

Onion News Network Untitled Narrative Show

by  
Dan Mirk and Will Graham

8th draft  
January 11th, 2013

**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

Musgrove 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

Uh--

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 pier. 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

Musgrove 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.

DAVID EVERETT  
 ... and though he was dead, I felt  
 the urge to kiss my father on the  
 lips. And so I did.

Abigail 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

Byeeeeeeeeee!

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 2012: "Polkas Danced," "Houses Demolished", "Bricks Eaten," 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.

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

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)

CAMERON (CONT'D)  
 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 ZWEIBEL.

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