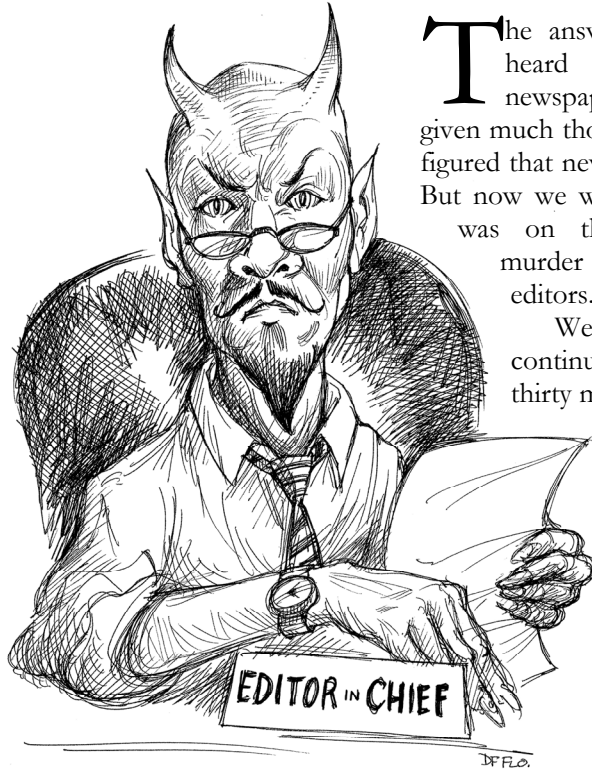


CHAPTER 11

Editors Must Die



The answer surprised us. We had heard similar sentiments about newspaper editors, but hadn't given much thought to them. I had always figured that newspaper people were smart. But now we were with a crazy lady who was on the verge of committing murder because of her hatred of editors. This was adventure!

We listened as the woman continued to blast editors. After thirty minutes she declared with an unshakable conviction:

"They must all die horrible, vicious, painful deaths. And these three must be the first to go."

"Sorry," said Dave. "No one is dying until we're sure they deserve it. If they do, no problem. And if the world will be a better place without

newspaper editors, we'll help you. And as crazy as you are, you're short and are no match for us."

She smiled and said, "Oh, gents, don't underestimate me. Don't be that dumb," walked close to me, snarled, "You make me sick," and then began beating me with her stick.

After a short scuffle, Dave grabbed the stick and subdued her with a bear-hug, releasing her only after she agreed to calm down. She told us more about her hatred of editors, and, in time, convinced us to see for ourselves what scum they were by going to a newspaper with her and getting jobs. We agreed that if she was right we'd help her kill the three and any other editors so deserving.

The sun was rising and we finalized our plan over a breakfast of bacon and eggs. The captives by this time had slumped to the ground in exhaustion. They moaned for food. The woman, whose name was Paulette, threw them the uncooked, fatty ends of her bacon strips and we all laughed as they fought each other for the tiny lumps of fat.

"The only problem with this plan," I said, "is that Dave and I have never worked for a paper. We're not reporters. We don't know the first thing about it."

"That's no problem," Paulette said. "You don't have to know anything. The stupider you are the better. Editors love people who are as dumb as they are. I'll tell you exactly what to say and how to answer questions. Follow my instructions and you'll get jobs."

We broke camp and marched the weak captives through the woods to a dirt road where Paulette had a small rusty horse trailer hooked to a red compact car. She walked her horse into the trailer, chained the captives to the back and then walked toward her car.

"What are you doing?" Dave asked her.

"I'm about to drive away. Follow me."

"But what about these three?"

"I'm going to drag these scum behind me, drag them through the woods and over asphalt until every last piece of their rotten, stinking flesh is scraped from their bodies. And then when they're bloody human sores, I'm going to coat them with salt."

"Why don't you at least put them in the trailer?"

"Because they ain't good enough to be in the same space with my horse."

After some haggling, Paulette agreed to let the three ride in the trailer. However, she refused to give them new clothes, even though the temperature was near freezing.

We found our bikes, which weren't too far down the road, and followed Paulette as she drove out of the forest and onto the highway. A few hours later we were in a fairly large city and in the office of the editor of one of the city's two newspapers.

"Goody, goody!" exclaimed the editor, a large, rounded, stoop-shouldered, rumpled, young-looking man named Jimmy who was sitting on the floor in the corner of his spacious, clean office with a pie in his lap and a slimy piece of pie filling stuck to the tip of his right thumb. "Goody! Goody! I have pulled out a plum from this pie. Bless this day and bless us all! Isn't this neat?"

"It's extra, extra neat, Jimmy. God is looking out for you today. Happy, happy," Paulette, who was unable to disguise her disgust, told him.

"Neato," Jimmy responded as he lifted his heavy body off the carpeted floor. "Let's offer a prayer of thanksgiving for this bountiful blessing."

We all knelt for a few minutes as Jimmy gave thanks for finding the plum. "Do you like me, Lord? Because I like you," he concluded. Once off his knees, Jimmy shuffled over to us, gave each of us a double-handed handshake as well as a hug.

"Acgh!" he said sharply. "What can I do for you?"

"They want jobs as reporters," Paulette, who worked at the paper, said.
"So you do, acgh," Jimmy responded. "What can you do?"
"Pray," Dave and I said at once, just as Paulette had instructed us to.
"Acgh! Have you ever been reporters? Or have you written anything?"
"No," we both responded. "We don't know the first thing about reporting.

Absolutely nothing. We can't even construct a proper sentence."

"Hmhmh. Ahhh, anything else?"

"Yes. We pray all day long."

"Hey-hey. Neat. Ahhh, what do you think a newspaper should be and do?"

Dave answered: "A newspaper should make people feel happy. Everybody should be happy. We should print happy news, nothing negative, just big, juicy, feel-good, happy stories. A smile a day beats working for pay, I say. Newspapers must be mongerers of happiness."

"Acgh. What else?"

"A newspaper should never offend anyone. If the truth is negative or hurts somebody, a newspaper should ignore it. A newspaper should



Jimmy Pulled Out A Plum

level out life's valleys and mountains so that everything is smooth and bland. A newspaper must create a set of artificial morals and standards and have no tolerance for individualism or personal freedom and choices. A newspaper must be an advocate of inequality. Some people are more equal than others. And newspapers must advocate greater rights for groups and people the editors hang around with. Those rights must come at the expense of equality for everyone else. A newspaper must cave in to the slightest complaint. Newspapers must dismiss as irrelevant, silly and incorrect, political and social opinions that are the opposite of those held by reporters and editors, and, we believe firmly that a newspaper must never print stuff that readers can use; it must exist to serve the artistic yearnings of its staff. A newspaper must be driven by design and photographs, rather than content, meaning news and words. In fact, to a good newspaper, words should be irrelevant."

"Lordy, you fellows are smart, in touch and in tune. Smart enough to be my superiors, that's certain. You're hired. You start right after I make a special announcement—an announcement of happy news to the staff. For this newspaper has made another giant step toward our goal of becoming the best small newspaper in the nation. Paulette and fellas, join me out here."

We followed Jimmy as he shuffled out into the large, open newsroom that was filled with messy desks. He stood by a desk in the middle of the room, held a bell in his hand, rang it loudly so that the dozens of staffers in the room gathered around him, and proudly announced in a loud voice:

“Happy news everybody! Happy! Happy! We have just taken another giant step toward our goal of becoming the best small newspaper in the country! Yes, we are achieving excellence! The numbers are in and, hey, in the past six months our circulation has declined by ten thousand! We are selling fewer papers today than we were six months ago.”

A great cheer went up from most in the room, although there were some unhappy faces in the crowd.

“Ouuuuu, Jimmy! Woouuonderful news. I am sooooo impressed. You are sooooo smart!” cooed a thin blonde with a leathery, age-worn face who wore a flowing, pink chiffon dress and who flitted around the edge of the crowd while smiling, giggling to herself, brushing up against men and batting her eyelids. She was braless, and the erect nipples of her small, sagging breasts showed prominently through the thin material of her dress. “Right on,” she continued. “Let’s dance. Let’s paaaaarty!”

Another cheer went up from the crowd. Jimmy looked proud. “Thank you! Baba,” he said in a rush. “Babawaba, you’re brilliant, too. Aren’t we all smart?”

“Ouuuuu! I am sooooo smaaaaart, it’s truuuuuue.”

A man with red hair, a pear shaped body and who was munching carrots spoke next. “We’re on our way to achieving design excellence too, Jimmy. We’ve won an award for using white space as a design technique. Bravo for us!”

“Oh, Dandy,” Jimmy said. “Bravo for us indeed.”

“And we’ve won a photo award, too,” said a short fat woman with a sour-looking face. “We ran a full page photo of the sky at night. The stars wouldn’t reproduce, and so it just came out black in the paper. The judges loved it. They said it was unique, dynamic and creative.”

“That photo spoke to me,” shouted a short brunette. “I took that photo and it’s still speaking to me. In fact, I can barely hear all of you because that photo is speaking to me this very minute. Oh! It just said that I’m brilliant!”

“Dandy wandy,” Jimmy said. “That photo doesn’t speak; it shouts loud and clear that this is the best darned newspaper staff in the whole darned world. Next time we get a great picture like that we should run it as a two page spread. That’ll win us even more awards.”

There was more applause from the staff, but not from Paulette. She was angry and spoke up: “But Jimmy, our circulation is falling because no one is reading us anymore. There’s nothing in this paper. If we keep losing circulation we’ll go out of business. I want someone to read my stories.”

“Acgh. That’s ego. That’s ego talking,” Jimmy snarled in disgust. “You’re being negative again. What’s the matter, are you angry? Why are you always such a naysayer?”

“Right on, Jimmy and shame on you Paulette,” said the carrot-munching Robert. “The reason those people aren’t reading us is because they’re not as creative or as smart as we are. They wouldn’t recognize creative brilliance if it smacked them in the eyes as a full page of black ink, like our picture of the night sky. I know there are people out there who don’t recognize the genius in that image. They don’t understand our use of imagery. So we don’t want them even buying our paper. They’re just cretins. We’re artistic and brilliant. They don’t deserve to receive our paper or to view our great work.”



Baba Sucks Up To The Boss

Paulette continued her argument: “We can’t just keep printing full pages of black ink and giant pictures. We need news, hard news and more news. If the circulation keeps falling, we’ll all be out of jobs.”

Her argument was met by jeers from most of the staff. A short, lumpy, doughy, pale-skinned man with blonde hair and a big, round wet spot on the crotch area of his pants scolded her:

“Why is it, Paulette, that you hate this newspaper and these fine people? Hatred, envy and anger will not be tolerated in this newsroom. Hatred is counterproductive to a good working atmosphere and it stifles debate. And let me say that people who hate do so because they recognize that others are more talented than they. Hatred is jealousy, and that is negative. Let me ask you, Paulette, have you ever had a full page of black ink printed with your name on it? Don’t answer because we all know the answer is ‘no,’ and that proves my point.”

“Dale,” said Paulette as she glared at the doughy man. “You might be the managing editor of this paper but that doesn’t give you the right to run it into the ground and out of business.”

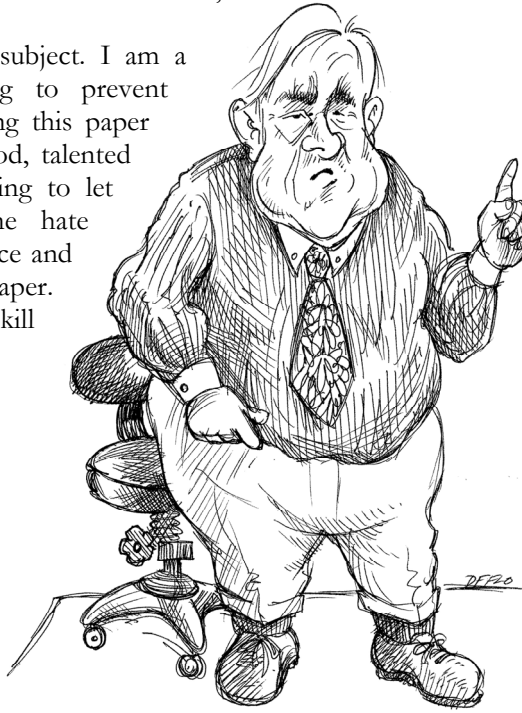
Dale bristled, stomped his feet, clenched his fists and shouted angrily:

“Paulette, have you seen your psychiatrist today? You’re angry again. Anger and hatred may be food for your dark soul, but it is out of line and intolerable in a newsroom. I’m warning you: keep on with these outbursts and we’ll fire you.”

“But you’re angry, too,” Paulette shot back. “How come you can be angry and I can’t? How come you can stomp your feet and I can’t? I think you’re operating under a double standard, hypocrite.”

“Don’t change the subject. I am a manager who is trying to prevent someone from destroying this paper and from slandering good, talented people. We are not going to let one angry person, one hate monger, destroy the peace and tranquility of this newspaper. You are threatening to kill and destroy. I am trying to give life and preserve. Now, if you’re jealous because everyone else is more talented than you are, admit it and move on. This meeting is over.”

As the staffers made their ways back to their desks, Baba approached and brushed her breasts against one of Dave’s arms.



Doughy Dale, Hypocrite

“Excuuuuuse me. You must be new here. Men are always coming on to me. I don’t understand it,” she cooed. “They can’t keep their hands off me. You know what I do on weekends? I walk around my house buck naked all day. I love the feel of my skin against a man’s.”

“Well, I’d like to invite myself over and get naked with you,” Dave said.

“Pig!” she shouted. “That is sexual harassment! I’m filing a sexual harassment complaint against you. Jimmyyyyy!” She followed Jimmy into his office. A few minutes later Jimmy called Dave in. I followed.

“Bad man, Davey,” Jimmy said from the chair behind a wooden desk. “Sexual harassment is bad. One more instance and you’re fired.”

“Hey! She came on to me. She rubbed her chest against me and talked about getting naked in her house and how she liked the feel of her skin against a man’s,” Dave protested.

Jimmy leaned back in his brown leather swivel chair, looked at Baba while tugging at a clump of his hair, and asked:

“Baba, anything to that?”

“Jiiiiimyyyyy?” she said while giggling and fluttering her eyelids,
“Jiiiiimyyyyy?”

“Acgh. I didn’t think so. Davey, that’s bad. Do it again and you’re fired.”

Jimmy looked at his watch, got up from the chair and headed for the door.
“Time for the news meeting.”