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 the bookbroker's coat in 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 cotillions 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, patting 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 oars in the water.” “If you insist.” “Oh indeed, I insist. Don’t be foolish. The upsurge that will come is going to start from the university yoke 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 a waste. Had given to man in longevity, it had taken away in enjoyment. Smoke packs 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’s 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 pounced 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’s 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 reverence, 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

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slowly and disappeared behind a black cur- 
tain.

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 repli- 
ces of "No, the director is not available" could be heard in surround-sound stereo. Ainsley, in fact, was on the eighth hole at Swaying 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 mono- 
graph 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 im-
pressed by Henderson's use of the word "un-
grateful" 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 Mrs. McKee 
 might like to provide wake-up calls for a 
month or two. "I am Hubert Huxley's secre-
etary. You do know who he is?" "Of course, 
my dear. He's the big wormon 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 gar-
dens from his fifth-floor office in the 
Ainsley Press Center. He could read prop-
osals for hours, deciding who would get 
published, not having to worry about in-
breeds on an editorial board or whims of 
eccentric 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 counters 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 writers. Catch my drift, son? 
We'll have you 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, 
only wanted part of Ainsley. Levitt, a promi-
nent alumnus and the owner of Hogs Un-
limited, 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 im-
pressed with Angie Ainsley than with her 
"bumpkin" husband. Angie also played ten-
sis at the Pines Country and Swimming 
Club and Levitt found her to be very ath-
letic and competitive. Levitt, who was the 
town's most eligible bachelor, frequented 
the club during the brutally humid and hot sum-
mer months, sipping a lemonade on the pa-
tio 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 mismanage-
ment. 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 sau-
sage." "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 action. You can continue the cha-
rade of having Ainsley report to you, but I 
want final say. That dumb guy couldn't bal-
ance his tires let alone a business operation." 
"I'm sure it can be worked out."

After hanging up, Levitt emailed his ac-
countant, asking him to look into his hold-
ings to find out how and when to get the 
money to Black. He also emailed Jessica 
Saunders, the news anchor at the local sta-
tion, to see if she was free for dinner. He 
wanted to make sure that she 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 staff along with Huxley who had 
flown in from New York for the presenta-
tion. The whole press group were wearing 
t-shirts made especially for the occasion. 
The front had the Press seal, a medieval 
monk toasting 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, Connect-

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 an-
swer any questions. Black told the audi-
ence about the serious errors 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 

dubious. 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 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, will you be consistent about your decisions? 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 gif, jpeg, 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 concern 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 content 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 aspect of developing a Website. The graphics can always be added later.

Conclusion

As you can imagine, developing a Website can be a challenging experience. It takes time to do, but it doesn’t have to be painful. With proper preparation and careful consideration 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 experience 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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