BROADCAST NEWS

BY

JAMES L. BROOKS
FADE IN

1 EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A restaurant supply truck is curbside, near a small -- restaurant -- GERALD GRUNICK, forty-one, is closing the back door of his truck -- feeling good about the world, a common state for him. He moves towards the cab of the truck and gets inside as we SUPER:

KANSAS CITY, MO. - 1963

2 INT. TRUCK - DAY

As he sits down beaming over his recent good fortune...now we REVEAL his twelve-year-old son, TOM, seated quietly beside him. He seems a bit down. Gerald glances at his son.

GERALD
I don’t know a recent Saturday I’ve sold more. You didn’t think I’d sell that health restaurant, did you?

TOM
No. Not even you.

GERALD
Why so glum?

TOM
I don’t know.

GERALD
(a beat)
Go ahead.

TOM
No, nothing. I’ve got a problem, I guess.

GERALD
Were you bothered by those waitresses making a fuss?

TOM
No. But, honest. What are you supposed to say when they keep talking about your looks? I don’t even know what they mean -- 'Beat them off with a stick.'

Gerald stifles a grin.

(CONTINUED)
GERALD
You know, Tom, I feel a little proud when people comment on your looks. Maybe you should feel that way.

TOM
Proud? I’m just embarrassed that I like when they say those things.

GERALD
As long as that's your only problem you're...

TOM
It's not.

He looks directly at his father and talks quietly, and sincerely.

TOM
I got my report card. Three Cs, two Ds, and an incomplete.

GERALD
Oh my. I see you studying so hard, Tom. What do you think the problem is?

TOM
I spend too much time on the math. That’s what I got the B in, which is really amazing. I’ll just have to try harder. I don’t know. I will. (talking himself into it)
Yes. I know I can. Yes. I will do better. I will. I will. I will!

He shakes his head for emphasis, glad he’s received this pep talk from himself -- he hands the card to his father.

TOM
Thanks, Dad, this talk helped. Will you sign it, please?

GERALD
(as he signs)
Would it help if I got you a tutor?

TOM
(suddenly hopeful)
That would be great. (worried)
It better help. What can you do with yourself if all you do is look good?

SUPER THE LEGEND – “FUTURE NETWORK ANCHORMAN”
FADE IN

BOSTON, MASS. - 1965

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY

AARON ALTMAN, looking almost preposterously young in his graduation gown -- is delivering his valedictory. He is a rare breed -- a battle-scarred innocent.

AARON
...and finally to the teachers of Whitman High School, I don’t have the words to express my gratitude which may have more to say about the quality of the English Department here than my own limitations...

He awaits a laugh and gets only the weird sound of collective discomfort.

AARON
...that was, of course not meant to be taken seriously. A personal note. I am frequently asked what the special difficulties are in being graduated from High School two months shy of my fifteenth birthday. I sometimes think it was the difficulties themselves which enabled me to do it. If I’d been appreciated or even tolerated I wouldn’t have been in such a hurry to graduate. I hope the next student who comes along and is able to excel isn’t made to feel so much an outcast. But I’m looking forward to college; this is the happiest day I’ve had in a long long time. I thank you and I forgive you.

There is very little applause.

ANGLE ON TEACHERS

MALE TEACHER
I’m always so confused by Aaron. Is he brave and earnest or just a conceited little dick-head?

BACK TO AARON AS WE SUPER: “FUTURE NETWORK NEWS REPORTER”

ANGLE ON STAGE

As Aaron walks to his seat past three full-grown tough-looking semi-literate high school graduates.

YOUTH #1
Later, Aaron.
Clusters of graduates at the fence bordering the sunken school yard looking down as the tough cap-and-gowners seen earlier cuff Aaron around.

CLOSER IN

Aaron reeling from a blow -- his lip bleeding -- his teeth covered with blood...as he gets to his feet. He is livid -- something primal triggered by this brutality.

AARON
Go ahead, Stephen -- take your last licks.  
(points at his face)
But this will heal -- what I’m going to say to you will scar you forever. Ready? Here it is.

He dodges as they come after him.

AARON (CONT’D)
You’ll never make more than nineteen thousand dollars a year.  
Ha ha ha.

They twist his arm and grip him -- his face scraped on the concrete.

AARON
Okay, take this: You’ll never leave South Boston and I’m going to see the whole damn world. You’ll never know the pleasure of writing a graceful sentence or having an original thought. Think about it.

He’s punched in the stomach and sinks to the ground. As the Young Toughs walk off, Aaron catches a phrase of their conversation.

YOUNG TOUGH
Nineteen thousand dollars...
Not bad.
FADE IN

ATLANTA, GEORGIA - 1953

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

JANE CRAIG, ten years old, is in her room typing. Above the desk where she works is a bulletin board with letters and pictures tacked to each one. Her desk has several file racks which contain bulging but neat stacks of air mail envelopes -- a roll of stamps in a dispenser is to one side. Jane types very well in the glare of her desk lamp.

JANE

(voice over; as she types)
Dear Feletzia, it’s truly amazing to me that we live a world apart and yet have the same favorite music. I loved the picture you sent and have it up on my bulletin board. You’re growing so much faster than I am that I...

OTHER ANGLE

SHOWING Jane’s FATHER standing near the door.

JANE

(voice over)
...am starting to get jealous. I read in the newspapers about the Italian strike and riots in Milan. I hope your weren’t...

FATHER

(softly)
Honey?...

Jane SCREAMS, and grabs her heart, breathing heavily, babbles nervously at her Dad.

JANE

Oh God -- Daddy -- don’t...don’t... don’t ever scare me like that -- please.

We SUPER: “FUTURE NETWORK NEWS PRODUCER”

Her Father is himself taken aback with the shock of her reaction. Falling back towards the door:

FATHER

Jane -- For God’s sake...

(recovering)
Look, it’s time for you to go to sleep.
CONTINUED:

JANE
I just have two more pen pals and then I’m done.

FATHER
You don’t have to finish tonight.

JANE
(he doesn’t get it)
Nooo. This way the rotation stays the same.

FATHER
Finish quickly. I don’t want you getting obsessive about these things. Good night.

We REMAIN WITH Jane who has obviously become disconcerted and troubled.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

As Jane moves to room at the other end of the hall -- a family room where her Father is reading.

JANE
Dad, you want me to choose my words so carefully and then you just throw a word like ‘obsessive’ at me. Now, unless I’m wrong and...
   (enunciating)
   ...please correct me if I am, ‘obsession’ is practically a psychiatric term...
concerning people who don’t have anything else but the object of their obsession -- who can’t stop and do anything else. Well, here I am, stopping to tell you this. Okay? So would you please try and be a little more precise instead of calling a person something like ‘obsessive.’

She advances furiously on her Father since even this strung out, even with two additional pen pal letters to get off, she has enough sense of duty to kiss him good night before storming from the room. She exits the room INTO BLACK.

Stay on BLACK as we begin MAIN TITLES:

OVER EXT. SMALL MID-WESTERN CITY - DAY

Emerging from the blackness -- Jane Craig -- now a twenty-eight-year-old woman -- a lone speed walker wearing a jacket to which reflecting stripes have been glued -- the kind of gear only possessed by someone who runs at off-hours. The jacket itself is a wish-I-had-it souvenir from some important news assignment, the sort of treasure you love above all else yet never mention. She stops running as she feeds quarters into the first of a phalanx of newspaper machines -- getting seven different papers before moving on.
INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

As she enters from the bathroom, having showered and dressed. The sun is just now rising. She sits next to her phone.

INSERT: JANE’S BOOK

The Filofax book is almost an additional character -- a crucial hand-fashioned tool of Jane’s trade. She flicks at a page -- takes down a typewritten sheet scotch-taped to it showing the room number of her crew and reporter.

ON JANE

As she dials one room number.

    JANE
    (into phone)
    Hi...It’s me...

INT. DUPLICATE MOTEL ROOM - DAY

ANGLE ON CAMERAMAN -- his equipment in evidence though essentially asleep holding his bedmate’s hand, as he listens to Jane.

    JANE’S VOICE
    (voice over)
    It’s thirty minutes before you have to meet me in the lobby -- nudge your wife.

BACK TO SCENE

    JANE
    There’s probably no time to eat... but there’s a cafeteria at the bus depot once we get down there. I love working with you two... It saves me a call.

She dials.

INT. DUPLICATE MOTEL ROOM

Where Aaron is switching his TV from station to station, monitoring the early morning news. His PHONE RINGS.

    AARON
    Hi. Turn on your TV...
    Good Morning America, the Morning News and Today are all about to talk to Arnold Schwarzenegger and I think he’s live on at least two of them.

    (CONTINUED)
JANE
At six o’clock on the wake-up news they used the wrong missile graphic. And they called me this morning to say they want us to take even cheaper rooms on the road now.

AARON
(Austrian accent)
Now listen, Arnold just said that he’s been making three million a movie now. But he’s not ever gonna change. He’s still the same person when he was making two million dollars a movie. He feels no different. He also bought a brand new condo with Maria, they gonna furnish tastefully.

JANE
Half hour in the lobby

AARON
(Austrian accent)
Okay, I’ll see you in the lobbys. (sic)
She hangs up -- unhooks the telephone cord from its base to gain a moment’s solitude. She sits stiffly, palms on top of her legs. It looks like someone with unusually good posture, waiting for something, and now we BEGIN TO SEE the first signs of that which she was waiting for as her face tenses, her eyes redden and she begins to cry. Now she sobs -- then miraculously shakes it off and exits quickly to the bathroom. This crying episode is clearly part of her morning routine.

Jane standing behind her husband-wife-camera-sound team as they train their attention on Aaron; who is getting ready to do a stand-up. There is a DERELICT off to one side. Aaron holds his microphone at the ready.

AARON

Ready.

CAMERAMAN

Your hair’s a little funny.

AARON

It’s an ethnic curl, I can’t do anything about it.

CAMERAMAN

In front a little -- it’s a bit... you want a mirror?

AARON

No -- Don’t worry about it. Let’s do this.

Jane nods her assent.

CAMERAMAN

Okay.

AARON SEEN THROUGH CAMERA

AARON

In other times, for other purposes, there might be a band and burning here at the bus depot for J.D. Singer’s return from war. He...

(CONTINUED)
11 CONTINUED:

JANE
(interrupting)
I’m sorry. But look at how wonderful his face is.

She points to the derelict.

AARON
Oh, you mean use him...That’s nice. Okay.

CAMERAMAN
I’ll put him in the low corner of the frame -- good.

AARON
In other times, with other purposes, there might be a band and bunting here at the bus depot for J.D. Singer’s return from war. Last week he was decorated by a president for heroism in a war. But it was the civil war -- in Angola -- and he was in it for the money.

He puts the microphone down.

AARON
Thanks.

He passes a vending machine and checks the stray hair.

12 INT. GATE AREA - DAY

Jane in the distant b.g. on the phone. Aaron and crew shooting as the bus pulls up, hisses to a stop and tired, rumpled passengers exit. J.D. SINGER, a strong, 5’6” figure emerges and is displeased to find a camera trained on him. He reacts with all the grace of a short mercenary.

J.D.
Go ’way.

J.D. gets his luggage from the compartment under the bus. The crew shooting.

AARON
Just a few questions?

J.D.
No.

He starts walking -- the four person newsteam staying with him.

AARON
We came from Washington.

(CONTINUED)
J.D.
Move away from me.

AARON
(holding out microphone)
How long has it been since you’ve been home.

J.D.
(moving)
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuckee. Snot...
Fuckee. You want to use that?

AARON
It depends on how big a news day it is.

They reach Jane. She calls to him.

JANE
J.D. I’m Jane Craig -- I spoke to you in Angola. I gave you some sugarless gum and Handi-Wipes.

As he reacts to her:

13 INT. JANE’S ROOM - NIGHT

Jane sitting next to Aaron making detailed timing notes as she screens the material shot that day on a portable monitor unit.

AARON
Where’s where I asked him about being scared?
(then)
You should work on your speech.

JANE
No -- it makes me nervous to think about it. Let’s do this.

She consults her notes and goes back to the exact spot.

AARON
(on tape)
All this business of war -- do you get scared?

J.D.
(on tape; he smiles)
Uh-uh.
(then)
I’m a little freaked right now about seeing my father though.

He laughs self-consciously and turns briefly away.

JANE
I love that turn away.
Jane is at the lectern in the darkened auditorium as two large monitors display some taped news pieces she has assembled. On the lectern is a sign telling us we are at the Conference of Local Television News Broadcasters.

JANE
(in darkness)
There’s a point I’m trying to make about these pieces coming up.

A WOMAN’S OUTLINE blacked out from behind -- her VOICE ELECTRONICALLY DISGUISED.

WOMAN
(o.s.; angrily)
I don’t think any client of mine makes less than fifty thousand dollars a year which means they can afford the best and you’re damn right I feel good that that includes me.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE - ANOTHER WOMAN in blackness, her VOICE DISGUISED.

WOMAN TWO
(o.s.)
No. You’d be surprised at who a working girl meets -- I’ve been a working girl for what? -- over a year anyway and that must be a thousand men and I don’t think there’s an age or type that hasn’t been in there.

INTERVIEWER’S VOICE
(voice over)
Policemen? -- Doctor? -- Lawyer...?

WOMAN TWO
(o.s.)
Oh, sure. Television reporters.

A hearty laugh from the audience.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE - FULL FIGURE
A WOMAN in blackness.

WOMAN THREE
(o.s.)
I’m seventeen now and I’ve been working the streets for two years and I guess to be honest -- I stopped thinking of it as temporary.
The lights come up on the room. The two screens go blank... there is general APPLAUSE. Jane blinks nervously.

JANE
Please don’t applaud.

ON AUDIENCE

Sitting in groups of three -- NEWS TEAMS from around the country, remarkably similar in composition... a great looking woman, good looking man (either young or attractively avuncular) and a Black or Hispanic. They still APPLAUD -- not yet having grasped the sincerity of Jane’s plea which she presses with more urgency.

JANE
Please. Don’t!!
(she yells)
I gathered these pieces as an example of what’s WRONG with local television news.

The applause stops.

JANE
These excerpts from THREE SEPARATE SERIES on prostitution were SIMULTANEOUSLY broadcast by all stations in one city during sweeps week. By what bend of ethics or suspension of duty is that broadcast news?

She pauses half a beat for possible applause -- hearing none, she continues. An anchorman sneezes -- four people shout “gezundheit” simultaneously -- they laugh.

JANE
The legacy of Edward R. Murrow, Eric Severeid, William Shirer, Brinkley, Cronkite, Rather, is being squandered in a desperate popularity contest. Our profession is in danger!

TRACKING SHOT

of audience, REVEALING that the news teams now have even more in common. They do not like Jane.

JANE
Yesterday’s compliment has somehow managed to become today’s kiss of death. To be considered a serious journalist is no longer flattering. It presents the risk of being labeled ponderous, or worse yet, elitist, right?

(CONTINUED)
SHOT CONTINUES

Women playing with their hair, young man bored...one middle-aged anchorman fusses with a spot on his tie...

ON JANE

Briefly departing from text, she moves the microphone away and talks to them directly -- risking private thoughts in an attempt at forging a connection.

JANE

All of you know what I’m talking about. We’re all trying to act tougher than we are. But we care. So, we’re all secretly terrified, aren’t we?

Not a peep -- she is thrown but doggedly presses on with her prepared speech though her throat constricts a bit, her voice begins to rasp.

JANE

We are being increasingly influenced by the star system. The network anchormen are so powerful they comprise our last best hope. The current group is clearly qualified -- tied still to our best traditions, but who follows these men?

TRACKING SHOT MOVES TO TOM GRUNICK

Seated with other members of his news team, including a young blonde woman whose hand is resting on his inner leg. Tom feels a growing excitement -- Jane is not just a speaker, she seems a savior.

TOM

Wow.

His female colleague looks at him.

FEMALE COLLEAGUE

Oh, I’ve known so many women like that. They don’t like their looks so they’re angry.

BACK TO JANE

Fumbling with her cards, sunk but game -- gamer than she would wish.

JANE

I was going to talk about other trends but... (mumbling)

...the magazine shows, news as profit, the historic influence of ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT,
JANE (cont.)
the hope, the dream, the question...Oh, I
was going to show you a tape -- a story
that was carried by all networks on the
same night -- the same night -- not one
network noted a major policy change in
Salt Two nuclear disarmament talks...
Here’s what they ran instead...Go ahead.
Show the tape.

ON MONITORS

Showing the Japanese Domino Championships as broadcast by
all networks in the Spring of 1985. It is quite spectacular
-- the dominoes falling into one another provoking waves, crossing
tiny bridges, setting off little fireworks. JANE’S AUDIENCE
applauds loudly and squeals with delight.

ON SCENE

Jane between the two monitors. She begins to speak loudly OVER
the AUDIENCE NOISES of approval.

   JANE
   (loudly)
   I know it’s good film. I know it’s
   fun. I like fun. It’s just not news.
   (as they continue
to applaud)
   Well, you’re lucky you love it --
you’re going to get a lot more just
like it.

STRAY VOICES - SHOUT “GOOD”

OTHER ANGLE

Jane sitting rocked into momentary catatonia, by the event.
Dazed as an animal stung by a tranquilizer dart. She takes
some irregular breaths waiting for a normal life to return.

WIDER

The official seated next to her looks out at the rows of
empty seats.

   OFFICIAL
   I don’t think there’s going to be
   any Q and A.

WIDER

He exits -- Jane alone for a beat -- then Tom enters from the
rear of the auditorium. He moves towards her.
TOM

Hello.
She looks up at him.

ANGLE ON TOM

Ernest, nervous -- handsome... Just when she needed a mirage there it is.

JANE

Hi.

TOM

I just wanted to tell you how great you were. My name’s Tom Grunick.

JANE

(dumbly)

Thank you.

(then)

They hated me. I don’t hate them.

(CONTINUED)
Well, they say if you can reach
even one person it means something...
And you did that.

Jane looks up at his smile -- a beat then:

Would you like to have dinner
with me?

Tom is just briefly taken aback - then:

Sure.

Jane arrives at the maitre d’ stand. She has attempted to dress
up to the extent that packing for a one-day trip allows. She
looks for Tom. Tom rises from a table and is immediately at
her side.

Hi. I was worried I was early.

I was a lot earlier.

They are lead to a table and sit down.

I kept thinking what a great break it
was for me to get to see you tonight.
More than a great break, maybe just what
I needed...just when I needed it...Angel
of mercy -- Godsend...lifesaver...what?

(picking one)
I like Godsend.

I haven’t been in news that long.
I’ve just been looking for the
right person to talk to. I have
about two thousand questions for you.

He notices that her head has gone into her hands, where it
continues to rest. He looks at her a beat.

It’s possible now’s not the right
time.

She lifts her head.

If we could just eat first.
TOM
Totally understood. Totally wrong of me to talk shop after the day you’ve had. Totally sorry.

JANE
Nooo. If I could just have a roll, I’d be okay.

She takes a roll from the roll plate. He smiles at her. She takes a bite.

JANE
Thank you.

JANE
Another thing I can’t stand -- Is this dull?

Tom shakes his head almost violently.

TOM
No, no, no, no...

Jane looks at him curiously -- then:

JANE
(broadly)
Another thing I can’t stand is ... when White House reporters bullshit with each other after a briefing and then one of them has a theory and the other quotes it in his story as ‘White House’ sources say...

TOM
That actually goes on...

JANE
Yes. My room is down here -- I’m not tired. Do you want to keep talking?

TOM
Yes, sure.
A small good room -- her working paraphernalia very much at evidence...the quality briefcase...a super compact cassette player...the reams of well organized notes...the thick contact book -- Jane is sitting on the bed -- Tom, not far away in the room’s only chair. One lamp is on and it serves to place Jane in the shadows and cast Tom in an enormously flattering light. MUSIC comes from her miniature portable STEREO system.

JANE
Come on...Even I’m not that hard on myself.

TOM
No, I really got this job on a fluke and wait till you hear where it ends up.

Jane smiles a calming smile.

TOM
I was doing sports at the station. The newspaper ran this untrue story that I was leaving and they got all these tons of protest mail -- So they made me anchor.

JANE
So great -- right?

TOM
Except I’m no good at what I’m being a success at.

JANE
How are you at backrubs?

Jane shifts her position so that her back is to Tom... He is immobilized by the sudden turn. Jane waits, (just a bit longer than it would take Tom to run from the chair to her side) before experiencing the ghost-like clutch of rejection. She moves briskly past the moment -- grabbing a “good night” chocolate from the pillow and munching it as she returns to his agenda.

JANE
It’s sort of normal -- the way you feel. In graduate school everyone thought the only mistake the admissions committee made was letting them in.

He moves to the bed.

TOM
Listen to me. You keep on thinking I’m somebody who lacks...confidence. That’s not it. I know I can talk well enough and I’m not bad at making contact with people, but I don’t like the feeling that I’m pretending to be a reporter.

(CONTINUED)
TOM (cont.)
And half the time I don’t really get the
news I’m talking about. It isn’t
that I’m down on myself. Trust me,
I stink.

JANE
(levelly)
I trust you.

TOM
I didn’t even have the chance to get
really good at sports. I wasn’t bad.
I thought I was starting to do
interesting features but hockey is
big at the station and...

JANE
(interrupting)
What about the obvious remedy?
Reversing things. Maybe getting a
job on a newspaper.

TOM
I don’t write.

Jane laughs or, more accurately, scoffs as Tom continues.

TOM
But that didn’t stop me from
sending out audition tapes to
bigger stations and the networks.

JANE
Well, come on -- it is your life.
Nobody is tying you to the fast
track. Did you go to college?

TOM
One year...almost one year.

JANE
So, you’re not well educated and
you have almost no experience and
you can’t write.

He nods agreement.

TOM
And I’m making a fortune.

Jane laughs very briefly -- then rubs her face vigorously with
her hands...He’s making her feel a little crazy. She gets off
the bed.

JANE
It’s hard for me to advise you since
you personify something that I truly
think is dangerous.

TOM
Uh-huh.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
(holding it in)
I agree with you -- you’re not qualified.
(letting it out)
So get qualified. You can insist on
being better prepared. You don’t have
to just leave it as...
(mimicking him)
‘I don’t write. I’m not schooled.
I don’t understand the news I’m reading.
But at least I’m upset about it, folks.’

A beat, then he mumbles softly to himself:

TOM
Whoa, this was a mistake.

JANE
Just what do you want from me, anyway?
Permission to be a fake? Stop whining
and do something about it.

He gets up to leave. She follows him.

JANE
Well, you don’t have to start right now.

He turns to her.

TOM
I hated the way you talked to me just
now...and it wasn’t just because you
were right.

He exits.

INT. JANE’S HOTEL - NIGHT

She is on the phone.

JANE
(into phone)
No. It wasn’t just the speech --
the same thing happened with this
guy -- I have passed some line some
place -- I am beginning to repel people
I’m trying to seduce.

INT. AARON’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As he talks with Jane.

AARON
(agreeably)
He must have been great looking, right?

(CONTINUED)
21 CONTINUED:

JANE
Why do you say that?

AARON
Because nobody invites a bad looking idiot to their bedroom.

She smiles.

AARON
Okay. Let’s do me.

JANE
Sure.

AARON
Okay. I feel like I’m slipping but do people who are actually slipping feel that way or is it always the really good people who are moving up who invariably think they’re slipping because their standards are so high?

JANE
This conversation is not worthy of you.

AARON
I’d give anything if that were true.

JANE
(laughing)
Good night.

AARON
Wouldn’t this be a great world if insecurity and desperation made us more attractive? If needy were a turn-on?

JANE
Call if you get weird.

21A INT. JANE’S HOTEL - NIGHT

She hangs up -- pulls back the bedspread on the double bed on the other half are papers, schedules -- tapes. She doesn’t clear them off so that she is literally sleeping with her work. The PHONE RINGS.

JANE
(answering)
I was just thinking it was the shortest phone conversation we ever had.

(CONTINUED)
EXT. PHONE BOOTH

A deserted well-lit area -- Tom on the phone.

TOM
I never told you the reason I was
telling you everything for.

JANE
(pleasantly surprised
it’s him)
Hey?

INTERCUT:

ON TOM

TOM
Those audition tapes I sent out...
I’ve been hired by your network for
the Washington bureau. So I’ll
probably see you at work. Sorry.

Jane is rocked and soured.

JANE
What???

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. STREET - MORNING

Jane and Aaron walking to work -- agitated.

AARON
They didn’t hire Peter Stiller from
the Times and he had a great
audition tape.

JANE
You want to start going over who they
could have gotten? They can’t take on
people like this for network news. For
God’s sake. What’s going on?

INT. NEWS BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Tom arrives for first day of work.

INT. ERNIE MERRIMAN’S OFFICE

ERNIE MERRIMAN is the network’s Washington Bureau Chief. He
is in his early 60’s, has worked for the network about 40 years
-- part of the golden age -- a family man, an honorable man,
a good guy. Right now he is welcoming Tom to the network
thereby good-naturedly helping with the destruction of all he
holds dear. As he hands Tom his credentials:

(CONTINUED)
ERNIE
Any particular area you feel strongest in?

TOM
To be honest, I was best at anchor.

Ernie gives him a long look -- is he kidding?

ERNIE
Why don’t you take a few days observing the system? -- then we’ll put you on general assignment.

25 EDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Two small TV monitors -- a smallish room. Jane goes over her timing notes which correspond to the time code SUPERED on the monitors. BOBBIE -- an extraordinarily silent man -- is doing Jane’s bidding. On the monitor we SEE the mercenary piece which Jane is editing against a tightening deadline. The PHONE RINGS periodically -- Jane conducting abrupt conversations while continuing to edit. The pressure is palpable to begin with but builds and builds; almost like a family fight getting out of hand and threatening to bend lives. Through it all, Jane remains remarkable calm. Her focus is amazing; her command sexy.

JANE
(consulting notes)
Go back to 316, Bobbie. The sound bite in the cab -- it starts, ‘I don’t know how I’ll feel...’

BOBBIE
We could...

JANE
(interrupting)
Please, Bobbie, we’re pushing.

As Bobbie expertly reverses the tape, Tom’s face appears in the glass doorway and then he enters the already crowded room -- Jane’s eyes click to him briefly. She makes not a move to welcome him. He pauses, but is committed and tries to find a place for himself against the wall.

TOM
They said I should observe the...

Jane is distracted by the noise...Tom leaning over towards her.

TOM
They said it would be okay if...

(CONTINUED)
JANE
(incredulous)
We’re working here!! You can stand
over in the uh, uh, uh...

She momentarily can’t think of the word ‘corner.’ Then back
to Bobble:

JANE
Play back the last line...

BOBBIE
He said something about...

JANE
(sharply)
Let me hear it!

Bobbie, taking the sharp commands with ever increasing,
yet still repressed, resentment.

The Assistant Director, BLAIR LITTON, enters the editing room.
She is about 26 and every night since she got her job as
Assistant Director she has been the first to crack under pressure.

BLAIR
We’ll need it in ten minutes. We’re
putting it directly into...

Jane holds up a finger of warning to Blair as she picks up a
ringing phone and talks to Bobble at the same time.

JANE
(into phone)
Craig, just a second --
(to Bobbie)
Let me hear it!

Through much of this chaos we focus on:

TOM
Wedged into an uncomfortable position between two tape racks --
He is wide-eyed at this circus of tension and fear. His eyes
dart around constantly -- trying to take in as much as he can,
always returning with wonder to focus on Jane.

MERCENARY
(voice over)
It’s been a long time since I’ve seen
my folks and all but...I don’t expect
any big deal homecoming.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
Stop there.
(into phone she’s been holding)
I want to shoot a picture from
a book I have in the office.

BLAIR
You don’t have time. Not a chance.

JANE
(into phone)
I’ll be right down. It’s real tight.

She crosses out.

BLAIR
I’ve got to tell Ernie...because there isn’t enough time.

JANE
Yes, there is.

Blair leaves, as Jane gathers up her notes. She charges out leaving Tom awkwardly alone with Bobbie.

TOM
I’m Tom Grunick. I started on General Assignment today.

Bobbie stops the machine, turns in his chair and shakes hands. Then he smiles secretly and speaks his first full sentence.

BOBBIE
I don’t think she’s going to make it.

Tom exits.

26 INT. BUREAU NEWSROOM

Aaron is having a theoretical discussion with Ernie and JENNIFER MACK, a correspondent in her early 40’s, a pioneer of beauties in news. She is well-schooled, bred, trained and known...GEORGE WELN, a black correspondent in his 40s, and MARTIN KLEIN -- the State Department correspondent for the network,

KLEIN
Okay what about this -- here’s a tough ethical one. Would you tell a source that you loved them just to get some information?

AARON
Yes.
GEORGE
Yes.

ERNIE
Me too.

JENNIFER
Sure.

AARON
Jennifer didn’t know there was an alternative.

Jennifer laughs that laugh one always hopes beautiful women will laugh when one says something funny. Aaron smiles at her.

AARON
Here’s one. They allow us to have cameras at an execution in Florida. Do you broadcast tape of the guy in the chair when they turn on the voltage?

KLEIN
Sure.

JENNIFER
Why not?

ERNIE
Absolutely.

GEORGE
You bet.

AARON
Nothing like wrestling with a moral dilemma is there?

Blair enters the scene, Tom trailing several feet behind, continuing to monitor the budding deadline crises.

BLAIR
Excuse me, Ernie, we’re seven minutes to air and Jane’s shooting an insert still for tonight’s piece.

ERNIE
She knows how much time she has.

Blair flashes a tortured smile -- panic is growing.

BLAIR
Okay. I just wanted you to know.
26 CONTINUED: (2)

AARON
What is she shooting?

BLAIR
Norman Rockwell’s ‘Homecoming.’

AARON
(thinks then)
Oh, that’s nice...
(walking away)
We’ll need some new lines.

27 INT. EDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Jane up against it now -- but still seemingly calm. Tom watching -- keeps on glancing at the clock fascinated -- impressed.

JANE
Okay, Bobbie, just a two second dissolve to the Rockwell.

BOBBIE
Should I...

JANE
(interrupting)
Just a two second dissolve.

BLAIR
(hurting)
Oh, Jesus, we have three minutes...
Why do you do this to me. Is it because I won an award?

28 INT. RECORDING BOOTH - NIGHT

Where Aaron is writing his last line on a folded over piece of paper even as he gets ready to record. He times it with a stop watch.

AARON
Norman Rockwell’s enduring portrait of a Homecoming. The return of a fighting man has always been one of the more moving ceremonies of war...
Tearful women, proud men, excited children. But J.D. Singer was right -- his homecoming was no big deal.

29 INT. EDITING ROOM - NIGHT

BLAIR
We have a minute and a half. It’s my responsibility to tell them we won’t be ready.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
Uh-uh. We’ll be ready.

Blair glances frantically at her watch.

BLAIR
In 84 seconds?

ON CLOCK
Sweeping from 28 minutes past the hour -- 84 seconds from deadline. Aaron walks in, Jane looks up.

JANE (hopefully)
Nine seconds.

AARON
Eleven and a half.

JANE
Oh, god. Back it, Bobbie -- Bobbie?

ALMOST SIMULTANEOUS DIALOGUE FOLLOWS. IT BUILDS UNTIL IT DUPLICATES THE SOUND OF LOUD AND BAWDY SEX.

BLAIR
You’re saying ‘Oh, god...’ They are going to go to up and the screen will be black -- they’re going to go to black because we’re not there. How about careers, huh? How about careers?

ON CLOCK
42 seconds away.

BLAIR
We’re not going to make it.

Bobbie makes a small bobble -- Jane giving the merest evidence of the strain, scratching her face repeatedly.

BOBBIE
Whoops.

BLAIR (unraveling)
Whoops?!? -- Whoops?!? No, please... no, ooh, ahh, ohhh.

AARON
Shit, shit, shit...

TOM (caught up)
You’re almost there, you can do it – can do – can do.

And as the pitch reaches its zenith, 27 seconds left. Bobbie hands the tape to Blair.

BOBBIE
Ready.
29A INT. NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Blair hikes up her skirt and takes off.

29AA VARIOUS SHOTS

Our “chase scene” as Blair soars through the newsroom, leaping a chair smoothly, smashing her leg against a table in full flight, the adrenaline deadening the pain -- she arrives at a waiting elevator -- uses a key dangling from her neck to unlock it...jumps nervously during the ride and now, in FULL EXTENDED FLIGHT, barrels down the long corridor heading to the control room where she arrives; slamming the tape into a technician’s hand even as it is introduced on the air.

29B INT. NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Aaron, Jane, the others looking at the end of the piece on the air -- Tom in the b.g. as Blair enters -- relaxed, almost jaunty.

BLAIR
I was a little nervous there for a minute.

AARON
Oh, come on -- tell us another.

ON MONITOR

The end of the piece -- the Rockwell painting giving way to the mercenary’s actual homecoming which matches the portrait. The irony works nicely. The network anchorman comes up for his close. BILL RORISH, 50 years old and able to flutter much younger pulses. He is able and experienced -- a reporter who has become a journalistic king.

BILL
(on monitor, smiling)
Bill Rorish...Thank you...good night.

JENNIFER
Look at that smile. Oh, that was good and oh my, Bill smiled -- he liked it.

AARON
He loved it. Big smile.

He gives Jane a congratulatory sock in the shoulder which she accepts -- Tom in the b.g. of the SHOT.

BLAIR
I haven’t seen Bill smile like that in weeks.

Ernie has walked a few steps to the office.

BLAIR
Ernie, you missed his close... He smiled. (mimicking)
Thank you...Good night.

She smiles Bill Rorish’s smile.

(CONTINUED)
ERNIE
I saw the smile -- good piece.

AARON
I’m gonna go look at it again.

They leave -- Aaron waving to Tom who stands in the b.g. The others leave. Tom approaches Jane.

TOM
I’m sorry if I was in the way. It was totally impressive. Great piece.

JANE
(somewhat formal)
You weren’t. Thanks. How does it feel being here?

TOM
I can’t believe I’m really here. No kidding. If you’re through work now --

JANE
No. Aaron and I go to Central America on Wednesday -- so I’m cramming.

TOM
I thought you were incredible in there. I know how much I have to learn. I’d really -- a lot -- appreciate it...if...

JANE
‘Really a lot appreciate it...’

TOM
You make me nervous. Anyway if I can pick your brain --

Jane grimaces at “pick your brain.”

JANE
I can’t help you, sorry. I’m not here to teach remedial reporting.

TOM
And it has nothing to do with the fact I left your room instead of staying there?

Jane looks at him.

JANE
Oh, please.
(than, almost gently)
You’re going to have to understand something. This isn’t personal.

She exits.

30 EXT. CENTRAL AMERICAN JUNGLE – MORNING

As Aaron, Jane and their CREW march along with a CONTRA SQUAD deep in their own conversation. Except for the DIN of TROPICAL BIRDS they seem almost like a cranky married couple on their way to work.

(CONTINUED)
AARON
I didn’t sleep. They’re giving me less and less air time. They don’t think I’m at all anchor material.

JANE
If we don’t get to their camp soon, we won’t be able to tape the supplies coming in.

AARON
Last time Paul was sick they gave Connie the weekend news instead of me.

JANE
You spend too much time -- much too much worrying about that crap...
(suddenly reacting)
Oh good.

They have entered a clearing where supplies have been dropped, the Guerrillas already tearing apart boxes with army boots inside.

ANGLE ON...
A Guerrilla soldier rubbing his shoeless foot -- a pair of new boots sits alongside him. Jane’s cameraman prepares to shoot -- saying in Spanish then English.

CAMERAMAN
Put on the boot.

Jane rushes into the scene incensed.

JANE
Stop! We are not here to stage the news. Wait and see what he does.

Then to the totally confused soldier:

JANE
(continued)
Sir, you do whatever you want. It’s your choice.

By now there is a fair sized cluster of armed men as well as the news team staring at the Guerrilla who is at a loss as to what is expected -- he looks to Jane who can offer no help save her own determination not to interfere. Finally he puts on the boot.

JANE
(to cameraman)
Okay.

He shoots the scene.
INT. HAY ADAMS HOTEL

Tom in shirt and tie is on the phone. This is a big day.

TOM
Okay, I’ll meet the crew there then. Could you give me that address again? Great. Yes, it’s good to finally be getting to work. Okay that’s 17204 Colorado -- like the state -- 17204? 1-7-2-0-4. Thanks.

He hangs up and quickly writes down the address.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY
As Tom gets directions from the CONCIERGE.

CONCIERGE
It’s only ten minutes if you prefer to walk...
(as he walks away)
I’ll look for you on the news tonight.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY
Tom has a real sense of the moment -- of having arrived. The strange bubble of pleasure rises to the surface as he walks off to cover his first story. He laughs out loud, loving his lot.

EXT. CENTRAL AMERICAN JUNGLE - LATE AFTERNOON
Jane in f.g. with her crew while Aaron talks in rapid Spanish to the GUERRILLA LEADERS. He takes in what they are saying then walks towards Jane -- one of the men he was talking with calling after him in Spanish with an added thought.

AARON
Thanks, you speak English very well, too.
(to Jane)
Great news. He says they’ve been engaging the Sandinistas pretty regularly and that he’d be really surprised if we didn’t take fire tonight.

Jane reacts - a flash of exhilaration. Aaron is amazed at her attitude.

(CONTINUED)
AARON

Look at her.

(then to Jane)

If anything happens to me tell every woman I’ve ever dated I was talking about them at the end. That way they’ll have to reevaluate me.

Jane laughs out loud, attracting the Guerrillas’ attention. Aaron repeats his speech in Spanish. The Guerrillas laugh.

35 EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Aaron and Jane in line behind the Guerrillas. They HEAR A SHOT. The head of the patrol gestures -- deploying his men. Aaron grabs Jane and heads for some cover to the left. As they run -- more SHOTS. Jane in work mode. As soon as they settle.

JANE

Let’s tape.

CAMERAMAN

(Spanish accent)
Much too dark. Black.

JANE

That’s okay.

ON AARON BARELY DISCERNABLE

As they start taping he is breathless with the nervousness of the nearby gunfire.

(CONTINUED)
AARON
The first shots were fired not thirty seconds ago. The Contras feel they must be outnumbered. This is so small a unit, that’s a given. Still they hold their ground despite the fact that their weapons have been acting up -- misfiring or jamming. A new shipment of rifles is expected tomorrow -- all they got today were the shoes.

There is the SOUND OF GUNFIRE.

JANE
(to Cameraman)
Okay.
(to Aaron)
Great line at the end.

AARON
Did you shoot their boots?

JANE
Of course.

AARON
We can cut back at the end.

JANE
To the pan of the supplies boxes --

AARON
Can you believe it? I just risked my life for a network that tests my face with focus groups.

36 EXT. GOVERNMENT BLDG. - AFTERNOON

Tom, squashed in amidst a small mob of reporters...behind a police line. He HEARS a reporter next to him say:

REPORTER
I think he’s coming out now.

TOM
(to his crew)
They say he’s coming out now.

A surge.

TOM
(to Reporter)
Is that him?

TOM’S CAMERAMAN

Yes.

Tom checks his notes.

INSERT - TOM’S BLACK BOOK

(CONTINUED)
The same model we’ve seen Jane use. A list of questions written in big color highlighted letters. As he looks down to study them, everyone else moves suddenly off.

ON TOM

Standing alone and forlorn as his crew trots back.

CAMERAMAN
(observing Tom)
What’s wrong?

TOM
I had a lot of questions here. I missed the story.

CAMERAMAN
Don’t worry, it’s okay. I got a piece of his face.

EXT. GUERRILLA CAMP - MORNING

Jane is standing -- talking to her crew. Others asleep in b.g. -- a drowsy, morning-after feeling.

JANE
Are you all packed and ready?

CAMERAMAN
The stuff in the dark is not good. Nobody wants news lit like that.

She waves him off -- then she walks several yards away, holding a knapsack in her hand. She takes out a brush and runs it through her hair -- opens a plastic case and takes out a travel toothbrush, brushes her teeth and rinses her mouth with water from her canteen. She puts everything back in place, then looks about, sobs for several beats. One of the Guerrillas hears her sobbing and enters the scene -- he stands a respectful distance away. Jane finishes, notices him, makes a face by way of explanation, and exits the scene feeling measurably better.

INT. WASHINGTON CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The Washington Control Room. Jennifer, Jane, Aaron, Blair stand watching the intro to the Central America piece. Tom stands in the distant b.g. There are over a dozen monitors -- including one which is constantly on the anchor man, Bill Rorish.

(CONTINUED)
ON TELEVISION MONITOR

Bill Rorish on camera -- an INSET behind showing Aaron in blackness planted into a Central American map bordered by rifles. A separate monitor shows the INSET alone.

BILL (voice over)
A fire fight along the Nicaraguan border...in one minute.

The INSET MOVES OUT AT US TO FILL THE SCREEN -- WE SEE Aaron’s dim outline and HEAR him say:

AARON (VOICE OVER; ON CAMERA)
The first shots were fired not thirty seconds ago.

The MUSICAL EVENING NEWS SIGNATURE COMES IN ever-so-briefly. The SCREEN GOES TO A COMMERCIAL -- as Blair screams enthusiastically.

BLAIR
Great graphic, great graphic.

Ernie ENTERS THE SCENE...He kisses Jane in greeting -- pats Aaron on the back.

ERNIE
You finally got a piece in a few minutes early and I hear Bill loved it.

Jennifer gives Jane a mock pat on the back.

ERNIE (continuing)
(approaching Aaron)
I have somebody downstairs who one of the clerks brought in and vouches for. He says he has something to say about gays getting promotions at State... It can’t hurt to tape him.

ON JANE

As she feels Tom staring at her -- turns and notices him for the first time.

TOM
Hi.

JANE
How’s it going?

TOM
Can I buy you dinner sometime soon?

JANE (thrown)
I just got back -- I don’t know which end is up.

(CONTINUED)
TOM
Okay.

BLAIR
Jane! Bill Rorish wants to speak to you at the break... Now!

AARON
Wow.

BLAIR
I never heard of him handing out compliments in the middle of the show.

ON MONITOR we SEE Bill Rorish

RORISH
(into phone)
Jane?

JANE
(into phone)
Yes.

RORISH
(into phone)
Well, darling, if it gets any better than that, I’m going to have to bring you up here to New York.

JANE
(into phone)
Thanks. I just wish you’d kept the first twenty seconds.

Blair cringes at Jane’s blunt reply.

JANE
(into phone)
But thanks.

RORISH
(over telephone)
Well the visual with the boots at the end was just perfect.

Jane covers the mouthpiece and turns to Aaron.

JANE
God, he loved the boots.

Aaron reaches happily for the phone.
JANE
(into phone)
Aaron should be hearing this
so I have an extra witness.

RORISH
(over phone)
Well, you always want to give the
credit away, don’t you?

JANE
(onto telephone)
No, I don’t. He happens to deserve
the credit. He’s right here.

RORISH
(over phone)
I’ll speak to you soon.

We SEE Rorish over the monitor -- he hangs up.

JANE
(to Aaron)
He had to read over some new copy.

We SEE on the monitor that this is not so. It’s a very edgy
moment for Aaron. Tom breaks the silence.

TOM
(to the rescue)
Okay if I watch you tape that
interview downstairs?

AARON

Yeah.

As he passes Jane he leans next to her and WE HEAR him WHISPER.

(CONTINUED)
AARON
Please laugh so they think I’m not
dying inside but have so much style
I just said something funny.

Jane does her part enormously well -- laughing with amusement...
but her eyes blaze -- her friend has been needlessly humiliated...
Blair wants desperately to be inside Aaron’s joke.

BLAIR
What did he say?

JANE
(as if still amused)
I’ll never tell.

38A EXT. CONTROL ROOM - STAIRCASE

Aaron follows Tom quickly down the staircase.

AARON
A year-and-a-half ago I made
some stupid remark about his
hairline. He’s never gonna
forget it!

Tom smiles with amusement.

39 INT. SMALL TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

BUDDY FELTON waits alone. A CAMERA CREW watches him.. He is
well dressed, exceedingly nervous. He summons the courage to
ask a question.

BUDDY
Could I see how I photograph?

CAMERAWOMAN
Huh? Sorry?

BUDDY
Cause for the interview they’re
going to use a screen and disguise
me to protect my anonymity so could
I see myself before that.

CAMERAWOMAN
Sure.

(CONTINUED)
The Camerawoman punches a button and immediately Buddy’s image comes up on a standing monitor on the studio floor. He’s not happy with the image -- but works at concealing his reaction -- gasping a bit of air -- trying to tough it. Aaron enters. Tom smiles a friendly smile which flusters Buddy momentarily. But again he almost manages to conceal his private rush. Buddy’s internal drama is such he invariably finds himself covering up; fearful roomfuls of people will simultaneously guess his thought.

Aaron directly behind him, a screen and looks at his notes.

AARON
Mr. Buddy Felton?

BUDDY
Yes.

AARON
That’s your full name?

BUDDY
Yes.

AARON
I’m gonna ask you some questions on tape. Is that all right?

BUDDY
(unsure)

Yes.

AARON
You worked at one time as a foreign service trainee in the State Department.

BUDDY
Yes. I worked there for two years. I was promoted on merit, um, nine times.

AARON
Eventually rising to?

BUDDY
Office Bimbo. (curbing his amusement)

No, I’m sorry.

Aaron is having a hard enough day. He is visibly annoyed.

AARON
Eventually rising to?

(CONTINUED)
BUDDY
G.S. (scratches his head)
I don’t know.

Tom laughs. Aaron shoots him a look.

AARON
You’re saying the fact that you’re gay had something directly to do with your promotions?

BUDDY
I don’t like the word gay.

AARON
Which would you prefer?

BUDDY
Ravenous homosexual.

AARON
Stop the tape, okay. Forget it, Ellen. Let’s call security and get him out.

As Aaron walks out -- Tom is momentarily fixed on the sight of Buddy walking in small circles giving himself a talking to.

BUDDY
Great time to act out, Buddy. You won’t be happy until you turn the whole world off.

(CONTINUED)
He notices Tom.

**BUDDY**
They’re not really going to call security are they?

**TOM**
No, I don’t think so.

**BUDDY**
How do I get out of here?

**TOM**
Follow me.

**BUDDY**
You talked me into it.

**EXT. OFF BUILDING - NIGHT**

As Buddy and Tom exit. Tom is about to walk off as Buddy talks to him.

**BUDDY**
Sir?

Tom turns. Buddy talks rather quickly -- He cares very much about leaving Tom with the right impression. The last words of his speech he hadn’t expected to say.

**BUDDY (cont’d)**
Thank you for not shunning me and all.

(CONTINUED)
BUDDY (cont'd)
I really did have all that information
but I thought I might just be being
vindictive to get a little hunk of
the ol' spotlight. I know, horrible --
but I didn’t do it, so okay? And
thanks again and would you like to
have a drink -- at a regular bar?

TOM
Uh, sure. Okay.

Buddy attempts casual matter-of-factness.

BUDDY
Is there a regular bar around here?

INT./EXT. REGULAR BAR - NIGHT

Tom and Buddy on adjoining stools. For Tom, the last weeks have
been humbling, antagonistic. He's enjoying Buddy who listens
attentively and wholeheartedly endorses every word Tom speaks.

TOM
I’ve been doing some morning show
stuff, but mostly radio -- that doesn’t
bother me. I’m in no rush for
anything. It’s just the snotty
attitude, even if I have it coming,
it’s still...

BUDDY
Bad manners.

TOM
Yes. That’s right.

BUDDY
I know... I mean you didn’t do anything
special for me tonight. You just had
what I think are good manners, decency.
And it really makes me want to be nice
back and it has nothing to do with any
homosexual thing.
(looks right at him)
Honestly.
(then away)
Because I don’t know if you’re
homosexual or not and -- you’re not,
are you?

TOM
No...no.

BUDDY
One’s enough.

Tom signals for the check.

(CONTINUED)
BUDDY (cont'd)
I wasn’t doing anything.

TOM
I really have to go.

BUDDY
Okay. At least let me show my appreciation. The Secretary of Labor is going to be indicted on Wednesday. For this graft thing he supposedly did before he was appointed.

TOM
What?

BUDDY
Yes, it’s true. They’re going to make it public Wednesday but isn’t it a big deal for you to have it a day and a half early?

TOM
Yes. How do you know?

BUDDY
(shrugs)
My roommate’s very social -- somebody from Justice was over and...I always hear things before they happen. Hey, and from now on, so do you.

INT. ERNIE’S OFFICE — DAY

George Weln, the black correspondent and Tom are seated in the office with Ernie -- they are in mid-meeting.

GEORGE
I’m virtually certain it’s not true. He may be indicted eventually, but I don’t think it will be this month.

ERNIE
(to Tom)
You want to be alone with me -- tell me your source?

TOM
If I told you, I’m not sure it would totally convince you, but I totally believe the guy.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGE
(insufferably)
Labor is my Department -- I can’t confirm it and my contacts go very deep.

TOM
So if it’s true -- I’m terrific, right?

ERNIE
It’s not even a close call. Of course we can’t go with it.

INT. EDITING ROOM - FOLLOWING DAY

Jane is working with Bobbie the editor...Snatches of the tape make it obvious that the Labor Secretary has been indicted -- George Weln stands behind Jane, who is dialing a number.

BOBBIE
Do you want him all the way to the car?

JANE
No stop where he’s all besieged.

BOBBIE
Because...

JANE
(to Bobbie)
Right there, Bobbie.

Tom enters.

TOM
So he was indicted?

JANE
Yes.

GEORGE
We were right not to go with it.

TOM
But I was right -- just somebody give it to me. I had a good story.

JANE
(to George)
Give it to him -- so we can concentrate.

TOM
Ah, I don’t want any credit. Bobbie and I serve anonymously.

He pats Bobbie on the back...and exits.
CONTINUED:

BOBBIE
(pausing in his work)
You know, I like Tom, because he...

JANE
Bobbie, please.

INT. METRO BUS - DAY
Crowded rush hour...Buddy and Tom stand next to each other.

BUDDY
...and the White House is hoping to keep a lid on it for a few days till they figure out what to do.

TOM
Thanks a lot Buddy.

BUDDY
(brushing it off)
Oh, please. So they were really impressed with you at work.

TOM
Not impressed exactly -- but a break in the clouds.

BUDDY
I see the change in you -- I see it.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY
The 10 A.M. briefing just breaking up -- Jennifer leaves her network seat in the front row, only to be grabbed by Tom who steers her outside.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE EAST WING - DAY
In the near distance a circular driveway and a silent armed MARINE GUARD, standing at attention.

TOM
(to Jennifer)
So he bought this Peugeot sedan at a greatly reduced price while he was there in charge of the White House Advance Team.

JENNIFER
(suspicious)
How come you’re not chasing it down yourself?

TOM
Look, I’m junior man -- and it’s your beat.

(CONTINUED)
JENNIFER
Boy, that’s nice...I wish we could all deal with each other like this. I’ll check it. Anything I can do for you?

TOM
This is my first time at the White House. Is there any chance to look at where he works and the rest of it?

JENNIFER
(a bit charmed)
I didn’t have the guts to ask when I first came up. I’ll get you a great tour.

INT. BAR - EARLY EVENING

Buddy and Tom watching the Evening News as Jennifer finishes her story.

JENNIFER
(voice over; on TV set)
The President says it’s not a violation but nonetheless White House sources say the full price will be paid for the Peugeot and new rules will put future bargain hunting off limits for Presidential Aides. This is Jennifer Mack at the White House.

Tom and Buddy smile at each other...energized -- up.

BUDDY
Forgive me, but it really is intoxicating being a news source.

TOM
Nobody else had it.

BUDDY
I wish it were you giving the story.

TOM
That’s okay.

BUDDY
What if we just don’t tell them anything anymore unless they let you do the story?

TOM
No. Really...don’t worry about it.

(CONTINUED)
BUDDY
Okay. And look, in the future I can call you when I have news for you. Don’t feel you have to spend time with me just to get the information.
(a breath; then to himself)
Well, that wasn’t as hard to say as you thought, was it, Buddy?

TOM
What do you mean? You’re one of the few people in this town I can talk to.

Buddy involuntarily makes a LOUD SOUND OF RAPTURE.

Buddy
Hoooooo.

The BARTENDER and some nearby patrons turn and look. Tom shifts with discomfort.

TOM
Hey, Buddy, don’t do that anymore.

Buddy
(simply)
Okay.

50 INT. WASHINGTON BUREAU - NIGHT

Jane waiting for an elevator...It comes and she steps on just as Tom clearly excited comes around the bend from Ernie’s office calling for her. He goes to the stairs.

51 INT. WALKWAY - NIGHT

He runs out and sees Jane in the lobby below, then takes off after her.

52 INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

As he enters and runs outside, looking in both directions then running off to the right. A BEAT -- REVEALING Jane has stopped to talk with Blair -- now she exits.

53 EXT. WASHINGTON STREET - NIGHT

Tom on the street, ahead of her, thinking he’s behind her...He runs another half a block and stops dejected...Turns to walk back to the office. He keeps looking back to see if he missed her, so that his head is turned as Jane reaches him, says a fairly social:

(CONTINUED)
JANE
Hi, how are you?
She keeps moving -- Tom spinning after her.

TOM
Wait -- I need you.

She stops.

TOM
I’ve got another story.

JANE
Some public official skipped a week on his Christmas Club?

TOM
The House Armed Services Committee has a secret report which says that the General Stillwell tank the Army has dumped a fortune into plain won’t work. I have it cold, confirmed. They have five million dollars in this thing already.

JANE
Billion.

TOM
Okay, billion...right, of course. They told me I could have any producer I wanted -- and I want you.

As Tom savors the moment.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - EVENING

Various bureau personnel standing at their desks watching Tom’s piece being broadcast. We SEE a TANK MISFIRING.

TOM
(voice over)
One source referred to it as a five billion dollar metal sculpture too ugly to look at and too big to bury.

AARON
(to Jane)
You write this?

JANE
I write for you sometimes.

AARON
Not because you have to.

(CONTINUED)
ON MONITOR
We SEE a General walking away from Tom.

TOM
(voice over)
General Elton McGuire is in charge of the weapons system.

ON MONITOR - TWO SHOT

GENERAL
I’ve been in the Army twenty-seven years -- so I’ll let the Army ask the questions, not you.

TOM
General, I don’t want to bother you anymore or your family. But tomorrow there will be a mob of me back here -- so, if you have anything to say, why not say it now, sir. the way you want?

ON TOM
He is a study.

Looking at himself -- and though it’s far from his first time on television -- it’s the first time he’s seen himself doing serious work and, by all appearances, doing it well. As the General answers in the b.g. --

BLAIR
I think it’s great of us to have left in what you said -- just great of us.

Tom smiles modestly.

AARON
(to himself)
Yeah, let’s never forget. We’re the real story. Not them.

Tom and Jane look over -- then Tom looks to Jane for a verdict. In the b.g., the news goes to a commercial.

JANE
Yeah, I know, I went back and forth on it.

BLAIR
I liked it. He’s not afraid to be human.

(CONTINUED)
Ernie ENTERS THE SCENE with his fourteen-year-old DAUGHTER in tow...He approaches Tom.

ERNIE
My youngest wanted to meet you.
This is Ellie.

TOM
Hi, Ellie.

ERNIE
You should be honored -- she never cares about meeting anyone here. But she liked you on television just now.

AARON
(entering scene)
Hi, Ellie -- remember me?

ELLIE
I'm sorry -- from where?

AARON
I've been to your house a lot...

ERNIE
(helping)
And Aaron went on that fourteen day raft trip with us last year.

ELLIE
(vaguely)
Oh yes -- hi.

AARON
I had that big yellow raincoat on.

She looks at him.

AARON (cont'd)
It had a hood.

Ellie now begins to recognize him.

AARON (cont'd)
It was over my head.

ELLIE
(now knows who he is)
Oh yeah -- your hair was different.

(CONTINUED)
As Aaron walks away he reassures himself.

AARON
She knows me.

INT. NEWSROOM - NIGHT (LATE)
He is on the phone.

TOM
(into phone)
Hi Dad...Did you see it? Great --
I’ll send you a tape...I’m sorry I
haven’t called. Things were a little
bumpy for a while. It’s not important...
I’m fine now.
(what he’s been
wanting to say aloud)
Hey, Dad -- I just may be able to
do this job...Well, I’m glad you
were sure.
Ernie is hosting the news staff for Sunday brunch -- they stand around drinking in small groups...Aaron is standing with Blair and a MAN in his fifties we have not seen before.

BLAIR
I don’t know why we have to feel defensive about it. Newspapers are in business to make money -- why not us?

Aaron looks at her in amazement.

BLAIR
They criticize us for supposedly pandering while they run WINGO Games.

GRAY HAIRIED MAN
(amused)
Exactly right. Excuse me. I’m paid to mix.

Blair and Aaron laugh appreciatively as he walks off to another group.

BLAIR
Goodbye, Paul.

AARON
Take care, Paul.
(back to Blair)
It takes a certain kind of courage for you to say that in front of the President of the News Division.

BLAIR
You think anyone who’s proud of the work we do is an ass kisser.

AARON
No. I think anyone who puckers their lips and presses it against his boss’ buttocks and then smooches is an ass kisser.

BLAIR
My gosh, and for a while there, I was attracted to you.

She walks off.

AARON
Wait a minute -- that changes everything.

(CONTINUED)
Jennifer ENTERS THE SCENE... and leads Jane down the hall until they are standing alone.

JENNIFER
This is very awkward.

JANE
Go ahead -- what?

JENNIFER
Ummm -- it’s dumb dorm stuff but I see Tom around you a lot and this is such a small office and I’d like to see him outside of work, unless there’s some reason for you to mind... in which case I just won’t do anything.

JANE
God Almighty -- Whew. Do I mind? Why do I mind. What a shock -- I don’t have a right to... I don’t think I like him. I know I don’t respect him... So what am I talking about -- what am I saying to you?

JENNIFER
You’re saying stay away from him.

JANE
(stupefied)
I can’t be.

She blinks in wonder.

JENNIFER
We don’t have to settle this definitively right now.

Jennifer moves off. Jane, unsteadied by the dose of self-revelation, peeks into the living room where she spies Tom.

ANGLE ON TOM
Oblivious, as he tries to eat a wobbly deviled egg.

ON JANE
As she slinks into the living room, moves past Aaron’s circle and scratches his back in friendship.

(CONTINUED)
NEW ANGLE

Tom sees Jane and starts for her.

Jane keeps moving, stepping over and bumping into fireplace apparatus in an attempt to remain inconspicuous, we hear snatches of party conversations.

GEORGE WELN
Tell me one person who ever left television news to work on a newspaper

She moves on; Tom still following.

ERNIE’S WIFE
(holding Paul’s arm)
I felt so proud when he turned down News Vice President so we could stay here. Suddenly, after all these years, we have a life.

Now Tom is there. He touches her on the shoulder. Jane turns.

JANE
(badly)
Hi, Tom.

She stands there, genuinely frightened. She must deal with him now.

TOM
It’s the first time I’ve seen you dressed like this. You look so clean and pretty.
JANE
What do you mean clean?

TOM
At work there’s always this sort of film over you.

JANE
Well, thumps like me leave appearance to guys like you.

TOM
You’re great at taking the edge off a good time.

Jane starts twitching. She pauses -- holds a hand lightly on his arm to steady herself.

TOM
You okay?

JANE
Yes. Just don’t say anything mean for a while. Thanks.

She meets his gaze for an instant -- and, in that instant, loses control for the first time in her memory. She looks strange as she retreats from this glimpse of upheaval.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
I’ve got to find someone. It’s important. Excuse me.

She walks away.

ON AARON AND ERNIE

ERNIE
I had the strangest thing happen yesterday. Anne and I have been married what? -- Thirty-six years...
Everything fine -- two days after the promotion came through, I was checking myself in the mirror and she was making a face at me behind my back. So yesterday I looked in the mirror and she was doing it again.

AARON
You didn’t say anything to her?

He shakes his head.

ERNIE
My instincts tell me not to.

Anne comes up.

ANNE
The office is phoning, honey.

He EXITS SCENE as Anne watches him go.

ANNE
I hope he moves that fast when it’s me on the line.

ON JANE

As she passes a chair with an afghan shawl on the back -- she picks it up and wraps it around herself, a bit chilled. She sees Jennifer on the stairs and moves toward her calling in a too loud, anxiety-ridden voice as she goes.

JANE
Jennifer. Hey, Jennifer.

ON STAIRCASE

Jennifer turning as Jane whips up the stairs.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
Forget what I said — you do whatever you want to with Tom.

She pushes at Jennifer a little.

JENNIFER
Well, there’s nothing I’m going to do right this second.

Jane pushes her again.

JENNIFER
But it’s a party, right?

Jane smiles back feigning female bonding — Jennifer goes back down the steps and crosses to Tom.

FULL SCENE

Aaron takes in Jane, who is taking in Jennifer and Tom — then Aaron begins to sense a new dynamic in the room as Ernie re-enters and huddles briefly with Paul... The News President is intent... The two of them walk over to Tom and Jennifer. We PICK UP just a few words:

ERNIE
This would be a good time to tap that source of yours. He could have an angle or something.

AARON’S P.O.V.

Tom is startled but cool — nods his head — Jennifer is amazed looking at Tom with new and even prettier eyes... Paul and Ernie now move towards Jane, a whole flow of movement creating a new energy in the area. Jane sheds her Afghan as she rises to meet them.

ERNIE
(to Jane)
We want you to exec produce a Special Report...

JANE
What?

Aaron has come over to join them now in time to HEAR.

ERNIE
A Libyan plane shot up one of our bases in Sicily. It’s all still happening.

(CONTINUED]
JANE
Let’s figure out the field.

ERNIE
Unfortunately, since Paul’s here, he’s made out the assignments...
Jennifer at the White House...
George at the Pentagon... Martin at State... and we need an anchor since Rorish is in his boat, so we’re gonna do the whole report this afternoon from here... with Tom.

AARON
That’s it. I resign as of now.

ERNIE
(to Aaron)
Stop it.

AARON
I’ll tell you what. I’ll stay if Tom knows how to spell Gaddafi.

JANE
Ernie, as much as I like you, I think I have to tell Paul what I think, because this is really sort of obscenely stupid.

ERNIE
Jane, if you want to, go ahead. I don’t disagree with you.

Jane moves quickly off, awed at the prospect of taking on the big boss.

ON JANE
As she moves past Tom who is talking on the phone, eventually catching up with Paul. In the b.g. Tom has just HEARD the “BEEP” of an ANSWERING MACHINE.

TOM
Hello, Buddy. It’s 1:35 -- and this is Tom. You can reach me at the office. It’s important.
I can use a little help.

Jane, because of the proximity to Tom is speaking in whispered intensity.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
Tom isn’t ready for the job
you’re about to hand him. Not
near ready. Not by the longest
shot. Aaron’s spent six weeks
in Tripoli, he’s interviewed
Gaddafi -- he reported on the
Eighty-one story. I think he’s
essential to do the job we’re
capable of and I think it’s my
responsibility to tell you that.

PAUL
Okay, that’s your opinion. I
don’t agree.

JANE
It’s not opinion.

PAUL
You’re just absolutely right
and I’m absolutely wrong?

She nods.

PAUL
It must be nice to always believe
you know better. To think you’re
always the smartest person in the
room.

JANE
(from her depths)
No, it’s awful. Oh my, it’s awful.

PAUL
(turning to leave)
We’d better get moving.

As they move out... Jane goes to Aaron... He moves with her
towards the door.

AARON
What happened?

JANE
I’ll tell you later -- where
you going to watch from?

AARON
Watch? --

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (8)

JANE
I’ll come by your place, right after... drink, take pills...
Love you.

She runs out the door. Aaron turns mean and mocks Jane’s last words — screwing up his face in a savage burlesque.

AARON
Yeah, love you, too.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

As Jane briefly pauses to see which car has room. Tom opens the passenger seat of his car — she gets in. It moves off.

INT. TOM’S CAR - DAY

As it moves off.

JANE
Nervous?

TOM
Excited.

Jane looks over at him — there’s no question he’s just told the truth.

INT. TOM’S OFFICE - DAY

In the b.g. we SEE the Bureau Newsroom beginning to pulse with activity. Tom closes the door. He sits down behind his desk and opens a bottom drawer — a clean white shirt lies there. He opens the center drawer — two ties are inside. He picks one. He reaches for a package of new red suspenders. He takes off the shirt and puts on the new one — all of this the work of an expert craftsman. By the time he finishes he looks like the authority figure we know he’s not.

INT. BUREAU NEWSROOM - JANE AND BLAIR

Jane is NOT hyper. She is purposeful — organized — even calming Blair with a little physical contact — a touch on the arm, to still her colleague’s hysterical demons.

JANE
Tell George and Jessica to try and cover everything without Tom having to ask additional questions.
BLAIR
And Bobbie says...

JANE
Did you hear what I just said --
do you have that? Take a breath.

BLAIR
(a breath, then)
Yes.

In the b.g. Tom has exited his office and looks about --
waiting for some indication as to what to do next.

JANE
And the most important thing
make sure his earpiece works,
have back-ups ready. That’s
never been more vital. He
must be able to hear me at
every second and clearly.

Jane sees him. She moves across the room -- takes Tom by the
arm.

JANE
We have twenty minutes -- you can
wait in the studio.

Tom coughs nervously into his hand and takes a pen from a
nearby desk, clips it into his inside pocket and walks off.

GRAPHICS ROOM - DAY

Jane is screening and asking corrections in a graphic
representation of an F-14 shooting down a Libyan Air Force
Mirage Fighter.

JANE
Put in the radar plane that spotted
them to begin with.

GRAPHIC ARTIST
We have no pictures on file.

JANE
I can’t draw -- but this is a
rough idea.

She uses the stylus from the ELECTRONIC PAINT MACHINE to outline
an American Air Force E-2C Hawkeye Radar Plane. Her work is
stunning.
INT. AARON’S APARTMENT – DAY

He has a glass in hand -- some chips on the table with a bottle of wine as he selects a Cassette Disk to play. He picks a French song -- looks at some of his books. He might even read. He is feigning disinterest for an audience of no one. He SINGS ALONG with the RECORD in perfect French.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY – DAY

Tom checking copy in the long hallway leading to the studio -- there is the merest of hubbubs causing him to look up. Buddy is being stopped at the other end of the hallway.

ON BUDDY AND SECURITY GUARD

GUARD
I have to check first.

BUDDY
(a bit frantic)
Well, then check -- but hurry --
There he is!!!

Buddy runs the length of the hallway to Tom’s side despite Tom’s gestures to slow down.

BUDDY
Is everything all right?

TOM
Yes. You didn’t have to come here. It’s just that I’m going to anchor this special report on this Libyan thing...

BUDDY
(delighted)
Anchor?

TOM
(amused despite situation)
Yes, stop! I wondered if you could find out anything about what’s happening.
(on Buddy’s reaction)
What’s wrong?

BUDDY
I broke up with my roommate --
He was really the magnet for everyone who knew anything.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

TOM
Oh.

BUDDY
Look, I can start up with him again if you really...

TOM
No. I’m doing fine... Look.

Tom stands there -- a man at home in this media castle.

BUDDY
Good. He’s on the world’s longest ego trip, let him take it alone.

TOM
Hey, okay. Look Buddy -- I’ve got to go to work.

BUDDY
(to Tom)
...good-bye then.

TOM
I’ll speak to you.

BUDDY
Well, who knows. Just let me tell you what my favorite teacher ever, told me -- ‘Don’t be afraid to be wonderful.’

He leans forward, gives Tom a quick embrace, a small kiss on the cheek. Tom turns and walks off down the hallway to meet his immediate destiny as Buddy looks on.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Jane mounts some steps in the control room -- she moves past the DIRECTOR and TECHNICAL CREW up to the next level where the two news execs, Ernie and Paul stand with their backs to the wall, and then up one more step slightly above the desk and table occupied by Blair. Now she slips into the large well-padded throne-like seat -- as WE BEGIN MUSIC CUE.

Literally at her fingertips is the row of buttons which provide immediate access to the field reporters at the Pentagon, State and the White House. In front of her the bank of monitors, the Technical Team and past them the studio where Tom is seated at Anchor, a FLOOR PRODUCER and WRITER feeding him copy.

(CONTINUED)
ANGLE FAVORING BLAIR

As she looks at Jane, who is poised to control the complicated apparatus of minds and machines comprising the big time network news. And Jane Craig is at the helm. Blair experiences a flash of emotion which transcends envy and verbalizes it.

BLAIR
(sotto to Jane)
Executive Producer -- wow.

Jane looks at her and, in a moment of atypical merriment, does a choking gesture at her own throat as the monitors flash a graphic reading: SPECIAL REPORT... We HEAR an ANNOUNCER’S VOICE say, “This is a Special Report from...”

INSERT: JANE’S CONTROL PANEL

Each of four buttons labeled so that the microphone can connect her to Tom and the field Reporters. She presses the button marked “Tom”.

JANE
You hear me, Tom? Tom? Tom? Damn it... He can’t hear me...
(to Blair)
I told you if there was one thing...

Tom’s VOICE on speakers.

TOM
(voice over; relaxed)
I can hear you. I was just teasing.

ON JANE

Gulping the air in relief, she slumps nonetheless impressed by his macho cool as:

Tom smiles towards her then -- poises himself just as the Announcer’s last words clear.

ANNOUNCER’S VOICE
(voice over)
...in Washington, Tom Grunick.

He begins his report. He seems authoritative, even compelling in a low key way. We trust him.

TOM
Good afternoon. A Libyan fighter plane attacked a United States Military Installation at Comiso, Sicily at ten-o-seven A.M. Eastern time. The Libyan MIG-21 was itself shot down by American F-14 jets.

Another monitor shows the Graphic running. In the background two men approach Paul. They look out of place, decidedly non-business like.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

MAN ONE
Mr. Moore, I’m Marvin Usher and this
is my brother, Stuart.

PAUL
Not now!!!
(gesturing)
Look.

TOM
The Libyan Missile destroyed an Army
Warehouse which, just thirty minutes
earlier, had been crowded with servicemen.
No one was injured.

INT. AARON’S APARTMENT - DAY

Aaron is seated, feet up, drinking, listening to MUSIC -- reading
a book, two remote controls are on the cushion next to him. He
SINGS OUT LOUD with the record as he reads -- at one point
providing his own lyric line OVER THE MUSIC.

AARON
(SINGING LOUDLY)
And I can read while I sing.

He picks up the television remote-control device and puts the
television on, the SOUND OFF.

ON TV

We SEE the graphic of the Libyan plane’s flight route, its
missile firing -- the U.S. planes taking off and the shooting
down of the Mirage jet... At one point Aaron lowering the MUSIC
and raising the TV SOUND hearing Tom.

TOM’S VOICE
(voice over)
The heat seeking missile virtually
disintegrated the plane on...

Aaron turns down the TV SOUND and turns up the MUSIC.

INT. BOOTH

Jane’s hand flicks at the button marked “PENTAGON”.

JANE
George, you’re ready?

ON PENTAGON MONITOR

We SEE George and HEAR him through Jane’s voice box.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGE

(voice over)
Should I cover everything or should
I save something for Tom to ask about?

JANE
Cover everything!

George nods.

JANE
(hitting Tom’s button)
We’re going to George. Say ‘the
Joint Chiefs are meeting -- we have
George Weln at the Pentagon’.

ON TOM

TOM
George Weln is at the Pentagon where
the attack launched by the lone
Libyan pilot has resulted in a massive
movement of military might.

INT. AARON’S APARTMENT - DAY

Where he still balances STEREO and TV SOUND.

AARON
A lot of alliteration from anxious
anchors placed in powerful posts.

He picks up the phone.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

As Blair hands it to Jane.

BLAIR
It’s Aaron.

JANE
Yes?

AARON
I think the pilot that shot down the
Libyan in 1981 is stationed right
here. Maybe you could get him --
and maybe Tom should say that our F-14
is one of the hardest planes to fly.
They’re nicknamed ‘Tomcats’.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
Thanks.
(to Tom)
The F-14 is one of the most difficult planes to master.
(remembering)
Oh, you call them ‘Tomcats’ and in the 70’s the first crop had a number of crashes.

TOM
George, isn’t the F-14 Tomcat one of the most difficult machines for a pilot to master?

GEORGE
I think you’re right -- it’s certainly one of our hottest planes.

70 INT. AARON’S ROOM - DAY

AARON
I say it here -- it comes out there.

He giggles.

TOM
(voice over)
There was trouble with them in the early days -- back in the 70’s.

Aaron dials again... As we SEE Jennifer standing at the White House.

AARON
(into phone)
Me again. Hi. Listen Gaddafi doesn’t foam at the mouth or anything. When you speak to him he’s not at all nuts. He seems like a leader -- very impressive, self-control... that’s what’s so strange.

ON JANE

JANE
Right and we have the ’81 pilot on the way in -- Nobody else will have him.

AARON
(voice over)
You’re welcome. So how does it feel to... I know you gotta go -- Me too. We’re very busy here.

(CONTINUED)
He hangs up -- LONG SHOT... Aaron with his remote controls. The picture switches back to Tom. He turns UP the VOLUME.

TOM
(voice over)
...outlaw nation but strangely those who have interviewed Gaddafi find him, in a phrase we like to use in this country, very 'presidential'

AARON
Nice, Jane.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY
Jane is on the phone. The atmosphere buckling with strain.

JANE
(into phone)
Just a minute.

Her finger hits the "Tom" button.

JANE
{to Tom)
To State for the message from Libya, then you’ll have the carrier pilot from the Sidra in time to...
(a sudden shriek)
What? No!

ON TOM
Jolted by the shriek in his earpiece but nonetheless continuing.

BACK TO JANE
As she SCREAMS INTO the phone -- this is more than volume, she is over-the-top livid, her face red, neck cords popping.

JANE
We only have ten minutes left -- how can you talk to me about parking problems? No, not you’ll try... you’ll do it -- do it or I’ll fry your fat ass, Estelle. Good-bye.

As she BANGS the PHONE down. Paul comments sotto to Ernie.

PAUL
(sotto)
I had no idea she was this good.

(CONTINUED)
71 CONTINUED:

JANE
(hitting Tom’s button)
Fill for a second.

TOM
(fluidly)
The latest message seems to indicate that the Libyan pilot was acting on his own without authority from anyone else.

(into camera directly)
In other words, I think we’re okay.

ERNIE
Who the hell cares what you think.

72 INT. STUDIO - EIGHT MINUTES LATER

MOVING CAMERA FROM Tom’s left profile TOWARDS HIS RIGHT PROFILE. TAKING IN THE Production Assistant who madly shuffles pages, even as Tom talks on camera, the monitor through which he sees the subject of his interview at the Pentagon, the clusters of assistants on the floor and now WE CONTINUE TO CIRCLE BEHIND HIM, BEGINNING TO SEE the Control Room and Jane in the distant background as we MOVE IN TOWARDS HIS EAR, the white ear piece firmly in place, we BEGIN TO HEAR, the barely audible crackle of Jane’s VOICE as she tells him roughly what to say and how long he has to say it.

TOM
...So, Commander, it must have been a bit tougher today -- shooting down the French-made Mirage Jet. The one you got was a SU-22... etc...

And NOW ALL IS OBSCURED EXCEPT THE ANCHOR’S EARS, the ear piece and the RED LIGHT on the CAMERA and beyond... almost an abstract vision.

73 INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

TOM’S VOICE
...Once again: The Libyan Government has disavowed any prior knowledge of the flight. This has been Tom Grunick reporting from Washington.

The special report ended, Jane breathes a breath -- she and Blair embrace while elsewhere in the control room the first talk concerns Tom:

PAUL
He was brilliant. I’ve never been as proud of one of my decisions.

Jane moves down the line thanking her crew.

(CONTINUED)
ERNIE
(proudly to Jane)
Great work, Jane, really -- You know?
Really.

She fends off the compliment.

JANE
Well, there were no major gaffs anyway.

Ernie scoffs.

ERNIE
Oh! Come here, “no major gaffs”.

He hugs her hard.

ERNIE (cont’d)
You were brilliant.

Jane glows – for an instant allowing herself the pleasure of her own accomplishment. She leaves Ernie’s side and takes a step towards the studio to thank Tom and the floor crew then hesitates and quickly retreats exiting the control room in the opposite direction.

PAUL
(to the Usher Brothers)
This was important for Tom -- there’s that bonding thing that happens with the public and an anchorman during a crisis. It’s not the conventions anymore; it’s this kind of moment.

Tom enters. He is exuberant.

PAUL
(to Tom)
What a baptismal. Congratulations.

TOM
Thanks. With all the help you get, it’s sure easier than local.

Paul and Ernie exchange a glance.

TOM (cont’d)
Where’s Jane? I’m still juiced.

Ernie points off... as Tom exits. The Usher brothers hover.

(CONTINUED)
ERNIE
(to the Usher brothers)
Can I help you gentlemen?

USHER BROTHER ONE
We’re here to play the new news theme.

ERNIE
New theme? You don’t need me for this.

PAUL
Stay. Why should I be the only one to feel silly?

USHER BROTHER ONE
We need a synthesizer -- but this will give you an idea.

He plugs in his electronic keyboard.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

As Tom makes his way across the nearly empty room. He enters Jane’s cubby, flushed with the electricity of the “win” -- the most noteworthy moment of his working life.

INT. JANE’S CUBBY - DAY

TOM
You’re an amazing woman. What a feeling having you inside my head.

JANE
(a bit thrown)
Yeah. It was an unusual place to be.

TOM
It was like indescribable--you knew just when to feed me the next line, you knew the second before I needed it. There was like a rhythm we got into. It was like great sex.

Jane looks at him and nods slightly -- a small unconscious spasm of truthfulness.

TOM
You have to celebrate with me, don’t you? Everybody’s going to that bar on the corner, “Caps”.  

(CONTINUED)
JANE
I’m going over to Aaron’s. Maybe
I’ll hook up with all of you later. How
long do you think you’ll be there?

Tom indicates that it’s an impossible question to answer...
They enter the elevator.

75A INT. CONTROL ROOM

Usher Brother Two has the keyboard out and begins playing the
prospective news theme: a suite meant to have majesty and drive, a
towering composition -- the effect of it somewhat lessened by the
fact that the two men VOCALIZE OTHER INSTRUMENTS over the keyboard
humming their hearts out -- building to a big finish followed by a
pregnant pause which Paul finally breaks.

PAUL
I got chills.

Paul looks to Ernie and the Usher Brothers react happily and
look at each other.

PAUL (cont’d)
Wasn’t Tom great.

ERNIE
Well, it worked.

76 EXT. NEWS BUILDING - NIGHT

As several people cross the street towards the bar. Tom has
been holding back one question.

TOM
It’s tempting to ask you how you
think I did.
(she starts to reply)
No. I’m enjoying myself. Take it easy.

He starts across the street.

JANE
(trying to be casual)
Maybe I’ll see you over there.

Indicates Bar.

TOM
You’ll never show up.

He starts across the street -- then turns and calls to her.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

TOM
Jane?
JANE
Yeah?
TOM
I’ll wait for you till seven.
JANE
(shouting back)
Okay.

Tom races to catch up with the others -- Jane in the distant background pauses a beat before walking off in the opposite direction. As Jane moves quickly along we hear the sound of Usher Brothers vocalizing news theme come UP AND continues through:

EXT. AARON’S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

As Jane approaches and is surprised to find him sitting on the stoop outside.

ON AARON
Happy to see her, rising fairly soberly to his feet. He APPLAUDS as she comes towards him.

JANE
Really? It was good.

He nods and APPLAUDS some more.

JANE
Your calling in that information -- you are the classiest guy I know.

AARON
Here, have a beer. Celebrate.

He sits down on the front steps of his townhouse.

AARON (cont’d)
God. It was so strange watching him. What’s the next step, lip-syncing?

Jane sitting on the step next to him

JANE
Okay... okay, okay

(CONTINUED)
AARON
You, know I’ve been doing some of the most important thinking of my life today. I wonder if this is the right time to tell you about it...

She steals a glance at her watch.

JANE
Whatever you think.

AARON
I figured out why it is I’m so hung up on getting a chance at weekend anchor... It’s because if I do it well, then they’ll pay me more, and my life will be great and they’ll treat me better. That’s why.

JANE
Sounds like you may be on to something.

AARON
Which means I’m at their mercy and who wants that?... Now I don’t want to tell you where this thought has led me. Anyway, well, why not tell you? -- it’s a happy thing. In the middle of all this I started to think about something that does nothing but make me feel good and makes immediate sense, and it’s you...

JANE
Oh, bubba.

AARON (cont’d)
And I’m going to stop right now, except, I would give anything if you were two people so I could call up the one who’s my friend and tell her about the one that I like so much...

Jane does not react.

AARON (cont’d)
All right, I’m not gonna say anymore... primarily because I’m about to pass out. Come on, I’ll walk you to the corner.

JANE
You get some sleep.

AARON (confused)
Right now?
(then deciding)
After I walk you to the corner?

(CONTINUED)
Arm in arm they walk towards Aaron’s gate.

JANE
You were stunning today.

AARON
You have someplace to go now, right?

JANE
Yes. Good night

AARON
Good night.

He grabs her very suddenly, hugs her and kisses her full on the lips. As they break:

AARON
Well, I felt something.

Jane laughs — turns and walks away as Aaron watches.

INT. CAB — EVENING

JANE
Hey, we’re going to Cap’s Bar on Seventeenth and Vermont. Connecticut’s clear on Sunday, so, take that over to Fifteenth, and then straight down Vermont, and we should by-pass Thomas Circle that way. If you don’t go over forty, we should catch mostly green lights.

ON the DRIVER’S annoyed look.

JANE
Come on -- don’t take it the wrong way. I just know about things.

He hits the meter.

EXT. CAPS BAR — EVENING

As the cab pulls up, Jane gets out and pays him.

DRIVER
Great route. I never made it anywhere near that fast before.

JANE
Thanks -- good driving --

(Continued)
As she turns to enter the restaurant -- Tom and Jennifer exit. As they confront each other:

TOM
I didn’t think you’d make it.

JANE
Well, I thought I’d check if all of you were still here. I’ll just go in and join the gang and you two go on.

TOM
There’s no gang in there -- We were the last ones.

JANE
Well, I’ll go in and have a bite.

TOM
(to Jennifer)
Jennifer, you want to have another drink?

JANE
Hey, I know how to have a burger by myself. I feel like a little solitude.

JENNIFER
(as they move off)
I sure know that feeling. Terrific work today.

JANE
(too jock-like)
Right back to you.

TOM
Thanks for getting me through.

He puts his hand behind her neck in an awkward gesture of camaraderie. She awkwardly disengages... waves and steps inside the door to the restaurant... standing there between the two sets of doors watching Tom and Jennifer walk away.

ON TOM AND JENNIFER

As they walk to his car, first exchanging a look... then bumping accidentally, then bumping back, a look, then kissing with passion, wrapped around each other.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

ON JANE

As she sees them and turns away.

INT. JENNIFER’S APT. - NIGHT

As Tom and Jennifer rush in locked in an embrace, shedding clothes even as they enter.

INT. JENNIFER’S APT. - NIGHT

We are aware of MOVING FORMS.

JENNIFER
(intense shout)
Damn all you sons-of-bitches.
Oh shit, you bastards ... Oh

They finish. A beat, then:

JENNIFER

Sorry.
ON TOM AND JENNIFER

Tom taken aback by the outburst from this woman he’s just made love to.

TOM
No, it’s okay...People say different things. They do...the plural threw me.

She laughs.

JENNIFER
The last time I was with someone we went through this awful mutual disease questionnaire but I guess it beats getting paranoid the next day. Okay, I’ll go first. I haven’t...

TOM (stopping her)
It would never occur to me to worry at all about you.

Jennifer is touched...

JENNIFER
You know something? I’m deeply complimented. Isn’t it strange to be deeply complimented because the man you’re with doesn’t think you have a venereal disease?...

Tom slides out of bed naked -- she moves quickly across the bed one outstretched hand reaching for his ass, a free -- even lusty sort of motion punctuated by her comment:

JENNIFER
Give me some of that.

He dances away -- out of range -- liking the action, a stupid grin on his face.

TOM
Where’s the bathroom?

JENNIFER
Through the closet.

He opens the door and turns on the light in the closet.

It is a converted room -- given over to racks of clothes and shoes extraordinarily well organized. Tom stands there agape. Various rain coats -- clothes for all climates -- lots of luggage.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She joins him in the closet -- holding out a sheet in front of her.

JENNIFER
I converted a bedroom -- this stuff builds up. Wait till you’ve been doing this sixteen years.

TOM
I’m not knocking it. It’s a great solution. Not only the storage but you can see everything you have.

Jennifer laughs -- he follows her gaze and sees himself in silhouette against the door -- his penis prominent in outline.

JENNIFER
Do you do bunny rabbits?

Tom is enjoying himself immensely.

TOM
Isn’t this a great date?

INT. JANE’S EDITING CUBICLE - MORNING

Jane is finishing a cry. She re-plugs her telephone cord. She looks worn out -- STOCK FOOTAGE OF STATESMEN move across the small screen of her monitor. She sighs and, without realizing, implores the heavens to help cure a malady she’s yet to recognize in herself.

JANE
(to herself)
God help me.

People have begun to filter into the newsroom in the b.g.

AARON
Jesus, Jane. How long have you been here?

JANE
A long time. I was restless. Will you crack my neck?

He starts massaging her neck as the phone rings. She lets it ring for a beat as Aaron works on her. As she picks up the receiver we HEAR a CRACK. She reacts to it at the same time she utters a greeting.

(CONTINUED)
82 CONTINUED:

JANE
Aaah --
    (into phone)
-- ello. You sure they said the
management meeting?
    (hangs up; then
to Aaron)
They want me to be at the
management meeting.

AARON
They’re not that dumb, after all.

He pats her on the back.

82A INT. WALKWAY - DAY

BLAIR
Do you know you’re the second woman
in network news history to produce?

JANE
    (though distracted)
No, I’m not. I’m the fourth.
Joan Richmond. Pauline Fredericks
got that credit once on a U. N.
special and there’s Susan Zirinsky.

83 INT. MANAGEMENT MEETING - DAY

Paul is running the meeting from behind Ernie’s desk.
TWO OTHER NON-EDITORIAL MEN are in attendance. As Paul
discusses the more pressing problems of the network news
division, Jane sits near the window strangely unmoved by
her first moment at the seat of power. She has the blues.

PAUL
Anyway, they seem to be very serious
about making me cut eight million from
the budget and that means massive firings.
I’m doing everything I can... It’s too
eyearly to make up a ‘death list’ but I
just wanted you to be aware of the
situation... We’re also going to cover
the Alaskan serial killer trial on a
continuing basis. I’d like it done out
of Washington which means we’ve got to
get somebody on a plane for Anchorage.
We can’t fool around anymore... Jane...

She looks up at him -- a bit sleepy-eyed.

PAUL (continuing)
This is going to be high-profile on
the Evening News -- who do you think?
George Weln or Jennifer?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JANE
(much, much too quickly)
Jennifer.
The men look at her curiously. She repeats herself more rationally.

JANE (cont'd)
Jennifer.

INT. TOM’S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

He has been reading from a respectable stack of mail -- Jane appears in his doorway. For the first time, we notice that she is woefully bad at at least one endeavor -- flirting.

JANE
Come on, I’ll buy you a drink.
There’s a big thing over at the Italian embassy.

TOM
I’m not sure I’d be good company tonight.

JANE
(self-conscious joke)
I’ll be the judge of that.

INT. ITALIAN EMBASSY - NIGHT

As they walk in -- one MAN looks at Tom with a glint of recognition. Then another -- a handshake -- a WOMAN introduces herself. A small knot of people form.

JANE
It’s much too soon for you to have this kind of buzz around you.

TOM
Do I have to stand here in the middle and meet them all?

JANE
I’ll get you through. Move and smile.
(she pushes him a little)
And smile and move...

They start crossing the room -- he is moving now, making progress. But an EGYPTIAN BUSINESSMAN stops him.

EGYPTIAN BUSINESSMAN
Is it safe for me to fly home?

TOM
Yes. We’re fine now.

JANE
AND SMILE.

He smiles -- people smile back.

(Continued)
JANE
AND MOVE.

ANGLE ON STAIR LANDING.

Where Aaron (Pimm’s Cup in hand -- a cucumber sticking out) stands with Martin Klein. Martin is eating from a huge platter of appetizers.

MARTIN KLEIN
The Italians serve the second best things right after the Chinese... I could do an article comparing Embassy food... Gourmet free-loading... sell it anyplace. I’m sure not getting the assignments.

AARON
Who the heck could that be?

AARON’S P.O.V.

From the excited group of people blocking his view, it’s clear there is some personage in attendance.

ON AARON

And now he sees that it’s Tom.

AARON
Is God testing me or something?

MARTIN KLEIN
Paul loves him. I heard him give him the most poetic compliment in his command. ‘He’s hot.’ Sometimes groups of executives get together just to say that word back and forth... ‘He’s hot, oh, she’s hot. Oh, he’s really hot.’ Hot-hot-hot-hot-hot-hot-hot...
(looking at Aaron)
And here we are.

AARON
Martin, you’re not allowed to use the word ‘we’ or I’m moving.

MARTIN KLEIN
(sudden thought)
Maybe Jane would like my food idea as a spot... Try the one in the middle.

He moves off to intercept Jane -- as Martin stops her... Tom is stranded -- then sees Aaron and moves over to his side.

TOM
Hi, Aaron... What’s doing?

(CONTINUED)
AARON
Same old stuff. I’m watching a man
who won three Overseas Press Awards
pitch an hors d’oeuvre idea.

A MAN stops and introduces himself to Tom -- shaking his hand:

TOM
You want to go out there --
(indicating balcony)
get out of this for a second?

AARON
Why don’t you lead? I’ll just
follow the flurry you cause.

Tom turns -- the sharpness of the tone unsettles him.

TOM
What did I do to you?

AARON
You’ve made my dreams silly.

Tom decides not to deal with the remark. He’s jolted by the
hostility. He leads the way out French Doors to a ground floor
terrace, where Aaron joins him, closes the door and the two men
stare at the party.

TOM
(gesturing at the party)
Heavy hitters.

Aaron nods.

They look inside.

AARON
(several beats; then)
How you doing?

TOM
(warming)
Great. Network news, Washington...
I love it. What do you do when your
real life exceeds your dreams?

AARON
Keep it to yourself.

TOM
You know the other day I really wanted
your reaction to how we did with the
Libyan report -- I was going to ask but
I guess I feel a little intimidated
with you.

AARON
Oh, stop it.

(CONTINUED)
ON Tom’s reaction.

AARON
You can’t talk about feeling intimidated when you’re on top of the world. It’s unseemly.

TOM
I’m not buying into any of that. I have a load to learn. I’m not going to act as if...

AARON
(finishing for him)
You have the job you have...

The sudden debate is important to Tom -- but it’s moving too fast for him.

TOM
Shut up a second...

AARON
(amiably)
Okay. Pretty peppy party, isn’t it, pal?

TOM
(picking his words)
I made one rule for myself when this started and I realized I was going to take a lot from you people because of being from sports...

AARON
And the rule was...

TOM
Never to pretend to know more than I did.

AARON
Can you name all the members of the Cabinet?

TOM
(flustered)
Okay, let’s drop it. I didn’t mean I’d take a test for you -- I mean if that came up in conversation I’d...

AARON
We’re conversing... Oh my, the names of the entire Cabinet have slipped my mind. What are they?

Tom is getting pissed.

AARON
(compromising)
Don’t name them. Just tell me if you know.

(CONTINUED)
TOM

Yes, Aaron, I know the names of the Cabinet.

AARON

Okay.

A beat.

AARON (cont'd)

All twelve?

TOM

Yes.

AARON

There are only ten.

Aaron’s suddenly a good deal happier -- damned if it isn’t a little infectious.

TOM

You’re feeling good, aren’t you?

AARON

(sincerely)

I’m starting to... We may do the capitols of the states.

TOM

Fifty, right?

Aaron almost smiles.

Tom enters the party leaving the door open.

LONG SHOT

Aaron in the f.g. -- his BACK TO CAMERA... Beyond him Tom being approached... then joining Jane.

86 EXT. JANE’S STREET - NIGHT

As Tom’s car comes to a stop.

87 INT. TOM’S CAR - NIGHT

TOM

This it?

JANE

I’m so exhausted. Punchy. Sick tired. I can’t think and I can’t move.
I’m just a dead lump of poured out flesh.

(then)

Would you like to come up?
Tom thinks -- then:

TOM
Maybe we could just sit here --
talk a little?

JANE
Okay. You didn’t like the party,
huh?

TOM
Too many smart people in one room --
it’s not healthy...

Jane’s confused by this. She looks at him.

TOM
I’m going to have to do a story
from beginning to end on my own.

JANE
Eventually. Does it have to be
right now?

TOM
(nodding)
Believe me, I wouldn’t be doing this
unless it was absolutely necessary.
I have an idea for something.

JANE
What?

TOM
I just read about it in a magazine
and it affected me.

JANE
Well, what is it?

TOM
If I tell you, can you manage not
to put it down or tell me why it
won’t work or is in bad journalistic
taste or anything like that?

JANE
(broadly)
Yes, Tom -- I think I can manage.

He turns towards her -- about to stick his chin out. Hesitates.

JANE (cont'd)
I promise.

(CONTINUED)
TOM

It's about women who are attacked by someone they know on a date... 'Date-rape,' that's the piece...
Well?

Jane clamps a hand over her own mouth.

TOM

Okay -- good move. Keep it there.

She continues to clamp her mouth shut as he exits the car, opens her door and then begins to half carry, half pull her out. She keeps her hand clamped over her mouth. Laughing from behind it as he lifts her up her front stairs -- deposits her behind her door and runs for it.

ON TOM

His spirits lifted.

ON JANE

Behind the door, trying to hide the glow in her eyes.

88 INT. JANE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The phone rings... Jane’s hand bounces off her nightstand to turn on the light knocking over and breaking the clock radio instead. Three alarm clocks stand next to the clock radio... Finally the light comes on. Jane’s voice is so thick with sleep the words she utters are just barely distinguishable.

JANE

Hello.

TOM

(uncertain)
Hello?

JANE

Hello... Who is it?

INTERCUT:

89 INT. TOM’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

TOM

I’m not sure I dialed right -- Jane?

JANE

Jane, yes. Tom? Tom, is that you? Is this Tom?

TOM

Yes.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
I had to sleep fast so I took two allergy pills to help me... I’m sorry... Hey, you called me.

TOM
It’s not important.

JANE
Says who? Not important -- ha-ha-ha. I was dreaming -- oh, no -- can’t tell -- how embarrassing for me. Gosh.

TOM
What pills did you take? You sound more like someone on a general anesthetic. Maybe I’d better speak to you tomorrow.

JANE
Nooo. Is it your story?

TOM
No. Are you going to the Correspondents’ Dinner on Saturday?

JANE
Why, you need me for the story?

TOM
No. Were you going to go?

JANE
Uh-huh.

TOM
Maybe I’ll get off work. I’d like to go.

JANE
Oh, good.

TOM
We can go together.

A beat, then:

JANE
So, you like me, huh?

TOM
I like you as much as I can like anyone who thinks I’m an asshole.
INT. JANE’S EDITING ROOM – DAY

Tom editing a piece with Bobby -- He also has a little typewriter table set up. He is reading from the page in the typewriter as he looks at the piece he has written.

TOM
(reading)
But cops on the street continue to view it as... Shit -- too long.
But street cops say... that fits.
That last cut work for you, Bobbie?

BOBBIE
Yes, and thanks for asking.

INT. NEWSROOM – NIGHT

As the regulars watch the Evening News, in particular the Date Rape piece which is now in progress. Tom anxiously eyeing Jane out of the corner of his eye as she watches the monitor. Her face impossible to read as she studies the screen.

ON MONITOR

UNIFORMED COP
What can you do? If a woman invites a man in and he says they uh, had sex and she says he raped her and then you find out they’ve been out together two, three times...how can you prove a crime?

NEW SHOT ON MONITOR

Tom and a woman of about thirty -- dignified but fragile -- she looks like someone who might be cast for a church production of “Glass Menagerie.”

YOUNG WOMAN
It will be a year next month since it happened...I never thought I’d talk about it outside of counseling...

ON NEWSROOM

As Aaron enters the scene.

AARON
Hi.

He is shushed by every woman in the room, accepts this and takes up a position near Tom and Jane to watch them.

ON MONITOR

YOUNG WOMAN
We’d gone out twice and I hadn’t enjoyed myself that much but it gets

(CONTINUED)
to a point -- I don't know if you can appreciate this but where you don't want to sit home or be with your girlfriends and people had always been telling me that I was 'too picky.' I'm not. It's just you want to meet a nice guy... So anyways, it was that 'give-him-a-chance' thing. No, it wasn't. I was lonely. So we went to a movie and when he brought me home he said could he just come up and have one beer and then he'd go. How do you say 'no', to that? So first it was this wrestling match which was awful enough because it got to be really a fight... because I'm a modest person... then he ripped my clothes and he forced me to... make love. He stayed in my apartment and forced me more times -- he didn't leave until...

(she has started to cry)
I promised myself I wouldn't cry...
It's just hard not to --
(ruefully)
You sure have a sympathetic face.
(she cries a bit more)
...I was so sure I wouldn't do this -- but the whole thing messed me up -- maybe more than it should...

ON MONITOR

A cutaway to Tom's face -- as, on camera, he turns clearing a tear from his eye.

ON NEWSROOM

Those watching struck -- perhaps embarrassed but riveted. Aaron is aghast. Aaron approaches the set.

AARON
Can I turn on the news for a second?
... Oh, wait a minute. Sex -- Tears --
This must be the news.

Tom stares daggers at him as a public official appears on the monitor.

ON MONITOR

PUBLIC OFFICIAL
I don't think you can overestimate it -- on any given Saturday night tens of thousands of women are being attacked and there isn't much they or we can do about it...

TOM
(on monitor)
The victims often remain too terrified

(CONTINUED)
TOM (cont'd)
to talk -- the police powerless and all the social welfare groups can finally do is monitor this epidemic of crime without punishment. This is Tom Grunick in Annandale, Virginia.

As his piece concludes.

NEWSROOM
Tom continues to glare at Aaron.

AARON
I’m in a pissy mood. I’m sorry.

TOM
What’s wrong with it?

AARON
Nothing. I think you really blew the lid off nookie.

Blair moans with displeasure. Aaron exits scene. Others start to congratulate Tom on the piece -- in the b.g. on the:

MONITOR
We SEE frozen wilderness -- men digging in the ground -- clumps of people watching them work.

ON JANE
Probing her-own ambivalence -- or, to be more accurate, working towards a positive stance.

JANE
(to Tom)
Nice work...
(checks watch)
I’ve got to get a crew off the clock.

She starts off -- Tom stopping her.

ON TOM AND JANE
Now off a bit by themselves.

TOM
So what did you think?

JANE
It moved me. I did relate to it -- I really did. It was unusual for you to cut to yourself when you teared up -- and that might not have been my choice... but it’s real and it got me... and I think a lot of the time I’m too conservative about that kind of stuff. Okay?

TOM
(enormously pleased)
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)
He walks back towards the area of the monitor.

ON MONITOR

JENNIFER
Tomorrow the jury returns to this site as each day brings more revelations of horror, four more bodies now taken from the frozen earth...This is Jennifer Mack in Wota Hamlet, Alaska.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Blair approaches Aaron

BLAIR
Ernie’s been looking for you.

As Aaron walks to his office.

INT. AARON’S OFFICE - DAY

As he enters and finds Ernie bent over his desk.

ERNIE
Oh, I was just writing you a note. What do you say we take a walk?

AARON (puzzled)
Outside?

ERNIE
Yeah --

EXT. WASHINGTON STREETS - DAY

Ernie is silent...He’s having difficulty. Aaron is feeling knots form. Finally Ernie breaks his silence.

ERNIE
I don’t know if we have any younger man more respected in our operation than you.

AARON
Just tell me what’s really going on. I think we know each other well enough for me to expect that.

ERNIE (agitated)
We know each other well enough for me to care how I put something to you which could wipe you out. So I will phrase things the way I think they should be phrased. All right?

AARON
Wipe me out?
Anyway. I want you to think of this as...

Just blunt talk, okay? I’d really appreciate bluntness.

Upper management thinks you’re dull.

Aaron deflates.

Aaron, I’ve never seen them like this -- I think Paul’s nervous about his own job and for some reason he thinks you only appeal to...

Wait. Bullshit me a little...I’m beginning to appreciate it.

I’m not suggesting the worst will happen...but someone with your brilliance gets nibbles about other jobs and maybe, the next time that happens, down the road -- you should look into it.

(emotional)
Ah, damn -- the fucking jerks -- My, God. They want to fire me.

All I know is that they’ve got to fire a large number of people... and they’re not going by seniority. There’s a recklessness in the air. They...

(interrupting)
Do one thing for me? Get me one shot at anchoring the Weekend News -- they’ve never seen me do it. I think it could turn them around.

I could do it this Saturday -- everyone wants off for the Correspondents’ Dinner.

Aaron turns -- his spirit lifted by the unexpected ray of hope.

Do it then.
ERNIE
Please prepare carefully. This couldn’t come at a better time.

AARON
Prepare what? You have Saturday’s news handy?

ERNIE
It’s been a while since you read the news -- I’ll have somebody work with you. Just on superficial performance things.

Several beats.

ERNIE (continuing)
Please.

AARON
Okay. I think I’d better be alone for a while.

ERNIE
I understand. I’ll go with you.

AARON
Thanks

INT. SMALL TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT
Aaron is seated behind a desk -- some old news copy in his hand. An unmanned camera is pointing at him. Tom is standing a few feet further back studying him.

AARON
This is uncomfortable for me -- because, well, I don’t mean it as a knock, but we approach this differently.

TOM
We sure do. I don’t mean it as a knock either.  
(he smiles)
Go ahead. I’ll just say what I think and you can disregard it if you want.

AARON
It just might not work for me because of our different approaches.

(CONTINUED)
Tom nods and gestures that he proceed. Aaron begins reading the news. Barely a sentence in, he is interrupted.

TOM
Wait.

AARON
What?

TOM
Your coat jacket is rising up in back.

Aaron ignores the tip.

TOM
When you sit down -- sit on your jacket a little -- that gives you a good line. Look at yourself in the monitor.

Aaron looks but is unimpressed and resumes reading the news. Tom, not about to be ignored when he knows it’s important, moves behind Aaron and begins to force his jacket down.

AARON
(very uncomfortable)
I don’t like being handled.

TOM
Sit on it! Now look.

AARON
Just don’t physically...
(he sees himself in the monitor and is suddenly enthusiastic)
Fantastic tip -- fantastic.

He starts to read again.

TOM
No. That’s not going to tell us anything. Let’s get this prompter going.

AARON
It’s not loaded.

TOM
I’ll find some copy. Be right back.

Tom exits -- Aaron looking after him, clearly taken with the genuine camaraderie ...the unmistakable joy Tom derives from helping out. Several beats and Tom comes back with a CAMERAWOMAN in tow.

(CONTINUED)
I got copy, I got Ellen to heat up the camera and I got Master Control taping so you can study it later.

He puts the roll of copy in the prompter.

Hey, Tom...

Tom turns.

I’m very appreciative.

Tom totally focused on him down on one knee checking him from various angles. He interrupts. Aaron reading from the prompter.

No. No.

No?

Don’t let your eyes go from the beginning of the sentence to the end like that. You don’t want to look shifty, do you?

Oh, God, no!

And the left side of your face is the good one. Go again. And try to punch one word or phrase in every sentence -- punch one idea a story. Punch -- come on --

Aaron does same with the story he is reading...

Good...very nice.

Aaron acknowledges the compliment in news mode. Punching the first words.

Thank you for the compliment, Tom.

He draws a laugh from the Camerawoman as he goes right into the next story.
CONTINUED:

TOM
Try not to move your head or
wrinkle your forehead...this is
good, very good...

EXT. NEWS BUREAU - NIGHT

Aaron, tape in hand, is saying his farewell to Tom. He is favoring
his left side as he will do for the rest of his life on earth.

TOM
You were smokin’ toward the end
there.

AARON
The pointers were great. I’ll study
the tape.

Tom is so into helping Aaron he finds himself delivering a locker
room pep talk:

TOM
And remember -- you’re not just reading
the news or narrating. Everybody has to
sell a little. You’re selling them this
idea of you. You know, what you’re sort
of saying is, ‘trust me. I’m, uh,
‘credible.’ So whenever you catch yourself
just reading...stop and start selling a
little. So long.

He moves off -- Aaron watching him go, feeling decidedly
uncomfortable by this last piece of advice and vaguely corrupted.

INT. JANE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jane FLIES INTO FRAME, carrying her dress, two large shoulder
pads clipped to her bra-straps. She is obviously running a little
late. Now she slips on the dress -- her pace so quickened that
it momentarily dulls the effect of seeing her in a pretty formal
gown; the kind good girls wear on special nights. The DOORBELL
RINGS...She opens the door while trying to put on her necklace...
Aaron enters carrying four bulging garment bags and a fistful
of neckties.

AARON
I spilled some rum on the outfit you
packed out. Let me show you the
alternates.

She eyes the amount of clothing, goes to the phone and dials.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
(into phone)
Tom...why don’t I meet you there?
I’ve got some last minute stuff I’ve
got to take care of...Hey, how did
you resolve your dilemma -- did you
rent the tux or buy it...I knew it.
How much? Wow...Okay...See you there...

AARON
I didn’t know you were going with him.

JANE
Did you bring your gray suit?

AARON
Yes...I was thinking that way too...
Which tie?

She holds them in her hand -- indicates with the necklace that
she wants him to help her...he fastens her necklace while
looking over her bare right shoulder as she riffles through his
tie collection.

JANE
(the clasp in place)
Thanks. Try this one.

She hands him the tie and he extracts his gray jacket from a bag
-- puts it on and ties the tie...She reaches into a white paper
bag full of fresh purchases and takes out a vial of perfume with
a built-in atomizer and sprays the air in front of her and walks
into the mist. ON Aaron’s reaction:

JANE
I read about it -- that’s how you
can make sure you don’t put on too
much perfume...

AARON
Could you at least pretend that this
is an awkward situation for you --
me showing up while you’re getting
ready for a date.

JANE
(flaring)
It’s not a date. It’s co-workers going
to a professional conclave.

Jane, unnoticed, reaches into the paper bag, takes a small box
of condoms and drops it into her evening bag.
Jane on a public phone, Aaron standing nearby within sight of a taxi stand.

**JANE**
(on phone)
How long will it take you to send one?...

She hangs up...paces...Then looks at Aaron, relaxes.

**JANE**
You look terrific.

Aaron poses a question which he feels in his deepest core:

**AARON**
Really?

Jane nods.

**AARON**
Because this is important -- so don’t just be polite. I’d really like to look...what’s the word I’m looking for?...

**JANE**
As good as humanly possible.

**AARON**
Yes.

**JANE**
Well, the line of the jacket -- No really...just very nice...just right. I wish I could be there.

**AARON**
Me too...Hey...if it gets dull a little before 11:00, drop by the studio.

**JANE**
I’m not sure I’ll be able to...I...

**AARON**
If...if not, I’ll have the tape...I’ll wait for you at my house.

**JANE**
Okay, great -- good luck.

Before she can deal with that, a cab arrives.

**AARON**
Thanks, Jane. Have a good time tonight.

(CONTINUED)
JANE

You too.

Aaron takes her in - she looks lovely.

AARON

I’d hug you, but why risk mussing either of us?

She half-laughs...kisses him, wipes the slight lipstick mark from his cheek and, in a sudden decision, takes each of her shoulder pads from her jacket and puts them in his jacket -- improving his look while diminishing her own. She gets in the cab.

AARON’S P.O.V.

Jane, leaning all the way over the front seat, giving detailed instructions to the DRIVER as the cab pulls away... As Aaron turns and walks off.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Jane, in her formal, sitting back -- anticipating her date.

EXT. WASHINGTON HOTEL - NIGHT

A hefty percentage of the Washington journalism industry’s men and women dressed formally for one of those evenings where they can finally assert their own glamour. Jane ENTERS THE SCENE.

INT. WASHINGTON HOTEL - ATRIUM - NIGHT

As Jane enters, lost momentarily in the lobby -- the majority of the throng passing through in formal clothes. A bit of DIALOGUE OVERHEARD from TWO MEN in dinner jackets.

MAN ONE

The L. A. times is a great outfit. Best severance pay in the business.

Jane keeps looking for Tom -- passing another MAN, talking to his SHARP-LOOKING DATE.

MAN THREE

He was lecturing me and finally I just said -- I’m sorry, I refuse to look at it as a negative that I’m young and my news appeals to people my age.

WOMAN

And it’s not like he just didn’t hire a twenty-six-year-old producer himself.

(CONTINUED)
MAN
No kidding, twenty-six.

Jane moves to the steps and starts up, greeting several people nervously. More bits of DIALOGUE, leaking from conversations of both substance and expedience.

ANONYMOUS OLDER MAN
Remember Brinkley’s great line -- “It’s as irrevocable as a haircut.”

Now, on the second level, she scans the crowd.

(continues)
JANE’S P.O.V.

The floor below. Tom in the world’s best-fitting tux...Clusters of people form around him but he works his way easily through them as he looks for Jane and grins his greetings, men are buoyed, women’s pulses throb.

ON JANE

As she silently mouths the words -- “smile and move and smile and move.” Which is exactly what he’s doing. Then a contract with the gods.

JANE

(to herself)
If he doesn’t see me soon, we’re not supposed to be together.

ON TOM

Seeing her. -- He does a tap step -- a brief giddy burst, the meaning of which is not lost on Jane. He is acting like her boyfriend.

ON JANE

Anxiety stripped away revealing a first glimpse of Jane as a joyous pretty young woman.

ON TOM

Moving quickly up the stairs -- as she walks toward him.

TOM

(excitedly)
It’s incredible who’s here.

JANE

Who?

TOM

Me!

She laughs. Almost completes an affectionate gesture -- takes his arm instead.

103 INT. NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Aaron seated in the main newsroom in shirt-sleeves, writing. He takes the just-completed page out of the typewriter and walks over to the weekend news PRODUCER (W.N.P.).

AARON

Want to look at this?

(CONTINUED)
George Weln appears...

GEORGE
(to Aaron)
What are you doing here?

AARON
(feigning casualness)
The weekend news...anchoring...
anchoring the weekend news. I’m going
to anchor it.

GEORGE
Way to go.

Aaron nods, as the Producer finishes the copy.

W.N.P.
This is terrific, Aaron. It’s
a pleasure to read.

AARON
Thanks. Oh, there’s water on the set,
Isn’t there, in case I get an attack
of cotton mouth.

W.N.P.
Sure. You’ll be fine.

AARON
(feeling patronized
and repelling)
I’ll be fine! Yes!! I know!!!

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT
Bomb sniffing dogs, SECRET SERVICE MEN and D.C. POLICE monitoring
the members of Washington’s most trustworthy elite as they pass
through the metal detector. The line moves slowly -- Jane and
Tom several couples back.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE
(o.s.)
Can I have your autograph for my
wife?

Tom and Jane turn to see a grinning Paul.

TOM
How you doing, Paul?

PAUL
So this is why you wouldn’t do the
Weekend News, you can’t turn down
a free meal.

(CONTINUED)
TOM
Yes, born to party.

Paul enjoys the riposte, looks at Jane who is shrinking within herself.

PAUL
I’ll see you two inside -- I think we’re all at the same table.
(sotto to Jane)
You’re finally learning to be flexible.
Glad you changed your mind about Tom.

As he leaves, Jane’s attention drifts briefly elsewhere -- she notices something. Her eyes pop.

JANE’s P.O.V.

The entrance where police doorkeepers are emptying a woman’s evening bag, clearly part of their security routine.

BACK TO JANE AND TOM

As this awful fact registers. She grabs Tom’s hand and leads him away...and so they leave -- holding hands

JANE
I’m sorry. I don’t want to go in there. I can’t.

INT. NEWS STUDIO - NIGHT

We are on the studio floor, FOCUSING on the activity around the Anchor Desk and three cameras...The FLOOR MANAGER stands ready to cue Aaron, the script is ready to roll on the prompter machine.

FLOOR MANAGER
Twenty seconds.

ON AARON

Making sure he is seated on his jacket -- taking one last look at the hand mirror being held by the MAKEUP WOMAN. She starts off -- but Aaron regrabs the mirror almost making her lose her footing -- a check -- then another check -- he points to a spot on his forehead which she dabs with the makeup sponge...Both of them fuss enormously with his hair -- four busy hands.

FLOOR MANAGER
Ten seconds.

AARON
How many?

(CONTINUED)
FLOOR MANAGER

Ten.

AARON

Okay.

He watches the MAKEUP WOMAN scurry underneath a camera lens, resits on his jacket and finally has the moment the system has been denying him for years. We can HEAR the moment in a barely AUDIBLE CRACKLE from the Floor Manager’s earphones...
“...The Weekend Report with Aaron Altman”
AARON
(on TV)
Good Evening...In mood and language better suited to an espionage novel than the delicate world of the Western Alliance, the British Foreign Secretary today pounced on what he termed, ‘The nest of professional spies and amateur traitors who were turning NATO Headquarters into an instrument whose only true function is folly.’ We begin our coverage with Edward Towne in London.

Aaron looks up -- takes a breath. He’s done well -- he’s punched his words and his one thought for the story. His gaze has been steady, his voice firm but he has begun to perspire. He dabs with his finger at the first trickles from his brow -- brushes some more prominent sweat from his upper lip...He beckons nervously to the Makeup Woman -- who comes in and dabs -- then dabs again as Aaron feels himself under his arms...

MAKEUP WOMAN
Gee whiz.

FLOOR MANAGER
Five seconds.

She scurries away, Aaron reaching for another Kleenex from her box and missing it...A graphic illustrating his next scripted section appears behind him.

AARON
...the sub-bases referred to are located in five countries...

And now the moisture on his face is clearly discernable -- the Floor Manager and Makeup Woman grimacing at the growing spectre as they look at a large monitor.

AARON
France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain as...

And now so much moisture sprouts from his upper lip that he pushes his lower lip out to slurp away the sweat...The Makeup Woman laughs briefly out loud before catching herself...Aaron’s eyes dart angrily in her direction.

AARON
As well as Great Britain...Our own State Department was rocked not only by the revelation but from the highly unusual persistence from the State Press Corps. Martin Klein reports on the ruckus at Foggy Bottom.

(CONTINUED)
A half-beat until he’s sure that he’s off -- his shirt now showing distinct sweat stains...

AARON

Help me.

The Makeup Woman picks up her Kleenex box -- then thinks better of it...

MAKEUP WOMAN

Someone find me some big towels.

ON AARON

He blots his face -- some makeup streaked -- by the towel.

FLOOR MANAGER

Five seconds.

ON MAKEUP WOMAN

As she scurries away, this time entering the control room trotting up one stair to look at the monitor...the Director talking to his Camera Operators.

DIRECTOR

I’d go looser but we wouldn’t see the graphic.

TECHNICIAN

(to other Technician)

No -- this is more than Nixon ever sweated.

The Makeup Woman now looks at the bank of monitors.

MAKEUP WOMAN

Can’t you just die for him?

ON MONITOR

Aaron’s makeup-streaked face.

106 EXT. WASHINGTON STREET - NIGHT

Tom and Jane walking drinks in hand, her arm around his waist. They stop -- he rests a drink on a ledge and boosts her up and then sits next to her.

TOM

You okay?

(CONTINUED)
JANE

Great.

FULL SHOT

REVEALING that they are sitting on an anti-terrorist concrete abutment protecting a major government building on a beautiful night in our capitol. He is still holding her hand -- and now he notes this.

TOM
(loudly to himself)
Why can’t I let go of this woman?

JANE

Well...

He interrupts her with the smallest of kisses -- so small and swift a kiss that she is left doing her return kisses to mid-air. And then he does something he’s thought about many times before -- he briefly caresses her breast -- while continuing to look at her.

JANE

At least kiss me when you do that.

TOM
(a grin)
You just can’t stop editing me.
Huh?

JANE

This is hysterical.

She laughs a little -- then kisses him. They break -- surprised and aroused and look at each other...

JANE

I was half hoping I wouldn’t have a good time tonight. You know why?

TOM

Because you’re nuts?

JANE

Right, right -- Isn’t she fun to tease?

He leans forward and speaks softly and truly.

(CONTINUED)
TOM

More and more lately when I’ve watched you in action -- seen all your energy -- I’ve been wondering what it would be like to be inside all that energy.

She takes a gulp of her drink -- puts a hand to feel the heat on her own cheek. Then turns to him.

JANE

Right back at you.

Several beats.

TOM

I don’t remember saying anything like that -- exactly...I don’t know why I just did.

JANE

(immediately at work)

Oh let’s see -- wait a minute, well, I can think of two reasons.

TOM

What?

JANE

Three...I just thought of a third... If you talk about it, you don’t have to do it.

TOM

That’s not it.

JANE

Good...Another is you’re trying to make it all about sex and heat and nothing else.

She looks at him -- he’s thinking.

JANE

Or it’s that great feeling that you don’t want to hold anything back. You know, intimacy.

She elbows him. Tom takes in the choices -- then:

JANE

(suddenly)

Oh, shit. I’m a creep.

She moves off the concrete wall.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
I forgot all about Aaron. I
promised to stop by and see how he
did.

TOM
I’d like to know. I’ll go along.

JANE
No. I’ll see you at your apartment
as soon as I can.

She starts to flurry with activity -- moves to the curb when
out of nowhere Tom barks a sharp command, the first time any
of his actions has been tinged with fury.

TOM
JANE!

Thrown, she stops and turns. He walks to her.

JANE
What happened?

TOM
Don’t run off -- like everything’s
settled the minute you make up your
mind.

JANE
He might be weird -- he can talk
more freely if I go alone -- why’s
that so hard to understand?

TOM
It’s not that it’s hard. I just want
you to give me a minute to catch up.

JANE
Okay.
(she hugs him)
Sorry.
(another beat)
Don’t yell at me like that again,
you scared the life out of me.

EXT. AARON’S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Jane exits a cab and moves up the steps.

INT. AARON’S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

He is at the top of a flight of steps. She KNOCKS on the DOOR.
RINGS. KNOCKS. Aaron opens it. He is wearing a sweatshirt and
cords.

AARON
I was in the shower.
She enters.
INT. AARON’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

JANE
How’d it go?

AARON
You didn’t see it or speak to anybody?

JANE
No.

AARON
Then it went well.

JANE
Did it really go well?

AARON
Define your terms.

JANE
Do you feel good about it?

AARON
No.

JANE
Do others feel that you did well?

AARON
No.

JANE
Then what was good about it?

AARON
I lost six pounds...

JANE
Aaron, will you tell me?

AARON
It was great...writing my little first rate copy, sitting on my jacket, punching my one thought. But I had this historic attack of flop sweat so they’ll never let me anchor again. Oh, I lost one of your shoulder pads -- I think it drowned. How was your evening anyway?

JANE
What do you mean, flop sweat? -- you’re making too much out of it...I’ll bet you were the only one aware of it...

(CONTINUED)
People phoned in.

Stop kidding, I want to know what happened.

I’m not kidding.

There were complaining phone calls because you were sweating?

No, nice ones worried that I was having a heart attack.

If all that happened how come you’re so chipper?

I don’t know. I don’t know. At some point, it was so off-the-chart bad, it just got funny. My central nervous system was telling me something. Jane. Sweat pouring down my face, makeup falling into my eyes, people turning on this fusillade of blow dryers on my head. All so I could read introductions to other people who are covering the stories, which is what I like to do anyway.

Yes.

And I’m chipper because you finally showed up.

Aaron kisses her bare shoulder.

I’m gonna cook for us. Tequila and eggs sound good?

I have to be someplace.

(Continued)
He looks at a clock reading 1:15 in the morning.

JANE
I told what’s his name -- Tom --
that I’d meet him.

AARON
Call him -- I mean it can wait,
right?

JANE
(now the plunge)
I don’t know. I may be in
love with him.
AARON
(as if he just
burned his hand)
No!!!!!

She starts for the door.

AARON
Don’t go.

JANE
This is important to me.

AARON
Yeah. Well...I think it is
important for you too. Sit down.

She sits. He walks to a desk and looks at her briefly...Silence.

JANE
What?

AARON
(looking at her)
Let me think a second. It’s
tough.

A remarkably long silence -- her mind wanders, she takes stock...
it is evident that he is straining to get it right, reaching
into himself.

AARON
Aaach...Jane...
Let’s take the part that has
nothing to do with me. Let’s let
me be your most trusted friend,
the one that gets to say awful
things to you. You know?

JANE
(testy and wary
but fair)
Yes, I guess. Yes.

AARON
You can’t end up with Tom because
it goes totally against everything
you’re about.

JANE
Yeah -- being a basket case.

(CONTINUED)
AARON
I know you care about him. I’ve never seen you like this about anyone so please don’t take it wrong when I tell you that I believe that Tom, while a very nice guy, is the Devil.

JANE
(quickly)
This isn’t friendship. You’re crazy. You know that?

AARON
What do you think the Devil is going to look like if he’s around? No one’s going to be taken in by a guy with a long, red, pointy tail. Come on. What’s he gonna sound like?
(Aaron growls)
No. I’m semi-serious here. He will be attractive. He’ll be nice and helpful. He’ll get a job where he influences a great God-fearing nation, he’ll never do an evil thing. He’ll never deliberately hurt a living thing. He’ll just bit by bit lower our standards where they’re important. Just coax along flash over substance. Just a tiny little bit. And he’ll talk about all of us really being salesmen.
(seeing he’s not reaching her)
And he’ll get all the great women.

She turns in fury.

JANE
Hey, Aaron. I think you’re the Devil.

AARON
You know I’m not.

JANE
How?!

AARON
Because I think we have the kind of friendship where if I were the Devil, you would be the only one I would tell.

She’s briefly impressed. He has a point.
JANE
You were quick enough to get
Tom’s help when you wanted help...

AARON
All right! Fine! Yes. And if things
had gone well for me tonight, then I
probably wouldn’t be saying any of this.
I grant you everything. But give me
this...he personifies everything
that you’ve been fighting against. And
I’m in love with you.
(realizing)
How do you like that? I buried the lead.

He pauses.

AARON
(an aside)
I’ve got to not say that aloud;
it takes too much out of me.

JANE
(thawing)
Sit down, stop.

Aaron slumps down -- it’s been a long round.

AARON
I’ve never fought for anyone before.
Does anyone win one of these things?

INT. TOM’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A CAR DOOR SLAMS in the street below -- he goes towards the
window which is blocked by his sofa -- puts his knees in and
looks out.

TOM’S P.O.V.

A woman walking from a car.

ON TOM

Momentarily thinking it’s Jane. Elated.

TOM’S P.O.V.

It is not Jane. The PHONE RINGS.

INTERCUT:

As he answers and we have the following conversation between
Jane, who is using the phone, with Aaron seen just a few feet
away. Tom is in his apartment.

(CONTINUED)
Hi. It’s me.

Where are you?

I can’t get away just yet. I’m at Aaron’s.

Well, when?

I’m not sure. It seems like he had sort of a mishap on the news.

I know. I taped it.

It wasn’t as bad as he thinks, was it? -- it wasn’t unprecedented or anything?

Not if you count ‘Singing in the Rain.’ Do him a favor and don’t treat it like a tragedy. You want me to talk to him?

Her eyes meet Aaron’s.

Uh-uh. (to Aaron)
He says you could hardly notice it.

Aaron beckons for the phone... as she does:

Don’t say anything about anything.

Let me talk to him

Aaron takes the phone.
110B CONTINUED: (2)

AARON
(into phone)
Hi. Will I ever sing again?

110C INT. TOM’S APARTMENT

Tom is sitting in a chair by an open window.

TOM
(into phone)
Everybody has one like that. I thought it was great when you started to laugh at the end.

110B BACK TO SCENE

AARON
(into phone)
I’m sorry I’m tying up Jane. I didn’t realize you two would be going this late. I’m sorry.

TOM
(over telephone)
Don’t worry about it.

AARON
(into phone)
I’ll put her back on.

Jane takes the telephone from Aaron.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
Hi, again. Sorry about...

TOM
No. That sounds more important. Let’s forget about tonight.

JANE
I don’t know if that’s absolutely necessary.

TOM
I’ve got my father coming through tomorrow anyway. I should get some sleep.

JANE
(hampered by Aaron’s presence)
Uh-huh.

TOM
I’ll see you at the office. Good night.

Several beats of silence. Finally:

TOM
Hello?

JANE
Yes.

TOM
Okay. Good night.

JANE
(total disbelief)
Good night??!

TOM
Jane, I’m not some chore you have to finish so you can stay on schedule.

JANE
Okay, great, Grunick -- Easy shots now -- huh? Good night.

(CONTINUED)
She puts the phone down. A beat -- she looks stricken. Aaron looks at her.

JANE
He just cancelled. He had a chance to think and he cancelled.

She bows her head.

JANE
I can’t breathe.
(aghast)
Over a guy?!?
(then)
But I can’t -- I can’t breathe. Damn it!

She gulps a breath. Her hands on her knees, leaning over -- another deep breath. Aaron takes in the spectre.

AARON
Well, Jane, it was nice of you to drop by.

111 INT. JANE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As she enters -- goes immediately to the phone.

ON PHONE...
Cradled in an answering machine -- indexes for sixteen one-button calls, mostly people from work -- “Parents” etc. Jane plays her answering tape. It is silent -- no messages... She fast forwards to double-check. Just the SOUND of blank tape. She pushes the button next to the “Tom Grunick.” It speed dials then we HEAR a busy signal.

ON JANE
She hangs up the phone. Then compulsively hits the “Tom” button again. Busy. And again. Busy. She considers for a moment hitting the button next to Aaron’s name.

JANE
(stopping herself)
Be fair.

She presses the button next to Tom’s name. Busy. And again. Busy.
As he picks up four newspapers dotting his lawn and opens the door of his car -- just as his wife calls from the door.

WIFE
Ernie, they’re calling from work.

ERNIE
Tell them I’m on the way in.

WIFE
It’s Paul.

Ernie, just a bit concerned, walks back to his house -- the four newspapers thick enough to be an awkward carry.

113 INT. ERNIE’S HOUSE

A phone in the immaculate living room.

ERNIE
(into phone)
Hello. Yes...

He holds the phone down at his side for a beat, composing himself in the face of a sudden and horrible turn of events.

ERNIE
Would there be any point to my going to New York and talking to them? Would there be any point in going over it with you? No, I’m still coming in.

He hangs up.

WIFE
What?

ERNIE
They fired me.

She takes his hand and kisses it -- then hugs him.

WIFE
(weeping)
How horrible. We’ll be fine. You’ll be fine. Stay here with me -- we’ll go for a drive, have some drinks, make happy plans.

ERNIE
No. They’re firing even more people than they said. Some will want to talk. It could help.

(Continued)
WIFE
(timidly)
I could use somebody to talk to on
a day like this.
(on his reaction)
Sorry. Go ahead.

ERNIE
Bye, sweetie.

WIFE
Okay, sweetie.

He walks towards the door -- picks up his newspapers on the
tray beneath the hall mirror and reacts.

HIS P.O.V.

In the mirror he SEES his wife making faces at him behind his
back. He thinks -- then walks to her -- gives her a small but
enormously sincere kiss and then EXITS his home without comment.

INT. EDITING ROOM - DAY

Jane is sitting in her editing cubby -- it is past noon. She
rises and stands in her doorway looking towards Tom’s office --
the door is open, the room is empty. Blair ENTERS carrying an
armload of tapes. She looks extraordinary.

BLAIR
I’ve got four hours of French
demonstrations --

Jane waves it off.

BLAIR
Some of it they use water cannons.

Jane takes the tape.

JANE
What are you dressed up for? Oh,
that’s right -- because the Evening
News is here this week.

BLAIR
I spent a fortune on this.

Blair EXITS...Jane pops the tape in, automatically making
timing notes, then standing -- looking again towards Tom’s
door.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JANE’S P.O.V.

The door now closed.

JANE

She stops the tape -- summons herself. She walks towards Tom’s office and opens the door.

INT. TOM’S OFFICE - DAY

Tom is seated behind his desk.

JANE

(with passion)
I kept trying to call you -- you never called me. Were you just diddling me? Is that it --? I’m great if I’m helping your career. But when I’m a woman for a second, I get immediately fucked around by you.

She is obviously in pain but still alert enough to catch Tom’s answer.

TOM

Jane, this is my Dad.

And, now OPENING the door a bit more -- Tom’s father is REVEALED seated across from him.

JANE

(that quickly)
I’m very pleased to meet you, sir.

Tom’s Dad is 25 years older than the only other time we’ve seen him -- still looking like the kind of American recruited for political campaign commercials. He nods at Jane.

JANE

Please forgive what I said (to Tom)
Sorry.

As she retreats:

TOM

You just light up a room and leave, huh.

She smiles through her torture as she exits.

(CONTINUED)
TOM AND HIS DAD

DAD
You want my opinion?

TOM
The thing that’s easy to miss about Jane is...

DAD
You want my opinion? And it’s okay if you don’t.

Tom thinks a beat.

TOM
Yes, I would.

DAD
The way she just acted is not the way an affectionate person acts.

Tom finds the comment off-the-wall enough to be thought provoking.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Paul arriving with Bill Rorish. The first time we have seen the multi-millionaire anchorman in the flesh. He has the grace and dignity of a man who spends every waking moment working on grace and dignity.

He and Paul are in the midst of an important conversation -- muted and ominous.

BILL
Just when do you start telling people?

PAUL
Almost immediately.

BILL
I’d like to take everyone out after the show.

PAUL
Bill...This is hard on all of us and it’s no time for compliments. But I think it’s extraordinary of you to come down here for this.

(CONTINUED)
BILL
If we’re not here for each other
during the tough times, we’re not a
news organization.

Blair ENTERS scene. The smallest flicker of interest from Bill,
but more than enough to justify her going into hock for the
outfit.

BLAIR
Welcome back to Washington.

BILL
Thanks.

A self-conscious look of greeting to Paul and she’s gone.

BILL
I’ve forgotten. Was she on the
list?

Paul nods “yes”

BILL
This is a brutal layoff...And all
because they couldn’t program
Wednesday nights.

PAUL
(can’t resist)
You can make it a little less brutal
by knocking a million dollars or so off
your salary.

AS Bill turns:

PAUL
Just a bad joke. I’m sorry. Awful.
It’s a miserable day and that was
some kind of totally sick-joke
defense mechanism which does not
indicate any of my feelings -- not
one -- but just shows the kind of
stress this represents for all of us.

Tom and his Father ENTER the scene from Tom’s office. Bill
walks to Tom.

BILL
Hi. It’s about time.

TOM
Good to see you, Bill.

AS they shake:

(CONTINUED)
A great handshake.

ON MR. GRUNICK’S FACE
touched, as he watches the networks’ most prominent journalist greet his son.

TOM
This is my father.

BILL
Good to meet you, sir.

ON TOM

Equally touched as he watches the world’s most prominent journalist greet his Dad, who turns goofy with excitement.

MR. GRUNICK
Good-bye, Tom.

He puts a big hand on his son’s cheek -- a farewell pat. Then whispers in his ear.

MR. GRUNICK
I’m going to go back home and tell all your old teachers.

Tom watches his father walk off and moves immediately to Jane’s editing room.

INT. JANE’S EDITING ROOM - DAY

AS Tom enters...

JANE
I feel terrible about what happened. What did he say?

TOM
He -- uh -- said he liked you because you looked like you had -- fire and honesty.

JANE
(enormously pleased)
No. Did he really?

TOM
Yes. Then he said a really weird thing...

(CONTINUED)
JANE  
(so softly)  
What?

TOM  
(he means this)  
That it would be a treat to make someone like you feel better... 
He gets like that sometimes.

JANE  
That’s so perfectly...It really 
makes me feel a little faint... 
(actualy woozy)  
Whooooo.

Blair enters wildly into the scene.

BLAIR  
Paul canned me. 
(as Jane goes to her)  
Well, my brother will feel great-- 
-- now he’s not the only screw-up.

JANE  
It’s started.

Bobbie sticks his head out of the office.

BOBBIE  
Tom -- Paul wants to see you.

At this moment a just fired messenger crosses the newsroom 
slamming a mailbag to the floor.

ANGRY MESSENGER  
Sons of Bitches!

Tom focuses and moves off fearful.

INT. NEWSROOM AND HALLWAYS - DAY  
Moving with Tom. Nervousness growing, confidence gone, he 
proceeds down the hallway.

INT. ERNIE’S OUTER OFFICE - DAY  
SECRETARY  
He’ll just be a minute. I hate 
this so much.

Tom sits down -- pats his tie in place...A beat and the door 
opens. Paul leads out Martin Klein. They shake hands.

MARTIN KLEIN  
You know I’m just old enough to be 
flattered by the term, ‘early retirement’

PAUL  
That’s wonderful...what a lovely 
line.

(CONTINUED)
They shake hands.

MARTIN KLEIN
(evenly)
Well, I certainly hope you’ll die soon.

A little smile to Tom and he’s off.

PAUL
Tom.

Tom enters the room. A nervous cough in evidence as he crosses to a seat.

PAUL
We’re having a severe cutback, Tom -- 27 people in this bureau alone, including technical personnel and we’re going to reorganize at the same time. We’re going to drop you out of Washington and assign you to London.

119A INT. WIRE COPY ROOM

A distraught Jane talks with Ernie - equally distraught, but contained.

JANE
You knew they were going to offer me this before I ever went in there.

She is agitated -- Ernie just looks at her.

JANE
(continued)
I can’t stand this! This is not --

ERNIE
(interrupting)
We care for each other too much to be dishonest. So let me tell you the simple truth. I’m leaving. No matter who they replace me with here, they were gonna make me leave anyway. The fact that it’s you takes some of the sting out of it.

Ernie pauses - then thinks of one more thing that needs saying.

ERNIE
And I don’t think you’re any better than I am.

JANE
Goddamn. No, I’m not.
Aaron and Ernie are off to the side of the newsroom -- People are packing their belongings -- as secretaries cry and embrace -- from an office rumbles a shouted denunciation:

ANONYMOUS VOICE
No. I won’t keep my voice down.
...They are worse than accountants -- they are bad accountants.

Tom enters scene.

TOM
Have you guys seen Jane?

ERNIE
She’s in there becoming the first woman bureau chief we’ve had here.

Tom takes this in.

AARON
What did they do with you?

TOM
They booted me out of Washington.

AARON
Impossible. There’s no system in the world that wouldn’t value one of us.

(CONTINUED)
TOM
Why? What did they do to you?

ERNIE
(pointing at Aaron)
It’s what he did. I’m proud of him.

AARON
They told me they’d keep me because they could plug me into any story and my salary was in line.

ERNIE
The cost-efficient reporter.

AARON
So I quit.

A weeping woman bursts into their circle and sweeps Ernie away. Tom and Aaron stand there -- comrades at last -- victims of the same sword.

TOM
You packing up tonight?

AARON
Yes. And I’m sorry that they’re sending you down but you’ll make it back...Where they sending you?

TOM
London.

AARON
/incensed/
London. That’s a promotion!

TOM
/defensively/
I don’t think so.

AARON
It is. Yes -- that’s where they had Rorish, for God’s sake, before they made him anchor. I can’t stand it -- they’re grooming you for it all and you don’t even know it.

TOM
Hold it down, okay?

(CONTINUED)
AARON
Can I ask you something? You only
had one crew on the date rape
piece, right?

TOM
Yes. You’re not going to stick
around for the farewell party?

AARON
No. I don’t know how much fun it
will be when Martin Klein and Ernie
have to drop off their credentials
with the security guard.

Aaron looks at people packing their belongings in boxes -- a
few pockets of conversation...Ernie reading some copy.

AARON
This story they won’t cover. And if
the network doesn’t cover it -- it
must not be important so why worry.

TOM
(eyeing him)
I’m going to miss you -- you’re a
prick -- in a great way...

Aaron taken by surprise -- laughs.

TOM
(correcting)
You know what I mean...

AARON
No, I liked the way it made me sound.
Okay. Be good. So long.

He exits.

121 INT. TOM’S OFFICE – DAY

AS he picks up a clean wastebasket and deposits his belongings.
A schedule book, clean shirt, two ties, cuff-links, a travel
mirror, cassettes of his Washington reporting. His desk clear
he writes on a clean piece of copy paper. He centers it on
the otherwise empty desk.

INSERT PAPER

“Good luck, you’ll love the bureau chief...Previous Occupant.”
AS Tom enters from his office, a wake is slowly igniting. Tom moves along the edge of the room, carrying his wastebasket full of belongings, not really a part of the mournful festivities.

TOM’S P.O.V.

Jane across the room hugging one person after another.

ON JANE

AS she embraces an older secretary.

OLDER SECRETARY
You know what I always wanted to
tell you -- that...

JANE
Shhh. This isn’t the last time
we’ll see each other. It’s not.

A two-armed tight embrace of Martin Klein.

JANE
We’ll get them back -- it’s going
to change.

Blair is at hand. She embraces Jane and whispers a confession into her ear.

BLAIR
(to Jane)
Except for socially, you’re my role model.

And now Jane sees Tom -- he mouths one word at her -- “London.” She nods that she already knows and then lets her body sag a little. He gestures her towards her editing room, so they can rendezvous.

123 INT. EDITING ROOM – DAY

AS Tom enters and waits for Jane. When she enters he closes the door.

JANE
These people -- it’s all so awful.
It just hurts physically, doesn’t it? Like something’s wrong with
your bones, like your organs are
shifting inside your body.

She looks at him expectantly. It’s not what he’s feeling.

(CONTINUED)
TOM
Maybe I haven’t been here long enough.
(suddenly buoyant)
But, hey, congratulations on the promotion.
JANE
How can you say that to me?
TOM
Sorry,
(a beat)
I can’t stand here feeling bad because I don’t feel worse. This has happened at every station I’ve ever been to. Do they owe you any time off?
JANE
(chuckling)
Fourteen weeks.
TOM
I think it’s crazy for you to come in here tomorrow and start a new job. I have a week before I have to get to my new job .... Let’s get the hell away to some island fast and ....find out how we are together away from this.
JANE
Well, I just think that’s an extraordinary proposal.
TOM
That’s yes?
JANE
That’s more than yes. That’s you bet.

They kiss.
124 INT. AARON’S APARTMENT - NIGHT
The phone rings. He answers
AARON
Hello.

125 INT. JANE’S OFFICE - NIGHT
Jane -- still at the office -- it is quite late.

JANE
(into phone)
Bastard, sneak, quitter.

(Continued)
125 CONTINUED:

AARON
Speaking.

JANE
I just found out. You didn’t say anything to me. You just resigned. Will you meet me now?

AARON
Uh, no, I can’t. Maybe next week. I got...

JANE
No! I’m, I’m going away tomorrow. Please.

AARON
All right. I’ll meet you at the place near the thing where we went that time.

JANE
Okay, I’ll meet you there.

126 EXT. SIDEWALK - RESTAURANT - DAY

Aaron and Jane are having a beer. They are in mid-conversation.

JANE
Why not try it for a few weeks?

AARON
Stop. My agent has a hot prospect -- the number two station in Portland. The general manager says he wants to be every bit as good as the networks. Personally, I think he should aim higher.

JANE
Tell me the God’s honest truth -- are you leaving because of me? Because if you are...

AARON
Ernie told this story. How he used to write obits and when the people in town called him up with death notices, he cried. And he always felt the good thing was that he was still that way when they promoted him out of obits. That you were lucky if you got out while you could still cry.

(a beat)
Which means I should of have quit this place three years ago.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
You’re just trying to say all great stuff
so I’ll feel even worse that you’re
not around.

He laughs.

AARON
Let’s go...

JANE
I just want to sit here for...
(she breaks off - then)
I mean, the feeling to stay here is
powerful. Why is that?

AARON
Maybe the best part of your life is
over and you don’t want to get up
and start the bad part.

(CONTINUED)
Jane looks at him levelly.

JANE
You are now required to sit here with me.
(a beat; then)
Come on... be smart for a second -- what do you think will happen to us?

AARON
Okay, that’s very easy. Five, six years from now I’ll be in town to collect an award representing the surge in foreign coverage by local stations.

JANE
(smile, it’s like old times)
Yes.

AARON
I’ll be walking with my wife and two children -- we’ll bump into you on the street, my youngest son will say something and I’ll tell him...
(deliberately)
... it’s not nice to make fun of single, fat ladies.

JANE
(a beat then quietly)
You won’t be able to stay mad at me, right?

AARON
I hope so...
(on her look he relents)
No. I’m not really mad.
(nodding head as if reciting a catechism)
I’ll miss you, we’ll talk, we’ll always be friends... we’ll get hot for each other every few years at dinner and never act on it, okay?

Jane looks at him, questioning.

AARON
I got to go.

(CONTINUED)
AARON

Jane, do you know how Tom had tears in his eyes in that interview he did with that girl? Ask yourself how we were able to see that when he only had one camera, and it was pointed at the girl during the entire interview. (on her reaction)

I’m fairly sure I was right to tell you.

127 EXT. OFFICE - NIGHT

We LOOK THROUGH THE WINDOW as Jane enters -- in a frenzy -- searching the stacks.

128 INT. TAPE LIBRARY - NIGHT

As she locates the cassette labeled “DATE-RAPE” - 9/26/87 EVENING NEWS - OUTTAKES.

129 INT. TAPE CUBBY - NIGHT

As she inserts the tape into the player.

ANGLE ON JANE...AND MONITOR.

As she watches...this is what she sees...

YOUNG WOMAN

...but the whole thing messes me up more than it should.

The young woman cries. We HEAR Tom.

TOM’S VOICE

Okay, that will do it. You okay?

The tape is rocky now -- the Sound Woman and Cameraman continue to roll as they move towards their next shot -- at times the camera pointing towards the carpet -- but the sound continues. The crew chatting -- mentioning that the tape is still rolling.

ON MONITOR

TOM

That’s enough. That’s enough.

YOUNG WOMAN

I’m sorry.

TOM

Are you okay?
YOUNG WOMAN
Yes. I’m sorry.

TOM
Don’t be silly. What are you sorry about?

YOUNG WOMAN
The way you were looking at me, I just went.

TOM
I just need a minute more of your time now, so we can shoot from behind you, toward me, and um...

YOUNG WOMAN
Uh-huh.

TOM
...that way we have someplace to go when we cut. And I just sit here, I nod my head and look nerdy.

YOUNG WOMAN CHUCKLES

JANE CHUCKLES.

SOUNDWOMAN
Tom.

TOM
Yeah.

SOUNDWOMAN
It kills me we didn’t get you on camera. It was so powerful seeing your reaction.

TOM
Really?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes, it was.

SOUNDWOMAN
For a second there, I thought you were gonna cry yourself. That would have been something.

(CONTINUED)
TOM  
(considering - then)  
Give me a minute.

JANE  
(fully realizing)  
You fucking...

The monitor reveals Tom successfully forcing a tear from his eye.

YOUNG WOMAN  
(commenting on this feat)  
Oh, that’s amazing.

Jane reacts, profoundly sad. She presses the rewind button in reflex and waits until the cartridge is ejected, then

EXITS FRAME.

EXT. BWI AIRPORT - DAY

Jane’s cab pulls up to the curb. She gets out -- she is carrying no luggage. She sees Tom who hurriedly walks up to her. Jane is fighting to maintain a calm.

TOM  
Look who’s the organized one. I’ve got everything.

He briefly opens a paper giftshop bag he is holding and shows her he has bought them each a bathing suit.

JANE  
I’m not going.

He looks at her with anticipatory distaste evident on his face.

TOM  
Why?

JANE  
I saw the taped outtakes of the interview with the girl. I know you ‘acted’ your reaction after the interview.

TOM  
I felt funny about it afterwards. It’s verboten, huh? I thought since I did it for real the first time -- but I get you. That’s not the reason you’re not coming?

(CONTINUED)
JANE
(raising her voice)
Of course it’s the reason. It’s terrible what you did.

TOM
We disagree on how God-awful it was. Why don’t you come with me and we can disagree and get a tan at the same time?

JANE
(livid)
Jesus, if you’re glib about this, I’m going to lose it. I was up all night and...

TOM
(attempting to calm)
Jane, Jane, Jane, Jane, Jane...

JANE
It made me ill. You could get fired for things like that.

TOM
I got promoted for things like that.

JANE
Working up tears for a news piece cutaway...You totally crossed the line between...

TOM
It’s hard not to cross it; they keep moving the little sucker, don’t they?

JANE
(distaste)
It just proves that the differences we have are...

TOM
This is a one-way argument. We’ve got six days; if you go and we fight and we hate it -- we’ll come home. If you don’t go? Well, that’s a much bigger deal. I leave for London right after that. So, it’d be a very big deal if you stay here. The plane’s boarding. You’re good at deadlines. Here’s your ticket.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
(taking ticket)
It’s amazing. You commit this
cruel breach of ethics and
you act as if I’m nitpicking. Try
and get this -- when you edited that...

TOM
(deliberately)
I’m leaving now. Gate 43.

He simply turns and walks away -- looking back once as Jane
stands there mucked up by his sudden departure -- the lack
of resolution to their confrontation is palpable.

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

On Tom moving past the metal detector. He too is frustrated --
pissed off at her.

INT. OTHER TERMINAL AREA

Jane moving quickly along towards the metal detector.

INT. METAL DETECTOR

As Jane passes through and sets off the buzzer. She stands
there -- the heel of her hand pressed to her brow trying to
stem the tears. As others look on she takes a huge key ring
from her pocket -- deposits it in the box -- walks through
without a buzzer and moves on.

INT. BOARDING RAMP - DAY

Tom waiting while in the background “People Eaters” ferry
passengers to the plane. (Note: These are busses which
extend to 25 feet in height by rising up on metal stilts to
pick up people at the terminal and ferry them to their
waiting planes.) As one full “People Eater” pulls away
and another empty one arrives.

TICKET AGENT
(to Tom)
This is the last one.

Others start to board. He sees Jane moving towards him.
He walks to her, she gestures back towards the street.

JANE
That’s not going to be the way we
say goodbye. Even though I think
what you did was rotten -- it’s
not all impersonal. You mean
something to me --

(CONTINUED)
TOM
(interrupting)
You keep coming after me and
looking down on me. It’s starting
to make me batty.

She looks at him.

TOM
(cont’d)
I can’t help it that they like me.
And I like that they like me. And
I think there’s a lot of this job
that I do well. What do you think it
takes to do this job -- the way they
have it now?

JANE
I don’t want to discuss work.

TOM
Well, let’s do a special report on
that...I mean that’s news.

JANE
I knew what you meant.

TOM
What I don’t know, I can learn and
what I do know, nobody can teach.
Excuse me for saying it about
myself, but I think it’s true.
(old habit)
What do you think?
(catching himself)
Never mind what you think.

They look at each other.

JANE
You’re lucky I came after you so you
got that off your...

TOM
(interrupting)
Yes, I am. Thanks. I mean it.

JANE
It’s okay.

TICKET AGENT
Sir?

The pressure begins to bend Jane’s resolve.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
So you have an extra bathing suit, huh?

TOM
(wary but hopeful)
You want to come?

JANE
(totally open)
It’s just that one of the few things I’m not confused about is what I was saying downstairs, that...

TOM
(gives up - sadly, finally)
Then you should stay here.

JANE
(softly)
It’s better when you let me say it.

He hugs her. Now that it’s over they can each care a bit more openly. While in the embrace...

TOM
Take it easy.

JANE
Why did I have to do this to myself? -- Watch you take off.

He kisses her lightly -- looks at her...then heartfelt:

TOM
Oh, honey.

He walks to the People Eater and gets on, still holding his paper bag of bathing suits. The bus pulls away.

ON JANE
Watching him go.

JANE’S P.O.V.
Tom standing at the front window of the bus -- framed very much as he is when on television.

A134 INT. AIRPORT TAXI CAB - DAY
Jane gets quickly into cab.
CABBIE
Good morning.

JANE
Good morning.
(after collecting herself)
Dupont Circle, please.

The cab pulls away.

JANE
Don’t take the beltway, because at this time of day there’s gonna be a lot...
(stops herself, then)
...go any way you want.

She sits back in the seat (containing herself) before finally and quietly adding what she knows to be true:

JANE
But New York Avenue’s faster.

CUT TO:
Much the same place where Jane and Tom first met. The words.... SEVEN YEARS LATER........ appear on the screen.

A sign off to one side tells us it’s the annual meeting of the Local Television Broadcasters.. and that at 2 P.M. Tom Grunick will be speaking on “Responsibilities of Broadcast Journalism for the ‘90s.”

Much the same audience, though two members of the audience may strike particular interest- a curly haired man seen from behind holding a similarly curly haired five-year old. Tom is in mid-speech.

TOM
...when they told me Bill had decided to retire and offered me the Evening News, I thought it was the same kind of joke we used to pull back at the station -- turning off somebody’s prompter in the middle of a show.

Some good natured laughter.

(CONTINUED)
TOM
(continuing)
And then when they heard my reaction --
they thought I was kidding. I told them
I’d be their anchor but I didn’t want
to be the Managing Editor -- that there
were people better qualified than I
to control the content and if there
weren’t we were all in trouble.

The audience really enjoys this:

SAME SCENE - SOME MINUTES LATER.

MOVING SHOT...

The anchor teams - leaning forward. They love this man.
Imagine the feeling -- you see, on the top of the mountain, a
man not unlike yourself.

TOM
And now to something more
important... I’d like to introduce
my fiancé.
  (gestures to a woman in
the front row)
Lila?

A svelte, near beauty gets to her feet.

ON CURLY HAIR AND BOY...

Aaron and his son as Aaron cranes for a look at the future
Mrs. Grunick.

INT. AUDITORIUM - STAGE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Tom and Lila shaking hands - Aaron, his son in his arms, waits.

ON TOM
As he sees Aaron... he is clearly delighted.

TOM
Holy shit, Aaron.

He claps him on the back... Aaron is as pleased as he is
uncomfortable with the attention.

TOM
Lila -- this is Aaron Altman!

LILA
(high British accent)
Oh, yes -- you’re one of Tom’s
50 or so role models.

(continues)
AARON
Hi.

TOM
Well, this kid couldn’t possibly belong to anyone else. What’s your name?

BOY
Clifford...

AARON
(indicating Tom)
Do you know who this is, Cliff?

BOY
The big joke?

Tom looks at him -- Aaron gives his son a disciplinary nudge.

AARON
I’m just bringing him over to give Jane a look at him --

TOM
I thought she’d be here. I’ll go with you.

AARON
Okay.

TOM
(to Lila)
I’ll see you back at the hotel.

LILA
(cool)
All right.

He starts off -- she pulls him back for an urgent communication.

LILA
Tom, the speech was magnificent.

AARON
Oh, I didn’t say anything about your speech.

TOM
I appreciate it.

EXT. WALKWAY - DAY

Tom, Aaron and the boy walking along...Tom plays with Cliff as they move. The boy is delighted...Jane is in a park -- a blanket spread out -- she is wearing shorts and a top -- she has some wine and a small picnic -- a toy for Clifford

She HEARS her name being called.

(CONTINUED)
ON JANE

Shielding her eyes from the sun -- now making out Tom... As they reach her.

JANE
(to herself)
Well, why not.
(as they arrive)
Hey, what is this? My life’s rushing in front of my eyes.

TOM
A picnic?

JANE
I thought for ol’ Cliff here -- Look at you? You’re more adorable than your pictures. Look what I got for you.

She hands him a toy.

AARON
What do you say, Cliff?

The boy kisses Jane’s hand.

AARON
He excels at gratitude.

TOM
(to Jane)
Are you any closer to a decision?

JANE
I think so... They’ve been talking to me about being Tom’s Managing Editor.

AARON
Really?

JANE
(to Tom)
I’m going to take it.

TOM
What a great surprise. I didn’t think we had a chance. I heard you wanted to stay in Washington.

JANE
Well, there’s a guy but he says he’ll fly up a lot.

(CONTINUED)
TOM
Well, we should talk. You
going to have time for dinner?
I’d like you to meet Lila.

JANE
I’m sorry because I was really
looking forward to that, but I’m
going back in a few hours.

TOM
(then)
Okay...It’s so good to see you.

He leans forward - kisses her on the cheek...A businesslike
kiss, devoid of subtext. Now Tom turns to leave -- pauses
to shake hands with Aaron.

TOM
(to Aaron)
It’s nice to see you.

AARON
Congratulations on history’s
longest winning streak.

TOM
If you ever get restless in Portland
let me know.

AARON
Why?

Tom shuffles uncomfortably.

ON JANE
Smiling, appreciating Aaron’s attitude towards a blandishment of
the powerful.

TOM
(to Jane as he leaves)
Bye...Boss.

Tom walks away. He’s a good 20 yards away when Aaron looks
up to see his son running after Tom.

AARON
(feigning ease)
Hey! Cliff! Cliff!

Tom now notices the boy, leans down and pats him.

TOM
(to Clifford)
Go back to your daddy.

AARON
(increasingly insistent)
Come on, Cliff. Come on.

(continues)
As Clifford runs back to his father, Aaron sits next to Jane.

AARON
(to Jane)
So who’s the guy?

JANE
Well, we met about three months ago.
He works at the Surgeon General’s office.
He loves boating. So, he’s been getting
me into water skiing.

Aaron laughs - at the very notion of Jane finding water sports a
lure. Jane deliberately moves past this moment.

JANE
I like it! So, doll, what
about you lately.

AARON
Well -- my wife got this new
job.....

He continues to talk - as the two former colleagues catch up --
their ease returns, if not their intimacy, as the frame locks
and the scene slowly recedes into a black background and we

FADE OUT AND
GO TO TITLES