

The Newsmaker

(A Synopsis)

Screenplay, looking for a buyer

Kevin Donovan

A hurricane approaches the south shore of Long Island as residents frantically evacuate their beach front neighborhoods to seek higher ground. While the police and National Guard direct traffic toward safety, an SUV speeds down the empty lanes in the opposite direction - toward the now evacuated stretches of beachfront. It is Bob Beachamp and his television crew, heading for a remote location to report on the impending arrival of the storm.

They find just the right house, a beach house on stilts, and set up a shot for their employer, NCN (National Communications Network), the largest cable news network in the country. Bob positions himself with the house and the ocean behind him, while his driver (Frank) drives the vehicle down on to the beach and backs it up to the stilts of the house. He then encircles two of them with a chain that is attached to the rear of the truck, all in preparation for the riveting footage that will catapult Bob to nationwide fame.

As Bob reports on the coming storm, the camera captures the house behind him, which suddenly appears to have been blown down, a dramatic demonstration of the powers of mother nature when in fact it is simply the result of a powerful four wheel drive vehicle.

The footage is carried by every network, leading to exciting interviews with Bob on the crew's escape from the storm and to his next assignment: coverage of a volatile Los Angeles trial with racial overtones that are certain to boil over when the verdict is announced. Riots erupt, but not in the neighborhood that Bob is doing his report. They certainly look like riots on camera, but it is instead a hired band of Hollywood extras, well trained on the activities and actions that will boost TV ratings.

From there, Bob and his crew travel to Africa - the Sudan to be exact. The United States has chosen to engage in a humanitarian military operation to help stop the spread of AIDS and famine in this destitute nation ravaged by civil war. And on the scene - thanks to a secret agreement between the U.S. government and NCN - is Bob Beachamp and his crew. It is a PR effort like none other, one that is sure to increase the African American vote of the sitting President, and one that Bob reports on with his usual dramatic embellishments. But it is here that he is faced with a reality he cannot ignore - famine and death that no artistic license can make entertaining. He quickly discovers that the flow of medical supplies and food is

inextricably tied to the seriousness and reality of his coverage, reporting nightly with the help of Dr. Alexis Truman, the woman responsible for the care of hundreds of suffering humans. In the beginning he succeeds, but then the tragic stories drive the TV ratings down.

He is ordered to change the content of his coverage and focus on what little military action there actually is. Despite the gravity of his subject matter, the business of entertainment is what must dictate his actions, and famine is not entertaining. Then he has an idea.

The dirt and sweat and tears of her efforts have done little for Alexis Truman's appearance, but underneath the grit, she is an attractive woman and Bob recognizes this. He commissions a makeover by the salons and boutiques of his hotel and transforms her into a beautiful and heroic woman. Soon after their first report on the progress of supply deliveries, the ratings turn upward and she is a media darling. The outcome is tangible: supplies increase and the rate of death begins to level off. Lives are being saved.

Through this campaign, Bob Beachamp has succeeded in stealing the thunder of the United States Military establishment and they don't like it. Since the *actual* civil war is many miles away from the center of the suffering, they begin to withdraw their support. The pipeline of food and medical supplies suddenly breaks down, and this sets the stage for Bob's final master plan.

In the dead of night, Bob and his crew steal a jeep and drive north to Cairo, where they board a flight to New York. With the assistance of one of his Hollywood extras in Los Angeles, a bomb scare is called in as the plane crosses the Atlantic. The "terrorist's" demand: Bring food and medical supplies to Sudan.

With the help of modern satellite technology, Bob is able to report live from the "ill fated" jetliner, interviewing the passengers who have been convinced to participate in the ruse in the name of humanity. The series of dramatic interviews with passengers creates a flood of calls into the network from viewers determined to give money and resources to this suffering country they have never heard about. The coverage degenerates into a telethon that ends with the climactic but safe landing of the jetliner in New York, which - in compliance with terrorist demands - is evacuated and swiftly loaded with supplies for a return trip to Africa. Bob and his crew choose to serve as couriers and receive a hero's welcome upon their arrival back in Sudan.

Fittingly, the story ends with Bob, Alexis and Bob's crew attending a movie about the dramatic events. The name of the movie: The Newsmaker.