

Media Wars

by Marisa Marmo

(Adapted book. Upper Intermediate level)

CHAPTER 1

A New Franchise

"Morning, David. Come in. How are you?"

David Fox entered the London office of Australian TV magnate Bruce Kemp. He smiled as Bruce stood up to shake his hand. Bruce was tall, slim and very athletic. David, on the other hand, was not so tall, not slim, and definitely not athletic.

"I'm fine, thanks Bruce. It's good to see you."

He looked around the room. On the walls were photos of famous TV stars, pictures and a map of Australia. Near the door was a cabinet full of shiny TV awards. KangaTV was a very successful network.

David Fox's channel, TrentTV, was doing well at the moment but David wanted more. So what could Bruce Kemp offer him?

Bruce smiled back. "There's another person involved in this meeting. Ah, here she is now."

The door opened again. This time David didn't smile. An elegant woman with short, red hair entered the room.

"Hello, David. It's so nice to see you."

There was a lack of sincerity in her voice.

"Anna! You look lovely," said David coldly. Anna Webb was the head of ChannelWebb, David's biggest rival in the fight for TV viewers. Bruce observed the frosty greeting with interest. Then he began to speak.

"My TV network, KangaTV, has decided to branch out and offer our viewers a more varied choice of international programmes. We want Australians to have an alternative view on the world's different cultures. So, I'm going to offer one of you the franchise of a new satellite channel." David opened his mouth to speak. "When will it start broadcasting?"

"At the end of the year," replied Bruce. "I'm more interested in the quality of programmes than the money offered for the franchise so over the next few weeks I'm going to monitor four of your most popular kinds of programmes - one on music, the news, an outside broadcast and a satellite link. The TV channel that produces the highest quality will win the franchise. Are there any questions?"

David was so excited he could hardly speak but he had to say something before Anna did.

"Bruce, this is a great opportunity and I feel honoured that you are considering TrentTV for the franchise. Our ratings have increased steadily for the past five years. Last month we signed a new advertising contract, which will increase our budget. We have an experienced, highly qualified team and our motto is 'inform, educate, entertain'."

He was interrupted by Anna. "You stole my best director and researcher."

"All's fair in love and war," grinned David.

"At least you can't steal the awards ChannelWebb won last month for best soap. I've worked in television since I was twenty and my success shows that," she answered back.

David glared at her. "So have I," he snapped.

Bruce quickly intervened. "Now let's discuss things in more detail."

* * *

Two hours later Bruce ended the meeting.

"I'm going back to Australia tomorrow but I intend to keep a very close eye on events. Remember - your fate is in your hands. Good luck to you both."

David was overjoyed as he hurriedly left the office. Today had already been great and it was about to get better...

CHAPTER 2

A New Face at TrentTV

David Fox's son, Simon, had just graduated from university with a degree in Media Studies and to David's joy, had decided to follow in his father's footsteps. David was therefore a happy man when he met his senior employees on Monday afternoon.

He had just explained to them about Bruce Kemp's franchise offer and what TrentTV had to do to win it. "That's fantastic news," said Rav, the technical director. "Just imagine, Australians will soon be able to watch the programmes that we produce."

Jenny Walker, the director, was more cautious. "We haven't won yet. Don't underestimate Anna Webb. I know her well and she'll do everything she can to get the franchise."

David looked at the three people in the room.

He had met Jenny two years ago when she worked for ChannelWebb and had immediately offered her a job at TrentTV. Jenny had accepted and Anna Webb hadn't forgiven either of them. As director, Jenny made the decisions and gave the orders to Rav. It was his responsibility to push the right buttons at the right time. Sally Truman was the production assistant and was

extremely efficient. She made sure that everyone involved in the programme was ready and in the right place.

"We are a good team and I believe we can win," said Sally. The others nodded in agreement and began to discuss the challenge. There was a knock at the door.

"Can I come in?" said a voice hesitantly.

David jumped to his feet. "At last! Everyone, you all know my son, Simon. He is going to join our team and I'm sure he will be a great asset in the future." Jenny and Rav congratulated Simon but were not happy. Simon had little experience in the field of TV; they needed to concentrate all their efforts on the franchise, not on helping a new employee.

"Now Rav, Simon wants to be a technical director so I want you to teach him everything you know." Both Jenny and Sally smiled but Rav didn't. "Sure," he replied.

* * *

The next day Rav took Simon to the gallery.

"It's amazing," whispered Simon. "There's so much equipment." Rav laughed and began to explain everything around them.

"Here on the wall there are lots of monitors which show what is going on in the studio which is broadcasting the programme and also in the other studios. That sign is lit up when a programme is on air. And this is where we all

sit. I don't want you to touch anything, as it is all set up for the next programme, Pop World."

Simon moved to where Rav had sat down. "Is this the mixing desk?" he asked.

"Yes. I'm sure you know that all our equipment is digital."

"I know that an analog signal is a continuous electronic wave that imitates the shape of the sound wave but how is digital TV different from the old analog system?"

"The term digital refers to a method of converting information into an electrical signal by translating that information into bits, a simple code in the form of 1's and 0's. This gives a stronger and more reliable signal and..."

Rav stopped suddenly as Simon's band moved towards the mixing desk.

"What does this button do?"

CHAPTER 3

The First Mistake

Rav grabbed Simon's arm and pulled him back.

"I told you not to touch anything," he said angrily.

"I'm sorry," apologized Simon. "I'm just so excited, I can't wait to start work."

Rav smiled. "OK. Now... we were talking about digital TV, weren't we?"

"What are the main advantages of a digital signal?" asked Simon.

Rav replied: "There's no distortion or degradation of the signal so the picture quality is much better. And of course, digital information can be stored in memory to make random access possible. That's why we have computers here in the gallery."

"And the resolution creates better quality, doesn't it?" added Simon.

"That's right. A digital TV screen displays more pixels and this improves detail, crispness, image stability and sound. Now why don't you go down and see the Pop World studio?"

When Simon entered Studio 3, Sally was talking to Katie Young, the presenter of Pop World.

"Hi, Simon. Come and meet Katie Young. She's presenting Pop World at six o'clock."

Simon shook hands with a pretty girl dressed in the latest fashions. They showed him the set of the programme. As they were chatting, the studio door opened. Simon couldn't believe his eyes. It was Juliet, his favourite singer!

"Juliet is our guest star today," explained Katie. She laughed as Juliet said hello and Simon blushed. This was his dream and it came true but he couldn't say anything Sally saved him. "Let's go back to the gallery and prepare for the programme. See you all later. Come on, Simon."

Back in the gallery, everyone was in position. There were only five minutes before the start of Pop World. Everyone was nervous. Jenny spoke to her staff.

"OK, this is the first programme that KangaTV is monitoring, so we all need to concentrate. Remember the franchise. Sally, start the countdown; Rav, start the music and set up the first shot. Let's go!"

Simon was sitting between Sally and Rav. He watched as Sally spoke to Katie in Studio 3 and Rav pressed some switches and said: "Cue Camera One on Katie." Simon saw Katie's smiling face appear on the monitor under the ON AIR sign. As the programme began Simon looked around; Sally was busy talking to the floor manager and Katie on the set; Jenny was watching the monitors and shouting instructions to Rav. Everything was going well.

Then Simon saw Juliet come into the studio. She was so beautiful. He was watching the interview when Rav touched his arm.

"Simon, on this piece of paper is the title of Juliet's new song. When I tell you, use the keyboard in front of you to key in the title and then press ENTER. The computer will then select the song. Do you think you can do it?"

Simon was so happy to be involved. "Don't worry, Rav. I won't let you down."

While he was waiting he looked at the title. The writing was so bad that some letters were unclear.

He decided to ask Rav but at that moment, Rav said: "Now, now!"

Simon saw Juliet standing with a microphone in her hand. He took a deep breath, put in the title and pressed ENTER. Then they all heard the voice of...

CHAPTER 4

Who's to Blame?

"Frank Sinatra!" yelled Jenny. "What's going on? Rav, stop the song, change to camera one, then change the track."

Rav immediately did as he was told. The voice of Frank Sinatra singing My Way had shocked everyone, especially Juliet. They all watched Katie closely on the monitor.

"Well, that's my Mum's favourite song but I'm sure that now Juliet will sing us her new song, My Day". The sound of Juliet's voice filled the studio and the sound of Jenny's voice filled the gallery.

"Now, can somebody please explain what happened? I told you all to concentrate."

Everyone in the gallery started speaking at once but they all fell silent as the door opened and David Fox burst into the room.

"Is this some kind of joke? Do you all realize that Bruce Kemp is watching Pop World? I don't think he will be too impressed with our performance so far. Who's the culprit?"

All eyes fell on Simon.

"I'm so sorry. Rav asked me if I could key in the title of the song but I couldn't read his writing. There was no time to ask him for clarification so I had to guess what the letters were."

Jenny, Rav and Sally again spoke at once:

"Why didn't you..."

"I asked you to do..."

"I knew that this..."

Simons father came to his rescue.

"Silence! As I see it, both Simon and Rav are to blame. Rav, I asked you to help Simon, not to make things difficult for him. Now, Juliet's song is about to finish, so get back to your places. We'll discuss this later."

* * *

It was now 7.30 in the evening and Simon was in Jenny's office. He was sitting in a corner away from Jenny's glare. Jenny and David were discussing the next day's lunchtime news, the second programme to be monitored by KangaTV.

"So, David, do you agree on the content and the order of the news items?" asked Jenny.

David smiled. "I think it's perfect. I've asked Gordon to come as soon as he's free so he can give us his opinion. Has the autocue been written?"

Before Jenny could, answer there was a knock on the door and a rather robust middle-aged man entered the room. It was Gordon Right, TrentTV's news anchorman. "Gordon, this is the script for tomorrow. What do you think?" said David as he handed him a sheet of paper. Gordon read it quickly. "It's fine," he observed. "We'll start with the item about the Prime Minister, unless a more important story comes in. Is the autocue ready?"

"We were just discussing that," replied Jenny. "There's just one more article to write."

"Maybe Simon could do it?" suggested David. Simon looked hopeful, Jenny looked doubtful and Gordon looked very annoyed.

"David, I've heard about your son's contribution to Pop World and I don't want him to be involved in my programme. I have a reputation; the viewers always get perfection from me. We can't afford to make another mistake."

Jenny didn't like Gordon very much. He could be so arrogant. She said: "Simon, can you write a short 'perfect' article for the autocue about a new film that's out this week? Here's the journalist's report."

Simon grinned. "Don't worry, Jenny. I won't let you down."

CHAPTER 5

Gordon Gets Angry

"How do you know what to shoot?" asked Simon. He was in Studio One talking to Joe, a camera operator. Joe replied: "The director decides and the technical director gives me instructions which I hear through my earpiece."

"It sounds interesting," said Simon. "I honestly don't know how a camera works. Is it very complicated?" Joe smiled. "Well, first the light from a scene in the studio comes through the lens and is divided into the three primary colours, red, blue and green. Then the beams of light are directed into a tube and converted into electrical signals. After that an audio signal is added and finally the composite signal is sent to the transmitter."

"It is complicated but I get the picture!" joked Simon.

"Oh, very funny," laughed Joe.

"What's this, under the lens?" asked Simon.

"It's the teleprompter. It's the screen from which the presenter reads the script. It's under the lens so that the presenter appears to be looking at the viewer but in reality is reading. It's often called the autocue."

"Autocue? Help!" cried Simon. "I haven't written the article for the news item," and he ran out of the studio to the nearest computer. There wasn't much time.

Simon quickly read the journalist's article about the new film and then typed as fast as he could. He was in such a rush that he forgot to use the spellchecker and didn't print a hard copy for Gordon. He sent the article as an attachment to the lunchtime news autocue file and then hurried to the gallery.

* * *

"Three, two, one - cue Gordon," said Jenny. The face of Gordon Right appeared.

"Welcome to the lunchtime news. We begin today with a report on the Prime Minister's visit to the United States." A photo of the Prime Minister came onto the plasma screen to the left of Gordon. "The Prime Minister was taken to the White House to meet the President and to discuss economic and foreign policies. We can now go to our correspondent in Washington for an update."

Jenny looked at Rav and smiled. The news was going well. The link to Washington had been done perfectly and no mistakes had been made so far.

"It's all looking good," whispered Rav.

Gordon continued to read in his totally professional way. As the news progressed, he moved the autocue with his foot, by using a pedal under his desk.

"And now we come to our final item. The new action film BAD will be released this afternoon in London."

"Will being? Afternoon?" said Sally. "What's the matter with him?"

Gordon hesitated for a second and then continued. "The film has some of Hollywood's biggest names, for example George..." Again Gordon stopped. The end of the sentence was missing! He glanced down at the desk to find the hard copy. He quickly looked through the sheets of paper but couldn't find it. There was a look of panic on his face. He began to feel hot. Then in his earpiece, he heard Jenny say, "Go to the link!" He looked at the camera and said: "Let's go to our reporter to find out more."

As soon as the camera was off, Gordon yelled: "Someone is in BIG trouble!"

CHAPTER 6

Who's Winning?

The door of the gallery flew open and Gordon appeared. He was furious. Jenny stepped forward to try and calm him down. "Now Gordon, don't be so upset. We..."

"Don't be upset? Did you see what happened? I looked a complete idiot! ME - Gordon Right! The autocue script was full of spelling mistakes and some of the sentences weren't even finished. Is TrentTV a professional TV company or not? And as for you, new boy..." he shouted as he moved closer to Simon. Simon quickly took a step back and decided that standing behind Rav was a good idea. It was time to apologise... again.

"I'm so sorry. I forgot to check the article for spelling mistakes and I really don't know what happened to the other sentences."

"I knew it would be a disaster to let you help," shouted Gordon. He glared at Jenny and added: "If anything like this happens again, I'll resign. Is that clear?"

And with that, he stormed out. Simon breathed a sigh of relief but became worried again when Jenny said: "David wants to see us in his office. Let's go."

"So, let's look at the situation so far," suggested David.

"We've made mistakes in both monitored programmes so things are looking grim," said Jenny. David didn't want to accuse his son directly so he just said: "Simon, you really must be more careful. If we continue to get things wrong, we won't get the franchise."

Simon didn't know what to say as Jenny added: "ChannelWebb has done everything perfectly so far." David sighed: "Yes, Anna took great pleasure in telling me that when she phoned earlier. If we're not careful, ChannelWebb will win. Anna's already speaking with an Australian accent."

Simon laughed but then he saw the look on his father's face.

"Anyway," continued David, "our next programme to be monitored is the outside broadcast. It's on Monday and we're doing an item about crop circles. Rav, I want you to in charge in the van and Simon will assist you." Both Jenny and Rav opened their mouths to speak.

"And that's final," said David.

Simon was once more grateful to his father. "I've never done anything like this before. Rav, what's the van like?"

"It's a mobile TV studio. Inside there are some monitors and a mixing desk. We have a camera operator to

shoot the film and a transmission aerial on the top of the van to send the signal back to the studio."

"By satellite?" asked Simon.

"That's right," replied Rav. "Our aerial sends the signal to a satellite which reflects it back to Earth, to the TV station. Satellites are positioned at 35,700 kilometres from the earth so they can move in a geostationary orbit. That means they follow the earth's movement at the same speed but their position doesn't change."

Rav was interrupted when the phone rang. David picked up the receiver.

"Hello Bruce, how nice to hear from you." Jenny and Rav looked anxiously at each other. David heard Bruce say: "Please be at ChannelWebb's studios tonight at eleven. There will be a videoconference link between you, Anna and me. David, I'm sure you realize that we need to talk."

CHAPTER 7

Australia Calling

David Fox walked into the reception of ChannelWebb. He was not looking forward to this meeting with Bruce Kemp. It was almost eleven o'clock at night so a security guard took him to Anna Webb's office. When he entered the room, he saw Anna on a big TV screen in front of him. A technician had a remote control in his hand; he pressed a button and the camera on the TV zoomed in closer so that only Anna's face was visible. When David closed the door, he saw that Anna was sitting opposite the TV.

"Ah, David. Come in. We're just checking that all the equipment for the link with Australia is working. Don't you have video conferencing facilities at TrentTV?" she asked innocently. David smiled and said: "Why spend all that money when I can use yours?"

Before she could reply, the screen flickered and Bruce Kemp's face appeared.

"Good day, or should I say goodnight," laughed Bruce. "I hope you haven't been waiting for too long. I've been making notes about your progress so far."

David tried to smile but couldn't. Anna instinctively moved towards the microphone in front of her to speak.

"Well, I'm sure you have no complaints with what you've seen from ChannelWebb."

"Well, I've been impressed with both TV stations but there is still lots of room for improvement. I'll show you what I mean," said Bruce. He looked at a small TV on his left, pressed a button on the remote control in his hand and to his dismay, David saw Juliet trying to sing over the voice of Frank Sinatra. As Anna laughed the shot changed to Gordon Right looking very worried as he searched through the papers on his desk.

"I can explain," David said quickly. "Everyone at TrentTV has been working really hard since we heard about the franchise and..."

"Well, I'm afraid their effort has not been good enough," interrupted Bruce. "I have very high standards and I expect the best."

Anna was enjoying herself. She smiled and nodded first at David, then at Bruce who looked at her.

"Anna, I'm not sure why you look so happy. TrentTV has made no mistakes with their advertising but I can't say the same for you. I've been watching your advertising for three days and on two occasions the adverts shown have not been at all suitable for the time slot." The TV in Bruce's office again showed evidence of what Bruce had just said. The smile on Anna's face moved to David's.

Bruce softened his voice a little. "I still have two more programmes to monitor. The next one is the outside broadcast. Which programmes have you chosen?" he asked, looking at them.

"We're going to do an item about crop circles, which have been in the news a lot recently," said David. "It will be a live broadcast in the middle of the countryside by one of our most experienced reporters." Anna: "We're going to shoot the one hundredth episode of our most popular soap, Southside, on location. The director's been planning it since March. At the end of the episode, the identity of a criminal will be revealed. It'll be great."

David's face fell. Could things get any worse?

CHAPTER 8

Trouble in the Country

The TrentTV outside Broadcast Unit had just stopped in a field, miles from the nearest town. The sky looked very grey and heavy with rain.

"OK, everyone," said Rav. "Let's get to work." He turned to the technician. "Jack, can you position the aerial?"

"It isn't very big," commented Simon looking at the top of the van.

"New technology," replied Rav. "It's bowl-shaped so it's called a dish antenna and it has a dipole and amplifier in the centre. It transmits radio waves in a narrow beam so it's the best type of aerial to send signals to a satellite. If we had more time, I'd show you how it works but Rob and I have to go and look at the crop circles. I just hope it doesn't rain. Those big, black clouds are getting closer. You stay here and help Jack." Simon watched Rav walk away with Rob Pitman, the reporter and Joe, the camera operator. He looked at the scenery and said to Jack: "If I had lots of money, I'd buy a house here."

"If I had lots of money, I wouldn't be here. I hate this stupid job", Jack muttered angrily as he connected the generator.

When Rav returned, all the equipment had been turned on.

"We've decided on all the shots of the crop circles," he said. "Let's practice the report here first, then we'll take the camera to the site and get ready for the live broadcast."

"There's a storm coming," Jack warned them.

Rav ignored him, got into the van and began pushing buttons on the mixing desk. They had just finished the practice of the report when big drops of rain began to fall.

"OK, everyone, get in the van," said Rav. "There's still over an hour before the broadcast and I'm sure the rain won't last long."

The rain came down very hard on top of the van.

Rav was checking the equipment when suddenly they heard a loud bang, the van trembled and the electricity went off. This was followed by a clap of thunder directly overhead.

"What happened?!" yelled Rav. The van was in complete darkness.

"I told you it was a storm," replied Jack calmly.

"I think the antenna has been struck by lightning. There'll be no outside broadcast today." He almost looked pleased.

Rav groaned: "Why did this have to happen today? Let's go and have a look at the damage."

"Are you mad?" said Jack. "It's too dangerous now. We're in the country, remember. We'll have to wait until the storm is over."

Simon felt sorry for Rav and wished he could help. The storm continued for twenty minutes.

When they all got out of the van, it was soon clear that Jack was right and none of the equipment was working. All the cables were burnt and the dipole was broken. "We're lucky to be alive," said Jack.

Rob was looking very worried. "How are we going to do the broadcast?" he asked Rav. "We've only got forty minutes."

"We'll have to record the item on the video camera and take the tape to the nearest TV station," replied Rav. Rob agreed but added: "How will we get it to the studio? The van's too big and slow. We'll never have enough time."

They looked at each other. Rob was right. The minutes were ticking away...

CHAPTER 9

All Is Not Lost

Twenty minutes later Rav was sitting on the back of a motorbike speeding to the local TV station. The man on the bike had come to see why there was a TV van in the middle of the field and had agreed to give Rav a lift. Just minutes before the broadcast they arrived at the studio and linked with TrentTV to show the tape as if the report were being shown live.

When the crew returned to TrentTV David and Jenny congratulated them. They felt more optimistic than before about the franchise. Everyone was happy. Everyone except Simon. They were all in the conference room waiting for the start of ChannelWebb's live soap episode. Simon sat down next to Sally who asked him why he looked so glum. "We could lose the franchise because of my mistakes. No one trusts me now. Rav won't let me do anything. Things are getting worse and worse for me here."

"Don't worry," replied Sally reassuringly. "It's easy to make mistakes when you're doing something new. That's how you learn. I'm sure I was the worst production assistant ever at the beginning," she laughed.

Simon smiled and decided that Sally was the kindest person at TrentTV.

David got up to speak to them. "The programme is about to begin. Now ChannelWebb's outside broadcast is much more difficult than ours. But that means it's easier to make mistakes, so let's just see what happens." He sat down and they all heard the now famous music that indicated the start of the soap, Southside.

Unfortunately, for TrentTV the episode was going well. David looked around the room and saw that all his employees were engrossed. The storyline was that someone had stolen a very expensive painting from the home of one of the characters. Tonight the identity of the thief was going to be revealed.

The programme was nearly over. One scene finished and the camera moved to the home of the main characters in the soap, a happily married couple. It soon became clear that they were not ready for the scene. A makeup assistant was combing the woman's hair and the man was putting on a jacket. They all looked at the camera and froze. Then the makeup assistant disappeared and the woman began to speak as if nothing had happened.

Jenny touched David's arm as everyone in the room laughed. "I bet Anna isn't feeling as confident as before."

David grinned. "She must be furious. I wish I could see her face."

The scene finished when the couple kissed.

Then the viewers saw a street and a man was standing at a bus stop but they could still hear the voices of the married couple.

"That was your fault Judy, as usual," said the man.

"You said OK, so the camera switched to us. You're never ready in time."

"Oh, no. The microphone is still on," giggled Sally. The sound engineer at ChannelWebb turned it off but not before, they heard the woman shout: "I said OK to the make-up assistant, stupid. Anyway, you weren't ready either, Mr Bad Breath! Brush your teeth next time we have to kiss."

Everyone at TrentTV cheered loudly.

"Fantastic," said David. "I think I'll phone Anna."

CHAPTER 10

An Exclusive Story

It was no surprise to David and the others that Anna Webb was not available for comment. Everyone was still in the conference room discussing what had happened.

"Tonight ChannelWebb has given us another chance to win the franchise," said Rav.

"That's true," commented Jenny. "However, it's also true that we've made some mistakes, so I'm sure Bruce Kemp hasn't come to a decision yet."

"Nevertheless, we are in a stronger position now," said David happily. Their conversation was interrupted by the telephone, which rang loudly. "Don't tell me that Anna's answering my call," laughed David. He picked up the receiver and heard Bruce Kemp's voice. He put the phone on hands free so that everyone in the room could hear.

"So, David. I can almost see the big smile on your face here in Australia! Anna Webb, on the other hand is a little upset right now, as I'm sure you can imagine."

"Of course," replied David. "I know exactly how she feels."

"I must congratulate you on your outside broadcast. It was not only interesting but also very well planned."

Luckily, Bruce couldn't see the relief on everyone's face. He didn't suspect a thing.

"Thanks," said David. "My employees are all hard working as well as extremely efficient. Have you made a decision yet about the franchise?" he asked tentatively.

"David! Really! Despite the mistakes made during the broadcast of Southside, I have been impressed by ChannelWebb so you both still have a chance to win. Now let's go on to the real reason for this call."

He paused and everyone at TrentTV held their breath. Now what?

"As there is only one more programme for me to monitor - the live satellite link, I have decided to come to Britain. I'd like to tell either you or Anna in person who has won. Furthermore, I would like to be present in the studio during the satellite link when it happens next week. That way I can keep a close eye on events."

"That's all we need," Jenny whispered to Rav.

Bruce gave David details of his arrival and wished them all goodnight. No one spoke as David put the receiver down.

They all wanted the franchise badly but they didn't need the added pressure of Bruce Kemp's presence in the studio.

Rav broke the silence. "So, do we know what the satellite link story is going to be?"

David shook his head. "No, but it will have to be good. I mean really good."

A voice came from the back of the room. "And this is where I win the franchise for TrentTV." Nobody had heard Gordon Right come into the conference room. Unusually he had a big grin on his face, which not even the sight of Simon could remove. They all looked at him.

"Well," said David impatiently after a few moments of total silence. "Are you going to tell us or not?" Gordon made sure that he had everyone's attention before he spoke. "What would you do without me?"

"I've just spoken to a friend of mine, a journalist, in Spain. She is willing to give us the exclusive rights to a story next week as it happens in Madrid. And you'll never believe me when I tell you what it's about..."

CHAPTER 11

Who's Getting Married?

"I don't believe it," said Jenny. Her voice echoed around the gallery.

"Neither do I," added Sally. "He's always said that he would never get married."

Rav laughed at them. "Well he must have changed his mind because George Miller, the famous Hollywood actor, is getting married today in Madrid."

David joined in the conversation. "And we have the exclusive rights to the wedding pictures." He could hardly contain his delight. "It will be a great scoop as only we know about the wedding."

"Who's he marrying, then?" asked Sally, who still didn't believe it was true.

"No one knows, not even Gordon or the Spanish journalist," said Rav.

"Now, is everything ready for the lunchtime news?" asked David. "Bruce will be here soon."

Jenny was already sitting in her usual place in the gallery. "Yes, we're ready. The satellite link has been booked from twelve to twelve thirty. That gives us plenty of time to make the link to Gordon in Madrid." Twenty minutes later Bruce Kemp was standing next to David in

the gallery watching the lunchtime news. Simon was standing alone at the back. The newsreader, a woman who had replaced Gordon who was in Spain, was talking about the exclusive story. "After the break we are going live to Madrid. Today is a sad day for all women. George Miller, one of the highest paid actors in Hollywood, is marrying a mystery woman."

Sally sighed and said into her microphone: "Countdown to adverts."

As the newsreader said to the viewers: "We'll see you in just a few minutes." Rav pressed a button and pulled a lever on the mixing desk; the first advert of the break appeared on the monitor.

David smiled. "It's 12.03. Let's link to the satellite and see what's happening in Spain."

All eyes moved to the monitor on the left of the "On Air" sign. Aware that Bruce was watching every move, Rav pressed a few more buttons. The screen flashed up the image... of a football match!

"Jenny, what's this?" yelled David.

Jenny's face was filled with horror. "I've no idea," she gasped. "We booked the Astra satellite last Monday. We can't have made another mistake."

"They could have double booked it. The match has just started," said Rav.

"What are we going to do?" shouted David. "We can't lose this exclusive story. Gordon will be waiting. Everybody think!"

Simon moved forward. "We could try to book another satellite," he suggested.

They all looked at him. Bruce was the first to speak. "Good idea, Simon."

Jenny grabbed the phone and dialled the number of the office in Paris that made the bookings. The news had started again. They didn't have much time.

"Come on!" said Jenny. "Someone finally answered the phone... in French!"

Jenny tried to stay calm. "I don't understand. Please speak English," but the voice continued in French. Jenny looked up. "Anyone speak French?" she asked frantically. Everyone started to shout and panic even more when it became clear that no one spoke French. Simon said something but the noise was too loud. He had no choice. He pulled the phone from Jenny's hand.

CHAPTER 12

Simon Saves the Day

Everyone looked at Simon in horror. What was he doing? TrentTV couldn't afford another blunder. It seemed that time stood still in the now silent gallery but only a few seconds had passed. Then the looks of horror turned to looks of amazement as Simon spoke into the phone. He was speaking French - very well! After just two minutes, he put the phone down and looked at his father, who was speechless.

"Well?" said Jenny and Rav.

"Well," repeated Simon smiling. "We have a thirty minute link with the satellite Hot Bird, starting from now."

Rav quickly pressed some buttons and turned a few dials and there was Gordon, looking back at them from outside a beautiful Spanish church. They had never been so pleased to see his face. Everyone cheered.

"Well done," said Bruce to Simon and patted him on the back.

David hugged his son and Sally cried: "I didn't know you could speak French. If we had known earlier, we wouldn't have panicked."

"Oh, I..." began Simon.

"You can talk later," said Jenny, "we have work to do now. Rav, get ready to link the satellite pictures to the news." There was great excitement in the gallery. David was sure that millions of people were now watching TrentTV. The newsreader had mentioned the wedding of George Miller at least four times during the programme. He heard her say: "And now we can go live to Madrid where Gordon Right is waiting to give us the latest news."

Gordon began to speak: "You're joining us just in time. The wedding ceremony has finished. George Miller will soon appear with his new wife and the world will finally know who she is. Here they come." The camera moved to the church door and George came out with his bride.

"It's Juliet," they all chorused.

Simon's face fell. "Oh, well. At least I met her here in the studios."

Sally touched his arm. "I know just how you feel. George was my dream man." They laughed.

TrentTV extended the news programme to show pictures of the happy couple. The phones soon began to ring as other TV channels asked to buy and use their satellite pictures. It was a great moment for David Fox.

Later that day Bruce stood before the TrentTV team in the conference room.

"I think it's fair to say that Simon saved the day for you. If it hadn't been for his quick thinking, TrentTV would have had a big problem. If he hadn't spoken French on the phone, you would have lost the biggest news story of the year. I hope that teaches you all the importance of learning a foreign language!"

Simon looked embarrassed but very, very happy.

"So, I have two announcements to make," continued Bruce. David was on the edge of his seat. He glanced at Jenny and Rav who looked as nervous as he felt. "Firstly, I've decided to offer the KangaTV franchise to... TrentTV." Everyone in the room jumped up and down with joy.

"And secondly, I'd like to offer Simon a job at KangaTV in Australia. What about it, Simon? Would you like to work in Sydney?"

"I'd love to," said Simon immediately, "unless of course my colleagues at TrentTV want me to stay here!!!"

- THE END -

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