

BROADCAST RIGHTS

by
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BROADCAST RITES
(By Paul Reynolds)

FADE IN:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

It is a full courtroom, overflowing actually. The crowd noise permeates the room.

JUDGE JOHN GRANDERSON, Texas District Court Judge for Houston and area, is a short, stout man in his forties. He bangs his gavel with authority above the din.

JUDGE

Quiet, I repeat QUIET.
I swear if I have to clear this
room, I will have the bailiffs take
each and every one of you out
kicking and screaming.

The crowd starts to quiet. It settles in and waits for the judge to speak.

JUDGE

Now that's better. I want y'all to
just take your seat and then we can
get on with this. I know it's been
an awful long six months for me and
probably the hardest case I've had
to listen to in my twenty five
years on the bench in this great
State of Texas.

A tall slender man seated at the prosecutor's table rises to address the judge. He is nattily attired and well groomed. This is the D.A.

PROSECUTOR

Your Honor can we ask for the jury
to be let in, I was told they have
reached a verdict.

JUDGE

Yes, Mr. District Attorney they
have indeed.

The judge motions to a bailiff who stands beside a door.

JUDGE

Bailiff, if you will.

The guard opens the door and a group of 12 sombre people file into the courtroom, each takes their place one by one in the jury box.

JUDGE

Have y'all reached your verdict?

A slight man in his fifties stands to answer the judge. He holds a folded piece of paper nervously in his hands. This is the jury foreman.

FOREMAN

Yes, your honor, we have.

The judge nods to the bailiff who then approaches the foreman and retrieves the slip of paper.

The bailiff matter of factly delivers the written statement to the judge.

JUDGE

Thank you BILLY.

The bailiff nods and retreats to a corner of the bench.

Judge Granderson takes a minute to let the note sink in, he takes off his glasses and rubs his eyes, there are tears.

He then queries the foreman again.

JUDGE

And this is your verdict?

The foreman rises again.

FOREMAN

Yes sir it is.

JUDGE

And the note here says it was unanimous?

FOREMAN

Yes sir.

JUDGE

Alright then, you may sit down.

The judge turns his attention to the lawyer's tables. He stares harshly at the defendant before speaking.

BAILIFF

Defendant please rise.

The assembled persons at the defendant's table do as told.

JUDGE

I am now going to read the verdict and no matter what the decision is I want no one in this room to whoop and holler, I expect quiet and I demand resolve. This is a place of quiet and justice and by God, it will remain that way.

The judge aims his gaze at the accused.

JUDGE

Accused, are you ready to accept your verdict?

A taller than average man, dressed in a suit that you can tell has been bought just for this occasion, steels his view on the judge.

This is GARRETT "THE BUTCHER" BELLOWS. He has been accused in the killings of twenty one school age African American children in Houston.

GARRETT

Yes sir, I surely am, but no matter what it says on that there paper I answer only to my God and Jesus.

The defense attorney, a youthful public defender who was assigned the case when no one else would take it, whispers something in Garrett's ear.

Garrett shoves him away forcefully.

GARRETT

Get outta' my face little man, you ain't done nothin' for me all these months, what'cha gonna' do now?

JUDGE

Counselor, I remind you to keep your client quiet and still so I can carry on.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Sorry your honor.

JUDGE

One more outburst like that from
your client and I will find YOU in
contempt of court.
Is that clear counsellor?

PUBLIC DEFENDER

(nervously)

Yes your honor.

The judge clears his throat and announces the verdict.

JUDGE

Garret Bellows, you have been found
guilty by a jury of your peers of
twenty one counts of first degree
murder.

The crowd in the courtroom erupts.

JUDGE

Order, Order!!
There will be order in my court God
Damn It... ORDER!!!

The crowd quiets down enough for the judge to speak again.

JUDGE

And as per the agreement made by
your Attorney we will now go right
to the sentencing.
For those crimes and by the powers
vested in me by the State of Texas
you are hereby sentenced to death
by electrocution at a facility of
the State's choosing.

The crowd cheers.

JUDGE

This sentence is to be carried out
as quickly as possible and if I may
offer my own thoughts on this
matter I can say that I have never
met such a remorseless, despicable
and evil incarnation of a human
being than you sir.
Your remaining time on this earth
will be very short.

Garrett remains standing, stoic as hell.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

A television screen in a boardroom goes to black.

A man in a light gray suit places a remote for the television on a table. The man is in his fifties, grey shocks of thinning hair and a small pot belly. This is RICK STERLING, head of news programming for NBN, the NATIONAL BROADCASTING NETWORK.

The room is filled with about a dozen other people, all dressed in power suits.

RICK

And with that friends goes our biggest ratings bonanza we've had in quite some time.

ANONYMOUS EXECUTIVE

Christ Rick, when did the news department start to worry more about ratings than the story?

Rick shoots the executive a death stare.

RICK

Are you kidding me? What year do you think we're living in? Damn I long for the days of Edward R Murrow and Walter Cronkite as much as anyone but these are the times we live in now, a time where information has to be instantaneous and the attention span of the average viewer is measure in nano seconds.

A man in his forties, very well dressed and impeccably groomed gets up from his chair and approaches Rick. This is STEVE WALTON, lead anchor for NBN's top ranked show HOUR LIFE AND TIMES.

Steve puts his hand on Rick's shoulder.

STEVE

It's Ok Rick, we've got enough footage on this case to do at least a couple more broadcasts, and then there's always going to be the injunctions and appeals that Bellows' lawyers are bound to file.

An intern from a corner of the room pops up, looks at his Ipad and interrupts the two men.

INTERN

Actually there's not going to be any appeal. It says here that Bellows is ready to accept his fate and doesn't want to delay the process.

A woman in her late fifties at the head of the table stands to address the group. She is dressed in a thousand dollar business suit and her hair is perfectly coiffed. This is LINDA SMITH, head of the network.

LINDA

And so gentlemen it looks like this ride is over. Let's wrap it up with a few follow up stories and victim's families statements and move on to whatever comes next. As Rick put it so succinctly too bad it has to be over.

RICK

You said it chief.

The executives around the table start to get up to adjourn the meeting.

Steve mentions something nonchalantly to Rick.

STEVE

Too bad we can't cover the execution.

Rick stops dead in his tracks.

RICK

What did you just say!?

Rick rushes over to Linda and whispers something in her ear.

She looks at him in astonishment and then whispers something back to Rick.

He nods.

LINDA

Everyone wait a minute please, everyone back to their seats.

Rick pushes Steve into his chair.

RICK
Steve, you're a fucking genius.

Steve has a look of total confusion on his face.

STEVE
What, what'd I say?

Once the group is reassembled around the table Linda speaks to the executives.

LINDA
Now everyone I want you to know that what I'm about to say may offend some of you, Christ what am I saying, it's going to offend most of you. But that being said this is the world we live in now and this is inevitable. I just don't know if it's possible.

An older man to Linda's right, one who has been through many battles of network T.V interjects. This is JACK WATSON, the executive producer of Steve's program.

JACK
What is it Linda, I'm sure we've covered this story from more angles than just about anyone. We've run this story about dry now I'd say.

LINDA
That's just it, Steve said it to Rick.

JACK
Said what... exactly?

LINDA
That there's still another part to the story, the conclusion, the climax... The big ending.

The executives all look at each other unknowingly.

JACK
Christ Linda, you're not making any sense. He's convicted, he's sentenced, the story's dead.

LINDA
But he's not dead, not yet anyhow.

JACK

So what.. you want us to do a couple stories from Death Row, I mean it makes for good television and all but every one knows what`s going to happen, it`ll be a back page story within a couple weeks.

LINDA

Jack you`re missing the point.

JACK

Now you`re just talking in circles.

Linda turns her attention to a milquetoast looking gentleman in his forties, horn rimmed glasses, very stern and studious face. This is TOM NIXON, the network`s top legal mind.

LINDA

Listen Tom I want you to check into something for me, and this is what I want all of you to know.

JACK

Can you just cut out the mystery and make some sense out of this for all of us.

Linda adjusts her custom designer outfit.

LINDA

I want to find out if it`s legal to cover the execution.

A deathly hush overtakes the room as the executives look at each other with disbelieving eyes.

JACK

That`s it, that`s what this is all about. I told you I can have Steve do a couple of shows from Death Row, hell we might even be able to pay Bellows to do an interview but that kind of thing`s been done before.

Linda reasserts herself to the group.

LINDA

No Tom, you`re listening but you`re still not understanding... I want to COVER the execution right up to the very end.

The group breaks into an uproar. Separate conversations erupt between executives, each with a thought on how this could be done.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Rick and Steve share a drink with Jack and one other man, TIM MONTGOMERY. Tim is the network's liason for the printed press national outlets such as A.P.

STEVE

Christ Rick this thing has really snowballed, are you sure that she's going to try and go through with it.

RICK

Hey it was you're idea in the first place, I thought you'd be flattered by the attention it was getting.

STEVE

It was really just a joke, I didn't even think about what I was saying, let known pay attention to it.

RICK

Sometimes the greatest ideas start with a whisper.

STEVE

Yeah I guess but now I don't know. I mean it seems like it could actually be building steam.

Tim interjects.

TIM

I'd say it is, one of the reporters I work with said he heard some rumors out of the network that they're about to announce something big.

STEVE

That could be anything. Did he say which network?

TIM

Fuck no, you know these guys, all about protecting their sources, first amendment bullshit, that sort of thing.

STEVE

And we're no better, looking to carry through with this thing based on our first amendment rights.

Jack slams down his glass.

RICK

I sure hope we know what we're getting ourselves into.

JACK

I've been around a long time but I never thought I'd see something like this. We're about to cross all kinds of lines.

RICK

More like move the line in the sand.

STEVE

If this works I'm afraid we'll open up Pandora's box.

RICK

Let's face it old friend, it's like the chief said, it really is inevitable. I'm just glad we thought of it first.

Steve drifts off in his own mind for a second. He doesn't hear his name being called.

TIM

Steve, Steve, you still with us?

STEVE

Yeah sure, sorry about that.

TIM

I was just saying that if this goes through you will be one of television's news pioneers.

RICK
Yeah I can just see it now, people
will say the names with
reverence...Murrow, Cronkite..
Walton.

Jack throws a beer nut at Rick.

STEVE
Screw you Rick.

The four men share a laugh.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Linda is already seated at the table as the executives enter the room and take their assigned seats. Another group of assorted men and women are lined up in chairs on a far wall of the room.

There is a great tension and unease as people settle in.

Linda stands to speak.

LINDA
Ladies and gentlemen thank you for
your attendance today. It has been
a long six weeks since we were last
here. I'm sorry it took so long to
get an answer but if you look to
your right you will notice there
are seven or eight of the brightest
legal minds in our country here
with us today and we're extremely
indebted to them for their opinions
and ...

Linda pauses for a second.

LINDA
But rather than me talking to you
about our news I'd like to turn it
over to Tom, he understands this
and can explain it to you far
better than I could even attempt
to.

Linda motions to Tom and he takes over the helm of the meeting.

TOM

Good afternoon, as Linda said it has taken an inordinate amount of time to figure out if we even have a case to make an offer to continue on with this endeavor. We started out with a basic check of what has been covered in the past and what the censors have allowed but that just scratched the surface. What we found is that even though what we are about to attempt isn't covered it certainly is expected that there will be legal ramifications and specifics, not to mention the moral repercussio..

Rick stands up in the middle of Tom`s monologue.

RICK

Tom, I love you but if you're going to carry this meeting with legal speak can I just take a second to call my wife and let her know I won't be home tonight.

There are small chuckles from the group.

TOM

(flushed with
embarrassment)

Well, sure, I mean absolutely.

LINDA

Just get to the heart of the matter Tom.

TOM

Yes, well, right. The group here before you are each going to make an argument - some for and some against - to convince you whether or not to proceed with our efforts.

Linda interjects by standing, Tom defers to her.

She looks solemnly at the group for about a minute.

LINDA

And if folks at the end of this meeting we come to a decision to move forward I expect that there will be no dissenters, no naysayers and no conflict. If you're not sure if you're up to moving forward, even with this meeting, please leave now and there will be no repercussions afforded to anyone who does so.

The room falls quiet, executives all look at each other. No one takes advantage of the offer given them.

LINDA

Good, it's settled then. From this point forward no matter what decision we come to we come to it as a house undivided. Tom the floor is yours again, sorry for the interruption.

TOM

Please let me introduce you to the scholars, lawyers and judges who will now give their learned opinions.

MONTAGE:

Tom announces each legal authority by name and each time their name is called they approach and we see snippets of each of their arguments. When they are finished with their individual testimony a network page escorts them from the room.

When the final expert has spoken Linda again takes over the meeting.

LINDA

I'd like to take a second to thank Tom and his team once again for bringing together such a formidable team of authorities on the matter to help us debate our position.

TOM

You're very welcome.

The executives give a small round of applause.

LINDA

And now for the hard part. We have just heard many different positions and theories on whether or not we can be successful with our petition to show the Bellows execution, should we choose to go forward with this as our final decision.

RICK

Decision, what decision. I think it was made clear that we can't afford not to go forward with this.

LINDA

Thank you Rick and I was sure you'd be for it but there are ten other people involved and I would like to hear from all of them.

STEVE

Not to disagree with my boss but are we sure this is the right thing to do. I mean I know we may win the ability to do it, but is it RIGHT?

Rick stares at Steve indignantly as he sits down.

He tugs at Steve's arm and whispers to him.

RICK

Remember, this was your idea in the first place.

LINDA

Thank you Steve, you're certainly not the only person in this room who feels that way I'm sure.

A woman in her thirties stands next to comment to the group. This is PAMELA STONEMAN, chief liaison for the network to the censor board.

PAMELA

Based on what I've learned through a couple of small trial balloons, this is something the censors would not even look at for a second so it may all just be moot anyhow.

LINDA

Thank you Pamela, but I'm sure if the Supreme Court is in our corner they have a larger voice than a censor board.

PAMELA

Supreme Court??

Linda gives her an astonished look.

LINDA

Well certainly, you didn't think we'd gone through all this bother just to see it shot down by some collective of tight assed, bible worshipping, holier than thou voice of the people idiots.. now did you?

Pamela stands back, astonished.

PAMELA

Well I guess not, it's just that, well it's just that they're not going to let it go by that easy, that's all.

LINDA

Now Pamela let's just cross that bridge when and if we come to it shall we, I'm sure that if it gets that far you'll be able to earn that six figure plus bonus salary we pay you.

Pamela sits down sheepishly, she has just been put in her place.

LINDA

Now can I hear from someone else please, again I would like to hear from as many of you as I can, certainly there is something on everyone's mind about this issue no matter what side of the coin you are on.

Tim gets up from his seat next.

TIM

Personally I'm an atheist so I really don't have any position one way or the other but my question is whether you think we can be the only one with this story. If it works for us what's to keep every news agency from wanting in on the story as well?

LINDA

Great question Tim, one I'd like to turn over to Rick.

Rick stands up confidently.

RICK

See that's the beauty of it, if egghead here...

Rick points to Tom but then blushes when he remembers the forum he's in .

RICK

I mean if Tom is successful with his petition to the Supreme Court then we just have to negotiate the exclusive rights for our network.

Another executive, BILL PETERS, chief of the entertainment division interjects.

BILL

You mean like negotiating the broadcast rights?

LINDA

Exactly.

BILL

My team and I have negotiated everything from political conventions to Olympics, I'm sure we could be up for the challenge.

Linda fidgets for a second, something she is not wont to do often.

Bill notices.

BILL

Linda, what is it, what's wrong?

LINDA

Nothing's wrong Bill it's just that I don't think this is really under the umbrella of entertainment although those lines are constantly being blurred these days.

Bill studies her face for a second, looks for the meaning in her statement.

Then it hits him like a pound of bricks.

BILL

You mean the NEWS division. The news division is going to negotiate the damn rights?

RICK

Actually, that's the beauty of it, we already have.

BILL

What the hell Rick, you pompous bastard. We haven't even come to a decision yet and you've already done something like this, what were you thinking?

RICK

I was thinking, you old dinosaur, that if we decide not to go ahead with this thing then it wouldn't make a difference anyhow but if we decide to move the ball forward we would be in a ready position. Now why don't you just sit the fuck down and let's get on with this.

LINDA

RICK!! There is no need for that kind of abuse towards another executive of this company in this discussion. It is well known that you and Bill have had your battles but this is above petty differences and jealousies and I remind you that we are all professionals here. Now sit down!

Rick grudgingly takes his seat, he acts like the favored son who has just been scolded by his father.

RICK
(under his breath)
Pussy.

BILL
So it seems like it really doesn't
matter what the entertainment
division thinks then, does it?

LINDA
Bill as I said before everyone will
have their chance to speak but if
we do go forward with this I
reiterate that we will all have to
work together, no matter what any
individual's thoughts or feelings
past this point are.
Now if I can hear from someone
else, how about Promotions and
Advertising.

A young man in his thirties stands.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT.

Steve parks his Corvette in the driveway and approaches the
front step. He sees his wife JESSICA clipping some hedges
along the pathway.

STEVE
Hey hon, you know we can afford a
gardener, right?

His wife chuckles, she is his second wife, about fifteen
years his junior, a consummate trophy wife by anyone else's
standards but Steve loves her for more than her physical
beauty.

JESSICA
I know, but I'd be bored out of my
skull if I didn't have something to
do to occupy my time.

STEVE
I certainly never have to worry
about that. Especially with what
went down today.

JESSICA
Oh what's up, something big?

STEVE
I think I'd like to talk about it
with a drink in my hand.

Jessica gets up from her task, she takes off her gloves.

JESSICA
Would you like me to get you a
lemonade?

STEVE
I was thinking a scotch.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve has his drink in hand, Jessica sits down next to him on
the couch and rubs his leg.

JESSICA
So what's the big news?

STEVE
I don't think you're gonna' believe
me.

JESSICA
Try me.

Steve looks at her pensively, unsure of whether to proceed.

STEVE
It goes against everything you
believe in.

JESSICA
Oooh, must be juicy. Tell me more.

STEVE
I'm not kidding, this is something
that's never been done before,
probably not even thought of.

Jessica gives him a playful punch.

JESSICA
Now I'm really intrigued.

Steve readjusts his position.

STEVE
Ok, but like I said you're not
going to like it.
(MORE)

STEVE(cont'd)

You've been following the Garret Bellows case as well as anyone, right?

JESSICA

Probably more so than anyone, I think even the death penalty is too good for him.. After the horrible things he did to all those innocent children.

Steve is taken aback by the passion in his wife's voice.

STEVE

Wow, I knew you were following it but I didn't know it riled you up so much.

Jessica takes a long drink of her scotch.

JESSICA

I just wish I could see the look in his eyes as they were getting ready to flip the switch.

Steve is flabbergasted.

STEVE

Here's the thing.. you might get your wish.

Jessica studies her husband's face as he downs his drink in one gulp.

JESSICA

What are you talking about?

STEVE

See that's what I'm telling you. We've made a push to try to get a ruling to allow us to show the execution.

Jessica is definitely confused.

JESSICA

Show it, you mean tape some interviews and show them leading up to the execution, right?

STEVE

Sure that's a part of it but you're not listening to me. I mean SHOW the execution... LIVE!

Jessica falls back deeper into the couch. She tries to comprehend the news.

JESSICA

But how do you even try to do that, I'm sure no one is going to let that happen.. right?

STEVE

I don't know, Linda's had the legal team working full steam to get the petition ready. It sounds like they're going to push hard.

JESSICA

Ready for who exactly, I mean where would they even try to get that approved?

STEVE

The Texas State Supreme Court.

Jessica ponders the thought.

JESSICA

That is big. But that's going to take months.

Steve retorts, half jokingly, half hopeful.

STEVE

Probably won't have to worry about it anyhow, he's more likely to be killed while on the inside waiting for his execution.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - DAY

Two guards, heavily armed, take the leg chains and handcuffs off Garret Bellows.

One of the guards looks to the tower and gives the sharpshooter placed there a thumbs up.

After a second the gesture is returned.

GUARD ONE

Ok Bellows you piece of shit, ten minutes in the yard, you've got it all to yourself as usual.

GUARD TWO

As if anyone could stand to be near
you for two seconds before shoving
a blade so far up your ass you
could taste the steel.

Garrett just smiles at the guards.

GARRETT

Always such a treat to have y'all
on my detail.

GUARD TWO

Fuck you.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

Garrett enters the yard and begins to walk around carefully.
He peers up to a tower and gives the guard a salute, the
guard flashes him the finger.

After a minute or two Gsrrett begins to jog.

GUARD ONE

Why does he care to be in shape,
he's not going to be on this earth
very much longer.

GUARD TWO

Yeah it won't be much longer before
old sparky gets to him.

Guard one smiles menacingly.

GUARD ONE

Oh, I don't think it's going to
come to that. Why go to all the
bother?

Guard one then signals a thumbs up again to the same shooter
in the tower.

Once again the signal is confirmed.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

Three black convicts, all the size of offensive linemen, peer
out from a hidden corner beside a door.

The tower guard flashes them a thumbs up.

As the men emerge it is evident they are well armed. One has a two foot lead pipe, another a chain in hand while the third brandishes a large knife.

CONVICT ONE
This is gonna' be sweet.

CONVICT THREE
I get first cut.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

Garrett continues his jog, surveys the area.

He notices the convicts out of the corner of his eye and comes to a complete stop as they approach.

GARRETT
I was wondrin' when y'all were
gonna' try this kind of thing.

The group of convicts stand five feet in front of Bellows.

One swings his chain, another taps the pipe in his hand.

GARRETT
So how much they payin' y'all for
this?

The convicts laugh.

CONVICT ONE
Payin'? Christ there was a line up
thirty men deep to get a piece of
you.

CONVICT TWO
You're the most popular inmate in
here, every one wants a piece of
you, fuckface.

Garrett smiles.

CONVICT THREE
After what you did to all them
kids, what'd you 'spect?

GARRETT
You mean BLACK kids don't you, but
it's like I told the judge.. My
daddy taught me the white man has
domain over all other creatures..

(MORE)

GARRETT(cont'd)

Damn, killin' niggers is no different than me killin' the chickens that walk around my farm.

CONVICT THREE

But what you did to 'em, that aint right.

GARRETT

Funny thing when you think about it, they kinda' tasted like chicken too... well, 'ceptin' they didn't have any white meat.

Knowing he didn't stand a chance three to one, Garrett's tactic works, the men are so worked up they are not able to carry out a concerted attack.

CONVICT ONE

You mother fucker!!

Garrett braces himself for the onslaught.

The man with the lead pipe lunges at Garrett with a forceful swing. He misses and Garrett uses both arms to create a crushing blow across the man's back, it knocks him to the ground.

Garrett picks up the lead pipe and as the man tries to get up Garrett smashes him in the skull which drops the man instantaneously.

CONVICT THREE

You son of a bitch!!

The two remaining convicts rush Garrett at the same time, one swings his chain, the other shows his blade.

The convict with the chain swings at his target, the chain wraps around Garrett's large forearm. Garrett uses the leverage to pull the man towards him.

At the same time the knife wielding convict lunges and Garrett is able to use the other convict as a shield. The blade goes deep inside the prisoner and he slumps to the ground, releases his grip on the chain.

GARRETT

Maybe you should have sent more fella's.

CONVICT THREE

Fuck you.

The two men circle each other and await an opportunity.

Garrett moves in towards the man but then quickly moves back as the man strikes forward with the shiv. Garrett quickly uses the chain to knock the knife out of the convict's hands.

Once again the two men circle, this time Garrett has the only weapon. The convict lets out a loud scream as he attacks Garrett full frontal style.

In an instant Garrett eludes the charge and is able to wrap the heavy chain around the thick neck of his attacker. A mere second goes by as Garrett twists the chain and snaps the man's neck.

GARRETT
(in a Scottish accent)
That'll do pig.

The guard in the tower sounds an alarm and twenty armed guards appear in the yard almost instantaneously.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom is rich, dark and very intimidating.

Seven Judges are seated at a large bench facing out to the pews.

A man in the centre, in his sixties and wearing a very pronounced hearing aid is at the centre of the group. This is JUDGE WILLIAM BANNISTER, chief justice for the Texas Supreme Court.

He bangs his gavel to begin the proceedings.

JUDGE BANNISTER
Ladies and gentlemen we asked this case to be held as a closed case for the fear of media hype overpowering the logic of the petition. Lord knows that there'll be plenty enough of that if we decide to let it go through.

Tom Nixon is seated at a table facing the judges.

He stands to address the assembly.

TOM
Your honor, is it alright for me to begin our case?

JUDGE BANNISTER

Just give me a minute Mr. Nixon,
you've got us to agree to hear the
case, and as you know this is a
closed case so I don't think
waiting another minute or two until
we're fully ready will hurt, now
will it.

Some of the other judges laugh gently as Tom sits down, his
face red with embarrassment.

TOM

Sorry your Honor.

Seated back a couple of rows from Tom's table are Rick and
Steve.

RICK

I don't know about you but I think
this is going to take awhile.

The judges take another second to confer with each other
before Bannister addresses Tom again.

JUDGE BANNISTER

As you know Mr. Nixon in light of
the recent incident in the State
Prison we are leaning towards
pushing up the date of the
execution for Mr. Bellows in the
interest of safety of the other
inmates.
This definitely puts a hindrance in
your case as the other judges and I
feel that the case may run longer
than the date of said execution.

RICK

(as an aside)

We're screwed now.

Tom has regained his composure and stands to address the
Supreme Court again.

TOM

Your honor, the network's belief is grounded in the first amendment and therefore we also believe that there is enough precedent set from previous case law that would allow this deposition to be dealt with in a short time frame commensurate with other decisions offered by the court, specifically The Dallas Chronicle v Redman and WKTV v Flynn, both cases similar to ours.

The judges discuss amongst each other.

JUDGE BANNISTER

It's obvious you are well prepared Mr. Nixon but those are local press and this case is a State and Federal Case. Even if we allow it the U.S Supreme Court would no doubt want to become involved as well.

TOM

I understand that your honor but again based on the thirty day window we believe the Federal Court would also have to allow the ruling and agree with the State Court's decision... If that IS the ruling you esteemed judges decide upon.

JUDGE BANNISTER

Now you can stop being a suck up Mr. Nixon. You may proceed with your case.

INT. BAR - NIGHT.

Steve shares a drink with a couple of co-workers.

Rick rushes their table, grabs Steve's drink, swallows it in one gulp.

He then gives Steve a large slap on the back.

RICK

We did it old man, we did it.

STEVE

Did it, are you serious?

Rick grabs another drink from the table, swallows it down as well.

STEVE

I hope you're gonna' pay for those,
that's the good stuff.

RICK

With the news I've got for you old
man I'll buy drinks for the whole
room.

In an instant Steve deciphers what the news must be.

STEVE

You mean they actually said yes, I
don't believe it.

RICK

Well believe it.

Rick goes to the bartender and asks him something before
returning to the table.

RICK

Watch this.

Rick points the group's attention to a television in the
corner.

An image appears on the screen and even though the men cannot
hear the announcer the crawl at the bottom of the screen
speaks volumes.

CU: Television screen -- Crawl reads as follows: Landmark
decision brought down by Texas State Supreme court allows for
NBN to televise execution of convicted killer Garrett
Bellows.

STEVE

What were they thinking?

RICK

I think those old buzzards just
wanted to pass the buck onto the
Feds rather than take the heat on a
NO decision. This way they can look
like they're the progressive ones
and with the public venom in the
state towards Bellows I think they
just want to do what they can to
keep the public on their side.

STEVE

Pussies.

Rick again slaps his friend on the back.

RICK

Thank God it's an election year.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Steve watches the news from bed.

Jessica enters from the ensuite, dressed in a skimpy teddy.

She nuzzles up close to Steve, he barely notices the outfit.

STEVE

So they're not making much of this on the news at all, it barely made third lead story.

JESSICA

Is that all you can think about, can't you even make room for a half hour of distraction?

She moves off the bed and blocks the television screen, showcases her body in the bright red lingerie.

STEVE

Well if I was younger it might have been a half hour, but I think at my advanced age you might have to settle for about ten minutes.

JESSICA

Your only as old as you feel.

She then hops onto the bed and feels for Steve's organ.

A smile crosses her face as she grabs it.

JESSICA

Well if this is any indication then maybe you're not quite as old as you think you are.

Steve smiles as Jessica's head quickly replaces her hand.

STEVE

Think baseball.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY.

Linda has assembled the team again.

She remains seated as she addresses them.

LINDA

Ladies and gentlemen we have passed a major hurdle with the State Supreme Court but Tom assures me that the Federal Supreme Court will be a much harder battle. I am asking all of you to redouble your efforts to ensure that there is no stone left unturned in our evidence towards our petition.

JACK

Linda, I know this is moving forward but are you sure this is something you really want to do?

LINDA

Jack, you've been very vocal about this but I don't think this is something I want to do, I believe it's something that we as a network HAVE to do.

JACK

I just want to be noted as I'm reluctant, that's all.

LINDA

Jack this is definitely a tenuous subject but that being said I need to know that all facets of our business are ready to go if the judgement goes in our favor. Now, how will the censors feel if we're a go for this?

Pamela stands and addresses the team.

PAMELA

I have the feeling that the censors will abide by the Supreme Courts Ruling no matter what it is.

LINDA

Fine, that takes care of that potential grenade.

(MORE)

LINDA(cont'd)

And as for sponsors and
advertisers?

JEFF SAMPSON, a tall man in his thirties and head of the advertising division, takes Linda's cue and states his position. He is a Texan.

JEFF

Well Hell's Bells if I wasn't surprised as shit but for every left wing sponsor that is in danger of dropping off we have two ultra conservative right wing ones that want to jump on board.

The whole room engages in broken conversations.

LINDA

Now calm down everyone.
That's great news Jeff but again be assured that this network is not going to sink to any crass advertisers here, nothing that would insinuate that we're into exploitation or violence for ratings.

JACK

(aside to Steve)

Edward R Murrow must be doing somersaults in his grave.

LINDA

Now Rick I want you to take Steve and a production team up to the State Prison to do some interviews with Bellows, get the flavor of where he stands on all this one way or the other.

RICK

So that no matter which way the decision comes down, we'll still have a story.

LINDA

Exactly.

RICK

Smart thinking chief.

Steve stands up.

STEVE

Linda, don't you think that if the judgement goes against us it would be better to just let things go, you know let the Bellows story fade away without any fanfare?

The room falls silent.

LINDA

Let me remind you again Steve that this whole agenda was set in motion by your comments, don't tell me you're getting cold feet this late in the game?

Steve turns red with embarrassment as he sits back down.

STEVE

No Ma'am.

Rick jumps up to defend his man.

RICK

I'm sure Linda that no matter what, Steve and his team will be the consummate professionals in all dealings with this matter. Steve has over thirty years of experience dealing with stories involving civil rights, political scandals, government practices....

LINDA

Sit down Rick, he's not running for office. I have every confidence that Steve will do the customary stellar job he has always done for this network.

Rick takes his seat.

STEVE

Thanks man.

RICK

I've always got your back, you're my meal ticket.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

This is the office of SENATOR DANIEL STEVENS, the Democratic senator from New York.

The office is well appointed with deep, dark wood grained furniture.

On the wall hang pictures of legislators from the past.

Daniel is a young African American who is built more like an athlete than a politician. Even though he wears a tailor made suit it still looks two sizes too small.

Daniel sits at his desk and the two chairs opposite are filled by senators from other states, one male and one female.

DANIEL

This is my proposal to ensure that state legislature allows for harsher truancy laws and enforcement for those students under sixteen years of age.

The female senator speaks against his logic.

SENATOR #1

I disagree completely senator, I find that in my state if you don't come down on the adults involved you will never get through to the student.

Daniel hides a smirk when he replies.

DANIEL

SENATOR THOMAS, with all due respect I have to point out that your state has the lowest truancy rate of the fifty and quite honestly your demographics don't exactly scream delinquents either.

SENATOR THOMAS

And so now it's my fault that my constituency is caucasian? Listen senator, it was you who called me in for support on this proposition, not the other way around.

The male senator in the other chair chuckles. He is an older man with a long white beard and ill fitting clothes.

This is SENATOR WILLIAM AGATHIE, from the state of Tennessee.

WILLIAM

Now, now ELIZABETH. I'm sure the young senator here didn't mean anything at all by his remarks, remember this is his first term and he's still getting his feet wet.

She calms down and hand presses her business skirt suit.

SENATOR THOMAS

Thank you William, I am glad he called you here as well or I don't think I ever would have come to this meeting.

William makes a bowing gesture.

WILLIAM

Now Daniel, why don't you just get down to the facts in order to help illuminate your point.

DANIEL

Fine, if I can ask you to open your presentation folder to ...

An aide enters the room, interrupts the proceedings and whispers something into Daniel's ear.

DANIEL

Excuse me Senators, could I possibly ask if we could continue this later, a very important matter has just been brought to my attention.

SENATOR THOMAS

I thought THIS was a very important matter for you, Senator.

Daniel smiles, gets ready to stick handle.

DANIEL

It is important Senator Thomas, it's just this other matter kind of broadsided me and I believe it will take immediate precedence.

(MORE)

DANIEL(cont'd)

Of course we can look at my bill after we meet again on your proposal for the lumber industry that you were looking for support on Madame Senator.

Senator Thomas smiles now as well.

SENATOR THOMAS

Maybe you're not as new to this game as I thought Senator.

DANIEL

Ma'am.

As the senior Senators take their leave the aide opens up an Ipad to show Daniel more details.

AIDE

This news is something that I thought you should see right away sir, I believe you can make a cause out of this that will set your mark in the caucus.

Daniel takes the Ipad, scrolls through the pages.

DANIEL

Christ I knew about the fringe details of this case but I believed the State Supreme Court would have quashed the proposal.

AIDE

It seems like the State Judges didn't want to open Pandora's box.

Daniel chuckles.

DANIEL

Right, why not let the Feds take the backlash.

AIDE

Welcome to politics Senator.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Steve and Jessica are seated on the couch while on two opposite chairs sit Rick and his wife GRETCHEN. Gretchen is in her mid forties and is dressed casual but expensive.

STEVE

I still can't believe this has made it to the Federal Supreme Court.

RICK

Mountains are made out of mole hills my old friend.

STEVE

I know but I just made an off hand remark, really just being a smart ass.

JESSICA

And see where it's got you.

Gretchen pipes in.

GRETCHEN

So you two are going all the way to Texas.

RICK

Yup, gonna' be there at least two weeks. Need to get enough on tape to last us for a few episodes if those Federal boys shoot down our proposal.

JESSICA

And if they don't?

STEVE

I'm sure sanity has to set in at some point. Besides even if the Supreme Court lets this ride I'm sure there will be some sort of political intervention, and that will take forever too.

Gretchen stands up and comes over to sit on her husband's knee.

GRETCHEN

And if not then you guys are going to make history.

Rick brushes his wife's hair with his large hands, barely making contact but with meaning.

RICK

And also make us wanted men I'm sure. I mean I'm all for this thing but I've been thinking...

Steve picks up the same tone.

STEVE

Finally starting to sink in, now is it?

RICK

Yeah, I guess the closer this thing gets to happening the more I realize that this is going to be huge.. And that not everybody is going to be happy.

STEVE

That's an understatement.

Jessica has been quiet but now feels compelled to say something.

JESSICA

Can't you guys just drop it, you know, let someone else take over, that kind of thing.

The two men look at each other for a second.

STEVE

You mean give it to another network, let someone else deal with the fallout if it goes through?

JESSICA

Exactly, if this goes through you did say it would change things forever. I'm sure ther'll be other executions to cover.

RICK

But there's only one first time.

Gretchen chuckles.

GRETCHEN

And heaven forbid that my man here isn't first on board the train.

STEVE

But it was our idea, I mean would the Wright brothers have handed over their plans to someone else, would Neil Armstrong have let someone else walk down that ladder.

Now it's Jessica's turn to smile.

JESSICA

That's what I thought, bitch and complain about it all you want but at the heart of the matter you two know you want this.

STEVE/RICK

BADLY!!

RICK

I wonder how those other networks are feeling right now.

INT. OFFICE BOARDROOM - DAY.

There are a number of executives seated in an opulent, glass encased boardroom which overlooks New York city in all its glory.

A large burly man in his sixties stares out the window, there is complete silence in the room. This is NATHAN STANDING, head of WNN, the largest network in the U.S.A.

NATHAN

(almost whispering)

Is there anyone in this room of overpaid morons who can possibly tell me how this happened? This is something that can make history and our network is relegated to sitting on the sidelines with our fingers up our asses.

Not a sound from the room.

NATHAN

(a little louder)

Now now, there must be one of you who has at least a thought on the matter.

Nathan surveys the room, as he does the executives look at the ceiling, walls or floor, all in hopes of not being the target.

NATHAN

PHILIPS, how about you, you're the head of the news department, it didn't ever cross your mind that this could have been a route we could have taken?

A man in his fifties, sweating profusely, is obviously the prey caught in the cross hairs. This is BRACE PHILIPS, Vice President of the news division.

Brace remains quiet as a church mouse, prays that Nathan doesn't push the matter and finds someone else to lash out at.

NATHAN

That's what I thought.

Nathan studies the room again, someone is going to have to pay for an error of this magnitude.

His eyes lock on the first person who is stupid enough to look up.

NATHAN

DRISCOLL, you there, why don't you tell the group how this could have happened, in your esteemed opinion.

BRAD DRISCOLL, a man in his forties and the most recently promoted V.P. at the table, turns white and stands to address the group.

BRAD

Well Mr. Standing, I.. well, I mean .. Uh, we.. Uh

Nathan has no patience for this.

NATHAN

Very articulate, where exactly was it you attended school again Driscoll?

Brad gulps.

BRAD

Harvard sir.

NATHAN

That's what I thought, god damn Ivy League prep brat, wouldn't know an original thought if it bit you in the ass.

BRAD

Sir, I, .. I ..

The executives all know what's coming, they let out a collective, almost inaudible sigh.

NATHAN

That's it Driscoll, there's no room here for someone who can't think outside the box. Get your stuff and get out.

Brad sits down, devastated.

NATHAN

Driscoll did I fucking stutter?

BRAD

Sir?

Nathan is completely steamed now, he's ready to blow a gasket.

NATHAN

Let me make this clear so you'll understand. You have exactly ten seconds to vacate this boardroom, haul your ass down to your oversized office and pack your stuff.

Nathan moves over to the window, looks down from the height they are at.

NATHAN

Unless you'd rather take the more direct route downstairs. Here, I'll start counting for you ... One, two, three..

With that Brad bolts out of his chair and almost flies out of the boardroom.

NATHAN

Now is there anyone else who would like to say something on the matter...

A quick survey of the room proves to him that his point has been made loud and clear.

NATHAN

No, didn't think so.
Listen people we didn't get to be the largest network by sitting on our hands and being afraid to make an out of the box decision. This is the last time that I will ever stand for this type of calamity or else I swear on my mother's grave that I will not treat any of the rest of you with the gentleness I just showed Driscoll.
Have I made myself perfectly fucking clear?

Nathan scans the room and the executives all nod in unison.

NATHAN

That being said, now that this is out there we need damage control and we need it now. I want intelligent thoughts and I want them right Didi Mao.

A woman in her late thirties, CAROL HANSON, Vice President of current affairs programming stands up.

NATHAN

Carol, you have something to say?

CAROL

Yes sir, what if we go the other way, you know, take a total opposite stance.

Nathan ponders this for a second, a small smile crosses his face.

NATHAN

I get it... we stand up on the soap box and preach to the moral right of the country. We would never stoop to that type of sensationalism, that type of fear mongering, that type of controversial programming, how dare they think they can cross those lines, that kind of message.

Carol nods.

CAROL
Exactly sir.

Once again Nathan smiles, this time more broadly.

NATHAN
And that folks is how we are going to play this. I want every one to convince all of our sponsors, advertisers and affiliates that WNN is appalled at the brashness and lack of professionalism expressed by NBN and their wish to push this broadcast forum.

ANONYMOUS EXECUTIVE
But Mr. Standing I thought you just said you wanted to be the network to broadcast the execution.

Nathan goes back to the window.

NATHAN
Are you just dim my good man, sometimes it doesn't matter what you want, it matters that you can keep others from getting what they want.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Linda and Tom go over some papers at the last minute as they drive to the Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C.

LINDA
Nervous Tom?

Tom smiles awkwardly.

TOM
I've been better.

LINDA
You did just great in front of the State Supreme Court, aren't you confident with that knowledge?

TOM
I think those people just wanted to make sure that the hot potato was passed to Washington before it had a chance to burn their fingers.

Linda nods.

LINDA

And with the tenure and established nature of the Federal judges you feel that your argument isn't as strong.

TOM

Oh I know our argument is strong, I just think that the feds may err on the side of caution on this one. This is the first time that any national broadcaster has threatened any amendment to the constitution at this level in over fifty years.

But there are first amendment decisions all the time.

TOM

Not of this grandeur, if this passes I'm afraid that we will have let the genie out of the bottle.

LINDA

Some people would call that progress Tom.

Tom thinks for a second.

TOM

Or naivete.

INT. SUPREME COURT BUILDING - DAY

The nine judges are each seated at their assigned chairs. It is an imposing sight for Tom.

Tom approaches the podium set up in the middle of the room.

Linda is seated in the pews in the back of the room, she smiles gently at Tom as he looks over his shoulder at her.

TOM

Ladies and gentlemen of the court, if I may indulge the court for your thoughts, if it pleases the court your honors.

JUDGE GRAYSON SMITH, the longest serving member of the federal court and a man well in his sixties but who could easily pass for fifty, stands from his chair and speaks softly to Tom.

JUDGE SMITH

Mr. Nixon, I know this is a large stage but we don't always sit on pomp and circumstance in this court. This is not a place for grandstanding nor is it a place for reverence.

TOM

Yes your honor. May I proceed?

The judge sits back in his seat.

JUDGE SMITH

Proceed please.

TOM

Your honors I believe that our network operates as a federal unit due to our national network status and as such we are proposing our petition based on the amendments of the constitution.

JUDGE SMITH

Mr. Nixon we have gone over all your documents submitted and don't believe we are in a position to allow this proposal as a First amendment case to be granted.

TOM

That's what I thought you might say your honors and that is why I am here in person to propose our petition as a fourteenth amendment argument.

The judges all look at each other. Judge Smith walks to each judge individually, after some discussion with each justice he comes back to his seat.

JUDGE SMITH

Mr. Nixon, after conference with each of my learned colleagues we are of the opinion that we will look at this case again in the new light which you propose.

TOM

Thank you your honors.

JUDGE SMITH

We will begin deliberations immediately and have set a five hour time limit as we realize your network must have all kinds of details to attend to, no matter the outcome of our humble council's decision.

Tom eases his guard a little. His posture liltts ever so slightly.

TOM

Thank you for your expeditious prudence your honors.

JUDGE SMITH

Mr. Nixon just one more thing before we look again at this case in the new environs.

TOM

Yes your honor.

JUDGE SMITH

You do realize what this could potentially mean to the broadcasting world if we do allow this petition, don't you?

Beads of sweat form on Tom's furled brow.

TOM

Yes sir, I believe we do. Thank you your honor.

JUDGE SMITH

You're welcome Mr. Nixon.

The judge looks out to the back of the room.

JUDGE SMITH

I believe we will be fair on this one for you Linda.

Linda smiles.

LINDA

Your honors.

JUDGE SMITH

You may retire back to your hotel
until we summon you Mr. Nixon.

TOM

Sir.

INT. NEWS VAN - DAY

Steve and Rick are seated in the van with their
driver/cameraman RONNY. RONNY is a twenty something film grad
who can't find a job in movies.

STEVE

I don't know why we're doing this
until we know the decision from the
Feds.

RICK

It's easy comradre, we shoot a ton
of stuff and then edit like hell
depending on which way the decision
comes down.

RONNY

I edited a short film in college,
took the best picture in my class.

RICK

Yeah yeah Ronny that's nice, just
keep your eyes on the road will
ya'.

RONNY

Sure Mr. S, but I can see for ten
miles down the road. I swear you
could see your dog run away from
home for three days out here in
these sticks.

STEVE

You didn't think they'd put the
prison in the middle of the suburbs
did you Ronny?

Rick chuckles.

RONNY

I guess not but... Hey wait, that
would be a great movie.. Prison in
the Burbs.

STEVE

Ronny you're young, you'll soon realize the 'burb's ARE a prison.

RICK

Eyes on the road Ronny.

RONNY

Sure Mr. S

STEVE

So explain to me again why you had to come out here with us, if it's just editing you're worried about you could have joined us back at the studio when we had our footage.

Rick smiles, he's as anxious as a kid in a candy store.

RICK

I know but it's not everyday you get to be involved with a game changing story. Besides I kind of envy you... getting to go all over the country, seeing different things, different places.

RONNY

Yeah right, one hundred miles of straight road in the middle of a Texas desert.

RICK

Ronny!!

RONNY

I know, I know... eyes on the road.

STEVE

Do you really think they're gonna let us go through with this?

RICK

I sure as hell hope so.

INT. TEXAS STATE PRISON - DAY

Garrett is led down a hallway by three of the largest guards in the prison. He is shackled at the neck, arms and ankles.

GUARD ONE

I don't understand why we need all these restraints, he ain't no bigger than any one of us.

GUARD TWO

Didn't you hear about what he did in the yard asshole?

Guard one sneers at Garrett with a look of "yeah I could take you one on one"

GUARD ONE

I'm just sayin'.. He don't look so tough to me.

As the guard stares down Garrett the prisoner makes a fake lunge at him, causing him to trip over his own feet.

Before the other guards can react Garrett is on top of his fallen captor and delivers a series of head butts, one which breaks the guard's nose.

GUARD TWO

Damn it Bellows, get off him.

The third guard delivers a blow from his night stick with all his might to Garrett's head, it doesn't seem to faze him.

Guard two joins in with his night stick.

GARRETT

All right fella's, all right, I'll stop.

Garrett gains his footing and stands up between the two guards. Guard one gets to his feet, blood flows from his nose.

GUARD ONE

You broke my fucking nose.

Garrett simply smiles.

GARRETT

Just had to show you maybe I'm as tough as they say, nothin' personal.

GUARD ONE

I'm gonna' break your face.

The second guard interjects.

GUARD TWO

Jesus JIMMY, just shut the fuck up
and get down to the infirmary,
we'll get him back to his cel.
Damn, the warden's gonna' be
pissed.
They're gonna' have to postpone
that damn news crew.

GARRETT

And don't forget to tell them who
did this to you Nancy.

Jimmy becomes infuriated and makes a lunge at Garret but the
two other guards get in between the guard and the prisoner.

GUARD THREE

Just get outta' here Jimmy.

INT. SENATOR STEVENS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Daniel peruses over some papers of the day. A young caucasian
aide in his mid twenties interrupts. This is JASON SEBORT.

AIDE

Excuse me Senator, am I bothering
you?

DANIEL

No, not at all JASON, what is it.

JASON

I just thought you'd like an update
on this Bellows thing.

DANIEL

Update?

JASON

Yes sir, seems he beat up a guard
and the film crew that had been
going there to shoot a segment on
the upcoming execution had to be
put off for a few days.

DANIEL

Good, maybe that buys me a little
more time to state my case before
they can get this to the airwaves.

The aide shakes his head in a non believing fashion.

JASON

I still can't believe that the Supreme Court passed the motion to allow this to be aired on national television, it just seems.. so ancient, like watching a stoning back in biblical times.

Daniel nods his head in agreement.

DANIEL

You're preaching to the choir Jason, although I'm afraid that some people may call it progress, evolution even. Isn't that what the Supreme Court called it?

JASON

Yes sir, but in a close five to four vote, and it took twenty nine hours of deliberation to come to that position.

DANIEL

And now it's up to me to try and stop their decision from coming to fruition.

Jason looks at the senator, opens his mouth to say something, but in a moment of reflection, thinks better of it.

DANIEL

Jason, what is it?

Jason smiles nervously.

JASON

Nothing sir, it's nothing.

DANIEL

Don't try and B.S a Bullshitter young man, what's on your mind?

Jason stares at his feet.

DANIEL

Son, the first thing you need to learn if you're going to be a true politician is to look people in the eyes at all times, even if you're going to lie through your teeth.

(MORE)

DANIEL(cont'd)

Now what is it that's troubling you?

JASON

It's just that I can't understand your position sir.

DANIEL

My position?

JASON

Yes sir, I mean when I think of all the facts that were brought out at the trial.. about what he did to those children..

DANIEL

You mean those BLACK children, don't you?

Again with the stare at the feet for Jason.

JASON

I'm sorry, sir.. It's just that, well that...

DANIEL

Let me ask you this Jason, if it was a black man who killed white children how would you feel?

JASON

I'd feel.. Well I'd feel like.. Like..

DANIEL

Like what son?

JASON

Like killing him myself.

Daniel puts a reassuring hand on the young man's shoulder.

DANIEL

Jason, it's alright.
My wife, my kids and all my friends have asked me the same question since the ruling came down.
If you don't think I struggle with and lose sleep everyday over what I'm doing then you haven't worked with me long enough.

JASON

I guess so sir, but I just don't think I'd have the intestinal fortitude that you do, that's all.

DANIEL

I just hope it's enough.

INT. COUNTRY BAR - NIGHT

The bar is pure redneck, heads of bear and deer adorn the walls, the country band plays behind a chicken fence. Cowboys and Cowgirls in all their high kickin' gear.

Steve, Rick and Ronny are seated at a booth. They can barely hear each other above the band.

STEVE

(yelling above the sound)
Well at least one thing's the same as city bars, you can't hear yourself think.

Ronny points to his glass.

RONNY

Drink.. no I'm fine, mine's barely started.

Steve just shakes his head, decides not to speak until a break in the music.

The band stops and a wild sound comes from the crowd, lots of hoots and hollers.

RICK

I guess they don't know what applause is down here.

STEVE

Not quite a night at the opera is it.

As the band takes a break and the crowd works it's way off the floor many patrons take notice of the tourists.

One of them, a mountain of a man with a bald head and a thick plaid shirt, stops by their table.

MAN

You fella's ain't from here are ya'

RONNY
 No shit Sherlock, what was your
 first clue, our non sloped forehead
 or our hairless knuckles.

The man's bald head turns bright red in anger.

MAN
 Listen you little piss ant!!

Rick quickly stands up to interject before the Mountain Man
 beats Ronny to a pulp.

RICK
 Listen here, my man. What's your
 name?

MAN
 Name's JIM BOB

RICK
 (under his breath)
 Of course it is.

RICK
 Listen Jim, if I can call you that?

Jim Bob glares at him.

RICK
 Ok Jim Bob, listen, my young friend
 here is obviously not from these
 parts and is ignorant in the ways
 of your local customs. Please
 accept on my behalf the apologies
 of my unlearned apprentice and lets
 just let bygones be bygones, shall
 we?

JIM BOB
 Mister you ain't makin' things any
 better.

Steve stands up to give it a try, maybe he'll have better
 luck.

STEVE
 Listen Jim Bob, my two friends here
 didn't mean any harm, we're here
 just like you to have a cold beer
 or two and enjoy the band.

A friend of Jim Bob's comes over, he's an even larger specimen.

LARGE MAN

Hey Jim Bob, is there a problem here, do you need some help.

The second man looks over the three city slickers, it doesn't take him long to realize Jim Bob can handle these three.. and three more just like them, all by himself.

JIM BOB

Nah, I'm good BILLY JOE

The city trio start to chuckle.

Billy Joe notices.

BILLY JOE

Somethin' funny is it, did my friend just make a joke, is that it?

STEVE

No, it's just that.. Well it's just that..

Steve looks at his compatriots, they are in full on laugh out loud mode now.

Steve can't help himself, he starts to laugh out loud, involuntarily.

JIM BOB

That's it, you boys are in for a beating.
This is gonna' hurt you more than it is me.

As Jim Bob cocks his arms and starts to throw his first punch Billy Joe grabs his wrist before it is unleashed into Steve's face.

BILLY JOE

Hang on Jim Bob, look at that!!

JIM BOB

What the hell you doin' man, you almost broke my arm.
Look at what?

Billy Joe points out the television playing above the bar.

There is a promo for HOUR LIFE AND TIMES on the set. Jim Bob looks at the T.V. then Steve for a second and then back to the T.V.

JIM BOB

Well I'll be damned, a real life celebrity, right here in our little ole bar. God Damn.

Steve breathes a much needed sigh of relief.

STEVE

I think my life just flashed before my eyes.

Billy Joe comes over to Steve and gives him a huge bear hug.

BILLY JOE

God damn, Jim Bob, we've got Steve Walton right here in our god damn bar, who'd a' believed it?

JIM BOB

Sorry about that Mr. Walton, I'm a huge fan. I guess I just got caught up in the heat of the moment. I didn't 'spect to ever see you in a place like this.

STEVE

Me neither.

INT. SENATE FLOOR - DAY

Senator Stevens has been on the floor for over an hour debating his points.

DANIEL

And so Senators I believe you can not allow this court decision to be carried through.

An older gentlemen, easily in his seventies with a pure white head of hair stands to address Daniel. This is Republican Senator J.C. TURNBERRY from Texas.

J.C.

Son in my forty years in the senate this is the first time any of us have ever had the audacity to question the wisdom of the Supreme Court, hell that's why we have them sum' bitches elected to sit up there.

There is broad laughter from the gallery of senators.

DANIEL

Senator this is no joking matter, I have been up here for the past hour explaining to all of you the onslaught of programming that this will allow into our nation's living rooms. Think of the children of this country and what we will be exposing them to as they grow up.

J.C.

Son it's just one thing right now, and I have every possible consideration from the network that it will be done in good taste. Besides look at what our young un's are exposed to already, what with what's allowed to be shown on the internet and what not.

Daniel concedes that point but has a rebuttal.

DANIEL

I understand Senator but this isn't some bootleg internet viral video or some obscure terrorist nation with a grainy video of a beheading that may or may not be real, this is a national broadcast on one of the largest networks in the country.

Senator Turnberry digs in his heels.

J.C.

A national broadcast yes but it's going to be shown at midnight, not exactly prime time, most likely all the little kiddies will be fully tucked in by then.

Again laughter from the gallery.

DANIEL

Senators I implore you to listen to me, if this execution is allowed to go public I believe it will be the most slippery slope that we will have ever let the media go down and there will, and let me be crystal clear on this point, be no turning back, ever.

A murmur runs through the senate.

J.C.

Son I believe you have good intentions, I truly do, but I also think that neither you nor I are close enough to the situation to offer a real opinion on things.

DANIEL

Excuse me.

J.C. moves to the centre of the room. He addresses the Speaker.

J.C.

Mr. Speaker, I know this is highly out of the ordinary but if you will indulge me I would like to call on someone to address the Senate.

DANIEL

Mr. Speaker there are no other Senators scheduled to speak on this matter.

Daniel surveys the room, all the other Senators seem surprised as well.

J.C.

Mr. Speaker it is not another member of the Senate I would like to bring out, it is someone who can shed a much more personal light on the nature of this matter.

The Senate Majority leader stands to address the assemblage. He is the Democratic Senator from Illinois. His name is DAVID PIERCE.

SPEAKER

Senator this is highly unconventional.

J.C.

I know Mr. Speaker but this person is the mother of one of the children who that Bellows monster butchered.

A strong murmur runs through the Senate.

SPEAKER

Order!! I will have order in my house!!

The murmur dissipates as the Speaker contemplates his next move.

SPEAKER

Senator Turnberry I will not allow this to become a spectacle.

J.C.

Understood Mr. Speaker.

The elder Senator motions to an aide at the far end of the Senate floor.

The aide leaves momentarily and re-enters almost simultaneously with a middle aged black woman dressed in a plain black dress with very little make up. This is IONA BERRY, mother of LADARIUS BERRY, twelve years old and victim number five of Garrett Bellows.

At first there is silence as the woman starts her walk towards the front of the Senate but then a small smattering of applause and as she ultimately reaches her pulpit the applause has turned into a standing ovation.

J.C.

Mr Speaker, may I present Mrs. Iona Berry, mother of one Ladarius Berry, an innocent child violently killed by Garrett Bellows.

The woman is unabashedly emotional as Senator Turnberry takes her hand and leads her to a podium.

She trembles as she unfolds a piece of paper retrieved from her purse.

IONA

(voice shaking)

Thank you very much, I am as nervous as you could possibly 'magine. I want to to talk you today about.. About Joshu...

The woman is overcome with emotion, she stands back from the podium, attempts to gain her composure.

Senator Turnberry approaches the podium, whispers something in her ear and pats her shoulder reassuredly.

Iona takes to the microphone at the podium again.

IONA

Excuse me.. I'm just 'pletely overwhelmed by be'en in front of y'all.

The mother readjusts herself before she starts to speak again.

IONA

When Senator J.C. asked me to speak to y'all I dint think I could do it. But when he 'splained this could help make a d'cision on showing to the world this animal pay the price for what'n he dun to Jason, well I'se be here to tell y'all that..that..

Iona is once again overtaken with emotion.

The senator approaches her again but this time she waves him away.

She reaches into her purse and pulls out a paper that she begins to unfold. Once unfolded it is shown to be a large picture of a seven year old boy in a cowboy outfit. He has a broad smile and is missing one front tooth.

Iona holds the picture above her head and turns slowly to show the entire room.

After what seems like an interminable amount of time the Speaker addresses the Senators.

SPEAKER

Thank you Senator Turnberry for inviting Mrs. Berry for taking the time today to show us how emotional and real this case can be.

Senator Turnberry takes the cue to retrieve Iona from the podium.

As she makes her exit each member of the Senate stands one by one and applauds her.

SPEAKER

I now believe that it is time for the Senate to vote on this matter.

We start to see the senators vote in turn.

The vote is almost unanimous.

Daniel Stevens just shakes his head.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Steve has his coffee on the couch as he watches a morning show.

There is a knock at the door and Rick walks right in.

STEVE

Hey ever heard of knocking?

RICK

Why afraid I'd catch you with a girl in your room old man, Christ I don't think you'd cheat on Jessica if SCARLETT JOHANSEN was standing in front of you naked.

STEVE

Very funny Jackass, what the hell is so important that has you up before eleven in the morning?

Rick laughs.

RICK

Listen, we've got a busy day ahead of us.

STEVE

Busy?

RICK

Yeah, now that the Senate has given us the green light and we're on hold with the Bellows interview brass wants us to go out and interview a bunch of the families and get a reaction to the execution.

STEVE

Really, I thought we'd done all the victim reaction stories already.

RICK

Well sure but that was just about the case. This is about the execution.

Steve thinks about it for a second.

STEVE

I guess that makes sense.

RICK

Damn skippy, and something else too.

STEVE

Oh yeah, what's that?

RICK

You're going to personally invite each of the families to the execution, you know, see if they want closure, that kind of shit.

Steve stands frozen in his tracks.

STEVE

Haven't these people been through enough already?

Ronny runs into the room with a half eaten bagel in his mouth and spills half of his coffee on the carpet as he comes to a stop.

RONNY

Come on boys, we're burnin' daylight.

EXT. RUN DOWN HOUSE - DAY

Steve and his team pull up to the front of the house.

All three men take a long look at each other.

RICK
Is this the way all these people
live.

RONNY
Racist much Mr. S?

Rick turns crimson with embarrassment.

RICK
I didn't mean.. I didn't... Uhh.

Ronny throws an empty coffee cup at Rick.

RONNY
Calm down Mr. S, I'm just bustin'
your balls.

STEVE
(to Rick)
Still think it was a good idea to
get out in the trenches with the
troops do you General?

Rick sticks his tongue out at Steve.

RICK
Smart ass. Just remember it was
Linda's idea not mine, if I had my
way I would just put the broadcast
on the minute they turn on the
juice.

Ronny interjects.

RONNY
The way this thing's blowing up on
social media I'm thinking you're
gonna' get a big promotion after
it's all over.

STEVE
Ah the big comfy chair up on the
top floor corner office. Just what
every brown nosing executive dreams
of.

Ronny laughs, Rick throws the coffee cup at Steve, it hits him in the nose.

STEVE
Hey not in the face, that's my
money maker.

RICK
Alright, let's get back to
business.

Rick looks through a file on his laptop.

RICK
This is the JACKSON family.

He turns the laptop towards Steve and directs his attention to a photograph on screen.

RICK
They lost LE'ROI, their youngest of
three children, to that bastard
Bellows.

Steve looks deeper at the picture. There is a family of five (Mom, Dad, teen son and daughter and a younger child)

STEVE
How old was he?

RICK
The young one, only seven.

RONNY
Jesus H Christ.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Jackson home is actually quite lovely inside, much different from the outside, at least twice as nice.

The three network visitors are seated at a couch and two chairs.

A black woman in her forties dressed in a simple house dress delivers each of the three visitors a glass of iced tea. This is SONIA JACKSON.

STEVE
Thank you Mrs. Jackson and might I
say what a lovely home you have.

A burly black man in his fifties who is seated in a large recliner chimes in. This is SOLOMON JACKSON, father of the family.

SOLOMON

Yeah, I know it don't look much from t'outside but I kinda' done that on purpose.

STEVE

Excuse me?

SOLOMON

See as the 'hood got worse it seem'd like all the punks want'd get into the nice lookin' 'uns so I figg'rd if it dint look so nice they'd stop breakin' in.

SONIA

It was either that or move.

Solomon nods, leans back in his chair and takes a long swig of iced tea.

SONIA

'Course since what happened to Le'roi everyone's been so nice I imagine we could live in the Taj Mahal and no one would dare break in.

Sonia starts to weep.

SOLOMON

It's Ok, Mother, it'll all be over soon.

Steve seizes the opportunity to jump in.

STEVE

Actually Mrs. Jackson..

SONIA

Call me Sonia.

STEVE

Alright Sonia, as I was saying that's why my colleagues and I are here today.

SONIA

I don't understand.

STEVE

Well we know you've been through a great ordeal and as you're husband just alluded to, one that is almost over.

Solomon starts to turn red with anger and shake.

SOLOMON

Mother that man who took away our Le'roi will soon be so full of electricity he'll be cookin' from the insides.

Sonia comes over to Solomon's chair, she dries her eyes and Solomon stands to console her.

STEVE

And Mrs. Jackson my network has had me come here today to see if you would like to have final closure on this subject by offering you the chance to view the execution at the site.

SOLOMON

But I thought the whole thing was you was showin' it on T.V, isn't that what this whole thing is 'bout?

Rick chimes in.

RICK

Yes Mr. Jackson, for the rest of America that's the case but our network feels it is important for each of the families affected to be offered the chance to view this execution up close, to provide as Steve says, closure to this matter.

SONIA

Or is it maybe that it would make better drama for the broadcast, you know, bolster the ratings.

Steve smiles to himself, it is clear that this woman's I.Q. is at least fifty points higher than her husband's. It must be true that opposites attract.

STEVE

Mister and Mrs. Jackson I understand that this is quite a decision for you to make and we definitely don't mean to put you on the spot at this moment.

He hands Sonia his card.

STEVE

I just ask that you think on this opportunity and after you make a decision that you call me so we can make arrangements either way.

SONIA

Thank you Mr. Walton.

STEVE

Call me Steve.

Sonia chuckles.

SONIA

Thank you Steve.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The phone rings and Jessica, who is asleep on the couch, is startled but somehow finds the cordless phone beside her.

JESSICA

(still half asleep)

Hello.. Steve is that you?

ANONYMOUS VOICE (V.O.)

Bitch, I'm gonna' kill you.

This wakes Jessica up like a slap in the face.

JESSICA

What are you talking about.. Who is this?

ANONYMOUS VOICE (V.O.)

You tell that husband of yours I know where you live and if he goes through with this I will gut the two of you in your sleep.

Jessica jumps to her feet, rushes to the living room window, looks outside to see if she can notice anything suspicious.

ANONYMOUS VOICE (V.O.)
You can look out your window all
you want Bitch, you'll never see me
if I don't want to be seen.

Jessica drops the phone as she faints.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Steve is on the phone with Jessica.

STEVE
Jesus Christ are you alright.. I
mean get the hell out of there,
take a motel room for the night.

JESSICA (O.S.)
I've never been so scared in my
life Steve. I don't think I can go
back there ever again.

STEVE
Now now hon, I know you're scared
right now and I feel terrible that
I can't be there but I'm sure that
this will blow over after it's all
done with.

Rick takes the phone from Steve's hand.

RICK
Jesse, it's Rick. Listen, where are
you right now?

JESSICA
I'm at the Dunkin' Donuts by our
house.

RICK
Ok, stay there and I'll have a car
over to pick you up in just a
couple of minutes.

JESSICA
Rick I'm scared.

RICK
I know, we'll get you somewhere
safe. I'll instruct the driver to
take you to a safe house we use for
whistle blowers..

(MORE)

RICK(cont'd)

unless you want to go to a family member's or friends.

Jessica is still shaken.

JESSICA

No, I don't want to get anybody else in danger. Just hurry Rick, please!

Rick hangs up the phone, looks at his friend, Steve is still in disbelief.

RICK

Hey I know you don't think this stuff is so serious but you can't take chances with your wife.

Steve shoots Rick an uncomprehending look.

STEVE

How bad is this thing gonna' get?

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Nathan meets with two of his top executives, BILL GRAYSON, in charge of media alliances and ZACK BURLESON, head of the news division.

NATHAN

All right gentlemen give me an update on the NBN situation.

ZACK

Well sir NBN has been pushing this on every news broadcast from the morning show til the late news.

BILL

And they've got all the local affiliates tagging it as well.

NATHAN

That's what I'd do... And as for us, what are we doing to combat this?

BILL

All of our media partners and local affiliates are behind us on our position, one hundred percent.

Nathan reaches into his suit pocket and extracts his smart phone.

He shoots Bill a dagger stare as he pulls up something on his phone.

NATHAN

One hundred per cent, is that right?

Nathan tosses the phone to Bill, who reads the screen.

CU: Screen headline reads WNN loses thirty seven percent of it's affiliate licensees to NBN.

BILL

Well, I, well...

NATHAN

Well what, did you really think I wouldn't keep on top of this thing to the last detail, let known something like this. All I seem to do is take phone calls asking why we aren't the ones with the exclusive rights. And let me tell you the board of directors is not taking this lightly at all.

BILL

You mean you're in danger of losing your job?

Nathan's anger turns into rage, he starts to physically shake at his extremities.

NATHAN

Let me tell you two this, if anyone is going to take the fall for this fiasco it certainly isn't going to be my ass on the line. I can think of two other people who will be fired long before the friendly fire hits my desk... do I make myself perfectly clear.

The two men look hard at each other and answer in unison.

BILL/ZACK

We're on it.

NATHAN

You've been on it, I need you to ramp up the vitriole. I want every last American citizen to hold NBN as a pariah, attacking their human rights, telling them that it's OK to shun the system, trying to be a sort of demi-god who is bigger than the rest of us.

ZACK

But we're a news division.

NATHAN

If affiliates keep dropping like flies we won't even be a network. Bill that's your job, I don't even want to hear about a station that serves two hundred people in Alaska thinking of leaving us.

BILL

Yes, sir.

INT. - T.V. STUDIO - DAY

There are two men, one white, one black seated opposite each other on two ends of a table and a third person seated in a seat between them, in the middle of the table.

A floor director counts down the host.

FLOOR DIRECTOR

Three, two

His voice stops as he counts down the final number and the host comes on air.

HOST

And thank you America for tuning in to our special PBS forum on the upcoming execution from the state of Texas.

I'm joined tonight by Reverend JACOB MOSES, head of the Fifth Pentecostal church in Houston and STANLEY ROBARDS, a member of the Ku Klux Klan in Amherst, South Carolina.

Gentlemen, I thank you for your attendance here tonight.

The studio audience applauds gently.

HOST

Reverend Moses, your congregation had two of the victims of Garrett Bellows, is that correct?

REVEREND

That's right, seven year old KEYSHAWN BARRETT and ten year old LAWFRONDA JONES.

HOST

And how does it make you feel to know that your parish has the ability to watch Mr. Bellows get what's coming to him.

Robards interrupts.

ROBARDS

Now just hold on there hoss, you said this here was going to be a debate on the right to show the murder of Bellows.

HOST

You mean execution.

ROBARDS

No I said it and I meant it.. Murder.

Now Reverend Moses interrupts.

REVEREND

At least it will be humane.. Not like the unspeakable acts committed on our children by that butcher. He should be publicly stoned, just like they did in biblical times.

ROBARDS

You black bastard, if Bellows had of had a trial of his peers he would not be sittin' there on death row at all.. Christ he'd be on his farm sippin' a beer if justice had been served.

The host realizes tempers are starting to flare and tries to regain control of the situation.

HOST

Now gentlemen, I know this is a hard topic but if we can just turn our attention back to th..

It's too late, both men glare accusatory looks at each other.

REVEREND

Why you stupid, ignorant cracker.

He stands and pushes the table towards Robards.

Robards retaliates as he also rises and pushes the force of the table back on the minister.

ROBARDS

You nigger coon. Bellows is a god damn hero for thinnin' out you people.

The two men continue to push the table and it finally lifts off it's legs.

The host cannot believe what is happening and tries to come between the two men.

Robards lands a hard right across the chin of the host, he drops like a sack of potatoes.

The Reverend then lunges at Robards and the two men fall to the floor, grappling with each other as they throw wayward punches.

The cameramen both leave their equipment as they rush towards the two combatants and the cameras point directly to the studio floor.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Jessica is on the phone as she paces the floor of the luxurious suite.

JESSICA

No Mom, I'm fine. It's just that the network thought it would be safer.. I mean better, for me if I was in a hotel room in New York rather than cooped up at home while Steve is in Texas.

She listens to the voice at the other end of the phone.

JESSICA

Yes, I'm sure that all this fuss will be finished once this whole thing is over. I mean time has a way of curbing people's emotions you know.

She again listens intently.

JESSICA

Mom, Steve and I are fine, it's just a little more high profile thing than I'm used to, you know, now I get a feeling of what Steve goes through every time he interviews some tough or controversial subject. It's just this time that it really seems to have struck a nerve all across the country, you know.

Jessica is interrupted by a knock at the door.

JESSICA

Mom listen, I have to go, my room service is here.
Ok, Mom I love you too.

Jessica hangs up the phone and crosses the room to answer the inquisitor.

It is indeed her room service.

JESSICA

Please come in.

The waiter rolls in his service cart and leaves it in a corner of the room.

JESSICA

Thank you.

The waiter extends his hand for a tip as he approaches the door but Jessica is completely unaware and almost shuts the door hard on his extended hand as he takes his leave.

INT. - INTERVIEW ROOM - TEXAS STATE PRISON - DAY

The room is pure white - sanitary - clinical, with nothing other than a cheap table and two chairs.

Steve is seated at the table opposite DIRK RANDOLPH, warden of the prison. He is a nervous man, he reminds Steve of different tweakers he has interviewed in the past.

STEVE

I want to thank you for allowing me the time to interview Mr. Bellows.

DIRK

I'm sorry we had to delay for a couple of days it's just that your Mr. Bellows, kind of formal isn't it?

Anyhow it's just that your Mr. Bellows had to be punished for breaking one of my best guard's nose.

STEVE

Punished - You don't think the execution's gonna' be enough then?

Randolph knew he had a good reason for hating this guy, now he's got one more.

He decides to play nice though.

DIRK

Very funny Mr. Walton. But for us he's not Mr. Bellows he's just another scumbag who killed a bunch of people.

STEVE

You mean innocent children, right?

DIRK

What, yeah sure, kids. Whatever.

Steve is taken aback by the disregard and pushes the issue.

STEVE

Sir do you not have any comprehension for how big this story could be?

The warden takes offense and puts his face inches from Steve's.

DIRK

Listen you can be all high and mighty if you want to but fact is I have to live with this vermon every single day of my life. You think Garrett Bellows is the worst criminal we've ever had in here.. Shit I can think of ten others off the top of my head who are way worse than him. Only thing that makes this one different is the media making up this constitutional bullshit and making this place a fucking circus for the past few weeks.

STEVE

Warden Randolph don't you think the American public has a right to decide if they want to see this execution or not?

DIRK

Don't mean a damn what I think, the State Board tells me what to do and I do it, I'm just another public servant. All I know is we cook about thirty of the worst offenders in this great country every year and go 'bout our business just fine then you and your holier than thou network decides to put a horsefly in the dogshit and this place is on inspection every goddamn minute of the day. So again to answer your question, it do'nt matter what I think.

Steve starts to understand, it's not the idea of the execution that's the problem, it's the extra attention to detail brought on the establishment. No one looks good under the microscope.

Steve pulls way back.

STEVE

Well again Warden, thank you for allowing us the time to do this interview.

DIRK

Whatever.

The door to the room opens and a guard leads Garrett into the room, he is shackled at the arms and legs. Two other guards are attached to Garrett at the arm, they wait until the warden vacates the one seat.

The guards then sit Garrett down and move to a corner of the room.

Steve notices that the chains are not removed and addresses the warden.

STEVE

Do you really think those are necessary? I mean your three guards are right there.

Dirk shoots Steve a quick fuck you glance as he nods at the guards.

DIRK

Suit yourself.

The guards move over to Garrett and undo all the cuffs, this sets him free.

GUARD ONE

I can't promise we can get to you in time if he makes a move.

Steve just gulps deeply.

STEVE

Mr. Bellows I'd like to thank you for taking the time to do this interview with me, it will take some time I'm sure but it wi..

GARRETT

Call me Garrett.

STEVE

Excuse me?

GARRETT

Call me Garrett, no need to be so formal. I imagine this interview is probably going to take us some time.

Steve is taken aback, he was expecting a monster who could only speak in monosyllabic words.

STEVE
Fine then, Garrett. Again thank you
for taking the time to grant this
interview, I'm sure that ..

Garrett interjects again.

GARRETT
And thanks.

STEVE
Ummm, your welcome, I guess. For
what exactly?

Garrett rubs his wrists.

GARRETT
For having these guys unshackle me,
haven't they told you about me?

STEVE
Sure they have, I mean I guess so.

GARRETT
And you're not afraid to be alone
with me?

Steve looks around the room at the three burly guards.

STEVE
I don't think we're quite alone.

Garrett looks at the guards as well, he grunts.

GARRETT
Yeah, I guess you're right. Anyway
it looks like you got under the
warden's skin... Just like I do. I
don't think he's none too pleased
at all the attention this here
place has been getting.

Steve smiles to himself, knows he was right about Warden
Randolph.

STEVE
I'm sure it's not what he's used
to, but it will be over soon.

Steve realizes what he has just said, he wasn't aware of how
morbid it would sound. He turns a shade of crimson.

Garrett just laughs.

GARRETT

That's OK Mr. Walton, I know what you mean, no offence taken.

STEVE

Thank God.. I mean.. call me Steve.

GARRETT

OK Steve.

Steve readjusts himself in the chair, this may not be so bad after all.

STEVE

Ok then, now if we can get on with the interview there is so much I'd like to ask you, so much America wants to know about you.

GARRETT

America wants to know about me? Are you sure... I mean from the letters I get it just seems like most people want to see me fry as soon as possible.

STEVE

But there are more than that who want to know all about you.

GARRETT

Kinda' morbid don't you think?

STEVE

It's not for me to say, I'm just here to tell a story.

GARRETT

I reckon you're gonna' have quite the story.

STEVE

Oh I'll have a story alright but I want you to have a say in the way you're perceived by America.

GARRETT

Perceived? You mean I have some sort of say in this here thang?

Steve takes just a second to change the subject.

STEVE

Are you comfortable, can I get you anything?
We're going to be her for some time, I've got many questions to ask you.

Garrett initially shakes his head but then looks at Steve, pauses for a moment.

GARRETT

Do you think I could ask you a favor?

STEVE

Sure.

GARRETT

Do you think you could get me a cigarette?

STEVE

I'm sorry, a cigarette?

GARRETT

Yeah, they pretty much keep me in solitaire around here, not much of anything given to me for anything, so I just reckoned I could maybe ask for.. Oh hell, never mind.

Steve studies Garrett for a minute before he gestures to a guard.

STEVE

Can you please ask the warden if this man can have a cigarette.

GUARD ONE

No sir, warden's orders were clear, no food, no drink, no nothin'

GARRETT

Thanks anyway.

Steve stands up and walks over to the guard. He's not new to this kind of thing.

STEVE

Listen would it really hurt you to do me a small favor and at least ask the warden.

The guard stiffens.

GUARD ONE

Once again sir, no exceptions,
warden was clear.

STEVE

Oh I'm sure he was, besides I'm
sure you're just doing your job.
I'm sure when I tell the millions
of Americans how you treat your
prisoners in here there will be no
backlash.. None at all.. Besides it
seemed to me the warden seemed to
like all this publicit..

GUARD ONE

Fuck!!

The guard stares down Steve for an instant.

As he retreats from the room, the guard motions to the other
two.

GUARD ONE

Don't take your eyes off the
prisoner.

The two other guards respond with a nod of the head.

GARRETT

Thank you.

STEVE

Don't thank me too soon, the
cigarettes aren't here yet.
And you may not be thanking me for
long.. Like I said I've got many
questions for you... Some you might
not like to answer.

GARRETT

Sir I don't mind answerin' any of
y'all's questions, just YOU might
not like the answers.

STEVE

I believe as a journalist I need to
listen to them, now matter what.

(MORE)

STEVE(cont'd)

America wants to know what makes you tick, and if the Senate allows our petition there will be more attention to this case than even during the trial... And on you.

GARRETT

So you mean I'm going to be like a celebrity or something?

STEVE

I'd say you already are.

INT. SENATOR STEVENS' OFFICE - DAY

Daniel is seated at his desk, he reviews some papers as an aide comes in.

AIDE

Excuse me Senator.

DANIEL

Yes, yes what is it.

AIDE

Sir your two o'clock is here.

Daniel glances at his watch.

DANIEL

Oh right, is it that time already?

Daniel puts the papers down on the desk.

DANIEL

All right, send them in please.

The aide leaves the room and returns in what seems like only a millisecond with two men in tow.

DANIEL

Thank you MARK, thank you, that will be all.

MARK

Sir.

The aide guides Nathan Standing and another man to a pair of seats opposite the Senator's desk.

Daniel comes out from behind the desk to meet them. He puts out his hand to shake theirs.

DANIEL
Mr. Standing.

The two men shake hands as they meet.

NATHAN
Senator, it is an honor. It is not
everyday I get to have a personal
audience with one of the top up and
coming politicians in the country.

Daniel pauses for a second. He is well aware this powerful
man can have the ear of the President himself with a mere
phone call.

DANIEL
No it is you who honor me sir, now
you said you needed a favor from my
office?

Nathan chuckles.

NATHAN
Right down to business is it, well,
Ok I like that in a man.
Senator I brought my friend along
with me here today as he's the best
there is in the business.

DANIEL
Business?

The other man now extends his hand to Daniel, he is in his
late thirties, lean, perfectly manicured head to toe, slicked
back hair, very politician like.

This is JOE DONNELLY, one of the top lobbyists on WNN's
payroll.

JOE
It's a pleasure Senator.

DANIEL
Yes, well thank you.. Uh,

Nathan blushes in embarrassment.

NATHAN
Oh excuse me Senator, where are my
manners. Please allow me to
introduce Joe Donnelly, he is one
of the best lobbyists in all of
Washington.

Daniel raises a skeptical eyebrow.

DANIEL
Lobbyist?

NATHANIEL
Yes sir.

DANIEL
I thought you needed a favor from
my office.

NATHAN
Oh I do Senator, but this will be
advantageous for both parties.

DANIEL
How so?

Joe laughs out loud.

JOE
You did say he was a junior
Senator.

NATHAN
Now Joe, not so fast. Senator will
you indulge me a minute to provide
you with some detail on exactly how
good Joe here is.

DANIEL
A minute, yes, I suppose.

NATHAN
Great, do you remember the logging
embargo with Bolivia a few years
back.

DANIEL
I certainly do, that seemed to go
on forever.

JOE
Eighteen months, to be exact.

DANIEL
Sure, I guess so, seems about
right. You were behind that?

Nathan laughs.

NATHAN

Behind it, Hell Joe here was the proverbial Wizard of Oz, pulling all the right strings at the right time. He kept that thing on hold long enough to make quite a few of our investors a bushel of money before the treaty was signed.

Joe grins.

JOE

And myself too.

NATHAN

I told you he's the best. But he's definitely not cheap. That deal should have been signed off in a matter of days, a slam dunk in all areas. But Joe here, well, maybe he should tell the story.

Joe picks up with the story for the Senator.

JOE

Thank you Nathan, you're too kind. You see Senator, it really doesn't make much sense to attack a problem head on if there is an outside agency that can do that for you. It keeps any politician...

Joe makes a gesture towards Nathan.

JOE

Or network head honcho for that matter in a Teflon state.

Daniel shoots a puzzled look.

DANIEL

Teflon?

JOE

Sure you know, nothing sticks.

DANIEL

Oh, I see. And how exactly does that relate to my needs?

Nathan and Joe share a knowing laugh.

NATHAN

Now Senator, that's the beauty of it, the whole thing is you need time on your side, seeing as how you lost out on your vote to keep this broadcast from happening.

DANIEL

And this favor you ask, it will keep the stench of that defeat away from me, is that the gist of it?

NATHAN

I would say that's exactly it, a junior Senator who has his eyes on the Oval Office one day would certainly not want a defeat like this to be a roadblock on that path.

Daniel is still confused. He still doesn't put the pieces of the puzzle together.

DANIEL

And how does my defeat for this broadcast factor in to the logging industry? After all the two are totally different anima..

Daniel sits down at his desk slowly as he puts the plan together.

NATHAN

I think Senator, that the light just came on.

JOE

You see Senator, I can bring in all the heavy hitters to do your work for you, Amnesty International, Coalition for Human Rights, Prisoner's Watchdog groups, etc.

NATHAN

Joe here will have so many groups begging for this not to be allowed that the case should be tied up for at least as long as the embargo.

JOE

And we shouldn't need anywhere near that amount of time, I'm told the execution could happen anytime in the next two to four weeks.

Daniel peers into Nathan's eyes.

DANIEL

I must say that I am quite surprised by this offer Mr. Standing. I would have thought that your network would have been applauding NBN for breaking down barriers that are sure to have very powerful future ramifications.

NATHAN

But there's the rub Senator. I am all for breaking down the barriers and I believe this truly will be a very important network first.. It's just.. Well, it's just that it wasn't WNN yielding the sledge hammer.

INT. PRISON - DAY

The cigarettes have arrived for Garrett.

Ronny is set up in the corner of the room, ready to start rolling film.

STEVE

So are you ready to talk about this?

GARRETT

You sure folks are gonna' be interested in any of this?

STEVE

As I said earlier you're the hottest topic on the planet these days.

GARRETT

So this stuff I read on the internet about them havin' a pool or somethin' on my dyin' time is true?

Ronny interjects.

RONNY

It's not really a pool see, a bunch of overseas gambling websites are offering odds of when you will be announced.

GARRETT

Announced?

RONNY

Sure, you know, when your exact time of death will be. I've got Twelve O' One and twenty eight seconds.

GARRETT

Well I'll be damned. People are screwed up.

Steve contemplates the irony of that statement.

Steve motions to Ronny to cut it out. He wants Garrett's full attention for the interview.

STEVE

Well if you're ready then.

GARRETT

Shoot.

Steve contemplates his first question for a moment. He had all these thoughts of how this was going to work out nailed down but...

STEVE

I just have to ask you, what were you thinking when you were committing your acts of horror on these little children?

Garrett leans back in his chair, takes a long draw on a cigarette.

GARRETT

See that's the difference that I can't get folks to understand. You see me as some sort of animal, as a beast.

STEVE

I'd say that's the way ninety-nine percent of the public see you.

GARRETT

But whose more of a beast, the butcher who cuts the animal parts into bite size pieces for his customer or the guy with the sledge hammer in the arbitrage, or is it the farmer who feeds the animal to get nice and juicy, fat enough to bring a great price at market?

Steve peers into Garret's eyes, looking for a sign, any sign at all, of remorse.

There is none.

STEVE

I think we should just move on... if you don't mind?

GARRETT

Don't bother me none.

STEVE

Fine, is it alright if we talk about how you chose, if chose is the right word, how you chose to start doing the things you did in the very first place.

GARRETT

I don't s'pose I'd say chose, I guess I'd rather say it was my right.

Steve is astonished, he stares at Garrett incredulously.

STEVE

Your RIGHT!?

GARRETT

Sure, I mean I was bein' bothered by my lack of gettin' ahead at the farm and when I saw on the news all these stories about 'Coons gettin' ahead... Well sir I guess it just doggone bugged me.. Yup, bugged me to no end.

STEVE

So this is about racism, about blacks getting over on the whites?

GARRETT

Nah man you're still missin' the point. I told you I ain't got nothin' against niggers, it would be the same if a spic or a slant was gettin' ahead, I just don't see anything below me on God's scale bein' able to get ahead of me.

STEVE

I must tell you that I notice you reference God and the Bible quite a bit.

GARRETT

Yes sir, that is my guidin' light.

STEVE

Well then can I ask you something?

GARRETT

Yes sir, ask me anythin' you want.

Steve pauses for a second to frame the question in just the right fashion.

STEVE

Well it's that in the Bible, at least to my rudimentary understanding, that it says all men are created equal. Do you believe that to be true.

GARRETT

Yes sir, I believe it with all my heart.

STEVE

Well then aren't you a walking contradiction of everything you just said you believed.

GARRETT

No sir, not at all.

STEVE

But you just admitted you believe all men are created equal - I don't understand.

GARRETT

That's what I been tellin' ya'. You believe all men means all men of any colour but I believe that Adam was created in God's image and I'm damn sure Adam was white. Anythin' comin' after that is inferior.

Steve shakes his head, he still can't get Bellows to understand that this is a complete abomination of the human condition.

Steve reaches into his portfolio beside the table and produces a folder. He throws it on the table opposite Garrett.

STEVE

I want to show you something, open the folder.

Garrett reaches out and opens the folder, inside is a picture of each of his victims.

GARRETT

What do you want me to do with these?

STEVE

Spread them out.

Garrett does as asked, when finished the photos all but fill the table.

GARRETT

(stoically)
Now what?

STEVE

Look at them, I mean really LOOK at them.

Garrett scans each picture, touches a couple of them as he looks through the assortment.

STEVE

Are you telling me that these bring no thoughts of remorse, no feelings in you at all?

Garrett steels his gaze on Steve. His eyes seem black, soulless.

GARRETT

Listen Mister, I know you're thinkin' you can get me to have an epiphany or somethin' but truth is it just ain't gonna' happen.

STEVE

You really are a monster!!

Garrett gets up from the table abruptly.

GARRETT

I think this here interview's over.

INT. WNN OFFICES - DAY

Nathan offers Joe a drink, he obliges.

NATHAN

So tell me Joe where do we stand?

JOE

Well I've got two of my top guys running all around Washington looking for any court that will put out an injunction.

NATHAN

How do you overturn the Supreme Court?

JOE

Oh you'd be amazed at the legal loopholes that exist in our system sir. Justice may be blind but it isn't deaf and dumb.

NATHAN

And is that it, will that be enough?

Joe smiles.

JOE

Oh no, not at all. I've got another group going to all the other networks to get them to rally against this thing - they've got them running commercials, talking about this on all their public affairs programs, Christ they've even got their six 'o clock news anchors doing commentaries on the sheer brutality of it all.

NATHAN

So everything is going as well as you planned.

JOE

Yes sir, by the time this thing airs, if it gets to that point... Well let's just say that there should only be about as many television sets turned to it as there are for three a.m. repeats of Roots in Alabama.

Now Nathan smiles.

NATHAN

It sounds like you've got you're bases pretty well covered.

JOE

That's why you pay me so well sir.

The two men clink glasses.

NATHAN

Cheers.

Nathan's cel phone rings, he puts up a finger to let Joe know he'll just be a second with the interruption.

ANONYMOUS VOICE - O.S

Mr. Standing

NATHAN

Yes.

Nathan listens to the rest of the information.

NATHAN

Yes, I see. Yes, alright then.

Nathan hangs up the phone and places it back in his Brooks Brothers suit pocket.

He is ashen.

JOE
Everything alright sir?

Nathan rips Joe's glass out of his hand and fires it violently against a wall.

NATHAN
You're fired!

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Steve is dressed in ripped jeans, an old T-shirt and sneakers as he sits at a table. He also has on an old pair of non prescription glasses, not so he can see but to help with the camouflage.

The bar is full of patrons, some dressed casually, some still in business suits from today's meetings.

Steve catches the eye of a working girl seated at the bar as she scans the room for a client. She nods at him but Steve shows off his wedding ring. She smiles and shrugs.

A waitress approaches him with a menu.

WAITRESS
Can I start you off with a drink.

STEVE
Just a beer please, and I won't need a menu.

WAITRESS
Suit yourself.

As the waitress takes her leave Steve overhears a loud conversation situated a couple of feet away from his.

There are two men in suits, one in his forties and one in his twenties arguing about something.

FORTY YEAR OLD
And if they want to show that stuff on regular T.V. then I say more power to them.

TWENTY SOMETHING

How can you be so crass, this is not something you show on television for anyone to flip too, like it's just a rerun of another cop show.

FORTY YEAR OLD

But even kids watch all kinds of violent crap on T.V all the time... And don't even get me started about video games, I must have seen my twelve year old kill over fifty guys the other day in some army game.

The young man smiles.

TWENTY SOMETHING

That's just it, it's only a game.

FORTY YEAR OLD

And you're saying they can't differentiate?

TWENTY SOMETHING

No I'm saying we shouldn't make them even try... Listen let's take a hypothetical, Ok.

FORTY YEAR OLD

Alright smart ass, go ahead.

TWENTY SOMETHING

Let's say you're away on a business trip, just like you are today.

The older man chuckles.

FORTY YEAR OLD

Now that's a real stretch, I'm on the road twenty five days a month.

TWENTY SOMETHING

Yeah, me too, but that's not the point. So getting back to it, you're on the road and this program comes on at midnight.

FORTY YEAR OLD

My wife has the kids in bed by midnight.

The young man smiles again.

TWENTY SOMETHING

Oh so no TV, no computer in your
twelve year old's room.

FORTY YEAR OLD

Touche.

TWENTY SOMETHING

So this program comes on when your
son's

(finger quotes)

In bed.

FORTY YEAR OLD

Yeah so, I'm sure he's probably
looking for comedy reruns or
sports.

TWENTY SOMETHING

Sure but then he's flipping
channels and the network is hyping
the shit out of this execution. I
mean it's a network first. For them
it's a really big deal.

Steve tries intently to listen to the two men as the waitress
brings his beer.

WAITRESS

Here you go.

She places the beer in front of him and Steve just waves her
away.

WAITRESS

Asshole.

Steve turns his focus back to the two men's conversation.

FORTY YEAR OLD

Yeah but even if he takes a look
I'm sure that the network will make
a big deal out of the fact that
this is not suitable for children.

TWENTY SOMETHING

Oh man you don't even watch
anything any more do you.

(MORE)

TWENTY SOMETHING(cont'd)

When someone's about to get killed in a show these days the network flashes a PG logo on screen for two seconds before the character is dispatched.

The older man interjects.

FORTY YEAR OLD

But for something like this..

TWENTY SOMETHING

Oh right for something really violent they put up a three second screen shot of VIEWER DISCRETION ADVISED.

The older man takes a long deep drink from his beer in front of him.

FORTY YEAR OLD

Holy Shit.

TWENTY SOMETHING

Makes you think, huh.

Steve turns to his glass of beer and just stares at it.

The two men leave and Steve almost gets up to talk to them, ask them more thoughts, but then thinks better of it and drains his beer in one gulp.

INT. NEW YORK CITY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is extremely high class, only the richest of the rich and the most influential people can get a seat here.

Even the busboys wear tuxedos.

Linda is seated across from Nathan, she knows he has a hidden agenda for meeting her, she just needs to know what it is.

LINDA

I was quite surprised at your invitation Nathan, what with all your network has been doing to discredit our enterprise.

NATHAN

My dear Linda, surely you must know that my network is simply appealing to the American people to use their best judgement when it comes to choosing whether to tune in to your broadcast of that despicable act the State of Texas will be bestowing upon that unfortunate soul.. What is his name again.. Billow, Billot.

Linda interjects.

LINDA

You know damn well it's Bellows.

NATHAN

Bellows, ah that's right. Now I was saying how our network feels that the American public deserves the chance to know exactly how harmful this may be to the broadcast system. I mean once this Pandora's box is opened who knows what else your network may show them. Perhaps, oh I don't know, perhaps a young nefarious child killing neighborhood pets, or better yet a reality show where people play a live game of Russian Roulette. I mean where will it all end?

LINDA

Now, now Nathan. All full of bluster, you're like a storm on the ocean that threatens to turn into a hurricane but by the time it hits land it is nothing more than a gentle shower. Surely Nathan you did not invite me here tonight just to let me know your thoughts on saving the American people from our broadcast, you've got something up your sleeve.

A waiter approaches their table.

NATHAN

I'll have the usual.

The waiter looks to Linda for her order.

WAITER

Ma'am.

LINDA

I'll have what he's having.

WAITER

Very good, Scotch neat.

Nathan smiles.

NATHAN

I like a drinking partner who can keep up with me.

LINDA

Oh I'll only be having one. Now as I was saying Nathan what did you really want me here for?

Nathan studies his opponent for a moment. It is clear that Linda is not going to play any of his games.

He decides to get to the point.

NATHAN

Right to the point then is it?

LINDA

If you don't mind.

NATHAN

Well if that's truly what you want let me put all my chips into the middle right away.

LINDA

Fine.

NATHAN

I need you to know Linda that I have the utmost respect for you, always have really.

Linda chides him.

LINDA

I don't hear those chips being pushed across the felt.

NATHAN

Fine, have it your way. The way I see it is you have two choices, neither very palatable I fear.

Linda smirks, she knew there was a plan.

LINDA

Why don't you explain them to me Nathan.

NATHAN

The first choice is that you let our network share this broadcast with you.

LINDA

Share?

NATHAN

Why yes of course, with us being the largest network and you having exclusive rights we could pool our resources and use the synergy to turn this network first into an event that truly makes history.

LINDA

And how would you explain your network's sudden change of heart on this matter.

Nathan chuckles.

NATHAN

With the amount of money I pay for spin doctors I'm sure that we could have little to no flak at all to deal with.

LINDA

I would imagine, just look at the money you've been spending to try and discredit us.

Another chuckle from Nathan.

LINDA

But let's not pull any punches here Nathan, you may say share but what you actually mean is steal.

NATHAN

I'm offended.

LINDA

I've known you long enough to say nothing could ever offend you. Now what's my second option.. In your opinion?

NATHAN

Well that option is not appealing at all, one where you would undoubtedly lose your position.

LINDA

Really, and how would that work.

NATHAN

Quite simply my dear, I said we were the largest network. WNN would just become larger with our newest acquisition.. The fledgling NBN network.

Linda was prepared for this, she had done her homework.

Linda loses any semblance of courtesy as she sets to answer her foe.

She steels herself, bares her teeth with a menacing smile as she does so.

LINDA

You pompous, sanctimonious Son of a Bitch. I might have been born at night Nathan, but it certainly wasn't last night. If you possibly think that your network could bully ours into submission or threaten us with a takeover then you have grossly underestimated us.

NATHAN

Really, how so?

LINDA

Thank God for anti trust legislature in this great country we live in. If you didn't think that I did all my homework before this meeting then maybe you don't respect me as much as you said.

Nathan feigns being taken aback.

NATHAN

And what did your homework indicate
then my old friend?

LINDA

Well it told me that the idea of
one network controlling all
televised broadcasts would
completely fly in the face of
everything that America stands for.
It tells me that we could keep you
in court fighting the sale for so
long your grandchildren would still
be battling it long after you're in
the ground.

Nathan now gives up all semblance of protocol.

NATHAN

You Bitch.

Now Linda smiles.

LINDA

Maybe now you're not
underestimating me.

Montage of different people and groups as they prepare to
watch the broadcast.

- Reverend Moses' church in Houston where victim's family
members that could not make it to the prison and other
community members gather. There are two large televisions
mounted in the rafters of the church

- Senator Daniel Stevens and his wife are in his den and
watch a thirty two inch flat screen, they sit entwined on a
couch.

- Steve and Rick's wives are in the boardroom of NBN,
surrounded by Linda and a large group of executives.

- Nathan and his executives watch a pop up television screen
in their boardroom.

- Joe watches a television in a hotel room alone

- A group in Chicago watch in a bar

- A Houston precinct house has a television rolled into the
detective's room.

- A young couple sit in their living room, both nurse a cup of coffee.
- A protestor lays down their sign in a corner of their living room as they turn their television set on.
- A family of four (Dad, Mom, teenaged son and daughter) gather in the living room of a modern, comfortable home.

INT. PRISON VIEWING AREA - NIGHT

People are starting to arrive for the execution, Steve maintains a place in front of the visitors as the camera flashes on.

STEVE

Good evening America we will now begin this NBN special program by allowing you, the viewers at home, to see the preparations for this event.

Even though none of our crew has been permitted to be in the actual chamber, NBN has been granted special access for a camera to be installed and let you see and hear the interactions in that chamber between Garrett Bellows and the officials that will oversee this process.

INT. PRISON DEATH CHAMBER - NIGHT.

Garrett is escorted to the electric chair by a pair of guards. They unshackle him and place him into the chair, where they proceed to shackle him in a seated position.

One guard then soaks a sponge, places it between the electrical conductor plate and Garrett's head, then screws it down tight.

There is a television camera in the room, one that is controlled from the viewing area by Ronny.

It shows the preparations live to the home viewing audience.

INT. VIEWING AREA - NIGHT

There is a large crowd outside of the chamber in the viewing area.

Many of the family members, including Iona Berry and her husband, are there. There are also members of six of the families that Steve talked to.

As well there is a group of prison, municipal and state officials.

Steve, Rick and Ronny are the only media in the area.

Ronny switches the camera's gaze from the spectators to the chamber every so often.

Steve takes his place in front of the camera as Ronny counts him down.

RONNY
(using his fingers)
Three, two..

His voice cuts off as he indicates one and then throws to his anchor.

STEVE
Welcome America to this exclusive
broadcast on NBN.
Before you decide to follow through
with watching this broadcast I want
to caution everyone that viewer
discretion is strongly advised for
this event and stress also that the
footage you are about to see is not
suitable for all viewers.

Rick is beside himself.

RICK
(mouths to Ronny)
What the hell is he doing?

Ronny just shrugs and keeps the camera fixed on Steve.

STEVE
We at NBN believe in the basic
rights of choice of all American
citizens and also strongly believe
that each of you who has chosen to
view this program will use the
utmost discretion in which members
of your own households can handle
witnessing the upcoming events.

EXT. OUTSIDE PRISON WALLS - NIGHT.

There are still hundreds of people, most hold signs of indignance and shout slogans gathered in a last minute vigil. They do know however that there is now no hope of shutting this broadcast down.

There are at least fifty armed guards overseeing the protesters.

A young man with a name badge that reads SAM holds a loudspeaker and tries to talk over the crowd.

SAM

Now listen everyone, I would like you all to disassemble. Our valiant fight is over and all we can do now is pray for the soul of this man. At the very least we have shown that not everyone in this nation is so taken with the idea of watching something so vile invade our living rooms.

CROWD MEMBER

But we didn't complete our mission.

SAM

We did enough, enough to have the powers that be understand that this cannot go any further.

There is a collective sigh from the crowd and slowly their voices are silenced and the signs put on the ground.

INT. PRISON DEATH CHAMBER - NIGHT

Garrett's eyes start to roam through the glass around the outside audience, he doesn't even blink once as he stares into the faces of the families of his victims.

A priest comes into the chamber, he approaches Garrett.

PRIEST

My son, now is your last chance to confess to those gathered here in this room and to almighty God above, both your sins and your regrets for the unspeakable pain you have caused to others. Do you have any last words to say?

GARRETT

No Father, I am quite confident that MY God will accept me into his heaven as I have no sins to confess to.

Gasps from the viewing area can be heard through the glass.

PRIEST

My son do you wish to have your head cloaked as you are readied to pay the ultimate price for your actions?

Garrett sneers at the priest as he shakes his head.

GARRETT

No need, may as well let 'em see right to the end that I feel no shame in what I have done.

INT. VIEWING AREA - SAME TIME

STEVE

And there you have heard it America, this man who you have all grown to know and make your own judgements on over the past months has now chosen, even at this very last second before meeting his maker, to not acknowledge any wrong doing in any of his cruel and horrific acts of violence. As we move to the very last stage of this execution I remind all viewers at home that NBN will show the execution to the very end, that is until the prison physician has verified that Garrett Bellows has indeed breathed his last breath and cannot harm another human being ever again.

The room is silent as the audience waits for the execution process to commence.

The captain of the guards speaks an order.

CAPTAIN

Roll on one.

Another guard lifts a lever and there is a loud buzzing noise as much of the electricity in the building is rerouted to the imminent point of contact.

The lights in the viewing area flash intermittently as the power to the chair increases.

STEVE

And that sound you are hearing and the lights you see fluttering are the final indication of what is about to occur.

I again implore you to be aware of what is about to occur next.

NBN is about to make network broadcast history in the next few seconds, when the captain of the guards says his next command there will be no turning back.

Montage of the people who watch from different vantage points.

- Senator Stevens wife gets up and turns off the television

WIFE

I can't bear to watch this.

- Nathan and his executives stare intently at their screen. The tension is high.

NATHAN

They're gonna' clean up in the overnights... God damn well should have been us.

- Crowd in the Chicago bar seems confused, some patrons start to cheer and whistle, some turn their eyes from the television sets in the bar while others are transfixed to the screens and cannot make any sound at all.

- Detectives and other police officers in the Houston precinct start to whoop it up with cheers and derogatory cries.

ANONYMOUS OFFICER
Fry the Bastard!!

- Family gathered in living room decide that it's just too much for the children.

FATHER
You kids get off to bed.

TEEN CHILD
But Dad, you said!!

FATHER
Well I changed my mind, now I say
off to bed.

The children grudgingly trot off to bed.

INT. DEATH CHAMBER - NIGHT

There is a hushed silence as the two guards make their final checks of the straps and bindings that hold Garrett in place and attach him to the contraption.

The priest comes over and quietly makes his final benediction for the guilty man.

Garrett steels his body to brace for the oncoming ten thousand volts. He finally shows some emotion, hopes that it will be over and he won't feel any pain for long.

The captain of the guards looks over to the curtain.

He makes a small gesture with his head as he makes his final command.

CAPTAIN
Roll on two.

The lights on the interior and the exterior of the prison flash on and off as the electricity is rerouted to supply the maximum amount of voltage to the chair of death.

FADE OUT.

AS THE CREDITS ROLL A CHOIR OF BLACK CHILDREN SINGING AMAZING GRACE COMES ON SCREEN.

