

# **MOURNING NEWS**

**Scene One**

(Lights up. It is nearly 10 a.m. on a Tuesday morning. NANCY sits at her SR desk, answering INCOMING PHONE CALLS. Both MATT and ALISHA sit at their respective desks typing up stories, both on the phone. TANYA sits in her loft reviewing a multi-column ledger. The staff is on morning deadline, meaning hustle and anxiety.)

ALISHA

(overlapping) I don't understand. Council approved them last night.

MATT

(overlapping) Spell your name for me again?

ALISHA

(overlapping) If they were approved then they're open record, Cheryl. What's the problem?

(Nancy's PHONE RINGS. She answers.)

NANCY

Rockford Daily Informer.

MATT

(overlapping) I'm sure you've spelled it twice already, sir, but I need it just one more time. Please?

ALISHA

(overlapping) Just fax them over. I'm not asking you to run them down here.

NANCY

Yes, he is. One moment please.

(She pushes the office intercom.)

Bo, line three.

(She hangs up.)

ALISHA

(overlapping) Is it donut time in your office? Why is faxing something now an epic problem?

MATT

Thank you. Okay. S-M-I-T-H. Smith. Got it.

(beat) Well, it could've had a Y in it. I don't know.

ALISHA

(overlapping) Cheryl, come on. I got this story that was due like a million years ago, and I just need to check how the original motion actually reads, A-S-A-P. So, please, pull the bear claw out of your face and fax them. PLEASE.

NANCY

(to across room) BO, LINE THREE.

MATT

(overlapping) No. I've got it now. I've written it down.  
(beat) Okay. (beat) No, thank YOU. (beat) You too.

(He hangs up. Nancy's PHONE RINGS.  
She answers.)

NANCY

Rockford Daily Informer.

MATT

Is Smith spelled with a Y or an I?

NANCY

Oh, you actually have a new carrier. She started yesterday. I'm sure she...

ALISHA

(to Matt, past receiver) Didn't you just ask him?

MATT

I didn't write it down.

(Alisha holds up a pinkie finger, representing the letter "I." He continues typing.)

NANCY

No. She just started yesterday. Do you even have numbers on your house? (across the room) BO, LINE THREE!

(Nancy grabs an executive stress ball from her desk, squeezes it repeatedly.)

ALISHA

(into phone) Five minutes? How about four? (beat) As soon as you can would be fine...hopefully.

(BO enters from USL ad room with copy in his hands.)

BO

(annoyed) I had NO reporters in the office all day yesterday, and all we have for P-I art is some old woman holding a stop sign. We have a huge hole on the class page, and so far no stories are in.

ALISHA

No. The story is due right now. (beat) Thank you, Cheryl.  
(beat) Yes, lunch tomorrow at Peggy's. (beat) Bye, dear.  
(She hangs up.)

BO

(to Alisha) Leslie says Hopper's took out advertising, so you can finish that preview for today's paper.

ALISHA

TODAY'S?

BO

Its tomorrow night? It has to be in today's paper to get them anything timely.

ALISHA

Well, what about this water restriction story?

BO

I need it too.

(Alisha is aggravated. Bo checks copy.)

NANCY

(still on phone) Well, I'll have a word with her when she comes to pick up her papers today. (beat) Mam, I'm not going to fire an eleven year old girl for missing one house on her first day.

MATT

There's a call on line three for you, Bo.

BO

Oh, thanks.

(He crosses to his DSL desk and answers the phone.)

Bo Freeman.

NANCY

I know the obituaries are important to you, Mam. I'm almost sixty. I look through them to see how many friends I have left.

MATT

Anyone know how to spell Gorgonzola?

BO

That ran Friday, Gwen. Didn't it?

NANCY

Then I'm not sure how to help you if that's your attitude today.

ALISHA

Can you believe this? The Hopper's preview AND the water story. We're fifteen minutes past deadline.

MATT

Is it G-O-R-E?

BO

I'll have to look, but I'm almost certain it ran. Do you have it in front of you?

ALISHA

Why do you need Gorgonzola?

MATT

This feature. This guy made a sculpture of his wife out of different cheeses for their anniversary.

BO

Well, if you haven't seen Friday's edition yet, how do you know it didn't run?

(Rubs his temple.)

Look, Gwen. Just look through Friday's paper. See if you see it. Call me back after eleven if it's not there, okay? (beat) I can't look right now. (to Nancy) Nancy, when did that Rockford Museum guest speaker announcement go in?

NANCY

(Without looking.)

Friday. Class page. Sixth column. Four inches down.

BO

(into phone) It was Friday, ok? I have to go. We're on deadline.

NANCY

BO, LINE THREE IS YOURS.

BO

(to Nancy) I KNOW. I'M ON IT. (into phone) Gwen, I have to let you go.

MATT

Gorgonzola? Anyone? Help.

BO

That big book in your desk, Matt.

MATT

Yeah.

BO

Dictionary.

(Embarrassed, Matt searches the drawers of his desk.)

Okay, Gwen. Goodbye.

(He hangs up.)

NANCY

If it happens again, let me know. I'll speak with her.

ALISHA

This isn't gonna' work, Bo.

(Tanya sees Nancy is free, stands and crosses downstairs holding with a sheet of paper.)

NANCY

All right. Good bye.

(She hangs up.)

BO

What?

(Nancy's PHONE RINGS. She answers.)

NANCY

Rockford Daily Informer.

ALISHA

THIS. We're understaffed. We're not going to be able to keep this up much longer with just the two of us reporting. What are we gonna' do for elections in two months?

(Tanya crosses SR to Nancy's desk and waits for her to finish.)

NANCY

Yes. I can stop your subscription for you.

(The staff stops and takes notice of the call. They look at each other, deflated, especially Tanya.)

BO

(beat) At this point, I don't know what to tell you.

ALISHA

Have we even interviewed anyone?

BO

I don't know.

TANYA

(Overhearing.)

Today.

BO

You have someone starting today?

TANYA

Maybe. I'm not sure yet. He's coming in today.

MATT

(Searching.)

I'm not finding it.

BO

It's next to your CHSAA directory.

MATT

I have a CHSAA directory?

(He continues looking.)

ALISHA

I hope he works out, cause this is getting out of hand.

NANCY

Well, we're sure sorry to lose you, Mister Seeley.

BO

Who is it?

TANYA

Mister Seeley? From Morgan's Farm Implement.

BO

No. Who do you have coming in?

NANCY

Okay. We'll get that stopped immediately.

TANYA

It's a little complicated to explain.

Thank you. Bye, bye.

NANCY

(She hangs up and grunts.)

(to Nancy) Is this Bob Hunter's personal or business account?  
(She hands Nancy the paper. Nancy looks, standing. Bo sits at his desk working over copy.)

NANCY

That's his business.

(She crosses SL to the calendar with a marker.)

TANYA

I think we're gonna' have to figure out a new system,..so I know which one's which in the future.

NANCY

I was thinking that myself. We've always done it this way, cause your father would keep them straight in his head.  
(Nancy marks an "X" on the week.)

TANYA

Doesn't surprise me. But I AM gonna' need a little help.

NANCY

We're ALL gonna' need help if we don't stop getting cancellations.

(She gestures to the calendar.)

TANYA

(Looks.)

Four since Tuesday.

BO

Five.

(Nancy's PHONE RINGS. She crosses to it.)

TANYA

It's only been two months. I'm doing the best I can right now.  
(She crosses US to the stairs. Nancy answers the phone.)

NANCY

Rockford Daily Informer.

BO  
(Stands.)

I'm sorry, Tanya. I didn't mean...anything. We all are...VERY  
sorry about...losing your father.

Found it!

MATT  
  
(Matt removes a dictionary from his  
desk.)

TANYA  
  
(pause) I know, Bo. Thank you. (beat) Let me know when  
my...appointment is here, please.  
(She heads upstairs.)

NANCY  
  
Okay. One moment, please. Let me have you speak to a reporter.  
(over shoulder) Matt, line one.  
(She hangs up, as Matt picks up.)

MATT  
  
This is Matt.

BO  
  
Do I know him?

TANYA  
  
(pause) Imagine SATAN just walked in and asked you for a job.  
(She exits.)

ALISHA  
  
(to Bo) What the hell was that?

BO  
  
What?

ALISHA  
  
Saying we're sorry about Stanley like that? Not on deadline.  
That's just dumb.

BO  
  
(annoyed) Don't you have stories to turn in?  
(He sits. Matt checks the  
dictionary.)

MATT  
  
G-O-R-G-O-N-Z-O-L-A. I knew that. (into phone) No, no. I'm  
listening.

BO

(to Matt) Is THAT feature going to be done for today?

MATT

(over receiver) I'm spell checking now.

ALISHA

Water restrictions is almost in.

(Nancy's PHONE RINGS. She answers.)

MATT

(into phone) What TIME tomorrow?

NANCY

Rockford Daily Informer.

(LEWIS enters from USR, dressed for travel.)

LEWIS

(Looks around.)

Is it me, or does this ENTIRE town smell like COW SHIT?!

(The staff looks at him. Bo calls Tanya on the intercom.)

BO

(into phone) I think your appointment just walked in.

(Tanya sighs and stands, seeing Lewis.)

TANYA

(pause) I see you left your pitchfork in New York.

(Lights bang out.)

**End of Scene One.**