

ANCHORWOMAN: RISE OF THE MANGO QUEEN

A ONE ACT COMEDY PLAY

by
Paul DiLella



BROOKLYN PUBLISHERS, LLC

Publishers of Contest-Winning Drama

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CHARACTERS

(2 Males, 4 Females, 7 Either, extras **)

SALLY SHELL	20s, new anchorwoman
SHELLY SOMMERS	30s, former anchorwoman
TROY THOMAS	40-50s, co-anchor and temp general manager
"Tiny" SPINOZA	50s-60s, general manager of KDST-Channel 6
EXASPERANZA SPINOZA	20s, Filipino wife of "Tiny."
SUZIE CRUZ	20s, TV crewperson
JULIO/ JUNE GARCIA**	20s, a physician's assistant (male/ female)
DECORATOR**	20s, jeans, T-shirt, or overalls
SW*AT LEADER	20s-70s, dressed in sweats, sneakers
SW*AT MEMBER#1**	any age, dressed in sweats, sneakers
MEDICS (2)**	20s-30s, dressed in ambulance uniforms
EXTRAS	Other SW*AT members

**Note: Doubling, tripling possible

TIME

Present

SETTING

Studio of KDST-Channel 6 TV News, Pahrump, Nevada

PRODUCTION NOTES

The idea for *Anchorwoman: Rise of the Mango Queen* was imbedded in the first play (*Anchorwoman!* a ten-minute play also published by Brooklyn). "Tiny" has gone off to the Philippines to marry; Troy has had a "heart attack," leaving Sally, Shelly, and Suzie to fend for themselves. Now, what would happen if "Tiny" and his new wife suddenly came back?

The set is still simple: a news anchor desk and chairs; the station logo, and a panoramic "scene" of a city. The only additions will be a new banner and logo, some fake palm trees, baskets of fruit, and some fake animals.

Our auditorium at Pahrump Valley High School, where *Anchorwoman: Rise of the Mango Queen* premiered, has a sloping floor to the stage; the character Suzie skates down to give the countdown to the newscasters who are facing the cameras (i.e. the audience). The audience enjoys watching, wondering if Suzie will crash into the stage. (Sometimes her bakes don't work!)

When I came up with the gag of having a SW*AT TEAM instead of SWAT, I had to think of a way where the message to 911 could be misunderstood. I thought that if Suzie texted the message, then that could set up the problem (and the payoff for the gag.)

While texting 911 is not yet available in all areas of the United States, some states like Iowa and Florida and cities like Boston, New York City, and L.A. have "e911" services available. Perhaps, then, texting 911 for a SWAT team is plausible device for the purposes of this play.

My favorite line for advertising is, "News shouldn't be this funny!"

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Anchorwoman: Rise of the Mango Queen premiered at Pahrump Valley High School on November 21, 2009 directed by the playwright with the following cast:

In Order of Appearance:

Sally Shell	Paige Trificana
Troy Thomas	Joey Steele
Suzie Cruz	Bianca Contreras
"Tiny" Spinoza	Marcus Shepard
Exasperanza	Sierra Castro
Shelly Sommers	Sadie Behar
Decorator #1	Gaby Harris
Physicians' Asst.	Shawn Kennedy
SW*AT Team Leader	Gaby Harris
SW*AT person #1	Trina Lighty
SW*AT Team	Tabitha Lighty Valerie Lawdensky Tyler Harris Vince Carbajal
Medic #1	Shawn Kennedy
Medic #2	TeAndre Small

ANCHORWOMAN: RISE OF THE MANGO QUEEN

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SETTING: KDST-Channel 6 studio, Pahrump, Nevada. (pronounced "K-DUST"). Studio is furnished with an anchors' desk and chairs. In the background is the station logo or banner or a faux city scene. If possible, in front of the stage is a prop camera.

AT RISE: *The 5:00 pm evening news show is in progress. Anchorwoman SALLY SHELL, wearing a sports coat, expensive-looking blouse, and a large red scarf, segues into local news.*

SALLY: Remember the saying, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you?" Well, it looks like our local burger bistro has bitten off more than it can chew. Woolf's Burger---known for "the burger so good you'll wolf it down"---was raided today with the help of local law enforcement and food regulators with the Food and Drug Administration. Complaints from customers who claimed their burgers had beards prompted FDA regulators to go undercover. What they discovered is Woolf's was using unregulated meat from an animal hospital. Analysis of Woolf Burger outlets revealed that 97% of the chain's fast food outlets were next to or near animal hospitals. One tip-off came from the chain's TV slogan: "Meat so fresh it barks." Police arrested the store manager, three employees, and a vegan protestor who bit a meat-eater. The FDA plans to investigate hundreds of Woolf's in twenty-four other states to see if the use of "veterinary waste" is rampant throughout the chain. Animal rights activists are expected to picket Woolf's until this controversy is resolved. When we come back from commercial, we will bring you the latest in sports.

(Theme music up as station goes commercial. SALLY relaxes, sips some water, and fixes her make-up. Interim station manager TROY THOMAS enters. HE has a big nose and a bad toupee.)

TROY: Great job, Sally. Great job.

SALLY: You're doing a fine job, too, Troy.

TROY: Yeah, ain't this the life. With Shelly and Tiny gone, life is good.

SALLY: How close are you to selecting a co-anchor?

TROY: With the economy in the crapper, I think that's on hold. Right now, it's all yours.

SALLY: Thanks for your confidence.

TROY: Saves a buck, too.

SALLY: I understand.

(SUZIE CRUZ, chewing gum and wearing headphones, skates in. SHE hands a note to TROY and skates off. HE reads it.)

TROY: Holy Hotmail! Listen to this: "Returning to Pahrump with wife. Expect pickup at American Airlines baggage, Flight AA 1435. Arrive July 29 [note: date can be changed for actual performance.] 1:40 pm. Be there. Signed, Tiny." What day is it?

SALLY: Don't you follow the news?

TROY: This is no time to be a smart aleck. The date?

SALLY: July 29. [date can be of actual performance]

TROY: You're sure?

SALLY: Unless you're using a Mayan calendar.

TROY: *(Checks his watch)* Oh pooh. It's 5:20. I'll never make it! Why am I getting this email now? *(Calls)* Suzie! Get out here!

(SUZIE skates in.)

Suzie. Why didn't I get this earlier?

SUZIE: Because you told me never to interrupt you while you're placing bets.

TROY: That's enough. Not now, Suzy. *(To SALLY)* What am I going to do now?

SALLY: Tiny's flying *into* the country. You could fly *out*.

TROY: Be serious. I don't have a passport.

SUZIE: Relax. It's been taken care of.

TROY: What do you mean?

SUZIE: Tiny's got a ride.

TROY: Who?

SUZIE: Our old friend and co-worker, Shelly.

TROY: What? Tiny fired her.

SUZIE: Yeah, well, she's not one to let go. Seems she's been corresponding with Tiny's wife, and they've become close. Shelly has been keeping her abreast of what's been happening in Tiny's absence.
TROY: So? Everything's been running fine.

(SUZIE's cell rings. SHE takes the call.)

SUZIE: *(Into phone)* Okay. Fine. *(To TROY)* Except the ratings. Not to mention we've lost two more sponsors. *Watch'n'Wash and Granny's Goodies.*

TROY: Who cares about a laundromat that shows R-rated dvds and a bakery which boasts "teeth optional" to eat its specialties. Big deal.

SALLY: Could've used that money to hire a co-anchor.

TROY: I know. I know.

SUZIE: They should be here any minute. That was Tiny on the cell.

TROY: What?

SUZIE: First stop, Tiny said, is the station.

TROY: Holy hemorrhoids! Why can't he go to a motel and relax?

SALLY: Tiny's form of relaxation is aggravating everyone.

TROY: Don't I know.

SUZIE: *(Gets a message on her headset)* Okay. I'll tell them. *(To SALLY and TROY)* If it matters, we've looped the same commercials six times now. Viewers are calling in suicide threats.

TROY: Oh... no!

(TROY and SUZIE exit.)

SALLY: I'm on it.

(SHE returns to her desk. Theme music up.)

This is Sally Shell with the KDUST-Channel 6 Evening News. On behalf of management, we apologize for the technical glitch which caused the same commercials to be aired several times in a row. Please send your comments to our station, using the email address on the bottom of your screen. For those of you who are seriously distressed, we will send you a voucher for your choice of St. John's Wort or a Happy Meal. In sports, Hazel Guttlerub of Boise, Idaho, won the Senior Power Walker Championship today in Loose Springs, Kansas. Despite stiff competition, Hazel out-powered her competitors, burning up the one-mile course in a record seventy-eight minutes. First prize is a pimped-out walker, complete with runners and a port-a-potty. Way to go, Hazel.

(Off-stage commotion. Suddenly, TINY SPINOZA and his Filipino wife, EXASPERANZA, storm in. TINY wears a tacky Hawaiian T-shirt, shorts, and loafers; EXASPERANZA wears traditional Filipino garb: Visayan-style skirt and blouse, called respectively Patadyong and Kimona. THEY are followed by an ashen TROY, and a blaze' SUZIE. SHELLY SUMMERS lurks in the background.)

TINY: What is going on here?

SALLY: I'm in the middle of a broadcast, Mr. Spinoza.

TINY: I don't care.

TROY: We don't want to lose all our viewers, Sir.

TINY: Since I left, this place is dead. No excitement! No thrills! Nothing. There's more life in a morgue.

SALLY: Sir, what about the broadcast?

TINY: Here. Give me your mike.

(SALLY takes off her mike and gives it to TINY. HE puts it on and stands in front of the anchor desk.)

TINY: Ladies and gentlemen, the management of KDST-Channel 6 News interrupts this broadcast to bring you an important announcement. A few weeks ago, I resigned my position of general manager. I flew to the Philippines to marry my love, Exasperanza Molito. I had planned to live the rest of my life in glorious retirement with my bride in the splendid country of the Philippines. However, it has come to my attention, thanks to the vigilance of a former employee---now reinstated---Shelly Sommers, that during my absence, KDST-Channel 6 News has been woefully mismanaged. Viewership has declined, and advertisers have bailed. To remedy this situation, I am hereby reinstating myself as the general manager with the full blessing of corporate office. Starting with our next broadcast, you will see changes in the way we present the news. I pledge to you, our viewing audience, to regain your trust and advertising dollars. Soon, KDST-Channel 6 News will be number one in audience share. We will sweep the competition. We will win all major journalism awards. Wait and see. You may be surprised, but you won't be

disappointed. Signing off for KDST-Channel 6 Evening News, your champion, Tiny Spinoza, General Manager. Thank you for watching and good night.

(Pause)

Okay. That's a wrap. Play theme.

(Signoff theme plays. TINY hands mike back to SALLY. EXASPERANZA joins her husband. THEY hug. SHELLY comes forward. SALLY and TROY look stricken, and SUZIE, indifferent to the turn of affairs, pops her gum.)

How was I, dear?

EXASPERANZA: Wonderful! Wonderful!

(SHE kisses TINY on the cheek.)

TINY: Save that for later, honey.

(SHE titters.)

TROY: Mr. Spinoza, you mentioned changes.

TINY: Oh, yes. Changes. First, we're going to rotate anchormen. Lead anchor will be Shelly---

SHELLY: ---I'm back!

TINY: ---you Troy and Sally will rotate each night.

TROY: I used to be head anchorman!

SHELLY: Times have changed. Out with the old. In with the new!

SALLY: More like---out with the bald and in with the witch.

SUZIE: We still have your broom.

SHELLY: I heard that!

TINY: Suzie will do live commercials.

SUZIE: *(Pops gum)* Oh, yeah?

TINY: And most important, our new program director is---Exasperanza!

EXASPERANZA: Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

SHELLY: Exasperanza has some fantastic ideas. Dynamite décor and eye-catching costumes.

SALLY and TROY: Costumes?

TINY: Yes, costumes. It will be a themed show.

SUZIE: *(Twirls finger)* Oh, boy.

SALLY: And Mrs. Spinoza has experience?

(SUZIE pantomimes pelvic thrusts.)

TINY: Of course not! We can't afford anyone with experience. But she has passion, and passion is what this news station needs!

(SUZIE pantomimes pelvic thrusts.)

TROY: When do the changes start?

TINY: Today. Now. This moment. We will unveil the new, improved KDST-Channel 6 Evening News format tonight at 10:00 pm.

TROY: Holy Christmas!

TINY: Yes! Christmas! Exasperanza has an idea for Christmas. We will do a holiday-themed telethon to raise money for homeless banking executives. All the news will be happy news. No downbeat newscasts. No murders, tornados, epidemics, or scandals. Just happy, happy news. We'll spotlight local talent in between news coverage. It'll be great!

SALLY: Isn't this a bit sudden?

SHELLY: No. The last broadcast is a perfect time to try out the new set-up. We can work out the bugs in time for tomorrow's prime time slot.

TINY: Yes, that was Shelly's idea.

SALLY: How clever.

SHELLY: Aren't I?

TINY: Exasperanza has made renderings of the new set. I've contacted professional set designers to produce the new set pieces and to install them tonight. *(Looks at his watch)* In fact, they should be here now. In the reception room. Exasperanza, they're all yours. Go to it.

(SHE exits.)

SALLY: What do we do now?

TINY: I want you and Shelly to go to the dressing room and put on your new costumes. Then come out here.

(SALLY and SHELLY exit.)

SUZIE: (Snaps gum) And me?

TINY: Tell Gary to set the teleprompter for the commercials. Get one of the products, bring it out here and practice your delivery.

(SUZIE exits.)

TROY: What about me?

TINY: Troy, you really put a scare into us the night you faked a heart attack.

TROY: I didn't fake anything. I had acute indigestion. I almost didn't make it.

TINY: And we almost didn't make it on air. I want you to have a physical.

TROY: A physical?

TINY: Now. A physician's assistant is standing by.

TROY: Oh boy.

(TINY whistles. [Alternate: TINY yells, "Out here, now!"] JULIO, a physician's assistant (P.A.), walks out, carrying a clipboard, medical bag, and a lightweight scale. Around his neck is a stethoscope. At the same time, SUZIE emerges with a folding tray and a paper bag. TROY is on one side of the stage, SUZIE the other. As the P.A. and SUZIE set up, EXASPERANZA leads the entourage of workers who haul in various set materials. THEY take down the old banner, remove old props to make room for the new set. Some of these props are fake palm trees, a backdrop / curtain of a panoramic view of Manila Bay [or something to that effect], a banner proclaiming "KDST-Channel 6 News—Fresh as a Mango." The effect is overwrought, gaudy, and tacky. As THEY work in the background, SUZIE practices with the teleprompter, coordinating her spiel with hand movements with the product. From the way SHE chews her gum, SUZIE is not enjoying this. On the other side of the stage, the P.A. weighs TROY, checks his heart, his blood pressure; HE tells TROY to run in place; HE checks his tongue and throat. The P.A. dutifully records the results. Through all of this, TINY SPINOZA paces like a caged animal. At the end of these activities, SHELLY and SALLY enter in costume. SHELLY parades in, while SALLY walks rigidly. SHELLY is draped in the bright colors worn during the Sinulog Festival in honor of Santo Nino. SALLY wears a dress in the colors and symbols of the Philippine flag: red, blue, and white. However, SALLY's attire includes a mask, worn during the many festivals.)

SHELLY: Exasperanza, how do we look? I look grand, don't you think?

(EXASPERANZA comes forward to inspect the costumes.)

EXASPERANZA: Magnificent! You are gorgeous! And you, Sally, you--

SALLY: --all that is missing is my spear.

EXASPERANZA: No, no, no spear, dear.

SALLY: (Indicating SHELLY) I need it to protect myself against the voodoo queen, here.

SHELLY: (To SALLY) You're so crass.

SALLY: Learned it from you.

(TINY comes over.)

SALLY: How am I supposed to talk through this mask? I can barely see out of it, and no viewer can see my facial expressions.

SHELLY: It fits you perfectly, Miss Rigor Mortis.

SALLY: Bite me.

SHELLY: With pleasure.

SALLY: On second thought, who needs rabies?

TINY: You two stop bickering. (Looks over EXASPERANZA's work) Shelly, you're fine. Sally, lose the mask.

SALLY: Finally.

EXASPERANZA: Will you wear it for me?

TINY: You mean when we're alone?

EXASPERANZA: (Whispers, cuddling up to him) When we're alone.

TINY: *(Trying to maintain composure)* Sure. Okay, we're agreed. The mask goes.

EXASPERANZA: We'll lose the festival effect I want to create.

TINY: Isn't there something else you could do?

EXASPERANZA: I could paint her face in festival colors. Red, yellow, blue!

SALLY: As long as I don't look like a face full of Skittles.

EXASPERANZA: Skittles. Yummy!

TROY: What about me? What do I wear? More than a mask, I hope.

EXASPERANZA: Your costume is in the dressing room. It's the fruity one.

TROY: The fruity one. Let me guess. Like the underwear commercial?

TINY: You heard my wife. Go put it on.

TROY: Yes sir. *(HE exits.)*

TINY: Suzie. How's it coming?

(SHE skates over.)

SUZIE: If you slow down the teleprompter, I can handle it.

TINY: Good. Tell Gary to slow it down. Clear off your stuff.

(SUZIE folds the table, puts the product into the bag, and skates off. TINY approaches JULIO/ JUNE.)

TINY: How'd he do?

JULIO [JUNE]: You mean Troy.

TINY: No, I mean the last six patients before Troy. Yes, Troy!

JULIO [JUNE]: His vital signs are normal for a man of his age and condition. However, people who seemed perfectly healthy can die without warning.

TINY: And how much am I paying you for this priceless information?

JULIO [JUNE]: Three hundred seventy-five dollars.

TINY: Do you think he has the stamina to last a whole program?

JULIO [JUNE]: Maybe.

TINY: A single news segment?

JULIO [JUNE]: Possibly.

TINY: The opening credits?

JULIO [JUNE]: More than likely.

TINY: I can only imagine what it would cost if I wanted an accurate opinion.

JULIO [JUNE]: Lots. I'll fax you the paperwork and the bill. Bye.

(As JULIO / JUNE exits---)

TINY: Will you take a postdated check? Ah, screw it.

(TROY enters in costume. HE is a walking pineapple.)

TROY: Watch out, people! These spines are sharp!

(SALLY rushes over to him.)

SALLY: Brother, can you spare a spine? Shelly doesn't have one.

(SHELLY glares.)

(Aside) That's okay. I'll just clip one when you're not looking.

DECORATOR: Mr. Spinoza, we're finished. How does it look?

TINY: Exasperanza, you tell me. It's your vision.

(EXASPERANZA walks around with a critical eye. Finally---)

EXASPERANZA: Magnificent! Darling, it's how I always imagined it!

TINY: There you go. See what talent can do?

(EXASPERANZA clasps her husband. The set DECORATORS and CREW exit.)

EXASPERANZA: You married me for my talent and my brains, yes?

TINY: Ah... I'd say... those reasons are in the top three.

(EXASPERANZA sees the gleam in his eye.)

EXASPERANZA: Oh, you naughty boy! You naughty boy!

(SUZIE skates in.)

SUZIE: If you love-birds would fly to a hotel, we could prep our show.

SALLY: How much time do we have?

SUZIE: Ten minutes.

SHELLY: Whoa, baby. Time to primp.

(As SHELLY exits---)

SALLY: No time for a facelift. Try using rubber bands.

SHELLY: They don't work!

SALLY: First honest thing she's said.

EXASPERANZA: Sally, dear, stay here. I'll get the face paint. I can't wait!

(SHE exits.)

SALLY: Watch, Troy. You're a pineapple. I'll be a mango.

TROY: *(To TINY)* Mr. Spinoza, I have been your lead anchor for six years now.

TINY: So that's why the ratings have gone down.

TROY: I'm serious. I have a reputation to uphold. My loyal fans expect it.

TINY: *(To SUZIE)* How many is that?

SUZIE: He used to have four, but one died.

TROY: I absolutely refuse to go on-air in this costume. It's humiliating, degrading, and it itches. I look like a yellow porcupine.

TINY: You refuse, eh? That's an insult to my wife.

TROY: Sometimes a man has to put his foot down.

TINY: You mean like this?

(HE stomps TROY's foot.)

TROY: Oooouch!

TINY: While you're still in pain, here's more bad news. You're fired. Suzie, escort Mr. Thomas to the office and prepare a check.

TROY: Fired? You can't fire me. I have a contract!

TINY: So?

TROY: I'll see you in court. If not earlier.

TINY: My lawyer will beat up your lawyer. Then your lawyer will beat you up.

TROY: We'll see!

(HE leaves in a huff. SUZIE follows him.)

TINY: *(As TROY exits)* Don't rip the costume! I need it for Halloween.

SALLY: At least you won't have to worry about Troy having a heart attack on air.

TINY: Precisely. Two birds with one stone. So it's you and Shelly.

SALLY: Just like old times. I'll pack my taser.

(EXASPERANZA returns with a make-up kit.)

EXASPERANZA: Sit down. Sit down, Sally.

(SALLY sits at the anchor desk.)

This will be such fun!

SALLY: Just don't turn me into Shelly. One of her is enough.

EXASPERANZA: Not to worry. When I'm done, you will look like our national bird, the Philippine eagle!

SALLY: Add some talons, and I can take on Shelly.

EXASPERANZA: Oh, you're so funny. Now keep your face forward and still.

(SHE adjusts SALLY's face. EXASPERANZA opens the make-up kit and takes out some grease paint, sponges, powder, and eyeliner. SHE gets to work. SUZIE enters, skating over to TINY.)

SUZIE: Mr. Spinoza, Troy didn't wait for his check. Just stormed out, screaming obscenities.

TINY: Any good ones?

SUZIE: You've said better.

TINY: Naturally. I'm Italian.

EXASPERANZA: Tiny, remember our deal. For every cuss word, you owe me a dollar.

TINY: This could cost more than the pre-nup.

SUZIE: Should I google some substitutes?

TINY: Good idea. There's got to be some flavorful words she doesn't know.

SUZIE: Right, sir. I'll get on it after the broadcast. *(Calls out)* Okay, everyone. Places. Five minutes!

(SUZIE exits. Offstage, SUZIE yells, "Places! Five minutes!" SHELLY runs out, stops, poses.)

SHELLY: How do I look?

SALLY: The papaya princess has arrived. Hurray.

SHELLY: The queen. I have to be a queen. The Queen of KDST Channel 6 Evening News.

SALLY: You lost that one, remember?

SHELLY: Rematch.

SALLY: You're on, sucker.

EXASPERANZA: Shelly, you look fabulous, just fabulous.

SHELLY: I owe all to you, Mrs. Spinoza.

EXASPERANZA: Call me Exasperanza, dear.

SHELLY: You are my champion, Exasperanza.

SALLY: You could choke saying a name like that.

EXASPERANZA: What was that?

SALLY: I said, "I'll choke without a glass of water before we start."

SHELLY: I should be so lucky.

EXASPERANZA: I know we didn't have time for a run-through. But don't worry. I'll cue you from the booth.

SALLY: Okey-dokey.

(TINY walks to his wife and hugs her.)

TINY: This is a great moment, my dear. Your first broadcast. I know you'll do fine. I'll be watching the monitors. After the show, we'll celebrate.

EXASPERANZA: I can't wait!

(SUZIE enters.)

SUZIE: Places. Everyone. Now! Thirty-seconds!

(EXASPERANZA packs up the make-up. SHE and TINY exit. SUZIE prompts from the floor. SHELLY takes her seat.)

SHELLY: Ready for round two?

SALLY: Ready. No quarter?

SHELLY: No quarter.

(SUZIE starts countdown, 5-4-3-2-1. The station's theme song starts---the new one. SUZIE exits.)

SHELLY: *(To SALLY)* That's not our theme.

SALLY: Another improvement. It's kind of bouncy. I like it.

(SHE hums and sways to the beat.)

SHELLY: Good grief. *(Calls)* Exasperanza! Suzie! What's going on!

(EXASPERANZA pops her head out.)

EXASPERANZA: It's Filipino Reggae. [or any other type of hip Filipino music] We need a more hip intro. As my husband says, "Deal with it."

(SHE exits. SUZIE skates out.)

SUZIE: Sally, you've been on air for a minute. Focus!

(SHE skates off. Theme music out.)

SALLY: Good evening. This is top TV newswoman Sally Shell reporting live from KDST Channel 6 News with the 10 pm evening update. Co-anchoring with me tonight is the *old* veteran, Shelly Sommers.

SHELLY: Thank you, Sally, for not spitting.

SALLY: Before we begin with our top story tonight, on behalf of the management at KDST-Channel 6, we want to welcome you to the new look of our news station. Palm trees, an aerial view of Manila Bay, baskets of tropical fruit, native vegetation, and the bright colors of the Philippines grace our studio.

SHELLY: There's so much color I may have to wear sunglasses.

SALLY: In keeping with the new international flavor of this station, our new program director, the former "Miss Mango Queen," the lovely and creative Exasperanza Molito, wife of KDST-Channel 6 general manager, Tiny Spinoza, has designed the costumes you see us wearing.

(SHELLY stands and poses.)

SHELLY: These costumes are based on the annual festivals the Filipinos have. Aren't I—er, isn't it lovely?

SALLY: Sit down before your girdle pops.

SHELLY: (Quietly) I'm not wearing a girdle.

SALLY: You should. There should be a law against seeing your O-rings.

SHELLY: I don't have O-rings. Finger rings maybe.

SALLY: Your "obese rings"---love handles.

SHELLY: (Quietly) I'd like to ring your neck.

SALLY: (To the "camera") Our top story tonight. You've heard of powdered eggs and powdered sugar. How about powdered water? Yes, you heard me correctly. According to Edith Clarm, a spokesperson for M.I.T., a scientist at its R & D facility has manufactured powdered water. Given the state of draught in the West and around the world, this is a staggering achievement. Its potential is limitless. First aid, fire, camping, sports, war, and more. While the actual formula is under lock and key, a co-worker, speaking under the condition of anonymity, said the key ingredient that holds the mixture together is oatmeal. When heated, the powdered water melts into a sticky goo. Left to cool, the sticky crust is scraped off, exposing water underneath. The crust is undergoing testing for its potential as a hair gel. Shelly?

SHELLY: I'd volunteer for the hair gel trial.

SALLY: Shelly, you *should* be on trial. After a short commercial break, Shelly will be back with local news.

SHELLY: (To SALLY) You're asking for it!

(SUZIE skates out for the commercial. SHE has a stuffed dog in one hand and a paper bag in the other. There is no table. SUZIE whistles, and EXASPERANZA runs out with a folding table. THEY set up. Lights dim. Spot up on SUZIE and EXASPERANZA.)

SUZIE: (Chewing, popping gum) How many times have you left the house, and while you were gone, Fido or Fluffy did a no-no on the carpet? You arrive home, reach for that cold drink, and walk into the living room ready to watch a flick when you step into a yucky, stinky mess. Worry no more. There's a solution: Pet-a-Poo disposable diaper wraps.

(EXASPERANZA demonstrates on a stuffed dog.)

EXASPERANZA: Little doggie got to go poo-poo?

SUZIE: Stick to the script. Just hold your precious in one hand while you tuck this little diaper---like so.

(EXASPERANZA is having fun mimicking the growls of a flustered dog. But SHE can't fold the diaper right.)

EXASPERANZA: Come on now, cute little puppy. Hold still.

SUZIE: It's a stuffed dog. (Points to the camera) They know that.

(EXASPERANZA wrestles with the "dog," as if it were resisting.)

EXASPERANZA: Hold still, you. Hold still!

(SHE smacks the "dog.")

SUZIE: You can't do that.

EXASPERANZA: Why not?

SUZIE: If people see you do that, they'll wonder how you'd act if it were a real dog.

EXASPERANZA: In the Philippines, we eat dog.

SUZIE: Stop that, or we'll get complaints.

EXASPERANZA: As my husband says: "This is America. Sue me."

(SHE finally gets the diaper on.)

There! Got it!

SUZIE: Like so. Convenient tapes hold the diaper in place.

(EXASPERANZA manages to tear off a tape.)

Convenient tapes *should* hold the diaper in place. *(To EXASPERANZA)* Here. Use this.

(SHE removes her gum and gives it to EXASPERANZA who uses it to hold the diaper.)

Voila! Done in less than---well, maybe in less time than it takes to fix lunch. But wait! There's more! Afraid Fido or Fluffy will tear at the diaper? No problem. Each Pet-a-Poo diaper comes in assorted scents that your pet will love!

(EXASPERANZA sniffs the diaper, feigning a pleasant odor.)

Beef, turkey, chicken, and salmon. They will be so caught up in the scent, they will forget about tearing off the diaper.

(EXASPERANZA overreacts. SHE jumps up and down, claps, and pumps her fist whenever SUZIE makes a selling point.)

What are you doing?

EXASPERANZA: It's called "acting."

SUZIE: For you green people out there, Pet-a-Poo wraps are biodegradable and are made from recycled roofing materials. Everybody wins when you wear Pet-a-Poo diaper wraps. A package of twelve for \$19.95, available at most pet and feed stores. Pet-a-Poo diaper wraps. You'll be glad you left home without them.

(EXASPERANZA bows. Spot out. SUZIE packs up, EXASPERANZA bows again. THEY exit. Lights up on ANCHORS.)

SHELLY: Sally, maybe they have your size.

SALLY: I'm not into scratch and sniff like you. *(To the "camera")* On the local front, Shelly is here with the latest.

SHELLY: Can't get approved for a home loan? Then grow your own house. Local gardener Philip Evers has grown a summer squash that weighs 2,000 pounds. Too large to cook, the veggie seemed doomed to rot in a landfill. Instead, Evers hollowed out the gourd to convert it into a house. He was able to carve 1,200 cubic feet out of that baby. Evers plans on spraying the interior and exterior with a fire-retardant resin that he hopes will delay decomposition. His secret to success was a combination of "Mighty-Grow" and rocket propellant in the ground water. While the first house collapses, Evers will grow another to move into. FEMA has approached Mr. Evers to lease his formula to the federal government in the hope that his concoction will produce affordable housing in emergencies. Sally?

SALLY: Now that's "planting" ahead.

SHELLY: You should've "squashed" that comment.

SALLY: Touche'! In financial news today, Warren Buffett, Chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, invested \$2.4 billion dollars in chocolate futures.

(SHELLY starts to sneeze. And sneeze. And sneeze. SHE is allergic to her costume.)

Shelly, what's wrong?

SHELLY: I'm allergic to something. My face is swelling! I can feel it!

(SHE pulls her purse from underneath the desk and pulls out a mirror.)

Ahhhh! I'm breaking out! I'm breaking out! Exasperanza! Get out here! Exasperanza! Somebody!

(EXASPERANZA runs out.)

I can't breathe! Help!

EXASPERANZA: Come with me. Lie down in the lounge. We'll call the paramedics. Suzie! Suzie! We need you!

SALLY: Reports that Hersey Co., the nation's second largest candy maker, showed a 20% profit---

(SUZIE skates out.)

EXASPERANZA: Shelly, don't hyperventilate. Suzie, call 911. We need paramedics now!

SUZIE: I'm on it!

(SHE skates off.)

SHELLY: My eyelids have puffed out over my eyes!

EXASPERANZA: Calm down. Calm down. We've called for help. Just come with me.

SALLY: ---showed a 20% profit in the first quarter---

(EXASPERANZA helps SHELLY up. SHE holds SHELLY's arm as THEY go off.)

---surprising Wall Street's expectations, jump-started this chocolate rally.

(Pause)

Guess that's all for Shelly tonight. Anyway---"In times of recession," says a source at Berkshire, "people want comfort food. Is there anybody on this planet who doesn't like chocolate?" The selling of chocolate candy and stock has spurred growth in a related area. Sales of refrigerated safes have zoomed, presumably to safeguard consumers' chocolate treasures.

(EXASPERANZA scurries to the anchor desk and sits.)

Good news? Shelly died?

EXASPERANZA: No, no. Suzie's with her until the paramedics arrive.

SALLY: And you're here because...

EXASPERANZA: I'm your new anchor, anchor-chief, anchor-girl---

SALLY: Anchorwoman. Well, that *is* news. Let's go to commercial, shall we? *(Yells)* Suzie! We got to go to commercial! Suzie! Suzie! Somebody!

(TINY enters in SUZIE's place. SALLY rolls her eyes. TINY heads for the spotlight. Lights dim on anchor desk. HE wears a head mike.)

EXASPERANZA: My hero!

TINY: My name is Tiny Spinoza. I'm general manager of KDST-Channel 6. Usually I don't do commercials. But tonight is different. It's different because... well, it's not important. What is important is you listen to what I have to say. We're living in tough times. Millions of people have lost jobs or have to struggle on reduced incomes. Like me, you probably have wondered how to make extra money. Well, look no further than your face. You may be sitting on a gold mine you have forgotten about. Remember in your first bar fight, a tooth got knocked out? Or somebody pushed you down the stairs and you lost a tooth? Or you chipped a molar in the bathroom? Each time you had the tooth replaced with gold. Yes, gold. And now, the value of gold is astronomical. Thanks to modern dentistry, you can have your gold fillings and crowns replaced with porcelain. Then take those golden babies and cash them in. One company that specializes in dental gold is "Golden Nugget Assets," a subsidiary of General Mills. Call the toll-free number on your screen, and Golden Nugget will send you a pre-paid envelope for your gold. Within twenty-four hours you'll get a check. They guarantee satisfaction with your payment, or they will return your golden treasures at no charge. The next time you're talking teeth, think "Golden Nugget Assets." Remember, there's gold in them thar gums!

(TINY walks off. Spot out. EXASPERANZA claps. Spot up on ANCHORWOMEN.)

EXASPERANZA: Wasn't that wonderful?

SALLY: Just golden.

EXASPERANZA: It's my turn, isn't it?

SALLY: If you insist.

(SHE shoves paper over to EXASPERANZA, who has trouble finding her place.)

(Through her teeth) Just look at the teleprompter.

EXASPERANZA: Where?

SALLY: *(Pointing)* Out there.

EXASPERANZA: Oh. The United States Supreme Court has decided to hear a case brought by a student against his parents--- *(Aside)* Well, if he were my son, I'd slap him silly.

SALLY: Stick with the news, please.

EXASPERANZA: Gideon Belcher, 18, who narrowly missed being valedictorian for his senior class, sued his parents in lower court for failing to breast-feed---I mean, rest-feed---er, breast-feed him as a child. *(Aside)* Breast feed! That's funny!

(Starts laughing)

A study from the University of Idaho, Boise, claims that babies who were ---roast-fed---

(Laughs)

Breast-fid! Breast-fed! I'll get it right. This study showed that babies who were best-fed---

(Laughs uncontrollably now)

Breast-fred! Breast-fed! Raised their grade point averages about 0.129 points. Gideon, who wasn't breast-fed---that poor sucker---

(Laughs)

Missed being valedictorian by 0.009 of a percentage point.

(Calms down)

The Supreme Court expects to reach a decision by January.

SALLY: All better now?

EXASPERANZA: Of course.

(Pause)

Breast-fed!

(Laughs again)

SALLY: Time for another commercial while a certain party composes herself.

(Suddenly, TROY darts out onto the set, armed with a "pineapple." HE is still in costume.)

TROY: Hold everything! I'm hijacking the news! Nobody fires Troy Thomas! Stay where you are. Sally, give me your purse! Now, or this pineapple will make fruit salad out of everybody!

SALLY: Make Shelly a fruit cocktail and we got a deal.

TROY: You're asking for it!

EXASPERANZA: He's going to pull the pin! Duck!

SALLY: You win.

(SHE reaches for her purse and passes it over to TROY. HE opens it and takes out a taser. Then HE tosses the purse back to SALLY.)

TROY: Joke's on you.

(HE drops the "pineapple" on the floor. It's a pear with a stem.)

SALLY: Nice trick, Troy.

TROY: You're not the only smart one here. I went to college, too. By the way, the paramedics took Shelly to emergency.

EXASPERANZA: Wait until my husband finds out about this.

TROY: I hope he does. I know he's watching the monitors. When he shows up, I've got a surprise for him.

SALLY: Troy, why are you still wearing your costume?

TROY: The zipper's stuck! And it itches! Which only makes me madder!

SALLY: I told you to try yoga. To curb your temper.

EXASPERANZA: Your face is as red as a mango.

TROY: Hush up, pineapple puss. Now stand up!

(SHE stands.)

Give me your head mike.

(SHE complies. TROY puts it on.)

SALLY: Don't muss your toupee'.

TROY: Did you have to tell them that? We're on the air! *(To EXASPERANZA)* Hold out your hand.

(SHE does. TROY whips out a pair of handcuffs and puts one on her wrist and the other on his.)

Aha! Now for part B. Sally, stay where you are.

SALLY: No problem. I'll play solitaire.

(SHE takes cards out of her purse and lays out the cards.)

TROY: Jimmy, camera on me. Me and my hostage. Okay? Ready? Good. All you regular viewers of the evening news at KDST-Channel 6 know me. For any of you new patrons---and I suspect they'll be more as the evening wears on---my name is Troy Thomas. I have been head anchorman here for the last six years---until tonight. Tonight, I was unceremoniously fired because I wouldn't kowtow to the ridiculous changes brought by our general manager and his wife, the lady I have handcuffed to me.

(Always the one to hog the spotlight, EXASPERANZA bows.)

You're probably wondering what I'm going to do. Ladies and gentlemen, tonight you're going to witness a first.

Tonight, I'm not only making the news live before your eyes but reporting as it happens. If this doesn't win me a Peabody, nothing will.

EXASPERANZA: My husband will never let you get away with this.

TROY: Exasperanza, your husband is a twit.

SALLY: Here, here.

EXASPERANZA: Shut up, you!

SALLY: Imagine, a complete thought from someone who can't say the word "breast-fed" without laughing.

TROY: Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, this is *my* life, the life of the unappreciated and underused Troy Thomas. When I moved to Pahrump eight years ago, I started in real estate. I found this property and this building for Mr. Spinoza. When he couldn't get a crew to work more than a couple of days, I volunteered my time to work the camera, to edit the programs, to solicit advertising---all because I believed in this station, the only station that presents the news other stations won't.

(During this rant, TINY and SUZIE enter but stay in the background. TINY whispers instructions to SUZIE, and SHE leaves.)

I scouted potential investors. I organized fund-raisers. I sat in the dunk tank at the county fair. I painted walls. I swept and mopped the floors. I scoured thrift stores for the props and furnishings we needed to get off the ground. I even paid Mr. Spinoza's bail when he got locked up for a DUI.

(TINY enters on the last line of the speech.)

TINY: Troy, you know how eternally grateful I am that you came to my aid in my time of personal trouble. I was divorced, lonely. I was working killer hours. Life seemed like a flat tire until I met my beloved.

EXASPERANZA: Oh, my darling! Get me out of this!

TINY: Be patient, dear. I'm working on it. Troy, all you say is true.

TROY: You're not denying anything?

TINY: Not in front of my viewers.

SALLY: Good point.

TINY: Troy, I know you think I have treated you unfairly, and I think we can work something out.

TROY: I used to be the anchorman. The one and only. Then you hired Shelly---

TINY: ---we had to woo the female demographic.

TROY: You're saying I'm not appealing to women?

SALLY: Well, let's just say you've got a lock on the twelve-year old and over sixty-five age brackets.

TROY: Then you hired her---Sally. And demoted me.

TINY: Your health, remember?

TROY: My health is fine!

EXASPERANZA: You're turning red again. Mango red.

TROY: I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore!

SALLY: What do ya know? The ghost of Peter Finch!

TINY: Troy, you had better calm down and listen to me.

TROY: Stay away, or Exasperanza gets tasered!

EXASPERANZA: What is "tasered"?

SALLY: It's the same as touching an electrified fence. Your body fries and you go unconscious. And you pee all over yourself.

EXASPERANZA: And ruin my outfit? Tiny! Don't let him do that to me! Please! Save me!

TINY: Troy, Suzie has called the police. They're sending SWAT.

TROY: They're sending SQUAT. I'm calling your bluff. Now, what's in it for me?

TINY: What do you want? I'm a reasonable man.

TROY: So is the devil. Okay, I'll play. I want to be lead anchor again.

TINY: Okay. Is that all?

TROY: Are you nuts? Fire Sally---

SALLY: I object!

TROY: Shelly can anchor on my nights off.

TINY: Nights off?

TROY: Yeah, I'm taking Sunday and Wednesday off. Anytime there's a breaking story, I'm the one to cover it.

TINY: Are you done yet?

TROY: I want my own dressing room and company car.

TINY: This is getting expensive.

TROY: I want a new wardrobe.

EXASPERANZA: I'll design it for you.

TROY: Not her. Nothing from the Banana Republic. I want the best. Versace.

TINY: I can't afford that for myself.

TROY: Too bad.

SALLY: You forgot a hair transplant.

TROY: Sure. Lump it in.

TINY: Sally, stay out of this!

SALLY: Since you're going to burn me, I might as well add to the fire.

EXASPERANZA: Tiny, do something!

(SUZIE enters, skating down the aisle.)

TROY: What do you want?

SUZIE: I thought you might like a final countdown, you know, now that the SWAT team is here. 5-4-3-2-1 Go SWAT!

(SHE exits.)

TROY: Ladies and gentlemen. A new development. The SWAT team has arrived. I sense they're closing in. I feel a lump in my throat. My hands are sweaty. Exasperanza is pulling away from me. Tiny is smirking. Sally is cheating at solitaire. What am I to do? Do I surrender? Do I taser my prisoner? Do I run, hoping to dodge the hail of bullets? Why didn't I wear a bulletproof vest? Will my hairpiece fall off? Viewers, only you can answer these questions. I beg you to call this station right now and vote. The number is on your screen. If you can't read, dial 775-727-1101. That number again for you visually-impaired viewers: 775-727-1101. No collect calls, please. Tell me what to do. Don't delay. I might be dead by the time you call.

(On the walls, in the shadows, we see silhouettes of an encroaching force. THEY sing:)

SW*AT TEAM: *(To the tune of the "Caisson Song")*

Over hill, over flab, our love handles we will grab
As our buttocks go bouncing along.
Up and down, in and out, our stomachs we will flaunt
Until we get skinny or gaunt.

TROY: This is my big moment. Do I live or die?

TINY: What was that?

TROY: I said—this is my big moment. Do I live or die?

SALLY: Hey, I'm expendable, so I vote "shoot to kill."

TINY: It's not up to me whether you live or die.

TROY: Yes, it is.

SALLY: He's asked viewers to vote.

TINY: Vote? That means---

TROY: ---yes, ratings. My ratings.

TINY: This could be good.

*(The SW*AT Team enters, singing and circling the news set. Each member is in gym clothes or sweats. THEY wear T-shirts that have "SWEAT" in big letters and "Team" in smaller ones. Towels drape their necks.)*

SW*AT TEAM:

For it's hi! hi! ho!
In the grind of cardio-
Count out your numbers loud and strong,
And where e'er you go,
You will always know
That the Sweat Team is burning it off.
That the Sweat Team is burning it off.

(Repeat as necessary.)

"Over hill, over flab..."

(The TEAM circles TROY and snap their towels at him. Startled, TROY flinches, accidentally tasing himself, pulling EXASPERANZA with him to the floor.)

TINY: Somebody grab him!

EXASPERANZA: Get me out of these cuffs!

(A TEAM MEMBER fishes through the pockets of TROY's costume for a key. HE finds it and frees EXASPERANZA. SHE runs to TINY.)

EXASPERANZA: Tiny, I was so scared!

TINY: There, there. You're safe now. You're safe.

SALLY: Exasperanza! You're not fried? What happened?

EXASPERANZA: Silly girl. Nothing can happen to me as long as I'm wearing my amulet. Crocodile teeth. Powerful magic. *(SHE holds up a necklace or bracelet.)*

SALLY: My, aren't we the lucky one?

SW*AT MEMBER #1: This man is going to require medical attention.

TINY: *(Yells)* Suzie! Get out here! Suzie!

(SUZIE skates in.)

SUZIE: 'sup?

TINY: Call an ambulance for Mr. Thomas.

SUZIE: On it. *(Exits.)*

TINY: Will he live?

SW*AT MEMBER #1: He'll live, but his toupee' is toast.

SW*AT TEAM LEADER: I'm sorry. I guess we interrupted something. Didn't mean to scare the poor guy.

SALLY: Interrupted nothing. You just saved our lives.

TINY: And my television station.

EXASPERANZA: And my outfit!

TINY: Is there anything we can do for you? Free raffle tickets?

SALLY: Buy lunch?

EXASPERANZA: Redecorate your office?

SW*AT TEAM LEADER: We'll take a donation.

TINY: How much?

SW*AT TEAM LEADER: Whatever you can afford.

SALLY: The station is so broke we'd have to borrow the money.

SW*AT TEAM LEADER: What's the raffle?

TINY: A... er... something big... and wonderful, right Sally?

SALLY: Right. A lovely... a spectacular---

TINY: ---magnificent---

SALLY: ---work of art... from... from---

EXASPERANZA: ---from the Philippines.

SALLY: Yes! The Philippines!

EXASPERANZA: Signed by the artist.

TINY: Signed by the artist.

SW*AT TEAM LEADER: Sounds good. Could you save me about a dozen tickets?

TINY: You got it, buddy. (*Shakes LEADER's hand.*) Thanks again. Thanks for coming. Bye.

SW*AT TEAM LEADER: We're done here. Form up.

(*THEY get in line and sing a reprise of the "Caisson Song" on their way out.*)

SALLY: That was quick thinking.

TINY: Yeah. Anything to save a buck.

SALLY: What are we going to raffle?

TINY: Exasperanza can paint a mango in her native colors and sign it.

SALLY: Might work.

(*SUZIE skates in.*)

SUZIE: Mr. Spinoza! Mr. Spinoza!

TINY: Tell me about Shelly later. Didn't I tell you to call 911? Get SWAT? Instead we get some fatso group called SWEAT. What happened?

SUZIE: I thought the line might be busy, so I texted them. I typed, (*SHE spells it out*) "S-n-d, S-W-T, 2, K-D-S-T, h-s-t-g, s-i-t."

TINY: "SWT"?

SUZIE: "SWT." Yeah.

SALLY: Suzie, do you know what "SWT" could stand for?

SUZIE: Yeah, SWAT.

SALLY: Try SWEAT. They sent the SWEAT TEAM.

SUZIE: Oh. Me bad.

TINY: Don't sweat it. Now what did you want?

SUZIE: The phones are ringing off the hook.

TINY: We have more than one phone?

SUZIE: We're getting emails by the hundreds!

TINY: What do they say?

SUZIE: They say---

TINY: ---Don't tell me. (*To EXASPERANZA*) I'm afraid it's bad news.

EXASPERANZA: Like in my country. Every day. Something bad. Typhoon. Earthquake. Airplane crashes. Drought. Take your pick.

SALLY: Your marriage is illegal, and you're being deported under the "Illegal Fruits and Vegetables Act."

EXASPERANZA: How can that be?

SALLY: Well, "Mango Queen," it's against the law for mangos and men to marry.

EXASPERANZA: Tiny, is that true?

TINY: Exasperanza, we made news tonight. We *are* the news tonight. Unfortunately, we will be the laughing stock of all news organizations around the country. No one will trust our reporting. No one will sponsor us. We will be remembered at parties and on late night television as the "Kings and Queens of Comedy News." The backlash will be so devastating I'll have to wear a disguise. We may have to move back to the Philippines.

EXASPERANZA: No, not that!

TINY: At least, the Philippines doesn't extradite for stupidity.

SALLY: They will when you get there.

TINY: My dream. To run my own television station. To shape the news. To groom my own Walter Chronkite or Dan Rather. It's over. I can't believe it. It's over.

EXASPERANZA: Oh, honey. *(SHE hugs him.)*

SUZIE: Mr. Spinoza, that's not what I came to tell you. I have great news! The vote!

SALLY: What about it?

SUZIE: It was amazing. 34% voted to make Troy sweat, 63% voted for Troy to surrender, 2% wanted Troy to taser Exasperanza because they hate her name, and 1% made a write-in for Al Gore. But that's not all. During this showdown, our viewership went through the roof.

TINY: No.

SUZIE: Yes. A 9.2 share! Out of 15.

SALLY: 9.2!

SUZIE: We creamed the competition!

TINY: That's over 10 million viewers. How'd we get that many?

SUZIE: From cable and satellite. Our only opposition were reruns on the Home Shopping Network, Tiger Woods's win at Crabgrass, and Lassie.

TINY: Holy ratings!

EXASPERANZA: What does that mean, darling?

SALLY: That means we're back in business!

TINY: That means, my dear, we never left the business! We're a hit! A gigantic, freakin' hit!

(SUZIE's cell phone rings.)

END OF FREE PREVIEW