

THE RISKY BUSINESS
by
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Cast of Characters

Eve	Trainee at Pulse TV
Jo	Director of ‘The Max’
Max Hankle	Presenter of ‘The Max’
Zed	Cameraman and technician
Pam Donald	Eve’s aunt. A TV war reporter.
George	Eve’s uncle. Security guard for Consolidated Operations
Ambrose Troy	Millionaire head of Consolidated Operations
Buckner	Executive with Consolidated Operations
Bracewell	Executive with Consolidated Operations

The action of Risky Business takes place in a Midlands Town in 1996

Scene One - In the TV Studio.

[The team are in the middle of a broadcast of '**The Max**'. There is frantic activity going on. Eve finds two volunteers in the audience to do the competition, and writes their names on idiot boards. '**The Max**' theme music. Jo and Zed are rushing around busily. Eve stops to talk to the whole audience]

EVE: It's a bit all over the place just at the moment, sorry. I'll have a chance in a -

[She is interrupted by the loud sound of a Jeans commercial. 'The only jeans in the universe cut from 01 denim' Jo, the director, headphones and clipboard, crosses and shouts, loud enough to be heard above it.]

JO: We're getting the ad in the studio. Kill the speaker will you ?

[No change]

FX? Come on. Kill the fold-back monitors. We're getting Levis down here. Can't hear myself think. Where the hell is Max ? He hasn't got time. Moron.

[The ad is cut. Jo rushes to sort out where Max is, nearly knocking Eve over]

Shouldn't you be doing something ?

EVE: Sorry.

[To audience] That's Jo. She's our director. Very busy.

JO: [Coming back across] Zed? We'll start tight on Max, come out to the girls, OK. I'm going to need you to tie off Camera One and switch over to the caption camera, yes ? Give yourself leeway. Got that? Zed?

ZED: Got it.

EVE: [To audience] Welcome to **Pulse TV**. It doesn't matter me talking just now, we're in a commercial break. The programme goes out live, you see. That's why it's all over the place. It always is.

Sorry, I'm Eve. I'm a trainee. I've only been here a couple of months, but I'll try to explain what's going on - -

JO: Where is he ?

MAX: [Swanning in] He is here. Worry not, Josephine.

[Max Hankle makes an entrance, playing to the audience a little]

JO: In the crowd. Come on.

MAX: I know.

JO: And it's Joanne.

EVE: This is Max. Max Hankle. He's our presenter. The presenter of '**The Max**'. Gorgeous, isn't he? I couldn't believe I was going to be working with him -

MAX: Shh! Which two is it ? [Going to sit in audience. Zed is setting up camera to film him there. Max is chatting to the people lined up to be contestants on either side of him.] Up for this, are you, my friend ?. It's your big big chance. Not just the public prize. Secret prize too. Whichever of you comes over most excited, dinner tonight with me, OK.

JO: Max. Back from the break in ten. Come on. Get sorted, quick. Five four three.

[Counts in the 'two one go' with her hands, cueing Max. Short jingle/burst of theme music. He makes out he is in mid-conversation with one of the 'competitors']

Yeah right. Uh-oh. They've sneaked back in, while we were just enjoying ourselves, weren't we? OK we've got....

[Eve is holding up 'idiot boards' through all of Max's bits, reminding him things, such as the girls' names, etc.]

.....Melanie here. Yo, Melanie. What's happening?. And Sarah. Hey! I've randomly picked these two by computer, while you were away,

haven't I? And.....Melanie, and Sarah, here, are up for the big one. You up for it? I'm up for it. Mega!

OK here it is - all you have to do.....etc etc.

[He involves them in some kind of humiliating competition tba]

Max: Next week's show will include an item from the Central Conference Centre, where we're going to be getting a rare glimpse of reclusive millionaire businessman, Ambrose Troy. The man behind the shades there, head of Consolidated Operations. He is going to be making an explosive announcement for us...

[A large photo of Troy is frantically put on the board for the camera]

Yes, that's the geezer. Right, with luck, he's going to be talking to us, about the launch of his new charity venture, '**Kids in Trouble**'. Join me then. Till then live life to '**The Max**'. I will.

[Theme music.]

JO: That's it. Off air.

MAX: Complete crap.

JO: Max, you did well. No-one will have seen anything. Believe me.

MAX: I believe that I got us out of a hole. I just don't believe the hole. Lousy contestants, too. It sucks. You've got this geek [he points at Zed] running around doing everything. What is this, home videos? This is supposed to be real television, not 'You've been bloody framed'..

ZED. Geek. Nobody says 'geek' man.

MAX: I'm out of here

[He goes off, lighting up a cigarette as he goes.]

JO: Clear the studio.

[She follows Max]

ZED: 'I'm outta here'? It's not as if he's from 'downtown LA'. I doubt if he's even been there.

EVE: He has. He did a whole week of reports from America, for those Rough Guide thingies.

ZED: He's from Kidderminster isn't he?

EVE: Stourbridge.

ZED: What are you, secretary of the Max Hankle fan club or something ?

EVE: I just -

ZED: He's a poser. A full of crap, useless tosspot... geek.

[He goes]

EVE: That's Zed. Officially he's a cameraman, but 'cause there's not enough staff he does a bit of everything. The station hasn't got much money, see.

[Eve talks as she moves scenery or whatever...].

It's a bit quieter now. It's always like that. Exciting, but mad. There's lots I should've explained, but it was all... well. The programme is called '**The Max**'. It's brilliant. I liked it even before I worked here. Max is off his head, he just doesn't care. Star. He's done some terrible things. Anyway. That's **Pulse TV**.

[The stage has opened up to reveal the **Pulse TV** office. There are notice boards at the back, some desks, tables, chairs. There is a table which Zed shares with Eve. Max is at the back, smoking. Eve sees her answerphone is flashing.]

EVE A message, ace!

[She had not seen Max, notices him now, and is embarrassed].

MAX: No, that's cool. A message on your answerphone. Big thrill for you.

EVE: It's just that I, well, it's, it's a private joke, sort of.

MAX No that's cool.

[He puts out his cigarette, and goes out. Eve curses]

EVE 'Private joke'? Is that the best you could come up with Eve? God. So dumb. What'll he think ?

[To audience]This is our office. The Nerve Centre, Jo calls it. That's Max's desk, that's Jo's, Zed goes there and I'm here. I don't get a desk of my own, until...well I don't know exactly. **Pulse TV**. [Points at logo.] That's our thingy. It's only a small company. Cable Television. We just make the one programme at the moment. It's not all stuff with the audience, it's a kind of magazine programme. '**The Max**'. I said, didn't I? It's aimed at teenagers. Really, it's just anything we can think of. Some special guests, funny things that are happening.

So who's rung me up ?

[She starts the answerphone]

GEORGE: [on answerphone] Eve. It's George.

EVE: Uncle George ?

[She switches it off as Zed comes noisily back in]

ZED Uncle George? Interrupting a high-powered business call, am I?

EVE: No, it's just -

[Jo enters, followed by Max]

JO: Stop worrying will you, Max ? It's just a television programme.

MAX: To you, perhaps. But, who notices the director's name? You could go and work on anything. I am '**The Max**'. I can't afford for it to be loused up.

JO: Max!

Listen everyone. Firstly, today's show. Well done all of you.

MAX: Yeah well done.

JO: The Björk interview was great. [Refer to competition entrants in some way etc etc]

Now. Something else. You should all know this. I've had another meeting with the network, and the news is not great. We've got ten weeks of '**The Max**', and beyond that...it's up in the air. Doesn't mean no, but it doesn't mean yes. We just have to prove ourselves. Don't panic about it, all right. That's my job.

MAX: Yeah, you stand to lose your reputation, not.

JO: What I think is that we just need one big idea. For a special, or a new series. Something fresh, that will appeal to a young audience. Something to get us noticed. So if you could all look out for ideas, I think that's the best way to take this. A challenge. The big idea, yes?

MAX: It's all about dosh isn't it? We don't need any big idea. All we need is a big name sponsor. The network would jump then. It's what I've said all along...Ambrose Troy. He's begging to bail us out, and this interview, at his 'launch'...it's the perfect way in.

JO: We've had this argument, Max. No. We're not going to be sponsored, because that just means doing what they tell us. OK.

MAX: You're the boss. For now.

JO: [Ignoring him] So, team. The big idea. I need you to look for it.

[She leaves, with Max again following, complaining.]

ZED: Magic. This could be what I needed.

EVE: Yeah?

ZED: I've got a million ideas for programmes. This could be the chance I've been waiting for? Good news, eh, Eve man ?

EVE: Suppose so.

[Zed goes. Eve lights a cigarette]

[To audience] It's the worst news in the world.. Typical. I get my big chance, and the station closes down. That is so slack.

At least Zed's got some ideas, though God knows what they're like, knowing him. I can't think of a thing. What kind of programme would be new?

[Jo pops back in]

JO: Still here ?

EVE: Yes, I was just -

JO: You can put that out. Or go home if you're going to smoke.

EVE: Sorry.

[She looks at Max's desk, but says nothing, as she puts out her cigarette. Jo has gone]

God, I'd better go. I'm supposed to be meeting someone.

This could be smart timing, thinking about it. Pam is bound to have some ideas.

[To audience] That's who I'm meeting, my friend Pam. Well she's my aunt, really. You may have seen her on TV, on the news. She's a war reporter, or 'foreign correspondent' sometimes. She always has that kind of army stuff on, and you see her with tanks going past. She's been everywhere. She's scared of nothing - unbelievable. It's because of her that I wanted to work in television.

Where's my diary, I'm supposed to be meeting her in this café.

[She finds the note and sets off to the café]

[MUSIC -

Scene Two - The Café Chic.

[Through the scene they both smoke, the atmosphere in the cafe is smoky, and Pam eats a bacon sandwich. Pam drinks coffee, Eve has a Diet Coke]

EVE: Pam. Hello.

[She is taken aback by how Pam looks, and does a poor job of concealing it]

You're... here. It's good to see you.

PAM: You too little Evie.

EVE: This is the Cafe Chic? I thought it would be smart.

PAM: What you mean is, 'God this place looks rough, and so does Auntie Pam.'

EVE: No -

PAM: I like it. Come on, sit down. Besides, the Red Lion has gone very posh all of a sudden. Fancy bottled beer, wine and salad, no smoking. Do you want a coffee ?

EVE: I've got this, thanks.

PAM: Something to eat ?

EVE: No ta.

PAM: So let's see you. God, you look smart in that stuff. I still think of you in bunches and a little pink party dress, you know. So grown-up.

EVE: Pam

PAM: Sorry. You know me. Speak as I find. You look good.

EVE: Get off, I'm fat as anything.

PAM: Don't be daft. Do you do all this 'working out' these days ?

EVE: Course not. I do dance classes, just one a week.

PAM: Tap dancing ?

EVE: Not exactly, no.

PAM: I learned tap dancing, you know. Wouldn't believe it now. I can still remember. Look. Timestep.

[She demonstrates. Doesn't care about making a spectacle, although Eve minds a bit. Pam is short of breath]

EVE: Yes, well. It's jazz dance I do.

PAM: Oh dear.

[Pause]

So how's my favourite TV presenter ?

EVE: Max ? I don't know why you've got it in for him. He's really sound.

PAM: Is that a good thing to be?

EVE: I just mean I know he breaks the rules and that, but that's what people like about him. He's dangerous.

PAM: He just puts on an act. He's never done anything risky in his life.

EVE: Compared to you maybe.

PAM: You just fancy him.

EVE: Not just.

PAM: Isn't there any other nice young man for you at **Pulse** ?

EVE: No. The only other man there is Zed. He's a technician, well a cameraman. He's a big fan of yours and all.

PAM: I like him already. I've been in a good few scrapes with cameramen in my time.

EVE: Yeah you probably would like him, that's how slack he is.

PAM: Didn't anyone ever teach you to respect your elders?

[They laugh]

How's everything really? You enjoying yourself?

EVE: Yeah, it's brilliant.

PAM: And?

EVE: Nothing.

Well... it's mixed, I suppose. Nobody takes much notice of me really. I seem to be in the way most of the time, they're all so busy. And I'm really trying to pick things up, so I can contribute more, but I feel invisible most of the time. I don't know if I'm really cut out for it.

PAM: No-one takes any time to talk to you?

EVE: Well they're very kind and everything. It's just they have important things to do.

PAM: Don't you go falling for that, Evie. Most of the time people just run around doing pointless things, so they can look important. What about Jo? She always seemed good to me. Doesn't she look after you?

EVE: Yes she's great. They all are. It's just me. I get in the way.

PAM: Rubbish. I'll have a word.

EVE: No, please don't do that

PAM: What?

EVE: It's just it's a really bad time. The station is in trouble. Jo says we might lose **'The Max'**.

PAM: Tragic.

EVE: No, it's the only show we do. She says we've got to find something fresh. We're all supposed to be looking for the big idea.

PAM: Ah. The big idea. Of course.

EVE: What do you mean?

PAM: Well, it goes on forever. The television people's search for the big idea. Fresh, original.. All it ever is is another way to con people. Listen Eve, will you let me give you some advice ?

EVE: Of course.

PAM: I was in Rwanda a couple of years ago, when the war was at it's height, doing TV reports. As evil a time and place as I can remember. Every day we'd send back footage of...I don't know, the worst pictures you could imagine. Families killed, children with terrible injuries, villages burned to dust, endless helpless refugees just walking. One morning, I was sitting outside the shack where we were based, I could hear gunshots every few minutes, and across the path there were two boys I'd got to know, one was called Jodi, the other...I can't remember. Anyway these two were playing soldiers, except that Jodi had a real rifle. I was just watching their game, thinking about what the future might have in store for them, and a fax came through. Strange thought isn't it - even in that kind of desperate place my little gizmo worked. So, this message was from my editor, in London, asking us to 'look for new angles'. New angles. Boredom was setting in, you see. Apparently the audience back home was getting bored with all these pictures of corpses in Africa. 'Try and find some new stories', he was saying. Problem was it was all the same things happening, landmines, shootings, corpses, refugees. I remember sitting there in this war, for a moment thinking 'what can I do, what new angle.' Then I stopped myself short. What am I doing, what is this? 'Boredom'. It was obscene. These people, these kids, families, were living in a nightmare, and back in London, the company was worried about its audience dropping. You see the point, Eve?

One of the other reporters actually did it. He set up a massacre. I don't mean completely, just changed the pictures. Got some soldiers to move a few bodies into one place, copied gunfire on tape to make it seem like it was happening then. It made it more exciting, more like a film. Only trouble was it wasn't true. I just went on reporting what I saw. I expect the editor stopped showing my reports.

EVE: Yes, but, what's all that got to do with Pulse? '**The Max**' isn't even a news show. It's a magazine programme. You know, something for everyone..

PAM: It's always the same, really. You still have to tell the truth. All I mean is, television can get to think it's more important than the people watching it, or people they're filming, and it isn't. If the station is running out of money, it doesn't mean anything goes. Do you understand ?

EVE:: Not really. People do get bored, don't they ?

PAM: Not with real life they don't. Why should people always want gimmicks. Everyone loves old jokes, old stories they've heard before. Just tell it how it is. I bet you, the thing that will makes enough young people watch **Pulse** is right under your nose. Not necessarily new. Obvious. That's where they always are. Under your nose.

EVE: That's my mouth.

PAM: Hey. You look better when you smile.

EVE: Do you want more coffee?

PAM: No thanks. I'd better not.

[Pause]

So have you seen old George then ?

EVE: Not for a bit no. He rang me up, though.

PAM: Oh yes? What did he want?

EVE: I don't know.

PAM: That figures. Never did get to the point of things.

EVE: No, I mean I haven't listened to the message.

Do you miss him?

PAM: Not much. I'm a better person than I was then, Evie. Calmed down.

EVE: Oh yes?

PAM: Well, remember how I was before ? When we split up?

EVE: Yes. I remember how you told me. Very calm, but I knew you weren't calm really. 'One of those things. Like Charles and Di.' You said.

PAM: Can't be right about everything, can I?

Were you angry with me?

EVE: With you both. I wanted you to stay like you were.

PAM: You didn't know how we were.

I'm sorry. There's nothing much wrong with him, Evie. Just brought out the worst in each other, or something. Hey-ho. I don't miss being married I can tell you. No-one to worry about when I'm dodging bullets.

EVE: He still worries about you.

PAM: What you mean still. He never did when we were married.

EVE: What are you doing now then, Pam ?

PAM: Oh you know. Off to war as usual.

EVE: Where're you going?

PAM: Top secret, Eve. Wouldn't want to leak to **Pulse TV's** ace reporter.

EVE: **Pulse TV's** thicko trainee

PAM: Don't do that, Evie. Don't run yourself down. You're as good as anyone. Better than Max 'mean and moody' Hankle.

EVE: I wish.

PAM: Well keep wishing. Keep 'going for it' will you. Come here.

[She hugs her]

EVE: Get off.

[Eve is puzzled by this display of emotion, which is unusual for Pam]

Are you going somewhere dangerous or something ?

PAM: Aren't I always?

[MUSIC -]

Scene Three - In the Pulse TV Office.

[Zed is putting ideas to an increasingly exasperated Jo].

ZED: I've got loads. What about this ? It's like a Blind Date thing, but for pets. They sit with their owners round a screen, and they give the deciding one things to smell, and whichever they like the smell of they send them off together and film them, doing whatever they do.

JO: I don't think you get it, Zed.

ZED: OK. OK, you don't like that one, what about this ? We get all famous olds, right. Helen Daniels from Neighbours, Victor Meldrew, Ethel from Eastenders, Vera Duckworth.

JO: Vera Duckworth, she's not that old.

ZED: She's ancient, man. Anyway, it doesn't really matter right, the thing is it's like a pretend panel game thing, and people do disgusting acts, eating insects, stuff like that, and it's called 'What Kills You?', right, and the olds pretend to have heart attacks. The act that kills them quickest wins.

JO: Old people dying is not entertainment, Zed.

ZED: You said ideas that kids would like. They'd love that. Anyway, they don't really die, they just act it out.

JO: They'll be queuing up to go on that panel, I'm sure.

ZED: I've got an idea for a new soap, too. Set in an undertakers.

JO: Thanks Zed.

ZED: Why not ? It's somewhere everyone goes, isn't it?

JO: You'll be going there soon.

ZED: It's good, man.

JO: What about you, Eve ? You thought of anything.

EVE: Nothing any good.

JO: Couldn't be worse than Zed's ideas.

ZED: Thanks.

EVE: Sorry.

MAX: I told you.

JO: Yes you've made your point, Max. You want us to be **'The Ambrose Troy Max'**

MAX: I never said we should change the name.

JO: No, well you don't think about things like that do you ?

We've got a few weeks. Keep working at it, all of you.

ZED: You ain't heard all my ideas yet.

JO: I've got to have something to look forward to haven't I?

[She goes]

ZED: That is so unfair.

MAX: [On his way out] Any more good answerphone messages, Eve?

[Eve laughs - a little forced]

ZED: What's he on about ?

EVE: Nothing.

ZED: There was a couple of messages for you before, did you pick them up. Some guy called 'George'. It was well weird.

EVE: Oh God, yes. I never listened to it.

ZED: Is he a nutter?

EVE: No. He's my uncle. He used to be married to Pam.

ZED: Pam Donald ? Never. Lucky George.

EVE: So what was weird about his message ?

ZED: I dunno. Listen to it.

Eve, what do you think about a quiz show - **'Whose Feet?'** You get people to see if they can identify friends and relatives from the smell of their feet. They could win a holiday or something.

EVE: Sounds good.

ZED: I'll try it on Jo.

[He goes out. Eve listens to the message]

GEORGE: [on answerphone, in a stage whisper] Eve. It's George. I'm not saying my full name, in case.... The thing is I need to see you. It's urgent. I can't explain. Central Library. 4.15. Say nothing to anyone. You might want to destroy the tape.

EVE: Destroy the tape?

[Beep then another message.]

GEORGE: It's me again. I forgot to say. The history department. Repeat. The History Department.

EVE: What's he on about? Meet him in the library ? Mad.

[To audience] George is my uncle. I said didn't I? Normally I'd say he was just ordinary, you know, but.... 4.15. I'd better go, to see what he's on about. I hope he isn't cracking up or something.

The library. Why the library?

[MUSIC -]

Scene Four - At the Central Library.

[George is 'in disguise', coat collar turned up etc. Business of following each other around the library, remaining silent. Eventually, Eve corners him]

EVE: George? What are you doing? You look stupid.

GEORGE: 'Voice'.

EVE: What about it? You lost your voice ?

GEORGE: 'Deep Voice'. Not George - damn!

EVE: I'm supposed to call you 'Deep Voice'?

[He nods]

Is it a game? Are you being sponsored for '**Kids in Trouble**' or something?

GEORGE: It's deadly serious, 'Cathy'

EVE: Oh right. That's me. Cathy. I see.

Are you OK, really, 'Deep'. Can I call you 'Deep'. 'Mr Voice' seems a bit formal.

GEORGE: I mean it. [Speaking in a louder, deliberate voice] Have you read the new book about The Beatles?

EVE: The Beatles. I'm not interested in The Beatles.

GEORGE: I think you should look at it. It's very good.

EVE: What?

GEORGE: Yes. You'll find it on that shelf over there.

[She finds the book]

EVE: 'The Beatles - Fab or Fable?'

GEORGE: That's the one. I think you might enjoy page 36. Sit down.

[She sits and finds the page. A piece of paper falls out. George is anxious that it remains hidden]

EVE: What is this. It's got a heading, 'Consolidated Operations'. That's where you work, isn't it?

GEORGE: Shh!

EVE: Sorry. What is this? Seriously.

GEORGE: I really can't talk about it. You must see it though. It's about a plan the company has. It's terrible. [Deliberately] People will die, Eve. Not just a few, hundreds and thousands. It's real, believe me. I just can't say anymore. If they knew I was giving this to you.

EVE: What do you expect me to do?

GEORGE: You're working for the TV company, aren't you ?

EVE: Yes

GEORGE: Well get the story out. Before it's too late.

EVE: Why me? Why haven't you told Pam ?

GEORGE: Because she's...I have my reasons.

Look I've said too much already. I'll be honest with you, Eve. I'm terrified. They will finish me off if they find out. Read the paper, and please, Eve. It really needs you to stop it.

EVE: I don't understand, Geor.... 'Deep'....what is it ? What do you mean, finish you... You're scaring me.

[He has gone. She reads the paper]

[MUSIC -]

Scene Five - In the Pulse TV Office.

[Jo comes in, followed by Zed.]

ZED: What if we do it underwater?

JO: Zed! No. Do you understand? NO.

ZED: I don't get your problem with it.

JO: How about this ? No-one would watch it.

ZED: I would.

JO: Exactly. No-one normal.

[Eve comes rushing in]

EVE: Got it.

JO: I don't mean to put you off, Zed. I'm sorry. But seriously it's your taste. **Pulse TV** exists for all the Young People of the Midlands.

ZED: Yeah but I'm young people, aren't I?

EVE: Jo. I've got the answer, to everything.

JO: [Not listening to Eve] Young, maybe...people, well.

ZED: Your loss. I'll sell the idea to someone else.

JO: I'll risk it.

EVE: Jo!

JO: What?

EVE: Got it.

JO: Eve, I haven't got time for any more big ideas.

MAX: Have you rung Ambrose Troy?

JO: No. Look I probably will, just don't rush me.

EVE: [Snapping] Please listen to me!

MAX: Ooh dear.

EVE: Sorry, but it's important, really.

JO: OK. What is it?

EVE: Well. I've got this friend, well he's my uncle, really, George. He works for **Consolidated Operations**, as a security guard, at the works outside town. I've just been to see him, and he's given me this.

[She hands paper to Jo]

MAX: What is it, a book token? Must be wicked to have an uncle.

EVE: No. It's a document...an outline thing. Not the whole of a plan, just part of it. Notes. What it is is it shows that they are planning a big ...plan thing. To ...George says it's the biggest thing you can imagine. Thousands of people will die he says. They are working out how to get away with it. I don't know all the details or anything, we'd have to research it all, but it's a big big story. A real scandal. Life or death. He couldn't tell me everything he knew because he was really scared. I think they were threatening to kill him or something.

JO: Oh Eve.

MAX: The woman from Uncle. [He hums theme music]

EVE: I'm serious. He was terrified, I've never seen him like that.

JO: This is nothing Eve. Its just about their normal planning.

EVE: Nothing ? How can you say that?

JO: What I mean is there's no story, everybody knows about CO.

EVE: Have you read this bit. Customer Wastage. 'We estimate that 120,000 people a year will die as a direct result by the year 2,000.' 120,000 people dying. How can you say it's nothing.

JO: You don't get it, do you ? Do you know what CO is ?

EVE: CO, no. Wait a minute, is it a chemical or something? A gas?

JO: CO. **Consolidated Operations.** The firm you're talking about. What do they do?

EVE: I don't know. They're a multi-national....a big company.

JO: Yes. A big cigarette company.

MAX: You know what cigarettes are ?

EVE: So?

MAX: So what Jo is saying is that that's what all this is. Someone banging on about cigarettes. Smoking. Does your Uncle smoke ?

EVE: George? No.

MAX: Voilà.. So dear Uncle George has a bee in his bonnet about smoking, and how very naughty it is, and he's trying to con you into giving him some free publicity.

EVE: But the threats. All these people dying-

[Max blows smoke in her face]

JO: Don't get me wrong, Eve. I'm no fan of cigarette companies, but there's no big new story here. Cigarettes kill you. We all know that, doesn't make a TV programme.

MAX: No wait, Josephine, perhaps we're missing a great opportunity here. Perhaps little Eve here has stumbled on something. I can picture it. Shock horror, '**The Max**' can exclusively reveal to the world. Cigarettes damage your health. This is brilliant. Ace reporter Eve is on the scene... "I have with me here a packet of cigarettes, and ...wait for it, here on the side it actually states cigarettes can cause heart disease. You heard it first on **Pulse TV**". Hey we could have dancers dressed as fags... or no, no...a big debate, people in silhouette, masks - "yes I cannot tell a lie, I am a ...newsagent...I have sold these things to innocent people".

JO: Max. That's enough.

MAX: [To Eve] Nice one, 'Scoop'.

JO: Eve, look. I know you were trying to help, but this isn't going to.

EVE: It's more than that, I know it is. George isn't like that.

MAX: Psst, Eve, I have also managed to discover, and can exclusively reveal to you that Father Christmas doesn't exist. 'No'. Matches are dangerous. 'I don't believe it.' When it rains you sometimes get wet. 'It cannot be true'

JO: Max! Shut it.

[He withdraws, laughing]

[Pause]

EVE: [Trying not to crack up] I thought it was....

JO: I know. Don't worry about it. Take no notice of him.

EVE: But the station closing...and..

JO: Yes. Listen, we'll be fine. I've pretty much decided to go with the sponsorship plan. I'll be talking to Mr Troy, when we cover the charity launch.

EVE: Oh.

JO: So if you've got any problems with **Consolidated Operations**, you'd better forget them quick. They may well be our new sponsors.

[Pause]

JO: Can you take this lot to the copier please, Eve. Run off seven of each.

EVE: Yes, OK.

[Jo goes out]

[Eve sits and hits herself on the head]

EVE: Stupid. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

ZED: Don't.

EVE: Well, I don't believe it.

[She picks up George's bit of paper, starts to tear it up]

ZED: Hey!

[He stops her, and looks at the paper]

EVE: I didn't even know they made cigarettes.

ZED: Well, exactly. **Consolidated Operations**. What's that supposed to mean? They call them different brand names. I think they make the ones you smoke.

[She picks up her packet, and lights a cigarette]

EVE: I really thought I had the thing that could save the station.

ZED: You and me both.

EVE: Well at least your ideas were funny.

ZED: Weren't supposed to be.

[Eve laughs]

EVE: I'll kill George.

ZED: If Consolidated don't get him first.

EVE: Don't you start. I am so stupid.

ZED: I think you're right you know.

EVE: That I'm stupid.

ZED: No. About this. This isn't just a 'normal' plan. There's something really weird about it. This bit, 'The task is to find enough new people to replace those that die'. They wouldn't normally put down anything like that in public. Normally the tobacco companies don't even admit cigarettes damage the health in public, but this admits straight out that they kill people. And this.. 'Our strength lies in the fact that so many of our customers are poor' 'This plan gets around the rules in a new and imaginative way' 'potential profits are exceptionally high'

I think you've got something here, you know.

EVE: There's no need to be nice to me, Zed.

ZED: I'm for real. Honest. It's worth following up at least.

EVE: You think so?

ZED: You said yourself, your uncle wouldn't have made it up.

EVE: No.

ZED: So there's no harm in digging a bit deeper, is there? Perhaps it'll turn out to be just as big as you thought.

EVE: So what do you suggest?

ZED: Well first of all we need to get into the CO HQ.

[He puts the paper up on the noticeboard]

EVE: The what?

ZED: The Headquarters of **Consolidated Operations**. Your uncle is a security guard you said. Who better to help us get in. Come on.

Bring your camera.

[He goes]

EVE: [Following] Are you sure about this?

[MUSIC -]

Scene Six - Outside, and then inside Consolidated Operations HQ.

[Eve and Zed are in the grounds of Consolidated's HQ. It is dark]

EVE: This way.

ZED: Sure.

EVE: The torch.

ZED: The battery's gone, I think. Perhaps we'd better -

EVE: Zed! It was you that persuaded me to do this, don't bottle out now.

ZED: I'm not, man. I'm just -

EVE: Shh!

[They listen out]

ZED: What is it ?

EVE: Never mind. Keep your voice down. We have to go through there. Wait here, keep a look out, and I'll signal you when to follow. I'll give an owl-call OK?

ZED: You're good at this aren't you? Must be being related to Pam Donald.

EVE: Zed. We haven't got time to discuss it. OK?

ZED: Yeah. Owl-call. OK.

[Eve goes on. Zed waits, jumpily. Eventually there is an owl-call. He hesitates. Another call. Eve reappears]

EVE: What are you playing at?

ZED: Sorry, man. Just coming. Was that the owl-call ?

EVE: Come here. I've opened the door. It was just like George said. We have to go through there, and then we'll be in the main offices. There's no-one about. The dogs have gone past.

ZED: The dogs.

EVE: Come on you dipstick.

ZED: Charming.

EVE: Here.

[They move through, over, round, under, whatever, until they are in the lobby of the building. They look round with torches]

ZED: Jesus. Smart building. Hey, fountain. This is just the lobby?

EVE: Yes.

ZED: Eve, man, there's fish in here. Massive one. Wow this is dark.

EVE: Zed. We're not here to admire the surroundings. Which way do you think?

ZED: You got the map.

[He starts snooping around behind things]

EVE: [Examining a bit of paper] He said the main offices are on the first floor.

ZED: There's got to be a lift. One of those glass ones on the outside, like in -

EVE: The lift moving would show up on security things.

ZED: Good thinking. Look. There's quite a bit of stuff here. Hey, these papers have got **Pulse TV** logo on them. Interesting.

EVE: Grab them. Anything might be useful. Stairs. This way.

[As they are setting off, there is a noise. Someone is arriving. Eve jumps and drops the map.]

EVE: Back here.

ZED: Your map, man.

EVE: Leave it. Quick.

[They conceal themselves. Buckner and Bracewell enter. They are CO executives - smartly dressed. At some point in the following they nearly step on the map, or go behind the pillar or whatever, but not quite]

BUCKNER: I think we cracked it. Apologies for running so late, Bracewell.

BRACEWELL: No, you're OK, Buckner. We've got to make the deadline, or we're both dead.

BUCKNER: I guess that's why they call it a deadline, Bracewell.

BRACEWELL: No, it's a phrase taken from military prisons, Buckner. If the prisoner steps over the line he gets shot.

BUCKNER: Right. Right. I was joking.

BRACEWELL: Oh. OK. Yes, I get that. Deadline.

BUCKNER: So. Do you want to run through points of action, then?

BRACEWELL: Sure [Checking her organiser] Our basic problem is this: Mr Troy needs to know all the main facts at tomorrow's meeting, and we need a range of plans to put to him. We must have everything ready for the big launch. Facts first.

BUCKNER: OK that's my bit. 1 - 111,000 smokers are being killed by the cigarettes every year, in this country alone.

BRACEWELL: Buckner. Buckner. Language, language. You know what Mr Troy is like.

BUCKNER: Oh yes. You want me to go through it like I will at the meeting?

BRACEWELL: Please.

BUCKNER: OK. [He composes himself] Mr Troy, problem one is a customer wastage quotient of 111.000 per annum. This is compounded by a a..... growing ... damn. I forgot what we call people giving up.

BRACEWELL: 'Consumer slippage'. Shall I do it ?

BUCKNER: No, no. I've got it. Mr Troy. The second problem is consumer slippage, particularly among AB1s. I remembered that, that's what we say for rich people isn't it ?

BRACEWELL: Very good. Third problem ?

BUCKNER: Yes. Problem three is that we're not supposed to advertise to children and young people. We can get round that easily enough. Problem four - it seems likely that some time we might not be allowed to advertise cigarettes at all.

BRACEWELL: The product.

BUCKNER: Advertise the product.

BRACEWELL: OK. Plus points. High product loyalty.

BUCKNER: Beauty. I love that one. Just means they get addicted, doesn't it. Hooked. Can't give it up if they want to.

BRACEWELL: Buckner please. 2 - plenty of new markets.

BUCKNER: Yes. China, Eastern Europe, loads of countries with no rules, where we can advertise and sell to kids..

BRACEWELL: 3 - strong government support.

BUCKNER: They're not going to hurt us too much with all the tax they make from 'the product', are they ?

BRACEWELL: Right. Final section. Our plans. Possible solutions.

BUCKNER: OK Mr Troy, you're going to love this. A plan so simple it's magnificent. We target ten to fourteen year-olds. We use every back-door, secret, under-the-counter way of getting to them, and we make them our friends. Every kid in the country will love us, we'll be on TV programmes, clothes, toys, and all the time no-one can touch us. Pretty soon every school toilet in the country will be full of your smoke Mr Troy. Every park playground will be littered with your fag-ends. It's a dream, Mr Troy, but we can make it happen for you.

BRACEWELL: OK, OK Buckner. Enough. It still needs work. He knows most of this already remember. And, you said the f-word. [Under his breath] Fags.

BUCKNER: The product. Sorry.

BRACEWELL: And smoke. We don't use that do we?

BUCKNER: No way, José.

BRACEWELL: Bracewell.

BUCKNER: No, Buckner. You're Bracewell.

BRACEWELL: Then why did you say José ?

BUCKNER: Who said José?

BRACEWELL: Did you say José ?

BUCKNER: You say I said José, I say I never say José.

BRACEWELL: Shut up, will you? Where were we?

BUCKNER: We'd got to the 'Trouble Plan', I think.

BRACEWELL: Right. That's me. I'll give him all the details. Every beautiful part of the perfect campaign. Success guaranteed.

[Eve coughs]

BUCKNER: What was that?

BRACEWELL: The 'Trouble Plan' -

BUCKNER: No. Over there. There's someone there.

[Zed and Eve run to escape. A struggle ensues. Zed escapes, but Eve is caught]

BUCKNER: He got away. Little tyke.

BRACEWELL: I got this one.

BUCKNER: Yes, so you did. Good work.

[He circles Eve menacingly]

And who I wonder might you be sent from ?

BRACEWELL: From whom, Buckner.

BUCKNER: Precisely. From whom might you be sent from.

BRACEWELL: No from.

BUCKNER: Quite. Quite, and do you know from, young lady?

EVE: I don't understand the question.

BUCKNER: Aha. Aha. Well let me tell you, I know someone who will be very interested in your answers indeed, my young friend. Mr Ambrose Troy will be exceedingly pleased to meet you. This way.

BRACEWELL: Idiot! He won't be so pleased about the other one, will he ?

[They take her away]

[MUSIC -]

Scene Seven - In the Pulse TV Office.

JO: I just don't think we can afford to be linked with what they sell. Apart from anything else, we'd be breaking the law

MAX: No way. Listen, we stick a few brand names in the show sometimes, have a packet on the set, what's the big deal ? Doesn't count as advertising, that.

JO: That's just the point.

MAX: Look, Troy likes me. I'll sort it.

JO: It's that I'm scared of.

[Zed rushes in and starts putting stuff on the walls]

ZED: She was right. Every bit of it.

JO: You look terrible, Zed.

ZED: So would you if you'd spent half the night in a wheelie bin

JO: What are you talking about?

ZED: I couldn't get out of the gates, until the milk van came through this morning.

JO: You're not making sense.

ZED: I told you. She was right about everything.

JO: Who?

ZED: Eve. They've got her. We have to rescue her

JO: Zed. Slow down. Is this another of your stupid ideas?

ZED: Stupid ? You know how to hurt me, don't you? No this is for real. She is a prisoner with Ambrose Troy at this very moment.

JO: Eve is?

MAX: I think the music's got to his brain. It was bound to happen.

JO: What are you doing ?

ZED: I'm getting my camera together. I don't expect you to take any notice, and he's probably in Troy's pocket.

MAX: I resent that. I'm in no-one's pocket.

JO: Zed. Slow down and sit. What is going on?

ZED: No time, man.

JO: Zed, please.

ZED: We went to CO, right, broke in. Heard a whole load about what was going on. Evil plans, man. Evil. I took this stuff from their offices. Interesting reading. Apart from everything else, he's planning to use us. **Pulse TV.**

JO: Who is?

ZED: Troy. Generously sponsoring us gets his name popular with kids. It explains it here. But that's only part of it. Plans, man, plans. Trouble.

JO: What plans ?

ZED: We didn't hear enough to know exactly, but they are up to something.

MAX: Oh right. You don't know what.

ZED: I know that they've caught Eve.

MAX: Caught her. This is ridiculous. Obviously little Eve's uncle has got at him too.

JO: Leave it Max. What do you want us to do?

ZED: Something about this launch we're covering tomorrow. We've got to stop it.

MAX: We can't do that, the programme's planned. Half of the show is about '**Kids in Trouble**'.

JO: I'm afraid he's right. I don't think we can backtrack on that. What exactly is Troy planning to do at it?

ZED: That's it, I don't know exactly -

MAX: Pah!

ZED: It's all about selling cigarettes to kids, or something, but I didn't hear enough.

JO: Right. Well we must find out everything we can. Research it all. Every bit of information about **Consolidated Operations** before the launch. See if we can fill the gaps. Anything that might show they are breaking the law.

MAX: It's pie in the sky. It's him and that flaky kid that broke in to the CO building, for Christ's sake. You want to jeopardise everything for this?

JO: I want to protect Eve. Where is she ?

ZED: God knows. She was grabbed by his people. Anything could have happened to her by now.

MAX: So now he's some kind of kidnapper. Ambrose Troy is a respectable businessman. Straight up. He's a good guy.

JO: Let's hope you're right.

ZED: So what are we going to do ?

JO: What about the police ?

ZED: I thought about that. I don't think we can risk it. Someone as rich as Ambrose Troy is bound to have influence. We might be playing into his hands.

JO: Well we're due at the Conference Centre in less than an hour. First thing to do is find out everything we can about Consolidated, about '**Kids in Trouble**', about Ambrose Troy. If there's going to be a showdown, we need to know our stuff. Come on. We have a lot to do.

[MUSIC -]

Scene Eight - In Troy's office at Consolidated Operations HQ.

[Buckner brings Eve in and sits her down.]

BUCKNER: You might regret this. Mr Troy wants to see you.

EVE: Do you enjoy your job?

BUCKNER: Don't try and get clever with me.

EVE: I'm sorry. Just asking. Didn't mean to be too clever for you.

BUCKNER: I didn't say you were too clever for me.

EVE: There must be a lot of pleasure in the job. Planning to kill people. Looking to get children hooked, being able to count in thousands, hundreds of thousands, the people you get, destroy, maim.

BUCKNER: You don't understand.

EVE: I'm beginning to. Perhaps you're just very well paid. Perhaps you're stupid.

BUCKNER: Do you smoke cigarettes ?

EVE: Yes, I do. Only so that I don't -

BUCKNER: So who's stupid ?

[Bracewell comes in]

BRACEWELL: Mr Ambrose Troy.

[Troy makes a big entrance, not acknowledging Eve.]

TROY: Eve Catherine Stanton. 19 years old. Researcher with **Pulse Television**.
[He hums 'The Max' theme tune] Lovely people. Quite a shame.
Rather disappointing for me. I had given that man so much.

EVE: Sorry.

TROY: Oh dear. I heard a noise from over there. Not good. No answer was
requested, and I am rather keen on my silence, aren't I Bracewell ?

[Bracewell nods]

19. I do not like young people, Eve. They are too green to be any use.
They have not learned the harsh lessons that equip us for life. They are
not tempered, weathered, worn in. Like new shoes. They give us blisters.

You see this pen ?

[Eve starts to say yes, then remembers to nod instead]

This is a proper pen. A fountain pen. It is over a hundred years old. You
fill it with ink, from a well, and then you write with it. Perfect, smooth,
flow of ink. No scratches, no blots. It never runs out, because there is
always more ink. A perfect machine, perfectly crafted. Do you know
who made this pen, Eve? It was my grandfather. Nathaniel Troy, master
pen-maker. And here it is, over a hundred years later, still writing. It is
old, you see. Trusted, tried, experienced.

Whereas you, Eve are nineteen. Do you know what that makes you? It
makes you a biro. A plastic ball-point pen. A fibre-tip, a roller-ball, an
ultra-fine Hi-Techpoint piece of rubbish. You are just a fashion, a phase
that foolish sheep go through. You will not last. You will be thrown
away.

EVE: You don't like young people. Is that why you kill them?

TROY: Oh dear oh dear. It made a noise. The young object over there made a
noise.

[He looks at Bracewell and she and Buckner gag Eve]

You are an inconvenience, Eve. I believe, Eve, you will not be able to
leave, Eve. But do not grieve Eve. Your last day will at least be
interesting. You might even learn something.

[He laughs]

The one that got away. Zed. Zed. Will soon I hope be..... oh dear, I just can't think of a rhyme.

Bracewell, Buckner. We must not allow this distraction to interfere with the job in hand. The young item can hear just what it means to be old and wise. It is not as if she is going to be able to tell anyone, is she...?

The Launch. Let us be sure that we have covered everything. First '**Kids in Trouble.**' Report.

BRACEWELL: Everything is going well Mr Troy. Already it is the second most popular charity in the country. Also we have evidence that 93% of people now associate the name Ambrose Troy with good deeds. Only 5% have not heard of you.

TROY: What about the other 2%?

BRACEWELL: [Hesitating] They think you are a kind of rice pudding sir.

TROY: You think that is funny?

BRACEWELL: Not at all Mr Troy.

[Eve is giggling under her gag. Troy stares at her]

TROY: I see.

We are getting there. Pretty soon 100%. Every person in the country, however young or idiotic, will think of Ambrose Troy as the kind and generous lover of children who set up '**Kids in Trouble**'....and then.....
Buckner

BUCKNER: Then we launch the cig...the product, Mr Troy.

TROY: Yes. The new brand. **Trouble Cigarettes.** Magnificent. Same colours as the charity, same name, and we leave it to the wonderful forces of the stupid to make the connection. You see Eve. Here will be a new smart cigarette with a little edge. Trouble, it takes a brave mature person to take on trouble. Are you ready for trouble, can you handle a little trouble.

Every young imbecile in the country will yearn to be part of this. Like the sheep they are they will flock to the shops. And every advert for our wonderful harmless charity will overnight become an advert for two things at once. That's before the campaign has even begun.

BRACEWELL: The posters - [She produces advertising images]

First of all just shapes and colours, reminding them of these harmless badges. Then the ugly pictures, with the single word. 'Trouble' violence, 'Trouble' danger. Every bit builds up the excitement.

BUCKNER: They are in a frenzy. We want 'Trouble' we want 'Trouble'.

BRACEWELL: You want 'Trouble' you have got it.

TROY: Then the master stroke. Overnight across the country, the ad too far. A little too much blood, a little too much body showing. Uproar, and the calls go up to bring them down. Shocking, disgusting, outrageous. Not in front of the children, they must come down. And Ambrose Troy is distraught, 'I do not know how it happened. I apologise to everyone, the posters will come down and the heads will roll'.

Back here the heads will roll, with laughter, as we collect the money. 'Trouble' will clean up. No 'youngster' in the country will be able to resist the excitement, the danger, the allure.

BRACEWELL: And that's not all, Mr Troy. Then we start the overseas campaign. Poland where the rules are less strict. China where there are so many millions of smokers.

BUCKNER: Around the world. The poor, the ignorant, we will find them and we will hook them.

BRACEWELL: Buckner! We will encourage them to become loyal customers.

BUCKNER: And every customer that we lose through ...wastage. We will replace with two new ones.

TROY: The younger the better.

Impressed, young lady? Oh dear, unable to put into words her admiration, I fear.

Excellent. I shall expect the launch of the Charity to go without a hitch. Put her in the laboratory for now. I think while we are at the Conference Centre might be a good time to investigate the effects of very high smoke concentration, don't you ?

Buckner. I need you to do an explosive little job for me.

[He goes. Bracewell is left to deal with Eve]

[MUSIC -]

Scene Nine - In the Pulse TV Office.

JO: What have you got?

MAX: This Troy dude is interesting. A serious bread-head.

JO: Could you speak english for me Max.

MAX: Into money, in a big way. Said to be the fourth richest man in the country. His family made money last century, shipping. Tobacco was originally only a small part of it. There isn't much in the way of quotes about him. He went to a private school in Scotland, then business school in Paris, from then on it's just business, business, business. The only interview I can find has him one fag short of a packet, that's for sure. Going on about antiques. He collects them. Works of art, too. Nothing dodgy about him though. Like I said.

ZED: The phone's dead.

[Jo and Max check the others]

MAX: This too.

JO: Damn.

MAX: That's bad luck.

JO: Don't suppose it's luck. Fourth richest man in Britain has powerful friends. How are you getting on, Zed ?

ZED: I tell you, man, I thought I knew about smoking and stuff, but some of this is unreal. Listen to this... If you take all the people who die in traffic and other accidents, all victims of murder, suicide, manslaughter, AIDS, anyone dying from heroin, cocaine, any illegal drug use, multiply the whole lot by six, that's how many people die every year from smoking. Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Strokes, Breathing difficulties -

JO: OK but what about Consolidated ? Anything specific ?

ZED: Not much. There's a lot of jack in it, I'll say that. Profits of £230M last year, selling more and more abroad. They can't advertise on telly, so they put money into sponsoring sport, cricket, snooker and that. I found one

piece says that scientists at Consolidated knew all about the dangers of smoking years ago, but hushed it up. Mostly they seem to stay squeaky clean. Try not to draw attention to themselves.

JO: Difficult. The thing is we don't know enough about their new plan to stop them. We can hold them up by throwing general things at them, but we need more.

ZED: So what do we do ?

JO: Well, we've got to get to the Conference Centre before them, to the '**Kids in Trouble**' Launch and see if we can, I don't know, slow them down. Same time, we must get Eve.

ZED: Easier said than done, that. I've been there. It's a fortress. They'll be on their guard now as well.

JO: What about Eve's uncle ?

ZED: George?

JO: Yes. Do they know he helped you get in before ?

ZED: Christ knows.

JO: I think we've got no choice. We need to ring him. See if there's any way he can help spring Eve.

MAX: The phones are down, remember.

JO: Can we track him down ?

ZED: I'll do that.

JO: You'd better take the van. We'll go to the Conference Centre by cab.

ZED: When I've got George sorted, I'll catch you there.

[He starts to go]

JO: Good luck.

Zed!

ZED: What?

JO: Leave us that research stuff. We might need it at the launch.

[He hands it over, and goes]

MAX: What do you want me to do?

JO: Is that an offer of help, I don't believe it ?

MAX: So?

JO: Come with me to the Launch. If we are going to mess up their presentation, it's possible you could be the perfect person.

MAX: Is that an insult?

JO: Would I insult my star presenter?

MAX: What do you want me to wear ?

JO: What?

MAX: Well, if you want me to make an appearance at this launch thing, I need to decide what kind of image is best.

JO: Yes. Try and just be yourself, Max.

MAX: Be myself?

[The phone goes]

JO: I thought you said it wasn't working.

MAX: It wasn't.

[Jo answers phone]

JO: Yes? AT, is that different from BT. What? Oh thank you. Yes we thought it had been vandalised or something. What kind of message? The van, no. We only have one. Yes. That's right, Zed, he's in it right now. What do you mean? There hasn't been an explosion. Of course not. Who is this? Wait a minute who -

Gone.

[A penny drops. Jo leaps up]

MAX: What is it?

JO: Quick, we've got to stop him.

MAX: Who?

JO: Zed. I think that must have been Troy. There's a bomb in the van.

MAX: What are you talking about. Jo -

[They make to leave, but there is a huge explosion outside. Stunned, they come back into the office, and sit in silence]

JO: No!

MAX: I don't believe it.

JO: You've got to now. This man is going to stop at nothing. Poor Zed.

MAX: He won't have felt a thing.

JO: What a waste, though. So young.

MAX: Yes, I know.

ZED: [Coming back in] What was that bang ?

[They stare at him]

What ? What ? I just forgot the camera.

JO: Come on. No time to lose.

[They all go]

[MUSIC -]

Scene Ten - In the Secret Lab.

[Bracewell has brought Eve into the laboratory]

EVE: So what does Ambrose Troy have a laboratory for, then ? Is he trying to breed a new kind of gorilla, to do his dirty-work for him ?

BRACEWELL: Oh no. This is the laboratory where we are perfecting the new product.

EVE: Ah. The ‘**Trouble**’ cigarettes. You’re all very pleased with that idea, aren’t you? Shame.

[Bracewell tries not to ask, but fails...]

BRACEWELL: What do you mean ?

EVE: Well there is a flaw in your plan. You think that no-one will see through your adverts, your slogans and everything. The problem is, not everyone is that stupid.

BRACEWELL: You really think that?

[She is tying her to a chair or something]

EVE: So what are you doing?

BRACEWELL: This is the ‘tar chamber’. Where we measure the contents of the smoke. I’m afraid after I switch this on it can get a bit stuffy in here. Rats and mice live for five minutes. Rabbits can sometimes survive ten. It might take you longer.

EVE: I see. Aren’t you supposed to ask me if I have any last request?

BRACEWELL: Am I?

EVE: Take my word for it, you are.

BRACEWELL: What is it you want ?

EVE: A last cigarette?

BRACEWELL: You're not allowed to smoke here, it's a no smoking building. No-one at Consolidated smokes.

EVE: Really ? Well I was joking anyway.

BRACEWELL: I realised that.

[There is a noise outside]

Who's there ?

[George comes in, in his uniform]

GEORGE: It's only me Miss Bracewell. Just doing the rounds. Oh, sorry I didn't realise you were in a meeting. Is everything OK?

BRACEWELL: Yes, yes, George

GEORGE: Only I just -

BRACEWELL: Nothing for you to worry about.

GEORGE: I would have thought you would be going over to the Conference Centre with the others.

BRACEWELL: Yes. Just some unfinished business with Miss...Miss...

GEORGE: Stanton

BRACEWELL: Yes, Miss Stanton. I'll lock up when I...wait a minute. How did you know her name ?

EVE: Uncle George, quick.

[George dodges past Bracewell, and frees Eve. There is a fight, in which Bracewell pulls a weapon on them both. George is wounded as he comes between them. Eventually, Eve disables Bracewell with a high kick.]

EVE: It's OK, I've got her. Are you all right ?

GEORGE: Yes, it's just my arm. I'll be fine.

[She helps him up]

EVE: You shouldn't have done that, George. They'll definitely know it was you that helped us now.

GEORGE: There's no point in worrying about that now. The main thing is to get you to the launch. The others will meet you there.

[He looks at Bracewell]

Out cold. That was quite a move you did on her. Have you been having self-defence lessons or something ?

EVE: Dance classes

GEORGE: Remind me never to ask you for a dance.

[They go out]

[MUSIC -]

Scene Eleven - At the 'Conference Centre'

[The stage is set up for a presentation. Max makes an entrance]

MAX: Yo! Welcome everyone. I guess this is an extra surprise for you. I mean you like come here for a dull kind of a business event and up springs yours truly - '**The Max**'! Hey! I'm the bonus ball.

Listen dudes. Quiet please. I'm sure you'd probably all like to just chill out here with me, and for me to just answer questions, do autographs and all that, but I'm here on a kind of a mission. What it is is that I've been doing a little research about this **Kids In Trouble** set-up - the outfit that all this razzmatazz is about. I know what you're thinking, you thought I was just a pretty face, but I can get down to business too, let me tell you, and I do if I know that something needs to be put straight. So I'm on the case.

[Jo is frantically signalling him to hurry up]

I set my team to check out K.I.T. in detail, right, and there's some information that I thought it was pretty important for you all to know. I persuaded my people to come down here so that the truth can be told, now, in full, by '**The Max**'. OK?

[Jo gets up and interrupts]

JO: Sorry Max, but there isn't time for all this. Listen folks, this is the situation. In a couple of minutes Ambrose Troy is going to be here in person to launch his pet charity, **Kids in Trouble**. What we've discovered, is that it is all a con. We don't know exactly what their real plan is, but we have evidence that there is more to it -

[She is interrupted from the back of the hall. It is Eve]

EVE: I know exactly what the plan is, and I can tell you all now.

JO: Eve. Thank goodness. Ladies and gentlemen this is Eve Stanton, reporter with **Pulse TV**, responsible for uncovering the scandal of **Kids in Trouble**. Eve.

EVE: There's not much time so I'll move fast. It is not Kids that are in trouble, it is Ambrose Troy. People are giving up smoking. Smokers are dying. He needs new smokers, and he isn't allowed to advertise to them. So he invents **Kids in Trouble**. This charity is just a big front for a plan to

launch **Trouble** cigarettes. These are aimed specially at children. What we need to do is stop this scheme before it starts. Help us if you can and will.

MAX: Yeah, right, Eve and Jo have basically said what I asked them to. Because I care about you and -

[Fanfare, drowning Max out and marking the arrival of Ambrose Troy. Max, Jo and Eve spread out in the body of the audience, distributing information sheets]

TROY: Friends. Dear friends, and most especially my very dear young people. I cannot tell you the pleasure it gives me to be here today, and to have the chance to put back a little of what I have been lucky enough to get out of my life, by launching **Kids in Trouble**. What I in my small way hope to achieve is to bring some joy into the hearts of those who are suffering, through no fault of their own. Kids. I myself was one. I remember, back when I was an ordinary little boy, playing in the streets of London...

[As he talks, the actors in the audience stir up opposition. Heckling, hissing, booing etc]

I am not sure what exactly has caused this disruption, but if I could just ask you to be quiet. Not for my sake, but for the sake of the poor suffering children for whom this charity is being created.

JO: Mr Troy. I wonder if you would be prepared to answer some questions.

TROY: Er, of course. I was going to offer the chance a little later, but I am quite happy to answer questions.

[The audience, lead or supplemented by Jo, Eve and Max, cross-question him about the Trouble campaign. He flounders at times, argues back at times, calls out for Bracewell and Buckner, who are not there, and in the end is forced off the platform, issuing threats of legal action against **Pulse TV** etc. Jo, Eve and Max go back to the podium.]

MAX: OK. I'd just like to thank you for helping me in my little mission here today. You were excellent. If you want to see the full story, find out exactly how I cracked the scandal, tune in for '**The Max**' this week, and we'll give you the low-down. You've been a great audience. Live life to '**The Max**'. I will.

JO: Max, please. We need to film the links.

[They go]

[MUSIC - '**The Max**' Theme]

Scene Twelve - In the Pulse TV Office .

[As the theme music fades, they arrive in the office. The programme is just finished]

JO: Excellent. They loved it.

EVE: Not surprising. It was ace. Troy's face, when we caught him up.

ZED: 'I have absolutely no comment at this stage' Man that guy knows it's all over.

EVE: I wish he did. It isn't though is it ?

JO: Eve's right. What we did in that programme was damage his latest campaign. It would take more than that to stop him.

EVE: Exactly, and if it wasn't him, it would be someone else.

ZED: Hey loosen up will you. Can't we just soak up the success for a bit?

[Max comes in]

MAX: Check this out. The most fan-mail I've ever had. This is just the faxes.

[He produces a long roll of faxes]

"Thank you thank you thank you. I would like to congratulate you, not only for wiping the smile off the face of a money-grabbing..." I can't read that bit ... "but also for having such a beautiful smile yourself, it's a treat to see a new face..." Oh this must be about something else.

ZED: It's about Eve, that's what. I told you she was a natural.

MAX: Well that one is. There's plenty more.

[He runs through the roll. All of the ones he looks at are unsatisfactory]

ZED: Let's see.

[He takes the roll off Max, who retreats to have a cigarette]

JO: Well it's no less than you deserve, Eve. Good job.

EVE: Thanks. I mean, I didn't do much, really, it was -

ZED: She's still dissing herself, man. Listen "It was refreshing to hear someone putting the side of every young person. Someone real instead of that phoney pillock. When will we have a show called 'The Eve'?"

MAX: About as good as one of your ideas, Zed.

ZED: [To Eve] You should read these. Perhaps you'll believe, Eve.

EVE: Don't start.

JO: [To Max] I don't know how you could smoke that now.

MAX: It's not one of his.

JO: That's OK then.

MAX: Well she smokes...little Miss refreshing new face.

EVE: Not any more she doesn't.

JO: Oh no?

EVE: I don't think I could really. Not after all this. I hope not anyway.

MAX: Why's that then ?

EVE: It just makes me angry, I suppose. Seeing those people, thinking about the money. I don't know.

ZED: Hey Eve, listen to this. There's one from Pam. Magic. A fax from Pam Donald, and I'm touching it.

EVE: Brilliant. What does it say ?

ZED: “That’s my girl. I said it would be under your nose, and as always I was right. I thought you showed great promise. Congratulations on the fall of Troy. Come and see me soon. Love Pam”

EVE: Ah, that’s great.

JO: That’s praise coming from her. She’s one of the best.

ZED: She is the best, man.

JO: Where is she?

EVE: I don’t know, some war zone, she wouldn’t say.

JO: So which war zone do they get **Pulse TV** in?

ZED: No it says here its from hospital.

EVE: Hospital, what do you mean.

ZED: Ward 3B, King Georges Hospital.

[MUSIC -]

Scene Thirteen - The hospital.

[Eve arrives with Zed]

ZED: I'll wait outside.

EVE: Don't be soft, Zed.

ZED: But it's Pam Donald. I'll make a fool of myself.

EVE: Come on.

[They go into the hospital room. Pam is sitting up in bed]

PAM: Evie. Good to see you.

[Eve goes over and kisses her]

Watch all my tubes, will you.

EVE: Pam. You look ...

PAM: I look dreadful, I know. You're not very good at that are you?

[She laughs]

EVE: I was going to say...

PAM: So aren't you going to introduce me to your boyfriend.

EVE: Oh no he's not... this is Zed.

PAM: Zed. Couldn't think of a name, eh ?

ZED: Miss...Mrs...I'm so pleased....er....pleased..

PAM: Not too good at talking is he ? I expect he has other talents. Looks nice, though. Want to come in here with me, young man ?

EVE: Pam!

PAM: Sorry. Supposed to behave myself.

EVE: How are you feeling ?

PAM: Never better. Just staying in hospital because of the food, really.

EVE: Can you be serious, for a moment.

PAM: Of course. Congratulations, seriously. They brought a TV in here specially, for me to watch you. I was so proud. You're a reporter now.

EVE: Well, I'm called a reporter at least.

PAM: How did it feel ?

EVE: It felt good. I was nervous at the beginning of the programme, but I think I enjoyed it. It must be in the blood, somehow.

PAM: Listen, Evie, you don't want any of my blood just now. Put too much rubbish in it over the years. So is **'The Max'** saved. ?

EVE: Probably not. But Jo thinks we're going to get something else. One of Zed's ideas...sort of.

ZED: It's going to be a bit like it is now, but using more young people as reporters and investigators and that. Sort of seeking out injustice, that sort of thing. **'Beyond the Max'**, I call it.

PAM: He speaks.

EVE: Jo thinks the name isn't quite right.

PAM: I think Jo is right. And have you got over your strange admiration for Max Hankle ?

EVE: I suppose. When I think about it he was never very nice to me.

ZED: Max is not a nice 'dude' full stop.

PAM: I'm very pleased for you, Evie. Hold my hand will you ?

EVE: Are you OK ?

[George arrives, in his uniform, but with gaffer tape stuck over the CO logo, and with his arm in a sling]

PAM: Look who's here.

EVE: Uncle George.

GEORGE [Embarrassed] Pam. Flowers.

PAM: Old romantic, aren't you ?

Well, I am blessed with visitors today. Zed, this is my ex. George have you met Eve's husband-to-be ?

EVE: Pam!

GEORGE: I know Zed, yes of course. It was him that sent me to rescue young Eve here.

PAM: Of course. I haven't seen you since you became James Bond.

EVE: You should have seen him, Pam, being a spy. It was unbelievable.

[She does an impression of George in the library]

Hidden depths.

PAM: Very well hidden. Ridiculous old man.

GEORGE: Are you..... er.. How are you doing ?

PAM: Much the same.

What about you ? Still working for the enemy, are you ?

GEORGE: No.

EVE: They knew he'd helped us. He couldn't go back there. Jo's given him a job at Pulse TV.

GEORGE: We haven't got the badges yet.

PAM: So you'll be working full-time on crowd control. All Eve's fans.

GEORGE: That and watching for nasty messages from angry millionaires.

PAM: I have to say, Eve, I didn't know half of that stuff you dug up about Ambrose Troy. I was lying here getting angrier and angrier. It makes you feel used, doesn't it. All that...

[She feels a twinge or something, and her illness suddenly gets through the jollity she is pasting over it. They are all quiet for a moment.]

GEORGE: I'll get some water.

[He goes out]

ZED: I'll help.

[He follows]

PAM: [Still in pain] Men

EVE I hate this. Seeing you here. It doesn't seem right.

PAM: No, well. Only myself to blame. You don't realise until it's too late.

Come on, don't you start getting worried about me. I'm so proud of you, Evie. Not so proud..... angry...

[She loses track of her thought]

I get very tired, I'm afraid.

[Eve is upset. She puts her head on the bed. Pam puts her hand on Eve's head.]

[MUSIC -]