

*read slowly
dramatically*

ARB Christmas

Cast of Characters:

Nancy C.	Rhonda
Sarah	Pirley
Dick E.	Elliott
Tim	Staw
Kathi	Joan
Michael S.	Bill C
Ken K.	Len
Ann Dodge (cameo)	May Ellen
Lisa Wittemore (cameo)	
and three mystery characters	

(The conference room at CCV in December. ARB is meeting. Outside the window snow is flying. In attendance: Nancy Chard, Sarah, Dick Eisele, Tim, Kathi, Michael Sawdey, Ken Kalb. Nancy speaks first.)

Nancy: Before we begin, I'm going to front load this meeting with a new agenda item.

Sarah: Is this another coup, Chard, or just loaded dice?

Nancy: Let's say it's another opportunity to see if our rules can withstand the repeated batterings of kinky and knotty exceptions to them.

Dick: I wonder if you could elaborate on that, Nancy.

Nancy: You're not going to believe this. . .

Sarah: Probably not. . .

Nancy: . . .but here's what happened. This morning I went to the office early, to pick up some papers. As I walked in, the computer printer beside Jeanette's desk was clattering away to beat the band.

Tim: Auto-dialing in the middle of the night. I knew they'd find each other sooner or later.

Nancy: The funny thing is I distinctly remember turning off that terminal the night before.

Kathi: May it was just mumbling to itself.

Nancy: No, there was a message.

Dick: I wonder if you could be more specific, Nancy.

(During this conversation, Ken Kalb has been taking notes furiously on a yellow note pad, looking up occasionally at the speaker with a penetrating glance.)

Nancy: Here's what it said: NANCY CHARD, BEWARE! MY DEGREE PLAN IS COMPLETE. READY THE COLLEGE TO RECEIVE IT.

Michael: What?

Nancy: The message was signed SAMUEL PEMBROKE and said the plan would arrive here today at 10 A. M. Right now, in fact.

Tim: Who is Samuel Pembroke?

Nancy: I had Elliott check it out.

Sarah: Elliott was in the office that early?

Nancy: He'd been there all night, as usual, working. Compared to the fat North, Carter, the South is so understaffed that we have to play catch-up ball just to stay even.

Sarah: I'm going to ignore that, Chard.

Nancy: So Elliott digs back into the dead files and finds that Samuel Pembroke is a 96 year old side-hill farmer, student of humankind, harmonica player, and CCV degree student from Ripton, Vermont. Seventeenth generation Vermonter and each generation more ornery than the last.

Michael: Old way?

Nancy: Old, old, old, old way. As old as you can get. This is when a few tunes on the harmonica and a jar of strawberry preserves earned a college degree, summa cum laude.

Dick: I think perhaps you're being a bit harsh, Nancy.

Nancy: Harsh my ass. That old coot. . .

(At this moment Ann Dodge and Lisa Wittemore stagger into the room carrying an enormous brass bound sea chest between them. They drop it to the floor. The conference room sways under the impact.)

Ann: This just got dropped off in front of the building ^{From} an ancient pickup truck. Guy shouted out the window, "It's Sam Pembroke's degree plan, all right."

Michael: Good lord, it's big enough to hold a body!

Nancy: George Bilicik! I knew he'd return to haunt us!

Michael: Coming from Ripton, maybe it's Robert Frost swinging low.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.

Kathi: Wow, that was good, Michael!

Michael: Nothing at all, nothing at all.

(Faintly at first, and then more loudly, a knocking is heard, apparently coming from the sea chest.)

Kathi: My god, what is that?

Tim: Somebody or something must be in there.

Sarah: Maybe it's Roger working on his grant.

Dick: Maybe it's the nude model from Donna Romero's Drawing I class.

Kathi: Maybe they're in there together. . .

Michael: Granting and grunting, as it were. . .

All: Groans.

(The knocking grows louder and of a sudden the conference room door bangs open, as if blown in by a gust of wind. Hands on hips, in tailored suit and black high heeled boots, Myrna Miller strides in. The knocking has stopped. All eyes turn to Miller. She glares archly from the group to the sea chest and back again to the group, and then speaks.)

Myrna: What the fuck is going on here?

(Stunned silence. No one replies. Myrna turns to Tim.)

Myrna: Tim, can you tell me what is going on here?

Tim: Myrna, there is one thing I have to tell you. You're not president anymore.

Myrna: I never was president, goddamit!

(Hands on hips, she turns to Kalb, who has looked up from his notes.)

Myrna: I always said, and if I said it once I said it a thousand times -- you heard me, Tim. . .

Tim: All one thousand times, Myrna. . .

Myrna: I always said, as soon as they get some big buck in here, like him, they're going to reinstate the presidency. I bet they gave you a car too, didn't they?

Ken: I got a car, yes.

(During this interchange, Kalb has stood up and backed slowly to the wall, pursued by Miller, who stands close, facing him. His yellow note papers are scattered over the floor.)

(aside)

Michael: It's hard to tell if she's going to kick his shins or seduce him.

Dick: (aside) I think she's deciding herself.

(Kalb moves forward, toward Myrna.)

Ken: While we're on the subject, Myrna, let me share something with you. Since I got here I've been haunted by your ghost flitting up and down these corridors. I'm getting damned tired if it, to be frank. I can't do anything without someone, frequently Cranse, telling me how the great Myrna would have done it. I would like to exorcise you once and for all from this college: not from its past, to be sure,

but from its present.

Myrna: That's fine with me. I never look back. Tim knows that.

Tim: Yes, Myrna.

Myrna: But now that I'm somehow here, it galls me to see the college, my college, reviving this old, old way crap. I thought I had banished that for good, goddamit!

(She gestures to the sea chest.)

Ken: The only thing I'm saying, Myrna, is that the person who is president of CCV is the one who gets to cuss last around here. Goddamit!

Myrna: So be it.

(Another gust of wind blasts through the conference room. Myrna stalks out, smiling mysteriously. Members of the ARB look silently from one to another.)

Kathi: Do you have the feeling. . .

Tim: like we're in one of those "ghost of CCV past" type of things?

Kathi: Something like that. How else would Myrna appear and disappear so quickly out of nowhere?

Nancy: Well, if that's the case, maybe we'll get a chance to see the future of CCV. If the past president returned to the present, maybe we'll get a glimpse of the future president.

Ken: You're looking at him.

(Another gust of wind blasts through the conference room. Myrna stalks out, smiling mysteriously. Members of the ARB look silently from one to another.)

Dick: I'm getting hungry.

(Quietly at first, and then more and more loudly, the knocking from the chest begins again.)

Kathi: Have a donut, Dick, I think we're in for a look at the future.

(Wind gusts through the conference room again, scattering papers. The door bangs on its hinges and Dona Welch enters.)

Dick: Dona!

Dona: I never thought I'd see you people here again.

(Dona is holding a great sheaf of papers in one hand and a miniature dictaphone in the other. All eyes turn to Nancy Chard.)

Nancy: Why didn't you think you'd see us here again, Dona?

Dona: As long as you ask, Nancy, I'll tell you.

Nancy: Yes, do indulge us, Dona.

Sarah: By the way, has anyone been taking notes of all this?

Dona: I see it's the old thing all over again. I sat in this room, it seemed like an eternity, listening, taking shorthand, trying to make sense out of nonsense, while you people haggled and bargained and went round and round and back and forth until I could have screamed. But I never said a word. I kept my mouth shut, even though I personally could have settled most things in a quarter of the time. A tenth, for god's sake.

Michael: If I recall, Dona, you didn't always keep your mouth shut.

Sarah: If I recall, you opened it a hell of a lot.

Dot: Hello everybody!

Dona: Meet the president of CCV.

(Gasps and exclamations greet this announcement.)

Kathi: How did that happen?

Dot: Well, when Mr. Kalb left. . .

Kathi: Where did he go?

Dona: Let's hold on that one, Dot.

Dot: Well, as I was saying, when Mr. Kalb left and I saw the ad in the paper I wrote to Mr. Bjork. I told him I thought CCV had been reformed and managed and shaped up for long enough, and what they needed for president was someone who would just be nice.

Dick: And that was you.

Dot: It's not that I'm always nice. I can be a real stinker sometimes, but it doesn't last too long.

Dick: What do you do as president?

Dot: Well, I make sure there's always sweet rolls in the morning, and fresh coffee, that people get their mail on time, and that everybody takes a lot of vacations. The president is supposed to do the important things, isn't that so? And what could be more important than those things?

All in the Christmas spirit too. Dona is very sweet and handles a lot of the administrative and academic details.

Sarah: I'm still wondering what happened to Ken Kalb.

Dick: I don't mean to tell you, I'm famished. Let's break and have lunch.

Dot: There's a nice new restaurant where Tubbs used to be.

Michael: Used to be? Does that mean we're still in CCV's future?

Nancy: What's the restaurant?

Dot: It's really very nice and clean, and the food is excellent. It's called, "GOOD EATS: KALB'S HEARTLAND RESTAURANT AND SALOON."

(Amid gasps of astonishment and renewed thumping from Sam Pembroke's Degree Plan,

THE CURTAIN FALLS.)