

## The Scoop

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While they were finishing their meal without any words, two firemen came in with soot-streaked faces. They sat down at a nearby table and ordered hamburgers and cold drinks. Robin kept looking over at them. Then one of them said to the other, "I sure hope George and Jeff are going to be okay."

"Yeah, that was a long fall."

"Excuse me," Robin turned to them. "What happened to George and Jeff?"

"They fell through the floor into the department store."

"When did this happen?"

"Just now," the other fireman replied. "We heard it on the walkie-talkie on our way over here."

Robin stood quickly and said, "How would you guys like to be on TV?" They looked at each other and one grinned and elbowed the other. "You come outside and give me the story of George and Jeff and I'll get it on TV for you," Robin promised.

"And," Ross piped in, "If you will tell me the channel you are monitoring on the walkie-talkie, I'll buy your lunch."

Within minutes they were standing outside the café with the fire down the street behind the two firemen and Robin was asking them questions. She was good. She asked why they thought it happened and one of them said the structure was old and not up to building code. The other fireman said, "Everyone up there knew the danger and went in, anyway, to save property and lives."

While they were talking, an ambulance went by with the siren blaring. Ross swung the camera away from Robin and the men and shot it going toward the scene of the fire.

"Let's go!" Robin shouted and Ross took out a twenty-dollar bill, shoved it into the hand of one of the guys and jogged off to catch Robin. When Robin reached the media area, there was quite a stir about what the ambulance was for. They always carried a walkie-talkie to eavesdrop on the action, but didn't always know which frequency was being used. Thanks to the two firemen, they could know what was happening just as it happened. Robin took her position and called in a late-breaking report. Ross turned the camera on her and heard in his earpiece, "Ready unit 3 on your report... on the count of three... one, two, three, you're on."

"Just a few minutes ago," Robin began "Two firemen fell through the flooring on the second floor into the store below. Apparently," she was saying, "they have sustained some injuries. They are still someplace inside the department store." Then she looked at Ross and he nodded, telling her that she was right.

"Jack Marshall," anchor for Jack Marshall Afternoon, said on the air, "Thanks, Robin, we'll check back with you later."

Then she signed off. There was excitement engraved on her face and she pumped the air with her fist. She grinned broadly at Ross and he patted the camera.

"Let's go back to the van. We can get a good shot from there of them loading the injured firemen and download your interviews." Robin nodded and they jogged off and made their way to the van.

Ross quickly put on the videotape to download the interview with the two firemen, grabbed another tape and climbed on top of the van where Robin was waiting. He slapped the cartridge into the camera, and put it on his shoulder. He went to the front of the van and shot the scene in front of the burning building, zooming in close where they were loading someone into the ambulance. Robin was listening to the walkie-talkie.

Then the voice of the news coordinator at the studio said, "Ready for a live update in four seconds," and started the countdown. Robin slid the walkie-talkie into her shoulder bag just as Jack Marshall put her on. Ross kept the shot of the scene going as Robin described it, saying she was not sure which fireman was being loaded into the ambulance. While she was talking, another ambulance arrived and Ross kept rolling and pulled back to focus on Robin as she reported that a second ambulance had arrived for the second fireman.

Then Ross came forward again and kept the camera running, showing the street where the two ambulances sat, while Robin's soft clear voice kept a dialog going with Jack about the fire. Shortly, the first ambulance left the scene. Then, they loaded the second man and drove away with the siren blaring as Robin gave the broadcast back to Jack.

"Come on," Robin caught his arm and turned him. She ran to the side of the van where the ladder was, looked down and froze.

Ross came up to her, "What's wrong?"

"You go first," she returned.

"You afraid of heights?" Ross asked as he started down. She did not reply, but started down behind him. He caught her around the waist and set her down in the alley. "You are afraid of heights," Ross nodded.

She pointed a finger at him, "Don't you tell that to anyone."

"I promise," he grinned.

As they hurried back to the media area, Ross was thinking that this was not good. What if they had to go up in a chopper or shoot from a high building? He was now having second thoughts about her making a desk job in the studio. This could be a real handicap for her.

Because of the two firemen being injured, the briefing was delayed, so they just milled around picking up bits of information among the reporters and monitoring the walkie-talkie. The studio asked for an update. Ross shouldered the cam and Robin pushed her hair back in place. Chicago is a windy city. Robin was giving a rundown of the story putting it all into perspective when Jack Nathins bumped into Ross and jerked the camera shot away from Robin.

Jack was a rival cameraman from HGFA Channel Two News and they had butted head several times trying to get a good position for a camera shot. That was acceptable in their line of work, but to blatantly ruin a live shot with a reporter was the biggest 'no-no' among cameramen. It was a flagrant act of disrespect.

"Sorry," Jack excused himself, but Ross was not about to excuse it. He had just ruined one of Robin's broadcasts and Ross was furious. If looks could kill Jack would be dead meat. He quickly refocused on Robin who finished her broadcast with professional poise and signed off.

As soon as the connection was broken, tears came into Robin's eyes and she lowered her head to hide them, fishing for a hankie in her shoulder bag. Ross walked up to her and shoved the camera in her stomach. Out of reflex, she caught it, but looked at him puzzled, her cheeks still wet.

Ross pushed through a few reporters and caught Jack on the shoulder turning him around. As he turned, Ross

clenched his fist and cocked it back. Then he planted it with all his strength into Jack's face. Blood spewed from his nose and mouth as he staggered backward, his camera flew up in the air and landed with a bang on the sidewalk. "Sorry," Ross spit at him.

Jack regained himself quickly and flew at Ross, tackling him onto the ground. They rolled around punching each other and scattering other reporters. After the shock of what was happening wore off, several male reporters pulled them apart and stood them up.

"You broke my nose, you son of a bitch!" Jack yelled at him, blood streaming down his rather dark Italian face onto his shirt and he struggled to be free from the men holding him to get at Ross. His black mass of hair was ruffled and he glared at Ross from under busy eyebrows.

"And you," Ross stabbed a finger at him, "deliberately bumped me and spoiled Robin's broadcast." Ross lunged at him, but the reporter and cameraman were holding him fast.

While Ross was yelling back at Jack, the cops arrived and Jack pointed at him. "I want this man arrested for assault and battery." While the officers asked around to find out what happened. Ross and Jack glared at each other, still restrained by their captors and Jack kept wiping the blood on the back of his hand.

Ross was cuffed, and they were putting him into a police car, while one of Jack's co-workers was helping him into a nearby car. He was holding a handkerchief to his nose and cursing. Ross looked at the bewildered Robin and shrugged. She was still holding the camera just as he had put it in her arms. "Guess you'll have to get a new cameraman out here," Ross said apologetically.

Ross was sorry to leave Robin without a cameraman, but he was glad that he punched Jack in the face. He hoped he had broken his nose and knocked a few teeth loose, too. If he ever did anything like that again, he would knock his Italian nose clear off his face.

Ross pleaded guilty and signed a confession that he had struck the first blow. By the time he was fingerprinted and booked in the city jail, he was starting to feel the blows he took from Jack and his anger had subsided. He would face a fine and, maybe, if Jack pushed it, some jail time. He was really regretting that. He knew that most of the reporters would be on his side, but he did strike the first blow, and oh, how good that felt.

Well, at the least he and Robin got the scoop and were the first to tell about the hurt firemen. It would take things like that to catch the eye of the powers that be. He was just wishing he would be around to camera for her. He really loved working with her. She was a little hard to get along with at times, but she had talent and determination and a few good breaks was what it took in the media business.