

"OUR TIMES"

A Screenplay

By

Bruce C. Fisher
WGAW Registration Number: 1620195

1901 Eden Lane
Wichita Falls, Texas 76306
(940) 855-6789 bqfisher@att.net

OUR TIMES

FADE IN:

INT. NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - MID-DAY - BRIGHT

PUBLISHER ROGER PHILLIPS, a preppy young man in his mid-thirties, is embroiled in an unpleasant conversation on his office phone with his boss CARTER.

ROGER

(heatedly)

I didn't come here to help sink this ship graciously! I came here to keep it afloat ... and I thought I had your support, Carter! I haven't been here a year yet and you're telling me there's no other option?

City Editor KLINE EDWARDS enters, recognizes his awkward timing and turns to leave. Kline is a young-looking man in his late 50s who wears glasses and the same uniform every day: A dark blue blazer, white shirt, solid blue tie, khaki slacks, black socks and black shoes with laces. His daily attire is a tell of his love of all things simple and clear.

Roger covers the phone mouth piece.

ROGER

Stay.

Kline closes the door, sits and picks up a copy of the Times off the coffee table.

ROGER

What's the timeline on this?

Roger's face mirrors a discussion of dire consequences.

Kline quietly studies Roger's face over the newspaper.

Roger leaps up enraged.

ROGER

Unhinged? I'm not the one ripping the rails out from under this train!

Embarrassed by his outburst, Roger turns his back to Kline.

ROGER

I heard you the first time ... fine!

Roger hangs up the phone hard. After an odd moment, he turns and he sits down again.

KLINE

Bad news?

ROGER
Very.

Kline folds the paper and returns it to the table.

KLINE
Well ... is it some big corporate secret?

Roger closes his eyes and rubs his forehead.

ROGER
(eyes still closed)
The board has decided to drain the swamp. In six months, the Times goes from a one-hundred-and-two-year-old daily to a twice-a-week paper.

Kline folds his arms across his chest and looks up.

Roger suddenly gets up and starts cleaning off his desk.

ROGER
And if things continue to slide, six months later it goes to once a week.

KLINE
What are you doing?

Roger tosses his cell phone into his briefcase and grabs his mouse to turn his computer off.

ROGER
(laughs defiantly)
I'm going on vacation! I've got four weeks of vacation and a week of personal time ... I'm taking it all ... starting right now!

Roger grabs his coat and briefcase and heads for the door.

KLINE
What about the weekly projections and financial reports you have to send to Carter. I don't know how to do that shit and neither does Larissa!

LARISSA BABCOCK nearly collides with Roger as they meet at the door to his office. Larissa is a frumpy early-forties single female with the temperament of a troll.

LARISSA
(dripping with disdain)
Exactly what is it that I can't do,
Kline?

ROGER
The weekly financials and projections ...

but don't worry about it.

(laughs wryly)

I'll email them just like I always do ...
from my laptop in some swanky hotel on ...
oh ... let's see ... Cocoa Beach sounds nice
... or what the hell ... maybe Aruba! You
know, I've never been to Aruba!

KLINE

You need someone here to call you with
the raw numbers?

ROGER

What the fuck for, Kline? Don't you get
it? Nobody at the corporate level gives
a fat rat's ass about this place
anymore! I'll just call in what I think
they want to hear and they'll be happy
as pissants on cotton candy!

Roger flees.

LARISSA

(calls to Roger)

What's going on around here?

ROGER V.O.

Kline can fill you in.

Larissa frowns at Kline who simply stares back at her.

LARISSA

Well?

Kline slowly rises and closes the office door.

KLINE

Apparently, we are being downgraded ... in
six months ... from a daily to twice-a-
week ... and Roger is going on vacation.

Larissa is astounded.

LARISSA

Twice a week! Just like that!

KLINE

Probably not enough e-bi-dah ... you know
... earnings before interest, taxes,
depreciation and amortization?

Larissa is immediately seething.

LARISSA

Shove it, Kline! I know EBITDA ... and ...
I'm gone!

KLINNE

What?

LARISSA

They won't need an editor and a publisher and it won't take six months to decide who to shoot!

KLINNE

Just wait till Roger gets back?

LARISSA

Screw Roger ... and screw the Times! My cousin has been begging me for years to join his advertising firm! I quit!

Larissa stomps out.

Kline walks to the window and looks out at the street for a bit, then ambles over to Roger's chair, sits down and dials the phone.

KLINNE

Amber? Hey, would you round up Joey and Russell and bring them with you to the publisher's office?

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - LATER

Kline is sitting at Roger's desk when REPORTER AMBER HAMILTON, REPORTER RUSSELL ZACHERY and ONLINE EDITOR JOEY ABERNATHY enter. Amber is mid-twenties, cute, petite and outspoken. Russell is handsome, buff, mid-twenties and black. Joey is early thirties, geeky and brilliant.

JOEY

Did you finally shoot the bastard?

Kline laughs and shakes his head.

KLINNE

Shut the door ... everybody sit.

RUSSELL

Wooohhh! Ominous.

Kline leans up, his elbows atop the desk.

KLINNE

Listen closely. Roger is gone for at least a month. I don't know if he's even coming back. Larissa's gone, too, and apparently she's not coming back.

Joey pumps a fist in the air.

JOEY

Thank you, Lord!

KLIN
Let me finish.

Amber swats Joey on top of the head.

JOEY
May I have another!

KLIN
Listen up. Looks like in about six months the Times is going to get cut from a daily down to twice a week, probably Wednesday and Sunday editions ... and it may go to once a week in a year if ad revenue doesn't level off in the acceptable range.

JOEY
So, what do we do?

KLIN
Well ... editorially ... at least for the next few weeks ... looks like I'm calling the shots.

RUSSELL
That's a change?

Snickers float across the room.

KLIN
I hear you ... and now I want you to hear me. We are going to do things differently ... better ... from now on ... at least for whatever time we have left.

AMBER
Such as?

KLIN
First, Amber, you and Russell, I want you to reign it in. No more interpretive reporting ... from now on, every news story we print will contain only facts and statements that are attributed to named, qualified sources ... and background ... like the annual city budget story. Stories with a continuing timeline will be fully backgrounded each time you update it. Interpretive reporting was a gimmick from liberal journalism schools to move opinion off the editorial page and op-ed page and scatter it all through the news hole.

RUSSELL

How does that work for the reader?
Somebody has to put it all together so
that readers understand the point we're
trying to make with the story, right?

KLINE

Interpretive reporting is propaganda
frosted with a little news. In the past
decade the frosting has grown so thin
anybody with half a brain can see right
through it. From now on, just report the
facts and let the reader figure it out ...
like it used to be ... back in the dark
ages when the Fourth Estate was alive
and well ... and newspapers held the high
ground.

JOEY

What? No more brainwashing the masses?
Say it ain't so, mistuh Edwards!

Kline chuckles a little.

KLINE

Same for the copy desk ... they're in my
cross-hairs, too. Wire stories will be
cut to just the attributed quotes and
facts. If what's left doesn't make
sense, we'll spike it and go on to
something else.

AMBER

Spike it?

JOEY

Kill it ... baby ... you know ... me Edgar G.
Robinson ... you Jane?

Amber flips the finger quickly at Joey.

RUSSELL

What if there isn't anything else left?

KLINE

Then we'll fill every page with local
news and local photos.

RUSSELL

God, this sounds dull and void.

AMBER

How much more can we do? We're running
our asses off now. Can we rob sports? At
least they still have a few stringers.

KLINE

No, leave the toy department alone.

JOEY

We need some jazz, Kline. Where are we going to find that around here?

KLINE

Well, Mr. On-line Editor, the Tea Party for starters.

AMBER

The Tea Party is news? Really?

KLINE

The Tea Party is the biggest news in a decade and we've ignored it ... flat out.

RUSSELL

The Tea Party is just another third party. They'll fade sooner or later.

KLINE

You sound like your fat former editor.

AMBER

She hated the Tea Party!

KLINE

The Tea Party isn't a political party at all.

RUSSELL

What is it, then ... a faze? ... a fad? ... a fantasy football league for politics?

JOEY

Oh, no, Bozo! It's a movement.

AMBER

A movement?

KLINE

Joey ... I'm surprised ... you've been paying attention.

JOEY

Political parties ebb and flow as their power rises and wanes but when one or more uses its power to force unwanted change on society as a whole, movements arise to recast the political arena and reform government. There are non-violent movements such as the Tea Party and then there is armed revolution ... and not much in between.

Kline applauds and laughs.

KLINE

Okay. All of you ... the local Tea Party group has a meeting tonight at the Plaza Hotel. It starts at seven. Be early and put your thinking caps on. We need bold and bright.

RUSSELL

What, exactly, is bold and bright?

KLINE

News ... just cover the news. When cable TV hit back in the late 70s, everybody said newspapers were dead. Exactly the opposite happened.

JOEY

Why?

KLINE

We didn't ignore it. We covered it because it was news ... the franchise rates ... how many channels were available ... the packages and pricing.

AMBER

So ... I don't get it.

KLINE

We covered cable TV as news because it was and newspapers did just fine. Then came the internet and what did newspapers do?

JOEY

Ignored it ... like a fat ugly cousin from Hoboken.

KLINE

Exactly! If we had jumped on it and become internet experts, things would be a lot different now ... and that's where I need help. We need the newspaper to be more than just a print version and an electronic version of the same old tired opinionated claptrap. We need a hard news twist.

AMBER

A what twist?

KLINE

Exactly! I tell you what ... the Internet and the Tea Party ... and you to tell me

the twist. That's the deal.

Joey explodes.

JOEY

You don't know how long I have waited
for someone to pull that trigger!

AMBER

What trigger?

JOEY

You'll see ... at the Tea Party meeting
tonight. You two come with me ... and ...
Kline we will see you at the Plaza!

INT: MEETING ROOM - PLAZA HOTEL - THAT NIGHT - WELL-LIT

A crowd of about 200 people CHATTER among themselves. Most are seated in neat rows of chairs with a few vacant rows at the back.

To the side, Joey mans a camera on a tripod in front of a table with a laptop on it while Amber interviews local Tea Party chairman VICTOR ROSE.

Kline enters and spots Joey and Amber. As he approaches, he sees the video from the camera on the laptop screen. He pulls up a chair and watches closely, intrigued.

AMBER

(on the laptop screen)

Mr. Rose, are most of the members of
this Tea Party group Republican as
everyone assumes?

VICTOR ROSE

Who knows? We are party-blind, gender-blind and color-blind ... and we are conservative. We want smaller government, lower taxes, less regulation on the private sector and elected officials who will obey and enforce the U.S. Constitution. You won't find any socialists or progressives here tonight. There once were many conservatives on both sides of the aisle at the state assembly and in Washington ... but the liberals ... who in reality are socialists ... drove the conservatives out of their party over the last couple of decades and many have taken refuge in the Tea Party.

AMBER

How long has this group been around?

VICTOR ROSE

Since the week after the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York City on Nine-Eleven ... but we were known then as a Nine-Twelve Patriot Group. In 2006, things changed dramatically. The socialists in Congress took control and the national debt went ballistic. Millions of like-minded patriots all across the country realized that Congress was out of control and the only way to fix it was to elect responsible, honest people instead of the same old tax and spend party favorites ... in both parties. That's when the Patriot movement morphed into the Tea Party movement.

AMBER

You've been here all that time?

VICTOR ROSE

Yep. Every week we sent out press releases and invitations to all the news outlets about our meetings and events, our featured speakers, and all that ... but not once has a news reporter ever covered a single event. And we've sponsored everything from liberty flash mobs in the mall with several dozen participants to Independence Day celebrations that drew six and seven hundred. You are the first reporter we've ever seen, young lady, and we are so pleased you have come.

Russell slips quietly up beside Kline.

RUSSELL

Look?

Russell points to the far side of the room to a young black couple chatting with the people seated in front of them.

RUSSELL

Black people.

KLINE

And white people ... and Hispanic ... and a couple of ex-yankees if I'm not mistaken. Your point?

RUSSELL

You wanted a new wrinkle? Voila! News flash! The Tea Party is not just a bunch of old rich white people who hate

everybody else.

KLINE

You want me to call your mother?

JOEY

Let's podcast her instead.

KLINE

What-cast her?

JOEY

Podcast ... a video that you can watch live or later if you want, in the privacy of your home or office, on your computer or your big screen or your iPad or your iPhone ... or just about any cell phone out there these days. It's like having our your very own TV show where you can say or show whatever you want ... to anybody who wants to watch ... where ever they are ... all without an FCC license.

KLINE

Who's watching tonight?

JOEY

Probably just you ... for now.

Kline throws his hands up clueless.

INT. NEWSROOM - TIMES SQUARE - NEXT DAY - MORNING

Kline sits at a computer terminal in his office oblivious to everything but the podcast he is reviewing on his computer screen.

ON KLINE'S COMPUTER SCREEN

The guest speaker at the Tea Party meeting the night before is talking.

GUEST SPEAKER

Tonight's topic is jury nullification. When you sit as a juror, the U.S. Constitution places you above the law. That's right. As a juror, you have the power to decide not only the fact but the whether the law being applied is just. The judge won't tell you about jury nullification. You see, judges want to hold that power for themselves ... the power to determine whether or not a law is Constitutional. However, the fact is our founders wrote the Constitution in plain English so that every American

would be able to read the Constitution and easily understand what it means. It doesn't require interpretation by a lawyer. When you serve as a juror, you have more power than the President of the United States. The judges and prosecutors who attempt to enforce the law on behalf of the government, must come before the common man - the juror - and get his permission to enforce that law! All it takes is for one juror to vote "not guilty" for any reason and not only the facts of the case but the Constitutionality of the law itself is thereby determined. And no juror may be punished in anyway for voting "not guilty." That in essence is jury nullification and no judge will ever let any of this be said in open court. All the same, it is the law of the land!

Amber and Joey appear at his doorway, watch a bit, then Joey KNOCKS.

Kline glances up and motions for them to enter.

KLIN
I'm still confused.

Kline pauses the podcast.

JOEY
(to Amber)
Show him.

AMBER
We want to run this in tomorrow's edition.

KLIN
What is it?

AMBER
A short news story about the Times sponsoring a photo club for kids eight and up with daily, weekly and monthly contests in four different age brackets and three categories for still and video photography.

KLIN
And why would I want to do this?

JOEY
Because the copy desk isn't going to be have enough local news and photos to

fill the paper every day if we cut out all the interpretive wire news.

KLINE

You don't say.

JOEY

Whatever ... We need more news, photos, whatever to fill up the paper. Even the local stories are going to be shorter, a lot shorter.

AMBER

Yeah, and this will help us get people to watch our podcasts.

KLINE

I still don't get the podcast thing. If I wanted to be a broadcast journalist I'd blow-dry my hair and pluck my eyebrows.

AMY

It's not broadcast news. Think of it as commentary and brief teasers or summaries of what readers can expect in tomorrow's edition.

KLINE

You can't put your opinions in the newspaper now so you're going to podcast them?

JOEY

Sort of ... I have set up a camera station in the newsroom and every day at 5:30 PM, we are going to shoot video of someone discussing the news of the day from everywhere ... from all the internet sites ... from all the major broadcast outlets ... who said what ... who got what right ... or wrong ...

AMBER

Which major TV news division ... ignored ... again ... a news story that reflects negatively on the President or one of their pet issues such as the global warming hoax ... so we tease our print stories which provide local comment and reaction to ... say ... people like that comedian who likes to call conservative women sluts.

KLINE

That part I like ... a lot!

JOEY

And, as the podcast progresses, we will interview our staff writers and guest writers to tell viewers what else will be published in the next morning's edition ... the local news.

KLINE

Whoa-whoa-whoa ... wait a minute ... guest writers?

AMBER

I was talking with Russell after the Tea Party meeting last night about how it we may end up lettting the wire news go completely ... you know ... fill the paper every day with just local news ... with local movers and shakers giving us their take on local, state and national news ... because that's the only thing we have to offer that our readers can't get anywhere else ... you know ... what happens locally and what local people think about the issues.

KLINE

You're catching on. Keep going.

AMBER

Well, Mr. Rose overheard our conversation and he volunteered to contribute news coverage. He's retired, he's smart and he is very knowledgeable about city government. He's a natural ... and when I explained how we're changing our focus to strict straight news ... as you have commanded, el commandante ... he got so excited that within twenty minutes we had a crowd of volunteers offering to help us cover things we have been forced to ignore for lack of manpower ... things like the zoning commission, the parks board, actual court trials ... and the library board meeting. When's the last time we had enough bodies around here to send somebody to cover the library board meeting?

KLINE

And you're going to do some sort of a roundup every day ... on your podcast ... from ...

Joey
Our podcast ... in the newsroom or from
the Plaza from 5:30 till 7 or later,
depending on how much we have to cover.

KLINE
Why 5:30 till 7?

JOEY
To stick it to TV news.

Kline appears skeptical.

AMBER
This is exciting ... really!

JOEY
The key is to reach out to as many
interest groups in town as possible.
With a Lens Club, we can get the kids to
watch ... and then read.

Kline ponders a bit.

KLINE
Then, let's go for the big dog.

AMBER
What's bigger than the youth market?

KLINE
God!

JOEY
How do we podcast God?

KLINE
Easy ... anything we do with God news will
be unique because the mainstream media
has done everything possible to cut
Christianity completely out of
everything, even our vocabulary ... and
like a bunch of stooges most local
outlets ... some unwittingly I'd like to
think ... played right along ... including
us. Remember our last Christmas edition?
The word Christmas didn't appear
anywhere in the news hole ... only in
advertisements. I was completely
mortified!

JOEY
That's what you get for taking vacation
at Christmas.

AMBER
At least you weren't here to answer the

phone calls ... more than a thousand calls.

KLINE

Okay. Amber, I want you to write another brief for tomorrow's edition. I want you to open every podcast with a prayer ... a prayer by someone from a church in the community.

JOEY

There are more than three hundred churches in the city Yellow Page listings. This could get ugly. Who picks who and how?

KLINE

Put all the church names on chips and put them in a fishbowl. Start with the biggest church in town ... to help pull some audience numbers right off the bat ... and get the senior pastor on the hook to go first ... then box the brief on Page One for the next three editions announcing our opening prayer project starting with Monday's podcast. Friday, Saturday and Sunday ought to be enough to rev up your Monday podcast. From then on, the person giving the day's prayer draws the next chip. When all the chips have been chosen, put them back in the bowl and start over.

AMBER

Are you sure this is a good idea? What about the agnostics and the atheists?

KLINE

I'm concerned about the ninety-seven percent of those in our community who are religious. The old days of giving the atheists a one-to-one voice against the gospel are gone at Times Square. If an atheist calls to complain, tell him to start his own newspaper.

Joey laughs and Amber giggles.

AMBER

God will definitely be watching.

JOEY

And probably every lawyer in the state. Can you spell ACLU?

KLINE

Hang 'em all! It's about time somebody reminded those birds the fourth Estate ain't no stinkin' democracy!

JOEY

Okkkaaaay ... after the gospel crowd, who's next?

KLINE

Our men and women in uniform ... patriotism ... something else the aristocracy within the fourth estate and the communists ... oh, excuse me, the progressives have been trying to stamp out over the past couple of decades.

AMBER

Our approach?

JOEY

A shout-out! We solicit photos or video from somebody with ties to our city who is serving in uniform ... here or anywhere else in the world ... and during the podcast we give them a shout-out and play their video or show their photos ... and then "See tomorrow's Times for the full story." For starters, we hit up the local recruiters office. And we get cute young kids to lead the Pledge of Allegiance right after the opening prayer.

KLINE

I love it. We've got the kids, God and our patriots to get started ... so ... get started.

AMBER

(salutes)

Aye, aye, el hefe!

Amber and Joey depart laughing.

INT. NEWSROOM - MONDAY'S PODCAST - BRIGHT

THE REV. JOHN GOLDMAN prays into the camera, eyes closed, head bowed, his voice strong and certain.

Amber and Joey sit quietly in the B.G., their heads bowed as does everyone else visible in the newsroom.

REV. GOLDMAN

Last, but certainly not least, dear Lord, we pray that you will protect and

guide our men and women in uniform, at home and abroad. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

AMENS resound.

AMBER

Thank you, Rev. Goldman, for getting us off to such a good start with our opening prayer.

REV. GOODMAN

Thank you, Amber, for making room for God on your program.

AMBER

It is our pleasure, sir. And now ... we have we have Lucy Wayman from Holy Trinity Christian School to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Rev. Goldman exits off camera and walks away with Kline who has been watching from behind the camera as a very cute small girl leads the Pledge of Allegiance in the B.G.

REV. GOODMAN

Kline, this is simply a wonderful addition to our community, something to make each day special for all who participate.

KLINE

I just hope people can find the time to participate, Pastor Goodman.

REV. GOODMAN

We always seem to find time for the things we like and people all over town are going to like this.

KLINE

I hope you're right.

They look back as the little girl finishes.

JOEY

Thank you, Lucy. You are adorable!

Joey bends down for a hug and Lucy kisses him on the cheek.

AMBER

And now ... the initial response to our Lens Club project has exceeded even our wildest expectations.

Joey flips through a fist-full of 8X10 photos till he comes to a picture of a parrot riding a dog.

JOEY

The first daily winner in the eight-to-12 age group is this photo of a basset hound named Suzy giving her pet parrot Chuckles a ride around the back yard.

AMBER

To find out the name of the young shutterbug who shot this hilarious photo, check your Times edition tomorrow morning where the winners of all categories will be published starting on Page 1B.

JOEY

And tomorrow afternoon we will post all the entries and the winners of today's contest on the Times' electronic edition. Look for the button that says "Photo Contest" and remember we will have daily winners so keep those photos coming.

Amber moves in to moderate as Joey goes to his keyboard.

AMBER

Selected by random drawing, our patriot shout-out of the day is pictured in this photo supplied by Mary Yeager, sister of Marine corporal Lance Yeager, who is stationed somewhere in Afghanistan with his bomb-sniffing dog Jasper.

Joey zooms the camera so that the photo fills the screen.

AMBER (V.O.)

This is only our third patriot shout-out and already the response has been so overwhelming that we added a new weekly feature for Tuesday's edition so we could recognize all of our patriots submitted each week. The owner of one of our local car dealerships ... Jimmy Eaton ... I'm sure all of you know that name ... volunteered to be our first official sponsor for our weekly Patriot Showcase page and that list of page sponsors is growing as I speak. Our advertisers make it possible for us to bring to you the best local news coverage available in any city anywhere in the country. Please support them with your patronage.

INT. KLINE'S OFFICE - A FEW DAYS LATER - BRIGHT

Advertising Manager DON ASH knocks on Kline's office door

and enters with Circulation Manager BILLY JONES in tow.

DON ASH
Kline, can we have a few minutes?

KLINIE
Sure ... sit ... speak.

DON ASH
Let me just spit it out. We're not sure where you came up with all this crazy stuff you've been running for the past few weeks ... but our advertisers certainly have noticed ... and they like it ... a lot.

Kline smiles, knowingly.

BILLY JONES
Circulation is moving up daily. I've had to add two thousand to the daily production run over the past week and we still have rack locations selling out by 8 AM.

DON ASH
And subscription sales are moving up.

BILLY JONES
Daily.

KLINIE
So, what's the problem.

BILLY JONES
Oh, no problem ... we just want to know if you think this is a flash in the pan or the beginning of a beautiful new trend.

KLINIE
I think we're going to get even better.

BILLY JONES
If you can keep this up, we're going to have to hire some people.

Kline smiles, and winks.

KLINIE
Sounds like you need to run an ad. And ... you know more than anybody how hard it is to sell advertising with ad rates as high as ours are.

DON ASH
Yeah, but I can't just cut ad rates. You guys may get away with gun-slinging on

the news side, but somebody's got to pay the bills.

KLINE

Why don't you experiment a little, too ... say with a special discounted rate for the Patriot Showcase page. We're getting enough submissions to ad a jump page and if you offer a special rate to give some smaller advertisers a chance to get involved, I think you'd increase your advertiser base ... and with lower production costs for standing business card ads, you'd make a killing even at half the ROP rate.

DON ASH

Yeah, but what happens when the special rate ends?

KLINE

Why end it? Who says a special rate has to have an expiration date.

DON ASH

You know ... I like it.

KLINE

Keep it to yourself, but I think we may be headed toward killing off our wire service contracts altogether which means enough reduction in bottom line costs that we both could add staff and cut probably twenty percent across the board off your rate card ... maybe more.

DON ASH

Now, you're preaching heresy. Nobody ever lowers ad rates in this business.

KLINE

We're already doing a lot of things nobody ever did in this business. You two just try to keep up.

INT. NEWSROOM PODCASTS - VARIOUS TIMES - VARIOUS BITS

With religious, patriotic and school playground transitions

...

SMALL BOY

I pledge allegiance to the United States of America ... and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible and with liberty and justice for all!

Transition ...

KLINE

Starting on Page One tomorrow, look for the first in a series of stories about yet another critical issue that the network news outlets have virtually ignored ... a new executive order signed by our President that will create a vast new layer of federal government under the guise of national security and finance it with government-insured loans exactly like those from Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae ... the subprime loans that created the financial firestorm which not only melted down our economy in 2007 but ignited financial wildfires in countries all around the world that are still burning today...

Transition ...

FEMALE PASTOR

(praying)

And with your divine guidance, oh Lord, we will remain steadfast in our Christian faith as we seek out new leaders for our country to steer us back onto the path of individual liberty and freedom ...

Transition ...

AMBER

Check tomorrow's Times to find out which nine-year-old little girl sent in this photo of her pet poodle playing the piano and singing! Here is a brief eight-second video for you doubters who think this may be some kind of trick. The full video will be available on our website immediately after this podcast.

Poodle banging of piano and howling and transition ...

RUSSELL

Our special feature for tomorrow's Times will be a compilation of all the major points from the President and his challenger ... as reported by eyewitnesses from the Tea Party who have transcribed from video recordings exactly what each candidate told which audience and where. You will be surprised to find out who keeps changing the so-called facts to

suit his promises ... read it for yourself in tomorrow's Times and form you own opinions.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NEWS BUDGET MEETING - DAYS LATER -
BRIGHT

Kline has his news team gathered for their daily news budget meeting.

KLINE
(to Joey)
What did you just say?

JOEY
I have been putting out the word on our new-found angle for success to other online editors ...

KLINE
Bragging ...

JOEY
Ah ... yes ... bragging ... to some of my colleagues ... about our podcasts ... and it seems we've started something.

KLINE
Be specific.

JOEY
I have a digital brother at the state capitol who has hitched his wagon to the local Tea Party start there and he has found a couple of former legislators ... retired ... in that group ... the local Tea Party ... who have agreed to interview our legislators on specific topics and send us reports ... print and podcast ... for us and two other online editors in the state.

KLINE
How much?

JOEY
The preferred Kline rate ... free.

Kline smiles.

KLINE
Perfect! And another star is ...

Suddenly, the door flies open and Larissa storms in mad as the devil himself.

Everyone is surprised, except Kline who calmly places his pen on his notepad, leans back and folds his arms across his chest.

LARISSA

I can't believe what you people have done to this newspaper!

KLINE

Larissa, let's take this to my office.

LARISSA

Shut up. You're fired!

Shocked expressions flash over all faces, except Kline's.

JOEY

Larissa, you really ...

LARISSA

(cuts Joey off)

You, too, web-worm! And before I'm through, there won't be a newsroom in the state that'll touch you!

Kline laughs.

LARISSA

Stop laughing! Get out of my newsroom!

KLINE

It isn't yours anymore. You don't work here. You quit. Remember?

LARISSA

When I want to quit I'll tell someone who matters!

KLINE

Well, don't forget to show up for work next time. Three days no-call, no-show, you don't work here anymore, resignation or no resignation. It's called job abandonment. You did read the employee handbook when you hired on, right?

LARISSA

Zip it! I'm an executive!

KLINE

So what? I turned in your termination form three weeks ago and Wilma accepted it cheerfully. You do remember Wilma in HR? She certainly remembers you. If you've got a problem, call Wilma ... in HR. The number is on the back of every pay stub. Now, you'll have to go. We

have a paper to publish.

LARISSA

I'm not going anywhere!

KLINE

Leave now ... or I'll call the police.

Larissa is stunned, temporarily speechless.

LARISSA

(finally)

I ... I ... I'll be back tomorrow for my things ... with my lawyer!

KLINE

Don't bother. Henry's already cleaned out your office. I'll have him Fed-Ex your shit to where-ever. Just call the main number and leave the address on my voice-mail.

LARISSA

You let the janitor clean out my desk!

KLINE

Nobody else would touch your shit. Now, leave or I'll call the police and have you arrested for trespassing!

Larissa storms to the door, seething.

Joey jumps to open it for her.

LARISSA

(to Joey)

Asshole!

JOEY

Sweat-hog!

Larissa stomps down the hall.

KLINE

Russell, follow her. Make sure she leaves the building. If she makes any detours, call the police ... I mean it.

Russell bolts out.

Kline bellies back up to the table and fetches his pen.

KLINE

Sports ... what's your lead tomorrow?

Slowly, the room breaks into a round of applause.

INT. NEWSROOM PODCAST - NEXT DAY - BRIGHT

Amber sits in the moderator's chair in front of the camera.

AMBER

Many of you probably know Kline Edwards, our city editor. I think he joined the paper as a cub reporter just after the Civil War!

Amber giggles as Kline enters the camera's eye, grinning.

AMBER

We have a new hard news project that has Kline so excited he insisted on telling you about it himself.

KLINE

Amber has a tendency to over-do things just a bit, but not this time. I really am excited about our new Times project Wasted. We are on a quest to discover taxpayer dollars that are being wasted right here at home.

AMBER

And we want our readers to help us.

KLINE

That's right, Amber. Starting now, the Times will pay \$200 every week for the best tip that leads us to tax dollars being wasted right here in our town by any government official, employee, agency, service, program or project. And, if you need to remain anonymous, that's okay by us. We'll do the work and keep your name out of it.

AMBER

Our first \$200 check goes to Victor Rose, chairman of the local Tea Party group.

Amber hands a check to Kline as Victor steps in.

KLINE

This is Victor Rose, as many of you know, and for his tip on wasted tax dollars here at home, the Times presents to him this \$200 check.

VICTOR ROSE

Thank you, Kline. In turn, I am going to donate this money to our Tea Party group which regularly brings guest speakers to

our community to help us educate ourselves on the U.S. Constitution, what our elected officials are doing, how to lower taxes and reduce government regulation and the size of government.

KLINE

To review our first Wasted report, pick up a copy of tomorrow's edition of the Times. You are not going to believe what Victor found for us.

AMBER

Kline, can't I drop a hint? Please?

KLINE

I'll bet you peeked while your mother wrapped your Christmas presents, didn't you?

Amber giggles.

KLINE

Well, okay ... but just a little hint.

AMBER

Check tomorrow's Times for our Wasted story about city employees in the sanitation department who ride around all day every day in city vehicles and do absolutely nothing ... not even the driving. They just ride and watch.

Victor and Kline shake hands.

KLINE

Thanks for the tip, Victor.

INT. TEA PARTY MEETING - NIGHT - MEDIUM ROOM LIGHT

Kline enters the meeting room to find a capacity crowd in the room, no empty seats, people standing along the walls and no Joey or camera. Finally, he spots Amber.

KLINE

Where's Joey? Where's the camera?

AMBER

He's up there.

She points to a window near the ceiling at the back of the room where Joey is watching and waving.

KLINE

How do I get up there?

AMBER

Through that door and up the stairs.

INT. VIDEO-CONFERENCE ROOM - SECONDS LATER - DIM

Kline enters the video-conference room to find Joey seated in front of a digital control console watching a large plasma screen on the wall.

KLINIE

What is all this?

JOEY

This is a state of the art video-conference facility that nobody has ever used.

KLINIE

Why not?

JOEY

Because there's a fee ... and nobody knew how to set it up and there was a glitch, which I fixed ... in exchange for free use any time I want.

Kline looks out the window at the crowded room.

KLINIE

Look at this crowd.

JOEY

Yeah, looks like our podcast has turbo-charged the Times and the Tea Party.

KLINIE

Yeah, I love it. Kid, you're a genius.

JOEY

Aw, shucks, Paw!

Kline punches Joey on the shoulder lightly and laughs.

INT. INNER OFFICE - PRESIDENT'S STATE RE-ELECTION HEADQUARTERS - MINUTES LATER - DIM

The STATE CHAIRMAN of the President's re-election campaign is watching Joey's podcast when one of his assistants enters.

STATE CHAIRMAN

Look at this shit.

The flat screen TV on the wall shows Victor Rose announcing his speaker for the evening.

VICTOR

(on screen)

Don't forget that we have the Tea Party candidate for U.S. Senate scheduled as our keynote speaker next week ... and now ... please welcome our current U.S. Representative ...

ASSISTANT

Yeah, I just got a call from the South District. One of the papers there is gearing up to do the same thing and one in the Coastal District has already started a Tea Party podcast there.

STATE CHAIRMAN

If this catches on, we're screwed. With all the focus on the national media, we have near total control over content and ninety percent of the bobble-head anchors sucking on our talking-point tit. Taking the focus back to the local level makes those idiots in Washington think accountability to their constituents actually matters. We can't work at the local level anymore. Local focus means local control.

ASSISTANT

What can we do?

STATE CHAIRMAN

Call a couple of the groups and get some people up there next week to stir things up. And send some to the coastal meeting next week. Let's see how many of those Bible-thumpers we can chase back to their recliners.

ASSISTANT

What about the backlash? Every time we make the local news we lose.

STATE CHAIRMAN

They are already covering these meetings. As long as nobody else does, who cares? And nobody else gives a shit about the Tea Party much less a podcast.

INT. KLINE'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY - BRIGHT

Victor Rose sticks his head in Kline's office door and KNOCKS on the door frame.

KLINE

Victor, come on in. What's on your mind,

my friend?

VICTOR

I was looking into a news tip for the Wasted feature and it sort of snowballed.

KLINE

Snowballed into what?

VICTOR

Well, a friend of mine is going to retire next week from her job as the county food-stamp queen and she tipped me to an area of abuse that extends beyond local, beyond state, all the way to Washington and appears to be criminal ... at least to me.

KLINE

What exactly are you talking about?

VICTOR

I was shocked to know that we have local lawyers and staff members ... and local real estate agents ... and other similar professionals ... even some of the owners of smaller businesses ... all scamming hundreds of thousands of dollars every week in federal food stamp money and unemployment compensation.

KLINE

What?

Victor smiles and scratches his head.

VICTOR

It started with food stamps and that led us to unemployment compensation fraud. So far, the cherry on top is a local company that has at least three lines of business and a dozen employees ... and they all take turns getting laid off ... then getting paid under the table while they draw unemployment and get food stamps ... then getting rehired for a month and it starts over again. They're making so much money they turned down an offer to buy the company ... didn't even want to hear the initial price.

KLINE

Scamming welfare used to mean welfare babies. This is wild.

VICTOR

We've found real estate agents who defer commissions for months at a time while they collect unemployment ... and food stamps ... then they take a commission check for eight or ten thousand bucks and, bam ... the next month they jump back in the unemployment line. I found one husband and wife team that have been staggering paychecks between themselves for over three years while they each drew more than thirty-six months of unemployment benefits out of the past forty-two months. They netted more than a hundred and ten thousand each year not counting unemployment payments, temporary disability payments and food stamps. And, they each have three Social Security numbers.

KLINE

How is that possible?

VICTOR

All you need to qualify for unemployment benefits is some income in the past three months from somebody ... somebody who nobody ever checks. Same thing for food stamps just lie on the application ... or put down somebody's name who will lie for you. Supervisors refuse to investigate. Their job is to hand out money because the more cases they have, the more employees they can hire and the bigger their paychecks get for supervising more people.

KLINE

Are we talking about just our office or our regional offices for these agencies?

VICTOR

Far as I can see, it's everywhere and the bigger the city the worse it gets.

KLINE

Do you have real dollar numbers?

VICTOR

Yes ... and no. We have lots of examples but we are nowhere near a full tally. Our best sources estimate as much as thirty percent of all unemployment and food stamp handouts may be pure fraud ... and that's just in our state. In the big

cities back northeast, it may be more than forty percent. And ... it's no secret to anybody on the government side or to most of the people getting these benefits. If they've been in the system for more than a year, most likely fraud is involved in one way or another.

KLINE

I have often wondered myself why with unemployment so high that you very seldom see anyone out actually looking for a job.

VICTOR

We've got groups in eight other cities in the state in on it now. In some places, it's beginning to look like out-and-out vote-buying. So far we have the names of sixteen members of the House of Representatives and four Senators who have openly blocked unemployment and food stamp fraud investigations or put them in the closet to die.

KLINE

That's what I love about straight news journalism. Facts don't have ears and the truth is an absolute defense in court.

VICTOR

Just warning you ... don't forget to put your helmet on before you leave the building.

Kline smiles, leans back in his chair and stares at the ceiling for a few seconds.

KLINE

Some days, I really ... really ... love this job!

They both laugh.

INT. TEA PARTY MEETING ROOM - NEXT DAY - BRIGHT

The crowd is just beginning to settle down to start the meeting and a dozen men who appear to be in their 20s and 30s, led by a man wearing a blue baseball cap sideways, enter through the back door of the room. Their demeanor and dress render them instantly conspicuous and they appear anxious upon discovering a room so crowded that they are forced to stand at the back.

Victor Rose heads for the podium.

VICTOR ROSE

Once again, I am so glad to have to use a microphone so that all of you can hear me. Two things right quick. If you want to receive the minutes of this meeting, they are available electronically if you sign in at the table in the back and give us your email address. Second, we have T-shirts, flags, bumper stickers and other items at the registration table for sale and 100% of the proceeds go to pay for Tea Party expenses for our website, our meetings and our voter registration project. Some of you just out and out donate and we do appreciate that very, very much as well.

A woman approaches waving a clipboard as a reminder.

VICTOR ROSE

And, if you'd like to address the group tonight, as always, please sign up now. We will recognize you in the order in which you sign up and please limit your comments to individual questions or points. We simply do not have the time for unscheduled speeches.

MAN IN BLUE CAP

(angrily)

I thought this was America where we have freedom of speech!

The Man in the Blue Cap starts walking toward Victor and his followers trail him glaring menacingly at those seated as they pass.

INT. INNER OFFICE - PRESIDENT'S STATE RELECTION HEADQUARTERS - DIM

The State Chairman, flanked by several associates, points to the large flat-screen TV on the wall.

STATE PARTY CHAIRMAN

Here it goes.

VICTOR ROSE (ON TV)

(ignoring the provocation)

This is a Tea Party meeting, not a mob sideshow. This will be an orderly meeting. If you want to participate, please sign up for your turn to speak.

The antagonists continue to approach up the center aisle.

MAN IN BLUE CAP
I think I'll take my turn now.

Anticipating physical resistance, the antagonists scan the crowd for opponents.

STATE PARTY CHAIRMAN
Where did we get this bunch of amateurs?

VICTOR ROSE
Ladies and gentlemen, please excuse me while I summon security.

Victor quickly exits through a door at the front.

INT. THE MEETING ROOM

MAN IN BLUE CAP
(yelling)
You're gonna need more than security!

Incredibly, no one moves except the antagonists who continue to cluster and move to the front of the room. All others, seated and standing in the back, simply stare silently at them.

MAN IN BLUE CAP
We came to see what kind of racist homophobes come to these teabagger meetings!

His slur prompts only deeper silence.

MAN IN BLUE CAP
Hey, morons! Don't you get it! This is our meeting now!

The antagonists begin to spread out and gesture menacingly at individuals in the audience nearest to them.

Audience members to the last appear unfazed and simply stare back in silence and disgust.

Just then Victor re-enters through the back door with one POLICE OFFICER at his elbow.

MAN IN BLUE CAP
One cop! Is that all you got!

He laughs and his fellow hooligans hurl jeers and slurs and turn their attention to the advancing Police Officer.

VICTOR ROSE
Officer ... please, wait just a moment.

MAN IN BLUE CAP
Just what I thought ... bunch of fuckin' hick cowards!

VICTOR ROSE

Will all able-bodied men here tonight
who have served in the armed forces of
our great nation please advance to the
center aisle.

Immediately, men stout and resolved move quickly and in an
orderly fashion to the center aisle.

POLICE OFFICER

(to the Man in Blue Cap)

Hey, you! Listen up! Get out and take
all of your thugs with you or I'm going
to arrest you for causing a public
disturbance.

From the audience, a YOUNG LAWYER in a neat suit chimes in.

YOUNG LAWYER

And ... I will personally file suit
against you individually and who ever
sent you for violating the civil rights
of each and every person gathered here
tonight! The Constitution of the United
States guarantees all citizens the right
to peaceful assembly and you are
violating that right for what appears to
be about two hundred and fifty American
citizens!

The agitators look at each other confused and a bit
intimidated.

MAN IN BLUE CAP

Fuck you teabagger faggots!

He charges the police officer and the other agitators launch
their attack SCREAMING AND YELLING.

Men from the audience immediately meet them insuperior
numbers and overwhelm them with ease.

One agitator lands a lucky punch and a swift counter-punch
knocks him out cold.

Another agitator lowers his head and runs headlong toward a
stout and round middle-aged man who, at the precise moment,
raises one knee which meets the agitator head on and flings
him over backwards out cold at the feet of the Young Lawyer.

YOUNG LAWYER

Perfect! Where did you learn that move?

STOUT ROUND MAN

Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Military Police ...
1977 to 1983.

The young lawyer sticks out his hand and they shake.

YOUNG LAWYER
Semper Fi!

STOUT ROUND MAN
HooAahhhhhh!

The brawl is so lopsided the Tea Party members in chairs POINT, LAUGH, CHEER and APPLAUD as fellow patriots clobber would-be agitators all up and down the center aisle.

The Man in the Blue Cap SEES defeat all around and makes a cowardly run for the door at the front.

There, a sharply dressed woman in her fifties beats him to the door and blocks his exit.

The Man in the Blue Cap takes a swing at her.

The woman expertly grabs his fist, shoves it down and with her other hand SLAMS his face hard into the door.

The Man in the Blue Cap crumples to the floor screaming through the BLOOD GUSHING from his nose.

The woman turns to several women who have rushed to assist her and they CLAP and LAUGH. She raises one sleeve exposing a USMC DEVIL DOG TATTOO with pink lipstick.

WOMAN MARINE
Never mess with a Marine, especially a
Woman Marine!

The women drag the Man in the Blue Cap back to the center of the room and the crowd APPLAUDS LOUDLY.

POLICE OFFICER
Okay! Okay! Folks! Quiet down, please!

The applause and cheers and laughter subside as the other agitators are also dragged to the center of the room.

The Police Officer's radio CHIRPS.

POLICE OFFICER
(into his radio)
I have the situation under control, but
I'm going to need more handcuffs and
probably ... one ... two ... three ... make it
six cruisers.

INT. INNER OFFICE - PRESIDENT'S STATE RE-ELECTION
HEADQUARTERS - A LITTLE LATER - DIM

Police on the flat-screen escort the agitators out in handcuffs and the Tea Party members again take their seats.

VICTOR ROSE

Please join with me ladies and gentlemen with a round of applause for these former active duty servicemen and women among us and our men in blue who steadfastly honor the oaths they have sworn ... to uphold the Constitution and protect and defend all Americans and the United States of America!

APPLAUSE resounds.

STATE CHAIRMAN

This is a fucking disaster! Who hired those idiots?

His associates exchange perplexed glances.

ASSITANT

You said always go out of state for muscle.

STATE CHAIRMAN

I said muscle, not morons! Call off that other bunch ... and get a bus load of attorneys on the road now to put a lid on this mess.

INT. MEDIA CENTER AT THE BACK OF THE TEA PARTY MEETING ROOM

Kline and Joey have been watching the calamity from start to end and are startled when Amber and Russell enter.

AMBER

(surprised at the police presence
she sees through the window)

What happened?

Kline shakes his head.

KLINE

Tea Party thirteen ... crashers zero!

JOEY

You can see the video later, just get down there and interview everybody who will stand still.

Joey tosses cordless microphones to Amber and Russell.

INT. COURTHOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER THAT NIGHT - HALL LIGHT

The DISTRICT ATTORNEY approaches in a hallway lined with the antagonists and their lawyers.

FIRST LAWYER

What are we doing here? This is

misdemeanor territory at best ... and it's the middle of the night for God's sake!

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Conspiracy to deprive citizens of their constitutional right to peaceful assembly makes this RICO and that's a felony in this state, sir. And, in this town, we like to fry our fish while they're fresh.

SECOND ATTORNEY

Come on ... you're joking ... right?

A procession of grim faces files down the hall and into a room with a door labeled GRAND JURY ROOM.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

I didn't see anybody laughing, did you?

The Man in the Blue Cap jumps up.

MAN IN BLUE CAP

Alright! Listen up! Don't nobody say nothin'! Nobody says nothin' they ain't got nothin'!

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

This is not a pep rally. Sit down and shut up.

MAN IN BLUE CAP

I got rights! You can't do shit to me!

The District Attorney points to a nearby SHERIFF'S DEPUTY.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Deputy, put this man in an isolation cell until I call for him.

The Deputy immediately descends upon the Man in the Blue Cap and expertly drags him off YELLING AND SCREAMING.

MAN IN BLUE CAP

Fuckin' hick town cops! I'm gonna sue the shit out of everybody!

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

(points to a mousy agitator)
You ... and your lawyer ... come with me.

INT. GRAND JURY MEETING ROOM - MINUTES LATER - ROOM LIGHT

JUDGE CLIFF NELSON enters.

The BAILIFF addresses the room.

BAILIFF

All rise, please. The honorable Cliff Nelson will preside over this meeting of the county grand jury.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Your honor ... I have thirteen individuals who I believe conspired to disrupt with violence a peaceful meeting of a local group of patriots here in town tonight. I also believe that these individuals were promised payment to disrupt this meeting by a third party.

JUDGE

Very well ... bring your first suspect to the witness chair.

The District Attorney motions toward the 1st Suspect who reluctantly approaches and sits in the witness chair.

BAILIFF

(holding out a Bible)

Please place your hand on this Bible and repeat after me.

The suspect looks at his lawyer who nods and then he complies.

BAILIFF

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

1ST SUSPECT

I do.

The District Attorney steps up to the witness chair.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

What is your name, home address and occupation?

The suspect again looks to his lawyer who nods affirmatively.

1ST SUSPECT

My name is Tony Kawalick. I live at 2205 Mulray ... apartment 232 ... in Chicago ... and I ain't got no job because da plant I worked at for five years closed a year ago. I'm a memba of da Machinists Union, local numba 413 and I ain't sayin' nuthin else cause my lawya told me not to!

The District Attorney laughs, then gets mortally serious.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Well, Mr. Kawalick ... let me tell you what I already know about you. You came in on the 2:30 flight from Dallas after a two-hour layover from a flight out of Chicago. You live with your mother who said she ... quote ... doesn't really give a healthy shit if you ever come back ... unquote. You have two felony convictions in Illinois, a third here would make you a three-time loser ... a habitual felon in this state ... which allows me to seek the maximum penalty of life in prison ... in one of our maximum security facilities where little guys from Chicago get special attention from their fellow convicts each and every day ... that is unless you choose to cooperate in which case I'll let you plead out to a misdemeanor and you can avoid all that oral-anal trauma at the state playpen. Just remember ... the first one to talk gets the best deal ... so what's it going to be you wheezy little piece of Chi-town shit?

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Your Honor, I object to the district attorney's blatant attempt to intimidate my client with childish name-calling.

JUDGE

The district attorney will refrain from calling the suspect a piece of Chi-town shit.

The suspect is obviously very intimidated.

JUDGE

Well ... what's it going to be, wheezy?
Talk now or scream from now on?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE GRAND JURY ROOM - LATER

The District Attorney escorts the 1st Suspect and his attorney out of the Grand Jury Room and herds them down the hallway away from the rest of the suspects and their lawyers.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

(to Sheriff's Deputy loud enough
for all to hear)

Take him to Interview Room A. I'll get
someone down there pronto to take his

confession.

The Sheriff's Deputy grins and winks.

SHERIFF'S DEPUTY
You sure can pick 'em, Dan-O.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
They're like a circle of dominoes ... all
I have to do is knock over one.

INT. NEWSROOM PODCAST - THE NEXT DAY - BRIGHT

Amber is explaining the follow-up coverage of the Tea Party meeting interrupted by thugs the night before to appear in the next edition of the Times as Kline enters.

AMBER
The video of last night's Tea Party made national news this morning when it hit the Drudge Report ... and Kline Edwards
(motions for Kline to join her)
our city editor sat in the visitors gallery all morning in District Court where he learned that the people who tried to break up the Tea Party meeting last night are from Chicago ... and ... well ... Kline you were there ... explain what the Times will report in detail tomorrow ... pretty please.

Kline is a bit hesitant but relents.

KLINNE
The district attorney identified those arrested at last night's Tea Party as paid political agitators from Chicago. After a very rare midnight meeting of the county grand jury all thirteen suspects signed plea agreements. In short, these guys are going to get a slap on the wrist in exchange for testifying against their political bosses who no doubt will face civil suits on top of criminal charges.

AMBER
Thank you very much, Kline. Tomorrow's edition will be a piece of history locally and nationally ... political art ... if you will ... a page one suitable for framing and most certainly a conversation piece for years to come.

INT. KLINE'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY - BRIGHT

Kline is watching a news report on a flat screen TV.

INT. ON THE FLAT SCREEN

Police lead the State Party Chairman for the President's re-election campaign out of state party headquarters in handcuffs while a reporter explains.

REPORTER

The State Party Chairman has been arrested on out-of-town warrants charging him with planning and ordering the commission of a hate crime and conspiracy to violate the civil rights of Tea Party members last night by hiring agitators from Chicago to attend a Tea Party meeting upstate and stir up trouble with bigoted insults and physical violence. We have been told that all thirteen of his alleged co-conspirators and two members of his own staff have given sworn statements and agreed to testify against this man and several others, including two political bosses in Chicago.

The phone rings. Kline answers.

KLIN

Roger, you're back ... be right there.

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER - BRIGHT

Kline enters to find Roger seated at his desk and CARTER, the corporate region vice president, sitting in one of several large leather chairs.

KLIN

Carter ... good to see you, man. We've been expecting you.

With a "don't bullshit me" look on his face, Carter rises monetarily and they shake hands.

KLIN

How was your vacation, Roger?

Roger grins shyly.

ROGER

I don't know now ... feels like some sort of time warp. I go to Mexico for a few weeks and come back to find myself in a whole new world.

KLINE

Yeah, we've been kind of busy while you were gone.

CARTER

Let's get right to it. I've been looking at the numbers ... the real numbers ...

(flashes grim glance at Roger)

And I had to come see for myself. I have to tell you Kline, this is the most amazing transformation I have ever seen ... money-wise ... content-wise ... everything. Where did you get this podcasting idea?

KLINE

Well, when Roger left for vacation he opened a door for us ...

CARTER

(interrupts)

Let me be clear. I know Roger abandoned his post ... and ... I appreciate you stepping up to the task ... but this is not about how Roger and I are going to work out his future. This is about how I can do what you have done here somewhere else. Can I duplicate this elsewhere? Is this a model we can carry to other locations?

Kline looks at Roger and back at Carter.

KLINE

Short answer ... yes.

CARTER

Long answer?

KLINE

I have thought about it ... a lot ... and I think every newspaper in the country is going to follow our lead sooner or later in some form ... a couple already are.

CARTER

Do you have a plan?

KLINE

Yes ... The Patriot's Press.

CARTER

What is The Patriot's Press?

KLINE

We need a trademark ... The Patriot's

Press or whatever is close that is available ... to start a new league ... if you will ... of papers which agree to conform to the journalism standard we have set. Let it be our standard at first and let us welcome all other papers who will join us to wear our trademark. We recognize writers with competitions just like the wire services do now, except submissions must follow our standard, no interpretive reporting on hard news, only for features and the toy department ... ah ... sports.

CARTER

Why would anyone outside our corporation want to be a part of The Patriot's Press if it is our baby?

KLINKE

That's just it. It won't belong to us as a company. It will belong to us as journalists ... collectively as the Fourth Estate ... as a moniker in the masthead of every member paper. The Patriot's Press - Where the Facts Speak for Themselves! Something like that.

ROGER

Sort of a flag to rally round?

KLINKE

In a way.

CARTER

What else?

KLINKE

We dump the wire services ... all the syndications ... even the comics and cartoons. Our news product has become too centralized nationally ... just like our government ... and it makes it easy for a handful of egotistical elitists to mold and control content for the whole industry. The days of cookie-cutter journalism are over one way or another. Readers and advertisers have been panning it for years. It was either change or die. We decided to change.

CARTER

I never thought about it like that ... and ... well ... I don't have any problems dropping the syndications but we have

contracts with three wire services ...
four in some places.

KLINE

We have contracts for news services and I'd love to see them defend in court that political slop they call news. It is 95% propaganda and we signed contracts for news. Besides, I need money to start paying our currently unpaid correspondents.

CARTER

What kind of money are we talking about?

KLINE

Five dollars a column inch for news and \$25 to \$35 per photo ought to cover it ... something a bit above token for now.

CARTER

Why should I pay for something we are getting for free?

KLINE

Because free won't last forever and it's the right thing to do. Soon we'll need to add some as full-time employees. This way we can winnow the ones who want more than part-time. Our ROP ad rate is \$25 per column-inch and I figure dumping the wire services, the syndicates and the other frills will save enough to cut that rate to \$15 or \$16 and give you more EBITDA than you're getting now. Lower rates will bring back more advertisers increasing pages per edition which means we'll need even more news. I pay a correspondent \$5 per column-inch and you've still got ten or more to cover costs and profit. The crap we're dumping costs us ten easy.

CARTER

You've done your homework ... but I need to run it by my controller. I'll get back to you on the specific dollars but I'm good on establishing a pay system. Meantime, how do we get this thing rolling as it is now?

KLINE

Get me a trademark and start sending your web-editors from other papers to me in twos and threes a week at a time. As

my web-guy trains them, the good ones can train others, too.

ROGER

I need something to help sell this to the CEO and the board. What do you see as your highlights to date?

Kline laughs.

KLIN

The series we ran on welfare fraud went national. The network TV talking heads and the wires tried to ignore it but it was just too big.

ROGER

I heard you had a fight at a Tea Party meeting?

KLIN

The video from that meeting went viral ... as they say in web lingo ... and we had to dump it on YouTube the next morning to get enough servers behind us to handle the traffic. We had over three million hits in 24 hours.

Kline picks up a copy of the Times off the coffee table.

KLIN

We're not just in the game, we are the game! In the last four weeks, we've gone from twenty-eight thousand to forty thousand paid circulation. We can't keep the racks stocked and subscriptions are climbing daily. High school kids can sell this ... heh, heh, ... hell they are selling this. Cartoonists from our high schools take up half the editorial page every day and we publish what won't fit there on the website because they are just too good to ignore. It's some of the funniest damned stuff I've ever seen. When did kids get so funny?

Kline laughs.

INT. NEWSROOM PODCAST - VARIOUS SNIPPETS WITH TRANSITIONS

Joey stands in front of a chart listing websites.

JOEY

From the Times webpage list of news sources, maybe the best news webpage every day is The Drudge Report. Drudge

lists the hottest news topics of the day from all over the world and posts links to over 150 news sources ranging from far left to far right ... wire services ... newspapers ... broadcast networks ... you name it ... and more than a hundred columnists and opinion sites. Whatever your take or flavor, you can find something that suits you on Drudge. I check it three or four times a day. Other hot websites are Breitbart.com started by the late Andrew Breitbart, The Blaze which is Glenn Beck's blatantly conservative corner of the world ... Newsmax, The White House Dossier, FoxNews.com, all of which pretty much will tell you what the major networks and newspapers are reporting and ... more important ... to me anyway ... you can see what the mainstream media mugs are ignoring because it doesn't agree with their liberal politics.

Cartoon transition.

AMBER

From our daily feature called The Laugh Factory, I have a cartoon by one of the most hilarious high school cartoonists in town which is a take-off on a story last week from somewhere in Florida I think where a high school student spiked his teacher's coffee with quote ... butt enhancement pills ... unquote. The victim in this cartoon spoof of that news story is one of our local football coaches who also has a pretty good sense of humor. See the story, this cartoon and the coach's reaction in tomorrow's Times.

Amber giggles into Wasted transition.

RUSSELL

This week's Wasted winner - our weekly feature to spotlight tax dollars wasted right here in our town - is a story about all the veggies and other government-mandated menu items in our school cafeterias that get tossed into the garbage every day because the kids just won't eat them. Check out tomorrow's Times photos of all that wasted food and the identity of our local tipster who collected the \$200 weekly prize for the best tip on tax

dollars wasted locally.

Food in trash bin transition to a book cover.

AMBER

For our Local Writers Story Board feature in tomorrow's Times, we have a review of the book entitled "Good People" ... written by a local author ... about the people who settled this part of the United States over a hundred years ago, a compilation of stories about things that really happened with real names of real people, many of whom have family and friends who still reside here in our community today. Reading this book will make you want to look into the history of your family, I promise.

Transition to collage of county sheriff patrol cars.

JOEY

Tomorrow's times will carry a story about the county sheriff bragging how he has turned traffic citations into a substantial new line of revenue for the sheriff's department. The story also quotes many of the sheriff's traffic-ticket victims describing their crimes such as speeding three miles per hour over the speed limit ... numerous rolling stops at stop signs where drivers insist they stopped ... and one for littering when the driver swears the debris blew up off side of the road. In their own words, and I quote, The sheriff has gone from protector to predator ... unquote ... and ... I love this one ... quote ... I can wait till the next election. The sheriff is going to understand why the police chief is appointed and why no county sheriff ever wrote traffic tickets in the past ... unquote.

(laughs into the lens)

Heh, heh, heh ... protector to predator ... I wish I had said that.

Transition to darling youngster reading the Preamble.

YOUNGSTER

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union ...

Transition to TEA PARTY GUEST SPEAKER speaking and the

INSPIRED FACES in the audience.

GUEST SPEAKER

I paraphrase from the "Citizens Rule Book" distributed among you tonight ... In 1776, we came out of bondage with faith, understanding and courage. Even against great odds, and with much bloodshed, we battled our way to achieve liberty ... which is that delicate area between the force of government and the freewill of man. Liberty brings freedom of choice to work, to trade, to go and live wherever one wishes. It leads to abundance and abundance, if made an end in itself, will result in complacency ... and breeds apathy ... and apathy yields to dependency ... which always eventually diminishes abundance ... revealing dependency's true nature ... which is bondage!

EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONVIENIENCE STORE - EARLY MORNING - DARK

A man fills a newspaper rack outside the store. The banner story visible through the front of the rack is headlined: FOUR MORE YEARS!

INT. TEA PARTY MEETING - PLAZA - 2 DAYS LATER - NIGHT - DIM

The room is abuzz when Victor turns on the microphone.

VICTOR

Please, take your seats. I know this is not the meeting we had planned for ... hoped for ... but ...

He pauses to collect his thoughts.

VICTOR

We may have lost the presidential election but if we quit fighting now, we lose our country.

All around the room, somber faces look at each other and way in the back, a young girl rises, hesitant at first, but after looking at those around her and finding her gaze met with a nod here and a soft smile there, she begins to sing with a clear determined voice.

YOUNG SINGER

My country 'tis of thee ...

Another voice joins in and another ... until all sing boldly.

ALL

Let freedom ring!

LOUD APPLAUSE fills the room.

Victor tucks the microphone under his arm and applauds, TEARS streaming down his cheeks.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAYS LATER - BRIGHT

Kline stands in the middle of the newsroom examining the front page of the daily Times.

The BANNER HEADLINE proclaims: U.S. Senator says President Lied! The SUBHEAD reads: Claims President Let Americans Die!

In the Times masthead: The Patriot's Press with an underline that reads: Where the Facts Speak for Themselves.

JOEY V.O.

You know this is not what they expected.
This was just supposed to go away.

Kline glances back to see Joey looking over his shoulder.

KLIN

Looks great! And average weekday circulation is over forty-one thousand ... best numbers ever for the Times ... facts and free will ... a mighty powerful combination.

JOEY

Facts are so less voluminous. We're getting twice the headline count on every page.

YELLING AND LOUD VOICES from near the front entrance of Times Square interrupt everybody and grow louder as FEDERAL AGENTS SWARM into the newsroom.

KLIN

What in hell ...!

A FEDERAL ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY boldly confronts Kline with a fistful of papers.

FEDERAL ASSISTANT DA

We're from the Justice Department and this is a federal warrant authorizing us to seize and search all property at this address possibly related to federal racketing charges ... for among other things ... money laundering and income tax evasion.

KLIN

You need to talk to our corporate attorney and get out of our way. We are publishing a newspaper here.

FEDERAL ASSISTANT DA
 It's not up to me. I'm executing a warrant. Read it ... and you get out of my way!

The Federal Assistant DA CLAPS his hands loudly.

FEDERAL ASSISTANT DA
 Everybody get your hands off your keyboards. Get off the phone, get up and leave the building. Leave all company property where it is ... computers, cell phones, laptops, IPads, everything. Then proceed to the front lobby where we'll take your name and address information in case we need to talk to you later.

Chaos ensues.

INT. FRONT LOBBY - TIMES SQUARE - LATER - BRIGHT

Agents have people lined up taking their information as Kline and Joey approach just in time to see Roger being led out in handcuffs.

KLINER
 Roger!

Roger holds up his hand-cuffed hands and smiles broadly as two federal agents rush off with him.

ROGER
 Finally! My name in headlines! Call Carter ... order lots of lawyers!

EXT. SIDEWALK ACROSS THE STREET IN FRONT OF TIMES SQUARE - LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

Kline and Joey walk swiftly toward the company parking lot.

KLINER
 The press is not a problem. I can have another paper lined up with one phone call to bootleg tomorrow's Times onto their print run tonight but we have to have something to print and looks like we're going to be locked out for a while.

JOEY
 No, sweat, boss. We're in the cloud.

KLINER
 What cloud?

JOEY
 I moved everything on our servers ...

programs, content, everything ... into a backup system in the cloud about two weeks ago ... you know ... with remote servers on the internet ... another computer anywhere in the free world and we're back in business in about ten minutes. All I need is the name of the print shop where you want me to ship the proof files for tomorrow's edition.

KLINE

Kid, you are downright inspirational!
What do you need from me?

JOEY

I'll get the computers. Find the desk guys, Amber and Russell, anybody else who has something we need to print ... tell them to meet me at the main conference room at the Plaza ... and ... oh yeah ... cell phones. We need new cell phones ... good ones this time, okay? iPhones!

KLINE

Just when I thought we were out of ammo ... three weeks after the worst president in the country's history gets re-elected ... and the feds lay a present like this right in our laps.

JOEY

We will be the lead story nationally for at least the next forty-eight hours ... I guarantee it.

KLINE

I'll call Victor. Let's see what the Tea Party thinks about this.

JOEY

Out of the ashes, the Fourth Estate rises again!

INT. PLAZA CONFERENCE ROOM - MIDNIGHT - BRIGHT ROOM LIGHTS

The room is abuzz with people talking on phones and keyboards clicking.

In the corner, Russell is podcasting telling about the events of the day and night.

Kline enters, leading a string of waiters and waitresses with pots of coffee and trays of food. He points his entourage to bare tables at one side of the room and quickly strides over to Joey.

KLIN

Did we make deadline at The Beacon?

JOEY

With five minutes to spare ... just got off the phone with their press foreman. He'll start our run in about an hour.

KLIN

With any luck the trucks ought to be loaded and moving in two hours ... that's plenty of time to be here by five. The circulation guys should have all the racks full and most of their routes thrown by seven.

JOEY

It's going to be a helluva day!

KLIN

What's Russell doing podcasting now?

JOEY

We're pretty much going to run 24-7 till this is over. We'll break out the good stuff and put it in two to four-minute clips that people can download or click-to-watch. Our site counter is going nuts so what we have is basically a live show. Six AM to nine PM we're switching anchors every hour and taking calls from viewers and readers to keep everything fresh. We're cycling it for the graveyard shift, but we're way off the reservation, chief.

KLIN

This is so much more than I ever expected.

JOEY

Yeah, me, too ... did you see this week's local TV ratings?

KLIN

Are you kidding? I haven't had time to change my mind much less check on the competition. Who cares what they're doing anyway?

JOEY

They suck ... and I mean bad. We're killing their market ... six o'clock news, eleven o'clock, noon news ... even the early morning shows.

KLINE

I got a call from Carter an hour ago and his phone is ringing non-stop with inquiries about Patriot's Press franchises.

JOEY

Franchises?

KLINE

Yeah ... the Patriot's Press has become a paper dragon, a newspaper dragon that is.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NOON THE NEXT DAY - BRIGHT

Kline walks down the crowded sidewalk dodging out-of-town reporters, looking for and finally locating Victor who is talking on his cell phone but hangs up when Kline arrives.

KLINE

Victor, what's the big news you were so vague about on the phone?

VICTOR

Remember the shootout at the OK Corral?

KINE

Do I get to be Wyatt Earp?

VICTOR

Yup ... Did you bring a camera?

KLINE

Yup ... Right behind me.

Joey comes trotting up with a video camera plugged into an iPad strapped to his chest. Other reporters begin to gather.

JOEY

What are we doing?

In the B.G., dozens of black-and-white state police cars commence rounding a distant corner headed to Times Square and CROWD NOISE ramps up.

KLINE

Would you look at this?

Federal agents at the front door of Times Square note the approaching state police cars and one darts inside.

VICTOR

This is going to be good.

State police cars ease up the street and form a blockage at both ends of a two-block stretch.

The Federal Assistant DA hurries out of Times Square flanked by four agents leaving two guarding the front door. He marches defiantly up to Kline and Victor.

FEDERAL ASSISTANT DA
What is this bullshit?

VICTOR
I think you need to ask him.

Victor points to the middle car in the procession.

As its passengers exit the vehicle the Federal Assistant DA's eyes widen when one turns out to be the STATE GOVERNOR.

FEDERAL ASSITANT DA
May I help you, Governor?

GOVERNOR
Yes, you may. I want you to take your agents and go home immediately.

FEDERAL ASSISTANT DA
With all due respect, I can't do that, Governor. We have several federal warrants.

GOVERNOR
Call the judge who signed those warrants. I think you will find they have all been withdrawn.

FEDERAL ASSITANT DA
Withdrawn?

The Federal Assistant DA grits his teeth, pulls out his cell phone and turns his back to make a call.

GOVERNOR
Victor ... good to see you, old friend.

VICTOR
Same here ... I hope you're going to be in town long enough for dinner.

GOVERNOR
I just might.

VICTOR
Governor, let me introduce you to Kline Edwards ... city editor at the Times.

The Governor and Kline shake hands.

KLINÉ
It's good to see you again, Governor.
Glad you could drop by today.

GOVERNOR

I didn't realize the last time I sat with you at your editorial board meeting that I was in the company of the man who would one day save the whole dang newspaper business.

KLINE

Back to the basics, sir, that's all we've done here ... well ... with a twist.

GOVERNOR

Nice twist. I like it.

Kline laughs and grins widely.

GOVERNOR

I came home a few weeks ago and my wife called me into the living room to show me this new news program she found ... and lo and behold ... there were all these Tea Party patriots talking about the U.S. Constitution like they had just written the thing themselves.

VICTOR

It is a truly remarkable document.

GOVERNOR

Yes, it is.

The Federal Assistant DA closes his cell phone, returns to face the governor and he is clearly angry.

FEDERAL ASSISTANT DA

This doesn't change anything. I have an investigation to finish and that is exactly what I intend to do.

The Governor gets in his face, cold as ice.

GOVERNOR

No warrant. No investigation. My Rangers have you outnumbered six to one and we've got all but three of you surrounded already. Either you leave now ... or you go to jail. Choose! Now!

The Federal District DA squirms, looks up and down the street. He is enraged, but he relents.

FEDERAL ASSISTANT DA

We'll go ... but I'll be back!

INT: TIMES NEWSROOM PODCAST - LATER - ROOM LIGHT

Russell stands before a giant flat screen with the angered

face of the Federal Assistant DA in freeze-frame.

RUSSELL

And the federal assistant district attorney was not happy when the Governor gave him the boot. Just watch.

FEDERAL ASSISTANT DA

We'll go ... but I'll be back!

GOVERNOR

If you come back, it better be as a tourist because if you or anybody else from the Justice Department comes back to this state with another trumped up warrant to harass honest patriotic Americans, you will be arrested and prosecuted like common criminals. Now, take your flunkies and beat it!

The Federal Assistant DA stomps off speechless.

RUSSELL

The full podcast of this episode will be available on our website in just a few minutes. Just look for the button with the federal assistant DA's red face on it and a headline that reads: Governor Flogs Federal Agents!

Amber enters the podcast.

AMBER

You'll find the full story in tomorrow's Times including some outrageously funny cartoons by some of our local artists from the various high schools. This one is my personal favorite.

Amber holds up a cartoon in which the artists sketched the governor as Batman giving the boot to the Federal Assistant DA depicted as a bedraggled Riddler.

INT. FANCY STEAKHOUSE - THAT EVENING - SOFT LIGHT

Victor and Kline are sitting at a large table in a back corner of an exclusive steakhouse sipping their drinks and chatting when the governor enters, ushered to their table by a cute waitress.

WAITRESS

Here you are, governor. May I take your coat and hat?

GOVERNOR

Thank you.

WAITRESS

And to drink?

GOVERNOR

Glenlivet ... neat, please.

WAITRESS

We have eighteen and twenty-five.

GOVERNOR

Twenty-five ... thank you ... gentlemen ... will you join me.

VICTOR

Sure, I'm almost empty.

KLINE

Mine's not empty but I never turn down good whiskey on a politician's tab.

They all laugh and the waitress exits.

KLINE

I appreciate your assistance today, Governor.

GOVERNOR

It was my pleasure ... extremely.

VICTOR

This U.S. Attorney General's office is the most corrupt government mob I've ever seen. Outlaws with badges ... that's all they are in this administration. These are the battles that end up winning the war, governor.

GOVERNOR

I hope your right, Victor. All of us have to do everything we can to stop this president's all-out assault on America. And now we're in for four more years of recession ... or worse ... a full-blown depression.

The waitress returns with fresh drinks.

GOVERNOR

Thank you kindly.

The waitress blushes and hesitates.

GOVERNOR

What is it, young lady?

WAITRESS

I voted for you.

GOVERNOR

Well, thank you ... very much.

WAITRESS

I saw you on the Times podcast before I came to work. You were fantastic.

GOVERNOR

Thank you ... very ... very much!

The governor gets up and they shake hands.

WAITRESS

I wish my mother could see me now. She is your biggest fan ever!

Kline grabs his cell phone.

KLINE

Don't move. Let me get a picture of you two and I'll make sure it gets on tomorrow's podcast an in the Times. We must keep the mothers happy.

Kline takes a photo.

KLINE

Here ...

(hands her his napkin)

Write your name ... and your mother's on this so I get the spelling right.

The waitress writes on the napkin.

WAITRESS

Thank you, Mr. Edwards ... soooo much.

KLINE

My pleasure, my dear.

The waitress leaves smiling broadly.

GOVERNOR

That podcast thing you're doing is amazing. You do realize the other team is trying to find a podcast act of their own to put up against you.

KLINE

What are you talking about?

GOVERNOR

The liberals are looking for a venue to compete with your Tea Party podcast, but their focus groups have panned every idea so far.

VICTOR

Such as ...

GOVERNOR

They tried flash mobs to trash the Tea Party but they came off like a bunch of Frankensteins at a nasty-name-calling festival. Next, they did party precinct meetings, then panel discussions with state and local party leaders ... with and without present and past elected officeholders ... with and without Hollywood celebrity hosts. So far the results are the same ... phony and boring.

KLINE

Are you kidding? How do you know all this?

GOVERNOR

I have my informants ... and believe me ... you have taken journalism and politics to a whole new level of play where none of the old rules apply.

VICTOR

I had heard rumors but nothing I'd call reliable. How did the focus groups react ... specifically?

GOVERNOR

Every project has failed ... miserably ... because they can't tell the truth.

VICTOR

They don't dare expose themselves for who they really are!

GOVERNOR

Exactly ... leftists ... Marxists ... socialists ... liberals ... whatever you want to call them ... they cannot publicly say what they believe. They cannot say candidly to the American people what they want to do to our nation and our society. If they did, they'd be dead, politically. So, they twist the facts, and spin one lie after another to conceal their real agenda. The focus groups keep saying the same thing ... phony and boring.

KLINE

Our purpose is to hold up a mirror that accurately reflects the world around us to our readers ... and viewers I guess

now. Newspapers surrendered the high ground two decades when they substituted opinions and sensationalism for hard news in their quest to share the spotlight with broadcast anchors. The American people just are not that stupid.

GOVERNOR

Exactly ... When Americans could no longer find a reliable source of unbiased, untainted information in all of American journalism, they were left with no alternative but to fend for themselves and ... now they love the Tea Party ... the Internet and conservative talk radio ... voila! ... the alternative media.

VICTOR

Governor, you've been closer to the President than we will ever get. What is your assessment of him as a person and as a president?

GOVERNOR

He is arrogant ... conceited ... ruthless ... absolutely hates America being a superpower. He claims to be Christian but his foreign aid tab says he loves Muslims more. He says things about the Bible and Christians that he would never say about the Koran and Muslims. He envies the European aristocracies and the Middle Eastern kingdoms. He hates our middle class and he wants everybody here to bow to him just as he has bowed to every two-bit tyrant and dictator around the world.

KLINE

To hear him tell it, it's the rich he's at war with.

GOVERNOR

Pure illusion ... every country has its rich and poor. What makes America great is the vast middle class. And this president intends to drown it with a mountain of debt to crush the dollar. That will force us to adopt a new monetary system and to take our place somewhere in the back of the line of the new world order.

VICTOR

Why do these socialists make so many problems for the oil business ... the energy business in general?

GOVERNOR

Forcing us to buy oil from the Middle East has made the Arabs rich and powerful ... and saddled our children and grandchildren with unimaginable debt. When our economy finally craters, the socialists will use the crisis to nationalize America's oil and gas industry ... and coal and electricity ... and put all that revenue directly into the federal government's general fund where they can spend it any way they choose.

KLINE

They are banking on our oil to be their piggy bank for the future?

GOVERNOR

Exactly ... all this bullshit about green energy and global warming ... pure deception ... smoke and mirrors ... a purely political crusade to yield U.S. sovereignty ... and our money ... to the United Nations to buy our president the big chair at the table of global government.

Kline looks at Victor, his jaw square with grimace.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - LATER - DARK

The Governor, Victor and Kline walk across the parking lot to the Governor's car which is flanked by two black-and-white state police cars.

GOVERNOR

Kline, I want you to meet somebody.

KLINE

Sounds serious.

GOVERNOR

She is.

A STATE TROOPER opens the back door of the Governor's car and an extremely attractive late-forties Mexican woman dressed in black jacket, shirt and jeans exits the vehicle.

GOVERNOR

Kline, this is Rita Rodriguez. She will

be your security detail for the next few weeks ... at least until I'm sure the DOJ has lost interest in the Times.

RITA smiles and firmly shakes hands with Kline.

RITA

I've heard a lot about you and I am very glad to be part of your team officially.

KLINE

I'm flattered, Governor, but ... I wasn't aware I that needed a body guard ... not that I'd mind ... I mean ... I ... I didn't know body guards were ... a ... so pretty.

Rita grins.

GOVERNOR

It's just a precaution. As we have discussed ... I am a bit deeper in the game than you and I have a better grasp of the rules ... or maybe I should say ... the lack of rules ... so ... just humor me.

The State Trooper opens the trunk and helps Rita remove a black canvas shoulder bag and a suitcase.

VICTOR

Makes sense ... they think they have the Tea Party neutralized with all their hate-speech venom and another four years ... but you, Kline ... you are a wild card. They don't know how to play your game so no telling what they'll do to make you go away.

KLINE

I've got news for the bastards. They're too late. We have taken a dying industry and breathed new EBITDA into it ... it has new life ... all on its own. Profit rules corporations ... not people.

RITA

You are assuming that we are dealing with honest rational people. The current regime is ruthless, dishonest and irrational ... so ... sir, you must be prepared ... at all times.

GOVERNOR

And don't let that pretty package fool you. She can be rough as a gravel road when she needs to be and meaner than a water moccasin.

Rita HISSES and points two snake-fang-fingers at Kline.
Kline raises one brow, then chuckles.

KLINE
Okay. So ... how does this work?

The Governor heads for his car.

GOVERNOR
You two work it out. I gotta go. Hasta
la vista.

Victor heads off also.

VICTOR
Me, too. Buona notte.

Kline attempts to take the bags from Rita.

RITA
I've got it. Where's your car?

Kline refuses to let go of the suitcase.

KLINE
I carry at least one or we're going to
have a problem.

Rita laughs and relents.

KLINE
Now, what's your hotel?

RITA
The Hacienda del Edwards.

Kline stops in his tracks.

KLINE
Wait a minute ...

RITA
Relax. The couch is mine.

Kline sighs slowly.

KLINE
That won't be necessary. I have a guest
room.

RITA
I must use the couch ... better vantage
point ... quicker access to the rest of
the house.

KLINE
I snore.

RITA

Me, too.

INT. EDWARDS' LIVING ROOM - EARLY THE NEXT DAY - BRIGHT

Rita is dressed to kill in a bright red shirt with a black denim vest, black denim jean skirt and fashionable patent leather lace-up commando boots. She stands at one side of the large front window studying the neighborhood.

KLIN

Good morning. How did you sleep?

Rita turns around, picks up a body-armor torso vest and tosses it to Kline.

RITA

Fine ... now ... put that on ... please.

Kline picks it up and is surprised how light it is.

KLIN

The last time I wore one of these was Viet Nam. They were hot and heavy.

RITA

That one's pretty comfortable ... the latest model.

Kline frowns.

KLIN

Hey, this thing's got a crotch in it.

RITA

You don't like your crotch.

Kline raises both eyebrows and exits with the vest in hand.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Kline enters tugging at his coat sleeves.

KLIN

This makes me look fat.

RITA

That's what all the girls say.

Rita flashes a naughty grin.

Kline smiles and chuckles a bit.

KLIN

What are you carrying?

Rita pulls a pistol out of the handbag under her arm which doubles as a gun holster and holds it up for Kline to see.

KLINER
Hmmmm ... 1911A-1 Colt Commander
Lightweight ... sweet ... ah, the genius of
John Browning ... me too.

Kline slips one hand underneath his coat and fetches a similar pistol from a shoulder holster.

RITA
Wow ... Ed Brown ... I'm jealous. And your backup?

Kline props a foot up on the edge of the coffee table and pulls up one pant leg to expose an ankle holster holding a Smith & Wesson Police Detective model revolver.

KLINER
This ... and you.

RITA
You ... and me, too.

Rita props a foot up on the other side of the coffee table and hikes her skirt a bit to expose a similar revolver in her thigh holster.

Kline looks at his leg then hers.

KLINER
Well ... ain't we a pair ... (chuckles).

Rite grins and wags a finger at him.

EXT. SAME DAY - SIDEWALK DOWNTOWN - MORNING LIGHT

Rita and Kline walk quickly down the sidewalk, each visually canvassing the area while keeping an eye on each other.

RITA
You are on all over town.

She nods toward a flat screen TV on the wall visible through the front window of a barber shop which is playing a Times podcast.

KLINER
People crave information ... especially local ... what's going on around them ... like a security blanket. The rest of the world can pretty much go to hell as long as they can see that their little piece of it is plodding on at its usual pace. But let the mailman run late ... or the trash truck break down ... or the water or lights go off ... and they get excited pretty damned quick.

On down the sidewalk Kline steers Rita into a café.

INT. CAFE - BRIGHT

Kline leads Rita to a booth and an OLDER WAITRESS appears.

OLDER WAITRESS

Good morning, Kline. How are you today?

KLIN

Every day's a holiday ...
 (older waitress in unison)
 Every meal's a feast.

Rita giggles.

OLDER WAITRESS

I'm Gloria ... his breakfast date for the last twenty years. Glad to see I've been replaced.

Kline winks at her.

RITA

I'm Rita ... and it's temporary ... but I'm glad to meet you.

OLDER WAITRESS

Likewise, sweetie.

KLIN

Rita's my body guard.

RITA

Podcast it, why don't you?

OLDER WAITRESS

I've got a muzzle you can borrow.

RITA

I may take you up on that.

OLDER WAITRESS

Now ... what'll you have, dear?

RITA

Whatever he's having.

OLDER WAITRESS

Don't you want to know what you're getting yourself into?

RITA

Too late for that, I'm afraid.

Kline strums his fingers on the table top.

OLDER WAITRESS

Mexican omelet with extra salsa, extra cheese ... jalapenos on the side ... coffee and water.

RITA

Perfect ... and Tobasco, please.

The waitress leaves and Rita points to the flat screen TV mounted in the corner with a Times podcast cutting to a full-blown broadcast advertisement.

KLINE

Can you believe it? We started a sixteen hour cycle Monday and yesterday morning we picked up our first national ad ... for the podcast. They want an anchor slot ... seven days a week.

RITA

Great stuff ... The TV networks are going to hate you more than Rush Limbaugh.

KLINE

Yeah, things are looking better and better all the time.

INT. THE PODCAST ON THE FLAT SCREEN

Amber is introducing a podcast guest.

AMBER

Albert teaches science at our biggest local high school and he dropped by to tell us about his favorite science web sites.

SCIENCE TEACHER

Amber, there are so many science resources on the web, but I want to start with my all-time favorite ... junkscience.com.

AMBER

That one debunks science studies and theories from the past with new data or credible experiments that often completely contradict previous conclusions, right?

SCIENCE TEACHER

Exactly ... take the junk science charade that banned a chemical called DDT.

(reads from notes)

Forty years ago, DDT was our best weapon to fight malaria and other diseases

carried by mosquitoes. Junk science studies and junk reporting of scientific studies alleged that DDT was poisoning the planet ... killing birds ... killing everything ... and on this website you will find not opinion, but real scientific research and analysis that shows all of it was ... well ... junk science. The truth is DDT doesn't poison people or our environment, just insects ... specifically mosquitoes. The ban on DDT has caused the needless deaths of as many as 30 million people and ruined the lives of a billion more who were infected by malaria and yellow fever in tropical countries, most of them helpless African children, according to Dennis Avery, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. With the rise of West Nile disease around the world, those needless deaths are sure to increase.

INT. CAFÉ

The Older Waitress approaches with breakfast.

RITA

Hanging around this guy is proving to be very educational ... pass the DDT, please.

OLDER WAITRESS

DDT and Tobasco ... for the seniorita.

They both laugh.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF TIMES SQUARE - DUSK - DIM

Kline and Rita exit Times Square toward the parking lot.

Rita scans the surrounding area as they continue, then she stops abruptly.

RITA

Wait. We have to go back inside for a minute. I left my phone in your office.

Kline's cell phone rings and he answers it as he holds up one finger.

KLIN

Yes, Joey ... wait ... hold on just a second
...

Kline turns to Rita.

KLIN

Go on. I'll wait here for you.

Rita looks around as Kline returns to his phone call.

RITA

Okay. But don't move from this spot. I will be back in one minute.

INT. TIMES SQUARE - KLINE'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER

Rita quickly enters, flips on the light, grabs her phone, slips it into her purse, turns off the light and closes the door behind her.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - KLINE STILL TALKING ON THE PHONE

Rita rounds the corner of the building and sees Kline still on the phone. Then SHE SEES a man walking briskly down the sidewalk who appears to be watching Kline out of the corner of his eye.

Rita charges toward the ASSASSIN approaching Kline pulling her pistol from her purse holster as she charges.

Kline is lost in conversation, oblivious to everything and just as he turns his back toward the assassin, Rita makes a flying leap.

RITA

Kline! Down!

Kline instinctively drops to his haunches.

Rita lands in front of Kline, grabs the Assassin's extended hand and simultaneously clubs his forehead with her pistol.

KLIN

Rita! What ...

The BLOODYED assassin falls back and struggles back up on his feet, his eyes fixed on Rita.

Rita squares off at him, shielding Kline with her body, her pistol aimed straight at the assassin's chest.

The assassin suddenly turns and sprints away hard.

KLIN

What just happened?

RITA

You just almost had a heart attack.

Rita holds out her hand to show Kline what she took from the Assassin's hand, a SMALL METALLIC CYLINDER with a spray nozzle on one end.

KLIN

What is that? It looks like breath freshener.

RITA

It's probably colorless, odorless and easily metabolized by the mouth, sinus and lungs ... and very lethal ... probably. We won't know till I get it tested.

Kline is shocked.

KLIN

You really think he tried to kill me.

RITA

It's a black ops called a Butterfly Harvest.

KLIN

A Butterfly Harvest?

RITA

Have you ever heard of the Butterfly Effect?

KLIN

Yeah ... I read that little book ... really more like a short essay ... written on a bunch of pictures. I didn't even have to buy it ... read it standing in the bookstore in about ten minutes. It reminded me of Paul Harvey's "The Rest of the Story."

RITA

I mean the theory ... that the air a butterfly moves when he flaps his wings ... seemingly so insignificant ... could ... if multiplied by the right conditions ... become a hurricane.

KLIN

But my hurricane is already here ... too late now to shut the barn door now. The horse is already long gone.

RITA

How do you know that this is your ultimate hurricane? What your enemies fear is that this is just the beginning and they aren't taking any chances.

KLIN

I don't feel like a butterfly.

RITA

Well, someone just tried to harvest you ... and they will probably try again. Come on ... I've got to get you off the street.

INT. CHRISTIAN SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - LATER - STAGE LIGHTS

Kline and Rita quietly enter the cross-adorned auditorium and find a seat as a youth choir starts to sing The Battle Hymn of the Republic with a SMALL BOY DRUMMING a perfect beat on his marching snare drum.

RITA

(quietly in Kline's ear)
What are we doing here?

KLIN

We are celebrating Thanksgiving with these children.

RITA

For the paper?

KLIN

No ... for Emily.

RITA

Who is Emily?

KLIN

I will introduce you later.

Kline and Rita settle back to listen to the children sing.

INT. AUDITORIUM LOBBY - AFTER THE PERFORMANCE - BRIGHT

Kline and Rita stand near a statue of the crucifixion.

RITA

Where is Emily?

KLIN

She will be here shortly. You can bet on that. We always meet by the Cross.

Just then EMILY and EMILY's GRANDMOTHER RUTH come into view. They are Vietnamese.

Emily runs to Kline who scoops her into his arms.

KLIN

Emily, you guys were fantastic!

EMILY

Thank you, thank you, thank you, Kline!
I knew you would come!

She hugs him hard again.

RITA

(to Ruth)
I'm Rita Rodriguez, a friend of Kline's.

They shake hands.

RUTH

I'm Ruth, Emily's grandmother. I am so pleased to meet you. Kline is a wonderful man. He is family to us.

KLINE

Emily, I think you've grown two inches since our summer fishing holiday and if you get any prettier, you're grandmother may have to put up a fence to keep the boys away!

EMILY

You always say the same thing.

(giggles shyly)

I'm bigger and prettier ... but that's okay, you're the best real friend I've got ... well ... you and Grandma!

KLINE

I'll always be here for you, sweetie!
Everybody needs friends.

EMILY

And you have to be a friend to have one!

KLINE

Smart girl! Smart girl! Smart girl!

They hug again.

KLINE

I have something for you, Emily. It's a Christmas present ... a little early ... because I wanted your grandmother to see you open it.

From his pocket, Kline produces a small box wrapped in red paper with a small white bow on it.

Emily is beside herself with eager joy.

EMILY

Ooooooeeeeee! What is it! What is it!

KLINE

Open it and see.

Emily carefully unwraps the paper and opens the box to find a gold leaf necklace with a small crystal angel adorned with hair of gold and face and hands of silver.

EMILY

It's the most beautiful angel I've ever seen! I love it! Thank yoooou! Soooooo

much!

Emily hugs Kline and kisses him on the cheek.

TEARS trickle down Kline's cheeks.

KLINE

And this is to make sure you have a good
Christmas season at your household,
Ruth.

Kline hands a sealed envelope to Ruth.

RUTH

You are the most generous man I have
ever met, Kline.

Through mutual tears, Ruth hugs Kline and gives him a big
kiss on the cheek.

EMILY

Hey, you guys stop crying. Kline said we
sounded great tonight!

They all laugh.

EMILY

I make good jokes, too.

INT. KLINE'S CAR - LATER - DARK

Kline drives silently through the night, smiling mostly to
himself.

RITA

Okay, talk. Who are Emily and Ruth?

KLINE

Three years ago, two thugs ... illegals
with criminal records long as my arm
from back in Mexico ... broke into the
house where Emily and her parents were
staying ... a home invasion. Emily's
father grabbed his gun and put up a good
fight but he died in the shootout and
his wife died two days later in the
hospital.

RITA

And the bad guys?

KLINE

They never got out of the house. I was
headed back to work after dinner and saw
the squad cars and ambulances. When I
rolled up, they had just discovered
Emily ... hiding in a closet.

RITA

She must have been terrified.

KLIN

It was the most heart-breaking experience of my life. This little wide-eyed waif of a little girl crying ... shaking ... in shock. When she saw me, she ran right into my arms and ... I just held her ... till she stopped crying. I took her to her grandmother's house and sat with her till she fell asleep. We've been best friends ever since.

RITA

And the envelope?

Kline sighs.

KLIN

Ruth has her house, and a Social Security check ... five hundred and sixty-three dollars a month. That's it. Have you ever tried to live on five hundred and sixty three dollars a month?

RITA

What about food stamps and Aid for Dependent Children? There are other sources of help.

KLIN

People who think the Vietnamese are moochers don't know shit about the Asian culture. She and her husband paid for Social Security so she'll accept that ... but she won't have any part of welfare!

RITA

But she will take money from you?

KLIN

I am a friend. That makes it different. That is the way it used to be ... people took care of other people in need. She would do the same for me ... or any other person in need ... if she could.

RITA

How much?

KLIN

Every other month or so, I give Ruth a couple of grand so Emily can have the things that other kids have ... things like new clothes and hair ribbons. You'd

be surprised at how important hair bows
are to little girls ... and their
grandmothers

RITA

Oh, I understand ribbons and bows ... but
... I'm just beginning to see through what
people in my line of work call, your
cover ... that hard-nosed old city editor
thing. No bad. Not bad at all.

Rita lifts the console between the seats, slides over and
leans her head on Kline's shoulder.

Kline smiles and drives on through the night.

INT. MEETING ROOM - PLAZA HOTEL - DAYS LATER - BRIGHT

Rita and Kline approach Joey who is monitoring the camera
ready to record Amber who stands ready to interview the Tea
Party guest speaker as soon as he finishes.

JOEY

That's Jack Farber, a key states' rights
advocate.

KLINIE

What's he want.

JOEY

He's petitioning the governor to call
for a convention of all state governors.
Farber wants them to formally declare
the Environmental Protection Agency a
rogue federal agency operating far
beyond its statutory or Constitutional
authority and push their legislatures to
outlaw the EPA from operating anywhere
within state borders or adjacent
territorial waters ... turn that authority
over to state environmental agencies
exclusively and ... if the feds retaliate
in any way, ... divert payment of all
federal excise taxes on oil, gas, coal
and electricity to fund state budgets.

KLINIE

Ballsy, I'll give him that.

JOEY

Don't you like it?

KLINIE

I love it, but don't quote me. Let the
reader decide for himself, right?

Joey bends over to check his computer monitor.

JOEY
Exactly.

Rita and Kline start off toward Victor at the other end of the room but Kline steps back to speak quietly to Joey.

KLINE
Listen, from now on ... you guys travel in pairs. Nobody goes anyplace alone. Got it?

JOEY
Why? What's the threat?

KLINE
I don't have time to discuss it. Just do it.

JOEY
Okay ... okay ... whatever you say.

Rita and Kline find two chairs and quietly seat themselves to listen to the speaker.

JACK FARBER
Secession will destroy our nation. The Tea Party is not a movement to destroy our nation by dividing it. Divide and conquer is the favorite tactic of our president. However, nullification is not only a state right but a tool states may use to preserve our nation and reign in our federal government. It is time for every state to produce legislation to nullify rogue federal agencies and rogue legislation such as the president's grand lie that he refers to as his health care law.

Rita looks at Kline and quietly pats her hands as if clapping.

INT. KLINE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER - DIM

Kline carry's a pizza box and escorts Rita to the table where she sets aside her purse and sits down.

KLINE
Here we are.

He places the pizza box on the table.

RITA
Can I help?

KLINE
No, thanks ... I'm just going to get some

napkins ... and a couple of beers ... um ... if beer's okay.

RITA

Beer's great. I'm a beery kind of girl.

KLINE

My favorite kind of girl.

Rita notices OLD PHOTOS of Kline, his wife and their son, and another of a man and a woman and two boys, one of which is Kline's son.

Kline returns with beer, paper plates and paper napkins.

RITA

Your wife and son?

KLINE

Yep ... more than twenty years ago. And that other one is my brother and his wife with their son and Terry, my son. Those were taken just before my wife passed away.

RITA

She was a beautiful woman.

Kline holds the box for Rita to get some pizza then takes a piece for himself.

KLINE

Yes, she was. And a helluva good cop.

RITA

She was a police officer?

KLINE

First time I laid eyes on her she wrote me a ticket for disturbing the piece.

RITA

What were you doing?

KLINE

Playing the stereo in my car too loud ... out in front of her house ... about midnight.

Rita grins widely.

Kline takes a huge bite of pizza.

RITA

Were you drunk?

KLINE

Nope ... just smitten. She tore up the

ticket the next day ... right after breakfast.

Kline laughs and chews.

RITA
What song were you playing?

KLINe
Witchy Woman of course!

They both laugh and continue to eat.

KLINe
She was shot in the line of duty when Terry was fifteen.

RITA
Did they get the bastard who did it?

KLINe
Didn't have to ... she did. She was working as a special investigator for the DA at the time ... taking down a meth lab in the middle of the night ... walked into a hornet's nest. She caught a nine in the left armpit just past her vest ... but it didn't stop her ... not instantly any way ... probably really pissed her off. She cut the last two bad buys in half ... literally ... three inch magnum double aught buckshot.

RITA
She was a fighter.

KLINe
Yeah ... you kind of remind me of her.

Rita grins and has more pizza.

KLINe
Terry was away for the summer staying with my brother ... in Moscow.

RITA
What did your brother do in Moscow?

KLINe
I asked him the same thing and never got a straight answer. He worked for the State Department. That's all I know. Terry said he was home almost every night so I figure it was a desk job.

Kline swigs his beer.

RITA
And Terry?

KLINE
Joined the Marine Corps right out of high school ... along with his cousin. Both could speak fluent Russian by the time they were old enough to drive ... CIA picked up both of them as soon as they got out of boot camp.

RITA
So ... you've got a pretty spooky family.

KLINE
Not so much anymore. Terry found a girl seven years ago and eventually she cancelled his frequent flier miles. He took a desk at Langley and I have a grand-daughter who turns seven next month. Emily and I are flying out there for Christmas. Wanna come with us?

RITA
That would be wonderful.

KLINE
What about your family?

RITA
Lot of brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews but ... I guess I never met a guy I didn't eventually scare away ... so ... it's just me ... and my vest ... I guess.

Kline grins.

KLINE
How about another beer?

Rita winks and smiles.

RITA
I'd love one.

INT. TIMES SQUARE - NEWSROOM - NEXT DAY - BRIGHT

Kline and Rita enter, looking more like a couple than a man and his bodyguard, and they barely make it into Kline's office before Joey rushes in.

JOEY
You better sit down.

Kline laughs and sits down in his chair.

KLIN

Okay. I'm sitting.

Rita sits down on the couch.

RITA

Me, too.

Joey is so excited he can't stand still.

JOEY

Today, we entered a new era in journalism.

KLIN

This better be good, Joey. I can only take so much hype without choking someone.

JOEY

I know ... I know ... I know ... so ... here it is. Some very rich dude that Victor won't name donated ... I mean gave us ... free ... no charge whatsoever ... an entire server network! And it is the bigfoot monster of the digital world!

KLIN

Joey, what do we need with some big-ass server network? I mean, it sounds very generous and all ... but ... what are we going to do with it?

JOEY

I already did it.

KLIN

Did what?

JOEY

I put in on-line yesterday afternoon ... booted account and log-on instructions and library up-load aps to every member of the Patriot Press and ... bingo ... this morning we have more news than you could ever use! Real news! The kind you like. No personality ... just the facts ... cut and dried ... short and sweet.

Joey LAUGHS MANIACALLY.

JOEY

Ain't I just the cat's meow!

Rita laughs and shakes her head.

KLINE

One more cliché, Joey, and I'm seriously going to kick the liberal shit out of you ... now ... what are you talking about?

Joey looks at Kline impatiently.

JOEY

Every local story written by every member paper of the Patriot Press and all of their podcast videos are now available to all Patriot Press members in this giant searchable data base with no strings attached ... no copyright ... no fees ... no nothing.

Rita appears confused.

RITA

What do you do with news from other papers?

KLINE

Plagiarize and localize!

JOEY

Exactly ... every local reporter's wet dream!

KLINE

You see what other reporters are doing at other papers and work up the same story if it applies to your locale. With the proper background, every paper can keep up with state, regional and national trends. With enough contributions, everyone can track legislation as it moves through Congress and see if their elected representatives are truly representing their interests.

RITA

Like the fraud stories you did about food stamps and unemployment?

JOEY

Exactly ... that series was localized in communities coast to coast. That file alone is 200 gigs ... zipped ... and growing exponentially.

KLINE

The so-called major news networks and wire services are all feeling wobbly at the knees right now and they don't know why. Years from now they'll look back

and realize this is the day they lost control.

JOEY

The libs just went from angry to livid.

KLINE

Yeah ... reminds me of what Jose Wales said about the Camancharos.

RITA

What was that?

KLINE

They ain't gonna like us killin' their friends.

They all laugh.

RITA

Hear that?

KLINE

What? I don't hear anything.

RITA

I think I hear butterfly wings.

JOEY

Butterfly wings?

Kline shakes his head and grins.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DUSK - VERY LITTLE LIGHT LEFT

Rita and Kline step out onto the sidewalk and both look cautiously all around, then they smile at each other like sweethearts.

Suddenly, two cars race toward Kline and Rita from opposite directions and GUNSHOTS fill the air.

Rita pulls her pistol and nails the driver of one car with a quick double-tap but is immediately hit in the chest by a GUNSHOT that knocks her backward into the hedges.

Kline instinctively pulls his pistol and before the second gunman can put his sights on him Kline shoots him once in the head.

With both drivers dead, the cars resume movement and run into each other.

KLINE

Rita! Rita! Are you okay!

Kline races to help Rita get up and she pulls open her blouse to pick the bullet out of her vest.

RITA
(grimacing with pain)
Damn it ... that hurts.

KLINE
Damned good vest though!

Rita looks at him and manages to grin.

Together, they raise their weapons and advance toward the cars sitting nose to nose with their engines still running. Kline takes one and Rita approaches the other.

RITA
In the back seat ... I've got a dead guy ...
with black teeth ... no doubt a meth head.
Looks like he hasn't had a bath or a
shave in a week.

KLINE
Same here ... probably. I can't see his
teeth but he has a hole in his chest the
size of a golf ball ... Probably a twelve
gauge.

SIRENS approach.

RITA
It was another harvest attempt ...
disguised to look like a shootout
between drug dealers.

KLINE
Yeah ... I think I know this one ... at
least his police mugshot.

Rita leans wearily up against the front of one of the cars.

RITA
They didn't count on you having a gun,
too. I was the primary target this time
so they could get to you.

The police cruisers race up and the HEADLIGHTS find Kline holding Rita close and Rita's head on Kline's shoulder.

INT. NEWSROOM PODCAST - THE NEXT DAY - BRIGHT

Russell stands before the camera, the hustle of the newsroom apparent behind him, and reads soberly from his notes into the camera.

RUSSELL
In today's Times, our readers read the
first report of a failed assassination
attempt on Kline Edwards, who was named
Editor of the Times this morning and

celebrated that promotion by giving my fellow reporter Amber Hamilton a full account of the shootout in front of Times Square yesterday evening in which both would-be assassins were killed. Each assassin drove a car belonging to local men, both found dead in the back seats of those cars. Both of those local residents had a long history of drug abuse and arrests and convictions for illegal drug manufacture, possession and sales. Tomorrow's news coverage of that assassination attempt includes information from the district attorney's office that links one of the would-be assassins to the U.S. Department of Justice through emails found on a laptop in his motel room. The district attorney has turned the case over to the state attorney general's office and so far three members of the U.S. House of Representatives who hail from this area have joined the call for a special investigation of the Justice Department regarding this attempted assassination.

INT. KLINE'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER - BRIGHT

Kline sits behind his desk with Rita in a chair at his side. Victor and Joey occupy the couch.

VICTOR

The district attorney said you could leave town? I thought he'd want to keep you close because of the investigation.

KLIN

The governor agreed that it might be a good thing if I hid out somewhere else for a while ... so my son and his family are going to meet us for a secret vacation.

RITA

And who's going to watch the city desk while you're gone?

Kline smiles at Rita.

KLIN

Joey ... my new city editor.

VICTOR

Joey, you earned it, man.

They shake hands.

JOEY

Thank you! Finally, I get to hunt up front with the big dogs!

KLINE

Now maybe he'll inflict himself on his staff instead of me. Every time I turn around I've got four new text messages or ten more emails. I don't think he sleeps. I think he's rechargeable and he has an AC plug instead of a belly button.

JOEY

I'll show you mine if you show me yours.

KLINE

Not in this lifetime.

Everybody laughs.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - ALLEY EXIT - LATER - AFTERNOON SHADOWS

Kline and Rita exit with Victor close behind. No sooner have they entered the alley when a car careens into the alley headed straight for Kline.

Rita instinctive shoves Kline out of the way of the car then steps up on Victor's hip pushing him back out of the way also. She uses her momentum to jump up landing like a cat on all fours on the hood of the car as it SLAMS into the wall of the building.

Larissa scrambles out of the car SCREAMING and running toward Kline who is having trouble getting up because of the slick train rails imbedded into the asphalt.

LARISSA

You fucking bastard! I'm going to ki...

As Larissa darts by Rita jumps off the hood of the car and clobbers her over the head with her pistol dropping Larissa instantly, as limp as a wet rag.

Kline crawls to his feet and joins Rita who is standing over Larissa with her pistol at the ready.

VICTOR

Damn! That crazy bitch! I ... ah ... I'll get the police.

RITA

Get Joey, too! Tell him to bring a camera. He won't want to miss his first big scoop as city editor.

KLIN
(to Rita)
Are you okay?

RITA
I'm pumped! What about you?

Kline is holding an elbow he banged on the railroad tracks when he hit the asphalt in the middle of the alley.

Rita examines it and Kline flinches with pain.

RITA
I think you may have broken a bone.

Kline ignores her.

KLIN
She's a zombie! Did you see her eyes!
That ain't caffeine!

RITA
Well well ... nailed my first Zombie
Socialist! Tattoo time!

KLIN
You're kidding.

Rita grins and hisses her snake fang fingers at him.

Kline manages to smile a little.

KLIN
Well, then, tat me too!

EXT. SMALL AIRPORT - PRIVATE PLANE - MORNING - BRIGHT

As background, CHILDREN'S VOICES SING Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A."

Kline, one arm in a sling, leads Rita and Emily off of a small private plane.

Baggage handlers unload the cargo hold in the B.G.

Emily runs straight to Kline's granddaughter and they SQUEAL and hug.

Kline introduces Rita to Terry and his wife.

The women embrace.

The men embrace.

The children dance around.

INT. CHRISTIAN SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DEBATERS ON STAGE - STAGE LIGHTS IN B.G.

The music fades slightly as Russell sets up his podcast.

RUSSELL

This afternoon we are sitting in on the regional debate competitions featuring four local teams, two from this school, the Liberty Christian School. And, believe it or not the topic of our next debate will be school vouchers! The team on the left will argue that vouchers cripple school systems individually and as a whole. The team on the right will argue that vouchers hold public school teachers - and teacher unions - accountable to not only taxpayers, but to the students, their parents and ultimately society as a whole.

The music comes back up.

FADE OUT:

THE END