

Tabloid

Written by

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Based on Tabloid, a theatrical musical
By Marta Jorgensen

First draft

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET NEWSPAPER STAND - MORNING

A crowd of people congregate around the Central Park newsstand grabbing at papers, magazines, pay the man and shuffle off. They fend off the early morning chill with hot coffee and upturned collar.

RHODA HAYNES, a disheveled older Lucile Ball lookalike with red hair, avoids getting trampled by the crowds. She guards her coffee cup.

RHODA HAYNES
Hey watch it!

She goes off in a huff. Rhoda signals a taxi. It stops and she gets in.

INT. RHODA HAYNES'S APARTMENT - MORNING

RHODA HAYNES, enters her apartment and throws her oversized purse on the couch.

Walking over to her desk, she picks up some darts. She throws the darts at a picture labeled, FRENCHY KING, an important looking man in a purple suit, stands next to an ornate fireplace.

Newspaper articles and pictures hang nearby - FAKE NEWS RAMPANT IN KING MEDIA, BLAZE HAYNES - FIRED FROM TV CONTRACT.

Another headline glaring away - CONGRESSMAN HAYNES LOSES SEAT IN HOUSE DUE TO SCANDAL.

There are papers on the floor and a laptop computer with manual on the floor. An old typewriter sits on the desk.

RHODA'S husband, HUBERT HAYNES is humming a tune as he walks in with a pile of mail in his arms. BLAZE HAYNES, their adult daughter drags behind.

HUBERT
We're back. That bus ride was murder.

BLAZE
You had to sell the car. I could've sold my jewelry you know. Or we could have had a telethon.

HUBERT

Lawyer bills. Telethon you mean like Jerry Lewis?

BLAZE

Oh for Pete's sake. Jerry Who?

HUBERT

Nothing. Well actually you are correct. Pete bought the car. You know, my intern. Mail's here dear. Darts again, well I see your aim is getting better.

HUBERT opens mail and sorts it into waste basket, floor and desk. BLAZE paces the room.

Lawyer bill, lawyer bill, subpoena, fan mail, letter from Frenchy's attorney, oh look, Good Housekeeping magazine. WE are not in this I hope. Are we?

BLAZE

Blaze Haynes here - on the prowl for a good gig. Now that my gig has been undone by Frenchy King, I need work. Call 555-1852 and donate. Hashtag #needchashnow.

RHODA

Page 20. How was the job interview dear?

BLAZE

Lousy, Moms. I am done, finished. A squashed bug on the rotting linoleum of life.

HUBERT

Well the writer's strike is over. Maybe you should get a new job?

RHODA

No, my job is to destroy King. I think about all those good people Francis King hurt. Makes me so mad. That nice Donny O'Connelly kid, us. All those other folks he trashed. Frenchy Francis King defendant vs. Haynes et all, plaintiffs.

(MORE)

RHODA (CONT'D)
 What would Donny do? Such a good
 kid. He needs to sue too.

HUBERT
 Well he'll have to write his own
 lawsuit. But our lawsuit with King
 Media will be over soon. I expect a
 decision sooner or later.

RHODA
 Sometimes I wish I could just dream
 it all away.

RHODA
 SOME FOLKS LIKE THEIR NAMES
 IN HEADLINES
 SOME FOLKS LIKE TO SEE
 THEIR NAMES IN HEADLINES
 BEING A HEADLINE
 IS THAT ALL I'M GOOD FOR
 BEING A HEADLINE,
 BUT I WANT MORE...

IN A TABLOID...

BLAZE
 YOU CAN READ ABOUT THE BIG HAIR,
 BIGFOOT, DOG MAN HOT BABE
 GOT IT MADE

TALKING SHEEP, IN YOUR SLEEP
 YOU CAN HEAR ABOUT THE BAD GUY
 OH MY, WE CRY, WHAT A STINKING
 CREEP

HUBERT
 YOU CAN READ ABOUT OLD MEN,
 OLD FRIENDS BORN IN JANUARY,
 DIED IN JUNE

YOU CAN SIGH ABOUT POLITICIANS
 AND THEIR IMPOSITIONS
 HERE TODAY, GONE TOO SOON

BLAZE
 MARY LOU HAD A BIG BANANA AH AH

NOW TOMMY LOU WANTS
 THAT BIG BANANA

(MORE)

BLAZE (CONT'D)
 HOLD THE PRESSES
 MARY LOU SHE CONFESSES
 HE HAS A KNIFE, SHE HAS A GUN
 HE'S GETS THE SHOE, SHE'S NUMBER
 ONE

RHODA
 CUZ IN A TABLOID COLORS
 RUN TOGETHER, BLACK TO WHITE
 NOBODY KNOWS THE WEATHER
 WHAT'S WRONG, WHAT'S RIGHT
 I WISH I MAY I WISH I MIGHT
 WHAT CAN YOU DO.....

RHODA AND HER FAMILY CROSS OVER INTO THE "WORLD OF
 TABLOID"... A MAGICAL SPACE WHERE ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN AND
 DOES. LIKE WALKING INTO A TABLOID MAGAZINE.

INT. KING MEDIA OFFICE - DAY

FRENCHY KING the overbearing boss hovers over DONNY
 O'CONNELLY, the mail room boy who is cowering in front of
 him.

RHODA HAYNES (V.O.)
 Once upon a time on page six, there
 was this nice young clean cut all
 American boy named Donny
 O'Connelly. He worked as an
 assistant and limo driver at a very
 important media giant called King
 Media. The big shot, the owner of
 this fine establishment was none
 other than a big lug called,
 Frenchy King. Donny and Frenchy
 were having a fight...

DONNY
 Now see here Mr. King I have worked
 for you for five years and this is
 the thanks I get. You're a crook
 and I had to tell the world just
 how unethical you were. You can't
 hide it anymore.

FRENCHY
 Facebook, X, now I got the FCC and
 the NSA after me. Yes I can. You're
 fired. Get out before I throw you
 out.

DONNY

Well.... Fine... but just remember
what comes around goes around.
Karma. You'll see. You shouldn't go
making up stuff about people.

The room goes dark.

CARD: ONE YEAR AGO

INT. FRENCHY KING'S LIMO - MORNING

The limo sits in New York traffic. Frenchy in the back seat
takes a phone call.

Donny is the limo driver. Donny watches traffic and keeps an
eye on the back. He sees Frenchy in a heated conversation on
the phone through the security glass. Curious he turns on the
intercom to listen in.

FRENCHY

Howard it's you again. So what is
it this time.

HOWARD, Frenchy's legal council is on the other end.

HOWARD

You are in trouble, Francis. You
are being investigated by some
Congressman named Haynes, Hubert
Haynes, New York. Heard of him?

FRENCHY

What the fuck for?

Donny in the front is all ears. He strains to listen while a
road crew directs traffic.

HOWARD

You can't go around spying on
people. You got caught.

FRENCHY

Well how else am I going to learn
anything. Its journalism. Well,
maybe. So you can fix it, right?

HOWARD

Nobody has to know.

At a stop light, Donny scribbles notes in his day planner.

BACK TO PRESENT

RHODA HAYNES (V.O.)
 Like all great tales, It all began
 with, it was a dark and stormy
 night.

EXT. HAPPY ENDING HOMELESS HOUSE - NIGHT

A rundown side street. Garbage cans are rolling in the street. A wind blows. DONNY fights the cold and braves the wind. He spots a light and the sign that reads, HAPPY ENDINGS HOMELESS HOUSE. COME IN. The place is a rundown mess.

DONNY
 Finally. I'll just try this place.

DONNY hurries to the front door and knocks. The door opens and the young man rushes in.

RHODA (V.O.)
 God he is in bad shape. The bane of
 sudden unemployment. But there had
 to be a silver lining.

A LOT OF TIME HAS PASSED IN A VAPOR

EXT. HAPPY ENDING HOMELESS HOUSE - DAY

The place has been transformed with flower pots and bright yard signs appear. In front of the Homeless house a crowd of BYSTANDERS, REPORTERS with cameras gather. Truck signs reading CNN, FOX, KING MEDIA.

KIDS and RESIDENTS crane to see what is up. Just then, the front door opens. Out comes DONNY, A cleaned up young man, 30's, short hair, twinkle in his eye sporting a college preppy suit hangs a large sign that says Grand Reopening of the Happy Endings Homeless Shelter as the new owner.

DONNY hugs his new girlfriend LAURA FITZPATRICK, 30's, hyper college graduate, impatient as she grabs a quick text message. She hugs him back.

SHEILA ACER, 30's, a lanky blonde in a tight red dress, stands to the side with her CAMERAMAN. She fixes her hair and pulls her dress down.

SHEILA is wearing outlandish platform shoes. She takes the shoes off and pulls a pair of red high heels out of a bag. They are still over the top but not as high.

SHEILA

It's good to dress for the story.
You know blend in.

CAMERAMAN

Oh yeah... that really makes you
look like the common man.

Sheila gets up and drags her CAMERAMAN over to DONNY and
shoves a microphone in his face.

LAURA turns to a BYSTANDER standing next to her.

LAURA

Oh God, there's that disgusting
Sheila Acer.

BYSTANDER #1

Yeah. Nasty Ace.

LAURA

Oh yeah... she's sure interested in
Donny. Seems like a lot of media
for just a homeless shelter. She
must buy her clothes from hookers.

SHEILA

(really surprised to see him)
So Mr. O'Connellly, it's you. Well,
I guess you went up in the world.

DONNY

What are you doing here? This is
where I ended up after you and Mr.
King tossed me out into the street.
If it wasn't for the nice old man
and Laura, I don't know what I
would have done. I guess you never
have been homeless.

SHEILA

(surprised by question)
Oh, sure lots of time... there was
the time I got overbooked in Cancun
and had to camp out at the pool.
All night under the stars.

DONNY

Sounds tough.

SHEILA

I spilled coffee on my mink. She
was scarred for life.

DONNY
 Sorry to hear that. Minks make nice
 pets.

SHEILA
 It was dead.

LAURA
 (to herself)
 Where's my taser?

DONNY
 Wow some coffee.

SHEILA
 (changing subject)
 You must be proud of yourself. Care
 to make a statement for our
 viewers?

DONNY
 Well yeah. We really cleaned up the
 joint. It all started like this.

DONNY (CONT'D)

I WAS UNEMPLOYED, DOWN ON MY LUCK
 MAN IT'S A LIFE THAT CAN REALLY
 SUCK. THE SIDEWALK WAS CLOSIN' IN
 ON ME I MUST CONFESS, I WAS A MESS
 BUT THANKS TO HOPE AND A BAR OF
 GOOD SOAP

(TINY JAZZ BAND plays)

I SMELL SWEETER
 I GOT THE GROOVY SCENT of PRIDE

CHORUS
 HOPE AND PRIDE, HOPE AND PRIDE
 OOOH,OOOH

DONNY
 Gotta CLEAN SET OF CLOTHES
 AND A GIRL AT MY SIDE
 and A SECOND CHANCE
 EVEN LEARNED TO DANCE
 HOPE AND PRIDE

CHORUS
 HOPE AND PRIDE, HOPE AND PRIDE

DONNY

NOW I'M THE NEW OWNER
 I KNOW EVERYONE...
 I KNOW EVERYONE...
 WE GOT HOMELESS SINGLE LADIES
 PRETTY MOMMAS WITH THEIR BABIES
 GROUCHY EMO KIDS IN PINK HAIR
 WHO SAY THEY DON'T CARE
 SOCIAL WORKERS WITH THEIR MASTERS
 KEEPING US FROM ALL DISASTERS
 DID I LEAVE SOMEONE OUT
 NOW THAT WOULDN'T BE FAIR

KITCHEN WORKERS pass out plates to the rhythm

DONNY (CONT'D)

HAPPY ENDINGS ARE US
 SO COME ON, TAKE A BUS!
 We'll be known far and wide
 GIVING OUT MEAT LOAFS OF HOPE
 WITH A SIDE OF PRIDE
 GIVING OUT MEAT LOAFS of hope
 AND A SIDE OF PRIDE!
 GIVING OUT MEAT LOAFS of hope
 AND A SIDE OF PRIDE,
 HOPE AND PRIDE, HOPE AND PRIDE

DONNY (CONT'D)

Thanks for all your support. We now
 have a decent place for people to
 live when they're down in their
 luck.

The CAMERAMAN holds up a placard with the Twitter hashtag
 #ALLACE.

SHEILA

Isn't that sweet. Well you heard it
 here. This is Sheila Acer for King
 Media.

SHEILA pushes away the camera man and walks away but then her
 phone rings. She answers it.

Yes doll. Well, how about the twin
 deal... no, we did that last
 month... ah that one I didn't like
 it, the other one is OK, but I
 think we were there last year. It's
 getting to be lean pickings Frenchy
 lean... the usual suspects are
 scarce.

(MORE)

SHEILA (CONT'D)

I don't know where they went just scarce.

(getting aggravated)

No, I covered that, no that is over the top even for you. We need to go local. You know everyone is going local these days That's called being a locovore.

I gotta go. By the way, guess who runs this new homeless house? Donny O'Connelly. The old man just up and died. The kid has been living here since we fired him. He's the new owner.

A man named TRENCH COAT BOB brushes past her as she continues her conversation.

Frenchy, Listen I need to discuss our tactics. I want to go local this time. Something different. I am bored with the same old same old. Gotta go.

She hangs up the phone and summons TRENCH COAT BOB. He comes over and something gets passed between them.

Bob, where have you been? I am standing here waiting for you. I need a story, you need to get me one, find me a good one for the boss. We got a deadline. If Frenchy wasn't your uncle, I'd can you.

She walks away. BOB lingers in the crowd. The crowd moves away, BOB stands alone in a shadow.

RHODA (V.O.)

There he is. The relative. Also a codefendant. Not the sharpest tack in the tool box. But with all things it began with a proposition.

CARD: SEVEN YEARS AGO

INT. FRENCHY KING'S LUXURIOUS PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

In the opulent penthouse apartment of Frenchy King, TRENCHCOAT BOB is seated on an extravagant leather couch. He's disheveled. Frenchy King stands before him, his arms folded and a calculating look in his eyes.

FRENCHY KING
(authoritative)
You see, Bobby, this is a family
business. You're part of this
family.

Bob, despite his disheveled appearance, shares a familial resemblance with Frenchy. His expression conveys both apprehension and a sense of obligation.

TRENCHCOAT BOB
(hesitant)
I never asked for this, Uncle
Frenchy. I didn't choose this life.

FRENCHY KING
(smirking)
Life rarely asks for our
preferences, Bobby. But you have a
skill set that can be very valuable
to me.

Frenchy King paces back and forth, revealing a shrewdness that runs in the family.

FRENCHY KING (CONT'D)
(calculated)
You're my nephew. It's only fitting
that you play a role in protecting
this empire.

Bob takes a deep breath.

TRENCHCOAT BOB
(reluctant)
What do you want me to do, Uncle?

FRENCHY KING
(smirking)
We'll start by making you my right-
hand man, my shadow. You'll learn
the ins and outs of this business
from the ground up.

BACK TO PRESENT

Bob paces.

TRENCHCOAT BOB

(mocking)

If it wasn't for being Frenchy's
nephew I'd can you. That woman
needs a lobotomy. I get no respect.
I went to college well, online. I
got a degree. Well, kind of.
Frenchy doesn't have a degree.
Well, it was a good forgery. I
made it myself. I'll show them.

TRENCHCOAT BOB

I'LL SHOW'EM, I'LL SHOW'EM,
I REALLY WILL, I'LL SHOW'EM
IT'S A SAD AFFAIR PULLING STORIES
FROM THIN AIR SUCH A MOCKERY
TO BE SPYING JUST FOR FREE
I COULD FIND A STORY
GET SOME FREAKING GLORY
AND I WILL, AND I CAN

BOB harasses BYSTANDERS minding their own business.

GIMME THIS, gIMME THAT
TELL ME THIS, SHOW ME THAT!
I AM JUST A PLAYTHING TO THAT MAN
MAN CHASES WOMAN
WOMAN RUNS FROM MAN
SUSIE ROBS THE TRUST FUND
MOMMY'S NOT AWARE
BUT REALLY DO I CARE?

A MAN chases a Woman, BOB snaps a picture.

I DON'T GET THE CREDIT
IT'S ALL ABOUT HIM
SHOULDN'T LET IT GET TO ME...
OH MY PSYCHIATRIST WILL BE CROSS
BIG MAN, BIG TALK, BIG FOOPY
BIG JERK HATES MY WORK!
LIKE ALL CREATIVE GENIUSES
WE WANNA HAVE OUR SAY
BUT LITERARY BREAKTHROUGHS
DON'T HAPPEN EVERY DAY

SO I MADE SOME MISTAKES
(MORE)

TRENCHCOAT BOB (CONT'D)
 BUT I KNOW WHAT IT TAKES
 INSTINCTS, FOCUS, VERBAL
 HOCUS POCUS
 FIND A PATH, MAKE A PLAY
 DOORS WILL OPEN ANY DAY
 NO MORE GIMME THIS
 GIMME THAT, YES I CAN!

(Sneaking up on another PASSERBY)

Now where is my GPS. What does this
 map say poor huz? Is that a b or is
 that p or d?

The GPS beeps as BOB fumbles with a map. He runs off.

EXT. HAPPY ENDINGS HOMELESS HOUSE - FRONT DOOR

Laura and Donny shoo away the last onlooker and stray news
 reporter.

LAURA

That made me ill. Come on Donny
 let's go inside before she comes
 back.

DONNY

I can't believe they came here.
 Couple of sleaze bags. Mr. King is
 not gonna like this. The Feds are
 still hassling him about that fake
 Haynes story. I had to turn him in.
 It was only right.

LAURA

I thought I'd never see her again
 after that fight we had?

DONNY

Fight? You knew her?

LAURA

Yes in school. She wasn't called
 Acer then.

CARD: TEN YEARS AGO

In a busy college cafeteria, filled with the chatter of students and the clinking of silverware, Sheila Acer and Laura Fitzpatrick sit at a corner table, their expressions tense. They are in the middle of a heated argument. Their fellow students cast curious glances in their direction.

SHEILA ACER

(angry and frustrated)

Laura, you just don't get it! We need to be the best, no matter what it takes.

LAURA FITZPATRICK

(equally irate)

And what exactly does "no matter what it takes" mean to you, Sheila? Crossing ethical lines for a story?

Their voices rise as the argument escalates, drawing more attention.

SHEILA ACER

(accusatory)

You're too idealistic, Laura. Journalism isn't all rainbows and unicorns. It's about getting the story, no matter how you do it.

LAURA FITZPATRICK

(defensive)

And you're too willing to compromise for the sake of a byline! This isn't a tabloid we're working for.

Laura feeling dejected, stares at her French fries.

SHEILA ACER

(scoffing)

You'll learn the hard way that the world doesn't work like that, Laura.

LAURA FITZPATRICK

(nearly shouting)

I'd rather learn the hard way than lose my integrity, Sheila!

Laura stands up, her chair scraping loudly against the floor.

LAURA FITZPATRICK (CONT'D)

(storming off)

I won't compromise my principles
for a story, Sheila. Not now, not
ever.

Sheila watches Laura's retreating figure, a mix of anger and frustration on her face. The college cafeteria falls into an uncomfortable silence.

BACK TO PRESENT

The crowd breaks up. DONNY and LAURA enter the homeless shelter front door.

RHODA flips through a newspaper.

RHODA

Talk about your forks in the road.
Those two...

INT. KING MEDIA - OFFICE - MORNING

SHEILA ACER walks in with a cup of coffee. A stunning RECEPTIONIST sits at a desk typing on a computer.

A dominating looking figure sits in a huge chair playing with a selfie stick. The figure spins around. The very imposing FRENCHY KING is playing ANGRY BIRDS on the computer tablet. He lights up when SHEILA appears throwing down her coat. She finds a letter on the desk and reads it.

FRENCHY

(agitated)

Hi Sheila. Well what happened?
Yeah, that's another subpoena from
the FBI. Damn O'Connelly. I want to
wring his neck!

SHEILA

Calm down.

She gives him a kiss. The RECEPTIONIST gets her cue to leave and shuts the door behind her. ACE sits on the desk.

FRENCHY

Damn birds. I don't get this game.
Did you talk to him did you
interview him?

SHEILA

Yeah, he told us in so many words his tale of redemption. CNN was there so was that other one with that great looking guy Todd. But, I can't see why he was there. Such a waste of great ass on the screen. But I'll tell you Donny O'Connelly's girlfriend looks like a piece of work.

FRENCHY

Girlfriend? He's old enough to have a girlfriend?

SHEILA

A social worker at the home. A real do gooder and man those shoes. Can't believe it. So many years. So what. I'd put her on the World's Biggest Loser if there was such a thing for shoes. I gave Bob his task. He was late as usual. So... are they here yet... where's the ratings?

FRENCHY

Out treasure hunting again? I wonder what he's looking for. Here's the latest report.

SHEILA

Yeah, give it to me.

FRENCHY stands up. Nearby is a coat rack with several jackets hanging up. He takes down a purple jacket and tries it on. Outlandish looking. He takes a selfie of himself with his selfie stick.

FRENCHY

How do I look?

SHEILA

Like a plum with stretch marks.

FRENCHY

Great isn't it? For my next congressional hearing? But, Congressman, I didn't know the bathroom was bugged.

SHEILA

It makes you look fat. You don't look good in patterns.

(MORE)

SHEILA (CONT'D)
 Don't wear that when you go before
 the Feds. So, you were saying about
 the ratings? Maybe the kid's
 right.

FRENCHY
 (horrified at the thought)
 What? Now, see here, let me tell
 you missy.

SHEILA
 OK I am listening because you are
 going to give pearls from your
 great intellect.

FRENCHY
 It's an inaconvertable fact.

FRENCHY cops a pose.

FRENCHY (CONT'D)
 WE'RE NUMBER one IN THE RATINGS
 GAME

SHEILA
 Number two

FRENCHY
 OK WE'RE ALMOST AT THE TOP OF THE
 PACK. OUR COMPETITION IS ON THE RUN
 CUZ WE GOT THE GOODS THAT THEY LACK

SHEILA
 YOU MEAN THAT PURPLE COAT OFF THE
 RACK JACK

FRENCHY
 I LOVE THIS COAT

SHEILA
 YEAH YOU WOULD
 THAT PURPLE COAT OFF THE RACK JACK

FRENCHY
 IT'S MINE!
 WE GIVE THE PUBLIC WHAT THEY WANT
 ANXIETY AND HEARTBURN
 AND WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR

SHEILA
 I GET IT

FRENCHY
 WE ALL KNOW THAT FUNNY FEELING
 THAT COMES FROM
 PARANOIA, BLOOD LUST
 AND FEAR MY DEAR

SHEILA
 OH YOU ARE SO THE BOMB!

FRENCHY
 RATINGS R US RATINGS R US
 TELL CNN WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS
 PHOOEY ON STANDARDS, STANDARDS
 AIN'T FUN

SHEILA
 GRAMMAR

FRENCHY
 PHOOEY ON STANDARDS, STANDARDS
 AIN'T FUN

SHEILA
 THERE'S THAT GRAMMAR AGAIN

FRENCHY
 WHO NEEDS JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY
 WHEN YOU CAN HAVE ALIENS,
 TALKING DOGS AND KILLER BEES

SHEILA
 OH PLEASE

FRENCHY
 WHEN IT'S GOOD FOR RATINGS
 IT'S GOOD FOR US
 RATINGS, RATINGS
 WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS
 WHEN IT'S GOOD FOR RATINGS
 CUZ RATINGS R US!
 WELL DID YOU HEAR THE STORY
 RATINGS R US!
 BLA WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS?
 RATINGS R US!

SHEILA
 OH, YOU ARE SOMETHING.

FRENCHY
 R US!
 I'm going to bury that kid!

SHEILA
I'm not sure I like the sound of
that.

FRENCHY
Now Sheila.

SHEILA
What Frenchy?

FRENCHY
Turn about is fair play.

SHEILA
What are you trying to say?

FRENCHY
You know what to do.

SHEILA
Oh the hell with you.

FRENCHY
Sheila my dearest.

SHEILA
Don't pout, I hate it when you
pout.

FRENCHY
You're my other half.

SHEILA
Yeah you could say we are the
Jackie and Hyde of media.

The phone RINGS. SHEILA picks up the phone. TRENCH COAT BOB
on the other end.

INTERCUT: SHEILA/BOB PHONE CONVERSATION

SHEILA
Bob, did you get me a story? We
need to be sure you can make it
stick. Boss is out for blood. Can
it be credible? And you heard it
where again?

Bob stands by a magazine rack on a city street. He's walking
his dog.

TRENCH COAT BOB

I heard it all while I was standing by the ally, walking my ah, my dog and I heard it. Money laundering, oh my, who would of thought such a nice kid. Embezzlement it just gets more interesting.

SHEILA

Sounds good. Now, don't screw up. Any ten-year old can do this.

TRENCH COAT BOB

Yes, yes, I know.

SHEILA

Thanks, we'll be in touch.

SHEILA hangs up.

END INTERCUT

TRENCH COAT BOB, standing by the street sign, pulls out a map and a magazine from his huge pockets. He looks longingly at a strange map.

TRENCH COAT BOB

Any ten year old can do this. Any ten year old can do this. The nerve of her. I am family, not her. I want to find this place. What does this say? Door house? Is that a P or a B?

INT. FRENCHY'S OFFICE - EVENING

FRENCHY KING talks to SHEILA on the phone.

FRENCHY

So what's in a word? You know Ace I have used every word ever written.

INT. SHEILA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING

Sheila lounges on her bed.

INTERCUT: FRENCHY/SHEILA PHONE CONVERSATION

SHEILA
Oh sure you have.

FRENCHY
No it's true. A word is a universe
within itself.

SHEILA
You're so full of BS.

FRENCHY
Take the word embezeller. It
connotes a universe of intrigue and
secrets. So what's in a word?

SHEILA
The word is embezzler.

FRENCHY
I said that.

SHEILA
No you said embezeller.

FRENCHY
Mind your own bidness.

SHEILA
No...

FRENCHY
Can it, Sheila. You see...

A WELL TURNED PHRASE
IS A WONDERFUL THING
SO MULTI SLABIC
REALLY DRAMATIC
GRAMMERLY PURE
JUST MAKES MY HEART SING

WORDS CAN BE PRETTY
WORDS, WORDS
WORDS CAN SOUND SHITTY
WORDS, WORDS
THE VOWELS AND THE VERBS
WORDS, WORDS
THE WORDS THAT DISTURB
(MORE)

FRENCHY (CONT'D)
 WORDS, WORDS

EMOTIONAL BLISS
 WHEN IT'S WRITTEN JUST RIGHT
 YOU CAN LAUGH WHEN
 THEY CAN CRY
 WHEN THEY FEEL YOUR SPITE
 DAY AFTER DAY OF
 EMBELLISHING WORDS
 RISING WITH SUNSHINE AND
 CHIRPING OF BIRDS...
 GEE DID I SAY THAT?

SHEILA
 A WELL TURNED PHRASE CAN
 DO SO MANY THINGS
 WORDS SHOULD BE PRETTY
 WORDS, WORDS
 ISN'T IT A PITY
 WORDS, WORDS
 EMOTIONAL WRECK
 WHEN YOU SAY IT JUST RIGHT
 YOU CAN SNORE ALL YOU WANT
 WHEN I CRY IN THE NIGHT
 DAY AFTER DAY
 I'M BURIED IN WORDS
 NO HAPPY SUNSHINE OR BIRDS
 WORDS, WORDS

FRIEND OR BOSS
 WITH THOSE WORDS, WORDS
 WHATEVER THE COST
 SOMETIMES YOU ASK AN IMPOSSIBLE
 GAME
 AND SOMETIMES I ANSWER WITH DOUBT
 SOMETIMES THE WORLD SERVES
 US DAGGERS AND RAIN
 BUT WE ALWAYS FIGHT OUR WAY OUT
 WORDS, WORDS
 FRIEND OR BOSS
 WITH THOSE WORDS, WORDS
 WHATEVER THE COST
 WHAT CAN I DO
 IF I SAY TOO MUCH
 IT'S ALWAYS SHEILA
 MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!

INT: HAPPY ENDINGS HOMELESS HOUSE - NEXT DAY

DONNY and LAURA do housework. A nervous female helper named HELEN comes running in with a computer tablet in her hand. She motions to LAURA.

HELEN

Laura, you have to look at this. I found this news posting on the Internet.

LAURA

(reading)

The Happy Endings Homeless Shelter has been implicated in criminal activity in embezzlement and money laundering for a well known drug cartel. Oh, my God, who wrote this?

HELEN

You know people always do that. It's probably some kid in his bedroom playing a prank. I wouldn't pay any attention to it. Stupid hackers.

DONNY

Oh, I don't know about that.

LAURA

Come on Helen can you help me in the kitchen. I have a bad feeling...

DONNY

(visibly angry)

Hackers. No, it's that King, he's got to be up to something.

LAURA

And that Acer woman. Snake in high heels.

HELEN and LAURA leave the room with a bag of trash.

DONNY is left alone with his broom. He paces nervously near the TV. He stops lost, in his thoughts. Music plays.

DONNY

SO WHAT AM I S'POSSED TO DO NOW?
HE'S GOT ME IN A CORNER
IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

(MORE)

DONNY (CONT'D)
 BEING CUT DOWN TO SIZE
 IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK
 BEING BURIED IN LIES
 IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK
 TO CLAW MY WAY OUT OF THIS HOLE
 THEY SAY IT'S A SIN
 TO COMPLAIN ABOUT HIM

BUT I'M RUNNING IN VAIN
 AND I'M GOING INSANE
 MY DAD ALWAYS TOLD ME
 THEY'D TAUNT ME AND SCOLD ME
 SO SPEAK OUT THE TRUTH
 CHASE THE DEMONS AWAY
 NOW I'M BAD, THEN I'M GOOD
 JUST MISUNDERSTOOD
 HOLD MY GROUND
 I COULD BE OK

KNOW THE RULES, GO TO SCHOOL
 FEED MY HEAD, GO TO BED
 GET A WIFE, GET A LIFE
 IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK
 SOME PEOPLE LIVE FOR ANSWERS
 IT'S ALL IN A DAYS WORK
 SOME PEOPLE REWRITE THE QUESTIONS
 TO THE ANSWERS

SO WHAT'S IT WITH HIM
 MAKE ME DANCE ON A PIN
 BUT IT'S ALL IN HIS DAY'S WORK
 BEING A SOLID GOLD JERK
 HOW DID THAT MAN BECOME AN EXPERT
 ON THE TRUTH
 THAT HE HAD TO REWRITE IT
 AND WE HAD TO FIGHT IT

SO IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK
 AND TODAY HIS TARGET IS ME
 HE THINKS HE HAS WON
 BUT I SAY HIS WORK IS DONE

DONNY stands defiantly and then he leaves the room.

RHODA (V.O.)
 Then there was that incident that
 was later discussed on page 45
 under the heading "Did It Happen?"
 (MORE)

RHODA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Of course, this is the Tabloid
 World."

INT: FRENCHY KING BEDROOM - NIGHT

FRENCHY texts while watching TV. Suddenly, all the lights go out. Frenchy is quite alarmed. There is a large TV in the room that is on the floor.

A white face appears in the screen then a white hand. Annoyed moaning is heard from TV.

A ragged figure begins to shimmy out of the screen and slides to the floor.

FRENCHY does not notice at first because he is yelling at his iPad screen.

FRENCHY
 Ah, dammit, I almost had ya.

The ragged figure is handed a ball and chain by another white hand that has just shown up in the screen.

The ragged figure dons the ball and chain and it suddenly clanks to the carpet with a dull thud.

Frenchy looks up. His jaw drops he drops the iPad and rubs his eyes. He is staring at the GHOST WITH CHAINS

In the meantime two other pale figures slither from the screen. One gets helped out.

One "ghost" has a great makeup job looks like a glamour ghost. The other looks like an old ghost, not a great job.

GHOST WITH CHAINS
 (New York accent)
 Frenchy King, Frenchy King. Whoooo.
 The Council has decided to pay you
 a visit.

FRENCHY
 I knew there was something wrong
 with this TV. The 3-D Hi Def
 baloney. Doesn't work.

GHOST WITH CHAINS
 You must be judged for crimes
 against society and little old
 ladies and nice girls and kindly
 gents.

FRENCHY

Where's that manual? Where did I
put it?

Frenchy rummages around in the stuff on the bed.

GHOST WITH CHAINS approaches the bed, reaches out to touch
FRENCHY. He jumps off the bed.

GHOST WITH CHAINS

We are real.. Whooo. As are your
crimes Frenchy King.

The OLD GHOST prods the GLAMOUR GHOST to the front.

GHOST IN CHAINS gives the ball and chain to the GLAMOUR
GHOST.

GLAMOUR GHOST

THEY SAY TIME HEALS ALL THINGS
SO I'VE BEEN TOLD
LIKE IN A MOVIE
LIKE IN STORIES OF OLD
BUT THEN YOU CAME ALONG
AND CHANGED THE GAME
YOU BROUGHT WITH YOU
A BALL AND CHAIN AHH

The OLD GHOST points to Frenchy.

OLD GHOST and GHOST WITH CHAINS begin to pantomime a door
being opened.

WELL YOU KNOW I OPENED THE DOOR
BECAUSE I COULD
WELL THE WOLF AT THE DOOR SAYS
HE'S MISUNDERSTOOD
I CRIED OUT AS LOUD
AS LOUD AS I COULD OHH
BUT I CRIED OUT IN VAIN
CAUSE THE ONLY SOUND HEARD
WAS THE CLANK OF THAT CHAIN
BALL AND CHAIN
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE
I HAD MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB
AND RACES TO RUN
WHAT WILL I DO NOW
WHAT WILL I DO
WITH THIS STUPID
BALL AND CHAIN?

(MORE)

GLAMOUR GHOST (CONT'D)
 WHEN YOU GIVE UP THE GHOST
 YOU GIVE UP THE CHAINS
 JUST ASK THE MAN

OLD GHOST takes a set of keys from Frenchy's bathrobe pocket.
 The bathrobe is nearby.

WHO KEEPS THE KEYS IN HIS HAND
 IT'S HARD TO CROSS A RIVER OF STONE
 IT'S HARD TO GET BACK
 YOU'RE NAME WHEN IT'S
 RIPPED TO THE BONE

The GHOST WITH CHAINS opens her shirt we see bones.

BALL AND CHAIN
 WHAT HAVE YOU DONE
 I HAD MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB
 AND RACES TO RUN
 WHAT WILL I DO NOW
 WITH THIS BALL AND CHAIN

GHOST WITH CHAINS
 Well, well, here we are again in
 the presence of the great Mr. King.
 Or should we call you the Sun King?
 Now that's a good nickname for a
 pompous ass as yours truly. Do you
 know who I am your majesty?

FRENCHY cowers in fear and utter shock.

FRENCHY
 What are you talking about? What
 man? No I don't know you! What the
 hell are you? No, it must be the
 bad sushi. You aren't here.

OLD GHOST
 You will be visited by some
 casualties. So enjoy the show. It's
 a reality show and you are the
 star.

FRENCHY
 OH really, so when is that going to
 happen?
 (thinking)
 Hasn't that been done before?

GHOST WITH CHAINS

Done before, done before? Geez, a critic.

FRENCHY

Why am I talking to a damn hallucination!

GHOST WITH CHAINS

Oh contraire.

GHOST WITH CHAINS stalks FRENCHY around the room scaring him. She waves a bony hand...

The bedroom goes away and out comes a TINY NIGHTCLUB WITH CHAIRS AND TWO TABLES.

Frenchy is pushed into a chair by Old Ghost.

Rhoda, Hubert and Blaze enter. Blaze in a long red dress steps up to a mike.

Rhoda and Hubert sit at another table looking like tourists.

FRENCHY

What the heck is going on here?

RHODA (VO)

And then there was the big letdown.
Oh course he did not remember.

CARD: ONE YEAR EARLIER

INT. BLAZE HAYNES' PENTHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The spacious penthouse apartment is bathed in sunlight, offering breathtaking views of the city skyline. BLAZE sits on a plush couch, her laptop open in front of her. A cup of coffee sits untouched on the table as she navigates her laptop with a mix of excitement and anxiety.

She clicks on a video news article headline that reads: "Record Label Drops Blaze Haynes." Her eyes widen as she reads the details.

REPORTER'S VOICE

In a surprising turn of events, Blaze Haynes, the chart-topping sensation known for her soulful voice, has been dropped by her record label, MJAM Records. Sources cite creative differences and a declining sales trend...

Blaze's expression shifts from shock to disbelief as the weight of the news sinks in. She leans back on the couch, her mind racing.

BLAZE

Dropped? But... but I've been with them for years.

Her phone rings, startling her. It's her manager, RICHARD.

RICHARD

Blaze, have you seen the news?

BLAZE

Yes, Richard, I have. What's going on?

RICHARD

It's true, Blaze. MJAM dropped you. They want to go in a different direction.

Blaze's eyes well up with tears, her voice trembling.

BLAZE

Different direction? After all we've been through?

Blaze takes a deep breath, trying to hold back tears.

INT. RHODA HAYNES APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - DAY

BLAZE and her many suitcases stand at the front door of Rhoda's apartment.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. SMALL NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The small nightclub is dimly lit, creating an intimate and cozy atmosphere.

Tables with flickering candles line the room.

A minuscule stage, barely large enough to accommodate a singer and a piano. The stage is adorned with a simple black curtain that drapes behind it, giving it an air of understated elegance.

Blaze steps into the spotlight. She wears a glamorous but slightly outdated outfit, embodying the image of a star who has seen better days.

Her microphone stands at attention, and a lone pianist sits at the baby grand piano, ready to accompany her.

Frenchy fidgets nervously. Blaze starts to sing.

BLAZE

YA KNOW I HAD A CAREER
I WAS ON TOP BUT YOU CAME ALONG
IT ALL STOPPED
WHILE SITTING IN THE MEDI-SPA
I SPIED A MAGAZINE
ON the COVER
SCORNE D AND ALONE
MY FACE puckered COFFEE STAINS
DRIPPING INNUENDO
AND THE CAPTION READ
BLAZE HAYNES
Caught lip syncing

AFTER PARAGRAPH TWO
THE PHONE RANG
IT WAS MY AGENT
who said "I QUIT"
YOU did ME WRONG, FRENCHY
YOU did ME WRONG, FRENCHY
YOU TOLD A TALE, FRENCHY
IT WAS A WHALE OF A TALE
I WENT TO JAIL
WELL NOT REALLY
IT JUST FELT THAT WAY

YOU KNOW ITS HARD
READING ABOUT YOURSELF
WHEN YOUR FACE, YOUR FACE
IS ALL OVER THE SHELF
THERE'S NOT ENOUGH WORDS
IN THIS SONG
TO TELL HOW YOU did
Ya did ME WRONG
ITS HARD, it's HARD

WHEN THE WORDS
ARE SO LONG
THEY WON'T FIT
IN THIS SONG
Doo doo doo doo doo doo
YOU DID ME WRONG!

Rhoda stands up and applauds.

RHODA

Wasn't she great. Give her a big hand.

SOUNDS of CLAPPING like in a big crowd.

FRENCHY

Why does that sound familiar? Are you done yet? I want to go back to bed.

HEADLINES

Float in the air "CAR CRASH - UP NEXT".

The tiny nightclub changes color SIRENS SCREECHING and a CRASH sound.

HUBERT

Oh my. I remember that. Blaze and I.

RHODA

Yes and it was not a fun time for me either. Damn King reporters chasing you.

HEADLINES

The headlines change to...

CONGRESSMAN HAYNES AND LOVE CHILD, THE FAMOUS CHANTEUSE, BLAZE, ALMOST KILLED IN CAR CRASH. CHASED BY KING MEDIA REPORTER.

FRENCHY

I didn't' do it, it was those other guys!

Blaze wants to keep singing.

BLAZE

YOU, YOU DONE ME WRONG
(big finish)

Frenchy runs off terrified. Rhoda and Hubert clap and holler. Blaze bows.

RHODA

Now Hubert. You're up next. Break a leg.

RHODA HAYNES (V.O.)
Francis King broke a cardinal rule
of journalism.

CARD: TWO YEARS AGO

INT. CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ROOM - DAY

The Congressional Hearing Room is filled with senators, reporters, and spectators. At the center of the room, behind a wooden podium, stands CONGRESSMAN HUBERT HAYNES, a man of integrity and resolve. He gazes sternly at the man seated before him - FRENCHY KING, the media mogul facing allegations of wiretapping and other crimes.

CONGRESSMAN HUBERT HAYNES

(firmly)

Mr. King, you are here today to answer for grave allegations of wiretapping, invasion of privacy, and manipulating public opinion through your media empire. These actions strike at the heart of our democracy. Do you understand the seriousness of these charges?

Frenchy King, no longer the flamboyant figure he once was, sits uncomfortably in his seat.

FRENCHY KING

(nervously)

Congressman Haynes, I... I'm aware of the allegations, but I assure you, there must be some misunderstanding.

CONGRESSMAN HUBERT HAYNES

(skeptical)

Misunderstanding, Mr. King? The evidence we've gathered is substantial. Citizens' private conversations were intercepted, their lives invaded, all in the pursuit of sensational headlines. Can you deny these actions?

Frenchy King hesitates, searching for words.

FRENCHY KING

(carefully)

I may have engaged in some...

(MORE)

FRENCHY KING (CONT'D)
questionable practices in pursuit
of a story, but my intentions were
never malicious.

CONGRESSMAN HUBERT HAYNES
(accusing)
Questionable practices? Mr. King,
what you call "questionable" is a
violation of trust, a betrayal of
the public's right to privacy, and
an affront to responsible
journalism. Can you justify your
actions?

Frenchy King shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

FRENCHY KING
(evasive)
Congressman, you must understand
the competitive nature of the media
industry. I was pushed to extremes
to stay ahead.

CONGRESSMAN HUBERT HAYNES
(unyielding)
Mr. King, the competitive nature of
the industry should never justify
breaking the law or compromising
the values that underpin our
democracy. The media holds immense
power, and with it comes an equally
immense responsibility.

The room falls silent as Hubert Haynes' words hang in the
air, the weight of the situation settling on Frenchy King's
shoulders.

CONGRESSMAN HUBERT HAYNES (CONT'D)
(concluding)
We will continue this hearing to
uncover the truth behind these
allegations, Mr. King. Rest
assured, justice will be served.

BACK TO PRESENT

Frenchy runs like he is escaping. For a moment he thinks he's
alone and collects his breath.

FRENCHY
That was a dream. I was dreaming
about those awful Haynes people.
Why? Where am I?

Frenchy stands alone in the dark.

Suddenly Hubert is standing by a chair on a dark stage. He has a floor length gavel he holds like a flag and there is a light on him.

Hubert turns to Frenchy.

HUBERT
Frenchy King, isn't it true
You think the world belongs to you?

FRENCHY
Ahhh... no?

HUBERT
Exhibit A. Headline - *Hubert
Haynes is a crooked Congressman.*
Now that wouldn't be because we
tried to investigate your
questionable journalistic
practices, would it?

HEADLINES appear in the air.

FRENCHY
No, I don't know how that headline
got there.

HUBERT assumes lawyer role.

HUBERT
IS IT TRUE FRENCHY KING
IS IT TRUE?
YOU CONFOUNDED THE PEOPLE,
DID YOU?
WITH OUTRAGEOUS, BALONIUS
GOSH DARN FELONIOUS,
TALES...

Four pink haired KIDS enter. HUBERT looks annoyed.

KIDS
OF INTRIGUE... OUR EARS ARE BURNING!
IS IT TRUE
WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT YOU?

HUBERT
READERS AND TWEETERS
MEDIA BELIEVERS
(MORE)

HUBERT (CONT'D)
 IS IT TRUE
 WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT YOU?

FRENCHY
 NOW THIS IS ALL VERY
 INTERESTING
 NOT!
 BUT I REALLY WANT TO GO BACK TO BED

KIDS
 NOT SO FAST
 WE SAVED THE BEST FOR LAST

FRENCHY
 Is this that crazy ghost thingy.
 Are you going to show me the errors
 of my ways or what?

Hubert raises the gavel over Frenchy's head.

Hubert swats Frenchy with the gavel.

HUBERT
 I thought this was my scene.

KID #1
 You are over your head gramps.
 We're your backup.

HUBERT
 Do you know any soft shoe? None of
 that stuff you kids do on your
 heads.

KID #1
 Hit it boys.

Dance routine soft shoe as Hubert speaks.

HUBERT
 Now where was I? I would like to
 sing about a number of things that
 come to mind.

I WAS ONCE AN UPSTANDING
 CONGRESSMAN
 NEVER HAD A WORRY OR A DOUBT
 EVERYBODY LOVED ME
 EVEN WHEN THEY SNUBBED ME
 I HAD A JOB THAT HAD
 WELL, YOU KNOW... CLOUT
 (MORE)

HUBERT (CONT'D)
WHILE SITTING IN THE MEN'S ROOM
I READ A MAGAZINE
AND TO MY SURPRISE
I GAZED INTO MY EYES
GAZING BACK AT ME
IN LIVING COLOR WAS ME ME ME!
AND THE CAPTION READ

KIDS
HUBERT HAYNES CAUGHT RED HANDED!

KIDS keep dancing looking bored. Suddenly they break into a hip hop routine to an unseen boom box.

KID #1
You're putting us to sleep Gramps.
Let's show em how its done.

HUBERT
Now wait a minute who's side are
you on?

The Kids break out into a wild dance number dragging Hubert and Frenchy into it.

The mood becomes raucous and weirdly supernatural when Rhoda and Blaze enter the scene.

Dazed and confused finally FRENCHY breaks free and runs off.

EXT. PARK BENCH - LATER ON

Rhoda, Blaze and Hubert, are sitting on a park bench in deep discussion.

RHODA
That was a splendid performance.

BLAZE
You should write a play about it.
Call it The Flatbush Little
Dickens.

HUBERT
Doesn't the Scrooge character have
a change of heart? That reminds me
of a story... We were trying to
convince this Congressman to change
his vote..

RHODA

Yes dear... I think it's time he
met the game changer.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

There is laughing heard. 4 KIDS saunter in and gather around
a lamppost.

One KID lights up a cigarette. Another KID is reading
something on his IPHONE.

KID #1

Did you know the Clapper thingy and
Chia Pets are really alien techno?

KID #2

Now that is buzz worthy.

KID #3

Did you read about the pizza drone
that blew a guys's apartment up
because he had the wrong change.
That's nasty.

KID #4

Serves him right. Pizza drones.
How do you suppose the King Media
dudes get their information? Spies?
Drone spies?

KID #1

They get it from the aliens dude.
Pizza drones came from aliens.

Rhoda, Blaze and Hubert listen in on the banter.

Just then SHEILA ACER walks along the street. She sees the
kids and tries to avoid them nervously.

The kids recognize her as she walks down a dark street at
night as she is getting out of work.

Sheila tries to avoid them. The Kids circle around her kind
of slow but not menacing.

The Kids pick up items in the street and use them as
percussion instruments.

KID #2

Well lookie here. We talk and voila
she shows up.

(MORE)

KID #2 (CONT'D)

The Queen of mean and in between.
Can I escort you to somewhere?

SHEILA

Now boys don't get up on my
account.

KID #1

EACH DAY I TURN IT ON
BEFORE I GO TO SCHOOL
THEY SAY I NEED TO WATCH THE NEWS
DON'T WANT TO BE A FOOL
THE LADY IN THE TIGHT DRESS
HER HAIR IS PRETTY COOL
BUT ALL I HEAR IS
BLAH, BLAH BLAH BLAH,
BLAH BLAH BLAH,
BLAH BLAH
BLAH, BLAH BLAH BLAH

KID #2

THIS BLONDIE GOT A SWAGGA ON HER
SHE'S SUCHA PRETTY PICTURE
YOU COULD PUT A FRAME ON HER
KINDA LIKE MY SISTER
BUT ALL I HEAR IS
BUY A CAR, BE A STAR
BUY A FROZEN DINNER
TAKE A POLL, ROCK N ROLL
I TOO CAN BE A WINNER
BUT ALL I HEAR IS
BLAH, BLAH BLAH BLAH,
BLAH BLAH BLAH,
BLAH BLAH
BLAH, BLAH BLAH BLAH

KID ROUND

FLASHY
AND KILLIN'
THRILLIN'
AND A LITTLE MORE

FLASHY
AND KILLIN'
THRILLIN'
AND A LITTLE MORE

KID #3

SIAMESE TWINS FACE
FIRING SQUAD
NOW. NOW, NOW

(MORE)

KID #3 (CONT'D)
 WHY THAT'S PRETTY ODD

KID #4
 THERE GOES BIG FOOT
 HE'S LOOKING FOR A THRILL
 I WOULD LIKE TO TALK TO HIM
 I GUESS I NEVER WILL
 DID YOU READ ABOUT YEAH YE
 DID YOU HEAR ABOUT YEAH YE
 DID YOU READ ABOUT YEAH YE
 DID YOU HEAR ABOUT YEAH YE
 ALL CREATIVE CAN YOU GET

IT'S ALL POTENTIALLY BELEVABLE
 IT'S ALL POTENTIALLY BELEVABLE

ALL YA WANNA DO IS BIMBAMBOOZ ME
 ALL YA WANNA DO IS BIMBAMBOOZ ME
 ALL YA WANNA DO IS BIMBAMBOOZ ME
 ALL YA WANNA DO IS BIMBAMBOOZ ME
 AH AH AH I BETTER REWIND
 ALL YA WANNA DO IS BIMBAMBOOZ ME
 ALL YA WANNA DO IS BIMBAMBOOZ ME
 ALL YA WANNA DO IS BIMBAMBOOZ ME
 ALL YA WANNA DO IS BIMBAMBOOZ ME
 AH AH AH I BETTER REWIND

BABEL
 IT'S SO MUCH BABEL
 YOU THINK WE'RE RIFF RAFF
 YOU THINK WE'RE RABBLE
 IT'S SO MUCH NOICE TO ALL US
 CITY GIRLS AND BOYS
 AH AH AH I BETTER REWIND

SHEILA
 You are just a bunch of hoodlums.
 Leave me alone.

KID #1
 She called us hoodlums. That hurts
 my feelings. You can dish it out
 but you can't take it. Better run
 sister. So where were we?

Sheila runs away. The Kids run off.

Blaze, Hubert and Rhoda are left alone sitting on the park
 bench.

BLAZE

My, they really don't like her. I
sure don't like her.

HUBERT

I should say not.

RHODA

Today's youth. Well even they have
a story

HUBERT

Somewhere between Twittering and
that other Book thing.

RHODA

Facebook. I can't rightly blame
because... they have to stand their
ground. Be stubborn.

HUBERT

Stubborn you mean like you can be.

Rhoda stands up and begins to pace.

RHODA

ALL THROUGH HISTORY
SINCE TIME BEGAN
THERE'S BEEN A MESS
BETWEEN SOME
WOMAN AND SOME MAN
CLEOPATRA HAD A GUY
MARY SHELLY HAD A THING
EVEN OLIVE OIL HAD A FOIL
LOOK AT ME EVEN I'VE HAD A ROIL
YOU KNOW I'VE HAD MY RUN IN
WITH DRINKERS AND THINKERS
AND DANDY HOODWINKERS
BUT I'LL DO JUST FINE
CAUSE I'M A STUBBORN WOMAN
YOU KNOW A STUBBORN WOMAN
YOU WOULD AGREE IT TAKES
A STUBBORN WOMAN LIKE ME

WIMPS AND SHRIMPS AND
SIMPY GALS
YA GOTTA HAVE JUNK
IN YOUR TRUNKS
LISTEN UP PALS
YOU THINK IT'S BAD
ALL THIS FUSSING AND FIGHTING

(MORE)

RHODA (CONT'D)
 YOU THINK YOU'RE MAD
 THINK YOU'RE SAD
 WELL I SAY YOU THINK TOO MUCH
 JUST FLICK IT OFF YOUR SHOULDER
 BEFORE IT MAKES YOU OLDER
 BE A STUBBORN GIRL
 AND FIND A WAY

THERE'S BEEN A WOMAN
 SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN
 SOME STUBBORN WOMAN
 BEATING UP SOME MAN
 SO BE A STUBBORN WOMAN
 GET UP BEFORE YOU FALL
 I KNOW CAUSE I'VE DONE IT ALL
 SO BE A STUBBORN WOMAN
 LIKE ME

HUBERT
 As much as I hate to say this, he
 needs you know.. a chance. I
 know... twenty-four hours. That
 always sounds sportsmanlike.

BLAZE
 I'd just hire a hit man.

HUBERT
 Oh my... That reminds me of the
 time... No forget it.

INT. FRENCHY KING'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

FRENCHY'S TV SCREEN

A commercial playing.

TV COMMERCIAL (ON SCREEN)
 (cheerful and exaggerated)
 Introducing the ultimate kitchen
 gadget, the SuperChop 5000! It
 slices, dices, and even teleports
 your veggies directly from the farm
 to your plate. But that's not
 all...

As the commercial blares on, Frenchy takes a sip of
 champagne, visibly amused by the absurdity of the
 advertisement. But suddenly, the TV screen flickers, and the
 commercial transforms into a bizarre and surreal spectacle.

WEIRD APPARITION (ON SCREEN)
 (manic and otherworldly)
 Frenchy King, the master of
 sensationalism, your time has come!
 Beware, for the spirits of tabloid
 tales have awakened, and they seek
 justice!

WEIRD APPARITION (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
 I AM GHOST OF THE BACK PAGE
 I AM THE GHOST OF MADE UP NEWS
 IS IT TRUE, IS IT NOT
 AM I DEAD OR JUST FORGOT?
 INVENTION IS MY HOBBY
 I'M A SHODDY DISEMBODIED

FRENCHY
 The back page?

WEIRD APPARITION (ON SCREEN)
 24 HOURS THAT'S ALL YOU GET
 24 HOURS NOT TEN OR TWO
 24 HOURS AND IT'S OVER FOR YOU!
 OH BOO HOO!
 THESE BLOOD THIRSTY FACES
 WAITING TO GREET YOU
 THERE'S CREATURES THERE
 HAPPY TO MEET YOU
 HAPPY TO SEAT YOU MAYBE TO EAT YOU
 IN A FRENCHY BOUILLABAISSE!!

FRENCHY
 Where? You're the ghost of fake
 news, maybe your warning is fake
 too.

WEIRD APPARITION (ON SCREEN)
 THAT'S FOR ME TO KNOW AND
 YOU TO FIND OUT
 24 HOURS THAT'S ALL YOU GET
 24 HOURS NOT TEN OR TWO
 24 THEN IT'S OVER FOR YOU

FRENCHY
 What should I do?

WEIRD APPARITION (ON SCREEN)
 RETRACTIONS!
 HA HA HA

TV COMMERCIAL (ON SCREEN)
 (cheerful and exaggerated,
 once more)
 Call now, and you'll receive not
 one, but two SuperChop 5000s for
 the price of...

Frenchy King remains transfixed, trying to make sense of the bizarre encounter. The spirits of tabloid tales have just made their presence felt in an otherworldly and absurd fashion, leaving him with a sense of impending reckoning.

FRENCHY KING jumps out of bed in a panic.

SOUND of howling wolves. FRENCHY jumps.

FRENCHY
 Aahhhh!!

EXT. STREET - NEXT DAY

The sun bathes the street in warm light. Donny dashes down the pavement with a wild, exasperated expression.

A chaotic procession of NEWS PEOPLE, some clutching microphones and others holding cameras, pursue him with relentless determination. The Mayor stops him.

MAYOR
 (coldly, with suspicion)
 Donny, we've had a significant
 issue brought to our attention.
 There are allegations of
 embezzlement at the homeless
 shelter you manage.

DONNY O'CONNELLY
 (defensive, but composed)
 Allegations, Mayor? I assure you,
 there's no truth to those claims.
 The shelter's finances are
 transparent, and every penny is
 accounted for.

MAYOR
 (skeptical)
 That's what you say, Donny.
 (MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)
 But given the severity of the
 accusations and the nature of the
 claims, we have no choice but to
 investigate further.

Donny's expression hardens as the Mayor continues, his eyes
 narrowing.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
 (firmly)
 In light of these allegations,
 we've decided to put your "Good
 Deeds Award" from the city on hold
 until this matter is resolved.

Donny's shock is evident as he processes the implications of
 the Mayor's statement.

DONNY O'CONNELLY
 (protesting)
 Mayor, you can't be serious. This
 award is not just for me; it's a
 recognition of the entire
 community's efforts at the shelter.
 We've done so much good!

MAYOR
 (unyielding)
 And we appreciate that, Donny. But
 we can't ignore serious allegations
 against a recipient of such an
 honor. It wouldn't be responsible.

Donny's frustration mounts, but he knows he must tread
 carefully.

DONNY O'CONNELLY
 (calmly, but with
 determination)
 I understand your position, Mayor,
 but I'm confident that this
 investigation will clear my name.
 The shelter's work must continue.
 The people there depend on it.

NEWS PEOPLE
 YOU THINK YOU KNOW A PERSON
 BUT THEN YOU DON'T
 THEY SAY THEY WILL,
 BUT THEN THEY WON'T
 WE HAD SUCH HIGH HOPES FOR YOU KID
 BUT LOOK WHAT YOU DID
 (MORE)

NEWS PEOPLE (CONT'D)
 THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD
 THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD
 I CAN SEE IT IN THE HEADLINES
 THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD
 WE KNOW WHAT YOU DID,
 THIS CROOK IS A KID

NEWS GUY #1
 HE WON THE HOMELESS SHELTER
 IN A GAME OF POKER
 BEGINNERS LUCK CAUSE HE'S MEDIOCRE
 I GOT THIS INFORMATION
 FROM A REAL ESTATE BROKER

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD
 THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD
 I CAN SEE IT IN THE HEADLINES
 WE KNOW WHAT YOU DID
 THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD
 THIS CROOK IS A KID

DONNY
 NO!! I DID NOT!
 WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE US ALONE?
 YOU INVADE OUR HAPPY HOME

NEWS GUY #2
 HE WAS SPOTTED ON A MONDAY, NO
 SUNDAY
 LEAVING BARNEY'S BAR AND GRILL
 WITH A BROAD, NO LADY
 YOU'D THINK THEY WERE FROM THAT
 MOVIE WITH WARREN BEATTY
 THE SIMILARITY DID GIVE US PAUSE
 I KNOW THIS, JUST beCAUSE

MAYOR
 I AM HERE TO TAKE BACK THE AWARD
 you crook

DONNY
 WHY? MOVIE?
 IT'S ALL LIES
 I DID NOT DO WHAT THEY SAY
 IT'S ALL LIES
 WHERE ARE YOU ALL GOING?
 COME BACK
 I AM INNOCENT!
 COME BACK

(MORE)

DONNY (CONT'D)
I AM INNOCENT!

NEWS GUY #3
HIS NAME IS REALLY GELLAR
AND HE AIN'T EVEN A FELAEER

DONNY
NOW WAIT A MINUTE!

NEWS PEOPLE
THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD
THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

HELEN
WE CAN'T AFFORD TERRIBLE PUBLICITY
MAY LEAD TO OUR COMPLICITY

TOM
I BELIEVE IN YOU DONNY AND MS.
LAURA TOO
I REALLY DO

HELEN
COME ON TOM
WE ARE GOING DOWN THE STREET
TO THE K-MART PARKING LOT

NEWS PEOPLE
THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD!

HELEN and YOUNG TOM are moving out with their shopping bags.

The 4 KIDS walk with picket signs.

DONNY and LAURA are left alone on the street.

Donny has the empty case that the award came in. LAURA wrings her hair.

LAURA
It could be worse.

DONNY
What's worse than this?

LAURA

I don't know... ahh.. Damn it Donny
we can't just take this lying down.
We have to fight back. This is our
whole lives and...
(crying)

DONNY

There, there, we'll be fine you'll
see.

DONNY and LAURA walk off holding each other close.

FRENCHY KING and SHEILA ACER are both on their phones at
opposite ends talking to each other.

FRENCHY

Change in plans. Find out something
good about that O'Connelly kid. Got
that?

SHEILA

What... are you kidding?

FRENCHY

It's life and death doll.

SHEILA

What has come over you?

FRENCHY

Think good thoughts, happy
thoughts. Reverse psychology.
Didn't you learn that in school?

SHEILA

Did you forget to take your
medication again?

FRENCHY

Smart ass.

SHEILA

First you want to bury him, now no.
Yes, I'm worried.

FRENCHY

I'm the boss. Do as I ask please.
It's my decision.

SHEILA

OK, OK ... I'll try...

FRENCHY

I gave up snacks, I'll stop
watching TV. Ohh that's a tough
one.

They both hang up together. FRENCHY and SHEILA slink off in
opposite directions.

TRENCH COAT BOB is singing and feeling carefree as he walks
along down a dark path.

TRENCH COAT BOB

MAN CHASES WOMAN
WOMAN RUNS FROM MAN
SUSIE ROBS THE TRUST FUND
MOMMY'S NOT AWARE
IT'S A LOT OF INTRIGUE
BUT REALLY DO I CARE

GPS tracker begins to CHIRP.

It must be here! But what's here

BOB comes to a place of dense bushes and vines.

He stands looking at the map, his back to the bushes.

Silently the bushes give way, a door opens, an arm comes out
grabs TRENCH COAT BOB and yanks him in. The door shuts. The
bushes go back to where they were.

The bush fades into the darkness.

EXT. **HAPPY ENDING HOMELESS HOUSE** - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

DONNY and LAURA huddles on the front steps of the Homeless
House.

RHODA stands alone in the shadows.

DONNY

So I wonder when the Feds will show
up to haul us away.

LAURA

We haven't been alone like this in
a long time, Donny. You know it's
kind of nice.

DONNY

Yeah. So what do we sell off first?
Your clunker or mine? Gee my school
loans are due.

(MORE)

DONNY (CONT'D)
 So if we plead guilty will they be
 easier? Never been to jail.

LAURA
 No. Stop this. Get up Donny grow
 some hair.

DONNY
 I don't think that's the precise
 term. Will it be painful?

LAURA
 Painful? What ever. Get up.

DONNY
 Right.

LAURA
 Right - you got it.

DONNY
 Hey yeah... well if our future is a
 jail cell can't think of any one
 I'd rather share it with than you,
 Laura.

IN A TABLOID
 WHEN THEY TELL IT
 HOW WILL THEY SELL IT
 SPELL MY NAME RIGHT
 DID I CAVE OR DID I FIGHT?
 I'M JUST A WORKING GUY
 TOOK A CHANCE I WONT LIE
 IN A TABLOID
 WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT YOU
 YOU HOPE IT'S TRUE
 BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO

RHODA echoes the song.

I wish I knew...

RHODA steps out of the shadows and wanders over to the park
 bench where BLAZE and HUBERT sit.

SOUNDS OF A HOOT OWL somewhere.

RHODA
 (to them)
 Ever read the stories about the
 Greeks?

HUBERT
Of course.. Which Greeks dear?
Jimmy the Greek?

BLAZE
I know about Stavros Azintakis, a
Greek shipping magnate. Came to my
show once.

RHODA
Oh.

BLAZE
You know the one two years ago in
Vegas. What a disaster that was. He
blew in like hot wind, blew up my
skirt. Well, not actually. Blaze,
Blaze, I'm all ablaze, in Greek of
course at least the drunk
translator says. It was like an
Olympic sport, well, I got a gold
medal. Until his wife showed up.

HUBERT, RHODA raised eyebrows. RHODA fingers crossed.

RHODA
Under the radar...

HUBERT
Back to earth. Is this another
let's consult the classics moment
again?

RHODA
Do I detect a bit of sarcasm?

HUBERT
Just asking. It never hurts to ask.
I never assume to know what is
going on in that head of yours.

RHODA
Remember the one about the horse.
You know da, da, da bearing gifts.

BLAZE
Horse? What da da da?

RHODA
You never got a horse. Hard to get
a horse in a taxi. Up an elevator.
Into a penthouse.

(MORE)

RHODA (CONT'D)
 So many things one sacrifices
 living in a high rise.

BLAZE
 What the hell would I do with a
 horse?

HUBERT
 Investment. Get to the point dear.

RHODA
 I always get to the point even when
 it's miles away, like now, you'll
 see. Remember the back page between
 the crossword puzzle and that awful
 instant hair ad. It was an
 entertaining tale to say the least.
 The set-up and the double cross.

INT. KING MEDIA OFFICE - NEXT DAY

FRENCHY KING paces nervously in his office, biting his nails.
 SHEILA enters. There is a news broadcast being held in
 another part of the floor that goes on that is clearly seen
 through a glass pane.

SHEILA
 What is wrong with you? We are all
 looking to find good things on
 Donny but he has stayed out of the
 public eye. When did you get a
 conscience? By the way, where is
 that no good nephew of yours. He is
 not anywhere to be found.

FRENCHY
 What? You would not understand.

SHEILA
 Naa... that would never happen.

RHODA in disguise as a bag lady named MADGE, enters the
 reception area of the office. She has a bag with her. She
 approaches the RECEPTIONIST.

MADGE
 Oh hello. I am here to see Mr.
 King.

RECEPTIONIST
 Ahhh. How did you get in here.

MADGE

Door. How did you get in here?

RECEPTIONIST

I work here. I am calling the guards.

MADGE

You looking for a story, I have one. That Donny person.

The RECEPTIONIST enters FRENCHY'S office.

RECEPTIONIST

Sorry to bother you but someone out here wants to talk to you about that O'Connelly situation.

FRENCHY

Oh? OK.

A woman named MADGE enters. She stares at Frenchy she wants to strangle him but stays in character.

What do you want? I gave last year. Come back next year.

MADGE

Mr. King, I know about you. I have read your various literary contributions to society.

FRENCHY

Oh really.

MADGE

I like the pictures. Say who is that nice looking family you got hanging on your wall there?

FRENCHY

Those are the Haynes nut cases. A bad writer, a stuck up singer and an old politician. Great family.

MADGE

Must be special to have such a place on your wall.

FRENCHY

We're in litigation. I keep their picture there so I can be reminded. But, go on, why are you here again?

MADGE

I live at the Happy Endings
Homeless House. I know what goes on
there. I know the real embezzler.
Not Donny. He's a peach and would
not hurt a fly.

FRENCHY

Oh, is that so. Got some evidence.

MADGE

Yes the culprit took a selfie.

TV screen in office flashes a picture of a GUY IN A CABLE MAN
UNIFORM mugging.

FRENCHY

Selfie? How'd you do that... in my
office? Get the tech guy up here
and fix this screen.

MADGE

This is your embezzler. Not Donny.

SHEILA

Why's he wearing a cable guy
uniform?

MADGE

A clever disguise. Who would
suspect the cable man of stealing
money from a homeless shelter.

FRENCHY

Sheila get our guest a glass of
milk. And some cologne.

SHEILA

We have girls for that.

FRENCHY

Go.

SHEILA exits.

Tell me more.

MADGE

Well it all started.....

FRENCHY

Yes.

MADGE
Just a minute...

MADGE pulls food out of her bag and starts eating.

FRENCHY
Go right ahead. Not on the desk!

MADGE
I brought you a present because you
are such a nice man. It's cake.
Come on, I know you want it.

SHEILA enters with the milk.

SHEILA
Here's the milk. I'll go.

FRENCHY
(longing)
Stay. Cake?

MADGE
I made this myself. By the way nice
shoes, Babs.

MADGE scratches herself and fiddles with bag. Picks up things
on FRENCHY'S desk and studies them, in the broadcast area
something has happened to cause a ruckus.

FRENCHY
Go see what's going on out there.

SHEILA exits.

MADGE
Where were we? Oh yes well it all
starts when I first moved in, lost
my job cause my gout was kickin'
up. The cable guy came to fix the
TV on the fritz. I missed American
Idol.

FRENCHY
People watch that?

MADGE
Yeah! We was like babes. Nobody
ever really knew
what he was doin' in the office. He
was play'in with phones, tapping
and hiding bugs under the rug.

FRENCHY

You know this how again?

MADGE

I know things. See things. Donny never did anything.

FRENCHY

So what did happen?

MADGE

It all started in a place called Slobivia. It was the typical hero's journey. You know unlikely hero stuff. Save the day at any expense.

The office takes on a Slabovian tone. Military drum beats out a time. Madge gets out of her chair and performs.

MADGE (CONT'D)

TRODGE N. HASS
 NOT THAT GREEK THING
 SLAVIC FROM GLOOMY PLACES
 YOU READ ABOUT IN NAT GEO
 HE'S FROM LOWER SLABOVIA
 NOW WHERE IT ALL BEGAN
 POOR TRODGE WAS OUT IN THE COLD
 AND HIS PEOPLE WERE STARVING
 WHAT TO DO
 WELL THERE'S ALWAYS THOSE PEOPLE UP
 NORTH

FRENCHY

Up North?

MADGE

WELL THOSE PEOPLE UP NORTH
 AND ALL THEIR BIG MONEY
 WELL WE COULD GET SOME
 SO THEY SENT TRODGE N. HASS
 ON A MISSION
 AND HERE IT GOES...

Snow flakes fall ever so gently in the office.

LOWER SLABOVIA,
 LOWER SLABOVIA
 LAND OF STARVING SNOW BOUND SMUCKS
 HE BECAME A SPY FOR SLOBOVIA
 SO WHAT'S TO YA WHEN THE PEASANTS
 WANT TO MAKE A STUPID BUCK

(MORE)

MADGE (CONT'D)
 WHAT'S A LITTLE LARCENY WHRN YER
 DOWN ON THE LUCK
 DA DOO DOO
 WELL THAT'S HOW IT STARTED
 SO TRODGE WAS SENT TO UP THE NORTH
 TO FIND A GOOD TO INVESTIGATE,
 INFILTRATE
 AND EMBEZZEL FROM
 WELL THERE'S ALWAYS THOSE PEOPLE AT
 THE
 HOMELESS SHELTER

FRENCHY
 Homeless shelter?

MADGE
 EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT THE HOMELESS
 SHELTER
 WELL THEN THAT'S WHAT THEY DID
 HE WAS A SPY FOR SLOBOVIA
 SO WHAT'S IT TO YA WHEN THE
 PEASANTS IN SLOBOVIA WANNA MAKE A
 BUCK?
 WHAT'S A LITTLE LARCENY
 WHEN YOU ARE DOWN ON YOUR LUCK?
 DA DA TA DA
 WELL HE WENT ON HIS MISSION
 AND IT WAS A HARD ONE
 BUT HE SUCCEEDED IN BREAKING
 INTO THE HOMELESS SHELTER
 AND SETTING UP THIS STING FOR A
 RANSOM

FRENCHY
 Ransom?

MADGE
 EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT THE RANSOM
 WELL HE RISKED HIS LIFE FOR THE
 WOMEN
 AND CHILDREN OF SLOBOVIA
 IT WAS REALLY HARD BUT HE DID IT
 AND GOT BACK IN ONE PIECE
 OH SLOBOVIA, OH THE HUMILIATION
 SO TRODGE WAS SENT TO SAVE HIS
 NATION
 THAT HOLE IN THE WALL YES THAT HOLE
 IN THE WALL
 WE CALL LOWER SLOBOVIA
 AND THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED
 TELL YA THE TRUTH...

FRENCHY

Terrible place. Well did he save his nation?

SHEILA

Everything is under control. What did I miss. Why is it snowing in here?

FRENCHY

Madge here gave me his name. Trodge N. Hass.

SHEILA

What kind of name is that?

FRENCHY

Lower Slabovian.

SHEILA

You buy this? But, but it's my story. Bob's story remember? The phone call? Find dirt etc, etc.

FRENCHY

Yes. Post the selfie with a headline. Finally I get a break.

SHEILA

Oh God, what are we coming to?

SHEILA exits exasperated.

MADGE

I hope they catch this crook. For sake of the women and girls.

FRENCHY

Poor things.

MADGE

We'll Send him back to slobovia. You and me!

FRENCHY

YES!

THE NEXT DAY

Big splashy front page of cable man's selfie and a headline on a TV screen - CROOKED CABLE MAN EXPOSED.

FRENCHY strolls in with SHEILA and past the RECEPTIONIST at the desk.

FRENCHY looks up at the screen.

FRENCHY

There it is, my salvation from the poorhouse. Damn ghost anyway, what does it know about the world? What does it know about the future?

SHEILA

What are you mumbling?

FRENCHY

I love the smell of a trending headline.

SHEILA

No, that's the smell of our reputations going down in flames.

FRENCHY

No, this is news being made and innocent victims being exonerated. Journalism.

SHEILA

Well it helped the ratings and you're a hero to the homeless shelter.

FRENCHY sits down at his desk and props up his feet.

Just then an older man named JOHN storms into the reception area.

JOHN

Do you know who I am?

RECEPTIONIST

Ah No. How did you get in here?

JOHN

The doorman let me in. I need to see your boss... now!

RECEPTIONIST

OK.

The RECEPTIONIST rushes FRENCHY'S office.

There's man here to see you and he looks mad.

SHEILA

Send him in.

JOHN barges in and hovers over the desk.

FRENCHY

Well John... so nice to see you.
Been a long time.

JOHN

How dare you. You accuse my son of
stealing money from a homeless
shelter. That's low even for you.
You are the master of excessive
hyperbole.

FRENCHY

Your son?

JOHN

That boy in your headline is my son
Jimmy. That picture is him at a
frat house Halloween party. It's
all over the place!

FRENCHY

Sheila!

SHEILA

You got it from that woman I told
you. You have been punked!

JOHN

I'm suing you and your rags.
Francis, you're some friend.

FRENCHY

John...Wait!

JOHN storms out and leaves in a hurricane of confusion.

SHEILA

See you never listen to me. Now
we're screwed.

SHEILA leaves crying.

EXT. BUSY SHOP LINED STREET - EVENING

RHODA, BLAZE and HUBERT are looking at the headlines on a row
of flat screen TV sets in a store window, FRENCHY KING PULLS
FAST ONE. CABLE GUY GATE.

HUBERT
 Interesting. The set-up and the
 double cross.

BLAZE
 He got screwed that time.

HUBERT
 I should say. Oh the web we
 weave...

RHODA
 Well.

HUBERT
 And.

RHODA
 Well Hubert, he was given twenty-
 four hours but you know how it is.
 He was not up for the task. Things
 got in his way.

HUBERT
 It doesn't seem very sportsman
 like.

RHODA
 This should have been on the front
 page.

INT. FRENCHY KING'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

FRENCHY is in bed trying to sleep.

Suddenly a big billboard reading DONNY IS A NICE GUY -
 ACQUITTED - NEWS AT 11. Over that is another sign that reads
 NEVER MIND rolls into view.

Frenchy sits up and stares at the sign.

FRENCHY
 What the hey!!

The GHOST appears holding a sand timer. The sand runs down in
 the sand timer. She points to it.

GHOST
 Times up. Though the billboard was
 a nice touch and news at 11 was
 nice but he is not cleared and they
 are still hounding him.

FRENCHY

Hey! I did my best. It's Madge's fault.

GHOST

Why is it the lady always gets blamed. Let's go. We are going on a field trip.

GHOST drags FRENCHY into darkness. Suddenly, face the wall of bushes.

Silently, the bushes give way, a door opens, an arm comes out grabs FRENCHY and yanks him in. The door shuts.

The bushes recede into darkness to forboding music of STURM UND DRANG.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Goodbye Mr. King.

FRENCHY

(muffled off stage)
Aehh.. what is that smell?

RHODA (V.O.)

And then there were these two. Oil and water.

EXT: ANOTHER PART OF TOWN - BRIDGE - NIGHT

SHEILA walks nervously. Behind her LAURA walks.

LAURA FITZPATRICK

(bluntly)
Hey Edowsky, let's call a spade a spade. You've sold out.

Sheila's eyes widen at Laura's directness, but she doesn't back down.

SHEILA ACER

(firmly)
Sold out? That's harsh, Laura.

LAURA FITZPATRICK

(unyielding)
Is it? You used to be the one who'd chase the story no matter where it led. Now, it looks like you're chasing fame, fortune, or someone's agenda. That's not the journalist I knew.

Sheila takes a moment to absorb Laura's words, her expression a mix of defiance and self-reflection.

SHEILA ACER

(defensive)

I've had to make choices, Laura. We all have bills to pay, and sometimes that means working on stories that, well, aren't exactly Pulitzer material.

LAURA FITZPATRICK

(unrelenting)

And there's the difference. I'd rather have my integrity than a stack of Pulitzer prizes built on compromised principles.

The words hang heavily in the air, creating an uncomfortable silence. Sheila's jaw tightens, and she averts her gaze for a moment.

SHEILA ACER

(softly, with a touch of regret)

Laura, I've made choices, and I stand by them. It's a different world out there now.

LAURA

You and that blood sucking boss of yours ruined me.

SHEILA turns around.

SHEILA

What do you want? Don't hurt me. He's not that bad.

LAURA

What are you two an item? Gag me... puke. Don't you have any respect for yourself? And why? Why us? Why not some rich guy or a rap singer. We're nobodies.

SHEILA

Mr. King has vanished. He called me and told me to find something good on your boyfriend that his life depended on it. Then he just disappeared. Do you know anything about this?

LAURA

Donny, I can't find him either. You know I can't even face my friends or go outta the house without some creepy news guy chasing me because of you.

SHEILA

Could Donny be, you know dangerous? I have to find him. Frenchy and I went too far this time.

LAURA faces SHEILA.

LAURA

No kidding.

YOU KNOW I HATE YOU

SHEILA

AND I DON'T BLAME YOU TOO

LAURA

WHEN DOES THIS WAR BETWEEN US EVER END

SHEILA

I DIDN'T PICK YOU - YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE GRUDGES

LAURA

I WANT MY LIFE BACK

SHEILA

I WANT WHAT YOU HAVE

LAURA

I WANT MY LIFE BACK
HE IS MY LIFE

SHEILA

I DON'T KNOW
I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S AT

LAURA

I WANT MY LIFE BACK

SHEILA

I WANT WHAT YOU HAVE
SOMEONE WHO'D LOVE ME
I'D GIVE ANYTHING FOR THAT
WHEN I WAS YOUNG I WAS SO NAIVE
HE CAME ALONG

(MORE)

SHEILA (CONT'D)
 MADE ME BELIEVE
 HE MADE ME BELIEVE

LAURA
 I WANT MY LIFE BACK

SHEILA
 I WANT WHAT YOU HAVE

LAURA
 I WANT MY LIFE BACK
 HE IS MY LIFE

SHEILA
 I DON'T KNOW
 I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S AT

LAURA
 I WANT MY LIFE BACK

SHEILA
 STANDING IN THE BILTMORE IN 1995
 HE WAS A PICTURE,
 SHORT BUT NOT TOO SHORT
 HE WAS THE EDITOR, I AN INTERN
 AT THE DAILY NEWS IN NEW YORK

Laura slowly comes over and sits next to Sheila on a park bench in her plain clothes and loafers.

LAURA
 WE MET AT COLLEGE IN 2005
 HE WAS A PICTURE
 TALL BUT NOT TOO TALL
 HE WAS A STUDENT, I WAS TOO
 AT AN IVY LEAGUE IN NEW YORK

SHEILA
 LIFE IS A PUZZLE
 I CAN'T COMPLETE

LAURA
 IT WAS SWEET

SHEILA
 BUT THERE WAS ALWAYS
 SOMETHING MISSING

LAURA
 I REALLY LOVE THE ONE
 I'M MISSING

SHEILA
BUT IT ALL WENT WRONG

LAURA
WITH HIM I BELONG

SHEILA/LAURA
ALL BECAUSE
OF THE DAILY NEWS
OF THE DAILY NEWS
IN NEW YORK

LAURA

YOU'RE STILL WEARING THOSE DAMN
SHOES.

SHEILA
YOU'RE STILL WEARING THOSE BORING
LOAFERS.

Laura takes off her shoes.

LAURA
Now, your turn.

Sheila takes off her shoes.

SHEILA
Try'em.

Laura slips on the shoes. They fit. Sheila tries on the loafers.

LAURA
Not so big after all are you?

Laura and Sheila take off the shoes and stand up. Barefoot they are the same height.

They walk off in opposite directions.

RHODA (V.O.)
Then there was him. You had to hand
it to him he had guts.

DONNY stands alone and RHODA comes out of the shadow.

DONNY
I can't stand to see Laura so
defeated. Mr. King has disappeared.
Who are you by the way?

RHODA

Your muse and guardian angel. Your benefactor.

DONNY

You look familiar. Aren't You Rhoda Haynes?

RHODA

You are Donny O'Connelly. The infamous March issue. One fine day our eyes met gazing on those slug lines. There were some good ones. "Bigfoot claims Refugee Asylum - Steals Car". "On the Lam from Feds."

DONNY

I liked the ones about the cavemen and the News Bot robot writing a story called Memoirs of a Meme. I read until I starting choking. The next column was about me.

RHODA

Oh I know the feeling.

DONNY

So what happened to Mr. King?

RHODA

So everyone has been wondering about the Poorhouse story what it is, where, why. Don't you want to see if it really exists. Let's go see.

DONNY

That's weird. Twilight Zone. I need to talk to him.

RHODA

Me too.

DONNY

Well...

RHODA

There's a door I imagine

DONNY

I want to find Frenchy King, look into that bastard's face.

(MORE)

DONNY (CONT'D)
He needs to apologize for
destroying my life.

RHODA
And mine.

DONNY
Is it dangerous? How bad can a door
be?

RHODA
Depends on who's writing about it.

INT. PERRY'S POORHOUSE - ETERNAL NIGHT

FRENCHY stands in the living room of PERRY'S POORHOUSE, a mishmash of bad interior decorating. "Don Giovanni" meets "Married with Children".

Mismatched decor and garishly retro '50s furnishings fills the living room. The walls, once with lively patterns, now peel with stories untold. The kitchen, where someone attempted cuisine (and failed), looks straight out of a cooking disaster show.

A television blares loudly, its screen flickering with an otherworldly glow.

FRENCHY
What the hell is this? Ohhhh, who
died?

Two ragtag RESIDENTS in jumpsuits are trying to put out a fire at a kitchen stove.

Other Residents are arguing and fighting over things. A TV is on.

RESIDENT #1
You burned our dinner again.
Perry!!!

FRENCHY
Who the hell are you people? What
is this?

An ominous silver haired man named MR. PERRY in sport coat enters and walks up to Frenchy.

FRENCHY recoils but Mr. Perry follows him.

Frenchy, bewildered, suddenly feels a curious sensation. Without warning, his feet begin to lift off the ground.

His eyes widen in shock as he starts floating, a look of disbelief on his face. He hovers a few feet above the gaudy, retro-fifties furnishings of the room, arms flailing for balance.

FRENCHY (CONT'D)
 (stammering)
 What in the... What's going on here?!

Mr. Perry, with a mischievous glint in his eye, stands nearby, making mystical gestures with exaggerated flair. He waves an ornate feather duster as if conducting an silent symphony, murmuring incantations under his breath.

MR. PERRY
 (chuckling)
 Just a little magic to lighten the mood! Welcome to Perry's Poorhouse, where the impossible becomes mildly improbable!

Frenchy floats around the room in a comically unsteady fashion, his attempts to regain control only causing him to spin like a human pinwheel.

FRENCHY
 (sputtering)
 I demand an explanation for this...this...ridiculousness!

MR. PERRY
 CAN IT BE REAL?
 THIS DREAD YOU FEEL
 OH YES, ITS REAL, OH BOY
 WELCOME TO PERRY'S POORHOUSE
 I'M MR. PERRY AND THIS IS MY INN
 WELCOME TO MY DOMINION
 WHERE THE RICH GO TO LIVE
 WHEN THEIR POCKETS GET THIN

 WELCOME YOU UNBELIEVERS
 OVERACHIEVERS, CROOKS ON THE RUN
 FOLKS WITH BAD MANNERS
 OH AND THAT HYGIENE
 ALL UNDER ONE ROOF
 WON'T IT BE FUN

 IT'S NOT A HOTEL CUZ
 YOU NEVER CHECK OUT
 A REALLY BAD DREAM
 ITS AS BAD AS IT SEEMS
 (MORE)

MR. PERRY (CONT'D)
 A REALLY BAD DREAM
 ITS AS BAD AS IT SEEMS

WELCOME TO PERRY'S POORHOUSE
 I'M MR. PERRY AND THIS IS MY INN
 WELCOME TO MY DOMINION
 WHERE THE RICH GO TO LIVE
 WHEN THEIR POCKETS GET THIN
 WELCOME YOU MEDIA MOGUL
 INK DRIPPING FROM YOUR HANDS
 YOU CAN DINE WITH YOUR VICTIMS

AHHH... WON'T IT BE GRAND
 WONT IT BE FUN
 SPEND YOUR DAYS HERE
 KEEPING UP WITH THE
 UNHAPPY REMINDERS
 SO TURN IN THEM GUCCIS
 AND ALL THEM NICE TOYS
 GET IN LINE
 GET IN THE LINE....

Frenchy suddenly lands on the floor with a thud.

MR. PERRY (CONT'D)
 Welcome to Perry's Poorhouse. I own
 this joint. Maybe you did
 something? Well we are very happy
 to have you. Babs, we gotta another
 one.

BABS comes over in her striped jumper. Tall blond in boots. Babs, is the oh-so-charming yet slightly off-kilter secretary and social worker for Mr. Perry at the enigmatic Perry's Poorhouse in attire that's a medley of polka dots and stripes, her blonde hair tied up in an outrageously perky ponytail, Babs is a walking paradox of efficiency and chaos.

FRENCHY
 Wow. You some kind of guard? Are
 you going to interrogate me?

BABS
 Maybe, I'm the Social Worker.
 Frances P. King II? That is your
 name? Any secrets, phobias,
 skeletons, switched at birth,
 abducted by green guys. Dark web
 accounts, strange bedtime
 practices. Or... rejection letters?
 So do you have any skills?

(MORE)

BABS (CONT'D)

You could be here a long time and everyone has to work to keep up this fine establishment.

FRENCHY

What do you mean do I have any skills? That's a ridiculous question.. This is a bad dream.

BABS

Wanna touch me and find out? No bad dream. Let me tell ya, we've hosted quite the lineup at Perry's Poorhouse! The crème de la crème, I tell ya. Hollywood big shots, rock stars, even a few politicians—name 'em and they've graced my humble establishment! Rubbin' elbows with the glitterati, sippin' tea with royalty... we've had 'em all! Not to brag, but we're the hotspot for the 'who's who' when they're down on their luck. Our little inn has seen it all—celebrities, scandal-makers, and even a unicorn or two. The stories we could tell, if these walls could talk! But alas, discretion's the name of the game here, my friends.

MR. PERRY

No chance.

BABS

He's going to be difficult.

Babs goes to her desk, buried under piles of papers that seem to have a mind of their own, serves as a command center for this peculiar realm. A vintage typewriter clacks away in the background, by itself.

MR. PERRY

You are so impressed with yourself. All these folks here are here because of you. Victims of character assassinations, scandals or other nefarious activities. They lost their shirts, their reputations. Might be a few literary critics here too.

FRENCHY

What?

MR. PERRY

It's your punishment to live here
with them for all time, ha ha, ha.

FRENCHY

Sheila... help me.

Decked out in a trench coat that seems to possess a life of its own, Bob cuts a figure that's equal parts mysterious and comically inconspicuous.

FRENCHY (CONT'D)

(Frenchy dumbfounded)

What are you doing here? Why do you
look so different?

TRENCHCOAT BOB

I found it... I found Hell or
something like that. It's not so
bad. You wrote about it in the last
issue, Uncle Frenchy.

FRENCHY

I made that up. What idiot would go
looking for Hell and find it? You,
of course. You're fired!

TRENCHCOAT BOB

Fine. Anyway I have a new boss.
Him.

FRENCHY

Sheila help!

EXT. STREET - EVENING

A streetlight flickers on. DONNY walking with RHODA one way
and LAURA and SHEILA walking the opposite way.

INT. PERRY'S POORHOUSE - ETERNAL NIGHT

DONNY and RHODA enter. FRENCHY is sweeping as MR. PERRY
supervises. TRENCH COAT BOB hangs out with the other INMATES.

FRENCHY stops when he sees DONNY. He does not at first
realize who RHODA is.

DONNY

Wow what is that smell? This is not
what I expected.

FRENCHY
(growling)
You?!!

RHODA
Broom looks good on you. You lying
coward.

FRENCHY
Get me outa here!

DONNY
Oh yeah, what with that broom? So,
this is the Poorhouse, always
imagined it like in the stories,
real dirty, creepy and people
fighting over oatmeal.

MR. PERRY
Oatmeal is too good for these
bastards. They only get it at
Christmas, which we don't celebrate
if you get my drift.

FRENCHY
That's fine with me. I hate the
stuff. Do I know you? Oh no, not
you my bane of existence, Rhoda
Haynes.

He stares at Rhoda.

RHODA
No kidding sport. Rhoda Haynes, New
York playwright caught in career
killing scandal. News at Eleven.
You ruined me with your phony
stories. There's not enough darts
in the world for you, King. I hope
you ring up a lawyer bill to
stretch to the moon and back.

FRENCHY
Darts? I never liked your plays. I
did not ruin you, your bad writing
did that.

RHODA
I never liked your plays. Geez
everyone's a critic. It was a
bore, a real snooze, highbrow
without the eyebrows. Bloodless
dribble, and on and on.

Rhoda points to an OLD MAN.

His words. He was a critic. One of yours.

Rhoda points to Trenchcoat Bob.

RHODA (CONT'D)
Nepotism.

TRENCHCOAT BOB
(impressed with himself)
Now wait a minute.

DONNY
(to Mr. Perry)
You know we have something in common.

MR. PERRY
Oh, what's that?

DONNY
We both run a home for the economically disadvantaged. I could give you some pointers.

MR. PERRY
(annoyed by the comment)
Oh, you could, could you? Go to Hell. Sorry... you're already here.

DONNY
Ahh, yeah. I guess... but that doesn't mean it can't be the best version of Hell, or something like that.

MR. PERRY
How?

DONNY
You have to give people hope. Something to look forward to? Better living conditions, activities, trips, free speech.

INMATE #1
Yeah. I vote we keep Donny as our cook and butler.

MR. PERRY
Shut up.

DONNY

I think people should know you
exist. Come out of the shadows.

FRENCHY

Well, I could run a story.

TRENCHCOAT BOB

You already did. Your urban legend.

FRENCHY

Oh, yeah.

INMATES

Don't forget us. By the way what's
for dinner?

BABS

BOUILLABAISSE!!

FRENCHY GASPS.

The INMATES pick up OBJECTS and proceed to beat out a rhythm.
Using every table and chair they choreograph a lively dance.

INMATE #1

IT'S NOT THE BILTMORE
IT'S NOT MIAMI
THERE'S NO SUN
AND BIKINI CLAD DAMES
WE ARE HAPPY WITH OUR TV
FINDING STUFF IN POKEMON GAMES

INMATE #2

WE AIN'T TELLING TALES BELIEVE ME
COME TOMORROW ITS MORE OF THE SAME
BUT...

ALL

PERRY'S POORHOUSE IS THE PLACE TO
BE
PERRY'S POORHOUSE IS THE PLACE TO
BE
WHEN YOU NEED A RE-ADJUSTMENT
ARE SICK OF NOTORIETY
PERRY'S POORHOUSE IS THE PLACE TO
BE

INMATE #3
 WE DON'T KNOW WHERE WE ARE
 OR HOW WE GOT HERE

INMATE #4
 DID WE COME BY MOTOR BIKE
 OR ON A TRAIN

INMATE #5
 WHAT YEAR IS IT?
 WILL SOMEONE EXPLAIN?
 BUT...

ALL
 PERRY'S POORHOUSE IS THE PLACE TO
 BE
 PERRY'S POORHOUSE IS THE PLACE TO
 BE
 WHEN YOU NEED A RE-ADJUSTMENT AND
 ARE SICK OF NOTORIETY PERRY'S
 POORHOUSE
 IS THE PLACE TO BE

MR. PERRY
 IN EVERY LIFE THERE'S A LITTLE
 RAINBOW
 LITTLE BIRDS HAPPY LITTLE WORDS
 WE HOLD THEM SO DEAR.
 SO SORRY TO TELL YOU
 YOU WONT FIND THEM HERE!

ALL
 PERRY'S POORHOUSE IS THE PLACE TO
 BE
 PERRY'S POORHOUSE IS THE PLACE TO
 BE
 WHEN YOU NEED A RE-ADJUSTMENT AND
 ARE SICK OF NOTORIETY
 PERRY'S POORHOUSE IS THE PLACE TO
 BE!

INMATE #1
 Yeah, how did he get here?

The INMATES stare longingly at a candy bar DONNY is holding.

INMATES
 OOOHHH...

Frenchy thinks they are looking at him and GASPS again,

Donny breaks off a piece and gives it to a young INMATE GIRL in a junior striped jumpsuit.

She eats it fast and then she holds her hands out please sir can I have some more?

DONNY

You're pretty young. Why are you here?

INMATE GIRL

He said I cheated on a spelling bee.

The song comes to an abrupt halt. Everyone glares at Frenchy.

Donny glares at Frenchy.

RHODA

Hey Mr. Finger Pointer, don't YOU have any secrets? I bet Mr. Perry would know.

DONNY

So who are you?

FRENCHY

Rhoda?

INMATES

Yeah we all wanna know.

MR. PERRY

Everyone wants to go to the Poorhouse at least once in their lives. Come on Izzy. Fess up.

ALL INMATES

Izzy?

Mr. Perry goes to the Library wall and pulls out a large book. He opens it.

MR. PERRY

Observe.

FLASHBACK: FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

INT. DOWNTOWN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Izzy Snodgrass, seated at his cluttered desk, is surrounded by newspapers and journalism textbooks. He stares at a blank paper in a typewriter sitting before him. A sandwich sits on the desk. In a moment of contemplation, he gazes at a bottle of French's mustard sitting nearby, its bright yellow label catching his eye. The word "French" stands out.

IZZY SNODGRASS
(murmuring to himself)
French... it has a certain ring to
it.

Izzy's eyes then shift to a picture of King George hanging on the wall, a symbol of royalty and power. The juxtaposition of the mustard bottle and the regal image sparks an idea.

IZZY SNODGRASS (CONT'D)
(smirking)
French's King... Frenchy King.

Izzy Snodgrass begins typing, replacing his own name with "Frenchy King" at the top of the blank page.

BACK TO PRESENT

General confusion and agitation among the inmates who realize they have been duped by this man.

FRENCHY

Cut it out! OK I'm Izzy Snodgrass.
That's my name. Not King.

DONNY
Flipping mustard?

RHODA
Did you get a rejection letter
maybe sent you over the edge, took
a tumble into the dark side?

FRENCHY
(nauseous)
OK, OK I am not a King. I am a
Snodgrass and a playwright.
I was young. It was the lure of
easy money. I was such a terrible
writer and this was perfect for me.

DONNY

I just want to know how you got my personal stuff.

FRENCHY

From Sheila and that knucklehead nephew in the ugly coat. You ruined me with your goody, goody whistle-blower bit. Stories, it's all about stories.

RHODA

Yes stories.

FRENCHY

I don't do bad things. It's just bidness. You know bidness.

RHODA

Business. Is too.

FRENCHY

Is not.

RHODA

Well I am sure you'll be very happy here... wherever this is.

Rhoda starts to walk away.

FRENCHY

No wait!

Frenchy looks around. Mr. Perry is motioning no, don't go. The Inmates are motioning yes, go.

Donny walks away.

DONNY

Well I am sure you'll be very happy here.

INMATES

No!

There's a melee and the INMATES go after FRENCHY. A riot ensues.

RHODA

HOLD IT!

INMATES

Where!

RHODA
Hold your horses.

INT. THE FRONT DOOR - ETERNAL NIGHT

Front door swings open. Hubert and Blaze stumble in. Mr. Perry looks annoyed.

MR. PERRY
It's like a train station here.
Now, who are YOU people?

HUBERT
Pardon us, we're with her.

RHODA
Oh Hubert. Nice to see you.

Everyone in the poorhouse is listening intently. Frenchy takes notes on a napkin. Mr. Perry scowls at him.

Blaze sniffs around the place, poking and prodding the decor.

BLAZE
This is the most hideous interior
decorating I have ever seen. TV
sitcom and Goth, weird. What's with
the jumpsuits?

HUBERT
Well what did we miss? Not what I
expected. Actually.

Suddenly there's a knock at the door. The door opens and in walks a LAWYER, well-dressed woman in a suit and carrying a briefcase.

LAWYER
Did someone call for help to
mediate an issue?

RHODA/FRENCHY
Lawyers? We hate lawyers!!

INMATES
Who's that?

HUBERT
Deux ex machina. Yes I did. I can
sling trash too.

INMATES

Do what?

LAWYER

I am not one of those. I am an analyst. OK then let's review the pros and cons of the scene. You big mouth and you gentle lady. So have your day and let's play find the ending.

FRENCHY

Analist? What is an analist?

LAWYER

The word is analyst. I am not a proctologist. Imbecile.

FRENCHY

Hey!

The Lawyer takes Frenchy and Rhoda and separates them so they face each other.

LAWYER

May I proceed?

HUBERT

Fire away.

LAWYER

THESE TWO CAMPS WE'RE GOING TO PLAY
FIND THE ENDING

FRENCHY

SHOW ME SOME MERCY, RHODA

LAWYER

FIND THE ENDING

RHODA HAYNES

FIND THE ENDING

FRENCHY

WE HAD SO MUCH IN COMMON,
WE MADE OUR LIVING WITH WORDS
WHEN YOU HAVE SUCH IN COMMON,
BICKERING IS SO ABSURD

IMATES

YOU CAN READ ABOUT THE BAD BOY
OH MY, WE CRY
YOU CAN READ ABOUT THE BIG HAIR
BIG FOOT, HOT BABE GOT IT MADE

RHODA

WE HAVE NOT IN COMMON
AT LEAST THEY WERE MY WORDS

LAWYER

Find the ending!

RHODA

I DON'T LIKE TO ENGAGE IN MENTAL
COMBAT
WITH AN UNARMED MAN
BUT OK
IF YOUR BRAINS WERE DYNAMITE,
THERE WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TO BLOW
YOUR HAT OFF
YOU DON'T DESERVE TO BE IN THE
PHONE BOOK
OR EVEN A COOK BOOK
JUST DON'T GO INTO WRITING A PLAY
STAY AWAY

FRENCHY

YOU'RE SO SCARY EVEN STEVEN KING
IS AFRAID OF YOU

RHODA

BEFORE YOU WERE BORN SOMEBODY
SHOULD HAVE SHOT THE STORK
YEAH ...SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T
INVOLVE WORDS
TV MEDIA NEWS OR OTHER PEOPLES
AFFAIRS

FRENCHY

SO WRITE YOUR ENDING
I IMPLORE YOU

RHODA

I'LL WRITE THE ENDING
SO YOUR READERS WILL ADORE YOU!

FRENCHY

WE MAKE OUR LIVING WORKING UP
HEADLINES

INMATES
HEADLINES

RHODA
BEING A HEADLINE IS THAT ALL
I AM GOOD FOR, I WANT MORE!

INMATES
AHHH AHHH AHHH AHHHH

The Inmates stage an impromptu dance number until Mr. Perry steps in.

MR. PERRY
Silence!

Frenchy trembles.

FRENCHY
Like what?

RHODA
You will have to pass a test.

LAWYER
Find the gall darn ending will ya!

RHODA
Incontrovertible.

FRENCHY
Inaconvertable? OK what's the test?

RHODA
That was it. You failed ha, ha.

LAWYER
OK, OK, I've heard enough.

HUBERT
Sorry, my wife's idea of justice.

LAWYER
Mr. King must pay for his misdeeds.

The LAWYER pulls out a roll of paper and unrolls it and places it in front of Frenchy as he sits at the dining table.

Frenchy King you are sentenced to
be thrown into the dark pit of
hell. Effective immediately.

ALL

GASP!!

The PIT OF HELL appears in the floor before them.

Frenchy is shoved towards the RED FIERY LOOKING HOLE.

DONNY

Well hold on now.

LAWYER

It's a fair decision.

DONNY

Well sure he did me wrong and all that but maybe there's another way?

RHODA

That's just like you kid. What do you have in mind?

DONNY

It him where it hurts.

LAWYER

The contract and bill of sale for one King Media. There must be a monetary exchange. Donny must buy the goods so as to avoid the gift tax.

FRENCHY

What the hell now wait just one minute!! God I hate lawyers.

DONNY

Does anybody have some money I can borrow?

INMATES

(together)

Hell no, it's a poorhouse!

MR. PERRY

We'll look.

Everyone starts digging in the furniture and corners and the floor.

I found a quarter. Hey here's my stuff! Who's been riffling in my stuff?

INMATES

GASP!!

MR. PERRY

We found ninety-nine cents and this bag of marbles.

LAWYER

Excellent. Donny make your ninety-nine cent offer to Mr. King, Mr. King you accept the offer and we'll seal the deal.

Frenchy turns pale as everyone around him is ready to kill him with a look. He signs the paper.

FRENCHY

I accept. Ninety-nine cents is a fair price for a one hundred and seventy-five million dollar company.

DONNY

One hundred and seventy-five million?

FRENCHY

That's right. You can't count it on your fingers. But if it gets me out of this place, I will take your offer of ninety-nine cents and bag of marbles.

Frenchy, in a cold sweat, shakily hands the contract to the Lawyer.

LAWYER

Well that's wraps it up for me.

MR. PERRY

Say, do you ever make personal appointments? I could use a little counseling.

LAWYER

(flirting)

It's only Hell anyway.

MR. PERRY

Everybody scram.

There is a rush to the door. The Inmates flop down on the couch and watch "Married with Children" and Mr. Perry and the Lawyer proceed to a back room.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF DOOR

The bush and vine covered door CREAKS open. Donny, Frenchy, et al, fall over each other to get out.

HUBERT
That was an ordeal.

BLAZE
Some weird mind thought up that place.

HUBERT
That is an understatement.

FRENCHY
I think I'm going to be sick.

RHODA
Not even big guy. Or is that Izzy Snodgrass?? Say it.

FRENCHY
God I hate that name. Say what.

Rhoda puts her face in Frenchy's face. The others stand aside.

RHODA
Got anything to say?

FRENCHY
Like what?

RHODA
You are a faker a coward and you can't write a decent sentence.

DONNY
Come on...

FRENCHY
Now that is hitting below the belt.

RHODA
You are dense.

FRENCHY
No, give me a hint.

RHODA
Not even big guy. Say it.

FRENCHY

Say what.

RHODA

Do you have anything to say to ME?
To us? Now that I have you here,
after all you did to my family.

DONNY

Come on...

FRENCHY

Say what?

RHODA

You are dense.

FRENCHY

No, give me a hint.

DONNY

Sounds like... starts with an s,
rhymes with safari.

FRENCHY

That's too hard give me another
clue.

DONNY/RHODA

Say, you're sorry, OK?

FRENCHY

Ahhhh, sssssssss, now can I buy me
company back?

DONNY/RHODA

No!

FRENCHY

Please, please I have money and
these marbles.

INT. PERRY'S POORHOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Frenchy, Donny, and the rest of the gang gather near a peculiar-looking door at the end of the foyer. The door is adorned with a kaleidoscope of colorful patterns, vibrant and swirling like an artist's imagination gone wild.

Mr. Perry stands by the door.

MR. PERRY
 (with a flourish)
 Ladies and gentlemen, behold! The
 Gateway of Escapades! A return to
 the mundane, the ordinary, the
 unextraordinary... the real world!

He pulls out an oversized golden key from his pocket and inserts it into the lock.

With a theatrical twist, he unlocks the door, and it swings open with a grandiose creak.

A SHIMMERING LIGHT spills out from the doorway, casting a mesmerizing glow on the group.

MR. PERRY (CONT'D)
 (bowing dramatically)
 Welcome to your exit, folks! One
 step through this threshold, and
 you'll bid adieu to the
 eccentricities of Perry's
 Poorhouse!

Frenchy, Donny, and the others exchange curious glances, a mix of excitement and apprehension evident on their faces.

DONNY
 (to the group)
 Alright, here goes nothing!

They each take a step through the doorway, and as they do, the vivid, surreal surroundings of Perry's Poorhouse gradually fade into the shimmering, otherworldly glow.

The kaleidoscopic colors blend into a mesmerizing whirlwind of light before dissipating entirely.

EXT. PERRY'S POORHOUSE - EXTERIOR - DAY

The group emerges from the door, blinking in the sudden brightness. They find themselves standing on the threshold of an ordinary street, back in the real world.

The door behind them morphs back into an unremarkable, weathered wooden entrance.

DONNY
 Well, that was... an experience!

Suddenly, Sheila, and two KING MEDIA REPORTERS rush at them.

SHEILA

Frenchy! What are you wearing?

REPORTERS

Mr. King, Mr. O'Connelly, did he kidnap you? Were you in any danger?

FRENCHY

No and no. Unless you consider a hot blonde in boots dangerous.

REPORTER #4

(curious)

What's it like in there, Frenchy? Are all those wild tabloid tales real?

Everyone gets closer.

FRENCHY

Well, if you wanna know the truth.. Well, it all started with the visit from the three ghosts... you know the past, present and future.

SHEILA

Come on Frenchy can't you for once play straight?

REPORTERS

Hasn't that been done before? I'm going for the alien angle.

FRENCHY

Shut up! It was that ghost... that weird ghost with the New York accent and crazy hair dragged me to the Poorhouse and Rhoda Haynes and her awful family were there!

REPORTERS

Where? We need an address.

FRENCHY

It was awful. It always smelled like burnt spam. They made me sweep the floor!

REPORTERS

Oh come on... you, Ha ah.

FRENCHY

No it's true. Donny O'Connelly came along and he was with the same ghost and some old man and a redhead. They tortured me. Made me sell the company to him for my freedom. God that pit of Hell.

REPORTERS

You did what? I think we got us a ghost story! Maybe a psychotic breakdown in the works. Don't forget Izzy Snodgrass. Well the March issue will be one doozy. Let's go.

The Reporters gleefully run off.

FRENCHY

If I had to apologize for everything I ever wrote about, every last person.

RHODA

Now that would be hell. Sooner or later it all runs together into one big mass of red and yellow boxy all caps statements with exclamation points....

Just as she speaks, Rhoda crosses over from the "WORLD OF TABLOID". It all goes back to the real world. Colors fade out. Another kind of plainness.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET NEWSPAPER STAND - AM

AS if no time had passed we are back to the beginning, where a crowd of people congregate around the newsstand grabbing at papers, magazines, pay the man and shuffle off.

Rhoda is back at the news stand. She picks up a freshly minted issue of the King Media and regards the cover with a wistful sigh.

RHODA

He never spells my name right.

FADE OUT:

THE END