

SILVERFOX CINEMA

presents:

FIGHTING FREDDIE

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OVER OPENING CREDITS:

CLOSE ON IDYLIC VILLAGE GREEN GAZEBO. PULL BACK TO REVEAL THAT WE'RE LOOKING AT A SOUVENIR POSTCARD CAPTIONED: "HARBINGER FALLS: '299TH MOST DESIRABLE CITY OUT OF 300 IN WHICH TO LIVE'." MONEY MAGAZINE.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Teen-age DRIVER flips the postcard over and starts writing: "Dear Mom,".

EXT. HARBINGER FALLS CIVIC CENTER - DAY

Teen-age driver sits in white stretch limo, with the elaborate WORLD SUPERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL HEAVYWEIGHT TELEVISION WRESTLING ASSOCIATION (WSPHTWA) insignia on the door, as it idles by the Civic Center PERSONNEL ONLY Entrance.

INT. CIVIC CENTER DRESSING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP of dark fingers wearing a two-fingered gold ring with grinning skulls, smearing white grease paint on dark skin.

Further down the counter, a callused white hand lovingly burnishes a sterling silver half-mask.

EXT. MAYOR'S MANSION - DAY

Wide, opulent manicured lawn is cluttered with "Re-elect Mayor Efrem Cuchichek" signs.

A huge billboard with Cuchichek's photo and his slogan that proclaims: "SOFTER SIDEWALKS: A GENTLER CITY."

White balloons tied to campaign signs are waving in the gentle breeze.

EXT. BABY BLUE CONVERTIBLE CHEVY MALIBU / HIGHWAY - DAY

INT. BLUE CHEVY MALIBU - DAY

Stuck in hell's traffic, the tuxedoed, handsome, square-jawed City Councilman FREDDIE BENTEEN, a charmer with an air of innocence, checks his watch as cars cheat, driving down the break-down lane.

EXT. LIMO/CIVIC CENTER - DAY

Window slides down revealing SATAN^[TM], professional wrestler, complete with red satin cape, pointy ears and horns.

SATAN
 (Shouting toward THE BERSERK
 HEADHUNTER^[TM] and KID PLASTIQUE^[TM])
 Come on! We're gonna be late.

THE BERSERK HEADHUNTER, a large African-American man, his face painted like a skull, wears bone earrings and a perfectly-tailored cobalt blue tuxedo, skull cuff links, leopard cummerbund, and matching tie, has emerged from the Civic Center PERSONNEL ONLY door.

KID PLASTIQUE, fake facial scars peek from beneath his silver half-mask, wearing a squeaky white vinyl tux styled with silver studs and grommets, carries an elaborately wrapped package.

They both sprint over to the limo and climb in. The limo sags visibly.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Satan taps on the glass.

The driver floors it before Plastique and Berserk have settled. As the limo peels out, they lurch into PRINCE PRECIOUS^[TM], a compact body-builder with a superior attitude who wears only a black mink loincloth, high black boots, and a black silk bow tie. His skin glistens with mineral oil.

Berserk reaches over and touches the leather seat cover, rubs his fingers together disgustedly. He makes a face.

SATAN
 Hey, Precious! Other people gotta
 sit in here, you know!

Precious is unperturbed. They ride in silence until Plastique notices the Prince's wedding present.

KID PLASTIQUE
Whaddja get 'em?

PRINCE PRECIOUS
Cordless drill with a keyless
chuck. Black and Decker.

KID PLASTIQUE
(not to be outdone)
Imported fondue set. Williams-
Sonoma.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

White limo with the WSPHTWA insignia on the door, flashes by.
END OPENING CREDITS.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Still stuck, Freddie watches the cars in the break-down lane.
He considers it, checking for cops in his rearview mirror.

EXT. MAYOR'S MANSION - DAY

Charismatic ARCH WOBOGLER, political operator, fast-talking,
Sgt. Bilko-type, product of many gene pools, stands next to
his hip, young speech writer, TINA LOO, as he surveys the
scene with enormous satisfaction.

ARCH
Politics and wrestling, Tina...
it's a match made in heaven!

Guests stroll beneath majestic trees: the "finest" people in
town, and "wrestling" friends of the groom.

A female wrestler shows off her muscles to an appreciative
blue-hair. A male wrestler flaunts a tuxedo with no sleeves,
showing off his totally tattooed arms.

Father of the bride, EFREM CUCHICHEK, high-strung and ornery,
wearing gray morning coat, and an obvious toupee, paces
anxiously, trailed by his ferret-like assistant SLEBURNE, and
two businessmen, SAM and HARRY, each hauling books of carpet
swatches.

They all trail Efrem as he heads toward Arch and Tina.

Tina spots them first.

TINA

Arch, I think we've got a situation here.

EFREM

Wogobler! Where's Benteen? If he's not here in five minutes, we're starting without him, (pointing) and you're toast.

ARCH

(unperturbed as ice)
Oh, he'll here.

Efrem turns on his heels and strides away. As an after-thought, he yells over his shoulder.

EFREM

And you, too, Loo!

TINA

Arch, maybe we shoulda picked him up...

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Freddie marshals his courage, makes his move, cutting off cars in the break-down lane. Horns honk. He's on his way.

EXT. WEDDING - DAY

Efrem escorts his daughter MARJORIE down the red-carpeted aisle. As she passes Sam and Harry, Sam pokes Harry and proudly points down.

SAM

My carpet!

Harry watches sadly as the bride's FEET pass over red broadloom, emblazoned with King O'Carpets gold crown logos.

EXT. MAYOR'S MANSION - DAY

Freddie screeches to a halt, flattening one of the reelection signs. He jumps out of the car, eyeballs the damage, shrugs, and tears off toward the wedding party.

WEDDING CEREMONY

Marjorie and her groom, BEN YANNIGAN, stand under a rose-covered trellis before a judge in formal black robes.

JUDGE

May we have the ring, please?

Freddie runs to his place next to Ben.

FREDDIE

Hold on. I'm here!

All eyes turn to Freddie.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Ben. Traffic was a b...

JUDGE

Ssshhh!

Judge motions for the ring. Freddie fumbles, drops it. He and the bride bend down simultaneously. Their heads meet just below the frame with a sickening THUD. Many fearsome wrestlers wince.

The maid of honor, ROSE CAREW, 34, ripe and attractive, retrieves the ring, hands it to Freddie. As their fingers touch, she eyes him. Still dazed, he misses this.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

...and so, by the power vested in me, I now pronounce you: man and wife.

Ben lifts Marjorie's veil. Her eye is starting to swell.

As the joyous RECESSIONAL begins, the red carpet starts to roll up the aisle, catching Efrem who trips and falls heavily. Guests GASP.

Efrem's eyes swim into focus, just inches from a King O' Carpets logo. He finds Sam in the audience. Sam freezes. His rival, Harry, nudges him.

HARRY

Your carpet, baby.

EXT. - DAY - GARDEN RECEPTION

Trays of hors d'oeuvres, ice sculptures, and a fountain cascading champagne grace a long table. A huge hand holding silver tongs delicately places a tiny cucumber sandwich on a tiny plate. It's THE MASKED ATHEISTTM, wearing a beige jerkin with slits for eyes, over spandex tights. He takes a tiny bite of the sandwich through the mouth hole.

The entire reception is dancing, eating, and talking. Knots of men and women wheel, deal, booze and snooze.

Kids chase each other around tables. Marjorie dances briefly with Efrem, who does not boogaloo well, and Benny dances with her MOTHER, a large, fun-loving woman.

Rose, standing by a tall hedge of flowers, would love to dance, but can't take the initiative. Suddenly she notices the ferocious Berserk Headhunter heading right for her. He smiles pleasantly to put her at ease.

BERSERK

(referring to the flowers) Aren't these lovely?

The Berserk Headhunter's voice is a sweet, genteel tenor.

ROSE

Oh, yes, I love hollyhocks.

BERSERK

Everyone's putting in hybrids, these days, but I think this old-fashioned variety is so much nicer. Don't you?

ROSE

....absolutely!

Rose moves quickly from surprise to delight. She's found a kindred spirit. They fall into animated conversation.

ACROSS THE LAWN

HARRY

(shaking Efrem's hand long after he wants it back)
Mr. Mayor, I think it's a great thing you're doing. Every loyal employee of Remnantland stands behind you one thousand percent.

EFREM

Yeah, yeah. Why don't you go and get yourself a drink, Harry?

HARRY

Not a problem, sir.

EFREM

(turning to Sleburne who is never far from Efrem's side)
Great party, huh? Place looks like a god-damn circus. Wrestlers...

SLEBURNE
 Social event of the season, boss.
 I'm honored just to--

Efrem holds up his empty champagne glass and "dings" it.

SLEBURNE (CONT'D)
 Yes, sir. Be right back.

Selburne seizes Efrem's glass and hustles away.

EFREM
 And get me some more of those
 cheese things--or whatever they
 are.

Sleburne scoots past Freddie who's watching a wrestling match between Prince Precious and THE MAD HATTER^[TM], in a ring set up on the lawn.

DOREEN HUNNERTHWASSER, a predatory, wealthy older woman in outre attire slinks up behind Freddie and tweaks his left earlobe. Freddie gives a little jump and yip, almost spilling his champagne and definitely putting a splash on his necktie.

DOREEN
 Councilman Benteen, it's been far
 too long.

FREDDIE
 Oh, oh, hi, Mrs. Hunnerlosser.

Now Doreen is directly in front of Freddie and much too close. Freddie rears up on his toes, away from her decolletage.

DOREEN
 Doreen. We know each other much
 better than that!

FREDDIE
 Uh, it's not like I've been
 avoiding you or...

DOREEN
 Oh, I understand. We were both
 married and there were the
 funerals. (beat) Poor Herman. You
 know, I told him not to get out of
 that iron lung--people heard me say
 that.

Freddie has no idea what to say.

DOREEN (CONT'D)
 Freddie, you can't know what it's like. A woman has needs, needs that no industrial conglomerate, even one the size of the Hunnerthwasser Corporation, can ever fulfill. Of course, I was stunned to hear about your wife and that awful boa constrictor.

FREDDIE
 It was an anaconda.

Doreen takes Freddie's hand and presses it to her heart.

DOREEN
 I guess we both know something about ... broken hearts.

FREDDIE
 Ah, Doreen, I ...

Freddie glances around desperately.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 Excuse me, but I think my manager needs me.

EXT. SAME - ACROSS THE LAWN - DAY

Arch and Tina commiserate with Sam, who clutches a highball, and stares angrily at the magnificent house.

ARCH
 Boy, the Cooch sure made City Hall pay off for him big time.

TINA
 You got to tip your hat to hard work.

SAM
 I don't want to hear about it. He screwed me over--royally.

ARCH
 Yeah? Do tell.

Freddie hurries up to Arch.

SAM

It was a done deal, Arch. I was in for fourteen thousand yards--minimum.

FREDDIE

Didn't Ben get a great gal!

ARCH

(to Freddie) Shh!.. Shh!.. Sam, how does he get away with it? Carpets!

FREDDIE

Great place, huh?

SAM

I've been watching you, Freddie.

FREDDIE

(rehearsed)

My staff has been looking into those allegations, and I have no comment at this time.

Arch goes "psst", and gives Freddie a little "not now" sign.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(understanding)

Oh.

SAM

That's exactly what I mean! Arch, why don't you run you boy Freddie here for mayor?

ARCH

Freddie?

SAM

Come on, Arch, he's perfect.

ARCH

Well, he's got the looks...

TINA

And the smarts...

FREDDIE

Who?

SAM

You!

FREDDIE
You really think so?

SAM
Arch, he's a shoe-in.

FREDDIE
For what?

SAM
How would you like to be mayor,
Freddie?

FREDDIE
Mayor? Cuchichek's mayor.

SAM
Not for long.

FREDDIE
I don't know...

ARCH
Freddie, we'd definitely like
that..

FREDDIE
Mayor?

ARCH
Sam, how much smooch the Cooch got?

SAM
(darkly)
Not as much as he think he do.

ARCH
Mmmmm. Mayor Benteen.

SAM
City Hall Fred!

TINA
Fighting Freddie Benteen.

FREDDIE
Arch, what do you think?

Freddie makes a "serious" face. Arch and Tina study him.

ARCH
A little more eyebrow.

TINA

No, no, the other one. The other one.

Freddie notices Rose bending to sniff a floral centerpiece, exposing an extremely nice bosom.

FREDDIE

I'm gonna have to practice. I'll be right back.

As Freddie heads for Rose, Sam watches him go.

SAM

You start working now, come November, you guys'll control the whole cannoli.

ARCH

We could get 20, 30, maybe even 40 percent.

SAM

Just remember, though, when you're thinking about what to ask for, you get more cream from a well-fed cow, if you get my meaning. (beat) You sure Freddie knows how to keep his shoes shined?

ARCH

Trust me, Sam. He's hot to trot. He'll make the best damn mayor this town has ever seen.

EXT. BUFFET TABLE - SAME - DAY

Freddie piles cubes of something on a plate and sidles up to Rose.

FREDDIE

Excuse me, but do you know what these are? Are these like, chicken, or fish? Because if they're chicken, I'll eat one. But fish... I don't feel like fish...

ROSE

Only one way to find out.

They each do some thoughtful chewing.

FREDDIE
Could be chicken. Could be fish.
Could even be some kind of cheese.
It's good though. Weren't you in
the wedding?

ROSE
I was the maid of honor.

FREDDIE
Right! I was the best man.

ROSE
I know.

FREDDIE
You've heard of me?

ROSE
Sorry, I don't follow wrestling.

FREDDIE
You think I could be a wrestler?
(striking a playful pose) The
Fearsome Omnivore^[TM]!

Rose laughs.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Actually, I'm not a wrestler. I'm
a City Councilman, for the Fifth
District. And I might be running
for mayor of the ... of all the
districts. Mayor of the whole
city.

He does his "serious" face again.

ROSE
Imagine, you could revitalize the
inner city, support education...

FREDDIE
Well, yeah, there's that, too.

ROSE
Why do you want to be mayor?

FREDDIE
Oh, it's mostly Archie's idea. I
mean, I want it, too. I'm afraid I
didn't catch your name.

ROSE

Rose. Rose Carew. Rhymes with shoe. I went to school with Marjorie. (Freddie looks blank.) The bride.

FREDDIE

Well, well. A rose by any other name...

ROSE

(flirtatiously)

Yes?

FREDDIE

Well, a rose ...is a rose... is a rose... by any other name is still as sweet... (he pauses) I think it's Shakespeare. Tell me about yourself.

ROSE

I'm in discount lingerie.

FREDDIE

Well, you'd never know it. What about Mr. Carew?

ROSE

There is no Mr. Carew.

The two of them stand together awkwardly. Suddenly Freddie puts down his plate of hors d'oeuvres.

FREDDIE

Care to dance?

ROSE

I don't know, I...

Freddie takes her hand and leads her to the dance floor. They dance, looking into each other's eyes for the rest of the song. The music stops but they don't disengage.

ROSE (CONT'D)

(dreamily) Fish...

She is talking about the canapes. She licks her lips. Freddie stares back at her. He swallows hard.

EXT. RECEPTION DINNER - LATER THAT DAY

Efrem glowers from the head table. His wife nudges him. He glares. She nudges him again, harder. Staring with hostility at The Masked Atheist, Efrem drags himself up, tapping his wine glass. Everyone quiets down.

EFREM

If I could just have your attention: I have a short toast. I sure hope my daughter's happy...

WYNN YANNIGAN jumps to his feet.

WYNN

As father of the groom, I'd also like to propose a toast. I couldn't wish for a smarter or more beautiful daughter-in-law.

General applause.

WYNN (CONT'D)

And I'm proud as hell of my son, who's every inch the promoter I ever was. He's come up with a program at the Civic Center: a Steel Cage Texas Death Match between Friar AngeloTM and The Masked Atheist.

The crowd cheers. The Masked Atheist stands up and waves. Someone yells, "Siddown, ya bum!" And he does, waving genially.

WYNN (CONT'D)

...that's on the 14th. But get this: now you'll be able to buy one of these little beauties:
(holds up wrestling action figure of Kid Plastique)
right in time for Christmas at your favorite store! Great job, Ben!

The wrestling crowd goes wild.

Freddie is genuinely excited by this news. He looks around at his wrestling idols, star-struck.

Wynn pulls out a large handkerchief, wipes the corner of his eye theatrically, and, with a grand flourish, hands Efrem the action figure.

Efrem sinks his head into his hands.

Wynn raises his glass.

WYNN (CONT'D)

So, here's hoping that love always
has you two kids in a figure-four
leg lock, and you give an Atomic
Drop to all your problems.

Marjorie and Ben hug. There's applause as guests toast the happy couple. Rose looks at them wistfully.

EXT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Tina and two volunteer CAMPAIGN WORKERS perch on stepladders, struggling to secure patriotic bunking above a FREDDIE BENTEEN FOR MAYOR sign.

Headquarters are located in an almost abandoned building (although a karate studio clings to life upstairs). FOR SALE OR LEASE signs are evident in the adjoining stores.

A rusty station wagon drops off a couple of TEN-YEAR-OLDS in dojo outfits who head for a side entrance.

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Freddie's on the phone.

FREDDIE

That's Rose C A R E W... That's right. It's in the phone book, DISCOUNT LINGERIE. Can't you look it up? Oh, hang on...

Freddie reaches for a tattered YELLOW PAGES, and starts flipping through it.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Lamps, lanterns, lawn care. I can't find it. Lingerie. You sure? Wait... Here it is! Well, I'll be! All right! It's 1559 Causeway. So, you'll deliver those by noon?

Arch, carrying campaign posters, rushes in with Tina.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 Two? Well, if that's the best you
 can do. Wait, have the card say:
 "Roses, for a very special rose."

Arch stops and listens. He looks at Tina meaningfully.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 Thanks. (hangs up) Arch, did you
 know they spell "lingerie" with an
 "i"?

ARCH
 They'll do any darned thing they
 think they can get away with.
 (beat) Wait till you hear what we
 came up with.

TINA
 I was doing some research on
 Cuchichek and lo and behold, every
 Friday night he gets together with
 a bunch of his pals...

ARCH
 His cronies, his clique, his
 conniving crew...

TINA
 And he plays pinochle!

Freddie has no reaction. The phone rings. Before Freddie
 can reach it, Arch snatches it.

ARCH
 Wogobler...uh-huh...What? What?
 Totally unacceptable... No... No,
 what, are you jaggging me? It's 25%
 or he can... Yeah, get back to us.

Arch hangs up. Freddie looks at the phone.

FREDDIE
 Arch, who was that?

ARCH
 Nobody. (with heavy emphasis)
 Freddie, he plays pinochle!

Freddie shrugs.

ARCH (CONT'D)
 Are you kidding? By the time
 Tina's through, it'll sound like
 Cooch's shooting dope with
 undocumented tattooed teenage male
 hookers.

FREDDIE
 Can she really do that?

ARCH
 Lay some on us, Tina.

TINA
 We need a mayor who can do more
 than play pinochle for our city's
 future.

Freddie is impressed.

TINA (CONT'D)
 This city needs serious thought and
 planning, not small talk around a
 pinochle table.

Tina sits down, crossing her legs with satisfaction. Arch's
 eyes appreciate those legs.

TINA (CONT'D)
 (on a roll)
 Time to lay our cards on the table.

FREDDIE
 Do one more!

TINA
 What's your vote, partner?
 Progress or pinochle?

Freddie reacts with delight and walks out.

TINA (CONT'D)
 I like him.

ARCH
 What's not to like? But, let's
 hold this pinochle thing for just
 the right moment.

TINA
 That's why you're the boss.

INT. DINER - DAY

CLOSE ON TV. It's breakfast rush at the diner. A TV plays the morning news. Chipper newscaster, CANDI KANE, wraps up a story.

NEWSCASTER CANDI
...all sidewalks covered in
broadloom. (tight smile) Floyd?

FLOYD MANNING, rapid AM-style delivery, picks up the ball.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD
Hey, thanks, Candi. Well, the race
for mayor is heating up.

Still photos appear on screen behind him: Efrem, looking grouchy; and Freddie, with his "serious" face.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (CONT'D)
Two months to go, Man-on-the Street
Pollster Bob Boudelang, finds the
incumbent leading among voters 25
to 49 years of age with 26%, while
newly announced challenger, Frankie
Benteen has 20%...

WIDE ANGLE on CUSTOMERS gobbling their breakfast, who pay no attention to the TV. SOUND recedes as we move to the other end of the counter.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (CONT'D)
24% are undecided, 12% don't know,
8% don't care, 2% say don't bother
me, 2% say they're ineligible to
vote.

Up front by the register sits the owner LATREASA THOMPSON, a vivacious African-American woman.

Rose walks in the door and sits down near her.

LATREASA
Hey chicka! The usual?

ROSE
Yeah. No. (pause) No, today, I'd
like some marmalade!

Latreasa glances significantly at HECTOR, the counterman. Hector, one of Rose's secret admirers, is clearly worried by this development.

LATREASA

Marmalade? You must have met someone!

ROSE

Latreasa! I did not go to Marge's wedding to meet a man!

LATREASA

Honey, even the bride goes to the wedding to meet a man!

Hector laughs, but Latreasa shoots him a look, and he skulks back to the grill.

LATREASA (CONT'D)

Was Boris the StranglerTM there? That man could get me in a Boston Crab anytime.

ROSE

I'm afraid I wouldn't know one wrestler from another, unless you count The Berserk Headhunter. But, I did meet a man who may be running for mayor.

CUSTOMER IN BACK (OS)

Hey, Latreasa, how's about some more coffee?

LATREASA

(ignores customer)

The Berserk Headhunter is running for mayor?

ROSE

No, silly! Freddie Benteen.

LATREASA

So when are you going to see him, again?

ROSE

Oh, he's not for me.

CUSTOMER IN BACK (OS)

Hey, Latreasa, how about that coffee?

LATREASA

Comin' Charley. You'd better thank of somethin' real good, Miss picky!

Hector brings Rose tea with lemon and rye toast, then slowly places three marmalade packets by her plate. He lingers.

LATREASA (CONT'D)

(to Rose)

It was me, child, I'd be dialing that phone right now.

ROSE

Oh, I couldn't do that. I'm sure he's a very busy man.

As Rose sips her tea, a smile of possibility warms her face.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Rose walks to work through nearly deserted streets. An engine ROARS. She turns in time to see a "REMNANTLAND" van painted in wild colors take the corner with tires squealing.

EXT. DISCOUNT LINGERIE - DAY

As Rose unlocks the door, TRUDY, her elderly assistant, walks up.

ROSE

Good morning, Trudy. How are you this morning?

TRUDY

About ten o'clock, dearie. How are you?

INT. STORE - DAY

Rose stacks boxes on a shelf. A couple of mannequins wear lingerie.

TRUDY (OS)

So Rose, what do you think of this?

ROSE

Oh, Trudy! Take that off right now! Goodness! Someone could come in. At least close the curtains!

A flimsy garment flies through the air. Rose catches it. And shakes her head in amusement.

ROSE (CONT'D)
 You really can't keep on doing
 this, Trudy!

TRUDY (OS)
 I'm feeling really spry this
 morning. Of course, I couldn't let
 my husband know. That man is sex-
 crazed. He would have squeezed my
 lemon and I would have been late
 for work.

ROSE
 Oh, you could be late for a good
 reason like that, Trudy.

A fully clothed Trudy emerges from the dressing room.

TRUDY
 Besides, I know how much you need
 me.

Trudy sits in a chair by the window, hardly moving a muscle,
 as Rose goes on working.

EXT. STREET - CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Two MEN in REMNANTLAND jumpsuits measure sidewalks. Freddie
 walks by whistling. The men stop working and eyeball him.

Faintly we hear MARTIAL ARTS CRIES in unison.

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Arch is on the phone.

ARCH
 What does he know? He couldn't
 pour beer from a bottle if the
 instructions were printed on the
 bottom... Listen, have your editor
 call me... yeah, have her call me.

Freddie saunters in. Arch hangs up.

ARCH (CONT'D)
 Where you been? We gotta get over
 to the museum.

Freddie looks at him blankly.

ARCH (CONT'D)

The urban round table.

FREDDIE

The round table? Do I really have to go?

ARCH

Are you kidding? Of course you do. The Cooch is gonna be there pretending to be an expert.

TINA

Arch, don't underestimate him. He sounds like he knows what he's talking about.

FREDDIE

He does?

ARCH

Nobody cares about that. The Cooch can piss in his hat and call it soup, but that doesn't make it so. The more he plays egghead, the more he cuts his own throat. Voters hate a smart candidate.

FREDDIE

So let's skip the round table.

ARCH

No way, Tanqueray. Besides, Mrs. Hunnerthwasser'll be there.

Freddie grimaces.

ARCH (CONT'D)

Look, I keep telling you, folks love a little romance. Besides, what's not to like?

FREDDIE

Ah, Archie, she's old.

ARCH

She's rich! She's powerful, she's good-looking, and she's rich.

TINA

Freddie, you're a single guy. It's been two years since...

Tina looks at Arch who suddenly seems embarrassed, and then she becomes embarrassed herself. There's an uncomfortable silence.

A martial arts KARATE YELL, followed by the muffled THUD of many tiny small bare feet. A few more bits of ceiling plaster rain onto the table. Nobody pays attention.

TINA (CONT'D)

She always gets a lot of publicity
and she's totally rich!

FREDDIE

I don't like the way she looks at
me.

ARCH

You don't have to do anything.
Just let people get a good look at
the two of you.

TINA

Deny everything.

FREDDIE

There's nothing to deny.

TINA

Everybody knows better, but you're
keeping things quiet.

FREDDIE

I'm not keeping anything quiet.
Nothing's going on.

ARCH

What'd I tell you, Tina? The boy's
a natural.

EXT. MUSEUM - DAY

Establishing shot. Urban Planning fans of every stripe and members of the media make their way in. A TV news remote truck sets up a big dish antenna.

INT. MUSEUM - DAY

The Urban Planners' Round Table Forum is set up in a large room dominated by huge dramatic "works of art."

A restless audience sits in folding chairs. Two IMPORTANT PEOPLE and three ACADEMIC TYPES, including the distinguished CHAIRPERSON, are seated at a long rectangular table with a podium at one end. Here Efrem Cuchichek stands, speaking from a thick sheaf of papers.

EFREM

...so what we really require today
in any comprehensive economic
policy is a flexible investment
strategy with abatements and
incentives...

Freddie sits at the other end of the table. He's puzzled. He looks at the banner which reads "round table," and then down at the non-round table.

Arch sits next to him, feigning interest.

Bored reporters fidget and look at their watches. Some clown around doing Three Stooges routines.

Doreen Hunnerthwasser tries to catch Freddie's eye from the audience.

EFREM (CONT'D)

Especially now, as investors have a
more cautious and prudent and yet
more aggressive strategy vis-a-vis
expected yields from municipal
bonds. To be brief...

ARCH

(to Freddie)

Too late...

Efrem pauses. He very briefly scratches one nostril. Suddenly several PHOTO FLASHES light up the room. Efrem freezes. A final flash captures his fury.

CLOSE ON FREDDIE, his eyes half closed, starting to daydream as Efrem talks on.

EFREM

...urban investment picture
presents a rich vista with...

INT. FANTASY - DAY

Out of the darkness, Rose walks into the foreground. She wears a white low-cut merry widow and looks very good indeed. She adjusts her garter and moistens her lips.

BACK TO SCENE - INT. MUSEUM - DAY

FREDDIE looks more interested. Efrem continues.

EFREM (OS)
 ...but what should the ratio of
 residential to non-resident...

EXT. FANTASY CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Efrem's voice fades behind the sound of JACKHAMMERS. Rose, in something black and slinky, plays with an enormous adjustable wrench. She lifts her sultry gaze from the tool.

Freddie in hard hat, tight jeans and work boots, sweat glistens on his naked torso, spots Rose. SAXOPHONE MUSIC begins.

Rose looks him up and down.

Freddie looks at her hungrily.

CLOSE SHOT of shapely legs in sheer black stockings, up a curvaceous body ... but the face isn't Rose's. It's Efrem. Sax solo ends abruptly with a couple of bad notes.

BACK TO FREDDIE AT THE ROUND TABLE reacting with surprise.

INTERIOR - ROUND TABLE - PODIUM - DAY

EFREM
 Obviously, in the real world,
 things aren't this black and white.
 However, I've prepared a very
 brief...

The audience groans.

Freddie is still disoriented.

CHAIRPERSON
 Thank you, Mr. Cuchichek.

EFREM
 But the ramifications...

CHAIRPERSON
 I'm sure we can all see the
 ramifications of your ... uh...
 ramifications...

To a smattering of applause, Efrem sulkily gathers his notes and returns to his seat. A couple of panel members rub their foreheads. One has fallen asleep.

CHAIRPERSON (CONT'D)

And now, a very few words from our other candidate...

Freddie quickly looks down at his lap. He stands, holding his speech in front of his groin, and walks to the podium.

In the second row, Doreen stares raptly, and starts to clap-- the only one to do so.

FREDDIE

(standing behind the podium)
Hey, thanks for that reception. You don't know how excited I am to be here. Uh, well, I had a long prepared speech... (he holds it up) but you don't want to hear speeches. No!

He tears it in half. The audience perks up. Arch looks at Tina anxiously.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

So, what does this city need? It needs someone with vision. Someone who can look at the numbers, or jobs, or... construction sites, and see ... beauty.

The audience mumbles. Arch is terrified.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

So, I'm not going to stand here, and toss out a bunch of half-baked ideas cooked up around a pinochle table.

Efrem jumps as if kicked.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

We can sit here, or we can go out there, and do things, get things done. A tough choice to make, but that's how I feel. So, thank you.

The audience erupts into enthusiastic applause. Freddie, pleased with himself, sits down. Efrem glowers.

ARCH
 (to Tina)
 Not the way I would've played it,
 but...

TINA
 Hey, it worked.

CHAIRPERSON
 Well, thank you, gentlemen. And
 now -- the bar is open.

The audience leaps to its feet, charging into the next room.
 The sleeping panel member wakes up and heads for the bar.

INT. ADJACENT ROOM WITH BAR - DAY

Bartenders stand at the ready. One of them, stacking glasses
 in front, barely gets out of the way in time.

ARCH
 (to Freddie)
 Let's go and press some flesh.

FREDDIE
 (alarmed) What?

ARCH
 The reception.

FREDDIE
 Oh, yeah, But, I don't want to stay
 too long. I got things to do.

INT. ROSE'S STORE - DAY

CLOSE ON Rose's hand fussing on a garter, smoothing black
 stockings on shapely legs.

Trudy is doing a crossword puzzle behind the counter.

TRUDY
 Rank in the Turkish army between
 major and colonel.

ROSE
 Nope. Sorry.

TRUDY
 Four letters? Ends in "a."

ROSE

Sorry.

Rose heads for the bathroom in the back of the store.

TRUDY

(yelling after her)

Second letter: a "d" or a "k".

ROSE (OS)

Still doesn't help.

A young DELIVERYMAN comes in with a large bouquet of roses.

DELIVERYMAN

These are for a ...

TRUDY

That'd be me...

DELIVERYMAN

Sign here.

He checks out a lavender teddy.

DELIVERYMAN (CONT'D)

Wow, that would really make my girl shine. How much?

TRUDY

For you, \$24.95 plus tax.

Trudy takes the card from the bouquet and tosses it.

DELIVERYMAN

How much for anyone else?

Rose returns from the bathroom.

TRUDY

\$24.95. Who the hell do you think you are?

ROSE

(to deliveryman)

Don't mind Trudy. She's having trouble with her puzzle.
(sees the roses) Oh, these are beautiful!

TRUDY

My husband will do anything to have his way with me!

Deliveryman gives Rose a look.

INT. MUSEUM/BUFFET TABLE - DAY

CLOSE SHOT LUNCHEON BUFFET which has been devastated by the devouring hordes. Freddie picks through what's left on the tray.

Across the room, Arch and Tina approach SYD, newspaper reporter, and ZEKE, TV cameraman. Zeke balances a video camera labeled "Bystander News" on one shoulder, while eating a spare rib with his free hand.

They all watch Freddie scavenge.

SYD

Arch, your guy looks pretty good up there. Maybe you know what you're doing.

THEIR POV Freddie's found an over-looked canape. He sniffs it, wrinkles his nose.

ARCH

Nah, it's all Freddie.

ZEKE

Management, Syd.

TINA

Experience.

SYD

Casting.

Across the room, Doreen Hunnerthwasser slithers up to Freddie. He begins backpedaling.

FREDDIE

...Mrs. Hunnerwasser

DOREEN

Doreen, please. Old friends like us, darling.

Arch, Tina, Syd, and Zeke watch Doreen stalking Freddie. Doreen corners Freddie against a large suggestive sculpture.

SYD

No news here.

ZEKE

File footage.

ARCH
 You boys aren't thinking of
 leaving? You gotta stay for the
 grip and grin.

TINA
 You didn't get the handout?

ZEKE
 Whazzat?

SYD
 Doreen Hunnerthwasser's passing a
 check.

ARCH
 A very big check.

ZEKE
 Youch.

SYD
 We couldn't miss that.

ZEKE
 Alert the media.

SYD
 We are the media.

Freddie panics as Doreen toys with his tie.

DOREEN
 ...and of course, you'll just keep
 on getting more powerful and more
 attractive once you're mayor.

FREDDIE
 I'll do my best.

DOREEN
 I'm sure you will. That's why I
 put a...

She reaches in her purse, pulls out a fat envelope, then
 reaches for Freddie's jacket. With one motion, she unbuttons
 it and thrusts the envelope straight down the front of
 Freddie's trousers.

DOREEN (CONT'D)
 ...very personal note inside.

Freddie gasps.

DOREEN (CONT'D)
 Why, dear boy, you've got tears in
 your eyes!

FREDDIE
 I think you gave me a paper cut.

INT. MUSEUM - LATER

Newsmen jostle for position.

ZEKE (OS)
 Watch it, buddy!

Doreen, Freddie and the curator stand at the podium.

DOREEN
 I just want to--are we ready?

ZEKE
 Go ahead. We're rolling.

DOREEN
 On behalf of my late beloved
 Herman... (dabbing her eyes) I'm
 announcing a new wing: the Herman
 Hunnerthwasser Definitive Arts
 Wing. And here to accept my
 donation is the curator...

The curator steps between Doreen and Freddie.

DOREEN (CONT'D)
 ...and that young councilman who
 has my unlimited support for mayor.

She yanks Freddie in front of the curator. Doreen holds a
 cardboard blowup of a Hunnerthwasser Foundation check, which
 she passes to Freddie. He peers down, not sure what it is.

Efrem, Sleburne, and MACKNAPP, distinguished and well-
 groomed, sit in a corner. Efrem munches on a dry roll.

EFREM
 Look at him. Mr. Prettyboy.

THEIR POV

Freddie turns the big check over to read it, then straightens
 up to face the cameras. Now, the check is upside down. The
 curator seizes the other end. All three smile. More flash
 photos.

SLEBURNE

Freddie's nothing. The guy who's killing us is Arch.

EFREM

You're a lot of help.

Champagne is opened and poured by Doreen. The curator has to work smartly to get a glass. Freddie glances at an index card for a second, then speaks.

FREDDIE

On behalf of the whole city and myself, I'd just like to thank Mrs. Hennerwasser for her donation...

In Efrem's corner, Macknapp leans in close to Efrem.

MACKNAPP

Efrem, you better find a way to cool off homeboy, or you can kiss this election good-bye. I don't want to switch ponies this late in the jamboree.

SLEBURNE

Wait 'til you hear what we're covering up tomorrow.

EFREM

We're taking the municipal zoo and selling it to the school hot lunch program.

SLEBURNE

Monkey see, monkey stew.

MACKNAOO

Won't that be a problem?

EFREM

Not the way we move the cash around.

SLEBURNE

It's educational. Kids love jungle animals. Lions, tigers, bears...

MACKNAPP

Two of the biggest municipal money losers... How can I get a piece of the action?

Sleburne and Efrem simultaneously:

SLEBURNE

Oh, it's a done deal.

EFREM

I'm sure you'll find a way.

INT. LIMO - DAY

ARCH

See, I told you being an expert
wouldn't help the Cooch.

FREDDIE

We're finished for the day, right?

Arch nods.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(to driver)

Hey, George, 1559 Causeway.

ARCH

What's there--it's that woman,
isn't it?

Freddie looks stubbornly at Arch.

ARCH (CONT'D)

She's not gonna do you any good.
She's got no juice. She's just a
civilian. Now you take Doreen...

FREDDIE

No, you take Doreen, and I hope
you'll both be very happy together.
Besides, I thought you said people
like romance.

ARCH

Wisen up, Freddie. Your lady
friend is poor. Doreen is rich.
Rich people have romance. Poor
people just have problems. Poor
people don't have romance, they
just have sex. Nobody likes sex.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The limo turns into Rose's neighborhood.

INT. LINO - DAY

The phone rings. Arch snatches it.

ARCH

Wogobler... Don't have a spaz. Nobody's cutting you out of the pastitsa. You want a taste, you can have a taste... Yeah... Five. You can go to ten. But we gotta gave a consensus on the Manassas.

Freddie looks at Arch quizzically, then out the window at the sidewalks carpeted in bizarre colors and patterns.

FREDDIE

Carpets? Arch, why not: "Freddie Benteen: because the sky's the limit!"

ARCH

(to Freddie)

Shhhhh!

(back to phone) No-no-no-no-. You guys haven't got the only bicycle on the block. Listen, I'll pick my friends and I'll pick my nose, but I'm not gonna pick my friend's nose, and you tell him that's Freddie's final word on the matter.

Arch hangs up and turns to Freddie.

ARCH (CONT'D)

She's got a lot of nerve calling you with this stuff. (beat) Just because she's my sister. Freddie, what'd you say?

FREDDIE

It was just an idea...

ARCH

Freddie, Tina's the idea person. You, you're doing just fine. Trust me.

FREDDIE

Great!

INT. STORE - DAY

In the background, Rose stands on a step ladder, shifting boxes. Trudy continues to do her puzzle.

CLOSE ON a portable TV on the counter playing a soap opera: a MAN and a WOMAN appear in a bedroom.

MAN ON TV

I have thought of nothing but you. Belinda, ever since the day I saw you in the arena. Even the referees thought I had a foreign object in my trunks.

WOMAN ON TV

It's no good, Ted. I'm marrying The Mad Azerbairjanian[™].

MAN ON TV

But, what about the children?

The TV holds on the woman looking stricken.

WOMAN ON TV

We have no children, Ted.

The man looks shocked. His face fades out to a TITLE CARD.

TV ANNOUNCED (VO)

We'll return to "The Young and the Wrestlers," after these messages.

EXT. DISCOUNT LINGERIE - DAY

Limousine pulls to the curb. Arch and Freddie step out onto the garish plaid carpet.

Freddie looks up the street. The carpet tack guy stops working and stares defiantly.

INT. DISCOUNT LINGERIE SHOP - DAY

Rose is on the ladder.

TRUDY

Shakespeare's amorous Veronan, five letters.

BUZZER sounds. Rose bends down, looks out the door through the transom, and sees Arch and Freddie in conversation.

EXT. LINGERIE SHOP - DAY

FREDDIE
I'd like to do this myself.

ARCH
Hey, your friends are my friends.

INT. LINGERIE SHOP - DAY

Rose quickly climbs down the ladder, snaps off the TV, smooths her hair, and buzzes them in.

FREDDIE
Hi, Rose. I hope you don't mind...

TRUDY
Who the heck are you?

ROSE
Trudy, please...

FREDDIE
I see you got the roses.

Rose is confused. She looks at Trudy.

TRUDY
Well, I was sure they were for me... Who would be sending you flowers? You haven't had a date in... Oh, it's around here somewhere...

Trudy fishes around in the waste basket. She hands Rose the card. Rose reads it and becomes embarrassed.

ROSE
Oh, they're very beautiful, but I can't...

FREDDIE
I'm glad you like them...

Arch clears his throat.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Rose, I'd like you to meet my campaign manager, Arch Wogobler.

ROSE
Hi.

ARCH
 Wonderful to meet you folks.
 Freddie depends on the support of
 citizens like you.

TRUDY
 Keep you eye on the cash drawer,
 dearie.

ROSE
 Trudy!

FREDDIE
 That's okay.

Arch glances at Trudy's crossword, but she snatches it so he
 can't see it. She goes back to her puzzle.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 I was hoping you might be available
 for dinner.

ROSE
 Tonight?

ARCH
 Freddie, you gotta be at the
 Ukranian Veteran's Legion Hall.

FREDDIE
 I thought you said I was done for
 the day.

ARCH
 You know we're soft in the eleventh
 ward.

FREDDIE
 (to Rose)
 What about tomorrow?

ARCH
 (shaking his head)
 The Sisters of Mercy Paramedic Stag
 Dinner. It could run late.
 There's a slide show.

FREDDIE
 (irritated, to Arch)
 Wednesday?

ARCH
 Freddie, we've got the King O'
 Carpet Opening. Shellfish Plaza
 Mall. I've got cameras coming.

FREDDIE
 How long is that gonna take?

ARCH
 Ten minutes. Two hours tops.
 C'mon, we gonna go.

FREDDIE
 Arch, do you mind?
 (to Rose) How about when I get
 done there, may we could go to
 dinner...

ROSE
 Actually, I ...

ARCH
 Sounds like a "no," to me. Nice
 meeting you, lovely ladies. Let's
 book, big boy.

ROSE
 Actually, Freddie, I think that
 would be very nice. What time is
 the opening?

FREDDIE
 Arch?

ARCH
 (reluctantly) Seven-thirty...

ROSE
 (to Freddie) I'll meet you there.

FREDDIE
 I can't wait!

Arch urges Freddie out of the store.

ROSE
 What did I just do?

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Efrem sits behind an imposing desk: Selburne stands.
 Macknapp sits next to a large object covered with a sheet.

MACKNAPP

I'll get right to it, Cooch. I'm backing you because I think you're going to be a winner. I don't hang around losers. I grind them into dust and build luxury condos on their graves.

SELBURNE

Everybody knows that, sir. Your name is synonymous with cruelty and ruthlessness... of the best kind...

MACKNAPP

(ignoring Sleburne, talking directly to Efrem) You've been talking a lot about privatizing city services. You serious?

EFREM

Well, it's my view that a great deal of inefficiency and some of the current corruption could be avoided by...

MACNAPP

Good. That's what I wanted to hear. I want you to sell me the sewers.

EFREM

I'm not sure there's a lot of revenue to be...

MACKNAPP

You let me worry about that.

Macknapp pulls the cloth off a TOILET with a COIN SLIDE where the flush lever would be.

MACKNAPP (CONT'D)

I'm gonna show you something.

They surround the toilet.

MACKNAPP (CONT'D)

After the election, you're gonna declare an emergency water shortage, and pass a law mandating this model toilet. (to Sleburne) Lemme have five quarters.

Sleburne digs into his pocket and produces the coins.
Macknapp puts them in the coin slot.

MACKNAPP (CONT'D)
This little fixture will save
umpteen gallons of water a day.

SLEBURNE
How much is that, Mr. Macknapp?

MACKNAPP
A lot.

Macknapp pushes in the slide and the TOILET FLUSHES noisily.

MACKNAPP (CONT'D)
(to Efrem)
Twenty cents from every flush will
go to you.

EFREM
Thirty.

MACKNAPP
Twenty-five.

Cuchichek nods approvingly as the flush subsides.

SLEBURNE
Can I have my quarters back?

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Freddie sits at one end of the room, looking lost, while
MICHELLE, a color consultant, scrutinizes him.

Her assistant, CHIP, tosses one fabric after another onto
Freddie's shoulder.

MICHELLE
No, no ... try the cools again.

Chip replaces the beige swatches with pieces of blue-grey.

In the background, Arch is on his cell phone, while Tina
deals with a group of impeccably dressed advertising men,
ERIC and DALE.

TINA
(reading from notes)
"Benteen: For all the things you
want."

She frowns.

DALE
It tested well.

ERIC
How about this, "Benteen: Not too
light and not too filling?"
Whaddya think?

TINA
(pleasantly)
You're insane.

Michelle stares at Freddie, then swaps a couple of swatches.

FREDDIE
What about, "Benteen: Because the
sky's the limit!"

TINA
It's a thought, Freddie.

MICHELLE
Can I have some quiet! I can't
work.

CHIP
Quiet! Quiet, please!

Silence, except for a faint KARATE YELL and THUD. More
plaster falls, including a big piece that lands on the ad
sketches. Eric and Dale look up apprehensively.

MICHELLE
(to Freddie)
Summer. You're definitely a
summer.

FREDDIE
Why, thank you.

CHIP
I thought you said he was an
autumn.

Michelle shoots him a look of disdain.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Rose comes out of the try-on room.

ROSE
I don't know why I let you talk me
into this.

LATREASA
You'll thank me later. Sister
child, this dress is hot.

ROSE
I don't want to look hot. I don't
even want to go.

LATREASA
You're just scared. Now, turn
around. Turn around.

Latreasa zips up the dress.

ROSE
He's a jerk.

LATREASA
Girl, you look good.

ROSE
Latreasa, he's just a yes-man to
that Arch Wo-whatever.

LATREASA
And that's just what you need--a
yes man.

ROSE
You really think I can do this?

LATREASA
Rose, you've been getting over
Travis for-ever. Time to get back
out there.
(She spins Rose around to face the
mirror.)
I hear some rumbling ovaries.

INT. HABERDASHERY - DAY

Freddie stands on a riser in front of mirrors, while a TAILOR
marks the cuffs on his new trousers.

ERIC
(to Tina)
"Benteen: Because it's time."

They admire Eric, who gives them an "I'm a genius," look.

FREDDIE
Time for what?

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - FOLLOWING

Rose is wearing another outfit, this one even more provocative.

LATREASA
...my Aunt Clara was 65 when she got married for the first time-- wore a white dress...

ROSE
(fiddling with the dress)
One button or two? Whadda you think?

LATREASA
Depends on how much like the guy.

BACK TO HABERDASHERY - FOLLOWING

The dream team considers Freddie's neckties. There sure are a lot to choose from.

DALE
No. More exuberance!

ARCH
But not too youthful.

ERIC
Mature exuberance.

DALE
Right. Exuberance but with short hair.

MICHELLE
Exactly.

She holds up two ties.

TINA
See? This one says spending but this one says investing.

Everyone becomes very excited.

FREDDIE
I like the orange one.

INT. ROSE'S BEDROOM OVER THE LINGERIE SHIP - DUSK

Latreasa paints Rose's nails a very bright red.

LATREASA

Now, you don't want to be too easy
on the first date--no matter how
much you like him.

Rose blows on her nails.

ROSE

We'll see. How's this?
(She does her best vamp) If I see
something I like, I take it!

LATREASA

You go girl. But you save some of
that for Freddie Benteen.

ROSE

(catching herself)
Oh, Latreasa, I can't do this...

EXT. SHELLFISH PLAZA MALL PARKING LOT - EVENING

The Shellfish Plaza Mall sign has a giant pink conch on top.
It reads: KING O' CARPETS OPENING / GUEST MATCH / THE
BERSERK HEADHUNTER AND BORIS THE STRANGLER: below that, in
smaller letters: WELCOME FERRET FANCIERS.

A graffiti-covered city bus pulls up to the mall entrance.
Several riders carry travel cages used to transport small
animals.

Among them, Rose gathers her courage and goes inside.

INT. KING O'CARPETS STORE - NIGHT

The Grand Opening has an Olde England theme. Young women as
Robin Hood's Merrie Men hand out discount coupons.

Peacocks strut through the store, occasionally breaking into
a run and having to be restrained.

Royal-sounding music on the PA. Banners announce 80% OFF!
WE DOTH BE CRAZY! NOTTINGHAM MONEY DOWN.

Reporters and photographers, including Zeke and Syd, wander
around snacking.

Rose enters, looks around for Freddie. She hears someone yell, "ARRGHH!" Then a flash goes off.

BACK OF STORE

EXTREME CLOSE-UP of The Berserk Headhunter's face, painted like a skull, glaring and showing his teeth. Then his face relaxes into a beautiful smile.

LONGER ANGLE Berserk stands in front of a cardboard jungle background, holding a small boy on one arm.

BERSERK

Good work! Who's next?

DANNY

I am.

BERSERK

What's your name, son?

DANNY

Danny.

BERSERK

Okay, Danny. What do you say?
Come on around here.

Berserk picks up Danny in the crook of his arm.

BERSERK (CONT'D)

Oof, you're a big boy, Danny.
You're eating all of your
vegetables, aren't you!

DANNY

Yes, sir!

BERSERK

Next time we take this picture, you
can hold me. You ready? Okay,
when I say three, gimme a growl.
One-two-three! Arrghh!

A flash goes off as Danny and Berserk grimace together. Berserk puts Danny down and ruffles his hair.

BERSERK (CONT'D)

See you later, partner.
(to the photographer)
Hey, Morty, I'm gonna take a break.
Be back in five, kids.

When Berserk walks away, Rose notices him.

ROSE
You're very good with children.

BERSERK
Yeah, I wish I had some.

ROSE
Me, too.

BERSERK
I guess we just haven't met the right person, yet. It's tough being a celebrity--you meet so many phonies.

ROSE
You know, I have a friend who's just the sweetest... Great cook. I think you'd really like her.

BERSERK
Really? Let me give you my card.

Berserk reaches into his pants pocket and produces a silver card case and an elegant fountain pen. He takes out a card and writes his number on the back.

BERSERK (CONT'D)
Here's my number. Now, don't spread it around. It's unlisted.

Arch, Freddie, Tina, and Sam emerge through a door behind Rose and Berserk. Arch tucks a thick white envelope into his jacket pocket.

Sam has on a robe made of shag carpeting over a gold lame outfit. On his head is a big crown that reads "Zero Money Down." The press begins to stir.

Freddie spots Rose.

FREDDIE
Rose, wow you look terrific!

ARCH
Shhh!

Freddie looks at Arch, who shakes his head disapprovingly.

The PA system blares a royal FANFARE of coronets.

ANNOUNCER ON PA
Hear ye! Hear ye! All hail his majesty, King O' Carpets.

Sam corrals Freddie and addresses his willing subjects.

SAM
 Hey folks, thanks for coming!
 Listen up, the Councilman has a few
 words.

Smattering of applause. Freddie smiles in appreciation.
 Tina nudges him to accept an index card.

FREDDIE
 (reading)
 Thank you, Sam. It's always a
 pleasure...

Zeke, the TV Cameraman, belatedly snaps on the sun gun atop
 his video camera. Boy is that bright light a problem.
 Freddie has trouble reading the card.

FREDDIE (CONT'D) (o.s.)
 We must ... we must ... fit..fight
 corruption constantly and without
 frail, fail. For this reason, I
 propose a blond issue to raise
 money which we're going to say will
 be used for more police and street
 lights. More police on the streets
 will mean fewer crooks, and more
 street lights will mean we can see
 them better.

Freddie isn't finished but--

SAM
 Wasn't that great folks?
 (mild applause)
 Now, it's time to buy carpets!
 (to Freddie)
 Freddie, get your picture taken
 with Hunt, yet?

Sam leads Freddie over to Berserk.

FREDDIE
 I'm really honored to meet you.
 You've always been one of my
 favorite wrestlers!

BERSERK
 Thanks Councilman. You've
 definitely got my vote. And I'm
 going to ask all my fans to vote
 for you, too.

FREDDIE
 (shaking his hand)
 Really? Thanks a lot!

SYD
 Hey, an endorsement! Can we quote
 you on that?

ZEKE
 Hey, let's do it for the camera!

Off to the side, Arch huddles with Tina.

Rose stands alone.

In the background, the light goes on again. Freddie and
 Berserk repeat the endorsement.

ARCH
 (to Tina)
 What about the credibility angle?

TINA
 It's nothing to worry about.

ARCH
 You sure?

TINA
 Wrestling's nothing more than an
 ancient pagan mating ritual.

ARCH
 Yeah, I guess you're right. We got
 bigger troubles.
 (turning to Rose) Listen honey,
 whatever you do tonight, be
 discreet.

ROSE
 I beg your pardon!

TINA
 And whatever you do, don't mention
 anacondas.

Old English FANFARE over the PA.

ANNOUNCER ON PA
 Time for the big match between The
 Berserk Headhunter and Boris the
 Strangler, right behind decorator
 broadloom.

BERSERK

Excuse me, folks. I'm on.

ARCH

Let's go gang.

Arch grabs Freddie's arm, hustling him after Berserk. Everyone follows.

AT THE RING

Wynn Yannigan stands inside. People gather around.

WYNN

Tonight we have two of the finest, meanest, most dedicated wrestlers, soon to be available at your local neighborhood stores (waves action figures): Boris the Strangler and The Berserk Headhunter.

Boris and Berserk showboat in the ring.

FREDDIE

(off of a look from Rose)
Arch, we're out of here.

ARCH

No way, you gotta stay for the match.

Freddie turns to Rose, but her preference is clear.

FREDDIE

We'd love to, but ... no way Tanqueray.

Rose is pleased by this preferential treatment.

Sleburne watches the proceedings from behind some broadloom. Arch catches sight of him.

ARCH

What brings you out of your hole, Sleburne?

SLEBURNE

It's a free country.

ARCH

With you around, things usually get pretty expensive.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Freddie and Rose settle into the limo. A little TV is on.

NEWSCASTER CANDI ON TV
 ...elementary school students...
 broiled ocelot. But City officials
 have no comment. Floyd?

NEWSCASTER FLOYD ON TV
 Well, Candi, this just in from our
 exclusive up-to-the minute
 Bystander News Man-on-the-Street
 Bob Boudelang. The question is:
 Freddie Benteen endorsed by The
 Berserk Headhunter: Will this
 influence your vote?

ROSE
 Oh, look, they're talking about
 you!

NEWSCASTER FLOYD
 ...48% now plan to vote for
 Benteen. 22% say they always
 planned to vote for Benteen. 26%
 still going to vote for what's his
 name. 2% say stop bothering me.
 8% want to see who Boris the
 Strangler endorses.

EXT. CARPETED CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The limo cruises through dark streets, past carpeted
 sidewalks. The news continues as a voice over.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (V0)
 4% are undecided. 8% are not sure
 if they're undecided. 2% are
 reported to say I'm not kidding
 now, get away from me or you're
 gonna be sorry. I'll hit you so
 hard your grandchildren will be
 cross-eyed.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The limo pulls up to the canopy of LES TROIS SALAUDS. A
 liveried DOORMAN opens the door, and Rose steps out. It's
 all pretty swanky. She shivers in delicious anticipation.

As she alights, the TV voice over concludes.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (VO)
Back after this. You're watching
Bystander News, the news that puts
you right in the line of fire.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

At an intimate table, Freddie fills Rose's glass.

FREDDIE
(shyly)
I just want to say that ever since
I met you, it's like I've been
under some sort of a spell.
(pause) You're really a very
special woman-person, and I really
like you. A lot.

They sip champagne, looking deeply into each other's eyes.

ROSE
(a bit shy as well)
Well, I like you, too. I mean,
this is pretty exciting, being out
with a celebrity, and an important
person and all...

Their waiter KEVIN walks up.

KEVIN
Have we decided what we're having
tonight?

ROSE
We have.

FREDDIE
The lady is going to have the
Seafood Prufrock.

KEVIN
The lobster.

FREDDIE
And I'll have the Chicken Libre.

KEVIN
The free range chicken. Very good.
If you'll come with me.

Kevin corrals the menus. Freddie and Rose look at each other, a bit confused. Kevin leads them to the lobster tank. ARMAND waits with a large net. RAMON waits by the back door.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

(to Rose)

This is Armand, who will assist
you. (to Freddie)
and Ramon, who will assist you.

Armand raises his net and salutes Rose.

ARMAND

Madame?

Rose is excited. She tentatively leans over a green-lit tank and points. Armand reaches for her choice. We don't see the lobster but there's a terrific tussle off-camera. Armand is splashed with sea water.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

Excellent choice. Doubtless Madame
has selected crustaceans before.

Ramon waits for Freddie by the back door.

RAMON

M'sieur?

Ramon yanks open the door and propels Freddie through it.

EXT. RESTAURANT/BACKYARD - NIGHT

Freddie finds himself in the dark. A heavy switch is thrown and powerful lights illuminate the yard.

Dozens of sleepy chickens caught by surprise look at the camera. There's a rising chorus of CLUCKING.

Ramon, holding a huge net, deliberately shuts the door. He turns to Freddie.

RAMON

So?

The chicks have spotted the net and there's a tremendous burst of CHICKEN SQUAWKING. Freddie looks alarmed. A cloud of dust and feathers in the foreground, obscuring Freddie and Ramon.

INT. RESTAURANT / TABLE - LATER

Rose, wearing a paper bib with a lobster on it, finishes her dinner, in slight disarray, demurely sucking a claw.

Freddie finishes a drumstick. He wears a bib with a chicken on it, and watches Rose raptly. A few feathers cling to his person.

ACROSS THE RESTAURANT

Doreen Hunnerthwasser stares at Freddie and Rose. She cradles a squirming Chihuahua under one arm.

She viciously stabs a wicked-looking knife into a bloody steak, saws off a tidbit, forks it and offers it to the dog without removing her gaze from Rose and Freddie.

DOREEN'S POV: Rose and Freddie toast, clinking glasses.

BACK TO DOREEN Without looking down, she stabs at the steak, missing it. Loud painful YIPPING from the dog below frame.

DOREEN

Oh, sweetums! Look what that bad man made mummy do!

Freddie and Rose, oblivious to the ruckus in the background, continue to gaze at each other.

Across the restaurant, waiters hurry to Doreen's table with bandages. The PAINFUL YELPING continues.

ROSE

(to Freddie)
I've had a wonderful time.

EXT. ROSE'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Freddie's limo stops in front of DISCOUNT LINGERIE. GEORGE, the driver, comes around to open the door. Rose exits the car, fishing for her keys, followed by Freddie. George looks at Freddie questioningly.

FREDDIE

Just a sec, George.

Freddie walks Rose to the apartment door. The moment has arrived. He smiles boyishly. There's going to be a good night kiss, but no one's sure what level of intimacy. Freddie gives Rose a fairly chaste kiss. Rose takes the cue. They break, happily.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Okay.

ROSE

...okay.

Freddie looks at her. Maybe she doesn't know how much he likes her. He'd better make sure. He kisses her passionately. Her keys hit the carpeted sidewalk.

INT. LATREASA'S DINER - DAY

LATREASA

Well, sleepyhead! How'd that nail polish work?

Rose gives Latreasa a dreamy smile.

LATREASA

Get out of here! Sit yourself down and tell me every detail.

ROSE

He's not as bad as I thought.

LATREASA

Uh-huh. So how's he feel about you? Are you sure he's single?

ROSE

He's a widower!

LATREASA

All right!

ROSE

By the way, I talked to someone you might really like.

LATREASA

Okay! You went from having no dates, no prospects whatsoever, to meeting a guy for me, too! I have definitely created a monster!

ROSE

Oh, Latreasa, you should at least call him. When I told him about you, he gave me his card.

LATREASA

Really? Who is it?

Rose takes a card from her purse.

LATREASA (CONT'D)
 (examining the card)
 Oh, he is one mean dude.

ROSE
 No, he is really a very sweet guy!

LATREASA
 You think I should call him?

ROSE
 He likes hollyhocks.

Hector watches Rose, sullenly working the grill.

LATREASA
 (directing her words to Hector)
 Hey, I don't want to hear anything
 from your department.

Latreasa looks at the card, brings it up to her nose and sniffs it pensively.

EXT. HUNNERTHWASSER MANSION - DAY

A rusty car, trailing smoke, labors up the driveway and pulls to a stop.

HACKBART, private eye in classic fedora, pops out, and surveys the palatial estate. Near the front of the house, the GARDENER, a boytoy is trimming the shrubs.

Hackbart rings the doorbell. An imperious BUTLER opens the door.

BUTLER
 Yes?

HACKBART
 I got an appointment.

BUTLER
 The tradesmen's entrance is around
 the side.

The door slams.

Hackbart resentfully trudges up the lawn and rounds the corner of the house. A hunky blond beach boy is washing a silver Rolls Royce. He stops to stare at Hackbart, who stares back.

Hackbart keeps pressing the buzzer until the door opens. The butler blocks the doorway.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Yes?

HACKBART

Yes?

The butler doesn't answer.

HACKBART (CONT'D)

I've got an appointment with Lady Hunnerthwasser.

BUTLER

Mrs. Hunnerthwasser? Come this way.

They disappear. After a moment, Hackbart reappears grumbling, and wipes his feet on the doormat.

INT. HUNNERTHWASSER LIBRARY - DAY

A fireplace dominates the room. A painting of an old man with Doreen by his side, in a landscape of oil derricks and smoke-belching factories hangs over the mantle.

A gorgeous HOUSEBOY dusts tchotchkes.

Hackbart lights a match with his fingernail, then lights his cigarette. He spies an ashtray, likes it, drops it in his jacket pocket, tosses the spent match into a potted plant, then drags on the cigarette, and looks around.

He hears a small, wheezy, high-pitched SNARL, and turns. The Chihuahua stands in the doorway, bristling, one eye is covered with a bandage.

Doreen charges into the room. The Chihuahua flees.

DOREEN

Good afternoon, Mr. Hackbart. I'm Doreen Hunnerthwasser.

HACKBART

You betcha, toots. Anybody who's ever rubbed an eyeball over the society page knows...

DOREEN

I don't care for your tone.

HACKBART

Get one thing straight, baby.
You're hiring a private eye, not
another altar boy.

The houseboy stops dusting and disappears.

Doreen coolly stares at Hackbart who blows smoke in her
direction.

DOREEN

I want you to follow a certain City
Councilman...

She hands Hackbart a folder with clippings.

DOREEN (CONT'D)

...and get me some photographs of
the woman he's been ...you know ...

There's a picture of Freddie winning the City Council seat.
Below that, a bigger clipping: "Bizarre Tragedy Mars Reptile
House Gala."

HACKBART

Piece of devil's food. It'll cost
you three bills a day, plus
expenses, but you won't have to
break the piggy bank for that, will
ya, sugar plum?

DOREEN

How dare you talk to me like that,
you little worm. I've a mind to
have you pitched out on your ear.

HACKBART

Don't get your panties in a bunch,
honey pie.

DOREEN

Give me that folder. And out!

HACKBART

You're just not used to talking to
a man with real cojones.

DOREEN

Why, you crummy little weasel. You
get the dirt on Freddie Benteen, or
I'll have your license revoked like
that. (she snaps her fingers)

HACKBART

You can try, sugar pussy. You can try.

As Hackbart heads for the door, Doreen snatches a vase and heaves it at him. The vase sails through the doorway out of sight, and CRASHES in the vestibule to a YIPE of pain from the Chihuahua.

INT. CHAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Arch and Tina drink beer in the back room as they watch TV.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (OS)
...the Bob Boudelang Election Poll:
40% for Benteen,

CLOSE ON TV

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (CONT'D)
28% for Cuchichek, 22% say they're
waiting for the debate. (more)

Tina and Arch salute each other, clinking their bottles.

INT. FREDDIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Freddie has his arm around Rose as they watch the news.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (OS)
6% say they're undecided... 2% say
I don't believe this! What is it
with you people? I keep telling
you not to bother me (more)

INT. HUNNERTHWASSER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Doreen is propped up in bed with several satin pillows. She watches an enormous TV, while absently toying with a tousled blond head on an adjoining pillow.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (OS)
...and you keep pestering me and
pestering me... (more)

EXT. TRAILER PARK - NIGHT

A run-down double-wide in the foreground. Through the window, an old black and white plays the same broadcast.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (OS)
 ...You're driving me up the wall!
 I'm not kidding. You bother me one
 more time with this crap... (more)

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

The TV has a coat hangar antenna. Hackbart, in boxer shorts and fedora, irons a shirt, a cigarette dangles from his lips. He barely glances at the TV.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (OS)
 ...and you'll be sorry your mother
 and father ever met. 6% are not
 voting. Tune in to more Bystander
 News at eleven... (more)

INT. HUNNERTHWASSER KITCHEN - NIGHT

On a shiny linoleum floor, a tiny portable color set.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (OS)
 ...for a behind the scenes look at
 the big debate and all the late-
 breaking stories. Bystander News:
 There's no place to hide!

Watching the TV is Doreen's Chihuahua. It reclines in an elaborate wicker dog bed. The dog still has a bandage over one eye. Now, its leg is in a plaster cast.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Freddie and Rose stand in a short line.

FREDDIE
 Maybe he's right.

ROSE
 Freddie, he's just being paranoid.

A pair of MOVIEGOERS notice Freddie. They eavesdrop.

FREDDIE
 He's a professional. It's his job.

MOVIE GOER
 Hey, Mr. Denteen. How're you
 doin'?

SECOND MOVIE GOER
You keep up the good work. You got
my vote.

Rose smiles.

FREDDIE
Thank you.

The first moviegoer looks at Rose for a second, and then
turns back to his companion.

MOVIE GOER
Who's she?

INT. THEATRE LOBBY - NIGHT

Freddie and Rose at the concession stand. The counter girl
dishes up popcorn.

ROSE
I know he's your friend, but do you
really trust him?

FREDDIE
Of course. I wouldn't be on the
City Council without him.

ROSE
People vote for you, not him.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Rose and Freddie settle into their seats.

STRANGER
Are those seats taken?

ROSE
Yes, they are.
(to Freddie) Freddie, sometimes
it's best to follow your own
instincts.

FREDDIE
What if I don't know what my
instincts are?

ROSE
What are you going to do if you're
elected?

Latreasa and Berserk arrive.

LATREASA (OS)
Hey, you two!

Rose gets up and kisses Latreasa on the cheek.

ROSE
We'll be right back.

BERSERK
(to Freddie)
How's it going?

FREDDIE
It's goin'.

BERSERK
Latreasa tells me you guys are getting serious.

FREDDIE
(gives a hopeful grin)
What about you?

BERSERK
Oh, Latreasa's really terrific. I don't get to meet too many women like her.

A STRANGER APPROACHES.

STRANGER
Excuse me, but aren't you that wrestler, Berserk Headhunter?

BERSERK
I get that all the time. Sorry. I guess I must look just like him.

Stranger looks at him for a moment, then shrugs and departs.

BERSERK (CONT'D)
(to Freddie)
Sometimes you just wanna be a regular joe.

Berserk's a head and a half taller than anyone else.

BERSERK (CONT'D)
I hope the girls'll be able to find us.

INT. THEATRE LOBBY - SAME

Rose and Latreasa stand in a long line outside the Ladies' Room.

LATREASA

It's like he's waiting for me to make the first move.

ROSE

Well, remember what you told me. Sometimes men don't know what they want until you tell them.

LATREASA

It's nice to go out with a gentleman, though.

One woman exits the Ladies' Room. The line inches forward.

ROSE

At this rate, we'll miss the beginning.

Rose turns to Latreasa, looks over her shoulder and gasps.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Look! Over there! It's Prince Precious!

LATREASA

Where? Where?
(she catches on)
Wow! What a hunk!

All the women on line charge off to the right.

Rose and Latreasa high five and head into the Ladies' Room.

INT. THEATRE - SAME

Rose, Latreasa, Freddie, and Berserk watch a 3-D action film we never see. They (and the rest of the audience) have on cardboard 3-D glasses. The sound track is very loud, with lots of SOUND EFFECTS, YELLING and ADVENTURE MUSIC. Sometimes the audience thinks a dangerous object is coming at them, and everyone cringes or ducks in unison.

MOVIE VOICE ONE

(from screen)

Ahaaag!

MOVIE VOICE TWO
Guess again dirtbag!

Sounds of GUNSHOTS. Berserk leans over to Freddie.

BERSERK
What an actor!

FREDDIE
Who?

BERSERK
Him.

FREDDIE
Oh, I thought you meant the other
guy.

MOVIE GOER
SSSHHH!

Several rows in front, Hackbart has on sunglasses instead of the 3-D glasses. He turns stealthily towards Freddie's row, trying to hide behind a large tub of popcorn. He carefully focuses a camera on Freddie and Rose.

MOVIE VOICE TWO
Here, help me with this boulder.
Don't let it go until I ...

Tremendous sound effect of ROCKS CASCADING. The audience shrieks and ducks for cover, some tossing snacks into the air. Hackbart's camera is knocked into his drink: PLURP.

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Freddie sits in the front room, doodling.
In the background, volunteers quietly work the phones.
Faint martial arts YELLS occasionally punctuate the scene.

Arch and Tina enter together.

TINA
(to Freddie) Hiya, Freddie,
whaddya think in of this:
"I wept because I had no shoes,
then I met a man who had no
insurance."

Freddie is confused.

ARCH
Latest poll results: we're killin'
the Cooch.

TINA
Just like I knew we would.

ARCH
We put him away at the debate and
it's a happy fizzies party ever
after.

FREDDIE
But, I wanna keep seeing Rose.

ARCH
(to Tina)
He's in heat...

FREDDIE
Tina, she's the most wonderful...

ARCH
I keep tellin' him, she's just one
vote.

FREDDIE
Arch, she's really special...

ARCH
Tina, can we put some topspin on
it?

TINA
I don't know. You hit me with this
kinda cold.

FREDDIE
You guys don't even pay any
attention to me.

ARCH
The little head is ruling the big
head.

TINA
How about we use the heart?

ARCH
You say, a politician with a heart,
and you think...

TINA
Heart attack. Eee. I don't know.
Can we sit on it for now?

FREDDIE
You could replace me with a giant
cardboard cutout for...

ARCH
Shhh! This is serious.

ARCH (CONT'D)
(to Tina)
If the media doesn't get wind of
it, maybe we can keep it from the
great unwashed...

TINA
Good luck.

ARCH
I want us to have a fallback
position.

TINA
Let me think about it.

ARCH
I don't want to have to turn
grandma's picture to the wall.

TINA
I hear you, Archie.

Arch gives her a double take; he likes this new name.
The phone rings.
Freddie reaches for it, but Arch gets it first.

ARCH
Wogobler here...

FREDDIE
I can't even answer my own phone.

ARCH
(to Freddie)
Shhh! This is important.
(into the phone)
Yeah? No, the big skazool is busy.
You want to talk to Freddie, you
have to talk to me...

FREDDIE
I'm right here.

Arch motions with his hand.

ARCH

Yeah, well a lot of people are talking about getting a taste of the sweet patootie, but so far I haven't seen anybody's nickel... Hey... Hey, wait, I'm bending over backwards here to make you a happy buckaroo and I'm not getting anything but trail dust. Well... Yeah... Hey, nobody's trying to slip anybody the rubber kishka.

FREDDIE

Sometimes I don't even know what he's talking about.

TINA

Yeah, he's goooood.

ARCH

It's seventeen five firm, and you can tell him that's Freddie's final word on it.

Arch hangs up.

FREDDIE

Seventeen five?

ARCH

Yeah. We'll take twelve, but I'm not gonna tell him that. He's just a flunky. Unless you think you can get more somewhere else?

FREDDIE

For what?

ARCH.

Nah. You don't want to know about it. Trust me. You want to be able to deny everything if it ever comes out.

FREDDIE

If what ever comes out?

ARCH

Exactly! See what I mean?

FREDDIE

No.

ARCH
So, we'll settle for twelve.

TINA
What a team. Mayor is just a stepping stone. There's no limit to where we can go.

ARCH
Yeah, but you gotta walk before you can crawl.

TINA
The wise man says the longest journey begins with the price of a ticket...

From overhead comes another BATTLE CRY from the karate students. A big piece of plaster comes crashing down. Nobody in the foreground pays it any attention.

FREDDIE
If it ever comes out, I deny it?

Arch and Tina are extremely excited by this.

ARCH AND TINA
(simultaneously) YES!

Arch mimes tossing a baseball into the air and swings a bat.

ARCH
It's outta here!

TINA
Let's go get those voters!

INT. LIMO - DAY

FREDDIE
Hey, guys, I think I have something that could be very important.

Arch looks at Tina. They both look at Freddie.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
I think Cuchichek wears a wig.

ARCH
Of course he's wearing a rug. You didn't know that?

FREDDIE
No, I didn't.

TINA
Did you think real hair looks like that? Everyone knows it's a lid.

FREDDIE
I don't think everybody knows that.
(to driver) George, did you know he was wearing a toupee?

George shakes his head.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
So you all knew? When were you going to tell me?

ARCH
Freddie, settle down. Don't get the jitters, not now.

FREDDIE
All right. (pause) Are those his real teeth?

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Freddie stands in front of a banner which reads: "TEASDALE SENIORS WELCOME FREDDIE BENTEEN." We don't see the audience.

FREDDIE
It's time we looked crime in the face with both hands and said, "Stop!"

He pauses, waiting for a reaction. There is dead silence.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
"Stop!" is what we'll say. So my comprehensive plan would make more money available to the community to make the streets safe for the elderly as well as normal people. Are there any questions?

Freddie pauses again. Nothing.

OVER FREDDIE'S SHOULDER the audience, a dozen seniors sit, mouths agape. A few of the women are doing needlepoint.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
I'd be happy to answer any
questions that anybody might have,
on anything.

Arch and Tina enter with a young orderly.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Any questions whatsoever? Well,
then, I hope you're going to
support me this Election Day.

ARCH
Okay, Freddie, let's go.

FREDDIE
You've been a great audience.

Arch, Tina, Freddie and the orderly leave. Their footsteps
echo down the hall.

The old people remain inert for a few more seconds then
spring into life, leaping from wheelchairs and dragging
tables to the center of the room.

INT. NURSING HOME CORRIDOR - DAY

Freddie, Tina and Arch follow the orderly.

FREDDIE
Awfully nice folk. I sure hope
they vote for me.

ARCH
Don't worry. They will.
(a look to the orderly) Twice, if
they got to.

INT. NURSING HOME ACTIVITY ROOM - DAY

QUICK ANGLE of a table: old gnarled hands expertly shuffle a
deck of cards, and organize a stack of poker chips. Someone
else rapidly counts a stack of \$20 bills.

EXT. LINGERIE STORE - DAY

Rose begins opening the steel security gate. Across the
street, Hackbart sits in his car fitting a telephoto lens to
a camera.

A taxi pulls up. Arch climbs out. He follows Rose.

INT. STORE - DAY

Arch examines a bra and panties on a mannequin.

ARCH
How much for somethin' like this?

ROSE
That's not why you're here.

ARCH
How much?

ROSE
\$19.95.

ARCH
Everything has a price.

ROSE
Not everything.

ARCH
Dream on. You don't like me much,
do you?

ROSE
Honestly, I think you're a bad
influence on Freddie.

ARCH
Never.

ROSE
This debate ought to be about
issues, but you're getting Freddie
to concentrate on a bunch of buzz
words.

ARCH
Politics is buzz words.

ROSE
Cuchichek talks about privatization
of city services. And, and sewers!
Freddie ought to be talking about
things like that.

ARCH
Look, when I was a kid, this city
had a private bus line, the fare
was a nickel.

(MORE)

ARCH (CONT'D)

Then somebody got the bright idea to privatize the trolley lines to their pals at the bus company. First thing they did was tear up the tracks. What's the bus fare now?

ROSE

A dollar fifty. But...

ARCH

But but but! In this country, it's root, hog, or die. Hey, we're gonna help ourselves, sure, but the difference is we're just gonna dip off some of the cream. The Cooch is letting his friends steal the whole cow and slaughter it, too.

ROSE

Why doesn't Freddie talk about things like that?

ARCH

You think tonight's debate is about Freddie and the Cooch? Who we're really up against is Boris the Strangler on the next channel.

ROSE

It that what Freddie thinks?

ARCH

(exasperated)

That's what I mean. If he thinks, he's gonna get all frehoodled! Rose, don't mess with Freddie's head. Next week that election is his if you just let him alone.

Rose's phone rings. Arch snatches it up.

ARCH (CONT'D)

Wogobler here... What? ...Merry Widows?

Rose extends her hand for the phone.

ARCH (CONT'D)

Listen, the name of the place is "Discount Lingerie." You get price, not selection.

ROSE
Give me that phone.

ARCH
No, I'm not gonna discuss it.

ROSE
Arch!

ARCH
You gotta come down here... No,
we're not open late. We're open
business hours.

Rose pulls on the cord.

ARCH (CONT'D)
All right. See you in half an
hour.

Arch hands Rose the phone.

ARCH (CONT'D)
You just have to know how to handle
people.

EXT. ROSE'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Freddie's limo pulls up. Rose gets out. Freddie follows her
looking concerned.

Rose starts to open the door of her apartment building.

FREDDIE
Come on, Rose...

ROSE
No, I want you to promise me that
you're going to stop letting Arch
make all of your decisions.

FREDDIE
Rose, he knows what he's doing.
We've been best friends since
seventh grade. He got me elected
class president.

ROSE
Best friends let people think for
themselves.
(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

And when you meet someone new, they say, "Tell the whole world about it." Freddie, I like you in a way I haven't felt in a long time, but, I want a man who can think for himself.

She starts to go inside.

FREDDIE

Okay, Rose. I'll try.

ROSE

That's not good enough.

As Rose goes into her building, Freddie stands on the carpeted sidewalk, crushed.

INT. HUNNERTHWASSER MANSION - DAY

The butler leads Hackbart into the entry hall.

BUTLER

If you would wait here, sir.

HACKBART

Suit yourself, bub.

The butler sniffs and departs. Hackbart hears a curious THUMPING on the marble floor and turns to the doorway.

Doreen's Chihuahua stand watching him. The bandage has been replaced by a chic little red silk eye patch. The dog's front leg is still encased in a plaster cast.

Hackbart lights a cigarette. The dog SNARLS. Doreen sails into the room.

DOREEN

Stop it, Champ!

HACKBART

Hey, Dorie baby.

DOREEN

That's Mrs. Hunnerthwasser to you, you insolent baboon. Do you have the pictures?

Hackbart tosses a manila envelope on the table.

HACKBART

Lay you peepers on these, sweet
mama.

Doreen opens the envelope and begins perusing the pictures.

DOREEN

Oh! They're perfect! You
wonderful man!

She gives him a hug.

HACKBART

Hey hey hey. Let's keep this
professional!

DOREEN

I know just who to give them to!

Doreen crosses to her desk, and opens her checkbook. She
raises her eyes to Hackbart, and gets that hungry expression
we've seen before.

DOREEN

I like a man who can deliver.

Hackbart returns her look with one of his own.

INT. FREDDIE'S HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Arch and Tina are in the midst of volunteers. Freddie stands
off to one side, sad and lonely.

The room fills with cheering.

ARCH

Thanks, gang! It's been a helluva
campaign, and thanks to you,
tonight we drop the big one.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

Freddie, Arch and Tina have just climbed in.

ARCH

To the studio, George.

The limo starts movie.

FREDDIE

She doesn't even want to see me
anymore.

ARCH

She'll be back.

FREDDIE

I don't even want to be mayor.

ARCH

You ace this debate, you'll get
elected. She'll come around.
You'll see. Women are like that.

Tina gives Arch a look.

ARCH (CONT'D)

This is what we've been working
for. You'll be the master of your
own destiny!

FREDDIE

Why don't you just run for mayor!

ARCH

It's all gonna work out. You'll
see. Have I ever steered you
wrong?

FREDDIE

Well, no... This time...

ARCH

You've just got predebate
jitters... Let's go eat up the
Cooch!

TINA

We're running a little late.

ARCH

No sweat. The champ always leaves
the dressing room last.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

On the floor, technicians ready the set: two podiums face
each other, with a moderator's table in the middle.

WARREN FIRTY, in a conservative suit and bow tie, is doing a
crossword puzzle at the moderator's table.

WARREN

Caspian republic: begins with "a".

Newscaster SHEILA BAMAWATTY, a woman of color, sits next to HERMIONE WHITESIDE, an elderly woman with the dignity of an ocean liner.

Sheila gets a touch-up from a MAKE-UP ARTIST.

Sheila, looking into a compact, bares her teeth, checking for lipstick.

SHEILA

Armenia.

WARREN

Ten letters: "j" in the middle.

HERMIONE

Did you get the Turkish army one?

SHEILA

Here we go!

The FLOOR MANAGER counts down, then points at Sheila.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Good evening. And welcome to tonight's debate. I'm Sheila Bamawatty, Bystander News. Our panelists tonight will be political columnist Warren Firty of the Picayune Examiner...

Warren nods at the camera.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

And Lifestyles editor Hermione Whiteside of the Suburban Pennysaver.

Hermione attempts a smile.

WARREN

Sheila, if I may, what we have here is essentially a battle between the charismatic and the managerial.

HERMIONE

And Frederick Benteen is, so far as I know, the first American politician to be endorsed by a professional wrestler.

Off to the side, Freddie and Efrem sit in folding chairs, being made up, having microphones pinned to their suits. Freddie steals a furtive glance at Efrem's hairline. Efrem ignores him.

SHEILA

What about the sympathy vote, Warren? Is that going to be a big factor here?

WARREN

I think that voters have by and large forgotten the incident a few years ago with the python and Cuchichek's wife.

HERMIONE

That was Benteen's wife.

SHEILA

And it was an anaconda.

WARREN

You sure? Anyway, it shouldn't be too much of a factor.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

A big dark room with a bank of TV monitors. At the console PHYLLIS WOLF, the DIRECTOR, calls the show over a headset. Various TECHNICIANS run video switches and audio controls.

Arch and Tina are shown to their seats.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO FLOOR - NIGHT

Freddie and Efrem walk onto the set with COMMISSIONER MONTGOMERY, a distinguished older woman.

SHEILA

And here's Commissioner Echo Montgomery of the League of Women's Voters.

Commissioner Montgomery shakes hands with both Freddie and Efrem and shows them a silver dollar.

COMMISSIONER MONTGOMERY

Councilman Benteen, since you're leading in the polls, please call heads or tails.

She flips the coin as Freddie gives her a smile and a wink.

FREDDIE

Tails!

The coin falls to the floor.

COMMISSIONER MONTGOMERY

Tails it is. Shake hands,
gentlemen, and good luck.

Efrem and Freddie shake hands gingerly as Commissioner Montgomery departs. Both candidates head for their podiums.

CONTROL ROOM

DIRECTOR

Ready. Go tape one.

UNSEEN ANNOUNCER (VO)

Tonight's debate is brought to you
by King O'Carpets Warehouse, and by
Little Whiskers, the first dog food
with the taste of cat.

LOGOS for each of the sponsors appear on the monitors as the announcer mentions them.

INT. LATREASA'S DINER - NIGHT

Rose and Latreasa are watching the debate with Berserk.

LATREASA

I'm not sure you're over him.

On the TV screen, the dog food logo changes to a close-up of Freddie looking serious and attentive.

ROSE (OS)

He's not for me.

BERSERK (OS)

I think he'd make a great
president, I mean, mayor.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

DIRECTOR

Camera two. Take it.

WARREN

(on monitor)

Councilman Benteen, would you categorize your plans for relieving the city's current fiscal crisis?

FREDDIE

(on monitor)

I'd be happy to, Warren. As you know, the current financial crisis is caused by the policies that my distinguished opponent has helped shape and endorse. We need more than half-baked ideas cooked up around a pinochle table.

Freddie's on air, but on other preview monitors we see Efrem react. The director sees it, too.

DIRECTOR

Camera one! Wait. Never mind.

ARCH

Gotta be quicker than that, Phyllis.

Tina and Arch chuckle.

HERMINONE

Pinochle?

STUDIO FLOOR

FREDDIE

We need to be playing for stakes a lot higher than a pinochle game.

EFREM

All right. That's enough about pinochle. Knock it off.

FREDDIE

I don't have to.

SHEILA

Mayor Cuchichek, if you'll just...

EFREM

Just for that, I'm going to talk about lingerie.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Rose looks at Latreasa with alarm.

INT. STUDIO FLOOR - NIGHT

SHEILA
Please, wait your turn, Mr.
Mayor...

FREDDIE
Just a minute.

EFREM
I don't think the voters of this
city want a mayor who corresponds
with a woman who sells ...lingerie.

CONTROL ROOM

AUDIO TECHNICIAN
Lingerie?

Arch and Tina look at each other. The director sees this.
Excitement starts to infect the control room staff.

DIRECTOR
(urgently, into headset)
Camera two, zoom in. Now!

ARCH
(to Tina)
Oh, great!

Freddie's anguished close-up on the control room monitor gets
tighter. He's sweating.

STUDIO FLOOR

PANELISTS
Gentlemen, please! Lingerie?

FREDDIE
Huh... You... What?

EFREM
Or do you want to deny it?

FREDDIE
Of course, I want to.

EFREM

I think that voters in this city
want a higher standard of morality.
Not the slinky slither of lingerie.

FREDDIE

They do not.

EFREM

Do too!

FREDDIE

Do not!

SHEILA

Gentlemen, please!

EFREM

Too!

WARREN

If we could, Mayor Cuchichek, I
have a question about the white
paper your office issued concerning
economic plans for industrial
development. (pause) What do you
mean, lingerie?

EFREM

My distinguished opponent is
currently having a liaison with a
woman who sells what some people
might call lingerie.

FREDDIE

It's not a liaison. That makes it
sound like something dirty. I
mean...

EFREM

Let him deny that she wears that
lingerie when they have a
rendezvous!

FREDDIE

What--um,
(points at Efrem)
He's wearing a wig!

SHEILA

(trying to restore order)
Gentlemen! The issue here is not
who's bald...(suddenly aware of the
double entendre) I mean...

EFREM

Let my opponent deny that sometimes
he wears lingerie as well!

FREDDIE

I do not.

EFREM

So, you're denying it!

FREDDIE

No, I mean...

EFREM

Do we want a government that
whispers with the silken rustle of
lingerie, or--

FREDDIE

Shut up!

EFREM

You gonna make me?

FREDDIE

Yeah!

CONTROL ROOM

The director tries to switch the cameras fast enough to follow the bickering. Everyone in the control room moves their gaze between Freddie and Efrem, like they're watching a ping pong match.

EFREM

(on monitor)

You and what army?

FREDDIE

(on monitor)

Me, myself, and I!

DIRECTOR

(under, calling cameras)

...two, one, two, one, two...

EFREM

(on monitor) Yeah?

FREDDIE

(on monitor) Yeah!!

EFREM

(on monitor) Yeah?!!

FREDDIE
 (on monitor) Yeah!!!

STUDIO FLOOR

The panelists watch the ping pong match, too.

SHEILA
 Gentlemen! Please! Hermione,
 could we please have a question?

FREDDIE
 Ask my opponent about his so-called
 reform plans, which are as phony
 as...

EFREM
 Professional wrestling?

FREDDIE
 Yeah! No! What?

EFREM
 You're the one that's been endorsed
 by wrestlers. Everyone knows that
 wrestling is a fake.

FREDDIE
 Everyone does not know that.

HERMIONE, SHEILA, AND WARREN
 Oh, come on!

CONTROL ROOM

The director senses a melodramatic moment and bears down.

DIRECTOR
 Tighter, camera two. I want to see
 pores.

ARCH
 (to director)
 Thanks, a lot, Phyllis!

FREDDIE
 (on monitor)
 It could be for real.

HERMIONE, SHEILA, AND WARREN
 (on monitor)
 Oh yeah, sure. Right. Sure.

There's a short silence while Freddie sweats on camera. In the back, Arch and Tina lean close together.

TINA
....bad feeling here...

FREDDIE
(on monitor)
Nobody knows for sure...

ARCH
We're cooked.

TINA
Goose city.

EFREM
(on monitor)
My opponent doesn't know sham from
shine-ola.

FREDDIE
(on monitor)
That's not true. I'll, I'll hold a
City Council hearing and if, if
wrestling's a fake, I'll drop out
of the race.

Arch stares at Freddie, thunderstruck.

EFREM
(on monitor)
Endorsed by frauds...

AUDIO TECHNICIAN
(under, to director)
Didn't his daughter marry a
wrestler?

DIRECTOR
Probably where he got the idea.

STUDIO FLOOR

Freddie pauses. It suddenly dawns on him that he's painted himself into a corner, and there's a moment of real panic in his eyes.

FREDDIE
Oh, yeah?

EFREM
Yeah!

FREDDIE

Yeah??

INT. BACK ROOM / CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Freddie, Arch, and Tina watch the rest of the exchange on TV.

EFREM

Yeah!

FREDDIE

YEAH?

EFREM

Yeah!!!

FREDDIE

Yeah????

NEWSCASTER FLOYD

That was the scene tonight at the mayoral debate, which produced one of the most sensational revelations of any recent campaign.

A photo of Rose adjusting a teddy on a half-torso mannequin appears on the screen. Her tongue at the corner of her mouth, she looks slightly wanton.

NEWSCASTER CANDI

Bystander News has identified Councilman Benteen's correspondent... Her name is Rosaline Canoe, a 37-year old divorcee. She was unavailable for comment.

Arch and Tina exchange a look.

Tina turns down the sound.

TINA

What happened? We started off so good, and then, pow!

ARCH

Don't ask me. Ask Yoko!

FREDDIE

What's that supposed to mean?

ARCH

Listen. If the shroud fits...

FREDDIE

Hey, Arch...

ARCH

And what twisted demonic suicidal impulse made you say you're gonna investigate professional wrestling?

FREDDIE

I trusted my instincts.

ARCH

What are you, a complete fool? Everyone knows that wrestling's rigged.

FREDDIE

I am not a fool. And wrestling's a great sport.

ARCH

A sport? They flip, they fart, they flip, they fart.

FREDDIE

No, Arch, wrestling's a skill. At takes artistry. These guys are, they're, they're like ballet dancers. It's sports entertainment. I have to defend 'em.

ARCH

What I did for you, I did from the heart, and you go and rip it to shreds in 10 seconds flat.

TINA

Come on Archie, let's think this through. Maybe we can--

A huge crowd of press has gathered and start shouting "Councilman Benteen," "Hey Arch, what's the story?"

FREDDIE

Arch, what do I say now?

ARCH

I quit.

FREDDIE

I say, "I quit"?

ARCH
No, I quit.

FREDDIE
Tina?

ARCH
We both quit.

TINA
Arch. (to Freddie) Freddie, you
gotta say somethin', or they'll be
out there all night.

Freddie goes to the door, glances back at Arch who looks away. Freddie starts to open it. Then closes it. Then opens it again.

FREDDIE
Please, I have something to say,
and that's that I want to say I
will have no future comment at this
time.

1ST REPORTER (OS)
When will you have a comment?

2ND REPORTER (OS)
When are you going to have the
wrestling hearings?

FREDDIE
But I do want to say, I totally
deny all of the allegations. And I
have nothing but scorn and contempt
for the alligators.

Behind the reporters, a taxicab pulls up. Rose gets out and sees Freddie getting roasted. TAXI HORN BEEPS several times. Reporters turn to look. Freddie sees that it's Rose, waving madly for him to join her.

Freddie bolts through the reporters, and dives into the cab.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

As the cab pulls away, Freddie and Rose embrace.

ROSE
Freddie, I'm so sorry...

FREDDIE
Rose, I love you.

EXT. CLUB ALABASTER ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A taxi pulls up in front of the private men's club with a brass plaque that reads CLUB ALABASTER: MEMBERS ONLY. A muscular DOORMAN stands guard. Arch, depressed, exits the taxi and enters the building.

INT. CLUB BAR - NIGHT

The sumptuous bar is nearly deserted. Wynn Yannigan drinks alone. Arch enters, his head hangin' low. He perches on a stool.

TOM, the BARTENDER, comes over.

ARCH
Bourbon, Tom. Make it a double.

Sleburne comes up behind Arch.

SLEBURNE
Hey, hey, hey! Members only! Oh,
it's you, Arch.

Arch gives a baleful stare.

SLEBURNE (CONT'D)
Congratulations! That wrestling
hearing is a stroke of genius.
After tomorrow, this city will be
rid of both you and Freddie.

ARCH
Get lost, you schlemiel!

SLEBURNE
Hey Tom, put Wogobler's drinks on
my tab. Least I can do for all his
hard work.

Sleburne chuckles and leaves. Arch downs the first drink.

ARCH
(mumbles to himself)
Oh, am I in trouble.

Wynn gets off his stool and peers into Arch's face.

WYNN
Trouble! I got nothing but
trouble. Just about to pull out
all the plugs for Christmas... And
you and your big-mouth Councilman..

ARCH

What? This is all your fault. You
and your meshugana wrestlers.

WYNN

Yeah, and politics' about as
straight as a crooked mile.

They stare off, then resign themselves to their losses.

ARCH

(to bartender)

Do it again, Tom.

(to Wynn) What are you drinking?

Wynn shakes his head. He has had enough.

ARCH (CONT'D)

Wynn, what can I say? One minute
he was listening to me, and the
next minute he was running amok.

WYNN

What happened?

ARCH

Cherchez les feminist.

WYNN

You know, my father, rest his
bones, always used to say, "A
burden shared is a struggle
spared."

They smile at one another. Two men who know the smell of a
good idea.

WYNN (CONT'D)

Let's you and me go someplace quiet
where we can talk.

Arch looks around at the deserted room.

ARCH

Oh, something this good has got to
have shabazz.

EXT. CITY HALL PARKING LOT - DAY

A large sign draping City Hall: "299th most desirable city
out of 300 in which to live." MONEY MAGAZINE.

It's a media circus and public spectacle. In the parking lot, Bystander News live remote truck is setting up.

Sheila Bamawatty interviews retired wrestler GORILLA MULDOON[™].

SHEILA

Serving as my co-commentator for this afternoon's telecast, former world wrestling champion, Gorilla Muldoon.

A crowd has gathered behind them, waving to the camera and vying for attention.

GORILLA

Thanks Sheila. What a great day for political sports fans everywhere. All autumn long we've seen Freddie Benteen and Efrem Cuchichek slugging it out like two be-hemoths with kind of intensity usually reserved for the squared circle.

Gorilla turns and menaces the hecklers. Several stumble and fall. He turns back like nothing happened.

GORILLA (CONT'D)

And now this hearing, which could decide not only the mayorship, but the future of wrestling itself. Well, as Rotten Ronnie Burke[™] used to say, "Once things start happening, anything can happen."

INT. CITY COUNCIL HEARING - DAY

The hearing is underway. The gallery overflows with all kinds. In the front, Rose sits next to Latreasa.

Wearing a business suit, and full skull make-up, The Berserk Headhunter sits at a long table, with his tiny ATTORNEY in pith helmet and safari suit.

Behind Berserk sit a bunch of wrestlers waiting to testify.

FREDDIE

Mr. Berserk, have you ever faked a match?

Berserk leans forward. His attorney covers the microphone and whispers something into Berserk's ear.

BERSERK

Councilman, I have never given my fans less than one thousand percent. I think that's what America deserves.

Efrem snorts.

FREDDIE

No further questions.

EFREM

Wait a minute. I have a lot of questions.

FREDDIE

The chair yields to Mr. Mayor.

EFREM

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The two stare at each other with hostility for a second. Sleburne slips Efrem a piece of paper.

EFREM (CONT'D)

(looking at the paper)

Your name is really Cleophus Moore, isn't it?

BERSERK

No, sir.

EFREM

And you were... What do you mean, 'No sir.'?

BERSERK

My legal name is The Berserk Headhunter. I'm copyrighted. Legally incorporated as an S-2 in the State of Delaware.

EFREM

But you were born Cleophus Moore.

BERSERK

Yes sir.

EFREM

And in this city?

BERSERK

Yes sir.

EFREM

You reside here now.

BERSERK

Yes sir.

EFREM

You've never been to Africa.

BERSERK

I've wrestled on every continent on earth, including Antarctica, when I wrestled for our brave Navy post in Little America. I've wrestled before 73 heads of state and...

EFREM

But you've never lived there!

BERSERK

In Antarctica?

EFREM

No, Africa! You never lived in Africa!

FREDDIE

Mr. Cuchichek, the chair fails to see the relevance of this line of questioning.

EFREM

The relevance?

FREDDIE

Yes. What are you getting at?

EFREM

How the hell can he be any kind of headhunter? He was born and lives on Cleveland Street!

Slight uproar from the gallery. Freddie bangs the gavel.

EFREM (CONT'D)

You're awful quick with that thing.

BERSERK

Where I was born makes no difference. You listen to business deals, or even the City Council and you'll see there's a lot more headhunting here than there ever was in Africa!

Applause and cheers from the gallery.

As Freddie bangs the gavel, Arch and Tina come in, weaving through the crowd.

BERSERK (CONT'D)
Are there any other questions?

EFREM
No, let's go on to the next jibonza.

Arch sidles up to Freddie and tries to give him an index card. Freddie's astonished. Then--

FREDDIE
(to Arch)
What do you want?

ARCH
Freddie, trust me.

Tina's right behind Arch, scribbling on index cards.

Berserk takes a seat beside late-comer Wretched Johnny Spaldeen^[TM], who looks nervous.

Arch hands Freddie a card. Out of habit, Freddie takes it and reads.

FREDDIE
For the next witness, the council would like to call to the stand World Supernational Professional Heavyweight Television Wrestling Superstar Wretched Johnny Spaldeen.

Applause from the gallery, which Freddie gavels down.

Johnny Spaldeen steps up, waving his enormous jewel-encrusted championship belt to the gallery.

Johnny hands the belt to Ben Yannigan, and takes the hot seat.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Your witness, Mr. Cuchichek.

EFREM
(surprised)
Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your name is...

Off to the side, Freddie and Arch fall into a whispered conference. Freddie is clearly agitated. From time to time, he looks at Johnny Spaldeen with wild surmise.

JOHNNY SPALDEEN
 (heavy Brooklyn accent)
 Giovanni Spaldini. I wrestle under
 da name of Johnny Spaldeen. Johnny
 Spaldeen, da human wrecking
 machine, eh?

EFREM
 Right. And you were born...

JOHNNY SPALDEEN
 In Bay Ridge, da people's republic
 of Brooklyn.

EFREM
 And how long have you been...

JOHNNY SPALDEEN
 Nineteen years. I used to be one
 of the Zebra Kids.

OFF TO THE SIDE

FREDDIE
 There's no way I can do this.

ARCH
 But it's the only way you can win.

FREDDIE
 Rose was right. I have to make my
 own decisions.

ARCH
 Listen, Freddie, if you don't do
 this, we're all going down.

FREDDIE
 You already quit.

Arch looks away.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 Arch, politics was always more like
 your kinda thing.

Arch, sensing the moment is coming--

ARCH

Freddie, it's your decision and you've got to make it, now!

FREDDIE

You know, I just went along with this for the ride, but I think now I'm in it for real.

ARCH

From now on, you call all the shots.

FREDDIE

I don't know, Arch. I don't know.

ARCH

It's your ballpark, all the way.

FREDDIE

You promise.

ARCH

You got my word on it.

FREDDIE

If you swear.

Arch crosses his fingers over his heart.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Okay, that's my cue.

Arch sharply points at Efrem, snapping his fingers.

EFREM

And have you ever participated in a faked match?

JOHNNY SPALDEEN

Of course. Whaddaya, stupid or something'? They're all fake.

There is a big uproar from the gallery. Rose looks very worried. Efrem motions Freddie to get him to bang the gavel. Freddie does.

EFREM

So all the outcomes are predetermined in advance?

JOHNNY SPALDEEN

You deaf, or wha? It's all like a little script.

(MORE)

JOHNNY SPALDEEN (CONT'D)

Good guys and bad guys. I hit you,
you hit me. Everything's
rehoisted.

EFREM

Your witness, Mr. Benteen.

Freddie opens his mouth to ask a question. Arch gives him a
"Go on," gesture.

Rose, Latreasa, and all the wrestlers lean forward.

FREDDIE

Mr. Spaldeen, why are you telling
us all this?

JOHNNY SPALDEEN

'Cause it's the troot.

FREDDIE

(reading from an index card)
But don't you have a different
reason, a secret agenda that none
of your fans know about?

JOHNNY SPALDEEN

No!

FREDDIE

You're not really Johnny Spaldeen,
are you?

EFREM

What?

JOHNNY SPALDEEN

All right, all right, I admit it.
You woimed it out of me.

Johnny Spaldeen stands and loosens his collar and tie.

JOHNNY SPALDEEN (CONT'D)

Dis Johnny Spaldeen ting is just an
act. I been posing as an American
to sucker yous all in.

Obviously rehearsed cries of "Oh, no!" From The Berserk
Headhunter and all the other wrestlers.

JOHNNY SPALDEEN (CONT'D)

My name is really Colonel Malik and
me and the rest of the
Azerbaijanians plan to destroy your
faith in your puny country.

(MORE)

JOHNNY SPALDEEN (CONT'D)

We hate da USA and everything dat
it stands fer. So paste dat in
your hat and smoke it.

The Berserk Headhunter leaps to his feet, along with several
other wrestlers.

BERSERK

Listen here, Colonel Milk or
whatever your name is! America is
the greatest country there is in
the whole USA, and you and your
Azerjanians...

ARCH

(starting to get annoyed)
Azerbajaininas!!!

BERSERK

What he said. You guys aren't
going to run down the U.S. of A. in
front of The Berserk Headhunter
while I sit idly by.

JOHNNY SPALDEEN

Try and stop us, dog of a pig!

EFREM

Aw, for crying out loud!

The Berserk Headhunter rushes up to Johnny Spaldeen. They
trade blows woodenly as the other wrestlers spread out and
hold back the aged BAILIFFS.

Freddie bangs his gavel. Johnny Spaldeen grabs Berserk by
his shoulders with thumb and forefingers spread out and
pretends to squeeze.

BEN YANNIGAN

(from the gallery)
Oh, no! Oh my god, it's the
Caspian Claw Bionic Death Grip!

Other wrestlers all go "Ooooooh!"

At Arch's urging, Freddie leaves the podium, and approaches
the two wrestlers. When Freddie reaches Johnny Spaldeen,
Spaldeen lets go of Berserk, who sinks to the floor,
seemingly unconscious.

Freddie puts his hand on Johnny Spaldeen's lapel. Spaldeen
throws himself in an astonishing somersault right past
Freddie and onto the witness table, SMASHING IT.

EFREM
Gentlemen! Please!

Spaldeen gets to his feet, charges Freddie, who puts his hand out. Spaldeed grabs Freddie's hand, slipping himself again, this time landing on a bunch of wrestlers waiting to testify. They go sprawling, knocking over chairs and spectators.

Efrem reaches for the gavel but Arch grabs it first. They tussle.

ROSE
(shouting from the gallery)
Watch out, Freddie!

Then with a GROWL, Spaldeen charges. This time, Spaldeen grabs Freddie's body and flips himself so that he winds up on the floor, with Freddie right on top of him.

JOHNNY SPALDEEN
(on the sly)
Good job, Freddie, thanks a lot.

FREDDIE
No problem.

Ben Yannigan sprints over and counts Spaldeen out, like a referee.

Pandemonium in the gallery.

Rose gives Latreasa a look of incredulity.

Efrem and Arch continue to tussle over the gavel. Efrem loses his toupee.

Freddie gets to his feet, aided by Berserk, and jumps for joy.

ANGLE on Johnny Spaldeen as Freddie jumps on his fingers.

JOHNNY SPALDEEN
(whispers)
Owww! Hey, watch it!

FREDDIE
Oh, Sorry, sorry...

Freddie moves over prudently. Spaldeen slumps back to unconsciousness.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Rose! Rose! Rose!

Kid Plastique and The Masked Atheist grab Rose. They lower her over the edge to Prince Precious and Satan, who carry her to Freddie.

BEN YANNIGAN

(tapping the microphone)

Is this on? (more tapping)

I think everyone in this great country of ours owes you, Freddie Benteen, a debt of gratitude, for protecting the American way of life. And so by the authority vested in me by my father, Wynn T. Yannigan, I hereby declare you, Freddie Benteen, World Super-national Professional Heavyweight Television Wrestling Champion of the World!

Ben puts the championship belt on Freddie to wild applause.

Efrem lets go of the gavel and rushes back to the podium. Arch walks up behind him holding the gavel.

EFREM

(grabbing the podium microphone)

Just a minute. I object!

Arch raps the gavel smartly on Efrem's hand.

EFREM (CONT'D)

Owwwww!

Freddie takes the microphone from Ben.

FREDDIE

I promise to serve to the best of my abilities. I'd like to thank my manager and best friend, Arch Wogobler, for his faith in me. But most of all, I'd like to thank the woman who brought back light and love to a lonely man. Rose, I'd like to ask you... Rose?

Rose looks at him, startled.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Will you be my wife?

ROSE

Could we talk about this later?

ALL SPECTATORS

Awww!

ROSE

Oh, all right!

SPECTATORS CHEER.

Freddie grabs her, they embrace then kiss.

They go on kissing as Latreasa runs up and hugs Berserk.

Sheila and Gorilla stand on either side of the doorway.

Hackbart swaggers out; Doreen clings adoringly to his arm.

Efrem walks up the aisle scowling, his toupee's on crooked.

GORILLA

Well, Mayor Cuchichek, I guess this makes you the odds-on-choice to be re-elected mayor.

EFREM

(cheering up)

Yeah, I guess that's right!

GORILLA

Unless Commissioner Montgomery rules that becoming champion makes Freddie Benteen mayor at the same time.

EFREM

Give me a break.

Rose and Freddie walk towards the door. Sheila tries to stick her microphone in their faces, but they're in complete oblivion. Latreasa and Berserk follow.

Johnny Spaldeen takes the microphone from Sheila and speaks directly to the camera.

JOHNNY SPALDEEN

Freddie Benteen may have won dis foist round, but he won't win da war! I'm going to defend da Aborigines--

SHEILA

Don't you mean, the Azerbaijanians.

JOHNNY SPALDEEN
 Whadda you, a wisenheimer? I'm
 swearing eternal revenge on him and
 all Americans on da 27th at da
 Coliseum. Call Ticketronic at 1-
 800...

INT. CLUB ALABASTER - DAY

CARL, MAX, and MONTY, three comfortable fat cats, recline in large leather easy chairs watching Freddie's moment of triumph on television. Max turns to his pals.

MAX
 So whaddaya think?

CARL
 I think you got something.

MONTY
 He's perfect.

MAX
 He's better than perfect.

CARL
 Jeezs, you're right.

MAX
 Of course, I'm right.

Carl takes out his cell phone and starts to dial.

The TV has switched back to the Bystander News anchor desk.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD
 ...just in, and now 64% of the
 voters think that Benteen should be
 declared mayor, 8% think that he is
 mayor...

MONTY
 Gotta hand it to you, Max. You
 still know how to pick 'em. But
 what about that wrestling thing?
 You think that could be a problem?

NEWSCASTER FLOYD (OS)
 2% said, "You again. I warned you,
 you son of a ... !"

CARL
 (to Monty)
 No way. Only makes it better.
 (into the phone)
 Sharkey? Carl here...beautiful,
 beautiful, couldn't be better...
 Listen, we got an idea for you
 fellas... No, better than that:
 for New Hampshire...

Carl glances back to the TV picture, where an optimistic photo of Freddie appears over Newscaster Floyd's shoulder.

NEWSCASTER FLOYD
 Complete poll results, and details
 of the unprovoked attack on our Man-
 in-the-Street Pollster Bob
 Boudelang, by an unknown assailant
 on Bystander News at 11. The news
 that gets you where you live.

Bull's Eye logo slashes on the screen.

CLOSING CREDITS over wedding scrapbook photos:

Freddie and Rose (traditional)

Latreasa and Berserk (in mufti on a beach, ring fingers entwined)

Doreen and Hackbart (on the Doreen II)

Arch and Tina (Justice of the Peace)

Photo credits reveal that Wynn Yannigan and Wretched Johnny Spaldeen are one and the same.

Photo credit of Bob Boudelang Bystander News Man-on-the-Street Pollster in traction.

EXT. COUNTRY MAILBOX - DAY

A woman's hand reaches into a rustic mailbox and pulls out the postcard from Harbinger Falls.

WOMAN (OS)
 Oh look, it's a post card from
 Sonny...

TV COMMERCIAL for WRESTLING ACTION FIGURES: Satan, The Berserk Headhunter, Boris the Strangler, Kid Plastique, Gorilla Muldoon, The Mad Hatter, Prince Precious, The Masked Atheist, Friar Angelo, Wretched Johnny Spaldeen, and Freddie Benteen, as THE FEARSOME OMNIVORE. Only available through this television promotion. Not available in stores.

THE END

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