

WINCHELL

by

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Fried Films

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HBO

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. HARLEM STREET - CANDY STORE - DAY - (1905) 1

WALTER WINCHELL, a boy of eight, wearing poor turn-of-the-century clothes steers a home-made scooter down a city street faster and faster and faster, and suddenly...

COMES UPON A HORSE-CART as...

The cart's DRIVER yanks the horse's reins and...

The HORSE BUCKS AND WHINNIES as...

THE BOY GOES FLYING OFF into the...

STREET'S GUTTER, and there lays unconscious and bloody.

VARIOUS PEOPLE on the street run this way and that, and shout out...

PEOPLE

Walter's been hurt! Find Mrs.
Winchell! Walter's been hurt!

CUT TO:

2 INT. HARLEM STREET - CANDY STORE - MORNING - (1905) 2 *

A FULL SHOT OF A NEWSPAPER'S FRONT PAGE - "THE SUN," DATED
FEBRUARY 6, 1905. *

REPORTER (O.S.) *

How do you feel Mrs. Winchell, knowing
your son's name sits on every
breakfast table from the Bronx to
the Bowery? *

WALTER WINCHELL, the young boy with his head bandaged, now
sits poised holding the newspaper's displayed front page as
JANET WINCHELL stands next to him wearing what's clearly her
dress-best with a fox stole around her shoulders.

SEVERAL REPORTERS crouch in front of the boy with notepads.

MOTHER

Proud of course. But Walter's always
been a good boy as his father would
tell you himself if he weren't away
on business.

3 EXT. HARLEM STREET - CANDY STORE - MORNING - (1905) 3

A neighborhood crowd hovers around the doorway and listens.
ONE WOMAN, close to the entrance, turns and confides to the

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

others as she points to a MIDDLE-AGED UNSHAVEN MAN across the street sitting on a PARK BENCH and PLAYING CARDS.

OUTSIDE WOMAN

The father's away on business at the benches where his customers pay with trumps to buy his coins.

The other women discreetly laugh and nod.

4 INT. HARLEM STREET - CANDY STORE - MORNING - (1905)

4

Walter still doesn't say a word, just holds the paper, but sitting by the store's window he sees the WOMAN OUTSIDE turning back and forth from the doorway to her friends.

SECOND REPORTER

Were you at your store when you heard?

MOTHER

It's not my store exactly. It's my mother's. She speaks only Yiddish....

She points to an OLD WOMAN in the corner who sits quietly.

INTERCUT BETWEEN THE CANDY-STORE AND THE OUTSIDE CROWD.

OUTSIDE WOMAN

(hushed to the others)

The store isn't the old woman's. She manages it for a man from mid-town.

YOUNG WINCHELL'S POV as he starts studying the woman and his EYES move closer and closer in on HER TALKING LIPS.

FIRST REPORTER

Who told you Walter had almost been killed by a runaway horse-cart?

OUTSIDE WOMAN

The cart was driving like a snail and the animal was more mule than horse.

The crowd is listening totally to the woman and no longer paying attention to the reporters and inside action as...

YOUNG WALTER is transfixed by the WOMAN'S LIPS which he clearly reads as WE GO BETWEEN his YOUNG FACE and her SILENT MOVING MOUTH as HER WORDS form in Walter's mind and the sound of her prattling fills his inner-ear.

4 CONTINUED:

4

OUTSIDE WOMAN (CONT'D)

The boy sleeps under a different blanket every night and in beds more not-blood than blood....The father had a cloth shop - silks and such, but he lost it betting his buttons after he'd pawned his shirt...The mother takes herself across the river every day and polishes brass in Queens...

YOUNG WALTER just keeps watching her lips as he ever so slightly NODS TO HIMSELF.

5 INT. VAUDEVILLE STAGE - NIGHT - (1917)

5

WALTER WINCHELL, a handsome kid of twenty wearing a World War I uniform and carrying a Prop-Rifle, stands on a stage decorated with American Flags and tableaux of parting soldiers and maidens.

WINCHELL

(singing)

"Every tear will be a memory, so wait and pray each night for me...Till we meet again!"

Winchell bows to a smattering of applause. The BACKSTAGE MANAGER motions for him to get off but Winchell stays put.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Thank you ladies and gentlemen and if I may I'd like to ask you to remember that whether your boy is armed with a bayonet killing the hun or your daughter is armed with a bandage saving another's Son...

The BACKSTAGE MANAGER takes a frustrated breath.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

In this Great War, greater than the great...are the Good.

No applause. Just looks. Winchell makes an awkward exit.

6 INT. VAUDEVILLE THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - (1917)

6

He walks backstage passing a line of dancing girls...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now...the Schwing Sisters!

Who go on as the band strikes up and the audience APPLAUDS.

(CONTINUED)

6

CONTINUED:

6

BACKSTAGE MANAGER

What the hell was that last bit?

WINCHELL

Something they can chew on at home.
They'll work it out in their sleep.

A CROWD OF PERFORMERS has gathered to watch the fireworks.
The Manager walks to a BACKSTAGE WALL where, on a HOOK, a
whole ream of SHEETS OF PAPER hangs next to a MONEY BOX with
a coin slot. He rips off a sheet and waves it.

BACKSTAGE MANAGER

What the hell is this?

Winchell snatches the paper and turns to the performers.

WINCHELL

Well that's a good question...and an
even better time to answer it. It's
a kind of backstage news report on
the goings on of our little troupe
here.

A MAGICIAN steps forward, furious, holding a sheet.

MAGICIAN

What's this about me having an affair
on my wife?

WINCHELL

You didn't have the affair on your
wife. It was on somebody else's
wife.

The Magician lunges for him as Walter deftly dances out of
the way using his prop rifle as protection.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

(displaying paper to
others)

Whose wife you ask? Buy "Newsense."
It costs only a nickel dropped in
the honor box to keep me in print
and pulp.

The Manager just stands red-faced.

MANAGER

Winchell - You're fired.

Winchell looks to the Manager, but in an instant, the
MAGICIAN'S FIST comes from nowhere and CLOCKS Winchell in
the jaw as the "Doughboy" goes down. One of the backstage
comics helps him up.

6 CONTINUED: (2)

6

Winchell, resigned to his new unemployment, walks over to the HONOR BOX which he assumes is empty, but when he takes it off the wall, the lid opens and...

A RUSH OF NICKELS spills out into his hands which he barely catches. Winchell can't believe it and SMILES BROAD.

7 OMIT

7

8 EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT - (1929)

8

Dancing shadows fill the curtained windows of the three-story residence in Greenwich Village. Charleston cadences echo from the insides as if the syncopated rhythms struggled to burst past the front door guarded by several "doormen" and escape into the night. *

Some well-dressed gentlemen enter and exit as... *

A TAXI pulls up to the stoop and stops as the door opens and AN EXPENSIVE WINGED-TIPPED SHOE steps out followed by another as we rise to PLEATED TUXEDO PANTS, past a TAILORED TUXEDO JACKET, past an unseen face, and finally to...

A GRAY FEDORA HAT?...Not matching the Tuxedo at all. The doormen all turn to the man with slight wonder as he lifts it away to reveal a HEAD OF PREMATURE GRAY HAIR crowning...

The face of WALTER WINCHELL, a handsome man in his mid-thirties with a smile professing honesty but a gleam in his eyes winking otherwise.

WINCHELL

Good evening gentlemen. I'm here for the Charity Dinner.

(looking at windows)

Don't tell me the snails have been served already.

FIRST DOORMAN

Sorry. This is a closed function sir.

WINCHELL

Only open to Philanthropists and Philosophers, huh? Well I was told... (password pause)

"Calvin Coolidge would be here dressed as Chaplin." I didn't want to miss that. I've seen so little in my life.

The doorman perks up. Steps back to let him pass.

(CONTINUED)

8

CONTINUED:

8

FIRST DOORMAN

Of course sir. I didn't realize.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

Winchell sets his HAT on the waiting cab's back seat and then walks up the stoop as he takes out a cigarette, searches for a light, and then finally stops at the LAST DOORMAN who stands closest to the entrance.

WINCHELL

Light?

The LAST DOORMAN offers a light as they lean to each other.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

(hushed)

Harry. Where are the Jumbos?

HARRY

Up top. On the third. Five Senators, Two Congressmen, and some actor.

WINCHELL

What actor?

HARRY

That actor, you know, who was in that flick...with the horse and the girl.

WINCHELL

Skip it. What's the mine field like?

HARRY

Like Christmas Day in the Argonne. Everyone too drunk to count the cannons. There's guards on every floor and they're all carrying. Something sweet must be happening up top cause they got extra watchdogs on the third.

WINCHELL

I've got a light-bulb on what it is.

Winchell slips Harry a BILL and turns to enter.

HARRY

You'll never reach the third.

WINCHELL

Your Sawbuck says I do.

Harry nods and clutches the bill as Winchell...

9 INT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT - (1929)

9

Enters the Party in full-swing as Flappers and Dandies crowd the rooms and halls.

9

CONTINUED:

9

It's Bacchanalian mayhem as a passing woman kisses him and hands him a champagne glass.

He wipes away the kiss and dumps the champagne in a plant as he cups the glass for a prop and negotiates the crowd to see a STAIRWELL leading up to the next floor - A BODYGUARD ever-present and watchful. People dance and run about as Winchell stands in the corner and studies the crowd. A swanky "MADAM" conducts the affair.

Winchell's eyes sift through it this way and that and suddenly he sets them on a MAN WITH TWO WOMEN ON HIS ARMS looking mildly important and more than mildly drunk. The man laughs and offers to get refills for the girls as he makes his way through the crowd. Winchell follows.

WINCHELL

Excuse me. Mister Bellamy? You are Robert Bellamy the Producer?

BELLAMY

Yes. But I'm not casting for anything right now. So if you'll excuse me...

WINCHELL

I'm not looking for a role, but a role may come looking for you, one in Winchell's column tomorrow, about you and your lovely lady friends.

BELLAMY

(sudden fear, whispers)

Winchell? Say - who are you?

WINCHELL

Wayne, Sir.

BELLAMY

I don't know you Mister Wayne...

WINCHELL

Just Wayne, and I've been sent by interested parties to keep yours and another Gentleman's name out of Winchell's column which goes to press...

BELLAMY

In two hours. I know. I'm as well aware of how that buzzard works as anyone on Broadway.

WINCHELL

Well he's here sir.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (2)

9

BELLAMY
(looking everywhere)
Here? Right now? I've got to get
out of here now.

WINCHELL
Not before I'm able to reach the
second gentleman on the second floor.
I'm to keep both names out or none.

BELLAMY
But I can't get you up there.

WINCHELL
Perhaps you should try. I'm sure
your wife Lily would appreciate it.

Bellamy gulps and thinks.

10 INT. BROWNSTONE - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT - (1929) 10

Winchell is let past the bodyguards on the second floor as a
relieved Bellamy below watches him rise. *

11 EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT - (1929) 11

HARRY is standing on the opposite sidewalk smoking as he
sees WINCHELL in the window give a slight wave.

12 INT. BROWNSTONE - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT - (1929) 12

Winchell whispers to a SECOND MAN in a corner.

13 INT. BROWNSTONE - THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT - (1929) 13

Winchell is finally admitted to the third and top floor as
he STILL CARRIES THE EMPTY CHAMPAGNE GLASS and passes by
several bodyguards at the top of the final staircase and...

Into the midst of the tamest floor of all where men mingle
about and talk almost in hushed tones. Winchell looks
confused as nothing juicy seems to be going on until...

NAKED WOMAN (O.S.)
(Texan drawl)
WhooooEEE! Ride up to the trough
and wet your whistles! Don't be shy
boys!

He negotiates the room of men drinking champagne until he
reaches a PORCELAIN BATHTUB sitting on four golden bear-
paws with TWO COWBOY BOOTS propped over the tub's edge.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

WINCHELL walks up to the tub and there sees a NAKED WOMAN wearing a cowboy hat and smoking a cigar as she lays in the tub filled with champagne which covers all her charms, charms that are becoming slowly revealed as men gather round and dip their glasses into the liquor.

NAKED WOMAN (CONT'D)

That's it. The faster you dip your
pans, the faster you strike it rich.
There's Gold in that there river!!!

WINCHELL dips his glass in too as he scans the other men around the tub, and by the gleam in his eyes he recognizes every important face. All raise their glasses.

WINCHELL

(to himself)

What a Blessed Event.

Winchell walks to the window, pulls the curtain, and...

14 EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT - (1929)

14

Waves to Harry who sighs a disappointed breath and TAKES THE BILL from his pocket as it's suddenly...

SNATCHED by...WINCHELL who hops into a taxi and pulls away.

*

15 OMIT

15

16 EXT. DAILY MIRROR BUILDING - NIGHT - (1929)

16*

Winchell walks up to the front doors and enters the lobby of the...DAILY MIRROR.

*

*

17 INT. DAILY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S DESK - NIGHT - (1929)

17*

Winchell, wearing his hat, sits at a small desk in the crowded bullpen.

INSERT OF THE SHEET'S HEADING: "YOUR BROADWAY AND MINE."

BACK TO WINCHELL who reads over the copy with a gleam.
There's a KNOCK on the door as a COPY BOY pops in his head.

COPY BOY

Gavreau's been looking for you.

WINCHELL

Well tell my Managing Shreditor I'm
finally ready to be found.

18 INT. DAILY MIRROR - GAVREAU'S OFFICE - NIGHT - (1929)

18*

GAVREAU, a man with a long nose for looking down at people and squinty eyes which have seen too much copy and too little life, sits behind his desk. He finishes the sheet, turns to Winchell, smiles and then CRUMPLES UP THE PAPER.

WINCHELL

What's the idea? That's a dynamite column.

GAVREAU

Two Senators and Five Congressmen...

WINCHELL

Five Senators and Two...

GAVREAU

All drinking from the same bathtub where a Chorine was swimming. It's immoral, indecent and...unhygienic.

WINCHELL

I didn't hear the Health Commissioner complain a hair was in his glass.

GAVREAU

It's not news. Not proper dispatch!

Winchell grabs a stack of newspapers from the desk corner.

WINCHELL

Like your other front page banners - "Vixen's Voice From The Grave Names Her Rapist," "I Was a Hoboken Harlot."

GAVREAU

They're good pieces.

WINCHELL

You mean they're good peasants. They're not rich. They're not respectable. These people's misery won't muddy up your press luncheon.

GAVREAU

At least those items are written in complete sentences. Not these slapdash half-baked phrases running together with dots and dashes everywhere. Adjectives with no nouns, adverbs with no verbs.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

WINCHELL

I'm not writing for the Ivy League,
I'm writing for the Major League -
the people out there who get up
everyday thinking they're nothing
because the Jumbos are everything.
I'm just levelling the playing field.

GAVREAU

You're writing for your wallet.

WINCHELL

And what's wrong with coining for
coin? You peddle death on the front
page while you bury the living under
some Tom-Thumb by-line.

GAVREAU

No, Winchell. I'm just burying you...
(tossing paper)
And this fabrication. This story
never happened.

WINCHELL

Says who? - You?

GAVREAU

Says your own story.

Gavreau opens his office's rear-door to reveal SEVERAL
SENATORS from the party as well as BELLAMY. They enter the
room in a line at whose end is the WOMAN from the BATHTUB,
brought in by the arm, and now wearing a long, faded coat
and a face full of fear.

FIRST SENATOR

It seems Mr. Winchell you're under
the misapprehension that these
gentlemen and I were at a gathering
where not only alcohol was served
but this young lady was present. Is
that right?

WINCHELL

Yeah. Except I'd say the alcohol
was present and the young lady was
served.

SECOND SENATOR

I'd like to say right now that we
were all in a meeting with the mayor
from six till midnight and this
actress was being auditioned by Mister
Bellamy at his office.

18 CONTINUED: (2)

13

BELLAMY

With my Secretary in attendance.
Isn't that correct young lady?

WOMAN

(nervous, frightened)
That's correct. It's a good part.
I'm even getting a call-back.

THIRD SENATOR

Even if what you think you saw was
true, I guarantee the time our names
would spend in your column would be
far shorter than the time this
"actress" would spend in jail.

WINCHELL

Let me guess - for lewd behavior and
corrupting the values of a Democracy.

THIRD SENATOR

Something along those lines.

Winchell looks to the woman who stands terrified.

WINCHELL

Well we don't want that, do we?

She shakes her head, trying to hold back the tears.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Alright. I'll kill the story.

BELLAMY

And no more passing yourself off as
an interested party "Mister Wayne."

WOMAN

Wayne? Hang on. That's my name.

Bellamy and the Senators turn to her as Winchell smiles.

WINCHELL

Just a little joke to myself doll.

The woman, DALLAS WAYNE, works up a smile.

*

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (3)

18

DALLAS

Yeah. Imagine that.

WINCHELL

What do you say you forget that call-
Back and come have supper with me?

Winchell holds out his hand as she wipes her eyes.

DALLAS

Okay. You got yourself a date.

He takes her hand and leads her out of Gavreau's office as
the Editor and Senators watch them both walk out, but not
before Dallas turns at the last second and shouts out...

DALLAS (CONT'D)

Wayne!

The Senators start at the noise, if nothing else, and Dallas
laughs as she and Winchell walk out of the office.

19 INT. NYC STREETS - TAXI (PROCESS) - NIGHT - (1929)

19

Winchell and Dallas sit in the back seat of a cab.

DALLAS

How did you know my name anyway?

WINCHELL

It's my business to know people's
names - what they use them for and
what they don't use them for.

DALLAS

My first name's Dallas.

WINCHELL

No it's not, and you should lose
that phony accent.

DALLAS

My Equity card says Dallas Wayne,
and besides, I'm from the Lone Star
State. I'm entitled to change my
name.

WINCHELL

No one's entitled to change their
name. A name is a sacred thing.
It's the one thing that defines who
you are and what you are. Broadway's
rotten with Birnbaums who baptize
themselves Bellamys, and Steinbergs
who title themselves Steeles.

19 CONTINUED:

19

DALLAS

So you've always been Winchell?

WINCHELL

Yeah. And anybody who tries to touch my name will lose theirs.

She puts her hand on his leg.

DALLAS

I won't touch your name.

The cab stops. Winchell takes her hand away and gets out as Dallas takes a look at the place they've arrived at...THE STORK CLUB, a small unassuming speakeasy.

20 EXT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1929)

20

Winchell and Dallas get out of the cab. Dallas's face falls at the sight of the modest looking Gin-joint just waking as the city's going to sleep.

DALLAS

Say. What is this Hash-house? I Thought you were taking me to the Ha-Ha or The Park Avenue.

WINCHELL

This is the Stork. You'll faint for it.

DALLAS

Faint? I'm an actress. I Swoon.

Winchell and Dallas approach a CAPTAIN at the door supervising a growing line. Winchell palms him a bill.

WINCHELL

That tip on Garbo's typhoid turned out to be tonsillitis.

CAPTAIN

Sorry Mister Winchell. I must a' heard wrong. Both start with the same letter.

WINCHELL

Make sure the next disease also ends with the same letter or you'll be catching something yourself.

CAPTAIN

Yes sir.

He admits Winchell and Dallas despite howls from the line.

21 INT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1929)

21

Winchell and Dallas enter the club whose crowd mingles at small "dime" tables on which sit "coffee" pots. DALLAS'S EYES WIDEN as she and Winchell negotiate the crowd.

DALLAS
That's...and that's...

She points but Winchell discreetly lowers her finger.

WINCHELL
Yes...they all are - but it's not
polite to point, and it's even ruder
to point out to them I'm here.

DALLAS
Let's grab a table.

Another STORK CAPTAIN approaches them.

SECOND CAPTAIN
Mister Winchell. Good to see you.

WINCHELL
Thank you. It's good to be seen.

SECOND CAPTAIN
Table Fifty as usual?

22 INT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1929)

22*

The Captain ushers them towards Winchell's favorite table which overlooks a cozy dance floor outlined with velvet ropes behind which more dime tables line the walls.

WINCHELL
How's your wife Miriam?

SECOND CAPTAIN
Very well...as I was just telling
Jerome Astor who was here without
his.

They arrive at table 50 as Winchell slips him another bill.

WINCHELL
Always nice to talk to a family man.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Could you bring us a pot of coffee
with coffee. Thank you.

The second captain nods and makes his exit.

DALLAS

Coffee? Swell. Booze everywhere
and I'm out on the town with Blue-
light Bob.

WINCHELL

Just keep your eyes and ears open.

DALLAS

Do I got a choice?

Winchell pulls up one of her dress's shoulder-straps.

WINCHELL

Your accent's slipping. Want to
dance?

DALLAS

Yeah, sure. Might as well.

Winchell leads her onto the floor as a SMALL BAND plays.
They dance as Winchell starts studying the crowd. *

DALLAS (CONT'D)

Say. You're a good dancer.

WINCHELL

You should hear me sing.

He dances her into a pattern and then suddenly swings her
out into another man's arms who was just passing by.

The OTHER MAN, a rich gangster type, is happy enough to dance
with Dallas who does a couple steps with the man but extends
her arm to come back to Winchell for a second.

DALLAS

Hey. I thought I was leaving with
you.

WINCHELL

Oh you are. Just keep your eyes and
ears open.

Winchell walks away from her as he starts slowly making his
way through the crowd as the MUSIC fills our ears, but soon
enough, Winchell starts studying the people he passes, people
dancing, people milling about as he looks at their FACES,
watches their MOUTHS, reads their LIPS, as the MUSIC fades

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2)

22

from the foreground and the WORDS PEOPLE ARE SPEAKING fill
Winchell's INNER EAR.

MALE PATRON

...Fannie Brice was betting at the
horses. Out at Belmont. Clear as
day for anyone to see...

FEMALE PATRON #1

...Lillian Lorraine says she's going
to marry again. I don't know if
it's true but I heard it from Helen
who said Fulton told her and he got
it from her driver...

FEMALE PATRON #2

...Lenore Ulric was bragging in the
powder room she only paid seven
dollars income tax last year and I
thought, sweetheart, that sounds
like fourteen too much...

Winchell negotiates the crowd and listens and listens.

23 EXT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - NIGHT - (1929)

23

Establishing shot of the swank St. Moritz hotel.

24 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - NIGHT - (1929)

24

We see the suite from the point of view of the living room
where a partially opened bedroom door stands and from it
SOUNDS OF A WOMAN MOANING come, like sex, but almost painful
as it grows a little louder until we see...

25 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - NIGHT - (1929)

25

Winchell and Dallas sitting on the still-made bed in their
underwear, he's still wearing his hat, as Dallas rocks back
and forth a little and moans trying to remember something.

DALLAS

Ahhhh....It was...Sounds like...

WINCHELL

Can you remember a first name? A
last name?

DALLAS

I was dancing with that No-neck you
threw me to, and the band was loud
and he was talking about a guy, "out
of town talent," flying in to meet
with Schultz.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

WINCHELL
Dutch Schultz?

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

DALLAS

I didn't ask if he was from Holland.
My head hurts.

WINCHELL

Alright. I'll lay off.

Winchell touches her cheek and Dallas puts her hand to his.

25A INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - NIGHT - (1929)

25A

They make love in the dark as their shadows rock back and forth on the bed and then suddenly the BEDSIDE LIGHT comes on as Dallas flicks the switch and sits up on top of Winchell.

DALLAS

Vincent Coll!

WINCHELL

No. Not now.

He offs the light and they begin to go again until...the LIGHT COMES ON AGAIN as Winchell flicks the switch, pulls himself over to the bedside bureau and writes...

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

"Vincent Coll."

DALLAS

He said nobody's supposed to know about it.

WINCHELL

There's no such thing as "nobody."
(turns off the light)
There's only "everybody."

26 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - DAY - (1929)

26

Dallas wakes and hears Winchell TALKING SOFTLY in the bathroom. She walks to the SLIGHTLY OPEN DOOR, to see...

27 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BATHROOM - DAY - (1929)

27

Walter, fully-dressed, sitting on the closed-toilet talking on the phone he's pulled into the bathroom.

WALTER

I know June-bug. I'll have the gardener come and look at it again.

28 INT. WESTCHESTER KITCHEN - DAY - (1929)

28

JUNE WINCHELL, Walter's wife, a Mississippian by accent and manner in that she speaks as sweet and hard as rock-sugar.

28 CONTINUED:

28

A MAID works quietly in the BACKGROUND.

*

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED: (2)

28

JUNE

I know you won't have that patch of lawn looking like a horde of locusts just came through for the feeding, and what you won't have, I won't have.

WINCHELL

(over phone)

I'll speak to him come the week-end.

JUNE

(picking up the Mirror)

And why is your column cut in half today?.....Then you might try writing something nice about somebody nice. There must be nice people where you go and I think you should find them...and don't quote the children anymore.

At the KITCHEN TABLE sit TWO CHILDREN; A GIRL aged six dressed like a ribboned-doll, and a BOY aged four wearing a cowboy hat and toy pistols. June resumes fixing lunch.

JUNE (CONT'D).

I know you know what I said about that. Printing what Walda said last month about the two dogs next door "dancing together," and now Walter Jr. and his first try at saying "Ash-can."

29 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - DAY - (1929)

29

Dallas outside the bathroom listens and smiles to herself.

WINCHELL (O.S.)

Alright June-bug. Yes. Alright.

But she suddenly hears Winchell hang up the phone.

30 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - DAY - (1929)

30

Winchell walks to the door and opens it to see...DALLAS BACK IN BED and "half-asleep" as he walks over to her.

DALLAS

What time we have to check out?

WINCHELL

We don't. I live here.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

DALLAS

At the St. Moritz? Some landlord.

Dallas sits up, letting the sheets fall past her breasts.

WINCHELL

Last night was a goodie.

Winchell picks up his wallet and puts some BILLS on the bureau. When Dallas sees the money she lifts up the sheet.

DALLAS

What's the dough for?

She just looks to him, about to cry and he realizes what she's thinking and we're unsure if he was thinking it too.

WINCHELL

What? - No baby-doll. For the item. For the Vincent Coll plum. I always pay my stringers who throw me ripe fruit. That's all. Rubbing knees was just a gee-whizzer I didn't expect.

Dallas smiles and he kisses her.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

I'm going to meet and greet you around town so you forget Bellamy and that bunch. They're playbores.

DALLAS

"Playbores." You like getting words wrong, don't you?

WINCHELL

I get 'em right. It's the rest of the world that's choking on the dictionary. Most people pick-up what I'm saying.

*

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: (2)

30

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

You're a light-bulb. Got to go.

Winchell darts up and he's to the door in an instant.

DALLAS

Say Walter. If I want to...bring
you another item - where you gonna
be?

WINCHELL

(a beat)

Everywhere swell-gel. I'll be
everywhere.

He smiles and is out the door, passing a HOTEL HOUSEKEEPER
in the hallway as Dallas watches him go.

31 INT. DAILY MIRROR - GAVREAU'S OFFICE - NIGHT - (1929)

31*

Gavreau reads Winchell's column at his desk as Walter sits
across from him.

GAVREAU

"Banditti Vince Coll's rolling to
town for a Chit with the Boy from
Holland ...Jerome Astor's wife has
been packing his lunch without the
apple, so who's his Eve?...Garbo's
gone back to Silent-Flicks so says
her Nose and Throat - Pistachio
anyone?" - What the hell is this
tripe?

WINCHELL

My column. Not an indecent, immoral
or unhygienic phrase to be found.
We go to press in less than half an
hour. It's your decision Solomon.

GAVREAU

But I can't print this. I can't
even understand it!

WINCHELL

That's your brain-pain.

Winchell gets up and leaves as Gavreau just watches him go.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

GAVREAU
(a beat, confused)
My brain-pain?

CUT TO:

32 EXT. NYC STREET - NEWSSTAND - DAY - (1929)

32

A MONTAGE OF WINCHELL'S COLUMN TAKING NEW YORK BY STORM as a
"MIRROR" TRUCK tosses out one pile of newspapers and still
another as we see...

*
*

AN INSERT OF THE HEADLINE "YOUR BROADWAY AND MINE", and...

*

Another pile of papers, this one with the banner "VINCENT
COLL KILLED IN GANGLAND SLAYING".

*
*

33 OMIT

33*

34 INT. DAILY MIRROR - THIRD FLOOR HALLWAYS - DAY - (1929)

34*

Winchell rounds the corner with Gavreau at his heels...

*

GAVREAU
The Vanderbilts aren't renovating
any of their houses. I checked.
What was that we printed yesterday?
Does "Renovation" mean Divorce? -
Winchell!

But Winchell keeps walking and smiling to himself as...

34A INSERT - SPINNING HEADLINE

34A*

WE SEE THE COVER OF YET ANOTHER MIRROR PAPER reading "WALL
STREET LAYS AN EGG" - dated: OCTOBER 29, 1929 and now...

34B OMIT

34B*

35 INT. DAILY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT - (1929)

35*

Gavreau bursts into Winchell's new corner office.

*

GAVREAU
I know what "Makin' Whoopee" is. I
figured it out.

WINCHELL
Congratulations. I'll bet your wife's
relieved.

GAVREAU
We printed that about one of the
Rheinhardt Brothers!

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

35

WINCHELL

You printed that about the one of
the Rheinhardt Brothers. I only
wrote it.

Gavreau storms out of his office and slams the door as...

36 EXT. NYC STREET - NEWSSTAND - DAY - (1929)

36

A "MIRROR" TRUCK rolls down the street and again tosses out
more piles of the paper as it turns and we see WINCHELL'S
PICTURE on its side and the caption: "HUNGRY FOR THE GAB?
WINCHELL'S GOT THE GOODIES," and finally we see...

37 INT. LUCKY STRIKE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY - (1929)

37*

A FULL SHOT OF THE "LUCKY STRIKE" CIGARETTE LOGO

*

WINCHELL (O.S.)

*

I'm a newsman. I don't want to do
radio. I don't have a voice for
radio.

*

*

Winchell sits at a board table alone on one side and facing
a line of executives on the other under the Lucky Strike
Logo. The Head Executive sits in the center, smoking.

*

HEAD EXECUTIVE

Mr. George Hill of the American
Tobacco Company disagrees, and he's
willing to offer you this as his
argument.

He hands a CHECK to a SECRETARY who carries it to Winchell.
He stares at it in disbelief.

*

*

WINCHELL

He's got a way with words.

HEAD EXECUTIVE

That's your first week's salary.

WINCHELL

It's more than I made my whole time
in Vaudeville.

HEAD EXECUTIVE

You won't have to worry about
theatrics on the Lucky Strike Hour.
It's a class act showcasing bands
from around the country with you in
the middle doing twelve minutes of
your...News.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

SECOND EXECUTIVE

Our listeners are of the...lower strata of society, and we want to do a High Society show. Your broadcast will not address the working classes directly but will on the surface be a news report for the gorgeous and glamorous.

HEAD EXECUTIVE

That way we have a subdued rarefied program where people feel they're getting to peer into the good life. Where they can...how shall I say?...

WINCHELL

Press their noses against the restaurant window and look in at what they'll never eat.

SECOND EXECUTIVE

Exactly. I mean - that's what gossip's all about, am I right?

Walter doesn't answer.

HEAD EXECUTIVE

Yes. Well, we've written an introduction for your show which we're sure will meet with your approval.

The Exec pushes a sheet of paper to Winchell as we go to...

AN INSERT OF THE PAPER now held in Winchell's hands as...

38 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - DRESSING ROOM - DAY - (1929)

38*

Winchell stands in his dressing room in a top-rack suit as a FITTER squares the shoulders on his jacket. Winchell reads aloud from the paper, practicing his introduction.

WINCHELL

(to himself)

Bon Soir to all the Beautiful People up and down Broadway and in the Hallowed Hills of Hollywood. This is your Society Scoopster Walter Winchell with the Latest for the Greatest.

He sets down the paper and thinks. He looks out the WINDOW at BROADWAY and something catches his eye. He LEANS IN TO THE GLASS, almost pressing his face to it and studies...

39 EXT. NYC STREET - BROADWAY - DAY - (1929) 39*

WALTER'S POV - A COUPLE, an average WORKING MAN without a jacket, wearing a hat and rolled up sleeves, and his WIFE with their BOY of six, as they wait to cross the street. *

40 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - DRESSING ROOM - DAY (1929) 40*

BACK TO WINCHELL who looks at them almost longingly as...

41 EXT. NYC STREET - BROADWAY - DAY - (1929) 41*

THE FATHER picks up his child and puts it on his shoulders and presses his wife's hand as they finally cross.

42 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - DRESSING ROOM - LATE DAY - (1929) 42*

A LONG BEAT ON WALTER as he just keeps watching them and then...he CRUMPLES THE PAPER and DROPS IT ON THE FLOOR.

He reaches for a TALL GLASS OF WATER, downs it, and then pouring himself another, downs that too.

FITTER

Why you drinking so much water?

WINCHELL

Because I want to read my copy as fast as I'm going to piss after the last page.

The Fitter puzzles but returns to the suit as Winchell pours a third glass. The HEAD EXECUTIVE enters.

HEAD EXECUTIVE

Wonderful. Mr. Hill's outside with The other sponsors. You look Top-Strata. I'm glad we ordered the pin-stripe.

WINCHELL

People won't see what I'm wearing over the radio.

HEAD EXECUTIVE

But they'll be able to hear it Walter. They'll be able to hear it.

WINCHELL

(thinking beat)
You're right.

HEAD EXECUTIVE

I have to attend to Mr. Hill and the rest. See you after the show.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

The Exec exits as WINCHELL looks over to a nearby table where there's his FEDORA, and next to that, a SHOE-BOX.

CUT TO:

A43 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT - (1929)

A43

A FULL SHOT OF A THIRTIES "SALAMI" MICROPHONE AS...

THE SOUND OF A JAZZ BAND finishes the last subdued bars of "MOONLIGHT IN VERMONT" and then, smooth as silk,...a SLICK EMCEE slides into frame and favors us with his smile.

EMCEE

Yes and yes again, that was Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra with "Moonlight In Vermont" coming to us from high-atop the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Center where you always sit head and shoulders above the crowd.

43 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - HALLWAY - NIGHT - (1929)

43

Winchell, holding another glass of water, the hat and the shoe-box, as he walks through the BACKSTAGE PASSAGES followed by the FITTER who makes last minute adjustments.

EMCEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We have a treat tonight for those of you in the know and in the glow...

Winchell shoves the hat and box into the fitter's hands.

WINCHELL

Hold these.

The fitter juggles the hat, box and water as Winchell takes off the jacket and rolls up his silk shirt sleeves.

FITTER

Hey! What do you think you're doing?

Winchell finishes the sleeves, puts the hat back on his head, drinks down the water and grabs the shoe-box as...

EMCEE (O.S.)

We bring you for the first evening, and for many Sunday evenings to come, that gatherer of gossip about the rich and irresistible...for the irresistibly rich...

Winchell now reaches the SOUNDSTAGE as...

43 CONTINUED:

43

EMCEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That wordsmith who'll whisper all
the wonders of the world...to all
you worldly wonderfuls...Walter
Winchell.

44 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT - (1929)

44

Winchell just makes it to a DESK WHERE THERE SITS A MICROPHONE
as the HEAD EXECUTIVE, GEORGE HILL and all the drones do a
double-take at how Winchell's now dressed, but before they
can even say a word to each other...

WINCHELL, wearing his hat and no jacket, sets down the shoe-
box, leans into the microphone and belts out...

WINCHELL
Good Evening Mr. and Mrs. America
and all the Ships at Sea!

In an instant Winchell's got the shoe-box open, out of which
he takes a TELEGRAPH PUNCHER which in another instant is
next to him he TAPS AWAY SOUND EFFECT TELEGRAPH BLEEPS.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
Let's go to Press!

Hill, the Executive and the rest go drop-jawed as WINCHELL
holds his PAGES and rips through the news like a man possessed
as he gyrates this way and that, almost jumping.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
Dots and dashes and lots of flashes
from border to border and coast to
coast...

THE EMCEE'S SILK SMILE has turned to woolen-shock as A WOMAN
works in the BACKGROUND. *

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
New York City - William Powell
recently released from the Vows by
Carole Lombard is already swapping
baby talk with Anne Harding... *

Winchell reads his copy loud and unbridled like a soul with
only twelve minutes left to live, and from the look of the
Head Executive, he may just have that.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
Randolph Scott's current armful is
the recently renovated Esther
Ralston...

45 INT. BARBER SHOP - NIGHT - (1929)

45

ONE BARBER counts money from the til as ANOTHER BARBER sweeps up hair. They listen with interest to Winchell on the radio.

WINCHELL (over radio) (CONT'D)
The Don Verdugos anticipate a Blessed
Event in latter October...

46 INT. WORKING CLASS HOME - NIGHT - (1929)

46

A working class family sits around their living room as they're drawn to the radio by the maniacally urgent voice.

WINCHELL (over radio) (CONT'D)
...And now the only Dot Dot Dot is
whether the baby joy will wear Blue
or Mink...

47 INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT - (1929)

47

A security guard sitting at his lonely post leans an ear.

WINCHELL (over radio) (CONT'D)
Boots Mallery and Cy Bartlett mutually
broke off matters but she denies Ben
Alvarado is the heart-thumper...

48 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT - (1929)

48

ALL IN THE STUDIO still stand aghast as WINCHELL keeps firing himself up into a bigger and bigger frenzy, still jumping around, still tapping on the Telegraph ticker, still spewing out the words at 237 a minute.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
Madeline Fairbanks of the Fairbanks
Twins and Lawrence Sherman, President
of the Allen Company, were recently
merged. My stock predictions - Buy
now, sell quick! And one final
note...

Winchell now grabs the mike and stands.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
...Before your ever vigilant reporter
for Lucky Strike signs off until
next Sunday at Nine..always
remember...

Winchell looks straight at the Executive and Sponsors.

48 CONTINUED:

48

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

It is you, the American Public, who
are the Beautiful People, because
the man who wears his child on his
shoulders and his wife on his hand
heads the best-dressed family in
town.

And just as quickly as the Broadcast began, IT'S OVER as...

THE RADIO-DIRECTOR points back to the EMCEE who's still
speechless as WINCHELL charges out from behind his desk toward
the HEAD EXECUTIVE AND SPONSORS who stand stunned as WINCHELL
flies past them and...

48A INT. NBC RADIO STATION - HALLWAY - NIGHT - (1929)

48A

Into the MEN'S ROOM as he knocks a MAN EXITING out of the
way as...

48B INT. NBC RADIO STATION - SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT - (1929)

48B

EVERYONE on the soundstage still stands stunned, and an...

ON THE AIR sign still shines - but NOBODY SAYS A WORD.

49 INT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1930)

49*

Winchell sits at TABLE 50 and now people come to him as HANDS
come from everywhere, SHAKING HIS, PATTING HIM ON THE BACK,
CUPPING HIS EAR to whisper an item or ask a favor.

We start a SERIES OF TABLE 50 favor-stops with a GANGSTER.

GANGSTER TYPE

She's a pretty baby-chick and if you
should happen to plug her act in
your column Mister Frank Costello
would show his undying gratitude...

Then a POLITICIAN...

POLITICIAN

He's a good kid and a good aide down
at City Hall for two years. I don't
want to lose him but he had this
scuffle with...anyway...I want to
keep him...

A MUSICIAN...

MUSICIAN

It's my theme.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)

I call it "Judy's Theme" and this
guy who calls himself a band-leader
just stole it. Changed the key and
hiked the octave. But he...

And finally...BELLAMY...

BELLAMY

Walter...May I call you Walter?

50 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - MORNING - (1930)

50

The PHONE RINGS, once, then twice, and finally a FEMALE HAND
comes out from under the sheets and answers it.

FEMALE

Hello. Walter Winchell's room.

WINCHELL comes out of the bathroom and looks to see the WOMAN
in his bed, not Dallas but a different "swell-gell," holding
the phone out to him.

FEMALE (CONT'D)

It's for you. Some dame named June.

Winchell's face falls a little, but he takes the phone.

WINCHELL

June-bug? Now just let me say
something....

But she says something and plenty loud and plenty of it as
Winchell's face winces, but as he listens something in him
changes as he's getting yelled at, and we finally hear the
OTHER END GO DEAD as she hangs up on him. He puts down the
phone and his face goes COMPLETELY HARD.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

(to himself)

I said...let me say something.

51 INT. WESTCHESTER KITCHEN - NIGHT - (1930)

51*

June sits knitting as Walter Jr. and Walda sit on the floor
and play a board game, and all listen to the RADIO.

WINCHELL (over radio)

...And there is no romance between
the mother of Ginger Rogers and John
Edgar Hoover, Chief of G Men. They
are however the best of friends.

June keeps knitting and the kids keep playing. The MAID
busies herself.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

WINCHELL (over radio) (CONT'D)
And on a cryptic note - even though
it's March - there is nothing so
bare as a dame in June...and if June
is your month of months, have the
wind to keep your husband warm or
disappear into December like a good
brittle girl, got it?...Grand! On
with the news...

Walter Jr. and Walda look up to see June shaking, trying to
control herself as BOTH KIDS REALIZE what's just happened.

A52 EXT. NYC STREET - ST. MORITZ HOTEL - DAY - (1930)

A52

Winchell leaves the hotel and crosses the street to CENTRAL
PARK.

52 EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY - (1930)

52

A MAN sitting on a BENCH reads the MIRROR, hiding his face.
As Winchell passes...

The man, young and short, in a dull suit, puts down the paper
and follows Winchell who keeps walking but soon enough notices
FOOTSTEPS behind him. They sound menacing and Winchell's
face starts thinking, but not one to run...

Winchell suddenly turns as the MAN'S FACE STAYS IN THE DARK.

YOUNG MAN

Are you Walter Winchell, the reporter?

WINCHELL

(suspicious)

That's what my press pass says.

The man, holding PEN and PAPER, steps into the light and
reveals a YOUNG, LONG and RATHER DULL-LOOKING FACE.

YOUNG MAN

Can I have your autograph?

Winchell's about to take the pen and paper when he takes a
real look at the man - ED SULLIVAN.

WINCHELL

Jesus. It's you Sullivan. What are
you doing following me?

SULLIVAN

Everyone's following you. At least
on the air. How does it feel to
have the number one broadcast in the
country?

52 CONTINUED:

52

WINCHELL

I don't know. Amos n' Andy are still topping me.

SULLIVAN

Just like you used to top me back at the Globe. And even then you wouldn't call me "Ed." Always just "Sullivan."

WINCHELL

Tell you what, the day you top me on the air - I'll call you Ed.

SULLIVAN

I would have topped you if I'd known what you'd known about the Lindbergh case. I still can't figure it - not broadcasting what you knew about the ransom. Who put you up to it?

WINCHELL

J. Edgar Hoover.

Sullivan goes wide-eyed.

SULLIVAN

Hoover? - How'd he do it?

WINCHELL

(a beat)

He asked...as a favor to a baby. Nice to see you Sullivan. Get used to following me. You're gonna do it a lot.

Winchell smiles and walks away as Sullivan calls after him.

SULLIVAN

You write a daily column, a weekly review and a Sunday broadcast. What's your secret Winchell? How'd you do it?

WINCHELL

All on my own Sullivan. All on my own.

53 INT. DAILY MIRROR - HALLWAY - DAY - (1932)

53*

Another young kid, early-twenties with glasses and dark curly hair, looking more lost than found, walks down the hallway and looks at each door. He is HERMAN KLURFELD.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

He finally reaches one door, breathes deep and knocks. No one answers for a second until suddenly the DOOR FLIES OPEN and Winchell thrusts out his head and looks at the kid.

WINCHELL

What the hell took you so long...and where's my dinner?

KLURFELD

(confused)

I don't have your dinner.

Winchell slams the door closed. Klurfeld stands there for a second and then again knocks. Winchell again opens.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

(quickly)

I'm Herman Klurfeld. The writer. From the Bronx. I'm here for the copy post.

WINCHELL

Oh. I thought you were my supper.

54 INT. DAILY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S OFFICE - DAY - (1932)

54*

Winchell heads back into his office as Klurfeld confusedly follows. Two men, one short and one tall, sit at typewriters. *

WINCHELL

Boys. This is Klurfeld the "writer." Klurfeld the writer, this is Sam Hague, the Press Agent...

The tall one waves.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

And Melvin Diamond, the Press Agent.

The short one nods.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

I'm not looking for writers so go back to the Bronx. I need a Press Agent.

KLURFELD

I want to be a Press Agent.

WINCHELL

What kind of experience you got?

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

KLURFELD

None. But I've got some pretty good items to pitch.

WINCHELL

You ever sold anything to any papers?
In the last month - the last year?

The COPY BOY enters.

COPY BOY

Here's your sandwich, Mr. Winchell.

KLURFELD

I just got out of college...
Accounting.

WINCHELL

My brother's an accountant in
Brooklyn. Only calls me when he
needs tickets to Broadway shows I've
panned.

KLURFELD

But you pan every show.

WINCHELL

That's why he should stay in Brooklyn.
And you should stay in the Bronx.
I've got no time to break you in
Hemingway.

Klurfeld goes to speak, but before he can GAVREAU bursts
into Winchell's office holding yet another copy-sheet.

GAVREAU

Not this time Winchell! I know what
"His Girl Friday" means. It's his
secretary. That's it. Isn't it?

WINCHELL

Gavreau, you're the razor's edge.
Now if you could only put your wit
to your wrists.

GAVREAU

Mister William Randolph Hearst owns
this paper and he's not going to
stand for you writing about one of
his close friends and his close
friend's secretary in such a manner.

Winchell's up in a heartbeat as the old fight continues.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (2)

54

WINCHELL

Oh yes he will because Mister William
Randolph Hearst wants to sell papers
and I'm the man who sells them for
him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

54

CONTINUED: (2)

54

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

But you Gavreau, you're just a red-pencil Ronny who wouldn't know a story if it bit you on your Yale-tail.

GAVREAU

You're nothing but a hack Winchell. You bastardize English Syntax and pass it off as Slanguage. You butcher English Grammar and wink at your common audience like you're Shakespeare. Shakespeare would spit on you.

Winchell, for the first time, is speechless. But then...

KLURFELD

Shakespeare would shake his hand.

Gavreau looks to Klurfeld in disbelief as does Winchell.

GAVREAU

Who the Hell is this?

KLURFELD

I'm Herman Klurfeld...

(to Winchell)

The writer.

(back to Gavreau)

According to H.L. Mencken, the greatest linguist of our time, Mr. Winchell is Elizabethan in his creation and revitalization of the English Language.

Gavreau is speechless as Winchell holds back a smile.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

And you say Mister Winchell bastardizes English? Well English is a bastard with too many illegitimate parents. From the Romans to the Celts to the Anglos to the Saxons to the Normans to the Puritans to the Irish to the Slavs, French and Jews.....All the way to Walter Winchell. English is the biggest ugliest bastard you'll ever meet. But then again I don't know the company you keep.

Gavreau's face goes red as he sputters and then finally...

54 CONTINUED: (3)

54

GAVREAU

Winchell. Get your press-agents out of here. They work for you and not the Mirror so get them out before I call security and have them thrown out!

He turns and storms out of the office as Winchell just looks to Klurfeld and a grin spreads across his lips.

WINCHELL

Okay Klurfeld the writer. - What'ya got?

55 INT. NYC STREETS - TAXI (PROCESS) - NIGHT - (1932)

55

Klurfeld sits in the checkered cab between Hague and Diamond on one side, and across from Winchell enjoying his seat alone. He fumbles with a note-pad and pitches his stuff.

KLURFELD

Okay. I heard that Winston Nash...you know....the Broadway Producer?

WINCHELL

I know he doesn't sell shoes.

KLURFELD

Right. Mister Nash is going to be discharged from Bellevue Hospital after having had a fist fight with his wife.

WINCHELL

That item's a dodge. Nash's wife is ninety pounds to his two-ninety. He fell down his stairs drunk and he'd rather leak it out his wife's Jack Dempsey than he's Jack Daniels. Next.

Hague smiles to Diamond at Klurfeld's first strike.

KLURFELD

Serge M'Divani who's about to be divorced from Mary McCormic has been seen with none other than Doris Duke.

WINCHELL

That's a ghost too. M'Divani's trying to get himself planted in the papers by spreading that seed around.

Hague smiles again at Diamond as the taxi pulls to the curb.

55 CONTINUED:

55

DRIVER
NBC studios.

56 EXT. NBC RADIO STATION - NIGHT - (1932)

56

Winchell and all get out. Klurfeld fumbles with his notes.

KLURFELD
I've got others. Better items.

WINCHELL
Listen Klurfeld.

Winchell looks across the street and there sees....A WOMAN
with a fine figure standing on the far corner.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
You see that dame there on the corner?

KLURFELD
Yes. I see her.

WINCHELL
Some looker, huh?

KLURFELD
Yes. - She's very attractive.

WINCHELL
You got a tenner on you?

KLURFELD
Excuse me?

WINCHELL
A ten-spot. A saw-buck. A Hamilton.

Klurfeld takes out his wallet and takes out TWO BILLS.

KLURFELD
Two Fives.

In an instant Winchell takes them and holds them up.

WINCHELL
Klurfeld says his Two Fins say the
dame's a looker.

Klurfeld's about to protest but just looks at his money and
then the WOMAN who waits for the light to change, and as it
does she crosses the street toward the cab. The closer she
gets the more her face comes into focus and as it does it's
clear she's NOT VERY ATTRACTIVE AT ALL.

56 CONTINUED:

56

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

An item's like a woman. Good from
far...Far from good.

Winchell POCKETS THE BILLS as Klurfeld sees them disappear.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Two lessons. - First, you've got to
get up close to a story. Look into
its eyes and read its lips. If not,
you'll lose your bet every time.

KLURFELD

(annoyed)

I wasn't aware I was making a bet.

WINCHELL

(smiling)

That's the second lesson.

Winchell and all walk into the building where...

57 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - LOBBY/ELEVATORS - NIGHT - (1932)

57

Winchell stops and suddenly turns back to Klurfeld.

WINCHELL

Tell you what Writer. If I use one
of your items in my broadcast tonight,
you're hired. If not...it's been
nice playing the ponies with you.

Winchell goes inside as Hague and Diamond follow and Klurfeld,
taking an exasperated breath, follows too.

58 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT - (1932)

58

A FULL SHOT OF THE MICROPHONE as, this time, the EMCEE bolts
into frame and STRAINS OF A SWINGING TUNE finish up. His
former silk is now full on steam.

EMCEE

Hey all you Subway Steves and Stellas
out there relaxing on this Day of
Rest before the grind again begins.
That was Duke Ellington taking the A
Train.

Klurfeld stands off to the side with Hague and Diamond.

KLURFELD

He's not going to use any of my items.

Hague grins but Diamond, shy but friendly, takes pity.

58 CONTINUED:

58

DIAMOND

If he does it'll be in the show's
first ten minutes. His closing
thought, what he calls the "Lasty,"
he always writes himself.

Winchell walks onto the stage in his hat and rolled sleeves
and he downs another water as he's cutting it close...

EMCEE

And now with all the dirt for you
Skirts and Shirts...Walter Winchell.

But Winchell's to the microphone just in time as he launches
into his broadcast.

WINCHELL

Good Evening Mr. and Mrs. America
and all the ships at sea! Let's go
to press!

Winchell picks up his copy, taps his telegraph, and repeats
the same tribal dance with the same speed and spasms.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

The King Vidor, Miriam Hopkins romance
looks strong at Hollywood court but
if anyone's looking for Vidor's crown,
his court jester's wearing it - and
that's all he's wearing. Long live
the fling!

KLURFELD waits for one of his items as Winchell continues.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Dorothy Parker, poison Ivy herself
to many people, is full of it...which
explains her bandaged paws...

Klurfeld keeps waiting as more items fly by and it's then he
sees the "BET" WOMAN FROM THE CORNER in the studio as she
discreetly straightens the mike line on the floor.

BACK TO KLURFELD who's now more annoyed than ever as he knows
Winchell rigged his involuntary bet.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

District Attorney Dewey mentioned as
Gubernatorial timber by the saw-mill
Republicans...

WINCHELL FARTHER INTO THE BROADCAST as KLURFELD looks to his
watch and the passing minutes.

58

CONTINUED: (2)

58

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

...will not run for that office if
Governor Layman does...

Diamond looks to Klurfeld and shakes his head.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

And now before your faithful reporter
signs off this week for Lucky Strike,
here's a cherry to top off your Sunday
night.

WINCHELL SETS ASIDE HIS COPY as KLURFELD TURNS TO WALK OUT.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

When one of those College Professors
walks up to you and says Winchell's
taking the Axe to Syntax and the
Hammer to Grammar, that he's turning
the English Language from a Mastiff
into a Mutt, you tell 'em English is
the biggest Hound in the Pound.

Klurfeld stops and turns back around.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

From the Romans to the Celts to the
Anglos to the Saxons to the Normans
to the Puritans to the Irish to the
Slavs, French and Jews...all the way
to Yours Truly. This dog knows when
there's something new to bark, English
always finds a new way to bark it.
That's what makes America great!

The RADIO-DIRECTOR motions to the Emcee to pick up again.

EMCEE

Thank you Walter and now we return
you to the Big Band sounds of...

WINCHELL'S UP AND OUT FROM BEHIND HIS DESK as he RACES toward
the opposite side of the room as KLURFELD thinks he's coming
toward him and walks straight in his path...

KLURFELD

Mr. Winchell. You won't regret this.
I...

But Diamond pulls him back just in time as Winchell rushes
out and...

58A INT. NBC RADIO STATION - HALLWAY - NIGHT - (1932)

58A

Races to the bathroom, KNOCKING A BOOM-MIKE. A TECHNICIAN tries catching it but can't as it CRASHES TO THE FLOOR.

CUT TO:

59 INT. LUCKY STRIKE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY - (1932)

59

Winchell, in a much nicer suit than the last time he sat in this room, faces the Head Executive and the drones. A SECRETARY sits taking notes.

WINCHELL

Jergen's is offering me twice the money for a higher spot on the dial. If you can match it...I'll stay.

The Head Executive holds up his CONTRACT.

HEAD EXECUTIVE

Mister George Hill wants to know if they can match what we've got...You, for another year.

WINCHELL

You can't hold me to that "Manhattan for a Box of Beads" deal. It'll never hold up.

The Head Executive, all smiles before...BUT NOT NOW.

HEAD EXECUTIVE

Oh yes it will, Mister Winchell. This isn't one of your father's unpaid Pinochle markers. This is a contract.

A BEAT ON WINCHELL - This is war.

60 EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY - (1932)

60

A taxi pulls up to the park and HARRY the doorman, who we recognize from the Prohibition Party, gets out. He hurries over to an OLD MAN playing cards with some SHIFTLESS TYPES.

HARRY

Mister Winchell. Your son needs to talk to you. Please come with me.

OLD MAN

I can't just now. I'm down forty.

Harry fishes through his pockets and slaps a couple bills down on the bench. Leads the old man into the cab.

61 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - DAY - (1932)

61*

Winchell rants and raves on the phone as he glances to Harry and his FATHER now standing shaved and in a suit.

WINCHELL (into phone)
You tell George Hill my Mirror Column
will be the looking glass he sees
his tobacco profits plummet in every
morning. - Cigarettes have suddenly
become unhealthy for my air-time.

Winchell hands the old man some bills and gives him a hard look, but then softens - STRAIGHTENS OUT THE MAN'S COLLAR.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
(to father)
My suit fits you like a glove.

But Winchell "comes to" and waves for Harry to get him out which Harry does as Winchell returns to his phone ranting.

WINCHELL (into phone) (CONT'D)
I'll tell you exactly how they can
carry on the broadcast. - I found my
own replacement.

CUT TO:

62 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - SOUNDSTAGE - DAY - (1932)

62

A FULL SHOT OF ED SULLIVAN as he comes into frame and smiles.

SULLIVAN
Hello. I'm Ed Sullivan, your new
host for the Lucky Strike hour.

63 EXT. MIAMI GOLF COURSE - MORNING - (1933)

63

Winchell, in checkered pants and a golfing-bonnet, tees off with a solid swing as a LARGE CROWD OF ON-LOOKERS and SOME FORTY REPORTERS BEHIND HIM clap approvingly.

WINCHELL hands his club back to his caddie and then walks up the fairway followed by his THREE GOLFING BUDDIES, the crowd behind the ropes, and the cart and journalists on the grass.

FIRST REPORTER
Mister Winchell. How does it feel
knowing the President-Elect's in
Miami as well, but you're getting
more attention and bigger crowds?

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

WINCHELL

And more reporters following me?
Ask yourselves that question.

SECOND REPORTER

Do you feel like a King?

WINCHELL

No. I'm just a conceited peasant.
All this attention will die off.

THIRD REPORTER

But you have received threats from
people on whom you've tattled?

WINCHELL

I don't "tattle, prattle, or shake
my rattle" as some of you, and I
know who, have portrayed me.

FOURTH REPORTER

But you have received threats?

BACK TO WINCHELL AND REPORTERS ON THE GREEN as Winchell
arrives at his ball and pulls a club from his bag.

WINCHELL

Of course. The man who's hated by
everyone knows who his friends are.

Winchell lines up his club to his ball and steadies his swing
stance.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

And the man who's loved by everyone
has more enemies than most.

ONE MAN, A COUNTRY-CLUB WORKER RUNS THROUGH THE TREES and
ONTO THE FAIRWAY right in front of WINCHELL who...

SWINGS sending his ball OVER THE CLUB WORKER WHO JUST
STANDS THERE AND YELLS...

COUNTRY-CLUB WORKER

Someone just tried to kill Roosevelt
in Bay Front Park!

REPORTERS and everyone stand stunned for a second, but...

WINCHELL drops his club in a heartbeat, whirls around and
starts running as the OTHER REPORTERS come to soon enough
and start running as well.

64 EXT. MIAMI POLICE STATION - DAY - (1933)

64

A surging crowd of reporters swells behind a BARRICADE in front of a PRECINCT. An ARMY OF COPS maintain the barricade as reporters fire questions over one another to the cops.

REPORTERS

Where's the President-Elect now?...Do you have the assassin in custody?

A POLICE SERGEANT walks up to the barricade as...

WINCHELL pushes his way to the front, still in his golfing outfit and looking, in the mob, like the circus' top clown.

SERGEANT

(Scottish accent)

Why don't you all head home lads. You don't have a hell's hope of getting inside let alone talking to the suspect.

REPORTER

Then you've got the assassin?

SERGEANT

Suspect.

WINCHELL

You've got to let me inside. I'm Walter Winchell.

The Sergeant looks to Winchell and leans into his face.

SERGEANT

I don't care if you're the last of the Stewarts come to claim the British throne. Nobody does anything without the okay of Mister Newman.

WINCHELL

Lawrence Newman?!

SERGEANT

Yes. He's in charge.

Winchell's eyes think as a smile takes his mouth hostage. He whirls around and makes his way back through the crowd as a reporter lets out a howl compliments of the cleats.

65 EXT. MIAMI POLICE STATION - TELEPHONE - DAY - (1933)

65

Walter reaches the crowd's edge and breaks through as he looks this way and that to see a BANK OF TELEPHONES as ONE REPORTER gets off.

65 CONTINUED:

65

Walter's to it in an instant as he cranks it and yells...

WINCHELL

Operator. I want to make a toll
call to the Bronx!

66 INT. KLURFELD'S KITCHEN - DAY - (1933)

66

Klurfeld sits at his kitchen table where lunch has just been
served as he makes eyes at his BABY in its high-chair. It's
RAINING. KLURFELD'S WIFE, an agreeably pleasant looking
woman holds the phone. *

KLURFELD'S WIFE (into phone)

A toll call?...From Miami...From
Winchell?

She looks to Klurfeld who bolts up and takes the phone.

KLURFELD (into phone)

We accept the toll. Mister Winchell?

67 EXT. MIAMI POLICE STATION - TELEPHONE - DAY - (1933)

67

Winchell on the phone.

WINCHELL

Klurfeld. Get your can down to my
office. We're scratching the column.

KLURFELD (V.O.)

But it's set. You said so this...

WINCHELL

Someone tried to off FDR. Be in my
office in half an hour to accept my
call or this is the last time we
talk.

Winchell turns and sees an OFFICER assisting Newman into his
car. Hanging up the phone, Winchell takes off after the
vehicle. *

68 INT. KLURFELD'S KITCHEN - DAY - (1933)

68

Klurfeld runs out the kitchen as his wife watches him go.

69 OMIT

69

70 EXT. MIAMI STREET - DAY - (1933)

70

WE SEE GOLF CLEATS RUNNING TOWARDS NEWMAN'S CAR AND TILT UP
TO REVEAL WINCHELL JUMPING ONTO THE RUNWAY BOARD. *

70 CONTINUED:

70

Winchell's running towards it before we know it and as he reaches it he JUMPS UP ON THE RUNNER as the car pulls over.

71 EXT. MIAMI STREET - NEWMAN'S CAR - DAY - (1933)

71

Winchell's straddling the runner as the back-window rolls down and LAWRENCE NEWMAN furiously looks out.

NEWMAN

What's the meaning of this?

WINCHELL

Mister Newman. Walter Winchell at your beck and call.

NEWMAN

Winchell! What in the blazes do you want? Get off my runner!

WINCHELL

I want inside the lock-up. I want first crack at the shooter.

NEWMAN

Are you mad?

(to his driver)

Call for some officers.

The driver reaches for the RADIO.

WINCHELL

I'd rather talk to the shooter than Your daughter - in the sanitarium - For that secret "rest cure."

NEWMAN

(to driver)

Wait.

WINCHELL

Think of all that trouble I'll have to go through. Getting past her nurses. Accidentally kicking over the bottles under her bed.

NEWMAN

(with eyes of fire)

Winchell. - You're the devil's own toady.

WINCHELL

Next time I see him I'll give him your regards...and your daughter's.

71 CONTINUED:

71

NEWMAN
(a beat, deciding)
Alright. You talk to the shooter.
Now let's go driver.

DRIVER
I'll let him in...

NEWMAN
No!

Newman shoots Winchell another look.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)
Make him ride on the outside...and
step on it!

The driver pulls out again as Newman stares at Winchell holding on as the car goes faster and faster but...WINCHELL JUST SMILES and clutches the car door as is GOLFING HAT FLIES OFF HIS HEAD.

72 INT. DAILY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S OFFICE - DAY - (1933)

72*

Klurfeld sits behind a typewriter and beside the phone. Suddenly the door opens and in walks Gavreau.

GAVREAU
I heard you were here. What's...?

The PHONE RINGS. Klurfeld reaches, but Gavreau grabs it.

GAVREAU (CONT'D)
Daily Mirror. - Emile Gavreau.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
I have a toll call from a Mister
Winchell from Miami for a...

73 EXT. MIAMI POLICE STATION - TELEPHONE - DAY - (1933)

73

Winchell's again outside the precinct at the phone bank.

WINCHELL
Gavreau, give the phone to Klurfeld!

GAVREAU (over phone)
You're calling toll Winchell? And
to your Press Agent who's not even
supposed to be in Mirror off...

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Do you accept the toll please?

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

WINCHELL

Gavreau, I've got an exclusive with
FDR's would be assassin...

GAVREAU (over phone)

Would be what?

WINCHELL

Assassin.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Someone tried to shoot Roosevelt?

GAVREAU (over phone)

Good lord. This is a story for the
city desk. Not your gossip column.

WINCHELL

Hand the phone to Klurfeld or I'm
climbing Hearst's castle walls and
telling him you melted the biggest
scoop of the decade. - Do it! - Now!

74 INT. DAILY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S OFFICE - DAY - (1933)

74*

Gavreau stands there holding the phone as he's stuck, and
mad as a stuck pig, and he finally hands the phone to Klurfeld
and again storms out of the office.

KLURFELD

Mister Winchell?

75 EXT. MIAMI POLICE STATION - TELEPHONE - DAY - (1933)

75

Winchell stands at a phone and smiles.

WINCHELL

Okay Klurfeld the writer. I'm going
to give you the straw. You spin it
into gold. This is your chance to
cram your novel into nine-hundred
words, and it better soar, it better
fly, it better make my Mamma cry.
Got a pencil?

76 INT. DAILY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S OFFICE - DAY (1933)

76*

Klurfeld's FOREHEAD IS SUDDENLY COVERED IN SWEAT as he sits
behind the typewriter and grabs a pencil.

KLURFELD

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

WINCHELL (over phone)
Joe Zangara, a blurry-eyed Florida
transient, fired five shots at
Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Mayor
Cermak in Miami's Bay Front Park.
One bullet hit the Mayor. The other
four...

77 OMIT

77

CUT TO:

78 INT. HEARST MANSION - DINING HALL - DAY - (1933)

78

PAN DOWN FROM A MAGNIFICENT DOME TO A FULL SHOT of WILLIAM
RANDOLPH HEARST sitting at a banquet table reading aloud
from the "Mirror."

HEARST

"...Barely escaped the President-
Elect and found their unhappy marks
on four innocent bystanders who in
this reporter's opinion deserve Bronze
Stars for taking bullets meant for
our soon to be Commander and Chief."

Hearst, a large blustery man who'd buy a Da Vinci, but bury
a dime, sets aside the paper and looks down the length of
the long table at Winchell sitting alone at the far end.

HEARST (CONT'D)

Marvelous. The prose doesn't show a
speck of purple. You've really
developed a wonderful style Walter.

WINCHELL

Thank you Mister Hearst.

HEARST

And your exclusive interview with
the assassin sold more papers in a
morning than a month, but the question
I would have asked is why he didn't
aim straighter and plug that liberal
SOB.

Hearst laughs. WINCHELL tries wearing a smile but doesn't.
A Butler enters with a couple maids as they set down a whole
meal on PAPER PLATES. Winchell notices the "finery."

HEARST (CONT'D)

I hope you don't mind eating from
paper plates.

78 CONTINUED:

78

WINCHELL

As long as I'm not the one who has
to get 'em clean.

Hearst chuckles.

HEARST

Walter. I'm moving your column up
to the top of the paper.

WINCHELL

The Front Page?

HEARST

No. The second. After all, the
Front Page is for real news. Am I
correct?

WINCHELL

Yes. Of course.

HEARST

But you'll be the top entertainment
column we have and I'm interested,
no - excited - to see what stories
you'll fill it with to keep it there.

79 INT. BARBER SHOP - EARLY MORNING - (1933)

79*

Winchell sits in a barber's chair as he has his daily shave
and finishes reading some sheets of paper. Klurfeld, Hague
and Diamond sit in chairs and await his response.

WINCHELL

This is the bruised fruit you're
hawking? Taylor Caldwell's luncheon?
Carl Sandburg's haircut?

Winchell suddenly and literally throws the pages at Hague's
and Diamond's faces as KLURFELD IS SURPRISED, DIAMOND COWERS
and HAGUE CONTROLS HIS TEMPER. Winchell bolts out of the
chair and towers over them in a literal lather.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

You expect me to follow a President's
hide with a Poet's head?

HAGUE

Sidewalk's slow. There's no real
stories.

WINCHELL

There are always real stories!
Sometimes there are just no real
men.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

79

Everyone in the shop looks their way as Winchell tries calming but Hague fumes. A MANICURIST works quietly as a BARBER brings a PHONE. *

BARBER

There's a call for you sir.

WINCHELL (into phone)

Winchell.

80 INT. NIGHTCLUB - DAY - (1933)

80

Dallas sits at the empty club's bar where the day-workers sweep the floors and clean the glasses.

DALLAS

It's Dallas.

WINCHELL

Moll-Doll. How's No-Neck?

DALLAS

You know you're supposed to call him "Anthony" now that we're hitched. Anyway, he's letting me run his Club and I was fishing around like you asked but I don't have much. Here goes...

81 INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY - (1933)

81

Winchell hangs up, wipes the soap from his face and looks to Diamond and Hague.

WINCHELL

You've disappointed Daddy. Now go.

Hague, still mad, and Diamond get up to go as does Klurfeld.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Not you Klurfeld. You stay.

Klurfeld sits down as Hague shoots him a look before he and Diamond leave. Winchell looks to Klurfeld.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Al Capone is being moved from Alcatraz to Georgia because he's dying of paresis and an Atlanta hospital's got better facilities.

KLURFELD

(waiting for more)

And...?

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

WINCHELL

That's it. That's tonight's
broadcast.

KLURFELD

About ten seconds of it.

WINCHELL

The whole show.

KLURFELD

How?

WINCHELL

You tell me.

82 INT. KLURFELD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (1933)

82

Klurfeld fiddles behind his radio plugging in the wire to an
overloaded socket as the radio's sound comes in and out.

KLURFELD'S WIFE

Stop fussing with it. We're going
to miss the broadcast.

KLURFELD

I think I've got it.

Klurfeld comes out from behind the radio as WINCHELL'S VOICE
comes over the primitive box.

WINCHELL (over radio)

Good Evening Mr. and Mrs. America
and all the ships at sea! Let's go
to press!

Winchell's voice trembles with excitement.

WINCHELL (over radio) (CONT'D)

Needles, California: Moving across
the desert tonight at high speed in
a darkened Pullman car is a man under
heavy guard. Many of you will
recognize his name, most of you would
shudder at its sound. He is Al
Capone, chief gangster of them all,
and he is being transferred under
heavy guard to a certain city on the
Eastern Seaboard, maybe to your city,
maybe to your neighborhood, maybe to
the very street where you live, your
wife walks, and your children play...

Klurfeld's wife puts her arm around their child and looks to
her husband.

82 CONTINUED:

82

KLURFELD'S WIFE

Is this true?

KLURFELD

(considering beat)

Absolutely.

83 EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

83

Stock-footage of the 1930's White House.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Get me Walter Winchell.

84 INT. PRESIDENT'S STUDY - DAY - (1934)

84

Winchell, dressed in his best, is ushered into a room with the curtains drawn. A dim figure warms its hands by the fire. Winchell waits for an uncomfortable second until the figure turns and...

REVEALS ITSELF as FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT, who clamps his teeth onto his cigarette holder and smiles.

FDR

Walter....I've got an item for you.

(a beat)

Senator Taft is a horse's Aft.

FDR laughs and a relieved Winchell laughs as well.

FDR (CONT'D)

Sit down my boy. Sit down.

WINCHELL

Thank you Mister President.

*

FDR

Heard that Capone story last Sunday. Scared the heck out of Eleanor. Had to promise her all night Al's new address wasn't Pennsylvania Avenue.

WINCHELL

I'm sorry sir.

FDR

Don't be silly. Enjoyed the drama. That's a reporter's job, isn't it?

WINCHELL

Well Mister President.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

I've been called a lot of things,
but a reporter's not usually one of
them.

FDR chuckles and draws a drag.

FDR

Yes. They say you dish the dirt.
Gab the gossip. You know before you
came today I looked up the word
"gossip." I imagine you know what
it actually means, but I didn't.

Winchell doesn't either, but just listens.

FDR (CONT'D)

Comes from an old word "God-sib."
The sibling of a god. The kinsman
to a divine thing. Walter...
(looks straight at
him)

I think Democracy's a divine thing.

WINCHELL

Yes sir.

FDR

The world's becoming a dangerous
place I'm afraid, a ticking bomb
whose fuse has already been long-
lit. But where it will explode, I
don't know.

FDR leans forward and talks to Winchell "confidentially."

FDR (CONT'D)

You're the one reporter I've read
who answers to no one. America needs
a son like you on its side, a son
who answers to no one.

FDR puts his hand on Winchell's shoulder as Walter becomes
terribly taken and moved by the intimacy from such a man.

FDR (CONT'D)

The Face of Fear is coming. I don't
yet know its eyes and I don't yet
know its name. But you will look
for it Walter, won't you?

Winchell nods, enraptured by the trust and intimacy.

84 CONTINUED: (2)

84

FDR (CONT'D)

And when you see that face, when you find it...you won't answer to anyone will you? Not even me. You'll dish the dirt on it and gab the gossip...

(a beat)

And you'll be a sibling to the god?

A BEAT ON WINCHELL as he just soaks this in.

WINCHELL

Yes Mister President.

CUT TO:

85 INT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1934)

85*

A FULL SHOT OF A NEWSPAPER slammed down on a table.

ON THE PAPER'S PAGE SITS A PHOTO of the face of ADOLPH HITLER orating and looking almost presidential.

WINCHELL (O.S.)

Tell me who this is.

At TABLE 50 Klurfeld sits with Winchell.

KLURFELD

Hitler. The leader of the German National Socialist Movement...

WINCHELL

The leader of the German National Bowel Movement. He's the face of fear.

KLURFELD

What?

WINCHELL

It's buried on page 20 but he's meeting with Mussolini in Rome and you can damn well bet they're not talking Italian Opera.

KLURFELD

Hitler's the German Chancellor.

WINCHELL

He's a thug. Look at him. I grew up on the streets and I know a gangster when I see one. - I'm going to write a column about him.

Klurfeld picks up his drink.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

85

KLURFELD

I'd love to read it.

WINCHELL

So would I. - Get cracking.

Winchell takes his drink. Klurfeld reluctantly gets up and leaves as Winchell downs the drink.

86 INT. HEARST MANSION - DINING HALL - DAY - (1934)

86

Hearst lunches as GAVREAU this time reads from the Daily Mirror.

*

*

GAVREAU

"The European Nations had better get down to brass tacks before they end up in iron chains. These soon to be captive countries must agree Hitler is their common enemy before they all face general attack. To treat this madman as a political figure is like the Portuguese thinking Napoleon was political because they were too busy looking at Josephine's figure."

Hearst looks across the table at GAVREAU.

HEARST

You're right. It's a little out of his realm, but it's too soon to worry.

GAVREAU

Yesterday he wrote FDR's smile deserved a Nobel Prize.

Hearst stops chewing. Thinks.

HEARST

Perhaps he's letting his second page slot go to his head.

GAVREAU

Perhaps sir. - I was more concerned about your business interests in Germany. Your press services, factories, fiber mills and such.

Hearst SETS DOWN HIS WOODEN FORK.

*

87 INT. DAILY MIRROR - GAVREAU'S OFFICE - NIGHT - (1934)

87*

Winchell enters as Gavreau, behind his desk, stands.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

WINCHELL
What do you want?

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

GAVREAU

It's not what I want. It's what
Mister Hearst wants.

Gavreau nods to HEARST who sits in the corner behind the
door. Winchell stiffens - on his best behavior.

WINCHELL

Mister Hearst. I didn't know you
were in the building.

HEARST

Walter. How are you?

WINCHELL

Fine. Finishing up my column.

HEARST

That's what I wanted to talk to you
about. What you've been writing
lately...about Germany...and now
Lindbergh, the nation's favorite
son...

WINCHELL

Who just joined Hitler on an
inspection of the Luftwaffe...

HEARST

As an aviator and emissary. Writing
that his halo will slip over his
neck and become his noose.

WINCHELL

That's exactly what will happen to
him and all of us if Hitler is
allowed...

HEARST

Walter. Walter. Go dig up some
dirt on a chorus girl, find out who's
diddling who, and print it for the
rabble that make us both a lot of
money. But get your eye off of Europe
and back into the Broadway Keyhole.

GAVREAU

(grinning)

Yes. I've gathered a perfect item
for your column. A young Ohio lady
whose specialty is making a muscle
in her chest wiggle. Her mother
taught it to her. The story's right
up your alley.

87 CONTINUED: (2)

87

WINCHELL
(controlling temper)
Mister Hearst. Hitler is...

HEARST
A man with a vision for his nation.
A man who's turning Germany into a
productive, profitable concern. I
agree his views on Jews are a little
extreme.

Winchell's face clouds over. Something in him switches.

HEARST (CONT'D)
But those are just scribblings in
that book of his. Just words, and
words won't hurt anyone. Now stay
away from politics and stick to
gossip.

WINCHELL
No.

HEARST
(can't believe his
ears)
Excuse me. What did you say to me?

WINCHELL
No. - I'm going to write about Hitler
and I'm not going to stop writing
about Hitler until there's nothing
left to write about Hitler because
the last thing I just wrote about
Hitler was that Hitler is dead.

Hearst's face goes red. He sputters.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
And if you don't care for that you
can release me from my contract and
I'll take my top column to the News,
Graphic or any nickel-print press
with butcher's paper and block-type.

Winchell opens the door.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
Though I don't think your accountants
would consider that decision very
"productive" or "profitable."

Winchell leaves as a stunned Hearst just stands there.

88 INT. BARBER SHOP - LATE DAY - (1938)

88*

Winchell's again shaved as Klurfeld, Hague, and Diamond watch him peruse more pages and then RIP THEM IN HALF.

WINCHELL

I want to take Hitler to a higher court, not a higher cotillion. Did you write this Herman?

HAGUE

Diamond and I wrote it. Klurfeld was sick. It's the best we can do.

WINCHELL

Well your best is half as good as shit.

Hague bolts up like he'll go for Winchell who slowly smiles and stands.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

You want to say something to me Hague?
You want to insult me?

Hague has a dozen on the tip of his tongue but holds back.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Go ahead...But you best make sure the insult is clever, clever enough to use in my column...or you're fired.

Hague's dying to barb him but his EYES search for the wit.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Go on. Insult me. I can always use a Goodie.

Hague thinks some more but decides not to finally and slowly sits down. Winchell looks to the three of them.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Now I want a Hitler column that's going to make the Fuhrer fume. In one hour.

Winchell storms out of the barber shop as all three look to each other. Klurfeld takes out pen and paper.

KLURFELD

If he wants a Hitler column, let's give him one.

Klurfeld smiles as the other two just look confused.

89 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - DAY - (1938)

89*

Winchell reads aloud from a paper as Klurfeld, Hague and Diamond stand nearby.

WINCHELL

"A crazed Ego whose Id is found in the Idiot manner in which he stomps his feet until all around him fall into line..."

Winchell smiles a "well done" as THEY ALL SMILE BACK.

90 INT. HEARST MANSION - DINING HALL - DAY - (1938)

90

Gavreau again reads as Hearst listens.

GAVREAU

"...A man-child who wraps his mouth around a microphone like a thumb."

HEARST

(to Gavreau)

Just take out the Hitler comment.

GAVREAU

Why not pull him altogether?

HEARST

Because his name sells papers. I can afford to lose him - but not his name.

91 INT. DAILY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S OFFICE - DAY - (1938)

91*

Winchell pages through the paper, not seeing his column on page two, then manically flips through to find it on ten as he explodes, kicks over a chair and storms out of the room.

Hague and Diamond turn to Klurfeld behind a typewriter as they again get to work.

GAVREAU (V.O.)

"...A self-appointed dictator who demands his followers adore him..."

91A STOCK FOOTAGE OF HITLER ON THE NUREMBERG PLATFORM
GESTICULATING

91A

GAVREAU (V.O.)

"And then stands back on his platform waiting to be convinced."

92 INT. HEARST MANSION - DINING HALL - DAY - (1938) 92

Hearst looks to Gavreau holding the paper.

HEARST

Take out all the political items.

93 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - DAY - (1938) 93*

Winchell takes the Mirror page by page, looking at each and throwing each away as....

WINCHELL

He's cut the column in half!

Klurfeld, Hague and Diamond are facing him.

GAVREAU (V.O.)

"...A self-effacing fascist who exacts loyalty from his subordinates during the day..."

93A OMIT 93A*

94 INT. HEARST MANSION - DINING HALL - MORNING - (1938) 94*

GAVREAU (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And then takes out the Long Knives at night..."

Hearst again to Gavreau.

HEARST

Pull him.

Winchell works his way to the end of the paper as he throws out the last couple pages. *

WINCHELL *

He's pulled me! *

A95 OMIT A95*

95 EXT. NYC STREET - NEWSSTAND - DAY - (1938) 95

Winchell looks over to Klurfeld, Hague and Diamond. He's as hot as he can be.

WINCHELL

I'm out of the Mirror! And all my shittorneys say I can't go to another paper. He owns my name. My Name!

CUT TO:

96 INT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1938)

96*

A CLOSE-UP OF WINCHELL through a CAMERA-LENS.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)

Could you give us a smile Mr.
Winchell?

The lens pulls back and next to Winchell sits Klurfeld.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And you as well Mister...Mister...?

Winchell and Klurfeld sit at Table 50 over drinks as the photographer hovers. Winchell sees Klurfeld will be in the picture and he waves the photographer away.

WINCHELL

Not now. Later. Not now.

The photographer makes his exit.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

So what do you think?

KLURFELD

What do I think? - I think you're
mad.

WINCHELL

What did you say?

KLURFELD

You heard me. And I'll say it again
if you didn't.

Winchell gets angry for a second, but then slowly SMILES.

WINCHELL

Little Herman Klurfeld from the Bronx
is growing up. He's a big boy now.

KLURFELD

Big enough to know you don't broadcast
political speeches on radio. Hell,
they barely let FDR do his Fireside
Chats. And the President doesn't
have a sponsor.

WINCHELL

To hell with the sponsor and the
network. At least I'll get one
broadcast out...

(CONTINUED)

96

CONTINUED:

96

KLURFELD

And then they'll pull you like Hearst did. You'll be out of a job...and then I'll be out of a job.

(a beat)

Hell, Walter. I know Hitler's a madman. He's a fascist fire-bug who thinks every night is Halloween, but he's got a horde of followers who're trick or treating with him. - He's Hitler.

(a beat)

You're only Walter Winchell.

WINCHELL

You mean I'm Winchell - and he's only Hitler.

KLURFELD

Walter. I a family to support. A wife, a child, another on the way. You've received death threats...

WINCHELL

I've been getting those for years.

KLURFELD

From irate cuckolds and bad tempered producers. Not the underground German Legion, the Friends of the Rhineland.

WINCHELL

But Hitler...

KLURFELD

What do we know about Hitler that hasn't already been written up?

WINCHELL

I'll tell you what Herman. I've talked to a hundred doormen and cabbies around this town whose Cousins and Mothers and Grandfathers back in Germany are being dragged out of their beds, their businesses and their shops and carried off into the night.

Klurfeld listens. Surprised.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

No. You won't read about it under Hearst's Banner or see it in an article about Lindbergh's latest buffet-luncheon in Berchtesgaden.

96 CONTINUED: (2)

96

Klurfeld just listens.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

You won't see it in a newsreel of Chamberlain signing the Munich Pact because the cameras are all filming the shoulder to shoulder rows of gorgeous soldiers and not their boots goose-stepping over broken glass.

(a beat)

Jews are being murdered...and there's no cleverer way I can find to say that. Can you think of a cleverer way to say it? Because if you can, I'll broadcast it.

A BEAT ON KLURFELD as he soaks it in - totally transfixed.

KLURFELD

I think you said it extremely well.

97 EXT. NBC RADIO STATION - NIGHT - (1938)

97

Winchell gets out of a taxi and heads into the building.

98 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - LOBBY/ELEVATORS - NIGHT - (1938)

98

Winchell walks into the lobby where TWO MEN IN OVERCOATS AND HATS looking ominously dangerous as they follow him to the elevators. He notices them as a woman recognizes him.

WOMAN

Mr. Winchell. I work at the switch-Board. Could I have your autograph?

WINCHELL

Of course Mrs. America.

She beams and Winchell signs her paper.

99 INT. KLURFELD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (1938)

99

Klurfeld again fools with the radio-plug going into the socket already over-loaded with at least eight other plugs.

KLURFELD

The radio's out again! We're going to miss the broadcast!

KLURFELD'S WIFE

Well it won't be the end of the world.

Klurfeld tinkers with it some more until suddenly a HOST OF SPARKS fly out as the lights go dim and come on again.

100 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT -(1938) 100

Winchell drinks his customary glasses of water as he looks over his copy. He looks out his door to see the TWO MEN hanging out in the back studio passages - waiting.

BACK TO WINCHELL who thinks. Steels himself. He drinks the last of his water.

101 OMIT 101

102 INT. KLURFELD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (1938) 102

Klurfeld is still tinkering with the plugs as finally a near fire spurts out of the overloaded socket and ALL THE LIGHTS IN THE APARTMENT GO OUT. Klurfeld kicks the wall.

KLURFELD'S WIFE
If you'd just left it alone.

KLURFELD
I can't miss this broadcast. I can't.

KLURFELD'S WIFE
I'll go get some candles.

Klurfeld bangs the radio again and again until...

KLURFELD'S WIFE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Herman! Come here!

He stops and starts walking toward his wife's voice...

103 INT. KLURFELD'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - (1938) 103

In the dark kitchen where she stands holding a CANDLE and listening. *

KLURFELD'S WIFE
Can you hear that?

KLURFELD
What for God's sake? I'm trying...

KLURFELD'S WIFE
Shush. Listen - It's Winchell.

Klurfeld listens as they both stand in the dark room and indeed, coming from everywhere, sifting through the windows and walls and floor is...WINCHELL'S VOICE, distant but clearly recognizable. Klurfeld goes to the kitchen door leading out onto his...

104 EXT. KLURFELD'S FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT - (1938)

104

Fire-escape as he and his wife come out and look onto the WHOLE BRONX NEIGHBORHOOD where from every apartment window and street corner and little grocery store comes...

WINCHELL'S VOICE like the air, anywhere and everywhere.

WINCHELL (over radios)
(echoing through Bronx)
You won't see it in a newsreel of
Chamberlain signing the Munich Pact
because the cameras are all filming
the shoulder to shoulder rows of
gorgeous soldiers and not their boots
goose-stepping over the broken glass
of Jewish shop windows.

Klurfeld looks to his wife and she to him as she sees his face is full of emotion. She TAKES HIS HAND.

WINCHELL (over radios) (CONT'D)
Our country which governs from the
bottom up must take to task the
tyranny that destroys from the top
down. This dictator will one day
discover...

We move away from the Klurfelds and TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD...

WINCHELL (over radios) (CONT'D)
...The memory of a people oppressed
is always longer than the road to
glory, and the voice of freedom...

...And up over the buildings to the SKY where WINCHELL'S VOICE SWIMS AND SIFTS INTO THE NIGHT.

WINCHELL (over radios) (CONT'D)
...Will be ringing even after the
curses of the Barbarians are
forgotten.

This last word lingers for a bit and then fades as we...

CUT TO:

105 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT - (1938)

105

A FULL SHOT OF THE EMCEE AND JERGEN'S SPONSORS just standing there not believing what they've just heard as...

WINCHELL runs past them and toward the MEN'S ROOM as the technicians quickly pull away their mikes and equipment in well-learned unison.

106 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT - (1938)

106

The TWO MEN enter the bathroom and see Winchell peeing.
He's confronted by...THEM as they surround him.

Winchell, peeing, looks up, afraid but not backing down.

WINCHELL

Can I help you Gentlemen?

FBI AGENT #1

Mister Winchell. - We're from the
FBI.

WINCHELL

Can't I take a piss in peace?

He displays an IDENTIFICATION CARD.

FBI AGENT #2

We understand you've had some death
threats?

Winchell breathes, relieved.

107 EXT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1938)

107

Winchell's about to enter the now red-hot night spot as a
whole line of people waiting in the RAIN see a REPORTER
approach him.

REPORTER

Mister Winchell...are you a Socialist?

WINCHELL

A Socialist?

Winchell's on the spot and thinks quick.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

With the straight dames I'm always
"Social," and to keep my dames
straight I always make a "list" but
I never put the two together.

The line laughs but the Reporter will not be swayed.

REPORTER

I mean, are you a Communist? Hitler
hates Communists and you hate Hitler.

WINCHELL

...And Hitler hates me. But I'm the
only one of the three that loves
America. Remember that.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

107

Winchell enters the club as the reporter watches him go.

CUT TO:

108 EXT. NYC STREET - NEWSSTAND - MORNING - (1939)

108*

A FULL SHOT OF THE MIRROR'S INSIDE PAGE with an article...
"HITLER DECLARES WINCHELL A NEW ENEMY OF THE NEW GERMANY."

Winchell walks up to a newsstand, grabs the paper and hungrily reads it. The NEWS-SELLER recognizes his face.

NEWS-SELLER

That's on the house Mister Winchell.

Winchell looks up with a schoolboy smile.

WINCHELL

Hitler hates me. He really does hate me.

The News-seller bites down on his cigar and smiles.

NEWS-SELLER

Yeah. Stalin's still not returning my phone calls and I'm all in a tizzy.

Winchell stands and reads to himself as we hear...

GERMAN VOICE (V.O.)

This is Radio Berlin broadcasting across the channel to England and the Isles. As was reprinted in America's own New York Mirror, "Hitler declares Walter Winchell the new enemy to a new Germany."

Winchell walks on and reads the paper.

109 OMIT

109

110 OMIT

110

111 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - DAY - (1939)

111*

The door opens and a BELLBOY lets the TWO MEN into the room as he accepts a TIP and then closes the door.

GERMAN VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"...Our noble friends in the United States must fight this man..."

The men go to work on Walter's room, breaking mirrors and furniture, ripping sheets and pissing on the bed.

112 EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATE DAY - (1939)

112*

Winchell again walks down his accustomed park-path.

GERMAN VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"...They should call him out on the
dueling field and, face to face,
demand satisfaction for true Germans
and Austrians everywhere."

Winchell keeps walking and again hears FOOTSTEPS behind him.
He stops and turns to face a FIGURE IN THE SHADOWS.

WINCHELL

Back for another autograph Sullivan?

The Figure comes into the light and it's not Sullivan at
all, but a different, harder face, a face we recognize tipping
the bellboy at the St. Moritz.

HARD FACE

(German accent)

No Herr Winchell. I do not want an
autograph.

The man then lets loose a punch straight into Winchell's
stomach and then sends one into his jaw as Winchell recovers
and then knocks the German on his ass, but...TWO MORE FIGURES
come out of the bushes and punch Winchell in the back and
sides as he goes down again and before we know it all three
of them surround Winchell as they kick and punch him again
and again.

CUT TO:

113 EXT. WESTCHESTER HOUSE - DAY - (1939)

113*

A FULL SHOT OF WINCHELL'S FACE all beaten and bruised.

WINCHELL

That's the one. Make sure it fits
tight.

Winchell's on the lawn supervising WORKERS PUTTING BARS ON
TWO WINDOWS on the second floor. Klurfeld stands there too.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

It's going to take more than a
Lindbergh ladder for those Ratzis to
get to my kids.

Walda and Walter Jr., now seventeen and fifteen are on the
front porch as Walter Jr. sits in a "love seat" just rocking
back and forth staring at his father, and Walda is busy asking
her mother for something she desperately wants.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

There was no need you coming Herman.
(hard to say)
But I appreciate it just the same.

KLURFELD

Sure Walter. After all, if the Reich
gets you, where's my next check coming
from?

WINCHELL

Hearst. He'll be more than happy to
hire you to write my epitaph.

June approaches.

JUNE

Supper will be ready in ten minutes.
Walda wants to go out tonight but I
said since it's the first weekend
her father's been home in more than
a month, you'd want her to stay.

WINCHELL

(feels the barb)
Yes. I want her to stay.

June sees the workers finish the two barred windows.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

The bars aren't too much of an
eyesore, are they Mamma?

JUNE

(disgusted)
No Walter. They're not. But you've
put them on the laundry room windows.
You've secured a dozen boxes of soap
powder. - Supper in ten minutes.

She walks back to the house where she tells Walda the
unwelcome decision and the teenage girl unhappily runs into
the house as June follows. Walter Jr. just keeps rocking in
the love seat and staring at his father.

WINCHELL just stands there looking at the porch scene and
then turns to Klurfeld, standing uncomfortably next to him.

WINCHELL

I'm not very hungry. How about you?

CUT TO:

114 INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT - (1939)

114*

A FULL SHOT OF DALLAS WAYNE in an evening dress, smiling.

DALLAS

Hello Suckers!

Dallas stands in the club's foyer as guests pass into the place, and Winchell and Klurfeld approach.

WINCHELL

I like the way you greet your customers. It's got class.

DALLAS

Every time I popped out of a cake I wanted to say that. Now's my chance. Say, what truck hit you?

WINCHELL

Never mind that. Dallas, I want you to meet Herman Klurfeld, my.... Associate.

Klurfeld glances to Winchell and the ambiguous label, but Dallas has her arm in the young man's in a moment.

DALLAS

Herman Klurfeld? Now Walt. Here's somebody in desperate need of a new name.

WINCHELL

We're in desperate need of a drink.

Dallas pulls Winchell over to a corner as Klurfeld follows.

DALLAS

Listen. I've been trying to call you for two days now. Where you been?

WINCHELL

Westchester. Catching up on chores.

DALLAS

Westchester? You mean Walter Winchell went home and played Family Dan?

WINCHELL

Listen. I'm on holiday tonight. Scotch, neat.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

114

DALLAS

I've been trying to call you with a tip-top tip. - Lepke wants to turn himself in.

KLURFELD

Lepke Buchalter!

Winchell and Dallas look to Klurfeld to keep quiet.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

(whispering)

The Chief of Murder Incorporated?

DALLAS

Head of the Mob's own assassin squad. Very good Herman Klurfeld. Walt. I Met Lepke at a party I went to with No-neck and he was real fascinated with me knowing Walter Winchell.

WINCHELL

It's a fascinating subject.

DALLAS

The New York D.A.'s got a death-price on his head but the F.B.I.'s put it out they still want him alive.

WINCHELL

Now every Gun this side of New Guinea's aiming for the reward so he wants to turn himself into the F.B.I..

DALLAS

He wants to turn himself into you. Then you turn him over to the F.B.I.. For some reason he'll only trust you.

Winchell's eyes go wide and he whirls around to Klurfeld.

WINCHELL

I just made the Front Page Herman. I just made the god-damned Front Page!

115 OMIT

115

116 EXT. MANHATTAN ALLEY - NIGHT - (1939)

116*

Winchell and Klurfeld sit in the front-seat of the parked car with Klurfeld behind the wheel.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

116

WINCHELL

Hearst has to put me back in ink now. Whether he likes it not I'll be tomorrow's banner and the biggest story this year.

KLURFELD

I don't think you should do this.

WINCHELL

What the hell are you talking about? The scoop of my life's gonna be walking down that alley in two minutes.

KLURFELD

Maybe it'll be Lepke. Maybe it won't. I know Dallas is on the level, but maybe it wasn't Buchalter who called her. Maybe it was "Da Friends of Dur Fuhrer," and you're going out there to meet Hitler's best buddy - a bullet.

Winchell just looks at Klurfeld.

WINCHELL

Damn - you sound like me. Have you been working for me that long?

KLURFELD

You're a pain in the tuckus, but I don't want to see you dead.

WINCHELL

Careful Klurfeld. Next you're going to have me thinking you'd miss me.

KLURFELD

(smiling)

Now you know that's not true.

WINCHELL

I know. But even if you did I'd tell you not to get worked up. Ask yourself why, though we've never met, I'm the only one Lepke will trust.

KLURFELD

I don't know.

WINCHELL

Think about it.

(MORE)

116 CONTINUED: (2)

116

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Anyway, I'm not going down that alley alone. I'm bringing a good friend.

Winchell pulls out a REVOLVER.

KLURFELD

You're carrying a gun?

WINCHELL

Time to go.

Winchell puts away the gun, gets out of the car and talks through the passenger-window.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

When I head down the alley you drive to the nearest phone and call Gavreau. Tell him to block out two banners. The first - WINCHELL CAPTURES LEPKE.

KLURFELD

Walter. Please. - You could die down there.

WINCHELL

(winking)

That's the second banner. - Tonight's going to be a Blessed Event.

And before Klurfeld knows it...Winchell walks down the alley and disappears into the dim shadows. Klurfeld sits for a frustrated second but then backs out of the alley and disappears around the far corner in search of a phone.

117 EXT. MANHATTAN ALLEY - NIGHT - (1939)

117*

Winchell walks down the dark alley and into the mouth of the murky brick corridor whose floor is punctuated here and there by patches of grim light thrown down by streetlamps.

Winchell continues on his way until he reaches the deepest bowels of the alley and there at its far end sees a FIGURE IN THE FRACTURED SHADOWS just standing there.

WINCHELL stops and just studies it. Then SEVERAL MORE FIGURES appear behind this first one and it becomes clear a group is there to meet...

WINCHELL who puts his hand in his pocket and grips his gun.

FIRST FIGURE

Walter Winchell?

WINCHELL'S sweating like hell and holding onto the gun.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

117

WINCHELL
Lepke Buchalter?

THE FIGURE takes a couple steps as WINCHELL grips his gun.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
Hold on. Stand your ground. I've
just got one question for you.

A BEAT GOES BY and then Winchell speaks....IN YIDDISH.

THE FIGURE doesn't say a thing for several moments and
WINCHELL repeats the question in Yiddish. Then...

THE FIGURE responds in Yiddish that sounds unsure. But
WINCHELL'S sure as he relaxes and breathes easy again.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
What took you so long to answer Lepke?

LEPKE steps out of the shadows and into the light.

LEPKE
No one's asked me my Bar Mitzvah
name since I was thirteen.

118 EXT. MANHATTAN ALLEY - NIGHT - (1939)

118*

Klurfeld drives back toward the alley and, stopping his car
and getting out, he sees...WINCHELL lead LEPKE to a GROUP OF
BLACK CARS waiting in escort formation.

KLURFELD runs toward them and sees Winchell lead Lepke to
one car in the formation's middle where the BACK DOOR IS
OPEN but the passenger in the back seat is unseen.

WINCHELL
Lepke Buchalter. Meet J. Edgar
Hoover.

Lepke hesitatingly climbs into the back seat as Winchell
nods to the unseen Hoover and then closes the door. KLURFELD
hurries up to Winchell as the escort drives away.

KLURFELD
Walter...

WINCHELL
What did Gavreau say? I'll bet he's
blocking out that second banner first.

KLURFELD
Walter...

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

WINCHELL

We've got to call him back. And now.

KLURFELD

Walter...

Winchell starts down the street.

WINCHELL

Where's the nearest phone?

KLURFELD

Walter!

Winchell stops in his tracks and looks to Klurfeld.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

Gavreau's not going to give you the Front Page...

WINCHELL

What! That what he thinks...

KLURFELD

And neither will any other paper.

Winchell just stands there in disbelief.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

Hitler just invaded Danzig, and he's rolling on through Poland. - It's War.

WINCHELL

(a beat, incredulous)
I've been outscopied by Hitler.

CUT TO:

119 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - MORNING - (1939)

119

A FULL SHOT OF A "MIRROR" PAGE whose caption reads "WINCHELL CAPTURES LEPKE" with HIS COLUMN below. Then...

THE PAGE IS TURNED revealing its other side, the FRONT PAGE of the "MIRROR" with the BANNER -"BLITZKRIEG!" - 1939

Winchell sits on his bed talking on the phone as he turns back and forth from one side of the page to the other.

WINCHELL

But how could you not have seen it yet?

120 INT. WESTCHESTER KITCHEN - MORNING - (1939)

120

June is on the phone, impatient and perturbed.

JUNE (into phone)
I was at the hospital all night.
Your son has been covering himself
with ketchup and lying by the side
of the road again. But this time he
decided to hang from a tree branch
and fell.

Walda comes into the kitchen and is trying to sneak out the
back way. June suddenly sees her.

JUNE (into phone) (CONT'D)
And where are you walking young lady?
I have to go Walter. Your children
need minding from at least one parent.

121 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - MORNING - (1939)

121*

Walter hears the line go dead as he hangs up as well and
returns to his column. There's a KNOCKING at the door.

WINCHELL
Yes! Yes! Bring it in!

Winchell doesn't look up at first but then sees DALLAS
standing there dressed in her OLD COAT carrying a SUITCASE. *

Dallas looks out the hotel window as Winchell stands behind.

DALLAS
Costello and the Big Boys figured I
passed Lepke to you. Seems they'd
rather he was in some D.A. freezer
than shooting his mouth off to Hoover.

WINCHELL
Are you in danger?

DALLAS
They're going to let me walk...as
long as I walk out of town and keep
walking.

WINCHELL
Dallas, I'm sorry.

DALLAS
No need.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

121

DALLAS (CONT'D)

It's actually going to work out alright. - I'm going to become that actress I've always said I already was. I'm really going to do it this time. There's this thing called "Living Theatre." You wouldn't believe where some of these plays take place. Dockyards and fish-markets and crumb-bum neighborhoods, and the women in 'em...I read one where this broad had a worse mouth than me. Imagine that.

WINCHELL

Your mouth's just fine.

DALLAS

Thanks - and thanks for fishing me out of that bathtub way back when.

She comes to him and KISSES HIM ON THE CHEEK.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

I'll be seeing you Walt.

She picks up her suitcase and walks for the door.

WINCHELL

Break a leg Dallas.

She stops and turns around and looks him straight in the eye, standing straight and proud.

DALLAS

My name's Mary Louise.

WINCHELL

Good luck Mary Louise.

WINCHELL just watches her leave as we...

CUT TO:

122 INT. PRESIDENTIAL PODIUM - DAY - (1941)

122

EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF ROOSEVELT'S FACE giving speech.

FDR (V.O.)

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and

(MORE)

122 CONTINUED:

122

FDR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
deliberately attacked by naval and
air forces of the empire of Japan.
The United States was at peace with
that nation and, at the solicitation
of Japan, was still in conversation
with it's government and it's emperor
looking toward the maintenance of
peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one
hour after Japanese air squadrons
had commenced bombing in the American
island of Oahu the Japanese ambassador
to the United States and his colleague
delivered to our secretary of state
a formal reply to a recent American
message. And, while this reply stated
that it seemed useless to continue
the existing diplomatic negotiations,
it contained no threat or hint of
war or of armed attack.

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CUT TO:

123 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - NIGHT - (1942)

123

A FULL SHOT OF A BEDSPREAD where suddenly...STACKS OF LARGE
BILLS, BOUND, begin to drop across the blanket and cover the
entire bed.

The room's door opens and in walks Klurfeld.

KLURFELD

Walter?

He turns the foyer's corner and sees WINCHELL'S BED COMPLETELY
COVERED IN STACKS OF MONEY.

KLURFELD'S eyes go wide as he walks all the way into the
room to see WINCHELL in the far corner at his typewriter and
dressed in the FULL UNIFORM OF A NAVAL OFFICER.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

Walter? You called me?

Winchell doesn't answer but just keeps typing. Klurfeld
takes a good look at the uniform and holds back a smile.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

Did the Japanese attack the Stork
Club?

WINCHELL

Not funny Herman. Now tell me what
you think of this. It needs punching
up.

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

KLURFELD

The column was submitted an hour ago.

WINCHELL

This is my will. But it cries for something more. "If I should die in the heat of battle...In the sting of battle..." What do you think?

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

WINCHELL

Guess. - Go on. Guess how much.

KLURFELD

I don't know.

WINCHELL

A million. Covers the whole bed-Spread...except the pillows. I've been stationed in Brazil and I'm not leaving my lettuce in any bank. Not during a world war.

Winchell gets up and lifts two corners of the bed-spread.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

I've rented a vault down on Wall Street. In the catacombs. Help me with this, will you?

Klurfeld takes the other two corners of the bed-spread as they lift all four together as Winchell fashions a "money-sack" out of the blanket and swings it over his shoulder.

KLURFELD

You're just going to carry that down to Wall Street?

WINCHELL

No. - I'm taking a cab.
(hands him the will)
See what you can do with this. I want it by morning. I ship out tomorrow.

KLURFELD

I've been meaning to tell you too. I've joined the Army. I report to Fort Dix in two days.

Winchell smiles and puts his hand on Klurfeld's shoulder.

WINCHELL

Are you going to write your Mother while you're in the service?

KLURFELD

(touched)

Yeah. Don't worry. I'll write her.

WINCHELL

Good. Then you'll have time to write for me too. I'll call you at the base with goodies and gags from Brazil.

123 CONTINUED: (3)

123

Klurfeld stands stunned as Winchell walks to the door.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

They're sending me down there on a secret assignment for the "Fourth Estate." In fact, stick that in tomorrow's column, after you finish the Will.

KLURFELD

The Fourth Estate? You mean...the Press? - You're going down to Brazil on a military press assignment?

WINCHELL

(thinking)

You've got a point. When you write it, call it...a "Diplomatic Mission."

124 INT. PRESIDENT'S STUDY - DAY - (1944)

124*

Winchell, in UNIFORM, sits in front of FDR'S desk as the clearly-aged President faces him.

FDR

Walter. The War Department asked you to resign your commission at my request.

WINCHELL

But why Mister President?

FDR comes out from behind his desk in a WHEELCHAIR. Pulls up to Walter.

FDR

I want you back home doing what you do best and what's best for the country, writing your column and answering to no one. Will you do that for me?

WINCHELL

Of course Mister President.

FDR

Thank you. Tell me. Is it true what I read in your column about "White Christmas" being the biggest selling record of all time?

WINCHELL

Yes sir.

FDR thinks to himself and gives out a wane grin.

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED:

124

FDR

I love that song - Wonderful tune.

But the grin soon disappears.

FDR (CONT'D)

Why are all the most beautiful songs
written during wars? Seems we could
learn to sing a better song in peace.
Now I think I'll say goodnight Walter.
I'm a little tired.

Winchell tries working up a smile as well but only watches
FDR struggle with his wheelchair and exit the room.

125 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - DRESSING ROOM - DAY - (1944)

125*

Klurfeld comes into the dressing room with some new copy as
he sees Winchell standing in his broadcast outfit, rolled-up
sleeves and jacketless, as he hands A WAD OF BILLS to HIS
FATHER who stands in the faded and once-expensive suit.

WINCHELL

You always bust into a room without
knocking Herman? You're lucky the
Army deferred your induction. They
wouldn't have put up with that at
Fort Dix.

KLURFELD

Sorry. I'll come back...

WINCHELL

No. Forget it. I've got to read
over my copy. Will you escort this
gentle-man out of the studio...the
back way?

KLURFELD

Of course. This way Sir.

Klurfeld helps the old man out of the room. As the door
opens, the father turns to Klurfeld.

FATHER

My son is a good boy.

KLURFELD'S FACE FALLS realizing this is Winchell's father.

FATHER (CONT'D)

My son is a good boy.

KLURFELD

Yes. Your son is a good boy.

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

The old man seems satisfied with the response. We see Winchell in the background as the door closes.

WINCHELL (V.O.)

What can I say at the passing of this man? What can a son say at the loss of his father?

126 STOCK FOOTAGE OF FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT'S FUNERAL

126

WINCHELL (V.O.)

There need be no great monument for FDR ever. His monument is forever in the hearts of the common people.

127 EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. STREET - DAY - (1945)

127

TWO MOTORCYCLE POLICEMEN ENTER INTO FRAME. WE PAN AND FIND WINCHELL standing among a crowd of dignitaries and politicians watching the passing of FDR's casket.

WINCHELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As a citizen one must stand in awe before the accomplishments of this single great soul....

ALL take off their hats EXCEPT WINCHELL who just leaves his hat for a moment before TAKING IT OFF. A COUPLE MEN behind him note the impropriety and trade looks, but what they don't see is...WINCHELL'S FACE STREAKED WITH TEARS.

WINCHELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

One can also weep as a friend.

127A STOCK FOOTAGE OF THE ATOM BOMB DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA AS THE WORLD MUSHROOMS INTO A NEW AGE AND A NEW UNKNOWN.

127A

INSERTS - VARIOUS (3) NEWSPAPER HEADLINES COVERING ATOMIC BOMB DROP.

*
*

128 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - NIGHT - (1945)

128

Winchell bursts into the room where Klurfeld, Diamond and Hague lounge and read the papers full of the Atomic attack.

WINCHELL

Has La Guardia called?

KLURFELD

No word from the Mayor yet.

WINCHELL

That son of a bitch plans an hour-long blackout for all of New York
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED:

128

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
and he chooses my radio time-slot to
do it.

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED:

128

DIAMOND

Guess he's nervous the Japanese are gonna retaliate, take out Queens and cost him his re-election.

HAGUE

That could win it for him.

All three laugh as Winchell picks up one of the papers.

WINCHELL

The Japs could take out Truman and that would be just fine with me. He's a crude cussing son of a bitch.

DIAMOND

The Japanese don't think he's too polite either.

WINCHELL

I've got no headache with him dropping the bomb. Should have done it a year ago. It's just FDR would have done it like a gentleman.

KLURFELD looks up at this odd remark.

KLURFELD

What's the difference between FDR or Truman killing thousands of men, women and children? There's no gentlemanly way of dropping an Atom Bomb.

WINCHELL'S FACE CLOUDS OVER and he approaches Klurfeld with a vehemence heretofore unseen.

WINCHELL

I'll tell you the difference.
(building)

One man can say "All right you sons of bitches, let's get the fucking A-bomb onto the fucking plane and get your cock-sucking asses out there over the mother-fucking Pacific and when you see that ass-licking Nip island you put your fucking finger on the fucking button and drop your fucking load!"

Klurfeld winces as Winchell's now completely in his face.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

And the other man can say...
"Gentleman, shall we?"

128 CONTINUED: (2)

128

Winchell draws back as Klurfeld takes a breath.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

That's the difference between
Roosevelt and Truman. Understand?

KLURFELD

Yeah. Sure Walter. I understand.

Everyone's uncomfortable for a long silent second, and then suddenly THE PHONE RINGS as Hague picks it up.

HAGUE

Walter Winchell's room. - Yeah.
He's right here. - It's the Mayor.

WINCHELL

(to Klurfeld)

There's no way of gentlemanly dropping
a bomb on a city? Watch. - Mayor La
Guardia? - Winchell here.

Winchell takes the phone as he walks over to his HOTEL ROOM
WINDOW looking OUT OVER NEW YORK - ALL LIT UP.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Understand you've scheduled a city-
Wide black-out for nine tonight which
happens to be the time slot of my
radio show. Now since Federal
regulations prohibit a black-out
after ten p.m. I suggest you
reschedule it for eight...

The Mayor's voice is audible on the other line.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Mister Mayor, don't even bother
talking because it wastes your time
and mine.

(looking to his watch)

You've got a little more than a minute
before eight and I strongly suggest
you call Water and Power right now
while you're still Mayor. My column
showed you into your office and my
column can show you out again. It's
your decision.

(looks to watch again)

Now you've got less than a minute.

Winchell takes the phone from his ear and gently slides it
over his shoulder as it hangs down his back so...

LA GUARDIA'S VOICE can be heard yelling and ranting as...

128 CONTINUED: (4)

128

WINCHELL just stands there looking out over the still-lit town as the Mayor's voice just keeps ranting. Winchell takes out a cigarette and strikes a match as the MAYOR'S VOICE stops, starts, and then again stops.

WINCHELL keeps waiting as he lights his cigarette and LOOKS OUT OVER THE CITY as if he would, by his very will darken it, as then suddenly...ONE BY ONE, NEARBY BUILDINGS START TO GO DARK as...

THE WHOLE CITY in patches and boroughs GOES BLACK as WINCHELL takes a drag from his cigarette.

THE WHOLE OF NEW YORK GOES COMPLETELY DARK until the only light visible in our view is the EMBER FROM WINCHELL'S CIGARETTE as...

129 INT. APOLLO THEATRE - NIGHT - (1952)

129

A WOMAN'S SINGING VOICE fades in, high-toned, French-sounding and beautiful. A SMALL ORCHESTRA plays in the pit.

FRENCH WOMAN (V.O.)

(singing)

"Wanderers, our land's full of
wanderers. Our hand's full of
wanderers. That's all we are..."

A FULL SHOT of JOSEPHINE BAKER, a beautiful black singer on stage singing the song.

JOSEPHINE BAKER

"Searching for our little land of
gold. Love means more than gold.
We're growing old. Life is but a
dream. Made that dream supreme.
You're King for a Day!"

As Josephine croons, it seems she sings the lyrics straight to us...as if she would warn us.

JOSEPHINE BAKER (CONT'D)

"Don't forget that castles crumble,
fortunes tumble. Love and love alone
is humble. Gather flowers while you
may. Be that happy one. Smile up
at the sun. You're King for a Day!"

130 INT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1952)

130*

JOSEPHINE BAKER enters with her entourage as she's greeted by the Captain and guided through the club.

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED:

130

WINCHELL (V.O.)

Last night your faithful reporter was privileged to watch Josephine Baker perform at the Apollo Theatre. And Apollo himself, Greek God of the Sun, would have found himself howling at the Moon if it had meant just one more encore from this legendary lady.

Josephine Baker follows the Captain and passes TABLE 50 where Winchell sits talking to a PRIZE-FIGHTER. Josephine stops for just a second.

JOSEPHINE

Thank you Mister Winchell for that wonderful review. You must come to Paris some time and teach our critics to write so poetically.

WINCHELL

Thank you Miss Baker. I'll do that.

Josephine continues on her way to her table as Winchell, with his back to Baker's table, resumes talking to the fighter.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

So when you fought Callaghan, in the first round, did his left-jab surprise you?

AT JOSEPHINE BAKER'S TABLE she orders for the whole party and the WAITER exits the room. It's now we see...

INSERT - JOSEPHINE'S ELEGANT WRIST WATCH, reading...FIVE AFTER TWELVE.

131 INT. STORK CLUB - LATER - NIGHT - (1952)

131*

Winchell keeps on talking to the fighter.

WINCHELL

He had you against the ropes in the sixth round. Were you playing him?

But Winchell stops as he sees the FIGHTER looking over his shoulder, and Winchell looks behind him to see JOSEPHINE BAKER looking for her waiter, trying to get service...

BAKER

Is there some way to get service in this cafe? Anyone? S'il vous plait?

But Winchell turns back to the boxer and keeps on.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

131

WINCHELL

Were you playing him or did you find
a last pocket of push in the eleventh?

INSERT - JOSEPHINE'S WRIST WATCH...now TWELVE-THIRTY-SEVEN. *

132 INT. STORK CLUB - FOYER - NIGHT - (1952)

132

The waiter's now distracted by another customer, off on
another problem as...

133 INT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1952)

133*

Winchell keeps talking to the fighter.

WINCHELL

I'll tell you this. You won me a
lot of lettuce that night. Yes
indeed...

Suddenly BAKER AND PARTY walk by the table as they EXIT,
Winchell noticing, but not thinking much of it as we...

GO BACK TO JOSEPHINE'S WRIST WATCH...reading TEN AFTER ONE. *

CUT TO:

134 INT. NY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S OFFICE - DAY - (1952)

134

A FULL SHOT OF THE "NEW YORK POST" as AN ARTICLE ON AN INSIDE
PAGE reads: WINCHELL BACKS STORK CLUB'S DISCRIMINATION AGAINST
JOSEPHINE BAKER

Winchell, Klurfeld, Hague and Diamond all read copies.

WINCHELL

When she passed my table I thought
she was going out to dance.

DIAMOND

She says she waited a half-hour for
her wine, no show from the waiter,
no offer of an order, no help from
Winchell.

HAGUE

She's saying it's because she's
colored.

WINCHELL

I have the best record on race
relations of any reporter in America.
Besides I had my back to her. How
was I supposed to know? *

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

KLURFELD

You weren't. But they don't know
that and now neither does anyone
else.

Klurfeld puts a sheet of paper into his typewriter.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

So you tell them.

Klurfeld begins to tap out a couple words, but suddenly
WINCHELL'S HAND comes from nowhere and rips out the sheet.

WINCHELL

I don't defend, I attack. That's
the first rule of this business.
The second you defend yourself, you're
dead.

KLURFELD

Your business is being a journalist,
and journalists use their columns to
argue and defend, even for themselves.

WINCHELL

Not Walter Winchell. Not me. And
I'm going back to the Stork Club
tonight and every night. I won't be
run out of some gin-joint like I'm
Johnny Reb 'cause some Vaudeville
Vamp get her Vino on time.

KLURFELD

Walter...

WINCHELL

We attack...somebody else. Who we
got in the pot?

HAGUE

Truman. They say he's thinking about
relieving MacArthur of his command
even though he retook Seoul from the
North Koreans...

DIAMOND

And disobeyed a direct Presidential
order while he was doing it.

WINCHELL

And if that hayseed under a hat hadn't
stopped him, MacArthur would have
crossed the thirty-eighth parallel
and stuck it to the Reds up their

(MORE)

134 CONTINUED: (2)

134

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
ninety-degree perpendiculars! We
use it. Klurfeld can write it.

Hague looks disappointed, but Klurfeld's not backing down.

KLURFELD
Just slip in a couple lines about
how you feel badly Baker was snubbed.
You don't have to apologize.

HAGUE
I could write up the MacArthur item.
Gag about Truman replacing him with
Chiang Kai-shek. Milk it out.

WINCHELL
(looking at Klurfeld)
I like it. It's yours Hague.

Klurfeld can't believe it as Hague goes to work.

CUT TO:

135 INT. NBC RADIO STATION - SOUNDSTAGE - DAY - (1952)

135

A FULL SHOT OF A MUCH MORE SUCCESSFUL SULLIVAN in front of a
MUCH BIGGER MICROPHONE.

SULLIVAN
I say that what Winchell did to
Josephine Baker is an insult to the
United States and the American
newspapermen who don't pursue the
racket he pursues. I despise him as
a very dangerous influence on American
journalism and American
communications.

CUT TO:

136 INT. DAILY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S OFFICE - DAY - (1952)

136*

A FULL SHOT OF THE POST'S FRONT PAGE this time as an ARTICLE
reads: NAACP DENOUNCES WINCHELL AND STORK CLUB.

Again Winchell and his writers each read their own paper.

KLURFELD
For God's sake Walter. Each day
this thing gets hotter to handle.

Winchell suddenly slams his paper down on his desk.

(CONTINUED)

136 CONTINUED:

136

WINCHELL

Why are these sons of bitches after me? The NAACP publishes a letter praising my past efforts on civil rights, and I read it on the air. Still the Post paints a bulls-eye on my back. Now they're calling me a plagiarist.

They all scan to the article's end as Diamond reads aloud.

DIAMOND

No they're not. They say that "We would call Walter Winchell a plagiarist but we can't."

Winchell stops and listen for a second.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

"Our legal department has informed us that he would have to write his own copy first before we could call him a plagiarist."

Winchell looks at the three of them and suddenly grabs Diamond's paper and then everyone else's one by one.

WINCHELL

I want the Post struck and I want it struck today. By tomorrow I want them bleeding from every by-line.

KLURFELD

They're just playing gossip hard ball. Let it pass and put the Baker thing right...

WINCHELL

That's not gossip. That's my name. That's me!

Winchell snatches all the newspapers and stuffs them into a wastebasket.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

No one touches my name. Not ever!

137 INT. WESTCHESTER HOUSE - WALT JR'S ROOM - DAY - (1952)

137

A FULL SHOT OF A BUREAU-TOP where NAZI INSIGNIA AND MEDALS LAY NEATLY ARRANGED as...A YOUNG MAN'S HANDS take several and bring them to a UNIFORMED CHEST, a black uniform with Swastikas, as we...

137 CONTINUED:

137

PAN UP HIGHER to see...WALTER WINCHELL JR., dressed in the full uniform of a Nazi General. He soberly studies himself in a MIRROR as he pins on the medals and insignia.

138 INT. NYC BAR - DAY - (1952)

138

A SOAP OPERA plays on the CORNER TV as toughs and dock-workers with great mugs of beer mill about the saw-dust covered floor. Suddenly...

THE FRONT DOOR OPENS, and framed in the light stands...

THE OUTLINE OF A NAZI-OFFICER - CAP, BAGGY-KNEES, BOOTS and all. The figure enters as all turn and stop to look at him disbelief...the soap opera the only noise in the place.

WALTER JR. stands center-stage as he brings these loud-mouthed toughs to the first speechless moment in a long time until suddenly...

THE BUNCH OF THEM just go for the "General" as we...

GO UP TO THE SOAP OPERA and hear the sounds of the show drowned out by the sounds of...BARE FISTS ON FLESH.

139 INT. KLURFELD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (1952)

139

Klurfeld opens his front door for someone who's just knocked, and outside in his hallway stand TWO REPORTERS.

FIRST REPORTER

Mister Klurfeld? Herman Klurfeld?

KLURFELD

Yes.

SECOND REPORTER

We're reporters from the New York Post and we'd like to ask you a few questions about Walter Winchell.

FIRST REPORTER

May we come in?

KLURFELD

Sure. - Yes. Come in.

The reporters enter as Klurfeld's taken by surprise.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

Sit down. I'll get you some iced tea.

*
*

140 INT. KLURFELD'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - (1952)

140

Klurfeld enters his kitchen where his wife, making dinner, has clearly seen the two reporters. They close the door. Klurfeld fixes an iced tea.

*

KLURFELD'S WIFE

What do they want?

KLURFELD

To ask questions about Walter.

KLURFELD'S WIFE

What kind of questions?

KLURFELD

I suppose what I do for him. My job.

KLURFELD'S WIFE

So tell them. You're his ghost writer.

KLURFELD

You don't understand. According to Winchell I'm not his writer. I'm his... Associate. Didn't you know? Winchell writes all those columns by himself. He'll hang me if I say otherwise.

KLURFELD'S WIFE

Well what are you going to tell them?

A BEAT ON KLURFELD as he thinks.

141 INT. KLURFELD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (1952)

141

The reporters drink iced tea as Klurfeld amicably faces them.

*

SECOND REPORTER

You are Walter Winchell's head ghost writer, are you not?

KLURFELD

No. I'm not. - I'm in shoes.

FIRST REPORTER

Excuse me?

KLURFELD

I sell shoes. I know Mister Winchell's column and I enjoy it very much. But not as much as I enjoy selling shoes.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

Klurfeld lifts one reporter's leg up in full view.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

I have an Italian Winged-Tip in stock
that will make your arches sing.

The Reporters exchange bewildered looks and it's then....
ONE REPORTER suddenly lifts a camera and SNAPS A PHOTO.

CUT TO:

142 MONTAGE:

142

FULL SHOT OF ANOTHER POST FRONT PAGE BUT THIS TIME...

WITH THE PICTURE OF KLURFELD'S STARTLED FACE where the
caption reads: WINCHELL'S NO. 1 GHOST. Then we go to...

ANOTHER POST HEADLINE reading WINCHELL AND A LADY NAMED BAKER.
And then to...

YET ANOTHER POST HEADLINE: WINCHELL AND THE MOB - OR: SCOOPS,
SCARES AND SURRENDERS...and on to...

WINCHELL AND HOOVER - OR: JOURNALIST IN G MAN'S POCKET and
finally ending on...

THE WINCHELL FIRING SQUAD - OR: HOW A DJ BIT THE DUST.

143 INT. KLURFELD'S DEN - NIGHT - (1952)

143

Klurfeld sits asleep at his typewriter. Suddenly there's a
KNOCK at his den-window. He wakes to see WINCHELL squatting
on his fire-escape. Klurfeld opens the window.

KLURFELD

Walter, what are you doing out here?

WINCHELL

Get your coat. We're going for a
ride.

KLURFELD

Where are we going Walter? Can't
this wait til tomorrow?

144 EXT. COURT STREET EL - TAXI (PROCESS) - NIGHT - (1952)

144

WE FOLLOW A ROARING SUBWAY TRAIN AND ARM DOWN PAST THE EL
STEPS as a TAXI carrying Winchell and Klurfeld passes the
CAMERA.

A145 EXT. HARLEM STREET - CANDY STORE - NIGHT - (1952)

A145

WINCHELL'S POV through the taxi's windshield as it turns the corner.

WINCHELL (V.O.)

Stop here. - Right here!

145 EXT. HARLEM STREET - CANDY STORE - NIGHT - (1952)

145

The taxi pulls over and Winchell jumps out with Klurfeld following. Winchell walks down the sleeping street. No one stirs as KLURFELD curiously watches WINCHELL study the sidewalk up ahead, looking like a man who'd lost a coin.

KLURFELD

Walter...?

Winchell raises his hand to hush him as Klurfeld approaches the spot Walter studies. Winchell finally smiles up to Klurfeld and points to a particular patch of pavement.

WINCHELL

That's where Mr. and Mrs. America
almost lost their favorite newsboy.

Klurfeld tries to give Winchell a satisfactory reaction as he looks down at the nondescript sidewalk and nods.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Horse-cart almost killed me, but it
didn't! - And those bastards aren't
going to kill me either. Do you
hear me? They're not going to kill
me!

His voice echoes throughout the sleeping neighborhood.

KLURFELD

I hear you Walter.

WINCHELL

They're not going to kill me.

KLURFELD

No one's trying to kill you.

WINCHELL

Yes they are. Baker and the NAACP.
The Post. Its Editor, James Wechsler.
(whispers to Klurfeld)
They're after me and I've figured
out why.

145 CONTINUED:

145

KLURFELD

Why?

WINCHELL

(confidential beat)
Communist stagemanaging.

KLURFELD

What?

WINCHELL

Wechsler and Baker and all the rest.
They have Red Blankets on their beds.
And I'm going to expose them.

KLURFELD

What are you talking about?

WINCHELL

I had them checked out Herman. They
all have Communist backgrounds.
Meetings, pamphlets, circulars. All
of them. Think about it.

Klurfeld just stares at the possessed man.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Why did Baker come into the Stork
that night? Why did she leave without
talking to me? Why did the Post
spread all that ink trying to blacken
me? It was all a design. The whole
while.

KLURFELD

There's no design.

WINCHELL

Then why are they trying to kill me!
Answer me that.

KLURFELD

No one's trying to kill you. They're
just newspapermen hungry for an item.
It's the same game that's been played
out in the papers for years. - It's
the game you started.

WINCHELL

But they're after my life.

KLURFELD

They're after your column.
(MORE)

145 CONTINUED: (2)

145

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

Your life is June, your children,
your friends, and I'd like to count
myself in that number. They're after
the "Blessed Event." But I don't
think of you that way. I think of
you as a Blessed Man.

Winchell listens, perhaps to be convinced.

KLURFELD (CONT'D)

But you can't be the Event and the
Man at the same time. You have to
choose. We all have to choose. - I
choose Winchell the Man. - Who do
you choose?

Winchell thinks about it for a moment. Wants to speak, but
doesn't, as he turns around and walks away from Klurfeld
DOWN THE STREET and INTO THE DARK as...

KLURFELD just watches him go.

146 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - MORNING - (1952)

146

Klurfeld knocks and enters to see Winchell working with
Diamond and Hague.

WINCHELL

You're late.

KLURFELD

I didn't get up til nine. A noise
woke me up last night and I had
trouble going back to sleep.

WINCHELL

We're sketching out columns for the
next six weeks. They'll all have
Goodies and Gab.

KLURFELD'S FACE IS RELIEVED.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

And the top-goodie is Post Editor
Weschler being a member of the Young
Communist League.

KLURFELD'S FACE FALLS as Winchell looks him in the eye.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Hague will oversee the series. I
want you to draft out the items.

146 CONTINUED:

146

KLURFELD

(a beat)

No.

Winchell just stares at Klurfeld, can't believe his ears.

WINCHELL

What?

KLURFELD

No. I've had more than enough.

Winchell looks like he's about to explode but just starts waving Diamond and Hague to get out. Finally...

WINCHELL

Get out. Get out! Leave us alone.

Diamond and Hague exit as Klurfeld's eyes don't back down.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

You're going to help me fight this thing through. I'm not going to let you miss the ship, Herman. Last week I returned from Washington where I sealed myself with some Special Prosecuters and Senators. This thing is going to be big, big enough for Winchell. I'll be feeding this Committee information and tips, goodies and gab and...

KLURFELD

You don't have to do this Walter.
And I know I don't have to write it.

WINCHELL

You write what I tell you to write!
You say what I say!

KLURFELD

You mean you say what I say. Most everything you've said, I've said first, but nobody knows it. You've taken my words, thoughts, Hates, hopes, and made them your own. My own neighbors or friends or family barely know what I believe or think because I've given it all to Winchell, the voice of a nation.

WINCHELL

And I've given you a job, a job which is seeing your first kid up the ivy

(MORE)

146 CONTINUED: (2)

146

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
tower of that college, - You can
leave me, but right now who's going
to hire the "Number One Ghost" for
the Number One Devil Walter Winchell?

*
*
*

Klurfeld's face falls. He knows Winchell has him. Winchell
holds out a PIECE OF PAPER to put in the typewriter.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)
Now let's go Hemingway.

Klurfeld reluctantly takes the paper and PUTS IT IN THE
TYPEWRITER as...WINCHELL just watches him. But nothing
between them will ever be the same again.

147 INT. STORK CLUB - NIGHT - (1952)

147*

Winchell sits at Table 50...seemingly alone.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)
Could you give us a smile Mr.
Winchell?

Winchell looks at us as we realize we're again seeing him
through a camera lens, but this time he SMILES. We go to a
series of FLASH-BULB CUTS of Winchell at Table 50 with
different men...

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And you as well Mr. Cohn?

ROY COHN smiles and sits next to Winchell. FLASH CUT to...

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And you Senator McCarthy?

SENATOR MCCARTHY as Winchell SMILES BROAD and again....

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Splendid.

The CAMERA FLASHES with a BLINDING LIGHT.

148 INT. WESTCHESTER FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT - (1952)

148

Winchell plays "Family Dan" again as he sets up a TELEVISION
in his family room where Walda, dressed up to go out, and
Walter Jr., with healing black eyes, unhappily sit as June
serves dinner on new "TV-trays."

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED:

148

WALDA

Why do we have to be here?

Walter Jr.'s silent. Just stares past the TV at the wall.

WINCHELL

Now we're all going to sit and eat together like a family, because that's what we're going to be - a family.

JUNE

We've always been a family Walter. But it's nice to hear you say it anyway.

Winchell sits chidden. The PHONE RINGS and he answers.

WINCHELL (on phone)

Hello. - Hague? - Yeah. I got back from D.C. this afternoon. My television's all set up. You watching on one?

WINCHELL looks to the TV as a LIVE VARIETY SHOW begins with music and clapping, and its entering host is ED SULLIVAN who looks stiff and more than a little dull.

SULLIVAN (on the TV)

Thank you and welcome. Tonight is going to be a really big show....

BACK TO WINCHELL as he turns his back on his family.

WINCHELL (into phone)

I'm telling you, the only thing lasting about television is people are gonna kick out their screens and use 'em as radios. And Sullivan's just the dull-boy to make it die a quick death. The only reason I pushed him for his first radio-spot was so I could finally put that kid out of his misery in my column...

But Winchell stops as he turns back to where Walda, Walter Jr. and June are all sitting laughing and enraptured with the show and Ed Sullivan. They've come alive as we've never seen them before and...

SULLIVAN

We'll be right back after this commercial message.

The STUDIO AUDIENCE CLAPS WILDLY and HIS FAMILY EXCHANGES SMILES as WINCHELL realizes what's just happened.

149 INT. GRUEN BOARD ROOM - DAY - (1952)

149

THE "GRUEN WATCH" LOGO stands on a nearby wall. Winchell sits across from another row of executives, but this time he's selling and they're buying - maybe.

WINCHELL

I'm perfect for television, and television needs me. I was in Vaudeville for twelve years, a born visual performer. I did a guest bit on a variety show and the howls from the crowd almost blew off my hat. The only reason America's eating its supper in front of Sullivan is it's hungry for something to stare at and it'll settle for the Tin Man when it hasn't seen the Wizard of Oz.

The Executives exchange considering glances.

150 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - DAY - (1952)

150*

Winchell sits on the end of his bed and studies a TELEVISION showing McCARTHY, with COHN, at his Senate table grilling some unseen soul.

MCCARTHY

Have you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?

We don't see the unseen soul, just Winchell watching.

MCCARTHY (CONT'D)

I hold in my hand documents, documents which assert that you and certain members of your acquaintanceship are indeed. I'll ask the question yet again...Are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?

BACK TO WINCHELL who watches intensely.

*

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

150

MCCARTHY (CONT'D)

Names, sir. I want names!

BACK TO THE ROOM where there's a KNOCK at the door. Winchell turns off the TV, opens the door to see DALLAS standing outside in the hallway as she gives Winchell a friendly but tired smile. Before he gets a chance to say a word she throws her arms around his neck and KISSES HIM.

151 OMIT

151

152 INT. ST. MORITZ HOTEL - BEDROOM - MORNING - (1952)

152

Dallas lays naked under the sheets as Winchell gets dressed.

The TELEVISION is on showing a REPORTER interviewing Ed Sullivan.

*

SULLIVAN

As an American I despise Communism.
But mostly I despise Walter Winchell,
One of the original character
assassins, as a dangerous influence
on journalism. - Now if you'll excuse
me.

*

*

*

*

WINCHELL switches off the TV.

*

DALLAS

It's good to see you again Walt.

WINCHELL

Sorry I've got to scram, but Gruen
Watches is going to air my radio-
show on television from now on and
I'm going to run Sullivan off the
blue screen.

DALLAS

That's swell. Television.

WINCHELL

I burped him before handing him a
microphone. Now I'm going to show
that ungrateful TV fuckcess something
he won't forget.

DALLAS

(thinking own thoughts)
Listen Walt. Now that we got a minute
to talk I wanted to ask you something.

WINCHELL

Ask away doll.

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED:

152

DALLAS

It's funny. You're going to laugh when I tell you about it, but, well ...A couple years ago when I was in this little theatre group up north I met this guy, a director. We had a thing for a month, just a month, but one night he took me to this meeting.

Winchell stops dressing and just looks at her.

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED:

152

DALLAS (CONT'D)

I mean I had no idea what it was going to be about. You know. I mean I can't even spell Socialism or Communism let alone agree with what they're about and anyway everyone spoke normal. Nobody spoke Russian or looked like Stalin. -I signed this petition after a couple drinks. Thought it was funny.

(tries to laugh)

You see, I've got this part in a picture. Out in Hollywood. Hollywood, California. Finally I'm getting a break. A real break.

WINCHELL

That's terrific. I've got to go.

DALLAS

They're taking it away from me. They already blackballed this director and they're saying I can't work anymore either. - But you know people.

WINCHELL

I don't know anyone.

DALLAS

You know everyone. You know people on that Committee. You could talk to 'em. Talk to 'em about me.

Winchell just looks at her and his face hardens. He reaches into his pocket and takes out MONEY.

WINCHELL

Thanks for stopping by Dallas.

DALLAS

What's the money for? I didn't bring you any items. I just need this favor. This one favor - for an old friend.

Winchell thinks, but then PUTS THE MONEY on the dresser.

WINCHELL

I always pay my stringers. Whether they bring me ripe fruit or not.

Winchell walks to the door as Dallas climbs across the bed.

152 CONTINUED: (3)

152

DALLAS

Walt. They're not going to let me work. Not in pictures or theatre or nothing. I can't do anything else. I've got nowhere else to go.

Winchell reaches the door but doesn't look back

WINCHELL

Stay the morning if you want. Shower and order breakfast. But be out by noon.

DALLAS

Walt. - Walt!

Winchell leaves as Dallas just sits on the bed and sobs.

CUT TO:

153 EXT. APPLIANCE STORE - DAY - (1952)

153*

A FULL SHOT OF ANOTHER TELEVISION SCREEN where JOSEPH McCARTHY sits at his Committee table and rants...

MCCARTHY (over TV)

When a Communist on the Faculty of an American University is one too many...

Winchell stands with a CROWD OF SHOPPERS watching a WHOLE WALL of televisions for sale all broadcasting the hearings.

MCCARTHY (over TV) (CONT'D)

When a Communist in the United States Army is one too many...

154 INT. ABC TV STUDIO - DRESSING AREA - NIGHT - (1954)

154

Winchell rolls his sleeves and studies them in a make-up mirror.

WINCHELL

How do they look? Even?

A WARDROBE MAN looks and nods.

155 INT. KLURFELD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (1954)

155

Klurfeld's wife turns on the TV.

KLURFELD'S WIFE

It's about to begin.

156 INT. ABC TV STUDIO - DRESSING AREA - NIGHT - (1954) 156

Winchell drinks his water and lets the wardrobe man fix his hat and sleeves making them look like they're working class before he finally enters...

157 INT. ABC TV STUDIO - SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT - (1954) 157

The sound-stage where a STUDIO AUDIENCE sits in makeshift bleachers and CLAPS. THE EMCEE steps up to the microphone and in a veritable simulation of his radio-broadcast...

EMCEE

And now for Gruen Watches we proudly bring you for the first time on television, a first-hand look at the voice of a nation, Walter Winchell!

WINCHELL is behind his DESK before we know it as he enters into his familiar radio-broadcast which includes the TELEGRAPH, the TRIBAL DANCE, the MICROPHONE, the whole bit.

WINCHELL

Good Evening Mr. and Mrs. America and all the ships at sea! Let's go to press. Washington: Senator Joseph McCarthy's Committee will subpoena an intimate friend of President Eisenhower's...

Winchell moves and shifts and works the telegraph-prop as the STUDIO AUDIENCE doesn't know what to think of the actual sight of a performance they've only listened to.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

...John Jay McCloy, the Former High Commissioner to Germany.

158 INT. KLURFELD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (1954) 158

Klurfeld and his wife just watch. She's amazed at the sight of Winchell in a melodramatic lather.

WINCHELL (over TV) (CONT'D)

Attention John and Jane United States. The diplomatic situation with Russia is desperate. The only thing that will stop Stalin is the Atomic Bomb. Either take Hiroshima to Stalin or take Stalin to Hiroshima.

KLURFELD'S WIFE

Why is he jumping around like that? Does he do this on the radio?

158 CONTINUED:

158

Klurfeld shakes his head. Watches Winchell looking absurd.

KLURFELD

Yes. - Yes he does.

CUT TO:

159 EXT. APPLIANCE STORE - DAY - (1954)

159

A FULL SHOT OF ANOTHER TELEVISION this time showing McCARTHY desperately trying to defend himself.

MCCARTHY

Mister Welch....Mister Welch...

Winchell again stands watching the wall of TVs but now there's only a few people watching as WELCH, the Boston Lawyer, challenges McCarthy before the American public.

WELCH

Have you no sense of decency Sir?
Have you absolutely no sense of
decency?

The few people watching turn and leave as McCARTHY, looking dazed and amazed, just sits behind his microphone.

*
*

160 INT. GRUEN BOARD ROOM - DAY - (1954)

160

Winchell silently sits at a small table across from a LEGAL ASSISTANT and an ATTORNEY, who matter-of-factly presents some papers.

*
*

ATTORNEY

As you know the Post has won their suit against you for one and a half million dollars. They've authorized me to inform you they're willing to accept a \$30,000 court-costs settlement...

Winchell's face rises.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

Provided you offer a public apology ...on the air...prime time. Otherwise they'll be happy to accept the one and one quarter million. Please call me if you have any questions. Good day.

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED:

160

The attorney leaves as Winchell stares at the papers.

CUT TO:

161 OMIT

161

162 INT. DAILY MIRROR - WINCHELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT - (1954)

162*

Winchell sits alone in his office and listens to the radio.

EMCEE (V.O.)

"Walter Winchell has authorized ABC to state that he never said or meant to say over the air or in his newspaper column that the New York Post or Mr. James A. Weschler are Communists or sympathetic to Communism. If anything Mr. Winchell said was misconstrued he regrets and withdraws it..."

Gavreau enters and drops copy sheets on Winchell's desk.

GAVREAU

There's not enough good gab in this and most of it I read in the News yesterday.

Winchell waves him to be quiet so he can hear the radio.

EMCEE (V.O.)

The New York Mirror and the American Broadcasting Company also retract any statements which were subject to such construction.

GAVREAU

Rewrite it Winchell. Now.

Gavreau leaves the office as Winchell just sits there.

EMCEE (V.O.)

Now a special presentation for your Sunday night...The Lone Ranger!

SOUNDS OF THE LONE RANGER program recede into the background as Winchell looks out his window at the CITY as if each light challenged him to darken it now.

DISSOLVE TO:

163 INT. DAILY MIRROR - BULLPEN - DAY - (1963)

163*

Men and women reporters packing their stuff into boxes - a couple of guys drinking booze from bottles.

(CONTINUED)

163 CONTINUED:

163

A reporter talks to Winchell.

REPORTER

Walter, how long did the Mirror last?

WINCHELL

From June 10, 1929 till...today.

REPORTER

And how does it feel now to have the paper shot out from under you?

WINCHELL

You don't feel happy or good about it. I'm thinking of an awful lot of people that I watched grow up around here from copy boys to executive positions and editors who seemed to have aged in the last few hours...I don't know where they're going.

CUT TO:

164 EXT. LAS VEGAS - NIGHT - (1960'S)

164*

Stock footage of the Rat-Pack's "strip."

165 INT. VEGAS CASINO - STAGE - NIGHT - (1962)

165*

A FULL SHOT OF Winchell sitting behind a desk in an UNKNOWN LOCATION with a MICROPHONE AND TELEGRAPH PUNCHER next to him. We believe he must be back in another radio sound-stage, somehow having regained his broadcast.

WINCHELL

Good Evening Mr. and Mrs. America and all the ships at sea. Dots and dashes and lots of flashes from coast to coast. Juicy tidbits from yours truly...

But Winchell suddenly interrupts himself and looks up.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

But wait a minute. Who's this juicy tidbit for Yours Truly.

And it's then we see...a SHOW-GIRL enter stage-right and dance toward Winchell who surprisingly enough rises to dance with her as we now see...

166 OMIT 166

167 EXT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - NIGHT - (1968) 167

A FULL SHOT OF HIPPIE-STUDENTS behind a wrought iron fence.
IN THE BACKGROUND WE HEAR THE CROWD SINGING BOB DYLAN'S,
"THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING".

STUDENTS

(chanting)

Hell no, we won't go! Hell no, we
won't go! Hell no...

A mob of reporters and television crews crowd behind
barricades outside Columbia University during the late-
sixties student-riots. A YOUNG TELEVISION REPORTER tapes.

REPORTER

We're here at Columbia University,
now two days into the students'
hostile take-over of the Science
Building...

BEHIND A BARRICADE, an OLD MAN makes his way to the surging
crowd's front and addresses a RIOT-COP. He is WINCHELL.

WINCHELL

I need to get into the building. *

RIOT-COP

Nobody's going anywhere, sir. *

WINCHELL

I'm Walter Winchell, a reporter for
the New York Daily Column. *

RIOT-COP *

I'm sorry, sir. All reporters have
to stay behind this barricade. *

Winchell breaks through the barricade. *

RIOT-COP (CONT'D) *

I told you don't do that. *

The cop hits Winchell. *

(CONTINUED)

167 CONTINUED:

167

Winchell goes down for the count, losing his hat as BLOOD
trickles down his forehead.

*
*

He just staggers on his knees and looks to his HAT which is
suddenly pickes up by ANOTHER OLDER MAN'S HANDS. Winchell
looks up to see...KLURFELD, older but still boyish, as he
helps Winchell up.

WINCHELL

Herman.

KLURFELD

Walter.

The STUDENTS RANT behind Winchell as he stands bewildered.

WINCHELL

The whole world's gone off its rocker.

(a beat)

They don't know who I am!

168 EXT. NYC STREET - NIGHT -(1968)

168

Klurfeld and a bandaged Winchell turn a corner. Several
ambulances and police cars are parked nearby.

WINCHELL

How are you Herman? Writing books I
hear.

KLURFELD

Biographies. I'm writing biographies.

WINCHELL

When are you going to write a book
about me? A little overdue, don't
you think?

168 CONTINUED:

168

KLURFELD

I think you should write your own book about yourself. Your autobiography.

WINCHELL

(smiling)

That's what I mean. When are you going to write my autobiography?

KLURFELD

You already have all my best stuff.

WINCHELL

You said that once before. That you had nothing left because I'd used it all.

They stop. Winchell thinks, takes out his wallet, and from it an OLD PAPER which he carefully unfolds.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Tell me what you think of this.

(pauses reverently)

"My respect for this man has always remained constant. No American can contemplate him without a sense of solemnity and humility, solemnity for the proud inheritor of a noble tradition, humility in the thought that he was a servant to his responsibilities."

KLURFELD

It's very good.

WINCHELL

It's better than good. It's great. In fact I think it's the finest thing I've ever read.

KLURFELD

Who wrote it?

WINCHELL

You did Herman.

KLURFELD

Me?

WINCHELL

The night of November 22, 1963.

KLURFELD

The day Kennedy was killed.

168 CONTINUED: (2)

168

WINCHELL

You probably don't remember but you wrote this for the column and I turned it down flat.

KLURFELD

I don't remember. Why'd you turn it down?

WINCHELL

(smiles)

Because it was too good. It didn't sound like me. It sounded like Herman Klurfeld.

KLURFELD

But you kept it.

WINCHELL

I did. And after you left me...

KLURFELD

After you fired me...

WINCHELL

After we left each other, I almost used it in a hundred different columns to describe a hundred different men, ninety-nine of them me.

(hands him the paper)

But it belongs to the man it describes second-best.

KLURFELD

Thank you Walter. I've said a lot of things about you behind your back...and also to your face. This one goes to your face. - You're one of a kind.

Winchell thinks about that for a moment.

WINCHELL

Maybe I used to be. But more and more I see my kind all the time.

(beat)

Herman, do you think we stepped over the line too many times?

KLURFELD

Perhaps. But we always knew where it was to step back over.

168 CONTINUED: (3)

168

WINCHELL

Or maybe we just drew it down wherever
we happened to be walking.

They just look at each other for a moment, and then Winchell
looks over Klurfeld's shoulder.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

You got a tenner?

KLURFELD

What?

WINCHELL

A sawbuck, a Hamilton.

Klurfeld looks behind him to see a WOMAN walking up the
sidewalk toward them, half-hidden in the shadows.

KLURFELD

Walter. I don't want to bet. I've
never liked this bet. It's an ugly
bet.

WINCHELL

Because you always lose. Come on.

Klurfeld takes out a TEN and hands it to Winchell who holds
the "pot." They both look at the woman approaching.

KLURFELD

She looks good from far.

WINCHELL

She is. You just bet she's far from
good.

Klurfeld can't believe Winchell's manipulated him again as
the WOMAN comes into the light, and indeed HER FACE IS
BEAUTIFUL as WINCHELL smiles and gentlemanly tips his hat.

WINCHELL (CONT'D)

Good Evening Mrs. America.

She smiles at the harmless old man and passes.

WOMAN

Good evening.

Winchell pockets the Ten and watches the woman walk into a
parking lot toward a LOCAL BAR. He turns back to Klurfeld.

WINCHELL

So long Herman.

168 CONTINUED: (4)

168

KLURFELD

Goodbye Walter.

Winchell turns to follow the woman, but smiles at Klurfeld.

WINCHELL

I have a feeling tonight's going to
be a Blessed Event.

Winchell walks, following the woman to the bar as he opens
the door for her, enters and disappears. Suddenly we...

HARD CUT TO:

169 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY - (1972)

169*

A HEART-BEAT MONITOR that loudly FLAT-LINES.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Walter Winchell is dead at the age
of seventy-four in the University of
California Los Angeles Medical Center.

170 INT. KLURFELD'S NEW APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (1972) 170*

Klurfeld and his wife, sitting in a different and larger
apartment. He puts his paper down and watches the TV.

TV ANNOUNCER (over TV)

Mister Winchell is survived by only
his daughter Walda, his wife having
passed away from Heart Disease and
his son having taken his own life
years before.

KLURFELD GETS UP and walks...

TO THE WINDOW where he looks out to see as LARGE AS THE
HORIZON..THE MANHATTAN SKYLINE outlined in a million lights.

TV ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Mister Winchell was, during the
thirties and forties, the most widely
listened to and prominent broadcaster
in American journalism, it having
been estimated that one out of every
two households listened to him weekly.

AN EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF KLURFELD whose face fills with the
emotion of the moment, but...the announcer's voice is soon
drowned out by OTHER TELEVISIONS AND RADIOS broadcasting
other shows about other subjects, and we hear a rising mish-
mash of other announcers and news-stories.

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED:

170

OTHER TVS

The Watergate Burglars were set free
on bail today...The Saigon
evacuation...In an unprecedented
move Ferdinand Marcos declares Martial
Law in response to what he calls a
Communist rebellion...

All these media voices FINALLY MERGE INTO ONE as KLURFELD
just stands there listening, and we...

DISSOLVE TO:

171 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY - (1972)

171*

A FULL SHOT OF WINCHELL'S COFFIN. His only mourners...WALDA
and a RABBI. Finally we hear a song...plaintive and
scratchy...from another time and another era...AS WE CRANE
BACK WIDER AND WIDER...

CROONER (V.O.)

I want to be in Winchell's column...

FADE OUT:

THE END