

MORNING
Glory

IN THE BLACK WE HEAR A BEEPING SOUND

FADE IN

INT. BECKY'S BEDROOM -- NEW YORK CITY -- PRE-DAWN

...an alarm clock beeps and flashes in the dark. We hear someone GROAN, then slap the clock quiet. A beat.

CLOSE ON

A hand coming out from under a comforter. Holding a TV remote. Click.

A TV switches on in the dark and CNN comes on. The TV is perched precariously on a bookcase. It's an old model, practically has a hanger for an antenna.

Now the figure in bed sits up -- BECKY FULLER, 30's.

OVERNIGHT ANCHOR

...sources say the Senator from Alabama flagrantly conducted the affair in his Senate offices...

Suddenly we see another TV go on. It's another hand from the other side of the bed, clicking a remote.

ADAM GREEN, 30's, goes by GREENIE, sits up sleepily in bed beside BECKY.

BECKY pulls out another remote, turns on yet another junky TV perched on the bookshelf. To MSNBC. Another remote, GREENIE turns on Fox news. Another remote, BECKY turns on NY1 News.

Most of the channels run the same photo of a busty blonde:

ANCHOR

Chloe Meyers, the alleged mistress, has not been seen since allegations surfaced.

BECKY and GREENIE stumble out of bed.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

..reporters are camped outside her modest house in Alabama waiting to catch a glimpse of the 21 year old model-slash-actress.

We jump-cut as:

BECKY and GREENIE brush their teeth, get dressed, taking in the news the whole time...

Finally BECKY turns off the TVs one by one, but hesitates as the last one catches her attention.

GREENIE stops and looks too. They watch as:

ON THE TV -- We see a grainy black and white archive shot from the 70's of a young REPORTER in front of Three Mile Island. We hear the pompous network VOICEOVER.

VOICEOVER

He's the anchor you've trusted for almost two decades.

...now we see the same REPORTER broadcasting by flashlight from the 1977 New York City blackout...

VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

He circled the globe to get YOU the story you needed.

We see the same REPORTER in Afghanistan in the 80's, followed closely by the camera. We see flashes of enemy fire up ahead.

REPORTER

The blasts are coming from the west-

Another flash. He keeps running towards the action.

VOICEOVER

He's covered every major story that's touched our nation.

Music swells over a series of dissolves as the REPORTER becomes recognizable as MIKE POMEROY... From the site of a plane crash, at the Oliver North trial, in Desert Storm...

VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

And he was there for us when we were most in need of comfort -- the only anchor who went to Ground Zero to show YOU what was happening.

MIKE on 9/11 at Ground Zero, talking to a FIREFIGHTER who is covered with grime.

VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

Join us next week for a look back at the life and times of Mike Pomeroy...

Finally we see MIKE smiling at his anchor desk.

VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

...and bid him a fond farewell--

CLICK. BECKY turns the TV off.

BECKY

A little sugar-coated, huh?

GREENIE

Yeah, but what're they gonna say?

(does a "voiceover" voice)

"A sporadic binge drinker and notorious asshole, Mike Pomeroy has been torturing producers and sleeping with interns for over twenty years."

BECKY

You're not still bitter, are you?

GREENIE

He tortured me for twenty months. I was chewing Zoloft like Mentos.

BECKY

Aw, poor Greenie.

She puts her arm around him, kisses him...

GREENIE

Are you going to kick me out now?

BECKY

You betcha.

INT. FOYER -- DAY

GREENIE grabs his stuff and heads for the door.

GREENIE

This isn't right. I feel used.

BECKY

Shh. I don't want him to hear you.

GREENIE

You really think he'll be shocked?
Twelve years after the divorce?

BECKY

(nudging him out)

Venti double capp. I'll be there in
a second.

INT. KITCHEN -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY packs a lunch into a brown paper bag, writes DYLAN on it, draws a heart around the name, shoves it into a backpack.

INT. DYLAN'S BEDROOM -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY kisses her son, DYLAN, 15, lying in bed. His room isn't like a typical teen's -- instead of video game posters, he has beautifully framed illuminated manuscript pages.

BECKY
See you tonight, Sweetie.

DYLAN
Mom, don't do it.

BECKY
Do what?

DYLAN
You promised.

She sighs. Okay.

INT. KITCHEN -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY gets out a new brown paper bag, writes the name DYLAN on it again, transfers the snack... and throws the bag with the heart into the trash.

Finally, BECKY walks out the door of her apartment. We see the clock behind her and we finally see what time it is:

3:30 AM.

EXT. STREET --- NYC -- PRE-DAWN

The empty streets of a darkened Manhattan. Quiet, peaceful and freezing. BECKY and GREENIE huddle against the cold on their way to work, clutching huge Starbucks cups.

GREENIE
We can't get scooped on this Chloe Meyers thing.

BECKY
Ava's on it, we'll get it.

GREENIE
Seriously, we gotta shove this story up AM America's ass, after what they did to us last week with the Secret Service sex tape thing.

BECKY
 (shakes her head)
 You know, sometimes you take the
 competition thing a little too
 seriously.

GREENIE
 Is that possible?

She gives him a look and GREENIE opens the door for both of
 them and immediately we are thrust into...

INT. THE MORNING SHOW -- DAWN

...loud, bright, busy, backstage at The Morning Show.

Everywhere we look we see logos, ads and posters touting the
 show's success... America's choice in the morning... The
 Morning Show, #1 in all markets...

We also see pictures of the The Morning Show anchors -- the
 cheerful JODI RAMIREZ and strapping ex-athlete BILL SHASTA.

BECKY puts her hand up, GREENIE fist bumps her, she grins,
 they go their separate ways...

We follow BECKY. She opens the door to the control room.

CUT TO:

TOM THOMPSON (20's) at his desk, looking exhausted. He sips
 coffee from a "The Morning Show" coffee mug. TOM is pasty and
 tired. Always.

BECKY
 Hey, Tom-tom, whaddya get me
 overnight?

INT. HALLWAY -- THE MORNING SHOW -- DAY

BECKY walks through the hallways with TOM.

TOM
 ...CNN ran the Indonesian bus
 accident at 2:42 am, I was gonna
 call you, because first they said
 two dozen fatalities, but only
 three died--

BECKY
 Anything on Chloe Myers?

TOM
Just your basic siege stuff --
reporters camped outside her
parents' house in Mobile and--

--and TOM coughs. It sounds horrible.

BECKY
You okay?

TOM
Why? Do I look bad?

BECKY
(Um...)
No.

TOM
I'm heading out.

He peels off and AVA, an attractive woman in her 30's, very pregnant, bustles out of an office and over to BECKY.

AVA
Got a flight booked for Mobile.

BECKY
You sure? Can you still fly at
eight... hundred months pregnant?

AVA
Yeah, I'm with the twins. They like
stakeouts. We eat candy.

Together they push open the door to...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- THE MORNING SHOW -- DAY

... BECKY, GREENIE and the other PRODUCERS, BOOKERS,
ASSISTANTS of The Morning Show are gathered around an
enormous table.

The Executive Producer of the show is OSCAR, gray-haired,
earring, in his 50's, looks like an aging rock drummer.

OSCAR
So who's doing the tick-tock on the
World Bank scandal?

GREENIE
That'll be Mort, live at the
Pentagon--

OSCAR
 (to BECKY)
 What else you got in your hour?

BECKY
 Last part of the series on amazing
 pets, the taped interview with
 Tiger Woods, then Jeff Birch's
 gonna play an acoustic set--

OSCAR
 Good, he always gets us some nice
 numbers--

GREENIE
 Yeah, funny, I tried to get him for
 the 7 o'clock hour, but he only
 wants to do Becky at 8.

Everyone grins at BECKY. She ignores it.

BECKY
 Maybe that's because my hour is
 more highly rated--

GREENIE
 Oh, come on. The guy loves you--

BECKY.
 He does not. He's just friendly.
 (off their looks)
 That's all it is.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO -- THE MORNING SHOW -- DAY

BECKY being hugged by JEFF BIRCH (30's). The hug goes on a
 bit longer than is strictly comfortable. Seems like he might
 be trying to smell her hair.

BECKY
 Thanks for coming, Jeff.

JEFF
 Don't thank me. I love coming to
 your show. The staff, the crew. And
 you have the best craft service.

BECKY
 Well, we try to--

To demonstrate he takes a piece of his breakfast quesadilla
 off his plate and lifts it towards her mouth--

JEFF
 Monterey Jack, my favorite--

He pops it in her mouth. Across the room she sees GREENIE, standing with a few of the camera guys. He waves.

BECKY
 (tries to finish chewing)
 Good. Great.

He follows her sightline over to GREENIE.

JEFF
 Oh man, You're not still seeing that guy, are you? I don't trust grown men with nicknames. Have a drink with me after?

BECKY
 (shakes her head)
 Gotta go do the show, Jeff.

As she walks away...

JEFF
 Is that a yes?

JUMP CUT THROUGH THE BUSTLE OF PRE-SHOW

In the greenroom, GUESTS wait in chairs, eating danishes.

BILL and JODI get their makeup done.

The WEATHERMAN runs some demos on the giant weather screen.

Fans gather outside the window of the studio.

BECKY and the other producers go into the control room.

BILL and JODI take their places behind the anchor desk.

ON THE MORNING SHOW

We see JODI and BILL on their living room set. We hear the opening clip piece playing in the background.

JODI
 Hello there, everyone, and welcome to The Morning Show.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

The show's in progress. BECKY is standing next to OSCAR when LENNY, BECKY'S associate producer, runs in, races over to them, breathless. LENNY is tiny, nervous, deeply Jewish.

LENNY

Embassy bombing... Amman. On the wires, CNN about to break it.

OSCAR

Any of our cable people nearby?

LENNY

No. We could maybe round up a BBC stringer. I'll see what I can find.

LENNY starts to walk away.

BECKY

I wish we had someone out there.

(thinks, realizes)

Wait a second. Lenny.

(beat)

Where's Pomeroy?

INT. BECKY'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY is on the phone with ROGER FRIEDLANDER, the president of the network news division...

BECKY

He's in Jerusalem covering the talks, we can copter him to Amman in twenty minutes.

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

...who's in his fabulous office. ROGER is sleek, polished and looks like he's in a crisp suit always, even when he's nude. His watch face is bigger than his head.

We intercut between BECKY and ROGER.

ROGER

He won't do morning show appearances, you know that.

BECKY

He'll do it if you tell him to.

ROGER

(sighs)

Dammit, Becky. You always push --

BECKY

Just trying to do the news here,
Roger--

ROGER

But it's gonna cost us--

BECKY

Come on, Roger. Don't be a jackass.

LENNY gives her a look. "Jackass?" Really?

ROGER

And you wonder why we don't promote
you to corporate.

BECKY

Jesus Christ, we're wasting time.

ROGER

He's gonna want to cut in with a
special report, not wrap it into
your show.

BECKY

You don't want to do that. It'll
kill the ratings for the day.

(he hesitates)

I'm on the air for another hour. He
wants to break this thing, he's
going to do it on The Morning Show.

ROGER

All right. I'll call him.

BECKY gives LENNY a thumbs up. He's doing it.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(sigh)

God only knows what Pomeroy's
doing.

INT. MOTEL -- JERUSALEM -- DAY

Pan across a motel room -- we see discarded clothing, an
empty wine bottle, wine glasses akimbo.

Tangled in the sheets we see the body of an exotically
beautiful WOMAN and a MAN, face down...

A cell phone rings. MIKE POMEROY rolls over and we finally
see his face. He picks up.

MIKE
Is anybody dead?

ROGER
Well, we're not sure yet--

MIKE promptly hangs up. The WOMAN snuggles in closer. The phone rings again.

INT. MOTEL -- JERUSALEM -- LATER

MIKE shaves, his phone on speaker. We intercut between MIKE and ROGER.

ROGER
Our cable, local, evening, morning shows -- we all work together now --

MIKE
Yes. Interesting point. Blow me.

ROGER
It's called synergy.

MIKE
BBBbllllloooowwwmmmeeee.

ROGER
So you don't want to break this?

MIKE
Okay, you want me on your depraved faux-news show, I want something too -- get me a crew so I can anchor from here tonight.

ROGER
Come on. That's expensive. Jesus, Mike, you're retiring. Ease up.

MIKE
You want me or not?

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- THE MORNING SHOW -- DAY

BECKY paces nervously, studying the monitors. LENNY runs in.

LENNY
Copter just landed.

EXT. EMBASSY -- AMMAN -- DAY

The crew feverishly sets up a shot amidst the chaos on the steps of the embassy. We see DAVE (MIKE'S producer), reading off a clipboard, rattling off information to MIKE.

DAVE

...okay, we don't have a casualty count yet... the group claiming responsibility has ties to both Al Qaeda and the Iranian government...

MIKE

Stop talking, you fatuous midget.

DAVE

(used to it)

...we are waiting for a State Department briefing and...

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- THE MORNING SHOW -- DAY

BECKY paces as MIKE comes up on the screen.

BECKY

(into her headset)

Dave? Are you there?

DAVE (O.S.)

Monitor's broken, I had to prep him verbally, but--

BECKY

Oh, Jesus. Is he sober at least?

EXT. EMBASSY -- AMMAN -- DAY

MIKE stands next to the camera dripping Visine in each eye.

DAVE

Oh, for sure not.

DAVE looks at MIKE. Crosses himself.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- THE MORNING SHOW -- DAY

LENNY crosses himself. BECKY shakes her head.

BECKY

... and the Jewish guy is crossing himself. So we're confident.

She takes a deep breath.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Come on, Pomeroy...

AND WE MOVE INTO THE MONITOR CLOSE ON

MIKE POMEROY'S face as he hears the countdown. 4-3-2...

IN THE STUDIO

We see JODI at the anchor desk.

JODI

For more on this story we go to
Mike Pomeroy, who's live at the
scene. Mike?

The show cuts to MIKE. And it's like a new person inhabits
his body. Serious, empathetic, informed, assured.

MIKE

Jodi, the bombing today at the
American Embassy in Amman came
after weeks of strife...

BECKY breathes a sigh of relief.

EXT. STREET -- OUTSIDE THE MORNING SHOW -- DAY

BECKY, LENNY, GREENIE and a few other members of the team
leave The Morning Show building at the same time.

BECKY

Congratulations, everybody. Nice
work pulling that together.

LENNY

See you tomorrow--

BECKY

--dark and early.

Everyone walks away, leaving her with GREENIE. He sighs.

GREENIE

So, I'll come over after Dylan's
asleep?

BECKY

No.

(off his look)

Come over for dinner. We're
ordering pizza.

GREENIE

You're joking -- sure about this?

BECKY

Why not? As someone I like pointed out, it's been twelve years since the divorce.

GREENIE

(grins)

Pizza's on me.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

BECKY and DYLAN have dinner with GREENIE.

DYLAN

Pomeroy refuses to appear on The Morning Show?

BECKY

All the other anchors do the morning shows but him. Thinks he's above it. I've barely met the man.

BECKY puts the dishes away.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Hey, you guys wanna watch TV? There's that new Ken Barker show where they strand people on top of the mountain--

GREENIE

(to DYLAN)

You don't actually let your mother watch that reality crap, do you?

BECKY

Come on, tonight's the episode where they start killing each other for food.

DYLAN

I would, but I need to finish my math proof tonight. Can't hand it in late, since it's a one-on-one.

BECKY

One on one? I thought a lot of kids were taking applied math.

DYLAN

Since I covered a lot of that stuff last summer at Columbia, they thought I should have my own tutorial. Pretty tough stuff.

GREENIE looks over his shoulder at DYLAN'S book.

GREENIE

Let me see that.

DYLAN

You know algorithms?

GREENIE

Doesn't every morning show EP?

(grins)

It's possible I learned something at Yale besides how to work a keg.

DYLAN grins, GREENIE grabs DYLAN'S book.

GREENIE (CONT'D)

Well, you've got about 25 IQ points on me, but maybe I can help.

BECKY watches them, smiling, can't believe this is going so well.

GREENIE meets her gaze, grins.

EXT. 55TH STREET -- NYC -- DAY

Outside Michael's, a gathering spot for NYC media types. BECKY walks down the street with ROGER.

ROGER

Thanks to Pomeroy you were three million households over AM America. Daybreak actually finished fifth, a new low for them -- beaten by a repeat of Antiques Roadshow.

BECKY winces.

ROGER (CONT'D)

But you gotta watch being such a hothead, Becky.

BECKY

You mean, the jackass thing? Sorry. You know me, high school dropout, teen bride, polite isn't my thing. You want manners, you got Greenie.

ROGER

True. But Greenie's not going to be running the show next month.

BECKY looks at him.

BECKY

Excuse me? I'm--

ROGER

Oscar's leaving to work at 7 Days -- can't imagine why he wants to leave live television, but there it is. You have any interest in running the show?

She doesn't know what to make of this. Her heart leaps.

BECKY

You're messing with me. You are...
I don't know why...
(realizes he's not)
Roger, I don't know what to say--

ROGER

You don't have to say anything. Just keep winning. And get me a Chloe Meyers interview.

ROGER walks in the restaurant. BECKY follows, quietly mouthing a little "Yes!" to herself. He turns.

BECKY

Don't worry, I'm on it.

EXT. STREET -- ALABAMA -- DAY

We're in Mobile, Alabama, on a street with rows of small neat houses. REPORTERS are camped out everywhere.

CAMERA finds AVA, twins strapped into the back of her rental car. AVA thinks for a second, then drives away.

EXT. STREET -- ALABAMA -- DAY

We see a salon with signs advertising hairstyles from the Charlie's Angels era. Hand drawn signs read: Waxing, Facials. AVA walks in, trailed by her 3-year-old girl twins.

INT. CONTROL ROOM-- DAY

BECKY and GREENIE huddle in the back of the room, the monitors hovering over them.

GREENIE

Wow. Becky, that's--- that's
amazing news.

But we see he's reeling.

BECKY

He just sprung it on me--

GREENIE

--no, it's great. It's great.

BECKY

You sure?

GREENIE

Hey, come on. How long have you
worked for this?

He holds his fist up. She grins, bumps her fist against his.
Just then LENNY runs in.

LENNY

Becky, I got Ava.

INT. SALON -- ALABAMA -- DAY

We see AVA, wearing a smock.

AVA

How fast can you get a local crew
over here? Right now. Live.

BECKY (O.S.)

You're kidding. Really?

QUICK CUT TO:

CLOSE ON CHLOE MEYERS, tears welling in her eyes.

CHLOE

...if he had told me he was
married, none of this would have
happened, I swear.

PULL OUT TO SEE BILL SHASTA

Conducting the interview on The Morning Show.

BILL

And you weren't suspicious? The two
of you only met in his office...

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY, GREENIE, LENNY and the rest of the crew watch the interview as it airs. They're all very excited.

GREENIE

What do the other shows have?

BECKY looks at the monitor.

BECKY

AM has John Kerry.

LENNY

Oof. Channel changer.

BECKY

Daybreak has senior weight loss.

GREENIE

Nice. We'll flatten them too.

BECKY

Come on. We kill Daybreak all the time. I kinda feel bad for them.

BECKY looks at DAYBREAK on the monitor. We see COLLEEN PECK, the poised anchor of Daybreak, talking earnestly into camera.

She is elegant, comfortably in command.

BECKY (CONT'D)

You ask me, their anchor situation is keeping them so far back in third. Colleen Peck is brilliant but she can't do it alone.

Cut to PAUL McVEE, COLLEEN'S co-anchor -- cute, vacant.

BECKY (CONT'D)

And she certainly can't do it anchoring with a rutabaga.

GREENIE

Screw 'em. You beat them on the story, fair and square.

BECKY gives him a look. He doesn't notice.

INT. BECKY'S OFFICE -- LATER

BECKY is on the phone.

BECKY

--I don't care. I'm not having Dr. Phil on again. He groped my assistant and brought a bottle of Stolichnaya--

Just then her other line rings.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Hold on... Ava? Hello? What's wrong? What happened?

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY stands in front of ROGER.

BECKY

You're overreacting.

ROGER

And you paid for a story.

He spins his computer monitor.

ROGER (CONT'D)

It's on every blog. And mainstream media's gonna kill us too.

BECKY

Are you crazy? Roger, we would never pay for a story. You know that. So Ava got a leg wax--

ROGER

And a haircut and a mani-pedi and some highlights and--

BECKY

She guessed Chloe might go down to the local salon. She had no idea Chloe's mother owned the place.

ROGER

But she does, so you look like you were trying to pay her for the interview--

BECKY

Roger, the other networks offered her hundreds of thousands to buy her snapshots and home video. You really think we tried to buy her for 112 dollars and 48 cents?

INT. STUDIO -- THE MORNING SHOW -- SIMULTANEOUS

TOM THOMPSON, is leaving work at the end of his night shift. On his way out he notices knots of people huddled everywhere, looking glum and tense, spots LENNY, who's popping Maalox out of a sheet of shrinkwrapped pills and downing them.

TOM

Lenny, what's going on?

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY paces, agitated.

BECKY

Roger, just hold on a second--

ROGER

Two years ago a booker got fired for buying a rape victim sneakers. Because the media got hold of it.

BECKY

--that's what I want to know. How the hell did they -- who called and told you? We've had leaks out of your office before, you know, and--

ROGER

It doesn't matter.

BECKY

Don't fire Ava, suspend her and--

ROGER

--and we've gotten way beyond that.

BECKY

Already?

ROGER nods. And she instantly gets it.

BECKY (CONT'D)

You're not going to make me EP.

ROGER

Greenie has only a couple years less experience than you do, so--

BECKY

(chokes out)

You're giving the job to Greenie.

ROGER
I don't have much choice, do I?

She looks at him.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Since you're not going to be
working here anymore.

INT. GREENIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

GREENIE is shocked. BECKY can barely breathe, unable to
compute what just happened.

GREENIE
Holy shit. Me? He wants me to run
the show?

BECKY
...I don't know how he found out
about it, he's certainly making too
big a deal about it--

GREENIE
Becky, I'm so sorry.

BECKY
Have you spoken to him?

GREENIE
No, not since the show, this is all
such a shock--

BECKY
...I can't believe this...

GREENIE
Look, I have no idea why this
happened, but I'll talk to him.
Tell him I think you should stay.
You're a very gifted #2.

And she looks at him. Something's off. But her brain's still
too frozen to calculate...

BECKY
A #2.

GREENIE
The EP job isn't right for
everyone. You have Dylan to worry
about and--
(realizes, quickly changes
tack)
(MORE)

GREENIE (CONT'D)

Look, it's shitty. I'm devastated.
But you're so talented, you'll get
something else great.

BECKY just nods, shaken.

BECKY

I... I have to go.

INT. BECKY'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY puts her things in a box. She talks to AVA on the
phone. AVA is sobbing.

AVA

I had no idea... as soon as I
realized something was wrong, I
called you, but your voicemail just
picked up, so I called Greenie and--

BECKY

You called...

AVA

--and he said he would take care of
it. Talk to Roger for me.
Straighten out. I was going to pay
for the salon stuff myself...

BECKY

You spoke to Greenie?

INT. OUTSIDE ROGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

ROGER'S ASSISTANT is on the phone. BECKY walks over to the
desk. Smiles. Don't worry, I'll wait.

And as BECKY waits, she looks down at ROGER'S call sheet.
Quickly scans it with her reporter's eye. And GREENIE'S
name... is not there.

The ASSISTANT hangs up. Looks at her. What are you doing?

BECKY

I was just wondering if Greenie
called Roger earlier because...

ASSISTANT

No, he didn't call.

And BECKY nods, relieved. Actually takes a breath.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

He stopped by the office. Couple hours ago.

She looks at BECKY. Who tries to cover. Doesn't work.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY walks over to GREENIE'S office. It's already being packed up by some INTERNS.

BECKY

Hey, guys.
 (feigns a laugh)
 Big job, he's such a pack rat...
 (lightly)
 When did he tell you to... pack up his office?

INTERN

(shrugs)
 Couple hours ago? Said to be careful with the Emmys.

INT. MICHAEL'S -- DAY

A fancy restaurant in midtown populated by media types. BECKY bursts in. Looks around. Where is he?

She spots GREENIE at a table. Starts to walk over to him like she's going to kick his ass...

... and she realizes GREENIE'S having lunch with The Morning Show anchors, BILL and JODI.

GREENIE looks over, sees her. BECKY can only stand frozen to her spot...

...as GREENIE, slowly, deliberately, turns his eyes away from BECKY and goes back to his conversation.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

BECKY stumbles outside. She tries to draw a breath, tries not to crumple right there on the sidewalk...

She runs away, through the obstacle course of PEDESTRIANS, the HONKING of the cars screeching at her as she runs...

QUICK CUT TO:

BLACK

INT. BECKY'S BEDROOM -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY'S hand reaches out, picks up remote after remote, turns on the TV's. The world swirls around her as...

...and we jump cut from ANCHOR to ANCHOR saying "relieved from her duties at The Morning Show"... "colleagues expressed dismay"... "replaced by Senior Producer Adam Green". We see pictures of her, of GREENIE, of CHLOE MEYERS...

BECKY switches off the TV's... and rolls over in the darkness.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT -- KITCHEN -- MORNING

DYLAN walks in. BECKY is in her pajamas, drawing a heart around his name on the lunch bag. He lets it go without comment.

She puts it in his backpack, hands it to him, doing her best. But he knows her better than anyone.

DYLAN

Mom, what are we going to do?

And she thinks of a million things to say, but what she says is the only thing she's certain of:

BECKY

I don't know.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET -- PROVIDENCE -- PRE-DAWN

In the dark, a beatup Subaru pulls into a dimly lit parking lot. BECKY gets out. The clock on the dashboard reads: 2:15.

INT. STUDIO -- WPGH, PROVIDENCE -- PRE-DAWN

The studio is tiny, everyone is yawning. The anchor -- exhausted, middle-aged RALPH -- reads off the teleprompter.

RALPH

Welcome back to Good Morning Providence, it's 4:38 am... Transit authorities are now saying that the piece of the central artery tunnel that fell on the commuter's head was reported to be about three feet in diameter.

And that's when BECKY, standing on the floor of the tiny cramped dingy set, notices that RALPH'S co-anchor, LOUANNE, is asleep. Just out.

BECKY
Oh Jesus. Not again.

The CAMERA goes to a one-shot of RALPH. BECKY walks over to ARNOLD, EP of the show. Complete asshole.

BECKY (CONT'D)
She's out again.

ARNOLD
(pissed)
I told you to make sure she takes her Ambien by 8. Well, fix it.

BECKY
(into her headset)
Sorry, Ralph, you're going to have to read Louanne's copy.

RALPH looks over. Sees LOUANNE asleep. From his reaction we can tell this isn't the first time this has happened.

RALPH
Looking ahead to today's city council meeting...

We stay on LOUANNE, sleeping. A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT walks over and nudges her. She jerks her head up.

ON RALPH, still reading the news, as we hear, from off-screen, a loud, startled yelp:

LOUANNE
I'm up!!

On BECKY, unable to believe she's in this hell.

EXT. STREET -- PROVIDENCE -- DAY

BECKY drives across the middle-class suburb, pulls up in front of a simple house.

INT. HOUSE -- PROVIDENCE -- DAY

BECKY walks in, puts down her things. Her mom, MELINDA (late 50's) is sitting in a Barcalounger watching Oprah.

Beside her on a side table are a pile of tabloids, a pack of menthols and two fingers of whiskey.

BECKY
Hey, mom, they back yet?

MELINDA
Nope -- still at the ball game.

BECKY
Wow. I can't believe Donnie talked Dylan into going.

MELINDA
Why wouldn't he want to go to a game with his father?

BECKY
We're talking about Dylan, Mom. He's not your average teenager.

Just then BECKY'S Blackberry buzzes. She looks at it.

MELINDA
Who's calling you all the time?

BECKY
It's the wire. It emails me when something comes up.
(explains)
The newswires -- AP, UPI, Reuters.

MELINDA
Oh. Okay.

One of those peculiar family silences.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
Oh, you remember Marion? From my bridge group?
(off Becky's look: yeah?)
Her daughter Sherry is a flight attendant. Does the Providence-Cleveland route. Works just two weeks a month. She's divorced, like you, but with two kids. Anyway, Marion says the perks in that job are fantastic, not just for Sherry but for her parents too. Marion went to Boca last year for pennies.

Beat. BECKY looks at her mother, amazed.

BECKY
Um, I might be wrong, but I think you just told me I should become a stewardess--

MELINDA

Flight attendant. And no. Of course not. I did not say that. Don't be silly--

BECKY

Oh. Okay.

MELINDA

--you're too old to be a flight attendant.

BECKY looks at her, dumbfounded. Just then DYLAN walks in with his father, DONNIE.

And although they're completely different, they look alike -- DONNIE looks like what DYLAN would look like if he were twenty years older, a mechanic and a biker.

DYLAN

...many people believe baseball began as a game called rounders in pre-Civil-War America. Some other early precursors to baseball were "stoolball", "poison ball", and "town ball." Oh... hey, Mom.

INT. HOUSE -- PROVIDENCE -- LATER

BECKY and DONNIE drink beers in the kitchen while MELINDA and DYLAN play checkers at the dining room table.

DONNIE

I can't believe you're still staying here with your mom. You gotta get your own place, Beck.

BECKY

I haven't been here that long.

DONNIE

Ten months. Enough time. Unless you don't want to be here. Unless you're just waiting to go back to New York.

BECKY

(ignores him)

He hasn't played checkers since he was three.

DONNIE

He hustled her out of about fifty dollars last week. So he does take after my side a little.

BECKY

(laughs, then, admitting)
Okay, don't get me wrong. I loved New York. That feeling you get on a spring day, like you're in your own musical, like:

(to a little melody)
"Look at me, I'm in New York..."

She stops, aware that she's babbling.

BECKY (CONT'D)

It didn't work out. I accepted it.

He nods, knowing this is bullshit.

DONNIE

So -- were you seeing anyone down there? In the city?

BECKY

Me? Nah. I'm too busy.

DONNIE

(beat)
You know if you ever want to get naked with me, for old times, I could help you out--

BECKY

Hey, no thanks. Nice offer, though, 'preciate it.

DONNIE

You going down to the city for that thing?

BECKY

Nah, I don't think so...

DONNIE

If you don't, he's gonna know why, Beck. You know that.

ON BECKY, knowing he's right.

INT. LECTURE HALL -- COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY -- DAY

We see a panel of TV PRODUCERS on a dais -- the event is moderated by a hip long-haired PROFESSOR.

PROFESSOR

... representing the local morning news shows, we have Becky Fuller of WPGH...

(polite applause)

Next we have Adam Green, executive producer of The Morning Show...

CAMERA finds GREENIE. BECKY tries hard not to look at him.

GREENIE

You can call me Greenie.

PROFESSOR

Morning shows can be the cash cows for their news divisions... The Morning Show, in fact, is the single most profitable program in the history of television. Every evening news rating point is worth one million -- in morning news it can be 10 million.

He turns to the panel.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Becky, let's start with you... what do you think are the requirements for working in morning news?

BECKY

Well, you'll be covering an amazing range of topics, from hard news on down to 8 ways to make spaghetti squash, so you have to be a very curious person--

PROFESSOR

Adam?

GREENIE

Well, I agree with some of what Becky said, but I do think the field has changed since she was working here in New York.

BECKY

Yes, that's right. I'm a relic. In a year, everything I knew about national news is out the window.

The audience laughs. BECKY doesn't.

GREENIE

I didn't say that. What I meant was, it's an evolving business. You really have to be in the thick of it to track its evolution...

BECKY watches GREENIE, trying to plaster a smile on her face.

AFTER THE PANEL

The PANELISTS mingle with the crowd. BECKY looks at GREENIE, in the center of a throng of admirers. Suddenly she hears a voice behind her.

VOICE

He's the most successful EP in The Morning Show's history. They've never been so far out.

BECKY turns. Sees ROGER. Sleek and expensive-looking as ever.

BECKY

Good for him. Brilliant guy.

BECKY shrugs. Picks up a carrot stick.

BECKY (CONT'D)

You come down here to learn about the news?

ROGER

Come on. Be nice. Doesn't it make you feel better that I got shitcanned last month? Now we have something in common.

BECKY

Actually we don't. You got thrown out in a run-of-the-mill corporate coup. You still have your reputation -- such as it is. Mine was ruined. I'm the #2 on the #3 show in Providence. I'm sleeping in my mother's basement and--

ROGER
 (very quickly)
 --and I just closed the deal to be
 the head of network news for ABS
 and we need a new EP for Daybreak.

She stares, amazed.

ROGER (CONT'D)
 Just thought I'd see if you have
 any interest in redeeming yourself,
 fixing that god-awful show and
 maybe kicking Greenie's Ivy League
 ass at the same time?

BECKY
 You want me... to run Daybreak?

ROGER
 Unless Rhode Island is just too
 riveting.

BECKY can't help it -- a leap of joy hits her.

BECKY
 Roger, I never thought--

ROGER
 Thought so. Let's have lunch.
 Hammer out a contract.

He starts to walk away.

BECKY
 No.

He turns. Excuse me?

BECKY (CONT'D)
 The show needs a complete overhaul.
 It's not even cleared by some
 affiliates... I don't even know why
 they keep it on the air. They could
 beat it with soap operas and game
 shows--

ROGER
 --but we don't have a strong news
 division so we need the show and--

BECKY
 --and you desperately need a co-
 anchor.

(MORE)

BECKY (CONT'D)

Paul McVee is a houseplant and he's there because that's what Colleen Peck wants -- a backup singer. And sadly enough, she's the face of ABS News. You can't piss her off or she'll quit.

ROGER

--I agree with you. And because I'm a genius, I persuaded Colleen to accept a new anchor.

BECKY

How did you do that?

ROGER

I threatened to cut her reporting budget in half and have her anchor the show from Daytona during spring break. And so she approved him.

BECKY

Him?

ROGER

She'll only approve one person. And if you can convince him to do it, the show is yours.

She looks at him. Oh no...

ROGER (CONT'D)

Man's a legend.

BECKY

Jesus, Roger...

ROGER

Look, I've always felt bad about what happened. You're very talented, and you got stuck. I still believe in you, but you're damaged goods and you know it.

And she looks at him, knowing he's right, but...

ROGER (CONT'D)

You won't get an offer like this again, Becky. What're you going to do?

EXT. STREET -- PROVIDENCE -- NIGHT

BECKY drives to DONNIE'S house. Half-restored vintage cars clutter the driveway.

INT. DONNIE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

DONNIE opens the door.

DONNIE

He fell asleep early. Sorry.

INT. DYLAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

DONNIE and BECKY watch DYLAN asleep in his bed.

BECKY

Guess I'll see him after school.

She heads down the hall.

DONNIE

Hold on a second.

She turns. A beat.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Did you know I don't even understand all the words Dylan uses? I keep a dictionary in the crapper, sometimes I sneak out during dinner and look things up.

BECKY

(nods)

I keep mine in my coat closet.

DONNIE

He would do great, back in New York. There's better schools for a kid like him there.

BECKY

(realizes)

He told you. About the offer.

(off his look)

Look, I've already got a good job--

(off his look)

--not exactly what I wanted, but fine -- I make decent money, and I can't uproot Dylan again. I can't.

DONNIE

Is that the reason? Or is that you're scared shitless? That you think you might fail and maybe Melinda is right and maybe you shoulda been a stewardess?

BECKY

Flight attendant.

DONNIE

You need to go down there and give it a fight, Beck. Everyone stops to watch a fight. Remember that.

She hesitates.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I'll come down and see Dylan. Take him for a motorcycle ride, out to a ball game, to a titty bar.

BECKY

Titty bar, wow... You promise?

DONNIE

Do whatever it takes, Becky. You owe it to yourself.

On BECKY, hesitating.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Come on, you can charm this guy. You can charm anyone. I should know, right?

EXT. FIELD -- SOUTH CAROLINA -- DAY

A wide field by a river in South Carolina.

We see a figure in a flak jacket, holding a shotgun, scanning the sky for doves.

Suddenly the figure hears a rustling, turns--

And we turn with him to see BECKY, facing the shotgun, which is pointed right at her.

CAMERA finds the person holding the gun...

...MIKE POMEROY.

EXT. FIELD -- SOUTH CAROLINA -- DAY

BECKY chases after MIKE who is trying to get away from her.

MIKE

Go away.

BECKY

Just hear me out.

MIKE

Go away. Go away. Go away.

BECKY

Look it's a real offer --

MIKE

On the worst show. In the morning.

BECKY

Okay, so it's not ideal.

MIKE

Don't you get it? I went out on top. You think I want to get back in that rat race? That's the last goddamned thing I want to do.

BECKY

Oh, for God's sake. That's the biggest bunch of bullshit I've ever heard.

He looks at her.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Only thing you've ever been is a journalist. You started out writing for your elementary school paper -- the Bluffton Bee -- when you were nine. It's all you've ever done, all you've ever been and I don't believe for a second that you don't miss it. News breaks and it kills you that you're not out there.

MIKE

And you won't be either, since the morning shows don't. Do. News.

BECKY

Goddammit, Mike. Yes they do. Will I have to make compromises, run some tabloid stories, teach people how to bake -- not fry --their chicken? Hell yeah. But everyone makes compromises--

MIKE

Wow, this is inspiring...

BECKY

--network television is owned by corporations, they need a bottom line, and if we get them enough eyeballs, then we get to do stories we care about. And -- and--
(can't stop herself)
And besides all that, I... I need you.

He looks at her, surprised. She's pretty surprised at herself, come to think of it.

BECKY (CONT'D)

You're Mike Pomeroy. The only man on television who's ever had your approval numbers is Fonzie. You want to stay out here and think about the good old days when news was king? Great. But you and I both know the truth -- you quit too early.

He wavers. Maybe for a second. But she sees it.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Come on. Give it a shot. Get back in the game.

And just like that the moment is gone. He picks up his shotgun again.

MIKE

No way. Never. Not going to happen.

BECKY

And that's it? End of story.

MIKE

Unless you want me to shoot you.

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

ROGER'S new office looks... just like his old one.

ROGER

So he left the door open.

BECKY

Not even a little. Thanks for the opportunity, Roger.

(sighs)

I mean that. Good luck finding the right EP.

She picks up her purse and leaves. He watches her go.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY walks towards the elevator. She hears a voice.

VOICE

Becky?

She turns. And sees... COLLEEN PECK.

COLLEEN

Haven't seen you since that Women in Broadcasting conference.

BECKY

Hello, Colleen. Nice to see you.

They shake hands. Then COLLEEN leans in with a well-practiced, sympathetic lilt to her voice.

COLLEEN

Listen. I heard about what happened. Very sorry. I was looking forward to the challenge. Mike Pomeroy. Imagine.

BECKY

Challenge, yes... bit of an understatement there.

BECKY presses the button for the elevator.

COLLEEN

Well, nice to see you, Becky.

COLLEEN smiles and starts to walk away.

BECKY

Colleen--

She turns.

BECKY (CONT'D)
I know, by the way.

COLLEEN
Excuse me?

BECKY
Why you told Roger to get Mike.

COLLEEN looks at her.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Because you knew he wouldn't do it.
So you can keep the show the way it
is. Which is what you want.

COLLEEN recoils a bit, surprised. And a bit amused.

COLLEEN
That's not true. I was simply
looking for someone who could
really raise the bar around here.

BECKY
(nods)
Yeah. Okay.

COLLEEN shrugs. But it's hard to hide her smile.

COLLEEN
And it doesn't matter now, does it?

BECKY nods. COLLEEN walks away. BECKY sighs.

That's when the elevator opens. And MIKE POMEROY steps out.

MIKE
I just happened to be in the
neighborhood and since you made the
offer face to face, I thought I
should decline it that way. Don't
get excited.

BECKY
(excited)
I'm not excited.

MIKE
I've won eight Peabodies, a
Pulitzer, I've been shot through
the forearm in Bosnia. Forty
stitches.

BECKY

Yeah. I get it. You can't take a job in morning television because it would undermine everything you've accomplished, your very sense of who you are morally. Especially not at this show.

MIKE

Exactly.

BECKY

And if you compromise that, you'd be compromising your legacy. And there's no way you'd do that.

MIKE

Yes, that's it.

A beat, then, very quickly:

BECKY

Six million.

MIKE

Eight.

BECKY

I'll see what I can do.

They shake. BECKY grins. And at the end of the hallway...

...COLLEEN steps out of her office, sees MIKE and BECKY shaking hands.

COLLEEN

Oh, fuck.

EXT. STREET -- RIGHT OUTSIDE DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY walks down the street, on the phone.

ROGER

At eight million, you'll have to scale back on national reporting, live shots, and God knows you can't have a new set.

BECKY

That's fine.

ROGER

And you'll have to think of something for Paul McVee to do.

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

He's expensive and he has three years left in his contract.

BECKY

Fine. Great.

ROGER

But Becky -- holy shit, you did this. You got him. Unbelievable.

BECKY

Yeah, I... I think I did.

ROGER

Congratulations. Looks like you're back.

BECKY hangs up. She looks around. And slowly a big smile breaks across her face.

BECKY

"Look at me, I'm in New York..."

MUSIC UP

EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- ESTABLISHING

BECKY and DYLAN drive into the city in BECKY'S Volvo. BECKY sings along to Duran Duran on the radio. DYLAN reads ArtForum.

EXT. STREET -- NYC -- DAY

BECKY smooths her skirt, checks her reflection.

BECKY

I'm just so nervous.

WIDEN OUT to see DYLAN.

DYLAN

Come on, Mom. Don't worry. You've done this before.

BECKY

What if I say the wrong thing?

DYLAN

Aren't I the one who's supposed to be nervous?

INT. HALLWAY -- PRIVATE SCHOOL -- DAY

A fancy private school in Manhattan. BECKY and DYLAN walk down the hall with the HEADMASTER.

HEADMASTER
We've reviewed Dylan's academic record. Very impressive.

BECKY smiles, still nervous.

HEADMASTER (CONT'D)
Becky, that's a nice name. Short for Rebecca?

BECKY
Oh no. I don't even think my parents knew it could be short for something.

The HEADMASTER nods. I see.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Although when I was a kid I thought it was short for "Becky, get me a scotch and soda."

The HEADMASTER smiles vaguely. He opens the door.

HEADMASTER
Well, right this way.

But before BECKY walks in, DYLAN stops her.

DYLAN
Would you excuse us for a second?

HEADMASTER
Sure.

He closes the door.

DYLAN
Don't do this.

BECKY
Do what?

DYLAN
This I-came-from-the-wrong-side-of-the-tracks-underdog-got-knocked-up-at-the-prom-I-work-for-the-news-but-it's-only-the-stupid-morning-news thing.

BECKY

Wait, that's my thing? That's a very long complicated weird thing.

DYLAN

We're here, Mom. We're back. Don't you think it's about time we start believing we belong here?

BECKY looks at him, amazed.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's go in.

EXT. STREET -- NYC -- LATER

DYLAN hugs BECKY.

DYLAN

Now... go to work.

And BECKY heads off down the street like a kid off to school.

EXT. STREET -- RIGHT OUTSIDE DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY pushes open the doors of Daybreak.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

In contrast to the high-tech and fancy control room at The Morning Show, Daybreak's looks dingy and cramped. She sighs.

Suddenly she hears a voice.

VOICE

I'll have you know I quit a very respectable #2 evening news show in Pittsburgh to come back here.

She turns. Sees LENNY.

BECKY

Man, it's good to see you.

They hug, pull apart. She pulls something out of his shirt pocket. A sheet of press-through pills.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Maalox comes in Lemon swiss cream?

LENNY

New flavor.

(looks around)

(MORE)

LENNY (CONT'D)

So, how much do we have to spend on renovating this place?

BECKY

Zero. I decided to spend our money on better things.

LENNY looks at her, confused.

INT. MONITOR -- DAY

CLOSE ON

A young female "CELEBRITY" is being interviewed.

CELEBRITY

...that tape was made for our personal use. I have no idea how it got on the internet. For only 6.95 per viewing...

PULL OUT to reveal we're on the set of The Insider, the celebrity "news" show. CAMERA finds AVA, gigantically pregnant again, wearing a headset.

BECKY

You sure you want to move back to New York? Back to the news grind?

AVA

Well, let's see... I'm doing a piece about some girl who was on some Ken Barker reality show where people live in a terrarium or something.

Just then AVA looks over at the host of the show -- PAT O'BRIEN. He waves to her, gives her a flirtatious wink. AVA forces a smile, waves back.

AVA (CONT'D)

Please get me the hell out of here.

INT. APARTMENT -- BROOKLYN -- DAY

CLOSE ON

A mug that reads REGIS AND KELLY.

Bright sunlight streams across a messy slacker's apartment as a cell phone rings. Sprawled across the bed is TOM THOMPSON. He looks at the caller ID. It says "DAYBREAK". He picks up the phone, confused.

TOM

Yeah?

BECKY

Hey, Tom-tom. It's me. You ready
for a new mug?

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY and COLLEEN walk down the hall. COLLEEN tries, not
well, to conceal her irritation.

COLLEEN

When does he start?

BECKY

On the air next week, but he's
coming by today to--

COLLEEN

Is he going to cook?

BECKY makes a face.

BECKY

Actually, he had a few contractual
conditions and one of them was...

COLLEEN

...he won't do cooking segments.
Great. Fantastic. I'm going to be
shaping turkey meatballs with Mario
Batali for the rest of my natural
life.

BECKY

Look, it's going to be fine. We
have a lot of great things planned,
ways to bring up the ratings and--

And COLLEEN wheels on BECKY. Fixes her with a stare.

COLLEEN

Do you know how many executive
producers I have had in the last
eleven years? Oh wait, lemme see --
FOURTEEN. And they all parade
around here with their great ideas
and if they're stupid, they get
fired and if they're smart, they
quit. In the meantime, I can't get
the reporters I want or the staff I
need and the rest of the news
department is for shit.

(MORE)

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

So all of a sudden they decide to open the coffers for another anchor -- and oh looky, it's a MAN -- and you know what? This crappy show will spit Pomeroy out. And you too. And I will still be here, trying to pull the whole goddamned train up the hill with my teeth. You think it's fun being back here, getting your ass kicked? Well, welcome to it, lady. And enjoy the pain.

She walks away. BECKY calls after her.

BECKY

Okay, thanks -- good talk!

She turns and walks the other way to her office. Fuck.

INT. BECKY'S OFFICE -- DAY

We see PAUL McVEE in BECKY'S new office.

PAUL

National correspondent?

BECKY

You'll be going out in the field. Covering stories, back to your reporting roots.

PAUL

I used to do weather.

BECKY

But the way you did weather. It was so... groundbreaking.

PAUL

Well, I was named Most Accurate by the newspaper in Bakersfield...

BECKY

You see?

PAUL

(trying it on)
National Correspondent Paul McVee.
National Correspondent, reporting live from Minnesota.

BECKY

Right. Yeah. Might not be Minnesota, but...

PAUL
 National Correspondent Paul McVee
 live on the scene in...
 (searches)
 Vermont, bringing you the moving
 story of--

BECKY ushers him to the door.

BECKY
 Okay, we'll talk more about this
 later. Try out a few more states.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- LATER

BECKY walks in, trailed by LENNY.

BECKY
 I've watched two years of Daybreak
 shows in the last three weeks --
 the show's too slowly paced, the
 live pieces are deadly, and
 everything is too long--

Suddenly an ASSISTANT walks in with a gift-wrapped box.

BECKY (CONT'D)
 Thanks.

She tosses the card to LENNY, opens the box.

LENNY
 (reads)
 Says "Best of Luck, Adam Green."
 Weasel.

BECKY pulls something out of the box. It's an ancient looking
 brass chalice. She and LENNY look at it.

LENNY (CONT'D)
 What the hell is it?

BECKY
 No idea.

Suddenly they hear someone speak.

VOICE
 I believe that's a relic.

They turn and see the voice -- MIKE in the door.

BECKY
 You're here.

MIKE

I signed a contract, didn't I?

BECKY

Next week, you have to be here every day by 5 AM. No exceptions.

MIKE

Who are you talking to? I'm a professional.

He takes a flask out of his pocket, takes a swig.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What should we do first?

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

They walk down the hallway.

BECKY

Colleen's dressing room is right here. She's really been looking forward to meeting you.

And instead of following BECKY into COLLEEN'S dressing room, MIKE gestures to another dressing room.

MIKE

This mine?

BECKY

Um, yes, but Colleen is--

--but MIKE goes into his dressing room. He looks around, then settles into a chair.

INT. MIKE'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

BECKY walks in after him.

MIKE

Great. Bring her in.

BECKY

Here?

MIKE

Of course here. Oh, great, you got me all the newspapers I wanted.

(opens the fridge)

And the mixers. Nice of you.

BECKY

You're welcome. It was all stipulated in your ten page rider.

MIKE

Let Colleen know I can't wait to meet her.

INT. COLLEEN'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

COLLEEN shakes her head, looks at BECKY like she's crazy.

COLLEEN

I'm not going in there. He should come in here.

INT. MIKE'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

MIKE is reading one of the newspapers, feet up on his desk.

MIKE

I'll just wait. She can come in whenever she's ready.

INT. COLLEEN'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

COLLEEN fixes BECKY with a stare. BECKY is pissed now.

BECKY

Okay, so he's a baby. And you, as you so emphatically pointed out earlier, are the host of a show that is so far back in third place that on The Morning Show we wouldn't have even checked it on the monitor unless you and Paul had burst spontaneously into flames. And since I know you don't want to continue being humiliated nationally every morning, I suggest you and I go next door and talk to the asshole I just hired to work with you, who is our only hope.

INT. MIKE'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

MIKE and COLLEEN shake. They're both such consummate professional fakers, you can't tell what just took place.

LATER

BECKY ticks down a list of items.

BECKY

...we will be shooting Mike's
promos all this week and on Friday
we'll finalize the format of the
first show.

MIKE

Sounds good.

They stand up. BECKY can't believe how well it went.

COLLEEN

Oh. One more thing.

BECKY looks at her.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

Who's going to say "goodbye"?

BECKY

I beg your pardon?

COLLEEN

At the end of the show. I've always
said it.

BECKY

Doesn't matter. I don't care. You
don't care, do you, Mike?

MIKE

Well, I've always said it.

COLLEEN

I've been saying it for the past
eleven years.

MIKE

Well, if it matters to you, I
certainly don't care about
something so trivial. I come from
the school of news as a public
service. I won't squabble with you
about something so unimportant.

COLLEEN looks over, about to spit nails. Covers effortlessly.

COLLEEN

Hmmm... thank God you're here,
Mike. It really is amazing to have
someone to re-focus our priorities.

On BECKY. Smiling fakely at the two of them.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY walks down the hallway with LENNY.

BECKY

It was like being with my parents before the divorce, only without the firearms.

LENNY

Come on, Becky, this is going to be great. We have a show with two bona fide legends. It's gonna be great.

BECKY

Maybe you're right.

She reaches in his pocket, grabs the Maalox, pops one out of the sheet and tosses it into her mouth.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Ew.

LENNY

Yeah. Pistachio. Not a favorite.

CLOSE ON

MIKE POMEROY'S FACE.

VOICEOVER

Coming soon to Daybreak, one of the most legendary newsmen of all time--

PULL OUT TO REVEAL IT'S A DAYBREAK PROMO

A shot of MIKE trotting purposefully up the stairs of the courthouse, carrying a briefcase.

PULL OUT FROM THE SCREEN

To the live shot of MIKE trotting up the stairs. He stops. CAMERA finds BECKY. She pulls her headset down, exasperated.

BECKY

Jesus, what now?

MIKE

It's just... this briefcase... what the hell do I have in here? Special anchorman papers?

BECKY puts her head in her hands.

MIKE (CONT'D)

And I'm trotting up the stairs on my way to nowhere, I feel like a trained monkey. It's embarrassing.

The DIRECTOR of the spot looks at BECKY.

BECKY

Let's go again.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN

MIKE sits at the anchor desk.

VOICEOVER

Soon he'll be bringing his experience to morning television.

PULL OUT FROM THE SCREEN.

In the studio, MIKE is at the anchor desk beside COLLEEN.

VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

Alongside Colleen Peck.

We see COLLEEN, forcing a smile. BECKY steps forward.

BECKY

Colleen, um...

COLLEEN

I look like I'm having an aneurysm?

BECKY

Little bit.

COLLEEN

Got it. Take two.

ON THE SCREEN

We see MIKE, walking purposefully into the Daybreak Building.

VOICEOVER

Mike Pomeroy is ready to bring you the whole world with your first cup of coffee.

PULL OUT FROM THE SCREEN

BECKY and MIKE are in the editing room.

MIKE

"Your first cup of coffee"? Do we really have to mention that? Why don't we just say "Watch Mike Pomeroy after that first coffee and before your morning dump"?

BECKY glares at him.

INT. DYLAN'S BEDROOM --- NIGHT

BECKY sits by DYLAN'S bed, saying goodnight. She's a bit distracted.

DYLAN

...I sold the X-box Grandma gave me and bought an 1869 2 cent brown Post Horse and Rider... lightly hinged, full original gum, good perforations.

BECKY

Sounds great.

DYLAN

Mike's first day's tomorrow, right?

BECKY

(nods)

Yeah. I'm sorry. I've been pretty distracted, huh?

DYLAN

Mom, it's just work. What about guys, dating? You really need to get a life.

She doesn't even flinch. Clearly they've had this conversation before.

BECKY

No I don't. I have you.

DYLAN

(shakes his head)

Okay. Well, good luck tomorrow. And just remember what Thucydides said.

BECKY looks at him.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

"The bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding, go out to meet it."

INT. BECKY'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

BECKY brushes her teeth, looks in the mirror. She spits.

BECKY

(with toothbrush as sword)

"Glory and danger alike!"

Beat. She rolls her eyes at herself. Turns out the light.

INT. BECKY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

BECKY is getting into bed when the phone rings.

GREENIE

I need to talk to you.

BECKY

What?

GREENIE

Just for two seconds. Meet me at the diner on your corner. Come on. It's important.

BECKY

(pissed)

Why the hell would I do that?

GREENIE

Because I know Mike. A lot better than you do.

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

BECKY walks in, wearing her pajamas with a windbreaker. She slides into the booth, irritated, and looks at him. Yes?

And for a moment he doesn't say anything.

BECKY

Okay, that's it. I'm leaving.

GREENIE

Becky, I'm worried about you.

BECKY
 (scoffs)
 Really?

GREENIE
 That show... it's a disaster. It's
 not even cleared in a lot of
 markets and--

BECKY
 Oh I'm not doing this.

She starts to get up. He looks up at her.

GREENIE
 I worked for him for two years. He
 gets nervous. Though he'll never
 admit it. And when he's nervous, he
 gets shit-faced and disappears,
 shows up late, that kind of thing.
 I just want you to know-- Look,
 Becky, I'm sorry about what
 happened--

BECKY
 No you're not. You're just too big
 a pussy to live with the
 consequences of what you did. Not
 to mention who you are.

GREENIE
 Becky--

BECKY
 And now, if you'll excuse me, I got
 stuff to do. Because this used-to-
 be-#2 is going to take the #3 show
 and shove it up your #1 ass.

And she exits. We push in on GREENIE, watching her go.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

BECKY walks out. And manages to make it around the corner
 from GREENIE and out of his line of vision before she starts
 hyperventilating.

INT. MIDTOWN BAR -- NYC -- NIGHT

We see LENNY, walking down a darkened street.

BECKY
 You tailing him?

LENNY
 Dunno. I haven't done much
 "tailing" so I can't exactly be
 sure--

BECKY
 Keep an eye on him.

INT. BECKY AND DYLAN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

BECKY paces. The phone rings again.

LENNY
 I think you should get down here.

BECKY
 What's wrong?

INT. BAR -- MIDTOWN -- NYC -- NIGHT

BECKY walks over to MIKE, who's drunk, regaling a table full
 of people, the table littered with empty glasses.

MIKE
 Uh-oh. The missus.

BECKY
 I need to talk to you.

Everyone looks at BECKY.

BECKY (CONT'D)
 Right now.

EXT. STREET -- MIDTOWN -- NYC -- NIGHT

MIKE and BECKY outside.

BECKY
 I uprooted my kid, my whole life,
 my staff's life, I bankrupted this
 show to pay your salary--

MIKE
 Oh, please--

BECKY
 I put my ass on the line for you.

MIKE
 --your ass is irrelevant here.
 You're a footnote, no one knows
 your name but people who read media
 blogs. It's my ass. Mine.

BECKY

Jesus, you're egotistical and selfish.

MIKE

I'm on-air talent. What did you expect?

BECKY

Look, I don't know why you took this job and clearly you don't give a rat's ass about doing it the way I want you to, but you are going to pay me and the people we work with the respect of being on time. I will make sure of that.

MIKE

Oh, really? And how will you do that?

INT. MIKE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

BECKY and MIKE walk in. His apartment is decorated in early Hemingway hunting lodge style. BECKY grabs a throw blanket.

MIKE

You're joking.

She lies down on the couch, plumps a pillow and settles in.

BECKY

'Night.

MIKE

Suit yourself, Crazy Lady.

He walks out of the room. BECKY lays down. Closes her eyes. Tries to sleep.

From the other room, she instantly hears loud SNORING.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MIKE'S APARTMENT -- PRE-DAWN

3 AM. BECKY is asleep on the couch. She snuggles in, rolls over and sees...

...MIKE'S face, two inches from her. He smiles.

MIKE

There's time before work.

BECKY
Get away from me.

He shrugs. Oh well. Worth a try.

MIKE
You hungry?

INT. KITCHEN -- EARLY MORNING

MIKE beats some eggs.

BECKY
Mike, we have to go.

MIKE
The beauty of a frittata is it can be made with any ingredients, really. Anything that's in your fridge will do.

He throws in some mushrooms, onions, tomatoes.

BECKY
That's great. You should make it on the show some time.

He gives her a look.

MIKE
I know this is a hard concept for you to wrap your ratings-obsessed mind around, but some of us don't want to peddle our personal lives. Some things are private.

BECKY
Yeah. I know.

And she gestures to his bathrobe. Which frankly should be wrapped a little more tightly in the front.

EXT. STREET -- NYC -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY and MIKE walk down the street. MIKE eats his breakfast, the frittata wrapped in a tortilla.

MIKE
The frittata was meant to be eaten at room temperature. It was invented in Italy for the afternoon repast.

BECKY
Oh for the love of God.

INT. STUDIO -- DAYBREAK -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY and MIKE walk in. LENNY rushes over to her.

LENNY
Where the hell have you been?

BECKY
Getting a culinary lecture from a
man who refuses to cook anything on
camera.

MIKE
(brightly)
She spent the night at my
apartment.

LENNY looks at her.

BECKY
We'll talk about it later.

INT. MAKEUP ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY watches as they apply makeup to MIKE, who is fast
asleep. COLLEEN looks at her, disgusted.

BECKY
Eight Peabodies. Eight.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY walks in with LENNY. She looks up at the monitor.

BECKY
So... what are they promo-ing for
The Morning Show today?
(looks up)
Oh, crap.

LENNY
What?

BECKY
They got an interview with the
drunk-driving Playmate. The one who
ran over Hef's dog.

LENNY
You're kidding me.

On the SCREEN, we see a page from a Playboy PLAYMATE spread, the relevant parts strategically blacked out.

BECKY

Great. Mike gets to compete with blurry nipples.

(seethes)

I wonder how long Greenie's been sitting on that interview, waiting to use it today.

Just then BECKY looks over. TOM THOMPSON is packing up to leave, getting ready to go home.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Where is it?

TOM

(acting innocent)

Where is what?

She picks up TOM'S mug, which is sitting on the table. It's the mug from his old job.

BECKY

Tom, what the hell?

She opens his drawer. There's a Daybreak mug there, unused.

BECKY (CONT'D)

I gave it to you the day we started. Why aren't you using it?

TOM

No reason.

BECKY

(slowly)

Tom-tom, this is going to work out. I'm not going to be fired. Everything's going to be okay.

TOM

Oh, I know that.

BECKY

Put the mug on your desk.

TOM

No.

BECKY

Do it.

TOM

Fine.

He reaches in, pops the mug onto his desk.

BECKY

Thank you.

She walks away. As soon as she's gone he quickly puts the mug back in the drawer.

BECKY (CONT'D)

I heard that.

INT. STUDIO -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

At the anchor desk, MIKE and COLLEEN have taken their places. They are stonily not looking at each other.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY paces -- then she steps to the monitor, looking closely at MIKE'S face. Something strikes her.

IN THE STUDIO

BECKY walks over to MIKE.

BECKY

Everything okay over here?

COLLEEN shrugs, nods.

MIKE

Go be a ninny elsewhere.

She leans into MIKE.

BECKY

You're a pain in my ass, and if you mess this up I'll kill you. But we're lucky as hell to have you. I hope you know that.

She walks back towards the control room. He watches her, struck by this.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

This time LENNY and BECKY cross themselves.

ON THE MONITOR

We see the end of the taped intro piece.

VOICEOVER

...those stories and more this morning on Daybreak with your hosts, live from New York, Colleen Peck... and Mike Pomeroy.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY'S heart beats a million miles a minute. She looks at the shot of MIKE and COLLEEN.

BECKY

They look good, right? They look okay, yes? It's fine so far, right?

LENNY gives her a look.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Sorry.

LATER ON THE SHOW

We see COLLEEN at the anchor desk.

COLLEEN

...reality television is now an established genre, drawing millions of viewers. Ken Barker, the producer of such reality favorites as "Tsunami Hunters", "Bad Nanny" and "How Much For My Wife?" is here to talk to us about the genre.

We see MIKE, conducting an interview in the "living room" area of the set with KEN BARKER, a handsome man in his 40's with a pronounced New Zealand accent.

MIKE

(leaning in, menacing)

How do you answer accusations that the voyeuristic depravity of your shows is ruining our country?

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY winces, takes a step back to check the monitors. On the Morning Show there's the naked Playmate, obscured nipples.

BECKY

People would rather watch Mike berating someone than look at naked hot girls, am I wrong?

ON THE SHOW

COLLEEN at the desk.

COLLEEN

And now to Ernie Appleby with the weather...

We cut to ERNIE, a happy, rotund fellow -- sort of a clean-shaven Santa.

ERNIE

Thanks, Colleen. I'd like to take a moment if I could to welcome Mike Pomeroy to his very first broadcast. As one hurricane said to another, "I have my eye on you."

He smiles at MIKE. On MIKE, deadpan.

DISSOLVE TO:

ON THE SHOW

We see PAUL McVEE -- National Correspondent PAUL McVEE, delivering a stiff report from in front of Mount Rushmore.

PAUL

... a few more facts about granite that not many people know...

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY rolls her eyes.

BECKY

And if anyone knows about granite...

LENNY

It's okay. It's just boring. We'll take a little boring on Mike's first day. And thank God you called in a favor.

CUT TO:

IN THE STUDIO

JEFF BIRCH, plays a song with a full, live band. It's a great, uptempo song...

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

Everyone enjoys the song. And suddenly they, and we, start to notice... that JEFF'S song is called "Rebecca". And the lyrics are clearly, very obviously about BECKY.

Slowly everyone turns to look at BECKY.

BECKY
Becky isn't short for anything.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY watches COLLEEN and MIKE, who are about to sign off.

LENNY
I think we did it.

BECKY
No major disasters.

ON THE SHOW

COLLEEN smiles.

COLLEEN
Thanks for watching... and goodbye.

MIKE
(nods)
Goodbye.

COLLEEN
(pissed)
Goodbye.

MIKE
(calmly)
Goodbye.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

Oh, shit. Everyone holds their breath.

BECKY
How many is that?

LENNY
Two each.

They look at the monitor. Still two seconds left on the clock over the screen.

BECKY
Oh, dear Jesus.

Very quickly.

COLLEEN
'Bye.

MIKE
'Bye.

COLLEEN
'Bye.

MIKE
'Bye.

BECKY
And we're out!

She sags into a chair, exhausted. From the monitor we hear a promo for AM America.

VOICE
Tomorrow on AM America... this sexy
First Lady from Montana hid a
secret past. Join us as we uncover--

BECKY
Nude photos.

VOICE
--the racy photos that have gotten
her in hot water.

A shot of the First Lady of Montana, naked, with
strategically blacked out areas.

IN THE STUDIO

BECKY talks to MIKE.

BECKY
Pretty good first day. You're still
standing.

MIKE
I hope God will forgive me for what
I've done.

He walks past her. She shakes her head. Just then she spots
KEN BARKER. She walks over to him.

BECKY

Listen, I'm sorry about Mike--

KEN

No problem. It's an honor to be pummelled by him.

(looks around)

Nice deal you got here. Two hours of network air time. Wish I could have it.

BECKY

Check back with me in a few weeks. I might beg you to take it off my hands.

KEN

(grins)

Good luck, Becky.

MUSIC UP ON A SERIES OF DISSOLVES

Of MIKE'S first week on the air...

COLLEEN, making crawfish with Emeril... AVA, hugely pregnant, at the craft service table piling a plate with donuts and cheese... MIKE, aggressively interviewing Al Gore -- AL shrinks back in his chair... TOM, still drinking from his REGIS mug... PAUL stiffly filing a report from the Grand Canyon... LENNY, knocking back a multi-colored handful of Maalox... ERNIE, throwing to MIKE with a grin and being met with a stony stare...

...and finally BECKY, pacing in the control room.

EXT. STREET -- NYC -- DAY

BECKY walks down the street with ROGER.

BECKY

Come on, the ratings are not bad for a first week.

ROGER

You're up. But so are AM and the Morning Show, so it doesn't matter.

BECKY

They must have been saving those stores for Mike's first week, especially Greenie, you know he's an evil twit.

ROGER looks dubious.

BECKY (CONT'D)

We got a bump. All we need is a bump.

ROGER

Not for the eight million I'm paying Pomeroy. You gotta do better than that.

BECKY

These'll go up. I promise.

ROGER

They have to. Do anything you can think of.

BECKY

Really? Anything? You want me to execute someone live?

ROGER

Not sure. Will they be naked?

INT. STAFF MEETING -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

The daily meeting. Every PRODUCER, ASSOCIATE PRODUCER, BOOKER, ASSISTANT, etc.

BECKY

...we can't just rely on Mike. He can't get us up there on his own. We need to make sure the show is as entertaining as we possibly can. Okay? Now, what do you have? I mean, stuff that can really take us over the top here.

Pan around the room. Everyone looks very intimidated.

A hand goes up. CAMERA finds a mild, slight man with the beginnings of a terrible balding pattern. NICK FAZEKAS.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Yes, Nick.

NICK

I'm working on a very interesting piece about the changes to the health insurance program in the new Teamsters contract.

For a second BECKY just sits there.

BECKY
I'm sorry. I just exited my body.
Anyone else?

INT. DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY walks down the hall with LENNY.

BECKY
We've got good stuff coming up --
the parenting series, summer
fashion show, Tim McGraw and Faith
Hill --

LENNY
Exactly. You just have to be
patient.

BECKY
Screw being patient. We want to
move up, we need to take risks.

She looks down at her clipboard with the run of show on it.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Take this McVee remote today...

LENNY
...the new roller coaster in
Illinois.

BECKY
And all we have is a taped piece?

LENNY
Well, he's gonna wrap around it
live, but yeah.

BECKY
But he's got a full crew there,
right?

She narrows her eyes.

LENNY
Uh oh. What?

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

On one of the monitors, we see PAUL, getting ready for his
remote. He's being strapped into the roller coaster.

BECKY
You sure the audio will work on
this?

LENNY
Oh sure. If he has a heart attack
we'll be able to capture every
heart-rending scream.

BECKY
Are you kidding? Look at him. He's
thrilled.

She presses a button.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Paul? You doing okay?

He gives a thumbs up.

BECKY (CONT'D)
See? He's happy.

LENNY
Dumb people are often happy.

BECKY ignores LENNY, nods at MERV.

BECKY
He's ready.

ON THE SHOW

MIKE introduces PAUL'S segment.

MIKE
Thrill-seekers have something
exciting to look forward to this
summer as Six Flags unveils a new
rollercoaster at its new park in
Illinois.

WE CUT TO

The gigantic roller coaster with its steep vertical drop.

MIKE (CONT'D)
The "Manhandler" is the fastest
coaster in the US with speeds of up
to 130 miles an hour and an angle
of descent of around 95 degrees...
Our Paul McVee is getting a sneak
peek at this amazing new ride and--

MIKE reads the prompter, looks a bit surprised.

MIKE (CONT'D)

--and in a little change of plans here, I guess Paul is planning to get up close and personal with this coaster. Is that right, Paul?

EXT. THEME PARK -- ILLINOIS -- DAY

PAUL looks at the camera, beaming, strapped into the coaster. His legs dangle out of the harness.

PAUL

Yes and it's very exciting. You're about to see EXACTLY what it's like to ride this ride.

MIKE

(disgusted)
And we can't wait.

COLLEEN

You nervous, Paul?

PAUL

No way, Colleen.

But there's something about his smile that looks a little worrisome, a bit tacked on.

BECKY thinks, turns to MERV, the portly director.

BECKY

Put him on a delay, okay?

MERV

What? Why?

BECKY

Just do it.

MERV

(shrugs)
Okay...
(into his headset)
Colleen, fill for five seconds.

COLLEEN

(onscreen)
I've never had the courage to get on one of those things, myself.
Oh, here he goes...

And on the screen, we see PAUL, strapped into the coaster, as he slowly takes off out of frame.

PAUL
Okay, I'm going up.

MIKE
Paul? Can you hear us?

The coaster rises higher and higher.

PAUL
Yes, I can. And I should tell you both, so far it's a beautiful ride. Quite an amazing view from up here.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

LENNY watches the show

LENNY
Still don't see why we need that delay.

BECKY shushes him.

PAUL
(onscreen)
And now I'm heading for the first loop.

BECKY
And here we go.

INT. HOUSE -- PROVIDENCE -- DAY

BECKY'S mother, MELINDA, watches the show from her Barcalounger, eating a bag of Bugles.

She watches PAUL careen through the frame, yelling something that has been bleeped by the network on the delay but is still clearly recognizable.

PAUL
(bleeped)
Fuuuuuuccckkkkk!!!!

MELINDA freezes, mid-Bugle.

IN THE STUDIO

MIKE and COLLEEN watch. In the studio the audio isn't bleeped. PAUL sails around another corner at hyper-speed.

IN THE BIKE SHOP

DONNIE is watching the show on a shitty old black and white in the garage.

He watches PAUL careen around a corner.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Holy shit!!!!!!!

DONNIE
Holy shit.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY and LENNY watch. The entire control room is frozen.

PAUL
Mommy!!!!!! Help me!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

EXT. STREET -- JUST OUTSIDE DAYBREAK -- DAY

MIKE follows BECKY down the street, angry.

MIKE
Jesus, Becky, how is that journalism? What are you going to do to him next? Put electrodes on his balls? I felt sorry for that animatronic puppet asshole.

BECKY
We got 80,000 hits on YouTube. Paul's thrilled. He's a rock star. And we got a bump in the minute to minutes.

MIKE
Oh come on, that's not news.

BECKY
If people are talking about it, it's news.

He gapes at her.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Come on, Mike, lighten up.

MIKE
You know what I've noticed? People only say "lighten up" when they're sticking their hand up your ass.

Just then ERNIE APPLEBY catches up to them.

ERNIE

Oh, hey, they said you just left, I heard you're looking for sexy stories. I'm working on a piece about weathervanes. I have a huge weathervane collection and I think people would really dig seeing them. 90 seconds, a live piece from my weather board, you can pop it in anywhere.

BECKY

Great, Ernie... do an outline. I'll look at it.

ERNIE walks away, thrilled..

MIKE

Who is that fat guy again?

BECKY

Our... weather man?

MIKE

If you say so. Look, Nick said he pitched you a fantastic story about the elections in Bangladesh the other day. That's journalism.

BECKY stops walking.

BECKY

Jesus, Mike, come on. On the list of things people want to think about in the morning, elections and Bangladesh are right up there with calculus and yeast infections.

Beat. He glares at her. Just then a FAN, a woman of about 40, races over to MIKE.

FAN

Oh my God. You're... it's you. God, I loved you when you were on at night but now...

(MORE)

FAN (CONT'D)

I get up and do my Versaclimber every morning while I watch you, then I brush my teeth during the commercial, and by the time I get downstairs to eat my breakfast, which is always an English Muffin with melted cheese, my kids and I and my husband ALL watch you. I feel like... it's like you're part of my family.

She gives him a great big hug, extending her cell phone to take a picture of herself with him. He stands there like a totem pole.

The FAN doesn't notice. Thrilled, she bustles away. Beat.

MIKE

I hate you. And I hate this job.

MIKE starts walking away. She calls after him.

BECKY

Okay then, see you--

He flips her off, keeps walking away.

BECKY (CONT'D)

--dark and early.

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

BECKY reads the New York Times. The headline is: Mike Pomeroy: Comeback or Last Hurrah?

She puts the paper down. A beat, then in a burst she picks it up and flings it across the room.

Beat.

She goes over, folds it neatly, puts it in the recycling bin.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

The show's in commercial. BECKY confers with the writers at their desk. Just then BECKY hears something on her headset.

BECKY

What? Oh, you're kidding me.

She looks at LENNY, mouths "MIKE".

BECKY (CONT'D)
 I'll be right down.
 (to LENNY)
 Mike's offended by some word in the
 story. I'll be right back.

She walks out of the control room. LENNY walks over to the
 writers area, looks at the copy.

LENNY
 Offended by what? It's a story
 about Easter chicks.

IN THE STUDIO

BECKY and the STAGE MANAGER huddle at the anchor desk. The
 STAGE MANAGER pages rapidly through a thesaurus.

STAGE MANAGER
 Okay, synonyms for fluffy...

On COLLEEN, very irritated.

COLLEEN
 Wait, synonyms? He's getting
 synonyms? He gets a thesaurus?

MIKE
 I'm not going to say the word
 "fluffy". It's bad enough I'm out
 here covering these ridiculous
 stories, I won't be humiliated.

COLLEEN
 Hey, buddy, last week I had to use
 rectal and moisture in the same
 sentence. I didn't see anyone near
 me with any reference material.

STAGE MANAGER
 "Furry, fuzzy..."

MIKE
 No... no...

STAGE MANAGER
 "Bushy..."

MIKE
 I'll say bushy. Fine.

BECKY

Hallelujah. Can we resume our nationally broadcast television show now?

She walks away. COLLEEN glares at MIKE.

COLLEEN

You're a child.

MIKE

No. I simply have standards.

COLLEEN

Oh, and I suppose I don't?

MIKE

No, you do. When you got a pap smear on camera six months ago you wore a robe. I thought that was a classy touch.

COLLEEN gasps.

STAGE MANAGER

...and we're back in 5-4-3-

IN THE STUDIO

COLLEEN and MIKE are at the anchor desk. COLLEEN is clearly seething.

MIKE

...we will tell you more about what happened to those *bushy* Easter chicks. Also tomorrow on Daybreak, we'll talk to psychologist Debra Shiffman about ADD --- how to tell if your child has it and what to do about it.

He turns to COLLEEN. She's too angry to say anything. Looks at the monitor. It says COLLEEN. She doesn't read the prompt.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY immediately senses something wrong.

BECKY

Oh, no. What's happening?

ON THE SHOW

MIKE covers, reading COLLEEN'S copy.

MIKE

..and Colleen will be making onion
pancakes with Gordon Ramsay.

COLLEEN

That's right, I will.

(laughs)

But only because you refuse to do
it, Mike.

MIKE

(laughs, covering)

Well, I can't cook at all, so--

COLLEEN

--and also you're a fatuous idiot,
so there's that--

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

Everyone freezes.

MIKE

(without missing a beat)

...a fatuous idiot who makes three
times what you make.

(smiling into camera)

See you tomorrow, folks. Goodbye.

COLLEEN

Goodbye.

MIKE

Goodbye.

COLLEEN

Goodbye.

MIKE

Goodbye.

COLLEEN

Goodbye.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

Horrified faces.

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY sits in front of ROGER.

BECKY

It will never happen again. I promise.

ROGER

Our phone has been ringing off the hook. One of the affiliates threatened to drive up here and cane me.

BECKY

It was a momentary lapse -- two exhausted, stressed people. It will never happen again. I'm sure they've both calmed down.

INT. COLLEEN'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

COLLEEN throws a paperweight against the wall.

COLLEEN

I'll kill him.

INT. MIKE'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

BECKY bangs on the door.

BECKY

Mike, let me in.

MIKE is downing what looks to be a pitcher of martinis.

INT. BECKY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

BECKY lies in bed, staring at the ceiling, frozen with panic.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BECKY'S APARTMENT -- PRE-DAWN

On her way out, BECKY picks up the Post. Huge picture of COLLEEN and MIKE on the front.

The headline reads: *Chaos breaks out at Daybreak...*

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK -- EARLY MORNING

BECKY and TOM walk through the halls together.

TOM

Huge play on every cable channel overnight. Fox news has it on a continuous loop. It's also up on Tvnews, Gawker, Fishbowl, Slate...

BECKY
Oh, shit...

INT. BECKY'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY talks to LENNY.

BECKY
They're both coming in early. I have to explain to them, in the severest possible language, that this could seriously compromise the integrity of this show. They can never do this again.

LENNY
Wow. Good luck with that conversation. You need body armor?

She laughs. LENNY exits and BECKY gets ready to walk out the door. Just then an INTERN walks in.

INTERN
Hey, Ms. Fuller, here are the minute-to-minutes from yesterday.

BECKY
Thanks.

She starts to walk out. Then by some instinct she stops. And looks down at the minute-to-minutes.

INT. STUDIO -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

MIKE and COLLEEN pre-show, waiting in the living room area.

COLLEEN
Don't talk to me.

MIKE
I didn't say anything.

COLLEEN
Jerk.

MIKE
You started it.

COLLEEN
Oh, mature much?

Just then they see BECKY walking towards them.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
This should be fun.

BECKY reaches them.

BECKY
So... about yesterday...

They look at her. And BECKY teeters a bit...

...then makes a choice.

BECKY (CONT'D)
I'm not going to lecture you.

They look at her. You're not?

BECKY (CONT'D)
You two are responsible
professionals. It's not for me to
determine how you should behave.

A beat.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Have a good show.

She walks away. On MIKE and COLLEEN, looking confused.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY walks in. LENNY looks at her.

LENNY
You read them the riot act, huh?

BECKY
(indicates the clock)
Oh, look. Show time.

He looks at her, suspicious.

ON THE SHOW

COLLEEN
...coming up in our next hour we'll
be talking to people who have
successfully completed this
innovative rehab program...
(smiles at MIKE)
Might pick up a few tips there.

MIKE smiles.

MIKE

I wonder if they have rehab for
uptight women who've had a bit too
much Botox.

COLLEEN'S smile doesn't flag for a second.

COLLEEN

Coming up next after your local
weather and traffic.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY'S cell phone rings. ROGER.

ROGER

You going to deal with this? Or do
I have to come down and do it?

BECKY

Don't worry. I'm on it.

IN THE STUDIO

BECKY walks over to the anchor desk. MIKE and COLLEEN look at
her, waiting to see what she'll do.

A beat. She looks at them.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Good show so far.

She walks away.

INT. BECKY'S OFFICE -- THE NEXT MORNING

She paces, waiting. The INTERN comes in with the overnights.
BECKY grabs them.

INT. LENNY'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY walks in, breathless. LENNY looks up at her. She puts
the ratings down on the desk.

BECKY

This is yesterday. This is where
she made fun of his tie.

She points to a huge spike.

BECKY (CONT'D)

And here's where he asked her if
she cries ice cubes. Another big
spike. They love it.

LENNY

Yes, but--

BECKY

It's banter, they're being real with each other and the audience loves it -- Everyone stops to watch a fight, you know. Remember that.

LENNY looks at her.

BECKY (CONT'D)

And we can also, you know, um... keep doing the news.

LENNY

But--

BECKY

But what? We wouldn't be exploiting anyone or anything -- except their sheer hatred of each other.

LENNY

Becky, come on. They are never going to go along with this.

INT. COLLEEN'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

BECKY shows MIKE and COLLEEN the ratings.

COLLEEN

We closed by a point and a half? In two days? Wow.

MIKE

Yes, that's great. Now, what the hell does the fact that she and I hate each other's guts have to do with the news?

COLLEEN

Do you want the largest number of people to see your work or not?

BECKY

You won't be doing anything but being yourselves. Just the way you've been the past couple days.

MIKE

This is absurd.

BECKY

I know.

COLLEEN

Jesus, Mike, don't you get it? This is a chance, the tiniest chance, to pull ourselves up, try and win this thing for a change.

MIKE

I'm a journalist, not some kind of circus performer. It's bad enough I'm here dragging my reputation through the mud.

BECKY

And I'm just saying, give this a chance--

MIKE

Fine. I want double the reporting budget, I anchor from the field one week a month, and I get a full crew to travel internationally when there's a breaking story. I'll keep doing the crap stories you need me to do, and I'll put on a show with Battle-ax over here, but in return I want what you promised me, which is a chance to do my actual job and go where the story is.

BECKY

(nods)

And you?

COLLEEN

I want Mike out of town as much as possible. So it works out.

MUSIC UP

A MONTAGE of MIKE and COLLEEN as their show rises in the ratings...

A clip of MIKE and COLLEEN on YouTube, arguing.

We see MIKE anchoring from Baghdad, dodging shrapnel.

MIKE and COLLEEN on the cover of EW, standing back to back wearing boxing gloves with a title that reads "TV'S NEW BICKERSONS".

BECKY'S mother MELINDA watches the show. We pan out to see she's watching it with her entire bridge group.

We see MIKE and COLLEEN on Letterman.

LETTERMAN

I hear you two just hate each other.

MIKE

It's just thinly disguised sexual tension--

COLLEEN

--yes, between Mike and himself.

We see MIKE, anchoring from an oil field in Irkutsk.

In her office, BECKY gets the ratings. We can see Daybreak, inching up towards AM America and The Morning Show.

We see MIKE anchoring from a beach, the wreckage of a hurricane around him.

And we see the cover of New York Magazine. A picture of BECKY. The headline reads Daybreak's Dream Girl.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE -- DAY:

ROGER holds up the cover. MUSIC OUT.

ROGER

Last week you were dead even with AM America. Twice. Do you have any idea what that means? We've never been within a share of them.

BECKY

And Lenny says two more affiliates just cleared the show.

ROGER

Nice work, Becky.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK -- NIGHT

BECKY, LENNY and AVA leave work, crossing paths with TOM THOMPSON on his way in.

There's a marked uptick in everyone's morale.

BECKY
Morning, Tom.

And just then BECKY notices something. Stops.

TOM
What?

She points to his mug. He holds it up. It's a Daybreak mug.

TOM (CONT'D)
Oh, yeah. I figured, why not?

BECKY
That's great.

And he smiles. A rare event in TOM'S world.

TOM
We keep up these numbers, I might even get a t-shirt.

BECKY grins. TOM walks into the building. Everyone starts to go their separate ways, saying good-byes.

AVA
Okay. See you--

LENNY.
--dark and early.

AVA walks away. LENNY starts to, but notices BECKY looking a little lost.

LENNY (CONT'D)
You and Dylan have plans tonight?

BECKY
No. Actually. He's in Rhode Island with Donnie, so...

LENNY
Rachel and I are just gonna order Chinese, you wanna--

BECKY
--oh no. Don't worry about me. I'm gonna go home, do some work.

LENNY
You sure?

BECKY
Oh, yeah. Of course. Go.

He hesitates, but she waves him off.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Go.

And she turns and walks off by herself, with nowhere to go.

INT. BAR -- MIDTOWN -- NYC -- NIGHT

BECKY has a drink by herself at the bar of a restaurant around the corner from the show. Suddenly she hears a voice.

JEFF

I didn't know you drank alone.

She looks over. And sees JEFF BIRCH. He slides in next to her. She tries not to smile, but does anyway.

BECKY

I keep trying to take up drinking.
My son's out of town, thought I'd
come here, tie one on, as they say--

JEFF

--who says that?

BECKY

No one.

Beat.

JEFF

Is everything okay?

BECKY

Oh, yeah. Great. Show's starting to
do a little better, so --

JEFF

--and so the reason you look like
you just lost your best friend is--

BECKY

Dunno. Guess I'm trying to figure
out what it would feel like to win.
Not sure I could hack it. I'm so
used to losing, I might crack under
the pressure--

She stops herself, aware she's going on too long.

BECKY (CONT'D)

--and anyway, what are you doing in
this part of town?

JEFF

I'm cutting some tracks at the studio across the street...

BECKY

(nods)

Oh, that's cool.

JEFF

I was actually hoping I might bump into you. So this is perfect. And I love to drink. So I can knock 'em back for both of us.

She laughs. He looks at her.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Unless there's something else you'd rather do.

BECKY

Nah. Can't think of anything.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. JEFF'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

JEFF and BECKY make out on the sofa like teenagers. And suddenly she shoots off the couch, very flustered.

BECKY

Oh Jesus. I can't do this.

(off his look)

You... me... this... You... date supermodels and rock stars and win Grammys and I... have a life. Well, not really, but parts of one. And those parts are very, very pre-occupying.

In response, he simply walks over and kisses her again...

BECKY (CONT'D)

Did you hear anything I just said?

JEFF

Not a word.

He kisses her again. And this time she gives in.

INT. BEDROOM -- NEW YORK CITY -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY opens an eye. Where the hell am I? She spots a guitar. And another. And another. Then she spots the Grammys. Oy.

She sits up, starts to get dressed. Suddenly she feels an arm snake around her.

BECKY

Jeff, listen, I don't know what I was thinking, I... I hadn't thought this through and--

JEFF

Becky--

BECKY

I just think this is lose-lose. For both of us.

He looks at her like she's insane.

JEFF

You know what? I'm a nice guy. I like you. That's all this is. Not a game, not a joust, there are no winners and losers, okay?

BECKY

Well--

JEFF

Jesus, you're annoying.

And with that he pulls her back on the bed. From off-screen we hear her laugh.

INT. BECKY'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY sits at her desk. Trying not to smile. Smiles. Sort of laughs a little even. Then tries to look serious. Which makes her laugh. Jesus, what is wrong with me?

Suddenly she hears a knock, which snaps her out of it. She looks up. NICK FAZEKAS walks in.

BECKY

Hey, Nick, what's up? I'm a little busy, I--

NICK

I'd like you to fire me. I'd quit, but I need the severance.

BECKY

Okay--

NICK

I'm not even going to address the fact that you've turned our anchors into a WWF Saturday Night Main Event--

BECKY

It's just a little banter.

NICK

--the story I did on the call centers in Alaska, the piece on gay marriage, the interview I scored with the embattled United Nations security chief--

BECKY

Nick, come on--

NICK

You kill them, or you bigfoot them so Mike can spend more time anchoring from overseas hotspots, those are good stories, Becky, you don't even watch them--

BECKY

--you mean, the piece about a single mother who works the call center all night so she can be with her developmentally disabled child all day? Or about how any idiot with a butane lighter and a newspaper can take out the UN?

On NICK, very surprised.

NICK

You watched them?

BECKY

What we're doing here is historic. We're inching up on The Morning Show. And once we do that -- once we even get near them -- then we'll have more latitude to cover what we want, okay?

He shrugs.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Come on, Nick. Things are looking up. Give me a smile.

And he just quietly turns and walks out the door.

EXT. STREET -- EVENING

BECKY walks home from work. She takes her cell phone out of her pocket. Puts it back. Takes it out again. Puts it back. Takes it out again.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM -- DAY

JEFF BIRCH is on the phone. Intercut with BECKY, walking home from work.

BECKY

It's just a dumb party for the Upfronts. Colleen and Mike's agency always takes over Cipriani and--

JEFF

It sounds--

BECKY

You don't have to go, it's boring. Just work stuff, work people, the entire television business pretending they've never seen a cheese puff before, it's stupid--

JEFF

--good. Sounds good was what I was going to say. Wow, you make this shit hard.

But he's grinning. BECKY grins too.

BECKY

So I'll see you tonight.

JEFF

You bet.

CLOSE ON

A huge pile of dresses on a bed. Another lands on top. Then another. And another.

INT. BECKY'S BEDROOM -- DAY

BECKY walks out wearing a dress with her bedroom slippers, hair in a high messy ponytail. She twirls.

Pull out to reveal

DYLAN and DONNIE, assessing the outfit. They look nonplussed.

DYLAN
A little conservative, Mom.

DONNIE walks over, picks something out of the closet.

DONNIE
How about this dress?

BECKY
That's a nightgown.

DONNIE
Yeah, and...?

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

A knock on the door. JEFF BIRCH is standing there. And is a little startled when the door flings open and he sees...

DYLAN and DONNIE standing there, looking like the kid from Rushmore and Bowzer.

JEFF
Hi... I'm Jeff.

DONNIE
Donnie Fuller, son Dylan...

DONNIE walks JEFF in, indicates a guitar case in the corner.

DONNIE (CONT'D)
I brought my rig... in case you want to jam.

JEFF
Oh, man... I'd love to... jam but I left my rig at home.

Just then he stops. Amazed. They all turn to follow his gaze. To where BECKY'S standing.

This could be the first time we've ever seen her in a dress. She looks shy. And pretty.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Look at you.

AT THE DOOR

They're getting ready to leave. BECKY hugs DYLAN.

BECKY

Don't forget to floss and do your homework, well, I'm sure you already did it and--

DYLAN

Hey do you work with Ken Barker?
Meant to ask you--

BECKY pulls on her coat.

BECKY

No, why...

DYLAN

His son Max is in my class. He said his Dad was going to be working at ABS soon...

(off her look)

I must have misunderstood. Go. Good night.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

BECKY and JEFF walk down the street together.

BECKY

You don't have to talk to anyone. I mean, you can if you want to but you certainly don't have to.

He stops her.

JEFF

It's okay. Stop.

BECKY

Sorry. I just haven't been on a date since... let's see -- knocked up, divorced, celibate, dating the guy in the office next to me -- nope, never been on a date.

JEFF

Becky, stop it. Here's one night you get to go out with a great guy to a party where everyone will pat you on the back. Is there any way that could actually... be fun?

And he kisses her.

BECKY

Not sure.

INT. CIPRIANI -- NIGHT

The place is packed with every major TV figure. And although it's a pretty big space, people are clumped in corners with the other execs from their own network.

The first person they bump into is KEN BARKER.

BECKY

Oh hey, Ken...

And for some reason, he just blows right past her. BECKY shrugs -- he must not have heard her.

JEFF goes to get BECKY a drink. COLLEEN, who's never looked more beautiful, sweeps over to BECKY.

COLLEEN

This is unbelievable. I've never been to one of these things without having to go in the bathroom and hyperventilate with shame.

BECKY laughs.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

I just want to thank you. I know I was... skeptical when you came to the show, but... thanks, Becky.

(notices)

Oh look, my agent actually wants to talk to me. This IS a party.

She sweeps away. BECKY laughs.

LATER

BECKY introduces JEFF to ROGER.

ROGER

The network's never had anyone do quite so well with Daybreak.

JEFF

Not surprised.

(to BECKY)

Can I get you a drink?

BECKY

Sure.

He walks away. ROGER quickly excuses himself. BECKY wrinkles her brow at how quickly he dumped her, shrugs it off.

A WAITER walks by with a plate of cheese puffs. BECKY takes one and as the WAITER walks away he reveals...

...GREENIE standing there.

GREENIE
Well, look at you.

She glares at him.

GREENIE (CONT'D)
You look pretty happy for someone
who's still #2.

BECKY
What's wrong? You worried?

He shrugs. And what's weird is... he doesn't look worried.

GREENIE
Congratulations, Becky. You look
gorgeous.

He walks away. She watches him go, suspicious.

We-see BECKY move through the party...

COLLEEN sweeps BECKY up in a hug... BECKY chats with an excited AVA... BECKY looks at ROGER, who looks oddly subdued... JODI RAMIREZ comes over to congratulate her... LENNY offers her a Maalox... BECKY sees KEN BARKER moving through the crowd... did she see him talking to GREENIE?...

BECKY turns to JEFF.

BECKY
I'll be right back.

ON A BALCONY

Overlooking the party, BECKY dials her cell phone.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Oh, hey, sweetie, it's me. Just
calling to say goodnight.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

DYLAN and DONNIE are playing chess. DONNIE stares at the board like a caveman, brain hurting.

BECKY (O.S.)
Um, Dylan, what did Ken Barker's
son say to you exactly?

INT. CIPRIANI -- NIGHT

We hear DYLAN'S voice as BECKY looks around the room.

DYLAN (O.S.)
I don't know. It was something
about his Dad...

She watches KEN BARKER talking to ROGER...

DYLAN (CONT'D)
...and how he wanted to get more
hours on the air...

ROGER and KEN shake hands.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
...and he figured out how to do it
or something. I don't know.

And suddenly GREENIE joins KEN and ROGER. And soon they're
locked in what looks to be an intense huddle.

BECKY
Okay. Thanks, honey. Say goodnight
to Donnie.

And for some reason BECKY'S heart is pounding.

ON THE FLOOR

We see BECKY stalk across the floor. She corners ROGER, who
has moved to the bar.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Need to talk to you--

BECKY pulls ROGER to the side...

BECKY (CONT'D)
What is it?

ROGER
I'm sorry, what?

She narrows her eyes.

BECKY
It's Barker. You're going into
business with him.

ROGER
(sighs)
I'm not.

BECKY
(guessing)
He set up a prime time show?

He shakes his head. She thinks. No... They wouldn't...

BECKY (CONT'D)
They're giving him the morning?
They're cancelling our show?

And ROGER looks down, for a moment less than utterly crisp.
And she realizes. She wells up with frustration.

BECKY (CONT'D)
For God's sake, Roger, why? We're
doing so well--

ROGER
--and you're running a very
expensive show. You've never won a
sweeps -- hell, Daybreak's never
won a week. Mike and Colleen are
the highest priced talent out
there, you're paying out McVee's
contract, plus Mike squeezed you
for the on-location anchoring and
the overseas reports--

BECKY
--but the ratings--

ROGER
--and Barker's programming costs
nothing. They can take a 15 percent
ratings dip and still be wildly
profitable.

BECKY
So why did they -- even bother
hiring me? Or Mike?

ROGER
They had to wait for Barker's
exclusive deal with the GBC to end.
And also, because he was pretty
confident you might do a good job
of getting some of the affiliates
to pick our morning programming.
Which you did.

BECKY
He? Who?

ROGER
Your new boss.

And she follows his sightline. She starts to panic.

BECKY
Greenie is taking your job?

ROGER
Oh no. He's going to be my boss.
(off her look)
Run the whole network.

She stares at him, the air having left her body.

ROGER (CONT'D)
They couldn't give him the TMS slot at GBC, of course, but Greenie knew Barker wanted morning time, so he connected him with the chairman of ABS. Just informally. As a favor. To show how serious he was about coming here--

BECKY
--and the first thing he's going to do is cancel a news show?

She looks down at the party, stunned. Sees MIKE, being congratulated. Reels.

ROGER
(quietly)
They're coming for us all. First it will be the evening news --they're loss leaders, but the news costs money -- anchors, reporters, bureaus -- and it's not profitable enough. And so one day they will come for us too, and news will be like sports, outsourced to cable.

BECKY
Daybreak deserves a shot. My people deserve a shot.

ROGER
You have one.
(off her look)
I managed to get you an out.
(beat)
The affiliates won't let them cancel Daybreak if...

BECKY
...if it's...

ROGER
...if it's number one. If you can
do that, it blows the Barker deal.

BECKY
How... how did you get that in
there? In the deal?

ROGER
It was easy.
(beat)
Becky, there's not a person on this
planet who thinks you can make the
show #1.
(nods his head sadly)
Not even me.

And she gathers herself.

BECKY
I have to go.

ROGER
What are you going to do?

She walks away.

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

A diner around the corner from Cipriani. BECKY and LENNY
huddle at the counter.

BECKY
I'm not going to tell anyone--

LENNY
But--

BECKY
I made these people leave their
jobs, God, Ava's been jerked around
so many times...

He looks at her. And BECKY sees AVA through the window,
walking into the diner.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Lenny, you just gotta help me.
That's all.

LATER

BECKY looks at her staff, crammed into a booth -- LENNY, AVA, TOM, MERV, all the other PRODUCERS we've seen before.

BECKY (CONT'D)

We need to get every story before anyone else does. We need to pull out every stop. I need the best stories we can possibly find. And we need to do it right now.

LENNY

Why? Why now?

BECKY

Because --

And she can't tell them. Won't.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Because they're resetting some of our ad rates. So we need to get the numbers up there. I'll take any idea you have about how to do that.

NICK raises his hand.

NICK

I'm working on a--

BECKY

(oh no way)

Ava, anyone interesting put out a sex tape recently?

INT. MIKE'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

BECKY talks to MIKE and COLLEEN.

BECKY

We need to post a win. And that's what we're going to do--

MIKE

I don't understand. Why now?

BECKY

--because I've decided. That being happy about being #2 is bullshit. I need you two be committed to doing whatever it takes.

COLLEEN

(quickly)

Whatever it takes.

MIKE simply stands up, looks at BECKY with disgust, and walks out the door.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

Don't worry about him. Just do what you need to do.

MUSIC UP

Clips of Daybreak...

...we see two photos of the same woman -- in one she's serious, in a judge's robes -- in another, she's merrily licking Margarita salt off her friend's chest in a bar...

...we see COLLEEN, preparing to get her eyes lasered on camera...

...we see PAUL McVEE, in Pamplona, getting chased by a bull, swearing a blue streak...

...we see MIKE and COLLEEN, bantering on the air, but there's an edge to MIKE now...

...we see a story about adorable puppies...

...pregnant cheerleaders...

...mug shots of chastened celebrities...

IN THE STUDIO

At the end of a show, MIKE signs off, then unclips his mic in disgust.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY follows MIKE down the hall. He's pissed.

MIKE

Jesus, Becky. How much lower can we go?

BECKY

Mike--

MIKE

So this what it really comes to? That we're willing to win at all costs?

And she stops. Had enough.

BECKY

You know what? I'm done
apologizing.

He looks at her. And she's tired and ragged and frustrated.

BECKY (CONT'D)

You know why people want to win?
Because it feels good. For once in
my life, I'm almost there, and now
I understand why people devote
their lives to being #1. Because
that's the only thing you're
rewarded for. That's what Greenie
understood, way before I did.

MIKE

You're not like him.

BECKY

Maybe I am. Maybe I should be.

MIKE

If you were, I wouldn't be here.

BECKY

Oh, come on, Mike---

MIKE

You were right, after I retired, I
got back to South Carolina, killed
some birds, went to a few bars,
woke up in some strange beds-- And
I was dying down there without the
news. And too damned proud to ask
someone for a job.

BECKY just looks at him, astonished.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You came down to see me. And you
were smart and different and you
kicked my ass. And I believed in
you. And now...

He shakes his head.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'll finish out my contract. But
this isn't the show I want to do.
And I don't think it's what you
want to do either, but...

BECKY

What's best for the show -- best
for the people who work for me --
is to be successful. Period.

He tries to interrupt.

BECKY (CONT'D)

I know what people want to see--

MIKE

Do you? Maybe you used to. I don't
think these are stories people
want to see, I think these are
stories they can't look away from,
like a car accident. That's not
news.

He looks at her.

MIKE (CONT'D)

But you do what you think is right.

INT. BECKY'S BEDROOM -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY'S morning routine. She turns on all her TV'S.

And on every show are the same visuals -- clips from the Miss
America pageant -- swimsuit contestants on a runway. Also--

A closeup of a brunette beauty wearing a Miss New Jersey
banner. A blonde beauty wearing a Miss Minnesota banner. And
a mug shot of a burly mobster type.

INT. STAFF MEETING -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY meets with her staff.

LENNY

Apparently Miss Minnesota was the
odds-on favorite. Miss New Jersey
was pissed. Her brother-in-law is
mobbed up, she asked him to put out
a hit. Kind of Tonya Harding by way
of the Texas Cheerleader.

BECKY

Who can we get?

LENNY

I'd take either girl, but the
brother-in-law's the real get.
Name's Joey Ippolito.

BECKY looks at AVA.

AVA
I'm on it.

BECKY
We need this story. We have to have
this story.

Just then NICK FAZEKAS interrupts. Summons his courage.

NICK
I have something.

BECKY looks at him.

NICK (CONT'D)
Small town in Delaware tried to put
a law on the books preventing
illegals from owning homes. A John
Doe family sued, case went to the
State Supreme Court. Decision's
coming down tomorrow at 8:30 and...

He pauses, very dramatically.

NICK (CONT'D)
...and I got the John Doe, willing
to speak to me first.

BECKY thinks. It's actually not bad.

BECKY
Who else has him?

NICK
No one.

BECKY thinks. NICK holds his breath.

BECKY
If I have time.

He looks at her, really.

BECKY (CONT'D)
We get the mobbed up brother-in-
law, you're probably screwed.
Otherwise, you're a maybe.

NICK
(thrilled)
Really? A maybe?

EXT. STREET -- NEW JERSEY -- DAY

We see AVA, with all three kids, in a minivan, driving through working class Wayne, New Jersey.

INT. BECKY'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY'S phone rings. She sees it's AVA, snaps it up.

BECKY

Hey--

INT. COLLEEN'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

BECKY walks in to see COLLEEN.

BECKY

Word is Joey Ippolito wants to be interviewed by a woman. Thinks it will humanize him. So it's between you and Jodi Ramirez--

COLLEEN

Okay--

BECKY

Ramirez is sending a note. Maybe we should call him.

COLLEEN

Okay, let's do it.

BECKY

You sure?

COLLEEN

We're trying to win here, right?

INT. HOUSE -- NEW JERSEY -- DAY

We see JOEY IPPOLITO on the phone...

JOEY

...look, thanks for calling, but my question is, don't more people watch the other show? The Morning Show show?

INT. COLLEEN'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

COLLEEN is calm, polished.

COLLEEN

That's right. We're like you, Joey.
The underdog. We need to get this
story out there every bit as much
as you do... all right, thank you.

She hangs up. BECKY looks at her.

COLLEEN shrugs.

And that instant BECKY'S phone beeps. She looks down. Reads a
text. Holds it up to show COLLEEN.

From AVA: *We got him.*

INT. BECKY'S OFFICE -- DAY

BECKY talks to AVA.

BECKY (O.S.)

Stash him in a motel room. I don't
want Greenie's bookers calling him.

INT. GREENIE'S OFFICE -- THE MORNING SHOW -- DAY

We see GREENIE on the phone, very upset.

GREENIE

What do you mean? How did this
happen?

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY on the phone to ROGER as she walks in.

BECKY

We got him. Exclusive.

ROGER

How the hell did you do that?

BECKY

We're running the promos right now.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN

The now-familiar footage of the Miss America pageant. Freeze
frame on MISS NEW JERSEY... camera pushes in dramatically.

VOICEOVER

In a competition where winning is
everything, some people will stop
at nothing... Tonight, the beauty
and--

Dramatic cut to IPPOLITO'S mug shot.

VOICEOVER (CONT'D)
--the beast.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

BECKY walks home, alone, exhausted, frazzled. Her phone rings: Jeff Birch. She switches it to Ignore. And walks home.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET -- NYC -- PRE-DAWN

The next day. In the pitch black COLLEEN gets in a limo.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY makes lunch for DYLAN, puts it in his backpack.

INT. DYLAN'S BEDROOM -- PRE-DAWN

BECKY kisses DYLAN goodbye.

DYLAN
Remember what Sun Tzu said--

...and he falls asleep mid-sentence. She kisses him, leaves.

EXT. STREET -- NYC -- PRE-DAWN

COLLEEN'S car enters the Holland Tunnel.

INT. MOTEL -- NEW JERSEY -- PRE-DAWN

The Daybreak crew sets up the motel room for the interview.

INT. GREENIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

GREENIE watches a Daybreak promo for the interview. Stewing.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

COLLEEN crosses paths with MIKE.

MIKE
Congratulations on the big get.

BECKY
Thanks. Oh, wait. Almost missed the sarcasm there.

MIKE
We're all going to hell.

BECKY
I'm putting on Nick's story.

He looks at her.

BECKY (CONT'D)
Right before the big interview. So
don't say I never did anything--

MIKE
How much of it? 60 seconds? It's a
three minute piece--

BECKY
Well, it's complicated because--

MIKE
How much time does the hitman get?

And now he does walk away, leaving BECKY standing there. She
calls after him.

BECKY
You're very hard on me!

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

LENNY folds his arms. And for the first time in memory he
looks... sort of relaxed.

BECKY
You look happy for once.

LENNY
Because for the first time I'm
thinking... we might win this
thing. This interview could put us
over.

BECKY nods, afraid to even entertain the possibility.

INT. MOTEL -- NEW JERSEY -- DAY

COLLEEN sits across from JOEY IPPOLITO, getting miked. On the
monitor next to the camera she can see the Daybreak opening.

VOICEOVER
...and now, live from New York,
Mike Pomeroy.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

BECKY paces.

BECKY

Here we go.

We see QUICK CUTS of the show

Promos for the Ippolito interview.

An interview with MIKE and Barack Obama.

A cooking segment with weatherman ERNIE APPLEBY.

INT. STUDIO -- DAYBREAK -- LATER

And then we see MIKE, alone at the anchor desk.

MIKE

This morning the Delaware Superior Court made a landmark decision about the legal rights of illegal immigrants.

ON ONE OF THE SCREENS

We see the camera on NICK as he waits for his cue. The wind messes up his already unkempt hair. His tie is askew.

BECKY

God, that's a sexy, sexy man.

He hear MIKE, introducing NICK.

MIKE

Nick Fazekas tells us what that decision means to one family.

BECKY'S phone rings, she answers it. AVA.

BECKY

What's wrong?

AVA

Ippolito's just jumpy, that's all.

BECKY

We're going to get to him in less than three minutes. We've got Nick's story, then commercials, then your guy, okay?

BECKY watches the show.

ON THE SCREEN

We see shots of a house in Delaware, then snapshots of an Asian family. We hear NICK'S voiceover.

NICK (V.O.)

...members of the Hmong tribe, the Khing family came to America in search of a better life. Today the court's ruling is a first step in making that dream possible again. We were the first people to talk to Lim Khing after the ruling was handed down.

We see NICK talking to an ASIAN MAN -- LIM KHING -- on the front steps of the courthouse. The steps are teeming with REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS.

NICK (CONT'D)

Mr. Khing -- you spell your name in the usual Hmong manner, with an h after the k, correct?

BECKY rolls her eyes.

BECKY

I'm going to strangle him.

NICK

Tell us why you brought this case.

LIM looks around, uncomfortable with all the attention.

LIM

We come here, we just want to work, be a family like everyone else. We think America will be the place for us to be free and to be happy.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY watches.

NICK

What was the first thing you thought when you heard about the decision--

He sees LIM, looking around on the steps.

LIM

Oh, I think I want to tell my wife. They only let me in the courtroom by myself, so I am still waiting for her. I--

And at that moment he sees her, his wife MAY, at the bottom of the steps, looking for him.

The shot follows his point of view. Then he starts running towards her. They're both crying.

And the control room is quiet, watching LIM hug his wife.

MERV

...Becky, we're running long, we're going to have to cut out.

INT. MOTEL -- NEW JERSEY -- MORNING

COLLEEN gets ready to start the interview.

She looks at the monitor. The Khing story is still playing. IPPOLITO looks at her.

COLLEEN

Don't worry. They're about to get out of this.

INT. STUDIO -- DAY

We-see MIKE, looking at the show on the monitor. He looks at the clock. Starts to notice...

NICK'S story is going long. He waits. The studio is quiet...

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

...and the control room is pandemonium.

LENNY

Becky, we gotta get out, give us the out.

BECKY

An out. Right. Okay.

But she doesn't move. The world is spinning around her... the monitors, the noise...

LENNY

Becky, what are you doing?

...and suddenly things snap into focus...

BECKY

No.

They all look at her. What?

BECKY (CONT'D)
I'm not cutting out. We're running
this whole piece.

They all look at her like she's insane.

MERV
Running the whole piece... now?

LENNY
Becky, we have to go to commercial.
And come back and do the Ippolito--

BECKY
Shhh....

She goes back to watching NICK'S piece.

LENNY
But...

BECKY
Lenny, I have to. This is what
people want to see. I know it.

ON THE SCREEN

Finally LIM and MAY pull out of their hug.

NICK
How did you feel when you heard the
ruling?

MAY
Only in this country can you wish
something and then the something
can be true. We have our house now,
our life now...

PULL OUT FROM THE SCREEN

To the CONTROL ROOM...

...where the place is a madhouse. Every single phone ringing,
people yelling.

BECKY
Call Roger, tell him we need to run
into commercial.

LENNY
What? No.

BECKY'S phone rings. AVA.

AVA

Becky, I'm sorry, I don't know what's happening there, but if we don't put this guy on the air when we said we would, we'll lose him.

And BECKY is confident now, calm, strong.

BECKY

I know.

LENNY walks over to her with the phone.

LENNY

Roger.

BECKY holds the phone to her ear.

BECKY

How can I help you?

ROGER

Becky, what are you doing?

BECKY

I'm running Nick's whole piece.

ROGER

You can't do that. The affiliates are going nuts.

BECKY

I know. Gotta do it, Roger. It's the better story.

ROGER

They're dropping the show. Going to news and weather.

BECKY

That's okay. Enough of them will stick with us.

ROGER

Becky!

BECKY

You want to fire me, you want to go to dead air, great. Otherwise, we're running thirty more seconds of this story.

She hangs up on ROGER.

And looks around at the show, with LIM and MAY still on it...
at everyone panicking... and suddenly she's very calm...

...time slows down and we see...

COLLEEN in the motel unclipping her mike.

IPPOLITO storming out of the motel room COLLEEN is in.

NICK'S story still on the air.

LENNY with phones pressed to his ear.

GREENIE looking at the monitor with Daybreak on it. Looking
shocked as he realizes the story isn't going to run.

IPPOLITO goes into his motel room. Slams the door

And finally, in the studio...

...we see MIKE, looking at the screen.

He looks at the STAGE MANAGER.

MIKE

What the hell did Becky just do?

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

BECKY finally snaps her fingers. The show cuts to commercial.
Everyone stands there, trying to comprehend what happened.

LENNY

Well, among other problems, we have
nothing to run when we get back.

BECKY

What do we need?

LENNY

Ninety seconds of filler.

On BECKY, thinking. She sighs. And we cut to:

INT. STUDIO -- DAY

MIKE looks at the STAGE MANAGER.

MIKE

Wait a second. Becky is screwed.
What is she going to run now?

STAGE MANAGER

Apparently she has something.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

We see ERNIE APPLEBY racing down the hallway, carrying an armful of weathervanes, very excited.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

LENNY looks at BECKY. He sits down next to her.

LENNY

So we're running the weathervane segment. Well, that'll put us over the top.

Just then MERV looks at her.

MERV

Wait a second. Hold on. Mike has something.

BECKY

He does?

INT. STUDIO -- DAY

MIKE calls out from the anchor desk.

MIKE

Can somebody get me a goddamned frying pan!

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

BECKY looks at the monitor. Oh my God.

INT. STUDIO -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

A frenzy. A kitchen set is wheeled in at the last minute.

MIKE

...eggs, a pan and a hot oven...

PRODUCER

...so it's an omelet...

MIKE

It's not an omelet, it's a frittata. That's the beauty of it. I can make it with anything I want.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAYBREAK-- DAY

BECKY races through the control room door, running towards the studio.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- DAYBREAK -- DAY

MERV calls MIKE'S segment.

MERV

...and we're back with Mike in 5-4-3-2...

INT. STUDIO -- DAYBREAK-- DAY

MIKE chops onions.

MIKE

...I learned how to make this in Italy, on a naked weekend with an unnamed movie star...

And we see BECKY, walking onto the set.

She looks at MIKE. And for a moment, he looks across at her.

Then goes back to making a frittata.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Now, what few people know is that the most important thing in making a frittata is a hot oven...

PULL OUT TO SEE

COLLEEN, in the motel room, watching the show, mouth open in astonishment. IPPOLITO looks at the monitor.

IPPOLITO

What the hell is she doing?

And despite herself a big smile breaks across COLLEEN'S face.

COLLEEN

The news.

IN THE STUDIO

BECKY watches MIKE. Who continues cooking.

MIKE

...because a hot oven, my friends, is the only way to make a frittata... fluffy.

BECKY lets out a loud laugh, claps her hand over her mouth.

And MIKE picks up the frying pan and sends the frittata in the air...

FREEZE THE IMAGE

MATCH CUT TO:

THE FRONT PAGE OF THE NEW YORK TIMES

Headline reads: Daybreak's #1 moment. And there's a picture of MIKE, sleeves rolled up, flipping the frittata. Having the time of his life.

FADE OUT THEN
QUICKLY BACK IN:

INT. DAYBREAK -- DAY

BECKY walks down the hall with COLLEEN.

BECKY
Great show today...

COLLEEN
Thanks.

BECKY
Look, Colleen... I don't think I ever apologized to you, for killing that hitman interview, after everything...

COLLEEN waves her off.

COLLEEN
That's okay.

BECKY
We will be #1 some day, you know--

COLLEEN
What are you talking about? We've already been #1.

BECKY
Well, yes, but only for a few seconds.

COLLEEN
Eleven seconds.

BECKY laughs. They keep walking.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
So ABS didn't hire Greenie--

BECKY
 --and CBN had to fire him. He
 helped a competitor.

COLLEEN
 God... what the hell is he going to
 do? I almost feel bad for him.

BECKY
 (sighs)
 You know what? Me too.

INT. NEWSROOM -- DAY

We're on the set of a very dinky local news station. We see a
 rather cheesy, toupeed ANCHOR at the desk.

ANCHOR
 ...and so the cow found its way
 back to the barn. Now, to the local
 Minneapolis weather... very high
 winds... I mean, it's really
 blowing everything around today.

In the video box behind the ANCHOR we see the WEATHER
 REPORTER, out by the lake, in the whipping wind...

ANCHOR (CONT'D)
 How about it, Steven? You getting
 blown?
 (realizes)
 Dammit...

Widen out to find GREENIE, head in his hands, watching
 helplessly, unable to believe he's in this hell.

And we hear the strains of a familiar song... "Rebecca."

EXT. STREET -- DAY

BECKY walks DYLAN into school. They pass the HEADMASTER.
 BECKY says a confident hello.

BECKY
 I'll pick you up from Max's house
 around 9, okay?

DYLAN
 Okay, but you know, it's a little
 hard to get used to.

BECKY
 What?

DYLAN
 You, having a life.
 (smiles)
 I like it. Looks good on you.
 Remember what Oscar Wilde said--

She shoves him into the school.

BECKY
 Go.

MUSIC CONTINUES

INT. BACKSTAGE -- BLUE NOTE -- DAY

...we see JEFF BIRCH, playing "Rebecca" with his band.

And there's BECKY, his date, standing off the side. JEFF'S manager, BILL, walks over to BECKY.

BILL
 Becky, this is Jeff's A & R guy,
 Scott.

BECKY
 Oh, hi, nice to meet you.

SCOTT
 Same here. Wait a second. Becky...
 (smiles, realizing)
 ...you're not, by any chance
 Rebecca?

And BECKY thinks it over for just a second.

BECKY
 Yeah. Guess that's me.

EXT. STREET -- NYC -- PRE-DAWN

MIKE and BECKY walk down the street, both eating something wrapped in foil.

MIKE
 I call it a brunchadilla -- eggs,
 cheese, spinach, hollandaise,
 wrapped in a artisanal flatbread.

BECKY takes a bite.

BECKY
 Very good.

MIKE
Making it on the show on Tuesday.

BECKY
Happy to hear it. We always get a
spike when you cook.

They walk down the street together, getting further and
further away from us.

MIKE
... oh and I'm getting my prostate
checked next week, thought I might
take a crew with me...

BECKY
Oh, come on, Mike, at some point we
have to draw a line.

MIKE
...really? That's news to me.

Beat. She groans.

MIKE (CONT'D)
News? Get it.

BECKY
Keep walking, Old Man.

And they head into the dark of an early morning. And we

FADE OUT