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INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, CBN STUDIOS - DAY

RUTH TRAVELER sits at one end of a big conference desk.  
Again, a little nervous.

CUT TO:

The other end of the conference table? Nothing but white men in grey suits. The men stare. RUTH smiles nervously. We cut back and forth between them a bit, until...

EXEC 1

Your name again?

RUTH

It's Theresa. T-h-e-r-e-s-a.  
Traveler. T-r-a-v-e-l-e-r. As in a  
person who travels. Obviously.

She laughs until she realizes no one else is.

But I usually go by my middle name,  
Ruth. So, Ruth Trave...

EXEC 2

And where are you from?

RUTH

New York City. Harlem. Born and  
raised. Specifically, near One  
Hundred and...

The white men lean in to each other and mumble.

EXEC 3

The Harlem here in New York  
City...?

RUTH

That's the one.

They confer again.

EXEC 1

Isn't that area of the city...  
dangerous?

RUTH

Oh, no, not at all. Not sure how it  
got this reputation as a...

EXEC 4

(Interrupting) And you went to  
school at...

Looks at papers in his hand. Double-checks with another EXEC. Then a third. They all look puzzled, whisper something, then he speaks again.

...Yale?

RUTH

Yes. Class of 1949.

More conference mumbling.

EXEC 5

Yale UNIVERSITY?

RUTH

Correct, Yale. Ph.D. in American History.

EXEC 1

Isn't that... unusual?

RUTH

American History?

EXEC 1

No, Yale University.

RUTH

Well, it's been around since 1701, so I'd assumed people have gotten used to it by now.

EXEC 2

No, we mean YOU. Attending Yale. Isn't that... unusual?

RUTH is puzzled, then the light bulb turns on. She tries to keep it together.

RUTH

Well, it's not THAT unusual. Quite a few Negroes have attended Yale. In fact, as far back as Eighteen Seventy-Four...

EXEC 3

Will this be your first time on television?

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

We see the high-heeled shoes of the ASSISTANT running down a hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, cbn STUDIOS

RUTH

Yes, DEFINITELY my first time on television. But I've been lecturing in large study halls, so that's KIND of like being on...

EXEC 4

That's actually NOTHING like being on television.

RUTH

(Apologetically)

Oh, no, I realize it's TELEVISION! A powerful medium. In fact, if television had been around when Abraham Lincoln was president, he probably wouldn't have...

EXEC 1

So you think Lincoln wouldn't have been assassinated if he has been on television?

RUTH

What? No, I didn't say that...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The ASSISTANT is running down the hallway toward the conference room, carrying papers in one hand.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM.

EXEC 5

Are you a black nationalist?

RUTH

Am I a what?

EXEC 1  
Black nationalist. You're not one  
of them, are you?

RUTH  
No. Why would you think I'm a black  
nationalist?

EXEC 2  
Well, many of you Negro (Finger  
quotes) "intellectuals" these days  
seem to be part of that whole...  
movement.

EXEC 5  
What's that one fellow? Garver?

RUTH  
Garvey? Marcus Garvey?

The Execs stare at her, then mumble among themselves.

RUTH (CONT'D)  
I mean, there is something to be  
said for Negroes supporting their  
own community, which is...

Realizes the Execs just staring at her blankly. They start to  
confer again.

(Pause) Is this going to come up on  
the show?

More whispered discussions among the execs. The ASSISTANT  
bursts into the room and waits to be acknowledged. All EXECs  
turn to her. She thrusts out the papers. One takes it from  
her and reads it, frowns, then passes it to the next, who  
reads it, passes it again, until it gets to EXEC 1. He reads  
it.

EXEC 1  
Well, we've lost Mississippi.

More discussions, then...

EXEC 3  
Misses Traveler, do you consider  
yourself a "smart" woman?

RUTH  
Uh... I think I'm intelligent.

They confer again, look up at her in unison, confer again.

EXEC 4  
Are you smarter than white people?

RUTH  
Than who?

EXEC 4  
White people. Do you consider  
yourself smarter than white people?

RUTH  
(Thinking) You mean, all of them?

The execs confer.  
No, not ALL white people, but I  
guess I'm AS smart or smarter  
than... a reasonable percentage?  
Sorry, do you always ask...

EXEC 1  
Miss Traveler...

RUTH  
Misses.

EXEC 1  
Excuse me?

RUTH  
It's "Misses" Traveler.

EXEC 1  
(To the others) Married.

They confer.  
Noted. Misses Traveler, I'm sure  
these questions seem strange, but  
they are important to what we're  
doing here. Particularly today.

RUTH  
Particularly today?

EXEC 2  
ESPECIALLY today. You may not  
realize it, but this isn't our  
normal contestant pre-show  
interview.

RUTH  
I had that suspicion.

EXEC 3  
(Standing and walking toward RUTH)  
Misses Traveler, you are about to  
appear on "Do It For The Money."

EXEC 4  
(Standing and walking toward RUTH)  
America's number one nationally  
televised game show.

EXEC 2  
(Standing and walking toward RUTH)  
And YOU are not a normal  
contestant.

RUTH  
I'm not?

EXEC 1  
Of course not, you are...

EXEC 2 rushes back to stop him. He whispers, then motions for  
all the others to come back. They all confer. WTF?

EXEC 1 (CONT'D)  
(Standing) Miss Traveler...

RUTH  
Misses.

EXEC 1  
Has anyone spoken to you about...

RUTH  
Spoken to me about what?

EXEC 1  
About you... your...

He sweeps his hand in front of his face. RUTH wonders what  
the hell that means.  
Your... whole...

RUTH is blank-faced. The execs notice and consult.

EXEC 5  
She doesn't know.

EXEC 2  
Apparently, no one's spoken to her.

RUTH  
About what?

EXEC 3  
(Sarcasm) Great way to run a  
network, I'll tell you.

EXEC 4  
AND we've lost Mississippi.

EXEC 2  
What's the contingency plan?

RUTH  
You need a contingency plan?  
For...?

EXEC 5  
(To the others) Saying nothing is  
the contingency plan. This is  
Cooper's baby.

RUTH  
Someone has a "baby?"

EXEC 1  
Agreed. Let Cooper handle that. He  
probably doesn't want anyone to  
steal his thunder, anyway.

Harumphs. Agreement. It's Cooper's baby.

EXEC 2  
She's his big idea, you know he  
wants it.

EXEC 3  
It's Cooper, of COURSE he wants  
it.

EXEC 5  
So we're agreed? Let Cooper handle  
it?

They "harump" in agreement.

RUTH  
Handle what?

The execs all turn to RUTH.  
Sorry, I was just wondering what  
about me was being handled.

EXEC 1  
Miss Traveler...



RUTH

Misses.

EXEC 1

Misses. What's your goal in coming here?

RUTH

I'm sorry?

EXEC 2

What do you hope to accomplish?

RUTH

What?

EXEC 3

What are you looking to achieve?

RUTH

Nothing. I just... sent in a postcard. To be a contestant. In fact, it was mostly my mother's idea. She said, "You're a professor at Yale, you're smart. You should be on that show." So I...

The execs confer.

EXEC 1

Fine. What do you WANT?

RUTH

Well, a new car would be nice! (Laughs) A new living room set. (Thinking, then...) Oh! A new refrigerator! Yes. I could DEFINITELY use one of those. One of those Amana double-door, frost-free, refrigerator freezers. So, if you could work it out where I go home with one of those...

RUTH laughs at her joke. The execs are stone-faced.

EXEC 2

Are you suggesting we fix the show?

RUTH

No, of course not, I...

EXEC 1  
 (Memorized by heart) Federal  
 Communications Commission  
 regulations stipulate that no  
 contestant on a game show shall be  
 promised specific prizes and/or the  
 cash equivalent prior to the taping  
 and outcome of their participation  
 in actual gameplay in exchange for  
 submitting or responding with the  
 previously agreed-upon responses,  
 under penalty of law, such  
 penalties including fines no less  
 than \$500,000 and/or possible  
 imprisonment.

They glower at her for "suggesting" it.

RUTH  
 I was kidding. I realize you can't  
 fix the show. I wasn't  
 suggesting...

EXEC 1  
 I think we have all we need,  
 Miss...

He pressed a button on the intercom on the table.

RUTH  
 Misses.

EXEC 1  
 Misses Traveler. Thank you. We're  
 going to take you down to the Green  
 Room. There, someone will call when  
 they're ready for you on set.

All execs stand as she gets ready to leave.  
 The room is not actually green.  
 That's just a word that's used to  
 describe it. Like blue laws. Yellow  
 belly. (Thinking) White noise.

At the last one, RUTH stares at him.

RUTH  
 White noise. Got it.

The ASSISTANT enters and RUTH stands to leave. They go