

15. The News Broadcast

(In a news studio. #1, a newscaster, is preparing for the evening news.)

- #1: Testing, testing...1, 2, 3. Is that enough? *(Off-stage voice: Yeah, it's fine.)* Then can we get this show on the road? *(Off-stage voice: Actually, we've got a small problem, Liz/Jim. You're going to have to anchor the show by yourself...again.)* Forget it! No way! I know what the "little problem" is. Frank/Jane fell off the wagon again, right? *(No answer.)* I take your silence as a yes. Well, this amateur stuff has to stop! You all wonder why this station is number five in a three station town. Look, I don't care where you find someone. Just get me a co-anchor.
- #2: *(Enters carrying papers. He/she goes to #1 and hands him/her the papers.)* Here you go, Ms./Mr. Nance. These are the latest news updates.
- #1: *(Looks #2 up and down.)* Who are you?
- #2: I'm Lisa/Larry. I'm the new newsroom intern.
- #1: *(Pause)* Tell me newsroom intern...can you read?
- #2: Of course I can read.
- #1: *(Rips the papers out of #2's hand.)* Congratulations. You've just been promoted. Sit down.
- #2: *(Sits.)* Wow, things move pretty quickly around here. So what do I get to do? Write the news, I hope? See that's what I really want to be. A writer. I studied writing in college and...
- #1: Yeah, yeah, that's a moving story, but you're not going to be a writer.
- #2: Oh, then what am I going to do?
- #1: You're going to report the news.
- #2: You mean I go and get the stories, bring them back so you can report on them?

- #1: *(To his/her self)* Interns. *(To Lisa/Larry)* No, you are going to report the news with me.
- #2: *(Pause)* Report the news with you? *(Panicked)* From here? *(Even more panicked)* ON THE AIR?!
- #1: *(Clips a microphone onto #2.)* You got it, Ace. *(#2 turns front, starts to hyperventilate, pulls out a little brown paper bag and starts to breath into it.)* What are you doing?!
- #2: *(Taking the bag away)* Hyperventilating.
- #1: I can see that. Does this sort of thing go on long? See, we're on the air in about two minutes.
- #2: *(This causes #2 to hyperventilate faster.)*
- #2: *(Takes the bag away.)* I'll be OK. Give me a few seconds. *(Breathes into the bag and finally calms down and takes the bag away.)*
- #1: Are we calm now? *(#2 nods.)* Good. Can we get on with this?
- #2: Mr./Ms. Nance...I...I can't do this. I can't perform in front of people.
- #1: Look...Lisa/Larry right? *(#2 Shakes his/her head.)* No one is asking you to get up and sing the aria from Carmen. All I'm asking you to do is read.
- #2: Read?
- #1: Yes, you know what reading is. You told me yourself you could read.
- #2: I know I said that, but...
- #1: No, no buts, just read. Do you see that monitor, right in front of us?
- #2: Yes.
- #1: Well words are going to appear on that and all you have to do is...
- #2: ...read them?
- #1: EXACTLY! See, you're a natural. *(To off camera)* Joe, throw the first story up there for me. *(Pause)* Thanks. See the nice pretty words. *(#2 nods, yes.)* I want you to read them for me. Can we do that?
- #2: I think so.

- #1:** Good. Go ahead. (There is a few seconds of silence. #1 looks at #2. #2 is mouthing the words and #1 realizes that he/she is reading to him/herself.) No, you genius, not to yourself! **OUT LOUD!**
- #2:** Oh. (Pause) You don't have to yell. OK, (Clears throat - then reads) today in Twain, students rioted for five...
- #1:** Stop, stop! Today in Twain? So much for being able to read. I think if you check that again, you'll find that it's TAIWAN. You know...the island...off the coast of China.
- #2:** I know where Taiwan is. I told you I can't do this. All these people make me too nervous.
- #1:** You can do this! Just forget the people.
- #2:** I can't.
- #1:** Look, do you want to be a sniveling, kowtowing, subservient, little nobody of an intern your whole life?!
- #2:** No.
- #1:** Then I want you to suck it up, and look straight ahead at the monitor. (Pause) No crying!
- #2:** I'm not.
- #1:** Now, look at nothing else in the room. Are you doing that?
- #2:** Yes.
- #1:** Good. Take a deep breath. (#2 does) and **READ THAT STORY!**
- #2:** Today in Taiwan, students rioted for over five hours in opposition to the government's enforced curfew. There were three fatalities and hundreds of people were injured. (Pause) I DID IT! I really did it. I read that in front of all these people.
- #1:** I told you, you could do it. So, how do you feel about doing it for real?
- #2:** You know, I think I can. I really think I can. This is going to be a piece of cake, a cinch. You know, I bet I could do this in my sleep. I bet...
- #1:** Whoa, Acc. You wanna calm down? How about we

- concentrate on not throwing up on camera for a start, huh?
- #2:** OK. Whatever you say...Liz/Jim.
- #1:** (Just shakes, his/her head.) Look, Frank's/Jane's jacket is on the back of the chair. Put it on. (#2 puts on the jacket.)
- #1:** Clip the microphone here. (Pause) So, you ready?
- #2:** You bet! Let's do it!
- #1:** (To the booth) How are we doing? Is it about time? (Off-stage: Ten seconds.) Remember. When that little light goes on, we're on the air. (Off-stage: And in 5, 4, 3, 2, ...#1 Smiles.) Good evening. I'm Liz/Jim Nance.
- #2:** (Horriified) And...I'm...Lisa/Larry. (#2 faints dead away and falls off camera. #1 watches, then looks back into the camera.)
- #1:** Welcome to the six o'clock news.