

Action News  
by  
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FADE IN:

INT. A TV STUDIO - EVENING

Two ANCHORS sit at a desk looking at sheets of paper. They raise their heads and look toward the camera as a graphic reading "CHANNEL 6 ACTION NEWS" flashes on the screen. The CHANNEL 6 ANNOUNCER begins speaking as the shot zooms in on the desk. Intense background music plays throughout the scene.

CHANNEL 6 ANNOUNCER  
Tonight, on Channel 6 Action News:  
Is your tap water really safe?

The picture switches to a shot of a glass filling with tap water. A computer-generated question mark appears over it.

CHANNEL 6 ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)  
Find out why you could be in  
danger. Then, our Action Weather  
Team will help you prepare for the  
work week with your seven day  
forecast.

A quick montage of various weather conditions accompanies the ANNOUNCER.

CHANNEL 6 ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)  
And our top story: The battle for  
City Hall. Who will be the next  
mayor of Homestead? See the latest  
polls and watch live interviews  
with the candidates.

The picture shows various city government buildings and brief shots from campaign events.

CHANNEL 6 ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)  
All this and more tonight on  
Channel 6 Action News!

The shot switches back to the studio, and the ANCHORS smile at the camera. The picture suddenly goes black.

CUT TO:

INT. LEACH'S OFFICE - EVENING

GREGORY LEACH, 56, manager of Channel 4 and head producer of the news, sits at his desk with a remote control in his hand.

He is a balding, slightly heavysset man with a consistently grim demeanor. He turns away from the television and faces a table behind him where four of his ASSISTANTS are seated.

LEACH

Gentlemen...how long has Channel 4 had the top news show in town?

ASSISTANT #1

Eight years.

LEACH

Eight years. Right. And how long has Channel 6 had a news program?

ASSISTANT #2

About three months.

LEACH

Exactly. So tell me...if we've been here so much longer, then why are we suddenly number two in ratings?

The ASSISTANTS sit and stare at LEACH for a few seconds.

LEACH (CONT'D)

Well?

ASSISTANT #3

Greg, if I can-

LEACH

Hey! What did I tell you?

ASSISTANT #3

(embarrassed)

Sorry, Mr. Leach...sir.

LEACH

Go on.

ASSISTANT #3

Well...people like new things, right? They're just trying something different. Give them a few weeks, and they'll come back to us.

LEACH

A few weeks? We're losing viewers every day!

ASSISTANT #4  
Maybe the election will-

LEACH stands up.

LEACH  
The election won't matter if  
nobody's watching our show!

ASSISTANT #2 stands up.

ASSISTANT #2  
Can I say something?

LEACH signals that he can.

ASSISTANT #2 (CONT'D)  
Look at Channel 6's style. That's  
obviously what people like, right?

Everyone slowly nods in agreement.

ASSISTANT #2 (CONT'D)  
Maybe it's time for us to make some  
changes.

LEACH  
Keep talking.

ASSISTANT #2  
I was thinking that-

The DIRECTOR opens the door and cuts him off.

DIRECTOR  
Hey, Greg, are we doing a show  
tonight or not?

LEACH  
We'll continue this conversation  
later.

LEACH gets up and follows the DIRECTOR.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A RURAL ROAD - EVENING

JUSTIN LOWERY, a 25 year-old reporter with a clean-cut  
appearance, stands in front of a camera holding a microphone.  
Two parked cars sit in the middle of the road behind him.

He straightens his tie and looks toward the camera as SMITTY, a 34 year-old cameraman with disheveled hair and a weight problem, fiddles with the controls.

JUSTIN  
Smitty, how much longer?

SMITTY  
(still looking down)  
You're on in 20 seconds.

JUSTIN  
Everything looking good?

SMITTY pushes a few buttons, then looks up.

SMITTY  
It is now.

JUSTIN  
Great.

SMITTY begins a countdown with his fingers.

SMITTY  
In five...four...three...

He signals the last two silently, and JUSTIN looks toward the camera. A graphic on the bottom of the screen identifies him.

JUSTIN  
Thanks. I'm here at the scene of an accident that took place a few minutes ago. Both drivers appear to be unharmed, but traffic could be backed up in this area tonight.

Behind him, one car pulls away, followed by the other.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)  
I'm going to talk to the drivers now and-

He turns around and sees that the cars are gone, then turns back to the camera.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)  
...Oh. Uh...back to you.

SMITTY looks down and shakes his head.

CUT TO:

INT. A NEWS VAN - NIGHT

JUSTIN and SMITTY sit in the back of the van as it pulls into the road.

JUSTIN  
Smitty...do you remember why you  
got into this business?

SMITTY  
Money.

JUSTIN  
Yeah, but...didn't you want to show  
people the world and keep them  
informed?

SMITTY  
No, it was mostly the money.

JUSTIN  
That's it? That's really all this  
job is to you?

SMITTY  
Man, you take this stuff way too  
seriously. You need to relax.

JUSTIN  
I guess you're right...but I  
thought there would be more to the  
news than this. I just want to  
tell people the truth.

SMITTY  
Welcome to the real world, Lowery.

JUSTIN stares out the window.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE CHANNEL 4 PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The van pulls into the lot. JUSTIN and SMITTY get out and  
walk toward the building.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHANNEL 4 NEWSROOM - NIGHT

JUSTIN enters the room through the main door and sees most of the Channel 4 staff gathered inside. He taps a FEMALE REPORTER on the shoulder, and she turns around.

JUSTIN  
Hey, what's going on?

FEMALE REPORTER #1  
Leach wants to say something.

Two MALE REPORTERS join them.

MALE REPORTER #1  
I bet he'll fire everyone. He's been acting strange.

MALE REPORTER #2  
Don't be stupid. He's probably just going to do his motivational speaker routine again.

JUSTIN  
What's that?

MALE REPORTER #1  
You haven't seen it yet? It's hilarious!

JUSTIN  
Well, I've only been here for a month, so-

MALE REPORTER #2  
(sarcastic)  
By the way, Lowery, that was a great report you did on that car crash.

JUSTIN  
Thanks, it was...

The others laugh, and JUSTIN looks down as the insult registers. The laughter stops as LEACH leaves his office and stands at the front of the room, followed by his ASSISTANTS. He has a very serious expression on his face.

LEACH  
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

ALL  
(monotone)  
Good evening, Mr. Leach.

LEACH  
As you know, Channel 6 has taken  
the lead in ratings. My assistants  
and I feel that we need to change  
our approach to the news in order  
to remain competitive.

ASSISTANT #2 steps forward.

ASSISTANT #2  
You've all seen the Channel 6 News,  
right?

Most of the staff nods.

ASSISTANT #2 (CONT'D)  
What do they have that we don't?

MALE REPORTER #2  
A budget?

A few people laugh.

ASSISTANT #2  
...No. What they have is energy.  
When you watch Channel 6, it makes  
you excited about current events.

ASSISTANT #4 steps forward.

ASSISTANT #4  
That's why people don't watch our  
show anymore. Let's face  
it...we're boring.

ASSISTANT #1 steps forward.

ASSISTANT #1  
But we can fix that. From now on,  
you guys need to treat every story  
like it's the most important thing  
that ever happened.

ASSISTANT #2  
Grab people's attention, and never  
let go!

ASSISTANT #3 slowly steps forward.



ASSISTANT #3

Um...this may be hard for some of you...but it's only for a little while, and then-

LEACH pushes him aside.

LEACH

Actually, no. It's a completely new attitude.

ASSISTANT #1

Exactly. Learn it, live it, and love it.

LEACH

Our future depends on it.

REPORTER #2 tries to hold back laughter. LEACH points at him.

LEACH (CONT'D)

Is there a problem?

REPORTER #2

(still laughing)

No, sir.

LEACH

Any questions?

JUSTIN raises his hand.

ASSISTANT #2

Over there, the new guy.

JUSTIN

Yes. I was thinking...isn't this a little dishonest?

LEACH

In what way?

JUSTIN

What if a story isn't that important? Won't the audience get suspicious?

ASSISTANT #2

Look, people don't care about honesty, okay? They want to be entertained.

ASSISTANT #4

And we're giving them what they want.

ASSISTANT #1

It's a public service!

ASSISTANT #2

Besides, it's not like we're making things up. We're just giving our coverage an edge. Get it?

JUSTIN

...I guess...

LEACH

Good. Any more questions?

Nobody says anything.

LEACH (CONT'D)

In that case, you can all go home. Remember our new strategy when you prepare your reports tomorrow.

People begin leaving the room. JUSTIN stands in the same place and stares at the wall for a few seconds before joining them.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITY OF HOMESTEAD - DAY

The sun sets on the city. A graphic reading "CHANNEL 4 EYEWITNESS NEWS" appears on the screen, and the CHANNEL 4 ANNOUNCER introduces the program.

CHANNEL 4 ANNOUNCER

You're watching Channel 4  
Eyewitness News: The most intense  
half hour of the day!

The shot switches to an image of trees blowing in the wind, accompanied by heavy rain.

CHANNEL 4 ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Our top story: The unpredictable weather continues as powerful storms pummel Homestead. We'll give you an eyewitness view of the damage.

The shot switches to an image of a cash register, followed by a sequence of other money-related scenes.

CHANNEL 4 ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)  
Then, is your money safe? Find out  
how a simple computer error could  
cost you everything.

The shot switches to a video of the MAYOR giving a speech.

CHANNEL 4 ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)  
And in election news, we examine  
Mayor McAllister's record. How  
many of the city's problems are  
really his fault? Keep watching  
Channel 4 Eyewitness News for the  
answer.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHANNEL 4 STUDIO - EVENING

The Channel 4 anchors, ED HUGHES and SHARON BALDWIN, sit at the desk holding sheets of paper. Both are young and were obviously selected for their looks.

CHANNEL 4 ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)  
And now, your new Eyewitness  
anchors, Ed Hughes and Sharon  
Baldwin.

The anchors look toward the camera.

ED  
Good evening. The weather turned  
violent last night as a  
thunderstorm swept through the  
area.

SHARON  
That's right, Ed, and now, some  
residents have no electricity.  
We'll have live coverage in a few  
minutes. But first...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STANFORD RESIDENCE - EVENING

JUSTIN stands in the front yard of a suburban house that clearly has no electricity.

An elderly couple, EARL and HARRIET, sits on the porch.  
SMITTY adjusts various settings on the camera.

JUSTIN  
...I can't do this. It's  
ridiculous.

SMITTY  
If you don't like it, quit.

JUSTIN  
You know I can't do that.

SMITTY  
Then stop complaining. This is  
your big chance, right? You're  
doing the lead story.

JUSTIN  
That's true.

SMITTY  
Of course it is. Now get over  
there. You're on in less than 30  
seconds.

JUSTIN walks over to the porch, and SMITTY follows with the  
camera.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHANNEL 4 STUDIO - EVENING

ED and SHARON sit at the desk, and a graphic reading "POWER  
FAILURE" appears behind them.

ED  
And now, for a closer look at the  
effects of the storm, here's  
Eyewitness reporter Justin Lowery.  
Justin?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STANFORD RESIDENCE - EVENING

JUSTIN stands in front of the elderly couple.

JUSTIN  
Thanks, Ed. I'm here with Earl and  
Harriet Stanford, who have gone  
without power for almost 24 hours.  
(MORE)

JUSTIN (cont'd)  
Did either of you think something  
like this was possible?

JUSTIN holds the microphone in front of them.

EARL  
What do you mean?

JUSTIN  
(melodramatic)  
Did you ever expect to lose all  
your modern conveniences like this?  
It must have been a shock.

EARL  
No, it happens all the time.  
Happened last week, in fact.

HARRIET  
I like it better this way. It  
makes you appreciate the simpler  
things in life.

JUSTIN appears to be at a loss for words.

JUSTIN  
But...um...let's see...did  
you...was there ever a time...when  
you felt like you couldn't go on?

HARRIET  
Well, there was that time in '82...

EARL  
Harriet, don't talk about that!

JUSTIN  
I...I meant today.

HARRIET  
Oh. No, we're fine.

JUSTIN  
...And there you have it.

EARL (O.S.)  
Nice talking to you, young man.

JUSTIN  
It looks like the storm wasn't so  
bad after all. Ed?

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHANNEL 4 STUDIO - EVENING

ED looks somewhat confused.

ED  
...Thanks. For another perspective  
on the storm...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STANFORD RESIDENCE - EVENING

SMITTY turns off the camera as JUSTIN begins walking toward the van.

SMITTY  
What happened, man? You blew it!

JUSTIN  
How did I blow it? I think it went  
well.

SMITTY  
You think it...

SMITTY shakes his head and mumbles to himself.

JUSTIN  
What?

SMITTY  
Lowery, listen to me. You just  
have to do what they tell you, all  
right?

JUSTIN  
Smitty, they told me to report on  
the power failure, and that's what  
I did.

SMITTY  
You know what I mean.

JUSTIN  
Yeah...I do. I said this was  
ridiculous, didn't I? Why  
shouldn't I be able to tell it like  
it is?

SMITTY  
Because that's not what people  
want.

JUSTIN  
It's what I want...

SMITTY  
Tough. Now come on. Let's go see  
if you still have a job.

SMITTY and JUSTIN get in the van, and it drives off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LEACH'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

LEACH sits at his desk watching a tape of a Channel 6 News  
broadcast.

CHANNEL 6 ANNOUNCER  
Our top story tonight: A new study  
says tap water could be good for  
your health...

A knock at the door covers up the end of the sentence, and  
LEACH turns off the TV.

LEACH  
Come in.

ASSISTANT #2 enters.

ASSISTANT #2  
Afternoon, Greg.

LEACH  
What do you want?

ASSISTANT #2  
The new ratings are in.

LEACH  
Did our plan work?

ASSISTANT #2  
It's hard to tell in only three  
weeks, but...as of now, we're even  
further behind Channel 6 than we  
were before.

LEACH stands up.

LEACH

What?

ASSISTANT #2

I don't understand it either, so  
let's not-

LEACH

You said that exaggerating our  
coverage was the answer!

ASSISTANT #2

Relax. I have another idea. Maybe  
we're looking at this the wrong  
way.

LEACH

I think we've established that.

ASSISTANT #2

Are you going to keep insulting me,  
or can I tell you my new plan?

LEACH

Make it quick.

ASSISTANT #2

Right. I've noticed that a lot of  
people in this town are...a little  
slow. Know what I mean?

LEACH

You're saying the viewers are  
idiots?

ASSISTANT #2

Not necessarily...but I do think  
our coverage is on a higher level  
than the average person wants to  
deal with.

LEACH

I see. So if we dumb down our  
reports...

ASSISTANT #2

Exactly. It may seem strange to  
us, but that's because we're more  
intelligent than most people.

LEACH

...I'll think about it.



