

THE CHARACTERS

Pace, McKenzie, Roth, Bennett-Stein

Experienced writer-reporters

Davis

In front of the camera

Wilson

New

THE SCENE

ACT ONE takes place in a newsroom for TBD News on New Year's Eve, at 23:18, at the start of a second go at the War on Terror.

The INTERLUDE takes place throughout the next year.

ACT TWO takes place in a newsroom for TBD News on New Year's Eve, at 23:18, during the War on Terror.

ACT ONE

December 31st, 23:18. Lights up on the writer's room of TBD News, where four women sit and stand around a long table piled high with books, notes, and both empty and full cups of coffee. A coffee maker sits on a mini-fridge in the corner. This room has clearly not been renovated in a while. In the corner sits a TV where TBD News is being broadcast. Currently, a detergent commercial is playing. Each woman has a laptop in front of her. SAM MCKENZIE is on the phone, not a cell phone. KENNEDY ROTH stands behind her, listening in and taking notes. Next to the phone is a table with a glass bowl (holding keys) on it. LEE BENNETT-STEIN alternates between reading an article on her laptop and intensely writing shorthand notes on post-its, which she sticks to her screen when they're completed. She stops to take a phone call. Only JAMIE WILSON seems unfocused, as she sits off to the side, anxiously glancing at everyone else and occasionally sipping her coffee. AVERY PACE enters, holding a clipboard, and stands at the end of the table.

AVERY PACE: Okay, what do we have?

SAM MCKENZIE: Car wreck on main-

KENNEDY ROTH: Off of main

SAM MCKENZIE: Off of main. Two dead, one's a kid-

JAMIE WILSON: Jesus.

SAM MCKENZIE: Don't interrupt.

KENNEDY ROTH: We're waiting on more information. I'll keep you posted.

AVERY PACE: Okay, and?

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: I've got money laundering by a couple Wall Street guys.

SAM passes KENNEDY the phone and sits down.

SAM MCKENZIE: A couple.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Don't interrupt.

SAM MCKENZIE: Fuck off.

AVERY PACE: Yes, there we go! Follow the money people, that's always where the scandal is.

SAM MCKENZIE: Scandalous. Nice Lee.

AVERY PACE: And enough of the infighting. Set a better example.

SAM MCKENZIE: I've got my tax evasion piece coming along. If you want us following the money.

Lee scoffs quietly.

SAM MCKENZIE: What? Have something to-

JAMIE WILSON: *(Interrupting, then realizing she interrupted)* I have a mom who O.D.'d while her son was out playing on the balcony... Apparently some new temperamental drug, Moxie? I have the real name written down somewhere but that's what people are calling it, if we decide to run it... but she left her son up on the balcony for a few hours and neighbors called the police.

AVERY PACE: Alright, better, you're picking it up. It's a little too family-drama for us, but you're getting closer. Keep up the good work.

JAMIE WILSON: It just seemed so sad.

SAM MCKENZIE: Sad sells.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: You'll catch on.

SAM MCKENZIE: The more horrifying, the better news. The public loves a tragedy.

AVERY PACE: More horrifying doesn't mean better news, it just means more drama. There is still a sector of the public concerned with truth and transparency.

SAM MCKENZIE: A sector.

AVERY PACE: Yes. And a horde of the drama crazed as well. But we can't dispute the people that come to us for real, topical news.

SAM MCKENZIE: Who comes to us for real topical news? I love the real stuff, you know I do but... you know. Sex sells.

JAMIE WILSON: *(Still caught up in the tragedy of it all)* I mean, he's okay, the son. But still, he could have very easily fallen-

KENNEDY ROTH: *(Interjecting)* Hey. *(Quickly, to Jamie)* Apologies, *(back to the group)* about that car crash...

SAM MCKENZIE: What about it?

KENNEDY ROTH: It's a pileup. There's another casualty: a white house adviser.

JAMIE WILSON: Jesus H.

SAM MCKENZIE: Which one?

AVERY PACE: Why don't we have someone there?

KENNEDY ROTH: You brushed it-

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: I'll send Davis.

AVERY PACE: Thank you.

KENNEDY ROTH: *(Listening to the phone)* Wait, wait, not a casualty. Just critical condition.

AVERY PACE: Running against the clock.

SAM MCKENZIE: Why is Taylor Davis going? Can't I go? It's my car wreck.

KENNEDY ROTH: Um...

AVERY PACE: It's no one's car wreck, and Davis is closer.

SAM MCKENZIE: She's in the studio, it's a sixty-second walk-

AVERY PACE: You're more valuable here. Davis is already with the crew and mobile.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: And won't need to change out of sweats to be on camera.

LEE picks up the phone and starts dialing.

SAM MCKENZIE: -it's only chest up-

KENNEDY ROTH: We need you he-

AVERY PACE: Come on Sam, you know how this works. You'll get on air soon, but right now we need you here. *(After a pause)* We don't claim ownership of tragedies, Sam.

SAM MCKENZIE: I wasn't trying to-

AVERY PACE: It's not your wreck. It's a story. And it's not your story till you win a Pulitzer.

SAM MCKENZIE: I'm well aware.

AVERY PACE: Roth

KENNEDY ROTH: Yes?

AVERY PACE: Follow up on the crash, you're covering that now.

SAM MCKENZIE: What?

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Deep breaths, Sam.

AVERY PACE: She got the call, it's her's. You're already working on that tax evasion piece.

SAM MCKENZIE: I can work on two pieces at once-

AVERY PACE: -with corporate offenders. You're busy enough.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Busy my ass, that story died before it got pitched. Everyone evades taxes.

JAMIE WILSON: Do they?

SAM MCKENZIE: I'm going to need to audit your account Lee.

KENNEDY ROTH: I can do-

SAM MCKENZIE: It's a joke, Kennie, no need to crunch the numbers. Pace, I got the first call-

AVERY PACE: And Roth took initiative and followed up. Can we focus here? We've got, what? Two solid pitches? That's not quite enough air time. C'mon boys, circle the wagons here. We have the money laundering, and, if we're

desperate, the drug baby-

JAMIE: Oh!

AVERY PACE: What else?

KENNEDY ROTH: And the white house adviser-

AVERY PACE: Yes, and the car wreck, I haven't forgotten.

SAM MCKENZIE: What about the mogul, the BFE Energy guy who was accused of sexually harassing-

KENNEDY ROTH: I think it was assaulting-

SAM MCKENZIE: -some of his workers? Kennie and I got a tip last night, I can follow up.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: I looked into it already.

KENNEDY ROTH: Since last night?

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: -that was faked. Some old rival trying to cause Trouble.

SAM MCKENZIE: It seemed pretty legitimate to me.

KENNEDY ROTH: It's worth looking into. I mean, if it's real-

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: I looked into it. Believe me, it's not real.

KENNEDY ROTH: It might make sense to double check

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: I double checked, I triple checked, it was faked.

A pause, AVERY picks it up.

AVERY PACE: Okay, scrap it. Let me know if another tip comes in. Until then, let it be. Alright, moving on, does anyone have anything seasonal?

SAM MCKENZIE: God knows the news tomorrow will be all drunk drivers and celebrity nonsense.

AVERY PACE: That's a given.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: (On the phone)
Yes, send Taylor Davis. Car wreck on...?

KENNEDY ROTH: Trinity and Clark, by the light.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: ...Trinity and Clark, by the light. Thanks. (Hanging up.) They're on the way.

KENNEDY ROTH: You're welcome.

JAMIE WILSON: You all work fast.

A pause. Everyone looks at JAMIE.

AVERY PACE: That's the job.

JAMIE WILSON: Right. I guess it is.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Taylor's on her way.

AVERY PACE: Thank you. Roth, start on the cue cards. I've got one. Well, I've got two. One big, one small. Lee?

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Big.

AVERY PACE: International leaders from the US, Great Britain, and Iraq are meeting for a summit in Baghdad.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Good. Small?

JAMIE WILSON: Wait, what?

AVERY PACE: Those "hover-boards" that are coming out, some of them explode.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Ha!

SAM MCKENZIE: Merry Christmas.

AVERY PACE: Yeah, I like that one.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Look more into Big, save Small as a bit piece. That's funny as sin.

JAMIE WILSON: (Quietly) Sin isn't very-

AVERY PACE: Got it. Thanks.

JAMIE WILSON: Wait, how do you know that? About Baghdad?

SAM MCKENZIE: She can't reveal her sources.

JAMIE WILSON: Wait, really?

AVERY PACE: No. She doesn't know yet Sam, give her a break before the hazing starts, will you?

(To JAMIE)

I have some connections out there.

JAMIE WILSON: Whoa.

SAM MCKENZIE: It's not a "whoa", you need connections. If you don't have sources, you don't have stories.

AVERY PACE: Swim or die.

SAM MCKENZIE: The car crash came in from my friend-

KENNEDY ROTH: -my sister-

SAM MCKENZIE: Right place right time, so we got a jump on the story.

JAMIE WILSON: *Right place?*

AVERY PACE: It's not always nepotism. Sometimes we get things biased on our own merit.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Nepotism is nice though.

SAM MCKENZIE: True.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: I've got a niece who interns in DC. Can't tell you how useful that's been. She gets me leads, I pick her up when she blacks-out at parties. It's mutually beneficial.

JAMIE WILSON: Alright, thanks for... explaining.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Don't mention it.

SAM MCKENZIE: No really, don't. We've got Lee on nepotism and tax evasion, the news would have a field day.

KENNEDY ROTH: We're the news.

SAM MCKENZIE: Well, I'm having a field day. A coffee advertisement featuring "Jingle Bells" plays from the TV. SAM groans.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Guess no one told 'em Christmas was over. If I hear Jingle Bells one more time...

SAM MCKENZIE
What'll you do? You're already... fuck, who's a Christmas villain?

JAMIE WILSON: The Devil. Scrooge-

KENNEDY ROTH: -the Grinch.

SAM MCKENZIE: The Grinch. Sure. Thanks Kennie.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: I will take that as a compliment. His heart grew three sizes.

KENNEDY ROTH: And he had a great dog.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Sure.

SAM MCKENZIE: Leave it to Kennie to remember the dog. But Lee has that cat/rat thing so that counts.

JAMIE WILSON: The... what?

AVERY PACE: As much as I'm loving this objective analysis of the Grinch, Davis just made it to the crash.

AVERY turns the screen, which depicts TAYLOR DAVIS standing near a street, towards the group. Sirens can be heard, and red and blue lights flash behind TAYLOR.

TAYLOR DAVIS: (On screen) ...arrived on the corner of Trinity and Clark where a wreck has resulted in the severe injury of White House Adviser Carson McCoy. McCoy is being rushed to St John Medical Center now, and we will be bringing...

She fades out as AVERY turns it back around.

SAM MCKENZIE: She looks good, I'll give her that.

JAMIE WILSON: She was closer.

SAM MCKENZIE: (Crossing to stand behind AVERY and look at the screen) She's always closer.

AVERY PACE: What's important is that we were first to the story.

KENNEDY ROTH: I'm not sure we were. RRJ is there.

SAM MCKENZIE: No.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: You've got to be kidding me.

AVERY PACE: Oh damn, yeah, that's them.

SAM MCKENZIE: (Flipping off the screen) Fucking hell.

JAMIE WILSON: RJJ?

KENNEDY ROTH: RRJ. From Rhodes County.

JAMIE WILSON: We don't like them?

SAM MCKENZIE: No we do not.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Bastards. It's always like this. I swear they have this place bugged.

For a moment, everyone seriously considers this.

JAMIE WILSON: They-

AVERY PACE: They do not. She's making a joke. Alright, let's get back to work.

SAM MCKENZIE: We got there first.

KENNEDY ROTH: Sam-

SAM MCKENZIE: We got there first. We must have.

KENNEDY ROTH: (after checking her computer) Their station is .3 miles closer.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: It was probably a pretty close race.

SAM MCKENZIE: Close only counts in-

AVERY PACE: Horse shoes and- something. Not in broadcast news. C'mon, let's focus. We're not on holiday yet.

SAM MCKENZIE: Like we get a holiday.

JAMIE WILSON: We don't get a holiday?

SAM MCKENZIE: (Sarcastically) We're on holiday right now, we just chose to hang out together and work.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Not really, we work most of the time.

JAMIE WILSON: Oh, I just figured I was here New Years paying dues.

AVERY PACE: Sorry to break it to you. Is that a problem?

JAMIE WILSON: No, no, my fiancé's family does this thing but it... kinda sucks so I wasn't planning on going anyway and... I'd honestly rather be here. When you love what you do...

AVERY PACE: You never work a day in your life. I get that.

LEE BENNETT-STEIN: Pace, I don't think I've ever seen you stop working.

AVERY PACE: Good. You've noticed.

SAM MCKENZIE: The only constant in life.