

Max turns off the TV.

Diana enters

DIANA

Howard's show is going to need some help if it's going to hold, Max. The Thursday show rated 14 with a 37 share, Fridays show rated 11 with a 30 share, and Mondays show is down another 3 points. Beale doesn't do the angry man thing well at all. He's too kvetchy. He's being irascible. We want a prophet, not a curmudgeon. He should do more 'Day of Wrath', Apocalyptic doom. I think you should take on a couple of writers to write some jeremiads for him. I see you don't like my suggestions.

MAX

Hell, you're not being serious, are you?

DIANA

Oh, I am being totally serious. The fact is, I could make your Beale show the highest rated news show in television, if you'd let me have a crack at it.

MAX

What do you mean have a crack at it?

DIANA

I'd like to program it for you, develop it. I wouldn't interfere with the actual news. But tee-vee is show biz, Max, and even the News has to have a little showmanship. What we need is someone who cuts through this anodyne crap we peddle as news. We need someone who reminds us who we are.

MAX

My God, you are serious.

DIANA

I watched your six o'clock show today it's straight tabloid. You had a minute and a half on that lady riding a bike naked in Central Park. On the other hand you had less than a minute of hard national and international news. It was all sex, scandal, brutal crimes, sports, children with incurable diseases and lost puppies. So I don't think I'll listen to any protestations of high standards of journalism. You're right down in the street soliciting audiences like the rest of us.

(MORE)

DIANA (CONT'D)

All I'm saying is, if you're going to hustle at least do it right. I'm going to bring this up at tomorrow's network meeting, but I don't like network hassles, and I was hoping you and I could work this out between us. That's why I'm here right now.

MAX

And I was hoping you were looking for an emotional involvement with a craggy middle-aged man.

DIANA

I wouldn't rule that out entirely.

MAX

Well, Diana you bring all your ideas up at the meeting tomorrow, because if you don't I will. I think Howard is making a goddam fool of himself and so does everybody Howard and I know in this industry. It was a fluke. It didn't work. Tomorrow, Howard goes back to the old format and this gutter depravity comes to an end.

DIANA

Okay

MAX

I don't get it, Diana. You hung around till half past seven and came all the way down here just to pitch this crazy idea when you knew goddam well I'd laugh you out of this office. I don't get it. What's your scam in this?

DIANA

Max, my little visit here tonight was just a courtesy made out of respect for your stature in the industry and because I've personally admired you ever since I was a kid majoring in Speech at the University of Missouri. But sooner or later, with or without you, I'm going to take over your network news show and I figured I might as well start tonight.

MAX

I think I once gave a lecture at the University of Missouri.

DIANA

I was in the audience. I had a terrible schoolgirl crush on you for a couple of months.

Blue (mm/dd/yyyy)

41.

MAX

If we can get back for a moment to the bit of the conversation where you hadn't ruled out emotional involvement with a craggy middle-aged man... what are you doing for dinner tonight?

Diana picks up the phone.

MAX (CONT'D)

Do you have any favorite restaurants?

DIANA

I eat anything.

(into phone)

I can't make it tonight, love. Call me tomorrow.

MAX

Son of a bitch, I get the feeling I'm being made.

DIANA

You are.

MAX

I better warn you, I don't do anything on the first date.

DIANA

We'll see about that.

*

~~18. HOWARD HAS A VISION~~

~~Suddenly Howard appears out of the darkness like a ghost.
Howard's face light up - he is clearly terrified.~~

~~HOWARD~~

~~Hello. Hello?~~

~~He listens intently.~~

~~HOWARD (CONT'D)~~

~~I can't hear you. Speak a little louder.
Yes. Yes. Yes.~~

~~He appears to hear something - we cannot...~~

~~HOWARD (CONT'D)~~

~~Why me? I said why me?~~

~~He listens again, then answers.~~

~~HOWARD (CONT'D)~~

~~Okay!~~

~~Okay!~~

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