

FADE IN

by
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Channel 79

by
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Episode #4:

The Best President Ever

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THE BEST PRESIDENT EVER

FADE IN:

INT. CHANNEL 79 HALLWAY - DAY

Posters on the hallway walls support various political causes, some lost, others past, some languishing unfulfilled in the present.

BRAD FRANKLIN, mid 40s, Starbucks cup in hand walks with

LU O'NEIL, black, late 40s, wearing a nice white sweater, clutches an armload of files, DVDs and papers to her chest, a newspaper under her arm and can of Rockstar in her hand.

BRAD

So, I'm being kidnapped to see some videos of your what your Independent Producers cooked up from the debates --
(re: her drink)
what the hell is that?

LU

We call 'em Indies, and what the hell is what?

BRAD

Right there, what you're carrying.

LU

Right there where? I'm carrying everything I own but my George Foreman Fryer.

BRAD

How do those things work anyhow, I was kinda thinking --

LU

-- Pretty good as a blunt instrument.

BRAD

(off her scowl)
Yeah, why don't I just take some of those files from you.

Brad reaches for the files.

LU

Always the gentleman -- carefule
with the polling stuff, don't be
grazing the twins, watch the --

BRAD

-- Yeah, well, maybe you can just
carefully slide in my --

Lu lets it all fall, Brad bobbles the handoff, tries to
catch things with the hand carrying his coffee, Lu's new
sweater gets a coffee bath and the floor proves gravity
is still working.

BRAD

-- arms...

LU

(off her sweater)
Oh, hell -- you cannot be serious.

BRAD

See, that's what I was afraid --

LU

You ain't seen fear til you see
Mr. Han's cleaning bill.

They squat down to pick up everything.

BRAD

I'll pay for --

LU

You damn straight you will --

AMBER, 20s and just enough Valley Girl to make you wonder
if the Goth look is really her idea or a Halloween hold
over she's just going with.

AMBER

Wow -- what happened to you --

LU

I was handing off to Brad --

AMBER

That's gonna stain, you know --

BRAD

I'm paying for --

AMBER

You could, like, soak it in a tub
of coffee -- and cream, I guess --
and that way it wouldn't look
stained, just -- ummm, mauve.

LU

Yeah, thanks Am -- aren't you late for our meeting?

AMBER

Oh, mygawd -- I gotta go. I'm dead if I'm late again. See ya there.

Puzzled, Brad watches Amber hurry away.

BRAD

Who all's at this meeting?

LU

You, me and her. She's taking notes.

BRAD

She can write?

LU

In three languages and two dialects.

BRAD

You're shittin' me.

LU

You stand around like a cop in a titty bar, dump coffee on my new sweater and you think I'M shitting you?

Lu smacks Brad in the head.

SOUND comes up and they do the walk-away.

LU

Of course I'm shitting you. Amber doesn't know up from left, but she tries like hell, which we could use more of around here because I'm telling ya, if buttoholes could fly, this place'd be an airport...

INT. EDITING ROOM - DAY

EARL JACOBS, mid 30s, webmaster for 79 and the go-to guy for all things technical, sits in a chair while Amber holds a bag of peas on his forehead.

AMBER

I am like, so... so sorry. I did not see you coming out --

Brad and Lu walk in and Amber drops the peas in Earl's lap. It's a big bag. And he knows it -- now.

AMBER
I was running in as he was runn--

 EARL
-- walking --

 AMBER
-- walking out. And I ran into --

 EARL
-- over --

 AMBER
-- over him. But it wasn't my
fault, because I was trying to get
to my --

 LU
-- our --

 AMBER
-- our meeting. Right! So it's not
really my fault. Wow, I can't tell
you how much better I feel about
all this now.

Earl looks at Amber. Looks to Brad. Looks to Lu and indicates a button on the playback.

 EARL
Push that button when you're
ready. If you need anything else,
anything at all, feel free to call
somebody with a helmet.

Earl leaves, Amber is nervous, chagrined. Lu puts her stuff on a desk. Brad's arm-load slides onto an editing table.

 BRAD
Maybe we should hit the button
before something else --

Suddenly Amber has all the speaking grace of Bridget Jones.

 AMBER
-- That's a great idea! Let's
watch these ground breaking video
clips, these technologically
pertain -- ahhh, relevant --
things -- and see what a great
job our wonderful and insightful --

Lu pushes the "play" button.

ON THE MONITOR as it opens to

A black and white snow, then a black lead, then comes to life under stirring news music.

Three men sit at a kitchen table. Two opposite each other for debate, one at the end, to moderate.

The debaters are dressed as Dracula and Frankenstein, the moderator a clean cut young man in a suit.

MODERATOR

Good morning. I'm Lewis Dumbhauser and this is Capitol Jerkoffs. From the left, Count Dracula, representing Democrats trying to suck the life blood from our economy. From the right, Frankenstein, representing Republicans trying to build an economy from their own dead body parts.

(a beat)

Alphabetically, we'll start with Count Dracula. How do you see your party dealing with the issue of national health care?

DRACULA

Well, obviously we'll want to join the other 36 industrialized nations who already provide affordable health care to their citizens. And we'll start by fixing the prescription drug program. I see little reason that the wealthiest nation on earth cannot provide for its own citizens in their own towns --

FRANKENSTEIN

-- You're backing a national health care plan that extends down to the towns and villages? That is ridiculous -- you're going to effectively run the insurance industry out of business. Who then, I ask you, is going to build all the skyscrapers? Who is going to loan money to developers? Who is going to build our shopping malls? The people living in small towns and villages?

DRACULA

We trust the good people who are the backbone of our country, living in the towns and villages all across --

FRANKENSTEIN

Well, when it comes to health care, I can tell you from personal experience that villagers are not to be trusted! Especially when you're talking about breakthrough medical experiments.

MODERATOR

What about special needs?

FRANKENSTEIN

Well, everyone has special needs, but we simply cannot afford to provide for them all. And yet not everyone wants to deal with this issue.

MODERATOR

Like who?

DRACULA

Well, for example, Senator Clinton has no policy on affordable access to free range blood.

MODERATOR

Free range blood. You mean --

DRACULA

Yes, if we concentrated on free range blood, we would not have these seasonal shortages when people are not giving to the blood banks. We would go to them, as it were.

MODERATOR

And Senator Clinton refuses to construct a national policy for free range blood?

DRACULA

Yes, but I did get a nice letter from Mike Gravel on the subject and I expect his white paper and a video very soon.

MODERATOR

Count Dracula, let's be honest. Aren't you just piling on Senator Clinton on this issue because she's a woman?

FRANKENSTEIN

No, No, No. He'd be delighted to pile on Hilary any time, blood has nothing to do with it.

(thinks)
Well, that -- and she is ahead.

BRAD

(O.S.)
You know, we missed Halloween with
this one.

LU
Yeah, well, for most of us it's
Halloween everyday in our bank
accounts.

BRAD
So, what else ya got?

LU
(cues up another one)
Here's one on the war I like --
puts things in a nice historical
perspective with a modern bookend.

ON THE MONITOR

A black man in robes preaches from behind a podium. A
sign on the podium: "Temple Mount Christian Cavalry".

PREACHER
And while it is true that Arab
armies conquered Palestine in the
7th century, Pope Urban II began
the First Crusade in 1099 when he
dispatched 35,000 brothers to run
them godless mother[BLEEP] out of
the promised land. Now we up to
145,000 troops with Pope Bush II
and still waiting for that
Promised Day in the Promised Land.
But hear me now brothers and
sisters. There is a powerful wind
a-blowing from the great state of
Tennessee that will expand our
military to the greatest heights
mankind has ever seen. Pope
Thompson I will spare no expense
to chase these godless
mother[BLEEP] to every nook and
cranny in every part of the world
and kill them as fast as they
spring up.

BRAD
Oh, yeah, run that one. I haven't
been audited in ten years.

AMBER

I liked all the history in it. I mean, you can tell he really did his research... you know, the Urban Pope and all. Kinda reminds me of a rock group, like Deaf Leopard, Urban Pope -- get it?

Brad looks at Amber. Looks back to Lu.

LU

How about a nice debate-inspired poem?

BRAD

From this bunch? I can already rhyme Huckabee, thanks.

LU

No, no -- it's ain't like that.
(cues it up)
It's a haiku, you know 5-7-5?

BRAD

Oh, good. We could use some Japanese simplicity, around here.

LU

Yeah, well -- about that...

ON THE MONITOR

A tough-looking heavily-tattooed biker sits on a Harley. A biker babe in a bikini holds a sign: "Harley's Haikus."

HARLEY

Was that a flip flop?
Tell us about drivers' licenses.
Or, read my finger!

Harley starts to jab the bird at the camera.

BRAD

OK. Alright. I always wondered where they went.

LU

Where what went?

BRAD

Careers, where they went to die. Turns out they come here. They sit in this very chair and watch 20 years of their life slide right down the toilet without so much as a courtesy flush.

LU

So you want to see the trailer for
"A Nation's Shame, the Sequel."

BRAD

Sure, go for it. It'll be a nice
segue into the throbbing headache
that's going to keep me awake all
night.

ON THE MONITOR

EXT. JAPANESE INTERNMENT CAMP - DAY

Grainy film shows dreary wooden buildings surrounded by
barbed-wire fencing. An American flag waves from a
flagpole.

People wander the compound. Some are gardening, a few
women sit on porches and sew. A sandlot baseball game
occupies some children while others kick balls to each
other.

The camera cuts to a series of close ups of the faces of
older Japanese women in the compound. Their faces are
wrinkled and worn. They look tired, haggard. Some attempt
a smile but most have that thousand-yard stare of the
defeated.

The voice over is Japanese, emotional, animated and seems
to be describing what's going on in the camp. The voice
over continues uninterrupted -- and without subtitles --
until

BRAD

(V.O.)

Gonna be hard to get happy after
this.

BACK TO SCENE

Monitors run the same programs except on #3, where all
the students are now putting condoms on bananas.

LU

That's the point. We screwed
these people over and we're doing
the same thing again. Different
century, different race, but we're
doing it again.

BRAD

I don't think there's an Emmy
category for Most Depressing
Screwover in a Foreign Language.

LU

But this is damned compelling stuff.

AMBER

Yeah, it's some really good shit.

BRAD

Well maybe we should take it out back and smoke some of it because nobody's going to watch it.

LU

(defensive, to Brad)

These people were American citizens and we locked them up for no other reason than because they were Japanese. And the entire piece being in Japanese lends to the sense of futility and lack of understanding we had as a nation. And still don't have.

(a beat)

You know damn well it's just a matter of time before we have to admit we did it again. The boogey man is after us, so let's lock up whoever we don't understand.

(glares)

It's like we don't have a on-deck circle in this country, it's just "Batter Up" and start swinging.

The door opens and Bill Marlin, New Director for Channel 8 walks in, just as the silence becomes deafening.

Lu switches the playback off, settles back in her chair, annoyed.

BILL

Am I interrupting something?

BRAD

Yes, thank god. Where the hell were you two minutes ago?

BILL

Getting the new numbers for Iowa. Check this out: Clinton's up by two over Obama, and Edwards a real close third.

LU

Lord God almighty, they got him surrounded.

BILL

Yeah, and the way Iowa works,
second could be first.

AMBER

I don't get that.

BRAD

Neither does anyone else, but the
basics are to win, you gotta get
15%. If you don't get 15%, then
they total up the candidates in
second place, who didn't have
enough to win, but one of whom has
more second place votes than the
leader had for first. Then second
wins.

Everyone looks at Amber for a flicker. Any flicker.
Finally a perspective.

AMBER

Right... so it's kinda like
Olympic Ice Dancing. You wait to
see who wins and if it's not your
guy, you know somebody got paid
off.

Brad, Lu and Bill look at each other, and then shrug
their agreement.

AMBER

So, how many people go to these
caucuses? Is it like, most of the
people in Iowa?

BILL

Not even close -- last time it was
around 125,000.

BRAD

Less in New Hampshire. Waaay less.

AMBER

OK, so I really don't get it now.
Why is everyone all wound up over
Iowa and New Hampshire -- aren't
there like twice as many people in
New York City as in all of Iowa
AND New Hampshire -- combined?

LU

Well, yeah -- probably twice as
many in New York City. But the
point is --

AMBER

-- that a tiny number of people in a couple of "who cares" states are going to decide who runs for President.

BRAD

Well... there's more to it --

AMBER

-- But that's the bottom line, isn't it?

BILL

Well, it's a lot more complicated than that --

AMBER

I don't think so. I don't know anyone who can name three cities in Iowa.

LU

(counts them off)
Des Moines, Ottumwa --

AMBER

Doesn't count -- you got that off a MASH rerun.

LU

-- Dubuque --

AMBER

Spell it.

Lu stops. It's quickly apparent she can't.

AMBER

See? If Iowa was so important, we'd know more about it. At least New Hampshire gave us one great president.

They all look at each other, thinking. Finally,

BILL

Franklin Pierce was from New Hampshire, but he isn't considered one of our better presidents.

Amber imitates a ringing phone, answers the imaginary hand piece and then hands it to Bill.

AMBER

It's the "DUH" phone, it's for you.

(exasperated)

I was talking about one of our
best Presidents EVER -- Jeb
Bartlett!

(looks at all three)

Hello -- he was President for like
six years or something.

Bill looks at Brad.

BILL

I'll just take these numbers back
to the office. You can drop by
anytime and pick them up from
Jimmy Smits.

Brad jumps up to follow.

BRAD

Hey, whoa, weren't you going to
introduce me to that guy over at
the place so we can finish that
thing we were supposed to do?

(jogs)

Hey, wait up...

FADE OUT