

Sports Night

"Gambling Men"

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Note: This takes place a week or two before episode 1 of season 2 ("Special Powers").

TEASER

FROM THE DARKNESS WE HEAR...

DAN
Four hundred dollars.

CASEY
No.

INT. ANCHORS' OFFICE

CASEY is trying to work. DAN is trying to annoy CASEY.

DAN
Four. Hundred. Dollars.

CASEY
No.

DAN
Is it because she's intimidating?

CASEY
It's not.

DAN
So you think she's intimidating?

CASEY
I don't.

DAN
Do you realize what I'm offering
here?

CASEY
Four hundred dollars?

DAN
A cash incentive.

CASEY
No.

DAN
(sigh)
You want more money.

CASEY
It's not about the money.

DAN
You'd do it for free?

CASEY
I might have done it. I might
have asked Jennifer. But it's
turned into a 'Dan thing.'
Besides, I'm going with Dana.

DAN
You're not inviting her to this,
like you haven't asked her out
for... two months now?

CASEY
You said ninety days.

DAN
Ninety days is like, a maximum
figure.

CASEY
But you said --

DAN
I'm revoking the rule.

CASEY
You can't revoke the rule.

DAN
Why not?

CASEY
'cos it's the rule.

DAN
But you won't do *anything,* and...
Jeremy and Natalie will be the

cute couple, and Isaac will run the show, and that's how it's gonna be. I'm bored, Casey.

CASEY
Anything can happen, Dan.

DAN
Did you ask her out last week?

CASEY
No.

DAN
The week before that?

CASEY
No.

DAN
Then odds are you won't ask her out this week, Case.

CASEY
That's what you think.

NATALIE enters.

NATALIE
What's what who thinks?

CASEY waves it off as unimportant.

NATALIE
(To CASEY; a bit worried)
JJ came by earlier; he wanted to talk to you.

CASEY
What's the big deal?

NATALIE
Well --

CASEY
I can handle JJ.

DAN
Two things, Casey, when you say
anything to JJ.

CASEY
Two things?

DAN
(counting off on his fingers)
It's not as funny as you think it
is, and it'll get us in trouble.

CASEY
Hey. It was just one time.

NATALIE
JJ has no sense of humor!

CASEY
And we didn't get in that much
trouble.

DAN
Nobody likes a smartass, Casey.

NATALIE
And remember, every time you smile
at JJ, a little bit of your soul
dies.

DAN and CASEY react.

NATALIE
(cont'd)
The eight'o'clock got pushed back
fifteen minutes.

CASEY
Why?

NATALIE
You need more time on the Bruins.

CASEY
Tell Dana I just have to figure
out an angle.

DAN
Say, Natalie --

CASEY
Dan, seriously. Not a word.

DAN
... would you do something that
made you really uncomfortable if I
offered you four hundred dollars?

NATALIE
(misunderstanding; angry)
Dan --

DAN
I so didn't mean that like that.

NATALIE
I hope you didn't.

DAN
I didn't.

NATALIE
The vengeance of Natalie is not to
be trifled with.

DAN
I bet Casey four hundred dollars
he won't ask Jennifer to the Ali
Fundraiser.

NATALIE
He won't do it.

CASEY
I might do it, if Dan weren't
being the Sports Night Gigolo.

JEREMY enters.

JEREMY
Fifty-eight thousand.

NATALIE
That few?

JEREMY
Approximately.

CASEY
What's up?

NATALIE
Oh --

JEREMY
Nothing.

NATALIE
(irked at JEREMY)
Nothing. So can anybody get in on
this bet?

JEREMY
Bet?

CASEY
Seriously, Natalie. Not one
single word.

NATALIE
We're betting Casey he won't do
certain things with which he is
very uncomfortable.

CASEY
(burying head in hands)
Oh, god.

JEREMY
("Is this kinky?")
Should I just leave?

DAN
I'm betting he won't ask Jennifer
from Accounting out to the Ali
Fundraiser.

NATALIE
I bet you twenty dollars you will

not do tonight's show without
pants.

JEREMY
Hey!

CASEY
I've already done that, Natalie.

DAN
It did make you really
uncomfortable.

JEREMY
The eight'o'clock's been pushed
back --

NATALIE
I just told them.

JEREMY
(awkward)
Oh.

DANA pokes her head in the door.

DANA
Hello? Eight'o'clock? Meeting?

NATALIE
You pushed it back fifteen minutes?

DANA
Oh.

NATALIE
(brightly)
Is there anything uncomfortable
you want Casey to do?

DANA
(glaring at NATALIE, but sounding
casual)
No.

DANA exits. NATALIE gets up.

NATALIE
I'm sure she'll think of something.

JEREMY
We could start up a whole pool.

CASEY
We could. But we won't.

JEREMY
With handicapping, relative odds,
combination bets, the whole nine
yards.

CASEY
You know, you could have just not
said any of that.

NATALIE exits; CASEY gets up and follows her out. We
continue on them through the hallway.

CASEY
(as he exits)
Hey Natalie, could you go look at
the color test? I think there's
something wrong with it.

NATALIE
Really?

CASEY
No.

NATALIE
What's on your mind?

CASEY
Dan's causing trouble.

NATALIE
He is?

CASEY
He was disrespecting you, Natalie,
and on your home turf.

NATALIE

Wow. Could you say that one again,
homey?

CASEY

I'm saying, he was trifling with
the vengeance of Natalie. And you
know what that's asking for?

NATALIE

The vengeance of Natalie?

CASEY

Doesn't have to be big, but you've
got to send him a message.

NATALIE

I'll think about it.

CASEY

That's all I'm asking.

CASEY peels off in another direction. NATALIE smiles
quietly to herself.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM.

DANA paces back and forth, looking lost. NATALIE enters.

NATALIE

Hey.

DANA

I forgot about the fifteen minutes.

NATALIE

Eight fifteen.

DANA

I must be going senile.

NATALIE

You have unscheduled time.

DANA

Natalie, don't go.

NATALIE
(shrugging)
I'm here.

DANA
I mean the job.

NATALIE
I told you what I'm doing --

DANA
I mean it, and I'm only going to
say this once, and then we can
forget it, but you will not be
happy in Galveston.

NATALIE
I know how you feel.

DANA
Maybe I'm not the person you trust
the most on this, but it's true.
You will be happier here. You've
gotta believe me.

NATALIE
I believe that you believe that
that's true.

DANA
Is that the best I can do?

A short beat.

NATALIE
You need a bet for Casey.

DANA
That's just a Dan thing.

NATALIE
Would you bet him he wouldn't go
out with you?

DANA
Natalie -- I don't even know if he
wants me.

(NATALIE responds with a look.)
Betting wouldn't be right.

NATALIE
Dana, what do you *want?*

DANA
I want him to screw up his courage
and tell me how he feels.

NATALIE
Dana --

DANA
If he can't do that, maybe we
shouldn't be together.

NATALIE
But don't you like him the way he
is?

DANA
(short beat; earnestly)
I do like him; I like him very
much.

NATALIE
Then what do you want?

A short beat; PA system kicks on with a little feedback
squeal.

JEREMY (O. S., on PA)
Attention, Sports Night employees.
If there is anything uncomfortable
or embarrassing you'd like Casey
McCall to do, we are starting a
betting pool.

NATALIE
(peevied)
Jeremy....

NATALIE exits.

JEREMY (O. S., on PA, overlapping)

Contact Jeremy Goodwin or Dan
Rydell for further information.

DANA
Maybe I'll just swear off men
forever.

END OF TEASER.

ACT I

INT. MAIN FLOOR

JEREMY writes "Casey Pool" on the whiteboard with odds and odd little scribblings to one side.

NATALIE enters, touches his arm.

JEREMY
Hmm?

NATALIE gestures towards the editing room -- JEREMY sets down his marker and follows her there.

INT. EDITING ROOM

NATALIE and JEREMY enter. JEREMY shuts the door behind them.

JEREMY
What is it?

NATALIE
You told everybody about the bet?

JEREMY
I told everybody about the bet.

NATALIE
On the intercom?

JEREMY
You know me, Natalie. You know about me and about secrets and about how those things don't mix.

NATALIE
How could you do that to Casey?

JEREMY
How could --

NATALIE
He's at a very sensitive place with Dana.

JEREMY
It's been three months, Natalie --

NATALIE
He's ready to go.

JEREMY
If he hasn't done anything in
three months, he's probably not
doing anything at all.

NATALIE
It was wrong, Jeremy. It was mean.

Beat.

JEREMY
(taking out little notepad)
Don't I have you down for twenty
dollars?

NATALIE
That's not --

JEREMY
Yeah, for the no-pants thing.

NATALIE
That's not the point --

JEREMY
Is this about Galveston?

NATALIE
Jeremy --

JEREMY
Am I right?

NATALIE
I've been worried about it. I
grant that I've been worried about
it.

JEREMY
I love Galveston.

NATALIE
I know.

JEREMY
Fifty-eight thousand people in
Galveston.

NATALIE
Jeremy.

JEREMY
In the late 19th century,
Galveston was dubbed the "Wall
Street of the Southwest."

NATALIE
Jeremy. You haven't talked about
the *job.*

JEREMY
It's great.

NATALIE
But you got turned down --

JEREMY
(a bit peeved)
I said, it's great.

NATALIE
It *is* great.

JEREMY
(looking through tapes)
I've gotta get hockey footage for
Casey.

NATALIE
I'd be on-air talent.

JEREMY
We should talk about this. I see
that we should. But can we not
talk about it? Not now?

NATALIE
(beat; softly)
In front of the cameras and
everything.

JEREMY picks up a tape, and looks at it instead of NATALIE.

JEREMY
Galveston has some of the most
variable weather in Texas.

NATALIE sighs.

JEREMY
(cont'd)
It's very prone to hurricanes.

NATALIE and JEREMY sit in the editing room silently for a moment.

INT. MAIN FLOOR

CASEY walks past the desks. KIM catches up to him and hands him a printout.

KIM
Here, Casey.

CASEY
The stats for Thornton?

KIM
No.

CASEY
The shot sheet for Andreychuk's
power play?

KIM
No.

CASEY
(looks it over)
Does it have *anything* to do with
the Bruins?

KIM

It's pick-up lines. We're betting fifteen dollars on every one.

CASEY

(reading it)

There's no way anybody can get anywhere with these.

KIM

You just have to use them, to a woman, at a bar, for real, and you get the cash.

KIM departs; DAVE catches up to him. CASEY tries reading one of the pickup lines aloud.

CASEY

"Hey, is it better to have a boil lanced, or just let it go down?"

DAVE

I dunno, man.

CASEY

Maybe I could hook up with a dermatologist.

DAVE

I have an official bet for you.

CASEY

Joy.

DAVE hands CASEY a tape.

DAVE

Just go into one of the stalls, sit down, and play this tape.

CASEY

What's on the tape?

DAVE

Not telling.

CASEY

So I'll have to listen to it?

DAVE

You aren't allowed to listen to it
until you're in the stall.

CASEY

Dave --

DAVE

And there have to be at least two
other guys, who you don't know, in
the bathroom when you do it.

CASEY

No one would do this.

DAVE

That's why it's twenty dollars.

DAVE leaves. CASEY moves on. ELLIOT stops him from
getting to his office.

ELLIOT

Fifteen spoons, Casey.

CASEY

("Am I going crazy, or is
everybody talking nonsense all of
a sudden?")
What?

ELLIOT

If you steal fifteen spoons from
the company cafeteria, you get
fifteen dollars.

CASEY

A dollar a spoon?

ELLIOT

Just fifteen dollars for all
fifteen spoons.

CASEY

Okay.

ELLIOT
It's not very sportsmanlike the
other way.

CASEY
So, I've got pickup lines, a weird
tape, and now...

ELLIOT
Spoons.

CASEY
No.

ELLIOT
Would you like to talk about a
trifecta?

CASEY
(As ELLIOT walks away)
I'd like to talk to anybody about
anything besides this stupid bet!

JJ
Casey.

CASEY turns around to face JJ.

JJ
(cont'd)
We should talk.

CASEY
(worried, but covering)
I -- I'm in the middle of
something.

JJ
And I can't wait, Casey.

CASEY
Can we do it on the way?

JJ
That's acceptable.

JJ and CASEY start walking.

CASEY
(congenially)
What's on your mind, JJ?

JJ
I'm liaising from Luther Sachs,
who has a significant, material
interest in the Pan-American Cup.

CASEY
We do love our soccer.

JJ
Except you've only mentioned it
once in the last week. Tonight
you're leading with the Bruins.

CASEY
That's Dana's department, and --

JJ
Luther thought *you* might be more
understanding. This needs
publicity, and it's Sports Night's
responsibility to promote it for
us.

JJ, engrossed in the conversation,
doesn't notice that CASEY has led
them straight into Isaac's office.
CASEY knocks on the open door,
pushes it further open.

CASEY
Hey Isaac? May I borrow a staple
remover?

ISAAC
(Glancing at JJ)
I don't have one.

CASEY
(meaning two things at once)
Sorry, Isaac.
(quietly)

Oh, and I think JJ needed to talk
to you about on-air content.
(normal again)
I've got the rundown to get to.
(JJ glares at CASEY)
Nice talking to you.

CASEY exits and shuts the door behind him.

JJ
Your staff is rude. Rude, Isaac,
and second-rate.

ISAAC
That's not your judgment to make.

JJ
I'm your boss -- so yes, it is.

ISAAC
If you personally don't like their
work, fine. You have your opinion.
But you don't have the right and
you don't have the justification
to criticize their abilities.

JJ
I don't even understand what
you're saying, Isaac. Your speech
is --

JJ pauses, trying to think of an
apt word.

ISAAC
If Luther has problems, I'm here
eight hours a day. If you do an
end run on my staff like that, you
won't get what you want.

JJ
Eight hours a day?

ISAAC
It's my job.

JJ

You shouldn't be here eight hours a day. You should be recovering.

ISAAC

This **is** recovering.

JJ

You know what I mean by 'recovering.' You should be in an official form of recuperation, away from here. You know it's for your own good, Isaac. You shouldn't be hobbling around here on your cane, barely in control of your faculties.

ISAAC

That's hurtful, JJ.

JJ

I represent Continental Corp's interests, Isaac. I'm not here to hold your hand and tell you everything's all right.

ISAAC

(smiles)

Tell Luther I'm here if he needs me, whether he likes it or not.

JJ

I don't think Luther Sachs will appreciate your tone.

(walks to door)

ISAAC

I'm betting he'll have a sense of humor. And JJ?

JJ

(stops)

Yes, Isaac.

ISAAC

You know it's for your own good.

JJ
(turns around)
What?

ISAAC
You don't want to deal with these
loons directly.

JJ
(leaving)
Right.

INT. ANCHORS' OFFICE
CASEY, frowning, stares at a blank screen. DAN, in the
background, types rapidly and noisily.

CASEY
I got nothing.

DAN
I can help.

CASEY
Don't want help.

DAN
(stops typing)
Silently, Casey, you were saying,
"Dan. Help me."

CASEY
(quick retort)
It's not a human interest story.

DAN
It *is* --

CASEY
It's a hockey game. It's Boston
beating the crap out of Detroit.

DAN
Start of the third period.
Andreychuk's got a few injuries,
but he's holding up. In fact,

he's carrying the team. Then Detroit sends out its enforcer. Brendan Shanahan comes in to do some questionable checking, to start some fights, to settle some scores. Shanahan looks Andreychuk in the eye, his teeth knocked out, a gash over his left eye from first period, scars across his face, and Andreychuk crumbles. Andreychuk plays like jelly. He loses his nerve completely when it really counts.

CASEY
Yeah.

DAN
Sound familiar?

CASEY
They still beat the Red Wings.

DAN
That's not --

CASEY
Power play with ten seconds left in the third period. Down one. Yzerman plows in past Thornton, past the only defenseman and he skates the puck in, but he's knocked the goal off its spot. Goal doesn't count. Clock runs out. The game is over, because when it really counted, Yzerman screwed everything up. That's what it's about. One zero.

DAN
... which completely ignores the human interest.

CASEY
(irritated)
At this point, I'd actually rather

talk to Jennifer than continue
this conversation.

DAN

You could always ask out Dana.

CASEY

Dana has other things on her mind.

DAN

(typing again as CASEY exits)
I'll bet that right now, as we
speak, Dana is thinking about it.

INT ISAAC'S OFFICE

The door bangs open like a gunshot. DANA storms in.

DANA

What the hell is JJ doing?

ISAAC

Good evening, Dana.

DANA

(sitting on the edge of a seat)
Why is he pressuring me into
covering soccer? The Pan-Am Cup
is months away! What's with JJ
and soccer?!

ISAAC

(quick and casual)
JJ doesn't care about soccer.

DANA

Okay, JJ's boss --

ISAAC

They don't care about soccer, Dana.
JJ wants to force us into a
decision -- any decision -- so he
can make a beachhead.

DANA

This isn't D-day, Isaac.

ISAAC

He's betting if he can get us on
soccer, he'll make an impression,
he'll make himself look important.

DANA

Is he about to lose his job or
something?

ISAAC

People in JJ's line of work are
always about to lose their jobs.

(beat)

How are the Bruins looking?

DANA

(gently)

Isaac, we were talking about JJ.

ISAAC

And now I'm changing the subject.

DANA

Okay.

ISAAC

And you asked me if he was about
to --

DANA

Okay. Sorry. I'll crack the whip
on Casey.

ISAAC

(short beat)

Why?

DANA

So he'll write the *Bruins* story.

ISAAC

I see.

(short beat; smiles)

How you doin'?

DANA

(leaving)
Now you're doing it on *purpose.*
(stopping)
So Casey just went running to you?

ISAAC
He did exactly what I told him to.

DANA
That coward! He couldn't handle
JJ on his own, so --

ISAAC
He did the right thing, Dana.
(sarcastic)
Believe it or not, I can handle JJ.

DANA
I worry --

ISAAC
Don't worry, now.

DANA
When?

ISAAC
Worry when JJ comes back. With
his buddies.

DANA
(worried, but trying to cover)
You think so?

ISAAC
(nods; smiles)
I'm not worried.

ISAAC rests a hand on his cane, thoughtfully.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. MAIN FLOOR

CASEY walks across the studio floor and passes DANA, who shoots him a look. CASEY sighs, walks into...

INT. ISAAC'S OFFICE
ISAAC is here. CASEY enters.

CASEY
Isaac.

ISAAC
Casey, don't start --

CASEY
I feel bad about it.

ISAAC
What did I tell you to do?

CASEY
I know what you said --

ISAAC
"Bring him to me, and get the hell
out."

CASEY
I know.

ISAAC
You think I'm deficient, and I
suddenly can't remember these
things?

CASEY
I was trying to apologize.

ISAAC
Don't apologize.

CASEY
Well... I...

ISAAC

Either apologize, or don't, but
don't do both. It's awkward.

CASEY
(curiosity)
Do people think I'm awkward?

ISAAC
Yes.

CASEY
Really?

ISAAC
Very.

CASEY
Kind of stiff?

ISAAC
Yes.

CASEY
Even after the thing with JJ last
--

ISAAC
You're also a smartass.

CASEY
Oh.

ISAAC
This is about the bet.

CASEY
You know about the bet?

ISAAC
I've put in a bet that you'll
punch out Dan on the air.

CASEY
Can't help you there.

ISAAC
(shrugs)

I like to bet on long shots. And
Dan's good at getting on your
nerves.

CASEY
Now this stupid bet is making it
impossible for me to ask Jennifer
out.

ISAAC
(a little exasperated)
Life is short, Casey.

CASEY
("Yeah, yeah, whatever.")
I know.

ISAAC
Yeah, but I got a glimpse of the
tail end.

Beat.

CASEY
Forget about the bet.

ISAAC
(correcting him)
Rise above the bet.

CASEY
That feels risky.

ISAAC
You want risky? Try taking on a
mediacogglu -- ahem, me-di-a con-
glo-me-rate... when you can't even
talk.

CASEY
Your speech is getting better all
the time.

ISAAC winces.

CASEY
Really.

ISAAC
(smiling)
Get outta here.

CASEY leaves.

INT. ACCOUNTING OFFICES

JENNIFER works at a computer at a desk. CASEY comes by.

CASEY
Hi. Jennifer?

JENNIFER
Casey McCall. I've heard about
your little bet --

CASEY
It's not about the bet. I'm
trying to rise above the bet. I
just --

JENNIFER
Everybody's heard about your
little bet. Thanks for making me
a laughingstock, Mr. McCall.

CASEY
It's Dan's fault for starting it,
not to mention Natalie's for being
an inveterate gossip, and most of
all Jeremy, who doesn't understand
that sometimes there are secrets
in the world.

JENNIFER
It's their *fault?* You only came
in here because of your stupid bet?

CASEY
I was trying to rise above the --
didn't I explain this before?

JENNIFER
Explain better.

CASEY
It's not my fault.

JENNIFER
I don't get it. Aren't you dating
Dana Wilmington?

CASEY
(after a moment's confusion)
Dana Whittaker.

JENNIFER
Yeah.

CASEY
No. I mean I will be.

JENNIFER
You will be?

CASEY
I may be. I might do.

JENNIFER
You might?

CASEY
When the time is right. Which
might be never.

JENNIFER
Oh.

CASEY
Would you want to go with me? To
the --

JENNIFER
I don't need this pity.

CASEY
It's not. I mean, it's not the
bet. And it's not pity. I just
genuinely want to know, and I
wanted to know before any of this.

If you do. That is. So
there you go.

JENNIFER

Put it this way: No way in hell.
You've got issues, it's the end of
the quarter, and I've got hours of
work ahead of me. You should
probably get out.

CASEY

(looking around; genuinely
confused)
I'm not in anything.

JENNIFER

I mean get outta here.

CASEY

I'll get outta here when I'm
finished.
(beat)
And I'm finished.
(short beat)
And I'm leaving.

CASEY exits.

INT. ELEVATOR LOBBY IN ACCOUNTING
CASEY enters.

CASEY

That's it. Just ask her and get
done with it.

CASEY heads for an elevator.

INT. ANCHORS' OFFICE

DAN is procrastinating. NATALIE pokes her head in the door.

NATALIE
Hey Dan.

DAN
What's up?

NATALIE
You know anything about the
Orioles getting sold?

DAN
No.
(sudden shock)
What?

NATALIE
The Orioles --

DAN
I heard you. What? Getting
sold? What? What do you know?

NATALIE
Casey said something.

DAN
That's impossible. That has to be
impossible.

NATALIE
It's probably nothing.

DAN reaches for the phone.

NATALIE
(cont'd)
But -- talk to Casey, before you
do anything.
Please?

DAN
Okay.

DAN sits back in his chair. He looks worried.

INT. ELEVATOR
It's empty but for CASEY. The door opens. DANA gets on.
They stand on opposite sides. CASEY watches DANA,
frightened. DANA looks down at her feet, smiling.

DANA
I'll need the hockey highlights as soon as you can get them together.

CASEY
Um... I...

DANA
What?

CASEY
(mumbling)
I was wondering if... did you... I mean, were you --

DANA
Casey, you're mumbling. Either talk louder or stand closer.

CASEY
(loud)
I WAS WONDERING --
(stops himself, shakes his head, steps closer awkwardly)

DANA
Oh -- we're going to pare down the Redskins and the Seahawks camp, but if the feed from the Bruins comes in --

CASEY
Listen, I was just thinking -- I'm sorry to interrupt.

DANA
Hm?

She gestures "come on, tell me."

CASEY
I... I was just wondering if --

Ding! The elevator doors open, and a crowd gets on. Casey tries to back up, finds the crowd forcing him forward.

DANA puts her clipboard on his chest, writes something on it.

DANA
What?

CASEY
Uh... um... nothing.

INT. ANCHORS' OFFICE

DAN sits on the couch, clipboard and pencil in hand, thoughtful. CASEY enters, dejected.

DAN
(not looking up)
"... and the mighty Casey has
struck out."

CASEY
(he's hit a nerve)
Leave it.

DAN
(looks up; beat)
The Orioles are getting sold?

CASEY
(disbelief & confusion)
Really?

DAN
Natalie said you knew something
about it.

CASEY
(figuring it out; knowing this
will goad DAN)
Well, it should be no big deal.

DAN
No big -- I can't believe this!

CASEY
How long has it been since you've
even been to Baltimore?

DAN

I saw Memorial Stadium. I was a kid, seeing baseball for the first time, seeing Eddie Murray in his prime, at Memorial Stadium, in the heat and loving it and watching every second of it, and I can't deal with the Orioles getting sold to Austin.

CASEY

("What an ill-conceived lie.")
Natalie said Austin?

DAN

I've narrowed it down to Austin, and a few cities on the west coast.

CASEY

(almost grinning)
You've really thought this one through.

DAN

I'm making a plea.

CASEY

A plea?

DAN

An on-air plea. To the Orioles.
To get them to stay.

CASEY

(about to give up the game)
Dan... you shouldn't worry about -

-

DAN

Oh, and Natalie left a message.
No-pants bet is up to sixty dollars.

CASEY

What?

DAN
West Coast Update pitched in.

CASEY
(abruptly changing his mind)
Dan, the plea sounds like a great
idea. Give it your best shot.

DAN
So you hit the wall with Dana.

CASEY
There were lots of people in the -
-
(pause)
-- the time wasn't right.

DAN
"'Not my style,' he said."

CASEY
(trying to explain)
Dana's a good friend. She's one
of the best friends I've got.

DAN
What could be better?

CASEY
And she's my boss.

DAN
So?

CASEY
(half to himself)
So if I screw things up, I've done
a very bad thing.

DAN
(typing it out)
"My Plea to the Orioles."

CASEY
(smiling)
I gotta go.

INT. DANA'S OFFICE

DANA sits at her desk. There's a knock at the door. JJ walks in.

DANA
Yeah?

JJ
Do you know where Casey is?

DANA
(anger kept under careful self-
control)
Hmm?

JJ
I'm sorry, don't you know the
answer to that one?

DANA
(sigh)
Yes I do. The answer is "I'm not
his mother," JJ.

JJ
You're an executive producer.
You're responsible for knowing
what's going on.

DANA
My responsibility is to keep you
from slinking behind my back.

JJ
I'm your boss, Dana.

DANA
Isaac is my boss.

JJ
Isaac is not in any position to
run the show. Not any more.

DANA
Isaac **is** the show, JJ! Isaac is

the heart of the show; he's the reason there **is** a show. You don't know sports, you don't feel it, you aren't passionate about it, and that is why you don't tell us what to do, JJ. That's why we do soccer when **we** say it's time to do soccer.

JJ

This isn't about passion. This is about **business.** And this **business** is hemorrhaging money - - CSC's money. Luther's money. You haven't done anything about it.

You've been busy being 'passionate.' That means you're in my way, Dana. I'm not a bad guy, but if this keeps up, I'll make things bad for you until you do your job.

DANA

My job is to just listen to you? Do you think you know a damn thing about making this show profitable?

JJ

I'm a businessman, and you're not.

DANA

I'm an executive producer. I belong here in my studio, and you don't.

JJ

(congenial)

I'll find Casey myself.

DANA

And you'll have to get out of my office to do it.

JJ closes the door behind him. DANA pounds her fist on her desk, winces, holds it hurt.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

NATALIE, DAVE, CHRIS, and ELLIOT
sit at their stations. JEREMY is
standing at his.

NATALIE
You can't tell me that, Jeremy.

JEREMY
I don't have the KJST feed.

NATALIE
Don't tell me --

JEREMY
I'm telling you.

NATALIE
Why did you rewire it ten minutes
before --

JEREMY
It's nothing to do with the wiring,
Natalie. It's not there.

CHRIS
It's back.

NATALIE
I don't see it.

ELLIOT
It's wired to thirty-two.

NATALIE
I'm looking at thirty-two.

CHRIS
That's not KJST.

JEREMY
That's because it's not there.

NATALIE
That's the Seahawks. Why do we
have the Seahawks?

JEREMY
I'm telling you, Dana wanted the
Seahawks on a live feed for the
tens, that's why I rewired it.

NATALIE puts down her headset and walks out. Everybody
except DAVE looks confused.

DAVE
I got the wheel.

INT. JUST OUTSIDE THE ANCHORS' OFFICE
CASEY is exiting the office; he runs into DANA.)

DANA
Hey.

CASEY
Hey.
(awkward beat)
What's up?

DANA
JJ's trying to pull my show out
from under me. And you?

CASEY
I'm being made the subject of
humiliation and ridicule with this
betting pool.

DANA
(smiling coyly)
I've got a bet for you.

CASEY
(a bit scared)
A bet?

DANA
A quarter.

CASEY
For what?

DANA
(distracted)
Make JJ's life hell.

CASEY
(grins)
What if I just make it so he
doesn't want to come down here
ever again?

DANA
That would be worth a whole dollar.

CASEY
You think I'm joking.

CASEY smiles, leaves. DANA smiles
to herself, then feels sudden
shock.

DANA
Casey, no!

NATALIE
(entering)
Dana, there's a really bad
situation here.

DANA
(vacillating)
What is it?

NATALIE
Jeremy's trying to get himself
fired.

DANA
But... I... oh.
(follows NATALIE out.)

INT. JUST OUTSIDE MAKEUP

CASEY is walking by; JJ stops him.

JJ
Casey, you had no part dragging

Isaac into this discussion. It was between your employers at CSC and you.

CASEY
JJ, did you ever wonder if you were gay?

JJ
Come again?

CASEY
Gay.

JJ
No.

CASEY
Really?

JJ
You are walking a very --

CASEY
You think Dan's attractive?

JJ
What? Why?

CASEY
You seemed -- no reason.

JJ
No. What's going on here?

CASEY
Nothing.

JJ
(beat)
Okay.

CASEY
(awkwardly close)
And just remember, if you've got anything to tell us... we're here for you.

JJ
You people are crazy.

JJ exits.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

DANA exits the control room and runs into JJ.

DANA
JJ!

JJ
No time, Dana.

DANA stands in front of him.

DANA
JJ, what did Casey say to you?

JJ
Nothing.

DANA
What did he say?

JJ
It's not important.

DANA
I'm sure whatever it was, he
didn't mean it, and he just wanted
to be left alone.

JJ
If that was it, it worked, because
I don't want to come down here
again.

DANA reacts as JJ walks away.

JJ
(to himself)
Creeps.

INT. OFFICE FLOOR

Almost empty. NATALIE is standing alone, still angry. DAN catches up to her.

DAN

Did Dana say that I could do it?

NATALIE

What?

DAN

My plea. My plea to the Orioles.

NATALIE

There isn't going to be a plea,
Dan.

DAN

But the Orioles are --

NATALIE

The Orioles aren't going anywhere.

DAN

They denied the rumor? 'Cause
they could --

NATALIE

It was a joke on you, Dan.

Beat.

NATALIE

Casey was mad about the betting,
and I was mad... and I played a
trick on you, and I'm sorry.

DAN

Natalie, what's going on?

NATALIE

Nothing.

DAN

Are you all right, Nat?

Silence; NATALIE ruffles some papers.

DAN

You're sure the Orioles are --

NATALIE

Yeah. You should go get ready.

DAN

Yeah.

DAN exits. JEREMY enters.

JEREMY

We've got the Seahawks feed
running on thirty-two, and
everything's fine.

NATALIE

I'm not talking with you right now.

JEREMY

Maybe you should. Have you
thought that maybe you should?
(beat)

Natalie, we're not arguing about
anything important.

NATALIE

Jeremy, this is my life! This is
my job, and this is where I'm
going to live, and it's big, and
it matters, and you'll have to put
up with being inconvenienced.

JEREMY

I'm not going to let it get in
the way of doing *my* job.

NATALIE

(smiling)

Well, if you do, I may have to
fire you.

JEREMY

Natalie. I don't even understand
why we're fighting about this.

NATALIE
Because I'm excited, and --

JEREMY
They haven't extended an offer.

NATALIE
They will, Jeremy.

JEREMY
(mounting confusion)
And if they do, you've said you'd
turn it down.

NATALIE
I said I was thinking about it;
I'm also thinking about not
turning it down.

JEREMY
How?

NATALIE
How?

JEREMY
They want you to move to some
provincial town with fire ants and
hurricanes and only fifty-eight
thousand people!

NATALIE
They want me to be on the air!

JEREMY
And we know why they want you
there.

NATALIE
They want me because I'm good, and
because I've worked like hell at
this, and --

JEREMY
They want you because you're cute!

NATALIE wants to slap him; instead she balls a fist, grits her teeth, and looks like she's about to cry.

NATALIE
I've gotta go.

JEREMY watches, guiltily, as NATALIE walks off to the control room; at the same time DAN walks in, thoughtful, looking at his feet.

DAN
Hey, Natalie, was it about the bet,
'cos...

NATALIE slams a door shut behind her. It's LOUD. DAN is stunned into silence.

JEREMY
(no eye contact)
Hey Dan.

Beat.

DAN
I've gotta get to makeup.

JEREMY
'k.

DAN
(Quietly)
Good show.

DAN exits.

INT. ISAAC'S OFFICE
ISAAC sits at his desk; DANA enters.

DANA
I have news.

ISAAC
Good news? Bad news?

DANA

Casey just had a confrontation
with JJ.

ISAAC
Damn. *News.*

DANA
No. It's not bad -- between the
two of you, I think JJ's out of
our hair for now.

ISAAC
He'll be back.

DANA
Are you up to this?

ISAAC
If I thought I weren't up to it,
I'd get the hell out of the way.

DANA
Damn right.

ISAAC
Huh. 'Hobbling,' my ass.

DANA
Uh... what?

CHRIS(O. S.)
Five minutes to air; first team to
the studio.

DANA and ISAAC are caught by
surprise.

ISAAC
Five minutes to air?

DANA
I'm going, but...
(exiting)
I'm going.

INT. STUDIO

DAN sits behind the anchor desk,
holding on to it a bit as if he
might otherwise float away; CASEY
enters, grinning.

DAN
Good of you to show up.
(taking one look at Casey)
What's going on?

CASEY
What?

DAN
What's with the look?

CASEY
It was as funny as I thought it
was.

DAN
Casey...

CASEY
And it might get us in trouble.

DAN
(taking this in)
Things are slipping.

CASEY
What do you mean?

DAN
Ten to one things get totally
crazy around here.

CASEY
(shaking head, smiling)
I'm not a gambling man, Danny.

A smiling DANA stops at the anchor desk, unfolds a dollar,
and drops it on the desk in front of CASEY. DANA goes to
the control room.

DAN
What was that?

CASEY
A dollar.

DAN
What **was** that?

CASEY
One dollar.

DAN rolls his eyes.

DAN
Dana, Casey's keeping secrets.

DANA
(from the control room)
You're damn right he is.
("Oh, shit!")
Casey, get that dollar off the
desk!

CASEY brushes the dollar aside with his arm, it flutters to
the floor.

INT. STUDIO -- CLOSEUP ON MONITOR

DAVE (O. S.)
In 3, 2, 1...

DAN
*Good evening. I'm Dan Rydell,
alongside Casey McCall. Those
stories plus, major upsets in
Boston, as the Blue Jays beat the
Red Sox...*

We slowly pan to the dollar, now on the floor.

DAN
(cont'd)
*... the Patriots beat a league
suspension, and the Bruins... beat
their losing streak. Stay tuned
to Sports Night on CSC, 'cos...
we're just full of surprises.*

FADE TO BLACK

DAVE (O. S.)
We're out.

END OF SHOW