

THE SHOW TO DIE FOR

By

Martin Cox

Martin Cox 2010

assatiates@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan Coleman (40's) talk show host, superman good looks, toothpaste-ad smile, sits admiring himself in the mirror. He hums along with 'Heartbreak Hotel' playing in the background.

His cell phone rings. He snatches it up, irritated.

DAN
Yes Karen. What?

KAREN (O.S.)
Your check bounced again...this isn't funny Dan. I'm working my ass off and looking after our kids. The least you can do is be responsible.

Dan sighs.

KAREN (O.S.)
Are you gambling again?

Dan shakes his head.

KAREN (O.S.)
Oh my God, you are. What is your problem?

Dan hangs up.

DAN
Bitch!

A knock on the door.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Five minutes Dan.

DAN
Yeah, yeah, coming.

He rises, tosses his cell onto the counter and leaves.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Dan's wrapping up his show.

DAN
(to camera)
Thanks for tuning in. This is D.C.
signing off and I'll see you all
tomorrow.

As he removes his earpiece the floor manager walks past.

FLOOR MANAGER
Good job Dan.

DAN
Good job my ass! That was so
fucking boring I was sending my own
feet to sleep.

He loosens his tie and heads off set.

DAN
I'm just glad tomorrow's Friday.
Two days away from this crap.

The floor manager calls out to him.

FLOOR MANAGER
Production meeting eleven tomorrow
morning.

No response. He shrugs his shoulders.

FLOOR MANAGER
Asshole.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Dan sits with director STEVE HARRISON (30's) and executive producer WILL SHORT (late 20's).

STEVE
Something's gotta happen Dan.
Ratings are down and I'm getting
heat from upstairs.

DAN
You're the fucking creative team.
Come up with something. I'm just
the host.

He sits back in his chair waving papers.

DAN

Look at this shit! These questions are so fucking lame, my six year old could write better.

He throws the papers across the table.

DAN

Why don't you get me someone interesting...Brad Pitt, Lady Gaga even George fucking Bush for chrissakes.

WILL

Limited budget...

Dan leans forward and slams his hand on the table.

DAN

Bullshit Will! Who've I got tonite? Some old ex-politician that nobody remembers. Way to go guys, fucking way to go.

Dan jumps up, leaves and shouts over his shoulder.

DAN

It's about time I did things my way you sonsabitches.

Steve looks at Will who collects the discarded sheets.

STEVE

Not long now. I reckon he's got another week, max.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Dan interviews ex-senator Bas Williams (70's).

DAN

So Bas. You've been around the block a few times right? You must've seen some corruption huh? Maybe got involved in a few things?

Bas's face reddens.

BAS

I don't think I'll dignify that question with an answer.

DAN

Oh come on man. You've been a bad guy, we all know that. Give us the skinny.

Bas rips his microphone from his jacket.

BAS

I'm not gonna sit here and be insulted by a little prick like you.

He rises sharply, clutches his chest and falls, already dead.

Dan screams as he goes to Bas's aid.

DAN

Go to commercials! Get a doctor. Jesus Christ! I didn't mean this...

EXT. DAN'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Dan throws his golf clubs into the trunk of his car. His cell phone rings.

DAN

Steve, it's Sunday man. I'm just heading off to golf...

He pauses.

DAN

It's about Friday's show right?...Okay, I'll be there in twenty minutes.

Dan angrily slams his trunk lid shut, jumps into his car and speeds off.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Dan enters. Steve and Will are already seated.

STEVE

Take a seat Dan.

Dan sits and folds his arms protectively.

DAN

Look, I know I was out of line
Friday, but how was I to know the
old guy was on his way out?

Steve attempts to speak but Dan holds up his hand and
continues.

DAN

If you're gonna fire me then do it.
Get it over with and I can go play
golf.

STEVE

You don't quite understand. Yes
there's some shit we've gotta
handle with Bas's people but
there's other things we want to
talk to you about.

Dan looks confused.

DAN

What "things". Don't tell me, the
legals are throwing me under the
bus. Well, what a surprise!

Will leans forward.

WILL

Dan, you ain't listening. Steve's
already told you the station's
taking care of that...no my friend
this is something big. Bigger than
you ever imagined.

Steve jumps in.

STEVE

Y'see Dan, on Friday night, Will
uploaded the show onto the net.

DAN

(angrily to Will)

You did what? Are you some kind of
sicko?

STEVE

No he's not...but the viewers are.
We've had over three million hits
so far. This thing's gonna explode.

DAN
Yeah, like in my face.

WILL
T.V.'s dyin' man. Everone's hitting
the web. The more gross the better.

DAN
By "gross"...let me guess, you mean
watching people die, right? Fuck,
where are our ethics guys? Where
are our fucking ethics?

Will looks to Steve for help. Steve stands.

STEVE
Ethics?

He sighs.

STEVE
Yeah your probably right. Our
ethics are in the can... especially
when you can't pay your child
support 'cos of your gambling
debts.

Dan looks shocked.

DAN
What the fuck?

Steve sits back down.

STEVE
This is a small community pal.
Sooner or later we all get to
know...and maybe, just maybe you've
forgotten your ratings suck?

WILL
Come on Dan. This is random. Chance
to get yourself outta the shit.

Dan sits back in his seat, thinks.

DAN
How?

STEVE
Assisted suicide. We've got it made
man. There's only three states it's
legal in, and your ass is in one of

STEVE
 'em! We've already got folks lined
 up.

INT. PAMMY MICKLESON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan, Steve and Will huddle in one corner. Steve scans a
 sheet.

STEVE
 Dan, you're gonna have to wing this
 one. Research's virtually nil.
 Pammy Mickleson. She's forty, one
 kid, husband...blah, blah,
 blah...got less than six months.

DAN
 I'll handle it.

STEVE
 Get the emotions goin'. Make us cry
 but make it good....Bruce'll drop
 by later.

Dan screws up his face.

DAN
 Just as it was all going so good.

WILL
 Hey dude, It's not every day the
 president shows up in person.

DAN
 Thank God. That guy's always got a
 motive.

The floor manager interrupts.

FLOOR MANAGER
 We're ready for you now Dan.

CUT TO:

Dan interviews PAMMY MICKLESON (40), dignified, once
 vivacious now slightly frail but with impeccable make-up and
 hair. Her intelligent blue eyes pierce into Dan's.

They sit diagonally across from each other a small coffee
 table between. On the table sits a lone glass filled with
 opaque liquid.

DAN
(to camera)
Welcome back folks. We're getting
to know Pammy Mickleson, beloved
wife and loving mother.

Dan turns his attention to Pammy.

DAN
Now sweetheart, may I say that you
do not appear to me as a person
that wants to end her life...I'm
sorry if this is inappropriate...
but you are a beautiful, vital
woman.

Pammy nods and smiles, flirting being a thing of the past.

PAMMY
Thanks Dan. My mom always told me
to look your best no matter what.
Hope I'm not letting her down.

DAN
Absolutely not.
(to camera)
But, I'm sure we all want to know,
why?

Pammy Smiles into the camera.

PAMMY
Why? May I tell you why?...Two
years ago my wonderful husband,
Frank, got laid off. The next week,
I was diagnosed.

Dan sits back in his chair.

DAN
Bad time huh?

Pammy ignores the comment, raises her voice, stabbing her
finger into the arm rest of the chair.

PAMMY
This man...my man, has been out
there every day, trying to find
work. Can you imagine how he feels?

Dan leans forward and takes Pammy's hand.

DAN
We're not here to judge
sweetheart...just to help.

Pammy calms.

PAMMY
Sorry. Just love him...you know.

DAN
Sure...and your son? Met him
earlier, shooting some hoops.
Handsome boy.

Pammy's hand goes to her mouth. She wells up.

PAMMY
That's the thing. Leaving him. It's
so hard...

DAN
Hard, in what way?

Pammy weeps openly.

PAMMY
Because it's not my time to go. I
have things to do.

DAN
So, why make this decision?

PAMMY
My medication.

DAN
Huh?

PAMMY
The medication I require is
expensive, big time.

Pammy takes a deep breath, presents herself with her hands.

PAMMY
What you see today is the result of
the drugs I'm taking. They mask the
real symptoms. I'm on a continual
high. No pain...except in my heart
that is.

Dan blows out his cheeks. He reaches over and takes Pammy's hand again.

DAN
I feel your pain sweetheart. Honest
to God, I do.

PAMMY
Thanks Dan.

She shakes herself out of her morbidity.

PAMMY
So our funds've run dry. We've got
a little put aside for our son's
education but we promised each
other no matter what, we'd never
touch that.

Dan looks directly into the camera.

DAN
Folks, please remember that always,
always look after the kids. Right
now, we're gonna go for a short
commercial break but be sure to
stay where you are to share Pammy
Mickleson's last moments.

CUT TO:

Dan is back interviewing Pammy.

DAN
You know there are people watching
that disagree with you taking your
own life, right?

PAMMY
Yes I do and I used to think like
that, but now...things are
different.

DAN
What if the doctor's are wrong?
What if you have more than six
months?

Pammy shudders and points to the glass on the table.

PAMMY
No way. I made my mind up some time
ago to do this. I wanted Nembutal
but we couldn't afford that.

Dan nods towards the glass.

DAN
So, what's in there?

PAMMY
Seconal. Frank had to sit and open up a hundred capsules. Mixed it with lemonade...ironic huh? The man that loves you doing something like that.

Dan shakes his head.

DAN
Just can't imagine. Real hard. But Frank knew you wanted to do this, right?

PAMMY
Initially yes. But this show? No. He doesn't even know about the money yet.

Dan sits back in his chair.

DAN
Money?

PAMMY
Bruce Merrian, your boss I guess, is gonna give Frank a check...when I'm...when it's all over. That'll cover our debts and then Frank can go on with his life. This'll be my last gift to my family...thanks to Mr. Merrian.

Dan looks at the camera again.

DAN
Yeah, our Bruce is quite a guy. Stay with us folks. After the break you'll witness the end of a life.

Dan jumps up and heads for Steve.

DAN
I wanna see Merrian...now!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

BRUCE MERRIAN (40's) is in a confrontation with Dan.

BRUCE

What is it with you? I give you the best....

Dan grabs him by the collar.

DAN

Listen to me you sweaty little asshole.

Bruce retaliates.

BRUCE

Get off me you shit.

Dan grabs him harder, spit spraying.

DAN

This show's about people dying, right? Dying with some kind of fucking dignity....Bullshit! You're gonna come on with a mock check, like a fucking game show host? Fuck you Bruce, fuck you. These people are for real!

Bruce smiles.

BRUCE

So, what you want me to do?

DAN

Something good. Something nice. Something you've never done in your life.

BRUCE

And if I don't?

DAN

I'll have this network off the air in thirty seconds...and you know I can.

PAMMY MICKLESON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan is back with Pammy. He looks at his watch, then into the camera.

DAN

Right folks, it's nearly time.

He turns to Pammy.

PAMMY

Pammy darlin'. Can you be talked out of this decision?

Pammy stiffens.

PAMMY

No sir. I've made up my mind. I want my family here once I've taken the drink. That'll give us 'bout five minutes to say our goodbyes.

She looks away, not wishing to share her tears.

Dan holds his head and shakes it as Steve approaches.

STEVE

Dan.

Dan looks up. Steve hands him a check.

STEVE

From Bruce.

Dan takes a glance then turns again to Pammy. He waves the check.

DAN

Okay sweetie. Right here I have a personal check from Mr. Bruce Merrian. A check that is made out to you in name and a check that will settle all of your debts and enable you to carry on with your medication for at least the next two years.

Dan grips Pammy's hand.

DAN

Y'see, you ain't gonna die tonite. You've got too much to live for...too much love in your heart. Ain't no way this is gonna happen.

Dan hands Pammy the check.

DAN

Go live. Go live for as long as you
can. Prove 'em all wrong and be
with your wonderful family forever.

Tears stream down Dan's face. Pammy is speechless. Dan looks
back to the camera.

DAN

Well Bruce. You did it...you did it
good. I'm also a man of my word. I
promised you and the viewers the
show of a lifetime...mine!

Dan grabs the glass and raises it to the camera.

DAN

Salute.

He downs the drink in one.

DAN

Good night all...and God bless.

FADE OUT:

THE END