HI, I'M RON, the Host's Chief Administrative Assistant, but you can just call me Ron. Let me begin, at the risk of seeming weird, by saying congratulations.

Of course I know. I've been doing this show every year for six years; how could I not know? But look at it this way, Kim—do you mind if I call you Kim? You have been chosen to represent all humanity for one evening. All the birds and beasts too. The worms and the butterflies. The fishes of the sea. The lilies of the field. You are, for one half hour tonight, the representative of all life on the planet. Hell, all life in the Universe, as far as we know. That calls for congratulations, doesn't it? You have a right to be proud. And your family, too.

Did you, I mean do you have a family? How nice. Well, we all know what they'll be watching tonight, don't we? Of course, I know, everybody watches it anyway. More than watch the Academy Awards. Eight to ten points more. A point is about thirteen million people these days, did you know that?

Okay. Anyway. Have you ever been on TV before? "Long shot at a ball game"—that's good. I loved Bill Murray too. God rest his soul. Anyway. Okay. TV is ninety-nine percent preparation, especially live TV. So if you'll walk over here with me, let's take this opportunity to run through the steps for our lighting people, as well as yourself; so you will be able to concentrate on the Event itself.

After all, it's your night.

Watch your step. Lots of wires.

Okay. We call this Stage Left. At 8:59, one minute to Airtime, one of the Girls will bring you out. Over there, in the little green outfits. What? Since you're a woman it should be guys in bikinis? I get it, a joke. You have quite a sense of humor, Kim. Do you mind if I call you Kim?

Right, we did.

Anyway. Okay. You'll stand here. Toes on that mark. Don't worry, the cameras won't linger on you, not yet. You'll just be part of the scene at the beginning. There will be one song from the International Children's Rainbow Chorus. "Here Comes the Sun," I think. All you have to do is stand here and look pretty. Dignified, then. Whatever. You're the first woman in two years, by the way; the last two Consumers were men.

I don’t know why, Consumers is just what we call them; I mean, call you. What would you want us to call you?

That’s another joke, right? Whatever.

Okay. Anyway. Song ends, it’s 9:07. Some business with the lights and the Host comes on. I don’t need to tell you there’ll be applause. He walks straight up to you, and—kiss or handshake? Suit yourself. After the handshake, a little small talk. Where you’re from, job, etc. Where are you from, by the way?

How nice. I didn’t know they spoke English, but then it was British for years, wasn’t it?

Anyway. Okay. Don’t worry about what to say; the Host has been briefed on your background, and he’ll ask a question or two. Short and sweet, sort of like Jeopardy.

To meet him? Well—of course—maybe—tonight right before the show, if time allows. But you have to understand, Mr. Crystal’s a very busy man, Kim. Do you mind if I call you Kim?

Right, we did. I remember. Sorry.

Okay. Anyway. A little ad-lib and it’s 9:10. I have it all here on my clipboard, see? To the minute. At 9:10 there’s some business with the lights, then the Girls bring out the Presidents of the Common Market, the African Federation, the Americas, Pacific Rim, etc. Five gentlemen, one of them a lady this year, I believe. There’s a brief statement; nothing elaborate. “Your great courage, protecting our way of life” sort of thing. A few words on how the Lottery works, since this was the first year people were allowed to buy tickets for others.

I’m sorry you feel that way. I’m sure voluntary would be better. But somebody must have bought you a ticket; that’s the way it works.

Anyway. Okay. Where were we? 9:13, the Presidents. They have a plaque that goes to your family after. Don’t take it; it’s just to look at. Then a kiss; right, handshake. Sorry. I’ll make a note of it. Then they’re out of here, Stage Right. Don’t worry, the Girls manage all the traffic.

Okay. 9:14, lights down, then up on the Native People’s presentation. You’re still standing here, Stage Left, watching them, of course. You might even like it. Three women and three men, clickers and drums and stuff. While the women dance, the men chant. “Science, once our enemy, now our brother” sort of thing. You’ll feel something on the back of your neck; that’s the wind machine. They finish at 9:17, cross to here, give you a kind of bark scroll. Take it but don’t try to unroll it. It’s 9:18 and they’re out

of here, Stage Left. That's the end of the—

What? No, the corporations themselves don't make a presentation. They want to keep a very low profile.

Anyway. Okay. 9:19 and that's the end of the warm-up, as we call it. The Host comes back out, and you walk with him—here, let's try it—across to Center Stage. He'll help you stay in the spotlight. He admires the scroll, makes a joke, ad-lib stuff; don't worry about it. He's done it every year now for six years and never flubbed yet.

There won't be so many wires underfoot tonight.

Okay. It's 9:20. You're at Center Stage, toes here. That's it, right on the mark. There's more business with the lights, and the Host introduces the President of the International Institute of Environmental Sciences, who comes out from Stage Left. With the Donut. We don't see it, of course. It's in a white paper sack. He sets it here, on the podium in front of you.

He stands out there, those green marks are his—we call him the Green Meany—and gives his Evils of Science rap, starting at 9:22. "For centuries, poisoned the Earth, fouled the air, polluted the waters, etc., etc." It's the same rap as last year but different, if you know what I mean. A video goes with it; what we call the sad video. You don't have to watch if you don't want to, just look concerned, alarmed, whatever. I mean it all really happened! Dead rivers, dead birds, dioxins. Two minutes' worth.

Okay. Anyway. It's 9:24, and he starts what we call the glad video. Blue sky, birds, bears, etc. Gives the Wonders of Science rap where he explains how they have managed to collect and contain all the year's toxic wastes, pollutants, etc., and keep them out of the environment—

How? I don't know exactly. I never listen to the technical part. Some kind of submolecular-nano-mini-mumbo-jumbo. But he explains it all, I'm pretty sure. I think there's even a diagram. Anyway, he explains how all the toxic wastes for the year have been collected and concentrated into a single Donut. The fiscal year, by the way. That's why the Ceremony is tonight and not New Year's Eve.

Okay. Anyway. Hands you the bag.

Exits Stage Right, 9:27. Now it's just you and the Host, and of course, the Donut, still in the bag.

It might be a little greasy. You can hold it at the top if you want to. Whatever.

Anyway. Okay. 9:28. You'll hear a drumroll. It might sound corny now but it won't

sound corny then. I know because I've been here every year for six years, standing right over there in the wings, and I get a tear in my eye every time. Every damn time. The camera pulls in close. This is your moment. You reach in the bag and—

Huh? It looks like any other donut. I'm sure it'll be glazed, if that's what you requested.

Okay. Anyway. 9:29, but don't worry about the time. This is your moment. Our moment, really, everybody in the world who cares about the environment, and these days that includes everybody. You reach in the bag, you pull out the Donut—

What happens next? I get it, still joking. I admire somebody with your sense of humor. Kim.

Anyway. Okay. We all know what happens next.

You eat it.