

THE CONTESTANT

Screenplay by

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Story by

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INT. PRODUCTION OFFICES - MORNING

Indirect lighting casts hangover shadows on the reluctant Monday morning staff. Along one side of the hall in large calligraphic letters reads: "What Would You Do?"

Apparently on the run for her professional life, a BLONDE PRODUCTION ASSISTANT sprints down the hall until her momentum inadvertently slams up against the caustic girth of PETE MC LAUGHLIN.

PETE

Whoa, honey, mosh pit's just not my style. I'm more the sensitive type.

BLONDE PRODUCTION ASST.

Oh sir, I am so sorry. I was just...

PETE

(starting to dance)

You see, I'm all about the box step.

Calculating his repertoire, Pete's tubby body now slithers sympathetically to an awkward break dancing maneuver.

PETE (CONT'D)

Salsa, a little techno, of course electric boogaloo...

Pete's friend and producing partner, KYLE TRENNOR, now wraps a lanky arm around Pete's shoulders, ushering him down the hall.

KYLE

(urgent whisper)

Come on, best behavior. We're on a short leash around here...maybe our last leash, if you know what I mean.

PETE

There's always Outdoor Life Network or, hey, Galavision. We haven't been there yet.

KYLE

Yet.

PETE

See, now you've gone and made me tense.

INT. BOARDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Notepads, coffee, and more than a few antacids line the lengthy conference table from end to end.

At the far head of the table sits ROBERT you-can-call-me-Bob MILLSTEIN, as glitzy as the game show world he's produced for centuries and as plastic as the surgery that fails to hide it.

ROBERT

Let's get started, shall we?

He stands.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

As executive producer of "What Would You Do," I would like to officially welcome our colleagues at the network to today's meeting. Introductions should probably be in order...

PETE

(under his breath)

Hello, my name is Pete, and it's been one hour since my last drink.

ROBERT

...but, since we will be working together hand-in-hand for the next several weeks, I'm sure we'll get to know one another.

Pete and Kyle exchange a quizzical glance.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I will, however, present an individual whose name I'm sure you're all familiar with, American Broadcast Network's President of Programming, Blake Yhedri. Blake.

A second generation immigrant, BLAKE YHEDRI and his cultural Napoleon complex do not so much take center stage as invade it.

BLAKE

Bob. First of all, I represent the network when I congratulate the executives, the staff, and the crew of "What Would You Do?" You have done a fabulous job. The show has been a tremendous success, and ratings are very good. But, ratings can never be high enough, people!

He slaps the conference table crisply.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
Sweeps are upon us. And our competitors are no doubt scheming ways to cut into our share. That is why we at the network along with your own reality show veteran, Bob Millstein, have come up with a plan. We're breaking out the fucking brooms.

The table cringes.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
We're upping the ante: ten million dollars.

Pete and Kyle swallow the astonished lumps in their throats.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
Enough with those lightweight shows that get audience panties in a bunch with one million. Pussies!

(table tries not to giggle)

Currently, this show awards fifty thousand dollars to contestants who perform outrageous stunts. So far, the production teams have remained clever in the challenges they've devised. That's why each team has been invited to this meeting. How many teams are there, Bob?

ROBERT
Four, Blake. Well, if you count them.

He points an accusatory finger at Pete and Kyle.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I wouldn't expect much from those two.

PETE
But then again we weren't gonna waste any time with introductions.

ROBERT
These are the two we sort of inherited from your sister network after that nasty bit of sitcom business.

KYLE

You have to believe that, on paper, Tony Danza and Bronson Pinchot were a perfect match.

BLAKE

Ah, you're the ones. Well, Bob, whatever the case, we're gonna need a lot of creative juice flowing on this one.

Several PRODUCERS seem to shrink under the weight of this expectation - all except Pete and Kyle.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

It is your job to come up with a stunt worthy of a ten million dollar reward. As always, it has to be clean and prime time. And, most importantly, it has to be good. The production team that comes up with the best idea will get to produce the sweeps show. If the show is a success, we won't want to let that kind of winning team go. We're talking multi-year production and development contracts.

PETE

(dreamily)

Job security.

BLAKE

You have exactly a week, people. Seven days of creation. I expect something divine.