupid?

Courtney runs off. Abigail smiles after her.

INT. CAMERON’S OFFICE

Cameron is shirtless, standing in front of the sculpture working on it. David enters.

CAMERON
Namaste David.

DAVID EVERETT
Sorry, I don’t speak Gay.

CAMERON
I’m just finishing this sculpture of my spirit animal.

DAVID EVERETT
Well I’m about to make your spirit animal very sad.

He shows Cameron a video on his phone.

CAMERON (IN VIDEO)
So then the pig got in the car -- (turns pages) -- and then there’s lots of letters ... Oh, there’s that one that looks the sign Zorro makes. OK all done.

CAMERON (CONT’D)
What’s this?

DAVID EVERETT
Do I have to spell it out for you? Wait, that wouldn’t help.

CAMERON
(can’t fight it:)
Look... I connect with people.
(MORE)
You don’t have to know how to read to know how to feel.

DAVID EVERETT
(chuckles:)
So you admit it. You won’t even be able to “anchor” a workout video if I decide to release this tape.

CAMERON
Fine. What do I have to do?

DAVID EVERETT
To start with, gimme your Gimmee award. It’ll be a symbol of how from now on, I own your rock hard ass.

He slaps David on the ass, grabs the award and leaves. One arm of Cameron’s spirit animal falls off.

ACT IV

INT. NEWSROOM (BULLPEN) - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

On a “Live Feed” monitor, we see an anchor talking next to a “Missing Fat Girl Found” lower third banner and a photo of Courtney. West walks up to Jillian. He’s very nervous.

JILLIAN
Scott, where have you been?

WEST
I’ve just been riding the elevator up and down. Someone gave me a tip.

He shows her a dollar.

MUSGROVE (O.C.)
West?!!

JILLIAN
(to West:)
Well, you’re about to learn your fate.

MUSGROVE
I was just in Helena Zweibel’s office. She’s been on the phone with the Bull’s Milk people.
(MORE)
MUSGROVE (CONT'D)
Apparently since your story aired, the mayors of ten cities have requested to have Bull’s Milk pumped into their water supplies. Bull’s Milk was so happy they sent you a real live bull. It’s in your office.

WEST
I don’t have an office.

MUSGROVE
Well, then there’s just a bull in someone’s office.

WEST
So does this mean -- ?

MUSGROVE
You aren’t fired, kid. I’m a pretty tough old newsbird, but what you did today gave my tiny newsbird heart it’s wings back. Where’d you get the idea to spin the story positive?

WEST
You know it was actually ...

JILLIAN perks up, ready to be praised.

WEST (CONT'D)
It just came to me. Because I’m such a good journalist.

MUSGROVE
And that’s why I’m sending you to Indiana: A tornado just hit a bullet factory there, hundreds are dead! Pack your bags, kid!

Musgrove walks off. West turns and sees JILLIAN watching. She’s genuinely hurt.

WEST
Jillian. I --

JILLIAN
You’re just like the rest of them.

She strides off. West stares after her, ashamed. Then he walks away, passing the Daytime Anchor who’s frozen outside her office. We see a bull inside pawing the ground (VFX).
INT. HELENA’S OFFICE - NIGHT

Musgrove enters holding a paper. He looks around.

MUSGROVE
Helena--?

WHAM! An arrow slams into the wall beside his head. Musgrove, startled, turns: Helena holds a crossbow.

HELENA
Oh it’s you. I was expecting assassins. I’m having a disagreement with the Russians.

MUSGROVE
That Bull’s Milk story bumped us up to a six point five share.

HELENA
Congratulations Ed.

She holds out her arm, and the falcon lands on it.

MUSGROVE
Thanks. And by the way...

HELENA
Happy anniversary of our second wedding.

MUSGROVE
I thought you forgot.

Helena walks towards him, falcon on arm. Music swells.

HELENA
I should be able to forget you. I’ve had hundred of thousands of lovers. I’ve slept with Henry Kissenger, the god Thor, even Greg Kinnear. But somehow the only one who ever meant anything to me was you, Ed. Maybe it’s your balding head or your medical ailments, but something about you pierced my armor, you sweaty beanbag chair of a man.

She kisses him, then pulls away.

HELENA (CONT’D)
And for that I can never forgive you.
She slaps him, then kisses him again, then slaps him.

HELENA (CONT’D)
I’d keep going with this, but I
have a meeting and the falcon has a
massage.

The falcon CAWS loudly. She walks away. Musgrove rubs his
cheek, but smiles.

INT. UNDERGROUND BUNKER - NIGHT

Helena walks up to a door, a security device scans her elbow.

COMPUTER VOICE
Elbow print recognized. Please
enter, Ms. Zweibel.

We hear a DING. SHOT OF: a high tech elevator wooshing up a
shaft (VFX).

INT. TOP SECRET MEETING ROOM

In the high tech, dimly lit meeting room, Helena’s brothers
ERNEST, ARCHIBALD, and LUTHER ZWIEBEL sit around a circular
table, in front of them is a sign with the division of The
Onion he runs: Lumber (Ernest), Computers (Archibald), Music
Stands (Luther). Helena takes the empty seat, marked “Media.”
On the walls are high tech maps of the world.

HELENA
So, it’s a family reunion.

ARCHIBALD
Greetings sister.

HELENA
This better be important, I’m
supposed to be getting a Brazilian
wax with Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

ERNEST
We thought you called this meeting.

HELENA
Me?

ANCIENT VOICE
I called it.
Everyone is startled. Suddenly the middle of the table opens up: out of it rises an extremely complex life-support machine holding the impossibly-ancient ZWIEBEL.

HELENA
Father!

ZWIEBEL
Good evening, my wriggling spawn.
The time has come to discuss which of you shall inherit my empire.
Because I’m finally dying, thank merciful Christ.

He coughs wretchedly. Helena glances at her brothers, who are glancing at her. Everyone keeps glancing at each other. The competition is on.

END SHOW