

JACK

21.

we will get turned up on the monitors that interest
and there are a growing number, which will all start to
simultaneously.

MONITOR #1

In a scene reminiscent of Paddy
Chayefsky's classic film, *Network*, Studio
7 Executive Producer Wes Mendell hijacked
tonight's live broadcast and instructed
his audience to--

MONITOR #2

In a stunning impression of Peter Finch's
Oscar-winning performance in the 1977
film, *Network*, Wes Mendell, longtime
Executive Producer of Studio 7--

MONITOR #3

He was mad as hell and he wasn't gonna
take it anymore. The UBS flagship
program, *Studio 7*, celebrating its 20th
season on the air, had a message for its
viewers tonight--

MONITOR #4

Disaster and embarrassment at UBS as
tonight's broadcast of *Studio 7* got off
to a start that would've made Paddy
Chayefsky smile--

JACK

You believe this?

JAMIE

I'm pleasantly surprised these guys have
heard of Paddy Chayefsky.

JACK

Everybody siddown.

People start to take seats and JAMIE sits, SHELLY, the head of
publicity, confides in her--

SHELLY

(quietly)

That was a faux pas back there.

JAMIE

(quietly)

Where?

SHELLY

(quietly)

At the dinner party. You don't compliment
the caterer in front of the hostess.

SCENE ONE

START →
SCENE

(CONTINUED)

1/9

CONTINUED: (2)

JAMIE

(quietly)

I don't want to start throwing my weight around, Shel, but that's probably not gonna be a high priority tonight.

JACK

Shelly, muzzles on the cast, mouths shut, nobody talks until I say so. Howard, what's legal thinking?

HOWARD

They're looking at the tape. There could be anything from the FCC to a class action suit.

JACK

What about the news division?

ALAN

They're not gonna like the crack about having theme music and a logo for the war.

JACK

Advertiser relations?

ZELDA

We're trying to get 'em on the phone, but it's not easy this late on a Friday.

MITCH

Same thing with the affiliates.

JACK

(beat)

The remark about worm eating and "Who wants to screw my sister"? He was talking about our shows?

MICHAEL

We don't know.

JAMIE's trying not to laugh--

JACK

Is there something funny about this, Jamie?

JAMIE

Oh God, Jack, there's like nine things funny about this. We're not sure which sister-pimping show he was talking about?

MICHAEL

I meant that--

(CONTINUED)

2/9

CONTINUED: (3)

JAMIE

The FCC doesn't have us on anything and a law suit wouldn't pass the laugh test.

HOWARD

They're worried a class-action suit--

JAMIE

--being brought by who? People with bad taste? They all got together and hired a lawyer to sue for defamation? Mitch, when the advertisers and affiliates see the east coast overnights and the fast nationals they're gonna be plenty happy and by the way, you can try, but you can't stop the cast from talking to the press. Certainly not the Big Three.

ALAN

The news division?

JAMIE

The news division can kiss me, report the damn news.

HOWARD

Who are the Big Three?

JACK

She's talking about Harriet Hayes, Tom Jeter and Stiles, they're the leaders in the group. Jamie, are you saying we're over-reacting to this hideous, humiliating and possibly actionable event that occurred on our air?

JAMIE

No, I'm saying you're dramatically under-reacting to it. Look, we caught one break. It happened on a Friday night and nobody ever learns anything new on a Saturday. But I'll bet my stock options against anyone's in this room that by Monday noon, Wes's rant will be the most searched for hit in the history of the Internet. I mean, it's gonna break records. And they'll say he was crazy and they'll say he lost his marbles but you know what else they're gonna say?

JACK

What?

JAMIE

That he was right.
(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

3/9

(4)

JAMIE (CONT'D)

They're gonna say he was right and courageous and hallelujah somebody said it. Every cable show's gonna have non-stop roundtables about how Hollywood's taking our national culture to hell on a speedboat and we just became the symbol of that. I don't know who the bookers are even gonna get who are gonna be on our side. People for the American Way isn't gonna show up to defend UBS's primetime schedule.

JACK

When the hell did there become two sides to this?

JAMIE

When you fired Wes. He's a martyr now.

JACK

Jamie, you can't be suggesting--this is what happened in the damn movie--you can't be suggesting we give him his show back.

JAMIE

Absolutely not. What he did was unforgivably irresponsible and he put me, to say nothing of his cast and crew, in a terrible position. He's done at this network.

JACK

Then what are you suggesting?

JAMIE

Let's talk in my office.

JAMIE gets up and exits. JACK, with not many choices, follows her out into--

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

--where JAMIE's standing there--

JAMIE

I don't know where my office is.

WES shakes his head and points and JAMIE follows him into--

INT. JAMIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She hasn't moved into it yet, this being her first day. Unopened packing cartons are everywhere. She's got a hell of a view out her floor-to-ceiling windows, though.

(CONTINUED)

4/9

CONTINUED:

JACK
What are you suggesting?

JAMIE
We need a new story and Studio 7 needs a new Executive Producer and head writer. I want to hire Matt Albie and Danny Moore.

JACK
No no no no no no no.

JAMIE
Yeah.

JACK
I have a history with those two guys.

JAMIE
No kidding.

JACK
I fired them.

JAMIE
I know the history, Jack, people in Kansas know the history. That's why it's a good story. It's a big story and we get to control it. We're gonna hire two people who hate your guts and we're gonna do it 'cause we're committed to quality. It's a tacit admission of guilt and a silent act of contrition and that's what's required here.

JACK
What the hell am I guilty of?

JAMIE
Jack--

JACK
What am I guilty of?

JAMIE
We don't have that kind of time.

JACK
You talk to your bosses at NBC like this?

JAMIE
Everyday. That's how I became president of a network.

JACK
I'll look completely de-balled.

(CONTINUED)

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(2)

JAMIE

You don't need all the fingers on one hand to count the number of people who care about your balls tonight.

JACK

I got news for you, sister, as long as I'm one of 'em, so are you.

JAMIE

Wes basically gave 'em the show when they were there. They were his boys.

JACK

Yeah, Wes didn't seem to kick up much of a fuss when I fired his boys, which, by the way, doesn't seem to have hurt their careers any.

JAMIE

Well that's between them.

JACK

I'm not the bad man here.

JAMIE

We don't need to debate four years ago. They're exceptionally qualified, it's a splashy choice. They're classy, and we need that right now.

JACK

My thought was that we'd promote Ronald Oswald and Richard Beck. They've been co-execs for three years, they know what they're doing, they know the current cast and staff, it'll bring stability and they're--what's the word I'm looking for--

JAMIE

Hacks. Ron Oswald and Ricky Beck are hacks and stability isn't what we're looking for, we're looking for surprise.

JACK

The most expensive thing in television are executive producers you can't control.

JAMIE

The most expensive thing in television is a show that doesn't work.

JACK

You're never gonna get these guys.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (3)

JAMIE
I will.

JACK
How?

JAMIE
I'll get 'em.

JACK
They've got a hit movie out right now.

JAMIE
A critical hit, but nobody's buying a ticket.

JACK
They're still gonna be offered everything.

JAMIE
I'm gonna get them to come back to television.

JACK
You know something I don't know?

JAMIE
Yeah, and we're keeping it that way.

JACK
When do you want to do this?

JAMIE
Now. Tonight. I want this all done and together for a press conference Monday noon to announce and take questions.

JACK
You're gonna get this all done on a Friday night.

JAMIE
Yeah.

JACK
You're gonna have to pay these guys.

JAMIE
Oh I'm gonna back up a Brinks truck. And I'll have to do what it takes to get 'em Wes's blessing.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (4)

JACK

They're not gonna care about Wes's blessing, Wes is at least as guilty as I am of--

JAMIE

They're gonna care.

JACK

'Cause they're classy.

JAMIE doesn't say anything...

JACK (CONT'D)

Do you have a thing for one of these guys? Or both of these guys?

JAMIE

(beat--smiles)

I don't know either one of them personally. Is that a question you were asked when you hired me?

JACK

You bet your ass it was.

JAMIE

I need to get started now. I need to get to Matt and Danny.

JACK

I'm gonna want to meet with 'em before any hands are shaken.

JAMIE

They're not gonna audition for you, Jack.

JACK

We're gonna have a conversation.

JAMIE

And what will you say in this conversation?

JACK

Whatever I damn well please.

(beat)

I don't think it's a secret to you that I want Wilson White's job. I'm gonna be CEO of Atlantic Media and to do that I've gotta show White I can delegate when it comes to UBS and particularly the entertainment division. But you saw how fast I fired Wes Mendell? Screw this up and I'll fire you faster.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

8/9

END: (5)

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm not like every other heterosexual man in show business, Jamie. I don't find you charming. And you've earned the loyalty of absolutely no one.

(beat)

So you go ahead and take your first steps toward making us all classy again. We've been waiting for you.

BLACK

END OF ACT ONE

9/9