

UNCANNY COUNTY

"Host in the Machine"

Episode 2-A

By: Todd Faulkner

Scene 1:

SOUND: INTERIOR - CAR DRIVING, (Music on radio?)

MORGAN: You don't find this strange? (beat) The secret interview at a casual restaurant - using code names, for god's sake - driving out to meet the woman I'm theoretically replacing at a backup television studio in the middle of nowhere?

BRANDON: I just figured it was par for the course in the news biz. Or a ritual sacrifice. (beat) That last part was a joke.

MORGAN: (without humor) It was funny.

BRANDON: Morgan - Helen looks harmless enough -

MORGAN: (chiding him) Ms. Macklowe - News 3's executive producer - is no one to be afraid of. Unless you're trying to hide a big story from her.

BRANDON: And she said the job was yours.

MORGAN: If Connie Ambrose signs off. (beat) Well, after all these years, I guess she has earned that right.

BRANDON: There's that accent. Does it always come back when you come home?

MORGAN: No. And it's not home. Not for years now. (beat) There - she's turning up ahead.

BRANDON: I see it. Wow. This is off the map.

MORGAN: It's their old studio. Apparently it's the only place Connie will work.

BRANDON: OK, that's a little weird.

MORGAN: I guess if you're as big as she is, you get what you want. (explaining) (beat) There it is. On the right.

SOUND: Car turns, road gets bumpier

BRANDON: (beat) You know this would be a huge change for us.

MORGAN: And a huge step for me. From night weekend anchor in Nowhere, Texas to filling the seat of the biggest local anchor in the entire -

BRANDON: I mean it's theoretically hard enough to find work as a - theoretical physicist-

MORGAN: I know, but this could be my big-

BRANDON: I just want to make sure you're really considering -

MORGAN: I'm considering everything.

SOUND: CAR parks. Distant car door opens, closes,

MORGAN: Jobs like this don't just fall out of the sky.

BRANDON: I'm sure they don't, but after that last-

MORGAN: It was a fight. We're fine.

SOUND: Door OPENS

BRANDON: I should come with you -

MORGAN: No. I'm fine. Besides, you can't. I had to sign an NDA just to meet Connie Ambrose.

BRANDON: Oh good. More secrets.

MORGAN: Don't be that way. It's just - wait here.

SOUND: Door CLOSES, FOOTSTEPS on grass, then pavement,

HELEN: Here we are. Is your young man - ?

MORGAN: Staying in the car. As discussed.

HELEN: Good. I remind you that what you're about to see is strictly confidential. No one - No one, not Brandon, not your family -

MORGAN: I don't have any family to speak of, and I know how to keep a secret.

HELEN: All right then.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS, Distant THUNDER,

MORGAN: She only works out here?

HELEN: Not much to look at is it? Guess you'd call it "vintage."

MORGAN: Old school, for sure. Wow, the tower's only -

HELEN: That's just a relay to the main newsroom. Signal goes out from there across the region.

MORGAN: That can't be up to HD standards...

HELEN: It ain't. But the signal is.

MORGAN: How is that possible?

HELEN: Good question – as you're about to see, Connie Ambrose is just full of surprises...

MUSIC: Theme song/Breaking News Music?

NARRATOR: Morgan McNeil grew up idolizing newscaster Connie Ambrose, a local news giant and a legend around these parts. But when she finally meets her childhood idol, Morgan may just find that being a local legend takes an awful lot more than she bargained for, especially on the airwaves -- of Uncanny County...

Scene 2:

MUSIC: BREAKING NEWS THEME

CONNIE (ON TV): The 45th annual family hunt for the elusive beast will kick off this Saturday at 9 a.m.

JERRY (ON TV): And as always, the annual event is B.Y.O.B. (pause) Bring Your Own Bigfoot. (lame chuckling) In case they still can't find him. (chuckling awkwardly trails off).

CONNIE (ON TV): You're covering it again this year, aren't you Jerry?

JERRY (ON TV): (hiding mild disdain) Wouldn't miss it, Connie.

CONNIE (ON TV): Don't get lost in the woods. Again.

JERRY (ON TV): I'll try... Hey maybe you should go - (realizes he shouldn't have said that) - one year.

CONNIE (ON TV): (just a tad coldly) We'll see. Someone's got to stay here to cover the real news.

SOUND: SMALL ELECTRICAL ZAP

JERRY (ON TV): (real) OUCH! (covering, with fake laugh) Oooouch...

NOTE: Next lines overlap with following scene, starting with "Remember, you can call us..."

CONNIE (ON TV): You can really feel the electricity in the air. Stay tuned to News 3, we'll bring you updates on tonight's storm. By all accounts, it's going to be a big one, so - stay safe., right Jerry? (beat) Remember, you can call us or email us with any breaking news you may see, or feel free to upload video directly to our website. Viewers like you help us to be the number one newscast in the southwest. That's it for us tonight on News 3 at 6. I'm Connie Ambrose - (beat) and he's Jerry Derryberry. From all of us here at Channel 3, have a wonderful evening, and an even better tomorrow.
(beat, then sotto voce)
Smile. Smile Jerry, the camera's still on.

JERRY (ON TV): I am smiling. Pretend I said something funny.

CONNIE (ON TV): You never say anything funny. You laugh.

JERRY (ON TV): Oh - you - (fake laugh) Happy? God I hate you.

Scene 3:

NOTE: Connie's last spiel and the following banter continues under the following (starting with "you can call us or email us").

MORGAN: Wow. She looks exactly the same on the monitor.
(joking) If the job doesn't work out, I hope she'll at least give me the name of her plastic surgeon.

HELEN: She hasn't had any work done.

MORGAN: Then there's a portrait of her aging in an attic somewhere...

HELEN: If only. (beat) Follow me. Look through the glass.

MORGAN: (beat) I'm confused. Is she pre-taped? Wow. You'd never know that- that banter lined up well. Except for that one little glitch.

HELEN: That wasn't a glitch and she ain't on tape.

SOUND: BELL CLANGS

VOICE (speaker): And we're out.

SOUND: JERRY fumbling to remove his mic and stand (through speakers)

JERRY (ON TV): Okay I'm sorry, I'm sorry - ok?

CONNIE (ON TV): You've known me ten years, Jerry. You know better.

JERRY (ON TV): You could have electrocuted me!

CONNIE (ON TV): A little shock. It was an accident. Don't be such a baby.

MORGAN: Her chair is empty. He's talking to an empty chair.
And it's talking back?

HELEN: That's right.

SOUND: STUDIO DOOR OPENS

JERRY: I can't work like this.

HELEN: She ain't gonna hurt you for real.

JERRY: Yeah aybe she'll just screw with my GPS again and I'll spend another week lost in the woods!

CONNIE (ON TV): For the one-millionth time, I did not fry your GPS..
(menacing) Although if I wanted to, I could...

JERRY: I want a raise.

HELEN: You'll get it.

SOUND: HE CRASHES THROUGH THE DOORS TO OUTSIDE

MORGAN: Wait. Where - where's the crew?

HELEN: Back at the main station.

MORGAN: Right, but somebody must have to -

HELEN: Nope. Just Jerry. For her eyelines.

CONNIE (ON TV): Helen, is that you?

HELEN: It is. There's someone I'd like you to meet.

SOUND: Door creaks open

HELEN: Come on. right through here.

SOUND: Two sets of FOOTSTEPS.

HELEN: Connie, this is Morgan McNeil.

MORGAN: Ms. Ambrose, first let me say what a pleasure it is to -
(beat) I'm sorry, I don't know where you -

SOUND: Old Television TURNS ON.

CONNIE (ON TV): Over here, sweetheart. In the TV.

MORGAN: (after a beat) Oh. I get it. She's in another room?

HELEN: No.

MORGAN: Working at home? Green screen?

HELEN: I wish. She's in there, and she is - what she is.

CONNIE (ON TV): Am I? What did you tell her I am?

HELEN: Ms. McNeil can figure it out for herself. She's here to -

SOUND: Old-school electronic "computer" sounds.

CONNIE (ON TV): I know why she's here. (beat) Morgan McNeil. University of Texas, top of your class. Double major; broadcast journalism and criminal investigation. Since then, you've logged seventeen months as a general beat reporter in Houston, 7 months as night time weekend anchor down outside of Lansdale. That's quite a commute for you.

MORGAN: Wow, that didn't take-

CONNIE (ON TV): You're from around here, used to watch my newscast every night - oh, isn't that sweet -

MORGAN: You were an inspiration to -

CONNIE (ON TV): You went to live with your grandmother after your parents were killed in a car wreck - sorry to hear that. (beat) You're an Aries, don't really believe in horoscopes, only you kinda do. You think you want kids, but not yet as it doesn't fit into your ten year "road map." Your long-term relationship is reasonably solid, but a lot more work that you think it ought to be. Your boyfriend, Brandon, is going for his PhD in theoretical physics but his big disappointment at the moment is that he can't seem to break his own high score on his vintage Galaga machine.

MORGAN: Yes. How did you -?

CONNIE (ON TV): (no big deal) Public records. Google. Your boyfriend just tweeted that last bit. Everything's connected these days.

MORGAN: (skeptical) You searched all that just now?

CONNIE (ON TV): That's right.

MORGAN: Because you're in the TV. You're connected? Plugged in?

CONNIE (ON TV): Well, through the studio wifi, but yes.

MORGAN: (still skeptical) Anything else?

CONNIE (ON TV): You're here for my job.
(quiet, but strong)
But you're not going to get it.

SOUND: Electronic CRACKLE and HUM.

HELEN: Unless we convince you otherwise. Let's just talk.
Where's the harm in - ?

MORGAN: Just stop. Both of you.

SOUND: ELECTRONIC NOISES STOP

MORGAN: Ms. Ambrose, Ms. Macklowe - I ... I just can't. (beat)
I tried to play along out of respect, but - come on. This
is just nuts.

CONNIE (ON TV): You have no idea.

MORGAN: Why would two professionals of your stature try so
hard to mock someone just starting out in the
business? This prank is beneath you.

HELEN: (overlapping) It ain't no prank.

MORGAN: You expect me to believe that Connie Ambrose, the
greatest newswoman in the country is nothing more
than some sort of electronic ghost?

CONNIE (ON TV): I'M NOT A GHOST!!!.

SOUND: ELECTRICAL HUMS, CRACKLES - LIGHTNING CRASHES

SOUND: Morgan SCREAMS, FLIES THROUGH THE AIR, lands with a thud..

HELEN: Morgan!

SOUND: Helen RUNS to her.

HELEN: Connie, that's enough!

CONNIE (ON TV): (embarrassed) Sorry...

MORGAN: What the hell was -?

HELEN: Her hand, more or less.

MORGAN: That was her hand?

CONNIE (ON TV): Kind of.

HELEN: It's hard to explain.

MORGAN: But how did she get in there?

CONNIE (ON TV): That's a good question. Why don't you tell her, Helen?

HELEN: It's a long story.

CONNIE (ON TV): Short answer - I had a bad day and threw myself into my work. Now, if that'll be all, I'd like to get back to it. News never ends, you know.

MORGAN: How long?

CONNIE (ON TV): Thirty years.

HELEN: Try thirty-six.

CONNIE (ON TV): Time does fly.

HELEN: It does. And all that time you've been talking about your responsibility to your viewers. Your TV family. Your neighbors. Well, Morgan here may not be you -

MORGAN: God no. I meant that in a good way...

HELEN: But she's a good fit to carry on your work.

CONNIE (ON TV): Don't. Even.

HELEN: She's a solid anchor. I know you've seen her reel by now and don't pretend you're not impressed. Plus, she's from here - you were her inspiration, who better to carry your torch -

CONNIE (ON TV): Helen -

HELEN: - to a new generation? You said it yourself, news never ends. It's time. Time for you to move on.

MORGAN: Ms. Ambrose. (beat) I'm sorry. I was unaware you were not ready to - step down, but.

CONNIE (ON TV): Here's the but.

MORGAN: She does make a good point. You're - you've evolved. You might be the next step in evolution, or something. When people find out -

CONNIE (ON TV): They won't.

MORGAN: They will. I can't imagine how you've kept it a secret this long. When they find out, they'll come for you. Try to figure out how you did it - get you in a lab or -

CONNIE (ON TV): Let them try. Anything else?

MORGAN: No. It's just - I'd hate to see you remembered as- well, as anything other than as the country's best anchorwoman.

CONNIE (ON TV): You're good. But not good enough...What do you propose I do? Turn myself off? Vanish into thin air to preserve my legacy? What kind of nonsense is that?

HELEN: Connie! Be reasonable, just consider -

CONNIE (ON TV): Go back to Lansdale, little girl. There's nothing for you here.

SOUND: ANALOG TV SHUTS OFF

MORGAN: Holy crap.

HELEN: That's Connie. Well, what's left of her.

MORGAN: She's so angry.

HELEN: I guess. She puts on a good show, at least. (beat) Hope you're all right. She don't usually lash out like -

MORGAN: I'm fine.

HELEN: She... I mean it. Whatever that thing is, it ain't her - good copy though, like an artificial intelligence, or - hell, she almost fools me from time to time, and I of all people -

MORGAN: Why now?

HELEN: Sorry?

MORGAN: This has been going on for years, surely you've thought about - talking to her about this before -

HELEN: I have. We play this game every few years, always ends with her digging in her heels. If she still has heels... But now - well, let's just say there are a few new pieces on the board..

MORGAN: There's never been a blackout? Power outage?

HELEN: Yep. Lost the feed, but didn't affect her a whit.

MORGAN: If you took out the tower -

HELEN: Reckon she'd end up stuck here alone. That don't seem right, whatever she is.

MORGAN: You know her well.

HELEN: Knew her. That thing is just an echo.

SOUND: CELL PHONE RINGS.

HELEN: God dang it. (answers phone) THIS AIN'T THE BEST TIME! (listens) Oh - Oh. Right. I'll be right there.

MORGAN: What happened?

HELEN: Never mind. It ain't covered by your NDA. (beat) Speaking of which - I need you to stay here. I've got a couple more forms my lawyer said we should -

MORGAN: But -

SOUND: DOOR OPENS.

HELEN: You will be compensated for your time, but you are not released. Stay here in the newsroom. She won't hurt you. Be right back.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSES.

MORGAN: Huh.

Scene 4:

SOUND: THUNDER. Footsteps as someone jogs up.

HELEN: Here you go. As requested. This form absolves you of any and all liability in the event of - well, in the event of anything.

SOUND: LIGHTNING, close.

HELEN: We'd better move - the storm's gonna hit any minute. (beat) Look, I'm sorry you had to keep this secret. I know it's wearing on you. It'll be over soon.

BRANDON: It will be over all right - soon as she finds out you were really hiring me.

HELEN: You're doing good here son. I hope that will give you some peace. That and the money.

BRANDON: It is a lot of money.

HELEN: You know, Morgan might still get the job. It's out of my hands. Either way, she's a good enough candidate and it'll keep Connie off guard. Emotional. That'll help, right?

BRANDON: It should.

HELEN: You checked the set-up?

BRANDON: Your people followed my specs perfectly. Five points in a circle around the tower. If this really is some sort of class-3 echo - We'll trap her, she'll get emotional and start to break apart. Then we'll have her.

HELEN: You're sure that thing you built's gonna work.

BRANDON: 100 percent. Theoretically.

SOUND: Cell Phone RINGS

HELEN: Don't answer it. (beat) Let's do this.

MUSIC: TRANSITIONAL MUSIC (OR Crossfade lightning?).

Scene 5:

SOUND: BEEP

MORGAN: Hey. So I'm stuck in here until Ms. Macklowe gets back. Everything's fine. Don't worry. I do wish I could talk to you about this. But I can't, so... I don't know, I'm rambling. See you soon.

SOUND: Tone as call ends. SILENCE FOR A BEAT

MORGAN: Um. Ms. Ambrose? If you are listening, I would like to say I'm sorry. You've always been, and still are, an inspiration to me and I'd never want to stand in the way between you and the work that you do. So very well.

SOUND: ANALOG TV TURNING ON, WARMING UP.

CONNIE (ON TV): (after a beat) Go on...

MORGAN: That's it. Except, I would like to thank you. I just - as strange as it is, I have a chance to tell you that I love doing what I do, and a big part of that is thanks to you. I'd never wanna, I'd never want my big break to be at your expense. Couldn't live with that. You're a legend. And rightly so.

CONNIE (ON TV): (won over, despite herself) Oh, have a seat.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS, Chair being pulled out.

CONNIE: Not there. That's my chair. If you sit there I'll have to hit you with a couple million volts.

MORGAN: Of course.

CONNIE (ON TV): Joke. Supposed to be. Not that funny to you, I guess.

MORGAN: Sorry. (beat) I'm - I'm going to go now. Your secret's safe. I won't -

CONNIE (ON TV): No, don't - I'm sorry. Please, sit. (beat) I'm sorry if I hurt you earlier. I get emotional, I get a little unstable. Literally. Can't hold my form. Weird. So Helen's finally dead set on shutting me down?

MORGAN: Well I don't -

CONNIE (ON TV): Guess she's finally decided I'm more "thing" than "me". You know she thinks I'm a demon? Or some kind of poltergeist?

MORGAN: Don't know why she thinks that.

CONNIE (ON TV): Easier for her.

MORGAN: I've just met you, and I can see it. You're alive.

CONNIE (ON TV): Am I? I can't tell anymore. I don't eat, don't breathe, my heart - if I have one - doesn't beat. Sure, I can change clothes in the blink of an eye, but that's just a parlor trick.

MORGAN: Really?

CONNIE (ON TV): Sure.

SOUND: STATIC.

MORGAN: Wow. That's a great shirt. (realizing) It's my shirt.

CONNIE (ON TV): A copy. More like a picture. Gotta stay current. You don't mind, do you? You never know where life will take you. Life, or whatever this is...

MORGAN: Seems to me if you're wondering if you're alive, you probably are. If you don't mind me asking - can you see them? Your viewers?

CONNIE (ON TV): Lord no. Wouldn't be right. But I can feel them. Their trust. Respect. Even love. To some of them I'm practically part of the family.

MORGAN: I remember.

CONNIE (ON TV): So there's that. A tiny bit of love from a whole lot of people. Still - it's not what I used to - why Helen and -

MORGAN: What?

CONNIE (ON TV): Lord knows if I could change what happened that night, I would. I sure wouldn't have been here when that storm hit. If I'd had any sense, I would have followed her back to --

SOUND: GENERATOR POWERS DOWN

MORGAN: The power.

CONNIE (ON TV): Someone shut it off.

MORGAN: But you're -

CONNIE (ON TV): I've got my own power.

SOUND: SUPER CRACKLY ELECTRICITY - OUTSIDE, MUFFLED

MORGAN: Now what is that?

CONNIE (ON TV): AGHH!!!

SOUND: DRAMATIC MUSIC STARTS, CONTINUES UNDER

MORGAN: Connie?!? What's happening?

CONNIE (ON TV): I don't - I don't AGH!!!

SOUND: CLOSER ELECTRICAL SOUNDS

MORGAN: No - don't get out of there - I think, I think you should stay in your set or whatever you are during this -

CONNIE (ON TV): I'm trying to – someone, something's pulling me out - it's tearing at MEEEEEEeeee (fades)

SOUND: ELECTRICAL SOUNDS END WITH A "POP"

MORGAN: CONNIE!!!

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS, RUNNING - Door BANGS open into

Scene 6: (continuous)

SOUND: TORRENTIAL WIND, WEIRD ELECTRICAL HUM (CONTINUES)

BRANDON: It's working, it's working!

MORGAN: Connie!! Oh my god - (seeing him) Brandon? What are you – Helen? You hired him to - ?

HELEN: Sorry, darlin. It was for the best.

MORGAN: She's trapped up there - floating in - what is that, a pentagram?

BRANDON: Oh yeah - Five points on a circle around the tower - I see it now! Never really thought about it.

MORGAN: Why are you doing this?

HELEN: It's pulling her apart!

BRANDON: No, she's just angry - she can't hold her form!

MORGAN: Brandon, you're killing her! Shut it down!

BRANDON: That thing is just energy - you can't kill energy

CONNIE: (effect on voice, in agony) Helen! Stop - help me!!!

HELEN: (through gritted teeth) Come on. Get it done.

MORGAN: What is that - device? Where did you get it?

SOUND: Device POWERS on, charges

BRANDON: Made it! From what Helen told me, she's a class 3. An echo. I read up on 'em. In her case, her form imprinted on data - well, data can be stored. In my Dynamic Vertiginous Recapacitor!

MORGAN: (reading) Dynamic Verti- ? A DVR?

BRANDON: NO! It's not just a - oh - yeah, technically I guess it is! Hah that's funny.

CONNIE: (effect on voice, in agony) PLEASE, STOP THIS.

HELEN: You said she wouldn't feel nothing!

BRANDON: She doesn't feel - she's an echo - Here, everybody stand back - I got this.

SOUND: POWER SURGE, sucking vortex sound CONNIE's WAILS fade with a - POP.

SOUND: Silence (except for the continuing storm).

MORGAN: Ms. Ambrose?

HELEN: Connie?

BRANDON: Easy peasy.

HELEN: Now what?

BRANDON: We build a secure, contained screening area you can play her back whenever you-

SOUND: Electronic MOANING.

HELEN: You're sure she ain't alive?

BRANDON: Pretty sure. There are no certainties in science.

SOUND: Metallic GROANING sound.

HELEN: You said there was no way she was actually -

BRANDON: "Virtually no way" - see the distinction? But, I'm on it - If - IF she were alive, the data stream would be a WHOLE lot bigger. That's all - and I made allowances for more data to a magnitude of - Oh.

MORGAN: What "oh"?

BRANDON: I seem to have missed a decimal point or - twelve. God, I hate touchscreens.

HELEN: What does that mean?

BRANDON: I may have severely underestimated your storage needs.

SOUND: Enormous electronic PULSE - not unlike a HEARTBEAT!

SOUND: PULSE!

MORGAN: Turn it off!

SOUND: PULSE! Electronic crackle.

BRANDON: I can't - the grid is pulling the electricity right out of the clouds - ramping up the power we grabbed from the studio - it's holding her in there! It's just gonna get stronger till she stabilizes -

SOUND: SCARY GROWING Electronic crackle.

BRANDON: Which, frankly, I don't see happening.

MORGAN: The tower! Everything's focused on the tower, right?

BRANDON: Yeah. Yeah, that's the anchor's - anchor?

SOUND: Footsteps in mud, CAR DOOR opens, closes.

BRANDON: Morgan?

SOUND: Car starts

BRANDON: Honey, what are you doing?

SOUND: CAR PEELS OUT

HELEN: Get out of the way, son!

SOUND: BODIES FALL IN MUD WITH A SPLAT

SOUND: ENGINE RACES -

HELEN: The tower!

SOUND: HUGE CRASH

SOUND: THE TOWER CREAKS

BRANDON: Uh - maybe - run?

SOUND: THE TOWER falls with a huge CRASH

SOUND: ELECTRICAL HUM INTENSIFIES then SPARKS OUT

NOTE: THERE IS A HEAVY ELECTRONIC EFFECT ON CONNIE'S VOICE UNTIL NOTED OTHERWISE

CONNIE: (after a beat) Damn it, Helen.

SOUND: RUMBLE, ELECTRICAL CRACKLES

BRANDON: Wait a second. Is she -?

MORGAN: Growing???

HELEN: My god, she's enormous!

BRANDON: Just when you think you've seen everything, along comes a 50-foot newswoman.

CONNIE: (A SCREAM OF RAGE)

HELEN: I'm sorry. I'M SORRY! I didn't know it was really you!

NOTE: CONNIE IS NOW HUGE - HER VOICE REFLECTS HER SIZE AS WELL

CONNIE: WELL NOW YOU DO!

BRANDON: I may have made a math error - my bad!

MORGAN: Maybe shut up now.

HELEN: I hired him - it's my fault.

CONNIE: Why. What were you trying to -

HELEN: I was trying to protect you!

CONNIE: (controlling herself)Protect me?? (losing it again)
PROTECT ME?!?

HELEN: Or whatever's left of you -

CONNIE: You still don't believe me! I am Connie! Your Connie!
I've always been your Connie!

HELEN: No. The real Connie was never so cold. Distant.

CONNIE: (controlled) What possible reason would I have to be
distant -

HELEN: That was thirty-six years ago!

CONNIE: To me it was yesterday.

BRANDON: Really? You don't experience the passage of time?

CONNIE: It's a metaphor, you jackass!

HELEN: You know I had no choice.

CONNIE: (controlled) Got to please daddy.

HELEN: You know it wasn't the time.

CONNIE: (controlled) Please daddy above everything - above me.

HELEN: I had no choice! I'd have lost everything!

CONNIE: We did lose everything!

HELEN: That's not what I mean.

CONNIE: You married a man!

HELEN: Dammit, Connie, it wasn't the time. It wasn't our time. And you KNOW it was a disaster! That man had no more interest in me than I had in him.

CONNIE: A disaster? GOOD! OUR LIVES HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON!

HELEN: I tried to find you - after you ran away from me that night. To explain. Tell you we'd still find a way -

CONNIE: It's not good enough. I LOVE YOU. (catches herself). I loved you...

HELEN: I loved you. I searched all over town - through that freak storm, finally I saw you were on the air of all places. I raced to get there - but I was too late. They told me that ball lightning had hit dead square in the studio and you was just - gone. Till you showed up a couple months later.

CONNIE: And you turned your back on me!!!

HELEN: I COULDN'T FACE WHAT I HAD -- (cries out, collapses)

SOUND: HELEN cries out and crumples to the floor

MORGAN: Helen?

NOTE: CONNIE'S REAL VOICE IS STARTING TO PEEK THROUGH.

CONNIE: Helen? HELEN?

SOUND: Electrical FIRE and FEEDBACK

MORGAN: Oh god,

BRANDON: She's breaking up -

SOUND: STRETCHING, CRACKLING SOUND

MORGAN: No, she's – pulling herself out - She's – she's

BRANDON: Human.

CONNIE: (normal voice) Helen, I'm right here. (beat, realizing)
I'm here.

BRANDON: My god, she - she's normal except she's -

MORGAN: She's aging.

BRANDON: I thought you said commenting on a woman's age
was normally -

MORGAN: (snappish) We are well outside the rules of normal.

CONNIE: It's all right. I guess I'm - catching up. (beat) Helen?

HELEN: I'm fine, I'm fine, I just -

CONNIE: Look at me. Look. At. Me. (beat) How sick are you?

HELEN: Oh for the love of god. I ain't sick. Just old. Too old for
this sort of nonsense.

CONNIE: I'm older than you are.

HELEN: They sold it. The station. They're forcing me out.
That's why I did it. Won't be able to protect you no
more. Thought I could get whatever was left of you
out of there, and keep you safe. I couldn't bear the
thought of them taking you away and -

CONNIE: It's ok. I'm here now. And we're together. And you know, I've been following the news and apparently two women loving each other isn't such a big deal these days. The world's changed.

HELEN: Not entirely.

CONNIE: Well, it's changin'. That's something, right?

SOUND: BIG CRACKLE - GROWING ELECTRICAL HUM

BRANDON: Huh.

SOUND: Beeping as Brandon punches some buttons

BRANDON: That's funny. Well, not so much "funny" as -

MORGAN: What?

BRANDON: The energy field that was holding her seems to be even greater that I mis-calculated. And it's growing.

MORGAN: The tower's down.

BRANDON: It's not coming from the tower it's coming from -

SOUND: ELECTRONIC SCANNER SQUEAL

BRANDON: -everywhere. All directions.

MORGAN: Everywhere?

BRANDON: All over the state, hell the whole -

MORGAN: Southwest region.

CONNIE: My viewers. That's it - I feel it. They're - pulling at me. It's like - they can sense that I'm gone -

MORGAN: And they want you back. They love you.

BRANDON: (ridiculous) That is completely and utterly (changes mind) possible. I think. Love is energy, of a sort. How long has she been on the air?

SOUND: BIG POP, and a sucking, black hole sound

BRANDON: Oh. That's definitely worse.

MORGAN: What's worse?

SOUND: Whirring scanner sound

BRANDON: The lightning, my containment grid and the power of - love - may have converged into the tiniest of - black holes.

MORGAN: WHAT?!?!?

HELEN: Connie, hold on to me.

CONNIE: I don't want to go back. I won't leave you.

BRANDON: It's her or the whole county. Maybe the world. Just, just run into that vortex, you'll be back on the air and the whole thing will stabilize. Probably.

CONNIE: I don't want to go!

BRANDON: There's no choice - it's expanding - It's now or never!

MORGAN: Or -

BRANDON: There's no "or" in "Now or" – OK, there is one, but -

HELEN: Or?

MORGAN: Maybe it is time for some new blood at Channel 3.

BRANDON: No -

HELEN: You can't! New owners won't stand for it - they'll put you in a lab!

MORGAN: Let 'em try.

BRANDON: Morgan!

SOUND: A SCRAMBLE, she's in his arms and she kisses him.

MORGAN: I have to –

BRANDON: (devastated) There's no guarantee it will work - and if it does, you'll be trapped in there.

MORGAN: Then get me out. But next time - double-check the math. I do love you.

BRANDON: I love you.

SOUND: SUCTION SOUND, VORTEX ACCELERATING

BRANDON: (with some difficulty) You'd better go.

CONNIE: Morgan? (beat) Thank you.

MORGAN: Ms. Ambrose, I consider it an honor.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS IN THE MUD AS SHE RUNS TOWARDS THE VORTEX

SOUND: ELECTRIC CRACKLE GROWS INTO AN ENORMOUS HUM AND POP!

Scene 7:

SOUND: STATIC - TV SWITCHING CHANNELS

MORGAN (ON TV): And finally tonight, a surprise wedding for two members of the News 3 family, former anchorwoman and local legend Connie Ambrose married her longtime partner, former News 3 Executive Producer Helen Macklowe in a quiet ceremony out by Lake Lackadasia. Ambrose and Macklowe went public with their relationship after announcing their retirement from News 3 Media. All of us here at the New News 3 wish them the very best.

JERRY (ON TV): Gotta tell you, I had no idea.

MORGAN (ON TV): They did keep it quiet.

JERRY (ON TV): They sure did. Remember, you can call us or email us with any breaking news you may see, or feel free to upload video directly to our website.

NOTE: dialogue below continues under Morgan's closing spiel (starting after "the very best" until they cut it off):

HELEN: Aww, that's sweet.

CONNIE: I wish they hadn't used that picture. Makes me look so old.

HELEN: You are, darlin. Older than me.

CONNIE: Hey! Not much.

SOUND: A Playful SWAT

HELEN: Get over here.

SOUND: A little kiss. They move together and cuddle up.

CONNIE: I told you - the new owners love her.

HELEN: Happy to be wrong. She is good.

JERRY (ON TV): Follow me this weekend - I'll be off in the panhandle looking for the legendary and mysterious Thunderbird.

MORGAN (ON TV): And I'll be here in your TV.

JERRY (ON TV): (covering) Not IN, not in your TV. Not actually.

SOUND: Tiny ZAP

MORGAN (ON TV): No, I'll be in the studio, just trying to hold things together.

JERRY (ON TV): Ow!

MORGAN (ON TV): Sorry.

JERRY (ON TV): (a little stung still) That's it for us tonight. I'm Jerry Derryberry.

MORGAN (ON TV): And I'm Morgan McNeil. From all of us here at the New News 3, have a wonderful evening, and an even better tomorrow.

HELEN: Now what, CNN?

CONNIE: I've had enough news for one lifetime. What else is on?

MUSIC: THEME MUSIC

NARRATOR: Morgan McNeil has some mighty big shoes to fill, but at the moment, it looks like they're gonna fit her just fine. If pressed, her new bosses would admit that they don't really understand how or why she became whatever she is - but they're keeping her secret safe because the audience loves her. And while love may not make the world go round, there are times it does seem to help hold it together, especially - in Uncanny County...