

RIP AND READ

By

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**Characters:**

Neil-----male, about twenty  
Harvey-----male, forties  
Mitch-----male, late thirties  
Gordon-----male, forties  
Maureen-----female, about thirty  
Alison-----female, early twenties

Additional voices: Mayvonne Tulle (female, forties);  
Roberta (female, forties); a baseball announcer (male,  
forties)

**Locations:**

-The newsroom of WCFR-FM on the northwest side of Chicago  
-A booth at the Taste of Chicago summer festival

**Time:**

Summer, 1987

## ACT I/SCENE 1

*Early June, 1987. Mid-morning.*

*The last half-minute of a news broadcast. In darkness, we hear a crowd chanting "We Want Gorbachev!"*

*Chanting fades and is replaced by a recording of David Bowie performing "Time Will Crawl."*

*Music fades.*

*An AP wire service machine spits out paper.*

*Lights up.*

*In the newsroom of WCFR, Neil stands over the AP machine, waiting for it to stop printing.*

*From overhead speakers, WCFR's live broadcast is heard.*

HARVEY (o.s.)

A crowd of sixty-thousand gathered last night in front of the Reichstag in West Berlin to hear David Bowie, Genesis, and The Eurythmics perform. While, on the other side of the wall, in East Berlin, riot police clashed with music fans and demonstrators.

*The AP machine stops. Neil rips the print-out, takes it to the intern's desk.*

HARVEY (cont'd., v.o.)

Early news from next year's presidential campaign: Six months before New Hampshire, Delaware Senator Joseph Biden will throw his hat into the ring; I'll have tape at noon.

*Neil sits at intern's desk. Above it, the black-and-white TV is tuned to "The*

*Lee Phillip Show," a daytime news-talk show.*

HARVEY (cont'd., o.s.)

Sports from yesterday: Cubs up, Sox down.

*Neil inserts a sheet of light-blue paper into the typewriter, begins typing.*

HARVEY (cont'd., o.s.)

Today, the Sox are in Anaheim and the North Siders will battle the Pirates at home. Should be seventy and sunny at game-time.

GORDON (o.s.)

Thanks, Harve. We'll be hearing more of that good stuff from Harvey at noon.

*Newsroom phone rings.*

GORDON (cont'd., o.s.)

But right now, we'll dig a little deeper into this fine new Replacements LP we've been featuring all week. Gonna drive you out with "Skyway" on 93.4, Chicago's First-Class Rock 'n' Roll.

*The Replacements' "Skyway" plays.*

*Music fades, but remains vaguely audible as Neil picks up the phone.*

*HARVEY enters quickly, stressed out, eating an egg-and-sausage breakfast sandwich, still in its wrapper. Under an arm, he holds copies of today's Tribune, Sun-Times, USA Today, and New York Times.*

NEIL

(Into phone)

Newsroom.

*Harvey puts down his newspapers, eats while observing Neil's phone manners.*

NEIL (Cont'd.)

*(Into phone)*

She's downtown at the County Building.

*Neil picks up message pad and pen,  
scribbles.*

NEIL (Cont'd.)

*(Into phone)*

Is that T-O-O-L-E? U-L-L? Got it. 7:00? I'll make sure she gets the message.

*Neil hangs up, takes phone message,  
places it on Maureen's desk, then  
returns to intern's desk, continues  
typing.*

HARVEY

We're getting real sloppy with our salutations around here, Neil.

*Neil stops typing, looks up at Harvey  
with nervousness and irritation ("Why's  
he ragging on me this time?")*

HARVEY (cont'd.)

*(Imitating Neil's phone manner)*

"Newsroom."

NEIL

So?

HARVEY

The salutation on the memo I gave you last week.

*(a pause)*

You didn't read it.

*Neil stares at Harvey dumbly.*

HARVEY (Cont'd.)

"93.4 FM, this is the newsroom, Harvey Belkoff speaking."

NEIL

Maureen doesn't answer like that.

HARVEY

Maureen doesn't follow a lot of rules anymore, but she did when she interned here. Can I hear you do it?

*Neil looks at Harvey, puzzled.*

HARVEY (Cont'd.)

The phone.

*Harvey mimes picking up a phone.*

HARVEY (Cont'd.)

*(prompting)*

"93.4 FM..."

NEIL

*(grudgingly picking up phone)*

"93.4 FM, this is the newsroom, Neil Haidler speaking."

HARVEY

Better. Who was it?

*NEIL gives a "huh?" look.*

HARVEY (Cont'd.)

The call for Maureen.

NEIL

Some woman. Mayvonne Tulle. Something about a community meeting. Calumet City.

HARVEY

What kind of community meeting?

*(A pause)*

You didn't ask.

*No response. HARVEY shakes his head, eats his sandwich.*

HARVEY (Cont'd.)

There goes another story.

NEIL

She was calling for Maureen.

HARVEY

Maureen's not here. News doesn't wait for people to return calls on their own time.

*(a pause)*

Pop quiz: To whom do you owe allegiance?

NEIL

I'm sorry?

HARVEY

Someone calls in with a story, asks for me or Mitch or Maureen, and we're not here; where's your allegiance?

NEIL

I don't know the right answer.

HARVEY

Not a seminar, Neil. Instinct—where's your allegiance?

NEIL

My instinct says it's to you or Maureen, but I think what you're trying to get me to say is that it should be to myself.

HARVEY

Wrong both ways. Your allegiance is to the story—whatever gets the story out no matter who can do it. Everyone's got a story; it's up you to get it. Nothing to do with ego.

*(Takes a bite of sandwich)*

I'm not here to bust balls, Neil, but we're losing ground. Everyone's so focused on the overall that we're missing the day-to-day. I'm not here to make comparisons, but the intern we had last summer? Alison Craigie? Have Maureen or Mitch mentioned Alison?

*NEIL nods.*

NEIL

Mitch did, yeah.

HARVEY

Crackerjack. They tell you where she is now?

*Neil nods.*

HARVEY (Cont'd.)

City Hall beat. 'BBM. Next thing you know, they'll give her a shot on the TV side. Only two crackerjack interns I've ever had—one's Alison; the other was Maureen. Now, I know you go to a good school, better than the one I went to; I know your father has a bigger house than the one I grew up in; I know you put together a good sentence and you do it

fast, but that doesn't mean anything now; now, we're starting at square one...

*The phone rings.*

HARVEY (Cont'd.)

...and that goes for reporting, for comportment, and for professionalism, which means everything from how you answer the phones to how you dress—blazers on assignment; shirtsleeves on Diversey. You come out of here at the end of the summer, you'll say, "That Harvey was a jerk, but you know what? I learned something; he busted my balls, but now I know why."

*Mitch, preoccupied, dressed in a sport coat and tie, enters fast, picks up before Neil can answer.*

MITCH

*(Into phone)*

Newsroom.

*Harvey flashes an exasperated look in Mitch's direction, walks over to his desk, sifts through papers. Neil continues typing.*

MITCH

*(Into phone)*

Sai Café is fine, I don't give a crap; they're your parents.

*Harvey rummages through his shelves of reel-to-reel tapes, picks one, threads it onto the player, puts on headphones, listens to the playback, types fast.*

MITCH (cont'd.)

*(Into phone)*

Jesus, I can't do this now, Jan. I gotta go. I'm meeting with Ezra today, you know that. Gotta go gotta go gotta go. Love ya. Kiss the boys. Over and out.

*Mitch hangs up, checks messages at desk, while draping his sport coat over the back of his chair. He assesses the newsroom.*