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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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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 book Broke man 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 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, 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 oats in the water.” “If you insist.” “Oh indeed, I insist. Don’t be foolish. The uproar that this will cause 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. While 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, Kerlinghetti, 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 rather 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

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

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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 Swingart 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. Jensen, 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 in-
formation 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
cring, 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 secre-
tary. 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 pro-
posal for hours, deciding who would get
published, not having things 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 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 winners. 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,
wasn't part of Ainsley. Levitt, a promin-
ent alumnus and the owner of Hogs Un-
limited, the biggest pig farming conglom-
erate 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 kiddin'." "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 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 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,
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 an-
swer any questions. Black told the audi-
ence about the serious errors that had been
in the case of the Press and how he had been
persuaded to reconsider his decision. After
nulling 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 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 gifs, 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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