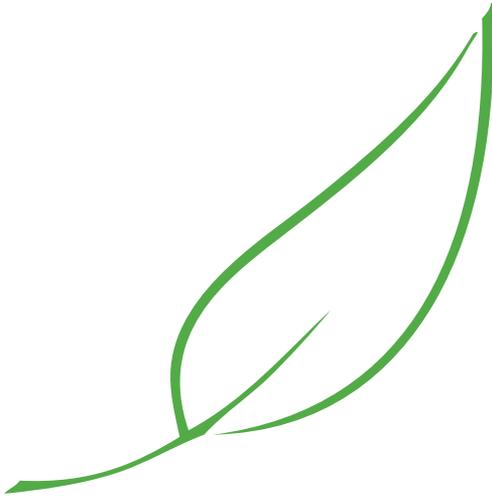


The Newton Flash

By Pat Cook



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THE NEWTON FLASH
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SYNOPSIS: "And the big news today," intones Kiki during the Newton High School television broadcast, "our mascot had kittens!" Such are the usual bulletin board items carried by school monitors between classes. Usual goes flying out the window with the arrival of Kate, the new co-producer. Out with the old and in with the new, fast and abrupt! Mel, the camera girl, suddenly becomes artsy, while Rad, the sound guy, needs to make out his last will and testament. When Kate and the news gang decide to televise secret information about their upcoming football game, a group of dangerous gamblers shows up. Is it any wonder the principal still believes no news is good news? This fast-paced spoof for teens is full of odd-ball characters, lightning dialogue, and clever twists.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 females, 8 males, 4 either)

PENNY (f)	Teen "talking head," a bit self-absorbed
KIKI (f)	Another "talking head," not too bright
HAROLD (m)	Low-key teen who thinks with his heart
MEL (m/f)	Sarcastic female camera operator
MAC (m/f)	Wise-cracking teen news writer
RAD (m)	Cool tech man
JOHNNY (m)	Lanky but lovable errand boy
DOLORES (f)	Cynical teenage news secretary
SARGE (m/f)	Rather lazy lady security guard
PRINCIPAL ROHATCH (m/f)	Long-suffering high school principal
KATE (f)	Whirlwind of a teen, very brash
MR. CLAYMORE (m)	High school custodian
MISS ABERCROMBIE (f)	Snippy secretary to PRINCIPAL

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WANDA (f)	Teen who is really into make-up
BLAIR (f).....	HAROLD's naïve little sister
LOIS (f).....	No-nonsense photographer
GUS BRUTUS (m)	Oversized and dim henchman
NILES CRAWFORD (m).....	Pompous head of the school board
MYRON (m).....	Frightened teen from another school
COACH PEMBERTON (m).....	Stammering, meek football coach
GOVERNOR (f)	All-knowing lady state governor

TIME & PLACE

Present, in autumn. News Room at Isaac Newton High School

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

As is the case with most plays, each character is written either as a man or a woman and particularly in a large cast show such as this one, some directors may wish a certain male could instead be female. Therefore, while certain characters here can be played as written (HAROLD, KATE, JOHNNY, BLAIR, etc.) others may be played by either a boy or a girl (MAC, MEL, SARGE, ROHATCH, etc) This will allow more flexibility in casting.

The setting for this farce is the television studio at Isaac Newton High School. Actually a one-time storage room, it's not too well kept and is full of discards. There are two doors in the floor plan. The first door, SR, leads to the rest of the school on the first floor while the second leads to stairs to the second floor.

Predominant in the room, SL, is the set; from here the news readers and announcers sit behind a large desk that faces DSR at an angle and broadcast to the rest of the school. On top of the desk are two microphones. Behind the desk is a large bulletin board on which there is a large sign proclaiming "Newton News." There are also two large, old style desks – one with chair is

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located SR near the door, and the other, also with chair, is located USC. There are computers with monitors on both desks. In the USL area is a table supporting all sorts of technical equipment. The rest of the room is full of file cabinets, castoff chairs, old newspapers, etc. There is also one video camera, mounted on a tripod with wheels, attached to cable.

PROPS

- Several pages of news items
- Paperback book (detective)
- Earphones
- Video camera, with tripod on rollers
- 2 microphones with stands
- Small paper lunch sack
- 2 computers with keyboards and monitors
- 3 ballpoint pens
- Broom
- Large trashcan on rollers (Full of paper trash)
- 1 crumpled page of note paper
- Viewfinder
- Detective magazine
- Make-up brush and rouge
- Large banner, which reads "THE NEWTON FLASH"
- 3 notepads
- Flash camera
- Several pink 'memo' pages
- 3 pieces of typing paper
- Door key (old fashioned)
- 2 wrist watches (girls)
- Banana
- Soda bottle (empty)

ACT ONE

(As the lights come up on the set, KIKI and PENNY are seated behind the desk. The atmosphere is casual and relaxed to the point of being boring.)

KIKI: (**holding notes**) Good afternoon, students.

PENNY: We hope everyone is having a very nice day.

KIKI: I'm Kiki Pancroft.

PENNY: And I'm Penny Darnell.

KIKI & PENNY: Rah, rah Newton High.

KIKI: And we just know you're going to be as excited as we are when you hear what we have to tell you today.

PENNY: That's right, Kiki. (**looks at her notes**) So, let's get right to it, shall we?

KIKI: Why not?

PENNY: Well, the big talk in the halls is now official. (**leans in**) Our mascot had kittens!

KIKI: (**fanning herself with her notes**) I know I've been on pins and needles waiting for the arrival.

PENNY: I think you're speaking for everyone, there, Kiki. Nancy, the Newton Neutrons mascot, gave birth earlier today to eight little kitties, ranging in color from black to black and tan.

KIKI: What a selection. Anybody wishing to adopt any of these lovely felines please see Principal Rohatch.

PENNY: And soon!

KIKI: And almost as exciting as that - today the cafeteria is serving tofu!

PENNY: Wow! I know those of us who are health conscious are looking forward to that.

KIKI: But that's not all. The tofu will be in the shape of a meatloaf.

PENNY: Will wonders never cease? Well, that's all for now.

KIKI: We'll be back next hour with more developments as soon as they... develop.

PENNY: This is Penny Darnell –

KIKI: And Kiki Pancroft saying –

PENNY & KIKI: Go Newton Neutrons!

PENNY: Yea!

(Lights come up in the rest of the room as they fade out on the set. HAROLD is standing near the US desk and watching the girls. MAC is sitting at the desk reading a detective paperback. DOLORES is sitting behind the SR desk leaning back in her chair as JOHNNY stands nearby. RAD is at the tech desk, wearing earphones and adjusting levers. MEL is behind the video camera with a hand raised.)

MEL: And... *(drops her hand)* you're out!

(HAROLD claps and looks around at the others. None of them join in the ovation. HE stops clapping and moves to KIKI and PENNY. MEL rolls the camera over to SR and out of the way.)

HAROLD: That was just fine, girls, just fine.

KIKI: We did okay?

HAROLD: Very okay.

PENNY: You don't think I was being pushy there? I didn't mean to step on any of Kiki's lines.

KIKI: No, not at all. I thought we both kept up the pace and really gave it to 'em.

MAC: *(flatly, not looking up from his book)* Had us on the edge of our seats.

HAROLD: You two should be very proud. You just get better and better with each broadcast. *(to RAD)* How'd they sound?

RAD: *(takes off his earphones)* As compared to what, man?

HAROLD: Did you get them?

RAD: Oh, they was comin' through, man – *(looks mournfully at KIKI and PENNY)* but I don't think I'll ever get them. *(leans back in his chair with his hands behind his head)*

MEL: You want me to make a copy of that for the files?

HAROLD: Of course.

DOLORES: For the archives?

KIKI: *(hand up)* I want a copy!

PENNY: *(hand up)* Me, too.

MAC: I want one to keep under my pillow. *(throws his book down on the desk)*

MEL: (*sarcastically*) Oh, you're so romantic. (*moves to a file cabinet and opens a drawer*)

DOLORES: That means I have to type out the copy. (*straightens up and begins typing*) Work, work, work, I didn't apply here to work!

MAC: (*jumps to his feet*) Harold, are we EVER going to ACTUALLY do any REAL news?

HAROLD: Mac, you know we have very specific guidelines about what sort of announcements we're allowed to make here.

(JOHNNY moves cautiously up next to KIKI.)

MAC: But aren't we a news team here?

SARGE: (*enters through the SR door carrying a small paper sack*)
Hey, kids.

ALL BUT MAC: Hey, Sarge!

SARGE: Just havin' my lunch. (*leans on DOLORES' desk*) Anything new?

MAC: And that's another thing. Why does the security guard have her lunch here in the newsroom?

SARGE: Hey! This was my lunchroom before it became your newsroom. I'm the one that's slumming.

DOLORES: He doesn't mean anything, Sarge.

MAC: How do you know?

DOLORES: You NEVER mean anything.

SARGE: Listen, if I'm interrupting anything – (*moves to the US door*)

HAROLD: Sarge, you don't have to leave.

SARGE: (*looks back*) No. (*sniffs indignantly*) I know when I'm not wanted. (*exits out the door*)

HAROLD: (*to MAC*) Now see what you did? You hurt Sarge's feelings.

MAC: Poor baby. Harold, can't we at LEAST do some interviews? Dig up some stories for a change?

HAROLD: I never said you couldn't do any reporting. I gave you an assignment just last week.

MAC: Yeah, boy! I get a card from Dolores there that proclaims - (*envisions the headline with his hands*) "Mrs. Plowright got her chair fixed!" (*looks at HAROLD*) I'm surprised the U.N. hasn't met on THAT one.

HAROLD: (*smiling*) I'll see if I can put a call in to them later.

JOHNNY: I thought you did very well, Kiki.

KIKI: Thank you, Johnny. (*walks over to the file cabinet, where SHE hands her notes to MEL, who files them*)

PENNY: Oh, he'd say that if you read the phone book and blew your nose twice!

MAC: (*glaring at DOLORES*) And THEN it turned out THAT wasn't even the story. I get to Mrs. Plowright's room and find out she didn't have her chair fixed; she had her HAIR fixed!

DOLORES: (*rises*) I made a typo!

MAC: You ARE a typo!

RAD: I'm type A myself. (*some of the others look at him*) In case that ever comes up, like.

KIKI: (*to PENNY*) You leave Johnny alone.

JOHNNY: (*to PENNY*) You read very nice, too, Penny.

PENNY: Yeah? What did I say?

JOHNNY: Uhm... (*HE can't remember*)

MAC: I would've thought to be a secretary you'd have to be able to type?

DOLORES: Oh, another piece of news there – I didn't know you could think!

MAC: Hey, if you were a guy -

DOLORES: (*moves to the front of the desk*) You want a piece of me, chump?!

MAC: I could take you on the best day you ever had! (*DOLORES suddenly grabs MAC by his throat.*)

HAROLD: Hey! STOP that, you two!

RAD: (*sits up*) Wow! Dig it; brutality in the ranks.

PENNY: Now, what did Kiki say?

JOHNNY: (*recites*) And we just know you're going to be as excited as we are when you hear what we have to tell you today. I know I've been on pins and needles waiting for the arrival -

PENNY: I rest my case! (*looks at KIKI*) He's got a crush on you!

(DOLORES and MAC wrestle each other to the floor.)

KIKI: (*moves to PENNY*) He does not!

JOHNNY: Yes, I do! (*PENNY and KIKI look at him.*) Wait – did I say that out loud?

MEL: (**moves to RAD**) Five bucks on Dolores.

RAD: You take an IOU?

MEL: No.

RAD: Then I do not choose to bet at this time.

HAROLD: Will you two stop fighting?! (**tries to pull the two apart**)

(At this moment, PRINCIPAL ROHATCH enters through the SR door.)

KIKI: He's just kidding me, aren't you, Johnny?

JOHNNY: Uh, sure. Well?

MEL: (**sees PRINCIPAL**) Uh oh! Harold!

RAD: (**also sees him**) Incoming!

DOLORES: (**stops fighting**) Think you know so much!

MAC: Yeah, you're another!

DOLORES: What does THAT mean?

MAC: It means - (**thinks for a beat and then the two continue to wrestle**)

ROHATCH: May I ask what's going on here?

HAROLD: Huh? (**turns and sees PRINCIPAL**) Oh! (**jumps to his feet**) Principal Rohatch!

(MAC and DOLORES stop in mid-grapple. Slowly, they both turn their heads to see PRINCIPAL.)

DOLORES: Uhhhh... (**jumps up**) And THAT is what you do when somebody has something stuck in their throat.

MAC: Yeah, I think it was your foot. (**rubs his neck as HE gets to his feet**)

ROHATCH: (**to himself**) This place is a zoo. I don't know why I bother

-

HAROLD: (**moves to PRINCIPAL**) What a treat to have you drop by.

We were...that is, Dolores was giving a... first aid demonstration.

ROHATCH: (**looks at MAC**) And just in time, too. Looks like he could use some first aid.

DOLORES: Thank you. (**moves back to her desk**)

MAC: Oh, sure! Compliment her.

ROHATCH: What? **(to HAROLD)** What is he talking about now? **(HAROLD starts to answer but PRINCIPAL quickly throws up his hands.)** Never mind! I'm sure I wouldn't understand the answer anyway.

HAROLD: Sir?

ROHATCH: Oh, don't play the innocent with me, Harold. I have a pretty good idea what you all think of me.

HAROLD: I don't know what you mean, sir.

VOICE: **(Just then a man's rough VOICE rings out.)** Okay, you moron, drop it! I ain't got time to mess with the likes of you, you get me?!

(Everyone but MAC looks around. RAD quickly puts on his earphones.)

ROHATCH: What was THAT?!

VOICE: Don't give me none a'yer lip! You want me to lay you out in the here and now?!

(MAC moves over to his desk.)

KIKI: Where's that coming from?

VOICE: Give it up!

ROHATCH: Yeah, which one of you said THAT?

MAC: Nobody said that – it's my screensaver, sir.

ROHATCH: Your WHAT?

MAC: **(pressing a key)** Screensaver. I have this old private eye movie screensaver.

HAROLD: It does dialogue from old movies, sir. You know, whenever you leave your monitor screen on long enough, this device comes on to save –

ROHATCH: Fine. As long as you understand what's going on here.

JOHNNY: Principal Rohatch, would you like something to drink?

ROHATCH: No, thank you, Johnny.

JOHNNY: We have some colas, bottled water, juices –

ROHATCH: I'm fine, Johnny.

JOHNNY: Iced tea, coffee, lemonade –

ROHATCH: No, THANK you! **(to HAROLD)** What does he do here?

HAROLD: He's our supply man. Besides, his Dad runs a grocery store.

DOLORES: That's where we get the colas, bottled water, juices, iced tea –

PENNY: Principal Rohatch, did you see our last broadcast?

ROHATCH: (*yawning*) Yes, I – I did. (*finishes yawning*) Fact, I think I dozed off. Wait, you DID tell them about those cats, right?

KIKI: Yes sir!

ROHATCH: Good. (*scratches his arm*) I think one of them has fleas.

MAC: Gee, I'll bet we'll lead off our next broadcast with THAT earth-shaking piece of journalism.

HAROLD: Mac, will you let the Principal get a word in? (*to PRINCIPAL*) Now, what were you saying, sir?

ROHATCH: Yes, Harold, the reason I took my life in my own hands and came in here is I have a new addition to your staff. (*moves to the SR door*)

HAROLD: A new addition?

PENNY: (*to KIKI*) He doesn't like us! I just KNOW he doesn't like us.

KIKI: Why do you say that?

PENNY: I bet he's got somebody to replace us.

ROHATCH: Actually she's a transfer. Just got here today. (*opens the door and indicates that someone enter the room*)

MEL: Does she like cats?

ROHATCH: (*to MEL*) I tried – no soap.

KATE: (*enters through the door*) Hello.

ROHATCH: Boys and girls, this is Kathryn Blassingale. She just moved here from Philly.

KATE: Please, call me Kate.

HAROLD: Philadelphia? From Palmer High, by any chance?

KATE: Yes! How did you know?

HAROLD: Just a guess. I have a couple of buds who go there.

ROHATCH: Kathryn here worked with their television station there so I figured she'd fit right in.

HAROLD: Oh, wonderful.

ROHATCH: I guess. You all try to play nice.

KATE: Thank you, Principal Rohatch.

ROHATCH: You say that now.

HAROLD: Glad to have you with us. I'm Harold Meeks.

KATE: Hello. (*the two shake hands vigorously*)

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HAROLD: (*after they shake, HAROLD wiggles his hand to get blood back into it as HE continues the introductions*) That is Dolores Gunther. She's our secretary.

DOLORES: (*waves*) Present.

KATE: Oh, I wouldn't want your job.

DOLORES: (*to the others*) Well, she's not replacing me.

HAROLD: (*moves to MEL*) This is Mel Tyree.

MEL: I keep everyone in focus.

ROHATCH: Like that's possible.

HAROLD: She's our cameraman... uh, girl.

KATE: I'm sure you have your hands full.

MEL: She ain't after my job.

HAROLD: And this is Mac Macdonald.

MAC: I'm the copywriter who KEEPS hoping for some real news!

KATE: We'll see if we can do something about that.

MAC: I'm in the clear.

HAROLD: Our soundman there, we call him Rad. (*RAD shoots a hand in the air.*)

KATE: Rad? Short for radical.

HAROLD: That, too, but it's actually his initials. (*turns to RAD*) And they stand for – (*indicates RAD to stand*)

RAD: (*stands reluctantly, takes off his baseball cap and places it over his heart*) Reginald Atterbury Detweiler. (*replaces his hat and sits*) I hate show and tell.

KATE: Glad we have a good soundman.

MEL: (*to RAD*) She ain't after you.

HAROLD: (*indicates KIKI and PENNY*) Kiki Pancroft and Penny Darnell.

KIKI: We read what they shove at us.

KATE: (*moves to them*) Oh, you're the talent.

PENNY: Ooh! Did you hear, Harold? Talent. (*The girls hold hands and giggle.*)

KATE: And so pretty! (*The girls stop giggling, look at KATE, look back at each other and giggle again.*)

HAROLD: And Johnny Garner. He's our "go to" man.

JOHNNY: If you need anything, you just let me know.

KATE: You'll be the first one I tell.

HAROLD: So, what's your specialty?

KATE: Well, I guess you could say organization.

MAC: Organization? (**looks at DOLORES**)

DOLORES: (**thinking**) Now I KNOW I've heard that word before...

ROHATCH: And that's why I knew you could use her here. See, the thing is, I'm making her coproducer.

(The other newsroom members all turn to HAROLD.)

HAROLD: Coproducer?

MAC, MEL & DOLORES: That's YOU!

HAROLD: What?

ROHATCH: That's right. You two will be working together. (**smiles broadly**) Have a nice day! (**exits out the SR door**)

(HAROLD slowly turns to KATE, who smiles at him sheepishly. The others in the room look at each other with wide-eyed surprise as the lights dim out.)

SCENE TWO

(It is an hour later and the group is getting ready to do their next broadcast. MAC is standing on the set next to the desk, holding pages. KIKI and PENNY are behind the desk. MEL is lining up the camera again, with JOHNNY watching her. RAD is at his controls while KATE and HAROLD stand near the SR desk. DOLORES, seated behind the desk, listens in.)

HAROLD: Listen, Kate, I'm not worried in the least. I know we'll get along.

KATE: Glad you feel that way. It's not any party, let me tell you, being a door prize at a turkey raffle.

HAROLD: Do what?

KATE: I just mean I didn't write my own label here and don't want to come off like I'm stealing anybody's gig.

HAROLD: Do what?

KATE: Listen, being the new kid on the block, I got the onus on me and don't I know it.

HAROLD: Do what?

DOLORES: (**making hand signals**) She says she's glad to be in this country and hopes for world peace.

MEL: (**looking through the camera**) Girls, smile for the birdie now.

(PENNY and KIKI look at the camera and smile.)

MAC: Just read the same old garbage you read last time plus add this.
(drops a page on the desk)

(Both KIKI and PENNY grab for the page.)

KIKI: Mine!

PENNY: Mine!

KIKI: Mine!

PENNY: Mine!

MEL: (**to JOHNNY**) Aren't they cute at that age?

JOHNNY: (**watching KIKI**) Uh HUH!

MEL: (**to RAD**) Can you hear them?

RAD: You mean, like, you want me to LISTEN?

MAC: Wait a minute! (**picks up the page and carefully tears it in two horizontally**)

KATE: Look, you all know each other and, well, you know how some people just come out of nowhere and start giving orders?

HAROLD: You're not one of those?

KATE: Well, actually, I AM one of those. But I'm depending on you to say whoa whenever I ride out too far from the hacienda. (**SHE sits on DOLORES' desk and swings her feet. DOLORES gives her a disgusted look.**)

HAROLD: Well, we all pull together here. We work as a team.

KATE: Natch. But somebody has to guide the team, right, Hal?

DOLORES: Hal?

MAC: (**hands the two pieces to PENNY and KIKI**) You read this part (**to PENNY**) and you read THIS part. (**to KIKI**) Now, you two play nice and later we'll all go downtown for lollipops!

KATE: And that's us, you and me. We run the whole show, the big top, the whole enchilada.

JOHNNY: (**looks back at KATE**) Enchilada? Did somebody say enchilada?

MEL: (**looks up**) We having enchiladas in the cafeteria?

HAROLD: Kate, I'm sure any ideas you have will be more than welcome.

KATE: Fine. (**jumps up and moves to the set**) Well, just off the top of my head here, just winging it, you know, what about this for starters?

DOLORES: (**arms folded**) Here we go. (**curious, SHE gets up and moves to MEL and JOHNNY**)

KATE: (**to KIKI and PENNY**) You two. You look so stiff behind that desk there.

MAC: They'd look stiff in a limbo competition. We just throw in the desk for animation.

KATE: Exactly my point.

HAROLD: (**moves to KATE**) What do you mean?

KATE: Why not have them, move here. (**points to the front of the desk**) Girls?

KIKI: Huh?

PENNY: Oh, sure. (**PENNY and KIKI move to the front of the desk.**)

KATE: There you go. Now, what say you sat on the edge of the desk and did the news that way?

HAROLD: Sat on the edge –

KATE: Give us a more casual look, make it more inviting, more audience-friendly. They ain't the enemy, you know. (**confidentially**) And they have to know we're on their side.

MEL: Now I have to refocus.

DOLORES: (**to MEL**) Maybe if you sat on a desk. (**MEL gives her an odd look.**)

KATE: Then, when you read your copy, really speak TO the camera. Treat that lens as if it were your best friend and you're giving out the dish.

PENNY: You mean like just us girls talking to other girls?

KATE: That's the angle, all right. Now. (**picks up a microphone**) Is this on?

RAD: (**winces and yanks the earphones off his head**) WOW! (**puts his fingers in his ears to clear them**) Don't mess with the machinery!

KATE: Sorry. **(to KIKI and PENNY)** What're you reading?

MAC: **(hands pages to KATE)** Same stuff from last time.

MEL: **(to HAROLD)** Is this okay with you, Harold?

DOLORES: **(imitating KATE)** Oh, call him "Hal." We're all chumsies here. You get my drift?

HAROLD: Hang on a second.

DOLORES: **(to MEL)** That's what I like about him – a man of instant indecision.

KATE: **(scanning the notes)** Uh huh, mascot had kittens... cafeteria serving tofu... okay! Let's see if we can't pepper this a bit. **(pulls out a pen and, bending over the desk, begins scribbling on the pages)**

MAC: Hey, that's my copy there!

KATE: You'll love it, trust me.

MAC: **(looks at the others)** That's what my mom always says about her spinach casserole.

CLAYMORE: **(enters through the SR door, carrying a broom)** Don't mind me, just cleanin' up. **(pulls in a large trashcan on wheels)**

KATE: **(still writing)** Anything to add to this?

MAC: Just this copy I wrote, telling them about you joining our staff.

KATE: Let's see it.

MAC: That's it there at the end. Those two pages torn in half.

KATE: **(KIKI and PENNY hand KATE their torn pages.)** Gotcha.

HAROLD: Hi, Mr. Claymore. Just the trashcans right now.

CLAYMORE: Whatever. **(moves to DOLORES' desk, picks up a trashcan and empties it into his large can)**

MAC: Good writing, don't you think? Crisp, sharp, to the point.

KATE: Right. **(puts the page on the desk and draws lines through it)**

MAC: Hey!

HAROLD: **(moves to KATE)** Is there something wrong?

KATE: Not at all. Like the man said - **(pulls up the pages and shows it to MAC)** Crisp, sharp -

MAC: **(after seeing the pages)** And to the point! **(looks at HAROLD)** She's good.

(HAROLD takes the pages and reads them.)

KATE: Glad for the endorsement. (*sees Mr. CLAYMORE*) Who's that?

HAROLD: Huh? (*looks up*) Oh, that's Mr. Claymore; he's our custodian.

KATE: He empties ALL the trash?

MAC: (*indicates PENNY and KIKI*) Usually after they read it.

KIKI & PENNY: HEY!

KATE: I mean, from all the offices, classrooms and like that?

HAROLD: I think so. (*hands the pages to KIKI and PENNY*) Coming up on time, folks! Girls? Positions!

KIKI: Right!

(SHE and PENNY sit on the edge of the desk, holding their notes. MEL lines up his shot. KATE sprints over to Mr. CLAYMORE.)

DOLORES: Why do I have a feeling a catastrophe is heading our way?

MEL: They say that certain dogs can tell when an earthquake is coming.

DOLORES: Thanks for the comparison. Mind if I scratch up your lens?

(KATE whispers to Mr. CLAYMORE, who shrugs and nods. During the next few speeches, KATE goes through the large can of trash, pulling pages out, uncrumpling them and reading them. The others are concentrating on the upcoming broadcast.)

HAROLD: (*looking at his watch*) Everybody ready? (*RAD and MEL nod. HAROLD holds up a finger.*) Four... three... two... and... (*points to PENNY and KIKI*)

KIKI: (*reads*) Wha'ss happenin'!

(HAROLD's eyes widen. The others lean in as a group, shocked at the new beginning. PENNY and KIKI share the microphone as they read.)

PENNY: (*also reads*) And who's it happenin' to?

KIKI: That's for us to know –

PENNY: And us to tell!

KIKI: I'm the Kikster.

PENNY: And I'm the Penster!

(DOLORES glares at HAROLD and nods in the direction of KATE.)

KIKI: Starting off with our own cafeteria. Big news. As of today they'll be serving NEW FOOD!

(HAROLD mouths "WHAT!" and starts to move to the girls, then DOLORES stops him. The others react in like fashion and continue to react through the broadcast.)

PENNY: Be the first in line and you won't be sorry.

KIKI: But wait, there's more!

PENNY: More news at Newton, so listen up! You having problems making grades?

KIKI: Want to get in good with Principal Rohatch?

PENNY: We know an easy A when we see one.

KIKI: And that's what we ALL need. And how do you do it?

PENNY & KIKI: ***(lean in to the camera)*** Adopt a cat!

PENNY: That's right. But you'll have to hurry.

KIKI: Supply is limited!

PENNY: Make a beeline to the principal's office and pick a pet.

KIKI: And we just KNOW Principal Rohatch will be SO grateful.

PENNY: Wouldn't you?

(KATE singles out a piece of paper from the trash and reads it quickly to herself.)

KIKI: And this scoop just in! The Newton News is growing in leaps and bounds!

PENNY: We just got in a new producer.

KIKI: Brand new and just arrived. Her name is Kate Blessingale!

PENNY: Let's get her up here! ***(KIKI and PENNY wave at KATE.)***

KIKI: Hey, Kate – come on down!

(KATE sprints past the others. As SHE passes HAROLD, HE makes a grab for her but misses. SHE moves in front of the camera.)

KATE: **(to the camera)** Thank you, girls. I hope I'll do as good a job as these fine broadcasters here. **(KIKI and PENNY giggle.)** And don't miss our next broadcast on the hour. **(holds up the paper)** And we'll tell you just WHAT the Principal's secretary REALLY does with her lunch hours!

HAROLD: WHAT?! **(clamps a hand over his mouth)**

KATE: And where Miss Abercrombie goes and with WHOM!

KIKI: **(not sure what's going on)** I know we'll all be waiting for that.

PENNY: **(equally unsure)** I know SOME of us will.

KATE: So tune in! **(The three girls pose as MEL raises her hand.)**

MEL: And... you're out!

DOLORES: Down and out!

KATE: **(sits on the desk)** Well, kiddies. How was that?

HAROLD: **(rushes up to her)** Are you out of you mind?!

(DOLORES, MAC and JOHNNY also rush up to KATE.)

KATE: What do you mean?

DOLORES: Everybody and their dog will be down on our necks!

MAC: You can't just make up stuff! **(to HAROLD)** Can we?

HAROLD: NO!

KATE: I thought it went well. **(turns to KIKI and PENNY)** Didn't you girls?

KIKI: It was, like, so COOL!

PENNY: Like, we were on FIRE!

DOLORES: Fire is the word, all right! The cafeteria is serving new food?!

MAC: Well, it's about time, don't you think? **(to KATE)** But saying old man Rohatch will give them an easy A?

HAROLD: I'll handle this, Mac.

KATE: **(takes a page from PENNY)** Oh, we never said he'd GIVE them an easy A. We said we know an easy A when we see one. Editorial comment.

HAROLD: WE never said ANYthing! It's all YOU! And if I know Principal Rohatch, he'll be walking through that door – **(points to the SR door just as PRINCIPAL ROHATCH enters)** right now.

(Suddenly the group begins a rush for the door.)

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MEL: Well, I'm late for class!

JOHNNY: Me, too!

RAD: I have to go dissect somethin'!

DOLORES: I have a book report!

MAC: I have to get to art class!

(Just as MAC reaches for the doorknob, PRINCIPAL ROHATCH puts a hand on his shoulder.)

ROHATCH: JUST a minute there, young man. You can be late for art class.

MAC: Okay, but today we're starting our studies into primitive use of textures and tints without implementing tools.

ROHATCH: You can tell Mr. Jardone I held you up. ***(turns to HAROLD)*** Now, Harold. What on earth... ***(stops and turns back to MAC)*** Wait. You're finger-painting?!

MAC: Well, the art department had a budget cutback.

KATE: ***(jumps off the desk)*** They DID?! Now THAT'S news!

PENNY: Are we in trouble, Mr. Rohatch?

ROHATCH: Ohhhh, yes. ***(moves to HAROLD)*** What on earth did you people do?

HAROLD: Sir, I was just about to give notes to my crew and, believe you me, I was just about to make that point most vehemently and –

ROHATCH: Can it, Meeks.

HAROLD: Yes, sir.

ROHATCH: Now I don't know what went on here since I left you but that last broadcast was one of the most outrageous things I have ever seen! And I meet with the PTA!

DOLORES: Sorry to hear that.

ROHATCH: I'll trade an A for a cat? The cafeteria is serving new food? WHO Miss Abercrombie is seeing? Now WHO'S responsible for this?

KATE: Who's to blame? We just -

HAROLD: ***(steps forward)*** I am, sir. ***(Wide-eyed, KATE turns to HAROLD.)***

MEL: What?

DOLORES: Harold!

MAC: Never heard of the guy.

RAD: **(to MAC)** Nice cover, dude. **(pats MAC on the shoulder)**

HAROLD: Mr. Rohatch, you authorized our group here and put me in charge. So anything that comes out of this office has to go through me. Now, isn't that right?

ROHATCH: Oh, so you're going to fall on the sword, eh? **(rubs his hands together)** Good. Makes it a lot easier. Now, first –

KATE: **(steps forward)** First, sir, what did you find wrong with the newscast?

ROHATCH: What did I find wrong? What DIDN'T I find wrong?

KATE: The cafeteria story? We didn't make up a word of it – it will be new food, won't it?

ROHATCH: **(getting confused)** Well, sure. No! YES! That is, I hope so.

KATE: You wouldn't want us to say it WASN'T new food, now would you?

ROHATCH: Well, no.

KATE: There you are.

ROHATCH: But what about that insinuation you made about Miss Abercrombie.

KATE: **(holds out the trash page)** All right here in black and white.

ROHATCH: **(takes the page)** Let me see that.

KATE: **(an aside to HAROLD)** Thanks, guy.

HAROLD: We'll talk.

ABERCROMBIE: **(enters through the SR door)** Mr. Rohatch?
(moves to PRINCIPAL ROHATCH)

ROHATCH: **(looks at her)** Oh, Miss Abercrombie. We were just talking about you.

HAROLD: It's nothing bad, sir, as you can see.

MEL: It's not? Sure SOUNDED like it was.

RAD: And wadn't ever' word crisp and clear, though?

ABERCROMBIE: See here, I don't like my personal life being dragged for all to hear!

KATE: All we were trying to do is call attention to your good deeds.

ABERCROMBIE: I... what?

KATE: **(takes the page from ROHATCH)** Here you're spending your lunch hours by helping out at the Cypress Retirement Center. Volunteering your time is well worth a mention on our little

broadcasts, don't you think? Oh, sure, we jazzed up the intro, but what better way to get MORE kids to tune in.

ABERCROMBIE: Oh. I didn't think of that.

KATE: And the more who hear about it, the more who are likely to ALSO want to help. You don't call attention to anything and you don't get anything.

ABERCROMBIE: Oh! You sort of entice them, then?

KATE: That's the general idea; we give them the hook. (***moves around the room as SHE speaks***) Think about it. Why do people watch the news?

DOLORES: I try not to – keeps me awake in class.

ROHATCH: You mean, keeps you awake at night.

DOLORES: Eeeyeah, that's what I mean.

KATE: They watch it because they want to be on top of things, to be let in on the here and now – but mostly to get the INSIDE. Find out what's going on behind closed doors, during sinister and secret meetings, who's really doing what to whom! (***points out***) And THEY want to be let in on it! And not just the goodie-goodie stuff, they want the dish, the dirt, the scam. THIS they can email and call their friends to impress them with!

HAROLD: (***aside to KATE***) You ended a sentence with a preposition.

KATE: So what's wrong if we juice the facts a bit, give 'em the old razzle-dazzle, and make it SOUND like they and ONLY they are getting the hard stuff. A spoonful of sugar may make the medicine go down, but a little arsenic on the oatmeal and, believe me, it's murder! And THAT'S what they want! (***nods once to make her point and folds her arms***)

(The others look at her, dumbfounded.)

DOLORES: I may cry!

ROHATCH: (***turns to his secretary***) What did you want, Miss Abercrombie?

ABERCROMBIE: I forgot. (***catches herself***) Oh, there's a line of students waiting to see you, sir.

ROHATCH: Ah HA! (***turns to HAROLD***) Now do you see what you've done?!

HAROLD: It'll never happen again. (**glares at KATE**) I give you my word.

ROHATCH: (**to MISS ABERCROMBIE**) Did they say what they wanted?

ABERCROMBIE: They all want a kitten.

ROHATCH: What?

ABERCROMBIE: Each and every one of them. (**leans in**) Sir, we don't have enough cats to go around.

ROHATCH: (**smiles broadly**) SAAAY, this may work out AFTER all. Harold?

HAROLD: I know – put a lid on her... I mean, IT!

ROHATCH: (**puts an arm around HAROLD**) No, on second thought, keep up the good work. (**looks at KATE**) I just KNEW you'd be a breath of fresh air.

MAC: And we're behind her one hundred percent! (**DOLORES, MEL, HAROLD and JOHNNY look at him**)

ABERCROMBIE: I better get back to the office. (**exits out SR door**)

ROHATCH: And hadn't you all better get to class?

DOLORES: Seems like this is where I came in. (**PRINCIPAL ROHATCH shoots her a look.**) And where I go out! (**grabs some books from her desk and races out the door**)

MEL: Wait for me! (**also races out the door, followed by JOHNNY**)

RAD: I think I have a class, like somewhere! (**exits**)

KIKI: (**moving to the door**) This is SO exciting!

PENNY: (**also moving to the door**) I know! I can't wait to see what's going to happen! (**KIKI and PENNY exit.**)

MAC: We may become a news team after all. (**moves to the door, stops and turns**) I'm going to have to dust off my tie! (**The others look at him curiously. HE smiles and exits.**)

ROHATCH: I'm a little curious about what is going to happen myself.

HAROLD: Well, wait and see.

ROHATCH: (**moves to the door**) I'll be watching. (**exits**)

HAROLD: (**turns to KATE**) Just what DO you have planned?

KATE: I –

HAROLD: Me being the one playing public relations and all.

KATE: Oh, don't worry. It'll be minor at best. Just a little here and a little there. You'll just LOVE it.

HAROLD: Uh huh... (*Leans in to her, eying her suspiciously. SHE smiles sheepishly.*)

(Lights black out.)

SCENE THREE

(It is a few days later. Now the pace of the room is rapid-fire. DOLORES is at her desk and typing furiously on her keyboard as KATE dictates. MEL now is holding the video camera in his hands and, looking through the view-finder, keeps swooping into the set as if trying to line up shots. MAC is sitting behind the set desk, holding his detective magazine and speaking into a microphone while RAD checks controls at his station.)

MAC: (*reads into the mike*) Then in a sudden burst of machine gun fire, an array of bullets sent Sergeant Flint diving under the table!

RAD: Louder, man.

KATE: (*dictating*) It is up to us, as members of the student body, to question such policies. Shouldn't the Student Council exercise more power in dealing with the administration?

DOLORES: Hang on!

MAC: (*louder*) Then, summoning all his strength, Flint kicks the table over and pulls his revolver.

KATE: And if they fail to meet the demand placed on them, shouldn't we take it up with the school board?!

MAC: With a sharpshooter's precision, Flint gunned down two of Mad Dog's henchmen!

KATE: We say it's time to take a stand! Now, read that back.

DOLORES: (*looks at her monitor*) "Shouldn't the Student Council exercise more power? We should summon all our strength and kick over the table. If they fail to meet the demand, we should take it up with the school board and gun down two of Mad Dog's henchmen."

MAC: (*jumps up*) HEY! (*rushes over to DOLORES' desk*)

RAD: (*yanking off his earphones*) YEOW!

KATE: That's not what I said!

DOLORES: That's what I heard!

MAC: (**waving his magazine**) You're stealing from my detective magazine now?

KATE: She didn't mean to.

MAC: Hey, I was going to compliment her.

(HAROLD enters through the US door.)

RAD: (**stands**) You want to send up a flare next time you plan on screamin' in my ears? Those horns are delicate, man!

DOLORES: (**same time as RAD**) How can I concentrate with everybody talking at once? I never said I was a stenographer, you know!

KATE: (**to MAC, same time as RAD**) We can't steal from a published article. Anything that's copywritten is verboten,

MAC: (**same time as RAD**) Now, THAT'S what I call flavor. Nothing like a little blood and guts to get their attention.

HAROLD: What is going on here?

KATE: Just getting the next broadcast up and running.

RAD: And blowing out every eardrum in a two-mile radius. It's a wonder I can balance at all.

MEL: Man, do I have some shots lined up. A little "camera vérité."

HAROLD: What? (**looks around**)

KATE: Dolores, scrap every other line.

DOLORES: (**looks at her monitor**) What? Where?

MEL: I do this right and it's almost 3-D!

HAROLD: Where's Penny and Kiki?

KATE: Let me in there! (**SHE moves behind the desk and, as DOLORES jumps up, sits in her chair. SHE begins typing.**)

RAD: I believe they're still in makeup.

HAROLD: MAKEUP?! We have makeup now?! And where's Johnny? I need him to pick up some sandwiches.

MAC: I sent him out on a tip at the football field.

HAROLD: A tip? What KIND of tip? What's HAPPENED to you people?!

(Just then KIKI and PENNY enter through the US door. They are wearing very chic clothes and heavy make-up. Following them is WANDA, waving a make-up brush.)

WANDA: Don't move so fast; your faces haven't dried yet!

RAD: **(sees KIKI and PENNY)** And the parade is just coming into view now, folks.

HAROLD: **(sees KIKI and PENNY)** Oh no!

PENNY: Just make sure our faces aren't smeared.

KIKI: Right. Especially when the photographer gets here.

HAROLD: Photographer?!

DOLORES: **(moves to HAROLD)** Haven't you heard? The girls are getting some eight-by-tens.

HAROLD: What?

DOLORES: What ELSE are they going to autograph?

(JOHNNY enters through the US door, carrying a large sign, which reads "THE NEWTON FLASH." HE moves to the set and puts it on the bulletin board over "The Newton News" – all during the next few speeches.)

JOHNNY: **(as HE enters)** Got that new logo sign, Kate.

KATE: Great! **(prints up her copy)** This oughta rattle some cages.

HAROLD: **(moves to the set)** Wait – what's with the new sign? The Newton Flash?

DOLORES: **(indicates KATE)** Ordered by Her Highness there.

KATE: **(rises)** We needed a new title to go with the new format.

(moves to HAROLD) So I thought of "The Newton Flash." **(claps her hands)** Flash – the latest news! **(claps her hands again)** Flash - first with the scoop! **(claps her hands again)** Flash!

HAROLD: **(grabs her hands)** Flash – we need to talk! **(everyone stops and looks at him)** What has gotten INTO you people?

RAD: I had a burrito for breakfast.

HAROLD: I don't mean that! Used to, we'd all work together. We'd all help each other. Now some of you people are getting glossies made! **(PENNY and KIKI look at each other and lower their heads.)** Others are trying to turn the broadcast into an art film! **(looks at MEL, who looks away and whistles idly)** Used to, we would take time to catch our breath. Now, this place is like a fire station. And all in the last week! I'm just glad to see Johnny hasn't changed.

MAC: Yeah, Johnny, I sent you to find out what all the hubbub was with the football team.

JOHNNY: Oh, I sent Blair down to check on that.

MAC: What?

JOHNNY: Yeah. She's my gopher.

HAROLD: Our gopher has a gopher?

KATE: We're doing more; we need more help. **(takes the pages from DOLORES' printer and places them on her desk)**

DOLORES: What do you call a gopher under a gopher?

MAC: Sub-gopher.

(KIKI and PENNY laugh.)

WANDA: Don't laugh! You'll crack your faces! **(KIKI and PENNY stop laughing suddenly.)**

HAROLD: Kate, now you've gone too far! We're dealing with people here, not numbers, not - **(thinks and turns to JOHNNY)** Wait, Blair who?

JOHNNY: Uhm... Blair... Meeks.

HAROLD: My little SISTER?! You HIRED my little SISTER?!

KATE: And she's working out just fine. And she's just FULL of tidbits around the school. Did you know -

HAROLD: NO! And I don't WANT to know. **(to JOHNNY)** Who told you you could hire Blair here?

JOHNNY: I didn't! **(points to KATE)** Your coproducer did.

HAROLD: **(back to KATE)** WHAT?!

KATE: Hey, I put the word out and she applied. And she's SUCH a dear!

HAROLD: I don't care if she's a moose. You don't hire people without telling me!

KATE: Now, Hal, you know how well we've been doing lately, really getting the school's attention.

PENNY: That's right, Harold. EVERYbody's talking about us.

KIKI: Yeah, and not giggling, for a change.

HAROLD: But is this what you want? Now, instead of doing the lunch menus, we rate the food. **(imitates a broadcast)** "We're having breaded veal cutlets today so get your shots early!" Instead of doing

the sports scores, we're handicapping the players. And instead of a monthly schedule we've got a lonely-hearts section!

MEL: I've already got two dates lined up.

HAROLD: See what I mean?

BLAIR: **(enters through the SR door, holding a notepad)** I got the scoop! **(moves to KATE)**

HAROLD: Blair!

BLAIR: Say, brother! **(holds up her notepad)** You'll love this – I made sure to get names, dates and so on.

KATE: Gimme! **(snatches the pad from BLAIR)**

HAROLD: Look, Blair, there's been some confusion around here –

DOLORES: SOME confusion? That's like calling World War Two a trip to Europe.

MAC: **(moves to KATE)** What's she got?

KATE: Hang on. **(continues reading BLAIR's notes)**

HAROLD: And the thing is I would rather you didn't work here.

BLAIR: What?! You can't DO that!

HAROLD: Hey, I'm the producer! It's my responsibility, and I say who gets hired!

BLAIR: Yeah? I'm gonna tell Mother!

HAROLD: **(leans on DOLORES' desk)** Oh, my head! **(puts a hand over his forehead)**

MEL: We have two minutes!

HAROLD: Okay, everybody out!

RAD: What?

MEL: You want us to leave?

WANDA: **(points to KIKI and PENNY)** If they move again I won't be responsible!

HAROLD: Let's go! Everyone, PLEASE! Just leave so I can speak with Kate.

(KATE looks up, expecting the worst.)

DOLORES: About time. **(opens the US door and holds it)**

MAC: Okay, but I want to hear all the football stuff when I get back.

KATE: **(waving the pad)** And it's a pip!

HAROLD: We'll see. Folks? (**HE points to the door. RAD exits, followed by MEL, MAC, DOLORES, KIKI, PENNY, JOHNNY, BLAIR and WANDA. HAROLD turns to KATE.**) Now!

KATE: I have a premonition the boom is about to be lowered.

HAROLD: Kate, this has GOT to stop!

KATE: (**moves closer to HAROLD**) I'll admit we've been sprinting at a pretty healthy clip here –

HAROLD: That's only part of it.

KATE: Oh? (**SHE is now leaning on the desk next to HAROLD**)

HAROLD: You fill everyone's heads with these grand ideas, you never check with me –

KATE: Uh huh. (**her face is very close to HAROLD's**)

HAROLD: And now you hire members of my own family!

KATE: You know you have the cutest ears?

HAROLD: And if that isn't bad enough... what?

KATE: Your ears. They're SO cute. (**runs a finger over his ear**)

HAROLD: Uhm... what was I saying?

KATE: (**casually**) And if that isn't bad enough.

HAROLD: Oh, yeah. And if that isn't bad enough, you keep inflaming almost everyone we interview and... (**turns and looks into her eyes**) and then end up talking your way... out.

KATE: I love your eyes. There is SUCH depth, such feeling in them.

HAROLD: You really think so? (**HE leans in to her. They almost kiss. Then HE wakes up.**) WAIT! (**moves quickly away from her**) You're doing it AGAIN!

KATE: (**innocently**) Doing what?

HAROLD: You... you... you... (**quickly changes his mind, rushes over to the US door and opens it**) Everybody back in here!

(RAD enters, followed by MEL, MAC, JOHNNY, DOLORES, KIKI, PENNY, BLAIR and WANDA. They each go to their stations. JOHNNY moves over to DOLORES' desk.)

RAD: (**as they enter**) Another troop movement.

MEL: We go on in one minute!

DOLORES: I hope you straightened everything out. (**glares at KATE**)

HAROLD: Yeah, well...

MAC & DOLORES: Uh HUH!

KATE: He read me the riot act, all right. Blair! (*motions BLAIR over*)

BLAIR: Right here, Chief! (*crosses to KATE*)

HAROLD: Let's just all get set up for the broadcast, shall we?

(KATE whispers in BLAIR's ear and then BLAIR whispers in KATE's ear.)

MEL: Ladies, shall we?

PENNY: Of course.

LOIS: (*enters through the SR door, carrying a camera*) Okay, who do I have to shoot?

HAROLD: What?

KIKI: She's our photographer!

PENNY: Over here!

LOIS: (*moves to the set*) Yes, and keep in mind I don't accept checks.

HAROLD: Oh, Jiminy Cricket!

PENNY: We want some eight by tens.

LOIS: And I want some tens and twenties. Let's all try to make each other happy, shall we?

KIKI: And get our best sides!

MAC: Then turn around.

KIKI & PENNY: Shut up!

(LOIS sets up her shot and begins taking photos.)

DOLORES: (*arms folded*) I should've stuck with the stamp club! At least, THERE when you had a bad taste in your mouth, it was from the stamps!

KATE: This is great! (*kisses BLAIR on her forehead then grabs the pages on DOLORES' desk*)

HAROLD: Great? What's great?

KATE: Tell you later, Hal. (*moves to KIKI and PENNY*) Read this. (*hands them the pages*) I gotta run! (*sprints over to the SR door*)

HAROLD: Wait! Where are you going now?

(KATE exits out the door without answering.)

MAC: (*to BLAIR*) What's that all about?

BLAIR: I don't know, but she sure was impressed. Did you see? She kissed me on the forehead.

DOLORES: Ah, she probably just needs the salt.

MAC: What did you tell her?

BLAIR: Just some dope on one of the football players.

MAC: Our girl's up to something big!

RAD: Coming up on time, you all!

(MEL raises a hand as KIKI and PENNY sit on the front of the desk on the set.)

MEL: Five, four, three, two and... ***(points at them)***

PENNY: ***(reading)*** It's us glamour girls again!

KIKI: ***(also reading)*** And lets get to the down and dirty!

PENNY: Our first item today – let's hang the Student Council!

HAROLD: ***(hand over his eyes)*** I'm going to be sick –

(Lights black out.)



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