

In the Gap - Commercial Break

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Danika (35) walks down a long hall thumbing her cell screen. Her assistant, Riley (22) walks beside her.

RILEY
Here's the bullet points for the second segment interview.

Then we've got Ben's piece from the Capitol. He'll remote in live for the follow up.

DANIKA
We have the book promo ready to go on the close?

RILEY
All set. We'll need you to give it a quick intro.

DANIKA
Alright, anything else?

RILEY
Yeah, boss wants to see you in the conference room.

DANIKA
We go live in 5 minutes.

RILEY
He said it's urgent.

DANIKA
Did he say what it's about?

RILEY
No, Chris is in there with him.

DANIKA
Chris is in there? Who's producing?

RILEY
I don't know.

Danika and Riley approach the conference room door.

DANIKA
Make sure they're ready for me on set, will you?

Riley nods and continues down the hall. Danika enters the conference room.

Two men are seated across from each other at a long table.

They are Aaron (40) a studio exec and Chris (30) the show producer.

DANIKA

Aaron, what this about? We go live in 5 minutes.

AARON

I know. Sit down.

DANIKA

I don't have time to sit down.

CHRIS

The network wants you to issue a retraction.

Danika sits across the table from Aaron in a chair next to Chris.

DANIKA

A retraction for what?

AARON

Your close last night. I've told you a dozen times you need to dial it back.

(to Chris) And I've been telling you to get a handle on things down here. I hired you to make a news show.

I've got ad dollars that are gonna walk if they don't get a retraction.

DANIKA

What am I supposed to apologize for? My support of a peaceful gathering of citizens exercising their constitutional right to free speech?

AARON

For your insensitivity and marginalization. It's gonna start costing us viewers.

CHRIS
Are you kidding? We've moved up in
every demo for the past 6 months.

AARON
And we'll keep moving up. This time
next year we'll be number one in our
slot. We'll keep selling ads and I'll
keep paying you.

You'll drop the retraction at the
close.

DANIKA
We've got my book promo slotted for
the close. We're going out with that.

AARON
Not any more.

DANIKA
It's a holiday weekend. We've got to
promote the book.

AARON
Let me make this easy for you. You
retract the statements you made last
night. You apologize to anyone you
might have offended and you come back
on Tuesday and everyone's forgotten
all about it. Alright?

DANIKA
And if I don't?

AARON
Hanna Davenport's been dying for her
own show. She'd crush it in this time
slot. I don't get a retraction, the
show's hers.

Aaron gets up and walks to the door.

PR wrote it up for you. It's in the
teleprompter. You'll read it live at
the close.

Aaron leaves the room.

Danika and Chris sit silent for a moment.

CHRIS
What do you want to do?

DANIKA
I can't apologize for what I said. I
didn't say anything wrong.

CHRIS
I know you didn't.

DANIKA
This is who I am. This is what I
believe. This is why we have a show.

CHRIS
If you don't issue a retraction, we
won't have a show.

Chris leaves the room.

Danika swivels in her chair to look out the window and sits
in silence for a moment.

2 ACT 2 - INT. NETWORK PRODUCTION BUILDING - DAY 2

A knock on the door and Riley sticks her head in.

RILEY
Two minutes, Danika.

DANIKA
Thanks, Riley.

Danika gets out of her chair and walks toward the door.

RILEY
You alright?

DANIKA
Yeah, I'm fine.

Danika and Riley leave the conference room and walk up
towards the studio. They pause before entering and Riley
begins mic-ing up Danika.

RILEY
That close last night was amazing.

DANIKA
Of course it was, you helped me write
it.

RILEY
I polished up a couple sentences.

DANIKA
Riley, you're the best writer I've ever worked with.

RILEY
Yeah, but you're the one that's getting up there every night and saying it. Your ideas, your conviction giving us all a voice. It's inspiring. I could never do that.

Danika smiles.

DANIKA
Of course you could.

Danika takes a breath and enters the studio.

INT. PRODUCTION SUITE

Danika sits behind the desk of a well appointed 3 camera production suite. We hear the audio of Ben's report from the Capital.

BEN (O.S.)
...and as we move into the weekend there's still no news of any movement on either side of the aisle.

A split screen shows Danika and Ben.

DANIKA
And is there any indication as to what we might expect from the moderate caucus?

BEN
Well, you're right Danika, it does appear that with the vote breaking along party lines, the moderate caucus will be the deciding factor. But with negotiations scheduled to go late into the evening and on through the holiday weekend, at this point, it's really anyone's guess.

Back to Danika full screen.

DANIKA
Thank you, Ben.

That's Ben Armstrong reporting live from the Capitol. And we'll be right back with our closing words.

The segment closes. Danika gets up from the desk. Chris walks up onto the set and approaches her. The two exchange a wordless look and walk off set, out of view of the crew and cameras.

CHRIS
How we doin?

DANIKA
I can't believe this is happening.

CHRIS
That's the way they do it.

DANIKA
I didn't even see the script. I have no idea what I'm gonna say.

CHRIS
It'll be a harmless apology. They just want it to go away.

DANIKA
We're going to let them do this?

CHRIS
I don't think we have a choice.

DANIKA
They'll shut the show down, just like that? These are peoples lives we're dealing with.

CHRIS
That's not gonna happen. We'll get through this.

DANIKA
What happens to the book deal if we get canned?

CHRIS
You're not gonna get canned.

DANIKA

And all those people, who we've been supporting. What are we saying to them if we do this?

CHRIS

You're not saying anything to them. You're doing the job your boss told you to do. That's it.

Riley comes backstage.

RILEY

One minute, Danika.

DANIKA

Thank you, Riley.

RILEY

Danika.

DANIKA

I'll be right there.

Riley leaves. Danika and Chris begin walking. As they come out from behind the set, they look out at the crew and cameras and lights. Chris stops and turns to Danika.

CHRIS

Listen, five years ago you were a weekend beat reporter in Cleveland, Ohio. You got here because of who you are, what you believe, and because you've always had the courage to speak truth to power. You've got an audience that believes in you. I believe in you and no matter what happens out there in the next two minutes, that's not gonna change.

Riley approaches again.

CHRIS

We gotta go.

Chris walks off set, behind camera, and stands next to Aaron.

RILEY

The network bumped the book promo.

DANIKA
I know.

RILEY
They said you're gonna read a
retraction?

DANIKA
Yeah.

RILEY
You can't do that.

DANIKA
I don't have a choice.

RILEY
They can't make you do that.

DANIKA
Riley, it'll be alright.

Danika walks to her mark on the floor and stands 6 feet in front of camera #1. Riley ducks behind camera #1.

CHRIS
We're live in five...

Chris flashes four fingers, three fingers, two, and points one at Danika. Aaron walks up behind Chris.

AARON
Looks like she's ready.

CHRIS
She's always ready.

The final segment goes live. Danika looks at the teleprompter, at Aaron and Chris.

DANIKA
In our closing segment last night I voiced my support for a group of citizens gathered peacefully in support of legislation currently being debated at the Capitol. While it did not surprise me that my remarks raised the ire of those opposed to the bill, what did surprise me was the criticism and backlash that

I received personally.

I was told that my remarks were offensive and intolerant, that my language was divisive, that the offended parties deserve an apology, and that in the interest of all concerned, I should retract my remarks.

And so to those of you who were offended, I have this to say.

Danika looks at Riley.

DANIKA

I am truly and sincerely sorry to hear of the reactions to the statement I made last night.

I'm sorry that we've come to a point in this country that we've abandoned thoughtful debate in exchange for the politics of personal destruction.

I'm sorry that instead of cherishing the rights of peaceful assembly and free speech, we choose the weaponry of slander and malice.

But most of all, I'm sorry that I haven't done more to support those who need it most.

Those laboring in obscurity to give their families a better life. Those sacrificing to care for the poor and needy among us. And those engaged in the celebration of our shared citizenry through service, kindness, and love.

And so as we approach the holiday weekend, and celebrate the life of one of our great leaders, I'll leave you with these words he spoke over 50 years ago. "We may have come here on different ships, but we're all in the same boat now."

Danika stand in silence. The studio is quiet.

3 ACT 3 - INT. NETWORK STUDIO - DAY

3

CHRIS
Alright, we're out.

The silence returns for a moment.

Riley stands up and begins clapping. The rest of the crew joins in.

Chris walks on set to Danika.

CHRIS
You don't know when to quit, do ya?

DANIKA
You think they'll take me back in Cleveland?

CHRIS
Yeah, I think they'll take you back in Cleveland.

Aaron approaches Danika and Chris.

AARON
I'm surprised at you Danika, I thought you had a little more ambition than that.

Aaron makes a call on his cell phone while staring at Danika.

AARON
Yeah, get ahold of Hanna Davenport.
Tell her she's got her show.

Aaron pockets his cell and begins walking away.

AARON
You can sign your severance papers in the conference room Tuesday morning.
You too, Chris.

Danika looks at Chris.

DANIKA
I'm sorry.

CHRIS
Don't apologize. It was perfect.

The crew begins to make their way out of the studio. Riley approaches Danika and Chris.

RILEY
Can't we do anything about this?

DANIKA
We've done all we can. We always have.

CHRIS
Well, on the upside, we've got the weekend off.

DANIKA
Riley, when was the last time you had a weekend off?

RILEY
I can't remember.

CHRIS
Let's get out of here. Dinner's on me.

DANIKA
Sounds good. You two go ahead, I'll meet you there.

Chris and Riley leave the studio.

Danika stands alone.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Tuesday morning.

The conference room is empty.

Danika enters the conference room and sits down at the table. She looks at a poster of herself on the wall the swivels her chair and looks out the window.

Chris enters and sits beside her in silence.

Aaron enters carrying a briefcase and sits across the table from Danika and Chris.

AARON
You really kicked up a hornet's nest on this one, Danika. My phone's been blowing up all weekend.

DANIKA
I turned mine off.

AARON
Yeah?

DANIKA
Computer too.

AARON
Well, you might wanna turn it back on.

Aaron thumbs his cell phone and slides it across the table to Danika. Danika picks it up and looks at the screen.

AARON
Your Friday close is all over youtube,
1.3 million views.

DANIKA
This says 1.4.

Danika slides the phone back to Aaron.

AARON
Web traffic on your page doubled over
the weekend, the rebroadcasts had
almost as many views as the live show.

CHRIS
Sponsors still pulling out?

AARON
No, they're fine. And I just got off
the phone with your publisher. You're
book is going to debut at number one.
They've already sold out of the first
shipping.

DANIKA
What about the vote?

AARON
Early reports have the moderate caucus
backing it. Looks like it's gonna
pass.

Danika looks at Chris and smiles.

AARON
So, needless to say, things have

changed a bit since we last spoke. The network no longer sees the need for a retraction.

Aaron takes two contracts out of his briefcase. He hands one to Danika and one to Chris.

Furthermore, we'd like to renew your contract for another 3 years with a significant compensation increase as you can see.

Danika and Chris look over the papers.

DANIKA
This is very generous, Aaron. I appreciate the offer.

AARON
Great.

DANIKA
But I think it's time for me to move on.

AARON
What?

DANIKA
I had a lot of time to think this weekend. There's more for me to do out there. Things I can't do from here.

AARON
What can't you do from here? We'll give you full creative control.
Whatever you want.

DANIKA
There's always gonna be boundaries.
Not only on the message, but on my time, my obligations.

AARON
Come on. Chris, tell her. Talk some sense to her.

CHRIS
Ha, you know that's not gonna work.

AARON
Who are we gonna get to replace you?

DANIKA
I thought Hanna was taking over.

AARON
Are you kidding me? Hanna Davenport?
She's a hack.

Aaron's phone rings. He checks the i.d.

AARON
Look, I've gotta take this. Meet me in
my office in a half hour. We're not
done talking about this.

Aaron leaves the conference room.

CHRIS
So, bestselling author, huh?

DANIKA
Youtube sensation too, don't forget
that.

CHRIS
Well, I can't wait to see what you do
next.

DANIKA
Me neither.

CHRIS
Do me a favor though, will ya?

Chris gets up and walks to the door.

DANIKA
What's that?

CHRIS
Turn your cell phone on when you get
back to Cleveland.

Chris leaves. Danika swivels in her chair and looks out the window.

INT. STUDIO SUITE - EVENING

Danika stands behind the set as the show gets ready to go

live. From her view she can see Chris standing behind camera #1.

CHRIS
And we're live in five.

Chris holds up four fingers, three fingers, two fingers, points one finger forward toward Riley, sitting behind the desk, studio center.

RILEY
Thank you for joining us this evening.
I'm Riley Conner.

Danika looks across the set and locks eyes with Chris. She takes a last look at Riley, walks off set and down the long hall.

RILEY (O.S.)
In breaking news this evening, after intense and prolonged negotiations it looks like legislation will pass that has been tied up for weeks in debate.

Ben Armstrong joins us from the Capitol. Ben, after weeks of gridlock the independent caucus finally decided they would support this bill. What made the difference?

BEN (O.S.)
It seems like a ground swell of public support over the long holiday weekend may have been just enough to swing the vote...

END