

# PRIME TIME

TEN-MINUTE PLAY

**By Leon Kaye**

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**SYNOPSIS:** Two executives and a newbie discuss possible shows to pitch to the networks.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
**(2 WOMEN, 2 MEN)**

PHIL..... Forties, affable but abrupt, runs the production company. He's interested in other people's ideas until he has a brainstorm and wants to drag the idea into another direction.

DANA..... Thirties, untalented yet competent, is holding onto her job by a thread and she knows it. She's become a "yes" woman.

JASE ..... Twenties, smart, imaginative but inexperienced.

WOMAN ..... On intercom (offstage).

**SETTING**

Phil's corporate office. Phil, depressed, sits behind a desk. Dana occupies one of the two chairs opposite, writes in a leather-bound notebook.

**DANA:** I'm a little unclear what we're gonna be pitching to the networks. You said you want some kind of variety show? But you don't want music?

**PHIL:** Yeah, music in a variety show can kill you.

**DANA:** So then why a variety show? Why not a sitcom?

**PHIL:** Maybe a sitcom about a variety show, eh?

**DANA:** With no music?

**PHIL:** Of course, no music.

*JASE knocks (off stage), peeks his head into the room, ENTERS.*

**JASE:** Mr Hubbard?

*PHIL leaps to his feet, approaches JASE. DANA also stands.*

**PHIL:** Jase, my boy. Jason – the savior.

**JASE:** Your secretary told me to just come in. Was that okay?

**PHIL:** No, but I'll make an exception cause we don't have much time. We're up against the . . . the . . . (To DANA.) What's that big cement thing you're up against that's gonna crush you if we don't move?

**DANA:** The network?

**PHIL:** Right, the network. Two network execs are on the way as we speak. Sit down, Jase. Let's all get to work.

*JASE sits, notices PHIL remains standing.*

**JASE:** You want me to sit?

**PHIL:** Yeah. It's better this way. You have to look up. I'm in power. I like the dynamic. Anyway, the network people are meeting us in the . . . the . . . Dana?

**DANA:** In the meeting room.

**PHIL:** Right. In a half hour and we need a show to pitch; otherwise, we're all unemployed and you're on a plane back to Memphis.

**JASE:** San Antonio.

**PHIL:** Details, details. Anyway, you understand the situation.

**JASE:** I'm not getting you. I moved here . . . to L.A. My whole family moved here.

**PHIL:** If you wanna be in the TV business, ya gotta move here.

**JASE:** I know.

**PHIL:** You just gotta.

**JASE:** I have a one year contract.

**PHIL:** Contract? That's adorable. You have a contract. Did you get it framed? (Sees the profound worry on JASE'S face.) Don't worry,

son. Everything will work fine if you can get us a show concept and maybe six or seven storylines all mapped out in the next half hour.

**DANA:** Twenty-five minutes.

**PHIL:** (*Looks at his watch.*) Should've sprung for a Seiko.

**DANA:** What about writing the pilot?

**PHIL:** I don't think there's time for that . . . unless we finish a little early.

*JASE seems lost. PHIL claps.*

**PHIL:** Chip chop. Time's rushing by.

**DANA:** Tick tock.

**PHIL:** Right. Tick tock.

**JASE:** Right. What about the show idea I sent you? Why can't we pitch that?

**PHIL:** Show? What show? (*To DANA.*) Why don't I know about his show?

**DANA:** You did read his show . . . Renaissance High School.

**PHIL:** Renaissance High School . . . yeah, that's right. Too expensive.

**JASE:** Really?

**PHIL:** I don't know what they tell you back in Nashville, but filming a series in Italy would cost millions.

**JASE:** San Antonio. And you wouldn't actually have to film in Italy.

**PHIL:** Wasn't the Renaissance held in Italy? Dana?

**DANA:** We could film in Yugoslavia for half the cost.

**JASE:** You don't need to. You can film the whole thing in studio.

**PHIL:** (*Ponders.*) I don't know. Michelangelo and Leonardo as high school students . . . seems like I've seen that before.

**JASE:** Where?

**PHIL:** Questions, questions.

**DANA:** What Phil means to say is . . .

**PHIL:** Too many unanswered questions.

**JASE:** Which is why you have a series, right? You have a series, and hopefully, you answer a lot of questions as the season progresses. (*PHIL looks confused.*) Dana?

**PHIL:** You don't get to say "Dana". Only I say "Dana".

**JASE:** Sorry. It was worth a try.

**PHIL:** What about a war series? You know, today's army. I've always wanted to do a war series.

**DANA:** What about the cost?

**PHIL:** We make it a cartoon. I just like the camaraderie of war. I hate the fighting. I hate the killing. But I like that we're all brothers and we cover each other's backs. Dana, is it back or backs?

**DANA:** Backs, I think.

**PHIL:** That's it then. *(To JASE.)* Can you pitch that?

**JASE:** You know, there were wars during the Renaissance . . .

**PHIL:** We're back in Italy!

**JASE:** I know, but—

**PHIL:** Geez!

**DANA:** Mr. Hubbard doesn't like Italy.

**PHIL:** You know what they get for a gold cross at the Vatican?! Those nuns are extortionists! No Italy. No mafia nuns. We set the thing in Iraq. Archie Bunker in a tank, how does that grab you?

**JASE:** I don't know.

**PHIL:** A warm-hearted bigoted sergeant that doesn't want anyone sitting in his tank. Good, eh?

**JASE:** I'm not sure yet.

**PHIL:** The second in command is a Mary Tyler Moore character, and you have a Belker character—

**JASE:** Belker?

**DANA:** Hill Street Blues.

**PHIL:** The guy that growls at dogs. I love that. Only maybe he growls at Iraqis.

**JASE:** What if two of the soldiers were artists?

**PHIL:** Okay, that's good. Quirky stuff.

**JASE:** And they want to paint the greatest masterpieces of all time.

**PHIL:** Only they have no paint!

**JASE:** No, actually, they have paint . . . and brushes . . . but there's the mean old Catholic Church that tells them what they can and can't paint . . .

**PHIL:** No religion. Religion's a killer. And don't get me started about religious variety shows.

**DANA:** And there is no Catholic Church in Iraq.

**PHIL:** Really? *(Beat.)* That's it then. Brainstorm! We make a series about the first Catholic Church in Iraq!

**DANA:** I like it.

**PHIL:** The priest is Archie Bunker. And the nun is Mary Tyler Moore, and the altar boy growls at Iraqis!

**JASE:** Is this supposed to be a sitcom?

**PHIL:** You tell me.

**JASE:** You can't make a series about a church and avoid religion.

**PHIL:** Remember, it's a cartoon.

**JASE:** Even so.

**PHIL:** Look at "South Park."

**JASE:** They do religion.

**PHIL:** "The Simpsons"?

**JASE:** Yes.

**DANA:** He's right. All the cartoons are sacrilegious and the writers are going to hell.

**PHIL:** You know that for a fact?

**DANA:** It was in "The Hollywood Reporter."

**PHIL:** Okay, instead of a church, we make it a MASH unit. With Jerry Seinfeld and Gary Shandling as a pair of wise-cracking surgeons.

**WOMAN:** (*On intercom.*) Sir, your two o'clock is here.

**PHIL:** But it's only one forty-five! Stall 'em!

**WOMAN:** Sir, they're in the room. They can hear you.

**PHIL:** Oh . . . what I meant to say is I'm in a meeting now, and we should be out in a few minutes. Okay? (*To JASE.*) We've got nothing to pitch! Come on, we need ideas!

**WOMAN:** You really need to press the off button.

**PHIL:** (*Pushes it.*) Okay! Gary Seinfeld and Jerry Shandling . . . Reverse that! MASH hospital. In Iraq! Archie Bunker, Mary and even Rhoda for God's sake!

**JASE:** What if we move the hospital to Santa Monica to save on costs. And we cast Seth Green and Anthony Michael Hall. They should be available.

**PHIL:** (*To DANA.*) Is there a fire alarm pull box in the hallway?

**DANA:** I never noticed.

**JASE:** We don't need to pull a fire alarm. (*Beat.*) Look, we have a show all ready to go. I have the pilot written. Ten episodes all mapped out! I'm throwing you a life preserver. I don't know why you're so intent on drowning!

**PHIL:** Rethinking, contemplating Italians . . . So, a Renaissance High School?

**JASE:** Yes!

**PHIL:** All the kids are gonna be the artistic masters we know today.

**JASE:** Some of the kids. Not all.

**DANA:** Kind of like a WB show, right?

**JASE:** Exactly like a WB show. The heart-throb long-haired artists. Misunderstood. Uncool, but passionate about their art!

**PHIL:** And they live in this beautiful ornate Italian house. And each week, one of them gets voted off.

**JASE:** Ah . . . no. No, that's . . . that's . . .

**PHIL:** A reality show with fictional characters! All the great artists of the twentieth century living in a penthouse! That's so great!

**DANA:** Or maybe classic television characters?

*JASE raises his hands to hold his throbbing head.*

**PHIL:** Yes! All living in a penthouse overlooking New York's Central Park!

**DANA:** Lucy, Gilligan, Jackie Gleason . . .

**PHIL:** Alex on "Family Ties" . . . before the Parkinsons.

**JASE:** (*Morosely.*) And then there's Maude.

**PHIL:** Right! (*Dancing and singing.*) And then there's Maude. And then there's Maude.

**JASE:** One thing, sir. How can you have a reality show if you're using actors?

**PHIL:** Groundbreaking television, son. It's never been done before.

**DANA:** Yes, but is it must see TV?

**PHIL:** Laverne and Shirley on the obstacle course . . . trying to run in and out of . . . what do you call those things?

**JASE:** Cones?

**PHIL:** Cones! Dana?

**DANA:** I have to see that!

**PHIL:** That's it. We've got it. (*Hits the intercom.*) Sabina, send in the executives! We have our show!

**WOMAN:** Umm . . . they left, sir.

**PHIL:** Left? What do you mean? They were just in there!

**WOMAN:** They said they had another appointment, and since you obviously were unprepared, they were—

**PHIL:** Unprepared?! Who gave them that idea? (*To JASE.*) Did you give them that idea?

**JASE:** Me?! I was sitting here.

**DANA:** I told you not to trust him, Mr. Hubbard.

**JASE:** What do you mean, not trust me? I just moved here. They probably overheard you on that intercom.

**PHIL:** It's just like that movie. What's the name of that, Dana?

**DANA:** "The Manchurian Candidate"?

**PHIL:** No, the other one.

**DANA:** "No Way Out"?

**PHIL:** Right. Kevin Costner's in the white military uniform, then he's talking Russian and spying and acting Italian.

**JASE:** You're just being paranoid!

**PHIL:** Let's go. Come on. (*Pulls at JASE, pushes him toward the door.*)

**JASE:** What are you doing?!

**PHIL:** Get out! Get out of my building!

**JASE:** Fine. Take your hands off me!

**PHIL:** I'm right behind you. I'm on your tail, bucko.

*PHIL and JASE EXIT. DANA smiles, push-dials the phone.*

**DANA:** Yeah, okay, remember the spec I showed you? Renaissance High School? *(Beat.)* Right. We change some of the character names, some of the plot points – *(Beat.)* It's an idea. You can't copyright an idea. We change some of the dialog. *(Beat.)* No, Phil's not pitching it at all. And the writer's probably on the next plane back to Mommy-ville. Boo-hoo. Hollywood is so unfair. *(Giggles.)* A year from now, Phil will be looking at the trades and yelling, *(Impersonates PHIL.)* "Dana, what's this Renaissance High School? Why can't we come up with ideas like that?"

**WOMAN:** *(On intercom.)* Dana?

**DANA:** *(Smile fades as she looks at the intercom.)* Yes?

**WOMAN:** I think Phil left the intercom on by accident.

**DANA:** Oh?

**PHIL:** *(On intercom.)* Actually, it wasn't an accident. And after I'm done with you, you'll be living in . . . in . . . Dana, what's the name of those metal houses on wheels where all the poor people live?

**DANA:** Hell. I'll be living in hell.

**LIGHTS FADE.**

**THE END**