

“What left is there like, technicals-wise?”

The Newscaster mutters the very important news under her breath, almost like some sort of practice. If she fumbles a single word, use the wrong synonym here or there, or stammer even once, she might risk underselling dire news. And the world needs something sad to latch onto, clearly. As the cameras start rolling, the teleprompter starts to scroll its text, and the lights and noises on set tear at the Newscaster’s patience and temperament, everybody here has prepared for this important, vital meeting.

“Uh... not on my end. If this works out, every screen in the Neighborhood will see your mug and hear your voice! Considering the uh... man how long has it been since people actually watched the news on like, television?”

“And on their phones, billboards, and smartwatches. Any screens that it takes to set up our solution. We need them all. Have we set up that long grid?”

“Uh... yeah. Yeah! Not a single person out there could escape the news! Personally I’m already miserable thinking about the news, I’m properly prepared!” Misery. Kinda strange that the world has misery to look forward to. When was the last time anybody specifically searched for sadness? Catharsis provided by a long, deserved cry. It’s not something that people actively look to experience, at least not usually, but drastic times and all that.

“Good. Roll the cameras.” Being on the podium for the news is absolutely dreadful on the best days. The light makes the coldest of winters feel like a mildly uncomfortable and stuffy summer night, and that’s when wearing anything lighter than the sauna-inducing suit that the Newscaster had to wear to her job. The brightness too, it’s easy for an audience to see her but it messes with her astigmatism. But it hardly matters the comfort of the one on set, as everything is all about the audience. That suffering, saccharine audience. The Newscaster remembers when that confounded plague started, how something felt... off, even before people realized the downsides to laughing oneself to death. A group of people who have, had and will always have no way to save themselves. Thankfully... well this *better* work.

BREAKING NEWS

“Hello, this is channel [##\$^E\$#%] with the 11 o’clock news.” The Newscaster reads everything the teleprompter tells her to with a determined, if stoic, timbre. Not a single thing should be out of place, lest the world goes even more mad. “Today, beloved musician David Conswith passed away at the age of 78, due to brain cancer.” That news didn’t have to be real. At least not when she said it. But should the news never lie, then it would come into existence

sooner or later. "It is with heavy hearts that we relay this information, but he would have wanted us to remember him and move forward with our lives, remembering his music and lessons despite the pain inherent in doing so." The world all over hears this information and feels the proper weight shackle down their collective souls, a necessary sacrifice to the psyche.

"In other news, a hurricane off the west coast destroyed several people's homes, leaving many without food, shelter, or hope. We implore you to understand the grief they are going through, analyze why you feel this way, and double those feelings to feel a percent of their pain." As the Newscaster delivers this information from the west coast, she will know sooner or later if her words caused a tragedy, as the world around her would drown in, well water, but also air, debris, and gloom. Again, she wouldn't be looking forward to this if it wasn't necessary.

"In other news... bugs... tear apart farms everywhere- no, that seems to be filler text. Not supposed to be here." She tries to avoid thinking about this random, seemingly unusual information. "In actual news, food prices have reached a record high. In addition to the average unemployment rate being the highest it's been in 20 years, very few families can afford food and don't know what to do." Their hopelessness is preferable to the alternative feeling, as everyone watching has seen from looking outside. It's an absolutely horrid experience to know that in this world, happiness itself can kill you, but... sometimes you just have to adapt. Learn how to feel good while feeling sad. There had to be a reason that the great poets of old would write horrifying and head-cleaving poetry, right? Why make something nobody would enjoy? It can almost feel like a predictive measure... but it's not exactly something the Newscaster can truly understand. Better to spread catharsis in ways she knows how to do.

"In yet other news... don't say it don't think it- Cameraman, who messed with the teleprompter?"

"Nobody, Newscaster, just stick to the prompts!"

"These were not part of the news- ok." The Newscaster tries to stay stoic, but...

"The world's first human won the lottery and killed fifty people- no, that's not news either- a large slime has been found engulfing various buildings in the Desert- what- a malnourished girl runs from absolutely nothing to worry about with a barely-held-together facade of contentment on her face- these are not- I cannot-" The Newscaster tries to skip over as much of the clearly fabricated news as possible. If these things all happen, which they clearly are not, then even saying they do would change that. Why would she want to introduce more fear and anxiety into the world than the recommended amount?

"Ok, an actual bit of the news. A new film has released in theaters all about the bittersweet coming of age story at a countryside town..." Something she can actually focus on without confusion. "This movie, by the name of "My Lovely Poison", is sure to distract you from the fact that the first expansion is now free and takes you to level 20- Ok what in the world?"

The cameraman shares the Newscaster's fear, as despite not seeing the teleprompter, even he

could predict what comes next. Whatever news is willed into the world, it can never be good. Without any prompting, the cameraman runs off the set, taking the closest emergency exit possible to just leave the building. It's this strange and... oddly comforting feeling going outside, actually. Sure, the sky has turned this unnatural hue, monsters beyond what anybody could comprehend have already turned the grass on the ground into a stain on soil, and even standing outside for a little bit has subjected the cameraman to ungodly amounts of radiation due to who-knows-why, but at least he's able to die knowing what would kill him. Either that or the giant green behemoth with a thousand pistols stapled together. Or perhaps a giant glop of solidified acid.

The Newscaster does not get this luxury. She has to stay indoors, and continue to read off the teleprompter. "So do not read anything, ever, stay near the light... do not trust what adults tell you... and remember to stay weird and never dream... that's not even news at this point, what does any of that have to do with-" the Newscaster reads this horrid jumble of phrases, wishing for whatever has altered the script to just stop. The world was only supposed to feel an unending sadness, not anxiety, horror, and anger that they have to deal with more than just one dangerous emotion.

"CUT THE FEED. WE ARE NOT LIVE ANYMORE." A command, spoken with absolute conviction, and the staff follow her orders. The Great Crying has to be postponed, because what the hell hijacked the news?

"I... what was that?" One of the members on set tries to apply logic to the illogical. "That... we tried to will sadness into existence, and I think the world answered with a challenge. Right... it could not be this easy. Rituals never simply happen, it was never going to be that easy."

"Well did the news work?"

"Just look outside. A lot of what was said has come to fruition. I saw about a thousand roaches devour an entire cow out there, and Somebody talking about using "Aigh-Oh-Eie"?

"That's a videogame term, AoE. Area of Effect. Must have been some weird teen-"

"Well if they were a teenager, i just witnessed a child die before my eyes."

The Newscaster's eyes widen. "O-oh..." For better or worse, the news did its job, what was said, was. For worse, for worse, for worse, for worse, for worse.