

TRAV-LER

Six

Transistor

VOL.

Hey Kemosabe!

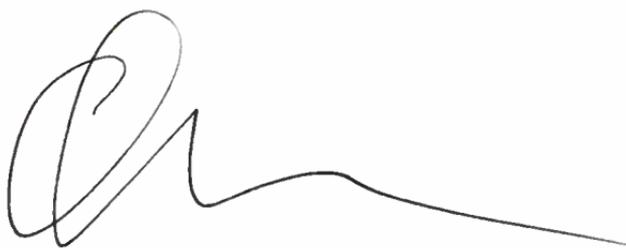
The Days (and Nights) of a Radio Idyll

CHRIS
INGRAM

Hey Kemosabe!

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of a Radio Idyll

Chris Ingram

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'C' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that tapers to the right.

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For my father.

Foreword

There was a time, quite recently, really, before iPods and MP3s and the binary language of zeroes and ones ruled the world, when the radio was our primary music source. We first heard the songs we'd buy—on vinyl discs, cassettes, and 8-track tapes—on our favorite radio stations. For the first time, a generation grew up with music on the go, from cigarette box-sized transistor radios, content with the static and questionable fidelity reproduced through plastic earplugs. It was an era of revolt and war, turmoil and tragedy. And we turned on and tuned in to the radio.

The disc jockey became the arbiter of our musical tastes, as Top 40—a format based on the number of records in an old-fashioned jukebox—rose to preeminence. DJs had personality, wit, timing, and a magical association with the music we claimed as our own. Rock and roll ruled the world, and the DJ was our sometimes screaming, sometimes wry, sometimes folksy connection to that glamorous world.

Around the country, from Boston, Mass, to Portland, Oregon, from Chicago to San Antonio, Miami to Los Angeles, DJs held a generation in the palms of their hands.

It's an arguable point, but many would say the gold standard of that style of radio was New York City's WABC,

77 on the AM dial. And most believe that nobody did it better than Dan Ingram. I certainly do, but I'm biased; he's my father.

This book is an attempt to capture those rollicking days, following Big Dan and his cohorts as they navigate two electric, chaotic, heartbreaking decades, from the early 1960s through the beginning of the 1980s.

This is not a biography, nor is it a history book.

Many of the events contained on the following pages are recreations of actual events, drawn from the memories of many of the people who lived through them. Others are fictions in which actual people are placed in imaginary situations during real historical events. The result is an episodic romp through an amazing time. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did creating it.

Chris Ingram

THE PARTY

Clank. "Shit!" A naked woman stands before a black faux marble bathroom sink, swallowing the last consonant before it passes her half-painted lips. She reaches into the sink to retrieve her Maybelline as a previously inert body stirs beneath gold satin sheets in the bedroom behind her. She's hoping to slip out of the one-bedroom bachelor pad on East 57th street unnoticed. Holding her breath for five beats, she returns to her makeup, confident in a discreet getaway.

The man in the bed is playing possum himself, lying with his back to the bathroom, waiting for his latest conquest to get the hell out of his apartment and his life. He wouldn't mind her laborious retreat if it weren't for the rising sun searing through his closed eyelids, turning his world bright red. He'd left the blinds open last night so they could both take in the view while he took her from behind. Now he can't get up and close them, or he'd have to talk to her, whoever she is. He throws an arm across his eyes and waits.

She's wondering who he is, too. She knows he's a celebrity, someone everybody seemed to know, or want to know, at the party last night. He caught her eye in his hip silver raw-silk Nehru jacket and single gold chain. She

caught his eye because she looked ... available. It was a look she cultivated carefully.

They were at a party for a rock group, fresh over from England, "across the pond," as she'd heard someone put it, and there were a bunch of radio stars in a suite on the eighteenth floor of the Hilton on 6th Avenue.

She'd noticed an acrid smell—marijuana, she'd assumed—and several long-haired youths going in and out of one of the rooms, where she surmised Mary Jane was being smoked. She was curious about it, hoping for an invitation, but just as she had made eye contact with one of the boys (bushy-haired, impossibly thin, with improbably thick lips) she heard a voice rumbling in her ear.

"So what brings you here?" The voice was deep and resonant, luxurious as dark chocolate. "My name's Dan, and I think you're very beautiful."

That's it, she recalls as she dabs at her lips. Dan Ingram. The disc jockey. "Daaaan In-grum." She's heard his name sung out on the radio for ... all her life, it seems. She sits on the closed toilet, pulling on her pantyhose. She thinks back to the party, remembering the assortment of characters parading in and out of the suite (and the pot room). There was the shorter, kindly guy, whom Dan introduced as his "best friend in the world." Ron Lundy had been sitting at a small leather-trimmed bar where a mustachioed bartender had smiled knowingly as he chatted amiably with a stewardess from BOAC, about the possibilities of supersonic air service. And a tall slender fellow (what was his name. .. Bruce?),

who, it seemed to her, was trying too hard, slapping backs and slinging one-liners. And there was that young guy—open-necked shirt, with intense, dark eyes who looked completely bombed.

He was sitting in a low-slung chrome and leather Barcelona chair, knees to his clavicles, rocking gently as his eyes seemed to roll in their sockets, each independent of the other.

“Roby, my friend, you’re trying too hard,” she remembers Dan addressing the kid in a kindly, almost paternal tone with that rich deep voice she suddenly couldn’t get enough of. “There’s plenty of booze, pot, women, whatever you want. Take your time, man!”

Roby Yonge looked up from his seat, his eyes grateful, but with the despairing, slack-jawed face of a man who had just bet the mortgage payment on the wrong horse. The kid steadied himself, ran his fingers through his thick, longish bangs, and walked purposefully to the bar.

He clutched the leather-edged bar with both hands, then leaned unsteadily against the bar as he perused the selection of liquor. “That one.” He pointed at a bottle of expensive Cognac on a shelf behind the bar. “Make it a double.”

Ron looked across the room at Dan, nodded at Roby, and shook his head. Dan replied with a shrug, palms upraised. He looked at the striking brunette he’d just drawn into his orbit and intoned, “Let’s take a walk.”

On the bed the next morning, eyes protected from the rising sun by his left arm, Dan is reconstructing the night’s events as well.

Just before the end of his Friday afternoon shift, he'd been reading a short weather forecast as Bruce Morrow (Cousin Brucie to his legion of fans) walked into Studio 8a for his six-to-ten evening shift. As Dan continued his forecast, Morrow turned his back and bent over a shopping bag.

Dan read, "Brief showers tonight," before erupting into laughter. The studio was suddenly filled with flying pairs of underwear. Bruce had scattered the briefs into the air and over the control board.

Dan let his laughter fill the studio, and thus every room where a radio speaker was tuned to WABC. "Cousin Bruce Morrow wears Jockey Classic Briefs! He just tossed a dozen of them all over the studio!" Dan sniffed into the microphone. "They smell new!"

Then he loosed another gale of laughter, letting it run a few beats longer before signaling his engineer to fade him down and under a jingle and then to start a commercial break. Only then did he give the cue to cut his microphone. He stopped laughing on a dime. "Good one, Bruce!"

"Thanks, Big Dan," replied Morrow, beaming with the knowledge that he had succeeded in pulling off a brilliant prank. Bruce asked, "You going to the party at the suite tonight?" He knew Dan avoided the official company-sanctioned parties, preferring to stalk his female prey as a lone wolf.

Dan considered his options: brave the rush-hour traffic to get home to his North Shore home overflowing with kids he barely knew, or spend the night in town at his secret pad with some as-yet-undiscovered partner. He reached for the phone to the right of the control board on the Formica countertop and dialed home.

"Hi, hon," he practically purred into the mouthpiece. "Got another late session tonight—I think I'll stay at the suite tonight."

WABC had a permanent suite reserved at the Hilton across 6th Avenue, or at least that's what his current wife had been led to believe. He paused. "I know. You're right. I know. We will. I promise. I know. Hon, I just said we will. Next week, all right? Okay. All right, babe. Just call my service if you need to get in touch with me. Okay. I love you. Gotta go. Bye-bye."

He hung up the phone with his right hand, using his left to cue the engineer to start his closing theme, an edited version of "Tr-Fi Drums" by Billy May and His Orchestra. He gave a thumbs-up to Bruce, who replied with a pair of his own. Dan turned to wrap up his show.

Bruce was glowing. He knew his antics didn't always garner him the respect of his colleagues, particularly the brilliant, sometimes acerbic Big Dan. Having pulled off a hilarious stunt and convinced Dan to join the party made him feel like part of the team. It was a sensation he didn't get when he was dressed in a leopard-print suit with a similarly attired schnauzer at live shows before thousands of fans at places like Palisades Amusement Park. He certainly got the love of the crowd—basked in it, really—but the respect of his peers was something he'd pined for ever since he'd crossed a union picket line at WINS to get his first shot at an on-air gig in Gotham. The knowledge that Dan was likely to mutter insults about him as soon as he was out of earshot didn't even bother him as he warmed himself in the light of the briefs joke.

Dan clamped his leather briefcase shut and headed out the door. He had two hours before the party would

really start swinging, so he headed for a favorite watering hole.

There were two such joints on the same block as the bronze-and-glass tower housing the headquarters of the American Broadcasting Company: Mercurio's, and Poor Richard's. Both were classic New York bars: dark oak and leather; discreet, crisply-pressed attendants; professional bartenders; excellent steaks.

The two were almost indistinguishable to the uninitiated, but the difference was vital. Poor Richard's was the place to let it all hang out, where deejays, executives, even the occasional salesman could blow off some steam. Mercurio's was a place where business was done. When Dan wanted to make a point during contract negotiations, or just wanted to get the backstory on what was going on in the corporate offices high above the eighth floor, he knew that was where he could find the decision makers and cut to the chase. VPs, presidents, hell, even the head of the network, could be found in booths at Mercurio's. Dan was welcome there, just as he was the only deejay who would walk into those rarified executive suites at ABC without an appointment.

Dan decided on Poor Richard's. He turned left out the glass main doors of the ABC building and left again down 53rd Street. He could feel the hum of a city shifting from work-week grindstone to weekend playground as he descended a half dozen steps, pausing at the bottom as his eyes adjusted to the darkness. The place was busy, the usual for a Friday.

He was met at the door by Antonio (never Tony), who greeted him with a broad smile framed by a thin mustache and even thinner lips. "Mr. Ingram, welcome

back. Would you like a table this evening, or will you be joining us at the bar?"

Dan surveyed the packed bar. Roger Grimsby deadpanned the latest news on a new TV high in one corner. Even in color, he looked pale and vaguely nauseated. *But brilliant*, thought Dan. Peering at Dan over their drinks were four perfectly coiffed young women, all of whom he was sure he'd had back to his pad. "Booth," he replied.

"Excuse me," a falsetto voice cut through the cigarette smoke as Dan sliced through a filet mignon, black and blue, cold in the middle. "Aren't you famous?" Ron Lundy plunked himself down across the table in Dan's claret-colored booth. He was already laughing. Hell, he was always laughing, or on the verge of it, anyway. Dan's face brightened. He'd known Ron since they'd worked together at WIL in St. Louis. Ron had been the WIL Wil' Child back then, 1960.

"Ron!" Dan put down his fork. "Don't tell me you're going to this thing, too?"

Ron nodded as he caught a waiter's eye, pointed at Dan's martini, and held up two fingers. "Yup, I'm going. Sklar says if we don't start making nice with the new groups, he might have to resort to payola!" They shared a slightly nervous laugh. Ever since the payola scandal of the late fifties, some bigger stations had resorted to hosting soirees, where the bands would mingle with the jocks, eat and drink to their hearts' content, and make nice with the program directors who decided on airplay.

No money or gifts changed hands, and the government seemed to approve. WABC Program Director Rick Sklar had raised the practice to a fine art. Present at WINS when the station's legendary jocks Murray the K and Alan

Freed were broken by the payola scandal, he was hyper-vigilant. It was the station that would buy the drinks, the station that would provide the food and entertainment. He wanted the deejays there to put on a unified front, and besides, the press couldn't hurt. It was great for ratings when a picture of Dan Ingram or Bruce Morrow sitting with the odd Beatle or Young Rascal showed up in the *Post* or the news.

Ron noticed Roby Yonge, all twenty-four years of him, his impish grin charming the ladies, sitting at the bar. He nodded in Roby's direction. "So what do you think about the new kid?"

Roby had been a force in Miami radio, the Big Kahuna, or some such thing. Sklar liked his youth and had brought him up to New York to handle various shifts and fill-ins.

"Kid's in over his head," replied Dan. And he was right. Roby seemed to think that the way to impress his new major-market colleagues was to party harder, screw more women, take more risks. What he didn't seem to get was that these icons of radio had attained their status by *excelling at work, not play.*

Besides, thought Dan, *there's only room for one Big Kahuna around here.* He looked up at Ron and said, mid-chew, "Fuck him."

"That's all right," answered Ron, gazing wide-eyed at the coterie of pretty gals surrounding the kid. "I think he's got better options."

The waiter returned with the drinks. "You drinking tonight, Ron?" Dan asked. It was a rhetorical question. Lundy was always drinking. Dan sometimes wondered whether he'd ever seen his best friend sober. But then

again, Ron may have wondered the same thing about Dan. Besides, they both recognized as much as anyone that, while they didn't have to out-drink anybody, they'd be considered killjoys if they weren't holding glasses in their hands. It didn't hurt that they liked it.

Ron took a long draw from his sweating martini glass, and screwed his face into a wry knot. "Ugh! You and your martinis. What have you got against whiskey? Now bourbon, that's a man's drink." He pinched his nose with one hand while lifting the glass to his lips with the other. "Oh well, when in Rome ... down the hatch!"

Dan loved this man: his gentle southern drawl, his ever-positive outlook; he envied Ron his apparent peace of mind. Ron never, as far as Dan knew, screwed around on his wife. He was a country boy, and proud of it. He'd said more than once that he longed for the day when he could return to his beloved Mississippi and live out his days in peace and quiet.

Ron looked at his watch. "Well, we going to the party or not?"

Dan looked at his own, wafer-thin, timepiece. It was 8:30. He'd been sitting there for over two hours. "Hmm," he rumbled before affecting his best Foghorn Leghorn. "Time do fly when you're having fun!"

"Or three or four martinis," rejoined Ron. "Let's get going. You don't want to miss this one. There are some stews coming, and Rick has been inviting all the secretaries, telling them to bring their loveliest friends."

Dan grinned. Rick really knew how to throw a party.

As they picked up their coats from the hat-check girl, Roby Yonge sidled up beside them, a giggling woman on each arm. "Time to rock 'n' roll?"

Dan rolled his eyes. "Something like that." They pressed through the heavy wood door into the autumn cool.

Back at his apartment that night, Dan swept the girl (Sally? Alice? He wasn't sure.) off her feet. As for her, she had never met someone so charming yet direct. Blatant, even. No one before had ever looked her in the eyes and said, "I find you very attractive and want to make love to you. Shall we cut through all the nonsense and go back to my place?" At first, she was shocked. Then she found it very alluring. Of course, anyone else, with a different voice, might not have gotten away with such brazenness. It didn't hurt that he was drop-dead handsome, 6'2", thin at the waist, well-dressed, with cuff links and that silk Nehru jacket. He wore a fancy wristwatch, and on his right wrist, a heavy gold ID bracelet bearing his name in capital letters: DAN INGRAM. She ignored the wedding band.

Now she's looking for her left shoe, trying to peek under the bed without disturbing Dan. He's still lying there, eyes in the shadow of his left arm, waiting. She contorts herself to reach underneath the platform without leaning on the mattress, snags the shoe by one of its straps, and pulls it to her. But just as she's got a grip, she loses her balance, landing on the bed.

Now Dan can't ignore her. "Huh?" He feigns a sudden awakening, rolling over and sitting up, supported by his elbows. The dark hair on his chest half-obscures the gold chain. "Leaving already? What time is it?" The state-of-the-art flip chart-style digital clock radio reads 7:22.

She looks shocked, like a kid caught with her hand in the cookie jar. "I'm sorry," she almost cries, springing

from the bed and pulling on the shoe while standing on one foot. "I didn't mean to wake you. I'll be out in a minute."

Dan puts on an act. "Don't be silly, Alice, stay as long as you want. There's juice in the fridge."

But she's already out, grabbing her coat from a leather club chair in the living room. "That's okay, I really need to get home. Thanks, though."

"Well, grab some cash for a taxi. My wallet's on the hall table." He shuts the blinds, lies back down, rolls onto his left side, ready to go back to sleep.

She opens the glossy leather billfold and eyes a thick wad of twenties. She pauses a minute, then takes one, placing the wallet exactly where she found it. As she pulls the door open, she shouts over her shoulder. "Thanks! I had really nice time." She walks out. "And my name's *Sally*." The door pulls itself shut with a slam as she walks to the elevator, headed for the subway.

BEGINNINGS

It's one o'clock on a rainy autumn morning on the Connecticut Turnpike—literally, *on* the Turnpike. Inside a toll booth, twenty-three-year-old Dan Ingram has been taking coins from motorists since five p.m. It's time to end his shift. He's glaring over his left shoulder, looking for a sign that Brian, his relief, has arrived to release him.

Finally, ten minutes late, the shine of Brian's bald pate breaks through the freezing mist. "Hey buddy!" He's late again; drunk again. He tilts a nearly empty pint bottle of whiskey in Dan's direction. "Try summa dis," he slurs. "This'll deaden your toothache, boyo!" He cackles as he slides his cash drawer into place.

Dan doesn't even bother to reply, raising his collar and turning his back to the booth, bowing into the wind. Knowing the rule that toll taker's drawers can be "short" by five percent, Dan settles up inside the small brick bunker that serves as the toll office, then walks to the parking lot, pockets jingling. He mounts a battered one-speed Schwinn and pedals out of the empty parking lot. A headlight generator hums as it rubs against his front tire, throwing a yellow beam of light on the wet black street ahead. Two miles later, he reaches home, a first-floor, two-bedroom apartment in

a brick housing complex outside New Haven. He has three hours to sleep before he rides the bike to his morning radio gig as New Haven's Morning Mayor. After that, he'll catch a few more hours' sleep before heading to his third job, washing the milk trucks for a local dairy.

Then back to the tolls.

Dan pushes his shoulder against a resistant door and emerges into the bright light of a tired kitchen. His wife, Patty, enters from the living room, takes his wet coat, and kisses him, holding him tight as the chill on his back turns warm. He knows she'll follow him anywhere, supporting him with adoring eyes, sure that all the tough times and hard work will pay off. She just plain believes in him.

They met in college: Hofstra, on Long Island. He was studying acting; she was a singer. Both were on scholarships. They left school when she was pregnant with their first child, a daughter. By now, they have a second, a son, and a third is on the way. Patty and the growing brood will follow him from city to city, state to state, as he struggles to achieve his dreams while supporting his very real family. Friends describe her as "comfortable as an old shoe," someone who always has a pot of coffee on for the neighbors who come by to chat or spill their troubles across the Ingram family's linoleum-topped kitchen table.

"How was your night?" she asks, pouring him a cup of joe, adding a healthy dash of whiskey. She knows the caffeine won't keep him awake; his much-needed nap will begin in a few minutes. The coffee works to beat back the damp chill he feels to his marrow.

"Same old same old, babe," he tells her, a little more wearily than usual. The truth is, he's barely holding on. He gave himself a deadline eleven months ago to make \$20,000 per year in radio or get out of the business. New Haven's Morning Mayor is paid twelve grand, pretty good coin for the market and the times, but a growing family requires more to live comfortably, let alone at a level commensurate with the heights of his dreams.

They had only moved out of his parents' house in Malverne, on Long Island, about a year ago when he imposed the deadline on himself. There is one sliver of hope, though, which only serves to heighten his anxiety: an air-check company has sent a tape of his morning show to a station in Dallas.

Dan captures Patty's hand as he pulls her into a seat beside him. He pulls her chair closer and wraps a hand around her waist. "I've got some news, babe. Have a seat." He sees the worry on her face as she sits beside him.

Dan tells her about a phone call he received the day before from a fellow calling himself John Box. The conversation verged on comical, with the man's long drawl and southern aphorisms ("We've got a morning man who just can't catch the scent. And if your dog can't smell—well, son, that's a dog that just won't hunt!" Dan took that as a tortured way to say the current guy was clueless.). In fact, at first, Dan was sure someone was putting him on, but eventually convinced of the man's legitimacy, Dan felt a wave of excitement to go along with a strong shot of apprehension. Box wanted to fly him out for an interview as soon as possible. To Dan, it felt like his last chance. If he didn't get the job, his career would be over. He wants the gig, badly, and he is pretty sure he'll

make, if not the magic goal of twenty thousand, at least something a lot closer.

Now he wonders if his faithful wife will despair at the thought of moving, again, pregnant. But he doesn't wonder for long. Patty gasps, and jumps up, her face filled with pride and genuine joy.

"Oh Dan, that's wonderful! Just wonderful!" Suddenly, he's out of his chair and they're embracing in a happy waltz around the kitchen. He feels a little ashamed at her unabashed faith in him. Never one to entertain a negative thought about her man, she seems to not be able to fathom his ever failing.

Doesn't she know how fallible he is? He needs to tamp down on the celebration a little. "Now, now, it's not an offer yet. What if he hates me or thinks I 'can't hunt'?"

Patty looks puzzled, then says, "Of course you can hunt. But why would you want to? Don't they have supermarkets in Dallas?"

He laughs, leaving the explanation for another day. He's tired, and it's nap time. He pulls her closer and looks deep into her brown eyes. "Time for bed," he murmurs.

"Okay, babe," she replies, pulling away from his embrace. "You must be exhausted. You need your nap."

He pulls her back against him, feeling the warmth of her through her cotton robe. "Who said anything about a nap?" He sweeps her off her feet and carries her through the living room to bed.

SO YOU WANT TO BE IN TELEVISION

Saturday mornings hold a special promise for Dan. Instead of sleeping in after working three jobs all week, he rises at five a.m. to head to a nondescript square brick building housing New Haven's first TV station, WNHC, Channel 8. Ten years since the station signed on as southern New England's first television outlet, WNHC has solidified its reputation as a leader in the still-nascent medium. Ingram knows that TV is the future of broadcasting, and he dreams (intensely, though secretly) of building a career on camera. He stamps out a cigarette in the drab parking lot and drags his tired bones to the large unmarked steel door at the rear of the bunker, as employees call the studio building.

Inside, the acrid smell of burned coffee is overwhelming. Dan sees his friend and cohost Steve Romano.

"Sarah made the joe again, huh?" Dan asks as he walks past Steve, who, having just left makeup, still has a napkin tucked into his shirt collar.

Romano nods. "How do you like working with farm animals, Dan?"

Ingram is usually up for anything, but he doesn't like surprises. "What do you mean?"

Romano tilts his head toward the stage. Squinting through and between the light stands and lumbering gray TV cameras, Dan can make out what looks like the rear end of a goat. "Oh no you don't, not me. Not this time. I got the monkey, remember?"

Steve chuckles. "Okay, it's my turn. I guess a goat can't muss up my hair on live television!" They share a laugh over the memory of a show a few months earlier, when a hyperactive chimp from a visiting circus almost tore Dan's hair out at the roots. Ingram heads across the cavernous space to makeup.

He settles into a barber's chair. Sarah is a young but very overweight makeup artist. Dan ignores the mug of malodorous coffee she places beside his seat. "So, Sarah, what's with the goat?"

"Oh, is it Bock beer season again already?" she asks.

It turns out the sponsor of the Saturday-morning programming, Ballantine beer, is issuing its seasonal Bock variety. The label features a goat's-head logo, and in one of today's live commercials, a station announcer will read his copy with a live goat on camera.

Ingram nods as Sarah explains the plan, and he actually drifts into a semi-sleep state as she veers into a one-sided conversation about her roommate's dating escapades.

Now it's 7:08 a.m., time for the first commercial break of the morning. Dan stands behind an elevated table, over which are draped two folded bedsheets. Dan looks into a square gray box with three lenses and reads his ad copy from a white board held up by a college kid: "It's Macy's White Sale. Starting today at your nearest

Macy's store. See for yourself just how much whiter our whites are than theirs."

He gestures toward the two sheets, and at home, on a black-and-white set, the Macy's sheet does look whiter. In the studio, however, an observer would noticed one thing a home viewer can't: The Macy's sheet is, indeed, white, but the one above the small sign that reads "Theirs" isn't white at all. In fact, it's light blue, making it look decidedly gray to the home viewer; just a little TV sleight of hand.

Ingram wraps up the bedclothes commercial. In the control room, a director calls for camera two, and Romano starts his spiel about the virtues of Ballantine Bock beer.

Just as Steve starts reading the cue card beside the camera, he's almost drowned out by the sound of splashing water. While doing his best to keep it together, he glances down and realizes the goat has chosen this precise moment to relieve himself ... on Romano's trousers.

The floor director shouts, "Dolly back three! Dolly back three!"

The camera, focused on the goat, pulls away, trying to find an angle that can showcase the animal without broadcasting the full scene to a Saturday-morning family audience.

A stunned silence envelops the hangar-sized space as camera men, cue-card holders, and cleaning men leaning on their brooms all gaze upon the unfolding disaster, mouths agape. Steve is a trouper and is dead-set on finishing the longest minute of his professional life with whatever dignity he can summon. The script calls for him

to take three steps to a display featuring bottles of the seasonal beer.

He does so, as another stench rises above the ammonia scent of goat piss, and he realizes the goat, fed all morning on cold coffee and doughnuts by the men of the crew, has eliminated his bowels on the green linoleum floor.

Romano slips in the muck but stays on his feet, finishing the spot in a cold sweat. "And now, back to the *Lone Ranger*, on WNHC, Channel 8."

"Cut. You're clear!" the floor director shouts.

Steve unbuckles his belt and drops his pants where he stands, leaning against the display counter as he slips his feet out of his ruined wingtips, leaving them and his slacks where they lie.

Ingram lends him a shoulder as he leaps over the broadening pool of animal effluent. "So you want to be in television, huh?" asks Dan sardonically.

"Oh, yeah," replies Steve. "If only for the glamour of it all..!"

JOHN BOX AND THE BIG D

Dan's flight to Dallas is a real belly-buster. When the pilot lights the no-smoking sign inside the DC-9, most of the passengers get doubly anxious. Now they're flopping around in turbulence at 20,000 feet *and* they can't enjoy a soothing smoke. Dan smiles wanly at the stewardess, and she literally climbs up the aisle to bring him another nip of whiskey.

The plane arrives in a drenching rain at Love Field, twenty minutes late. Dan dashes across the illuminated tarmac, through the terminal's revolutionary moving walkways, and to the street.

He hails a cab and asks the driver, "Do you know where the Admirals Club is? I need to get to the Admirals Club half an hour ago."

The cabbie strokes his chin and squints his eyes. "I think I know where it is. But I'm not sure it's still open."

Dan snarls, "Well, it must be open. I have a meeting there tonight."

The cabbie shrugs his shoulders, flips the flag on the meter, and begins the six-mile drive into Dallas. Of course, there is no Admirals Club. Not in downtown Dallas, anyway. In his attempt to sound more worldly than he really is, Dan has agreed to meet John Box there,

acting as if he knows its location. But he is, in fact, unaware that it's the American Airlines lounge for high rollers, *at the airport!*

Box actually remarks on the drenched raincoat flying through the terminal as he waits (and waits) for New Haven's Morning Mayor, "Now there's a man in a hurry. I don't think his feet touched the floor once," and returns to his drink.

It's an hour later when Dan returns to the American terminal at Love Field, afraid he's blown it. When he walks into the Admirals Club, there's only one man at the bar. He takes a deep breath and walks across the lounge. Just as he's about to introduce himself to a traveling hosiery salesman, a booming voice emanates from a dark, semicircular booth. "Is that Dan Ingram I see? Boy, you're late. Very late!"

Dan turns to see a short man with a huge cowboy hat, seated at a table littered with gimlet glasses.

"Mr. Box, I'm sorry. I went to the wrong place and—"

Box lets out a friendly, if overmodulated, laugh. "That's all right, son. You look like you've had a hard day. Lemme buy you a drink."

Ingram orders a martini, very dry. "Just introduce the gin to the vermouth." Box chuckles at that one.

"You've got a lot of catching up to do young man," said Box, slapping the table and laughing at his own joke.

Ingram surveys the numerous glasses, some stuffed with cigarette butts, and nods. "Yes, sir, it appears I do." He downs his first drink in one belt.

Dan's capacity for drink puts him in good stead, and he holds his own with his potential employer.

Box manages to do business as well, asking Dan for a summation of his radio history, schooling, and family. "My folks were professional musicians," Dan tells him. "Mom led a trio that toured up and down the East Coast—unheard of from women in the 1920s—and Pappy played reeds—saxophone, clarinet, flute—you name it. He introduced me to radio. He used to take me along to his gigs when he was playing as part of the studio bands on all sorts of radio soap operas and game shows. Plus he played for Tuscanini in the NBC Radio Orchestra.

Box seems genuinely interested. "Must've been a tough way to make a living, Depression and all."

"I'll say. What really saved our bacon was the day he landed a regular Friday-night gig with an orchestra at the Rainbow Room. Of course, my folks had lots of friends who weren't so lucky. There was a while there when you never knew who you'd find sleeping on our couch in the morning. They were good that way; always had an extra place at the table for anyone between gigs. Of course, time does what it always does, and when Pappy slowed down a bit, he took a job teaching music at Power Memorial High School in the Bronx."

Box tilts his Stetson backward, exposing strands of dark, oiled hair. "Well, your folks sound like fine people. Damn fine people. But tell me, Dan: What did you learn on those trips to radio stations with your father that sets you apart from any other kid I can hire from right here in my own backyard?"

Dan looks his man straight in the eye. "Simple. One word, actually..."

"And that word is...?"

"Contact." Dan leans forward over a half-drunk martini. "I learned it from watching Arthur Godfrey. My pappy played in his orchestra, too. I'd sit stage right and look at the man—"

Box interrupts. "I heard he was one helluva son of a bitch."

Dan nods, never taking his eyes off his would-be employer's face. "Oh, he was. Off-stage, he treated people like dogs. But I realized something in the way he spoke to the audience. I never once heard him say, 'Hello, all of you people,' or 'I hope you're all having a great time.' It was always *you*: 'How are *you*' and 'We welcome *you* to the show.' I realized he was creating what I've come to call contact. Radio is much more intimate than TV, or the stage, or any other medium. When I listen to you, you're the only voice in my head. Calling me a crowd just sounds wrong. So I make sure, every time I crack that mic, that you know it's you and only you I'm speaking to. And I hope that's the experience for every one of my listeners."

Box has been listening intently to the younger man, returning his fiery gaze over the rim of his gimlet glass. "Well, I'll be. ... I've never heard it put quite that way before, Dan."

"Just clear up one more thing for me, son." By now, Box is well and truly sloshed. "What's this about kee-mo-sob-bee? Wasn't that Tonto's name, from the *Lone Ranger*?"

Dan finishes his third martini and looks across the table through the cigarette smoke, into Box's reddening eyes. "It's what Tonto and the Lone Ranger call each other, Mr. Box. It's a sign of respect. Of brotherhood, really. So when I call my audience Kemosabe, I'm bring-

ing them into my circle. They really are my friends. Remember, when Tonto came upon the Lone Ranger, he had been left for dead. Tonto nursed him back to health. The Ranger owes his life to Tonto. I've had some people tell me I'm being disrespectful to Indians for using the term. But I just tell them that it's quite the opposite: It's a term of endearment, flowing from a true sense of fellowship." He stops as the waitress drops off another round and picks up some of the detritus on the tabletop. "That usually brings them around." Box nods, though Dan isn't sure if it's from understanding or inebriation.

The Texan plants his glass on the table, stamps out the stub of a cigarette, and stretches his right hand across the litter of glasses, stubs, and crumpled cocktail napkins. "I think you're just the man we need. Now let's get outta here and find a party." He yells over his left shoulder, "Sugar, where's the party at?"

Their waitress answers from the kitchen, through a window behind the bar. "Wherever you are, Johnny. Everybody knows that!"

They leave the Admirals Club, chauffeured in Box's Lincoln limousine, landing at a very classy strip joint downtown. Dan has never been a titty-bar kind of guy. He's always felt uncomfortable himself and pity for the girls. Box notices his discomfort. "Wassamatter, son, not your brand of tequila?"

Dan replies, "They're beautiful girls, John, but I have a wife and two kids at home, and another on the way."

Box, through the haze of cigarette smoke and booze, respects the young man's reserve. "I'm glad you said that. I told you we need a dog that hunts, but we don't need one that hunts tail day and night. You're gonna do just fine here in the Big D."

Big Dan has won over John Box. And he's got the job. It's two a.m. by the time he gets to his hotel room, and he's drunk, but he promised Patty he'd call as soon as he knew, either way. The phone rings just once before she picks it up.

"How'd it go, babe?" she asks, sleep slurring her words.

He does his best not to let the booze affect his. "Pack up the kids, babe, it's time to hit the wagon trail. I got it! I got the gig!" They discuss the move, what to pack, what to leave behind. In the morning, he wakes up in the same spot, lying across the bed, feet, one still shod, on the floor.

GETTING THE GIG

Dan stands outside a prewar building on the west side of Manhattan. It's June of 1961, a couple of years before the offices of the American Broadcasting Company would move to their iconic location at 1330 Avenue of the Americas. He takes a deep breath. It's been three months since he and Patty performed their third now-familiar cross-country "wagon train," this time leaving St. Louis for Long Island. He's invested in a production company and is providing commercials, promotions, and contests to several stations in Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York. Today, as he has for several weeks, he's angling for a meeting with WABC Vice President and General Manager Hal Neal.

Dan can feel his pulse pick up just a tick as he walks into Neal's outer office. A prim buxom and very blonde secretary offers him coffee, which he declines. He's learned in his six previous visits that her name is Marlene and she comes from Canarsie. Dan has sat on the same plain woven bench so often, he recognizes the coffee stain just to the left of the wood table section dividing the two seats. This is the first time, however, that he's caught Neal in his office. Or at least it's the first time Marlene has admitted to Neal's presence. A buzzer on the secretary's

desk sounds off, followed by a scratchy reproduction of a man's voice. She presses a plastic button and speaks into a wood box on her desk, "Yes, sir, Mr. Neal. I'll send him in." Dan is on his feet before her finger has left the button.

The first part of the meeting is a standard sales call, Dan playing the role of salesman, producer, and technician. He's a one-man band, extolling the results other stations have reaped thanks to the efforts of Mars Broadcasting, then the technical excellence of the company's studios, then the fast turnaround and quality craftsmanship of his product.

"Look," says Dan, a touch more nervously than he wants, "I know you do a lot of your production in-house, but I believe there are many things a full-time production company like Mars Broadcasting can do for you that your regular staff just can't. We've handled contests in every top-ten market in the country, and we get results."

Neal listens, politely, if halfheartedly, toying with the small boxes containing demonstration reels of Mars Broadcasting's work. Dan is worried he's not getting through.

"We're prepared to offer you total market exclusivity. Right now. We're prepared to be your sole production house."

Neal looks up, eyes slightly wider, and replies, "I'd need more than market exclusivity. I'd want, and I'm stressing I haven't agreed to anything yet, but, if we were to work together, I'd need *regional* exclusivity at the least. We're heard in a lot more markets than just New York, you know. Hell, you can pick us up just fine in Philly!"

Dan answers immediately. "We can definitely work with you on that, Mr. Neal."

A buzzer sounds on the desk. Neal presses a button. "Yes, Marlene, what is it?"

Marlene's voice crackles: "Your two o'clock is here, sir."

Neal responds, "Oh, right. Thank you, Marlene. Have Mr. Cosell take a seat, and tell him I'll be ready for him shortly." He drops the three demo tapes onto an overflowing in-box and rises to signify the meeting's end. He extends a hand. "Call me Hal. Now, if there's nothing else..."

This is the moment Dan has been waiting for. He stands up, unraveling his 6'2" frame, and takes Neal's hand, looking hard into his dark eyes. "Well, you could use a new afternoon man. And I'm the one you're looking for."

Neal awkwardly pulls his hand away and fairly staggers half a step back. His brow furrows as he returns Dan's gaze. He's been very patient with this young man and has liked what he's heard, but now the kid is pitching himself for a job that isn't even open. "You're mistaken. We're very happy with the man we have in that slot."

Dan shoots back. "I can do better, and I'll prove it."

Neal sits back down behind his desk. "And how do you intend to do that?" he asks, anger rising audibly.

Dan remains standing. "I'll have a tape for you by nine a.m. tomorrow."

Now, all Neal wants is to get this Ingram kid out of his office. "Look, I'm in at seven so I can get some work done before the kindergarten crap starts around here. There's no job opening, so please, don't go to the trouble."

Dan says, "Then I'll have it on your desk by six."

Neal tries to interject, "Look, really, don't bother," but Dan continues over him.

"I promised six, and I'll deliver it at six. I always keep my word." He extends his hand across the desk and grips Neal's again as the executive stands back up. Neal shakes his head in wonder as the young man strides across the Persian rug and out of the office.

Outside on the sidewalk, Dan feels as if he hasn't drawn air since he exited Neal's office. He leans against a phone booth and breathes deeply. He's at once exhilarated and fearful. It was obviously a breach of etiquette to use a production sales meeting to pitch himself for a job, but he knows that waiting around for luck to turn his way will get him nothing. He's realized that he needs to be on the air, in some capacity. He's paying the bills, and has a lot of autonomy in his current job, but he has underestimated the jolt he gets from being behind a microphone, live, working without a net. He feels as if he's put himself out to pasture too soon, and there's only one way back into the barn: He's got to get on-air work. Now.

He takes a seat in the phone booth and calls home. It's going to be a long night in the studio.

Driving back to Mars Broadcasting in his weathered 1957 Chevy convertible, Dan lights a Kent with the dashboard lighter.

It's been just a few months since the move from St Louis back to New York, but only a little over two years since the first wagon train to Dallas. Each trip marked a major career gamble, and each one was undertaken with another mouth or two to feed.

The first trip, from Connecticut to Dallas, was the toughest. Dan's days of working three jobs just to make ends meet seemed about to end, if Box's promises were kept. That was a huge leap of faith, but he and Patty had decided to take the risk. "We can always come back if things don't work out," Patty had reassured him, "and it'll be an adventure!" She could always put a smile on his face, even when he was scared out of his wits—especially when he was scared out of his wits. So they packed the two kids into the Chevy, and Patty, showing with their third, navigated, AAA road maps in hand. Five days and countless bathroom stops later, they were in the middle of a Dallas whirlwind.

KBOX, like every other station but one, was a perennial also-ran in Dallas, and the Ballaban family wanted that changed. They had hired the right man to reinvigorate mornings in the city. Within three months, Dan and KBOX, the Big Sound of the Big D, had made up twelve share points and at the end of the year were locked in a tight two-horse race. Dan would get in at five a.m., opening the blinds covering the picture window at the back of the studio, while coffee brewed and he prepared the production that was almost as big a part of the station's success as his morning show. Outside, a pulsing shroud blocked the view of the flatlands beyond. The window was coated with live insects, attracted to the light from inside the studio.

The Ballabans, and John Box, liked what he accomplished in Dallas so much that they offered him another raise, and the morning gig at their St. Louis station, WIL, so it was off on another wagon train, with a third child in

tow. This time, Patty followed the black '57 in a new blue Ford station wagon.

It was at WIL that Dan formed his lifelong friendship with a laconic country boy from Mississippi, Ron Lundy. After another year and another amazing turnaround, he decided to leave St. Louis for home and for part ownership of Mars Broadcasting. This wagon train was even fuller, with the addition of twin boys born just a couple of months earlier.

Making the move had been a calculated risk. His production and voicing skills were razor-sharp and in demand. He knew he could make a living with them anywhere, but he also knew his on-air talents had outgrown any but the biggest market in the universe: New York City.

What's really got him second-guessing himself is the fact that he's already had an on-air job offer from another Top 40 powerhouse in New York City: WMCA. Just three weeks earlier, in a reversal of today's roles, it was the trail-blazing program director Ruth Meyer who'd interrupted Dan during a similar Mars sales call. The offer was impressive: \$35,000 per year. But he knew he'd make more at WABC; \$53,000 was the base union pay, and he had his sights set on that number. Vexed by self-doubt, Dan hasn't yet summoned the intestinal fortitude to tell Patty about the offer, let alone his out-of-hand rejection of it.

Now he drags on his fifth cigarette of the drive and pulls into the Mars parking lot in New Haven, mutters something about quitting the damn things as he lets himself in through the back entrance. The AC is blessedly cold as he shucks his suit jacket and heads for the shelves

of 3M recording tape on the far wall. He's been air-checking New York deejays almost daily for over a month, and the reels have taken over an entire shelf. He pulls down yesterday's tape of Jack Carney on WABC. He looks at the big clock on the opposite wall. It's four p.m. He drops the tape and grabs a fresh one, laying it on the deck of an Ampex 200a recorder and threading the tape through the transport mechanism while flicking two switches that open the corresponding channels on his Gates control board.

He listens to the final two hours of Carney's show, grabbing the records of every song he hears as they play, chain-smoking and imagining alternative lines to Jack's. Carney has great pipes but seems better suited for, say, big band or standards, or even a talk station. WABC has made the change to Top 40, and Ingram knows that requires a much higher energy level.

At six p.m., the real work begins. He's creating a veritable alternate universe, splicing out Carney's breaks with a razor and an aluminum Edi-Tall block (named for its inventor, Joel Tall). He has to blend the music of the original show with the corresponding records he spins on his studio turntable. He marks the magnetic tape with a white wax pencil at the exact point the sound of a drum-beat or hard consonant arrives at the playback head on the machine, then matches the new tape at the same point in the air check. He records his own breaks, then cuts them from one reel, looping them around his cotton collar before splicing them into the other tape. It's a laborious process, but one he relishes.

At 3:30 a.m. he listens to the finished product. He squints as his eyes follow the blue smoke of his cigarette streaming straight up against the white soundproofed

wall and roiling against the ceiling; his ears keenly assess the quality of the splices and music matches.

He's back in the car by four a.m., and outside WABC by five. The security guard recognizes the tall, thin man but balks at letting him into the building. Ingram digs out a ten-spot from his overcoat pocket. "Look, I just want to drop this tape off at Mr. Neal's office. Here, look, it's just a tape."

The guard looks at the flat box with the red-and-black plaid 3M logo, then at the tenner, then at a harried-looking, bloodshot Dan. "Okay, but get in and get out. I don't need any trouble."

Dan's "Thanks!" comes from somewhere in the back of the lobby as he hurries for the elevator and Neal's office.

Dan's body is pleading for sleep. Searching for a place to lie down, he finds a settee in the ladies' room.

He drifts off for fifteen minutes, until he's awakened by a shriek and hustles out past a very confused cleaning lady. He finds his way to Hal Neal's outer office and grabs a scrap of stationery from the secretary's cherry credenza. He writes, "Dear Mr. Neal, I told you I'd get this to you by six. I always keep my word. —Dan Ingram." He arrives home at seven to a hot pot of coffee and five children and, of course, Patty. One by one, he hugs all his kids, kisses them, tells them he loves them, and then grabs some shut-eye before going back to work. He's got three contest promotions and a voice-over job to get done today, before delivering them himself to clients across a three-state area.

In less than a week, his life, his family's lives, and those of millions of radio listeners will be changed forever.

BEATLEMANIA

*M*ounted NYPD police officer Eric O'Toole sits uneasily on his steed, a chestnut named Bingo, overlooking a sea of scruffy-looking kids massed outside a midtown hotel. Traffic is frozen across a four-block area, honking car horns competing with the seemingly unprompted shrill screeches of preteen girls. It's February 1964, and the Beatles have arrived.

The mounthy's ears strain below his helmet to make sense of the noises rising from the throng. The crowd seems to be ... *singing*. The tunes are familiar, if the words are indistinct; even he can recognize the melody of the omnipresent jingles of WABC. He doesn't know why, because he's probably the only one there who doesn't have a transistor radio connected to his ear with a small plastic earplug, but on the air, as Ron Lundy and Scott Muni survey the scene from a balcony above and Dan Ingram prompts the listeners from the studio, the kids are singing along with the station's trademark jingles.

On the ground, without a radio, it seems to the mounthy like some outbreak of mass hysteria as thousands of kids sing, "Your world ... looks great ... on Seventy-Seven WABCeeeeee!" followed by huge cheers. Then

on to the next jingle, and the next. Their reward? Dan plays a Beatles record, of course!

Just yards behind Bingo's rump stands a thirteen-year-old girl from Staten Island. Stacy Kahn was on the sidewalk outside the hotel's entrance when John, Paul, George, and Ringo piled out of their car and into the swarming mass of adolescence.

Known at school as a teller of tall tales, she stood on the toes of her patent leather shoes, in a plaid skirt and white blouse, with hundreds of similarly attired, shrieking fellow fans, awaiting the arrival of the four Liverpudlians. She had already begun inventing the story she would tell in school the following Monday. Paul had seen her on the sidewalk and come up to her—had kissed her, in fact. She was hashing out the details when a wave of screams announced the Fab Four's arrival in a sleek black limousine.

In an instant, the throng descended on the four, grabbing shirt collars, hair, anything they might rend from their heroes. When the police had beaten back the mob and the Beatles disappeared inside, Stacy noticed something in her hand. She squinted down, blinking as she raised her hand to just below her chin. Hanging from her clenched fist was a gold chain, suddenly very heavy, a gold lump dangling from it. Wrapping both hands around her prize, she ran, hands clasped as if in prayer, around the corner and away from the mass of heaving-breasted teens. Once clear of the crowd, she examined the booty more closely. Because Stacy was Jewish, the iconography wasn't known to her; the figure looked like the statue she'd seen on the dashboard of the Ford Fairlane driven by Stevie, her older sister Jodi's boyfriend. And she

was right. It was a St. Christopher medal—Ringo's St. Christopher medal. Stacy Kahn was about to ride a whirlwind even her overactive imagination couldn't have invented.

Now, standing once more among the pulsating throng of Beatle maniacs, Stacy is feeling a bit guilty, and very afraid. She hadn't before noticed the number of police officers trying to keep a lid on what suddenly seems to her to be a nonstop riot.

She feels like a criminal, suddenly distant from the fray, even as she stands within it. She looks around herself, seeing, as if for the first time, the surreal spectacle of children, faces contorted in frenzied ecstasy. It's as if her crime has made her an observer, like a scientist peering down a microscope at an organism of which just ten minutes ago she was a part. She separates from the collective and heads for home, but just as she finds relative peace on her walk to the subway, she's stopped in her tracks by what she hears through the little white earplug connected to the cigarette pack-sized RCA in her coat pocket. It's Scott Muni, speaking with Ringo. Much of the interview has been the usual light banter, with Muni (and the crowd outside the hotel) laughing appreciatively at Ringo's sly one-liners.

But Muni calls attention to an angry welt across the left side of the drummer's neck, and says, "Now Ringo, I know you're getting accustomed to the crowds of kids and the fact that they sometimes get a hold of your clothes and maybe keep a bit for themselves. But I understand today you lost something very special to you, and you're hoping to get it back."

Ringo replies, "You're right, Scott. You see, I lost my St. Christopher medal this morning. It's not worth a lot of money, but me mum gave it to me, so, yeah, I'd really love to get it back."

Stacy feels as if her heart has stopped as Muni announces that WABC is on the lookout for Ringo's St. Christopher medal. "Just bring it to us at our studios here on Park Avenue, and you'll get to meet Ringo. No questions asked, just bring it back to him. And now, how about another Beatles record?"

Stacy can hear the crowd roar from three blocks away as "Love Me Do" flows from the transistor radio, through a wire, and into her ear.

Back among the throng, Bingo starts and is soothed by Officer O'Toole. Neither one of them understands what's going on here. "That's okay, Bingo, that's okay." He pats the nervous horse's massive neck muscles. "These Beatles can't last forever, now, can they?"

Stacy has doubled back. She has decided to turn in the medal, no matter the consequences. She reaches the address on Park Avenue they keep repeating on WABC (every time the plea is aired, she feels the heaviness of the holy object weighing her down even more) but has a hard time finding the disappointingly nondescript door that opens into what she has always thought must be a magical place.

She stares at the sinister black handgun protruding from the holster of the very serious-looking guard in the small lobby as she explains that she is there "to see the man about Ringo's medal." She holds her breath as the guard makes a call. He instructs her to sit on a long wooden bench and wait. And she waits. And she waits.

She waits so long that doubt creeps in—waves of it—threatening to undermine her earlier resolve to see this through, to do what is right and accept the consequences. She fears the delay is a ruse, that the guard is really bringing in the police. Her black patent shoes, each fastened by a single elastic strap across the top of her white socks, begin tapping a nervous beat on the worn stone floor.

Her body flushes, begins to tingle, as she considers fleeing, running out through that plain steel door and never looking back. Just then, she's startled by a smooth, kind voice.

"Well, hello, young lady! I understand you have something for Ringo."

Stacy looks up and can't be sure she's seeing what is, in fact, before her. Standing next to the tall, handsome man who uttered those words are Paul, George, John, and Ringo! It's too much for Stacy to comprehend. She leans forward, tires to stand, swoons ... and faints into the outstretched arms of Dan Ingram.

When Stacy comes to, it's to the accompaniment of what she now recognizes as Liverpool accents. John is saying, "Yeah, we see this a lot these days," as Dan lets out a pleasing laugh. Stacy opens her eyes. She's in a large office, on a couch, and sitting opposite her on an identical seat is Ringo. He stubs a cigarette in a big crystal ash-tray on the coffee table separating them, and cries out in his familiar (and to Stacy's ears, adorable) voice, "She lives!" The group turns its attention to Stacy as she sits up, rubbing her eyes as if awakening from a deep sleep.

"There you are, lassie!" says Ringo. "Here, have a cold drink." He raises a pitcher and fills a heavy glass with water, passing it to her across the table. She sips,

slowly, trying to get the lay of the land, feeling very much like Alice in Wonderland. As she carefully places the glass on a coaster, Ringo continues. "Now, I understand you have something of mine."

Stacy fairly leaps to her feet, plunging her left hand deep into the front pocket of her skirt. "I'm really, really sorry," she exclaims. "I didn't mean to do it. I was just reaching out like everybody else, and next thing I knew, it was in my hand!"

Her words accelerate, spilling from her lips so fast, and without sufficient breathing, that she starts to feel light-headed again. She feels a fatherly hand on her shoulder and stops, takes a deep breath.

"Listen, Stacy, nobody here is angry at you. And you did a very, very brave thing to come here and tell the truth. We're very impressed! So don't worry. You're not in trouble. In fact, we have a big surprise for you. You can sit down, next to me, and relax. Okay? I'm Dan Ingram, and I think you know the rest of this bunch."

One by one, the members of the greatest band in the world shake her right hand and introduce themselves. When it's Ringo's turn, she hands him his medal, its broken chain dangling. She realizes she's crying.

"That's all right, luv!" Ringo smiles as he looks down at his medal, then reaches up and wipes a tear from Stacy's cheek. "You've done the right thing, and I'm grateful."

Dan moves back into the picture. "Now, Stacy, we're going to need to speak to your mother."

With its "Who Found Ringo's Medal," WABC has spun promotional gold. The only problem is, Stacy has acted too quickly. WABC has to keep the mystery alive, at

least through the weekend and the Beatles' Sunday-night appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show*.

The station soon has virtually every radio listener in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut wondering, "Who found Ringo's medal?" They put the laconic lad on the air, explaining how much the medal means to him, and asking anyone who "found" it—intentionally avoiding any accusation of theft—to bring it to the station and pick up his or her reward.

Stacy and her mother are treated to a two-night stay at the New York City Hilton, with room service three meals a day. But what first sounded glamorous soon devolves into into drudgery.

If Stacy's mom was upset about the theft of the medal, that was nothing compared to her anger at their shared, if gilded, imprisonment. By Monday morning, Stacy's mother is livid.

They leave the Hilton at nine a.m. A uniformed man smiles as he opens the door ahead of them. "Good day, ladies. I trust your stay with us was a pleasant one."

Stacy's mother snarls over her shoulder as she heads for the sidewalk, weighed down with shopping bags and luggage, "Pleasant? Sure, it was pleasant—if you consider Sing Sing to be fine accommodations! I don't care how many gifts and autographs you can tempt my daughter with. We were prisoners in a golden cage."

Stacy exclaims, "C'mon, Mom! He didn't do anything—he's just the doorman! Besides, look at all this great stuff we got. Plus the autographs, and lunch with the Beatles! Wasn't it dreamy? I think George really likes me. He said he'll call me when the tour settles down..."

"More like a nightmare," retorts her mom. "Next time, throw the damned thing in the river and be done with it. And don't start with your tall tales! I've told you more than once that you have an overactive imagination. My god, It was like being locked up in jail for the weekend! We couldn't go anywhere without that damned escort. They haven't heard the end of this. Don't forget your uncle Eli is a lawyer."

Stacy is still in a dream state, buzzing with the memories of meeting the Beatles. "But Mom, we signed their agreement. We stayed out of sight until they announced that they found Ringo's medal. And they did that this morning, so what's the big deal?"

She stops as they walk by a news stand, and she picks up a local paper. She flips through the first couple of pages. "See? There I am, in the paper with the Beatles!" Stacy shows the paper to her mother. There's a photo of Stacy with Ringo, under the headline: JERSEY GIRL FINDS MOPTOP'S MEDAL.

Her mother is unmoved. "Humph! The big deal? *The big deal?* We were ... unlawfully imprisoned, that's the big deal! They could have ended their little scam the minute you returned the damned thing. You can't just lock people up for no reason. You just don't do that to people! What kind of people are they?"

"Well, you sure didn't mind the room service ..."

"That's besides the point. And don't talk back. Oh, they haven't heard the last of me. Your uncle Eli is a lawyer ..."

But her mother's words fade among the swirling memories of an adolescent acolyte. For Stacy, the boredom of the hotel room is already fading.

HEY KEMOSABEI

She knows she has tales to tell her friends that'll last a lifetime. And thanks to the newspaper story planted by the station, she's got the pictures to prove every single one. Perhaps even a few she hasn't thought of yet.

JUST HANG ON

*I*t's a raw, cold New York City winter afternoon in 1972, and Charlene "Charli" Palmentero is on a mission. From her vantage, walking west across the Brooklyn Bridge, the sun is setting behind Manhattan, casting a bluish shadow across the East River. At least it seems blue to Charli; it could just be a reflection of her own mood.

Charli has just turned thirty. And she's alone. Again. Her mother passed away five years ago to the day. Her stepfather, well, he died long before that. "Not long enough." Charli shudders as the cold wind thrums through the bridge's cables. The fondling at the hands of her drunken stepfather started early and came often, interspersed with unpredictable beatings—all her life, it seemed to her—and yet when they came to an end with her stepdad's passing, Charli couldn't help but feel ... guilty.

Her self-confidence shot, Charli has meandered through life. College, at City University of New York, should have been a respite, a chance to reshape her life. But when her stepdad died during Charli's freshman year, something inexplicable happened. She lost focus, broke up with her first and only real boyfriend, dropped out.

MAKING WAVES

It's a sizzling summer day. Thousands of people—New Yorkers, Long Islanders, Jerseyites, and whatever you call people from Connecticut—are packed into their cars, headed for the Beach, the Shore, the Sound. Many, if not most, are driving with their windows down, praying for a wisp of wind to cool them and their steaming broods as they negotiate beach-bound traffic.

When you finally make it to the beach, it's a sea of oiled humanity. Women in the skimpiest bikinis lie on blankets, next to muscular men wearing even less, next to families of fair-haired kids under t-shirts and broad hats. You can walk from one end of Jones Beach, Sea Isle City, or New London to the other and never miss a beat of that song you're hearing. WABC is blaring out of every transistor radio that still has an ounce of juice left in its nine-volt battery.

Then, on cue, the whole sea of oiled, pink bodies wells up in one great wave and turns over in unison. The reason? Three words emanating from those same speakers:

"Roll ... your ... bod! Roll ... your ... bod!"

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Years later, when her mom died, she made herself a promise: If her life hadn't improved in five years, she'd end it all. Now here she is, walking her last steps on earth, or over it, on the planks of the Brooklyn Bridge walkway, with her only remaining possession, a transistor radio.

She's lost the earplug and has it playing full volume in her blouse pocket, under a pea coat that may or may not have belonged to her real father, a Navy cook who'd died in San Francisco while on leave during World War II. "Let's Hang On," by Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, blares from the tiny speaker.

"Let's not and say we didn't," mutters Charli as she passes beneath the first of two massive gothic towers supporting the bridge and its humming cords of wound steel wire. It occurs to Charli that as headstones go, she could do worse. Reaching a spot roughly midway, and at a safe distance from the rest of the bridge's foot traffic, she stops. Grabbing a hold of one of the cold, buzzing cables on which the bridge sways, she lifts one foot, gathering the courage to traverse a girder spanning the roadway below. She contemplates the likelihood of making it to the edge, and over, before a plunge into the freezing water below.

On the radio, Big Dan Ingram is reading a live commercial: "At your neighborhood Gristedes this week: Chicken parts for just sixty-nine cents a pound." Then, a trademark Ingram crack: "Some assembly required."

Charli pauses as the three words register in her brain. She chuckles. Then she laughs, out loud. Not a hysterical gut-buster, but the kind of laugh you emit when you're in on the joke. Knowing. Smart. For just

one second, she remembers that feeling, of belonging, of palling around, of *getting it*.

Charli puts her foot back on the wooden walkway. She's surprised at how hard it is to let go of the cable, as if frost and fate are asking her, one last time, if she's sure she wants to abort her suicide. But she knows she can. If she can laugh, even briefly, find joy in the wisecrack of a radio deejay in the darkest moment of her darkest day, maybe she can find happiness in other places. Maybe she really can hang on. Maybe, just maybe, she can make a life for herself—one laugh, one smile, at a time.

As she turns and heads back toward her rented room, the setting sun illuminates the borough she's called home all her life.

Brooklyn has never looked more beautiful.

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"Roll ... your .. bod! Roll ... your ... bod!"

There's an intimacy to those three words, even as they're heard by hundreds of thousands of ears at once—especially among the women. It's as if, having chosen to believe that you're in a private place, lying half-naked among thousands of strangers, you can therefore choose to allow one man with a rich voice into your little private sanctum, and roll for him, with him. It's a secret of radio that Dan learned early in his career: Never speak to "all you people out there" or "everybody." Speak to "You." It's what makes radio the most intimate of broadcast media.

It's on just such a day that Joanne Gray has joined those pilgrims making their exodus to enjoy a few hours in the sun. She has just left her new apartment in Roslyn and is headed to Jones Beach, Robert Moses's gift to Long Island. Windows down, and the radio on, Joanne notices something. The realization comes out of nowhere and then becomes as obvious as the tail fins on the aging Cadillac she's been trailing for the past half hour. As one car inches past her, then another, it hits her: Just about every car on this highway seems to have its radio tuned to one station. The same song is fading in, then out again; the booming sound, the echo, those jingles, and that voice: It's WABC. And the voice belongs to Dan Ingram, emanating from a four-inch speaker on her, and seemingly everyone else's, dashboard.

"Well, Kemosabe, the boys in the chopper tell us the LIE is once again the world's largest parking lot this afternoon. Do yourself a favor and introduce yourself to the lady in the car next to you. You're gonna be there a while, so why not make a new friend today?"

Joanne chuckles to herself, turning up the volume as the opening notes of Vickie Sue Robinson's "Turn the Beat Around" ring out. Dan intones, "Ah yes, time to turn the beat around. And do me a favor. While you're at it, why don't you rotate that radish?"

She laughs lightly once again before something catches her eye. There's a young man in a faux-wood grained Country Squire waving at her across the station wagon's empty passenger seat. He's also got WABC on, and he's bent on taking Big Dan's advice. Joanne turns her radio down to hear what he's yelling through his open windows.

"Hey there!" he yells over the din of music, engine noise, and honking horns, "I'm Mike! You like that song, too?"

Joanne's instinct is to ignore him, turn away, eyes straight ahead, but she knows he's not going anywhere, and neither is she, not for a while. Not in this traffic. She turns her blonde head and looks over her bare left shoulder to appraise him. Long dark hair frames his Ray-Bans, which rest on a moderate, if slightly crooked, nose. A neatly trimmed handlebar mustache seems to accent the deep divot in his chin and angular cheekbones. She like what she sees, and waves back. "Oh yeah, I love it!"

He nods, and she smiles. Then, awkward silence, or what would be silence were it not for the music, honking and revving motors.

Joanne gasps as Mike gets out of his running car and trots around the front end with a piece of paper in his hand. She considers rolling up the window but checks herself. Mike has squatted next to her door.

"Listen, I know this is weird, but like the man said, why not make a new friend? I'm new in town and would love to take you out sometime. Can I have your number?" He pulls a pen from the pocket of his white t-shirt.

"Oh, I don't know, I mean, I don't even know you..." Joanne protests.

"Sure you do! I'm Mike, remember?"

Joanne blushes, then laughs. She decides to take the plunge and grabs the pen from his hand.

"I just moved into a new place, so the number wasn't working yet this morning, but the phone company says it should be up and running by tonight, so..." Her voice trails off as she folds the paper and hands it back to Mike.

Mike picks up the thread. "So, I'll call you tonight!"

Just then, loud, long horn blasts come from the lines of cars behind Mike's and Joanne's cars. Mike is all smiles as he hustles back to his place behind the wheel, and Joanne watches him, smiling, too. She puts her car in gear and takes off, filling the growing void that has opened up before her. Mike puts the Squire into drive,

then realizes he's neglected to get one vital bit of information.

"Wait!" he yells. "I didn't get your name!"

But she's gone, the space where her little VW bug once stood now taken up by a steaming Buick full of restless kids and an irritated mother.

He looks down at the paper, unfolds it, and smiles. The round, delicate handwriting reads, "Joanne," followed by a Nassau County telephone number.

Six months later, they think it only natural to invite the man who precipitated their meeting to attend their nuptials, a year to the day after just another traffic jam on the Long Island Expressway.

BLACKOUT!

It's another average November day in New York City, the kind of day when the true misery of oncoming winter has yet to fully register with your consciousness. Sitting in WABC Radio's shiny new studio 8a is Big Dan Ingram, facing the man who has become his favorite engineer, Bobby Ryan. Dan is in his home stretch, the final hour of his four-hour "Ingram Flingram," and he's looking forward to a station gathering across the street at the Hilton with the Rolling Stones. "Get off of My Cloud" has just hit number one, and it's a fair bet that by the time the real party gets underway, they'll all be high as a kite, if not a cloud. Dan knows the booze will be top-shelf and the women first-class.

"You coming to the soiree tonight, Bobby?" Dan asks. He likes this guy, a Fordham grad (all the good ones seemed to have some link to that university in the Bronx).

"Nah," comes the reply. "I've got me a real date. The chick from 2B."

"Oh ho ho, say no more, my friend, and good luck!"

The girl in 2B has been the subject of numerous conversations across the console for the past few weeks. Bobby had bumped into her ("I swear, I didn't even see

her, then, boom! There she was!") as she was moving into his building on Avenue E. He had helped carry some boxes and a chair into her one-bedroom walk-up and asked her for a date on the spot.

He'd felt a bit awkward asking, covered as he was in a cold October sweat, but as he'd earned his sheen in her service, he figured his appearance was more than balanced out.

She had wrinkled her nose and giggled a no, something about not being ready "yet" as she closed her door against him. But the "yet" was all he'd needed. He had found a surprising number of ways to bump into her again, and his efforts had finally paid off.

Dan is all raised eyebrows and suggestive jibes as they proceed through the show's final hour, each man looking forward to his night on the town. But something's suddenly odd. Dan's finely attuned ears note a shift in the audio.

"Bobby, do you hear that, or am I out of calibration?" he asks.

Ryan shuts his eyes and listens to the commercial airing at the moment. "I'm not sure. Is it slower than usual?"

"Then I'm not nuts. What the ...?" Dan cues the next jingle, then a song. By the time the song has ended, it's clear to anyone that everything has slowed down.

"That was 'Everyone's Gone to the Moon' by Jonathan King ... in the key of R. Not sure what's going on here, but I'm sure we'll get it worked out in a minute. ... It sounds like the electricity is slowing down; I never knew that could happen!"

As the lights in the studio dim, a newscast begins. The news staff is bustling, trying to get answers from Consolidated Edison about what's going on.

There's no awareness yet that everyone's plans for this Friday night in Gotham are about to be superseded by the unexpected, all because of a simple mistake made a couple of days ago, hundreds of miles away.

It was 11:30 Monday night, November 8, 1965, at the Sir Adam Beck power-generating station in Queenston, Ontario. Guy Rheume was going about his regular work routine.

Rheume has been a maintenance engineer for seventeen years. With his seniority, he could easily have pushed for, and received, a day-side job, but he preferred the quiet of the night shift, when all the supervisors were gone and he could do his job without interruption. Lately, he had taken to wearing an earplug connected to a transistor radio. He was a fan of rock and roll, and he had come to really enjoy the sound of WABC, with its jingles and unusual echo. Bob Lewis, Bob-a-Loo, as he called himself, was witty and upbeat, and Guy was fast becoming a fan of WABC's overnight talent.

One of Rheume's duties was to set the safety relays at the power station. These relays would shut down the flow of electricity if they encountered any sudden, unsafe surge of current. They were a safeguard against damage to the generating plant and ensured that it could not be knocked off-line by such a surge. On that Monday night, Guy made a small mistake, setting a safety relay at a third of the appropriate level. In less than forty-eight hours, when a perfectly safe level of juice hits that ill-set relay, some thirty million people across the northeastern

United States and in Canada will learn what havoc a simple human error can cause.

Two-thirds of the way through the newscast, it becomes clear there's a massive power outage affecting the tri-state area. Ingram picks up the hotline and calls engineering. Al ("Crazy Al") Lombard picks up. "Who is this calling on my telephone?" bellows the chief engineer.

"It's Ingram. What's going on?"

Lombard pauses. With some people, his maniacal act works to intimidate, granting him the space to do his job without meddling. He knows Dan; hell, he's been to his house to calibrate his studio lots of times, all for a case of beer and a dip in the pool. He doesn't need to intimidate Dan Ingram.

"Dan, we've got what looks like a major blackout. As of five minutes ago, the whole city—hell, the entire state—was in the dark."

"Do we have carrier?" asks Dan.

Crazy Al smiles. This Ingram is on the mark. "Yes, Dan, for whatever reason, Lodi has power and the transmitter is broadcasting carrier wave. There's just no signal getting to the stick from here."

Ingram doesn't pause for a moment. The party, Bobby's date, none of it takes precedence over the station being on the air. He's a true broadcaster, raised with the "show must go on" ethos of his professional musician parents. "Who's going with me?" he asks.

Al Lombard has already been packing gear. "I believe that duty falls to me."

"I'll meet you at the freight elevator in five minutes," says Dan, then hangs up. He grabs his coat from the back of the chair at his desk in the inner lobby.

As he takes a shortcut from Studio 8a through the news booth and the newsroom, he's startled to come upon the dim figure of a man sitting at the engineers' console in the nearly pitch-black air studio. "Who's there?" Ingram asks, louder than necessary; his heart is racing, and he is genuinely startled.

"It iss I, Klaus!" comes the reply. Klaus is one of the older engineers; with a deep German accent and a rigid demeanor, he's also the subject of a lot of Nazi jokes among the rest of the staff.

"Klaus," Ingram asks, "what are you doing in here?"

"I am scheduled to be in this studio until seven o'clock." Klaus draws on his cigarette, illuminating his haggard features and the cart tree behind his head in orange light.

Ingram opens his mouth to speak, to tell him there won't be any broadcasts coming out of this studio for some time, then checks himself. He knows Klaus will follow his schedule to the letter no matter what he tells the man. "Okay, Klaus. Have fun." Dan turns and shrugs as the engineer's drag ends and his face blends back into the darkness.

In a surprising bit of dumb luck, Lodi, New Jersey, site of WABC's transmitter and antenna array, is not affected by the massive blackout now throttling the entire region. It is served by Public Service Electric & Gas, or PSE&G, which operates separately from the Ontario line now in crisis. It's imperative that Ingram and Lombard get to the transmitter with music and, most importantly to the business of radio, commercials and get the station back up.

They meet at the eighth-floor elevator, Lombard with bags of equipment weighing down his burly frame, and Ingram with boxes of "carts" containing the lifeblood of the station—those commercials.

"Oh, yeah, the spots!" Lombard gets it. For every commercial spot that doesn't air, the station is required to "make good," a costly proposition, considering its full commercial dance card. If they can't get the ads airing, and soon, WABC could be running free commercials, and blocking new business, for weeks.

Lombard leads Dan through the shadows of emergency lights in the subterranean parking garage to a beat-up 1962 Plymouth Fury painted in police-style white and black. Ingram looks askance at its battered fins and dented nose.

Lombard sees his trepidation. "Don't worry, Dan, she's a runner. Former detective's car. Cop shocks, cop tranny, cop engine. It's all I ever buy."

Ingram takes a while to find the passenger-side lap belt, fastening it as Lombard's relic squeals its way through the garage. They pay the surprised attendants at the exit. (It's the attendants' job to retrieve cars, and tonight, they've been ordered by the cops to inform all patrons their cars are unavailable). Ingram and Lombard share a grin as they shoot out of the garage into ... gridlock.

The sun has already set, and the scene on the streets of Manhattan is something out of an apocalyptic nightmare. Traffic lights are dark. Streetlights are invisible. The taillights of thousands of immobile cars stretch as far as the eye can see, while the headlamps of thousands more stare back.

"Okay, Dan, hold on." Crazy Al Lombard is about to demonstrate where he got his nickname. "Did I ever tell you I used to be a New York cabby?"

Lombard leans into the chrome ring inside the radius of the Fury's steering wheel, adding his own note to the cacophony rising from the city streets. "Damn, I wish this thing still had its siren," he mutters as he turns left toward 6th Avenue. He never makes it to the street, though. He picks his way, horn blaring, down the sidewalk, shocking already frightened pedestrians out of his path. Hitting 6th Avenue, he wrangles the Fury into every space that presents itself. He uses every trick in the book, tailgating a wailing ambulance, cutting through whole blocks by driving through every underground garage he knows. Even so, it's slow work. It's 7:30 p.m. when Bill takes a lurching left onto 79th Street and heads for the tracks of the West Side Line of the New York Central Railroad. He eases the Fury through an overgrown opening to the track, then floors it, throwing stones in its wake as he follows the tracks toward the George Washington Bridge. It's 8:30 before they reach the other side of the GWB and a strangely luminous Bergen County in New Jersey.

The transmitter is in the middle of a swamp. Driving in the best of conditions is a downright dangerous proposition. Those who've tried it in autumn, with its freezes and thaws, usually swear never to return. Today is not going to be pretty. Lombard does his best to get up a head of steam so he doesn't get caught gunning the engine without momentum—a sure way to get stuck.

He's successful for the first quarter of a mile of the half-mile path that some optimistically call a driveway, but as the gravel runs thinner and the muck grows predominant, both

he and Dan can sense the losing battle between gravity and inertia. It doesn't take long for the Fury to get bogged down. Ingram gamely tries pushing, and they gain a few more yards, but it's clearly hopeless. They make the final few hundred yards on foot, each man lugging all the gear and carts he can manage, to the cinder-block bunker housing the transmitter.

Lombard pulls out a ring containing dozens of keys and finds the right one on his first try. He reaches through and around the doorway to flick a switch, and they're bathed in fluorescent light. It's the first time they've been so well lit since before they left New York almost three hours ago.

They stand there, blinking in the new brightness, and Lombard lets out a laugh that is half relief, half amusement. Ingram stands next to the General Electric fifty-kilowatt transmitter. He's covered in light yellow mud. His Italian loafers are encased in the stuff. His perfect hair is frosted with it; his expensive coat will never be worn again. Ingram looks down, trying not to laugh, but he gives in to the moment, and soon, the nocturnal sounds of swamp creatures are silenced by the unfamiliar howls of human laughter emanating from a building previously known only for a gentle hum and source of heat.

In ten minutes, Dan Ingram is in the air, playing the music the audience wants and the commercials the station requires, and, more importantly, providing the city with the news it needs most.

They're relieved by Bob Lewis and another engineer shortly after midnight. Lombard has called a tow truck to get his Fury out of the muck, and he and Ingram wait in the car.

"Too bad there's nowhere to get a drink around here," sighs Dan. Too tired to bother speaking, Al points to the glove box. Ingram opens it, and out falls a half-full bottle of Jack Daniel's.

Ingram passes it to him, and Crazy Al takes a long swig. Dan takes a goodly pull of his own, and they sit back, waiting for the wrecker, warmed by the Jack and the quiet satisfaction of a mission accomplished.

BOYS BEING BOYS

It's 11:30 p.m., and Dan, Ron, and Bruce are sitting in a private booth at Mercurio's at the base of the ABC building. Smoke fills the air as they, along with thirty or so other customers, each does his best to single-handedly keep the American tobacco industry in business.

It's a rainy Friday night in May 1968, and overcoats and umbrellas hang from hooks and chair backs in varying states of dryness. The WABC trio's overcoats are pretty much dry, as they entered the dark, polished oaken world to get out of the rain four hours ago. All three are having espresso, with delicate snifters of Hennessy X.O. in hand. Dan surveys the bar; it's the same conglomeration of professionally coiffed and made-up secretaries and hangers-on he sees every night. He's slept with an unsettlingly high percentage of them, and not one of them sparks in him the desire for another go. He's suddenly very weary. He's been searching for something all his life, it seems; certainly since he lost his Patty.

It's a feeling he wrestles with often: the pursuer, the jungle cat chasing his prey as if by instinct alone, he's becoming more and more stymied by a nagging ennui, disdaining himself and his meaningless string of

conquests. He wonders what Patty would think of him and the life he is leading. In so many ways, he's living a dream life.

If he doesn't own this town, he certainly is a stockholder, and yet, forty miles to the east, in an eight-bedroom North Shore mansion, resides what is left of his life with her: Eight kids now, since his second wife brought two with her and together they'd brought an eighth into the world. It seems somehow logical that the one thing they'd actually create together would be born with Down syndrome, afflicted with a chromosomal mistake. What would Patty tell him? She's been gone just a handful of years, but her voice is already too distant to be heard over the din of his new, conflicted life. Right now, all he needs is some air.

"Let's get out of here."

A raised eyebrow gets him the attention of a waiter; a down-up gesture with his right index finger gets the leather-clad check deposited at his elbow. Dan pays (he always pays) with his white Diner's Club card. He stamps out his Kent, belts back the cognac, and swills down the last of his espresso.

Ron and Bruce look at each other and shrug. They're game for whatever comes next. They throw on their overcoats as the waiter returns with the imprinted carbon receipt for Dan's signature, and Ron pulls his Trilby over his thinning hairline. They catch up with Dan on the sidewalk, on 53rd street, just east of 6th Avenue.

"Can you believe this shit?" Dan growls, standing stock-still, like a hunting dog at the point. It's clear to Ron and Bruce what he's talking about as they mount the steps to sidewalk level. The streets are damp, and the New

York City air feels freshened by the rain. On the sidewalk on the northwest corner of 53rd Street and 6th Avenue stands a small trailer with illuminated windows.

It's a portable studio, a three-dimensional billboard just one block from the WABC studios, bearing the call letters of the station that would like to call itself the competition: little 5,000-watt WMCA.

WMCA has done a fine job keeping up with the "big sound" of WABC. When the jocks at 77 stopped calling themselves the Good Guys, the folks at AM 570 scooped up the moniker and promoted the hell out of it. A Good Guys sweatshirt is worth its weight in gold in some corners of the radio world.

The truth is, MCA soundly defeats ABC in the New York City ratings in some day-parts. Named for its location in the McAlpin Hotel in Herald Square, WMCA's only weakness is its signal: a 5,000-watt candle overpowered by WABC's 50,000-watt clear-channel blowtorch.

Hell, WABC's newest morning man just came over from WMCA.

Dan remembers the day Harry Harrison was offered the job, just a few months earlier. Program Director Rick Sklar had been itching for a fight that morning. He'd called a staff meeting in his corner office on the eighth floor. By the time Dan got there, everyone else had assembled in chairs and in the black leather couch lining the back wall. Dan assumed an indifferent stance near the door as Sklar continued his rant without acknowledging Ingram's arrival.

The two got along, each knowing he needed the other. Dan's afternoon show was outperforming WABC's morning

show, by a lot, and that kind of topsy-turvy success gave Big Dan a lot of clout. In fact, that was the gist of the meeting.

"Why can't I get my morning jock to give a simple time-and-temperature check?" He rubbed his temples as he opened an exotic wood cabinet to expose a Harmon Kardon stereo AM-FM receiver and TEAC reel-to-reel tape deck.

He switched on the receiver, illuminating its horizontal window with a deep green light. With one hard twist, he sent the tuning knob spinning, its needle flitting over numerous stations before stopping dead at 570 AM, WMCA. He couldn't have pulled it off on purpose in a million years, but at just that moment, Rick Sklar made his point.

Over the fading notes of the Beatles' "Love Me Do," WMCA morning man Harry Harrison said, "It's seven minutes after nine o'clock, thirty-seven degrees at WMCA," before introducing Martha and the Vandellas' "Dancing in the Street."

The assembled jocks, including overnight man Charlie Greer, Ron Lundy, Big Dan, and Bruce Morrow, shook their heads at the unlikely, perfect timing of the display. The meeting was over. Sklar picked up his phone and had his secretary get him Harrison on the line. Harry Harrison was on the air at WABC in two weeks, a position he would hold down until 1979, when Ingram himself would take over the shift, one of many last-ditch but ultimately futile attempts to stem the station's slide into the history books.

The appearance of an MCA remote studio, replete with six-foot-high lettering painted on all sides, so close

to the WABC studios is an affront no one at ABC can permit unchallenged.

"Of course you realize, this means war," Dan intones in his best Cary Grant.

"Whaddya wanna do, burn it down?" slurs Bruce. His last cognac being his first, he's a bit under the weather.

Dan ponders a moment. "Nope. But I think I have the nascent embryo of a plan. Follow me, men!"

The trio walks up 53rd street a few steps to the underground garage entrance beneath the WABC lobby. They arrive at a nondescript, white-painted elevator door, and Dan inserts a key. The three get off in the lobby of 1330 and hop into another car headed for the eighth floor.

"Who's got a key to the prize cabinet?" Dan asks. The prize cabinet is actually a storage room about ten feet by ten feet, stocked with posters, glossies of the deejays, cases of soda—whatever swag the sales department brought in, even cartons of cigarettes.

"I think Dolores has it in her desk," says Ron, giggling at the mere possibility of whatever mischief Dan has in mind. They walk through the grid of salesmen's desks, squinting as their eyes adjust to the harsh fluorescent light. When they reach the desk of Sklar's secretary, Bruce pulls out the center drawer.

"Eureka!" Dan smiles, knowing he's avoided being the one to actually steal the key, just as he would let Bruce be the one to open the prize cabinet door. Dan and Ron share a knowing look. Once inside the closet, the three scan the stacked cases of photos, promotional materials, records and ... *bumper stickers*.

Dan says, "Gentlemen, I think we have a strategy," as he grabs a case of the WABC stickers. "Grab a box and follow me."

He snags a carton of Kents on the way out, Ron close behind, before hitting the light, leaving Morrow in the dark.

Bruce is last out of the room. He locks the door and returns the key, scrambling to catch up as the elevator door begins to close. "Thanks for holding the door, guys," he says in a half-joking, half-hurt voice.

Ron straightens up in mock seriousness. "We're on a mission. No one man is more valuable than our objective." The elevator slams shut and starts its fall.

All three feel a little woozy as they exit into the lobby, but the fresh cool air invigorates them as they hit the street.

Like a commando, Big Dan keeps low as he surveys the object of their mission. There's a light on inside the trailer, but if anyone is inside, he's sitting still—asleep, probably. The team begins in a somewhat orderly fashion: Ron pulls the backing off the bumper stickers while Bruce and Dan (they're taller) furiously pat the stickers on the surface of the remote studio. Within ten minutes, they've covered most of the north-facing side and have started on the south side, where three metal steps and a railing lead to a door. By now, they're in borderline hysterics; Ron's laugh always gets to Dan, and he is letting loose with barely controlled laughter himself. Bruce is doubling over between affixing stickers. By now, all three are stripping the backing from the stickers and plastering the trailer on their own. It's practically raining slivers of slick plastic-paper, like a low-altitude ticker-tape parade.

Suddenly, there's a sound—the groaning of a wood chair scraping along the floor—then footsteps, and a shadow in the window.

The three run to opposite ends of the trailer; Bruce and Dan hide behind the east side, Ron the west. The door opens, and a gruff voice snarls, "Who's out there?"

Dan and Bruce sprint down 53rd Street, laughing and swearing as the tails of their London Fog overcoats fly behind them. "Go back downtown, losers!" shouts Bruce. They don't stop until they've made 5th Avenue. They turn the corner and trot up the steps of St. Thomas Church, their panting and giggling echoing off the carved surface of its massive granite arch. There's time for a deep breath, and they lock eyes before breaking into a relieved gale of laughter. Dan struggles to light a cigarette as his shoulders spasm in glee. Then he realizes they're a man down.

"Where's Ron? Shit, where's Ron?"

Bruce has stopped laughing, too. It's one thing to pull a deniable prank, but if there's an arrest, that could mean the man's job. Dan doesn't know what he'll do if he's gotten his best friend in that kind of trouble.

"We have to go back." Dan's stomach is now doing somersaults, the result of the booze he's drunk all evening, his worry about Ron, and the fact that he's probably never run so hard in his life. He puts his hand over his stomach, wonders if he's going to be sick, decides he's not. He runs his hands through his hair and takes his overcoat off, folding it over his arm. He doesn't want to be too recognizable if he runs into whoever was in the trailer. He takes a long drag on his cigarette, stamps it out

on the stone steps still black with the evening rain, and, with Bruce, starts the walk back toward 6th Avenue.

There's a hunched figure laboring toward them through the darkness. "Who's this, Quasimodo?" Dan asks aloud. He's wondering if it's the security guard from the trailer and slows his pace, trying not to look too interested.

Just then, a giddy laugh echoes between the skyscrapers. It's Ron, and he's carrying a large cardboard box. The three meet in the middle of the street. "C'mon, c'mon," whispers Ron, "you gotta see this!" They make it around the corner again at 5th Avenue, and Ron starts opening the box. "When you all ran off like a pair of pansies, I did some recon. The guy in the trailer took off after you, so I poked my head inside and grabbed whatever was near the door." He folds back the last flap to reveal a case of light yellow WMCA Good Guys sweatshirts. All three burst into laughter.

"Beautiful," says Bruce, almost crying with glee "Bee. Yoo. Tee. Full!"

Dan feels like he could burst. "That, my friend," he tells Ron, eye to eye, "is priceless! Let's get a drink."

All three light cigarettes from Dan's lighter as they amble, half-leaning on each other, looking for the first watering hole they can find.

The next morning, six dozen Good Guys sweatshirts (minus three souvenirs) are in the back of a New York Department of Sanitation truck, on their way to a landfill in Queens.

THE PRICE OF SUCCESS

It's one p.m. on an autumn Wednesday, and Rick Sklar is agitated. He's pacing back and forth, from his desk to the bookcase containing thousands of pages of ratings reports and a top-of-the-line stereo system, which glows green as it lightly plays the sounds of Ron Lundy on his midday shift on WABC, introducing "One Bad Apple": "Well, those Osmonds may have found themselves one bad apple, but it's not anywhere around here. Good afternoon, from the Big Apple, the greatest city in the world!"

Sklar is in no mood to be entertained. His top jock has been out for two days with no sign of returning. Dan Ingram is on strike.

"Dammit!" he spits before stepping out of his office and asking his secretary for Ingram's home number. He dials it himself, hoping a personal approach might help bring Dan back to work. Of course Sklar knows that in this game of contract-negotiation poker, Ingram holds the better hand. He is already the highest-paid jock at WABC; Ingram makes more than any jock in the country. But Sklar has been told to keep a lid on expenses, especially salaries, until after the 1972 election, a solid year away.

"Damn damn damn," he spits as he dials Ingram's home number. It rings three times before a teenaged boy's voice cracks, "Hello?"

Rick takes a breath. "Hi, this is Rick Sklar," he says as evenly as he can. "May I speak to your father?"

The reply would make him laugh if he weren't so angry.

"My Dad says he's sleeping and if anyone calls, not to wake him, not even for the second coming of Christ."

Sklar tries a new tack: "Well, this isn't the second coming. Could you tell him its just his boss, Rick?"

"Sorry," comes the reply, "he said not to wake him. Can I take a message?"

Sklar sighs. "Please tell him Rick Sklar called and would like to speak with him as soon as possible."

"Okay," the breaking voice answers. Then a quick, "Good-bye," before the line returns to dial tone.

Sklar shakes his head as he returns receiver to cradle. He knows he's undermanned in this battle.

He thinks back to his first meeting with Big Dan Ingram. It was about a year before Sklar would join him at WABC. Sklar was working his way up at the hot station of the late fifties, WINS, with Murray the K and his Swing-in' Soiree, and the so-called Father of Rock 'n' Roll, Alan Freed. In fact, it was Sklar who had suggested Murray's nickname, and it stuck. Ingram and Sklar's paths first crossed at a broadcasting convention in Manhattan. Ingram was representing WABC at a meet-and-greet, and Sklar made a point of introducing himself.

Sklar had sought Dan out and shaken his hand vigorously. "I really admire what you guys are doing over there at ABC."

Dan said, "Don't think we don't know that you guys are the 800-pound gorilla. But we're making a run at you. Why don't you come by sometime?"

"I know Hal Neal would love to meet you. You're doing great things over there, but it must be getting hot for you guys..." Ingram let his voice trail off as he maneuvered Sklar into a more private corner of the ballroom.

He leveled his intense dark eyes at Sklar. "Seriously, I think you're brilliant. We all respect your lineup. But you guys took a huge hit in the payola mess." Ingram looked over Sklar's shoulder to make sure they weren't being overheard.

The radio industry had been badly bruised by the payola scandal. Overnight, the industry-accepted method of playing music for pay had become a crime, the scourge of a nation. The idea that a song could get airplay if its producers paid radio programmers cold, hard cash had been as much a part of radio as the vacuum tube. And almost as quickly as the tube was replaced by the transistor, it was recast, with humiliating congressional hearings, as the worst kind of graft: a betrayal of public trust. No one had been hurt more by the pay-for-play controversy than WINS stars Murray the K and Alan Freed.

Sklar replied, quietly, measured: "I can't pretend we haven't been bruised over this, but I really think we can recover. We have a solid bunch of guys, and management is supportive—"

Dan interjected. "Of course you can. But instead of bailing out a leaky boat, wouldn't you like to come aboard a brand-new ship?"

Sklar replied, "Well, you guys do have a sweet new cabin cruiser, I don't deny it. But you're buried under network commitments. You're playing rock and roll all day, and then, just in time for the most lucrative shift of the day, you switch to 'Don McNeill's Breakfast Club.' That's gotta kill your numbers."

Ingram placed a hand on Sklar's shoulder and sighed. "You're right, of course. But isn't that what challenges are all about? Think about the opportunities—I can guarantee you Hal Neal will give you a clean slate to do whatever you want. And I'm sure we can pay you better."

At this, Sklar raised his hand in a stop signal. "Dan, I appreciate your words. I will consider them. But I think, out of respect for my own employer, I should cut this short."

Ingram smiled. "I actually admire you for that, Rick. I hope we can get to know each other better soon." He extended his hand, and the two exchanged a warm handshake before Sklar turned and walked away into the crowd.

It hadn't been long after that night that Sklar met with WABC's then-program director, Hal Neal. In 1962, with Neal's vow to find a way around network commitments, Sklar came aboard as promotions director. Starting with limited cash, Sklar used his promotional genius, and Ingram's impeccable production and voicing talents, to launch the buzz about WABC to unprecedented heights. One of his first prizes was a scant \$500, but his high-voltage energy (as well as an ear for what worked in other markets) soon showed direct results with listenership. By the time, in 1963, that the Mona Lisa arrived in

New York, better than 30,000 contestants submitted their entries in a WABC contest to win a hundred dollars for the best, worst, smallest, and biggest versions of the DaVinci masterpiece.

In fact, it was after that promotional masterpiece that WINS sought to re-hire Sklar. WABC made sure it kept him onboard by promoting him to program director.

Now, nine years later, the station is in the stratosphere. Ratings are tops in New York, thanks in no small part to the demise of most of the network programming. Sklar has fashioned a powerhouse Top 40 station that will never be duplicated. His promotional genius is now legend. With the giant audience WABC now enjoys, station contests can no longer be carried out over normal telephone lines. First, the station crashed the phone system during a contest in which Bruce Morrow gave away Beatles tickets. They then resorted to special phone-company exchanges to handle the unheard-of volume of calls, but even those got overloaded. WABC now has to use spotters, seeking the WABC button, or Musicradio bumper stickers, the bearers of which are then awarded prizes.

And now, Sklar is butting heads with one of his favorite people—certainly his most bankable. He respects Ingram for his wit, class, and energy. That Ingram expects to be paid what he believes he is worth, Sklar can't hold against him; with ratings at times double WABC's own morning show, not to mention his direct PM drive competition, Dan gets the job done. He has earned the right to expect his share of the pie, and the money he wants isn't out of line. But Ingram has made a new demand:

after working a deejay's standard six-day work week for a decade, he wants Saturdays off. And he's not budging. But corporate orders have been issued: Hold the line on contracts until after next November. Somehow, Sklar has to break this logjam.

He knows he has to take this "upstairs" to ABC corporate. He presses a switch on his desktop Bakelite intercom. "Dolores, can you get me Mr. Neal?"

"Right away, sir." It takes less than a minute for his secretary to come back on the speaker. "Mr. Neal is on line three."

Sklar fairly snatches the receiver from its cradle. "Hal, it's Rick. We've got a problem..."

Hal Neal, now VP of ABC Radio, jumps right in. "Yeah, I've been meaning to stop by to see you. What's going on with the Ingram mess?" he asks, employing one of Ingram's own names for his show to describe the contractual problem.

"Well, you know him. He wants what he thinks he's worth, and it's hard to argue with him."

Neal grunts mirthlessly. "He certainly makes it hard to like him sometimes, doesn't he? Have you spoken with him?"

"I called his home myself. One of his kids picked up. Said his dad was asleep and didn't want to be roused for the second coming!"

"Ha!" Neal likes that one. "That sounds like our man, all right."

"We're kind of over a barrel, here, Hal. We've got no contract to enforce. He can take a walk and work anywhere after the six month no-compete clause ends..."

Neal sighs into the black telephone mouthpiece. It sounds like a tornado in Sklar's ear. "Okay, listen: Get this done. Reach out to his agent and tell him we're ready to discuss their terms. I'm leaving this in your hands, Rick." Sklar could hear the aggravation propelling Neal's words. "Do what you must, but get this done. I want him back on the air yesterday!"

"Okay, Hal. Thanks." He hears his boss's line click dead. Sklar foregoes the intercom and shouts, "Dolores! get me Don Buchwald. Now!"

After dragging negotiations out long enough for a nice unscheduled vacation, Ingram returns to the airways the following Monday, vastly better off and very well rested. His place as the highest-paid deejay in America is secure. His Saturday shift is taken over by a new hire, who sounds remarkably like Dan Ingram; Bob Cruz.

Months later, ABC offers Ingram a weekend coast-to-coast countdown show that would be performed live on Saturdays. Having just fought a bruising battle to free up his weekends, Dan turns it down. His decision leads the network to buy a small California production company called Watermark, Inc. It's owned by an up-and-coming former Korean War Armed Forces Radio jock named Casey Kasem. He'll rocket to fame and fortune as host of the show, American Top 40.

THE HARDEST DAY'S NIGHT

"**T**o hell with Dan Ingram, and his Lincoln Continental convertible with Town and Country Radio, too!"

Chuck Leonard is preparing for his eleven p.m. air shift at WABC. For the first time in his career, he's at a loss as to what he'll say tonight. It's ten p.m., Thursday, April 4, 1968. Two hours ago, the reverend doctor Martin Luther King Jr. was pronounced dead of a gunshot wound to his neck in Memphis. Chuck, like most Americans, is choking back a mixture of rage, sadness, disappointment, and fear. As a black man, the first to star in a major-market mainstream Top 40 radio station, he feels more handcuffed by the format than he ever has before.

It was in 1965 when he first heard of Dan Ingram. More importantly, that was when Dan first heard of him. Chuck had just started at New York City's rhythm-and-blues station, WWRL. He was the evening man, opposite WABC's Cousin Bruce Morrow.

Big Dan first heard Chuck while driving home after work, after a couple of hours at Poor Richard's. He discovered that his commute to Oyster Bay, Long Island, would get him home at around nine p.m. whether he left right after his shift ended at six p.m. and he battled the

traffic with all the other commuters or hung out for a few drinks in the city. This night, he'd knocked back a few with his agent, Don Buchwald, then climbed into his baby-blue convertible four-door Lincoln Continental and headed across town toward the 59th Street Bridge.

The Lincoln was equipped with a so-called Town and Country AM-FM radio, which enabled him to pull in weaker signals, like WWRL's. As much as rock and roll had made him a household name, it was jazz and R&B that he really loved. When he heard Chuck Leonard, at once suave and upbeat, truly cool, he knew he was hearing top talent. He recommended Leonard to WABC VP Wally Schwartz the next morning.

Leonard was more than your average platter spinner. A journalism school graduate from the University of Illinois, he once worked with Carl Bernstein, who would make a name for himself in just a few years as a member of the *Washington Post* team that would blow the lid off Watergate. He was a former Golden Gloves boxing champ, and a Vietnam vet. He was an honorable man, so when Cousin Brucie called him asking that he interview with program director Rick Sklar, he'd declined. He'd been at WWRL for only a month and felt he owed his new employer more gratitude than to jump ship so soon. There were other reasons, not the least of which was that WWRL was considered a black station. He could say things to his primarily African American audience that he'd feel restricted from saying on a 50,000-watt blowtorch that could be heard in thirty-eight states. But the calls kept coming, and he finally relented and made the trip to 1330 6th Avenue. He was treated with respect, and

the interviews went well, but he turned down the offer. The full-court press continued, however, and he agreed to hear their sweetened offer. This time, when he got out of the elevator on the eighth floor, he was greeted in the station lobby by a balding sweaty man laden with photographic equipment.

A hoarse Bronx accent emanated from behind a heavily bearded face. "Awr you Chuck Lennid?" Chuck nodded and was trundled into a side room where the man ran through a roll of film in his Hasselblad, shooting Leonard from the front, in profile, smiling, serious; he was getting his publicity photos taken before he'd ever accepted the gig!

Well, this certainly puts me in a much better negotiating position, he thought behind a wry smile. While meeting with Sklar, the PD told him he could be the first black air personality at a major-market pop station in the country.

Leonard narrowed his gaze directly into Sklar's. "I'm nobody's experiment. If I take this job, It'll be because I belong, just like everybody else."

Sklar looked across the room at Leonard. He saw the qualities in Leonard that made him the right man for the job: talent, class, and fire. Chuck took the job that day.

But on this day, he's second-guessing himself. He wonders how different things might have been had he stayed at WWRL. Would he have been more vocal about the civil rights movement? What would he have said on this day, during his evening shift, instead of his cobbled-together schedule, designed, he has come to realize, as much to deprive the competition of his talents as to benefit WABC. He shakes his head as if to clear some unseen

cobwebs. *That's enough what-ifs*, he thinks, and he straightens his narrow silk tie. He doesn't really blame Ingram for his conundrum. In fact, the two have become close friends. They respect each other's intellect and admire each other's work. In fact, at joint public appearances, it isn't uncommon for Dan to stand up when Chuck is introduced, and vice versa.

As a result of long-running this prank, there are hundreds of people throughout the greater metropolitan area who believe Dan Ingram is a thin black man and Chuck Leonard is a tall white one.

Bound by format or not, Chuck knows he has an important job to do: keep people calm on a night when tempers and fears are sky-high.

His wife, Pamela, watches him from across their sunken living room, her husband silhouetted against the sparkling lights of 9th Avenue. He fastens plain gold links in his cuffs. He has always been a dapper dresser, whether working the night shift or mornings. But that's not what first drew her to him.

She was a teenager growing up outside Louisville, Kentucky, when she first "met" her future husband. She, like millions of other teenagers of the day, was first introduced to the Beatles on the radio, then on the *Ed Sullivan Show* on a Sunday night in 1964. Soon, she and her friends were hosting all-night Beatles sleepovers; after their dates ended on Friday nights, they'd gather at one or the other's home and play rock-and-roll records. When they'd exhausted their 45s, they'd click on the radio and listen to, of all things, WABC. In 1965, Leonard had just started there. Pamela and her girlfriends thought he sounded "just dreamy."

When she was twenty, she decided it was time to sample life in the big city. She broke up with her boyfriend, who had a solid job at his father's pharmacy, about a week before her move. As she drove home, she tuned in WABC. Driving her father's Dodge Coronet along the winding roads outside of town, she heard Chuck Leonard intone, "This is WABC, the Most Music Station, and I'm Chuck Leonard, the best who ever did it and got away with it!"

His high spirits irked her broken heart, and she spat out, "What are you so happy about?" It was her first fight with her future husband, though neither one knew it.

They met in 1967 at Harlem's legendary Apollo Theater. He was involved in promoting and emceeding some of their bigger shows; she had landed a job in the ticket office. It took three dates for her to realize that the erudite, fit, gracious man across the table was in fact the man she'd yelled at months earlier in her car. They were married ten months later.

Now Pamela looks across the living room of their Upper West Side apartment. The man of whom she is so proud, the father of the child she's four months away from delivering, looks like he's fighting his way through quicksand. He is tense, yet his strong shoulders are slumped. She knows his heart is broken; hers is too, of course. She wants to tell him to take the night off, but she knows that just can't happen.

He sighs deeply. "Well, maybe I can do some good ... keep the peace." If he has to be on the air tonight, he wishes it were back at WWRL. Maybe there he could speak his mind, give vent to the outrage, the frustration, the anger that seem to have turned his legs to jelly. But

no. He knows that to do that would only give the lunatic fringe an excuse to do violence: to pillage, rampage, riot. No. He's going to WABC and will do ... his best.

His walk across town is surprisingly quiet. It's as if a rubber band is slowly being stretched and the entire city is waiting to see whether it will snap, unleashing all of its pent-up energy, or slowly relax, returning, if not to its original shape, at least to a recognizable semblance thereof.

Chuck is eyed suspiciously by almost every white man he sees, and they're all he sees on his walk to work this night. Uniformed doormen seem loath to leave the security of their awnings, watching Chuck intently as he saunters by. Highly polished shoes and French cuffs or not, he feels as if tonight, he's only another potential troublemaker to every white man in the city. He's uneasy. And he's mad.

Entering the station through the main lobby, he sees the armed guards eying him uneasily, but his time he recognizes a difference. They're almost chagrined, as if out of some associative guilt. He looks each one straight in the eye. "Good evening, gentlemen. Tough night, eh?"

Their posture eases immediately. They nod, then look down. Chuck follows their eyes to their shiny black shoes contrasting against the stone floors. "That's for sure," one of them says as Chuck continues his walk to the elevator.

"Have a good night, guys," he says before rounding the corner.

Inside studio 8a, Bruce Morrow greets Chuck with a heartfelt hug. "My God, Chuck, my God," is all he can muster.

Chuck takes his seat and plugs in his headphones. His first duty is to introduce the news. "Chuck Leonard here, not really rocking and rolling, at WABC." The usually smooth deejay lets two seconds of dead air pass before the news begins.

He breathes deeply as the newscast unfolds. Two men are being questioned. A rifle has been recovered. Mayor Lindsay is walking the streets of Harlem. At a concert in Boston, James Brown is urging calm.

For the first time tonight, Leonard looks across the console to see who his partner is this difficult night. He expects to see any one of the many young, bell-bottom-wearing kids who seem to have taken over the engineering ranks and is startled to see Klaus meet his gaze. Thanks to his Germanic carriage and accent, the man is the butt of endless hair comb-mustache, goose-stepping Nazi jokes. There's comic speculation that he's an escaped Nazi rocket scientist, or at least former Hitler Youth. Chuck has rarely had Klaus as his engineer, but when he has, he's actually enjoyed the other man's precise, efficient work. As their eyes meet, Chuck sees genuine anguish in Klaus's red-rimmed eyes. The man is ... wrecked.

"I, too, have felt the pain of hate." Klaus speaks in his usual clipped accent as his voice cracks, his throat dry.

Chuck hears the sounder that tells him it's his turn to go on. He cues Klaus to open his microphone, then to start his first song. It's "To Sir with Love," by Lulu. Over the introduction, he speaks, plainly, unadorned.

"It's a good night to urge quiet, peace, and prayer." He never takes his eyes off Klaus, who effortlessly carries out Chuck's hand cues, still staring deeply, earnestly, into Leonard's eyes.

Klaus cues up the next cart.

"I vas only seven when the Nazis killed my mutter and Fahter," he continues. "It vas the second day off the Anschluss, when the troops entered my town in Austria. My fahter owned a small manufacturing plant in town. He was very much respected—people came to him for work und for help when they were in trouble. He vas like an unofficial mayor in my town. Und my mutter was loved by everyone for her kindness and intellect. The Nazis marched into our home that night, chust after my bedtime, and argued with my fahter. I heard the Germans yelling und screaming, und my father calmly answering. I could not make out the verds, but it was clear they were not happy with my fahter."

Klaus grins weakly as he takes a drag from a cigarette.

"Und then, 'Pop! Pop!' und the Nazis started tearing the house apart, dragging furniture und rugs, anything they could carry, out the front door. They came to my room and pulled me out of bed. They slapped me across the face und said my sister und I didn't live in that house anymore. When they pushed me down the stairs, I saw my mutter und fahter lying across each other. I remember thinking their bodies looked like a human swastika, lying on the floor in a pool of blood. I never saw my home or my sister again."

Chuck realizes his mouth is hanging open, then closes it and speaks. "Klaus, man, I had no idea. I'm so sorry."

Klaus shakes his head vigorously. "No no, don't feel sorry for me. I've had many years to, how do you say? 'Get over it.' Your people lost a great leader today, all because of hate. It is I who am sorry for your loss."

It's time for an engineering shift change; the latest set of sideburns is waiting to take Klaus' place at the console. Klaus systematically picks up his pack of Pall Malls, his lighter, and a black leather satchel he carries with him everywhere. "I hope you have a peaceful night. Und that another peace-loving leader will soon rise up in the place of Dr. King." In a move that can only be called ungainly, he thrusts his hand across the console.

Chuck grips the older man's hand and receives a crisp one-pump handshake. Klaus turns and leaves the room.

Leonard exhales, "Man, this is going to be a long night."

The shift continues quietly, with slow music and brief interjections calling for calm.

Finally, signing off before Charlie Greer takes over for the overnight shift, Chuck tells his audience across much of the country: "Well, it hasn't been fun. ... Tonight, I'd just like to urge calm, and quiet, and peace ... and prayer." He realizes that that refrain is the most political he's ever been at WABC, and his stomach churns just a little. He's not sure if it's from self-loathing or hunger.

In the news booth off studio 8a, the newsman resumes his staccato delivery of the terrible story of the day. Big Dan walks through the studio door.

"Chuck, my friend, how're you doing?" Dan's rumbling voice, gentle, sincere, hits a nerve. Leonard chokes back a sob. It's barely audible, but everyone in the room hears it.

Charlie and his engineer look up from their preparations, then look back down at their copies of the paper log. Dan puts his long arm around Chuck's shoulders. "Let's take a walk."

They're silent as they walk to the elevator, enduring the wait and the ride to the lobby. Not a word is spoken as they walk through that granite lobby and head out the revolving doors, down the steps and onto the sidewalk on 6th Avenue.

Leonard breaks their silence. "Y'know, I was cursing your name earlier this evening." Chuck looks down as he and Ingram mount the curb in front of the Hilton on 6th Avenue.

Dan tilts his head, perplexed. "How come?"

"Ah," says Chuck softly, almost apologetically, "it's not that I was pissed at you. Just ... things could have been so much different today. ..." Leonard lets his words linger in the air.

Ingram gets it immediately. "If you had stayed at 'RL?"

"Well, yeah, man. Sometimes I feel as if I walked away from my own people." Leonard looks up, turning his eyes to his colleague, and is surprised to see Ingram looking right back at him. There's an honest intensity in Ingram's eyes that catches him off guard.

"Listen, Chuck. I understand what you're saying, but let me ask you something. Do you think you'd have done more good over there tonight?" He continues, not allowing Chuck to respond. "Look, I get it, and I'd probably be beating myself up too, if I were you. But you were a lone black voice at an otherwise all-white station, urging peace and prayer on one of the worst nights in our nation's history. Do you think your audience is as white as the rest of the staff's?"

"More black kids listen to WABC than a thousand WWRLs. You were a force of peace tonight, Chuck, and

I'm proud of you. Proud of your work, proud of the man you are, proud to call you my friend."

The words penetrate a defensive shell that Leonard realizes he's been holding up all day. His boxer's shoulders drop just a bit, as if relieved of some long-carried weight.

The two jog across Broadway just ahead of an oncoming phalanx of taxicabs.

"Thanks, man. I appreciate that. And I appreciate your friendship, too. But it's not easy to fully accept those words, even if your arithmetic is right."

"I know," replies Dan. "I know you've struggled with your decision to come to ABC since the day you got here. But sooner or later, I hope you realize you made the right choice. You're reaching so many more kids, black and white. And it just may be that in your own way, you're having every bit as important a role in fighting bigotry as anyone at a supposed black station."

Chuck hears the words, senses them working their way deeper into his tortured heart. He can't fully accept them yet, but he's getting there.

The two young, handsome, well-dressed men, one white, one black, continue their westward walk in a warm silence, each knowing that on this night, there simply isn't anything more to be said.

Chuck senses a difference as they approach, then pass, the same doormen who eyed him so tensely just a few hours earlier. He feels the slight of their softened perceptions, based as they are solely on the fact that a white is man walking beside him, but he's also grateful for Dan's company. He's grateful for his friendship, and for his inestimably good sense to keep silent.

Chuck decides against telling Dan about Klaus's remarkable soliloquy that night, but it's not more than a day or two before the goose-stepping and behind-the-back "sieg heils" end for good.

When they reach Chuck's building, Dan offers his hand. They share a long, firm handshake, then Dan peels away from the brownstone stoop with its wrought-iron railings and heads back across town alone. Chuck watches as he disappears among the pedestrians and traffic into the half-darkness of the New York City night. He sighs and looks up to see the golden light shining from the windows of his eleventh-floor apartment. Pamela's waiting for him, and he can't get to her fast enough.

TURN ME ON DEAD MAN

Roby Yonge swallows, hard. His head is swimming, and he can feel his eyes welling with tears. *Dammit. Don't cry. God, please don't let me cry.* He's struggling to keep it together, to not give his boss the satisfaction of knowing how devastated he is.

"We'll, I guess that's that," he says, rising to shake Rick Sklar's hand across his impeccably clean desk.

"I know I can trust you to finish out your time on the air here as a professional." Sklar is looking hard into Yonge's eyes, as if seeking clues as to his future comportment. The kid is clearly shaken.

"I told you the day you hired me, you can count on me, Rick," says Roby. "You still can." He's relieved to be seeing clearly again, to have regained his composure. He takes a couple of deep breaths as he walks though Sklar's outer office, past a sympathetic-looking secretary who is clearly aware of what has just transpired.

"We're not going to be renewing your contract." Sklar's direct, business-like declaration keeps reverberating in his mind, like words bouncing off the inside of his cranium.

"Well, it's not as if it's a surprise," Yonge says to no one as the elevator doors close.

He suspected his days at WABC were numbered when September came and went with no talk of a contract renewal.

Now here it is, October 1969, and he got the news every performer fears. But the truth is, he has been expecting it almost from his first day in New York City. He knows he was simply unprepared for the pressure of Market #1.

He had been the Big Kahuna, the maverick of Miami radio. His weekly surfing columns had been a must-read for the longboard crowd of South Florida. His youthful good looks and smooth on-air style had appealed to Sklar the minute he had heard Yonge's air check, delivered on cassette tape (with what Sklar was sure was beach sand inside the packaging), and the New York programming legend had hired him right away for the one p.m.-to-three p.m. weekday slot.

Such was the might of WABC that Sklar could pay Yonge more than triple his income in Miami, even if he did only have to do a quarter of the work. And that was Roby Yonge's undoing: too much free time. He had always been a devoted partier; his after-hours beachside bacchanalias were legend.

But there was something about the way the guys at WABC blew off steam that he never quite understood. It was as if there were missing some nuance, some unspoken set of rules. And he doubted very early on that he ever would understand.

He turns up the collar of his wool herringbone coat against the chill of early autumn. The wind is gentle but

chills him to the core. He checks his Swiss watch; it's four o'clock and already almost dark. He's got eight hours until the start of his latest air shift, midnight to six a.m., where he's been dumped by Sklar for months. "Fuck it," he spits. "I need a drink."

Now it's 12:37 a.m., on October 21. Roby can't recall exactly how much he's had to drink, or how many bong hits he's done, but he knows he's toasted.

He feels giddy, liberated, as he calls for his mic and intones, "Well, folks, I've already been fired, and no one in management is listening, so I won't get cut. So tonight, we're going to talk about something nobody is telling you. A group of scholars have uncovered what seems to be incontrovertible proof that Paul McCartney, of the Beatles, is dead, and has been for some time—perhaps as long as three years."

For the next twenty minutes, Yonge opens the phone lines to anyone within the thirty-eight-state nighttime coverage area of WABC to share their theories and pile on their interpretations of Paul's barefoot walk across Abbey Road, his attire on the Sergeant Pepper album cover, anything they consider clues to his alleged disappearance. Yonge encourages listeners to play music backward and seek messages in songs like "Revolution 9." Yonge's voice is unusually subdued, adding a mystical quality to his broadcast.

He's right about one thing: No one in management is listening. But the single switchboard operator on the usually quiet graveyard shift is being inundated with

calls. She can't keep up with the number of freaked-out, worked-up people calling from all over the country.

She calls Sklar at his East Side apartment. When apprised of the unfolding events, Sklar acts immediately. He knows that Les Marshak, as winner of the station's Star Search competition, the newest jock in the WABC fold, lives in Greenwich Village and is also therefore the closest. He calls him first. "Les, I need you to meet me at the station right now!"

Rick is waiting in the lobby when Les arrives. "Roby's gone off the reservation," Sklar says, "I need you on the air now."

Les nods and follows Sklar and a security guard into the elevator and onto the eighth-floor lobby. They can hear Yonge intoning the words, "Turn me on, dead man," as they round the corner and push their way into Studio 8a. The trio enters as Yonge goes to commercial for the first time since taking air.

Yonge stands, grabs his coat, and dutifully follows the guard out of the building. Not a word is exchanged. Marshak takes his seat, checks the log, hands his engineer the stack of carts, including an hour's worth of commercials Yonge has neglected to air, and resumes the WABC format. Not a single mention is made of Roby Yonge on the air at WABC again. And industry-wide, it becomes virtual law that no on-air personality ever cracks a microphone again once he or she has been told he or she is being let go.

A COUSIN TO THE RESCUE

Cousin Brucie Morrow is on the radio, mangling the opening of "Mockingbird" by James Taylor and Carly Simon. His voice rises and falls like a drunken soprano practicing her scales as he talks to his "cousins," even as J. T. and Carly have finished their recitative and begun the body of the song. But nobody cares about this violation of the deejay's code (Thou shalt hit the post and never speak beyond it) because, well, it's Cousin Brucie. Morrow lacks the production chops and perfectionism of a Dan Ingram or a George Michael. He knows it; everyone knows it. But he brings something different, an *earnestness*, that endears him to millions of evening listeners. While most of the other heavy hitters at WABC, from Harry Harrison to Ron Lundy, Ingram to Chuck Leonard, are hip, stylish, and clever, Brucie appeals to the nighttime audience, most of whom are teens. They expect less technical virtuosity, and he delivers. Only Morrow would don a leopard-print suit while emceeing a show at Palisades Amusement Park in New Jersey. In fact, in a court case brought by the IRS over Brucie's clothing deductions, the judge would note, "No one in his right mind would purchase such a suit for anything but professional entertainment reasons. Case dismissed."

He's a self-promoter of the first class, often managing his career by telephone as his engineers produce his show for him, sometimes even reminding him a song is needed within a minute or there will be dead air.

In fact, he's just handed a cart across the console when the clear light bulb containing a tiny facsimile of Robert Indiana's LOVE sculpture lights up. He's been expecting a call from his lawyer and reaches for the phone in a heartbeat. "Stan, it's about time. I was about to put out an APB on you," he chuckles. His face stiffens as when he hears a foreign voice. It's a teenage boy, scared to death. "Cousin Brucie, I'm dying. Please help me!"

A thousand thoughts run through Morrow's mind. Is this a prank? How'd the kid get this number? The LT1-7777 hotline was a well-guarded secret. Just what exactly does the kid mean, he's dying? Brucie decides to take the call seriously; it's a good thing he does.

"Okay, Cousin, okay. What's going on? How do you mean you're dying? You sound healthy enough to me."

The kid replies, "I took something, and now the whole world is dripping. I'm dripping. I'm dying, right?"

Bruce asks the kid his name; the kid tells him it's Steve. He sees a frantic wave from Andy, his young engineer. He needs a song, and he needs it now. Ignoring the paper log, Morrow grabs the cart closest to him and tosses it across the console. Andy gets it in the cart just as the last WABC jingle sounds, and he takes a deep breath.

"Okay, Steve, this is your cousin Brucie. Do you trust me? Do you believe in your cousin?"

"Yes," comes the reply, through a frightened sob.

"Okay, now tell me what you took, Steve. Your cousin isn't going to let you die. Okay?"

"Okay," answers Steve. "I think they called it a purple microdot. I'm all alone, and I know I'm dying. I hear God next door, and he's coming for me!" Steve's speech is alternately ponderous and rapid.

Bruce is not exactly into the drug scene. He knows lots of his listeners are on some mind-altering chemical or another through the night, but Bruce sticks to the occasional drink, and usually only because Ingram is buying. But a "purple microdot" sounds scary enough for him to look for help elsewhere. "Okay, Cousin Steve, tell your cousin Brucie where you are. Where are you, Steve?" He can only hear muffled cries over the line. Brucie considers calling the phone company for a trace, as he's seen on TV, but doesn't have the slightest idea about how to do that. Finally, Steve returns to the phone.

"I can see through my arm, Cuz! I see right through it. Oh, please don't let me die!"

"All right, Steve, but you've got to help me help you. Where are you?"

"I'm home all by myself. My folks went to Tahiti for a couple of weeks, so we had a party. Now everybody's gone, and I'm gonna die..."

Brucie tries again. "Where is home, Steve? Do you have an address?"

Finally, Morrow gets an answer. He hears Steve's uncontrolled sobbing and puts the call on hold. He calls the police and gives them the address, then stays on the line with an ever-deteriorating Steve. Within minutes, before the next song fades out, he hears banging on the door through the receiver.

Steve wails, "Oh no, Cousin Brucie, God's here. He's angry at me, I know it! He's going to take me away. ... Don't let him take me away!"

"It's okay, Steve; it's not God, just some friends of mine. They're your friends, too. They're there to help you. Just let them in, Steve. Let them in."

Bruce hears the kid put the phone down, hears the lock turn and the door open. Then there's a riot of wailing and banging and shouting. Then, quiet. Finally, someone picks up the phone. "Hello?" someone asks.

"Yes, it's me, Cousin Brucie—er—Bruce Morrow. I'm the one who called you."

"Heeey, Cousin Brucie, far out! This is Mike of the Little Neck ambulance corps," comes the reply. "We've got the kid under control. Nice job keeping him on the line. You never know what's gonna happen during one of these acid trips. I've seen kids do real harm to themselves. You may have saved a life tonight."

Bruce's pulse eases. He realizes his heart has been pounding for over a half hour. He becomes aware of a chilling sweat down his back. "Well, I'm glad I could help," he says before promising to play a song for the corps.

Andy's in a lather himself, having taken on the job of following the log and pulling the music carts while Morrow was on the phone. It's time for a final on-air break from Brucie. "Hey, Cousins, time for your cousin Brucie to say good-night for now. Do yourselves a favor and be careful about what you're putting in your body, okay? Your cousin wants to see you back tomorrow night."

He cues the next jingle, then a commercial, and stands up from the console. He's neglected to signal Andy to kill his mic, but that's all right. Andy already has.

FADING LIGHT

It's Monday, July 5, 1976. Last night, millions of Americans across the land thrilled to fireworks shows big and small, celebrating the nation's 200th birthday. None was bigger than the spectacular display that erupted over the skyline of Manhattan, and Bobby Ryan had a front-row seat. As a WABC engineer, he wouldn't ordinarily have access to the VIP location that his bosses and the top talent got, but Dan Ingram made sure Bobby got the prime position that he, and other big shots and their families got: a viewing spot at the US Coast Guard base on Governors Island off Manhattan's southern tip.

Dan, and a few select others, know Bobby's terrible secret: He is slowly, and irrevocably, losing his eyesight. Last night's light show may very well have been the last he'll see.

Bobby is much more than just another engineer. The crew at WABC is highly skilled and talented—has to be to keep up with the rapid-fire, exacting Ingram, or to change pace and go with the flow of the laconic, though equally demanding, Ron Lundy. When it comes to others, like Bruce Morrow, hell, they practically run the show themselves.

Bobby Ryan, though, is something special, especially when working in the alchemic crucible of an Ingram show.

Bobby remembers the time in '68, when he and Dan were really rolling through a broadcast, seamlessly flowing from commercial to quip, to song intro to jingle, to another wisecrack, all at Dan's direction, courtesy of Bobby's production. They were simpatico, almost as if Bobby could predict Dan's hand-cued demands. In fact, that's where the trouble came that day: Bobby jumped the gun on a jingle out of a song, cutting off Big Dan's back-sell. Ingram's glare made Bobby feel like a naughty six-year-old at his father's knee—not because he feared Dan, but because he knew he'd let Dan down.

With the mic still open, Dan remonstrated, "Now, I am the producer and you are the engineer," cued the mic dead, then a commercial, and without warning, lobbed a cart toward Bobby's head. It was a soft, arcing toss, with little malevolence. In fact, Bobby caught it and inserted it in the proper machine.

"I'm angry not because you made a mistake but because you didn't give a hundred percent. On this show, you've got to be on your game."

Bobby nodded, then grinned. "Nice pitch. Tom Seaver you ain't."

Dan saw the glint of his teeth and let out a chuckle, "Well, then I guess we're both in the right business. Let's get back to it."

But now it's Monday, July 5, 1976, and Bobby isn't laughing. So far, he's been able to make do on New York streets without a white cane, but last night, he realized he will soon be relying on a lot more than that.

It started about halfway through the fireworks show. It was as if his eyes were performing pyrotechnics for him alone. Kaleidoscopic effects made the already awesome display downright scary.

The cracking and drifting of dimming images continued on the packed subway ride back home, staying with him all night and into this morning.

Bobby starts his day on Ron Lundy's show. His first shift is ten to eleven a.m. Then he handles production duties on a couple of prerecorded Sunday public-service shows, then, after a break, enters studio 8a at five p.m. He'll end his day doing his favorite work, engineering for Dan Ingram.

Up to now, his fading vision hasn't been too much of a problem; Bobby's so familiar with the board, he really could do his job with his eyes closed. Plus, all the buttons he pushes are illuminated; yellow means standby, green means the tape in the corresponding channel is running, and red means the tape has re-cued to its starting position and stopped. The lights and familiarity are the saving grace of his work. If he were an electrician or a dentist or a construction worker, he'd never have been able to hang on so long.

But today is different. Ingram notices the furrow of worry creasing Bobby's forehead. He chooses to say nothing, respecting his colleague's privacy. Bobby's fracturing vision is made worse by a fading in and out of darkness, or is it light? At times, those lit buttons come close to winking out. And then they do. And they don't come back.

Peter Frampton is asking, "Do you feel like I do?" Bobby raises his hands shoulder-high, then slams them on the white counters on either side of the console.

Dan looks up, and what he sees truly scares him. Bobby is stock-still, mouth agape, face frozen in terror. "Bobby, what is it, man? Are you okay?"

Bobby pivots toward the soothing voice coming from across the console, turns his eyes in Dan's direction. "Dan, I can't see ... anything. I'm fucking blind, man!"

Dan calls master control for a new engineer "It's an emergency, dammit!" and is around the desk before the phone finishes ringing from the slam it has just endured.

"It's okay, Bobby, it's gonna be all right," he says, his voice uncharacteristically cracking. It gets both of their attention, and both know that from now on, for Bobby, things are going to be anything but all right.

HEALING RADIO

"*H*ello, luv, it's a beautiful day in the greatest city in the world!" Ron Lundy oozes joy through the four-inch speaker in the dashboard of a bright-red thirdhand Ford Mustang. It's being driven by Joe, a college student, approaching the Holland Tunnel. Joe feels butterflies doing somersaults in his belly as he cranks open the vent window for a burst of cold air, cooling the persistent sweat that's been building on his chest. It really is a gorgeous day. Most of the last winter snow has melted, and the sun gives the illusion of spring even as the temperature loiters below freezing. He's about as nervous as he's ever been, almost as scared as the moments before his first air shift at Jones College in Jacksonville, Florida. He's grown up in the New Jersey suburbs, and WABC has been a guiding example for his own creative development. Jones College owns four radio stations, two AMs and two FMs, and he's been patterning his own performances on the giants he's revered all his life: Dan Ingram, Ron Lundy, Bruce Morrow. He and his college friends gather to drink and smoke, and to listen to air checks of those luminaries, as well as stars from other markets, like George Michael, who left Philadelphia and joined WABC just a year earlier. In fact, Joe amazed his

crew when he was able to actually tune in decent reception of WABC at night, and they grooved to the super-cool Chuck Leonard and the slick Jim Nettleton.

Now he's on his way to Mecca: WABC itself. It's been only three weeks since he wrote programming genius Rick Sklar, asking for a tour of the station. Not only did Sklar reply, he engaged Joe in a ten-minute phone conversation about radio. He then invited Joe in for a tour and a visit.

Joe realizes his hands are sweating when he takes one off the steering wheel and fishes for a quarter. He wipes the coin on his khaki slacks before handing it to the toll taker. It's one p.m. He's timed the visit for a chance to meet the man he and his friends call the Johnny Carson of radio, Big Dan Ingram.

As Joe emerges from the tunnel downtown, a real-life drama is unfolding a hundred-thirty-odd streets to the north.

Lying in a ward at Harlem Hospital is fifteen-year-old Osvaldo Santiago. Up until three weeks ago, he was what most would call a normal inner-city kid. He's smart, tough—streetwise, as the cliché goes. He's also a solid student and a hard worker. His after-school job working for his father's office cleaning business hinders his dream of stardom on the P.S. 153 basketball court, but he's a little on the small side, and while quick with great ball-handling skills, he knows he has little prospect of playing in college. Besides, he likes the cash his father pays him (after deducting half and depositing it in his college account). And he loves surprising the varsity kids who show up at the local playgrounds in their fancy letter jackets with his quick first step, deadly shooting, and

relentless defense. His father is proud of him and of the example he sets for his younger sister and brother. And the son's winning smile is the spitting image of his mother's.

But today, no one is smiling. A wicked cross-over dribble is the furthest thing from anyone's mind. Mother and father are in what have become familiar places, each on either side of their son's bed, holding their breaths, for hours at a time, it seems, waiting for Osvaldo to wake up. He's been in a coma for eleven days, after being found on the basketball court four blocks from his home, apparently the victim of a mugging. He has shown no sign of improvement, no real sign of life, save for a low moan that emanates from his chest when the radio is on. The sound at first distressed his doctors and parents, but a nurse noticed his pulse and respiration ease at the same time the radio-induced moaning began. She suggested keeping the radio on, and his parents, desperate for a positive sign, consented. As for the station, there is only one choice. Disco has made its inroads all over the city; John Travolta dress-a-likes are getting all the chicks. But Osvaldo is not a disco fan. He, like so many millions of Northeasterners, is still in the process of "growing up with" WABC.

His favorite deejay is Dan Ingram. He loves Ingram's wit and wordplay, and though his immigrant parents don't quite get all of Ingram's jokes, they recognize his brilliance.

So they bought a new radio, with a headphone jack, so Osvaldo can hear his favorite station without disturbing the other patients in his room. Thus adorned with a pair of brown faux-woodgrain Radio Shack headphones,

Oswaldo Santiago listens to the Rolling Stones, the Bee Gees, Rod Stewart, and the Beatles as his parents sit beside him and pray for a miracle.

Joe finally finds a parking spot eight blocks from WABC and drops a dime into the meter. As a middle-class kid from Jersey, he enjoys the cache that coming from the New York metropolitan area gives him in the eyes of his southern college chums. The truth is, he's no city kid, but he plays the part well. He's careful not to look up at the towers scraping the sky all around him. He affects an air of nonchalance at the hookers who shout out at him offering a "party," and at the street hawkers handing out strip-joint flyers. It's hard for him to maintain that unimpressed facade, though, as he climbs the steps of the ABC building and enters through one of its heavy glass doors.

He gives his name to the uniformed guard at the front of the auditorium-sized stone lobby. He takes a seat on a tufted vinyl bench as he waits for an escort to the eighth floor. Suddenly, he senses a change in the air; the guards' backs stiffen just a bit, and there's a sudden feeling of ... anticipation when the door swings open again. It's Dan Ingram. Joe is sure of it. He's taller than Joe imagined; slim, wearing a stylish gray trench coat and medium-length sideburns; thick, dark hair brushed back on his head. But when he speaks, Joe knows it's him. "Good afternoon, Ted. How's the wife? Hey, Steve, kids okay?" Joe doesn't even hear their brief, almost grateful responses; how can you taste ginger ale after you've just drunk Dom Perignon?

He tries to stand, to introduce himself, but something, be it fear or better sense, keeps him planted on the

bench, and the moment is gone. Ingram rounds the corner as a pretty young woman approaches the reception desk. "Are you Joe?" He nods and manages, finally, to push himself to his feet.

"I'm Dolores, Mr. Sklar's assistant. He's looking forward to meeting you. Won't you come this way?" Joe now feels like an explorer, first to shine a flashlight into the heart of a great pyramid. He's going to remember every detail.

The elevator opens to the brightly painted lobby. On the wall facing the elevator, in huge red, blue, and gold lettering, is painted the WABC Musicradio logo. A modern, curved white desk and matching office furniture greet Joe as Dolores leads him to a door, lock buzzing open as they reach it. More office space opens up as he's guided to Sklar's outer office. Ingram is speaking with Sklar as Joe approaches.

"Joe, nice to see you!" Sklar's nasal tenor greets his guest. "Hey, I want you to meet someone. Dan, this is Joe. Joe, say hello to Dan Ingram."

"Mr. Ingram, this is a real honor. I really respect your work, and I and all my friends are huge fans," says Joe calmly and clearly. He's relieved, having feared he'd forget what to say or, worse, stammer.

Ingram looks him right in the eye. "Joe, it's my honor. Why don't you swing by the studio later? I'm on the air in twenty minutes."

Joe replies, "I'd love to," as Ingram releases his hand. Then Ingram and Sklar return to the subject they were discussing before Joe showed up. "So, Rick, you're okay with me doing this?"

Sklar replies, "Of course. Thanks for the heads-up."

"See you later, Joe," says Ingram as he turns and walks away.

Joe's meeting with Sklar flies by. They speak about formats, how to serve your listener, making sure your audience always gets what it's looking for when it tunes in. Sklar points out that no two WABC deejays sound the same: Each has his own voice, his own delivery, his own style. But the one constant is energy, excitement—and, of course, the music. Jingles help maintain the energy level: Listeners may forget a disc jockey's name or time slot, but they can sing those jingles as easily as "Happy Birthday." They were the vanguard of a revolution in pop radio. First produced by PAMS productions, and later by JAM Creative Productions, they may have been available in other markets, but no one used them to such effect as WABC Musicradio 77.

"The success of WABC stands on three legs; take one away, and the whole thing might come crashing down," Sklar tells Joe. "They are the jocks, the music, and the jingles. Each deejay has a unique sound. Their deliveries vary from talent to talent, and that's a good thing for us. It might not work everywhere."

Joe thinks about the warm but relatively stark time-and-temperature checks of Harry Harrison; the drawling, smiling voice of Ron Lundy; the intimating rumble and amazing pipes of Big Dan Ingram; the high-pitched, conspiratorial near-whinny of Cousin Bruce Morrow. He realizes the genius of Program Director Rick Sklar is his understanding that the other two legs of the format can stand up to the strong personalities of the WABC staff, even complement them, no matter the sound of their

voices. It's a genuine case of the station being much larger than the sum of its parts.

Sklar continues, "The jocks maintain the high pace of the format, stay out of the way of the music, and make an impression every time they open the mic." Joe nods intently. He isn't taking notes, but he feels as if he's being told something he's known, or perhaps felt, all his life. No one has ever put it into words until now. It's as if he's been admitted to a master class in broadcasting, and he savors every moment.

Joe tries to be subtle as he steals another glance at his watch. He knows Ingram takes the air at two p.m., and he's dying to catch the deejay's opening monologue. Every day, Ingram opens his show with a one-minute vignette, always humorous, never written down. He always manages to make it fit over a one-minute music bed, and he never fails to make it funny. This is just one of the reasons Joe and his pals call him radio's equivalent of Carson. But, unknown to Joe, today is going to be different.

Sklar grins wanly as he sees Joe checking his watch. He knows the kid wants to sit in with Big Dan, and the show is about to start. "So, do you want the tour now, or after you visit Dan Ingram?"

"After!" Joe responds, perhaps a little too eagerly.

Sklar laughs and says, "Let's go, then!"

Rick looks through the window in the thick door to studio 8a, gets a wave from Dan, and pushes, Joe close behind. "I thought I'd let Joe hang around with you for a little while," Sklar tells Dan.

"Grand," says Ingram, and, to Joe, anyway, it sounds like he means it. "So Joe," says Ingram as his visitor settles

into a revolving chair to his right, "tell me about yourself."

Joe tells him he's on the radio in Jacksonville. "My boss keeps telling me to stop trying to be the next Dan Ingram."

Dan laughs, then turns to his engineer. With the flick of a finger, his opening theme begins. Dan clears his throat, then waves for the mic.

"Hi there, Kemosabe. Big Dan Ingram here. Today, I want to speak to a very special young man. His name is Osvaldo, and he's not doing so well. Osvaldo, your mom and dad tell me you're a big fan, and I want you to know I'm a fan of yours. Your parents are with you right now, and they want me to say a few things for them, so I want you to do your best and listen very closely. Your parents love you very much, Osvaldo. They're with you right now, and they want you to gather up your strength and wake up. They know you can do it, and so do I. And I'll let you in on a little secret, Osvaldo: They need you to wake up. So do your little brother and sister. And so do I. You can do it, Osvaldo. We're all counting on you. Now wake up, and when you're all better—and you *will* get all better—you can come visit me here at the station. Okay, Osvaldo? Time to wake up now."

Two more hand signals to the engineer kill the microphone, and the opening strains of "Stayin' Alive" begin to play from the speaker mounted on the wall above Ingram's head. "Well, we'll see what comes of that," says Dan to no one in particular.

"Either way, nice job," says Sklar as he heads out of the studio. Joe sits in awed silence.

For the next twenty minutes or so, Ingram is generous beyond Joe's dreams. He signs a picture, supplies Joe with photos and promotional material about all the other jocks, and answers every one of his questions. Sklar returns to gather Joe for his tour when a button on the studio phone line illuminates.

"Hold on a sec," Dan says as he picks up the receiver. "Hello?" A pause. "Really? No kidding; that's great! Oh, I'm sure he would've come out of it on his own. Oh now, it wasn't my doing. Well, bless you too. Thank you. No, I mean it, thank you. Be sure to get him down here as soon as you can! Well, you're welcome. Thanks. Thanks. Bye-bye now. Good-bye."

Ingram settles the receiver in its cradle. "How about that," he asks. "The kid woke up!"

All sit quietly for a moment, then Dan breaks the spell with a flurry of cues for the engineer, who segues from a Sonny and Cher song to a jingle and to a commercial break.

Joe is shaking his hand one last time when Ingram tells him, "That's good advice your boss is giving you, by the way. Don't try to be the next anyone, Dan Ingram, or anyone else. The next somebody is nobody. Be the first Joe ..." He pauses. "What's your last name?" Joe answers, and Dan continues, "Perfect! Be the first Joe Piscopo. Now *that's* somebody I'd want to get to know."

AUTUMN LEAVES

*I*t's Wednesday morning, June 5, 1968, and Dan Ingram, for the first time that he can remember, doesn't know how he's going to open his show. He's driving his brand-new meta-flake blue Corvette Stingray convertible, top down, 435 horses screaming under its fiberglass hood. He's flying past slower, law-abiding traffic, southbound on the Wantagh State Parkway. He's not completely sure why he's taking this detour from his assorted westerly routes on the way to Manhattan for afternoon drive shift. He just left for work early, hoping a fast drive would clear his head. Normally by now, he's at least shaped the general gist of his minute-long opening monologue, delivered over a pre-produced music bed. Today, though, he's sick to his stomach.

Bobby Kennedy, New York senator, emergent front-runner for the Democratic Party's nomination for president of the United States, brother of slain president John Kennedy, lies on a surgical table at Los Angeles's Good Samaritan Hospital. He's been shot three times, once in the head, by a Palestinian opposing US support of Israel. Five others were also wounded last night as Sirhan Sirhan emptied his .22-caliber Iver-Johnson Cadet revolver

while being subdued atop a kitchen table inside LA's Ambassador Hotel. All would survive, except for Kennedy.

It's only been a couple of months since the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., and Dan, along with the nation, is reeling. He's struggling to hold back tears of sorrow, of rage, of confusion, as the 'Vette, now flying west on the Southern State Parkway, exceeds 120 miles per hour. Dan can barely hear the ABC news special report over the wind and the engine roar. There have been rumors, quickly denied, that Bobby is already dead.

But the retractions can't conceal the concerns his doctors have about their patient's "continuing failure to show improvement."

His condition is, they say, "extremely critical as to life."

Dan's easing up on the gas pedal just as he detects the flashing lights of a Nassau County Police car. It takes a while before he hears the siren, as if the 'Vette is out-stripping even sound itself.

Ingram pulls his sports car over, hoping the broken bits of glass and discarded metal littering the shoulder don't slice his tires, and waits for the cop to catch up. With an angry twist of the volume knob, he snaps the radio off, then pulls his leather billfold from his breast pocket and drifts into a thousand-mile stare. He's overtaken with an alien sense of familiarity, as if, dropped in a foreign land, he nonetheless recognizes his surroundings. Then his memory forces its way through the psychic fog: He's within yards of the spot where his life, the care-

fully constructed, indestructible fortress of work, success, family, and fame was ripped apart forever.

It was a cold, wet autumn night in 1962. Bright yellow leaves swept across the headlights of the Southern State, congregating in low glistening piles where they met any irregularities in the asphalt. Dan was in the back of a police car, its siren blasting a path through bumper-to-bumper traffic. He would view the spot where it had happened, where weather and a generous spirit had claimed the life of his beloved Patty. He refused to call it fate. Or God's will. Just a mathematical equation—a recipe, really, for tragedy. If any of the ingredients had been missing—if Patty hadn't volunteered to help a friend, if the road had been dry, if it had been a different season—she would have survived the night.

Dan had wrapped himself in his overcoat as the cop opened the door and walked with him to what he repeatedly referred to, in what seemed to Dan a strangely hollow voice, as "the scene."

Patty's car, a brand-new VW, front end twisted, glassless, was hooked up to a wrecker, on the opposite shoulder. The car hers had hit was already out of sight. The creosote-stained wooden guardrail sported a deep gash; shards of light-colored wood, exposed to the air for the first time, stood stark against the brown surface.

"It appears, according to witnesses, that the first vehicle, your wife's vehicle, skidded out on a patch of wet leaves. It then struck the barrier here—" He pointed to the open wooden wound. "—and jumped into oncoming traffic. She was ejected and expired instantly."

Dan was in a velveteen fog, hearing the words, nodding his head, feeling nothing. No, less than nothing. He

was falling. Descending, fast, into a foreign, colorless universe. He thought about his five kids at home, from whom, through workload or some inner sense of parental deficiency, he'd already started feeling distant. But instead of feeling drawn closer to them by the tragedy, they seemed, inexplicably, to be drifting farther from his arms. He never remembered how he wound up back in the cop car that night, staring through the windshield at a point a million miles distant.

Now, five years later, he's sitting within a stone's throw of the scene of his wife's death, waiting for a county cop to make his slow amble up the shoulder to the open-topped Stringray.

The cop's words are predictable: "Do you know why I've pulled you over, sir?"

Ingram doesn't utter a sound, just offering up his driver's license and staring straight ahead. He slowly becomes aware of the tears dripping off his jaw, and of the cop, seeming all the taller, staring down through mirrored sunglasses from above Dan's low-slung Corvette.

Dan adjusts the chrome rearview mirror, takes a look, wipes his eyes against alternate biceps, and looks up at the cop. "Rough day," he manages to mutter.

The looming cop looks at the driver's license, then back at Ingram, who is trying to compose himself.

"That's for sure," replies the cop. "Mr. Ingram, do you know how fast you were going?"

Dan inhales, pondering his options but lacking the strength for a spirited defense. "Well, I can't tell you for certain, Officer, but I'll believe you if you tell me it was too fast. It's just..." Dan doesn't have the energy to even

try to charm the cop. He wants this over with so he can get to the station and behind a mic again—the only place, right now, where he'll feel safe and in control.

"Can you explain to me, sir, what your hurry is? You're risking your own life and those of others when you drive like that,"

Dan sighs. "You're right. You're right. I apologize. I guess I'm just distracted by ... all this..." he trails off, and then looks up at the cop. "It's just ... how much more of this can we take? It's like we're eating our own young out there. What the hell is going on?"

The cop nods, lips taut. He hands the license back to Dan and says, "Don't let me see you doing this again. And have a good show, Mr. Ingram."

He walks away before Dan's brain can fully register the reprieve. Ingram manages to shout a feeble, "Thanks," before the cop's purple-and-orange door slams shut. Then he starts up the 'Vette and drives, carefully, back into traffic.

Now he's got it. He finally knows what to say in his opening. In forty minutes, he's back where he belongs, at the microphone in Studio 8a. He cues his mic and begins, dry, without a festive music bed, just him and hundreds of thousands of listeners, one at a time: "Well, Kemosabe, it's happened again, my friend. Violence rearing its head against the very best of us. It's enough to think the human race is doomed, that the worst of us—the angry, muddled, and violent among us—will not rest until there's no one left. But it's not true. With every kindness we perform, each favor we grant, we make ourselves and others stronger. Six years ago or so, I went through a terrible tragedy. You responded with cards and letters, well-wishes, and prayers. And let me tell

you something: It made a difference. It gave me strength in my time of trouble. So I ask you to send those wishes to Bobby and the whole Kennedy clan. But I ask you to do one more thing: Do a kindness, today if you can. Help an old lady with her groceries, make a donation to a charity, let a foolish speeder off with a warning. Resist the temptation to greet harm with violence, anger with rage. Respect each other.

“Support one another. Love each other. That’s how we’ll get through this. Together.”

He cues the first song of a somber day: “Let’s Get Together,” by the Youngbloods, and orders his microphone cut.

The rest of the day follows a regrettably familiar pattern. There’ll be no high-energy jingles, asides, or one-liners. The music will be mellow, the presentation low-key. Between news bulletins and commercials, there’s little room for fun, anyway. The station has been through this three times now, and Dan is not the only one wondering how many more such days will follow.

SUMMER OF SAM

It's a hot Saturday night in Brooklyn, and the televisions tuned to the Yankees on channel 11 can be heard through open windows up and down every street. The private sounds of domestic life are served up like some after-dinner slideshow, back to back with those of neighbors known and never met. Like sunbathers on a crowded beach, each minds his own business, lest his very public exposure be singled out for unwelcome attention. Passing car radios battle for aural supremacy in the cacophonous soundtrack of New York City.

Couples are still "parking"; "good" girls are still fumbling with beginner boys, both learning to slake their sexual desires in hasty backseat collisions. But there is a real danger that lends their encounters an air of added risk. This is late July 1977, the Summer of Sam; the .44 Caliber Killer is on the prowl. To date, the madman has killed five victims and wounded six more in seven separate attacks, most of them on parked couples. There's no sign that his murderous spree is anywhere near an end, and the added sensational press coverage of his ongoing published taunts at the police has made parking feel like a lot more than the usual temptation of fate.

Jeanne Napolitano and Mikey Petrocelli ("It's Mike," he'll correct you, though he's been called "Mikey" all his life. He's eager to sound more grown-up than he knows he really is, as if that alone could make him more mature, not to mention taller than his current 5'6" height) are sitting in his uncle Tino's blue '72 Monte Carlo. They've parked next to a leafy park a few blocks from Gravesend Beach. The murders that began a year earlier have been in the Bronx and Queens, so the two feel safe, though vaguely exhilarated by the distant danger. It's been over a month since the last shooting, in Bay-side, and the city is more tense than usual, alternating between the thrill of a Yankees pennant chase and the anticipation over when, and where, the next couple might be brutalized.

Mikey pulls the Monte up a couple of spaces, to a location beneath a streetlight, and turns off the ignition, careful to leave the key in its "on" position so they can listen to the radio.

Jeanne sighs. "Thanks, that's a lot better," she purrs, wrapping her hands around his right bicep.

"You know, the last one, they were under a street-light, too," says Mikey, a Camel dangling from his lower lip.

"I know, but they must not have had these muscles for protection." She giggles as she gently squeezes his arm. He's pleased but grunts in false modesty.

Their make-out sessions have the familiar air of ritual: She'll press her hand against his chest in protest, not against his coming-on, but with the vague fear that he's taking her acquiescence for granted. He's all hormones, eager to prove his manhood, but there's also a sense of

safety in knowing that, on this night at least, he won't be asked, or allowed, to prove anything beyond his ability to simulate the deed, fully clothed.

On the radio, Chuck Leonard is talking up "Lady Marmalade," his smooth voice lending an elegant air to an otherwise raucous disco tune.

Leonard provides the theme music to thousands of backseat boudoirs. Ingram often jokes that Chuck's probably been "present" at more inceptions than God, at least during his time as night man at WABC. Even now, with disco on the rise and ABC approaching its end, the Best Who Ever Did It and Got Away with It holds a unique power over his audience. Given his short, late shift, he makes up for a dearth of exposure with a profusion of style. He has become a master of what Ingram calls contact. It wouldn't matter if he didn't look the part (and he does); to millions of listeners, he's suave, sophisticated, and classy.

To Jeanne and Mikey, Chuck is the first black man it was considered acceptable to like. He's practically family to any kid who has been in a car late at night. He makes them feel almost grown-up, as if his savoir faire can rub off on them through the radio.

Back in the studio, as Jeanne and Mikey perform their Saturday-night ritual, Chuck walks a fine line. He knows what's going on in those parked cars all over the region, and he recognizes the danger of a dog-talking gunman on the prowl. But even at this hour, he doesn't want to go too "blue," talking about what's really going on in those cars before the bullets fly.

He genuinely fears for the safety of his listeners and feels he has to say something. As the final strains of

Diana Ross's "Love Hangover" fade into the ether, he calls for his mic. "Okay, my friends, time for me to say good-night. Be well, stay safe, and, whatever you do, keep your eyes open for anyone acting suspicious. Your life is worth it." He signals the engineer to play the next commercial and then to kill his mic as he unfolds his athlete's frame and stamps out a cigarette.

Back in the Monte Carlo, Mikey has reached second base and is getting ready to head for third. His right hand is cupping Jeanne's right breast, his arm wrapped around her from behind. She's arching her back like a happy kitten when Leonard's warning emanates from the dashboard speaker. She opens her eyes and looks into the side-view mirror. When she finally focuses, she sits up with a start. "Oh my God, Mikey, who is that guy?"

Mikey grumbles but restrains his ardor long enough to look out the rear window. A short, heavysset man is walking slowly along the sidewalk, peering into windows of the parked cars behind them.

"I don't know, probably a car thief. He ain't stealin' this one," he mumbles, pissed he's lost his grip on her C cup.

She says, "Baby, you heard Chuck. We should go."

"Oh come on," he responds, now genuinely angry at her, at the killer, at Chuck Fucking Leonard. But he sees the fear in her eyes and reaches for the key. He turns the engine over, shifts the car into drive, and pulls away, his night ruined.

Four hours later, Stacey Moskowitz and Robert Violante would be found in a car just one block from Jeanne and Mikey's parking spot, both shot in the head. She would make it to the hospital, only to die hours later.

He would survive, one eye destroyed, his vision irreparably damaged. They would be David Berkowitz's final victims.

STUDIO 54

It's a Saturday night on the west side of Manhattan, and what can only be described as a mob is undulating outside a door at 254 West 54th Street. The art-deco numbers above the entrance are all you need to see to understand what the fuss is about. It's 1977, and this is Studio 54.

A white Rolls Royce purrs its way to the curb, its flying lady perfectly reflecting the scene before it: a link to earlier ages of excess, like the roaring twenties. A burly driver slips smoothly from his door and elegantly makes his way to the passenger side as the crowd murmurs, guessing what celebrity might be hidden behind the Rolls's dark-tinted glass. First out is a tall, trim man with perfect hair, silk suit set off with a red silk pocket square. He's mostly known as a radio star, but he's well known enough to be recognized. "It's Dan Ingram!" somebody yells from the mass of supplicants praying for their chance to get into the storied club.

After Dan emerges from the crisp, white limo, a young woman, some twenty years his junior, steps out in a long white dress slit almost to her hip. She's beautiful, and smart enough to know that if she continues to play her cards right, she can be the next Mrs. Dan Ingram.

As they walk between the velvet ropes separating the anointed from the mob, a young girl in a red halter top and silver hot pants reaches out and pulls Dan toward her. "Are you really Dan Ingram? I'll do *anything* if you take me in with you."

Dan regains his balance and pulls his arm away as two doormen hustle the brunette to the curb.

Inside, it's another universe, pulsating music and half-dressed bodies colliding with high fashion and cocaine. Dan is fond of neither crowds nor coke, but his new flame has been begging for a chance to make the scene at the hottest spot on earth, so he obliges her.

He's gotten familiar with the place. More importantly, he's gotten known by the staff and owners Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager as a "cool dude": restrained, classy, and never a troublemaker. Dan knows the big shots who frequent the place and knows which ones to leave alone beyond a polite smile. He also knows when to look away when behaviors take a turn toward the illicit or downright illegal. Doorman Mark Benecke might keep Woody Allen or Warren Beatty out, but Dan Ingram always seems a good fit for the "cast" he assembles each night.

A former nightclub and so-called opera house, Studio 54 had most recently been used by CBS as a TV studio, actually called Studio 52, as the fifty-second studio purchased by the network. It had levels of seating extending, seemingly, because of the black paint job, into the night sky. This mezzanine was where some of the more illicit behavior often unfolded. After a few dances and a couple of martinis, Dan has already had enough.

His date is in the ladies' room, to "powder her nose." She may be snorting coke, but might not. Neither the drug, nor his date's possible use of it, is of any real interest to him. He casts his eyes upward at the roiling darkness of the mezzanine when he sees something that he thinks just might make his night.

He's no longer in a hurry to get out of the steaming cauldron of excess. What he needs now is a telephone. He makes his way to the bar, and a bare-chested bartender brings him the phone, training a long cord across the well of lower-priced liquor, ice, and sinks. Dan makes two calls of virtually the same duration and almost identical words: "It's Dan. Get over to Studio 54 right away. I think we have a solution to Mike's problem." To one he adds, "Bring the Polaroid."

First to arrive is Chuck Leonard. If anyone could "out-cool" Dan Ingram, Chuck is the man. Married with a daughter, Leonard sees Studio 54 as anything but his scene, though he, like anyone else with a name in the area, has checked it out for himself. He bobs serenely through the crowd until he spots Dan standing by one of the bars to his right.

It feels like a solid ten minutes pass as Chuck weaves his way through the bouncing clumps of dancers and lovers to reach his friend's side. "Okay, whatcha got?" he asks.

Dan replies as quietly as he can, given the cacophony around him, lips barely moving: "Look over my left shoulder ... halfway up the bleachers. Do you see what I see?"

Dan is relieved to see Chuck move his eyes casually around the bar, the crowd, the topless woman across the

room, before subtly looking at the spot designated by Dan.

Ingram watches Leonard's face as his eyes widen and his lips flicker a smile before continuing his visual tour of the fabled hot spot. Finally, he looks Dan in the eyes. "We got him!"

Dan replies, "Yes, we do, my friend. Yes, we do."

Just then, Ron Lundy bellies up to the bar. "What's happening, guys? Is this place a freak show, or what?"

"Ronny," chuckles Leonard, "you do have an appreciation of the obvious! How you doing, man?"

"I'm fine, I'm fine." Then to Dan, "Tell me, for what possible reason do you drag a man out of his bed at ten o'clock on a Saturday night?" Ron laughs as he watches Dan suppress his amazement that any man in his forties would be in bed at such an hour.

Chuck fills Lundy in on the situation, and Ron also shows discretion before casting his eyes on their target. His face lights up. "Okay, so what's the plan? How do we fix things for Mike?"

Mike Adams is a fill-in part-time jock at WABC. Unlike the bigger stars, or even Chuck, who works only about twenty hours a week at the station, Mike is struggling. The pay, even for part-timers, is good, and Mike makes a decent living for a bachelor—enough for a pleasant one-bedroom apartment in unglamorous SoHo—but he wants more. He's a solid jock, and any other station would use him more, but he prefers the larger audience of WABC, hopeful that he'll get his shot.

But he's also fighting a very different battle. He's been struggling with his desires, it seems, all his life.

A good if not outstanding athlete, he nevertheless never felt particularly attracted to the girls who'd hang around after football games, hoping for eye contact or a date. When he did date a girl, for the prom, or a big dance, he fought to keep his eyes from lingering too long on the taut shoulders of a boy dancing next to him, or the tight buttocks of his math teacher, Mr. O'Brien.

No one ever told him the hunger he felt growing inside was dangerous. They didn't have to. He certainly knew it was dangerous to express in public.

So he took to entertaining his friends. Quick with a comeback or a jibe, he was considered a bit odd, but good company. His wit was his lifeboat. With it, he could exist in dangerous seas, even if he never got the chance to touch the water himself.

It wasn't until his third year in college that he acted on his urges. It was with a professor in his communications class at Fordham—probably, he thought later, an acting-out of his crush on Mr. O'Brien. Over the years, he had come to terms with his sexual orientation, even while knowing it was still not safe to be public about it. Even so, he'd made solid friendships at WABC. Dan Ingram knew his secret, as did Ron Lundy and Chuck Leonard. His gratitude for having such solid friends was one of the reasons for his hesitance to jump to another station.

His recent troubles had started when he was at a very different club from Studio 54, in Greenwich Village. It was a safe place for the suddenly burgeoning gay scene to unfold. Yes, you could get sex in the back rooms, but not all of the men drinking at the bar were hooking up

on the spot. Some, like Mike, had more romantic notions of dating.

One night in 1977, an older, very drunk man sitting beside him at the bar started coming on to Mike, loudly and crudely. "I wanna fuck you in the ass!" he slurred. "I wanna fuck you in the ass right here. Right now!"

The more politely Mike tried to quiet the man, the louder he got. "Wassamatter, you too good fer me? Your ass too good fer me? Or is it just a ragged-out baggie? That's it! Fucking you is like throwing a sausage down a hallway, in't it?"

To this day, Mike can't remember throwing the punch. He hadn't been in a fight since the fifth grade. Now, all he could see was the balding gnome sputtering insensibly on the floor, bleeding from both nostrils. He left the bar before anyone even asked him to, and he hadn't been back since, but the damage had been done.

It turned out that the bleeding gnome was Eric Thurston, head of the NBS radio network. Thurston had a wife and six kids and was a deacon of his Catholic church, a leader of the straight community. Had it been a little brighter in the bar, Mike might have recognized him; Thurston had offered him a job about six months earlier. But the damage was done: Thurston remembers Mike and has been making his life miserable ever since.

It started with late-night phone calls. Thurston got the number from Mike's resume. At first, they were just crass and abusive, slurred telephone porn before that became an industry unto itself. Then, two months ago, the calls took a turn for the worse, in daytime. Sober. Threatening: "Listen, you fag, I can ruin you with a call. If I just hint to your boss about what a perverted queer you

are, you'll never work in this town again. You'd better start thinking about playing ball."

"Playing ball" meant he wanted Mike in his bed, and soon. The calls kept coming, not just at his home, but even on the WABC hotline. When Thurston heard Mike filling in or doing a regular shift, he'd call him there, too.

That's how Dan caught wind of the crisis. Mike was finishing up a midday shift, filling in for Ron Lundy, and Dan was coming in to start his afternoon drive show. The LOVE sculpture light bulb to the right of the deejay console lit up, indicating someone was calling the studio phone. Dan saw Mike's hesitance to pick up the receiver, watched Mike's face turn crimson as he hissed, as quietly as he could, "Stop calling me here, damn it. Stop!"

Dan joked, "Oh you get those, too? How do they get this number?" But the stricken look on Mike's face told him this was much more serious than a stalker. "Mike, what are you doing tonight? Let's get a drink. On me." Mike agreed, and filled him in on the whole drama over martinis at Poor Richard's that night.

The following week, Mike, Dan, Chuck, and Ron talked it all over. They agreed no one would believe Mike if he were to retaliate by outing so strong a heterosexual figure as Eric Thurston. Lundy summed it up, slapping his friend on the shoulder, "You really are up shit creek without a paddle." It wasn't a joke; it was a solid assessment. "Don't worry, Mike. We'll think of something. Just don't do anything rash."

Mike's three friends are just a bit winded as they reach the mezzanine level. Ron pulls out a folding

Polaroid SX-70 camera and affixes a bar of flashbulbs to its top.

The three walk quietly to a point midway down the center aisle and come upon two men playing tongue hockey. One is a sleek, young black man with no shirt and shiny silk shorts. The other, white, hairy, bald, has his hands down those shorts.

From out of nowhere comes a velvety announcer's voice, punctuated by several flashes and clicks. "Eric Thurston, staunch defender of traditional values, you're on *Candid Camera!*" The young man covers his eyes, befuddled, but completely uninterested. Thurston, however, screeches in a high-pitched voice, "Get outta here! Fuck off! Do you know who I am?"

Ron answers, shaking his head, "Of course we know who you are. Do you know who *we* are?"

Says Chuck, "We're Mike Adams's friends."

Adds Dan, "You're going to leave our friend alone, or these pictures will go to every newspaper in town. Got it?"

Thurston mumbles something profane and tries to get up, his limp dick still hanging through his open trousers. All three stand in front of him, preventing him from rising.

"Say it. Say you'll leave Mike Adams alone," says Ron.

Thurston gives up his struggle to rise and turns his attention to holstering his Johnson. "Okay. Okay! I was just having a little fun with the guy. I'll stop. I promise. Now leave me alone, will you?"

The three look at each other and the disheveled fat man on the theater seat before them. Says Dan, "We done?"

"We're done," replies Chuck.

"Done," agrees Ron.

"Good. I need a drink. And I think I still have a date down there somewhere," says Dan.

"You're buying," replies Ron. "I still haven't met the latest FMI!"

"FMI?" asks Dan. "Future Mrs. Ingram!" laughs Ron.

Chuck laughs, shaking his head. "I'm going home, boys."

Dan and Ron head for the bar.

Mike never fears answering the phone again.

SO YOU WANT TO BE IN TELEVISION, TOO

It's a spring morning in New York City—very early morning: 3:30. Dan is sitting in a makeup chair, making his final notes in a stack of folders lying haphazardly on his lap. He's in the fourth day of the fourth and final week of what has turned into a month-long tryout for a new ABC TV show, and all indications are he's just about locked up the gig as host of *Good Morning America*.

He's got a black telephone receiver tucked between his left ear and shoulder. On the other end of the call is his agent, Don Buchwald. They've been together since the early sixties, when Dan was represented by Harry Abrams and Associates. When Buchwald decided to strike out on his own, it was Ingram who agreed to go with him, essentially helping bankroll Don's venture with his cut of Dan's radio and commercial voice-over contracts.

It has been a highly profitable partnership. Dan has been riding high, buoyed by his most recent successes. Buchwald has been a driving force in helping Dan cement his place as one of the premier voice-over artists in the country, doubling his WABC income with voice

work. And now he's on the cusp of breaking out in another, even more lucrative, medium.

The opportunity came unexpectedly, when the popular host of local TV affiliate WABC's AM New York was forced to take a lengthy medical leave. Several hopefuls have come through to fill in, but none has stayed as long as Dan. He has managed to translate what he does on radio into excellent TV: make contact with his viewers as if he is speaking only to them.

Much of that comes from his opening up about his personal life; talking about his son with Down syndrome; even sharing pictures of his Irish Setter, "Moose."

He seems to be hitting a nerve with New Yorkers, in part, surely, because of their familiarity with his radio work, but also because of a newly revealed aspect of his personality: a warmth and sincerity that could easily be missed by listeners to his high-energy radio show.

This week has been particularly rewarding. What began as a ten-minute segment with Leonard Nimoy on Monday has evolved into a week-long cohosting stint for the former *Star Trek* star. The former "Mr. Spock" has stayed on to share his own insights into the renowned show, but also into Nimoy the man. He has even shared his published poetry, reading samples on the air. More importantly, the two have formed a very real, very deep friendship.

"Don," says Dan into the mouthpiece. "what on earth are you doing up so early this morning?" He's feigning ignorance, confident he knows why Don is calling. "Couldn't wait to deliver the good news?"

A thin man in polyester slacks and light blue silk shirt practically dances around Dan's makeup chair as he

touches him up, ducking under the telephone chord and generating a breeze that flutters the tissues tucked into Ingram's collar.

Dan knows that focus-group studies, the final step toward cementing the TV job, wrapped up earlier in the week. Don has been working closely with Squire Rushnell, the TV executive who would bring *Good Morning America* to the number-one spot in the morning TV ratings war.

Rushnell is staunchly in Dan's corner and has stayed in touch with Buchwald, providing him with the focus-group scores. Buchwald needs the results before the network seals them, believing that if he and Dan know the results, ABC can't lowball them when it comes time to negotiate a TV contract.

Suddenly, Dan's casual posture stiffens. His face hardens, and the stack of folders fall from his lap into a heap on the floor. The makeup artist backs away as Dan takes a tight grip on the telephone receiver. "Say that again," Dan says grimly.

Even the makeup man can hear Buchwald's reply through the black telephone receiver: "I'm sorry, Dan, but Squire tells me the results are not what we expected. They took the tapes out of the city and into the 'heartland,' middle America, wherever that is."

"Okay, they're not what we expected. But what exactly were the results?" Dan jumps to his feet, stretching the coiled wire to its limit. The phone strains to stay connected to the wall.

Don replies. "Very high marks for likability. Ditto for trustworthiness. Ditto for humor—"

Dan interrupts. "Don, are you fucking with me here? If you are, tell me now, and we'll laugh about it tomorrow over cocktails."

The reply is silence, followed by the sound of Don clearing his throat. When he resumes speaking, Buchwald's voice cracks. Dan feels his blood turn cold.

"Bottom line is, in spite of all the positives, they say you sound too ... 'ethnic for middle America,' whatever the fuck that is."

Even with his head swimming, Dan can't help noticing Buchwald's profanity. It's the first time he's heard Don swear in their eight years' collaboration.

Dan feels dizzy and realizes he hasn't been breathing. He fills his lungs deeply, with the air perfumed by his cooling coffee and the dusty scent of makeup. "What *does* that mean, Don? What do they mean, 'ethnic'? Isn't everyone ethnic in this country?"

Don replies, "Well, Rushnell says it means they think you look too..." He pauses. "Too Jewish. He says that might work in New York and LA, but not in Peoria."

"My folks were *Presbyterian*, for fuck's sake!" Dan wheels as if he's speaking to someone in the room. The makeup guy ducks as the phone gives up the ghost and pulls away from the wall, flying across the cramped room.

"Hello? Hello? Don?" Dan shouts, even as he recognizes the absurdity of speaking into a dead phone. "Shit."

Dan kicks his way through the pile of papers and drops himself back onto the barber's chair. "Okay, Timmy, let's finish the plasterwork."

Gesturing at the scattered pictures, bios, and charts, Timmy asks, "Do you want me to gather these up for you?"

Dan is actually touched. It would likely be a violation of union jurisdiction for Tim to pick up Dan's stuff. Obviously, the kid can see Ingram has been the recipient of bad news. "Nah, leave it there," Dan replies. I think I'm gonna wing it the last few shows." He settles into his seat and falls into a surprisingly restful nap.

BEGINNING OF THE END

On a blustery December night in Manhattan, John Lennon lies dying on a Central Park West sidewalk. The news of his death rocks the city he's adopted as his home, and its shockwaves are rapidly spreading around the world.

Howard Cosell has reached the pinnacle of his fame, perhaps passed it. He's now known mainly for his work on Monday Night Football, and for his seemingly unlimited vocabulary. Much of the public has forgotten his principled stand on behalf of Mohammed Ali, or even his ringside orations at some of the biggest boxing matches in modern history. He's hitting the bottle, hard, often showing up for his Monday games already drunk, occasionally puking on the way from his limo to the broadcast booth.

It's during one of those Monday-night games, at Schaeffer Stadium in Foxboro, Massachusetts, between the Patriots and the Miami Dolphins, when most of the country learns of Lennon's assassination. It's news that stuns the viewership—news that Cosell almost doesn't announce.

"Is this something we really want to say now, during the game?" Cosell asks his producers, who are sitting in

the broadcast truck at street level outside the stadium. "We're broadcasting a football game. This isn't sports related." Owners of the huge satellite dishes of the day can hear his side of the exchange, as well as Dandy Don Meredith's insistence that the news be broadcast.

Cosell obliges, announcing the "unspeakable tragedy" of Lennon's demise on Monday, December 8 at Roosevelt Hospital on Manhattan's west side.

What isn't apparent at the time is that Lennon's passing will also provide the second bookend to WABC's two-decade run as a music powerhouse.

Just as the arrival of the Beatles in 1964 indelibly established WABC's place on the broadcasting map, the death of what many consider the band's conscience will come to serve as a final milepost on the road to the station's demise. It won't be long before the station will bow to the pressures of the marketplace forever.

The inevitability of change has become apparent to anyone who can do basic math. Ever since the disco era erupted in the mid-1970s, WABC's share of listeners has shown constant erosion. The rise of FM more than doubled the number of frequencies competing for the same pool of ears, fracturing the listener base with tighter and narrower programming. The fact that music sounds much better on FM, and in stereo, compounds the problem. Listeners are going elsewhere, and AM is fast becoming the bastion of the burgeoning talk-radio industry.

But on this December night, a relative newcomer to WABC is just waking up from his evening nap and preparing for his overnight shift.

Howard Hoffman first made his name as a brilliant jock outside of New York City, at Middletown, New York's WALL. Some of his exquisitely produced spoofs of radio-programming clichés and practices will outlast his time at WALL, setting the bar for radio bits for generations to come.

After spending time at stations in New England and out west, he's finally made it to Mecca: New York City and WABC. Hoffman is an object lesson in why every time a jock cracks his mic, he should do his very best.

It's been years since Hoffman was working in Providence, Rhode Island, but in late 1979, WABC's program director was Al Brady Law, who had been the PD of WHDH, Boston, when Hoffman was in Rhode Island. Law had been impressed by Hoffman, and when WABC needed an evening man, Law remembered the kid. He tracked him down to Phoenix, where Hoffman had just been notified he was being cut loose. Hoffman actually finished his last shift in Phoenix on a Saturday and was on the air at WABC the following Monday.

But this shift, in December of 1980, is about to change his life, and those of music lovers everywhere.

Hoffman can sense a heightened buzz in the atmosphere this night. He hears an inordinate number of sirens in the air below his twenty-second-floor apartment on West 57th Street, between 8th and 9th Avenues. *Must be a busy night at Roosevelt*, he thinks as he heads out the door and starts his usual walk to work. Of course, Lennon has just been brought to Roosevelt Hospital around the corner, but Hoffman doesn't know that.

"Just another night in the Big Apple," he mutters as he heads east for 1330.

His first sense that anything is seriously amiss comes as he rounds the corner from the elevators and outer lobby on the eighth floor and passes the large double windows of the usually somnambulant (at this hour, shortly before midnight) WABC newsroom. It looks as if the entire staff has been called in. He recognizes the morning news guys, in about four hours early. *Uh-oh*, he thinks, *are cuts in the air?* That thought echoes the concerns of most of the staff these days.

Dan Ingram had seen the changes coming for some time. Other major-market ABC properties were making the switch to talk, and some, like Detroit's WXYZ, were making a lot of money at it.

"Don't look now, but there's another Kilroy in a suit," Dan would remark to his engineer when the visits from the "brain trust" began. He called them "Kilroys in suits" because whenever another programmer with ideas about WABC's future would get his requisite tour, the first thing Dan would see through the little window in the heavy studio door would be the peak of a man's head. He'd watch them rise up as they stretched onto their tippy-toes, noses just visible, as they strained to get a glimpse of the air studio before trundling upstairs to the executive suites.

Dan had unprecedented access to those offices. In fact, he's the only one of the station's deejays who is welcome there without an appointment.

As Hal Neal and then Rick Sklar moved up in the organization (in 1980, Neal was president of all ABC radio stations and Sklar was his vice president), Dan's access only grew.

It has only been a couple of years since WABC was toppled from its perch as the perennial top station in the New York City ratings, by an FM station that focused solely on the music of the whirlwind Disco era. Endless attempts to tweak the music, focus on older, "gold" hits aren't working for the former lion of the tri-state area. The numbers have begun to seep away as more stations, with hyper-focused programming, join the feeding frenzy like so many hyenas, by sheer force of numbers seizing the larger predator's kill.

But the end isn't going to happen this night, though Lennon's death will serve as the closing bracket to the era of Musicradio WABC's dominance. And Howard Hoffman is about to find himself knee-deep in a national tragedy.

Hoffman, still unaware, grabs a cup of coffee, black, from the Mr. Coffee machine outside the newsroom door. He strains to catch a word or two from the very serious-looking news reporters, writers, producers, and anchors, but the heavy door between the hall and the newsroom is just as effective as the one leading to the air studio, which he now pushes open with one hand, his coffee held wide in his right.

Sturgis Griffin is on the air, wrapping up his evening shift. He looks haggard and drained. Hoffman is sure the end really has come. As a radio vet, he's been through staff shake-ups and purges before and has heard the war stories of dozens more.

He asks a clearly stricken Griffin, "What is going on around here?" Griffin answers, "You haven't heard?" Then without waiting for a response, he says, "They got John Lennon."

Hoffman knows all about Lennon's battles with the Nixon administration and his efforts to stay in the United States. "Immigration?" he asks. "I thought he beat that rap."

"No," replies Griffin, barely able to hold back a sob, "they shot him. He's dead!"

Hoffman drops into one of the two swiveling chairs at the side of the control board. Coffee splatters from his mug and dribbles down the wooden armrest and onto the woolen fabric. An engineer, also on the verge of tears, sits opposite Griffin.

"What do we do?" asks Griffin.

"Well, first thing we should do is call Jay." Jay Clark is the latest PD, brought in, it seems to most, to dismantle Musicradio and preside over the station's next phase. Hoffman watches as Griffin presses the buttons of the touch-tone phone, dialing the number they've found in the dusty station Rolodex.

"Hi, Jay, It's Sturgis. Have you heard the news?" It's clear to Hoffman that he hasn't, that Sturgis has probably woken him. "John Lennon has been shot. He's dead," Griffin intones into the mouthpiece, trying his best to sound calm. There's a pause, and then it's Griffin's turn. "Well, I'm just wondering what to do. Should we break out some Beatles songs, or what ...?"

Griffin seems to wince as he responds again. "Okay. All right. You got it. Sorry to bother you. Good night."

Griffin places the receiver in the cradle and looks up at Hoffman. "He says under no circumstances should we break format. He says we should just keep playing what he's already told us to play."

"That's it?" replies Hoffman, almost shouting in disbelief.

"No," replies Griffin. "He says from now on, never to call him at home after eight o'clock. He says to call Steve Goldstein instead." Goldstein is another relatively new hire, brought in as assistant program director less than a year earlier.

"Well, then let's call Steve." Hoffman's shift starts in two minutes. "Go ahead, Sturg, I'll take over."

Griffin gets up from the console chair, and Hoffman sits down before the seat has time to cool. He reaches for the Rolodex and dials Goldstein's home in Westchester.

Unlike Clark, Goldstein is wide awake, having heard the news on Monday-night football. He's in shock, too, and listens to Hoffman's concerns. "I mean, we can't just act like nothing has happened, can we?" asks Hoffman.

"I'll be there in less than an hour. Don't change anything until I get there."

Hoffman feels a sense of relief as he hangs up the phone.

Steve Goldstein gets there just before one a.m. He takes Hoffman to the music library, followed by Griffin. Sturgis has stuck around, trying to be of help where he can, liaising between the jock studio and the newsroom as the news staff breaks in with live reports from Roosevelt Hospital and outside the Dakota Hotel, where a swelling crowd stands vigil on the snow-swept sidewalk outside Lennon's apartment. They load up with dozens of tape cartridges containing Beatles music, especially any featuring Lennon.

The rest of the night is a blur of Beatles tunes and news reports. The local news staff is in full crisis mode and does itself proud.

They feed the entire network, as well as breaking in several times an hour with reports of the spontaneous outbreaks of singing from outside a grieving Yoko Ono's apartment building, and the latest word about Lennon's deranged assassin, Mark David Chapman.

Through it all, though, Hoffman can't shake the belief that he's not the one who should be at the mic—Dan Ingram should. Despite over a decade's experience as a successful, skilled jock, Hoffman feels inadequate to the situation. But he's wrong. He manages to hold things together throughout the trying night, in a way that only a true broadcasting pro can.

He orchestrates an entire night's programming, so that even when he's not on the air, he's coordinating the next break and the one after that. When the night ends, he can't remember a single word he's said. But it's a monumental accomplishment.

Even so, he feels only relief when Big Dan bursts through that thick door, fresh, impeccably dressed, and obviously *ready*. "Unbelievable night, huh?" Dan asks rhetorically. He looks Hoffman straight in the eye, deeply. "Nice job, Howard. Excellent work."

Howard feels buoyed, by Dan's words, certainly, but most of all, by his presence.

Hoffman stays in the studio, and he and Dan use the breaks between music news and traffic to discuss the tragedy, Howard is just grateful for the sense of camaraderie he feels with this broadcasting great.

HEY KEMOSABE!

In less than eighteen months, the machinations that were underway well before that harrowing night would make their final turn. Musicradio would succumb to the inevitable and vanish into the ether.

BREAKING THROUGH

It's one of those February evenings in New York that remind you that spring is just around the corner. Trash that's been frozen scentless for weeks thaws, assaulting the nose as well as the eye. Sidewalks, slippery for months, finally dry in the sun. Winter-weary pedestrians open their coats to let the cool breeze dry their building sweat. There's a lightness in the belly, a harbinger of spring fever to last a day or two before the harsh northeastern winter reasserts itself.

Nowhere is that fluttering in the belly felt more keenly than in a tastefully appointed room on the fourteenth floor of the New York Hilton, on the Avenue of the Americas. A young woman is touching up her makeup, brushing her hair, and getting dressed, casually, for the most important evening of her life. Liz Kiley, all twenty-one years and forty-five days of her, is about to make her debut as the first woman ever to host an air shift on WABC Musicradio.

As she focuses on applying her eyeliner, Kiley tries to quell the self-doubt that's rising from that tumbling, fluttering space in her center. "I can't believe this is happening," she says through lips contorted through the makeup process. Just two weeks earlier, she'd been a

happy up-and-comer at WPGC in Washington, DC. She had come to love the place fondly called the Big Pig, cutting her teeth on the air and developing her sound. She loved meeting the artists, is still warmed by the kindness of Barry Manilow backstage at a concert six months earlier.

But when a promised raise failed to come through in January, she did what countless other jocks did: She sent an air check to WABC. She'd been astonished when, a week later, ABC Program Director Glenn Morgan called to tell her she was "one of the few I have my eye on." Less than two months had passed, and now she was sitting at a dressing table in a room at the Hilton, preparing for the biggest of the big time. "I can't believe this is happening," she repeats what is becoming a mantra.

The hiring of WABC's first woman jock did not happen easily. Nor was it made from any sense of righteous balancing of the gender scales. The truth is, WABC was in real trouble. Less than one year earlier, an upstart station with a narrowly focused format accomplished the unthinkable. Little WKTU-FM, a station that had jumped on the disco bandwagon, playing only the hot dance tunes of the craze, knocked legendary WABC from the top of the ratings. There was a lot of scrambling at ABC. The station adopted more disco but also increased its rotation of "gold" records from the fifties and sixties. What was first dismissed as a lucky punch proved to be no fluke. Radio itself saw a seismic shift from wide-appeal formats to stations super-serving slivers of the audience. Perhaps more important was another shift, from AM dominance to the age of FM, with its higher-fidelity stereo signal. At

WABC, as with stations across the dial, more change was on the way.

On the executive floor of the ABC building, there was a great sense of restiveness in the air. The station and its mass-appeal Top 40 format could not risk any major changes.

As with an ocean liner, a change in course would require a lot of time, with no guarantee that the audience you had before the move would still be onboard when you complete your turn, or that the one you seek will be waiting when you find your new bearings. Musicradio architect Rick Sklar had succeeded in large part by looking outside the New York market, for what worked elsewhere. If he saw a contest or a promotion that succeeded in Detroit, he'd find a way to localize it, "make it New York," and run it at WABC. Major shifts were too risky; WABC had to keep the listeners it already had.

Sklar had surrendered day-to-day decision-making duties there as he moved up as vice president of all ABC radio stations, but he was certainly an active observer. Morgan met with Sklar almost daily, and the latter wanted a response plan to the upheaval. The hiring of Kiley seemed a no-brainer to Morgan. The sultry Nightbird, Alison Steele, had dominant numbers, particularly among young men, on progressive rock WNEW-FM. Throughout the seventies, Steele had built a legion of listeners. If WABC couldn't make a major shift in format, at least it could revolutionize its deejay lineup. Sklar disagreed, vehemently. "I don't care who it is; a woman's voice does not belong on my format. Period." Morgan went ahead and hired Kiley anyway.

Liz walks across 6th Avenue and up the steps, past the ABC cube, and into the soaring lobby at 1330. Something about the sound of her heels echoing throughout the cavernous space makes her feel a bit less lonely, a tad more ... assertive.

She catches a hazy reflection in the chrome elevator doors; checks her shoulder-length, layered sandy brown hair; straightens her silver-framed aviator glasses.

She re-tucks her purple striped blouse into her high-hipped, slightly bell-bottomed slacks, takes a deep breath, and steps into the fluorescent brightness of the reception area on the eighth floor. The last strains of Donna Summer's "Bad Girls" are wafting from the glossy white ceiling-mounted molded plastic speakers, and a small group of men and women applaud her as she enters the room. "Look out, it's our own 'bad girl!'" somebody shouts, and Liz smiles tightly, nervous.

Morgan makes his way to her, takes her coat, announcing, "Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce WABC's newest star, Liz Kiley!" There's more hand-clapping, and a few "hear, hears," and Glenn begins the rounds of introductions. Over the speakers, the unmistakable beats of Billy May's "Tri-Fi Drums" begin. Dan Ingram is just ending his shift.

While Liz was crossing Sixth Avenue to get to the gathering, Ron Lundy had been sitting in Studio 8a as his great friend Dan did his show. "It's the Four Tops, with their tragic tale of the midget at the smorgasbord: 'I Can't Help Myself!'" He signaled to the engineer to cut his mic, and turned his attention back to Ron.

"Hey man, I don't care if she's a piece of ass or a dog; nobody's gonna mess with her when I'm around. Hell,

Ron, most of us have daughters her age." That his current wife, his third, was just a few years older didn't enter into his fatherly calculus. "She's got to be scared shitless. Let's give her a break, right?"

Ron nodded in vigorous agreement. "I met her after she interviewed. She's a good kid."

"Okay then," answered Dan, oblivious to the chauvinistic absurdity of the discussion. "The new girl is off-limits."

Dan looks at the small square window in the studio door and waves George Michael in. "You guys meet the new girl yet? She's just a kid!"

Michael slides his overcoat off both shoulders at once, then chucks it on top of a rack by the door. "I've got underwear older than her."

Dan makes his way into the scrum surrounding the "new girl." He reaches out a paw as the group parts as if by his will. "You must be Liz. I'm Dan Ingram. If there's anything I can do to help you, please just let me know. I've heard your air check. You're going to be great."

He smiles winningly and looks intently into her eyes, and Liz, almost drunk with the excitement of meeting so many of her radio idols, hears herself say, "Thank you, Dan; I will. I'm very excited to be working with you."

Dan moves on. The truth is, he hasn't heard her air check, but he considers it important to seem fully engaged, to project an aura of authority. Morgan doesn't bother to contradict him.

Kiley sees Sklar across the room, looking anywhere but at the group in the reception area laughing and chattering and sipping champagne. "Excuse me," Kiley says to the group, and strides across the room, puts out her

hand. "Mr. Sklar, hello, allow me to introduce mys—" She gasps, flushing as Sklar turns his back, striding through his only avenue of escape: the men's room door.

She stands there, shocked and embarrassed, as Morgan sidles up beside her.

"I'm sorry about that. He's just not ready." He grips her right hand, still outstretched, and shakes it gently, disguising her humiliation. "We'll prove him wrong, won't we?"

Liz shrugs, tries to shake it off, and returns to the party.

The gathering doesn't last long, and she's not on the air until midnight, so at eight p.m., Liz finds herself back in her room at the Hilton, reflecting on the short journey her career has taken. She remembers getting the call from Morgan telling her she had the job.

"I'm not sure I'm ready," she had told her boss at WPGC.

"You have to be ready," he'd replied. "It's time to go."

She had loved radio since she could remember, always walking around with her little transistor radio, earplug in her ear, listening to the same stars she now must get accustomed to calling colleagues.

She, along with millions of other school-aged kids of her generation, had perfected the method of stringing the earplug wire through her desk, into her blouse, and through its collar to her ear. Teachers would wonder why large portions of their classes were bobbing their heads in unison during a lesson, until one of the less-adept kids would get caught changing batteries or adjusting the volume.

Liz thinks back to her childhood. She was born at Lenox Hill Hospital, on Manhattan's east side, in 1958. Her family escaped the city later that year, taking up residence in Elmsford, in Westchester County, by the Sprain Brook Parkway, before moving to Connecticut. When she received her first radio at age four, she was hooked. No Barbie doll, no game, no TV show could duplicate the thrall of the amazing personalities who visited with her courtesy of the little magic box she could hold in her hand.

She remembers her mother saying, on more than a few occasions, that the family would have to buy Rayovac stock just to keep her in nine-volt batteries.

Her first concert was hosted by none other than Cousin Bruce Morrow: the Dave Clark 5. She can't remember the venue, but she'll always remember Cousin Brucie's lime-green silk suit.

Now she'll be sitting in the studio of her radio heroes, to be heard in something like twenty-five states, and, when the atmospheric conditions are right, as far away as New Zealand. She wonders if anyone will be listening to her tonight. She pictures a young girl hearing her for first the first time. Could she inspire such a girl? Times, she knows, have changed. But the magic of radio hasn't.

When she arrives in the studio for her first air shift, a long white box, the type that usually contains roses, rests in front of the console. She wonders if Sklar has had a change of heart, or, thinking back to her recent days at the Pig, if it's a prank, the box filled with any imaginable junk. She looks at the card as she lifts the top to reveal a dozen perfect long-stemmed red roses.

HEY KEMOSABE!

It reads:

Dear Liz,

Looks like you've made it.

—Barry Manilow

THE END

It's Monday, May 10, 1982, and Studio 8a is packed. Ordinarily, Ron Lundy would be doing his usual, silky, happy midday show in "the greatest city in the world," and to an extent, he is. But the start of this work week is also the end of an era. It's already being called the Day the Music Died, a play on "American Pie," Don McLean's paean to Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper, by fans and journalists alike. It's the day music, as a primary focus, will cease to be played over WABC's airwaves.

The champagne corks start popping shortly after Ron begins his final broadcast at nine a.m, FCC regulations forbidding the drinking of alcohol in-studio are ignored with a wink. There's a steady stream of well-wishers—executives, receptionists, secretaries, salespeople, news staff—all coming by to hug, cry, sniffle, and say good-bye. And Dan Ingram is there, too. Rick Sklar decided the two old friends would cohost the big nine-to-noon farewell show for two reasons. The most obvious one is that they've been at the station the longest (Ingram since 1961, Lundy since 1965), and as the most familiar personalities at the station, their combined presence adds poignancy to the send-off. That they're best friends only makes the choice more clear. But Sklar has a more pressing consideration that makes

putting his highest-rated jock on the air that morning a no-brainer: The switch to all talk is a huge bet on the future direction of the station in particular, and on radio in general. He wants the highest possible audience for the all-talk format that debuts at noon.

He hopes the Ingram-Lundy audience will stick around to hear the new sound of WABC, and that most will stay for good.

The show is a blur for both Dan and Ron. Ingram is wearing a navy blue suit with a striped tie and silk pocket square. Lundy, ever the country boy, is less formal, with an untucked button-down shirt hanging over his blue jeans. They exchange sardonic glances as some of the very bigwigs who engineered their demise come through to express condolences and appreciation for "all they've done" for the station.

But for them, this is the start of something quite big—revolutionary, really. In a few months, Super-Radio is scheduled to debut. ABC has gathered some of the highest-rated jocks around the country, and, with the nascent technology of satellite broadcasting, will begin a coast-to-coast network of radio stations, through which great jocks once known only in Chicago or San Francisco or New York would become national names. Unbeknownst to Dan and Ron, but already clear to many of the same executives slapping them on the back on this Monday morning, Super-Radio would never get off the ground. Low initial ad sales would frighten the network away from the project, killing the chance to start the radio-syndication boom decades before its time.

Dan has checked his super-thin Concorde watch again; he's actually eager to get this thing over with. The

show is a parade of pre-recorded tributes from the proverbial man on the street all the way up to celebrities of the day.

Ingram has just finished speaking, by phone hookup to Bruce Morrow, revelling in a replay of the famous "briefs" prank when, as the engineer remotely fires another piece of tape, the heavy studio door swings open. It doesn't take long for Dan to rise from the seat he's wedged into beside Lundy's at the mic. Dan strides through all the hangers-on to greet the man entering. He's tall, with dark glasses and a gray suit. And a red-tipped white cane.

"Bobby!" Big Dan's voice cracks. "Bobby Ryan! How are you, man?" It's the first time he's felt anything all day. "Come on in, Bobby, take a seat."

He directs the blind former engineer with what can only be described as loving hands as Ryan, who knows the studio from memory, heads straight to the guest chair that has always stood at the side of the console. A recently hired secretary is seated there, eating free cake and sipping champagne while chatting with one of the sales guys. One look from Dan is all it takes for her to clear out.

"Ladies and gentlemen, allow me introduce to you Bobby Ryan, engineer extraordinaire." There's a chuckle or two from those who don't know Ryan's story, but a few subtle whispers lead to small gasps of recollection and, finally, applause. Ingram raises his hand and quiets the crowd as he asks, "Or should I say Nevada State Senator Robert Ryan?" And the applause swells higher.

Dan has stayed abreast of Ryan's life after WABC. Despite every excuse, Ryan never seemed to get knocked down for long. He went to school, got another degree, moved back to Nevada, and entered politics.

That he's taken time to visit the station today touches Dan deeply, and Dan's briefly swimming in a whirlpool of memories. He makes sure he hears all about Bobby's life before returning to the mic for the last fifteen minutes of Musicradio WABC.

Finally, it comes to Dan to issue the final "legal station ID": "And now I'm going to say something I'll never say again: This is WABC New York. I can never say that again, Ron."

Lundy replies with his usual exuberance: "I know it. It's been a great day today! I've loved every minute of it!"

They cue the engineer to play two carts. One plays the bells from the beginning of John Lennon's "Starting Over," and the second, Lennon's "Imagine." And with that, a twenty-one-year-old institution dies.

Hours and countless handshakes and hugs later, Dan is at his desk on the eighth floor, packing his various knickknacks and assorted swag. He finds a stack of WABC bumper stickers from that prank back in, what was it, '68? He laughs and tosses them in the trash can at his feet. There's a Good Guys sweatshirt from the same day, and Dan decides to leave it there for the desk's next occupant. He's about done when he spots the corner of a glossy piece of paper poking out from the back of the center drawer. Curious, he drags it from its hiding space. It's a single page from an old magazine, compressed like an accordion. He spreads it out on the desk surface. Suddenly, Dan feels cast adrift. It's an ad for a 1963 twenty-three-window Volkswagen station wagon, with a huge red ribbon wrapped around it. "It Comes In Its Own Box," reads the caption. Faded feminine script handwrit-

ing reads, Darling, I don't need a Rolls-Royce, but I think this is cute. Please? Love, Patty

In an instant, he's transported back almost two decades. He had offered to buy his ever-faithful wife any car she wanted. It was 1962, and after all the uncomfortable "wagon trains" from station to station, state to state in secondhand cars, he finally felt financially secure. "You can have whatever you want, a Rolls, a sports car, anything!"

He was twenty-eight and proud of his work and family, and liked the thought of his wife driving around in something top of the line. But Patty had always been grounded, unimpressed by flashy cars and jewelry. "I'll think about it," was all she'd said. The next day, he'd found the ad on top of his briefcase as he headed off to an early morning commercial voice-over recording session.

They went to the VW dealer in Hempstead, and she found one on the lot right away. It was red with white trim, just like the ad, and had plenty of seats for the five children. And its fifty horsepower moved it quite perkily down the road. That it didn't have seat belts yet was of no concern; she was a safe driver, and the restraints were set for delivery at the dealership in another week or so. Patty drove it off the lot that fall day.

Just a few weeks later, Dan received the phone call that shattered his newfound security forever.

A policeman called their home on a tree-lined neighborhood in Woodbury, where Patty had left him with their five children while she helped out a friend in need.

The friend had a bunch of Tupperware to deliver, but she was sporting a nasty black eye inflicted by her drunken husband, so Patty cheerfully offered to drop off the promised goods in her shiny new "VeeDubbelYoo." She had picked up the goods but never made the deliveries.

Over the phone, the cop, in very even tones, told Dan that his wife had been in an accident, that she had "expired," and that he was needed to identify the body. He called a neighbor, Anita, a recent widow who, along with her late husband, had been a regular dining guest, to come over to watch the kids.

They were all asleep when he slid into his Cadillac and drove to the hospital. Everything was velvet: the night, the wet roads, the feel of the steering wheel in his hands. He found himself at the hospital entrance suddenly, as if he'd dreamed the thirty-minute drive.

A cop and an attendant in hospital whites met him at the emergency room nurse's station before he'd had the time to sit down. "Mr. Ingram?" Dan nodded back at the guy in white, who looked away. "I'm sorry for your loss. Please come this way."

Their shoes squeaked down the glistening hallway, to an elevator for the trip to the morgue. Dan suppressed an urge to flee, suddenly claustrophobic, the smells of antiseptic and floor polish suffocatingly pungent. Another man in white joined the three when the elevator opened at the basement entrance to the morgue.

Dan realized that at 6'2", 190 pounds, he was a threat to overpower his escort if he lost it. The more people on hand, the better for them, he knew.

The stainless steel drawer opened sideways, contrary to Dan's expectations. It was already ajar, exposing the form of a body under a white, papery wrap. Dan braced himself as the attendant pulled down the shroud. It was Patty, of course. Her head was just slightly askew, but besides that, there wasn't a mark on her—no sign of such violence that could take a life and leave another in shambles.

Dan choked back the scream he felt rising in his throat, nodded as tears burned down his face. "It's her." He nodded. "It's her. My God, Patty." He stopped there, crushing the wails that sought release from his knotted chest.

Again, from the cop this time, and with a hand on his shoulder: "I'm sorry for your loss, sir."

One attendant nodded at the other, and he started pushing the drawer shut. Dan heard himself, through gritted teeth, in a strangulated, foreign voice: "No, don't! She won't be able to breathe in there. Wait ..."

His shoulders slumped as the ridiculousness of his cries reached his consciousness. He noticed another furtive glance between orderlies, the cop shifting his weight to the balls of his feet. Dan turned away as the brushed steel drawer shut then latched with a well-oiled click. He was back under control.

The cop guided him to an outer room, where he had to sign a paper. "She had expired by the time the ambulance reached her," the cop told him. "Death was instantaneous."

Finally, some news he could grab a hold of. It turned out a pregnant woman had been in the car that Patty's VW had struck after jumping the guardrail of the Southern State

Parkway. She'd suffered a broken shin bone. Dan would find her husband, pay her medical bills. Her husband would say (what else?) he was sorry for Dan's loss.

After the cop took him to the scene, Dan drove home, thanked Anita, and made his way to bed, checking on the kids along the way. He decided to wait until sunup to break the news.

He sat on his bed, *her* bed, *their* bed, and kicked off his shoes. It wasn't until he reached up to scratch his face that he realized he was crying.

He looked around the room, hoping something would catch his interest. His eyes fell on the white binding of a book by Dr. Spock, the one who was supposed to have all the answers on child-rearing. He got up, grabbed the tome, and sat on the floor, back against the bed. He started reading, looking for guidance for the difficult challenge awaiting him in the morning.

"I'm sorry for your loss." It was a phrase he'd hear over and over for the next several weeks, and more. But what had he lost? It was so much more than a carefully constructed life and family, a soul mate and a mother for his brood. Something broke inside Dan that night. He was on the cusp of one of the most successful broadcasting careers in history, and he'd suddenly lost much more than his moral compass. He'd lost his magnetic north. He married Anita eight weeks later.

Dan folds the ad and numbly slips it into his right breast pocket. It strikes him that the day the music died was not May 10, 1982. Nor was it February 3, 1959, as Don McLean might have him believe. No, he realizes, now, after all these years, the music in his life died that autumn night in 1963.

Despite all the records he's played, Dan has been living in a world without music for decades. But he's done what's expected of a man. The more he succeeds (and he's worked hard at that, handling his air shift and dozens of commercial voice-over auditions and recording sessions per week), the more money comes in.

He pays his bills (paid off the mortgage on the manse in Oyster Bay Cove in seven years) and covers all of his responsibilities. As for the booze, the broads—why not keep a little for himself? Isn't he entitled to enjoy the fruits of his labor after everything he's been through?

And the fruits, after all, are very good indeed.

Dan starts with a sudden chill as Ron Lundy slaps him on the back; stragglers are heading to Mercurio's, and for once, "You ain't paying, Kemosabe!"

Dan's head clears in a beat, and he stands up to face his old friend. "Then make mine a double."

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It was a time of wide-eyed excitement; of great leaps, revolution, and war. A new generation wrested control of the music and the mores of the times. They tuned in, turned on, and dropped out to a sound track of rock and roll. It was the sixties and seventies, and in the biggest metropolitan area in the world, they heard it all on an AM radio tuned almost exclusively to WABC radio. Rising stars and future legends like Dan Ingram, Bruce Morrow, Chuck Leonard, and Ron Lundy played the hits, over and over again, pioneering what today has become a dying art: personality radio.

Hey Kemosabe! The Days (and Nights) of a Radio Idyll is a ground-breaking work, blending memoir and fiction to create a revelatory look beyond the surface of the times and at the biggest radio stars of the day. We witness the camaraderie of these superstars as they navigate their times: the partying, the hijinks, and the heartbreaking loss.

It focuses on the brilliant, sophisticated, and subversively clever Ingram while following his life, and that of the radio station, through more than two decades of dominance over the New York area airwaves. More than just a "music" book, *Hey Kemosabe!* is based on the remembrances of Ingram and other characters, drawn from interviews by the author, former CBS News writer Chris Ingram (who is also Big Dan's son).

WABC and its beloved cast of characters provided the mortar that helped hold us all together during a turbulent era—from the arrival of the Beatles through national tragedies like the Kennedy and King assassinations; from the rise of disco, FM, and talk radio to the murder of John Lennon. They were always there, dependable friends setting the tone with humor, energy, and, when called for, reverence.



Chris Ingram grew up with a rare view of the adroit, heyday, and demise of personality-based rock-and-roll radio. The son of radio legend Big Dan Ingram, he had a front-row seat to a magic era in the industry, both before and behind the scenes. A former news writer for CBS News, Ingram has written about major events occurring around the globe. Now he's turned his attention to the story of WABC Musicradio and the stars who made it the most listened-to radio station on the planet for two decades. His enthusiasm for the subject matter covered in *Hey Kemosabe! The Days (and Nights) of a Radio Idyll* is proven, having followed his father's footsteps into radio; he's also a radio deity.

Chris has written this unique work by blending memoir, fiction, and the results of hours of interviews with many of the characters included within. He presents a fast-paced, rollicking ride through an era of upheaval and excitement.

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