

THE DEAD BEAT - PILOT

Written by

ALISON ZEIDMAN

alison.zeidman@gmail.com  
AGENTS: morton@icmpartners.com, TAriel@icmpartners.com  
MANAGEMENT: jgreenbaum@arlookgroup.com

COLD OPEN

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INT. THE DAILY POST - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A drab, modest meeting room. Around the table: HELEN "LEN" HOWARD (early 30s, slightly dorky, ambitious), BETTY WOODS (late 60s, miserable, Andrea Martin type), KENNETH JONES (early 30s, kind of robotic, Sam Richardson type) and KAT (late 20s, Awkwafina type).

LEN

So... Anyone have any fun weekend plans?

Kenneth looks down at his lap. Betty rolls her eyes. Kat texts on her phone.

LEN (CONT'D)

Cool. Me neither.

STANLEY CHARLESTON (late 70s, gruff) enters and sits at the head of the table.

STANLEY

OK, let's get started. Who's dead today?

Len raises her hand enthusiastically, excited to pitch.

LEN

Well--

BETTY

My ex-husband. My good-for-nothing kids. My con man of a divorce lawyer.

STANLEY

People who are ACTUALLY dead, Betty, not people you WISH were dead.

LEN

Apparently Pat of Pat's Cheesesteaks AND Geno of Geno's Cheesesteaks both died within HOURS of each other last night.

STANLEY

Huh. Like Adams and Jefferson, but with more heartburn.

LEN  
Yes. And racism.

KAT  
Sucks about Pat. Geno...meh.

BETTY  
What do you mean, "meh"?

KAT  
His steak is too dry.

BETTY  
What?!

KAT  
Sorry -- his steak WAS too dry.

BETTY  
You bite your tongue!

KAT  
Sure. Tastes better than Geno's  
steaks.

Kat pulls out her tongue and makes a show of biting down.

STANLEY  
Kat. Enough. Betty, write 'em both  
up. Kenneth -- who've you got?

KENNETH  
Shelly Longman, age 76. Longtime  
Jackson Elementary principal, and --  
here's where it gets REALLY  
interesting --

Len interrupts to finish for him.

LEN  
17-time Southeastern Pennsylvania  
Regional PINBALL CHAMPION!

Kat leans over, looking at a PHOTO on top of Len's NOTES.

KAT  
THAT'S where it gets interesting?  
How about what a friggin' SNACK she  
was?

Kat holds up PHOTO OF SHELLY LONGMAN. She's a super hot old  
lady (think Helen Mirren in a bikini hot). EVERYONE reacts,  
amazed, except Len, who's uncomfortable.

KENNETH

Oh my stars and garters.

KAT

Right?

LEN

Can we maybe not objectify our subjects?

KAT

Jealous much?

LEN

Pssh. Of some hot old dead lady?  
(clearly jealous)  
No.

STANLEY

Relax, Howard. So. Betty's on Pat and Geno. Kenneth's on Longman. Kat, dig up whatever you can find on any of 'em in the archives. And Howard, you --

Suddenly, Stanley grabs his CHEST like he's having a heart attack.

LEN

Stanley?

STANLEY

Huhhh!! Urk! Guhh!

LEN

Stanley? What's wrong?!

Stanley continues to thrash around.

LEN (CONT'D)

Oh my god -- Stanley?! Stanley, Can you hear me?!

Stanley COLLAPSES onto the table, DEAD. Len looks to the rest of the room, horrified.

LEN (CONT'D)

...Is this my assignment?!

**END OF COLD OPEN**

ACT ONE

INT. THE DAILY POST - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Len, Kat, Betty and Kenneth stand over Stanley's body, not sure what to do.

LEN

Oh my god. What do we do??  
Should we call 911?

BETTY

He's already dead.

KAT

We'll get maintenance in here to  
like, disinfect everything, right?  
Get rid of the general, like,  
stench of death?

KENNETH

It seems to me that the best course  
of action would be to--

An alarm on Kenneth's watch starts BEEPING.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

Whoops. That's all the time  
allotted for this morning's  
meeting. Better get to work.

He gathers his things to leave.

LEN

Seriously, Kenneth?

KENNETH

Yes. I schedule all of my  
activities in 15-minute increments  
to be sure I make all deadlines.

Kenneth whips open a PLANNER, starts reading.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

9:15am: Pitch meeting. 9:30am:  
Receive assignment. 9:45am:  
Research. 10am: Research. 10:15am:  
Research. 10:30am: Take break, look  
out window. 10:45am--

BETTY

How about when you go to the  
BATHROOM? Is that on the schedule?

KENNETH

Number ones, yes. But not twos or threes.

Kenneth leaves. Betty turns to Len and Kat.

LEN

Threes? Should we be worried about him?

(refocusing)

Never mind. What are we going to do about Stanley?

KAT

OK. First we need to get our story straight.

LEN

Right. Wait, what?

KAT

I say we all leave, trick some intern into discovering his body, and if anybody suspects anything, we say we thought he was napping.

LEN

Why would anyone "suspect" anything? We didn't do this.

KAT

(winking)

Exactly.

BETTY

I'm gonna get back to work. Just call Joe and tell him what happened.

She salutes Stanley's body.

BETTY (CONT'D)

So long, Stanley. Ya got out, ya lucky bastard.

Betty exits. Len turns to Kat.

LEN

Right. Joe will know what to do.

INT. THE DAILY POST - JOE'S OFFICE - DAY

A messy editor's office. MILES STEER (early 30s, Steven Yeun type) sits slumped in a chair across from JOE MCCAFFERTY (late 50s, John Slattery type), who's irate. A PLACARD on the desk identifies him as JOE MCCAFFERTY - EDITOR IN CHIEF.

JOE

I don't know what to do with you!

MILES

I know...

JOE

It's all over the news! The TV news!

Joe angrily grabs a remote and turns on his TV to a LOCAL NEWS STATION, where a CRIMINAL is tearfully speaking to reporters at a press conference. CHYRON: "BLEACHER CREATURE MURDERER CONFESSES FOLLOWING FALSE PHANATIC FRAMING."

CRIMINAL (V.O.)

I'm turning myself in today because I just couldn't stand by and watch this poor, BELOVED man be ripped apart by false accusations. He doesn't deserve that. This is a man who brings Philadelphia joy, and hope, and HOT DOGS--

PAN TO PHILLIE PHANATIC, holding a hot dog gun.

CRIMINAL (V.O.)

Look at that face. How could anyone think THAT is the face of a murderer?

Camera focuses on Phillie Phanatic's blank stare.

CRIMINAL (V.O.)

Shame on you, Philadelphia Daily Post! You're the REAL criminals!

Joe shuts the TV off and turns back to Miles.

JOE

Anything you want to say for yourself?

MILES

Well, I would argue that the MURDERER is still the REAL criminal.

JOE

Miles. You swore to me that you had the sources to back this up!

MILES

And I DID!  
(under his breath)  
...think I was going to get them.

JOE

You're off the crime beat. I'm reassigning you to obituaries until further notice. There's no better department to get back to good, solid, FACTUAL reporting.

MILES

WHAT? But all the WEIRDOS work in obits!

JOE

Hey! This paper's obituary page is ALMOST award-winning. And those weirdos are led by the best damn editor we've got.

INT. THE DAILY POST - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Len stares at Stanley, biting her nails. Kat walks up.

KAT

He still dead?

LEN

Yep. Pretty sure.

KAT

Anyone tell Joe yet?

LEN

I will. In a minute. I just feel bad leaving him in here all ALONE.

KAT

(shrugging)  
It's Stanley. He liked being alone.

LEN

Yeah, but here it just feels WRONG.

KAT

Maybe if we put him in his office?

LEN

Hmm. Yeah. Maybe. But how do we get him there?

Kat walks over and puts her hands on the back of Stanley's chair. She gives it a spin and gestures to Len.

KAT

Your chariot, m'lady.

INT. THE DAILY POST - KENNETH'S CUBICLE - DAY

Kenneth pops his head over the cubicle wall to talk to OLIVIA (early 30s, prim, Yvonne Orji type). She's wearing a huge engagement ring, and her cubicle is neat, tidy, and full of Pinterest-y collages of wedding dresses, wedding decor, etc.

KENNETH

Excuse me. Olivia?

She turns, sighing, slightly annoyed by the distraction.

OLIVIA

...Yes, Kenneth?

KENNETH

You're the wedding announcements editor.

OLIVIA

Yes, Kenneth.

KENNETH

So you know a lot about love.

OLIVIA

Your point, Kenneth?

KENNETH

Well, I just wanted to ask...How do you know if you're IN it?

Olivia perks up, actually intrigued by this.

OLIVIA

In what? In LOVE?

KENNETH

Yes.

OLIVIA

Oh my god, Kenneth -- are YOU in love with someone??

KENNETH

I think so. I never realized it before, but I think she might be... the one.

OLIVIA

Aw!

KENNETH

The only problem is, I can never tell her.

OLIVIA

What? No, you've GOT to! Kenneth, this is your SOULMATE! You have to FIGHT for her! I'll help you. Tell me all about her.

KENNETH

Well, she's beautiful. Brilliant. Has the top score 15 years running on "Revenge From Mars."

Kat appears.

KAT

And she died two days ago.

OLIVIA

What?

KENNETH

Oh, yes, that's true.

Kat hands Kenneth a FOLDER of news clippings.

KAT

Here's what I could find on her in the archives.

KENNETH

Thank you.

Kat walks away. Olivia looks stunned. Kenneth is still looking to her for advice.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

So. What should I do?

INT. THE DAILY POST - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Betty is at the counter getting coffee. Kat enters.

KAT

Hey B-money. I found some stuff on Pat's and Geno's for you.

She hands Betty a SINGLE print-out. Betty scans it.

BETTY

This is just some blog post ranking Philly's best cheesesteak spots.

KAT

Huh. Yeah, I guess it is. And look at that, Pat's is at the top, and Geno's isn't even ON it.

Betty, annoyed, crumples up the print-out and throws it in Kat's face.

INT. THE DAILY POST - ELEVATOR - DAY

Miles is in the elevator with Joe, pleading.

MILES

Joe, please. Don't make me do this. I'll go ANYWHERE else. Sports! Business! HOROSCOPES! ANYWHERE but obits!

JOE

Stop complaining. This'll be good for you.

MILES

But nothing exciting EVER happens down there!

INT. THE DAILY POST - OBITS BULLPEN - DAY

Elevator door dings open. Len is standing right in front of it, pushing STANLEY'S BODY in a rolling chair.

LEN

Joe! Hi! So...Stanley's DEAD!

Joe turns to Miles.

JOE

This exciting enough for you?

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWO

INT. THE DAILY POST - OBITS BULLPEN - DAY

Joe, Miles, Len, Kat, Betty and Kenneth watch as CORONERS wheel Stanley's body out on a gurney.

JOE

Poor Stanley. Taken from us far too soon.

KAT

I mean, he WAS like, SUPER old.

Len shoots Kat a "dude be quiet" look. Joe turns to address the group.

JOE

Well everyone, this is unfortunate timing, but, I have a new reporter to introduce to the obits team. This is Miles Steer, formerly of the major crimes beat. He'll be joining you all so he can get a little REFRESHER on how to report a story.

MILES

Hi.

JOE

Miles, this is Betty Woods, our most senior staff writer. I want you shadowing her for the day -- you can learn a lot from her.

Betty picks her teeth with a paper clip.

BETTY

Don't fall in love with me, kid.

JOE

This is Kenneth Jones, young hotshot.

Kenneth waves, dorkily.

KENNETH

Hello!

JOE

This is Kat -- huh. I'm sorry, Kat, I just realized I don't know your last name.

KAT

Don't have one.

JOE

You don't HAVE one?

KAT

(shrugs it off)  
Never needed it.

JOE

...OK. Well, Kat here, no last name, manages the paper's archives, and works closely with the obit team.

KAT

'Sup.

JOE

And finally, this is Helen Howard. She's basically the deputy editor down here, in every sense except for title and salary.

Len reaches out to shake Miles' hand.

LEN

(proudly)  
That's right. You can call me Len. Or Howard. Or deputy ed--

JOE

OK, I know this is going to be a difficult day, but we have a paper to get out, and Stanley wouldn't have wanted to get in the way of that. So. Let's all just get back to work.

Joe turns to leave. Len follows him.

LEN

Um, Joe?

JOE

What do you want, Howard?

LEN

Well, the thing is, I can't just get back to work. Stanley was about to give me my assignment for the day, but then he, you know...

JOE

Died.

LEN

Right. So I was thinking, since there's nothing else on my plate right now, and Stanley was kind of my mentor, and role model, and father figure...

JOE

You want to write his obit.

LEN

Yes please more than anything in the world.

JOE

Fine. Go ahead and take a crack at it.

Joe exits. Len celebrates to herself.

LEN

HELL yeah! Howard in the HOUSE!

JOE (O.S.)

Remember that you're getting this assignment because the man is DEAD, Howard.

LEN

(composing herself)  
Right. Of course.

INT. THE DAILY POST - BETTY'S CUBICLE - DAY

A sad cubicle with a desk covered in ceramic dolls/figures. Miles sits behind Betty, bored. Betty clicks around on her computer, slowly, pausing every once in awhile to type, "hunt and peck" style.

MILES

So, do you need me to--

BETTY

No. Shush it. Working.

Miles leans back in his chair, frustrated. He tries again.

MILES

...What are you working on?

BETTY

Confirming the cause of death.

Miles perks up as Betty picks up her DESK PHONE and dials.

MILES

Oh, AWESOME. So who do we interview first? The cops at the scene? The coroner? Are there any sketchy extended family members or ex-wives you need me to track dow--

BETTY

(on her call)

Hello, this is Betty Woods calling from The Philadelphia Daily Post. I'm very sorry for your loss. We'd like to write an obituary for your husband.

(a beat)

Of course. And can you confirm his cause of death?

Listening, she jots down notes on a notepad.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Great. Thank you. I'll be in touch if we need anything else.

Betty hangs up.

BETTY (CONT'D)

And that's lunch.

MILES

Wait. That's it? ONE phone call?

BETTY

Not always. Sometimes they don't pick up on the first try, and I have to call back later.

MILES

But -- how do you know they're even telling the TRUTH? I mean, c'mon, BOTH owners of Philly's two most FAMOUS cheesesteak spots die within hours of each other, and you don't suspect foul play??

Betty looks around, then leans close to Miles, like she's about to get real with him.

BETTY  
...Honestly?

Miles' eyes widen in anticipation.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
No.

INT. THE DAILY POST - BREAK ROOM - DAY

A dirty, dingy kitchenette. Miles stands at the counter, next to the microwave, holding his breath. Len enters to grab coffee, giving him a look. The microwave timer goes off.

MILES  
(gasping out a breath)  
Puh!

LEN  
What are you doing?

MILES  
(recovering)  
Seeing if I can hold my breath as long as every setting on the microwave. That was potato.

LEN  
Uh, why?

MILES  
No reason. You wanna try popcorn?

LEN  
Aren't you supposed to be shadowing Betty?

MILES  
Look, no offense, but this job is...soul-crushingly boring. So I'm just gonna kill time until Joe forgets why he's mad at me and I can go back to covering REAL news.

LEN  
Wow. OK. Well uh, NO OFFENSE, but anytime someone starts a sentence with "no offense," they usually end it by saying something stupid and offensive.

MILES

Come on, admit it -- this is a crap assignment! What'd you do to get sent down here?

LEN

Wrote my first obit for my cat at age 5, wrote the death notices for three out of four of my grandparents, two uncles, one brother, and both parents, begged Stanley for an unpaid internship here when I was in college, talked my way into a staff writing job after graduating, and consistently turned out impeccable work ever since.

MILES

Oh. I didn't realize this was, like, a career path for some people.

LEN

Of course it is. Obituaries is the most prestigious section of this paper.

MILES

(sarcastically)

Right. I've heard how you're ALMOST award-winning.

LEN

(bitter, angry)

We only lost because the prize committee is like, OBSESSED with the New York Times. It's all politics!

(composing herself)

Look. I know everyone thinks obit writers are like, morbid weirdos or whatever. But we're not just reporting deaths. We're recording HISTORY. It's very rewarding.

Kat enters, carrying a stack of DEATH NOTICE INVOICES. She drops them on the counter in front of Len.

KAT

Paid death notice invoices that need processing. They came to me by mistake.

Kat exits.

LEN

OK, maybe not THIS part of it so much. But it CAN be really exciting! Sometimes someone dies right at the end of the day, and you're racing to deadline. Sometimes someone famous dies completely unexpectedly, and we don't have an advance drafted for them. Sometimes we have to issue CORRECTIONS. You'll see. Things can get prrrrretty crazy around here.

MILES

Like, your boss could die in the middle of a workday.

LEN

EXACTLY!

(catching herself)

Wait, no, that's actually very sad and rare.

INT. THE DAILY POST - OLIVIA'S CUBICLE - DAY

Kenneth hovers around Olivia's cubicle, loudly, repeatedly sighing until she can't ignore him.

OLIVIA

Yes, Kenneth?

KENNETH

I have terrible news.

OLIVIA

About Stanley? I just heard. Oh, gosh, it's just awful.

KENNETH

Yes. But it's even worse than that. It turns out Shelly Longman was MARRIED.

He hands Olivia a clipping of a marriage announcement.

OLIVIA

Oh, Kenneth. I'm so sorry. Does it really matter, though?...

KENNETH

This is it. This is what a broken heart feels like. Like getting punched in the butt.

OLIVIA

Welllll, I think the best thing for a broken heart, in this case, is to just finish writing her obituary. And then, you can move on. Maybe find someone who's more, you know. Alive.

Kenneth stares at the photo in the marriage announcement.

KENNETH

I have to call him.

OLIVIA

Who?

KENNETH

Her husband.

OLIVIA

Oh, I don't think that's a good idea.

Kenneth stands up, resolute.

KENNETH

I don't have a choice. It's part of the job.

OLIVIA

Oh, well, if it's strictly professional.

KENNETH

And once I've done that part of my job, I'm going to tell him I'm in LOVE with his wife!

INT. THE DAILY POST - LEN'S CUBICLE - DAY

A neat, organized cubicle with colorful post-it notes, paper clips, etc. Len sits working. Miles walks up.

MILES

OK. Show me.

LEN

What?

MILES

Show me how this job can be exciting. Let me shadow you while you work on Stanley's obit.

LEN

Sorry. Can't.

MILES

Please? I can't keep shadowing Betty. It's like watching paint dry if the paint also hated you and smelled like old cheese.

LEN

No, I mean I can't because I'm already done.

She hands him a PRINT-OUT. Miles reads.

MILES

Hmm...

LEN

What?

MILES

Isn't this kind of...short?

LEN

I like to think of it as, "an obituary of few words for a man of few words."

MILES

OK. But isn't it kind of...only focused on his job? I mean, the guy must've had friends, or a family or...SOMETHING outside of this place.

LEN

You didn't know Stanley.

MILES

Did YOU?

LEN

Uh, we worked together PRETTY closely. Trust me -- this is Stanley's obituary.

MILES

Oh, OK. So that's obit reporting, huh? You get the cause of death, write a few paragraphs based on first-hand knowledge and a couple Google searches, and that's it?

LEN

(somewhat offended)  
No. There's more to it than that.

MILES

Then prove it. Let's report it out.

He holds the print-out out to her, like a challenge. Len snatches it back and grabs her jacket.

LEN

Fine. But I doubt we'll find anything else.

MILES

We'll see. Betty! I'm heading out!  
Hold my calls!

BETTY (O.S.)

Whatever.

INT. LITTLE PETE'S DINER - DAY

A dingy, old school diner. Len and Miles enter. Len looks around, grossed out.

LEN

I can't believe Stanley ate lunch here every day. Even the AIR feels sticky.

Miles takes a seat at the counter.

MILES

Yeah, this place is GREAT.

LEN

Wait -- we're not STAYING. Stanley always got lunch to go. I'm pretty sure the only reason he came here was because it's so close to the office.

MILES

Then why are we here?

LEN

I don't know. For color, I guess.  
To set the tone of who he was: a  
devoted, hard-working editor,  
hardly ever away from his desk.

MILES

C'mon -- the guy came here EVERY  
day. There had to be more to it  
than just proximity.

Len sits down next to him, reluctantly. DINER WAITRESS (60s,  
smoker's voice) approaches them, barely interested.

DINER WAITRESS

What can I get yas?

MILES

I'll have three eggs, scrambled,  
side of brisket hash, toast, onion  
rings, and a chocolate shake.

DINER WAITRESS

That all?

MILES

Isn't that enough?

LEN

Just coffee for me. Thanks.

DINER WAITRESS

(mocking)  
Ooooh, city gal, huh?

LEN

(confused)  
We're all in a city right now.

MILES

Excuse my dining partner's limited  
palate. What's your name?

Diner Waitress COUGHS a horrible, raggedy smokers' cough.

MILES (CONT'D)

Uh, lovely. That was my mother's  
name. Listen, can you tell us  
anything about a customer who comes  
in here all the time? Stanley  
Charleston?

Diner Waitress perks up.

DINER WAITRESS  
You're friends of Stanley's?

LEN  
Colleagues. Yes.

MILES  
So you know him?

DINER WAITRESS  
OH, yeah! He comes in here every day for a turkey club and talks my ear off. Ya can't shut the guy up!

LEN  
Stanley? Really? Like, a full conversation? With full SENTENCES?

DINER WAITRESS  
Yeah, of course. Stanley talks to EVERYBODY. Ain't that right boys?

She turns back to the KITCHEN. LINE COOKS call out.

LINE COOKS  
Oh, yeah! / What a guy! / Stanley's the best!

LEN  
Well -- what does he talk about?

DINER WAITRESS  
Oh, y'know, the usual stuff. His hopes, his dreams, his passions, his fears, his childhood, intimate details of his marriage...

MILES  
Right. Normal small talk.

DINER WAITRESS  
Sometimes on the weekends he comes by with his kids...

LEN  
Stanley has KIDS?

DINER WAITRESS  
Or his grandkids....

LEN  
Stanley has KIDS who have kids?!

DINER WAITRESS

Oh, yeah. You've never met his family?

LEN

Well -- our working relationship was very professional --

DINER WAITRESS

Sounds like you hardly even know the guy.

LEN

(defensive, jealous)

Well if you think you know him so well how come you don't know that he's DEAD?!

Diner Waitress and Line Cooks are shocked.

LEN (CONT'D)

Um. I mean...

MILES

On second thought, I think we'll take that order to go.

INT. THE DAILY POST - BETTY'S CUBICLE

Betty walks up to her workspace, carrying a cup of coffee. She finds a CHEESESTEAK sitting on her desk, laid out over a GENO'S CHEESESTEAKS wrapper. A POST-IT NOTE attached to it reads: "Peace Offering? xoxo Kat."

BETTY

Aw...

Betty picks it up and takes a bite. It's delicious.

BETTY (CONT'D)

(mouth full)

Oh that's so good.

Suddenly, Kat is right behind her.

KAT

SURPRISE, BITCH! It's from Pat's!

Betty does a SPIT TAKE.

EXT. STANLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Len and Miles walk up the front steps of a modest South Philly row home.

MILES

You're SURE this is how you want to meet Stanley's wife for the first time?

LEN

Well, obviously I didn't know him as well as I thought I did, so, I guess I have to.

MILES

It just seems a LITTLE soon to be prodding her with interview questions.

LEN

He worked in obits for 30 years. I'm sure she gets it.

She rings the doorbell. MRS. CHARLESTON answers it. She looks like she's been crying.

MRS. CHARLESTON

Hello?

LEN

Hi, Mrs. Charleston, I'm Len Howard, from The Daily Post. I'm writing the obituary on your husband.

MRS. CHARLESTON

Of course. We're so grateful that you're honoring Stanley.

Len throws Miles a quick "told ya so" look.

MRS. CHARLESTON (CONT'D)

Come on in and meet everyone.

LEN

Everyone?

As they enter the house, Len and Miles are shocked to find:

INT. STANLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A bright, sunny living room, CRAMMED WITH DISTRAUGHT RELATIVES young and old.

LEN

Oh, wow. Everyone.

Mrs. Charleston points around, introducing everyone.

MRS. CHARLESTON

These are our children, Denny, Lenny, Jenny, Kenny, Benny and Penny. Their spouses, Mandy, Sandy, Andy, Tandy, Candy, and Randy Our grand-kids Ann, Cheyenne, Dan, Fran, Jan, Luann, Roseann, and Stan. And our great-grand-baby, Tevin.

TEVIN (5 years old) steps forward, crying.

THEO

It's supposed to be my birthday!

He sniffles and throws himself into Mrs. Charleston's arms. She comforts him.

LEN

Oh, boy. You know, we can probably just do this later over the phone...

MRS. CHARLESTON

No, it's fine. We're all already here. What do you need to know?

LEN

Well -- we're just trying to get a sense of, uh, you know...

MILES

What made Stanley, STANLEY.

The room is silent as people think. Then:

KENNY

My father was a SAINT.

LEN

Can you elaborate?

KENNY

A SAINT!

LEN

Um. OK. But how, specifically?

PENNY

Well, I remember the time when he called us from the Olympics --

MILES

Oh, was he covering it for the paper?

PENNY

No. Competing.

Mrs. Charleston points out PHOTOS on a FAMILY PHOTO WALL of a young Stanley wearing Olympic gear and medals.

MRS. CHARLESTON

He medaled in judo AND water polo that year.

MILES

Wow. I had no idea Stanley was such an athlete.

LEN

Me neither.

KENNY

More than just an ATHLETE! He was a SAINT!

LEN

Right. Already got that one.

MRS. CHARLESTON

He was also quite the artist.

MILES

Oh, really? What kind of art?

MRS. CHARLESTON

Street paintings, mostly. What was that funny name he used to call himself?

JENNY

Banksy.

MILES

Oh my god. Is THIS a Banksy?

Miles points to a framed CROSS-STITCHED HEART.

MRS. CHARLESTON  
Oh, no. That's a Patti.

PENNY  
Patti LaBelle. Dad's first wife.

DENNY  
He was also the original Hall in  
Hall & Oates.

MILES  
I LOVE Hall & Oates!

MRS. CHARLESTON  
That was before he found his true  
calling, of course.

LEN  
Right. The paper.

Everyone looks at Len, confused.

MRS. CHARLESTON  
The what?

LEN  
The newspaper. Where he worked. For  
30 years. As editor of the  
country's second most prestigious  
obituaries section.

MRS. CHARLESTON  
Oh, right. That was really more of  
a hobby for him.

LEN  
Oh, COME ON!

**END OF ACT TWO**

ACT THREE

INT. PEN & PENCIL CLUB - DAY

A small, dark journalists-only bar. The walls are decorated with framed newspaper headlines, articles, etc. Len and Miles are pretty much the only people in there. They get their drinks. Miles raises his glass.

MILES

Well that was a day. To Stanley!

Len clinks her glass against his, reluctantly.

LEN

To Stanley.

MILES

Who I've gotta say, it turns out, was KIND of a badass. And you thought we wouldn't find anything!

LEN

Yup. You didn't even know him, and you were right. I worked with him for eight years, and I was wrong.

She takes a big swig of her drink.

MILES

Aw, c'mon, I'm just teasing you. So he kept his work life separate from his personal life -- that's not a reflection on YOU.

LEN

Maybe not when he was ALIVE. But I was supposed to be writing his OBITUARY, and I COMPLETELY missed all that stuff. What else have I missed over the years? Maybe Roger Wolfe, age 82, violinist, ALSO won a Nobel Prize I didn't know about. Maybe Mimi Jones, age 71, former Rockette, ALSO cured some rare form of cancer. Maybe Sandra Smith, age 103, beloved grandmother, was also BATMAN.

MILES

You're being too hard on yourself.

Len sighs.

LEN  
It's not just that.

MILES  
Well, then what is it?

LEN  
You ever think about what your  
obituary will say?

MILES  
Um, no. Morbid.

LEN  
I do. All the time. And I thought  
it would say pretty much exactly  
what I wrote for Stanley. But now  
I'm realizing how...SAD that is. I  
don't have a LIFE. I just have this  
JOB.

Miles doesn't know what to say. Len shrugs it off.

LEN (CONT'D)  
Anyway. It doesn't matter. I need  
to get back to the office and start  
rewriting.

MILES  
Len, wait...

Len leaves. Miles watches, sadly. Then, realizing, kind of  
annoyed:

MILES (CONT'D)  
I guess I'LL be paying our tab.

INT. THE DAILY POST - KENNETH'S DESK - NIGHT

Kenneth stares at his phone, psyching himself up to make the  
call. He takes a deep breath, then dials.

KENNETH  
Hello. This is Kenneth Jones from  
The Philadelphia Daily Post. We'd  
like to write an obituary for Mrs.  
Shelly Longman, and I was hoping to  
speak with her...  
(pained)  
Husband.  
(a beat)  
Oh. He's also deceased?  
(a beat)  
(MORE)

KENNETH (CONT'D)

And they were DIVORCED?  
(barely containing his  
excitement)

Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that!  
(a beat)

And whom am I speaking with now?  
(a beat)

Their DAUGHTER! Wonderful! Tell me,  
did you share your mother's eyes? I  
mean -- interest in pinball?

(a beat)

Lovely. And now, just to confirm  
some details for the piece: You are  
a single, adult woman?

(a beat)

Great. And one more question: do  
you like Italian food?

INT. THE DAILY POST - LEN'S DESK - NIGHT

Len sits in front of her computer, scrolling through her new  
obit draft. It's several pages long. She sighs, frustrated.  
Kat appears behind her.

KAT

Yo what up, you writing Harry  
Potter fan fic?

LEN

I'm trying to finish my obituary  
for Stanley.

KAT

Oh, well this'll help. I found a  
whole BUNCH more stuff on him in  
the archives.

Kat drops a HUGE FILE FOLDER down on Len's desk.

KAT (CONT'D)

Did you know Stanley was Sylvester  
Stallone's inspiration for ROCKY?

Len GROANS, bangs her head on her desk.

INT. THE DAILY POST - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Olivia is on her way out. Kenneth catches the elevator door  
as it's closing, and steps in. He's in a great mood.

OLIVIA

Good day?

KENNETH

Yup! I have a date with Shelly Longman's daughter this Thursday.

OLIVIA

Wait, what? How did you --  
(catching herself)  
You know what? Never mind. I'm happy for you, Kenneth.

KENNETH

Thank you.

OLIVIA

So. Where are you taking her?

KENNETH

She invited me to attend her mother's funeral.

OLIVIA

Oh, Kenneth...

KENNETH

What kind of floral arrangement says, "I'm sorry for your loss," and also, "I love you?"

Olivia sighs. Then, reluctantly:

OLIVIA

Pink roses, lilies, and go easy on the baby's breath.

INT. THE DAILY POST - LEN'S DESK - NIGHT

The office is nearly empty. Most of the lights are turned off, except at Len's desk. She's reading on her computer, sadly. Miles walks up, holding a PRINT-OUT.

MILES

You still working?

LEN

Yup. Finished the obit, but I don't have any plans, so might as well just keep working 'til I die.

MILES

Well, before you do that -- can you take a look at something for me?

He hands her the print-out. Len reads aloud.

LEN

"Helen 'Len' Howard, obituaries editor of The Philadelphia Daily Post, died after fatally losing a microwave timer breath-holding contest to renowned true crime writer Miles Steer."

(to Miles, sarcastic)

Nice.

(reading)

"While she wrote passionately about death, winning several Pulitzer Prizes for her obituary writing, Howard was undoubtedly even more passionate about living. She traveled extensively, practiced an absurd amount of hobbies, was part of Taylor Swift's hashtag 'squad,'" led the Philadelphia Eagles to the Super Bowl every year from 2022-2045, successfully negotiated an Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty, and had over 200 grandchildren."

(to Miles)

Yikes.

(reading)

"In her time at The Post, she will be remembered as an invaluable colleague, leader, friend...and Batman."

Len looks at Miles, obviously touched. He looks back sheepishly.

MILES

Obviously the Super Bowl championships are a stretch, but, that's not on you. Our offense is really weak this season. Anyway, you get the idea, it's not too late to live your best life, blah blah blah.

LEN

Thanks, Miles.

MILES

So...you still gonna hang out here?

Len gets up, gathering her jacket and things to leave. They head towards the elevator.

LEN

You know what? No. You're right. If I want a life that's MORE than just this job, there's no reason I can't have that. The only person standing in my way is --

ELEVATOR DOOR dings open. Joe's inside.

JOE

Oh hey, Howard, I was just coming to find you. Nice job on Stanley's obit. I was thinking, would you have any interest in stepping in as edit--?

LEN

Yes please more than anything in the world!

**END OF ACT THREE**

**TAG**

INT. THE DAILY POST - BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

Miles presses the potato button on the microwave and holds his breath. Betty stops in as she's leaving for the night.

BETTY

Hey, kid -- you were right. The police are suspecting foul play at Pat's and Geno's.

Miles GASPS out a breath.

MILES

I KNEW it!

BETTY

Apparently John from John's Roast Pork is a person of interest.

REVEAL: Kat is standing in front of the open fridge, eating from a LUNCH BAG labeled STANLEY.

KAT

(mouth full)

Aw, man! But John's is the BEST!

BETTY

JOHN IS A MURDERER AND NOBODY'S BETTER THAN GENO!

**END OF EPISODE**