

VIRAL

Written by

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. PIXELATED TV SCREEN - EVENING

A SPINNING GLOBE GRAPHIC shows the words "Annals of Now" then shifts to a SCOLDING FINGER GRAPHIC that reads "Greg's Grouses".

A middle-aged black correspondent with an Ed Bradley vibe leans against a desk in an office lined with BOOKS.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNALS OF NOW STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

GREG GOODRICH shuts the book he was "reading" and turns to camera.

GREG

Hoagie punch cards. I don't like them, and neither should you. I'm Greg Goodrich and this is my grouse.

Greg turns to camera two.

GREG (CONT'D)

Sandwich loyalty cards were created to shackle mankind into repetitive noshing. Sometimes I want a deli Reuben, sometimes I want a Subway footlong. Sometimes I want falafel! My lunch, my choice. I won't limit my eating options just because a free sub is dangled. I'm not a "hero", I just want freedom.

A young PRODUCTION ASSISTANT does a jerk-off hand motion.

GREG (CONT'D)

Remember: If you're not grouching - you're not paying attention. Back to you, Peggy.

PEGGY LONGFELLOW, an elderly woman in a Nancy Reagan blazer sits behind an imposing anchor desk.

PEGGY LONGFELLOW

Thank you Greg. In real news -

Greg flinches, stung.

PEGGY LONGFELLOW (CONT'D)  
- a new UN report revealed that top  
climate scientists are building a  
secret underground bunker only they  
have the keys to. It will be large  
and have tennis courts.

Peggy dabs her forehead and tries to catch her breath.

PRODUCER (O.S.)  
You good Peg?

Peggy struggles to speak, then keels over on the desk. Greg  
rushes to her side to help. As he checks her pulse, he spots  
the production assistant with phone in hand.

GREG  
Call 911! She's having a heart  
attack!

Greg notices the PA recording the scene on his IPHONE instead  
of helping. He storms over and slaps it out of his hand.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
Hey, that's a 10-S! I camped out  
for that! Unnecessarily it turned  
out!

Looking around, Greg notices everyone else recording on their  
phones as well.

GREG  
This is real life, not "content"!  
Peggy needs help!

The crowd keeps filming as Peggy tumbles to the floor. Greg  
angrily pulls out his old FLIP-PHONE and dials 911.

GREG (CONT'D)  
Jesus, there's more to life than  
going viral!

SMASH CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: "VIRAL" [HARD WHITE FONT ON BLACK SCREEN]

CUT TO:

MONTAGE:

--Young blond dudebro TROY MALLOY dumps dozens of ALKA-SELTZER TABLETS into a Subway FOOTLONG ROLL.

TROY

It's your boy Troy, about to make  
this Alka-Seltzer footlong my  
bitch!

He chokes down the toxic sub as his BOYS cheer. He vomits foam almost immediately. Though the clip is amateurish, the guy does have a certain charisma. [CHYRON: "900,000 views"]

--Troy dances "The Running Man" in the middle lane of the GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE in a sumo suit, stopping traffic at rush hour. [CHYRON: "8.2 million views"]

--Troy records from his bed while holding a single PINK ROSE towards the camera.

TROY (CONT'D)

Never let a man tell you you're not  
foine. I love the flaws on your  
body *more* than the good parts.

[CHYRON: "8.6 million views"]

--Young fans swoon at a "Stars of Social Media" live show. Troy grabs a GUITAR and strums one note. The crowd explodes like it just saw Hendrix. As Troy preens, the older backing band look at one another, weary. [CHYRON: 18 million views"]

--GRAPHIC: Troy's photo passes The Fat Jew, a Hemsworth torso, and Vladimir Putin on Ogler.com's "Hot Influencers List".

--A SUPER-FAN is interviewed at Troy's e-book signing event. (Troy is signing TABLET screens with a Sharpie.)

SUPER-FAN

My gay dad kicked me out 'cause I'm  
left-handed. I was living on the  
streets.

(blinks back tears)

Troy's videos were the only smile I  
had most days. I'll *always* support  
him no matter what.

TROY

(puts his arm around him)  
This right here is why I get to do  
what I do.

--Troy steals a POLICE HORSE when a young COP isn't looking. The cop grabs for his GUN, but once he sees that it's Troy, he laughs and gives a thumbs up as the star gallops away.

[CHYRON: "48 million views"]

-Clips from this montage and other Troy vids meld into a vast grid of phone screens held by the hands of unseen people.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Shaky phone camera footage of Troy cockily striding through a hospital corridor in a fake doctor's uniform.

TROY  
412, this is it.

Troy bursts through the door to find a comatose middle-aged man lying in a hospital bed.

TROY (CONT'D)  
'Sup sick homie! It's your boy Dr. Troy!

Troy puts his stethoscope up to the man's chest and listens.

TROY (CONT'D)  
The patient needs 50 CC's of  
Scrotex, stat!

He pulls out a prescription pad and writes "Deez Nuts". Then Troy straddles the man and pulls down his own scrubs.

TROY (CONT'D)  
For more great content like this,  
follow me @Troystronaut!

Troy drops his crotch onto the poor man's face. The image freezes the moment before nut-to-chin contact.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ANNALS OF NOW STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Back live in studio, Greg sits opposite Troy, who's putting on a "remorse face" in a suit he looks uncomfortable in.

GREG

You've been dropped by Tiger Shaft, a company that sells enhancement pills at gas station stop-and-shops. Your tattoo artist put out a statement distancing himself from your ink. Malala ripped up your picture on SNL. Troy Malloy: What do you have to say for yourself?

TROY

I did a oopsie, no doubt.

A heavy lingering pause.

GREG

That's it?

TROY

Yeah. I mean...no?

(looks around)

Wasn't Peggy Longfellow supposed to be doing this?

GREG

She stepped down to tend to her health. I'm filling in this week until a replacement is chosen. What I'm more concerned with is your lack of remorse.

TROY

Remorse, right.

(turns to camera)

I want to apologize to the man I hurt. My bean bags should never have blasted your cheeks, even if it did get 53 million views. I know that now. I'm not a bad person.

GREG

You are. You do bad things and feel nothing.

TROY

That's not true. I once gave a turkey to a soup kitchen. It bit a guy, who sued and got *rich*! Plus I'm a Big Brother!

GREG

You're a youth mentor?

TROY

No, I have a younger brother. His name's Liam, and I am *nice* to him.

GREG

What I saw on that tape was indefensible.

TROY

My producer Billy said the guy was a Troy super-fan who always wanted to be in one of my pranks.

GREG

So you planned to slam your genitals on the face of a *different* coma victim?

TROY

Right! Billy mixed up the room numbers. He's super dyslexic. Dyslexia's like, a huge problem in this country. One I'm committed to fixing.

(holds up tacky shirt)

That's why I've donated 12 TroyBoy hoodies to-

GREG

Let's talk about your victim, Landon Higley.

A photo of sweet-faced LANDON HIGLEY comes up on the monitor.

GREG (CONT'D)

Landon was a beloved teacher at Benedict Arnold Middle School injured protecting his students from a crazed Cutco knife salesman.

Grainy security footage of a disheveled man wandering through a school hallway waving a KNIFE. Landon steps between the man and some very scared kids.

GREG (CONT'D)

The community rallied around him.

GRAPHIC: Photo of smiling Chicagoans at "LandonWalk", a walkathon held to raise money for Landon's treatment.

GREG (CONT'D)  
 Mayor Lubbit even visited him  
 personally.

CUT TO:

INT. LANDON'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Live local news footage of MAYOR LUBBIT doing a photo-op with  
 a still-comatose Landon.

MAYOR LUBBIT  
 On behalf of the grateful citizens  
 of Chicago, I am proud to present  
 Landon Higley with a Key to the  
 City!

Mayor Lubbit awkwardly lays an OVERSIZED KEY on Landon's  
 chest and shakes his limp hand. The CIVIC LEADERS in  
 attendance all look embarrassed to be there. The key slips  
 off and clatters loudly to the floor.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. ANNALS OF NOW STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Looking exposed, Troy turns to an off-camera producer.

TROY  
 Can I get a energy drink? I've got  
 dry mouth. Listen!

He smacks his lips so they can hear the dryness. The sound  
 is repulsive.

GREG  
 You can have water later.

TROY  
 (mutters)  
 Just my luck, I get the grouser.

A few crew members chuckle.

GREG  
 What's that?

TROY  
 I SAID YOU GROUSE. No one takes  
 you seriously.

GREG

Excuse me - I'm a respected journalist with over 15 years in the industry. I've won awards. I play tennis with Anderson Cooper.

TROY

Singles or doubles?

Greg hesitates to answer, and Troy serves up a "Jim from The Office face" to camera, netting big laughs from the crew.

GREG

And I'm going to be the next anchor of this show. They told me I was next in line months ago. Greg's Grouses is a placeholder.

TROY

(re: Greg's pit stains)  
Yeah, well you sweat too much, and that's bad journeyalism. Clark Kent's shirts were never funky, and that's what gave him the confidence to steal Superman's girl!

GREG

You are out of line.

TROY

There IS no line! You should be *thanking* me for making you relevant. My fans don't even know who you are.

GREG

That has nothing to do with-

Troy does a backflip and then points at Greg's underarms.

TROY

YOU LOSE, SHIT PITS!

Troy starts dancing the Stanky Leg. Greg has completely lost control of the interview.

GREG

I have overactive sweat glands okay! Hyperhidrosis is a VALID MEDICAL CONDITION!!

Blinking back tears, Greg rips off his mic and storms out.

INT. YOUTUBE PAGE - LATER

The YouTube screen shows the video: "*Troy Malloy Pwns Stank Shirt Grouser*". The views count skyrockets to 63 million.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - THE FOLLOWING WEEK

The show's on-air talent and producers sit around a conference table. LYSETTE YAO, their fiftysomething Asian-American showrunner addresses the group.

LYSETTE

For decades, Peggy was our trusty news captain, steering the "S.S. Annals" through the choppy waters of broadcast journalism and around the icebergs of cancellation.

Staffers cringe at the lame metaphor.

LYSETTE (CONT'D)

But the world is changing, and we must change with it. It's time for new voices to be heard.

Greg primps for his coronation.

LYSETTE (CONT'D)

On that note, I'd like to announce our new Annals of Now anchor...Troy Malloy!

The room gasps. Greg's jaw hits the floor.

VARIOUS STAFFERS

The Instagram idiot? / Terrible idea. / She's kidding right?

LYSETTE

It's an unconventional choice, but these are unconventional times. Troy's teabag segment was the most retweeted in Annals history, so we're going all in on the youth thing. We're talking hashtag vapes, emoji neck tattoos, sexually fluid flash mobs! It's about authenticity or whatever.

GREG

You're making a big mistake  
Lysette. Troy has no experience!

The crowd agrees.

LYSETTE

People *like* that now. He's an  
outsider, like E.T.! Everyone  
loves that bike-basket virgin even  
though his finger is grotesque.

GREG

He abused a coma victim on camera!

LYSETTE

That was in the past.

GREG

It was three weeks ago!

LYSETTE

"Ago". That means past. *Your*  
words. Besides, love, hate:  
What's the difference as long as  
they point their big dumb face at  
the screen?

GREG

Our viewers trust us to be better  
than this. Troy will shred that  
credibility like a buzzsaw.

LYSETTE

Our viewers are *old*. And from a  
business standpoint, old people are  
worthless. No offense Archibald.

An old coot in Depression-era trousers and a pageboy cap  
looks up from carving a piece of driftwood.

ARCHIBALD

Put a sock in it birdie!

LYSETTE

Look, I was brought on to expand  
our audience, and Cray News is  
killing us in the digital space.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE - AFTERNOON

FLETCHER TANNER, an insufferable Brooklynite with ear gauges as wide as frisbees, and an OLDER FILIPINO MAN stand on the edge of a bridge with bungee cords strapped to their ankles.

FLETCHER

Fletcher Tanner here, with an exclusive jump-terview with the bloodthirsty badass himself: Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte!

(to Rodrigo)

You ready to get CRAY, D-2 Mighty Ducks?

Rodrigo nods and they dive headfirst off the bridge.

CUT TO:

Split-screen shots from their respective GoPro helmet cams.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

(yelling over the wind)

WHAT NEW BANDS ARE YOU INTO?

RODRIGO DUTERTE

WHAT??

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LYSETTE

They hired Grumpy Cat's cousin as their foreign affairs correspondent and we need to keep up. Sure, we got a nice bump when Peggy's ticker gave out, but we can't count on one of you keeling over every week.

Lysette eyes a heavysset correspondent, EUGENE expectantly.

EUGENE

(sarcastic)

So sorry to disappoint you.

LYSETTE

If we don't get some buzz soon, the show's done and we're all fired. That comes right from the top.

GREG

But we won a Peabody last year!

LYSETTE

Does *your* dog's chiropractor take those? Mine wants money. You know, there's an old Chinese saying I'm blanking on so never mind.

GREG

The news isn't about maximizing profit. It's about informing the public on the issues that matter.

LYSETTE

You. Are. Adorable!  
(to rest of staff)  
Anyway, I invited Troy here to meet you guys. Let's all give him a warm Annals welcome!

Lysette throws open the door. Troy struts in to thunderous silence.

TROY

Can you feel the electricitiness??

EUGENE

No.

TROY

I want you to know I have a lot of respect for the skits you do here.  
(“uptight newsman” voice)  
“Trade war”...“Voter purge”  
...“Tainted meat”.  
(chuckles)  
Y'all are hilarious.

EUGENE

Why are you like this?

TROY

God made me this way, and he made penguins, so you *know* he's good!

Troy does the sign of the cross wrong.

LYSETTE

(reading slang off phone)  
Don'tcha just love this bae?! Bruh so Gucci.

Deafening silence. A lone cough. Troy spots Greg and sidles up.

TROY

There he is. Greg Goodrich, the  
Pit boss! Pit crew! Pits-ch  
Perfect!

Troy shrugs, conceding that last one was a stretch.

TROY (CONT'D)

Can you believe we're going to be  
on the show together? Again?

GREG

No. I definitely cannot.

TROY

It's gotta be weird that you tried  
to ruin my career, and now I'm  
taking yours! But, like, good  
weird.

GREG

(clipped)  
Congratulations Troy. I'm going to  
get some air.

Greg hustles toward the door looking shell-shocked.

TROY

Ooh! I got one!  
("It's Britney bitch!")  
It's pit-ney bitch!

ACT TWO

CUT TO:

INT. SOUNDCLOUD INTERFACE - ESTABLISHING SHOT

26-year-old DOUGIE GOODRICH's rap song "Rich Parents" plays  
on his Soundcloud page. It has 12 followers.

DOUGIE (THROUGH SPEAKERS)

ALLOWANCE BIG BILLS BIG BILLS/  
RICH PARENTS!/  
HAMMOCK SO ILL SO CHILL/  
RICH PARENTS!/  
PREP SCHOOL DIPLOMA/  
PAPA'S AMEX ON SWIPE/  
(MORE)

DOUGIE (THROUGH SPEAKERS) (CONT'D)  
MOMMY WORKS NIGHTS/  
SO I CAN DO WHAT I LIKE (SMOKE!)

CUT TO:

INT. DOUGIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dougie bobs his head cockily as he plays his new song for his mom MARION GOODRICH-BAINES. She insincerely bops to the beat, straining to be supportive.

DOUGIE  
No one is doing music like this.

MARION  
Well I think it's pretty neat how it has all those words. All the best songs have lyrics.

DOUGIE  
You're right, I *am* better than Drake.

MARION  
The nepotism raps are...an interesting choice.

DOUGIE  
You don't like it mama?

MARION  
No I love it! It really pisses me off, and music is about emotion.

DOUGIE  
Whatever. "Nep-trap" is the future. Visionaries are never appreciated in their own time. It usually takes three to four months.

MARION  
Hey no pressure, but did you ever get around to finishing your term paper?

In response, Dougie plays the next line of his song.

DOUGIE (THROUGH SPEAKERS)  
ASSIGNMENT NOT DONE NOT FUN/  
RICH PARENTS!

MARION

You know I'm not one of "those" moms that sets boundaries or makes kids pick up their beer bottles, but I *cannot* have you flunking out of my alma mater. I'd be the laughingstock of the alumni association.

DOUGIE

Hey, that's on you for wanting your son to pursue an education. If we'd used that money on studio time, I'd be headlining Coachella right now instead of that cut-rate Prince hologram. Why'd they make him so burly??

Marion's phone rings.

MARION

Hold that thought. It's your father.

(puts phone on speaker)

Hey Mr. anchorman! Tell me *everything*. Was there champagne?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GREG'S CAR - SAME TIME

Greg is in his car, driving recklessly because he's so upset.

GREG

(babbling, frantic)

Lysette's dog's chiropractor has no respect for the craft! And how *dare* you disrespect E.T. like that! He'll have sex when he's good and ready!

MARION

Pardon?

GREG

They gave the job to Troy Malloy!

MARION

(shocked)  
For real??!

DOUGIE

(excited)  
For real??!

GREG  
 (furious)  
For real!!

DOUGIE  
 Troy's the coolest!

MARION  
 He is very cool, but your dad  
 doesn't want to hear that right  
 now.

DOUGIE  
 Remember when I recreated his video  
 where he rolls himself up in a big  
 burrito?

MARION  
 (wistful)  
 You made some good friends in that  
 burn unit.

DOUGIE  
 Hey dad, can you get me a selfie  
 with him? Then everyone'll be  
 like, "That guy next to Troy looks  
 like he raps good. We should check  
 his groundbreaking album out!"

GREG  
NEVER!!!

Gregs slams his flip-phone shut.

MARION  
 (to Dougie)  
 If you write your paper, I bet I  
 could help you with that.

DOUGIE  
 Blackmailing your own son. Like a  
 limbo stick on the ground, it gets  
 no lower.

Marion shrugs as if to say, "It's out of my hands."

DOUGIE (CONT'D)  
 Fine, I'll think about it. Now if  
 you'll excuse me, I have to  
 practice my hip-hop hand motions.

Dougie does cliched rapper poses, like "prayer hands" and "pulling the trigger of invisible gun". It's hard to watch.

CUT TO:

INT. PEGGY'S FRONT PORCH - LATER

Peggy opens her door to find a frazzled Greg pacing on the porch. She waves him in.

CUT TO:

INT. PEGGY'S OLD-FASHIONED LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Peggy sips a mint julep on her couch as Greg vents.

GREG

...And I can't even quit because of my contract. They could put me on ice for five years!

PEGGY

(disinterested)  
Back to the grind. Punching the ol' work clock.

GREG

C'mon Peggy! What should I do?

Peggy erupts, pounding the table.

PEGGY

You can stop whining like a biddy and DO something!

Greg is taken aback. He's never seen this side of her before.

GREG

Write a strongly worded letter to Lysette outlining my concerns?

Peggy hurls her drink against the wall.

PEGGY

TAKE TROY OUT! Curb-stomp that weisenheimer!

GREG

Look, I want him gone as much as anyone, but I need to do this in a way I can keep my conscience clean.

Peggy shakes her head, floored by Greg's naiveté.

PEGGY

You need an education, son. Let me tell you the story of Buford Birch.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. 1970'S LOCAL NEWS STATION - MIDDAY

BUFORD BIRCH anchors a local news program. He's a real pro.

PEGGY (V.O.)

Buford was the star newsman at ABC St. Louis where I started out. He was handsome, charming...

Buford chats with a FEMALE COLLEAGUE in the kitchen.

PEGGY (V.O.)

...and a total snake. But I didn't know that yet.

As she turns around, he honks air boobs. Riding the laughs from his boorish pals, he throws in a few pelvic thrusts.

PEGGY (V.O.)

After years in the trenches, I finally got my big break: An interview with the county commissioner about the beefcake scandal at City Hall.

Peggy hangs up the phone and pumps her fist. Hell yeah!

PEGGY (V.O.)

Buford was thrilled for me. He even offered to look over my notes.

Peggy hands Buford a FOLDER and thanks him. Buford makes a beeline to their boss's office and points at Peggy through the window.

PEGGY (V.O.)

Next thing I know, Buford's assigned to my story and I'm doing a puff piece about a squirrel who can't water ski.

CUT TO:

INT. STATION RESTROOM - DAY

PEGGY (V.O.)  
I was livid.

Peggy hulks out and punches a hole in the bathroom wall. She collects herself, then heads back in looking prim and proper.

PEGGY (V.O.)  
But I didn't complain. Girls that did never moved up. Instead I called Maurice.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCDONALDS PARKING LOT - DUSK

A greasy creep MAURICE hands incognito Peggy a WRITHING PLASTIC BAG in exchange for a wad of cash.

PEGGY (V.O.)  
Unfortunately Buford couldn't make the interview...

CUT TO:

EXT. BUFORD'S DRIVEWAY - THE NEXT MORNING

Buford groggily shuffles to his mailbox in his robe. He opens it to find it's filled with COBRAS! One shoots out and sinks its fangs into his cheek. Two others follow.

PEGGY  
...so other arrangements had to be made.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Buford lays in a hospital bed with bandages all over his face watching Peggy crush the interview on TV, expertly grilling the commissioner about the recent spike in hunk-smuggling.

PEGGY  
The best part is Maurice threw in some vipers at no extra charge.

Buford pulls the lid off his food tray to find three hissing vipers poised to strike.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PEGGY'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Greg looks horrified.

GREG

You brought snakes into a hospital?

PEGGY

Heavens no! I bribed an orderly with drugs.

(off Greg's look)

This biz is not for creampuffs.

GREG

I'll sit the boy down and talk sense to him. No violence. He'll see things my way, I just know it.

Peggy shrugs and offers Greg a SNACK CAN.

PEGGY

Mixed nuts?

Greg eyes it warily. She cracks it open and chomps a cashew.

CUT TO:

INT. GOODRICH LIVING ROOM - LATER

Marion sits watching softcore porn on her iPad when Dougie stomps in. She mutes it but doesn't turn off the screen.

DOUGIE

I have come to a decision. I will not be writing my paper because civil rights, plus I got a new X-Box game where I can be Lego Joker.

MARION

I'm sure you'll find another way to get that selfie.

DOUGIE

No, this is where you say, "I'll help you anyway and here I made you some pork chops with the honey glaze you like!"

MARION  
Good luck kiddo.

Dougie storms off and Marion goes back to watching her video.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE of Dougie scheming to get that selfie:

-Dougie posts a Craigslist ad for a "Troy Malloy lookalike".

-Dougie opens the front door to find a RUMPLED DRUNK in a cheap blond Troy wig. Dougie is not impressed.

-Dougie makes a phone call.

DOUGIE  
Hello, Make-A-Wish Foundation?...I  
need a selfie with Troy Malloy.

-Dougie tweaks a terrible photoshop of he and Troy riding a jet ski together. Angry at how fake it looks, he deletes it.

-Back to Dougie's Make-A-Wish call:

DOUGIE (CONT'D)  
No I'm not a child...

-Dougie opens the door to an OLD ASIAN WOMAN in a Troy wig.

-Back to the phone call:

DOUGIE (CONT'D)  
NO I'm NOT sick...

-Dougie stuffs a suit with towels and props it up. The PUMPKIN "head" with Troy's face carved on it rolls off and splatters on the floor. Dougie busts his ass on pumpkin chunks.

-Back to the call:

DOUGIE (CONT'D)  
Well that's discrimination!

-Dougie opens the door to see a TURTLE with a wig taped to its shell. As he crumples to the fetal position and ugly cries, Marion sidles up.

MARION  
Write the paper Dougie.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNALS OF NOW LOBBY - LATER

Troy stands in the lobby with a bunch of BOXES, dismissing a disappointed young FEMALE FAN who wanted a picture.

TROY  
...for the last time, it's not  
happening.

She stomps out of the lobby past Greg as he walks in.

FEMALE FAN  
Prick thinks he's too good to pose  
with fans.

Greg clocks Troy's boxes with dismay and approaches.

GREG  
Christ, this is really happening.

TROY  
It's crazy, right?

GREG  
We should talk. I know we haven't  
always seen eye to eye.

TROY  
I am a lot taller than you.

GREG  
But I'm asking you to reconsider  
your choice. This thing is so much  
bigger than you or me.

Troy distractedly uses his phone camera to check his teeth.

TROY  
I feel something in there. You see  
arugula?

GREG  
The line between news and  
entertainment blurs more and more  
every day and the crazy thing is  
most people don't even care!

Troy perks up.

TROY  
They don't?

GREG  
Americans don't want to eat their  
vegetables anymore. All we want is  
candy!

TROY  
For real?

GREG  
Spectacle has become more important  
than truth. More lucrative too.  
It's a new world and this is what  
we're up against.

TROY  
Wow. I guess I was so wrapped up  
in my own head that I never thought  
about it like that.  
(surprising himself)  
This just doesn't feel right now.

GREG  
Really??

TROY  
I don't think I should do this.

GREG  
(shaking Troy's hand)  
You're making the right call, Troy.  
I'm proud of you.

Greg gets into the elevator to head up to his office. He  
gives a little fist pump as the door closes.

CUT TO:

INT. GREG'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

As Greg sits at his desk, he spots Troy with a MOVER bringing  
his boxes in on a HAND-TRUCK! Greg goes over to investigate.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

GREG  
What are you doing here?

TROY  
(confused)  
You convinced me to stay.

GREG

No I...what?

TROY

I was about to leave with my stuff  
'cause I got cold feet. Not  
literally.

(hikes up pant leg)

Totes Toasties. I was scared  
people wouldn't accept me, but like  
you said, people want candy! I'm  
candy! America can eat me!

It dawns on Greg what's just happened.

GREG

(rising panic)

No I was confused. America is  
going to spit you right out! It  
wants truth carrots and gravitas  
radishes. You should go.

TROY

At first I only signed on to win  
back Tiger Shaft, but you schooled  
me that news isn't about what  
happened in the Gaza Stripe or who  
dumped what chemical in which  
river. It's about swag.

Just then, Lysette passes by.

TROY (CONT'D)

I'm back in Lysette! Greg  
practically begged me to stay on.

GREG

That's not what-

LYSETTE

Team playa!

Lysette grabs Greg's wrist and forces a fist bump.

TROY

So I've been thinking: Who says an  
anchor can't dance on their desk?

MOVER

I'd watch that. Chuck Todd just  
sits there like a lump.

LYSETTE

I'm not sure that's such a good idea...

GREG

Oh thank god.

LYSETTE

I'm *certain* it is! But it has to be a cool one like the dental floss dance.

MOVER

Great dance.

LYSETTE

The studio audience is gonna love it.

GREG

(taken aback)  
"Studio audience"?!

CUT TO:

EXT. GREG'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Greg wheezes, puffs his inhaler, then grabs his car keys.

CUT TO:

EXT. PEGGY'S FRONT PORCH - LATER

Peggy opens the door to find Greg, looking even more wild-eyed and desperate than last time.

GREG

Let's curb-stomp that weisenheimer.

Peggy is thrilled to see Greg unleashed.

PEGGY

Come in. He's here.

CUT TO:

INT. PEGGY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Greg and Peggy greet Maurice (as seen in her earlier flashback). He's older, but still the same slimeball.

PEGGY

Greg, this is Maurice.

MAURICE

Hey you're that news black that's always grousin' on Annals!

GREG

I only do those as a favor. It's temporary. I don't even write them.

Greg's defensive comments hang in the air like a wet fart.

GREG (CONT'D)

Anyway, thanks for meeting on such short notice. Peggy says you're the top guy.

MAURICE

(to Peggy)

Me and this lil psycho go way back.

PEGGY

He sold me my first garter snake.

MAURICE

Hate to rush you like this, but I got Monster Jam tickets tonight. My old lady's stepsister wants to get her tit signed by Grave Digger.

GREG

I need to mess with this guy's head before he goes on the air tomorrow. What do you recommend?

Maurice breaks out his stash of snakes from a bin.

MAURICE

If you just want to scare the guy, I've got some decent coachwhips and Angolan pythons. But if you're looking to man up and go full paralysis, these blue corals will get the job done.

Greg's phone dings. It's a TEXT from Dougie: "[camera emoji, praying hands emoji]". Greg looks annoyed, then an idea dawns on him.

GREG

You know what? I think I'm good on snakes. Gonna go a different way.

MAURICE

It's a \$100 minimum.

GREG

But I don't want any.

MAURICE

(to Peggy, peeved)

You told me he was one of the good ones.

Peggy shrugs. It's not her fault Greg wussed out.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

I skipped my kid's court date for this. Arson my ass. George Soros burned that Blimpies.

GREG

(getting up to leave)

I'm not some gangster guy that does stuff like this. This was a bad idea.

MAURICE

What, you think you're better than me 'cause you don't sell snakes to hurt people?

GREG

I mean...kinda.

Maurice lunges at Greg.

MAURICE

You accurate son of a bitch!

Peggy has to hold him back.

PEGGY

It's not worth it. You're already on probation for hitting your probation officer. Let it go.

Greg hustles out the door.

MAURICE

WE'RE NOT DONE GROUSER!!

CUT TO:

INT. REVAMPED ANNALS STUDIO - LATER

Annals' spinning globe graphic is now set to a booming booty bass track. We pan over the rowdy young audience, with Dougie seated among them.

ANNOUNCER

Put your hands together for DJ  
Attribution and the Journalistic  
Integrity Dancers!!

A Deadmau5-style DJ with a lit-up POSSUM HEAD scratches on the TURNTABLES. A female dance crew in skimpy "reporter" outfits performs a high-energy Fly Girls routine.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And now, the man who's technically  
a reporter now...Troy Malloyyyyy!!

Troy rides in on a loud DIRT BIKE and the crowd goes wild. The other Annals reporters to the side look stunned at how much their show has changed. Lysette however seems thrilled.

TROY

Buckle up bitches, 'cause we're  
about to take you balls deep into  
the news! This is Annals of Now!!

Sick beats blare as Troy is escorted to his desk by two of the dancers.

TROY (CONT'D)

Tonight we'll be reporter-ing on  
all types of important stuff, like  
a doctor in Ohio who caught a  
bullshit charge just for  
"overprescribing" Oxys. Um, that's  
not a thing, brah!

The amped crowd starts chanting "Drugs! Drugs! Drugs!"

TROY (CONT'D)

But first, let's give it up to  
Peggy Longfellow for holding it  
down all these years. She's a bad  
bitch.

CUT TO:

INT. PEGGY'S OLD-FASHIONED LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Peggy smiles appreciatively while sitting in front of her TV. A much YOUNGER MAN lifts his head up from between her legs.

YOUNGER MAN  
Hey, he said your name!

She pinches his cheek like a grandmother at a family reunion.

PEGGY  
I'm not paying you to talk, dear.

She guides his head back down.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. REVAMPED ANNALS STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Troy is straight-up cracking pistachios at the anchor desk.

TROY  
I gotta piss, so we'll be right  
back. Keep watching or we'll...

AUDIENCE  
(chants in unison)  
TEABAG YOUR FACE!

GREG  
How did they know to...?

Troy hops up on his desk and does the "Shmoney Dance".  
Pistachio shells crack under his shoes.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
Cut! We're back in three minutes!

Troy jumps down and heads out of the studio to the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDIENCE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Greg makes a beeline over to Dougie's seat.

GREG  
You ready?

DOUGIE  
(puckers lips)  
Hell yes.  
(MORE)

DOUGIE (CONT'D)  
I practiced my duckface for hours.  
(holds up two phones)  
I even bought a backup phone just  
in case. Also, I borrowed your  
credit card.

Greg bristles at the disrespect, but now is not the time.

GREG  
So Troy's in the bathroom right  
down that hallway.

DOUGIE  
Are you *sure* this is gonna work?

GREG  
Definitely. He loves being  
approached by strangers who want  
something from him. Besides,  
you're a *fan*! He owes you!

DOUGIE  
Damn right! Without my clicks he'd  
be in a ditch somewhere eating  
beans out of a shoe!

GREG  
Yeah! Go get what's yours!

Dougie bolts in the direction Greg pointed out.

CUT TO:

INT. STAFF BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Troy is at a urinal when suddenly Dougie barrels in, out of  
breath. He sidles up to Troy and stares.

DOUGIE  
Pee here often?

TROY  
I don't know man.

Long pause. Dougie strains to make small talk.

DOUGIE  
(points to his own pants)  
TroyBoy jeans.

TROY  
Right on.

DOUGIE  
So I'm literally inside you right  
now. Big fan.

Troy flees to the sink. Dougie trails right behind.

DOUGIE (CONT'D)  
Can I get a selfie for the Gram? I  
need your face to promote my brand.

TROY  
Nothing personal, I'm just not into  
selfies. I have to get back now.

Troy hustles out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Troy heads back with an increasingly desperate Dougie nipping  
at his heels.

DOUGIE  
C'mon, don't be like that. I got  
burrito burns on my thighs for you!

CUT TO:

INT. REVAMPED ANNALS STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Troy walks back in studio, where the crowd waits for the show  
to resume.

DOUGIE  
Let's just do one. We'll knock it  
out real quick then you can get  
back to your thing.

Troy snaps and grabs Dougie's shirt.

TROY  
Just drop it you freak! I'm not  
taking a picture with you!

Dougie tries to snap a pic anyway as if he didn't hear him.

DOUGIE  
And here...we...go.

Troy ducks the camera and Dougie grabs his wrist. Troy bites Dougie's hand, drawing blood. They fight and the audience immediately starts filming it on their phones. A SECURITY GUARD runs over to break it up.

TROY

You cut my face!

DOUGIE

What, too good to get scratched by a fan?!

TROY

Get off me! I have to finish the show!

SECURITY GUARD

No one's going anywhere until we file a report.

Dougie escapes the guard's grip, duckfaces his lips, dives in front of Troy like a secret service agent taking a bullet for the president, and snaps a selfie in midair. Success!

CUT TO:

INT. DOUGIE'S INSTAGRAM POST - SECONDS LATER

On Dougie's Instagram, we see the pic that was just snapped: His airborne body in front of an angry scratched-up Troy. The caption: "Hanging with my best friend Troy Malloy. NBD:)"

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN ALLEY - THE NEXT MORNING

Fletcher Tanner's head sticks out of a large CANNON that's in a grimy alley in Bushwick.

FLETCHER

Fletcher Tanner here with your Cray News Blast! Annals of Now was cut short last night when new anchor-bae Troy Malloy got into a bathroom brawl with grouser Greg Goodrich's son Dougie that spilled in studio. When approached for comment, Dougie forced me to film a promo for his mixtape. There's your news -- and now for the blast!

Fletcher lights the fuse and blasts himself into a brick wall. The camera's POV approaches Tanner's motionless body.

OFFSCREEN CAMERAMAN  
(rising panic)  
Fletch-a-Sketch??

Sirens in the distance. The POV turns the other way and jostles wildly as the unseen cameraman hauls ass out of there.

CUT TO:

INT. LYSETTE'S OFFICE - THE NEXT MORNING

Greg knocks on the door and walks into Lisa's office.

LYSETTE  
We need to talk about last night.

GREG  
Look, I get why you thought you had to shake things up, so just know that there are no hard feelings on my end. I say we move forward.

LYSETTE  
Thanks for being so understanding, Greg. You're a class act.

Just then Troy walks in with bandages on his face and hand.

LYSETTE (CONT'D)  
Oh *snap!* Did the Honey Nut Cheerios bee just walk in? 'Cause you are bringing the buzz!

Troy holds his phone aloft like He-Man's sword.

TROY  
The fight footage is blowing up on Celebrity Meat!

LYSETTE  
I know!! We're talking Challenger explosion numbers here! Take that, astronauts tragically struck down before their time!

GREG  
Wait, he fought my son last night on set! How is that okay??

LYSETTE

It's *more* than okay! An on-set-smackdown is next-level promotion! Ogler is calling it "The Scrapper from the Crapper". Dab hands!

Lysette tries to dab but ends up chopping herself in the face and giving herself a bloody nose.

TROY

A paparazzi from TMI lurked outside my house all night. He even hopped the gate. It was so dope!

GREG

Do you care about *anything*?

TROY

This is bigger than feelings, Bro-v.-Wade. The audience loves what we do! Who are you to say they're wrong?

LYSETTE

The show's got everyone's attention now. It's dangerous. It's raw.

GREG

It's cynical and empty.

LYSETTE

And now it's *yours*! We spent so much on hoochie oil and dry ice that we had to let the other reporters go. You're the lead now, with Troy!

TROY

From now on, when people think of you, they're going to think of me. We're like two peas in a thing that holds peas.

LYSETTE

Tupperware.

GREG

I want nothing to do with this talentless attention whore.

TROY

Hey, you picked the same side of the camera I did.

(MORE)

TROY (CONT'D)

The only difference is *I* gained 2 million followers last night. That is my talent. You're in this whether you like it or not. Don't go along, I press charges against your son.

Greg looks to Lysette. She shrugs, yeah that's pretty much the deal.

GREG

(to Troy)

You *do* realize we're going to end up killing each other, right?

LYSETTE

Just make sure you do it on the air!

Greg leaves, shook. When he opens the door, a BUCKET OF SNAKES falls on his head. He turns to see Maurice peeking over a cubicle, an unlit PALL MALL tucked behind his ear.

THE END