

Date: _____
English 30B

The End

by Thomas Hunt

A large soundstage. Many engineers scurry back and forth running large wires and monitoring huge reel to reel machines, that are recording and transmitting today's broadcast.

The director gets up from his chair and claps to get everyone's attention. "Alright people, let's get a move on, we've got a big show to do today." He claps again and a production assistant with a headset on starts to lead the talent out of their dressing rooms to their microphones and chairs in the middle of the stage.

With the cast in place, the director turns to the first cast member. He is a young man with a great deal of makeup caked on his face to make him look gaunt and pale. He has track marks down both his arms, drawn in cheap bic pen.

"Alright Cal, let's hear the theme song."

The young man lifts his trumpet to his lips with his right arm, a needle still hanging out of it and begins to play a sad lullaby.

The director nods in time with the music and moves down the line to the next performer. He counts down from three on his fingers and cues the performer.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen, I'm the narrator. Sometimes I'm omniscient and other times I pretend to have the viewpoint of one of the characters. I take on other forms too. Usually I say things like "he said" or "his skin tensed up and then relaxed". But tonight, I'll be narrating our show, our first performer, who we've already heard is Cal Baker, but some you might know him as Chet. He's playing the trumpet and the needle. But he ain't no 45, he's a heroin addict." Laughter. "It ruined his life, got him exiled to France and later he jumped out a window." More laugh track, Cal kinda frowns, but keeps playing. "But man could that boy play." The rest of the cast sits silently and listens to a bit of Cal's somber lullaby.

The director points to the next cast member, a priest dressed in bright white robes.

"Hi, I'm Mark, the obsessive compulsive Catholic priest. I could have something to do with the author's childhood or I could just be an outcry against organized religion, but that's for you to decide. I specifically asked not to sit next to Cal, because he's dirty and stinks of vomit. Sitting next to the Narrator isn't much better,

because he's phantasmal." Mark sticks his hands through the Narrator's body and waves to the director.

Cut that out.

"See. He's a freak, doesn't even have quote marks around his words when he talks." I am not a freak. "Look how he interrupts me. How rude. Now next to me is a man who's works I hated but who's lifestyle I totally understand, Arthur, the famous writer and recluse."

Arthur leans towards the microphone and begins to speak. "What irony it was for me, Arthur the Author to be in a story that no one liked. When the author showed it to his friends, they liked it, but this class, they were hoping it and the original copy would be burned. Alas they weren't and now they live at the bottom of a trunk. I suppose there is just no taste for accounting."

Arthur clears his throat, just so we could have a paragraph break and continued speaking. "As for Mr. Howard, he was unable to make today's show as he is currently trying to recite all of my unpublished work from memory for his upcoming book *Sweet Revenge, Revenged* which is due out this fall from Raunchy House Books."

Or perhaps Mr. Howard is not here because only the dead can enter this soundstage. Is this heaven, or hell?

"Shut up you damned theocratic narrator. I told them why Howard is not here. Do they have publishing companies in Heaven? God I hope not."

Arthur paused dramatically. "Although perhaps we are all dead, as no sequels are planned for our characters, but at least we have one last chance to perform in this really big show."

"Silence you. It's my turn now." Richard growled from the chair next to Arthur. "We've had enough of your dilly dallying nonsense you cocksucker. That's right. I called you a cocksucker. If you've read the transcripts of the tapes or watched that film by that rat bastard Oliver Stone, you'll know I'm into profanity. I don't know why I was invited to this damned show. I'd rather have that SOB Kissinger here. Son of a bitch was probably Deep Throat. Deep voice, didn't like the administration. Put that SOB on my list. Put him on my list." Richard seems to stop talking and seems to be just plotting, thinking and mumbling to himself. The director waits a beat to see if he's going to continue, but when he doesn't, the director just moves down the line to the next performer.

"Ummmm. My name is Jack Remington, and I'm really surprised you invited me to be here on the show. I know I shouldn't be at a loss for words, because I'm a typewriter,

but I really am. I would have thought that Bret, the blocked author would have been invited and I would have been left at home, probably to be used as a plaything by some child who would push down all my keys at the same time and leave me hopelessly jammed, while he plays with my ribbon and gets ink all over his hands." Perhaps diatribes like this is why most people prefer their typewriters not to talk.

Now. You probably want to know how this typewriter is talking and why you, the listening public aren't just hearing the slamming of keys, the occasional bell DING!, and the slide back to the beginning of the line. It's actually quite simple if you follow my logic. This typewriter is a magical typewriter and if you type the truth into it, Jizz comes out and you can put that Jizz in a jar and sell it. No, wait that's just a *Naked Lunch* reference. No one here will get that reference. Right now they'll be running to their reference books trying to figure out what naked lunch is and when it is served. Must be more simple and less oblique. The typewriter can talk because.

The director, having his fill of the pointless and empty yammering of the typewriter signaled to the announcer to cut off the mike. He moved down the line to the next

performer, Frank Marshall, the host of the popular late night TV show.

"First off folks, I'd like to apologize that Jerry Bruckheimer, oops, I mean Gary Baslimer, could not be here with me today, but as you all saw on my surrealistic talk show, I killed him. But maybe it wasn't just me. Maybe it was the violence created in his movies that spread to society and society killed him. Or maybe it was just his time to go. Or maybe everyone booked on my show dies. Maybe it's some kindof post apocalyptic game show where the losers get interviewed before they die. Maybe interviews equal death. Maybe I'm just here because the author said he'd pay me fifty thousand dollars and I'll be able to pay off my bookie and get my Porsche back from the repo man. Or maybe I'll just put it all on the niners to go all the way this year. Who knows. The important thing is that you're enjoying yourself out there in radioland. Because we only go around this planet once, and you'd better have a damn good time, cause as they said in Jerry's movie *Top Gun* "there are no points for second place".

A unshaven and befuzzled man enters the studio from a side door and jumps into the empty chair next to Frank. "I have arrived?"

The director nods, and points at him. The sound engineer switches on his mike.

"Hi. Is this thing on? My name is, well, I never really got a name. I was supposed to be part one of a four part story, but no one really dug the whole cliffhanger idea, so the other parts never got written. Which suits me fine, as I don't mind just bumming around the country, talking to people, getting in adventures. You know. That kinda stuff. I just came here today because the director promised me a lift to Florida, which is where us drifters usually spend the winter months." The drifter was full of useful facts like that. "Anyway, I'm glad to be here, and I'm really looking forward to taking part in the big finale number."

He turned to the left and the director quickly switched on the mike next to him. He noticed it was at the wrong level and adjusted it downwards to better suit the height of the performer.

"My name is little Kelly. I am very upset that you are not angry about me being eaten." The half skeleton, half girl scout uniform little girl said. "I was just trying to sell cookies door to door to express how girls are conformed and distorted by capitalism, when that Hannibal Lector wannabe ate me. At least he ate half of me

anyway. The other half is still here and it's hopping mad. I just want to say Fuck You MegaFreaks™! Fuck you for not crying and caring about little girl scouts! You bastards. Shit, piss, cunt, fuck, cocksucker, motherfucker, and tits...."

The girl scout's ranting was quickly cut off by the sound engineer. She continued to scream obscenities as two large men dragged her off of the soundstage. As they dragged her off, one of the men was salivating and the other one was pondering where he could get the recipe for chicken fried girl scout.

Sitting next to the girl scout, quiet during her whole rant, was Jenny. The little girl from "Try not to think of pink elephants." The director pointed at her and she straightened up in her seat and began to speak. "I'd like to thank you for giving my story the prize of longest title. It was tough to compete with other stories like "Cal", "Richard" and "Earth", but I enjoyed the competition.

"I also think it's great that we all came out here on this bare stage with no disguises." Britain said. "I'm glad I can finally admit that I have produced artists like William Shakespeare, Nick Hornby and John Lennon. I've also managed to spread my culture all over the round. But

I would like to apologize for the Falkland War. That was just silly." She curtsies politely and returns to her seat.

The director pointed at the next performer. Billy sits in his chair quietly. The director sighs. "Billy, speak."

"I am Billy."

"I am the future."

"I have no soul."

"Cal. Start the music."

Cal begins to play "Always look on the bright side of life". Everyone begins to sing:

Some things in life are bad,
They can really make you mad,
Other things just make you swear and curse,
When you're chewing life's gristle,
Don't grumble,
Give a whistle
And this'll help things turn out for the best.
And...

Always look on the bright side of life.
[whistle]
Always look on the light side of life.
[whistle]

If life seems jolly rotten,
There's something you've forgotten,
And that's
to laugh and smile and dance and sing.
When you're feeling in the dumps,
Don't be silly chumps.
Just purse your lips and whistle.
That's the thing.
And...

Always look on the bright side of life.
[whistle]
Always look on the right side of life,

[whistle]

For life is quite absurd
And death's the final word.
You must always face the curtain with a bow.
Forget about your sin.
Give the audience a grin.
Enjoy it. It's your last chance, anyhow.
So,...

Always look on the bright side of death,
[whistle]
Just before you draw your terminal breath.
[whistle]

Life's a piece of shit,
When you look at it.
Life's a laugh and death's a joke it's true.
You'll see it's all a show.
Keep 'em laughing as you go.
Just remember that the last laugh is on you.
And...

Always look on the bright side of life.
Always look on the right side of life.
[whistle]

As song is ending, the narrator begins to speak: That was a really great show. I'd like to thank all of you for coming. I'd like to thank the cast, the crew and all of you listeners out there. We've had a great time and I hope you had one too.

Poof. The cast, the chairs, the equipment all vanishes and the director is left alone in the middle of the soundstage. He starts whistling the song and walks casually towards the door. The door flies open and an old wino runs in.

"Am I late?"

"Yeah. You missed it." The director said.

"Damn."

"But don't feel bad. They didn't even read your story. It was one of those short ones that the professor never read out loud."

"So I was one of the ones that didn't get read."

"Yup. One of the unread dead."

"Damn. Looks like it was a helluva show."

"It sure was."

"You wanna get a drink?" The old man said.

"Sure."

"You know, this could be the beginning of a beautiful short story."

T H E E N D