

1/1/03
JIP 101

JOINED IN PROGRESS

"Pilot"

by
Tim F. Hess

Tim Hess (It's Over Productions)
324 South Ridge Drive
South Sioux City, NE 68776
712-574-6334

JOINED IN PROGRESS

"Joined in Progress"

INTRO

SCENE A

FADE IN:

INT. - FX: A TV MONITOR
(HARRY)

HARRY IS ANCHORING KJIP-TV'S NIGHTLY NEWSCAST. A PHOTO OF JEREMIAH PROGRESS APPEARS OVER HARRY'S SHOULDER.

HARRY
And finally, tonight, search and
rescue officials have called off their
efforts to find the body of KJIP-TV
founder, Jeremiah Progress.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE B

INT. KJIP-TV - STUDIO - NEWS SET - DAY (1)
(HARRY, STAN, MAX)

ANGLE ON: NEWS DESK

HARRY IS BEHIND THE NEWS DESK AS BEFORE. MAX IS RUNNING THE STUDIO CAMERA. STAN STANDS NEARBY, FLOOR DIRECTING. A MONITOR NEAR HARRY DISPLAYS THE NEWSCAST AS IT AIRS.

HARRY
Progress was attempting to become the
oldest man to sail solo across the
Pacific ocean. That attempt ended in
tragedy over a month ago.

(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)
Progress was a direct descendant of
the founder of our fair city of
Progress, Iowa, and was the sole owner
of KJIP-TV, which now becomes the
property of his nephew and only
surviving heir, Joseph Progress.

THE PHOTO OF JEREMIAH OVER HARRY'S SHOULDER CHANGES TO AN
IMAGE OF JOE PROGRESS ON THE MONITOR.

HARRY (CONT'D)
KJIP's new owner arrives tonight to
hold a private memorial service with
the KJIP staff.

THE PHOTO OF JOE CHANGES TO THE KJIP-TV NEWS LOGO ON THE
MONITOR.

HARRY (CONT'D)
And that's the news, in Progress. For
everyone here at KJIP-TV, I'm Harry
Green. Goodnight.

ANGLE ON: MAX AND STAN BEHIND THE STUDIO CAMERA.

STAN
And we're clear. And out.

HARRY
Thanks, guys.

HARRY YANKS THE MICROPHONE OFF HIS NECKTIE AND DROPS IT ON
THE DESK JUST AS STAN REACHES OUT FOR IT. HARRY HURRIEDLY
EXITS THE NEWS SET.

SCENE C

INT. KJIP-TV - THE HUB - DAY (1)

(HARRY, ARTIE, NELSON, T.D., MAX, BERNADINE, GUS, GABE,
GRETCHEN, STAN, JOE, EXTRAS)

THE HUB IS ALIVE WITH ACTIVITY AS THE STAFF FINISHES UP THE FINAL TASKS OF THE DAY. HARRY ENTERS FROM THE STUDIO AND HEADS TO ARTIE WHO IS SEATED AT HIS DESK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM. T.D. AND BERNADINE ARE AT THEIR DESKS ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE HUB.

ANGLE ON: ARTIE'S DESK

ARTIE IS HURRIEDLY PACKING HIS BRIEFCASE.

HARRY

Well, Artie, what did you think of
tonight's newscast? Did it reach out
and grab you?

ARTIE CONTINUES TO PACK, PLACING FILES INTO A BOX.

ARTIE

Sorry, Harry. I didn't have much time
to watch tonight. There's tons of
paperwork I have to have ready for the
change in ownership. You wouldn't
believe how much information the FCC
requires on these things.

HARRY

(DISAPPOINTED)

Oh. I see.

ARTIE
Plus the payroll's due, I have to get
to the bank with tonight's deposit and
I should be at the airport - (LOOKS
AT WATCH) now.

HARRY
Ah yes, the accountant's job is never
done, is it Artie? Maybe we should do
a human interest story on you. I know -
"Tonight at ten - debits or credits!"

ARTIE
Laugh all you want, Harry. One of
these days I won't be here to make the
payroll deposit - then what will you
do?

HARRY
I know, I know. This entire TV station
would come to a screeching halt
without you.

ARTIE
Very funny, Harry.

ARTIE PUTS HIS BRIEFCASE ON TOP OF THE FILE BOX. HE PULLS AN
ENVELOPE OUT OF THE OUTSIDE POCKET OF HIS BRIEFCASE, WHICH
CAUSES AN AIRLINE TICKET VOUCHER FALL TO THE FLOOR. HE PLACES
THE ENVELOPE IN HIS 'IN' BOX. HE PICKS UP HIS BRIEFCASE AND
THE FILE BOX AND BEGINS TO LEAVE. HARRY SEES THE TICKET
VOUCHER ON THE FLOOR AND PICKS IT UP.

HARRY
Wait, Artie - you dropped something!

HARRY REALIZES WHAT THE PACKET IS AS ARTIE STOPS.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Ooh, tickets to Belize! Good for you,
Artie! You know, I have a little place
picked out in Miami, myself. Five
years from now it will be paid for and
I'll be retired and on the beach.

ARTIE SNATCHES THE PACKET AWAY FROM HARRY.

ARTIE
That's mine!

HARRY
(TO ARTIE)
Sorry!

(TO HIMSELF)
Sheesh - I think he's a couple of
weeks late on that vacation.

SCENE D

INT - KJIP-TV - STUDIO - NIGHT (1)
(GRETCHEN, BERNADINE, HARRY, GABE, STAN, T.D., JOE, MAX,
GUS, NELSON, EXTRAS)

STAN MOVES A LARGE PORTRAIT OF JEREMIAH PROGRESS, FRAMED BY A
MULTITUDE OF FLOWERS, INTO PLACE AT THE EDGE OF THE NEWS DESK
WHILE MAX DRAPES THE DESK WITH BLACK FABRIC. BERNADINE PLACES
A LARGE PUNCH BOWL AND A STACK OF PAPER CUPS ON THE DESK.
THROUGHOUT, VARIOUS UNNAMED STAFF MEMBERS ENTER THE STUDIO.

ANGLE ON: STUDIO ENTRANCE

GRETCHEN ENTERS THE STUDIO THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS, CARRYING
A RATHER LARGE TRAY OF RATHER SMALL SANDWICHES.

GRETCHEN
Hey, Miss Bernadine, where do you want
these?

ANGLE ON: NEWS DESK

BERNADINE

Gretchen! There you are! Wonderful!
Just put them down over here by the
punch.

GRETCHEN PLACES THE TRAY BESIDE THE PUNCH BOWL.

BERNADINE (CONT'D)

And I think we are ready. Now all we
need is our new owner and we can
start.

GRETCHEN

Why is so cold in here, Bernadine?

BERNADINE

They say they have to keep it cold
because of all the electronic
equipment - but I think it's all the
pure evil leaking out of this big
picture over here. As soon as Gabe
gets back with the napkins, I'll
remind him to turn off the air.

ANGLE ON: STUDIO ENTRANCE

HARRY RUSHES INTO THE STUDIO.

HARRY

Is everything ready? They should be
here any minute!

HARRY CONTINUES OVER TO THE NEWS DESK.

ANGLE ON: NEWS DESK

HARRY STUDIES THE SET UP AND COUNTS OFF THE ITEMS ON HIS FINGERS.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Portrait, check. Flowers, check. Food,
check. Punch, check. Cups, check.
Looks good. Great job, Bernadine!
Everything's perfect.

BERNADINE

I just wish Gabe would hurry up with
the napkins.

HARRY

Oh my God! Napkins! Napkins? How did I
miss that? Napkins! You've got to have
napkins. Why didn't I remember that? I
mean, if you don't have napkins
everyone's wiping their hands off on
their pants - and you get greasy spots
on your shirt when they pat you on the
back. We have to have napkins!

ANGLE ON: STUDIO ENTRANCE

GABE ENTERS WITH THE NAPKINS.

GABE

Never fear, Engineering is here!

GABE TAKES THE NAPKINS TO BERNADINE.

ANGLE ON: NEWS DESK

BERNADINE TAKES THE NAPKINS FROM GABE.

BERNADINE

Gabe, these say "Happy Birthday" on them. This is a memorial for a man lost at sea.

GABE

Yeah, well I couldn't find any that said "Bon Voyage."

BERNADINE

We'll just consider ourselves lucky then, won't we? Thank you, anyway. Oh, and I'm supposed to remind you about the air.

GABE

Turned it off on the way in. It should warm up once we get some warm bodies in here.

HARRY

OK. Portrait. Flowers. Food. Punch. Cups. Napkins. Everything looks perfect.

BERNADINE

Harry, everything's going to be just fine. You need to relax a bit. You've been tense all day. Your blood pressure's got to be going through the roof. Why are you so nervous?

HARRY

Nervous? I'm not nervous. It's just -
everything's got to be right tonight.
We want to make a good impression.

BERNADINE

On who? Young Mr. Progress? Why you
should remember as well as anyone that
I used to change his diapers. That boy
practically grew up in this building.

HARRY

That may be - but your young Mr.
Progress is now a very important
person. He owns the number two station
in Progress, Iowa for goodness sakes!

GRETCHEN

Gabe, how many stations are there in
this town?

GABE

Two.

GRETCHEN

Well, thank God we're not number
three, then.

HARRY

He's an important broadcasting
executive now. We can't treat him like
he's some dorky kid anymore.

BERNADINE

He's family. That's what he is. And that's how we're going to treat him, Harry. He's been gone for far too long, and I for one will be very happy to have him back home.

GRETCHEN

Why did he leave?

GABE

It's Progress, Iowa. We only have two TV stations. Why would he stay?

BERNADINE

He went off to Chicago to work in advertising. Did pretty well, too. Worked his way up. Was in charge of a small cable network when his uncle's contract with the devil finally expired.

HARRY

Now stop that! I don't want to hear anyone talking about Jeremiah Progress like that.

GABE

At least not until this service is over and our new owner is out of earshot.

STAN, MAX AND T.D. ENTER.

STAN

Hey, gang!

T.D.

Damn, Gabe! Could we turn off the air?

It's like an icebox in here!

GABE

Already on it, big guy.

HARRY

Ice!

BERNADINE

What?

HARRY

Ice! Ice! Where's the ice?

BERNADINE

Artie's bringing the ice.

HARRY

Artie?

BERNADINE

Yes, Artie. Our accountant.

HARRY

I thought Artie was picking Joe up at
the airport.

BERNADINE

No, Artie's getting ice. He had to go to the bank first, though - maybe there was a line for the after hours deposit box.

HARRY

It doesn't matter - I'll run down to the corner store and get a couple of bags of ice. No big deal.

BERNADINE

Don't be long. Mr. Progress and his entourage should be arriving any minute now.

HARRY

Fear not!

HARRY HEADS TO THE EXIT.

ANGLE ON: STUDIO ENTRANCE

HARRY (CONT'D)

I'll be back before you know it.

HARRY EXITS, BUT IMMEDIATELY RETURNS.

HARRY (CONT'D)

See, I'm back already! Allow me to present our new owner, Joseph Progress!

NELSON ENTERS

NELSON
Sorry Harry - it's just me. Young
Joseph will be along momentarily.

HARRY
Nelson, you and Bernadine are going to
have to stop thinking of Mr. Progress
as a little kid! Where is he?

NELSON
He had to visit the little boy's room.
Harry, we've known him since he was
this high.

NELSON INDICATES JOE'S HEIGHT WHEN HE WAS A YOUNGSTER - AND
SMACKS HIM RIGHT IN THE CROTCH WHEN HE ENTERS. JOE COLLAPSES.

JOE
(HIGH PITCHED VOICE)
Hi everybody!

HARRY
He is taller, but I thought his voice
would have changed by now.

END OF INTRO

ACT I

SCENE E

FADE IN:

INT - KJIP-TV - STUDIO - NIGHT (1) - AS BEFORE
(GRETCHEN, BERNADINE, HARRY, GABE, STAN, T.D., JOE, MAX,
GUS, NELSON, EXTRAS)

ANGLE ON: STUDIO DOORS

NELSON HELPS JOE TO HIS FEET. BERNADINE RUSHES TO JOE.

BERNADINE

Oh my goodness! Joe - are you all
right?

JOE

(HIGH PITCHED VOICE)
I'm okay.

JOE (CONT'D)

(NORMAL VOICE)
I'm okay. Well so much for a dignified
entrance.

NELSON

I am so sorry, Joseph.

JOE

It's okay, Nelson. Could've happened
to anyone.

HARRY

Mr. Progress, if you feel the need to
fire Nelson over this incident, we'll
all back you one hundred percent. I
know a guy across town who can write
commercials ten times better than this
guy. He's dead weight, you know.
Pulling us all down.

JOE
It was an accident, Harry. No one's
getting fired.

HARRY
No one?

JOE
Don't look so disappointed.

HARRY
Well, it's just - a change in
ownership usually means a change in
staff.

JOE
Not this time, Harry. Not this time.

HARRY
Well there goes tomorrow's lead story.

BERNADINE
Let me get a good look at you!

JOE
Bernadine, it is so good to see you
again! Nelson was right, you are as
bewitching as ever!

BERNADINE
Now you know you can't believe a word
that old fool says! But you can both
keep on saying it all you want!

JOE
And Harry, apart from the
disappointment over tomorrow's lead
story, how are you, you old rascal?

JOE SHAKES HARRY'S HAND AND PATS HIM ON THE BACK.

HARRY
It's great to see you again. I just
wish it were under better
circumstances, Mr. Progress.

JOE
Please, it's Joe. It's always been Joe
and it always will be. No pretensions.
And thank you for the kind words...but
I thought you knew Uncle Jeremiah
pretty well.

HARRY
Ah, that's the grief talking, isn't it
Joe? Allow me to introduce the rest of
our crew. Sports Anchor and Account
Executive, Theodore Desmond.

JOE
T.D. Desmond! Local boy makes good!
It's a shame you blew out your knee in
the state semifinals. But I'm glad
you're on our team now. I like what
you're doing here.

JOE AND T.D. SHAKE HANDS.

T.D.
Thank you. It's a pleasure being here.
Sorry about your uncle.

HARRY
Gabe Hartfield, Chief Engineer.

JOE SHAKES GABE'S HAND.

JOE
Keeping it on the air! Good to meet
you.

HARRY
Our production team - Stan Winstrom
and Max Rodriguez.

JOE SHAKES HANDS WITH STAN AND MAX.

JOE
Guys. Staying busy, I hope.

MAX
Always.

HARRY
And Gretchen Jergensen from Master
Control.

JOE SHAKES GRETCHEN'S HAND

JOE
The most important job in the
building.

GRETCHEN

Thank you!

JOE

Good to meet you.

BERNADINE

You're probably exhausted from your flight. Can I get you anything? A sandwich? Some punch?

HARRY MAKES SLASHING GESTURES AT HIS THROAT TOWARDS BERNADINE.

JOE

Some punch sounds good. I can get it.

JOE STEPS AWAY.

BERNADINE

(TO HARRY) What is wrong with you?

JOE RETURNS.

JOE

Excuse me, Bernadine. Is there any ice?

HARRY

See!

BERNADINE

Oh, I'm so sorry - it completely slipped my mind. Artie's bringing the ice. He should be here any minute.

JOE
That's okay. I suppose I could just
scrape a little frost from the icy
glare in Uncle Jeremiah's portrait.

NO ONE KNOWS WHETHER TO LAUGH OR NOT.

JOE (CONT'D)
Look folks, I appreciate what you
people are trying to do here. But I
think we've got to start out on the
right foot. Complete and total
honesty. A show of hands - who really
liked Uncle Jeremiah?

HARRY RAISES HIS HAND.

JOE (CONT'D)
Harry? Really? Bernadine?

BERNADINE SLOWLY SHAKES HER HEAD 'NO'

JOE (CONT'D)
Nelson?

NELSON
In a word, no.

JOE
Harry?

HARRY
Yes?

(BEAT)
No?

(MORE)

(BEAT) HARRY (CONT'D)
Could you repeat the question?

HARRY LOWERS AND RAISES HIS HANDS A FEW TIMES, THEN BURIES HIS FACE IN HIS HANDS.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Oh, I'm so confused!

JOE
That's okay, Harry. Look, why don't you folks give me a tour while we're waiting on the ice?

NELSON
A capital idea!

JOE TURNS TO SPEAK TO THE FULL STAFF.

JOE
Could I have your attention, please?
We'll be getting started in just a few minutes. Please, enjoy some refreshments. We have sandwiches and um, room temperature punch. Which must be why it's so cold in here.

JOE CHUCKLES AND HARRY FORCES A LAUGH, BUT OVERDOES IT. JOE GIVES HIM A PUZZLED LOOK THAT SILENCES HIM.

JOE (CONT'D)
So enjoy yourselves! I'll be right back!

JOE, BERNADINE, NELSON AND HARRY WALK TO THE STUDIO DOORS. JOE HOLDS THE DOOR OPEN AS THE OTHERS EXIT.

SCENE F

INT. KJIP-TV - THE HUB - NIGHT (1)
(BERNADINE, JOE, NELSON, HARRY)

JOE FOLLOWS BERNADINE, HARRY AND NELSON INTO THE HUB FROM THE STUDIO DOORS.

NELSON

Now, this is what we lovingly call
"The Hub." I suppose it's quite a bit
different from when you last visited.

JOE

Wow! It looks great! You know, I think
the last time I was here, Bernadine
was still cranking out commercial logs
on a typewriter.

BERNADINE

Now, those were the days! And I don't
ever want to go back, thank you very
much! These tired old fingers couldn't
take it.

HARRY

(POINTING) That's Traffic. Accounting
is here. Sports is over there and
News is around the back. And
Jeremiah's office is - was - across
the way.

ANGLE ON: ARTIE'S DESK

THEY ALL STOP AT ARTIE'S DESK. JOE PICKS UP ARTIE'S NAMEPLATE
FROM THE DESK AND SITS IN ARTIE'S CHAIR.

JOE
I haven't thought of Artie in years! I
always wondered how an accountant
managed to keep his desk so clean. I
mean, he must deal with so many files,
so much paper - but it's never on his
desk. Look.

JOE PICKS UP THE ENVELOPE FROM JOE'S 'IN' BOX.

JOE (CONT'D)
He's got one envelope in his 'In' box.
Incredible. Can't wait to see him.
How's he holding up these days?

HARRY AND NELSON SIT ON THE EDGE OF ARTIE'S DESK.

HARRY
If you don't mind me saying, sir - um,
Joe. He's been through a rough patch.

NELSON
His wife left him about six months
ago. Been a terrible strain on him.

JOE
Oh that's terrible! What was it?

NELSON
Another woman.

JOE
But that's not like Artie.

BERNADINE

No, but it is exactly like Artie's wife. She ran off with a blonde little slut fresh out of college.

JOE

Ouch!

HARRY

He can't be hurting too badly. I happen to know he's planning a vacation in Belize.

NELSON

Belize? That doesn't sound right. The divorce nearly wiped him out.

HARRY

Saw the plane tickets myself. (LONG BEAT) Question.

JOE

Shoot, Harry.

HARRY

Artie led me to believe he was on his way to the airport to pick you up.

NELSON

No, that's not right.

BERNADINE

I told you he's out getting ice. You must have heard him wrong.

NELSON
I volunteered to go to the airport as
soon as we knew Joseph was coming.

JOE
It's Joe.

NELSON
You will always be Joseph to me.

JOE
Yessir.

HARRY
Look, I'm an investigative journalist -

NELSON
Oh, dear...

HARRY
I remember details.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE G

INT. KJIP-TV - THE HUB - DAY (1) - EARLIER
(ARTIE, HARRY)

ANGLE ON: ARTIE'S DESK

FX: SLO-MO REPLAY OF THE EARLIER EVENTS AS SEEN FROM HARRY'S
POINT OF VIEW.

HARRY (V.O.)
Artie had several boxes of files.

HARRY'S RECOLLECTION SHOWS ARTIE WITH TALL STACK OF BOXES.

HARRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He put his briefcase on top of them
and a plane ticket fell out.

A LARGE PACKET CLEARLY LABELED 'AIRPLANE TICKET' FALLS TO THE FLOOR.

HARRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He was in a big hurry. Said he had to
get to the bank with the payroll
deposit before it closed and he was
already late for the airport. I wanted
to tell him all about my retirement
bungalow in Miami, but he wasn't
interested at all. He snatched the
tickets right out of my hands.

ARTIE DOES SO.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE H

INT. KJIP-TV - THE HUB - NIGHT (1) - AS BEFORE
(HARRY, JOE, BERNADINE, NELSON)

ANGLE ON: ARTIE'S DESK

NELSON
Yes, I remember. He did seem a bit
upset today.

HARRY
His tickets fell out when he pulled
that envelope out of his briefcase
pocket.

JOE
This envelope?

JOE PICKS UP THE ENVELOPE AND READS IT.

JOE (CONT'D)
Strange...this envelope is addressed
to me.

JOE OPENS THE ENVELOPE, TAKES OUT A HAND WRITTEN NOTE AND
READS.

JOE (CONT'D)
"Dear Joe" - see Nelson, he can do it
why can't you? "Dear Joe, by the time
you get this I will be on my way to
South America."

HARRY
See?

JOE
"It breaks my heart to tell you this,
because I never intended to hurt you.
My grudge was with your Uncle
Jeremiah."

BERNADINE
Grudge?

JOE
"It goes back twenty years and
involves a broken heart."

BERNADINE

Oh my word! Artie and your Aunt Sarah were an item - until she fell for Jeremiah.

JOE

"I have been embezzling from KJIP-TV for the past fifteen years and have deposited a substantial amount of money in an off-shore account in a country that has no extradition treaty with the United States. You won't want to use the green ledger I've been showing the I.R.S. You'll want to use the red ledger that is hidden under the potted plant."

NELSON AND HARRY EXCHANGE LOOKS THEN SPRING INTO ACTION.
NELSON GRABS THE POTTED PLANT.

NELSON

Help me, Harry.

HARRY PUSHES AND THEY TILT THE PLANT REVEALING A RED LEDGER TAPED TO THE BOTTOM OF THE POT. HARRY PEELS IT AWAY FROM THE POT.

HARRY

Got it!

HARRY HANDS THE LEDGER TO BERNADINE WHO OPENS IT, SEARCHING FOR THE LAST ENTRY.

JOE CONTINUES TO READ FROM THE NOTE.

JOE
"I am very sorry, Joe. I never meant
to hurt you, only your uncle."

BERNADINE HANDS THE OPEN LEDGER TO JOE. JOE SEES WHAT HE HAD
FEARED.

JOE (CONT'D)
According to this, it looks like KJIP
is broke.

HARRY
Question.

JOE
Yeah, Harry?

HARRY
If Artie's in Belize, who's picking up
the ice?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I

FADE IN:

INT. KJIP-TV - JOE'S OFFICE - NIGHT (1)
(JOE, NELSON, HARRY, BERNADINE)

JOE IS SEATED BEHIND A LARGE EXECUTIVE DESK READING THE LEDGER. BERNADINE IS SEATED IN A GUEST CHAIR, NELSON IS PACING. HARRY KNOCKS TWICE ON THE DOOR, ENTERS AND CLOSES THE DOOR.

HARRY

I've sent the staff home, Joe. Don't worry, they don't suspect a thing. They think you're in here, crying your eyes out like a little baby.

JOE

Well they're not far from being wrong, Harry.

HARRY

Oh, and the hot blonde from Master Control--

BERNADINE

Do you mean Gretchen?

HARRY

Yes--Gretchen! Gretchen thinks it makes you hot - some crap about being sensitive and 'in touch' with your feelings. I'm going to have to try that sometime.

JOE

I can't believe we're broke. Would someone please tell me I'm trapped in the world's worst good news - bad news joke.

NELSON

Let's not jump to conclusions, Joseph. We don't know for certain that this ledger is any more accurate than the other one. For all we know, the truth is somewhere in between.

JOE

We need help. There's only so much accounting I can account for. Any ideas on where we can find a bookkeeper who works for free?

BERNADINE

Faith.

JOE

Faith only goes so far, Bernadine. I need someone to go over the books.

BERNADINE

Faith Denison.

JOE

Oh, Faith Denison. There's a name I haven't heard in years. What does she have to do with any of this?

BERNADINE

She's been Dr. Rainey's bookkeeper for a few years now.

JOE

She's still in town?

BERNADINE

Never left. I'm sure she'd be more than willing to go over the books.

JOE

I don't know, Bernadine. I mean, I don't want to let just anyone look at the books.

BERNADINE

Faith Denison is not just anyone! You had as big a crush on that girl as any sixteen year old boy could.

JOE

And that might be all the more reason to find someone else.

NELSON

Well, I think it's a great idea. If you can't trust your high school sweetheart, who can you trust?

JOE

How about Kimberly Overton?

NELSON

Who's Kimberly Overton?

JOE

The ninth grade girl with the twelfth grade chest that I dumped Faith for right before prom.

NELSON

Oh dear. Well, let's just hope that Faith believes charity. - and forgiveness.

CUT TO:

SCENE J

INT. KJIP-TV - THE HUB - DAY (2)
(JOE)

ANGLE ON: JOE'S OFFICE DOOR

SFX: SLAP

JOE (O.S.)

Ow! What was that for?

CUT TO:

SCENE K

INT. KJIP-TV - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY (2)
(JOE, FAITH)

JOE AND FAITH ARE STANDING IN JOE'S OFFICE. JOE IS HOLDING HIS CHEEK WHERE SHE HAS JUST PLACED A WELL DESERVED SLAP.

FAITH
That was for Kimberly Overton!

JOE RUBS THE OTHER SIDE OF HIS FACE.

JOE
I thought this side was for Kimberly Overton.

FAITH
It was. I've been saving up. Do you have any idea how much you hurt me?

JOE
I'm starting to.

FAITH
Dumping me for a - a set of brainless bosoms!

JOE
OK. I apologize. Again. I was young and stupid - and very distracted. But you know I always valued your mind. And goodness knows I need it now. Please, sit, relax, and stop with the hitting.

JOE OFFERS HER A CHAIR. FAITH SITS. JOE SITS ON THE CORNER OF HIS DESK.

FAITH
Bernadine explained a few things to me
over the phone. I am sorry to hear
about Uncle Jeremiah. He was a sweet
old man.

JOE
No, he was a crazy, mean old crust of
a human being.

FAITH
That too.

JOE
He apparently left a lot of enemies in
this world. And one of them has taken
all of my money.

FAITH
All right. For old times sakes. I'll
take a look.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE L

INT. KJIP-TV - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (2)

(JOE, BERNADINE, HARRY, GABE, NELSON, T.D., FAITH)

JOE SITS AT THE HEAD OF THE CONFERENCE TABLE. TO HIS RIGHT
ARE NELSON, BERNADINE AND GABE. TO HIS LEFT ARE FAITH, HARRY
AND T.D.

JOE
Alright, gang - as you know, we're
broke.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
I'd like to introduce Faith Denison.
She's agreed to look over the
financials and I asked her to sit in
on this meeting to help us figure out
what to do next. I really hope one of
you has a brilliant idea as to how we
can generate some positive cash flow.
Pronto.

SILENCE.

JOE (CONT'D)
Anyone?

HARRY RAISES HIS HAND.

JOE (CONT'D)
Yes! Harry.

HARRY
Before we get too far into this,
there's something you need to know.

JOE
Sure, Harry - tell me.

HARRY
When we have department head meetings
like this... well, usually... there
are donuts.

JOE
What?

HARRY
Donuts. With the little sprinkles.

JOE
Harry, we're having a meeting about cutting costs, there aren't going to be any donuts.

HARRY
Bear claws?

JOE
Anyone else have any ideas? Bernadine?

BERNADINE
Logs are full. Spots are running.

JOE
Okay, well that's a positive. T.D.?

T.D.
Most clients are paid up. Not a lot of new cash on the books. Inventory is tight.

JOE
So you're saying we've already been paid for the spots we're running tomorrow?

T.D.
Pretty much. I suppose we could add some commercial time to the newscast.

(MORE)

T.D. (CONT'D)
Have a fire sale; sell the new spots
cheap to get some money coming in.

HARRY
Absolutely not! The content of the
newscast is absolutely untouchable!

JOE
Harry, if we have to put a sponsor's
logo on your suit jacket we will.
Bernadine, I want you to add two
minutes of commercials to the news
starting tomorrow.

HARRY
Two minutes!

T.D.
I'll cut sports by a one minute. You
trim back the Rotary Report by thirty
seconds and drop the human interest
story at the end.

HARRY
No way! That would leave just thirty
seconds for the Rotary Report--

NELSON
Which is still about fifteen seconds
too many.

HARRY
Who asked you?

JOE
Gentlemen! Harry! Easy now. It's
important that you try to make this
work. Okay?

HARRY
Fine. But why is News making all the
sacrifices? What about Nelson and his--
his-- herbal tea?

NELSON
Tea? I bring my tea from home!

HARRY
Sure you do.

JOE
Harry! Leave Nelson's tea out of this.
But you do bring up a good point.

HARRY
I do?

JOE
Yes. Expenses. I want everyone to go
over their departmental budgets with a
fine tooth comb. Cut to the bone,
people. No new purchases. Only the
barest of essentials.

HARRY
Haircuts?

JOE
Haircuts?

HARRY
I have to look professional. I have to
have my weekly trim!

JOE
I know I'm asking a lot Harry, but if
you get too shaggy, Bernadine is
pretty good with a set of clippers.

NELSON
I can loan you a bowl.

HARRY
You've got to be kidding!

JOE
About the bowl, yes. But the trims are
history. Anything else we know of?

GABE
Just ordered some videotape, but I can
cancel the order.

JOE
How long can we get by without it?

GABE
Never fear, Engineering is here! We'll
make what we have work.

JOE
That's the spirit! With any luck, it
won't be long.

HARRY
A-hole.

JOE
What was that, Harry?

HARRY
Payroll! What about payroll?

JOE
That could get tricky. When is payday?

BERNADINE
Next Friday.

JOE
Okay. That doesn't buy us much time.
It's on you, T.D. Sell me some spots!

T.D.
Yessir!

JOE
Ten o'clock tomorrow morning I want us
all back in here with a list of
solutions. I want to hear ideas on
generating new revenue and I want a
long list of expenses we can cut. And
let me be absolutely clear.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
If we come up short on payday, the
folks at this table get paid last.

HARRY SIGHS LOUDLY.

JOE (CONT'D)
Comment, Harry?

HARRY
No.

JOE
Speak your mind now. Once we leave
this room I expect a united front.

HARRY
You cut out the donuts, you're cutting
my Rotary Report, you're trimming back
on my haircuts, and I might not get
paid. What else could possibly go
wrong?

SCENE M

INT. KJIP-TV - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY (3)
(JOE, HARRY)

ANGLE ON: EXTREME CLOSE UP OF HARRY

HARRY
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!

ANGLE ON: JOE'S DESK

JOE IS SEATED BEHIND HIS DESK. HARRY IS STANDING IN FRONT OF
JOE'S DESK.

HARRY (CONT'D)
You can't do this!

JOE
I'm sorry, Harry - Faith and I have poured over the books trying to find another solution. But the ratings for the newscast would have to triple to make up for what it costs.

FAITH
Apparently Jeremiah was absorbing the loss from his personal funds. Which are now in Belize, with your accountant.

HARRY
But Joe!

JOE
We need cash, Harry! And we can bring in more money with cheaper programming. We have to cancel the news.

HARRY KNEELS.

HARRY
I'm not above begging, Joe. Please, please, please don't do this!

JOE
Get up, Harry.

HARRY
(TO FAITH)
What was your name again?

FAITH

Faith.

HARRY KISSES FAITH'S FEET, THEN GRABS HER LEG.

HARRY

Faith, please don't let him do this!

JOE

Harry. Let go of the nice lady and get
up.

HARRY STANDS.

JOE (CONT'D)

I know you're concerned about your
staff. We're going to give them a
generous severance package - that I
have no idea how in the world I'm
going to pay, but that's why we have
Faith.

JOE THINKS FOR A BEAT ABOUT THE DOUBLE MEANING OF WHAT HE HAS
SAID

JOE (CONT'D)

Your people are young. They'll
survive. T.D. is our top salesman,
he's staying, so don't worry about
him. Most of the others weren't going
to stay in a little town like Progress
for long anyway.

HARRY

Screw them! What about me? I'm just
five years from retiring to Miami!

JOE

You know, that's a heck of a
coincidence, Harry.

HARRY

How so?

JOE

I'm selling the news desk to a public
access cable channel in Miami. You've
spent a lot of time with that desk. I
think it will remember you when you
visit it in five years.

HARRY

But what do I do between now and then?
I'm an anchor. That's all I've ever
been.

JOE

Harry, you are a very important part
of KJIP. People all over town love and
trust you.

HARRY

(MOMENTARILY DISTRACTED)

I do have a trustworthy smile.

JOE
We've done a lot of thinking about
this too. There's one place where we
can make some money. Children's
programming.

HARRY
What? I don't understand.

JOE
Harry, you're going to stop being
Harry Green, anchorman, and start
being Uncle Harry, host of Uncle
Harry's Hoedown.

HARRY
(NOT AMUSED)
What?

JOE
You know. Kids? Cartoons? Sponsors?
We can produce it with a much smaller
crew than the newscast.

FAITH
That means less expense for the
station.

JOE
And most importantly, since you'll be
the only member of the cast, it will
mean more face time for you.

HARRY
More face time? (BEAT) Kids? (ANOTHER
BEAT) Uncle Harry's Hoedown?

JOE
It pays.

HARRY
It pays what?

JOE
Ten percent commission on every
sponsorship package you bring in.

FAITH
That's a very generous commission.

HARRY
I don't know...

JOE
I'll throw in one haircut a month.

HARRY
I'll do it.

SCENE N

INT. - FX: A TV MONITOR
(HARRY)

HARRY IS IN COSTUME AS UNCLE HARRY.

HARRY
Remember kids, I'm Uncle Harry - and
I'll see you next time on Uncle
Harry's Hoedown!

HARRY DOES A LITTLE DANCE AS THE CAMERA PULLS BACK

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE 0

INT. - KJIP - STUDIO - HOEDOWN SET - NIGHT (4)
(HARRY - AS UNCLE HARRY, STAN, MAX, JOE, FAITH)

HARRY IS ON THE HOEDOWN SET AS BEFORE. MAX IS RUNNING THE STUDIO CAMERA. STAN STANDS NEARBY, FLOOR DIRECTING. JOE AND FAITH ARE BEHIND THEM, OUT OF THE WAY, OBSERVING.

STAN
And we're clear. And out.

HARRY IMMEDIATELY STOPS DANCING AND QUICKLY BEGINS TO PEEL OFF HIS UNCLE HARRY GARB.

HARRY
Could we have picked an itchier wool
blend for this costume? Ah, get it
off! Get it off!

JOE AND FAITH STEP FORWARD

JOE
Good job guys. Thanks for staying late
and getting it done.

STAN
No prob.

MAX
Yeah, this was fun!

JOE
Nice job, Uncle Harry.

FAITH
Yes. The children of Progress are
going to adore you.

HARRY
How could they not?

JOE AND FAITH EXIT THE STUDIO AS STAN AND MAX HELP HARRY OUT
OF HIS COSTUME.

SCENE P

INT. KJIP-TV - THE HUB - NIGHT (4)
(JOE, FAITH)

ANGLE ON: THE HUB ENTRANCE

JOE AND FAITH ENTER THE HUB AND HEAD FOR THE FRONT ENTRANCE.

JOE
You've done some good work, Miss
Denison.

FAITH
And so have you, Mr. Progress.

JOE
I think we've put together quite a
little plan here. This really could
keep the station on the air.

FAITH
I hope so.

JOE
You know, there's one last thing we
need to include in the plan.

FAITH

What's that?

JOE

An accountant. Who's going to account for all this money I don't have? I don't know anything about accounting. Can you recommend somebody?

FAITH

Joe. You've seen the numbers. You can't afford an accountant. But... I think you might be able to squeeze in a bookkeeper.

JOE

A bookkeep -- you?

FAITH

Why not? Dr. Rainey's going to retire next summer. I'm going to be out of work. And...and I have a soft spot for charity cases. And you are one big charity case.

JOE

Oh, so it's pity accounting, is it?

FAITH

Just like old times. Only now, if I catch you budgeting around with someone with a flashier calculator, I get a trip to Belize out of it. Dinner?

JOE

Oh, I would love to, but--

FAITH

We could collect aluminum cans on the way.

JOE HELPS FAITH WITH HER JACKET.

JOE

There is one more thing that's been on my mind all week. Whatever happened to Kimberly Overton anyway?

FAITH

Married. Six kids. Divorced. Chest of drawers.

JOE

Chest of drawers?

FAITH

As in "her chest now hangs down to her drawers."

JOE
Ohh. You know what's so sexy about you
brainy girls?

FAITH
What's that?

JOE
No matter how old you get, your brains
stay where God put them.

FAITH
Why thank you for noticing!

JOE OPENS THE DOOR. FAITH LEAVES.

ANGLE ON: MANAGEMENT OFFICES

THE LARGE PORTRAIT OF JEREMIAH NOW HANGS NEXT TO JOE'S DOOR.
JOE STOPS AND RUNS HIS FINGER DOWN THE PORTRAIT'S FRAME,
CHECKING FOR DUST. GABE IS APPLYING LETTERS TO THE GLASS OF
THE DOOR NEXT TO JOE'S OFFICE.

JOE
(TO THE PORTRAIT) Uncle Jeremiah, you
may have been one mean so-and-so - but
we're going to get through this in
spite of you.

JOE LOOKS AT THE NEW LETTERING ON HIS DOOR.

ANGLE ON: CLOSE UP OF JOE'S DOOR

JOE'S DOOR READS: "JOE PROGRESS, OWNER JIP-TV"

ANGLE ON: MANAGEMENT OFFICES

JOE (CONT'D)
Gabe.

GABE

Hi, Joe.

JOE

Uh, Gabe. There's no 'K' in the KJIP
on my door.

GABE

Yeah, I know. Ran out of K's.

JOE

You ran out of K's?

GABE

I'm on it.

JOE OPENS HIS DOOR, ENTERS HIS OFFICE AND CLOSSES THE DOOR.

ANGLE ON: CLOSE UP OF JOE'S DOOR

GABE STICKS THREE PIECES OF BLACK ELECTRICIAN'S TAPE TO THE
GLASS TO FORM A 'K' ON THE WINDOW OF JOE'S DOOR.

ANGLE ON: MANAGEMENT OFFICES

GABE (CONT'D)

Never fear, Engineering is here.

GABE DUSTS OFF THE WINDOW PANE WITH A TOWEL AND EXITS.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT II