

Civic Duty
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FADE IN:

INT. TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS - DAY.

A tired ceiling fan whirs. Sunlight glares through dusty blinds. A half-empty room of town locals shifts uncomfortably in folding chairs.

At the dais, council members sit behind mismatched name placards. Doyle, Councilman **CARL ROSS**, (50) red-faced, loud, always ready to filibuster. Council woman **TRUDY BENSON** (50) obsessed with enforcing extremely specific rules. Councilman **BOB PERKINS (70s)**, red-faced and stubborn, slams his gavel twice for effect—though no one asked him to.

COUNCILMAN BOB

And another thing! The height of
birdbaths is *getting out of hand!*
If we let one be twenty inches,
what's next? Thirty?! Forty?! Bird
skyscrapers!?

MAYOR DOYLE (60s), soft-spoken and conflict-averse, tries to interrupt.

MAYOR DOYLE

Bob, maybe we should table..

COUNCILMAN BOB

I will not be silenced, Doyle! This
town used to *respect boundaries!*
Literal, architectural ones!

Suddenly, Bob grabs his chest. His eyes widen. He stumbles backward.

COUNCILMAN BOB (CONT'D)

(grunting)
Algae... rising... birds...
winning...

He collapses onto the floor behind the desk.

Gasps echo. Papers fly. People stand, panic rippling through the room.

ROSEY JONES(40s), the sarcastic town clerk, barely looks up from her laptop.

ROSEY

Birdbaths: 1. Bob: 0.

MAYOR DOYLE

Call 911! Someone help him, Rosey!

ROSEY

I'm already on hold with Code Enforcement. Want me to conference them in?

EXT. MAIL TRUCK - STATION LOT- DAY.

FRANK WEAVER (40s), bright-eyed and full of heart, sips from a cactus-patterned travel mug.

He's loading mail into the truck, then spots a folded paper rubber-banded to a bunch of other mail.

He squints at the headline:

COUNCILMAN BOB PERKINS DIES MID-MEETING - SEAT VACANT.

Frank stares for a beat. Blinks. Then shrugs.

FRANK

Well, I'll be damned Bob finally retired.

He pulls the truck out onto the road.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - CACTUS GULCH - CONTINUOUS.

Frank continues along his route, mailbag swinging. He walks up the short path to a desert-style front porch, where **MRS. NORWOOD (60s)**, spirited and nosy in equal measure, is watering a collection of spiky succulents.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Morning, Mrs. Norwood. Got your electric bill, three coupons for expired beef jerky, and—gasp!—an actual handwritten letter.

MRS. NORWOOD

Frankie, you're the only reason I haven't unsubscribed from life.

She takes the mail, then eyes the newspaper tucked under his arm.

Mrs. Norwood reads newspaper headline.

MRS. NORWOOD (CONT'D)

Oh Lord, Councilman Bob finally keeled over, huh?

FRANK

Right in the middle of a birdbath tirade.

MRS. NORWOOD

Figures. That man fought harder
against lawn ornaments than crime.

FRANK

He definitely died doing what he
loved, being furious about
absolutely nothing.

Mrs. Norwood laugh, eyeing Frank.

MRS. NORWOOD

You know, you should run.

FRANK

Me?

MRS. NORWOOD

Why not? You know everybody in
town, you're annoyingly cheerful,
and you deliver things on time.
which is three more qualifications
than Bob ever had.

FRANK

Please. I can't even fix my screen
door.

MRS. NORWOOD

Doesn't matter. You can't do worse
than *Bob the dog catcher* trying to
get raccoons off the school roof.

Frank chuckles, waves, and turns to leave.

FRANK

Appreciate the confidence, but I'll
stick to stamps and squirrel
diplomacy.

MRS. NORWOOD

Suit yourself. Just know: if I see
your name on the ballot, I'm voting
twice.

FRANK

That's wildly illegal.

MRS. NORWOOD

Then consider it campaign training.

Frank walks off, amused but thinking.

FRANK

Write-in, Councilman Frank.

He smiles

INT. CACTUS GULCH POST OFFICE - BREAKROOM - AFTERNOON.

The breakroom is small, slightly too warm, and decorated with faded "Employee of the Month" photos and a sun-bleached poster that says "Neither Rain, Nor Snow..."

Frank pours himself a cup of weak coffee from a stained pot. **TINA (30s)**, the sardonic shift supervisor, is scrolling through her phone. **NATE (20s)**, a part-time mail clerk and conspiracy theorist, is assembling a peanut butter and pickle sandwich.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You hear about Bob Perkins?

TINA

Dead? Saw it online. Guess a birdbath finally got him back.

NATE

I'm just saying, his heart attack was very conveniently timed. Council seat open, elections next week—classic cover-up.

FRANK

He was 78 and angry at clouds. Not exactly cloak-and-dagger.

TINA

What, you gonna run, Frank?

FRANK

Mrs. Norwood said I should. Said I've got "good porch-side manner."

TINA

She also thinks her cat is the reincarnation of her ex-husband.

NATE

Honestly, you'd crush it. You know everyone. You've got that whole "trustworthy face" thing.

FRANK

You think?

NATE

Yeah. Like if Mister Rogers and a cactus had a baby.

FRANK

Thanks, I think?

TINA

I mean, you already know how to deliver disappointment. That's 90% of politics.

They laugh. Frank grabs his satchel.

FRANK

Well, if I were to run, which I'm not, it'd be as a write-in. You know, low-stakes. Just a friendly face on the ballot.

NATE

I'll write you in. I've already got a Sharpie.

TINA

Frank for Council. Slogan: *"He Delivers."*

FRANK

That's actually, not bad.

Frank pauses, considering it for just a second too long.

TINA

Oh God. He's thinking about it.

FRANK

Okay, that's enough. I'm not running for anything. I already have a route, a pension, and a goldfish who respects me. I'm good.

TINA

Alright, alright. No pressure.

Frank finishes his coffee, slings his mailbag over his shoulder.

FRANK

Thanks for the civic enthusiasm, but leave politics to the professionals. Like Carl with his pothole PowerPoints.

He exits, whistling.

NATE

He'd get elected in a heartbeat.

TINA

We should help him accidentally campaign.

NATE

I'll talk to my barber. The man gossips like a group chat.

TINA

Let's give Cactus Gulch the councilman it deserves, and *doesn't* ask for.

They toast coffee cups like co-conspirators.

NATE

We're gonna accidentally elect a mailman, aren't we?

MONTAGE - THE WRITE-IN WHISPER CAMPAIGN BEGINS.

EXT. SUNRISE DINER - DAY.

Tina sips iced tea at the counter, chatting with **MEL (50s)**, the sharp-tongued waitress.

TINA

I mean, it's not official, but if *Frank* were on council? No more lukewarm debates about leaf blowers.

MEL

Frank? The mailman?

TINA

Knows everyone. Hates conflict. Smells like vanilla and civic decency.

MEL

Honestly, that's better than Carl.

Mel scribbles Frankie for Council? on the back of the specials board.

INT. DMV - WAITING LINE - DAY.

Nate leans in close to a line of sweaty, annoyed residents holding ticket numbers.

NATE

Hey. You sick of potholes? Of broken crosswalk buttons? You want actual eye contact at meetings?

They nod slowly.

NATE (CONT'D)

Write in Frank. The mailman. Trust me, he delivers.

One Woman types it into her phone: Frank. Council. Mail?

INT. LOCAL COFFEE SHOP - DAY.

A **BARISTA** concentrates as she swirls foam on a cappuccino. A customer watches, confused.

The cup lands on the counter.

BARISTA

Triple soy, two pumps vanilla... and one political endorsement.

CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON FOAM:

VOTE FRANK!

INT. FIRST SONORAN COMMUNITY CHURCH - BULLETIN BOARD - DAY.

A neat list of Sunday service announcements:

Potluck moved to Fellowship Hall

Choir rehearsal Thursday

Pray for Frank's Candidacy

A church LADY stands nearby, reading it, squints.

CHURCH LADY

Oh Lord, what office did that sweet boy run for now?

END MONTAGE

EXT. VARIOUS FRONT YARDS - CACTUS GULCH - AFTERNOON.

Montage-style scene as Frank walks his familiar route through the sunny streets of Cactus Gulch, mailbag slung over his shoulder, casually joking with neighbors while dropping off mail.

FRONT YARD #1 - MRS. NORWOOD'S CACTUS GARDEN.**FRANK**

Mrs. Norwood! Still keeping those succulents more hydrated than I am?

MRS. NORWOOD

Barely. Half of them are pickled from gin misting.

FRANK

Well if they vote, tell 'em to write me in. I'm running for council. Very unofficially.

MRS. NORWOOD

Already done. You're ahead of the jackalope.

FRONT YARD #2 - RETIREE COUPLE ON ROCKING CHAIRS.**FRANK**

Afternoon, y'all. Got your Reader's Digest and your monthly HOA warning letter.

MR. HARPER

Ugh. What now?

FRANK

Too many lawn flamingos. It's a crisis. Which is why I'm running for council. Sort of. Write me in if you want fewer flamingo crackdowns and more porch peace.

MRS. HARPER

Can you fix the pothole near the library?

FRANK

I can at least name it and send it a sympathy card.

FRONT YARD #3 - KIDS AT LEMONADE STAND.**FRANK (CONT'D)**

What's the campaign donation policy for lemonade?

KID #1

Fifty cents a cup. Dollar if it's cold.

FRANK

Oof. Inflation. Okay, I'll take one cup, and in return, you tell your parents to write in Frank the Mailman. Deal?

KID #2

Can we vote?

FRANK

Not legally. But your enthusiasm counts.

FRONT YARD #4 - YOUNG WOMAN WALKING A GIANT IGUANA ON A LEASH.

Frank raises an eyebrow, hands over a postcard.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm running for council. Write me in?

WOMAN

You pro or anti-iguana rights?

FRANK

Strongly neutral. But I support clear leash signage.

WOMAN

You've got my vote.

BACK TO FRANK - CONTINUING DOWN THE SIDEWALK.**FRANK**

Honestly, if this works, I'll eat my mailbag.

INT. CACTUS GULCH TOWN HALL - EVENING.

A modest gathering of townspeople fills the community room. Folding chairs, a table with a punch bowl, and a banner reading Election Results Tonight! set the scene.

ROSEY MILLER (40s), the ever-sarcastic town clerk, stands at the front with a stack of papers.

ROSEY

Alright, folks. Time to announce the results for the open council seat.

The room hushes.

ROSEY (CONT'D)

With a total of 83 votes cast the winner, with 11 write-in votes, is... Frank, our mailman.

Gasps and murmurs ripple through the crowd.

Frank, standing near the back, looks up from his cup of punch, stunned.

FRANK

Wait, what?

ROSEY

Congratulations, Councilman. Looks like your postal route just got a bit more scenic.

Laughter erupts. Frank walks to the front, bewildered.

FRANK

I, I didn't think anyone would actually write me in.

MRS. NORWOOD

Well, we did. And now you're our representative.

ROSEY

You won by 11 votes over a Deadman, good job, sparky.

FRANK

Guess I better start learning about zoning laws.

ROSEY

First lesson, don't propose any changes to the birdbath regulations.

The room chuckles as Frank takes a deep breath, realizing the weight of his new role.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING.

The cozy kitchen glows under soft desert light. A pot just begins to boil over on the stove. Frank wears apron that reads *I DELIVER FLAVOR*, is stirring two different sauces and talking to a small fishbowl on the counter.

Inside it: president troutman, a goldfish with a tiny fake castle and way too much gravitas.

FRANK

I know, I know, never campaign on an empty platform. But technically I didn't campaign at all.

He sprinkles a pinch of oregano into the pot. Sniffs. Shrugs like, *good enough*.

FRANK (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Honestly, I blame you. You're supposed to be the political strategist in this house.

Troutman bobs in place, utterly unhelpful.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Now I've got zoning meetings, budget reviews, and Marla—sorry, Rosey—who already thinks I'm gonna break democracy.

He starts plating what is clearly questionable pasta with a side of garlic bread that looks more like garlic bricks.

FRANK (CONT'D)

But hey, at least I'm still the best-dressed councilman with a carb strategy.

The front door opens, **ANGELA FOSTER (30s)** walks into the kitchen holding a bottle of wine.

ANGELA

Something smells ambitious.

FRANK

Dinner and emotional spiraling. Two courses!

Angela snuggles Frank.

ANGELA

So, Councilman Weaver. Ready for your first scandal?

She points to the slightly-charred garlic bread.

FRANK

It was supposed to be rustic.

Angela sets down a bottle of *Two Hawk Vineyard* red on the table.

ANGELA

Don't worry. The wine's doing the heavy lifting tonight.

FRANK

Good. It needs to pair well with semi-edible surprise.

They sit across from each other at a small table decorated with string lights, mismatched plates, and an unlit cactus-shaped candle.

ANGELA

So, eleven votes, huh?

FRANK

Ten, if you don't count mine. Nine if you subtract the guy who thought he was voting for "Frank Sinatra."

ANGELA

Still, the town picked you. And it wasn't just a prank. People trust you.

FRANK

I'm a mailman, Angie. My biggest decision last week was whether Mrs. Norwood's mystery envelope was humid enough to hand deliver.

ANGELA

You're also the guy who dropped off groceries when the power went out. The guy who fixed a kid's bike mid-route. You show up. That counts for something.

Frank takes a sip of wine, then stares at his garlic brick.

FRANK

Okay but zoning laws? Budgets? Councilman Carl? The man's forehead has veins that scream *intimidation*.

ANGELA

Then don't out-politic them. Out-Frank them.

He laughs. It's the kind of laugh that says *you might be right but I'm still terrified*.

FRANK

What if I screw it up?

ANGELA

Then you'll fix it. Or apologize
with muffins. You've got options.

FRANK

I think I need a new tie.

ANGELA

I think you need to relax and let
your girlfriend toast to her
boyfriend's weirdly historic write-
in win.

She raises her glass.

ANGELA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

To Frank. Our accidental
councilman.

FRANK

To Angela. The only person who
believes I can govern *and* make
marinara at the same time.

They clink glasses.

ANGELA

I don't believe that second part,
just for the record.

FRANK

Maybe this is crazy.

ANGELA

It's Cactus Gulch. Crazy is just
town tradition.

They sip in content silence.

INT. CACTUS GULCH TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS - NIGHT.

A creaky ceiling fan spins lazily overhead. The fluorescent
lights buzz. Town locals fill the folding chairs, sipping
lukewarm water from paper cones. At the dais sit:

Mayor Doyle, Councilman Carl. Council woman Trudy. Rosey, the
town clerk, typing with one hand, sipping iced tea with the
other.

And Frank, freshly shaven, very overdressed, trying to look
like he belongs. He sits at the far end, nervously organizing
colored index cards labeled things like greeting, maybe joke,
and nod a lot.

MAYOR DOYLE

Alright, let's call the meeting to order. Item one: community use of the abandoned mini-golf course.

COUNCILMAN CARL

We are not tearing up a historic site to plant kale!

COUNCILWOMAN TRUDY

It's not historic. It's full of tumbleweeds and bees.

CARL

That jackalope statue has been here since 1973!

TRUDY

It's fiberglass, Carl. It's literally melting.

Frank hesitates, then nervously raises his hand.

FRANK

Uh... if I may?

Everyone stops. All eyes turn to him.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What if, hypothetically, we don't tear anything up? We just garden around the jackalope?

Dead silence.

CARL

Are you suggesting a *compromise*?

TRUDY

Or worse—*coexistence*?

FRANK

I'm suggesting cactus beds and heritage carrots. Very local. Very low-water.

A LOCAL MAN IN THE CROWD

Can I grow ghost peppers?

A TEENAGER

Will there be Wi-Fi?

MAYOR DOYLE

Please. One implausible question at a time.

Frank flips over a note card. It simply says: Stay cheerful.

FRANK

Look, I'm new at this. But I know a thing or two about community. I've walked every street in this town. Literally. I've delivered your mail, your bills, your birthday cards, and I've seen what you all care about. You want a town that feels like home. Not just asphalt and anger.

The room quiets. Carl frowns. Rosey glances up from her screen, mildly surprised.

FRANK (CONT'D)

So maybe, we plant around the jackalope. And maybe it becomes a place we can all be proud of. Even Carl.

CARL

Only if I get naming rights.

ROSEY

Motion on the table: Jackalope Memorial Community Garden pending zoning clarification, city liability insurance, and Carl's ego.

MAYOR DOYLE

All in favor?

A hesitant show of hands. Then, one by one, they all go up—including Carl's.

MAYOR DOYLE (CONT'D)

Motion passes.

Frank exhales. The crowd claps, awkwardly at first, then warm and genuine.

ROSEY

Not bad, Councilman. But don't get cocky. Next week's agenda includes a screaming match over wind chimes.

Frank grins.

FRANK

Good. I brought earplugs and muffins.

INT. TOWN HALL - BACK HALLWAY - LATER.

Dim overhead lights buzz as Frank walks out of the council chamber, still clutching his notebook and a half-eaten muffin. The sounds of folding chairs scraping and locals chattering echo behind him.

Rosey leans against the bulletin board, sipping her tea, watching him with a raised eyebrow.

ROSEY

You really want to be here again next week?

FRANK

Wasn't awful.

ROSEY

That was the *easy* night. No one even mentioned feral peacocks.

Frank smiles and walks beside her.

ROSEY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

This isn't your postal route, Frank. There are rules. Forms. Zoning. Regret.

FRANK

I've navigated HOA mailboxes, i can handle anything.

ROSEY

Oh, sweetheart. That optimism's gonna get eaten alive by the Building Code Committee.

Frank stops walking. Takes a breath.

FRANK

You don't think I belong here, do you?

ROSEY

Honestly? I didn't. But then you actually listened, didn't shout, and somehow got Carl to vote for carrots. That's... rare.

FRANK

I've got more muffins. Just saying.

ROSEY

Don't bribe me with baked goods,
Frank. Unless they're blueberry.

Frank pulls one from his bag and hands it to her like it's a peace offering.

ROSEY (CONT'D)

You last three meetings, I'll teach
you how to actually read a zoning
map without crying or want to
commit suicide.

FRANK

Deal. But I cry at the elevation
key, so, fair warning.

She smirks, her first semi-genuine smile.

ROSEY

Welcome to local government.
Population: you, and your rapidly
dying spirit.

She walks off.

FRANK

You forgot the muffin!

ROSEY (O.S.)

I don't forget muffins, Frank.

Frank watches her disappear down the hall, then turns and
smiles to himself, still standing.

MONTAGE - FRANK CANVASSES CACTUS GULCH.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY.

FRANK walks down main street with a mail bag full of colorful
hand-drawn JACKALOPE GARDEN INITIATIVE flyers. Each one has a
cartoon carrot wearing sunglasses and the tagline: "Grow
Together, Cactus Gulch!"

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT.

Frank hands a flyer to **MRS. BARNETT (70s)**, head of the *Cactus
Gulch Garden Club*. She reads it over her bifocals.

MRS. BARNETT

Raised beds? Native plants?
Composting station? You trying to
kill me with joy?

FRANK

Just trying to grow something we
don't argue about.

MRS. BARNETT

You're about to learn that people
do argue about mulch.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - SHADED BENCH.

Frank chats with **DALE (50s)**, president of the *Prickly Pear Preservation Society*.

DALE

If one shovel hits a cactus root,
we're filing a grievance. This town
is built on prickly pear values.

FRANK

Then we plant around the roots.
Coexistence Dale.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALK - LATER.

Frank hands flyers to confused kids, dog walkers, a couple on
matching Segways, and one man watering a patch of gravel.

INT. LOCAL HARDWARE STORE.

Frank sets out a stack of flyers on the counter next to a
barrel labeled *FREE NAILS (limit 5)*. As he leaves, two
customers argue over xeriscaping vs. emotional plant
aesthetics.

CUSTOMER #1

We need drought resistance!

CUSTOMER #2

We need joy!

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - SMALL GATHERING.

Frank hosts a "Sun & Soil Social" with a folding table of
free lemonade and seed packets. The Garden Club and Prickly
Pear Advocates are seated awkwardly at opposite tables,
glaring over their compostable cups.

FRANK

We're not here to argue water use.
We're here to plant ideas!

MRS. BARNETT

Well, Dale called my aloe vera
emotionally sterile.

DALE

I stand by it.

FRANK

Okay, we're gonna take a five-
minute feelings break.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - EVENING.

Frank drops off one last flyer, pats a friendly dog, and exhales.

In the background, two teens walk by arguing loudly.

TEEN #1

I'm telling you, succulents are
boring.

TEEN #2

You're boring! They *retain water*,
Kyle!

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Frank collapses onto the couch, dirt on his pants and flyers sticking out of every pocket. He looks at President Troutman.

FRANK

I may have accidentally started a
botanical civil war.

Troutman swims in a perfect circle.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You're right. Should've led with
snacks.

INT. CACTUS GULCH TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS - NIGHT.

The room is slightly more full than usual—flyers, whisper campaigns, and garden drama have stirred up civic curiosity. Locals sip from Styrofoam cups. A guy in a "*Plant Peace*" T-shirt sits next to a woman with a cactus pin and crossed arms.

At the dais, Frank sits upright and energized. Next to him, Rosey sips from her iced tea, calmly flipping through a stack of papers. Mayor Doyle looks like he's hoping to survive the night without a migraine.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Mr. Mayor, Council members,
tonight, I propose we approve the
Jackalope Garden Initiative.

Whispers from the crowd. Carl rolls his eyes. Councilwoman Trudy adjusts her glasses dramatically.

FRANK (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

We've got community support. We've
got volunteers. And yes, we've got
a watering schedule. The people
want a garden. I say we give it to
them.

A few light claps. Frank beams.

COUNCILWOMAN TRUDY

And the jackalope statue?

FRANK

Staying right where it is. He'll be
our guardian gnome.

Laughter from the audience. Even Carl smirks.

MAYOR DOYLE

All in favor?

Hands go up—Trudy, Carl (reluctantly), even the Mayor.

MAYOR DOYLE (CONT'D)

Motion passes.

Applause! Frank stands, shakes a few hands from the front row. Someone yells, Go, Frank!

FRANK

Let's plant some joy, Cactus Gulch!

He turns to Rosey, still glowing.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Not bad for my first real vote,
huh?

Rosey doesn't look up from her notes.

ROSEY

Mm-hmm. Just one thing, Councilman Sunshine.

FRANK

Yeah?

ROSEY

You just approved a community garden on land zoned *amusement-only*.

Frank freezes.

FRANK

But, it's not even fun.

ROSEY

Doesn't matter. According to the city's 1978 zoning map, it's still classified as a "themed recreational parcel." Same category as laser tag and bounce houses.

FRANK

I just passed a resolution that violates bounce house law?

ROSEY

Technically, yes. And now you'll need either a zoning variance or a miracle.

Carl leans in with a smirk.

CARL

Told you the jackalope was sacred.

Frank sits back down. Applause fading. Smile... slightly wilting.

FRANK

Okay. New plan. Find the miracle department.

EXT. CACTUS GULCH - RESIDENTIAL STREETS - AFTERNOON.

The sun hangs low, casting long shadows across stucco houses and gravel yards. It's quieter than usual. Even the wind feels less forgiving.

Frank walks slowly along the sidewalk, mailbag dragging a little heavier than usual. His normally bright demeanor is dulled. He wears his uniform, but his smile is missing.

He stops at a mailbox shaped like a boot. On the side, someone's spray-painted: COUNCILCLOWN.

Frank stares at it, then lets out a quiet, humorless laugh.

FRANK (CONT'D)

At least they spelled it right.

He pulls out some bills, a catalogue, and a letter with glittery handwriting. The return address is a house he knows well.

Frank walks up the path, drops the mail, then notices a smaller envelope taped to the side of the mailbox.

He peels it off. It's a handmade card, scribbled in marker.

On the front:

TO: MR. MAILMAN (AND NOW COUNCIL GUY)

He opens it. Inside, in big uneven handwriting:

Thanks for trying to make the town nice again. I think the jackalope would like a garden too.

— Savannah (Age 7)

Frank stares at it, folds the note carefully and slides it into his shirt pocket.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Okay, Jackalope. I'll try again.

He picks up his pace, straightens his shoulders, and walks on, still tired, but walking forward.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Frank sits slumped on the couch, surrounded by zoning printouts, sticky notes, and a discarded "Cactus Gardening for Beginners" pamphlet. President Troutman swims in gentle circles nearby.

A knock at the door.

Frank opens it to find Angela, holding a warm takeout bag in one hand and a thick, spiral-bound Cactus Gulch Municipal Code - 1982 Edition in the other.

ANGELA

I brought carbs and codes.

FRANK

You really know how to romance a defeated mailman.

She walks in, sets the food down—spaghetti, meatballs, and garlic knots in shining takeout glory.

ANGELA

I figured you were either buried in paperwork... or watching sad documentaries about defeated underdogs.

FRANK

It was *Rudy*. I cried at halftime.

Angela sets the book in his lap.

ANGELA

So, here's the plan: you eat enough pasta to power a backhoe, then we find a loophole in here to turn your garden into a reality.

FRANK

Angela, this thing's 400 pages long and half the tabs are labeled "obsolete but enforceable."

ANGELA

Exactly. That's where the magic lives.

She flips to a marked page: Temporary Civic Land Use: Emergency Climate Resilience Zones.

ANGELA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Any parcel of land can be repurposed for temporary public use if it promotes environmental resilience and community cohesion. Your garden? Drought-tolerant. Educational. Volunteer-driven. Boom. Qualifies.

Frank stares at the passage, then at her.

FRANK

Are you sure you're not secretly a lawyer?

ANGELA

No, I'm a teacher. We read everything and live off cold coffee and broken hope.

FRANK

You're amazing.

ANGELA

I know. Eat your meatballs and change your town.

Frank grins. He grabs a fork and the zoning book, sits beside her on the couch.

FRANK

You realize this means I have to go back to that council meeting.

ANGELA

Yes. And you're going to do great. Just don't call Carl "Captain Kale" again.

FRANK

No promises.

They clink garlic knots in a makeshift toast. President Troutman watches approvingly

INT. CACTUS GULCH TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS - NIGHT.

The chamber is buzzing with townsfolk.

Frank sits at the council dais, noticeably calmer. A thick, dog-eared copy of the Cactus Gulch Municipal Codebook sits in front of him—flagged with neon sticky notes.

MAYOR DOYLE

Next on the agenda: the Jackalope Garden situation. Again.

A low groan from Councilman Carl., already scowling.

FRANK

Mr. Mayor, Councilmembers—last time, I proposed a community garden that, well... accidentally violated local zoning law.

CARL

You tried to plant kale on sacred fiberglass.

Frank opens the codebook with theatrical flair.

FRANK

But after some very intense pasta-fueled research, I found this—
Section 14.3, Subsection C.

Rosey, mildly impressed, looks up from her screen.

FRANK (CONT'D)

It allows the city to designate parcels of land for temporary civic use promoting heat-resilience and environmental education, pending a simple council vote.

Beat. Murmurs from the audience.

FRANK (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Our garden is low-water. Volunteer-run. Teaches sustainability. It qualifies. All we have to do is call it what it is: a temporary heat-resilience initiative.

TRUDY

It's, technically accurate.

ROSEY

And legally sound. Even has precedent—someone used it to set up a pop-up misting station in '97. For lizards.

CARL

Fine. But if that jackalope statue dies, it's on you.

FRANK

I already scheduled weekly aloe rubdowns. He'll be fine.

A few chuckles ripple through the crowd.

MAYOR DOYLE

All in favor?

Hands rise—Trudy, Doyle, Rosey, even Carl (very slowly).

MAYOR DOYLE (CONT'D)

Motion passes. The Jackalope Garden lives.

Applause erupts. Someone yells, Let's mulch this town!

Frank smiles wide. Rosey leans toward him.

ROSEY

One crisis down. Fifty-two left.
Hope you like noise ordinance
debates.

FRANK

Only if I can bring snacks.

EXT. ABANDONED MINI-GOLF LOT - MORNING.

The sun rises over the once-forgotten Route 66-themed mini-golf course, now bustling with community volunteers, potted plants, and bags of compost.

Kids chase each other around painted tires. A woman hands out lemonade. Someone strums a ukulele in the background.

At the center of it all stands the jackalope statue, still sun-faded and slightly terrifying, but now decorated with a flower crown.

Frank, holding a tiny shovel, kneels beside a small planter box.

He gently places a succulent in the dirt, then pats it with care.

FRANK (CONT'D)

There you go, little guy. Welcome
to public service.

Rosey walks up holding a freshly laminated lanyard. It reads:

COUNCIL ACCESS - FRANK (District 4)

ROSEY

Your official badge. Laminated,
because statistically, you're going
to spill something.

FRANK

I already did. Enthusiasm.

They both look at the jackalope.

ROSEY

You know it's got a crack in its
antler?

FRANK

Character flaw. Makes it relatable.

ROSEY

Enjoy the win. Next week's agenda
is about competitive wind chimes
and a debate over whether squirrels
are a public nuisance.

FRANK

Perfect. I already know two
squirrels who'll speak on their own
behalf.

They walk off toward the refreshment table, surrounded by
laughter, sunshine, and a hopeful patch of green in the
middle of the desert.

FADE OUT