From the Other Side of the Street - The Press is Dead! The Press is Dead! Long Live the Press! A Parody on Recent Events

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From the Other Side of the Street — The Press Is Dead! The Press Is Dead! Long Live the Press! — A Parody on Recent Events

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See Bet You Missed It this issue p.78 for a related article. — KS

Preface

The two men met briefly against a dark gray sky. The envelope passing between them was almost lost in the brisk wind that had come up. Taking time to scratch his neck, Ainsley stuffed the document in the inside pocket of his book bags. He thought that his father-in-law had given him the jacket, like the wife that came with it, had been a constant irritation ever since they had moved from the East coast. He liked Southern hospitality. She despised the constant coddlings and mint juleps. “This is it?” Ainsley asked, lighting a cigarette. “All set, as I understand. It should hit the wires in the next day or two. Are you prepared?” the tall stranger asked.

“Prepared, my man. This,” he said, tapping his jacket, “is what I’ve been waiting for. Waiting for over a year. Just too bad Hiller won’t be around to see it. He always wanted funding. He just didn’t know how to play the game. Tell ol’ Black that we have all oats in the water.” “If you insist.” “Oh indeed, I insist. Don’t be foolish. The uproar that this will cause is going to have to come from the university, you know once and for all. They want it that way. I want it that way. So let it happen.” “You’re on your own now. Clear?” “As clear as a freshman’s innocence in September.” Ainsley watched as his contact left and disappeared into the central campus crowd.

Chapter 1

Ainsley sat in his leather chair. Numbers, he mused, damn going to kill culture in this country. Scientists all gone mad and, to boot, a damn new one in the university president’s chair. What research had given to man in longevity, it had taken away in enjoyment. Smoke stacks everywhere. New drugs each month. But as for quality? Now that was it. Where was beauty now, he wondered, looking at one of the coeds that he’d hired to help in the production department. She caught his gaze and smiled back awkwardly. Ainsley’s office was filled with floor-to-ceiling cherry bookcases. He had negotiated this as part of his package when he came to the university. Each case had books of interest, but one case was filled with his favorites, old antiquarian volumes. Moby Dick was there in leather binding, as was Sinclair’s The Jungle and Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby. And he had a first edition of Kerouac’s On the Road, signed by the author. The book, which was given to him by the woman his mother wanted him to marry, had its value, Ainsley thought. Yet in ways Kerouac, Ferlinghetti, Ginsburg and their cronies marked the downfall of classics in America. Ainsley knew that he and his fellow directors were the last vanguard, preserving quality in a time of mass gimmickry.

“Professor Edwards to see you.”

“OK, Myrna. Tell him that I’ll be right out.” Ainsley didn’t even turn around to look at his secretary, or better stated, his predecessor’s secretary. Myrna Voxburg had been at the university and with the press longer than any other employee. After getting Edwards, Ainsley closed the door and handed the philosophy professor the envelope. Ainsley never liked Edwards much. The old geezer, as he referred to Edwards, was a power broker at the university, not so much because of his tenure status and appointment as department chair, but more so because Edwards’ late father, the honorable Chester Arthur Edwards, was the previous president of the university. Edwards was always viewed as the little prince who would one day take the throne. Several divorces over the years had clouded that prospect. “Damn perfect. Absolutely the best thing that could happen to your little shop.” Edwards pounded Ainsley on the back. “When does it go out to the general public? I can’t wait to see the reaction.”

“Probably tomorrow.” Ainsley replied, his back still aching from Edwards’ enthusiasm. Edwards reread the document. “How much do you expect to get after the shit hits the fan?”

“I hope that we get at least a million. But who knows. Black seems to think that he can wash his hands of the Press for life if one or two corporations take up the cause. You know I don’t like the guy all that much, but he sure knows how to manipulate folks. My real hope is that some sucker donates a building to us along with the cash. I mean, this is definitely a win-win situation for the university. They no longer have to fund us. We no longer have to worry. It’ll be great to wrap it in the reverent, kneeling-down tearful guise of scholarship. Are your folks ready?”

“They have been practicing their speeches for weeks. I can’t imagine that anyone will be able to say no to the outcry.” They looked at each other and snickered in that little boy way as if they’d just found out that little girls were made differently.

Chapter 2

Black, dressed in a new Versace suit, stood at the podium. He had expected a bit larger crowd for his announcement. “Thank you for coming. I wish to make a serious announcement about a reorganization at the university. When I was chosen to lead this hallowed institution to greater heights, I noticed a weight around the shoulder of learning that was dragging us down. It reminds me of a story.” A reporter in the back was heard to moan and whisper to a colleague, “Oh no.”

Black continued. “When I was little and had to walk five miles to school everyday in the rain, ice, and snow, my shoes worn, my hands gloveless and cold, I understood survival. Survival came from doing the best with the least. When you give too much food to a plant, it dies. When you overeat, you die. When you give too much money to a unit and that unit asks for more, we all die. I cannot let death surround me.” Black reached over and took a drink of water. “We have been giving too much money to the university press at this institution. We give it $100,000 and it asks for $200,000. We give it $200,000 and it asks for $400,000. We satiate its thirst and it asks for $500,000. There is a cancer at this institution and it must be eradicated. Therefore, after consultation with my closest advisors, I am shutting down the university press as of now. Immediately. Pronto. The money that was to be allocated to the university press will now be turned over to the library to purchase books for all students and faculty. Are there any questions?” A sea of hands popped up in unison. Black looked at them, turned continued on page 62
slowly and disappeared behind a black curtain.

Chapter 3

The phones began to ring at about 3:15 PM at the Press's office. In one frenzied moment at about four, every phone was being answered by the available staff and replies of "No, the director is not available" could be heard in surround-sound stereo. Ainsley, in fact, was on the eighth hole at Swingtide Meadows, the university golf course, searching for his ball in Patton's Creek. The other three members of his group were waiting for him on the green.

Chapter 4

Ainsley woke to his dog's heavy breathing and climbed out of bed slowly. His head was still afloat in a pitcher of last night's last call and he almost stumbled down the stairs. After downing three aspirin, two Advil, and three glasses of water, he made his way to the front door with one hand on the wall and the other on his forehead. The morning paper, as always, was just out of reach, so he sneaked out in his skivvies, hoping Mrs. Jenson, who saw everything, hadn't noticed him, grabbed the morning Standard and headed in for a cup of coffee. Splattered across the front of the paper in gigantic letters Ainsley hadn't seen the size of since the governor's son was caught in a local gay bar were the words "UnimPRESSive: President shuts it down." The local beat writer, Orville Henderson, had gotten the right slant on it, Ainsley decided as he read through the story, especially when he got to the paragraph that detailed the reaction of the dean of libraries, Sylvia Klophart. Miss Klophart was thrilled that the president thought of the libraries monograph fund instead of the new basketball arena fund when it came to additional funds, but the amount was still not adequate if the university wanted to have a world-class information center. Ainsley was most impressed by Henderson's use of the word "ungrateful" in close proximity to Miss Klophart's name.

Another reaction came from Justin Ocksham, the head of the state's cultural center, which was still housed in a double-wide trailer on the outskirts of the capital. Ocksham called Black "an inanimate object that had no idea how irresistible the force was going to be to run him out of the state. His decision was worse than Lee's at Gettysburg!"

The phone rang. Ainsley spilled half his coffee on the front page and the rest in his lap. He picked up the receiver on the third ring, brown streams working their way down his shorts. Who the hell could this be at 7:30? "Mr. Ainsley?" "Yes" A voice that he didn't know but wanted to know more about asked. "Mr. Ainsley. This is Sandra McKee of the Allied Confederation of University Presses. Have I gotten you at a bad time?"

"No." Ainsley wondered if Ms. McKee might like to provide wake-up calls for a month or two. "I am Hubert Huxley's secretary. You do know who he is?" "Of course, my dear. He's the big wopman there, no?" "Well, we don't put it exactly that way. But Mr. Ainsley, Mr. Huxley would like a word with you. "Put him on, old gal."

Ainsley kept watching the dollars come in as more people got involved with his press's crisis and for that matter this blow to scholarship in general. Ainsley could see a future in which he could look over the Press's gardens from his fifth-floor office in the Ainsley Press Center. He could read proposals for hours, deciding who would get published, not having his opinions about in-breds on an editorial board or whims of eccentrics professors. Life was going to be good.

"Director Ainsley, Huxley, I hear that you have a small problem there, but before we discuss the matter, let me tell you we are 100% behind you on this one. We are not going to let some bean counter strip you or your staff of jobs, because everyone knows that scholarly presses lose money every year. It's their job to lose money. Like I always said, you got to have losers or there'd be no winners. Catch my drift, son? We'll have your back in business in no time." Huxley droned on for a while spouting off numbers and figures, dropping names left and right, and basically being as boring as a lifetime bureaucrat could be. In the middle of Huxley's monologue, Ainsley put the phone on the table, ate his cereal, drank the last of his coffee, got dressed, and headed out the front door while his wife kept sleeping.

Chapter 5

Everett Levitt was on the phone at the same time as Huxley. Levitt, however, wanted no part of Ainsley. Levitt, a prominent alumnus and the owner of Hogs Unlimited, the biggest pig farming conglomerate in the country, had met Ainsley at the annual Pigs and People Fest that he threw every summer. He was much more impressed with Angie Ainsley than with her "bumpkin" husband. Angie also played tennis at the Pines Country and Swimming Club and Levitt found her to be very athletic and competitive. Levitt, who was the town's most eligible bachelor, frequented the club during the brutally humid and hot summer months, sipping a lemonade on the patio overlooking the club's pool. Angie had been a springboard diving champ in college, and during the years since, she hadn't lost any of her form. "Stephen, I don't want it that way. Our agreement was predicated upon keeping the sonofabitch. I don't care what the trustees think." Levitt was getting agitated at the university's president. "They're putting a lot of pressure on me, Ev. They keep calling it gross mismanagement. I mean it's hard to argue with them when the damn press has been losing a half-million dollars each year for the past five years. They want Ainsley out." Black was sitting out on his dock petting the family's Labrador.

"What'll it take? Give me a ballpark number." "Probably two, maybe one and a half." "Anything else?" "Well, a few of them asked for a year's supply of your sage sausages." "You gotta be kidding." "I wish I were. OK, I'll give you two mil and the frigging sausage, but that means I get to control the operation. You can continue the chas" "rade of having Ainsley report to you, but I want final say. That dumb guy couldn't balance his tires let alone a business operation." "I'm sure it can be worked out."

After hanging up, Levitt emailed his accountant, asking him to look into his holdings to find out how and when to get the money to Black. He also emailed Jessica Saunders, the news anchor at the local station, to see if she was free for dinner. He wanted to make sure that he got the best exposure possible for his generous act.

Index

Black was all smiles as he stood at the podium. Flanking Black on one side was Everett Levitt attired in a blue seersucker suit. He looked the part of a dashing avenger ready to launch a major quest. On the other side were Ainsley and members of the press's staff along with Huxley who had flown in from New York for the presentation. The whole press group were wearing t-shirts made especially for the occasion. The front had the Press seal, a medieval monk looting away at a parchment tablet, and the back was inscribed with the words "Bound to Fight." Ainsley's wife was not on the podium or in the crowd which one journalist from The New York Times found odd. As the pre-meeting bustle continued, Angie was instructing two strong movers about items in the house that needed to be put on the waiting van. She was labeling packages as well with a large red felt marker. One of the movers was wondering how long it would take to drive to New Canaan, Connecticut.

Black opened the session by explaining to the gathered media that he was going to read a brief statement and allow Levitt time for a few comments. He also explained that due to prior commitments, he couldn't answer any questions. Black told the audience about the serious error he had made in the case of the Press and how he had been persuaded to reconsider his decision. After mulling it over, he came to the conclusion that the Press really needed to be a part of the university. Levitt, on the other hand, was jubilant. He was proud of his years at the university, and now that he had amassed a fortune in the pork business, he was thrilled

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to use text for your links, as opposed to
to icons, then what font style and size do you
want? What color should they be? Should
they be in bold? Italic? Underlined? What
about having your links change color after
they have been clicked on? This will help
the users remember which links they have
already visited. You need to have your links
look different from the rest of the page. You
want them to stick out so people will know
to click on them. Do you want to have text
with each link that describes what each link
does and where it goes? You
don’t have to use text at
all. You can use icons.
If you do, then what
kind of icon will you
use? There are
thousands of icons-
available out there on the Web that
you can copy and use. The choice is yours.
Again, are you consistent about your de-
cisions? Also, will you have links going
back to the original site, or will the user have
to rely on the “back” button? Before you go
“live” with your Website, make sure that all of
the links work.

Graphics

Graphics are a big part in most Websites.
There are many different kinds of graphics,
such as gifs, jpgs, java, active x, counters,
icons, pictures, drawings, and animation. With
thousands of different graphics available, how
do you decide what to use, where to use them,
how much should they be used, and will there
be any consistency?

It is my opinion that the last major con-
cern that should be dealt with in the creation
of a Website is the graphic art. What kind of
graphics and pictures you want to place on
your homepage is not as important as the con-
tent and arrangement of items. My experience
showed me that I needed to focus on what was
to be included on the homepage and how the
items were to be arranged. This is what I call
building the base to the Website. For me,
building the base was the most important as-
pect of developing a Website. The

Graphics can always be added later.

Conclusion

As you can imagine, developing
a Website can be a challenging ex-
erience. It takes time to do, but it
doesn’t have to be painful. With
preparation and careful consider-
ation of some of the issues listed
above, it can be a fun experience. I do believe
that the more you prepare for the project, the
easier it will be. Make your plans on paper. If
you are working with a committee, have the
committee discuss each of the issues before
starting the actual work. You may need to start
the work, and then make adjustments as the
project progresses. As I said above, my ex-
perience has led me to believe that if you start
with the bare-bones of the project, then the
artistic parts can be added later. Have fun out
there.

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from page 62

that he could help an institution that he
loved. He presented Black with an over-
sized check in the amount of two million
dollars.

The Chronicle of Higher Education’s
subsequent edition carried a picture of
Levitt, Black, Ainsley, and Huxley shaking
hands and holding the check. The rest of
the media carried a different shot, one of
Ainsley sprawled out on the

floor sur-
Ainsley
rounded by his staff.

when

Levitt

explained

some of the new direc-
tions that

he thought the

Press should be involved in instead of pub-
lishing only poetry and scholarly minutiae.

Ainsley became noticeably agitated when
Levitt boasted about his desire to be the edi-
tor of a new journal that he was going to
call Swine Time: Pigs in American Culture.
However, the blood rushed rapidly to
Ainsley’s head when Levitt announced that
he was so pleased that the university was
going to build a new facility for the press
that would double as a pork research center
and be called the Levitt Institute.

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